



Ascension In Action

Ascension Lutheran Church

December 2017

Published monthly in Colorado Springs, Colorado

I'm grateful for ...

I'm grateful for ...

Food on my table and a roof over my head.

Laws and goodwill which keep my family safe.
Fair pay, health insurance, and meaningful work.

I'm grateful for ...

The sound of my daughter reading a book in the next room.

The smell of coming rain.
The taste of warm bread.

That moment in the morning when the sun hasn't yet risen on my neighborhood, but it illuminates Pikes Peak and casts long shadows from Kissing Camels, which I can see clearly from this one spot along my morning walk.

I'm grateful for ...

A fellow Ascension member who gave me the Martin Luther bobble-head he won at the Spaghetti Dinner Raffle.

The Audubon crossing guard who greets me and walks me across Circle Dr.

My next door neighbor who always has a kind word to share.

Colleagues who take ministry seriously, but not too seriously.

A friend who sends an email saying she's praying for us every time there's a funeral here.

I'm grateful for ...

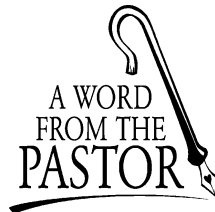
Volunteers at the hospital who help people find their sick family.

Church basements that become homes for the homeless.

Food pantries.

A global church that knows the abundance of God's love.

That person at Ascension who seeks out anyone sitting alone.



I'm grateful for ...

"In the beginning God created ..."

"In you all the families of the earth shall be blessed ..."

"In those days a decree went out from Emperor Augustus ..."

"In three days I will raise it up ..."

"In the night in which he was betrayed, our Lord ..."

I'm grateful for grace and for love and for each of you.

- Pastor Daniel

Ethnic Coffee Hour December 3!

Sunday, December 3rd is the Ethnic coffee hour at Ascension and hope you can bring in a goodie to share. Please label it with the name and country of origin.

Thank you, Thrivent Financial members!

Through the end of October of this year, you have directed \$2,318 of your Thrivent Choice Dollars to Ascension Lutheran Church. Thrivent Choice is a charitable grant program that gives Thrivent Financial members the chance to recommend where Thrivent should distribute some of its charitable outreach funds each year. Ascension deposits most of the Thrivent Choice Dollars it receives into our general fund to support all our ministries. However, two years ago the Ascension Congregation Planning Council decided to dedicate one-quarter of these grants (\$579.50 so far in 2017) to our Youth and Family Ministry to help offset the costs of sending our youth to the ELCA's National Youth Gathering. If you have Choice Dollars yet to give this year, please consider directing them to Ascension. Go online to thrivent.com or call Thrivent Financial at 800-847-4836.



What's Happening

The November 14th meeting included the following actions and discussions:

- Pastor Daniel Smith opened the meeting with a devotion and prayer.
- Thinking about our future, Board Directors shared thoughts on Ascension's core strengths that we can build upon as we begin the strategic planning process. Responses included: financial health and generous giving; our commitment to service and youth programs; strong Pastors and Lay Leaders; and our welcoming/accepting environment.
- Funding options to install automatic doors for the upstairs restrooms.
- Lay Ministry to consider a request to provide name tags to help guests and new members.
- To maintain future financial strength, cash reserve and operating cash amounts were examined.
- Finalized the 2018 budget proposal and set the agenda for the December 3rd Congregational meeting. In addition to approving next year's budget and new board members, the CPC will ask the congregation to approve its decision to change the status of Pastor Daniel Smith from Associate Pastor to Co-Pastor.
- Thrivent Choice designations. How do we raise awareness for participating member to designate available dollars to Ascension? 25% of current designations directly support our youth.
- Pastor Dan Holt closed the meeting in prayer.
- The approved minutes of recent meetings are posted on the round kiosk in the Fellowship Hall and are available in electronic format from the church office.

What a month it has been! Had a blast celebrating our 500 years of Lutheran heritage. Thank you Board of Lay Ministry for putting on an awesome celebration. Thank you endowment committee for allowing us to use endowment funds to provide a delicious meal.

Thank you to all who turned in an "Estimate of Giving" card. You helped the CPC with compiling next year's budget. If you have not turned in your card yet, please do so. It is never too late.

