

NEW LEADERSHIP FOR Congregational Care & Prayer Ministries

Three months ago, I shared that we were searching for a half-time Assistant Rector to oversee Congregational Care and Prayer Ministries at Ascension. After conducting a local and national search we received six applications for this position from men and women from across the world. However, the search committee was unanimous that none was the right candidate for Ascension and our current needs. (As a practical matter, attracting suitably qualified clergy to serve part-time and without benefits necessarily limits the potential pool of those who might be able to serve.)

As it began to look like we might not be able to fill the position advertised we started to consider how our needs could be addressed in a different way. To that end, we decided to divide the job into two with one person overseeing Congregational Care and another Prayer Ministries – at least on an interim basis. As Ascension continues to grow we are, I believe, moving towards the day when we will need, and be able to afford, a third full-time priest on staff – but not yet.

In the meantime, I am delighted to announce the appointment of The Venerable Dr. Mark Stevenson as interim, part-time Deacon for Congregational Care and The Rev. Canon Dr. Andrea Millard as interim, part-time Director of Prayer Ministries. I realize those titles are quite a mouthful! (Deacon Mark is the archdeacon of our diocese – hence the title “The Venerable” and Mother Andrea is an honorary Canon, from her time serving on the bishop’s staff in the Diocese of New England.)

Enough of formal titles, let me tell you more about Mark and Andrea and the gifts and experience they bring to us.

Mark Stevenson **Deacon for Congregational Care**



Mark, and his wife The Rev. Canon Karen Stevenson, have just completed an 18-year ministry at Trinity Church, Washington PA, where Karen served as rector of the parish and Mark as the deacon. (Fun fact: Karen, succeeded me as rector of Trinity, Washington. I served there between 1994 and 2000.) At Trinity, Mark assisted with congregational care in many ways, including hospital, nursing home, and shut-in visitation and care; training of Lay Eucharistic Ministers; starting and leading a weekly men’s group, which involved a great deal of wide-ranging pastoral care; and maintaining relationships with members of the congregation of all ages, but particularly with seniors who needed special care and attention.

Mark continues to serve as Archdeacon of the Diocese, a role he has had since 2008. As archdeacon Mark’s primary responsibility is for the pastoral care of the diocesan deacons. This involves coordinating all the ways deacons care for each other, from an on-line prayer center to pairing active deacons, with retired, shut-in deacons.

Mark also brings his experience as former Academic Dean of Trinity School for Ministry and as a director of numerous theatre productions, which have made him a strong project manager. Over the course of his career,

Mark has had extensive experience at identifying, training, encouraging, and mentoring the right people for the right jobs.

Mark is no stranger to Ascension. He started attending Ascension when he first moved to Pittsburgh in 1979. He was confirmed here; met Karen and married her here; served on the Vestry; and served here as his first assignment after his ordination to the diaconate in 1998. The Stevensons have now just moved into a condo a block and a half away from Ascension!

Andrea Millard Director of Prayer Ministries



Prayer Ministry has been a hallmark of Andrea’s vocation. Even before her calling to full-time ministry some fifteen years ago, she was actively engaged in various aspects of prayer ministries. Andrea brings both parish-based and diocesan-wide experience in leading prayer ministries and equipping teams for service within the Church.

Before Andrea and I were married in September 2017, Andrea served The Anglican Diocese in New England for eight years as Canon for Prayer and Healing Ministries. Her focus in that position was to identify, equip, and deploy lay prayer ministers throughout the Diocese for service within their local churches. Training and encouraging others effectively to minister to the sick and broken with the compassion, sensitivity and empowerment of Jesus Christ was a source of great joy. Andrea provided biblical, theological and practical grounding for a variety of prayer ministries. Through the design, development and implementation of regional conferences, local parish gatherings and

individual consultation with rectors, vicars and ministers, Andrea mobilized over a hundred lay leaders to serve in a variety of prayer ministries including Intercessory Prayer; Individual Prayer Appointments; Altar Prayer Teams; Healing Prayer Teams; Prayer Meeting leadership; and more.

Andrea also brings her experience serving as a member of the clergy team at Trinity Church, Greenwich, CT (2003-2009). Her responsibilities there for spiritual formation included: *Community Care* (providing hospital visitations; sacramental preparation and celebration; preaching; pastoral counseling; and spiritual direction); *Pastoral Care* (equipping lay leaders to serve one another by discovering spiritual gifts, strengths and passions; creating lay leadership spiritual development programs; facilitating weekly gatherings to teach spiritual practices); and *Prayer Ministries* (establishing an engaged culture of congregational and individual prayer; and developing theologically grounded healing prayer ministries).

Between them, Mark and Andrea bring a wealth of experience and expertise – more than we could have expected or hoped for - thanks be to God! They will each be working 10 to 12.5 hours a week and will therefore necessarily need to be focused on their particular areas of responsibility – so you will not see them in the pulpit very often. Please pray for them as they begin their new work among us.

