



# THE MESSENGER

ASCENSION Lutheran Church

February 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
- AI-Anon Meeting - Mondays at 7:30 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 Kruse*
- 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 February 11 at 7:00 PM

## Getting to know you . . .

*from Pastor Kobert's Desk*



### **Greetings to you all!**

It is a joy to be working with you all here at Ascension as your interim pastor. I hope to be able to help provide pastoral care for you as you seek to call a new pastor.

As this time together begins, I thought it might be helpful to share a bit more about myself with you all.

I grew up around Pittsburgh, in O'Hara township east of the city, graduated from Fox Chapel High School in 2005, and was accepted to Penn State New Kensington to study engineering. That degree decision only lasted a year before I changed majors and began to study Medieval History. I moved to State College for the 2007-08 school year and graduated in 2010 with two majors, Medieval Studies and History. During that time, I worked at Camp Lutherlyn over the summers, met my wife Cindy, and discerned that after graduating I would go to seminary.

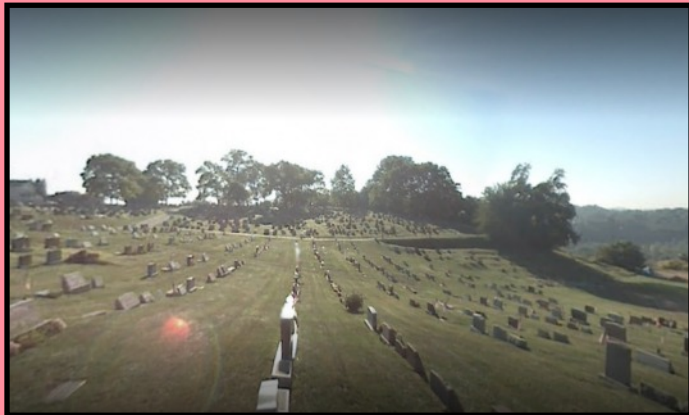
Cindy and I were married in June of 2010 and later that fall, I began my studies at the Lutheran Theological Seminary at Gettysburg. For internship we traveled to Rural Retreat Virginia, a small town located about an hour east of Bristol off I-81. As we prepared for my final semester in seminary, we found out that we were expecting our first child, and shortly after that we found out that I was assigned to the Southwest PA Synod.

I took my first call at Faith Lutheran in New Florence in the summer, and our son Logan was born that fall. Two years into the call Faith began to work with Hebron in Blairsville to share a pastor, similar to our current

*Continued on page 2*

# 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*

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



Pastor Ryan Kobert

partnership!  
I served both congregations for another two years before starting the call process that brought me to St. Paul's in Sewickley.

Since starting that call in 2018, our family grew, and we welcomed Nora into the world in 2019.

Logan, Nora, and I all practice Tae Kwon Do together, and I am active in the PTA at their school. We are also caretakers of a cat and dog and enjoy going for walks around the neighborhood.

This is a condensed version of my background, and I would be happy to sit and share more of my life story with you. I also look forward to getting to know many of you better, hearing your story, and learning how you have come to be a part of Ascension's life in ministry. Blessings to you all!

## SUNDAY WORSHIP ASSISTANT SCHEDULE FEB. - MAR. 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 |
|---------|------------------|---------------------|---------------------|------------------|-----------|-----------|---------------------|--------|----------------|
| Feb. 02 | Pr. Ryan Kobert  | Jeff Williams       | Bob Dudek           | Gib Palmgren     | Volunteer | Volunteer | Presentation        | WHITE  | Kelly Bryan    |
| Feb. 09 | Pr. Ryan Kobert  | Mary Thompson       | Bob Thompson        | Jason Eager      | Volunteer | Volunteer | 5 Epiphany          | GREEN  | Deb Whitfield  |
| Feb. 16 | Pr. Ryan Kobert  | Jerry Wessel        | Jeff Williams       | Charlotte DeCola | Volunteer | Volunteer | 6 Epiphany          | GREEN  | Bob Stathers   |
| Feb. 23 | Pr. Blair Morgan | Jennifer Burkholder | Bob Dudek           | Jeff Williams    | Volunteer | Volunteer | 7 Epiphany          | GREEN  | Jeff Williams  |
| Mar. 02 | Pr. Ryan Kobert  | Jerry Wessel        | Avis Ritter         | Thad Ritter      | Volunteer | Volunteer | Transfiguration     | WHITE  | Jason Eager    |
| Mar. 05 | Pr. Ryan Kobert  | Mary Thompson       | Bob Thompson        | Gib Palmgren     | 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 Kruse           | 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   |



