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Ascension Lutheran Church
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704-487-5679

CHURCH STAFF

The Rev. Christina L. Auch, Pastor pastorchristinaauch@gmail.com
Debby Chaffin, Secretary ascensionsecof@bellsouth.net
Rose Cook, Financial Secretary (volunteer)
Steve White, Organist
Cathy Hubbard, Organist

2018 CONGREGATION COUNCIL OFFICERS Term ending []

Judy Bridges, President [18] Gail Sherman, Secretary [19]
Daryl Cook, Vice President [19] Greg Blalock, Treasurer

2018 CONGREGATION COUNCIL

Calvin Blalock [19] Steve Hudgins [19] Sandra Waldrop [18]
Mike Hubbard [19] Lisa Philbeck [18] Jean Waris [19]

COMMITTEES OF COUNCIL:

FIDUCIARY

FINANCE Daryl Cook
COLUMBARIUM Daryl Cook
Members: Calvin Blalock, Judy Bridges, Ray Lacy, Steve Eckard
PROPERTY Steve Hudgins and Mike Hubbard
STEWARDSHIP Calvin Blalock

GOVERNANCE

LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT

MUTUAL MINISTRY
Members: Allen Philbeck, Willi Lacy, DP Washburn

NOMINATING

Members: Judy Bridges, Lisa Philbeck, Sandra Waldrop

MISSION

Pointing to Jesus
WORSHIP and MUSIC Sandra Waldrop and Jean Waris
YOUTH Lisa Philbeck
EDUCATION Gail Sherman

Calling Others to Service

OUTREACH

FAITH COMMUNITY HEALTH MINISTRY

Lisa Philbeck

Pastor Christina Auch

Prayer

Affirmation

FELLOWSHIP

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.

2018 Highlights

Cooper-Crowe Scholarships were distributed to Brooke Buchanan (Lenoir Rhyne University) and Parker Hart (Western Carolina University) for spring 2018 and to them and to Jacob Stone (Lenoir Rhyne University) for fall 2018.

Revenue (\$159,023) increased again this year, ending 1% over 2017. Total revenue exceeded the budget (\$148,751). Expenses were higher than 2017, in part due to staffing changes in the secretary and custodian roles and the cost of security and safety equipment that was installed in the church. In September, we transferred \$34,000 from our accumulated surplus to fully fund the emergency reserve at previous levels. At year-end the unrestricted portion of the reserve was \$34,354.

Pledges for 2019 total \$121,856. The 2019 budget is \$155,130, which is 4.3% more than 2018. The budget figure represents a ratio of pledges to budget equal to 78.6%.

Finance accepted a recommendation from the congregation council to incrementally increase benevolence over a five-year period in order to achieve a contribution equal to 10% of receipts in 2023.

The congregation hosted ELCA Gift Planner Deacon Mitzie Schafer to talk with the congregation and our members about gift planning. We then asked two working groups to develop endowment bylaws and a gift policy. The former was approved at the November annual meeting; the latter is a work in progress.

2019 Objectives

Continue to faithfully monitor receipts and expenditures.

Promote the purchase of columbarium niches within the congregation.

Continue to address recommendations noted in the last audit (2016).

Finish and present completed gift policy to the congregation.

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.

2018 Highlights

Safety and security

Responding to requests to increase the security of our church building, we installed six cameras at entrances to the building. Bobby Jones built and installed a cabinet in the narthex to hold the monitor and equipment. We also installed push bars to allow us to lock doors but also to push out in case of emergencies. The \$4,011 expense was covered by accumulated surplus in the Unified Fund.

Accessibility

In November, we installed a new outside elevator for the entrance to the narthex. The old unit failed in August and was outdated. We are now in compliance with NC state code. Property procured services from two electrical companies Weaver Electrical helped us conform the old elevator system to interface with the new lift. The elevator expense was approved by the congregation in September and paid for by emergency reserves.

While the lift was out of operation, property volunteers also established a chapel space in the church basement and installed an audio and video system that allows guests to view our services from downstairs. This space and technology allows people who cannot manage the stairs or have other reasons to be out of the sanctuary to attend worship and participate in communion. This area can also be used for overflow for funerals.

Additional Work

Early in the year, the carpet in the sanctuary was stretched and new railings were installed in the chancel to reduce the risk of falling on the stairs there. Steve Hudgins, Judy Hudgins, Dave Williams and Bobby Jones removed old hardware in the ladies' restroom in the church, painted and replaced drapes. Bobby Jones installed mini blinds in the Sunday school classroom and changed out valances in the light fixture. Scott Stone changed the cloth draped on the cross at Lent and Easter.

