

# *This Week at Ascension*

## ***Breathe, Fire, Wind, Womb: A Reflection on the Holy Spirit***

**The Spirit is like breath, as close as the lungs, the chest, the lips, the fogged canvas where little fingers draw hearts, the tide that rises and falls twenty-three thousand times a day in a rhythm so intimate we forget to notice until it enervates or until a supine yogi says *pay attention* and its fragile power awes again.** Inhale. Exhale. Expand. Release. In the beginning, God breathed. And the dust breathed back enough oxygen, water, and carbon dioxide to make an atmosphere, to make a man. Job knew life as “the breath of God in my nostrils,” given and taken away. With breath, the Creator kindled the stars, parted a sea, woke a valley of dry bones, inspired a sacred text. So, too, the Spirit, inhaled and exhaled in a million quotidian ways, animates, revives, nourishes, sustains, speaks. It is as near as the nose and as everywhere as the air, so *pay attention*.

**The Spirit is like fire, deceptively polite in its dance atop the wax and wick of our church candles, but wild and mercurial as a storm when unleashed.** Fire holds no single shape, no single form. It can roar through a forest or fulminate in a cannon. It can glow in hot coals or flit about in embers. But it cannot be held. The living know it indirectly—through heat, through light, through tendrils of smoke snaking through the sky, through the scent of burning wood, through the itch of ash in the eye. Fire consumes. It creates in its destroying and destroys in its creating. The furnace that smelts the ore drives off slag, and the flame that refines the metal purifies the gold. The fire that torches a centuries-old tree can crack open her cones and spill out their seeds. When God led his people through the wilderness, the Spirit blazed in a fire that rested over the tabernacle each night. And when God made the church, the Spirit blazed in little fires that rested over his people’s heads. “Quench not the Spirit,” the apostle wrote. It is as necessary and as dangerous as fire, so stay alert; *pay attention*.

**The Spirit is like wind, earth’s oldest sojourner, which in one place readies a sail, in another whittles a rock, in another commands the trees to bow, in another gently lifts a bridal veil.** Wind knows no perimeter. The wildest of all wild things, it travels to every corner of a cornerless world and amplifies the atmosphere. It smells like honeysuckle, curry, smoke, sea. It feels like a kiss, a breath, a burn, a sting. It can whisper or whistle or roar, bend and break and inflate. It can be harnessed, but never stopped or contained; its effects observed while its essence remains unseen. To chase the wind is folly, they say, to try and tame it the very definition of futility. “The wind blows wherever it pleases,” Jesus said. “You hear its sound, but you cannot tell where it comes from or where it is going. So it is with everyone born of the Spirit” (John 3:8). We are born into a windy world, where the Spirit is steady as a breeze and as strong as a hurricane. There is no city, no village, no wilderness where you cannot find it, so *pay attention*.

**The Spirit is like a womb, from which the living are born again.** We emerge—lashes still wet from the water, eyes unadjusted to the light—into a reanimated and freshly charged world. There are so many new things to see, so many gifts to give and receive, so many miracles to baffle and amaze, if only we *pay attention*, if only we let the Spirit surprise and God catch our breath.

*From Rachel Held Evans, Searching for Sunday*

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# HEADLINERS

## **Parish Town Hall Meeting at 10:15 on Sunday, February 11**

Meet with Randy and Vestry members for updates and a Q&A session about Ascension's transition.

## **February 13 is Shrove Tuesday!**

That's right, Ash Wednesday is on Valentine's Day this year! We need a team of people to organize this annual event. Sign the clipboard Randy will be passing around in church if you want to be part of creating this fun event!

## **Palm Sunday is a 1A Sunday!**

There will be one service at 10:00 a.m. Afterward will be Randy's farewell celebration. Save the date: March 25.

## **Ascension Youth Group Jan FY18 and Mission Trip Info**

**January 28**

Regular Ascension Youth Group  
6 pm – 8pm Ascension Undercroft  
Need dinner volunteers please

Please email or text us if you can attend this Sunday's service project or if your family can cover dinner one of the evenings. Also-I have dates for our Mission Trip in June. It is June 23rd through June 29th. We will return to Philadelphia and will be going with our Virginia diocese friends. Finally-thank you all for the coats and winter wear we sent to St. James! We sent them 37 pounds of warm items and they were so grateful!!

Best-  
Angie and Trevor

# LIFE LONG LEARNING

## **Wednesday Morning Book Group**

We will begin study and discussion of Michael Morwood's book *Is Christ God? Finding Our Faith From Amazon*: "In the new millennium, the most central question is how to understand God and Jesus. This book is an invitation to Christians—and non-Christians—to challenge their inherited notions of how and why Jesus is to be thought of as divine." You can order the book by following this link: [http:// amzn.to/2CRGzCs](http://amzn.to/2CRGzCs). For the 17th read through the end of chapter one.

