



Rector's letter to the Congregation

Dear Church family,

A new calendar year is a good opportunity for us to *look back* and reflect on where we have seen God at work in our lives, and to *look forward* to recommitting ourselves to God.

Looking back:

Personally

2017 has been another year of God's grace and provision. A long season of much heartache and struggle came to an end with my engagement in May, and marriage in September. Thank you to all who have prayed for me and my family these many long years past and more recently for me and Andrea. God did indeed do "abundantly far more than all I could have asked or imagined." (Ephesians 3:20)

As a Congregation

For us as a congregation we also have so much to be thankful for this past year. We have seen increased attendance, increased giving, and several folks making first time or renewed commitments to Christ.

At the beginning of the year we welcomed Jonathan and Tish Warren as our new co-Associate Rectors. Having a married couple job share as priests (Jonathan 0.85 time and Tish 0.25 time) is a first for us. This has been a hard year for them with much grief in their family, and yet we have been blessed by them as they have lived and loved and ministered among us.

A significant highlight of 2017 was the fruitful mediation and almost unanimous support of the congregation to move forward with a proposed settlement with the Episcopal Church. This settlement, once approved by the courts, regarding our building and assets will enable us to stay in these historic buildings and use our historic endowment funds to continue the ministry and mission of Ascension in Pittsburgh and to the ends of the earth. Thanks be to God! Let us continue to pray for our brothers and sisters in the Episcopal Diocese and the work that still needs to be done to finalize the proposed settlement.

We also rejoiced to receive our organ back, splendidly restored and enhanced!

Looking forward:

Personally

I am looking forward to my Sabbatical leave beginning after Easter. I will be away from the parish from April 9 through August 18. I am so very grateful to be able to take sabbatical leave which provides a wonderful opportunity for me to do a "spiritual reset." One of the things I will be doing is reflecting on how I am to serve God and Ascension in the final quarter of my full-time ministry as a priest in Christ's church. I intend to spend some time with other long-tenured rectors of large churches and seek to learn how they have maintained faithful and fruitful ministries. I'm also interested to learn how some have managed to transition from being Rector as a "CEO" to being Rector as "Father-in-God." There will be time for slowing down, for rest, and renewal - including much longed-for time to read. Andrea and I plan to spend time in the UK and Ireland as well as time at home and with our families. In June, I will also be representing the diocese as one of our Diocesan Provincial Council Deputies to the second Global Anglican Future Conference (GAFCON) in Jerusalem.

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Letter to the Congregation continued

Looking Forward as a Congregation

I am delighted to announce that Bishop Grant LeMarquand will be serving as our “Priest in Charge” during my absence. Bishop Grant is recently home from Ethiopia, with his wife, Dr. Wendy, where they have been serving as Missionaries with SAMS. Bishop Grant will be serving as our principal preacher on Sundays at Ascension, as well as being present on Tuesdays and Wednesdays during the week. He will be leading our staff meetings, attending vestry meetings, and providing an overseeing pastoral presence while I am away.

Some of the highlights to look forward to in the year ahead include:

- Women’s and Men’s Ministry with occasional events throughout the year including a Women’s Epiphany Quiet Day (Sat, Jan 6) and a Men’s Breakfast on “A Christian Vision of Manliness” (Jan 20)
- Congregational Meeting (Sun, Feb 11th) – please attend. There are many ways to engage in our communal life and this meeting, though more ‘institutional,’ is an important part of our spiritual commitment to one another and our life together.
- Lenten Dinner Series (Fridays in March) – The Rev Geoff Chapman will be leading a four-week series on “The Inner Life.”
- Eastertide Courses: We hope to have several classes including Confirmation, Financial Peace University, and a relationship course entitled “How we Love”.
- Fall Parish Retreat (Oct 5-7)
- A Fall Series on “Difficult Conversations” (politics, race, sexuality, etc.) – We are in the process of putting this together. The plan is to be able to talk about some of these potentially divisive issues in a measured, intentional, and non-reactionary way.

So much of our faithful following of Christ takes place as we love God and our neighbors in the everyday ordinariness of our lives, at home and at work, with our families and friends. To that end, I want to stress once again the importance of setting time aside daily to be with God through prayer and bible study. I highly commend to you the Bible in One Year (BIOY) App. This is a very accessible way to read the whole Bible in a year. I have used this App twice now. In 2015 I *read* it each day, and last year I *listened* to it. In addition to portions of Scripture from the Old and New Testaments and the Psalms or Proverbs each day, there is also an accompanying commentary from Nicky Gumbel – who is an excellent Bible teacher.

