



The Ascendant

A Newsletter by and for Members and Friends of Church of the Ascension

March 2016

Candidates' Forum

The Candidates' Forum will take place on the Sunday before the Annual Meeting, March 6 at 10:15 a.m. in the Undercroft Commons. Candidates for Vestry and Delegates will field questions and discuss their vision for Ascension.



Annual Meeting

Our annual parish meeting will take place at 12:30 p.m. on Sunday, March 13 in the Undercroft Commons. We'll begin with a potluck lunch.

Our primary business will be to elect new Vestry members and Convention Delegates and to have a time for shared reflection on the ministry and mission of Ascension.

Daylight Saving Time Begins Sunday, March 13



Time to Spring Ahead

Remember to set your clocks forward one hour before you go to bed on Saturday, March 12.

Let us Pray

Q. What is prayer?

A. Prayer is responding to God, by thought and by deeds, with or without words.
- *Book of Common Prayer*, p. 856 (from the Catechism)

"Pray without ceasing..." - 1 Thessalonians 5:17

For the most part wherever I have journeyed as a church member or clergy type I found people who liked to pray out loud and those who didn't. Priests fall into these two camps, too. Some of us say grace out loud in restaurants, for example. Others think this seems too much like the Pharisees as portrayed by Jesus in Matthew 6. Praying in public is just too pious and showy and meant for the "family" of God.

Some people think committee meetings ought to begin with prayer. Actually, most everybody does, although there are some who forget to do this. When that happens someone invariably believes that the meeting lacked a spiritual component.

I have sympathy with both points of view. I pray out loud in restaurants before meals, sometimes. Other times I let my mindfulness about and gratitude for the meal (and my companions) be the prayer.

Written and spoken prayers are one way to pray. I have often compared the Book of Common Prayer to "training wheels" on a child's bicycle. Using words penned by people of prayer who write well - words formed and informed by Scripture - the prayers we read to ourselves and out loud lodge in our hearts and minds over the years. And when we need to say something prayerful ourselves and don't have the book ready to hand, we find familiar, beloved phrases welling up within us.

The Book teaches how to pray on our own, and when we are too needy and distressed to do it on our own, it is there waiting to out into words those "sighs too deep for words."

Spoken prayers before meetings can serve to put us in mind of God's companionship even in the business of religion. Silence and centering together can accomplish this, too. I like to balance both approaches. Occasionally a spoken prayer can seem to "inoculate" gatherings from a consciousness of the presence and guidance God's Spirit. The prayer is spoken and then other imperatives and agendas - business as usual - prevail.

Acknowledging this can itself be prayer! "We have erred and strayed from your ways like lost sheep!"

Praying without ceasing, you see, can even embrace those times we have ceased to pray.

Peace,
Randy

LIFE LONG LEARNING

Youth Confirmations

Kate Siberine and Randy are teaching confirmation classes on Sunday afternoons at 3:00 in Room 1. These classes are aimed at preparing young people between the ages of 14 and 22 for confirmation at Washington National Cathedral at 10 a.m. on Saturday, May 14. A class for older candidates for confirmation or reception will be offered at another time.

Young prospective confirmands need to have been active at Ascension for some time, and will be participating in these classes without parental pressure, as the purpose of confirmation is to provide people baptized as infants to make the promises made on their behalf by parents and godparents their own.

In this vein, if someone slightly younger (or older, for that matter) approaches Kate or Randy and is highly motivated to participate, they will not be turned away.

In the mean time, contact Kate (ksiberine@gmail.com) or Randy (ral@ascensionmd.org) with any questions you may have.

ESOL Class

Free ESOL classes, English for Speakers of Other Languages, are offered at Ascension on Sunday mornings, from 9:00 a.m. to 10:30 a.m. in Room 1. Childcare is provided. Contact Luis Pedron if you have questions at 301.922.5610.

Spanish Bible Study

Javier offers a Spanish Bible Study every Wednesday at 7:00 p.m. at rotating locations. Contact Javier at ocampo@ascensionmd.org for more information.

Spanish Class

The Spanish Class with Javier meets Tuesdays at 6:30 p.m. at Ascension House.

