

LISTENING to God and to One Another

How do we hear from God? How do we hear from one another? These are important questions – always, and especially before making major decisions or embarking on new ventures. The short answer to these two questions is: “By listening!”

In the November edition of the Ascent, I shared some of our preliminary thinking about our buildings and the essential repairs that are needed and the possibilities of making exciting improvements. (See sidebar.)

Since then, work behind the scenes has continued. In March the new vestry went away for a day retreat to listen, to pray, and to begin brainstorming how God might be calling us. At its meeting in April, the vestry voted unanimously to move forward with a parish wide feasibility study concerning our buildings and much needed repairs and improvements.

The vestry has also spent time thinking and praying about the huge potential we have to reach out to our neighbors with the Good News of the Gospel and how we might enter new mission partnerships to further this. Since returning from my Sabbatical last year including time at GAFCON in Jerusalem and the January visioning trip to Thailand and Singapore, I am excited and convicted, like never before, by the needs and opportunities for mission to the ends of the earth – in our very neighborhood!

We have hired both the architectural and urban design firm, Rothschild Doyno Collaborative, and capital campaign consulting firm, James D. Klote and Associates, to undertake with us an initial feasibility study to help us through this next phase of discernment.

For us to listen well, I believe there are three things we need to do: Pause, Reflect, and Respond.

Pause:

We pause when we take time to be still, to be quiet and to pray. Mother Andrea has written (on page 3) more about how we can pray, reminding us that, in the words of Henri Nouwen, “*Prayer is first of all listening to God.*” Some of this pausing and listening can be done on our own. We need also to do this together. The invitation from the start is for us *together* to listen to God, seek his will, discern his calling, and then to do what he calls us to do.

What Needs to be Done?

We have known for more than ten years that serious and substantial work needs to be done to our buildings. Specifically, much of the stonework needs to be repointed, many of the window frames and some of the roofs need to be replaced or restored, and there are various other deferred maintenance issues in need of attention. This is a big project.

Additionally, anyone who has been to the Parish Hall between the services on a Sunday morning knows that our hall is full! This is a great “problem” to have, but it does need to be addressed.

How might we make the hall bigger? Is there a way to lessen or remove the congestion in the curved corridor that connects the hall to the Nave? How can we provide better restroom facilities? What else should we be doing to put all our facilities into the kind of shape they need to be to serve the mission and ministry we are being called to do?

These are some of the exciting questions that now need to be answered.

Reflect:

For four weeks, beginning May 12, the congregation is invited to listen together - to God and to one another. We will use our best critical faculties as we do this and we will have the help of professional consultants to help us engage in this process as we reflect on the needs and opportunities that are upon us as a congregation.

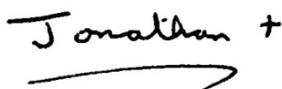
Our desire is that everyone who is a part of our church family will engage in this process. To that end, we are inviting every adult and interested young person to attend and participate in a one-hour meeting to hear a brief presentation, to give their feedback, and to listen to one another.

To enable everyone to engage in this we are setting up not one meeting but twelve. Don't panic, we are asking only that you attend one meeting! But the same presentation and opportunity to reflect together will be offered at each meeting. There will be gatherings on each of 4 Sundays (May 12, 19, 26 and June 2) and there will be additional meetings during the intervening weeks.

Respond:

The vestry will be meeting in early June prayerfully to consider how we are being called to respond to the needs, opportunities, feedback and all we will have been hearing and discerning together during this month of listening. At that meeting, the vestry will be asked to take a decision as to what we should do going forward.

Yours in Christ,



Jonathan N. Millard
(Rector)

Please plan
to attend a
Listening Group
in the month of
May or June
(one hour)

*Childcare
provided*



to God and to each other
**LISTENING
GROUPS**
Pause ❖ Reflect ❖ Respond

Sunday, May 12 after 9am service (New Catacombs)

Sunday, May 12 after 11am service
(New Catacombs; sandwiches provided)

Saturday, May 18 at Noon
following the Ascension Work Morning
(Hunt Rooms; pizza provided)

Sunday, May 19 after 9am service (New Catacombs)

Sunday, May 19 after 11am service
(New Catacombs; sandwiches provided)

Thursday, May 23 at 7pm (Hunt Rooms)

Sunday, May 26 after 11am service
(New Catacombs; sandwiches provided)

Tuesday, May 28 at 7pm (Hunt Rooms)

Thursday, May 30 at 7pm (Hunt Rooms)

Saturday, June 1 at 2pm (Hunt Rooms)

Sunday, June 2 after 9am service (New Catacombs)

Sunday, June 2 after 11am service
(New Catacombs; sandwiches provided)

An Invitation to Prayer

by Andrea Millard

What an exciting opportunity we have before us! For many years we have had to hold off on building repairs and maintenance, but that season of waiting is over. As we embark on a journey of seeking God together, we want to be good stewards of the gifts given us - people, buildings, location, global mission and more. Prayerful engagement is key to listening well to God and to one another as we seek input in refining our building needs and ministry priorities.

