



# ACT



## ASCENSION CHURCH TODAY FALL/WINTER, 2009

**“One Church, One Body,  
One Spirit,  
Serving All People.”**

**“Una Iglesia, Un Cuerpo,  
Un Espíritu,  
Sirviendo a todos los pueblos.”**

**“Koom ib Lub Tuamtsev,  
Koom ib Lub Cev,  
Koom ib Tug Ntsujplig,  
Ua Num Rua Txhuas  
Tug Tuabneeg.**

### Statement of Mission

**Ascension Lutheran Church is a community of disciples of Christ who proclaim and witness God’s love. We seek to include and to invite all to participate in our ministry to anticipate God’s kingdom of justice.**

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#### Inside this issue:

Pastor’s Letter	2
Thanksgiving	3
Stewardship	3
Concert	4 & 5
WELCA - Hephatha News	6
Bldg. & Property	7
Leadership	8, 9, 10
Christmas Information	11
Amis	





## Ascension Lutheran Church Today - ACT FROM THE PASTOR'S DESK



Dear Disciples,

Wow, what a fall! Sunday School, Confirmation, Bible studies, Spirituality groups, choirs preparing to lead worship and share in concert. We have experienced a wonderful Sunday - "The Taste of Ascension". We look forward to World Hunger - World Mission Sunday November 22nd, our Thanksgiving community worship and meal on the 24 and our Thanksgiving Eve worship service on the 25<sup>th</sup>.

The basement was completed in time for the Hmong American Peace Academy to start the school year and the basement turned out to be beautiful after the restoration. The Dining Room has welcomed the Senior Meal Program on a regular basis and the new storage areas have been completed so that this space is more welcoming and useful. Preparations and plans have been set for the Advent and Christmas season as we moved toward the beginning of a new church year. And, we have had a chance to respond with our stewardship commitment forms as we "Serve Boldly, Responding to God's Call".

We have moved forward in ministry with the dedicated and spirited efforts of so many lay leaders in our congregation. The Leadership Council continues to be the source and center of leadership and vision for our congregation to live out our mission and mandate as "One Church, One Body, One Spirit, Serving All People". If you read the fine set of notes by our Secretary, Sue Hess, you get an idea of the kind of work the council and some of our ministry teams have been doing over the last several months.

The Hmong outreach board has been very active in the absence of Pastor Vang. Please take advantage of the traditional Hmong Thanksgiving on the 29<sup>th</sup> and the Hmong New Years Celebration on the 1<sup>st</sup> of January. These two events are wonderful times to share with each other and to bask in the diversity of our cultures.

An important update on Pastor Vang - treatment plans change weekly at this point. The transplant date has been postponed. Pastor Vang, as of today (November 11<sup>th</sup>) has a viral infection that will not permit him to receive a bone marrow transplant on Nov. 24<sup>th</sup> as originally scheduled. He will have to get over the infection and most likely have another round of chemotherapy before a transplant. Thank you for your continued prayers and cards and support not only for Pr. Vang but for all in our congregation challenged by illness.

We live by hope, blessed by a God who chooses to be with us. The gift of the incarnation of God in Jesus Christ and the ongoing presence of the Spirit is sufficient in our journey together as people of faith. This radical grace enables us to proclaim boldly and to work diligently as disciples of Jesus responding to the call to serve the world shared with us by a loving God.

I am so grateful for your partnership and honored to serve with you in our ministry at Ascension Lutheran Church. I so look forward to our worship and prayer life on Sundays and other days when we share the good news and are fed from the table of the Lord.

With Thanksgiving and Gratitude to God and to You! - see you in Church.

Pastor Jacobs



**Tuesday, November 24 - 5:00PM -  
Thanksgiving Worship followed by  
Neighborhood Thanksgiving Celebration Dinner at 6:00PM**

**Wednesday, November 25 -  
Thanksgiving Worship at 7:00PM**

**Can you give a little?** We will not get any funds this year from Thrivent for the Thanksgiving Dinner on 11/24. A \$300 donation has been given from the Milwaukee Branch of National Mutual Benefit Insurance (thanks to Clay and Alice Durler). Can you contribute a little so Cindy Sykes can get the turkeys and all the fixings for the meal for over 100? Food Ministry thanks you in advance!

