

WELCOME TO CHURCH OF THE ASCENSION

Christmas Eve/Day : 24/25 December A.D. 2016

John the Evangelist

By Frederick Buechner

John was a poet, and he knew about words. He knew that all men and all women are mysteries known only to themselves until they speak a word that opens up the mystery. He knew that the words people speak have their life in them just as surely as they have their breath in them. He knew that the words people speak have dynamite in them and that a word may be all it takes to set somebody's heart on fire or break it in two. He knew that words break silence and that the word that is spoken is the word that is heard and may even be answered. And at the beginning of his Gospel he wrote a poem about the Word that God spoke. When God speaks, things happen, because the words of God aren't just as good as God's deeds; they are God's deeds. When God speaks, John says, creation happens, and when God speaks to the creation, what comes out is not ancient Hebrew or the King James Version or a sentiment suitable for framing in the pastor's study. On the contrary. "The word became flesh," John says (1:14), and that means that when God wanted to say what God is all about and what humankind is all about and what life is all about, it wasn't a sound that emerged, but a man. Jesus was his name. He was dynamite. He was the word of God.

John says nothing about when or where or how he was born. He says nothing about how the Baptist baptized him. There's no account of the temptation in John, or the transfiguration, nothing about how he told people to eat bread and drink wine in his memory once in a while, or how he sweated blood in the garden the night they arrested him, or how he was tried before the Sanhedrin as well as before Pilate. There's nothing in John about the terrible moment when he cried out that God had forsaken him at the very time he needed him most. Jesus doesn't tell even a single parable in John. So what then, according to John, does Jesus do?

He speaks words. He speaks poems that sound much like John's poems, and the poems are about himself. Even when he works his miracles, you feel he's thinking less about the human needs of the people he's working them for than about something else he's got to say about who he is and what he's there to get done. When he feeds a big, hungry crowd on hardly enough to fill a grocery bag, for instance, he says, "I am the bread of life. Whoever comes to me will never be hungry, and whoever believes in me will never be thirsty" (6:35). When he raises his old friend Lazarus from the dead, he says, "I am the resurrection and the life. Those who believe in me, even though they die, will live, and everyone who lives and believes in me will never die" (11:25-26). "I am the gate," he says. "Whoever enters by me will be saved" (10:9). "I am the good shepherd" (10:14), "the light of the world" (8:12), "I am the way, and the truth, and the life," he says (14:6) and "The Father and I are one" (10:30).

You miss the Jesus of Matthew, Mark, and Luke, of course-the one who got mad and tired and took naps in boats. You miss the Jesus who healed people because he felt sorry for them and made jokes about camels squeezing through the eyes of needles and had a soft spot in his heart for easy-going ladies and children who didn't worry about heaven like the disciples because in a way they were already there. There's nothing he doesn't know in John, nothing he can't do, and when they take him in the end, you feel he could blow them right off the map if he felt like it. Majestic, mystical, aloof, the Jesus of the Fourth Gospel walks three feet off the ground, you feel, and you can't help wishing that once in a while he'd come down to earth.

Jesus, for John, is the Jesus he knew in his own heart and the one he believed everybody else could know too if they only kept their hearts open. He is Jesus as the Word that breaks the heart and sets the feet to dancing and stirs tigers in the blood. He is the Jesus John loved not just because he'd healed the sick and fed the hungry but because he'd saved the world. Jesus as the *mot juste* of God.

-originally published in *Peculiar Treasures* and later in *Beyond Words*

TO OUR VISITORS, NEWCOMERS, AND SEEKERS

We thank you for joining us today and hope you will return often.

At Ascension, our mission is to become "ambassadors of Christ," so we welcome you to this community of resident aliens. We invite you to fill out a welcome card (located in the rack at the ends of each pew).

LIFE LONG LEARNING

Music Program for Sunday School

The last Sunday of each month is "Music Sunday" with Howard Hanson, Ascension's Children's Music Director. We spend approximately 15 minutes during the 9:00 and 11:15 Sunday School sessions to learn basic music theory, explore our favorite musical traditions and learn new Bible songs.

Yoga Classes

Randy's yoga class is every Thursday at 10:00 a.m. in the Chapel. These are gentle, entry level classes anyone may enjoy. No props are needed. There are some mats, blocks and blankets for those who want them. If you have your own mat, bring it. Wear loose fitting, comfortable clothing. There will be no class on December 29.

