



JEHOVAH-JIREH: *The Lord will provide!*

In Genesis 22 we read the story of Abraham and Isaac, where God tested Abraham to see if he would trust him. It's a gripping and scary story, the climax of which is the provision of a ram caught in a thicket for Abraham to use as a sacrifice. The story foreshadows God offering his only Son, Jesus as a sacrifice for us. Abraham called the place where this happened, *Jehovah-Jireh*, which means, "The Lord will provide."

Like you, I am conscious of and grateful for the many ways God continues to be our provider. There are so many examples we could give of God's provision to us at Ascension in recent years. While many have worked, prayed, and given generously, the Bible tells us that it is God alone who gives the growth (1 Corinthians 3:7). I think sometimes we (perhaps pastors especially) can be overly focused on how many people attend church on Sundays — perhaps you've heard the joke that you can always spot a pastor in a restaurant... he or she is the only person counting how many are there! That said, numbers matter because people matter. We want to see more people coming to know and love God, to find healing, forgiveness, hope and direction in Christ. Financial numbers matter too, because we are called to be wise financial stewards of the funding given for the work of God's Kingdom.

Giving and Attendance both up 10% in 2019

It is with deep gratitude that I am delighted to report that our year-end giving for 2019 ended with an increase of 10% over the prior year. Attendance was also up 10%, with the Average Sunday Attendance being 486 and many Sundays exceeding 500 people. As we seek to complete the pledge-gathering part of our three-year capital campaign, *More than Stones*, we are blessed to see the Lord's provision in our midst. The continuing growth is a constant reminder of why we need to expand and improve our facilities to better enable the ministry and mission to which God has called us — welcoming our neighbors and reaching the nations.

Thanksgiving, love and prayers for Bob Forrest

As many will know, Bob Forrest has faithfully served as our Maintenance Manager for over a decade. The past year has been especially hard for Bob and his family as Bob has been battling stage 4 cancer. In January Bob went onto long-term medical disability enabling him to focus on his health. Please continue to hold Bob in your prayers that he may find rest, peace, joy and encouragement in this difficult season. We are deeply grateful for his work and presence among us at Ascension.

Welcome to Isaiah Bornman as our new Maintenance Manager

I am pleased to announce that Isaiah Bornman has joined the staff team as our new Maintenance Manager. Isaiah is a Wheaton grad and comes to us after several years of working in maintenance and repair shops where he has built a wealth of knowledge and experience. If you don't yet know Isaiah and his wife, Amy (also a Wheaton grad, and one of the artists in our congregation) do please welcome them and pray for them as Isaiah takes on this new and important job at Ascension.

2020 Annual Parish Meeting - Please plan to attend!

This year's Annual Meeting is scheduled for *Sunday, February 16th at 1:00 pm* in the New Catacombs. This meeting is especially important this year as we will be giving an update on the *More Than Stones* initiative. We hope to have received firm bids from contractors and have more news regarding the possible phasing of the work to be done and a

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start date. This meeting will provide an excellent opportunity to hear more about the vision for ministry and mission at Ascension and will include a report from the team recently returned from Thailand. There will also be important reports from our treasurer, senior warden and rector. Additionally, we will be electing three new members of the congregation to serve on the vestry. The meeting is open to all (although only adult members are eligible to vote).

As the Lord has so faithfully provided for us in the past, I am confident he will continue to do so in the future.

Jehovah-Jireh!

Yours in Christ,

Jonathan N. Millard (Rector)

Vestry Nominees

Robin Capcara

Robin grew up in DuBois, Pennsylvania, the oldest of three children raised by her homemaker mom and electrician dad. She received a B.A. in Political Science from Thiel College and an M.A. in Higher Education from Geneva College. She has also studied in the M.Div. program at Trinity School for Ministry. She lives in Forest Hills.

She has worked in ministry for nearly 40 years. She worked with the CCO doing campus ministry, supervision and training for 21 years. She worked at Ascension in Adult Formation for 5 years and currently works as campus staff for InterVarsity in faculty ministry at CMU, Pitt and Duquesne, and as a public speaker, consultant and spiritual director. At Ascension she serves as a lay reader, lay eucharistic minister, prayer minister and ESL Bible study leader.

She is mom to the delightful Ian Capcara (Allison Park) and Zoë Welsh (Wilksburg) and mother-in-law to the amazing James Welsh. She loves the woods, crime novels, board games, walking and hiking.



Brian Janaszek

Brian is a life-long resident of Pittsburgh. He and his wife Jen met at Geneva College, and they promptly settled in Pittsburgh. They have two kids, Sebastien and Oren, and live in Morningside, only a stone's throw away from where Brian grew up in Lincoln-Lemington. They have been at Church of the Ascension since 2014.

