

# THE MESSENGER

## ASCENSION LUTHERAN CHURCH

January 2024

### WEEKLY EVENTS

Sunday Worship - 10:30 AM

Sunday School - 9:30 AM (adult & child)

Drum Class - Mondays 5-8 PM Apr-July

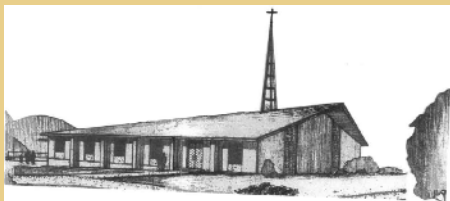
NA Meeting - Wednesdays at 7:30 PM

AA Meeting - Saturdays at 10:00 AM

- Mondays at 7:00 PM

Soccer Shots - Saturday mornings &

Tuesday evenings (Spring-Fall)



### **Ascension Church Council**

#### 2024 COUNCIL EXECUTIVES

President – Jeff Williams

Vice President – Chelsea Karaffa

Secretary – Thom Kruise

Treasurer – Bob Thompson

#### 2024 COUNCIL LIAISONS

Christian Education

Pastor Joe Murdy

Communications & Publications

Jason Eager

Fellowship

Sharon Giza

Finance & Stewardship

John Bielewicz

Mutual Ministry

Jeff Williams

Personnel

open

Property

Phil Spano

Social Ministry & Evangelism

Sharon Giza

Worship & Music

Thom Kruise

Youth

Chelsea Karaffa

#### Next Council Meeting

Tuesday JANUARY 9 at 7:00 PM

## *A New Year, 2024 is here!*



*From Pastor Murdy's Desk*

**T**here is something about January 1st that makes things new. New Years Eve is full of fun traditions. Maybe you have a group of friends that always gets together or unique family customs that are necessary to uphold if the

new year is going to be full of good things. At the Murdy house we make little sandwiches. We spend hours cutting bread into various shapes, coloring cream cheese and decorating each sandwich - only to be eaten shortly after they are admired. As we gather with friends, family or perhaps turn in early in the comfort of our home one thing is certain - the new year will be different.

The stroke of midnight is a kind of reset button! We all have humble ambitions of change. "I want to lose weight," "Less sweets," "new job," or "go to church more." We all want the new year to be different and somehow better or improved from the last. How do we do that? Where do we begin? Every one of us are different and the steps it takes to bring about positive change are different. I think the best advice I can give when it comes to wanting positive change is to not do it alone. Ask someone to be with you, to help keep you accountable. Most of all to encourage you and cheer you on!

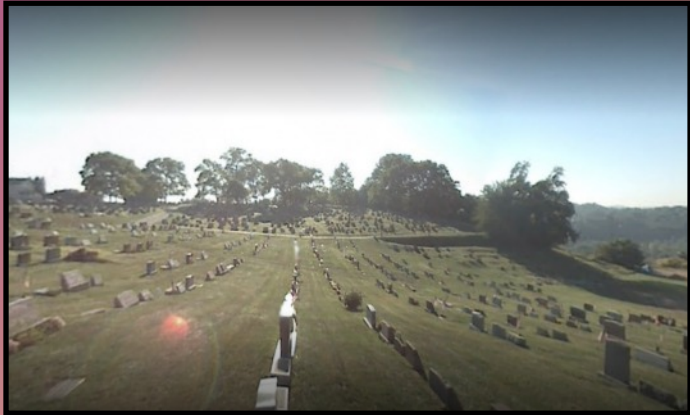
Although there may be lots of steps and sacrifices that lead to the various kinds of change, we crave more. Something permanent and deep. If this is the kind of change you are looking for, the answer can be found in Jesus. As Christian disciples we ought to be actively engaged in our relationship with Jesus at all times. It should be part of our nature, seen in every action and heard through every word. Alas, we all fall short of this expectation. We call this sin. Christ wants nothing more than a willing heart and an eagerness to love. Our life can be different, that's a promise. That being said, there is no guarantee that life will be easy or without pain. However, when we give our lives over to Jesus, we know that our lives will be different, full of hope and purpose. The first step to this new life is a willingness to be made different and to share your life with Christ.

