



From the heart of
ASCENSION
Lutheran Church

**quarterly
newsletter**
February 2026

From the Pastor's Desk

Dear Saints of Ascension,

Happy New Year! Another year has ended and a new one has begun. Yet here in the Church, we find ourselves traveling a familiar road. Walking behind our Lord Jesus on his journey from Bethlehem's manger to Jerusalem and the cross and finally, to the empty tomb and his Ascension. Yet, rather than boring, this familiarity brings us comfort.

Maybe a lot has changed for you in the past year. I know for our family this is true, especially in the last month. Sometimes the change is good, but other times the change is bad. Maybe, like us, a new child was born into your family. Yet it could also be that someone dear to you passed away. Our Lord Jesus, and his place in our lives, is meant to be a gift of constancy in our ever-changing world. The uncertainty of life in our fallen creation--broken in sin--is countered by the certainty of hope in Jesus, who is the "same yesterday, today, and forever" (Hebrews 13:8).

As we enter this Lenten season, my encouragement to you is to reflect on the sameness of Jesus and this journey. This isn't a sameness that bores us; no, it is a sameness that is the rock that we cling to when everything else changes. He is always there, He always forgives, loves, dies, and rises. And the kicker, He does all that for you!

Blessings, Pastor Thompson

what's inside?

have you
heard?

recent
happenings

OCC
wrap up

lent & easter
2026

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 Update: Sunday School Edition!

The children and youth of Ascension have had a strong season of learning about scripture this season. Take a look to see what has happened in our classrooms since the fall newsletter:

From Lindsay Fleishauer (PreK): The boys are always inquisitive and full of energy! We are focused on small lessons with repetition! We've focused on two big stories: Creation and the Flood. The children love quoting, "Let there be light!" as the light switch is flipped, and they love singing a song about Noah on the boat. We are laying the foundation for strong habits for the future!

From Patti Lopresto (K-2): The K-2nd grade class is progressing through their study of the Old Testament. We have covered the journey of Moses and the Israelites and are now learning about the life of David.

From Lora Koontz (3-6): The upper elementary Sunday school class has been studying the Babylonian Exile by reading select chapters from the following books: 2 Kings, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, Daniel, Esther, Ezra and Nehemiah. You read that correctly. They are reading from actual Bibles these days, not kiddie worksheets!

Christian Ed Update (cont.):

From Janine Nicolette (7-12): The youth have followed Paul through his third missionary journey and his arrest. We've read and discussed Galatians, Acts 15-19, 1 & 2 Thessalonians, and have begun 1 Corinthians.

From Emily Marcellus for the music classroom: At music time, the children of Ascension spent many weeks practicing for the children's Christmas Pageant! We learned the first verse of four traditional Christmas hymns to perform during the pageant. We are now starting a new song that we will be singing in early February, so stay tuned!

From Elizabeth Russler for the Christmas pageant: On December 14, our amazing youth brought the Christmas story to life for the congregation in place of the readings and sermon. Through their singing, acting and narration, they brought the joy and wonder of Jesus' birth to everyone in the congregation. Huge thanks to our youth, volunteers and parents who made it such a success!

Outreach Team Updates

First, we'd like to thank you for your generosity of gifts for Concordia Franklin Park. This committee also used our budget to buy gifts for Concordia Wexford. Bringing joy to these residents is the best gift of all.

We hope you found the Advent booklets to be helpful for you and your family's Christmas devotions.

We are excited that 5 members attended our information meeting about meals for Pleasant Valley Emergency Men's Shelter. Each of them will be a lead for each of four dinners per year, and will be asking members to make a meal item or donate to dinner costs. And it's not too late for anyone else to also volunteer to be a lead. Contact Lisa Marcellus with questions.

We have planned an excellent speakers' program about fire safety. No exact date yet. The program will include a free gift of a fire blanket. All you have to do to get it is sign up and show up. There will be one gift per family. The speaker will be from Peebles Volunteer Fire Department.

Lenten dinners are just around the corner. The routine for the Lenten dinners will be the same as usual in that we will ask for donations of soup and desserts. Of course, with a sign-up sheet in the narthex.

Outreach Team Updates (cont.)

We have a new plan for cleanup, and that is asking specific church groups be assigned one week, for example: Elders, Men's Monthly Bible Study, Youth, The Christian Ed Team, Prayer and Praise, etc.

We have some new ideas for the Easter brunch, possibly with a professional chef. You will love it. More info to come.

The date planned for the free drive-thru spaghetti dinner is April 15, (tax day). The new kitchen stove should operate much better now that the gas company has updated the regulator to commercial vs private home. This will make boiling water so much quicker. Watch for sign-up sheets. This is a one-day project. Let's make it as successful as our first one.

Looking forward to working with you.
The more, the merrier!

