



THE MESSENGER

ASCENSION LUTHERAN CHURCH

April 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 April 13 at 7:00 PM



From Pastor Murdy's Desk

Dear friends in Christ,

ALLELUIA! CHRIST IS RISEN!

CHRIST IS RISEN INDEED!

ALLELUIA!

Greetings in the name of the crucified and risen Christ! At the

beginning of lent, I offered an invitation to participate in the disciplines of lent. These disciplines sought to foster and encourage our faith, strengthen us in our efforts to bear witness to the gospel, to center our attention to the life of Christ, and renew our relationship with God. The invitation included self-examination and repentance, prayer and fasting, sacrificial giving and works of love.

Now that we have arrived at Easter with our invitation in hand, you might be asking yourself, "now what?" Now its time to put our invitation to good use and that means inviting others and sharing the good news: the good news of Jesus' death and resurrection and what it means for our lives - this one and the next!

As Christians it is our joy and responsibility to carry on the mission of Jesus, to share the good news and to continue in the work of the disciples. Every year as we hear the passion story I always think to myself, we have more in common with the first disciples of Jesus than I think we realize. After the Passover with Jesus where he instituted his supper, he takes the disciples to the garden of Gethsemane to pray. Following his betrayal and arrest the disciples fled. Only a few disciples show up in the story between the arrest of Jesus and his resurrection. The disciples find themselves hidden away behind locked doors afraid and uncertain. They have followed Jesus and now, perhaps they are unsure what to do, now that Jesus is dead. What's going to become of them?

Suddenly, something unexpected happens. Mary Magdalene comes banging on the locked door with thrilling news! "*Jesus has risen! He's alive, just like He said He would be!*" The disciples go running to the tomb, which they find empty. Suddenly they don't know what to do. Do they not know what to do out of fear or excitement? All of human history has been rewritten. God has stepped into human history like never before by redirecting our fate in offering himself as an atonement for our sin so that we might have forgiveness, and life. Life with God, our creator.

Being a Christian is believing in the power of the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ, the Son of the living God. Believing that Jesus died and rose again

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New to our sanctuary!

If you have been to church recently or have visited our Facebook page, you may have noticed some new additions to our sanctuary. Over the past several years we have sought to add elements, items and vessels to our sanctuary which not only add to the sanctity of our worship but also reverence the very presence of God in our midst.



We have been incredibly happy to add a few new items which already have added to the beauty of our church. The altar cross, which matches our altar candles was purchased using memorial fund money. The tabernacle was a generous gift given by Mark and Barbara Thompson. Both the cross and tabernacle will be blessed and set apart on Maundy Thursday.

The tabernacle is something that Ascension has never had, but rest assured, tabernacles are seen throughout many Lutheran congregations.

What is it? The word *tabernacle* means dwelling. It refers to the movable sanctuary, constructed by Moses as a place of worship and a house for the living God. The tabernacle in the church is a place where the consecrated elements of Holy Communion are kept and reserved.



Jerry Wessel also has purchased two brass candelabras which will be placed behind the altar on the two shelves where flowers used to be. One was damaged in shipping, which has delayed their presence in worship. We look forward to their addition to worship. Surely the acolytes will enjoy lighting more than just two candles!

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

doesn't stop there, at simply believing. Our Christian faith calls us to respond to what we believe in through: worship and mission. After the resurrection the disciples worshiped and went out in mission to evangelize; to share the good news. After the Ascension of Jesus, the disciples returned to worship and then went out in mission to share the good news. Before the descent of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost the disciples worshiped and then went out in mission. From Jerusalem to the ends of the earth the disciples shared their experience, their faith, and their lives with others for the sake of the Gospel - simply because they believed.

This Easter we must ask ourselves how we should respond to our belief, whether you're a new believer or a lifelong Christian, an active Christian or one who hasn't been around in a while. No matter where you find yourself, behind a locked door, running to the tomb in fear, or running from the tomb with excitement, we must reclaim our call to worship and share the good news. We are called in and sent out. This is the rhythm of our Christian life. The power of this message still gives life to the dead and sight to the blind. Why would we keep this to ourselves?

