

ASCENSION LUTHERAN CHURCH

The Messenger December 2016 Issue



2016 Council Officers

President- Bob Thompson
Vice President- Vacant
Secretary- Venus Thompson
Treasurer- Bob Thompson

2016 Council Members

Christian Education- Venus Thompson
Fellowship- Karen Houseman
Social Ministry- Joel Randal
Finance- Clay Marnich
Evangelism- Bill Hendricks
Stewardship- Jim Mentzer
Property- Bob Thompson
Worship/Music- Jerry Wessel
Comm./Publications- Dale Kozek
Youth Ministry- Joel Randal

NEXT COUNCIL MEETING

Tuesday, December 13th
at 7:00 PM

From the desk of Pastor Murdy...

Brother Martins Small Catechism Part V

The Creed Article III

The Holy Spirit

"She was found to be with child from the Holy Spirit." Matthew 1:18

"And suddenly from Heaven there came a sound like the rush of a violent wind..." —Acts 2:2

In his opening remarks on the third article of the creed in his Large Catechism Martin Luther he says, "I cannot give a better title than 'Being Made Holy.'" It is the Holy Spirit that makes us holy. Although we don't often think of ourselves as holy- we should. In this I mean, we are a people set apart. It is the Holy Spirit that sets us apart in our baptism and marks us as one redeemed by Christ the crucified.

In seminary we often got sidetracked in our preaching (homiletics) classes while discussing the role of the Holy Spirit in our preaching. You hear of charismatic preachers through the ages whose voices sound like those of the apostles – tongues on fire and thunder in their words! Where is the Holy Spirit when I preach? Many of my colleges' and I would voice that Lutherans have become so unaware of the Holy Spirit. We are afraid to let loose and let God. We don't like anything to out of the ordinary. Heaven forbid if we didn't preach from the pulpit one Sunday. Recognizing the Holy Spirit can be as easy as following your heart and allowing God to guide your actions and your words. It's not a matter of stepping out of the way- but joining the dance of the Trinity. Although our mighty God is indeed a mystery that is omnipresent we can easily articulate God the Father and God the Son. We can understand this relationship between Father and Son. Yet, we are often speechless when it comes to describing the Holy Spirit. Who is the Holy Spirit? What is the Holy Spirit? While I have your attention I would like to clear this one up- it's not a dove! One of the most beautiful descriptions I have ever come across is in *The Shack* by Wm. Paul Young.

In this amazing book the Holy Spirit is called Sarayu a female figure who radiates light and exemplifies the hidden mystery and gentleness of God. In following the Holy Spirit to the lack one day the main character has this to say: "Her nature was rather ethereal, full of dynamic shades and hues of color and motion...she obviously is not a being who is predicable."

Try as we might, describing the Holy Spirit is indeed like trying to describe the wind. Which makes a lot of sense when you think about it. The Hebrew קודש רוח and Greek Άγιο πνεύμα word for the Holy Spirit means "wind" "breeze." Although we cannot describe the Holy Spirit we know what the Holy Spirit does. The Holy Spirit, or the Sanctifier makes us Holy. It is through the Holy Spirit that we come to believe in Jesus. The Holy Spirit "called me [us] through the gospel, enlightened me with his gifts, made me holy and kept me in the true faith, just as he calls, gathers, enlightens, and makes holy the whole Christian church on earth and keeps it with Jesus Christ in the one common, true faith." —Small Catechism.

The Holy Spirit continues to work among us in subtle and sometimes thunderous ways. The Holy Spirit speaks to us through the word, calls us to our baptismal vocation and comforts our hearts and lives as we wait for the coming of Christ. One of my favorite quotes in the entire book of Concord (Lutheran confession and documents of faith) is found in Luther's explanation of the third article in his Large Catechism: "...he first leads us into his holy community, placing us in the church's lap, where he preaches to us and brings us to Christ." What a beautiful image. To think of the Holy Spirit as the one who places us in the lap of the church. How do we respond to such a gift? We open our lives to the Holy Spirit and allow the Spirit to lead us where God would have us go.

