



# This Week at Ascension

[Link to the Bulletins for February 21](#)

[Link to Ms. Diana Gustafson's Sermon "In Absence We Discover God's Presence" from February 14.](#)

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

## Calendar Highlights

**Friday, February 19**  
6pm Couples in Recovery, Chapel

**Saturday, February 20**  
9am Overeaters Anonymous, Undercroft Commons  
11am AI-Anon, Undercroft Commons  
11am Overeaters Anonymous, Chapel

**Sunday, February 21**  
7:45am Holy Eucharist, Main Church  
8:15am Choir Rehearsal, Choir Room  
9am Holy Eucharist, Main Church  
9am *Godly Play*, Room 6  
9am *A Joyful Path*, Room 11  
9am ESOL Class, Room 1  
10:15am Holy Eucharist for Families with Young Children, Chapel  
10:15am Men's Shelter Lunch Preparation, Undercroft Commons

## On "outgrowing" American Christianity

Every now and then a blog post or article will make the rounds in which the author claims to have "outgrown" church or religion or, in this case, American Christianity. I remember having similar feelings of emancipation, of *starting over, from scratch* when I first began to realize the evangelical faith I had inherited was not the only kind of faith there was. And perhaps such feelings are a necessary and unavoidable part of growing up, of making that important distinction between oneself and one's parents. And yet, when it came time to write a book about church... I couldn't deny the reality that, as much as I may dream of it, there's no starting from scratch... for any of us. Our culture, our past, our biases, our experiences, our communities, our wounds, our healing—this isn't the baggage we carry; it's the skin we wear. We can't just slough it off.

Sure, it would be easier to tell the story of my emancipation from the evil ways of *those Christians* who identify as conservative, evangelical, American. But it wouldn't have been a true story... at least not for me. While my disagreements with many in that community are important and real, *those Christians* were, and continue to be, my friends. They were often the first to show up at my front door with a casserole when the family was down with the flu. They taught me to love and memorize Scripture, to change a diaper, to rejoice with those who rejoice and weep with those who weep, and to think critically enough to deconstruct and reassess some of their own teachings. Most importantly, they were the first people to introduce me to Jesus, something I never want to take for granted.

Certainly others bear much deeper scars, but even the most painful religious experiences cannot simply be discarded. They must be confronted, molded, repurposed. It's a messy, sacred process. This is why, in the wake of my last book release, I so strongly disliked headlines about my "leaving evangelicalism for the Episcopal Church." While I'm happy to acknowledge that I've switched denominational affiliation, there is much about evangelicalism that I joyfully bring with me through the doors of St. Luke's Episcopal Church and which the people

11am Holy Eucharist in Spanish, Chapel  
11am Godly Play, Room 6  
11am A Joyful Path, Room 11  
11:15am Holy Eucharist, Main Church  
12:30pm Lenten Series on Race, Undercroft Commons  
1pm Christian Counselors Gathering, Library  
1pm Personnel Committee, Room 1  
1:30pm Maryland Uke Jam, Chapel  
5pm Holy Eucharist, Chapel

#### Monday, February 22

6:30pm Overeaters Anonymous, Undercroft Commons  
7pm Girl Scouts, Room 6

#### Tuesday, February 23

6:30pm Spanish Class, Ascension House  
7pm Education for Ministry, Library  
7pm Codependents Anonymous, Room 1  
8:30pm AI-Anon, Room 1

#### Wednesday, February 24

10am *Falling Upward* Book Group, Library  
7pm Ensemble Rehearsal, Main Church  
8pm Gamblers Anonymous, Chapel

#### Thursday, February 25

11am Episcopal Seeking Seniors, Asbury  
6pm Bariatric Support Group, Chapel  
7:45pm Choir Rehearsal, Choir Room

[Link to our Online Calendar](#)

## Worship Leaders

Sunday, February 21  
Preacher: (The Rev.) Randy Lord-

there joyfully receive. Very little of my faith has involved leaving and arriving. The vast majority of it has involved wrestling, meandering, stretching, struggling. As the saying goes, it's a work in progress. My spiritual GPS has yet to chirp, " *You have arrived...* "

Let's be real, folks: If you're reading the Bible, you're interpreting it. If you identify as a Christian, you're part of a religion. If you're an American citizen living in America, you can deliberately surround yourself with global perspectives (a good idea!) but you can't just opt out of American Christianity. It's far better to acknowledge the fact that our contexts, privileges, affiliations, and blind spots affect our worldview than it is to announce we've managed to finally overcome or outgrow them. I find it odd that so many who claim to have a postmodern view of Christianity seem so entrenched in modern, Enlightenment-based ideas of objectivity and progress.

Writing *Searching for Sunday* forced me to consider that perhaps real maturity is exhibited not in thinking myself above other Christians and organized religion, but in humbly recognizing the reality that I can't escape my own cultural situatedness and life experiences, nor do I want to escape the good gift of my (dysfunctional, beautiful, necessary) global faith community. This consideration made the writing process infinitely more difficult and infinitely more rewarding. I suspect it had the same effect on my faith.

