

Ascent

2018 November

The Rev. Dr. Ann Paton to Retire as Liturgical Assistant

Dear Church Family,



The Rev. Ann Paton, Ph.D.

I write to share the news that our beloved matriarch, Ann Paton, has decided it is time for her to step down from serving as a Liturgical Assistant at Church of the Ascension – a position she has held these past twenty years.

While we will miss having her in the pulpit or celebrating the Eucharist, so long as her health and strength permits, Mother Ann will continue to be in her usual pew to worship with us on Sundays. It is hard to believe that Ann turns ninety in December!

Please come and join us for a luncheon on Sunday, December 9 after the 11:00 am service. Ann will speak briefly about the Nunc Dimittis and we will have a chance to celebrate with her and offer some words of thanks for her extraordinary ministry in our midst.

Ann is known and loved by so many in the Pittsburgh and South Western, PA community. Ann is an alumna of Geneva College where she returned to teach for 44 years. Still today Ann is Professor Emerita of English and earlier this semester she gave a guest lecture to a rapt class of students. Ann earned her Ph.D. in medieval English Literature at the University of Colorado.

We all know that Ann is precious to us. What you might not know is that she was ordained here in Pittsburgh in 1991, and has been a priest of this diocese for more than twenty-six years. Ann served on the bishop's staff as Deployment Officer, on the Commission on Ministry, and as the Director of formation for bi-vocational priests. Most recently Ann served on the Editorial Board for the new ACNA catechism.

Ann has been a treasured Spiritual Director for many and a much sought-after retreat leader. Ann loves music, theatre, books and missions. Ann is also a passionate advocate for full equality for women in the church.

To so many here at Ascension she is known and loved simply as "Mother Ann."

Do come and celebrate with us on December 9, as we honor Ann and give thanks to God for her life and ministry - thus far. Thank you, Mother Ann for your extraordinary ministry among us. We love you.

Yours in Christ,

+

Jonathan N. Millard
(Rector)



Nunc dimittis
The Song of Simeon
Luke 2:29-32

Lord,
now let
your servant
depart in peace, *
according to your word.
For my eyes
have seen
your salvation, *
which you have
prepared before
the face of
all people;
to be a light
to lighten the
Gentiles, *
and to be
the glory
of your people
Israel.

Abundance II

Last month I wrote about “Abundance.” Since then we have seen continued signs of life and health and growth in our midst. We had record attendance at our annual parish retreat (340 people attended, with more than ever staying for the whole weekend. 80 people had never been before.) Last week’s new members class gathered 25 people.



Last month I set out three ways that I believed God may be calling us to respond in this season of abundance: with thanksgiving and generosity, with humility and attentiveness, and with renewed commitment to God and his church.

This month I’m going to say a little more about renewing our commitment to God and his church through thanksgiving and generosity.

As we approach Thanksgiving, what are you thankful for? As we heard on the Parish Retreat giving thanks to God is an important part of our praying lives. This month, why not make a list of all the things that you are grateful for and offer that list as a prayer of Thanksgiving.

If you are in town for Thanksgiving this year do join us for our annual Thanksgiving Eve service of Evensong. The service begins at 7pm Wednesday, November 21 and childcare is provided. It is a beautiful and reflective service where the whole focus is on thanksgiving. All our prayers, readings, and the testimonies that people bring – speak of God’s goodness, faithfulness and abundant provision. Perhaps you have a *brief* testimony, that you would be willing to share, expressing how you are thankful to God for His provision in the year past. Do let me know!

Jesus said, “to whom much has been given, much will be required.” (Luke 12:48) As those who have been given much – food, homes, financial resources, time, work, families, friends, etc. – how can we be generous in giving back to God? There are so many ways for us to respond. One important way, however, is in our commitment to God’s work through the ministry and mission of Church of the Ascension. This commitment likewise, can be expressed in different ways – **with our time, our prayers, our hospitality towards others, and otherwise serving the body of Christ with the gifts God has given us.**

One important way in which we can all participate in responding to God’s abundant provision is through the generous giving of our money. Please prayerfully read and consider how you will respond to the Financial Stewardship letter that you should receive in early November.

As you reflect on God’s abundance, give thanks to him and prayerfully consider how much you will give back to God from all he has entrusted to you. As we grow numerically as a church family so also do the opportunities and needs for additional financial resources.

*Let us give
cheerfully and abundantly
with grateful hearts.*

Jonathan +

Jonathan N. Millard

*“Give thanks to the Lord, for he is good;
his love endures forever.”*

Annual Thanksgiving Eve Service of Evensong

Prayers, readings and testimonies that speak of God’s goodness, faithfulness and abundant provision. Please let Jonathan Millard know if you have a *brief* testimony to share!

Important News from Vestry

At its October meeting the vestry was unanimous in making two important and strategic decisions. First, to begin a search process for a paid, half-time Assistant Rector and, second, to appoint a committee to make recommendations regarding essential repairs and exciting improvements to our buildings.

Assistant Rector (half-time)

Over the last 18 months, Ascension has welcomed some two hundred newcomers! Of course, our average Sunday attendance has not gone up by that amount. Many of these newcomers have not yet become a part of our church family. Nevertheless, this encouraging and exciting season of growth presents challenges that must be addressed.

While we have an excellent team of dedicated clergy and ministry and support staff, the vestry was unanimous in the view that two full-time paid priests are simply not enough to provide the pastoral leadership and oversight that is now needed at Ascension.

Two areas that were highlighted in need of particular focus are Congregational Care Ministries and Prayer Ministries. We believe that our mission and ministry as a church will be underpinned and enhanced by having a priest who can devote her or his time to providing exceptional pastoral leadership in these two areas of ministry. We are looking for someone who will raise up leaders for the Church with special responsibility to identify, equip, deploy and provide ongoing support to lay leaders in these areas of ministry.

Congregational Care Ministries at Ascension includes leading teams in the following areas: Visitation and Pastoral Counseling, Lay Eucharistic Ministers, Meal Ministries (for families of newborns and those who are sick or in other need), The Workshop (professional counseling services), Spiritual Direction and Chaplaincy to Ministry Teams.