Baptisms



Baptisms will be held March 26, Easter Eve, and May 15, Day of Pentecost.

Contact the Rector for more information at 301.948.0122 ext. 12 or ral@ascensionmd.org.

Armor of Light Viewing and Discussion

Kirk Fitch and Alice Benson will host a viewing and discussion of the acclaimed *Armor of Light*, a documentary following an Evangelical minister and the mother of a teen aged shooting victim who ask, is it possible to be both pro-gun and pro-life? See more about the film at <http://www.armoroflightfilm.com/>. Watch the weekly announcement bulletin for date and location.

Education for Ministry (EfM)

EFM is a theological program, organized and coordinated by the University of the South School of Theology, Sewanee, TN (<http://efm.sewanee.edu/>) -there are no term papers or final exams! The program is preparation for, or enhancement of the ministry to which we all are called. An EFM group consists of six to twelve participants and trained mentor(s) who meet weekly, in a seminar format, over the course of a nine-month academic year. Through study, prayer, and reflection, the seminars furnish an opportunity to deepen understanding of the reading materials. More important is the development of skills in theological reflection. The goal is to learn to think theologically.

Church of the Ascension offers this enlightening program on Tuesday evenings at 7:00 p.m. in the Library. But it's more than a class, it builds a community through shared meals and prayer.

For questions or additional information, please contact David Mitchell at 240.454.1904, newlywed98@comcast.net; or Bob Owolabi at 301.518.9835, bob.owolabi@verizon.net.

Yoga Classes at Ascension



Lucia Tolson teaches an entry level class at 10:00 a.m. every Thursday morning in the Chapel. Her classes run for about an hour. There is a suggested donation of \$1-\$10.

LIFE LONG LEARNING

Lenten Series: God's Children Talk about Race

"The end is reconciliation; the end is redemption; the end is the creation of the beloved community."- Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., December 3, 1956.

In 1956, Martin Luther King, Jr., called for a "Beloved Community" in which black and white could meet in unity and goodwill. Sixty years later, many people feel simply angry, tired or even left out of the conversation on race. They hear terms like "White Fragility" - "Systemic Oppression" - "White Privilege" - "Color Blindness" and feel accused or simply confused.



If you are upset by racism but feel as if you need a dictionary to understand how people talk about race in America, join our Lenten series this February and March. As a community of lovers of Jesus, we will use three interactive workshops to develop a shared vocabulary, to examine anxieties and hopes about race and to build a foundation for making a difference in the wider world. We will anchor our discussions in personal experience and current events and in Martin Luther King, Jr.'s call for a Beloved Community. Please join the conversation to share your experiences of anger, love, invisibility, and compassion. People of all ages, experiences, and ethnic backgrounds are welcome.

We met on February 21 and will meet again on March 6 ("Systemic Racism"), and March 20 ("Can You Love a Stranger ... or a Racist") at 12:30 p.m. in the Undercroft Commons. Hearty snacks will be served.

The Listening Heart Community

The Listening Heart Community is Ascension's "monastery of the heart", an intentional group for seekers in all stages of their spiritual journey to explore Benedictine and other contemplative spirituality in community. We encounter scripture and other texts through lectio divina and use contemplative practices to deepen our experience of the sacred in each moment. Meeting dates in March are Monday March 7 and 21 from 7-8:30 p.m. in the library. Contact Lori Perine at lperine@gmail.com if you would like to join us.

Present Moment, Wonderful Moment: Still Water Mindfulness Practice Group

New and experienced practitioners are welcome on Tuesday evenings from 7:00 to 8:30 p.m. in the Chapel. An introduction to mindfulness practice is offered on the last Tuesday of each month, at 6:45 p.m., followed by a guided meditation. Additional resources and program announcements are available via our Facebook page, <https://www.facebook.com/stillwatermpc>.

For more information, contact Lori Perine at swgaithersburg@gmail.com.

New Book for Wednesday Mornings: Diana Butler Bass's *Grounded*

You're invited to join a discussion group using *Grounded*, Diana Butler Bass's latest book on the transformation of religion in America. The first installment of this new book study will be Wednesday morning at 10 a.m in the Library on March 2. See the Sunday announcement for specifics about which chapters to read in advance.

