

THE MESSENGER

ASCENSION LUTHERAN CHURCH

February 2021

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

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)

2021 Ascension Church COUNCIL



John Bielewicz

Jason Eager

Clay Marnich

Rudy Marnich

Barbara Thompson

Bob Thompson

Mark Thompson

Jerry Wessel

Jeff Williams

Next Council Meeting

Tuesday Feb. 9 at 7:00 PM



From Pastor Murdy's Desk **LOVE one another!**

There is no doubt about it, February is a month dedicated to love, and not just because Valentine's Day is on the fourteenth. February also happens to be the month the church takes its first Lenten steps, beginning with Ash

Wednesday. What does Lent have to do with love? Well, everything. Lent is a forty-day journey to the cross in which the greatest love story is revealed to all of God's people. So, I thought this month we could talk about love.

In the bible there are three kinds of love: *agape*, *philia*, and *eros*. Each will be as familiar to you as you experience them in your own life, but, perhaps you did not know there were different words to describe the different ways we love. After all, our language can be a challenge when trying to differentiate love - for example, when we say, "I love my wife," and "I love cheeseburgers." Of course, we know one is more important than the other. But, you can see how a broader understanding of biblical love can open the way we use the word love.

The first and most familiar type of love is *agape* ἀγάπη love. Agape love is the kind of love that God gives to us in an undeserved fashion. We might call this grace, given freely by God. John 3:16 and 1 John 3 describe this love in detail. This kind of love is a love that each of us possess even when we feel unloved and undeserving. Throughout our Lenten journey we come to discover, once again, God's love shown to us through the life-giving sacrifice of Jesus on the cross.

The second kind of love is *philia* φιλία. Right away you might think of the word Philadelphia, which comes from the Greek meaning, "the city of brotherly love." This is kind of love we show one another. This love is one in which we share with our brothers and sisters, not just our biological siblings but with creation as those united in God's family. This love is only motivated and encouraged through the agape love we come to discover in Jesus.

The third kind of love is *eros* ἔρως. Eros is where we get the word "erotic." This kind of love is shown between married people. Eros is a love that is shared mutually between two people and it is one that as Christians we should remember is a blessing of God.

continued on page 2



Celebrating Saints Cyril and Methodius February 14

The birthplace of Cyril and Methodius - the "Apostles to the Slavs" - was Thessalonica, the capital city of the Macedonian Province of the Byzantine Empire. Of Greek descent, their father was a high-ranking officer in the Byzantine Army. However, their mother Mary, in all probability, was of Slavic birth. Hence, the brothers were acquainted with the Slavic tongue since childhood.

St. Methodius, whose baptismal name was Michael, was born in 815 A.D. His younger brother Constantine, better known later in life by his

religious name, Cyril, was born about ten years later. They both studied at the Imperial School of Constantinople, where children of the higher imperial officials received their advanced education.

St. Methodius (Michael), known as a good administrator, became the governor of the Strymon District of Macedonia. St. Cyril (Constantine), a gifted scholar, assumed a teaching post at the Imperial School.

Shortly thereafter, Constantine was ordained a deacon and was entrusted with some extraordinary assignments by the Patriarch Ignatius, including a diplomatic mission to the Caliph of Bagdad in 851 A.D. Around that same time, Michael, weary of politics, retired to the monastery on Mount Olympus in Bythnia, Asia Minor. There he received his religious name Methodius, and shortly after his monastic tonsure, was elected superior of the monastery.

Under the influence of St. Methodius, St. Cyril also decided to pursue a religious way of life and joined his brother at the monastery on Mt. Olympus. But before taking religious tonsure, he was summoned by his former professor, Patriarch Photius, to lead a diplomatic mission to the Khazars on the Caspian Sea. This time St. Cyril also took his brother Methodius with him. After a very successful mission to the Khazars, St. Methodius returned to his monastery on Mt. Olympus, while St. Cyril assumed a position as a philosophy professor in Constantinople.

In the summer of 862 A.D. the Moravian Prince Rastislav requested that the Byzantine Emperor Michael III send some Byzantine missionaries to Moravia "to explain to us the Christian truths in our own language." After signing the alliance with Prince Rastislav, the Emperor decided to send the two missionary brothers, SS. Cyril and Methodius, who already had proven their missionary skills and were familiar with the Slavic language and customs.

St. Cyril, who was one of the foremost linguists of his time, resolved first to compose a Slavic alphabet ("Azbuka") and then, with the help of his brother Methodius, he proceeded to translate the Holy Liturgy and scriptural

In a book by C.S. Lewis titled *The Four Loves*, he adds a fourth kind of love to this list: storge στοργή love. Storge love is one of family and familiarity. This is the kind of love we express to people we relate to or share a bond with - for example, the love between siblings or parents or a close friend.

