



THE MESSENGER

ASCENSION Lutheran Church

JULY 2026

WEEKLY EVENTS

Sunday Worship - 11:00 AM
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
Bible Study - Thursdays at 7:00 PM*
Soccer Shots - Saturday mornings &
Wednesday evenings (*Spring-Fall*)
* on hiatus for the summer

ASCENSION CHURCH

2026 COUNCIL

President – Sharon Giza
Vice President – Debbie Whitfield
Treasurer – Bob Thompson
Secretary – Katie Mercadante

2026 COUNCIL LIAISONS

Call Committee
Joyce Leister
Christian Education
Jeff Williams
Communications & Publications
Jeff Williams
Fellowship, Social Ministry
& Evangelism
Debbie Whitfield
Finance & Stewardship
Bob Stathers
Mutual Ministry
Sharon Giza
Personnel
Sharon Giza
Property
Don Tarbert & Bill Whitfield
Worship & Music
Katie Mercadante
Youth
Katie Mercadante & Debbie Whitfield

Next Council Meeting

Tuesday July 14 at 7:00 PM

Take a good look at the stars



from Pastor Kobert's Desk

This month I will be taking a week of vacation at Lutherlyn with my family. I love going back to that place in the woods, it is a place where my faith life really changed. I enjoy the various activities that are available there, the staff are always friendly, the hiking trails wind through beautiful woods, the lake's

water is calm and reflects the wood line. What amazes me every time I go though is not what happens there during the day, but what I am able to see there at night.

As the sun sets and fireflies begin to dot the fields with their yellow flashes the entire camp transforms. It moves from a bright and noisy place filled with the voices of children of all ages to a quieter space. If the moon is full, it casts eerie shadows in the wooded areas, the wind blowing through the trees with the leaves rustling makes it seem like the camp itself is shushing campers off to sleep. Nighttime is one of my most favorite times of day when I am there though, despite the strange noises by nighttime woodland critters. The reason for this is the view of the sky.

Most places that campers come from are lit up with artificial light which drowns out the stars at night. At Lutherlyn though, the light is so far off that the sky is dotted with millions of stars and provides a great place to see constellations and hear stories. To me though, it helps to put perspective on my place in the world. When I look up to the heavens and see these stars I am reminded of the words from Psalm 8: "When I look at your heavens, the work of your fingers, the moon and the stars that you have established; what are human beings that you are mindful of them, mortals that you care for them?"

continued on page 2

Mount Calvary Cemetery

1715 Middletown Road
McKees Rocks, PA 15136
Robert J. Dudek, Superintendent
mtcalvarycem@alcpgh.com
412-331-0780
All Denominations Welcome



Mount Calvary Cemetery Board Members

*Bob Hughes • Bette Ann Kallay
George C. Kasich • Pastor Kobert • Joyce Leister
Debbie Whitfield • Jeff Williams*

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

The nighttime sky humbles us in its majesty, complexity, and the sheer size of it all. Each of those dots of light is a ball of gas burning billions of miles away, many of them larger than our own sun. God put them there, and God put us here. How is that for perspective?

God has placed us little, tiny humans floating around on a relatively small rock, and cares for us so much that Jesus was sent to die for our sins. In a universe filled with billions of galaxies, innumerable stars, untold number of planets with their moons, God cares for us. We are worthy of God's love; we are each known by God in ways that we do not even know ourselves.

If ever we think that our lives are too large to care for another person, no matter who they are, we would do well to remember this psalm. For God the universe is not large enough for God to not care about us, so why should we not care about another? Take a good look at the stars when you next have a chance, bask in the vastness of the created universe, and as you come to recognize that God has created it all, remember that you too are a part of it, and that you are a beloved child of God. ■

