



Ascension Mission Partners and Covid-19

It is wonderful that, despite our external circumstances, we still have the hope of our risen Lord! We are an Easter people and we have an Easter hope! Alleluia!

In this Ascent we are going to be looking beyond our own circumstances to focus on our mission partners by asking two questions: How has the Covid-19 pandemic affected them and how can we support them in prayer? We typically feature one Ascension mission partner in each Ascent, so it is with delight that we have been able to communicate with almost all of our partners and have articles from most of them to share with you.

In the past year some new thinking has gone into mission and outreach. We have begun to categorize our budget in ways different to the past by focusing on the following components of a healthy mission budget that were commended to us by the Rev. Canon Yee Ching Wah, Dean of the Anglican Church of Thailand and Director of Mission for the Diocese of Singapore, when he visited us this past October for Ascension's Parish Retreat. A healthy mission budget should:

- Reflect the church's calling
- Be strategic (it is focused, it goes 'long' and 'deep')
- Take a tiered approach so that corporate calling and individual callings are clearly outlined and appropriately supported

Overall, 10% of prospective pledge and giving income has been earmarked in the 2020 Budget for outreach/mission. Our mission budget has three Tiers:

Tier One reflects the Corporate Calling of Ascension. It represents 56% of our budgeted mission and outreach giving. Included in this tier is giving toward the Thailand Partnership, the Ascension International Ministry as well as the Ascension Campus Ministry.

Tier Two reflects money directed in support in individual callings of Ascension Missionaries. It represents 25% of our budgeted mission and outreach giving. Support for the following mission partners is included in this tier: Nate and Erika Twichell, David and Debbie Kornfield, Jewel Anita Hendrix, Anne and Frank Bernardi, Kathleen McAlister, Ardath Smith, Renee Smith, David Meeks, Olivia Skal.

Tier Three reflects money directed toward different agencies and organizations that Ascension partners with, both local and international. It represents 19% of our budgeted mission and outreach giving. Support for the following mission partners is included in this tier: East Liberty Family Health Care Center, Shepherd's Heart, East End Cooperative Ministry, Kairos Prison Ministry, Women's Choice Network, Seeds of Hope, Open Hand Ministry/Circles, Trinity School for Ministry, Society of Anglican Missionaries and Senders, Anglican Frontier Missions.

Please read the articles in this Ascent and continue to uphold our missionaries and mission partners in prayer during this difficult time.

Yours in Christ,
Jonathan Millard (Rector)



Thailand Partnership

An Update on the Ministry of St. Andrew's Anglican Church in Chiang Mai



Jeanne Yee Ya Hui and her husband Gerry serve as missionaries at St. Andrew's Centre. They are pictured here with their three daughters, Elizabeth, Kathleen and Zoe.



*"The Church is not the building, It's the people ...
It's not just the gathering, it's also the scattering."*

- John Wimber

Like many parts of the world, life for many in Thailand has been disrupted and worries have mounted in the face of the Covid-19 pandemic. The Thai Prime Minister ordered a nation-wide Emergency Decree on March 25th for a partial shutdown to stem the spread of the virus.

Besides the Covid-19 situation, Chiang Mai and many northern parts of Thailand were hit by unprecedented levels of air pollution these past several weeks as intensifying forest fires sent PM2.5 levels in some areas up to 592 — which is almost 12 times above safe levels.

To follow are some highlights taken directly from an update written by Jeanne Yee Ya Hui who was with us last fall at Ascension's Parish Retreat.

English language Outreach at the Community Learning Centre

The leadership team remains thankful to God for an enthusiastic group of students who have put in much effort to learn English. They have improved tremendously, especially in their pronunciation. It is such a joy seeing them laugh and enjoy themselves while learning. Due to the virus situation, the last two sessions of lessons were taught via video conferencing. The next term will be taught online and will start the third week of April.

The team is particularly thankful to God for 17-year-old Mochi who wants to begin to attend church on Sundays and to find out more about God, with her mother's blessings (which is critical in Buddhist culture). Please pray for Mochi to continue to experience God personally, and also for deeper relationships to be built with this group of students in the next term.

Teachers' Professional Training and Team Building Session

We thank God for a blessed time of teacher training in early March. Jeanne shared with the teachers and staff about the mission, vision and core values of the school and what teachers and staff of St. Andrews School stand for. It was good to re-visit the purpose of this School and how we can continue to serve together with the aim of this School being a channel of blessing from God to our children, their families, and to society. Gerry led everyone in team building games and we had a fun and relaxing time of bonding and deepening our relationships as co-workers in Christ.

St. Andrew School's Response to the Covid-19 Situation



Summer School 2020 (April through mid-May) has been cancelled because schools have been ordered to close since March 26th due to the partial lock-down by the Thai government. Our parents and children have indicated their disappointment, but they absolutely understood the need to close the school. St. Andrews School has put in social distancing steps at the school workplace such as 'Staggered Work Days' and 'Work From Home' measures for teachers and staff.

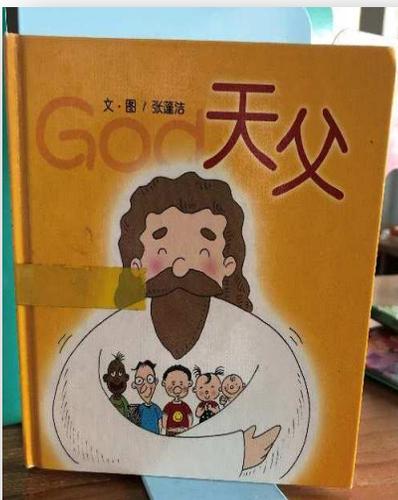
Jeanne has been tele-communicating with teachers regularly to continue to give academic direction and pastoral support to them in their work preparation as well as for emotional needs, especially for the English teachers who have family members back in their home country.

