



THE MESSENGER

ASCENSION LUTHERAN CHURCH

October 2021

WEEKLY EVENTS

Sunday Worship - 8:30 & 10:30 AM

Sunday School - 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 - Saturday mornings &

Tuesday evenings (*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 October 12 at 7:00 PM

We are one, on The Way...



From Pastor Murdy's Desk

My Dear Friends in Christ,

In the early church (1-300 AD) followers of Jesus were called people of The Way. It indicated not only the spiritual path they would follow, but also what would make their lives distinctly different from the way of the

world. This Way was sacred and set them apart. They chose to follow Jesus. The road was never promised to be easy. But Jesus promised to always be with us and show us the way to eternal life.

As people of the way we know that the road isn't always smooth. My sermon on September 26 - the Sunday of our merger - gave us an opportunity to consider those things which often make our path a challenge; obstacles which slow us down or cause us to stumble.

Every church and every disciple have hurdles, obstacles and things in their way. What we must do is evaluate those things from time to time and continue moving forward. We encounter these stumbling blocks along The Way and oftentimes they can distract us to the point where we forget where we are and where we were headed. So, an important question for us as a church is, where are we going?

Over the past year I have held this question prayerfully. The further we got into conversations and the process of merging, the answer was becoming clearer. ***This is where we are supposed to be. This is what we are supposed to do.***

I am beyond thrilled and excited, as I know that a church that votes unanimously (two churches that vote unanimously!!!) is for the future! As I think about where we are headed and those stumbling blocks which pop up from time to time, it is imperative to remember what's most important - that is the MISSION. When I think of that word, "mission," I can't help up sing in my head the words to "Lord, You Give the Great Commission" (ELW 579): "Lord, You give the great commission: 'Heal the sick and preach the word.' Lest the church

continued on page 2

Celebrating

St. Francis of Assisi

Commemorated October 4

He used to praise God the Artist in every one of God's works. Whatever joy he found in things made he referred to their maker. He rejoiced in all the works of God's hands. Everything cried out to him, "He who made us is infinitely good!"

He called animals "brother" or "sister," and he exhorted them to praise God. He would go through the streets and byways, inviting everyone to sing with him. And one time when he came upon an almond tree, he said, "Brother Almond, speak to me of God." And the almond tree blossomed.

That is what St. Francis of Assisi did, and that is what he does for us once we are caught up in his life and teachings. He makes us blossom, wherever and whoever we are. We blossom because we see in Francis what could happen to us if we were to embrace the overflowing goodness of God revealed in everything that exists, and let that embrace change us.

(www.franciscanmedia.org)

Francis of Assisi

Francis of Assisi was a poor little man who astounded and inspired the Church by taking the gospel literally — not in a narrow fundamentalist sense, but by actually following all that Jesus said and did, joyfully, without limit, and without a sense of self-importance.

Serious illness brought the young Francis to see the emptiness of his frolicking life as leader of Assisi's youth. Prayer — lengthy and difficult — led him to a self-emptying like that of Christ, climaxed by embracing a leper he met on the road. It symbolized his complete obedience to what he had heard in prayer: "Francis! Everything you have loved and desired in the flesh it is your duty to despise and hate, if you wish to know my will. And when you have begun this, all that now seems sweet and lovely to you will become intolerable and bitter, but all that you used to avoid will turn itself to great sweetness and exceeding joy."

He was, for a time, considered to be a religious fanatic, begging from door to door when he could not get

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

neglect its mission, and the gospel go unheard, help us witness to your purpose with renewed integrity: With the Spirit's gifts empower us for the work of ministry."

The Mission! *That's* what its all about. As a church we are called to preach the gospel, help our community, serve one another and bear witness to God's love. Now that our merger has gone through, we are blessed to be able to do this together. We now have a great opportunity to discern how we might accomplish this together - with new people, new visions and dreams, new resources, renewed energy and integrity. But we don't do this alone. We do this through the power of the Holy Spirit and by relying on the gifts that God has given us. God has given us everything we need to accomplish our mission; all we need is the courage and boldness to step out in faith on The Way.