Yours in Christ,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Jonathan +". Below the signature is a horizontal line that ends in a small upward-pointing arrow.

Jonathan N. Millard
(Rector)

ANNUAL
MEETING
2018 2019

Sunday, March 3 after 11am service

Please mark this date on your calendar and plan to attend our 2019 Annual Meeting. We will vote in new vestry members, be given a 2018 financial report and update on the 2019 budget. We will hear from our Senior Warden as well as from our Rector on events of 2018 and things to come in 2019. It’s a great way to engage with Ascension.

Childcare and lunch will be provided.

Making SPACE for Grief



Mary Allerton, a poet and a puritan who sailed to America on the Mayflower, wrote a poem after she birthed a stillborn child with these lines:

There is no time to grieve now, there is no time.

There is only time for labor in the cold.”



*Tish Harrison Warren,
Writer-in-Residence*

Nearly 400 years later, I sat in my church office as a woman speaking about her own sorrow, said to me, “I am grieving but I don’t have time for grief. There is so much work to do. I have to keep going.” The similarity struck me. Here are two women in completely different circumstances, four centuries apart, and, without knowing it, they spoke nearly the exact same words. They shared the same ache.

We, Americans, as a culture, have inherited this tendency to resist grief. It’s in our cultural DNA, the water we swim in. America tends toward optimism and forward progress, busyness and productivity. And we can be taught that “there is no time for grief.”

But if we do not make space for grief, we cannot know the depths of the love of God, the healing that God can wring from pain, the way that practicing grief can open our hearts to love, to vivacity, to wisdom, even, at times, to joy. We must make time for grief. In part because grief will not simply disappear if ignored. Grief is stubborn, relentless even; it will make itself heard or we will die trying to silence it. If we do not face it directly, it comes out sideways.

In order to truly hold the dark reality of loss, suffering, pain and death, without despair, denial, numbing out, or belittling that reality, requires that we hold to the story of a powerful God who loves us and gives life to the dead. But to hold to this hope of resurrection without resorting to sentimentality, false hope, and saccharine cheerfulness, we must be completely honest about the horrific reality of human vulnerability and loss. To deny one is to deny the other. To belittle one is to belittle the other.

One of my very favorite pictures—and metaphors— of the church is found in a little noticed passage from the book of Ezra. At the end of the exile, when the temple was being rebuilt, the foundation to this holy place was finally laid, and there was a big celebration, a moment where the people of Israel gathered to worship and remember God’s restoration. This was a moment they had waited for, the rock and mortar of their rescue and redemption. And yet, Ezra tells us: “Many of the older priests and Levites and family heads, who had seen the former temple, wept aloud when they saw the foundation of this temple being laid, while many others shouted for joy. *No one could distinguish the sound of the shouts of joy from the sound of weeping, because the people made so much noise.*” (Ezra 3:12-13, emphasis mine). Dignity be damned; these are people who knew how to celebrate hope and mourn their losses. Even in this moment of restoration, a scar remained, and it was worth weeping over. And here we find the people of God, some wailing in grief and some wailing in joy, and it’s all so wrapped up together that no one can tell where one ends and the other begins.

That is what life looks like until God sets things right, lived in the meantime, in the already and not yet. We have seen the foundation of the temple laid—Paul actually calls Jesus “the foundation that has been laid” in 1 Corinthians. There is so much overwhelming beauty in this life of faith we’ve been given; there is almost unimaginable grace that we receive even on the most ordinary day. And yet, things are not made new yet, and we dwell in a world where grief is ever present. This beauty and pain are all wrapped up together, unable to be pried apart, just as is in the book of Ezra. And the response of the people of God was to admit all of it, to deny or denigrate none of it, to claim both hope and loss, grief and beauty, so thoroughly true that no one could distinguish the loud shouts of joy from the wails of pain.

I hope you will make time to grieve. Our task as a church is to take up practices, both individually and together, where we hold, with utter honesty, both the brokenness of the world and the hope of what’s to come.

I know one woman who, a couple years after the death of her husband, didn’t want to go to church for fear that she’d start crying. But I invite you: feel total freedom to cry in church as much as you need. We have time to grieve here, and we grieve together. And if you are rejoicing, we can celebrate together as well. Both are not only welcome, but, if Ezra is to be believed, they are all so wrapped up together in the mystery of God, in the “already and not yet,” that we cannot pry them apart until God himself dries every tear.



A Process for Confirmation *and an invitation to* Deepen in Your Faith

Why Confirmation?

If you are new to Anglicanism, one thing that might stand out to you is the emphasis we place on the sacraments. Our tradition no less than other evangelical traditions places great emphasis upon the transformative power of grace, but more than other evangelical traditions, we place great weight upon the sacraments as the means by which God brings his grace to us.

