



THE MESSENGER

ASCENSION LUTHERAN CHURCH

March 2021

WEEKLY EVENTS

- 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

Council Executives

- Jason Eager *president*
- Jeff Williams *vice-president*
- Clay Marnich *secretary*
- John Bielewicz *treasurer*

Council Liaisons

- Jerry Wessel *Christian Education*
- John Bielewicz *Youth*
- Jason Eager *Communications & Publications*
- Rudy Marnich *Social Ministry & Evangelism*
- Bob Thompson *Finance & Stewardship*
- Barbara Thompson *Worship & Music*
- Mark Thompson *Property*
- Jeff Williams *Mutual Ministry*
- Clay Marnich *Personnel*
- (Vacant) *Fellowship*

Next Council Meeting

Tuesday March 9 at 7:00 PM



From Pastor Murdy's Desk

The Invitation

I can remember as a kid how excited I would get receiving an invitation in the mail or at school from a friend. There were birthday parties, of course, but there were also holiday parties and pool parties. There was a certain kind of thrill and sense of friendship that came with an invitation. As adults there can come

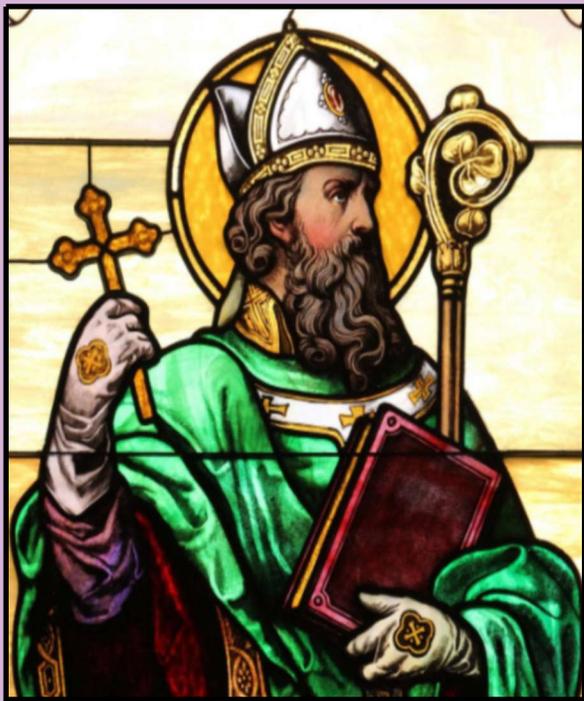
sometimes be a mixture of apprehension when it comes to party invitations. There are lots of reasons we, as adults, can sometimes shy away from invitations. Perhaps you may not know everyone at the party, maybe there is the expectation of a gift, or as an introvert, you tend to shy away from crowds. Whatever the case may be, sometimes, our reluctance to accept invitations can cause an unwillingness to accept the church's invitation to participate in this holy season.

At the start of lent, we were invited to participate in the disciplines of lent. These disciplines seek to foster and encourage our faith, strengthen us in our efforts to bear witness to the gospel, to center or focus and attention to the life of Christ, and renew our relationship with God. The invitation is this: "**To self-examination and repentance, prayer and fasting, sacrificial giving and works of love.**" Now, you might be tempted to think this invitation isn't worth opening. After all, it does require a lot from us. But, I promise, this invitation, if you accept it, will only help prepare you for the real party.

As you read and hear the scripture lessons on Sunday mornings and during our midweek services, you might find yourself hearing words that sound a lot like an invitation. For example, on the first Sunday of lent we heard these words from Jesus: "***The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God has come near; repent, and believe in the good news.***" This invitation to repent and believe is about acknowledging and bearing witness to what God has done and is doing through Jesus the crucified and risen Christ. Each invitation we hear in the coming weeks and beyond is one that invites us into a new and more beautiful way of living. It is an invitation we are to share with others.

