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Ascension Lutheran Church

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CHURCH STAFF

The Rev. Christina L. Auch, Pastor

pastorchristinaauch@gmail.com
ascensionsecof@bellsouth.net

Debby Chaffin, Secretary

Rose Cook, Financial Secretary (volunteer)

Steve White, Organist

Cathy Hubbard, Organist

2017 CONGREGATION COUNCIL OFFICERS Term ending []

Judy Bridges, President [18]

Gail Sherman, Secretary [17]

Kelly Smolzer, Vice President [17]

Greg Blalock, Treasurer [17]

2017 CONGREGATION COUNCIL

Ludy Wilkie [17]

Bob Bryant [17]

Lisa Philbeck [18]

Calvin Blalock [17]

Steve Eckard [17]

Sandra Waldrop [18]

Steve Hudgins [17]

COMMITTEES OF COUNCIL:

FIDUCIARY

FINANCE

Steve Eckard

COLUMBIARIUM

Steve Eckard

Members: Calvin Blalock, Judy Bridges, Ray Lacy

PROPERTY

Steve Hudgins

STEWARDSHIP

Calvin Blalock

GOVERNANCE

LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT

MUTUAL MINISTRY

Members: Allen Philbeck

NOMINATING

Members: Calvin Blalock, Bob Bryant, Steve Eckard, Gail Sherman, Steve Hudgins, Ludy Wilkie

MISSION

Pointing to Jesus

WORSHIP and MUSIC

YOUTH

EDUCATION

Bob Bryant and Sandra Waldrop

Gail Sherman

Ludy Wilkie

Calling Others to Service

OUTREACH

FAITH COMMUNITY HEALTH MINISTRY

Kelly Smolzer and Lisa Philbeck

Pastor Christina Auch

Prayer

Affirmation

FELLOWSHIP

Kelly Smolzer and Lisa Philbeck

FIDUCIARY

FINANCE COMMITTEE

Finance Committee volunteers prepare a draft budget for the succeeding year, including the congregation's support of the wider ministry being carried on in its behalf by the ELCA and the Synod, and submit such draft budget to the Congregation Council for its action and later presentation to a congregation meeting. The committee exercises oversight of all the financial affairs of the congregation to make sure that they are being conducted efficiently. The Committee is also responsible for the marketing and sale of Columbarium niches.

2017 Highlights

Insurance providers were evaluated in the late winter and we replaced Church Mutual coverage with coverage from Preferred Church Insurers of North Carolina.

The congregation approved \$30,000 to replace the roof on the education building and finance met in May to discuss how to best finance the expense. It was decided to pay for the roof from the existing emergency reserves and replace the funds that are used using \$10,000 from the existing surplus in the unified fund and asking the congregation to raise the remaining \$20,000. A congregation letter went out in June asking for pledges and gifts and received \$22,250 in pledges and gifts. A net amount of \$16,489 was borrowed from the Emergency Reserve Fund; as pledge payments are received, the Emergency Reserve will be repaid.

Cooper-Crowe Scholarships were distributed to Brooke Buchanan (Appalachian State University) and Parker Hart (Western Carolina University) for spring and fall 2017.

Revenue (\$157,986) increased again this year, ending 5% over 2016. Total revenue exceeded the budget (\$155,462). Expenses were also reduced (\$144,336) in part due to the secretary vacancy in the first quarter and in part due to utility savings we realized over the year. In December the congregation voted to increase its mission support for 2017 from \$4,000 to \$6,000 (3.85% of revenue). We have accumulated a modest reserve from past years' surpluses (\$69,692). At year-end the unrestricted portion of the reserve was \$61,453.

The 2018 budget was proposed and approved for \$148,751, 3.1% lower than 2017. At that time, pledges (\$122,376) were 82.3% of budget; pledges increased by year-end to \$130,676 and now represent 87.8% of the 2018 budget.

2018 Objectives

Recognizing the increasing challenges to achieving financial success as measured by budgeted expectations, the Finance Committee will continue to faithfully monitor receipts and expenditures. As one way to enhance unified fund revenues, the Committee will also promote the purchase of columbarium niches within the congregation. The Committee will also continue to address recommendations noted in the last audit (2016).

PROPERTY COMMITTEE

Property volunteers see to the proper maintenance and protection of all property of the congregation, including equipment, and take care that the same is kept in good repair and is adequately insured.

2017 Highlights

Developed a punch list of tasks for each month and had a churchwide property workday on Saturday, March 25. Routine maintenance and repair of property and equipment continued throughout the year as needed.

Roof Update – After a continued, unsatisfactory response from Cline Roofing we filed a property loss claim with Church Mutual for the roof damage. The claim was denied. We engaged an attorney to help us pursue legal remedies but ultimately could not reach a satisfactory outcome without incurring even greater expense.

