



THE MESSENGER

ASCENSION LUTHERAN CHURCH

January 2021

SPECIAL EVENT

CONGREGATIONAL MEETING

Sunday Jan. 17 at 10 AM

TO BE HELD VIRTUALLY!

WEEKLY EVENTS

**NOTE: ALL IN-PERSON
EVENTS ARE SUSPENDED
UNTIL FURTHER NOTICE**

When in-person gatherings are once again permitted, following is the anticipated schedule:

Sunday Worship - 8:30 & 10:30 AM

Sunday School - Sunday at 9:30 AM

Confirmation - 1st & 3rd Tuesdays

NA Meeting - Wednesdays at 7:30 PM

Spirituality Group - Thursdays at 7 PM

AA Meeting - Saturdays at 10:00 AM

Soccer Shots - Saturdays at 9:15 AM
(Spring-Fall)

2020 Council Officers

President - Jerry Wessel

Vice President - Kelly Bryan

Secretary - Karen Houseman

Treasurer - Bob Thompson

2020 Council Members

Christian Education - Kelly B.

Youth Ministry - John B.

Comm. & Publications - Jason E.

Social Min./Evangelism - Rudy M.

Finance and Stewardship - Bob T.

Property - Tom L.

Worship/Music - Karen H.

Mutual Ministry - Jeff W.

Personnel - Jerry W.

Next Council Meeting

Tuesday Jan. 12 at 7:00 PM



From Pastor Murdy's Desk **NEW YEAR 2021!**

My dear friends in Christ!

Happy New Year!

I know what you're thinking, "Yeah, right! Happy New Year... That's what we said *last* year." This year's New Year's festivities will undoubtedly be filled with remarks comparing 2020 with our hopes for 2021. There is

always something so remarkable about standing at the threshold of a new year - uncertain of what it will bring and being hopeful that it will be full of blessings. 2020 started out with the same eagerness as all the years that came before it. We faced a lot of challenges and disappointments. But, I wonder, if we were to count our 2020 blessings would we be surprised?

In my Christmas Eve sermon, I used the example of a broken ornament to express some of our feelings about the year, and 2020-Christmas in particular. In that example, my grandfather turned the ornament so that the focus was not on its brokenness but on what still made it beautiful.

2021 is going to have its own challenges, disappointments and obstacles - just like any other year! But, if we enter the year with hope, faith and love it will be hard to see anything less than beautiful. I think 2021 will bring us an opportunity to work on our perspective. To recognize and appreciate the positive and the blessings in all things.

One of the things I am most grateful for from this past year is each of you. For all the challenges we faced, I believe we grew as a congregation and through the obstacles became a stronger church. I think we gained a deeper appreciation for what it means when we worship and sing together. We tried new things - outdoor worship, Christmas eve by firelight, YouTube, Zoom meetings and more - and through it all we discovered - new things aren't so bad.

continued on page 2



Celebrating Thomas Aquinas January 28

Thomas Aquinas was a brilliant and creative theologian of the thirteenth century. He was first and foremost a student of the Bible and profoundly concerned with the theological formation of the church's ordained ministers. As a member of the Order of Preachers (Dominicans), he worked to

correlate scripture with the philosophy of Aristotle, which was having a renaissance in Aquinas's day. Some students of Aristotle's philosophy found in it an alternative to Christianity. But Aquinas immersed himself in the thought of Aristotle and worked to explain Christian beliefs in the philosophical culture of the day.

At the age of five, Thomas Aquinas was given to the Benedictine monastery at Monte Cassino in his parents' hopes that he would choose that way of life and eventually become abbot. In 1239, he was sent to Naples to complete his studies. It was here that he was first attracted to Aristotle's philosophy.

By 1243, Thomas abandoned his family's plans for him and joined the Dominicans, much to his mother's dismay. On her order, Thomas was captured by his brother and kept at home for over a year.

Once free, he went to Paris and then to Cologne, where he finished his studies with Albert the Great. He held two professorships at Paris, lived at the court of Pope Urban IV, directed the Dominican schools at Rome and Viterbo, combated adversaries of the mendicants, as well as the Averroists, and argued with some Franciscans about Aristotelianism.

Unity, harmony, and continuity of faith and reason, of revealed and natural human knowledge, pervades the writings of Thomas Aquinas. One might expect Thomas, as a man of the gospel, to be an ardent defender of revealed truth. But he was broad enough, deep enough, to see the whole natural order as coming from God the Creator, and to see reason as a divine gift to be highly cherished.

