



# THE MESSENGER

## ASCENSION LUTHERAN CHURCH

December 2022

### WEEKLY EVENTS

**Sunday Worship** - 10:30 AM

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

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

**Spirituality Group** - Thursdays at 7:00 PM

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

- Mondays at 7:00 PM

**Soccer Shots** - Saturday mornings &

Tuesday evenings (*Spring-Fall*)



### **Ascension Church Council**

#### 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**

*vacant*

**Social Ministry and Evangelism**

*Sharon Giza*

**Worship and Music**

*vacant*

**Youth**

*Chelsea Karaffa, Venus Thompson*

### Next Council Meeting

**Tuesday December 13 at 7:00 PM**

## *Waiting for Jesus . . .*



*From Pastor Murdy's Desk*

From the time I was little and even through adulthood, my dear grandmother would hide baby Jesus. Perhaps you do this in your own house. I was always at Gram and Pap's house and would spend so much time looking for Jesus.

I would beg my grandmother to tell me where he was hiding. "If you tell me I promise, I won't tell anyone and it will be our secret." To which she would respond, "You just have to wait until Christmas!" Even now, after all these years, I find myself still speculating where she may have hidden baby Jesus. She probably just kept him in the box.

As I recall this precious memory, I can't help but think that perhaps in some mysterious way my grandmother was teaching me what Advent was all about. Advent is a season of wonderment, waiting, and watching. I recently noticed pastors (not just Lutheran) posting encouragement to let Advent be Advent and let Christmas be Christmas. In the hustle and bustle of this magnificent season it can be easy to become distracted with the glitter and gold and forget about the muck and mire of Christ's crèche. It's easy to just put Jesus in the crib where we know we can find him. It's another to wait and wonder when he's coming.

The word Advent comes from the Latin word *adventus*, which means *coming*. With this in mind, we can understand that our waiting is all about anticipating the coming of Christ, the promised Messiah. Advent is also about our preparation as we anticipate greeting the Son of God. Advent is the perfect season to think about what it means to get ready. With the ever-growing list of things to do, we may feel a sense of urgency and want to rush. However, this is the perfect time to slow down. It's not just the shopping, the decorating and the cookies. Just thinking about the holiday to-do list can be overwhelming.

