

The Ascent

EPIPHANY 2024

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Epiphany at Ascension

Epiphany: The Light of Christ



By Marilyn Chislaghi, Director of Ministry
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Epiphanytide is the time between the end of the Twelve Days of Christmas, January 6, and the beginning of Lent on Ash Wednesday, which takes place on February 14th this year. Epiphany is the day that commemorates the manifestation of Christ to the Magi, and the weeks that follow are marked by new and surprising beginnings.

Throughout Epiphanytide, the Gospel readings highlight episodes in Jesus' ministry in seemingly "ordinary" circumstances. However, these events contain an epiphany moment of sudden and striking realization that these are signs of the in-breaking kingdom of God. Ordinary and extraordinary happen side-by-side.

This Epiphanytide we are focusing on Ascension's mission partners who share the light of Christ at home and abroad. Ascension's mission statement reads in three parts: "A Worshiping Community; equipping God's people; sharing Christ's healing with a broken world." The vestry and staff of Ascension are pleased that, in keeping with the third phrase of the mission statement, there are so many incarnations of what sharing the healing of Christ looks like. Our hope is that this edition is placed on your bedside table or on top of your desk, wherever you pray, so that you can uphold these servants of the Lord in your prayers in the year ahead. Please keep this Ascent as a resource for prayer and may there be an in-breaking of the kingdom of God in new and

fresh ways as all of those you meet in this edition labor faithfully for Christ.

All of those featured, with the exception of one person, have some level of funding from Ascension's mission budget. We are pleased to include an article with a focus on James Scannell who has a burgeoning ministry within the disability community!

Just a word on Ascension's mission budget and how it is structured. Typically, at least 10% of prospective pledge and giving income is earmarked in the budget directly for outreach and mission, whether through Ascension or beyond our walls. In 2024 that number nudges just over 11%.

Our mission budget has three tiers: Tier One reflects the corporate calling of Ascension as an Anglican Church situated in Pittsburgh and as an active member of the Anglican Church in North America. Included in this tier is giving toward distinctively Anglican mission endeavors, either here in Pittsburgh or mission partnerships abroad. Tier Two reflects funding in support of individual callings of Ascension missionaries. Tier Three includes funding directed toward different agencies and organizations that Ascension partners with, both local and international. Since fundraising for general operating budgets is a particular challenge, we are pleased to make contributions.

We hope you enjoy reading about the people and partnerships we support. Since many of the people featured in this Ascent attend on Sunday mornings, do take an opportunity to get to know them!

Be the Light



By LuAnn Pengidore, Director of International Ministry
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It was amazing that the wisemen came from distant lands to search for the King. We too have students from all over the world 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 internationals on our monthly field trips and just get to know them. We always want many English speakers! And the field trips are fun!
- You can join in our 15-minute prayer time for internationals on Mondays at 4pm via Zoom. To get the link, join the group on the Church Center app.
- 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 make a meal for moms with new babies that are homebound.

Thank you for already being a bright light to so many internationals. If you would like to let the light of Christ shine in any of the ways suggested above, please contact me.

The Blessing of Carthage

By Frank and Anne B.

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Eighteen hundred years ago the first African Christian martyrs were sentenced to death in the Roman city of Carthage. Less than a hundred years later under the leadership of St. Cyprian the illegal Christian community of Carthage had grown so large that it was able to save the city from a plague by going out on the streets and caring for the sick while the Roman officials were too afraid of infection to leave their homes. In the years prior to Christianity being legalized in the Roman Empire there were more Christian house churches in Carthage than in any other city in the world. A century later, a violent church split in Carthage resulted in the suppression of indigenous Christian churches, effectively signing the death warrant for North African Christianity. Within a couple of centuries, the once great church of Carthage ceased to exist.



Twenty-two years ago, we (Anne & Frank B.) moved to Tunisia with a vision that God would one day restore the blessing of Carthage. In that time, we have worked towards authentic and infectious communities of faith among the exclusively Muslim population of Tunisia. We have prayed ceaselessly for the sick and have seen some healed. We have told countless stories of Jesus and witnessed some decide to follow him. We have aided in the production of a new translation of the Gospels and experienced scores of families receive it with joy. We have set up businesses that provide much needed job training and employment to dozens of Tunisians who suffer under the country's oppressive economic system. Of course, we have also made a plethora of mistakes and missed countless opportunities, but we are unbelievably honored to have been able to participate with what God is doing in this very unreached part of the globe.

As the Rector of St. George's Tunis, Frank has been able to oversee a remarkable transition in the Anglican church in North Africa, from expatriate chaplaincy to a brand-new diocese in the Anglican Communion committed to multiplication among the indigenous population. There are now North African Arabs from a Muslim background who are Anglicans and committed followers of Jesus. There is now an Anglican seminary that is currently training over twenty future leaders in this church. Just like the early church in North Africa, this new emerging church faces persecution, discrimination, and harassment, but also like the early church these new Christians are bold and exhibit uncommon commitment.

There is a lot to be excited about right now in North Africa. We don't take credit for any of it. We are simply willing to be here and have the privilege of riding the wave of God's miraculous intervention among the unreached that he loves so very much.



A New Calling

By Nate and Erika Twichell

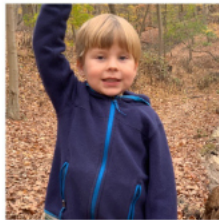
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Throughout our life together, Erika and I have returned to a simple thought many times: we just want to be obedient. When we started Agape Year in 2016, it wasn't because we thought we would be great gap year directors (we weren't), or because we wanted an adventure (it was), but because it was the obedient thing to do. We both knew that we were being obedient to God's call on our lives. That desire to be obedient is why our family will be moving to England this coming summer.

