



*Spires* May 2021

# Church of the Ascension

13216 Detroit Avenue • Lakewood, OH 44107 • [www.ascension-lakewood.org](http://www.ascension-lakewood.org)

## FROM REV. VINCENT BLACK



This year in May we celebrate three very significant days in the Liturgical Calendar, Ascension Day, Pentecost (Whitsunday) and Trinity Sunday. And of course, we also celebrate Mother's Day. Mother's Day in the United States is always the second Sunday in May. However, the other three days are all determined by the date of Easter in any given year so they don't always occur all in the same month and won't again until 2024.



Ascension Day is always forty days after Easter and therefore always on a Thursday. It is a very significant feast for the whole Church and especially for this parish as we are named for this holy day. On this day we remember that Jesus ascended to heaven taking his resurrected, glorified, and still wounded body, to the right hand of God. Jesus who was abandoned, beaten, and killed is now alive, glorified, and ascended. The fullness of humanity is not only in heaven with God but is actually incorporated into God's very being.

We always celebrate Pentecost 50 days after Easter ("penta-" is a prefix meaning 5). On Pentecost we rejoice that Jesus kept his promise and sent the Holy Spirit to empower and sanctify his Church. In Eucharistic Prayer D (BCP 374) the priest prays the following words right before the consecration of the bread and wine,

*"And, that we might live no longer for ourselves, but for him who died and rose for us, he sent the Holy Spirit, his own first gift for those who believe, to complete his work in the world, and to bring to fulfillment the sanctification of all."*

We will use Eucharistic Prayer D for the celebration of Holy Eucharist on all three of these holy days. Try to pay particular attention to these words. They are powerful words. Remember at baptism we are marked as Christ's own for ever when the priest makes the sign of the cross upon our forehead and says those very words preceded by our name and declaring that we are sealed by the Holy Spirit in Baptism (BCP 308).

The following Sunday, the first Sunday after Pentecost is always Trinity Sunday, the day we celebrate the great mystery of one God in three persons, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. Many of our prayers and the heart of our creeds include some version of, "to the Father, through Christ, in union with the Holy Spirit." Pick up your Book of Common Prayer (BCP) or your Sunday bulletin and notice how many times this formula occurs in one form or another. In the Trinity we find One for everyone. Not because it's all about us and therefore we get to pick and choose but rather because it is all about God and being made in God's own image and likeness we identify with various aspects of God in different ways at different points in our lives. So in actuality, as Christians every day we live is life in the Trinity, Trinity Day if you will, for it is in, through, and with The Holy Trinity that we live, move, and have our being.

A few other things before I close my reflection for this month. On Ascension Thursday we will celebrate Holy Eucharist at 7:30pm. Since we are not able to have a parish meal after Eucharist this year it is even more important that we all share in the Lord's meal together in Holy Communion either in-person or via Facebook. And on Pentecost we will celebrate the same service at 8 and 10:30am with music and have a family service at 9:30am just as we did on Easter. Please be sure to participate as we celebrate the gift of the Holy Spirit. And finally, look in your bulletins at the words in italics printed right before the start of the service and right before the Nicene Creed. Read and reflect on them. We will examine them more closely in the sermon on Trinity Sunday. They are printed on page 2 as well.

## FROM REV. VINCENT BLACK

*"Please note that in our liturgy when we refer to God we cannot adequately verbalize the magnitude and comprehensiveness of God's diversity and are always limited by our use of language. We acknowledge that although Jesus was born into history as a man, neither God the Father nor God the Holy Spirit were embodied with human sex. Although our language is often not all inclusive we believe God always is. God made human beings in God's own image with complexity and diversity. Thank you for sharing your diversity and complexity with us as we worship God together."*

*"We say these words as a gathered community to affirm our belief in God as creator, redeemer, and sustainer of all creation, as the source of life and holiness. God has blessed humanity with relationships and community which are part of God's own essence as Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. We do not say these words as some sort of litmus test but as an invitation to wrestle with the mystery and complexity of God with generations of Christians who have gone before us and with generations who will come after us."*