If you look closely at the picture above (page 1), you'll notice that the perspective is of *looking back on two paths that have become one*. That's where I see us as a congregation. Our stories, histories, joys, and dreams have been joined and now we walk together as one people of The Way ... on The Way. I am excited to see where God will lead us, and I'm thankful to be walking alongside each of you.

With you on The Way,
+Pastor

“THIS is where we are supposed to be. THIS is what we are supposed to DO.” ~ PJ

It's Official!

Fellow Ascension Church members,

The weekend of September 25-26 marked a significant moment in the life of Ascension Lutheran Church. On Saturday September 25th, the congregation of Good Shepherd Lutheran Church voted unanimously to approve the merger documentation as well as the updated by-laws. The following day, Sunday September 26th, the congregation of Ascension also voted unanimously to approve both documents. These two votes, along with the signature from Bishop Kusserow, effectively complete the merger process. The last remaining step is for the Certificate of Merger to be filed with the state.

The past 9+ months has seen a significant amount of work, discussion, and prayer as both councils have navigated through this process. From a personal perspective, this journey has been a great learning experience. I want to extend my gratitude to the council and congregation of Good Shepherd as this, at times, has not been an easy process. They went above and beyond to all of the information and documentation along the way to ensure the right decision was being made.

I welcome all of the new members who are joining us and I look forward to the next chapter as a merged Ascension Lutheran Church congregation.

Yours in Christ,

Jason Eager

President, Ascension Church Council

Dear members of Ascension Church,

On Saturday September 25, 2021, the congregation of Good Shepherd Church met in the Chapel of Mt. Calvary Cemetery. We had twenty (20) active members and three (3) guests attend this meeting.

I am happy to report that **the vote was unanimous** to merge with Ascension in accordance with the merger documents as signed by both congregations' Council Presidents.

I would like to thank the congregation of Ascension Church for being so friendly and welcoming to the Good Shepherd members.

Bette Ann Kallay

President, Good Shepherd Church Council



ALC Council Meeting Highlights

Council meeting was held Tuesday Sept 14, 2021

September Council Highlights

• **New Business:**

- the remaining items from Good Shepherd will be brought to Ascension following our vote.
- Projector and screen from Good Shepherd will be added to sanctuary. Placement to be determined. Most likely above center cross.
- Now that the bathrooms are nearing completion, council will discuss a new project in October. There are remaining funds to be used and members will be encouraged to participate in funding new projects.
 - Here are just some of the initial items: parking lot lights; railings for sidewalk to pavilion; stations of the Cross; icon portraits of the Ascension of Jesus and Christ the Good Shepherd; dorsal curtain for front of church; energy-efficient furnace.

• **Committee reports:**

- **Sunday school** has started with 8 students; Confirmation is slated to start on 9/21.
- **Social Ministry and Evangelism:** Road pick up went great!
- **Property:** Bathroom should be complete by end of September, and cleaning occurred on 9/11 and 18.

Next Council Meeting: Tuesday, October 12 at 7 PM

September 26th Congregational Meeting Highlights:

- Motion to accept merger agreement, passed unanimously.
- Motion to accept revision to bylaws, passed unanimously.
- Ascension and Good Shepherd are now a merged congregation.

Best Wishes . . .

OCTOBER BIRTHDAYS!

Date | Member/Friend

- 1 Harper Murdy
- 7 Suzie Bryan
- 9 Richard Mussman
Jameson Murdy
- 10 Rachel Hall
Callie Derbish
- 13 Jerry Wessel
- 20 Dave Walenchok

OCTOBER ANNIVERSARIES!

Date | Members/Friends

- 4 Brian & Jeannette Tomchak
- 6 Chuck & Mary Jane Knetzer
- 7 Mike & Jill Lescalette
- 15 Travis & Candace McEwen
- 21 Michael & Diane Bayer
- 23 Mike & Linda Siemons

. . . and Blessings to ALL!

