

***Ascension Lutheran Church***

***Newsletter December 2015 Issue***

**THE MESSENGER**

**2015 Council:**

* Clay Marnich, President
* Rick Zoltun, V. President
* Venus Thompson, Secretary
* Ellen Randal, Youth Ministry
* Bill Hendricks, Social Ministry
* Lynn Neilson
* Rudy Marnich, Finance
* Kelly Braun, Stewardship
* Dale Kozek, Communications
* Pastor, Worship/Youth

**Next council meeting will be Tuesday, December 8th**

**at 7:00 PM.**

From the Pastor—

In the movie *New in Town*, the main character Lucy, played by Renée Zellweger, is asked a very important question by Blanche Gunderson, a local Minnesotan, “Have you found Jesus?” Blanche asks. To which Lucy responds, “I didn’t know he was missing.” It’s a funny sort of question that receives a funny sort of response. As Lutheran Christians we believe that a life in Christ is brought to us through the Holy Spirit, namely through the gift of Holy Baptism. This question of finding Jesus is posed by many in our Christian circles. It’s a question of salvation and relationship with our Savior. Although we don’t pose the question in this way, we should be ever vigilant about sharing the Gospel and extending the opportunity to come to Christ.

When I was a kid my favorite Christmas tradition was looking for Jesus. Gram used to hide the baby Jesus and say, “We have to wait until Christmas.” That never stopped me from looking all over the house for him. In the basement, attic, and dining room, in drawers, cupboards and on top of shelves. Gram was good at hiding the baby Jesus.

There are times in our lives when we use the word “lost” when it comes to our faith, our relationship with God and our understanding of how God works. We feel lost when our faith doesn’t seem to match the obstacle before us. We feel lost when God doesn’t seem to hear our prayer. We feel lost when we feel disconnected from church, faith and family.

What we lose in those times and moments is not Jesus. It’s our awareness of His presence. We get overwhelmed with all the stuff in our lives and at times they can consume us. Our head and hearts get clouded and we lose perspective. Think of it in this way, Jesus is the light that guides our way but the more we allow our lives to be removed from this light we find it harder to see.

In this season of Advent and Christmas we have the opportunity to see Jesus in a new light. In the manger we find a baby, more vulnerable than all humanity. In his hands we don’t see a scepter but a gentle touch of love and acceptance. In his perfect eyes we see ourselves, broken. In this spectacular vision we see the mystery behind God’s veiled presence among us as Emmanuel, this Child has come to redeem us all.

If you have lost Jesus this year, find him again in the manger. Look for him in the bread and wine. See him in the fellowship of believers. Hear his words in Holy Scripture. From time to time our faith and hope seem as lost to us as a set of keys or our favorite sweater. In this time of Advent Christ comes to us a new. Perhaps not in the way you expect. But in a brand new way, if you open your eyes to see and if you open your heart to receive him.

At the conclusion of the car ride Blanche not really understanding the jovial response to her serious question responds, “We don’t really joke about Jesus around these parts. But can you imagine if Jesus had gone missing? Imagine!?”