Yours in Christ+

Pastor Joseph Murdy, OLF



Shirley Vete; Pat and Gene Summerhill; Mary and Harold Honath; Ron and Pat Williams; Elizabeth Reuben; Sandy Belsky; Lorraine Zwikl; Barbara Jean Murdy; Judy Mostoller; and Rich Mussman.



Bring five dozen, four to trade, and one to share! Join Us On Sunday, December 18th for our Annual Cookie Exchange, following Worship Service!



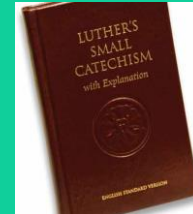
Wednesday Evening Advent Services 7:00 PM
Sunday, December 11th Children's Pageant
Sunday, December 18th Cookie Exchange
Christmas Eve Services, December 24th at 4:00 PM
and 10:00 PM
Christmas Day Service, Sunday, December 25th
10:30 AM

Luther's Small Catechism

If you don't have a small catechism at home and would like one, they are available in the Narthex. You can also download Luther's Small Catechism for free (a perk of the 500th anniversary) on your iPhone

<http://www.augsburgfortress.org/store/product/13904/The-Small-Catechism>

The Small Catechism is also located in the back of our new hymnal the ELW.



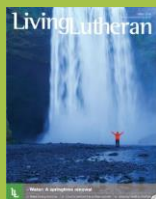
The Fellowship Chart has been posted in the Narthex and is ready to receive sign-ups from members who are eager to provide a light snack after worship! Just take a look at the available dates and sign up for the date that works for you!

Important Dates:
Cookie Exchange
Children's Pageant

Please mark your calendars for events coming soon!

Living Lutheran Subscription

<https://www.livinglutheran.org/subscribe/>



If you are interested in receiving the quarterly subscription of Living Lutheran Magazine, or learning how you can donate towards quarterly fees, please contact the church office or follow the link to be enrolled.



Ascension Supports

"Family Promise" at Sewickley United Methodist

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.

When families successfully leave our Shelter program for housing of their own, our Home Again program sets them up with the furniture and household goods they need to make a successful new start!

We are desperately seeking mattresses and box springs of all sizes, but twin beds for kids are most important! They are also looking for gently used car seats.

We pick-up!

Please contact Laura Vincenti at lvincenti@familypromiseswpa.org, 412-576-9795 or 724-229-1129.



Sunday, December 11th

The Children of Ascension will be putting on a pageant during Worship Service. Come see all their hard work and bringing the love of Christ.

Remember Christmas

by Valerie L. Plowman

Red reminds of the blood He spilt
to wash away and cleanse all of our guilt
White is for His actions, most pure.
Through sinless perfection, He did endure.

Green is for the life eternal
we can obtain through our Lord supernatural.
The star shines like the one so bright
that twinkled above that first Christmas night.

The fir tree is for many things:
the tree of Jesse--the father of kings,
and for the needles pointing to the Lord--
that little babe we all adored.

The wreath shows one eternal round;
the begin' of the Lord cannot be found.

The lights remind us that this babe
is the light of the world, and born to save.

The candy cane is for the crook;
not one sheep or lamb the shepherd forsook.

The Christmas bells we love to ring
proclaim joy! The birth of a newborn king.

These symbols remind us that we,
more like the three wise men all now should be.
Earnestly seeking to find the new babe
who humbly in a manger laid.

Ascension Lutheran Church is changing hymnals!

We ordered 88 of the needed 140 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 Narthex.

WE ARE \$1170.00 AWAY FROM OUR GOAL! THANK YOU ASCENSION FAMILY AND FRIENDS!



The 2017 approved budget is \$143,000+ and our estimated offering is around \$125,000. How do we close the gap?