Watch for upcoming events during advent. Opportunities to serve others, Ethnic Coffee hour, SUP activities, Choir Cantata, Sunday School Christmas Program, CLC Christmas program and many more Advent activities.

"A Community of Grace, Called to Serve."
Peace be with you, Greg Gulliksen, President CPC
637-9313 / greg.gulliksen@gmail.com

Simply Giving Reminder

For those who use Simply Giving for their offering and will be adjusting their offering for 2018, please pick up a change form in the church office or out on the Welcome Center counter. Fill out the form. Return the form to the church office. The church office will take it from there. Please contact the church office if you have any questions or wish to start using Simply Giving for your offerings.

Congregational Meeting



Congregational Meeting

Our next congregational meeting is scheduled for **Sunday, December 3, 2017** beginning at 9:15 am. On the agenda will be calling our Pastors to be co-pastors,

update from the capital campaign completion team, board reports, and the recommended 2018 church budget among other topics.

CHRISTIAN SYMPATHY TO...

- **Rex Rudy & family at the death of his stepmother.
- **Eddie Calderon & family at the death of his father.

Ascension Free Pantry

Ascension Free Pantry, located outside of the CLC, is getting regular use! Please remember to pick up some grocery items for the pantry when you are doing your own grocery shopping! Food can be put directly into the pantry or into the storage cupboard in the fellowship area.

US & THEM WE: As I write this, Thanksgiving is days away, and Advent will be fast upon us. As we sit in this season of thanksgiving and anticipation, it seems a good time to meditate on Proverbs 3:5-10: *Trust in the Lord with all your heart, And lean not on your own understanding; In all your ways acknowledge Him, And He shall direct your paths.*

As we prepare for the celebration of the coming of our Messiah, it is easy to get caught up in other aspects of Christmas like shopping, gift-giving, travel plans, finishing up work for the year and we can wind up exhausted. We can wind up feeling like, "I am missing Christmas!"

Instead, let's remember "In all your ways acknowledge Him..." Let's remember our brothers and sisters in need and bring a little extra to the food pantry. Want to make a year-end gift? Consider some of the various ministries supported by Ascension through the Board of Social Outreach like: ELCA World Hunger, KPC Kids Place, Mercy's Gate, IHN, SET Clinics, Mosaic, Rainbow Trail Lutheran Camp, Lutheran Family Services, Thrivent Builds, or Pikes Peak Academy. Want to know more about what these various ministries do? Feel free to look them up online or shoot me an email or a phone call. I'd love to tell you!

May this season of thanksgiving and preparation be a blessing and not just a series of obligations and chores! May God be honored "in all your ways."

Blessings,
Sharla Saunders –
Director, Ascension Board of Social Outreach

CONGRATULATIONS TO...

**Aaron Holt and Kelly Phares-Zook on their marriage in November.

Ascension Ladies' Luncheon

The ladies of Ruth Circle would like to invite all ladies of Ascension to join us on Thursday, December 14, at 11:30am for our annual Christmas potluck luncheon in Fellowship Hall, when we honor our staff and have a special guest speaker. The main meat dish will be furnished, so please bring a side or a dessert. And bring a friend for this special time of Fellowship!



THANK YOU...

to **Everyone who contributed to our Reformation celebration. Members (and spouses) of the Board of Lay Ministry planned the luncheon for the last six months. A big thank you goes out to the Endowment Committee for a \$5,000 grant to cover the costs of the luncheon. Thanks to our music program, Kathy Hayes who provided the Button Boyz (accordion players) for entertainment during the luncheon, and the Board of Worship. And thanks to Eric Dyer and Arlayne McKee for the Luther Rose painting in the sanctuary. The Service was spectacular and the luncheon that followed was a great way to end our year of Reformation celebration activities.

****Parish Education** wishes to thank each of you who supported the Compassion Kids' Bake Sale on November 12. More importantly, Nuhamin & Jahir, the two Compassion Kids who are sponsored by ALC Sunday school, thank you for your overwhelming generosity. Your purchases raised over \$650 to support the needs of these two children. The funds will help Nuhamin and Jahir have access to a supportive faith community, schooling, adequate nutrition and medical care. Thanks again!

**to Val and Marjorie for their leadership and to everybody who helps with our funeral receptions. We've had quite a few funerals this year and the receptions that followed each one were well planned and they provided the grieving families a nice setting for remembering their loved ones and visiting with funeral guests.

