

# THE MESSENGER

## ASCENSION LUTHERAN CHURCH

February 2023

### WEEKLY 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

**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*)



### 2023 COUNCIL EXECUTIVES

**President** – Jeff Williams

**Vice President** – Chelsea Karaffa

**Secretary** – Thom Kruse

**Treasurer** – Bob Thompson

### 2023 COUNCIL LIAISONS

**Christian Education**

*Pastor Joe Murdy*

**Communications & Publications**

*Jason Eager*

**Fellowship**

*Sharon Giza*

**Finance and Stewardship**

*John Bielewicz*

**Mutual Ministry**

*Jeff Williams*

**Personnel**

*Clay Marnich*

**Property**

*Phil Spano*

**Social Ministry and Evangelism**

*Sharon Giza*

**Worship and Music**

*Thom Kruse*

**Youth**

*Chelsea Karaffa, Venus Thompson*

### Next Council Meeting

**Wednesday February 15 at 7:00 PM**

## *2022 Review: Pastoral Reflections*



*From Pastor Murdy's Desk*

My dear friends in Christ,

When it comes to the church, there are many images that come to mind. I have been in several churches over the years and admired various kinds of architecture. One form of church construction that has always intrigued me is

that of a boat. There are some churches that when you look at the sanctuary from the right angle you can tell that the designers were intentional about making it look like the upside-down hull of a ship. Now when it comes to boats in the bible, there can be dozens of illustrations from which to draw. Not least of which is Noah's Ark, or the fishing boat Jesus fell asleep in, preached in, and traveled in with his disciples.

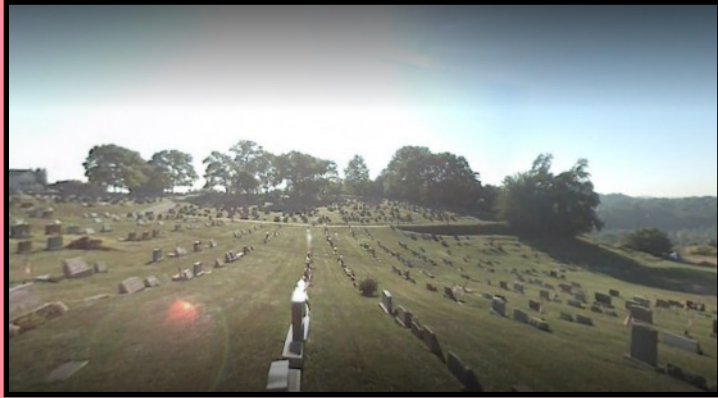
I would like to offer an illustration with a boat in mind. **I often think of the church as a canoe.** The canoe requires more than one person to row and steer. Sure, you could row by yourself but eventually you'll wear yourself out and have to stop. Imagine with me for a moment - a canoe. In this canoe there is a seat for each of us. But who is rowing? Who is offering encouragement? Who or what is distracting us? *Where are we going?*

As I look back on our years together and look ahead dreaming about where we could go next, I can't help but ask, where are we going? Sure, we have a fine boat, plenty of people to row, but where are we going? This is not a bad question. In fact, we have asked it many times before. At various moments in the life of our congregation we have come together to prayerfully discern, where is God calling us? In 2019 and 2020 we decided to merge the ministries of Ascension and Good Shepherd. Prior to this, in 2015, we developed a three-year mission plan executed from 2016-2018. We have so many wonderful ideas but aren't always sure when, how and where to implement them. Now is the time for more discernment, more prayer and more work together. Ascension is never lacking for ideas from big to small.

*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

“Now is the time for  
more discernment,  
more prayer, and  
more WORK  
TOGETHER.”  
~ PJ

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

When I look at our canoe, I see nothing but potential. I see work that needs to be done. I see strong hands, seasoned and fresh, ready to do the hard work of rowing. What we need next and perhaps most important of all is a clear vision of where we feel God is leading us. Along the way we must never lose sight of our primary objectives as a congregation: “To serve in response to God's love....”

