

# The Ascent

SEPTEMBER 2021

ASCENSIONPITTSBURGH.ORG



MORE THAN STONES

*Welcoming our Neighbors, Reaching the Nations*

## Letter from the Rector



# Almost There...

MORE THAN STONES

*Welcoming our Neighbors, Reaching the Nations*



By Jonathan Millard, Rector

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**I** am delighted to share this update on our *More Than Stones* initiative. For those who are new to Ascension, in the summer of 2019 we embarked on an ambitious campaign to raise a large sum of money to fund three very specific goals: **Essential Repairs, Refurbishment and Renewal, and Mission and Ministry.** (The plans and artistic renderings of the proposals are on display in the glass hallway and copies of our *More Than Stones* brochure are available there also.)

**The Essential Repairs** are now almost complete. The cleaned and repointed exterior stone masonry sparkles in the sunshine. The new pews and refinished floor in the Nave enhance our beautiful worship space. The stained-glass windows are currently being repaired. Other essential repairs are nearing completion.

**The Refurbishment and Renewal** portion of this initiative is focused significantly on the plans to expand our Parish Hall, add new restrooms, improve the connection and flow of our buildings, and create a welcoming outdoor patio area with a new and obvious church entrance<sup>1</sup>. The architects are continuing to work on the detailed design, and we look forward to sharing more soon.

**The Ministry and Mission** component was a piece that was added in response to the 20+ Listening Groups we held in the fall of 2019. This portion of the monies we are raising is to be used for additional staffing, outreach, ministry, and mission. This Ministry and Mission focus is highlighted in the tag line of our campaign: *Welcoming our Neighbors, Reaching the Nations*. Towards this goal, we have continued to welcome people throughout the pandemic (receiving some 58 adults into membership with their 28 children). Funds have also been directed to the expansion of our international ministry.

## On Target - Just 10% to Go!

The goals of *More Than Stones* remain two-fold:

First, to visit every household and invite people to participate by giving towards this initiative. We made tremendous progress until things came to a halt with the pandemic. We are now beginning the process of completing this goal to the best of our abilities.

Second, to raise \$8.2 million. We are working closely with our architects to stay on track and are committed to keeping as close to this financial target as possible and avoid going into debt. Currently it looks as though we will be able to do what we set out to do for about \$8.4 million.

<sup>1</sup>Architectural renderings of our new spaces are on page 6 to help you visualize the new Parish Hall expansion.

By God's grace and through the generosity of so many people **we are 90% of the way there!** We have received gifts and pledges that range from \$5 to \$500,000. We need now to raise just 10% of the original target – that is about **\$820,000**. This is a truly remarkable testimony to the sacrificial giving, broad participation, and generosity of so many people. Thanks be to God and to each one who has participated.

## Final Push to Cross the Line Together

We are about to launch a three-month effort from September through November to raise this last 10%. God-willing, we hope to sign construction documents early in the New Year. We expect to break ground by September next year with completion of the project by the end of 2023.

## Please Join Us

From the very beginning, the desire, hope, and expectation has been to see as many people as possible share in the realization of the vision of *Welcoming our Neighbors and Reaching the Nations*. The invitation to be a part of this *More Than Stones* project is to **every member and friend** of Church of the Ascension.

In this upcoming three-month mini campaign, we will be inviting everyone to take a fresh look at what God is doing in our midst and what we believe he is calling us to do through *More Than Stones*.

- If you have not yet pledged, we will be inviting you to do so.
- If you previously declined to participate, we will be asking you to take another look.
- If you have already pledged, we will be inviting you to consider whether you might be able to give again to help close the gap. Some may be able to extend their pledge for a further year or two; others may be able to make a one-time additional gift.

Almighty and eternal God, in your goodness you set for your people the chief cornerstone, Jesus Christ, to be the foundation of our faith and the strength of our life together: Grant us grace to so build our lives upon the living Stone that, faithfully and fervently we would declare the light and life of your truth and love to the nations, both here in Pittsburgh and to the ends of the earth, to the glory of your Name; through Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God now and forever. *Amen.*

## Honoring Beloved Members and Friends of Ascension

The Vestry has agreed to use the opportunity of this project as a time to honor and remember specific members and friends of Ascension – some *living stones* and some who have gone before us. I am looking forward to sharing the honorary naming of four different spaces in the renovations and new building. (I stress, these names are *honorary* and not related to financial contributions.) I will be announcing the names during September.

## Invitation to Pray

Please pray for the successful completion of this project. **We are so very close.** I also appreciate that \$820,000 is a very significant sum to raise. As we have said before, reaching this goal will take generous and sacrificial giving. **We want everyone to participate.** Over the coming weeks please take time to pray about your response and, if you are married, to discuss this with your spouse.

Jonathan +  
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# Things that Matter Most

By Kevin Antlitz, Assistant Rector  
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**I**n an interview with *Christianity Today* about fifteen years ago, John Stott (1921-2011), brilliantly summarized the three things that matter most to every human being. The three ultimate desires in the heart of every person are transcendence, significance, and community. Grasping these categories helps us understand why we do what we do at Ascension. I want to unpack each and talk a bit about how our Community Groups fit in to scratching the itch we all have.

The first desire Stott mentions is transcendence. Despite living in a world where we've tried to construct an iron dome above us to keep God out, it's interesting that we can't seem to escape longing for something beyond our world, something bigger than ourselves. Being created by God and for God, it's no surprise that we simply can't seem to shake this instinctual desire for transcendence, which ultimately is the reality of God, who is over and above all. This is why our communal eucharistic worship is so vital. It is here where we experience the transcendent reality of God who continues to make himself available to us by His Spirit through the ministry of word and sacrament.