## FROM SUSAN O'DONNELL, SENIOR WARDEN



### MAY MESSAGE FROM THE SENIOR WARDEN

Welcome May! In the fullness of the Easter season, I hope you will join us as we rev up the building and grounds gardening efforts on the first Saturday of each month. Our church property is park like and requires many hands to keep it beautiful and welcoming. The first couple of months of the season we can control the weeds, mulch, and trim the bushes. WOW!!!! beauty will abound within our gardens, welcoming the community and our congregation to rest, reflect, relax, and repose. We begin at 9:00am on the first Saturday of the month, working together in community, to care for our gardens at Ascension. There is something for everyone to do at every age. An hour or two of your time will help us make the yard the beautiful place it is meant to be.

As a vestry we are beginning to work on a video tour of the church to create a digital inventory of our church assets. This is following an insurance recommendation to make sure that in any event we know exactly what we value in our church. Some of you might begin worrying as you read this. I understand your worries because I remember the last time an inventory was asked of us at Ascension. It was when there was talk about closing our church. Today, due to God's grace, we are working NOW to "be a beacon of hope and a witness of the gospel to for all people" as stated in the Ascension Prayer.

Also, vestry is working to archive our years and years of past church records and photos. A team of volunteers has agreed to help locate, sort, and categorize this information. As you probably guessed the church records will be digitalized, working backwards from the present. Our 150th year celebration is not too far off.....2025. The archiving by volunteers will encapsulate our church history and allow all of us to celebrate it on our 150th anniversary.

At our vestry retreat at the very end of March, we worked with Father Aaron Gerlach, Rector of Old Trinity in Tiffin, by zoom. He is a peer of Father Vincent's. We dissected the prayer for Ascension, our missional prayer, sentence by sentence to build meaning and turn its words into actions. We analyzed and examined the words at a personal level as well as in the context of the church. The "Prayer for Church of the Ascension" is so powerful. It calls us to walk through our own life as Jesus did. This prayer was written by Father Vincent. He shared at the retreat that the words for the prayer flowed through him and were inspired by the Holy Spirit. It was a wonderful experience and as I pray and reflect during the week, I continue to examine it sentence by sentence.

And now as I still reflect on our church missional prayer, I cannot help but remember Easter and how "we witnessed to the gospel". The dedication of so many brought us three in-person church services and one live streaming version. There were four services to join on Easter morning. Members of our church worshipped as well as others from churches still closed and still others joined us who attended Ascension long ago as children. It was wonderful to see each other again in person (masked and socially distant of course). The 9:30am outdoor Easter family service was attended by at least thirty children with their families. Our young church school members led us in readings and prayer and brought the Easter story to life through a narrative retelling. Beginning in May, every fourth Sunday, there will be an outdoor 9:30 am family and intergenerational outdoor worship service before the 10:30am service. Everyone is welcome to attend. It will be organized by the leaders of our Christian education team. Consider joining us after the 8:00am service or just come to the outdoor family/intergenerational service at 9:30am, another way to "witness the gospel" at Church of the Ascension. Hopefully, my grandchildren and John and I will be there on Pentecost, Sunday May 23rd at 9:30am for the family and intergenerational service. Maybe we will see you there too.

In Faith, Susan O'Donnell, Senior Warden

# FROM LEAH ROMANELLI DEJESUS, SEMINARIAN

## Moving Stories from our Matriarchs

May 31 is the Feast of the Visitation (Luke 1:39-56), when a newly pregnant Mary goes to her cousin Elizabeth, whom the angel Gabriel has said is also pregnant. When John the Baptist, still in Elizabeth's womb, hears Mary's voice calling to Elizabeth, he leaps with joy and Elizabeth, filled with the Holy Spirit, praises God that the mother of the Christ child is visiting her. The interaction concludes with one of our most popular canticles, the Magnificat. Because this holy fast approaches, we begin our tour of our matriarchs featured in the stained glass windows in the narthex with Mary and Elizabeth.

