

Ascension Lutheran Church



Missouri Synod

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Worship Leader Today: Mike Fiffik, Elder

Secretary: Barbara Marcellus
secretary@ascensionpgh.com

Music Director: Vanessa Candreva
vcandreva@ascensionpgh.com

Welcome To Our Guest

It is a great joy to have you here today. We pray that your time with us has helped to deepen your faith in our Lord, Jesus Christ. If we can be of service to you or your family, we invite you to talk to us at your convenience. You will always be welcome here. Please do us the honor of signing the guest sheet at the podium at the front of the church or at the entrance from the education wing.

FOURTH SUNDAY IN LENT

March 22, 2020

Online Worship Service

AS WE GATHER

It's said that darkness is nothing more than the absence of light. Darkness and blindness are words often used throughout Scripture to describe our sinfulness—the absence of the true Light. In our continued Lenten journey, we prepare our hearts for the dark afternoon of Good Friday at the cross. Yet even in that darkness, Jesus Christ brings the light of life. In our times of spiritual blindness and comfort in the darkness of this world, we gather again today to see His light through our vision of Spirit-given faith, that our eyes may look to Him who is the light of the world—the light no darkness can overcome.

WELCOME

OPENING HYMN: **“Holy Spirit, Light Divine”** LW 166, vs. 1, 2, & 6

**Holy Spirit, light divine,
Dawn upon this soul of mine;
Let Your word dispel the night,
Wake my spirit, clear my sight.**

**Holy Spirit, grace divine,
Cleanse this sinful heart of mine;
In Your mercy look on me,
From sin's bondage set me free.**

**Holy Spirit, all divine,
Dwell within this self of mine;
I Your temple pure would be
Now and for eternity.**

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INVOCATION

Elder: In the name of the Father and of the † Son and of the Holy Spirit.

People: **Amen.**

CONFESSION AND ABSOLUTION

Elder: If we say we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us.

People: **But if we confess our sins, God, who is faithful and just, will forgive our sins and cleanse us from all unrighteousness.**

(Silence for private confession)

Elder: Let us then confess our sins to God our Father.

People: **Most merciful God, we confess that we are by nature sinful and unclean. We have sinned against You in thought, word, and deed, by what we have done and by what we have left undone. We have not loved You with our whole heart; we have not loved our neighbors as ourselves. We justly deserve Your present and eternal punishment. For the sake of Your Son, Jesus Christ, have mercy on us. Forgive us, renew us, and lead us, so that we may delight in Your will and walk in Your ways to the glory of Your holy name. Amen.**

Elder: In the mercy of almighty God, Jesus Christ was given to die for us, and for His sake God forgives us all our sins. To those who believe in Jesus Christ He gives the power to become the children of God and bestows on them the Holy Spirit. May the Lord, who has begun this good work in us, bring it to completion in the day of our Lord Jesus Christ.

People: **Amen.**

RESPONSE: "Create in Me A Clean Heart"

GATHERING SONG: "Forever Reign"

OLD TESTAMENT: Isaiah 42:14–21 *(Amid the unbelief of His people, God will turn darkness to light.)*

EPISTLE: Ephesians 5:8–14 *(Once in darkness, we are now children of light in the Lord.)*

HOLY GOSPEL: John 9:1–41 *(Jesus heals a man born blind.)*

Congregation reads together:

^{9:1} As He passed by, He saw a man blind from birth. ² And His disciples asked Him, "Rabbi, who sinned, this man or his parents, that he was born blind?" ³ Jesus answered, "It was not that this man sinned, or his parents, but that the works of God might be displayed in him. ⁴ We must work the works of Him who sent Me while it is day; night is coming, when no one can work. ⁵ As long as I am in the world, I am the light of the world." ⁶ Having said these things, He spit on the ground and made mud with the saliva. Then He anointed the

man's eyes with the mud ⁷ and said to him, "Go, wash in the pool of Siloam" (which means Sent). So he went and washed and came back seeing.