Bobby Jones and Dave Williams cut up and removed large tree limbs that were brought down by storms on our property. We also had all the old stumps removed from the grounds. Property worked with an anonymous donor to get the church parking lot sealed, painted and striped. Carl Grigg Electrical helped repair lights outside the church in time for the community Thanksgiving service.

We had a very successful work day in September where 19 people showed up for a hot breakfast and folks worked on repairing concrete pads and pressure washing sidewalks, cutting tree limbs, trimming shrubs, polishing furniture, repairing lights in the basement and halls and having a good time. Volunteers also distributed soil between the trees to reduce erosion.

2019 Objectives

Install new batteries in HVAC instrument panels

Work up prices to repair all the outside lighting and address intermittent outages in the education building and complete work (requires approval)

Working on plan to divert water away from church wall by the lift

Establish a working group to study bathrooms and make recommendations to council

Prune outside shrubbery as needed

Work on sound system problems

Cover the window wells on the southside of the sanctuary and scrape, inspect windows which are on the exterior and contract for repainting. (requires approval)

Paint all outside doors

Defrost freezer in church kitchen

Repair tiles in columbarium as needed

Begin planning for church work day for the first Saturday of September

Begin making changes to bathrooms (requires approval)

Continue work in restrooms including painting men's room

Help with any outside Christmas decorations

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

2018 Highlights

Paid pledges and offerings (\$153,058) accounted for 96.2% of the congregation's revenue (\$159,023) in 2018.

A fall appeal was made for the Unified Fund for 2019, with a letter mailed in September to all households, and an ingathering of pledges held on the third Sunday of October. Pledges for 2019 total \$ 121,856. The 2019 budget is \$ 155,130, which is 4.3% more than 2018. The budget figure represents a ratio of pledges to budget equal to 78.6%.

Newsletter articles in January, February, April, July, September and December offered thanks for the gifts given to the congregation, encouraged a spiritual practice of gratitude and provided a vision for stewardship of all of our gifts – spiritual, personal and financial. Participation in the life of the congregation and the importance of building relationships through fellowship were promoted also.

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

April	\$170.02	Graham School Social Workers
July	\$296.24	Boys & Girls Club of Cleveland County
September	\$125.20	Cleveland County Potato Project
December	\$96.20	Agape Mission Community

Lenten coin envelopes collected \$401 for ELCA Good Gifts.

Benevolence

Ascension contributed \$4,000 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 \$1,787 in **crisis funds** through the Pastor's Discretionary Fund.

2019 Objectives

Continue to promote conversations about mission support and stewardship year-round.

GOVERNANCE

2018 Highlights

Drafted an update to 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.

2018 Highlights

The Mutual Ministry Committee did not meet in 2017 or 2018 but new members were added to the committee in 2018. 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.

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.

2018 Highlights

Three of our nine congregation council members completed their two-year terms on December 31, 2018. Calvin Blalock also resigned his council position, effective December 31, 2018. In November, four new council members and one returning council member were nominated and elected to new two-year terms that expire 12/31/2020: Greg Blalock, Bob Bryant, Steve Eckard and Ludy Wilkie and Sandra Waldrop.

2019 Objectives

Five of our ten congregation council members will complete their two-year terms on December 31, 2019. These five 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 the church office
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.

2018 Highlights

Visiting Preachers:

Seminarian Angie Littlefair preached on Bold Women's Sunday and again on April 8. NC Synod Bishop Timothy Smith returned to preach on Pentecost in May and Reverend Dee Liss preached on June 17. Mary Costner, who is participating in the synod's lay preaching certification, preached on October 7 and Ludy Wilkie preached for the worship led by Ascension's men on October 14. Pastors Danielle DeNise and Sara Ilderton and Deacon Deb Johnson preached in November when Pastor Christina was out on medical leave.

Special Services:

In addition to Lent and Holy Week services, volunteers coordinated Bold Women's Sunday in February and we celebrated the baptism of Steve White's granddaughter in May. Pastor Christina led a Blessing of the Animals in the columbarium in October, and the men of the congregation led worship one Sunday in October, too. We recognized veterans in November, and volunteers led the Hanging of the Greens and Festival of Lessons and Carols in December. When worship was canceled because of December snow, Pastor Christina created and published an Advent service on video that was shared on social media and by email.

