

February
2025

ASCENSION NEWSLETTER

"Love the Lord with all your heart... Love your neighbor as Yourself."

Matt. 22: 37-40

ASCENSION
LUTHERAN
CHURCH

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If there is one verse in all of Scripture that reminds us, as it has been often told, it is what the Christian Church has known as the Great Command- to **"love God with all our heart, soul, mind and strength and... love our neighbor as ourselves."** It is out of this verse that God's redeemed people are able to carry out what is also known as the Great Commission, **"Go, make disciples of all nations."** The great command goes hand in hand with the great commission. Out of one comes the other, and because of one the other has a place to exercise the love of God in every way!

After experiencing God's forgiving love in Jesus, it is hard for that to not spill over in our thoughts and actions. The Apostle Paul puts it this way, **"For Christ' love compels us, because we are convinced one died for all and therefore all died."** (2 Cor. 5: 14) Simply put, Jesus' death on the cross was the payment for all of mankind's sin, past, present and future. This Good News means that because God does not hold our sin against us, He does not hold our neighbors' or even an enemies' sin against them. We read in Matthew 7, **"Forgive us our debts as we also have forgiven our debtors"** as part of our desire to live in God's forgiveness forgiving others along the way. In this way we promote the peace of God that Jesus has earned for all, especially in the body of Christ, of which His example of mercy and grace are to be found.

It is with this heavenly gift from above (salvation born out of God's love for us) that we exhibit the same love towards our fellow man. Why wouldn't we want the same blessing of salvation, life and peace for our fellowman. When Jesus says, **"Go, make disciples..."** He is saying God followers are what the church is all about, and God followers are what is made as we continue in God's Word for ourselves, and in our thoughts, words and deeds for others. This happens on an individual basis in each of our daily activities. It happens through our school as teachers, staff and volunteers exercise their God given gifts to promote Christ centered education and care. Through the church's support, many more families are touched by the love of God!

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ACS Board Note

Hello all,

My name is Jordan Kotowske, I am the new chair of the Ascension Lutheran Parochial School Board. As I get more acquainted with our operations, I will add snippets to our newsletter regarding the school. I am a middle school English teacher at Central Baldwin with three years of experience. Providing students with a quality education and support system has become the keystone of my professional life.

Our school is now thriving at a level that, to my understanding, we have not yet seen. McKenzie is doing a phenomenal job leading our staff and students, and we are so happy to see our program growing! Please come find me after the early Sunday service or leave a note in our church mailbox if you have any questions or comments for me!



MINISTRY
PARTNERS

Ascension Christian School Note:



January flew by, and we are so excited to jump into all the wonderful things 2025 has in store! We are kicking off the year by celebrating National Lutheran Schools Week with a fun spirit week and meaningful activities. February is shaping up to be just as exciting, with the Scholastic Book Fair and other surprises on the horizon.

Enrollment is well underway for summer camp and the new school year in August, and we are thrilled to share that our preschool program is officially at capacity with 32 amazing children! What a blessing to witness God's goodness at work here at ACS.

Here's to a year of faith, fun, and growth as we continue this incredible journey together!
McKenzie Sullivan

Thank you Ascension,
your giving to the school
in January was \$ 995.



February Worship

February 2 – Love Is God's Authority in Action

February 9 – Going Fishing!

February 16 – Blessings and Woes

(Continued from page 1) Where does that leave us? Perhaps it leaves us with more opportunities to pray for others and how God wants His people to respond. It makes each of us more open to the opportunities that are right in front of us. It enables us to not have divided loyalties between what our sinful flesh wants in competition with our Lord's leading of His people! He is the one who knows the pastures to which His people can thrive in His grace. And because we know and are confident of this, we want others to come with us! So we can see that loving God, and our neighbor really motivates and equals to making disciples as we go! And "go" we will by His grace!

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

Officers

John Peterson, President

Richard Tellman, Vice-President

Alex Norton, Treasurer

Recording Secretary, Open

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

Jordon Kotowske, Parochial School Board Chair

Youth, Open

Elders

Joe Nelson

Tom Hanley

Peter Bencke

Jim Partridge

Michael Schulz

WHY PRAY ?