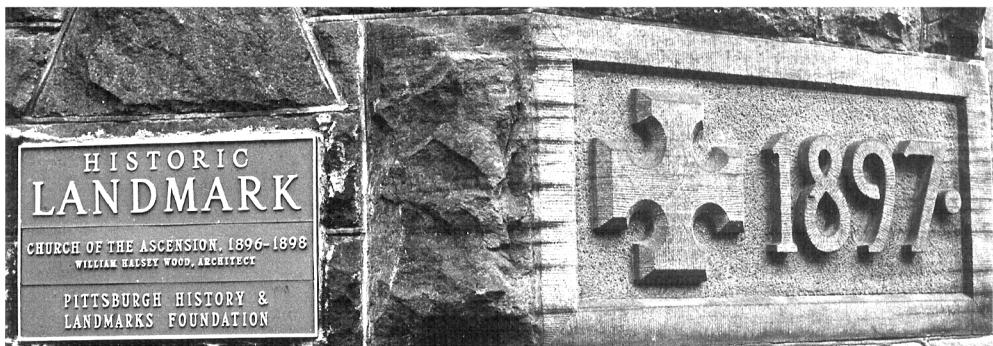
Prayer Ministries at Ascension includes leading teams in the following areas: Intercessory Prayer, Prayers of the People, Altar Prayer Ministry, Prayer Appointments, Soaking Prayer Ministry, Prayer Practicums, and Prayer Meetings.

The bishop has affirmed this need and given his blessing to the proposed appointment. A small search committee will now assist the Rector in this search process. The position will be advertised locally and nationally, and the full job description will be posted on our website. Please pray for this process, that we might rightly discern God's leading and calling.

Our Beautiful Buildings - Essential Repairs & Exciting Improvements

What Needs to be Done?

We have known for more than ten years that serious and substantial work needs to be done to our buildings. Specifically, much of the stonework needs to be repointed, many of the window frames and some of the roofs need to be replaced or restored, and there are various other deferred maintenance issues in need of attention. This is a big project.



Additionally, anyone who has been to the Parish Hall between the services on a Sunday morning knows that our hall is full! This is a great "problem" to have, but it does need to be addressed. How might we make the hall bigger? Is there a way to lessen or remove the congestion in the curved corridor that connects the hall to the Nave? How can we provide better restroom facilities? What else should we be doing to put all our facilities into the kind of shape they need to be in

in order to serve the mission and ministry we are being called to do? These are some of the exciting questions that now need to be answered.

Why Now?

Other than attending to immediate safety concerns, we have rightly not felt able to deal with some of the major maintenance issues presented by our buildings, so long as there was uncertainty around the ownership of these facilities. That uncertainty is soon to be behind us – we are expecting the final approval of the Settlement Agreement with the Episcopal Diocese by the courts within the next couple of months. We want now to fix our eyes firmly on our future moving forward in mission as we steward the extraordinary resources of our buildings and people.

Faithful members of our church family built our historic church and established endowment funds generations ago. The last capital campaign was twenty years ago and resulted in the building of the Education Wing and the large glass corridor. It is hard to imagine life at Ascension without these facilities which are used extensively on a daily basis.

It now falls on us to honor our past as we do essential repair work to our beautiful and historic buildings, *and* address the present and future needs of a growing congregation strategically located in Oakland.

What Will it Take?

What it will cost to do what needs to be done is not yet clear. That said, we have been working hard this past year with professional architects and engineers to get greater clarity. We expect to know soon how much we will need. Given what we know already, however, it is fair to say that the amount needed is likely to be several millions of dollars.

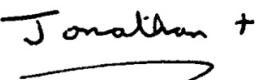
When Will We Begin?

It's too soon to give any precise timeline, but I hope that the work of the Capital Campaign Feasibility Committee can be done in a timely manner, with the help and input of a professional firm to assist in that work. This will enable the vestry to make informed decisions in the first half of next year. We will keep the congregation informed as this work progresses. My hope is that our campaign to raise immediate financial gifts and pledges will be completed before the end of 2019, so the work itself can be completed in 2020.

Please Pray:

Please pray for the leadership and all in our church family that we would be faithful to respond to God's calling and leading in the months ahead as we embark on what should be a very exciting project.

Yours in Christ,



Jonathan N. Millard
(Rector)



Annual Meeting
*Sunday, March 3
after the 11am Service*

2018 PARISH RETREAT: An Introvert's Report

A great weekend was had by 340 members and friends of Ascension who attended the Parish Retreat at Laurelville for all or part of the weekend. We're glad to hear a testimony from Josh Momaney!

I had fun. I had good food. I mourned the loss of the ducky race (cancelled because of all the rain and the creek turned raging rapids!) I got to meet all sorts of new people in my church family. I got to reflect on the meaning of a healthy prayer life. I got closer to God. I got to enjoy quiet from the hustle of everyday life. I got closer to nature and saw God's wonder in His creation. I had a great time. . . and I hated every minute of it.



Josh Momaney

Don't get me wrong, I love our Parish Retreat, however, I am an introvert. And not just a normal introvert but a major introvert. The nametag felt like a heavy burden that enabled people to know me by name. The thing is, I'm awkward, and I know I'm awkward. I'm horrible at making small talk. When Father Jonathan returned from his sabbatical, I wanted to ask him how it went and what he learned; but it came out weird and basically, "Did you have fun?" I could tell he wasn't quite sure how to answer. It was awkward. I'm an awkward strange introvert. I have friends and I enjoy spending time with them like most people, but it takes me a while to get comfortable. It always has.

But that's kind of the point of the retreat. To get out of our comfort zones. To build relationships. Get closer to God and learn to live with Him in His amazing world. Now, don't get me wrong. I would love it if Father Jonathan played video games on Twitch talking about the Christian themes on display and answered Bible questions from the chat, all the while I could watch from my own living room and not have to talk to people; but that's not what the Church is for. The Church is not about entertainment, it's about God's community. Getting to know our brothers and sisters in Christ. And that means, getting uncomfortable.

So, here I am. Ready to make as much awkward small talk as anyone is willing to indulge. I'm a part of this church community. I might seem highly uncomfortable, shy and kind of weird, and that's because I am, but I'm willing to get to know you.

Editorial question: Josh, where is your name tag?





Baptism in the New Testament

Baptism is a ritual with immense significance in the New Testament. St. Paul says that when we are plunged under the waters of baptism, we die together with Christ, and when we rise from the water we are raised to new life together with him (Romans 6:3-4).

St. Peter gives us another image: through the waters of baptism we pass through the death of God's judgment of sin and are placed into the safety of the ark, just as Noah and his family were (1 Peter 3:20-1). And that ark is the church.

