

Ascension

November
2019

Thanksgiving

Recently, just as we were getting ready to say goodbye, the person that Andrea and I had visited said: “Thank you so much for asking us to participate in the capital campaign. We are honored that you would ask us.” This was not the first time that similar words have been said to us during such a visit. What was surprising this time was that these words came from a person who does not attend Ascension, but simply knows who we are, loves what we are doing, and wanted to make a pledge in thanksgiving to God for His work through us!

Thanks be to God!

I am so grateful for Church of the Ascension. At the end of the year I will have been a part of this church family for 16 years. I remember well the very first Sunday I and my family sat in a pew near the back with our children aged 5, 7 and 9. When it was time to share The Peace, Lenore Dixon turned around to greet us. It was her first Sunday too. Over the years, until she died just this past summer, I came to know and love Lenore. While we may have disagreed on any number of topics, what bound us together over the years was our deep love for God and for the people and place that became our church home and family. Lenore graciously bequeathed most of her estate to Ascension and the vestry agreed that that should be put towards our *MORE THAN STONES* campaign.

Thanks be to God!

Coming from a foreign country, experiencing the hospitality and welcome of the people of Ascension has been especially precious to me. In times of personal joy and obvious blessing as well as in times of terrible sadness and profound loss, my Ascension family has been a gift from God. We have laughed and cried together. We have worked and prayed together. We have rejoiced and celebrated. Like members of any family or community there have been times when we have misunderstood, hurt, disappointed, and wronged each other – but we have also extended love and grace, forgiveness and support. I am so grateful. Andrea and I feel blessed to have begun our married life together two years ago among our dear brothers and sisters at Ascension. Thank you, and

Thanks be to God!

What are you grateful for about Ascension? Gratitude is perhaps the greatest motivator for giving – of ourselves: our time, talent and treasure. Giving thanks to God is, as we are reminded each week in the Eucharistic Prayer, “our duty and our joy, always and everywhere...” I pray that you will know great joy as you give thanks and as you give to our *MORE THAN STONES* capital stewardship campaign.

Yours in Christ,

Jonathan +

Jonathan N. Millard
(Rector)





MORE THAN STONES

Welcoming our Neighbors, Reaching the Nations

As I have pondered my responses to the invitation to give to the *MORE THAN STONES* Campaign two quite different scenarios have risen in my memory. One has to do with the call on us as a parish to go forth to share the gospel of Jesus Christ with the whole world and the other has to do with what it means to live in solidarity and love with one another as the Body of Christ, right here within the walls of Ascension. That solidarity and love is essential to forming us as people who can give right witness to Jesus.

The first scenario is of one of the Listening group gatherings after worship, back in May. As I sat with others in the meeting, my mind was filled with troubled thoughts about a darkened world desperate for the light of Christ, of a culture desirous of social justice but often seeking it in ways contrary to the gospel, of the thousands of people right at our doorstep who are lonely and despairing. In the midst of these thoughts I heard people speaking of the way students from all over the world are gathering at the universities around us and even coming through our doors, either as students in the ESL program or in order to see if the presence of Christ might be found among us. My troubled thoughts were transformed into excitement by the possibility of hundreds of these gifted people coming through our doors, being touched by engaging with our ministries and coming to believe in and love Jesus and *then* going back to their countries to spread this light in many corners of the world! I know that God has the power to make this happen and I really want to do what I can to help turn this vision into reality.

This reminds me of the story of “V.” I met V a little over a year ago – it might have been after the Feast of Pentecost service. She was sitting quietly in the nave and after the hubbub had died down I went over and introduced myself and we got into quite a conversation. She is the mother of a CMU student, from India, and she had stepped into the doors of Ascension and, although not yet a Christian, had been deeply moved by the Spirit of worship and of mystery which she encountered, and wanted very much to know more. She and I talked long about Jesus, and she also had good conversations with others, including Marilyn Chislaghi. Since then we have kept in touch via emails from India and she was back here last spring, having sought out Christian churches in India and continuing to seek Jesus. It is encounters like these that excite me.

The second scenario is from an annual meeting sometime in either 2007 or 2008 when we were discussing whether we should become part of the Anglican communion. A dearly loved, albeit rather curmudgeonly elderly woman in our congregation, now deceased, stood up and said “I was baptized here, confirmed here and married here and been part of this congregation all my long life. I have seen Bishops and Rectors come and go and I am here to say that I stand behind our Rector one hundred per cent!” I was deeply struck by what a gift her loyalty, her long solidarity with our congregation, through good times and difficult times was to our congregation. Although I certainly haven’t had the tenure at Ascension that SHE had, I find that in my 27th year of walking alongside the people of this parish, God is teaching me new things of what it means to work to go deeper in relationship, to seek his presence in others in joy and in sorrow, in feasting and in lean seasons and there is richness in that. I want to be part of what helps others to make their homes here, to put down roots.