Worship elements:

Pastor Christina led a new midday Ash Wednesday service that was a service of the word with the imposition of ashes. Throughout Lent, we worshiped on Wednesday nights with Holden Evening Prayer; Angie Littlefair, Lisa Philbeck, Sandra Waldrop and Carol Berger assisted Pastor Christina with the liturgy and organist Steve White accompanied them. On Easter Sunday, jingle bells were available to anyone who wanted to raise a joyful noise whenever we said or sang "Alleluia" throughout worship. June 3, 2018, we dedicated a new banner for Ordinary Time, given in memory of Ann Berger.

Enhanced Music:

We hosted the Rutherford Chamber Consort concert in the evening on Saturday, May 26. On Christmas Eve, Steve White accompanied Carol Berger and a soloist from Gardner-Webb to provide special music.

Expanded Worship Community:

Ascension again 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.

2019 Objectives

Find a new vendor after Easter to re-plate the brass offering plates.

Find a solution to the difficulty of lighting the Advent wreath.

Find a solution to the problem of the vandalized luminaries

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.

2018 Highlights

A community Easter egg hunt was held on Saturday, March 17 and attended by community and congregation families. Pastor Christina and a parent took two youth to the synod's YouthQuake, a day of fellowship, worship, learning and service, in Hickory on Saturday, October 6. Youth collected, sorted and distributed Christmas cards in December.

While we continue to involve a community of caring adults in the lives of our children and youth, it has been and continues to be challenging to plan specific youth group events. Youth and parents have competing demands on their schedules and a disparate variety of interests.

2019 Objectives

Provide scholarships for youth to go to camp.

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.

2018 Highlights

Confirmation – Four youth celebrated confirmation on Pentecost Sunday in May: Chase Buchanan, Logan Lacy, Max Smolzer and Zach Smolzer.

Pastor Christina participated in Campfirmation at Lutheridge as part of the teaching team for the Foothills Cluster (Cross & Crown, Matthews; Holy Trinity, Charlotte; Incarnation, Columbia; Living Saviour, Charlotte; Mt. Olive, Hickory and St. Michael, Greenville (SC)). The cluster decided after camp to close and will not continue

Confirmation continued to involve both parents and students in 2018 and in the new school year the class focus moved from the Bible to the Reformation and Luther's teachings in the Small Catechism.

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.

Lenten Book Study – Pastor Christina led a Lenten study of Father Richard Rohr's book *Falling Upward*. There were between three and five participants who met weekly for conversation.

Summer Bible study – Pastor Christina led an eight-week summer study of the Book of John using a film version of the gospel and the Book of Faith study. There were between four and eight participants who met weekly.

Summer Book Study – Pastor Christina led a four-week study of Diana Butler Bass' book *Grounded* that was offered to anyone in the NC Synod. There were between three and five participants who met weekly for conversation using online video conferencing.

2019 Objectives

Continue lay-led weekly Bible study and confirmation classes.

Offer a Lenten Bible study.

Confirmation on Pentecost for Caleb Richards and RuthAnne Hoffman.

+ 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.*

2018 Highlights

Hospice Cleveland County received donations from Hearts for Hospice and Clarann Schiavo continued to advocate for Hospice as a watchman in our congregation. 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. As we celebrated our congregation's 95th anniversary, we collected items from the hospice wish list with the goal of collecting at least 95 units each month.

On July 29th we celebrated the **feeding ministry** volunteers who retired in June after 13 years of feeding hungry neighbors, first in our fellowship hall and then by delivering a meal for the 30-50 residents of the Cleveland County Rescue Mission.

Clarann Schiavo also retired as the volunteer coordinator for the **backpack ministry** to students at Graham Elementary School. We are working on continuing involvement with backpacks by partnering with the local Feeding Kids Cleveland County organization.

The **Little Free Pantry** was installed and blessed for ministry in January. For eleven months we provided toiletries and non-food items to neighbors in need. Sometimes, community members also contributed items. Hats and socks were the most popular items. Unfortunately, the pantry was vandalized just before Christmas. We have decided not to reinstall it.

Building Use by Outside Groups: Lutheran Services Carolinas reserves the conference room weekly to meet with clients. Lifeline Screening, the American Legion, Relay for Life, Foothills Quilter Guild, and several families also rented our space for events. Outside, Shelby High School used the parking lot for staging their Homecoming Parade in October.