St. Andrews School hopes to re-open for Academic Year 2020-2021 on May 18th. However, we are preparing and training our teachers to conduct home-based learning should

the school closure order extend. Gerry has been training teachers in pairs, with important and computer technology skills needed should home-based learning become a reality in May. Thank you for all of your care and prayer support as we continue to serve in Chiang Mai. Please pray with us as we offer pastoral care & support in the church and in the school during this period. Please pray that we may be a church that is not bound by walls. We pray that many will see and experience Jesus, the light in the midst of the darkness.

A Request from St. Andrews Preschool

Would you be willing to video yourself reading a children's book appropriate for a 5-year-old? The teachers at St. Andrew's are taking turns reading books to their children and wondered if you would like to be a guest reader for their classroom? Here's what you need to do by May 1, 2020:



- Choose a book appropriate for a 5-year-old.
- Camera up:
 - Have a crisp background, not too many distractions.
 - Be sure that your face and the entire book can be seen. (Please be sure the camera is stabilized so there is no movement.)
 - Be sure to have the volume up on your phone while recording.
- Say Hello to the children.
- Introduce yourself: Name & where you are from.
- Read the title of the book, author, and illustrator.
- Read the entire book. Most children are not native English speakers, so please read in a clear and slow pace.
- When your video is complete text or e-mail it to Charity Wahrenberger at 814-312-2059 or charityhaubrich@gmail.com

Visit this link to view an example: <https://photos.app.goo.gl/Po5x72C2No>

Ascension Campus Ministry

Venite Goes Virtual



A month ago, students at the University of Pittsburgh and Carnegie Mellon University were on Spring Break, and we were planning a new series, ironically enough, on the importance of connection with God and others called *Showing Up*. Of course, we had no idea how far in the opposite direction things would go so quickly. Now, with showing up anywhere—physically at least—being discouraged, we needed to change our plans literally overnight.

It's been a whirlwind, and though our ways of doing ministry have been radically reconstructed over the past few weeks, our mission is still the

same. “*Venites invite college students into a deeper understanding of the Gospel, a broader vision of God’s Kingdom, and richer relationships within the diversity of Christ’s body at Church of the Ascension and beyond.*” We are still doing this. Through weekly fellowship gathering over Zoom we are watching and discussing the *For the Life of the World* video series, checking in on each other, and praying for one another. We are also encouraging and equipping students to take their faith into their own hands even more. People who grew up in the church often talk about college being the time where they “made their faith their own” as opposed to just continuing to go along with their parent's beliefs, and in this season it could be easy to revert back to these old habits and ways of thinking. So, we’re urging students to continue their personal discipleship and live out their faith in the context of their households. For some this has proven to be even more difficult and countercultural than living out their faith on campus.

While most of the work we’ve been doing has simply been helping students cope with the reality of this crisis and begin to walk faithfully into this new unknown, we’re hopeful that there is great untapped potential and much that God could do in this season. We’re hoping to move with creativity into new mechanisms of ministry, recognizing that even when we finally see an end to the crisis mode that we are currently in, things will likely not be going back to the way they were. So, we move forward trusting in Christ to restore, confirm, strengthen, and establish us. You can contact Leah Hornfeck at (leah.hornfeck@ascensionpittsburgh.org).



Campus Ministry: Coalition for Christian Outreach

In addition to all the work that Leah Hornfeck and Alex Banfield Hicks do to encourage and grow a thriving campus ministry through Venite, Ascension has 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*. All are working to see a generation of college students and staff transformed by the power of Jesus Christ.

Serving with the CCO are Jonny Cagwin (Staff Care & Discipleship Coordinator and Campus Minister to CMU), Shelly Riemersma (Staff Spiritual Director), Ginger Weeber (Gift & Stewardship Officer) and Tyler Marwood (Marketing Coordinator). Tyler has been the brains behind Ascension’s livestreamed services, and we are truly grateful for all he has done to help us continue to function and flourish through the pandemic! Thank you Tyler!

Here's a word from Vince Burens,
President and CEO of the Coalition for Christian Outreach:

So how does ministry on campus *without* the campus? The how has changed, but the what and why remain the same. Our staff are figuring out creative ways to continue connecting with students—calling, texting, face-timing, hosting Bible studies via Google Hangouts and Zoom video calls, and reaching out in tangible ways to students. Virtual Bible studies around the country are drawing record numbers of students—students who never accepted invitations to attend in-person Christian gatherings on campus are hungry for connection and thirsty for truth. And our training department is resourcing our staff to engage with students to help them create a rule of life during these disorienting times.



Shelly



Jonny



Ginger



Tyler



Robin Capcara with InterVarsity Faculty Ministry

Robin works with *InterVarsity Christian Fellowship Faculty Ministry* to equip Christian professors to be a redeeming influence and reaches out with the love of Christ to non-believing professors.

Here's a word from Robin:



Robin

Faculty ministry in the time of COVID-19 is strange – as life is for all of us. All three of the universities where I minister to faculty - CMU, Pitt and Duquesne - closed their campuses to all but essential employees in mid-March. Students vacated residences halls and apartments when they could. Others with nowhere to go (e.g. international students) have stayed and are isolated and cut off from home and family.

Teaching shifted to online classes. Many professors had never taught online before and universities scrambled to equip them with the necessary skills. They have worried about students that they could not find and who didn't respond to email. They have been helping students with broken computers, no internet access or who are caring for sick relatives while carrying full course loads.

