

# The Ascension

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## Epiphany: The Light of Christ

# Two New Partnerships



By Marilyn Chislaghi, Director of Ministry

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**A**scension's international ministry, under the direction of LuAnn Pengidore, serves people in three broad categories: graduate students and their spouses; professionals and their spouses; low-income immigrant and refugee families. It is this latter group which comes to us needing help – financial, medical, employment, legal, practical. From finding inexpensive cars and good car seats, to finding rides for job interviews or lawyer appointments, we have only dipped our toes into these waters. It takes coordination, resources, and time to come alongside. Building relationship is key.

Pittsburgh is a destination city for refugees and immigrants. There are significant Nepali, Burmese, Chinese, Latino, Russian-speaking, Congolese, Indian, Iraqi, Somali, Syrian, and more recently, Afghani immigrant populations. Ascension currently has refugees from several countries actively engaged in our program. We have 4 refugees from Cameroon, India, Afghanistan, and Nepal, for whom we purchased Chromebooks for online classes, helped with job needs and childcare, and linked with classes, conversation partners, and counseling. We have other low-income immigrants from Rwanda, the Congo, Guatemala, Argentina, Venezuela, Columbia, Ecuador, and Iran who are actively involved with classes and field trips.

In the past few months, we were approached by representatives of two non-profit entities, the *Christian Immigration Advocacy Center* (CIAC) and the *Society of Anglican Missionaries and Senders* (SAMS). Both want to enter partnerships with Ascension. Both presented us with a ministry vision directed toward refugees and low-income immigrants. Both entail pilot programs. Both are full of wonderful possibilities.

## CIAC



**Christian  
Immigration  
Advocacy  
Center**

The *Christian Immigration Advocacy Center* has offices on the north side of Pittsburgh and approached Ascension to develop a satellite office on the east side. Jennifer Bright Tinker is an Ascension parishioner who is also an

experienced immigration lawyer. Jennifer has been our liaison with CIAC leadership - indeed she is the champion for this initiative - and together we have been working out an agreement as to what it would look like for our church to host and staff an eastern satellite office.

CIAC's Mission ([www.ciacpgh.org](http://www.ciacpgh.org)) is to provide high-quality legal services in a compassionate, incarnational, and culturally appropriate way, empowering churches to serve their poorest neighbors well through collaborative partnerships. CIAC primarily serves low-income individuals and families in need of immigration legal services surrounding green cards, naturalization, family reunification, asylum claims and other related immigration matters.



Jennifer Bright Tinker and Kier Tinker

Rather than build a large infrastructure first, beginning in October 2021 we decided to test launch a Wednesday legal clinic that runs at the same time as evening English classes to gauge demand as well as ministry needs on our end. We took these initial steps with an agreement that CIAC will provide malpractice insurance to our legal volunteers and give us access to their bank of documentation and forms. Ascension provides volunteer legal personnel who direct clients toward resources. Complicated cases are referred to CIAC lawyers in the main office for more help.

With just one email to English class participants, the three appointments for our first clinic in October filled up immediately. Issues dealt with on that evening included affirmative asylum, removal of conditions when married to a US citizen, Violence Against Women Act, temporary protected status, B1/B2 tourist visas, and consular processing. Since its start up, Jennifer Tinker has recruited a volunteer administrator, Kathleen Oliver, to assist with client intake.

We are still very much in process. We have not developed a schedule or come to agreement for fees payable to CIAC for clients we refer. We don't have a consultative structure in place for evaluation and decisions regarding scholarships. We also don't have income guidelines set up to determine levels of assistance. While we have applications pending, we have not as yet secured ongoing funding! For now, we're glad to be off to a great start. As the international ministry has already proved so well, we appear to have a congregation easily motivated to volunteer with internationals. Providing this opportunity to our members in the legal profession seems like an easy win and a great way to expand our current ministry in a vital new direction.

It bears mentioning that Ascension already has strong links to Christian medical institutions that serve the poor and non-English speakers, notably East Liberty Family Health Care Center, founded by one of our members, Dr. David Hall. Adding CIAC is very appealing. The ability to teach immigrants and refugees English, to assist them legally, to refer them to Christian medical care, and to invite them into the life of our congregation and introduce them to Jesus if they so choose, provides a type of whole person care that we very much desire. This vision excites us. It is a robust embodiment of the tagline of our *More than Stones* campaign – *welcoming our neighbors and reaching the nations*. The initiative to follow enhances this even more.

