



Connections

Newsletter of Ascension Lutheran Church • El Paso, Texas • November 2019

“CONNECTING THE COMMUNITY TO CHRIST!”

Pastor's Desk

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An old English minister once said, “A grateful mind is a great mind.” He is right, and the Bible agrees. There are 138 passages in Scripture on the subject of thanksgiving. Some of them are powerfully worded. For example, St. Paul says, “And whatever you do, whether in word or deed, do it all in the name of the Lord Jesus, *giving thanks* to God the Father through Him” (Col. 3:17). The apostle also adds: “Rejoice always, pray continually, *give thanks* in all circumstances; for this is God's will for you in Christ Jesus” (1 Thess. 5:16-18).

Martin Rinkart (1586-1649) was a young German Lutheran pastor in the little village of Eilenburg, Saxony. He grew up as the son of a poor coppersmith, but felt called to the ministry. After his theological training, he began his pastoral work just as the brutal Thirty Years' War erupted between Protestants and Catholics. Much of Germany was torn up. Floods of refugees poured into the walled city of Eilenburg. It was the most desperate of times.

Eilenburg was overrun several times by different armies, and in 1637 Swedish soldiers encircled its city gates. A terrible plague and famine ravaged the town. Eight hundred homes were destroyed, and people began dying in increasing numbers. There was a tremendous strain on the pastors, who expended all their strength in preaching the gospel, caring for the sick and dying, and burying the dead. One after another, the pastors themselves fell ill and perished until Rinkart was the only pastor still alive in the town. He buried thousands of its inhabitants, including his own dear wife. Some days he conducted as many as fifty funerals.

Rinkart lived just long enough to know that the Peace of Westphalia ended the horrible war. He composed a hymn of confidence and thankfulness even under severe tribulation. His hymn was sung all over Germany to celebrate. It is still sung today around the world



and is a favorite on Thanksgiving Day—“Now Thank We All Our God.”

It's hard enough to remember to thank God when life is peaceful and good. Again, Paul reminds us to “*give thanks* in all circumstances, for this is God's will for you in Christ Jesus” (1 Thess. 5:18). How much more important is it to thank God in all circumstances! Sometimes He spoils us with His generosity, but often His best work is done when His people are suffering hardships. We win either way.

Have a blessed Thanksgiving! And following in the footsteps of Martin Rinkart, may your hearts overflow with thankfulness in good times and bad!

Now thank we all our God,
With hearts and hands and voices,
Who wondrous things has done,
In whom His world rejoices;
Who from our mothers' arms
Has blessed us on our way
With countless gifts of love
And still is ours today.

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Upcoming Events and News You Need to Know!



By Kim Bestian
Director of Children's Ministry

Thanking God for Family

The home is the basic building block for society and the world. What happens and is learned there decides how humanity will exist. It is where we learn to talk and walk. Share or not to share. Give or not to give. Care or not to care. It is where morals or no morals are observed. Cultural traditions and habits are formed. We learn about the true God who loves us and gives salvation freely, or we learn about false gods who require deeds to no avail. What is learned in the home affects all of civilization—whether or not it is beautiful and beneficial or damaging and destructive. Parents are the determining factor for the existence of humanity and the future of the world.

Perfectly designed by the Almighty and One true God, the institution of

family is created to be the footing for earthly life and blessings. Parents are directed to instruct and impress on their children what God commands for the eternal benefit of all those who follow Jesus Christ. Since the home is biblically foundational, the church can *partner with* and come alongside to help and support Christian

parents. This is found in the children's ministry program at Ascension. It wraps around relationships and partnerships. This results in the temporal *good* for our society here on earth and eternal salvation for hearts after God.

In this month of thanksgiving focus, a display of our families with young children is featured down the hall across from the kitchen by the children's ministry bulletin board. Take a look, and please keep these families in your prayers, as they are a great gift to the church and worthy of our thanks to God.

Grateful for Volunteers

The children's ministry was blessed to have giving hearts from those who so generously shared their time for the Fall Fun-Trick or Treat event held on Saturday, October 26. Special appreciation goes to Pastor Bestian, Jean DeWitt, David Epperson, Debbie Epperson, Melanie Gal-

agher, Tito Holquin, Elizabeth Krumrey, Bella Montgomery, Brett, Moravec, Judy Pozzerle, Jan Schlak, and Luz Soto. There were lots of fun costumes, yummy treats, spider game, pumpkin craft, and special devotional with song. Pictures were taken of all participating families, and Jeff Howell won the parent prize drawing. It is a great blessing when the people of God help at children's ministry events to partner with parents. Thank you to you all!

