

Ascension

December
2011

Advent at Ascension

Bishop Duncan to Visit Ascension

Sunday, December 4

We are pleased that Archbishop Duncan will be with us to preach and celebrate at both services on the second Sunday of Advent. We will host a dessert reception in his honor after the service. Please plan on bringing your favorite cookies or squares.

Brazilian benefit!

Sunday, December 11

A craft and baked goods sold in the Parish Hall after the 10:30am service will raise funds to support mission trips to Brazil. Items that will make great gifts/stocking stuffers: colorful cloth napkins and table runners, aprons, decorative pillow covers, pot holders, gift bags for beverages, bibs and baby blankets.

Greening of the church

Saturday, December 17

9:30am

Come and join in the activities including: hanging ornaments on the Christmas tree, hanging wreaths, setting out the crèche, and putting together plates of cookies to take to our shut ins. Coffee and donuts will be served in the morning. Come! And, if you can assist on Friday doing some advance preparations, you are welcome to join us then. Contact the church office for more information.

Christmas for the Homebound

Saturday, December 17 and Sunday, December 18

Parishioners! Please join in 'sharing the joy of giving' by visiting our 20+ homebound members of the Ascension family. On Saturday, December 17 at 9:30am we'll package cookies for our homebound and we'll deliver them following the 10:30am service on Sunday, December 18. To make this a grand experience, we need the support of many in the parish. Can you bake 2 ½ dozen cookies, no larger than 3 inches diameter, without nuts or excessive icing? If so, please deliver them to the church by Friday, December 16. Can you deliver the gift following the 10:30am service on December 18? This can be a wonderful memory maker for parents and children. If you are unable to participate but would like to financially donate to our outreach, please do so. Your checks should have 'Christmas for the Homebound' on the memo line. Please watch the bulletin for more information. Any questions, please contact Ann Tefft (ann.tefft@ascensionpittsburgh.org) or Paula Wasko (waskop@windstream.net).

Oakland Girls Choir Christmas Concert

Saturday, December 17 at 7pm

You are welcome to this wonderful evening of choral music. Tickets may be purchased at the door.

Service of Lessons and Carols

Sunday, December 18 at 10:30am

Ascension traditionally celebrates Lessons and Carols on the 4th Sunday of Advent. The service weaves together a progression of scripture readings from young and old along with carols sung by the congregation and choirs that carry us from Old Testament prophecy to fulfillment in the Christ child. Childcare is provided for those age 4 and younger. Children age 5 and older will be with us for the service.

Christmas Caroling

Sunday December 18 at 5pm

Last year we had so much fun singing Christmas carols around our neighborhood, we want to do it again this year. Walking in the crisp evening air with a light scattering of snowflakes falling on our noses (we hope!), singing our favorite carols to celebrate our Savior's birth is not to be missed. This is a joyful way to bless and invite our neighbors to our Christmas service. Afterwards we will return to the church for a pizza party and hot chocolate. Come with the entire family and bring your friends. Please RSVP to ann.tefft@ascensionpittsburgh.org if you are coming so we have plenty of food. Bundle up and bring your flashlights too!

Christmas & New Year's Services

Christmas Eve

Family Christmas Service

4pm

All are invited to this warm service which will feature a children's pageant entitled, *Bright Christmas: An Angel Remembers...The nativity story from the angels' point of view.* Childcare for infants and toddlers will be provided.

Rite 2 Festival Eucharist

10pm

Our late Christmas Eve service will feature a drama, festival procession, incense, candles and the great music of the season in celebration of the birth of the Christ child. Childcare is not provided.

Christmas Day

Sunday, December 25

We will have one service on Christmas Day which will begin at 10:30am. There will not be an 8am service nor a Hot Breakfast. Childcare for children age 4 and younger will be provided.

New Year's Day –

The Holy Name

Sunday, January 1

We will celebrate this special service on New Year's Day at 10:30am. There will not be an 8am service nor a Hot Breakfast. Childcare for children age 4 and younger will be provided.

The Drama of Worship



We come into the presence of God “unto whom all hearts are open.” We sing, we hear God’s Word read and proclaimed. We declare our faith, we confess our sins and we receive the sacrament. We are sent out, our hearts reshaped, our sins forgiven, back into the narrative as players in God’s story at work, at home, and in our vocations.

