



# Campaign Update from the Rector

## Sunday August 25<sup>th</sup>

Join us for the official kick off of our Capital Stewardship Campaign! Over the summer many teams from the congregation have been hard at work behind the scenes giving vision and input to the process, as well as visiting in homes across the parish. We'll hear more about this at our special combined service at 10:00 am next Sunday. As well as worshipping together, with Holy Eucharist and a short homily from Bishop Grant, I will be updating the congregation on our progress so far. I am especially excited that representatives from our architectural firm will be present to share with the whole congregation the vision and concepts for expanding our Parish Hall as well as some of the other wonderful proposed improvements that have been developed over the last few months.

## A Brief Recap.

Much work has gone on over the last 12 months to bring us to this moment in our congregational life. After May's intensive Listening Process (with 240 adults participating and more than 1,440 unique comments, questions, suggestions, etc. recorded), the vestry responded to the congregation's input by making changes. Most significantly was the addition of \$650,000 to create a Mission and Ministry Growth Fund to underpin our current and future growth and outreach. This fund will enable adequate support for staffing and ministry costs over and above the costs of repairs and enhancements to our buildings.

## The Needs and Opportunities before us:

- The time is NOW! We need to repair our historic buildings and expand our Parish Hall.
- The lens is MISSION! We are not doing this to have a nice clubhouse. We want to maximize our unique location and calling to welcome our neighbors and reach the nations.
- The need is for SACRIFICIAL GIVING! We are seeking the participation of everyone to give as generously as they are able.

## Projected Costs:

Essential and Urgent Repairs (\$3,600,000); Refurbishment & Renewal (\$3,750,000); Ministry & Mission Growth Fund (\$650,000); Project Costs and Expenses (\$200,000) for a total of \$8,200,000.

## The Capital Campaign Goals:

- Visit every household
- Invite everyone to participate and to make a pledge

I look forward to our time together on Sunday. *"Now to him who by the power at work within us is able to accomplish abundantly far more than all we can ask or imagine, to him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus to all generations, forever and ever. Amen."* (Ephesians 3:20-21)

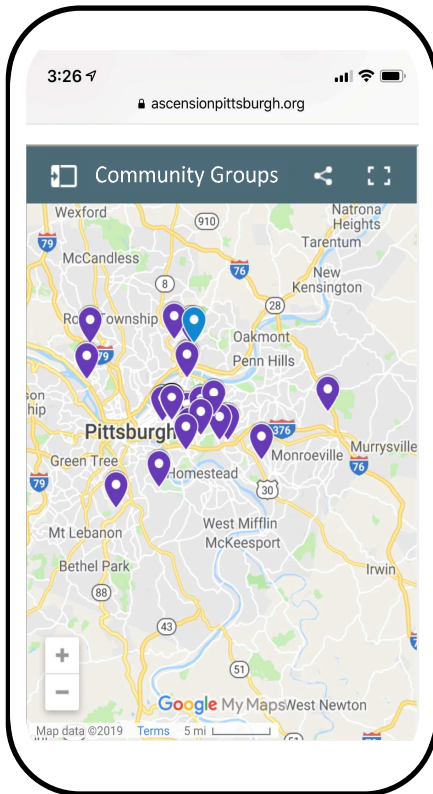


MORE THAN STONES

*Welcoming our Neighbors, Reaching the Nations*

# COMMUNITY GROUPS:

## *The Koinonia of the Church*



The Christian life was never meant to be lived alone. Life is difficult. The Christian life calls us intentionally and voluntarily to take on hardship in imitation of Christ (Mat 16:24-26; Rom 8:17; Phil 3:10). But we were never meant to do this as individuals or in isolation from one another. The earliest church was described as a koinonia, a communion or a fellowship (Acts 2:42; Phil 1:5; 1 John 1:3, 7) the same word used to describe the union that the believer shares with Christ (1 Cor 1:9; 10:16). In other words, the intimacy we share with Christ is meant to be shared with the body of Christ that gathers in particular places. We are meant to be ‘individually members one of another’ as the one body of Christ (Rom 12:5), so that together we may encourage and enable one another on the arduous path of discipleship.

Almost every aspect of modern life pushes in the opposite direction, atomizing and individualizing us. No feature of late modern life does this quite so much as our online lives. Social scientists like Jean Twenge, Sherry Turkle, and others have demonstrated a strong correlation between social media use and increased loneliness and unhappiness. These correlations are especially strong for young teenagers and emerging adults who use social media frequently. By contrast, rich embodied relationships that are not based on mere affinity but on the achievement

of a great good are sources of tremendous happiness, energy, purpose, and personal agency. There is no greater good for which we can strive than to be built up into maturity in Christ and to be ambassadors of his reconciliation (Eph 4:11-14; 2 Cor 5:20).

At Ascension, the spaces we have created to foster these intentional and purposive interpersonal relationships among the body of Christ are Community Groups. We encourage every member and every regular attendee of Ascension to join a group. We have 28 groups (and growing!) meeting all over the city (for a map, see <https://www.ascensionpittsburgh.org/connect/community-groups/>). The groups are diverse in terms of when they meet and how they organize their activities, but each CG loosely follows the pattern of the early church: the fellowship (the koinonia), the breaking of bread, devotion to the apostles’ teaching, and the prayers (Acts 2:42-6).

We have seen over time that the embodied relationships created in these groups are the way in which people come to feel as though they are part of this body, that they have real relationships that tether them here. These groups are the way in which many congregational needs are met. When a member of the body is sick, injured, or distressed, Community Group leaders are often the first to know and the first to be able to respond. These groups are also sites where the mission of our church, to be a worshipping community, equipping God’s people, and sharing Christ’s healing with a broken world, gets diffused and internalized. We see group members coming alive and coming to maturity in Christ and beginning to serve as his ambassadors in these spaces.