Consider these two verses from I Sam.12:22-23; “For the Lord will not forsake his people, for his great name’s sake, it has pleased the Lord to make you a people for himself. Moreover, as for me, far be it from me that I should sin against the Lord by ceasing to pray for you, and I will instruct you in the good and right way.” Samuel and all the prophets conversed with God continually. Jesus taught his disciples to pray, and Jesus himself often went to a solitary place to speak to his Father. We often overlook or discount the power of prayer because our prayers are not answered as we had hoped. God’s power is often displayed in his omniscience by not answering the prayer the way we wanted. God is our spiritual Father, he cares for us more than we know and is pleased when we come to him for advice or need his help. God loves to hear his word spoken to him in our prayers. When in need or when giving thanks, find a passage of scripture to guide your prayer. Since we are called a Royal Priesthood in scripture it is also a responsibility of God’s people to be in prayer for others; there are plenty of passages that can guide you in those prayers.

Gary Kinne



Christian Families Can’t Save the World, but They Can Confess the Faith

This summary is from the December 2024 Lutheran Witness article of the same title written by Anna Mussmann.

In 1980, 33% of women had four or more children. Childlessness was rare, and the childfree movement unheard of. Now, approximately one third of millennial and Gen Z adults say they neither have nor want children. It is fair to say that many Americans are afraid of having kids and building families. Furthermore, these childless young people are right about one thing: Family life in modern America is hard.

The current secular model of family is fundamentally broken, and no amount of free childcare will change that. At its core, this broken model is built on the belief that human beings must construct our own identities apart from anyone else. We must be free to define ourselves and pursue our dreams. Because commitment to other people limits our freedom to self-define and pursue happiness, we must be free to discard other people at will. That is why no-fault divorce, abortion, cutting annoying relatives out of our lives, dropping friends when their problems become overwhelming, and changing churches or denominations on a whim are all essential components of our world’s model. How, then, can we help a country filled with exhausted, stressed, lonely people, many of whom are so confused by the world’s recipe for a good life that they eschew the fundamental human desire to marry and have babies? They are missing out. Isolation is not part of God’s model for the human race. Psalm 68:6 tells us, “God sets the lonely in families” (NIV), and living together in loving self-sacrifice is a wonderful gift that we should want our neighbors to have.

The only full and ultimate solution for our neighbors’ suffering is Jesus.

Three ways family life is a witness to our neighbors:

The first way Christian families serve the world is through example. We can show our neighbors that the broken model is not the only way — stable, joyful, committed, functional family life is possible.

The second way Christian families serve the world is by being available. The stability of healthy family life means that we are more likely to have the extra margin to help others. We can be the people who invite others into our homes for food and fellowship.

The third way Christian families serve the world is quieter and less visible. Christian family life is risky. It is dangerous to give ourselves fully to others, trusting them to love and care for us in return, rather than first guarding our own needs and identity.

We could not do it if we did not trust someone outside ourselves. Our crazy, dangerous lifestyle is a witness that God is great and good. It is He who protects us from ourselves, our families and the world. It is He who forgives our sins and helps us forgive each other. It is He who works through us and all our flaws to build and care for the people around us. It is He who puts the lonely in families.

Mike Schulz Head Elder

ACS Fundraising News

Your ACS Fundraising Committee has one more event scheduled for this school year: **The 3rd Annual Wine-Tasting and Silent Auction!!** This event will be hosted by David and Debbie Ellis at their home in Fairhope. More details will be coming soon but it will be in April on a wonderful Saturday evening. We can enjoy their porch and yard, and of course, each other's company, as we sip on some wine (other nonalcoholic beverages also), nibble on hors d'oeuvres, and bid on some interesting auction items! Please plan to join in the fun of a casual evening with friends and help support our growing school. Blessings to all! Lynn Nichols

Washing Machine Needed

Camp Dixie is in need of a washer. If you or you know anyone who may have a slightly used washer or are will to help toward the cost please see Greg



*Anniversaries
and Birthdays*

Cindy Segers	February 2
Willis Cannon	February 12
Stevi Kotowske	February 12
Gary Kinne	February 16
Peter Bencke	February 22

Bill & Darlene Kieninger	February 21
Steven & Monica Olivier	February 28

Ladies Tea

We will have a Ladies Fellowship Tea again this year! Date will be 3/15/25 at Westminster in Spanish Fort as it was last year! Time will be set later but probably around 11:00 or 11:30 am! We hope you can join us! More information to come!



