THE MESSENGER

ASCENSION Lutheran Church

NOVEMBER 2026

WEEKLY EVENTS

Sunday Worship - 11:00 AM
Sunday School - 10:00 AM *(children)*
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)*

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

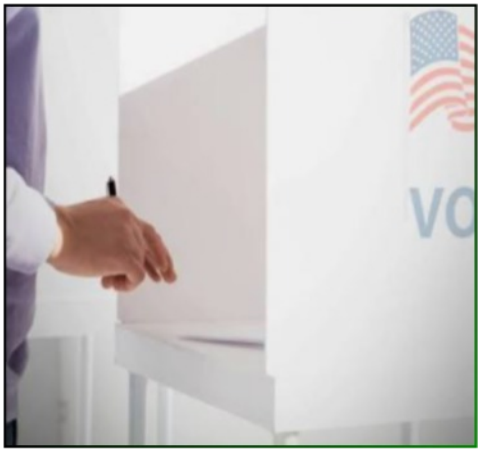
Next Council Meeting

Tuesday November 10 at 7:00 PM

Welcoming God's Kingdom

– in worship and in the voting booth

from the Office of the Bishop - Southwest PA Synod, ELCA



Dear Family in Christ,

When we gather as the body of Christ together in worship, we pray the Lord's Prayer. This prayer that Jesus taught his disciples echoes through the generations to us now, and we add our voices to the great cloud of witnesses as we pray: "Your kingdom come. Your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven." (Matthew 6:10) The sure and certain hope of this prayer is that God is at work in the world to bring it into alignment with God's reign.

As we pray this prayer, we also trust that God's Spirit is moving in our own hearts, helping us to live a life committed to bringing God's kingdom into focus here on earth by caring for God's people and God's creation to the best of our ability.

As a society, we are in a season of great tension. We are not of the same mind on how our communities, institutions, or even our congregations are to align with God's will on earth. In recent decades, our electoral processes and civic life have become increasingly divisive — often focusing on name-calling and blaming rather than centering on authentic debate about the best way to care for the well-being of all.

As Christians, we are called to demonstrate through relationships with our friends, families, and neighbors that the kingdom of God draws near and is planted here on earth as it is in heaven. That is why I am writing to you as we approach yet another divisive election time. Our faith has prepared us to engage and participate in our civic life together, for we bring our same values we hold in worship to the voting booth. While we may not agree on the detailed paths to welcome in God's kingdom here on earth, we believe and trust that we are one body in Jesus Christ with many members — seeking to learn and understand from one another's experiences, hopes, and dreams.

Our most recent ELCA Social Statement on Faith and Civic Life states, "The most radical feature of the Constitution is its first three words: 'we the people.'" When we, the people of God, turn our hearts toward both God's kingdom and care for our neighbors as citizens together, we come closer to glimpsing that kingdom here on earth. We seek to understand others in their differing opinions, where media and social media deal only in soundbites.

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

Welcoming God's Kingdom *(continued from pg 1)*

We offer words of grace when the political discourse deals in "gotcha" moments.
We enter the polling booth attentive to the needs and experiences of our neighbors near and far.
We work to ensure that all citizens can use their voice and cast their vote.
We remember that those who are running our elections, and those running for public office, are our neighbors. They are beloved in God's sight, deserving of respect and grace.

Our faith assures us that God's kingdom is with us now and into the future. May you be encouraged in your civic engagement over these coming weeks and beyond, praying fervently, voting faithfully, and proclaiming God's peace all along the way.

And may you be encouraged in the ways you welcome in God's kingdom and will for this world: loving God and loving one another as Jesus loves us.