2019 Objectives

Continue to support outreach and fellowship activities.

+ CALLING OTHERS TO SERVICE

Daryl and Rose Cook participated with Pastor Christina in the **annual assembly** of the NC Synod of the ELCA held in Raleigh. 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 fifth year, volunteers gave their time in service to others on **God's Work, Our Hands Sunday**. On Saturday, September 8, seventeen volunteers worked inside and outside the church property donating their time and sweat to accomplish needed landscaping and cleaning. "God's Work, Our Hands" weekend continued on Sunday, September 9 with a collection of 10 lb. bags of white potatoes for the **Cleveland County Potato Project**. After collecting 470 pounds of potatoes, we celebrated with food and fellowship at the annual congregation picnic.

+ 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. Handmade knitted prayer squares are available in the narthex.

Funeral Committee – This committee coordinated a reception for friends and family of Jack Cummings and Charlie McCall, and meal delivery to Bob Bryant after Cindy's funeral.

Prayer Garden – Constructed in 2017, the space was blessed in the New Year. It provides quiet space for prayer and reflection.

Community Presence – Pastor Christina participates in Police Chief Ledford's "Partnership for Change" quarterly assembly of clergy and ministers as well as a monthly ministerium at the local hospital.

+ 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 Fred and Nancy DeBell as new members in 2018 and welcomed William Coyne and Ronnie and Vickie Jo Franks back.

FELLOWSHIP COMMITTEE

Fellowship – Special events this year included mid-week Lenten dinners, breakfast on Easter morning, and a congregation picnic in September.

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 2019. Details are found in weekly emails and the bulletin.

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 Vice President of the synodical board in June and attends committee and meeting days as well as special events for the state organization. We hosted a breakfast on Pentecost Sunday for the confirmands and for our one high school graduate and provided gifts.

Buck a Chick during the Easter season raised \$80 for ELCA Good Gifts, and we made a \$200 donation in November to provide school uniforms and fees for girls in need. A December sock drive collected 113 pairs of socks for residents at Heritage Oaks.

FAITH HEALTH COMMUNITY MINISTRY

2018 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, she provided information about brain health, respiratory health, heat related illness and medication safety. The bulletin board 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 community health, nutrition and Atrium’s community resource hub and in the 6th Annual Tony Biles Convocation which focused on Addictions and the Faith Community.

Pastor Christina was trained in both **mental health first aid for adults** and “QPR”(“Question. Persuade. Refer.”) which is a strategy to recognize the warning signs, clues and suicidal communication of people who may be in crisis.

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

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.

Pastor Christina offered three **Desert Days** (February, April and August) to encourage spiritual well-being. The schedule allowed time for silence with God indoors or in the prayer garden or columbarium as well as time for centering prayer and reflection. The initiative was inspired by the Anchorage in Greenville, SC and there was no cost to participate.

2019 Objectives

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

COMMUNICATION –

The Lutheran subscriptions – Each household of Ascension has the opportunity to receive **The Lutheran** publication (the magazine of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America). Contact the church office if you would like to subscribe.

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

Podcasts - Most Sundays the sermon is recorded and made available on an RSS feed on iTunes, Google Play, Stitcher and TuneIn (search for "Pastor Christina Auch"). Links are also published on Facebook, Twitter and on the website. The sermon text is posted on the pastor's blog.

Weekly e-news - The *Weekly Notes from Ascension* is distributed on Wednesdays via email to all interested members and households (72) 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, 2018)

Baptized Membership	132
Child Membership (15 and under)	12
Confirmed Membership	121
Voting Membership	94
Average Sunday Worship Attendance	58

RECEIVED IN 2018

By Baptism	1	Norah Wood (Steve White's granddaughter)
By Transfer from ELCA Congregations	2	Nancy and Fred DeBell
From Non-Lutheran Congregations	1	Angie Littlefair (Associate)
By Affirmation of Faith	0	
By Restoration	3	William Coyne, Vicki Jo and Ronnie Franks
By Confirmation	4	Chase Buchanan, Logan Lacy, Max Smolzer Zach Smolzer
Communion Milestone	0	

REMOVED IN 2018

To the Church Triumphant	2	Charles Elwyn McCall (10/14/2018) and Cynthia Williams Bryant (12/15/2018)
To other ELCA Lutheran Congregations	5	Micah, Kelli, Hunter, Lilly and Ryder Sturgis
To Non-Lutheran Congregations	0	
Administrative Action (12/31/2018)	0	

FROM OUR PASTOR

Dear Ascension Church Family,

Sometimes I am asked, “What is your vision for your congregation?” and I answer, “I don’t have a vision for the congregation because I believe the vision of who our congregation is must come from the people themselves.” I am a partner in ministry with each of you, and *together* we live out the mission of our congregation, incorporating new members, building strong and healthy relationships, nurturing our faith through worship and helping each other live out our faith in between Sundays, too. *Together* we are the extension of Christ into our community.