Here at Ascension we have 59 giving units. Of those 59 40% give \$1-10 per week, 15% give \$10-20 per week, 26% give \$20-40 and 19% give more than \$40 per week. We know that God not only gives us what we need but gives us enough to give more. Stewardship recognizes that when we give in trust we know that God daily gives us all that we need. Even a small amount can make a big difference. For example: What does an additional \$1 per week look like from each 59 giving units- \$3,000 more for the church!

Throughout 2017 our council and our stewardship committee are committed to education and awareness surrounding stewardship. This includes the reality of our financial giving and participation, active stewardship programs, and regular conversation about our collective time, talent and treasure. 2016 was a rough year for the church. Attendance was down from last year, giving was down as a result of attendance and participation in our major summer events were marginal.

So, where do we go from here? We move forward with hope and assurance in God's abundance and with a willingness to participate in Gods great mission in this place. Stewardship means a lot of different things to different people. Some hear stewardship and think, money! This is true. Some hear stewardship and think, what do you need me to do? This is also true. At the center stewardship is our relationship with God. This relationship is abundant and bountiful! God is full of love, grace, and overflowing goodness. "God is good, all the time!" "All the time, God is good!"

God showers goodness on the earth and the people whom God has created. To trust God's abundance, we must recognize it. Where do you find God's abundance in your life? How do you share that abundance? As 2016 comes to a close during this season of thanks and giving how might we respond to God's goodness? As we enter into a new year- a season of prosperity and hope- how might you support the mission of Christ' church?

Family Game Night

Join us for a fun filled evening of laughter and fun on Wednesday, December 21st (Time TBD). Bring your family's favorite board or card game and a snack to share.



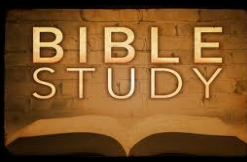
If you are interested in purchasing flowers to be placed in the chancel to the glory of God, we invite you to sign up in the Narthex on the flower chart. (Please ONLY place your name if you are ordering flowers) Checks can be placed in the offertory plate or church office, check are to be payable to Ascension Lutheran Church. The cost for two vases is \$50 or one vase for \$25. This is a great way to celebrate a milestone or loved one! The whole month of December is available.



We are always looking for non-perishable foods, small amount gift cards, and hygiene products for our

Brother Martin Pantry

If you know of anyone in need, please refer them to the church office. Thanks Ascension!



Pastor's Bible Study

Will now be monthly (instead of weekly)

The next session will be December 6th at 7:00 PM

Studying Paul's letter to the Galatians

A Blessed Advent and a Merry Christmas

Advent is a season of waiting, anticipation and remembering what it is that we are waiting for: the second coming of Christ. Christmas is a time when we remember God coming into our lives incarnated to dwell among us as Emmanuel. In all this waiting and anticipation we can often forget to keep Christ in Christmas. We get so stressed out with the "holidays" that church seems to be the last thing we need added to our list of things to do. Without Christ- there is no Christmas. Without Christmas there is no hope. That's what this time is all about, hope.

Life is hard without hope. Hope is what keeps us going and what sustains us throughout all the seasons of life. Hope is what strengthens our faith and ensures us that those who trust in God's promises will not be disappointed. We hear hope when we hear the ringing bells of the Salvation Army. We see hope where there is charity and self-sacrifice. We feel hope when we gaze upon the Christ child- swaddled in his mother's arms. During this season of Advent and Christmas we have the joy of remembering in whom we have hope.

During this sacred season I pray that each of you will experience all the joy this time has to offer and further pray that you carry it with you throughout the year. As we wait for Christ to come again- let us do so with hope and joy that when Christ comes he finds us faithful.

To each of you my dear Ascension family, on behalf of myself and my family I wish you all a very Merry Christmas!

Lovingly+

PJ





*Inside this Month
Issue...*

A Christmas Poem

*A Word from PJ and
Family*

Fellowship

Upcoming Events

*Birthdays and
Anniversaries*



Ascension Lutheran Church
1290 Silver Lane
McKees Rocks, PA 15136

(412) 859-3711
office@alcpgh.com
music@alcpgh.com
pastor@alcpgh.com
www.alcpgh.com