When we sensed that God was calling us overseas, we didn't want to choose the spot ourselves. We wanted to be directed by God. Our prayer was to be sent to a place where the church was small and in need of encouragement, and where we could serve those on the margins. In England, we will be ministering to vulnerable adults, those who have experienced homelessness, domestic violence, and those with intellectual disabilities. The ministry has a wide reach, but the area that Erika and I will be focused on is set on a 125-acre working farm outside the city of Leeds. Erika will be leading the Expressive Arts Therapeutic Program, combining drama, poetry, and music to create a place of belonging, dignity, and purpose. I will be running the Farm Store, a small shop selling the eggs, lamb, and beef produced on the farm that also acts as a touchpoint for the public to interact with the ministry.

The statistics for church attendance in England were startling to us. Pre-pandemic surveys put church attendance below 5% of the population. The nation that birthed major missionary movements and revivals has walked away from God. On our first Sunday back at Ascension from visiting the ministry, we read these words from Jeremiah: "This is what the LORD says: 'Stand at the crossroads and look; ask for the ancient paths, ask where the good way is, and walk in it, and you will find rest for your souls.' But you said, 'We will not walk in it.'" Our call in England is to join those who invite people back to the ancient paths, back to the good way.

We covet your prayers for our children through this challenging transition, for provision of financial supporters to make this ministry possible, and prayers against my fears as we prepare to leave our community. For updates and for more info, please chat with us and see our website at www.theslowwork.com.



Ministry Down Under

By Jewel Anita Hendrix

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Jewel Anita Hendrix has been affiliated with Ascension as a missionary for many years, serving in various places around the globe. She is currently in New Zealand working with various agencies in prayer ministry, inner city ministry, and helping coordinate a new retreat facility. She has a heart for the vulnerable and seeks whole person and whole community transformation in Christ.

I have experienced lots of good milestones in 2023 – a New Zealand passport and celebrating 10 years working for *Reconciled World (RW)* being among them! Those of us affiliated with *Reconciled World* gathered for a week in Turkey – our first time together since before Covid. *RW* has been growing rapidly. As I coordinate prayer for the ministry, it has been hard to keep up with all the new faces, and the stories of transformation continue to roll in as the wholistic discipleship movement spreads. Find out more at reconciledworld.org

But it has also been a year of pruning. *Ignite 6:8* came into the year with me as the only full-time staff person. *Ignite 6:8* is all about helping people live out a Micah 6:8 lifestyle of compassion and justice rooted in the Father's love. God graciously reminded the board of *Ignite 6:8* that you only prune a third of the tree or you risk killing it. So, we looked at activities and prayed through what third to prune.

Our *Youth with a Mission* partners decided they wanted to do our *Streethelp* ministry at least twice a month, so we raised up more leaders and went out on Friday nights serving hot meat pies and drinks to those sleeping rough in tents, cars or on the streets. The past few months, the number of people sleeping rough in Tauranga has doubled. Each time, we find people who are hungry, physically, but also crying out for emotional connection. Just this past Friday, one young man who we've been talking to was finally open to considering accepting Jesus. In the past he's always said that "if" he was "spiritual" he'd become a Buddhist. He has experienced much pain in his past and has made many mistakes. Hopefully he'll allow grace and forgiveness to cover those soon.

Hoatu Lodge, the retreat center I manage, is moving along with the business as missions' model. We have had youth groups, prayer retreats and others come in addition to the family groups and school groups. God has also blessed us with a builder who is volunteering his time once a week, taking care of all sorts of things for us. And the couple who are managing it have decided to stay on for a while yet. Find out more at hoatu.co.nz



The Challenge of Leadership Transition

By David and Debra Kornfield

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Tears, laughter, and worship! The Spanish Discipleship Bible, co-

authored by David and so long in production, is finally in the hands of *Discipling and Pastoring of Pastors (DPP)* leaders

gathered in Bogotá, Colombia in October 2023. What a celebration!! The Discipleship Bible, packed with practical studies for small groups, was published in Brazil in 2018. Since then, modules have been translated and passed around Latin America through the internet. At last, all the resources are available to Spanish speakers in one volume. We would love to see the Discipleship Bible published in English as well. Pray with us for that to happen!



We both grew up in Latin America, the children of missionaries in Bolivia and Guatemala. After serving in Brazil for twenty years, we moved to Pittsburgh because of our daughter Karis's health needs. Rather than ending our ministry, God expanded it through Zoom, WhatsApp, email, and travel across Latin America. Our vision, "Healthy disciple-making pastors; healthy disciple-making churches," now reaches pastors and their families in an organized way in twelve Spanish-speaking countries.

We face one huge challenge and several related tasks as we walk into 2024. God has given us a vision for a Latin American Disciple-Makers Summit. Embracing this call highlights the need for Dave to pass on the leadership baton for eight different ministries presently led or co-led by him. Please come and hear more about this at our **annual mission lunch at Ascension on January 28 in the Hunt Rooms following the 11am service**. We'll share a Power Point called "The World of DPP" that recaps our story. **Will you join us? Please RSVP to Debbie** by email (above) or text 412-996-6856. If you can't come that day, you can view the presentation through a link posted on the

home page of ButGod.blog, though you'll miss stories and details.

Our biggest obstacle is finances. Why? Because most pastors working with DPP are volunteers, sacrificing spare time from pastoring their own churches to move the various *Discipling and Pastoring of Pastors* ministries forward. Each country must develop a financial base that can support leaders to give significant time to *DPP* without hurting their marriages and families due to overwork.

Dave is training teams we're calling *Sons and Daughters of Barnabas* to raise support in their countries for *DPP*. As Barnabas donated significant resources to the early church in Jerusalem (Acts 4:36-37), this ministry seeks his "sons and daughters," whose hearts God has touched to resource *DPP*.