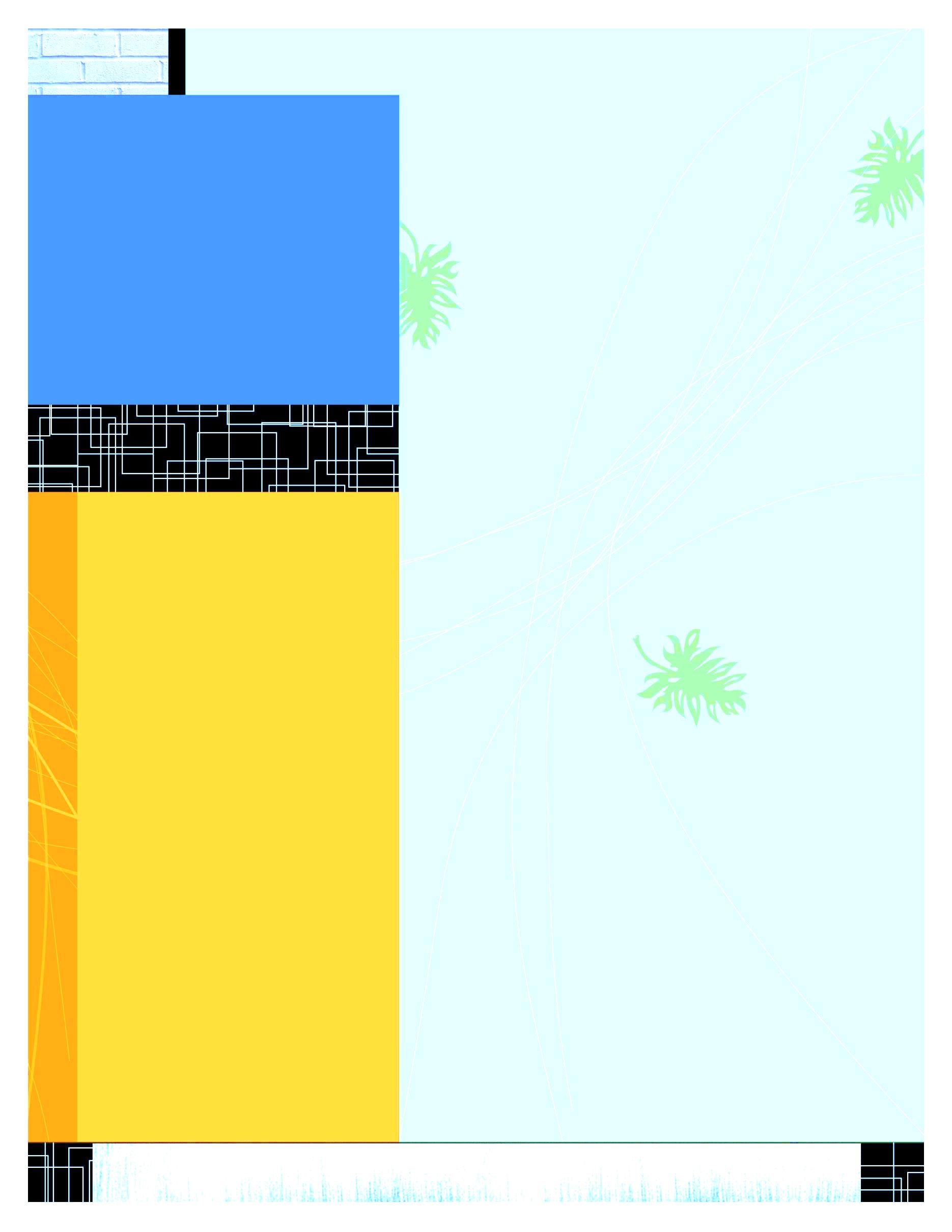
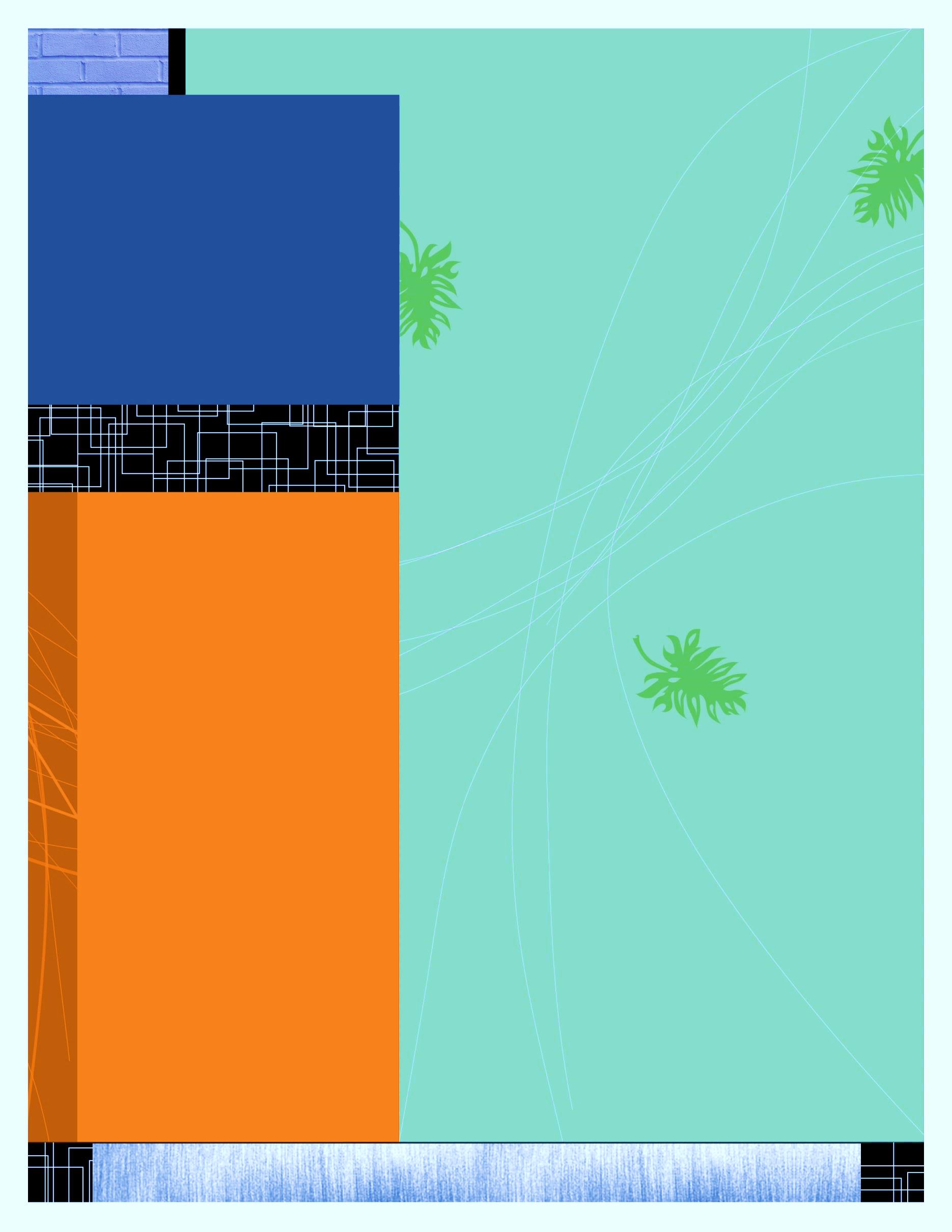
Thanks be to God that we know exactly were to find Jesus when we seem to have lost him- right in our hearts!

