

The Ascension

EPIPHANY 2025

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Epiphany:
The Radiance of Christ

Radiance



By Marilyn Chislaghi, Director of Ministry
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O God, who before the passion of your only-begotten Son revealed his glory upon the holy mountain: Grant that we, beholding by faith the light of his countenance, may be strengthened to bear our cross, and be changed into his likeness from glory to glory; through Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever. Amen.

The Sundays in Epiphany, a liturgical season of light, end with Transfiguration Sunday. When Jesus' disciples experienced his transfiguration on Mount Hermon, Jesus' radiance was brilliant, glorious, and bright.

This theme of radiance plays itself out in Scripture. When Moses came down from the mountain after an extended time with the Lord, his face was radiant, shining brightly, reflecting the glory of God. As Hebrews 1 makes clear, Jesus himself is the radiance of the glory of God. Psalm 34 reads, "Those who look to him are radiant." St. Stephen was said to have the face of an angel when he was martyred. He, like Moses and Jesus, was a radiant reflection of the glory of God's presence. We – corporately and individually – are invited into this story of radiance: *"I will make you a light for the nations, that you may bring my salvation to the ends of the earth"* (Isaiah 49:6).

In this Epiphanytide edition we are focusing on Ascension's mission partners who reflect this radiance – ordinary lives through which extraordinary things happen, as well as

several institutions and organizations committed to bringing the light of Christ in particular ways. As each of these lights shines forth, they combine to create an attractive brilliance. We hope that the warmth of this beauty is seen through the pages of this Ascent as we catch up with Ascension missionaries and mission partners, taking a quick glimpse of the work to which they are called and the unique ways they radiate the light of Christ.

All of those featured in these pages have some level of funding from Ascension's mission or operating budget. Typically, at least 10% of prospective income from giving is earmarked in the annual budget directly for outreach and mission.

Ascension's 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 and the global Anglican church. Tier Two reflects funding in support of individual callings of Ascension missionaries who work outside of Anglican structures. Tier Three includes funding directed toward agencies and organizations that Ascension partners with, both local and international.

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

A Light to the Nations



By LuAnn Pengidore, Director of International Ministry

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LuAnn is on staff at Ascension and oversees Ascension's ESL classes and broader ministry to internationals. The featured picture is of the 2024 end of semester party.

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 Epiphany season and beyond:

- 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 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.
- You can teach or assist a class.
- You can attend Wednesday morning Conversation Cafe in Bailey Hall.

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.

Lives Transformed in Tunisia

By Frank and Anne B.

(Please email the church for contact information)

Anne and Frank have served in Tunisia for 23 years. Ascension is their sending church.

After the 2011 Tunisian revolution that triggered the Arab Spring, life changed significantly in Tunisia. Initially there was an explosion of freedoms, a commitment to democracy, and an optimism that led to national pride and solidarity. During this period Tunisia benefited from its first real elections, a new (and universally acclaimed) constitution, a decrease in corruption, and a Nobel Peace Prize. Unfortunately, this season was also characterized by increased Islamic extremism, terrorist attacks, and a severe economic downturn. Overtime many Tunisians became jaded with the empty promises of freedom and democracy because life continued to get harder.



Another ray of optimism shone bright in 2019 when a new president was elected. This new president wasn't a politician; he was a mild-mannered professor of constitutional law. He ran on a campaign of combatting corruption and electoral reform and won with a significant majority. After two years in office this new president dismissed the parliament on the grounds of corruption. Initially this was popular. Since that time, however, he has ruled the country by presidential decree and changed the constitution to give himself more power. Tunisians found themselves wondering if once again they were living under a dictator. Compounding things, the economy is still very weak, and life continues to be hard.

This political uncertainty affects our ministry in several ways. There is a real concern that religious freedoms in Tunisia are under attack, and it sometimes seems like we are returning to pre-revolution levels of religious oppression. In the last year several Christian workers (missionaries) have been arrested, others have lost their visas, and businesses owned by Christian workers have received intense scrutiny. Just recently the only Christian NGO in the country, which has operated for fifty years with integrity and with the government's blessing, decided to cease operation because of the changing conditions.

We thank God that in the midst of this uncertainty we have been able to persist in our work. Anne owns and operates a Kingdom business in Tunisia, and it has avoided any extra scrutiny; actually, it is thriving. Frank is the rector of St. George's Anglican Church in Tunis, and even though worship services, baptisms, weddings (for the indigenous Muslim background population) all happen out in the open, we continue to receive favor from the authorities. But this doesn't mean that we have been unaffected. Some Tunisian followers of Jesus have begun to experience fear unlike we have seen in many years. Some of the leaders in the church have been refused passports on the grounds that they are Christians. And government agencies refuse to acknowledge that the church exists as a legal entity making things as simple as getting an internet account very difficult.

Of course, we don't expect this type of work to be easy, and we are grateful for the blessing of being able to serve in Tunisia for 23 years. We are not driven by a lack of repression, and we are not motivated by decreased persecution. We are, however, moved to pursue our call when we see lives transformed by the power of the Gospel. One of the leaders at St. George's recently recalled a story about being kicked out of his house by his



mother when she learned that he had chosen to be a follower of Jesus. He reminisced about how painful it was to have a broken relationship with the woman that bore him, but he had no choice but to faithfully follow the God who sought him out and rescued him. Last month on Christmas eve Frank baptized this woman – the mother who just a few years earlier kicked her son out of the house. We are moved to answer God's call by lives transformed.

