

# The Ascension

**AUGUST 2020**

Church of the Ascension | [www.ascensionpittsburgh.org](http://www.ascensionpittsburgh.org)



Who's  
Who

*Living Word Photos*

Re-introducing the staff and clergy of Church of the Ascension, recognizing volunteers and welcoming a few new faces

# Welcome.

“Come to me, all you that are weary...and I will give you rest...”

Matthew 11:28

**G**rowing up in England in the 60's and 70's, I remember bomb-drills at school, from the threats of the IRA; power-cuts every week, the effects of an oil crisis and coal-miners' strike. In 1981, rioters were in the streets, fueled by unemployment and racial tensions. It seemed like the sky was falling. We may feel similarly today. This summer feels like no other, but in a profound sense, there is “nothing new under the sun.”



Six months ago, the word “coronavirus” first appeared in the media. Then it was a far-away concern, barely attracting any attention. Today we all know, all too well, what has happened. The convergence of widespread sickness and death, mass protests across the nation and the world, unemployment and loss of income, an even greater political polarization in our country, along with the suspension of so many things that we have taken for granted – together have left us reeling.

Many are fearful. Many are weary. Many are carrying heavy burdens. Many are experiencing “decision fatigue.” I know I am. Our Lord’s words to us from Matthew’s Gospel are so timely: “Come to me, all you that are weary and are carrying heavy burdens, and I will give you rest.”

During these summer months of July and August, I hope and pray that you will indeed turn afresh to Jesus and take on his yoke, walking and working alongside him, and find rest for your souls.

In this summer’s edition of our monthly newsletter, you will see we are presenting a “Who’s Who” of those on staff and also some who volunteer in core ministries. I hope you will enjoy reading the brief bios and meeting the new people coming on board.

I am especially pleased to welcome and introduce Karen Stevenson who has joined us to serve as our part-time (15 hours/week) Interim Assistant Rector. Karen is well known by some at Ascension, having served on staff many years ago as our campus minister. (Also, she is married to our Parish Deacon, Mark.) Karen served as the rector of Trinity Church (Washington, PA) for many years and now works on the Bishop’s staff as Canon for Mission for the Diocese. Karen will have special responsibility for our Community Groups. I am very grateful for the experience and energy Karen brings.

Yours in Christ,

*Jonathan +*

Jonathan Millard  
Rector

# Getting to Know...

## Jonathan Millard

### Rector

**I grew up in Cheshire, England. After working as a barrister (trial lawyer) for five years in Manchester, I answered what I believed to be a very clear call to serve God as a priest. I studied Theology at Wycliffe Hall, Oxford and was ordained in 1992.**

I have three adult children: Jack, who is pursuing postgraduate studies in Seattle; Juliet, who is an Elementary School teacher in Charleston, SC; and Jane, who has just graduated from Pitt and is considering grad school.

Andrea and I were married in 2017 and she and I are enjoying life together "more than we could have asked or imagined." Hardly a day goes by when we don't laugh together and thank God for one another, for our families, and our church family at Ascension.

I have had the great privilege of serving as rector of Ascension since 2004. I love my job. It's hard to describe in a few words what I "do" as rector, given the wide variety of responsibilities and opportunities that come my way. An analogy I sometimes use is that of Ascension being a bit like an aircraft carrier. A carrier is a launching pad for critical missions, a vibrant community, a mess hall, a hospital, and so much more. I get to serve on the bridge overseeing everything with an amazing crew. It's a vocation, a calling, a way of life. It demands my best efforts and my dependence on the Lord, who is the true captain of the ship.

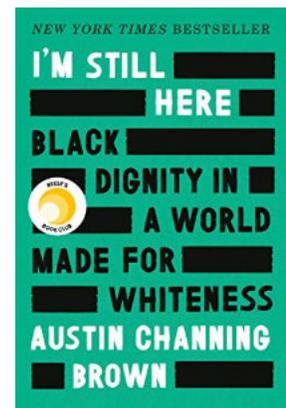
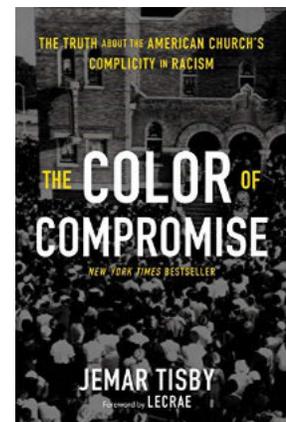
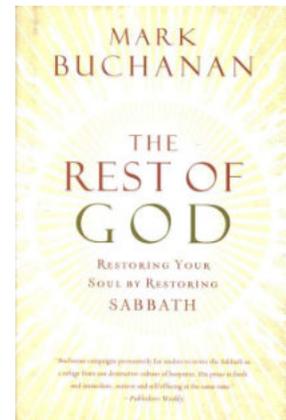
As rector, I also come alongside people of all ages and stages of life – in the mundane and the extraordinary, in

times of joy or sorrow. In my own life, I have known times of great sadness but through it all I have experienced the extraordinary love of God and the wonderful love and support of my Ascension family, whom I cherish.