In the year ahead, 2023, it is my prayerful wish that we would work together to develop a unified mission and clear vision for the future of Ascension Lutheran Church. Last year I shared the potential of a ten-year plan. After much reflection, I no longer see that as a responsible goal. It is my opinion that 2-3 or perhaps even 5-year goals would create healthier and more attainable objectives. This plan would include the following:

1. Self-development: how are we growing in faith, in study of the holy scriptures and in our own discipleship?
2. Stewardship: developing and equipping one another to be generous supporters of the mission God has called us to. Also understanding holistic stewardship.
3. Outreach: explore our ministry outside the church and how we care for our neighbors and those in need.
4. Strengthening our own bond and relationship with one another through fellowship and formation. All of this is attainable if we work together.

This is my hope. This is my prayer. This is how I will help guide us as we step into a new year of opportunity and ministry together.

I know that we can do it!

Together in Christ+

PJ

Excerpted from  
Ascension Church 2022 Bulletin of Reports  
January 29, 2023



## ***Social Ministry and Evangelism***

**Meeting Sunday, February 5<sup>th</sup> after worship**

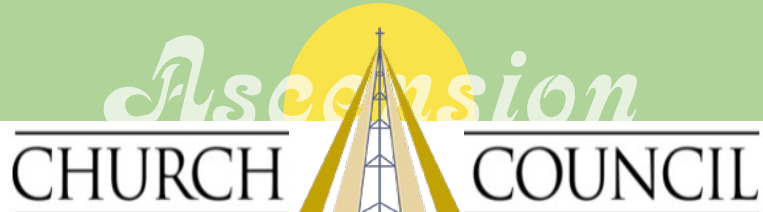
**Join us as we lay out a plan for 2023  
to engage in mission and outreach.**

YOU are invited to an initial meeting to get our heads together, develop a vision/plan for 2023 and begin this vital work of service to our community. **Please join us on Sunday, February 5<sup>th</sup> following worship.**

Some of the worthy suggestions collected in Fall 2022 were: Family Promise... Singing at nursing homes... Crafts for shut-ins... Feeding/serving food in our parking lot to anyone in need or to homes... Angel gifts at Christmas... Reaching those in community thru member suggestions (those in need)... Youth committee - food pantry service... Making cards for shut-ins... Participate in Clinton light up... Clothing drive for homeless shelter... Gift baskets/cards for troops overseas... Giving tree for a family in need at Christmas... Thanksgiving meal for family in need... Send cards to our shut-ins and/or to those who send monies to the church but do not attend... The VA always needs help... Send post cards inviting community to visit Ascension.

We also are SEEKING VOLUNTEERS/chairperson to serve on the **Fellowship Committee**. Duties would be to plan and provide support for Ascension Church activities throughout the year involving fellowship, such as Mardi Gras/Shrove Sunday; welcoming new members; fellowship; church summer picnic; Rally Day; Sunday School; Christmas Program and other fellowship ideas and events as planned.

**Please reach out to Pastor Murdy or Sharon Giza (Fellowship council liaison) to join these essential efforts in the life of our church.**



## **ALC Council Meeting Highlights**

*Council meeting was held Tuesday Jan 10, 2023*

- Motion to accept December minutes, all in favor.
- Guest - Kirk Weaver-Stained Glass Proposal
- Motion to amend C12.14 (to have the ability to vote through virtual meetings, i.e. Zoom), 1 nay, all others in favor.
- Motion to add the amended provisions from 2022 for the model constitution, provide to congregation in January, meeting in February. 1 nay, all others in favor.
- Officer Elections: Nomination for President, Jeff, all in favor.
- Nomination for Vice President, Chelsea, all in favor.
- Secretary Nomination, Thom, all in favor.
- Treasurer Nomination, Bob, all in favor.
- Committee liaisons (see front page of NL).
- Council positions: Three 3-year positions, Two 1-year positions.
- Need for new refrigerator - Motion for new refrigerator - Estimates to be brought to next meeting.
- Ball valve replacement required for heating system - required action due to little to no heat in fellowship hall. Bob requested refund for 1,680.00 for ball valve replacement in which he paid for, request for refund out of special project fund. All in favor.
- Motion for any "Other" funds collected January 15-February are designated to a donation to Chief McIntire. All in favor. 1 opposed.

