

# THE MESSENGER

## ASCENSION LUTHERAN CHURCH

February 2022

### WEEKLY EVENTS

**Sunday Worship** - 10:30 AM

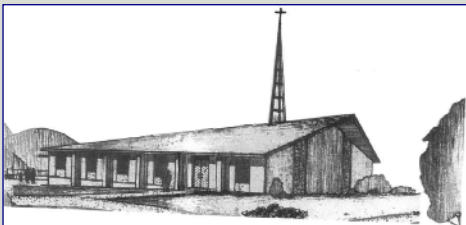
**Sunday School** - 9:30 AM (*adult & child*)

**NA Meeting** - Wednesdays at 7:30 PM

**Spirituality Group** - *suspended until Fall*

**AA Meeting** - Saturdays at 10:00 AM

**Soccer Shots** - Saturday mornings &  
Tuesday evenings (*Spring-Fall*)



### 2022 COUNCIL EXECUTIVES

**President** – Jason Eager

**Vice President** – Chelsea Karaffa

**Secretary** – Venus Thompson

**Treasurer** – John Bielewicz

### 2022 COUNCIL LIAISONS

**Christian Education**

*Pastor Joe Murdy*

**Communications & Publications**

*Jason Eager*

**Fellowship**

*Members*

**Finance and Stewardship**

*John Bielewicz*

**Mutual Ministry**

*Jeff Williams*

**Personnel**

*Clay Marnich*

**Property**

*Bob Dudek, Mark Thompson*

**Social Ministry and Evangelism**

*Sharon Giza*

**Worship and Music**

*Barbara Thompson*

**Youth**

*Chelsea Karaffa, Venus Thompson*

### Next Council Meeting

**Tuesday February 8 at 7:00 PM**

## *Congregational Meeting Greeting*

*From Pastor Murdy's Desk*



My dear friends in Christ,

This June I will celebrate my tenth year as pastor of Ascension and it is remarkable to me how fast ten years have flown by. When I consider the challenges we've faced, the dreams we've had and the adventures we've undertaken,

I am grateful to have done so much with you.

2020 and 2021 will certainly never be forgotten. We have faced a number of obstacles, but together we overcame them with grace. When we had to go remote and cancel our in-person worship, I didn't hear one person complain. Truly! In 2021 we were able to return to in-person worship and although we still wear masks out of care and caution for all intents and purposes, it seems to have been a "normal" year. It was so normal that I almost forgot we were not in-person the whole month of January.

We responded to this pandemic with care for our neighbor. Wearing masks may seem like a small sacrifice to some and a huge inconvenience to others, but we do it because we care. When we have had to change or modify our worship, fellowship and normal operations we did so with willing hearts - knowing that being together was most important! Now, I'm not saying no one complained (that I heard). The challenges were real for us all. What I hope you will hear in this is how proud I am of us as a congregation for handling things the way we did.

The highlight of our year came with the merger between Ascension and Good Shepherd. It has been such a joy to experience new friends, new ideas, and new ministries. The incorporation of Mount Calvary Cemetery has been an adventure and one that I look forward to growing into. The Cemetery's potential for mission outreach is something we as a congregation should continue to discern. Our Creative Hands quilting group has

*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

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

“It has been such a  
JDY to experience new  
friends, new ideas  
And new  
ministries.”

~ PJ

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

already, in less than a year, added so much to our church simply by their presence and dedication.

Our worship space in 2021 has changed in beautiful ways. I can remember, shortly after the addition of the new pulpit and lectern, talking with someone and saying, “it’s like our sanctuary has always looked like this.” I hope that the addition of so many new elements has only added to your experience and has helped to enhance our collective worship.

I am always grateful for this annual occasion to look back on a year. Not only does it give me a chance to highlight those special moments from the year behind us, but it also gives us an opportunity to reflect and dream as we step into a new year. 2022 is full of opportunities for us as a congregation. It is my hope that we can return to hosting our annual yard sale, offering vacation bible school, new youth ministries, regular fellowship and once again offer outdoor worship (perhaps not every week). Just to name a few!

2022 has come after so much transition and growth that I wonder if this wouldn’t be the perfect year to look at our gifts and prayerfully discern what our mission is. In 2018 we completed a three-year mission plan. Before that our humble mission statement was drafted long before I arrived and perhaps even prior to my predecessor. Mission statements can be long or short, complex or simple. They can have bullet points or simply state what we are about. What are we about? Where should our time, talent and treasures be placed? What is God calling us to do as a unique and growing church? What is our plan for the future?

