

The Ascent

SUMMER 2023

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The Season of Pentecost

Rector's Summer Reading



By Jonathan Millard, Rector

jonathan.millard@ascensionpittsburgh.org

As I continue on my sabbatical, I have many books waiting for me on my Kindle. I am glad to share with you the titles of three of those for this year's summer reading recommendations. Let me add one caveat: I haven't read any of these books, so I cannot speak to how good they are... I invite you to join me in reading the following:

A Burning In My Bones: The Authorized Biography of Eugene H. Peterson—Winn Collier, WaterBrook (2021)

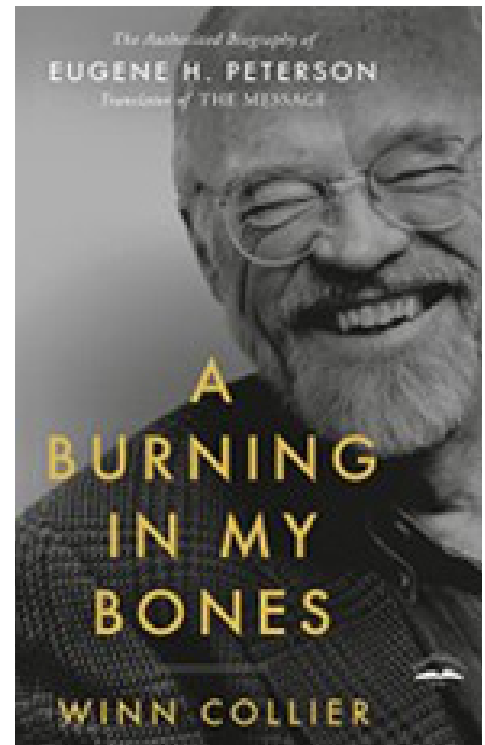
I am looking forward to reading this biography. I am a long-time fan of the late Eugene Peterson and have found his writings to be illuminating, challenging, and so often a breath of fresh air. During a previous sabbatical, in 2010, I had the great privilege of meeting with Eugene Peterson at his home in Montana. I will be forever grateful for my time with him. He truly is one of my "heroes" of the faith.

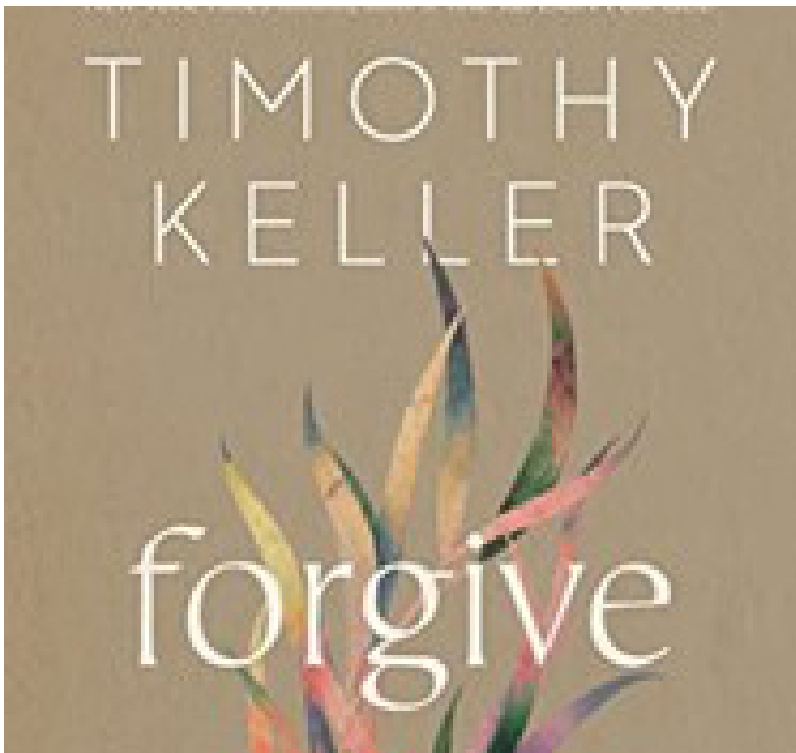
Reading for the Love of God: How to Read as a Spiritual Practice—Jessica Hooten Wilson, Brazos Press (2023)

In the opening chapter, Jessica Wilson, asks: "What kind of reader are you? That was enough to get my attention. I'm looking forward to exploring what she means by a "spirituality of reading" as well as being introduced to some authors and titles that I will probably want to explore further.

As Tish Harrison Warren writes:

"Hooten Wilson makes the case for reading as a means of transformation into Christlikeness. Her own meditations on the theology, spirituality, and ethics of reading are punctuated with studies of great Christian readers, male and female, down through the ages, which adds a rich layer of historical insight to her own brilliant reflections. This book is profound and practical at once. As St. Augustine would say, tolle lege (take and read)!"