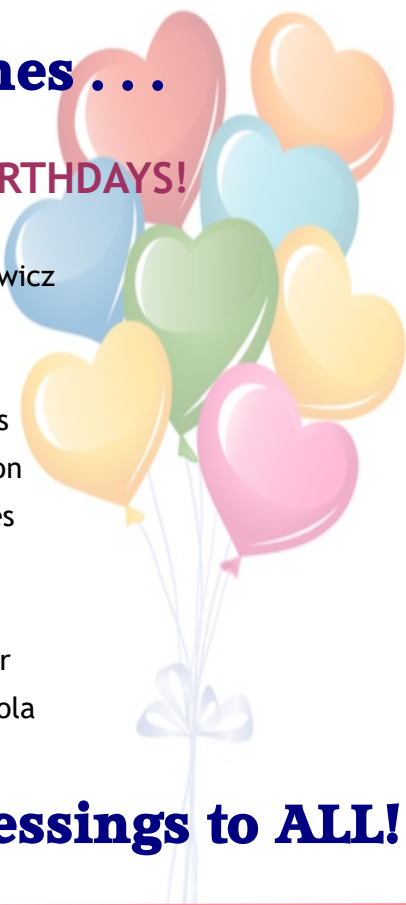
**Next Council Meeting:** Wednesday, Feb. 15<sup>th</sup> at 7 p.m. (due to St. Valentine's Day)

## Best Wishes . . .

### FEBRUARY BIRTHDAYS!

Date | Member / Friend

- 6 Brittany Bielewicz  
Sue Thomson
- 8 Mary Hughes
- 11 Cindy Stathers
- 13 Nora Thompson
- 15 Conner Hughes
- 20 Bob Dudek
- 21 Marion Cerar
- 24 Jamie Cropper
- 27 Audriana DeCola



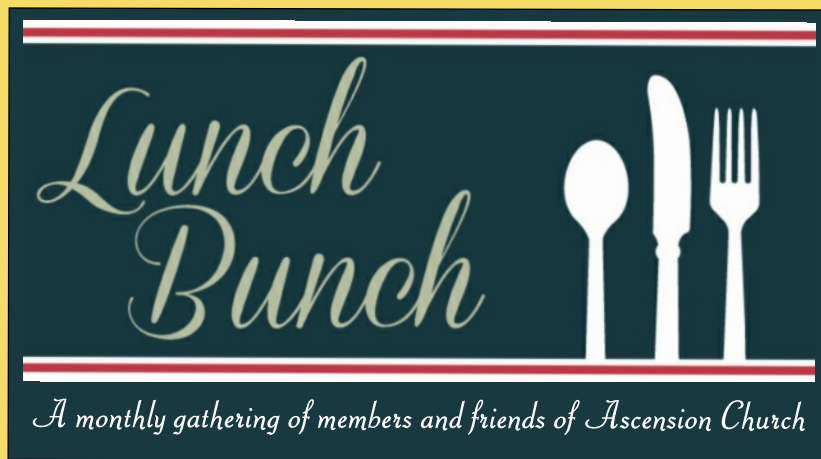
## . . . and Blessings to ALL!

## go NEWS?

If you have pictures, articles, or ideas to submit for the **MARCH 2023** Newsletter, please contact the office or Pastor, or email [office@alcpgh.com](mailto:office@alcpgh.com).

Page 6 Valentine Trivia Quiz Answers:

- 1) a. 2) d. 3) c. 4) d. 5) b. 6) c. 7) d. 8) a. 9) b. 10) b. 11) a. 12) b.



