

# "CONNECTING THE COMMUNITY TO CHRIST!"

# Pastor's Desk

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#### I *passed* on the dessert tray the other night at dinner, tempting as it was. Most of us dread *passing* through the TSA screening lines at the

TSA screening lines at the airport when we're in a hurry. I *pass* columns like this your way hoping to stir your heart and mind on matters of faith and life.

One thing I will never pass, however, is away. Yes, one day I expect to die, and you'd be wise to expect the same. But none of us will simply "pass away." That phrase seems to have become increasingly popular over the past few decades, even irritatingly popular. A survey of modern-day obituaries reveals that nearly 50 percent of families no longer refer to the *death* of their loved one. Grandma has merely "passed away." Or, when time is of the essence, she merely "passed."

As a pastor, I have the opportunity to visit with funeral directors while riding in the hearse. Many have shared with me that this linguistic trend is an attempt to make death sound less cold, gentler, and not so harsh. Perhaps they are right. We don't do well with the *finality* of death. Despite what the world claims, death is not natural, but unnatural. It was never a part of God's original creation. No, we brought this malady upon ourselves when our first parents, Adam and Eve, disobeyed God and ate of the forbidden fruit. As a result, we now seek to keep death at arm's length. We live in denial of it. To speak of father's death as a

"passing" is to lend a wispy and soft feel to his disappearance, almost as if an unsuspecting El Paso wind mysteriously swept him out of view.

"When a person is born we rejoice," anthropologist Margaret Mead once wrote. "And when they're married we jubilate. But when they die we try to pretend nothing has happened." To pretend as if the sudden absence of our spouse's voice or laugh at the table doesn't affect us is to perform a disservice to ourselves. Faith in the Savior allows us to face the reality of death. Emerging alive from the tomb on Easter, Jesus has defeated death and won the victory of eternal life for us. "Where, O death, is your victory?" St. Paul triumphantly asks, "Where, O death, is your sting?" (1 Cor. 15:55). It teaches us that grief can be a gift, just as tears rolling down the cheek can be a love offering for that loved one who has died. Our hope is in Christ!

Trying to soft-pedal death with the language of "passing away" sounds all the more awkward when we try to speak of its counterpart*birth*—in similar ways. As an experiment, try not to think of yourself as being born. Instead, envision yourself as gradually "showing up." Can't we just be straightforward about the two bookends of life? We're born. And we die.

Christ Jesus overcame *death* and the grave for us. We're never told He holds a victory flag over our "passing away." If that were the case Paul's



inspired words in 1 Corinthians 15 would have to be rewritten: "'*Passed away* has been swallowed up in victory.' 'Where, O *passed away*, is your victory? Where, O *passed away*, is your sting?" (vv. 54b-55) Huh?!

When the day arrives for God to carry me to His heavenly home, who knows what euphemisms will be uttered? Pastor Bestian "checked out." He "kicked the bucket." He "sold the farm." He's "pushing up daisies" or "juggling haloes now." Perhaps he's "taking up harp lessons." Or, in the elegant words of E.E. Cummings, he "started a worm farm."

But those who know me best, and the confidence I have in God, only need four words: *Brian died in faith*. That will do it. Those four words will speak honesty, truth, and love—all at the same time. And the Lord will be praised! (As He should be!) ++

# CHILDREN'S MINISTRY





By Kim Bestian Director of Children's Ministry



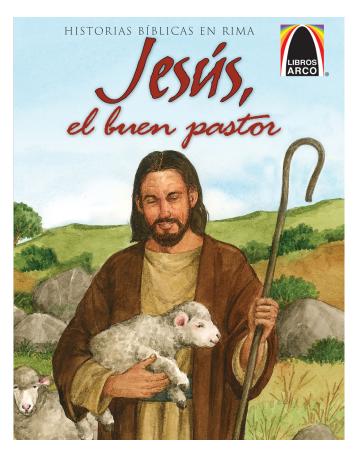
A big thank you to the following servant leaders who helped teach Ascension's Summer Sunday School: Kirsten Moravec, Lvnn Burchfield, Nethia Kelly, Debbie Epperson, Keri Howell, Iean DeWitt, Judy Pozzerle, Kathy Wilmeth, Barbara Lewis, Donna Tuchenhagen, Susan Webber, Maritza Schlak, Dawn Yturralde, Rachel Witty, Mary Rosenbaum, and Luz Soto with the teen youth group! The Ten Commandments were the focus of study along with applicable Bible stories. We wrapped up the summer sessions on Rally Day/Sunday School Jump Day. Another big thank you to all who participated and helped with Christian Education Sunday on August 25 - With Hearts and Hands and Voices!