Three recent stories stand out to me as illustrations of these points. **Rob and Donna Martsof** who recently formed the Highland Park/Morningside group, are veteran Community Group leaders from another church. Community Group for them was like a second family, and for that reason they insisted upon a high level



of commitment in the group. Members committed to not skipping meetings for non-trivial reasons. They have a strong commitment to in-depth study of the Bible, transparency and vulnerability about what is happening in their lives (fostered by the level of commitment in the group), and serious prayer, both for their needs and the needs of the world.

Out of the communion fostered by that culture, **Jane Huang** and **Nate Taylor** were counseled and loved through their engagement, and Nate was given a place to stay with the Martsolfs until they were married. They continue to have ongoing encouragement from married couples in the group that have been married for many years. **Joan Anson** and **Lynn Cox** have both had prayer and domestic support as they have wrestled with significant medical issues.

CGs have also been engines for intergenerational relationships in our church. One of the key findings of the past fifty years of the study of congregations is that the loss of friendships between generations has been an unmitigated disaster for congregational vitality. This is especially true for younger generations. One recent study by the Barna Group suggests that millennials who remain in church after leaving their parents' home were twice as likely to have had a close personal friendship with an adult inside the church than those who did not.

Because of the severing of the connection between the generations, Christianity has also been 'juvenilized', to use the redolent phrase of Tom Bergler. The point of Christianity is to become mature through the faithful practice of the faith - learning to pray, learning to study, learning to develop one's spiritual gifts in the church and the world, learning to give, learning to love sacrificially - so that one participates in the work of redemption that Christ is doing, rather than simply to



have ecstatic feelings in worship. But this idea was almost lost in the American church for many decades. But in the winnowing that is now happening, as churches are emptying out, we are remembering who we are and what we are for.

A big piece of this equation is the recovery of intentional intergenerational friendships, in which older, more mature Christians can share their wisdom and perspectives with younger Christians, and they can in turn be encouraged by

the vibrancy and energy and idealism of the young. The Point Breeze and East End CGs (in addition to the HP/Morningside group) have modeled this intergenerational community as well as anyone. **Lenore Dixon**, a beloved and recently deceased member of our congregation, became a member of the East End group several months before her decline. The hospitality that this group, mostly composed of singles and couples in their 20s, was able to extend to her was transformative to her. She was astonished at the friendships she was able to forge with **Amy Foster** and **Lorna Williams**. She was overwhelmed with gratitude when that group showed up while she was in the hospital to clean her home.

This kind of sacrificial love across the generations is beautiful and it is catching. We hope to see more of it as our groups continue to grow and deepen, and as more of our congregation is captivated by the vision of what is possible through these groups. If you are interested in being connected with a group in your part of town, please send me an email ([jonathan.warren@ascensionpittsburgh.org](mailto:jonathan.warren@ascensionpittsburgh.org))! We would love to invite you more deeply into our koinonia!



*The Rev. Jonathan Warren  
Associate Rector*

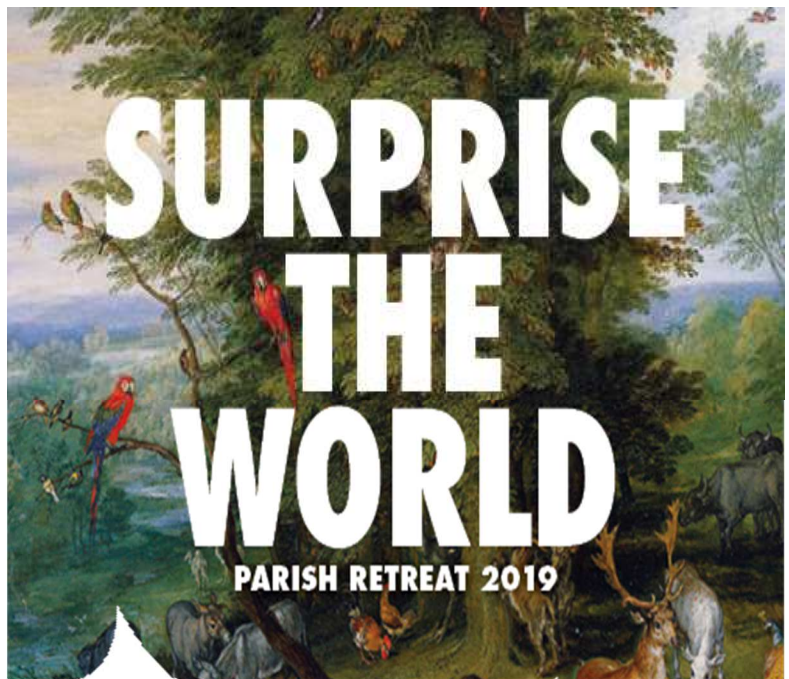


# Parish Retreat

**Friday, October 4 –  
Sunday, October 6**

We are pleased to announce that the theme of our Parish Retreat this fall is *Surprise the World!* The theme is a take-off from a small book of the same title written by Michael Frost. It has all to do with practicing several missional habits and learning to live 'questionable lives'. We plan to look at these habits and focus on some who have lived 'questionable lives' - from the Bible, from history, and currently both here in the U.S. as well as in places far away. With that in mind, the retreat will be taught by all Ascension clergy (not just 1 but 2 Jonathans (!), Tish, Andrea and Mark!) as well as the Rev. Canon Ching Wah Ye, Dean of the Anglican Church of Thailand, and Jeanne Yee-Gan, Director of the St. Andrews Anglican School in Chiang Mai. As Ascension seeks to grow a partnership with the church in Thailand, it's exciting to have our new friends come to us.

