



# ALC Connections

## August 2016

LCMS Ascension Lutheran Church 2780 Haslett Rd. East Lansing MI

### *The Discipleship Chat*

#### **Holy Land – Our Identity**

As I prepared for my June trip to “the Holy Land,” I heard the quote that you will invariably hear: *‘so you’re going to the holy land to get closer to God.’*

If territorial proximity worked that way, *everyone in Israel would be Christian disciples*. It doesn’t. And they’re not. Actually, you could take your Bible with you to northern Michigan, spend some good time in reading, devotion and prayer, and get much closer to God than I could just sightseeing and taking pictures in the Church of the Holy Sepulchre in Jerusalem. Holy Land is where the Word of God is studied, and where the Gospel message of Jesus has set lives free from sin. Its all over!

When we got up to Ceasarea Philippi, in the north, we were at the source of the Jordan River. My son Patrick filled a large water bottle with (clean) Jordan River water (most of the Jordan River, especially south of the Sea of Galilee is pretty grungy). We carried it for almost two weeks. The night before we left, we discussed what to do with it. What is it that makes Jordan River water special? Some people like to use it for Baptisms, as if it somehow adds sanctity to the Sacrament. Others keep it as some sort of venerable relic. We had a good but brief discussion on what the real power of Baptism was – the Word of God in it. We ended up pouring it out, realizing that it held nothing more than souvenir value, and could easily stand in the way of clear Gospel. Besides, we had better souvenirs – like Dead Sea salt!

We stopped our rental car along the road in the Elah Valley, and walked the dry river bed where a teenaged David picked out 5 smooth stones on his way to engage the giant Philistine Goliath in battle. Scripture says he selected 5 smooth stones

(aerodynamic!) and slayed the enemy and blasphemer of God with just one. I would have picked up 20 or 30 and been a veritable machine gun, whipping stones left and right. David picked up 5. He only needed one. The one stone represented total faith in God as he followed God’s direction. The 5 represented his preparation. Give God plenty to work with. But remember – God only needs one – in your hands.

We met our Palestinian Christian guide Said after church services at the Lutheran Church of the Redeemer in Jerusalem. He gave us a pretty exhaustive tour of the Old City of Jerusalem. Tour Guides in Israel have to train for two years, and past a difficult exam. He was a member of the Arabic speaking Lutheran congregation. Towards the end of the tour, my son Ryan asked him what it was like to be a minority among a minority – a Christian Palestinian among the Muslim Palestinians ... in Israel. Said put it this way: ***“Being a Christian is not just a religion – it is a whole identity.”***

For him, it is not just a thing to do or go to on Sunday. It marks him a different in his society. It sets him apart – all the time. Our Coptic friends who use our Chapel, and who grew up Christian in a Muslim Egypt tell me the same thing. Their religion is listed on their birth certificate, and on their drivers license. It is taken into account when they apply for a job, and when they apply for university. It is often held against them. And yet they refuse to change, and they cling to who they believe in – Jesus. Because ... *it is not just a religion, but it is their identity.*

Being a Christian is our whole identity. Not “should be.” **It is!** We have been claimed to belong to God through Jesus Christ, who paid the price for our sins, so that God could forgive us and make us His children. What a marvelous identity.

Pastor Dave



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## Activities ...Meetings.... and Opportunities



**Men's Venue** in August will be going to a Friday night Lugnuts game on Aug 19. Sign up soon to reserve your spot, or call the church office (337-9703), so that we can order advance tickets.

**Spiritual Gifts** – There is still time to sign up for classes. At this point, the classes will be held on Wednesdays, both in the morning and evening. Call the church office (337-9703) or turn in the registration form. They can be found in the Narthex of the church.

LUTHERAN ADULT GATHERING - REGISTRATION ENDS AUGUST 15  
October 14-16, 2016 | Mackinac Island, Mich.

Join brothers and sisters from throughout the Michigan District and around the country on Mackinac Island in October 2016 to see the beauty of God's creation in the fall colors and learn again of His marvelous handiwork and His ongoing care of that creation. Activities include a champagne reception, delicious dining in the Grand Hotel, and a wide array of sectionals. For more information, or to register, go to [www.michigandistrict.org](http://www.michigandistrict.org)

## Bible Studies

The **Men's Bible Fellowship** meets every Saturday at 8am (around coffee and donuts). Enter through the side furnace room/kitchen door. You are invited to join us as we study the Gospel of Luke.

