

December
2024

ASCENSION NEWSLETTER

ASCENSION LUTHERAN CHURCH

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"Arise, shine, for your light has come, and the glory of the Lord rises upon you." Isaiah 60: 1

This wonderful prophecy of the entrance of Jesus into the landscape of Israel was gloriously fulfilled some 700 plus years later. When Jesus, God in the flesh, conceived by the Virgin Mary, took on human flesh, ***"He who knew no sin became sin for us so that we could become the righteousness of God."*** (2 Cor. 5:21) This encapsulates the Good News of salvation God had promised just after Adam and Eve's fall into sin. At that point sin entered the world and death also. Yet, God in His mercy came to them, covering their guilt and shame, promised that her ***"seed would crush the head of the serpents' seed"*** as His plan for all of mankind to, by faith, receive the salvation we so desperately need.

This we celebrate as we recall Jesus' birth at Christmas time. After the announcement of the angels, Joseph and Mary's trek to Bethlehem and the ensuing Gospel accounts, we find our Lord bringing God's saving love to the masses of people as He trained His disciples. It is a great example of how God continues in our day as He provides His earthly blessings while at the same time training His followers to be disciples who make disciples.

When you read the book of Acts after the Holy Spirit came at Pentecost, we see all of Jesus followers working together to bring the Good News of Jesus' reconciling work to the world around them. They gathered regularly at the temple and in their homes, ate, prayed, and worshiped, serving together, their witness was favorable to the community they lived and served in. On occasion we read, after the Gospel was presented, ***"and many more were added that day."*** This is the result of God's people, under the Gospel of Jesus Christ, coming to faith, strengthened in the faith and serving in the faith. It is a normal, natural and regular part of Christian living!

So, ***"Arise, shine, for your light has come"*** is not only a command, but a natural response to God's love found in Jesus Christ, your Savior! What else would you do? What else would you be but a servant of His who strives to be faithful in all your endeavors, ***"making every effort to enter into His rest,"*** His finished work found on the cross at Calvary. Jesus, in His suffering and dying for you labored to pay in full the debt your sin was owed Him. He took care of it all so that, as was said above, ***"we could become the righteousness of God."*** The natural response is one of deep gratitude for His forgiveness, freely offered, that continues to give thanks in all things as we serve together in His ministry fields for an eternal harvest! Let us celebrate and serve together having been bound in His love and motivated by His peace. Amen!

In Christ service to you and for the advancement of His Kingdom always, Pastor Ralph

Ascension Christian School Note:

As the year comes to a close amidst changes within the school board, I want to express my heartfelt gratitude. Thank you to the Dube family for their belief in me and their encouragement, and to Cynthia Tellman for being the school's backbone and an incredible mentor. I'm grateful to Sally Norton for guiding my staff toward a fantastic year, and to Debbie Ellis for her exceptional encouragement. A special thank you to Lynn Nichols for her invaluable fundraising efforts. While I could name so many more, I want to formally thank the entire congregation for their belief in me and in this little school. Together, we are planting seeds for growth in Christ. Here's to another year of sharing God's love through Christian education.

Merry Christmas,
McKenzie Sullivan



ACS Report to Voters' Meeting November 17, 2024

In August 2019, Ascension Christian School began its first school year with one student, a director, and a teacher. Eventually, we added two additional students to our program and replaced the teacher with another, and then COVID-19 shut our school down. That was our first year—not a terrific start, but a beginning. We have had five directors and many teachers in the last six years. Sally Norton took over the pre-k four class in our second year, giving us much-needed stability in our fours classroom. We have added more students each year. We had one year of our pre-K 4 class being full. This year our pre-K 3 class is full with a waiting list.

I mentioned Sally earlier and want to thank her again for what she brought to our school in the three and one-half years she was a teacher at ACS. With her experience and leadership, Sally was able to guide our other teachers with what they needed so our school could offer a quality education. Quality education for our students is critical; our reputation depends on it. We want our four-year-olds prepared for kindergarten; we don't want teachers to ask why this student does not have the skills they need or where they went to preschool. Last spring, two professors from the University of South Alabama screened the students in our pre-k 4 class to see if they met various benchmarks. Our students met or surpassed the benchmarks; the professors were very pleased and said they would recommend our program to parents.