After commissioning and receiving an engineering report and soliciting multiple bids for repairs, we engaged Daniel Enterprises (Charlotte) to complete the repairs. The work was completed in September 2017 and the final successful inspection took place in November 2017. To date, we have spent \$31,088.42, including the legal expenses that we incurred. Because of generous pledges and gifts from the congregation, only \$16,489 was expended from emergency reserves.

Accessibility – Greater attention is being given to the church's accessibility, including consistent access to the lift for worship services and installing handrails in the chancel to aid worship assistants with the steps.

Janitor Services Changed – Long-time sextons, or custodians, Ed and Nancy Marler retired at the end of 2017, and helped develop a comprehensive list of all they did to maintain the church offices and buildings. The new contract for services was bid to three vendors and awarded Darla Wyatt and Wyatt Cleaning, beginning at the New Year. We celebrated the Marlers' retirement with them after worship on December 17.

Congregation Preparedness – After a November church shooting in Texas, the Congregation Council asked Steve Hudgins to form a **safety and security team** under Property. Ascension hosted members of the Shelby Police Department in early December to speak to the congregation about preparedness for an active shooter situation and to answer questions about church safety. Dave Williams agreed to manage the new safety and security team in the New Year and began organizing guidelines and evaluating the current conditions with assistance from ushers and the fire marshal.

2018 Objectives

Replace 132 lights and valances

Replace the keypad entry for the office. (completed in January 2018)

Stretch the carpet in the chancel (completed early in February)

Paint the women's restroom in the church building.

Hold property workday May 5, 2018.

Purchase and install railings in the chancel.

Explore energy savings from City of Shelby before 2019 budget process

Address stress fractures in the columbarium concrete.

Make decisions about Education Building's third floor use and flooring.

Cover the window wells on the southside of the sanctuary and scrape, inspect windows which are on the exterior and decide next steps.

Establish guidelines for safety and security and explore personal safety and public health education with the Faith Community Health Ministry

STEWARDSHIP COMMITTEE

Stewardship volunteers promote the expression of Christian faith in daily living by teaching the Christian use of all the gifts we are given by God, including finances, creation and wellness. Emphasizing giving first fruits, stewardship efforts seek to increase each household's level of proportionate giving annually.

Stewardship Appeals

2017 Highlights

Paid pledges and offerings (\$152,783) accounted for 96.7% of the congregation's revenue (\$157,986.44) in 2017.

In June 2017, we mailed a letter soliciting donations to "Raise the Roof." The congregation was challenged to raise \$20,000 and the congregation council committed \$10,000 from the existing unified fund surplus to cover the estimate expense of replacing the roof on the education building. We received \$22,250 in pledges and gifts.

A fall appeal was made for the Unified Fund for 2018, with a letter mailed in September to all households, and an ingathering of pledges held on the third Sunday of October. We received pledges totaling \$122,376. The 2018 budget is \$148,751, which is 3.1% less than 2017. At that time, the budget figure represented a ratio of pledges to budget equal to 82.3%; however, pledges increased by year-end to \$130,676 and now represent 87.8% of the 2018 budget.

Newsletter articles in February, May, September, October and November provided a vision for stewardship of all of our gifts – spiritual, personal and financial – as well as encouragement to build relationships through fellowship and be attentive to financial stewardship throughout the year.

Noisy Offerings were held on each fifth Sunday, replacing special envelope appeals that had been made in the narthex. These offerings received:

January	\$156.05	Pastor's Discretionary Fund
May	\$105.22	Little Free Pantry (Outreach)
July	\$148.87	Emergency Reserves
October	\$207.67	Lutheran Disaster Response (Hurricane Relief)
December	\$176.14	Hospice Cleveland County

Lenten coin envelopes collected \$176.75 for the Little Free Pantry.

Benevolence

Ascension contributed \$6,000 directly to the NC Synod of the ELCA for benevolence. Benevolence is one of the ways in which our congregation supports the wider Church, including providing scholarships for seminary students, financial support for new congregations in North Carolina and missionaries around the world, and funding for pan-Lutheran agencies, such as Lutheran Disaster Response, Lutheran World Relief and Lutheran Immigrant and Refugee Services.

We also distributed more than \$1,018 in crisis funds through the Pastor's Discretionary Fund.

2018 Objectives

Continue to promote conversations about mission support and stewardship year-round using the newsletter and temple talks.

Expand stewardship education and conversations to include time and talent as well as financial gifts.

Encourage the stewardship of relationships between members of our congregation family.

GOVERNANCE

2017 Highlights

The congregation approved and ratified the constitution that was in 2016.

2018 Objectives (continued from 2017)

Update the congregation history on record with the North Carolina Synod.

LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT

MUTUAL MINISTRY COMMITTEE

The Mutual Ministry committee aids the council, pastor and staff in the assessment of how each is living out the mission, vision, and values of the congregation.

