

Ascension

December
2019



Advent Reflection

-by Andrea Millard, Director of Prayer Ministry

Advent marks the beginning of the liturgical year. In Advent we change the color of the fabrics used in the church from green (which corresponds to “ordinary time”) to purple (a penitential color). While the world around us is decorating in green and red, silver and gold, the Church uses purple, the traditional color used to reflect the Advent themes of sin and repentance. (Advent also includes themes of watching, waiting, anticipation and more.) The Advent season invites us to engage in practices of spiritual “house cleaning” or “heart cleansing” in preparation for the coming of Christ at Christmas.

One way we respond to this invitation is by incorporating into our regular Eucharistic liturgy a prayer that has been found in Anglican Prayer Books for hundreds of years, *The Prayer of Humble Access*. At Ascension we will say this brief prayer together just before receiving communion.

Like many Anglican prayers, it is both biblical and theological. It is biblical in that it makes scriptural allusions (to the “crumbs from the table,” Mark 7:28; to being “not worthy,” Luke 7:6; to teaching Christians to “eat his flesh and drink his blood,” John 6). It is theological because it refers to our fallen, sinful state while at the same time recalling God’s character, which is always to have mercy. For some, the idea of referring to ourselves as sinners is offensive. Yet this prayer pairs the reality of our human condition *immediately* with the abundant grace and mercy of God. The prayer provides a clear, concise recap of the Gospel, highlighting our need of God’s grace.

When we come to the Lord’s Table, Anglicans speak of “receiving” communion rather than “taking” communion. We come with our hands open reflecting the posture of our hearts - open to receiving God’s gift in the sacrament of bread and wine, the body and blood of Christ. In receiving Holy Communion, *The Prayer of Humble Access* also reminds us of the benefits of being nourished, cleansed, and renewed in the Lord as well as receiving assurance of eternal life in Him.

As we begin our liturgical new year, join us in our Advent practice of praying together *The Prayer of Humble Access*.

The Prayer of Humble Access

We do not presume to come
to this your table, O merciful Lord,
trusting in our own righteousness,
but in your abundant and great mercies.
We are not worthy so much as to
gather up the crumbs under your table;
but you are the same Lord
whose character is always to have mercy.
Grant us, therefore, gracious Lord,
so to eat the flesh
of your dear Son Jesus Christ,
and to drink his blood,
that our sinful bodies
may be made clean by his body,
and our souls washed
through his most precious blood,
and that we may evermore dwell in him,
and he in us. Amen.

Advent: Preparing for Christmas



Advent Devotional

To help in our preparations for Christmas, Advent Devotionals written by students and faculty at Trinity School for Ministry are available free of charge to any who wish to have one. You will be able to find them on information tables. You can also find the devotional online at www.tsm.edu.

Christmas Poinsettia Memorials

Sunday, December 8 deadline

It is a longstanding Christmas tradition at Ascension to remember and celebrate those we love and those we have lost by donating to the poinsettias that adorn our altars from Sunday, December 15 (Advent 3) and following. If you would like to remember someone special or name a specific thanksgiving in this year's memorial bulletin insert, please contact Melita Carter at cartermo@gmail.com or [412-736-3540](tel:412-736-3540) by Sunday, December 8.

Greening of the Church

Saturday, December 14 at 9:30am

The Greening of the Church is a festive event and a great way to support our altar ministry. We will be hanging ornaments on the Christmas tree, attaching candle standards to the pews, putting up wreaths, setting out the crèche and more. All welcome! Coffee, bagels, pastries and juice will be served. Meet at the back of the church by the Christmas tree!

Begin a New Prayer Practice as We Begin a Liturgical New Year in Advent

All over the world Anglicans join in a rhythm of prayer called the Daily Office ("office" means duty). It's a way of structuring each day so that we begin and end with prayer. The principle rites of the Office are Daily Morning Prayer and Daily Evening Prayer. The rites are found in our new prayer book on pages 11-31 and 41-56, respectively. Morning and Evening Prayer are designed to ensure "...God's people annually encounter the whole of the Holy Scripture, daily confess their sins and praise Almighty God, and offer timely thanksgivings, petitions, and intercessions" (p 6, *2019 Book of Common Prayer*). Our 2019 Prayer Book also includes rites for Midday Prayer (p 33-39) and Compline (p 57-65), the prayers for the close of day.

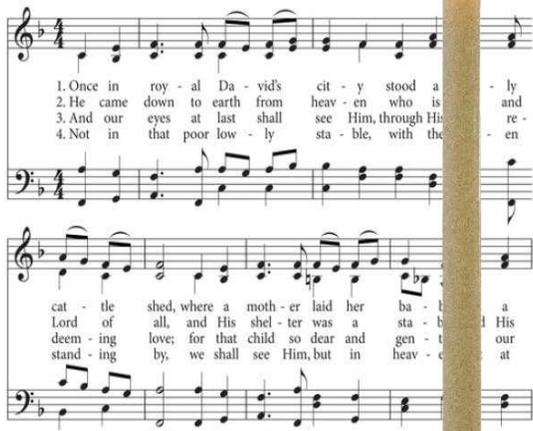
If you are new to Anglican worship or are feeling overwhelmed by the structure of the Daily Office, you might consider praying an abbreviated prayer pattern such as is found in "Family Prayer" (pp 66-78). "These devotions follow the basic structure of the Daily Office of the Church," (p 66) but have been modified to meet the needs of families with young children.