Forgive: Why Should I and How Can I?— **Timothy Keller, Viking (2022)**

I know that forgiveness is at the heart of the Gospel. I believe in it, I preach it, and I try (and struggle) to practice it. I also know that just as there is no such thing as “cheap grace” neither is there “cheap forgiveness.” How does forgiveness fit in the face of abuse? I wrestle with wanting to seek justice, call out wrongdoing, and see that people are held accountable. I am hoping Keller will help me think about these challenges in a new way.

In recent years I have also been deeply saddened by some people’s contentedness not to forgive and have seen the terrible damage that unforgiveness brings—not least to the person refusing to forgive.

Keller writes:

“We live in a world where canceling, ghosting, and insults are the norm. You will experience snubs on a regular basis and in some cases will experience real injustice. How are you going to keep it all from turning you into a wrath controlled by the past? You must forgive and forgive well.”

I’m looking forward to reading about how I can “forgive well.” I hope that you will find this selection engaging and enriching.

Editor’s note: Tim Keller died of pancreatic cancer on May 19, 2023 at the age of 72. Here is a brief statement from his son Michael on behalf of the entire family: Timothy J. Keller, husband, father, grandfather, mentor, friend, pastor, and scholar died this morning at home. Dad waited until he was alone with Mom. She kissed him on the forehead, and he breathed his last breath. We take comfort in some of his last words, “There is no downside for me leaving, not in the slightest.” See you soon, Dad.

A Fond Farewell from the Massas



By Chris Massa, Director of Music and Worship Arts
chris.massa@ascensionpittsburgh.org

In the summer of 2022, Elise went to England to attend a retreat hosted by Resound Worship, a group of UK-based songwriters and worship leaders she had connected with during the pandemic. Caleb and I met her in London after about a week, and when she picked us up at the airport, it was immediately apparent that something was different, that she was in her element. I asked her how the trip had been, and what she said would change the course of the next several months, and of our lives: “It’s been amazing. We should move here.”

Two things you should know: First, ever since I visited London and Dublin as a high schooler, I’ve dreamed of living in England. For reasons I can’t quite put into words, I’ve never been anywhere that has felt so much like home. Second, I’ve long considered myself a composer first and a church musician second. It’s when I’m writing music and collaborating with other artists, particularly those outside the church, that I feel that I am the closest to who God has made me to be. It is in those moments that, to paraphrase Eric Liddell in *Chariots of Fire*, I feel God’s pleasure.

So, it may not come as a huge surprise that, when Elise threw out the idea of moving to England, I didn’t rule it out as an impossibility. Instead of “no,” I started thinking of “how,” and I immediately thought of going back to school. I have a bachelor’s degree in music composition, but my previous attempts at grad school had all ended in disappointment and frustration - and that was almost 20 years ago. Did I have what it takes to go back to school? And was I willing to put myself out there to find out?

I began exploring the websites of UK-based universities, listening to music by composition faculty members, and reaching out to professors whose music I resonated with. Some never got back to me, while others were incredibly helpful—one professor was instrumental in helping me put together a research proposal—but even when they were encouraging, they often turned out to be dead ends. By the early months of 2023, there was only one school that was a possibility, although it seemed unlikely: Durham University.

It was the Monday before Palm Sunday that I received an email from Durham



saying that I had been accepted to their Ph.D. program. I can only compare the feeling to the moment when Elise and I found out that she was pregnant. We were both excited—it was what we had been hoping and praying for—but we also both knew that our lives were about to change. I called Fr. Jonathan the next day and relayed the news to him, and the days and weeks that followed were a process of gradually telling more people what was happening, and letting the ramifications of it sink in.

That, in so many words, is the backstory. Here is where things currently stand:

I will be pursuing a Ph.D. in music composition, and it's a full-time three-year-long program. My specific area of study will be passion oratorios—musical settings of the last days of Jesus' earthly ministry—with one of my final projects being the writing and performing of a new contribution to the genre. (As an aside, Charles Wood's setting of the St. Mark Passion, which the Ascension choir sang at this year's Good Friday service, was a piece that I first became aware of in the process of writing my research proposal.) I will have two advisors: one who is head of the composition department, the other who is part of the musicology department and Co-Director of the International Network for Music Theology. At the risk of stating the obvious, this is an incredibly good fit for me and my compositional interests. While I have not received any scholarships at this point, I am in the process of seeking out loans and grants to ease the financial burden.

Elise will be able to work while I am a student, and while she may seek out additional employment, her primary work will be continuing her mission work with United Adoration, where she leads arts retreats and seeks to foster and encourage artists in the church. (If you'd like to talk to her about being a supporter of her work, believe me, this is a great time to do so.) She will also be continuing to write with Resound Worship, particularly with Andy Clark, who has been her co-writer on "All the

Earth Was Waiting," "O Gracious Light," and many other songs.