Yours in Christ+
Pastor

“Being a **Christian** is believing in the power of the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ, the Son of the living **God**”
~ PJ

Good Shepherd update . . .

On Sunday, March 21st our council met with the council of Good Shepherd Lutheran Church. As you may or may not be aware, their pastor resigned several weeks ago after months of conflict. With the guidance of Pastor Peter Asplin, our two congregations introduced one another and asked each other lots of questions. Together we talked about what a merger would look like. Here are some highlights that were discussed:

- If we merge, we would become one congregation. Ascension's name does not change. Essentially, all members are automatically transferred to Ascension along with the cemetery and all of the congregation's assets.
- Good Shepherd currently has about 45 active voting members.
- If Good Shepherd's council is unable to sell their church property before the merger, it would then become the responsibility of Ascension to continue the effort of selling the building.
- The cemetery covers about 25 acres and has approximately 7,500 available lots for graves. The cemetery has \$460,000.00 invested, along with over 1 Million invested in a perpetual care fund. The care fund is reserved for when the cemetery becomes full, in which case it can be maintained indefinitely.
- There is currently no debt for the church nor the cemetery.
- Many of the council members from both congregations found our conversations to be interesting and exciting. We anticipate further conversation and vote at our April Council meeting.

The next step for our congregation will be for our council to vote whether to move forward or not. The process following this vote would include drafting "merger paperwork" in which the details both legal and practical would be outlined. Following this would be a congregational vote at which time we would decide whether or not to merge congregations. We ask for your continued prayers and discernment.

If you have any questions please feel free to reach out to me directly or a member of Ascension's council. We also have a few members of Good Shepherd's council, including their president, who actively worship with us. Any of us would welcome your questions.

In Christ +
Pastor Joe

ALC Council Meeting Highlights

Council meeting was held Tuesday March 9, 2021

- Council approved a request by a local instructor to give drum instructions to Montour students playing in the marching band. No more than 10 students will participate, and students will be drumming on pads.
- Motion carried to approve John B and Jason E as additional check signers.
- Reminder of joint Council meeting to discuss possible merger with Good Shepherd Lutheran Church - Sunday, March 21st at 7 p.m. via Zoom.
- Motion approved to use memorial funds for purchase of cross for altar and ciborium not to exceed \$1,200.
- Next Council Meeting: Tuesday, Apr. 13 at 7 p.m.



WELCOME, SPRINGTIME! Taking advantage of a sun-shiny spring morning, Ascension council member Jerry Wessel contemplates the placement of a new bed of pansies in the decorative pots near the entrance of the church's eastern door.

BEST WISHES . . .

APRIL BIRTHDAYS!

Date | Member

- 5 Dee Gratzmiller
- 7 Judy Bryan
Jennifer Palmgren
- 8 Leo Rickerd
- 12 Christopher Paladino
- 15 Samantha Siemons
- 16 Mary Jane Knetzer
- 19 Kristin Bryan
- 23 Mike Lescallette
- 27 Julie Wessel
- 30 Mary Ann Groskova



APRIL ANNIVERSARIES!

Date | Members

- 7 Leslie & Leo Rickerd
- 30 Kathi & Bill Marchetti



. . . and blessings to all



'LUNCH BUNCH RISING'

After a year of COVID restrictions, and like the legendary Phoenix rising from the ashes, (or more like savory aroma rising from pasta), the **Ascension**

Lunch Bunch plans to resume their monthly lunches together starting with an Italian feast!

On **Thursday, April 15th** (yes, traditionally it is "tax day"- so everyone will either celebrate or commiserate together), the Bunch plans to go to the "La Cucina" (which in Italian means "the kitchen") Italian restaurant, located at 200 Spring Drive in Weirton, WV. It is just off Highway 22-30 past the Pa. State line, about 30 minutes from church.

Gathering time at La Cucina is 11:30am.

