

From the desk of Pastor Murdy…



After the death of Jesus, his disciples hid in fear. Their entire world, everything they had believed in, their lives- turned upside down. Jesus, who they believed to be the Son of God, was dead. Despite everything Jesus had taught and promised them they fled with hopelessness.

One of our favorite family movies is the Wizard of Oz. Including both the original, and the animated versions that Zoey and McKenna have discovered. With Dorothy and the gang in the back ground I can’t help but use Oz as an illustration for post-resurrection fear.

Have you ever felt like a tornado showed up spinning through your life, picked you up and dropped you somewhere else? I am sure this is what the disciples must have felt like the night in the garden of Gethsemane. There can be times in our lives, spiritual or otherwise, when we feel as though our lives have changed so dramatically we find ourselves wondering through what seems like the Land of Oz This is what I like to call, Oz syndrome. Oz syndrome is the progressive or instantaneous feeling of utter loss, petrified, and bewilderment.

Have you ever felt like you were in Oz? Maybe you are now, or maybe you know someone who is. Oz can be rather scary, especially if you feel alone. When we find ourselves lost on the yellow brick road, uncertain of where it may lead us and when we can no longer rely on our own sense of direction we need to trust in Jesus. The only way out of Oz is by trusting in God to guide you. We can click our heels all we want; walk to the emerald city and back. Lost is lost! The truth is, when we are lost, the only one who knows the way is God. We are not all lucky to have ruby slippers, but fortunately we have a God who we can pray to at all times. We have a God who is always with us, even when we find ourselves in “Oz”.

After three days of being in what seemed like Oz the disciples come face to face with the risen Christ. Jesus came to meet them behind locked doors. In the midst of their fear, Jesus came to meet them while they were lost. The message of Easter is a message of hope, liberation and peace. It is a message that needs to be written on our hearts so that when we do feel lost we know that Christ is with us. Nothing can keep Christ from us- not death, not the tomb, not even locked doors!

Yours in Christ + Pastor

*ASCENSION LUTHERAN CHURCH*

*The Messenger April 2016 Issue*

**2016 Council Officers**

President- Bob Thompson

Vice President- Kelly Braun

Secretary- Venus Thompson

Treasurer- Clay Marnich

***2016 Council Members***

Christian Education- Venus Thompson

Fellowship- Karen Houseman

Social Ministry- Joel Randal

Finance- Clay Marnich

Evangelism- Bill Hendricks

Stewardship- Kelly Braun

Property- Bob Thompson

Worship/Music- Jerry Wessel

Comm./Publications- Dale Kozek

Youth Ministry- Joel Randal

**NEXT COUNCIL MEETING**

Tuesday, April 12th at 7:00 PM

# A Message from Rich…

Easter has provided us with a time of renewal and new birth leading to the sunlight of Spring.  As we await the emergence of the caterpillar from her cocoon after a long winter of silence and darkness, it is with hope and joy that we are certain she will come forth at just the precise time that the Creator has determined. When we see her burst out with multicolored wings and in perfect harmony with nature, we can appreciate God's timing in all things. If the young butterfly were to emerge a day early she would fall to the ground. But God's timing is perfect.

So it is with us. Spring is a time of renewal for us to come out of the winter darkness and burst forth with joy and hope. This is a perfect time to renew ourselves in the sunlight of God's Grace. Take a few minutes out of these sunny days to just sit for five minutes in silence and allow His Grace to come and enter into our hearts and minds. Let the sunlight of His Spirit flow throughout our entire being. Just take five minutes out of your busy day and give it to God, our Creator. Anyone can do it. God Bless.

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**Rich Mussman**

**The Choir in Lutheran Worship**

by James Tiefel

This is a story about the church choir, but it's not a story only for present or potential choir members. It's a story for everyone who worships in a Lutheran Church.

"Special thanks to the choir for beautifying our worship today." What a nice thing to say! Choir members are pleased when the pastor compliments them or, for that matter, when anyone finds their music to be beautiful. There is plenty of ugliness in our sinful world, and music in worship restores some of the beauty that was lost after the fall into sin.

But is adding beauty the primary objective of the Lutheran choir? Actually, the choir has other functions that are equally if not more important. The music of the choir should not be less than beautiful, but it should also be more.

