

EPISCOPAL
**Church of the
Ascension**



This Week at Ascension

[Link to the Bulletins for
March 29](#)

[Link to Ms. Barb Mansfield's
Sermon "Unless a Grain of
Wheat Falls Into the Earth
and Dies" from March 22.](#)

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

Calendar Highlights

Saturday, March 28

9am Overeaters Anonymous,
Undercroft Commons
11am AI-Anon, Undercroft
Commons
11am Overeaters
Anonymous, Ascension House

Palm Sunday, March 29

*No Christian Formation for
Children, Youth, or Adults*
7:45am Holy Eucharist, Main
Church
8:45am Liturgy of Palms and
Holy Eucharist, Main Church*
9am ESOL Class, Room 1
10:15am Holy Eucharist for
Families with young
Children, Chapel
10:15am Choir Practice,
Choir Room
11am Liturgy of Palms and
Holy Eucharist, Main Church*
11am Liturgy of Palms and
Holy Eucharist in Spanish,
Chapel*
5pm Holy Eucharist, Chapel

Love, Not Atonement

The common Christian reading of the Bible is that Jesus "died for our sins"--either to pay a debt to the devil (common in the first millennium) or to pay a debt to God the Father (proposed by Anselm of Canterbury, 1033-1109). Anselm's infamous *Cur Deus Homo* has been called "the most unfortunately successful piece of theology ever written." My hero, Franciscan philosopher and theologian John Duns Scotus (1266-1308), agreed with neither of these understandings. Scotus was not guided by the Temple language of debt, atonement, or blood sacrifice (understandably used in the Gospels and by Paul). He was inspired by the high level cosmic hymns in the first chapters of Colossians and Ephesians and the first chapter of John's Gospel.

After Anselm, Christians have paid a huge price for what theologians called "substitutionary atonement theory"--the strange idea that before God could love us God needed and demanded Jesus to be a blood sacrifice to atone for our sin-drenched humanity. With that view, salvation depends upon a problem instead of a divine proclamation about the core nature of reality. As if God could need payment, and even a very violent transaction, to be able to love and accept "his" own children--a message that those with an angry, distant, absent, or abusive father were already far too programmed to believe.

For Scotus, the incarnation of God and the redemption of the world could never be a mere mop-up exercise in response to human sinfulness, but the proactive work of God from the very beginning. We were "chosen in Christ before the world was made," as the hymn in Ephesians puts it (1:4). Our sin could not possibly be the motive for the divine incarnation, but only perfect love and divine self-revelation! For Scotus, God never merely reacts, but always supremely and freely acts, and always acts totally out of love. Scotus was very Trinitarian.

The best way I can summarize how Scotus tried to change the old notion of retributive justice is this: *Jesus did not come to change the mind of God about humanity (it did not need changing)! Jesus came to change the mind of humanity about*

**Meet in front of
Gaithersburg High School
Entrance for the Procession*

Monday, March 30

6:30pm Overeaters
Anonymous, Undercroft
Commons
7pm Listening Hearts
Community, Library

Tuesday, March 31

9:30am Staff Meeting,
Library
11am Yoga, Chapel
6pm Spanish Bible Study,
Room 3
7pm Education for Ministry,
Library
7pm Still Water Mindfulness
Practice, Chapel
8:30pm AI-Anon, Ascension
House

Wednesday, April 1

10am *Speaking Christian*
Book Group, Library
7pm Codependents
Anonymous, Ascension House
7:30pm Tenebrae, a Service
of Darkness, Main Church
8pm Gamblers Anonymous,
Ascension House

Thursday, April 2

6pm Spanish Class, Room 3
7:30pm Holy Eucharist with
Foot Washing and Stripping
of the Altar, Main Church

[Link to our Online Calendar](#)

Worship Leaders

Sunday, March 29
Preacher: (The Rev.) Randy Lord-
Wilkinson

Flower Delivery: Hawa Clemens,
Adoma Baffoe

7:45 AM *Reader/Prayers:* Leslie
Sanya, *Chalicians:* Enid Cole, Wadai
Dennis, *Healing Prayer:* Meredith
Horan, *Acolytes:* Raymond Chin,
Jackson Douglas, Aidan Douglas,