St Paul also tells us in Titus 3:5 that in baptism we are washed with the water of regeneration. Here he draws on Temple imagery to liken baptism to the bath that priests must take in the bronze basin in the inner court of the Temple in order to approach the high altar and the Holy of Holies. In baptism we are given the great dignity and honor of being incorporated into the kingdom of priests. In keeping with this, at baptism we are given the vocation 'never to be ashamed to confess the faith of Christ crucified, and fight bravely under his banner against the world, the flesh, and the devil, and to continue as his faithful servant to the end of your days' (Collect after Baptism).

Fundamental Changing of Loyalties

To be baptized is thus not simply a rite of passage or a symbolic act of belonging to the church. It involves a fundamental change in our loyalties. It is a fundamental surrender of ourselves to the Lord Jesus Christ. It is slavery to Christ rather than slavery to sin. It is a submission to and an invocation of his Lordship in every area of our lives. It is a refusal to hold any part of ourselves back from him. It is the concession that he is the rightful ruler and owner of all things, and that he is worthy of this love and submission because he 'loved me and gave himself for me' (Galatians 2:20).

Preparation: Counting the Cost

This change of loyalties is symbolized and really given in baptism, and historically the process of changing one's allegiance from sin to Christ involved lengthy preparation, as candidates for baptism counted the cost of following Christ (Luke 14:28).

At Ascension, the process of preparation for adult baptism involves learning basic Christian teaching summarized in the Lord's Prayer, the Apostles' Creed, and the Ten Commandments. It also involves a process of relinquishing our lives to him by learning to pray, and to follow him as his disciples in the realms of sex, money, and power, three areas that are consistently highlighted throughout Scripture as presenting painful obstacles to our allegiance to Christ.

Nuts and Bolts of Baptismal Preparation

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There will be a total of 12 classes, all held on Sunday mornings from 9:30 – 10:30am. They will be taught by Robin Capcara, an experienced Christian teacher in our congregation, in three 4-week modules. We will be using J.I. Packer's *Growing in Christ*, as well as the Anglican Catechism, *To Be a Christian*. The modules will be held at the following times:

Module 1: November 4, 11, 18; December 2

Module 2: January 13, 20, 27; February 3

Module 3: March 3, 10, 17, 24

Each candidate will be paired with a baptismal sponsor as well. Candidates will meet with their sponsors at least 4 times between November and April to talk and pray together. Candidates who decide through this process that they want to dedicate themselves to Christ will meet with one of Ascension's priests in April and then will be baptized at the 6am Easter Vigil on Sunday, April 21, 2019.

Are you already baptized but are now finding your way back to Christ?

Although this process is primarily oriented toward those pursuing adult baptism, it is also open to those who were baptized in the past but who have only recently rekindled their relationship with Christ and are seeking to reaffirm their baptismal vows. Please contact Fr. Jonathan Warren at jonathan.warren@ascensionpittsburgh.org if you are interested in getting more information or signing up.

Seniors Ministry

Spiritual direction – What is it? What is it not? How does it work?

What happens in spiritual direction? Who is it for?

How do I know if I need spiritual direction?

How can I find and choose a spiritual director?

In November our topic is “Exploring Spiritual Direction” with speakers Barbara Franzen and the Rev. Dr. Jack Gabig. Barbara Franzen is a longtime member of Ascension. She is a retired biology teacher who has volunteered in many ministries: with youth, the pastoral care team, and with internationals. Jack Gabig is Associate Professor of Practical Theology at Trinity School for Ministry. He has served Ascension on staff and as volunteer over the course of the past 24 years. Both Barbara and Jack have a longing to be more and more what God calls each of us to be and both are trained spiritual directors.

In the Rev. Ann Tefft’s words, “Spiritual direction is one of the graces which God gives to us so that we can grow deeper in our relationship with the Lord by hearing and responding to His voice. Let’s consider together how to grow deeper in knowledge, intimacy, and service with the Lord through this wonderful ministry.”

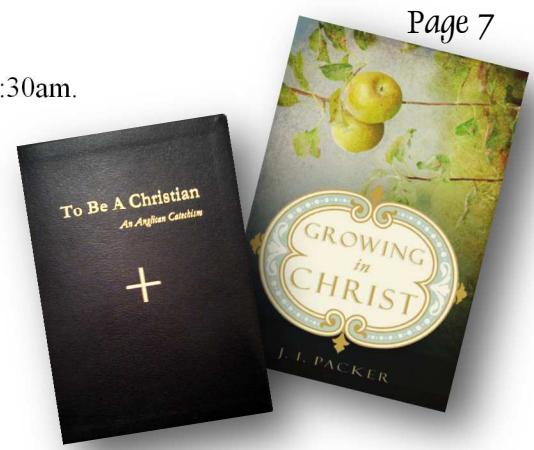
Join us Thursday, November 8 from 12:30 – 2:30pm for a catered lunch, and a presentation and discussion on spiritual direction. Parking restrictions will be lifted for people to park on the streets, and the Neville Street lot will be reserved for seniors. There is a \$10 charge for lunch, but first-time friends are free!

Please RSVP to Ann Tefft at 412-526-1107 or tefft.ann@gmail.com

Barbara Franzen



The Rev. Dr. Jack Gabig



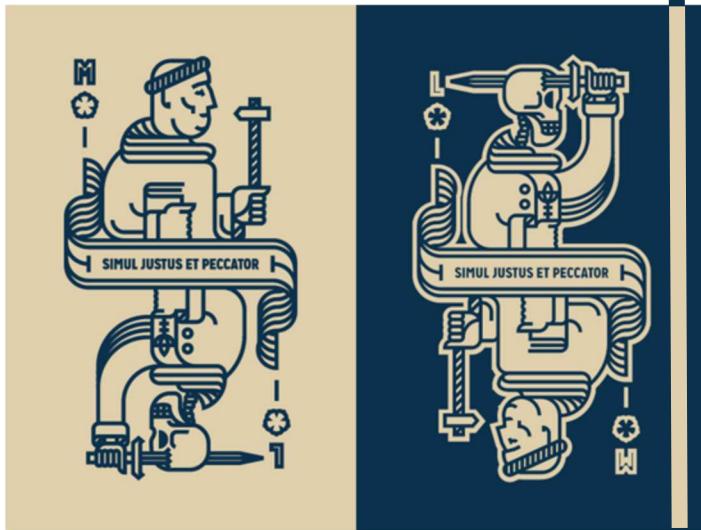
All Saints' Day:

Dear Church,

Martin Luther describes Christians as “*Simul Justus et Peccator*,” simultaneously saint and sinner.