The fall Sunday School quarter begins September 1. All children are welcome to join other children as they continue their faith nurture and Christian friendship building with their brothers and sisters in Christ. This takes place in the children's Christian education wing of the Ascension building. Parents are encouraged to attend the adult Bible class, led by Pastor Bestian in the Fellowship Hall, at the same time. The Family Bible Hour begins at 9:15 a.m. and concludes at 10:15 a.m. each Sunday. When parents are in God's Word, they are obeying His commands to first learn about Him and then impress His commands on their children. Deuteronomy 6:5-9. Ascension offers these opportunities by obeying Jesus' Words to feed His sheep and lambs. John 21:15.



Soap For Hope! What is that? It is a service opportunity sponsored by the children's ministry of Ascension! The children will be collecting all kinds of soap for those in need. Items include: liquid hand soap, bar soap, dish detergent, laundry detergent, dryer sheets, shaving cream, disinfectant spray, window cleaner, toilet bowl cleaners and brushes, powder cleansers, sponges, and so forth. We have Jesus' forgiveness to wash away our sins. He has also provided us with soap to clean the outside of our bodies and our homes to stay healthy. People are in need of His Word and also in need of soap. The children of Ascension invite YOU to help them collect lots of soap for those in need. Please bring your contributions to church with you! This project will be active throughout the month of September. Thank you for your gifts of love.





Our 2019-2020 Sunday School Offerings will be used to purchase **Spanish Arch Books** for **Juarez Mission Churches**. These Spanish books will be used to share the **Love of Jesus** with our Spanish-speaking Brothers and Sisters in Christ!











Remember to use your Sunday School Offering envelopes! Offering envelopes allow the amount of the gift to remain between the child and God. Offering envelopes also help children to not lose their gifts for God! \*Please speak to your Sunday School Teacher or the Sunday School Coordinator if you need envelopes.

# With Hearts and Hands and Voices

Ascension Lutheran Sunday School 2019-2020

# YOUTH MINISTRY



# Apostasy

#### By Luz Soto Director of Youth Ministry

Apo-what? I'm sure your Lutheran brain has kicked in and asked, What does this mean? If so, I'm glad you're asking. Apostasy (noun) is defined as the renouncement or abandonment of a religious or political belief. If you've been watching entertainment news or social media, there's been a few Christian public figures, such as Hillsong songwriter Marty Sampson or writer Josh Harris, who have turned away from the faith. I wanted to share snippets of the response from another entertainment figure -lead singer of Skillet, John Cooper. Although I've heard of Skillet, I've never been a fan of their style of music, but I am in agreement with what he said. No editing was done to the following snippets of his statement. Ask your Youth Director for the full copy of his statement, which is truly worth the read.

"Ok I'm saying it. Because it's too important not to. What is happening in Christianity? More and more of our outspoken leaders or influencers who were once "faces" of the faith are falling away. And at the same time they are being very vocal and bold about it. Shockingly they still want to influence others (for what purpose?) as they announce that they are leaving the faith. I'll state my conclusion, then I'll state some rebuttals to statements I've read by some of them. Firstly, I never judge people outside of my faith. Even if they hate religion or Christianity. That is not my place and I have many friends who disagree with my religion and that is 100% fine with me. However, when it comes to people within my faith, there must be a measure of loyalty and friendship and accountability to each other and the Word of God...

"...My conclu-sion for the church (all of us Christians): We must STOP making worship leaders and thought leaders or influencers or cool people or "relevant" people the most influential people in Christendom. (And yes that includes people like me!) l've

been saying for 20 years (and seemed probably quite judgmental to some of my peers) that we are in a dangerous place when the church is looking to 20 year old worship singers as our source of truth. We now have a church culture that learns who God is from singing modern praise songs rather than from the teachings of the Word. I'm not being rude to my worship leader friends (many who would agree with me) in saying that singers and musicians are good at communicating emotion and feeling. We create a moment and a vehicle for God to speak. However, singers are not always the best people to write solid Bible truth and doctrine...