Finally, I exhort you in 2018 to follow the example of the early church (Acts 2:42 printed below) to attend Sunday Worship each week, and to participate in a Community Group. Our disciplines of daily prayer, weekly Worship with other Christians, and active participation in an Ascension Community Group are vital ways in which we can follow Jesus in our day to day lives.



Yours in Christ,

Jonathan +
→

Jonathan N. Millard
(Rector)

They devoted themselves to the apostles’ teaching and fellowship, to the breaking of bread and the prayers. Acts 2:42

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 in a funeral, as we commit our loved one to Christ and the age to come, surrounded by our church family and friends. This is an ancient tradition. Third century theologian, Hippolytus, encourages us to accompany with singing the funerals of the faithful departed. 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 the context of God's story and devote it and ourselves to the Lord through this service. However, 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 still-birth, 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 and be welcomed by their parents, siblings, extended family and church family. These children 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

Jonathan Warren, co-Associate Rector

Family News

January Birthdays

1. Michael Mulock
2. Anna Ruhl
3. Elowyn McKenna
Mari Stout, Flannery Warren
4. Suzie Hall, Ruah Scandrett
5. Catherine Crotty
Brent Stewart
6. Mary Meyers
8. Barbara Baur
Wendy LeMarquand
11. Thomas Fuener
12. Ben Cummings, Ted Ritts
Kelsey Sams
13. Jim Franzen, Betsy Roberts
Ron Yadrick
14. Alex Banfield Hicks
15. Oy Adebajo
16. Bonnie-Marie Yager-Wiggan
17. Finn Foxwell
Mary Martha Truschel
18. Valerie Schalm
19. Luke Gauthier
Josh Momaney
20. Brittany Gernhard
22. Holden Gerlach
David Matthew
23. Jenn Cummings
24. Luke Maddalena
Dan Tickner
25. Jim Foster, Susan Killmeyer
William Moyer
27. Dan Hickey, Laura Irvine
Nate Twichell
28. Ashley Harper
29. Nancy Drew, Nora Woon
30. Marc Miller
Madeleine Swab
31. Megan Foxwell
Gayle McDonough

January Anniversaries

6. Aaron & Kelsey Sams
Grant & Christy Martsolf
7. David & Jenn Crosby
22. James & Allyson Entner
25. Gary & Alyson Holt

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

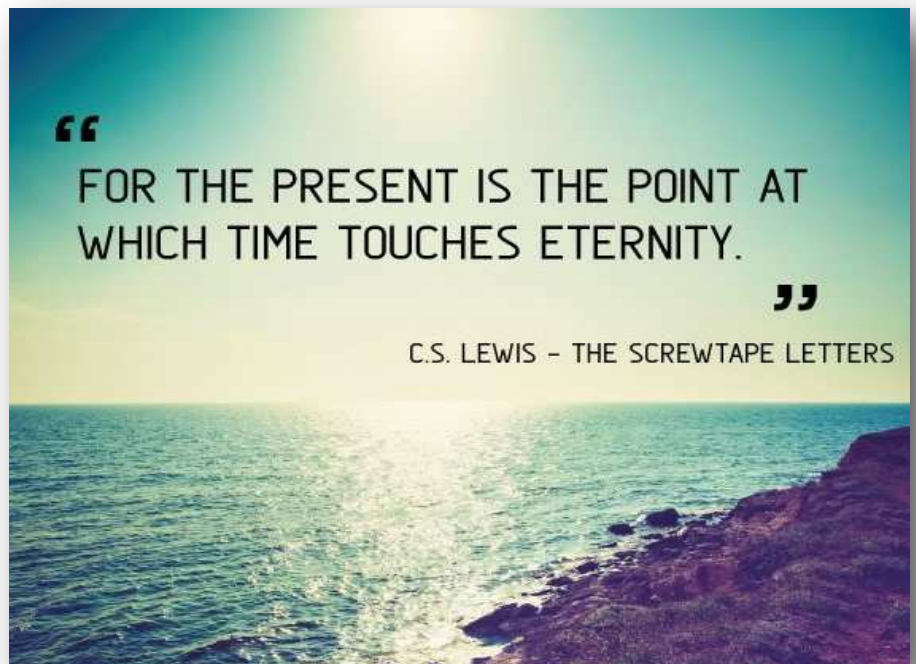


“For the present is the point at which time touches eternity.”
(C.S. Lewis, *The Screwtape Letters*)

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

We live in the age of what some have called ‘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 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 and 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.

