



# This Week at Ascension

[Link to the Bulletins for May 31](#)

[Link to Randy's Sermon "We're Bad, God's Mad, Jesus is Sad. Not." from May 24.](#)

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

## Calendar Highlights

### Saturday, May 30

9am Overeaters Anonymous, Undercroft Commons  
9:30am Ascension's Adventure Group, Sugarloaf Mountain  
11am Al-Anon, Undercroft Commons  
11am Overeaters Anonymous, Ascension House

### Sunday, May 31

7:45am Holy Eucharist, Main Church  
9am Holy Eucharist, Main Church  
9am Godly Play, Room 6  
9am ESOL Class, Room 1  
10:15am Holy Eucharist for Families with Young Children, Chapel  
10:15 am A Joyful Path, Room 3  
10:15 am Rite 13, and Confirm, not Conform, Ascension House  
10:15 am Choir Practice, Choir Room  
11am Holy Eucharist in

## The Trinity

The Christian doctrine of the Trinity affirms, in shorthand, "one God in three persons." Like the Nicene Creed, the doctrine of the Trinity is a fourth-century product. And just as the Nicene Creed is a problem for many contemporary Christians, so also is the Trinity. A major reason for this is the word person and its common meaning in modern English. It suggests a distinct center of personality and thus a distinct being. When person is understood this way, the Trinity seems to affirm that God is like a committee of three people, God the creator, God the Son, and God the Spirit. Thus it is not surprising that many Jews and Muslims, Christianity's closest relatives, understand the Trinity to be an abandonment of monotheism and an affirmation of "tri-theism." But this understanding of the Trinity, whether by Christians or Jews and Muslims, is not the ancient meaning of the Trinity. The language used in the Trinity (though not yet the doctrine) goes back to the New Testament. In the 50s, Paul's blessing at the end of one of his letters refers to God, Jesus, and the Holy Spirit: "The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Spirit be with all of you" (2 Cor. 13: 13).

In Matthew's Gospel, written around 90, the risen Christ commands his followers to "make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit" (28: 19). But the doctrine of the Trinity—meaning an officially formulated teaching— took time to develop. Implicit in the three articles of the creed, it became explicit later in the fourth century, especially in the brilliantly poetic theology of Basil of Caesarea, Gregory of Nyssa, and Gregory Naziansus, known together as the Cappadocian fathers, named after the area in central Asia Minor (now Turkey) where they lived. Why do Christians affirm a threefoldness to God? Many religions affirm a twofoldness to God, implicitly or explicitly. Even Christianity's monotheistic relatives Judaism and Islam do. For both, God is transcendent and immanent, more than everything and yet present throughout the universe. Hinduism also affirms a twofoldness to ultimate reality, fully transcendent as brahman and immanent within each of us as atman. Religions, including

Spanish, Chapel  
11am Godly Play, Room 6  
11:15am Holy Eucharist,  
Chapel  
12:30pm Christian  
Formation Teacher's  
Meeting, Room 1  
12:30pm Harvest Festival  
Meeting, Library  
12:30pm Newcomers'  
Welcome Brunch, Undercroft  
Commons  
5pm Holy Eucharist, Chapel  
7:30pm Evensong and  
Reception for Paul Kelley,  
Main Church

#### **Monday, June 1**

11:30pm Cancer Support  
Group, Room 3  
6:30pm Ascension Softball  
vs. Epworth UMC, Flower Hill  
Field  
6:30pm Overeaters  
Anonymous, Undercroft  
Commons  
7pm Listening Hearts  
Community, Library

#### **Tuesday, June 2**

9:30am Staff Meeting,  
Library  
6pm Spanish Bible Study,  
Room 3  
7pm Education for Ministry,  
Library  
7pm Still Water Mindfulness  
Practice, Chapel  
8:30pm AI-Anon, Ascension  
House

#### **Wednesday, June 3**

10am *The Portable Jung*  
Book Group, Library  
7pm Codependents  
Anonymous, Ascension House  
8pm Gamblers Anonymous,  
Ascension House

#### **Thursday, June 4**

11am Yoga, Chapel  
6pm Spanish Class, Room 3  
6:45pm Girl Scouts, Room 6

monotheistic religions, are typically binitarian, to use a word that is not a word. The question is why Christians add a third to this twofold affirmation about God. The answer is obvious—because of Jesus. The reason that Christianity moved from the twofold monotheism of Judaism to a threefold monotheism is because of the significance of Jesus for his followers in the first century and continuing in the centuries since then. He was for them the decisive revelation of God— and continues to be that for Christians.

This is what makes somebody Christian: seeing the decisive, normative revelation, disclosure, epiphany of God in Jesus. The Trinity is thus a testimony, witness, tribute to the centrality of Jesus for Christians. In both Greek and Latin, the meaning of the word translated into English as person is quite different from its modern meaning. In the fourth century when trinitarian doctrine was formulated, the word *persona* in Latin and its Greek equivalent *prosopon* referred to the mask worn by actors in the theater. Actors wore masks not for the sake of concealment (as we might wear Halloween masks today), but to play different roles. The etymology of the Latin *persona* reflects this; its roots mean "to speak through," "to sound through." In a quite literal sense, *persona* as a mask is something an actor speaks through. Applied to the Trinity, the ancient meaning of *persona*/ *prosopon* suggests that for Christians the one God is known and speaks in three primary roles or ways: as creator and the God of Israel; in Jesus; and through the Spirit.