SUNDAY WORSHIP ASSISTANT SCHEDULE JULY - AUGUST 2026

Date	Supply	Assisting Minister	Communion Assistant	Lector	Usher	Acolyte	Sunday (or special)	color
July 5	Carol Emch	Jeff Williams	n/a (SotW)	Thad Ritter	Volunteer	Volunteer	PENTECOST 6	GREEN
July 12	Carol Emch	Mary Thompson	n/a (SotW)	Gib Palmgren	Volunteer	Volunteer	PENTECOST 7	GREEN
July 19	Pr. Ryan Kobert	Jennifer Burkholder	Jeff Williams	Melissa DeCola	Volunteer	Volunteer	PENTECOST 8	GREEN
July 26	Pr. Ryan Kobert	Jeff Williams	Deb Walenchok	Sharon Giza	Volunteer	Volunteer	PENTECOST 9	GREEN
Aug 2	Kathleen Howells	Mary Thompson	Bob Thompson	Jason Eger	Volunteer	Volunteer	PENTECOST10	GREEN
Aug 9	Pr. Ryan Kobert	Jennifer Burkholder	Al Morrow	Rich Mussman	Volunteer	Volunteer	PENTECOST11	GREEN
Aug 16	Pr. Ryan Kobert	Jeff Williams	Avis Ritter	Emilia DeCola	Volunteer	Volunteer	PENTECOST 12	GREEN
Aug 23	Pr. Ryan Kobert	Mary Thompson	Deb Walenchok	Jeff Williams	Volunteer	Volunteer	PENTECOST 13	GREEN
Aug 30	Pr. Ryan Kobert	Daniel Giza	Jeff Williams	Charlotte DeCola	Volunteer	Volunteer	PENTECOST 14	GREEN



Council President's **CORNER**

A message from Council President Sharon Giza

June was a full and exciting month for our church family, beginning with our annual **Yard Sale**. Thank you to everyone who volunteered, donated, and participated to make this year's event such a success. A special thank-you to **Bob and Frank** from the Cemetery crew for setting up our tent. We received many positive comments about the vendor trucks and the basket raffle, which raised **\$1,200** for the McKees Rocks Food Pantry.

As a reminder, our **capital campaign** to repay the five-year loan for the parking lot is still underway. If you would like to contribute, you may designate your gift under "Other" on your offering envelope.

A big thank-you also goes out to our **Property Committee** for preparing the parking lot for tar and chipping. By the time you read this newsletter, the renovations should be complete—providing a safer, cleaner, and more welcoming space for everyone who uses our church facilities.

Next up is **Vacation Bible School**, and we need as many volunteers as possible. Clearances are required for all volunteers; please see **Katie Mercadante** if you need help completing them. And please spread the word—**VBS** is coming in August, and we want to welcome as many children as possible.

Finally, don't forget your church during the summer months. We are always here, always open, and always ready when needed.

Sharon Giza

Ascension Lutheran Church Council President



ALC Council Meeting Highlights

Council meeting was held Tuesday June 9, 2026

Call to order: Sharon 7:00pm

Attendance: Sharon, Katie, Bob S, Don, Bob T, Debbie, Joyce, Jeff, Pastor Ryan

Review/Approve Minutes of June Meeting

Pastor Report, Office Administrator's Report

Old business: Yard Sale wrap-up – motion to take proceeds of "spot" sales to the general fund/local by Bob S. 2nd Bob T. Motion carries. Letters have gone out to all vendors that made donations

New business: none.

Council Officers Reports:

➤President – *Sharon Giza* Outdoor worship

➤Vice President – *Debbie Whitfield* Cemetery Cmte met on Sunday, Judy Henry resigned from the Board; her resignation was accepted.

➤Treasurer – *Bob Thompson* Thrivent Choice Dollars are front-loaded vs. quarterly. Income exceeded expenses.

Council Liaisons Reports:

➤Christian Ed/Comm. & Publications – *Jeff Williams* Thursday night Bible Study & Sunday bi-weekly Bible Study taking the summer off. eSign is up to date.

➤Fellowship, Social Ministry & Evangelism *Debbie Whitfield* Ice Cream Social: Mary & Val are handling grad gifts and social. Sharon has applied for Ingram Day on 10/3. Rally Day & Oktoberfest are next after VBS.

➤Finance & Stewardship *Bob Stathers* – Yard Sale was a success. Attendance is holding steady. Stewardship—committee of people to help visit the shut-ins.

➤Property *Don Tarbert & Bill Whitfield* – plugging away at the parking lot. Don has taken care of the ants in the fellowship hall.

➤Worship *Katie Mercadante* Altar Guild has some needs; Lynn Kinney provided a specific list. Motion to order materials needed minus the candle by Jeff, 2nd Debbie.

