



THE MESSENGER

ASCENSION LUTHERAN CHURCH

December 2024

WEEKLY EVENTS

Sunday Worship - 10:30 AM

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

Drum Class - Tuesdays 5-8 PM Apr-July

NA Meeting - Wednesdays at 7:30 PM

AA Meeting - Saturdays at 10:00 AM

- Mondays at 7:00 PM

Soccer Shots - Tuesday evenings (Spring-Fall)



2024 COUNCIL EXECUTIVES

President – Jeff Williams

Vice President – Jason Eager

Secretary – Thom Kruise

Treasurer – Bob Thompson

2024 COUNCIL LIAISONS

Christian Education

Jason Eager

Communications & Publications

Jason Eager

Finance & Stewardship

Kelly Bryan

Mutual Ministry

Jeff Williams

Personnel

Thom Kruise

Property

Phil Spano

Fellowship, Social Ministry

& Evangelism

Sharon Giza

Worship & Music

Thom Kruise

Youth

(open)

Next Council Meeting

Tuesday December 10 at 7:00 PM

A TIME to REJOICE celebrate

A message from Interim Pastor Clagg

Dear friends in Christ,

Our Lord is calling us to prepare for the revealing of a new creation. Salvation is born in Jesus Christ and we celebrate His invitation to be saved now and forever. Amen.

Like God's people in Isaiah's day, we are a rebellious people. Many times, our hearts are hardened against our very own neighbors, whom we renamed enemies. We justify fighting and tearing one another down with a self-centered orientation.

Christmas is the self-giving of God. Reorienting us to serve and live for God's glory alone. Help us dear Jesus, wrap our lives in the gifts of hope, peace, joy, and love. Your presence, God in the flesh, brings light and new life. We praise you now and always. Bless us with eyes of faith to give witness to your saving presence. We focus on you in the center of our life wreath. Seeing your image in the neighbor once a stranger or enemy. We truly see anew the Gift of your birth in us.

Isaiah 9:6 NIV

*"For to us a
child is born, to
us a son is given,
and the
government
will be on his
shoulders.
And he will
be called
Wonderful
Counselor,
Mighty God,
Everlasting
Father,
Prince of Peace."*



*Pastor Clagg also serves
Grace Evangelical Lutheran Church
in Rochester, Pa.*

Pastor Gregory Clagg

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 George C Kasich Jason Eager



ALC Council Meeting Highlights

Council meeting was held Tuesday November 12, 2024

Call to order at 7:02 pm. All in attendance except Bob and Jason.

Devotion offered by Sharon

Approve October minutes as recorded by Phil, second by Sharon. Passes unanimously.

President's report *Jeff Williams*: Visitation; Pastor-sharing concept; Children communing for 1st time

Finance: 2025 Budget outline presented. Motion to update budgeted amounts by Jeff, second by Phil. Passes unanimously.

- Motion to disclose income and expenses to the congregation monthly in the newsletter and weekly bulletin by Phil, second by Sharon. Passes unanimously.
- Motion to approve the Cemetery budget for 2025 by Jeff, second by Kelly. Passes unanimously.

Old Business: e-Sign; Sign wiring work party; Pastor

New Business: Budget; Vote in Council date – 11/24; December Congregational Meeting date – 12/8; Reports due January; Christmas Eve worship – 4 pm

Important dates:

Council Vote: 11/24
December Meeting 12/8

Adjournment: 9 pm

Next Council meeting: Tuesday, December 10 at 7 pm



Happy Advent, Church!

HERE'S YOUR SIGN . . .

We are prepared for our new sign to appear shortly! Thank you all for your generous contributions!

I appreciate the efforts by the Property Committee and others for all the work getting two new electrical circuits ready. Our new lighting for the Cross and the new sign will hopefully be welcoming indicators to the community to come and join us in worship and fellowship.

SUPPLY PASTOR NEWS

We may be “contracting” for a steady supply Pastor. Our council was offered the opportunity to “share” Pastor Ryan Kobert of St Paul’s in Sewickley www.stpaulssewickley.org for Sunday worship and visitation assistance. We will work out the details and report back as this develops. The stability of a regular supply Pastor may help us attract new families looking for a bible-centered church.

VISITATION SURPRISES

I would be remiss if I failed to recognize the Women’s Group for taking the gift baskets to our homebound and shut-ins. I received a thankful call about that surprise. Many thanks!

BEHIND THE SCENES

I again want to send a big thank you to all those who keep the church functioning! We all appreciate the “behind the scenes” things done in service to our congregation.

WELCOME

I want to welcome the new council members, and I appreciate all the nominees who accepted the opportunity to serve the Church and help the Council or the Cemetery Board.

