



Pastor Tim’s Council Report- November 2022

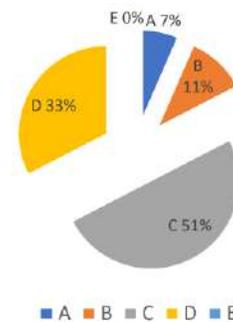
Grace and peace to you my family in Christ.

A blessed November to you. As I write this, I am grateful for the steady gentle rain that is falling outside my window. It feels like it’s been a long time since our parched land has had a sip of water. May this rain be a foretaste of a wet winter.

As you will see in our attendance reports in the Newsletter, the in-person worship numbers seem to be slowly increasing. The numbers fluctuate each week but overtime the average seems to be steadily coming up. I hope this is in part due to our efforts to reach out to people and encourage them to return. Each week I seem to talk with at least one person who hasn’t been to church in a long time and is grateful to be back. To counter this, the online views seem to be slowly going down. It would be nice if both numbers went up but if I had to choose one, it would be the in-person numbers. As we learned through the worship sermon series worshipping together in person is the fuller experience of worship for so many reasons. As a staff, worship leadership team, and congregation we need to continue to focus on this and encourage people to gather for worship. In an online meeting I had recently with about 50 ELCA senior pastors around the country, I learned that almost all churches were heavily affected by drops in attendance and that the return to worship continues to be slow. In fact, we are just above average, when it comes to comparing ourselves with the pre-pandemic worship statistics:

What is your current percentage of worship compared to your pre-COVID average attendance?

- A. Less than a third
 - B. 33%-50%
 - C. 50%-66%
 - D. 66%-100%
 - E. Over 100%
- * Some respondents selected more than one answer



Living into Pastor Steve’s new half time position is taking a bit of transition time. As he mentioned in his October report, he continues to work more hours than we are paying him to work. While it is hard to measure what a half-time pastoral position is, I will be in conversation with him about figuring out hours and boundaries. I don’t want to create an expectation for him to work more than what he is called to work.

While I am encouraged by the more recent reporting of giving, I am aware that we, at our June congregational meeting, challenged the congregation to increase giving by 3% this year. I am

convicted that we need to do more to communicate our goal to the congregation. I will be working with our Generosity Team to communicate this along with the general appeal to commit to yearly giving.

I am looking forward to December's worship schedule. We will be adding the Hanging of the Green event (not a worship service), our Wednesday evening Advent services and of course our Christmas Eve and Christmas day services. Our Hanging of the Green will once again attempt to incorporate our school families. We will be using the snow play event (at 4pm) to encourage school families to come and check out the church at 5pm. It will be an experiment. The risk is that the school families don't show up and or that the church folks don't like the new format. Please pray that things go well.

We are now in the process of transitioning our Worship Vision Team to a Worship Committee (though we may not use the term "Committee"). I am grateful for the help of the WVT. They helped produce the worship tenets that I previously talked about. It is now one the WC to use those Tenets to help deep the worship experience.

Its time to begin the process of finding leaders for next year's open positions, also known as the nominating process. Because we have high standards for our leadership here at Ascension, this can be a delicate and drawn-out process. I am grateful to work with Carrie Leonard this year as in her role as Immediate Past President and have ask her to create a better, more systematic process than we have used in the past. I would ask for your prayers as God calls our next leadership.

Yours in Christ,

Pastor Tim

Church Council Report – Pastor Steve Herder – Nov. 9, 2022

Like last month's report, I'll begin by sharing memories of our worship services. I really enjoyed this Sunday when Chris and Arty Newmark were both baptized by Pastor Julie. And Arty's little friend, Jackson Winfrey, was "reading" the Bible!