That being said, some of us adults are "young" in our experience of incorporating prayer practices into our day and would benefit from learning a basic pattern before moving onto a more robust rite.

When it comes to developing an intentional prayer practice, be encouraged by the wisdom of Dom John Chapman who wrote, "Pray as you can, not as you can't."

The *2019 Book of Common Prayer* is available for purchase or download at bcp2019.anglicanchurch.net. A helpful Daily Office tool is legereme.com, a website that follows the Anglican Church in North America (ACNA) daily lectionary, which is our daily scripture reading plan.

Advent Lessons & Carols



CHURCH OF THE
ASCENSION

The Service of Lessons & Carols weaves together a progression of scripture readings along with carols sung by the congregation and choirs that carry us from Old Testament prophecy to fulfillment in the Christ child. We will have two services of Lessons and Carols on different dates – one at the 9am service and one at the 11am service. The services will be festive, musically different, and both are superb introductions to the Christian faith. Plan to bring a friend!

Advent 3: Lessons & Carols at the 9am service

We will celebrate a Service of Lessons & Carols at our 9am service on **Sunday, December 15th**. Childcare is provided for those aged 4 (PreK) and younger. They should go directly to their classrooms when they get to church as there is no Children's Talk at this service. Children age 5 (Kindergarten) and older will be with us for the service. We will have a regular 11am service of Holy Communion with readings from Advent 3 on December 15th.

Advent 4: Lessons & Carols at the 11am service

This Sunday is the mirror image of last Sunday. On **Sunday, December 22nd** we will have a Service of Lessons & Carols at our 11am service while we have a regular 9am service of Holy Communion with readings from Advent 4. Children age 5 (Kindergarten) and older will be with us for the service with childcare for those aged 4 (PreK) and under. Please bring them to their classrooms prior to the start of the service.

Christmas Services

Family Christmas Eve Service at 6:30pm

All are invited to this warm service that is designed with children in mind. We will celebrate the nativity of Jesus with a children's tableau and sing the great carols of Christmas. *Childcare for children aged 4 (PreK) and under will be provided. Children aged 5 (Kindergarten) and older are with us for the service.* Please remember to bring your bells to this service! It is a great joy to sing the great hymns of Christmas with congregational bells ringing out!

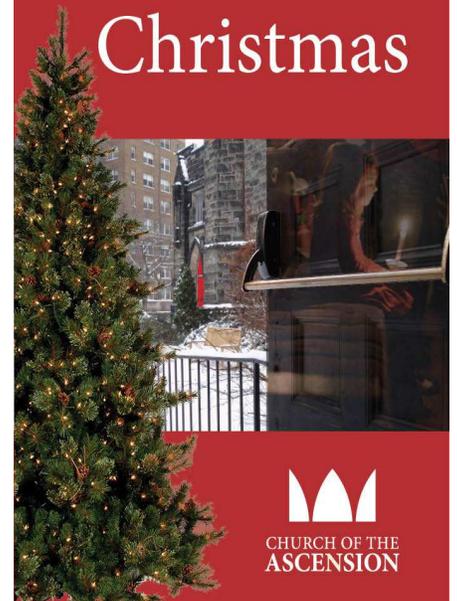
Festival Christmas Eve Eucharist at 10pm

Our late Christmas Eve service will feature a Festival Procession, incense, candles and the great music of the season in celebration of the birth of the Christ child. *Childcare is not provided.* Please remember to bring bells to this service also!

Christmas Day Eucharist at 10am

The lessons are different from Christmas Eve so that those who wish to make this their second service of Christmas may join those who prefer this quiet one to the festival celebrations on Christmas Eve. *Childcare is not provided.*

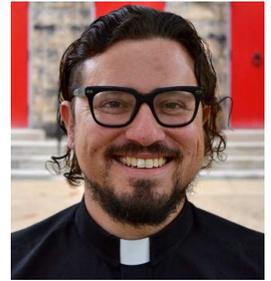
Celebrate
Christmas



CHURCH OF THE
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An Invitation to a Holy Advent

By Jonathan Warren



It's December, and Christmas music has been blaring in stores for weeks already as America lumbers through the holiday season. For many of us, it is not the 'most wonderful time of the year', but the loneliest. Not a time of celebration, but a time of mourning. Although there is a stigma against feeling down during the holidays culturally, the church has always recognized the need to do justice not only to the joy we should feel in the birth of our savior, but for the great sorrow we feel living in a world in which his victory is not yet complete. For that reason as Christians we do not simply plunge into festivity at the Lord's birth, but rather we pause to contemplate the reason why it was necessary for God to enter into human history, to involve himself in our sin and blindness and distress.