What a joy it is to share the grace of God with others on a daily basis. One of the verses of Scripture that I learned as a boy, remains with me as a challenge and an encouragement in my life and work: "Have I not commanded you? Be strong and courageous. Do not be afraid; do not be discouraged, for the Lord your God will be with you wherever you go." (Joshua 1:9)

I think I have the best job in the world! And, just one more thing. Each summer the Ascent typically features an article on the Rector's Summer Reading. Given that many of us have a bit more time at home, there are some titles I want to recommend to you.

One book I am going to be re-reading, and I have recommended before, is Mark Buchanan's The Rest of God, Restoring Your Soul by Restoring Sabbath. (Thomas Nelson, 2007 - 223 pages.) In the light of our current situation nationally, and my own personal awakening to racial tensions and injustices, I also commend to you two other books. Both are very challenging. Both may make you feel uncomfortable. Both are well worth reading: The Color of Compromise, The Truth about the American Church's Complicity in Racism by Jemar Tisby. (Zondervan, 2019 - 250 pages); and I'm Still Here, Black Dignity in a World Made for Whiteness by Austin Channing Brown. (Convergent Books, 2018 - 175 pages). I found this to be a very challenging read.



# Karen Stevenson

## Interim Associate Rector \*



“It is my delight to step in and help Ascension continue to move forward in mission and discipleship.”

**I** was born a Preacher’s Kid in rural Minnesota and spent my childhood mostly in rural settings like South Dakota and the Upper Peninsula of Michigan. After graduating from Calvin College, I worked for the Coalition for Christian Outreach for 15 years, serving as a campus minister at Youngstown State University and then as a staff supervisor and staff trainer.

It was during my tenure with the CCO that I moved to Pittsburgh and eventually joined Church of the Ascension. I met my husband Mark at Ascension and we were married here too. It was also here that I discerned a call to ministry and began attending Trinity School for Ministry for my Master of Divinity degree. In 1997, I was ordained at Ascension and joined staff as an Assistant Rector working in campus ministry, as well as with young adults and international students.

In 2000, I was called as rector of Trinity Church in Washington, PA where I served a wonderful community of believers for 18 years. In 2018, I was called to the staff of the Anglican Diocese of Pittsburgh as the Canon for Mission where I oversee a variety of areas: leadership development including the Curacy Program; helping parishes take the next steps in mission; planting new works of gospel-shaped, sacramental, missional congregations; and helping connect and coordinate the national and international mission initiatives of our parishes.

It is my delight to step in and help Ascension continue to move forward in mission and discipleship. I will be working with Community Groups and specifically equipping and supporting leaders. God has blessed Ascension with gifted people who are facilitating these groups and I am excited to meet and work with them and to celebrate what God is doing.

I will also be helping to do preparation with those moving toward baptism and those preparing for confirmation. Baptism and confirmation are those rich and weighty moments in our lives of faith when we affirm our commitment to our Lord in the midst of the community of faith.

It is a delight and joy to work with the staff team and the people of Church of the Ascension to reach out with the gospel of Jesus Christ to the communities of Pittsburgh and to welcome our neighbors and friends into a worshipping, learning, serving community of Jesus followers.

\*Karen’s position is part-time.

# Marilyn Chislaghi

## Director of Ministry



**I** grew up in Edmonton (Canada) which has many similarities to Pittsburgh – bad weather, good sports, great churches! I was raised at Beulah Alliance Church which is part of the Christian and Missionary Alliance denomination. Our youth group was strong. We were into ‘Bible Quizzing’ which had me memorizing vast portions of scripture throughout high school, including all of James and Romans (word perfect!). I am still in touch with several high school church friends and we have annual reunions in various parts of the U.S. and Canada.

I attended the University of Waterloo in Ontario and married my college love, Rob Clifton. Two days after our wedding, we flew off to the University of Cambridge where I acquired a Masters degree from the Faculty of Divinity. Our son, Ben, was born in Cambridge in 1993 and our daughter, Clare, was born in Ontario in 1996. We moved to Pittsburgh on a snowy January day in 1997 with two kids and two cats so that Rob could take up a position at the University of Pittsburgh. Having become Anglicans in Cambridge, we immediately began attending Church of Ascension. We saw a little sign advertising the Alpha Course on the church lawn and figured we would give Ascension a try. We never left! Ascension quickly became our church family, walking with us (actually carrying us) 4 years after our arrival through Rob's battle with colon cancer and death in 2002. We received tremendous care and support from our Ascension church family, so much so that

I decided to continue living in Pittsburgh with the kids after his death, becoming a U.S. citizen in 2007.