"... It is time for the church to rediscover the preeminence of the Word. And to value the teaching of the Word. We need to value truth over feeling. Truth over emotion. And what we are seeing now is the result of the church raising up influencers who did not supremely value truth who have led a generation who also do not believe in the supremacy of truth. And now those disavowed leaders are proudly still leading and influencing boldly AWAY from the truth... Brothers and sisters in the faith all around the world, pastors, teachers, worship leaders, influencers...l implore you, please please in your search for relevancy for the gospel, let us NOT find creative ways to shape Gods word into the image of our culture by stifling inconvenient truths.



But rather let us hold on even tighter to the anchor of the living Word of God. For He changes NOT.

*"The grass withers and the flowers fade away, but the word of our God stands forever" (Isaiah 40:8)"* 

So where exactly am I going with this? As I repeat time and again, sink yourself into the Word of God. Everything you come up against, everything you're taught, you measure up to the truth found in Scripture. Let your Bible ALWAYS be your source of measuring every word, every action, every person, every situation. Always seek the answers in the Word of God...even Martin Luther encouraged this, which is why he continuously asks throughout the Small and Large Catechism "What does this mean?" The true and correct answer to that one question will always be found in the Holy Word of God, nowhere else.

# SEPTEMBER 2019

# CLOUDCROFT YOUTH HIKE

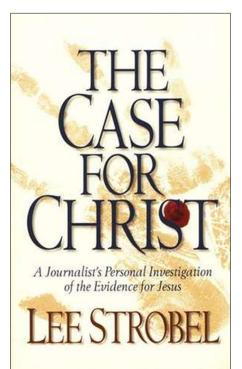
Saturday, September 7

Hiking and Swimming!

Lunch will be provided.

Meet at Ascension's parking lot at 7:30 am to carpool!

Sign-Up Sheet will be on the A-Frame!



# Is Jesus of Nazareth really the Son of God?

Together, we will use the Student Guide for Lee Strobel's *The Case for Christ*, to go on a riveting quest to discover the truth about history's most compelling figure.

This new Youth Bible Study starts on September 1 and we will be meeting in the Youth Room downstairs.

Don't miss the opportunity to explore the hard questions many Christians aren't willing to ask and can't answer!



Contact Information

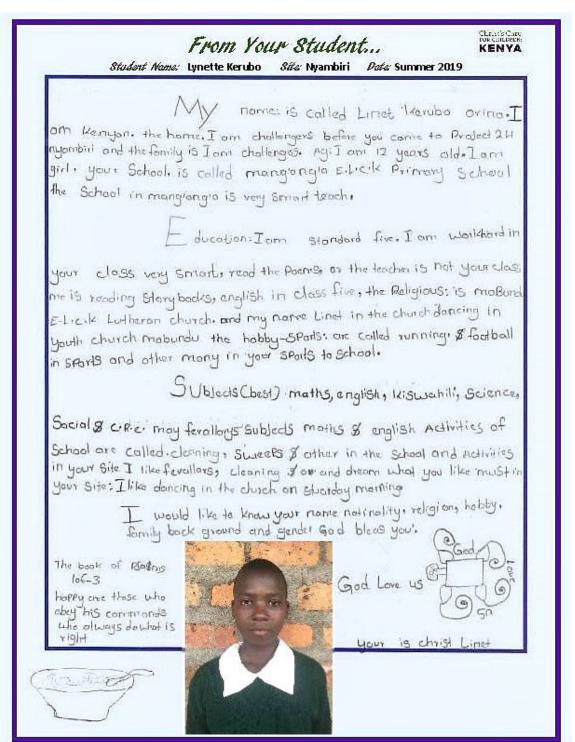
LUZ M. SOto, DYM Phone: (915) 219-1686 E-maíl: luzsoto07@gmaíl.com



# 2019 VBS Mission Project Update

meet our goal of \$1,080.00, which will sponsor Lynette child on the other side of the world! for a year. To date, we've collected \$1,213 and are truly excited to be sending the check and letter to her. If you

For our 2019 VBS Mission Project, we took offerings to haven't added your name to the letter, please make sure sponsor a young girl from Kenya named Lynette you do as we're sponsoring Lynette as a church family Kerubo. We've been collecting offering from the chil- and not an individual. Thank you for your support of dren, youth and adult Family Bible Hour classes to this wonderful opportunity to share God's love to a



# MINISTRY & BOARD REPORTS



# Stewardship Minute—The Pearl of Great Price

Jesus said, "Again, the kingdom of Heaven is like a mer- What about us? We chant looking for fine pearls. When he found one of great have the advantage of value, he went away and sold everything he had and bought past history. We have *it*"(Matthew 13A5-46).