Tai Chi Class

Tai Chi is an ancient tradition that helps us feel healthy and relaxed. It is a moving meditation. Claire Rosser proposes to lead a group through the 88 steps in the Yang Long Form on Thursdays from 4:00 p.m. to 5:00 p.m. in the chapel. For detailed information: <http://www.ascensionmd.org/tai-chi-class/>

There will be no class on December 29.

Contact Claire Rosser at 301.275.0617 or Cjrosser@aol.com if you have any questions.

Finding God in the Waves Book Group

The Wednesday Morning Book Group continues exploration of *Finding God in the Waves: How I Lost My Faith and Found it Again Through Science*, by Mike McHargue. From Amazon.com: "From the host of the popular podcasts, The Liturgists Podcast and Ask Science Mike, a story of having faith, losing it, and finding it again through science—revealing how the latest in neuroscience, physics, and biology help us understand God, faith, and ourselves." For a fuller description and to purchase, go to <http://amzn.to/2ecQ9DC>

There will be no meeting on December 28.

The Listening Heart Community

We have been discussing possible times to try to get together outside of the regular Sunday service, in the format of an informal Bible study or book reading. Because we all have small children, we would also like to include snacks and a play space. Weeknights are difficult for most of us, so we are proposing the following times to get together, once a month:

Sundays, before or after the 10:15 service (something like 9:30 or 11:15 am). Saturday or Sundays post-nap time (something like 4 or 5:00 pm). What would everyone prefer?

If we meet before or after the 10:15 Sunday service, we could find a space at the church. If we meet in the afternoon on Saturday or Sunday, we could meet at individual homes. We are happy to host the first meeting or two.

Yours,
Brian, Sarah, Leo, and Jane
sarahanear@gmail.com

Mind-Body Skills Workshop

Dr. Tina Lightner-Morris will offer workshops on holistic health using research based healing therapies for 8 Mondays from November 14, 2016 to January 9, 2017 between 7:00 p.m. and 9:00 p.m. to help you deal with life changes, stress

LIFE LONG LEARNING

and illness. Participants have experienced a decrease in depression and anxiety, renewed sense of wellbeing, better coping skills to manage pain, increased energy and stamina, enhanced immune system, greater self-awareness and more. The fee is \$65 per session, \$520 for the series or \$500 if paid in full by the first session.

For more information or if you have question, contact Dr. Lightner-Morris, at 301.524.0808 or tina@lightbalncecounseling.org

LIFE AT ASCENSION

The King's Birthday

The King's Birthday still has many openings for speaking and non speaking parts for children young and old. If you are interested in participating please email me at vagordon1@yahoo.com. You are also invited to our first rehearsal. The first rehearsal will be Saturday, December 31, 10-12noon. The second rehearsal will be Saturday, January 7th same time.

Look forward to your participation.
Gordon

Visitors' Welcome Kits Are Available

If you are visiting Ascension today, Welcome! To learn more about the community that is Church of the Ascension, please take home with you a welcome packet, located on the Chapel counter and on the table next to the Office. A Welcome Team member will be glad to assist you!

Ascension's Cookbook Committee Needs You!

Do you love to cook and bake? Are you wiz at organization and planning? Are you a stickler for good punctuation? Well, come and join us! It has been 22 years since Keeping the Feast, Ascension's last community cookbook, was published under Father Joe Clark. Much has changed at Ascension. We have new leadership and many new members, along with new programs and initiatives. What hasn't changed are the feelings of cohesion and welcome that set us apart, and we can't think of a better way to celebrate everything that's great about our community than with a new cookbook!

We are looking for a mix of skills and perspectives to help collect and organize recipes, as well as oversee production and sales. If you are interested in helping craft Ascension's next community cookbook, please contact Zadinga Ogada (z_zulu@msn.com or 202-256-7237) by December 31st. We anticipate holding our first planning meeting in the early part of next year.

Let's get cooking!

Vestry Nominations Welcome

It is that time of year when the Vestry is in discernment around who may be called to the ministry of leadership at Ascension. If you'd like to nominate someone simply approach any Vestry member, or e-mail one of the Wardens: Betsy Hasegawa (grhasegawa@verizon.net) or Janet King (bkmechanical@aol.com).



Pledge Envelope Boxes

Pledge envelopes are available on the table outside the church office door.