Word Search KEY

(Grid on page 7)

HO A S C E N S I O N R C C P
F G L X M A P P Q A O M E J A
L P O U I T T Y V N R E M E S
F O X O T D C H Z Q G R E S T
F A F B D H P A A E A G T U O
C D T F K S E T L N N E E S R
H M H I E H R D V K R R C P
Y E U K E C G E A C A S Y H R
M L X R U R I I P N M R E R A
N C C F C V S A F H P Y I I
S A I L F H W V L P E W L S S
M I N I S T R I E S U R L T E
C O N G R E G A T I O N D H Z
W E A R E O N E M U S I C K U
H O L Y S P I R I T Z L Y K M

LECTOR SCHEDULE

OCTOBER 3

Jason Eager

OCTOBER 10

Jennifer Burkholder

OCTOBER 17

Debbie Whitfield

OCTOBER 24

Kelly Braun

OCTOBER 31

Gib Palmgren

THANK YOU!

*September 11 & 18 were our indoor clean-up days.
Project coordinators Mark & Barbara Thompson
render words of thanks for a job well done:*

Thank you to all our faithful servants of the church
who came to help us with the fall cleaning.
Many hands made the work light . . .

Wood washed and polished,
Windows cleaned,
Kitchen scrubbed and organized,
Carpeting and pews were steam cleaned,
Closets cleaned and organized,
Chores outside cared for,
Trailer put in order
and many other tasks that needed to be done.

We all enjoyed pizza for lunch - thank you to the
person who provided it - pizza never tasted better
than after the morning of work.

However, when the bathrooms are completed,
there will be more to do. We also will be
depending on you to once again to come and help
us clean and organize the fellowship hall.

Our place of worship is important in our lives and
we need to keep it in good order.

We appreciate all your help - thank you.

got NEWS?

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

for his work, evoking sadness or disgust to the hearts of his former friends, ridicule from the unthinking.

But genuineness will tell. A few people began to realize that this man was actually trying to be Christian. He really believed what Jesus said: "Announce the kingdom! Possess no gold or silver or copper in your purses, no traveling bag, no sandals, no staff" (Luke 9:1-3).

Francis' first rule for his followers was a collection of texts from the Gospels. He had no intention of founding an order, but once it began, he protected it and accepted all the legal structures needed to support it. His devotion and loyalty to the Church were absolute and highly exemplary at a time when various movements of reform tended to break the Church's unity.

Francis was torn between a life devoted entirely to prayer and a life of active preaching of the Good News. He decided in favor of the latter, but always returned to solitude when he could. He wanted to be a missionary in Syria or in Africa, but was prevented by shipwreck and illness in both cases. He did try to convert the sultan of Egypt during the Fifth Crusade.

During the last years of his relatively short life (he died at 44), Francis was half blind and seriously ill. Two years before his death he received the stigmata, the real and painful wounds of Christ in his hands, feet and side. On his deathbed, Francis said over and over again the last addition to his Canticle of the Sun, "Be praised, O Lord, for our Sister Death." He sang Psalm 141, and at the end asked his superior's permission to have his clothes removed when the last hour came in order that he could expire lying naked on the earth, in imitation of his Lord.

Francis of Assisi was poor only that he might be Christ-like. He recognized creation as another manifestation of the beauty of God. In 1979, he was named patron of ecology.

Saint Francis of Assisi is the Patron Saint of:

Animals Archaeologists Ecology Italy
Merchants Messengers Metal Workers

Source: www.franciscanmedia.org



Francis was the son of a wealthy cloth merchant. In a public confrontation with his father, he renounced his wealth and future inheritance and devoted himself to serving the poor. Francis described this act as being "wedded to Lady Poverty." Under his leadership the Order of Friars Minor (Franciscans) was formed, and they took literally Jesus' words to his disciples that they should take nothing on their journey and receive no payment for their work. Their task in preaching was to "use words if necessary." Francis had a spirit of gladness and gratitude for all of God's creation. This commemoration has been a traditional time to bless pets and animals, creatures Francis called his brothers and sisters. A prayer and a hymn attributed to St. Francis are included in *Evangelical Lutheran Worship* (p. 87, #835).