God graciously helped us 'pick up the pieces' of our lives in the years after Rob's death. I worked at my kid's school for a couple of years, and also volunteered as the director of Ascension's Sunday School program when it was without a staff person to lead it. I was delighted to receive a phone call from Jonathan Millard in 2005 inviting me to join the staff as Director of Children's Ministry! In 2006 I transitioned to the position of Parish Administrator. In 2015 I shifted positions again and now serve as Director of Ministry.

I am passionate about facilitating church family and fostering genuine discipleship and congregational care. As Director of Ministry, I take an overall perspective of our church life, making sure all ministries have leadership, and all leaders are supervised. I work with the rector to address areas where there are gaps or weaknesses, and also help develop out new ministry initiatives. I directly oversee our welcome ministries and communications, and supervise several members of staff. I love working at Ascension!

On the personal front, I had my first conversation with Charlie Chislaghi on October 31st of 2006 (Halloween!). But apparently I didn't scare him away and we were married at the most joyous wedding celebration I could ever have imagined 10 months later. With his favorite colors being fluorescent orange and green, Charlie has brought much color and even more joy into my life!

# Andrea Millard

## Prayer Ministry & Leadership Development\*



**I grew up in Concord, Massachusetts where my first job was teaching swimming lessons at Walden Pond. This experience shaped me. I have always liked helping people learn new skills and grow in confidence. My undergraduate and graduate work in management gave me opportunities for this as I applied adult learning principles in the business world. For fifteen years I worked in the financial services industry, including ten years running a training and development consulting practice.**

Throughout my life, I have been active in the church by volunteering in a variety of prayer and leadership positions. It was likely a surprise only to me when I began to sense God's call to ordained ministry. My local church encouraged me to go to Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary for an M.Div. (Years later, after joining the Anglican Church, I studied at Trinity School for Ministry, earning a D.Min. with a focus in Anglican Studies.)

For the past twenty years I have served Christ's church in a variety of ministry contexts including parish ministry, hospital, nursing home and crisis chaplaincy and on Anglican leadership teams.

Nearly three years ago, I came to Church of the Ascension as a newlywed, having married

Jonathan in September 2017. The first year I attended services, but my focus was on national and regional ministries (including working on the 2019 Book of Common Prayer, leading retreats, seminars and workshops on various aspects of prayer, pastoral care and spiritual formation.)

In 2019, I joined the Ascension staff as an interim (quarter-time) Director of Prayer Ministries. This year my role expanded to half-time to include Leadership Development initiatives (and no longer as interim).

One of my greatest joys in ministry is developing teams where people get to use their gifts, talents and passions for the sake of the Kingdom. Frederick Buechner's words have inspired me: "The place God calls you to is the place where your deep gladness and the world's deep hunger meet." How rewarding to help one another find this intersection!

I also enjoy creating opportunities for people to pray in a variety of ways. Prayer is relational and, as Clement of Alexandria observed, "Prayer is keeping company with God." What joy there is in exploring the rich tradition of Christian prayer, discovering how those before us have kept company with God.

\*Andrea's position is part-time.

**I started attending Ascension when I first moved to Pittsburgh in 1979. I was confirmed here; met my wife Karen and married her here; served on the Vestry; and served here as my first assignment after my ordination to the diaconate in 1998. For many years, I served as the Archdeacon of the Diocese and I am now Archdeacon Emeritus.**

I was a long-time theatre professor before moving to Trinity School for Ministry, from where I retired as the Academic Dean. I have studied theatre and acting and have appeared in a variety of theaters in Pittsburgh and elsewhere. I appeared in the Visit Pittsburgh commercial and had a role in the feature film, *Where'd You Go, Bernadette?* starring Academy Award winning actor, Cate Blanchett. I also appear in Ascensionite Benjamin T. Wilson's first feature film, *Galatea*.

I love loving on Ascension's seniors, children, and everyone in between in my role as Parish Deacon!

\*Mark's position is part-time.

# Mark Stevenson

## Parish Deacon\*



# Chris Massa

## Director of Music & Worship Arts



**I** grew up in Dover, PA, the son of an elementary school guidance counselor (my mom) and a Baptist music minister (my dad), and it's no exaggeration to say that I grew up in the church and surrounded by music. I first banged on a drum set when I was five or six years old, started dabbling with writing music while in high school, and studied music composition at West Chester University. Even though I grew up in the church and in a Christian home, it was in college that I really started taking my faith seriously. It was also then that I first encountered one of the great questions of my life: Am I called to music, or ministry? What I thought I knew for sure was that, whatever I was called to, it most likely wasn't music ministry.



An internship with a campus ministry brought me to Pittsburgh in 2003, and after years of working more odd jobs than is advisable, I found myself married to my lovely wife, working sporadically as a freelance composer and worshipping here at Church of the Ascension. (The decision to put down roots at Ascension was actually a very prayerful one, but that's a story for another time.) Elise and I got involved with the 9:00 am music team right away, and the opportunity to serve in a leadership role came a year or two later when I was invited to serve as Interim Assistant Music Minister. Even though it's not what I thought I wanted to do—in fact, I had kind of been avoiding it—I loved music ministry from day one. The calling came through the process of serving.



