

From the desk of Pastor Murdy…

**Praise from the Heart**

We don’t often think about how we praise God, do we? We sometimes take it for granted that our attendance in church on Sunday morning is adequate and can therefore check it off the list of weekly obligations. In our busy and over committed lives we fail to recognize God's activity, we fail to honor the Sabbath and our praise becomes dry and half-hearted at best. Realizing what needs to change is the first step. When it comes to praise there are so many things we give our attention to. Ask yourself, where does God rank? Do you need to adjust the list? What needs to go so that God becomes the first priority above all else?

Praising God is as easy as being yourself. Recognizing who you are, who God has created you to be and being satisfied with it. Praising God starts within. It pours from the deepest place of who we are. When our hearts recognize who God is, there is nothing that can stop our praise and adoration of the Most High. As a pastor, I truly believe that our sense of self is intimately reflected in how we worship and praise our maker.

Several years ago I traveled to Arizona to visit family. While we were there we drove to Sedona. If you have ever been, you know how breathtaking it is. If you have not, put it on your bucket list. One of the main attractions is a church built into the side of a mountain, it’s called the Chapel of the Holy Cross. Around the church are small walk ways with beautiful flowers mixed in with natural desert landscape. Other than the flowers, what caught my attention the most were these little signs that said, “Don’t pick us, we are praising God.”

Praising God is not something you practice. It’s not something you fit in. It’s not something that can be made artificially. Praise is something that comes from the heart, and reflects our genuine appreciation and acknowledgement to the one “*from whom all blessings flow*.” “*I will praise you, Lord my God, with all my heart; I will glorify your name forever.*” Ps. 85. Challenge yourself to find the moments in your day that can be dedicated to praise. Worship is not restricted to a pew on a Sunday morning.  Praise is the very breath that you breathe.  Every passing second is one in which the Lord has given you to reflect His goodness. This is embodied in your character, attitude, and esteem. How patient were you in the grocery store line? What was your reaction to the customer service representative you struggled to understand? When given a compliment, do you dismiss it and retort with a personal insecurity? Or can you accept yourself for how others see you and how God created you to be? When presented with an opportunity to show love or annoyance, where will your actions fall?

Just like flowers we too are created. Created to be who God has made us to be. As created people, we should mirror the same ease with which a flower worships.  It is in our created nature that we represent the image and purpose of God. However, this requires vulnerability and acceptance of who God has intentionally created you to be. The flowers and plants around us use only what they are given to praise God. How more equipped are we? Accept who you are, and accept where you have been planted. As creation around us continues to break froth with new buds and blooms let them be a reminder to you to praise the Creator.

*Praise the Lord! Praise God in his sanctuary; praise him in his mighty heavens! Praise him for his mighty deeds; praise him according to his excellent greatness!”* Ps. 150

Yours in Christ,

PJ+

*ASCENSION LUTHERAN CHURCH*

*The Messenger JUNE 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, June 14th

at 7:00 PM

Continuation…

**Stewardship**

It is with great joy that I write on behalf of stewardship. I was asked to share some reflections on how our pantry is coming along and perhaps share a story or two on how discretionary funds are being used.

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Br. Martins Pantry was cleaned out just after Easter. There were a few items that had expired and the rest of the items were taken to Good Shepherd food pantry to be distributed to the local community. I am currently working with social ministry to think of different ways the pantry can be utilized. One thought is that each month or season certain items could be collected, i.e. toilet paper or PB&J. Another is that a list could be created with certain necessary items that could supply a person/ family with enough food times for a week. Each shelf could be designated for that purpose.

In the past 6 months, three individuals have called the church with the immediate need for the pantry. One of these individuals has had need on more than one occasion. Which is why it’s there.

My discretionary fund allows me to help people using available resources and pastoral discretion. There is a gentleman in McKees Rocks who is unable to eat several non-perishable food items, i.e. pastas because of diabetes. I was able to give him a gift card which allows him to go to the store with dignity and shop for himself.

We just recently we received a call from a women who is relocating to her home town in Oregon with her 13year old daughter. She is receiving aid to move, but did not have enough for food along the way. What a joy it was to hear her story and give her the means for nourishment along her journey.

As a pastor I hear so many stories. Some are stories of great despair and hard times, others are momentary hardships. Some struggle as individuals and others as families. One theme I continue to hear is a sense of apology for asking for help and a deep gratitude that follows the assistance. We all need help, I often say. If you can’t come to the church in times of need, what are we here for?

Thank you for your continued support to the outreach ministries of this church! For the pantry, gift cards, random $5-10 to help the needy, and so much more. We are all blessed to be a blessing- thank you!

