

The Ascent

OCTOBER 2021

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Living Stones

Letter from the Rector



Living Stones

MORE THAN STONES

Welcoming our Neighbors, Reaching the Nations



By Jonathan Millard, Rector

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Dear Church Family,

The end is in sight to complete our capital campaign!

We are now almost halfway through our final three-month push to complete our More Than Stones campaign. At the end of August, we needed to raise another \$820,000 (just 10% of the initial financial target). That gap is now beginning to close, and we will announce the final numbers by the end of the year. Please plan to join us on October 23 or 24. I look forward to sharing updated renderings of the proposed new addition facility improvements. Just as the building of the newly named “Minnie Smith Education Wing”, twenty years ago, allowed ministry to flourish, so now we believe our current project is vital for the flourishing of our call to welcome our neighbors and reach the nations with the love of Christ for generations to come. We want everyone to be a part of the More Than Stones campaign as we complete and celebrate this once in a generation project, as we prepare for expanded and deepened ministry at Ascension.

Testimonies of God’s work in our lives

Included in this edition of the Ascent are several “living

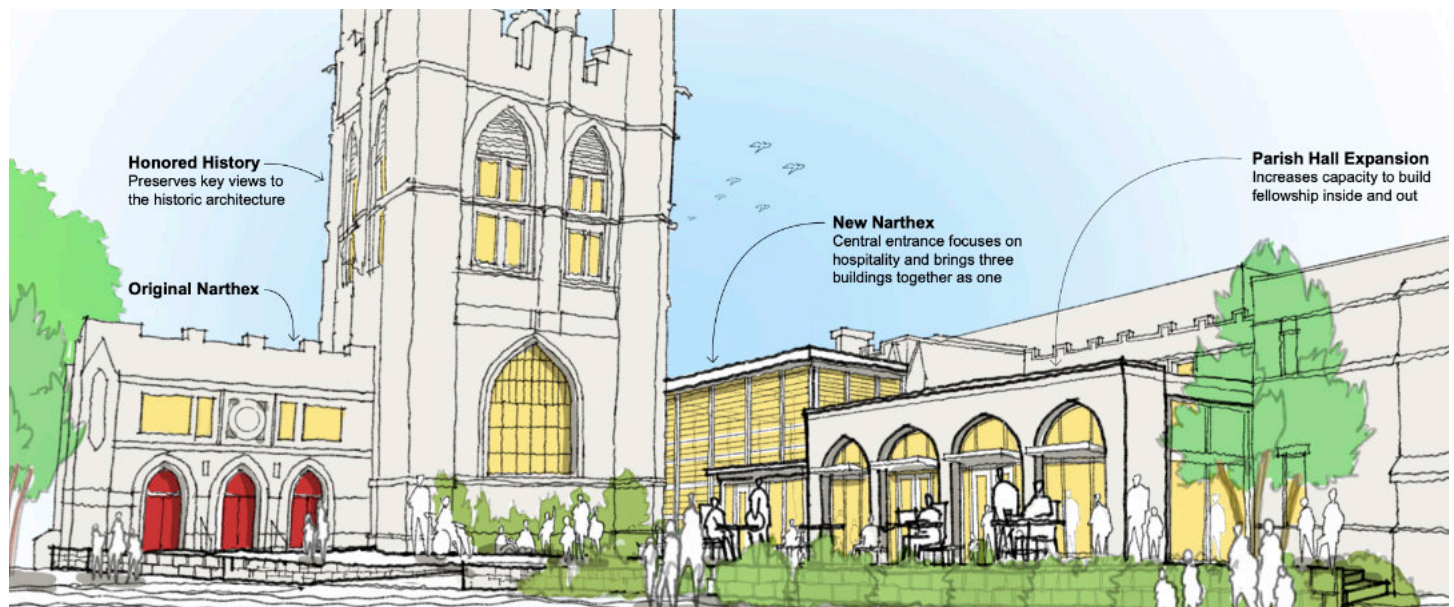
stones” testimonies. We will also be sharing video testimonies during October. At the end of the day, our More Than Stones campaign is all about the living stones of Ascension – including those who have gone before, those who today make up the congregation, and those whom, God-willing, will come among us in the future. This campaign truly is a generational effort.

More opportunities to reach out to our neighbors

As we look to the completion of our capital campaign and the exciting building work ahead, we continue to explore ways to share Christ’s healing in a broken world. We have begun talks with a couple of agencies about ways we might minister to the refugee and immigrant communities within Pittsburgh, a natural expansion to our current international ministry. More on this in the coming months.

Our newly named spaces

I am pleased to summarize the honoring of beloved members and friends of Ascension in the naming of four spaces. (I do hope you have been able to see the videos. If not you can access them all <https://youtube.com/playlist?list=PLA0rOp2-TxwNNgW-ill4rzNT4WjbGYBZz>)





The Ann Paton Contemplation Garden

The Rev. Dr. Ann Paton, who turns 93 this December, is one of our beloved living stones at Ascension. Ordained for some 30 years, Mother Ann has been such an important part of our community at Ascension. Ann's gift to the parish has been her excellent preaching together with her constant challenge to us to take time intentionally to come into God's presence in silence. In the video Mother Ann challenges us to keep worship at the forefront of our life together and to remember the priesthood of all believers and to live out that calling.