Stewardship Update

Are you looking for an opportunity to use your gifts of time, talent, and treasures to develop good stewards of Ascension Lutheran? Ascension has an opening as the Head of Stewardship. If you are interested in learning more, please reach out to Pastor Thompson or Beth Gard, Council President, about this role!

Council Update

As we closed out 2025, several officers stepped off the Council or took on other roles. The Council would like to recognize these individuals.

We would like to thank Michael Fantin, Tim Mayes, Ronette Blake, and Kristin Mayes for their leadership and service to Ascension Lutheran Church.

We have been blessed to have such valuable leaders and stewards of the church. Michael Fantin will move to Head Trustee while Tim Mayes continues to serve on the Board of Trustees.

We would also like to thank Lynn Gunther for her years of leadership and dedication to Ascension while serving as President. We are grateful that Lynn will continue to serve on the Council as Vice President. We are blessed that Lynn will continue to impart her knowledge, her leadership, and support of the Council through 2026.

Please welcome the 2026 Council Officers:

President - Beth Gard

Vice President - Lynn Gunther

Treasurer - Patti LoPresto

Secretary - Trish Young

Financial Secretary - Darryl Gunther

Head Trustee - Michael Fantin

Stewardship - VACANT

Trustees Update

We are happy that the Woodlot project is complete! We will be posting some no hunting signs in the woods at the request of some of our neighbors.

We are working on obtaining updated quotes for the asphalt driveway so we can proceed with that in the Spring.

People's Gas just replaced/updated our gas regulator for the commercial oven so that should work very smoothly now!

We are working on connectivity and electric issues with our outdoor sign.

Lastly we are working towards getting some new Narthex doors. Quotes are in the works.

Fellowship Team Update

The team worked hard in 2025 to come up with a general schedule for 2026! We are looking forward to having more fellowship time with everyone in 2026.

We are excited to continue to encourage the men, women, and youth to also spend some intentional time together as brothers and sisters in Christ!

Thanks to all who attended our taco bar/game night in January. We are so excited for Bingo Night: Pie Day edition coming in March! Stay tuned for details.

Financial Update

Here is a financial update for the newsletter summarizing 2025.

Income:

| | |
|-------------------------------|---------|
| Offerings (including online): | 273,675 |
| Loose Plate: | 11,764 |
| Hall Use: | 16,928 |
| Tree Harvesting: | 9,397 |
| Other: | 13,840 |
| Total: | 325,604 |

Expenses: 308,030

Excess Income vs Expenses: 17,574

Income from Tree Harvesting and Christian Counseling Associates totaled 25,510, so, even though we brought in excess income versus our expenses, without these two items, we would have had a deficit.

Thank you for your generosity in giving to God's Kingdom through your offerings.

Worship Committee Update

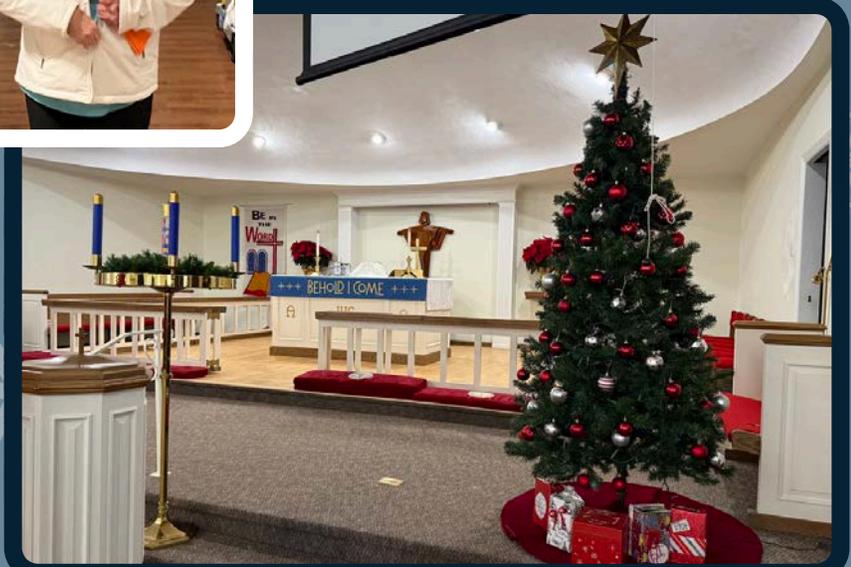
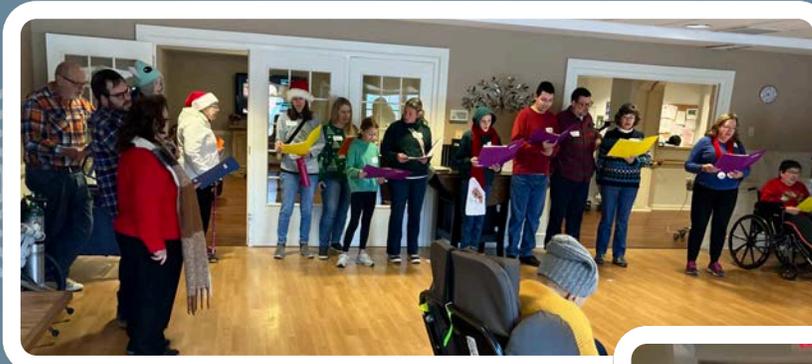
Worship Committee has been working hard to make sure our services on Sundays are running smoothly and faithfully. Our Music Directors, Emily and Lisa, put together special music for all the special services in Advent/Christmas. Altar Guild has geared up for another year and found volunteers for each month of 2026!