Registration for the retreat will begin after services on August 18th. You can also register online at [www.ascensionpittsburgh.org](http://www.ascensionpittsburgh.org). For more information, please feel free to reach out to Marilyn at [marilyn.chislaghi@ascensionpittsburgh.org](mailto:marilyn.chislaghi@ascensionpittsburgh.org).

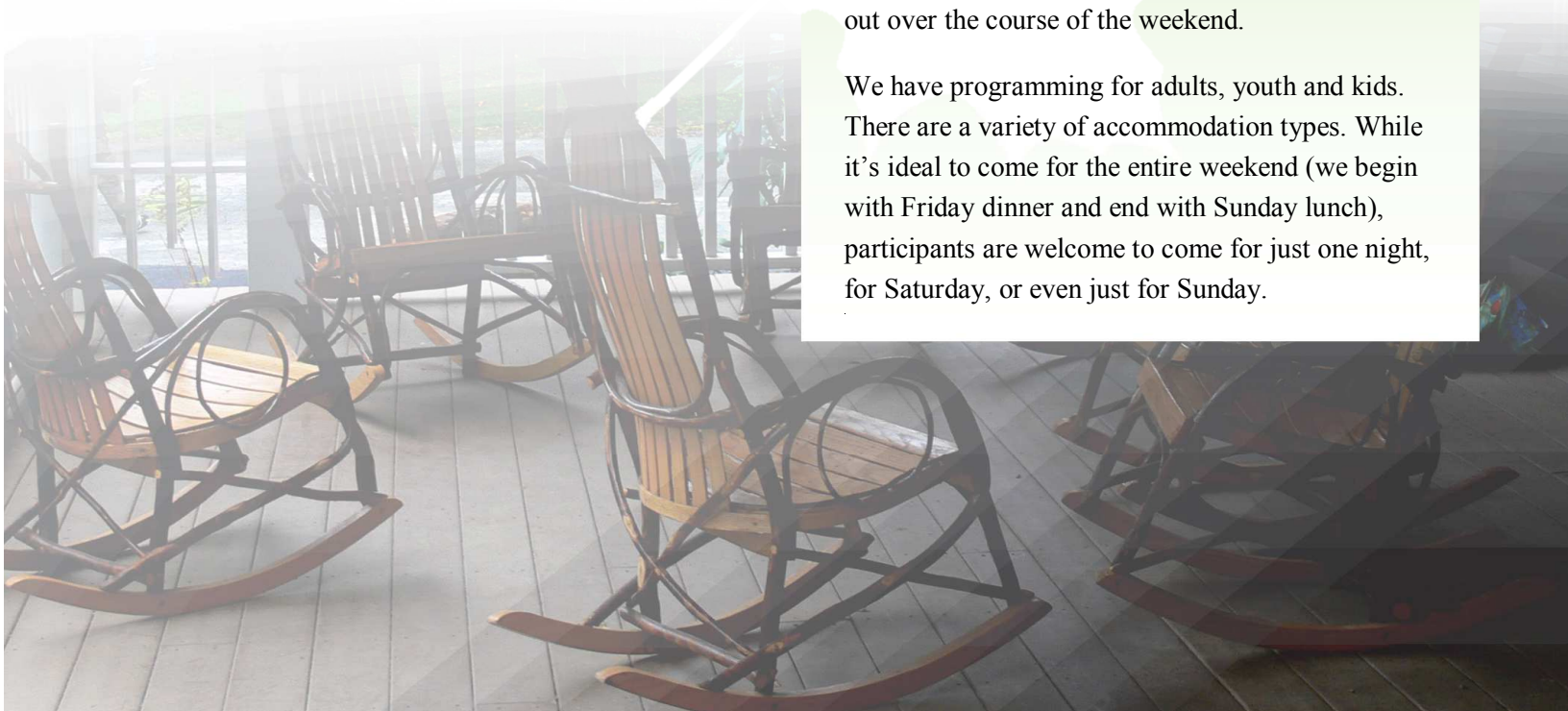


*A time to relax  
and enjoy the  
beautiful  
Laurel Mountains  
and the crisp,  
fresh air.  
A place to learn  
and have fun.*

The Parish Retreat has considerable history at Ascension. For 30+ years we have had an all parish/all ages retreat on the first full weekend of October at Laurelville Mennonite Church Center. This 250-acre camp, conference and retreat center is located one hour east of Pittsburgh at the foot of the Laurel Mountains.

Over the years, we've outgrown two meeting spaces there, and now meet in the largest group facility available to us. Last year, over 300 people came out over the course of the weekend.

We have programming for adults, youth and kids. There are a variety of accommodation types. While it's ideal to come for the entire weekend (we begin with Friday dinner and end with Sunday lunch), participants are welcome to come for just one night, for Saturday, or even just for Sunday.



# OWLS FELLOWSHIP

## OLDER WISER LIVELY SAINTS



*Ann Tefft*

**The OWLS**  
**at Church of the Ascension**  
extend an invitation to the first  
OWLS Luncheon and Presentation  
of the Season  
Enjoy Lunch, Fun and Fellowship!  
All are warmly welcomed!