A blessed Advent and a very Merry Christmas+

Yours in Christ+

Pastor Joseph Murdy

**December 2015**

*Continued from Music Director….*

**GROUP DISCUSSION**

What song of the Christmas season has been especially meaningful to you? Why?

**SUGGESTED GROUP SINGING**

Silent Night! Holy Night!, No. 80—*101 Hymn Stories*

**THOUGHT**

He became what we are in order that we might become as He is. –Athanasius

***A WORD FROM OUR MUSIC DIRECTOR:***

***\*The following is taken from Kenneth W. Osbeck’s book Devotional Warm-Ups for the Church Choir. At each weekly rehearsal, Ascension’s choir has read one of these devotions.***

**THE SONGS OF CHRISTMAS**

**The Song of Mary –“The Magnificat”**

*My soul doth magnify the Lord, and my spirit hath rejoiced in God my Savior (Luke 1:46, 47)*

The songs of the Christmas season, songs about Christ’s birth, represent some of the finest music known to man. One of the choicest collections of sacred music for the Christmas season is George Fredrick Handel’s immortal *Messiah*. Handel began writing the music for this biblical text in 1741, and he completed all 53 numbers in just 24 days. *The Messiah*, presented on April 13, 1742, is undoubtedly the most frequently performed oratorio ever written, and it is certainly one of the most highly esteemed. At the first London performance, when the chorus began the word “hallelujah,” King George II was so inspired that he stood to his feet. Audiences stand today when the inspiring “Hallelujah Chorus” is heard.

Another musical master of this period is Johann Sebastian Bach (1685-1750). Often called “the father of church music,” he wrote two great Christmas works: *The Magnificat* and the *Christmas Oratorio*. Both of these are still frequently performed.

The New Testament contains four important “songs” related to the Christmas message. They are:

THE SONG OF MARY – “The Magnificat”

THE SONG OF ZACHARIAS – “The Benedictus”

THE SONG OF SIMEON –“The Nunc Dimittis”

THE SONG OF THE ANGELS –“Gloria in Excelsis Deo”

In addition to providing the basis for many great musical works, each of these texts contains important spiritual lessons for us today.

