

This Week at Ascension

The Amazing John the Baptist

Many of you were here last Sunday when I baptized two precious infants. (Ian and Sebastian) they seemed a little puzzled by the activity, but happily they were accompanied by family, and godparents, and all of you. For you welcomed them into the body of Christ, and promised on their behalf to help these little boys to resist evil, and follow in the ways of the Lord. A heavy responsibility, but manageable with the help of the Holy Spirit.

This week we have a reminder of the importance of the baptismal covenant in the Feast of St. John the Baptist. For sheer dramatic appeal, it would be hard to find a story fuller of wonder, love, rebellion and tragedy than his. John's mother, Elizabeth, had had no children, and she is described as barren. She had made peace with this loss, and had no expectation of having a child. Imagine her surprise when she was visited by an angel who announced that she would have a son, and that she was to call him "John". Her husband, Zecharias, balked at the instruction: that was not a name of anyone in the family. The angel promptly struck him dumb, though he reversed the punishment when Zecharias wrote on a paper for all to see that the boy was to be named John. This event was dramatic for a reason. The assembled townspeople were shown that this was a very special boy, one whose birth was impossible normally, and who arrived with a name that was unusual, and chosen by God. Surely they must have wondered and talked about what he was destined to become.

As a young man, John spent a period of solitary living in the desert, a fairly commonplace occurrence for young men of his background. Somewhere around 27-28 AD, John attained prominence as a prophet, not a priest. His message was oriented toward all levels of Jewish society: God's judgment was imminent. To prepare for this judgment, everyone should repent of their sins, be baptized in the River Jordan, and show evidence of repentance. In this way, John the Baptist served as forerunner or herald of the Messiah. His role was to prepare the way for Jesus by personally focusing his considerable talents on identifying and announcing the Messiah:

"I myself did not know him; but for this I came baptizing with water that he might be revealed to Israel." John 1:31

Jesus, too, spent time in the desert, and John the Baptist formally identified him when he baptized Jesus, saying, "I saw the Spirit descending from heaven like a dove, and it abode above him. And I knew him not; but he that sent me to baptize with water, the same said unto me, 'Upon whom thou shalt see the Spirit

descending, and remaining on him the same is he that baptizes with the Holy Spirit.' And I saw, and bare record that this is the Son of God." John 1: 32-34

Jesus and John the Baptist were kinsmen, and certainly there are parallels in their lives: the angelic proclamation about their birth and the divine intervention in its fulfillment. John the Baptist was truly a transitional figure forming the link between the Old Testament prophesying the coming of the Messiah, and the New Testament, revealing the message of Jesus.

The end of John the Baptist was his shocking decapitation at the hands of Herod, urged on by his wife Herodias. Artistic, theatrical, and operatic renditions of the event (as recorded more discretely in the Bible) can be found on the internet.

Tomorrow is the remembrance of the birth of John the Baptist. Wouldn't he be pleased to see the Church of the Ascension faithfully carrying out the sacrament of Baptism, bringing new souls to reside in Jesus Christ?

HEADLINERS

The Fredy Diaz Martinez Fund

Friends, most of you know that our fellow parishioner and friend, Fredy, was arrested by ICE a little over a week ago. Fredy's wife and three children are also active and faithful members of Ascension. They primarily worship at the Noon service, but are always participants in the One Ascension services. Their daughter Jazmin is a reader of the Psalms at that service and reads beautifully from the lectern. Fredy and his family are always there for others in need. Present to serve when Ascension needs him. Our lawns and gardens testify to his care. In my support letter to the immigration judge, I described Fredy as a man of merit and spirit.

Well, now Fredy needs us. Because of his detention, he will have massive legal bills so that he can be reunited with his family, his church and his job. At this time, his family is deprived of the much needed second income provided by Fredy to his family. Last time, we let you all know what had happened to Fredy and invited you to help Fredy and his family. We also asked you to write letters of support for Fredy to the immigration judge. Many of you have provided wonderful letters. Thank you. Many of you have already made financial donations as well. Thank you. To further support the Fredy and his family, we are formally setting up a Fredy Diaz fund. If you have not yet donated, we invite you to do so as you are able by going here: <http://ascensionmd.org/know-about-fredy-and-his-family/>.

May God's Blessings be upon you!
Javier and Nan

First Responder Presentation

Would you know how to act quickly if a person in your pew suddenly had a heart attack? Do you know where our AED is located, how to use it, or even what it is? What would you do if a stranger entered the church carrying a weapon, or simply looked threatening? A presentation given by a member of the Gaithersburg Police Department will address all of these issues, and more, on Sunday, June 24th following the 10:00 a.m. service in the undercroft. Please plan to attend this important meeting to learn more about these urgent issues.