Each of these expressions of love has a unique and holy place in our lives. Throughout the month of February, I hope that you will not only mediate on the gift of love but also consider the ways we share God's love with one another.

What we must be reminded of the most is that **GOD IS LOVE** ...

“Beloved, let us love one another, because love is from God; everyone who loves is born of God and knows God. Whoever does not love does not know God, for God is love. God's love was revealed among us in this way: God sent his only Son into the world so that we might live through him. In this is love, not that we loved God but that he loved us and sent his Son to be the atoning sacrifice for our sins. Beloved, since God loved us so much, we also ought to love one another.”

With LOVE,
Pastor

readings (the Epistles and Gospels) into the “Slavonic” language – the native language of the Slavic people – using his new alphabet (later dubbed “Cyrillic” after its creator).

SS. Cyril and Methodius began their missionary journey in the spring of 863 A.D., crossing into neighboring Bulgaria, where Byzantine missionaries were already spreading Christianity.

On their journey to Moravia, the Holy Brothers proceeded along the Tisza River to the northern part of Bulgaria, where they intended to follow the so-called Salt Route, connecting the salt mines of Maramoros with central Europe, all the way to Moravia and Bohemia. Northern Bulgaria was, at that time, already populated by Slavic tribes, who were ruled by their own princes, recognizing the Bulgarian suzerainty. They populated both sides of the Tisza River, and their land extended deep into present-day Transylvania and Hungary. SS. Cyril and Methodius recognized the peculiarity of the language and customs of these native people, and called their land “Rusj.” Thus, these people began to call themselves – “Rusj-synj” (children of Rusj), or “Rusiny” (modified by Latinization as “Ruthenians”).

The mission of SS. Cyril and Methodius in Moravia was very successful and they educated a great number of Slavic missionaries in their Missionary School in Velehrad. Among their students were a great number of Ruthenian youth, who later returned to their homeland and extended their missionary work to other Ruthenian tribes in neighboring Galicia and, eventually, in Kievan Rusj (in present-day Ukraine).

SS. Cyril and Methodius received the approval of Pope Adrian II for their mission among the Slavic peoples in 869. On that occasion, the Pope also approved the use of the Slavonic language in the Divine Liturgy. During the sojourn of the Holy Brothers in Rome, St. Cyril died on February 14, 869 A.D., and was buried with great solemnity in the Basilica of St. Clement.

Pope Adrian II subsequently ordained St. Methodius bishop and appointed him a Papal Legate for the Slavic peoples. However, upon his return to Moravia from Rome, St. Methodius was seized by German missionaries, who from the very beginning opposed Slavic missions in Moravia, and he was kept in prison for nearly three years. They released him only upon the intervention of Pope John VIII. But soon after his release, the German bishops once again accused St. Methodius of heresy, the usurpation of arch-episcopal authority, and the “scandalous use of the Slavic language” in the Liturgy. Then, summoned to Rome in 880 A.D., St. Methodius cleared himself before Pope John VIII. The Pope not only approved the missionary work of St. Methodius among the Slavs, but also reconfirmed the use of the Byzantine-Slavonic Liturgy, which still is in use today.

ALC Council Meeting Highlights

Council meeting was held Tuesday Jan. 12, 2021

- Motion to continue the suspension of our in-person gatherings until February 1, 2021. Discussion took place regarding the number of cases of COVID-19 in the area; also discussed was Bishop Kusserow’s letter. Motion carried.
- Mr. and Mrs. Bielewicz are to email the council their recommendation for announcing on Sunday, January 24th, if it is advisable to open for February 7th in-person service. Motion carried.
- All members of council are interested in having a conversation with Good Shepherd Lutheran Church regarding a possible merger.
- There was a motion that we apply for the second round of Paycheck Protection Program (PPP) loan. The estimate is between \$12,000.00 - \$13,000.00. Motion carried.
- Motion to purchase 3 air purifiers and filters, not to exceed \$1,000.00 out of the Memorial Fund. Motion carried.
- At our next council meeting we will elect officers and select committees.
- As a church council, we recognize that we can conduct business in an official capacity as we can see and hear each other via Zoom Meeting.



HIGHLIGHTS

Sunday Jan. 17, 2021

Congregational MEETING

- 2021 Annual Congregational meeting reviewed the 2020 Bulletin of Reports and the 2021 proposed budget.
- 2021 Budget was approved.
- 3 positions on council were open and three members accepted nominations. These persons were approved.

BEST WISHES . . .

FEBRUARY BIRTHDAYS!

Date | Member

6 Brittany Bielewicz

Sue Thomson

10 Shawn Rose

11 Cindy Stathers

13 Nora Thompson

14 George Kasich

21 Marion Cerar

24 Jamie Cropper



FEBRUARY ANNIVERSARIES!