He and his family spend as much time as possible rock climbing and driving around the United States (which, these days, is not much). He also enjoys standing in the mud on the shore of some wind-swept lake in the middle of nowhere watching Sebastien and the rest of the Central Catholic rowing team.

Brian is employed as a software engineer for a medical devices company. He has served on the boards of directors for Wilksburg Christian Housing and the Southwestern PA Climbers Coalition.



Tyler Marwood

Tyler grew up in Linesville, PA, "where the ducks walk on the fish," and he graduated from Geneva College in 2009. After graduation, Tyler participated in the Pittsburgh Fellows Program, which is when he experienced his first Anglican worship service at St. Stephen's Church in Sewickley. A year later, he moved to Pittsburgh and started attending Church of the Ascension.

Tyler has worked at the CCO (Coalition for Christian Outreach) in the Marketing and Communications Department since 2013. He loves working for an organization that is passionate about reaching college students with the Gospel, connecting them to a local church, and giving them a vision to serve Jesus in their lives.

Tyler and his wife, Kate, live in Brighton Heights with their daughter Mercy, who was born in August of 2018. They love taking walks around the neighborhood and seeing the growing Ascensionite community! Tyler also loves his cat, Booboo, eating ice cream, and reading British novels.



ASH WEDNESDAY:

CONCERNING ASH WEDNESDAY

*The following is taken from
The Book of Common Prayer
(2019), p. 542*

Ash Wednesday marks the beginning of the season of Lent: a time of penitence, fasting, and prayer, in preparation for the great feast of the resurrection.

The season of Lent began in the early days of the Church as a time of preparation for those seeking to be baptized at the Easter Vigil. The forty days refer to our Lord's time of fasting in the wilderness; and since Sundays are never fast days, Ash Wednesday is the beginning of the Lenten Fast.

Throughout the Old Testament, ashes are used as a sign of sorrow and repentance, and Christians have traditionally used ashes to indicate sorrow for our own sin, and as a reminder that the wages of sin is death (Romans 6:23). Like Adam and Eve, we have disobeyed and rebelled against God, and are under the same judgment, "you are dust, and to dust you shall return" (Genesis 3:19).

But as we are marked with ashes in the same manner that we were signed with the Cross in Baptism, we are also reminded of the life we share in Jesus Christ, the second Adam (Romans 5:17, 6:4). It is in this sure hope that we begin the journey of these forty days, that by hearing and answering our Savior's call to repent, we may enter fully into the joyful celebration of his resurrection.

An Invitation to a Holy Lent

In the introduction to the Ash Wednesday liturgy (on the left), three spiritual disciplines are especially commended for the Lenten season: penitence, fasting and prayer. How might we incorporate these practices into our lives this Lent?

PENITENCE:

Penitence means expressing sorrow, regret or remorse because of our sins, including being willing to right a wrong and amend our lives to conform more fully to the likeness of Christ.

Let's be honest: there is little in our culture that helps us name sin for what it is. Liturgy can help. Within the Ash Wednesday liturgy there is a Litany (a list) that specifically names areas of life where we fall short of God's call to love and serve others (*Confession and Litany of Penance*, p 547). The Litany is far from a guilt trip; rather, it is a resource for helping us be as real as possible before the Lord. We do so without fear or dread as we remember our Lord's character, which is always to show mercy to those who ask.

Perhaps you (and your community group) will pray through this litany on a weekly basis, taking time to listen for the Lord's invitation to turn, forgive and return.

Lent is also an especially appropriate time to meet with a clergy member for confession. In Anglicanism we have a saying, "None must; some should; all may." This applies to the rite of confession. While none must, freedom and spiritual healing are often the outcome as we "come clean" before the Lord. For more information about this practice, see *Reconciliation of Penitents*, in the "Healing Rites" section of our Prayer Book (p 223).

FASTING:

Fasting is the act of abstaining from food for a period of time, but it can also be broadened to apply to abstaining from anything that takes our attention from the Lord. We are a distracted people who often have unwholesome appetites for food, drink, and entertainment. During Lent it has been the practice of the church to encourage self-denial as a way to open time for paying attention to God.

Perhaps you (and your community group) will consider supporting one another in fasting, whether from a meal or some other "good thing" that may have become a distraction or thoughtless habit (screen time, social media, etc.).

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ASH WEDNESDAY an Invitation to a Holy Lent continued

PRAYER:

“Prayer,” as Clement of Alexandria wrote, “is keeping company with God.” There are so many forms of prayer, including thanksgiving, petition, and intercession.

Perhaps you (and your community group) will consider a new form of prayer this Lent. You could engage in praying the Psalms, journaling prayer, contemplative prayer, healing prayer, listening prayer, and so on.