Sources: www.sundaysandseasons.com | www.franciscanmedia.org

From Pastor Murdy's Desk (continued from pg 1)

Despite restrictions and church being different - we still received visitors with open arms. We watched as people found creative ways to do things differently. I am proud of us, as a congregation and as people of faith. I am very proud to be your pastor.

2021 is going to be a great year! Because we are going in together. I am excited and full of hope for all the new opportunities this new year will bring.

Happy New Year Church!

Love,

PJ+

Pastor Joseph Murdy

“2021 is going to have its own challenges, disappointments and obstacles - just like any other year! But, if we enter the year with hope, faith and love, it will be hard to see anything less than beautiful.”

- Pastor Joe



Blessing our homes in Epiphany

During the season of Epiphany, which means “manifestation,” we hear the story of the

Magi. These magi, later to be known as the three wise men, followed a star at its rising from the east to a stable where they knelt to present gifts and witness the birth of a King, the manifestation of the Son of God incarnate. In this season of light, we continue to celebrate the birth of Christ as our Savior and we mark this celebration with the blessing of our homes, offices, classrooms and churches.

For many this is a new practice, or one that seems outside the scope of “Lutheranism.” This age-old custom has been celebrated by Christians for hundreds of years and one we continue to embrace in our own tradition. During the season of Epiphany, we will provide a service for you to bless your own homes - all you need is chalk. Normally, I am always willing to come and bless your homes from the inside. If you would like your house blessed by the pastor, perhaps we can find a safe way to do this, if even from the outside. As we enter into this season, on January 6th let us remember the visitors received by Christ and ask Christ to enter into our homes where his blessings and peace may be welcomed!



DID YOU KNOW . . . The letters “C+M+B” stand for the Latin blessing, “*Christus Mansionem Benedicat*” (May Christ Bless this House), as well as the legendary names for the three Magi: Caspar, Melchior and Balthasar, most often seen symbolically to represent Asia, Europe and Africa, respectively. The inscription is applied as a prayer that Christ will bless homes so marked and that he will stay with those who dwell there throughout the year and with any guest who may cross their threshold.

Source: www.stvincent.edu

ALC Council Meeting Highlights

Council meeting was held Tuesday Dec. 8, 2020

December Council Highlights

- A new router was purchased and installed by Jason Eager.
- The motion was made that we suspend all in-person activities until further notice; our council will reevaluate at each council meeting. Motion was carried.
- Annual congregational meeting will be held virtually on Sunday, January 17, 2021
- **Next Council Meeting:** Tuesday, Jan 12 at 7pm



Virtual Congregational MEETING

Sunday January 17, 2021 at 10 a.m.

Please join us as we elect new council members and approve our 2021 budget.

Since we were not able to have our annual meeting in November, we will plan to accomplish those things which we were going to do in November.

We will also share the Bulletin of Reports, which is what we normally do in January.

A link to this virtual meeting will be shared a few days prior to the event.

BEST WISHES . . .

JANUARY BIRTHDAYS!

Date | Member

4 Dolly Spano
9 Philip Paladino
12 Mark Thompson
13 BetteAnn Kallay
14 Layla McEwen
15 Kelly Bryan
19 Tom Lanzarotta
20 Amy Lanzarotta
21 Alexis Brown
24 Nate Zoltun
27 Clay Marnich
Don Lucas
28 Mark Marnich



Plans are in the making for the
next delicious **LUNCH BUNCH**
adventure in 2021!

*If you are interested in being informed
of the next get-together, please contact
Nancy Schreiber or Paula Wessel.*

Everyone is welcome!

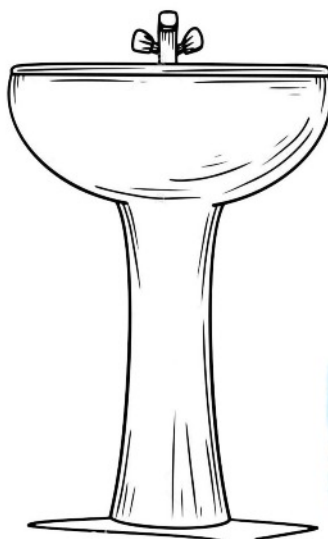
We really do hope to see you soon!

Let us hear from you!

If you have pictures, articles, or ideas
to submit to for the FEBRUARY
Newsletter, please contact the office or
Pastor, or email office@alcpgh.com.



Drop by drop by drop . . . keep those “OTHER” contributions flowing!