As we approach All Saints’ Day, we remember that the gospel we receive was not dropped in a locked box from the sky but comes from human hands - hands young and old, rough with work and smooth with privilege, hands of every color and culture. We receive the gospel today because God has been faithful to preserve his message of redemption by preserving his church - by sustaining men and women in lives of repentance and holiness.

Simul Justus et Peccator



I did not grow up practicing the liturgical calendar, and I’m still pretty new to All Saints’ Day. For Catholics, it’s a day to celebrate and pray to and through the saints—both known and unknown—who dwell in the presence of God (It precedes All Souls’ Day, when Catholics pray for the souls of those in purgatory). As a Protestant who has celebrated All Saints’ Day exclusively in Anglican churches, I understand “saint” to mean all those who are in Christ - all Christians, past and present. What Catholics and Protestants share in common is that All Saints’ Day is a day intended to celebrate God’s redemptive work in and through the lives of men and women throughout history.

We celebrate the saints not primarily because they are moral examples for us to live up to, and certainly not because they were perfect, but because Jesus has wrought beauty and goodness through them. Michael Ramsey, the mid-twentieth century Archbishop of Canterbury, writes, “We do not know the whole fact of Christ incarnate unless we know his church, and its life as part of his own life... The Body is the fullness of Christ, and the history of the Church and the lives of the saints are acts in the biography of the Messiah.” Every believer you know (or know of) - from Augustine to members of our own church - are part of this biography of the Messiah.

And yet, each of these saints we celebrate was (or, if they are still living, is) a sinner. What’s so beautiful about the saints is the work of Jesus through them, though they are sinners! Even Christians can divide the world into neat divisions of saints and sinners. Depending on your chosen subculture, the lost sheep are those others “out there” - those who are gay or democrats or alcoholics - or on the other hand, those who are old, male, Trump-supporters. But the gospel is that we don’t have to look at our political or theological enemies to find darkness, lostness, and sin. We who are Christians, we—each one of us in this church—are lost sheep who have been found and rescued by a great shepherd. Remember the saints and remember they were sinners who God loved and redeemed. And let that give us hope, that he can love and redeem us too, each one of us, our enemies, our friends, even you, even me.

This All Saints’ Day may we remember the very good news that we are sinners, and that we are saints. This is the history—the long, twisting, miraculous story-- of grace. And that’s what we celebrate on All Saints Day.

In Christ,
Tish Warren (Priest, Writer in Residence)

REMEMBERING: November II

-by Marilyn Chislaghi, Director of Lay Ministry



Roll of Honor located in the Narthex

Here's a quick snippet of Ascension history during this time, taken from Marilyn Whitmore's *Centennial History of Church of the Ascension* published in 1989: "During the years of World War One, the teachers of the Sunday School set the goal for the children's Lenten offering at \$500. The children met, and sometimes exceeded, this goal practically every year ... In 1917, the children also conducted a successful 'Melting Pot' drive, in which they brought in gold, silver, or lead in many forms. The old jewelry, cutlery, and other items were melted down and the metals sold. The Sunday School then sent the money to the Red Cross to use for famine relief among Armenian and Syrian children."

It was also during the period of the Great War that the mural of the Ascension was painted in oil on canvas and placed in its present position in March 1918. The mural was painted by Frederick Lamb, one of the leading religious muralists of the day. It is the second largest wall painting devoted to the theme of the Ascension in the United States. The painting provided comfort and solace in dark days of the Great War. Rector Wyatt Brown wrote in the bulletin on Easter 1918: "This picture of our Ascending Saviour quiets my nerves, uplifts my heart, increases my faith, makes bold my soul. I can go into the Church at any time and find comfort just to sit and look at it."

There are many historical treasures in Ascension's archives. If you want a fascinating volunteer position as part of the archives team, contact Marilyn Chislaghi at marilyn.chislaghi@ascensionpittsburgh.org.

Church of the Ascension has a history of great depth and beauty, dating back to its founding in 1889. All the furnishings and objects of worship we have come to assume week after week were lovingly provided for by former generations. Just take a look around the Nave – intricate altar linens carefully chosen to help us recall our Christian story as we cycle through the church year; candelabras and ornate chandeliers; a marble baptismal marking the entrance to the Nave; stained glass windows, one of the most beautiful called "Angels with Lilies"; the brass eagle lectern; the commissioned copy of Raphael's "Transfiguration"; elaborate decoration on the clergy stalls; intricate tile work in the chancel; the columbarium in the Oliver Chapel with its doors, each named after one of the gospels. Pay close attention at communion – silver chalices, glass cruets, finely ornamented bread boxes, all given in memory of someone at Ascension, one who was beloved. All whispers of those who came before us who, like us, sought to follow Jesus.

Of special note is the Roll of Honor located in the Narthex, the large entryway near the red doors. The Roll of Honor commemorates those from Ascension who served and died in the "Great War", World War 1. November 11th, 2018 is a significant anniversary for exactly 100 years ago hostilities formally ended at the 11th hour of the 11th day of the 11th month when an armistice was signed. On Sunday, November 11th, the altar flowers will be given in memory of those, from this very church, who served and gave their lives.

Missions: Sarah Laribee

Former Ascension Youth Director Sarah Laribee has spent the past four years teaching high school English in northern Iraq. Sarah will be living in Pueblo, CO for the coming year as she discerns what God has next for her vocationally. This is also an opportunity to spend more time with family members. Before leaving for Pueblo, Sarah spent time here in Pittsburgh worshipping with her Ascension family, sharing at the Parish Retreat, and speaking with young adults at a Dinner and Compline. I had the opportunity to ask Sarah a few questions about her experience in Iraq.



Nate: I'd love folks to know how living in a desert conflict zone for 4 years challenged your view of Jesus.

Sarah: I think the biggest strengthening for me as far as how I view Jesus now is that, if anything, I have become even more exclusivist. It's not that I was all that progressively relativistic before, but I have come to really view the absolute truth and beauty of Christ as a total non-negotiable. I think before 4 years in Iraq, I felt that Christianity was absolutely true, and the only way to God, but there was probably a part of me that tended to see that there are commonalities in a lot of religions and that everyone is hopefully on a journey towards God. I think 4 years in the Middle East has definitely made me more strident about the fact that anything that is not Christ is total loss. I have Muslim friends, very dear Muslim friends now. But I find the god they believe in to be totally the opposite of Jesus. In Jesus there is a complete resting in him because we are hopeless and unable to do anything without him. So any ideology that smacks of a system where a person can win a favorable outcome with God through his or her own good behavior now is an utter and tragic lie to me, so much more than it ever did before. Islam falls into this category for me, but so do American distortions of the Gospel, like the prosperity gospel and moral therapeutic deism.

