

Ascent

July/August
2018

World Refugee Day

by Bishop Grant LeMarquand



Here I am, essentially a guest at Ascension (I'm a fill-in priest, remember), and a guest in this country (Wendy and I may not be illegal aliens, but we are, technically, 'aliens'), and I'm going to say something about what may be the hottest, most controversial issue of the day - refugees.

In 2016 the UN declared June 20 to be "World Refugee Day". What the UN wanted to do was draw the attention of its member nations to the reality of the present refugee crisis and encourage (or push? shame?) member nations into doing something about this crisis. And a crisis it is. There are approximately 68,000,000 displaced people in the world. That's a lot of zeros. That's more people than the population of many countries. Three more people were displaced while you read the first paragraph of this article.

As many of you know, my wife, Wendy, and I lived for some years in the middle of a refugee crisis - millions of South Sudanese, their country embroiled in a hideous civil war, fled to neighboring countries beginning in December 2013 - and hundreds of thousands ended up almost literally (well sometimes even 'literally') in our backyard, hungry, naked, traumatized. The church responded in whatever ways we could to bring life into situations of death.

Of course, in this country the issue of immigration is sharply contested. Americans are deeply divided on how to deal with the so-called 'Dreamers'. The President is adamant about building a wall on the southern border. And now, of course, with children being separated from their parents at detention centers in border states, protests about the present government policies are being heard, not only

from the so-called 'left', but from Republican law-makers, conservative religious leaders (including Roman Catholic bishops, Franklin Graham and others), from the former First Lady and even, it seems, from the present First Lady.

Let me say that I am not a lawyer or a political scientist. Neither do I have the psychic ability to discern the truth from lies in all of the accusations and counter-accusations being thrown around. What no one is denying is that children and parents are being separated at the border and that this practice is immoral. This is not to say that countries all have completely open borders. No country does. The political discussion needs to be held about how to regulate immigration, but I think all will agree that the political atmosphere is toxic at the moment.

So how are Christians to respond?

Christians need to approach this issue as we would approach any other - by searching the scriptures and shaping our living by them. So, what do the scriptures say? Well quite a lot, really - more than I can say here in any depth. But, let me put down a few markers.

1. The Patriarchs of Israel were nomads who sometimes needed to find refuge in foreign countries because of famine or war (For example, Genesis 12 and 28)
2. The people of Israel were migrants. They were an oppressed people in Egypt and God delivered them from their slavery and brought them into a new land (For example, Exodus 20:2)
3. Because Israelites were strangers and sojourners, they were commanded by God to welcome strangers (For example, Deuteronomy 10:19)
4. Jesus and his family were forced to flee their home because of political oppression (Matthew 2:13-18)
5. Jesus frequently had to hide from his opponents and even said that he was homeless, having no place to lay his head (Matthew 8:20)
6. In fact, Jesus' ministry can be characterized as coming into this world and being rejected, not being received (John 1:11)
7. Those in the early church saw themselves as exiles and aliens in this world (1 Peter 1:1)
8. The church was commanded by Jesus to care for (among others) strangers and those in prison (Matthew 25:38-40)

We should add to this discussion that conservative Christians are often described as people who have "family" as a part of their agenda. This is good and right. We should protect unborn children; we should do all we can to help husbands and wives to live together in peace and harmony; we should help parents to raise their children in loving Christian environments; we should uphold the good that monogamous heterosexual marriage is for society.

And so, since the scriptures call us both to care for the stranger AND to uphold the family, we should be horrified by the suggestion that the government is separating parents from their children at the border. I am not here proposing a particular solution to the refugee and immigration crisis as this country is experiencing it. But I am suggesting that our politicians are not handling this situation in a way that is honoring to God's revelation in the scriptures and in the person of Jesus Christ. Our prayers and action are required.

I am proud of Ascension's ministry with people who are newly arrived on our doorstep. It is a start. We have been given much—I suspect that more is being and will be required of us.