These two scenarios – one about reaching outside our walls, the other about reaching inward, intertwine within me in such a way as to make me want to invite all of us to engage with *MORE THAN STONES*, to offer ourselves to God for his use in building up the Kingdom.



Jeanne Kohn

Stewardship 2020

November 1, 2019

All Saints Day

Dear Church Family,

I write, as I do each year at about this time, to ask for your prayerful consideration of your **annual pledge** to God's work through Church of the Ascension. In this coming year, perhaps more than ever before, it is important that we continue to be faithful in our **regular financial giving**, given that we are also in the middle of our *MORE THAN STONES* capital campaign. (I have been encouraged, humbled and deeply thankful for the ways many have made campaign pledges that are generous and sacrificial.) Our regular giving is, of course, separate from our giving towards the capital campaign.

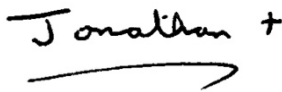
We have been greatly blessed this past year with an increase in attendance and in seeing new people worship with us on a near weekly basis. As we grow numerically, so also do the opportunities and needs for financial resources to support ministry and mission out of Ascension. One important way in which we can all respond to this growth is through the generous giving of our money. As you reflect on God's gracious provision in your own life, not least financially, I invite you to give thanks to him and consider how much you will give back to God from all he has entrusted to you.

How we use our money and what we give back to God, out of all he has given to us, is one way we are called to respond joyfully to the Lord. For followers of Jesus the tithe (10% of our income) is the basic biblical standard for monetary giving. It is both a duty and a joy to invest in God's work through the ministry and mission of Ascension. Pledge cards will be found in our pews beginning in November. Your pledge plays an important role in the process of tithing. It encourages us as individuals to be intentional about our giving and serves to keep us accountable. (For those who are not yet tithing, the pledge card extends an opportunity to establish a schedule to achieve a tithe goal within three years.)

Please prayerfully consider your commitment to tithing the treasure God has given you to his work at Ascension. Then, complete the pledge card and bring it to church on Christ the King Sunday, November 24th, or mail directly to the church office.

Let us give cheerfully, generously, and with grateful hearts.

Yours in Christ,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Jonathan +". Below the signature is a long, horizontal, slightly wavy line.

Jonathan N. Millard
Rector

Parish Retreat — Looking Back & Following Up

Resources for Learning Jesus

by Jonathan Warren

jonathan.warren@ascensionpittsburgh.org

October's Parish Retreat looked at Michael Frost's Surprise the World book in which he suggests we practice 5 missional habits which are easy to remember using the acronym BELLS: Bless, Eat, Listen, Learn, Sent. In response to numerous requests, Jonathan Warren is publishing the resources he suggested in his seminar on Learn, namely to 'Learn Jesus.'

A number of folks have asked me to set out the main points I mentioned for getting started in 'learning Jesus' through the gospels. At the retreat I said that our approach to scripture should include both the 'discipline of study' and the 'discipline of meditation'. Richard Foster, in *Celebration of Discipline*, says that "The process that occurs in study should be distinguished from meditation. Meditation is devotional; study is analytical. Meditation will relish a word; study will explicate it. Although meditation and study often overlap, they constitute two distinct experiences. Study provides a certain objective framework within which meditation can successfully function." We need both, as study is the foundation on which fruitful meditation is built, whereas meditation internalizes and digests what has been learned. Neither is complete without the other.



In the retreat talk, and in this article, I am describing the discipline of study. What is a good method for learning Jesus in the Gospels? First, we need to read the gospels themselves. We need to keep in mind several things when we read the gospels:

1) We need to read extensively. We need to read big chunks of the gospels at a time. If we crumble up the readings into little bits, it's really difficult to know what's happening or how the various stories relate to one another.

2) We need to read intensively. We need to pay attention to the details of the stories, like where the story takes place, and where the gospel writer puts the story in relation to Jesus's mission. Is he in his 'Galilean springtime'? Or has he 'set his face like flint' toward Jerusalem? If the story is about one of Jesus' sayings or about his parables, who is his intended audience? How does the gospel author or Jesus refer back to themes and images from the Old Testament or from the intertestamental period? With all of these details, it is really helpful to have both a good Bible dictionary, and a trustworthy commentary.

I can recommend without qualification the popular commentary series by NT Wright called "The New Testament for Everyone." I can also recommend, for a Bible dictionary, the *Eerdmans Dictionary of the Bible*, edited by David Freedman, which I regularly use in my own personal study and sermon preparation. Right now, we have an embarrassment of riches in tools that you can use to study scripture, but this is like a starter kit.

3) We need to ask how the gospel we are reading relates to the other three. Even though Michael Frost refers to the gospels as 'biographies,' this is not quite right. It is a fact the importance of which cannot be over-stated that the early church settled on four gospels, not a single gospel, and not a 'harmony' or digest of the various gospels. Early attempts, beginning in the second century, to figure out how to smush the differing details of the various accounts together - like Tatian's *Diatessaron* - were rejected.

