



From the heart of
ASCENSION
Lutheran Church

**quarterly
newsletter**
Fall 2025

From the Pastor's Desk

Dear Saints of Ascension,

This Fall I taught a class on Death and Dying. I didn't plan it this way, but that class ended just one week before All Saints Day. Both my preparation for that Bible Class and the service on All Saints Day have been on my mind. Death has a way of clearing out the cobwebs in someone's life. It brings to the forefront of your mind questions that we often want to ignore. The thought of death causes us to think about what is really important. So, what is important?

The church, its pastors, and its people can get distracted just like anyone else. As a pastor when I am caring for families and friends who have just lost their wife, husband, mom, dad, or friend the real purpose of the Church comes out in the most beautiful way. It reminds me what is important. Faith in Jesus as the Son of God, who became true man, died on the cross and rose from the dead to save you. That is the important thing. That is what church is ultimately about. When faced with the ultimate consequence of sin--death--this is what defeats it.

Fall usually brings new challenges and blessings. In the midst of those don't lose sight of what is important. God loves you and sent Jesus to save you; and He has done exactly that.

Blessings, Pastor Thompson

what's inside?

have you
heard?

recent
happenings

advent is
coming!

pew talk

pause for a
puzzle

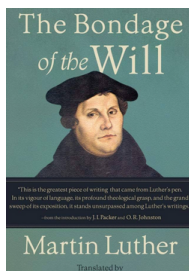
pastor's
doing what?

let's connect,
learn & serve!

A Christ-centered community where we **connect, learn, and serve.**

have you heard?

Christian Ed's Quarterly Book Recommendation



Bondage of the Will By Martin Luther

Four years after the Protestant Reformation began and in answer to Erasmus' Diatribe on Free Will, Luther wrote this book in order to assert that the human will is enslaved to sin and lacks free will in matters of salvation.

Key teachings:

- Bondage of the will: Because of the fall of Adam, human beings are inherently sinful and have no ability to choose God or do good works of their own will.
- Salvation is through faith alone: Salvation is not earned through good works or human effort but is a gift from God, received by faith.
- God's sovereign grace: God is the sole actor in salvation, initiating and completing all that is necessary for a person to be redeemed.
- Denial of free will in salvation: The idea of free will in the context of spiritual matters is an illusion, as the will is not free to choose the good.

This book will help you clarify the difficult but biblical position on human will and will make you more conversant in it. It is especially helpful when engaging with Roman Catholics or decision-theology Protestants, both of whom assign more freedom to the human will than scripture properly allows.

Christian Ed Updates

Fall is in full swing here at Ascension Lutheran Church. We were excited to start the season with Rally Day which was held on Sept. 7th. Books were blessed during the divine service, and then all the kids got to meet their teachers and visit their classrooms. The rooms were all fresh and redecorated for the new year. We are so thankful for all our teachers who give so faithfully of their time and love to each and every student. After visiting the classrooms, everyone met outside for a beautiful day and a picnic full of delicious food, fellowship and games. A wonderful time was had by all!

The following week, Sept 14th, all the Fall classes started. Pastor continued the series on The Chosen that was started in the summer. Episodes 5-8 were covered, thus completing season 1. Pastor then led a wonderful discussion about each episode. Pastor also just covered a series on Death and Dying which discusses preparation for planning a funeral that glorifies Christ and our faith. We just started up our New Member Class & a book of the bible study on Titus. Feel free to drop in!

We are always looking for members who would like to be involved in the Christian Education team. We meet once a month, the first Tuesday evening, for just an hour and a half. Please reach out if you are interested.

Outreach Team Updates

The PUMPKIN FEST/FLEA MARKET XI (if Superbowl can use Roman numerals, so can we) was another smash hit--pardon the pun, we didn't smash any pumpkins.

Income for Pumpkin Fest was \$3,155 resulting in a profit of \$2660. A 10% tithe of \$315 is given to the church general fund and the remainder is set aside for a future special project. We only had two Thrivent grants of 250 dollars each compared to having three last year so that did infringe a bit on profit amount. We had 155 pies to sell and got many compliments for each type. Only a few pies are in the freezer (keep watching for sale of them closer to

Thanksgiving.) Thank you to the 41 volunteers who gave many hours and to all those who attended and made lots of yummy, fun, useful purchases. Please support Shenot's Farm Market, Chili's on McKnight Rd, and Mazur's Greenhouse & Farm, who very much contributed to our success. With this event we truly reach out to the community.