*Bp. Grant LeMarquand
Priest in charge*

Ways to get involved with Refugee Ministry in Pittsburgh

Casa San Jose



Casa San Jose is a Latino Community Resource and Welcome Center located here in Western, PA. You can find out more about their mission at www.casasanjose.org.

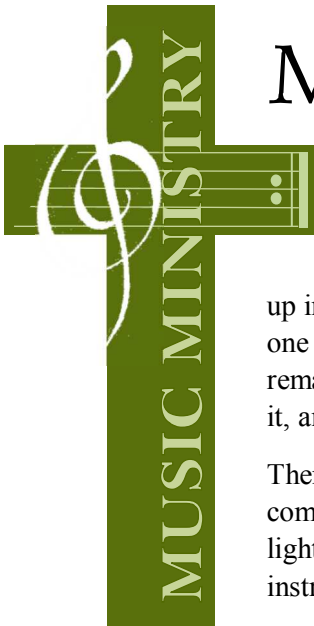
Our own Tracy Medrano works there. Contact her at carolane.medrano@unitedwayswpa.org. There are a variety of ways to volunteer, but a high need right now is the Rapid Response Team:

"We are in need of on-call families who can respond when someone is picked up by ICE. For a church group this might be something like providing a place for kids or family to stay for a couple of nights while we figure out next steps, cooking for them, taking kids to school, sit with a family when a parent is deported, etc. This is not a long-term commitment."

Holy Family Institute



Holy Family Institute cares for immigrant children on a temporary basis, providing shelter, medical and education needs until they can be reunited with their families. They are always in need of donations! Find out more by visiting the Holy Family Institute website at www.hfi-pgh.org.



Music Ministry Transition

by Chris Massa, Assistant Director of Music Ministry

The first band stopped playing, so it was time for the next band to set up, and it was clear that this was a process that had happened many times. People were running around, setting up instruments, plugging and unplugging microphones — it was a well-oiled machine. And then one person wheeled out a baby grand piano and started polishing it, and that's what he did for the remainder of the set-up. He polished every inch of that piano until you could see your reflection in it, and still he kept polishing.

Then the set-up was over. All of the stagehands ran back to the side, and the musicians started coming to the stage. Gradually, the music started, and the lights started turning on, and the spotlights started spinning. And then, the star, the man of the hour, the piano player, ran out to his instrument. The crowd cheered, the pianist bowed, and he sat down at the piano...

And nothing happened. Well, *something* happened, but it was much too quiet for anyone in the outdoor coliseum to hear. The pianist looked around, confused; a stagehand came out and fiddled with the piano; and then the show started again, and the piano could be heard. I'm not sure exactly what had gone wrong, or who had forgotten to do their job. From where I was — this is a true story, by the way — it seemed like there was a higher priority placed on making sure the piano *looked* good than there was on making sure it *sounded* good. What I do know for sure is that despite everyone's best efforts, and despite how good everything looked, something had been missed, and that something was critical.

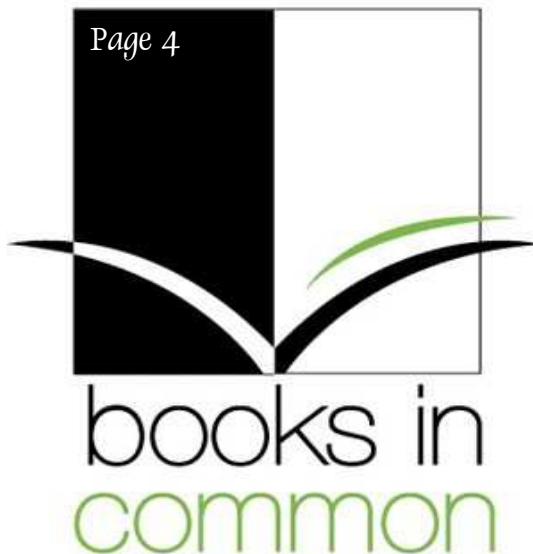
There are changes coming to the music ministry here at Church of the Ascension.

