

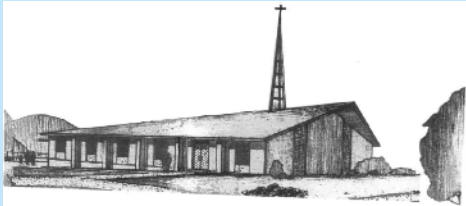
THE MESSENGER

ASCENSION LUTHERAN CHURCH

January 2023

WEEKLY EVENTS

- Sunday Worship - 10:30 AM
- Sunday School - 9:30 AM (*adult & child*)
- NA Meeting - Wednesdays at 7:30 PM
- Spirituality Group - Thursdays at 7:00 PM
- AA Meeting - Saturdays at 10:00 AM
- Mondays at 7:00 PM
- Soccer Shots - Saturday mornings &
Tuesday evenings (*Spring-Fall*)



Ascension Church Council

- John Bielewicz
- Jason Eager
- Sharon Giza
- Chelsea Karaffa
- Thom Kruse
- Clay Marnich
- Pastor Joe Murdy
- Phil Spano
- Bob Thompson
- Venus Thompson
- Jeff Williams

*NOTE: Executive officer elections
for 2023 will take place at the
January council meeting*

Next Council Meeting

Tuesday January 10 at 7:00 PM

Revelation!

From Pastor Murdy's Desk



Epiphany is a season of seven weeks just between Christmas and Lent. The word Epiphany comes from a Greek word, meaning manifestation or revelation. Through these seven weeks from the Baptism of Jesus to Transfiguration we learn and discover something about Christ as the Son of God, his relationship with the Holy Trinity and the purpose of his incarnation. The incarnation of Christ is really what this season is all about. Through Christ's incarnation, his willingness to take on our flesh and humanity is at the heart of this sacred season. Christ was born for all people and has come to redeem all God's people back to the relationship God has always intended.

Epiphany is a season marked with history and tradition. The day of epiphany was once considered to be only second to the season of Easter. In the early church Christians would celebrate epiphany not only by recalling the Magi, but also Jesus' baptism and his first miracle - the wedding at Cana. In the Eastern church Epiphany became the day to receive new members through baptism. These new members were called *illuminandi* - those who were enlightened by Christ.

The next seven weeks gives us great opportunities to learn and grow in our faith. One of the ways we can embrace this blessed season and connect it to our lives at home is to bless our homes by chalking our doors as a sign of God's presence and blessing.

continued on page 2

THANK YOU!

Dear Ascension Family,

On Christmas Day we were presented with card full of your love and generosity. Amanda and I can't thank you enough for thinking of us and for such an incredible gift which will be enjoyed by our family! Thank you not only for the card but also for all the other gifts which have been shared throughout the month - the cookies, cards, wine and beautiful well-wishes! God bless you all! Thank you for being such a blessing in our lives.

PJ and Amanda



The Murdy Family
zoey, Harper, PJ, Amanda,
Jameson, McKenna

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

Epiphany (also known as Twelfth Night, Theophany, or Three Kings Day) marks the occasion of a time-honored Christian tradition of "chalking the doors." A new tradition for some and an old one for others. Here is how it

works: take chalk of any color and write the following above the



entrance of your home: **20 + C + M + B + 23.**

The letters have two meanings. First, they represent the traditional initials of the Magi — Caspar, Melchior, and Balthazar — who came to visit Jesus in His first home. They also abbreviate the Latin phrase, *Christus mansionem benedicat*: "May Christ bless the house."

The "+" signs represent the cross, and the "20" at the beginning and the "23" at the end mark the year. Taken together, this inscription is performed as a request for Christ to bless those homes so marked and that He stay with those who dwell therein throughout the entire year.

The chalking of the doors is a centuries-old practice throughout the world. It is, however, an easy tradition to adopt, and a great practice for individuals and families where we dedicate our year to God from its very outset, asking God's blessing on our homes and on all who live, work, or visit them there.

In Christ +
Pastor

“CHRIST WAS
BORN
FOR ALL people”
~ PJ

Parents' Nite Out

Fun for the kiddos and a welcome break for their parents, Ascension's "Parents' Nite Out" was held Friday December 9 in the fellowship hall. Many thanks to all who coordinated the event and kept our young members busy while their parents enjoyed an evening out and about on their own.