Who knew that Jesus was the **pearl of great price**? After all, wasn't He just "the carpenter's son"? (Matthew 13:55) "The chief priests and the whole Sanhedrin were looking for false evidence against Jesus . . . " (Matthew 26:59) because, rather than seeing Him for what He was and is, the pearl of great **price**, they were threatened by Him and wanted to destroy Him.

Even His disciples who had lived with Him, eaten with new in Him. Do we view Him as the pearl of great price? Him, listened to Him, and worked beside Him for three Are we willing to sell everything we have to give for Him? years found Him to be not the pearl of great price, but a danger to their lives and reputations and they "deserted sealing our lips, fearing rejection if we speak His name? Him and fled" (Matthew 26:56) at His time of need.

God's Word. We know of Jesus' perfect life lived in our place; we know of His anguished prayer for us before His Father; we know of His death on



the cross that paid the price for our sin; we know of His triumphant resurrection; and we know how our lives are made Or are we hoarding our assets, refusing to share? Are we God give us grace to proclaim Jesus, our pearl of great price.

reasurer's Report –							
n'eduar er s'rieper e	Treasurer's Report: 2019 Income & Expense Statement [July]						
Finance Update					July	YTD	Budget
	Income:	Offerings		\$	24,153.33	\$ 169,587.37	\$ 175,175.00
		Other Income		\$	3,537.33	\$ 31,579.45	\$ 29,757.37
		Total		\$	27,690.66	\$ 201,166.82	\$ 204,932.37
	Expense:			\$	29,535.85	\$ 222,573.36	\$ 224,720.75
Approved Council Minutes are sent to Ascension members with the Friday e-mail when they are received by the Church Office. Please call 833-1009 to request a	Raise The Roof						
		Donations - 2019		\$	3,121.00	\$ 35,440.46	
		Total 2017-2018				\$ 124,992.00	
		Other receipts				\$ 7,656.30	

# Raise the Roof Goal Met!



"Raise the Roof" Praise the Lord! has met the goal of \$175,000 in dona-Total expenditures for "Raise tions. the Roof" were \$172,309.22. The goal for "Raise the Roof" was originally decided in December 2017 by the "Raise Roof" Committee and the allowed the team to complete all originally scheduled work along with additional efforts. We would like to thank everyone involved in the "Raise the Roof" committee and campaign, your contributions were appreciated. The "Raise the Roof" Campaign is officially over, and the extra money raised during the campaign will be discussed in the next Congregational Meeting.

As "Raise the Roof" ends Ascension Lutheran Church is establishing a maintenance fund. The building and

grounds for Ascension are getting older and the goal of this effort is to fund the on going maintenance that is not currently in the annual budget. Each year the Board of Trustees has busted their budget due to emerging maintenance issues and concerns. Establishing this fund will help Ascension keep up with current building codes, fund emergency maintenance, and allow for unexpected building expenses (e.g. plumbing). New envelopes will be placed in the pews to support this and other donation efforts. We want to thank everyone for their current and future support to all of our ministries.

# MINISTRY & BOARD REPORTS



The 2019-2020 school year has just begun at Ascension Lutheran Preschool. On Monday, August 19, teachers were welcomed back with a breakfast provided by the Board of Directors. Teachers used the week for staff meetings and classroom preparations. Students were welcomed back on Monday, August 26.

The preschool Fall Festival will be held October 18, 5:30—7:30 pm. It is being sponsored by Thrivent Action Team from Thrivent Financial.

Our preschool has been in operation for over 50 years. Our staff is dedicated to providing our students with a quality education based on Christian values. If you have never visited the preschool, or if you have not stopped by recently, take a few minutes to do so! You will be surprised at the enthusiasm and excitement that radiates through the halls. You will be warmly welcomed by our director, Marhel Cueva, and the terrific staff that works diligently to educate our little ones. It will be time well spent!

# Ascension LWML 2019 Quilt Drawing



It's BAAACK! The annual event you've been waiting for—that's right, the handmade quilt drawing sponsored by Ascension's Lutheran Women's (LWML) Group. Tickets go on sale Sunday, September 15 at \$10 each for a chance to win the king size (101"x104") quilt in a lovely 'Pineapple' pattern of

cream, green and rose. It is on display on the LWML pegboard in the fellowship hall.