By sacraments we primarily mean what are sometimes called the “sacraments of the Gospel,” the sacraments of baptism and the Eucharist, which were ordained by Christ himself and which “are generally necessary for our salvation” (*To Be a Christian*, q. 104). But like Roman Catholics and the Orthodox churches, we also recognize five other rites - confirmation, penance, orders, matrimony, and extreme unction - which are “commonly called sacraments” (*Articles of Religion*, XXV). These are not necessary for salvation, but “God clearly uses them as means of grace” (*To Be a Christian*, Q. 117). Confirmation, then, is one of the rites sometimes called a “sacrament of the Church” (*To Be a Christian*, Q. 116). Why do we do it? And more importantly, do we have biblical warrant to do it?

Confirmation for Anglicans is a sacramental rite that seals your “mature commitment” to your baptismal covenant (*To Be a Christian*, Q. 118). When you are baptized in the Anglican church, the celebrant after baptizing you in the name of the Holy Trinity makes the sign of the cross on your forehead with chrism oil to seal that you belong to Christ forever. The celebrant then prays that in being marked with the cross, “you shall not be ashamed to confess the faith of Christ crucified, to fight bravely under his banner against the world, the flesh, and the devil, and to continue as his faithful servant to the end of your days” (*The Order for Holy Baptism*).

What this prayer tells you is that the covenant you make in baptism is to push back against the darkness of the world by the power of the Holy Spirit in prayer and in your conversations and in your actions. The New Testament does not permit a distinction between first and second-class Christians. To be baptized is nothing less than to pledge to have your whole life conformed to the shape of Christ’s death and resurrection (Rom. 6:3-4).

In confirmation we ask for an adult understanding of these vows you have taken in baptism, and we commission and pray for the Holy Spirit to come upon you in power to carry out this weighty calling. Our bishop lays hands upon you and prays for “daily increase in the Holy Spirit” to strengthen you for the calling of baptism (*Preface to Confirmation*).

In Scripture there is a rich theology that grounds the liturgical practice of the laying on of hands. Laying hands upon a person is a way of giving them a particular job or office (Numbers 27:18ff; Deuteronomy 34:9; Acts 6:6). In this sense the bishop solemnly enjoins all confirmands to carry out their worldly vocations to the glory of God, to fulfill their baptismal covenant (1 Cor. 10:31).

The laying on of hands is also closely associated in Scripture with blessing. For instance, Jacob blessed his grandsons Ephraim and Manasseh by laying hands on them (Gen. 48:13-20). In the New Testament, it is the blessing of the Holy Spirit that is imparted to newly baptized believers by the laying on hands (Acts 8:17-18; 19:5-6).

Confirmation draws these scriptural threads together in a single liturgical act, summoning confirmands to carry out their baptismal callings and empowering them to do it with the blessing and power of God. Confirmation is an act carried out by a Bishop. In the Anglican understanding, Bishops are the chief representatives of God’s people. They symbolize the unity possessed by the body of believers, and therefore when they visit the churches over which they preside they are the chief Celebrants of Baptism and the Eucharist. They are therefore also the officers of the church who administer this gift

of confirmation. All members of our congregation are encouraged to take the step of being confirmed, to receive a fuller measure of the Holy Spirit's power and blessing to fulfill their commission as Christ's disciples, to serve as his witnesses to the ends of the earth.

The Process

Beginning in 2019, our confirmation process will be an extended process involving **8 class sessions (4 in the spring and 4 in the fall)** exploring the history and theology of Anglicanism; an instructed Eucharist, where we unpack why we do what we do on Sunday morning; spiritual gifts and how they can be put to work at Ascension; vocational flourishing; spiritual disciplines; and how we live out our baptismal vows in the life of Ascension. These class sessions will be taught by the clergy at Ascension. Although these class sessions are primarily for those who are going through the confirmation process, they are all open to anyone who is interested in the topic.

The process will also involve **6 meetings** with a confirmation sponsor drawn from among the mature lay members of our congregation. Following Christ involves repentance, which is really a change of fundamental loyalties of our hearts and our lives. Becoming a disciple of Jesus therefore involves both a change of our basic desires and a change of behavior. We can see this change of loyalties in the renunciations and vows we take in the baptismal liturgy:

- Do you renounce the Devil and all the spiritual forces of wickedness that rebel against God? I renounce them.
- Do you renounce the empty promises and deadly deceits of this world which corrupt and destroy the creatures of God? I renounce them.
- Do you renounce the sinful desires of the flesh that draw you from the love of God? I renounce them.
- Do you turn to Jesus Christ and confess him as your Lord and Savior? I do.
- Do you joyfully receive the Christian Faith, as revealed in the Holy Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments? I do.
- Will you obediently keep God's holy will and commandments, and walk in them all the days of your life? I will, the Lord being my helper.

These meetings explore what we might call the 'pressure points' in the process of changing our loyalties to Christ, the places where we experience difficulties in giving our lives over to him. The meetings will focus on the meaning of the gospel; prayer; sex; money; power; and mission.