In Christ,

Bishop Melissa L. Stoller

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SUNDAY WORSHIP ASSISTANT SCHEDULE NOV - DEC 2026

Date	Supply	Assisting Minister	Communion Assistant	Lector	Usher	Acolyte	Sunday (or special)	color
Nov 1	Pr. Ryan Kobert	Mary Thompson	Al Morrow	Rich Mussman	Volunteer	Volunteer	ALL SAINTS	WHITE or
							PENTECOST 23	GREEN
Nov 8	Pr. Ryan Kobert	Jeff Williams	Avis Ritter	Thad Ritter	Volunteer	Volunteer	PENTECOST 24	GREEN
Nov 15	Pr. Ryan Kobert	Mary Thompson	Bob Thompson	Gib Palmgren	Volunteer	Volunteer	PENTECOST 25	GREEN
Nov 22	Carol Emch	Jeff Williams	n/a	Melissa DeCola	Volunteer	Volunteer	PENTECOST 26	GREEN
Nov 29	Pr. Ryan Kobert	Jeff Williams	Al Morrow	Jason Eager	Volunteer	Volunteer	ADVENT 1	BLUE
Dec 6	Pr. Ryan Kobert	Mary Thompson	Avis Ritter	Thad Ritter	Volunteer	Volunteer	ADVENT 2	BLUE
Dec 13	Pr. Ryan Kobert	Jeff Williams	Bob Thompson	Rich Mussman	Volunteer	Volunteer	ADVENT 3	BLUE
Dec 20	Pr. Ryan Kobert	Jennifer Burkholder	Al Morrow	Sharon Giza	Volunteer	Volunteer	ADVENT 4	BLUE
Dec 24	Pr. Ryan Kobert	Mary Thompson	Avis Ritter	Gib Palmgren	Volunteer	Volunteer	CHRISTMAS EVE	WHITE
Dec 27	Pr. Ryan Kobert	Jeff Williams	Bob Thompson	Emilia DeCola	Volunteer	Volunteer	1 CHRISTMAS	WHITE

Council President's CORNER

A message from Council President Sharon Giza

As the seasons change, we are quickly moving toward the Advent season.

OKTOBERFEST SUCCESS

I would like to thank everyone who volunteered to make our first Oktoberfest a success! We received many positive comments, and everyone seemed to enjoy themselves. We continue to "Shine a Light" at Ascension and want to keep the momentum going as we expand our outreach within the community.

HERE WE GROW

I would like to challenge each of you to invite a friend, family member, or acquaintance to one of our worship services or outreach events. Together, we can continue to grow our ministry and share God's love with others.

CONGREGATIONAL MEETING

Please remember our important congregational meeting on November 15 following worship. During this meeting, we will hold elections for Church and Cemetery Board positions that will be open in 2027. This will also be a Sip, Stay, and Mingle event, so plan to join us for fellowship and refreshments following the elections.

GIVE THANKS!

We have so much to be thankful for at Ascension Lutheran Church, and we look forward to celebrating the upcoming holiday season together.

Blessings,

Sharon Giza

Ascension Lutheran Church Council President

REMEMBER TO "FALL BACK" at 2 a.m. Nov. 1 as Daylight Savings Time ends!

Ascension CHURCH COUNCIL

ALC Council Meeting Highlights

Council meeting was held Tuesday Oct. 13, 2026

Call to order: 7:00 pm

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

Review/Approve Minutes of September Meeting

Pastor Report, Office Administrator's Report

Old biz: Oktoberfest Wrap-up — nothing but good things. Thank you went out to St. Malachi today. Consider 5-8pm for next year. We have very generous people in this congregation that helped make this possible.

New biz: Council nominations — 3 open seats on council (Sharon and Jeff are rotating off and cannot run again), Don will need to run again (had a one-year appointment). The two full terms are 3-year terms. 1 seat open on the cemetery board (4-yr term)

Church Council Elections November - Church Meeting - November 15, 2026

Church and Cemetery Budgets for 2027 Due for November council meeting.