*The Magnificat*. The song of Mary begins with an outburst of praise to God. The language of her song is Old Testament, showing Mary to be a girl familiar with the Scriptures. Her poetic statement, perhaps composed on her journey to visit Elizabeth, is a humble contemplation of the mercies of God. It resembles Hannah’s prayer of rejoicing over the birth of her son, Samuel (I Sam. 2:1). Mary’s song is named “The Magnificat,” which is the first word of the Latin version, *Magnificat anima mea Dominum*. It may be divided into four stanzas:

* The first (Luke 1:46-48) is an expression of highest praise to God for what He had done for His handmaiden. When she said “God, my Savior,” she confessed the truth that she too had to know Christ not only as an earthly Son but as her own personal Savior.
* The second (vv. 49, 50) broadens out to acknowledge God’s power, holiness, and mercy to all generations.
* The third (vv. 51-53) is prophetic in tone, describing how God will bring down the proud and exalt the humble.
* The fourth (vv. 54-55) focuses upon God’s help for His people and the remembrance of His covenant.

We marvel at the faith of this Jewish young woman and stand in awe and respect at her knowledge of the Lord. No wonder she rejoiced (v. 47) at the angel’s announcement that she would bring the Messiah, the Son of God, into this world. And from henceforth all generations would call her blessed (v. 48).

*Continued =>*

A Message from Rich…

**What time is it in your life?**

**Ecclesiastes 3:1-8 teaches that there is a time for everything, and a season for every activity under the heavens. As the end of the year approaches it is a good time to reflect upon where we are in our lives.  It is not necessarily measured in chronological terms as much as in where we are in relation to others and to ourselves.  There is a time to be born and to die, to plant and to uproot, to hurt and a time to heal.  Are you in need of healing? It may be physical, emotional or spiritual. Know that God knows what time it is in your life and He will meet your need. Are you in a time to weep or a time to laugh?  A time to mourn or a time to dance? There is a time to be silent and a time to speak. We enter all these seasons as we follow the course of our lives.**

**No matter what time it is in our life know that God is aware, He sees all, He hears all, and He knows every need.  In His good time every need will be met and every season will be complete. Find time this Christmas season to be still and reflect up your live and in what season you are in. And remember that the seasons change, they do not last forever.  May God’s Christmas Blessing be upon you.**

**Rich Mussman**

**December 2015**

Council Minutes Available!

**What Child Is This**

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* What Child is this, who, laid to rest,  
  on Mary's lap is sleeping?  
  Whom angels greet with anthems sweet  
  while shepherds watch are keeping?
* This, this is Christ the king,  
  Whom shepherds guard and angels sing;  
  haste, haste, to bring him laud,  
  the babe, the son of Mary
* Why lies he in such mean estate  
  where ox and ass are feeding?  
  Good Christian, fear; for sinners here  
  The silent Word is pleading.
* Nails, spear shall pierce him through,  
  the cross be borne for me, for you;  
  hail, hail the Word made flesh,  
  the babe, the son of Mary.
* So bring him incense, gold and myrrh;  
  Come peasant, king, to own him,  
  The King of kings salvation brings;  
  let loving hearts enthrone him.
* Raise, raise the song on high,  
  the virgin sings her lullaby;  
  joy, joy for Christ is born,  
  the babe, the son of Mary.



Shirley Vete; Pat and Gene Summerhill; George and Julia Kasich; Mary and Harold Honath; Ken “Butch” Thompson; Chuck Kohnen; Courtney Kohnen; Ron and Pat Williams; Elizabeth Reuben; Sandy Belsky; Dee Gratzmiller; Matt Wilkinson; Jean Nau; Aaron Braddick; Kay Braisted; Lorraine Zwikl; Connor Paselivis; and Debbie Hendricks.