2017 Highlights

The Mutual Ministry Committee did not meet in 2017. The committee's role is to check in periodically regarding the pastor's overall health and well-being and provide feedback to her about her ministry from the congregation's perspective.

2018 Objectives

Recruit additional members to mutual ministry. (completed in January 2018)

NOMINATING COMMITTEE

The nominating committee canvasses the congregation seeking at least two candidates willing to serve as a congregation officer or member for each vacancy. Council members whose terms are ending serve as the nominating committee. Nominations from the congregation are always welcome.

2017 Highlights

Eight of our eleven congregation council members completed their two-year terms on December 31, 2017. In November, three new and three returning council members were nominated and elected to new two-year terms that expire 12/31/2019: Daryl Cook, Mike Hubbard and Jean Waris and Calvin Blalock, Steve Hudgins, Gail Sherman.

2018 Objectives

Three of our nine congregation council members will complete their two-year terms on December 31, 2018. These three will serve as the nominating committee, encouraging new leaders to agree to nomination to the congregation council at the annual meeting in November.

+ POINTING TO JESUS

WORSHIP AND MUSIC COMMITTEE

Worship and Music volunteers administer all programs directly connected to the worship services and see that worship opportunities are provided regularly and in accord with the liturgy of the ELCA. Responsibilities include recruiting and training worship assistants, ushers and readers; providing hymnals and other devotional materials, and arranging for the care of paraments, vestments, and musical instruments and supplies.

Our weekly worship ministry team consists of

Altar Guild and Communion Assistants	coordinated by Carol Berger
Readers, Assisting Ministers	coordinated by Rose Cook
Acolytes and Crucifers	coordinated by Libby Stone
Ushers and Tabulators	coordinated by the church office

Altar Guild meets in January, June and October and always welcome new members.

Worship and Music meets occasionally and then volunteers meet separately to plan specific special services (Reformation, Hanging of the Greens).

Members decorated the sanctuary for each season and for special services, including Ash Wednesday, the Sunday before Thanksgiving and Hanging of the Greens.

2017 Highlights

- Visiting Preachers: Assistant to the Bishop Rev. Sara Ilderton preached on August 19; Young Adult in Global Mission Kurt Hellmann preached on September 10 for God's Work. Our Hands Sunday; and former interim Rev. Bill Batterman preached October 1.
- Special Services: In addition to Lent and Holy Week services, volunteers coordinated Bold Women's Sunday in February, the biannual memorial service for Hospice Cleveland County, a Father's Day worship led by the men of the congregation; a celebration of the 500th anniversary of the Reformation in September; the recognition of veterans in November, and the Hanging of the Greens and Festival of Lessons and Carols in December.
- Worship elements:
 - On Epiphany Sunday, worship was canceled because of snowfall, but "Snow Worship" was offered on YouTube by email and Epiphany stars were distributed the following week to encourage year-long reflection on a word from the Holy Spirit that God was speaking into our lives;
 - Throughout Lent, we worshiped on Wednesday nights with an evening prayer liturgy and studied Luther's catechism in small group "table talks" that recalled Martin Luther's own practice of discussing faith and theology in community;
 - On Palm Sunday, we had an interactive reading of the Passion narrative, and on Easter Sunday, jingle bells were available to anyone who wanted to raise a joyful noise whenever we said or sang "Alleluia" throughout worship.

- On Pentecost Sunday volunteers offered prayers in Spanish, German and American sign language and provided red ribbons for anyone who forgot to wear red and wanted a symbol of the Holy Spirit to hold;
 - The congregation met Flat Jesus Memorial Day weekend and was encouraged to take him on their summer adventures and share photographs of his travels.
- Enhanced Music: The Shelby Vocal Project participated in worship for the Hanging of the Greens. Choir members provided a choral anthem for the Lutherfest worship on September 17 and again on December 17 during Advent. Steve White accompanied Carol Berger and a soloist from Gardner-Webb to provide special music on Christmas Eve.
 - Expanded Worship Community: Pastor Christina again led a Blessing of the Animals at the October Mush, Music and Mutts festival uptown; she preached at the Gardner Webb University School of Divinity's Reformation Service, and Ascension hosted the Community Thanksgiving service that benefits the Shepherd's Table feeding ministry at the Episcopal Church of the Redeemer and the three city shelters for men and women. On December 21, the winter solstice, Ascension hosted our first Longest Night service, which was a service of prayer and reflection with special music by Dr. Cal Robertson from Gardner-Webb Divinity School; seminarian Angie Littlefair preached and one of her mentors Rev. Dr. Lee Ann Marino, an apostle with Apostolic Fellowship International Ministries, participated also.
 - Pastor Christina knit prayer squares for the congregation that were first distributed during worship in July; the tags included Matthew 11:28 ("Come to me, all you that are weary and are carrying heavy burdens, and I will give you rest.") and the message: "This square is made with prayers for your comfort, encouragement, safety and well-being. When you feel lonely or need comfort, reach for me in your pocket. You are not alone. God and our prayers are with you always. God bless and keep you." Extra prayer squares are in a basket in the narthex for anyone to take.

