



Think On These Things...

My words in this particular note to you will span the end of Lent and the beginning of Eastertide.

Just as winter has given way to spring, or so at least we hope, so too will the lengthening shadows of Lent give way to joy and light of Eastertide.

Just as I wrote to you last month that we would shift our creed to the traditional language of the Apostles' Creed for the season of Lent, I want you to know that we will use the ecumenical text of the ancient Nicene Creed for the season of Eastertide to Pentecost.

Why shift creeds and language? There are two primary reasons that I can think of. One is pedagogical—if we only use historical creeds sparingly and for one Sunday at a time, we don't learn them. And if we don't learn them, then we don't know the language of our faith. So I prefer to use creeds for a season so that they can become part of us, and provide instruction for us whether we be seasoned Christians or seekers of the faith, or a bit of both—as most of us are. The second reason is that, when it comes to worship, words matter... and using different words expands our understanding of theological concepts. For instance, I hope that as we have used the traditional language of the Apostles' Creed this Lent, you have considered what difference it makes to say that Christ descended to the dead versus he descended into hell... does "descending into hell," refer to the totality of the

passion, or just what happened after Jesus died? Does the descent into hell (the experience of God-abandonment) shape our understanding of the cry of dereliction (my God, my God, why have you forsaken me?) of Jesus on the cross?

These are important questions to consider in our faith as we prepare for Easter. When we say, "Christ is risen, he is risen indeed," I hope that we will have considered precisely from what Christ has risen.

And as we say the Nicene Creed for the season of Eastertide, I hope we will encounter faith questions. Why does it matter to say that Jesus was begotten, not made? What does it say about our Easter faith that Jesus is light from light? What faith claim are we making when we say that "For us and our salvation he came down from heaven?" (And as a side note, we are using the ecumenical version because the gendered language for humankind in the traditional Nicene Creed is simply too abundant to correct without creating syntax errors.)

And whatever faith questions our language and creedal claims provoke in us, I would love to hear your insights and your questions. Like most ministers, I didn't go to seminary in the hopes that I would one day read balance sheets and moderate session meetings, as important as those things are. I went because I wanted to be able to ask better questions, and hopefully get better answers. I would love to hear from you.

—Baron Mullis



HOLY WEEK at First Church

Palm Sunday
April 14

Celebration Worship - 9 am
Procession of the Palms - 10:15 am
Traditional Worship - 11 am

Maundy Thursday
April 18
7 pm

Good Friday
April 19
12 noon

Easter Sunday
April 21
Sunrise Service - 7 am
Celebration! Worship - 9 am
Traditional Worship - 11 am



LECTIONARY

APRIL 7
FIFTH SUNDAY IN LENT
Isaiah 43:16-21
Psalm 126
Philippians 3:4b-14
John 12:1-8 3

APRIL 14
PASSION/PALM SUNDAY
Luke 19:28-40
Isaiah 50:4-9a
Philippians 2:5-11
Luke 22:14—23:56

APRIL 18
MAUNDY THURSDAY
Exodus 12:1-14
Psalm 116:1-2, 12-19
1 Corinthians 11:23-26
John 13:1-17, 31b-35

APRIL 19
GOOD FRIDAY
Isaiah 52:13—53:12
Psalm 22
Hebrews 10:16-25
John 18:1—19:42

APRIL 21
RESURRECTION OF THE LORD
Isaiah 65:17-25
Psalm 118:1-2, 14-24
Acts 10:34-43
John 20:1-18

APRIL 28
SECOND SUNDAY OF EASTER
Acts 5:27-32
Psalm 150
Revelation 1:4-8
John 20:19-31

April 2019 at a Glance

Monday, April 1

11:00 am Congregational Care Team

Tuesday, April 2

7:00 pm Women's Bible Study

Wednesday, April 3

7:30 pm T&T Group

Thursday, April 4

6:45 pm Deacons

Sunday, April 7 - Fifth Sunday in Lent

9:00 am Celebration! Worship (Old Buttonwood Hall)