Stability in staffing with teachers and director is critical as well. Parents and students do not like to see too much change during a school year or the duration of their child's enrollment. The staff need to get to know each other to have a comfortable, productive working environment. It is also essential that the ACS School Board and our congregation support our director and teachers with an occasional note, snack, or a small token of our appreciation for their endeavors.

I am hopeful that we can continue to keep our classrooms full. Achieving full enrollment before each school year begins allows us to have the teachers and aids necessary to provide a smoothly run school year.

Stable enrollment numbers in the three and four classrooms are essential before we begin to plan for our school's future growth. A stable staff is critical to provide continuity from one year to the next, and a quality education experience for our students in each classroom is vital.

Looking back over the last six years, there are things that I would like to have done differently; hindsight is 20/20, as we all know. Plenty of good things have happened throughout this adventure. I have gotten to work with some incredible people who have put their heart and soul into this project. Getting Ascension Christian School up and running has been a team effort. I especially want to thank Jim Dube, my numbers guy; Sally Norton for stepping in when we needed her most; Lynn Nichols for teaching, doing Mother's Day projects with our students, and leading our fundraising committee efforts; and Debbie Ellis for always on target comments at our school board meetings and organizing our yard sale fundraiser.

I wish Jordan well in his new role as Chairman of the Parochial School Board. I pray for the future of Ascension Christian School and that we will continue to "Share God's love through Christian education.

Cynthia Tellman

Officers

John Peterson, President
Richard Tellman, Vice-President
Alex Norton, Treasurer
Ruth Partain, Recording Secretary
Kathy Schulz, Financial Secretary

Directors

Evangelism, Open

Education, Jean Canupp

Stewardship, Open

Fellowship, Marian Bencke

Grounds and Board of Properties, Greg Nichols

Public Relations, Open

Cynthia Tellman, Parochial School Board Chair

Youth, Open

Elders

Jim Partridge

Michael Schulz



ACS Fundraising News

Wow! Did we have some yummy cookies supplied by our talented bakers? Yes, we did! We hope all of you had the opportunity to purchase some of these goodies to enjoy and share with family and friends while we counted our blessings at Thanksgiving. Thank you for blessing our school with your dollars, your time, and especially, your prayers. We made \$555.00 at the Autumn Market and about \$450.00 at the Cookie Sale. I

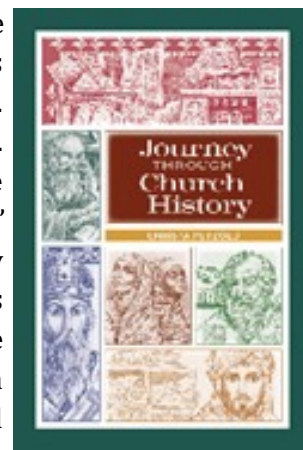
thank God for each of you and your gracious, giving hearts that are supporting this ministry!



And now we can focus on our Savior's birth and thank God for the blessing of His Son sent to earth to die for our sins and give us the gifts of forgiveness of sins and eternal life. From your teachers, staff, board members, and fundraising committee members, we wish you a wonderful Christmas filled with joy, peace, and love. Blessings to all!

Lynn Nichols

In the CPH book "Journey Through Church History," one of the early disciples of the Apostle John was Polycarp. Polycarp was born in 69 AD, about 39 years after Jesus ascended into heaven. He grew up in the town of Smyrna on the Mediterranean Sea. Smyrna was also one of the churches Jesus spoke to in the book of Revelation. Irenaeus, who was taught by Polycarp said that Polycarp was brought to faith by the apostles. He knew and spoke with many people who were witnesses of Jesus' resurrection. He came to serve as Bishop of Smyrna. The city was large, estimates say over one hundred thousand people. It was known for its wealth, beautiful buildings and fancy new temples and statues erected in honor of Roman emperors. Many of the craftsmen belonged to a guild. To be a member, a person usually had to sacrifice to a pagan god or the emperor. Christians would have to choose between their faith and their livelihoods. They knew that it would be wrong to offer sacrifices. We can be sure it would have been tempting to do so. When Polycarp was a pastor, it was against the law to be a Christian.