Nate: How has your time overseas impacted/changed your view of missions and missionaries?

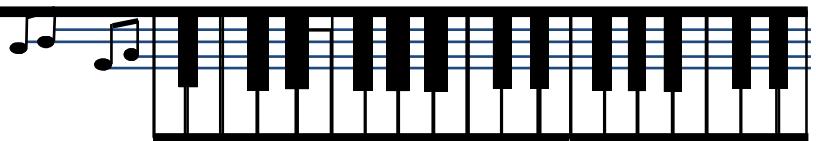
Sarah: Is anyone still reading after that first answer? So, as believers, I think we are often caught between this place of believing that we have a beautiful thing to offer the world, and an internal struggle with our own doubts, skepticism, and pain. So even if we truly believe there is no other name under heaven by which we may be saved, the dissonance of our daily belief/unbelief can really be so confusing to us. I think all of life is a mission. And we are in the long haul with people because this road with Jesus is a long haul. And so we have to be winsome and kind and loving in the living out of our Gospel call with each other because the last thing that is compelling about Jesus is a lot of information about Jesus. So that winsome and long-haul life with people can take place anywhere. I love it when people go to places like Iraq that have very few Christians because that is an opportunity for people to see the difference Jesus makes in a life. But I feel a real hesitancy sometimes because we are all of us hopefully on mission, no matter where we are. I was doing nothing more exceptional in Kurdistan than a believer who wants to live winsomely in East Liberty. I think I just ate a little more chicken and rice doing it there.

Nate: How did your time in Iraq changed you and your view of yourself?

Sarah: It began to strip away for me a crippling need for approval. (I'm still in this process, but I'm headed in that direction!) Set in a tribal context, it really takes a long time to break in and you are an outsider for years. I was absolutely still an outsider when I left. And while I felt very loved there, I didn't feel like I could do things I tended to rely on in the States to try to win approval because my high 'Strengthsfinder Woo' just didn't, essentially, translate well. So I learned to begin to listen more, and observe more, and lean hard into Jesus more. Iraq is kind of boring and lonely, honestly. And it was in that context that I began to feel a little like Eustace having his skin shredded off by Aslan in *The Voyage of the Dawn Treader*. When all my tricks were no longer sufficient, that is when I could finally begin to understand more deeply that Jesus was. But I did not stop drinking hot sauce. That translates in any culture.

- by Nate Twitchell, Director of Agape Year

Children's Choir



It is my very great pleasure to introduce to you Jane Banfield Hicks as our new children's choir director. Jane has a lot of choral and voice training – she was in her church's children's choir from the age of six and started taking voice lessons when she was around nine. In high school she sang in choral ensembles every year, including guest conducting the girls' choir during her senior year and organized and led an annual caroling group for three years. In college she majored in vocal performance, earned a BA in Music and continued to sing in choral ensembles. These kinds of leadership roles and choral singing roles have continued since college and it is easy to see how very qualified she is to teach and lead our children!

However, as wonderful as her experiences in the past have been, I value even more the vision and enthusiasm she has for children growing in their knowledge and love of God through music and worship.

Here are Jane's own words about that:

"Children's Choir was an important experience for me. Both my parents, particularly my dad, are musical and I grew up in a house which was full of music. Through Children's Choir, I gained a better understanding of what worshipping God through music could be, and it vastly improved my own musicality (especially my ability to listen!). Neither my elementary school nor my middle school had children's choirs, so this was a precious experience. Our director, Jon Coker, was wonderful, and was obviously eager to share his love of music with the kids at church. We had opportunities to play handbells, and audition for solos - many good experiences for me at a young age. My hope for our children at Ascension is that they, through the music we sing, would grow in their love for Jesus and their love for choral music. I believe worshipping the Lord through singing really helps imbed truths into our hearts and minds - adults as well as children! It is a uniquely beautiful experience."

-by Jeanne Kohn, Director of Music Ministries



Jane Banfield Hicks



Young Adults

Young Adult Ministry

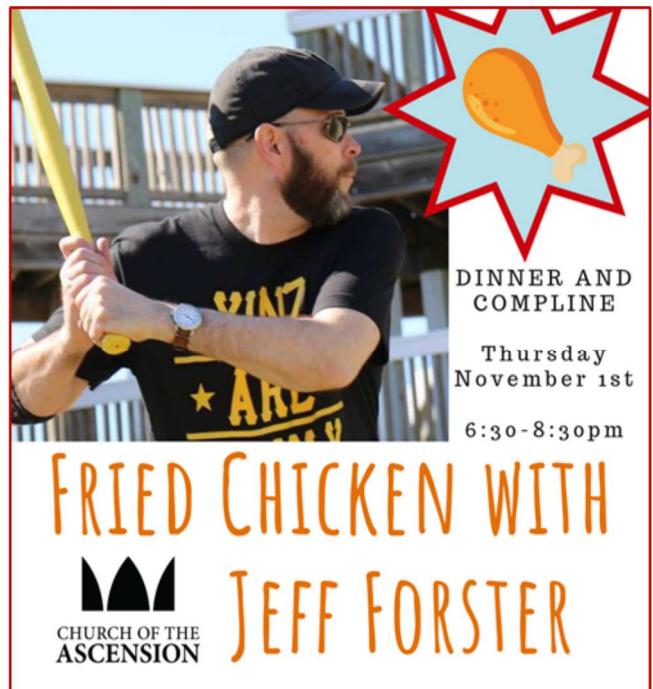
What's the best place to eat in Pittsburgh?

What's your favorite movie or TV show?

What ways has God been challenging you?

These questions—posed by Sarah Laribee—are what the Young Adult Dinner and Compline series is all about. These monthly gatherings are ways for 20 and 30-some-things from all over Pittsburgh to build community, connect with one another, and grow in Christ.

October's gathering was definitely a homecoming as we indulged in comfort foods like chili and cornbread as we welcomed back Sarah Laribee, Ascension's former Youth Director. Sarah spent the past few years teaching in Iraq. Her big challenge for us was to be bold in our faith with each other. Similarly, Hebrews 10 tells the early Jewish Christians to spur one another on toward love and good deeds, and as I listened to Sarah's message, I couldn't help but think about how those words speak to us today in 2018.