The Family Christmas Worship Service

The Family Christmas Worship Service will be held Sunday, December 15, 10:00 a.m. Parents, please be sure to bring your children to Sunday School *every* Sunday, as pictures and practice will take place each week. We hope all the children will be able to be a part of this great celebration of the birth of our Lord, Jesus Christ! *O, Christmas Tree-You Point the Way to Jesus!*



September 27, 2019

Ascension Lutheran Church
6520 Loma De Cristo Dr
El Paso, TX 79912-7301

My dear fellow redeemed:

I have been blessed to know people who experience profound, life-changing JOY when they tell others about Jesus through their sacrificial giving. I pray you are one of them. There is something intensely personal and full of meaning in a gift like the one you have joyfully given. Thank you.

St. Paul said it best: *“I thank God in all my remembrance of you, always in every prayer of mine for you all making my prayer with joy, because of your partnership in the gospel from the first day until now. And I am sure of this, that he who began a good work in you will bring it to completion at the day of Jesus Christ.”* (Philippians 1:3-6, ESV)

Please let me know if there is anything we can do to serve you better.

In service to our Lord, Jesus Christ,

Pastor Matthew C. Harrison
President, The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod

THE LUTHERAN CHURCH—MISSOURI SYNOD
1333 S. KIRKWOOD ROAD • ST. LOUIS, MO 63122-7295
888-930-4438 • www.lcms.org

RECEIPT FOR YOUR RECORDS

DATE: 9/24/2019

Ascension Lutheran Church
6520 Loma De Cristo Dr
El Paso, TX 79912-7301

We thank God for you and your gift to The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod of: **\$1,080.00**

It will be used in support of: **Christ's Care for Children Kenya-Child Sponsorships**

Receipt Number: **833044**

Your gift is tax deductible as allowed by law. You have received no goods or services in exchange for this gift, other than intangible religious benefits.
Please consult your attorney or a financial advisor when using this receipt to prepare your income taxes.



Where is Your Focus?

So many of you are enjoying having a driver's license, or perhaps are excited about getting your driver's license or permit. Or maybe you're anxiously looking forward to learning to drive in a year or two. Driving is something many teenagers are looking forward to as it is the first step to independence. One thing you'll hear over and over again, from your parents or a driving instructor, is to always keep your eyes on the road.

It's going to be said so many times to you—keep your eyes on the road. See, wherever your eyes are focused, that's where your car will go. This advice doesn't just lend itself for driving though. When you're walking down the hallways of your school, you always need to keep your eyes where you're going (and not on the phone in your hand). When you go through life, you keep your eyes on your goals or you loose focus.

Even in your faith, you need to keep your eyes on Jesus, or you'll drown under the struggles and temptations of the world. This is so important to remember daily, because there's so much around us vying for our attention. When we lose our focus, we risk losing what's most important—our relationship with our Savior.

Shortly before dawn Jesus went out to them, walking on the lake. When the disciples saw Him walking on the lake, they were terrified. "It's a ghost," they said, and cried out in fear. But Jesus immediately said to them: "Take courage! It is I. Don't be afraid."

"Lord, if it's You," Peter replied, "Tell me to come to You on the water."

"Come," he said.

Then Peter got down out of the boat, walked on the water and came toward Jesus. But when he saw the wind, he was afraid and, beginning to sink, cried out, "Lord, save me!"

Immediately Jesus reached out His hand and caught him, "You of little faith," he said, "Why did you doubt?"

Matthew 14:25-31

Many times in life, we will encounter situations where we have a choice to make—put our focus on Jesus Christ or on our own abilities. I myself learned recently what happens when our focus stays on Jesus throughout a situation that is meant to distract you.

Despite the disappointment that resulted, I encountered God's love and awesomeness when He's sought after, time and again, throughout the day. I'll tell you, though, it isn't easy. Our own desires, dreams, and hopes when we think we're close to getting something we have wanted forever can take our eyes off our Savior. Through the help of the Holy Spirit, I continuously sought out God's will every time I felt myself losing focus.

In the end, I didn't get what I wanted, but I learned something amazing—there is never any regret in trusting God's plan over your own, even when you don't get what you want. As long as you keep your focus on what truly matters—Jesus your Savior, your Best Friend, your One True Love—God will continuously carry you, shelter you, and protect you.

Everyday, seek God's help to keep your focus on Jesus so your life can go down the path God has planned for you. Always, no matter what comes your way, keep your eyes on Jesus.



November 2019 Youth Happenings

Ascension Family!

