

Advent at Ascension

Advent Worship: Wednesdays at Noon

December 6, 13 and 20

In the rhythms of the liturgical year there are seasons of silence and periods of celebration; times for fasting and days for feasting. Advent is a season of silence. It's a time for reflection and is often referred to as 'Little Lent.' This has been the practice in the Eastern Orthodox tradition. Lent and Advent are both seasons of 'preparation' and 'anticipation.' Like Lent, there is a sense in which Advent is also penitential. As the days grow shorter and darkness comes more quickly, Advent is an opportunity to reflect on your relationship with God and what the coming of Christ means for you. With this in mind, we invite members of the congregation to spend time in quieter reflection at our Wednesday noon services held in the Gordon Chapel. Childcare will be provided for all Wednesday Noon services throughout Advent.

Advent Teaching Series: The Gospel According to Isaiah

**Saturday,
December 2, 9 and 16
8:30 – 10am**

A three-week series during Advent taught by Jonathan Warren, where we learn how to follow the apostles in their exegesis of the 'Gospel according to Isaiah.' If you long to understand the Old Testament as Christian scripture, if you long to understand how

*'the New is in the Old concealed,
the Old is in the New revealed,'*
as Augustine once counseled us to understand the Scriptures, please join us in the Hunt Rooms. Child-care, light pastries and coffee will be provided.

Greening of the Church: Join us to prepare the Nave!

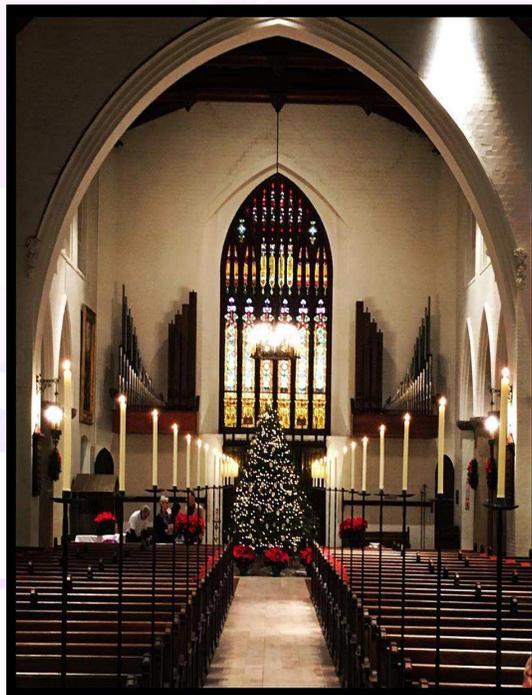
**Saturday, December 16
10am – Noon**

The Greening of the Church is a festive event and a great way to support our altar ministry. We will be hanging ornaments on the Christmas tree, attaching candle standards to the pews, putting up wreaths, setting out the crèche and more. Coffee, bagels, pastries and juice will be served in the morning. Please come! Meet at the back of the Nave (sanctuary). You may contact the church office (ext. 219) for more information if you have any questions. All ages welcome!

Advent 3: Lessons and Carols

Sunday, December 17 at 9 & 11am

We will celebrate a Service of Lessons and Carols at both our 9am and 11am services. This Service weaves together a progression of scripture readings 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 aged 4 and younger. They should go directly to their classrooms when they get to church as there is no children's talk at this service. Children age 5 and older will be with us for the service. This is a great seasonal service to invite guests to attend.



Christmas Services

Family Christmas Eve Service Sunday, December 24th at 10am

Because Christmas Eve falls on a Sunday, we will have our Family Christmas Eve service at 10am (instead of our usual 4pm). All are invited to this warm service that is designed with children in mind. We will celebrate the nativity of Jesus with a children's tableau and sing the great carols of Christmas. Our co-associate rector, the Rev. Dr. Jonathan Warren will preach. *Childcare for children aged 4 and under will be provided. Children aged 5 and older are with us for the service.* Coffee and Christmas cookies in the Parish Hall will follow the service. Please remember to bring your bells to this service! It is a great joy to sing the great hymns of Christmas with congregational bells ringing out!



Festival Christmas Eve Eucharist Sunday, December 24th at 10pm

Our late Christmas Eve service will feature a Festival Procession, incense, candles and the great music of the season in celebration of the birth of the Christ child. Our rector, the Rev. Canon Jonathan Millard will preach. *Childcare is not provided.* Please remember to bring bells to this service! It is a great joy to sing the great hymns of Christmas with congregational bells ringing out!