Here is what's on Amazon about *Grounded: Finding God in the World - A Spiritual Revolution*:

The headlines are clear: religion is on the decline in America as many people leave behind traditional religious practices. Diana Butler Bass, leading commentator on religion, politics, and culture, follows up her acclaimed book *Christianity After Religion* by arguing that what appears to be a decline actually signals a major transformation in how people understand and experience God. The distant God of conventional religion has given way to a more intimate sense of the sacred that is with us in the world. This shift, from a vertical understanding of God to a God found on the horizons of nature and human community, is at the heart of a spiritual revolution that surrounds us - and that is challenging not only religious institutions but political and social ones as well.

Bass brings her understanding of the latest research and studies and her deep knowledge of history and theology to *Grounded*. She cites news, trends, data, and pop culture, weaves in spiritual texts and ancient traditions, and pulls it all together through stories of her own and others' spiritual journeys. *Grounded* observes and reports a radical change in the way many people understand God and how they practice faith. In doing so, Bass invites readers to join this emerging spiritual revolution, find a revitalized expression of faith, and change the world.

LIFE AT ASCENSION

Ascension's Adventurers to Tour the "Holy Land"



All parishioners and friends are invited to participate in a 45-minute, docent-guided tour of the Franciscan Monastery in Washington, D.C. on Saturday, March 5. The monastery offers an opportunity to see replicas of famous Holy Land shrines. We will meet in the Ascension House parking lot at 9:45 a.m. to carpool. Alternatively, you can meet us at the monastery at 10:50 a.m.

The tour is free, but donations are greatly appreciated by the Franciscans. Participants are also invited to join us for lunch at a yet-to-be-selected restaurant. We are planning to eat within a couple miles of Ascension after we have returned. For more information, see <http://www.myfranciscan.org/> and/or contact Richard Snay at rssnay@aol.com or 301.977.5259.

April Ascendant

Please email Pia Leaman by Thursday, March 24, if you have anything for the March Ascendant at leamanp@ascensionmd.org. Thank you!

Easter Flowers

If you would like to donate Easter flowers in memory or in honor of a loved one, please fill out an envelope (available on the Narthex and the Chapel), insert your check, and place it in the mailbox outside the office or in the offering plate by *Sunday, March 20*. The suggested donation is \$25.

Easter Artwork and Filled Eggs



Forms are now available for children to submit artwork for the Easter Family Service worship leaflet. The service will take place on Easter Day, March 27 at 12:30 p.m. An Easter Egg Hunt will follow the service. Please sign up to bring filled Easter eggs. The sign up is on the bulletin board in the Narthex.

Calling All Current Girl Scouts: Help Sell Cookies at Ascension!

Girl Scout Troop 3243 is hosting its 4rth annual "Cookie Booth at Ascension" on Girl Scout Sunday. Any and all registered Girl Scouts who attend Ascension is invited to participate. We will sell cookies after each morning service. If you want to receive credit for your sales, please contact Lori Perine at gstrop3243@gmail.com no later than Tuesday March 1.



Movie Night, Friday, March 4

Everyone is welcome to meet up in the Undercroft Commons on Friday, March 4 at 6:00 p.m. to watch *Maleficent*. We'll start off with pizza and whatever else people want to bring. We do ask for a donation of \$5 per person with a \$15 per family maximum toward the cost of the pizza. We'll start the movie at 6:30 and we'll most likely be out and off to bed by 8:30 p.m.

Please bring your favorite beverage, and some to share. Snack foods will not be denied admission. You need not be a child, or have one, to attend! Dolls, favorite toys, sleeping bags and pillows are also welcome!