2018 Objectives

Purchase a new banner for Ordinary Time using memorial funds. (completed January 2018)

Introduce a mid-day Ash Wednesday worship. (completed)

Holden Evening Prayer for midweek worship during Lent.

Make arrangements after Easter to re-plate the brass offering plates.

Host the Rutherford Chamber Consort concert at 7 p.m., Saturday, May 26.

Continue to support existing worship and music of the congregation in accordance with the Word of God and the faith and practice of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America.

YOUTH COMMITTEE

The function of the Youth Committee is to coordinate the activities in which children, youth and families participate, and advocate for children, youth and families within the congregation, encouraging and supporting the participation of children, youth and families in the activities of the congregation, the conference, and the synod.

2017 Highlights - Youth

Lock In – Ten youth participated in the lock-in this year with three adults supervising. During a pizza supper, youth shared high and lows and then competed for the win in a cornhole tournament. The youth played Sardines and traditional Hide and Seek in the sanctuary building and then scripted and filmed a video Bible story-telling of the Last Supper for the synod's "Tell It" competition.

ELCA YOUTH GATHERING 2018 – Although an information session was held and some initial fundraising was completed, none of Ascension's youth will be attending the 2018 National Youth Gathering in Houston, Texas.

SOUPER BOWL of Caring – The youth raised \$149.65 for the men's shelter meal that our congregation prepares for the residents of the Cleveland County Rescue Mission during the Souper Bowl of Caring on February 7.

Blessing of the Backpacks – Families with school-age children (K-12) were invited to participate in worship on Sunday, August 10 in a blessing of the backpacks. Each student was invited to receive a prayer and blessing and those who participated also received a gift card from the youth ministry.

"Because We Care" Yard Sale – Donations of clothing, household goods, furniture and toys overflowed from the fellowship hall as volunteers tagged goods for the yard sale that generated more than \$405 for the "Because We Care Fund" of The HealthCare Foundation of Cleveland County, and three youth walked with Pastor Christina and Gail Sherman at the Saturday celebration and butterfly release. All funds raised assist patients and families who are receiving cancer treatment at the local hospital.

Challenger 3 outing – Ten youth and friends enjoyed miniature golf, go karts and the arcade at Challenger 3 on a blustery day in October.

2018 Objectives

Continue to involve a community of caring adults in the lives of our children and youth.

Easter Egg Hunt	March 17 (rain date March 31)
Youth Lock In/Movie Night	April 13
Relay for Life	May 18
Vacation Bible School	Week of July 14
Rock the Park at Carowinds	June 2
Youth Spaghetti Dinner	June 16
Youth-Led Worship and Rally Day	August 26

EDUCATION COMMITTEE

The function of the Education Committee is to oversee the conduct and promotion of faith formation activities for all generations of learners within the congregation, giving attention to ways in which we read and learn Scripture, learn the stories of our faith ancestors and understand Scripture as a collection of what God has already done and where we might see God at work in our world. It shall encourage the use of teaching and worship materials published, or approved by the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, and seek to provide devotion resources and encourage faith practices (share, read, talk, pray, bless) in the homes of the members of the congregation.

2017 Highlights

Confirmation – Three youth celebrated confirmation on Pentecost Sunday in June: Landon Hendrick, Devyn Paul, Rainey Wallen.

Pastor Christina participated in Campfirmation at Lutheridge as part of the teaching team for the Foothills Cluster (Living Saviour, Charlotte; Holy Trinity, Hickory; Cross & Crown, Matthews; St. John's, Hudson; Holy Trinity, Charlotte; St. Stephen's, Lenoir; and St. Michael, Greenville (SC)).

In Fall 2017, confirmation became inter-generational and Pastor Christina invited other “caring adults” to participate in the twice-monthly classes. The group uses the Faith 5 practices as a structure and “The Greatest Story” curriculum for Bible study. The class closes with prayer for the highs and lows shared at the beginning of each class and with a circle of blessing where each person blesses the person next to them.

Sunday Morning Learning/Faith Formation –

Weekly adult Bible study, led by Chris Scheffel and Ludy Wilkie, follows the quarterly Bible study resources from Augsburg and meets year-round in the classroom across from the church offices.

Cross+Gen Faith Formation met monthly during the 16-17 school year and twice monthly in the summer. This inter-generational group met in the Fellowship Hall and structures its learning around Faith 5 (Share, Read, Talk, Pray, Bless).