Some research has continued but many labs are shut down leaving faculty, their research, their grad assistants and their funding in limbo. Art shows, theater productions and graduation ceremonies have all been canceled. Seniors and grad students finishing their programs cannot defend their theses and are panicking about canceled summer internships and job interviews. Faculty hear about all of this and try their best to comfort and advise their students.

I have offered weekly prayer meetings via Zoom for the faculty at all three universities. The prayer meeting at CMU was initiated by a faculty member who saw a need. She subsequently asked me to lead it. Faculty have responded at each school and have expressed deep appreciation for these prayer meetings. Professors are intelligent, competent people who are used to handling most issues that come their way. But they, like all of us, are completely out of their depth when facing this virus and its effects. One senior administrator was in tears during our first prayer session because of the weight of the numerous critical decisions she was making. She was truly grateful that there was a group of Christian faculty praying for the university.

Please pray that Christian faculty who have come together virtually during this crisis might be willing to continue to meet to encourage one another after the pandemic is over. Pray that non-Christian profs might be open to God as they face questions about life, death, and meaning during this bewildering time. (robin.capcara@gmail.com)

International Ministry



By LuAnn Pengidore

“Do not be afraid. You have seen how God goes before you, carrying you as a parent carries a child.”

Deuteronomy 29:31

Along with 38 regular volunteers, I am facilitating the involvement of internationals in weekly English classes, volunteer opportunities, conversation partners, churchwide activities, and weekly Bible studies. The goal of this program is to offer excellent English classes with some cultural/history lessons to those in our surrounding communities. For those interested, we also offer opportunities to explore Christianity

and the Church. Finally, we try to help those who are isolated or have needs, connecting them to other internationals or individuals and families at Ascension.

Our participants live mainly in Oakland, Shadyside, Squirrel Hill and Bloomfield and they work in various fields, such as restaurants, homecare workers, cleaning services as well as universities and hospitals. Others are spouses of researchers and full-time parents. This year, our students stem from 24 countries, including Jordan, Iran, Algeria, Chad, Sri Lanka, and Nepal. However, most of our students hail from Venezuela, China, Japan, Colombia, Brazil, Russia and the Ukraine.

Our routine schedule is to have three 13-week semesters with three weeks break in between. We offer field trips, Shakespeare, pronunciation and cooking classes during those breaks, especially in the summer. However, our spring semester has been extended due to the shut-downs of Covid-19. Currently, we have five English classes that have gone online as well as several weekly conversation partners online. In addition, six regular Bible studies have continued online. These studies have met students at all English levels using the Jesus Story Bible, the Book of Mark NIRV, the Discovery Bible study program, and excerpts of Luke. Before the shutdown, students were cooking with Jonathan Sewell for Shepherd’s Heart, and one student led a weekly game night with Alan Irvine and Jen Cummings on Thursday evenings. Presently, a student is working with Timmy Podnar to offer an excellent online curriculum for Monday mornings and has also led museum tours. I have been offering classes three days a week during this transition and will transition to five days a week starting next week.

“Staying Connected” and “offering courage, friendship and resources” are goals during this pandemic. Many teachers have said they want to continue classes as long as the shutdown continues because some students feel isolated. David Van Every, for example, offers a weekly short story reading class and citizenship history lessons. Slowly, students are starting to come online more and more as they do not all have the same technological resources. Meg Sateia has offered two different Bible study times on Mondays for moms to be able to access.

We know that God is a God who sees. He saw Hagar and he sees our students and us. We remind ourselves that God multiplied the loaves and fishes and is not hindered by lack. Here is how you can pray:

- Many students and some teachers are uncertain about their jobs as well as graduate and undergraduate studies
- Health for teachers and volunteers
- Many students were supporting families in countries of need, such as Venezuela.

We would love a few conversation partners – all conversations would of course be over the phone. If interested, email me at PittsburghEnglish4U@gmail.com.

Nate & Erika Twitchell

Never be afraid to trust an unknown future to a known God. – Corrie Ten Boom



Agape Year Fellows in Chiang Mai

Erika and I are the founders and directors of Agape Year, an 8-month long gap year for recent high school graduates. The goal of our program is to anchor young people in their identity in Christ through 8 months of discipleship and cross-cultural service.

Our participants come from all over the country, mainly from ACNA parishes, to live with us on the northside of Pittsburgh and witness how the church is engaged in mission. We then spend two months serving alongside our Thai brothers and sisters in partnership with Saint Andrews Anglican Church Chiang Mai.

Our year concludes with two months of travel around the U.S., visiting churches and telling the story of what we have witnessed God doing in Pittsburgh, Thailand, and beyond.

If I had to choose a word to sum up what this pandemic has meant to the young people we disciple, it would be “uncertainty”. As we have continued to mentor and minister to them via Zoom, the uncertainty they feel about the future is palpable. Will I be able to go to school in the fall? Will my parents be okay? When will I see my friends again?

We serve a God who offers the antidote to uncertainty. So, we continue to mentor our Fellows from a distance, walking with them as they navigate these new waters. Our weekly Monday night call includes our Fellows from all three years of the program as well as our friends in Thailand. The encouragement that comes from those calls is very special.

Many of the ministries that we partnered with have closed their doors or adapted services during the pandemic. These ministries serve the most vulnerable populations - populations that experience material lack or isolation in their daily life. As this pandemic continues, they are experiencing great uncertainty as well. We pray for them often, “that the hope of the poor will not be taken away.”

To be able to live into hope in uncertain times I’ve started working some hours at the Trader Joe’s where I worked before Agape Year. So many of the shoppers express deep anxiety and fear about the future. It’s an awesome privilege to share hope and encouragement with them. Being on the front lines in a grocery store is not something I expected to be doing during a pandemic, but the opportunity to be light is so desperately needed.



