THE MESSENGER

ASCENSION Lutheran Church

March 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
Thom Kruise

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 March 11 at 7:00 PM

A season of self-reflection

from Pastor Kobert's Desk

Lent is often known as a season of self-reflection. People of the Christian faith will often take this season to willingly remove something from their life to better themselves or to deepen their faith in Christ. It is a time that can serve as a reorientation away from the things that draw us away from God to better shine the light of Christ that we have been given.

I certainly encourage all the faithful to seek out a practice over these next forty days that sets something aside in your life that is a distraction, or doesn't really benefit your life in any way. Instead, picking up a practice of daily prayer, scripture reading, or volunteering of time to a group that serves others. In these ways you can reflect on your life and find the places and ways that need reorientation towards what Jesus has called us to do.

Ascension, as a congregation, is also at a season if its life which requires discernment and self-reflection. The grief of a pastor leaving is very real, and one not often understood by clergy, though we do go through grief of our own when a call changes. Still, both present an opportunity for self-reflection and reorientation.

A well-used question can help to start that process of self-reflection for congregations: If Ascension were to shut its lights and lock its doors tomorrow, how long until the surrounding community notices?

Much like a personal self-reflection moment, the question seeks to tease out what the purpose of a place is. Especially when there is the absence of a called pastor. Is there community connection only because the Pastor has done it, or is there genuine connection with the whole congregation? What is the purpose of this congregation in this place? When nonmembers speak about the church, what do they have to say?

These are just a few self-reflective questions to get us started, but with each answer the congregation comes closer to being able to boldly proclaim who we are in the world, and how we live out the mission of Christ here in this place and

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Mount Calvary Cemetery

1715 Middletown Road
McKees Rocks, PA 15136
Robert J. Dudek, Supervisor
mtcalvarycem@alcpgh.com

Mount Calvary Cemetery Board Members
Judy Henry • Bob Hughes • Bette Ann Kallay
George C. Kasich • Joyce Leister
Pastor Kobert • Sharon Giza

ASH WEDNESDAY

REMEMBER to "SPRING AHEAD"

Sunday March 9th @ 2 AM, turn your clocks 1 hr. ahead!

SUNDAY WORSHIP ASSISTANT SCHEDULE
MARCH - APRIL 2025

NOTE: SUNDAY WORSHIP TIME IS NOW AT 11:00 AM

Date	Supply	Assisting Minister	Communion Assistant	Lector	Usher	Acolyte	Sunday (or special)	color	Council Update
Mar. 02	Pr. Ryan Kobert	TBA	Avis Ritter	Thad Ritter	Volunteer	Volunteer	Transfiguration	WHITE	Jason Eager
Mar. 05	Pr. Ryan Kobert	Jennifer Burkholder	Amy Kruise	TBA	Volunteer	Volunteer	ASH WEDNESDAY	PURPLE	Kelly Bryan
Mar. 09	Pr. Ryan Kobert	Jeff Williams	Bob Dudek	Jason Eager	Volunteer	Volunteer	1 LENT	PURPLE	Sharon Giza
Mar. 16	Pr. Ryan Kobert	Jennifer Burkholder	Amy Kruise	Jeff Williams	Volunteer	Volunteer	2 LENT	PURPLE	Jerry Wessel
Mar. 23	Pr. Ryan Kobert	Jerry Wessel	Jeff Williams	Thad Ritter	Volunteer	Volunteer	3 LENT	PURPLE	Jeff Williams
Mar. 30	Pr. Ryan Kobert	Mary Thompson	Bob Thompson	Charlotte DeCola	Volunteer	Volunteer	4 LENT	PURPLE	Bob Stathers
Apr. 06	Pr. Ryan Kobert	Jennifer Burkholder	Amy Kruise	Sharon Giza	Volunteer	Volunteer	5 LENT	PURPLE	Kelly Bryan
Apr. 13	Pr. Ryan Kobert	Jeff Williams	Al Morrow	Jerry Wessel	Volunteer	Volunteer	PALM SUNDAY	RED OR PURPLE	Jerry Wessel
Apr. 17	TBA	Mary Thompson	Bob Thompson	Jason Eager	Volunteer	Volunteer	MAUNDY THURSDAY	RED OR WHITE	Jason Eager
Apr. 18	Pr. Ryan Kobert	Jeff Williams	Bob Dudek	Rich Mussman	Volunteer	Volunteer	GOOD FRIDAY	NO COLOR	Sharon Giza
Apr. 20	Pr. Ryan Kobert	Jerry Wessel	Jeff Williams	Daniel Giza	Volunteer	Volunteer	EASTER	WHITE	Jeff Williams
Apr. 27	Pr. Ryan Kobert	Jennifer Burkholder	Avis Ritter	Emilia DeCola	Volunteer	Volunteer	2 EASTER	WHITE	Bob Thompson

NOTICE: Former Ascension Council President Jerry Wessel, author of this column, has resigned from Ascension's congregation and membership. Although this column and the opinions stated therein had previously been published in this issue of "The Messenger," it represents Mr. Wessel's personal opinions during his tenure as council president and does not reflect any official position of Ascension Lutheran Church.