The great story of our faith is sometimes called the meta-narrative – or “big story.” On the canvas of this story are painted scenes of life from Creation and the Fall to God’s great rescue plan – first with his chosen people - called out to be a light to the nations and then, with the coming of Jesus, salvation for the world. The story climaxes with Christ’s death, resurrection and ascension, but will not be complete till Jesus comes again. And even then, for all those who are a part of the Kingdom of God, the story will go on for all eternity with saints and angels around the throne of God.

This great drama is played out in the world, in the church and in our lives. Week by week our worship life is based on a liturgical pattern that dramatically rehearses this great story.

All our senses are engaged – we hear the music, we taste the bread and wine, we smell the incense, we touch one another as we share the peace, we see icons of Christ, in one another, in the sacraments; we catch glimpses of glory in the music, or the architecture; our minds are engaged in the words of the liturgy, Scripture and from the pulpit, and our hearts are warmed. At least – that or some of that is the goal!

We come into the presence of God “unto whom all hearts are open.” We sing, we hear God’s Word read and proclaimed. We declare our faith, we confess our sins

and we receive the sacrament. We are sent out, our hearts reshaped, our sins forgiven, back into the narrative as players in God’s story at work, at home, and in our vocations.

The Arts – whether in music, drama, or fine art, etc. are all part of the rich tapestry of how we engage more fully in worship. Our worship is not a mere cerebral engagement with God’s Word – but a much more visceral encounter with the living God, with the Word made flesh.

For me that has been true in countless ways, but one stands out - four years ago at the Christmas Eve services. I played the part of a shepherd. The stage direction and the behind the scenes effects placed the church in total darkness. Flashlights pierced the gloom, and some dreadful sound, I cannot recall now what made it, was electrifying – and I actually felt afraid as we followed the directions we’d been given, crouched in the aisle. Then the angel (played by a high school girl) backlit, standing with arms outstretched spoke those words angels usually speak when encountering quivering mortals: “Do not be afraid.” Her voice strong and clear – yet gentle and riveting – calmed my soul.

Writing this now sounds a bit over the top yet it is what I experienced. I am so grateful for the gifts God has given to His church and in particular for the gifts he's given to his people at Ascension.

For many years we have been blessed with a dramatic presentation of the Passion narrative on Palm Sunday. Those of you who have been present on that day will know it's not a passion play – rather what takes place is a part of our worship. That's why we don't applaud and those up front don't bow. The attention is not on players performing, rather it is on God and we are all participants caught up in the narrative. We enter into the story, and the drama helps us do that as it illuminates the scripture within our liturgy.

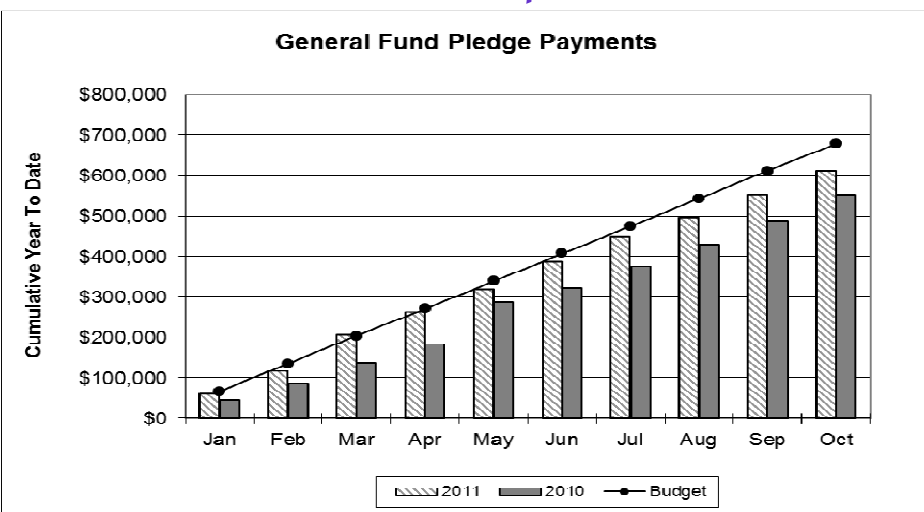
This Christmas Eve at the 10pm service we are preparing for another dramatic engagement with God and his Word - and the Word made flesh. All who will be present will be invited to be a part of this dramatic presentation of the story of the Incarnation, whether as participant in the pew or as one of the cast involved in the retelling of this great story. If you would like to be one of those in that cast, please contact Jeanne Kohn at jeanne.kohn@ascensionpittsburgh.org. It will not be necessary for anyone to have a speaking part and there will be only two short rehearsals, on December 11 and December 17. Ascension parishioner, Brenda Harger - CMU professor and Theatre director - will be our director. We welcome men, women and children of any age to be a part of this. All that's needed is a willingness to enter in – not as a star – but as part of the story, part of His story, part of God's story.