Can you pray for our Fellows as they wait to find out what the next year will hold? Can you pray for our friends at Daily Bread, the Pittsburgh Project, Open Hand, and others throughout the city who are trusting God for their daily bread? Can you pray for safety for me as I serve the shopping public? And can you pray for patience for Erika as she runs our household with four young children while continuing to mentor our Fellows? *Never be afraid to trust an unknown future to a known God.* (natetwitchell@sams-usa.org)

Frank & Anne



The last time the entire world was captivated by a single global event was September 11, 2001. During that time, we were preparing to move to North Africa to begin an overseas ministry to Arabs. We were delayed in going by about two weeks. This time we are stuck in a home in Pittsburgh (like the rest of you) but our delay in returning to North Africa will certainly be longer than two weeks.

The country where we live is handling the pandemic

appropriately; they have very few cases, but they are instigating a very strict stay at home policy. Most of our colleagues and teammates are still in the country and they are doing as well as can be expected and eagerly looking for ways to bless others amid very hard times.

What is not fairing so well right now are our businesses. A big part of our ministry is about increasing the Kingdom of God (as well as human dignity) through economic empowerment. To this end we have started and operate two businesses that up until now have significantly blessed the country. Because of the pandemic we have had to lay off some of our employees and that has been very hard. We have, however, been aggressively moving as much of the work as possible to be done over the internet and equipping our staff to work from home. One of our businesses is a language center which was forced to shut down entirely because of the stay at home order. We were able to pivot quickly and train our staff on virtual tools and while many of the language learning sessions are being postponed, others are able to continue and we have even been able to start with new clients in other parts of the world.

We have enjoyed having all our children at home with us. We are very grateful that we were in the U.S. when this lockdown started because our children at college needed a place to go. As you pray for us please remember our son who was planning on getting married this June. We are not sure how the current situation will affect his wedding. We would also appreciate your prayers for our businesses and the wonderful people that we employ. Ask God to sustain them through this and to bless our efforts as we try to lead from afar.

Renee & Ardath Smith with Hineni House



We are sisters who have ministered to cross-cultural workers since the 1990s. We develop and strengthen these workers and other church leaders **so that they can stay in the game!** As founding members of *Hineni House* - a Christian community devoted to worship and prayer, serving those serving God, our activities are summed up with these phrases: Worship in Beauty; Prayer in Action; Serving Those Serving God.

Our U.S. base is located in McDonald, PA. The novel Coronavirus restrictions impact our international travel and our ability to open our home for encounters with the Lord Jesus. But we are fully engaged in ministries of prayer and spiritual direction, nonetheless. We are about to invite overseas workers and others to join us online for Midday Prayer and/or Compline a couple of

days a week. We are excited to provide this to those who desire community worship in these uncertain days.

We are also hearing continued anticipation regarding global revival. May we all be faithful to listen to the Lord in these times and act on his direction in caring well for others. May his Kingdom come on earth as it is in heaven!

Our picture was taken in Utah. We cut short our partner development trip to the Southwest in February/March because of COVID-19. In the midst of serious - even sad - times, we want to remember to laugh and enjoy life – as we did when we “met up” with the Sinclair dinosaur on our way back to Western PA.

May the Lord Jesus bless you with a sense of His Presence. In him, we have all we need. Julian of Norwich lived through the Bubonic Plague. She knew about the uncertainties of times like ours when she wrote:

*God of your Goodness, give us yourself,
For you are enough for us.
And we can ask for nothing less that is to your glory.
And if we ask for anything less we shall still be in want,
For only in you, have we all.*

If you would like more information please contact either one of us at:

Renee Smith: renee4ethne@f-alumni.net

The Rev. Ardath Smith: ardath.smith@novo.org

Jewel Anita Hendrix

with YWAM &



Currently, I am in Tauranga, New Zealand working with both YWAM and Reconciled World. This season of my ministry has two main parts:

- (1.) Training young adults and churches for wholistic missions.
- (2.) Using prayer strategically for missions and extending the Kingdom here on earth.

You can get prayer resources online from reconciled-world.org/pray. Much of the training I use is aligned to

materials you can find at tctprogram.org (also from Reconciled World). I'm usually doing training through the YWAM network both here in New Zealand and other nations. The photo I've included is of me doing a training in the Solomon Islands. In the past few years, God has had me doing more training in the Pacific Islands (unfortunately, I rarely get to see any of the gorgeous beaches). Locally in the town of Tauranga, I partner with various local ministries to support them and provide opportunities for the "Ywammers" to experience different types of ministries to the vulnerable (a crisis pregnancy center, a ministry to the nightlife crowd, a ministry for the homeless, etc.)

This is my seventh year here in New Zealand, and conveniently I had already been planning a 3-month sabbatical time from April to June this year. All of New Zealand went into a 4-week lockdown starting last week, closing most of the local ministries that I partner with. We sent all of our YWAM students home a few days before that. And honestly, it just feels like God has insisted that all my colleagues take a sabbatical too, making it much easier to step away from ministry than usual. Originally, I had thought I would be in the U.S. for May and have the opportunity to spend time with my Ascension family, but instead I am here in New Zealand for the full 3 months. Happily, I have a house to myself (because of the lockdown) and have been able to start off the time just immersing myself and the house in praise and prayer.

Please pray for this sabbatical time to be refreshing and restorative. Pray for me to know more of God and what His will is for my life.

We have been given a hope that the world cannot understand in the face of Covid-19. Let us be a witness to that hope in our families and our communities. I encourage you to keep yourself rooted and grounded in Jesus' love for you, knowing that you will see abundantly more than you can ask or imagine through our God for His glory. (Ephesians 3:17- 21)

I would love to hear from you too! My email is jewelanita@gmail.com.