Film Screenings We hosted joint education and fellowship activities including a February 1 screening of “The Bible Tells Me So” and the Rick Steves’ documentary “Luther and the Reformation.”

Reformation with the Presbyterians – Some members of the congregation participated with Shelby Presbyterian Church in dinner and a skit about Martin Luther’s life to celebrate the 500th Anniversary of the Reformation in October.

Lenten Book Study – Pastor Christina led a Lenten study of David Lose’s *Making Sense of the Cross*. There were between six and eight participants who met weekly for prayer and conversation.

Advent Lectionary Bible Study– For four Wednesdays in Advent, a group met with the pastor for a lectionary Bible study.

2018 Objectives

Continue lay-led weekly Bible study and inter-generational confirmation.

Pastor-led book study for Lent using Richard Rohr's *Falling Upward*.

Confirmation on Pentecost, May 20, 2018 for Chase Buchanan, Logan Lacy, Max Smolzer and Zach Smolzer.

+ OUTREACH

OUTREACH COMMITTEE

The purpose of the Outreach Committee is to extend Christian compassion and helpfulness to the ill, aged, orphaned, the underprivileged, the imprisoned, and, in general, to persons of all ages in need of aid in body or soul. They will strive to enlist as many as possible of the individual members and organizations of the congregation.

2017 Highlights

Cleveland County Rescue Mission continues to be supported by volunteers who prepare a monthly meal for the residents at their men's shelter on Buffalo Street. Between 30-50 people are served at each meal.

Graham Elementary School continues to receive backpacks for five students. The school transitioned to a year-round schedule in July.

Hospice Cleveland County received donations from Hearts for Hospice, and Clarann Schiavo continued to advocate for Hospice as a watchman in our congregation. We participated in Hearts for Hospice and hosted the spring memorial service and reception for patient families. Pastor Christina continued to volunteer at memory bear workshops where families are invited to make a teddy bear out of a loved one's clothing and visit with Hospice patients when possible.

Building Use by Outside Groups: Lutheran Services Carolinas uses the conference room weekly to meet with clients. The American Legion, Mustang Club, Relay for Life, Quilters, Lutheran Men in Mission, and several families also rented our space for events. Outside, Shelby High School used the parking lot for staging their Homecoming Parade in October.

Community Thanksgiving Meal

More than a dozen congregation members gathered at Graham School on the day before Thanksgiving to support the Feeding Kids Cleveland County neighborhood Thanksgiving Meal.

2018 Objectives

Bless the Little Free Pantry (completed in January)

Promote and encourage the congregation's 95th anniversary outreach collection of items for Hospice Cleveland County wish list with the goal of collecting at least 95 units each month.

Continue to support existing outreach and fellowship activities.

FAITH HEALTH COMMUNITY MINISTRY

2017 Highlights

Pastor Christina continued to serve as the trained faith community health promoter for our congregation.

Providing accurate health information Using the bulletin board in the hallway outside the church offices, we provided information about 2017 topics. The materials are provided free of charge as part of our partnership with CHS. Pastor Christina also participated in “lunch and learn” meetings that provided information about financial health, suicide awareness and prevention, adverse childhood experiences (ACEs), breast health and immune system support. Twenty people in the congregation completed a health ministry survey in May; the overwhelming preference was to receive written communication such as email, mail, newsletter, bulletin insert, etc.

“Here We Walk” was a six-week activity that invited members to be active for at least thirty minutes a day during July and August. Participants had a map they could color in as they progressed around a route that included significant sites in Germany in Martin Luther’s life. A half-dozen members completed their maps and received various prizes for their effort.

Advocating for health needs in our community Pastor Christina participated in Carolina HealthCare’s “chaplain’s grand rounds” which featured education on mental illness, anxiety and depression through its “Healing Link” program which fosters a network of community advocates who work or volunteer in a variety of settings to achieve a healthier community for us all.

Lifeline Screening, a health screening provider, rented the building to provide screenings to community members.

Limited Counseling Pastor Christina trained in seminary to use Prepare/Enrich curriculum for marital and premarital counseling and pastoral care. Neither pastoral care nor pastoral counseling is intended to be long-term, and as appropriate, individuals are referred to professional, licensed providers.

2018 Objectives

Continue to encourage healthy choices and provide relevant health information to our congregation.

Host Desert Days on the first Friday of even months (February, April, June, August, October, December) to encourage spiritual well-being. The day’s schedule is designed to allow time for silence with God indoors or in the prayer garden or columbarium as well as group time for centering prayer and reflection. The initiative is in cooperation with the Anchorage in Greenville, SC and there is no cost to participate.

+ CALLING OTHERS TO SERVICE

Relay for Life was held at the fairgrounds on May 19 with participants raising \$797.34. Fundraisers included a hot dog dinner and Sock Hop, “Blue Jean” Sundays (April 23 and 30 and May 7 and 14) and sales of t-shirts and handmade jewelry.