9:45 am Lectio Divina (MacColl Room)
Children's Sunday School (Cochran Room)

11:00 am Traditional Worship (Sanctuary)

12:15 pm Twenties & Thirties Brunch (Irish Pub)

1:00 pm Band of Boomers - Adventure Aquarium

Tuesday, April 9

7:00 pm Women's Bible Study

Wednesday, April 10

7:30 pm T&T Group

Thursday, April 11

12:00 pm Women of Wit & Wisdom

5:30 pm Membership & Evangelism Committee

6:30 pm Trustees

Saturday, April 13

10:00 am FPC Bike Ride - Schuylkill River Trail

Sunday, April 14 - Palm Sunday

9:00 am Celebration! Worship (Old Buttonwood Hall)

9:45 am Children's Sunday School (Old Buttonwood Hall)

10:15 am Palm Sunday Procession (Rittenhouse Square)

11:00 am Traditional Worship (Sanctuary)

12:15 pm Fellowship (Old Buttonwood Hall)

Tuesday, April 16

9:30 am WiseRetirees

6:30 pm Session

7:00 pm Women's Bible Study

Wednesday, April 17

7:30 pm T&T Group

Thursday, April 18

7:00 pm Maundy Thursday Service (Sanctuary)

Friday, April 19

12:00 pm Good Friday Service (Sanctuary)

Sunday, April 21 - Easter

7:00 am Sunrise Service (Sanctuary)

9:00 am Celebration! Worship (Old Buttonwood Hall)

9:45 am Easter egg hunt (Old Buttonwood Hall)

11:00 am Traditional Worship (Sanctuary)

12:15 pm Fellowship (Old Buttonwood Hall)

Monday, April 22

Church office closed.

Tuesday, April 23

7:00 pm Women's Bible Study

Wednesday, April 24

7:30 pm T&T Group

Saturday, April 27

8:30 am Habitat Workday

Sunday, April 28

9:00 am Celebration! Worship (Old Buttonwood Hall)

9:45 am Lectionary Bible Study (MacColl Room)

Children's Sunday School (Cochran Room)

11:00 am Traditional Worship (Sanctuary)

The Messiah, part 3

12:15 pm Fellowship (Old Buttonwood Hall)

Monday, April 29

6:30 pm Missions Committee

Tuesday, April 30

7:00 pm Women's Bible Study



THE PROCESSION OF PALMS

Once again, First Church will join with other Rittenhouse Square neighborhood congregations for the procession of palms to mark Palm Sunday. Participants may join the procession and walk as long as they wish, with various congregations dropping off along the way.

The procession begins at the goat statue in Rittenhouse Square at 10:15 AM sharp, and stops first at Church of the Holy Trinity (19th & Walnut) before making its way to First Church at 10:30. Those who wish to remain at First Church may do so; those who wish to continue will visit Trinity Memorial Church (22nd & Spruce), St. Patrick's Church (20th & Locust), and conclude at 11:00 AM at Church of the Holy Trinity.

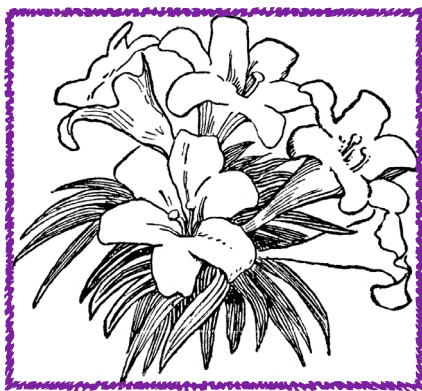
Music at First Church

Premier Performance on Easter — “The Light of Christ”

Every year I find myself contemplating the many special services at First Church and thinking, “Should I stick with something familiar and loved, or try to find something new and fresh and worthy of the worship we offer here?” Usually, in the end, I do a bit of both. This happens especially around Easter, when we’ll be expecting lots of visitors. There are a few pieces without which many peoples’ Easter simply “wouldn’t be” Easter! Do we include them by rote because it’s what people expect? Or do we take a gamble on something new?