The season we set aside to do this as a church every year we call Advent, which comprises the four Sundays leading up to Christmas. Advent comes from the Latin work 'adventus', which means 'coming'. And actually at Advent we contemplate three 'comings' of the Son of God: his first coming in the flesh as the man Jesus (John 1:1-14), his second coming, when he returns in great power to bring to fulfillment the kingdom of God, which he inaugurated in his earthly ministry (2 Pet 2:1-3, etc.) and third coming, post-Pentecost, as Christ sends the Holy Spirit upon our hearts and composes us into his body on earth (John 14:18-23; Acts 2).

Because we are meditating on three comings rather than just one, the Scripture readings in this season are, as Mother Tish likes to say, 'trippy'. During the first Sunday in Advent we read the 'little apocalypse' of Matthew (or its parallels in Mark or Luke), which foretells the suffering and confusion that will precede the return of Christ in his second coming. In the second and third weeks of Advent, we train our attention upon John the Baptist, who Jesus tells us is 'greatest among those born of women' (Matt 11:11; Luke 7:28). John the Baptist is the one who 'prepares the way of the Lord'. Only in the last Sunday when we come to the Annunciation are we allowed to take our eyes off of the devastation that Sin, Death, and the Devil have inflicted upon God's good creation and train them squarely upon the good news that has come to us in Jesus.

The 'holiday season' in the secular American calendar is above all loud, distracting, and consumptive. Advent is reflective, mournful, and ascetical. Advent is a time of fasting. Advent is a time of silence. Advent is a time for the church collectively to take stock of who we have become as sinners. It is our time to reflect upon our cowardice, our compromises, our capitulations with a world that both despises and longs for the reign of Christ. It is our time to reflect on the ways in which we are not ready for Christ and in which we have not kept the 'lamps burning' (Mat 25:1-13), the ways in which, if we are honest with ourselves, we prefer the world to Christ.

For that reason, as Fleming Rutledge has written, 'the premier personage of Advent is John the Baptist'. John comes as an ascetic and a hermit, a man thoroughly disenchanted with the allure of the things of this world. He stands outside the world's institutions in order to proclaim the wrath of God which is to be poured out upon them because of their sinfulness. When sin becomes institutionally embedded, it takes on a life of its own. It colonizes territory and poisons relationships and whole communities. Sin sets up what the late Philip Rieff called 'deathworks': narratives, beliefs, actions, artifacts - personal, collective, and institutional - that warp and mock God's intentions for his creation.

Under these conditions, sin becomes an 'atmosphere' which all of us inhabit, at times without even being aware of it, at times fully aware of how grievous it is but feeling powerless against it. We are blinded and wounded in the core of our being by sin. The scriptures describe sin as a kind of slavery (John 8:30; Rom 6:20) - it has become the master of the world, and we are powerless to overcome it. Even though it is John's appointed task to pronounce the judgment of God over sin, he too will become the victim, quite literally, of sin, as Herod Antipas unjustly, casually, and cavalierly has him executed at the request of his stepdaughter (Matthew 14:1-12). John's whole mission is to unmask the sin which has blinded and enslaved the whole world, including our own hearts. As Rutledge says,

“When he appears on the banks of the Jordan, the cover-ups come to their appointed end. Two thousand years before all the Watergates, Irangates, and other sordid-‘gates’, John came proclaiming God’s imminent judgment on the venality of governments, the corruption of police departments, the greed of financiers, the selfishness of the rich, the self-righteousness of the religious establishment. In the end, he became one of *los desaparecidos* himself, executed without a trial in the dank dungeon of the local strongman, thus becoming truly the precursor of the One whose way he prepared, the One whose death at the the hands of the political and religious ruling classes signified the final judgment of God on all the powers and principalities.”

And so the message of Advent is: don’t look away. Don’t look away from the world enslaved and in captivity to sin. Don’t turn away from the wickedness that individuals, institutions, churches, governments, corporations vomit forth constantly upon the world. Don’t deny that this wickedness has infested our hearts as well. Don’t deny that by living as sinners we add our own perverse notes to the swelling symphony of sin’s dominion.

But we can’t practice this by taking to Facebook and Twitter and Instagram to decry and counsel vigilance against the latest outrage. If we are adding to the cacophony of this season, just to that extent we are not actually preparing ourselves for the three comings of Christ. Actual repentance is a painful work which requires us to experience the emotions that run deeper than anger - fear and sadness - and undistracted silence is the indispensable condition in which God can speak to us through these emotions. In the space created by silence, God can make us see why Christ had to become incarnate, and he can make us love that incarnation. He can make us see how Christ’s work remains incomplete in the world and even in his body the church, and he can make us long for the second coming. He can make us more attuned to the work he is doing in us to renew us through the Holy Spirit, and he can make us thirst for greater participation in that work.

This year I invite you to a holy Advent. I’ve mentioned already a resource which I highly recommend for your Advent reading: Fleming Rutledge, *Advent: The Once and Future Coming of Jesus Christ*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2018. But more than the reading, I want to call you to stillness, to observation, to contemplation. Slow down and marinate in the readings each Sunday. Meditate upon the three comings of Christ. Practice fasting - if your health does not permit you to fast from food, then fast from social media, television, or another distraction which holds you in thrall. And let God, the Father, the Son, and Holy Spirit renew you so that you long for the redemption which is already ours in Christ and which will one day be complete.