As my role has continued to shift over the last five years, it's been a joy to see how the various pieces of my background can be used to serve the church. There's more crossover between Baptist and Anglican hymnody than one might think, and the combination of conducting lessons from college and my experience writing for and working with choirs has equipped me in ways I never could have expected.

It's worth mentioning that, during this unusual season, the music and arts ministry has had to morph and reorient itself many times over. There are still opportunities to serve, but health concerns—particularly concerns over the dangers of singing—have forced us to think outside the box. If you are a musician, a poet, a visual artist, or are otherwise artistically inclined, please reach out to me. We may not be able to serve in some of the usual ways, but the opportunities are still there if we're willing to look.

My role here at Ascension is, in the best sense of the word, collaborative. In addition to serving alongside my wife, Elise, it's also my pleasure to serve with **Jane Banfield Hicks** as the children's choir director. Jane brings a lot of wisdom and enthusiasm to her role, and I can't wait to see where the children's choir goes from here.

I'm also delighted to continue serving with **Jeanne Kohn**. Jeanne has served Ascension for over 26 years, and it's been a joy to collaborate with her during my time on staff. The fact that she has agreed to continue serving as organist and choir accompanist is a blessing to me and to the Ascension family as a whole.

# Elise Massa

## Asst. Director of Music & Worship Arts\*



**T**o quote Lennon-McCartney, it's been a "long and winding road" of faith. I grew up in Oakmont, PA and had established my entire identity as a vocalist. In April 1999 at age 15, I surrendered my life to Christ while attending an Assembly of God Fine Arts Convention. That same July, I was accepted into the prestigious Interlochen Arts Academy for Classical Voice, only to have my acceptance revoked when I was diagnosed with a vocal injury two weeks later. Unable to sing for a year, I was absolutely shattered and felt abandoned by God. I faced the choice to either betray my Savior in anger or suffer through a tremendous identity crisis alone. By God's grace, I chose to suffer with Him as he dismantled my identity and idolatry, and rebuilt a foundation of faith that rested in Him alone.

After college, I served with Youth With A Mission - Music & Worship Arts (New Zealand/Fiji) where I first experienced the beauty of people from all over the globe worshipping in their diverse cultures with unity of spirit. I returned to the United States to work in behavior health and special education, while serving as a music minister in a local church. In 2013, my husband Chris and I visited Ascension after praying to find a church that was liturgical and charismatic (tall order, eh?). In addition to joining Ascension staff in July 2019, I also work at Duquesne University, and am a mom to an active 4-year old! It's a full life!

As Assistant Director and one of the ministry's vocal leaders, I echo the Psalmist's exhortation: "O magnify the Lord with me, and let us exalt his name together." (Psalm 34:3) My hope is to empower other vocalists to do this by integrating their heart (emotion), mind (truth), soul (identity), and strength (skill/technique).

I feel particularly humbled and overjoyed when I have the opportunity to hear stories and walk alongside artists of all disciplines as they seek to serve the Lord in the church and in their community. I get to see this regularly in two Ascension ministries: the Ascension Songwriters Collaborative and Wrought Iron Worship (Ascension's interdisciplinary arts collective). I also serve as the Pittsburgh local retreat leader for United Adoration, a global organization that strives "to help local churches release their artists to show the wonder and beauty of God through the sacred arts and song". If you are an artist, and are seeking a community that will encourage and challenge you, let me be the first to invite you to the table! I am so glad you're here!

\*Elise's position is part-time

# Leah Hornfeck

## Assoc. for Youth & College Ministry



**I was born in Pittsburgh and grew up in Chippewa township, just outside of Beaver Falls in Northwest PA, with my parents and younger brother. Though we went to church semi-regularly throughout my childhood, it wasn't until my senior year of high school that I truly began following Christ. A teammate on my high school volleyball team who had a strong faith and love for God helped me see what it meant to have a relationship with Jesus, and he radically turned my life upside down.**



I then attended Duquesne University where I received my Bachelor of Science in Athletic Training. However, during my time in college and through my leadership roles in a campus ministry called Crossroads, I felt that God was calling me to work in ministry. Spring semester of my senior year, I applied and was accepted to the CCO Fellowship Program with the intent of further discerning my call to ministry. Upon graduation, I spent a year ministering to college students at Slippery Rock University and being mentored by a veteran CCO staff member. Throughout that time God affirmed that this was indeed the work he was calling me to do.

I began pursuing what the CCO calls “career staff” positions, and that’s when I was first introduced to Church of the Ascension. I had heard wonderful things about this church and was very interested in the possibility of working with students in Pittsburgh, the city I had come to love and know as home. I also was intrigued and excited by the position’s emphasis on helping students transition into and from college. Thankfully, Ascension seemed to like me too, and they brought me on through their partnership with the CCO in June of 2018.