Those who wish to be confirmed at the end of this process will be confirmed by Bishop Grant LeMarquand on **Advent 2 which falls on December 8, 2019.**

The Class Sessions

For confirmands, attendance at each of these class sessions is required. Each individual class session is also open to anyone interested in the congregation. So, mark your calendars!

Wednesday classes 6:30 – 8:30pm
Childcare provided.

Spring Classes:

May 8:

Understanding Anglicanism (Part I)

Why be confirmed? From Jesus to the ACNA

May 15:

Understanding Anglicanism (Part II)

Prayer Book, Sacraments, Instructed Eucharist

May 22:

Understanding Ascension (Part I):

The Local Church and You

Ascension's Ethos

Ascension Ministries

Community Groups

Spiritual Gifts

May 28:

Understanding Ascension (Part II):

The Local Church and You

Honoring God in your vocations

Spirituality of Everyday Life

Fall Classes:

October 9:

Spiritual Disciplines (Part I):

History and Practice of the Daily Office

October 16:

Spiritual Disciplines (Part II):

History and Practice of Contemplative Prayer

October 23:

Spiritual Disciplines (Part III):

History and Practice of Spiritual Direction

October 30:

Understanding the Commitments of Confirmation and Membership

What commitments are you making in confirmation?

What commitments are you making in membership?

Tour of the nave and the facility

Q&A (ask anything!)



Will You Entertain Us?

CAYG (Church of Ascension Youth Group) is looking to organize a "Variety Show" to accompany their Lasagna Fundraiser on Saturday, May 4th. Can you sing, dance, tell a story or perform stand-up comedy? I can't wait to showcase all the various talents that our congregation will reveal! Imagine our parish hall full of appreciative friends and family, eating a hearty lasagna dinner and giving money towards our "Going the Distance" fund, that supports initiatives to help Ascension's youth and college-aged students transition to their next chapter in life as confident Christians in community.

If you would like to perform a 3 - 5 minute number OR if you would like to donate a lasagna for the dinner... Then please contact me (Alex) at alex.banfield.hicks@ascensionpittsburgh.org by April 4th.

Daily Prayer

CAYG's spring series is based around the Lord's Prayer and seeks to cultivate a community of confident Christians who pray daily for each other. This series completes our three-year cycle of thematic semesters, engaging these six questions:

DOCTRINE: What do we believe? **ETHICS:** How should we live?

BIBLE: How do we listen? **EVANGELISM:** How do we speak?

APOLOGETICS: How do we answer? **PRAYER:** How should we pray?

Do join us in praying that CAYG continues to grow, not just in numbers, but as faithful disciples prayerfully depending on Jesus at home and at school.

Middle School Youth Group: Fridays 6:30-8:30pm.

High School Youth Group: Sundays 6:00-8:30pm.

Thinking of daily bread, would you ever be able to cook a meal for the 12 or so Volunteers who serve on a Friday night? We eat as a team at 5:30pm but food can be brought the day before and we can reheat it. If you are willing, contact Alex. Thanks!



Daily Prayer

Venite: College Ministry

“ O come, let us sing to the Lord; let us make a joyful noise to the rock of our salvation! Let us come into his presence with thanksgiving; let us make a joyful noise to him with songs of Praise!” Psalm 95:1-2

The word 'Venite' is a Latin word meaning "come", specifically used as an invitation to prayer and worship. That is the invitation we are extending to college students through our CCO college ministry at Ascension—now formally called *Venite*. We desire to see college students come to know the power of prayer and worship in every area of their lives. These are not simply "spiritual practices" that are disconnected from everything else we do. They are attitudes and postures that inform and infuse all that we do and all that we are.

One way we encourage and spur on college students to live this out is through a weekly gathering where we sing together, study the Bible, and pray for one another and our world. (See picture of our first meeting of the semester.) This meeting is not just a "Christian huddle" where we come to hide or escape from what is going on in our lives. It is a place where students are built up and equipped to be agents of change and restoration on their campuses in those broken places. Because ... as college students are transformed by Christ, the world is transformed by Christ.

If you are a college student or you know a college student who could benefit from this type of community, contact Leah Hornfeck at leah.hornfeck@ascensionpittsburgh.org or Alex Banfield Hicks at alex.banfieldhicks@ascensionpittsburgh.org. We hope you'll come and join us on this mission!



Young Adult Ministry: True and Proper Worship

"I urge you, brothers and sisters, in view of God's mercy, to offer your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and pleasing to God—this is your true and proper worship." - Romans 12:1



CHURCH OF THE
ASCENSION

DINNER
AND
COMPLINE

Thursday
February 7th
6:30-8:30pm



BABA GHANOUSH
WITH
REV. FRANK & ANNE



It's so easy for young adults to fall into the trap of monotony. Day after day we follow our same schedules, do the same routines, see the same people, etc. We feel tired, empty, and disoriented. We lose sight of the bigger picture and we forget what we were made for. We forget that we are "living sacrifices," that we are to be holy and pleasing to God. When we live into who we were created to be, we are refreshed, enlivened, and at peace.