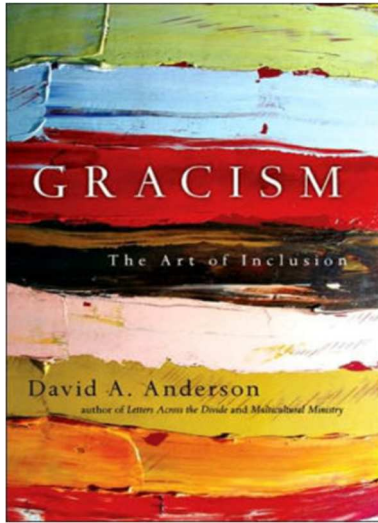
- Tish Warren, co-Associate Rector



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

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

Recommended Reading for Epiphany: Gracism



A few months ago, we had the privilege of hosting the Rev. Dr. Esau McCaulley at our church for a Men's Breakfast and to preach on Sunday morning at Ascension. Fr. Esau electrified us with his own story of becoming an Anglican, with his deep appreciation for the liturgy and its formative power for making disciples, and he challenged us with the fact that the Anglican Church in North America does not, by and large, reach people of color. As an African American growing up in Huntsville, Alabama, Fr. Esau told us he had never heard of Anglicanism because Anglicans had not made a serious, enduring effort to create inroads into his community.

This is a problem because the kingdom of God is multi-ethnic. As it breaks down the dividing wall between Jew and Gentile (Eph. 2:14-22), so it also breaks down the dividing wall between all ethnicities. God, the Creator of all, made 'of one blood all nations of men' (Acts 17:26), and the future we look forward to is the gathering of all nations into a unity in Christ which is not a uniformity, in which all ethnicities will bring their own gifts and praise God in their own languages

(Isa. 60:5-7; Rev. 7:9), as St. Augustine wrote: "Set in one place, [Adam] fell and, as it were, broken small, he has filled the whole world. But the Divine Mercy gathered up the fragments from every side, forged them in the fire of love and welded into one what had been broken."

That unity is to find expression in the midst of our local churches now as a sign of our hope for the resurrection. The apostles labored hard to forge and sustain this unity in the earliest churches (Col. 3:11-14; Gal. 3:28; Eph. 4:3-6; 1 Cor. 1:10; Acts 15:1-21). This conviction was not a piece of airy-fairy social engineering dreamed up by the apostles, but a central part of the apostolic faith which they had received from Christ (John 15:9-14; 17:9-26; Mt. 28:16-20). The fourth century father John Chrysostom witnessed to the power of the gospel to overcome historic ethnic divisions: "Of one and of the other, Christ makes a single body. Thus he who lives in Rome looks on the Indians as his own members. Is there any union to be compared with that? Christ is the head of all."

Fr. Esau is one of the co-founders of the Anglican Multi-Ethnic Network (AMEN), which "exists to help Anglicans in North America better reflect the diversity of the body of Christ in local churches so that our churches' ethnic make-up manifests the universal saving power of the gospel and its ability to unite all people under the lordship of Christ." AMEN recommends resources designed to help the churches in the Anglican Church of North America to understand and overcome the sources of historic and present divisions between different ethnic groups.

AMEN's recommended reading for Epiphany is David Anderson's *Gracism: The Art of Inclusion* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 2010). As a church that places our hope in Christ and which lives in expectation of the powerful work of the Holy Spirit to overcome divisions in our city, our country, and in the one, holy, catholic, and apostolic church of Christ, we will join our province in prayerfully reading this book during Epiphany, when we remember the nations joyfully bringing their gifts to the Christ-child, and the light of his incarnation becoming known to the world (Mt. 2:1-11).

- Jonathan Warren, co-Associate Rector



Want to read and discuss this "Gracism" with others?

Join Jonathan and Tish Warren as they lead a discussion of the book near the end of Epiphany, on Friday, February 9, from 7 – 8:30pm in the Parish Hall. We will have childcare available, as well as tea and coffee. Please join us in reading this book during Epiphany and for our discussion on February 9. All are welcome!