Specifically — and I hope this isn't the first time you're hearing this — the contemporary music ministries — i.e., the 9am team and I am Resounding Grace — will be merging into one ministry. Jeanne and I both believe that this will be a positive change, that it will raise the bar on the quality of music while also deepening our worship as a parish. We also know that this change will have its share of challenges, that details could be overlooked. That's why we're approaching this cautiously, carefully, and most important, prayerfully, so that what is most important, the worship of our Triune God, will resound for everyone to hear.

Here's one specific way we'll be doing this: For the next several months, I will be working extra hours, and most of these hours will be at the church. This will enable me to meet with current (and future) members of the music ministry and allow Jeanne and I to have more time to pray, discuss, and vision cast. It's also so I can be a support to Jeanne, and so I can be a support to *you*.

We at Church of the Ascension have a deep love for our music ministry, so we want to make sure that any changes made will continue the integrity and richness of our worship together. As of June, I have been granted an office in the Jonah's Call space, and I plan on having an open-door policy. So please, consider this your invitation. I would love to listen to your thoughts about what you love about the music ministry and what fresh expressions you'd like to see. Whether it's to share ideas, voice concerns, or simply to pray, know that I want to work with you to make this change go as smoothly as possible, to help the music here at Ascension be as good as it can be.



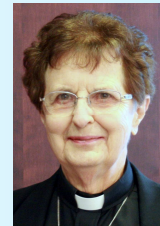


Karis: All I See Is Grace

*How rare is a book that you want absolutely everybody to read? Debra Kornfield's **Karis: All I See Is Grace** is that book.*

This is not another facile "rah-rah for Jesus" book. No. This one's for real. It is an honest, winsome, compelling account of Debbie's long, roller coaster faith journey with her daughter Karis, born with a birth defect, struggling for survival, yet full of life for all of her thirty years. No matter where you are in your own life, you will find yourself in this book and live your next day with renewed strength and yes, joy.

The Rev. Dr. Ann Paton



A golden girl—sparkling, gifted, passionate, ambitious, loving, joyful, multicultural; honors student at Notre Dame . . .

Chronically ill—in unrelenting pain, fighting to survive one crisis after another . . .

Karis Joy Kornfield was both of these. She could have become bitter and angry. She could have despaired. But . . . she was profoundly confident of God's love for her. Her gift of joy impacted all who knew her. And, as I learned through her journals, she believed God had a specific purpose for her life, revealed through a prophetic word when she was sixteen. Was that purpose fulfilled?

