



# Connections

Newsletter of Ascension Lutheran Church • El Paso, Texas • January 2020

## “CONNECTING THE COMMUNITY TO CHRIST!”

### Pastor's Desk

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**T**he moment we unwrap the last Christmas present under the tree, we quickly turn our attention to the new year—and everything we're going to change about our lives to improve them. Attend Bible class. Eat healthier. Lose excess pounds. Exercise more. Get ample sleep. Stress less. Stop judging others. Clean the cat's litter box more often. Etc.

Realistically, we probably won't keep 95% of our resolutions. (I didn't keep my office desk clutter-free like I resolved to do last year.) Yet that doesn't keep us from trying to improve our situations and ourselves.

Did you know that God makes resolutions every year too—for *our sake*? And He keeps them 100% of the time! Granted, His have been the same for thousands of years because He never changes. Still, I thought this would be a good time to review all the resolutions God makes—and maybe those will help you keep your resolutions in perspective.

First, **I will be with you.** Writing through Isaiah, God promises, *“Do not fear, for I have redeemed you; I have summoned you by name; you are Mine. When you pass through the waters, I will be with you; and when you pass through the rivers, they will not sweep over you. When you walk through the fire, you will not be burned; the flames will not set you ablaze. For I am the LORD your God, the Holy One of Israel, your Savior”* (Is. 43:1-3). Whatever the *“waters, rivers, and fires”* you face this year, God will be with you to deliver you. Your troubles won't separate you from Him—because you are His beloved and baptized child.

Second, **I will help you.** The psalmist pens, *“But You, God, see the trouble of the afflicted; You consider their grief and take it in hand. The victims commit themselves to You; You are the helper of the fatherless”* (Ps. 10:14). God isn't some disinterested, distant divine being in the sky. He is the Father. Better yet, He is *your* Father. He is committed to you—today, tomorrow, your whole life, and then for eternity.

Third, **I will forget your sins.** God reminds us, *“I, yes I, am He who blots out your rebellious deeds for My own sake, and I will not remem-*

*ber your sins”* (Is. 43:25).

Maybe last year you resolved not to drink too much, to stop yelling

at the kids, to avoid fights on social media about politics. But, as usual, that didn't go so well. God says those sins aren't just brushed off with an “it's okay” (because sin isn't okay), but thanks to Jesus, they are wiped away and completely forgotten. Divine deliberate amnesia!

Fourth, **I will give you rest.** Jesus promises, *“Come to Me all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest. Take My yoke upon you and learn from Me, because I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls”* (Matt. 11:28-29). You make resolutions because you want your days to go better. I hate to be a spoiler, but we all know that throughout this year we will have bad days. That's okay. God is there with gentleness for your weariness.

Finally, **I will be there for you.** God resolves, *“And surely I am with you always until the end of the age”* (Matt. 28:20). I know this is pretty much a repeat of the first point, but—if you're like me—it's so easy to forget that we're not alone. Whatever happens to you in 2020, God is with you. He isn't going anywhere.

Now, why am I so confident God will keep every one of these resolutions? Because Jesus had a resolution too: *“As the time approached for Him to be taken up to heaven, Jesus resolutely set out for Jerusalem”* (Luke 9:51). Jesus resolved to go to the place where He would absorb the Father's wrath for your sin and where He would take your punishment in your place. Because He did that—and then came back to life, defeating death forever—your greatest problem has been overcome. God is thrilled to bless you, to act on your behalf, to rejoice over you, and to keep every single one of His resolutions to you. And that truth is what will make 2020—no matter what happens—a happy New Year! ✝



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## Oh, Worship the King!



Oh, worship the King! And that is what we did on December 15 at the Family Christmas Worship Service! Many hours had gone into the planning and preparing for this adoration of God. The participants came to worship for presenting reverent gifts of praise, and thanksgiving for God's Son, Jesus Christ, our Savior. It was an honorable privilege to organize, practice, and get ready in devotion to our heavenly Father. The purpose for this creative worship experience was to make a lasting and deep impression on hearts for God by expressing His great love for us through the witness of the children and youth of Ascension. All this was done to glorify Him! We pray your spirit was lifted in devotion to the One who came to save us from our sins, and rescue us from the grip of eternal damnation—the original punishment given in the Garden of Eden. Our Christmas trees are great reminders, as they grow upwards like an arrow pointing us to Jesus!