Maybe you will pick up an Ascension Prayer Calendar (on resources tables throughout the building) and select a day to pray through the needs listed. Feel free to connect with me (andrea.millard@ascensionpittsburgh.org), Mother Andrea, Director of Prayer Ministries, for ideas and resources.

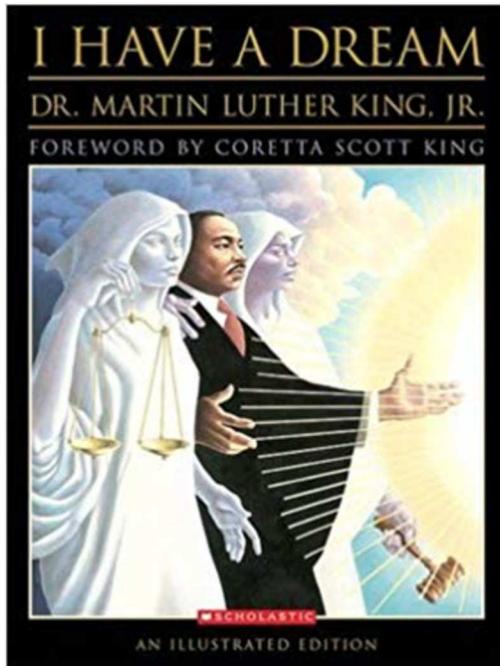
In the words of the Ash Wednesday liturgy, “I invite you...in the name of the Church, to the observance of a holy Lent...”

[The Book of Common Prayer (2019) is available for download at bcp2019.anglicanchurch.net]



Join Ascension clergy as they host several ‘Hard Conversations’ on Fridays in Lent, looking at Race, Politics, Sexuality and Gender. The series will take place from 6:30 – 8pm and will include teaching, testimony and time for questions. Childcare will be provided. Please mark the following Fridays on your calendar and plan to attend: March 6, 13, 20 and 27.

Art and the Symphony of Brotherhood



On Martin Luther King Day, my son and I visited the Carnegie Public Library and borrowed the book *I Have A Dream: An Illustrated Edition*. (Scholastic Press, 1997) Fifteen artists provided stunning interpretations of Dr. King’s famous speech, spoken at the March on Washington in August 1963. The art evoked various questions from my toddler: Was pouring ketchup on the heads of sit-in protestors funny or mean? Why does the policeman look like a giant with a club? These can be challenging and heart-wrenching topics to discuss with our children, but absolutely necessary (in Dr. King’s words) “to transform the jangling discords of our nation into a beautiful symphony of brotherhood.”

In February, also National Black History Month, we are inviting Ascension to join the “symphony of brotherhood” by singing songs that press into injustice, reconciliation and peace. We hope these will become our “work songs”...

As we mend the bonds of peace with those whose lives are closely linked with ours
 (“Make Us One,” Jennifer Bell);

As we embody mercy and compassion in the face of vitriolic polarization
 (“Let Us Be Known By Our Love,” Liturgical Folk);

As we taste and see a neighbor’s culture as it comes alive at the table over a meal
 (“We Will Feast in the House of Zion,” Sandra McCracken);

As we humbly listen to the stories of injustice
 (Hymn #599 “Lift Every Voice and Sing”);

As we intently search for the Imago Dei in the face of both brother and “other”
 (Hymn #529 “In Christ There Is No East or West”).

We will also share a new song, “There Will Be Peace” (Massa/Regan), recently finished at the 2020 Trinity School for Ministry’s Worship Songwriting Workshop, *Songs for the New Eden*. 35 songwriters from across the country gathered to discuss how songwriters might stir our congregation’s imagination of the New Eden. “There Will Be Peace” specifically expounds on imagery from St. Augustine’s *City of God* and Isaiah 26 and 32 (*Peace between man and his Maker/Peace between family and neighbor/Peace as all nations sing together/Peace unto you be now and forever.*)

by Elise Massa,
 Asst. Director of Music and Worship Arts
elise.massa@ascensionpittsburgh.org

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, February 13
Valentine Party
12:30PM – 2:30PM

Have you ever thought of going to a counselor?

The Rev. Connie Hughes will share with us what she has learned from being a counselor. Connie is Pastoral Care Minister at Christ Church Fox Chapel. She came to faith at a Young Life ranch in 1965. After raising her children and teaching 7th and 8th grade English, she obtained a Masters in Counseling from Duquesne University. She has worked for eleven years as a Licensed Professional Counselor specializing in trauma, addictions, and depression. Connie graduated from Trinity with an Master of Divinity in 2010. Following graduation she joined Christ Church Fox Chapel as Assistant Rector where she was ordained priest in January, 2011. She enjoys fiber arts of all kinds, especially traditional rug hooking, and spending time with her seven grandchildren.



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.