## Council President's **CORNER**

A message from Council President Jerry Wessel

### **ACTS 20:31 "SO BE ON YOUR GUARD"**

In this passage, St. Paul is warning the congregation at Ephesus about people from their own group distorting the truth. There have been divisions and schisms in the Christian church from its beginning. St. Paul dealt with several in his epistles. In 1054 AD the Orthodox church split from the Roman Catholic church. In 1517 AD Luther started the reformation. It is no wonder then that we see controversies and divisions in the church today.

To "Be on your guard," you should be aware of what is happening in Ascension's national church body, the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA). Many congregations are leaving the ELCA for other church bodies. Look up the ELCA's so-called social statements; the "Report on the diversity, equity, inclusion, and accessibility audit" recently published with recommendations to change congregations' constitutions; and other things said and done by the presiding bishop and other leaders in the church. See if you agree with them.

The North American Lutheran Church (NALC) was formed 14 years ago by pastors and congregations that disagreed with the ELCA's "WOKE" theology, ordination of people in same-sex relationships, support for abortion on demand, and transgender advocacy. NALC now has over 480 congregations that have left the ELCA. Look them up on the web along with other Lutheran groups like "Lutheran Coalition for Renewal" (CORE), [www.lutherancore.org](http://www.lutherancore.org) and "Lutheran Congregational Support Network" at [lutherancongregationalsupport.org](http://lutherancongregationalsupport.org) which just became active November 26, 2024 because of constitutional changes being considered by the ELCA which may try to strip congregations withdrawing from the ELCA of all their land, buildings and bank accounts.

I for one am finding it very hard to stay in the ELCA. Every time a synod official has addressed the Call Committee, he has said that we could call a Presbyterian or United Methodist minister to be our



### **ALC Council Meeting Highlights**

**Council meeting was held Tues. Jan. 14, 2025**

AED Check: Performed by Sharon.

Call to order: 7:02 pm

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

Devotions: January: Bob February: Jason  
Review Minutes of Last Meeting: Motion to accept as presented by Jerry, second by Debbie. Passed unanimously.  
Officer Reports given. Old business discussed.

New business – election of officers and assignment of liaisons for 2025:

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

*Christian Education:* Jason Eager; *Youth:* Deb Whitfield;  
*Communications and Publications:* Sharon Giza;  
*Fellowship, Social Ministry & Evangelism:* Jeff Williams;  
*Finance and Stewardship:* Thom Kruse; *Property:* Bob Thompson; *Worship and Music:* Jerry Wessel; *Mutual Ministry:* Bob Stathers; *Personnel:* Kelly Bryan; *Call Committee:* Sharon Giza

#### **Important Dates:**

- Sunday Feb 2: Congregational Meeting w/ Installation of Council & Bulletin of Reports
- Sunday February 9: "Soup-er Sundae" party w/Welcome to Pr. Kobert
- Confirmation: June 1 • Yard Sale: June 7

Motion to adjourn: Jerry. Sharon second. 8:25pm.

Closing Prayer

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

pastor. I'm a Lutheran, not a Calvinist or Wesleyan! We do not share the same theology. I do not want them teaching our youth. I encourage everyone to do their own research into the ELCA and alternatives.