The season of lent can, at times, be refreshing and at others, a bit more arduous. But, every step of the way we are being prepared for the main event. The party of a lifetime. There will be miracles! Angels are sure to attend! Palms, wine, and fresh bread. Making a surprise appearance - the king of kings,

continued on page 2



Celebrating Saint Patrick March 17

St. Patrick Was Never Officially Canonized as a Saint . . .

He may be known as the patron saint of Ireland, but Patrick actually was never canonized by the Catholic Church. This is simply due to the era he lived in. During the first millennium, there was no formal canonization process in the Catholic Church.

Many of the stories traditionally associated with St. Patrick, including the famous account of his banishing all the snakes from Ireland, actually are false, the products of hundreds of years of exaggerated storytelling.

After becoming a priest and helping to spread Christianity throughout Ireland, Patrick most likely was proclaimed a saint by popular acclaim.

St. Patrick Wasn't Irish . . .

St. Patrick was born in Britain — not Ireland — to wealthy parents near the end of the fourth century. He is believed to have died on March 17, around 460 A.D. His birthplace doesn't mean Patrick was a Brit, however — at least not technically. During his lifetime the British Isles were occupied by the Romans, a group that included Patrick's parents and thus the saint himself. It is unknown whether his family — thought to have been part of the Roman aristocracy—was of indigenous Celtic descent or hailed from modern-day Italy. When Patrick penned the two surviving documents attributed to him, he wrote in Latin and signed his name "Patricius," but according to some accounts he was born Maewyn Succat.

Although his father was a Christian deacon, it has been suggested that he probably took on the role because of tax incentives, and there is no evidence that Patrick came from a particularly religious family.

At the age of 16, Patrick was taken prisoner by a group of Irish raiders who were attacking his family's estate. They transported him to Ireland where he spent six years in captivity.

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

the prince of peace, the one true son of God. Yep, you guessed it! Jesus, himself. This is *the* Easter Party and everyone is invited! But, getting ready for a party such as this surely requires preparation.

That's what lent is. It's about preparing ourselves. Opening our hearts and minds, and in doing so discovering that we truly need what Jesus has to offer. All that is required of us is a willingness to accept God's free gift of grace which comes at the price of Jesus's sacrifice. So, to honor this gift with all that it deserves we prepare ourselves with "self-examination and repentance, prayer and fasting, sacrificial giving and works of love."

My friends, receiving an invitation doesn't put us on some sort of exclusive list. In fact, our invitation comes with a very clear commission - bring guest(s). Throughout this season of lent, let us be mindful of the invitation we have to prepare for Easter.

See you at the party!

Pastor

“LENT . . .

It's about preparing ourselves.

Opening our hearts and minds,

and in doing so discovering

that we truly need what

JESUS has to offer.”

~ PJ

(There is some dispute over where this captivity took place. Although many believe he was taken to live in Mount Slemish in County Antrim, it is more likely that he was held in County Mayo near Killala.)

During this time, he worked as a shepherd, outdoors and away from people. Lonely and afraid, he turned to his religion for solace, becoming a devout Christian. (It is also believed that Patrick first began to dream of converting the Irish people to Christianity during his captivity.)

St. Patrick's Visions and Miracles . . .

After more than six years as a prisoner, Patrick escaped. According to his writing, a voice — which he believed to be God's — spoke to him in a dream, telling him it was time to leave Ireland. To do so, Patrick walked nearly 200 miles from County Mayo, where it is believed he was held, to the Irish coast. After escaping to Britain, Patrick reported that he experienced a second revelation — an angel in a dream tells him to return to Ireland as a missionary. Soon after, Patrick began religious training, a course of study that lasted more than 15 years.

After his ordination as a priest, he was sent to Ireland with a dual mission: to minister to Christians already living in Ireland and to begin to convert the Irish. (Interestingly, this mission contradicts the widely held notion that Patrick introduced Christianity to Ireland.)

St. Patrick Incorporated Irish Culture into Christian Lessons . . .

