

The Ascension

OCTOBER/NOVEMBER 2022

ASCENSIONPITTSBURGH.ORG



Welcoming our Neighbors
and Reaching the Nations

Welcoming our Neighbors and Reaching the Nations



By Marilyn Chislaghi, Director of Ministry

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It was with joy that we celebrated a groundbreaking ceremony for the Ken and Ethel Bailey Parish Hall and Carlucci Commons on Sunday, September 18th. Our architect partners from Rothschild Doyno Collaborative joined us, as did our partners from Jendoco, our general contractor. We have spent considerable time together with RDC and Jendoco, sharpening our financial pencils and honing in on a design that fits our vision and purposes. It was good to worship the Lord together with no less than two Bishops and an Archbishop present, hard hats on! And what fun to see children playing their part with shovels in hand. Erika Strassburger, our local councilwoman, expressed her surprise at the sheer number of them!

On our recent trip to Israel, I was impressed with Christ Church, Jerusalem, an Anglican church in the old city of Jerusalem which was originally constructed in 1850 and stands strong and healthy today, 170 years later. From its start, Christ Church was engaged in the city establishing the very first hospital in Jerusalem as well as a preeminent vocational trade school for Jewish refugees which through the years has been a home to Arab Christian refugees as well. Today, among its manifold ministries, Christ Church hosts a Messianic Jewish congregation, an Arabic congregation, and two English speaking congregations. It administers an active Mercy Fund and remains a hub of activity.

Christ Church gave me a picture of what a healthy Christ-centered institution can accomplish over time. It is planted smack in the middle of the old city, in the main square off the Jaffa gate. It has been a beacon of light since its inception and continues so today. It was an honor for both Charlie and me to get to know a former Rabbi who came to Christ through the ministry of Christ Church. He is now doing online classes at Trinity School for Ministry and hopes to enter ordained ministry.

Ascension was founded in 1889 and, like Christ Church, has a solid history of being the hands and heart of Jesus in the City of Pittsburgh. While by no means perfect, Ascension has been a beacon of light—a place of healing, a center of worship and ministry, and a church that has sent out many to share Christ with those beyond our walls. The hope of our leadership is that with the completion of this ‘historic fix’ of our physical structure—stonework, windows, floors, roofs, doors, offices, bathrooms, you name it—we will be well



positioned for the service of Christ on this corner of Ellsworth and Neville for generations to come.

I serve as staff liaison to Ascension's Mission Committee. In the past couple of years some new thinking has gone into mission and outreach. We have begun to categorize our budget in ways different to the past by focusing on the following components of a healthy mission budget which should: (1) Reflect the church's calling; (2) Be strategic in the sense that it is focused and goes 'long' and 'deep'; and (3) Takes a tiered approach so that corporate calling and individual callings are clearly outlined and appropriately supported.

So, what is the corporate calling of Ascension? Increasingly we have designated resources toward outreach within our immediate context, particularly through our international and campus ministries, and more recently toward the development of a refugee ministry. We have also been deliberate in actively supporting Anglican missionaries, ministries, and partner agencies worldwide. The Anglican Church in North America is relatively new, and we want to do our part in supporting Anglican missionaries and initiatives throughout the world.

This colorful edition of the Ascent is devoted to many of those from among us who engage in mission and outreach and who receive support from Ascension. Some align with our corporate endeavors, and some pursue a strong individual call to a particular ministry. Currently 14.5% of total projected pledge revenue for 2022 is directed toward mission and outreach. We invite you to get to know our 'missionaries' through this edition, and to continue to uphold them in prayer. Hopefully you will have a much clearer window into the worlds to which they have been called.



Your Mission Committee

By Denise Cox

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Your Ascension Mission Committee helps to provide prayer, funding, and care for our Ascension missionaries. Also, the committee oversees local outreach encouraging members of the congregation to volunteer with area Ascension ministry partners. Another important aspect of this committee's oversight is to encourage and aid Ascension members in the discernment of vocations to local and global ministry. To that end, this year the committee is helping to sponsor a short-term mission to Chiang Mai, Thailand, to work with the Anglican school, church, and outreach center there. Such mission allows team members to experience ministering cross-culturally.

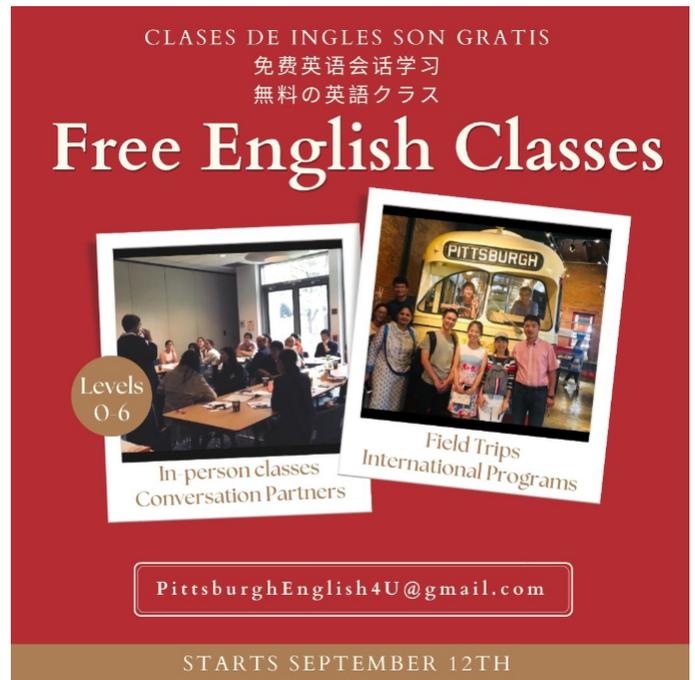
If you have a question or feel the Holy Spirit nudging you towards local or global ministry then your Ascension Mission Committee would welcome the opportunity to talk and pray with you. Just reach out to me, Denise Cox. Our committee members include myself (Chair), Conn Thieman, Jonathan Sewell, Marilyn Chislaghi, Nate Twichell, and Sarah Gilmer.

This edition of the Ascent is devoted to those mission and outreach endeavors that Ascension supports. We have tried to include most people and organizations that we support via our mission and operating budget, letting them speak for themselves. We hope you enjoy reading of the manifold ways people from Ascension are engaged in the world, and we also hope you will keep them in prayer.



Ascension International Ministry

Fallingwater & Hike
 Saturday, Nov. 5th @ 10am-4:30pm
 \$10/person; Contact LuAnn for more info



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Contextualizing Anglicanism



By Frank Bernardi

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I send warm Tunisian greetings to our friends at Ascension from the newest diocese in the worldwide Anglican Church. Last fall the Archbishop of Canterbury inaugurated the Anglican Province of Alexandria along with three brand new dioceses. Among these is the Diocese of North Africa, and this month we are having our very first Diocesan Convention and it is being held right here in Tunis.