Caleb will, of course, be attending primary school in Durham, although we don't know what school yet. Given his outgoing and bubbly personality, Elise and I are confident he'll have no trouble making new friends. What is more, he is young enough that he will most likely pick up a British accent—and we're fine with this.

Our house in Morningside will likely be going on the market in early June. In the meantime, we are donating and selling many of our goods and possessions. Our goal is to move to England with as little as possible, partially to cut down on moving costs, and partially because our new home will be significantly smaller than our current one. That's right! We've already found a place to live! It's a charming two-bedroom place that is rented out by one of Elise's friends, Chris Juby, who visited Pittsburgh with Resound Worship a few months ago—and it's just a 20-minute walk from the university.

And one more thing, just so there's no confusion... We will miss you all terribly. Serving and worshiping at Church of the Ascension have been among the great joys of our lives, and by moving from Pittsburgh, we are leaving our jobs, our friends, and our faith community, all of which revolve around Ascension. The decision to leave is not one that we have taken lightly, and yet, if we didn't think it was the right thing to do, we wouldn't be doing it. We take solace in knowing that, while we are leaving behind so much that we love and care about, we are stepping out in obedience to who God has made us to be. Far from walking away from our callings, we are exploring another facet of those callings, and we take great joy in knowing that you are praying for us, and that we will be able to pick up where we left off when we return, whether it's long-term or for a visit. Thank you for everything you have meant to us as musicians, as artists, as ministers, and as a family. We love you, and we'll see you soon.

Youth Ministry Leadership Transition

Dear Church Family,

I am writing to let you know that the Rev. Alex Banfield Hicks has accepted a new position as the Director of Recruitment and Church relations at Trinity School for Ministry (TSM) in Ambridge, PA. He will begin serving in this new role in September 2023. Alex, Jane, Lydia, John Victor, and Beatrix will continue to worship at Ascension and enjoy life among us in Pittsburgh.

Alex has been such a gift to our church family over these last eight years. By God's grace, Alex's ministry to middle and high schoolers through the Church of Ascension Youth Group (CAYG) has shaped the lives and faith of many of our youth. In a time when it's so hard for so many reasons to be in middle or high school, CAYG has offered a stable and vibrant space to make friends, to have fun, and to grow in faith, hope, and love. I praise the Lord for that.

Alex is gifted in so many ways but one of his greatest strengths is his ability to recruit volunteers, grow teams, and develop systems. Our church has benefited from this tremendously. Alex has worked tirelessly to activate the church to serve our youth. Alex is excited to use his strategic and recruiting gifts in a new context at TSM as he serves the wider church by gathering and equipping ministry leaders from across the country and around the world.

While this transition is very hard, I know that our loss is the Church's gain. King Jesus rules over his kingdom and he moves us where he wills. Change is so often hard, but God is good and he always provides for his beloved children. I have every confidence that God will provide for us in this. He already is.

Forming the faith of our youth has been a priority of Ascension for many, many years. I want to reassure you that it will continue to be a priority. We remain committed to shepherding our youth through the middle and high school years. We remain committed to providing a space where they can form a radical and resilient faith in Jesus. We remain committed to hiring another gifted woman or man to lead CAYG in the next season of our life together.



In all likelihood, it will take some time to find a long-term successor to Alex. That said, I am delighted to announce that the Rev. Josh Bennett has agreed to serve as the Interim Director for two years.

Josh has many years of experience leading Youth Ministry. He is already quite involved with CAYG, especially with Youth Confirmation and the Niagara Falls service trip this summer. You may recall that Josh agreed to serve as Ascension's Contemporary Worship Music Coordinator as we conduct a search for the next Director of Worship Arts. Josh will still help coordinate worship but the majority of his work time will be devoted to CAYG.

Josh will begin as the Interim Director of CAYG in July. This will allow him to overlap with Alex for two months to ensure that the hand off is as smooth as it can be. Please join me in praying for this significant transition.

It is worth pointing out the CAYG Summer Series is called "Do Not Worry," inspired by the Sermon on the Mount (Matt 5-7). It's almost as if the Lord knew what we needed before we did. In fact, he always does. Praise the Lord.

With you in Christ,
Kevin+



By Alex Banfield Hicks, Director of Youth and College Ministry
alex.banfieldhicks@ascensionpittsburgh.org

What do you worry about?

This summer will see a sweet six-week series at youth group looking at how the Bible addresses our tendency to worry! The summer can be a welcome break from the stresses and demands of school and is a great time to slow down and pay attention to Jesus before facing the demanding transitions that the fall always brings.

In June, our Middle School and High School youth groups look forward to welcoming those who will be starting Middle School in August. We will also be walking with those preparing to move to a new High School. It strikes me that this is a great time to listen to Jesus who said, 'Do not worry', who directed us to look up and consider God's provision for the birds of the air, and who calls us instead to 'Seek first His Kingdom and his Righteousness.'