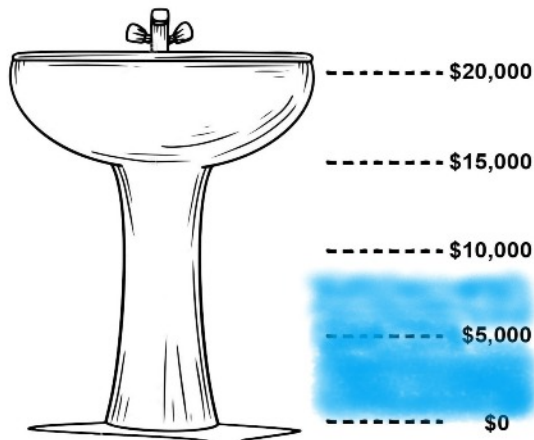
Although the Bunch has carpooled in the past, it is necessary to continue to follow COVID guidelines, so any participants who want to meet at church at 11am to carpool ideally should have all of their shots. Otherwise, the recommendation is to just meet at the restaurant. **Everyone is welcome!**

Please phone Jerry Wessel or Nancy Schreiber by Wednesday April 14 so reservations can be made.

We hope to see you there!

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 **\$9,150** so far. Our goal is \$20,000.

Thank you for your continued generosity!

got NEWS?

Let's hear from YOU !

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



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 still may sign up by reaching out to Pastor Joe directly throughout Holy Week at services.

*****Please note: each service is limited to 45 people; the 10:00 am service already is at capacity.**



Holy Week Services

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 to the left.*

LESSER FESTIVALS & commemorations

April 4 Benedict the African, confessor, *died 1589*

April 6 Artists: Albrecht Dürer, *died 1528*;
Matthias Grünewald, *died 1529*;
Lucas Cranach, *died 1553*

April 9 Dietrich Bonhoeffer, *theologian, died 1945*

April 10 Mikael Agricola, *Bishop of Turku, died 1557*

April 19 Renewers of the church:
Olavus Petri, *priest, died 1552*;
Laurentius Petri, *Bishop of Uppsala, died 1573*;

April 21 Anselm, *Bishop of Canterbury, died 1109*

April 23 Toyohiko Kagawa, *renewer of society, died 1960*

April 25 Mark, *Evangelist*

Source: www.sundaysandseasons.com

April 29 Catherine of Siena, *theologian, died 1380*



Catherine of Siena was a member of the Order of Preachers (Dominicans), and among Roman Catholics she was the first woman to receive the title Doctor of the Church. She was a contemplative and is known for her mystical visions of Jesus. Catherine was a humanitarian who worked to alleviate the suffering of the poor and imprisoned. She also was a renewer of church and society and advised both popes and any persons who told her their problems. Catherine's contemplative life was linked to her concern for the poor and suffering. She is a reminder that prayer and activism belong together.

FUNDING OUR MISSION 2021 SUMMARY

Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your minds, so that you may discern what is the will of God — what is good and acceptable and perfect. *Romans 12:2*

Bishop Kusserow recently offered a similar counsel: **“Let’s not let the familiar become an obstacle for the possible.”** Over the past year, learning to diverge from the familiar and discerning God’s will has been the constant work of all within our synod. Through the work of the budget committee and synod council, as well as the deliberation of the 2020 Synod Assembly, this budget looks much different than in years past. In some cases, it was necessary to let go of the familiar, but the result serves all within our synod and is a faithful expression of our synod’s mission.

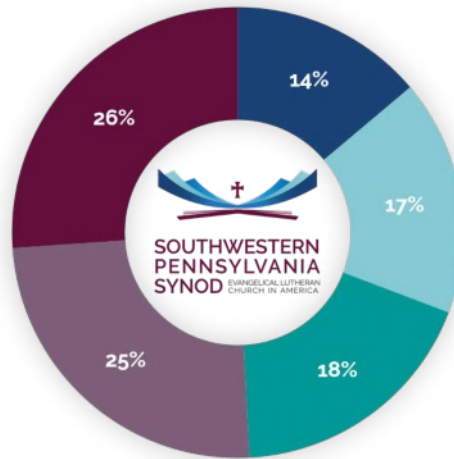
\$428,559.12

COLLABORATION &

■ ELCA ■ Syn

In early summer, the Stewardship & Financial Support Committee hosted a Zoom book study on the book “Grateful” by Diana Butler Bass. Since we weren’t able to host a live Stewardship event this year, the book study sounded like a wonderful alternative.