A new diocese means organizing things differently, starting new institutions, and of course plenty of fanfare. What is most significant about this, however, is that it means that the 85 million Anglicans across the world have recognized that North Africa is no longer a great big empty spot on the map worthy of nothing more than a few expat churches. Instead, it is now recognized as a place with millions and millions of people—all loved by God—and worthy of an indigenous church of their own.

In the 21 years that Anne and I have been in Tunisia, the Anglican presence here has been mostly for English speaking foreigners. When Archbishop Mouneer Anis asked me to become the Rector of St. George's Tunis it was because of a vision that he had that the Anglican church in North Africa would be for local people, would include relevant expressions of the faith, and would have indigenous leadership. Today the Diocese of North Africa is brand new, still has no diocesan bishop, spans five countries, has four churches, and only two ordained priests—a true missionary diocese. But for the first time we are excited that the Anglican church will take root in this swath of land that is about the size of the continental U.S., and we are busy putting into place plans to start new churches and raise up local leaders.

Of course, this is an uphill battle. North Africa is still virtually one hundred percent Muslim, there is plenty of religious persecution, and in most locales, the authorities do not recognize or permit Christian institutions. Nevertheless, we remain hopeful and committed to the vision of an indigenous, growing, and vibrant church. We are sustained by the small miracles that we have already seen God do in our midst. Last year, I was able to baptize twelve locals. This month, eight are being confirmed, and we already have a large prayer group in a second city which, Lord willing, will become the first new church plant in our diocese.

The Lambeth Quadrilateral (est. 1888) asserted that one of the key principles of Anglicanism is “the historic episcopate locally adapted.” We are seeing this concept of ‘locally adapted’ played out here in North Africa in the most innovative of ways. As

local Muslims become followers of Jesus, we realize that adapting the culture of worship and community involves so much more than simply changing the language. It requires us to be creative, remain flexible, and extend grace. This type of contextualization has always been close to our hearts, and Anne and I feel honored and humbled that God has seen fit to use our two decades of service in Tunisia in this new and exciting way.

Anne continues to operate her language center. God continues to amaze us with what he is doing through this center. It provides economic empowerment to locals, and it equips other Christian workers in the country to more effectively share the Gospel with Muslims. Furthermore, we have already seen synergy between our accomplishments of the last two decades (such as the language center) and these new things that God is doing.

Finally, we would like to thank the Ascension community for the amazing care and hospitality that it has shown to us during Anne's recent health concerns. She is on track for a full recovery, and that would not have been possible without this wonderful church.



A New Service at Ascension for Sudanese—but everyone is welcome!



By the Rt. Rev. Grant LeMarquand
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The country of Sudan has been a place of turmoil for decades (and since 2011 we should say countries, since ‘South Sudan’ became independent on July 9 of that year). From the 1950s until the early 2000s, two civil wars devastated the southern part of Sudan resulting in the deaths of millions. Race, oil, and other factors contributed to these wars.

However, the reality that the north was dominated by a radical form of Islam while the south was majority African Traditional Religion and Christianity was perhaps the major element in the conflicts, particularly since the north wished to impose Islamic law (sharia) on the whole country.

On the other hand, what is now South Sudan (and parts of the north, especially the Nuba Mountains) also went through a major religious revival during these wars. To give just one example: before the second civil war (in the 1980s and 90s) only 10% of the Jieng people (sometimes called the Dinka) were Christians. By the turn of the millennium, 90% of the Jieng were baptized Christians. Christ came to the Sudan(s) during their suffering.

The hardship of so many led to mass migrations as millions of southerners and Nuba Mountain people were internally displaced or became refugees in neighboring countries. Some eventually made their way to safer countries—including the U.S. In Pittsburgh itself, there are several hundred Sudanese and South Sudanese. Some have

been here for more than a decade; some have arrived recently.

Sudanese Christians have multiple obstacles to overcome in any new place. One of them is finding a way to worship. Since many Sudanese do not speak English fluently, they find it more comfortable to worship in their own local languages or in Arabic. Most Sudanese know enough Arabic that they can at least sing together. Cultural and language barriers have led many Sudanese around North America to form Sudanese churches. Some of these congregations are ethnically defined; some are denominationally defined; others are open to various Sudanese peoples with a wide variety of denominational backgrounds.

Earlier this year I was approached by Samuel Kody, a Nuba Christian who spent ten years as a refugee in Cairo before coming to the US. While in Cairo, Samuel led a Sudanese church and was licensed as a lay reader by Mouneer Anis, the Anglican Bishop of Egypt. When Samuel contacted me, he had already begun to gather Sudanese families who wanted to start a church. Finding a place to worship has been a struggle. Most Sudanese in Pittsburgh live south of the city in an area where there are no ACNA churches. For a while the group worshipped in a Methodist Church, but several problems (scheduling and rental fees) have made this difficult. It took me a while to realize that Ascension, although on the wrong side of the river, is quite close to most of our Sudanese Christians.

And so, after discussions with the Rector and the Vestry, from September 17 Ascension will be hosting a fledgling Sudanese congregation on Saturday afternoons, from 4:00 pm until 6:00 pm. We will worship in English and Arabic. All are welcome to join us!



Thailand 2023

By Erika Twichell

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“When I went to Thailand, I didn’t expect to be immersed in a culture that was completely oriented to another religion. We saw how Buddhism is interwoven with the government, education, and family life. And we got to hear stories of the Gospel becoming good news to our Thai brothers and sisters. We have so much to learn from them.” – Charity Wahrenberger, 2020 Ascension Thailand Team.

This January, Ascension will be sending a team of seven to partner with our brothers and sisters in Chiang Mai, Thailand at St. Andrew’s Anglican Church. With Thailand being more than 95% Buddhist, most Thai have not met a Christian, let alone have a meaningful relationship with one. The Anglican Diocese of Singapore has tasked itself with being a modern-day Antioch, reaching out to Thailand and other nearby countries where there is little Christian witness.

Thai Christians can struggle in feeling isolated as they are often first-generation believers. On our family’s first trip (2018), we asked a church leader to tell us what he would want us to share with the Church in the U.S. He replied, “That we are here. We are here. Remember us.” This remembrance is part of our call in returning to Chiang Mai. Ascension was the last church to send a team before the pandemic hit full force and this team will be one of the first teams back at St. Andrews. One of the primary roles of the team will be to offer encouragement and refreshment to the teaching staff at St. Andrew’s primary school as well as beginning to reconnect with youth and families in the neighborhood surrounding the church. We are eager to hear the stories of what God has done in these last three years and be a reminder of the Family they belong to.



Meet the team!

Kelly Shane (cross-cultural worker), Sophia Shane (student), Mari Stout (therapist), Davita Stout (student), Jess Bennett (deacon), Elizabeth Ames (TSM student), and Erika Twichell (missionary/team leader) responded to the Parish’s open invitation through the application process.