When you pray for North Africa, we welcome you to: pray for political stability, pray for democracy, pray for an improvement of the economy, and pray for religious freedom. Yes, please pray for those things. Mostly, however, pray that God will continue to transform lives. Mostly pray that despite the political, legal, and economic circumstances His Kingdom will continue to come in North Africa.

Addendum

Frank and Anne's January newsletter describe two Muslim-background believers who were baptized on the first Sunday of Epiphany:

Faith (*not her real name*) is a very eager woman who was drawn to Jesus as a teenager and came to believe in him purely by reading books that she found on her parent's bookshelf. She lived as a secret believer (completely alone) most of her life. Recently she got divorced and discovered that for the first time she was free to pursue her faith openly - no longer under the thumb of a father or a husband. She lives with her three young children, whom she has begun to teach of Jesus.

Jeffrey is a refugee from South Sudan who came to North Africa to flee war in his own country. His life in Tunisia is extremely hard, but he continues to pursue his faith diligently. He has been a Christian for many years, but never had the opportunity to live within a Christian community so he was never baptized. Jeffrey is ecstatic that he finally can be baptized. He was warned that January can get chilly and the baptistry is outside. His response: "I have been waiting to do this for so long, I don't care how cold the water is."

A Letter from Yorkshire

By Nate and Erika Twichell

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Nate and Erika, with their four children, moved to Yorkshire this past year to minister with Caring for Life and to revitalize the local church.

There is an old Epiphany collect that includes the lines, “Grace us with the hospitality to open our hearts and homes to visitors filled with unfamiliar wisdom, bearing profound and unusual gifts.” It was out of a desire to both receive and give this kind of hospitality that led our family to Yorkshire almost 8 months ago.

Our prayer was to be where the church was small and in need of encouragement, and where we could serve people on the margins. In ways we never expected, God has opened doors for us to serve with *Caring For Life* (CFL) in Leeds. CFL is a Christian charity seeking to share the love of Jesus with at-risk and hurting people, including those who are homeless and intellectually disabled. Through providing long-term support, homes and friendship, CFL comes alongside people in chaos to offer hope. All of this takes place on a working farm in the Yorkshire countryside.

Erika and I get the amazing opportunity to serve people who have spent most of their lives overlooked and undervalued. We get to extend the hospitality of Christ’s love and presence to those who have often received neglect and abuse. We also get to receive the gift of hospitality that our beneficiaries so rarely get to extend. The beneficiaries view the farm as their farm. We are guests, given the profound and unusual gift of being welcomed into their space. Many of the beneficiaries call their time at the farm “the best day of my week.” It is an awesome privilege to be invited into that best day.

We also came to Yorkshire with the prayer to be of encouragement to the local church. In some ways this was a bit of a nebulous goal, not as easy to quantify as our work with vulnerable adults. But we have found that this prayer of ours has been answered through Otley Parish Church. While we are not the only family with young children in the church, we have been told by multiple parishioners how encouraging it is to see our family fill up a pew every Sunday. We are grateful for this community of saints and continue to seek out ways to support the work they are doing here.

Standing behind the deli in the Farm Shop, I get to speak with hundreds of customers a week. As soon as I start to speak, it becomes apparent that I’m not a Yorkshireman. “You’re a long way from home” is something I hear almost every day. This gives me the opportunity to share why we are here, to tell a story of praying, listening, and obeying. I have lost count of the number of customers who have told me how encouraging it is that we’ve come. God is using our act of obedience to be of encouragement to the people of Yorkshire. We are so grateful to have been sent by Ascension, to be Christ’s hands and feet in Leeds on your behalf and are encouraged by your prayers and support.

For more information, find us 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 that all focus on local mercy and justice (Reconciled World; Ignite 6:8; Youth with a Mission; StreetHelp). She has a heart for the vulnerable and seeks whole person and whole community transformation in Christ.

This year has been full of unexpected things for those of us ministering in New Zealand.

At the turn of the year, through the ministry of Ignite 6:8 (igniteSix8.nz), we hosted a NZ premiere of “Buying Her,” a film by Exodus Cry about sex trafficking. The fruit has been more than we ever imagined. Since the film things have moved forward: a hotline for NZ; the UN declared prostitution a human rights violation; an organization which is working to provide exit services for people coming out of the sex trade; podcasts and websites telling the stories from NZ; and we’ve connected with about 10 new women who are survivors. Lots of good movement that we clearly see God’s hand in.

Our work with those sleeping rough in Tauranga (in tents, cars or on the streets) also increased this year. In February, *Youth with a Mission* partnered with a mobile dental clinic for a week of dental appointments focused on our friends from the streets. Then we had an intern for an 8-week internship serving community meals and following up with people. After she finished,

she said, “Why would I stop? This is a lifestyle that Jesus would want me to live.” For a total of 6 months, she built relationships, got people into housing, helped them take their next steps with mental health, sobriety and so much more. It’s been a beautiful extension of our ministry as we continue to serve with the *StreetHelp* van twice a month, giving out hot meat pies and coffee to those on the streets late into the night. One got baptized at a local church last weekend. Another accepted Jesus at a recovery church a few weeks ago. Another who wasn’t open to Jesus at all last February, will likely be the next getting baptized.