Familiar with the Irish language and culture, Patrick chose to incorporate traditional ritual into his lessons of Christianity instead of attempting to eradicate native Irish beliefs. For instance, he used bonfires to celebrate Easter since the Irish were used to honoring their gods with fire. He also superimposed a sun, a powerful Irish symbol, onto the Christian cross to create what is now called a Celtic cross, so that veneration of the symbol would seem more natural to the Irish.

Although there were a small number of Christians on the island when Patrick arrived, most Irish practiced a nature-based pagan religion. The Irish culture centered around a rich tradition of oral legend and myth. When this is considered, it is no surprise that the story of Patrick's life became exaggerated over the centuries; spinning exciting tales to remember history has always been a part of the Irish way of life.

ALC Council Meeting Highlights

Council meeting was held Tuesday Feb. 9, 2021

- Motion to accept potential members who have requested membership.
- The church was asked if we would be willing to have drum lessons offered by an independent source from Montour school. This will be reviewed at our next meeting as there were some more questions asked by members of council.
- Executive council election was held and committee liaisons were selected. *President:* Jason Eager, *Vice President:* Jeff Williams, *Secretary:* Clay Marnich, *Treasurer:* John Bielewicz.
- Possible future merger with Good Shepherd Lutheran Church, McKees Rocks was discussed. Zoom meeting scheduled Tuesday the 16th at 7 p.m. with GS council and Synod (Pastor Peter Asplin). **This was canceled on February 14th. Questions can be emailed to pastor to compile a list of Q & A.
- Council liaisons: *Christian Education,* Jerry. *Youth,* John. *Fellowship,* [NA]. *Communications and Publications,* Jason. *Social Ministry and Evangelism,* Rudy. *Finance and Stewardship,* Bob. *Property,* Mark. *Worship and Music,* Barbara. *Mutual Ministry,* Jeff. *Personnel,* Clay.
- Next Council Meeting: Tuesday, Mar. 9 at 7 p.m.



The HEAT is back!

A few weeks ago, the motor which feeds the hot water through our heating system in the fellowship hall broke. The part finally came and was replaced on Feb. 22. A big thank you to Bob Thompson, Al Morrow and Jerry Wessel for their handy work in replacing the part. Another big thank you to the Walenchok, Randal and Thompson families for loaning us their space heaters! *And, thank you to ALL who offered their help!*



JOURNEY WITH US

Thursdays at 7 p.m. during Lent

February 25., March 4., 11., and 18.

**Services will be held in-person
and also streamed live via Facebook**

This year our midweek Lenten services are focused on themes surrounding **Philippians 2:5-11**, which is the second lesson on **Passion Sunday (Palm Sunday)**. These verses in **Philippians** as the **Christ Hymn** points the church toward our annual celebration of the **Sunday of the Passion**.

It is my hope as we anticipate **Holy Week** that we will arrive with a deeper appreciation for the proclamation of the passion story read on **Palm Sunday**. Throughout the season of **lent** we will explore and dig into the rich contrast between that **Sunday's** entrance rite shouts of "**Hosanna!**" over and against the passion reading's cries of "**Crucify!**" Join us as we worship, reflect, sing and prepare our hearts and minds for the passion of our Lord. - PJ



Holy Week Services

Palm/Passion Sunday - March 28th
8:30 a.m. & 10:30 a.m.

Maundy Thursday - April 1st
7 p.m.

Good Friday - April 2nd
7 p.m.

Easter Vigil - Saturday, April 3rd
5 p.m.