If you are a Young Adult, we hope you will consider joining us for our next gathering on Thursday, November 1st when we'll be chowing down on some fried chicken and hearing from Jeff Forster. Contact Leah Hornfeck at leah.hornfeck@ascensionpittsburgh.org or 724-630-0167 for more information!



Ascension is happy to partner with the Coalition for Christian Outreach as we join together to reach college students for Jesus Christ! We are particularly glad that Leah Hornfeck, a CCO employee, is part of our staff and church family.

Ascension Campus Fellowship



Our College Bible Study is well underway! This school year we've been working our way through the book of Romans, tackling topics such as the Righteousness of God, the Reign of Sin, and Justification by Faith. However, we've also been taking breaks from our studying, spending time getting to know one another better, and building community. In October, we had a Game Night where we spent a couple hours blowing off steam and playing games like Dutch Blitz and Mario Kart. It was a blast and a nice break from the daily grind of classes and extracurriculars.

As we continue our Romans study, we'll be discussing attributes that mark Christians and the Christian Life, such as hope, freedom, and salvation. We'll also be planning another fun, Christmas-themed social event for the first week in December. (Details for that are TBD.) If you are a college student or college-aged person, we'd love for you to join our group! We meet at Ascension in Room 105 on Tuesday evenings at 6:30pm. Contact Leah Hornfeck at leah.hornfeck@ascensionpittsburgh.org or 724-630-0167 for more information!

Youth and Young Adult Ministry

Leah Hornfeck and I (affectionally known as ‘team yaya’ - youth and young adults) were praying together one Monday morning and a particular image came to my mind. I am often in an airport, and, having three kids who are very excited by the sight of planes taking off and landing means I too am often standing up against those giant airport windows looking out. My point?

As Leah and I were praying, the picture of planes launching into the blue, and landing down on the runway, was strongly impressed upon me. This resonated a lot with what we actually do. Our hope and prayer is that Ascension’s teens, and their friends from other churches and around the city, graduate from high school and are launched into whatever follows as confident Christians in community. This is the ultimate goal of building the middle and high school youth weekly youth group gatherings, the two-year confirmation process, and the various trips and retreats that populate our CAYG calendar.

We are also thankful that increasing numbers of college-aged and older young adult folk are landing at Ascension. We try and facilitate that smooth arrival by greeting new people on a Sunday, inviting them to the monthly Dinner and Compline gatherings, connecting them to the weekly community groups that meet around the city (including a Tuesday night Bible study for college-aged friends at Ascension), and cultivating a network of mentors throughout the congregation.

So please do pray for this ministry of ‘launching and landing’, share any good ideas you might have to improve what we do, and contact us if you’d like to be a mentor or serve in any way!

Leah Hornfeck @ leah.hornfeck@ascensionpittsburgh.org or 724-630-0167

Alex Banfield Hicks @ alex.banfieldhicks@ascensionpittsburgh.org or 412-652-3137.



CCO Christmas Cards

Ascensionite, Bonnie Liefer has designed a line of Christmas cards that beautifully and uniquely illustrate the scriptures. Purchase of these cards support the ministry of **Coalition for Christian Outreach (CCO)**, a campus ministry encouraging college students to serve Jesus Christ through their calling in life.



Look for the brochures with order forms available on our two display tables; in the glass hallway of the Education Wing and also just outside the Parish Hall. You may also order online <http://cards.ccojubilee.org/collections/christmas>.

Your friends will notice these unusual Scripture-based cards. Send a card they well remember!

- Bonnie Liefer



Children's Ministry

Children's Ministry is partnering again with a local ministry, *Light of Life*, to serve in our community and teach our children about serving our neighbors.

LIGHT of LIFE rescue mission

Food. Shelter. Hope.

10 East North Avenue

This is a unique opportunity to lead our children in loving and serving other children their own age in their own city by enabling our children to contribute to a Christmas party for *Light of Life* children.

Light of Life provides emergency food and shelter and runs residential programs for men, women, and children who have been impacted by homelessness and addiction. Our specific partnering is with their **women's and children's Christian residential program**, which focuses on single mothers recovering from abusive relationships as well as poverty and addiction. This program provides residents with subsidized housing, transportation, childcare, counseling, Bible studies, education, and training in order to heal and restore the women to independent living, grow them in their spiritual and personal walks, and prepare them for rewarding careers. The program also specifically focuses on parenting skills as well as reconciling and re-establishing bonds with their children.

While mothers are in classes, the children at *Light of Life* sleep, eat, learn, and play in a safe and nurturing environment. They are also provided with essentials for attending school and participate in educational and family bonding activities such as museum field trips.

Due to the financial strain involved in recovery and rebuilding a life, the children in the *Light of Light* residential program do not have the opportunity to experience a Christmas filled with presents. However, every year the children of *Light of Life* enjoy a Christmas party celebrating the birth of Jesus where each child receives a stocking filled with the simple joys of childhood trinkets and toys.



**Ascension Children's Ministry
has committed to provide
100 stockings for the
Light of Light Rescue Mission
Christmas party**

Stocking Stuffer Donations Needed

Suggested guidelines:

- gender-neutral
- for any age
- feel free to be creative
- let your children decide what they want to give!

Ideas include:

gum	yo-yo
balls	Jacks
jump rope	small games
mind teasers	markers
unique pens	small books
small stuffed animals	

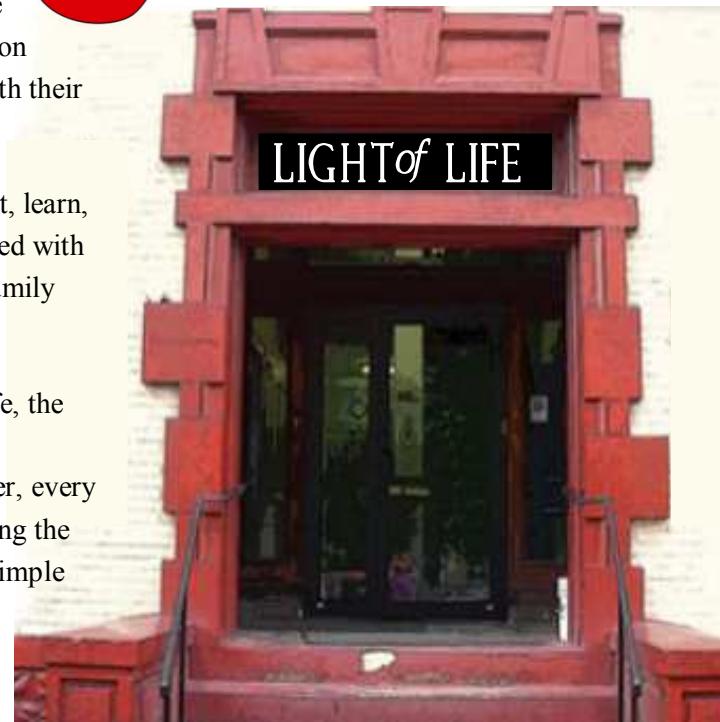
TIMELINE:

Sunday, November 11

Deadline for donation items

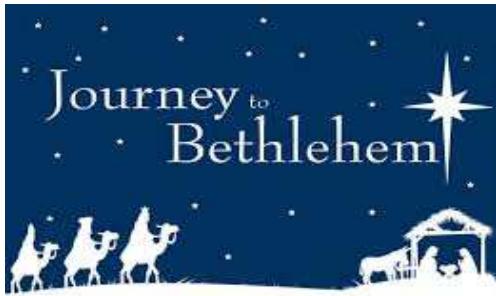
Sunday, November 18

Our children will stuff the stockings during the Sunday School hour.



Resources for "Advent at Home" from Children's Ministry Sunday, December 2

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Children's Ministry is for everyone in our congregation, all the way from the very young on up to the very seasoned young-at-heart.

Christmas Tableau

Preparation for the Family Friendly Service on Christmas Eve at 6:30pm

All children are invited to participate in this year's Christmas Tableau. Signup sheets will be available on Sundays in the children's ministry wing on November 4, 11, and 18. Kids can sign up to be nativity characters, animals, angels, shepherds, wise-persons, and even the star. We will need several readers!

We will work on getting costumes fitted between the services on December 9, 16, and 23. The mandatory rehearsal will occur in conjunction with the greening of the church; 11:30am - 12:15pm on Saturday, December 15. On Monday, December 24, kids should arrive at 5:30pm to get into costume.

The Tableau is a lot of fun, and a great opportunity for kids to be involved in our worship service. If you plan to be in town for the holiday, you are encouraged to participate!

More information

Contact Matt Ulrich, Director of Children's Ministry at matt.ulrich@ascensionpittsburgh.org

Stop by our large display in the Parish Hall to pick up a very simple set of resources for celebrating Advent this year in your home. During the four Sundays of Advent our liturgical calendar invites us to go "on a journey to Bethlehem" with the prophets, the Holy Family, the shepherds, and the Magi, as a way of preparing for coming close to the mystery of Christmas. Together with this set of resources, and perhaps adding your own Nativity scene figures, Advent wreath or candles, you will be equipped for setting aside moments at home to further explore the scripture readings that our children also learn during Sunday school in Advent. This gift from

Christmas Tableau

Sign-up November 4, 11 and 18

Sign-up sheets in the children's ministry wing

Costume Fitting & Rehearsals

After the 9am and before the 11 am services
Sunday, December 9
Sunday, December 16
Sunday, December 23

Mandatory Rehearsal

Saturday, December 15
11:30am to 12:15pm in conjunction with
the Greening of the Church

Christmas Eve,

Monday , December 24

Children arrive at 5:30pm to get into costume



Ascension International Ministry

Food Festival

Friday, November 2 at 6:30pm

We will host an International Ministry Food Festival on Friday, November 2. This will be a fun evening with great food as our international friends bring in dishes from their own countries. Members and friends of Ascension are welcome to join the fun, bring along some food, and get to know internationals who LOVE speaking with Americans. Bring a dish to share, side salad, pie or other dessert. Thanks!

Thanksgiving Hosts



Internationals love being invited into American homes for Thanksgiving. This is something we've coordinated the past several years, and it has resulted in deep and lasting relationships. If you would like to host internationals this year, please contact LuAnn.

Want more information?

If you would like to volunteer in the International Ministry, contact LuAnn at PittsburghEnglish4U@gmail.com.

Parish Teaching on Advent

10:30am to Noon Saturday, November 10

Teaching on Advent with Jonathan Warren

Childcare provided



If you are new to Anglicanism, one of the things that may surprise you is that January 1 is not a huge deal to us. This is because the new year for us begins on Advent 1, which falls this year on December 2. Advent, from the Latin *advenire* or ‘to come to’, encompasses the four Sundays before Christmas and is traditionally a season both of preparation, of waiting, and of repentance. The Orthodox Church explicitly refers to Advent as a ‘Lesser Lent’.

As Christians, our calendar is marked by seasons of feasting, celebrating the most critical events in the story of redemption, preceded by seasons of fasting and repentance. Advent is a sober season in which we remember the devastation that sin and death have unleashed upon the earth, which necessitated the coming of Christ, and we remember how much sin and injustice remains finally to be cleansed by Christ.

We wait with Israel for the Messiah, and this trains our hearts to wait for his second coming to bring the justice and the righteousness of the kingdom in its fullness. In this respect, the early church fathers actually spoke of two Advents, two periods of waiting: the first coming of Christ in the incarnation, in humility and weakness, and his second coming in glory, where he will come as King of Kings and Lord of Lords (Rev 19:16) to purify the earth, accompanied by the great company of angels.

As Cyril of Jerusalem wrote in the 4th century, ‘We preach not one advent only of Christ, but a second also, far more glorious than the former. For the former gave a view of His patience; but the latter brings with it the crown of a divine kingdom.... In his first coming, He endured the Cross, despising shame (Hebrews 12:2); in His second, He comes attended by a host of Angels, receiving glory. We rest not then upon his first advent only, but look also for his second’.

The Scripture readings for Advent are intentionally chosen to reflect this theme of the two comings of Christ. We will be exploring these Lectionary readings, as well as the meaning of Advent in history and in the present in a teaching by Fr. Jonathan Warren on Saturday November 10, from 10:30 - Noon. Childcare and light snacks will be provided. The class will take place in the Hunt Rooms.

Want to save money and support our youth?

ORDER A CHRISTMAS WREATH!

You'll be saving up to 25% off retail as we buy wholesale (Premier Foliage) and add a minimal markup. Profits provide scholarships to support Church of the Ascension's youth group and their summer service projects in Haiti and Charleston.