Yours in Christ,

Jonathan +

Jonathan N. Millard, *Rector*

Treasurer's Report



In October, giving totaled \$60,823, bringing our total so far this year up to \$613,759, which is 11% ahead of giving last year, but 10% below budget. In order to meet our budget for 2011, we will need to receive at least \$201,500 before the end of December. Thank you for giving faithfully!

Sue Cray, *Treasurer*

New Service Beginning February 5

We hope new people will serve in various capacities on Sunday mornings both for the 9am and 11am services. Contact Marilyn Chislaghi if you are willing to serve. Also, signup tables will be set up after our services on December 4, 11 and 18.

Acolyte/Crucifer

Be a part of the procession on Sundays, carry the cross and assist with the elements at Communion.

Altar Guild

Prepare the church for services of communion, baptism and confirmation. Some of the work is done on Friday or Saturday and some is done Sunday morning.

Sound Ministry

Work the sound system for worship services. Training will be provided.

Security Ministry

Those in the security ministry walk the facility between services primarily to help ensure the safety of children and those who are vulnerable.

Greeter Ministry

Welcome people to worship as they enter through the Narthex doors or through the glass hallway entry.

Usher Ministry

Welcome people to worship in the Nave, assist them in finding a seat if necessary, and assist with both bulletin distribution and collection of the offering.

Welcome Table

Greet newcomers at the welcome table at the back of the Nave.

Prayer Ministers

Pray for those who come forward for prayer during the singing of communion songs.

Prayer Vigil

Pray for the services with another individual or group of people prior to the start of the service.

For Your Calendar

Hospitality Ministries Sunday, January 8

Meeting at 9:15am for Greeters, Ushers and those who staff the Welcome Table. Please gather in the Hunt Rooms.

Men's Breakfast Saturday, January 14

Men of all ages are invited to a Saturday breakfast on January 14. This is an opportunity to explore how you can walk with other men and see your faith grow and strengthen. As iron sharpens iron, so one man sharpens another. Whether in our work or relationships or our personal lives, we should not walk alone but encourage each other to be strong and courageous. We hope this to be an opportunity to explore in more depth discipleship and mutual accountability relationships. Contact Allen Burnett for more information (email: ajburnett4@gmail.com and phone: 412-215-6846.)

Annual Meeting Sunday, January 29

Plan on joining us after the 10:30am service. Lunch and childcare will be provided.

New Service Pattern Begins Sunday, February 5

We shift to three services on this Sunday. They will begin at 7:30am, 9am and 11am. A hospitality hour will be offered from 10 – 11am.

Women's Retreat Saturday, February 18

More information coming in the new year! Please reserve the date

Youth Ministry

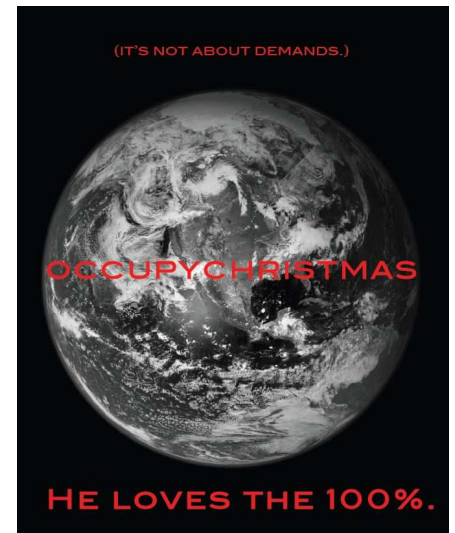
Occupy Christmas: The Advent Sessions

Oh, hey, youth groupies. So, we're going to switch things up a bit, which is what we do best around these parts. Taking a look at what's happening all around us in the world, we're jumping on a common theme from current events. Join us on Wednesday and Friday nights in the basement to protest the lame way our culture demands we understand Christmas. We'll look at the original occupier: Jesus Christ, as he came to earth to change the entire thing around with his grace. And we'll see how we can be a part of spreading the real message of Christmas: that God loves the 100%.