Many faithful people came together as the body of Christ to help in all sorts of areas to make this worship experience possible. It was a real JOY to work as partners in the Gospel! So many helped as they saw needs and jumped right in to be of service. Thanksgiving to God for peaceful unity in planning, working, presenting, and all the clean-up done by these faithful servants of Ascension!





## Lap Quilts Donated to Wounded Warrior Project



Congratulations to our sewers! 27 lap quilts were completed and donated to "Wounded Warriors." They were so happy to receive the quilts, as the picture shows. There are more pictures of the "Wounded Warriors" with their quilt on the LWML bulletin board, so please take a minute to look at them.

This project would not have been possible if it had not been for Gretchen Schmalz and her Thrivent Dollars. We were able to purchase fabric and batting to make the lap quilts. Prayerfully,

we will be able to continue this project and start again in February.

To make this project successful we need people to cut fabric, people to sew the tops together, people to quilt the layer together, and people to finance the project.

If you cannot cut or sew, you can simply write a check to Ascension with "soldier quilts" in the memo. If you have any questions, please call Mary Rosenbaum at (915) 219-7156

## Stewardship Minute—A New Year, New Opportunities

Each new day brings promise of a new start. For many, the start of a new week is the time to begin that diet, get serious about exercising, or forego TV viewing. For a vast majority, though, there's something especially motivating and invigorating about seeing the JANUARY calendar on the wall. This is the year we'll accomplish great things.

God doesn't necessarily call us to do great things, however. He asks that we be trustworthy in small things (Luke 16:10-11). To that end He gives us gifts to use to build up the Body of Christ and to reach out to the lost.

Some of us have many gifts. People like Michelangelo—painter, sculptor, and poet—and Thomas Jefferson—architect, statesman, and scientific farmer—come to mind. God, the Giver of gifts, knows that the number of gifts each of us has varies. Jesus told the Parable of the Talents pointing out this fact and teaching us that success lies in using what we've been given, not in having the greatest amount.

Our gifts also differ in degree. There are many sculptors but few, if any, compare to Michelangelo. Yet their art can bring satisfaction and inspiration to others. You may not be able to sing opera, but you can sing God's praises. You may not be a great orator, but you can witness to



the love and grace of God in Christ. You may not be a mechanic, but you can provide transportation for someone needing to get to an appointment or to church.

That's why God gives us gifts and abilities—that we may be equipped to serve others. The start of a new year offers us an opportune time to assess those gifts and see how we can use them for God's glory and the good of His people. The motivation to do this comes from the same One Who gave the gifts! Just as He was motivated by love for us to give us—not just our gifts—but His greatest gift, His Son, so we are motivated by love for Him to serve those He calls us to serve.



## What Is God's Will?

Have you ever stopped to think, really think, about what God's will for your life is?

Maybe you have wondered if His will for your career aligns with your future plans. Or maybe you wonder if His will includes a spouse and kids. Or maybe you want to know if God's will include success, material gains, or travel.

Many times, we can get bogged down by the many things we want and what God's will might be. We wonder what we'll have to give up, or what we'll need to change when God makes His will known to us. To try to know God's will for us and our lives becomes an impossible mathematical problem where the odds of us getting it right seem stacked against us.

It becomes this huge, overwhelming task to give our lives over to God's will, but what if I told you His will for your life can be boiled down to 3 simple things?

*"Rejoice always, pray continuously, give thanks in every circumstance, this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you."* **1 Thessalonians 5:16-18**

We let all the possibilities of what we would have to give up—careers, relationships, opportunities—become so much noise we can't see the simplicity of God's will. We start thinking on all the things we have to give up—our plans, our dreams, our wants and desires. It just clouds our minds and keeps us from doing the will of God, which is so simple!