Pray for this crew as we prepare spiritually and culturally to serve at St. Andrew’s. Over the course of this fall we will meet regularly to prepare ourselves for entering Thailand with the posture of a servant and learner. We will also be preparing materials and activities to help lead a “Reading is Fun” week at St. Andrew’s primary school. We have been invited to coordinate a couple evenings of cultural exchange with youth from the neighborhood, giving us an opportunity to share and learn more about the cultural context of the Church. And, as in any missional context, there will be surprises and opportunity to practice the spirit of flexibility!

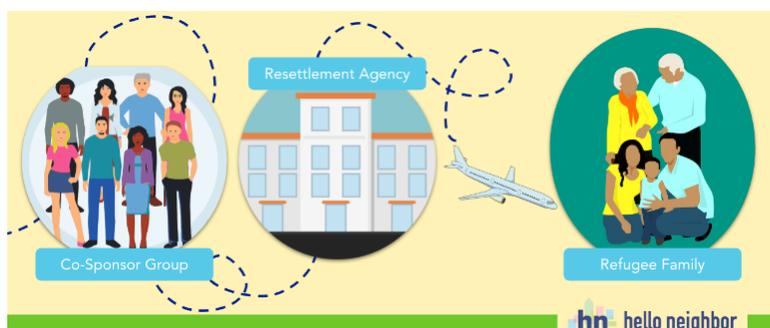
Walking With a Refugee Family



By Daniel Behrens, Ascension Missionary in Residence

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What is it like to be a refugee - to be forced from your homeland and placed in an unfamiliar part of the world? What do refugees need most in their first months in the United States? What kinds of help are not actually helpful for those starting over in a new place?



We as a church have an opportunity to begin answering these questions by forming a Community Co-Sponsorship team with Hello Neighbor.

Community Co-Sponsorship is an approach to refugee resettlement which has a long history in Canada but is just getting traction in the United States. Hello Neighbor is one of the agencies spearheading Community Co-Sponsorship in Pittsburgh. A Co-Sponsorship Team of between 5 and 15 people work hand-in-hand with a refugee resettlement agency to walk with one family in their first 6 to 12 months in Pittsburgh. At this point, the refugee family could be from Ukraine, Afghanistan, or even Myanmar or Congo. With training and guidance from Hello Neighbor, the team delegates responsibilities and cooperates with the family in several hands-on ways, which fall into five core areas: Pre-Arrival and Welcoming, Public Benefits & Services, Education & Literacy, Healthcare, and Community Orientation and Engagement. These tasks range from cooking a meal to helping children enroll in school to taking a family to a Pirates game.

I doubt many of you read that list of core areas and feel a rush of excitement. My family recently moved between states, and we are still begrudgingly slogging through the details of our own relatively minor “resettlement.” Why would I want to voluntarily dive into something as confusing as navigating the healthcare system?

I hear this annoying Bible verse in my head: “Little children, let us not love in word or talk but in deed and in truth” (1

John 3:18, ESV). Maybe no one enjoys navigating the healthcare system...least of all the refugees themselves! But it is the kind of thing you do when you love someone! We do difficult, messy, practical things when we value the wellbeing of another person.

To put it plainly, community co-sponsorship is an opportunity to put our convictions about showing hospitality to strangers into practice. Sometimes “Welcoming our Neighbors” and “Reaching the Nations” means assembling furniture from IKEA, taking someone to the grocery store, or just listening to a painful story and not knowing what to say. Just like helping with an English class, being a conversation partner, volunteering at the legal aid clinic Wednesday nights, or praying for internationals on Mondays at 4 pm, Community Co-Sponsorship is a sacrificial, practical way of loving our neighbors.

If we take this opportunity and form a Community Co-Sponsorship team with Hello Neighbor, as I sincerely hope we do, we will learn about what being a refugee is actually like, about what it takes to start over in a new place, and about what kind of help is not actually helpful.

We need a small team of committed, trained team members, and we also need a big group of people helping with in-kind donations and sharing their connections and areas of expertise. If you would like to be part of this effort, please talk with Charlie Chislaghi (charleschislaghi@mac.com) and me! Thank you!

Steadfast Through the Plague: Ascension's Meals for Those Outside our Walls

By Jonathan Sewall and Brian Janaszek

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The pandemic has disrupted many lives, and some of those most affected have been people who didn't have a home or adequate food access even before the Covid-19 virus arrived. Through it all,

Ascension has maintained the commitment to help feed our neighbors: we have not reduced the number of meals promised, and we have not missed providing any of those promised meals.

We continue to provide dinners for East End Cooperative Ministry (EECM), a social service agency founded by area churches over 50 years ago, and for Shepherd's Heart, an Anglican parish which has reached out to the streets and welcomed the homeless as members of its congregation for decades. We will continue providing meals even through the planned Parish Hall renovation, though a map may be needed to navigate the way to the kitchen.

Volunteers are coveted and welcome for this work, either cooking, or serving, or both. There are onions and peppers to chop, meat to be browned, salad to be tossed, and brownies to be baked. There are meals to be offered with open hands.

- Meal prep occurs in Ascension's kitchen on selected Sundays (see schedule below), either during or right after the 11:00 am service. With a team of 3-6 cooks, we can finish in less than two hours - though folks can leave any time they wish.
- EECM meals are served at the organization's building, 6140 Station Street in East Liberty at 5:30 pm on the Tuesday following the Sunday we cook.
- Shepherd's Heart meals are served in the evening after their church service on the same Sunday that we cook: volunteers arrive at Shepherd's Heart (13 Pride Street, Pittsburgh 15219), either in time to worship with them at 5:15 pm, or by 5:45 pm to serve the meal after the service; we are usually finished by about 7:00 pm.



This is an opportunity that individuals or community groups can take part in, a chance to serve the homeless and destitute of our city, face-to-face. Even the kids can be included. If you would like to help, please sign up. The remaining dates this year are listed below. We'll soon have more dates for 2023. If you have any questions or want to sign up, please send a text or email to Jonathan Sewall, 412-452-1935, jonathan.sewall@gmail.com.

- Sunday, September 25: Cook for EECM; Serve Tuesday 27th
- Sunday, October 16: Cook & Serve for Shepherd's Heart
- Tuesday, October 25: Servers needed for EECM meal
- Sunday, November 6: Cook & Serve for Shepherd's Heart
- Sunday, November 27: Cook for EECM; Serve Tuesday 29th





UNITED ADORATION

Making Sacred Space for Artists in the Church



By Elise Massa

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What would it look like if artists and the church labored together to illuminate God's active presence in every age and culture, evoking the world's imagination and desire for the Kingdom of God?

This is the question that I ask myself daily as a missionary with United Adoration, a non-profit organization that seeks to revitalize the creativity of the church by empowering artists across disciplines: visual arts, creative writing, song writing, dancing, and that only touches the surface.

Artists flourish when given space to create their art, and community in which to share their art. They also desire integration of their vocation with their discipleship in the church. United Adoration seeks to meet these needs by inviting artists to arts retreats, setting aside sacred space to connect with the Lord, the local artistic community, and their craft.