Olivia Skal with



Just down the hill, across the river, and around the bend from Ascension there is a little Christian Community Development Org. called Urban Impact. We are a non-profit ministry that exists to share the gospel of Jesus Christ with children, teens, and their families in Pittsburgh's Northside neighborhoods through programs in athletics, education, performing arts, and options. I serve as an Urban Missionary in the Athletics department, focusing on spiritual formation and staff development.

With the onset of Covid-19, Bible study groups have still been meeting online, but we have paused bridge-building programs like basketball, tutoring, and performing arts academy. We can no longer offer a physical safe place and loving atmosphere to our students or their families. There are many needs that we are working to understand and meet in some way. Needs have ranged from online tutoring, to toiletries, to food for those with no transportation.

Our biggest prayer is that Jesus would turn many hearts towards Him at this time. Though we have been scattered, the gospel remains unhindered (Acts 8:4). Please pray for

students who are stuck at home with much idle time. Some have abusive family members and are feeling trapped and isolated.

Pray too for the new disciples of Christ who are rising up! I hope you will be encouraged by this text from a fellow Urban Missionary/friend: "Hey guys, I just got off a FaceTime call with 'Q' and 'S' [two students]. We talked for a while and it all was so life giving, but the most encouraging thing is that these guys are LEADING a virtual Bible study ALL ON THEIR OWN!! When I asked what led them to start it, they said they thought people still needed to hear the Word. They're up to 6 other students who regularly phone in and they have been inviting more! In fact, they have had multiple non-believers and atheists phone in. I'm so unbelievably proud of them and I thought it would brighten all of your days."

This new season can feel both beautifully bright and scarily strange. Though I have been deeply strengthened and made hopeful by **all the new that God is doing**, I also can feel overwhelmed by the volatility of the future. Please pray for peace, wisdom and focus for me and my colleagues as we continue learning how to minister and tend to ever-adapting needs during this time .

For more information about my ministry or that of Urban Impact more generally, please email me at olivia.skal@gmail.com

Sarah Laribee with the Classical School of the Medes



Hi! I am in my fifth year of teaching literature to Kurdish students at the Classical School of the Medes in Northern Iraq. Schools shut down abruptly (like 10-minute warning abruptly) on February 25, and the entire country has been on strict lockdown (no driving or walking anywhere) since March 13. The economy is in shambles, like everywhere else, but most people have zero resources, especially in the refugee camps on the outskirts of the city.

My school has made the shaky, hot mess transition to online teaching, and we are dealing with fuel and food shortages, and the same boredom and fear the rest of the world is. The strict, early quarantine has helped Kurdistan be in a slightly better position than other places, and it needed to happen because I can see the mountains of Iran from my room.

My daily routine now basically consists of trying to figure out why dried beans never soften even after 72 hours of soaking, preparing online lessons, watching videos of baby animals being rescued from basketball nets or frozen lakes, and listening to Beethoven's 9th Symphony on repeat. Though, to be fair, aside from the online lesson bit, that was pretty close to my life before.

It's easy to feel kind of impotent in times like this. I've made sort of a trope of myself talking about why "going" matters. Not more than other service, but if you *can* go, what if you did? But now I just feel like one more person not working, taking limited resources, and watching baby animal videos. I think times like this flush out our inner temptation to always be more, produce more, be effective more. And there is nothing less efficient than a national quarantine.

So I have to daily surrender that to Jesus (as I know you do, too). That Christ has done the work, and Christ knew this was coming, and Christ knows me, and Christ cares for those I love in Kurdistan so much more than I do.

I love the Incarnation more than ever. It's great to have an immortal, all-loving, all-powerful, all-knowing God. But as we are forced into isolation, and separated from the ones we love, and as the longing to be together increases, how incredible it is to have a God who came to us. Whose redemption and restoration was about reuniting us with Him. That has become a comfort to me in all of this.

I see my students on Zoom a few times a week, and if you could be praying that even in this disembodied transition, I would model an embodied Savior. And also for the millions of people in Iraq for whom hunger and total poverty is a very real threat right now.

I am thrilled to be worshipping with you online these days, singing "Glory be to Jesus" and am longing more than ever for the eternal Table to be shared with you. All my love, and do yourself a favor... listen to some Beethoven. Oh, and drop me a line at slaribee@gmail.com.

Dave and Debbie Kornfield with OC International



Dave and Debbie Kornfield are working through OC International with national movements of discipling and pastoring of pastors, as well as the “Decade of Discipling” of the World Evangelical Alliance, primarily in South America.

Nearly all of Dave’s scheduled trips and events for the first half of this year have been cancelled. It is emotionally and spiritually challenging for him to feel “stuck” in Pittsburgh.

Please pray that through online mentoring, Dave will be fruitful and effective in supporting leaders in each country who face similar conditions, some with fewer resources.



Just as Dave connects with his teams of leaders online, they must do the same with their teams.

Pray they will grow in their grace and ability to disciple, mentor and support pastors virtually through this unusual time, as pastors in turn seek creative ways to care for their congregations.

Pastors tend to be workaholics, finding enforced isolation very difficult.

Pray that this “desert” time will be transformative as pastors seek to connect their hearts with God, with their teams, and in outreach to their neighbors and others in their spheres of influence.

The World Evangelical Alliance’s plans for advancing the Decade of Disciple-Making launched in Jakarta in November 2019 must dramatically change.

Pray that the follow-up team, of which Dave is a part, will have wisdom from God regarding how to continue this momentum under Covid-19 conditions.

Most Latin American countries embraced social distancing protections late.

Pray for understanding, compliance, and for creative use of limited resources in dealing with the virus impact to come.