The second desire is for significance. About this Stott says: "Almost

everybody is looking for his or her own personal identity. Who am I, where do I come from, where am I going to, what is it all about? ... We need to teach people who they are. They don't know who they are. We do. They are human beings made in the image of God, although that image has been defaced." This is why biblical preaching and teaching is so important. This is where we hear the truth about who we are in God and our reason for existence.

The third desire is for community. This should come as no surprise. Each of us longs for connection, for friendship, for meaningful relationships. Each of us longs to be known and loved. Each of us longs to know and love others. In the interview, Stott draws out the connection between the love of God and love within Christian community by citing 1 John 4:11-12: "Beloved, if God so loved us, we also ought to love one another. No one has ever seen God; if we love one another, God abides in us and his love is perfected in us." The Church exists to be the new family where God's children can receive and give love. This is why Community Groups are essential to our life together.

If the longing for transcendence is primarily met through worship, our desire for significance and community is worked out best in the context of a Community Group. This is where real life-on-life stuff happens. Our Community Groups are made up a wide variety of small groups of all shapes



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and sizes with a variety of emphases. Though they're all different, each one provides the time and space where we can develop deep relationships of love and work out who God has called us to be together. This is why Community Groups matter.

Over the past 18 months, we have experienced significant disruption to our communal worship, to our sense of who we are and what God has called us to do, and to our relationships. In so many ways, our Community Groups have helped hold our church together. We praise God for our Community Group leaders and for their sacrificial and faithful leadership!

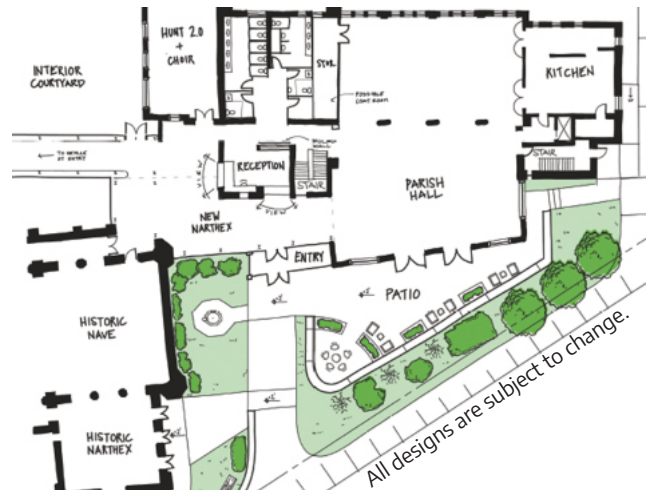
As we relaunch Community Groups after Labor Day, we are not planning anything new. Many of us are still getting comfortable with in-person meetings again. It will take a while to get back to "normal." One of my primary goals is that we begin to re-establish good, life-giving rhythms as groups begin meeting again. This will require patience and resilience because we're not sure what the impact of COVID will look like in the months ahead.

Even though we are not planning anything new, my hope is there will be lots of new faces in Community Groups. My prayer is that everyone who considers Ascension to be their church home will join a Community Group. We are starting a few new groups and hope to start a few more. If you sense the Lord may be calling you to lead a group, please reach out and let's explore that together (do keep in mind that only members of Ascension can serve and all leaders need to be approved by clergy).

We currently have over 25 Community Groups – praise God! The best way to get a sense of the different groups is through the website: <https://www.ascensionpittsburgh.org/connect/community-groups/>

There you can see the group locations on the map, read about the groups, and access the leaders' contact information. If you're currently in a group, consider inviting a friend along. If you're not in a group, I encourage you to join one.

# Visions of the Future Parish Hall



View outside expanded Parish Hall with Patio Area from Ellsworth Ave.



View inside expanded Parish Hall with new Reception area.

# International Ministry Launches “Journey”



By LuAnn Pengidore, Director of International Ministry  
[PittsburghEnglish4U@gmail.com](mailto:PittsburghEnglish4U@gmail.com)

**T**he mission of Ascension’s International Ministry is to love our international neighbors by offering excellent English classes. Classes run from mid-September through June and are for beginners to advanced students. As we get to know them, we also help our international friends with advice and direction for practical needs they have - information on jobs, career counseling, housing connections, interviewing skills, legal help, social workers, paperwork, health care connections, furniture, and sometimes food and clothing.

We also try to help internationals build friendships among each other and with people from Ascension through field trips and social activities, including a new community chess club led by Doug Spence. We include internationals in the life of the church as much as they want - through English learner Bible studies, Baptism and Confirmation classes, Soul Care Retreats, Prayer Ministry, the Worship Arts Festivals, Graduate Ministry, Children’s Ministry, and Community Groups.

This past summer, the International Ministry offered several in-person speaking classes at Ascension, 5 online classes and 2 Bible studies, as well as special classes in Pronunciation, Early Pittsburgh History, Greek Mythology, TED Talks and Grammar Conversation. The ministry linked 16 students with Ascension conversation partners and 7 internationals were linked with Point Park English teachers in training.

In the fall, beginning mid-September, the ministry is planning to offer English classes on Monday mornings at 9am, and Wednesday and Thursday evenings at 6:30pm. We will have 6 online classes via Zoom and 7 in person classes with special COVID protocols remaining in place.