# 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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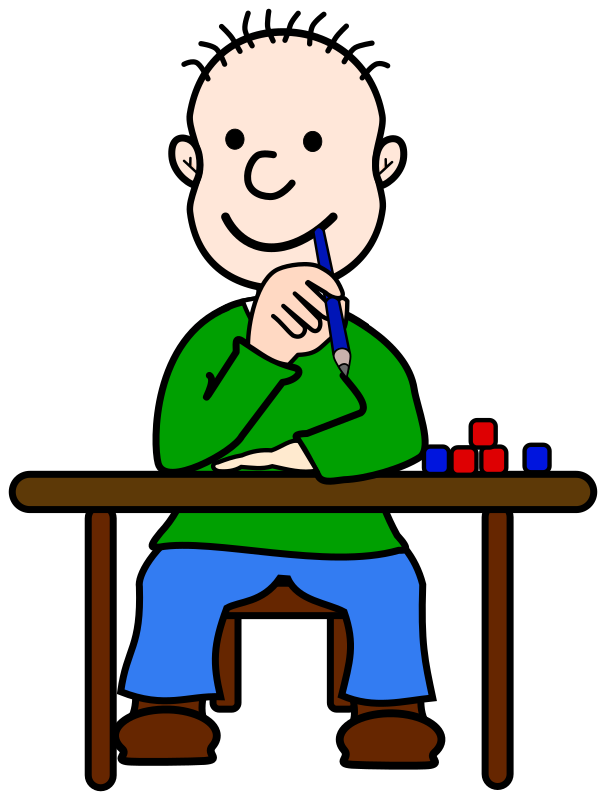
**Rich Mussman**



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; Lorraine Zwikl; Paselivis Family; Barbara Jean Murdy; Michele Germusa 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)**.**

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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.

**Family Promise Wish List**

**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!**

**We pick-up!**

**Please contact Laura Vincenti at** [**lvincenti@familypromiseswpa.org**](mailto:lvincenti@familypromiseswpa.org)**,** [**412-576-9795**](tel:412-576-9795) **or** [**724-229-1129**](tel:724-229-1129)**.**

[](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)

**Vacation Bible School:**

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

**Learn how you can get involved by contacting the church office today!**

***UPCOMING COMMITTEE/MEETINGS***

**Christian Education Meeting**

Sunday, June 5th at 12:00 PM

**Mutual Ministry Meeting**

Sunday, June 5th 9:00 AM

**Property Meeting**

Monday, June 6th 7:00 PM

**Lunch Bunch**

Thursday, June 16th Das Dutch House

**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.

WE ARE HALFWAY THERE! THANK YOU ASCENSION FAMILY AND FRIENDS!

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Ascensions 5th Annual

WING FLING

**Saturday, August 27th 3PM**

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

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 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.

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.  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.  We were able to raise $574 towards the annual walk for Autism Speaks. To learn more information, please visit <http://www.autismspeakswalk.org/faf/home/default.asp?ievent=1150338>



# STEWARDSHIP STATION

MAY 2016: HOLY STEWARDSHIP

by Audrey Riley

Eggplant by Alice Henneman

Spring is finally here! And it’s finally planting time! I love getting my hands dirty in my vegetable garden, don’t you?

Planting time, whether we’re planting soybeans or summer squash, is a holy time. God’s good earth receives the seeds we so hopefully entrust to it, and in the fullness of time (with a little luck) we will see an abundant harvest.

And then what do we do with what our gardens or fields grow? At my house, we eat most of it ourselves. You too? We share what we don’t eat with our friends and neighbors first, and then with others, perhaps through our congregation or the local food pantry. A farmer might sell her crop and use her earnings first to support her family and then to support her congregational unit and synodical women’s organization. That’s good stewardship, and that’s a holy thing too.

Our purpose statement suggests the same direction—starting close to home—for our stewardship as Women of the ELCA, whether as individuals, congregational units, or synodical women’s organizations. Our purpose statement calls us first to “affirm our gifts and support one another in our callings,” and then to “promote healing and wholeness in the church, the society, and the world.”

I read that to mean that when we are deciding where our gifts should go, the first place to think of is our very own beloved community of women. When we give Regular Offerings and Thankofferings, when we sign up for Faithful Friends, when we name Women of the ELCA in our estate plans, that’s exactly what we’re doing. Giving to support our synodical women’s organization’s ministry emphasis—or to support a ministry emphasis of another SWO or the churchwide women’s organization—is another part of supporting our beloved community of women.

So, as we plant our eggplant and dream of the delicious dishes we’ll serve our families and friends, let’s also plan to give generously to support Women of the ELCA. Good stewardship is a holy thing, too.