~ Romans 16:17

Here again, St. Paul is warning a congregation about internal opponents of what he and the other apostles taught. Our national church body, the ELCA, continues to fail to "keep an eye on" those that have agendas in conflict with Lutheran theology. I'm not a theologian, but I believe that there are many theological differences that have caused the Lutheran, Presbyterian, Methodist, United Church of Christ and Anglican denominations to be separate for the last 500 years. I've been reading about some as I do research on the Internet. I do not understand why the ELCA insists that it is okay to share pulpits with or call as our pastor someone from a non-Lutheran denomination *as long as they are WOKE or radical*.

For instance, we say in our bulletin each week just before Communion that, "As Lutherans we believe in the true presence of Christ in the sacrament of Holy Communion." Presbyterians do NOT believe in the true presence of Christ in the sacrament.

Lutherans believe that we are saved by grace through faith and are simultaneously saints and sinners. Presbyterians believe that believers grow in holiness by cooperating with God's grace. If you get online, you can find many differences between the various denominations. Why is it okay to worship with them or have them teach and minister to us and our youth? Why *isn't* it okay with the ELCA to call a pastor from a different Lutheran group, but okay to call a non-Lutheran?

ELCA theologians seem to believe that they need to update Lutheran theology so it is more “modern” and relevant than what the 20-25 generations of Lutheran theologians who came before them believed. The *Book of Concord* contains the three creeds, various Lutheran confessions, and Luther's Large and Small Catechisms. In the past, new pastors, when they were

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Ascension CHURCH COUNCIL

ALC Council Meeting Highlights

Council meeting was held Tues. Feb. 11, 2025

Call to order: 7:01pm

Attendance: Jerry, Thom, Bob T, Bob S, Sharon, Jason, Jeff, Pastor Kobert, Deb W.

AED Check: Validated by Sharon

Review / Approve Minutes of Last Meeting: Motion to accept as presented by Jeff; Second by Debbie; Passed unanimously.

Pastor Report & Office Administrator’s Report presented

President *Jerry Wessel* discussed letter received from the Office of the Bishop

Vice President *Sharon* Giza: Cemetery income for January; Planning meeting in next couple of weeks

Treasurer *Bob Stathers*: Reviewed Statement of Income/Expense; Audit needed in the May/June timeframe

Old Business: Capital projects for 2025: new project such as keyless entry, security system, parking lot patching. Proposed including monthly financial report in bulletin, focus will be on monthly income/expenses

New Business: Motion to form sub-committee to study ELCA issues and other Lutheran bodies with the goal of briefing congregation. Motion passed.

Call Committee: *Sharon* Email to Pastor Asplin to see if there is any movement on the application

Fellowship, Social Ministry & Evangelism: *Jeff: V*isitations continue (2-3 in a day); Working to put together strategy for messaging on the new sign; Discussed need to revamp the visitor pamphlet; Mardi Gras party on 3/2.

Finance and Stewardship: *Thom:* Discussed need for an audit; ELCA audit instructions reviewed.

Mutual Ministry: *Bob S:* Pastor Kobert to talk to his Mutual Ministry team; Bob will be able join with them for discussion

Property: *Bob T:* Installed expansion tank on hot water heater; additional plumbing work to be quoted.

Worship and Music: *Jerry:* Need to set a date with Johnathan to discuss plans for Easter.

Important dates: Mardi Gras Lunch: March 2 after service
Ash Wednesday March 5 service 5:30pm
Sunday June 1: First Communion
Sunday June 1: Confirmation
Saturday June 7: Yard Sale

Motion to adjourn: Sharon; Seconded by Debbie; Passed unanimously 8:05pm

Next Council Meeting: Tues. Mar. 11, 2025 at 7 pm

MARCH

Date | Member/Friend

HAPPY BIRTHDAY:

2 CJ Woods
4 Lynn Kinney
5 Ellen Randal
Michael Rodriguez
10 Jeff Williams
15 Nancy Schreiber
21 Debbie Williams
25 Michael Bayer
29 Mason Bryan

Happy Anniversary:

30 Gib & Jen Palmgren

"Therefore, since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, let us also lay aside every weight and the sin that clings so closely, and let us run with perseverance the race that is set before us, looking to Jesus the pioneer and perfecter of our faith, who for the sake of the joy that was set before him endured the cross."

