



THE MESSENGER

ASCENSION LUTHERAN CHURCH

MARCH 2023

WEEKLY EVENTS

- Sunday Worship - 10:30 AM
- Sunday School - 9:30 AM (*adult & child*)
- Drum Class - Mondays 5-8 PM Apr-July
- 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*)



2023 COUNCIL EXECUTIVES

- President – *Jeff Williams*
- Vice President – *Chelsea Karaffa*
- Secretary – *Thom Kruse*
- Treasurer – *Bob Thompson*

2023 COUNCIL LIAISONS

- Christian Education**
Pastor Joe Murdy
- Communications & Publications**
Jason Eager
- Fellowship**
Sharon Giza
- Finance and Stewardship**
John Bielewicz
- Mutual Ministry**
Jeff Williams
- Personnel**
Clay Marnich
- Property**
Phil Spano
- Social Ministry and Evangelism**
Sharon Giza
- Worship and Music**
Thom Kruse
- Youth**
Chelsea Karaffa, Venus Thompson

Next Council Meeting

Tuesday March 14 at 7:00 PM

40 Days: The Disciplines of Lent



From Pastor Murdy's Desk

“O Lord, throughout these forty days you prayed and kept the fast; inspire repentance for our sin, and free us from our past.” ELW 319, v1

My dear friends in Christ,

Throughout the next forty days we are called to 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 our focus and attention to the life of Christ, and renew our relationship with God. As a way to encourage you along this Lenten pilgrimage I would like to offer you a reflection on the disciplines of Lent: ***“to self-examination and repentance, prayer and fasting, sacrificial giving and works of love.”***

Self-examination: What can I do better? This is a question we often ask ourselves whether it's in regards to work, relationships, parenting, etc. How often do we ask ourselves this question when it comes to our faith? Each and every one of us is called in this season to a renewal of faith. Lent gives us an opportunity to slow down, and look inward - to work on those things we often neglect - especially when it comes to our life of faith. Self-examination is also about acknowledging who God is and who we are as God's children.

Repentance: Repent means to turn around. To see things from a different perspective and to start over. Lent is a time to wipe the slate clean. Start over. Admit what we have done wrong and start over. Perhaps you need to make a phone call and ask someone for forgiveness. Maybe you need to be the one to say, “I forgive you.” Lent is a time to be intentional about our confession - daily, together on

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Mount Calvary Cemetery

1715 Middletown Road
McKees Rocks, PA 15136
Robert J. Dudek, Supervisor
mtcalvarycem@alcpgh.com



Mount Calvary Cemetery Board

Judy Henry
Bob Hughes
Bette Ann Kallay
Joyce Leister
Pastor Joe Murdy
Jeff Williams

“Prayer is something
I hope will be renewed
and encouraged...
Not just for 40 days,
but for the rest of
your Life.”

~ PJ

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

Sunday morning or perhaps sitting down with your pastor for private confession and forgiveness. *Repentance means to turn around* - why not start today.

Prayer: Couldn't we all use a little more time in prayer? What God desires is intimacy - closeness with each and every one of us. Our Father desires to be close to His children. If you think of your prayer life like a phone battery - are you fully charged? In the red zone? Somewhere in between? Might it be time for a recharge? Prayer is something I hope will be renewed and encouraged in your life this season, not just for 40 days but for the rest of your life. Perhaps you set just a few minutes of each day to be in quiet conversation with God.

Fasting: Fasting is about centering our lives in Christ. When we give something up or go without something, we should consider how it might help us better focus on Jesus. It's about emptying ourselves so that our lives can be filled with God's love. When I think of fasting, I always think of it as a reset. To give something up is to be more mindful of what we *need* vs what we *want*. Fasting can look different to different people - but can help us focus on others more than ourselves. To see Christ more clearly instead of seeing ourselves first.

Sacrificial giving and works of love: each and every one of us is called to works of love - showing kindness and being generous with what gifts God has given to us. Imagine what the world might look like if every day we choose to imitate the love of Christ? Show love, give to those in need, be merciful, forgive, uphold justice and human dignity. Be the bridge others need and show the love of God in all you do. The ultimate goal of the Christian life is to imitate the life of Christ - perhaps this Lent you might consider some of the small steps you can take towards this goal.

My dear friends in Christ, the practices of Lent are good for us, but not if we see them as achievements or burdens. They are instead ways in which we become aware of our poverty and awake to the generosity of God. What we seek is not a successful Lent, a check list of what we have done. What we must seek instead is a holy Lent, an opening up of our poor lives so that they can be a place of resurrection.

In Christ+
Pastor Joe



ALC Council Meeting Highlights

Council meeting was held Wednesday Feb 15, 2023

Social Ministry and Evangelism

Meeting Sunday, March 12 after worship

Join us as we refine our plan for 2023 to engage in mission and outreach.