Our prayer walking team has grown – and we’ve sparked other churches into prayer walking too. God has narrowed our focus a bit and concentrated efforts on brothels. One day last month we had about 45 people out prayer walking at once, empowered through our time of Justice Prayer around sexual exploitation.

We’ve been able to use the retreat center I manage, *Hoatu Lodge* (hoatu.co.nz), for ministry much more than last year. 35% of our bed-nights were ministry related! The business side is going well. We’ve had a builder helping once a week all year - such a blessing. And we have new caregivers in the cottage. One lady, coming out of a domestic violence situation, who was there for a few nights until we could get her housing said, “Oh the lodge...there’s something about that place. I was getting healing just by being there.”

Church of the Ascension, thank you for your financial support and, most of all, for ongoing prayer support!

Reversing the Great de-churching in Latin America

By Debra Kornfield

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David and Debbie Kornfield have been affiliated with Ascension for many years, primarily serving in South and Central America.

During our twenty years in Brazil, Dave and I focused our mission work in two areas: discipling and pastoring pastors, and healing pastoral marriages and families damaged by emotional wounds and trauma. These two ongoing ministries, now largely under national leadership and boosted by the Discipleship Bible in Portuguese and Spanish, have spread across Spanish-speaking countries of South and Central America, the Caribbean, and over to Spain. When not traveling, Dave “lives” on Zoom and WhatsApp, on any given day visiting pastors in many countries from our home in Pittsburgh.

This year, though, our focus has changed. The Latin American church has suffered even greater losses over the last five years than the US church. God has given Dave a vision for renewal and revival, which will begin by gathering the leaders of the major denominations and disciple-making ministries from each country. We hope to infuse them with hope, foster collaborative relationships, and inspire more intentional discipleship within the churches, beginning with the pastors and leaders.

This huge gathering, called the Latin American Discipleship Summit, has gained twenty-plus international partners, like CRU, the Assemblies of God, Baptists and other major denominations. It's scheduled for March 25-28, 2025, in Bogotá, Colombia. The main obstacle is financial. Airfares from most countries to Bogotá are expensive, and using a convention center large enough for the hoped-for thousand participants is expensive. Dave and I are personally trying to raise \$100,000 to help. Please contact me if God touches your heart to contribute. We are deeply grateful to Ascension for their support of this initiative.



We don't think of the Summit as an “event” - one and done. Our goal is that the Summit be repeated in each country, bringing together even more leaders locally, and of course tailoring follow-up plans to the specific situation in each place. Fostering collaboration across denominations and para-church organizations is a God-honoring, Kingdom-building outcome, bridging traditional barriers and clarifying values and priorities. Individually and ecclesiastically, we're not called just to build our own little kingdoms, but to strengthen THE Kingdom of God under our Lord's headship over the entire Body of Christ.

As you think of us, please pray: for stamina, for the teams working toward the Summit (especially for the Summit administrator, Zoraya, and her team), and for financial provision for every leader God wants to participate in Bogotá. Pray for the leaders and plenary speakers. Most of all, pray that God will bring revival to the church of Latin America. Thank you.

For more information about the Summit, you can view a Power Point (QR below). You can text, write, or call Dave or me, or chat between services on Sunday mornings. We cherish our relationship with you, our Ascension family.



A Life of Adventure!

By Renee Smith

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Renee is a long-time member of Ascension and attends the 11am service. She ministers to cross-cultural workers, many of whom were from the Muslim world.

When I was a girl, my mother told me that if I followed Jesus, I would live a life of adventure. She was right! When I was five, our family ‘adopted’ a Muslim who was studying journalism with my Dad. He was from Bangladesh and became my Uncle Molla. The nations streamed through our family front door over the years. There was Wilson from Hong Kong and families from Afghanistan and Korea. There were students from Jordan and Japan, neighbors from India. I can’t remember them all!

In my early years at Ascension (1985 on), I helped with the fledgling international student work and prayed with those interested in missions. When the Lord released me in 1998 to join an agency that works in the Muslim world, I was thrilled. Finally, I was to have a more direct role in impacting the nations with the Good News of Jesus Christ!

Little did I know how this adventure would unfold! Over the next 15 years I had the privilege of coming alongside cross-cultural workers focused on ministering long-term in Muslim homelands. I learned a great deal about the challenges they experience, and the reasons all too many return home prematurely and/or unnecessarily. I realized my ‘sweet spot’ in ministry is helping people to stay the course – to stay on the field growing in deeper connection with our Lord Jesus.

I provided debriefings; oversight for those who experienced trauma or who stumbled in their faith; and developed venues for workers to learn creative approaches to spiritual formation practices that could be sustaining in foreign contexts. I did hundreds of hours of prayer ministry to help address blocks (we all have them!) to intimacy with God. And during those years I helped birth two spiritual formation communities focused on loving and worshipping the Lord, and secondly on welcoming others to join us for retreats in order to be refreshed in the Lord Jesus.

