Dear Ascension brothers and sisters,

The Epiphany season celebrates light, even in the midst of the dark winter time. The light of Christ gives meaning to our lives, hope to us and the world, and fosters love in our community, reflecting outward. During the winter we enjoyed the Scandinavian dinner (with much hilarity and great food and music); a number of us participated in the Climate Action Day in Montpelier (see related article); several attended a Clean Water event in Montpelier; we wrote letters for Bread for the World; and the youth created Blessing Bags to be given to people in need. On February 9 we welcomed new member Michaela Wentz. One has only to think about all the activities that go on at Ascension to realize how each person contributes to the flourishing of the whole. And, parishioners’ ministries extend outward, as well.

Thank you for being a great congregation, making meaningful ministry in our complex world.

Blessings, Pr. Nancy

An invitation to Holy Season.....

Lent is the period of forty days leading up to Holy Week, when Christians mark the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ.

- **Sunday, March 8**: Lent 2, 10:00 a.m. Worship Service, Bible Study at 11:30 a.m.
  - **Sunday, March 15**: Lent 3, 10:00 a.m. Worship Service
  - **Sunday, March 22**: Lent 4, 10:00 a.m. Worship Service
  - **Sunday, March 29**: Lent 5, 10:00 a.m. Worship Service
- **Sunday, April 5**: Palm Sunday, 10:00 a.m. Worship Service
- **Thursday, April 9**: Maundy Thursday, 7:00 p.m. Worship Service
  - **Friday, April 10**: Good Friday, 7:00 p.m. Worship Service
- **Sunday, April 12**: Easter Sunday, 8:00 and 10:00 a.m. Worship Services, 7:30-9:30 a.m. Pancake Breakfast, 9:00 a.m. Easter Egg Hunt

[CLICK HERE](#) to view our *full* Season of Lent 2020 Flier!
Hi Wonderful Ascension families!

Sunday School News

I can't believe we are already moving into Lent. Christmas and Epiphany have gone by so fast! Our youth program has been busy. Thank you everyone for our wonderful Christmas pageant! This year, all of you were so engaged in acting out this beautiful story and hearing the congregation singing the hymns with us and watching you all brought the Christmas story to life for me in a way I've never experienced before. I am unbelievably lucky to get to work with all of you.

Our new youth group has been busy! From our first meeting in November, the youth have been clear that they are looking for opportunities to do God's work in the world, caring for our community and the earth. I am inspired seeing their energy and passion for service work. In February, the youth decided to create Blessing Bags as a center choice for Love Sunday. These bags of personal care items can be distributed to people in need as a helping hand and a gentle reminder that they are loved and cared for. On Love Sunday, some of our youth group members worked with our Sunday School class to help pack the bags for distribution. I am so very proud of the great work our youth group is doing, and can't wait to see what they choose next!

Speaking of Love Sunday, last week was our annual Love Sunday celebration. In addition to the wonderful Blessing Bags with our youth group, we made valentines, candy flowers and hearts, and jewelry to share with special people in our lives. At the end of the morning, we shared who we were thankful for and who we loved or held in

2020 Church Council

President: Barry Lemley
Vice President: Bill Huggett
Secretary: Doug Dreibelbis
Treasurer: Roger Watters
Financial Secretary: Gene Heyerdahl
Cheryl Heppner
Jane A’Lee Heyerdahl
Mousa Ishaq
Noah Dreibelbis
Richard Butz
Pastor Nancy Wright
Imagine our surprise to learn that little, remote, Lincoln, Vermont is the home of an acclaimed magician, Tom Verner, and his wife Janet Fredericks, a mime, who perform around the world. And, even more surprising, we learned that their mission takes them to refugee, immigrant and migrant detention camps where they bring laughter and hope to the children who find themselves in dire circumstances.

Several years ago, Gail and I took our grandson, Ethan, to a Bristol New Year’s Eve event at our town hall, and first saw Tom and Janet perform. It turns out they do this every year in Bristol, and we had the opportunity to enjoy their magic and witness their incredible rapport with kids. Last January I approached Tom about sharing their magic and mission with us at Ascension and they enthusiastically accepted.

They will perform for our Sunday School kids and parents and friends on Sunday, March 22, at 9:00am in the fellowship Hall. At 11:15 they will give a short performance, highlighting their mission at the Coffee Hour.

We are hosting this amazing couple and would like to contribute to their mission, and are accepting donations for that purpose. You can write a check to ALC, note Magicians, on the notation line and drop it in the offering plate or give it to me. ~Richard

Don’t forget to mark your calendars for our upcoming special Sundays! Here’s the dates where we have special things planned:

April 5 is Palm Sunday. Join us for this special youth morning where we’ll learn about Holy Week and Easter together before leading the palm processional for today’s service. Please plan to stay for the service so you can be part of the processional!

April 12 is Easter Sunday! We’ll have our annual Easter Egg hunt, sing Easter songs, and have a pancake breakfast. Come ready for the fun!