The speaker in September on Diabetes & Heart Health Nutrition was one of the best we've offered. We were pleased with the attendance & what we learned!

Thank you to all who contributed items for the October Shepherd's Heart clothing drive. We delivered 29 coats, 87 pairs of socks, 44 T-shirts, 12 sweatshirts, and various scarves, flannel shirts, briefs, boxers, shoes, dress shirts, pants, and even thermal underwear. They are always so thankful of what we do for them!

Outreach Team Updates (cont.)

The second visit to The Pleasant Valley Shelter was to provide dinner on November 2. Lisa Marcellus headed up eight of our members who either made and/or served the meal or contributed money to cover the cost. This is such a worthwhile project. Please watch for more opportunities in 2026!

Through our member, Arlene Rusnica, we became aware of a need for families at North Hills Community Outreach. They are asking for Thanksgiving dinner supplies. To help meet this need we have donated \$150 and the extra cans of pumpkin from Pumpkin Fest. We are hoping they will use the money to buy turkeys. Lastly, just a little tease to let you know of projects still to come in 2025:

A possible Fire Safety speaker; upcoming meal for Christmas carolers & church christmas decorators, and Concordia resident and shut in Christmas gifts.

Men's Retreat Recap

This September Ascension hosted its very first--hopefully of many--Men's Retreats. There were 8 guys in attendance. They spent a Friday afternoon to Saturday afternoon in Deep Creek, MD. They enjoyed some good food at the local restaurants, fellowship around a firepit and on a hike, and learned about Biblical Masculinity and Spiritual Leadership.

It was a great time!

Council Update

No report.
Check back next time!

Trustees Update

No report.
Check back next time!

Worship Committee Corner

At the end of October, we said goodbye to Cathy, our former music director. We wish her luck with her new endeavors working at a new school. We now welcome Lisa and Emily Marcellus into the position as a shared role, starting now!

Thank you to Mark and Katie Straszheim and Amy Diak for their years of service on the Praise Team.

You will be missed! With their departure, we need some new people to help serve the worship of the congregation on Sundays. Please prayerfully consider joining our team!

Our Advent & Christmas theme this year is "Every Heart Prepare." It will look at how to prepare for the arrival of the Christ child by looking at the things we use to prepare for our own Christmas celebrations like lights and presents. We look forward to seeing you at the Advent Services!

Stewardship Update

No report.
Check back next time!

Giving Update

Current YTD - \$219,824

Budgeted YTD - \$230,025

Need some help finding your place?

New to Ascension or feeling like it is time to get more plugged in? We would love to discuss your interests and help you get connected. See or email Marissa Thompson or Pastor Thompson!

recent happenings

Sunday School Kickoff Picnic!



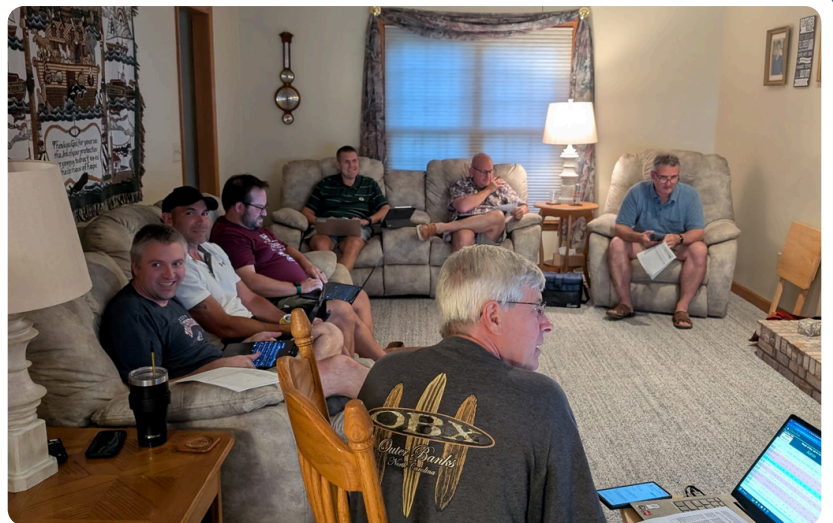
Blessing of the new sunday school teachers!