More Than Just Sunday !

1. **Sunday Adult Bible** will focus on the sermon message as we utilize a 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 instruct the younger folks! Contact Jean Canupp for more info!



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 – February 8.** We meet at 7:30 for breakfast, Discovery Bible Study and prayer. Thanks!

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

Church Answers... Church Answers is a church consulting company whose regular emails offer timely advice in helping churches manage every aspect of the church's ministry of making disciples and caring for our communities with the redeeming love of our Lord Jesus! On one episode of the podcast between this father/son consulting team, it was noticed on the bookshelf behind one of the broadcasters a book entitled Give, Save, Live – GSL for short. Obviously, Biblical principles for handling money is important and beneficial for everyone. Give your tithe, Save for yourself and use the rest to Live on. If more people lived under these principles trusting God for His daily supply of “bread” then there would be less ‘indebtedness to the lender’ and more freedom to make even better life choices that honor God. But another way to look at this GSL is to think, “What if we Give our attention God’s Word, Save up His promises in our hearts (and the daily encouragement that comes forth), and Live life in service to others, we would have a never ending store of God’s grace for every situation in life! It’s the same as saving for a rainy and we have the resources to meet the need. Our stewarding all of God’s resources are for such a time as we live in the grace of our Lord Jesus! Thanks!



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

1 Corinthians 15:58

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 5th Commandment and its explanation. **“You shall not murder.”** By this commandment we clearly understand how precious life is. This is so because God is the author of all life and as the one who has given man the responsibility to care for all creation, the care and protection of human life is at the top of the list! This shows the true and proper fear of the Lord when do not *“hurt or harm our neighbor (read anyone) in his body, but help and support him in every need.”* And to that end, we read what God forbids in this commandment this: *God forbids us to take the life of another person (murder, abortion, euthanasia) or our own *suicide).* Jesus even describes hatred (Matt 5:22; 1 John 3:15) towards another as murder, so that it is not in our actions alone, but even our thoughts need to be checked! The question *“Does anybody have authority to take another person’s life?”* The answer is *“Yes, lawful government, as God’s servant may execute criminals and fight just wars.”* Romans 13: 4ff describes the role government is to have in society, and the protection of its people is first on the list.

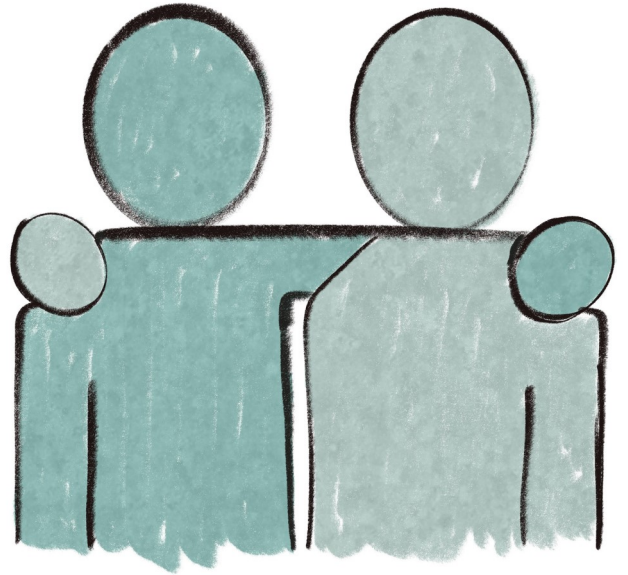
But the thing the mercy of our Lord brings to the table is not only ‘not harming or hurting’ someone, but that we would actively seek out to do good to our neighbor, their family and property. This as the Scripture says, **“fulfills the law of Christ.”** Galatians 6:2



I AM HERE

In *Bread for the Journey*, theologian Henri J.M. Nouwen calls consolation — from “to be with” (con-) “the lonely one” (solus) — “one of the most important ways to care.” He writes, “Life is so full of pain, sadness and loneliness that we often wonder what we can do to alleviate the immense suffering we see.”

Although consoling doesn’t necessarily remove someone’s pain, Nouwen notes that it serves a deeper purpose: To console means “to be there and say, ‘You are not alone, I am with you. Together we can carry the burden. Don’t be afraid. I am here.’ That is consolation. We all need to give it as well as to receive it.”



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