Date | Member

12 James & Karen Mentzer

. . . and blessings to all!



ASH WEDNESDAY

ASH WEDNESDAY SERVICE – February 17

As of now (February 1st) our Ash Wednesday service will look a little different than in years past. If you wish to receive the absolution of sins and ashes you are invited to come to church from **7:00 - 8:00 pm on Wednesday, February 17th**.

Ashes will be administered safely by using a cotton swab and the pastor will be wearing gloves. Masks are of course required. If you do not wish to receive ashes but would like consolation and prayer, the church will be open to you at this time.

If you have any questions, please contact Pastor.

WHAT DO YOU MEAN HE DON'T EAT NO MEAT?

OH, THAT'S OKAY. I MAKE LAMB.

Meatless Friday?

Many of you I am sure have seen the movie “My Big Fat Greek Wedding” and will get the reference in this picture. Any time my family abstains from meat we usually quote this funny movie. Lent is a time for fasting and abstaining from many things. Lent is a season which calls us to observe, with more diligence, our Christian charity, relationship with God and our own mortality. Many Christians - yes, even Lutherans - tend to give something up for Lent and abstain from meat on Fridays (by meat, it is usually understood as no red meat). The primary reasons for doing this is to be mindful of Christ’s sacrifice while abstaining. Why Fridays? Because Jesus died on a Friday. Why fish? Well, not only is fish often a symbol of the faith - it was a primary source of food in the Mediterranean. I hope that throughout the forty days of Lent you will be mindful of sacrifice and intentional about God’s greatest gift of love ... even if you still eat meat on Friday. – PJ

Let us hear from you!

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

Requiescat in Pace . . .

We offer our Christian sympathy and condolences to the Filloy and Burkholder families.

Karen Burkholder passed away in December and **Joseph Filloy** passed away in late January.

As the church, we mourn with their families, celebrate their lives, and give thanks to God for the promise of eternal life.

Joe and Karen will be missed,
but now they reside in the church triumphant.



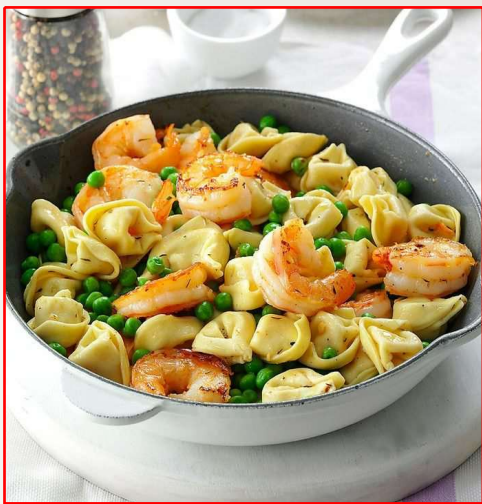
Joe Filloy
September 16, 1934
~ January 20, 2021



Karen Burkholder
August 10, 1972
~ December 29, 2020



Make it FRESH . . .



Switch from fish and enjoy a fresh Lenten entree made with succulent shrimp, peas and tasty tortellini - all ingredients handily found in your local grocery store!

Source: www.tasteofhome.com

Shrimp Tortellini Pasta Toss

Prep/Total Time: 20 min. Makes 4 servings

INGREDIENTS

- 1 package (9 ounces) refrigerated cheese tortellini
- 1 cup frozen peas
- 3 tablespoons olive oil, divided
- 1 lb. uncooked shrimp (31-40 per pound), peeled and deveined
- 2 garlic cloves, minced
- 1/4 teaspoon salt
- 1/4 teaspoon dried thyme
- 1/4 teaspoon pepper

DIRECTIONS

Cook tortellini according to package directions, adding peas during the last 5 minutes of cooking.

Meanwhile, in a large nonstick skillet, heat 2 tablespoons oil over medium-high heat. Add shrimp; cook and stir 2 minutes. Add garlic; cook 1-2 minutes longer or until shrimp turn pink.

Drain tortellini mixture; add to skillet. Stir in salt, thyme, pepper and remaining oil; toss to coat.

Nutrition Facts: 1-1/4 cups: 413 calories, 17g fat (4g saturated fat), 165mg cholesterol, 559mg sodium, 36g carbohydrate (4g sugars, 3g fiber), 29g protein. Diabetic Exchanges: 4 lean meat, 2 starch, 2 fat.

LESSER FESTIVALS & commemorations

February 2 Presentation of Our Lord

Forty days after the birth of Christ we mark the day Mary and Joseph presented him in the temple in accordance with Jewish law. There a prophetess named Anna began to speak of the redemption of Israel when she saw the young child. Simeon also greeted Mary and Joseph. He responded to the presence of the consolation of Israel in this child with the words of the *Nunc dimittis*. His song described Jesus as a “light for the nations.” Because of the link between Jesus as the light for the nations, and because an old reading for this festival contains a line from the prophet Zephaniah, “I will search Jerusalem with candles,” the day is also known as Candlemas, a day when candles are blessed for the coming year.