I began volunteering with United Adoration as the Pittsburgh local leader in 2019. Thirty-five Pittsburgh artists from various denominations came to our first Multi-Art Retreat! In 2021, I left my full-time job at Duquesne University to serve as a missionary with United Adoration as Northeast Regional Leader. I continue to lead retreats and arts gatherings while discipling local leaders in the Northeast region. This work complements my part-time role as Assistant Director of Music & Worship Arts.

I also serve with United Adoration internationally alongside Resound Worship. Resound is a collective that encourages grassroots songwriting in the UK. This past summer, I spent three weeks leading retreats and seminars for churches in Scotland and England. It was during this trip that I co-wrote the song "O Gracious Light" (Clark/Massa).

For community outreach, United Adoration partnered with Ascension to host the 2021 Summer Worship Arts Series as well as the St. Nicholas Market. Discipleship initiatives include *Axios*, an artist formation group which invites Ascension-based artists to pursue Christ-centered artistic formation through discussion and reading books on arts and theology. We have also welcomed several non-Christians to our art shares. These art shares will start up again this fall.

Artists have a formative role in forging the church's identity and its witness to God's redemptive story for all people and creation. Artists can do this when we are rooted in Christ and know that our value is not found in our work, but in *his* work in us as his beloved, his *masterpiece* (Ephesians 2:10, ISV). Your partnership allows this to happen. Thank you!





12 SONG CHALLENGE

Weds MINI RETREAT





SEPTEMBER '22

SONGS OF HOPE

Acoustic Soul: One Family of God

A Night of Unity in the Kingdom of God

By Liz Ealey

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In a city too often divided along lines of economics, race, and even church denominations, Pittsburgh Christians can miss the larger reality of the people of God. God's people are not merely Ascensionites, or even Anglicans, but everyone who calls upon Jesus as Lord and Savior. Recently Sarah Gilmer coordinated Church of the Ascension hosting Acoustic Soul, an event organized by Macedonia Church of Pittsburgh, a Black Baptist church in the Hill District. Acoustic Soul is an inter-church event run by BLAZE, Macedonia's Young Adult Ministry. Young adults aged 18-40 from several different denominations around Pittsburgh came together to enjoy the "first outside Acoustic Soul for a night of worship, learning, fun, and fellowship," said Jarah Doose, Acoustic Soul Team Lead.

Young people of all life stages were present: students, professionals, single people, married people, parents of young children, even soon to be engaged people (as one man stated from the stage to great enthusiasm). Black people, white people, wealthier people, and poorer people all worshipped God shoulder to shoulder. Some people

stood and danced, some people sat and swayed, while others worshipped in stillness. After attending, Bailey Nichols said, "It was beautiful to see the Body united together".

The message focused on John 15. The more Christians abide in Jesus, the more connected we are to the unity of the Trinity and thus to the unity of the family of God. After the message, people broke out into small groups for discussion. Asher Bernardi from Ascension had the opportunity to lead one of the groups. He said, "It felt like a real working out of the body of Christ: people of different backgrounds and traditions able to come together because of what we share, not what separates us." Asher said his group had a spirit of unity and a lively discussion about abiding in Christ as our true identity.

The evening was a glimpse of Heaven and an answer to the prayers for unity frequently included in our liturgy. We hope and pray to have the opportunity for Ascension to be a Light to the City of Pittsburgh through attending, hosting, and organizing events focusing on the unity of God's kingdom across racial, economic, and cultural divides. If you have ideas for future events or are interested in assisting with them, please reach out to Sarah Gilmer (sarahjgilmer@gmail.com) or Liz Ealey.

Kairos Prison Ministry: Bringing the Hope of Christ to those Behind Bars

By Ron Yadrick

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Jesus said, "... I was in prison and you visited me ..."
 Matthew 25:36-40

Kairos Prison Ministry offers an invitation to the incarcerated to enter a personal relationship with the living Christ. Kairos' mission is not only to advocate Christ through talks, meditations, music, and activities, but also to put transformed human lives into Christ's service, thereby transforming prison environments. Kairos is a lay led ministry recognized as an effective program that positively changes people's attitudes and behaviors. It involves an extensive Weekend, along with regular gatherings referred to as Continuing Ministry.

Kairos volunteers respect the dignity of each prisoner while modeling Christ's love. They practice 'Listen, Listen, Love, Love'. This theme reminds volunteers that Kairos is not about preaching and convincing. Instead, as volunteers we listen with our hearts - an Act of Love. We realize we are *all* broken, but with God's Grace, try to be the face, heart, and mind of Jesus in the prison ... living, laughing, and crying with the "residents."

Kairos has three programs:

1. Kairos Inside serves incarcerated men and women;
2. Kairos Outside reaches out to women impacted by incarceration, because families "do time" along with their incarcerated spouses, fathers, sons, relatives, and friends;
3. Kairos Torch encourages young men and women to share their life journey and change behavior through participation in a long-term mentoring process.

Kairos Inside is supported by the prayer and logistical help of the "Prayer and Sacrifice" team. Judy Yadrick and Jackie McKee from Ascension often joined the Prayer and Sacrifice team when their husbands, Ron and Scott, were on the inside team at State Correctional Institution Greene in Waynesburg, PA. We are anticipating our first weekend at this facility since November 2019 due to the Covid lockdown. We have begun intensive team training sessions.

For more information, to volunteer, or to donate financially, see the kairosprisonministry.org or kairospa.org websites, or contact Ron Yadrick. Ron will soon be asking the Ascension community for essential prayer vigil sign-up support for the upcoming K26 Kairos Weekend which takes place Thursday – Sunday from November 10-13. Thank you and God bless you!

Coalition for Christian Outreach

By Tyler Marwood

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Did you know that Ascension has been partnering with the CCO (Coalition for Christian Outreach) for more than 30 years. This long-term partnership has seen thousands of college students come through our doors and has been reaching one of the most strategic mission fields in the world—the university campus.

Today's college students are tomorrow's leaders - the people who will set the course of our lives in the future. They will go on to be doctors, government leaders, business owners, farmers, teachers, clergy members, and so on. And this generation, Generation Z, is like none other in American history.

These young women and men have experienced a whole new level of disruption through a pandemic, racial upheaval, and the waning influence of the Christian church. They have an increased distrust of institutions that further isolates them from meaningful connections with trusted adults. Even though they are more digitally connected than ever, they are far lonelier than previous generations and they do not see the Church as a viable option to turn to in times of difficulty.

Now more than ever, students are coming to campus without any direct exposure to the Gospel. This is a great challenge but also a great opportunity for all of us.

This generation is hungry for hope. It is a generation that is open, curious, and available in ways we could have never dreamed of decades ago. They need to hear the Gospel of Jesus Christ, they need to be connected to a local church, and they need a vision for how to live their lives to the glory of God.

This is where CCO staff step in to meet directly with students, share the Gospel, set up discipleship meetings, equip student leaders to multiply the Gospel, work in partnership with local churches, and share the profound vision that God cares about every area of their lives.

Even though you may not be able to go on campus yourself, you support the work of the CCO.