This invitation to prayer is for everyone who claims Ascension as their home parish. None is too young or old, too new or long-tenured to join in this season of prayerful discernment. While there will be more invitations to corporate prayer gatherings, we ask that you, your family, your community group and/or ministry team commit to regular prayer for Church of the Ascension during the month of May.

We invite you to use your own prayers or the one provided (below) from the ACNA 2019 Book of Common Prayer, "For Church Meetings."

Please pray *regularly* (daily, as you are able) for our Listening Group gatherings. You might also hold before the Lord those engaged in presenting and gathering information and that those participating in these meetings would share from a place of prayerful listening and with discerning hearts.

For Church Meetings

Almighty and everliving God, source of all wisdom and understanding, be present with those who take counsel [*in the Church of the Ascension Listening Groups*] for the renewal and mission of your Church.

Teach us in all things to seek first your honor and glory.

Guide us to perceive what is right, and grant us both the courage to pursue it and the grace to accomplish it; through Jesus Christ our Lord.

Amen.

Listening to God

*"Prayer is
first of all
listening to God.*

It's openness.

*God is always speaking;
he's always doing
something.*

*Prayer is
to enter into that activity...*

*Convert your thoughts
into prayer.*

*As we are involved
in unceasing thinking,
so we are called to
unceasing prayer.*

*The difference
is NOT that prayer
is thinking about
other things, but that
prayer is
thinking in dialogue...
a conversation
with God."*

~ Henri Nouwen



*The Rev. Canon Andrea Millard
Director of Prayer Ministry*

Celebration of MINISTRY as Jeanne Kohn Retires

As many of you know, earlier this year Jeanne Kohn announced her retirement effective this summer. As I shared at our annual meeting, Jeanne's last Sunday as Director of Music Ministries will be on Pentecost, June 9. After having a very well earned two-month break, Jeanne will be helping us through the transition in leadership by serving as part-time organist and choir director for one more year.

We will be giving thanks for Jeanne and celebrating her extraordinary ministry at Ascension spanning more than 26 years at our combined service and BBQ on the lawn on June 9.

Jeanne Kohn has served in music ministry for over 40 years in numerous churches and denominations. Jeanne holds a Bachelor of Arts in Music from Connecticut College and a Master's in Organ Performance from the New England Conservatory. In October 2005, Jeanne received an Honorary degree of Doctor of Music from Nashotah House Seminary.

The blended musical content in our services that we now take for granted at Ascension was introduced by Jeanne during my predecessor's time beginning in 1994. At that time Jeanne founded Resounding Grace, which up until last year led so much of our contemporary worship.

I am deeply grateful for Jeanne's leadership, prayerfulness, and significant abilities that she has shared with us these past many years. While playing the organ and leading the choir have been two important aspects of her ministry, Jeanne has done so much more besides, including mentoring many young and upcoming musicians, providing pastoral care to the 80 or so folks involved in this ministry, serving as a spiritual director, and having a significant role in envisioning, planning and executing so many of our weekly, seasonal, and special worship services at Ascension. Few rectors in the country have been so fortunate as I and my predecessor, Doug McGlynn, to have had such a loyal and faithful servant as Jeanne.

As we say thank you to Jeanne, I also want to recognize and thank her husband Andy and son, Lex - who are also both highly accomplished musicians who have played, sang, conducted, and written music for our music program at Ascension. I am so delighted that this remarkable family will continue to be among us in our church family.



Welcome to Chris & Elise Massa

Whenever you have a change of leadership like this there are inevitably certain anxieties. Will the entire music program change? Will we continue to have an excellent range of music including choral, traditional hymnody, classical as well as contemporary music? And the answer is a clear YES, we will absolutely be continuing the great musical traditions that are so much a part of our identity in our corporate worship.

To that end, I am delighted to share here, as I announced at the annual meeting, the appointment of Chris Massa who will succeed Jeanne this summer – with a new job title: “Director of Music and Worship Arts”. Additionally, Elise Massa is to become “Assistant Director of Music and Worship Arts.” (Chris will be working ¾ time and Elise ¼ time.) The change in job title is to reflect the long tradition of incorporating the arts into our corporate worship. This is something we are excited to see develop further in the years ahead.

