



# THE MESSENGER

## ASCENSION Lutheran Church

AUGUST 2025

### WEEKLY EVENTS

Sunday Worship - 11:00 AM \*new time!  
Sunday School - 10:00 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 - Saturday mornings &  
Wednesday evenings (Spring-Fall)



### 2025 COUNCIL

President – Jerry Wessel  
Vice President – Sharon Giza  
Treasurer – Bob Stathers  
Secretary – Jason Eager

### 2025 COUNCIL LIAISONS

Christian Education  
Jason Eager  
Communications & Publications  
Sharon Giza  
Finance & Stewardship  
open  
Mutual Ministry  
Bob Stathers  
Personnel  
Kelly Bryan  
Property  
Bob Thompson  
Fellowship, Social Ministry  
& Evangelism  
Jeff Williams  
Worship & Music  
Jerry Wessel  
Youth  
Debbie Whitfield  
Call Committee  
Sharon Giza

### Next Council Meeting

Tuesday August 12 at 7:00 PM

## We Are A Storied People

by Pastor Ryan Kobert

<sup>13</sup> *When they had entered the city, they went to the room upstairs where they were staying: Peter, and John, and James, and Andrew, Philip and Thomas, Bartholomew and Matthew, James son of Alphaeus, and Simon the Zealot, and Judas son of James.*

<sup>14</sup> *All these were constantly devoting themselves to prayer, together with certain women, including Mary the mother of Jesus, as well as his brothers.*

<sup>23</sup> *So they proposed two: Joseph called Barsabbas, who was also known as Justus, and Matthias.*

<sup>24</sup> *Then they prayed and said, "Lord, you know everyone's heart. Show us which one of these two you have chosen <sup>25</sup>to take the place in this ministry and apostleship from which Judas turned aside to go to his own place."*

<sup>26</sup> *And they cast lots for them, and the lot fell on Matthias, and he was added to the eleven apostles.*

(Acts 1:13-14, 23-26)

This summer has been something special for our denomination and synod. Both an election for our local bishop and one for our presiding bishop has taken place. At the time of my writing this, the candidates for a presiding bishop have been narrowed down to one of three individuals. [See page 4 for latest news.]

Moments like these, synod and churchwide assemblies, are something unique within the life of the church. Often, we might think that this is simply a business meeting on a large scale; pass a budget, elect new officers for the council, hear new policy suggestions, and occasionally elect a new bishop. Yet there is so much more than this!

We are a storied people, meaning that we have a deep interest in the stories of our past, the things that

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# MOUNT CALVARY CEMETERY

1715 Middletown Road | McKees Rocks, PA

**Robert J. Dudek, Supervisor**

[mtcalvarycem@alcpgh.com](mailto:mtcalvarycem@alcpgh.com)



## Mount Calvary Cemetery Board Members

*Judy Henry • Bob Hughes • Bette Ann Kallay*

*George C. Kasich • Joyce Leister*

*Pastor Ryan Kobert • Sharon Giza*



## Meeting Highlights - July 15

Minutes of June meeting unanimously approved. Reports submitted by Pastor, President, Vice President, Treasurer, Office Admin.

**Old Business:** New locks & cameras; New stove; Roof repairs

### **Committee Reports:**

*Call Committee:* Sharon - MSP addendum, pastoral interview.

*Christian Education:* Jason - Need to find volunteers to teach Sunday School.

*Property:* Bob T. – Property meeting at 6pm prior to council meeting; Created list of items to accomplish over the remainder of the year; Proposal to have a picnic after a clean-up/work day; Clay M. offered to provide labor (for weeding, etc) on 7/26 if we supply materials.

*Youth:* Deb W - Meeting 7/29 to discuss plan for fall activities

**Upcoming event: RALLY DAY** Sunday September 7

**Next meeting:** Tuesday August 12 at 7:00 pm

## **We Are A Storied People** *(continued from pg 1)*

make us who we are as people of faith. During these assemblies there are many stories that are shared, stories that show our faith in action. Those gathered hear these reports of how our life together in Christ shares this gospel through the many ministries of the larger Church.