Dear Ascension,

How can we begin to thank you for the great outpouring of love we have experienced from you at the birth of our son Augustine? The cards, texts, phone calls, prayers, meals, visits, and gifts you have lavished on us have been nothing short of staggering to us, and we are so grateful. As most of you know, Mother Tish was diagnosed with post-partum preeclampsia after giving birth to Gus, which has caused severe blood pressures and put her at risk of stroke or seizure. In the midst of this, you have prayed for us and given us very practical help with childcare and food and cleaning. Basically, you have made it possible for us to survive as a family during this difficult season, and we want you to know how much we love you and how much we appreciate you. Thank you for carrying us in this joyful and crisis-laden season of our lives!

Grace and peace,
Jonathan+ and Tish+



Christmas Dinner for Internationals

We have had a great semester filled with classes, laughter, field trips, Bible studies, pumpkin pie socials and more! We did some things that were new this fall. We added additional classes on Monday morning and expanded our evenings beyond Wednesday to also include Thursday nights. We also expanded childcare as this is a huge benefit for our international friends. We look forward to beginning again in mid-January for our winter term! We ALWAYS need volunteers in all kinds of capacities. If that's you, just contact LuAnn.



However, before the New Year and another round of classes begins, we are also inviting you to a Christmas Dinner Party with internationals on Wednesday, December 18th at 6pm in the Parish Hall. We will be setting up for 150 people. We hope to have 120 internationals and 30 regular Ascensionites at 15 tables (2 from Ascension with 8 internationals per table). If you would like to come to the dinner or to help with the dinner, please email PittsburghEnglish4U@gmail.com. LuAnn will get back to you!

Special Needs Ministry: Dressing the Part!

In December, Capernaum Friends will enjoy spending time together and celebrating the birth of Jesus in our traditional way. After reviewing the story of the nativity, our Friends will dress the part of all the members of the Christmas story. We sing Christmas carols, decorate ornaments and of course, have some pizza. If you'd like to join us, please come along! We meet on Saturday, December 14 from 2 – 4pm in the New Catacombs. Cookies are ALWAYS welcome! If you would like more information, please contact Keira at keirafuener@gmail.com.



OWLS FELLOWSHIP OLDER WISER LIVELY SAINTS

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



Thursday, December 12
12:30PM – 2:30PM

Christmas Party

With Lara Lynn McGill, Soprano

Come and enjoy a Christmas musical program with Lara Lynn McGill, a member of Ascension's choir! We will enjoy Christmas music sung by Lara, scriptures, and sing-along hymns. Lara has an extensive and wonderful resume as a operatic soprano, having performed in the United States, Italy, Austria, and South Africa. The Pittsburgh Post-Gazette described Lara as "a high-fashion model and a voice of size, clarity and wide coloristic range ... a three-dimensional figure who combined vulnerability with strength and tugged at the heartstrings in her every breath and movement". We are in for a tremendous afternoon. This is a seasonally festive event to which you will want to be sure to invite a friend!



Music to Delight Us All and
Celebrate the Season

COST: \$10 charge for lunch,
but first-time friends are free!

RSVPs are necessary to Rev. Ann Tefft:
412-526-1107 or tefft.ann@gmail.com.

Parking restrictions will be lifted for people to park on the streets, and the Neville Street lot will be reserved for seniors. We meet in the Parish Hall.

MISSIONS: Dave and Debbie Kornfield

Our work in ten countries, our mission responsibilities, and Dave's role with the World Evangelical Alliance all require travel! This year, Dave has been to Burkina Faso, Colombia, Ecuador, Peru, Brazil, Paraguay, Argentina, Bolivia, Singapore, Angola, Indonesia, Mexico, and the Dominican Republic (some several times), and ten U.S. states. Debbie often travels too.



What is this all about? Well, did you know that pastors and their spouses can be some of the loneliest people on earth? In many places and denominations, pastors are expected to be super-human. They have no one to talk to about their own needs and challenges. Sadly, there is a trend toward depression and even suicide among pastors in Latin America. Their kids may suffer as well.

Our work with “pastoring” the pastors includes the formation of mutual-care groups, often cross-denominationally since pastors feel safer in that context. We also lead pastoral marriage retreats, training in ministry and self-care skills, and discipling.

Discipling of pastors and leaders? Yes! Most have not experienced life-transforming personal care and encouragement to grow personally, in their understanding of Scripture, their practice of prayer, and in other disciplines. As pastors become healthier, they are better able to care for their own leaders and their churches. Healthy pastor = healthy church. The pastoring of pastors rallying cry is “Alone, NO!”

In May, the complete Discipleship Bible was published in Brazil, a seven-year project for Dave. Since then he has had more time for developing “Intentional Disciple-Making Churches (IDMC),” in conjunction with his mentor Edmund Chan of Singapore. In each country of Latin America and each region of Brazil, Dave wants to help develop a model IDMC church that can train and encourage other churches in fulfilling the Great Commission.