-----\$20,000
-----\$15,000
-----\$10,000
-----\$5,000
-----\$0

The “OTHER”
offering category
on your member
contribution
envelopes is
designated for the
renovation of the
church restrooms,
and has thus far
totaled \$7044!
Inching toward the
\$20,000 goal ...
THANK YOU!

LESSER FESTIVALS & commemorations

January 1 The Name of Jesus

The observance of the octave (eighth day) of Christmas has roots in the sixth century. Until the recent past, Lutheran calendars called this day “The Circumcision and Name of Jesus.” The emphasis on circumcision is the older emphasis. Every Jewish boy was circumcised and formally named on the eighth day of his life. Already in his youth, Jesus bears the mark of a covenant that he makes new through the shedding of his blood on the cross. That covenant, like Jesus’ name, is a gift that marks the children of God. Baptized into Christ, the church begins a new year in Jesus’ name.

January 2 Johann Konrad Wilhelm Loehe

renewer of the church, d. 1872

A nineteenth-century German Lutheran pastor, Loehe worked to enliven the church with the eucharist at its center, from which would flow evangelism and social ministry. He sent pastors to North America, Australia, New Guinea, Brazil, and Ukraine.

January 1 Martin Luther King Jr.

renewer of society, martyr, d. 1968

An American prophet of justice among races and nations, King was an eloquent preacher, a leader of the nonviolent resistance to race-segregated society, and recipient of the Nobel Peace Prize in 1964. Born on this date, he was assassinated on April 4, 1968.

January 17 Antony of Egypt

renewer of the church, d. ca. 356

One of the earliest of the Egyptian desert fathers, Antony gave away his sizeable inheritance and became a hermit. Later he became leader of a group of monks who devoted themselves to prayer, worship, and labor.

January 17 Pachomius

renewer of the church, d. 346

Born in Egypt, Pachomius became a Christian while a soldier. He became a hermit (a solitary monk) and organized others into a religious community. His rule for monasteries influenced later ones in both the Eastern and Western churches.

January 18 Confession of Peter

• Week of Prayer for Christian Unity Begins •

The Week of Prayer for Christian Unity is framed by two commemorations, the Confession of Peter (a relatively recent addition to the calendar) and the older Conversion of Paul. Both apostles are remembered together on June 29, but these two days give us an opportunity to focus on key events in each of their lives. Today we remember that Peter was led by God’s grace to acknowledge Jesus as “the Christ, the Son of the living God” (Matt. 16:16). This confession is the common confession that unites us with Peter and with all Christians of every time and place.

January 19 Henry, Bishop of Uppsala

martyr, d. 1156

When Erik, King of Sweden, determined to invade Finland for the purpose of converting the people there to Christianity, Henry went with him. Henry is recognized as the patron saint of Finland.

January 21 Agnes

martyr, d. ca. 304

Agnes was a girl of about thirteen living in Rome. The details of her martyrdom are not clear, but she gave witness to her faith and was put to death as a result, most likely by the sword. The church has honored her as one of the chief martyrs of her time.

January 25 Conversion of Paul

• Week of Prayer for Christian Unity Ends •

The week of prayer begun by the remembrance of Peter’s confession now comes to an end as we recall the pivotal moment in the life of the other pillar of the early church, the apostle Paul. His encounter with the risen Christ turned him from persecutor of the followers of Christ to one of their leaders.

January 26 Timothy, Titus and Silas

missionaries

These three early Christian men were missionary companions of the apostle Paul. Timothy became bishop of Ephesus, Titus bishop of Crete, and Silas was imprisoned with Paul at Philippi until they were delivered by an earthquake.

January 27 Lydia, Dorcas and Phoebe

witnesses to the faith

Women as well as men were important Christian leaders from the beginning, as demonstrated by these coworkers of the apostle Paul. Lydia, a seller of purple goods, lent her home for a church; Dorcas was known for charitable works; Phoebe was a deacon in the church at Cenchrae.

JANUARY 28 is dedicated to St. Thomas Aquinas.

See detailed article on page 2 of this issue.

Sights & Sounds of the Season . . .







*To be Christ's Disciples,
nurture our faith, serve God,
welcome our neighbors,
and joyfully share in His love.*

Contact Us

(412) 859-3711

pastor@alcpgh.com

office@alcpgh.com

music@alcpgh.com



Ascension Lutheran Church

1290 Silver Lane

McKees Rocks PA 15136

(Robinson Township)

Visit us on the web at www.alcpgh.com

Follow us on 

Ascension Lutheran Church
1290 Silver Lane
McKees Rocks, PA 15136

PLACE
STAMP
HERE