CARING FOR OUR COMMUNITY

Ascension's Giving Tree

This Christmas season through Sunday, January 8, you will find Ascension's "Giving Tree" adorning the Narthex. A sign near the tree will identify crucially needed items for refugees and recent immigrants from the Middle East or Latin America, who are now living in the D.C. area. In a box near the tree, you will find a collection of pairs of color-coded cards, each labeled with possible gift options (gift card, metro card, or check). One card in each pair will have an attached string, and the box will contain several pairs of cards for each gift option. Select a pair representing the gift of your choice. Put the card containing a string on the tree immediately, and take the other card with you. After you have obtained your gift, place it in the designated box located near the tree. Your gift may also be placed in the offering plate as long as it is clearly marked "Giving Tree". Eventually, we hope the tree will be covered with many brightly colored cards. Cards and money will be distributed between Crossroads and the MCIRRN (Montgomery County Interfaith Refugee Resettlement Neighbors).

If you have any questions, feel free to contact fellow parishioners Sue and/or Richard Snay at 301.977.5259 or subarsy@aol.com.

Mobile Med

We host the MobileMed van every Tuesday from 7:00 a.m. until 3:00 p.m. Volunteers are assigned a 2 ½ hour shift each month. Duties include collecting basic patient information, answering questions and ensuring a safe, comfortable waiting area. Our contact for Mobile Med is Jean Cohn at spangle1@comcast.net or 240.372.3652.

FINANCIAL REPORTS

Last Week's Income*	Weekly Budget Goal	Year to Date Income*	Year to Date Budget Goal
\$10,267.26	\$9,498.19	\$496,188.45	\$474,909.62

N.B.—In addition to pledge and plate income, together with what Ascension receives in rental fees and money from several small trusts, Ascension uses the cash portion of the Endowment Fund to meet month-to-month operating expenses. In general, we have been using between \$7,000 - \$8,000 per month from the Endowment on top of a monthly transfer of \$3,334 that the Vestry approved as part of the 2016 budget.

Pledge Update as of 12-20-16:

- 112 Pledges for the Annual Giving Campaign, for a total of \$259,847.
- 57 Pledges for Facilities Reserve Fund, for a total of \$76,222

Below are the names of those who pledged to the annual giving campaign this past week:

- Major & Hawa Clemens
- Joseph Robert Ellis
- Alvaro & Suzyn Gonzalez
- Kay & Clay Kolle
- Peter Maroulis
- Dotty & Jerry Pfadenhauer
- Thomas F & Dorothy J Thiele
- Todd & Jennifer Shea
- Gerlinda Somerville

And those who pledged to the Facilities Fund:

- Todd & Jennifer Shea
- Gerlinda Somerville

New Website Launched



We just launched our new website. What is New:

- A responsive design automatically adapts itself to a particular viewing environment such as desktop, tablet or mobile.
- Online electronic giving
- Signup to different subscription directly from our website
- Analytic tools to track the traffic to the website which helps to analyze the engagement of the site visitors.

Online Giving



Church of the Ascension is pleased to announce the introduction of an electronic option on our new website for making regular offerings. Contributions can now be debited automatically from your checking or saving account or processed using your credit or debit card. Our new electronic giving program offers convenience for you and much-needed donation consistency for the congregation. If you are currently giving on a weekly basis, you will no longer need to write out 52 checks a year or prepare 52 envelopes. And, when travel, illness or other circumstances prevent you from attending the services, this program will allow your weekly offerings to continue on an uninterrupted basis.

An Authorization form and a "Frequently Asked Questions" flyer are available from the church office.

You can also find the electronic Authorization form by clicking "Give to the Church of Ascension" button on the home page of our new website.

CONTACT US

205 S. Summit Ave., Gaithersburg, Maryland, 20877
www.ascensionmd.org

- ◆ Office Hours: Monday-Friday 10:00 am-4:00 pm
- ◆ Phone: 301.948.0122 ◆ Fax: 301.926.9012
- ◆ Randy's Cell: 301.801.4347
- ◆ Javier's Cell: 202.903.6426
- ◆ Prayer requests: Fill out a yellow prayer request card on the table outside the office, in the Chapel or e-mail the office at office@ascensionmd.org.