Since then, I have been continuing my work as CCO staff, ministering to students at University of Pittsburgh and Carnegie Mellon University in partnership with Church of the Ascension, where I also work with high school students in the Church of the Ascension Youth Group (CAYG). Our CCO-Ascension campus ministry, now called Venite, has taken many shapes and forms in my two years here. We are certainly still finding ourselves and

learning how to build a new, unique ministry amidst so many other established groups, but we’ve made great strides. Our vision is to “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’ve done this through student-led Bible studies, monthly Sunday brunches, on-campus midday prayer meetings, attending the CCO’s Jubilee conference, and more.

Of course, many of these things are no longer possible and there is much in flux due to the COVID-19 pandemic. However, I do have one very exciting piece of news to share with you regarding the 2020-2021 academic year. This year, I will have a CCO Fellow who will be joining me in working with college students through Venite! I mentioned going through the CCO Fellowship Program after my senior year of college, but to give you a bit more information about it, this is a one-year opportunity to minister to college students while being mentored by an experienced CCO staff member. The fellowship program provides intensive Biblical and ministry training, intentional opportunities for growth and ministry experience, and much more. At the end of the fellowship year, Fellows have the opportunity to continue into the career track of full-time campus ministry staff with the CCO. My Fellow is **Christopher Kirkland**, who earned his undergraduate degree in History from Washington and Lee University, then his M.Div. from Trinity School for Ministry. Here is a bit of what Chris has to say about his desire to minister to college students through the CCO:

“During my own time in college, I owed a lot to the people who invested their time and wisdom into my own struggles. I hope to offer students similar guidance, drawing on the full counsel of Scripture and Christian tradition. Going into campus ministry, I wanted to help bridge the divide between campus and church and I think CCO does that the best.”

Chris will be joining us onsite in early August, after completing his CCO New Staff Training. It would mean the world to know that you are praying for him, our students, and the work we’ll be doing through Venite during this unprecedented, upcoming school year.

# Alex Banfield Hicks

## Director of Youth & College Ministry



**I** grew up amongst the rolling hills of England's West Country and in 1999 matriculated at the University of Oxford to study modern history. My cynical atheism began to soften after I joined the Merton College Chapel Choir, and my interest in Christianity was piqued further while studying the lives of early British saints. Convinced by the truth of the resurrection, and helped by the various works of C.S. Lewis, I committed my life to Jesus in 2000.

I became an active member of St. Ebbe's Anglican Church, joining their children's ministry team and speaking at annual youth summer camps (where I became friends with the Rector of Christ Church Fox Chapel!) From 2005, I served with the InterVarsity mission team in Milan, Italy, met Jane, who hails from Minnesota and Kansas City, and we were married in 2007.

We ministered with UCCF (InterVarsity UK) in Exeter, were transferred to Oxford in 2009 and our daughter Lydia was born in 2011. In 2012 we crossed the pond and our son John Victor was born in St Louis while I completed my M.Div. at Covenant Seminary. We were called to Pittsburgh in the summer of 2015 to serve as Ascension's Youth Director. Our youngest, Beatrix, was born here shortly afterwards. I was later invited to oversee Ascension's campus ministry as well.

Apart from the fun of collaborating with Leah Hornfeck, perhaps the greatest joy of being the Director of both youth and campus ministry, and serving at Ascension for over five years, is the privilege of seeing awkward middle schoolers transform into confident Christians at college, who then lead their peers in stunning Bible studies. Another highlight is the opportunity to work regularly with a team of gifted, caring and hilarious

volunteers who pour themselves out as mentors and small group leaders for those going through perhaps the most stressful and formative season of life. I am particularly thankful for **Gabbie Stout**, who during her time as an undergrad at Pitt, not only led our Venite college ministry, but served faithfully as a volunteer who went above and beyond to care for the 'CAYG-ers' (Church of Ascension Youth Group).

As well as the awesome team of volunteers, I am very thankful for the regular assistance of **Kelsey Regan**, who is the CAYG facilities manager and does lots of work behind the scenes, as well as doing brilliant pastoral work with the middle school girls. And over the summer I am honored to have **Wesley Williams** and **Sam Ferguson** as Summer Directors, preparing resources for small group leaders and also serving in our 'back yard small groups' during the pandemic.



# Catherine Slocum

## Children's Ministry



**E**very night before I fell asleep, my Mother sang a prayer with me that went like this:

Lord keep us safe this night  
secure from all our fears  
may angels guard us while we sleep  
till morning light appears  
AMEN

Since I can recall, I have known that Jesus loves me, that God is my provider and that His church is a haven in a heartless world. As a result, I have given my life to serving Him by serving those in His Church; particularly children.