Please RSVP by Midnight Thursday, March 3. We need 10 confirmations to make Movie Night happen...
Sign up here: <http://bit.ly/1QtzFkB>

WORSHIP

Holy Week and Easter at Ascension

Wednesday, March 23

7:30 p.m. Tenebrae, a "Service of Darkness" - Main Church

Maundy Thursday, March 24

7:30 p.m. Holy Eucharist with Foot Washing and Stripping of the Altar—Main Church

Good Friday, March 25

12:00 p.m. "Stations to Go" - Various Locations in Old Towne Gaithersburg

7:30 p.m. Prayer Book Liturgy—Main Church

Easter Eve, Saturday, March 26

7:30 p.m. Easter Vigil—Main Church

Easter Day, Sunday, March 27

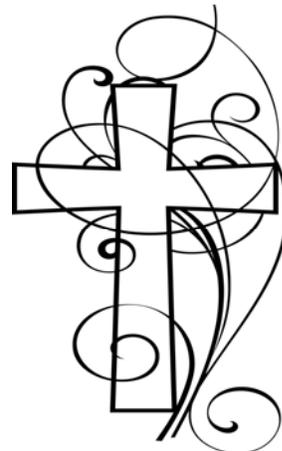
7:45 a.m. Holy Eucharist—Main Church

9:00 a.m. Festival Eucharist—Main Church

11:00 a.m. Festival Eucharist—Main Church

11:00 a.m. Holy Eucharist in Spanish—Chapel

12:30 p.m. Holy Eucharist for Families with Young Children, followed by an Easter Egg Hunt—Main Church



No Christian Formation on Palm Sunday or Easter Day

There will be no Christian Formation classes for Children, Youth, or Adults on Palm Sunday, March 20, or Easter Day, March 27. Classes will resume on a regular schedule again on Sunday, April 3.

Celebrate Girl Scout Sunday at Ascension: March 6



Ascension invites all girls and adult volunteers active in the Girl Scouts to wear their uniforms to church on March 6, Girl Scout Sunday, for a special recognition and blessing at the morning English-language services. Members of the congregation can support our Scouts with a purchase of Girl Scout cookies or a contribution for a "Gift of Caring" to benefit the homeless shelters supported through the Montgomery County Coalition for the Homeless. Cookie purchases or contributions can be made after each morning service.

Girl Scout Sunday is the kickoff of national Girl Scout Week 2016. Girls from various religious traditions are encouraged to honor their commitment via the Girl Scout promise "to serve God" by celebrating the rich diversity of belonging and religious observance of Girl Scout Sunday, Girl Scout Sabbath and Girl Scout Shabbat.

Youth Sunday—Save the Date

On Youth Sunday, April 10, Ascension's Youth will take leadership roles at all services. In preparation, they will have chosen the hymns and composed the Prayers. They will read the lessons and psalms and serve as acolytes, chalcists, and welcome team. If you are interested in participating, please contact Angie at angela.hightwalker@gmail.com. Come and support our youth on this day.

In Our Thoughts and Prayers

We Give Thanks for the Birth of:

Holden Beckman McGuirk, son of Kevin McGuirk and Rachel Robbins, who was born on January 28.

We Give Thanks for the Lives of:

Keira Lynn Petersen, who died on February 15.

Margaret Dubois, who died on February 20.

VESTRY DIGEST

Vestry Digest, January 2016

Meeting of February 7, 2016 (January meeting postponed to this date)

Present: Randy Lord-Wilkinson, Betsy Hasegawa, Rose Buck, Gordon Donnelly, Janet King, Lauren Kingsland, Avin Lalmansingh, Denise Lionetti, Gary McLaughlin, Najma Stubblefield, Howard Holland. Absent: Enid Cole, Paul Whitmore.

Old Business

2016 Budget. Howard led a discussion about the 2016 budget. Lauren moved, Betsy seconded, and the Vestry unanimously voted to adopt a budget for 2016 using \$40,000 from the cash portion of the endowment; this choice resulted in a budget that still carries a \$99,934 deficit. The vestry will establish a planning committee to identify ways to close or prevent another gap of this size, including further withdrawals from the endowment.

Annual Giving Campaign. Avin updated the Vestry on the status of the pledge campaign. Pledge commitments at this time totaled \$350,056, which is behind 2015 in terms of total pledged, and number of pledges. Gary reported efforts to contact people that pledged last year but not for 2016; it appears unlikely we will attain last year's level of giving.