There is too much to know about Mary from one brief article, so I will detail a few things about Mary the person here, but would like to send you to this excellent sermon by Rev. Dr. Wil Gafney for more meaty information on her. The link will be at the end of this article along with another link to a dramatic sermon I presented on Mary's life almost a decade ago for Mother's Day.

The first thing to know about Mary is that her name is Miryam! Mary is the English translation of the Greek Maria, which is a translation of the Hebrew Miryam. However one decides to pronounce her name, she is young. She is a child by today's standards and a young woman by the standards of the day as a young teenager. She agrees to become Jesus' mother, but being a mother with no father stepping up was not only socially frowned upon, it was dangerous. If Joseph had not agreed to still wed Mary (thanks to his own visit from a very busy angel), she may have been cast out of her family and in the worst case, even stoned by her community, as we see happening to the woman suspected of adultery in John 8.

Mary has come to symbolize and mean a lot of things that we have decided on her behalf. We know almost nothing about her as an individual, but we've decided that she must be holy and pure in order to be chosen to carry and nurture Jesus. As an extension of that holiness, Mary is often depicted in art as a demure and passive type of angelic. However, from her words in the Magnificat, we know that in actuality she is more like the angels of Revelation, strong and prophetic, decrying evil and insisting on a new world order where God's mercy reigns. She proclaims his power, his defense of the poor, his overthrow of earthly rulers. And we think our mothers had high expectations of *us*? Mary knows her son is going to change the world and part of the reason she says yes to God and yes to being Christ's mother is that she wants to participate in the restoration of justice. Read her words and my side-by-side commentary:



# FROM LEAH ROMANELLI DEJESUS, SEMINARIAN

## The Magnificat

My soul proclaims the greatness of the Lord,  
 my spirit rejoices in God my Savior; \*  
 for he has looked with favor on his lowly servant.  
 From this day all generations will call me blessed: \*  
 the Almighty has done great things for me,  
 and holy is his Name.  
 He has mercy on those who fear him \*  
 in every generation.  
 He has shown the strength of his arm, \*  
 he has scattered the proud in their conceit.  
 He has cast down the mighty from their thrones, \*  
 and has lifted up the lowly.  
 He has filled the hungry with good things, \*  
 and the rich he has sent away empty.  
 He has come to the help of his servant Israel, \*  
 for he has remembered his promise of mercy,  
 The promise he made to our fathers, \*  
 to Abraham and his children for ever.

*lowly: Mary isn't being self-deprecating, she's acknowledging that God is so much more powerful and holy than humanity and she's marveling at getting to participate in God's work in the world.*

*fear: think of this more like awe*

*God has taken down kingdoms that oppress his people before and that is what Mary hopes for today.*

*God will give to the needy what they lack, caring for their physical and spiritual needs and those who would not help them when they had plenty will be deprived.*

*The promise is the one God made to Abraham to make his descendants as many as the stars, to be their God and they God's people, and to take them to the Promised Land. Although by Mary's day the Israelites have had and lost the Promised Land, there is a constant hope of returning.*

Mary is not the only woman saying yes to an unexpected pregnancy in this story, though. Elizabeth, her cousin, is significantly older than Mary and should have been past her child-bearing years, especially in the first century CE. Church tradition tells us she was about sixty years old at a time when even living to sixty was a huge achievement. Elizabeth came from a long family line of priests and was married to a priest. We know that since priest is a respected, educated community role, that Elizabeth probably had more access to learning, resources, diverse foods, and leisure time than most Jewish women of the day. She did not, however, have the ability to bear children. The angel Gabriel visited her husband, the priest Zechariah, and told him that they would have a son. This story intentionally mirrors other stories from the Torah of God giving children to infertile couples, like Sarah, whose husband is Abraham (from the Magnificat! Parents of Isaac); Rebekah, whose husband is Isaac (parents of twins Jacob and Esau); and Hannah, whose husband is Elkanah (parents of the prophet Samuel).