ALC Council Meeting Highlights

Council meeting was held Tuesday Dec. 13, 2022

- Painting/mural update – Pastor, Sharon and Venus discussed met with Pastor Scott Bryte to discuss the commissioning of two murals to be painted on canvas for the enhancement of our worship space: one of the Good Shepherd and one of the Ascension. Sketches are in process and will be available for congregation to see prior to contract. Clay made a suggestion, using painting on stained glass - Jeff suggested that once the sketches are in, decide if use in Murals or possibly Stained Glass.
- Filling Bob Dudek's seat. We thank Bob for his service as a council member for this past year! This seat remains open for a one-year position and will be discussed at our next meeting. When we merged with Good Shepherd, constitution changed members from 10 to 12 (for 2023) no change until 2024. Wanted everyone to have a voice and for full transparency. Council Decision, should be discussed and decided upon at January Meeting.
- Welcome new council members: Bob Thompson and Thom Kruse. Welcome returning members Jason Eager, Jeff Williams and John Bielewicz.
- Executive elections to take place at our January meeting.
- Building Committee update: committee has decided to continue sharing details of potential plan and continue discussing timeline for capital campaign.
- Motion to purchase a microphone/video for Zoom council meetings.

Next Council Meeting: Tues Jan. 10 at 7 p.m.

Important date:

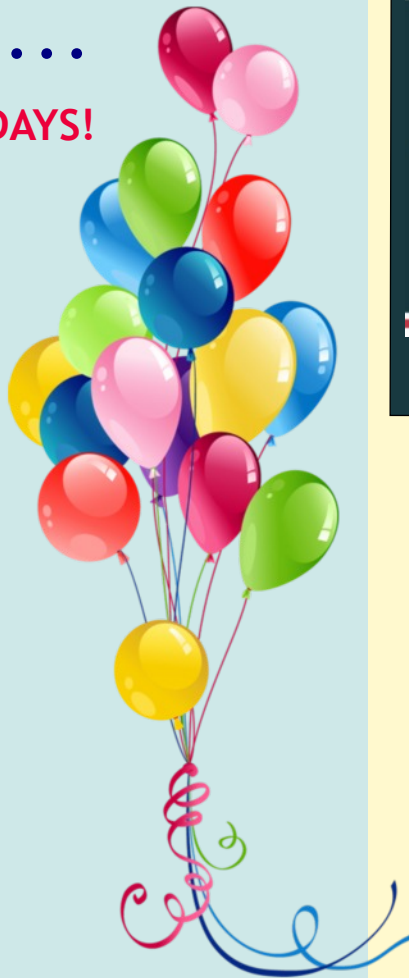
Semi-Annual Congregational Meeting
(Bulletin of Reports and incorporation of ELCA constitutional updates [every 3 years])
Sunday January 29, 2023
recommended by Pastor/Congregation

Best Wishes . . .

JANUARY BIRTHDAYS!

Date | Member/Friend

- 4 Dolly Spano
- 5 Daniel Giza
- 9 Philip Paladino
- 13 Bette Ann Kallay
- 14 Layla McEwen
- 15 Kelly Bryan
- 19 Tom Lanzarotta
- 20 Amy Lanzarotta
- 21 Alexis Brown
- 23 Darlene Witt
- 24 Glenn Simpson
Nate Zoltun
- 27 Ryan Hughes
Don Lucas
Clay Marnich
- 28 Mark Marnich
- 31 Joyce Leister



. . . and Blessings to ALL!

IMPORTANT DATES

JANUARY 2023

Tue 10 Council Meeting

Sun 29 Congregational Meeting

got NEWS?

If you have pictures, articles, or ideas to submit for the **FEBRUARY 2023** Newsletter, please contact the office or Pastor, or email office@alcpgh.com.

Lunch Bunch



A monthly gathering of members and friends of Ascension Church

Join the LUNCH BUNCH Thursday Jan. 19 for a Down(ey)-home mid-day meal . . .