#### ***BE ON YOUR GUARD!***

Jerry Wessel

*Ascension Council President*



# FEBRUARY

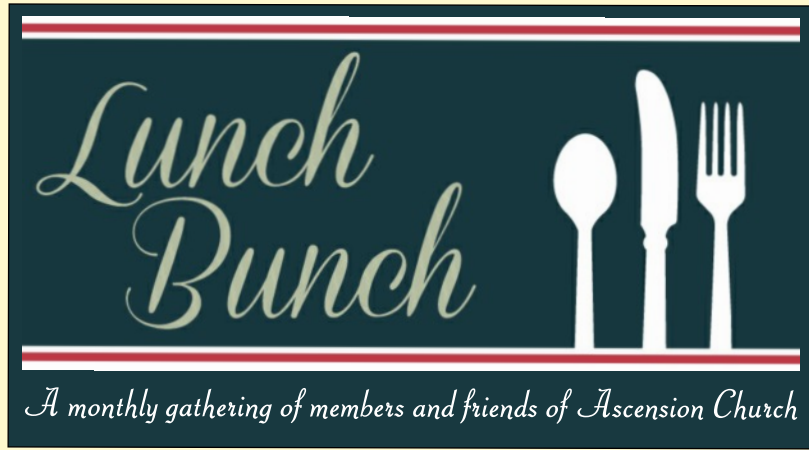
- | Date | Member/Friend                     |
|------|-----------------------------------|
| 6    | Brittany Bielewicz<br>Sue Thomson |
| 8    | Mary Hughes                       |
| 11   | Cindy Stathers                    |
| 13   | Nora Thompson                     |
| 15   | Conner Hughes                     |
| 20   | Bob Dudek                         |
| 21   | Marion Cerar                      |
| 24   | Jamie Cropper                     |
| 27   | Audriana DeCola                   |

**Best wishes & many blessings!**



## got NEWS?

If you have pictures, articles, or ideas to submit for the **MARCH 2025** Newsletter, please email [office@alcpgh.com](mailto:office@alcpgh.com).



### **MORE ISLAND PARADISES (!?) Join the Lunch Bunch FEBRUARY 20th**

In January, the Ascension Lunch Bunch braved the cold, windy (and that day, very snowy) Pittsburgh weather to enjoy some fellowship in the Bahama Breeze. Yes, some participants still wore their flowered shirts, Island dresses and leis. Some however also wore long johns underneath - it was a cold day for the island! There was a warm breeze inside the restaurant, good food and drinks and warm conversations.

If you missed the island trip in January, give us a try in February when we visit another island. We will meet on balmy Neville Island in the scenic Ohio River on February 20<sup>th</sup> at 11:30 AM at Carmody's Grill, 4905 Grand Avenue. Please let Nancy Schreiber (412-859-3969) or George Kasich (412-726-1645) know by Tuesday, Feb. 18th if you plan to come so that sufficient warning may be given to Carmody's. The food is always good there, as will be the company, so if you can, please do try to attend. All are welcome!

~ Jerry Wessel

 Happy Valentine's Day!  
Friday February 14



**Semi-Annual  
Congregational  
Meeting  
Sunday  
February 2, 2025**  
Following worship

## Upcoming EVENTS

*from Ascension Women's Group*

**A SUPER DAY . . .** 

On **Sunday February 9<sup>th</sup>**  
Ascension's Women's Group will hold a  
**"SOUP-er Bowl Sundae" Lunch**

*A variety of delicious Soups  
and Ice Cream Sundaes will be served!*



*The gathering will also feature a special  
welcome to Pastor Kobert.*

first



### FIRST COMMUNION 2025

Anyone wishing to attend  
**First Communion classes**  
(held during the Sunday School hour at 10:00 am)  
please contact Pastor Kobert ASAP so that  
enough study books may be ordered.

communion

## ASH WEDNESDAY

MARCH  
5<sup>th</sup>  
2025



*Stay tuned  
for the schedule of  
Lenten and Easter  
services for  
2025*



### ***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*



## **Ascension Lutheran Church**

has several **committees** that could really use extra members to help enrich our important ministry work.

Areas in which help is needed are:

**Christian Education** - assist with Sunday School education and activities

**Youth** - Plan activities and service events throughout the year for our young members, the future of our church

**Communications and Publications** - We need assistance with updating the ALC website ([alcpgh.com](http://alcpgh.com)) and ideas for messages to be placed on our beautiful new digital sign! If you are good with websites, media, etc., please join this committee!