## Introducing Daniel and Rebekah Behrens



In August of 2021 we were approached by Denise Cox, Associate Director of the *Society of Anglican Missionaries and Senders* (SAMS) to consider a partnership with Daniel and Rebekah Behrens who hoped to relocate to the northern United States from their

ministry with *Trinity on the Border* ([www.thebordermission.org](http://www.thebordermission.org)) in Texas to come alongside refugees and poor immigrants permanently settling in cities. The Behrens have a call to work with refugees and low-income immigrants and felt a pull from

the Holy Spirit to live and minister in a city where immigrants are settling for the long-term, rather than come alongside them on the Texas border which is very much a transit point.

The Behrens went through a discernment process with SAMS and have been accepted as candidates for a pilot project in Pittsburgh. They moved to Pittsburgh in December with the hope that, with Ascension as a partner, they will build out an inland refugee/immigrant ministry program that the entire Anglican Church in North America (ACNA) can learn from. They are seeking agreements and the blessing of their sending church, St. Peter's in Tallahassee, Florida; the Bishop of the Gulf Atlantic where Daniel is canonically resident as an ordained Anglican priest; the Bishop of Pittsburgh; and, of course, Church of the Ascension which will function as their home base. While they do not anticipate obstacles, agreements are not currently fixed, so this is very much a work in progress.



Daniel and Rebekah and their children worshipped with us on Christmas Eve! In terms of their upcoming timetable, the first half of 2022 will be a time of transition. They will have three months of training with SAMS and will focus their efforts on support raising. The Behrens will also use the first half of 2022 to understand Pittsburgh, particularly where primary immigrant communities are located, with the goal of moving into such a community. They will begin attending Ascension to understand what ministry to our poorer immigrants already exists and begin relationship building with program leaders and the Ascension family generally. They will also be welcoming their third child in June!

This spring SAMS will also send Daniel and Rebekah to Dallas in March to observe one of the best church refugee ministries in the United States, *Gateway of Grace* ([www.gatewayofgrace.org](http://www.gatewayofgrace.org)), established in an Episcopal Church by Samira Page who was herself an Iranian refugee. The vision of Gateway of Grace is to see the practical and spiritual needs of refugees in their communities met through the Gateway of Grace services and compassionate and meaningful relationships with Gateway of Grace volunteers. An extensive ministry with administrative and communication supports has been built out. A few of us from Ascension hope to join them on that trip.

What will the Behrens' ministry look like as they minister with us as "missionaries in residence"? At this point we don't know but there are manifold possibilities. We do know that they come with an incarnational vision – life on life with relational bridges being key. We have broached the possibilities of starting an Evening Prayer service in Spanish, providing transportation to classes, developing a mentoring or after-school program for children of immigrants, establishing an off-site chapel in a strategic location. Our hope is that they will build out ministry and programming in new and innovative ways, building a team along the way to complement all the good ministry already happening - there are currently 50+ adults regularly volunteering with international ministry. I have every confidence that the Ascension family will come alongside this new work with enthusiasm.

## Revelation 7:9 Ministry

The Apostle John had a dream on the island of Patmos. Revelation 7:9 reads, "After this I looked, and there before me was a great multitude that no one could count, from every nation, tribe, people and language, standing before the throne and before the Lamb." In fact, this is our Lord's dream. One day it will be a wonderful reality. We want to participate in that dream in the here and now, developing a foretaste of that vision with a coordinated, multi-faceted ministry that serves as an example to the whole church, particularly within our diocese and ultimately to the Anglican Church in North America. It is a vision full of life, beauty, and hope. Through these partnerships we hope to move more fully into that dream and behold together as vision comes to life.

# Be the Light



By LuAnn Pengidore, Director of International Ministry  
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**I**t was amazing that the wisemen came from distant lands to search for the King. We too have students from China, Japan, Guatemala, Ecuador, Vietnam, Venezuela, and many other countries who are eagerly seeking the King.