The gospels are instead something like theological portraits. Each one of the gospel writers has a different take on Jesus, different facets of his life and ministry that they want to highlight. They pull from different themes and imagery from the Old Testament in order to tell us who Jesus was and is. Thus, there are differences of detail, differences of language, differences in the order in which the stories are told, that are critical and indispensable for understanding each gospel. That doesn't mean the gospels are not historical. But that does mean that the Jesus we meet in the gospels is always mediated through the theology of the post-Pentecost church. The church is built on the foundation of the apostles, because it is the witness of the apostles to Jesus that is recorded in the gospels. There is no secular 'historical Jesus' detached from his church that we can access.

If you are unsettled by the differences you see in the gospels and by skeptical scholars like Bart Ehrman who challenge our ability to know Christ through the Gospels, I would encourage you to read some of the trustworthy scholarship out there on gospel criticism. One of my favorite scholars on this is Michael Bird, an Aussie Anglican. His recent book *The Gospel of the Lord* is perhaps the best one stop shop that lays out the issues related to the reasons why the gospels were written and preserved as well as the formation of the canon.

Along with reading the gospels themselves, we also need to read about Jesus. There are a number of books available that help to put Jesus into context, especially laying out Jesus's relationship to Israel. The Scottish theologian TF Torrance liked to say that Israel is the 'womb of the incarnation'. That's an important point - even though Jesus is savior of all humanity, the particular backdrop against which he is to be interpreted is the hopes and expectations of Israel.

The story of Israel is the indispensable background to understanding who Jesus was and who we are. There are a ton of great books introducing you to who Jesus was and the nature of the gospel he proclaimed and embodied, both popular and scholarly. I would recommend three popular ones by fellow Anglicans - NT Wright's *Simply Jesus*, Scot McKnight's *The Jesus Creed*, and Alister McGrath's *Jesus Christ: A Guide for Study and Devotion*.

Are there other resources you've found helpful for learning Jesus in the Gospels? Shoot me an email and let me know what they are!

Follow-up from our Conversation with Canon Yee Ching Wah on Gender Identity and Sexual Orientation

by Jonathan Warren

jonathan.warren@ascensionpittsburgh.org

Thank you to everyone who came to the conversation with Canon Yee Ching Wah, Canon Jonathan and myself at the Parish Retreat last month. We asked Canon Ching Wah to be part of a conversation because his church is ministering to LGBTQ persons in a very different context than we are here in the US, and cross-cultural perspective is always helpful.

It was gratifying to us that so many came to listen in on this conversation and to ask questions. We are keenly aware that we were addressing a great many topics at once in a short period of time, and that we were not able to do justice to the many questions that were handed in. That conversation was the beginning of a broader discussion of these pressing concerns, rather than a final word.

continued



Several things became clear to us, however, during this introductory conversation. First, many in our congregation are wrestling with questions related to sexuality and gender identity and want to hear more from us on these topics. Some among us are struggling personally, and some are concerned for your friends, family members, and co-workers. We want to say again that folks are always welcome to make appointments with us to share their concerns and/or seek counsel with us. Of course, we do not know everything, but we do want to listen compassionately, we can certainly reason together from Scripture and tradition, and we can always pray and ask for the Spirit's guidance together.

Secondly, we are aware that gender identity and sexuality are complex and differentiated realities. In our conversation with Ching Wah, we were hoping both to hear his insights as a missionary to Thailand, where gender dysphoria and transgenderism are more prevalent than they are here, and to signal our concern and desire to speak into these questions as clergy. We recognize, however, the introductory nature of all that we said in that conversation, and that there is more to examine in detail, both theologically and pastorally.

Lastly, although we want to uphold and affirm historic Christian sexual orthodoxy and the goodness of the gender binary inscribed in the creation, we want – insofar as we are able - to do so humbly, winsomely, and compassionately. We want to do this interpersonally, but also in our communications and our teachings as clergy. We know that the church has often failed to minister well to LGBTQ persons, and we repent for the church's and for our own failures to listen and love well.

That so many of you were eager to be part of this conversation has confirmed our decision to move forward with a series of 'Difficult Conversations' for our Lenten series this year. A number of you were present when Pieter Valk from EQUIP came and spoke with us about the gospel and sexual orientation as our first experiment with a 'difficult conversation'. In 2020 we will be addressing four controversial topics in our Lenten series: politics, race, sexuality, and gender identity. We know these are sensitive matters and that they are questions many of us struggle with on a regular basis, and we intend to approach them prayerfully, with fidelity to the Scriptures, and with compassion and pastoral concern for our family members, friends, and neighbors.