The Minnie Smith Education Wing

Minnie Smith (1927 to 2011) was one of a small group of people who met together for more than ten years to pray for our church. When this group met through the 1970's there were almost no children or young families at Ascension. In response to Minnie and others' faithful prayers, and by God's grace, the tide turned at Ascension. Today, we can look back at more than 40 years of life, health, and growth. By 1998, there were so many children the church decided to build an education wing. We now stand at another crossroads. We are being called upon to respond to the growth that God has continued to give in so many areas of our life together. This time, as well completing extensive repairs to our historic buildings, the challenge is to build an extended parish hall and make much needed improvements so we can continue to provide a hospitable welcome to all.



The Ken & Ethel Bailey Hall

Ken and Ethel Bailey have been a huge inspiration to us. Prior to his death five years ago, Dr. Bailey had been a regular guest preacher at Ascension. He was a scholar of biblical languages, traditions, and culture and a masterful teacher. Ethel Bailey was a research assistant to Dr. Jonas Salk, during the time that he discovered the Polio vaccine, here in Pittsburgh. They are both such wonderful examples of what it means to live out the Christian life through their vocations. Still today, most of the vital ministry and mission of Ascension takes place Mondays through Saturdays as parishioners serve God in their workplaces. Our extended hall will continue to be a multi-purpose space – including as a venue for the kind of teaching and equipping that marked Ken Bailey's ministry as well as for weekly hospitality, and so much more.



The Carlucci Commons

Christina Carlucci, who died in January 2019 after an aneurism and stroke, continues to be missed by so many in our church family. Christina, in many ways, embodied what it means to love our neighbor. She exuded generous hospitality, love, and kindness. Christina loved Jesus and she loved people. This was seen especially in the care and concern she expressed for our special needs community at Ascension. Christina helped us better to see and love those on the margins. Her life was an example and inspiration to us of welcoming hospitality. We hope that the envisioned outdoor patio space, the Carlucci Commons, will be a place of hospitality and welcome for generations to come.

Yours in Christ,

Jonathan +

Meeting James



By Marilyn Chislaghi, Director of Ministry

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I have known James Scannell since he was an infant. But, I am only really getting to know James now. James is autistic. He has been unable to communicate until recently. Early in the pandemic, at the beginning of 2020, James was introduced to a method of communication using a spelling board. James and his parents, Anna and Shawn, have worked tirelessly to master the spelling board. I share their sheer astonishment. As Anna said, James is 'in there'!! We have witnessed a miracle, and as you read the interview below with this wise young man whose thoughts we did not know a year ago, I believe you will agree.

In September I went to the Scannell home and interviewed James. We sat at the dining room table, James and his parents and me. I asked the questions. James used the spelling board. Anna pronounced the words as we watched James spell. James needed a break every 4 questions or so. In the interview to follow the responses are James' words as he spelled them.

With no more delay, Church of the Ascension, meet James.

Tell us about yourself and how long you have been at Ascension.

I am 20 years old and I have autism. Autism is primarily a motor planning disorder. I can understand everything but can't communicate reliably verbally. I have been at Ascension my whole life.

What has it meant for you to grow up in the church?

Church has been foundational in my understanding of God and community. I learned stability and change in the church calendar. I love being in the Nave. It is so peaceful.

When are you in the Nave?

I like to stay there all Sunday afternoon. I meet God in the beauty and the silence. I am so happy in that space.

What's your favorite part of the space?

I most appreciate the quiet and the openness. I remember so many people who have been a steady presence in my life like the Fosters, Hargers, Shiners, Malleys.

Does the Nave look like a ship to you? Is this a dumb question?

There are no dumb questions. Thanks for asking. I do feel protected in the Nave.

When you come to a service do you like the music?

Yes, I adore the organ. I love its power and diversity.

Is there one service in the year that is your favorite?

I like Pentecost because of the red people wear and the story of the Holy Spirit.

What is your favorite part of our Sunday Service?

I love the sermons because so often people don't talk to me like an adult.

So, it is good to be taught at that level.

What would you like people to know about how to interact with you?

I'd like them to talk to me like a normal adult. Motor issues make me look odd on the outside, but I am normal on the inside.

Have you been confirmed?

No, we haven't had a class since I learned to spell (Note: James is taking the youth confirmation course now)

When did you learn to spell (using the board)?