Venezuela has almost no functioning health services. For many, starvation is a more real threat than the Coronavirus. Violence is greater than anywhere else in the world except for active war zones. Clean water, soap, electricity, and internet are luxuries, sporadically available even to hospitals. One in six Venezuelans has already fled the country, overloading Colombia especially, which understandably closed its borders with the Covid-19 threat. One friend told us, “Our challenge is to choose which way we want to die.”

Please pray for the faithful pastors doing all they can to care for their families, congregations, and neighbors, in unimaginable circumstances.

Your prayers matter! Pastors and others with whom we work are touched and encouraged when we can tell them Ascensionites care and pray for them, especially Venezuelans. If God gives you insights for us or for them as you pray, please share them with us. Thanks. Please contact us with any questions or comments at debrakornfield@gmail.com or davidkornfield@gmail.com

Kathleen McAlister with Serge



Hi, my name is Kathleen McAlister and I am a Serge Missionary Apprentice, serving in Dublin, Ireland. I'm a bit of a ministry jack-of-all-trades, serving with a local Anglican church as a youth leader, Sunday School teacher, chief tea-maker for the bi-weekly outreach socials for the elderly of our community, seeking to encourage the Irish church and support the kingdom-building work here in post-Catholic, secularist Ireland.

Because almost all of my work and the work of the church is relationally-focused, life came to a near standstill in mid-March with the implementation of social distancing and now full lockdown. We have, however, begun to grow an online presence and find creative ways to reach out, connect, and serve through things like a weekly youth ministry podcast, daily video devotionals from the church team, recorded Sunday services, prayers of the people from homes, hospitals and even grocery stores across the parish. Praise God for technology!

I covet your prayers!

- Please pray that Ireland's cautionary measures would prevent the country from experiencing the same devastation that other European countries have seen.
- Pray also for continued creativity in ministry, for joy in a unique opportunity, and that the church in Ireland would not fear lost ground, but rather have confidence that the same God for whom we labored in the past is still sovereign and still at work, that even now gospel seeds we planted and tended are taking root and sprouting.
- Please pray, also, for me that I follow God's direction in this time as to how best to love well and bring glory to his name. Also pray that I lay the fear I feel of not being able to get home into the hands of Him who is more than able to care for my family. "My flesh and my heart may fail, but God is the strength of my heart and my portion forever" (Psalm 73:26, ESV).

In the loss of so much in the world—life, economic stability, physical connection, future plans—I have found great comfort in my own weak heart finding its strength and satisfaction in all that is left—our good and faithful Father. May you be encouraged by the promises of God to restore all things and by his daily provisions of Himself, leading us to love even in the midst of all the loss, and calling us to be the body of Christ in this world—broken for our healing.



Holy Trinity

You have heard from me and I would love to hear from you!

My email is kmcalister@serge.org.

Kairos Prison Ministries International is about a portion of Matthew 25:36 - "I was in prison, and you visited me."



Kairos consists of three ministries:

Kairos Inside - Men and women volunteers bring the face, heart, and mind of Jesus, and his love, forgiveness, and joy, to the incarcerated "residents" inside prison. This is done by semi-annual four-day "Christianity 101" weekends, with a joyful Sunday afternoon "Closing" open to anyone upon vetted request. The "Closing" is sometimes like sitting on the 50-yard line watching the Holy Spirit at work - experiencing heretofore broken prisoners crying tears of thankful joy and accepting Jesus as their Savior. You'll never forget it!

We follow up this mountain-top experience by weekly two-hour Friday night "Prayer and Share" accountability discipleship sessions, including worship, singing, and break-down small group discussions.



Kairos Outside is similar. It ministers to women (wives, girlfriends, mothers, sisters, daughters, aunts) of incarcerated men and women. The women are themselves in a prison of loneliness, shame, despair, and economic hardship. Women volunteers shower these lady guests with an annual three-day "Christianity 101" October weekend of talks, chapel, small group sessions, love, pampering, food (including an Elegant Sat Night Dinner), and lots of Jesus. A Sunday afternoon "Closing" open to everyone is a similar moving experience. The beautiful, local venue is St Paul Monastery on the South Side Slopes of Pittsburgh over-looking Downtown and the Monongahela River.

Monthly reunions bring volunteers and guests together for fellowship and renewal.

Kairos Torch is a branch of the ministry that focuses on incarcerated teenagers. Currently, there is no Kairos Torch in Pennsylvania. Care to start one up?

The virus pandemic has closed Kairos down. Kairos Inside's four-day March 26-29 Weekend was postponed indefinitely. The next weekend is scheduled for October 8-11. Friday night Prayer and Share is also postponed indefinitely. The residents look forward to this fellowship so much!

A recent Kairos Outside Reunion was canceled, as were two important fundraisers. What a disappointment - Kairos depends on fundraising. We join with many others in praying that life will return to normal so that our Kairos Inside and Outside teams will be able to meet together to prepare and plan to present the love, forgiveness, and joy of Jesus Christ to our Kairos Outside guests and our Kairos Inside prison residents at our scheduled fall dates.

Our Ascension leadership team is made up of three – Ron and Judy Yadrick and Jackie McKee. Judy has been experiencing depression which has been exacerbated by the pandemic, and Ron is working from home. Jackie is a therapist and has been encountering anxious and fearful clients. Please keep us in prayer.

We pray for the residents inside prisons, their fear of close quarters, and the women who love them.

May we remain expectant of God's goodness, grace, and mercy as we persevere to a new day. In His name we pray. Amen.