When home in Pittsburgh, Dave mentors pastoral leaders via Skype, often switching between countries and languages within a day's work. Words of affirmation encourage him. After a recent retreat in Brazil, for example, a pastor wrote: *David, these meetings with you have been for me a relief, a balm for my soul, an inspiration, a life-giving experience I will never forget. Your words included some of your own suffering and linked our hearts with yours, while at the same time offering hope. I felt God's presence in every part of our time together, empowering and training us through the Holy Spirit. I want to register here my deep gratitude.*

We appreciate your prayers for:

- The leaders of pastoring of pastors' movements in each country, including the specific challenges pastors face in Venezuela.
- Publication of the Discipleship Bible in Spanish and English, the Karis book in Spanish and Portuguese, one of Debbie's and two of Dave's Portuguese books in Spanish.
- Dave's role with the World Evangelical Alliance which is launching “The Decade of Disciple-Making: 2020-2030.” Dave wants to nurture national discipling movements throughout Latin America.
- Discernment of when to say yes and when to say no to the open doors before us.



Contact info: Debbie: debrakornfield@gmail.com

Dave: davidkornfield@gmail.com

MISSIONS: Thailand 2020

From January 2nd through the 13th, six members of Church of the Ascension, along with the Twichell family and the Agape Year Fellows, will travel to Chiang Mai, Thailand. This trip continues a growing relationship of service and love between St. Andrew's Anglican Church in Chiang Mai, members of the Anglican Church in Singapore and the Church of the Ascension.

Last January, several leaders and members of Ascension traveled to Thailand to begin building relationships and opportunities with a number of ministries there. In addition, the Rev. Canon Ching Wah and Mrs. Jeannie Yahui visited Ascension in early October to share at the parish retreat and participate in ministries at Ascension. This team hopes to continue this partnership in January. These are some of the activities the group will be involved in:

The St. Andrew Community Pre-School: The team will encourage, support, and work with teachers and students in a multi-lingual pre-school. They will prepare dramatizations and spend time reading to the school's children. They will be purchasing dozens of age appropriate English language books for the pre-school and for the Children's Day event.

Children's Day Program: Partnering with St. Andrew's, the team will assist in providing local children with fun activities, books, crafts and sweets during Thailand's annual Children's Day festivities.

Presentation of God's love: They will combine efforts with local church leaders to listen, visit and pray with community members and those interested in learning more about Jesus. The team will journey into the hill country north of Chiang Mai to give support to the St. Stephen's ministry center that provides a home for teens seeking to finish their high school education.

St. Andrew's Community Center: The team will assist in the outreach activities of this center that strives to provide educational opportunities to children, teens and adults of the surrounding lower income community.

Special Outreach Activities: Some in the group will share specialized skills. The clergy members will provide liturgical training. The physician will share best practices in holistic care at a local hospital.

Please pray for Emily Wilson, Brandon Daily, Mark Stevenson, Karen Stevenson, Charity Wahrenberger and Todd Wahrenberger as they minister in Chiang Mai. Also pray for Nate, Erika, (Henry, Annie, George, Jack) and the Agape Fellows, Nathan Perdue and Christian Conger as they will be leading the team and staying for further ministry at St. Andrews. Pray for opportunities to share God's love in Thailand where less than 2% of the population follows Jesus.



By Denise Cox

Agape Year



Agape Year is a 'gap year' program headed up by Ascension's Nate and Erika Twichell. Agape Year Fellows partner with many Ascension ministries.

In his book *Is God Anti-Gay*, Sam Allberry, a same sex attracted celibate Anglican from England, shares: *Ever since I have been open about my own experiences of homosexuality, a number of Christians have said something like this: "The gospel must be harder for you than it is for me," as though I have more to give up than they do. But the fact is that the gospel demands everything of all of us. If someone thinks that the gospel has somehow slotted into their life quite easily, without causing any major adjustments to their lifestyle or aspirations, it is likely that they have not really started following Jesus at all.*

One of the themes that keeps coming up in conversations with our Fellows is that of death to self. In Luke 9:23, Jesus tells the crowd around him that "If anyone would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross daily and follow me."

For our Fellows, denying themselves can look like spending a Saturday serving food to the houseless on a 25-degree November day. It can look like learning to be vulnerable when the impulse is to protect and defend oneself. They might say that sitting down for a meal at our dining room table with a five-year old, a three-year old, and six month old twins qualifies as death to self!

We do ask a lot of our Fellows. And they do sacrifice a lot to be with us. Most 18-year old Americans are focused on getting into the right college, so they can get the right job, so they can buy the right car, while commuting from the right house. It is a sacrifice to put educational and vocational goals aside and spend a year serving the least, last, and lost. And it is truly death to self to set aside a year with the goal of growing deeper in your faith in Christ.

Allberry's reminder that a gospel that doesn't disrupt lifestyle and aspirations is not true gospel is a word for us as well, not just our Fellows! Our Fellows have been blessed by hearing your stories of transformation, surrender, and obedience. Having our church family speak into their lives gives them a perspective that is hard to come by for 18-year old's.