While many of us know Chris primarily through his and Elise’s leadership of our contemporary music, what you may not know is that Chris has a music degree in which his main field of study was music composition and percussion. Chris is also a classical music composer and arranger and his choral music has been performed throughout the US as well as in Europe. Chris has further been featured as a guest conductor with instrumental ensembles and choirs in schools and churches. Chris has worked with and written for both student and professional choirs, including Voces Solis (a professional chamber choir in the Pittsburgh area) and the Pittsburgh Girls’ Choir. Some of you also got to hear his first symphony last year.

Elise’s training includes classical voice, musical theater, classical and jazz piano, and cello. Her passions in arts ministry include ecumenical and multicultural worship and championing artists from within the local church in the gifts bestowed on them by the Creator.

In addition to her continued leadership in the Ascension Songwriters Collaborative, Elise’s primary role as assistant will be as vocal leader for our contemporary music both as an up-front singer but also with the role of empowering other vocal leaders.

Please pray for Jeanne in this season of her ministry and for Chris and Elise as they prepare to take over the reins, and for all those who give so much as they serve in this area of ministry at Ascension. After Jeanne fully retires in 2020, we will be appointing a part-time organist.

Yours in Christ,

Jonathan +

Jonathan N. Millard
(Rector)





Letter from a Visitor

Ascension clergy and staff received this letter from Esther Goetz, a sometimes visitor to Church of the Ascension, on Palm Sunday, April 14th.

It was such an encouragement that we are sharing it with the congregation.

Esther is a wife to one, a mom to four almost completely grown children, and a “Meema” to one. Her passion is to bring hope and healing (with a little humor) to all. She is a published author, a podcast host, the coordinator for marriage mentoring of a large church along with her husband, a speaker and has been leading women’s groups for 25+ years. She understands that she is a beautiful mess and along with the heart of her kind, gracious and loving God and the help of her fellow sojourners, all will be well. You can read more at www.dollymamanj.com.



Dear Church of the Ascension (I Have Some Confessions to Make),

*“We work out our faith with these other broken men and women around us in the pews.”
- Tish Harrison Warren*

Dear Church of the Ascension,

I have visited your church two times. My husband and I live in New Jersey, but he works in Pittsburgh three days a week and has an apartment in the Strip District, not very far from you. About once a month, I make the reverse commute and we spend the weekend in Pittsburgh, a city I have come to love and enjoy beyond what I thought possible.

It’s on these weekends that we have walked through your bright red door, been greeted by your people, sat in your pews, listened to your choir, watched your children gather at the feet of your rectors, opened the scriptures, kneeled in prayer and shared bread and wine. It’s on these weekends that we have been outsiders peeking in on how you navigate this complex world of “church” in the new millennium.

Today, I have some confessions to make to you this Sunday morning, a day where I will be entering into the doors of another church, one where my view is from the inside out, not the outside in, one where we’ve loved and served for many years, one that is also maneuvering the mosaic of “church” in 2019. Back to my confessions.

Today, I confess that I only visited your church because I was mildly obsessed with Tish Harrison Warren, having soaked up her book, *Liturgy of the Ordinary*, not only once at a cursory level, but in depth with my women’s group. When I found out that she had moved to Pittsburgh and was a writer in residence only a mile away from my husband’s apartment, I was determined to visit you. I felt a little like the paparazzi, as I recorded her talk with the children, received communion from her and talked her ear off as she was greeting parishioners. It was not my finest moment, but as she reminds me in her book, we are all “limping to redemption,” and I am included in the “all.”

Today, I confess that something changed inside of me that first day. I wanted to come back. Not just because of Tish, although her talks that day fed my soul the love that it so longed for, but because as I watched and wondered about this community that “practiced” very differently than what I am used to, it seemed kind and gracious, filled with love for those on the inside and those on the outside (me included), the kind of love Jesus talks about every chance He gets.

Today, I confess that I came back with my husband, this time my motivation not to see Tish (I didn’t even see her that day), but to be filled again with this

OWLS: Seniors Ministry

Thursday, May 9 from 12:30 – 2:30pm

It's Welsh Day
at OWLS!

We are
delighted
to have

**Dr. Shirley
Kilpatrick,**

Ascension
member

and Professor

of Literature at Geneva College, as our featured speaker. She recently returned from one of her many trips to Wales and she writes, "As many of you know, the Welsh tradition has become central to Mother Ann Paton's spiritual walk. Thanks to her, that tradition has become important to me as well. I think it can nourish you. So come for a time of celebration together, drawing on the work of the Welsh bards. And if you know anything about the Welsh, you know there will be singing!"