We welcome you to the **Thursday afternoon Bible Study**, 2pm in the classroom. We've been studying the great spiritual life lessons in I and II Samuel and I-11 Kings. Join Us!

**Quilt Group** meets at 1:00pm on Monday, August 8th.

**The Women's Venue** will meet on Thursday, August 18, at Boston's Restaurant, Eastwood Town Center, at 6 pm. The restaurant is located at 3301 Town Center Blvd.

**August Elder's meeting is this Tuesday at 7pm. August Council meeting is August 21st.**



**It's Soup Kitchen time again!** We are scheduled for Saturday, August 20 from 9am to about 1:30pm. We need 12 volunteers and the sign up sheet is on the kiosk. Remember to bring a hat.

**See Bulletin board** for details of *Mission Festival*, this Saturday in Ann Arbor.

## Properties Committee News

**60th Anniversary:** In celebration of Ascension's 60th anniversary year (and to defray costs associated with the storm damage), it is suggested that contributions of an extra \$6 or \$60 or even \$600 be made. Please mark your envelope "Anniversary" and the funds will be dedicated toward offsetting storm damage and parking lot improvements.

**Want to Get Involved?** The Properties Committee needs two additional members. Interested? Contact Carolyn Boger.



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### **Ascension Celebrates 60th Anniversary**

#### Part Five: The mid 1970s

On March 25, 1973, groundbreaking ceremonies were held for the new building. Pastor Reinhardt, who helped initiate and stimulate the new building program, preached at the Ground Breaking service.

Construction progressed and the Cornerstone laying was done September 9, 1973. The Rev. David Kruse of Martin Luther Chapel gave the message based on Matthew 16:18, "I will build my church and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it."

Costing \$450,000, the facilities grew with a new sanctuary, office and educational space and included blacktopping the parking area and renovating the 18-year-old church. Where the chancel and organ pipes once stood became classrooms. The former nave was outfitted for playing basketball and volleyball. Solid walls replaced folding doors and an education office was made under the stairs. The former pastor's office became available for a youth director or vicar (now the Stephen Ministry room). A choir practice room was created above the former sanctuary. Where the choir once sang became the youth room. The building design was a simple but elegant blending of the old and the new.

The congregation began worship services in the new sanctuary on March 24, 1974. Formal dedication occurred May 5, 1974.

Staff expanded with the addition of a Youth Minister, Robert Riedel, on a part-time basis. He served for about a year before accepting a call to Peace Lutheran in Taft, California.

In 1975, Ascension began providing subsidy support for First Lutheran Church in Pusan, South Korea. Also about this time, the congregation supported the effort to bring Vietnamese, then later Hmong families from Laos, to the Lansing area. Ascension would help over 60 Hmong people relocate. Many men found employment at Wohlert Corp., owned by Walter Patenge.

1976 marked the church's 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary. The celebration started at Epiphany with the hosting of combined Lutheran choirs. Membership at year's end numbered 725 baptized, 522 communicants.

The congregation's first memorial service—deliberately not a funeral—was held November 17, 1975, for Alton Powell, a strong Christian and leader at Ascension. Following Peg Powell's example, Jean Peterson requested that a memorial and burial service, rather than a funeral, be held for her husband, Norman, on July 21, 1978.



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On July 3, 1977, Stephen Fehl was installed as Director of Christian Education and Youth.

[From a description of the chancel art written around November 1977:

The history of the chancel began when Ascension in 1971, through its Christian Art Show, bought one of Father Kosicki's pieces, a stainless steel prize-winning Menorah that carries a theme of unity in its design and flow. A year and a half later, Rev. Kosicki was asked to make all appointments for the chancel to match the Menorah. The first piece was the 400 pound Communion Rail. The next was the processional cross that highlighted through 5 clear panels of glass the 5 wounds of Christ. The 8-foot crucifix followed, made of Bistle Cone Pine from Colorado. The altar front was the most challenging, being reworked over 100 times. It depicts the Last Supper which forms a triangle completed with the chalice on the altar and the presiding minister. It is carefully designed so vestments will not catch on it and was snapped into place with about 100 pounds of pressure. The pulpit and the lectern depict preaching prophets or angels. The baptismal font artwork depicts the Holy Spirit, balancing the Last Supper theme.]