*continued on page 2*

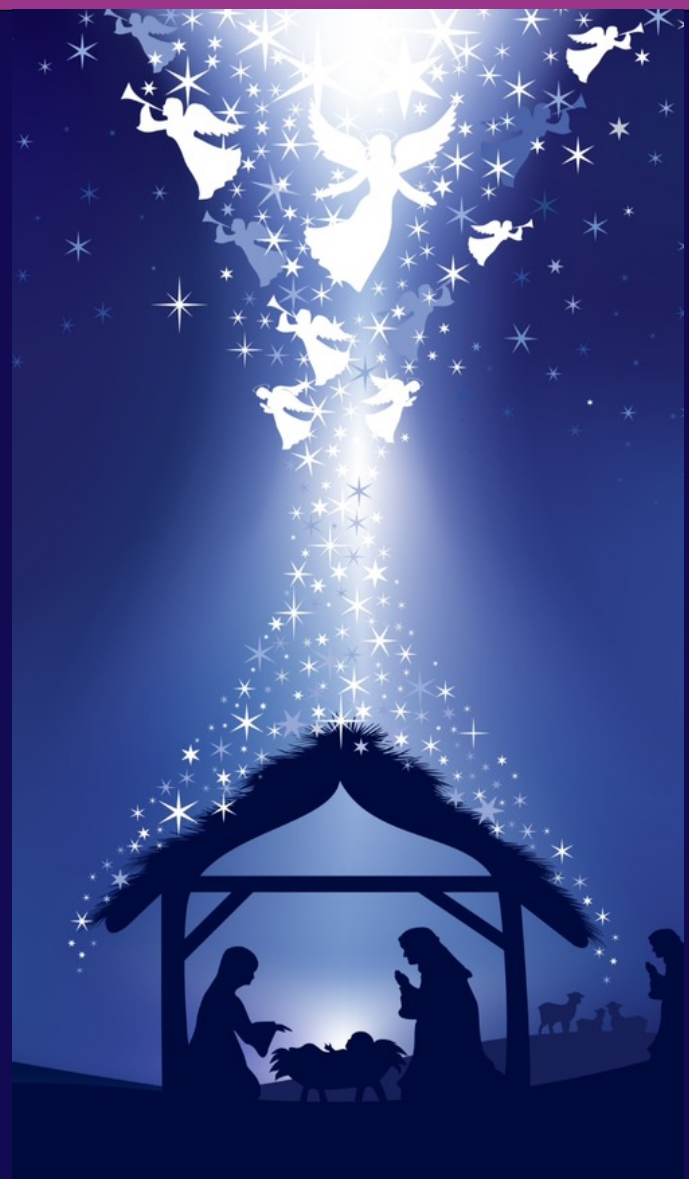
# Mount Calvary Cemetery

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 Chelsea Karaffa



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

Perhaps you are feeling the same sense of being overwhelmed. During this sacred time of waiting there are things we can do to keep us focused on the coming of Christ and honor the opportunity to prepare for Christmas. Here are a few things which I would encourage you to do as you wait with watchful eyes and prepare for the birth of our Savior.

**Find a way to honor Christ at home.** Setting up a nativity scene, placing a picture of the holy family, or using an Advent wreath or an Advent calendar can all be ways to stay mindful of the season. Take time each day to reflect on the true purpose of this season of waiting.

**Be kind and generous.** We all know that people are working extra hard this time of year and with the challenges of short staffing it can make working life hard. Give compliments, tip well, and be kind. Consider ways that you might be more generous to others.

Finally, **listen to the story.** Every Sunday we read the scriptures both old and new which tell us the story of God's people. In this story the people (we) are in need of a savior and God knows it. So, from the very beginning God knows that he will send his only Son to save God's people from their sins. Listen to the voices in these stories and let them resound in your own life.

My friends, *Jesus is coming!* Let us prepare for the one who saves us.

From our family to yours, I wish you a blessed Advent and a very Merry Christmas.

In Christ +

Pastor

“Advent is a season of  
wonderment,  
waiting and  
watching”  
~ PJ



# Christmas Eve

Saturday December 24, 2022

4 pm & 7 pm traditional Christmas Eve worship



## Christmas Day Worship

Sunday, December 25<sup>th</sup> at 10:30am

*Christmas pajamas welcome!!!!*

## HOLDEN EVENING PRAYER



### Join us for midweek Advent services

7 p.m. WEDNESDAYS: December 7, 14 and 21

Join us as we await the newborn King throughout the season of Advent through our midweek services of Holden Evening Prayer. This unique contemplative worship service originally was written during the winter of 1986 while the composer, Marty Haugen, was in residence at Holden Village in the North Cascade mountains of Washington state. A remote wilderness community and retreat center, Holden is rooted in the Lutheran tradition which welcomes all people.

Ascension Church has long enjoyed this beautiful service (about 30 mins). We hope that you will join us on Wednesdays - December 7, 14 and 21 throughout this sacred Advent season. Unsure of driving in the dark?

Please just ask for a ride! Come take a break from the busy world and join us for worship.



## ALC Council Meeting Highlights

Council meeting was held Tuesday Nov. 8, 2022

- 2023 Proposed Congregational Budget (Darlene, John, Jason, Bob, and Pastor work on) – Motion to Present to Congregation. All were in Favor.
- 2023 Proposed Cemetery Budget – Motion to Present to Congregation with an income statement. All were in Favor.
- 2023 Council Election/Nomination Review - 5 Spots - Nominations to begin this week, in addition to the paper nominations in church, deadline Sunday the 27<sup>th</sup> of November.
- Commissioned paintings for sanctuary - The Ascension/The Good Shepherd - to use memorial fund monies and cemetery contributions. Interest? 6K between two panels. Motion for Pastor to move forward or any other council member to look into art to bring back for discussion. All in Favor.
- December 4<sup>th</sup> Congregational Meeting
- Next Council Meeting:  
Tuesday, December 13 at 7 p.m.