We are excited about one new addition this year. In addition to several English learner Bible studies, there will be a 13-week “Journey Through the Bible” Dinner/ Video Discussion on Friday nights from 6 - 8pm, which will lead participants through the whole story of the Bible from Old Testament through New Testament. It is open to the other members and friends of the Ascension community as well as internationals.

If you are interested in this ministry or in participating in the “Journey Through the Bible” on Friday night for the fall semester, either as a participant or as a volunteer, contact LuAnn at [PittsburghEnglish4u@gmail.com](mailto:PittsburghEnglish4u@gmail.com).



**CHURCH OF THE ASCENSION**

## The Journey

13-WEEK “JOURNEY THROUGH THE BIBLE”  
 DINNER/ VIDEO DISCUSSION  
 CONNECTING OLD AND NEW TESTAMENTS

Sept. 17 - Dec. 17th  
 Fridays 6:00-8:00pm  
 All are welcome to register  
 Help also needed (see comments)



# Church of the Ascension Youth Group: Youth Group Sundays!



By Alex Banfield Hicks, Director of Youth and College Ministry  
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We are doing something new this fall! Instead of gathering the middle schoolers on a Friday and the high schoolers on a Sunday, we will be hosting two separate meetings on a Sunday night. While 'Better Together' established the Sunday rhythm, this new pattern WON'T see the middle schoolers and high schoolers together throughout. Using the whole of Ascension's space (I counted over twenty suitable rooms of various sizes, not including the outside), Grades 6-8 and 9-12 will enjoy two parallel evenings that culminate in a joyous moment of singing together at the end. Parents will be relieved to know that drop off and pick up will be the same for both groups (6 – 6:30pm to start, 8:30pm to finish).



And why 'RENEW'? While we look forward to the freshness of this new configuration, renewing our friendships and focusing on one evening, we will also benefit from an extended soak in the rich theology of Ephesians. I was very struck by Paul's words, "Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind." My prayer for all of us is that, as we begin to grasp the richness of our inheritance with all the saints, our minds will be renewed and our lives transformed! Don't hesitate to be in touch with any questions or let me know if you'd like to be involved.



VENITE

## Hopeful & Humble



By Leah Hornfeck, CCO Campus Ministry Staff & Associate for Youth and College Ministries  
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After spending the summer apart, it was a sweet reunion getting to spend a week biking from DC to Pittsburgh with a handful of our Venite students. Making daily progress towards a goal, like biking to Pittsburgh, feels great! If only normal life felt like that. Instead, we experience lingering doubts and concerns. There are the obvious college ones like, "What are classes going to be like?" and "How will things with my roommates go this year?" Then, there are the deeper and more challenging questions like, "What does it mean to live well in this world at this time?"

And is it even worth trying to live well, or is it all truly meaningless?

This Fall we'll be turning to the book of Ecclesiastes as we wrestle with this question, learning to enjoy life as we experience it, not as we think it ought to be. As we transition from summer to school and from bikes to books, we'll be seeking God to transform our attitudes from helpless & hopeless to hopeful & humble.

If you are a college student, we would love to have you join us for our weekly fellowship gatherings as we study Ecclesiastes! Starting on September 1, we'll be meeting every Wednesday from 6:30 - 8:30pm at Church of the Ascension. For more information, please contact Leah.



# A New OWLS Bible Study



By Ann Tefft, Director of OWLS Ministry

[tefft.ann@gmail.com](mailto:tefft.ann@gmail.com)

*Christ has indeed been raised from the dead, the first fruits of those who have fallen asleep. For since death came through a man, the resurrection of the dead comes also through a man. For as in Adam all die, so in Christ all will be made alive. But each in turn: Christ, the first fruits; then, when he comes, those who belong to him.*  
-1 Corinthians 15:20-23

**O**ur OWLS monthly meetings were relaunched in May in our tent and will continue throughout the year on the second Thursday of every month with a delicious lunch, a speaker and stimulating fellowship.

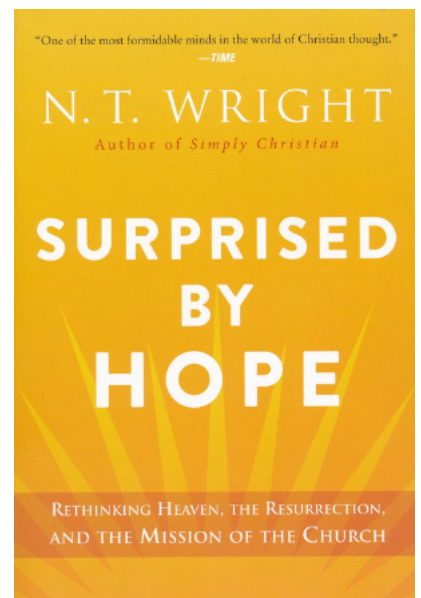
On September 9th, our Rector, Father Jonathan, will share exciting news about Ascension's *More Than Stones* Campaign which necessarily came to an abrupt halt in March 2020 with the onset of the pandemic. That notwithstanding, much work happened behind the scenes and in plain sight! Most exciting, we have all seen our exterior stonework turn from black to gold. Behind the scenes tremendous work has been done planning, applying for grants and refining architectural plans for the parish hall expansion. Father Jonathan will give a full update - with great news that we are very near to our goal. This is one OWLS you will not want to miss!