Bishop of Washington - The Rt. Rev. Mariann Edgar Budde
mebudde@edow.org, 202.537.6550

Rector - (The Rev.) Randy Lord-Wilkinson
ral@ascensionmd.org, voice mailbox 12

Assistant to the Rector—The Rev. Javier García Ocampo
ocampo@ascensionmd.org, voice mailbox 16

Seminarian—Jason Cutshall
jascut@mac.com

Minister of Music—Jerrold Tidwell,
tidwellj@ascensionmd.org, voice mailbox 11

Parish Administrator - Kathy Van Arnum
office@ascensionmd.org, voice mailbox 10

Media Specialist—Eleni Hailu
comm@ascensionmd.org, voice mailbox 14

Altar Guild Directors-Sari Stoddard, 301.972.0914,
Sari.stoddard@verizon.net, Mardia Dennis, 301.540.4499
mard908@gmail.com

Children's Music Leader - Howard Hanson,
howarddhanson@gmail.com

Chapel Musicians - Eric O'Loughlin, ericsmelody@gmail.com,
Samuel Munguia, pianoconclave@verizon.net

Nursery Attendant—Brenda Alvarez

LEADERSHIP AT ASCENSION

Senior Warden: Betsy Hasegawa
Junior Warden: Janet King

Vestry:

2017: Denise Lionetti, Najma Stubblefield, Paul Whitmore

2018: Berenice Rodriguez, Avin Lalmansingh,
Gary McLaughlin

2019: Rose Buck, Zadinga Ogada, John Pruessner
Sari Stoddard, *Clerk of the Vestry*
Howard Holland, *Treasurer*

Christian Formation for Children: Zadinga Ogada ~ Christian
Formation for Youth: Angie Hight-Walker ~ Facilities: Ted Be-
dell Finance: Howard Holland ~ Mission: Paul Boynton ~ Pas-
toral Care: Randy Lord-Wilkinson Personnel: Jean Cohn ~
Worship: Carleton MacDonald

Delegates to Diocesan Convention:

Kristen Keating, Carleton MacDonald, Sue Snay
Alternate: Mardia Dennis

Cycles of Prayer

In the Diocesan cycle of prayer, we pray for
Church of St. Stephen and the Incarnation and Misa Alegra
St. John's Church, Zion Parish, St. John's Church, Broad
Creek, St. John's Church, Mt. Rainier
St. John's Church, Georgetown, St. John's Church, Lafay-
ette Square and Iglesia San Juan, St. John's Church, Nor-
wood, St. John's Church, Olney, St. John's Episcopal
School, Olney, St. John's Preschool, Washington, DC

THIS WEEK AT ASCENSION

MONDAY, DECEMBER 26

OFFICE CLOSED

- 1:00 pm Al-Anon—Library
- 6:30 pm Overeaters Anonymous—Room 4
- 7:00 pm Jr. Girl Scout Meeting—Room 6

TUESDAY, DECEMBER 27

OFFICE CLOSED

- 6:00 pm Bible Study—Ascension House
- 7:00 pm Codependents Anonymous—Room 1
- 7:00 pm Stillwater Mindfulness Group—Chapel
- 8:30 pm Al-Anon—Room 1

WEDNESDAY, DECEMBER 28

- 1:00 pm Al-Anon—Library
- 7:00 pm Ensemble Rehearsal—Main Church
- 7:00 pm Overeaters Anonymous—Room 1
- 8:00 pm Gamblers' Anonymous—Chapel

THURSDAY, DECEMBER 29

OFFICE CLOSED

NO CHOIR REHEARSAL

FRIDAY, DECEMBER 30

OFFICE CLOSED

- 1:00 pm Al-Anon—Library

SATURDAY, DECEMBER 31

- 9:00 am Overeaters Anonymous—Chapel
- 11:00 am Al-Anon—Undercroft Commons
- 11:00 am Overeaters Anonymous—Room 1

SUNDAY, JANUARY 1

Preacher: Randy Lord-Wilkinson

- 7:45 am Holy Eucharist—Main Church
- 8:15 am No Choir Rehearsal
- 9:00 am Lessons and Carols—Main Church
- 10:15 am Service for Families with Young Children—Chapel
- 11:00 am Misa en Espanol—Chapel
- 11:15 am Lessons and Carols—Main Church
- 5:00 pm Holy Eucharist—Chapel

Church Attendance	Dec. 4	Dec. 11	Dec. 18
7:45 a.m.	26	27	25
9:00 a.m.	84	89	95
10:15 a.m.	9	10	17
11:00 a.m. Spanish Service	52	35	84
11:15 am	46	49	59
11:30 a.m. At Sunrise	—	6	12
5:00 p.m.	14	15	14
Total:	231	231	306