## Congregational Meeting Sunday December 4

- 2023 Church Budget and 2023 Cemetery Budget are available in the church hallway. If you would like an electronic copy, please notify the office at [office@alcpgh.com](mailto:office@alcpgh.com).
- Church Council & Cemetery Board Elections

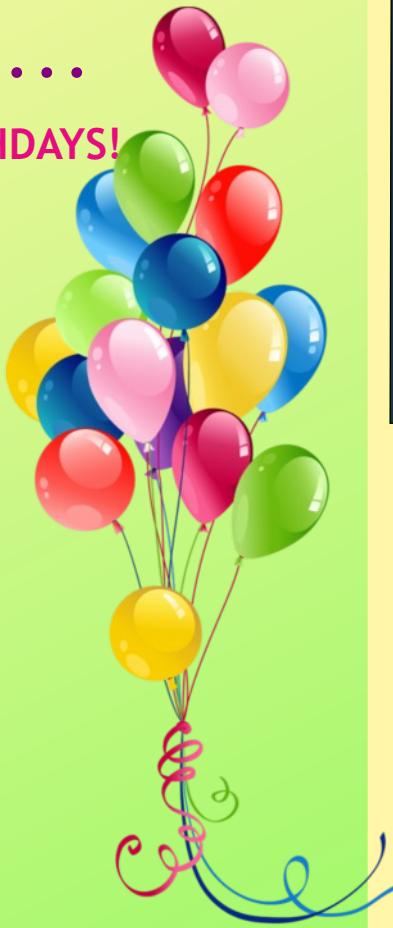


## Best Wishes . . .

### DECEMBER BIRTHDAYS!

Date | Member/Friend

- 3 Donald Simpson
- 6 Travis McEwen
- 7 Ryan Bayer
- 10 Dorothy Barkley
- 12 Jeanne Rose
- 13 Natalie Rodriguez
- 14 Paxton Brown
- 16 Debora Whitfield
- 17 Kay Braisted
- 18 Judy Henry
- 19 Lauren Bayer  
Dylan Siemons
- 20 Katie Neilson
- 21 Rudy Marnich Sr.  
Pat Summerhill
- 22 Isabella Bryan
- 23 Joey Neilson
- 26 Phil Spano
- 29 Jake Zoltun



### DECEMBER ANNIVERSARIES!

Date | Members/Friends

- 2 Jerry & Paula Wessel
- 4 Jeff & Deb Williams

## . . . and Blessings to ALL!

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

If you have pictures, articles, or ideas to submit for the **JANUARY 2023** 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 at the Thompson House - Thursday December 15

Ascension Lunch Bunchers met in November at Harold's Inn in Hopewell for their monthly get-together and feast. Although Harold's angels didn't sing, there was plenty of room at the Inn and a deliciously good time was had by all.

For December, the group has been invited to the home of Mark and Barb Thompson at 14 Bell Ave. in Crafton for a Christmas lunch on **Thursday Dec. 15 at 11:30 AM**. Please phone Jerry Wessel (412-787-1213) or Nancy Schreiber (412-859-3969) by Tuesday Dec. 13 if you plan to attend, so that we may give Mark and Barb an idea of how many hungry reviewers will descend upon them. Hope to see you there!

— Jerry Wessel

## THANK YOU!

*Thanks to everyone who participated in our Ascension photo directory project.*

*It was a long and patience-testing process, but I think you'll agree that the end result was a fine reward for the wait!*

*Thank YOU once again to each of our volunteers who worked on this undertaking.*

*We couldn't have done it without you!*

Our new Ascension Church photo directory is awaiting pick-up for all those who were photographed by Universal Church Directories.

A text-only directory will be available for general distribution to Ascension members.

+PJ





## The Advent Wreath

The Advent wreath is part of our long-standing Christian tradition. The actual origins are uncertain. There is evidence of pre-Christian Germanic peoples using wreaths with lit candles during the cold and dark December days as a sign of hope in the future warm and extended-sunlight days of Spring.

By the Middle Ages, the Christians adapted the Advent wreaths as part of their spiritual preparation for Christmas. After all, Christ is “the Light that came into the world” to dispel the darkness of sin and to radiate the truth and love of God (cf. John 3:19-21). By 1600, both Catholics and Lutherans had more formal practices surrounding the Advent wreath.

The symbolism of the Advent wreath is beautiful. The wreath is made of various evergreens, signifying continuous life. The laurel signifies victory over persecution and suffering; pine, holly, and yew, immortality; and cedar, strength and healing. The circle of the wreath, which has no beginning or end, symbolizes the eternity of God, the immortality of the soul, and the everlasting life found in Christ. All together, the wreath of evergreens depicts the everlasting life promised to us through Christ.