Now I'm excited to announce in addition to the monthly meetings, we will have a 6-session Bible study on N. T. Wright's *Surprised by Hope, Rethinking Heaven, the Resurrection, and the Mission of the Church*. This book powerfully clarified my understanding of what to expect and hope for when we die and has not only brought me peace but has also energized my desire and determination on how best I can continue my work as a Christian. I hope it will do the same for all who attend.

As the book's overleaf explains: "For years Christians have been asking, 'if you died tonight, do you know where you would go?' It turns out that many believers have been giving the wrong answer. It is not heaven. In this book, Wright outlines the present confusion about a Christian's future hope and shows how it is deeply intertwined with how we live today. Wright ... asserts that Christianity's most distinctive idea is bodily resurrection. He provides a magisterial defense of a literal resurrection of Jesus and shows how this became the cornerstone for the Christian community's hope in the bodily resurrection of all people at the end of the age. Wright then explores our expectation of "new heavens and a new earth," revealing what happens to the dead until then and what will happen with the "second coming" of Jesus." Moreover, Wright explores the ramifications for how we are to live right now.

This Bible Study will take place at 10:00 am on the Thursdays listed to follow, and will be in addition to our monthly OWLS meetings on the second Thursdays of each month: September 23 and 30; October 14 and 28; November 18; December 2.

The Bible study will include a brief video with N. T. Wright, and discussion of the book based on a study guide. It is not too early to start reading so please contact Ann Tefft 412-526-1107 or at [tefft.ann@gmail.com](mailto:tefft.ann@gmail.com) to sign up.



# Parish Retreat Relaunch



By Marilyn Chislaghi, Director of Ministry  
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**O**ne of the many sad occurrences of 2020 was the cancellation of Ascension's Parish Retreat, a highlight of our life together each year. We are very pleased that the Parish Retreat is back for 2021! Please plan on attending October 1 - 3. We will gather at [Laurelville Retreat Center](#) about 50 minutes from Pittsburgh in the Laurel Highlands. We have a few changes to make the retreat as affordable and as safe and as fun as possible for all participants.

First, we have cut prices on food and accommodation this year, offering greater subsidies to everyone, so that finances are not an obstacle. In addition to general subsidies, we will continue to offer scholarships as we have done in the past. You are welcome to come for the entire weekend and stay overnight. There are about seventy rooms with ensuite bathrooms and many other types of accommodation. If you don't want to stay overnight, coming for a day trip is possible too – either Saturday or Sunday.

Second, we hope to use as much of the great Western Pennsylvania outdoor space as we can. If it's a cooler weekend, please bring your woolies because we hope to have all of the huge garage-style doors on our main meeting space as open as possible for maximum air flow. We are also permitted to take meals outside to eat. The Retreat Center constructed a large Outdoor Pavilion with picnic tables and it sits just a few yards away from the Dining Hall. We're making a change to Friday dinner as well. We'll begin with an outdoor cookout and a program for all ages rather than



dividing out youth and children. We'll end a bit earlier so our people with small legs get a good night sleep.

Third and most exciting, in addition to ducky races, soccer, and outdoor hikes, we have use of the brand-new Laurelville pool on Saturday afternoon - and it will be heated! Better yet, we have use of the pool on Sunday too. Typically, the retreat ends with lunch on Sunday. This year, we'll have an extended swim time from 1 – 3pm on Sunday afternoon to finish up the weekend in style.

Another fun fact – one of our parishioners, Bill Campbell, has constructed a medieval Trebuchet. Look that word up! Think catapult. The Trubuchet will make an appearance Saturday afternoon with a few heads of lettuce or cabbages that will find their way across the soccer field!

Finally, as if that wasn't enough, our Interim Bishop, Martyn Minns, along with his family, will be attending the retreat and you are invited Saturday afternoon to have tea with him on his cottage porch.

So, what is the retreat? Is it all swimming and hiking and eating outside and having tea and watching duckies and the throwing of cabbages across a field? Well, no! It's also a time for our community to gather, to worship, to pray, and to learn. Our theme this year for our common gatherings will be "God is our Refuge and Strength: Reflections on Psalm 46." If you read that Psalm, you'll see the appearance of a word that may be new to you – Selah. It means 'pause.' We've all had a difficult journey for many months. This retreat will be an opportunity to pause and reflect on who God is, our refuge and strength.

We hope you will think about coming. You are invited! Registration began mid-August. You can get more information at our retreat table on Sundays. You can also register online. Just check out our announcements on our News & Events tab. If you need to know more, please contact our registrar, Josh at [josh.bennett@ascensionpittsburgh.org](mailto:josh.bennett@ascensionpittsburgh.org).

# Through the Red Doors: The Wonder of a Big Church



By Catherine Slocum, Director of Children's Ministry; with Jay Slocum, Curriculum Developer  
[catherine.slocum@ascensionpittsburgh.org](mailto:catherine.slocum@ascensionpittsburgh.org)



**T**he world seemed so much vaster, the places grander, the people larger and more heroic. It was 1991 and Jay and I were serving as the Interim Junior High Youth Ministers at Truro Episcopal Church in Fairfax, Virginia, for the summer.

I was 22 and a rising senior at The King's College and Jay had just turned 24 and was a newly minted college graduate of Kings. We had only been dating for 3 months and my dad, The Rev. Martyn Minns, was the new Rector who had hired us as a team, allowing me summer work in the church and Jay a chance to join in; getting to know what it meant to be a part of a "ministry family" as he slept on the couch for the summer. It was a magical time. We worked hard, made lots of mistakes that revealed our age, and by God's grace, watched our program blossom.