Youth Group Seeks Donations for Raised Garden Beds

Next Sunday, June 24th at the 10 am service, we will send off our Ascension Youth to their annual Work Camp/Mission Trip to intercity Philadelphia. Fourteen Ascension Youth will be joined by four Youth from the diocese of Virginia, as has become a tradition over the past few years. Please attend the service to wish them well on their service week.

While the Youth are in Philly, they will construct 10 raised garden beds. The lumber cost is \$1000 and we are seeking donations to help fund the project. Please playfully consider a donation of even the smallest amount. Make checks payable to Ascension with subject line such as "work camp project" or "lumber". Cash can be put in an envelope and labeled accordingly.

Self-sustaining fresh fruits and vegetables are critical to improving children's lives in these unserved communities.

The University of Liberia Alumni Chorus

The University of Liberia is located in Monrovia, Liberia on the West Coast of Africa and is the flagship center of higher learning in Liberia. The University Chorus is a nonprofit Organization in the United States consisting of alumni of The University of Liberia. The Choir has a concert once each year and all proceeds go towards a scholarship fund to continuously sponsor forty students enrolled in full-time studies at the University and the construction of a Fine Arts Center on the University's Fendell Campus in Liberia. The Choir has committed to singing two songs on Sunday, July 22nd at the 10:00 AM service as an offering of thanks and appreciation for your kindness.

1. The Lord bless you and keep you
2. A traditional Liberian tribal song

Volunteer for Grounds Maintenance

If you are free and would like to join us on July 7th from 8 AM - 12 PM, we are organizing volunteers to help prune trees, bushes, landscaping and the overall appearance of Ascension's grounds. If you have yard tool and equipment to help in this project, please let us know. There is a sign up sheet in the Narthex. If you are interested in leading this group, please make a note next to your name.

If you have any questions, please contact Lin at office@ascensionmd.org

Facilities Committee Seeks Volunteers!

Have you ever built a house all by yourself? Neither have we. But we have lived in houses and apartments where things break and need repairs. If you have experience calling plumbers, electricians, roofers, etc., and meeting them when they come for estimates, you are just the kind of person we need for the facilities committee. While we welcome handy people who can fix a lock, drive a screw or change a light bulb, most of our duties consist of identifying projects, arranging for estimates and meeting prospective contractors. Perfect for retirees! The more of us there are, the less anyone person has to do. If you are interested, contact one of the following: Ted Bedell, 301-520-8449; Luis Pedron, 301-922-5610; John Pruessner, 240-271-4739, or email Lin Keene at: office@ascensionmd.org

Are you interested in helping someone in need of transportation get to church?

We have members at Ascension that are looking for a ride to Sunday service. Are you available, are you interested in giving them a lift? If you live in Gaithersburg and would like to assist please contact the parish administrator Lin Keene at office@ascensionmd.org

LIFE LONG LEARNING

Wednesday Morning Book Group

We are reading Derek Wilson's book entitled AMagical World: Superstition and Science from the Renaissance to the Enlightenment. Our group meets on Wednesday mornings at 10:00 a.m. in Ascension's library. All are welcome to participate. Please read Chapter 7 for this coming Wednesday.

Tai Chi

Tai Chi classes are offered at 4:00 p.m. on Thursday afternoons in the Chapel; a good time of peace and balance in a lovely place. Please come and join us.

Tai Chi will be cancelled any Thursday that schools are closed for bad weather this winter. Contact Claire Rosser at 301.275.0617 or Cjrosser@aol.com if you have any questions.

Thursday Morning Yoga

Yoga classes are offered on Thursdays at 10:00 AM, taught by Lucia Pires. The class is multilevel, with an emphasis on gentle yoga, and is appropriate for beginners. Props are offered, but the students are encouraged to bring their own yoga mats.

Lucia Pires is from Rio de Janeiro, Brazil. She is a 500-hour Pranakriya Yoga School of Healing Arts certified yoga teacher. Her training focuses on cultivating and enhancing the relationship of the student with his or her life force through yoga postures, breath work and meditation, in order to create change in awareness and help the student move towards wholeness and greater aliveness. She completed her professional training in 2015.

Lucia is the mother of two boys, ages 14 and 10, and when they give her a little break she enjoys reading, writing, long walks in nature and dancing.

There will be no yoga class on 7/26, 8/16 and 8/23.