We hear how communities are rebuilt after disaster in part due to Lutheran Disaster Response, or how people are fed through our World Hunger initiatives. No one congregation could do what we are able to do together. The stories of those who are on the ground with these ministries help us to see the impact that we have when we support them.

Community building is also a part of who we are. We worship in community, we serve in community, we work in conjunction with one another for the sake of showing God's love to the world. For as Dietrich Bonhoeffer shared, "The church is the church only when it exists for others." Doing all this alongside one another is what builds up Christ's church.

When assemblies gather, we meet others from different congregations. We share our joys and struggles, we hear how others have overcome obstacles, and we bond over our shared commitment to Christ.

And finally, at these assemblies we worship. We intentionally take time to hear God's word, many times over. Full worship services. Daily devotions. Prayers before every voting time. Hymn breaks. We ground ourselves in Christ's redeeming word.

These times spent in assembly, whether in our synod or at churchwide, remind us that we are not in this ministry alone. We remember that the body of Christ is more than just what we can see from our front door. That each of us are filled with wonderfully unique gifts to serve Christ in the world where we are, and that our own little community of faith is a part of the larger Church, bringing its unique gift to our region yet also supporting something much grander than ourselves. ■

# PUSHIN' TO 100!



**A well-deserved SHOUT OUT to Ascension's Creative Hands Group - our "QUILT LADIES" - as they continue their push to make ONE HUNDRED quilts for distribution to various humanitarian agencies this fall. The ministry meets on Wednesdays throughout the year in Ascension's Fellowship Hall. GO, GIRLS!**

## Lunch Bunch



**JOIN US  
THURSDAY  
AUG. 21!**

A monthly gathering of members and friends of Ascension Church

In July, Ascension's Lunch Bunch visited "La Cucina" in Weirton, West Virginia. While I can't say it was "Wild and Wonderful" in W.Va., the food and companionship hit the "wonderful" part; we just were not too wild.

On Thursday August 21<sup>st</sup> at 11:30 am, the Bunch will assemble at **Jabby Joe's**, located at 1562 Island Avenue in McKees Rocks. If recent get-togethers were too far for some to join the crowd, this one is only a short drive for most Ascension members. It's on Hwy 51 just past the Fleming Park bridge at Neville Island. If you aren't too busy, come on and give us a try! Jabby Joe doesn't jabber too much (although some attendees might) and the food and service have been good in the past. Please let George Kasich (412) 726-1675 know by Tuesday August 19<sup>th</sup> if you plan to attend so that sufficient jabbering space is reserved.

We hope to see you there!