This quilt is handmade and it was donated by our very own Kay McLeod who initiated this project by donating the first handmade quilt to Ascension's LWML (formerly known as Women with Christ) many years ago. Kay has donated many of the quilts LWML has used to raise funds for mission work and we sincerely thank her for her generous support!

Drawing will be after second service on Sunday, December 1, 2019. All proceeds from this drawing support the mission work of the Lutheran Women's Missionary League.

# BIBLE STUDY & PRAYER





# Sunday Morning Bible Study

#### Family Bible Hour:

Pastor Bestian will continue the study on the Book of Acts in the Fellowship Hall. All members & friends of Ascension are encouraged to attend!

# Men's Bible Study

**Men's Saturday Breakfast and Bible Study:** This group resumes meeting September 7 and meets every Saturday at 8:00 a.m. at the church.

**Tuesday Night :** This group meets every Tuesday at the church at 6:30 p.m. They will begin the study "Stuff They Didn't Teach Me in Sunday School" on September 3.

## Women's Bible Study

**Woman-to-Woman:** This group meets Tuesday mornings at 10:30 a.m. at the church. They resume meeting on September 10.

**Tuesday Evening:** Tuesday evening Ladies Bible Study will begin a video-based study on September 10, "The Faithful: Heroes of the Old Testament" which borrows from five different best-selling studies. Please call or text Anita Werner at (915) 494-2335 to confirm your participation and order your study book.

**Thursday Morning:** The Thursday a.m. Bible study will begin a study of James on Thursday, September 12, 9:45 a.m. at the Schlak home.

Please call the office if you need additional information for a Bible study.

Another resource available to you can be found at <u>www.lhm.org</u>. You will find the Lutheran Hour daily devotions at this website.

# PrayerTime



PrayerTime takes place every first Sunday of the month. Please join us as we each pray silently for the many prayers received in the church. You may come to the altar or pray in the pew as well. **The next PrayerTime dates are September 1 & October 6 from 5:00 - 6:00 p.m.** 



# **Books Go Where Missionaries Cannot**



LUTHERAN HERITAGE

#### Somalia, in Northeast Africa, is one of the world's most dangerous places to be a Christian.

tion identifies as Muslim, and it's not he writes, he may have found a way: hard to see why. Sharia law is enshrined in Somalia's constitution, and anyone curiosity about another religion faces who graduated from Mekane Yesus Semi- deliver Somali Bibles. We met five believdamage and physical attacks.

eliminating Christianity from Somalia, his Friday service is small, there are many spent two days in each location, during and any Somali who is found to worship converts and seekers there who would which I answered their questions about Jesus – or worse, shares the Good News very much like to receive and read the Christianity, Islam and the difference with others – risks immediate execution. Despite the dangers, a small community of Christians (probably fewer than 10,000 people of the country's 8 million inhabitants) perseveres.

#### Where does a believer turn when there are no churches?

The isolation felt by the one-in-athousand Somali Christian is significant. about 100 books every month, and he the fellowship, their conversion is genu-Though it is a dangerous proposition and some have died in the process small, secret groups of Christians have proposal and assured him that we will To help support this important work, go formed, including a Somali Lutheran start the process of smuggling as soon as to www.LHFmissions.org/Donate and Church.

guage bring answers to questions, com- of delivering three boxes of Christian

church family.

FOUNDATION their protection), a Lutheran pastor and evangelist, is passionate about sharing

LHF publications with his Somali peo-Over 99 percent of the country's popula- books inside Somalia's borders. And now, and I welcomed.

> He said that LHF books are a great Bible. source for teaching and learning the Christian faith.

permit Christian literature into their hours and in different venues, to make country, he suggested that we smuggle sure that before they are allowed to join promised to distribute them immediately. ine and they are reliable people." My church elders and I applauded his the books arrive.

With no known trained pastors inside "Two weeks ago, I met a trader of my Somalia's borders, LHF's catechisms and clan who regularly smuggles contraband Source: LHF July/August 2019 Newsletter devotions published in the Somali lan- goods, and I asked about the possibility

fort and a sense of belonging to a larger books to someone in Somalia. The trader said, 'That is not problem at all. We don't *care about the contents; just pack and* Rev. Warsame (names are changed for *seal them well, and we will take them to* anywhere you want in Somalia.'