Summer Sunday School

There will be summer Sunday school in room 3 (the toddler room/room of refuge). It will be geared toward ages 5 and under, but older children are welcome to come help or just hang out.

If you have questions, contact Megan Didavi 703-636-7199 mdidavi@gmail.com.

Spanish Class

Come and take part in Ascension's Spanish Class on Mondays from 6:00 p.m. to 8:00 p.m. at Ascension House. You don't need to know Spanish to come, because we get together to learn and/or practice. For more information contact Javier at ocampo@ascensionmd.org

CARING FOR OUR COMMUNITY

Prison Ministry

Bubba Pflantzbaum has been writing to an inmate in Cumberland for about 10 years, providing friendship and access to information. His name is Jim, and he may be released in the next year or so. Jim is always looking for people to correspond with, so if you are interested in getting involved with this ministry, please email Bubba at bubbashalom@gmail.com

Ministerio Felicidad

Ascension members prepare lunches and send love and prayers to day laborers in the neighborhood

of the church. Join Javier at 6:00 a.m. on Saturday, June 23 in the church kitchen. If you have any question, Contact Javier at ocampo@ascensionmd.org

Men's Shelter Lunch Preparation

The Men's Shelter Lunch program provides bagged lunches for homeless men, assembled in the Undercroft once a month. Supplies are donated by Ascension members. Depending on the season, we provide forty to eighty lunches a month. The next program is July 15 at 10:15 a.m. Contact Edith at esekasi@gmail.com if you would like to help, or sign up at <http://bit.ly/1VAKEz8>.

Gaithersburg HELP

This organization provides emergency food and other support to needy families in Gaithersburg. Non-perishable food collected at Ascension every week, and during specific holiday in-gatherings, helps to stock the pantry. Donations may be brought to church at any time and left in the narthex. For more information, contact Melanie Mitchell at 301.519.1074 or melanie.mitchell@verizon.net

Mobile Med

Mobile Med: Ascension hosts the Mobile Med van on Tuesday at Ascension House (where the van parks) and the Chapel (where the patients wait). We have volunteers that man the waiting room from 7:00 a.m.-3:00 p.m. You do NOT need medical knowledge or training - we act as hosts to the patients as they wait. We welcome new volunteers!

Jean Cohn
spangle1@comcast.net
240.372.3652.

Montgomery Hospice

Montgomery Hospice is a nonprofit hospice that has been serving the residents of Montgomery County for 36 years. We provide professional end-of-life care in homes, extended care facilities and at Casey House, our acute care facility. We are looking for new volunteers. Our greatest need is for volunteers to visit patients. These volunteers provide companionship for patients, respite for family members, lavender oil hand massages, music by the bedside or help with practical matters. Many provide the gift of "presence" by simply being with a patient. All volunteers go through an application process and a three-day training. For more information, call 301-921-4400 or visit www.montgomeryhospice.org/volunteer

LIFE AT ASCENSION

Ascension Work Camp 2018

Where: Philadelphia, PA St. James School

Cost: \$350 however scholarships will be found for those in need. Please make check out to Ascension and put "work camp" in the memo. Also please do not hand it to me but rather give it to church office in person or mail.

This is always a very rewarding experience for our Ascension Youth. The church will send them off on June 24th at the 12 am service.

Please contact Angie to sign up or with any questions: angela.hightwalker@nist.gov.

Kitchen Closed

Until repairs are completed, the kitchen will be closed. We are sorry for the inconvenience and thank you for your support during this time

PRAYER REQUESTS

Prayers For Those Whose Lives are Closely Linked With Ours: The Cathedral of St. Peter and St. Paul, Cathedral Chapter, Cathedral Chaplains and Cathedral Volunteers, The Protestant Episcopal Cathedral Foundation.

We pray for comfort, healing, courage and hope for Reba Brown, Jean Cohn, Harriette Eleanor Cooper, Fredy Diaz, Peggy Donnellon, Sally & William Glick, Rudi Miksa, Ann Mitchell, Leslie Pool, Leslie Sanya, Fran Spina, Doret Sutherland, Samuel Tellu, Martha Tieran, , and all those who, in this transitory life, are in trouble, sorrow, need, sickness, or any other adversity, as well as for all those on our extended healing prayer list.

QUICK LINKS

[Link to Leaflets for Services](#)

[Link to podcast of Javier's Sunday, June 17 Sermon: "The Kingdom of God Here and Now"](#)

[Link to Sermon and Other Videos page](#)

[Link to the Episcopal Diocese of Washington's Website](#)