Preaching at Ascension in 2018

The Lectionary is a gift to the church and its preachers. It spares us from vanity, self-flattery, and staleness by forcing us to consider, week in and week out, the ‘whole counsel of Scripture’ (Acts 20:27). Preachers are assigned texts to preach: we do not have the luxury of choosing comfortable passages to preach on, nor do we have the luxury of substituting passages without episcopal permission. Moreover, if you follow the Anglican ‘rule of life’, which commends the devotional practices of joyful and attentive participation in weekly communion, the Daily Offices of Morning and Evening Prayer, and private devotions (Q. 255, *To Be a Christian*), you will read through the entirety of Scripture every year in the Daily Office Lectionary and once every three years in the Sunday Lectionary: a thorough immersion in the Bible.

At the same time, the Sunday Lectionary does not take us passage by passage through books of the Bible, and it gives us each week readings from the Old Testament, the Psalms, the Epistles, and the Gospels. Preachers may focus a sermon on any or all of these readings. For all of these reasons, it can be difficult to get a sense of the continuity of the Scriptures – to get a sense of the purpose of each book, and to get a sense of how the whole hangs together in the light of Christ – even through attentive participation on Sunday morning.

With all of this in mind, in 2018 we are focusing our preaching consistently on one reading in the Sunday Lectionary. In most cases, this will mean that each preaching ‘series’ will be on one book of the Bible, enabling us to unpack the meaning of that specific book over a series of Sundays and to place that book in its context within the whole of Scripture. Each week, our preachers will also craft a series of questions based on the reading on which they are preaching. These will be for use in Community Groups, families, and other settings.

We hope that in all of those settings, you will return to the Sunday Scripture and read it again in the week following, with the second reading freshly illuminated by the preaching of the word on the prior Sunday. The questions will be made available on the website no later than Sunday afternoon for use during that week. Along with the devotional guide we now provide in the bulletin on Sunday mornings, these preaching series and the accompanying questions are aimed at ‘equipping the people of God’ to pray and ‘hear...read, mark, learn, and inwardly digest’ the Scriptures so that ‘we may embrace and ever hold fast the blessed hope of everlasting life’ (Collect for the Second Sunday in Advent).

Our first series in Epiphany 2018 will be through the Lectionary readings in the Gospels of Mark, Matthew, and John. We are calling this series “The Baptized Life.” The first Sunday in Epiphany, January 7, we celebrate The Baptism of Our Lord, and our readings in the Gospels help us to understand our identity as those who have put on Christ’s death and resurrection in baptism, and therefore who we are to be and what we are to do as his body. We look forward as a preaching team to meditating upon the word of God with you, and to being transformed by the Holy Spirit speaking through Scripture.

-Jonathan Warren, co-Associate Rector



The Baptized Life
An Epiphany Sermon Series

Epiphany Sermon Series: The Baptized Life

January 7

Epiphany 1: Mark 1:7-11: The Baptism of Our Lord

January 14

Epiphany 2: John 1:43-51: The Calling of Philip and Nathanael

January 21

Epiphany 3: Mark 1:14-20: Repent and Believe the Good News

January 28:

Epiphany 4: Mark 1:21-28: Teaching with Authority

February 4

Epiphany 5: Mark 1:29-39: Disciples of All Nations

February 11

Epiphany 6: Mark 9:2-9: The Glory of God in the Face of Jesus Christ

Want to find out more about the Epiphany "Baptized Life" Series and the Gospel of Mark?

Join us on Saturday, January 13, from 10:30 – Noon. Jonathan Warren will teach on the Gospel of Mark, providing insightful background to this Gospel since it will be our primary focus throughout Epiphany. All who are interested are invited to this teaching.

A Community Group leader meeting will precede the teaching from 9 – 10:15am. Childcare will be available for the entire morning.

Special Needs Ministry

Capernaum Friends meets the second Saturday afternoon of each month in Ascension's new catacombs. Much fun was had re-enacting the Nativity story!



Ministry in the Middle East

We are pleased to have brief updates from two former Ascensionites, both serving Moslem populations. Full names have been omitted from the article. Thanks to Nate Twichell and Jen Cummings for reaching out to Sarah and David, both of whom you are soon to learn more about.

An update from Sarah

Hi from Kurdistan!