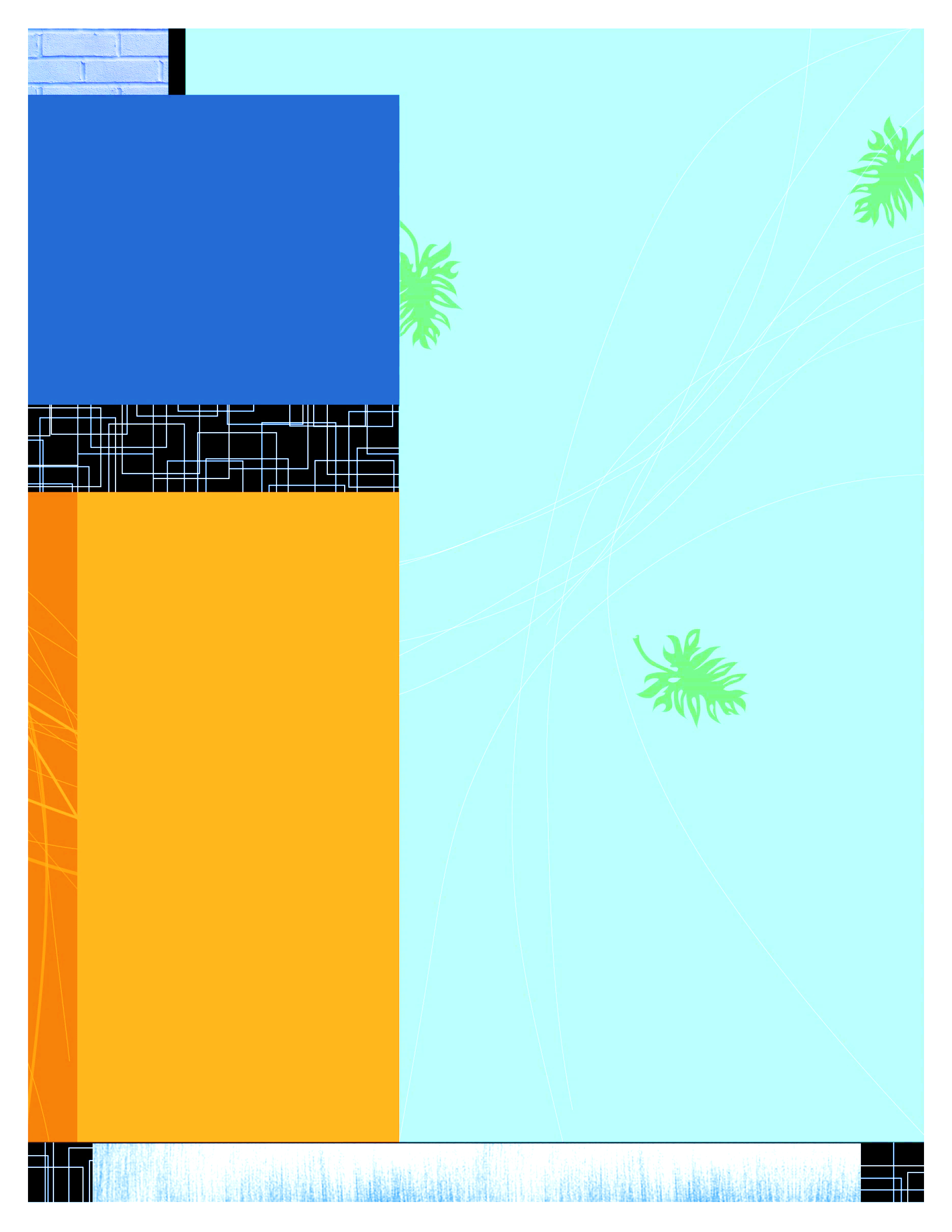


**Have you ever wondered what council is up to or what our finances are looking like these days? We invite you to see what going on by keeping up with our council minutes now available in the hall way and office. You may have noticed a new binder in the narthex. If you take a look inside you will see: a monthly council agenda and minutes, finance reports, team reports, our constitution and our annual bulletin of reports. If you wish to take a copy home you can find them located just inside the office on the wall in a folder marked council minutes. If you have any questions please feel free to ask your council representatives or pastor.**

**December 2015**

**Ten Interesting Facts about Octopuses:**

1. They pack poison
2. They can use tools
3. They can open childproof pill bottles
4. They’re masters of camouflage
5. They live fast and die young (1-2 years)
6. Their suckers can hold up to 35 lbs.
7. They’re very playful
8. They have light blue blood
9. They have THREE hearts
10. They have perfect vision but are deaf



**Altar Flowers for**

**December Available**

**12/06/15**

**12/20/15**

**12/27/15**

If you are interested in purchasing flowers to be placed in the chancel to the glory of God, we invite you to sign up in the Narthex on the flower chart. (Please ONLY place your name if you are purchasing flowers) Checks can be placed in the offertory plate or church office, check are to be payable to Ascension Lutheran Church. The cost for two vases is $50.

