



# THE MESSENGER

ASCENSION Lutheran Church

APRIL 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 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 April 8 at 7:00 PM

## We are One Body in Christ



from  
*Pastor Kobert's Desk*

As we look with expectant hope to the day we celebrate Jesus' resurrection, we do so and remember that this resurrection was a bodily one. By that, I mean our faith in what God has done in raising Jesus up from the tomb is

that Jesus was not just raised in the spirit, but in physical form. The physical body of Christ was given new life by the Lord of Life, showing the defeat of death and the sin that leads to it.

To prove that this was so to the followers and disciples, Jesus sits and eats with them and invites them to touch him where he was pierced. The body of the risen Christ was present with the disciples in the upper room, it was with the followers on the road to Emmaus, it was in the garden with the women at the tomb. That physical body assured them all that the promise that Jesus had been telling them was real. With this promise being real, so too is the promised sending of the Holy Spirit that unites.

Paul was quick to pick up on this truth and wrote often about it. Then, as now, there were many things that the followers of Christ used to differentiate between one another. Those differentiations were used as justification for creating a sort of hierarchy within the church.

Could the Greeks be followers of Jesus as they were, or did they need to become Jewish first? What was the role of women in the church? Could Gentiles every truly receive the gift that God offers? Who could be true followers of Jesus? Paul had to deal with these questions wherever he went. Some of his answers were directed at the Jewish followers of Christ, and others at the Greek and Gentile followers. But each time he sought to help them to look at one another while considering the body of Christ.

*Continued on page 5*

# 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*

## Holy Week & **EASTER** schedule of services

**MAUNDY THURSDAY**  
**6:00 pm April 17, 2025**  
**St Paul's Sewickley**

**GOOD FRIDAY**  
**6:00 pm April 18, 2025**  
**Ascension Church**

**EASTER SUNDAY**  
**11:00 am April 20, 2025**  
**Ascension Church**

### SUNDAY WORSHIP ASSISTANT SCHEDULE APRIL - MAY 2025

Date	Supply	Assisting Minister	Communion Assistant	Lector	Usher	Acolyte	Sunday (or special)	color	Council Update
Apr. 06	Pr. Ryan Kobert	Jennifer Burkholder	Amy Kruse	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. 18	Pr. Ryan Kobert	Jeff Williams	Bob Dudek	Rich Mussman	Volunteer	Volunteer	GOOD FRIDAY 6:00 PM	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
May 04	Pr. Ryan Kobert	Mary Thompson	Bob Thompson	Jason Eager	Volunteer	Volunteer	3 EASTER	WHITE	Jason Eager
May 11	Pr. Ryan Kobert	Jeff Williams	Jennifer Burkholder	Thad Ritter	Volunteer	Volunteer	4 EASTER Mother's Day	WHITE	Deb Whitfield
May 18	Pr. Ryan Kobert	Jerry Wessel	Bob Dudek	Daniel Giza	Volunteer	Volunteer	5 EASTER	WHITE	Jeff Williams
May 25	Pr. Ryan Kobert	Jennifer Burkholder	Amy Kruse	Melissa DeCola	Volunteer	Volunteer	6 EASTER	WHITE	Jerry Wessel
June 1	Pr. Ryan Kobert	Mary Thompson	Bob Thompson	Gib Palmgren	Volunteer	Volunteer	"ASCENSION SUNDAY"	WHITE	Bob Stathers

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



## Council President's **CORNER**

A message from Council President Jerry Wessel

### **HAPPY EASTER - WITH THANKS!**

As we get closer to Easter (finally - it seems Lent is 3 months long this year!), I want to recognize and thank our many members who provided soup, salad and desserts (my personal favorite) for Wednesday evening Lenten services. We also owe thanks to all those who have practiced with the choir, cleaned and decorated inside the building and worked on the church grounds in preparation for the coming of Easter.

Our members who dedicate so much time and effort to Ascension are what makes our church the faith family it is.

I hope everyone has a happy Easter as we celebrate Christ's resurrection after suffering for our sins.