Mark your Calendars for the  
**2nd Thursday** of the month

**12:30PM – 2:30PM**

**September 12**  
**Surprise the World**  
with Timmy Podnar

**October 10**  
**Being a Missionary in Tunisia**  
with Frank and Anne

**November 14**  
**Heroes of the Faith**  
with Mark Stevenson  
(Who will actually take on their personalities!)

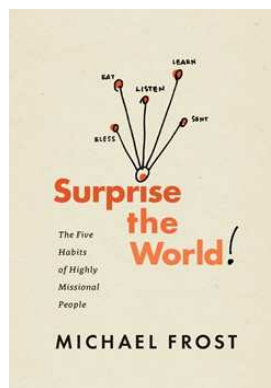
**December 12**  
**Christmas Party**  
with Lara McGill  
Music to Delight Us All and  
Celebrate the Season

**Thursday,**  
**September 12th**  
**12:30PM – 2:30PM**



Timmy Podnar will  
introduce us to  
**"Surprise the World"**

a book by Michael Frost  
(Recommended Summer  
Reading by Fr. Millard).  
And explore the 5 Habits  
of Highly Missional People



Bless, Eat, Listen, Learn, Serve are all behaviors we all do, or can do, every week, if not every day. It does **surprise the world** to learn that's what following Jesus is all about. Michael Frost, true to what the book is about, writes of what he has lived and experienced in life. Learn how Timmy has incorporated these habits into her life in what promises to be an informative and inspiring talk.

**COST:** There is a \$10 charge for lunch, but first-time friends are free! **RSVPs** are necessary to Rev. Ann Tefft: 412-526-1107 or [tefft.ann@gmail.com](mailto:tefft.ann@gmail.com). **Parking** restrictions will be lifted for people to park on the streets, and the Neville Street lot will be reserved for seniors. We meet in the Parish Hall.



# International Ministry

## Ministry Activities this summer:

- Six beautiful kids between 6-10 years of age are learning Bible verses, creating art projects, reading and discussing with Isabel Heistand.
- Toured the Van Gogh exhibit at Phipps, and toured Rodef Shalom's garden and inside scrolls and art
- Cooked a meal and ate it in the Parish hall
- Explored the Carnegie Library programs
- Attended America's Musical Journey and the Da Vinci exhibit at the Science Center
- Toured Carnegie Art museum with tour guide Kenneth Wahrenberger
- Toured the Heinz history center to complement Denise Cox's summer class on famous Pittsburghers
- Learned about the Pittsburgh Promise through guest speakers
- Attended a presentation by the Landmark Foundation and walked with them
- Learned about volunteering with the homeless ministry and signed up with Jonathan Sewell
- Studied areas of the Psalms, Matthew, Mark, and creation using a Navigator Discipleship book.
- The teachers finished a great spring semester with five levels, a youth program for 10-12 year olds, a beginner children's program for 5-10 year olds, 2 toddler programs, and an "Introducing God" class.



## Ministry Impact—Testimonies from former students



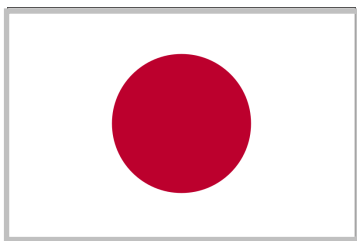
### From K (Middle East):

When I came to United States from Middle East I had a lot of stress. Joining the church program for English classes opened new world in front of me. A part of this world was learning English which it was very helpful to me. The other part of this world was people in church who were being my fabulous close friends. They invited me to church talks and ceremonies and services. They were very generous in behavior and time. I found them as a way to find God in the United States. Thanks God for reaching them out in Pittsburgh. Now I am in the other state but still I love them and we have communication. I pray for them for success in their job and supporting internationals to find their world as I did.

### From Luz (Mexico):

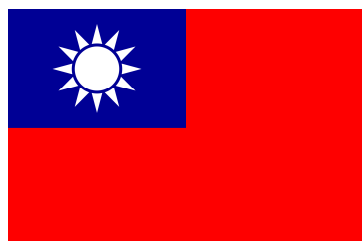
I'm from Mexico and I arrived to Pittsburgh in January. Since I discovered the International Program at the Church of the Ascension, Wednesdays are my favorite day of the week! It means that I get to attend the ESL lesson and bible study session. This is time that I am grateful to invest because it benefits my mind and my soul. I have improved my English greatly, which has helped my work opportunities. And more than anything, studying in a place where everyone is so warm, welcoming, and inclusive, has given me a sense of belonging to this beautiful new city. Thank you for everything!





**From Remi (Japan):** My name is Remi Nagasaki and I'm from Japan. I came here 2 years ago because of my husband's research in UPMC. I took my son here and he was only 2 months. I really wanted to practice my English but there were no places that I could learn English with my little child. (Taking child to ESL class is banned almost all ESL class.) I have to practice my English skills because I have to take my son to the hospital or doing necessary procedures and so on. It's very hard to speak and understand English so I wanted to cry every day and at that time LuAnn told me that she would held the ESL class which provides childcare. I was truly glad. I started to

join Monday and Wednesday English class and it was really useful for me. ESL teachers are so nice so I could learn a lot of things and my English improves little by little. Also, I could make a lot of friends from this church because of the class and field trips so my lonely life was completely changed. On top of that, bible study also helps me how to manage my feelings and how to overcome the difficulties. It really helps me. I really appreciate people who support us. Thank you so much for your help.



### From Y (Taiwan):

I was not well-prepared to live abroad with a child and got frustrated by the language barrier and also shocked by the different cultural. I didn't feel confident at all in speaking English, actually I spoke less than 10 English sentences for months, including "Hello" and "Thank you", not to mention to find a place where I could belong to.

Luckily one day I walked by the church and noticed the "ESL Classes" sign. The enthusiastic teachers with professional teaching skills, the welcoming environment and the happy atmosphere really changed my life in Pittsburgh. When my second child was

on the way, I was so overwhelmed and anxious. But deep down in my heart, I knew that I could always find support and help from Ascension Church whenever I was in need. It made me feel so much safer. In my mind, I constantly wonder how people can be so nice, so thoughtful and devoting themselves to help other people. Until now, it is still a question for me. Thank you so much for all the kindness and support through these a little tough and bitter-sweet years. I truly appreciate it. We are leaving Pittsburgh very soon. We will go back to Taiwan and then move to Seattle. Hope you can visit us sometime. I really appreciate your kindness and support through these years. Ascension Church is one of our favorite places in Pittsburgh, and the best ESL school ever.