**The Resurrection of our Lord -
Easter Sunday, April 4th**
7:30, 8:30, 10:00, 11:30 a.m.

*NOTE: Sign-up is required for Easter Sunday, as seating at each service is limited to 45 people!
Please reach out to Pastor Joe,
or contact the office to sign up.
Additional information below.*

Sunday, April 4th The Resurrection of our Lord

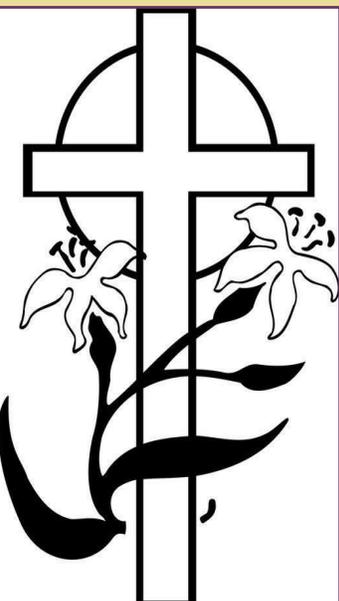
Easter Sunday Services - 7:30, 8:30, 10:00, 11:30 a.m.

This year our Easter service will be a tad different in terms of our preparation and how we come together. Our excitement and eagerness to celebrate the risen Christ will not be diminished by our efforts to care for and keep one another safe.

This year we ask that you sign up in advance for one of our Easter services.

As you can see there are more than one opportunity. The 7:30 service can be considered a sunrise service, while the other services will all look the same. All will be Easter services and all will offer Holy Communion. You can sign up by reaching out to Pastor Joe directly either throughout the week or on Sunday morning, or you can call/email the office.

*****Please note: we are limiting each service to 45 people.**



BEST WISHES . . .

MARCH BIRTHDAYS!

Date | Member

2 CJ Woods

4 Lynn Kinney

Karen Houseman

5 Ellen Randal

Michael Rodriguez

9 McKenna Schilling

10 Jeff Williams

15 Nancy Schreiber

21 Debbie Williams

25 Michael Bayer

Dirk Houseman

29 Mason Bryan



MARCH ANNIVERSARIES!

Date | Members

18 Dirk & Karen Houseman

30 Gib & Jen Palmgren



. . . and blessings to all!



Let's hear from you !

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

FOR THOSE IN NEED . . .

Please help fill the "toiletry" shelves at the pantry of

Good Shepherd Lutheran Church in McKees Rocks.

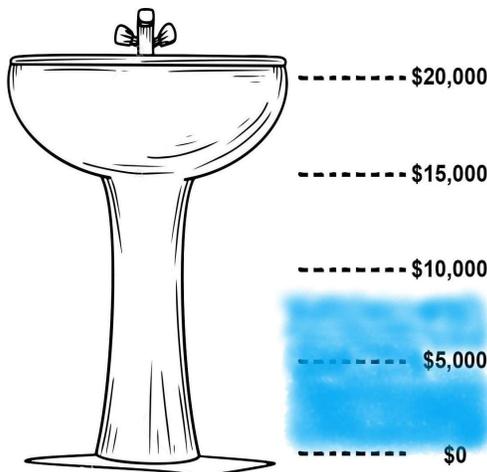
Suggestions for needed items include: soap, shampoo and conditioner, deodorant, razors, lotion, toothpaste, etc.

Receptacles will remain in our church hallway during Lent.

Thanks for your support!

Keep those "OTHER" contributions flowing!

Continuing in 2021, Council has designated our bathroom renovation as "Other" on your giving envelope. So, in addition to your regular offering, we encourage you to consider how nice a bathroom remodel will be by contributing a few dollars every now and then to "Other."



The **Bathroom Renovation** offering has collected over **\$8,356** so far. Our goal is **\$20,000**. Thank you for your continued generosity!

LESSER FESTIVALS & commemorations

March 1 George Herbert

hymnwriter, d. 1633

An excellent scholar, Herbert served briefly in the English parliament, then became a parish priest. He was known for devoted care of his parishioners, as well as for writing poetry and hymns, including “Come, my way, my truth, my life.” He died at age 40.

March 2 John Wesley & Charles Wesley

d. 1791 & 1788; renewers of the church

These brothers led a revival originally intended to remain within the Church of England, one that involved frequent communion and advocacy for the poor. Except for a brief time in America, they worked in England. Charles was also a prolific hymn writer. After their deaths, their work led to the formation of the Methodist Church.