Christmas Day Eucharist at 10am

The lessons are different from Christmas Eve so that those who wish to make this their second service of Christmas may join those who prefer this quiet one to the festival celebrations on Christmas Eve. The Rev. Dr. Jack Gabig will preach. *Child care is not provided.*

Ascension Youth Ministry

Youth Group Christmas Overnight Friday, December 15

On this evening we will see members of both youth groups and their parents gather for a Christmas dinner, play a festive themed game of 'Family Feud', enjoy a couple of short Christmas movies made by the high schoolers, before we wave goodbye to parents. The evening will then involve worship and small group discussion, big group games and team challenges, plus the greatest challenge of them all; sleep! Do pray we all grow closer to Christ, build a strong sense of fellowship (which is a real desire for teens, identified by the creators of various hit shows), and then serve the church next morning by setting up all beautiful features of our Nave in Advent!

WE CAN'T WAIT FOR OUR...

OVERNIGHT BEFORE CHRISTMAS!

- FRIDAY 15TH DECEMBER
- 6.30PM DINNER & 'FAMILY FEUD' W/ PARENTS (STAY TILL 8PM)
- 'GREENING OF THE CHURCH' ON SATURDAY MORNING
- BREAKFAST & LUNCH PROVIDED
- FINISH AT NOON



DIOCESAN
DYG
YOUTH
GATHERING

ST STEPHEN'S CHURCH, SEWICKLEY
WELCOMES THE

**PITTSBURGH DIOCESAN
YOUTH GATHERING!**

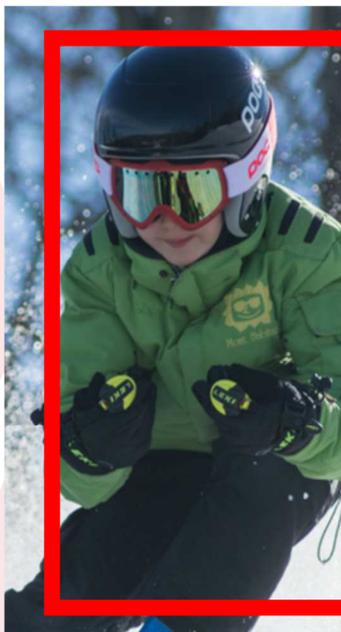
SATURDAY NOV 4TH
8AM-3PM

WORSHIP, GAMES, PRACTICAL HELP
+ TIME WITH THE BISHOP

Ascension Youth Worship Band!?!



Kelsey Regan, Jack Harper and I drove a group of middle and high schoolers to the Pittsburgh Diocesan Youth Gathering on Saturday, November 4th. Kelsey led a brilliant seminar on Mental Health and the Christian, the Bishop shared his testimony, which was wonderfully down to earth, and the Fox Chapel Youth Group Worship Band led an impressive song set. The lead guitarist also invited us to see his school band later that night (which I did - so much fun!). But best of all, a few Ascension teens with musical gifts were inspired to develop a Youth Worship band here too, so pray for them as they gather and practice to lead a time of worship and prayer during the Overnight Before Christmas on Friday, December 15th.



From Sunday Jan 14th 6.30pm
Till Monday Jan 15th 6.30pm

CAYG Ski Trip!

COST: \$55 PLUS RENTALS

PLACES ARE LIMITED

APPLICATION DEADLINE DECEMBER 8TH

DOWNLOAD FORMS FROM

CAYGONLINE.COM

Family News

December Birthdays

1. Denise Bozich, Brian Janaszek
2. Christine Kauffman
5. Dave Weeber
6. Dana Cummings, Nicole Mack
7. Mariana Gowdy
Grant LeMarquand
9. Bob Forrest, Peter Foster
Joe Weaver
10. Sam Taylor
12. Oren Janaszek, Piper Kilpatrick
Ann Paton, Stephen Schaad
13. Boden Cagwin, Katie Gorbold
Owen Maddalena, Owen Miller
14. Josephina Emrock
Caroline Martien
16. Emily Gauthier, Anna Mamo
18. John Ito
19. Janet Harris, Mary Ann Moores
Dee Wible
20. Janet Helms, Henry Maddalena
22. Sally James, Charlotte Swab
23. Meg Sateia
24. Liam Ulrich
25. Paula Clemens
26. Brian Becker, Dick Castor
27. Harry Ealey, Abby Kimball
28. Kelly Morrison
29. Autumn Stewart
30. Aramide Adebajo, Alan Irvine
Mary Versa Clemens-Sewall
Henry Twichell
31. Marilyn Chislaghi
Sarah Fuller, Christina Silva