Jesus advised us to not put our light under a basket, but to fill the whole house with it, and to be a light to the nations as well. One way we can be the light is by preparing room in our own homes for those who have come from afar. Here are some suggested ways to share the light of Christ this season:

- You can invite internationals that attend the Sunday services to a lunch or coffee afterwards.
- You can accompany the internationals on our bi-monthly field trips and just get to know them (Note: Students will take a tour of the Carnegie Art Museum with Millicent Smith on January 8 and the Carnegie Science Center Pompeii exhibit on January 29.)
- You can volunteer to bring pizza, a light meal or dessert to the Friday Bible study for internationals led by Robin Capcara from 5:00 pm – 6:00 pm. This study of the Gospel of Luke is a follow up to our Journeys course that concluded in December.
- You can offer to pick up a family that does not have a car for a field trip or worship service.
- You can join in our 15-minute prayer time for internationals on Mondays at 4:00 pm via Zoom. To get the link, email [sophiedbernardi@gmail.com](mailto:sophiedbernardi@gmail.com).
- You can be a conversation partner with an international or with a small group of internationals, in person or on Zoom.
- You can donate an old laptop for internationals who only have a phone for online classes.
- You can visit some moms with new babies that are homebound.
- You can cook with internationals for EECM.



Thank you for already being a bright light to so many internationals. One student from Japan who comes to the services commented that six people from Ascension asked her to Thanksgiving dinner and she was really blessed by that. If you would like to let the light of Christ shine in any of the ways suggested above, please contact me.

# A Spotlight on Foundations



By Kevin Antlitz, Assistant Rector

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**O**n the Feast of Epiphany (January 6), we celebrate the revelation of Jesus to the whole world. Our word epiphany comes from the Greek *epiphainō*, which means “to appear or make known.” During Epiphanytide, we remember how Jesus was made known to the nations as a baby (Matthew 2:1-12) when the magi come from the East to worship him. We remember how the light of Christ shone in each of our lives. We remind ourselves of the great call to shine as Christ’s light in the world.

As we embark on a new year together, Ascension is offering a spiritual formation opportunity called Foundations. The goal of Foundations is to help us better know and love and live the light of Christ. I want to share more about it and why you should consider joining us.

In his book *The Rise of Christianity*, the historian Rodney Stark describes how the church progressed from an obscure and marginal movement making up just .002% of the population of the Roman Empire in 47 AD to over 55% by the year 350 AD. Over the course of three centuries, there was an

explosion of church growth. People were converting and getting baptized. Their religious allegiances were shifting from the Judaism of the Old Covenant or the Roman pantheon to Jesus and the New Covenant. But, as they say: “you can take the pagan out of pantheon but it’s hard to take the pantheon out of the Christian.”

Although their beliefs had changed, their desires, imaginations, and fundamental assumptions about the world were still in need of conversion. Our aim is that how we think, live, and love would be shaped more by the transformative story of the gospel than deformative stories of our culture. Of course, this process is a lifelong journey, but it doesn’t happen by accident.

To facilitate this kind of holistic formation, the church developed a process of catechesis. Catechesis derives from the Greek word *katecheō*, which means “to teach or instruct.” Catechesis, then, is the foundational instruction in Christian belief and practice. This is one of the many resources or methods we have available to help us grow as disciples of Jesus.

Foundations adopts the classic catechesis model. That means it covers the Lord’s Prayer, the Ten Commandments, the Apostles’ Creed,

the sacraments as well as Anglican history. The course will include 12 sessions and will be led by Father Kevin and Josh Bennett with the hope of other clergy teaching as they are able.

Perhaps the best way to think of Foundations is as a discipleship cohort or a Community Group with a semester long commitment. In addition to covering the foundational content of the Christian faith, participants will be expected to meet a few times throughout the semester with 2-3 fellow members to share and pray for one another.

Foundations is open to everyone, but space will be limited, and we ask folks to join who can commit to missing no more than two sessions. We will meet on Thursday evenings from 7:00-9:00 pm at Ascension starting in mid to late January. There will be a link for you to sign up. Check out News & Events at [www.ascensionpittsburgh.org](http://www.ascensionpittsburgh.org).