The four candles represent the four weeks of Advent. One tradition is that each week represents one thousand years, to sum to the 4,000 years from Adam and Eve until the Birth of the Savior. Three candles are purple and one is rose. The purple candles in particular symbolize the prayer, penance, and preparatory sacrifices and good works undertaken at this time. The rose candle is lit on the third Sunday, Gaudete Sunday, the Sunday of rejoicing, because the faithful have arrived at the midpoint of Advent. The center candle signifies Christ, the Light of the world. The progressive lighting of the candles symbolizes the expectation and hope surrounding our Lord’s first coming into the world and the anticipation of His second coming to judge the living and the dead.

— [www.elca.org](http://www.elca.org)

## Parents’ Night Out!

### Friday, December 9<sup>th</sup>, 6-8pm

Parents, give yourselves a well-deserved night out while your kiddos come to hang out with friends at our annual youth event!

We’ll paint some new ornaments for your Christmas tree (ceramic ornament kits supplied and fired by The Clay Café!) and create some masterpiece Christmas cards to send to our homebound Ascension family members.

And of course, there will be **PIZZA!**

**Please RSVP to Melissa at [melissadecola@hotmail.com](mailto:melissadecola@hotmail.com)**

**or via text at 717.968.0406 by Monday, December 5<sup>th</sup>** so we can be sure to have enough ornaments for everyone.

***Hope to see you there!***



# Children's Christmas Pageant!

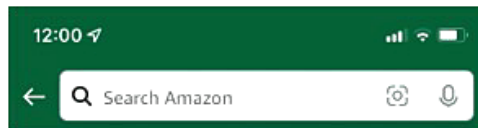
**Sunday December 18**

Celebrate the birth of Christ in song!  
Then join our children following their presentation (after Sunday worship) for a light luncheon and birthday cake in our fellowship hall.

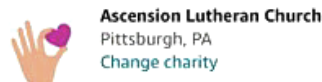


You shop. Amazon gives.

# amazonsmile



## Your AmazonSmile



Mobile App  
Generating donations

ON

Did you know that Ascension Church can make money while **you** shop on Amazon!?

With many of us shopping while using our mobile devices, we want to make sure you know how to ensure that Ascension would benefit.

- While using your *Amazon Mobile App*, Select the three stacked lines in the bottom right corner.
- Scroll to the bottom of the screen until you see

Settings

- A dropdown menu appears - select *Amazon Smile*.
- You should see *Ascension Lutheran Church* at the top.
- Directly below, it reads *Mobile App*.
- The dropdown menu to the right should say **ON**. If not, then select and change. Now **YOU'RE DONE!**

Please note: shopping on your computer and your mobile device are different. If you shop using your phone, this is an important step to take.

It's time to

**Order Your Poinsettias!**



Yes, like many other items which we purchase at this time of year to make our

holidays more festive and beautiful, poinsettias haven't escaped the price hike. But we are assured from our floral friends at 2 Buds Floral Designs that these are quality plants which will enhance any space where they are placed - especially around the altar of our Lord as we await his coming! So please consider ordering a plant or two to adorn our worship space, and in turn beautify your home! Order forms are available in the church narthex. December 11 is the last day to order.

SIZE	PRICE ea.
4.5"	\$ 9.50
6.5"	\$15.50
8" (3-stem)	\$37.50
10" (4-stem)	\$55.90

## FOOD BANK receives gifts of comfort from Ascension Church



**A heartfelt THANK YOU** to everyone who donated to this year's food drive in support of the Inter-Church Food Bank of McKees Rocks! The narthex of Ascension Church was lined with boxes and bags of generous gifts for those in need. Members of the Thompson family packed and delivered the donations to the Food Bank.



# LESSER FESTIVALS & commemorations

## **December 3 - Francis Xavier, missionary to Asia d. 1552**

Francis Xavier (SAYV-yehr) was born in the Basque region of northern Spain, later becoming a missionary to India, Southeast Asia, Japan, and the Philippines. At each point he learned the local language and, like Martin Luther, wrote catechisms for the instruction of new converts. Together with Ignatius Loyola and five others, Francis formed the Society of Jesus (Jesuits). Francis spoke out against the Spanish and Portuguese colonists when he discovered their oppression of the indigenous people to whom he was sent as a missionary.