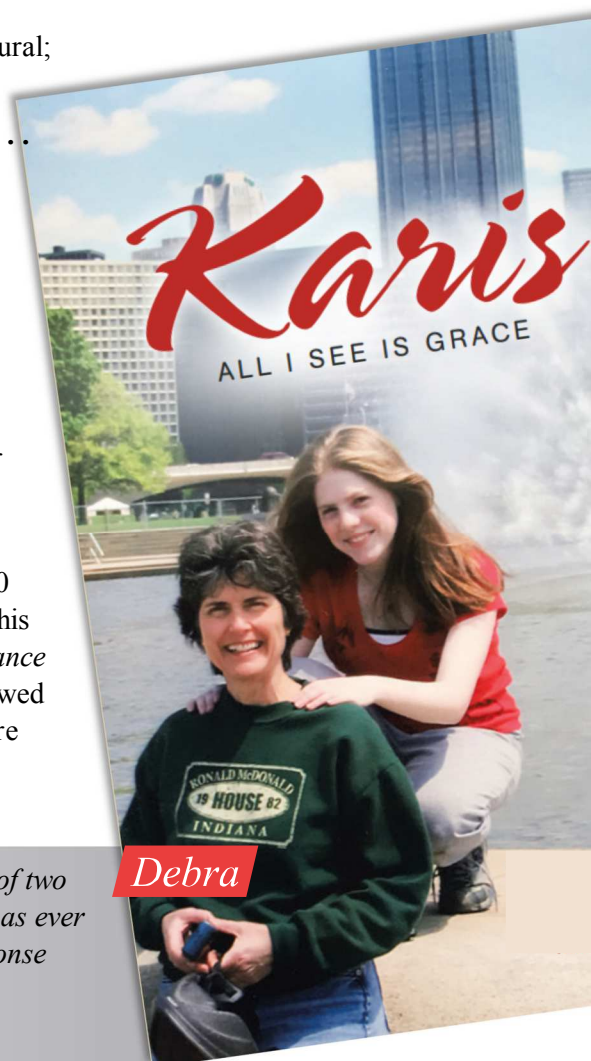
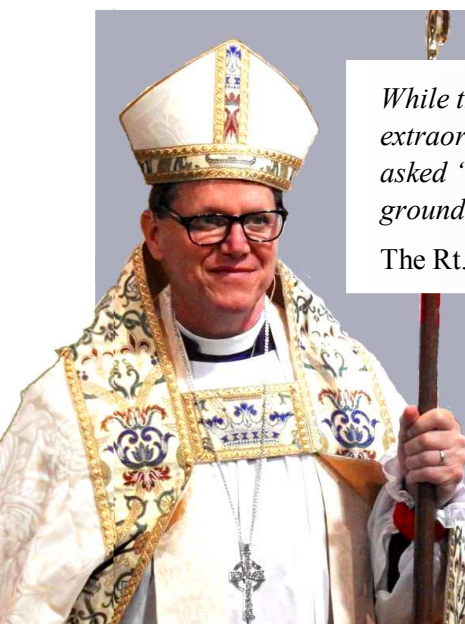
I kept reading her journals to find out. My understanding of Karis's life gradually but crucially altered. When she wrote the phrase "All I see is grace," her suffering seemed insurmountable. All grace?? As a mom in anguish over her child's adversities, how could I make any sense of that statement?

As I read, words of Scripture shouted to me: "Tell everyone about God's wonderful deeds" (Psalm 103:2). My first attempt to "tell" resulted in over 3,000 pages; reducing that to 250 was no small feat. As I review what is preserved in this book, my heart cries, "Oh, but there's more! So much more!" There's an abundance of grace. Lavish heaps of it! That's what Karis found, and what her journals showed me. There is abundance of grace for each of us, in our circumstances, just as there was for Karis in hers.

- Debra Kornfield

While this book will make you cry, the irrepressible joy of two extraordinary souls shines brightly. For everyone who has ever asked "Why, Lord?" here is a gentle, encouraging response grounded in God's presence and grace.

The Rt. Rev. James L. Hobby, Bishop of Pittsburgh



Karis, All I See Is Grace will be available by the end of July through WestBow Press, Amazon, or by contact with the author, Debra Kornfield: debrakornfield@gmail.com.

Women Alive in Christ

Women Alive in Christ is an organization of the Anglican Diocese of Pittsburgh. Four times a year they host a gathering for women from all over the diocese for fellowship, good food and good teaching. Generally, they host two lunches and two one day retreats a year. The next lunch event will feature our own Dr Wendy LeMarquand as the speaker, and the next all-day retreat will feature our own Andrea Millard!

Anglican Diocese of Pittsburgh Women's Association
Fellowship • Good Food • Teaching



Dr Wendy LeMarquand

Women Alive in Christ Lunch: The Women's Blessing

Speaker: Dr. Wendy LeMarquand

Topic: The Invitation of Faith

Date: July 28, 2018

Time: 10am - 12:30pm

Location: Grace Anglican Church
325 Church Lane, Edgeworth PA 15143
(north of Sewickley)
724-741-1676

Cost: \$12 with pre-registration

To Pre-register call:
Bonnie Colianne 724-939-7163
or Diane Babcock 724-825-5631



Mark your Calendars:

Women Alive in Christ

One-Day Retreat

Date: October 13th

Speaker:

Rev. Canon Dr. Andrea Millard

Details to be announced

Check the October Ascent!