Whether you are brand new to Ascension or you've been around for 50 years and want a refresher, this course is for you and we hope you will consider joining us! If you can't make it this spring, we'll be offering it again in the fall.

# Special Needs Ministry

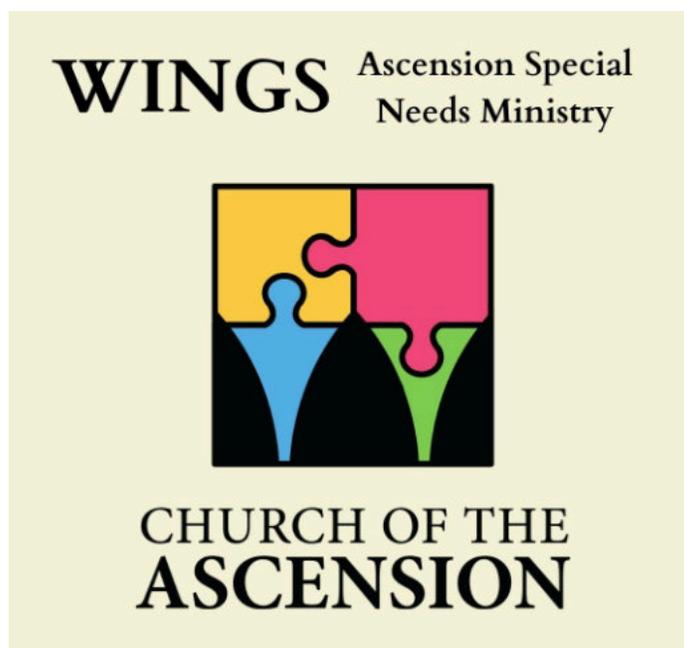


By Josh Bennett, Ascension Fellow  
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**D**id you know that Ascension's special needs ministry meets three Sundays a month? On the 1st and 3rd Sundays of the month we gather at 10:30 am to learn, sing, hear from God's Word, serve, and bless one another by name. On the 2nd Sunday of the month, we gather for a pizza lunch at 12:30 pm and some type of service project. It has been my joy to serve with this ministry for the past couple of months, and it has taught me an incredible lesson - diversity, true life-on-life diversity, is absolutely beautiful.

Sure, diversity can be hard. It's natural to gravitate towards those who are more like us. There is a comfort in that. But what if we're missing out?

Jesus claimed in John 10:10 that he came so that we "may have life, and have it abundantly." He makes clear throughout John's Gospel that this life he refers to is the life which comes from abiding in him — it is the life that brings us into communion with our Triune God and with one another. The invitation to live and love our sisters and brothers in Christ, in all of our diversity, is an invitation to experience at greater depths the abundant life of Christ.



This is made profoundly clear in our special needs gatherings. There is diversity in age, gender, upbringing, and the extent to which disability has touched our lives. We all encounter one another, and encounter the Lord in unique ways — ways that the Spirit of God uses to kindle faith, hope, and love in the hearts of our community. Or as the Apostle Paul writes, "The eye cannot say to the hand, 'I have no need of you,' nor again the head to the feet, 'I have no need of you'" for "If one member suffers, all suffer together with it; if one member is honored, all rejoice together with it." (1

Corinthians 12:21, 26)

So, as you think about this new year, as you consider ways to press further into the abundant life of Christ, consider pressing further into your relationships with those in our special needs community. God knows that we are better together. For ways to be involved in our gatherings, please reach out to me.



# Campus Ministry Epiphany Dinner



By Leah Hornfeck, CCO Campus Ministry & Chris Kirkland, CCO Graduate Ministry  
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*"And nations shall come to your light, and kings to the brightness of your rising." - Isaiah 60:3*

**I**n this season of Epiphany, we celebrate the coming of all the nations to know the light of Christ as exemplified by the coming of the wise men. Epiphany invites all people from all places, both current leaders and the next generation, to come and worship Christ. The next generation is currently located on college campuses right here in our neighborhood of Oakland. These college students are the next generation and the future leaders of the church, and we want to see them come to Christ and flourish in their faith.