Sincerely,

**Jerry Wessel**

*Ascension Council President*

#### **PostScript ...**

*As part of our continuing religious education, I encourage you to Google the "Sparkle Creed." Read it, and decide for yourself if it reflects the Triune God in whom you believe. Also be sure to read some of the commentary and news articles written about this creed. I personally found one from Australia quite interesting. ~JW*

### **\* Dates to Remember \***

- Tues Apr 8 Council Meeting
- Sun Apr 13 Palm Sunday
- Thurs Apr 17 Maundy Thursday
- Fri Apr 18 Good Friday
- Sun Apr 20 EASTER
- Sun May 11 Mothers Day
- Tues May 13 Council Meeting
- Mon May 25 Memorial Day
- Thurs May 29 Ascension Thursday
- Sun June 1 1<sup>st</sup> Communion & Confirmation
- Sat June 7 Annual Yard Sale
- Sun June 8 Pentecost Sunday



## **ALC Council Meeting Highlights**

**Council meeting was held Tues. Mar. 11, 2025**

**Call to order:** 7:00pm

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

**AED Check:** Validated

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

**Pastor Report & Office Administrator's Report** presented  
**President Jerry Wessel**

**Vice President Sharon Giza:** Cemetery income for Feb.; Cemetery Board meeting in April; President's letter discussed.

**Treasurer Bob Stathers:** Budget info discussed for inclusion in Bulletin; Remind members RE: Thrivent Choice Dollars

**Old Business:** -Capital projects for 2025: further discussion.  
-Determine financial info format for inclusion in bulletin  
-Sub-committee to study ELCA issues; set a meeting date

**New Business:** -water leaks indoors and outside

**Call Committee:** Sharon Pastor Asplin updates that there has been no interest in an interview.

**Fellowship, Social Ministry & Evangelism:** Any new suggestions for sign messaging? Visitations ongoing.

**Mutual Ministry:** Bob S: meeting on 3/13

**Property:** Bob T: Installed expansion tank on hot water heater; additional plumbing work for water fountain

**Worship and Music:** Jerry: Maundy Thursday – No service at Ascension; St. Paul's will be hosting the service at 6pm; Good Friday – service will be held at Ascension at 6pm

**Youth:** Deb Whitfield: BINGO on Sunday 3/16

#### **Important dates:**

- Lutheran Bingo March 16
- Sunday June 1: First Communion
- Sunday June 1: Confirmation
- Saturday June 7: Yard Sale

**Motion to adjourn:** Bob S.; Seconded by Sharon

**Next Council Meeting:**  
**Tues. Apr. 8, 2025 at 7:00 pm**



# APRIL

## APRIL BIRTHDAYS!

Date | Member/Friend

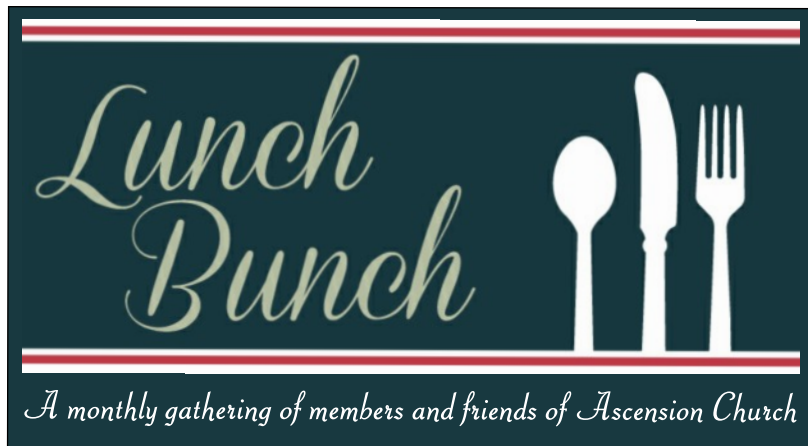
- 2 Avis Ritter
- 5 Dee Gratzmiller
- 7 Judy Bryan  
Jennifer Palmgren
- 8 Leo Rickerd
- 12 Christopher Paladino
- 15 Samantha Siemons
- 19 Kristin Bryan
- 23 Mike Lescallette
- 27 Julia Wessel
- 30 Mary Ann Groskova



## APRIL ANNIVERSARY!

Date | Members/Friends

- 7 Leo & Leslie Rickerd



## TRY SOMETHING NEW FOR APRIL . . . Join the Lunch Bunch on April 17

In March, nine Ascension Lunch Bunch members braved a cool, rainy day to meet at Downey's House for lunch. The food was too good and too much, as most attendees left with take-home boxes. We enjoyed catching up with each other and spinning tales.