Join us from 12:30 -2:30pm for a delicious lunch. OWLS meetings take place on the second Thursday of each month in the Hunt Room. (Parking restrictions will be lifted for people to park on the streets and the Neville Street lot will be reserved for OWLS only.) There is a \$10 charge for lunch, but first-time friends are free! Please RSVP to Ann Tefft at 412-526-1107 or tefft.ann@gmail.com.



love you have to share. I confess that as I sat there, tears welled in my eyes as the message of God's love for me was communicated from beginning to end, almost as if it was a calculated move on your part. Here is just a glimpse of the words that leapt from the white booklet and the hymnal I held in my hands:

We started here...

"O love that will not let me go, I rest my weary soul in thee."

"Come down, O Love Divine, seek thou this soul of mine."

*"What wondrous love is this, O my soul, O my soul,
What wondrous love is this that caused the Lord of bliss
to lay aside His crown for my soul, for my soul,
to lay aside His crown for my soul."*

"Jesu, my love, my joy, my rest, Thy perfect love close in my breast..."

The middle was filled with this:

*"There's a wideness in God's mercy like the wideness of the sea;
there's a kindness in his justice, which is more than liberty.
There is welcome for the sinner, and more graces for the good;
there is mercy with the Savior; there is healing in his blood."*

And we ended here...

*"O the deep, deep love of Jesus, vast, unmeasured, boundless, free!
Rolling as a mighty ocean in its fullness over me!
Underneath me, all around me, is the current of Thy love
Leading onward, leading homeward to Thy glorious rest above!"*

Whether it was deliberately planned by your leadership, God knew what I needed that day, my heart was more open to receiving the love and goodness of God, or ALL of those in sweet combination, my "outsider" self felt beautifully connected to you and your people, and especially to the loving heart of God.

Today, my last confession is one of thanks to you. Thank you for being a beacon in the middle of my beloved adopted city of Pittsburgh. Thank you for giving this outsider a place of belonging. Tish reminds me in her book that "God loves and delights in the people in the pews around me and dares me to find beauty in them." I have found the beauty in you. Your beauty is one that has given me inspiration for my inquisitive mind, daring hope as an anchor for my soul, but most of all, deep, deep love for my longing heart, a beautiful and firm foundation that I carry with me into this Holy Week ahead. Thank you. We shout HOSANNA ("Come Save Us!") together today!

Godspeed, Church of the Ascension! I will be coming through your red doors again soon!

- Esther Goetz



Dan Dupee, author of *It's Not Too Late*, and chairman of the board of the Coalition for Christian Outreach is joining us for dinner and will be our guest speaker.

When: Saturday May 4th, 6:30-8pm

Where: Ascension's Parish Hall

Cost: \$10 per plate. Cash or Check

[payable to Ascension, memo: GTD]

Childcare: Kids eat with us ... then head to the Hunt Rooms from 7-8pm.

What kind of food do we need to help us run with perseverance the race set out before us? That is the question that around 40,000 runners will be asking on Saturday May 4th, as they anticipate Sunday's big race, the annual Pittsburgh Marathon.

What kind of community will help us Christians run with perseverance the race set out before us? That is the question we will be asking over dinner in the Parish Hall on Saturday May 4th, after our 5pm Saturday service of Holy Eucharist.

What is the role of parents, friends, family, youth group, college ministries and the wider church body? And what can we do to help our young people in those particularly challenging parts of the Christian race; the transitions to high school, to college and beyond?

I am very thankful that Dan Dupee, author of *It's Not Too Late*, and chairman of the board of the Coalition for Christian Outreach is joining us for dinner and will be our guest speaker. I am also very thankful for those graduating out of middle school, and graduating out of high school, who also are preparing to present!

This dinner is also a fundraiser for Ascension's youth, college and young adult ministries. Established last year, our **'Going the Distance'** fund resources initiatives that support our youth through these transitions. For example, this year we have been enjoying a monthly 'senior church tour'. Leah Hornfeck and I have been taking our high school seniors to a different local church once a month, to enjoy a range of worship services before discussing our experiences over lunch. Our hope is that those who then leave Pittsburgh for their studies or jobs are more confident and competent at finding, visiting and getting connected at a new church. Money from the GTD fund pays for lunch!

So please join us in the Parish Hall after the Saturday May 4th service of Holy Communion for a delicious lasagna dinner! We will be providing all the food (no need to send in Lasagna this year) but we welcome your donations.

Special Needs Ministry

Sunday Morning WINGS Class

We need another teacher as well as more 'buddies' for our Sunday morning class for special need teens and adults. WINGS class runs concurrent with the 9am service. Teachers serve on a rotation, approximately one week out of every 4 or 5. If you want to talk more about this opportunity to serve, please contact Keira Fuener (email below).