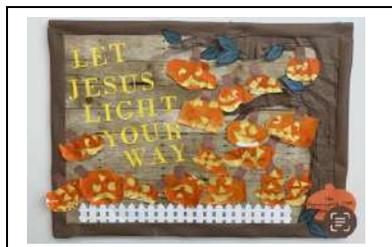
Thanks to our Global Ministries Team, our Community Concerns Team, and our women's ministries with the LWR quilts, for sharing God's blessings with so many people near and far. October each year is a big month for us with these ministries. We thank Louise Evenson for leading the LWR kit project, Jan Burgert for leading the quilt ministry, and Jessica Placas-Hengst for leading the Project Response Drive for our Food Pantry! Each of these ministries are greatly appreciated by our congregation, community, and around the world.

I'll share examples from two other worship experiences this month, one from our Christian Life Hour at one of our local senior living facilities, led by Norm Guetschoff, and then the Cal Lutheran installation of Rev. Scott Hamilton Adams, a very joy-filled worship service on October 28th.



We were saddened by the death of dear friends, Pastor John Wilker (service on Dec. 3 at 1:00pm), Marty Bielke (service on Nov. 12 at 1:00pm), and Homer Caston, our second oldest member (service in MN and here to be scheduled). The first weekend of November each year is our All Saints Weekend, and we remembered with love many dear friends, as we continue to pray God's comfort and strength for their families, and especially now with Phyllis Wilker, Don Bielke, and Helen Caston.

Thanks to Linda Morrow for leading our email prayer group throughout each week. For our prayer ministry last month, we hosted the Blessing of the Pets. This month we



join our Conejo Valley Interfaith Association for a Thanksgiving Eve service and pie social at 6:45pm on Nov. 23, at the Latter Day Saints church in Newbury Park, 35 S. Wendy Drive. Harbor House will be the recipient of the offerings. In December Ascension will host the Ventura County Compassionate Friends service on Dec. 11 at 7pm. (The photo is from our ECC!)

Each day I post between two and six ministry related items on to our Ascension Facebook page which now has 2,168 people connected to it. Stacy posts on our social media often too. We include inspiration from the Bible, prayer quotes, Ascension church, school, and foundation updates, and news from our ministry partners across the United States and around the world. The ELCA, the Deaconess Community, Olive Tree Bible, and Lutheran World Federation are some of the favorite sites to share.



Thanks to Chris Clark for leading our Community Concerns Team which this past month was active with the food drive, the Tuesday night feeding of those who are homeless, led by Tania and Barry Disselhorst (and many volunteers), and the CPR class by Di Starzak. Our next blood drive will be on Dec. 18 in Founders Hall, so please mark your calendars. Thanks to all of you are donate to our Caring Ones or to the Agape Fund. Almost every day we are helping someone in the community with these gifts. Thanks to our Eucharistic Ministers, led by Pastor Ron Cox, for bringing Holy Communion to people in their homes, as I do as well. Thanks to Barbara Krum who is doing a lot of visitation ministry, as well as Jeff and Jan Specks helping Norm and me with the Christian Life Hours. We will begin a new one a Varenita of Westlake this month!

For Global Ministries updates, please see our reports later in this Council packet. Our October was most active with our Lutheran World Relief kit ministries and our Fair Trade Fair and sales here (thank you, Carol Bjelland!), along with prep for our Gifts of Hope in November, as well as being one of three national hubs for Lutheran Immigration and Refugee Service, with "Hope for the Holidays." I'll share on the next pages a few photos of these ministries.

God's blessings to each of you. It is a joy to be serving our Savior Jesus with each of you. Thank you for your prayers. You are in ours.



ASCENSION FAIR TRADE MINI POP-UP SALE THURSDAY, 12/8 2:30-4:30 PM BACK PARKING LOT - GATE OPENS AT 2:30 PM EVERYONE IS INVITED ASCENSION LUTHERAN Fair Trade Ministry Justice for People & Planet

Come, worship with us 7 PM SATURDAYS WITH COUNTRY SPIRIT; 9 AM SUNDAYS, TRADITIONAL; 11 AM SUNDAYS WITH PRAISE ALIVE WORSHIP AT ASCENSION GET THE BLESSING BE THE BLESSING GROWING FAITH that LASTS Right here on Facebook or in person!