Since 2010, the adventure of following Jesus has involved establishing *Hineni House*, a Christian community devoted to worship and prayer, serving those who are serving God in cross-cultural and local settings. *Hineni House’s* ministry base is about 40 minutes from Ascension in McDonald, PA. We welcome cross-cultural workers and others to join us in worship, solitude (either at our base or local hiking trails), and creative approaches to prayerful communion with God. We invite people to come and meet with the Lord so that they may continue their journeys in deeper communion with Jesus, renewed to extend God’s love to the world. Spiritual direction, prayer mentoring, inner healing prayer, and spiritual formation training and retreats are on offer. It is a grand adventure!

If you are interested in following this adventure, feel free to connect with me to get on my email newsletter list.



I Never Dreamed...

By Ardath Smith

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Ardath is a long-time member of Ascension and attends the 11am service. She supports cross-cultural workers in their spiritual formation.



Growing up, I never felt called to be a missionary. I grew up in a musical family, playing piano and cello; I dreamed of playing in a string quartet. From 14 years of age I studied under Anne Martindale Williams, the principal cellist of the Pittsburgh Symphony, eventually studying at Carnegie Mellon.

However, during those years I entered what I call ‘the years of death’ in my earthly pilgrimage. In my sophomore year both my arms began to have tendonitis-type symptoms, becoming so painful that I took off the second half of my junior year. That March my mother died of metastatic breast cancer. Fifteen months later, my father remarried, which ended much in our family culture. I had been able to graduate by the skin of my teeth the month previous, but I knew I would never be a professional musician. No doctor could give me a clear diagnosis or recommend helpful treatment. I did not know what to do with myself.

However, I had given myself to Jesus when I was 10, and I belonged to him body and soul. “Lord - none of my dreams are coming to pass. You promise to take care of me. I need a job.” The Lord provided a job that became a wonderful education over the next 7 years. Then, supported by Ascension, I taught English in Mongolia for a year. Although this was not traditional missionary service, I learned a great deal about the challenges of serving the Lord cross-culturally.

The experience also proved to be a can-opener for my soul - in the wake of it I grappled in new ways with the realities of my own brokenness and experienced more of the Lord’s healing - but I *still* didn’t have a sense of calling or direction. Again I prayed, “Lord, my dreams are like sand sifting through my fingers - *what are you doing?!*” To my astonishment I heard him say, “I am making you whole.”

It was another five years before I realized that the Lord had been training me *for decades* for a ministry that I had not known existed - spiritual direction. In the midst of training to become a spiritual director, I met the president of Novo Mission. He asked, “Do you want to go back overseas?” “No...not to minister to nationals...but I would *love* to return to minister to missionaries!” Wait...what? Maybe I **was** called to missions, it just didn’t look like any call to missions I’d ever heard of, because I was called to support missionaries in their relationships with God!

That was 25 years ago. I have since traveled world-wide to minister to cross-cultural workers. I love creating and holding space for others to engage with God, whether that is spiritual direction, designing retreats, prayer ministry, or leading in worship (to my abiding wonderment, the girl who never felt called to be a missionary is also now a priest!). I never dreamed....

Agencies & Institutions Supported by Ascension

*There are agencies and institutions that are mission critical to the church. Ascension supports the operating budgets of several. **Would you consider the same?***

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 Denise Cox, Associate Director of SAMS and Ascension parishioner (denisejcox@yahoo.com). You can also talk with Conn Thieman and Marilyn Chislaghi who are on the SAMS board. The Ascension mission budget supports SAMS operating budget. Many parishioners support individual SAMS missionaries as well.

Anglican Frontier Missions (AFM)

The vision of Anglican Frontier Missions (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.



Asher and Sophie (see earlier article) have chosen AFM as their umbrella organization. Ascension supports AFM's operating budget and will support Asher and Sophie as they launch their new 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 everyone, 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 in more than one location.

Ascension supports ELFHCC's operating budget. 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. Many other members of Ascension have worked or do work at the Center. Please keep this vital ministry in prayer!

Trinity Anglican Seminary

Many folks who are new to Ascension may not know that the flagship denominational Seminary for the *Anglican Church in North America* (ACNA) happens to be a forty-minute drive west of Pittsburgh, in the borough of Ambridge. Founded in the mid-1970s to renew and reform The Episcopal Church, Trinity Episcopal School for Ministry (as it was then called), gathered and formed many of the leaders who would drive the Anglican realignment movement that resulted in the establishment of the ACNA in 2009.



As well as the many full-time residential and online students pursuing training for ordination in the Anglican church, Trinity welcomes a good number of local Anglicans who drive up for an evening lecture, audit a week-long 'Intensive' in January or June, or enrich their retirement by taking one class a semester (one morning or afternoon per week, plus a cooked lunch together).

Trinity has numerous points of connection with Ascension. Jack Gabig, Jacob Rodriguez, and Joel Scandrett are current professors, Mark Stevenson was on the faculty for many years, Karen Stevenson is the current director of Student Life, and members of the staff team - Josh and Jess Bennett, Wes Williams, and Daniel Behrens - are all Trinity graduates. I (Alex Banfield Hicks) may not have served for eight years as Ascension's Director of Youth and Young Adult ministries if I hadn't met our former Rector, Jonathan Millard, at an Andy Crouch lecture at Trinity ten years ago!

Our vision is to develop Christian leaders who can plant, renew, and grow churches that make disciples of Jesus Christ, and we are currently expanding our capacity to do that by adding the church-based pathway for our Master of Divinity (the gold-standard program preparing future church leaders) to our traditional residential pathway. The church-based pathway ensures future leaders get thoroughly prepared for Anglican leadership through our online courses, in-person week-long Intensives, and mentored courses in their own churches.