Young Adults

Summer Series Dinner and Compline Thursday, July 12th at 6:30pm

This month we will feature **"Samosas with Sima!"** Sima Weaver was a missionary to India for many years and currently practices medicine at East Liberty Family Health Care Center. She and her husband and children attend the 9am service. We'll begin our evening with dinner and conclude with a Service of Compline.

All welcome. Bring a friend! For more info, contact Leah Hornfeck at

leah.hornfeck@ascensionpittsburgh.org

or text her at 724-630-0167.

We will meet in the Hunt Rooms
in the education wing.



DINNER AND COMPLINE



SAMOSAS WITH SIMA!



Thursday
July 12
6:30-8:30pm
724 630 0167

Summer Youth Interns

By Alex Banfield Hicks

I am very thankful that Jack Harper and Gabbie Stout, who have been serving wonderfully with CAYG this last year, are staying on through this summer to work with Leah Hornfeck in leading the youth Alpha course and the Three Big Events in July and August. I'll let them introduce themselves below!

Gabbie Stout



When I moved to Pittsburgh one year ago, I knew that one of the first things I needed to do was find a church that felt like home. I was blessed by the fact that Ascension was the first church that I tried; it immediately felt like a home away from home. As I went through my first year at Pitt, I had the privilege of meeting and becoming friends with members of Ascension through Children's Ministry, Youth Ministry, Campus Ministry, and even a Young Adult Community Group. The family I have found here has been a constant amid all of the trials and anxieties of my first year at Pitt, and I am grateful to have the opportunity to continue ministering to the youth at Ascension through the summer youth ministry internship. I am excited to continue growing the relationships I've started in the past year and to learn more about each and every student who walks through our doors on Friday and Sunday nights. I'm looking forward to helping our youth grow in their faith while also having the opportunity to grow in faith myself. I have been blessed by my new Ascension family, and I pray to return that blessing to the youth group this summer.

Jack Harper



My name is Jack Harper and I have been attending Church of the Ascension since 2012 when I moved with my family from Georgia to Pittsburgh as a junior in high school. I was heavily involved with the youth group then as well as the music team. I have been involved as a leader with the Middle and High School Youth Groups since August and I am honored to be one of the Youth Interns for this summer. I am looking forward to the ALPHA Series the most because the Middle and High Schoolers are learning new things every week. I am also looking forward to our Day Trips to OhioPyle and Kennywood. After the summer I'm moving to Virginia, where my parents have relocated, and hope to enter a police academy at some point. I'll miss Ascension!

Coming up this Summer

We are very excited about The Big 3 Events for CAYG (Church of the Ascension Youth Group) this summer!

OhioPyle

Wednesday, July 11

Kennywood

Wednesday, July 25

Fall Launch Overnight

Saturday, August 25



Get a free 2018 CAYG t-shirt if you sign up via the caygonline.com website before the end of June. Also, please note: This Overnight is a new event, distinct from our regular annual gathering of parents, volunteers and youth (and siblings) on Friday August 24th