May 10 is Mother’s Day. We will have a special youth morning to honor our mothers and show them how much we appreciate their love for us. Come ready for crafting fun outside. Don’t forget your nice smiles, as Jess is happy to take some outdoor family portraits for everyone!

June 7 is Youth Sunday! During the Sunday School hour we will have our annual Sunday School Game Show, and our youth will all have the opportunity to take on roles during the service. Please plan to stay for church today so everyone can be part of the celebrations!

I’m so excited for all the fun we have coming up this spring!

Check out their website here: https://www.magicianswithoutborders.com/
Social Action Committee News

The Social Action Committee has been busy this fall and winter, and we have a number of activities to come in the spring. The Coffee Project, which has expanded to include Palestinian dates and other foodstuffs, continues to be extremely popular under the leadership of Cindy Ulmer. In December the Giving Tree Project, led by Cheryl Couillard, collected $1,200 in gift cards for deserving local families identified by the Howard Center. We also sponsored several letter-writing campaigns after church for Bread for the World, the Global Fund for Health, ONE campaign, and SNAP, among others, believing that we fulfill the prophetic mission of the ELCA and the overall church by looking outside ourselves and serving as advocates for “the least of these,” our brothers and sisters in need.

On November 11, we sponsored a well-attended talk by Barbara and John Fritsche, Ascension members who volunteered their talents to help Dar Al-Kalima University in Bethlehem, Palestine. Dar Al-Kalima’s founding president is the Rev. Dr. Mitri Raheb, Pastor Emeritus of Christmas Lutheran Church, Ascension’s sister congregation. The Fritsches showed slides and shared their experiences of living and working for three months in Bethlehem as well as additional travels in the Holy Land. Their after-church talk was followed by a lively discussion.

Several popular events occurred again this year. On December 21, we served breakfast (including Palestinian specialties, courtesy of Mousa Ishaq) for some 35 members of Ascension and friends before we joined in worship with a live simulcast of the Bethlehem Prayer Service, composed of prayers, readings, and hymns from our sister congregation, Christmas Lutheran Church in Bethlehem, Palestine, jointly held with Washington’s National Cathedral. Following the service, we collected $800 for Bright Stars of Bethlehem’s Ajyal “Generations” Elder Care Program, which serves seniors from all Christian denominations and the Bethlehem community at large. The program combines spiritual, educational, recreational, and health services for those aged 65 or older and enables them to give back to their community through activities such as mentoring to young families, leading traditional crafts and storytelling workshops for children, and preparing meals for special groups and events. (SEE PHOTOS ON LEFT)

On February 8, the aromas of delicious food—including expertly prepared lutefisk, thanks to Jake Hansen and his sous chefs—wafted through Ascension as more than 50 members of the congregation and friends sat down to enjoy the annual Scandinavian Dinner. The feast was inaugurated by Jake Hansen and France Leblanc eight years ago; needless to say, it rapidly outgrew their home! Scandinavian humor (not an oxymoron) and music filled the air, as well, in a rollicking after-dinner program led by emcee Bill Valliere with musical accompaniment by himself and David Burke. (A quick sample story: “Ole wore both of his winter jackets when he painted his house last July. The directions on the can said ‘put on two coats.’”) Mange tusen takk (“many thousand thanks”) to all those who attended and those who contributed food. Our good-will offering to benefit hungry Vermonters through the meal-packaging event raised $1,210! (SEE PHOTOS ON RIGHT)
On March 22, we will cosponsor, with the Education Committee, a special program by Tom Verner of Magicians Without Borders (www.magicianswithoutborders.com). President of the organization since its inception in 2002, Tom has traveled to over 35 countries and performed for one million people. Please watch the E-News for details. (Also see page 3 in this issue for more information.)

Also please mark your calendars for July 19, when we reprise our famous Chicken Barbecue!

—Submitted by Kris Peterson-Ishaq for the Social Action Committee

Faith Climate Action Day a Big Success!

(Review by VTIPL Board Member and Faith Climate Action Day organizer Richard Butz)

On February 20, 2020, more than 50 members of Vermont Interfaith Power & Light, and Vermont Interfaith Action (VIA) spiritual communities gathered at the State House in Montpelier to meet with our lawmakers to urge them to support the Global Warming Solutions Act.

The day was an amazing experience beginning with policy briefings and tips on talking to our legislators led by Sen. Chris Pearson and Vermont Conservation Voters’ Lauren Hierl. That was followed by a press conference, then group and one-on-one meetings with legislators including Chris Bray, Chair of the Senate Committee on Natural Resources and Energy, House Speaker Mitzi Johnson, and Senate President pro tempore Tim Ashe.

A highlight of the day was the press conference in the historic Cedar Creek Room where The Right Rev. Thomas Ely, Rev. Jane Dwinell, Rev. Daniel Cooperrider, Harris Webster (representing VIA), Rep. Sarah Copeland Hanzas, and UVM student Morgan Dreibelbis spoke from the perspectives of their traditions and their hearts. Morgan’s comments, a member of the generation that will inherit the climate we’re leaving behind, are now posted on our website. Other speakers’ remarks will also be posted there soon.