~Hebrews 12:1-2a

From Pastor Kobert's Desk *(continued from pg 1)*

in this larger community. Just as in our own personal Lenten journey we should be asking, "Does this serve Christ in our life in this place? If so, then how?"

If it does not, however, serve Christ in this place, we must do as the author of Hebrews instructs *[see above]* and set aside that weight and the sin that seeks to keep us from serving Christ, instead looking to Christ. During these forty days we will be reoriented to the cross of Christ, seeing his life, hearing his words, being taught how to live towards one another. These are the guides that can help this congregation to recognize who we are in this place, to live into that mission of Jesus, and to make the impact in the world that Jesus envisions.

Reflecting on this, reorienting our faces to the cross of Christ, and boldly serving the world around us will go a long way in showing a future pastor, whoever they may be, that this is a place where God is at work.■

Quiet times

A reflection by Nancy Jacobs

Has the cold weather made you feel cut off from the world? I know it has for me - want to sit out on my back porch in the sun ... barefoot and in a pair of shorts. I'm impatient for this weather to go away - AND SOON!! But our Lord kind of puts a kink in my wishing when He tells us to "be still" - allow yourself "quiet times."

He has limitations on my wishing … and on my impatience. "Be still" he says again. Instead of resenting His limitations, make quiet times in your life to search for ways to better serve Him. How, you ask … well, there many ways … serve the church on council, teach bible study classes, volunteer to assist in the service, extend yourself into the community by helping with the food bank, check with community leaders to see if you can provide clothing, blankets, toiletries for the needy.

In this day of hurry up … running from one action to another without stopping, we need "quiet time" to dwell on our beliefs and devotion to our Lord and to what is really important in our lives. God in many ways tells us not to spoil "quiet times" by wishing them away, but to put them to good use. So, while you sit on your back porch "be still" and know that God works within you and by you to show His love for all mankind.

Join the Lunch Bunch Thurs. March 20

Lunch Bunchers Bette Ann Kallay, Darlene Witt, Jennifer Burkholder and Nancy Schreiber enjoyed lunch with the Bunch at Carmody's Grill on Neville Island in February. Join the fun on March 20th when another delicious outing is planned (location "TBA!") Please let Nancy Schreiber (412-859-3969) or George Kasich (412-726-1645) know by Tuesday, Mar. 18th if you'd like to be counted in so that sufficient space can be reserved. All are welcome!

"Soup and Service"

HELD WEDNESDAY EVENINGS

MARCH 12 • 19 • 26 • April 2 • 9

• 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*)

LENTEN PROJECT 2025

God's Work, Our Hands

Make GIVING a part of your 2025 Lenten journey by adding to the collection of toiletry items and paper products for the Inter-Church Food Bank in McKees Rocks.

Please help fill the containers in the hallway for delivery on Good Friday, April 18th. God counts on all of us to share our bounty with our neighbors.

Thank You!

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*
- **Mary Miller,** friend of Sharon Giza – *multiple medical issues*
- **Thad Ritter** – *health concerns*
- **Bill McEwen** – *multiple health concerns*
- **Kraig Rahner,** son of Rose Rahner – *critical health concerns*
- **Tina Kruise,** stepmother of Thom Kruise – *stage 2 throat cancer*
- **Virginia Shar** – *recovering from fractured ankle*
- **Bob Hughes** – *recovering from recent surgery*
- **Nancy Jacobs** – *cancer treatment/surgery*

President's Corner *(continued from pg 3)*

ordained, were required to swear that they believed what the Book of Concord contained and that they would teach and preach those doctrines. Now the ELCA says, "Unqualified acceptance of the Book of Concord is not required." Apparently, it does not match the ELCA's political and social agendas. I believe that if we *say* we are Lutherans, we should *stand* for what Luther stood for.

Ascension will need to decide soon if we can continue to live in the ELCA. Our church council approved a motion in February to form a sub-committee to study ELCA issues and other Lutheran church bodies with a goal of presenting a briefing to the congregation. *If you would like to be on this sub-committee, please see Bob Stathers (chairperson) or another council member.*

In addition to theological problems I have with the ELCA, there are many things I would call "church governance" issues that I will write about next month. As I wrote in the last newsletter [February 2025], we need to "stay alert."

More radical changes are being considered at the national level of the ELCA. Ascension needs to be ready for them.

Jerry Wessel
Ascension Council President

Having a real "SOUPer" Time!

Pastor Ryan Kobert *(above)* and members of Ascension Church enjoyed the "Souper Sundae" social event following worship on Sunday Feb. 9.

Please join us for our annual

Mardi Gras Pancake Lunch

SUNDAY, March 2nd after worship.