**From KC (Nepal):** I participated in the morning class with Timmy and the Bible study.

The classes that the church provides not only helps students but also housewife, mothers with their children to learn and improve English language. Meanwhile small children are provided daycares which is absolutely free of charge. Isn't it amazing? In addition, church provides field trips to explore Pittsburgh and way of people's living, culture as well as about the history. For me it's the most valuable experience to have.



*LuAnn Pengidore*

We ask for your prayers for wisdom, hospitality, and extend our appreciation for Ascension's generosity and encouragement.

To learn more or to find ways you could participate, contact LuAnn at [PittsburghEnglish4U@gmail.com](mailto:PittsburghEnglish4U@gmail.com)

## Fall term schedule:

**1st  
week**

**Monday, September 9 &  
Wednesday, September 11**

ORAL TESTING will begin to determine what class level will best fit the student's needs.

**2nd  
week**

*The following week,*

**Monday, September 16 &  
Wednesday, September 18**

Seven classes will begin that will offer different levels of proficiency.

# Special Needs Ministry

## 2019-2020 Calendar

After witnessing the baptism of one of our members with special needs on Easter morning, I was reminded again that participating in faith with people of all ages and abilities affirms God's loving welcome to every person that he has created. By sharing in lessons, worship and eucharist together, the gentle, persistent and mysterious work of God's Spirit among us becomes visible. Our church body is strengthened when we are intentional about welcoming people of all abilities to actively participate in christian life together, including baptism, confirmation, and weekly eucharist. Please connect with me if you would like to know more!

This spring, we explored how Jesus' death and resurrection allowed God to be with the disciples and now with us in a new way. Using visual and tactile materials, storytelling and crafts, we are spending time this summer deepening our understanding of the sacrament of baptism. Starting this fall, we will learn together about Jesus' life and work. Learning together, using many types of learning methods and being open to multiple ways of communicating with each other and God can strengthen the foundation of our faith and open our hearts to the creative work of the Holy Spirit.

If you want to come closer to God regardless of your perceived abilities and worth, this group will welcome you. If you have questions about who God is, come and explore God's word afresh in a setting where we freely wonder together about all that God is, does, and will do for us. God is reaching out, and our special needs members are leading the way into a beautiful and free relationship with a God that insists that he loves us fully already. For more information, please contact the Director of Special Needs Ministry, Keira Fuener, at [keirafuener@gmail.com](mailto:keirafuener@gmail.com). Thanks!

## Ways to volunteer with us:

### WINGS:

#### Sunday 9am, rejoin the service for Eucharist

**Teacher:** Lead class and teach lesson (approx 1x/month)

**Buddy:** Join the class as a friend to those with special needs and assist with classroom activities

**Partner:** Pray with and for friends and family in this ministry and those unable to attend our WINGS class.

### Capernaum Friend's Club:

#### Monthly Outreach Event (2pm-4pm, second Tuesday Sept-May)

**Teacher:** Plan and teach accessible lesson about God's love and care for us (varies by month)

**Buddy:** Join Friends (1x/month) to help with activities and facilitate fellowship together

**Other:** We love to have fun together, play games, sing songs, do crafts-- all welcome!

**Caregiver partner:** Prayer and friendship support

**Logistics/outreach:** Taking pictures of group events, designing invitations, calendars, etc.

DATE	THEME
September 14	The Lord Is My Shepherd
October 12	Square Dance with the South Hills Club
November 9	Thanksgiving: Every Good Gift comes from God
December 14	Christmas
January 11	Snowflakes: God our Creator Made us Unique
February 8	Valentine's Day Dance!
March 14	Jesus always loves us
April 11	The Story of Easter Week - New Life in Christ
May 9	Special Program for Parents and Friends (TBD)



*Keira Fuener*



# ASCENSION CAMPUS MINISTRY



## VENITE

It's hard to believe summer is almost over and school is right around the corner. For a church planted in the middle of Oakland, this is an exciting time! Our streets and neighborhoods will once again be filled with bright-eyed, bushy tailed college students—some returning and some stepping onto campus for the very first time. The first 2-3 weeks on campus really sets the tone for how students are going to spend their school year, and for new students these first few weeks can even set the tone for their entire college career.

According to studies done by Barna Group **60% of young people who grew up in the church will leave it during college.** This means there is real urgency and importance in connecting students to campus ministries and local churches during the first few weeks on campus. It's not just about adding to numbers and looking good. It's about making sure students continue to walk with and grow in Christ. It's about their salvation and sanctification. It's about building the Kingdom of God on earth as it is in heaven in the here and now—at Ascension, at the University of Pittsburgh and Carnegie Mellon University, and to the ends of the earth.

This is a daunting task to say the least, but Alex and Leah are grateful to not be going at it alone this fall. **Venite has recruited 3 students to be a part of the Student Leadership Team for the fall semester!** Please hold these 3 in your prayers as they begin a new semester and as they help form and shape this ministry through their worship, discipleship, and outreach.



**Gabbie,**  
a junior classics  
major with a  
pre-med track  
at the University  
of Pittsburgh.



**Austin,**  
a junior  
engineering major  
at the University  
of Pittsburgh.



**Laura,**  
a junior costume  
Design and History  
major at Carnegie  
Mellon University.

Venite will host many outreach and social events  
between August 19th and September 2nd.

### Take Note of our **WEEKLY** fellowship gatherings

**DAY:** Wednesdays  
beginning August 28  
through-out the semester

**TIME:** 8:30pm

**LOCATION:** Old Catacombs  
(lower level - Parish Hall bldg.)



If you have any questions about Venite or are  
interested in helping out, please email Leah Hornfeck at  
[leah.hornfeck@ascensionpittsburgh.org](mailto:leah.hornfeck@ascensionpittsburgh.org).