In the meantime, we are aware that many of you submitted questions during the conversation with Canon Ching Wah that we did not have time to answer fully in the conversation. For that reason, we are taking counsel together and hope to provide some answers to those questions in upcoming issues of the Ascent. To be faithful to Christ, we need clarity about what we believe as a parish, but we also need to grow together in sacrificial love and compassion for our community, and we need to model mature, non-anxious conversation around the most divisive and controversial topics in our society. As we enter this season of deeper cultural engagement, we would ask you to join us in praying consistently this prayer from the ACNA *Book of Common Prayer*:

*O God, you made us in your own image,
and you have redeemed us through your Son Jesus Christ:
Look with compassion on the whole human family;
take away the arrogance and hatred which infect our hearts;
break down the walls that separate us; unite us in bonds of love;
and work through our struggle and confusion to accomplish your purposes on earth;
that, In your good time, all nations and races may serve you in harmony
around your heavenly throne; through Jesus Christ our Lord.*

Amen. (P. 659)

Jonathan Warren



Parish Retreat Continued

Surprise! How God's Kids Bless the World Fun and Learning at the Annual Parish Retreat

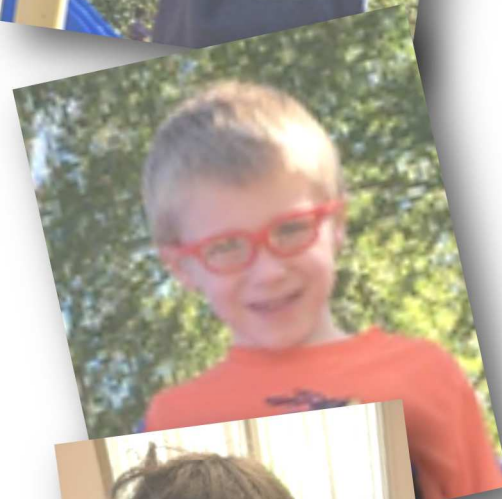
by Catherine Slocum

catherine.slocum@ascensionpittsburgh.org

What do Starburst candies, Lego blocks, broken pottery and singing in the Thai language have to do with the Annual Parish Retreat at Laurelville? Well, if you were part of the children's ministry program, these objects represented four ways God's kids bless the world. On Friday night of the Parish Retreat children ages kindergarten – 5th grade learned about being the salt of the earth by tasting the effect of salt on things like starburst candy and Hershey's chocolate. The night culminated with a black light freeze-dance party with popular kids worship music playing in the background which helped them experience a sense of God's desire for us to be the light of the world. On Saturday, our children learned about forgiveness using broken pottery and legos to show how certain things can be repaired (the kids made mosaics) and how we sometimes attempt to use our skills to earn God's favor (the kids made lego trophies). On Sunday morning we had a special visit from Jeanne Yee Ya Hui who taught the children a "Thank You Jesus" song in Thai as part of our lesson on God's desire to bring shalom or wholeness to the world.

We are praising God for His provision for the Children's Ministry program at the Parish Retreat. We had a total of 72 children registered for the retreat and a team of over 30 volunteers and care givers who offered their time, talent and treasure to make this such a beautiful time for the children. From recruiting to planning to production the Lord's hand was in every aspect of this program. Children in the nursery experienced love and care from our experienced childcare team. The Pre-K group had exceptional programming that included aspects of the older children's lessons along with a Godly Play lesson on the Good Shepherd, bible readings from the Jesus Bible Story Book and a fun-filled music and movement class.

On behalf of the children's ministry we want to offer a GREAT BIG THANK YOU to our incredible volunteer and caregiving team. Many thanks to: Elisabeth Moyer, Suzanne Werder, Jay Slocum, Jess Kissel, Chris Kissel, Yolanda Grenier, Emily Sadd, Molly Sadd, Margaret Sadd, Enkhlen Bayar, Sue Myers, Katerina Koukouvagia, Andy Halfhill, Hannah Halfhill, David Woods, Rebecca Woods, Karen Stevenson, Mark Stevenson, Kate Lee, Tim Lee, Joanne Spence, Ginger Weeber, Dave Weeber, Jeanne Yee Ya Hui, Jen Newhouse, Eric Newhouse, Rachel Priselac, Jill Amber Graham, Melissa Wilson, Rhonda Herman and Sue Crary. We certainly couldn't have done it without you!



Parish Retreat Continued

A Word From the youth about the Parish Retreat

by Alex Banfield Hicks

alex.banfieldhicks@ascensionpittsburgh.org

Laurelville! So much to be thankful for!

For *Kelsey Regan* who spent hours preparing, writing, planning, packing, moving stuff, setting up stuff, leading dramas, praying with individuals, facilitating conversations and then making sure it was all packed up to go back to Ascension.



We also want to thank ...

Harry and Liz Ealey - who reached high to set up our Lodge Lighting. For *Amelia Bailey, Charlie Forster and James Rankin* - who were our officiants at Compline. For *Tom Hillman, Christian Conger, Austin Everett, Morgan Mitchell, Leah Hornfeck, Taylor Roberts, Sam Ferguson, Bailey Nichols, Mari Gowdy, Olivia Skal, Natalie Mayberry and Wes Williams* - who led small groups, acted in dramas, mentored individuals, and prayed. For *Andrea Millard* who led a workshop preparing our youth confirmands to lead the Prayers of the People on Sunday morning. For the heroic parent who let her son stay for the Saturday night program, even though it meant she had to leave Pittsburgh at 3:30am to collect him at 5am. For *Edmund Campbell*, who took this photo.