I think I say it every year, but the practice of reporting on our ministries and congregation life is both joy and encouragement for me. It helps remind me of God’s abundance and generosity when I witness your response to God’s grace in your love for each other and for our neighbors.

I am especially grateful for the ways that you allow me to be a community pastor involved with Hospice Cleveland County and the Common Ground pay-as-you-can café and for your investment in my ongoing formation and education. In 2018, I spent time with colleagues learning about the intersections of pastoral care and spiritual care and training in mental health first aid and suicide intervention. I also dedicated time to the craft of preaching, learning alongside other preachers in St. Paul, receiving constructive criticism from The Rev. Amy Butler from Riverside Church in New York, and participating in North Carolina’s own women’s preaching festival in Durham.

As you read the reports from our ministries, celebrate what you see, but also ask, what’s missing?” and write down your questions. Let’s pay attention to where God is leading us next *together*.

+ Pastor Christina

p.s. I cannot say thank you enough as well for the prayers, support and care given to me and my family before, during and after my medical leave in November. Thank you for the gifts of encouragement and love that you extended to us.

FROM OUR PRESIDENT

Dear Ascension Church Family,

One again I thank you for the privilege of leading your church Council for another year. As Daryl Cook begins his new term as president, we look back at what we accomplished over the past year with gratitude that God continues to bless our congregation.

Marking our 95th anniversary of ministry in this place, we dedicated the Prayer Garden which provides a welcoming quiet space on the church property and we supported Hospice Cleveland County monthly with a collection of items from their wish list.

We continued packing backpacks for Graham Elementary, and for the first half of the year, feeding the residents at the men's shelter monthly. While those feeding ministries concluded in 2018 we always are looking for ways to support the community. After a devastating rainy season, the Cleveland County Potato Project needed potatoes to feed hungry Cleveland County citizens, and we answered with a pickup load of potatoes!

Ascension's Women of the ELCA presented our annual Bold Women's Sunday service in February and provided a financial gift to the ELCA Good Gifts program to buy uniforms and pay school fees for girls overseas. We support Hospice Cleveland County and Heritage Oaks, the assisted living home in Gastonia, with ongoing volunteer efforts and projects.

We had a rich variety of voices join us this year in worship: Angie Littlefair, Pastor Dee Liss, Mary Costner, Ludy Wilkie, The Rev. Danielle DeNise, Deacon Deb Johnson and The Rev. Sara Ilderton all preached during the year. And Bishop Tim Smith returned to Ascension to preach and confirm Zach Smolzer, Max Smolzer, Chase Buchanan, and Logan Lacy on Pentecost. We also hosted the Rutherford Chamber Consort free community concert in our sanctuary, and for the second year, the annual Community Thanksgiving Service allowed us to host other church members and clergy in the Shelby area.

We welcomed Vickie Jo and Ronnie Franks, William Coyne, and Fred and Nancy DeBell as new members.

The challenges of an aging buildings and equipment go hand in hand with celebrating 95 years of ministry here in Shelby. With the education roof successfully repaired, the thirty-five year old lift demanded attention when it failed in August. The process of getting competitive bids, selecting a vendor and replacing the lift was more complex than you might imagine, and the lift was completely out of commission for several months. Concern that people who needed the lift could not worship sparked the idea, suggested by Willi Lacy, to convert an unused room in the church basement into a small chapel with speakers and a closed circuit television. Thanks to Willi Lacy and to the property

volunteers for taking an idea and making it into a reality. Although the lift is operating again, the chapel remains available for guests.

Late in 2017, Council decided to update the safety and security in our church building. This year, safety and security guidelines were developed, and we installed new locks on all outside doors and six surveillance cameras that are monitored from the narthex.

Looking to the future, ELCA financial planner Mitzie Schafer helped us develop endowment bylaws and a gift policy as well as talked with members regarding their giving and planning.