December Anniversaries

16. Joe & Sima Weaver
21. Dan & Ruth Hartling
28. Kyle & Alison Sutton
Tyler & Megan Foxwell
29. Garrett & Abby Kimball
Andy & Jeanne Kohn
Josh & Meg Sateia
30. Marc & Jenn Miller
31. Steve & Aggie Paff

Women's Ministry

Epiphany Quiet Day: The Door of Eternity

Leader:

Renee Smith

Date:

Feast of the Epiphany,
Saturday, January 6
8:30am - Lunch

Cost: \$25

Childcare Provided

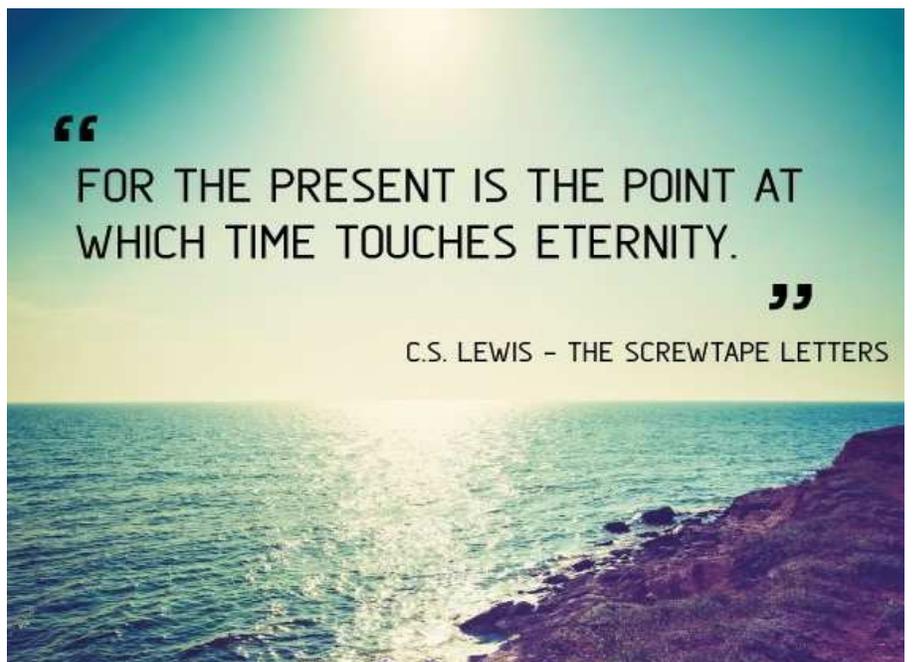


*“For the present is the point at which time touches eternity.”
(C.S. Lewis, *The Screwtape Letters*)*

Across the ages, humans have touched on biblical truth – the present in God’s Presence matters – deeply. Each of us is invited to live, not in the past or the future, but His present. And somehow – in God’s economy – this living in the holy now opens us to reality so that we touch eternity.

We will reflect on 2017 and engage in ways to live ‘presently’ so that 2018 is increasingly free of anxiety and fear. The present matters. Eternity matters. Each of us matters as we engage our Lord in the holy now.

Registration will take place in the month of December through bulletin inserts and online by visiting our website at www.ascensionpittsburgh.org. Contact racheldkbecker@gmail.com for more information or to register.



Men's Breakfast

A Christian Vision of Manliness: Scripture & Tradition



Speaker:

The Rev. Dr. Jonathan Warren

Date:

Saturday, January 20 at 8:30am

Cost: \$10

Childcare Provided

The social theorist Zygmunt Bauman says that we live in the age of 'liquid modernity', an age where the ideologies and paradigms of understanding of the past have been swept away. We are adrift, it is safe to say, in a time of profound uncertainty and tentativeness. The slam poet Taylor Mali draws attention to this anxiety in his poem 'Totally like whatever, you know?': 'In case you hadn't noticed,/It has somehow become uncool/ to sound like you know what you're talking about?/Or believe strongly in what you're saying?/ Invisible question marks and parenthetical (you know?)'s/have been attaching themselves to the ends of our sentences?/Even when those sentences aren't, like, questions? You know?'