A goal of our young adult ministry at Ascension is to teach young adults how to live into the daily rhythms of grace that will allow us to live our lives as "true and proper worship". One of the ways we do this is through a monthly gathering called *Dinner & Compline* where we eat, pray, listen, and sing together about the specific season of life we are in. Join us for our February gathering on Thursday the 7th from 6:30-8:30pm in the Ascension Hunt Rooms. We will be hearing from Ascensionites who work in North Africa, Frank and Anne.

International Ministry

We have a thriving group of internationals coming for English over the winter and Bible studies being offered at various times. We officially started back the week of January 21st. If you would like to take an international to lunch at your home or participate in a short-term group study with internationals, let us know. Also, if you have an idea for a one-time class you would like to lead - like a workshop on your job, volunteering, pronunciation, cooking or knitting, please email LuAnn. For example, an Ascension member is leading a cooking class in February and another member is offering knitting in May.

Please pray for the "Introducing God" Workshop

This is being offered on Wednesdays for seven weeks from 6:30-8:00pm.

We would love to serve a hot snack for this Bible study.

If you could help by providing a snack or to volunteer to help please email LuAnn for more information at

PittsburghEnglish4U@gmail.com.



Owls Seniors Ministry

**Thursday, February 14th from 12:30 – 2:30pm
for lunch and this delightful talk.**

Abraham Lincoln served as the 16th president of the United States from 1861-1865. His nicknames include “Honest Abe,” “The Rail-Splitter” and the “Great Emancipator.” His rise from humble origins to his shocking assassination make his life both fascinating and distinctively human. He led our nation through the Civil War, preserving our Union with remarkable insight and character. Come hear a delightful and entertaining talk on one of our greatest Presidents by Jack Puglisi, an accomplished speaker whose study on this man brings an edge of wisdom, wit and humor into the mix.



This artistic rendering of Abe was created by our speaker, Jack Puglisi.

Join us Thursday, February 14th from 12:30 – 2:30pm for lunch and this delightful talk. There is a \$10 charge for lunch, but first-time friends are free! Parking restrictions will be lifted for people to park on the streets, and the Neville Street lot will be reserved for seniors. We will meet in the Hunt Rooms which are reached through the Neville Street entrance to the church. **Please RSVP to Ann Tefft** at 412-526-1107 or tefft.ann@gmail.com.

Security

ALICE Training: Saturday, February 16, 1-4pm

In an effort to enable a secure environment for all at Ascension, we will be providing an ALICE training on Saturday February 16, from 1-4pm. The training will cover the A.L.I.C.E. response (Alert, Lockdown, Inform, Counter, Evacuate) to a variety of crisis situations that could occur (but we hope never will!), specifically with the possibility of an armed intruder with an intent to harm in view. It is unfortunate that we need to have this conversation, but important that we do, so that we can be as prepared as possible should we find ourselves in one of these situations. It is also helpful for congregants to note that we have made several facility modifications with security concerns in mind and have plans for more.



The ALICE training will be held in the Education Wing and will focus on security in that area of the building; although we will also briefly discuss the Nave and how these skills can be applied to any offsite context. Anyone is welcome to attend regardless of your ministry area (ushers, music team, prayer team, parents, etc) and especially those who serve in the Education Wing are encouraged to make every effort to be there: Sunday School teachers, assistants, childcare workers, etc. It is free! Invite a friend!



Please note that we are NOT able to provide childcare during this training. Please make appropriate arrangements for your kids. This is for two reasons: 1) the training involves role playing scenarios which will include the nurseries. 2) the training involves all of the people who would normally work/volunteer in childcare. For more information, please contact Matt Ulrich at matt.ulrich@ascensionpittsburgh.org

Missions: Campus Ministry Support

In addition to all the work that Leah Hornfeck and Alex Banfield Hicks do to encourage and grow a thriving campus ministry, we have the pleasure of supporting several saints who work in campus ministry in different ways.

We have six additional people, pictured on the right, who worship at Ascension and are on staff with the *Coalition for Christian Outreach* (CCO): Jonny Cagwin, Bonnie Liefer, Tyler Marwood, Shelly Riemersma, Nicole Shirk and Ginger Weeber.

Robin Capcara works with *InterVarsity Christian Fellowship Faculty Ministry* at Carnegie Mellon, Pitt and Duquesne. She works to equip the Christian professors to be a redeeming influence at the university and reaches out with the love of Christ to non-believing professors.

Together, these dear people are working to see a generation of college students and staff transformed by the power of Jesus Christ and His gospel reaching the world for the glory of God. Ministry to college students, done in partnership with the local church, has taken on greater urgency. Churches from across the country have realized the need for direct ministry to college students – the next generation of leaders in the church. The CCO has begun to branch out from its beginnings in the tri-state area to a more national level from Boston, MA to Fresno, CA.