The truth is, I am a Christian, which means I am religious. And I am an American, which means my Christianity is affected by privilege, by Western philosophy, by 17th century Puritanism, and by Psalms the Singing Songbook. My American Christian heritage includes both Martin Luther King Jr. and the white segregationists who opposed him - a reality that is both empowering and uncomfortable, but one I can't escape, one I want to look squarely in the eyes.

Loving the Church means both critiquing it and celebrating it. We don't have to choose between those two things. But those of us who remain Christian cannot imagine ourselves to be so far above the Church - including the American Church - that we are not a part of it. Yes, we are called to grow and mature, and yes, our convictions and denominational affiliations will likely change, but I've found I'm a better writer—and a better person—when I'm more focused on outgrowing the old me than I am on outgrowing other people in my community. After all, this is Kingdom growth. There aren't ladders, only trellises.

*December 05, 2015* by Rachel Held Evans

Wilkison

*Flower Delivery:* Esther Sawyer,  
Adoma Baffoe

**7:45 AM** *Reader/Prayers:* Jackson Douglas, *Chalicians:* Leslie Sanya, *Healing Prayer:* Kate Siberine, *Acolytes:* Ron Hayden, Jackson Douglas, Aidan Douglas, *Welcome Team:* Frank Sanya, Janet King, *Altar Guild:* Mardia Dennis

**9:00 AM**, *Readers:* Andrew Greene, Carleton MacDonald, *Prayers:* Diana Gustafson, *Chalicians:* Margaret Tellu, Swithin Kwamena-Poh, *Healing Prayer:* Major Clemens, *Acolytes:* Alfred Wasikye, Kofi Dickson, Lisa Dickson, *Welcome Team:* Nii Armah Akuete, Ruby King, Charles Dickson, Alex Langley, *Altar Guild:* Caryl Thomas, Adoma Baffoe, Dotty Pfadenhauer

**11:15 AM** *Reader:* Peedy Terry, *Chalicians:* Avin Lalmansingh, Christian Nwankwo, *Healing Prayer:* Sarah Rubin, *Welcome Team:* Alice Padmore, *Altar Guild:* Avin Lalmansingh Anika Lalmansingh

**5:00 PM** *Reader/Usher:* Howard Holland

*Eucharistic Visitors:* Meredith Horan

## Announcements (click for more info)

### HEADLINERS

[Lenten Series: God's Children Talk About Race](#)

[This Year's Rice Bowl Offering](#)

[Men's Shelter Lunch Preparation](#)

[New Book for Wednesday Morning Book Group](#)

### CHRISTIAN FORMATION

[Godly Play, February 21](#)

[A Joyful Path, February 21](#)

[Youth Group, February 28](#)

[Youth Confirmations](#)

[Education for Ministry](#)

[Armor of Light Viewing and Discussion](#)

[Intro to Islam](#)

[Yoga at Ascension](#)

[Listening Heart Community at Ascension](#)

[Still Water Mindfulness Practice Group](#)

### WORSHIP

[Bulletins for Tablets Link](#)

[Attention Worship Leaders](#)

### SERVICE

[Gaithersburg HELP](#)

[Ascension's Cancer Support Group](#)

[Lord's Table Soup Kitchen](#)

### LIFE AT ASCENSION

[Blood Pressure Screenings, February 28](#)

[Movie Night, March 4](#)

[Ascension's Adventure Group to Tour the "Holy Land"](#)

[Annual Meeting and Candidate's Forum](#)

[Easter Flowers](#)

[Our Winter Weather Policy](#)

[Keeping the Feast](#)

[Spanish Classes](#)

[ESOL Classes](#)

[Prayer Request Updates](#)

## **PUBLICATIONS**

[February Ascendant](#)

[Together We Shine](#)

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## **Prayers**

### **FOR THOSE WHOSE LIVES ARE CLOSELY LINKED WITH OURS:**

In the Diocesan cycle of prayer, we pray for The Audit Committee, The Committee on the Partnership with the Province of South Africa, The Diocesan Retreat Committee

### **PRAY FOR COMFORT, HEALING, COURAGE, AND HOPE:**

Carol, Ann, Dorothy, Leo, The FitzPatrick Family, Abby, George, Marguerite, Warren, Adam, Nancy, Janet, Lou, Fran, Maria, Peter, Leslie, 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.

Equip us and empower us to be witnesses to your love - as advocates and as servants, as ministers of welcome and of hope for all affected by natural disasters, violence, and war.

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

### **THANKSGIVING:**

For the life of Keira Lynn Petersen, niece of Monte Petersen, who died on February 15.

**Episcopal Church of the Ascension**  
205 South Summit Avenue  
Gaithersburg, MD 20877-2315  
301-948-0122  
[ascensionmd.org](http://ascensionmd.org)