**Serving Boldly... Responding to God's Call Stewardship Campaign Wraps Up**

Many thanks to Ascension disciples who have returned their Covenant and Commitment pledges to the 2010 Annual Stewardship drive and to the Building Improvement Fund. Your support is critical to Ascension's ability to carry on our ministries. God is counting on each of us to do our part to sustain His work using our hands.



If you have not yet made your pledge, please return your Commitment form to church as soon as possible. You may mail it in to the church office at 1236 South Layton Blvd., Milwaukee, WI 53215 or place it in the Sunday offering plate. A return envelope was included in your Serving Boldly Stewardship envelope. If you have misplaced your Stewardship materials, there are some Stewardship envelopes with pledge forms in them at the back of the church.

By providing an estimate of your giving for 2010, our Leadership Council is able to do a better job of planning for ministries in 2010. What better way to express our thanksgiving to God at this time when we will be celebrating Thanksgiving Day?

**Thank you, Ascension disciples from the Stewardship team.**

"Verily, I say unto you, in as much as you have done it unto the least of these my people, you have done it unto me."  
Matthew 25: 40

**In-As-Much Sunday, December 13, 2009**

Again this year, we are asking you to donate Christmas gifts for children in need at Hephatha Lutheran Church, our partner congregation. Please label the gifts with the appropriate gender and age for children ages birth-12 years. Please bring your gifts on Sunday, December 13<sup>th</sup> and put them under one of the In-As-Much trees. When you give these gifts with love, you help make a child's Christmas come alive and closer to the true meaning of Christmas through the Spirit of Giving!

This may be the only gift a child receives for Christmas, so please be generous. It is a blessing to be able to share. Gifts will be delivered on Sunday, December 13<sup>th</sup> after our services. If you will not be here on December 13<sup>th</sup>, please feel free to deliver the gifts to the church office earlier or contact Christy Kudy @ 672-8010 or [ckudy@wi.rr.com](mailto:ckudy@wi.rr.com).



## Ascension Lutheran Church Today - ACT

Candlelight at Ascension will be very special this year. This cantata by Tom Fettke features familiar classics and carols. Accompanying our choirs will be musicians from Ascension and the Milwaukee Youth Symphony Orchestra. Kurt Ollmann's rich, splendid baritone will grace the program as featured soloist. Ring in the Spirit of the Season with bells and sounds of children's singing. Our very own Handbell Choir, Kids of the Kingdom and Youth Choir will present their several selections. As always, Leonhard Rose will accompany on the organ as Cindy Bettine, assisted by Roxanne Carloni, leads this outstanding concert.



Lyric baritone Kurt Ollmann benefited greatly from an artistic association with Leonard Bernstein. After thorough schooling and a fruitful beginning with Milwaukee's adventuresome Skylight Opera, he appeared in several prestigious world venues before being given a place among Bernstein's favored singers. Clear enunciation that could sound either international or comfortably American afforded him immediate access to both operatic and musical comedy roles and even more so for those works, such as Bernstein's *Candide* and *West Side Story*. Ollmann made his Seattle Opera debut in 1988, singing Mercutio in Gounod's *Roméo et Juliette*. He also has performed at Teatro alla Scala, Vienna Staatsoper, Théâtre de la Monnaie, Rome Opera, New York City Opera, Santa Fe Opera, and the Wexford Festival in such roles as the Count in Mozart's *Nozze di Figaro*, Pelléas in Debussy's *Pelléas et Mélisande*, Ramiro in Ravel's *Heure Espagnole*, and the title role in the world premiere of Lieberson's *Ashoka's Dream*. Ollmann returned to Seattle twice in 1999, for Falke in J. Strauss, Jr.'s *Fledermaus* and for the Speaker in Mozart's *Zauberflöte*. In 2000, he sang Frédéric in Seattle Opera's production of Delibes' *Lakmé*. Ollmann performs frequently in concert in the U.S. and abroad; he has sung with London Symphony Orchestra, Orchestre de Paris, Rome's Accademia di Santa Cecilia, and the New York Philharmonic. His concert repertoire includes many contemporary works, such as Rorem's *Now Voyager*, which he sang at Carnegie Hall in the world premiere. His numerous recordings include the role of Riff in Bernstein's *West Side Story*, conducted by the composer.