But at the same time, and for the same reason, our age is one of profound dogmatism, with experts and activists across the political and institutional spectrum speaking with manufactured certainty and heaping scorn and vituperation upon their opponents. Brené Brown has written recently in this vein that the only thing we now hold in common as a nation is rage.

Nowhere, perhaps, is this combination of profound uncertainty and profound dogmatism more evident than in our loss of confidence in what it means to be a man. We know and can identify 'toxic masculinities'; we wring our hands about the increasing number of men who 'fail to launch'; we increasingly see masculinity detached from embodiment and dissolved into a subjective attribute of identity; and we see an alarming rise, especially among younger men, but now increasingly among prestigious societal leaders as well, in 'feral', predatory, and nihilistic masculinities. And everywhere it seems, we are not having conversations or debates so much as savage shouting matches.

In the church, to be frank, we are not doing much better. We are better at identifying what we are against in our men than we are for in building each other up in godly manliness. We have heard prominent pastors, like drill sergeants, tearing Christian men down from the pulpit for being 'boys who can shave'. But what is a noble, godly vision of manliness that we can aspire to? Where do we see it commended and modeled in Scripture? In the history of the church?

This is a difficult topic, and there are bound to be disagreements, but to me it is worth the risk to open this conversation as a church. As Nassim Nicholas Taleb has argued, unless we as the church have 'skin in the game', trying to figure out together how to grow as men together with grace and patience with one another, how can we profess to offer the hope of Jesus Christ to the world? Let's reason together, let's build one another up, and by the power of the Holy Spirit and in the name of Christ be an alternative in this discussion to the outrage that surrounds us.

But what is a noble, godly vision of manliness that we can aspire to?

?

Where do we see it commended and modeled in Scripture?

?

... In the history of the church?

?

Poverty Simulation

Save the Date!

Circles of Greater Pittsburgh is teaming up with Church of the Ascension for a Poverty Simulation on Friday, February 2, 2018 from 6:30-8:30pm



Ted Melnyk

A poverty simulation is part role-play, part-monopoly, part game of Life (on overdrive). We step into someone else's shoes and navigate the tough choices and obstacles that many of our neighbors in poverty face every week. Circles explains that "During a simulation, participants role-play the lives of low-income families, from single parents trying to care for their children to senior citizens trying to maintain their self-sufficiency on Social Security. The task of each family is to provide food, shelter and other basic necessities during the simulation while interacting with various community resources staffed by low-income volunteers."

Though the Simulation will be at Ascension, the New Catacombs will be transformed into a city (called Realville). The Pittsburgh Post-Gazette describes a recent Poverty Simulation: "It is set up with tables along the walls manned by people playing representatives of a bank, school, day care center, employer, homeless shelter, grocery, rent collector, payday lender, pawn shop, police station, utility company and welfare office." Each participant will be assigned a role to play (and a packet with goals, instructions, "money," etc.). Think of it like a real-life video game or immersive theater with your church family. Poverty Simulations raise our own awareness about poverty and provide a creative way for us to practice empathy as a community.

We will also get to hear about the important and redemptive work that Circles—directed by Ted Melnyk, who attends Ascension—is doing in our city and how we can join, support, and pray for them. According to their website, Circles connects "people across socioeconomic lines in an effort to move people & families out of poverty." Instead of creating programs to "manage poverty," they engage in the "longer term, harder work of moving people out of poverty. Good jobs, saving, investing and changing lives and families for good."

Join us for this night together, which will be an imaginative, challenging, and thought-provoking time (and experiment!) for our community. For more information, contact tish.warren@ascensionpittsburgh.org



Do you have what it takes to survive a month in poverty?

Deepen your understanding of poverty by participating in a poverty simulation.

Congregational Care: Meal Ministry



Jill Shook

Jill Shook is a part of our Congregational Care team. She leads our *Ascension Meals Ministries*. I interviewed her about herself, ice cream, superpowers, and the important work she and her teams are doing in our church. If you'd like to join our Ascension Meals teams, contact Jill at jilleshook@gmail.com.