You show students hospitality on Sunday mornings, you bring meals or care packages during finals, you volunteer your time with Venite or Jubilate, you open your home to students, you mentor them one-on-one, and you welcome them into the life of the congregation, among many other things.

You also partner with the CCO by supporting our two full-time CCO staff members, Leah and Chris Kirkland, who reach out to undergraduate and graduate students at Carnegie Mellon University and the University of Pittsburgh.



In addition, you offer continued mission-budget support to four other CCO staff who make Church of the Ascension their home - Jonny Cagwin, Tyler Marwood, Shelly Riemersma, and Ginger Weeber.

Where do you fit in?

Would you pray for the CCO and for college students? Would you welcome them when you see them at church? They may seem intimidating, but they are excited to know you. Would you volunteer to bring a care package or get involved with Venite or Jubilate by talking with Chris or Leah?

Please know that you have something to offer. College students need trusted adults in their lives. They need to know the tangible love of Jesus Christ right here at Ascension, and you are part of this great mission!

Married and On Mission: Coalition for Christian Outreach

By Leah and Chris Kirkland

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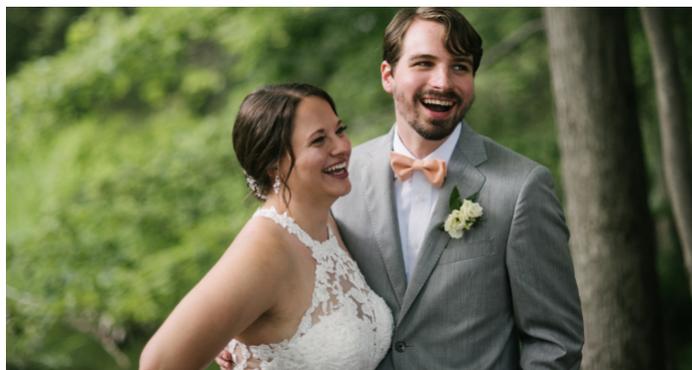
“He began to send them out two by two...” Mark 6:7

Leah had been working at Ascension, leading the campus ministry, Venite, since the summer of 2018. Starting with only a few college students she cultivated a growing, close-knit student community. During 2020, as Leah and Venite navigated the challenges of the pandemic, Chris was finishing up his final year at Trinity School for Ministry and looking to serve in campus ministry again.

Chris was drawn to the CCO and their model of ministering to college student in the context of the local church. So, upon hearing that there might be a CCO fellowship position opening at Ascension, he leaped at the opportunity to work there. After various conversations and interviews, where Leah and Chris connected over their shared love of campus ministry, college students, and a desire to see them transformed by the gospel, Leah offered Chris the fellowship, and he accepted.

Having come from impactful campus ministries ourselves, we knew firsthand the importance and goodness of faithful discipleship and a committed Christian community for someone setting out on their own for the first time. Moreover, we shared the vision of the college campus being a key mission field for gathering and raising up the future generation of leaders in the church - something we, and many other staff at Ascension, had personally experienced. So, we got to work.

We spent many hours at the church and in Oakland preparing and leading Bible studies, equipping and discipling student leaders, and welcoming new students with game nights and movies in the courtyard. We also took students outside of the city and the student bubble, going to pumpkin patches, practicing contemplative prayer on backpacking trips, and introducing students to Jesus and



the gospel for the first time at our Jubilee weekend retreat. In the process, we discovered that we worked well together well, and we even became close friends throughout our first year on mission together.

Once Chris began his longer-term position at Ascension, working with graduate students through Jubilate and the CMDA (Christian Medical and Dental Association), and now supervised by Alex Banfield Hicks, he asked Leah out on a date, and it was her turn to accept his offer. Over the last year, our ministries grew alongside our relationship, and we decided to become lifetime co-laborers for Christ when we got married this past summer on July 16th. We celebrated with family, friends, fellow ministers, and students. Our shared mission grew beyond our work, as we have been called in our marriage to reflect God’s own love and commitment to His people.

As we continue in our mission and begin our marriage, we’ve been delighted to launch into a new season of ministry and life together. From canoeing out into Lake Michigan to serving free tea to students on campus, we’ve already experienced great growth and flourishing. We hope these efforts will continue to draw students more fully into the knowledge and love of Christ, loving them as He first loved us. We’re eager to see what more God has in store for us: married and on mission.

InterVarsity Christian Fellowship/USA

By Dabney Robinson

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For everything there is a season, a time for every activity under heaven. [...] So I saw that there is nothing better for people than to be happy in their work. That is our lot in life. And no one can bring us back to see what happens after we die. – Ecclesiastes 3:1 and 22, NLT

I'm grateful to the writer of Ecclesiastes for these words that remind me of the seasons and the encouragement to live in the present moment. Often, we long for the future, for what's ahead. In my life outside of work, I beg for the seasons to change before they do (especially when winter seems to linger here in Pittsburgh!) In my work with InterVarsity as National Director of Ministry Partnership Development, my team longs to see staff reach full funding so they can minister to students on campus. But we know from experience that God is doing something in and through new staff in the time before going to campus.

Three to four times a year my team trains and coaches a group of new staff across the country in cohorts on Zoom every week for seven weeks. We start out with spiritual foundations and then we help these new staff develop a team of people who can pray and give alongside them. They are making connections with other staff, with potential ministry partners, and with God. One staff said this "God met me through Scripture. I loved being reminded of the God's abundance and the beauty of Nehemiah's leadership."

This fall, about 4 million first year students have arrived on campuses across the U.S. This is the most non-religious and unchurched student generation yet. And more students than ever are leaving the church (or have already left) even if they have been involved as kids. About 20% of new students this fall are "nothing in particular" spiritually, though data shows that they are the most open to change. As always, there's a deep need for our work, but perhaps more than ever with this generation.

The good news is that we are sending new staff to many campuses fully resourced for the ministry to begin this fall! That means staff who are equipped and eager to minister to students and faculty are arriving just in time to welcome these new students. You are already a part of that work through Ascension's partnership with InterVarsity, so THANK YOU!



InterVarsity Faculty Ministry

By Robin Capcara

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I work with university faculty at Carnegie Mellon, Pitt, and Duquesne universities through InterVarsity Christian Fellowship Faculty Ministry. InterVarsity's vision is "planting and growing witnessing communities of faculty committed to spiritual formation, community, evangelism and service, and the integration of faith, learning, and practice."

I disciple Christian faculty at the universities through on-line prayer meetings, in person and hybrid book groups and Bible studies, one-on-one chats, and day-long retreats and seminars. I try to help them meet and form meaningful community with other believing faculty at their schools.