**Celebrate Christmas with instrument and song,  
classics and carols, choirs and solos,  
ringing of bells and the pipe organ's swell.  
Join us December 6th for "A Glorious Christmas!"**

### **HOLIDAY BAKING?**

We are once again asking our members to bake a few extra dozen cookies or bars to serve at the social following the Candlelight Concert on December 6th. This has become a very popular event, a chance for our visitors to socialize and make contact with former members and friends. You may bring your baked goods any time and we will freeze them - or bring them the morning of December 6th... Please mark the package **For Candlelight Social** and leave in the church office or kitchen counter.

Any questions, call Jan Fox 1-262/782-5680 or Donna Mudrock, 421-4582.

Thanks in advance!



*Annual Candlelight Concert*



Come to Ascension Lutheran Church  
and experience

*"A Glorious Christmas"*

by Tom Fettke

**Sunday, December 6th at 3:00pm**

A Celebration with Carols and Classics

Directed by Cynthia Bettine & Roxanne Carloni

Featured Soloist - Kurt Ollmann

Senior Choir, Youth Choir, Handbell Choir  
and Kids of the Kingdom

Accompanied by Leonhard Rose,  
Organist and Pianist

Musicians of Ascension

Members of MYSO

(Milwaukee Youth Symphony Orchestra )





### Women of the ELCA in Review

Jan Fox, president of our local Women of the ELCA, keeps us active and focused. Although our numbers are dwindling we keep busy enough around Ascension and the synod.

Thanks to many good helpers the Annual Rummage Sale again brought money into our budget. With the closing of the BookShelf/gift store and their monies used for Ascension over the years, our budget shrank. Nevertheless, Bible study, participation locally and nationally, and “sweat-equity” around the church continues.

This year with \$1500 we helped sponsor Ascension Youth going to New Orleans. A kitchen cleaning was organized and carried out. Most recently the Women contributed \$1000 to the wall storage unit in the dining room. Some other funded projects included Habitat for Humanity \$100; Synodical convention offering \$100; Lutheran Campus Ministry \$135; around \$300 towards the Commons wall mural; Lutheran Social Services \$100; and \$400 to Ascension in Mission.

Thanks to many Ascension Disciples contributing items for Lutheran World Relief Kits we were able to assemble and ship 28 School Kits and 24 Health Kits.

No one keeps track of the hundreds of volunteer hours the Women of Ascension offer for the ongoing ministries at Ascension – representing our three language ministries. Where would the Church be without its women?

If you want to participate the remaining of the year and also in 2010 the Women of the ELCA want you! Contact Jan Fox, Margaret Leech, Carla Schultz, Sandy Maes, Ellie Dietrich or Mary Lou Thomsen. They will be thrilled to add your hearts and hands of service to our shared ministries at Ascension.

### GRATITUDE

That was the theme for Hephatha Lutheran Church’s annual Mission Partnership Appreciation Day on Saturday, November 3. Representatives from many of their 32 partners in ministry received a beautiful artistic interpretation of the dove over Hephatha’s altar. Dawn Wolff, who has battled HIV/AIDS for 20 years, designed and colored the art – first for their confirmands and now for us. Look for the picture to be posted on Ascension’s wall.

Some Hephatha numbers from 2008 were shared:

Average Sunday worship 167

Membership: baptized 395 ; confirmed 208

Baptisms: 30

Confirmations: 8 teens, 5 adults

The young women’s motion choir helped set the celebrative mood through music and interpretive dance. Gospel hymns and an inspiring sermon by Pastor Mary Martha focused our minds and hearts on the ministry we share to be the church as God re-forms us to faithfulness. Pastor Mary Martha said, “In this time of foreclosures remember that we have One who will never foreclose on us.”

As Ascension disciples let us continue in thoughts, gifts and prayers to be a faithful mission partner even as we receive in gratitude the work of God in God’s wider Church. -submitted by Mary Lou Thomsen



To: Disciples of Ascension Lutheran Church  
From: Building and Property Ministry Team (John Dierschow, Wayne Fox, Bob Hoffmann,  
Art Maes, Tom Tamms, Ted Wosika)  
Re: A synopsis of projects that have been completed, are currently in process, and future endeavors.