### Join Ascension's LUNCH BUNCH for their next "breezy" adventure Feb. 16 . . .

The Lunch Bunch had 18 people travel to Downey's House in Robinson Township for their January gathering. The food was quite good, but couldn't beat December's menu at the Thompson House (Barb & Mark) – but the conversations at Downey's were great!

On Thursday Feb. 16, the Bunch will escape the cold winter winds of Western Pa. at the **Bahama Breeze** restaurant overlooking the Mall at Robinson. We will meet there at 11:30 am.

Please note: swimsuits, shorts, sandals and flowery shirts are optional (however not really recommended!) but we do hope to see lots of attendees enjoying the virtual tradewinds.

Let Nancy Schreiber (412-859-3969) or Jerry Wessel (412-787-1213) know by Tuesday Feb. 14 if you plan to attend, so that sufficient cabanas, beach blankets and sun umbrellas may be reserved ☺ **All are welcome!**

~ Jerry Wessel

## MARDI GRAS PANCAKE BREAKFAST and TALENT SHOWCASE!



A Pancake Breakfast is being planned to take place on **Sunday February 19** after worship in the Fellowship Hall to celebrate Mardi Gras/Shrove Tuesday.

**ALSO** - anyone and everyone who would like to share their talents are enthusiastically invited to participate in Ascension's **TALENT SHOWCASE** after the breakfast. ALL talents are appreciated and welcome - singing, dancing, playing an instrument, dramatic or comedic readings, or anything else you would like to share! Both children and adults (*and pastors*) are welcome to showcase their talents. Help is needed to set up (Saturday/18<sup>th</sup> at 4 p.m.) and cleaning up after the event.

QUESTIONS? Please contact Sharon Giza at 412-956-6222 or email [oneone2@verizon.net](mailto:oneone2@verizon.net) to get on board.

### Come one, come all, let's have some fun!



## Soup and Service begins

**Wednesday, March 1<sup>st</sup>**

### HELD WEDNESDAY EVENINGS

**MARCH 1<sup>st</sup> - 8<sup>th</sup> - 15<sup>th</sup> - 22<sup>nd</sup> - 29<sup>th</sup>**

- Soup, salad and bread are offered  
6:00-7:00 pm
- Midweek Service celebrated 7:00-7:30 pm

Please consider signing up to bring soup (two varieties are offered weekly), salad or bread.

*(No Midweek Service during Holy Week)*

# 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. The delay in the production and subsequent arrival on Jan. 17 of our 2023 giving envelopes was another casualty of those circumstances.

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

### **PLEASE NOTE:**

**Giving Envelopes<sup>+</sup> for 2023 as well as Giving Statements<sup>\*</sup> for 2022 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 19 will be mailed via USPS.*

*\*Envelopes have been issued only to those who picked up and used their 2022 envelopes last year.*

# ASH WEDNESDAY

**February 22  
2023**



## ASH WEDNESDAY SERVICE – February 22

**7:00 pm: Service of Holy Communion  
with the Imposition of Ashes**

**Join us at Ascension Church as we enter the  
Great Lent on Ash Wednesday, February 22<sup>nd</sup>.**



*\*\*\*If you have old palms at home, in your car or laying around, please bring them to church before Feb. 22. The palms which we once blessed to raise our Hallelujah become for us a sign of renewal and repentance on Ash Wednesday.*

### **Dear Ascension Members and Friends,**

As many of you may know, any offerings that are earmarked on your giving envelopes as "Other" are directed to the Special Projects Fund. Council then votes to designate a special project upon which to spend the monies collected.

At the January Council meeting, it was voted to send any "Other" funds collected from Jan. 15<sup>th</sup> thru Feb. 12<sup>th</sup> to the family of slain Brackenridge Police Chief Justin McIntire.

On your offering envelope, please indicate the portion of your weekly offering which you would like to be directed to "Other" during this time and ultimately be donated to Chief McIntire's wife and children.