➤Youth *Katie Mercadante & Debbie Whitfield*—Youth Committee will meet before VBS.

Motion to adjourn & Closing Prayer.

Next Council Meeting: Tuesday July 14th at 7 pm

A mid-year resolution to do better...

A reflection by Nancy Jacobs

I enjoyed Pastor's message in the June issue of The Messenger.
[Reflecting on prayer, June 2026]

Maybe "enjoyed" isn't quite the proper word ... maybe "relate" is a better one.

I know I make use of many kinds of prayer: I pray "thank You, Lord." I pray "help me, Lord." I pray "why did you let that happen, Lord." I pray "take care of my family and friends, Lord, the members of our church, and the unknowns - the fractured families in our community, the chaos in government. Look after us all, Lord."

I know in my heart I should spend more time with the Lord than I do.

That says it all.

I remember my grandmother who lived by her bible. She lived with us and when I would visit with her, I didn't get a piece of candy or a glass of milk. I got a bible reading.

Writing this brought to mind when years ago, Rich Mussman led us in bible study in the grass outside - it was really fun. Thanks for the memories, Rich.

Writing this has made me just a little ashamed of me, so I must fervently make a mid-year resolution to do better.

Join me?

~ Nancy

Thanks - a 'LOT!'



After a LOT of hard work and a LOT of generosity, Ascension's parking lot was resurfaced on June 24, 2026, and the striping was done the following week.

Special Project Fund: Parking Lot

The Special Project Fund ("Other" on your giving envelope) will be used to repay the loan received to **resurface our parking lot.**

Our goal is to raise \$5,000 per year for five consecutive years to fully repay this loan.

We are almost there to our first-year goal!

All Special Project/ Other offerings will go directly toward this 5-year capital campaign.

Thank you for considering a contribution to help improve the safety & accessibility of Ascension's parking lot.

Your support truly makes a difference.

HAPPY Birthday, America!

JULY BIRTHDAYS!

Date | Member/Friend

- 1 Jennifer Burkholder
- Megan Ganley
- 2 Greg Thompson
- Camryn Endes
- 3 Brian Tomchak
- 7 Diane Bayer
- 12 Venus Thompson
- 14 Gio Thompson
- 17 Amanda Derbish
- 18 Bob Stathers
- 21 Al Morrow
- 22 Mary Thompson
- 23 Grayson DeCola
- 24 Virginia Shar
- 31 Amy Kruise



☀️ OUTDOOR WORSHIP

Weather permitting,
we will hold Sunday worship
outdoors in the pavilion
on the 2nd and 4th Sundays
during the summer months:
JULY: 12 & 26
AUGUST: 9 & 23

Lunch Bunch



A monthly gathering of members and friends of Ascension Church

Join the Lunch Bunch Thursday JULY 16!

In June, less than a baker's dozen (eleven, actually) Lunch Bunchers met at the Log Cabin Inn for good food and a good time. Happily, the buffalo head above me didn't drool, although a few attendees may have when they saw the lunch menu. The Log Cabin is always a favorite and if you missed out, it will probably be a year before we get there again.

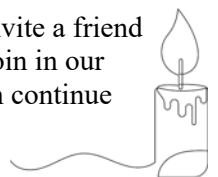
However, for July, we will go to another favorite site, *La Cucina* at 200 Three Springs Drive in Weirton (Almost Heaven), West Virginia. It is an easy drive west on Hwy 22/30 and only about thirty minutes from Ascension if there is no construction (which seems to be everywhere this year, so you'd better plan on adding a few minutes more). We'll meet there at 11:30 AM on July 16th - the earliest third Thursday possible. As is our custom, please let Jerry Wessel (412) 787-1213 OR George Kasich (412) 726-1645 know by Tuesday July 14th if you plan to attend so reservations can be made. If you would like to suggest a new place to go for future lunches, then we invite you to attend and get your suggested spot on the list of places for the Bunch to consider. We hope to see more lunch-savvy people give The Lunch Bunch a try! ~ Jerry W.