Venite 2020: A Look Ahead



Venite: Ascension Campus Ministry

Venite is a ministry where college students are invited to come, find a community of peers pursuing Christ, and make a home among them at Ascension. Want to know all the current events in the world of Venite? You've come to the right place! Check out all the things we have coming up, and for more information reach out to Leah Hornfeck (leah.hornfeck@ascensionpittsburgh.org) or Alex Banfield Hicks (alex.banfieldhicks@ascensionpittsburgh.org).

Weekly Fellowship Gatherings:

Wednesdays at 8:30pm in Ascension's Old Catacombs

Venite's weekly gatherings include times of worship, teaching, discussion, and prayer. We are currently going through a series on *The Surprising Goodness of God*, where we are studying Exodus 34: 6-7 to see what God has to say about himself. We would love for you to join us as we explore and unpack God's goodness together!

Midday Prayer:

Each week we meet on campus (at Pitt in Bellefield Church and at CMU in the UC Chapel) to pray together for each other and for the stresses that come with student life. *Contact us to find out the days and times for those meetings on your campus!*

Sunday Student Brunch:

Our next Brunch is Sunday, March 22nd at 12:30pm!

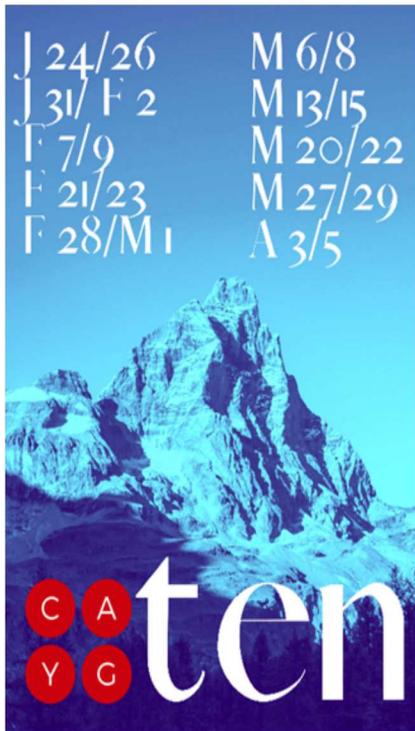
Throughout the semester we've planned 3 Sunday Brunches at Ascension following the 11am service at 12:30pm. This is a great opportunity to connect with other students as well as other members of Ascension's wider community. It's also a great opportunity to bring friends along and introduce them to Venite. We won't have a student brunch in February due to CCO's Jubilee Conference, February 21-23.

Jubilee 2020:

Join us for a weekend of powerful worship, incredible speakers, and engaging workshops, and discover what it means to live faithfully in every area of life alongside thousands of other college students from across the country at the CCO's Jubilee Conference. *The conference takes place in February from Friday, the 21st to Sunday, the 23rd.* For information info, check out the website at <https://www.jubileeconference.com/>. If you're not a college student but are interested in Jubilee, you can sign up to volunteer for the conference and attend for free! For more information about this, reach out to Leah Hornfeck (leah.hornfeck@ascensionpittsburgh.org).



Youth Ministry



In Exodus 19:4-6 we read: Then Moses went up to God; the Lord called to him from the mountain, saying, *“Thus you shall say to the house of Jacob, and tell the Israelites: You have seen what I did to the Egyptians, and how I bore you on eagles’ wings and brought you to myself. Now therefore, if you obey my voice and keep my covenant, you shall be my treasured possession out of all the peoples. Indeed, the whole earth is mine, but you shall be for me a priestly Kingdom and a holy nation.”*

Jumping forward to the next chapter, we then read in Exodus 20: *Then God spoke all these words: “I am the Lord your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of slavery; you shall have no other gods before me.”* This is the first of the ten commandments. But these commandments aren’t given as burdens for us to bear, or standards for us to feel guilty about, or tests we need to pass to prove that we belong to God.

The context in which the ten commandments are given is clear; the people already belong to God, and they have been set free. By observing these ten commandments God’s people both demonstrate what belonging to God looks like, and will continue to enjoy the freedom and flourishing that life with God brings, avoiding falling back into various kinds of slavery and idolatry.

Do pray for the youth ministry volunteer team, the middle school youth group (Friday nights) and the high school youth group (Sunday nights), as we look at each of the ten commandments this Spring, exploring how belonging to God and enjoying freedom with him cultivates the characters and the kind of society that we all long for.

Love Canva?

So do we! But we would also love anyone who would enjoy volunteering an hour a week to design posters, flyers and various other communication pieces for our youth and college ministries to get in touch! You would be free to work in your own time, and would enjoy seeing your creations online and displayed at Ascension, on walls and in print! Email alex.banfieldhicks@ascensionpittsburgh.org to find out more.