December SUP

December SUP, 12/21, 12 pm - 1:30 pm: *"Voices of Grief,"* a documentary highlighting the stories of individuals and families dealing with hardships and loss will be shown. Kathy Sparnins, the documentary's producer will also be present to field questions and will be bringing with her one of the women featured in the film. Main dish provided, bring a side dish to share. To help in planning, let Karen Rubinow know you can come, nodak@sidkar.com.

Prepare the Way for the Lord!

You can contribute to the decorations in the sanctuary by purchasing a poinsettia for the altar. A sign-up sheet is on the kiosk in Fellowship Hall. Cost is \$10, and you may take your poinsettia home following Christmas services.

The Worship Board invites you to join us in decorating the sanctuary at 9:00 am Saturday, December 2.

Christmas Toolkit...brought to you by Team Stretch (Elisa T., Jim D., & Deacon Mary)

On Sunday November 19, we were privileged to have four congregation experts share their tips on how to survive the holiday stress and make the season a more blessed and satisfying experience. For those members who were not able to attend, here are the highlights. We hope these tips can help all make the Christmas season a more peaceful, spiritual, and healthy period.

Spiritual: Pastor Karen Matuska

1. Take advantage of your Advent and Christmas traditions like lighting the Advent wreath and singing favorite holiday music.
2. The word "enough" is a helpful correction to the excesses and unhealthy pressures that come with this season. Asking questions with the word "enough" can help, such as "Have I bought enough gifts for my child?" and "Have I eaten enough?" It is also helpful with the pressures to do everything (decorating, cooking/baking, attending events and still being jolly) to remind ourselves "I am enough." We have enough and are enough because of the generosity of God.
3. God did not reject the world but entered into it. We often strive for the "perfect" Christmas with everything going just right. There is perfection to be had this season, but it is perfection given to us through Christ.
4. PSA: Please be kind to retail workers this time of year and all year round. One of them is my husband and they all deserve kindness.

Health and Safety: Sara Petz

With the Christmas holiday upon us there are so many things that pull and push us every day. Sometimes we can lose sight of the some common sense and easy things to keep us feeling WELL. We are air breathing creatures and thrive in sunlight and fresh air. Colorado winters are unique in how much sunshine we get every day. I encourage you to take advantage of every hour of that sunlight. Get out and take a walk in the sunshine at a local park or in your neighborhood, this is even more fun with a buddy. No, the walk from your car across a Wal-Mart parking lot is not what I mean and the stroll in "the Mall" is not a deliberate walking event. Feel the sun, breath the fresh air and clear your mind. Enjoying a memory of a special Christmas with your buddy is also a great part of this activity. Remember, you are not hiking the Incline or power walking for a cardio workout, you are REFRESHING your body and spirit for a celebration of our greatest gift of all. You will enjoy this Christmas season better in a place of joy and wellness. Be safe in your walk, avoid distraction [head phones or your nose in your cell phone] and wear just enough of a coat to stay warm but not over heated.

Financial: Nancy Albertson

This time of year is full of anticipations, preparations, excitement and celebration. It also can be a time of high expectation, and perfection, often imposed by ourselves. According to a health line survey 60% of the respondents experience some stress during the holidays. #1 cause is Finances.

Christmas is a time of honoring traditions, creating new ones purchasing gifts, but it doesn't have to come with a big price tag. Here are some tips to help you avoid overspending through the Christmas season.

Intentional spending: Decide on your Christmas budget before you begin shopping. Be in communication with your family and loved ones about the budget plan. Without a budget you risk spending beyond your means, falling into consumerism. Over spending is a dangerous trap that causes accumulated debts you won't be able to clear with ease.

Avoid emotional gift buying: Tight time frames for buying gifts often causes over spending and buyer's remorse. Do your homework. Research the best prices by using the computer and consider ordering online, if coupons are available.

Cash verses Credit: Pay cash so you are aware how much you are spending. If you choose to use credit card, use only one, so you can monitor how much you are charging. Also, give yourself a credit card spending ceiling. Be careful about opening department store credit just to get extra discount. Why? You are more likely to over spend.

Smart Shopping: Organize coupons and discounts so you utilize them to your advantage. Pay attention to their expiration dates. Shop when it is not as hectic in stores. You will find you make smarter budgetary discussions without a lot of stress & chaos surrounding you.