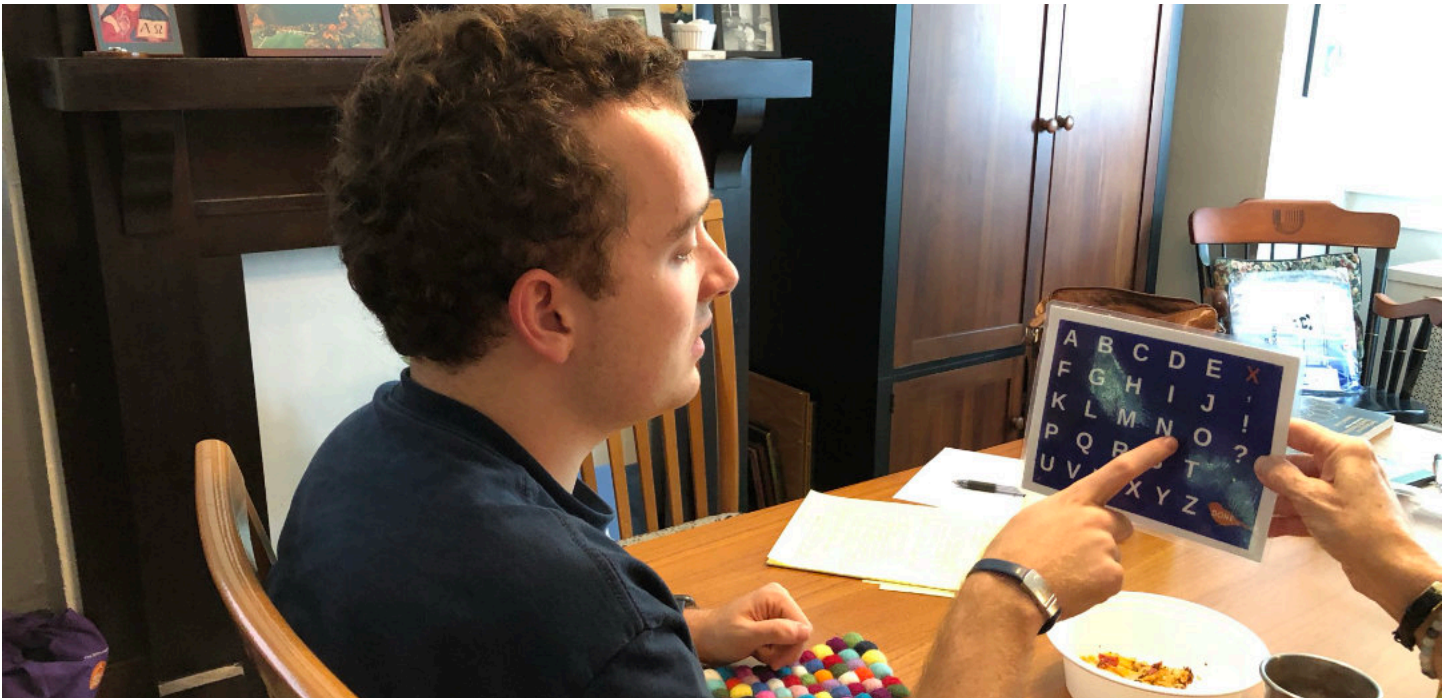
Last year, mainly during Covid shutdown.

Anna, can you tell me how you found out about the spelling method?

Susan Glotfelty at church told me about [her grandson] Holden and his success with the spelling board. I didn't know how to get training. I went to a seminar in January 2020, before shut-down. One of the teachers we know is a consultant and she became James' teacher. It was a slow go at first to learn. We started with larger letter boards, moved to a smaller board and a smaller board, then to a large laminate and then to a smaller laminate. Many people can spell on an iPad. We have not mastered that yet. Something about it sends James' brain into a loop.

James, was this an accurate description?

Yes, I get stuck on an iPad.



I have seen you in the Ascension kitchen. What do you do there?

I love cooking there, especially using the mixer. I like it that I have a chance to give back to the community.

What else would you like people to know?

I'd like people to know that disabled people are not necessarily stupid.

Can you tell us more about this?

I was trapped in silence for so many years, but I always knew the presence of God in that time. God talked to me. I had dreams about God. I always knew He was there and loved me.

What else do you want to say?

I want to say that God is faithful in our troubles.

What hopes do you have?

I hope I can keep learning all my life. I hope I can live with friends.

What fears do you have?

I am afraid of when my parents are gone and who will help me. Not a long time ago, I worried more but God is reassuring me that He is in charge.

How can the church help?

I want to know the church will look out for us even when our parents can't.

How can disabled people serve?

We have so much to offer because we have suffered, and we know God in a deep way. I like disabled people to interact with typical people more in church and not be segregated.

Do you have a favorite Bible verse?

"I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me."

Wow, you recited that so easily.

I am a sponge!

How do you feel about being featured in the Ascent?

So exciting. I am so happy to tell my story. God deserves glory.

At this point Anna showed me a collage that James made featuring an American flag with several additional cutouts when he went to an art camp at the Andy Warhol Museum.

Tell me about the collage James.

It is about voting rights. I am so proud

of it. I care about voting rights and access, and I got to compose it.

What does the white lace on the collage stand for?

It is an homage to RBG. She cared about marginalized people, and I am sorry she died.

Well James I think we'll wrap up for today.

Thanks for your time, Marilyn. It means a lot to be heard.

Would you ever want to be featured in a video?

I'd love it.

A video testimonial?

I'd love it.

Would you like Father Millard to ask the questions?

Yes

How about filming this Saturday at 10am?

How about 11? 10 is a bit early.

For more information, you can google "S2C" + "spelling" for links about the "Spelling 2 Communicate" method.