The first course of the Doctor of Ministry degree that I began at Trinity School for Ministry in January required that I write a biblical theology around the themes of anxiety, and the prayers and the desires of the heart. I am looking forward to turning what I learned into a series of youth group lessons.

Would you be interested in joining us? The youth group summer series can be a great opportunity to find out if serving in youth ministry is for you! You may well find it life-giving, encouraging, amusing and good for you as you wrestle with your own worries. Please contact me for more information.

Music & Worship Arts

Music Ministry Team

We are pleased that a team of 6 people has come together to bridge the gap in Ascension's Music Ministry upon the Massa's departure to Durham, England. The last official Sunday for Chris, Elise and Caleb will be August 13. After that time, you will see some familiar faces take a more prominent role in this core ministry at Ascension. We are pleased to welcome them all on board! They will begin their new responsibilities in July to overlap for a few weeks with Chris and Elise.



Gary Harger

Principal Organist and
Traditional Worship
Music Coordinator



Jennifer Miller

Choir Director



Heidi Mayhew

Choir Accompanist



Josh Bennett

Contemporary Worship
Music Coordinator



Scott Bowles

Principal Pianist for
Contemporary Music



Wes Williams

Music Tech

Welcome to Deacon Wes Williams!

We are pleased to announce that Wes Williams, a young man who has called Ascension home for many years and was ordained to the diaconate in early June, will come onto Ascension staff as a Curate.

In the Lent Ascent, our rector, Jonathan Millard, announced the beginning of a new Curacy program which is largely funded by a \$250,000 *Made to Flourish* start-up grant. So, what is a Curacy and what is a Curate? One of the core ministries of *Made to Flourish* is the establishment of Pastoral Residencies. They describe it this way:

“Just as teaching hospitals provide real-life experience for young, talented doctors, a Pastoral Residency provides an irreplaceable learning laboratory for seminary graduates to grow in leadership, preaching, administration, and godly character.”

At Ascension, we will be calling our Pastoral Residents, “Curates”. *Curate* is a word often used in Anglican churches to describe a newly ordained member of the clergy who is in training. The word historically has been descriptive of a person who is entrusted with the care or “cure” of souls.

As part of our application for the *Made to Flourish* grant, our Senior Warden, Ginger Weeber, wrote:

“In a culture where fewer and fewer people grow up in the Church, and many (60% or more) who do grow up in the Church leave after high school, I believe deeply in the importance of raising up young leaders to reach the next generation. The church leadership and staff are committed, gifted, experienced people with deep faith, who are well able to carry out this Curacy Program. The congregation has a high degree of theological and biblical equipping, with a day-to-day living out of their faith in their work, family, and communities. We recognize our church is situated in such a way and in such a place that we can have an impact on the culture around us: universities, cultural institutions, hospitals, the tech industry, and more. We are called to prepare the next generation to reach people and influence institutions for the sake of Christ and His Kingdom.”

We welcome Deacon Wes as a Curate! He will have a variety of responsibilities from prayer ministry to Sunday worship scheduling, youth ministry, as well as a role in music ministry. Wes will marry Meg Scanlon in August, so many changes in his life are afoot. Please keep Wes (and Meg!) in your prayers in the months ahead.



We Welcome Jess Bennett to a New Role!

As many of you know, Ascension is taking some fallow time from its partnership with the CCO (Coalition for Christian Outreach) to evaluate college and young adult ministry and to consider pathways forward in the future. We said goodbye to Leah and Chris Kirkland as they ended their time as full-time campus ministers on staff with us in May, but that does not mean ministry to college students at Ascension will cease to exist in the meantime!

Over this summer and coming year, Jess is delighted for the adventure of coming alongside our current college-age young adults to continue to foster discipleship and belonging here at Ascension. The plan is to keep meeting on Wednesday nights to study the Scriptures together, as well as gather outside the church walls regularly to play, eat, do life together, and connect with others in our congregation and community. If you're in the 18—22-year-old range, you are invited to join us! Ask Jess for more details.

On the other hand, if you're not in that age range but have an interest in investing in college-age young adults, please reach out as well. If you haven't got the time or margin to be involved physically, we would greatly appreciate your prayers for this ministry and our season of discernment! During all of this, our confidence has not wavered that the Lord deeply loves the young adults among us and in these Oakland campuses, and we need your prayers as we discern how to best live out our role in His work.



Cultivating Small Things



By Daniel Behrens, Ascension Missionary in Residence

behrensdg1@gmail.com

In Winter 2022, as I was beginning to learn about the refugee ministry in Pittsburgh, I had coffee with an Ascension parishioner who was volunteering with one of the local resettlement agencies. This conversation turned out to be formative for me. He shared with me, “When I think about the worldwide refugee situation, I feel sad and overwhelmed. But I get much better results when I get out of my house and do something.”