God. God in Jesus moved people beyond the counting, weighing, and punishing model, that the ego prefers, to the utterly new world that Jesus offered, where God's abundance has made any economy of merit, sacrifice, reparation, or atonement both unhelpful and unnecessary. Jesus undid "once and for all" (Hebrews 7:27; 9:12;10:10) all notions of human and animal sacrifice and replaced them with his new economy of grace, which is the very heart of the gospel revolution. Jesus was meant to be a game changer for the human psyche and for religion itself. When we begin negatively, or focused on the problem, we never get out of the hamster wheel. To this day we begin with and continue to focus on sin, when the crucified one was pointing us toward a primal solidarity with the very suffering of God and all of creation. This changes everything. Change the starting point, change the trajectory!

We all need to know that *God does not love us because we are good; God loves us because God is good.* Nothing humans can do will ever decrease or increase God's eternal eagerness to love.

- Richard Rohr, adapted from *Eager to Love: The Alternative Way of Francis of Assisi*, pp. 183-188

Announcements

(click for more info)

HEADLINERS

[Holy Week and Easter at Ascension](#)

[Easter Artwork and Filled Eggs](#)

[Easter Flowers](#)

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

[Architect's Drawings and Blueprints of a Reconfigured Worship and Community Space](#)

CHRISTIAN FORMATION

[Godly Play, March 29](#)

[A Joyful Path, March 29](#)

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

[Confirmation Class](#)

[Wednesday Evening Spiritual Practice Opportunities](#)

[Still Water Mindfulness Practice Group](#)

[Listening Heart Community at Ascension](#)

Welcome Team: Frank Sanya, Wadai Dennis, *Altar Guild:* Leslie Sanya, Wadai Dennis

8:45 AM *Readers:* Sarah Rubin, Andrew Greene, *Prayers:* Gordon Donnelly, *Chalicians:* Swithin Kwamena-Poh, Sari Stoddard, *Healing Prayer:* Kate Siberine, *Acolytes:* Kayleigh Yankie, Alex Hanson, Nuelle Johnson, *Welcome Team:* Naomi Senkeeto, Esther Allotey-Taylor, Bev Stennett, Christine Kroma, *Altar Guild:* Nancy Carman, Cynthia Perley

11:00 AM *Reader:* Laura Shay, *Chalicians:* Alice Benson, Kirk Fitch, *Healing Prayer:* Kate Siberine, *Welcome Team:* Penelope Cudjoe, Musu Rogers, *Altar Guild:* Avin Lalmansingh, Anika Lalmansingh, Laura Shay

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

Eucharistic Visitor: Jean Cohn

[Speaking Christian Morning Book Study](#)

[Men's Retreat - Save the Date!](#)

WORSHIP

[Calling all Altar Guild Members](#)

[Youth Sunday, New Date](#)

[Acolyte Training and Review](#)

[Bulletins for Tablets Link](#)

SERVICE

[Lord's Table Soup Kitchen](#)

[Gaithersburg HELP](#)

[Ascension's Cancer Support Group](#)

LIFE AT ASCENSION

[Ascension's Adventure Group to Tour Congressional Cemetery, April 11](#)

[ESOL Class](#)

[Family Movie Night, April 17](#)

[Fall Event](#)

[New FACTs on Episcopal Church Growth and Decline](#)

[Annual Report](#)

[Prayer Request Updates](#)

THE ASCENDANT

[March](#)

Prayers

FOR THOSE WHOSE LIVES ARE CLOSELY LINKED WITH OURS:

Calvary Church, Washington
Church of the Atonement, Washington
Church of the Redeemer, Bethesda
Martin Luther King, Jr

PRAY FOR COMFORT, HEALING, COURAGE, AND HOPE:

Debar, Carol, Sue, Lee, Gordon, Joseph, Ann, Susan, Nancy, Onepe, Nancy, Janet, Lou, Fran, Robert, 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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