When we gather for public worship, we worship our Savior God by proclaiming the good news about Jesus. This is the commission Jesus gave his people, and we show how much Jesus is worth to us when we carry out his commission. We cannot do all this work on our own, however; we call our pastor to proclaim the gospel on our behalf during public worship. But we do some of this work ourselves also in worship. When we confess our sins, when we speak the Creed, and when we sing Christian hymns, we are retelling the story of God's love.

The Lutheran choir assists both the pastor and the members as they proclaim the gospel in worship. The choir assists the members by supplying rehearsed voices to help worshipers sing new and difficult songs and hymns. The choir heightens the joy of hymn singing by offering special settings of stanzas on festival days. The choir assists the pastor, too. It enhances the Scripture readings as it adds beauty and variety to the psalms and scripture verses that punctuate the lessons. The choir often sings an anthem and, as it does, it proclaims the good news just as the pastor does in his sermons and the members do in their hymns. You'll often notice that the choir anthem invariably amplifies the worship theme of a particular Sunday as its text matches the focus of the lessons and sermon.

Have you noticed that the words the choir sings are always found in the Sunday bulletin or in the hymnal? If the choir's only task were to beautify the service, the words would hardly be important. But the choir's ministry is more than that. The choir also proclaims the gospel and helps others to do so. In fact, that is the choir's primary purpose in Lutheran worship. The next time you want to compliment a member of your church choir, why not say, "Thank you for helping me worship today and for strengthening my faith."

**New in the sanctuary**

A big thank you to Jerry Wessel, who designed, created and placed the new beautiful cross with votive candles, which was displayed for Easter Sunday. Ascension truly is blessed by his willingness to share his talent with us. (Special thanks to Maddie Graham to supplying the photo).

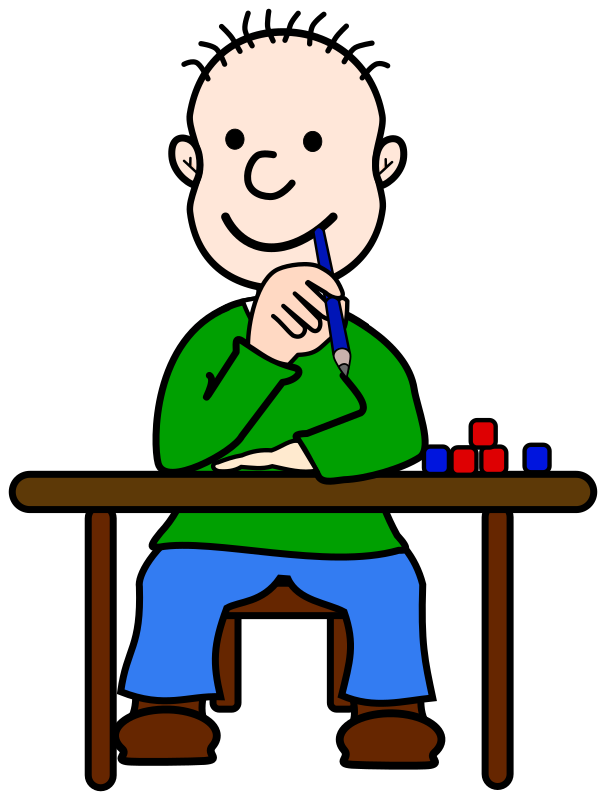




Shirley Vete; Pat and Gene Summerhill; Mary and Harold Honath; Ken “Butch” Thompson; Ron and Pat Williams; Elizabeth Reuben; Sandy Belsky; Matt Wilkinson; Jean Nau; Aaron Braddick; Lorraine Zwikl; Connor Paselivis; and Rich Mussman.

**Ever thought of giving your child a private and quality education?**

**Holy Family Academy, an affordable and innovative Catholic high school serving students of all faiths! If you would like to learn more, please visit** [**hfa-pgh.org**](http://hfa-pgh.org/) **or contacting** [**Admissions@hfa-pgh.org**](mailto:Admissions@hfa-pgh.org) **or** [**412-307-0230**](tel:412-307-0230)**.**

**

Additional Ways to Give Towards the Church…

SIMPLY GIVING:

Simply giving is a new and much more suitable way to give to your church. Many of us pay our bills online or have them set up to be paid automatically for convenience. Now you can give to the church the same way. 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.