Capital Campaign Update. Betsy reported that she has forwarded summaries of the notes from the cottage meetings with our consultant, Leslie Pendleton. She will in turn review and advise the Vestry on the next steps for our campaign, including timing of a feasibility study. Randy recommended that the amount spent so far on the campaign be shared with the parish.

Parish Life Chair. A chairperson is still being sought.

Vestry Member-Recruitment. Two individuals have agreed to stand for Vestry, and others are thinking about it. The need for diversity and representatives from all services on the Vestry was acknowledged.

New Business

Rice Bowl. The Rice Bowl donations will go to two efforts. First is an Episcopal Relief and Development program to reduce gender-based violence in Liberia, and the second was to plan a meal welcoming refugees in the Gaithersburg area.

Rector Review. Betsy reported on the status of the rector review. Materials available from the Episcopal Diocese of Washington (EDOW) website will be evaluated for use as is, or adapted for Ascension. The goal is to do such a review annually. Enid and Betsy will be responsi-

ble, but encourage all Vestry members to provide input. Ascension staff are also reviewed annually by Randy.

Dates-Annual Parish Meeting, Vestry Retreat. The Annual Meeting is scheduled for Sunday March 13, 2016 at 12:30 p.m.; the Vestry Retreat for Friday April 1 and Saturday April 2.

Shrove Tuesday Pancake Supper/Feast. Lauren led a discussion on planning the feast. Rose and Avin agreed to coordinate shopping and volunteers with Lauren's assistance.

Parish Photo Directory. Randy suggested and the Vestry agreed to produce a new Parish Photo Directory. The last directory was made in 2006. Randy will speak with a vendor.

Small Groups. Randy addressed his desire to make small groups a core part of Ascension life, envisioning newcomers invited into a group that will eventually grow and divide into smaller, new groups. This topic will be revisited at the next Vestry meeting and at the Vestry retreat.

Open Mic

Big thanks to Gordon for leading the Epiphany Pageant. Rose noted how lovely the pageant was and the enthusiastic response to the event.

Rose and Avin recommended scheduling the Thank You luncheon for parishioners who made a financial pledge to Ascension. The Vestry will decide on a date after Lent.

Rose advised the Personnel Committee for which she is Vestry Liaison will present job descriptions for the Sexton and Nursery Coordinator positions.

Randy announced the need for all fundraisers to be approved by the Rector and/or Wardens in advance.

Respectfully submitted,
Betsy Hasegawa, *Junior Warden.*

CURRENT FINANCIAL STATUS

Financial Update, January 2016

At its February 7, 2016, meeting, the Vestry adopted a budget for 2016. We are now in the process of "calendarizing" the budget for the year. That is, based on the budget as adopted and the income and expenses projected for the year, we break income and

expenses down by month, and lay them out on spreadsheets that our accounting firm uses to create the reports we review from month to month.

As we do so, we are also taking a final look at the end-of-year numbers for 2015, while reviewing a simple listing of income and expenses for January. The end-of-year numbers for 2015 will be used to create a report for Ascension's annual meeting on March 13, 2016, as well as form the basis for information to be shared with Ascension's auditors.

January Financial Figures

Because all of the information on the 2016 budget has not yet been loaded into the system our accounting firm uses to track income and expenses from month to month, we don't at this point have benchmarks to use in gauging how well we are doing in compared to what we expected for January. Thus, all we can track at this point are the absolute numbers.

- Total income for January was \$38,150. We received \$4,177 in Plate receipts and \$27,133 in Pledge income. The pledge income number is lower than in previous years for January and may reflect attendance and the extreme weather we had during the month. Rental income was \$2,060, which is the usual amount for most months; Miscellaneous Unrestricted income was \$4,780. That's in turn a very strong figure.
- For January, our total expenses were \$53,910. Even without the benefit of projected figures to use as a basis for comparison, January was a very expensive month. In part, that's because there were 3 paydays during the month, which happens two months out of the year. In addition, weather related issues had an impact on both Utilities and Facilities. We incurred \$3,850 in costs for utilities, and \$8,317 in Facilities. As we know, the Facilities expenses include \$5,565 for snow removal following the "snowpocalypse" during January. Other expenses are largely in line with expenses during the last several months of 2015.
- Based on January income and expenses, we had negative net income of \$15,760 for the month.