Source: www.sundaysandseasons.com

Lunch Bunch



A monthly gathering of members and friends of Ascension Church

Join the Lunch Bunch on their next expedition - Thursday October 21: "A Shakespearean Adventure"

Steeped in tasty memories of their last gathering at Pomodoro in Wexford, Ascension's **Lunch Bunch** is ready for their next culinary adventure.

On **Thursday October 21**, the Bunch will travel north to the Ellwood City area to take in the sights and flavors of "Shakespeare's Castle" - formally known as Shakespeare's Restaurant & Pub at Olde Stonewall Golf Club - "Where ye olde world meets the new in an immersive dining experience." Shakespeare's is a one-of-a-kind Medieval-style dining venue where every customer is "treated like royalty." The restaurant features an American style cuisine with a casual medieval theme.

Shakespeare's is located at 1495 Mercer Road in Ellwood City, Pa. Those carpooling can meet at Ascension Church at **10:30 AM**, and those who would rather go straight to the restaurant should plan to arrive there by 11:30 AM. In either case, all planning to attend need to let Jerry Wessel (412-787-1213) or Nancy Schreiber (412-859-3969) know by Tuesday afternoon Oct. 19 so that reservations can be made. As always, everyone is welcome to join in the Lunch Bunch fun!



LESSER FESTIVALS & commemorations

October 4

Francis of Assisi, renewer of the church, d. 1226

See feature about Saint Francis of Assisi on page 2 of this issue.

October 4

Theodor Fliedner, renewer of society, d. 1864

Fliedner helped to bring about a revival of the ministry of deaconesses among Lutherans. He was influenced in this by Moravian deaconesses he had met. The motherhouse he founded in Kaiserswerth, Germany, inspired many around the world to take up this ministry.

October 6

William Tyndale, translator, martyr, d. 1536

Tyndale was ordained a priest in England, and his life's desire was to translate the Bible into English. He was opposed in this by King Henry VIII, causing him to flee to Germany. He completed the New Testament in 1525, but before he could finish the Old Testament, he was tried for heresy and burned at the stake.

October 7

Henry Melchior Muhlenberg, pastor in North America, d. 1787

Divided Lutherans in America asked leaders in Europe to send someone who could take charge and unite their work. Muhlenberg was sent, and was effective in organizing the American Lutherans. Among other accomplishments, his liturgical principles became the basis for the Common Service of 1888.

October 15

Teresa of Ávila (Teresa de Jesús), teacher, renewer of the church, d. 1582

Teresa of Ávila (AH-vee-la) is also known as Teresa de Jesús. She chose the life of a Carmelite nun after reading the letters of Jerome. She worked to reform her monastic community in Ávila, which she believed had strayed from its original purpose. Her reforms asked nuns to maintain life in the monastic enclosure without leaving it and to identify with the poor by not wearing shoes. Teresa's writings on devotional life have enjoyed a wide readership.

October 17

Ignatius, Bishop of Antioch, martyr, d. ca. 115

Ignatius was the second bishop of Antioch, in Syria. It was there that the name "Christian" was first used to describe the followers of Jesus. Ignatius is known to us through his letters. In them he encouraged Christians to live in unity sustained with love while standing firm on sound doctrine. Ignatius believed Christian martyrdom was a privilege. When his own martyrdom approached, he wrote in one of his letters, "I prefer death in Christ Jesus to power over the farthest limits of the earth. . . . Do not stand in the way of my birth to real life."

October 18

Luke, Evangelist

St. Luke is identified by tradition as the author of both Luke and Acts. Luke is careful to place the events of Jesus' life in both their social and religious contexts. Some of the most loved parables, including the good Samaritan and the prodigal son, are found only in this gospel. Luke's gospel has also given the church some of its most beautiful songs: the *Benedictus* sung at morning prayer, the *Magnificat* sung at evening prayer, and the *Nunc dimittis* sung at the close of the day. These songs are powerful witnesses to the message of Jesus Christ.

October 23

James of Jerusalem, martyr, d. ca. 62

One of three early-church leaders named James, this man is identified in the New Testament and by a historian of the time as a brother of Jesus. Scholars are uncertain whether this means a blood brother. He was a leader of the church in Jerusalem.