The above is sometimes called an external understanding of the Trinity, because it concerns three primary modes of revelation, three primary roles in which we experience and know God. Some theologians have argued that the Trinity is also about internal relations within God (or within the Godhead, a term often used for the unity that underlies the Trinity). In a general way, the suggestion that there are internal relationships within God makes an important claim. It produces a relational model of God and thus a relational model of reality. Reality is not static, but dynamic and relational. But when theological disputes break out about what those internal relationships are like, I wonder whether we are trying to know too much. The most famous of those disputes is the one that caused the Great Schism within Christianity in the eleventh century. The issue was whether the Holy Spirit "proceeds" from "the Father" or from "the Father and the Son." The Western church affirmed the latter, and the Eastern church the former. In 1054, Christianity split in two over this issue, producing Roman Catholicism and Eastern Orthodoxy. Each side excommunicated the other. There is something at stake in this issue, even as it's unclear that the two sides in the conflict had any inkling of it. And that is if God's Spirit "proceeds" from "the Father and the Son" (and not from "the Father only"), then God can be known only through Jesus and thus only in Christianity. But if God's Spirit "proceeds" from "the Father

**Friday, June 5**  
6pm Family Movie Night,  
Undercroft Commons  
6pm Couples in Recovery,  
Ascension House

[Link to our Online Calendar](#)

## Worship Leaders

**Sunday, May 31**  
Preacher: Ms. Enid Cole

*Flower Delivery:* Esther Sawyer,  
Hawa Clemens

**7:45 AM Reader/Prayers:** Jean Cohn, *Chalicians:* Sharon Hayden, Edna Leake, *Healing Prayer:* TBA, *Acolytes:* Ron Hayden, Jackson Douglas, Aidan Douglas, *Welcome Team:* Don Cohn, Jean Cohn, *Altar Guild:* Leslie Sanya, Wadai Dennis

**9:00 AM Readers:** Barb Mansfield, Andrew Greene, *Prayers:* Carleton MacDonald, *Chalicians:* Major Clemens, Swithin Kwamena-Poh, *Healing Prayer:* Paul Whitmore, *Acolytes:* Kofi Kwamena-Poh, Nuelle Johnson, Stacy Taylor, *Welcome Team:* Naomi Senkeeto, Esther Allotey-Taylor, Bev Stennett, Christine Kroma, *Altar Guild:* Caryl Thomas, Adoma Baffoe, Doty Pfadenhauer

**11:15 AM Reader:** Avin Lalmansingh, *Chalicians:* Page Salazar, Anika Lalmansingh, *Healing Prayer:* Peg Ruppel, *Welcome Team:* Alex Langley, Alice Padmore, *Altar Guild:* Avin Lalmansingh, Anika Lalmansingh

**5:00 PM Reader/Usher:** Hollis King

**Eucharistic Visitors:** Musu Rogers

only," then it is possible that God can be known apart from Jesus and thus in other religions.

To return to the main point, speaking confidently about the nature of internal relationships between the three persons of the Trinity is problematic. How could we ever know? But when we focus on the external meaning of the Trinity, its claim is clear. God is one (Christians are monotheists), and God is known to us in three primary ways.

Borg, Marcus J. (2011-04-12). *Speaking Christian: Why Christian Words Have Lost Their Meaning and Power—And How They Can Be Restored* (pp. 212-216). HarperCollins. Kindle Edition.

## Announcements

(click for more info)

## HEADLINERS

[Evensong and Reception for Paul Kelley, May 31](#)

[Family Movie Night, June 5](#)

[Annual Parish Picnic, June 7](#)

[Broadhurst Architect Presentation, June 14](#)

[Congratulations Graduates!](#)

## CHRISTIAN FORMATION

[Christian Formation Summer Break](#)

[Godly Play, May 31](#)

[A Joyful Path, May 31](#)

[Rite-13 and Confirm, not Conform](#)

[Work Camp 2015](#)

[The Portable Jung](#)

[Still Water Mindfulness Practice Group](#)

[Listening Heart Community at Ascension](#)

## WORSHIP

[Worship Rosters, April - June](#)

[Attention Worship Leaders](#)

[Bulletins for Tablets Link](#)

## SERVICE

Lord's Table Soup Kitchen

Gaithersburg HELP

Ascension's Cancer Support Group

#### LIFE AT ASCENSION

Ascension Softball Schedule

Ascension's Adventure Group to Sugarloaf Mountain, May 30

Newcomer's Luncheon, May 31

Summer Office Hours

Hospitality Hour

Father's Day Food Drive

ESOL Class

Prayer Request Updates

#### THE ASCENDANT NEWSLETTER

May

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#### Prayers

FOR THOSE WHOSE LIVES ARE CLOSELY LINKED WITH OURS:

Trinity Church, DC  
Trinity Church, Newport & Hughesville  
Trinity Church, St. Mary's Parish and St. Mary's Chapel  
Trinity Church, Upper Marlboro

PRAY FOR COMFORT, HEALING, COURAGE, AND HOPE:

Rameses, Lee, Peg, Jackson, Nan, Susan, Gary, Nancy, Nancy, Janet, Lou, Fran, Ryan, 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. For all people affected by natural disasters, violence, and war.

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

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