This year, in addition to the familiarity of the *Hallelujah Chorus*, *Christ Has Conquered*, and *The Strife is O’er*, the choirs will be singing a piece I wrote specifically to marry the old and the new. I’ve taken several ancient texts along with their ancient tunes, but have glued them together in a new and striking way. “The Light of Christ” is scored for choir, organ, brass and percussion.

“The Light of Christ” (with the response “Thanks be to God”) comes from the beginning of the Easter Vigil as the Pascal candle is carried into the darkened church. This is the opening



strain of the piece, sung after the choir imitates the anxious and fearful crowd with a whispering and murmuring. This is followed by the line from the Nicene Creed, *and the third day he rose again according to the scriptures*—the very reason why we gather on Easter. Next, sung to its ancient tune over a drone, the first three statements of the *Exultet* are

sung, commanding us to rejoice and glory in our risen King. Then, as at the beginning, almost fearful, the choir begins to whisper Alleluia—which grows into a terrifying brass fanfare as the choir sings the “Great Alleluia.” That fanfare / Alleluia

gesture happens three times, ascending a half step and growing in complexity each time. After the last Alleluia rings through the building, the bombast melts away, and the conclusion of the Nicene Creed emerges, sung to the 17th century Credo III melody. Under the choir, chimes and brass discreetly play *Victimae Paschali Laudes*, the ancient gradual hymn for Easter morning. The soaring Amen of Credo III brings the piece to a close, as the clouds part and we look toward our risen King.

—Andrew Senn

Handel’s Messiah — it’s not just for Christmas!

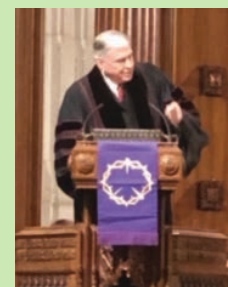
On Sunday, April 28th (the week after Easter), the Chancel Choir and orchestra will offer Part 3 of Handel’s *Messiah* in morning worship. This is the Easter portion and focuses solely on the resurrection. It’s long been an interest of mine to offer *Messiah* in a worship service, and I rejoice that this is the year.

After all the excitement from Holy Week has subsided, please return on Low Sunday and revel in Handel’s glorious strains of *The Trumpet Shall Sound*, *I Know That My Redeemer Liveth* and *Worthy is the Lamb*.

—Andrew Senn

Reflecting on Excitement, Leadership, and Giving...

For our first *Conversations Worth Having*, Dr. William G. Enright spent the weekend with First Church officers—as well as pastors and elders from sister congregations, our Synod Executive, and members of our own congregation who were interested



in learning about the dynamics of giving in the local congregation.

Over 40 people gathered to

spend the morning in reflection on the ministries of our various congregations. We had “Table Talk” and considered what excites us about First Church—and how we then use our excitement to tell our stories so that others know about what we are doing here at 21st and Walnut. Dr. Mullis noted at the end of the day, “The topic was giving, but I am sure it hasn’t escaped your notice that this has really been a seminar on leadership.”

Be sure to thank those officers and members who gave their Saturday to reflect on our ministry. Some of us learned some new things, many of us got a review of what we might already have known, but all of us reflected on what drives our beloved First Church, and how we might reach out to the center of Philadelphia in meaningful ways.

Connecting with Other Faiths: *Love Your Neighbor*

On Friday, March 15th, 50 men, women, and children were gunned down while at prayer at a mosque in New Zealand. We need to ask ourselves: What is our responsibility as Christians? As members of the First Presbyterian Church in Philadelphia? How does an interfaith framework help us to view all humans as God's children, beloved by the creator and therefore worthy of our respect and care? What is the means by which we reach out in a timely fashion to show compassion and solidarity?

We earnestly ask you, members of this community, to respond to these questions. Perhaps we can come together for another table talk?