- See more at: <http://www.womenoftheelca.org/devotions-pages-92.php#sthash.by4HGI0d.dpuf>

Yours in Christ,

Stewardship Committee

**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).



**The Modern Worship Music Wars**



The old church debates about hymns and choruses have taken on a new, more subtle tone.

Ours is a generation marked by war.

I’m not referring to a war with guns and tanks, though we have certainly seen our share of that as well. We are a generation that grew up witnessing the church fight over the very thing that was supposed to unite us: the worship of Jesus.

The Good Old Hymns vs. Modern Worship Choruses.

Organ & Piano vs. Those Demon Dr from these consumerism driven worship wars of our younger years unscathed. Their impact has been profound, both personally and corporately. Fast forward a decade or two and, at first glance, the worship wars that once plagued the church seem to have died down. So it might be easy to chalk it all up to a problem from a bygone era.

**Read More @**

<http://www.relevantmagazine.com/god/church/modern-worship-music-wars>

Soccer Season is Upon Us!

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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!*

**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/>



**How to be One of the People**

**Who is in the Know in**

***Four Easy Steps***

**Have you ever wondered what was going on at Ascension or even in the local religious community? Were you ever looking for a way to let others know more about Ascension? Guess what? You can be one of the people who is in the know about everything Ascension in four easy steps.**

**Step 1 - Check out the newsletter. Since your reading this, you already have this step down and are on your way. If you don’t get the newsletter by email, copies are always available in the narthex.**

**Step 2 - Consult the bulletin boards lining the hallways. They have information about activities at Ascension, activities at other churches, community news involving church members, news about what is going on in Sunday school, and information about new members. Stop by and take a quick peek on your way into or out of church on Sunday.**

**Step 3 - Go to our Facebook page – Ascension Lutheran Church. There are photos, jokes, inspirational messages, and updates on past and future activities at the church. While you are there, be sure to “like” us. We have 149 likes. Let’s see if we can get 200.**

**Step 4 - Explore our webpage - www.alcpgh.com. It is full of information about the church and upcoming events. There are copies of the newsletter in case you missed it (see Step 1). And, there are photos from events at the church. You may be an internet star and not even know it. Don’t forget, this is a great place for others to check us out, so let your friends know about it. Post it on your Twitter or your Facebook page.**

**Complete these four easy steps and you will earn a reputation as one of those people who always knows what’s going on.**



**Faith as adventure**

Every so often in our spiritual lives, we encounter times that feel like a moving day of faith. What we thought we knew needs cleaning out or updating. Our limited assumptions about God may need to be expanded so that more of our neighbors can find a home in God’s love. These moving days of faith can be unsettling as what we previously believed faces challenges. Our faith is an adventure. Sometimes we have to pack up old beliefs and let them go. Moving is change, and change is hard, but often, on the other side, there is an opportunity for a new adventure, a new experience of our God. This message is adapted from “A Moveable Faith” written by Brooke Peterson in the April 2013 issue of Gather magazine. Today we remember John Calvin, re-newer of the church, who died in 1564

. - See more at: http://www.womenoftheelca.org/blog/faith-*adventure#sthash.pzJHIkDd.dpuf*

**Body love and roller derby**

I lay on my back on the cold concrete, legs a sprawl, and arms outstretched, laughing and gasping – both exhausted and exhilarated. When I sat up, the women with me pointed admiringly at the smear of sweat I had left on the concrete floor. I had just finished skating 27 laps around the track in less than five minutes! I marveled at my body.  When I was younger, I hated how my body looked and I hated the way it worked. I developed this hate/hate relationship with my body. I was always the kid who had to sit out gym class because of my asthma. My earliest memory is learning how to use an inhaler. I think, in our culture, it can be hard to have a positive relationship with our bodies. My heart aches for those in our midst, especially teenagers, whose minds are filled with unhealthy images of the body they think they are supposed to have. Instead of hearing that they are “wonderfully made” (Psalm 139:14), these children and adults are confronted with shaming expectations and taught to hate and fear their own bodies. Countering these messages can be literally lifesaving. Now, when I look in the mirror, what I see is a powerful and amazing creation of God. What made the difference for me?

Roller derby. 

In 2013, after skating with the preschool children in the congregation I was serving, I remembered that I had loved to roller skate when I was younger. I was struggling with self-image at the time, but rolling around the rink with the little ones reminded me of joy and light.

After that outing, I bought a pair of cheap skates and took some Saturday-morning classes. But then I realized that my large thighs and powerful hips were not created for figure skating.

And then . . . derby happened.

Read the complete article at: <http://www.boldcafe.org/blog/body-love-roller-derby>

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Ascension Lutheran Church

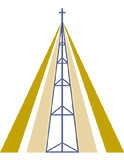
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