

THE MESSENGER

ASCENSION LUTHERAN CHURCH

March 2024

WEEKLY CAMPUS 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)



2024 COUNCIL EXECUTIVES

President – Jeff Williams
Vice President – Jason Eager
Secretary – Thom Kruse
Treasurer – Bob Thompson

2024 COUNCIL LIAISONS

Christian Education
(To Be Determined)
Communications & Publications
 Jason Eager
Finance & Stewardship
 John Bielewicz
Mutual Ministry
 Jeff Williams
Personnel
 John Bielewicz, Thom Kruse
Property
 Phil Spano
Fellowship, Social Ministry
& Evangelism
 Sharon Giza
Worship & Music
 Thom Kruse
Youth
 Chelsea Karaffa

Next Council Meeting

Tuesday March 12 at 7:00 PM

Til we meet again . . .



From Pastor Murdy's Desk

My dear friends in Christ,

Words cannot express how grateful my family and I are for your love and support over these very difficult past few weeks. I know that my unexpected announcement and decision to leave has come as a tremendous

shock to many. For those who are still shocked and worried, I truly am sorry. As I have said before, it was never my intention for it to seem so abrupt. I have cherished every conversation, every hug, every tear, every thoughtful gift and words of love and encouragement.

Thank you for all of your thoughtfulness. The sendoff on Sunday, February 25th was absolutely wonderful. I couldn't believe how many people came to worship and to send us off well. I have loved (and cried with) each card and note. Their words will echo in my ministry for many years to come.

I am beyond blessed to have called you all family. Each of you and the mission/calling of Ascension will continue to be in my thoughts and prayers. Although there will be many things that I can no longer do for you as your pastor, I will continue to serve Christ's church alongside you. *We are church together!*

As the dust settles and you begin to look to the future, please pray. **Ask for the wisdom of the Holy Spirit** to guide each and every decision you make. **Trust in God** to guide you. **Look to Christ** and keep your mind, heart and eyes fixed on Him.

Although it's still Lent, and I now have left, we nevertheless keep our eyes on the Easter horizon. The Resurrection of Jesus Christ is the foundation of our faith, but as the weeks go by and turn into months, we tend to forget about God's grace and forgiveness and focus on our brokenness. As Easter people, how do we live our daily lives fully aware of God's love and mercy? The answer is as easy as it is challenging: **keeping our eyes on Jesus**. When we look to Christ, we

continued on page 3

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
Jason Eager • George C Kasich
Joyce Leister

A simple little phrase ...

Reflections by Ascension Office Administrator Darlene Fejka

Back in the fall of 2020, when I applied for the position of Office Administrator for Ascension Church, I was confident that my skills, knowledge and personality would be a perfect fit. Little did I imagine though, that this work opportunity which I fortunately assumed on October 2, 2020 would prove to be a learning opportunity as well with a seasoned and capable “boss,” professor and mentor in the person of Pastor Joe Murdy.

Not only have I learned much more about everything Lutheran over these past 4 years, but also have learned invaluable lessons in patience, kindness, tolerance, tenacity and love thanks to “PJ” and his steadfast yet gentle ways. For that I always will be grateful.

It just won't be the same in the office not being greeted in the morning with that sunshiny smile and bubbly can-do attitude which brightened many a day. I'll always cherish the many lighthearted (and often downright “LOL”) moments shared which gave balance to what could sometimes be quite stressful work.

I often would leave PJ a simple little phrase in my notes, texts, emails to let him know that despite the many challenges, tasks, detours faced, “*I love this job!*”

PJ's LITTLE FREE LIBRARY

by Phil Spano

It's an early Friday morning when a text message pops up from Pastor Joe. “Morning Phil! Let's build one of these!!! I think about it all the time...then forget. I know just where to put it. Bibles, children's books, church info. Thoughts?”

Well, I guess we each get called to help in different ways. So, I did a bit of research, talked to a few folks, and sent a few pictures to PJ, but my motivation wasn't quite there. PJ told me, don't worry I trust you.

After my father's passing, I felt it and was ready. Bob Thompson helped me find some money (and shingles) and it didn't take long from there. By early February I finally got back to Pastor and let him know that the library was nearly complete. Little did I realize the timing and that the Lord was guiding me to complete this in time for PJ's departure.