Trinity Anglican Seminary would not exist without the support of faithful churches and faithful members. If you would like to talk to me about a potential seminary student you know (it can be you!), or about supporting Trinity, or founding a scholarship fund, then please email me, Alex Banfield Hicks, at alex.banfieldhicks@tas.edu.

Ministry With Our New Neighbors



By Daniel Behrens, Ascension Missionary in Residence
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I serve as a Missionary-in-Residence at Ascension, along with my wife Rebekah and our three girls. I am a priest in this diocese, and we are part of the Society of Anglican Missionaries and Senders (SAMS-USA). Our family's vision is to partner with the church to share the love and truth of Christ with recent immigrants. I want to share some of the areas of ministry where this is taking shape and celebrate highlights from 2024. Since we are serving right here in Pittsburgh, you are welcome to become more directly involved!

Cross-Cultural Discipleship

In the spring I was able to help organize a catechism class for three newly baptized people from China. I also get to lead discussions for internationals about the meaning of baptism and how it is practiced at Ascension. It is such a privilege to share how, through Jesus, God gives us a new start, a new identity and a new community!

Another area of discipleship is with a Sudanese Christian congregation who met for worship at Ascension on Saturdays. Lord-willing the community will resume meeting for worship on Sunday afternoons. Their leader, Samuel Kody, is in discernment for ordination in the Diocese of Pittsburgh and plans to complete his seminary training and intern at a local Anglican church this year.

Latino Ministry

I get to help organize gatherings for Spanish-speakers involved with the International Ministry. In the fall we launched a monthly discussion group called "Charlemos" which features delicious food, wisdom from the Bible, and time to build relationships. We hope for stronger relationships and deeper discipleship over the new year.

Job Partners

Along with other Ascension volunteers, I get to walk with internationals who are seeking adequate employment. Despite the "Now Hiring" signs on many businesses it is surprisingly hard for recent immigrants to navigate online

applications, resumes, interviews, negotiating wages, etc. Ascension Job Partners get to provide guidance and encouragement in this draining process.

Welcome Circles

Through our ongoing partnership with Hello Neighbor, we welcomed a 4th refugee family from Syria in May 2024. Our team of church volunteers provided a warm reception. After a few weeks they chose to join relatives in Michigan. We regrouped over the summer and in September we welcomed a family from South America. They are adjusting well, and we are proud to call them our neighbors. The future of refugee resettlement is uncertain, but we plan to continue gathering teams to walk with refugee families in the new year.



Beyond Ascension

Beyond what you might see at Ascension, we have been blessed to connect with several Muslim families in our part of Pittsburgh. We are learning a lot as we seek to build deeper relationships and share our faith. I organized a meeting at Ascension in November called "Loving Your (Muslim) Neighbors" to provide training for others at Ascension. Our speaker was Dan Omar who hopes to become a missionary-in-residence at an Anglican church in Atlanta in 2025. We pray for many more new partnerships like this, helping churches across North America to share the love and truth of Christ with their new neighbors. Thank you for being part of what God is doing right here in Pittsburgh!

Be the Bridge

By Ryan and Kelly Shane

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Ryan and Kelly, and their daughters, attend Ascension's 9am service.

Kelly and I (Ryan) have been serving with *WEC International* since 2003. We lived primarily in the Middle East for about 18 years, working with a variety of teams and ministries centered on educational development, refugee care, and discipleship.

In 2021, we transitioned back to the US with our three teenage (at the time) daughters: Ella, Sophia, and Juliana. With our oldest daughter Ella ready to start university in the fall, the challenges of the Covid-19 global pandemic also expedited our transition to the US earlier than anticipated. We felt called to come back to the Pittsburgh area to set up a home for our family, and to seek ways to continue the ministry and mission-work we were engaged in moving forward. Ascension became our much-needed church community and respite during our transition process. The ministry opportunities which came about during our transition and sabbatical developed organically alongside the work the Lord had already started with the International Ministry and community outreach at Ascension. We felt like we were home again!

As a native Pittsburgher, I've always been fascinated by bridges –and the perceptions other Pittsburghers have of these ubiquitous objects crossing our many rivers and valleys. For some, bridges impose natural boundaries and make us feel content, living and working in our *side* of town, or intimidated by the possibility of entering into something *unfamiliar* or *unknown*.

For me, bridges have always represented the possibility of connection. There is something about stepping out in faith towards the *unfamiliar* which provides a context to see and experience the Lord working. I believe the Lord wants His people to take risks and 'cross bridges'. More importantly, the church in every community is called to *be the bridge* which connects a broken and hurting world to the hope of salvation and transformation offered through Christ.

We are excited to be a part of the refugee resettlement (Welcome Circles) ministry at Ascension for this season, as



we continue our ministry with *WEC International* through their refugee-centered work of *Neighbors Worldwide*. Not only does this ministry *bridge* the type of mission-work we have been involved in for many years overseas, but it also dynamically *expands* the missional outreach of the church to care for the needs of the poor and vulnerable seeking shelter and sanctuary in Pittsburgh.