In just over a month we will head to Thailand to join our ministry partners in Chiang Mai. While spending 6 weeks in sunny Thailand might sound like a nice break from Pittsburgh winter, our Fellows will hit many roadblocks. Satan does not like to see God's Kingdom built up, and will attempt to thwart their efforts. Spiritual attack is real. Please pray for Nate and Christian as they make major adjustments to their lifestyle and aspirations and follow Jesus where he has called them. And please pray for our family as we walk alongside these young men.

By Nate Twichell

Campus Ministry: Midday Prayer on Campus

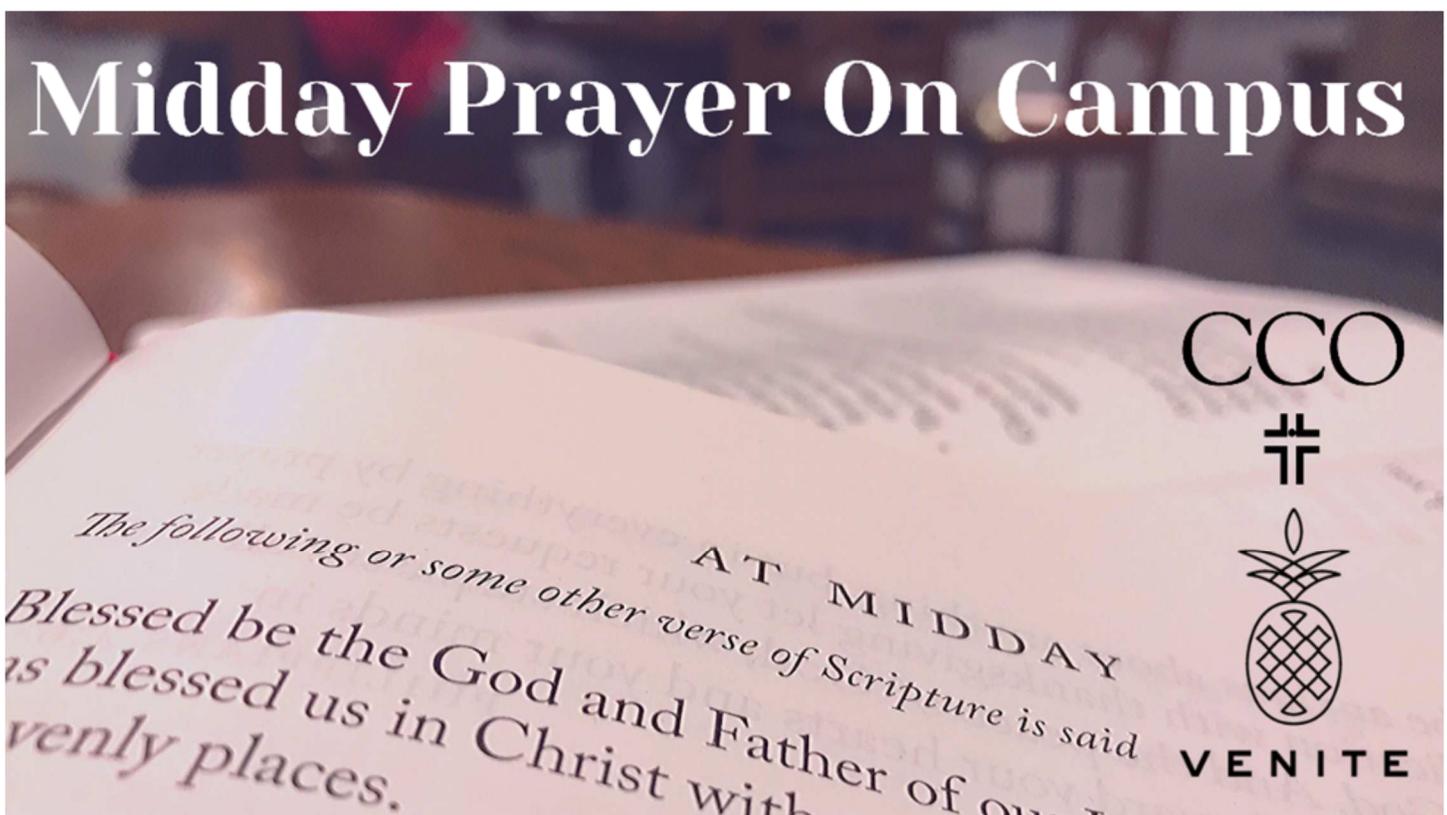
by Alex Banfield Hicks

With a gleaming red-bound copy of the new 2019 ACNA Book of Common Prayer nestled in my messenger bag, Leah Hornfeck (CCO Staff and Ascension's Associate for Youth and Young Adult Ministry) and I found a suitably quiet space in the University of Pittsburgh's Cathedral of Learning to pray.

We chose the Family Prayer version of Midday Prayer (you can download here <http://bcp2019.anglicanchurch.net/>) as it was shorter but also the prayers had an international scope. We conclude praying a collect that asks: "Grant that all the peoples of the earth may look to you and be saved; for your tender mercies' sake." This seemed to have extra weight and urgency as we were surrounded by Pitt's International Rooms!