How long have you been at Ascension and how did you find out about us?

Our first day at Ascension was the sunrise service on Easter Sunday, 2014. We had just moved to Pittsburgh after getting married. I'd asked the rector from my church in Nashville to suggest a church in the area, and he had suggested Ascension.

What is your favorite kind of ice cream?

I love pretty much any ice cream without actual fruit pieces in it, but Handel's Banana Cream Pie is my go-to!

If you had a completely free afternoon and could spend it anyway you'd like, what would you do?

I would go to the library and browse for an hour or so, then go for a trail run.

If you could have one super power, what would it be? And why?

I've always thought that I would love to be able to be invisible. Maybe in cloak form, like Harry Potter.

How did you end up hearing about and leading Soul Food and New Mom Meal Ministry?

I wasn't even aware that we had a Meals Ministry until I was in the hospital after the birth of our daughter Eleanor, and Dr. Amy Maddalena happened to be my pediatrician. She mentioned that Ascension had a Meals Ministry, and then sent my info to Sara Hilleglass, who was coordinating the New Moms Ministry at the time. After I had received the meals, I shared with Sara how much the ministry had blessed me, so when she unexpectedly had to move, she asked me to consider leading it. After that, the coordinator of the Soul Food ministry also stepped down, and I was asked to lead that ministry as well. We combined the two into the Ascension Meals Ministry, although the volunteer pools are different.

What do these ministries look like or do?

The Meals Ministry seeks to love our fellow Ascensionites through providing meals during times of transition, such as the birth of a baby, the death of a loved one, or a health crisis. Many of the volunteers for the New Parents branch of the ministry also volunteer for the Soul Food branch of the ministry.

What is your favorite part of leading or being on this ministry team?

I really love being able to care for my fellow church members in such a tangible way, and see the way that the volunteers step up to provide for each other.

What are the current needs of your ministry?

The Meals Ministry could always use volunteers! Many of the New Parents Meals Ministry volunteers are also on the Soul Food Ministry list, and when there are multiple births or crisis events at church, they get stretched thin.

How can our church support this ministry and how can we be in prayer for your team?

Our church could support us by signing up for either (or both) meals ministry list! In my 6-month tenure, the average total need for meals ranges from 1 meal/month to 3 meals/month. There's no obligation to sign up to make every meal, and many times, the meals can be dropped off at church. We would always appreciate prayers for a smooth meal delivery process (arranging the meals, having volunteers sign up quickly, getting the meals to the members who need them seamlessly). We want to be a blessing and not a logistical headache.

How does this ministry help Ascensionites to "do good to everyone, and especially to those who are of the household of faith" (Galatians 6:10)?

I believe that blessing others blesses us, and sharing food with one another is a backbone of our faith. From the fruit in the garden of Eden, to the Feast Days set forth in the Mosaic Law, to the Last Supper that envisages our current Eucharist, food has been an integral part of the Biblical story. Taking the time to prepare (or buy!) a meal to nourish a fellow believer is a tangible way to live out our faith, and is truly a blessing for both the giver and the receiver.

Children's Ministry



Karen Sloan

Welcoming Karen Sloan to the team

We are excited to welcome Karen Sloan as our new Assistant Children's Director! As a mom and ministry leader she brings with her considerable experience working with children, and an enthusiasm for resourcing parents and teachers. We look forward to how God will use her to continue the growth and discipleship of the children at Ascension.

Children's Tableau: 10am Christmas Eve

All children are invited to participate in this year's Christmas Tableau, which will be occurring during the 10am worship service on Christmas Eve. Talk to Matt if you have not yet signed up and would like to participate. We will work on getting costumes fitted between the services on December 3, 10, and 17. The mandatory rehearsal will occur in conjunction with the Greening of the Church; 11:30am - 12:15pm on Saturday December 16. On Sunday December 24, kids should arrive by 9am to get into costume for the 10am service. This 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!