Order online at caygonline.com/wreaths OR fill out this form and return with payment to the friendly face who brought it, or put in Sunday's offering plate!

Name: _____

Phone number: _____

Address (If Delivery needed): _____

Order form on back

Tear off and Keep! _____

Order & Payment Deadline! Sunday, November 25th.



CHURCH OF THE
ASCENSION

Pick Up: Sunday, December 2nd 9:00am-2:00pm
at 4729 Ellsworth Ave, Pittsburgh, PA 15213

Deliveries made between 3:00pm and 5:00pm on
that Sunday. Please be in!



YOUR ORDER

- x \$15 30' of White Pine Roping
- x \$25 20-22" Frazier Fir Wreath with Bow & Cones
- x \$30 24" Mixed Wreath
- x \$40 Hanging Basket of Greens
- + \$5 Delivery Charge (if you can't pick up from 4729 Ellsworth Ave on Sunday December 2nd between 9:00am- 3:00pm)

\$ _____ TOTAL Referring youth (or team) name:

Their contact info:



How are you paying?

Cash Check Check Number Easy Tithe (online)

Delivery?

Yes No, I will pick up at Church of the Ascension on December 2nd, 9-2pm

— Tear off and Keep! —

Join us for our Christmas Services!



CHURCH OF THE
ASCENSION

Sunday, December 23
Holy Eucharist at 9am; 11am Lessons and Carols

Monday, December 24
6:30pm and 10pm services





Agape Year

The Directors of Agape Year, Nate and Erika Twichell, attend Ascension and all Agape Year fellows, newly minted high school graduates, participate in the life and worship of our church.

This fall our fellows spend four months ‘Going Deep’ in service and discipleship.

We partner with a number of organizations throughout the city so that we can taste and see what the Church is doing to build up the Kingdom here in Pittsburgh. One of those partners is *Living Ministry*. They seek to uncover the hope of Jesus Christ as they build relationships with the homeless in Pittsburgh.

On Tuesday mornings, Tessa, Kieran, and Megan walk down a set of creaky well-worn stairs to the basement of a non-descript church on North Avenue. It is in that basement that Erika, Henry, Anne and I meet the fellows as we partner with *Living Ministry* to stand in line with, eat with, and converse with our homeless and unemployed neighbors. We share a simple meal, talk about the weather, sports, ailments, and how they are doing. After the meal, we stick around for a short Bible study. The study is not particularly well-attended, and on the face of it, looks like a failure. Isn’t the study the important part? If only a few people stick around for the Bible study, why bother? But what joy it is to listen to our neighbors! What joy it is to be Christ’s hands, feet, and ears in that place!

And amazing things happen when you listen. A few weeks back, Sheila mentioned that she had missed out on the banana pudding that had been served. Banana pudding was her favorite and her birthday was coming up. She wondered if they might serve it again, hoping it would happen on her birthday. The fellows were listening! Monday night saw ‘Team Agape Year’ gathered around our kitchen making scratch-made banana pudding for Sheila in the hopes that she would be there the next day. When our fellows walked down those creaky stairs and produced a beautiful crock of banana pudding with crushed Nilla Wafers on top, Sheila exclaimed, “Now you’re gonna make me cry!” The pudding was shared with everyone there, and Sheila was able to take a large portion home with her. She insisted on taking pictures with us (and the pudding!) and on telling the whole room about what had happened. I watched as Megan led a simple prayer for Sheila. I was teary eyed.

Sometimes “God with us” looks like sharing the Gospel of Jesus Christ with someone. Sometimes it sounds like listening. And sometimes it tastes like scratch-made banana pudding.

We have two opportunities for our Ascension family to join us in serving our city:

Saturday, November 10

We’re volunteering at *Alive 2018*, the largest celebration for the homeless in Pittsburgh. There is food, worship, prayer, and clothing distribution.

Saturday, December 1

We’re working with *Open Hand Ministries* for their first Saturday workday. This day will involve demo/construction work and no experience necessary!

Please see Nate or Erika Twichell with any questions or email at natetwichell@sams-usa.org.



Calendar

Parish Workday

Saturday, November 3

8:30am – Lunch (Pizza provided)

We need skills at all levels!

VOLUNTEERS
CALLING ALL HELPING HANDS



All Saints Sunday - Baptisms

Sunday, November 4

We will have baptisms at the 9am and 11am service

Contact Jonathan Millard or Jonathan Warren
if you wish to be baptized

Community Group Leader's Meeting

Saturday, November 10 at 9am

All community group leaders are invited to a quarterly meeting in the Hunt Rooms. Breakfast snacks and childcare provided.

Advent Women's Breakfast

Saturday, December 1

8:30-10:30am

Speaker: Sarah Laribee

Theme: Joyful Waiting

We are all waiting for a variety of things: Friday afternoon to come. That potential employer to call back. The healing of a dear friend. Just...one...date... Waiting for your kids to sleep through the night ... and waiting for them to call you once in a while. And as the Church enters the season of Advent, we are especially reminded that our lives here and now are also focused on a not yet as we wait for the return of our King. Join Sarah Laribee as we focus together on the discipleship of joyful waiting. Together we will explore ways that Jesus uses our times of waiting to show his glory and his love for us.



Sarah Laribee

Explore Ascension

Saturday, December 8

9am – lunch

Ascension Hunt Rooms

Our next Explore Ascension class will be Saturday, December 8. This class is for all those who are new to Ascension, who wish to find out more about Anglicanism in general or Ascension in particular. It is also part of the pathway to membership. So, mark your calendars! The class is co-taught by all Ascension clergy. We begin with breakfast and conclude with lunch. Childcare is provided.

If you would like to register there are a couple of options:

- (1) Visit www.ascensionpittsburgh.org and sign up there;
- (2) Email Marilyn at marilyn.chislaghi@ascensionpittsburgh.org.



CHURCH OF THE ASCENSION

A Worshipping Community;

Equipping God's People;

Sharing Christ's Healing With a Broken World

Worship Services

Sunday

9:00 a.m.

Holy Eucharist

11:00 a.m.

Holy Eucharist

Wednesday

Noon

Holy Eucharist

in the Gordon Chapel

Address

4729 Ellsworth Ave.

Pittsburgh, PA 15213

Phone: 412-621-4361

Fax: 412-621-5746

Website

www.ascensionpittsburgh.org

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Ascent Deadline

Articles for the December Ascent are due November 15. The publication will be available December 2.