- Motion to bring all of the capital projects along with the stained glass as memorializing the merger to the congregation. 7 approved, one against, one abstained.
Motion to approve sabbatical. Jason motioned to approve, Thom second. Approved unanimously.
Motion to approve Anne Schmidt as interim pastor during the sabbatical. Thom motioned to approve, Jason second. Approved unanimously.
Discussion on amendments to the church model constitution regarding use of the amendment reason as "inclusion." Pastor will go to the synod to discuss the terms defined as "inclusive" that include equality, marginalized, oppressed, and solidarity. These terms relate to the amendment to item C.09.23.
Mt. Calvary Cemetery - approved funding of paintings and funds for two stained glass windows, along with framing for the other windows.
Increase of burial fees for MCC Passed unanimously.
Income and expenses are going to be added monthly to the newsletter, so that the congregation can see how the church is performing financially. Bob proposed that all committees establish dates for meetings for the entire year.
Fellowship, Social Ministry and Evangelism met on 2/5, 12 showed. Many ideas were made and there will be a merger between fellowship and social ministry. Next meeting will be 3/12.
Personnel evaluation of staff will be set up.
Congregational meeting: Sunday, March 5
Next Council Meeting: Tuesday March 14 @ 7 pm
Adjourned 8:58 pm



"Soup and Service"

HELD WEDNESDAY EVENINGS

MARCH 1st - 8th - 15th - 22nd - 29th

- Soup, salad and bread are offered 6:00-7:00 pm
Midweek Service celebrated 7:00-7:30 pm

Please consider signing up to bring soup (two varieties are offered weekly), salad or bread.

(No Midweek Service during Holy Week)



Best Wishes . . .

MARCH BIRTHDAYS!

Date | Member/Friend

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/Friends

18 Dirk & Karen Houseman

30 Gib & Jen Palmgren

. . . and Blessings to ALL!

IMPORTANT UPCOMING DATES

Congregational Meeting

Sunday, March 5th after worship

Fellowship, Social Ministry & Evangelism

Sunday March 12th after worship

Annual Spring Clean-up

Saturday March 25th at 1 pm

Palm Sunday

April 2nd

Easter Sunday

April 9th

Lunch Bunch



A monthly gathering of members and friends of Ascension Church

Join Ascension's LUNCH BUNCH for their next "island" adventure March 16. . .

In February, 19 adventurous Ascension Lunch Bunchers basked in the Bahama Breeze "sun" and enjoyed Island fare and an easygoing island atmosphere, along with each other's company.

Continuing their island tour, the Bunch will visit the big island - Neville Island, that is - on Thursday, March 16. They'll meet at 11:30 am at Carmody's Grill, 4905 Grand Avenue - or if carpooling, meet at church at 11 am.

If you plan to go on this excursion, please let Nancy Schreiber (412-859-3969) or Jerry Wessel (412-787-1213) know by Tuesday March 14 so that reservations can be booked. Note, no scuba diving or snorkeling activities are planned (unless the Ohio River is at flood stage), but if you want to bring a swimsuit, that's okay - the Bunch doesn't really have a dress code for this island adventure, so anything goes . . . (within the standards of appropriateness, of course). All are welcome - Hope to see you there!

~ Jerry Wessel

THANK YOU!



I'd like to thank EVERYONE who sent prayers, cards, calls, texts and made visits during my rehab. I'm sure that these have speeded along my recovery!

I'm hoping to see you all on Easter Sunday.

God's Blessings - with Love,

Rose Marie LaQuinta

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 also was 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.

EVENT-ful days at Ascension!

YOUTH GROUP EVENTS!



Sunday, March 19th
following worship
"Lucky to be Lutheran"
BINGO! & Pot Luck Lunch
Families welcome!

MORE MORE MORE . . .

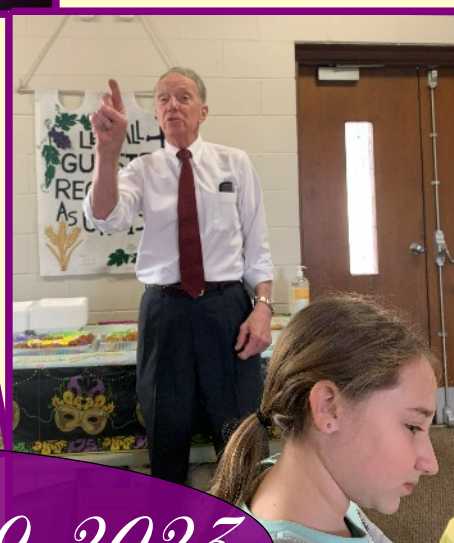
Keep an eye out for upcoming **YOUTH** events such as **Spring Clean-up** at the church (rainbow chalk sidewalks, anyone???) and running the **Bake Sale** at the annual **Ascension Church Yard Sale!** As always, if you have any ideas or suggestions for Youth events which you'd like to see at **ALC**, please forward them on to me (melissadecola@hotmail.com) or our council reps **Chelsea** and **Venus**. We'd love for the youth of the church to be part of the call to expand our outreach!

- Melissa DeCola

Blessing Bags 2023!

This event always is a terrific chance to teach our kiddos how we love our neighbors. On Sunday February 26, we enjoyed a light lunch and then assembled bags for distribution to the homeless. Thank you everyone for your generous contributions and for helping to make this Youth activity a success!





Sunday February 19, 2023



On Ash Wednesday, February 22, the palms which we once blessed to raise our Hallelujah became for us a sign of renewal and repentance.

Ashes remind us of God's condemnation of sin, as God said to Adam, "Dust you are and to dust you shall return" (*Genesis 3:19*).

On Ash Wednesday, this most penitential day, we received ashes in the form of the cross, the same symbol placed on our bodies with water in our baptism.

Ashes are a symbol of our need to repent, confess our sins, and return to God.

Source: www.elca.org





*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

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PLACE
STAMP
HERE