Growing up in New Canaan, Connecticut and attending Saint Paul's Episcopal Church, I was formed by a church that was full of God's Spirit, a love for His Word and a love for His People. This church, its people, and the place left deep imprints on my life. In fact, this church comes back to me in dreams. I believe this foundation of having my formative years nurtured in a vibrant and life-giving church has had a long-term effect on shaping who I am, my passions and my goals. I am grateful to have witnessed the faith of devout Christians giving of them-

selves, serving the church, and sharing both their lives and possessions with each other. Hence, as I look back on my life and career, I find that I have spent a huge amount of my energy in the endeavor of building up God's Church and those who enter its doors.

Over the past 20 years, I have been the wife of an Anglican Priest, the mother of two daughters and a servant of children and families as a church member, volunteer, church planter, and in the past decade, a Director of Ministries to Children and their families. I count it a joy and a delight to serve the Lord by serving you all and your kids as the Director of Children's Ministries here at Church of the Ascension. The Scriptures say that the gates of hell will not prevail against God and His Church. I believe that it is a high calling to serve the body of Christ both in its life as it gathers within the walls of the Church, and in its life as it moves out into the world to be a faithful presence to the city and beyond. Thank you for allowing me to serve you in this high calling.

As well as the awesome team of volunteers who have been helping out in this difficult season, I am very thankful for my assistant **Katie Wentz**, who works with me behind the scenes to keep everything running smoothly!

# Kiera Fuener

## Special Needs Ministry

**I** am Keira Fuener, and my husband Paul and I began attending Ascension in 2004, shortly before our first child was born. Now we fill up a pew with 4 kids, Ella (15), Thomas (13), Anna (11), and Michael (9). In normal times, you may have seen us at the 9:00 am service. I am primarily a stay at home mom and began my part-time position at Ascension as Director of Special Needs in March of 2019.

Currently, I record a lesson for our Friends with special needs each week using the Godly Play curriculum. We then have a Zoom call prior to the Sunday live-streamed service to fellowship together, review the

lesson and pray. Friends, caregivers, and volunteers show up on the screen together each week. They are a loving, gentle and faithful crew!

I love talking and wondering about God with people of all abilities. For me, it is freeing to explore creative ways to experience God's love, words and wisdom with people that may not communicate in a typical way, but definitely have a deep love of God and a desire to know more about God. I love that when we come together as a group, God's Spirit is with us. It is such a gift to have a space to pray, sing, and learn from each other, accepting each person for who God made them to be. (And on top of all this - it is just fun!)



# Ann Tefft

## Ascension Seniors (OWLS) Ministry

**I** am from Columbus, Ohio but spread my wings in college earning a BA in English Literature from Northwestern University and an MBA from Case Western University in Finance. My first career was in business. My second career was as a full-time mother! I began an M.Div. degree in my late 50s which launched my third career as an Anglican priest!



My husband, Forrest, and I have been married for 51 years. Our daughter, Kimberly, and her wonderful husband, Todd, have three young children who are living with us in Michigan this summer. What I love in this world, other than Jesus, include my family and spending time with our grandchildren, people searching for truth, making friends with people from all over the world, travel, reading, and gardening.

At Ascension, I function as a liturgical assistant helping out on Sundays. I also assist with Ascension's international ministry, teaching English and leading a Bible class on Thursday nights. I am also a conversation partner with two people from Russia. I plan to host a community group starting this fall in Fox Chapel.

My central role is to lead Ascension's OWLS group which stands for "Older, Wiser, Lively, Saints!" This is a group of folks from a variety of backgrounds who are interested in gathering together once a month for fellowship, a delicious lunch at a bargain price, and meaningful conversation facilitated by a guest speaker on a wide variety of subjects usually focused on our Christian life together. The arts are also integrated into the meetings with occasional performances by musicians. We have had gatherings varying from real owls from the zoo, an opera singer, professional pianist, as well as special holiday celebrations. We have fun! The group is focused on the interests of the seniors within our congregation. But all are welcome to attend, including those in our immediate neighborhood as well as our own friends and family from outside the church. Importantly, our OWLS group offers a wonderful place to bring a friend that may not have a church community and is in need of Christian hope.

I love my role at Ascension! In particular, I love giving encouragement and intellectual stimulation to the seniors of our community, many of whom are retired. A community that cares for one another is vital to our life in Christ together. It is a privilege to help facilitate that.

\*Ann's position is volunteer.

# Liturgical Assistants

In addition to staff priests and deacons (Jonathan Millard, Karen Stevenson, Andrea Millard and Mark Stevenson), Church of the Ascension also has several volunteer liturgical assistants who occasionally preach, assist or celebrate at our services. They include the **Rev. Dr. Jack Gabig**, **Bishop Grant LeMarquand**, and the **Rev. Dr. Joel Scandrett**, all of whom work at Trinity School for Ministry. **The Rev. Ann Tefft** (pictured above), who leads our OWLS ministry, is also a liturgical assistant. Beginning this August, our former Associate Rector and Writer-in-Residence, the **Rev. Dr. Jonathan Warren** and the **Rev. Tish Warren**, will serve as liturgical assistants, preaching regularly. We are grateful to have all serving with us!