October 26

Philipp Nicolai, d. 1608; Johann Heermann, d. 1647; Paul Gerhardt, d. 1676; hymnwriters

These great hymnwriters all worked in seventeenth-century Germany in times of war and plague. Nicolai, a pastor, lost 1,300 parishioners to plague, 170 in one week. He wrote "O Morning Star, how fair and bright" and "Wake, awake, for night is flying." Heermann's hymns, including "Ah, holy Jesus," often express the emotions of faith. Gerhardt, perhaps the greatest Lutheran hymnwriter, was a pastor in Berlin.

October 28

Simon and Jude, Apostles

Little is known about Simon and Jude. In New Testament lists of the apostles, Simon the "zealot" or Cananaean is mentioned, but he is never mentioned apart from these lists. Jude, sometimes called Thaddeus, is also mentioned in lists of the Twelve. At the last supper Jude asked Jesus why he had chosen to reveal himself to the disciples but not to the world. A traditional story about Simon and Jude says that they traveled together on a missionary journey to Persia and were both martyred there.

October 31

Reformation Day

By the end of the seventeenth century, many Lutheran churches celebrated a festival commemorating Martin Luther's posting of the *Ninety-five Theses*, a summary of the abuses in the church of his time. At the heart of the reform movement was the gospel, the good news that it is by grace through faith that we are justified and set free.

Word Search!

In celebration of the historic merger of
Ascension and Good Shepherd Churches
on September 26, 2021

"We Are One"

H O A S C E N S I O N R C C P
F G L X M A P P Q A O M E J A
L P O U I T T Y V N R E M E S
F O X O T D C H Z Q G R E S T
F A F B D H P A A E A G T U O
C D T F K S E T L N N E E S R
H H M H I E H R D V K R R C P
Y E U K E C G E A C A S Y H R
M L X R U R I I P N M R E R A
N C C F C V S A F H H P Y I I
S A I L F H W V L P E W L S S
M I N I S T R I E S U R L T E
C O N G R E G A T I O N D H Z
W E A R E O N E M U S I C K U
H O L Y S P I R I T Z L Y K M

ASCENSION

CEMETERY

CHURCH

CONGREGATION

ELCA

FATHER

GOOD SHEPHERD

HOLY SPIRIT

HYMNS

JESUS CHRIST

LUTHERAN

MERGER

MINISTRIES

MT CALVARY

MUSIC

OFFICIAL

ORGAN

PASTOR

PRAISE

THANKS

WE ARE ONE

ELCA . . . WHAT IS THIS?

by Nancy L. Jacobs

THIS is Evangelical Lutheran Church in America! THIS is us! We are not only members of Good Shepherd Lutheran Church of McKees Rocks, not only members of our Synod, but we are members of one of the largest Protestant groups in America.

Evangelical . . . does that not sound something like "Evangelism?" Sure, it does ... and what does that mean to us? Evangelism means the active calling of people to respond to the message of grace and of commitment of ourselves to our God and Father, Jesus Christ, and to announce the Good News.

We are Lutherans either by choice or by inheriting from our parents, but regardless, we have accepted a responsibility to believe in the teachings of the scriptures and of our church, and to live up to these teachings. By being a member of a church, we have a connection . . . we know we are in the presence of our Lord when we enter His house on Sunday morning. But that connection — that presence we receive of peace and grace — isn't just something our Lord provides for us just one day a week. He takes care of us 24/7.

"Church" isn't just "Sunday." "Church" is the whole picture — faith, action, caring for others, compassion, outreach, love. "Church" is a building, but it is a building housing not only the tangibles — the altar, the hangings, the candles and all that makes it beautiful — it also provides that sense of peace, of strength, of belonging, and a place to begin a week of meeting all challenges. "Church" is evangelism — communicating the Gospels so that those hearing God's word have the opportunity to accept Jesus Christ and become a productive, responsible member of the Church.

This is what "Church" can do for you!

Nancy Jacobs, a former member of Good Shepherd Lutheran Church, wrote this article several years ago to celebrate what being Church means. Its theme rings true even more so today as she shares it with her new congregation at Ascension.

Words are horizontal, vertical and diagonal. KEY appears on page 4.



*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