**I. COMPLETED PROJECTS**

**A. Painting of the Commons**

**B. Code of ordinance violation upgrades**

**Project Manager: Catalyst, Inc.**

- 1.) Provide proper illuminated exit signs.
- 2.) Install proper exit hardware on all exit doors.
- 3.) Install required panic hardware on all required exit doors.
- 4.) Install an approved fire alarm system.
- 5.) Install approved automatic sprinkler system in basement.  
**(Butters-Fetting Contractor)**
- 6.) Provide required mechanical ventilation

**C. Flood Damage Restoration**

**Carl Krueger Construction, Restoration Division, Contractor.**

**D. Current Project**

**Tom Kaschak, Contractor. Ministry Team, Painters**

- 1.) Construct storage addition in dining room.

**E. Future Projects for Spring, 2010**

- 1.) Seed front lawn on south campus.
- 2.) Trim hedges at north main entrance areas.

In conclusion, I would like to thank all the members of our team who have volunteered many hours of their time.

As a reminder to all disciples of Ascension Lutheran Church, there is still in effect a program with the Endowment Board. For every dollar that you contribute for building and property improvement, Endowment Board will subtract a like amount from our debt balance. Please identify on your contribution envelopes, the amount you wish to contribute for this program.

God bless you all,  
Tom Tamms  
Building and Property Ministry Team Leader



### Notes from your Leadership Council by Sue Hess

In June of 2008, the congregation approved a new Constitution and Bylaws, revising Ascension's structure to form a Leadership Council composed of members of the three language groups. At its first meeting, your Council elected the following officers: President Roger Rustad, Vice-President Douglas Vue, Secretary Susan Hess. Unfortunately, by January the position of Treasurer became vacant, and remained so until late Spring. Current Acting Treasurer: Michael Romaszewski

In July your Council had to urgently deal with its first major issue, signing a new tenant. The Hmong American Peace Academy, better known as HAPA, had outgrown its classrooms at St. Lawrence and was seeking additional space at Ascension. With school to start in September, 2008, and our building needing renovation (air conditioning, carpeting, painting, furniture), an immediate decision was needed. Special meetings helped decide the issue and move the rental forward. HAPA funded all renovations, Ascension worked with it to see that everything was completed, and grade school opened as scheduled. Because HAPA was moving toward a full high school, it would need increasing future space. Adding a basement sprinkler system and replacing some doors and locks would allow us to meet City Code and provide that space, so your Council approved moving forward with sprinkler construction. Covered initially by an Endowment loan, for which a special Congregational Meeting was needed, the cost of installation will be offset by increases in the HAPA lease, with "break even" achieved in 3 years. If HAPA doesn't stay 3 years, we can recoup that cost with new tenants.

During 2008, your Leadership Council identified all functions served by various organizations and prior boards at Ascension, and built an organizational structure of teams to serve those functions. Drafting people to serve on the teams has been a challenge we continue to address. One of the most active Ministry Areas is the Serving and Sending Ministries, which organized and executed a highly successful Taste of Ascension open house on October 11, 2009. This gave visitors a "taste" of what they can experience at Ascension, tenants an idea of exactly who their host is, and Ascension members a picture of how many activities take place at our facility. Attendance was 300 to 350. It was good to see a full church and a lunch crowd. One advantage was an opportunity to mingle with the other language groups. Some people intentionally sat with strangers, getting to know one another. Your Council thought we need to continue such get-together's.

Last Spring your Council presented our new structure to the congregation. You may have seen the large organization chart on the bulletin board in the Commons. If not, please stop and review it soon. **We need volunteers to get the new teams functioning.** Communication is an issue, so Jan Fox has agreed to be Communications Director. Executive Committee and pastors will soon meet individually with Council liaisons to each Ministry Area, to identify where we need people and who would best serve those roles.

Your Council developed a Financial Requests policy. All expenses, regardless of amount, require filling out a form with (1) authorizing signature and (2) correct budget category. Expenses under \$100 may be authorized over the phone (office staff to fill out the form and note who authorized), or the form can be filled out after-the-fact. Amounts over \$100 must have approval from Team Lead or Council liaison.