In Paul's letter to the Corinthians Paul addresses a lost people, confused and all to willing to modify their discipleship to fit the world around them. **"So if anyone is in Christ, there is a new creation: everything old has passed away; see, everything has become new!"** John writes in the book of Revelation about this newness we have in Christ: "And the one who was seated on the throne said, **"See, I am making all things new."**

*continued on page 2*

# Mount Calvary Cemetery

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



**Mount Calvary Cemetery Board Members  
wish all a very Happy New Year 2024**

**Judy Henry • Bob Hughes • Bette Ann Kallay  
Chelsea Karaffa • George C Kasich  
Joyce Leister • Pastor Joe Murdy**

Amanda Murdy  
& Thad Ritter  
joined together  
for a duet of  
"Away in a  
Manger"  
during the  
4:00 pm  
Christmas Eve  
service at  
Ascension  
Church.



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

There is a natural change that occurs when you give your life to Christ. When you open your lives to the living God then you open your lives to being made new. This change occurs at our baptism and can be reclaimed over and over again as you daily remember your baptism.

My prayer for each of us in the new year is that we will be open to God making things new in and among us. We can open our lives to this transformation through prayer, scripture, communal worship, confession, and the mutual consolation we have with one another. May we see God at work in our lives in new and unexpected ways!

Being made new +

Pastor

Dear Ascension,

Thank you for the very generous gift that was presented to me on Sunday morning (Christmas Eve). Thank you to all of you who took a moment to sign the thoughtful card! I am overwhelmed by your generosity, thoughtfulness, and love.

Merry Christmas and Happy New Year!

+ PJ and family

“Christ wants  
nothing more than a  
willing heart and  
an eagerness to  
LOVE”  
~ PJ



# A New Year MESSAGE

*from Ascension Council President*

Hello Ascension Church Members,

I want to thank everyone for signing Pastor Joe's Christmas card and for your contributions. I appreciate all of your help throughout the year. *Many hands make the tasks easy!*

I would like to wish you all a Happy New Year and hope that this year we will look forward to a healthy, positive and productive 2024 for our church.

Sincerely,

Jeff Williams

Ascension Council President



## *Ascension Church* **Congregational MEETING**

**Sunday, JANUARY 28  
FOLLOWING WORSHIP**



### ALC Council Meeting Highlights

Council meeting was held Tuesday Dec. 12, 2023

- Call to order: 7:01pm
- Review Minutes of Last Meeting: Motion to accept by Jeff, Pastor second. Note changed to subcommittee.
- Pastor Report: Pastor informed council that we should present an amendment to the church constitution regarding changing C12.01 at the January 2024 congregational meeting
- President: *Jeff Williams*, Venus Thompson's resignation. 1 year remaining. Council to discuss filling position in January.
- January - council liaison positions and officer elections.
- Motion by Clay to have council nominations starting 1/7 for two weeks with a vote at the congregational meeting for one seat on council. Second by Jason. Three yes, five no. Motion fails.
- New Business: Motion by Clay that at the January congregational meeting, there is an election held for one council seat. No second.
- Fellowship: Luncheon this Sunday 12/17
- Important dates:
  - o Tuesday, January 9th council meeting
  - o January Congregational Meeting date: January 28 to review of Bulletin of Reports.
- Adjournment: Motion by Thom, second by Sharon. 7:54 pm.

**Next Council Meeting:  
Tuesday January 9, 2024 at 7 pm**

***Important upcoming date:*  
Semi-Annual Congregational Meeting  
Sunday January 28, 2024**



# JANUARY

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

## go<sup>te</sup>NEWS?

If you have pictures, articles, or ideas to submit for the **FEBRUARY 2024** Newsletter, please contact the office or Pastor, or email [office@alcpgh.com](mailto:office@alcpgh.com).

## Lunch Bunch



*A monthly gathering of members and friends of Ascension Church*

**Join the LUNCH BUNCH Thursday Jan. 18 for some Down(ey)-home deliciousness . . .**

In December, 12 Lunch Bunchers cruised to the Island (Neville) for a holiday lunch at Carmody's Grill. While there were several other festive groups there while we were, none shared their offices' Secret Santa gifts with us. We did, however, have a good time and too much to eat - but it was the holidays, so "pig-out" was allowed.