Keira Fuener

Capernaum Friends Club – this month a program for Caregivers as well

Saturday, May 11 at 2pm

Our next Capernaum Friends Club meeting is Saturday, May 11 from 2 – 4pm. Anyone is welcome to join us, even if you are just curious about what we do. If you know a family with a special need teen or young adult, please let them know about us! Our doors are open wide! For more information, please reach out to Keira at keirafuener@gmail.com.

At our May meeting, parents and caregivers of our special need friends are invited to a program to be led by representatives of Hope Grows, an organization committed to the wellness of caregivers in mind, body and spirit. Caregivers will meet in a separate room while the regular Capernaum Club takes place in the New Catacombs.

A 'Christina Story' by Dana Kaasik

We are sad to say goodbye to Dana Kaasik, who co-led our Special Needs Ministry with Christina Carlucci for many years. Dana and her husband are moving to California at the end of April. Dana reflects on her great friend, Christina Carlucci, who passed away at the end of January.

Christina was like the glow of a sunrise that envelops everything in its warmth and helps you to see the beauty of the world around you - both near and far - that was hidden in darkness moments before. Christina had a way of seeing beauty in places that others couldn't. Her love and acceptance made people feel seen and loved just as they are. As someone who always has a plan before I take action, Christina taught me that sometimes you need to decide to make the world a better place and figure out the details along the way. An example of this is when she suggested special needs friends take up the offering on Sundays. I immediately thought of the difficulties in coordinating this and how this would cut into our short time together for WINGS Sunday school. But while I was focused on the barriers, Christina could only see the impact this would have on the congregation and our Friends - something that took me months to see. Because of Christina, our Friends look forward to taking up the offering more than anything else. **Being a part of the service makes them feel like a seen and appreciated part of the Church. The feeling of being seen and appreciated just the way you are is a gift Christina gave to everyone she encountered.** I cannot count the number of times members of the congregation have shared how meaningful it is for them to see our Friends take up the offering - a visible reminder that each of us brings to God different strengths and weaknesses, and God graciously and lovingly accepts what we bring to Him to use for His glory. Did He ever use Christina! I can't wait to feel her embrace once again in the resurrection.



Dana Kaasik



Mother's Day (May 12)
through **Father's Day (June 16)**.

Children's Ministry Baby Bottle Campaign

Each year Ascension's Children's Ministry encourages the support of our local pregnancy center at Women's Choice Network. The Baby Bottle Campaign is a simple and creative way for us to partner in mission with this organization.



The Baby Bottle Campaign will run from Mother's Day (May 12) to Father's Day (June 16). Look for the table and display in the Parish Hall on **May 12 and 19** to pick up your baby bottles! Fill your bottles with cash, coins, and checks and return them by June 16.

WCN's medical clinics offer free pregnancy tests, STD testing and treatment, sonograms, medical consultations, and caring, confidential, and non-judgmental options counseling. When abortion vulnerable women come to one of the four centers in the Pittsburgh area and see their sonogram, 85% will choose life! Clients are encouraged to enroll in "Life Support," an ongoing accountability program that enables families to earn while they learn. Childbirth, parenting classes, and life skill programs allow clients to earn clothing, furnishings, formula, and other items.

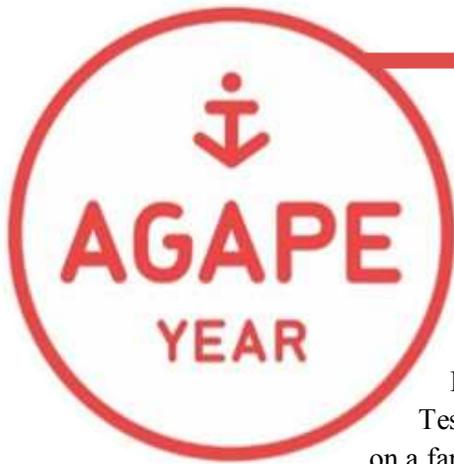
Services also include post-abortion care and education on abstinence and healthy relationships. WCN works with schools, churches, and community groups to share the benefits of sexual abstinence and the message of the Sanctity of Human Life.

All of these services are offered under the direction of a Professional Medical Staff and are provided at no charge to clients because of generous gifts from individuals and churches. WCN is not funded by any state or federal dollars. They rely on local partners to help give hope to a new generation.