➢President – *Sharon Giza* Need new carpeting sooner than later

➢ Vice President – *Debbie Whitfield* Cem. board meets Oct 24

➢Treasurer – *Bob Thompson* VBS & Outreach budget lines need to be increased

➢Fellowship, Social Ministry & Evangelism *Debbie Whitfield* — No Sip, Stay, Mingle Dec. 20 due to HB Jesus party Dec. 13

➢Finance & Stewardship *Bob Stathers*— *"Let it Shine"* having positive impact

➢Property *Don Tarbert & Bill Whitfield* - Insulation done, heat pump addressed, wind damage to Cemetery tent, shed being cleaned out.

➢Worship & Music *Katie Mercadante* — suggestion to institute only one piece of the new setting at a time. Perhaps the choir can teach it before announcements. Concern about the hymns not being put in the bulletin and the service not being "user friendly." We need to give it time, especially with a new setting. If folks have concerns, please see a member of Council.

➢Youth *Katie Mercadante & Debbie Whitfield* — youth events are open to youth from outside the congregation too. If you have a youth in your life that would like to attend, bring them along.

Motion to adjourn & Closing Prayer.

Next Council Meeting: Tuesday November 10th at 7 pm

NOVEMBER 2026

IMPORTANT DATES

Sun 08 Nomination deadline
Tue 10 Council Meeting
Sun 15 VOTING
Sip Stay Mingle
Thu 26 Thanksgiving
Sun 29 ADVENT 1



On **Saturday, October 24** family and friends gathered around the Ascension campfire for an evening of fun and fellowship.





SPECIAL PROJECT FUND: PARKING LOT RE-SURFACING

YES! WE HAVE ACHIEVED THE FIRST $5,000!

The Special Project Fund ("Other" on your giving envelope) will continue to be used to repay the loan from the Lutheran Church Extension Society (LCES) for our recent parking lot re-surfacing. Our goal was established at the outset of this project to raise $5,000 per year for 5 consecutive years to fully repay this loan.

As of Sunday July 5th, your generosity has yielded sufficient funds to cover the first $5,000!

We began "Round 2" of our $25,000 goal during the month of July 2026 as our Special Projects Fund has reset to the next $5K. Any offerings marked "**Special Project**" will go directly toward this ongoing capital campaign.

Thank you for considering a contribution for the safety and accessibility of our parking lot.

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*
- **Lynn Simeoni** – friend of Ascension Church – *terminal brain cancer*
- **Nancy Jacobs** – *prayers for better health*
- **Liz Eisenhauer** – friend of Katie M. *childbirth complications*
- **Monica Esposito** – daughter-in-law of Deb Walenchok – *early-stage breast cancer*
- **Judy Henry** – *prayers for better health*
- **Bill Helterbran** – brother of Debbie Whitfield – *prayers for stroke recovery*
- **Jennifer Burkholder** – *prayers for recovery from recent shoulder surgery*
- **Deb Walenchok** – *lung cancer and recovery from broken femur surgery*





VOTING 2027

NOMINATIONS

for 2027 Council and Cemetery Board

There are 3 open positions on Council and 1 on Cemetery Board. Fill out the pink NOMINATION FORM and submit it by Sunday November 8.

Meeting to VOTE & elect new Council & Board members will be held Sunday November 15th following worship.

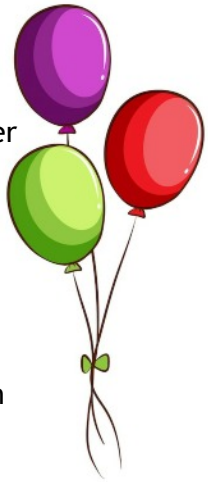
College Mailings!

If you have a family member that is also a member of the Ascension church family, that you would like to receive a package, please email their name & school mailing address to Katie at katie.mercadante@gmail.com OR see Katie in the back row! We will be collecting names through Sunday, November 15th.

november

NOVEMBER BIRTHDAYS!