In 2024, we hope to see a U.S. chapter of *Sons and Daughters of Barnabas* begin and organize with the goal of raising matching funds. In prayer we have imagined retirees and others with experience and connections in the business and financial world helping people contribute matching funds for *DPP*. Such a partnership would free Latin American leaders to equip healthy, multiplying, disciple-making pastors and churches into the future.

Dave could then step back from his current roles, free to mentor those who accept one of his leadership batons and to invest in other dreams, like mentoring disciple-making movement leaders in other parts of the world and publishing the Discipleship Bible in English!

Anglican Mission Societies Supported by Ascension



By Marilyn Chislaghi, Director of Ministry
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The Society of Anglican Missionaries and Senders (SAMS)

The Society of Anglican Missionaries and Senders (SAMS) was founded in the United States in 1976 to respond to the call from Anglican leaders around the world for cross-cultural workers. SAMS-USA was the latest SAMS branch, the first SAMS branch having been formed in England in 1844.



Ministering as partners with the global Anglican church is all about building lasting relationships. SAMS Missionaries serve in 29 countries in varying contexts building relationships in Christ's name – operating schools, baptizing people, building maternity clinics, discipling young believers, caring for the suffering, starting new churches, and more. SAMS has missionaries teaching law and theology in higher education institutions in Uganda and Malawi. But there are also missionaries providing care for vulnerable children and disaffected youth.

And closer to home SAMS stepped out with the Diocese of Pittsburgh and Church of the Ascension to place SAMS missionaries Daniel and Rebekah Behrens at Ascension to catalyze ministry to refugees and recent immigrants. If you would like more information about SAMS, missionary service and the joys of cross-cultural ministry, please contact me.

Anglican Frontier Missions (AFM)

The vision of AFM: Planting biblically based, multiplying, indigenous churches and dioceses where the church is not yet established, among the 3 billion people and 7,000 unreached people groups still waiting to hear the gospel for the very first time. Partnering with members of the worldwide Anglican Communion and other Christians who live near or among unreached peoples, AFM equips and sends short- and long-term missionaries who harness the spiritually formational power, practices, and rhythms of the sacraments, liturgy, and the prayer book tradition to disciple believers from Muslim, Hindu, Buddhist, animistic, and secular backgrounds. Join us!



Our Logo expresses AFM's vision sacramentally through color and shape. The orange in AFM's logo represents the fire of the Holy Spirit falling upon unreached people groups. The blue globe represents the priestly ephod, and thus the priestly ministry of our cross-cultural workers who "declare the praises of him who called us out of darkness into his wonderful light" (1 Peter 2:8-9). The globe highlights the Eastern Hemisphere where most unreached peoples are located, and purposely includes Europe, a new frontier in missions

The shape of AFM's logo, when traced around its perimeter, presents the logo in the shape of a key, an extremely important Biblical metaphor. Peter, upon whom Jesus built the Church, was given the keys to the Kingdom of Heaven (Matthew 16.19) and AFM's mission is to unlock the chains of bondage which enslave the unreached peoples at the ends of the earth. AFM has the keys of anointing, support, network, knowledge, purpose, training, history and determination to help every segment of the Anglican Communion to be a meaningful part of completing the Great Commission and doing it as Anglicans.

Ascension Members Develop a Practical Ministry of Advocacy and Theological Consultation

By Paige Forster

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Ascension member James Scannell, a frequent contributor to the Ascent, has nonspeaking autism. In 2020, at the age of 19, he learned how to communicate with a spelling board. Since then, James has developed a wide-ranging, fruitful ministry advocating for people with disabilities and partnering with theologians who study and write about disability.

James' ministry began to develop when he and his mother, Anna, heard disability theologian John Swinton on a podcast. James prayed to meet Swinton. It turned out that Anna's college friend, who works at

InterVarsity Press, was able to connect them. Swinton told James and Anna about an upcoming online conference on autism and the church. James attended the conference in 2021, participated in a Q&A session, and met UK disability theologians Claire Williams and Armand Leon van Ommen.

James and Anna never knew the field of disability theology existed before they started making these connections. Disability theology asks vital, practical questions. James explains, "Those who have more active bodies or vocalizations often feel unwelcome in many churches. Sensory issues like hating loud noises can make worship painful. Social expectations for superficial chit chat can be exhausting. These are all topics of interest to disability theologians."

The theologians James has met have interviewed him and drawn on his insights in their writing and teaching. Communicating with a nonspeaker has “opened a world to them,” as James puts it. Although he does not claim the title of theologian for himself, he is grateful God has used him this way. Besides speaking with theologians, James is involved with the Anglican Church in North America’s Access Leadership Network, which works to build communities of belonging across the ACNA among those with and without disabilities. James participated in a panel discussion in October and helped design the November meeting.

James also advocates outside the church setting. He recently wrote a blog post about advocating for oneself during the hectic holiday season. He has also made multiple presentations to help others understand issues relating to nonspeakers, including apraxia (when the body does not cooperate with the brain) and sensory processing differences. He uses a set of PowerPoint slides and presents alongside his friend Matthew Rice, who also has nonspeaking autism. The two young men have different opinions and experiences, which helps the audience understand that autism is not homogeneous.

Theologian Leon Van Ommen dedicated his most recent book, *Autism and Worship: A Liturgical Theology*, to James. The dedication says: “James has shared his story, experiences, views, and his own interviews with disabled people with me over the course of numerous conversations There are few people who have challenged me in my thinking and my view about autism, church, ministry, and theology as much as James. For that, I am deeply grateful.”

Claire Williams reflects similar gratitude in the acknowledgments for her book, *Peculiar Discipleship: An Autistic Liberation Theology*. She writes: “To James, words cannot express my thankfulness for your friendship You are a wonderful ambassador and theologian in your own right. I can’t wait to see all that you become in the future.” And Williams recognizes James’ mom as well: “To Anna, your emails are such an encouragement. From all the way across the globe you bring light and hope to me Who would have thought that Jesus could be shown through an email on a computer screen? Your words have done that for me.”