⁸The neighbors and those who had seen him before as a beggar were saying, "Is this not the man who used to sit and beg?" ⁹Some said, "It is he." Others said, "No, but he is like him." He kept saying, "I am the man." ¹⁰So they said to him, "Then how were your eyes opened?" ¹¹He answered, "The man called Jesus made mud and anointed my eyes and said to me, 'Go to Siloam and wash.' So I went and washed and received my sight." ¹²They said to him, "Where is He?" He said, "I do not know."

¹³They brought to the Pharisees the man who had formerly been blind. ¹⁴Now it was a Sabbath day when Jesus made the mud and opened his eyes. ¹⁵So the Pharisees again asked him how he had received his sight. And he said to them, "He put mud on my eyes, and I washed, and I see." ¹⁶Some of the Pharisees said, "This man is not from God, for He does not keep the Sabbath." But others said, "How can a man who is a sinner do such signs?" And there was a division among them. ¹⁷So they said again to the blind man, "What do you say about Him, since He has opened your eyes?" He said, "He is a prophet."

¹⁸The Jews did not believe that he had been blind and had received his sight, until they called the parents of the man who had received his sight ¹⁹ and asked them, "Is this your son, who you say was born blind? How then does he now see?" ²⁰His parents answered, "We know that this is our son and that he was born blind. ²¹But how he now sees we do not know, nor do we know who opened his eyes. Ask him; he is of age. He will speak for himself." ²²(His parents said these things because they feared the Jews, for the Jews had already agreed that if anyone should confess Jesus to be Christ, he was to be put out of the synagogue.) ²³Therefore his parents said, "He is of age; ask him."

²⁴So for the second time they called the man who had been blind and said to him, "Give glory to God. We know that this man is a sinner." ²⁵He answered, "Whether He is a sinner I do not know. One thing I do know, that though I was blind, now I see." ²⁶They said to him, "What did He do to you? How did He open your eyes?" ²⁷He answered them, "I have told you already, and you would not listen. Why do you want to hear it again? Do you also want to become His disciples?" ²⁸And they reviled him, saying, "You are his disciple, but we are disciples of Moses. ²⁹We know that God has spoken to Moses, but as for this man, we do not know where He comes from." ³⁰The man answered, "Why, this is an amazing thing! You do not know where He comes from, and yet He opened my eyes. ³¹We know that God does not listen to sinners, but if anyone is a worshiper of God and does His will, God listens to him. ³²Never since the world began has it been heard that anyone opened the eyes of a man born blind. ³³If this man were not from God, he could do nothing." ³⁴They answered him, "You were born in utter sin, and would you teach us?" And they cast him out.

³⁵Jesus heard that they had cast him out, and having found him he said, "Do you believe in the Son of Man?" ³⁶He answered, "And who is He, sir, that I

may believe in Him?" ³⁷ Jesus said to him, "You have seen Him, and it is He who is speaking to you." ³⁸ He said, "Lord, I believe," and he worshiped Him. ³⁹ Jesus said, "For judgment I came into this world, that those who do not see may see, and those who see may become blind." ⁴⁰ Some of the Pharisees near Him heard these things, and said to Him, "Are we also blind?" ⁴¹ Jesus said to them, "If you were blind, you would have no guilt; but now that you say, 'We see,' your guilt remains.

HYMN OF THE DAY: "O Christ, Our Light, O Radiance True" LW 314, vs. 1-3

O Christ, our light, O Radiance true,
Shine forth on those estranged from You,
And bring to them Your home again,
Where their delight shall never end.

Fill with the radiance of Your grace
The wand'ers lost in error's maze.
Enlighten those whose secret minds
Some deep delusion haunts and blinds.

Lord, open all reluctant ears,
And take away the childish fears
Of those who tremble to express
The faith their secret hearts confess.

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THE APPLICATION OF GOD'S WORD FOR TODAY

Mike Fiffik, Elder

APOSTLES' CREED

I believe in God, the Father Almighty, maker of heaven and earth.

And in Jesus Christ, His only Son, our Lord, who was conceived by the Holy Spirit, born of the virgin Mary, suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, died and was buried. He descended into hell. The third day He rose again from the dead. He ascended into heaven and sits at the right hand of God the Father Almighty. From thence He will come to judge the living and the dead.