**Rejoice always.**

**Pray continuously.**

**Give thanks in all circumstances.**

This, my friends, is the simple Formula of God's Will, and it's what we need to do as He guides us through the path He's chosen for us. In everything we do, as we fulfill or change dreams, we simply have to remember those three things.



**Rejoice ALWAYS.**

**Pray CONTINUOUSLY.**

**Give THANKS in ALL circumstances.**

As we go about learning, growing, seeking Him in His Word, we do His will by rejoicing always, praying continuously, and giving thanks in all circumstances.

This is especially true during the circumstances when we give up our "okay" plans for God's "*OH WOW*" plans, because, in the end, His Will is good and perfect and so pleasing!



# January 2020 Youth Happenings

## Thank You to Ascension's Youth!

On 2019 Advent Wednesdays, we were able to bless five of our homebound brothers and sisters in Christ with warm fleece blankets tied by our Ascension Youth.

Again ... THANK YOU!

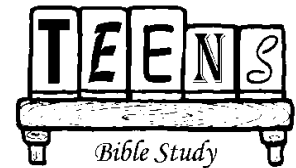
## Youth Winter Fun Day!

Snow Tubing at Ruidoso Winter Park  
February 1, 2020

(Be at Ascension's Parking Lot at 7:45 a.m. to Carpool)

\$15 per person for All Day Fun  
Bring Extra \$\$ for Snacks

Get your release form from Luz!



Sundays

9:15 -10:15 AM

Continue

*The Case for Christ*

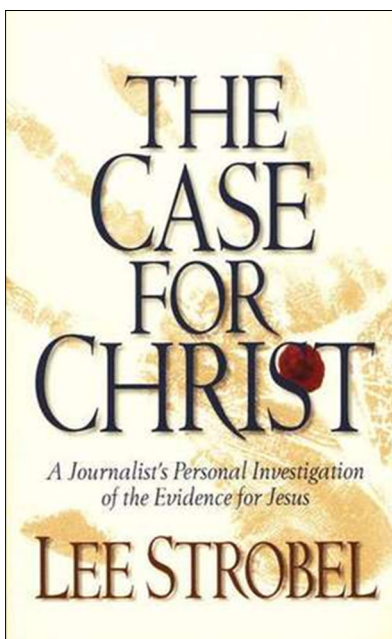
**January 5**

**January 12**

**January 19**

**January 26**

**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.

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





## January Preschool News

Happy New Year from Ascension Preschool! Our teachers return on Tuesday, January 7 for a half day and then students will be back at school on Wednesday, January 8. There is no school on Monday, January 20 in observance of Martin Luther King, Jr. Day. In-house registration will begin for all students on Tuesday, January 21.

If you have any questions about our preschool, please contact our director, Marhel Cueva at (915) 833-4849.



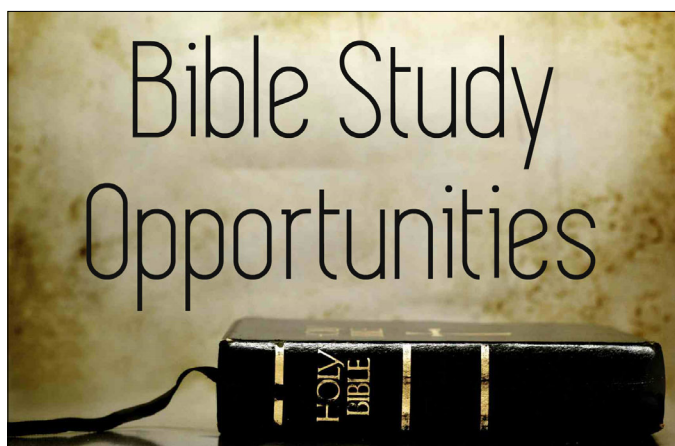
## Treasurer's Report



### 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 [November]					
		November	YTD	Budget	
<b>Income:</b>	Offerings	\$ 31,035.98	\$ 270,712.30	\$ 275,275.00	
	Other Income	\$ 6,155.77	\$ 54,608.64	\$ 45,711.01	
	<b>Total</b>	<b>\$ 37,191.75</b>	<b>\$ 325,320.94</b>	<b>\$ 320,986.01</b>	
<b>Expense:</b>		<b>\$ 32,027.61</b>	<b>\$ 348,180.56</b>	<b>\$ 352,856.95</b>	
	<b>Raise The Roof</b>				
	Donations		\$ 44,318.46		
	Total 2017-2018		\$ 135,184.30		
	<b>Building Maintenance</b>	\$ 1,555.00	\$ 1,555.00		
	<b>Pay Down Debt</b>	\$ 1,980.00	\$ 1,980.00		