"Brother Diric also proposed that his conple. Though he himself has suffered phys- gregation, which currently has about ical attacks and threats of death, Rev. eight members, become part of our So-Warsame is determined to share LHF mali Lutheran Church, which the elders

"Additionally, one of the elders and I "Greetings! I have traveled to Ethiopia... traveled to a camp of internally displaced who expresses doubt about Islam or even [and met] Brother Diric, a young man people to visit some converts there and to intense persecution: harassment, property nary a few years ago. He requested that ers in the camp and three in town. They LHF books be delivered to a group of told us that there are more believers and believers in Somalia. He said that even seekers in their areas and they requested Religious leaders speak openly about though the number of those who attend for teaching and Christian literature. We books by themselves, as they fear perse- between the two faiths, and I instructed cution if their Christian faith is exposed. them on how to pray and how to read the

> "Finally, in my own city, I have been teaching five new converts (three women "Since the Somali border police will not and two men), separately at different

> > select "Somalia" from the dropdown menu.

# Ascension's Newest Members



#### Kent Kaneer & Alicia Gomez

Kent is originally from Huntsville, Missouri, but moved to El Paso for a job with Customs. He is retired from law enforcement and is currently working part time in home healthcare and also working to become a home inspector in the area. His hobbies and interests include

trapshooting, fitness, gardening, coins and history. He loves the Lord and was led here by God to this very supportive and friendly church! Alicia is originally from El Paso and came back to the area because her father, siblings, nephews and nieces are here. She enjoys Zumba, aerobics and yoga classes and she also collects angel figurines.

She is an administrator for Amor Personal Assistance Service, Inc, a home healthcare business. The one thing she likes about Ascension is our Pastor.

#### **Alvin Downey**

Alvin is originally from Friona, Texas and came to Ascension Lutheran Church after searching the internet for a church. He has a BS degree in Animal Science and works as a Livestock Broker. He enjoys golf and his favorite food is steak. He especially likes the people of Ascension.



# UPCOMING EVENTS





#### September 1

5:00 pm PrayerTime

#### September 3

8:30 am Pastors' Conference

# September 5

7:00 pm Board of Elders

#### September 7

9:00 amBoard of Christian Education10:00 amBoard of Children's Ministry

#### September 8

9:00 amBoard of Christian Service11:30 amBoard of Evangelism11:30 amBoard of Youth Ministry11:45 amConfirmation Begins

## September 11

12:30 pm Board of Preschool

#### September 14

10:00 am LWML Brunch and Bible Study

#### September 19

3:00 pm
October calendar updates & newsletter articles due in office
6:30 pm
Ladies Night Out (Julio's Mexican)

## September 21

9:30 am Board of Stewardship

# September Weekly Events

- **Sun:** 8:00 & 10:30 am | Worship (Communion 1<sup>st</sup> & 3<sup>rd</sup> Sundays) 9:15 am | Family Bible Hour 11:45 am | Confirmation Class
- Tue: 10:30 am | Woman-to-Woman Bible Study 6:30 pm | Men's Bible Study 6:45 pm | Boy Scouts 7:00 pm | Women's Bible Study
- Wed: 8:45 am | Preschool Chapel 10:00 am | Weight Watchers Meeting 11:15 am | Sit & Sew 7:00 pm | Choir Rehearsal
- Thu: 9:45 am | Women's Bible Study
- Sat: 8:00 am Men's Bible Study & Breakfast

\* If you're not sure or don't have a schedule already, please call the church office at (915) 833-1009 to verify if a specific event is being held that week.



# Altar Care for September

8:00 a.m.: Mielke Family 10:30 a.m.: Barb Spott/ Cheryl Botello

# CONNECTING THE COMMUNITY TO

**Our Staff** 

Pastor: Rev. Brian R. Bestian

Director of Children's Ministry: Kim Bestian

> Director of Youth Ministry: Luz Soto

> > Preschool Director: Marhel Cueva

Music Director/Organist: Ruth Ann Ostergren

> Office Administrator: Lynn Burchfield

Tender Care Nursery Attendant: Haleigh Gonzales

> Custodian: Gail and David Regalado

#### **Our Sunday Schedule**

Worship: 8:00 & 10:30 a.m. Coffee Fellowship: 9:00 a.m. Family Bible Hour: 9:15 a.m.



Articles for the October newsletter are due **Thursday, September 19** 