The icing on the cake was the vote on the bill - the Global Warming Solutions Act. Expected to garner around 95 votes, the bill passed with the veto-proof majority of 105 - 37 and a voice vote on the second reading the next day. What a victory that we can share! We filled the capitol with our energy and it was noticed.

This is just the beginning. The bill must pass the Senate and then on to the governor. There are three more bills to follow if we put the entire suite together, so expect more emails and calls to action as we work together to stand up for God’s Creation. Together, we can do this! Special thanks to our co-sponsors VPIRG and Vermont Interfaith Action, as well as retired VTIPL Coordinator Betsy Hardy, new Coordinator Donna Roberts, VTIPL President Ron McGarvey, and Rev. Dick Hibbert for all their work to make this happen. (For more information, see this VT Digger article.)

From the VT Interfaith Power & Light Newsletter, March 2020 Edition
Karen Huber, Sam Swanson, Richard Butz, Gene and Jane A’Lee Heyerdahl, Jen Burkman, Pastor Nancy, and Morgan Dreibelbis were all part of the ALC crew in attendance.

Here’s the speech given by Morgan:

“Hi, my name is Morgan Dreibelbis and I am from Underhill Vermont. I am currently a senior at UVM, and an intern at the Natural Resources Board. In the spring, I will be graduating with a degree in Environmental Studies and a minor in Political Science. My focus is International Environmental Law and Policy. It’s kind of a mouthful, but I like to tell people my focus first because there are so many branches of Environmental Studies. But also, because I love it.

I’ve actually always been interested in the environment, and in environmental law and policy specifically since high school. Since my freshman year I told anyone who asked that I would be in Environmental Politics after I graduated. Though I had no idea what that meant, if that was real, and the only job I could think of doing was running the EPA. But my mind was made up that that’s what I would be doing. And my passion for the environment has only grown throughout college and what I have learned. For me, climate change changes how I think about everything. Every shirt I buy, every cup of coffee I drink, every trip I take. Almost unconsciously, when I consume something or go somewhere, I automatically think about the possible ecological footprint I am creating or of that product. Where was it sourced, how was it made, how did it get here? I’ve actually been banned from doing it at the family dinner table as I would start lecturing my siblings on where their chicken came from, or how their tomatoes were slowly killing the earth. But as I start to create my own life, my contribution to climate change affects how I judge my past, dictates what I do today, and what I will do in the future. Especially now that I know my only option isn’t just running the EPA.

Whether the environment is your life and passion, or you are just trying to do your part, it’s terrifying to hear what the future will be like, and to see the complete lack of care or action by those that have the power to change it. For me, as a young person, it makes me angry, frustrated, and scared to see that carelessness. A fistful of cash in exchange for a safe, healthy, and guaranteed future, for your children, and for young people around the world. Something I think we all feel, is that climate change is extremely overwhelming. It feels like those small individual actions do nothing, when you take a step back and see the big picture. And I decided early on, that while I understand and appreciate the vital importance of those small actions, like not using straws or composting, these are small potatoes. Law and policy, while it can be slow and not always what we want it to be, helps establish a vital standard by which all are upheld to. So not just those that wish to act a certain way participate, but eventually everyone does. Laws and policies can help create norms and behaviors that set the pace for future government and non-government action, and change the way people think over time.

The Climate Solutions Act is just that kind of bill. Vermont so often talks the talk of being green and sustainable, but fails follows through in action or in actual law and policy creation. The Climate Solutions Act creates deadlines, tangible goals, and calls for realistic methods such like market-based strategies to help keep the economy going, while achieving emissions reductions. This is the kind of action we need, and we want. Young people now grow up learning about the climate crisis and the severity of the situation we are in. You can no longer pass the time with telling us you’ll do something later, or creating lofty and meaningless aspirations that don’t actually achieve anything. Setting real goals, passing bills that create real change, and promising the young people of your state that you will help protect their home, is Vermont’s responsibility. As your young Vermonters step into the world and into our futures, we expect more from our governments, and we expect to see change.”
**Worship Schedule**

- **9:00 a.m.** Sunday School for All Ages
- **10:00 a.m.** Worship Service with Holy Communion

This publication can be viewed on our website at www.alcvt.org. If you wish to receive a hard copy please contact us via phone at (802) 862-8866 or email at church.office@alcvt.org.

## The Church Mouse

A Good News Letter from Ascension Lutheran Church

### Staff and Lay Leaders

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<td>Rev. Dr. Nancy Wright</td>
<td>Pastor</td>
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<td>Elizabeth Wirsl</td>
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<td>Jeri Bergdahl</td>
<td>Sr. Choir and Bell Choir Director</td>
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<td>Bill Valliere</td>
<td>Contemporary Choir Director</td>
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### Church Council

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#### Members

- Cheryl Heppner, Jane A’Lee Heyerdahl, Mousa Ishaq, Noah Dreibelbis, Richard Butz, Pastor Nancy Wright

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ASCENSION LUTHERAN CHURCH

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