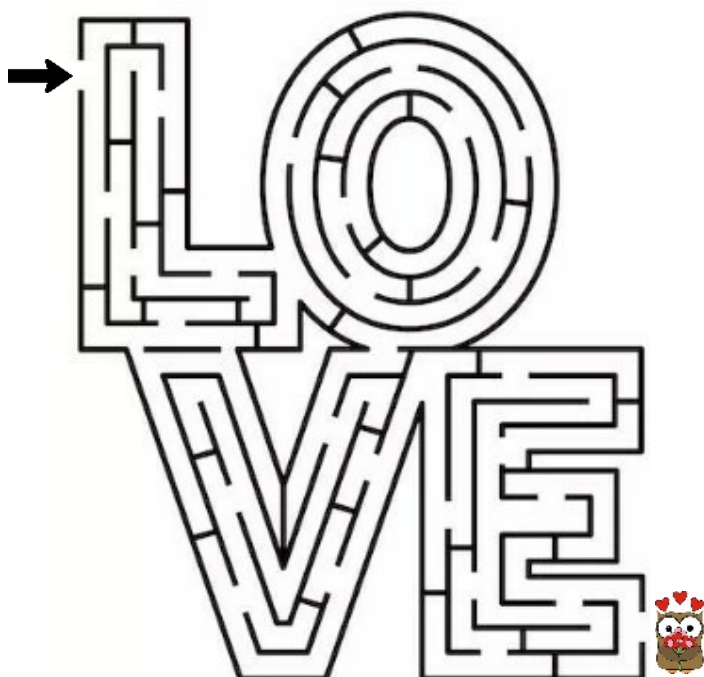
Thank you,  
**Ascension Council**

# HAPPY Valentine's Day



COLOR ME SWEETLY!

All you need is ...



You are a-MAZE-ing!

## VALENTINE'S DAY

### WORD SEARCH

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

BE MINE

BESTIES

CHERUB

CUPID

CUTIE PIE

FRIENDS

HEART

HUGS

KISSES

LOVE

PINK

ROSES

SMOOCH

SWEETIE PIE

VALENTINE

XOXO



## Valentine Trivia Quiz



- In which country is it customary for women to give men chocolate on Valentine's Day?  
a, Japan b, Canada c, Switzerland d, Italy
- Which movie was NOT released on Valentine's Day?  
a, Silence of the Lambs b, A Good Day to Die Hard c, Daredevil d, 50 Shades of Grey
- How much do people spend on Valentine's Day in America?  
a, \$10.5 million b, \$8.3 billion c, \$19.7 billion d, \$40.2 billion
- Which fast-food chain offers tableside service on Valentine's Day?  
a, KFC b, Burger King c, Quizno's d, White Castle
- In Roman mythology, who is Cupid's mom?  
a, Psyche b, Venus c, Juno d, Luna
- Which president lost his first wife on Valentine's Day?  
a, John Tyler b, Millard Fillmore c, Theodore Roosevelt d, Woodrow Wilson
- What was the name of the small heart-shaped sweets, manufactured by Swizzel, which had short romantic messages printed on them?  
a, Parma b, Chews me c, Jelly Belly d, Love Hearts
- Which one was considered Shakespeare's most romantic play?  
a, Romeo and Juliet b, Othello c, The Tempest d, Hamlet
- Today we associate love with the heart, but this wasn't always the case. In medieval times, which internal organ was believed to cause love?  
a, The eyes b, The liver c, The kidneys d, The lips
- Approximately what percentage of Valentine's Day cards are purchased by women?  
a, 15 b, 85 c, 65 d, 35
- What is the approximate date of the first Valentine ever sent?  
a, 1415 b, 1316 c, 1217 d, 1615
- A Roman myth says that roses grew when Cupid was carrying a certain liquid to the gods on Mt. Olympus. Cupid spilled the liquid and from that spot roses grew. What was the liquid?  
a, ambrosia b, nectar c, olive oil d, wine

# 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