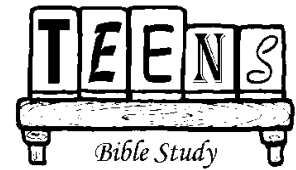
You are invited to join the youth for a

Day of Kind Service at Ysleta Lutheran Mission

Meet at the YLM campus on Saturday, November 30 by 7:30 am to help distribute food to families

Everyone is welcomed to join us.

If interested, you can also help on Friday, November 29, from 9-11 am to put together food baskets



Sundays

9:15 -10:15 AM

Continue

The Case for Christ

November 3

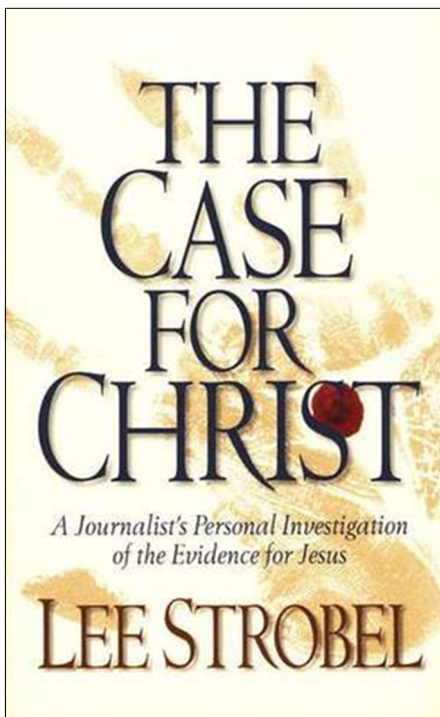
(Adult Bible Class)

November 10

November 17

November 24

All junior and senior youth will be meeting downstairs in the YOUTH ROOM for Sunday Morning Bible Study



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 meets 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-mail: luzsoto07@gmail.com



Board of Christian Education Thank You

Dear Board of Christian Education and members of Ascension Lutheran Church,

I hope this letter finds you all well and in high spirits! What a busy and wonderful year this has been so far! I am currently finishing up my last semester at Concordia University Texas where I will be receiving my degree in Secondary Education, History, and also receiving my Lutheran Teacher Diploma. I am finishing strong with a 3.9 GPA and graduating with honors (Magna cum Laude).

These past few years studying education, history, and religion at Concordia University Texas in Austin, have been full of all kinds of amazing experiences! This is my final semester of schooling as I complete my two student teaching placements in Houston. My first student teaching placement was at Pearland High School in which I taught 10th grade AP European history! During my time there, it just so happened that the curriculum units that needed to be covered were over the Reformation and the Religious Wars; how awesome is God's timing! I had a blast being able to teach the kids about Martin Luther fighting the good fight while working within the frame of a public-school setting! I

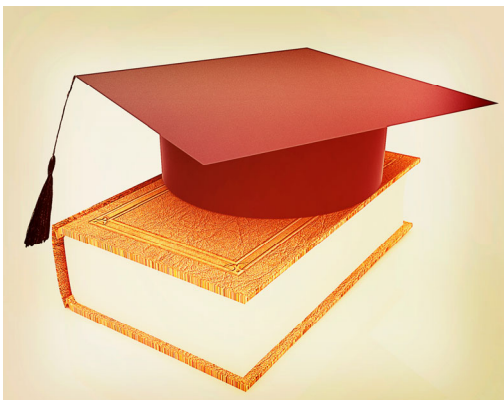
just started my second student teaching placement at Saint Mark's Lutheran Church's middle school. I am currently teaching Religion, United States History, Civics, Texas History, and Engineering to 7th and 8th graders. In the upcoming weeks I am going to be accompanying the 7th grade Texas history class on a 3-day field trip to the Alamo in San Antonio and also the Bullock Texas History Museum in Austin where I have been able to spend countless hours in admiration studying the amazing history of our great state these past few years in my free time outside of class. As I finish up my last few weeks of my final semester before my graduation in December, I wanted to take a moment to write you all this letter.

Words cannot begin to describe the amount of gratitude I have towards you for financially supporting my education. Thank you from the bottom of my heart for being so generous. Due to your help and funding for my education I have successfully finished another school semester with straight A's, and also successfully got straight A's in my summer courses before I began my student teaching this semester. I thank God for giving you all such a generous heart and the means to help others.