Occupy Christmas

edEfy (Sr. Hi) Wednesdays, November 30 - December 21, 6:30pm
CAYG (Junior High) Fridays, December 2 - December 23, 6:30pm

We look forward to demanding something greater from the Christmas season. Questions? Give Sarah a call at 970-222-4407 or email her at slaribee@gmail.com

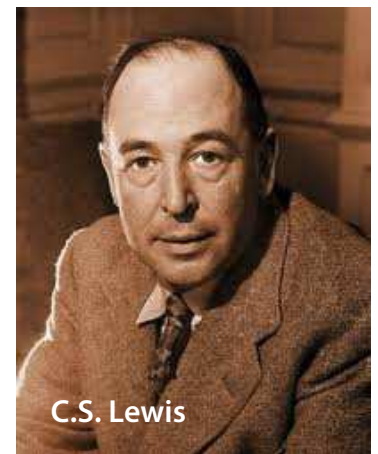


Library News

The Ascension library has a new collection of C.S. Lewis' works and his life, donated by an Ascension parishioner. The new book shelf location list is posted on the library bulletin board, along with a copy of the Pittsburgh Post Gazette article of C.S. Lewis life.

The books for your reading enjoyment are:

1. A Grief Observed
2. Beyond Personality
3. Christian Behavior
4. Experiment in Criticism
5. God in the Dock –
Essays on Theology and Ethics
6. Letters to Children
7. Mere Christianity
8. Present Concerns – Essays
9. Surprised by Joy, the shape of my early life
10. The Allegory of Love
11. The Case for Christianity
12. The Dark Tower and Other Stories
13. The Four Loves
14. The Problem of Pain
15. The Screwtape Letters
16. The Weight of Glory
17. The World's Last Night
18. And God Came In by Lyle W. Dorsett
(Extraordinary Story of Joy Davidson – her life and marriage to C.S. Lewis)
19. C.S. Lewis' Case for the Christian Faith by Richard L. Purtill



C.S. Lewis

As you enjoy these books and all in our lending library, please be a good steward by returning them in a timely manner so others may enjoy them as well.

Family News

December Birthdays

1. Denise Pierchalski
2. Christine Kauffman
4. Alicia Helmick, Patti Emory
5. David Weeber
6. Nicole Mack
7. Grant LeMarquand
Christopher Fleissner
Mariana Gowdy
9. Peter Foster
11. Jarod Oliver
12. Ann Paton, Stephen Schaad
13. Lynn George, Owen Miller
Caroline Richards
Owen Maddalena
17. Alex Stone
18. Ken Wahrenberger
19. Mary Ann Moores
Janet Harris
20. Janet Helms
22. Sally James
23. Jack Foster
24. Denise Cleary
Emma Rae Kaczynski
25. Julie Ann Wasko
Paula Clemens
27. Francis Pionati
29. Cliff Hartle
30. Alan Irvine, Aramide Adebajo
Mary Versa Clemens-Sewall
31. Marilyn Chislaghi

December Anniversaries

19. George and Marilyn Whitmore
21. Ruth and Daniel Hartling
23. Brian and Debora Wortham
26. Ronald and Sally James
29. Andrew and Jeanne Kohn
30. Marc and Jennifer Miller
James and Kristin Richards
31. Steve and Aggie Paff

If we have missed your birthday or anniversary, please let us know!

Congratulations

To David and Rebecca Woods at the birth of Samuel and Noah on November 10, 2011

Modules

2 Modules offered during the season of Epiphany

Wednesday nights
Jan. 11 thru Feb. 8.
7 – 8:30pm

Small Groups form the backbone of our adult discipleship program. Twenty groups meet in various parts of the city each week to pray, study the Bible, and encourage members in their walk with Christ. We strongly encourage you to join or start a small group if you're not in one.

Beginning in January we will also offer regular Discipleship Modules that will run three times a year (in Epiphany, in Easter, and in the Fall). Some of these

modules will take place at Ascension. Others will take place in homes or businesses in our communities. These modules are designed to supplement the discipleship that happens in our small group. Come on your own, bring a friend, or come as a small group. Take a change of pace with your group for 5 weeks, give your leader a break, and get to know some other folks at Ascension. Whatever the case – we hope you'll join us.