March 7 Perpetua & Felicity and companions

Martyrs at Carthage, d. 202

Vibia Perpetua was a noblewoman, and Felicity her slave, who were catechumens at Carthage, northern Africa. They, with four other catechumens, had defied the Roman emperor who had forbidden conversions to Christianity, and were put to death in the amphitheater.

March 10

Harriet Tubman, d. 1913 **Sojourner Truth, d. 1883**

Renewers of society

Harriet Tubman, born into slavery, helped about 300 others to escape slavery until the institution was abolished. Sojourner Truth, whose birth name was Isabella, was freed after slavery was abolished, and discerned a call to be a preacher. Taking the name Sojourner Truth, she set out on an evangelistic journey, where people found her testimony to be deeply moving.

March 12 Gregory the Great

Bishop of Rome, d. 604

Born into wealth and power, Gregory was for a time the chief administrator of the city of Rome. Giving this up for a life in the church, he was elected pope in 590. He influenced public worship through the establishment of a lectionary and prayers to correlate with the readings. Gregorian chant is named in his honor.

March 17 Patrick

Bishop, missionary to Ireland, d. 461

A native of Britain, Patrick was kidnapped by pirates at age sixteen and sold into slavery in Ireland. After a few years, he escaped, returned home, and entered the ministry. Returning to Ireland, he successfully served as a bishop and missionary there.

March 19 Joseph, Guardian of Jesus

Though the Bible tells us little about the husband of Jesus’ mother Mary, we know that he was a carpenter or builder by trade. He is also shown as being devoted both to God and to Mary and Jesus. It is assumed that he died before Jesus became an adult.

March 21 Thomas Cranmer, Bishop of Canterbury

martyr, d. 1556

Cranmer’s lasting achievement is contributing to and overseeing the creation of the Book of Common Prayer, which remains (in revised form) the worship book of the Anglican Communion. He was burned at the stake under Queen Mary for his support of the Protestant Reformation.

March 22 Jonathan Edwards

Teacher, missionary to Native Americans, d. 1758

A Puritan minister in Connecticut, Edwards is remembered as being a great preacher. Though his most famous sermon talks at length about hell, he was more concerned with God’s love. He served both as missionary to the Housatonic people in Massachusetts, and as president of the future Princeton University.

March 24 Oscar Arnulfo Romero

Bishop of El Salvador, martyr, d. 1980

Romero was deeply concerned with injustices evident toward the poor and powerless in El Salvador, and worked forthrightly against political repression. He was assassinated while presiding at the Eucharist in a chapel near the cathedral in San Salvador.

March 25 Annunciation of Our Lord

Nine months before Christmas the church celebrates the annunciation. In Luke, the angel Gabriel announces to Mary that she will give birth to the Son of God, and she responds, “Here am I, the servant of the Lord.” Ancient scholars believed that March 25 was also the day on which creation began and was the date of Jesus’ death on the cross. Thus, from the sixth to eighth centuries, March 25 was observed as New Year’s Day in much of Christian Europe.

March 29 Hans Nielsen Hauge *renewer of the church, d. 1824*

Hauge was a layperson who wished to revitalize the church in Norway. As a result of a mystical experience, he felt called to preach. Many professionals in the church feared his motives and influence; he was imprisoned for leading unauthorized gatherings.

March 31 John Donne *poet, d. 1631*

After finishing his education at Oxford University, Donne seemed headed for a career in the English public service. But a series of circumstances led him into the ordained ministry. He is well known as a writer of both secular and sacred poetry.

See detailed article about St. Patrick beginning on page 2 of this issue.



MAD ABOUT MARCH!

WORDSEARCH

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

CROCUS

LENTEN

STPATRICK

BASKETBALL

FORTYDAYS

MADNESS

THAW

CABINFEVER

GREENERY

SPRINGBREAK

WARMER

CLEANING

IDES

SPRINGTIME

WINDY

Stumped? Visit our FACEBOOK page for the answer key!

www.facebook.com/alcpgh



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

Contact Us

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PLACE
STAMP
HERE