I hope everyone is able to enjoy “PJ's Little Free Library” and remembers our Pastor's love when they see it.



Thank you, PJ
for sharing this call with me,

Phil

P.S. A stand is ready for it to be
installed once the weather
warms up a bit.

That phrase still
will ring out thru
my future days at
Ascension, but
now will take on a
new melody.

Pastor Joe truly
will be missed as
he follows a new
path in his life and
ministry to God's
people, but the
legacy which he leaves at Ascension Church will
give wings to new ideas, and certainly will leave this
happy and holy place with inspiration to continue the
work of our hands and hearts.

Thank you, dear PJ. May God grant to you and
your family peace, health and happiness for many
blessed years!



Office Admin Darlene Fejka and Pastor Joe

Social Ministry & Evangelism

S.A.L.T. - Serving As Lutherans Together

March

-Food Bank collection (throughout Lent)

April

-April 20: Church/roadway spring clean up

-Autism awareness talk/walk (date TBD)

May

-Veterans clothing collection

JUNE - YARD SALE!

Please mark your calendars for the **Yard Sale on June 8th**. If anyone has any connections for good community advertising, please let the SALT committee know. (Also, feel free to post on community groups/forums on our behalf!) SALT member Jamie Cropper is looking into getting a sign made to hang over Silver Lane that can be used for future years.

Upcoming SALT meetings for 2024:

•April 28 •July 21 •Sept 22

Please reach out to Sharon Giza (Fellowship, Social Ministry & Evangelism liaison) to join these essential efforts in the life of our church.

Pastor's Farewell Message (continued from pg 1)

will see the love of God given to us immeasurably and unconditionally. Henri Nouwen once said, "God's love for us is everlasting. That means that God's love for us existed before we were born and will exist after we have died." This is how we hold on to Easter - **look to Christ**. When you fix your eyes on Jesus, you will never lose sight of God's love.

With all my heart,

PJ+



ALC Council Meeting Highlights

Council meeting was held Tuesday Feb. 13, 2024

- 7:00 PM February 13th 2024
- **Call to order:** Jeff W. called to order at 6:55pm
- **Pastor's Report:** Pastor's resignation and update on future steps
- **Fellowship, Social Ministry and Evangelism, Sharon:** Mardi Gras party went well! People everywhere! We are collecting toiletries and hygiene products for the Food Bank during Lent.
- **Property, Phil S:** Built a free library box that will be placed outside the church.
- Important dates:
 - March 12th – Next Meeting
- Adjournment: Motion by Thom, second by Sharon. 8:20pm.
- **Special meeting:** Thursday Feb. 22nd
 - Pastor Peter Asplin, Assistant to the Bishop ELCA/SWPA shared about future steps, options and the call process.
- **New Business:** Don and Val Tarbert wish to join Ascension. Passed unanimously.

Paintings coming soon!

The Good Shepherd painting has been completed and The Ascension is well underway! We hope that everyone is looking forward to something new, beautiful and meaningful in our sanctuary this year.

Our two new paintings - one of Christ the Good Shepherd and the other of The Ascension - are still on track to be presented on Easter morning.

Both paintings are intended to commemorate our 2021 merger and to memorialize those who now rest in the Kingdom. It is our continued hope that these paintings will celebrate our story and what God has done in our lives.

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!

Lunch Bunch



A monthly gathering of members and friends of Ascension Church

Join Ascension's LUNCH BUNCH March 21

In February, nineteen Ascension "Lunch Bunchers" (including a couple of friends) braved the icy Pittsburgh winds to enjoy a warm Bahama Breeze lunch. Several wore loud island shirts, but no Panama hats, shorts or flip-flops were evidenced. The food was great and the company even better, as was the island atmosphere.

On Thursday March 21, the Bunch will try a new lunch venue, "Jabby Joe's" at 1562 Island Avenue, McKees Rocks, just past the Fleming Park bridge coming from Neville Island (on Route 51). The menu is extensive and you can expect a lot of jabbering at Jabby Joe's.

As is our custom, we will meet at the restaurant at 11:30 am. If you plan to jabber with us, please let Nancy Schreiber (412-859-3969) or George Kasich (412-726-1645) know by Tuesday March 19, so that sufficient room is reserved for all Ascension jabbers. EVERYONE is invited to join in the merriment and fellowship, so if you aren't busy on March 21st, come on along and give it a try!