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. To learn more, please contact church office.

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 God in whom they rest and who provided such a gift- for however short a time. In the like of the church when a loved one dies we have the opportunity to contribute to the memorial fund.

**Worship and Music**

Worship: If you have an interest in decorating the church during special times of the year please see Lynn Kinney or Pastor Joe. We are looking for your talents and ideas on how we can decorate the church to be more festive and display symbols related to the season. For example, Advent, Christmas, Lent, Easter, Thanksgiving, etc. We would love to work together!

**Music:** Have you ever wondered how hymns are selected and why we sing certain songs when we do? If you are interested in helping in the music selection process please see Pastor Joe or Brandy. As part of our three year mission plan we would like to invite more participation in the planning process. Let us know!

**NEW**- We invite you to share your favorite hymns with us that can be incorporated in our worship. Hymnals are available in the narthex, along with a sheet for you to list your favorites. Feel free to borrow a hymnal to spend more time with your selections.

**Lent collection**

Heads, shoulders, knees and TOES! Thank you Ascension family for making this wonderful foundation a success!

2 Corinthians 9:13

Through the testing of this ministry you glorify God by your obedience to the confession of the gospel of Christ and by the generosity of your sharing with them and with all others,

[](http://www.google.com/url?sa=i&rct=j&q=&esrc=s&source=images&cd=&cad=rja&uact=8&ved=&url=http://www.i2clipart.com/clipart-hahn-15ed&bvm=bv.117604692,d.cWw&psig=AFQjCNE99Y_quP9r4IfiCtY45QxH5H6mFw&ust=1458922846436578)

**Ascension Lutheran Church is changing hymnals!**

We will soon begin to use the new Lutheran hymnal, the Evangelical Lutheran Worship (ELW) or Cranberry book. We welcome you to contribute to this effort by donating a book to the glory of God in honor or in memory of someone. Each hymnal cost $22.50. We invite you to use the envelopes provided in the bulletin.

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**Vacation Bible School:**

**Mark your calendars August 1st to the 5th (6pm-8pm) for Vacation Bible School this year!**

**More information to come!**

***UPCOMING COMMITTEE MEETINS***

Property Meeting

Monday, April 4th at 7:00 PM

Council Meeting

Tuesday, April 12th at 7:00 PM

Finance Meeting

Sunday, April 17th at 12:00 PM

Worship & Music Meeting

Monday, May 2nd at 7:00 PM

Council Meeting

Tuesday, May 10th at 7:00 PM

Fellowship Meeting

Sunday, May 22nd at 12:00 PM

Ascensions 5th Annual

WING FLING

**Saturday, August 27th 3PM**

We have some big ideas, be sure to not miss this event!

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.

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April 2nd kicks off the month long observance of Autism awareness with the worldwide “Light it up Blue”campaign.  Our 3rd to 6th grade Sunday school class will once again host Autism awareness Sunday on April 10th.   Statistics show that Autism now affects 1 in 68 children and 1 in 42 boys.  Autism is the fastest growing developmental disorder in the US for which there is still no medical detection or cure.  Our class will offer candy, cookies, cupcakes and merchandise with the Autism logo for donations that will benefit Autism Speaks.  We hope to shed light on Autism and offer hope to those affected.  The annual walk for Autism Speaks will be held in Pittsburgh on Sunday, June 12th.  Please support our efforts to raise funds on Sunday, April 10th and if possible to walk on Sunday, June 12th.  Thank you in advance!



**OPPORTUNITY TO SERVE**

Ascension’s current constitution is approximately 20 years old, and our Synod and the ELCA are encouraging us to update it. If reading and pondering are your strengths, we would love to have you join our new Constitution Committee at Ascension to assist with this process. The ELCA adopted a Model Constitution in 2013, and we will be using that as our starting point. We expect this process to take several months, but not require many meetings.

If you are interested (or want to learn more), please contact Kelly Braun at [braunk@pepperlaw.com](mailto:braunk@pepperlaw.com) or 412-787-7773.