Nutrition Speaker Event



Fantasy Football Draft Night



A lot of fun was had at the Mens Fall Retreat in Deep Creek, MD!





Sunday School is loads of fun! ALC has great participation in Christian Ed!



Our ladies are having lots of Fall crafty fun together!





Pumpkin Fest & Flea Market 2025





The tree harvest was completed! So much room was opened up. Thanks Trustees for organizing.



Thank you Blake Family for hosting a great Fall Pumpkin Party!



I already told you
I am not turning your water into
pumpkin spice latte



advent is coming!



We do so much to prepare for Christmas. One way we prepare is by decorating our homes, yards, and churches with evergreens, lights, crèches, and presents. This season, reflect upon these common Christmas decorations and how they help us see Christ and prepare for His coming with this Advent and Christmas series.

Ways to prepare for the Christ Child:

- Reading the Christmas Story: Luke 2:1-21
- Take home an Advent Season devotion book or children's book (coming soon)
- Find a way to serve others this season!

Upcoming Advent & Christmas Services

Join us for our mid-week advent services:

December 3, 10 & 17
Wednesdays at 6:30pm

Join us for Christmas!

Christmas Eve
Wed. 12/24 at 6pm

Christmas Day
Thursday 12/25 at 10am

Save the Date!

The Children's Christmas Pageant is coming on Sunday, December 14 during worship. We look forward to a fun service and cookies with the kiddos.

Service Opportunities this Season:

Operation Christmas Child: Build a shoebox to show less fortunate children around the globe that they are precious to God. Boxes can be made online or by hand until Nov 16. See Bob or our website with questions.

Christmas at Concordia, Adopt a Resident: Supply a few gifts to spread Christ's love this season to the elderly residents & our shut ins this Christmas! Details soon.

Christmas Caroling to our Shut-Ins: We'd love some help again this year to spread some Christmas cheer! Sign up in the Narthex soon.

Decorate the Church for Christmas: We'd love to have you help us! Details soon.

pew talk

**What is your favorite
Pittsburgh-area restaurant,
meal or treat?**



**Homemade.. Vicki's or
Jackie's crockpot mac
& cheese... YUM!!!
Otherwise Pineapple
Curry from Red Orchid.
-Marissa T**



**Della Terra in
Zelienople.
Homemade pizzas,
pastas and salads.
Pasta & wine make
this gal happy!
-Janine N**



**Tie between
Sushi Tomo or
Caliente's Pizza. Both
in Ross Township.
-Pastor Thompson**



**Acai bowl from
Fueled in Cranberry!
-Elizabeth R**



**Pad Thai from
Noodlehead in
Shadyside.
That's my favorite!
-Janeen D**



**I love to go to Narcisi
Winery in Gibsonia.
-Lindsay F**

pause for a puzzle



THE FALL

Discover the hidden words.



N	A	O	N	P	E	R	T	U	W	E	E	F	R	L
E	A	I	F	L	V	G	U	D	E	V	V	R	S	E
J	S	B	E	T	D	W	O	O	Q	L	I	U	T	A
A	B	V	T	H	G	I	E	N	F	E	F	I	P	V
D	E	V	E	Z	X	I	F	M	E	W	X	T	Y	E
A	W	C	F	L	A	M	E	S	L	T	I	Q	P	S
M	A	T	M	T	C	W	V	E	R	E	S	G	A	Z
U	W	H	H	I	D	E	P	O	P	N	W	P	Y	H
Z	Z	S	E	R	P	E	N	T	D	S	O	R	K	H
N	L	E	G	N	F	A	X	V	H	K	R	E	W	U
J	A	I	E	J	Y	F	W	D	R	B	D	H	T	J
R	E	K	F	U	F	O	B	P	V	V	S	W	E	T
F	E	V	E	E	W	B	V	H	N	L	N	R	O	I
S	O	X	X	D	L	E	P	L	W	Q	F	U	M	V
F	O	R	B	I	D	D	E	N	D	X	B	K	D	W

Word Bank

SIN
ADAM
EVE
FLAMES

SWORDS
SERPENT
HIDE
FRUIT

FORBIDDEN
LEAVES
NAKED
LIFE

pastor is doing what?