Resetting the Table for Special Needs Ministry



By Marilyn Chislaghi, Director of Ministry

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Keira Fuener did an incredible job leading our special needs ministry the past two years. Her tireless commitment resulted in strengthened bonds within our special needs community, among participants and parents and caregivers, as weekly online lessons and gatherings took place. One beautiful pandemic surprise was that we had a new family join us. As announced, Keira has stepped away from leadership of this ministry to return to her previous career in nursing. We wish her all our best!

I am delighted to announce the formation of a team to continue our special needs ministry. The structure of the ministry looks similar but not exactly the same as it did pre-pandemic. We will offer several gatherings throughout the month so that our community remains intact and strong. However, there will also be specialized offerings customized to participants depending on levels of understanding and communication as well as a monthly lunch and service project on a Sunday.

Launching in November, our monthly program will take this shape:

- 1st Sundays – A WINGS class between services (10:30 – 11:15)
- 2nd Sundays – A SERVICE PROJECT with pizza lunch after the 11am service (12:30 – 2pm)
- 3rd Sundays – A WINGS class between services (10:30 – 11:15)

Our current team members include:

- Beth Christensen, gifted teacher and storyteller, will be our lead teacher and director of the curriculum for Sunday programming.
- Judy Schaad, one of our parents, will come alongside Beth and assist with communications.
- I will meet up quarterly with the team to plan out our monthly program.

We would like a few other team members to pre-plan events and have opportunities for Sunday volunteers also (no pre-planning necessary). Please contact me if something sparks your interest!

- Buddies and helpers (needed at all events; no pre-planning necessary)
- Team member for Food: Pizza, cookies and drinks provider for the 2nd Sundays
- Team member for Service Projects: Lead the group in a project 2nd Sundays
- Team member for Music: Leading in worship songs 1st and 3rd Sundays
- Team member for Crafts: Lead in craft projects 1st and 3rd Sundays

We look forward to the launch of our in-person program again in November. Please reach out to me if you would like to become part of our team and part of this special community.



Beth Christensen



Judy Schaad

I Have Many People in the City



By LuAnn Pengidore, Director of International Ministry
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Working alongside Denise Cox in the international ministry, I see her as more of a ‘living column’ in the Church rather than a ‘living stone’ because of the support for the program she has given since it began. Denise has attended Ascension for 33 years and has faithfully served at SAMS (Society of Anglican Missionaries and Senders). In the fall of 2016, she started teaching in our English program—having prayed about her next area of service and believing God was pointing her more personally toward serving internationals and refugees. When Denise read about the new initiative at Ascension among internationals, she believed it was her answer to prayer. She jumped in as a lead teacher on Wednesday evenings, commuting 45 minutes to an hour each way.

Denise has primarily been teaching idioms and American culture - as well as a course on famous Pittsburghers. She enjoys it when “the lightbulb goes on” and a student tells her that he/she has heard these idioms before in a meeting and was confused by them.

What Denise hadn’t imagined when she first signed up was how many students would come to the program. She guessed 5-10 people. In fact, 60 came the first year and now between 80-90 regularly participate. She has had 12-18 students in each advanced class that she has taught. Denise said that she was surprised at how deeply she would be encouraged by participating in some of the Bible studies and discipleship opportunities.

Other highlights include taking families on field trips or coming alongside a student who was pregnant with encouragement and advice. She has also enjoyed linking students up to job resources or asking me to link them up with certain kinds of conversation partners. In doing so, several students have significantly improved their job opportunities and others have been brought into the Ascension family.

One thing that Denise reminds herself of was something the teachers read during a teacher training, from Acts 18:1, “Do not be afraid, for I am with you, and no one will attack you or harm you, for I have many people in this city.” This idea that God already has people in this city that are his and who are not believers yet, really struck her. I value and appreciate Denise’s ideas, faithful support, and prayerful approach to improving the ministry year by year.



More than Stones: Prayer Stones



By Andrea Millard, Director of Prayer Ministry & Leadership Development
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When we launched *More Than Stones* in 2019, we invited people to take a prayer stone and prayer card as physical reminders to hold in prayer all aspects of this initiative. These prayer stones represent campaign priorities: Old Stones, New Stones and Living Stones.

Ruth Hartling and Judy Yadrick helped prepare the stones for the congregation. Judy remembers being “impressed with how the stones were polished smooth and came in a wide array of earth tones. The shapes varied but each easily fit in the palm of your hand. Each stone was engraved with the common symbol of our faith, a cross.”

Now, two years into the project, we rejoice in how God is answering our prayers. Already many have welcomed the *More Than Stones* visiting teams into their homes and so many have given generously and sacrificially. We’re now only 10% away from our financial goal!