Meg Sateia is a member at Ascension who volunteers at the Northside center as a Client Advocate doing options counseling and facilitating Life Support classes. She says, "I love that my title includes the word 'advocate' because it makes me think of how Jesus was an advocate for people in vulnerable positions. That is what I get to do through this ministry. I am in a unique position to meet people in the midst of a crisis, provide a listening ear, and offer tangible support they need and the hope of the Gospel." Talk to Meg (meg.sateia@gmail.com) if you'd like to hear more about Women's Choice Network or visit mypregnancycenter.org. You may also contact Ascension Director of Children's Ministry, Matt Ulrich, at matt.ulrich@ascensionpittsburgh.org. Thanks!



Meg Sateia with her husband Josh and their children Isabella and Wesley



On May 5th, our two Agape Year Fellows from this year, Tessa and Kieran, will pack up and move back to their respective homes in Massachusetts and Florida. Since coming to Pittsburgh this past September, Tessa and Kieran have milked cows on a farm in Ohio, worshipped in



Kieran

Tessa

Anglican churches in 5 different US states and 2 continents. They lived in Thailand for close to 2 months, sharing God's love in a country where less than 1% of the population knows the Good News of Jesus Christ. They've eaten cheese steaks at Peppi's, doughnuts in Rhode Island, fried crickets in Thailand, and been introduced to the local delicacies of Sheetz. They logged hours and hours in rental vans and cars, hours and hours in airplanes, they rode bicycles, they rode the T, they saw Chiang Mai from the back of a motor scooter and the back of a pickup truck. These experiences were incredibly formative and will shape the arc of their lives forever.

And Kieran and Tessa worshipped in your midst. Every Sunday this past fall they walked through our red doors to worship and serve with a body that is familiar to us, but new to them. As part of our year they served with Ascension's International Ministry, helping with the ESL classes. They got to know our youth by serving with both middle and high school youth groups. They grew with the college group on Tuesday nights. And they got to know you at Laurelville and in line for bagels and coffee in the parish hall.

When I asked Tessa and Kieran what worshipping at Ascension meant to them they rattled off a list of names of people they'd gotten to know. They reveled in the late nights at Laurelville and Jubilee, the rides home from Ascensionites who live on the Northside, the people who asked them hard questions about their experience in Thailand. And they talked about the worship. One of them shared that, "worshipping at Ascension has made me love liturgy again; the steps of it, the rhythm, the prayers, the songs."

So thank you for being not just a home church, but a home for Kieran and Tessa these past 8 months. And thank you for being a home for Erika and me. One of our Fellows shared how impactful it was to see Erika and I carry our newborn twins up for Eucharist on Palm Sunday. It means a lot for us to call Ascension home and to be missionaries sent from this special place.

Upcoming ways to serve your community with Agape Year:

- Daily Bread homeless lunch and Bible study Tuesday afternoons in May
- Open Hand Saturday Workday May 11th
- Street Outreach with Living Ministry May 18th
- Contact Nate at 724-787-7586 or natetwiche11@hotmail.com with any questions.



Kieran

Ascension participants in Jubilee 2019

Tessa

Mission Partnership

- with the Diocese of Singapore and the Anglican Church of Thailand

Ascension hopes to grow a deep partnership with our brothers and sisters in the Diocese of Singapore and the Anglican Church of Thailand, and with that in mind, over the course of the next few months introductions will be made to many of the people and ministries that our team had the opportunity to visit this past January. Members of Ascension's team that visited Thailand /Singapore in January include Marilyn Chislaghi, Denise Cox, Andrea and Jonathan Millard, and Joel Scandrett.



The following article, written by the Rev. Ching Wah Yee, Dean of Thailand, is reprinted with the permission of the Society of Anglican Missionaries and Senders.

The South East Asia Mission Challenge

South East Asia is tucked between two ancient cultures with 5000 years of civilization. These two giants have more than 40% of the world's population. Yet, South East Asia is only a corner between these giants but still home to 600 million people. Of these 600 million people, the Anglican Province of South East Asia, which does not include the Philippines and Myanmar, covers a population of 422 million people.

Singapore is a dot in this corner with only 5 million people. Most of us are migrants who found a place of refuge on the 250 square mile island. Our Diocese has a total membership of 20,000 people in 27 parishes. How does a 20,000 member church carry the mandate of missions to countries with 422 million people? To make matters more challenging, each of the 6 deaneries under the covering of the Diocese of Singapore (Laos, Cambodia, Thailand, Vietnam, Nepal, Indonesia) has a unique language and culture. In the last 20 years the first mission pioneers have been sent from Singapore. But we cannot complete this mission alone. We need your partnership.