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

# Youth Ministry

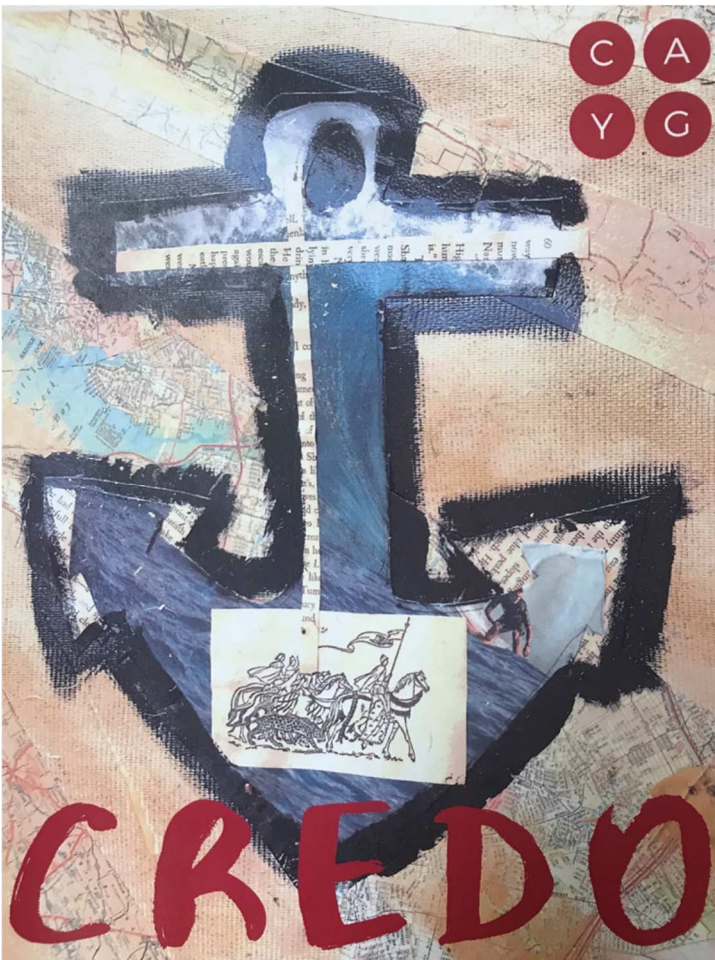
## Kelsey Regan: CAYG Facilities Manager

Church of the Ascension Youth Group (or CAYG) has benefited and is very grateful that this summer Kelsey started a new part-time position as Facilities Manager for

CAYG. Having been a dedicated volunteer since my arrival in 2015 (as well as serving in various previous seasons), Kelsey's gifts and abilities include not only the pastoral care of our younger members, but also in managing the physical and digital resources that facilitate the ministry of CAYG, a program that has twice as many involved now as it did a few years ago. Do pray for her as she dedicates a days' worth of time each week to oversee all the hospitality, administration and digital creativity into what happens at youth group on Friday and Sunday nights, as well as organizing big projects like the Christmas Wreath Fundraiser and keeping volunteer clearances up to date!



## CREDO or 'I Believe'



Youth Group begins again with a new fall series on the Apostles Creed. We will be going deep with this essential historic creed that serves as an anchor to our souls in the shifting storms of cultural and personal change. The picture is taken from Erika Twichell's painting 'resilient faith' that you can see for yourself down below the Parish Hall in the Old Catacombs.

### Middle School CAYG

Fridays, 6:30 – 8:30pm  
in the Old Catacombs  
beginning September 6

### High School CAYG

Sundays, 6:30 – 8:30pm  
in the Old Catacombs  
beginning September 8

For more info, contact  
Director of Youth,  
Campus and Young Adult ministry,  
Alex Banfield Hicks at

[alex.banfieldhicks@ascensionpittsburgh.org](mailto:alex.banfieldhicks@ascensionpittsburgh.org)





# Children's Ministry

## Welcome Catherine!

We are delighted that Catherine Slocum begins her new position as Director of Children's Ministry on August 11<sup>th</sup>! Her email is [catherine.slocum@ascensionpittsburgh.org](mailto:catherine.slocum@ascensionpittsburgh.org). She'll be building a team in the children's wing and is eager to get to know so many new faces. There will be opportunities for a Meet & Greet with Catherine at the BBQ on August 25<sup>th</sup> as well as at the Parish Retreat in early October. Welcome Catherine and we look forward to getting to know you in the years to come!



## Children's Choir

I hope you are having a wonderful (and warm!) summer! I am directing the Ascension Children's Choir, and I LOVE welcoming new children! I wanted to send along a few details, to let you know what will be happening this autumn, when we start :) If you have questions, please feel free to email me, or come find me after the 9am service on a Sunday!



**WHAT:** The Children's Choir runs from September - May and is open to children from 1st grade - 5th grade.

There are a few exceptions - we do accept some children who are in Kindergarten, who are particularly mature and able to participate in rehearsal without too many interruptions/distractions! We sing 1 time per month, and twice in December (no singing in September or January!). Our first rehearsal will be on **September 8th**.

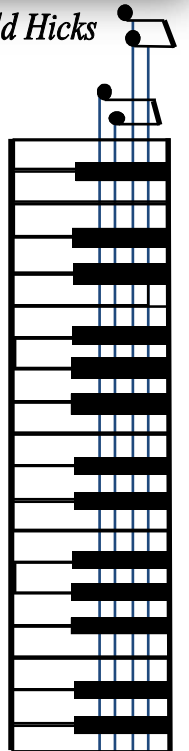
**WHEN:** Sunday mornings, from 10:15am - 10:50am. Children coming from the 9am service will take Communion quickly, and come to the choir room. I also hope to start training the older children (3rd-5th grade) in harmonisation from 10am-10:20am.