Willi and Ray Lacy participated with Pastor Christina in the **annual assembly** of the NC Synod of the ELCA held in Greensboro. The assembly is a gathering of rostered leaders and church staff, synod council and staff, as well as voting members from the congregations that form the synod. Reporting on business from the previous year and celebrating the ministries of our congregations, we gather each year for a time of worship, fellowship, learning and exploring ways we can be church together for the sake of the world.

For a fourth year, volunteers pitched in to help out neighbors on **God’s Work, Our Hands Sunday**. We invited Young Adult in Global Mission to preach during morning worship and then held a congregation meal and program about YAGM. About two dozen volunteers made ten fleece blankets that were shipped Lutheran World Relief later in the fall.

We provided 30 shoeboxes of small toys and toiletries for **Operation Christmas Child** this year. A group of volunteers traveled to work in the Charlotte warehouse on December 4.

+ PRAYER

PRAYER AND CRISIS CARE

Prayer Requests – Prayer request forms are available in the narthex. Please submit the prayer requests by placing prayer request forms in the offering plate or by contacting the church office. The prayer list, administered through the church office, is printed weekly in the worship bulletin. Requests remain for three weeks. Requests for renewals can be made by contacting the church office.

Funeral Committee – Thankfully, this committee was able to rest this year. Loving support was provided to the families of Rick Jackson and Greg Peeler.

Prayer Garden – A prayer garden was designed and constructed with volunteer materials and labor and remaining funds from the 90th anniversary year. Located near the lift to the sanctuary, the garden has seating and landscaping to provide a quiet corner for prayer and reflection. It was blessed in the New Year. (2018)

Community Presence – At year-end, after nearly three years, Pastor Christina ended her service as a volunteer chaplain with the Cleveland County Sheriff Department. Local clergy participate in a rotation of chaplains who provide weekly chapel services to the officers and detectives on duty. She provided the benediction for the 2017 Martin Luther King, Jr. celebration at Shelby High School. She participated in the National Day of Prayer observance at City Hall. She also participates in Police Chief Ledford’s “Partnership for Change” quarterly assembly of clergy and ministers.

+ AFFIRMATION

VISITOR/NEW MEMBER

Visitor Follow-Up – Visitors worshiping with us who provide a phone number or mailing address are called or sent a written note from Pastor Christina acknowledging their presence. Questions about Ascension and our ministries are discussed to help them in consideration of membership at Ascension.

New members – Pastor Christina meets with prospective members individually, answering questions about Lutheran tradition, the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA) and our congregation and ministries. We welcomed four new households as members in 2017: Mark and Miranda Hudgins and their sons Ford and Dylan; Karen and Mike Hubbard; Courtney Richards and her children Caleb and Emily; and by transfer of letter, Ladley and Jane Burn.

FELLOWSHIP COMMITTEE

Fellowship – Special events this year included mid-week Lenten dinners, breakfast on Easter morning, Lutherfest in September, and a potluck meal after Hanging of the Greens in December.

Adventurers – On the first Saturday of each month, “Adventurers” meet at 9:00 am for breakfast at a local restaurant, often Creekside Clock Restaurant off Dixon Blvd. Cards are also signed for homebound members and members on the prayer list.

WOMEN OF THE ELCA

All women are invited to participate as they are able in 2018. Details are found in weekly emails and the bulletin.

Lin Washburn and Pastor Christina participated in the February one day retreat at Salem Lutheran Church in Hickory and Lisa Philbeck led the young women at the spring retreat at Kure Beach and at the synodical gathering at Lenoir-Rhyne in June. Lisa was elected to the synodical board in June and attended those committee and meeting days as well as the Fall Gathering at Redeemer Lutheran Church in Gastonia. We hosted a breakfast on Pentecost Sunday for the confirmation students and their families and provides gifts of NIV Bibles to the three confirmands.

In October, the women hosted a vendor fair supporting entrepreneurs from nearly twenty local businesses to raise money for the congregation’s “Raise the Roof” campaign. A December sock drive also collected 186 pairs of socks for residents at Heritage Oaks.

COMMUNICATION –

The Lutheran subscriptions – Each household of Ascension has the option of receiving ***The Lutheran*** publication (the magazine of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America) by printed subscription at a greatly reduced rate.

Website – The church website (www.ascensionlutheranshelby.org) is maintained regularly by Pastor Christina. Audio recordings of the weekly sermons are available online.

Weekly e-news - The *Weekly Notes from Ascension* is distributed on Thursdays via email to all interested members and households (68) with computer access and email addresses. This weekly communication includes current highlights of our ministry areas, the upcoming week's church calendar, and the weekly prayers of the people. Individuals and groups may submit articles for publication.