Ski Trip Update

A big thanks to Rhonda Smith (pictured bottom left) for hosting and organizing two ski trips this past weekend! While the weather on Saturday certainly put a damper on proceedings, the combination of fresh powder and sunshine on Monday was pretty much perfect! Here is (most of) the Monday crew before heading over to Hidden Valley.



Come to Lynn, MA, this summer!

Would you be interested in joining me, 19 middle and high schoolers, and a team of chaperones, socializing and serving poor communities in Lynn, MA with YouthWorks this summer?.

Make memories and build friendships that last. The youth who really persevere with youth group and beyond (some even now leading in our college ministry) are those who have gone on these summer trips with us. You're the person to make this possible!



We will **partner with local ministries** in Lynn to assist with providing programming for children, caring for the elderly, and supporting community members struggling to meet their basic needs.

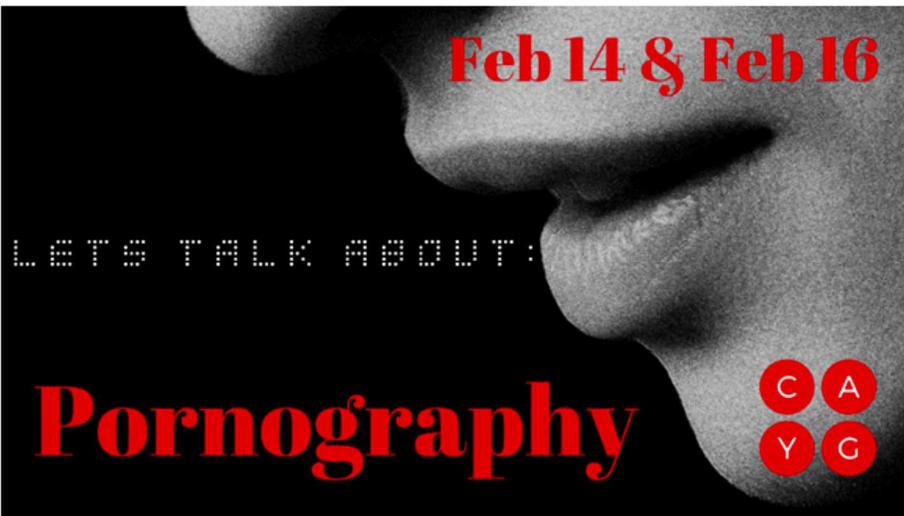
In the evenings we explore neighboring Boston, enjoy North Shore beach, share a meal at My Brother's Table, and host a community cookout.

When? Saturday, June 13 (lunchtime) till Friday, June 19 (back late)

How much? \$99. A fun AND useful vacation for only \$99?! [Real cost \$334]

Chaperone registration deadline is Sunday, February 15.

Contact Alex Banfield Hicks with any questions (alex.banfieldhicks@ascensionpittsburgh.org)



For our next **'Let's Talk About'** special session at CAYG, over the Valentine's day weekend, we will be looking at the pervasive and destructive force that is pornography. "A scientific consensus is emerging that today's porn is truly a public health menace: its new incarnation combines with some evolutionarily-designed features

of our brain to make it uniquely addictive, on par with any drug you might name—and uniquely destructive. The evidence is in: porn is as addictive as smoking, or more, except that what smoking does to your lungs, porn does to your brain." (<https://amgreatness.com/author/pascal-emmanuel-gobry/>)

Pray that these conversations will be useful for all involved, and for the helpful influence of youth group folks in their circles.

MISSIONS: Kathleen McAlister

Born in Philadelphia, PA, but primarily raised in rural Kansas, Kathleen knew from an early age that home would always be more than one place and one set of people. A pastor's daughter, she grew up in a home saturated in scripture and stories of the saints, the idea of missions hovering in the back of her mind.

In 2014, Kathleen returned to Pennsylvania to study English at Grove City College. God used Kathleen's time at college to draw her closer to him and expand her vision of the Kingdom, while teaching her to trust more and more on his providence and plan. In the summer of 2017, between her Junior and Senior year, Kathleen had the amazing opportunity to serve as a Serge intern on the team in Ireland. Serge is an international mission organization with over 225 missionaries worldwide. Those two months of community, worship, prayer, and service had a deep impact on the day-to-day living of Kathleen's faith, as she began to see her brokenness as a means in which to preach the gospel and the comfort of the breadth of God's love. After graduation in 2018 she began to prepare to join the Serge Ireland full-time.

Kathleen raised 100% of her needed support, completed her visa process, said good-byes to family and friends and arrived in Ireland in September 2019 as an apprentice missionary for Serge Ireland. Kathleen was assigned to work with **Holy Trinity Anglican Church of Ireland in Rathmines**, a moderately affluent neighborhood of Dublin. The church dates back to the early 19th century but more recently was on the verge of dying out. The current rector was asked to plant a church within the existing body. The congregation has grown and now has university students, families and young professionals who have joined the original parishioners.