Speaking of spinning, the Bunch will spin on down on Thursday April 17<sup>th</sup> to a new venue – Firebirds Wood Fired Grill at the Piazza in South Fayette, 210 Millers Run Road, just off the Bridgeville exit of US route 79 south.

Firebirds is an American restaurant and steakhouse known for their “scratch” kitchen, bold flavors and inviting atmosphere. Their lunch menu offers a full spectrum of soups, sandwiches, signature salads and more.

We will meet at the usual time, 11:30 am on April 17<sup>th</sup> (yes, it's Maundy Thursday) at the grill. You really don't have to drive a Firebird to attend, but if you do, that would be fun to see!

As is our custom, please let Jerry Wessel (412) 787-1213 or Nancy Schreiber (412) 859-3969 know by Tuesday April 15<sup>th</sup> if you plan on joining the Bunch, so that enough parking spaces can be reserved for all of those classic Firebirds ... or, maybe maestro Stravinsky will grace us with a few notes from his famous classical masterpiece “The Firebird” ... or maybe the only famous (or infamous) classics there will be our own Lunch Bunchers. In any case, come on out and give us a try! ~ Jerry Wessel

## Being near God

*A reflection by Nancy Jacobs*

The Book of Psalms is not a book of the bible I generally pick for everyday reading, but somewhere in my little study books psalm 73 was cited, so I looked it up. It's a good one!

Psalm 73, verse 3 says:

“For I was envious of the arrogant  
when I saw the prosperity of the wicked.”

So . . . the bad guys have no pain, no problems, everybody likes them and they are rich! Doesn't seem fair, does it? The Psalmist goes on about his struggles in his life and the changes that occurred, but ends his song by verse 28 --- it is good to be near God.

I found this easy to relate to --- we go through phases, too. Good days, bad days, just like the Psalmist. We complain about finances, troubles at home or in the work place, health, people who disagree with us, prices, weather ... but in the end, *it is good to be near God.*



# Lenten Soup Suppers

## “Soup and Service”

**HELD WEDNESDAY EVENINGS**

**April 2 • 9**

- Soup, salad and bread are offered  
6:00-7:00 pm
- Midweek Service celebrated 7:00-7:30 pm  
(No Midweek Service during Holy Week)



### **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 Kruiise, stepmother of Thom Kruiise – *stage 2 throat cancer*
- Virginia Shar – *recovering from fractured ankle*
- Bob Hughes – *recovering from recent surgery*
- Bette Ann Kallay – *recovering from recent knee surgery*
- Nancy Jacobs – *successful cancer surgery; recuperating at home!*
- Diana Spade, Fejka family friend – *serious health concerns*

# 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 18<sup>th</sup>**. God counts on all of us to share our bounty with our neighbors.

**Thank You!**

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

In the letter to the Romans, Paul encourages them to humble themselves, not thinking of themselves more highly than another. For each of us, though many, are one body in Christ. That is, we are all given the gift of the Holy Spirit. The blessings given in that Holy Spirit differ, but all have a place in the body.

In his first letter to the Corinthians, he has states more clearly that we are all baptized into one body, whether we are Jews or Greeks, slave or free. Because of this we cannot dismiss another part of the body of Christ as lesser, for all have a role to play in sharing the gospel.