I believe in the Holy Spirit, the holy Christian Church, the communion of saints, the forgiveness of sins, the resurrection of the body, and the life everlasting. Amen.

PRAYERS OF THE CHURCH

Elder: Let us pray for the whole church of God in Christ Jesus and for all people according to their needs.

Gracious Lord, shine Your light of mercy and grace into our darkened hearts of sin and eyes blinded to Your will and ways, so that we know the fullness of Your forgiveness, life, and peace. Lord, in Your mercy,

People: hear our prayer.

Elder: Healing Lord, shine Your light of peace and healing to all who seek relief, for the sick and dying, for those troubled physically, spiritually, emotionally, and mentally, and for the grieving and the dying, that Your comfort be known, especially those we name in our hearts. Lord, in Your mercy,

People: hear our prayer.

Elder: Lord of all nations, shine Your light to all places in this world and to the leaders of cities, states, and countries, that Your light guide and direct them so that peace be had and justice faithfully served. Give courage and diligence to all who work to defend liberties and life, and to those who speak for those who cannot speak for themselves. Lord, in Your mercy,

People: hear our prayer.

Elder: Lord of the Church, shine Your light upon all You have enabled to speak and proclaim Your Word. Be with our congregation, that we remain united in truth, love, faith, and service. Give courage to live as Your witnesses, that many who remain in darkness rejoice in the light of truth. Lord, in Your mercy,

People: hear our prayer.

Elder: Lord of all seasons, in this season of Lent shine Your light upon us as we examine ourselves, see our sins, and know our need for a Savior. As we continue to follow Christ to the cross, draw our hearts and minds to You and the joys that await. Lord, in Your mercy,

People: hear our prayer.

Elder: Into Your hands, O Lord, we commend all for whom we pray, trusting in Your mercy, through Jesus Christ, our Lord.

People: Amen.

LORD'S PRAYER

ANNOUNCEMENTS

THE BLESSING

The Lord bless us and keep us.

The Lord make His face to shine upon us and be gracious unto us.

The Lord lift up His countenance upon us and give us peace.

CLOSING SONG: "Jesus Messiah"

Elder: Go in peace and
People: **serve the Lord.**

LOOKING AHEAD: The assigned readings of the Church Calendar for next week are Ezekiel 37:1-14, Romans 8:1-11, and John 11:1-45 (46-53) or John 11:17-27, 38-53.

OUR MISSION AND VISION STATEMENT

Acknowledging the great gift of God the Father in sending His Son, Jesus Christ, as our Savior, we the people of Ascension Lutheran Church, as guided by the Holy Spirit, are committed to the furtherance of God's Kingdom. We will share and live the Gospel in our homes, our church, our community, and the world. Motivated by Christ's love for us, we are dedicated to spiritual growth and unity, worship and fellowship, and compassionate service. We recognize this as our common purpose and pray that God will enable us by His strength and wisdom to seek His will.



THE
LUTHERAN CHURCH
Missouri Synod

ASCENSION NEWS

ASCENSION WORSHIP SERVICES SUSPENDED – Out of an abundance of caution, for the health of our congregation during the COVID-19 pandemic, Ascension Lutheran Church has decided to suspend worship services for the next two weeks. This affects the following services: Wednesday Lenten Services on March 25 and April 1 – this includes our family dinner before services – and Sunday Services on March 22 and March 29.

We plan to offer everyone access to worship materials and meditations at our website at <http://ow.ly/nC5V50yOV1S> beginning with Wednesday's (March 18) Lenten Service. Here is a link to the **March 18 Lenten Service Worship Video** – <https://youtu.be/gmZDRhmlUII>.

The church office hours will remain the same although visitor access will be limited. More information about Bible studies and meetings is forthcoming. We hope to make those available to you via video-conferencing.

The Elders are available to anyone feeling overwhelmed by all the events from the past couple of weeks. Please contact the church office for more details or email the Elders directly at elders@ascensionpgh.com. Your church council will monitor the situation and advise if any future dates (or changes in current schedule) are warranted.