Jay and I were married at Truro. About a year later, I joined the staff at Truro, working as the Director of Communications while Jay served as a disability advocate in DC and wrote and taught at Truro. Like many of our Christians friends, our lives revolved around Truro, our small group, the church year, the annual retreat, diocesan events and politics and life inside the rectory as the daughter and son-in-law of the Rector. Jay was confirmed at Truro, both of our daughters were baptized there, and Truro sent Jay to seminary here in Pittsburgh. From the grandness of the weekly Eucharist to celebration services at Easter and Christmas which left us in awe of God's grace and the church's beauty, we saw Truro as a place of wonder and pride.

This Spring, after being away for many years, Jay and I returned to Truro for a brief visit. Have you ever visited a home, school, or familiar place from your childhood and found it to be much smaller than you had remembered? The backyard of your childhood home seemed like it was as big

as a football field when you were a child. Returning to see it as an adult, you find it to be as small as a postage stamp in comparison with your memory. So it was with Truro Church. How could the nave have shrunk? How could the walls have lost their magic? Oh, we loved being back. We loved the familiar sights and the joy of seeing old friends still faithful in worship and attendance. But it seemed smaller. We do not know if this is a universal phenomenon; to have a place seem so large when we are young and then to have it “shrink” in later years. But, both Jay and I, and many to whom we have spoken, have experienced the wonder of places from the perspective of youth as being huge and then finding them smaller years later.

Do you realize that all around us there are children who see our church, The Church of the Ascension, as a place of wonder? A place where a massive picture of Jesus rising into the sky fills their eyes and their imaginations every time they walk into the nave. A place where stone and marble, the smell of old wood and new wood, the big tent and the bigger tent embrace their play as these places shelter them from the harshness of the outside world. Perhaps you and I are to them bigger than life, heroic even? We are not certain of this but, from our shared experience, we know the wonder and joy of THE CHURCH, and it is our joy to create conditions for children and their families to allow the church to be a place that is big and beautiful and full of wonder so that in later years they might return to find something smaller because they have grown to become larger themselves.

## 9am Kids’ Church in the Chancel

We are bursting at the seams with excitement at the thought of once again offering weekly children’s programming. God is so good and has given us a way forward to minister to the Ascension children this fall despite all the constraints. Beginning September 12, we will open our nave and our nursery during the 9am tent service. Children ages 4 years – 5th grade will be invited to enter through the red door closest to the tent after the children’s talk and

gather in the Chancel where we will wonder and learn and play in a calm and reverent style. We plan to create age-appropriate lessons using artifacts in the Nave and godly play materials. We will learn things like why the Nave is shaped like a ship, why engravings on the altar rails ask us to humble ourselves and why the baptismal font says let the little children come to me.

## 11am Kids’ Church in the Courtyard

Also beginning September 12, our nursery and courtyard will be open during the 11am service. Children ages 4 – 5th grade will be escorted out of the nave after the children’s talk and into the Courtyard. Here they will be welcomed into the Kids’ Church tent and will have a lesson mirroring the 9am lesson, however it will include using our outside space to learn like constructing a ship out of cardboard boxes as we think about the shape of the nave or pouring water as we learn more about the baptismal font.

## Nursery Care

Our littlest Ascensionites will enjoy the nursery once again (infant – 3 years old) where we will open the doors 15 minutes prior to the service and provide a well-trained caregiving team and a bible story time in our toddler room. Of course, we will be mindful of keeping a safe and clean nursery and will adjust our protocols as needed.

We will continue the format of having Kids’ Church in the Chancel at the 9am and Kids’ Church in the Courtyard at 11am while we continue to worship in the tent. We can hardly wait to get started and will need your help! We will be sending out a link soon to for you to register your children for the nursery and for the Kids’ Church program. We are also in the midst of recruiting and building our team. Please contact Catherine if you would like to find out more.

## Worship & Music Arts



By Chris Massa, Director of Worship and Arts; with Elise Massa, Assistant Director  
[chris.massa@ascensionpittsburgh.org](mailto:chris.massa@ascensionpittsburgh.org) and [elise.massa@ascensionpittsburgh.org](mailto:elise.massa@ascensionpittsburgh.org)

**I** think it was on NPR that I heard the story of an elderly man who occasionally shared stories with his grandchildren about his time in World War II. One particular story was a doozy. He was on a submarine that was under fire and taking on water. Officers were barking orders while soldiers ran around frantically, understandably rattled by the situation.

The children listened intently until the youngest one couldn't take the suspense any longer. "What were you doing, Grandpa?" The old man was as unflappable as always. "I was solving the problem."

For the last several months, the music and arts ministry has, understandably, been focused on solving the problems at hand. Services are suspended? Then we'll figure out how to livestream. Choir rehearsals are super-spreader events? Then we'll sing remotely, or under a tent. Virtual choir anthems, outdoor arts retreats, and Saturday afternoon recording sessions had become the norm, and we've had to adjust as the seasons and health recommendations have changed.

Our hope has always been that fellowship and disciple-making would be at the heart of the music and arts ministry. So, while we leaned toward problem solving this past year, we are hoping to rebuild by leaning more toward deepening fellowship and formation as artists in the church. Here are some ways that we can rebuild together.

### Worship Arts

If the Ascension Arts Series has taught us anything, it's that there is a vibrant community of talented artists here at Ascension; what's more, those artists are looking for opportunities to use and share their gifts. Would you like to join this communion of artistic saints? Do you have an idea as to how to edify our local body and community through your artistry? Reach out to Elise.