## 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 starting again on January 11.

**Tuesday Night:** This group meets every Tuesday at the church at 6:30 p.m. starting again on January 7. 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 starting again on January 14.

**Tuesday Evening:** The women's Bible study will meet again starting again on January 21. 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 starting again on January 9.

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](http://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: January 5 & February 9 from 5:00 - 6:00 p.m.**



## A Harvest of Life: Celebrating Christmas Conventions



Receiving the blessing at Christmas Convention in Gbintiri, Ghana.

The harvest is just past ... Christmas is just ahead ... After the harvest is stored, Komba Lutherans in Ghana relax and anticipate informal Christmas gatherings called conventions. These conventions last several days and extend almost around the clock. Greetings, devotions, meals, singing, and dancing are all important to the bonding experience and repeated daily.

Reading God's Word is an important part of Christmas conventions. The Word is read not just once, but many times throughout several days. Readers of different ages come from different towns. As each reader bends to take the microphone, the atmosphere becomes silent. The Word is read in Komba, a language they can all understand. The reader begins, "The book of John, chapter 1: 'The Word became flesh ...'"

Missionary Michael Erslund says, "The act of God's Words being spoken in our lives is a mystery when we stop and think about what is happening. God uses the Holy Spirit to work through His Word to bring faith and life to the hearers."

"We often don't know how different people are affected by the Scripture as it is read in public areas. I wonder what my Muslim friend thinks when he listens, walking over to the convention from his motorcycle shop," Michael says.

Those spoken words also reach others, who practice local traditional religions, as they sell their goods to the gathered crowd. Michael reflects, "Will it make a difference to them?"

"For my Christian family," Michael declares, "the words bring life!" Believers again hear spoken words that bring an unseen harvest of hope.

*Source: "The Messenger" newsletter by Lutheran Bible Translators*





# January

## At-a-Glance Church Calendar of Events

**Sun, Jan 5 | Epiphany Sunday**  
11:30 am Board of Youth Ministry  
5:00 pm PrayerTime

**Tue, Jan 7**  
8:30 am Pastors' Conference

**Wed, Jan 8**  
12:15 pm Board of Preschool

**Thu, Jan 9**  
7:00 pm Board of Elders

**Sat, Jan 11**  
9:00 am Board of Christian Education  
9:00 am Take down Christmas Decorations  
10:00 am Board of Children's Ministry  
10:00 am LWML Brunch & Bible Study

**Sun, Jan 12**  
9:00 am Board of Christian Service  
11:30 am Board of Evangelism

**Tue, Jan 14**  
7:00 pm Church Council Meeting

**Thu, Jan 16**  
6:30 pm Ladies' Night Out (P.F. Chang's)

**Sat, Jan 18**  
9:30 am Board of Stewardship

**Thu, Jan 23**  
3:00 pm Feb. newsletter & calendar updates  
due in office

### January 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:** 10:00 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.*

# January Serving Schedule

## Greeters

## Readers

	8:00	10:30		8:00	10:30
Sun, Jan 5	Porter	Burchfield		Mike Radach	Lynn Burchfield
Sun, Jan 12	Kathy Kiphart	Volunteer		Kelley Walker	Lynn Burchfield
Sun, Jan 19	Moore	Burchfield		Lauren Hannemann	Ryden Richardson
Sun, Jan 26	Meitler	Soto		Kristal Wade	Jan Schlak