Date	Member/Friend
1	Emily Lescallette
	Joel Randal
2	Bill McEwen
4	Andrew Burkholder
6	Suzy McEwen
8	Leslie Rickerd
10	Darlene Ganley
18	Bryce Adams
	Kayleigh Adams
19	Allison Bayer
22	Kathleen Bowman
23	Dirk Stathers
25	Holden Tomchak
26	Dee Lightner
	Gib Palmgren
29	Linda Siemons



NOVEMBER ANNIVERSARIES!



Date	Members/Friends
15	Dave & Deb Walenchok

Lunch Bunch

A monthly gathering of members and friends of Ascension Church

Join the Lunch Bunch This Month!

Seven lucky Lunch Bunchers got to sit, converse and eat together at a fabulous Round Table at Shakespeare's Tavern Castle in October. There were way more "orange and yellow fall colors" seen along the way (in construction cones, road signs and workers' vests) than actual fall foliage on the drive there and back this year! Everyone enjoyed their food selections and as is tradition, the fall pumpkin bisque soup was a plus!

For our November 19th luncheon, we have chosen **The Kaufman Tavern** in lovely little downtown Zelienople (just off I-79 N) since we have not been there in years. The address is 105 S. Main Street and there is a convenient free parking lot behind the building.

Please call George Kasich (412-726-1645) or Jerry Wessel (412-787-1213) by Tuesday November 17th if you plan to attend and have a very enjoyable lunch with us!



FALL PANTRY DRIVE

Collecting of toiletry & personal essentials - soap, deodorant, body wash, toothpaste & toothbrushes, shampoo, tissues, etc. - will be conducted Sunday November 1st thru Sunday November 22nd, 2026. ANY non-perishable FOODS are also gratefully accepted for this drive, which benefits the Inter-Church Food Bank.

As always, THANKS for GIVING!



On Saturday, October 10th Ascension Lutheran Church hosted an OKTOBERFEST to the delight of the 80+ patrons in attendance. The festively decorated pavilion created a welcoming atmosphere, enhanced by the sounds of Bavarian style music provided by accordionist Kevin Solecki. Lederhosen were spotted on several attendees, including Ascension's one-man "willkommen party," Bob Stathers. A big "DANKE" is extended to all who made this exhilarating event possible!

2026 Polar Plunge at Lutherlyn

Last year, your support of Camp Lutherlyn put **Pastor Ryan** in a duck costume as he braved freezing temperatures and frigid water. He challenged us to raise at least $1,250 to wear the costume, and **together with St. Paul's, we collected over $1,800!**

This year, on December 5th, Pastor Ryan will once again take the plunge, and will don the duck costume if he receives at least $1,250 in donations. You can sponsor him by going to www.lutherlyn.com/plungeme to help him reach his goal.

"Against all sane judgement, but with a desire to support the camp, I am once more going to participate in the Polar Plunge at Lutherlyn. I have a title, crown, and plunger to uphold!" ~ Pastor Ryan Kobert





Our next "Sip, Stay & Mingle" will be held on Sunday November 15 after worship.

NOTE that there will be no "SS&M" gathering on December 20 due to the previous week's "Happy Birthday, Jesus" Christmas event.

LESSER FESTIVALS & commemorations

November 1 *All Saints Day*
The custom of commemorating all of the saints of the church on a single day goes back at least to the third century. All Saints Day celebrates the baptized people of God, living and dead, who make up the body of Christ. On this day or the following Sunday, many congregations will remember the faithful who have died during the past year.

November 3 *Martín de Porres, renewer of society, d.1639*
Martín was the son of a Spanish knight and a freed black slave from Panama. As a lay brother in the Order of Preachers (Dominicans), he engaged in many charitable works in Lima, Peru. He founded an orphanage, a hospital, and a clinic for cats and dogs.

November 7 *John Christian Frederick Heyer, d.1873*
Bartholomaeus Ziegenbalg, d.1719
Ludwig Nommensen, d.1918 missionaries
Heyer was the first missionary sent out by American Lutherans. After teaching at Gettysburg College and Seminary he was assigned to the Andhra region of India. A worker among the Tamil people on the southeast coast of India, **Ziegenbalg** was opposed both by local Hindus and by Danish authorities. He was known for caring about the welfare of the whole person. **Nommensen** was born in northern Germany and was sent to Sumatra as a Lutheran missionary. Working among the Batak people, he translated the scriptures into their language and honored their native culture.