PASTORAL SUPPORT

Remember, our interim Pastor Clagg is available if you have a need for prayers or support. Pastor Clagg is a delight to talk to and pray with. If you’re an early bird, I highly recommend the early service (8:30am) on Sundays at Grace Lutheran in Rochester.

Blessings to all,

Jeff Williams

Ascension Church Council President

2025•2025•2025

ATTENTION Giving Envelope users!

Giving envelopes for 2025 will be ready for pickup at the Sunday December 8 Congregational Meeting following worship.

• DATES to REMEMBER •

DECEMBER 2024

Sunday DEC 08
Congregational Meeting

Tuesday DEC 10
Council Meeting

Tuesday DEC 24
Christmas Eve Worship @ 4 pm



DID YOU KNOW that Ascension Lutheran Church has a Facebook page?

Please follow us and "like" us so that more people will see our posts!

<https://www.facebook.com/alcpgh>



Please keep in your prayers:

- JoAnne Erwin, Dee Gratzmiller, Mary Honath, Norma Kohnen, Lottie Lodge, Jean Marion, Betty Simpson, Rose Rahner, Betty Borden, Nancy Jacobs – *shut-ins*
- Mary Jane McGinnis – *health concerns*
- Cole Powers, son of Amy Reckner's co-worker – *health concerns*
- Bob Thompson – *health concerns*
- Mary Miller, friend of Sharon Giza – *multiple medical issues*
- Thad Ritter – *health concerns*
- Ellie Sturvist, friend of Bette Kallay – *continued recovery*
- Frank Gillespie, friend of Amy Reckner – *cancer*
- Bill McEwen – *multiple health concerns*
- Kraig Rahner, son of Rose Rahner – *critical health concerns*

SUNDAY WORSHIP ASSISTANT SCHEDULE DECEMBER 2024

Date	Supply	Assisting Minister	Communion Assistant	Lector	Usher	Acolyte	Sunday (or special)	color	Council Update
Dec. 01	Jerry Wessel	Mary Thompson	Bob Thompson	Jason Eager	Volunteer	Volunteer	Advent 1	blue	Phil Spano
Dec. 08	Pr. Deb Thompson	Jerry Wessel	Amy Kruse	Rich Mussman	Volunteer	Volunteer	Advent 2	blue	Jason Eager
Dec. 15	TBA	Jennifer Burkholder	Bob Dudek	Sharon Giza	Volunteer	Volunteer	Advent 3	blue	Sharon Giza
Dec. 22	TBA	Jeff Williams	Jerry Wessel	Melissa DeCola	Volunteer	Volunteer	Advent 4	blue	Jeff Williams
Dec. 24	Pr. Deb Thompson	Mary Thompson	Bob Thompson	Gib Palmgren	Volunteer	Volunteer	CHRISTMAS EVE	white	Bob Thompson
Dec. 29	TBA	Jerry Wessel	Al Morrow	Jerry Wessel	Volunteer	Volunteer	Christmas 1	white	Kelly Bryan

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
- 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

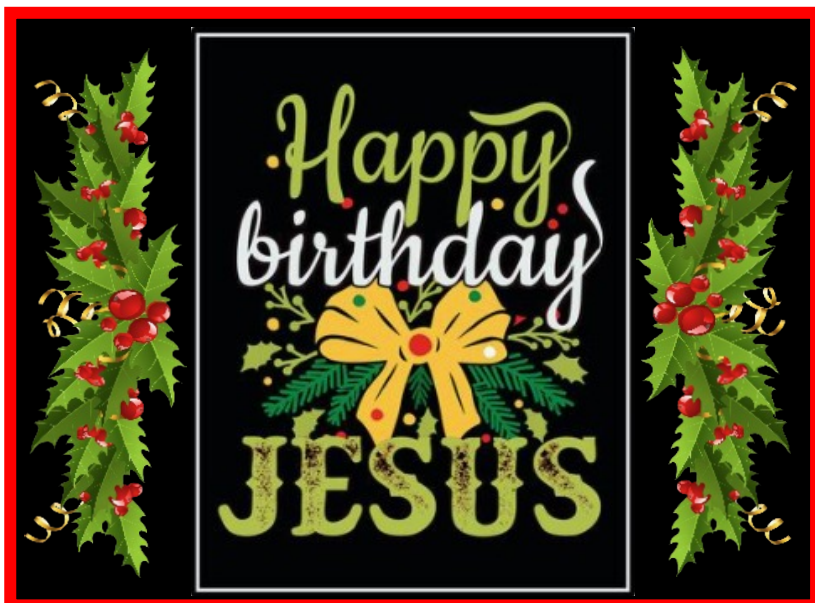


DECEMBER ANNIVERSARIES!