~ Jerry Wessel

## SUNDAY WORSHIP ASSISTANT SCHEDULE - AUGUST-SEPTEMBER 2025

Date	Supply	Assisting Minister	Communion Assistant	Lector	Usher	Acolyte	Sunday (or special)	color	Council Update
Aug 3	Pr. Ryan Kobert	Jennifer Burkholder	Bob Dudek	Charlotte DeCola	Volunteer	Volunteer	PENTECOST 8	GREEN	Jeff Williams
Aug 10	Pr. Ryan Kobert	Mary Thompson	Amy Kruse	Rich Mussman	Volunteer	Volunteer	PENTECOST 9	GREEN	Sharon Giza
Aug 17	Pr. Ryan Kobert	Jennifer Burkholder	Al Morrow	Gib Palmgren	Volunteer	Volunteer	PENTECOST 10	GREEN	Bob Thompson
Aug 24	Pr. Ryan Kobert	Jeff Williams	Avis Ritter	Thad Ritter	Volunteer	Volunteer	PENTECOST 11	GREEN	Jason Eager
Aug 31	Pr. Ryan Kobert	Mary Thompson	Bob Thompson	Emilia DeCola	Volunteer	Volunteer	PENTECOST 12	GREEN	Kelly Bryan
Sept 7	Pr. Ryan Kobert	Jeff Williams	Bob Dudek	Melissa DeCola	Volunteer	Volunteer	PENTECOST 13	GREEN	Bob Stathers
Sept 14	Pr. Ryan Kobert	Jennifer Burkholder	Amy Kruse	Jason Eager	Volunteer	Volunteer	PENTECOST 14 & Holy Cross Sun.	GREEN	Deb Whitfield
Sept 21	Pr. Ryan Kobert	Mary Thompson	Al Morrow	Dan Giza	Volunteer	Volunteer	PENTECOST 15	GREEN	Jeff Williams
Sept 28	Pr. Ryan Kobert	Jeff Williams	Avis Ritter	Sharon Giza	Volunteer	Volunteer	PENTECOST 16	GREEN	Sharon Giza
Oct 5	Pr. Ryan Kobert	Jennifer Burkholder	Bob Thompson	Jeff Williams	Volunteer	Volunteer	PENTECOST 17	GREEN	Bob Thompson



# ELCA 2025 Churchwide Assembly in Phoenix yields new Presiding Bishop



PHOENIX — The Rev. Yehiel Curry was elected July 30 to serve a six-year term as presiding bishop of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA). The election took place during the 2025 ELCA Churchwide Assembly being held July 28–Aug. 2 at the Phoenix (Ariz.) Convention Center.

Curry was elected on the fifth ballot. There were 799 votes cast, with 400 votes needed for an election. Curry received 562 votes, and the Rev. Kevin Strickland, bishop of the ELCA Southeastern Synod, received 237 votes. Curry is the first Black presiding bishop of the ELCA.

Speaking to the assembly after his election, Curry reflected on his membership at Shekinah Chapel in Riverdale, Ill., where he eventually became a lay mission developer while he participated in the Theological Education for Emerging Ministries program, which prepares individuals for ordained ministry in the ELCA, with a focus on emerging ministry contexts like ethnic-specific, multicultural, rural and inner-city settings. He spoke to the assembly about his initial hesitation in accepting that first ministry role.

“Perhaps I’m out there in one of you,” Curry said. “I never saw myself as good enough, so for two years, I said no. I finally said yes. When I said yes, your support, this church’s support, of that ministry meant everything. So if you want to know what your benevolence dollars look like, it looks like me, and I want to say thank you. Thank you for your investment.”

Curry has served as bishop of the ELCA Metropolitan Chicago Synod since 2019. He previously served as mission developer (2009-2012) and pastor (2012-2019) of Shekinah. He received a Bachelor of Arts from Lewis University in Romeoville, Ill., in 1995 and a Master of Divinity from the Lutheran School of Theology at Chicago (LSTC) in 2013. LSTC is one of seven ELCA seminaries.

The churchwide assembly, the chief legislative authority of the ELCA, is meeting under the theme “For the Life of the World.” The assembly will participate in plenary discussions to make decisions about the work of this church. They will also spend time in worship and engage in various ways of theological reflection.

*Read more about Rev. Curry at Living Lutheran online*  
<https://www.livinglutheran.org/2025/07/casting-a-vision-for-the-church/>

## Best Wishes . . .

### AUGUST BIRTHDAYS!

Date | Member/Friend

- 1 Katy Thompson
- 4 Nancy Jacobs
- 6 Nolan Cropper  
Mary Jane McGinnis
- 7 Emily Paladino
- 9 Bonita Stephenson
- 10 London Rickerd
- 12 Raleigh Rickerd
- 14 Abigail Lescallette
- 15 Finn Randal
- 17 Matt Bryan
- 24 Jessica Rodriguez
- 25 Tom Lightner
- 28 Rose Marie LaQuinta

### AUGUST ANNIVERSARIES!

Date | Members/Friends

- 2 Bob & Judy Bryan  
Bill & Suzie McEwen
- 17 Phil & Dolly Spano
- 25 Drew & Joyce Leister  
Thad & Avis Ritter
- 26 Tom & Darlene Ganley

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



# 2025 RALLY DAY

**Sunday, September 7<sup>th</sup>  
following 11 AM worship.**

**Join our Ascension family as we kick off another year!**

YOU ARE INVITED to bring a main dish, side dish or dessert to share  
at our RALLY DAY celebration following worship on Sunday September 7.