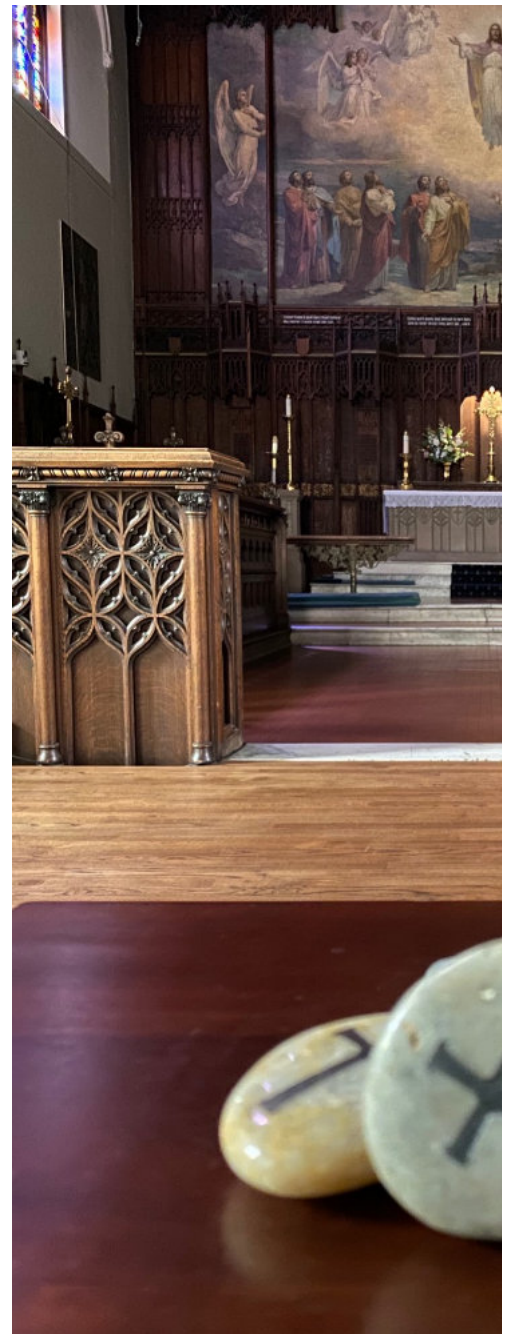
It got me thinking: where are those prayer stones now? So, I spoke with a few folks to find out:

Laura Irvine told me she really appreciates symbolism and has three prayer stones. The first is on a table next to her prayer chair as a reminder to pray during her regular prayer times. The second is with her at work, as a reminder that Jesus is her anchor there. And the third is in her car, reminding her that the Lord is with her when she is “on the move.”

Linda and Alan Komm have their stones on their bureaus. Alan said his stone “reminds me that the Lord’s imagination is way beyond what I could imagine for Ascension,” and this is cause for “praise and thanksgiving.”

The Sams family has their prayer stone on the windowsill over the kitchen sink. “There is a lot of activity at the sink, so it’s a great place for all of us to see it and keep in mind [the needs of our community].”

Judy Yadrick recalls this: “My prayer as we launched the campaign was that these tangible stones would help remind us of our individual uniqueness and the value we have in God’s sight. God has blessed Church of the Ascension over the years and desires that the body of Christ, as well as the tangible building, be a blessing to our neighborhood(s) and extend blessings to the nations.”





Stacey Regan keeps her stone on the lamp table next to her wingback chair. “I like the feel of the stone; it’s substantial. I like to hold it as I pray in thanksgiving for Ascension and for God’s protection and provision.”

Tyler Marwood and his family have their stone “outside in a little patch of lilies next to the backdoor entrance of our house.” They see it as they come in and go out of their home.

Lisa Suit told me her daughters, Hayden and Lylah have a “treasure chest” for their stones. Her son, Nathan has his in a drawer for safekeeping. Lisa keeps her stone on the shelf with her prayer book and bible. “[The stone] helps me remember to pray for those who can still help financially; for the work in progress ... like the stained-glass project, that it be done well, avoiding errors and mistakes; and, for us to use the space [yet to be developed] for even more mission and ministry.”

Jonathan and I have one of our stones placed in the corner of the kitchen where we charge our electronic devices. We see it frequently and it reminds us that Jesus is the cornerstone and that this project is for the advancement of his Kingdom. Jonathan keeps a stone in his car and I have a stone on my desk. To be honest, it often gets covered with papers. Every so often, when I’m sorting and organizing (more like excavating), I rediscover it and use that moment to give thanks once again for all those who are so sacrificially giving to this work.

I wonder, where is your More Than Stones prayer stone? How might it assist you as you pray in these last few weeks as we approach the finish line of the campaign? If you don’t have a stone and would like one, just ask Andrea.

Focus on a Family!



By Kevin Antlitz, Assistant Rector

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With our focus on the flesh and blood that make Church of the Ascension a church, I want to spotlight the leaders of one of our Community Groups. This interview of Jordan and Brenna Markley will give you a sense of how vital our CG leaders and ministry are to our life together.

First, some biographical info: Brenna is a lifelong Pittsburgher, raised in the North Hills, and Jordan married into the city. They've been married for seven years. Jordan works in fundraising at Carnegie Mellon and Brenna cares for their two wonderful daughters full-time.

How long have you been a CG leader and when and how did your group first form? Can you share a little about how it got started?

We have led the Greenfield Community Group for a little over 3 years. When we discovered there was no CG in our area, the church provided a list of most of the families in the area. We cold-emailed the Ascensionites from Greenfield and received a tremendous response. The chief constraints on our group when we launched were whether the scheduled meeting times worked for all families. Even then, I think we launched with about a dozen members.