Asked what prepared him for this work, James says: “Two words. THE LITURGY.” He says that hearing the liturgy weekly “has grounded me in the story of who God is and His love for His creation.” He shares that he has been loved at Ascension and wants to love and serve those who have loved him. And “not least,” he adds, “Jesus has shown himself to me in the nave many times. He was my friend before I could communicate with other people.”

Asked what prepared her for this work, Anna says, “Sometimes a call feels like a natural outflow. I have a child, he is disabled, here I go. Vocation is really about God’s calling.” She finds it “great fun to be a fly on the wall” as James talks with theologians. Though she keeps quiet during interviews, she sometimes later shares her thoughts via email. She also keeps her theologian friends connected with new resources and the writings of nonspeakers.



In the future, James hopes to meet more academic theologians. He would also like to see more disabled people in leadership in the church and continue to spotlight the gifts that disability brings to the community as a whole. Anna hopes the church learns to speak more clearly about identity and value. She notes that the world tells people who they are, and the church - perhaps not liking the message - is reactive. She states, “Let’s lead the conversation instead.” Anna also hopes the church learns more about how to be a loving and practically supportive community to those who cannot manage independently in society.

Anna and James are both very interested in disability theology’s attention to imago Dei, what it means to be made in the image of God. In heaven, they wonder, will James no longer be autistic? Or will we somehow retain our differences while Jesus transcends what causes our suffering? James says, “I like my brain.” He pushes back against the medical model that sees autism as something that must be fixed.

James and Anna are helping to broaden and deepen the church’s understanding of disability. Their quiet but vital ministry brings the light of Christ’s love to people who have traditionally been marginalized.

Ascension Refugee Ministry



By Daniel Behrens, Ascension Missionary in Residence

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Rebekah and I are part of the Society of Anglican Missionaries and Senders (SAMS-USA), and I get to serve as a Missionary in Residence with Ascension, focusing on refugees and recent immigrants. Let me share about how this ministry is taking shape as Ascension continues to widen the range of care we can extend to our new neighbors!

Welcome Circles: Through Welcome Circles, a group of 5 to 15 volunteers partners with Hello Neighbor, a refugee resettlement agency, to walk with a refugee family for their first six months. It is a holistic, team effort to move them toward stability, including assembling bunk beds, signing up for school, and drinking tea and listening. In 2023 we gathered three teams to receive three families from Syria, and we hope to receive two to four more in 2024. It is humbling, sometimes heartbreaking work, but is a privilege to walk closely with those God has brought to our city. Please email me if you would like to be on a cohort in 2024!



Job Partners: We get to meet people from dozens of nations through the ESL classes at Ascension. Students sometimes ask for assistance with other needs, including help finding work. The Job Partners ministry pairs an Ascension volunteer with a job-seeker for 1 to 3 months to help them identify what they need and overcome the barriers to securing employment. Please email me if you would like to train to be a Job Partner!

Latino Ministry: Over the past year and a half, Rebekah and I have worked with Carolina Tufiño, a former ESL student from Ecuador and Ascension parishioner, to organize events for Spanish-speakers. We have had parties, potlucks, Bible studies, and even a bingo night, all as opportunities to build relationships. If you speak Spanish or simply appreciate Hispanic cultures, I hope you can participate in our next gathering!

Neighborhood Mentorship: Rebekah and I have been blessed to walk with three newly-arrived families from Afghanistan who live near our home in Beechview. Rebekah has mentored two first-time moms, I have helped with driving lessons and cultural orientation, and we have given and received warm hospitality. If you live in the South Hills and would like to connect with these families, please send Rebekah (rebekahbehrens@sams-usa.org) a message!

Christian Immigration Advocacy Center (CIAC): While not part of my family's ministry, I want to mention another key partnership at Ascension. Since October 2021 the church has hosted a weekly legal aid clinic where volunteers meet with internationals seeking help navigating the immigration process. The visa process is complex and intimidating, and the CIAC clinic provides compassionate listening, astute guidance and, where appropriate, referrals to affordable legal help. For more information on how to help, contact ciac@ascensionpittsburgh.org!

Introducing Ryan and Kelly Shane

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We are Ryan and Kelly Shane, along with our three daughters Ella, Sophia, and Juliana Shane. Although Ryan is a Pittsburgh native, we moved to Pittsburgh in the summer of 2021 from our home in Lebanon. As a family, we spent most of 18 years living in several countries in the Middle East, but the last 9 years of our time (2012-2021) were spent in Lebanon.

We were in Lebanon as missionaries, and our visas and day-to-day work came through educational development (Ryan) and medical relief (Kelly). For most of our time in Lebanon we worked with Syrian refugees who arrived in huge numbers. Estimates say there were about 2 million Syrian refugees in Lebanon at the height of the Syrian crisis. Our projects included an initiative called MotherCare where we assisted pregnant refugees to get the education and care they needed and, with the help of outside funding, paid many of their hospital bills. We worked with another ministry called Blanket them with Hope which was an income-generating crochet project that both provided women with an income as well as baby blankets for newborns from other refugee families. We loved the relationships we developed and the conversations we were able to share.

In 2021, after much prayer, we left Lebanon. We did this in part because of Covid and the impact it had on our ability to do ministry, and in part because our oldest daughter was ready to attend university. As we closed that chapter of our lives, we were heartbroken to leave so many that had become dear to us in camps and other difficult situations. We asked the Lord to care for them and to show us what He wanted us to do in the

United States. Ryan was already working on a Master of Divinity degree at Trinity School for Ministry, so he was able to continue and finish his studies.