Chicken tenders & drinks will be provided.

★ SEE YOU THERE! ★

## **Please keep in your prayers:**

- JoAnne Erwin, Dee Gratzmiller, Norma Kohnen,  
Lottie Lodge, Jean Marion, Betty Simpson, Rose Rahner,  
Betty Borden – *shut-ins*
- Mary Jane McGinnis – *health concerns*
- Thad Ritter – *health concerns*
- Bill McEwen – *multiple health concerns*
- Michele Alves-Martz, co-worker of Emily Reckner – *health concerns*
- Mike Voyten, co-worker of Amy Reckner – *cancer has returned*
- Linda Younkers, mother of Kathleen Howells – *stage 4 cancer*
- Hogan Moody, friend of Cy & Kathleen Howells – *cancer*
- Pastor Joe Murdy as he serves his 9-month Army tour of duty in Kuwait
- Rudy Marnich – *recent surgery*
- Family of Melanie Hall – friend of Debbie Whitfield – *upon her passing*
- Family of Mary Honath – *upon her passing June 26, 2025*
- Norma Kohnen – *hospitalization for pneumonia*





# 'SUNDAE' BEST



Ascension's 2025 graduates Bella Bryan and Jacob Eager were honored at the Ice Cream Social held on Sunday July 13.

*photos by  
Sharon Giza*

## THANK YOU, ASCENSION CHURCH!

Ascension's 2025 Yard Sale and Bake Sale happened on Saturday, June 7. Bake Sale proceeds of \$429 was forwarded to the Inter-Church Food Bank in McKees Rocks. Program Director Donna Pollard writes:

Dear Pastor & members,

Thank you so very much for your generous donation to Interchurch Food Bank.

With recent cuts to food banks, your support means so much to us. Your donations allow us to continue to meet the needs of those in our communities.

Sincerely,

Donna Pollard

## *Visit: more than a word*

*a reflection by Nancy Jacobs*

My neighbor passed away recently - she was a good neighbor but kept mostly to herself. We were not close friends but we were friendly. She loved to bake cookies and share them!! I felt sad about her death because she didn't seem to have many friends or relatives visit her often. I thought about this and realized how important a "visit" is to some people. There were many months when I could not venture out - when I couldn't navigate steps, when I couldn't keep my balance.

So, a visit from a friend was time for "yippees!!!" And the assistance from helpers like Jennifer and Helen meant I could function almost normally. Ascension's leaders have to be the most caring people around. The programs that they put in place for all kinds of aid to its members and to the betterment and growth of the church are unrivaled. I look forward to the day I can actively lend a helping hand. I mention this to God just about every day and night, so I wait for him to say "Ok ... enough is enough. Get busy!!!"

# AUGUST LESSER FESTIVALS & commemorations

**August 8 - Dominic, d. 1221** *founder of the Order of Preachers (Dominicans)*

Dominic was a Spanish priest who saw the wealth of the clergy as a stumbling block for the church, so he formed a movement, the Order of Preachers (commonly called Dominicans) devoted to itinerant preaching and living in poverty.

**August 10 - Lawrence, d.258** *deacon, martyr*

As one of the seven deacons of the church at Rome, Lawrence was responsible for the church's financial matters and for the care of the poor. Asked by the emperor to gather the church's treasure, he presented a collection of orphans, lepers, and the like. The enraged emperor Valerian had him put to death.