Five Theological Giants of the Christian Faith

Taught by the Rev. Dr. Ann Paton and the Rev. Ann Tefft

Location: Hunt Rooms

Do television offerings make you yawn? Are you in need of some stimulating conversation? Investigating these five giants of the faith - Augustine of Hippo, Martin Luther, John Calvin, John Wesley and Karl Barth - will inspire you to renewed strength and purpose! Just like us they all had challenging personal struggles along with their brilliant thoughts which helped shape our church today. Come learn what every Christian wants to know about these theologians as we investigate the major contributions each made to our faith. We will also learn about the challenges each faced as we read a sample of their writings.

Join us on Wednesday evenings from 7 to 8:30pm for dessert and coffee at Church of the Ascension. And bring a friend.

New Members' Class

Taught by the Rev. Josh Miller with other special guest teachers

Location: Conference Room (2nd Floor of the Parish Hall Building)

The New Members Class is great for three groups of people:

1. Those who want to become members of Ascension
2. Adults who want to be confirmed in the spring on Ascension Day
3. Anyone who would like a place to explore the basics of the faith and a place to ask questions.

Using the story of the Prodigal Son, we explore the meaning of the gospel and what it means to live it out in our day to day lives. We also take a look at church history, Anglicanism, the mission of Ascension, and anything you've ever wondered about in our worship services. If you are being confirmed, you'll also get a personally tailored course of study, after the five weeks of class are completed, to round out your confirmation preparation.

If you fit into one of the three groups of people mentioned above – please join us! Dessert and beverages will be served.

Campus Ministry

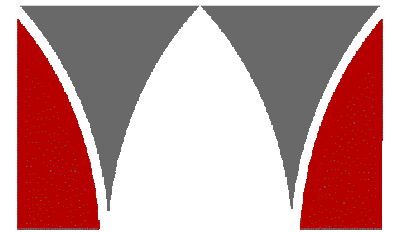
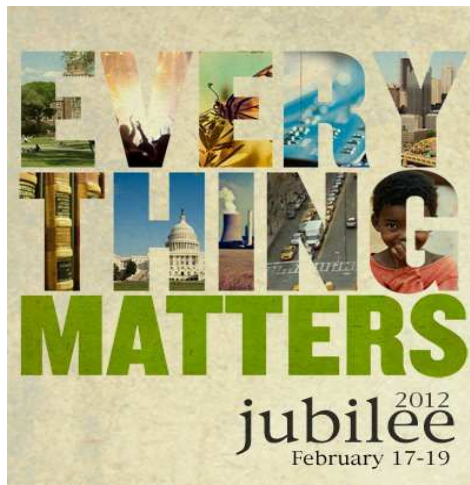
Jubilee 2012
"Everything Matters"
February 17-19

The Jubilee Conference is a fantastic opportunity for college students and it happens here in Pittsburgh. The weekend is an incredible look into how we as Christians can use our studies, skills, and passions to serve God and live out the Kingdom vision. Here are some words from the website -

"Jubilee is the CCO's annual college student conference. Jubilee is a catalytic event created to provide 'a vision of and for life' to help followers of Jesus grow in living out their faith in every area of life. Encouraging students to consider the public implications of their own personal transformation and what it means to be faithful to God in their university years and their vocational pursuits that will follow." - www.jubileeconference.com.

Students: This conference is a life-changing event where you get to look into connecting your faith, study, and living. Early registration means money saved. Scholarships are available.

Parishioners: Would you like to help a student to go? We are looking for scholarship gifts that would make it easier for students to afford this great conference. Contact Jonny Cagwin.



CHURCH OF THE ASCENSION

Worship ♦ Grow ♦ Give

A Worshipping Community;
Equipping God's People;
Sharing Christ's Healing With a Broken World

Worship Services

Sunday

8am
Holy Eucharist Rite I

8:45am Hot Breakfast;
Parish Hall

10:30am
Holy Eucharist Rite II

5pm
Jonah's Call

Wednesday

7am
Holy Eucharist Rite II
in the Gordon Chapel
followed by breakfast

Address

4729 Ellsworth Ave.
Pittsburgh, PA 15213
Phone: 412-621-4361
Fax: 412-621-5746

Website

www.ascensionpittsburgh.org

The Ascent

Published monthly by the
Church of the Ascension.
Marilyn Clifton Chislaghi, Editor
Judy Yadrick, Publisher

Ascent Deadline

Articles for the January Ascent are
due December 15 and will be
available January 1.

Come to the
presentation of
**Bright
Christmas**
An Angel Remembers

The Nativity story from
the angels' point of view
Christmas Eve Worship 4pm