**SALT Committee** - this committee (**S**erving **A**s **L**utherans **T**ogether) plans events throughout the year for our church to participate in, including Women's Bible Study and service to our community

**Property** - helps with maintenance of the church and grounds

**Worship and Music** - meets quarterly to discuss worship and music for the calendar year in the church

**Please email us at [office@alcpgh.com](mailto:office@alcpgh.com) if you are interested in helping or if you have any suggestions. *Thank you!***

# FEBRUARY LESSER FESTIVALS & commemorations

## **February 2 Presentation of Our Lord**

Forty days after the birth of Christ we mark the day Mary and Joseph presented him in the temple in accordance with Jewish law. There a prophetess named Anna began to speak of the redemption of Israel when she saw the young child. Simeon also greeted Mary and Joseph. He responded to the presence of the consolation of Israel in this child with the words of the *Nunc dimittis*. His song described Jesus as a "light for the nations." Because of the link between Jesus as the light for the nations, and because an old reading for this festival contains a line from the prophet Zephaniah, "I will search Jerusalem with candles," the day is also known as Candlemas, a day when candles are blessed for the coming year.

## **February 3 Ansgar, Bishop of Hamburg**

*Missionary to Denmark and Sweden, d. 865*

Ansgar was a monk who led a mission to Denmark and later to Sweden, where he built the first church. His work ran into difficulties with the rulers of the day, and he was forced to withdraw into Germany, where he served as a bishop in Hamburg. Despite his difficulties in Sweden, he persisted in his mission work and later helped consecrate Gothbert as the first bishop of Sweden. Ansgar had a deep love for the poor. He would wash their feet and serve them food provided by the parish.

## **February 5 The Martyrs of Japan, d. 1597**

In the sixteenth century, Jesuit missionaries, followed by Franciscans, introduced the Christian faith in Japan. But a promising beginning to those missions—perhaps as many as 300,000 Christians by the end of the sixteenth century—met complications from competition between the missionary groups, political difficulty between Spain and Portugal, and factions within the government of Japan. Christianity was suppressed. By 1630, Christianity was driven underground. Today we commemorate the first martyrs of Japan, twenty-six missionaries and converts who were killed by crucifixion. Two hundred and fifty years later, when Christian missionaries returned to Japan, they found a community of Japanese Christians that had survived underground.

## **February 14**

**Cyril, monk, d. 869** and **Methodius, bishop, d. 885**  
*missionaries to the Slavs*

These two brothers from a noble family in Thessalonika in northeastern Greece were priests and missionaries. After some early initial missionary work by Cyril among the Arabs, the brothers retired to a monastery. They later were sent to work among the Slavs, the missionary work for which they are most known. Since "Slavonic" had no written form at the time, the brothers established a written language with the Greek alphabet as its basis. They translated the scriptures and the liturgy using this new Cyrillic alphabet. The Czechs, Serbs, Croats, Slovaks, Ruthenians and Bulgars regard the brothers as the founders of Slavic literature. The brothers' work in preaching and worshiping in the language of the people are honored by Christians in both East and West.

## **February 18 Martin Luther**

*renewer of the church, d. 1546*

On this day in 1546, Martin Luther died at the age of sixty-two. For a time, he was an Augustinian monk, but it is his work as a biblical scholar, translator of the Bible, public confessor of the faith, reformer of the liturgy, theologian, educator, and father of German vernacular literature that holds him in our remembrance. In Luther's own judgment, the greatest of all of his works was his catechism, written to instruct people in the basics of faith. And it was his baptism that sustained him in his trials as a reformer.

## **February 23 Polycarp, Bishop of Smyrna**

*martyr, d. 156*

Because he is said to have been known by John, the author of Revelation, as well as the important early church fathers Irenaeus and Ignatius, Polycarp serves as a vital link in church history. He was burned at the stake at age 86 for refusing to renounce his faith.

## **February 25 Elizabeth Fedde**

*deaconess, d. 1921*

Fedde was born in Norway and trained as a deaconess. In 1882, at the age of thirty-two, she was asked to come to New York to minister to the poor and to Norwegian seafarers. Her influence was wide-ranging, and she established the Deaconess House in Brooklyn and the Deaconess House and Hospital of the Lutheran Free Church in Minneapolis. She returned home to Norway in 1895 and died there.



*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](http://www.alcpgh.com)

*Ascension Lutheran Church*  
1290 Silver Lane  
McKees Rocks, PA 15136

PLACE  
STAMP  
HERE