## **December 4 - John of Damascus, theologian and hymnwriter d. ca. 749**

Born to a wealthy family in Damascus and well educated, John left a career in finance and government to become a monk in an abbey near Jerusalem. He wrote many hymns as well as theological works. Foremost among the latter is a work called *The Fount of Wisdom*, which touches on philosophy, heresy, and the orthodox faith. This summary of patristic theology remained influential for centuries.

## **December 6 - Nicholas, Bishop of Myra d. ca. 342**

Though Nicholas is one of the church's most beloved saints, little is known about his life. In the fourth century he was a bishop in what is now Turkey. Legends that surround Nicholas tell of his love for God and neighbor, especially the poor. One famous story tells of Nicholas secretly giving bags of gold to the three daughters of a father who was going to sell them into prostitution because he could not provide dowries for them. Nicholas has become a symbol of anonymous gift giving.

## **December 7 - Ambrose, Bishop of Milan d. 397**

Ambrose was a governor of northern Italy and a catechumen when he was elected bishop of Milan. He was baptized, ordained, and consecrated a bishop all on the same day. While bishop he gave away his wealth and lived in simplicity. He was a famous preacher and is largely responsible for the conversion of Augustine. He is also well known for writing hymns. On one occasion, Ambrose led people in a hymn he wrote while the church in which they were secluded was threatened by attack from Gothic soldiers. The soldiers turned away, unwilling to attack a congregation that was singing a hymn. Ambrose is credited with authorship of three hymns in *Evangelical Lutheran Worship*, including "Savior of the Nations, Come" (ELW 263).

## **December 13 - Lucy, Martyr d. 304**

Lucy was a young Christian of Sicily who was martyred during the persecutions under Emperor Diocletian. Apparently she had decided to devote her life to God and her possessions to the poor. Beyond that, however, little is known for certain about Lucy. However, her celebration became particularly important in Sweden and Norway, perhaps because the feast of Lucia (the name means "light") originally fell on the shortest day of the year. A tradition arose of a girl in the household, wearing a crown of candles, bringing saffron rolls to her family early in the morning on the day of Lucia.

## **December 14 - John of the Cross, renewer of the church d. 1591**

John was a monk of the Carmelite religious order who met Teresa of Ávila when she was working to reform the Carmelite Order and return it to a stricter observance of its rules. He followed Teresa's lead and encouraged others to follow her reform. He was imprisoned when he encountered opposition to the reform. His writings, like Teresa's, reflect a deep interest in mystical thought and meditation. In one of John's poems, "The Spiritual Canticle," he cried, "Oh, that my griefs would end! Come, grant me thy fruition full and free!"

## **December 20 - Katharina von Bora Luther, renewer of the church d. 1552**

Born to an impoverished nobleman, when Katharina (Katie) was five her mother died and she was sent to live in a convent. She later took vows as a nun, but around age twenty-four she and several other nuns who were influenced by the writings of Martin Luther left the convent. Six children were born to Katie and Martin. Though initially Luther felt little affection for Katie, she proved herself a gifted household manager and became a trusted partner. She was so influential that Luther took to calling her "my lord Katie."

## **December 26 - Stephen, Deacon and Martyr**

Stephen was a deacon and the first martyr of the church. He was one of those seven upon whom the apostles laid hands after they had been chosen to serve widows and others in need. Later, Stephen's preaching angered the temple authorities, and they ordered him to be put to death by stoning.

## **December 27 - John, Apostle and Evangelist**

John, the son of Zebedee, was a fisherman and one of the Twelve. John, his brother James, and Peter were the three who witnessed the light of the transfiguration. John and James once made known their desire to hold positions of power in the kingdom of God. Jesus' response showed them that service to others was the sign of God's reign in the world. Tradition has attributed authorship of the gospel and the three epistles bearing his name to the apostle John, as well as Revelation.

## **December 28 - The Holy Innocents, Martyrs**

The infant martyrs commemorated on this day were the children of Bethlehem, two years old and younger, who were killed by Herod, who worried that his reign was threatened by the birth of a new king. Augustine called these innocents "buds, killed by the frost of persecution the moment they showed themselves." Those linked to Jesus through their youth and innocence encounter the same hostility Jesus encounters later in his ministry.

Source: [www.sundaysandseasons.com](http://www.sundaysandseasons.com)



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

**Contact Us**

(412) 859-3711

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PLACE  
STAMP  
HERE