As we enter into the season of Lent, we are using a series from Concordia Publishing House called "For You" that highlights why Jesus endures all his sufferings. He did it for you!



recent happenings

Christmas Caroling to Shut Ins



Decorating the Church for Christmas





Children's Christmas Pageant & Cookie Reception 2025





Emily & Lisa would like to offer a special thanks to all of the musicians (bells, praise team, choir, soloists) and all of our AV volunteers who took time this Advent season to use their skills to make our services so special!





Special thanks to Barb for helping organize the music room! It looks so great. We are ready for 2026!



GAME NIGHT & TACO BAR FELLOWSHIP EVENT 2026



We LOVE baptisms!
Congratulations
Josie, Amber, Jadon,
Noah & Caleb!



Womens Galentines Event!





operation christmas child

By the grace of God, we had another successful Operation Christmas Child season as **245 Gospel Opportunity (GO) shoeboxes** were collected by members and friends of Ascension! This includes 215 boxes in-person and 30 online. This is well above our goal of 220 boxes.

We also had our **first-ever packing party** where members packed boxes with supplies that were donated and obtained through various other means. We set a goal of 30 shoeboxes to be packed at the packing party, but as usual, Ascension went above and beyond and packed 39!

A big **THANK YOU** to everyone who packed a shoebox, donated supplies, or prayed for this program! A child somewhere in the world will be blessed by your shoebox and hear the Good News of Jesus Christ.

Friends, family members, and neighbors may also come to know Christ through your shoebox gift. **So again, THANK YOU!!**



BIBLE TRIVIA

1. **Who led the Israelites across the Red Sea?**
a) Moses b) Joshua c) Aaron d) Abraham
2. **What was the name of the city where Jesus was born?**
a) Jerusalem b) Nazareth c) Bethlehem d) Jericho
3. **Which of the following is not one of the four Gospels in the New Testament?**
a) Matthew b) Acts c) Mark d) Luke
4. **What is the last book of the New Testament?**
a) Revelation b) Romans c) Genesis d) Ephesians
5. **Who was sold into slavery by his brothers but later became a powerful leader in Egypt?**
a) Joseph b) Jacob c) Isaac d) Esau
6. **What did God create on the seventh day, making it a day of rest?**
a) Light b) Animals c) Plants d) Nothing
7. **Which prophet was known for his patience and endurance through various trials?**
a) Jeremiah b) Daniel c) Job d) Ezekiel
8. **Who was the mother of Samuel, the prophet and last judge of Israel?**
a) Deborah b) Sarah c) Hannah d) Ruth
9. **In the story of David and Goliath, how many smooth stones did David take to defeat Goliath?**
a) 1 b) 3 c) 5 d) 7
10. **What is the first book of the Old Testament?**
a) Exodus b) Leviticus c) Genesis d) Deuteronomy

pastor is doing what?

Sleeping you say? You guessed wrong! We are proud to share that Josephine "Josie" was born safely in January, and all is well! We are so blessed to have her in our home and also our church family. It was such a great joy to celebrate her baptism with our family and our church family all bearing witness to her new life in Christ!

Henry is loving being a big brother, even as he still has a few things to figure out. For example, he still can't figure out why his new baby sister won't play cars and monster trucks with him yet! But he loves her and is already taking good care of her.

Thank you for the opportunity to take paternity leave to get adjusted and recover as a family. We really appreciate the baby gifts and meals as we get the hang of it all as a family of four plus Tucker the dog! We so appreciate your generosity and kindness.



upcoming ways to...

For more visit:
ascensionpgh.com/news

serve:

Drive-Thru Spaghetti Dinner
April 15

Look out for more opportunities!

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

Altar Guild | Acolytes | Choir
Class Teachers | Fellowship Team
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)

connect:

1st Quarter Congregation Meeting
Sunday, Feb 22, 11am - Sanctuary

Prayer and Praise
Wednesdays - Fireside Room - 10am

Pie Day Bingo Night
Saturday, March 14 5pm Fellowship Hall

spring newsletter deadline:

Send your newsletter content & photos to mthompson@ascensionpgh.com by Wednesday, April 15. Thanks!

learn:

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

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

Fire Safety Seminar
Details to come



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

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|---|--|
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| Alicia Weisser, Secretary | secretary@ascensionpgh.com |

| | |
|-------------------------------------|--|
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