**WHERE:** We meet in the Education wing, in room 104.

**Other details:** When the children sing on a Sunday, they sing for both services (9am & 11am). At the 9am service, they sing for communion (approximately 9:40am arrival) and for the beginning of the 11am service. We have a normal rehearsal in between. We ask parents to sign up to bring a snack twice a year. I try to bring donuts once a month as a special treat for the kids!

**More information:** Contact me, Jane Banfield Hicks, at [jbanfieldhicks@gmail.com](mailto:jbanfieldhicks@gmail.com).

*Jane Banfield Hicks*





# MISSIONS Agape Year



Agape Year is super excited to welcome its third cohort to Pittsburgh on September 2nd and eager to introduce them to their new church family. Over the course of the next 9 months at Ascension, our Missional Fellows will be tutoring with the ESL ministry, volunteering with the CAYG Middle School, and assisting with Prayers of the People. So please introduce yourself to Christian and Nathan as we welcome them to Agape Year and to Pittsburgh!



## Get to Know Christian Conger

My name is Christian Conger, I'm from El Paso Texas and I graduated out of the Westside Christian Community Homeschool Co-op.

### What are you most excited for with Agape Year?

Entering into this new season of life with Agape Year, I am really looking forward to seeing what God has for me through experiencing different cultures and communities.

### What is your favorite meal/food?

For the longest time burgers would be my go-to meal, but last year a friend of mine took me out for Thai food and so I cannot wait to have authentic Thai cuisine in Thailand.

### What do you want to do in the future/vocation/job?

After finishing up Agape Year I am going to pursue an education in commercial music with hopes of finding a place in worship ministry.

### What is your favorite hobby/ what do you do for fun?

I enjoy spending my free time stepping back to take a breath and spend time with the people who are closest to

## Get to Know Nathan Perdue

My name is Nathan Perdue, I am a military child so I'm really from all over, but I currently call North Carolina my home. I graduated from Lejeune High School just this year, and I'm really looking forward to this program!



### What are you most excited for with Agape Year?

I think what I am most excited for this coming year is exploring my faith and the different communities I have the privilege to be a part of

### What is your favorite meal/food?

My favorite meal is a baked potato, broccoli, and a side of really any meat.

### What do you want to do in the future/vocation/job?

After attending and graduating college, I would like to become an anthropologist where I would look at current events and draw conclusions based on historical events. As it states in Ecclesiastes 1:9, "What has been will be again, what has been done will be done again, there is nothing new under the sun"

### What is your favorite hobby/ what do you do for fun?

I have so many different hobbies to choose from, but two of my favorites are painting and playing guitar.

# MISSIONS: Church Plants



ST. THOMAS  
CHURCH



The Rev. Josh Miller

Some of you know that six years ago, the Rev. Josh Miller left Ascension to plant a church. Prior to that, Josh served as our Associate Pastor for five years, from 2008 - 2013. In 2013 he moved to Ft. Collins, Colorado, founding St. Thomas Church with Ascension's help.

Once a year, in the Ascent we give a recap of what's been happened at St. Thomas in the past year. Highlights of this past year include:

- A New Worship Leader (which is an answer to pray from last summer's Ascent update)
- Finding a Tangible Way to Serve the Poor. St. Thomas began partnering with another church to serve dinner and provide a warming station for 75-90 guests on winter Sunday nights, when the local Rescue Mission is closed.
- The St. Thomas Youth Group started this past spring! (led by Josh) And their first mission trip is this summer.
- A group of young adults joined a kickball league and a weekly 5K social run hosted by a local brewery (with happy hour afterward) to build relationships with others outside of church walls.
- And Sarah Larabee, Ascension's former Director of Student Ministries, preached at St. Thomas on July 14<sup>th</sup>!

Please pray for those who call St. Thomas home, that the entire congregation would be contributors to God's Kingdom and not merely consumers of it. And please pray that God would draw to St. Thomas, those who could benefit from their ministry. Josh sends his personal thanks, saying, "By God's grace and with your help, St. Thomas is alive! If I were starting all over again, I would pray more. Please don't underestimate what your prayers mean to us. Thank you!" For more information on Josh and St. Thomas Church, visit [www.saintt.org](http://www.saintt.org).



JONAH'S CALL

A GOSPEL CHURCH. A CITY CHURCH.

In the Bible, Jonah was a prophet called to proclaim the Gospel in the heart of a thriving city. Jonah's Call Anglican Church exists in the heart of Pittsburgh to join in a Gospel movement that seeks the flourishing of our great city.

Having celebrated their ten-year anniversary together last year, Jonah's Call said farewell to their founding Rector, Rev. Jay Slocum, his wife, Catherine, and their children. After an interim season of discernment and seeking, Jonah's Call welcomed the Rev. Andrew DeFusco (a longtime friend of Ascension) as the second Rector in the history of the congregation. Over the course of the past year they have been celebrating his arrival, orienting him to their life together, and working under his leadership to case a vision for the next season.



The Rev. Andrew DeFusco

At Pentecost this year, Jonah's Call began to implement a Pattern of Life that integrates the elements of their vision--worshiping God, loving neighbors, shaping culture--and gives them sustainable rhythms of concrete expression. It's an exciting time for this young parish as they see their vision coming to life in new ways! When Ascension helped to plant Jonah's Call ten years ago, the plan was to establish an independent congregation that would inhabit a distinct cultural space and offer a unique gift to the city of Pittsburgh. We rejoice to see God continuing this work in our midst.