Here's what two professors at Duquesne University had to say about my work:

"Robin's ministry walks with you each step of the way as a faculty member (and in my case, as a new faculty member!). She has mentored me, prayed for me, guided me, and connected me with other Christian colleagues for the past 5 years. This type of ministry is essential for Christians working in academia!"
C. Daley, School of Music

"The Pittsburgh Faculty Ministry, represented by Robin so well, has been a blessing to me for over a decade. This Ministry has facilitated relationships that are grounded in faith but extend to professional productivity and impact the lives of students and others in our careers. This Ministry and Robin helped to shine a light on the 'big picture' of my professional aspirations and interactions." Heather Rusiewicz, Speech-Language Pathology

Sometimes we think that "missions" must be conducted overseas to reach the lost, but the late missionary bishop, Leslie Newbigin, described our situation in the modern West quite well when he noted that:

"... traditional [mission] sending agencies have...failed to recognize that the most urgent contemporary mission field is to be found in their own... heartlands, and the most aggressive paganism with which they have to engage is the ideology that now controls the 'developed' world."

Because that is the case, I also seek out non-believing faculty members who may be interested in dialoguing about the Christian faith. Sadly, the current divisions in our society have made Christians and Christianity seem narrow-minded and mean-spirited to many non-believers. I try to find ways to share the real Jesus with them and separate Him from cultural and media stereotypes. I also train Christian faculty to share their faith with their non-believing colleagues. Please pray for Christian faculty members to be both bold and loving in their interactions with students and colleagues.



 **InterVarsity**
GRADUATE & FACULTY MINISTRIES

Young Life

By J.B. Ward

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Young Life is an international ministry with the mission of “introducing adolescents to Jesus Christ and helping them grow in their faith.” Pittsburgh Young Life started in 1953 and now has 25 staff and over 100 volunteers in 35 ministries including middle school, high school and college-age students, students with disabilities and teen moms. We accomplish our mission through weekly Bible studies (Campaigners), weekly outreach meetings (Club) and summer & weekend adventure camp experiences at our resort-style camps.

The hallmark of Young Life is what we call “contact work” - going to where kids are, learning their names, praying for them, building bridges of friendship - all with the hope of earning the right to share the good news of Jesus Christ with them. We follow Jesus’ example in that he “became flesh and dwelt among us” (John 1:14). This year, Young Life leaders in Pittsburgh will spend countless hours with teenagers on their turf - at sporting events, grabbing dinner or coffee, hanging at the school campus. They do this with the desire to share Christ with lost and hurting kids, especially those who have never heard the gospel message before. We believe that every kid, regardless of race, ability, or socioeconomic status, has the right to hear about a God who loves them and sent his Son for them. We invite kids to respond to a personal invitation to a relationship with God and walk alongside them regardless of their response. Our hope is that as kids hear the gospel, their lives will be transformed, and they will find their home in the local church.

A picture of this transformed life is one of our developing leaders, Amir. Amir was a sophomore when he met Sly Williams, the East End Director of Young Life. Amir noticed Sly’s genuine interest in him and he could tell there was something different about Sly. After a hard season including being arrested and on probation, Amir decided to join Sly at Campaigner Weekend (a local discipleship experience) where he heard about Jesus’ love for him and desire to be in a personal relationship with Him. Amir gave his life to Christ that weekend, dove headfirst into his local campaigners group, served for a month of his summer at Young Life camp where he shared his story, and has a desire to step into a leadership role with Young Life during college. Amir’s story is one picture of the many lives being transformed by the Lord through Young Life.



Hineni House

By Renée Smith

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A Christian community devoted to worship and prayer,
serving those serving God in cross-cultural and local settings.

Worship in Beauty / Prayer in Action / Serving Those Serving God

Renée and Ardath Smith returned to Pittsburgh in 2018. Their decades of ministry with and among cross-cultural workers and church leaders continue at Hineni House along with another community member.

Hineni House welcomes cross-cultural workers and others to join them in encountering the Lord at their U.S. base in Western Pennsylvania through worship in community (Morning & Evening Prayer), solitude with God, creative prayer, and access to nature. We invite them to come and meet with the Master so that they may continue their journeys in deeper communion with Jesus, renewed to extend God's love to the world. Spiritual direction, prayer mentoring, deep healing prayer, spiritual formation training, and retreats are on offer.

Here is one person's response to time at the House:

"In my time at the Hineni House, I wanted to bring to God my heartaches and disappointments about leading my congregation during the Covid pandemic. I had felt like a failure as a leader because the church had lost so many members and struggled to stay civil with itself. On top of this, I had not coped well, gaining weight, and experiencing significant depression. At the house, I spent time in healing prayer with the team, and I discovered God didn't want to talk about Covid. Instead, he wanted to talk about my past and bring forward several deep and hidden wounds. I walked away with three direct visions of God's love that applied to my family, my childhood, and my body. Since I returned to the pulpit, I have seen a remarkable turnaround in myself and in my congregation. I am grateful for my time at Hineni House, and I encourage others to seek them out as a resource for prayer and healing after a difficult season of ministry."

A busy fall is unfolding. On top of the normal spiritual direction and deep healing prayer appointments that all three women provide... Renée and Ardath helped host a pre-conference called "Under the Acacia Tree" for those involved in missionary care at the New Wineskins Missions Conference. Ardath departs for Spain in October as a faculty member for Deepen – a spiritual companionship / direction training program for cross-cultural workers. Our third member heads to Singapore for work and family re-connection.

The Nations of the World are Knocking on Ascension's Doors

By Jen Hemphill

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Internationals hear about the English as a Second Language (ESL) classes at Ascension from flyers hanging on poles, at schools and in cafes, from friends, from the internet, and from the sign standing on the sidewalk in front of the church. For people who have only lived in the U.S. anywhere from a few months to a few years, understanding and speaking English well is extremely important. In order to make friends, do their schoolwork, buy food at the grocery store, find good jobs, and better assimilate into life in the United States, they must learn English. But when students walk through the glass doors of the church, they find that they receive much more than just help learning to speak better English.

ESL classes are only a part of the International Ministry at Church of the Ascension. People who come to take classes also find themselves plugged into a community that surrounds and assists them in more ways than they could have imagined. Some students receive help writing their resumes and interviewing for a job and find employment. Some students who are feeling lonely and isolated find friends and connection. A stay-at-home mom during the Covid-19 shutdown found community through the ESL program. Teachers encouraged another student to use her English more which helped her confidence in making friends. Some students learn about Jesus in one of the Bible studies offered each week; several over the summer were



baptized into the church. Some students and their families eventually become U.S. citizens. Students also meet other people, who, like themselves, are learning how to live in a new place and speak a new language.

The students aren't the only ones who find themselves benefiting from this program. Those who volunteer their time are blessed by the new relationships they build with the English learners too. Volunteers from Ascension help in many ways: attending and driving for field trips, offering bible studies, discipling individuals, being a conversation partner, teaching a class, donating snacks, or praying with the International Ministry prayer group on zoom once a week. Building relationships is what makes the International Ministry at Ascension so successful.

And it is booming. We have heard it from the pulpit on Sundays, the world is coming to Pittsburgh and is knocking on Ascension's doors. According to LuAnn P., more than eighty brand new students have been added to the program since this June. Over 200 people from 39 different countries are involved in this ministry in some way. Here is an opportunity to minister to the nations right at our doorstep and more volunteers are needed.