Inspired by this experience, we then printed out more portable paper copies of Midday Prayer and each week have gone out to enjoy Midday Prayer with students; in the Cathedral of Learning, in the University Centre's prayer chapel at CMU, and in various other locations. I met up with Ryan Smith, studying at Pittsburgh's Institute of Mortuary Science, and we walked down Baum to pray together at East Liberty Presbyterian. I later met up with four Pitt students to enjoy Midday Prayer (it is always Midday somewhere, right?) at Bellefield Presbyterian Church at the heart of Pitt's campus.

This Midday Prayer gathering at Bellefield has become a weekly fixture, and I was pleased to see Bethany Adamiak, a Pitt Junior who also sings in Ascension's choir, step up to lead and develop our prayer time together. Do pray for these growing prayer gatherings, and if you want to find out more or want to get involved, don't hesitate to email alex.banfieldhicks@ascensionpittsburgh.org or leah.hornfeck@ascensionpittsburgh.org



Children's Ministry in December!

The month of December is filled with many opportunities to prepare our hearts for Christmas. The children will have a variety of ways to participate in the life of the church during the season of Advent. If you have any questions, please reach out to our Director of Children's Ministry, Catherine Slocum at catherine.slocum@ascensionpittsburgh.org.

Celebrating Advent at Home – materials available beginning November 24th

An Advent Journey to Bethlehem materials (inspired by the Godly Play curriculum) will be available for families to take home beginning Sunday, November 24th on the children's table in the Nave.

Light of Life Rescue Mission Stocking Preparation – December 1st

Children's Ministry will prepare 100 stockings for the Light of Life Mission for their Women's and Children's annual Christmas party. The children will assemble the stockings during Sunday School at both the 9am and 11am services on Sunday, December 1st.

Lessons and Carols – 9am on December 15th and 11am on December 22nd

Children will remain in church to participate in the festive Lessons and Carols service. Nursery care will be provided for PreK (age 4) and younger. Sunday School will be held during the alternate services (11am on December 15 and 9am on December 22).

Christmas Tableau Dress Rehearsal – December 21st in the Nave

A mandatory dress rehearsal will be held from 11:30am – 12:15pm for the Christmas Tableau on Saturday, December 21st. The Tableau is performed during the family service (6:30pm) on Christmas Eve. This is a wonderful and memorable opportunity for your children and includes scripture readings taken from *The Voice* translation. All children (ages 3 – 5th grade) are invited to participate. Costume fittings will happen in between the services in the Hunt Room beginning December 8th. Sign-up sheet available in the back of the Nave on the children's table.

Christmas Eve Family Service – December 24th 6:30pm – Bring your bells!

Join us for this traditional Christmas Eve service which will include the children's Christmas Tableau, the great carols of Christmas, the Holy Eucharist and Silent Night sung by candlelight. Nursery care will be provided.

And let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, to which indeed you were called in one body. And be thankful. –

Colossians 3:15



Growing our Children's Ministry Team



Katie Wentz

We're excited to welcome Katie Wentz to our children's ministry staff team. She will be working one day per week for Ascension providing administrative support for our children's ministry. We're so grateful to have Katie on our team – she is an answer to prayer! Welcome Katie!

Katie and her husband live in Thornburg Borough and when they are not working on renovating their house, they like to be outside whether that is running, going for a bike ride or just a nice walk around the community. Katie has been a life-long traveler and is always up for an adventure; she has been to four continents and forty-three states. Katie brings years of experience working with children as she volunteered with St. Stephen's Summer Celebration over the years. Katie was most recently on staff with the Pittsburgh Leadership Foundation and is currently serving with Haiti H2O in a part-time capacity.

Youth Ministry

The Overnight Before Christmas

I can't wait for our end of year celebration on Friday December 13! CAYG families are invited to join us for Dinner (6-8pm) and CAYG Christmas Entertainment in the Parish Hall. To RSVP and to watch the winner of last year's High School Christmas Movie competition or my family's lip-sync performance, follow the links at <https://caygonline.com/tobc/>. Questions? Email me at alex.banfieldhicks@ascensionpittsburgh.org



CAYG Ski Trip

I am very thankful that CAYG parent Rhonda Smith has offered to host not just one but two Ski Trips in 2020! Middle Schoolers (and parents) can sign up for the Day Skip Trip (Saturday Jan 18th) while High Schoolers (and chaperones) can do so for the Sunday to MLK Monday (Jan 19-20th) Overnight Ski Trip. Do so via <https://caygonline.com/ski-2/>. By the way, CAYG = Church of the Ascension Youth Group.