Ascension's Lunch Bunch thanks Mark and Barbara Thompson for having the group to their Crafton home in December. The food was great and wayyyy too much - Mark will be eating leftovers til Valentine's Day! The company was even better and singing Christmas carols was quite fun (but I don't think that we are at concert-level yet). Thanks again, Mark & Barb!

On **Thursday January 19**, the Bunch will continue its trend of gathering at someone's house for a great meal - **DOWNEY'S HOUSE**, that is - located at 6081 Steubenville Pike in Robinson. As usual, we will meet there at 11:30 am, or if you want to carpool, meet at the church at 11:10 AM to share a ride (or transport others). Please let Jerry Wessel (412-787-1213) or Nancy Schreiber (412-859-3969) know by Tuesday, Jan. 17 if you plan to attend so that there will be enough room reserved to seat everyone. Hope to see you at *The House* ... All are welcome!

~ Jerry Wessel



Christian Unity 2023: Do good; Seek Justice.

Every year, Christian communities and churches join together to pray for the visible unity of the Church, faithfully abiding by the will of Christ, who prayed “that all may be one” (John 17:21) during the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity. In much of the world, this Week of Prayer is commemorated from January 18-25. In other places, it is celebrated during the eight days preceding Pentecost. The Franciscan Friars and Sisters of the Atonement of Graymoor in Garrison, NY, USA, feel called to invite all Christians to the **Week of Prayer for Christian Unity 2023**.

As we gather throughout our world to pray for the unity of Christians in 2023, we celebrate the theme gifted this year to the Church from Christians gathered together by the Minnesota Council of Churches, “Do good; seek justice” (Isaiah 1:17). This theme was approved by the Joint Committee on the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity between the Holy See and the World Council of Churches in late September 2021, in response to calls for equity and justice in the shadow of the murder of George Floyd in Minneapolis.

Our God is a God of reconciliation, requiring justice for all those who are under oppression. We learn to do good when we seek justice. The call of Isaiah for goodness and justice among the Israelites speaks loudly to us today. Affirmed ecumenically, this call can spread to all.

Together then, especially after the upheavals and anguish of the last three years, let us learn to do good and seek justice in Christ’s love to bear the good fruit that can make 2023 a blessing for all. Pray that they all may be one.

Resources for the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity January 18-25, 2023 can be found online:

Franciscan Friars of the Atonement
Graymoor Ecumenical & Interreligious Institute
https://geii.org/week_of_prayer_for_christian_unity



In learning to do good and in seeking justice, we Christians share one Teacher and one source of justice. In the paschal mystery of Christ, we find the compassion for humanity that brings complete justice and complete goodness. If we follow Christ to the cross in a self-emptying of all our vain senses of superiority and judgements, we can build a community of supportive love among all. The cross is our way to salvation.

The colors in the poster are profoundly meaningful. The hands, including that of Jesus, are different colors to emphasize the fellowship of all human beings and the universality of the Incarnation of God. The red in the world below evokes confusion and chaos, disunity and warfare. The blue in the world above speaks of tranquility and hope. The way there is through joining our hands with Christ’s, and through the theme itself. Much can be said of this poster art.

That they all may be one.

*From ART POSTER: Commentary on Art Piece
2023 Week of Prayer for Christian Unity
by Fr. James Loughran, SA*

Christmas Pageantry!

Sincere thanks to all of the participants, parents and coordinators who worked so wonderfully to make the December 18 Christmas Pageant at Ascension a reality and a fine success!



LESSER FESTIVALS & commemorations

January 1 The Name of Jesus

By Jewish law, every baby boy was circumcised and named on the eighth day of life, so on the eighth day of Christmas the church celebrates this event in Jesus' life. The keeping of the covenant as well as Jesus' name are signs of God's salvation given to us through him.

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 15 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 Thomas Aquinas teacher, d. 1274

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.



*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
mtcalvarycem@alcpgh.com

Ascension Lutheran Church
1290 Silver Lane
McKees Rocks, PA 15136
(Robinson Township)
Visit us on the web at
www.alcpgh.com

Ascension Lutheran Church
1290 Silver Lane
McKees Rocks, PA 15136

PLACE
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HERE