[Jesus] said to His disciples, "The harvest is plentiful, but the workers are few. Therefore beseech the Lord of the harvest to send out workers into His harvest." Matthew 9:37-38

To sign up as a volunteer or for more information, please contact LuAnn (pittsburghenglish4u@gmail.com) or Daniel Behrens in the Refugee Ministry (danielbehrens@sams-usa.org).

*Our photos are of two immigrant families welcomed into our international ministry, one from Ukraine and one from Afghanistan.

A Year of Discernment

By Nate Twichell

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More years ago than I would like to admit, I climbed my first big mountain, Mt. Rainier. On the first day of the climb, we got up to a little over 10,000 feet, and made camp. We woke at 1:00 am to make a long, 15-hour push to the top and then back down. At one point in the pre-dawn hours, I found myself ascending a steep spine of rock and snow, about three-feet wide, with 1000's of feet of emptiness on either side. When I peered over each edge, my headlamp beam was swallowed by the void. I didn't know what was ahead, but I could only go up!

In the spring of 2016, Erika and I launched Agape Year, a missional gap year for recent high school graduates. We had been married for three years, had a two-year-old son, and a deep desire to see connections built between Anglicans in the US and Anglicans in the majority world. We've had the great pleasure of walking with 18-year-olds as they leave home for the first time, ask big questions, wrestle with God, and see how His love is big enough to handle all of that. Our Fellows have participated in the Ascension International ministry and CAYG, they've rehabbed homes around Pittsburgh, visited with the homeless under city bridges, visited ACNA churches all over the US, and traveled to Thailand and Israel. During that, we grew from a family of three to six!



This fall marked the first time in five years that we didn't welcome Fellows into our home over the Labor Day weekend. Erika and I have an expanded role with SAMS, the Society of Anglican Missionaries and Senders, as the interim co-directors for Bridger Missionary Internships. Much of what we have done with young adults will be used in this new role as we recruit, mentor, and walk alongside short-term missionaries of all ages. SAMS Bridgers spend anywhere from two weeks to two years serving alongside other SAMS missionaries and the global church. Our role sees us preparing them to launch, providing spiritual direction while they are on the field, and assisting in their debrief upon their return. We are very excited and grateful for this opportunity.

This is also a year of discernment for our family. Erika and I have long desired to serve overseas fulltime, but for several reasons, the doors never quite opened for that. We feel a deep desire to be with the church where it is struggling, growing, and suffering. These are the places where we feel our hearts come alive. This year is an opportunity for us to discern if that is what God has for us and for our family. Can you pray for us? Can you pray that God would give us the faith to follow where He leads, no matter the challenge? This feels like being on that narrow spine of rock and snow, with a deep expanse of unknown all around us. Thanks for being our community as we listen and follow into the unknown.

Do Justice, Love Compassion, and Walk Humbly with Your God

By Jewel Anita Hendrix

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This year marks ten years in Tauranga, New Zealand with Reconciled World. This work has been quite a change and refocus from before and yet a continuation of the path God has had me on. The focus of my ministry is justice and compassion, tied together through knowing God's heart and truth.

Reconciled World's work in various nations disciples churches wholistically to bring transformation. I support Reconciled World through prayer – praying myself, and organizing, encouraging, and teaching prayer for the rest of the organization. Thanks to Covid, I have been doing online teaching of what we call "Justice Prayer." This is a way to pray through large issues (trafficking, domestic violence, fatalism, etc.) and still have hope. We dig into God's truths which counteract underlying foundational ideas that allow injustices to take root. Those truths become our basis for intercession.

Through another organization, Youth with a Mission, I lead the Ignite 6:8 ministry. From Micah 6:8, "What is required of you, but to do justice, love compassion, and walk humbly with your God," the mission is to ignite compassion, restore justice and transform communities. We empower churches and participants to engage in areas of justice and compassion to see transformation in their families, communities, and nations.

Through Ignite 6:8, I am involved at varying levels with many different community ministries and churches:

- Streethelp, a ministry for people who are sleeping in the streets or out in the nightlife
- Pregnancy Choice, an organization that helps women with an unexpected pregnancy
- Koha Shop, a secondhand shop where you set your own price
- Mentoring of young people aged 9 - 19 through different organizations
- Speaking and teaching at different churches, and schools
- Leading local prayer walks each week and focus on one topic each month for Justice Prayer and a training Justice Night

Last year, Ignite 6:8 developed a tourist lodge called Hoatu Kaimua, which runs on a "business in missions" model, to allow space for different educational programs we wish to facilitate. It holds 38 people and is in the native bush of New Zealand, full of waterfalls, glow worms, and stunning beauty. Quite an undertaking for us!

There is lots going on, but it has been so encouraging to see all that God does with it. With Streethelp, we've had people give their lives to Jesus each of the last three times we've been out. The Koha Shop has been a blessing to many, while becoming a place where our clients say they "can find life." Hoatu Kaimua is hosting the local Women's Refuge for two "Wellness Weekends" before the end of this year. And so many people are more confident to pray about the "big ugly issues" of our world. It all works together for bringing God's kingdom on earth today.



Bogotá! The Ministry of David and Debbie Kornfield

By Debbie Kornfield

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Dave and Debbie both grew up in Latin America, the children of missionaries in Bolivia and Guatemala. After twenty years in Brazil with OCI, they serve pastors across Latin America from their home base in Pittsburgh, working with more than fifty denominations.

On October 20, pastors of pastors will gather together in Bogotá from ten countries of Latin America. It's been three years since we were together for this annual retreat, a rich experience of mutual encouragement. We look forward to the hugs! Wait, you said "pastors of pastors"? Do pastors themselves need pastoral care and support in growing as disciples of Jesus?

Yes! We care for pastors in Latin America and Brazil, but pastors and their families are in crisis worldwide. This was true even before Covid killed hundreds of pastors in every country of Latin America as they served without timely access to vaccines. Imagine the impact on their families and congregations. Many churches closed or still struggle to survive. Political upheaval and polarization, economic stress, and emigration (especially from Venezuela) have hurt churches as well.



How has God led us to address this complex reality? Pre-pandemic, we traveled. A lot! As Covid closed the doors to in-person ministry among pastors, we pivoted to intensive online engagement. Dave spends hours each day on Zoom, WhatsApp, and email, flipping between Spanish and Portuguese. We've seen God deeply bless these efforts.

Can you give some examples? Sure!

- Events held online instead of in person in various countries have reached hundreds of pastors across Latin America, Spain, and Portugal, without the costs of travel, housing, and food.
- Dave started "microgroups" for targeted discipling of key leaders, who do the same with pastors in their cities and countries. Studies translated from Portuguese into Spanish from Dave's Discipleship Bible prompt lifegiving

- conversations. We anticipate publication of the Discipleship Bible in Spanish next August.
- Debbie leads a similar microgroup on Monday evenings for leaders' wives.
- Monthly webinars offer resources to pastors on pertinent topics, while the developing School of Discipleship takes them deeper. Creating videos for the school preserves Dave's deep reservoir of practical teachings. Soon they'll be easily accessible through websites in both Spanish and Portuguese.

