

Ascension Lutheran Church

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Evangelical Lutheran
Church in America
God's work. Our hands.

Ascension Lutheran Church

Cheyenne, Wyoming

ascensioncheyenne.org

February 2019

Congregation approves capital campaign

\$15,000 sought for safety, ADA compliance

At its annual meeting January 27, the congregation of Ascension Lutheran Church approved moving forward with a \$15,000 capital campaign “to target security and accessibility” at the church.

In explaining the need for funds outside the normal budget, Council Vice President Doug Cook said the May 2018 break-in at the church highlighted two areas requiring longer term action.

Following the break-in, Laramie County sheriff deputies met twice with congregational leaders and suggested forming a Safety Committee. In turn, that committee recommended (1) installation of a combination of motion detectors, cameras, keypad entry devices, alarm systems, wireless door contacts and remote monitoring capability along with other items in the sanctuary, narthex and office areas and (2) installation of ADA-compliant door entry points at key locations in the building.

Doug said no funds existed in the budget and a 50 percent down payment would be required before work could begin. In addition, the council had decided “for economies of scale” to use one contractor for both items and not to separate the two recommendations. He said the \$35 monthly monitoring fee could be covered in the operating budget.

Other safety actions have already taken place including moving the nursery to the intern’s office; rekeying the building; establishing stricter key control and purchasing a stronger safe.

In other business, the congregation heard from Scott Meier, who served along with Keren Meister Emerich and Barbara MacKenzie on a yearlong Audit Committee. The committee offered four pages of recommendations to be implemented during the next year, but the highlight was the church should no longer rely so heavily on volunteer treasurers and instead hire an outside bookkeeper.

Because of the audit report and a substantial decrease in revenues, the proposed 2019 budget underwent two rounds of calculations to decrease it. The congregation approved a 2019 budget of \$293,013. The budget approved at last year’s meeting was a little more than \$315,000.

Joining Tim Leberman, who was approved for a second term, new members elected to the Church Council were Rick Moler, Al Young and Barbara MacKenzie, who agreed to serve a one-year term as treasurer in light of the implementation of the Audit Committee’s recommendations.

Two members, Pete Obermueller and Barbara MacKenzie, tentatively agreed to be delegates to the Rocky Mountain Synod’s assembly May 3–5 in Albuquerque.

Copies of the 2018 annual report, which includes the budget and pastor/committee reports, are available in the church office.

PASTOR'S PIECE

Attentive hospitality

The season of Epiphany is associated with light. Our Epiphany hymns are filled with the poetry of starlight. At season’s end, Epiphany gives way to the white light of Transfiguration Sunday, the last Sunday before Lent. The light of Christ is light to all people.

This year, my family and I spent the Day of Epiphany in Oslo, Norway, at a latitude where daylight was in short supply. But the days leading into Epiphany are the days that burned most brightly for me. They were spent in the shadow of mountains in a farmhouse well north of Oslo. That farmhouse conveyed warmth and light throughout the week of our stay. The cast-iron stove in the living room was dependably supplied with logs; the Christmas tree lights remained on; the pine floor and ceiling glowed with amber reflections. But the profounder impression of light was gained from our host, my second cousin, with his unflagging spirit of hospitality. Gunnar is a soft-spoken, resolute man, whose modesty accommodates a keen aesthetic. He fed us well, with dinners of lamb and cabbage, and rockfish, and with breakfasts of flatbread, brown and white cheeses, herring, and liver pâté. He drove us all about the vicinity, introduced us to a slew of my relatives, walked us to ancestral landmarks, shared a trove of genealogical records, and initiated us into the culture of the region. If I had to describe his hospitality in a single word it would be “attentive.” He was attentive to us without calling attention to himself.

My cousin normally limits himself to four small demitasse cups of coffee in the morning, but upon noticing our family’s Yankee pattern of consumption, he brewed three pots in succession and kept filling our cups like an attentive waiter!

When the boys and I became embroiled in animated conversations among ourselves, he quietly occupied himself until an opening presented itself. Then, he sat down with a book or sheaf of papers and shifted our focus onto family history.

Gunnar and I share the same great-grandfather, who was my mother’s paternal grandfather. But he took the time to investigate my mother’s maternal side, too. On an especially memorable day, he drove us to a steep slope of the local fjord and led us up to some foundation stones and brush that marked the birthplace of my maternal great-grandfather. He explained this had been a family of “crofters,” sharecroppers whose mountainside existence was likely eased by the southern exposure. Nevertheless, my great-grandfather and all his siblings immigrated to America, and my great-grandfather became a landholding farmer in southwestern Minnesota. We also visited the old church where my great-grandfather was baptized. These experiences left me feeling grounded in a way I’d not felt before.