EXPLORE ASCENSION

New Member Class



Saturday, November 16

9am – lunch

Ascension Hunt Rooms

Our next Explore Ascension class will be Saturday, November 16. 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

all Ascension clergy. We begin with breakfast and conclude with lunch. Childcare is provided. If you would like to register there are a couple of options: (1) Visit www.ascensionpittsburgh.org and sign up there; (2) Email Marilyn that you plan to come at marilyn.chislaghi@ascensionpittsburgh.org.

Thanksgiving Eve Service

Wednesday, November 27 at 7pm



We hope you can join us for a traditional service of sung evensong. One of the aspects of the service that makes it unique is that we offer a time for members and friends of the parish to give public testimonies of thanksgiving to the goodness of God in their lives. If you would like to give a testimony, please email our rector, Jonathan Millard, at jonathan.millard@ascensionpittsburgh.org.

Premarital Counseling Cohort

Beginning in January 2020

Are you engaged or considering becoming engaged?

Ascension uses a pre-marriage curriculum designed by Nicky and Sila Lee (Holy Trinity Brompton; Alpha) and we like to gather a cohort of several couples to walk through the materials together. Rob and Donna Martsof, a mature couple in our church with tons of experience and a great passion for encouraging young couples, will facilitate the course. The course is 6 weeks in length and the hope is to meet every other week at an agreed time beginning in January 2020. If you would like more information or want to be referred to Rob and Donna, please reach out to our Associate Rector, Jonathan Warren, at jonathan.warren@ascensionpittsburgh.org.



Worship Night with the Sparks

Friday, November 15, 7:30pm

Join Greg and Rebecca Sparks for a night of musical worship in the Parish Hall. Greg and Rebecca have a true heart for bringing people together under the banner of Christ, and one of the ways they have done this is through their music. Though they no longer go on tours, they have graciously agreed to share their gifts and talents through worshipping with us. Plan to join us as we magnify the greatness of our God together.

Sparks House & Church of The Ascension
Invite you to

Worship Together

Friday Nov. 15
7:30 PM

Parish Hall at
Church of The Ascension
4729 Ellsworth Ave
Pittsburgh, PA 15213
thesparks.house

CROSS THE BOUNDARIES
OF CULTURE, NEIGHBORHOODS
AND CHURCH BUILDINGS
TO LIFT ALL OUR VOICES
AS ONE UNITED HEART IN CHRIST.
ALL AGES WELCOME!

OWLS FELLOWSHIP OLDER WISER LIVELY SAINTS



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

Thursday, November 14

12:30PM – 2:30PM

With The Venerable Dr. Mark Stevenson

**Mark will portray a
great hero of the faith,
the English
Abolitionist
William Wilberforce
1759-1833**

Mark is no stranger to Ascension. He started attending Ascension when he first moved to Pittsburgh in 1979. He was confirmed here; met his wife Karen and married her here; served on the Vestry; and served here as his first assignment after his ordination to the diaconate in 1998.

Mark was a long-time theatre professor before moving to Trinity School for Ministry, where he retired as the Academic Dean. He has studied theatre and acting and has appeared in a variety of theatres in Pittsburgh and elsewhere. He appeared in the Visit Pittsburgh commercial and had a role in the recently released feature film, *Where'd You Go, Bernadette?* starring Academy Award winning actor, Cate Blanchett.



**Mark your Calendars for the
2nd Thursday of the month
12:30PM – 2:30PM**

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

COST: \$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.

Parking restrictions will be lifted for people to park on the streets, and the Neville Street lot will be reserved for

Local Missions: Helping Our Neighbors

Many of Ascension's members participate in groups or work on their own to improve the lives of people here in Pittsburgh. One of the special joys of coordinating some of these efforts is the chance it affords me to learn about ways that individuals and families contribute, for few of them ordinarily talk much about the good they do. As a church, we have relationships with several organizations that provide opportunities to help. This article describes 3 of these-- **East End Cooperative Ministry, Circles-Open Hand Ministries and Shepherd's Heart**. To find out more about any of them, you're welcome to phone or text me at 412-452-1935 (please leave a message if I don't answer) or email me at jonathan.sewall@gmail.com. Many thanks! - *Jonathan Sewall*



**EAST END
COOPERATIVE
MINISTRY**

is an interfaith agency, now almost 50 years old, that provides help to some of our neighbors in need. At their building in East Liberty, EECM runs a short stay shelter for homeless folks, temporary housing for those committing to try to transform their lives, a workforce program for employment, a food pantry for those who can't afford groceries and tutoring and mentoring programs for kids.