November 11 *Martin, Bishop of Tours, d.397*
Martin's pagan father enlisted him in the Roman army. Approached by a beggar, Martin cut his cloak in half and gave part to the man, whom he later understood as representing Christ. He asked to leave the army, but was jailed instead. After his release, he became a preacher, and later a bishop.

November 11 *Søren Aabye Kierkegaard, teacher, d.1855*
Kierkegaard was a Danish theologian whose writings also gave rise to the modern philosophy of existentialism. He frequently attacked the complacency of the state church of his day, as well as its desire to be accepted by polite society rather than be a stumbling block.

November 17 *Elizabeth of Hungary, renewer of society, d.1231*
Born in Hungary, Elizabeth was betrothed to the son of the Landgrave of Thuringia, and at age four was taken to be raised with him at the Wartburg Castle. Ten years later they were married. She was very generous to the poor, and after her husband's death she lived in cruel hardship until her own death at age twenty-four.

November 23 *Clement, Bishop of Rome, d.ca.100*
Clement was the third bishop of Rome. He is best remembered for a letter he wrote to the congregation in Corinth, still struggling with the same problems that led to Paul's letters to them. As did Paul, he focused on the need for love among Christians.

November 23 *Miguel Agustín Pro, martyr, d.1927*
Pro grew up among oppression in Mexico, where revolutionaries accused the church of siding with the rich. He was a Jesuit priest who served during a time of intense anticlericalism, and therefore carried out much of his ministry in private settings, working on behalf of the poor and homeless. Miguel and his two brothers were arrested, falsely accused of throwing a bomb at a government official's car and executed by firing squad. Just before the guns fired, he yelled, "¡Viva Cristo Rey!" meaning "Long live Christ the King!"

November 24 *Justus Falckner, d.1723*
Jehu Jones, d.1852; William Passavant, d.1894
pastors in North America
Not only was **Falckner** the first Lutheran ordained in North America, but he also published a catechism which was the first Lutheran book published on the continent. **Jones** was the Lutheran church's first African American pastor and carried out missionary work in Philadelphia which led to the formation there of the first African American Lutheran congregation (St. Paul's). William **Passavant** created and nurtured a new level of organized social ministry in western Pennsylvania, now known as Lutheran Services in America. Passavant and his legacy sought to serve the poorest of the poor, providing shelter, medical, and living assistance.

November 25 *Isaac Watts, hymnwriter, d.1748*
Thought by many to be the greatest hymnwriter in the English language, Isaac Watts was born in England to a family of nonconformists. He wrote about six hundred hymns, many in a two-year period beginning when he was twenty years old. Some of Watts's hymns are based on psalms, a nonconformist tradition. Ten of Watts's hymn texts are in *Evangelical Lutheran Worship*, including "O God, Our Help in Ages Past."

November 30 *Andrew, Apostle*
The first of the disciples to be called by Jesus, Andrew quickly began to bring others to the Savior, including Simon Peter. The Bible also shows him leading some Greeks to meet Jesus, and he brought forward the boy with five loaves and two fish, with which Jesus fed thousands.

Source: www.sundaysandseasons.com

UPCOMING YOUTH EVENTS at ASCENSION CHURCH

2026

November - College Care packages; Creative Hands service;
Clinton Park Light-Up Tree decorating
December 13 - Cookie Exchange & Bells Program

2027

February 7 - Family Bowling
March - Month of Bingo
March/April - Spring Clean-up Service



To be Christ's Disciples, nurture our faith, serve God, welcome our neighbors, and joyfully share in His love.

Contact Us
(412) 859-3711

office@alcpgh.com
mtcalvarycem@alcpgh.com
pastorstpaulssew@gmail.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