Thanks to our Zoom account we not only had people participating from congregations across our synod but also from other synods.
— *Barbara Nugent*
Synod VP & Stewardship Chair



MISSION:

To serve, connect, and equip ELCA congregations in southwestern Pennsylvania to tell the story of Jesus.

\$227,481.10

CONSTITUTION &

■ ELCA ■ Syn

When I arrived here at Bethel, I wasn’t sure I wanted to be a pastor anymore. I had lost the sense of call that was once so strong in my life.

In the past year, as both the transitional interim and now as the called pastor of Bethel, that sense of call has returned. I know God has called me to be a pastor in His Church and to be the pastor to His people here at Bethel.

— *Pastor David Hanssen*
Bethel, Stahlstown

\$277,780.34

LEADERSHIP

■ ELCA ■ Synod

“The Love+Teach+Heal Leadership Academy has given me a better understanding of what it means to be a congregational leader.

I have enjoyed the class and continue to learn so much each time that I am currently taking it for the third time. The knowledge acquired from attending these classes has given me the confidence to be able to lead a worship service.

— *Ray Dittenhafer*
Holy Trinity, Irwin

\$302,051.66

MISSION &

■ ELCA ■ Syn

Glade Run, as a sanctuary-certified agency, is guided by the understanding that many of the challenging behaviors displayed by individuals we encounter are directly related to adverse experiences. We have brought trauma informed training to congregations in our synod and we can help you create a safe space, sanctuary space, too

— *Pastor Christina Hough*
Director of Spiritual Care,
Glade Run Lutheran Services

\$406,167.71

ORGANIZATION &

■ ELCA ■ Syn

When at Harrold Zion, we made great use of the synod’s Resource Center.

During Covid, Beth has been wonderful, keeping us apprised of webinars relating to worship and learning ideas during these difficult days. As a result of Beth’s knowledge and directions, I have made use of many of the webinars that she has brought to our attention.”

— *Pastor John Smaligo*
Harrold Zion, Greensburg

FUNDING OUR MISSION 2021 SUMMARY

Collaboration & Vitality

We're better together; it's the very definition of "synod": on the journey together. When creative energy & collaboration meet ministry, the results are vibrant Christian communities.

- Congregational ministry support for stewardship, evangelism, missional leadership, discipleship, & faith formation
- Guidance for new parish & collaborative models
- Support for new & renewing ministries
- Ecumenical Affairs Committee & ecumenical/interfaith partnerships
- Congregational Life Committee & Communications Services Committee

Constitution & Call

Whether in the joy of welcoming a new candidate to the ministry, uncertainty of pastoral transitions, or trauma of congregational crises, the Synod supports members during the biggest changes & needs.

- Prepare & approve candidates for ministry
- Support rostered ministers & congregations throughout the call process
- Train & place interim calls
- Provide pulpit supply to congregations
- Synod council & conferences expenses
- Support/counseling fund
- Guide congregations during conflict & uncertainty
- Adjudicate ethical & constitutional offenses

Leadership Formation

Healthy & growing leaders are needed for healthy & growing congregations, which is why the Synod is constantly offering training & formative experiences for rostered and lay leaders.

- The Resource Center
- Continuing education for rostered ministers
- First-call theological education
- Ministry Committee & Youth Ministry Committee
- Mentorship during times of discernment
- Train lay worship leaders
- Leadership support, lay education
- Thiel College & United Lutheran Seminary
- Student grants, career development services