Why did you decide to become a CG leader? Did you have experience leading like this in the past?

We don't know that there was much of a decision. Things just kind of fell into place! We had attended a small group in our old neighborhood that had introduced us to a number of people we wouldn't have known otherwise, and we didn't have that where we were living currently. Honestly, we were more interested in meeting other Ascension families than anything. While we had both led study groups and small group discussions in the past, we were just focused on opening up a space for people to gather and providing the opportunity for them to connect. The biggest question we had to answer was, "can we open our house to a bunch of people we don't know well yet, and commit to praying for them?"

Do you have any wisdom for folks at Ascension who are considering stepping up to become a CG leader?

Ascension is a big place. If there's something you're hungering for in the life of the church, whether it be regular fellowship with other believers, developing a rule of life, diving into contemplative practices, reading books about theology or church history, or serving alongside the people you worship with, there are probably five or six other people just like you who wish there was a community group doing those things. That said, it might be challenging to find one another unless one of you steps out and starts a community group.

What does a typical CG group gathering look like for you?

We've changed that recently! We used to meet for a bi-weekly dinner, followed by family prayer and a discussion of the sermon. All told we'd spend about 45 minutes to an hour eating and



fellowshipping, and 30-45 minutes praying together and discussing. That worked well when many members were in graduate school and no one was up for additional outside reading. Now things have changed: we have more kids but still meet in a fairly small space so we're not asking anybody to prepare a full dinner. We are also adding childcare and we're planning to discuss Tish Harrison Warren's new book *Prayers in the Night* among the adults. We'll keep adapting as we go.

Can you share some of the highlights of your group?

One of the things we love about our group is that while we've spread out across the city a bit since our founding, there are several members who live a few blocks apart in Greenfield, and all the members come into the East End frequently for one reason or another. This makes it much easier to take the kids to the park together, bring over meals when people are sick, lend one another tools, and talk on front porches after kids go to sleep. And the best part about this is the way it extends out into the neighborhood and gives us a chance to connect with other families, those that attend Ascension and those that don't. We truly feel a strong sense of community that I don't know we would experience otherwise.

What have been some of the greatest challenges your group has faced?

Part of the reason we're choosing to read Tish's book is because it's an approachable way to get into questions about theodicy. Throughout the years we've been together, members have dealt with family members fighting addiction, health scares for themselves, their parents and their children, anxiety, depression, joblessness, and financial concerns. The support we've found in the community group has been an incredible gift during those times, but anchoring those relationships in a richer, shared understanding of how we understand the relationship between pain, the fallen world, and God's providence is a challenge we're hoping to lean into together.

As you think about ministry in your neighborhood and the CG ministry at Ascension more broadly, what are some of your hopes?

We'd love to connect fellow Ascensionites with one another if they're interested in forming community groups, and to also foster more informal opportunities to fellowship together. I tend to think about this type of ministry in multi-decade time scales, and while the deep study and discussion that a small group can foster is essential, building a richer network of loose ties to the broader church body, and finding informal ways to support one another and serve our neighbors, those that love Jesus and those that don't, is equally important. Right now, our house is full to the brim on CG nights, with about 11 adults, six kids, and one more on the way. But we know there are probably twenty other Ascension households within a two-mile radius of our house, and we'd love to see that network of small groups grow and connect with one another in our small corner of Pittsburgh.

Church of the Ascension Youth Group: Six Years Later



By Alex Banfield Hicks, Director of Youth and College Ministry
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I first met Sebastien Janaszek in the fall of 2015 when he was homeschooled and in 7th grade (pictured). He was quiet, thoughtful, and remained faithfully part of things in the years that followed. He was always present at leadership lunches, youth group retreats, and also joined us for a number of our summer trips.

Earlier this month I was delighted to hear that, though now graduated from high school, he is keen to return in a volunteer capacity to help out at youth group. I asked him a few questions.

So why do you want to help out on a Sunday night?

I have always liked the youth group community, and I'd like to gain a little bit of leadership skill and ministry skill experience.

Talking of experience, what have been the significant youth group experiences over the years?

I know you disagree, but the Louisiana Trip. That was a very formative experience for me. The work we were doing. I felt like I was part of something. Same thing with the bike trips, being part of a team. And of course, the Laurelville retreats that I have been able to make, helping lead Compline, playing in the worship band, stuff like that.

The 2018 Louisiana Trip was a service week spent in a docked and refurbished warship doing practical tasks to help a ministry that processed donations at a dock. I couldn't stand the humidity and cockroaches, but Sebastien found the hard work and steady routine very meaningful. The bike trips were the 2019 and 2021 pilgrimages between Pittsburgh and D.C to raise money for Haiti H2O. The other photo of me and all grown up Seb on the most recent bike trip. People said we looked quite similar. I am flattered!

While I am very thankful for the youth group 'living stone' that is Sebastien, and for God's steady work in his life, I am also reminded that it is the summer trips that are most significant in helping our teens find their place in the 'living temple' which is our Ascension community. Do pray for these trips and let me know if you'd like to be a chaperone!