As I dug deeper, I heard about him moving boxes to make the agency’s storage space more efficient, providing tech support for refugee kids trying to navigate school on a laptop, and assembling a bed early one Sunday for a refugee couple who were about to be discharged from the hospital with a newborn baby. The Lord had helped him to channel his compassion for the world into concrete action to serve particular people in Pittsburgh.

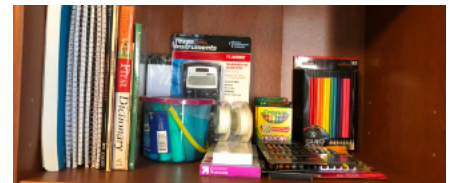
One of my seminary professors charged my graduating class to “Proclaim Great Things and Cultivate Small Things.” We as Christians, as people who take the Bible seriously, get to proclaim the impossible good news that God has a particular concern for the displaced (Deut. 24:17-22), so much so that he himself became a refugee (Matt. 2:13-15). And we put this good news into practice...by cultivating things which can feel very small.

As Ascension’s refugee ministry has taken shape, I see more and more people in the church following this pattern: proclaiming great things and cultivating small things. For most of us, the refugee ministry has looked like buying a toaster, packing a moving truck, looking for an apartment, drinking tea, listening to worship songs in Arabic, or practicing parallel parking. Refugee ministry may sound complex and overwhelming, like a discipline for a highly specialized few. But most of us are not called to be trauma counselors or case workers. We put our faith into practice in small, often invisible, acts of hospitality.

At the time of writing, our community co-sponsorship team is days away from receiving a refugee family from Syria and beginning to walk with them in a host of concrete ways in their first six months in Pittsburgh. We will need help through the summer, mostly in ways that feel small. But I want to encourage you not to tire of the “small things” you may be invited to do. Instead of simply feeling sad and overwhelmed about the worldwide refugee situation, we can engage with the people now in our community. These “small things” are an essential way that we as a church get to make God’s heart more visible. “Proclaim great things. Cultivate small things.”

Editor’s Note: Since the writing of this article, Ascension received its first family to resettle. They are a family of 6 from Syria. Much fun was had by the team in May cleaning their new apartment and fully outfitting it with furniture, appliances, and food. Thank you, Church of the Ascension, for all the gifts provided through the Target Registry! Please see the photo spread on pp 12. The family is extremely touched by the depth of welcome they have experienced, and particularly by the fact that they have strong supports as they navigate a new life in the United States. They are not alone.

Cultivating Small Things: A Look at our Refugee Family's First Home



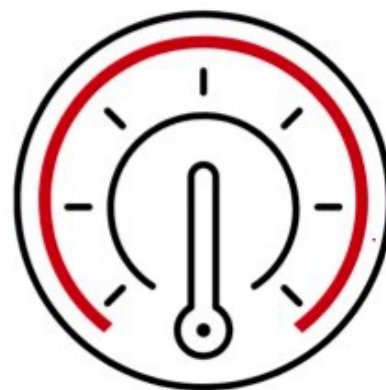


Interested in Leading a Community Group?



By Kevin Antlitz, Assistant Rector

kevin.antlitz@ascensionpittsburgh.org



From the first pages to the final pages of the Bible, one of the things that is abundantly clear is this: God did not design us to walk alone. God created us for relationship. This is part of what it means to be made in the image of God.

God is Trinity. God is relationship. To be made in the image of this God means we are made for relationship – with God and with one another.

With a church our size spread out across two services, we know getting plugged in can be a real challenge. One of the best ways to get to know others and become known by others is through Community Groups (CGs). I want to share about our CG ministry and the need we have for more CG Leaders.

Snapshot of the CGs at Ascension

We have a wide variety of groups. Some meet weekly, others meet monthly. Some are more focused on relationships while others are more focused on studying together. Despite this freedom and flexibility, all groups share four common practices inspired by Acts 2:42. These include: studying the Scriptures, caring for one another, hospitality, and prayer.

We currently have a lot of CGs at Ascension. We have over 25 groups, almost 50 leaders, and around 250 adults involved in groups. I regularly thank God for the roster of amazing CG leaders who faithfully create opportunities for us to grow, to connect, and to serve.

In many ways, our CG ministry is healthy – praise God. That being said, the reality is that there are more adults who want to join a group than we currently have space for. We need more groups and to have more groups we need more leaders.

Role of a CG Leader

I like to describe the role of CG leaders by using three images: glue, a lightbulb, and a thermostat. I'll quickly explain what I mean.



Jeff and Joyce are new members of Ascension as well as of a Squirrel Hill Community Group and say, "This group is a true blessing for us"

First, a CG Leader is glue. They gather people together. They organize group meetings and socials (or delegate the responsibility to someone else). They help a small group of people stick together for a season.

Second, a CG Leader is a lightbulb. As a lightbulb, CG Leaders oversee the "content" of their meetings. Whether that's leading a discussion or a Bible study (or delegating the responsibility to another gifted person), CG leaders are responsible for creating the space for "Aha-moments."