Since Christians didn't bother other people, Emperor Trajan didn't think it made sense to spend all the governments' time chasing Christians down and punishing them. If accused by someone of being a Christian, then that was a different matter. If the Christian was willing to make a sacrifice to the emperor or pagan gods, the authorities would let them go. If not, they would be punished. Much later in Polycarp's life (86 yrs old), when the anger of a mob against Christians also sought bring their leader, Polycarp, into disrepute, tradition says that soldiers came to his home. As he spoke peacefully to them, they were confused. They had trouble seeing why this peaceful old man should be arrested. Polycarp invited them in to eat with him and asked only for an hour of prayer before they took him away. After the prayer they took him away to face his accusers who tried to get him to say Caesar is Lord. He refused saying, "Eighty-six years I have served Him and He never did me any injury: How then can I blaspheme my King and Savior?" They tried again and again to get him to recant but he calmly refused. They condemned him to death, and as they tied him to the stake to light him on fire, Polycarp gave thanks to God for the chance to suffer martyrdom and for the certainty of the resurrection. While some of the details may not be accurate, the Church has always looked up to Polycarp as a faithful witness and an example of a man willing to die for his faith, but not eager to stir up trouble. Let us pray that we would be faithful as well under such circumstances!

Matching Fund for Preschool Success!

Matching Grant Opportunity for Ascension Christian School – Brothers and sisters at Ascension, it is with great pleasure we announce that we have not ‘left any money on the table’ but have exceeded above and beyond the offer to match up to \$10,000, and an extra \$5,000 if raised the full amount. We did much more than \$10,000, the total raised was \$13,525.00 which, when adding the 15,000 comes to \$28,525.00! What a great blessing it is to be able to enter a new phase of planning for the future of ACS. Our school has been blessed along the way in the past 6 years to the potential need for more space. Funds from this matching grant, your regular monthly giving and other fundraisers help to make this future possible. As we give our Lord Jesus thanks, let us continue to pray for more souls to feed the Good News of Jesus at ACS and the space to do so! Thanks!

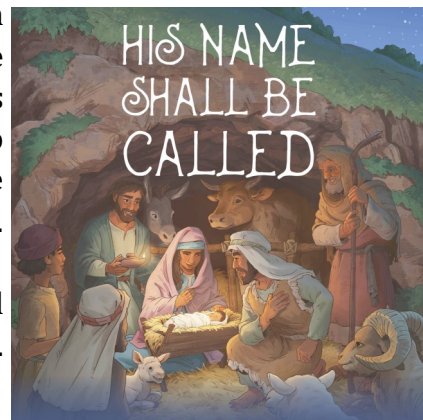
There is a sign-up sheet on the bulletin board across the kitchen window for poinsettias for the Christmas Eve and Day services. Donation is \$10.00 Thank You!



Vincentine Williams	December 5
Tom Hanley	December 11
Joe Nelson	December 16
Lisa Donner	December 22
Eric Marrero	December 25
Jean Hershberger	December 29
Judy Jackson	December 30
Ruth Partain	December 30
Sharon Kinne	December 31
James & Cheryl Pitts	December 28

Midweek Advent Services – His Name is Called

During the season of Advent, we prepare to celebrate the birth of God’s Son, who was given the name Jesus—a Hebrew name that means “God saves.” In addition to His earthly name, Holy Scripture calls Jesus by various titles which describe something about His person or work. In this year’s Advent series, we are going to examine four titles given to Jesus in Isaiah 9:6. Those titles are “Wonderful Counselor,” “Mighty God,” “Everlasting Father,” and “Prince of Peace.” We will learn how each of these titles describes something about who Jesus is and what He did for our salvation. Wednesdays, December 4, 11, and 18 at 11 am and 7 pm. Come Join Us!



More Than Just Sunday !

1. **Sunday Adult Bible** will focus on the sermon message as we utilize a this format of devotional learning. We meet in the sanctuary. Children meet in their respective rooms in the south hallway! The Sunday School teachers stand at the ready to love, teach and



2. **The Wednesday Morning Bible Study-** We are studying Hebrews. Please come and be a part of the fellowship and learning. Invite a friend and fill your spirit! 9-10:30am .



3. **Men's Breakfast** – December 14. Normally we meet at 7:30 for breakfast and Bible. Since Night in Bethlehem begins in the afternoon, there is some finishing up of getting everything ready. If you come there will be breakfast biscuits, coffee and juice. We'll do a devotion and finish up getting everything together. Thanks!