An extra, special, photo: Rainbow photo by Pastor Chamie, and graphic artwork by Stacy Bosco!

HOPE
for the Holidays™

*Join Lutheran Immigration and Refugee Service
in sharing hope with children and families
seeking safety this holiday season.*

Hope for the Holidays™ launches this October.
LIRS invites your community to:

Act: Write and decorate holiday cards in English and Spanish

Donate: Help bring holiday joy and hope

Advocate: Support the safety and reunification of more families

Pray: Lift your voices for those who seek safety and protection

Teach: Learn about a family's journey getting settled in the U.S.

Visit:
LIRS.ORG/HOPE

 Lutheran Immigration
and Refugee Service





**St. Andrew's
(StARS)**



**God's Global
Barnyard**



<https://alcto.org/gifts-of-hope>



**Friends of
Fieldworkers**



Harbor House

Pastor Julie Council Report November 2022

Sunday School is growing to the extent that we are now in need of at least one new teacher so that we can further divide up the ages. My goal for the year was to sustain having 14 kids in Sunday School, and on Nov. 6, we had around 22 kids. We had 27 come up for the children's message, and a few more who came up to me after worship to get the mask I was giving out but who hadn't come up for the Children's Message. This is the result of really good work on the part of each of our Sunday School teachers, and hard work on my part as well. We are seeing the fruit of that. This is a huge win, and I am celebrating it. A next step for me in the coming weeks will be getting to know these families better and looking new teachers as well.

Yesterday a school family gave \$2,500 toward my ministries in gratitude for all the support I have given them in the past months, and because they were giving to the school's annual fund and simply did not want to leave the church out. This will be a game changer for me this year and is also an affirmation of the ministry I am doing at the school. Along this lines, I now have a few church members matched with classes for our classroom buddies program, and we will have them start visiting those classes this month! I am excited for this program and think it could really benefit everyone involved and be a great bridge and relationship builder.

This month, the principal and I hosted coffee outside the ECC during drop-off (on the coldest morning of the month!), as a chance to connect with families and just be visible on their campus. We were welcomed warmly, got to know many families, and found that many people wanted to stop and talk about both the church and the school. We will plan to make this a regular event and to plan a next one for after Christmas. And at my park playdate this month, Jenni and I tried some new marketing and I had 4 or 5 new families join me.

I recently volunteered to become interim dean of our conference of Pastors. This is a position that acts as a conduit between pastors and the bishop, meets together with other deans, and gathers the pastors in our area together for mutual support. I am excited to be in this role and am considering whether I would like to put my name forward to be elected to continue in this role.

We had 9 students go through 1st Communion, and this year we were again able to make the bread for Communion, and we had 9 students receive 2nd grade Bibles and 6 students receive 2 year old Bibles. I will match those who received a Bible with people in the congregation who would commit to praying for them this year. These numbers are all lower than I would like, but the principal and I have noted some particular communication issues we can address, and have a meeting scheduled to hopefully take milestones to the next level and increase engagement.

We are also working hard on putting together a meaningful Hanging of the Green service that will both be enticing to school families and satisfying to church members who have enjoyed the traditional service. We have settled on an event on Dec. 4 at 4 pm that will start with snow, a food truck, crafts, and the youth selling treats. We will then move to the sanctuary, sing a few carols and turn on the lights. Those who wish to stay for more singing will be invited to do so. This framework will allow many families to join us for a taste of hanging of the green and hopefully provide us an opportunity for some good outreach. As a council member, we'd invite you to consider attending both pieces—if you

don't have kids or grandkids, come for at least part of the snow play time. Maybe get to know a family that's there, grab a snack, buy some lefse, and be the face of our church to families who are there!

Together, we are building the One Ascension Bridge!