Ron Yadrick: ron.yadrick@gmail.com 412-720-5253, Judy Yadrick: yadrick.judy@gmail.com 412-736-8282, Jackie McKee: mckeejk@gmail.com 724-991-9843

The Society of Anglican Missionaries and Senders



By Denise Cox

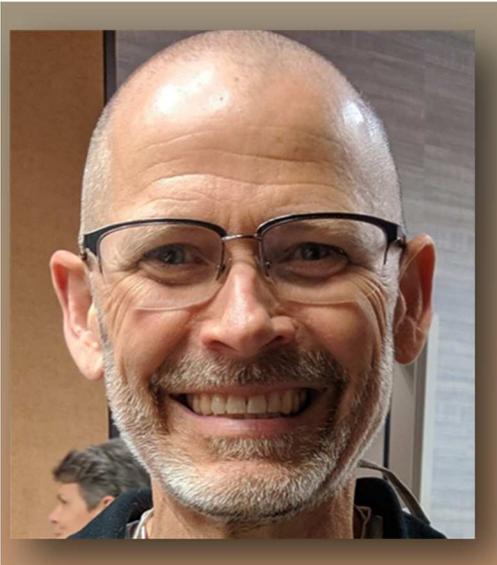
I am the Associate Director of SAMS, responsible for the pastoral and administrative care of 100 missionaries and their families. SAMS has missionaries on every continent except Antarctica. My ministry in the past weeks and days has been one of counseling and advising missionaries and helping them in the decision-making process to stay or

return to the U.S. While the Coronavirus pandemic is one factor, social and civil unrest is sometimes a more pressing issue. Most missionaries have decided to continue ministries in the countries where they serve. This tiny virus humbles us all in every part of the world. In addition, it calls me into deeper prayer for our Lord's mercies in every part of the globe. In the meantime, some families continue to face crises of other kinds such as medical, marital or economic. These too must be addressed. Many are concerned about their supporters and how this virus is disrupting livelihoods both in the U.S. and in the countries where they live. Personally, I have had to up my game in using technology. Additionally, given time differences around the world, conversations go on from early morning to late at night.

Pray that I will remain well, that SAMS missionaries and staff will remain well, and that communities will remain calm in the face of Covid-19 restrictions on movement and food supplies. I remain alert to seeing God at work. Reports from missionaries are encouraging.

I invite you to join "SAMS at Prayer" on Thursdays at Noon. Join our SAMS staff, missionaries and supporters as we give thanks and petition the Lord for the world. It is an amazing privilege to listen to prayers from around the world. If you would like to be a part of this, email Kate Ulrich at kateulrich@sams-usa.org. She will provide you with the invitation and link to join this Zoom conference prayer call. The above photo was taken at a SAMS missionary retreat in South Africa that I planned this past year. If you would like to learn more, please email me at denisecox@sams-usa.org

Anglican Frontier Missions



By David (last name left off intentionally)

AFM plants churches in areas where a viable and visible church still does not exist. As a strategy coordinator, I am called to initiate a church multiplication movement among a Western Asia ethnic group of 2 million Sunni Muslims with less than 50 people who have become Christians.

My current focus is supporting a talented and gifted indigenous leader, exequiting Luke for a translation team, managing social media and encouraging prayer. I travel quarterly to Western Asia from Virginia.

COVID-19 has disrupted March travel and postponed a conference. Fortunately, we were able to complete a translation milestone, connecting our team with a consultant by Zoom from 5 locations. While work continues remotely, I am personally challenged by the many daily changes as well as uncertainty for the future. Our ministry partners in Western Asia all must stay at home for social distancing and encounter the same challenges families with young children have in the U.S. (work, entertaining and educating kids, etc.)

Prayer Concerns include:

The Gospel of Luke Project: Our quality is good; please pray that our team becomes more efficient.

Facebook page (new initiative): Pray for the steady production of beautiful photos and videos of translated Scriptures and pray that thousands would be attracted to the Gospel.

Post Covid-19 Peak: Pray for wisdom and good planning for resumption of normal travel. This includes my personal travel to Western Asia and the travel of national partners to rural areas.

As each of you settle into a “new norm”, gaining confidence in keeping yourselves safe and fed, may the Holy Spirit overflow in your lives through works of love, hope and healing for those you know in Pittsburgh.

To learn more about AFM, please visit the website at www.anglicanfrontiers.com

Ministry to Pittsburgh's Poor

By Jonathan Sewall

Despite stay-at-home orders, organizations serving the homeless simply can't tell their clients to stay home. Both of these Pittsburgh ministries continue to provide for our neighbors who have few resources in these difficult times.



EAST END COOPERATIVE MINISTRY

East End Cooperative Ministry (EECM),

www.eecm.org, in East Liberty, continues to house folks who have no housing and to distribute meals and groceries. EECM's Food Pantry remains open each weekday. Because of social distancing requirements, clients can no longer enter to choose their food from the shelves. Instead, staff and volunteers fill bags with groceries and hand them out. Likewise,

EECM's community lunch remains available free of charge to all in need on weekdays. The meal is not served in the dining room but instead offered as take-out only.

Since at least the 1990s, Ascension members have cooked and served the evening meal at EECM on the last Tuesday of each month. With the new restrictions, we can no longer go inside to serve. But our ministry continues, for we can still cook! If you're interested, please contact Jonathan Sewall, 412-452-1935 or jonathan.sewall@gmail.com.

With the increased need due to economic hardship, EECM requests monetary donations at 6140 Station St. Pittsburgh, PA 15206. They are extremely grateful for all healthy volunteers who continue to help; please see eecm.org and click on [Volunteer](#). Please pray that their resources and volunteers remain steady through the crisis.



Shepherd's Heart

is an Anglican parish church near Mercy Hospital that welcomes the homeless and offers special help to veterans in need. With the virus outbreak, they, too, have had to change their operations. The Drop-In Center now offers individually-packaged foods, plus information on staying healthy and referrals to health professionals as indicated.