**“Now, you are the body of Christ and individually members of it.” (1 Cor. 12:27)**

We are members of this body because of the resurrected body of Christ. Like the resurrected Christ, we are a real and powerful body of believers. Like the scars that marked our Lord’s body, we are physical and in many places. The same power that lifted Christ from the dead was shared with all parts of this body of Christ, now spread throughout the world. That gift of life unites us in purpose and ministry, to share the things that give life to others, just as we were given the gift that gives us life. ■



# Ascension's picture-perfect events!



## Mardi Gras Pancake Lunch

Members of Ascension Church enjoyed the "Mardi Gras Pancake Lunch" on Sunday March 2 and the "Lucky to be Lutheran" BINGO on Sunday March 16. Many thanks to all who worked to prepare these fun events, and to all who attended.

photos:  
Sharon Giza &  
Melissa DeCola



**"LUCKY TO BE LUTHERAN"**



**REMEMBER - APRIL 6 is the deadline to order your EASTER FLOWERS! See info in the BULLETIN, and order forms in the church narthex.**



# LESSER FESTIVALS & commemorations

## **April 4** Benedict the African

*Confessor d. 1589*

Born a slave on the island of Sicily, Benedict first lived as a hermit and labored as a plowman after he was freed. When the bishop of Rome ordered all hermits to attach themselves to a religious community, Benedict joined the Franciscans, where he served as a cook. Although he was illiterate, his fame as a confessor brought many visitors to the humble and holy cook, and he was eventually named superior of the community. A patron saint of African Americans, Benedict is remembered for his patience and understanding when confronted with racial prejudice and taunts.

## **April 6** Albrecht Dürer, d. 1528; Matthias Grünewald, d. 1529; Lucas Cranach, d. 1553

*Artists*

These great artists revealed through their work the mystery of salvation and the wonder of creation. Dürer's work reflected the apocalyptic spirit of his time. Though he remained a Roman Catholic, he was sympathetic to Martin Luther's reforming work. Grünewald's paintings are known for their dramatic forms, vivid colors, and depiction of light. Cranach's work includes many fine religious examples and several portraits of Martin Luther. Cranach was also widely known for his woodcuts.

## **April 9** Dietrich Bonhoeffer

*Theologian, d. 1945*

Bonhoeffer was a German theologian who wrote profoundly, yet in an accessible manner. In the Second World War, he became a leader of the Confessing Church in Germany that resisted the Nazi movement. Linked to a plot to kill Hitler, he was hanged shortly before the end of the war.

## **April 10** Mikael Agricola

*Bishop of Turku, d. 1557*

Consecrated bishop of Turku, Finland, without the approval of the pope, Agricola began a reform along Lutheran lines. In only three years, he translated the New Testament and worship texts into Finnish, in the process establishing the rules of Finnish writing that are still used today.

## **April 19** Olavus Petri, priest, d.1552;

**Laurentius Petri, Bishop of Uppsala, d.1573;**

*Renewers of the church*

These two brothers studied with Luther at the University of Wittenberg and then returned to their native Sweden to introduce the Lutheran reforms. Olavus published a catechism and hymnal; Laurentius was a professor who de-fended the office of bishop and later became one.

## **April 21** Anselm

*Bishop of Canterbury d. 1109*

This eleventh- and twelfth-century Benedictine This eleventh-century monk was one of the greatest theologians of the Middle Ages. He is remembered for emphasizing the maternal aspects of God, and for the theory that the Son of God became human in order to make the necessary payment for our sin.

## **April 23** Toyohiko Kagawa

*Renewer of society d. 1960*

Born in Kobe, Japan, Kagawa was orphaned as a young child. Later, when he became Christian, he was disowned by the rest of his family. Wishing to bring Christian principles into society, he worked among poor people, established schools and hospitals, and worked for peace.

## **April 25** Mark

*Evangelist*

Though Mark himself was not an apostle, it is likely that he was a member of one of the early Christian communities. It is possible that he is the John Mark of Acts 12 whose mother owned the house where the apostles gathered. The gospel attributed to him is brief and direct. It is considered by many to be the earliest gospel.

## **April 29** Catherine of Siena

*Theologian d. 1380*

A member of the Order of Preachers (Dominicans), Catherine was the first woman among Roman Catholics to receive the title Doctor of the Church. She was a contemplative and is known for her mystical visions of Jesus. Catherine was a humanitarian who worked to alleviate the suffering of the poor and imprisoned. She was also a renewer of church and society.



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

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PLACE  
STAMP  
HERE