Please pray for wisdom, discernment, and grace as the congregation explores the next steps in their branching out in mission. To learn more about Jonah's Call or to discover how you can partner with them and support their Gospel mission, visit [www.jonahscall.org](http://www.jonahscall.org) or send an email to Rev. Andrew DeFusco at [anglicandrew@gmail.com](mailto:anglicandrew@gmail.com).

# A Call to Arms:



As Director and Assistant Director of Music and Worship Arts, our prayer is that all artists will find a home in the church where they can be edified and encouraged in using their gifts as a “doxology” for the glory of Christ in the church and in the world.

## Why pursue this vision?

### God is a creative God

The significance of this cannot be overstated. When God created the heavens and the earth (Gen. 1:1), he was exercising his gifts as an artist. When he created mankind in his image (Gen. 1:26-27), he shared his gift of creativity with them. This means that, when an artist uses their gifts, they are bearing homage to their creative creator God.

### God has given artistic gifts

In Exodus 31:1-5, God singles out Bezalel, son of Uri, son of Hur, to design the Tent of Meeting, the Ark of the Covenant, and various other objects for the tabernacle. Is this because Bezalel is a particularly skilled craftsman? Well, yes, kind of, but it’s really because God had “filled him with divine spirit, with ability, intelligence, and knowledge in every kind of craft, to devise artistic designs, to work in gold, silver, and bronze, in cutting stones for setting, and in carving wood, in every kind of craft.” In other words, the gifts to create come from God, so it only makes sense that they should be used in his service.

## The church is a body with many members

In 1 Corinthians 12:12-27, Paul famously uses the human body as an analogy for the church, breaking it down into specific parts — the foot, the ear, the eye, etc. — that need each other to survive and thrive. This can be viewed through the lens of spiritual gifts — prophecy, healing, tongues, etc. — but it should also be applied to those talents we many not see as being overtly spiritual. God has made some to be doctors, some accountants, some architects, some cooks, and yes, some artists. Just as the eye would be mistaken to say that it does not need a hand or a foot, so we would all be mistaken to say that we do not need artists and the arts, thus depriving them of the opportunity to use their gifts and depriving the church of the opportunity to be blessed and nourished by them.

We hope that everyone at Church of the Ascension will join us in pursuing this vision this year and in the years to come.

Pressing on,

*Chris and Elise Massa*

## A Vision for the Arts in the Church

*Come, artists - to arms! hand in hand, not alone,  
isolated behind canvas or thick sculptor's stone.  
All the world's a stage - why are you in the wings?  
Your church needs your beauty - to dance, and to sing,  
To gaze, to recite unveiled truth that was lost.  
For the church without art comes at too high a cost.*

*Be strong and courageous – do not be afraid!  
Our enemy loathes, how he loathes how we're made,  
but here, in the arms of your Holy Creator,  
the Spirit breathes life to our passions; and later,  
the dreams that we dream, the dance that we dance,  
leads lovers and loners to sacred romance.*

*Come, artists - to arms! for this world is at war,  
and the pen and the brush are a mightier sword.  
We perfect praises for a world without end,  
sharp'ning our bow, polishing our lens.  
In a world of decay, empty hopes gath'ring rust,  
we seek wrought iron worship,  
forged in love, not in lust.*

*Come, artists – to arms! and craft out your praise  
in the comp'ny of saints who have served in these  
ways. The youth and the aged, the hipster, blue collar,  
You are part of this guild - whether trained or  
inspired. All artists are welcome to gather, commune,  
for the Kingdom is near and is waiting for you.*

- Elise Massa

[chris.massa@ascensionpittsburgh.org](mailto:chris.massa@ascensionpittsburgh.org)  
and [elise.massa@gmail.com](mailto:elise.massa@gmail.com)



# Coming Up



## Newcomer Event

**Sunday, September 1 at 7pm**

Break out your dancing shoes, and get ready to Cha-cha, Polka, Salsa, and Swing! We are happy to invite you and your friends to a Labor Day weekend social! On Sunday, September 1st, we will be gathering at 7pm for an intergenerational evening of dance in the Parish Hall. We'll start off with dance lessons from instructor, Dara DeChellis, followed by a time of free dancing.

All are welcome! If you're newer to Ascension, this is a great way to meet and get to know folks! If you've been around for a while, this is your chance to welcome and make new friends!

Refreshments will be provided, but please feel free to bring a snack, dessert, or beverage along with you! For more information, contact Leah Hornfeck @

[leah.hornfeck@ascensionpittsburgh.org](mailto:leah.hornfeck@ascensionpittsburgh.org).

## Connection Lunch

**Sunday, September 15 after 11am service**

Join clergy and staff after the 11am service for a Connection Lunch.

- Are you new or still feel 'newish' after having been here for a while?
- Interested in joining a Community Group?
- Interested in finding a ministry to serve?

Bring your questions and the church will provide a pizza lunch!



## Explore Ascension

**Saturday, September 21 from 9am - Lunch**

Our next Explore Ascension class will be Saturday, September 21. This class is for all those who are new to Ascension, who wish to find out more about Anglicanism in general or Ascension in particular. It is also part of the pathway to membership. So, mark your calendars! The class is co-taught by Ascension clergy. We begin with breakfast and conclude with lunch. Childcare is provided. More info and online registration will take place in September.

# CAMPAIGN KICKOFF

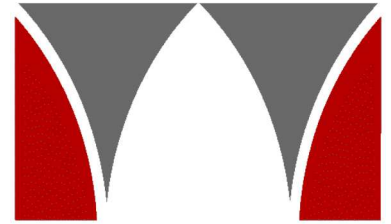
## SUNDAY, AUGUST 25

10am Worship Service with BBQ to follow  
Progress update from the Rector  
Presentation by the Architects



## MORE THAN STONES

*Welcoming our Neighbors, Reaching the Nations*



### 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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