God has opened doors as well through the World Evangelical Alliance's 2020 launch of the "Decade of Disciple Making" (DoDM). Venezuela and Brazil developed DoDM projects right away, and this year six more Latin American countries are doing so, trailblazing DoDM as a model for the rest of WEA's world. Dave is guiding the leaders of these eight countries in this fledgling but exciting work.

Finally, a new "Multiplying Grace" project offers part-time financial help for proven leaders and their families. This year we've supported five pastors - in Venezuela, Colombia (2), Paraguay, and Ecuador. We want to expand this number in 2023. Are you interested in engaging? Let us know!

How can we track with you regularly? Email Debra to sign up for our monthly newsletter. And each day, October 20-25, please pray for our retreat in Colombia. Thanks!!

Do you enjoy a good story? Is your book club looking for its next read?

Debbie Kornfield has also published four books in her 20 years of missionary service. Debbie's newest novel, *Horse Thief 1898*, begins in rural southern Ireland with Cally and Teddy whose father is a farmer and whose mother dies in childbirth. Sixty-five miles and a world of experience away, near Waterford, piano prodigy Charlie grows up in the mansion built by his grandfather, one of the wealthiest merchants in Ireland. The two families meet in a tragedy at sea which leaves Cally and Teddy orphans. Now in America, Cally and Teddy join a gang of street boys in Albany and then work as hoggees on the Erie Canal. Will Charlie and his family find them again? How will Charlie deal with the loneliness that has haunted him since childhood?

Judy Yadrick says: "I was intrigued by all the unexpected twists and turns. Through the many heartaches and struggles there was such sweet redemption in the kindness and love of family and of total strangers." Meg Sateia comments: "Dramatic and tragic but balanced with compassionate character development and whimsical details."

A **Discussion Guide** is included for use by book clubs. Though the main characters are children in *Horse Thief 1898*, the book is written for older teens and adults. Some of Cally, Teddy, and Charlie's experiences, though carefully related, are too intense for younger kids (as they are for the characters in the book). Book Two of the Cally and Charlie Series, *Treasure Hunt 1904*, will be out in time for Christmas. Early reader Dave Liefer says he likes Book Two "even better than *Horse Thief 1898*."

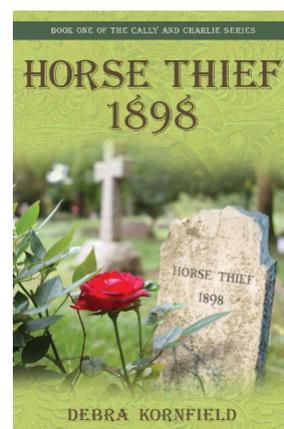
You're invited to a Table Wine and Read of *Horse Thief 1898* in association with United Adoration

Saturday, Oct 29, 6:00-8:30 pm, 1717 Morningside Ave. Pittsburgh

Email Debbie or Elise Massa (elise.massa@ascensionpittsburgh.org) to register



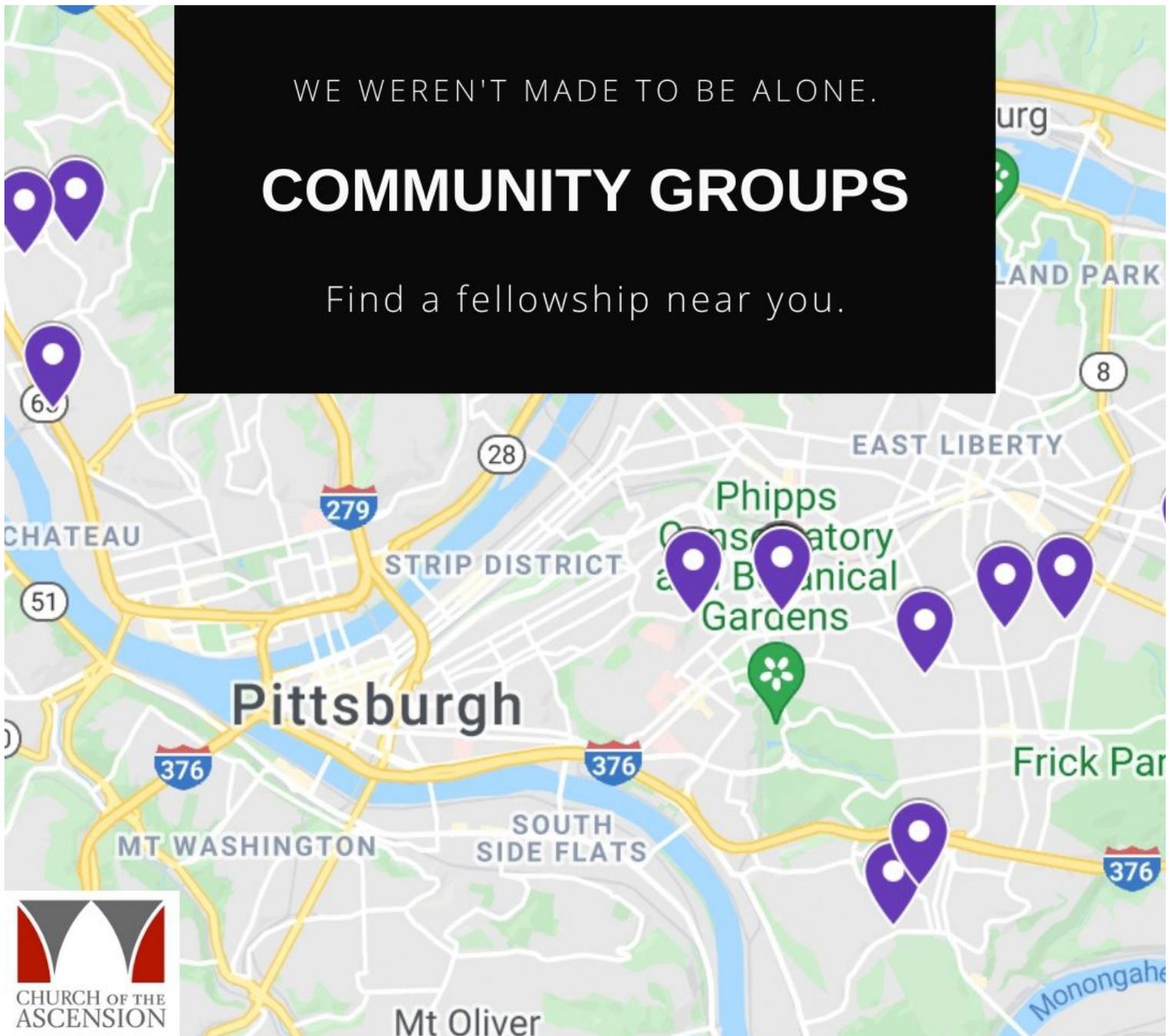
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A Worshipping Community;
Equipping God's People; Sharing
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