It's honestly been a tense few months in the Kurdish region. Since a failed vote for independence, the Iraqi government has enacted stricter and stricter limitations on Kurdish citizens and foreign workers in the region. (I'd like to put a caveat here...there is blame to go around in both the Kurdish and Iraqi governments, and while America can tend to be very pro-Kurdish, it's a complicated situation with many, many moving parts. End of political interlude.)

The last week has been especially hard. It is impossible to get visas to re-enter the Kurdish region since Iraq took over the borders and the airports last month. This week, Iraq issued an edict that all foreigners without visas must leave by the 15th of December or risk an unknown consequence. I have tentatively been able to secure a visa through another organization so that I can stay to finish the spring semester at the high school I am teaching at. But at this point so much is up in the air that we are all just confused by what we should do and when.

Which brings me to Advent, the time of my writing. The uncertainty of my living and working situation is not particularly interesting or special in the large scheme of most people in the world. For most of time. Refugees in camps. Parents waiting by their children's hospital beds. Husbands and wives who cannot seem to reconcile. There is nothing that is certain in this life. Except the love and salvation secured by the boy in the womb of the virgin. And the promise of full restoration from the coming King.

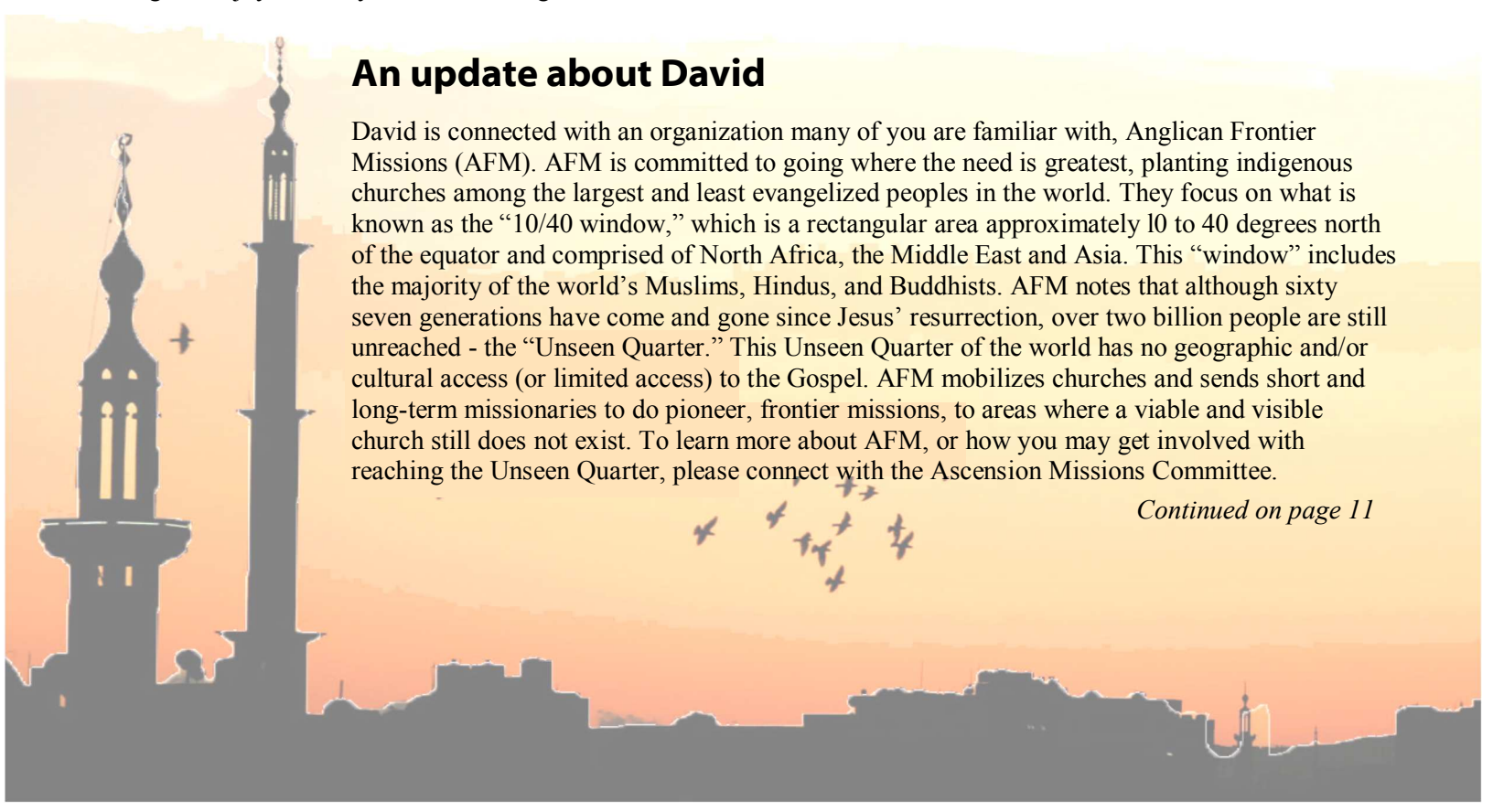
In the last hour since I started writing this, we've had two mid-size earthquakes. Which seems kind of poetic. All of creation is groaning.