**August 11 - Clare of Assisi d. 1253** *Abbess of San Damiano*

At age eighteen, Clare of Assisi heard Francis preach a sermon in a church in town. From that time, she determined to follow in his example of Christian living. With Francis's help (and against the wishes of her father) she and a growing number of companions established a women's Franciscan community, called the Order of Poor Ladies, or Poor Clares. She became a confidante and advisor to Francis, and in standing up against the wishes of popes for the sake of maintaining complete poverty, she helped inspire other women to pursue spiritual goals.

**August 13 - Florence Nightingale d. 1910; Clara Maass d. 1901** *renewers of the church*

**Nightingale** was born in England, and horrified her wealthy family by deciding to become a nurse. Trained at Kaiserswerth, Germany, with a Lutheran order of deaconesses, she led a group of nurses in ministering in the midst of the Crimean War, and worked for hospital reform. **Maass**, a native of New Jersey, also was a war nurse, and volunteered as a subject for research on yellow fever. She died of the disease.

**August 14 - Maximilian Kolbe, d. 1941; Kaj Munk, d. 1944;** *martyrs*

**Kolbe** was a Franciscan priest, born Raymond Kolbe. After spending some time working in Asia, he returned in 1936 to his native Poland, where he supervised a friary that came to house thousands of Polish war refugees, mostly Jews. The Nazis were watching, however, and he was arrested. Confined in Auschwitz, Kolbe gave generously of his meager resources and finally volunteered to be starved to death in place of another man who was a husband and father. After two weeks, he was executed by a lethal injection. **Munk**, a Danish Lutheran pastor and playwright, was an outspoken critic of the Nazis, who occupied Denmark during the Second World War. His plays frequently highlighted the eventual victory of the Christian faith despite the church's weak and ineffective witness. The Nazis feared Munk because his sermons and articles helped to strengthen the Danish resistance movement. He was executed by the Gestapo on January 5, 1944.

**August 15 - Mary, Mother of Our Lord**

The church (including Martin Luther) honors Mary with the Greek title *Theotokos*, meaning God-bearer. Origen first used this title in the early church, and the councils of Ephesus and Chalcedon upheld it. Luther upheld this same title in his writings. The honor paid to Mary as *Theotokos* and mother of our Lord goes back to biblical times, when Mary herself sang, "from now on all generations will call me blessed" (Luke 1:48). Mary's life revealed the presence of God incarnate, and it revealed God's presence among the humble and poor. Mary's song, the *Magnificat*, speaks of reversals in the reign of God: the mighty are cast down, the lowly are lifted up, the hungry are fed, and the rich are sent away empty-handed.

**August 20 - Bernard, Abbot of Clairvaux, d. 1153**

A Cistercian monk, Bernard was a man of great spirituality who wrote mystical works and criticized those whom he thought took an overly intellectual approach to the faith. He became an abbot, and wrote several hymns that are still beloved today.

**August 24 - Bartholomew** *Apostle*

Mentioned as one of Jesus' disciples in Matthew, Mark, and Luke, Bartholomew's name is replaced in John's gospel by Nathanael, leading many to believe that the two are different names for the same person. Little is known about his work, though some traditions place him later in India or Armenia.

