

This Week at Ascension

A System of Beliefs or a Way of Life?

"For centuries, Christianity has been presented as a system of beliefs. That system of beliefs has supported a wide range of unintended consequences, from colonialism to environmental destruction, subordination of women to stigmatization of LGBT people, anti-Semitism to Islamophobia, clergy pedophilia to white privilege. What would it mean for Christians to rediscover their faith not as a problematic system of beliefs, but as a just and generous way of life, rooted in contemplation and expressed in compassion, that makes amends for its mistakes and is dedicated to beloved community for all? Could Christians migrate from defining their faith as a system of beliefs to expressing it as a loving way of life?"

"For centuries, Christians have presented God as a Supreme Being who showers blessings upon insiders who share certain beliefs and proper institutional affiliation, but who punishes outsiders with eternal conscious torment. Yet Jesus revealed God as one who "eats with sinners," welcomes outsiders in, and forgives even while being rejected, tortured, and killed. . . . He preached that God was to be found in self-giving service rather than self-asserting domination. . . . What would it mean for Christians to understand, experience, and embody God as the loving, healing, reconciling Spirit in whom all creatures live, move, and have their being?"

"For centuries, Christianity has presented itself as an "organized religion"—a change-averse institution . . . that protects and promotes a timeless system of beliefs that were handed down fully formed in the past. Yet Christianity's actual history is a story of change and adaptation. . . . What might happen if we understood the core Christian ethos as creative, constructive, and forward-leaning—as an "organizing religion" that challenges all institutions (including its own) to learn, grow, and mature toward a deepening, enduring vision of reconciliation with God, self, neighbor, enemy, and creation?"

"Many people today are leaving the belief systems of their parents and grandparents. This is a mass exodus from institutional faith that demographers are calling "the rise of the Nones." Nones comprise about twenty percent of all Americans, and one-third of Americans under thirty. Having little patience with (or appreciation for) mystery, as well as so little humility or basic love for groups other than our own, maybe Christianity in its present formulation has to die for a truly universal and love-centered spiritual path to be born. I sincerely wonder if this might be true."

- Brian McLaren, author of *The Great Spiritual Migration: How the World's Largest Religion Is Seeking a Better Way to Be Christian* (Convergent: 2016), 2-3. Please visit brianmclaren.net to learn more about his work.

HEADLINERS

Latino Ministry Posada

At 7:00 p.m. on Saturday, December 9th, Ascension will host the Posada of the Latino Ministry of the Diocese of Washington. Members of all the Latino congregations will be visiting Ascension and everybody is welcome to join us.

Master the Calendar!

Did you know that Ascension keeps a master calendar, managed by our Parish Administrator Lin

Keene, that organizes and displays all uses of all our space all the time? It's true. As you and your group decide to meet, reach out to Lin or check the calendar on the website to find a room you can use on the date you prefer. To book the room, contact Lin by phone: [301-948- 0122](tel:301-948-0122) or by email : office@ascensionmd.org. and she will add you to the calendar. If there's a conflict, she will let you know and help you find an alternative space, day, or time.

It makes meeting easy. If you have any questions, please contact Lin.

Thanks all,

Betsy Hasegawa

Lost and Found

Lost and found is located on the shelf above the coat area by work room 5. Items found will kept for a period of three weeks.

Volunteers Needed

We are looking for volunteers for the church office from 9:30 a.m. to 3:00 p.m. Contact Lin at office@ascensionmd.org

LIFE LONG LEARNING

Wednesday Book Group: *Christ Actually: Reimagining Faith in the Modern Age*

Read Chapter 9, "Imitation of Christ" in preparation for Wednesday's discussion. The book group meets in the Library from 10:00—11:30 a.m.

Godly Play and Joyful Path

There will be no Godly Play and Joyful Path on November 26 in observance of the Thanksgiving weekend.

CARING FOR OUR COMMUNITY

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, December 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 Lunches program provides bagged lunches, 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.

[Read more](#)

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](tel:301.519.1074) or melanie.mitchell@verizon.net

LIFE AT ASCENSION

What is a “Contemplative Eucharist?”

As you may know we are trying this out at 5:00 p.m. on Sundays in the Chapel. It features meditative easy to sing a capella chants (think ‘Taize’), and moments of silence. Rather than a full length sermon the celebrant offers a reflection on the biblical readings of the day and invites a response from the congregation. Intercessions and Communion complete the service.—RAL

Epiphany Pageant - The King's Birthday

Wanted - Participants young and old; for speaking and nonspeaking parts in our Epiphany Pageant. Needed-Assistant Director(s), Piano Accompanist, Greeter, 4 Narrators, Innkeeper, Mary, Joseph, Shepherds, Inn Workers, Stars, Angels, Kings, and Stable Animals. We have the scripts and the costumes we just need you. The pageant will tentatively be on Sunday January 7th. at the 5:00 p.m. service. Rehearsals on Saturday December 23, 30th and January 6th. from 9:00-10:30 a.m. Please contact Gordon Donnelly. I sing in the choir at 9:00 a.m. , teach in Room 11 at 10:15 a.m., in the instrumental ensemble for the 11:15 a.m. My email is vagordon1@yahoo.com

Thanks,

Gordon

Blessing of the Cars

As we celebrate the beginning of the Christian year we pray that God be with us wherever we go. For that reason we will have the blessing of the cars on December 10 after the 11:00 a.m. services in the parking lot. If you want you can decorate your car with flowers.

Lady of Guadalupe Day

Join us on December 17 to celebrate the Lady of Guadalupe Day at 7:00 p.m. in the Main Church. After the service we will have a Mariachi Band to sing “Las Mañanitas” to the Virgin. If you want to experience more about the Latino Traditions, this would be a great opportunity to do it. After the service we would continue the celebration in the Undercroft with more Mariachi songs and Latin-American food.

Pledge Cards

Remember to bring Your Pledge Cards to Church: And place them in the baptismal font as you come forward to receive Communion.

Yourh Group Fall Service Project

The Northern Montgomery Count (NOMOCO) Episcopal Churches will have a bowling activity on Sunday December 3rd from 4:00 p.m.—5:30 p.m. The cost is \$15 with unlimited cheese pizza and soda, shoe rental and 1.5 hours of bowling included. Contact Angie if you want to go at angela.hightwalker@gmail.com

PRAYER REQUEST

Prayers For Those Whose Lives are Closely Linked With Ours: Christ Church, Chaptico, Christ Church, Clinton Parish, Christ Church, Port Tobacco Parish, Christ Church, Prince George's Parish, Christ Church, Wayside Parish, Christ Episcopal School, Daughters of the King

Pray for Comfort, Healing, Courage, and Hope: Beth, Sue, Melanie, Fran, Mike, Delores, George, Dorett, Ruthie, Suzanne, Sally and William and all those who, in this transitory life, are in trouble, sorrow, need, sickness, or any other adversity.

We pray for peace in the world and all who are serving our country here and abroad, especially those in harm's way, and their families.

We pray for all special intentions, and those on our extended Healing Prayer List.

Quick Links

[Link to Service Leaflets for November 26](#)

[Link to Podcast of Laura's Sermon on Sunday, November 19: "A Thief in the Night"](#)

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



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