We pray for all that have been affected by this virus and for everyone in the medical profession during this unprecedented time in our nation. Please be safe – everyone.

WITH CHURCH SERVICES BEING SUSPENDED through April 1, 2020, it's very important to remember the church's expenses continue. There's still a mortgage to be paid, payroll to meet, utilities to pay, etc. Now is a great time to try out **ONLINE GIVING!** Go to the Online Giving page of the church (ascensionpgh.com/giving) or download the app (Give+) from Vanco to your phone. You can set up recurring or one-time donations. Now more than ever it's important to continue your support of Ascension financially. We encourage you to consider giving your offering online. Of course, you may also mail in your donation to the church if you would like. Questions? Contact Bob Marcellus at finance@ascensionpgh.com. Thank you.

CANCELLATIONS – The following activities have been cancelled:

Morning with the Lord Praise & Prayer: cancelled until further notice

Young at Heart luncheon: March 24th

Choir rehearsals: March 25th and April 1st

EASTER FLOWERS – Because our order had to be in by March 29th, and with all the uncertainty because of the Coronavirus, we have decided to suspend our flower sale this year.

FOR PASTORAL NEEDS/EMERGENCIES, please call Pastor Barry Keurulainen at 724-352-2777 (office) or after hours at 724-352-3841 (home). You may also reach him via email at bjk@stlukecabot.org. If you would like to speak with an Elder instead, please feel free to contact one of the Elders listed below:

Mike Fiffik, Head Elder	412-780-1647
Cooper Blake	412-654-4146
Bob Booth	808-295-1835
Pete Candreva	412-999-4856
David Dille	412-726-1934
Darryl Gunther	724-272-0441

EYES ON JESUS LENTEN SERIES – “Murderous Eyes” is the theme of week 4 in Lent. The chief priests and scribes saw Jesus as an obstacle to be rid of by murdering Him through the Roman judicial system. Yet during the Passover festival, they would unwittingly bring about the Father’s sacrifice of the ultimate Passover Lamb.

DEADLINE APPROACHING – If you are a Thrivent member, you can designate your Choice Dollars to Ascension Lutheran Church. Thrivent Choice® is Thrivent’s charitable grant program. **Choice Dollars designated to eligible benefit members in 2019 must be directed by March 31, 2020.** To designate your Choice Dollars, or for more information, visit Thrivent.com/choicedollars or call 1-800-847-4836.

SOCIAL MEDIA – Watch for postings on Ascension’s facebook page (www.facebook.com/AscensionPgh), google plus (<https://plus.google.com/+AscensionLutheranChurchPittsburgh>), and twitter (www.twitter.com/AscensionPgh) accounts. You don’t have to have accounts to view our pages online. Please do check us out (and “Like”/follow us).

EMAIL ACCOUNTS – Please use the email addresses below for contacting these individuals/groups:

President (Jennifer Ciccone)	president@ascensionpgh.com
Treasurer (Patti Lopresto)	treasurer@ascensionpgh.com
Financial Secretary (Bob Marcellus)	finance@ascensionpgh.com
Elders	elders@ascensionpgh.com
Board of Christian Education	education@ascensionpgh.com
Board of Trustees	trustees@ascensionpgh.com
SOAR Respite Nights	soar@ascensionpgh.com
Vanessa Candreva (Music Director)	vcandreva@ascensionpgh.com
Barb Marcellus (Secretary)	secretary@ascensionpgh.com

COMMUNITY CONNECTIONS

THE LUTHERAN HOUR is on WWNL/1080 AM on Saturdays at 3:30 PM and on Sundays at 8:00 AM. Read or listen to the sermon at www.lutheranhour.org. **March 29, 2020:** “**Labors of Love**” (Exodus 10) Guest Speaker: Pastor Ryan Tinetti

KFUO RADIO, a media ministry extension of LCMS congregations, shares Christ for you anytime, anywhere on **KFUO.org** via worship services, Bible and theology studies, practical talk programs, and sacred music. You can find programs on demand at kfuo.org and wherever you get your podcasts! Find us on social: **@KFUOradio** on [Facebook](#), [Twitter](#), and [Instagram](#). **This week on KFUO.org**, begin the book of Revelation on Thy Strong Word with Rev. AJ Espinosa and guest pastors (weekdays at 11:00 a.m. CT), hear about gossiping on The Coffee Hour with Pastor Chris Hull (3/24 at 9:00 a.m. CT), and study Matthew 24-25 on Sharper Iron's All Righteousness Fulfilled (weekdays at 8:00 a.m. CT). Find these programs on demand at kfuo.org!