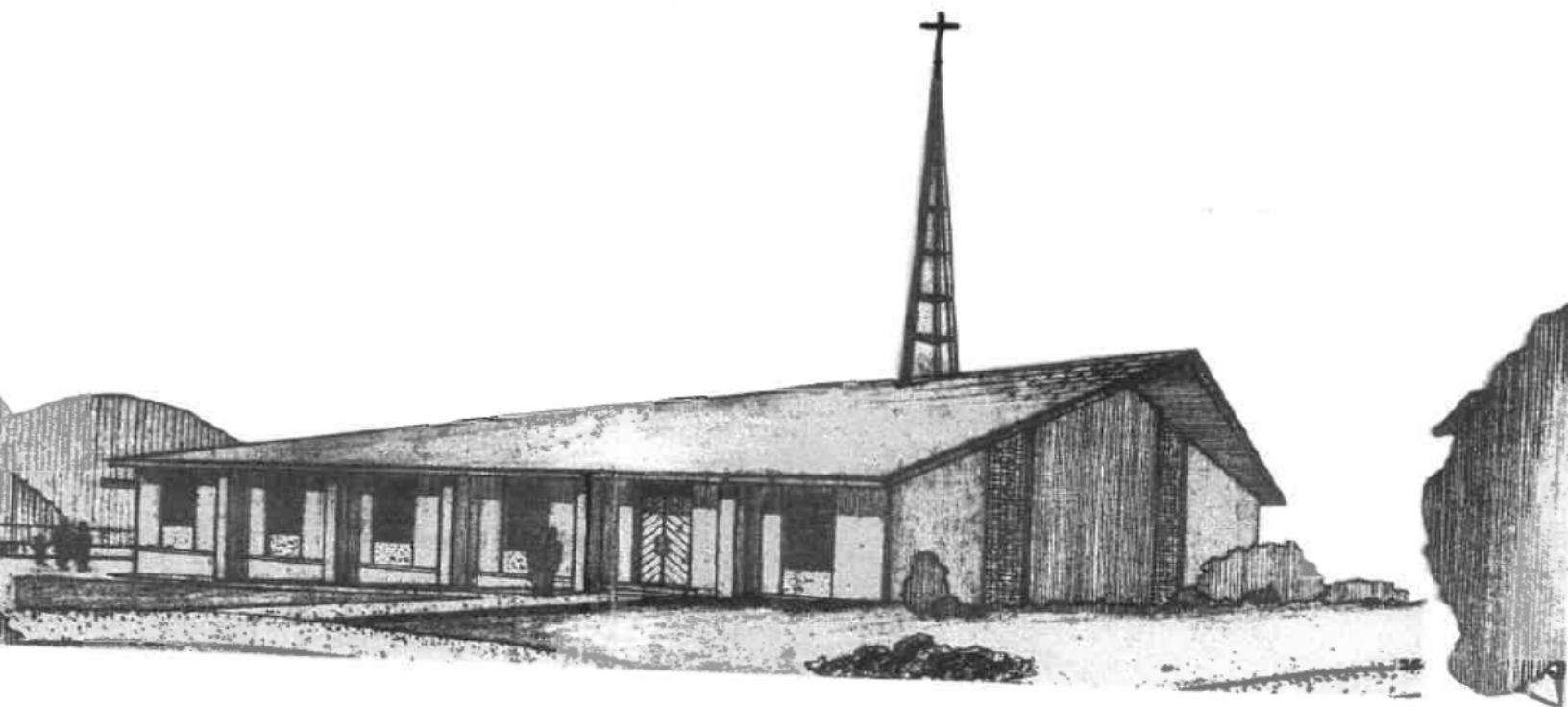
**August 28 - Augustine, Bishop of Hippo, d. 430**

Augustine was one of the greatest theologians of the Western church. Born in North Africa, he was a philosophy student in Carthage, where he later became a teacher of rhetoric. Much of his young life was a debauched one. As an adult he came under the influence of Ambrose, the bishop of Milan, and through him came to see Christianity as a religion appropriate for a philosopher. Augustine was baptized by Ambrose at the Easter Vigil in 387. He was ordained four years later and made bishop of Hippo in 396. Augustine was a defender of the Christian faith and argued, against the Donatists, that the holiness of the church did not depend on the holiness of its members, particularly the clergy, but that holiness comes from Christ, the head of the church. Augustine's autobiography, *Confessions*, tells of his slow movement toward faith and includes the line "Late have I loved thee."

**August 28 - Moses the Black d.ca. 400** *monk, martyr*

Converted from life as a thief and a robber to Christianity, Moses was an Ethiopian who became a desert monk at Skete. The change in his heart and life had a profound impact on his native country. He was murdered when Berber bandits attacked his monastery.





*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