In January, we empowered a Call Team to recommend whether to renew the pastors' 3-year term call, which expires at year-end 2009. Two of the pastors' goals, (1) initiate and grow an integrated worship service and (2) integrate our leadership structure, have been met. Growth does need to continue. The goal to grow our worship attendance to 400 per Sunday wasn't met, but could still be if our structure works. A recommendation to again extend unlimited calls to the pastors was accepted by your Council and forwarded for congregational approval. After much debate, that recommendation was approved at the August Congregational Meeting.

In September, 2008, your Council voted to request \$3900 from Endowment to have our property appraised. That appraisal was completed in early 2009. The value of building and contents is \$9.5 million. The appraisal is critical to see that we are properly insured. The necessity of insurance hit home when our basement flooded in June. Insurance covered the cost of a restoration project that lasted throughout the Summer.

With the departure this year of Lutheran Social Services as a tenant, the future of Foster Parent training is in question. Contractually, LSS is obligated to pay rent until 2012, unless a new tenant can be found. LSS initially had the state contract to train foster parents, but the UWM School of Social Welfare is now responsible for it. UWM asked LSS to continue managing the training, but LSS may not be interested. If so, UWM will be seeking bids from potential managers. Ascension could submit a bid. The trainers like our site, and someone from the program would help us. Do we want to pursue this? It does bring a lot of people through our building.

Leadership Council members from all 3 languages were delegates to the Synod Assembly in May. The most controversial issue was allowing ordination of gay or lesbian pastors. The Milwaukee Synod's past policy was to turn no one away from our churches, but to not ordain gays or lesbians. The May 2009 resolution allows the relationship and authorizes synods/congregations to make the decision. The resolution passed both the Synod and the ELCA National Convention in Minneapolis. Our delegates noted that Ascension is highly regarded and was mentioned a number of times during the convention. We take for granted the significance of our ministry, especially our ministry to Hephatha, the youth coalition and Camp Indian Sands. Pastor Youa Kao read the Pentecost story in Hmong at a worship service.

Since delegates are elected to serve at Synod meetings for the entire year, our reps are now involved in selecting a new bishop for the ELCA Milwaukee Synod. As of October 1, Bishop Paul Stumme-Diers left for a call from a congregation on Bainbridge Island, Washington. Our Interim Bishop is the Rev. David Olson, from Clinton, Connecticut. Delegates attend a series of meetings to nominate, meet and get to know all the candidates. The actual election will take place at Our Savior's on Dec 4th & 5th. Installation of the new bishop will be Sunday, March 14, 2010, at 3:00 pm at Holy Cross Lutheran, Menomonee Falls. ELCA Bishop Mark Hanson will preside at both.

After Pastor Vang was diagnosed with leukemia in June, your Council voted to continue 1/3 of his salary when disability income payments began. Hmong lay leaders, with worship assistance and guidance from Pastors Jon and Walter, are keeping the group together. Elders see to the needs of the people.

-CONTINUED-



## Ascension Lutheran Church Today - ACT

The pastors must visit when Hmong members are sick. Despite these efforts, Hmong attendance is down. In Hmong culture, Youa Kao is the leader. Your Council continues to address the issue.

At its June meeting, your Council invited Dan Moshinski, Financial Advisor for Endowment, to present some history, financial goals, and investment strategies of the Fund. This was to inform new Council members who were unfamiliar with Endowment. Also in June, we planned a Recognition Sunday for Kathryn Sommer. In Summer, your Council discussed the Design Plan of the Courtyard Renovation Team. Extensive design had been excluded by the team itself, but your Council questioned even the final proposal. Begin inside to be more welcoming. Simply landscape outside. Invest in ministries, not site beautification. Instead, we proposed just completing renovations necessary to make the courtyard safe and useable. Two main problems must be addressed immediately: (1) Cupola beams, and (2) deteriorating concrete. We'll need to deal with these costs regardless. The congregation agreed, and approved the lesser funding at its August Congregational Meeting.