The Shuttle Bus continues to take homeless folks to medical and other essential appointments; now the bus is sanitized twice daily. The Veteran's Home continues to house, feed and counsel 15 formerly homeless veterans; alternative housing will be

arranged for any residents who test positive for the virus. Shepherd's Heart regrets, though, that it has had to close its building to use by outside groups, including 2 churches and 10 nonprofits, one of which is a Narcotics Anonymous group with 120 members.

Despite the virus Shepherd's Heart continues to greet the neighbors coming to its doors. Their regular 5:15 pm Sunday service continues, now with seating dispersed, and Ascension and other congregations continue to provide the free dinner afterwards. Meals are now packaged into take-out containers before serving, and groups providing the food drop it off instead of serving. Ascension is scheduled to deliver a meal on Sunday, April 26.

Shepherd's Heart, too, asks for prayers for staff and volunteers and those they serve, that all stay healthy and show the love of Jesus as they carry out their roles. They critically need funds: increased food and cleaning costs have expanded expenses by \$30,000 above budget for April and May. Please click on [Donate](#) at www.shepheart.org. Donations of towels, socks and underwear, dry foods and pasta sauce are welcomed, too. Their address is 13 Pride St., Pittsburgh, PA 15219; the phone number is 412-281-1305.

East Liberty Family Health Care Center



**East Liberty
Family Health Care Center**

A CHRISTIAN MINISTRY OF
WHOLE PERSON HEALTH CARE

By Christy Martsolf

My name is Christy Martsolf, and I am a Registered Nurse at East Liberty Family Health Care Center. More specifically, I am an RN for the Homebound Outreach program at EL, which means that my patients are a population who for a variety of reasons are too fragile to leave their homes. My colleagues and I spend our days out of the clinic, driving to homes around Pittsburgh seeing patients; and we are still doing our work, now in face masks, sometimes from the doorway.

A few months ago, I was taking Dr. David Hall out to see some of my homebound patients. Uninterrupted conversation with the Medical Director of East Liberty Family Health is rare (he is a gifted multi-tasker

and during a regular work day at least 3 people are looking for him at all times), and while we talked, he told me about the mission of East Liberty when he founded the clinic in the 1970s. As a family physician, Dr. Hall felt the Lord was calling him to provide medical services to the poverty-stricken steel workers as the factories were closing. East Liberty Family Health Care Center was started as a way to bring Christ as the Great Physician to the city of Pittsburgh. The clinic has evolved and grown many times since its inception, always with the goal of reaching the poor, and anyone in need, with the embodied love of God.



Dr. David Hall

We are almost four weeks into the pandemic that will forever define the year 2020, and the mission of East Liberty Family Health Care Center has evolved again. The Providers and Nurses working in the clinic are still seeing patients every day, triaging patients who are able to be seen remotely over video in order to protect our vulnerable. Each day at the East Liberty office ends with Providers and Nurses donning PPE (personal protective equipment) in a respiratory clinic where the focus is on identification and treatment of potential Coronavirus patients. Risks are mitigated and all the safety precautions are taken. But covering everything is prayer, like we at East Liberty have always done to start every clinic day, and to end every patient visit.

Please pray for the work being done at East Liberty Family Health Care Center.

Several members of the family at Ascension work as Physicians and Nurses at this place, and our patients need us to bring the love of Christ and the work of His healing hands. Pray for the end of this pandemic, strength and health for our patients, and courage for the Church as She shows up to care for the sick, following in the footsteps of St Catherine, St Agatha, and St Luke.



By Meg Sateia

Women's Choice Network is a life affirming organization that provides free pregnancy tests, sonograms, and STD tests as well as classes on pregnancy, parenting, and healthy relationships, post abortion support groups, and other services. While the classes are now being offered virtually, Women's Choice Network has remained open as an "essential" and "life sustaining" service. Here is an update from Executive Director Amy Scheuring:

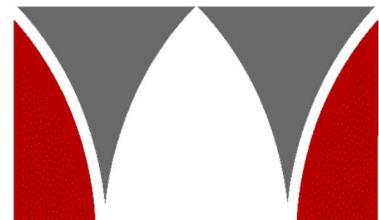
During a time when we would expect for our outcomes to decline, we actually doubled our key numbers in the month of March! While all visits were up in 2020, the numbers of sonograms more than doubled from this time last year. We are seeing more abortion vulnerable people than ever. Uncertainty, anxiety, and economic realities cause pregnant couples to consider abortion. And groups like Planned Parenthood are ready to take advantage of their vulnerability and fear. But our advertising is working, our doors are open, and our staff is able to provide help and hope as we share the truth and comfort of God's Word.

How can you be praying for Women's Choice Network? First, give thanks to God that this ministry is thriving! Please pray for the staff members who are still seeing clients each day, for protection and stamina for them. Pray for the clients who are facing a personal crisis during a particularly difficult time. And please be praying for the unborn whose lives are threatened especially in a climate of fear and uncertainty.

For more information please visit the website at

www.mypregnancycenter.org.

Ascension typically does a Baby Bottle drive in the month of May, the proceeds of which benefit the Women's Choice Network. We will be providing an update on that later in spring.



CHURCH OF THE
ASCENSION

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

Worship Services

Sunday

10:00 a.m.
Livestream

Wednesday

Temporarily suspended

Address

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

Website

www.ascensionpittsburgh.org

The Ascent

Published monthly by the
Church of the Ascension.
Marilyn Clifton Chislaghi, Editor
Judy Yadrick, Publisher

Ascent Deadline

Articles for the next Ascent
are due May 1.

The publication will be
available mid month.