## Acolytes

## Elders

	8:00	10:30		8:00	10:30
Sun, Jan 5	Mary Witty	Emma Morales		Dave E./Wiegert	Dave T./Richardson
Sun, Jan 12	Stephen Kaiser	Bella Montgomery		Witty	Dave T.
Sun, Jan 19	Tatum Walker	Emma Morales		Dave E./Mielke	Richardson/Witty
Sun, Jan 26	Haley Walker	Kyle Kelly		Dave E.	Burchfield

## Trustees

## Ushers

	8:00	10:30		8:00	10:30
Sun, Jan 5	Radach	Downey		Lichon/Porter	Morales/Wilmeth
Sun, Jan 12	Wiegert	Kaiser		Radach/Switzer	B. Voge, D. Voge
Sun, Jan 19	Kaneer	Behl/Werner		DeWitt/Wade	B. Voge, D. Voge
Sun, Jan 26	Volunteer	Werner		Wiegert/Porter	Maki

## Instructions for When to Arrive When Serving

### Greeters:

Please arrive 20 minutes before service begins in order to greet those who arrive early.

### Readers:

Please arrive 10 minutes before service so the Elder of the Day knows you are present.

### Acolytes:

Please arrive 15 minutes before service begins in order to robe up and light the candles in a timely manner.

### Elders:

Please arrive 20 minutes before service begins in order to make sure all those who serve are present.

### Ushers:

Please arrive 20 minutes before service begins to hand out service folders.

### Trustees:

Please arrive early enough to open church doors.

*These are just reminders that are in addition to the checklist items for each group.*

**Thank you everyone for your service to our Lord!**



**Jeff Howell  
John Witty**

*We need more assistance in this ministry! Please contact the office if you could help even just once a month.*



**January Altar Care**

**8:00 am: Radach/Meitler**  
**10:30 am: Spott/Banister**

# 2020 Daily Bible Reading Plan

Is it time to read your Bible through from cover to cover? Why not do it? Set aside just ten minutes each morning before going to work. Make it a promise to yourself. We offer this Bible reading schedule to follow for 2020.



## Tips on Reading the Bible Daily

1. Start reading the Bible today—there is no better time, and there's no reason to wait.
2. Set aside a specific time each day. Set your schedule and then stick to it. Mornings are great, but feel free to use any time that works consistently for you.
3. Read the Bible for the sake of learning, not simply to accomplish your next reading. Highlight verses, take notes and bookmark. Say a short prayer to God before you begin, asking the Holy Spirit to give you wisdom and understanding, then be refreshed by the words you read!

## January

- 1 Genesis 1-2; Matthew 1
- 2 Genesis 3-5; Matthew 2
- 3 Genesis 6-8; Matthew 3
- 4 Genesis 9-11; Matthew 4
- 5 Genesis 12-14; Matthew 5:1-26
- 6 Genesis 15-17; Matthew 5:27-48
- 7 Genesis 18-19; Matthew 6
- 8 Genesis 20-22; Matthew 7
- 9 Genesis 23-24; Matthew 8
- 10 Genesis 25-26; Matthew 9:1-17
- 11 Genesis 27-28; Matthew 9:18-38
- 12 Genesis 29-30; Matthew 10:1-23
- 13 Genesis 31-32; Matthew 10:24-42
- 14 Genesis 33-35; Matthew 11
- 15 Genesis 36-37; Matthew 12:1-21
- 16 Genesis 38-40; Matthew 12:22-50
- 17 Genesis 41; Matthew 13:1-32
- 18 Genesis 42-43; Matthew 13:33-58
- 19 Genesis 44-45; Matthew 14:1-21
- 20 Genesis 46-48; Matthew 14:22-36
- 21 Genesis 49-50; Matthew 15:1-20
- 22 Exodus 1-3; Matthew 15:21-39
- 23 Exodus 4-6; Matthew 16
- 24 Exodus 7-8; Matthew 17
- 25 Exodus 9-10; Matthew 18:1-20

- 26 Exodus 11-12; Matthew 18:21-35
- 27 Exodus 13-15; Matthew 19:1-15
- 28 Exodus 16-18; Matthew 19:16-30
- 29 Exodus 19-21; Matthew 20:1-16
- 30 Exodus 22-24; Matthew 20:17-34
- 31 Exodus 25-26; Matthew 21:1-22



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.