We also felt that the Lord was asking us to continue serving refugees. We began to help Church of the Ascension as the relationship with Hello Neighbor was in formation and, happily,



we've been helping to lead the volunteer teams ever since. It was with great joy that we realized so many Syrian refugees are arriving right now in Pittsburgh and that we can help families who have been "stuck" to start a new life. We continue with WEC International, our mission organization, but now focus on refugees arriving here in Pittsburgh. We have absolutely loved getting to know so many Ascensionites as they volunteer to love and serve refugees alongside us.

Shelter Meal Ministry

By Bryan Janaszek and Jonathan Sewall

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Ascension's Shelter Meals ministry works with two Pittsburgh ministries, East End Cooperative Ministry and Shepherd's Heart Fellowship, to provide warm meals for people experiencing homelessness. Ascension has been helping at EECM for nearly 40 years. The organization was founded in 1970 as a pastoral response to the changes happening in East Liberty. The ministry began with interracial breakfasts at Peabody High School (now Obama Academy) and a Meals on Wheels program. Each year brought new ministry opportunities, including the Vintage Senior Center, the East End Food Coop, a soup kitchen, and a food pantry.



EAST END
COOPERATIVE
MINISTRY

In 1983, a homeless shelter was opened in East Liberty Presbyterian church, and soon thereafter, Ascension parishioners began to prepare and serve meals there on the last Tuesday of every month, a tradition that continues to this day. In 2013, EECM moved into the Community House, a new complex in East Liberty, and Ascension

prepares and serves the monthly meals here. We will serve anywhere from 40-80 on a Tuesday evening. (A fun fact is that the soup kitchen, food pantry, and homeless shelter were the initiatives of Mary Chislaghi, Charlie Chislaghi's late wife!)



In 1993, Mike and Tina Wurschmidt received a call to serve the homeless and came to Pittsburgh to attend seminary. They organized a small group of committed Christians to worship together and walk the streets of Pittsburgh to bring material and spiritual help to those experiencing homelessness. Shepherd's Heart Fellowship was born. In time, the ministry bought their current building, located at 13 Pride Street, close to Mercy Hospital. They worship here on Sunday evenings, provide meals for those who need them, and manage a drop-in center as well as a veteran's home. Ascension's shelter meal ministry has been cooking and serving meals after the Sunday worship service for many years. The meals provide an opportunity to talk with the people Shepherd's Heart faithfully serves.

We have been thankful that both EECM and Shepherd's Heart have been able to share their commercial kitchen spaces with Ascension during the church construction project. While it has been a challenge learning new spaces and working around the little limitations, it has also been a joy to continue serving their

ministries. We look forward to having access to the Ascension kitchen, which will allow us to prepare the meals on Sundays after church.

EECM meals are served on the last Tuesday of the month. The dates for Shepherd's Heart in 2024 will be January 28, March 10, April 14, September 8, October 13, and December 8. If you are interested in participating, you can contact either Jonathan or Brian. Another option is to join the group on Ascension's app. You will see upcoming meal dates and be notified through the app.

Trinity School for Ministry

By Jack Walsh

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Trinity School for Ministry is an Anglican seminary just west of Pittsburgh in the borough of Ambridge, a few miles beyond Sewickley.

The school has numerous points of connection with Ascension. To name just a few, Joel Scandrett is a current professor, Mark Stevenson was on the faculty for many years, Andrea Millard has a Doctor of Ministry from Trinity, and members of the staff team - Josh and Jess Bennett, Wes Williams, and Daniel Behrens - are all Trinity graduates. And, of course, just a few months ago, Alex Banfield-Hicks left Ascension to take on a key role at Trinity guiding church partnerships and leadership development. I have worked on the staff at Trinity in various roles for over 13 years.

The school was founded in the mid-1970s emerging from a renewal movement in the Episcopal Church. Following a similar path to the journey Ascension took, over time it became clear that the best hope for faithful, biblical, Christo-centric Anglican ministry was with the Anglican Church in North America. The school is now primarily aligned with the ACNA.

Trinity welcomes all students and faculty who long for a church that is evangelical in faith, catholic in order, alive in the Holy Spirit, and committed to mission. The approach is one of evangelical commitments and Anglican heritage. Many students, both within those traditions and beyond, have found it to be a valuable context in which to be formed for the Gospel ministry.

The Stanway Institute at Trinity School for Ministry is named for Dr. Alf Stanway, long time missionary to East Africa and the first Dean President of Trinity. Through the Stanway Scholarship, Trinity can bring two students a year to the main campus to work on a Master of Arts degree in Religion. The scholarship provides the students full support while they are studying. The purpose of the program is to prepare them to return to their home countries and multiply their ministries through training others within their dioceses. Many previous Stanway Scholars have returned to major leadership roles in their home countries in Africa.

Trinity School for Ministry would not exist without the support of faithful churches and faithful members. We are deeply grateful to God for the long relationship with the Church of the Ascension.



Faith + Work Conference



A Vision for the Role Our Daily Work Plays
in the Mission of God

With The Rev. Dr. Aubrey Spears

January 18-19, 2024

TSM Faith & Work Conference: January 18 - 19

Interested in learning more about the role your daily work plays in the mission of God? If so, mark your calendars for a conference hosted by Trinity School for Ministry on Thursday and Friday, January 18-19. In this two-day seminar, The Rev. Dr. Aubrey Spears will lead an exploration of the theological foundations for integrating faith and work and will share ways to help us follow Christ through our work. You can register online at tsm.edu/interterms.

Kairos Prison Ministry

By Ron and Judy Yadrick

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Jesus said, “I was in prison and you visited me.” Matthew 25:36-40
Kairos is a lay led ministry that focusses on bringing the love and forgiveness of Jesus Christ into prisons as well as to families impacted by incarceration. Kairos’ main activity is a semi-annual Kairos Weekend for prison “residents”, along with regular follow-up gatherings through its Continuing Ministry program.