Mission & Service

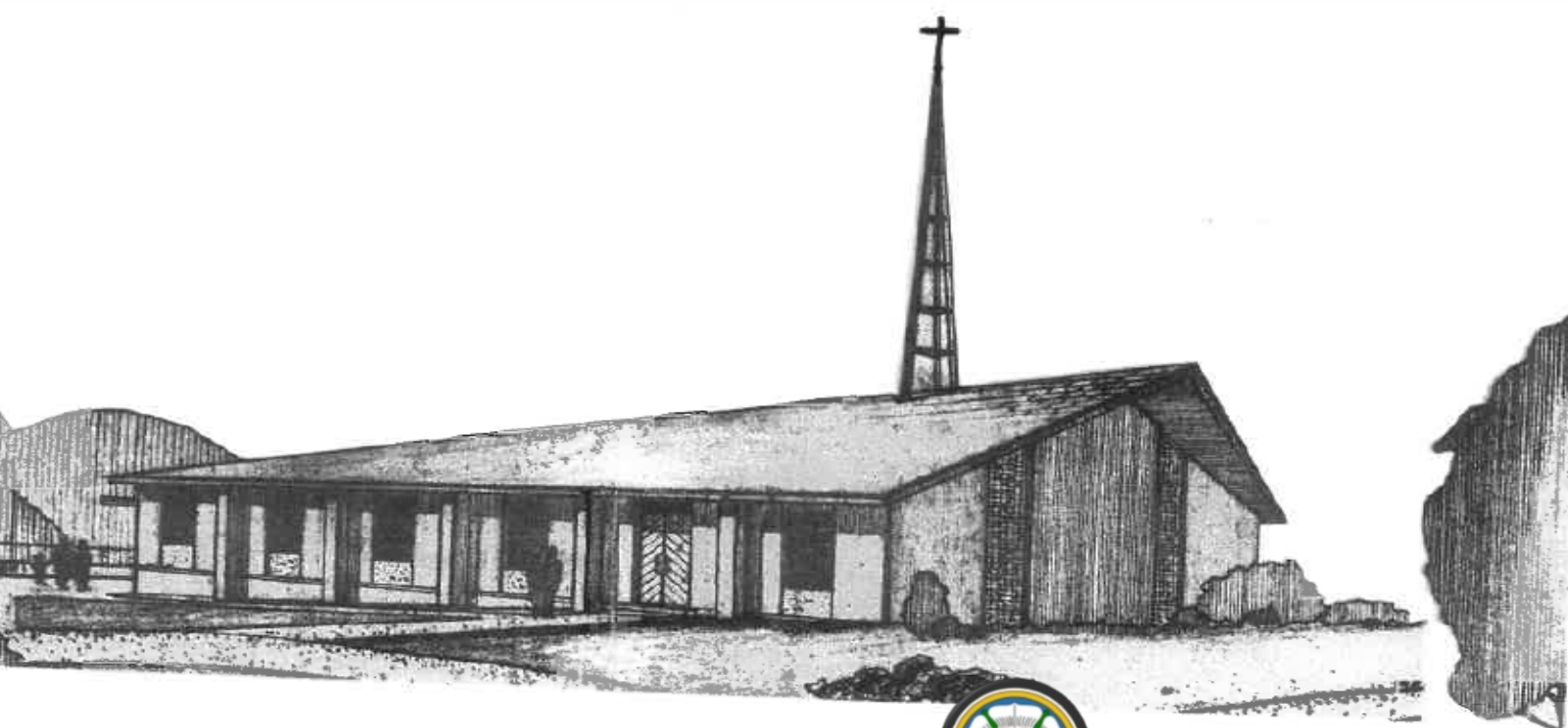
Because Christ dwells in us, we are sent into the world to be his hands & feet. The Synod commissions & supports ministries in our local congregations & throughout the world.

- Camping ministry at Lutherlyn & Camp Agape
- Youth ministry & campus ministry
- Social ministry partners: Lutheran SeniorLife, Glade Run, Bethesda Lutheran Services, Lutheran Service Society
- Advocacy through LAMPa
- Outreach, Stewardship, & Church in Society Committees
- Support missionaries & companion synod
- Provide relief with disaster response
- Address the root causes of hunger & poverty

Organization & Administration

The Synod provides additional infrastructure, resources, & coordination for Lutherans throughout southwestern Pennsylvania. More ministry & service is possible because of our shared work.

- Congregational support for reporting, governance, & administrative best practices
- Synod-wide communications
- Coordination of Synod Assembly
- Administrative support, financial management, data/history keeping, legal support
- Churchwide participation & connections



*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

