

# ***THE REACH***

***May 2022***



At Ascension, we celebrate the wonderful diversity of God's family!  
Join YOUR hands with ours so we can  
REACH out together to serve in God's name!

## **THE REACH**

**The Evangelical Lutheran Church of the Ascension  
827 Wildwood Avenue  
Columbia, SC 29203-5815**



**ALL ARE WELCOME!**  
**SUNDAYS 11:00 A.M. HOLY COMMUNION SERVICE**  
**The Rev. Jackie Utley, Pastor**



**Office Phone #:** 803-786-6429

**Office Hours:** By Appointment

**Mailing Address:** 827 Wildwood Ave., Columbia, SC 29203

**Office Email:** [ascension.office827@gmail.com](mailto:ascension.office827@gmail.com)

**Pastor's Email:** [ascension.elca@gmail.com](mailto:ascension.elca@gmail.com)

**Website:** [www.ascensionlutherancolasc.com](http://www.ascensionlutherancolasc.com)

**Facebook:** [www.facebook.com/Ascension.ColumbiaSC](http://www.facebook.com/Ascension.ColumbiaSC)

**Staff:**

Jackie Utley, Pastor – [ascension.elca@gmail.com](mailto:ascension.elca@gmail.com)

Laura Browder, Office Administrator – [ascension.office827@gmail.com](mailto:ascension.office827@gmail.com)

Greg Stone, Parish Musician – [gstone@sc.rr.com](mailto:gstone@sc.rr.com)

**Church Council:**

Ken Dobbins, Chairperson – [kdoobb007@gmail.com](mailto:kdoobb007@gmail.com)

Pastor Jackie Utley, Vice Chairperson - [ascension.elca@gmail.com](mailto:ascension.elca@gmail.com)

Laura Browder, Secretary - [ascension.office827@gmail.com](mailto:ascension.office827@gmail.com)

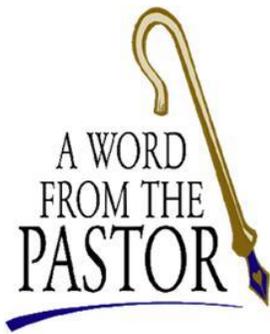
Mike Lever - [MLever@l-jinc.com](mailto:MLever@l-jinc.com)

**Pastoral Support & Advisory Board:**

Billy Browder - [bbjb1974@yahoo.com](mailto:bbjb1974@yahoo.com)

Catherine Garren - [cgarren210@bellsouth.net](mailto:cgarren210@bellsouth.net)

Ken Dobbins - [kdoobb007@gmail.com](mailto:kdoobb007@gmail.com)



Here it is that we have entered into this most sacred season of Easter. Having celebrated Resurrection Sunday one week ago, reflecting back on Holy Week I recall how this year, earlier in the day on Good Friday, I had the opportunity to participate in a “Seven Last Words” worship service at Reid Chapel AME Church here in Columbia. For those who may not be familiar with this service, I have learned that it is most commonly held among the Baptist and Methodist faith traditions, maybe others, but not in our Lutheran tradition.

Though it was my first time participating in or even attending this type of service, I was fully aware of its existence and the nature of it. In this service, the seven last sayings of Jesus as He hung on the cross before dying are the main focus. Thus, 7 Pastors are invited to expound on one of the sayings for 5-10 minutes each. These sayings are a compilation of scriptures from several Gospel versions of the Passion, which I have decided to share with you here:

1. *“Father, forgive them for they know not what they do.”* (Luke 23:34)
2. *“Today shalt thou be with me in Paradise.”* (Luke 23:43)
3. *“Woman, behold thy son! Behold thy mother.”* (John 19:26b, 27a)
4. *“My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?”* (Matt. 27:46, Mark 15:34)
5. *“I thirst.”* (John 19:28)
6. *“It is finished.”* (John 19:30)
7. *“Father, into thy hands I commend my spirit.”* (Luke 23:46)

Having provided the sayings, it was the 6<sup>th</sup> Word, “It is finished” on which I was invited to expound. Here, I had the opportunity to share what I perceive these words of our Lord and Savior to mean. “It is finished” did not mean for us, “It is over.” These words pointed not to an ending, but a beginning. Sin, death, and the devil were finished, but not Jesus. His earthly mission had been fulfilled and in dying, new life for us had begun, because the debt of sin had been paid in full. Moreover, I failed not to mention His Resurrection of which we would soon celebrate.