Ascension regularly works with EECM in 2 ways:



Christmas Giving Tree:

Every year, EECM collects and distributes gifts to the families of their program clients. Many of these families may often have to choose between paying utilities and getting bus passes, and so Christmas gifts are out of reach. Congregations receive wish lists from the children and suggestions for the adults; often the kids want books. At Ascension, we put each request on a card and hang the card on our Giving Tree, which will go up in our sanctuary during November. We ask our folks to take a card, purchase the item (the goods should be new), wrap it as a present, attach the card to the outside of the wrapped package and place it under the tree. Ascension is among the larger participants in this ministry: in recent years, we have provided more than 40 individuals with 2-3 gifts each.



Monthly evening meal:

For well over 2 decades, Ascension has prepared and served dinner at EECM on the last Tuesday of every month. Many other local congregations and groups, too, have been serving on their particular days of the month. We cook our meal in Ascension's kitchen after the 9am or the 11am service on the Sunday preceding the last Tuesday (so, for example, Sunday, November 24, for serving Tuesday, November 26). The food is simple and takes 1-2 hours to prepare; no cooking expertise is needed. Those of us serving the meal come at 6pm on those last Tuesday evenings to EECM, 6140 Station Street, Pittsburgh 15206. Servers usually finish up by 8pm.

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Open Hand Ministries and Circles East Liberty:

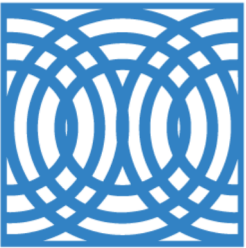
Open Hand Ministries was established by 6 Presbyterian congregations in the East End to address poverty and housing needs in East Liberty and surrounding neighborhoods. They stress the need to save and build assets as a long-term solution to generational poverty. For selected families, they have rehabilitated area houses and made them affordable, so that these folks can raise their kids in their rapidly gentrifying neighborhoods and pass on an appreciating asset to future generations. On the first Saturday of nearly every month, anyone can show up at the current rehabilitation work site and volunteer to help with construction; no experience is necessary. Tim Raufer, known to many at Ascension, directs these efforts for Open Hand.



Tim Raufer

Open Hand’s broader program is *Circles East Liberty*,

which seeks to fight racism as well as poverty. Every year or so, Circles recruits and trains “leaders” and “allies.” A leader is someone who wants to improve his or her situation, to get out of poverty: “leader” means this person must set the goals and make the decisions. Allies come alongside a leader; their sole qualification is that they care; they are not necessarily mentors, for it is not presumed that they know what’s best for the leader. Training continues each Tuesday night for several months, as both leaders and allies become familiar with their roles and those they’ll work with. Then they form circles, each with a leader and 2 allies, and continue meeting weekly on Tuesdays for a year as the leaders, helped by the allies, take steps to improve their finances. The staff and other circle members provide lots of advice and group sessions to help.



Shepherd's Heart

Prepare and/or serve a meal



An Anglican parish at 13 Pride St. in Uptown, near Mercy Hospital, serving our neighbors, especially veterans, who have no good place to live. The Rev. Mike Wurschmidt (affectionately called “Pastor Mike”) and his wife Tina established the ministry over 25 years ago by visiting folks on the streets and welcoming them into their services. Unlike most of those who make these efforts only once or twice, Mike and Tina kept coming back and eventually gained the trust and respect of those they sought to serve. Each Sunday, following their afternoon Eucharist, their church offers a free dinner to anyone present. Ascension is one of many congregations and groups who cook and serve this dinner. We reserve about 6 Sundays scattered across each year; the first date for 2020 will be in January or February. This ministry is good for families and folks who can’t volunteer during the work week. We’ve had several community groups volunteer, and recently students in our English as a Second Language (ESL) ministry have been helping out as well: last fall at ESL class they expressed their desire to give back to our church, and they’ve been helping ever since. To volunteer, you can help cook, serve or both. Cooks can expect to spend about 2 hours preparing the meal after our Sunday services: we can start cooking after the 9am or the 11am service, depending on which one you attend. Servers can attend the 5:15pm Eucharist at Shepherd’s Heart or come near the end of the worship service (about 6:30pm) and then serve. We’re usually done by 7:30 or 8pm, though it’s fine to leave earlier.



“Pastor Mike”

Want to save money and support our youth?

ORDER A CHRISTMAS WREATH!

You'll be saving as we buy wholesale (Premier Foliage) and add a minimal markup. Profits provide scholarships to support Church of the Ascension's Youth Group summer service projects in 2020.

Fill out this form and combine with cash or check in an Offering Envelope (see the pew holder in front) before putting into the offering plate as it passes.



\$20
30' White Pine
Roping



\$30
22" Frazier Fir
Wreath w/Bow
and Cones



\$35
24" Mixed Wreath



\$40
Hanging Basket

Name:

Phone number:



Thanks so
much for
supporting
us!



YOUR ORDER



How many?