# FROM LEAH ROMANELLI DEJESUS, SEMINARIAN



While Christianity has more stories and traditions about Mary than can be written in one article, it does not have a huge catalogue of extra-canonical stories about Elizabeth. Interestingly, Mary and Elizabeth are respected figures in Islam, as well. That faith tradition says that Zechariah was in charge of Mary's education and that she was always at the temple and eager to learn more and that Elizabeth helped to raise Mary and loved her like a daughter.

While we have no idea how much if any of this information is historically accurate, it drives home a guiding principle of the saints: we look to their lives because we can see ourselves reflected in them. How many of us have a beloved aunt or cousin to whom we run when we're afraid or overwhelmed? How many of us are Hermione Grangers from *Harry Potter*—and apparently also Marys in the Muslim faith!—eager to learn and grow and be challenged? How many of us struggle or know someone who struggles with infertility? If God can work through these people, God can work through us. And if these people can say yes to God, so can we. Deciding is just the first step.

## Resources:

Rev. Dr. Wil Gafney's sermon on Mary's life: <https://www.wilgafney.com/2020/08/16/mary-of-god/>

My Mother's Day dramatic presentation on Mary's life: <https://youtu.be/uGZ2mw4jtXc>

For a video on Muslim faith and Mary, watch Chicago Theological Seminary's Prof. Najeeba Syeed give a lecture at the Women's Mosque of America here: <https://youtu.be/OcVZkIKUIAM>. Please note before watching that in Arabic, Mary is translated Miryam and Jesus is translated as the Prophet Issa.

**God loves you. No exceptions.®**

# May 20 901



Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
<b>BIRTHDAY CELEBRATIONS</b> May 07: Joshua Gillies May 10: Ann Beyer May 13: Brenda Killey May 18: Marilyn Little May 18: Jeffrey Welfley			<b>ANNIVERSARY CELEBRATIONS</b> May 22: Allison Thompson May 22: Daniel Vanah May 23: Kathleen Jones May 24: Joyce Knapp May 27: Heather Doerschuk		1 9 am - Yard & Garden Cleanup	
2	3	4 5:30 pm - Trials for Hope Meal (Take out only) 12:12 pm- Noon day prayer via conference call	5	6	7	8
9 8 am- Service (Make reservations) 10:30 am- Service (Make reservations)	10	11 12:12 pm- Noon day prayer via conference call (See Page7)	12	13 5:30 pm - Community Meal (Take out only) 7:30 pm - Ascension Thursday Service (Make reservations)	14	15
16 8 am- Service (Make reservations) 10:30 am- Service (Make reservations)	17	18 12:1 2pm- Noon day prayer via conference call (See Page 7)	19	20	21	22
23 8 am- Service (Make reservations) 9:30 am- Family and Intergenerational Service (Make reservations) 10:30 am- Service (Make reservations)	24 5:30 pm - Trials for Hope Meal (Take out only)	25 12:12 pm- Noon day prayer via conference call (See Page 7)	26	27	28	29
30 8 am- Service (Make reservations) 10:30 am- Service (Make reservations)	31					

## In-person worship on Sundays

Please do not come to church if you are not feeling well.

All will be required to wear a mask and keep a social distance of 6 feet. Please bring your own mask. Masks will be available if you forget to bring one.

Hand sanitizer will be provided, and you are asked to use it. It is recommended that you have your own hand sanitizer as well.

There will be no coffee hour following the services at this time. People may socialize at a safe distance outside on the lawn or in the garden.

8 am and 10:30 am services will be in the church. As a rule we will enter via the center aisle, and exit via the side aisles maintaining social distance.

All these things may seem to be a burden and to diminish our experience of worship. The devil, the power of evil, wants us to be discouraged and to give up hope. We need to be mindful that we worship God as our Creator and Redeemer and that all our hope on God is founded! We will not give up gathering as the Body of Christ simply because it is less than ideal. Remember we follow a Lord who was terribly inconvenienced by the crucifixion but in the end rose from the dead and freed us from death and despair. So in this season we gladly bear the burden of keeping each other and ourselves safe while simultaneously worshiping God and bearing witness to the world of God's unwavering love.