Third, a CG Leader is a thermostat. They have a sense of the spiritual and relational temperature of the individuals in the group and of the group as a whole. And they don't simply measure the temperature, they also help set it in the context of time spent together.

There is no one-size fits all method or model for being glue, a lightbulb, and a thermostat. All of our leaders do this a little differently and we celebrate that.

Qualifications for Leaders

I now want to share about qualifications for being a CG Leader. I'll list them and then say a few words about it.

To be a CG Leader you must:

1. Have the desire and capacity to lead
2. Be a member in good standing at Ascension
3. Be appropriately gifted (we're not looking for omnicompetence!)
4. Be approved by Ascension clergy
5. Have experience as a participant in an Ascension CG
6. Attend the CG Leaders trainings (just two a year!)

There is not a formal process for becoming a leader. It usually happens pretty organically. I am hoping to recruit 8 new leaders to launch four new CGs this fall (each group must have two leaders to share the joys and responsibility of leading).

If you are interested in becoming a CG Leader or just want to learn a little bit more, please reach out to me (after a service or via email) or to any of the other clergy or staff at the church.

Parish Retreat 2023



Please reserve the weekend of September 29 – October 1 in your calendar.

Every fall Ascension hosts an all-ages retreat at Laurelville Mennonite Center, about an hour east of Pittsburgh. It is a highlight of our life together as a church family. Last year almost 350 people were in attendance, either for the entire weekend or for part of the time. Registration will go live, online, in August. Be watching! We are delighted to have the Rt. Rev. Drew Williams, Bishop of the Anglican Diocese of New England, as our guest speaker this year. He will lead us in reflections on the Father Heart of God.

Late Summer Soul Care

**9:30am -11:00 am, Gordon Chapel
Saturday, August 26**

Join us for a morning of quiet reflection and contemplation. Together we engage in a slower rhythm designed to help us listen and respond to the Lord. We prayerfully read scripture (Lectio Divina), meditate on God's holy Word, and make time for individual reflection.

We begin and end each gathering in silence, and throughout the morning we offer plenty of space to linger quietly in the presence of the Lord.

To register, check out the News & Events page on our website.

And for those who like to plan ahead, please mark your calendars for September 23, October 21, November 18 and December 2.



If Your Interest is Piqued...



By LuAnn Pengidore, Director of International Ministry
PittsburghEnglish4U@gmail.com



Luke 3:11 says “Whoever has two tunics should share with him who has none.” Many of you are doing this through the International Ministry here at Ascension. Here’s a glimpse of what’s happening in this world.

At the end of April, we finished several weekly Bible studies in which students studied the Book of John, the stories of Easter and baptism, the parables of Luke, the Jesus Story Bible, and a Spanish study on Jesus’ miracles. We also concluded 14 weekly English classes that were held Mondays and Wednesdays. This fall we will resume classes and we are also hoping to add another study on Wednesday mornings as well as a men’s study on Monday mornings. The summer is a great time to build up the cadre of volunteers. If your interest is piqued, please reach out to me!

In addition to a Volunteer Appreciation Brunch in early June, we are launching a short summer session for beginners through advanced learners with new volunteers doing the instruction. The purpose of these classes is to keep international English students engaged and to allow new students to make connections while waiting for the grammar classes in the fall. Again, if your interest is piqued, please reach out to me.

In June, we will offer a free Career Class for both men and women. Down the hall, there will be a high beginner class

offered at the same time. In July on Wednesday mornings, students will take part in a Conversation Café for five weeks. This is a fun time of sharing coffee and snacks and is largely staffed by faithful volunteers from Legacy, Ascension’s Senior Ministry. In the Café, a native speaker and a small group of English learners converse about cultural topics. In August, on two Wednesday evenings, a new AI computer course to help beginner students is being offered by a CMU post-doctoral student. Back by popular demand, a pronunciation and song class for intermediate and advanced students will also be offered. On the weekends, those in the international ministry are invited to explore Amish country, the Pitt Observatory, World Refugee Day, a Fourth of July picnic, Round Hill Farm as well as game nights and grilling out.

Many thanks to those 43 faithful volunteers and students who invested one to six hours a week during our two semesters as drivers, teachers, assistants, trainers, Bible study leaders, childcare workers, conversation partners, field trip helpers, set up/take down snacks, 10:4@4 prayer warriors, and literacy helpers. Some of these volunteers continue to reach out during the summer and invite internationals to lunch or church or on walks. God is using so many in our church family to serve our community and share His very Good News. If you have any questions on how to connect with this ministry, or if your interest is piqued, please reach out to me and I will send you a list of opportunities to serve.

The Importance of GAFCON

By The Rev. Dr. Joel Scandrett, Trinity School for Ministry

jscandrett@tsm.edu



Along with Jonathan Millard, Andrea Millard, and Lauren Scharf, I had the privilege this April of serving as a delegate of the Anglican Diocese of Pittsburgh to the Global Anglican Future Conference (GAFCON) in Kigali, Rwanda.