**Ascension Supports**

**"Family Promise" at Sewickley United Methodist**

On Monday, March 14, volunteers from Ascension provided transportation, dinner, and fellowship to homeless families temporarily housed at Sewickley United Methodist (SUM), through Family Promise of Southwestern PA. This non-profit organization connects children and families experiencing homelessness with a network of local congregations and dedicated staff, all focused on providing them with shelter, meals, hospitality, and support until they are able to return to sustainable independent lives in their own homes. Due to recent placement of one of the families into their new home, there were just two families staying at SUM on the evening that Ascension volunteered. With five children ranging in age from four months to eight years old, we had a great time playing games, making artwork and Easter crafts, and reading books with them. They loved to play "school," pretending to be the teacher and principal, and giving us math and reading lessons. Shortly after our volunteer date, we learned that one of the two families would be moving into their new home at the end of the month!

Thanks so much to all of the volunteers who generously donated their time, energy, and delicious food/cooking! Ascension is currently scheduled to support SUM again during their next hosting week, on Monday, June 13, 2016. If you are interested in learning more and/or getting involved (volunteering as a van driver, dinner host, evening host, or overnight host), please contact Lynn Neilson (lynnneilson@gmail.com) and Ellen Randal (ellen.randal@gmail.com). To learn more about Family Promise, visit their website at [www.familypromiseswpa.org](http://www.familypromiseswpa.org).



# STEWARDSHIP STATION

Recently, four members of our new Congregational Council and Pastor gave up their Saturday to spend it with Bishop Kusserow and his assistants to attend the Synod’s first ever training for new Council Members. On Saturday February 27, Bob Thompson, Joel Randal, Kelly Braun, Jerry Wessel and Pastor travelled to St. John’s of Highland Lutheran Church in the North Hills to attend group training with several other congregations. The Bishop and his assistants, Pastor Sarah and Pastor Ed, focused on explaining the 2013 Model Constitution for ELCA Congregations (see related article in this newsletter about Ascension adopting this constitution); describing Synod resources available for the Council; and reminding us that the Synod is there to help us when needed. They also held break-out sessions for Council presidents, secretaries, treasurers and certain committees (such as stewardship). Much thanks go out to Bob, Joel, Kelly, Jerry and Pastor for taking the time to attend and network, and bringing back this information to the rest of the Council and Congregation.

Yours in Christ,

Stewardship Committee



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*The Fellowship Chart has been posted in the Narthex and is ready to receive sign-ups from members who are eager to provide a light snack after worship! Just take a look at the available dates and sign up for the date that works for you!*

*Important Dates:*

*June 4th – Yard Sale*

*August 27th – Wing Fling*

*Please mark your calendars and plan to attend these excellent Ascension events and stay tuned for Painting with a Twist and Oktoberfest events coming soon!*

Saturday, June 4th 8: 00 AM – 2:00 PM

Set up time will be scheduled for 6:00 AM, we have extended hours this year.

Cost is $10 per (10x10) spot.

You keep all the money you earn from the sale. We will be working with AMVets to donate any unwanted items, left over from the sale, on Monday, June 6th.

The church will also be hosting a food/bake sale throughout the entire event; proceeds will go towards a non-profit organization.

If you would like to sign up and reserve a spot, please send an email to [ascensionyardsale@gmail.com](mailto:ascensionyardsale@gmail.com)

There are still some spots available!

**Carla Stewart, Director**  
WHO: All kids ages 2-8 **\***Mini (ages 2-3); Classic (3-5); Premier (ages 5-8)

WHERE: Ascension Lutheran Church

WHEN: Our 8-Week season starts Wed. 3/30 and Sat. 4/2

\*Multiple, convenient class times from which to choose!