We have begun to get our lives and our home ready for the new arrival of baby girl Thompson early next year. I have been getting my stair stepping in at home painting her room, moving furniture, reorganizing rooms, and doing all the needed house projects with Marissa. Henry is now saying, "baby sister's room!" There is so much more pink and purple in our home now! Our family is so thankful for the generous and thoughtful support of our growing family. I truly feel blessed and appreciated as a pastor and our family feels loved by all your kindnesses.

I am also enjoying, despite my lackluster record of 3-6, our Ascension Lutheran Fantasy Football League. Fortunately, you didn't call me to serve as your pastor due to my ability to predict sports abilities and successes.

In early October, the Easter District of the LCMS hosted our annual pastor's conference in State College, PA. It was a nice opportunity to learn and enjoy the brotherhood of ministry. The two big themes of the sessions were Stewardship and History of American Lutheranism. I mean grab your popcorn, right?!

Henry started Sunday School this fall and he's been having a blast with "my teacher!" he says. Thanks to everyone who also helps entertain Henry with toys, funny faces or a warm lap when he feels like exploring. We will surely need and welcome more help with him at church when baby girl comes sometime this winter.



upcoming ways to...

For more visit:
ascensionpgh.com/news

serve:

Operation Christmas Child

Packing Party: November 9 at 12pm

Box Deadline: November 16 at 9:30am

Shut In Christmas Caroling

Saturday, December 6 at 9am

Christmas Church Decorating

Saturday, December 6 at 9am

connect:

4th Quarter Congregation Meeting

Sunday, Nov 23, 11am - Sanctuary

Children's Christmas Pageant & Reception

Sunday, December 14 9:30

Prayer and Praise

Wednesdays - Fireside Room - 10am

learn:

Christian Education Hour

Sundays 11am-12pm, classes for ages 2+

Please note there are no classes on:

11/23-12/14 & 12/28

Ladies Bible Study

Fireside Room - 10am

See Karen B or Janet S for dates!

Men's Bible Study

Fireside Room 8:30am

4th Saturday of the Month

No December Meeting

See you in January!

winter newsletter deadline:

Send your newsletter content & photos to
mthompson@ascensionpgh.com by
Wednesday, January 14. Thanks!!

Want to get more involved? You can always join one of our teams!

Altar Guild | Acolytes | Choir
Class Teachers | Handbell Choir
Money Counters | Praise Team Band
Worship Tech Team | Ushers
Christian Education | Outreach
Worship Committee

Specifically, right now we are on the hunt for:

- Praise Team Members (Voice or any instrument!)
- AV Booth Help (slides/sound/camera)
- Part Time Youth Director (paid position)



ASCENSION

Lutheran Church

8225 Peebles Road Pittsburgh, PA 15237

WORSHIP WITH US

Join us each Sunday at 9:30am for worship in our Sanctuary.

View our live streamed services on our YouTube Channel: AscensionPGH

CONTACT US

CHURCH OFFICE

Monday - Thursday: 9:30am - 3:00pm

412-364-4463

Need to visit? Call ahead to make sure someone is in the office.

CHURCH CONTACTS

Rev. Adam Thompson, Pastor
Lisa & Emily Marcellus, Music Directors
Alicia Weisser, Secretary

pastor@ascensionpgh.com
music@ascensionpgh.com
secretary@ascensionpgh.com

President - Lynn Gunther
Vice President - Michael Fantin
Treasurer - Patti Lopresto
Financial Secretary- Darryl Gunther
Secretary - Trish Young
Stewardship - Kristin M & Ronette B
Head Trustee - Tim Mayes

president@ascensionpgh.com
mfantin64@gmail.com
treasurer@ascensionpgh.com
finance@ascensionpgh.com
pyoung1234@icloud.com
kmayes@ascensionpgh.com
trustees@ascensionpgh.com

Elders
Board of Christian Education
Board of Trustees
Outreach - Cheryl Saffa

elders@ascensionpgh.com
education@ascensionpgh.com
trustees@ascensionpgh.com
ctshearts@yahoo.com



www.ascensionpgh.com