Since September Kathleen has settled into her new community and has been getting involved with various ministries including Come Together Tuesdays, a community outreach to the elderly and often lonely local population. She was heavily involved with Christmas festivities including the Nativity Play in children's ministry, a large Christmas social for all congregants as well as an ecumenical Advent service. She is excited to begin the new year helping with a newly created Junior High Youth Group.

Praises and Prayers:

Kathleen is grateful for all who have partnered with her in this work of the gospel

Huge praise for the arrival of three new Serge teammates

Thanksgiving for the provision of an apartment (with heat!) as well as an awesome roommate

Pray as Kathleen enters the 'Bleak Midwinter' of the darkness, gray, and cloudiness of an Irish winter

Pray for the Irish Prayer Summit in July

Pray for 'Encounter' which is the Serge Ireland two-month internship aimed at college-aged people to study the Bible, and to learn practically what life as a child of God looks like. Kathleen will be involved with the planning and running of this program.



Holy Trinity



MISSIONS: Campus Ministry Support

In addition to all the work that Leah Hornfeck and Alex Banfield Hicks do to encourage and grow a thriving campus ministry, we have the pleasure of supporting several people who work in campus ministry in different ways. Specifically, we have four additional people who worship at Ascension who are on staff with the *Coalition for Christian Outreach* (CCO) and one person who works through *Intervarsity Christian Fellowship*.

With the CCO are:

Jonny Cagwin – Staff Care & Discipleship Coordinator and Campus Minister to CMU

Tyler Marwood – Marketing Coordinator

Shelly Riemersma – Staff Spiritual Director

Ginger Weeber – Gift & Stewardship Officer



Jonny



Tyler



Shelly



Ginger



Robin

Intervarsity Christian Fellowship Faculty Ministry:

Robin Capcara works at Carnegie Mellon, Pitt and Duquesne to equip the Christian professors to be a redeeming influence at the university and reaches out with the love of Christ to non-believing professors.

Together, these dear people are working to see a generation of college students and staff transformed by the power of Jesus Christ and His gospel reaching the world for the glory of God. Ministry to college students, done in partnership with the local church, has taken on greater urgency. Churches from across the country have realized the need for direct ministry to college students – the next generation of leaders in the church. The CCO has begun to branch out from its beginnings in the tri-state area to a more national level from Boston, MA to Fresno, CA. Additionally, the CCO is collaborating with other national campus ministries to pray for students, faculty and staff on every campus across the United States. There are 4,948 campuses ranging from large state schools to elite private universities, community colleges to technical schools.

Prayer Requests:

Pray laborers for the harvest, specifically for more staff for open positions.

Pray for Jubilee, a yearly gathering of the CCO much like Urbana, but geared towards helping students of all vocational callings to bring their faith and their love of God into their studies and then into their professions.

Pray for students to hear the gospel and gain a vision for serving Christ in the world.

Pray for student leaders who are holding to and boldly sharing their faith in Jesus Christ in an often-hostile setting.

Pray for more professors and staff to be open to a relationship with Jesus.

Pray specifically for Ascension's campus ministers

Pray for the new ministry at Clemson University, SC through Christ the Redeemer Anglican Church

Pray for the planning for the spring semester by CCO staffs across the country

Vocational Calling: Loving God and Neighbor

Ascension has as part of its mission statement “Sharing Christ’s Healing with a Broken World.” There are several ways this is envisioned, but one primary way we share the love and healing of Jesus with others is through our work. We have vocations to which we have been called and through which we bring a Christian presence. With that in mind, Ascension leadership is happy to commend Jubilee Professional to you. For more than ten years Jubilee Professional has brought together Christian professionals and thought leaders from across the country to ask a single question: *What does my work have to do with the Kingdom of God?*

Jubilee Professional takes place on Friday of the same weekend and at the same venue as the Jubilee Conference for those in college (see Leah Hornfeck’s article on page 7). Jubilee Professional gathers professionals together to listen to people tell the stories of how they have come to understand their work as a calling to love God and neighbor, to fix what is broken and fill what is missing; to help make things the way they are supposed to be. Those who have been featured in previous years include financial managers and farmers, architects and artists, entrepreneurs and entertainers. Each has shared practical stories of following Jesus through the work that they do every day. For over 10 years the *Coalition for Christian Outreach* has partnered with the *Pittsburgh Leadership Foundation* to produce this unique event for men and women who are one, five, twenty or fifty years out of college!

This year Jubilee Professional will take place on Friday, February 21st at the Westin Convention Center (1000 Penn Avenue, Pittsburgh PA 15222). The plenary speaker will be John Stonestreet who is President of the Colson Center for Christian Worldview. He is a sought- after author and speaker on faith and culture, world-view, education and apologetics. He is the daily voice of BreakPoint, the nationally syndicated commentary on faith and culture founded by the late Chuck Colson. John has co-authored four books, his most recent being *A Practical Guide to Culture*.