I know that all will be well. But I would appreciate prayer for the next few days and weeks of uncertainty for all of us here. And prayer for my work at the high school as I start the second semester, and my roommate begins again at The American University. Sometimes this place seems the darkest its ever been, and I pray that I would continue to live into the light and joy that only Christ can bring.

An update about David

David is connected with an organization many of you are familiar with, Anglican Frontier Missions (AFM). AFM is committed to going where the need is greatest, planting indigenous churches among the largest and least evangelized peoples in the world. They focus on what is known as the "10/40 window," which is a rectangular area approximately 10 to 40 degrees north of the equator and comprised of North Africa, the Middle East and Asia. This "window" includes the majority of the world's Muslims, Hindus, and Buddhists. AFM notes that although sixty seven generations have come and gone since Jesus' resurrection, over two billion people are still unreached - the "Unseen Quarter." This Unseen Quarter of the world has no geographic and/or cultural access (or limited access) to the Gospel. AFM mobilizes churches and sends short and long-term missionaries to do pioneer, frontier missions, to areas where a viable and visible church still does not exist. To learn more about AFM, or how you may get involved with reaching the Unseen Quarter, please connect with the Ascension Missions Committee.

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David has been serving in Turkey since 1994. He and his family lived there for more than ten years. For the last seven years he has been serving the Turkish people from here in the United States. He travels to Turkey about four times per year. He has recently returned from a trip to the southern part of the country. The highlight of this trip was the necessity to delay worship one day because twenty local people came with questions about the Bible. There is a local Christian couple, 'Esther and Brian', who are now settling in this southern region of Turkey, so discipleship is increasing. David asks us to pray for a good relationship between him, Esther and Brian. He is also thankful that many, many visitors (beyond expectations!) are now coming to the church in this region and are hearing the good news. He is also praying that the several hundred who are hearing the good news would have ears to hear and respond with obedience and faith.

Local Mission: Feeding a few Hundred Ascension's meals for EECM and Shepherd's Heart in 2018

Several community groups and families have volunteered for Ascension's meals ministries over the past year, and it's my privilege to hear how blessed they feel extending blessings to others. More are welcome! We primarily serve with **Shepherd's Heart** on several Sundays during the year, and monthly with **East End Cooperative Ministry's** meal Ministry.



Shepherd's Heart is an Anglican parish whose congregation includes many folks from the street, some homeless, nearly all of them poor. The church serves dinner to all present every Sunday night after their 5:15pm Eucharist service.

Ascension serves on these six Sundays in 2018:

January 28
March 4
May 13
September 23
October 28
December 2

The meal is prepared that Sunday in Ascension's kitchen between our morning services and after the 11am service. You are invited to help with preparing and/or serving the meal.

Time food is served:

6:30pm to 7:45pm

Location:

Shepherd's Heart
13 Pride Street
Two blocks from Mercy Hospital.



EAST END
COOPERATIVE
MINISTRY

East End Cooperative Ministry (EECM) offers both emergency shelter and longer-term housing to people in and near East Liberty who have no place to live. Ascension is one of dozens of groups that volunteer to prepare and serve dinner every night of the year. Our responsibility is the evening meal on the **LAST TUESDAY of every month** (except: January 23 instead of January 30). The meal is cooked in Ascension's kitchen on the Sunday prior to the last Tuesday of the month.

Time food is served:

6pm to 8pm on the last Tuesday of the month

Location:

EECM's Community House
6140 Station St
East Liberty

If you're interested, please contact me at
412-452-1935 or
jonathan.sewall@gmail.com.
Thanks and many blessings!

- Jonathan Sewall



Children's Ministry Testimonials

We are pleased to feature a testimonial from one of our Sunday school teachers, Keira Fuener.