Prayer Requests:

- Pray for laborers for the harvest, specifically for more staff for open positions.
- Pray for Jubilee, a yearly gathering of the CCO much like Urbana, but geared towards helping students of all vocational callings to bring their faith and their love of God into their studies and then into their professions.
- Pray for students to hear the gospel and gain a vision for serving Christ in the world.
- Pray for student leaders who are holding to and boldly sharing their faith in Jesus Christ in an often hostile setting.
- Pray for more professors and staff to be open to a relationship with Jesus.
- Pray specifically for Jonny Cagwin, Bonnie Liefer, Tyler Marwood, Shelly Riemersma, Nicole Shirk, Ginger Weeber and Robin Capcara.



Jonny Cagwin
Staff Care & Discipleship
Coordinator and Campus
Minister to Carnegie Mellon
University



Bonnie Liefer
Vice President for Marketing
and Communications



Tyler Marwood
Marketing Coordinator



Shelly Riemersma
Staff Spiritual Director



Nicole Shirk
Executive Vice President
for Campus Ministry



Ginger Weeber
Gifts and Stewardship
Officer



INTERVARSITY
Robin Capcara
Works for Intersivity
Christian Fellowship
Faculty Ministry at
Carnegie Mellon, Pitt
and Duquesne



Agape Year

Part of Agape Year, a 'gap year' program headed up by Ascension's Nate and Erika Twichell, involves cross cultural ministry. The Agape Year interns were in Thailand at the same team that Ascension's team travelled to the same location in Chiang Mai. Hear what they have to say!

Greetings from team Agape Year in Chiang Mai, Thailand!

Tessa and Kieran are seeing God's kingdom come at St. Andrew's Center, Chaing Mai, in a variety of capacities. They get to teach EFL, live in community, embrace another culture, and grow in their understanding of the global church. Let's hear how their first couple of weeks went:

Kieran shares:

"Boy oh boy, I can't believe I'm finally here. The days leading up until coming to Thailand, I was kind of in disbelief that it was happening. It's still somewhat surreal being here, but at the same time, I feel settled in already. So much has happened in just the first few days. Right after getting off the plane, Tessa and I learned that we'll be teaching two extra times a week than we were planning to at a different location with different kids. That sort of set the tone for how crazy everything is going to be in Thailand. Lots of things just get thrown at you from all different directions, and we're learning how to roll with it. I'm particularly trying to work on not getting as upset by curve balls, and to not get as frustrated with myself when I don't do things right.

The people here are pretty amazing. Tessa and I are housed at St. Andrew's church (where we teach and attend service). The other teachers who stay at the church are all very polite and nice to live with so far. Everyone is polite, actually! That's a big part of the Thai culture. We've gotten to meet the church staff a couple of times in a small group, and they're all delightful as well. I've especially enjoyed getting to know Gerry (who you can see with us in some of the pictures), a Singaporean missionary who is our main leader here in Thailand. He's bursting with energy and the Holy Spirit, and I love him."

According to Tessa:

"My second class was yesterday (Wednesday night) and it was awesome! I feel like I'll say it a million times but I love my kids. They are enthusiastic and funny and even though we don't speak the same language we are figuring it out! It'll be a challenge but I'm grateful to have a class so willing to try. Today we walked around the city of Chiang Mai and we went into one of the temples. I was struck by how beautiful it was and the clear dedication and devotion that went into building it. It also made me very sad in a way that's hard to describe. I hope all the people that go to the temples to pray find God and his endless love and grace. I am eternally grateful for this experience and thank God every day that I get to be here and meet all these wonderful people."

Please continue to pray for Tessa, Kieran, Nate and our brothers and sisters at St. Andrew's Church Center in Chiang Mai. We ask that the world would know Christ by their love for one another.



An Invitation: Parish Prayer Series in Epiphany

The Gospel of Luke tells us, “Jesus sent his followers out to preach the Kingdom of God and to heal the sick.” (Luke 9:2) An impressive and possibly daunting mission!

Followers today too are sent out to preach the Gospel, yet often they do not feel equipped to respond to the second part of Jesus’ directive – “heal the sick.”

During Epiphanytide we will explore what it means to engage with our Lord in his mission of healing and wholeness. We will discover what it means to bring ourselves (and others) into the loving and compassionate presence of God for his care and healing.

The goal of this prayer series is to help us, as a community, live into one of our mission values, that of sharing Christ’s healing with a broken world. Whether or not this finds expression, for example, in official “prayer ministry,” in personal or corporate intercession, or simply in coming alongside another to pray and to care, these sessions aim to provide theological and practical foundations for the vital ministry of healing. Together we will focus on three different yet interwoven aspects of prayer: Emotional Healing, Physical Healing and Spiritual Healing.

This series will be team-taught by The Rev. Canons Jonathan & Andrea Millard and The Rt. Rev. Grant and Dr. Wendy LaMarquand. Each gathering will feature interactive talks, journal reflections, and large and small group discussions.