The Church Calendar and Following Jesus



My son, Liam (age 4), has always enjoyed puzzles. One Saturday morning this last month over breakfast he asked me, "What is the red Sunday?" At first I was a bit confused, but soon realized after some inquiry that he was referring the church calendar puzzle that we have with the Godly Play materials in his Children and Worship class. The 'red Sunday' is Pentecost. This led to a lengthy discussion about the church calendar, including Christmas, Easter, Pentecost, and so forth. Did you know that every year we tell the story of the Gospel through our worship? I had the privilege of sharing the good news of Jesus Christ with my son, beginning with a simple puzzle and a familiarity with our common worship!

I was left to wonder how we can better follow the church year in our homes and community groups. Advent is the beginning of the church year, and is the perfect time to begin! I would encourage others to ask their kids what they are learning in Sunday School and even to check out the materials in their classes. Take advantage of the resources provided. Talk to others about how they do this in their home.

The next day at church, Liam asked me if I could come with him to Sunday School. As the director I usually have something that needs to be done or am taking advantage of an opportunity to be in worship and hear the sermon. So I told Liam, "I'm not sure; I might be able to come." After taking care of some responsibilities, I went and sat in the back of the Nave to listen to the sermon, but Liam's request stuck with me. After a few minutes, I left and went to join his class. I was not surprised to find him sitting on the floor playing with the church calendar puzzle and showing other kids how to do it. I joined him and together we remembered the story of Jesus which we re-dramatize each year through our worship.

Liturgical Resource for you!

We are excited to launch this month a liturgical resource that could be a helpful addition to your personal, family, and community group devotional times. This can be found each week as a bulletin insert and includes basic liturgy options, the Sunday scriptures, a memory verse, and catechism questions. You are welcome to do more or less than what is on the sheet. The hope is that this tool will encourage and resource you and your family to grow deeper in your relationship with Christ throughout the week.

Missionary Community



Jewel Anita Hendrix

Church of the Ascension was recommended as a “praying church” to Jewel Anita when she came to Pittsburgh in 1983 to study at Chatham. Shortly after graduating in 1987, she went to the mission field, first teaching at a school for missionary children and

eventually working for Food for the Hungry (FH). She served 18 years in Guatemala, before being transferred to the international office of FH. From 2005 to 2012 she served the Child Development Programs internationally for FH, overseeing programs in 14 countries in Asia, Africa and Latin America. Traveling and training in many different countries has given her a love for the diversity that God has created throughout the earth and an appreciation for how He reveals Himself to each culture differently.

Currently she is with both Reconciled World (RW) and Youth with a Mission (YWAM). RW ministry sees God transform the lives of vulnerable people by applying Biblical truth to brokenness in all areas of life. Jewel Anita leads the prayer department for RW. Based in Tauranga, New Zealand, she spends significant time each day in the Tauranga House of Prayer, interceding on behalf of Reconciled World and others. With YWAM, she works to raise up youth to serve on the mission field, with a deep understanding of the intimacy of God as the foundation for sharing His love wholistically with others. In Tauranga, she partners with different organizations to provide opportunities for the YWAM staff and students to learn and work with community ministries to promote transformation in their own backyard.

Her passion is to see the Kingdom of God established over all the earth, through the restoration of relationships, by aligning all of our lifestyle to the truth of God’s original intentions and to bring transformation of whole nations through truth being laid as the foundation of the different spheres of society.

Missions, justice and prayer are the three strands that God has placed in her heart to work this out. She practically combines a lifestyle of prayer and fasting together with addressing issues of justice to the end of eliminating poverty and oppression, together with evangelism, discipleship and establishing the Kingdom on earth now. “Your kingdom come, Your will be done on earth as it is in heaven.”

Jewel Anita would appreciate your prayer support:

- Please pray for Jewel Anita when she is teaching. Pray for her to be sensitive to what God would have her say to each different group she is speaking to, whether to YWAM students, churches in New Zealand or internationally.
- Please pray for Jewel Anita’s health, sleep, finances, peace, and general wellbeing. It is easy for these things to get out of balance. Pray for her to be safe, healthy, provided for and full of joy in the midst of her ministry.
- Please pray for Jewel Anita as she works with and influences the local ministries in New Zealand. Pray for her to encourage them towards even greater alignment to God’s original design for communities. Pray for her to be light and salt in her community.
- Please pray for Jewel Anita’s time for intercession. Pray for her to sustain a prayerful lifestyle. Pray for her to be able to creatively engage others in praying for justice issues that are on the heart of God.