In the new year on **Thursday January 18**, the Bunch will gather at a local house for a great meal - **DOWNEY's HOUSE**, that is - located at 6081 Steubenville Pike in Robinson. Just to clarify, it is NOT "Number 10 Downing Street" - we were NOT invited to London by the Prime Minister! But if you'd like to attend anyway, please let Jerry Wessel (412-787-1213) or Nancy Schreiber (412-859-3969) know by Tuesday, Jan. 16 if you plan to come so that there will be enough room reserved to seat everyone. As usual, we will meet there at 11:30 am, or if you want to carpool, meet at the church at 11:15 AM to share a ride (or transport others). Hope to see you at *The House* ... All are welcome!

~ Jerry Wessel

# THANK YOU! THANK YOU!

It is with a grateful heart and thankful spirit that we render THANKS to our dear friends and fellow Christians at **Ken Mawr Presbyterian Church** in Kennedy Township. Our copier experienced an unexpected halt in production, and a "fix" was unavailable . . . after unsuccessfully exploring a

number of remedies, arrangements were made with Pastor Karl and Jane McDonald, who very graciously spent their time, talent and resources to print the rest of our Christmas Eve bulletins from their church office. **THANK YOU Pr. Karl & Jane, and Ken Mawr Presbyterian community!**



## ***WEEK OF PRAYER FOR CHRISTIAN UNITY JANUARY 18-25, 2024***

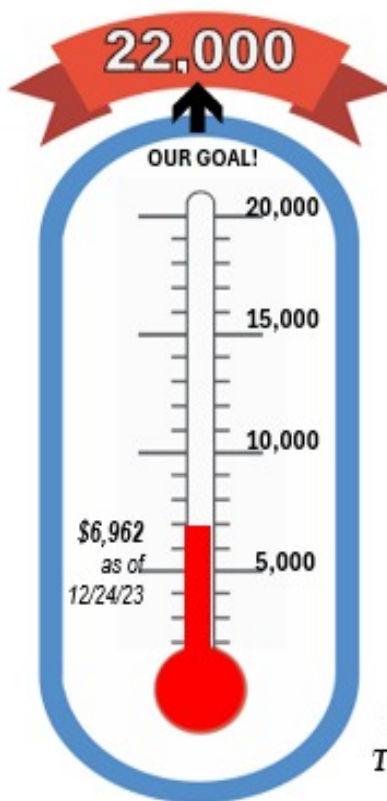
The idea of a period of prayer for Christian unity originated in a conversation of Father Paul James Wattson with an English clergyman, Rev. Spencer Jones. In 1907, Rev. Jones suggested that a day be set aside for prayer for Christian unity. Fr. Wattson agreed with the concept but offered the idea of an octave of prayer between the Feast of St. Peter's Chair on January 18 and the Feast of the Conversion of St. Paul on January 25.

Today the *Week of Prayer for Christian Unity* belongs to all Christians who are sincerely interested in the fulfillment of Christ's prayer "that all may be one." It is sponsored by the Commission on Faith and Order of the World Council of Churches and the Pontifical Discastery for the Promotion of Christian Unity. On a national basis, materials for the celebration of the Week of Prayer are published by Graymoor Ecumenical & Interreligious Institute.

For more information and resources visit [https://geii.org/week\\_of\\_prayer\\_for\\_christian\\_unity/](https://geii.org/week_of_prayer_for_christian_unity/)

## ***HAVE YOU HEARD ...***

Ascension's iconic road sign  
is going **DIGITAL!**



You can greatly help  
to fund this new  
Special Project by  
directing a portion of your  
Sunday offering to  
"OTHER"  
on your giving envelope  
or write "e-Sign" on  
your pew envelope offering.  
Thank you for your support!



## ***O come, let us adore Him!***

With lighted candles in hand, Ascension Church members, family, friends and visitors were among the 130+ faithful who joined in welcoming Christ the newborn King during the 2023 Christmas Eve services.



# Happy Birthday, JESUS!

Sincere thanks to all of the participants, parents and coordinators who worked so diligently to make the December 17 Christmas Program and "Happy Birthday, Jesus" party at Ascension a reality and a true 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](http://www.alcpgh.com)

*Ascension Lutheran Church*  
1290 Silver Lane  
McKees Rocks, PA 15136

PLACE  
STAMP  
HERE