\* Please visit our website for more information

<https://www.soccershots.org/pittsburgh/>



REGISTER FOR SUMMER CAMP 2016

[www.lutherlyn.com](http://www.lutherlyn.com) or 724-865-2161

An Invitation to CAMPBLAST! Saturday, May 7th ~11am -4:30pm

Classic Camp- Juniors (Grades 4-6) Jr. High (Grades 7-9)

Classic Senior High (Grades 10-12)

Small Fry Days (Grades 1-3)

Day Camp at Lutherlyn (Grades 1-6)

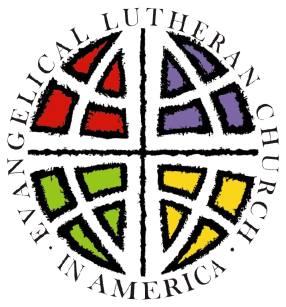
SO MUCH MORE FOR CHILDREN AND FAMILIES!

**ELCA Facts:**

[**https://www.elca.org/en/News-and-Events/ELCA-Facts**](https://www.elca.org/en/News-and-Events/ELCA-Facts)

As of December 31, 2014, there were 3,765,362 baptized members in the ELCA. There were 9,261 congregations organized in 65 synods in nine geographic regions.   
  
The ELCA is a diverse church body, becoming more so every day. This church is committed to growing in diversity and strengthening its global, ecumenical and interfaith relationships around the world.   
  
ELCA congregations are led by gifted men and women who have been called by God to serve their community. The ELCA calls both women and men to serve as pastors and lay rostered leaders. Here are some facts about ELCA leaders:   
  
As of September 15, 2015, there were 17,777 leaders on the ELCA roster including 966 associates in ministry, 59 deaconesses, 200 diaconal ministers and 16,435 ordained clergy. In 2015, 25 percent of clergy on the ELCA roster were women. In the ELCA’s eight seminaries, the numbers of women and men preparing for ministry are about equal.   
  
About 86 percent of ordained women and 83 percent of ordained men are actively serving in congregations.   
  
The ELCA offers opportunities for Lutheran education at every level and considers education as an important part of our calling. We offer quality education at every level through our institutions. In addition to the eight ELCA seminaries and two seminary extension centers, there are 26 colleges and universities, 50 or more lifelong learning programs, 14 high schools, 296 elementary schools, 1,573 early childhood programs, 145 camp and retreat centers serving 450,000 annually.   
  
The ELCA is committed to making the world a more just and peaceful place to live. Through programs, ministries and partnerships ELCA congregations, synods and the church wide organization work every day to address inequities in political, economic and social systems and to end conflict and violence all over the world. We are a church that believes God is calling us into the world – together. This is Christ’s church. There is a place for you here.

# Luther and Lutheranism- Martin Luther (1483-1546) Martin Luther was eight years old when Christopher Columbus set sail from Europe and landed in the Western Hemisphere.  Luther was a young monk and priest when Michelangelo was painting the Sistine Chapel in Rome.  A few years later, he was a junior faculty member at a new university in small-town Germany, intently studying the Scriptures, “captivated with an extraordinary ardor for understanding Paul in the Epistle to the Romans.” In these days Luther was tormented by the demand for righteousness before God. “I did not love, yes, I hated the righteous God who punishes sinners, and secretly, if not blasphemously, certainly murmuring greatly, I was angry with God.” Then, in the midst of that struggle with God, the message of the Scriptures became clear, like a long-shut door opening wide. When he realized that a “merciful God justifies us by faith … I felt that I was altogether born again and had entered paradise itself through open gates.” What Luther discovered is the freedom of Christians trusting God’s mercy in Christ. As he later wrote, “Faith is God’s work in us. It changes us and makes us to be born anew of God. This faith is a living, busy, active, mighty thing. It is impossible for it not to be doing good works incessantly. Faith is a living, daring confidence in God’s grace, so sure and certain that believers would stake their lives on it a thousand times.” This discovery set Luther’s life on a new course —both his own life and his public service as a preacher and teacher. When a church-endorsed sales team came to the Wittenberg area in October, 1517, Luther was concerned that the promotion and sale of indulgences undermined the promise of God’s unreserved mercy in Jesus and the faith that trusts that promise. His 95 Theses or Disputation on the Power and Efficacy of Indulgences became the first of a life-long stream of books, sermons, letters, essays, even hymns in which he expressed his confidence in this life-giving promise from God, the Gospel, and its liberating implications for all of life in church and society.







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*Fellowship*

*Upcoming Events*

*Birthdays and Anniversaries*

*Crossword Puzzle*



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