You all are an outstanding example of Christian love and leadership. This is an exciting time for me as I am about to embark on my vocation after my many years of schooling that have prepared me for this day. I truly cannot wait to finish my last placement this semester at Concordia University and embark on my vocation as a history teacher in our Lutheran schools. They are in dire need of more educators! I praise God for putting you all in my life and helping me along the way. It has been a very long and trying journey, but I have persevered, and I am so glad because it is so worth it! Due to your generosity you have taken some of the financial burden off of my shoulders. I have been working very hard during my breaks off from my studies doing construction work to pay for my education. Your gifts of love have been greatly appreciated. Thank you all again so much. I keep the Ascension family in my daily prayers (as I hope you all will keep me in yours as I embark on this new journey in life)! Please know that you all mean the world to me! I am looking forward to coming home to visit and seeing you all again! God's richest blessings!

**Your brother in Christ,
Isaak Bestian**

Graduation Recognition



Professional Church Worker's Scholarship Fund for the past few years. Isaak is graduating from Concor-

dia University-Texas on December 7, 2019, with his Lutheran Teacher Diploma (LTD). We are proud and thankful to God for allowing one of our *sons of the congregation* to be called into full-time church work for the furthering of the Gospel. We know it is very expensive to attend LCMS Concordia Universities. As a result, many called professional church workers incur a sizable debt by the time they graduate, as in Isaak's case. We invite those at Ascension, who would like to give a card and/or monetary gift to Isaak, to place it in a designated box anytime from November 17 through December 1. They will be delivered to Isaak at his graduation. Thank you! May we continue to pray for our church workers, both those in the field and those preparing for the work of the Lord in this service.



Christmas Book Sale

The Board of Christian Education will hold their annual Christmas Book Sale on Sunday, November 17, and Sunday, November 24. Books for children, youth and adults will be available for purchase. Please peruse your Christmas Gift List and stop by the display in the Narthex to select that perfect gift for friends and family. You may even find a book that you might enjoy. Books may be purchased with cash or by check drawn payable to Ascension Lutheran Church placing the words "Book Sale" on the memo line. We look forward to seeing you at the sale!



Thank You from Your Pastor & Staff

Thank you to the Ascension family for the special pastor and staff recognition on Sunday, October 20. Your kind words, along with the cake, gifts and cards were greatly appreciated!

³I thank my God every time I remember you. ⁴In all my prayers for all of you, I always pray with joy ⁵because of your partnership in the gospel from the first day until now, ⁶being confident of this, that he who began a good work in you will carry it on to completion until the day of Christ Jesus.

—Philippians 1:3-6



LWML 2019 Quilt Drawing



Tick, tock time is running out to buy your tickets to have a chance to win the beautiful king size quilt on display on the LWML peg board in the fellowship hall. This quilt is handmade and 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!

The quilt is king size (101" x 104") in a lovely 'Pineapple' pattern of cream, green and rose. Tickets are \$10 each and can be purchased from any LWML

member. 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.

November Preschool News

Fall has kicked off with a bang at the preschool! The Fall Fest was another big success for our students and their families. Everyone had a terrific time. A heartfelt "thank you" to **Gretchen Schmaltz** for her efforts in obtaining funds from Thrivent to help absorb some of the costs incurred for the event. We are most grateful for her commitment to the preschool.

The school will be closed on November 11 in observance of Veteran's Day. Upon returning from the day off, students will enjoy another "bike day" on November 15. This is always a favorite activity of the children as they wheel around the parking lot on their bicycles or tricycles. And what better weather they will have to be outdoors!

Thanksgiving is a special time of year for all of us, in-

cluding our staff and students. School will be closed for fall break from November 25 – 29. When they return, the students will be preparing for the various Christmas activities that always are filled with excitement and bring a smile to the children.



Just a reminder, you are always welcome to stop by and visit the preschool to see what is happening in the classrooms and share in the joy of a Christian environment.

Treasurer's Report



Finance Update

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 copy of the minutes.

Treasurer's Report: 2019 Income & Expense Statement [August]					
		August	YTD	Budget	
Income:	Offerings	\$ 22,941.13	\$ 192,528.50	\$ 200,200.00	
	Other Income	\$ 6,723.92	\$ 38,303.37	\$ 34,333.28	
	Total	\$ 29,665.05	\$ 230,831.87	\$ 234,533.28	
Expense:		\$ 29,897.53	\$ 252,470.89	\$ (22,031.52)	
Raise The Roof					
	Donations	\$ 6,141.00	\$ 41,581.46		
	Total 2017-2018		\$ 135,184.30		



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 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. Their study is called "Stuff They Didn't Teach Me in Sunday School."

Women's Bible Study

Woman-to-Woman: This group meets Tuesday mornings at 10:00 a.m. at the church.