~ Jerry Wessel



CONGRATULATIONS, MARTA ZEILER!

After living 12 years in the United States as a permanent resident, I am proud to announce that I am officially a United States Citizen.

I cannot express how proud, grateful, and thankful I am. Never in my wildest dreams, did I think I would leave my home country and begin a new life in America. I believe it's destiny that brought me here.

The speaker at the swearing in ceremony stated, "Leaving your home country to become an American takes courage but is worth it because of the opportunities and all of the great people that live in the USA."

I will always love and be proud of my roots in Indonesia and that will never change. I am excited for what the future holds here in the United States!

Regards, *Marta*

On February 26, 2024, Ascension Church member Marta Zeiler became a US Citizen. She is pictured with her husband James and son Vincent.

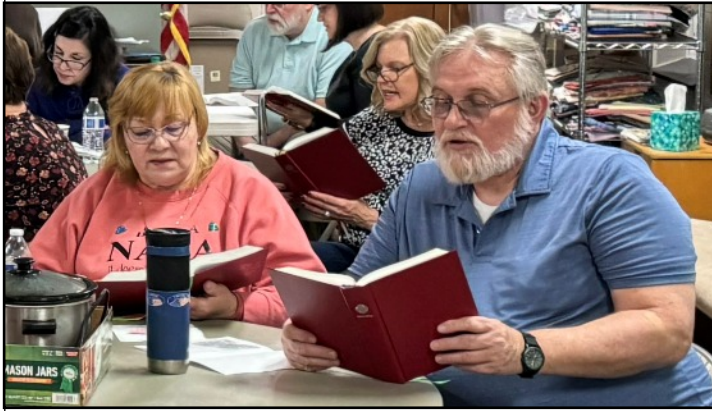
Eventful Days!

Youth Bowling (2/18), Farewell to Pastor Joe (2/25)
were February 2024 events to remember!



WELCOME!

Ascension Church welcomes new members **Donald and Valerie Tarbert**, who transferred here recently and already have become quite active members!



Val and Don are pictured participating in Ascension's Lenten Midweek Service on Wednesday, February 21. They will be "officially" welcomed at the Sunday March 10 service which will be celebrated by **Bishop Kurt Kusserow**, after which there will be a special reception in the Fellowship Hall.

HOLY WEEK & EASTER SERVICES*

Palm Sunday

10:30 am - March 24th

Maundy Thursday

7:00 pm - March 28th

Good Friday

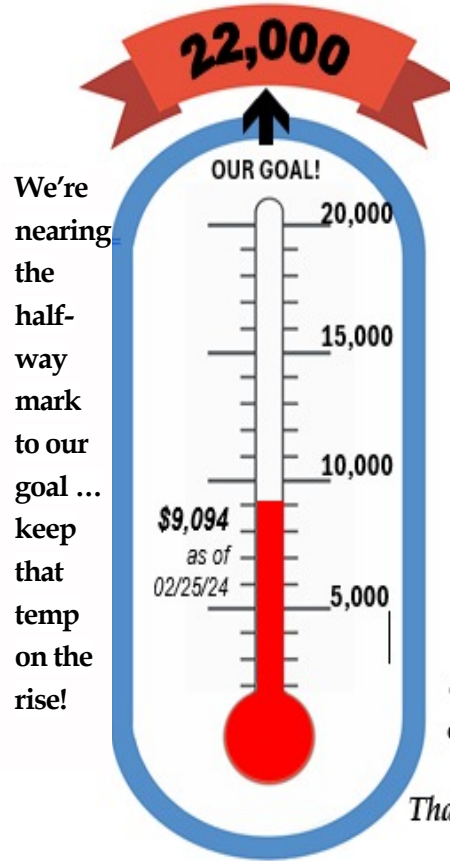
7:00 pm - March 29^h

Easter Sunday

8:30 & 10:30 am - March 31st

* Schedule subject to change

Temperature's still on the rise . . .



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!



Soup and Service

HELD WEDNESDAY EVENINGS

MARCH 6th - 13th - 20th

Soup, salad and bread are offered
6:00-7:00 pm

- Midweek Service celebrated 7:00-7:30 pm
(No Midweek Service during Holy Week)
- Please consider signing up to bring soup (two varieties are offered weekly), salad or bread.

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.



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

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PLACE
STAMP
HERE