I started teaching in the *Children in Worship* classroom about two years ago, mostly because I knew they needed teachers! What I didn't know at the time was how deeply I would be encouraged and grown in my own faith as I learned more about wondering and worshipping God with some of the youngest in our congregation.

One of the first lessons I taught (and still one of the most meaningful to me) was the lesson of the Good Shepherd "who knows each of his sheep by name." That story expands into a lesson where the Good Shepherd welcomes his sheep and then all the people of the world to his Table. The lessons are simply worded and materials minimal, but as I practiced and then presented the story, I experienced visually and emotionally God's deep love and care for us, and all of Creation, in a new way.

The classroom is designed to be a worship space for children, and the lessons encourage children to enter into God's story with their imaginations using "I wonder" questions. I was amazed to see 3 and 4 year-olds empathize with the people in the story and use their imaginations to link their world with the reality of God. Wondering with the kids about the mysteries of our faith or the thoughts and feelings of the people in God's story doesn't cause spiritual confusion. Instead, this open wondering about God awakens in them (and me!) a genuine desire to know more, approach the fullness of God and wait for what His Word might reveal.

As a parent and a teacher, I want all our kids to grow up trusting and loving God, but my faith isn't enough. I have to trust God to grab their hearts in the way that is right for them. My experiences with the *Children in Worship* classes have allowed me to see how God is working in the hearts and minds of even very young kids. They love God's story and are working out their growing faith through questions and uncertainty. This struggle is important work: I don't need to supply all the right answers. I am learning to trust in God our Teacher and Shepherd to guide them (and me) and to grow their faith (and mine). God is doing great things, and in all this I feel very thankful.



Keira Fuener





International Ministry

We have many opportunities for volunteers in our International Ministry. Providing quality English classes and good hospitality each week is a challenge!

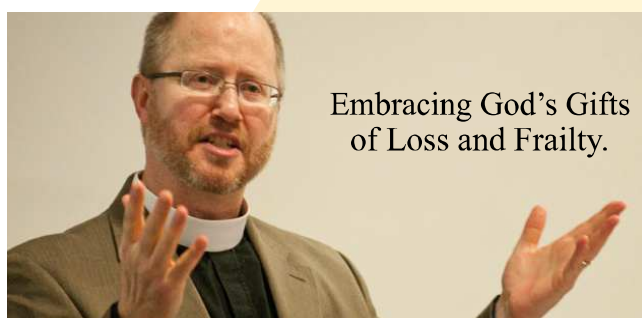
- Do you have experience with learning a language or teaching English or another subject? Perhaps you could assist a teacher in the spring semester beginning January 15.
- Could you meet two times a month as a conversation partner with a student?
- Another area of need in the international ministry is to bake and deliver cookies on a Wednesday once a month.
- Can you help with testing new students on Wednesday nights?
- If you are a high school student or college age student, we would also love to have you help in the Bible study on Wednesday nights or in the classes.
- Can you manage an Excel spreadsheet and collect money? We need help managing our book sales.
- We may run an Alpha Course for Internationals who are interested in exploring the Christian faith. We'd love volunteers for this endeavor which might begin as early as January 24. We need a few volunteers for table discussion. We need MANY volunteers to assist with food. Ideally, we would like one person to coordinate a simple dinner for approximately 20 people.



To volunteer or find out more, contact Lu Ann at PittsburghEnglish4U@gmail.com. Thanks!

Owl's Senior Luncheon

Thursday January 11 from 12:30 to 2:30pm



Embracing God's Gifts
of Loss and Frailty.

Come for an inspiring talk by the Rev. Dr. Joel Scandrett

Come for an inspiring talk by the Rev. Dr. Joel Scandrett who will speak on "Embracing God's Gifts of Loss and Frailty." Joel is the Assistant Professor of Historical Theology and Director of the Robert E. Webber Center at Trinity School for Ministry. We are privileged that Joel offered to talk on this sensitive and challenging subject and will share from his personal experience. Don't miss this one! Contact the Rev. Ann Tefft at tefft.ann@gmail.com or 412-526-1107 to make your reservation.

Young Adult Ministry



Thank You!!