If you are interested in finding out more or registering, please visit www.jubileeprofessional.com. You will find a complete list of speakers, schedule and registration information. If you are interested in finding out more by talking to someone, please have a conversation with any of those who work for the CCO that also attend Ascension. Helpfully, names and bios can be found on page 11 of this Ascent!





agapeyear.org
 A Story to Believe In
 A Family to Belong To
 A Kingdom to Build Up

By Nate Twitchell

It is amazing how quickly something that was at first strikingly foreign can become familiar. When you first walk the streets around Saint Andrew's Chiang Mai, your senses are assaulted by the sights and smells of a culture very

different than ours. The air is filled with the scents emanating from roadside eateries. The smell of grilled meats and stir-fried noodles mixes with incense from shrines and spirit houses, exhaust from scooters, and the smell of trees and flowers. Your ears are filled with the sounds of passing cars and motorbikes, people speaking a language that has 5 different tones for pronunciation, the national anthem played over loudspeakers twice daily, and with birdsong. Your eyes are flooded with the bright colors of flowers and traditional Thai weaving, the sight of a family of 4 on a scooter, food being prepared in front of countless shops, and the distinctive orange of a monk's robes. It is a lot to take in.

Our family had the opportunity to spend the first 3 weeks of January in Northern Thailand leading the 6-person team from Ascension as well as our Agape Year Fellows. Within a few days our minds and bodies acclimated to the once foreign sights, sounds, and smells and we were able to see beyond the cultural differences to the great spiritual need that exists in Thailand. Walking past the shrines and spirit houses that dot the neighborhood, you are struck by the hopelessness and spiritual uncertainty that is so pervasive in Thailand. Visiting a temple allows you to see past the beautiful architecture to the fear that the Thai people feel so deeply. And when you talk to Christians in Chiang Mai, you hear their stories of finding freedom from the system of luck, black magic, and earning merits that held them in bondage.

One of the truths of who God is that kept coming back to me during our time in Chiang Mai was that our God is a God who desires to be known. When you see the gods of Thailand, the idols, the art, you see something that is other, something so unknowable. As we walked the streets of the city and sat with its residents, I kept thinking about how meaningful it was that we were there during the church seasons of Christmastide and Epiphanytide. In these seasons of the church calendar we celebrate the reality of the God with us, the God who took on flesh and walked amongst us, and the God who reveals himself to the whole world.

In Acts 17 the Apostle Paul tells the people of Athens that what they were content to worship as unknown desires in fact to be known, to be close to His people. It is not hard to see god as unknowable in Chiang Mai. The golden idols and sculptures that you see on a daily basis do not depict God drawing all people unto Himself. They do not show Him in whom we live and move and have our being.

What a joy it was to be in that place with our partners at Saint Andrew's who daily proclaim the truth of Emmanuel, God with us. Thank you for your prayers and support as we walked with our Fellows through the challenges of culture shock to help them see how God is at work in Thailand, drawing a family together out of every tribe, tongue, and nation.

Ministry Focus: The Altar Guild

The Altar Guild is a group of friendly, dedicated people who share a special bond. Those involved are invited to participate in the process of learning and serving together as part of a team. The quiet service of the altar guild – often unseen – is essential to our common life in preparing our gathering space for worship. Participants on the altar guild discover our deep Anglican heritage and the rich symbolism of our liturgy.



What does the Altar Guild do?

Work on a team under the leadership of a team captain. Currently our captains are Tissy Forsythe, Melita Carter and Susan Bailey

Prepare the Nave for worship services

Laundering and ironing linens

Polishing silver and brass

Arranging the flowers for the altars

Decorating the church following the church calendar and liturgical colors

Disassemble the altar after services

When does the Altar Guild do its work?

Altar guild members participate on one of three teams. Each team serves one month each quarter. Teams work on Saturday mornings from about 9:30 – 11am. They also clean up on Sundays after the 11am service. Some team members can do both Saturday and Sunday whereas others can do only Saturdays or only Sundays. Whatever assistance team members can offer is gladly welcomed!

Altar Guild may be for you if:

You would like to serve in a very quiet yet important way.

You don't mind performing a function that is rarely noticed except when it is not done!

You only have a few hours each month available to serve.

You want to be involved, but don't feel comfortable "up front."

You like to set the stage for important events.

You would enjoy the opportunity to learn more about the elements and symbolism of our liturgy.

You have an artistic flair

You don't mind a bit of heavy lifting and climbing ladders (each of our team needs at least one person like this – guys are welcome too!)