***COMMUNITY BOARD***

**Christmas Tree Light Up  
Visit with Santa  
Friday, December 4, 2015  
6:30-7:30 p.m.  
Clever Road Park**

Santa and Mrs. Claus will arrive at the Christmas Tree Light Up by fire truck and Santa will flip the switch to start the holiday season and light up Robinson Township! Join the festivities that will include caroling, hot chocolate and cookies. Make Robinson Township's Light Up event a tradition in your family and create holiday memories with us that will last for years to come!

**Beaver County Festival of Trees**

Come see the beautiful decorated trees at Bradys Run Park Lodge in Brighton Township. Walk into a Winter Wonderland and be amazed with a wide variety of creatively designed Christmas Trees displayed each with a different theme. Visit the North Pole Cafe', Santa Land, Candy Lane gift shop, enjoy the model train display with local entertainment. Free shuttle service from the Ice Arena.

Adults $5; Seniors (65+) $4; Children (ages 6-12) $2.

Thursday 5-9pm; Friday-Sunday 12-9pm

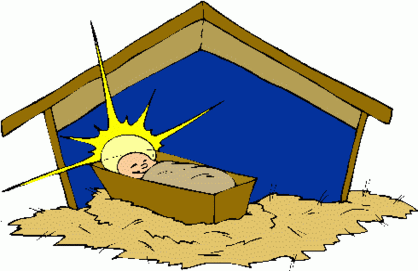
Visit: www.beavercountyfestivaloftrees.org for more information!

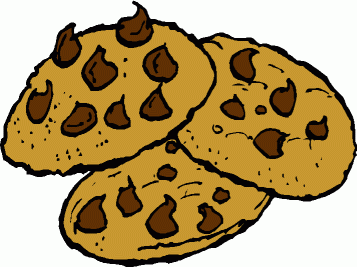
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***Ascension’s Advent-Christmas Calendar:***

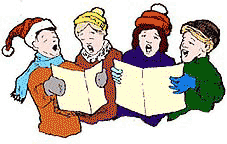
***Midweek services of Holden Evening Prayer-***