Always
give
yourselves
fully to
the work
of the
Lord ...

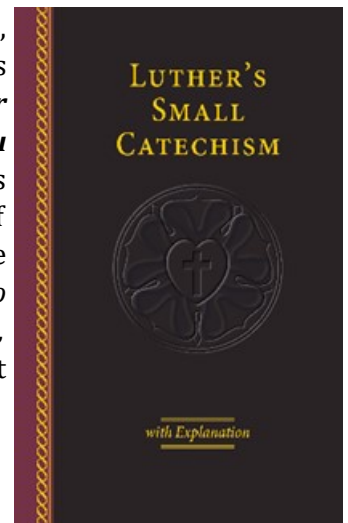


1 Corinthians 15:58

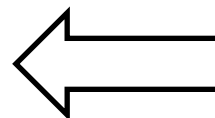
4. December Stewardship Corner – *“Stewardship is the joyous activity of the Christian in service to the Kingdom of God.”*

“Always,” says the Scripture, *“give yourselves fully to the work of the Lord.”* Whether it is being in the Word, worship, serving in your vocation or doing a hobby or recreation, always giving yourself fully simply means that what you do in life is reflective of your relationship to your Lord Jesus. He is the One who has given and continues to give fully His mercy and grace, gifts, both divine and earthly, *“so that in all things at all times, having all that you need, you will abound in every good work.”* 2 Cor. 9:8 We have to conclude here at Ascension, especially after our fund raisers and matching fund opportunity, we are able to continue to look forward in the ministry we have been given together to manage. Let us give thanks in all things for all our Lord continues to do for and through us!

5. **Catechism Corner**--As we open our Luther's "Small Catechism", we read these words, "as the head of the family should teach them in a simple way his household". This month we look at our 4th Commandment and its explanation. ***“Honor your father and your mother.”*** This is the first command that comes with a promise, ***“that you may live long in the land that Lord your God is giving you.”*** The honoring of others in their station in life can bring many blessings for oneself. Certainly, the blessing of peace is reason enough and it shows true concern and desire for God's blessing to be upon them as well! Our Small Catechism simply says, *“We should fear and love God so that we do not despise or anger our parents and other authorities, but honor them, serve and obey them, love and cherish them.”* As we seek to get along with others it



December 1 – Jesus' Sorrow
 December 8 – Prepare Ye the Way
 December 15 – Is He the One?
 December 22 – A Baby Leaped!
 Christmas Eve – Prince of Peace (6:30 pm)
 Christmas Day – He IS Christ the Lord! (10:00 am)
 December 29 – On the Cusp of All Things New!



December
 Worship
 Themes

Upcoming Events

Night in Bethlehem Schedule

Between NOW and December 13th help hand out posters. All you have to do is pick up posters on the Narthex table and go to your neighborhood store, libraries, Senior centers , etc. and ask if you can put up a poster.

December 12th--5:30 pm Cast Soup Supper. Please come and learn about your area and what to say to our visitors, You can try on your costume if needed.

December 14 & 15-- Our event happens! 4 - 7 pm. Invite your friends, neighbors, family members and be with them to see and learn about our Savior's Birth!

December 16th--Starting at 9:00 am we will begin the cleaning up process!

Rediscovering Jesus at Christmas - Do you know someone who needs to rediscover Jesus ? Maybe You? A Visit to Bethlehem may help.

In *Jesus Rediscovered*, Malcolm Muggeridge reflects on visiting the Church of the Nativity, built over a Bethlehem grotto in A.D. 330. Beneath it, "a silver star marks the alleged precise spot where Christ was born." Such shrines are common in the Holy Land, though most "are doubtless fraudulent," he writes. Yet among Bethlehem visitors, "almost every face somehow lights up a little" as "Christ's presence makes itself felt."

A humble earthly shrine reminds us that God's Son arrived as a pauper, not a prince. "Behind all this there is a real man born, growing up, reaching maturity like other men," Muggeridge writes, "trudging through this selfsame dust, and sheltering from this selfsame sun ... this man in whose flesh God deigned to live and die."

Ascension Lutheran Church
8888 County Road 64
Daphne, Alabama 36526

We are a congregation committed to the Gospel of Jesus Christ reflected in our ministries of worship, learning, care and outreach to our community.