You want to make some new friends – teams begin their Saturday work with a brief time of prayer in the chancel followed by about 90 minutes of fun work together

Who do I contact if I want to be involved?

Please contact our Director of Ministry, Marilyn Chislaghi. You can reach her at 412-621-4361, ext. 219 or email marilyn.chislaghi@ascensionpittsburgh.org.



For Your Calendar

Shepherd's Heart Sundays - February 2 and 23

February 2nd may be most famous as Groundhog Day, but it's also Ascension's first date this year to serve dinner at Shepherd's Heart, an Anglican church near Mercy Hospital that invites and embraces our homeless neighbors, especially veterans, as members of their congregation. Each Sunday, following their 5:15pm Eucharist, they offer a free meal to anyone present. Ascension is one of many congregations and groups who cook and serve this dinner. We're scheduled to serve 6 Sundays in 2020; the second date is February 23rd. For February 2nd, one of Ascension's community groups has graciously offered to serve the meal, so we only need help with cooking. We can start cooking in our kitchen at Ascension after the 9am or the 11am service, depending on which one you attend; total time is about 2 hours, though you can leave anytime you need to. If you'd like to volunteer, please contact Jonathan Sewall at 412-452-1935 or jonathan.sewall@gmail.com in advance. Thank you!



International Ministry Meals

English Classes and the Discovering God Course began in January and continues through spring

If you would like to make a dinner for the Discovering God course and/or cookies for the Wednesday night or Monday morning English Classes, or if you would like to attend the English classes one time and see what they're like, or if you have a talent to share or something you could present for a class, please email Lu Ann at PittsburghEnglish4U@gmail.com and we will set up a date.

OWLS (Older, Wiser, and Lively Saints) Fellowship

Thursday, February 13 from 12:30 – 2:30pm

Join our older saints for a delicious lunch and presentation. OWLS meetings take place on the second Thursday of each month. Parking restrictions will be lifted for people to park on the streets and the Neville Street lot will be reserved for OWLS participants. There is a \$10 charge for lunch, but first-time friends are free! **Please RSVP to Ann Tefft** at 412-526-1107 or tefft.ann@gmail.com. To see what's up this month, see the full article on page 6.

Special Needs Ministry: Capernaum Friends Club

Saturday, February 15 from 2 – 4pm

Our special needs friends will enjoy music, dancing, and pizza in celebration of Valentine's Day. New volunteers and dance partners all welcome! For more info, please reach out to Keira at keirafuener@gmail.com.



Ash Wednesday Services

Wednesday, February 26 at Noon and 7pm

Please consider keeping 'a holy Lent' and join us on Ash Wednesday. We will have services at Noon and 7pm. Childcare will be provided at both services.



Ash Wednesday derives its name from the practice of blessing ashes made from palm branches that we also blessed on the previous year's Palm Sunday, and placing them on the heads of participants to the accompaniment of the words "Remember that you are dust, and to dust you shall return."

According to the gospels of Matthew, Mark and Luke, Jesus spent 40 days fasting in the desert, where he endured temptation by Satan. Lent originated as a mirroring of this, fasting 40 days as preparation for Easter. Ash Wednesday, a day of fasting, is the first day of Lent. It occurs 46 days before Easter (40 fasting days and 6 Sundays which are non-fasting days) and can fall as early as February 4 or as late as March 10.



There are two great opportunities coming up to build relationships with staff, clergy and other members of Ascension's congregation, as well as to get to know the whys and whats of Ascension and Anglicanism more generally. No RSVP for either is needed – all welcome including the kids.

Explore Ascension

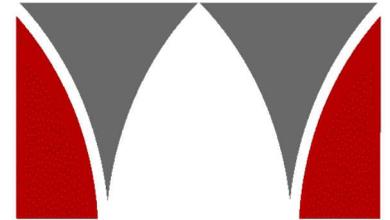
Saturday, February 15, 9am – lunch

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. The class is co-taught by all Ascension clergy. We begin with breakfast and conclude with lunch. Childcare is provided. Mark your calendars and plan on coming!

Newcomer Lunch

Sunday, March 15 after 11am service

Join clergy & staff after the 11am service for lunch. Are you new or still feel 'newish' after having been here for a while? Interested in joining a Community Group? Interested in finding a ministry to serve? Bring yourselves, your kids (if you have kids!) and your questions - and church leaders will provide conversation and lunch!



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

Address

4729 Ellsworth Ave.
Pittsburgh, PA 15213
Phone: 412-621-4361
Fax: 412-621-5746

Website

www.ascensionpittsburgh.org

The Ascent

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Marilyn Clifton Chislaghi, Editor
Judy Yadrick, Publisher

Ascent Deadline

Articles for the March Ascent are due Wednesday, February 12. The publication will be available Sunday, March 1.