U.S. missionaries are still needed, but the platform today is teaching English. The 1997 financial meltdown tamed the rising tigers in South East Asia. The reality of globalization woke the countries up from their nationalistic dreams. Prior to the financial crisis, speaking English was seen as betraying your own national identity. But today, English is the necessary passport to relate to the world. In South East Asia, English language centers are doing a brisk business.

When you come to South East Asia, you are coming to a part of the world where less than 1% of the population is Christian. You are coming to a part of the world where the structure in society will not bring equality and justice unless the gospel impacts the land, where societal values have insufficient depth to withstand the godless currents pushed by the media.

You are coming to a part of the world where we in the Diocese of Singapore and in the Province of South East Asia are still laying the foundation for missions. Some things are working but most things are a work in progress. We are not unaware of the cross-cultural challenges as we seek your partnership in mission. It is the grace of God for the glory of God that a multi-cultural team can work together in a third-culture setting for the sake of the gospel. May our eyes be focused on the mission together, giving grace to each other for the imperfection we may encounter, so that when our Master says our work is done, all will declare: "Surely God is in our midst, for this work cannot be done without God."

*We are delighted to announce that the Rev. Ching Wah Yee will be our speaker at this fall's **Parish Retreat**, to be held at Laurelville Mennonite Church Center from October 4 – 6.*

MISSIONS: Kairos Prison Ministry

By Ron and Judy Yadrick

"I was in prison and you visited me." Matthew 25:36



kairosprisonministry.org

Kairos Prison Ministry has been in State Correctional Institution (SCI) Greene, near Waynesburg, PA for the past 12 years. There are usually two Kairos weekends a year. The team will often witness a transformation in these men over the four-day weekend. Here are the results from our weekend in March:



A group picture of the volunteers who participated in Kairos #24

- There were **several** decisions for Christ (including a Wiccan follower who spent 2 1/2 years in solitary confinement).
- There were renewed commitments, including a former Muslim, who was baptized a week later!
- Genuine discovery happened! One resident exclaimed that his experience was "A Light in the Darkness!"
- A Community of Christian fellowship was established for these men.

Among the residents who have come to Christ in previous Kairos weekends there are "lifers," gang members, and one fallen Pastor (who lost all hope of ever reconciling his relationship with Christ). These men gather at the weekend closing ceremony to welcome the K24 residents into the community of faith. The testimonies of discovering and often rediscovering the transforming love of Jesus Christ increase. Please pray that these men will take permanent hold of these gifts from God.

Some of the weekend volunteers return the Saturday after the weekend for an Instructional Reunion with the residents. The focus here is to teach and practice good listening and communication skills. These are helpful skills that benefit in their participation in weekly Friday night "Prayer & Share" follow-up gatherings.

Pastor Bill, a member of the volunteer team, is a pastor of a church in Waynesburg who missed the Weekend due to a death in his family. He goes inside SCI Greene Sunday nights to conduct "40 Days of Purpose." He shared the following with the team:

"I was thinking about you guys yesterday as you conducted the Instructional Reunion, and then again tonight. Our 40 Days team was able to attend chapel tonight, and 12 guys were baptized, 4 of whom attended the Kairos Weekend. The first three spoke about the Lord's working in their lives; the fourth said he had been waiting 46 years for this day to come! It was a moving experience for all (and a cold one - evidently the water was pretty frigid!)"

- Pastor Bill

We genuinely and sincerely thank you for your prayer support. Gratitude, Glory, Honor and Victory go to Our Lord.

To learn more please contact Ron or Judy Yadrick
ron.yadrick@gmail.com (412-720-5253) or yadrick.judy@gmail.com (412-736-8282)

NOTE: Kairos Outside Western PA (KOWPA), is an equal partner sister ministry (with corresponding witness) that is an outreach to women of incarcerated men. This weekend format is patterned like the Kairos Inside (as "inside" the prison) and takes place in the city of Pittsburgh. The weekend is traditionally scheduled at the end of October. If interested in learning more about this ministry please contact Ascensionite Jackie McKee mckeejk@gmail.com or 724-991-9843.

For Your Calendar

The Drama of Scripture



Saturday, May 11 from 9:30 – 11am in the Hunt Rooms

In the first half of 2019, we are exploring our Christian story by reading together Craig Bartholomew and Michael Goheen’s *The Drama of Scripture*. Jonathan Warren, our Associate Rector, is teaching several sessions between January and June on the narrative arc of Scripture, corresponding to the six ‘acts’ of the drama of redemption that Bartholomew and Goheen highlight. If you haven’t come to the first couple sessions, it is OK to join the class now. All sessions are available on the “Sermon” page of our website.

Parish Workday

**Saturday, May 18
from 8:30am through Noon**

Join a crew doing some spring cleanup work.