Finally, the balance in the Endowment Fund was \$473,053 as of December 31, including \$153,827 being held in the cash portion of the Fund. The balance in the Capital Improvements & Building Repairs fund remains at \$22,409.

Howard Holland, *Treasurer and Chair, Operations and Finance Committee*, hhollbike@verizon.net.

CARING FOR OUR COMMUNITY

Men's Shelter Lunch Program

The Men's Shelter Lunch program provides bagged lunches for residents of a local homeless shelter, assembled in the Undercroft Commons once a month. Supplies are donated by Ascension members. Depending on the season, we provide forty to eighty lunches a month. Sign-up for contributions are through an online system and assembly occurs by those present after the 9:00 o'clock service on the third Sunday of the month.

We will meet next on Sunday, March 20. Contact Edith at esekasi@gmail.com if you would like to help, or follow this link <http://bit.ly/1DVayRb>.

Lord's Table Soup Kitchen

Additional volunteers needed at Soup Kitchen/Lord's Table during the 1st shift from 1:00 - 3:00 p.m. at St. Martin's on the 1st Saturday of each month. No experience needed; just bring a hat and apron. I particularly have need about 2:15 to 3:00 p.m. for someone strong to accept the donation boxed delivery from Trader Joe's and other contributors. Any additional information, contact Leslie Sanya 301.315.2662 or leslie-sanya@mris.com.

This Year's Rice Bowl Offering

The Lenten Rice Bowl Offering has been a tradition at Ascension since the 1980s. The offering comes from parishioners' cash or check donations left in a wooden bowl as they come forward to receive Communion. This year's offering will be split between the two organizations described below.

Episcopal Relief & Development and the Humanitarian Arm of the Episcopal Church of Liberia Episcopal Relief & Development and the Humanitarian Arm of the Episcopal Church of Liberia (ECL-RD) have launched a program to mobilize faith networks to end sexual and gender-based violence (SGBV). The aim of the program is to prevent violence against women and girls and increase survivors' access to services. SGBV is pervasive throughout Liberia, and the prevalence can be attributed in part to the moral and institutional breakdown during the country's devastating 14-year civil war.

Refugees Welcome Here

We will also sponsor a #RefugeesWelcomeHere meal at Ascension, where Ascension members provide and share a meal with refugee clients of the International Cultural Center Crossroads program. Nouf Bazaz supports and is studying the idea.



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March 2016

The Episcopal Church of the Ascension
205 South Summit Ave.
Gaithersburg, MD 20877-2315

*The First Day of Spring
is March 20!*



Address Service Requested

"We are ambassadors who represent Christ." - 2 Corinthians 5:20

Contact Us

Phone: 301.948.0122 Fax: 301.926.9012
eca@ascensionmd.org www.ascensionmd.org

Parish Staff

Rector	Randy Lord-Wilkinson
Spanish Language Missioner	Javier García Ocampo
Minister of Music	Jerrold Tidwell
Seminarians	Kate Siberine
	Diana Gustafson
Office Coordinator	Kathy Van Arnum
Communications	Pia Leaman
Children's Music Leader	Howard Hanson
Chapel Musicians	Eric O'Loughlin
	Samuel Munguia
Sexton	Betty LaVern
Nursery Director	Giséle Lachance

Sunday Services

7:45 a.m.—Holy Eucharist
"Meditative" service, no music - Main Church

9:00 a.m. Holy Eucharist
Classic sacred music of the Church accompanied by Choir and Organ—Main Church

10:15 a.m.—Eucharist for Young Children and Families
Storytelling of the Gospel with children's songs—Chapel

11:00 a.m.—Eucharist in Spanish
Songs and prayers in Spanish—Chapel

11:15 a.m.—Holy Eucharist
Music and liturgy in the vernacular accompanied by instrumental ensemble—Main Church

5:00 p.m.—"Last Chance Church" Eucharist
Informal service with music blending Gospel and jazz influences—Chapel