LET IT
SHINE

ASCENSION LUTHERAN CHURCH MEMBERSHIP INITIATIVE

- >We recently participated in the **Kennedy Garden Club Spring Festival** to help spread the word about our church and the wonderful things we do for the community.
- >**Looking ahead**, we will be hosting **Vacation Bible School** in August. Please share this with family and friends — VBS is open to children ages 4 through 4th grade, and we would love to welcome new faces.
- >**This fall**, we will also have a table at the Robinson Autumn Festival as another opportunity to introduce our church to the community.
- >**To grow our congregation**, we truly need everyone's support. Invite a friend or family member to worship with us, and encourage them to join in our many outreach events throughout the year. Together, we can continue building a vibrant, welcoming church family.





Ascension Lutheran Church
1290 Silver Lane
Robinson Twp.

Vacation Bible School

August 10-14 | 5:30-8pm

Campfire Celebration

August 14

Register Here



Suggested Donation:
\$5 per child

Ages 4 - 4th

Grade

must be potty trained

Questions:

ascensionvbs15136@gmail.com

VBS VOLUNTEERS ARE STILL NEEDED!

If you're interested in volunteering to give our kids the **BEST** VBS experience ever, please email katie.mercadante@gmail.com
NOTE: ALL volunteers need to have clearances on file with the church. Questions?
See Katie Mercadante or Katy Thompson.

Help Make VBS a Success!

Yes, we are still looking for volunteers, but if you are looking for other ways to help, we are in need of some supplies!
Check the sign-ups in the hallway for things we will need to borrow and that can be purchased and donated to help make this our **best VBS yet**. These lists will be updated as we finalize plans and have a head count closer to the week of VBS - August 10-14.

JULY 2026

★ **IMPORTANT DATES** ★

Sat 04 Independence Day
Sun 12 Outdoor Worship
Tue 14 Council Meeting
Sun 26 Outdoor Worship

SPECIAL NOTICE:

Pastor Ryan is on vacation thru July 12. He will be back Mon. & Tues. July 13-14, then will be out of the office July 15-17. Please pray for him as he travels to Arizona and competes in the American Taekwondo Association World Championship Tournament! **Pastor Michael Sourwine** (House of Prayer Lutheran in Aliquippa) will be available for any emergencies while Pastor Ryan is away. Congregants can still call Pastor Ryan's cell phone (412-526-3209) if there is an emergency, as Pastor Sourwine will have that official phone in his possession.



Please keep in your prayers:

- JoAnne Erwin, Dee Gratzmiller, Norma Kohnen, Lottie Lodge, Jean Marion, Betty Simpson, Rose Rahner, Betty Borden, Virginia Shar – *shut-ins*
- Mary Jane McGinnis – *health concerns*
- Thad Ritter – *health concerns*
- Bill McEwen – *multiple health concerns*
- Tom Walenchok – brother-in-law of Deb Walenchok – *lung & brain cancer*
- Deb Walenchok – *lung cancer*
- Lynn Simeoni – friend of Ascension Church – *terminal brain cancer*
- Nancy Jacobs – *prayers for better health*
- Bob Thompson – *continued recovery from leg injury*
- Liz Eisenhauer – friend of Katie M. *continued recovery, childbirth complications*

To update a status or add to this prayer list, please email Ascension office office@alcpqh.com

LESSER FESTIVALS & commemorations

July 1 - Catherine Winkworth, d. 1878;
John Mason Neale, d. 1866; *hymn translators*

July 3 - Thomas, *apostle*

July 6 - Jan Hus, d. 1415 *martyr*

July 11 - Benedict of Nursia, d. ca. 540 *Abbot of Monte Cassino*

July 12 - Nathan Söderblom, Bishop of Uppsala, d. 1931

July 17 - Bartolomé de Las Casas, d. 1566 *missionary to the Indies*

July 22 - Mary Magdalene, *apostle*

July 23 - Birgitta of Sweden, d. 1373 *renewer of the church*

July 25 - James, *apostle*

July 28 - Johann Sebastian Bach, d. 1750;
Heinrich Schütz, d. 1672;
George Frideric Handel, d. 1759; *musicians*

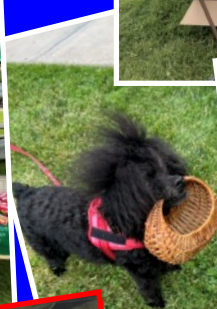
July 29 - Mary, Martha, and Lazarus of Bethany