All skill levels needed! To find out more,

email karen.gowdy@ascensionpittsburgh.org.

(A “Listening Group” will be held at noon, pizza provided.)



Four Classes to better understand the ‘Anglican Way’ - May and June of 2019

The Wednesday classes listed below will be held from 6:30 – 8:30pm with childcare provided. The classes are open to all and will be taught by Associate Rector, Jonathan Warren. Participants are welcome to pick and choose any that interest them. These 4 classes are compulsory for any who wish to be confirmed at Ascension. For an article on Ascension’s confirmation process, see the February Ascent, available at www.ascensionpittsburgh.org.



Explore Anglicanism

May 22: Understanding Anglicanism (Part I)

This class will outline the nature of confirmation in the Anglican church and will do a quick run through of Anglican history from Jesus to the formation of the Anglican Church in North America.

May 29: Understanding Anglicanism (Part II)

We will take a closer look at the Prayer Book and Sacraments of the Anglican Church. The class will include an Instructed Eucharist.

June 5: Understanding Ascension (Part I): The Local Church and You

This class will look at Ascension’s Ethos - Evangelical, Catholic, Reformed, Charismatic, Hospitable. We will also examine Ascension Ministries and Community Groups and offer participants a Spiritual Gifts inventory.

June 12: Understanding Ascension (Part II): The Local Church and You

We will examine how we honor God in our Vocations and will also examine a Spirituality of Everyday Life.

An Afternoon with Ascension Missionary Jewel Anita Hendrix

Sunday, May 26 from 3 – 5pm

At the home of Roger and Amy Maddalena
418 Dickson Ave, Pittsburgh PA 15202

Tea and snacks provided

Come and hear an update from Jewel about her work in New Zealand with *Reconciled World* and *Youth With a Mission* (see the March Ascent at www.ascensionpittsburgh.org for a newsy article on Jewel's work abroad)

Jewel Anita Hendrix



An Evening with Frank and Anne

Friday, June 14 from 7 – 8:30pm



Join Frank and Anne on this late spring evening. We'll meet in the Parish Hall for coffee and dessert and celebrate the ongoing ministry of Frank and Anne.

Frank will speak on the topic of **The Demise of Christian Carthage**
What happened to the once great church of North Africa and what can it teach us about missions today?

During the third and fourth centuries few places in the world had a Christian community as large, influential, or devout as the Roman province of Africa and its capital city Carthage. It enjoyed a reputation for purity, passion, and martyrdom; it produced great thinkers such as Tertullian, Cyprian, and Augustine. Today, however, there is no remnant of this once devout community other than archeological ruins that have been abandoned for more than one thousand years. What happened to this church? What role did Islamic expansion play in its disappearance (the answer may surprise you)? The Rev. Frank, along with his wife Anne, have served God in North Africa for nearly 18 years living incarnationally among North African Arabs in a country that is effectively entirely Muslim. Over the years Frank has led tours of the ancient ruins of Carthage for hundreds of people exploring the dynamic history of that church and its unfortunate demise.

Explore Ascension

Saturday, June 15 from 9am – lunch

New to Ascension?

New to Anglicanism?

Interested in membership?

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.





Marathon Weekend: Saturday Worship on 5/4 at 5

On the weekend of the Pittsburgh Marathon we cancel all Sunday services and gather for worship at 5pm on Saturday instead. Please plan to join us then and enjoy supporting the City of Pittsburgh on Marathon Sunday!

After our Saturday worship service, the youth are hosting a Lasagna Dinner fundraiser. Plan to come and ‘carb up’ prior to the race. The money raised will go toward a new ‘Going the Distance’ Fund. This fund will resource a range of initiatives that support youth and emerging adults through the faith-challenging transitions of school, college and beyond. Come to the dinner to find out more!

Are you running the race? Running for a non-profit?

If you are running the marathon (full marathon, half marathon, relay), we’d love for you to come up for prayer at the time of the Peace on May 4th. We’ll pray for you and any non-profits you may be running in support of.

Marathon Overnight

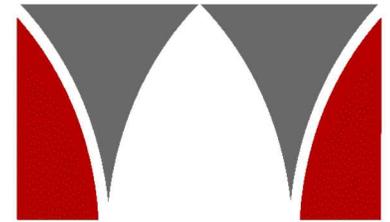
After dinner many from the middle and high school youth groups will stay for evening programming, before ‘sleeping’ overnight at church and waking bright and early to serve at an official Marathon Fluid Station outside WQED, distributing water and Gatorade to the passing runners.

Lasagna Dinner Youth Fundraiser

Plan to come!

Plan to bring a check!

Plan on great table conversation!



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 June 2.