The gatherings are open to all, so come to one or come to all three. In keeping with the Epiphanytide ethos, come prepared to experience the ordinary side-by-side with the extraordinary, which are hallmarks of Jesus’ healing ministry.

Epiphanytide is the time between the end of the Twelve Days of Christmas and the beginning of Lent, on Ash Wednesday. Epiphany (January 6) is the day that commemorates the manifestation of Christ to the Magi, and the weeks that follow are marked by new and surprising beginnings.

Throughout Epiphanytide, the Gospel readings highlight episodes in Jesus’ ministry in seemingly “ordinary” circumstances (a baptism, a wedding, a sermon, etc.), however, these events contain an epiphany moment of sudden and striking realization that these are signs of the in-breaking Kingdom of God. Ordinary and extraordinary happen side-by-side.



Epiphany Prayer Series

When & Where:

Following the 11am worship service
(~12:30 — 2pm)
in the Parish Hall



Sunday, February 17:
Physical Healing



Sunday, March 17:
Spiritual Healing

A light lunch will be provided
A donation for lunch is appreciated

An Invitation: The Drama of Scripture

One brief way of summarizing the vocation of the church of Jesus Christ is to say that it is the community that lives by the story of Jesus. We believe, teach, and confess that Jesus Christ is the ‘desire of every nation’ (Hag 2:7) and that his story is also the story of Israel. In Christ, the covenant that God made with Israel is opened to the nations. As Lauren Winner puts it, in the church the nations are given ‘intimacy with the God of Israel’.

To live by this story, we have to know this story, which means we must know how to read the Scriptures which tell this story. The Scriptures set out before us a grand drama of God’s rescue and restoration of his good creation, which begins with Abraham and Israel and culminates in Christ and the church which lives the story of Christ.

In the first half of 2019, we will be exploring our story by reading together **Craig Bartholomew and Michael Goheen’s *The Drama of Scripture***. Jonathan Warren, our Associate Rector, will teach five sessions on the narrative arc of Scripture, corresponding to the ‘acts’ of the drama of redemption that Bartholomew and Goheen highlight.

This new year, make it a priority to immerse yourself in the Scriptures through the Daily Office or through the many Bible in One Year programs that are available online. Join us as well for this course as we explore how these texts fit together and how they proclaim the good news of the reconciliation of all things to God in Jesus Christ.



For more information contact Jonathan Warren at jonathan.warren@ascensionpittsburgh.org



Class Schedule

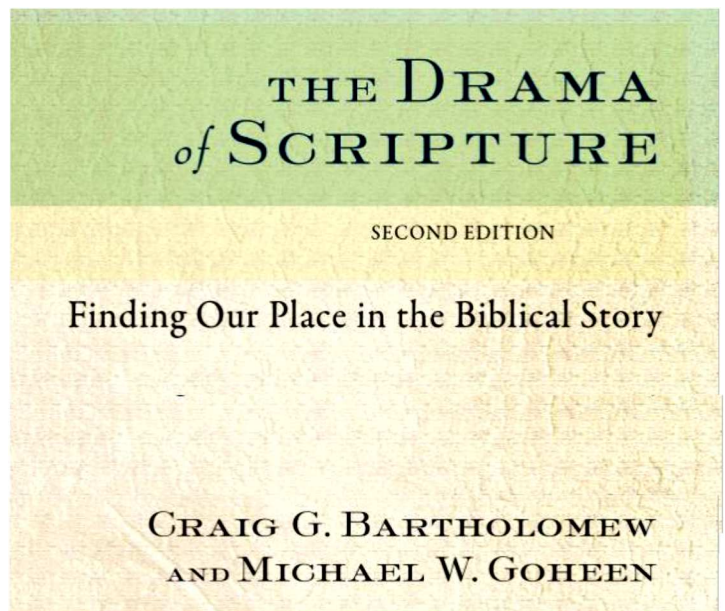
Saturday, February 16, 9:30 – 11am

Saturday, March 16, 9:30 – 11am

Saturday, April 13, 9:30 – 11am

Saturday, May 11, 9:30 – 11am

Saturday, June 8, 9:30 – 11am



Global Anglicanism: Thailand

A discernment team recently travelled to Thailand: Marilyn Chislaghi, Denise Cox, Jonathan & Andrea Millard, Joel Scandrett. The team joined Nate Twichell and the Agape year interns who had arrived a week earlier. Thailand is a country that is 99% Buddhist, but has a small but vibrant and growing Anglican presence.

Ascension's team was sent, at the invitation of the Diocese of Singapore, to examine the possibility of a partnership with the work being done through the Anglican Church of Thailand. The Anglican Church of Thailand began under the leadership of the Diocese of Singapore, which sent missionaries to Thailand and officially established an Anglican Deanery in Thailand in 1991. The Deanery has grown from a group of just 7 people at the first Thai Anglican Service in 1991 to 500+ members in 13 strategically planted congregations today.