# LuAnn Pengidore

## International Ministry

**M**y name is LuAnn Pengidore and I lead the International Ministry at Church of the Ascension. I am from Beaver Falls, PA (one-hour west of Pittsburgh), where I was raised in an Italian/Irish Catholic family with my sister and brother (lots of cousins), and my parents, who owned a small grocery store.

As a child, I was always very interested in international cultures, languages, and missions - though I had only been to Florida. I began to study French and read a lot of biographies, such as Amy Carmichael and Jim Elliot. Wanting to experience a new "culture," I attended Furman University in South Carolina (which seemed like a new cultural experience to me!) and I ran cross country and played basketball there. I joined the Fellowship of Christian Athletes and began attending Protestant churches and reading about the Church Reformers.

After Furman, I had an amazing experience studying abroad in Germany and seeing Eastern and Western Europe through Rotary International. This eye-opening experience, as well as working in Botswana, prompted me to study International Development. I worked for 7 years with the Pacific Basin in the federal government in Washington, DC and was very involved in my

church's Alpha ministry. Wanting to make a more personal impact, I transitioned into teaching English as a Second Language in my 30s and earned another Masters.

Since 2012, I have taught at the University of Pittsburgh in their English Language Institute. Since 2016, I have also worked part-time at Church of the Ascension leading our International Ministry which centers on English as a Second Language classes. I am really happy that starting this August, I will be working full-time at Ascension in this capacity, trying to grow our relationships with internationals even more!

What I enjoy most about working in the International Ministry is learning about other cultures and linking internationals to resources - be it housing, employment, legal advice or specifically Christian resources from within our church. I also enjoy seeing people improve in their language development, exploring on field trips, having fun talking to each other, and for some, participating in Bible studies and discipleship classes. Finally, making new international friends myself is what I enjoy most about this ministry.

If you are interested in talking to me about the various opportunities in the International Ministry, from teaching to being a conversation partner to coming alongside a family in need, please email me.



# Livestream Tech Team

**A**scension has been livestreaming our services since Sunday, March 15th. This monumental task was undertaken by a small tech team that has been with us each step of the way.

Our video team includes **Tyler Marwood** and **Ben Wilson**. Our sound team includes **Jay Gowdy** and **John Delappe**. This is all home-grown talent. The Ascension leadership team and broader church family are so thankful they stepped in to bridge the gap!



# Karen Gowdy

## Administration



**I** grew up in a Chicago suburb and came to Pittsburgh to attend Carnegie Mellon University. It was there that I became a Christian through the ministry of friends and met my husband Jay. We were married at Ascension 30 years ago and have raised our two daughters, Elena and Mariana, here. Professionally I worked for a respirator manufacturer in product engineering support, and then, after taking some years off to raise my daughters, did software testing and office management for an autonomous vehicle system manufacturer's Pittsburgh office.



I began working at Ascension 4 years ago. I oversee the support staff, office, facility, and bookkeeping. My job varies greatly day to day, depending on whether I am dealing with insurance, budgeting, room reservations, donation tracking or maintenance planning. The support staff at Ascension are really great and they all work hard to contribute to the church's ministry behind the scenes. We also have a lot of wonderful volunteers, like Sue Crary, our Treasurer, who have helped me greatly. I particularly enjoyed working with Bob Forrest for many years and whose recent death from cancer is such a loss to our entire church family. Bob, along with other members of the property committee, have been such a great team to work alongside for necessary renovations and for plans associated with our church capital campaign. I am so happy to come to work and see the progress on the stonework this summer! I am looking forward to serving the church in these coming years.



There are a lot of comings and goings on staff and I'm that person who chases them down with paperwork to keep everything on the up and up. We are welcoming a new bookkeeper, **Niki Adams\***, since Linda McLane is retiring and moving to a beautiful home with her husband on her daughter's farm near Ohio. Niki is also the bookkeeper for Christ Church Fox Chapel, Jonah's Call and Seeds of Hope. We're in good hands!

We also welcome **Kristen Parise\*** as our new Communications Assistant. My supervisor, Marilyn Chislighi, has joked that hiring Kristen is like hiring a British Airways pilot to operate a little twin engine! Kristen is the Director of Communications for the Anglican Diocese of Pittsburgh. She and her husband make Ascension home. This edition of the Ascent, which looks a bit different from our previous editions, is her first piece of work for us. Welcome Kristen!