February 3 Ansgar, Bishop of Hamburg

Missionary to Denmark and Sweden, d. 865

Ansgar was a monk who led a mission to Denmark and later to Sweden, where he built the first church. His work ran into difficulties with the rulers of the day, and he was forced to withdraw into Germany, where he served as a bishop in Hamburg. Despite his difficulties in Sweden, he persisted in his mission work and later helped consecrate Gothbert as the first bishop of Sweden. Ansgar had a deep love for the poor. He would wash their feet and serve them food provided by the parish.

February 5 The Martyrs of Japan, d. 1597

In the sixteenth century, Jesuit missionaries, followed by Franciscans, introduced the Christian faith in Japan. But a promising beginning to those missions—perhaps as many as 300,000 Christians by the end of the sixteenth century—met complications from competition between the missionary groups, political difficulty between Spain and Portugal, and factions within the government of Japan. Christianity was suppressed. By 1630, Christianity was driven underground. Today we commemorate the first martyrs of Japan, twenty-six missionaries and converts who were killed by crucifixion. Two hundred and fifty years later, when Christian missionaries returned to Japan, they found a community of Japanese Christians that had survived underground.

February 14

Cyril, monk, d. 869 and Methodius, bishop, d. 885
missionaries to the Slavs

These two brothers from a noble family in Thessalonika in northeastern Greece were priests and missionaries. After some early initial missionary work by Cyril among the Arabs, the brothers retired to a monastery. They later were sent to work among the Slavs, the missionary work for which they are most known. Since “Slavonic” had no written form at the time, the brothers established a written language with the Greek alphabet as its basis. They translated the scriptures and the liturgy using this new Cyrillic alphabet. The Czechs, Serbs, Croats, Slovaks, Ruthenians and Bulgars regard the brothers as the founders of Slavic literature. The brothers’ work in preaching and worshiping in the language of the people are honored by Christians in both East and West.

February 18 Martin Luther

renewer of the church, d. 1546

On this day in 1546, Martin Luther died at the age of sixty-two. For a time, he was an Augustinian monk, but it is his work as a biblical scholar, translator of the Bible, public confessor of the faith, reformer of the liturgy, theologian, educator, and father of German vernacular literature that holds him in our remembrance. In Luther’s own judgment, the greatest of all of his works was his catechism, written to instruct people in the basics of faith. And it was his baptism that sustained him in his trials as a reformer.

February 23 Polycarp, Bishop of Smyrna

martyr, d. 156

Because he is said to have been known by John, the author of Revelation, as well as the important early church fathers Irenaeus and Ignatius, Polycarp serves as a vital link in church history. He was burned at the stake at age 86 for refusing to renounce his faith.

February 25 Elizabeth Fedde

deaconess, d. 1921

Fedde was born in Norway and trained as a deaconess. In 1882, at the age of thirty-two, she was asked to come to New York to minister to the poor and to Norwegian seafarers. Her influence was wide-ranging, and she established the Deaconess House in Brooklyn and the Deaconess House and Hospital of the Lutheran Free Church in Minneapolis. She returned home to Norway in 1895 and died there.

FEBRUARY 14 is dedicated to SS. Cyril & Methodius.

See detailed article beginning on page 2 of this issue.

Source: www.sundaysandseasons.com

LOVE ONE ANOTHER!

W H A S B Z W T I F X G J O V
Y Z K F D W B L F R F S T H H
H N L I L Q U I R D V W O V P
A S O R S Y T V I R A E G A Q
P K V A U S T N E M L E E F X
P H E J O S E T N A E T T F A
I H U I E H R S D R N E H E B
N E G G S F F Y S R T N E C E
E A L K S H L M H I I Z R T L
S R U K Q C I L I A N K B I O
S T V C U U E V P G E U J O V
M S T I B O S T H E T C B N E
A Q S I B I H F O R E V E R D
Q O S T U D K T F D S X C C W
Z C A R I N G J M V G B Q N R

BUTTERFLIES

FOREVER

HEART

AFFECTION

VALENTINE

KISSES

CUPID

MARRIAGE

HAPPINESS

BELOVED

HUGS

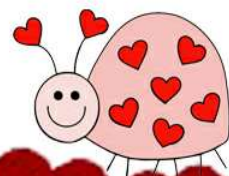
SWEET

TOGETHER

CARING

FRIENDSHIP

LOVE





*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  www.alcpgh.com

Ascension Lutheran Church
1290 Silver Lane
McKees Rocks, PA 15136

PLACE
STAMP
HERE