The Conference took place April 17-21 and brought together over 1,300 Anglican delegates from 52 countries, including 315 bishops, 456 other clergy, and 531 lay leaders. While it was a great joy and blessing to worship with fellow Anglican Christians from all over the world, it was also an important occasion in the life of our worldwide Anglican Communion.

What Is GAFCON?

Because they were originally founded by the Church of

England, the bishops of the 47 regional Churches (or Provinces) that make up the Anglican Communion have historically recognized and been in communion with the Archbishop of Canterbury, who is regarded as “first among equals” and the leader of the Communion. However, over the last 50 years theological tensions have increasingly strained relationships within the Communion. At the heart of those tensions has been profound disagreement over the inspiration and authority of Scripture, the unique divinity of Jesus Christ and our need for salvation in him, and what Scripture teaches about human nature, marriage, and sexuality.

A watershed moment occurred at the 1998 Lambeth Conference which is a gathering of Anglican Communion bishops convened every ten years by the Archbishop of Canterbury. At that conference, the overwhelming majority of Anglican Communion bishops affirmed Resolution 1.10 on Human Sexuality, which “upholds faithfulness in marriage



between a man and a woman in lifelong union and believes that abstinence is right for those who are not called to marriage,” while also “calling all our people to minister pastorally and sensitively to all irrespective of sexual orientation.” However, the resolution was rejected by a small but powerful minority of liberal Western bishops and has continued to stand as a point of division within the Communion to this day.

In response, much like the Anglican Church in North America, GAFCON was founded in 2008 as a renewal movement within the Anglican Communion and has convened every five years since. A central aspect of GAFCON’s mission continues to uphold the authority of Scripture in the Anglican Communion, a key expression of which is GAFCON’s 2008 Jerusalem Declaration. In the meantime, GAFCON has also become a movement committed to the renewal of Anglican mission by promoting mission and evangelism to unreached people groups, advocating for persecuted Christians, supporting theological education, and promoting majority world sustainable relief and development.

What happened at GAFCON 2023?

Sadly, the theological divisions between biblical and liberal Anglicans have continued to widen since 1998 - as they have in many other Christian denominations. This past February, the Church of England voted to permit blessings of same-sex marriages, a decision which directly contravenes Lambeth Resolution 1.10. What distinguishes this decision is its support by the Archbishop of Canterbury, the supposed leader of the Anglican Communion. This decision was a major focus of GAFCON this past April, and the bishops and delegates attending issued a statement in response entitled the “Kigali Commitment.” A key passage in that statement reads as follows:

Both GSFA and GAFCON Primates share the view that, due to the departures from orthodoxy articulated above, they can no longer recognize the Archbishop of Canterbury as an Instrument of Communion, the ‘first among equals’ of the Primates.

While this is a momentous statement, it was given far greater weight by the presence of the leaders of the other large majority world Anglican group, the Global South Fellowship of Anglican Churches (GSFA). Between GAFCON and GSFA, approximately 85% of the Anglican Communion was represented. Together, the Kigali Commitment calls for a collaborative “resetting” of the Anglican Communion by GAFCON and the GSFA churches. What this will look like remains to be seen, but:

The goal is that orthodox Anglicans worldwide will have a clear identity, a global ‘spiritual home’ of which they can be proud, and a strong leadership structure that gives them stability and direction as Global Anglicans ... Most importantly of all, we commit ourselves afresh to the gospel mission of proclaiming the crucified, risen, and ascended Christ, calling on all to acknowledge him as Lord in repentance and faith, and living out a joyful, faithful obedience to his Word in all areas of our lives.

What does this mean for Ascension?

This decision probably won’t have an immediate impact on our life together at Ascension. We can certainly be encouraged that the Anglican Church in North America is a member church of GAFCON and that we stand in theological and spiritual solidarity with our global Anglican brothers and sisters. But going forward, I believe we are witnessing the renewal of the Anglican Communion under a new form of leadership that is reclaiming the great treasure of historic, biblical Anglicanism. And for that we can give thanks to God!



“...and a little child shall lead them.” Isaiah 11:6

By Father Josh Misner, Children's Ministry Volunteer

Each Sunday at 11:00 am for the past two years I have been led by children. After the children's message, the kids (very) eagerly raise their hands in hopeful expectation that theirs will be selected to take up the cross of Christ and to lead us into our Kid's Church time. I have come to see this child as something of a sign, symbolic of what the prophet Isaiah spoke of long ago in hopeful expectation for the time when the leading of a child would bring peace as the world has never known, where wolves and lambs, lions and calves, dwell together. This child bears the awesome privilege of reminding us that opposites—even conflicting ones—become transfigured in the Kingdom of God.