Special thank yous to Calvin Blalock, Lisa Philbeck, as their Council terms end. In 2019, we welcome back Bob Bryant, Greg Blalock, Steve Eckard and Ludy Wilkie and extend Sandra Waldrop's term.

Respectfully Submitted,
Judy Bridges
Council President 2018

2018 TREASURER'S REPORT

Greg Blalock
**PERCENT
 OF
 BUDGET**

	YEAR TO DATE	BUDGET	
<u>Unified Fund receipts:</u>			
Loose offering	\$ 1,074.66		
Unified pledges	149,383.00		
3rd Sunday offering	2,601.00		
Columbarium niche payments	-		
Designated - budgeted items	4,031.83		
Other income	1,932.66		
Investment income	-		
Total receipts	\$ 159,023.15	\$ 148,751.00	107%
<u>Unified Fund disbursements:</u>			
Benevolence	4,000.00	\$ 4,000.00	100%
Pastor's Salary	40,817.04	40,817.00	100%
Pension, Health Plans	18,919.56	18,920.00	100%
Pastor's Social Security	6,321.00	6,321.00	100%
Housing Allowance	14,289.00	14,289.00	100%
Office Expense	3,209.13	2,500.00	128%
Worship & Music	1,891.34	1,300.00	145%
Education	636.60	600.00	106%
Vacation Bible School	-	-	
Youth Activities	80.00	200.00	40%
Outreach	167.44	300.00	56%
Continuing Education/Development	1,277.42	800.00	160%
Ministry Expenses	3,150.97	3,600.00	88%
Supply Pastor/Organist	802.00	600.00	134%
Synod Assembly Expense	863.68	1,200.00	72%
Stewardship	315.19	300.00	105%
Lawn Care/Custodian Services	8,675.00	7,200.00	120%
Lead Organist Salary	10,662.43	10,500.00	102%
Lead Organist Soc. Sec.	815.71	804.00	101%
Associate Organist	2,595.00	2,522.00	103%
Secretary Salary	4,322.43	4,159.00	104%
Secretary Social Security	330.67	319.00	104%
Church Utilities	11,733.59	13,000.00	90%
Insurance	6,605.00	7,500.00	88%
Publications	1,565.13	1,000.00	157%
Maintenance	9,609.33	6,000.00	160%
Tax withholdings	-	-	
Total disbursements	\$ 153,654.66	\$ 148,751.00	103%
Unified Fund surplus / (deficit)	\$ 5,368.49	\$ -	

OTHER ACCOUNT BALANCES:

Emergency Reserve Fund	\$	44,363.01
Youth Funds	\$	5,639.85
Cooper-Crowe Scholarship Fund	\$	1,861.02
Petty Cash	\$	200.00
Capital Improvement Fund	\$	4,019.02
Organ Maintenance Fund	\$	3,106.40
Pastor's Discretionary Fund	\$	647.54
Social Ministry / Outreach Fund	\$	2,260.54
Anniversary Fund	\$	274.78

2019 APPROVED BUDGET

ASCENSION LUTHERAN CHURCH

		2019 BUDGET ADOPTED	2018 BUDGET ADOPTED
101	Mission Support to NC Synod	\$ 6,500	\$ 4,000
201	Pastor's Salary	35,031	40,817
202	Pension, Health Plans	18,936	18,920
205	Pastor's Social Security	8,859	6,321
206	Housing Allowance	18,810	14,289
207	Office Expense	2,200	2,500
208	Worship & Music	1,500	1,300
209	Education	600	600
211	Youth Activities	200	200
212	Outreach	300	300
214	Continuing Education/Development	800	800
215	Ministry Expenses	3,600	3,600
216	Supply Pastor/Organist	600	600
217	Synod Assembly Expense	1,200	1,200
221	Stewardship	300	300
301	Lawn Care/Custodian Services	9,125	7,200
311	Lead Organist Salary	10,710	10,500
312	Lead Organist Soc. Sec.	820	804
313	Associate Organist	2,572	2,522
321	Secretary Salary	4,242	4,159
322	Secretary Social Security	325	319
401	Church Utilities	12,000	13,000
404	Insurance	7,500	7,500
405	Publications	1,400	1,000
601	Maintenance	7,000	6,000
Total Budgeted Unified Expenses		\$ 155,130	\$ 148,751
Change from prior year		4.3%	-3.1%