Sebastien in 2015



Sebastien and Alex in 2021



VENITE

Meaningful Moments



By Leah Hornfeck, CCO Campus Ministry Staff & Associate for Youth and College Ministries

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With a sigh of satisfaction, we walked outside into the still warm September night at the end of another encouraging Venite when one student said to me, “This is so different.”

Throughout this season of pandemic, we’ve heard a lot about there being a “new normal” on the other side of all this. Things won’t be this way forever, but things also aren’t going back to what they were before March of 2020. It seems that as a society we are approaching the threshold of this new normal, and these changes and differences are making themselves evident even in the Venite community.

Thankfully, this new normal that we’ve found ourselves in has been filled with many good things—new faces of eager and engaged students, happy voices singing in praise and worship, wide smiles, and boisterous laughter from your standard issue get-to-know-you games.

As we continue to embrace new and exciting things, something we’re trying at Venite this October and November is a guest speaker series. We’re inviting other Ascensionites - living stones who’ve done a bit more living (if you will) - to share stories of meaningful moments in the midst of the messiness from their lives.

If you’re a college student, we’d love to have you join us for this series at our weekly fellowship gatherings! We meet every Wednesday from 6:30-8:30pm at Church of the Ascension. For more information, please contact Leah.



Pursuing a Call Through Graduate Studies



By Chris Kirkland, Director of Graduate Student Ministry
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As the semester kicks off, we have been celebrating one of Ascension's new stones in the form of the graduate ministry and the living stones that have been building it up. One of our brightest living stones is Bailey Nichols, who has been continuously reminding us of the joy, centrality, and urgency of the gospel. She is in her second year of her PhD program in Social Work and has been attending Ascension since 2018. It has been a delight to have Bailey as part of our community and I hope other graduate students will come to join us on Saturday mornings (9am) and Monday nights (8 – 11pm) as well!

Where have you seen God acting in your life recently as a student?

The grad ministry at Ascension has been an answer to prayer as a way to stay connected to other believers. Academia can be very isolating. It's great having other people to help you stay accountable, study the Word, and talk about the deeper things.... When I felt this call to return to school, I knew I needed a strong church community to withstand the pressures of academia in a secular setting.

How would you describe your sense of call?

I have been called into the academic realm because I have a heart to help people see connections between the way the world is doing things, namely in the world of social work, and God's plan for redemption through Jesus. Social work has given me a very clear picture of where the world is and where it is going. As Christians we are called to be set apart, but we cannot run away from the world and hide in a corner. Instead, we are called to engage with the world as part of the Great Commission. Rather than run away, we should ask, '...How do we navigate in the world today which offers many other answers? How do we develop critical thinking skills so we can be aware of these things while truly following Christ and seeking to live missionally?'



What is the biggest challenge you have faced as a Christian graduate student?

The biggest challenge I've faced in my program is knowing how to speak the truth in love and where it is appropriate to speak the truth in a world that says that 'everyone has their own truth.'...That is a real challenge in academia: how can we navigate false narratives and speak truth in places that are hostile to truth? How do we be a light without overstepping inappropriately?

What do you hope to do with your work, especially in light of those challenges?

My hope would be to find a teaching role in a Christian university because my alma mater didn't have a social work program. We need Christians who know the Truth in the social work field to be lights for Christ and I want to help them navigate many of those issues.

What role has Christian community played in your life as a student?

My small group has been awesome. The fact that it's intergenerational has been really helpful, especially since several of them have had academic careers and can understand my context as a graduate student. It has also helped me see myself as part of the larger church body.... Ascension is my family. With my biological family living in Georgia, Ascension, especially through my small group, has become my family. I am so grateful the Lord brought me to Ascension.

Light and Love: Ministering in a COVID Surge

By Denise Cox, Society of Anglican Missionaries and Senders
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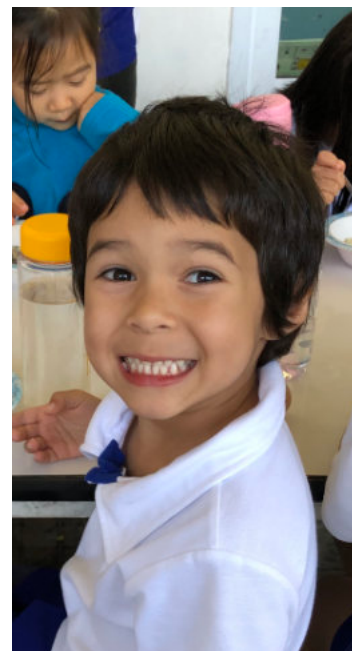
Currently in Thailand hospitals are at capacity as over 20,000 cases a day of the Delta Covid variant are recorded. In the midst of this surge, Jeannie Yahui, Gerry Gan and their three girls, missionaries from the Anglican Diocese of Singapore, minister to Thai families through the St. Andrew's School and Church in Chiang Mai. Ascension has a partnership with the Anglican Church of Thailand, and especially its expression in Chiang Mai.