The Coalition for Christian Outreach's Jubilee conference helps students to do exactly that. This February, hundreds of college students from around the country will gather in Pittsburgh for a weekend of worship, teaching, and fellowship as they are equipped and encouraged to step more and more into their roles as leaders of the faith on their campuses and in the church.

We want to invite you to partner with us and Ascension's college students on this mission by coming to our Epiphany Dinner. This dinner will not only serve as an opportunity to donate to help send our students to Jubilee, but it will also be a great place to make new connections and build meaningful relationships across generations. We will have a couple of students share their experiences - where God's goodness can be seen on campus and where many students struggle to live faithfully - and we will discuss how the redemptive and restorative work of Christ is crucial for today's students. Our students will also be practicing their future leadership now by leading us in musical worship and a time of prayer. Please consider joining us and Ascension's college students on Saturday, January 29th in the Parish Hall as we shine a light on the Christian college student experience and spur them on to be encouraged and equipped at Jubilee this February.





# Church of the Ascension Youth Group: The Pursuit



By Alex Banfield Hicks, Director of Youth and College Ministry

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**STARTING SUNDAY  
JANUARY 23RD 2022**



**SOCIAL MEDIA & JESUS'  
SERMON ON THE MOUNT**



**A** s a newly minted American citizen, I can now fully claim my right to life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness. But should I? And is the pursuit of happiness a wise venture for us to engage in? It is certainly something we are obsessed with, and since 2012 the United Nations has run an annual survey called the World Happiness Report. This year the United States came in at number 14.

Moreover, this obsession with happiness has been put on steroids by social media. In her book, *The Happiness Effect*, author Donna Freitas writes that young people “face enormous pressure to look perfect online - not just happy, but blissful, ecstatic, and fabulously successful. Unable to achieve this impossible standard, they are anxious about letting the less-than-perfect parts of themselves become public.”

The inevitable comparisons that we make on social media drive us to assume that the

ingredients for happiness highlighted online - how we look, the things we get to experience or achieve - must necessarily be what we must pursue as we pursue happiness. But what if this was all profoundly wrong and misdirected, leading to isolation, depression and distorted lives and relationships? What might our creator say if he walked amongst us?

Instead of the pursuit of happiness, Jesus calls us to seek first His Kingdom and his righteousness, trusting Him for all our other needs. The Sermon on the Mount gives the clearest and most striking exposition of how to live the good life, Jesus' way. So, starting from Sunday January 23, Church of the Ascension's Youth Group (CAYG) will be beginning a new series called “The Pursuit”.

Do contact me to get involved, find out more, or if you'd like to hear more about how to pray for our young people. And on that, every Tuesday there is a 15-minute Zoom prayer meeting for children and youth. Contact Jen Newhouse at [niferm@hotmail.com](mailto:niferm@hotmail.com) for the link.

## Music & Worship Arts

# Three Wise People



By Elise Massa, Assistant Director of Music and Worship Arts

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**T**he Music and Worship Arts Ministry serves to give glory to the Lord through worship, artistic discipleship, and creative community. Like the Wise Men coming to the nativity, members of our ministry both bring their artistic offerings and are sent to their community to share the good news of the True King. Our hope is that those in this ministry would echo the words of artist Henry Ossawa Tanner: “I rejoice in my ability to give blessings to others...I invited the Christ-spirit to manifest in me.”

Here are testimonies from “Three Wise People” who have served within the Music & Worship Arts this past year:

### Nathan Van Patter, visual artist



“I’m a local artist making a show about my neighborhood in the Mon Valley to be shown,

about a mile from my house, at a gallery in Braddock, Pennsylvania. Spending most of my life in low church settings, coming to Ascension and being part of the Christian high church inheritance has added new language to the way I paint. While my work has skewed towards the dark and gritty, I’ve received the visual language of the sanctuary and rituals as a new conversation partner. I’ve felt much more able to include in the world of my paintings things that are brighter, have a slightly more structured composition, or are explicitly Christian. Having compelling visual inputs from church broadens the scope of my creative habits. I’ve found the best art, like the best food, comes from having the best ingredients. My life at Ascension has found its way into my art, shifting the equilibrium of my tone a little more towards light.”