# Stacey Regan

## Secretary

**While I grew up moving frequently with the Air Force (finally landing in Texas), I have been in Pittsburgh and at Ascension for 26 years. Church was the constant in my transient life. Being part of a “worldwide Anglican communion” was part of my discipleship from an early age that I thought was pretty cool.**

Church was also where my ten dollar plastic guitar was welcomed on Sunday mornings when I had just started learning to play, and that nurtured a lifetime love of singing and writing music, especially worship music. Songwriting and Jesus grounded me through many phases of life including high school and college at the University of Texas, 38 years of marriage, homeschooling four kids, 23 years renovating an old Victorian house, and now living on my own. More recently I have enjoyed Trinity School for Ministry’s annual songwriting workshops, the United Adoration online creative sessions, and the Ascension Songwriters Col-

laborative. Over the years, I have been involved in a variety of ministries. But in addition to music, I now primarily serve in prayer ministry and as co-leader for the Brighton Heights community group.

My job as secretary at Ascension includes maintaining the database and parish directory, bulletin, livestream slide production, and miscellaneous clerical support. I am also the contact for baptisms and weddings. Wired for establishing and organizing systems, I enjoy making sure everything is in order and running smoothly so that everyone is free to worship or do their work without hiccups or distraction.

As an extrovert continually processing the names and data of our congregants, I love meeting new people and connecting them with longtime Ascensionites, either because I notice address proximity or learn of similar vocations. There is so much going on, so many ways to serve, and so many wonderful people at Ascension intentionally living out their life in Christ. It is simply a joy to help folks get woven into the fabric of the church family here!



# Isaiah Bornman

## Maintenance

**My name is Isaiah Bornman and I work as the Maintenance Supervisor here. My wife, Amy, and I moved to Pittsburgh and joined Ascension in 2018 after a couple of years of moving around. We feel good being back near Amy’s family and are starting the whole settling down and starting a family part of life.**

Each evening, I get to walk our pup around Riverview Park trails and we are just starting to feel our baby’s first kicks while watching goofy 90’s movies through the quarantine.

I came on staff in January and only got to experience a bit of normal church life flow, but the quieter building still keeps me busy. I work each day on small repair jobs that keep popping up, chasing leaks, and maintaining our building’s many systems. The less busy season has given us time for deeper cleaning, painting, and repair projects. I enjoy working alongside our custodians **Richard Cavallucci** and **Josh Momaney** to facilitate all the events and to care for our church and the staff. While we miss the daily activities at Ascension, we keep working to keep the space clean (and disinfected!) and to better the space for the hopeful return of church life.



# Ascension Fellows

**C**hurch of the Ascension is launching a new ministry initiative this September called the Ascension Fellows Program. This is a leadership formation program focused on mentoring and training potential new clergy. The program will be run in partnership with the Anglican Diocese of Pittsburgh Curacy Initiative which has provided partial funding. Our fellows will essentially be doing a 'residency', just like newly minted doctors do hospital residencies to gain valuable expertise. The fellows are here to gain on the ground experience and broad exposure to all aspects of church ministry and leadership.



Our hope is that the Ascension Fellows Program will develop a pipeline of new leaders with significant ministry experience who ideally continue to serve at Ascension when their time in the program comes to a close, or who may be in a good position to lead an Ascension church plant. Of course, the fellows may be called by our Lord to work in another Anglican parish not affiliated with Ascension. The fellows will gain ministry exposure in a multi-staff church as well as mentoring, support and formation as they move toward full-time ordained ministry. The dream is to begin with two fellows this fall and grow this program over the next decade so that Ascension provides a stream of vibrant, young leadership.

In addition to broad exposure to parish life, Ascension Fellows will be deployed in one or two primary areas of ministry. Our first two fellows will be active in the teaching and discipleship component of our international and young adult ministries. In addition to a primary ministry focus, the fellows will also be regular attendees of our staff meetings and will rotate on and off other ministries throughout their time with us, for example assisting in areas such as the altar guild, welcome ministries, baptismal and confirmation preparation, and so on. The goal is to give our fellows broad and comprehensive exposure to the ministry of an active Anglican church while also deploying them in targeted ways.

With that preamble, we are happy to introduce **Josh and Jess Bennett** to the Ascension church family. They have accepted our offer to become our first two fellows beginning September 1st. They are married and both graduated with M.Div. degrees from Trinity School for Ministry in the spring. They come to us highly recommended. While they both want to enter into discernment as to whether to be ordained to the Anglican priesthood, they are currently members and staff of Allegheny Center Alliance Church where they served in youth ministry for several years in tandem with the completion of their degrees and growth of their young family. They have two small children, Charlie and Ruth. Josh and Jess will together work the equivalent of a 1.5 FT position in their initial year. We look forward to welcoming Josh and Jess as well as little Charlie and Ruth soon!

**Worship Services** Sunday 10:00 am Livestream on YouTube with walk-through Eucharist from 11:30-12:30

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**About The Ascent** **The Ascent** is published monthly by Church of the Ascension. Marilyn Clifton Chislaghi, Editor  
Kristen Parise, Publisher



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