Ascension has been given the opportunity to build authentic community and friendship with folks who often come from *lesser reached* areas of the world. Welcome Circles help to *bridge the gap* between the feelings of uncertainty and isolation which naturally come with being a refugee, with the possibility of renewed hope and a future as residents of a new city. Welcome Circles encourage us to *live* the gospel, without even having to leave Pittsburgh!

Through Ascension's partnership with a local resettlement agency, Hello Neighbor, we have settled several families from Syria, and a recent family from Venezuela/Ecuador. Kelly has also been hired by Hello Neighbor as a manager for case workers overseeing resettlement and placement, based on Ascension's reputation for quality refugee-care and organization. I get to work closely with many newly settled refugees, especially Arabic-speakers, and help to encourage our Welcome Circle members to use their gifts and abilities to bless the families we serve. We have both found great joy working alongside Ascension in this ministry over the past (almost) 2 years!

Shelter Meal Ministry: Throwing our Pebbles Into the Pond

By Bryan Janaszek

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“What we would like to do is change the world - make it a little simpler for people to feed, clothe, and shelter themselves as God intended them to do. We can work for the oasis, the little cell of joy and peace in a harried world. We can throw our pebble in the pond and be confident that its ever-widening circle will reach around the world. We repeat, there is nothing we can do but love, and, dear God, please enlarge our hearts to love each other, to love our neighbor, to love our enemy as our friend.” – Dorothy Day

Once, and often twice a month, a small group of volunteers prepares and serves meals to those experiencing homelessness in neighborhoods around Ascension. The history of this ministry has been well-documented in earlier editions, so I will spend this time sharing a bit about the experience of serving people through this ministry, casting our pebbles into the pond, and making it just a little simpler for those around us who are in need.

Since the conclusion of the parish hall construction project, the ministry has returned to Ascension’s kitchen to cook the meals. We are glad to be back! The typical menu that is prepared on a Sunday after one of the services is beef stroganoff, coleslaw, rolls, brownies, and either green beans or oranges. We prepare enough food for 80 people, so that means chopping ten pounds of onions and cooking two very large pots of stroganoff. This may seem like a considerable amount of work, but with just a few volunteers, even those that have never cooked before, the meal can be ready in under two hours. When we are cooking for East End Cooperative Ministry, the meal goes into our walk-in cooler when finished for serving on Tuesdays. When cooking for Shepherd’s Heart, the stroganoff goes into our warming oven, where it will be picked up later in the afternoon, delivered, and served.



EAST END
COOPERATIVE
MINISTRY

opportunity. transformation. hope.

Serving the meal at Shepherd’s Heart Fellowship in the Uptown neighborhood provides the unique opportunity to worship with the very community we will later serve. Shepherd’s Heart is an Anglican parish, and while they worship from the same prayer book, the experience is profoundly different from most Sundays at Ascension. It offers a glimpse into the life of a community dedicated to changing the world for an underserved population, offering that little oasis in a life of hardship. As the liturgy concludes, the team from Ascension prepares to serve the meal. As soon as the liturgy concludes, the line forms, and the food is served. Shepherd’s Heart encourages volunteers to sit down with members of the community and eat with them, offering the opportunity to love in the little ways Dorothy Day describes.

If you are interested in serving, we cook the meal for EECM on the Sunday before the last Tuesday of each month and prepare and serve meals for Shepherd’s Heart on rotating scheduling, based on their need. In 2025, we will shift the calendar for these events from the Shelter Meals ministry group to registration events within Church Center, which should make it even easier to find an opportunity and sign up. If you have any questions about the ministry, please don’t hesitate to reach out to me or Jonathan Sewell.

Network of Life

By Meg Sateia

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The Network of Life (NOL) is a life-affirming ministry offering pregnancy services to those vulnerable to abortion at their Women's Choice Network centers as well as education for the community.

Thank you for your prayers and support for Network of Life. I'm pleased to report that the 2024 Baby Bottle Campaign raised \$2,355. This was our most successful campaign on record!

Network of Life ministers to the people affected by abortion. As someone who volunteered as a Client Advocate for several years, I'd like to share a bit of what I love about this ministry. I love that this ministry doesn't only care about the unborn. They care about the women (and men) who are staring at that positive line on a pregnancy test and need help. I've been through a surprise pregnancy myself, and it was terrifying, even though I was married and wanted kids eventually. As a Client Advocate, I was trained to listen. Asking on the intake form both what the client was considering and why, opened the door for clients to share things they often didn't feel safe sharing with their own friends or family. It was a safe space where we followed strict standards for confidentiality while giving people time to process their thoughts and feelings.

The services offered are valuable yet free and help women to make their own decisions. The free ultrasounds performed by RDMS specialists and read by physicians can help women considering an abortion to confirm a pregnancy, determine viability, and rule out ectopic pregnancy which is a life-threatening condition that an abortion does not treat. About 80% of women who view their ultrasound will choose life.