My friends, we are not the same congregation we were 15, 10 or even 5 years ago. Our church has changed in wonderful and beautiful ways, and so has our resources and our community. I think it’s time. Join me this year as we look inwards and outwards and listen to the Holy Spirit as we collectively discern where God is calling us and who God is calling us to be.

With full anticipation for the year ahead!

Yours in Christ+  
Pastor Joseph Murdy

from Ascension Church Bulletin of Reports  
January 30, 2022



# WELCOME NEW MEMBERS!



On Sunday January 23, Ascension Church officially welcomed several new members: Darlene Witt and Daniel Giza (*above*), and Blair & Beth Varner (*below, with Pastor Joe*), whose infant son Brooks also received the sacrament of Baptism on Sunday Jan. 16. Welcome to our Ascension family!



## ALC Council Meeting Highlights

*Council meeting was held Tuesday Jan 11, 2022*

- Motion to designate the next special project as a digital roadside sign at cost of \$23,000. 1 in favor, 3 opposed, 3 abstentions.
- Motion to vote at Feb. meeting for sign, boiler and/or architect as special project. Motion seconded. All in favor.
- Executive committee elected: Jason Eager, President. Chelsea Karaffa, Vice President. Venus Thompson, Secretary. John Bielewicz, Treasurer.
- Committee liaison selections. (*see listing on page 1 sidebar*)

### **Next Council Meeting**

Tuesday, February 8, 2022 @ 7pm

### **Congregational meeting highlights**

Held Sunday, January 30

- Motion to accept January 2021 minutes, all in favor.
- Motion to ratify amendments to constitution, all in favor.

## go NEWS?

If you have pictures, articles, or ideas to submit for the **MARCH 2022** Newsletter, please contact the office or Pastor, or email [office@alcpgh.com](mailto:office@alcpgh.com).



## Best Wishes . . .

### FEBRUARY BIRTHDAYS!

Date | Member/Friend

- 6 Brittany Bielewicz
- Sue Thomson
- 8 Mary Hughes
- 11 Cindy Stathers
- 13 Nora Thompson
- 14 George Kasich
- 15 Conner Hughes
- 16 Don Gregory
- 20 Bob Dudek
- 21 Marion Cerar
- 24 Jamie Cropper

**. . . and Blessings to ALL!**

## Lunch Bunch



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

**Join Ascension's LUNCH BUNCH for their next culinary adventure . . .**

Plans for February's Lunch Bunch gathering remain a guarded secret ... **Thursday Feb. 17** is the date ... For details, and to get in on the February Fun, contact Jerry Wessel (412-787-1213) or Nancy Schreiber (412-859-3969) by Tuesday, Feb. 15!  
All are welcome!

## Winter at Ascension



1. LOVE
  2. SMOOCH
  3. HAPPINESS
  4. CHOCOLATES
  7. KISSES
  8. VALENTINE
  9. MARRIAGE
  11. DINNER
  12. ROSES
  15. DIAMOND
  17. PUPPY
  18. CRUSH
- DOWN
6. RED
  5. HEART
  10. SWEETHEART
  13. BALLOONS
  14. WEDDING
  16. HUGS
  18. CUPID
  19. JESUS
- ACROSS

Crossword Answers  
(Page 6)

*Celebrate LOVE*

# THANK YOU!

Since late 2019 and continuing to this day, so many activities and aspects of our lives have been delayed, put on hold, modified or even eliminated due to the unprecedented circumstances surrounding the Covid pandemic. One of those was the delay in the arrival of our 2022 giving envelopes . . . which miraculously and thankfully arrived just in time for our Sunday January 30 Congregational meeting!

Thanks to all for your patience, cooperation and continued generosity during the month of January.

## PLEASE NOTE:

**Giving Envelopes for 2022 as well as Giving Statements for 2021 are awaiting pickup in the church hallway. Please be sure to attend a service soon to pick those items up!**

*All Giving Statements remaining after Sunday Feb 13 will be mailed via USPS.*

## ✝ Bible Study ✝

*Come study The Greatest Story*

*Tuesdays at 10 a.m.*

Bob and Mary Thompson have graciously invited us to have Bible study at their home at 68 Kathleen Drive in Robinson.

Our study will be "The Greatest Story."

The first lesson will be how the Bible came to be.

How much do you feel you know about the Bible, the greatest story?

Don't worry if the answer is "little" or "nothing."

We are here to discover together.

Come join us at the Thompsons for Bible Study on Tuesdays, beginning February 1st!

# ASH WEDNESDAY



## ASH WEDNESDAY SERVICES – March 2

**12:00 noon:** Distribution of ashes and holy communion

**7:00 pm:** Traditional Ash Wednesday liturgy

Ashes will be administered safely with a cotton swab and the pastor will be wearing gloves.