- x \$20 - 30' of White Pine Roping
- x \$30 - 20-22" Frazier Fir Wreath with Bow & Cones
- x \$35 - 24" Mixed Wreath
- x \$40 - Hanging Basket of Greens
- + \$5 - Delivery Charge (if you can't pick up from the church
4729 Ellsworth Avenue on Sunday Dec 1st 9am-2pm)

\$ _____ TOTAL Referring youth name(s):

How are you paying? [checks payable to 'Church of the Ascension']

___ Cash ___ Check _____ Check Number

Delivery? Address:

- ___ Yes
- ___ No, I will pick up at Church of the Ascension on **December 1st, 9am-2pm**

Fold, Tear & Keep

Order & Payment Deadline! *Sunday, November 24th.*

Pick Up: *Sunday, December 1st 9am-2pm* at
Church of the Ascension
4729 Ellsworth Ave, Pittsburgh, PA 15213

**Enter Ascension from the N Neville Street side
and come straight down the steps to the basement**

Deliveries made between 3:00pm and 5:00pm

Note your order below and
Bring this slip when collecting

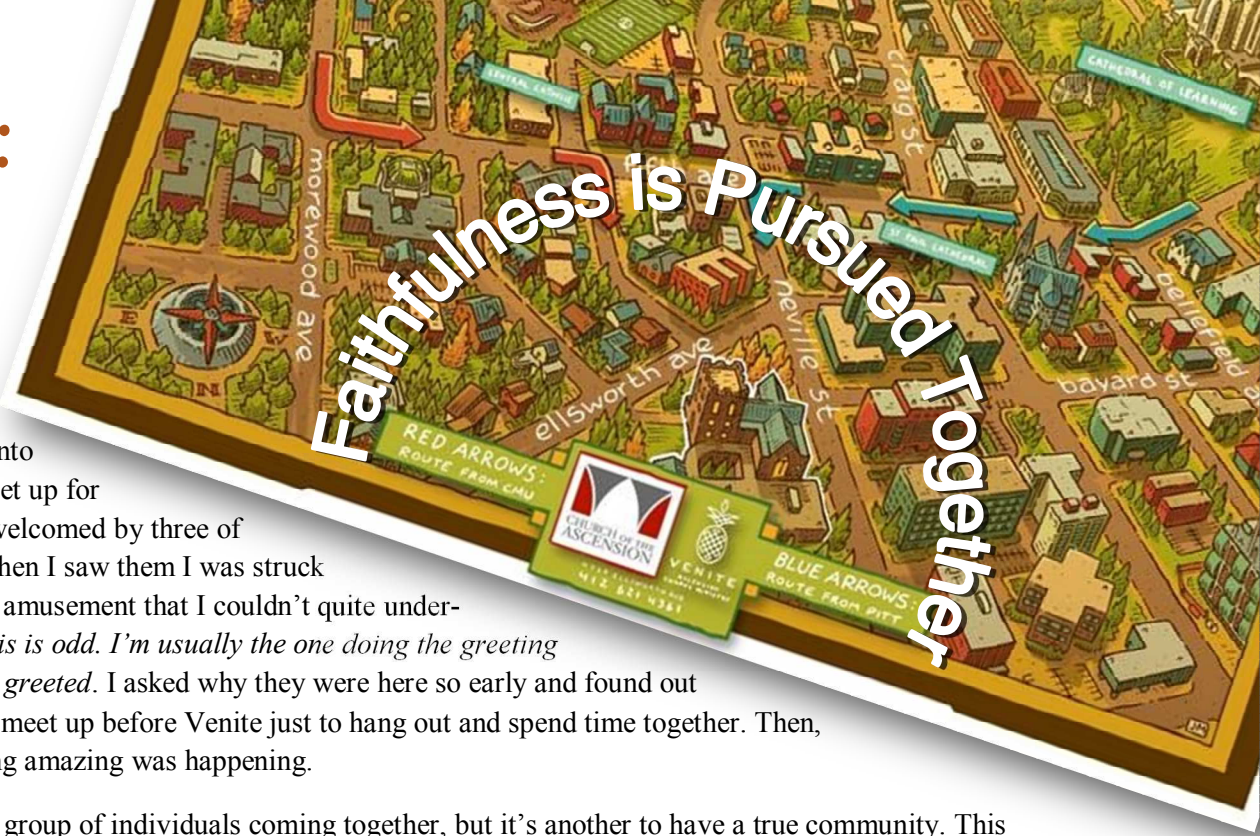
Venite:

Ascension Campus Ministry

As I scurried out of the cold, evening rain into the Old Catacombs to set up for Venite, I was warmly welcomed by three of our Venite students. When I saw them I was struck with a sense of joy and amusement that I couldn't quite understand, and I thought, *this is odd. I'm usually the one doing the greeting here, not the one being greeted.* I asked why they were here so early and found out that they had agreed to meet up before Venite just to hang out and spend time together. Then, I realized that something amazing was happening.

It's one thing to have a group of individuals coming together, but it's another to have a true community. This moment helped me to see that **these students are becoming a community and embracing one of our CCO core values—Faithfulness is Pursued Together.** Venite is no longer just a vision that Alex and I dream about, it is a real community of real people, and God's people are the place where he, through his Spirit, does real Kingdom work. Now, we have people who are pursuing Christ and being equipped to do just that work, and you could be a part of it.