*Wednesdays at 7PM*

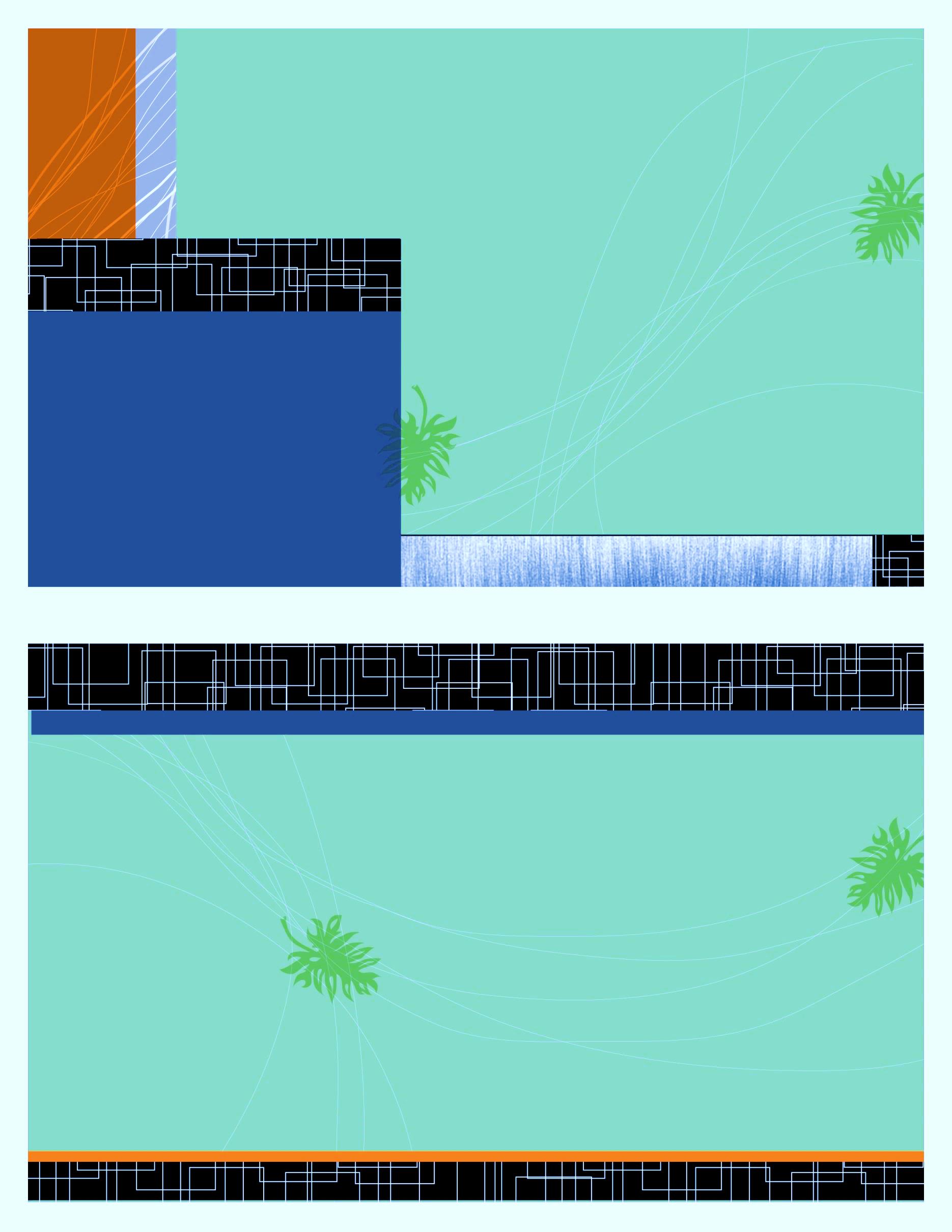
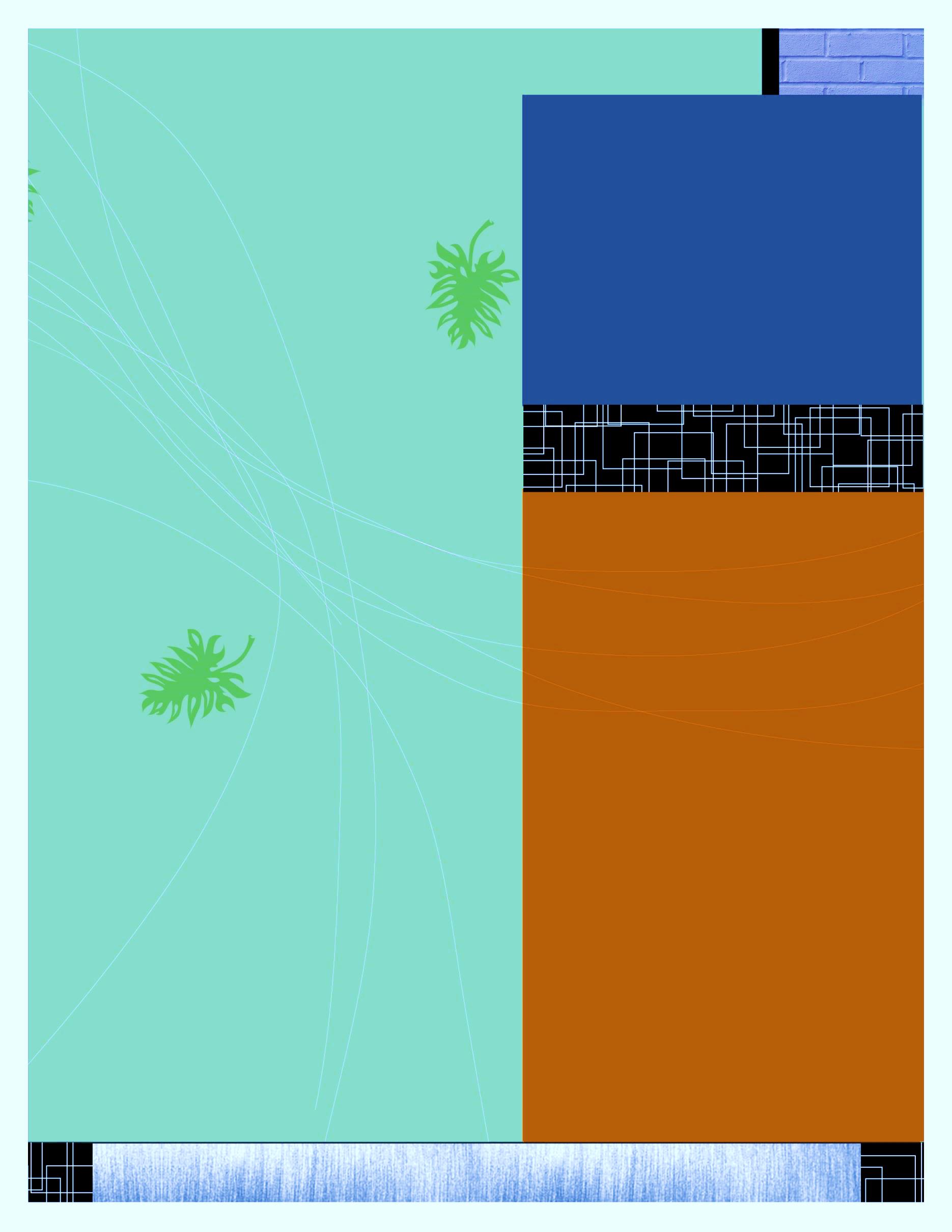
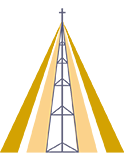
***Children’s Pageant-*** *Sunday, December 13th*