Ascension's team experienced more than they imagined prior to leaving. The missional enthusiasm and vision for ministry of both Thai and Singaporian leaders was infectious. The team visited the Anglican Church Center (church, school, community center) in Chiang Mai and then travelled down to Bangkok to meet with those leading churches, campus ministries and social outreach programs in that huge city. The team made a pitstop in Singapore on the way home to have further conversation with church leaders.

The team was sent to discern the possibility of an ongoing partnership, and while Thailand is very far away from Pittsburgh (literally half way around the world!) the corporate sense of the team was that a partnership is something we want to pursue vigorously. While much discussion will need to take place, ideas generated included sending short-term teams to help Thai churches connect to their neighbors through youth sport camps or intensive language courses; short-term missionaries (5 – 6 weeks) to assist with language classes; clergy and congregational leaders to attend biannual meetings of Thai church leaders to assist with training in Scripture, Anglican essentials and topics in Pastoral Care (mental health and marital disintegration are problems in Thailand, just as they are in America).

In late April or May we will host an Eleven & Lunch event to update the congregation more fully. The team looks forward to showing slides of the trip and inform the congregation more about what was learned and what the path ahead might look like.



Thailand discernment team

For Your Calendar

EXPLORE ASCENSION

New Member Class



Saturday, February 23 from 9am – lunch

New to Ascension?
New to Anglicanism?
Interested in membership or
just want to find out more?

Join us for this informative morning taught by Ascension clergy and staff. We will begin with breakfast at 9am and conclude with lunch. Childcare will be provided. To register, fill in a bulletin insert or visit the News and Events page at www.ascensionpittsburgh.org.

Friday Lenten Series: Prayer

This year our Friday Lenten Series will take a different format. There will be no meal, but rather we will meet from 7 – 8:30pm for Prayer Workshops. All details will be available early March. For now, please mark your calendars for the following Fridays: March 22 and 29; April 5 and 12. Plan on joining us!!



HOW WE LOVE: A Marriage Enrichment Course



Marriage is hard and we need each other. This 6-session course is an opportunity to press into the challenges of our marriages together, and grow in learning how to love well. Designed by Milan and Kay Yerkovich, How We Love suggests that our relational styles are formed (for good or for ill) through our early life experiences. This course looks at how these styles impact our marriages and offers insights and practices to help shift unhealthy patterns and grow in intimacy. As the Yerkovich's put it: "For 14 years, our marriage was stuck in the same old frustrating patterns. When we looked at our first lessons in love from our families, we immediately recognized the unseen forces governing how we loved. For the first time, we understood the source of our frustrations and why we were stuck. Deep change was possible at last."

Course facilitators: Jim and Mari Stout

Course dates: 6 Friday evenings from May 3 – June 7

Time: 6:30 to 9pm

Childcare: Childcare will be provided for infants through 5th grade

Jubilee Professional 2019:

From Toil to Joy

Friday, February 22 from 11am to 6:30pm
Westin Convention Center, Pittsburgh

Jubilee Professional is a half-day conference to learn how to apply biblical truth to your everyday professional life. At Jubilee Professional, hundreds of people from a variety of sectors come together to grasp a greater vision for how their work contributes to the flourishing of their community, city, and world.

Each year Jubilee Professional features powerful talks from local and national speakers who walk the walk and have a story to tell. In fact, for ten years, the [Pittsburgh Leadership Foundation \(PLF\)](#) has partnered with the [CCO \(Coalition for Christian Outreach\)](#) to produce this unique event for men and women who are one, five, twenty or fifty years out of college.

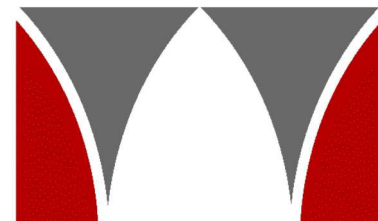
Just Work: From Toil to Joy

This year Jubilee Professional will address how we move from the toil of work to the joy of work restored.

Is work “just” work? Or could it be that is primary to God’s redemptive plan- that it is in and through our everyday work that justice is realized for the common good and the flourishing of all? If you believe that you are “just” a sales executive, “just a pastor” or “just an Uber Driver”, Jubilee Professional has a message of hope for you. If you have ever thought that discovering your calling is far away and impossible to realize, this year’s Jubilee Professional will deliver practical ways to make your daily work, from doing dishes to setting strategy for your team, from starting a business to volunteering at your child’s school, an integral part of God’s call on your life.

Registration

Visit <http://professional.jubileeconference.com>



**CHURCH OF THE
ASCENSION**

A Worshipping Community;
Equipping God’s People;
Sharing Christ’s Healing With a Broken World

Worship Services

Sunday

9:00 a.m.
Holy Eucharist

11:00 a.m.
Holy Eucharist

Wednesday

Noon
Holy Eucharist
in the Gordon Chapel

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The Ascent

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Ascent Deadline

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The publication will be
available March 9.