### Instrumentalists

Our goal is to put together a rotation of musicians who will help provide prelude music, particularly for the 11am service. If you're interested, reach out to Chris.

## Children's Choir

Changes are coming down the pike for the children's choir, including plans to incorporate more music and movement into Sunday School and for kids to help lead music during Sunday services. There may even be opportunities for our younger instrumentalists to get involved. The Kids' Church video series has provided a great jumping-point for this, so stay tuned for more information, and reach out to Jane Benfield Hicks at [jbanfieldhicks@gmail.com](mailto:jbanfieldhicks@gmail.com) for more information.

## Music Team

We are looking for versatile vocalists willing to learn both vocal leadership and harmony. We have a particular need

for pianists, percussionists, and string instrumentalists (violin, cello, etc.). If you're an instrumentalist, reach out to Chris; if you're a vocalist, reach out to Elise.

## Choir

If you want to sing, learn about music, and engage in community, there may not be a better outlet for this than the choir. We sing a broad range of music—English hymnody, Renaissance counterpoint, American folk hymns, etc.—and we pray and laugh a lot as well. Whether or not you've ever sung in a choir before, there's almost certainly a place for you in ours. Email Chris for more information.

# Graduate Ministry: Ora et Labora



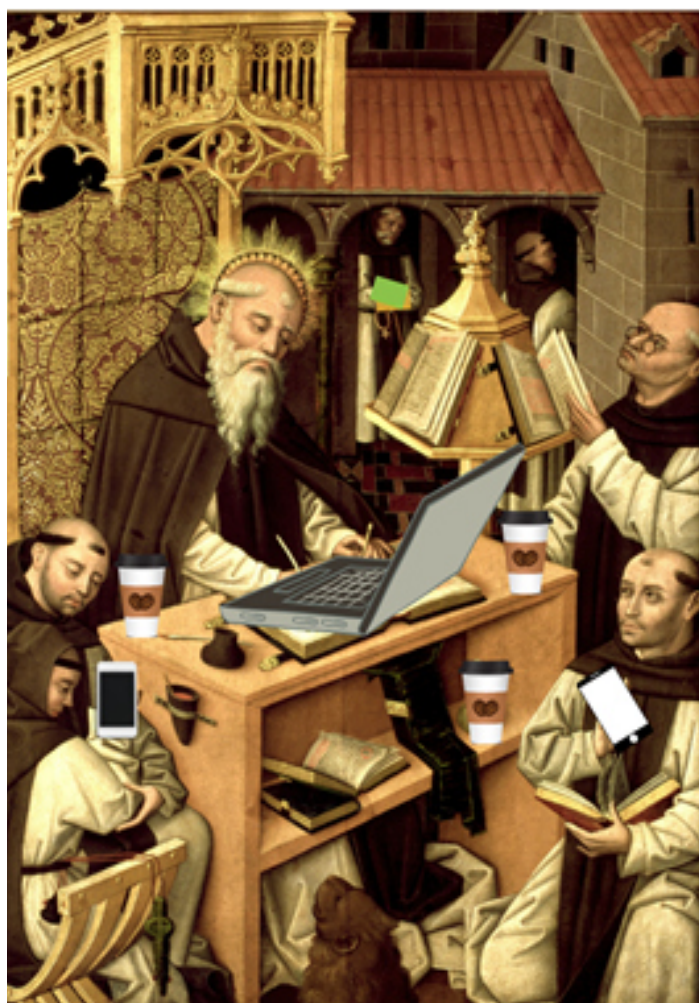
By Chris Kirkland, Director of Graduate Student Ministry  
[ckirkland@ccojubilee.org](mailto:ckirkland@ccojubilee.org) or 412-716-1617

**I**t's late Monday evening and in Room 105 a handful of students are diligently working away. A few are seated together at the table rapidly typing, surrounded by books. Others on the couches quietly flipping through research. The room is full of the soft light of the lamps and the blue screens, the sounds of clattering of keys and the smell of coffee.

At 9:30pm, there is a shift as typing stops and red books are slid across the table. Softly, the group begins to intone, "The Lord Almighty grant us a peaceful night and a perfect end..."

This is *Ora et Labora*. Borrowing from the old motto of the Benedictine monks, "prayer and work" this is a time for graduate students to gather in community as they labor alongside one another and approach God together.

Through this time, we want to encourage a sense of joy in our vocations and acknowledge God as the center and source of our being. *Ora et Labora* will be on Mondays from 7 – 10pm starting September 13. Come join us!



# Special Needs Ministry in Transition



By Marilyn Chislaghi, Director of Ministry  
[marilyn.chislaghi@ascensionpittsburgh.org](mailto:marilyn.chislaghi@ascensionpittsburgh.org)

**T**he pandemic has been particularly hard on our special needs community, both our parishioners with special needs and their caregivers – lock down in care homes for months on end, cancelled school, 24/7 education and care at home, social isolation. The effects are still being felt.