College students — come join us Wednesdays at 8:30pm here at Ascension.



Monthly Brunch

Another way to get involved is to come to our monthly brunch after church on Sundays. Last month we held our *first* Venite Brunch, and it was as delightful spending time together and meeting new students as it was delicious! *Big thanks go out to Denise and Pittsburgh Premiere Catering for cooking such a wonderful meal for us, and to April Bailey, David & Ginger Weeber, and Greg & Rebecca Sparks for serving the food and staying to hang out with our students.* Join us **Sunday, November 17th at 12:30pm for our next brunch.** Students, invite your friends and check out our walking map to help you get here!

Stress Less Bags

Not a college student but would like to be a blessing to these neighbors of ours? Help us provide small gifts to give to our students in Stress Less Bags. In November, we will be giving out lists of suggested items for these bags and collecting these gifts throughout the month. The items will be assembled in bags and given to students at our final Venite Brunch on **December 8th**—right before finals week to encourage students and help them stress less as they prepare and take their exams!

Families: Parenting in a Technological Age

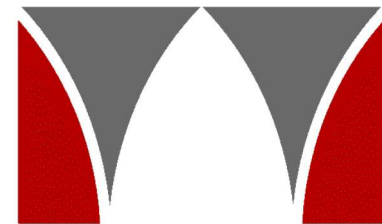
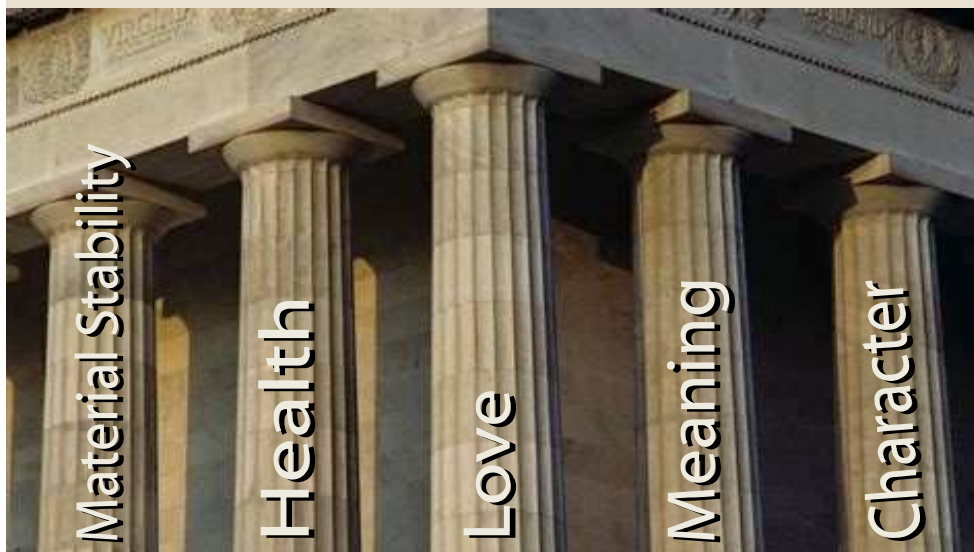
An important conversation was had – *let's keep talking*

On Saturday evening, October 12, about fifty of Ascension's friends and family gathered in the Parish Hall to eat pizza and delicious side dishes, served up from Denise Bozich's catering company, while enjoying jazz music that played in the background. After the children and youth were dismissed for their program, the adults gathered to hear Dr. Grant Martsof present a trenchant analysis on the way the digital world affects us through the use of our phones and our social media. A highlight of the presentation included an image of a Greek Structure with five doric columns representing the five inherent motivations and desires we all have as persons – material stability, health, love, meaning and character. Grant's important question to us was, "How does the use of our technologies contribute to these five core human motivations and desires beyond the ease, convenience and efficiency that our technological tools offer?"

We are grateful to the team of folks who helped make this successful event happen. A special thanks to Grant and Christy Martsof for their vision and energy. A thanks to the four couples who served on the parent panel: Brian Janaszek and Jenifer Hemphill, Aaron and Kelsey Sams, Charlie and Marilyn Chislaghi, Jay and Catherine Slocum. Thanks also to those who helped with the meal and programming for our children and youth during the event. What an enlightening night we had!

Many participants have asked if we can continue the conversation. Hence, we would like to gather again in the new year to offer "Parenting in a Technological Age Part II." Mark your calendars for Saturday, January 25th from 5 – 7pm. If you are interested in helping with this next gathering please contact Alex Banfield Hicks alex.banfieldhicks@ascensionpittsburgh.org or Catherine Slocum catherine.slocum@ascensionpittsburgh.org.

**A person is an integrated body/spirit
with specific, inherent motivations and desires**



**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

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Ascent are due November 15
The publication will be
available December 1.