MEMBERSHIP DATA (as of December 31, 2017)

Baptized Membership	133
Child Membership	19
Confirmed Membership	114
Voting Membership	93
Average Sunday Worship Attendance	56

RECEIVED IN 2016

By Baptism	2	Dylan Turner, Hudson Smolzer
By Transfer from ELCA Congregations	0	
From Non-Lutheran Congregations	2	Ladley and Jane Burn
By Affirmation of Faith	5 (3)	Mark, Miranda and Ford Turner; Karen and Mike Hubbard; Courtney, Caleb and Emily Richards
By Restoration	None	
By Confirmation	3	Landon Hendrick, Devyn Paul and Rainey Wallen
Communion Milestone	0	

REMOVED IN 2017

To the Church Triumphant

Rick Jackson	June 3
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To other ELCA Lutheran Congregations	0
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To Non-Lutheran Congregations	0
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Administrative Action (12/31/2017)	0
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FROM OUR PASTOR

Dear Ascension Church Family,

When I report monthly to the congregation council, I organize my ministry activities under headings that reflect the core values our congregation adopted: Pointing to Jesus, Outreach, Calling Others to Service, Prayer and Affirmation. Reflecting on the past year in ministry together, I want to share some of the highs, or great joys, that have taken place in those different areas of ministry.

Pointing to Jesus Worship continues to be one of my favorite ministry activities. I am grateful for times when we can have a variety of voices participate in leading our worship, and especially appreciate the support that was given to new worship opportunities like hosting the Hospice Memorial Service, Community Thanksgiving worship and Longest Night worship.

Outreach “God’s Work Our Hands” Sunday in September engages us in ministry that extends beyond the corner of Lafayette and Marietta Streets. This year, we welcomed Kurt Hellmann, a Young Adult in Global Mission who had completed a service year in Cambodia, and with funds from a Thrivent Action grant we purchased and assembled ten fleece blankets that were shipped to Lutheran World Relief for distribution.

Calling Others to Service Committing to support Angie Littlefair by providing her with a ministry site during her senior year at Gardner-Webb Divinity School has been life-giving. Being a place where students can explore their gifts and raising up new leaders for the Church are challenging roles for a congregation. I have been delighted to see you welcome Angie into weekly Bible study and encourage her leadership in worship and teaching.

Prayer The prayer garden, established with remaining 90th anniversary funds and individual donations, is a visible sign to our neighborhood that God is here and an invitation to sit and rest in God’s peace.

Affirmation Baptisms! What a joy it was to welcome Dylan Turner and Hudson Smolzer into the family of God through baptism and promise to support them and pray for them.

Thankfully, there are more highs than lows in our ministry together, and I am grateful for the opportunity to share in what God is doing in this place!

+ Pastor Christina

To be an extension of the hands of Christ.

FROM OUR PRESIDENT

Dear Ascension Church Family,

Thank you for the privilege of being your Congregation Council President for the past year. Your continued support means a great deal to me.

It has been an interesting year-one with some surprises:

We can finally say the roof on the education building is not leaking. The Property Team picked Daniel Enterprises to undo the previous damage caused by previous contractors. Payment for new roofing was made with funds from Emergency Reserve. Pledges from the congregation will replenish that fund over the next three years.

Debby Chaffin was welcomed as our secretary in March. Ed and Nancy Marler announced their retirement as church sextons in December after 25 years of service. They were honored at a coffee fellowship after church.

The Prayer Garden and Little Free Pantry were projects of Women of the ELCA in addition to the backpack program at Graham Elementary and feeding the Men's Shelter monthly. We continue to support Hospice of Cleveland County as well as Heritage Oaks in Gastonia.

We welcomed guest preachers: Kurt Hellman from Young Adults in Global Mission, Assistant to the Bishop Pastor Sara Ilderton, and our former interim Pastor Bill Batterman.

The ladies presided over Bold Women's Sunday in February and the men took over on Father's Day for a special Men's Service.

We reached into the community hosting the Thanksgiving worship service for the first time.

Landon Hendrick, Devyn Paul, and Rainey Wallen were confirmed on Pentecost and were honored with their families at a special breakfast.

Courtney Richards and her children Emily and Caleb, Karen and Michael Hubbard, Ladley and Jane Burn, and Mark and Miranda Turner and their children Ford and Dylan became part of our family as new members.

We served as a ministry site for Gardner Webb Divinity School student Angie Littlefair.

Council verified values which we found most important to Ascension:

- I. Incorporation of new members into congregation life.
- II. Build strong, healthy relationships among members.
- III. Nurture people's faith through worship.
- IV. Help members live out their faith in daily lives.
- V. Be a positive force in the community.

God continues to bless Ascension Lutheran and the Holy Spirit is alive and well in our activities.

Special thank yous to Ludy Wilkie, Bob Bryant, Kelly Smolzer, and Greg Blalock as they end their congregation council terms. We welcome back Calvin Blalock, Steve Hudgins, and Gail Sherman as well as new members Jean Waris and Michael Hubbard.