Think Outside The Box: Give others the value of your skills time & experience. Consider making homemade gifts. Remember the spirit of giving isn't about how much we spend but how much of ourselves we give to others. Give a gift of EXPERIENCE....an evening at the Pikes Peak Center a Progressive Dinner or a train ride. Or, give a flock of chicks for a deserving village in another country via Heifer International or the ELCA program.

Start Planning for Christmas 2018: Figure what you spent on Christmas 2017. What were your spending categories? Ex. activities, gifts, food, restaurants, travel. Once you come up with this number, decide if it's realistic. Take inventory and then create a monthly holiday savings fund for 12/2018 and start your shopping early.

(Continued on next page)

(Christmas Toolkit continued)

Emotional: Elisa Thompson

Here's a few suggestions to help you keep your sanity intact during the busy Advent season:

1. Let go of the unrealistic expectation that the holidays should be only jolly and festive feelings. Over the course of any thirty days, it is completely normal for our moods to fluctuate. Grumpy, worried, sad and tired days happen even during "the most wonderful time of the year". Add the activities and demands of Christmas preparation and what are the chances you will feel blissful and mellow the entire Advent season?
2. Try to prioritize your holiday prep early. If possible, renegotiate, delegate or simply drop tasks you find wearing. Make a point to include activities you enjoy on your holiday prep list. Often, if we don't schedule fun activities during this busy time of year, they just don't happen.
3. Communicate! Often times when you let friends and loved ones know of activities that stress you out, you find they would also like to forego these activities or are more than happy to take on tasks for you.
4. In this season of "peace on Earth and good will towards men" we often find ourselves surrounded by those we've successfully managed to avoid all year. While we are not likely to change the individual, we can choose to change our response to the person's behavior. For instance, while you may not be able to remove people from the guest list, you don't have to allow them to corner you.
5. Not only can we apply loving, healthy boundaries to others, we often need to do so with ourselves. If we eat, drink and spend too much and sleep and exercise too little, we are not going to be in top form for managing holiday stress.
6. Spoiler Alert! Perfection doesn't exist. Striving for it leaves you overwhelmed, irritable and never satisfied. Christmas can still be wonderful even with dry turkey, lurking dust bunnies and bickering relatives.

A Parting Thought from Team Stretch: Christmas can still be wonderful even when there's mishaps and things go awry. Sometimes God's grace and blessing show up in the least expected places for instance, a barn in Bethlehem! When bad things happen and the world around you seems to be collapsing, or at least driving you crazy, remember the promise of Christ is that He will be with you. And no matter how dark things seem, out of the darkness will come light. A Blessed Advent and Christmas season to you all from Team Stretch.



Notes from the Music Room

This December the choir and instrumentalists of Ascension will again present their annual cantata, but some things will be a bit different. Our cantata this year really centers around Advent and preparing our hearts. We all know the story of Christmas, it is one of the first Bible stories that children can tell. But sometimes we miss the wonder, it becomes simply a familiar re-run playing in the background of this busy time of year. This year's cantata is punctuated by the Advent hymn *Savior of the Nations, Come*. This hymn was translated by Martin Luther from St. Ambrose's (c. 340-397) text and set to an old chant tune, and Luther's text was then translated to English to form the hymn we know. It reminds us of the amazing mystery of Jesus' birth, His Divine Identity, and His holy mission of redemption. I hope that our retelling of the story and meditations on it, will re-awaken the amazement and joy in your hearts at God's great love for us, that He would come to earth in such a humble way to be our Savior, to shed His life for us all.

Gloria in Excelsis Deo, Megan Miller

Connecting Ascension Riders and Drivers (CARD) Program

A couple of months ago, the daughter of one of our senior members approached me to see if our church had a ride sharing program for members without cars. Her Mom can no longer drive, but she still lives at home and needs rides to doctors' appointments, grocery stores, church, etc. The daughter lives out of town. I had to say that we don't have a ride sharing program at Ascension, but maybe it's time to start one up. As a result, the Board of Lay Ministry is interested in seeing how many people could use a program like this and how many drivers are willing to provide rides when their calendars allow. If you are in need of rides or are interested in providing rides, please contact John Hayes at (719) 572-1052 or at blazehayes@aol.com. Drivers would need to use their own cars and have their own auto insurance. *We are now providing rides for three of our members.*