We hope to see you there!

Come on EVERYONE,

Let's have some FUN!

2025

Family & Youth special EVENT:

"LUCKY TO BE LUTHERAN"

Sunday March 16
Following Worship

LESSER FESTIVALS & commemorations

March 1 George Herbert
hymnwriter, d. 1633
An excellent scholar, Herbert served briefly in the English parliament, then became a parish priest. He was known for devoted care of his parishioners, as well as for writing poetry and hymns, including "Come, my way, my truth, my life." He died at age 40.

March 2 John Wesley & Charles Wesley
d. 1791 & 1788; renewers of the church
These brothers led a revival originally intended to remain within the Church of England, one that involved frequent communion and advocacy for the poor. Except for a brief time in America, they worked in England. Charles was also a prolific hymn writer. After their deaths, their work led to the formation of the Methodist Church.

March 7 Perpetua & Felicity and companions
Martyrs at Carthage, d. 202
Vibia Perpetua was a noblewoman, and Felicity her slave, who were catechumens at Carthage, northern Africa. They, with four other catechumens, had defied the Roman emperor who had forbidden conversions to Christianity, and were put to death in the amphitheater.

March 10
Harriet Tubman, *d.1913* **Sojourner Truth,** *d. 1883*
Renewers of society
Harriet Tubman, born into slavery, helped about 300 others to escape slavery until the institution was abolished. Sojourner Truth, whose birth name was Isabella, was freed after slavery was abolished, and discerned a call to be a preacher. Taking the name Sojourner Truth, she set out on an evangelistic journey, where people found her testimony to be deeply moving.

March 12 Gregory the Great
Bishop of Rome, d. 604
Born into wealth and power, Gregory was for a time the chief administrator of the city of Rome. Giving this up for a life in the church, he was elected pope in 590. He influenced public worship through the establishment of a lectionary and prayers to correlate with the readings. Gregorian chant is named in his honor.

March 17 Patrick
Bishop, missionary to Ireland, d. 461
A native of Britain, Patrick was kidnapped by pirates at age sixteen and sold into slavery in Ireland. After a few years, he escaped, returned home, and entered the ministry. Returning to Ireland, he successfully served as a bishop and missionary there.

March 19 Joseph, Guardian of Jesus
Though the Bible tells us little about the husband of Jesus' mother Mary, we know that he was a carpenter by trade. He is also shown as being devoted both to God and to Mary and Jesus. It is assumed that he died before Jesus became an adult.

March 21 Thomas Cranmer, Bishop of Canterbury
martyr, d. 1556
Cranmer's lasting achievement is contributing to and overseeing the creation of the Book of Common Prayer, which remains (in revised form) the worship book of the Anglican Communion. He was burned at the stake under Queen Mary for his support of the Protestant Reformation.

March 22 Jonathan Edwards
Teacher, missionary to Native Americans, d. 1758
A Puritan minister in Connecticut, Edwards is remembered as being a great preacher. Though his most famous sermon talks at length about hell, he was more concerned with God's love. He served both as missionary to the Housatonic people in Massachusetts, and as president of the future Princeton University.

March 24 Oscar Arnulfo Romero
Bishop of El Salvador, martyr, d. 1980
Romero was deeply concerned with injustices evident toward the poor and powerless in El Salvador, and worked forthrightly against political repression. He was assassinated while presiding at the Eucharist in a chapel near the cathedral in San Salvador.

March 25 Annunciation of Our Lord
Nine months before Christmas, the church celebrates the annunciation. In Luke, the angel Gabriel announces to Mary that she will give birth to the Son of God, and she responds, "Here am I, the servant of the Lord." Ancient scholars believed that March 25 also was the day on which creation began and was the date of Jesus' death on the cross. Thus, from the sixth to eighth centuries, March 25 was observed as New Year's Day in much of Christian Europe.

March 29 Hans Nielsen Hauge *renewer of the church, d. 1824*
Hauge was a layperson who wished to revitalize the church in Norway. Many professionals in the church feared his motives and influence; he was imprisoned for leading unauthorized gatherings.

March 31 John Donne *poet, d. 1631*
After finishing his education at Oxford University, Donne seemed headed for a career in the English public service. But a series of circumstances led him into the ordained ministry. He is well known as a writer of both secular and sacred poetry.

Source: 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
pastor@alcpgh.com
office@alcpgh.com
music@alcpgh.com
mtcalvarycem@alcpgh.com

Ascension Lutheran Church
1290 Silver Lane
McKees Rocks, PA 15136
(Robinson Township)
Visit us on the web at
www.alcpgh.com

PLACE
STAMP
HERE

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1290 Silver Lane
McKees Rocks, PA 15136

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