*Masks are strongly encouraged.*

If you do not wish to receive ashes but would like time for consolation and prayer, the church will be open from 9:00 am to 3:30 pm. If you have any questions, please contact Pastor.

## BE A BLESSING TO OTHERS!

Our youth will be kicking off the year by building **"Blessing Bags"** for the homeless, and we need your **HELP!** Please consider donating items such as socks, hand warmers, granola bars, rolled quarters for laundry, mini toiletry items, etc. by placing them in the box in the church hallway during the month of February. Thank you for being a blessing to our youth and to the homeless in our community!

## SUNDAY LECTOR SCHEDULE

FEB. 6

Sharon Giza

FEB. 20

Mary Thompson

FEB. 13

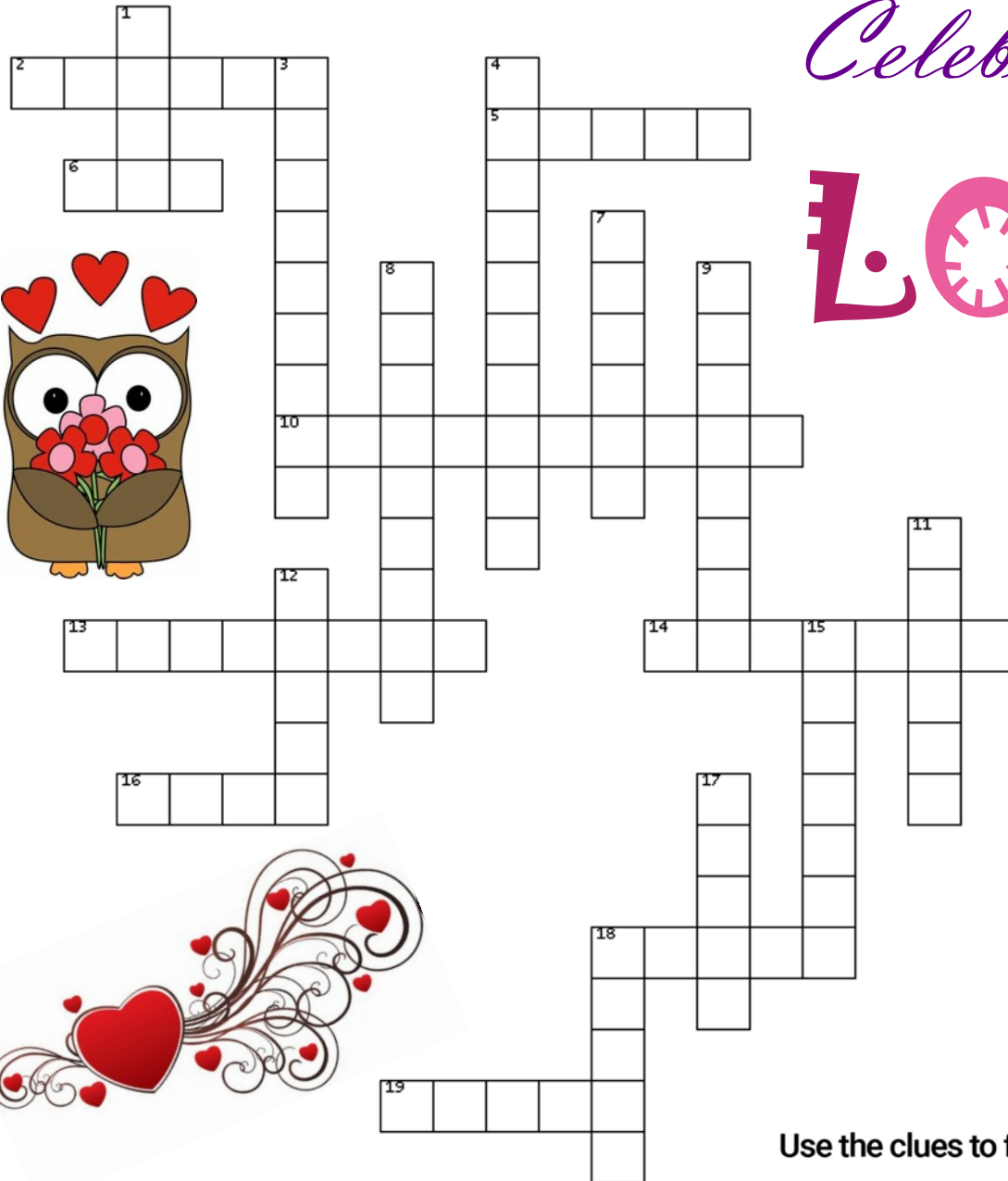
Debbie Whitfield

FEB. 27

Mark Thompson



# Celebrate LOVE!



**Use the clues to fill in the words above.**

Words can go across or down.