Change of Address:

Andrew Gulliksen
360 N. Arroyo Grande Blvd. Apt. 922
Henderson, Nevada 89014

Thoughts on an Abundant Life

MERRY CHRISTMAS
HAPPY BIRTHDAY JESUS

I hope I am the first wish you Merry Christmas. That probably is not the case but I love doing it. This is my favorite holiday for so many reasons. But as I celebrate more and more holidays the commercial craziness seems to get worse each year. But as a Christian Lutheran I try to ignore that and live in the comfort of Jesus's birth and the joy of being with people that feel the same.

As a student in a Lutheran school we were so busy with preparations for our annual Christmas program and totally emerged in the "reason for the season" the commercial stuff took a backseat. Even at home the preparations were centered about the celebration and not how much you could buy.

I can still hear the King James words of the real Christmas story, recited by my classmates in a dim lite church on Christmas Eve. Best ever memory.

I see people so stressed about "the holidays" that they don't or can't see the joy in the preparations for the best Christmas gift ever. If you have that stress or know someone who does, you are included in my prayers. We can all pray for these people and even help by living in the joy of Advent and Christmas. I know that joy is contagious and the only thing we want to spread this season.

If you have those wonderful Christmas memories I encourage you to share them and help others create their own memories. My best advice for getting in the moment for Advent and Christmas is to read Luke 2:1-20, in the King James if you want or any version you have.

God bless your Christmas preparations.

"... behold I bring good news of great joy ... for to you is born this day in the city of David a Savior who is Christ the Lord."

Sara

Bridge Group

Our Bridge Group will meet at 5:30PM on Dec. 16 at Ascension. If your card playing skills are a little rusty or you would like to learn how to play this great game, we have help sheets and bridge instructors available to help. Feel free to contact John or Kathy Hayes at (719) 572-1052 or at kittypawz@aol.com if you have any questions about this group.

Create A Legacy



*Ascension Lutheran Church
Endowment Fund*

Endowment Fund Legacies Created

Thanks and God's blessings to the following donor(s) for gifts to the Endowment fund:

Sandy Trent - Birthday

BECOME INVOLVED...

****Coffee Fellowship Hour – Smell the Aroma!** Please help keep the coffee hours going by signing up to host a Sunday morning Fellowship Hour! All directions for coffee making are in the coffee station, or just ask for assistance. One or two people is all it takes, and you are so appreciated! See the sign-up sheet on the Kiosk in Fellowship Hall.

****Prayer Ministry** – as we pray for people it helps us to have updates to keep us connected to the person and situation. If you have a prayer concern or would like to become a member of our Prayer Chain, contact the office, 634-1694 or office@ascensionlutheranelca.org.

****Quilts for New Beginnings** – meets every Wednesday from 9-1 in the Fellowship Hall. They spread out quilts in all phases of creation, and if you'd like to help put together quilts for a good cause, come and join us. No experience necessary, just a good heart willing to learn and participate.

****Mercy's Gate – formerly Northern Churches Care** – Pantry items and toiletries are collected in the cupboard in the Fellowship Hall. Ongoing needs: crackers, mac & cheese, oatmeal, spaghetti, corn, green beans, spaghetti sauce, tomato products, tuna, gravy toothpaste, tooth brushes, face soap.

****Knotty Kneedlers** – We continue to make small blankets and now sweaters and baby burial buntings for the Indian reservations, as well as prayer shawls. If you would like to become involved in this ministry, or just want to join us for fellowship and work on your own project, we meet every Wednesday at 1pm, in Fellowship Hall. Contact Bonnie Vawter, 579-6707, with any questions.

****Campbell's Soup Labels:** Please just cut the UPC bar code and the picture of the "point value boy" from the following products: Campbells - soups, chunky soups, Healthy Request, Supper Bakes; Pepperidge Farm, Spaghetti-Os, Swanson, V-8 beverage caps and Prego Spaghetti Sauce. Thanks for continuing to collect these to help the people with disabilities.

BECOME INVOLVED...

****Pop can tabs** help the Ronald McDonald House. They may be placed in the container in the cupboard in the Welcome Center.