Teacher and student sometimes hold this place of opposites, though hopefully not in such extreme ways as Isaiah's animals! As much as I have labored alongside Catherine Slocum to teach your children the Gospel of Christ, in many ways your children have led and formed me. Giving thanks for Spider-man action figures and Grover-stuffies while also praying for new baby cousins and aging grandparents has been a gift from the Lord to shape me into a priest who delights in being with children, those to whom, Jesus teaches, “belongs the Kingdom of God,” and to love the things that they love.

I have been honored to teach your children about listening, grace, beauty, sin, repentance, and love as they led me into God's Word for their sakes. That time has now come to a close, as Emily, Sophia, and I have moved to Post Falls, Idaho, where I am in the process to



become Rector of St David's Anglican Church. I will step into that role carrying with me the gifts that your children and I have received from the Lord together. By entrusting your children's formation in the Gospel to me, you have blessed a far-flung church plant in North Idaho with a priest who loves the lives of children and desires to see whole families formed into the likeness of our Lord.

One more matter deserves attention: Ascension, you have a remarkable gift in Catherine and her husband, Jay Slocum. I have witnessed their leadership as they faithfully attend to the Scriptures, plan lessons, and put into action times which allow our children to flourish as they learn through reading, play, and prayer. I have learned much under their instruction, and I invite you to consider joining Catherine's team as either a helper or teacher. You'll find them in the procession, following Jesus' cross, and led by a little child.

Fearfully and Wonderfully Made

By James Scannell

jds2cc1@icloud.com

For this issue James, a young adult at Ascension who has non-speaking autism and communicates via a spelling board, gives his readers additional excerpts of his interview with Ann Paton, a 90-something retired priest who formerly served at Ascension, beloved by many! The first part of the interview was in the Lenten Ascent, published February 2023.

JS: Tell me about listening to God.

AP: You listen to God the way you would listen to any friend. When you pray, you are talking to God. And that's what you do - because Jesus is your friend, God is your friend, and He is always listening. He is ready to listen. So, the way you should speak freely to a friend because they are your friend, Jesus teaches us to speak to our heavenly father. So, in a good friendship, one person doesn't talk all the time. One person listens. So that's the way you pray. You say something and then you say, "Speak Lord for your servant hears" and you just shut up and see what comes to you.

JS: How do you listen?

AP: You listen the way you would listen to me. You sit and present a question. You may remember Samuel - he thought he heard Eli the elder priest, but he didn't. The third time he went to Eli who said, "No, no, that wasn't me, that was God." Samuel said, "Oh, OK". Eli told him to just say, "Speak Lord for your servant hears." And that's what he did. But it was Eli who told him that.

JS: I hear God often. I sometimes worry it is my own desires.

AP: Of course you do! We all worry about that. But there is no reason your desires wouldn't be the same as God's or at least that's a possibility. I know what you mean—you're concerned that it's just something you want to do and not something that He wants.

JS: I love being Jesus' person.

AP: That's it. You are.

JS: I love him. And I can't wait to see how He will use me every day.

AP: Right. Every day, first thing in the morning, the first thing that you think of is, "Thank you Lord for another day" because every day is a gift and you pray, "Thank you Lord for another day, help me to live it the way you want me to live it." That's the way to start the day. And then at night at some point you review the day with him. You give him thanks for the good stuff that has happened. That could be people who have spoken to you or somebody you've spoken to or whatever happened during the day. It has a name in mystic theology, it's called the Daily Examen. You go through the day and give thanks for good stuff that has happened - for example, people have been kind or good things you've had to eat or a good day physically like sunshine.

JS: I'm so happy we talked. I hope you are blessed in knowing how much you have taught me. I have listened to your sermons and have learned so much. I'm sure people will keep listening.

AP: Thank you.



Bishop's Award for Excellence

We were delighted to see Isaiah Bornman, Karen Gowdy, and Eric

Newhouse receive the Bishop Award for Excellence. These three people have been central to the success of our multi-million-dollar refurbishment of the historic Nave (cleaned and pointed, internal refurbishments), stained glass (removed and fixed), as well as the construction on the Parish Hall that is ongoing right now.

While continuing to juggle their regular job responsibilities, they've added this project (projects!) on top of it all. They are gifted, skilled, easy to work with, and do it all for the love of Jesus and the Church. Thank you and well done! Enjoy some photos of the ongoing work as well as some snapshots of Isaiah, Karen, and Eric.







Legacy Seniors Ministry

*Alan Komm:
His Wisdom and Legacy*

Thurs. June 15th
12:30-2:30PM
\$15/lunch (1st time free)

Worship Services **Sunday 9:00 am, 11:00 am Nave Services** with [YouTube](#) live stream.

Website www.ascensionpittsburgh.org

Address 4729 Ellsworth Avenue Pittsburgh, PA 15213

Phone/Fax (412) 621-4361 / (412) 621-5746

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