## **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](tel:301.275.0617) or [Cirosser@aol.com](mailto:Cirosser@aol.com) if you have any questions.

## **Thursday Morning Yoga**

Randy's yoga class is every Thursday at 10:00 a.m. in 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.

## **Godly Play**

This week in Godly Play, we present the Parable of the Good Shepherd. In this story, we learn about the shepherd who knows each of his sheep by name and shows them the way to all good things. If one sheep goes missing, the good shepherd searches for it, even leaving the ninety-nine to do so. When he finds the missing sheep, he calls his friends to rejoice. This story underscores how well Christ knows each of us. It also reminds us that to stay on the true path, we must know Christ as well. We explore how our faith helps us through good times and bad times and take comfort that if we lose our way, Christ will come looking for us and welcome us back into the fold.

## **Children's Formation**

The members of A Joyful Path moved their classroom upstairs to Room 2 (the old nursery). Come and join us in our new setting today after the 9:00 a.m. service.

## **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](mailto:ocampo@ascensionmd.org)

# 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, January 27 in the church kitchen. If you have any question, Contact Javier at [ocampo@ascensionmd.org](mailto: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 January 21 at 10:15 a.m. Contact Edith at [esekasi@gmail.com](mailto: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](tel:301.519.1074) or [melanie.mitchell@verizon.net](mailto:melanie.mitchell@verizon.net)

## Mobile Med

Mobile Med will not be at Ascension House starting tomorrow January 2nd (until the beginning of March). I have posted signs on the Ascension House bulletin board and on the door to the chapel. Signs list the alternate location as well as a number to contact for more information.

Jean Cohn  
[spangle1@comcast.net](mailto:spangle1@comcast.net)  
[240.372.3652](tel:240.372.3652).

# LIFE AT ASCENSION

## Zumba at Ascension

We will have Zumba classes at Ascension every Thursday at 7:30 p.m. in Undercroft Commons. Zumba is a dance fitness program created by Colombian dancer and choreographer Alberto "Beto" Perez during the 1990s. Zumba involves dance and aerobic movements performed to energetic music. The choreography incorporates hip-hop, soca, samba, salsa, merengue and mambo.

## Interfaith Dialogue and Reflection Series

Church of the Ascension will be one of the hosts of a four-part program series of interfaith dialogue and reflection titled "Abraham's Children." The four sessions will be held in March on Wednesday evenings, 7-9 PM as follows:

- March 7 at Church of the Ascension ([205 S Summit Ave, Gaithersburg, MD 20877](https://www.churchoftheascension.org/))
- March 14 at Kehilat Shalom ([9915 Apple Ridge Rd, Gaithersburg, MD 20886](https://www.kehilatshalom.org/))
- March 21 at Islamic Center of Maryland ([19411 Woodfield Rd, Gaithersburg, MD 20879](https://www.islamiccenterofmaryland.org/))
- March 28 at Tikvat Israel Congregation ([2200 Baltimore Road, Rockville, MD 20851](https://www.tikvatisrael.org/))

Developed by the Institute for Islamic, Christian, and Jewish Studies in Baltimore, Abraham's Children offers text study and dialogue among the three Abrahamic faiths in an effort to engage "the complexities of what is shared and what is unique in the Jewish, Christian, and Muslim traditions." The Faith Community Working Group of Montgomery County and the Greater Gaithersburg Interfaith Alliance is teaming up with Church of the Ascension, the Islamic Center of Maryland, Kehilat Shalom and Tikvat Israel Congregation as co-sponsors of the series. For more information or to sign up, write Richard Lederman at [ledermanrc@gmail.com](mailto:ledermanrc@gmail.com) or call him at [240-441-8074](tel:240-441-8074).

# PRAYER REQUESTS

Prayers For Those Whose Lives are Closely Linked With Ours: St. Paul's Church, Baden and St. Mary's Chapel, Aquasco St. Paul's Church, Rock Creek Parish St. Paul's Church, Piney Parish St. Timothy's Parish, DC St. Timothy's Child Development Center, DC Diocesan Convention: The Bishop of Washington, Diocesan Convention Officers, Clerical and Lay Delegates, Convention Task Force and Committee Chairs (January 27) Pray for the Mission and Ministry of the Episcopal Diocese of Washington

We pray for comfort, healing, courage and hope for Harriette Eleanor Cooper, Mike Darracott, Sally and William Glick, Sue Jenkins, Melanie Mitchell, Fran Spina, Ruthie Swain, Gail Unterberger, Kim Weaver, Suzanne Winterhalter, 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 Service Leaflets for January 21](#)

[Link to Podcast of Randy's Sermon on Sunday, January 14: "Like a Broken Window"](#)

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