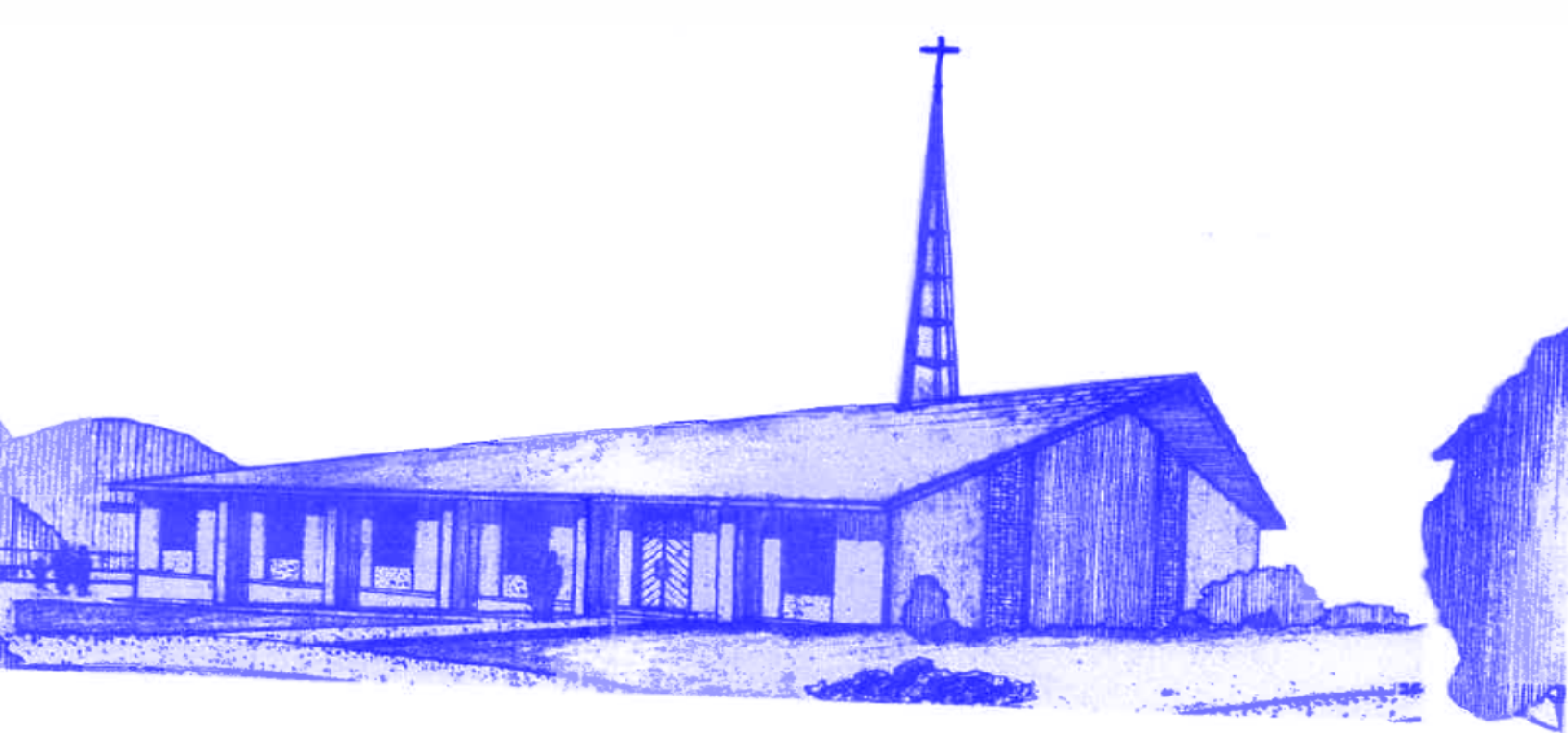
July 29 - Olaf, King of Norway, d. 1030 *martyr*

Source: www.sundaysandseasons.com

Pix Picks!

From the June 6 Yard Sale to June 14 Graduates' Ice Cream Social to Outdoor Worship, June 2026 was alive with activity at Ascension Church.





*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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(Robinson Township)

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www.alcpgh.com

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PLACE
STAMP
HERE