Annual Parish Retreat

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WHAT: Annual Parish Retreat

WHERE: Laurelville Mennonite Church Center

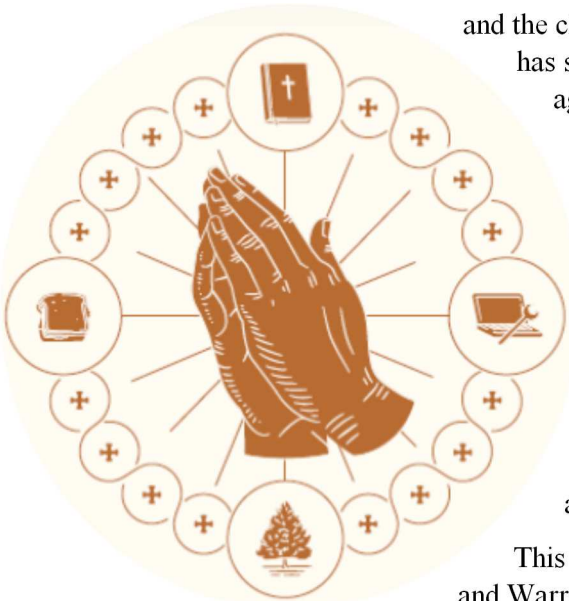
WHEN: Friday, October 5 – Sunday, October 7.

TEACHING: “Lord, Teach us to Pray...”

SPEAKERS: Jonathan & Andrea Millard;
Jonathan & Tish Warren

**Please note:
Registration opens
Sunday, August 19**

The weekend offers great teaching, an opportunity to enjoy beautiful natural surroundings and the chance to get to know others who regularly attend Ascension. The retreat has something for everyone – married or unmarried, from kids to college-aged to empty-nesters. Children and youth enjoy concurrent programming with their peers.



Saturday afternoon there are several optional activities to enjoy the outdoors. Campfires and hot chocolate will also be part of the mix. Corporate worship, small group discussion and prayer ministry are highlights for many. The weekend concludes with Sunday morning worship followed by lunch.

All of the logistical details for registering for the retreat including meals, accommodation and scholarship will be available on our website in early August. Please mark your calendars now and plan to attend. Registration will open on Sunday, August 19.

This year our retreat will be co-taught by two clergy couples - the Millards and Warrens. Together we will explore such topics as why we pray, when we pray, the Anglican Way of Prayer, the Lord’s Prayer and how we Pray. We hope to offer workshops on the ‘how’ of prayer, including topics like praying with icons, praying with beads, praying in silence and even praying with color. The weekend will be a rich experience of great teaching as well as a wonderful time of connection with the Ascension church family.

International Ministry

There is room for you in the international ministry! We have these six needs for our program, some that apply to the summer months and some for the fall:

1. Two testers to help in September: Monday morning at 9am and Wednesday evening around 5:30 or 6pm.
2. Drivers for Friday night or Saturday field trips in July and August.
3. Partners to meet with an international every other week. These are needed all of the time!
4. Beginning or intermediate teachers (or assistants) on Monday mornings from 9-10:30am, beginning in September. Training provided! You do not need a background in ESL.
5. Three people to be part of a discipleship group with internationals in the fall (the time of the group has yet to be determined)
6. Two teaching assistants for the advanced classes on Wednesday evenings beginning in the fall.



If you are interested in exploring any of these opportunities, please contact Lu Ann at PittsburghEnglish4U@gmail.com.

Family News

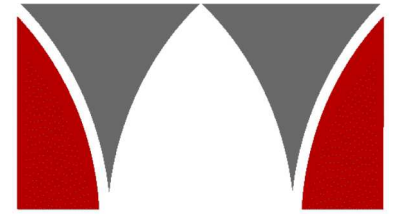
Alicia Helmick celebrated her 95th Birthday

It was a joyful month for Alicia Helmick as we celebrated her 95th birthday together as a congregation on Sunday, June 3rd after the 11am service. That was followed by another celebration lunch with several of Alicia's close friends from Ascension.



Arnold and Betsey Fritsch celebrate their 65th Wedding Anniversary

With much thanksgiving, Arnie and Betsey celebrated their 65th anniversary by renewing their vows during the Wednesday, June 13th Noon Service.



**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

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www.ascensionpittsburgh.org

The Ascent

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Ascent Deadline

Articles for the Fall Kick-off
Ascent are due July 31 and
will be available August 19.