***Cookie Exchange-*** *December 20th*

***Christmas Eve Services-*** *4:00 PM and 10:00 PM*

*****Services of Lessons and Carols-*** *Sunday, December 27th*

**December 2015**

[](http://www.alcpgh.com/)

**PRESENTS FOR PATIENTS**

Join us on Thursday, December 17th at 6:00 PM. We will take our presents to the patients at Xavier Care Home and sing Christmas Carols.

**Memorial Fund**

When a loved one dies, how do we remember them? This question is especially important when a saint of the church dies and people whose lives were touched want to honor the God in whom they rest and who provided such a gift- for however short a time. In the life of the church when a loved one dies we have the opportunity to contribute to the memorial fund. After our 2015 annual meeting we established a memorial fund committee to help educate and oversee the receiving and use of funds contributed. If you are interested in being a part of this conversation, please see the Pastor. Gifts given to the memorial fund can either be designated for a particular item or use, or it can be left to the church to decide how to best utilize those donations. If you have questions about this process you can contact the office at any time. If you wish to make a donation in memory of a loved one cards are available in the **narthex.**



Please help the church in keeping our “Brother Martin’s Pantry” stock full for those in need! We have been able to help so many thus far. So the next time you are at the grocery store, grab just one more can of soup, canned vegetable or fruit, or even a box of pasta and a jar of sauce. *We are also accepting personal hygiene products.* Every little bit goes a LONG way and your continuous support helps immensely in making a difference in someone’s life! THANK you, *for all you do*, Ascension Family!

**Simply Giving:**

Have you been wondering what simply giving is? Simply giving is a new and much more convenient way to give to your church. Many of us pay our bills on line or have them set up to be paid automatically for convenience. Now you can give to church the same way. Simply giving is a program offered through Thrivent Financial and a company called Vanco. You simply fill out a form indicating how much you would like to give a week, bi-weekly, or monthly and it will easily be withdrawn from your bank account. You can even establish how much you want to give for Christmas, Easter, benevolence, local and other. It’s easy and simple- that’s why they call it *simply giving*. Nicole, pastor and others will be available to you if you have any questions. We encourage anyone who is interested. This enables us to track giving more efficiently, secures giving during the low months and helps with that Sunday morning dilemma “I forgot my check book.” Forms will be available beginning in September and will be available throughout the year for you to start any time.

**THRIVENT MEMBERS:** The Thrivent Choice program lets members choose where some of Thrivent Financials charitable outreach funds go. If you are a Thrivent member who is eligible to participate in this program, you can choose Ascension to receive your Choice Dollars. Thank you to those who have already designated their Choice Dollars to Ascension! For any questions concerning the Thrivent Choice Program, please contact your Thrivent representative or call Kurt Herbst, Ascension’s Thrivent representative at 724-814-6058.

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