CHRISTIAN COUNSELING ASSOCIATES of Western Pennsylvania (CCA) is a full-service counseling center committed to using the resources of the Christian faith in helping individuals and families achieve emotional, spiritual, and physical well-being. Licensed and certified professional counselors provide all services. Available services include help for those seeking professional help for emotional and life challenges such as depression, anxiety, marital problems, addictions, grief, trauma, or any mental health concern. CCA offers services to adults, children, adolescents, and families. Christian counseling engages a faith-based process of change that can equip individuals to overcome the challenges they face. CCA accepts many different health insurances for payment and offers a sliding fee scale if there is no insurance. Ascension provides office space for CCA. For more information or to schedule an appointment, call CCA at 724-396-1510.

LIFE QUOTE – “At home: can we be more loving and forgiving to those who mean so much to us? Can we take the time to show our unconditional love? At work: are we really a Christian example to our coworkers? Can we be more mindful of the struggles others are going through? At church: where sometimes, ironically, it’s the hardest, can we put on the mind of Christ, giving ourselves to our brothers and sisters in the faith? ... [L]et the message of God's love in Jesus resonate boldly in your own life ... to God’s glory.” *Dr. J. A. O. Preus – A Life Quote from Lutherans For Life • www.lutheransforlife.org*

PRAYER REQUESTS – March 22, 2020*

“And the prayer offered in faith will make the sick person well; the Lord will raise him up. If he has sinned, he will be forgiven. Therefore confess your sins to each other and pray for each other so that you may be healed. The prayer of a righteous man is powerful and effective.” (James 5:15-16)

FOR HEALTH & HEALING

Marie (breast cancer – friend of Becky and Gordon Marquette); Eileen Vogel (recovery from surgery); Susan, Carol, and Karen (health issues – friends of Trish Young); Cookie (health issues – Trish Young’s sister-in-law); Joe (mass on heart – Cheryl Sedar’s son); Gene Williams (mesothelioma); Sandi Weber (health issues); Shut-ins: Elva Fields, Helen Goettmann, Lois Kitzki, Phyllis Kitzki, Clay McClellan, Don Sohngen, Nadine Weber

FOR STRENGTH & COMFORT

For all those who lost loved ones, especially Janine Nicolette, Michael Fantin, and Emily and Isabelle Nicolette-Fantin on the death of Geraldine Nicolette; Gino’s family (friend of Gene Williams); Mark, Coleen, and Nick Koorsen and Mark’s three grandchildren, on the loss of Mark’s daughter, Rebecca; for the citizens, survivors, relief workers, missionaries, and families affected by hurricanes, earthquakes, terrorist attacks and disasters worldwide

FOR THANKSGIVING

For the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ; all our guests this morning; the gifts of love and God's Word; family and friends; our country

FOR SAFETY/PROTECTION

For our college students; missionaries; our armed forces; unborn children

FOR DIRECTION AND FAITH

For our pastoral call process; those who are experiencing a crisis of faith; women with unplanned pregnancies

GENERAL PRAYER, GUIDANCE, AND PROVISION

For Pastor Lee and his family; the Gaertner family; SOAR Respite Nights and participating families; Gene Williams, Jr. and DiscipleMakers; Pastor Eric Andræ and Campus Ministry in Oakland; seminary students; the residents and staff of Concordia Lutheran Ministries; Shepherd’s Heart Fellowship; Food For The Poor; Christian Counseling Associates counselors and their clients; those with special needs (physical, mental, or emotional)

“Devote yourselves to prayer, being watchful and thankful.” (Colossians 4:2)

***Please note that prayer requests will remain on the prayer list for 60 days and then be removed unless an extension is requested by notifying the church secretary.**