Church leaders, authors, seminary students and young pastors have been engaged with the theme of “radical hospitality” for the past few years. Conversation has focused on open Communion and the welcome of otherwise marginalized persons. As we think about hospitality, it may be helpful to remember the importance of attentiveness. Hospitality may include grand gestures but must include small ones practiced at close range. Attentiveness to a visitor demands the tabling of one’s own agenda and an attention to detail evidenced in something so small as a liberal pouring of coffee at the table.

Pastor Wes Aardahl

Christ Lutheran pastor resigns

Pastor Rebecca Aardahl has resigned Christ Lutheran Church effective February 28. “With my resignation, the congregation will be freed from the financial obligation of compensation for a pastor,” she wrote to her congregation in December. “My husband, Wes, will continue as pastor at Ascension Lutheran; I will rest for a time.”



Parament to celebrate baptisms at Ascension

In her mother Rachel’s arms, Eisele Faye Krueger, baptized in December, was the first child to be honored with the use of a new baptismal banner at Ascension. Craig Anderson, right, designed the parament, which was sewn by Debbie Jacob and funded through donations made in memory of Charles Blackburn. (Rebecca Aardahl photo)

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Charles Stevens

Newsletter Editor
Rosalind Schliske

Church Council
Mike Bell

Doug Cook

Yessica Cordova

Erin Edwards

Tim Leberman

Barbara MacKenzie

Rick Moler

Ryan Mitchell

Patti Riesland

Al Young

If your address, phone number or email address has changed, call the church office or email ascensioncheyenne@gmail.com.

Ascension Lutheran Church seeks to be a community that nourishes relationships with God and one another that lead to a deeper spiritual life, based on a grace-oriented Lutheran perspective.

Feb. 22 Newsletter Deadline

Church Council Meetings Highlights

December 20

Treasurer's report

- December offerings so far have come in above last year's, but total year-to-date offerings are down (\$272,044.26 compared to \$288,566.93 in 2017). Expenditures to date total \$282,374.75, resulting in a deficit of \$4,930.49.

Pastor's report

- Pastor Wes conducted a few informal interviews for the **Saturday worship coordinator**, and the Worship Task Force will conduct formal interviews in January.

Audit report

- Hard numbers going back to 2012 will be available in January. The Audit Committee has many recommendations; the council will consider forming a Finance Committee, whose first task would be sorting through the audit recommendations.

Committee reports

- It is hoped the **volunteer background check process** will be completed in January.

Old business

- Because of remaining uncertainty about post-audit funds, a motion was passed so that the council could approve the **budget** while giving the Budget Committee authority to make minor adjustments as necessary once the audit results are final.
- Although no formal vote took place, the consensus was not to recommend to the congregation sponsorship of an **intern** during the 2019–2020 intern cycle. In addition, the council resolved that the congregation's commitment to interns moving forward shall be based on a review of financial support.

- Four council positions** will be voted upon at the annual meeting, but Tim Leberman plans to run again. The Nominating Committee will begin looking for volunteers.
- The council approved seeking congregational approval at the annual meeting for a **capital campaign** targeting security and ADA door accessibility with a goal of \$15,000.

January 10

Treasurer's report

- January offerings so far have come in below last year's, and total year-to-date offerings are down (\$3,915 compared to \$4,235 in 2018). Offerings for 2018 came in at \$279,688.26.

Pastor's report

- Confirmation** is resuming its normal schedule.

Committee reports

- The council will need to appoint a new member to serve on the **Endowment Committee**.

Old business

- Volunteer background checks** are still in the works; Chris Muggenberg has a meeting with Wyoming's Division of Criminal Investigation soon.
- The audit committee has made recommendations for improvements to the church's current financial system. The biggest change is **hiring a bookkeeper**, for which Barbara McKenzie will request RFPs (to be reviewed by Tim Leberman or Doug Cook). The council agreed by consensus that although many of the other recommendations are valid, it would be better to implement a new bookkeeper prior to making any other major changes.



The Endowment Committee has allocated some of this year's fund dispersement to cover the cost of Vacation Bible School June 17–21. The \$3,000 donation will ensure Sky Ranch counselors can repeat last year's successful program as these children can attest. (Kris Rude photo)

Youth activities

Youth to collect cans for Souper Sunday

The Youth Group will collect canned soup on Super Bowl Sunday, February 3. The soup donations will help stock the church's Little Free Pantry. Last year, the youth group collected 209 cans of soup, so help them collect even more this year.