Respectfully Submitted,
Judy Bridges
Council President 2017

2017 TREASURER'S REPORT*Greg Blalock*

		YEAR TO DATE	BUDGET	PERCENT OF BUDGET
<u>Unified Fund receipts:</u>				
	Loose offering	\$ 979.63		
	Unified pledges	147,601.00		
	3rd Sunday offering	4,202.00		
	Columbarium niche payments	2,750.00		
	Designated - budgeted items	1,497.00		
	Other income	956.81		
	Investment income	-		
	Total receipts	\$ 157,986.44	\$ 155,462.00	102%
<u>Unified Fund disbursements:</u>				
101	Benevolence	6,000.00	\$ 6,000.00	100%
201	Pastor's Salary	40,113.96	40,114.00	100%
202	Pension, Health Plans	18,050.28	18,050.00	100%
205	Pastor's Social Security	6,212.04	6,212.00	100%
206	Housing Allowance	14,043.00	14,043.00	100%
207	Office Expense	3,013.94	3,000.00	100%
208	Worship & Music	1,363.88	1,300.00	105%
209	Education	791.21	600.00	132%
210	Vacation Bible School	-	-	
211	Youth Activities	90.99	200.00	45%
212	Outreach	341.47	300.00	114%
214	Continuing Education/Development	1,116.67	800.00	140%
215	Ministry Expenses	3,036.72	3,600.00	84%
216	Supply Pastor/Organist	522.00	600.00	87%
217	Synod Assembly Expense	906.58	1,500.00	60%
221	Stewardship	234.20	300.00	78%
301	Lawn Care/Custodian Services	7,584.50	7,200.00	105%
311	Lead Organist Salary	10,462.39	10,300.00	102%
312	Lead Organist Soc. Sec.	800.47	788.00	102%
313	Associate Organist	2,547.00	2,472.00	103%
321	Secretary Salary	3,220.03	8,158.00	39%
322	Secretary Social Security	246.32	625.00	39%
401	Church Utilities	11,714.43	15,000.00	78%
404	Insurance	6,320.00	9,000.00	70%
405	Publications	2,471.87	1,300.00	190%
601	Maintenance	3,131.81	4,000.00	78%
	Tax withholdings	-	-	
	Total disbursements	\$ 144,335.76	\$ 155,462.00	93%
	Unified Fund surplus / (deficit)	\$ 13,650.68	\$ -	
<u>Designated receipts/(disbursements):</u>				
	Receipts	\$ 50,720.23		
	Disbursements	(56,899.57)		
	Net change in designated items	\$ (6,179.34)	\$ -	
	Beginning balance - Unified Fund	\$ 62,220.98		
	Ending balance - Unified Fund	\$ 69,692.32		

OTHER ACCOUNT BALANCES:

Emergency Reserve Fund	\$	21,642.35
Roof Funds	\$\$	-
Youth Funds	\$\$	5,867.91
Cooper-Crowe Scholarship Fund	\$\$	3,001.76
Petty Cash	\$\$	200.00
Capital Improvement Fund	\$\$	3,497.19
Organ Maintenance Fund	\$\$	3,100.80
Pastor's Discretionary Fund	\$\$	545.06
Social Ministry / Outreach Fund	\$\$	1,741.09
Anniversary Fund	\$\$	496.82
Youth Savings	\$\$	1,492.15
WELCA	\$	455.35

2018 APPROVED BUDGET

	ASCENSION LUTHERAN CHURCH	2018 BUDGET ADOPTED	2017 BUDGET ADOPTED
101	Benevolence / Synod Mission Support	\$ 4,000	\$ 4,000
201	Pastor's Salary	40,817	40,114
202	Pension, Health Plans	18,920	18,050
205	Pastor's Social Security	6,321	6,212
206	Housing Allowance	14,289	14,043
207	Office Expense	2,500	3,000
208	Worship & Music	1,300	1,300
209	Education	600	600
211	Youth Activities	200	200
212	Outreach	300	300
214	Continuing Education/Development	800	800
215	Ministry expenses (Auto Allowance)	3,600	3,600
216	Supply Pastor/Organist	600	600
217	Synod Assembly Expense	1,200	1,500
221	Stewardship	300	300
301	Lawn Care/Custodian Services	7,200	7,200
311	Lead Organist Salary	10,500	10,300
312	Lead Organist Soc. Sec.	804	788
313	Associate Organist	2,522	2,472
321	Secretary Salary	4,159	8,158
322	Secretary Social Security	319	625
401	Church Utilities	13,000	15,000
404	Insurance	7,500	9,000
405	Publications	1,000	1,300
601	Maintenance	6,000	4,000
Total Unified Expenses		\$ 148,751	\$ 153,462