Date | Members/Friends

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

. . . and Blessings to ALL!



Lunch Bunch



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

BRAVO! Lunch Bunch set for encore in North Fayette

In November, sixteen members of Ascension's Lunch Bunch were spotted in North Fayette at "The Yard" for some good food and great company. We still didn't know whether we were in the front yard, the back yard, the side yard or the longest yard - but if YOU weren't with us, then you missed a really good time!

Don't miss the Bunch's next acclaimed lunch venue - **BRAVO! Italian Kitchen**, 211 Summit Park Drive in the Pointe at North Fayette on Thursday the 19th of December. We aren't quite sure what Bravo's signature exclamation point (or is it a "pointe") stands for in the restaurant's name - which we do hope is not associated with the abundance of loaded guns and gunfire in the classic western movie "Rio Bravo" - but we are assured that the menu IS loaded with lots of great choices.

Come on along and find out what the exclamation is about, **Thursday December 19** when we will meet at 11:30 am at the Pointe at North Fayette for lunch at BRAVO! If you'd like to attend this next Lunch Bunch adventure, please let Nancy Schreiber (412-859-3969) or Jerry Wessel (412-787-1213) know by Tuesday Dec. 17, so that the restaurant may prepare sufficient space for our bunch. A big BRAVO! shout-out to all those planning to attend . . . hope that you'll be among those numbered in the excitement!

~ Jerry Wessel

Ascension's iconic road sign is finally going **DIGITAL!**

Thanks to the many generous donors who have helped to fund this special project since its inception over a year ago. The new sign has been purchased and is being installed!

Questions? Ask any Council Member for more details.
Thanks for your generous support!



**Congregational
Meeting**
Sunday
December 8
Following worship

COUNCIL AND CEMETERY BOARD POSITIONS FILLED VIA VOTE ON NOVEMBER 24, 2024

Elected to Ascension Church Council:

Kelly Bryan
Bob Stathers
Jerry Wessel
Deb Whitfield

Elected to Mt. Calvary Cemetery Board:

Joyce Leister

Thanks for Giving!

Food bank receives plentiful donations



The generosity of Ascension Church members yielded over 20 bags of essentials to stock the Inter-Church Food Bank in McKees Rocks with much-needed toiletries and personal care items. Ascension members Avis Ritter (far left) and Mary Thompson (far right) were assisted by I-CFB coordinator Donna Pollard (next to Mary) and site volunteers during the Nov. 25 delivery.

It's time to
**Order Your
Poinsettias!**

SIZE	PRICE ea.
4.5"	\$ 6.00
6.5"	\$12.00
8.5" (3-stem)	\$25.00

Yes, it's a Christmas miracle! Poinsettia prices have **STAYED THE SAME** as last year's pricing, to make your holidays even more festive, beautiful and affordable! Be assured from our professional 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 into the new year!

Order forms are available in the church narthex.
Sunday December 8 is the last day to order.

Presents for Patients



For Christmas 2024, Ascension Church members will have the opportunity to bring some happiness to others by participating in a “Presents for Patients” gifting event. These “Angel Tree” gifts will be given to the patients at Merakey.

We are asking for donations of special gifts for the patients who have shared their wish lists with us.

Tags with the patient’s information will be posted on the display board in the church hallway.



Saint Nicholas



Through hundreds of years, **Saint Nicholas of Myra** (c.280 - 6 December 343) has been honored and venerated by many. By his example of generosity to those in need - especially children - St. Nicholas continues to be a model for a good and righteous life.

Widely celebrated in Europe, the feast day of St. Nicholas (December 6 according to the Gregorian calendar, or December 19 according to the Julian festival calendar used by Orthodox Christians) kept alive the stories of his goodness and generosity.

In medieval and Tudor times, it was traditional for a choir boy to be chosen on the feast of St. Nicholas as a “Boy Bishop” to dress and act as a bishop and to lead joyous processions around communities, collecting money for the church and parish funds. In Germany, Poland and other European countries, this tradition is still practiced.

December 6 remains the main day for gift-giving and merrymaking in much of Europe. In the Netherlands, St. Nicholas is celebrated on the 5th of December, the eve of the feast day, by throwing candies – many times chocolate “coins” – and small gifts into the doors of neighborhood children. Dutch children leave carrots and hay in their shoes for the saint’s horse, hoping that St. Nicholas will exchange them for small gifts.

This simple gift-giving and revelry in honor of St. Nicholas in early December is regarded as helping to rightfully preserve a Christmas Day focus on the Christ Child.

DECEMBER

LESSER FESTIVALS & commemorations

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

Francis Xavier (ZAYV-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, 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 was unable to 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, who 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.



*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