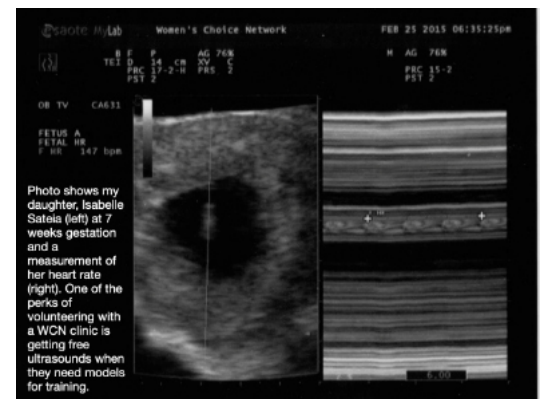
Additionally, I've seen the ministry go above and beyond in providing ongoing care for their clients, including providing classes on pregnancy and parenting. To find real, encouraging stories about the impact this ministry is having on their clients, go to the NOL website and look for their "Transformation Tuesdays" blog posts under "Our Stories".

The NOL is currently expanding to be able to reach even more clients. They announced in the fall that their Monroeville center - which is currently their smallest and busiest center - is moving into a new suite at their same location that is nearly double the square footage of the old space.

Thank you again for your part in making this ministry happen! If you have questions about Network of Life, please reach out to me.



Women's Choice
Network
where the choice is life!



Church Revitalization through the Worship Arts

By Elise Massa

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Elise Massa works in the UK with United Adoration, a US based nonprofit, affiliated with the ACNA. United Adoration describes its purpose as follows: We are on a mission to revitalize the creativity of the local church by empowering artists to create in their own language, culture, and context. Our vision is to see the church be the primary patron of the arts. While Elise works with United Adoration, Chris Massa, former music director at Ascension, continues work on his PhD at Durham University.



I thought I'd share the perspective of our leaders and participants. Because of your partnership, their stories are part of your story. Thank you, Church of the Ascension, for partnering with us in this Kingdom work.

"After years of feeling unseen and unheard, weird and left out, God showed me that I only needed to surround myself with other artists who seek Him first above all else to get a confirmation: He delights in what He has created, even in me." - Emese, Scotland Multi-Arts Retreat

"The retreat came at a time of transition. My trauma healing was done, and God was starting the process of rebuilding. Part of the rebuilding is my gifting of creativity, my unique expression of God in me, to offer to God." - Derby Multi-Arts Retreat on "Joy"

"With every contact, every event, every conversation that I've had the privilege of holding, I have been encouraged and stirred up at the work the Lord is doing in our nation and beyond and have seen a fresh expression and reflection of our Creator. I'm so excited for what 2025 holds." - Rebecca Beese, Oxfordshire & Home Counties regional leader

"We've created spaces for writers and musicians to gather and craft together. One month, a chap brought poetry that we turned into a new church song as a group. It's been brilliant on a personal note to find a tribe of fellow creatives who want to make Jesus known and to support our local creatives through collaboration and coordination." - Andrew Clayton, West Midlands regional leader

Why aye, Ascension! (that's hello). The Massas continue to "keep calm and carry on" in our second year in Durham, England. Chris continues his PhD at Durham University and starts teaching in 2025. Caleb has announced he plans to be a professional footballer. That said, he recently wrote a school song for Christmas about angels "telling some stuff" to shepherds, so we're not too concerned.

Even though United Adoration UK is still very much in the beginning stages, our strong, committed core team continues to witness God's transformational work in lives and church communities through the arts. This past year alone, our UK team led over 60 gatherings! We deeply desire to see the Christian faith expressed locally in meaningful and accessible ways, from the theologically rich soil of Oxford to the under-resourced, salt of the earth council estates in Halifax.

As UK Team Leader, my primary responsibilities are building and supporting my network of leaders while also being available to lead both online and in-person events. Following a multi-arts retreat in Derbyshire, a Holy Spirit "breakthrough" led not just to the creation of beautiful art, but also to a number of participants coming forward to learn how to be both local and national leaders.

I have had the opportunity to lead workshops and speak with church/arts leaders about artistic discipleship and the value of local Christ-centered creative communities. These organizations include New Irish Arts (founded by Keith Getty), Engage Worship, Evergreen+, Resound Worship, and recently the Pratt Green Trust.

Student Ministry with Coalition for Christian Outreach [CCO]

By Tyler Marwood

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Ascension is home to several CCO staff members who worship with us and are dedicated to reaching the next generation for Christ:

- Jonny Cagwin – Formation & Discipleship Specialist and Campus Ministry Staff at CMU
- Tyler Marwood – Director of Marketing & Communication
- Carrie Reale – Events Specialist
- Shelly Riemersma – Staff Spiritual Director
- Carter Shearer – Marketing and Graphic Design
- Ginger Weeber – Gift & Stewardship Officer

The CCO partners with churches like Ascension to reach college students, helping them encounter Jesus and discover that God cares about every part of their lives. Through Gospel-centered relationships, discipleship, and leadership development, CCO staff walk with students as they grow in their faith, connect to local churches, and learn to live out their callings in every area of life.

Today's college students are in a unique stage of life. They're navigating a digital and virtual world, but deep down, they crave something real and lasting. Many of them are also more open to spiritual conversations than any generation before. They need:

- To hear the truth about Jesus,
- To be connected to a local church where they can find faithful peers and trusted adults who care for them, and
- To know that they belong to their Creator, not to the idols of our age.

How you can help!

- Pray for the CCO's ministry with college students and for the Jubilee Conference (Feb. 21-23).
- Join us at Jubilee Professional on Friday, February 21, 2025, at the Westin Hotel in Downtown Pittsburgh. Maybe your work feels disconnected from your faith, or you're wondering how to live out your calling in your day-to-day life. At Jubilee Professional, you'll explore how your work can join in God's restoration of all things. Early bird registration is available through January 24. Learn more and register at jubileeprofessional.com.