### Linda Evans, choir member



“There is no higher purpose and calling in life than to praise the Lord! I speak from a life-long journey of music ministry. When the organist and musicians ‘play the words’ and

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not just the notes, lives can be changed. The Lord works in music to heal and speak to His people and uses it to save the unbeliever as well.

As an example, a Jewish young man wanted to sing and was welcomed, and then was witnessed to as he did what he loved to do. He was fed and it was his love of music that led him to the Lord through His people in the music ministry.

If you had ever considered sharing your gift, of any level or proficiency, I would urge you to find a place in music ministry. Being in a choir or instrumental group can be a vehicle to help you give more than you could ever do alone. He will use your willingness and the gift you bring. You will bless and be blessed. I pray that you will prayerfully add your unique offerings to the music ministry at Ascension.”

## Wes Williams, musician



“Part of the beauty of music is how it serves as a means of unity. It creates spaces for celebration and grief, for contemplation and exclamation. This space is open for all who wish to enter, who would turn their ear to heed the invitation that chords and melodies extend. The opportunity to take part in creating those spaces of expression, where people can share in delights and sorrows, is an honor.

Serving in the music ministry at Ascension holds with it the responsibility, in contrast with the world at large, to deflect attention from musicianship and toward the glory of

God. All sound that is created in these worshipful spaces is to be used for that purpose, and not distract from it. My personal growth in humility stems in large part from the practice of this responsibility. I am not leading to impress, but to invite others to join with the music created in the worship of our great God.

This responsibility has extended to my leading of the Youth Group music team on Sunday nights. It is always about invitation to worship our God together and bringing ourselves closer in unity through that act of service in worship.”

# Helping our neighbors: Ascension's Meals Ministry in 2022



By Jonathan Sewall, Mission Committee

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## EAST END COOPERATIVE MINISTRY

**O**ur church has provided dinners at Shepherd's Heart and East End Cooperative Ministry for many years. Shepherd's Heart is an Anglican parish near Mercy Hospital that serves the homeless. EECM runs a shelter, kitchen, children's program, and other ministries from its base in East Liberty. In the last two years volunteer support for this ministry has been strong, and those of us who organize it praise God for your interest and willingness to serve. To volunteer or ask questions, please call or email me.

Below is the list of cooking and serving dates for this year. For both, we cook in Ascension's church kitchen on Sunday after the 11:00 am service, starting about 12:15 pm. With a team of 3-6 cooks, we can finish in less than two hours - though folks can leave any time they wish.

We serve the EECM meals on the following Tuesday at 6140 Station Street at 5:30 pm. At Shepherd's Heart, we serve later the same Sunday: servers can show up at Shepherd's Heart, 13 Pride Street, Pittsburgh 15219 in time for their 5:15 pm Eucharist or about 5:45 pm to hand out meals after the service; we finish about 7:00 pm. Thanks so much!

Sunday, Jan. 23: cook for EECM; serve Tuesday Jan. 25  
 Sunday, Jan. 30: cook & serve for Shepherd's Heart  
 Sunday, Feb. 20: cook for EECM; serve Tuesday Feb. 22  
 Sunday, Mar. 6: cook & serve for Shepherd's Heart  
 Sunday, Mar. 27: cook for EECM; serve Tuesday Mar. 29  
 Sunday, Apr. 24: cook for EECM; serve Tuesday Apr. 26  
 Sunday, May 1: cook & serve for Shepherd's Heart  
 Sunday, May 29: cook for EECM; serve Tuesday May. 31  
 Sunday, Jun. 26: cook for EECM; serve Tuesday Jun. 28  
 Sunday, Jul. 24: cook for EECM; serve Tuesday Jul. 26  
 Sunday, Aug. 28: cook for EECM; serve Tuesday Aug. 30  
 Sunday, Sep. 4: cook & serve for Shepherd's Heart  
 Sunday, Sep. 25: cook for EECM; serve Tuesday Sep. 27  
 Sunday, Oct. 16: cook & serve for Shepherd's Heart  
 Sunday, Oct. 23: cook for EECM; serve Tuesday Oct. 25  
 Sunday, Nov. 6: cook & serve for Shepherd's Heart  
 Sunday, Nov. 27: cook for EECM; serve Tuesday Nov. 29

# “Love Packs” Bless Thai Children



By Denise Cox, Mission Committee

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**R**ecently, Ascension was able to provide funds to aid one of our mission partners, St. Andrew’s School in Chiang Mai, Thailand. Some of the funds were used to supply “Love Packs” for the families of the children attending St. Andrew’s. The packs were filled with a toy medical kit, a stationary set, and an age-appropriate book in English. Each pack had an explanation in English, Chinese and Thai explaining the gift was from the Church of the Ascension and came with photos of the Ascension team that ministered at the school during book week two years ago.