Thanks given for youth activities' support

The youth wanted to thank the congregation for its Advent chili feed support through setup, cleanup and food donation and the collection of 34 blankets for the Cheyenne Christmas Angels providing food. The free will donations helped the youth group purchase Christmas gifts for four children from two families in the community.

Service held for Lloyd Kjorness

A memorial service for Ascension Lutheran Church member Lloyd Kjorness, 85, who died January 10, was held January 18 at the church with Pastor Wes Aardahl officiating.

Born September 28, 1933, Lloyd grew up on a farm outside Bismarck, North Dakota. He graduated with a master's degree in guidance and counseling from South Dakota State University and served in the U.S. Army at Fort Dix during the Korean Conflict.

Lloyd lived a life of service through his work as a high school guidance counselor and then for 20 years as the director of adult education for the state of Wyoming. Until his death, Lloyd continued to serve the community delivering meals for Meals on Wheels and working extensively with Alcoholics Anonymous throughout the region.

He is survived by his wife, Alice Kjorness, of Cheyenne; his sons, Eric Kjorness, of Lewiston, Idaho, and Chris Kjorness, of Grand Rapids, Mich.; and his three grandchildren.

News

Old family pictures sought for Art Gallery

The theme for the month of February in Ascension's Art Gallery is "For all the saints." Organizers are looking for very old family pictures to display in the gallery. Materials will be available to label those pictured and identify the family to whom the photo belongs. Sid Strand said he will hang pictures for participants and asked that the pictures be brought to the church by Sunday, February 10.

Family Promise to serve two families

Ascension's Family Promise coordinator Margie Sewell reported two families are in the program for the church's shared rotation with St. Paul's, and coverage is needed from Wednesday, February 13, through Saturday, February 16. All dinners are covered except a volunteer is needed to serve the Wednesday meal from 5:30–7 p.m. The other slots to be filled are as follows: Wednesday, Thursday and Friday overnight hosts, 8:30 p.m.–7 a.m.; Thursday and Friday evening hosts, 7–8:30 p.m.; Saturday hosts, 10 a.m.–noon and noon–2 p.m. If you can assist, contact Margie or Patti Riesland.

WELCA to continue 'Meetings with Jesus'

The Women of the ELCA (WELCA) will continue its study titled "Meetings with Jesus," which uses the Gospel of John. The group will meet at 9:30 a.m. on Tuesday, February 19, in the upper fellowship hall to study session two, "By night and day: Coming to faith in Jesus." For information, contact Shirley Toppenberg at 634-4946.

Boxed giving envelopes to be discontinued

Ascension Lutheran Church has decided to change the giving envelopes used for offerings. According to Tim Leberman, Church Council president, the decision was made for a number of reasons.

Cost: Ordering envelopes with the date and a sequence number is approximately four times more expensive than envelopes without the date or sequence number. Ascension's internal tracking system for an individual's offering is not number-based; instead, donations are entered into the system by name, which results in the quarterly giving statement.

Waste: A large numbers of boxed envelopes are never picked up or used; most recently, unclaimed boxes filled two large garbage bags. In addition to the waste and trash, substantial volunteer time was used to sort and inventory the boxes.

Options: For those of you who would like to use a paper envelope, two options are available. First, all the pew racks will be filled with pew offering envelopes. Second, those who want to take envelopes home will find pew envelopes available in the narthex.

Envelope alternative: Many in the congregation are using electronic giving, which does not require the use of paper envelopes. We are aware some do not have computer access and hope the pew envelopes are acceptable for your offering needs.

Church's Book Club to read 'Babette's Feast'

"Babette's Feast" is the selection for Ascension's Book Club, which will meet at 7 p.m. on Tuesday, February 26, in the upper fellowship room. Finding the book has been complicated by the fact that her given name was Karen Blixen, but she wrote and published under the name Isak Dinesen! However, "Babette's Feast" was most recently published as a paperback under the name Karen Blixen. A great movie is also available although it's in Danish with English subtitles. Pastor Wes is looking for used copies, so stay posted if you have trouble tracking down this great book. Also note "Out of Africa" is another book written by this author that was translated onto the big screen in a popular movie.

Fundraiser for COMEA to be February 28

Each year, COMEA houses more than 4,000 homeless people, and each day it provides 110–150. To support this mission, a fundraising event, Tacos and Tequila, will be held from 5:30–9 p.m. on Thursday, February 28, at the Red Lion Inn. Individual tickets are \$50. To purchase tickets, go to <https://www.tickettailor.com/events/tacostequila/228620>.

Ascension will cook and serve a meal on a Sunday in February to be determined.

Next meeting • February 14 • 7 p.m.