If you plan on attending church in person please register at <https://ascensionregistration.eventbrite.com> before 12pm on the day before.

## Noon day prayer Tuesdays At 12:12pm via conference call

On Tuesdays there will be a conference call enabling you to call in and join Father Vincent and other members of our Ascension community for:

- Noonday Prayer (10 minutes),
- A reflection from Forward Day by Day (5 minutes),
- Time for us to check-in with each other (20 minutes),
- Time to ask questions and exchange information (10 minutes),
- Prayer for the Church of the Ascension.

This will give everyone access to our priest and allow us to continue together in prayer and fellowship.

**We will start noonday prayer promptly at 12:12 and end just before 1pm.  
Please do not call in before 12:05pm.**

You can call in for all or part of the time.

We will use the Book of Common Prayer pp. 103-107.

Dial-in number: (425) 436-6300

Access code: 593523#

Use \*6 to mute and un-mute yourself when trying to talk.

## Ascension Permanent Zoom Meeting Link

Join Zoom Meeting

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/82605560985?pwd=NUZPYmp5bFpSQXEzVGZEOXpjOEExaQT09>

Meeting ID: 826 0556 0985

Passcode: ascension

Tap for cell phone to call automatically:

+13017158592,,82605560985#,,,,\*786753522# US (Washington DC)

Or Dial

+1 301 715 8592 US (Washington DC)

Meeting ID: 826 0556 0985

Passcode: 786753522

## ASCENSION DAY

We will celebrate our parish name day with a service of Holy Eucharist on May 13, Ascension Thursday, at 7:30pm. The service will also be streamed via Facebook.

Unfortunately due to the ongoing pandemic and the resulting restrictions, we will not hold our customary parish dinner that evening.

## MONTHLY FAMILY OUTDOOR SERVICE

Because of the wonderful responses from our children and adults alike, we will have an outdoor family service (similar to what we had on Easter) once a month. It will be held on the fourth Sunday of the month at 9:30am. Our next Outdoor Family Service be held on May 23, the Day of Pentecost. All are invited to attend.

Please register at <http://ascensionregistration.evenbrite.com>

## SUNDAY 10:30AM SERVICE

The entire service is streamed  
live each Sunday at 10:30am on

The Church of the Ascension Facebook page  
[facebook.com/pg/ascensionlakewood/videos/](https://www.facebook.com/pg/ascensionlakewood/videos/),

and at

[www.ascension-lakewood.org](http://www.ascension-lakewood.org).

## YARD CLEAN UP

Join us for garden & yard clean-up Saturday May 1 at 9am.

There is something for everyone to do at every age.

An hour or two of your time will help us make the yard the beautiful place it is meant to be.

**Note for your calendar garden and yard clean-ups are the first of each month.**

## REMINDER TO THE PARISH AND COMMUNITY

- Community Meals will continue as scheduled. **Meals will be prepared for take-out**
- Vestry Meetings will be virtual until further notice.
- Please click on the link for a list of phone and internet AA meetings [Online Intergroup Alcoholics Anonymous](#)

## PLEDGES AND OFFERINGS TO THE CHURCH

Please mail in your pledges/financial offerings so we can continue with the ministries of the church as well as meet our financial obligations.

**OR**

## YOU CAN USE PLASTIC TO DONATE TO THE CHURCH!

At [theascensionshop.com](http://theascensionshop.com) you can use plastic to donate to the church. Credit and debit cards are accepted. One time, Weekly, Bi-Weekly, and Monthly contributions can be entered. All contributions will show on your annual statement. Just take a look! With thanks to theascensionshop creator Michael Crowdes; send questions to [crowdes@gmail.com](mailto:crowdes@gmail.com).

**amazon**smile  
You shop. Amazon gives.

You can pick **Church of the Ascension** to donate to on **amazon**smile and amazon will donate a percentage of your total purchase to the church.



## CLOTHING DRIVE HIATUS



**Due to COVID-19 we are no longer collecting clothing for St. Luke's. Please do not drop off clothes at church. The dropbox has been removed.**