Thank you to all that came and worshipped with us at Sanctus: A space for [Advent]. It was amazing to see everyone gathered together for a time of extended worship and fellowship. A huge thank you to Elise and Chris Massa, Sarah Gilmer, Lorna Williams, and Amy Foster for being apart of the worship team. Also big thanks to Mariel McMarlin for her great prayer station and to the members of the Ascension choir who opened our evening with a beautiful song! Please pray for the team as we gather together soon to plan and pray about future Sanctus events!

Looking ahead: After Harvey; Ascension's Helping Hands

While Hurricane Harvey's devastation was instant, the slow rebuilding of homes and lives in Houston will take much longer. In March, a team from Ascension is planning to drive down to Texas and spend a week partnered with *Missio Dei*, an Anglican church dedicated to serving those affected by the hurricane. For more details on how you might get involved physically or financially, contact alex.banfieldhicks@ascensionpittsburgh.org.

Bible in a Year

Our Rector's "Letter to the Congregation" on the front page stresses the importance of setting time aside daily to be with God through prayer and bible study. With a new calendar year beginning, here are a variety of apps and resources for you to consider.

Bible in One Year (BIOY)

A free Bible reading app with commentary by Nicky and Pippa Gumbel (founders of the Alpha course in the UK). This app is available on iTunes, Google Play, website or daily email to your inbox. Check it out at www.bibleinoneyear.org.

YouVersion: The Bible App

Get the free Bible App for your phone or table at www.bible.com/app.

Our Daily Bread: Daily Devotions from the Word of God

In addition to a daily devotional, this resource gives daily readings that take you through the entire Bible in a year. The quarterly booklet can be mailed to you or you can find the daily devotional and readings (or listen to them online) at <https://odb.org/>.



Two Big 'Thank Yinz' from the Youth

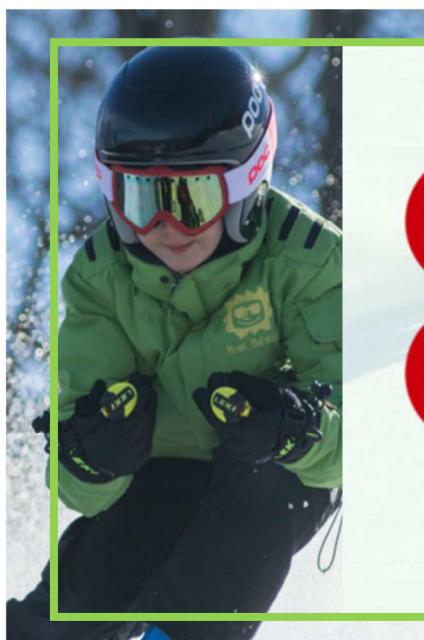


A first big thank you to

all who have served as confirmation mentors so far in our two-year youth confirmation process. It has been a delight to see you and your confirmands meeting to work through that month's confirmation assignment, and to see us all sitting around the table for our monthly confirmation lunch discussion. Thank you to those who have already agreed to be mentors for the final four-month quarter of this program. If anyone is interested in finding out more about being a confirmation mentor in the fall of 2018, please email me at alex.banfieldhicks@ascensionpittsburgh.org.

A second big thank you to

everyone who supported our youth group by buying Christmas Greens from us. And a special thank you to Brandon Walker who chopped down and delivered his own trees as a gift to the Youth Group. Together the wreath and tree sales benefited our mission and retreat scholarship fund with almost three thousand dollars! Not only are many doors festooned with sweet-smelling and stylish wreaths, but now many 'doors are opened' for those who want to serve on our summer mission trip!



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

Youth Spring Series

As part of our three-year plan, the Spring series in youth ministry focuses on evangelism. We will be 'Learning Evangelism from Jesus' (and from Professor Jerram Barrs, whose book of the same name provides the content and inspiration). Please pray that this ten-week series will serve both middle schoolers and high schoolers so that they not only have a new encounter with Jesus, but that through them, Jesus is at work transforming the lives of their friends at home and in school.

What happened when people met Jesus?

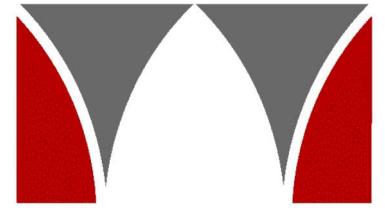
ENCOUNTERS

How do we present ourselves to others?
How does he transform us today?



FROM JAN 19/21 UNTIL MAR 23/25

www.caygonline.com



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

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Fax: 412-621-5746

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The Ascent

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Ascent Deadline

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