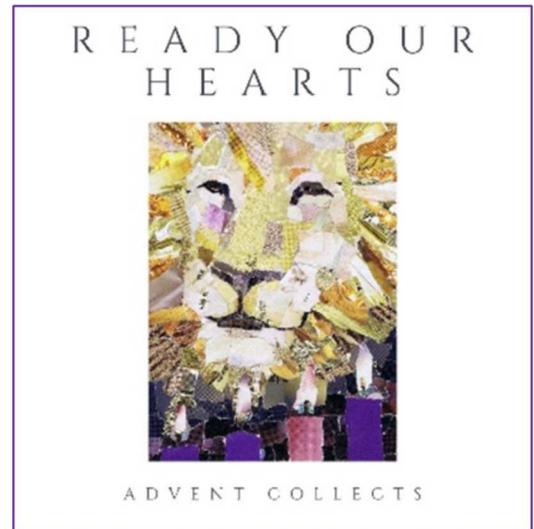
Music and Worship Arts

Ready our Hearts

The Advent Season is filled with artistic guideposts – candle lighting, the greening of our Nave, and the purple vestments all call us to wait expectantly for Christ’s Incarnation and his return. This year, we are excited to announce three additional artistic opportunities for our community:

Ready our Hearts: Advent Collects

written by the Ascension Songwriters Collaborative. The Collaborative has recorded musical settings of the four collects that accompany each week of Advent. Traditionally, a collect is a short prayer meant to guide Christians in reflecting on a particular focus throughout the week. The collect is prayed first at the Sunday service, and then repeated daily as part of the week’s Daily Office (set hour of prayer). The CD and lead sheets are available for free electronic download (ascensionsongwriterscollaborative.bandcamp.com) with limited physical copies



Trinity Advent Devotionals

Ascension artists have been featured in this year’s Trinity Advent devotionals. This devotional provides daily written meditations based on the Daily Office readings of the season. Make sure you pick up your copy today! You can also access the daily devotionals online at www.tsm.edu.

Advent Hymn Sing (Friday, Dec. 20th)

Did you know that “O Come, O Come Emmanuel” is *not* a Christmas song, but actually an Advent hymn based on the ancient O Antiphons? Do you wish you were more familiar with the beautiful hymnody in our 1982 Hymnal? Is there a hymn that you love but is not regularly sung in our services? Come join us at an Advent Hymn sing in our Nave on Friday, December 20th from 7 – 8:30pm. This event is open to all families, fellow ACNA churches, and across denominations! Come for a splendid time of singing and prayer for our city and congregations!

Photo Directory & Photo Booth!

During the Month of December!

Pictorial Directories are such great tools to help connect names with faces for both newer and older members of our church. On Ascension’s website (www.ascensionpittsburgh.org) you will find our password protected pictorial directory. We would love your picture and plan to make it easy for you to get us a picture of you (and your family) in the month of December! Just look for the Photo Booth display in the Education Wing hallway. Take a couple minutes and snap a picture.



Bowles, Scott

How does the Photo Booth work?

All you do is follow the directions – type in your email and then the iPad will tell you what you need to do. If you don’t like the photo taken, you can do as many retakes as you like. Once you are satisfied, the image is emailed both to you and to Ascension for use in our directory. Names and photos are the only pieces of information listed in the password protected directory. Also, if you already have a great photo, you can email it to judy.yadrick@ascensionpittsburgh.org.

For Your Calendar

An Evening to Discuss Child Baptism

Monday, December 16 from 6 – 7:30pm

If you are considering child baptism, an evening is planned to gather at the back of the Nave near the baptismal font to discuss the Anglican doctrine of baptism. It will be a festive gathering since the church will be fully decorated for Christmas. A very light dinner of sandwiches will be provided. Please come and enjoy this evening with Jonathan Warren and other parents at Ascension. Childcare provided. The next baptismal dates on the church calendar include the Baptism of Christ (Sunday, January 12) and Easter (Sunday, April 12). Bring your questions!



Sunday, January 5 from 4:30 – 7:30pm

Are you new or still feel unconnected after a couple years at Ascension? YOU ARE INVITED to a Newcomers' party at the home of Andrea and Jonathan Millard (122 Westchester Place, 15215.) The gathering of newcomers with clergy, staff and a few other long-time Ascensionites will take place on the 12th Night of Christmas, so bring a plate of festive cookies for dessert. Dinner will be provided. Children are welcome.



Premarital Counseling Cohort

Beginning in January 2020

Are you engaged or considering becoming engaged? Ascension uses a pre-marriage curriculum designed by Nicky and Sila Lee (Holy Trinity Brompton; Alpha) and we like to gather a cohort of several couples to walk through the materials together. Rob and Donna Martsolf, a mature couple in our church with tons of experience and a great passion for encouraging young couples, will facilitate the course. The course is 6 weeks in length and the hope is to meet every other week at an agreed time beginning in



New? Interested in Ascension?

Saturday, February 15, 9am – lunch

This class is for all those who are new to Ascension, who wish to find out more about Anglicanism in general or Ascension in particular. It is also part of the pathway to membership. So, mark your calendars! The class is co-taught by all Ascension clergy. We begin with breakfast and conclude with lunch. Childcare is provided.

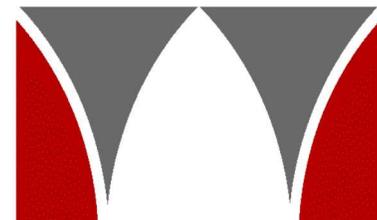
Families: Parenting in a Technological Age

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

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

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

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



CHURCH OF THE
ASCENSION

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

Worship Services

Sunday

9:00 a.m.
Holy Eucharist

11:00 a.m.
Holy Eucharist

Wednesday

Noon
Holy Eucharist
in the Gordon Chapel

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