Missionary Community



Ardath Smith
Renée Smith

Renée and Ardath Smith have had a long affiliation with Church of the Ascension. Both are deeply committed to the work of God among the nations and have worked with professional mission organizations over the years. They are currently seeking to establish the work of *Hineni House*, a community of those committed to prayer for the nations. Renee wrote in our 2013

Ascent, “There seems to be a movement of pray-ers who desire to wait on Him and agree with His purposes for the nations. God has an agenda for this world – we are moving toward the marriage feast of the Lamb!” Renée and Ardath hoped to relocate to Wales to take up this vocation of prayer for the nations. Their latest update begins with reflections on their time in Wales, what they have done in 2017, and their current sense of where the Lord is leading them. Please read on ...

*After they had spent some time there, they were sent off in peace
by the brothers to those who had sent them. (Acts 15:33)*

Our last Sunday in Wales, Ardath and I attended church in Llan Ffestiniog. It was a hard morning for a variety of reasons. One reason was that we had come to love the people of north Wales where we had been for three months. The service ended with the song “Here am I, Lord” - an old song (1981) written by Daniel Schutte. As we sang, each verse brought a memory or a thought about how God moved during our time and wants to move across Wales. Then the refrain:

*Here I am, Lord. Is it I, Lord? I have heard you calling in the night
I will go, Lord, if you lead me ... I will hold your people in my heart.*

I tried to sing while the tears flowed. ‘Lord, I *do* leave this place holding the people in my heart!’ The service ended. People started chatting and gathering around tea and biscuits. Then came the unexpected. The Anglican vicar’s wife, Becky, gathered the peoples’ attention: ‘We have been blessed this summer to have two people with us who have ministered to many and are leaving today to go home to the USA. Let’s thank Ardath and Renée and pray they can return soon!’ More tears.

Just as in Acts 15:33(above), we were sent in peace back to the USA. The book of Acts lives on! In Acts 14:27 it says,

*“When [Paul and Barnabas] arrived and gathered the church together,
they reported all the things God had done with them,”*

Ardath Smith and I (Renée Smith) are sisters physically. We have been members here at Ascension since the late 1980s. We were sent out separately in the 90s to work with agencies in Asia, Europe and the Muslim world. In recent years, God has been leading us into ministry together; He is forming a worshipping community that is committed to prayer for the nations as well as ministry to church leaders and cross-cultural workers. There are 10 people in our community presently. Currently the 10 of us are located throughout the United States. We are looking for a permanent location for our *Hineni House* community where we can pray and minister together.

In April of this year, Ardath and I flew to Wales, UK and lived, for the most part, in Blaenau Ffestiniog. We had four goals for our time in Wales. The first three goals were met. The last one was not.

- Engage** in worship and prayer onsite,
- Learn** more about Welsh culture and language,
- Cultivate** relationships with the Christian community,
- Discover** a UK church or agency interested in providing visa sponsorship.

Ardath wrote to Archbishop Robert Duncan as our time drew to a close in Wales: “The Lord has given us tremendous favor here in Wales. I have travelled widely and lived internationally before. I have never experienced anything like the welcome and affirmation of our presence that we have experienced here. Stella [another Community member] joined us for the month of June. Her spiritual gifts of discernment were heightened, and the three of us found ourselves ministering together in unexpected ways, and discerning unexpected things together. The extent of spiritual activity in and around us has been remarkable the entire time... We are tremendously honored to have had the privilege of being part of what God

is doing here in North Wales. We are seeing signs of both revival and awakening in the Blaenau Ffestiniog area: 1.) people coming to Christ through those we know and are praying with and 2.) many unexpected spiritual conversations. The battle is fierce - the breakthroughs joyous, the griefs great. But - we do not yet have any option for a visa sponsorship. Where does God want us to establish a home base? I understand our challenge to be this: we need to listen to the Lord, waiting upon him, attending to him in that posture of *hineni* (here I am), until we hear clearly what he is saying.”