While the service consisted of a variety of seasonal hymns sung by a choir throughout the service, I must say for me, it was a most inspirational and meaningful experience. It was indeed a privilege and honor to share in worship with other clergy and congregants of various faith traditions on that blessed Holy Day. It was indeed appreciated the more with the anticipation of celebrating our risen Savior on Resurrection Sunday which was soon to follow. Thus, we indeed celebrated on that blessed Holy Day! Alleluia, Christ is risen!

Easter Blessings,  
Pastor Jackie



# Music Ministry Notes

Greg Stone, Parish Musician

Over the past two years, Ascension has been blessed by the presence of Bridget Whately, our seminarian. She has been very active in our parish serving as assisting minister, crucifer, teacher to Lily and a very active member of our music ministry. This month, we must say good-bye to Bridget, as she will be embarking on her internship. She will be in Indiana next year working in a parish in the capacity of an associate pastor. To say that she will be missed is a huge understatement.

I must say that I am a bit biased toward Bridget because of her huge addition to our music ministry. Not only has she sung in our choir and served as a cantor, she has also been playing bells. With her absence next year, there will be a large void in our music department. Bridget will never be able to be replaced, but her absence will leave a vacancy that needs to be filled.

Since 2019, when the pandemic hit, church attendance and participation has dropped significantly. One of the ministries that have suffered at Ascension is the music ministry. You have probably realized that our handbell choir has dropped to four members. Thankfully, Brian Smith has joined us this year, and what an addition he has been. Some may have noticed that he has been playing four, five and six, bells in a couple of our recent selections. That is an amazing feat! In order to take some of the pressure off of our ringers, we need one or two additional members. To be a member of the handbell choir, you do not need to know how to read music. According to Bridget, you only need to be able to count up to four.

Our chancel choir is also in desperate need of additional singers. In order to keep this vital part of Ascension's worship ministry going, we are going to have to grow our choirs. Music is a necessary part of our worship. Without music, can you imagine our Sunday morning liturgies? It is my prayer that some of you reading the newsletter this week will be lead to come to a rehearsal. The choirs will be rehearsing through June and then we will take a break this summer. We will resume our rehearsals in August to prepare for the fall, Advent and Christmas seasons.

I truly appreciate our current choir members. They are such an important part of the Ascension family, and they are certainly an important part of me. I look forward to our time together each week. I pray that each choir member knows how much he or she means to me. We are a family for which I am truly thankful. Won't you join our musical family?

**If you would like to learn more about The Music Ministry at Ascension,  
contact our Parish Musician, Greg Stone, at 803-609-5124 or [gstone@sc.rr.com](mailto:gstone@sc.rr.com)**

# Monthly Scripture Readings

## May 1<sup>st</sup> – Third Sunday of Easter

*The disciples make a big splash and eat breakfast with the risen Jesus. Wading in the water (remembering baptism) and eating with Jesus (celebrating holy communion) is our weekly encounter with the risen Christ. Jesus asks us again and again: Do you love me? And Jesus invites us, again and again, to follow him, bringing the Easter life to others. Acts 9:1- 20 | Psalm 30| Revelation 5:11-14 | John 21:1-19*

## May 8<sup>th</sup> – Fourth Sunday of Easter

*The gift of new life, of eternal life, is the gift of the risen Christ. It is the promise of Jesus. It was true for Dorcas in Joppa. It was true for those “who have come out of the great ordeal” in the Revelation vision. It is true for us and for all the baptized: Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life, and I will dwell in the house of the Lord forever.*

**Acts 9:36-43 | Psalm 23 | Revelation 7:9-17 | John 10:22-30**

## May 15<sup>th</sup> – Fifth Sunday of Easter

*Easter initiates a new day. It anticipates a new heaven and a new earth. The risen Christ is making all things new. In the mystery of holy baptism God has made new people of us. Today Jesus invites us to see everyone in a new light—through the lens of love. Acts 11:1-18 | Psalm 148 | Revelation 21:1-6 | John 13:31-35*

## May 22<sup>nd</sup> – Sixth Sunday of Easter

*Visions abound in the readings for the sixth Sunday of Easter. Paul has a vision about what to do. John has a vision of what will be. Jesus provides visions of peace that surpasses human understanding and power beyond human imagination.*

**Acts 16:9-15 | Psalm 67 | Revelation 21:10, 22--22:5 | John 14:23-29**

## May 29<sup>th</sup> – Seventh Sunday of Easter

*It is possible to hear in Jesus’ high priestly prayer, a prayer he offered shortly before his death, the petitions of the ascended Christ for his own throughout history—to our day—and beyond. Jesus prays for us. In holy baptism we become believers in God, have our robes washed in the flood of Christ’s forgiveness, and receive the gift of life forever with all the saints.*

**Acts 16:16-34 | Psalm 97 | Revelation 22:12-14, 16-17, 20-21 | John 17:20-26**



Join us as we celebrate

## *"The Ascension of Our Lord"*

**Potluck Fellowship Meal**  
**Thursday, May 26<sup>th</sup>. at 6:00 p.m.**  
**Fellowship Hall**

Please bring your favorite dish or dessert to share.