Offerings to date are only 85% of anticipated. Although eased somewhat by deferring repayment of Endowment loans and by disability insurance covering salary and benefits, the shortfall is significant. We voted to request that Endowment extend deferral until year-end. Remaining reserves have been spent, so the 2010 budget has no leeway. We must creatively look for savings. The Budget Team is at work so Council approval can happen in November, in preparation for the December Budget Meeting. Budget/finance-related issues:

- Determine why offerings are down.
- Monitor stewardship concerns and education.
- Follow up with visitors and members who have stopped attending.
- Provide support for those facing job loss or other hardship. Assist in finding new employment.
- Seek other funding sources, and encourage our partners to do the same.
- Tithing our benevolence to the Synod is a matter of faith. Encourage proportionate giving in response to what we have received. First fruits should go to the work of God's Kingdom. Faith-based giving is often a matter of up-bringing. Did the family have a giving tradition? Children learn by example. Emphasize giving from Sunday School on up. In Hmong culture, "family" helps physically but not financially. More education is needed about seeing and contributing to the big picture, and on what the Bible says should be our commitment.

As we move forward into the future, it is important that we tell the story of what we did and how we did it. In our congregation, a dominant group decided to share power with new immigrant groups. We are a model for the ELCA and all Christianity. The Church has lost its relevance and is in decline. Accepting different cultures is difficult, but essential to relate in today's environment. We must continue to strive for justice, equality, tolerance and acceptance, and we must publicize, in Lutheran publications, on the web, and perhaps by speaking at a national ELCA convention, what has been accomplished at Ascension.

### **CONGREGATIONAL BUDGET MEETING:**

**December 16, 2009.**

**6:00 cookies & coffee - 6:30 meeting.**



Fall/Winter, 2009



Christmas Worship Schedule



Family Worship -  
Thursday, December 24 - 5:00PM

Candlelight Service -  
Thursday, December 24 - at 10:00PM

Christmas Day Worship -  
Friday, December 25 - 10:00AM

**ASCENSION IN MISSION/AMIS HAS A GLOBAL/LOCAL HEART**

Ascension in Mission will sponsor a Hunger Sunday this year on November 22. "We give so others might live." We say it often and here is another opportunity for giving. The Hunger can is out for your "Change for Change: Helping Feed the Hungry." The ELCA has a World Hunger Appeal and Ascension has a Food Ministry! Both need our support. Bring your bags of groceries for the Food Ministry to church on November 22. A guest from the ELCA Hunger program in Chicago will be with us on the 22<sup>nd</sup>.

A review of programs supported by your donations to Ascension in Mission/AMIS for 2009 included the following microfinance projects:

- \$ 750 to the Women and Children fund in Nepal
- \$ 750 for microloans to farmers in El Salvador
- \$1600 for Lutheran School Scholarships in Palestine
- \$1600 for shrimp farming in El Salvador

We also sent locally:

- \$1600 to Serenity Inns which help addicted men to recovery and new life
- \$6300 to our long-time Mission Partner, Hephatha Lutheran Church on South Locust

If you are interested in more information of what Ascension in Mission is doing or you want to challenge us to greater ministry on behalf of Ascension you can talk to Mary Lou Thomsen on Sundays or call her at 414-964-5766. She would be happy to hear from you! Thanks to your contributions and the Endowment Fund the outreach ministry of Ascension Lutheran Church (now 157 years old) can continue!

**Ascension Lutheran Church**  
**1236 S. Layton Boulevard,**  
**Milwaukee, WI 53215**

**Ministry Staff:** Reverend Jonathan F. Jacobs,  
Reverend Walter Baires, Reverend Youa Kao Vang  
Senior Ministry            Pastor Elizabeth Baires  
Choir Director            Cynthia Bettine  
Bell Choir Director       Roxanne Carloni  
Choir Director Emeritus   Ray Dietrich  
Organist                    Leonhard Rose  
Office Manager/Admin     Gloria Jiménez  
Business Office            Heidi Barrett, Greg Joers  
Food Ministry              Linda Estes  
Maintenance               Carlos Ruiz, Mike Witters

**PRESORTED STANDARD**  
**US POSTAGE PAID**  
**MILWAUKEE, WI**  
**Permit No. 4066**

**DO NOT DELAY**  
**TIME VALUE DATA**  
**November, 2009**

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