Tuesday Evening: This women's Bible study will meet again in the new year. Please call or text Anita Werner at (915) 494-2335 with any questions.

Thursday Morning: The Thursday a.m. Bible study group is doing a study of James. They meet at 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 www.lhm.org.

You will find the Lutheran Hour daily devotions at this website.

PrayerTime



PrayerTime takes place on the first Sunday of each month. Please join us as we silently pray for the many prayers received in the church. You may come to the altar or pray in the pew as well. **Next PrayerTime dates are: November 3 & December 1 from 5:00 - 6:00 p.m.**



Grant Provides Emergency Assistance for Lutherans in Malawi

By Shara Osiro



The 2018 growing season was off to a good start in Malawi. But as the maize grew to knee height, an infestation of fall armyworms and stalk borers swept through much of the African country, decimating crops. The poor harvests affected thousands of Malawians, including members of the Confessional Lutheran Church—Malawi Synod (CLCMS). The Rev. Davis Wowa, president of the CLCMS, visited his congregations in late 2018 and saw the scarcity that was affecting pastors and many of the 2,050 Lutherans around the country.

Wowa reached out to The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod (LCMS) for help, and the Synod responded to the crisis with a \$15,833 grant to help provide food to starving people.

In January, the CLCMS received the grant and purchased 970 so-kilogram bags of maize—20 more bags than anticipated, thanks to lower-than-expected transportation costs.

Wowa and his fellow pastors and church leaders distributed the maize throughout the CLCMS' nine congregations. "Doing it this way will make it open so that all is carried [out] in a transparent manner and everyone would see that things are done to the glory of God," Wowa said.

The church members who received the maize expressed their joy through song and dance. Rather than spending all day searching for food and still coming up short, they were able to feed their families and begin working in their gardens to prepare for the next harvest.

Thanks be to God, this year's rainfall has reduced the number of pests in the fields. In addition, the Malawian Lutherans are implementing lessons learned from several agricultural missionaries from the LCMS who have visited in recent years. These new methods have helped address the root of the problem, even as rain has given their gardens a head start.

"We live by their lessons. We are thankful for the agricultural missionaries and the LCMS East Africa field office for sending them to Malawi," Wowa said.

Source: "Lutherans Engage" magazine, Fall 2019

Shara Osiro is an LCMS missionary and communication specialist for the Africa region. Learn more at international.lcms.org/africa



Saturday, November 2

10:00 am Board of Children's Ministry

Sunday, November 3 —All Saints' Sunday

11:30 am Board of Evangelism
11:30 am Board of Youth Ministry
5:00 pm PrayerTime

Tuesday, November 5

8:30 am Pastors' Conference

Thursday, November 7

12:30 pm Board of Preschool
7:00 pm Board of Elders

Saturday, November 9

10:00 am LWML Brunch & Bible Study

Sunday, November 10—Veteran's Day Sunday

Olive Wood Carving Sale
9:00 am Board of Christian Service

Monday, November 11—Veteran's Day

Church Office & Preschool Closed

Saturday, November 16

9:00 am Board of Christian Education
9:30 am Board of Stewardship

Sunday, November 17

Christmas Book Sale Begins
12:00 pm Congregational Meeting

Tuesday, November 19

7:00 pm Church Council Meeting

Thursday, November 21

3:00 pm Dec. calendar updates & newsletter articles due in office
6:30 pm Ladies Night Out (Como's Italian)

Sunday, November 24—Christ the King Sunday

Christmas Book Sale

Monday, November 25

Preschool Thanksgiving Break (Nov25 - 29)

Wednesday, November 27

7:00 pm Thanksgiving Eve Service –
Food Collection

Thursday, November 28—Thanksgiving

Saturday, November 30

7:30 am YLM Food Distribution

November Weekly Events

- Sun:** 8:00 & 10:30 am | Worship (Communion 1st & 3rd Sundays)
9:15 am | Family Bible Hour
11:45 am | Confirmation Class
11:45 am | Liturgical Dance Practice
- Tue:** 10:00 am | Woman-to-Woman Bible Study
6:30 pm | Men's Bible Study
6:45 pm | Boy Scouts
- 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.*



November Altar Care

8:00 a.m.: Mariann Porter
10:30 a.m.: Melendez Family/
Barb Spott/Ordella Uhde

CONNECTING THE COMMUNITY TO
CHRIST!

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:

Lorena Rodriguez

Our Sunday Schedule

Worship: 8:00 & 10:30 a.m.

Coffee Fellowship: 9:00 a.m.

Family Bible Hour: 9:15 a.m.