Kairos uses talks, meditations, music, and activities to invite the incarcerated to enter a personal relationship with the living Christ. Kairos’ mission is not only to advocate Christ, but also to put human lives in service - literally transforming prison environments from the inside. Kairos is recognized by prison officials as an effective program that positively changes the attitudes and behaviors of those who attend.

Kairos volunteers respect the dignity of each prisoner while modeling Christ’s love. Volunteers practice a method described as ‘listen, listen, love, love’. Kairos is not about preaching and convincing. Instead, volunteers listen with their hearts - an act of love - realizing we are all broken. Through God’s grace, we try to be the face, heart, and mind of Jesus in the prison, living and laughing and crying with the residents.

Kairos Inside volunteers are supported by prayer and logistics of the Outside Support Team. This outside team is open to men and women and spouses of those going inside. Judy joins the Outside Support Team when her husband, Ron, is on the inside team at State Correctional Institution (SCI) Greene. This prison is in Waynesburg, PA, about an hour south of Pittsburgh on I-79. The next Kairos Weekend at SCI Greene is Thursday through Sunday, April 18 – 21, 2024. The team will begin meeting on February 10 to prepare.



A “bucket list” item for both Judy and Ron is for many in the congregation to witness a Kairos Weekend Closing Ceremony. It is like sitting on the 50-yard line of a football game and watching the Holy Spirit work. You will never forget it! But to experience it, you must submit vetting paperwork to the institution at least a month ahead of time, by about March 17. Talk to Ron if you are interested in coming for the Sunday closing session. It will give you a taste of what Kairos Prison Ministry is all about

For more info, to volunteer or to donate financially, see the www.kpmi.org or www.kairospa.org websites. Better yet, contact Ron Yadrick or Judy Yadrick who will be asking the Ascension community for essential prayer vigil sign-up support before the upcoming Kairos Weekend in April.

Women's Choice Network

By Meg Sateia

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At Women's Choice Network's annual fall banquet in September, Executive Director Amy Scheuring announced that the WCN medical clinics would now be part of an umbrella organization called the Network of Life. She explained that after the **Dobbs v. Jackson** ruling in 2022 overturning **Roe v. Wade**, Pittsburgh mayor **Ed Gainey** made a statement that Pittsburgh would be a sanctuary city for abortion. The mission of the Network of Life is instead to make Pittsburgh a sanctuary city for life, a city offering help for women and their babies, and the men involved in pregnancy decisions too.



Since the pandemic, the FDA requirement for dispensing the abortion pill drugs in-person has been lifted, allowing women access to mail order abortions up to nine weeks in Pennsylvania. With fewer regulations around the process of obtaining a medical abortion, the window of time for WCN to reach women who are vulnerable to abortion has become shorter. Additionally, WCN faces challenges marketing their services to women who could benefit from them. They are up against large corporations who are able to spend a great deal of money on marketing abortions in ever subtler and more varied avenues on social media and with product placement in movies and online content.



Since the founding of Women's Choice Network in 1985, over 7,000 babies who were at risk for abortion have been born with the support of their services. WCN does not just care about saving babies' lives, but also coming alongside women faced with unplanned pregnancies to offer ongoing support and resources. You may have read that pregnancy clinics like WCN coerce women into carrying their babies and mislead women. If you have any questions about this, please reach out to me and I'd be happy to talk with you about how WCN cares for their clients with integrity, not coercion.

If you are interested in supporting this ministry, you can pray, volunteer, or give financially. The Road Crew is a prayer ministry that will email you one prayer request per week (a great way to learn more about the redemptive work of this ministry!). Email asuehling@gmail.com to join. To read about volunteering visit <https://mypregnancycenter.org/get-involved/>. To donate go to mypregnancycenter.org and click the donate button. Alternatively, you can view their new giving catalog which allows you to fund specific services: <https://www.givingcatalog.life/>.

Developing Artists in the Church

By Elise Massa

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Greetings from across the pond! With scones in hand, our family is acclimatizing to the Northeast of England (Durham to be exact) since arriving in August 2023. Both Caleb and Chris start their respective Spring terms in the British education system. Caleb is enjoying football (aka soccer) as a goalie, while Chris is right on track with his PhD which means his research focus is forming, but still a bit fuzzy. Thank you for your prayers.

For those unfamiliar with my work as UK Team Leader with United Adoration, here are a few of our beliefs and how these have played out so far on British soil.

“We believe creative communities should be thriving in local churches.” My primary focus the last few months has been establishing roots in our new local church, St. John’s Church, Neville’s Cross. St. John’s has had a legacy of arts-on-mission, but most of these artists lack creative community. To bring artists together, I organized a Resound Worship concert to bless the St. John’s community, followed by an American Thanksgiving dinner for the musicians. Chris and I hosted an Advent small group with dinner, fellowship, and prayer. Artists thrive when churches thrive; so, I’ve been in discussion with St. John’s to help revamp their communications strategy as a tool for mission and engagement with the community. Who knew that designing Ascension’s social media would prove formative for work in the UK!

“We believe that God brings creativity, collaboration, and healing when artists gather together.” There is deep division and skepticism between UK churches whose worship styles differ. From the beginning, I believed the Lord was calling me to mend these divisions by uniting artists and church leaders in prayer. Every other Tuesday, our UK-based team members pray on Zoom for UK churches and arts organizations. Our format is similar to Ascension’s 10for@4. I’ve also been invited by United Adoration’s partner organizations to teach various artistic contemplative prayer workshops

for young worship leaders (18-35) through tenured Salvation Army captains!