During the past several months, schools were not able to meet in person due to COVID restrictions. St. Andrew’s did provide classes online but many of the families were very stressed with small children at home as well as working from home (sounds familiar!) and strict restrictions on movements. School staff visited each student’s home dropping off the “Love Pack” and greeting the students and families. Teachers and students had not seen each other in person for months so this was an exciting visit. After the visits the school staff received many notes from families expressing their appreciation.

Funds were also used to upgrade audio/video equipment for teaching online.

St. Andrew’s School, which operates in a community that is 99.9% Buddhist, expresses its gratitude to Church of the Ascension for the church’s partnership in providing a concrete expression of God’s love during this very difficult time.

*Ascension sent mission teams to Chiang Mai in January 2019 and January 2020. Once the pandemic is behind us, we hope to resume annual trips to work alongside the growing Anglican Church throughout Thailand.*



# Shedding Light on Dark Times: Children's Ministry 2021



By Catherine Slocum and Jay Slocum  
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**H**ave you ever faced a problem that you could not solve? Have you ever called upon an expert to help when something was “over your head” only to have them fail terribly in solving your dilemma? Have you ever had to use all your resources and wits and will to overcome some obstacle, to no avail? Have you ever experienced the joy, after being at your “wits end” of having a person come to your aid and offer you relief, resolution, or restoration?

On Christmas Day 2017, the Slocum family awoke to a very cold house and an icy landscape. Our youngest delighted that we had received a white Christmas as we gathered around the Christmas tree layered in sweaters as we wondered where the heat had gone. To our chagrin, we discovered that our furnace was refusing to fire and must have been dormant for the whole night. Setting aside this concern, we lit the fireplace, opened presents, said our Christmas prayers, and ate a Christmas dinner.

When the revelry subsided, Jay proceeded to the basement, deducing that the source of the problem was not the furnace, but the fuse box. With plans to visit family across the state, Jay stayed home to attempt to solve the problem as Catherine and our two daughters escaped the cold and resumed holiday celebrations with family. After many hours of frustrated problem solving, Jay finally received help from a non-interested electrician sent from a Home Warranty claim, who without barely entering the door, diagnosed an internal wiring problem, but no solution. Many more hours of problem solving, in a house growing ever colder, resulted in no answers and much concern as the temperature plummeted into the teens. Neighbors and knowledgeable family members and friends were consulted, to no avail.

Then after three cold days, a humble electrician answered our call for help, interrupted his holiday plans, and solved

our problem for \$75.00. The problem was an external electric line leading into our house that had been damaged in the ice storm, causing the main line to short out if loaded with anything more than a few electric lights inside the house. What joy Jay felt when the electric company came that day in late December and reconnected our electric line. And what gratitude he held toward the electrician for his honest, thoughtful solution to a problem we could not solve. Warmth and light never felt so good as the New Year came around.

Whether it is a broken vehicle, a broken body or a broken relationship or a pandemic riddled society, many of us have experienced the frustration of doing all that we can to overcome a problem, to no avail. And, it is our hope, that many of us have also experienced the joy and gratitude that have resulted from having a person, or a team of people, heal or fix the brokenness that we cannot overcome on our own.

2021 felt like an electrical problem that we could not resolve. There were times in 2021 when we felt at our wits end, unable to solve problems that we had never encountered before. However, 2021 was a year, for Church of the Ascension, full of moments of relief that made us feel both joyful and grateful.