And so, we wait and listen. We are committed to going wherever our Lord sends us. Since I moved out of Arizona in December 2012 I have lived in other's homes. My expectation of moving to Wales, UK on a long-term visa has yet to materialize. Both Ardath and I, since April, have lived in other's homes. In August, we were surprised by a chain of circumstances that raised a question: ***might the Lord want us to establish our US home base in Pittsburgh and continue to travel to those regions in the world where we do ministry - Wales, Spain, the Middle East?***

We were sent out from Ascension. We return for short periods and report. We value our Ascension family! **Would you pray and discern with us?** We would love to have retreat space for church leaders and cross-cultural workers we work with. ***Are we to establish our US home base in Pittsburgh?***

Christmas Parties

OWLS

Seniors Christmas Party & Luncheon

Thursday, December 14 from 12:30 to 2:30pm

Be filled with the Christmas spirit at our party which will include Christmas carols with Holly Puett and a beautiful presentation by Nancy Drew, a docent at the Carnegie Museum of Art. Her talk will highlight the museum's Christmas tree exhibition and exquisite 18th century *presepio* Nativity scene, a scene rare in US collections, which together with the trees makes up a cherished Pittsburgh tradition.

A delicious hot-lunch catered will be served at 12:30pm. First time visitors are free, others pay \$10. You are encouraged to bring a friend of any age. Don't miss this one! Contact Mother Ann at tefft.ann@gmail.com or 412-526-1107 to make your reservation.

Christmas Caroling
with Holly Puett



Presentation
by Nancy Drew

Ministry with Internationals Christmas Party

Wednesday, December 20 from 6:30 to 8pm

All members and friends of Ascension are invited to the *Internationals Christmas Party* in the Parish Hall on Wednesday, December 20th from 6:30 - 8pm. Story-teller Alan Irvine will regale with a few Christmas stories, we will visit the Christmas tree and creche in the Nave, have a potluck with international food, and just stand around and talk. If you are interested in attending the Christmas celebration, please do! There is usually plenty of food.

Additionally, if you or your community group would like to bring Christmas cookies to any class or have an international over for a Christmas party or meal, please contact Lu Ann at PittsburghEnglish4U@gmail.com or just invite someone you have already met.



Lu Ann Pengidore



Story-teller Alan Irvine

A Service of Memorial & Lament

**Monday,
January 8 at 7pm**

The Christian funeral is a glorious affair, a moment of lamentation, memorial, and celebration all at once. There is profound closure and catharsis in a funeral, as we commit our loved one to Christ and the age to come, surrounded by our ecclesial family and friends. The third century theologian Hippolytus charges us: 'in the funerals of the departed, accompany them with singing if they have been faithful in Christ'. Our funerals should 'be filled with the Spirit' as we address one another 'in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody to the Lord from your heart' (Eph. 5:18-19).



The funeral represents a loss that we can mark liturgically: we can place this loss in a context and devote it and ourselves to the Lord through this service. But it is certain that over the course of our lives there are many losses that we are not given occasion to mark in this way. We bear these losses silently and privately, or potentially with a small company of friends who walk in darkness with us. Among the most painful of these losses relates to children: the loss of children in utero through a miscarriage or a regretted abortion, the loss of children through stillbirth, and the long ache of infertility.

At Ascension, we want to offer a liturgical context to corporately and publicly lament and memorialize these losses. We have chosen the feast of the Baptism of our Lord, January 8, as an appropriate date, to offer this Service of Memorial and Lament. The Baptism of Our Lord is the feast in which we commemorate the moment in which the identity of Jesus Christ is made known to the world: the Holy Spirit descends upon him 'in bodily form', Luke tells us, and the Father declares over him 'You are my beloved Son; with you I am well pleased' (Luke 3:22). We believe that through our baptism we are claimed through union with him in the Holy Spirit as Christ's own brothers and sisters. We are adopted, as Paul says, into the household of God as His own children (Eph. 1:5, 3:20; Rom. 8:17).

In this service we want to commend children to God who did not live long enough to receive baptism, but who are nonetheless holy through the faith of their parents (1 Cor. 7:14). We want to accompany these departed, too, with singing in the assembly. We want to surround those who have longed for children but were not able to have them with psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs. If you have suffered any of the losses described in this article, or you are close to someone who has, please join us for this service. If you have questions or want more information, please contact jonathan.warren@ascensionpittsburgh.org.



**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

9:00 a.m.
Holy Eucharist

11:00 a.m.
Holy Eucharist

Wednesday

Noon
Holy Eucharist
in the Gordon Chapel

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The Ascent

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

Ascent Deadline

Articles for the January Ascent
are due December 11 and will
be available December 31.