****Terrace Gardens Bingo** – Prizes and Volunteers are needed. Our church has been supporting bingo at the Terrace Garden Healthcare Center for about 35 years. We call three games of bingo from 10:00-11:00AM on the third Wednesday of each month for the residents. We normally have about 15 players. We call out the numbers until every player wins in each game. After they win, we help them (if needed) to the prize table where they can pick out a prize of their choice. The prizes are all donated by members of the Ascension family. We could use some of the following prizes: our #1 need is for gently used men's clothing (sizes Large and higher), then we also have a need for women's clothing (large and Plus sizes), hygiene products (body washes, lotions, tooth paste, shampoo, etc), playing cards, some small containers of ladies' perfumes, adult coloring books/crayons, and lady's jewelry. Please mark items as "Bingo Prizes" and place them in the Terrace Garden Bingo box located on the counter behind the Welcome Center. The residents really look forward to our bingo each month and it is rewarding to help them. Please contact John Hayes at 572-1052 or at blazehayes@aol.com if you'd like to help or learn more about this Outreach program. *Thank you for your continued support of this program.*

Sunday School to Present Christmas Program

The Christmas Story will be presented by our children and youth on December 10 during 8:00 and 10:30 AM services. Also, please join us for fellowship and celebration between services!



Christmas program information for Sunday school families:

- Sunday, December 3: This is our final Sunday school meeting to practice songs, work on lines, and be assigned costumes. We will start downstairs at 9:15 AM.

- Saturday, December 9: We will practice in the sanctuary at 9:00 AM.
- Sunday, December 10: Kids should arrive at 7:40 AM. More details to come in a December email. Please contact lisamcoltrin@yahoo.com with questions.



Spaghetti Supper Success!

November 5th was our annual Spaghetti Supper, Raffle and Variety Show. The evening was very successful and we wish to thank everyone throughout the community who bought tickets for this event.

Thank you, thank you, thank you for the much-appreciated, generous donations that were raffled off between the acts during the Spaghetti Supper Variety Show.

Thanks to all of you the raffle was a huge success. Your thoughtfulness means so much and we are so grateful!

We would also like to thank Jim and Patrick DeLoughry and Mary Stoneback for your commitment to our mission and all of your hard work and dedication you put in... Your efforts were truly appreciated!

Also, a million thanks to all of our wonderful volunteers! We could not have done it without you all.

Lastly, thank you to our chefs, especially Troy Kindley, who prepared an awesome dinner!

Thanks again for supporting our 2017 Spaghetti Supper, Raffle and Variety Show!

We look forward to another successful dinner next year.

God bless,
The Youth Board



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Ascension Lutheran Church, ELCA
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Colorado Springs, CO 80909

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ADDRESS SERVICE REQUESTED

CHURCH STAFF

Normal Office Hours: 9-12 Mon-Fri (719) 634-1694
Pastor Dan Holt – off on Friday
Pastor Daniel Smith
Music Director – Megan Miller
Diaconal Minister of Faith Formation – Mary Stoneback
Office Administrator – Arlayne McKee
Consultant for Health Care – Dr. Dennis Caldwell
Child Learning Center Director – Teresa Adams
E-mail addresses: office@ascensioncos.org
d.holt@ascensioncos.org (Pastor Holt)
d.smith@ascensioncos.org (Pastor Smith)
m.stoneback@ascensioncos.org (Mary Stoneback)
music@ascensioncos.org (Megan Miller)
t.adams@ascensioncos.org (Teresa Adams)
clc@ascensioncos.org (CLC)
ts.trinko@gmail.com (newsletter articles)
Our Website: www.ascensioncos.org
January newsletter deadline: Dec. 17



William Asiano (father of Bill Asiano), Beth Ayen (Daughter-in-law of Darcy & Bill Ayen), Dorothy Brown, Sharon Budd (Sister of Darcy Ayen), Brad Buhler, Grace Buhler, Jerri Butschky, Kate Campbell, Michelle Courtright (Daughter of Jeff & Renee Courtright), Libby Dollar, Jacquelyn Ellison (Granddaughter of Marilyn & Troy Goodenough), Steve Hahn (Grandson of Joan Magee), Pat Lewis, Jeff Sebben, Jerry Smith, Cathy Stanley, Virginia Stanley, and all of our men and women serving overseas.