“We believe that artists play a crucial role in shaping culture.” How important then that artists are rooted and disciplined in the truth of Christ! United Adoration believes that *mission moves at the speed of relationship*. Therefore, sometimes missionary work with the 3-mile-per-hour Jesus can feel quite mundane. Which feels more glamorous to say? “I led workshops in artistic prayer practices for primary school children!” or “I spent an hour shoveling ice off the sidewalks because the children couldn’t get there safely!” But both are



necessary in life together. Raking autumn leaves for the church “gardening day”, meeting artists for tea or at their craft fair stalls - this is how I hear the church and artists’ heartbeat, build relationships, and then invite artists into the transformative relationship with Jesus Christ. It’s hard work, and it’s long work, but it’s good work.

Finally, I was so moved to receive messages about how ‘O Gracious Light’ (Clark/Massa) ministered to you during the parish retreat. I’m excited to announce that the song has been officially released on Resound Worship’s latest album, *Downcast Souls Expectant Hearts*. Our hope is that these congregational songs will be formative in helping UK churches make space for grief and lament and be firmly rooted in our eschatological hope in the resurrected Christ. You can purchase the double album at <https://www.resoundworship.org/>.

Coalition for Christian Outreach [CCO]

By Ginger Weeber

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M meet CCO staff who are members of and worship at Ascension:

Jonny Cagwin, Formation & Discipleship Specialist and Campus Ministry Staff at CMU

Tyler Marwood, Director of Marketing & Communication

Shelly Riemersma, Staff Spiritual Director

Ginger Weeber, Gift & Stewardship Officer

College students need you, the church! They need:

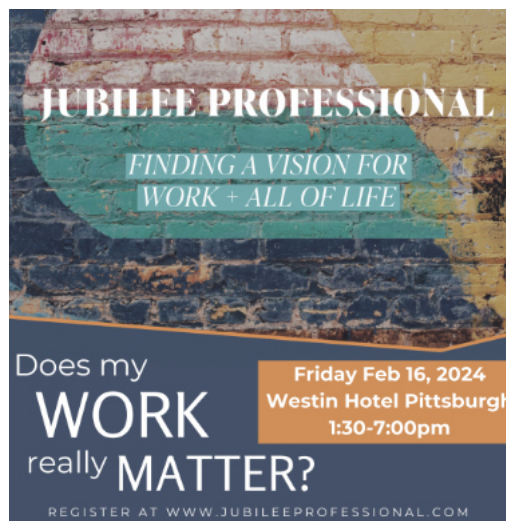
1. To hear the Truth about Jesus,
2. To be connected to local bodies of believers, to find faithful peers and trusted adults who care for them, and
3. To know that they belong to their Creator, not to the idols of our age.

Right in our backyard at Carnegie Mellon University, Cole, a student leader, invited Alejandro to the Tartan Athlete Fellowship. Alejandro is from Madrid and plays on CMU's soccer team. Over the course of his time in college, he came to the fellowship meeting, then the team Bible study his junior year, and then talked with Jonny about feeling the nudge of the Holy Spirit in his growth in faith. Jonny invited him to meet together with him and Cole to read through the Gospel Centered Life. As Jonny equips student leaders, they invite others in to experience who Jesus is and what it means to grow in faith.

Please pray for the CCO's ministry with college students, and for the Jubilee Conference (Feb. 16-18) in particular.

Register for CCO Jubilee Professional: Friday, Feb 16

[CCO Campus Ministry](#) invites you to join Jubilee Professional on Friday, February 16, 2024, in Pittsburgh. No matter your title, industry, or vocation, whether at home with children, seeking employment, or leading a congregation, you can join in the conversation on faith and work. For more than a decade, Jubilee Professional has helped attendees apply their faith to work by learning from local and national practitioners, networking with others, and finding a vision for work and life. Early bird registration is available through January 19. Register at www.jubileeprofessional.com.



InterVarsity Christian Fellowship Faculty Ministry

By Robin Capcara

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I minister to faculty at Carnegie Mellon, Pitt, and Duquesne universities with InterVarsity Christian Fellowship. I seek to disciple Christian professors to be “salt and light” (Matthew 5:13-16) in their daily work at the university. I also try to build relationships with professors who do not identify as Christian, in hopes of sharing Jesus with them.

Why minister to faculty?

- Professors have a disproportionately greater influence on society by training virtually all influential leaders in every field: *“Faculty attitudes and behaviors are known to have important implications for student development. The actions of faculty both within and outside the classroom impact the learning and development of future teachers, lawyers, physicians, and policymakers, not to mention their very own academic successors and the thousands of others whose work affects our daily lives.”* (Lindholm & Astin, 2006.)
- They study, teach, and research topics of immense importance with the potential to bless and change the world.
- Non-believing faculty are one of the most significant “unreached people groups” in Western society.
- Many faculty labor alone, “siloeed” in their departments and schools. Christian faculty need to develop collegial relationships and a sense of mission with other Christians at the university.
- “Baby Boomer” faculty are retiring and are being replaced by new, young scholars who need guidance and direction in being servants of Christ at the university.
- Professors face ethical challenges and temptations related to success and status. They need help to stay grounded, humble, and dependent on God.
- They struggle to keep up with increasingly demanding workloads of teaching, research, publication, and service.

Thank you, Ascension, for supporting this critical work! Will you join me in praying for:

- Ways for Christian faculty and staff to “bless” the university community. In this divided and contentious time, we want to be a witness by **loving** the University and its people.
- Health, protection and provision for me and the ministry.
- Softening of non-Christian professors and a growing curiosity about Jesus among them.



 **InterVarsity**
PITTSBURGH FACULTY MINISTRY

InterVarsity Christian Fellowship

By Dabney Robinson

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I'm grateful for the privilege to share a bit of the work God has called me to and to thank you for your support. I am in my twentieth year of ministry with InterVarsity, which changed my life in college. After working directly on campus with students for seven years, my roles since 2011 have been in development, most recently as the National Director of Donor Engagement.