We are extremely grateful to Keira Fuener, Ascension Director of Special Needs Ministry, for her efforts to keep Ascension's special needs community steady and connected in hopes that a ministry of encouragement would flourish, circumstances notwithstanding. Keira has the heart of a pastor and the virtues of steadfastness and diligence. For over a year she has undertaken many initiatives to reach our participants in creative and innovative ways. One of my favorites was a series of personal video greetings for Stephen Schaad, who was alone and in lockdown, using Flipgrid - a technology I'd never heard of. Stephen loved it! For well over a year Keira hosted a 9:30am Sunday Zoom call for all connected to the program. One of the blessings of that regular Sunday morning time was seeing participants in their own homes and being introduced to caregivers we'd never met. Again, for well over a year Keira produced and posted godly play lessons on Ascension's website and then on our YouTube channel. Since lockdown began to ease, Keira has hosted several colorful (and messy!) gatherings at church where fun and laughter was experienced by all.

Keira has resigned her position as director to begin a refresher course so that she can return to her vocation as a Registered Nurse. As she puts it, "Like many others, the pandemic reminded me just how important caregivers are! I hope this will bring me nearer to being able to care for people both body and spirit!"

We are looking for a new Special Needs Ministry Director, someone responsible for ongoing programming as well as other innovative ways to minister to friends and families with special needs. Until a new director is appointed, we will offer regular times to meet up and serve together. If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to reach out to me or email Judy Schaad at [foot.pt@verizon.net](mailto:foot.pt@verizon.net). Here's what's coming up and to which you are invited!



## Gathering in the Courtyard with Pizza and Games

Sunday, August 29 after the 11am service (12:15 – 1:30pm)

This will be a fun time to reconnect. We will celebrate Keira!

## Barnyard Picnic

Sunday, September 12 from 4 – 6:30pm

A time to enjoy chickens, ducks, and other animals at the home of one of our volunteers, Petra Tomcik.

If you need a ride, email Marilyn (above) or Judy Schaad (also above).

## Service Opportunity to cook a meal

Sunday, September 26 after the 11am service (approximately 12-2pm)

Under the guidance of Jonathan Sewall, we'll cook up a storm!



# Autumn Soul Care



By Andrea Millard, Director of Prayer Ministry & Leadership Development

[andrea.millard@ascensionpittsburgh.org](mailto:andrea.millard@ascensionpittsburgh.org)

**A**n important part of our life of prayer is listening. In our busy lives it can be challenging to find solitude and silence to hear from God. To help us settle ourselves, we have designed these gathering to give our souls space to be refreshed in the presence of the Lord.

We gather for silent prayer, Scripture reading and individual reflection. The tempo of the morning is slow. We slow down to listen, pray, and respond to the love and grace of Jesus. Each gathering will feature a reflection led by an Ascension Spiritual Director.

All gathering are on Saturday mornings from 9:30 - 11:00am. Please join us for one or more of our fall offerings:

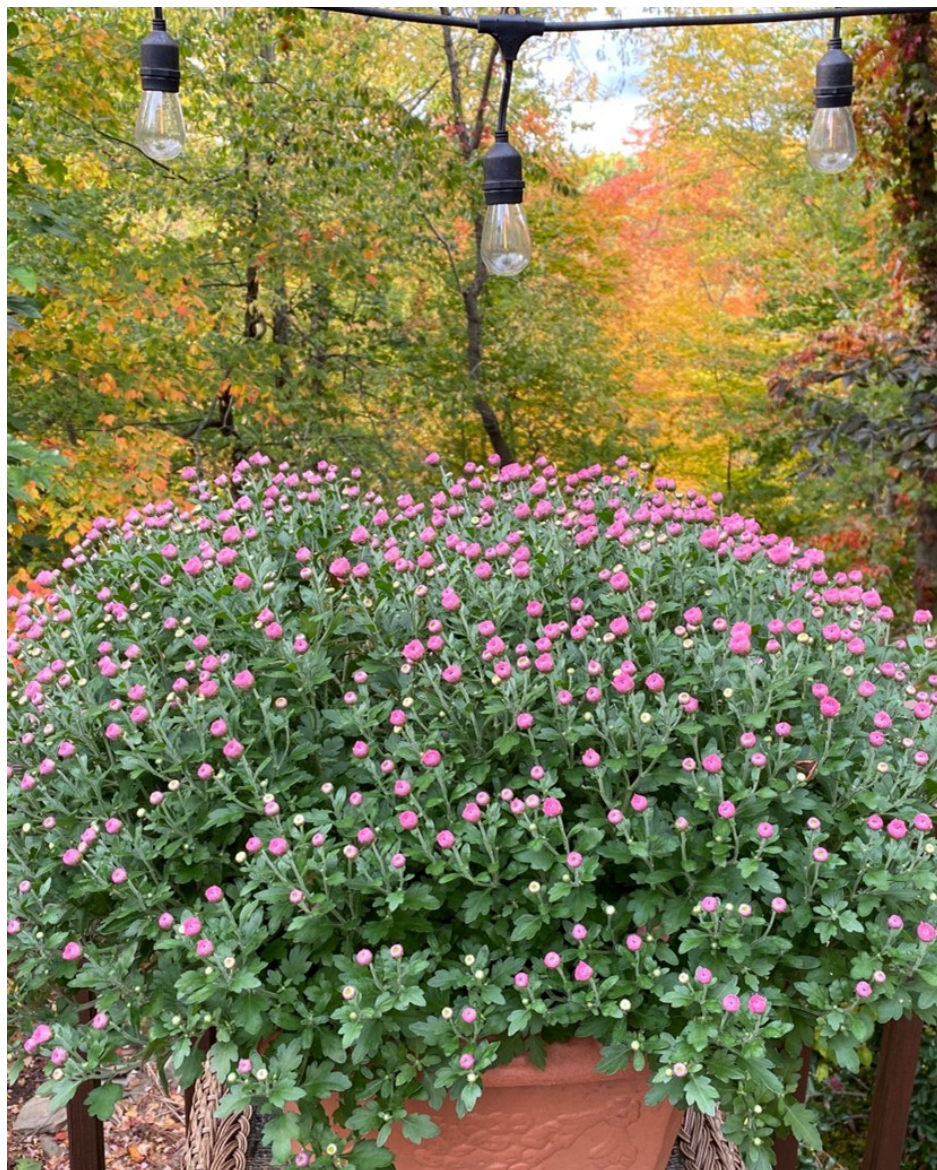
September 18, with Lynn Schrott

October 9, with Jeanne Kohn

November 13, with Hannah Halfhill

December 4, with Brian Janaszek

Registration link is on the [Announcements / Latest News](#) page of the Ascension website.



# Loving Our Neighbors Through Prayer



By Andrea Millard, Director of Prayer Ministry & Leadership Development

[andrea.millard@ascensionpittsburgh.org](mailto:andrea.millard@ascensionpittsburgh.org)

**O**ne of the most important ways the Church loves our neighbors is to pray for them. Beginning the week of September 5, we are relaunching weekly prayer gatherings.

**These are online interactive sessions where groups pray for 10 minutes for the needs of our neighbors and our church family. If you've never joined in, this would be a great time to check it out. If you have participated in the past, welcome back.**

Team leaders start the prayer time promptly at 4:00pm and lead the groups in prayer for 10-minutes. (The Zoom calls open at 3:45pm for fellowship, orientation, and preparation.)

Pray with the group weekly or if you can only join occasionally, that's fine too. To participate, send an email to the group contact person, who will welcome you and send you the Zoom link.

## 10For@4: 10-minute Prayer Gatherings at 4:00pm (on Zoom)

*Mondays: Praying for Internationals*

Sophie Bernardi, [sophiedbernardi@gmail.com](mailto:sophiedbernardi@gmail.com)

*Tuesdays: Praying for Children & Youth*

Jen Newhouse, [niferm@hotmail.com](mailto:niferm@hotmail.com)

*Wednesdays: Praying for "Ascensionites" (using the pictorial directory)*

Andrea Millard, [andrea.millard@ascensionpittsburgh.org](mailto:andrea.millard@ascensionpittsburgh.org)

*Thursdays: Praying for Peace, Justice & Racial Reconciliation*

Hannah Halfhill, [halfhill@gmail.com](mailto:halfhill@gmail.com)

"It matters little what form of prayer we adopt or how many words we use. What matters is the faith which lays hold on God, knowing that He knows our needs before we even ask Him. That is what gives Christian prayer its boundless confidence and its joyous certainty.

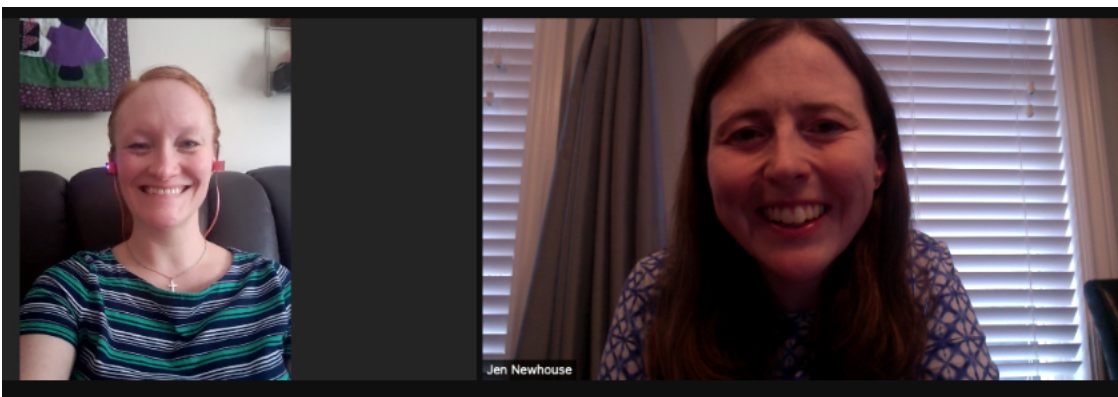
**DIETRICH BONHOEFFER - THE COST OF DISCIPLESHIP**



*THURSDAYS: PEACE, JUSTICE & RACIAL RECONCILIATION  
CO-LEADERS (FROM L TO R): MILICENT SMITH, HANNAH HALFHILL, SARAH GILMER, LYNN COX*

“God has used the weekly Thursday afternoon prayer time for Peace, Justice, and Reconciliation in my life in some remarkable ways. As we have connected weekly (as able) we have taken the opportunity to share what God is doing in our lives, and to speak to each other, to Him, about the pressing thoughts and burdens we carry about these themes. He has been very present. It is a joy to experience!”

**-DON WARDIUS**



*TUESDAYS: CHILDREN & YOUTH  
CO-LEADERS (FROM L TO R): LISA SUIT, JEN NEWHOUSE*

COVID UPDATE (AS OF 8/1)

# SUNDAY WORSHIP PROTOCOLS

"...AND LOVE YOUR NEIGHBOR AS YOURSELF."

9AM OUTDOORS:



11AM INDOORS:



READ MORE: [HTTPS://WWW.ASCENSIONPITTSBURGH.ORG/LATEST-NEWS/](https://www.ascensionpittsburgh.org/latest-news/)

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

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

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