Letters are shared when the words intersect.

## ACROSS

2. Just a little kiss
5. It beats within you
6. Color of hearts
10. A special beloved
13. Gift filled with helium
14. A couple's big day
16. Wrap your arms around
18. Draws back his bow
19. He told us to love one another

## DOWN

1. Do this to thy neighbor
3. A state of elation
4. Life is like a box of these
7. Your lips give these
8. February 14 saint
9. Two people united
11. Paired with a date night movie
12. A dozen red flowers
15. Engagement ring centerpiece
17. A baby dog
18. Orange soda or intense feelings

*Answer key is on page 4 of this issue.*

# LESSER FESTIVALS & commemorations

## **February 2    Presentation of Our Lord**

Forty days after the birth of Christ we mark the day Mary and Joseph presented him in the temple in accordance with Jewish law. There a prophetess named Anna began to speak of the redemption of Israel when she saw the young child. Simeon also greeted Mary and Joseph. He responded to the presence of the consolation of Israel in this child with the words of the *Nunc dimittis*. His song described Jesus as a "light for the nations." Because of the link between Jesus as the light for the nations, and because an old reading for this festival contains a line from the prophet Zephaniah, "I will search Jerusalem with candles," the day is also known as Candlemas, a day when candles are blessed for the coming year.

## **February 3    Ansgar, Bishop of Hamburg** *Missionary to Denmark and Sweden, d. 865*

Ansgar was a monk who led a mission to Denmark and later to Sweden, where he built the first church. His work ran into difficulties with the rulers of the day, and he was forced to withdraw into Germany, where he served as a bishop in Hamburg. Despite his difficulties in Sweden, he persisted in his mission work and later helped consecrate Gothbert as the first bishop of Sweden. Ansgar had a deep love for the poor. He would wash their feet and serve them food provided by the parish.

## **February 5    The Martyrs of Japan, d. 1597**

In the sixteenth century, Jesuit missionaries, followed by Franciscans, introduced the Christian faith in Japan. But a promising beginning to those missions—perhaps as many as 300,000 Christians by the end of the sixteenth century—met complications from competition between the missionary groups, political difficulty between Spain and Portugal, and factions within the government of Japan. Christianity was suppressed. By 1630, Christianity was driven underground. Today we commemorate the first martyrs of Japan, twenty-six missionaries and converts who were killed by crucifixion. Two hundred and fifty years later, when Christian missionaries returned to Japan, they found a community of Japanese Christians that had survived underground.

## **February 14**

**Cyril, monk, d. 869 and Methodius, bishop, d. 885**  
*missionaries to the Slavs*

These two brothers from a noble family in Thessalonika in northeastern Greece were priests and missionaries. After some early initial missionary work by Cyril among the Arabs, the brothers retired to a monastery. They later were sent to work among the Slavs, the missionary work for which they are most known. Since "Slavonic" had no written form at the time, the brothers established a written language with the Greek alphabet as its basis. They translated the scriptures and the liturgy using this new Cyrillic alphabet. The Czechs, Serbs, Croats, Slovaks, Ruthenians and Bulgars regard the brothers as the founders of Slavic literature. The brothers' work in preaching and worshiping in the language of the people are honored by Christians in both East and West.

## **February 18    Martin Luther** *renewer of the church, d. 1546*

On this day in 1546, Martin Luther died at the age of sixty-two. For a time, he was an Augustinian monk, but it is his work as a biblical scholar, translator of the Bible, public confessor of the faith, reformer of the liturgy, theologian, educator, and father of German vernacular literature that holds him in our remembrance. In Luther's own judgment, the greatest of all of his works was his catechism, written to instruct people in the basics of faith. And it was his baptism that sustained him in his trials as a reformer.

## **February 23    Polycarp, Bishop of Smyrna** *martyr, d. 156*

Because he is said to have been known by John, the author of Revelation, as well as the important early church fathers Irenaeus and Ignatius, Polycarp serves as a vital link in church history. He was burned at the stake at age 86 for refusing to renounce his faith.

## **February 25    Elizabeth Fedde** *deaconess, d. 1921*

Fedde was born in Norway and trained as a deaconess. In 1882, at the age of thirty-two, she was asked to come to New York to minister to the poor and to Norwegian seafarers. Her influence was wide-ranging, and she established the Deaconess House in Brooklyn and the Deaconess House and Hospital of the Lutheran Free Church in Minneapolis. She returned home to Norway in 1895 and died there.



*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