Fundraising is not a calling most people consider, myself included! Raising support was the primary reason I resisted joining InterVarsity immediately after graduation. Who wants to raise money from friends and family? But that was before I learned (and relearned over and over) about the ministry of developing partners through Henri Nouwen and countless others.

In fundraising as ministry, we are inviting people into a new way of relating to their resources. By giving people a spiritual vision, we want them to experience that they will, in fact, benefit by making their resources available to us. [...] Fundraising is also always a call to conversion. And this call comes both to those who seek funds and those who have funds. Whether we are asking for money or giving money we are drawn together by God, who is about to do a new thing through our collaboration.

– Henri Nouwen, A Spirituality of Fundraising

It's this collaboration with others, the opportunities for spiritual growth, and the mission of making space for students and faculty to encounter Jesus on campus that have kept me with InterVarsity. Students are hungry for community and belonging, and we get the joy of helping them to connect with God and with others through studying the Scriptures, evangelism, and leadership development on campuses across the U.S. What could be better?! Thank you for your support which enables this work.



"I feel like I've seen the Kingdom of God here with InterVarsity. And so it's taken me from a young man who wanted to run from what God has called him to do to wholeheartedly trying to seek after the Kingdom."

Jeremiah
Florida State University
Tallahassee, FL

Young Life

By JB Ward, Pittsburgh Metro Director

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This year we celebrated 70 years of Young Life ministry in Pittsburgh. Seventy years of sharing the gospel with lost students. Seventy years of praying, showing up, investing, inviting, and making disciples. Seven decades of plugging kids into Pittsburgh churches and building up generations of spiritual leaders. The world has changed but our simple and effective mission remains the same: go into the world of kids.

As we turn over another year, one thing continues to be true about Pittsburgh: there are members of the Church, empowered by the Holy Spirit, living out the Great Commission amongst our lost, lonely, and hurting kids. Right now, our team of 25 staff and 100+ volunteer leaders and committee members are living this out in our city. Middle school, high school and college students are meeting Jesus and growing in their faith.

Praise God we don't do this alone. Jesus, the author of life, who commands us to GO, goes with us. "And surely I am always with you, to the very end of the age." As we leverage our strong team and history, we are expectant for the next 70 years of ministry.

This past year we hired 8 new staff to do direct ministry with students and build our leadership development pipeline across the city.

One of our new hires, E'monie Campbell, grew up as YoungLife kid at Woodland Hills High School and now has seen some fun success on staff in her home neighborhood. E'monie started last year with a group of three at her campaigner bible study and has grown the group to 20+. E'monie has done an incredible job sharing the gospel with her life and through teaching the Bible. In the past 6 months alone we've seen 10 kids make decisions for Christ!

Thank you, Church of the Ascension, for your faithful prayer, financial support, and hosting our many events for college students and our city ministry.



East Liberty Family Health Care Center

In 1975, the Rev. Douglas A. Dunderdale was the senior pastor of Eastminster Presbyterian Church in the East Liberty neighborhood of Pittsburgh. He began praying that God would bring a Christian healing ministry to become a part of the church.

Also in 1975, David Hall, a resident of Mt. Lebanon in Pittsburgh (and now long-time member of Church of the Ascension), graduated from MIT and entered Medical School at the University of Rochester. For what did these two men pray? That God would call like-minded people to a ministry of healing in the urban area of Pittsburgh where God's love would be experienced through healing and care that was fundamentally different from what the world was providing. They prayed that the new Center would be open to anyone, especially the underserved and underinsured. They prayed for a Center where doctors, nurses and other healthcare professionals would pray with every patient and address their whole person needs: physical, mental and spiritual. After seven years of prayer, East Liberty Family Health Care Center (ELFHCC) was founded in 1982 in the basement of Eastminster Presbyterian Church, in the heart of East Liberty.

The Center has been distinctively faith-based since its inception, offering prayer with every visit, but never

discriminating on the basis of religion. Every person is made in God's image, worthy of good care and welcome at the Center. For 40 years, the Center has provided quality "whole-person" healthcare for all people, without regard to ability to pay. It has grown from a three-room office in a church basement to a full-service health care center with three locations. Every activity of ELFHCC is focused on meeting the whole-person health care needs of Pittsburgh's East End.

The mission of the ELFHCC is: To witness to God's love, known in Jesus Christ, by empowering our patients through community centered, whole-person quality health care for all, which includes those who are uninsured, underinsured and underserved.

Today Dr. David Hall continues to function as ELFHCC's Chief Medical Officer. Dr. Greg Anderson, also a member of Ascension, is ELFHCC's Medical Director of Informatics and Quality. Many other members of Ascension have worked or do work at the Center. Please keep this vital ministry in prayer!



Urban Impact

By Julia Piecka

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For those of you who don't know, I am an Urban Missionary with Urban Impact Foundation, which is in the North Side of Pittsburgh. I have called the North Side my home for the last four years, and in some ways, it feels like I am just getting started. Four years is a long time, but at the same time I am just beginning to see the fruit of my ministry.

I oversee the Tutoring Center at Urban Impact, which is an afterschool tutoring program that works alongside students and their families to help their students reach their academic potential. Each day of program, a student

will encounter a Bible lesson, a one-on-one tutoring session, and dinner. One of the reasons I love this program so much is because I have the privilege to grow closer with the students and their families.

I have witnessed students learn to write their name for the first time, read a book on their own, or give their lives to Christ. I have watched students grow up and become leaders in their communities; each year is another opportunity to grow deeper in my relationships with the students to help them excel as they become young men and women.





Ash Wednesday

Remember that you are dust, and to dust you shall return.

Wednesday February 14, 2024
Services 12:00pm & 7:00pm
Childcare provided



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

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