As in other parts of the world, classes for students as well as worship services are being conducted online. Preparing lessons and running a bi-lingual preschool with virtual instruction has strained the teachers and parents alike. For Jeannie and Gerry, while they too are stressed, this means tapping into the deep resources of their relationship with Christ. Gerry holds hands as they work through computer difficulties with teachers and parents. Jeannie helps families to navigate online learning. Jeannie and Gerry are thankful because they have been given the freedom to concentrate on showing Christ's love and being a light to Thai families in their community during this very difficult time. This is a phenomenal opportunity and challenge in this majority Buddhist culture.

St. Andrew's School and Church had welcomed two teams from Ascension prior to the pandemic. In addition, Jeannie, the headmistress of St. Andrew's School, visited with Ascension during the 2019 Parish Retreat. Ascension continues to hope that travel will become easier and teams can again minister face to face in Thailand.

In the meantime, please pray for St. Andrew's School and Church, the teachers and pastoral staff. Also, pray for the Anglican Church in Thailand especially the churches along the Myanmar border as they take in refugees fleeing from political unrest.

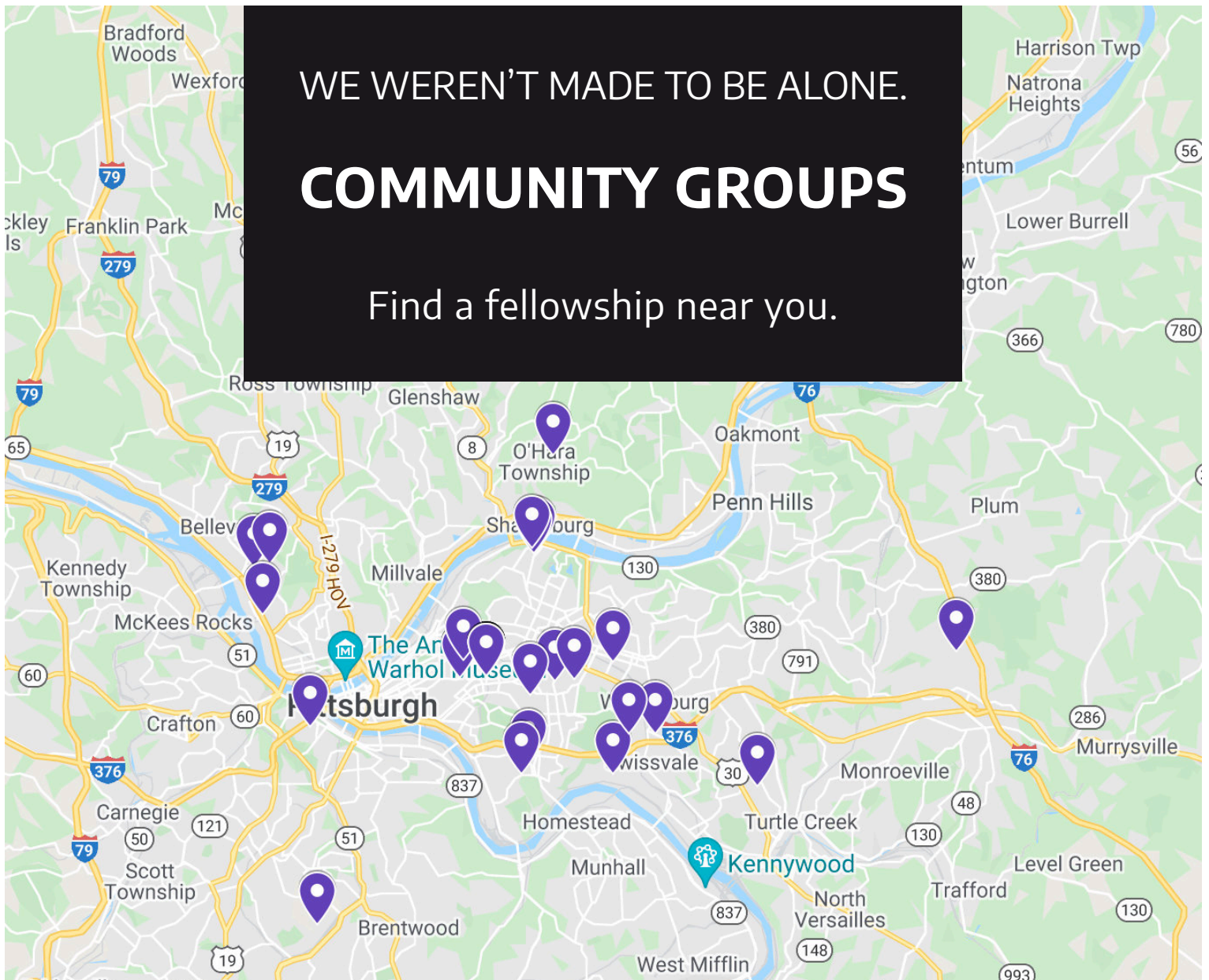
As a concrete sign of partnership, Ascension sent \$2000 to St. Andrew's School in Chiang Mai to provide care packages for 53 families in the school. If you would like to give to this project, a check can be sent to Ascension with Thailand on the memo line.



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A Worshipping Community;
Equipping God's People; Sharing
Christ's Healing with a Broken World