Together, we can help students encounter Jesus, connect with His Church, and live out their callings in the world.



InterVarsity Christian Fellowship Faculty Ministry

By Robin Capcara

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Since the 1970's, it has been commonly believed that a college education was the leading cause of secularization among Americans. (Some cited the work of sociologist, Daniel Yankelovich, to support this idea.) But just this year, sociologist Ryan Burge found that a college education actually had a positive correlation with increased religious practice. People with a college degree are more likely to attend religious services than those without. And attendance is even higher among those with a graduate degree! Clearly, ministry at America's colleges and universities is fertile ground.

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 great 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.)



- Professors 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.

Student Ministry with InterVarsity Christian Fellowship

By Dabney Robinson, VP Annual Giving, InterVarsity Christian Fellowship/USA

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Did you know that a perk of being part of Ascension is that you get to participate in God's work on campuses across the United States through several campus ministries?!

Even though I've only been at Ascension about 8 years, I've been on staff with InterVarsity Christian Fellowship for 20 years. I am not only on staff with InterVarsity, but I am also a product of our ministry. When I stepped onto campus as a freshman at the University of Richmond in 1999, I was looking for a group of Christians whose values aligned with mine.

But what I found was so much more; a community who loved God and each other and would build the foundation for me to follow Jesus for a lifetime. Fellow students helped me wrestle with hard questions, our campus staff minister developed us as leaders, and our time studying the Bible taught me the gospel was good news; not just for me, but for the world.

InterVarsity helps students focus on growing in the "four loves": love for God, God's Word, God's people of every ethnicity and culture, and God's purposes in the world (much like what we do here at Ascension). These values are why I came on staff in 2004 and why I have stayed for two decades. My student work is less direct these days, but I am grateful for the opportunity to help resource the ministry by leading the Annual Giving department.

I get to experience this ministry daily, but you are the ones making a real difference. Because of your partnership, students are coming to know Jesus for the first time, are being disciplined by the Scriptures, and developed as leaders. These students are thoughtful Jesus-followers who are impacting the world. Thank you for the sacrifices you make to continue partnering with us on campus!



Teen Ministry with Young Life

By JB Ward

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JB Ward works with Young Life Pittsburgh. JB, his wife Bethany, and their children have been attending Ascension for several years. They lead a community group in the South Hills.

Young Life has been living out its mission of “introducing adolescents to Jesus Christ and helping them grow in their faith” in Pittsburgh for over 70 years! We accomplish our mission through weekly Bible studies (Campaigners), weekly outreach meetings (Club), and summer weeklong and weekend adventure camp experiences at our resort-style camps. But the bread and butter of Young Life is what we call “contact work” - going to where kids are, learning their names, praying for them, building bridges of friendships - all with the hope of earning the right to share the good news of Jesus Christ with them. We follow Jesus’ example in that he “became flesh and dwelt among us” (John 1:14).

We believe that every kid has the right to hear about the God who loves them and sent his Son for them. We invite kids to respond to a personal invitation to a relationship with God and walk alongside them regardless of their response. Our hope is that as kids hear the gospel, their lives will be transformed, and they will find their home in the local church.

In Pittsburgh, we have a team of 23 staff and over 100 volunteers in 35 ministries including middle school, high school, college-age students, students with disabilities, and teen moms. Currently our team is impacting over 6,000 students across the Greater Pittsburgh region as we build and equip the next generation of spiritual leaders.

My role is to develop our staff, volunteers and local support teams as we build new ministries across our city. This year we are developing new ministries in Hampton, Brashear, North Hills, Chartiers Valley and Steubenville, OH.

Here’s a quote from one of our students: *“I’m grateful for Young Life because it’s given me a community. I moved here earlier this year, and didn’t have friends or people to depend on in my faith. With Young Life, that all changed. I made friends with people from all walks of life and have people to depend on in my school and at home. Young Life is one of the best things that has ever happened to me, and I consistently thank God for having it.”* - Rachel, High School Sophomore

Kids, like Rachel, live in a post-truth world where grace is neither extended nor understood. Kids are longing for acceptance, purpose, and security. This is the world we show up in. This is our mission field, where we share the person of Jesus Christ, full of grace and truth. Thank you, Church of the Ascension, for supporting our work so our team can spend as much time as possible in the field with lost students.




Teen Ministry with Urban Impact

By Julia Piecka

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This past fall marks the beginning of my fifth year with Urban Impact Foundation and I have been loving every minute of it. This past summer I oversaw our middle school camp program, Junior Leaders, which aims to provide our middle school students with an opportunity to grow in their faith while learning how to be a servant leader among their peers.

This fall, we expanded our Tutoring Center to 40 students in first through sixth grade to provide free academic tutoring for our students through a holistic approach to learning. I look forward to this upcoming year as I will be celebrating a decade of serving with Urban Impact and getting ready for my tenth Summer Day Camp season.

The Lord is good! In the photo is a student who served as a camp counselor this summer but was one of my first campers when I was an intern back in 2016. It is wonderful that, in the Lord, things come full circle!





Ash Wednesday

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

Wednesday March 5, 2025
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