Many people at Church of the Ascension, like that honest electrician who came to our aid, emerged amid this time of chaos and confusion to solve problems and heal broken situations. Resilient kids willing to try what had never been done before, flexible moms and dads who pivoted time and time again, talented artists, teachers and “doers” who stepped in to make up new ways to gather and learn and worship without complaint, combined to make this year one that reminded us of the promise that comes to us in James 1:2-4, “Consider it pure joy, my brothers and sisters whenever you face trials of many kinds, because you know that the testing of your faith produces perseverance. Let perseverance finish its work so that you may be mature and

complete, not lacking anything.”

With great joy and gratitude, recall with us the many instances in 2021 where we experienced resolution, restoration, and recovery in our time together as a Church.

- Kids’ Church Video Series Season 3 teachings on play, rest, emotions, prayer, lent (Jan. – Mar. 2021)
- Sunday morning Children’s Talks continue to include voice recordings (Jan. – Oct.) and then in November transitioned into in person again!
- Puppet Workshop – Sally Lolli’s forever friend, Meep Meep, became our model puppet as we made our own puppets and talked about how to understand our emotions (Feb. 2021)
- Family tables and video streaming of the Sunday service in the Parish Hall
- The Easter Special Video and singing *He’s Got the Whole World in His Hands*
- Palm Sunday –begin worshipping in the tent on the main lawn, provide resurrection egg kits that tell the Easter story and process with a live donkey
- Jay Slocum comes on board as Children’s Ministry’s curriculum developer
- Prayer team continues weekly prayer time on Tuesday afternoons and gathers for a celebratory tea hosted by Susan Bailey



- Summertime tent events held from 10:15-10:45 am on Sundays join by our beloved puppet friends, and enjoying fun treats like Rita’s Italian Ice. (May – Aug. 2021)

- Weekly Activity Bins provided on Sunday mornings! Staple materials like the Sunday Paper

and crayons along with fun crafts that included Pentecost headband, stain glass cross craft, lunch sack puppets, Haitian foil crosses and button Christmas ornaments to name a few. Thank you, Katie Wentz!

- Children present songs during our worship services – *I’ve Got that Joy, Joy, Joy down in my heart, Jesus Strong and Kind, and He Has done Marvelous Things*
- Produce 5 videos on our Kids’ Church values of Grace, Kindness, Listening, Truth and Beauty (May – Aug. 2021)

- We open our nursery and begin weekly Sunday morning children’s programming Sept. 12, 2021
- Jay and Catherine Slocum develop curriculum that is immersive and uses the whole space of the Nave and Courtyard that is dynamic and fun for the children.
- Kids’ Church teaching series this fall included “Psalm 46 – God is Our Refuge and Strength”, “God’s Kingdom is the Best”, “To Infinity and Beyond – the Bigness of God’s Kingdom” and “The Good News of Advent.”
- Growing our teaching team for our godly play curriculum during Advent (Nov. – Dec. 2021)
- Annual Baby Bottle Campaign raised over \$1,000 for the Women’s Choice Network
- Parish Retreat – Fort building, face painting and lots of fun was had!



- Over 800 cookies were made by our children and delivered to folks aged 70+ in our congregation

- Take-home Advent Scripture chains provided for families to countdown to Christmas

- St. Nicholas at Night Market fun – pure delight was had by all to see the children enjoy sleigh rides with St. Nick, enjoy the live nativity animals and all that the market provided.



- Building from our Kids’ Church video series creating a multimedia Christmas Eve Pageant that combines live and video retelling of the Christmas story. Grateful for all 35 children who participated.

- Singing catchy worship songs all year long like *Unconditional Perfect Love* with the Sparks and other tunes with our Kids’ Church music team. Thank you, Elise Massa, Jane Banfield Hicks, Mike Juday, Josh and Jess Bennett.

**Pray with us!**

**10for@4**

**PRAY**



**...for Internationals (Mon.)  
... for Children & Youth (Tues.)  
...for "Ascensionites" (Weds)  
...for Peace, Justice &  
Racial Reconciliation (Thurs)**

**Want to join us on Zoom? Visit our website!**

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

**Website** [www.ascensionpittsburgh.org](http://www.ascensionpittsburgh.org)

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**About The Ascent** *The Ascent* is published monthly by Church of the Ascension.  
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A Worshipping Community;  
Equipping God's People; Sharing  
Christ's Healing with a Broken World