---

Thank you for your generous donations and faithful almsgiving through the Lenten Season. We exceed our goal of \$100,00 and **collected a total of \$1,250** that will go directly to aid the people of Ukraine. **Lutheran World Relief** will match this donation bringing the total to **\$2,500!**



---

### *Baby Bottle Campaign to support Birthright of Columbia*

From Mother's Day, Sunday, May 8<sup>th</sup> to Father's Day, Sunday, June 19<sup>th</sup>, you will have the opportunity to participate by taking home a bottle and filling it with coins, cash, or check\*. Funds enable Birthright to offer positive assistance and aid to local pregnant girls and women who contact them for help. \*Checks should be made payable to "Birthright of Columbia."

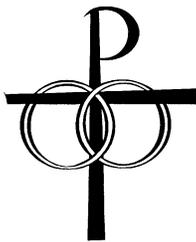
# CELEBRATIONS!!

Birthdays



Crystal Freie 12th

*Anniversaries*



*Tommy & Alma Sharpe 7<sup>th</sup>*

*There is no more lovely, friendly and charming relationship, communion or company than a good marriage. ~Martin Luther*

*Did we miss your Birthday or Anniversary? Let us know so we can update our information on file.*

# M.O.R.E. Justice

*Midlands Organized Response to Equity and Justice*



MORE Justice Co-presidents, The Rev. Jackie Utley & The Rev. Deacon Dianna Deaderick, opening the 2022 Nehemiah Action Assembly.

## **UPDATES from The Nehemiah Action!**

**Who was Nehemiah? What is a “Nehemiah” Action?** In 5th chapter of the Old Testament book of Nehemiah, the **Prophet Nehemiah** returns to Jerusalem to find his people being exploited. During a terrible drought and famine, a group of moneylenders began capitalizing off of the Israelites desperation by enticing them to buy loans with high interest rates. When the Israelites defaulted on their loans, they were forced to sell their children into slavery (Nehemiah 5:1-5).

Instead of practicing *mercy ministry* by providing direct service in order to alleviate his people's immediate needs, Nehemiah understood the problem stemmed from a unjust system and the root cause had to be addressed with systemic change. In doing this, Nehemiah was practicing *justice ministry*.

Nehemiah used his influence to coordinate a "great assembly" where a large Israelites called out the moneylenders for their foul practices. Upon seeing the great numbers gathered to hold them accountable, the moneylenders publicly promised to abandon their practices of usury and to return to the people all that they had taken unjustly.

**Every year, MORE Justice recreates the "Great Assembly" Nehemiah led by holding our own Action Assembly.** Like in Nehemiah 5, the assembly addresses public officials and powerful decision makers and asks them to publicly commit to use their positions of authority to address our community's problems.

This year around 600 people gathered at the Midlands Metropolitan Convention Center for the first in-person Nehemiah Action since 2019. Several other members attended online, all banded together to address serious community-wide problems in the Midlands at the root.

The Nehemiah Action is the largest gathering of community members presenting specific solutions in Richland County each year. Our public servants showing up to directly address the community on these issues is a display of leadership. Thank you to those officials that prioritized their attendance this year! Richland County Council members Paul Livingston & Allison Terracio, Columbia Mayor Daniel Rickenmann, City of Columbia Council members Aditi Bussells & Howard Duvall, and Richland One School Board Commissioner Beatrice King.

Gun Violence Recap: The M.O.R.E. Justice ministry asked and received a commitment from Columbia Mayor Daniel Rickenmann to schedule and initiate a Comprehensive Problem Analysis by an outside, nationally recognized entity by June 1, 2022.

Affordable Housing Recap: The M.O.R.E. Justice ministry asked and received a commitment from Richland County Council members Paul Livingston & Allison Terracio to support the establishment and funding of an Affordable Housing Trust Fund.

(Information from this article via MORE Justice website and Facebook page.)

## ***The Nehemiah Action is over but our work is far from done.***

Network Members be sure to mark your calendars for *The Celebration* that will be held on Monday, May 23rd at 6:30pm. Location TBA.

Check out the new MORE Justice website at **[morejusticecolumbia.org](https://morejusticecolumbia.org)**!

**To learn more about this Justice Ministry,  
please contact Ascension's Team Leader, Laura Browder,  
or Pastor Jackie Utley at 803-786-6429.**



**Our members, family, and friends with current needs:**

Clinard Rawls                      Johnny Smith  
Min. LaVone Griffin      Ken Dobbins  
Frances Jordan, mother of Ruben Jordan

**Members in care centers and at home:**

Ava Hudson                      Pat Martin                      Charlene Van Patten  
David Lever                      Lisa Mosely                      Dorothy Van Patten  
Margarie Lever                      Delores Richardson

**Members with special/long term needs:**

Tommy Boozer                      Ken Butler                      Selma Foster                      Johann Roof  
Laura Browder                      Pete Currie                      Clinard Rawls                      Debbie Shumpert  
Debra Butler                      Donna Clark                      Gene Roof

**Our family and friends with long term needs:**

Paula Bodner, friend of Nancy Kerr  
Dianne Browder, Steve Browder, & Linda Poole, siblings of Billy Browder  
Dave Conant, Friend of Greg Stone  
Lynette Funk, daughter-in-law of Carol Funk  
Charles Garren & Kay Garren (as caregiver), brother of Catherine Garren  
Nancy (Sharpe) & Kenny Glenn, relatives of Joyce Browder  
Linda Green, friend of Phyllis Hutchinson  
Barb Hessenthaller, sister of Carol Funk  
Marian and Steve Hudson, Ava Hudson's daughter-in-law and son  
Eleanor & Michael Jenkins, relatives of Lily Jenkins  
Butch Johnson, friend of Ruben Jordan  
Marilyn Johnson, friend of Pastor Jackie Utley  
Conner Miller & Ian Miller, grandsons of Ken Dobbins  
Cleo Morris, frequent visitor & neighbor of the church  
Dihue Paisley, friend of Pastor Jackie  
Wendall Patton, friend of Billy Browder  
Matt Robinson & Carrie Schilling, friends of Catherine Garren  
Bear Sheneman (6 yrs. w/severe health issues), friend of the Browder Family  
Kennedy Small, great niece of Carol Funk  
Jerry Stone, father of Greg Stone  
William Utley, brother of Pastor Jackie  
Charlie Whyde, friend of Ken Butler

**Our Neighbors & Community:**

The Dowdy House residents & staff  
Eau Claire Community Council  
Lutheran Theological Southern Seminary  
Seminary Ridge Neighborhood Association  
South Carolina Hispanic Outreach staff and clients

**Our ELCA & SC Synod Ministries:**

The Evangelical Lutheran Churches of America & Bishop Elizabeth Eaton  
The South Carolina Synod of the ELCA & Bishop Virginia "Ginny" Aebischer  
Sagrada Familia & Cristo Rey Lutheran Churches & The Rev. Jorge Leone  
S.C. Lutheran Men in Mission & "One Year to Live" participants  
Journey Ministry & Minister LaVone Griffin  
Lutheran Services Carolinas

**Our Ascension Groups & Ministries:**

Members of the Church Council & Ken Dobbins, Chairperson  
Members of the Choirs & Greg Stone, Parish Musician  
The Service & Outreach Committee  
M.O.R.E Justice Team & Laura Browder, Team Leader  
The Parish, Administrative, & Grounds Keeping Staff  
"Share the Joy" Worship Volunteers

~~~~~  
**Closing Prayer:**    *A Part of Me: A Poem for Mother's Day*

*Lost memories clutter my mind,  
Though distantly I can see  
A glimmer in the mirror of  
My mother, but it's only me.*

*How she gathered eggs, in her  
White apron so tenderly  
Or her homemade biscuits and gravy  
For my brother and me.*

*A grandmother's smile  
For all the world to see  
I'm in her loving arms as  
She gently cradles me.*

*A special aunt whose gift  
Of praise, for only me to see*

*Who sang a sweet lullaby  
Just a little off key.*

*I gather those memories of  
Days I'll never see  
But in so many faces  
Who are all a part of me.*

*We touch a child's life  
For a brief moment you see  
For we're to pass it on  
A part of you and me.*

*So many special faces  
All collective memories  
We humble ourselves before you  
Lord, and give special thanks  
To our mothers and Thee.*