We reached out to Megan LeCluyse to learn about UPenn's response to the mosque shootings, and her observations have shaped this article. The Muslim students organized a vigil on campus on Friday, the day of the shooting, with the support of the college administration. Megan, representing the Christian Association, and a Rabbi were among the speakers. There was a terrific turnout, with students representing a variety of communities. But what happens next? We understand the importance of interfaith relationships, and standing in solidarity with those who are targeted, showing compassion and concern—as at the vigil—is one aspect of interfaith action. Megan emphasized that, while our interfaith relationships are important, it doesn't fall only on Muslims to educate us about Islam; as Christians, we have a responsibility to educate ourselves about other traditions; knowing more about other faiths, then, can be seen as another aspect of interfaith action.



"The Golden Rule" by Norman Rockwell

And knowing more can better prepare us to be aware of religious stereotypes that may be part of our everyday thinking, and certainly part of what we hear every day. Megan gave an example of a post from one of the Penn students that highlighted how the media kept referring to the mosques as "peaceful" mosques, implying that was something notable, when almost every mosque is a peaceful mosque. She challenged us to notice and name the unhealthy and inaccurate stereotypes that have been allowed to thrive in the U.S. In the March 18th edition of *The Guardian*, Mesrine Malik comments on how the message about Muslims has become incorporated into a white supremacist narrative that weaves anti-Muslim hate into a tapestry along with

antisemitism and anti-immigration. She believes this is no longer the time for debate but a time to call things what they are—to name what we see. Very challenging, yet may we see this as an aspect of interfaith action?

Heeding God's Call

While the shooter was certainly deranged, we recognize that this kind of religious violence is far too widespread in our world today. In New Zealand, the government moved to address new restrictions and bans on the sale of semiautomatic weapons, but we in the United States seem paralyzed by the notion of gun control. **Heeding God's Call**, a group supported by some of our members, issued a public statement on March 15th which you may access through the following link: <https://bit.ly/2Fz6l1g>. What is our response to their call to us to "demand the ban" on assault weapons?

—Carol Cook & Diane Rogers

"LUNCH & HOT TOPICS!" *A Stimulating Experience!*

Women of
Wit &
Wisdom

Join us for a brown bag lunch followed by an invigorating topic and discussion on Thursday, April 11, 12:00 noon, Old Buttonwood Hall. Your "hot topic" may be sacred or secular.

Bring your own lunch plus your special subject, along with your ideas, thoughts, opinions, and views for

dissection and courteous, respectful discussion!

Don't miss this opportunity for fellowship and connection with our First Church Sisters! RSVP to womenwitwisdom.org or call Diane at (609) 980-5421 by Tuesday, April 9. Beverages will be provided.

—Diane Rogers & Ruth Camisa



The Labyrinth

On March 13th as the sun set, 25 members, friends, and neighbors of the congregation came individually to the church to walk the prayer labyrinth as part of their Lenten practice. The canvas labyrinth was loaned by Princeton Theological Seminary and is modeled on the ancient stone labyrinth on the floor of Chartres Cathedral. Those who walked this pathway in prayer, some alone and some with others, surrounded by quiet music and candlelight, found it spiritually centering, and a meaningful practice on their journey through Lent.

Easter Flower Dedications

In accordance with our long-standing tradition at First Church, we decorate the sanctuary for Easter by giving glory to God and remembering loved ones through contributions for flowers. To make a donation, please complete this form with your dedication and leave it in the donation box in the church office along with your check. (There is no designated amount.) The dedications will be published in the bulletin on Easter Sunday.

PLEASE DO NOT ENCLOSE CASH. Please make checks payable to "First Presbyterian Church" and note "Easter Flowers" in the memo line. **You may also make contributions for Easter flowers online via our website (www.fpcphila.org/give-now).** The dedication space on the website form is limited; if additional space is needed, email your dedication to office@fpcphila.org.

PLEASE SUBMIT ALL RESPONSES BY PALM SUNDAY (APRIL 14).

Your Name: _____

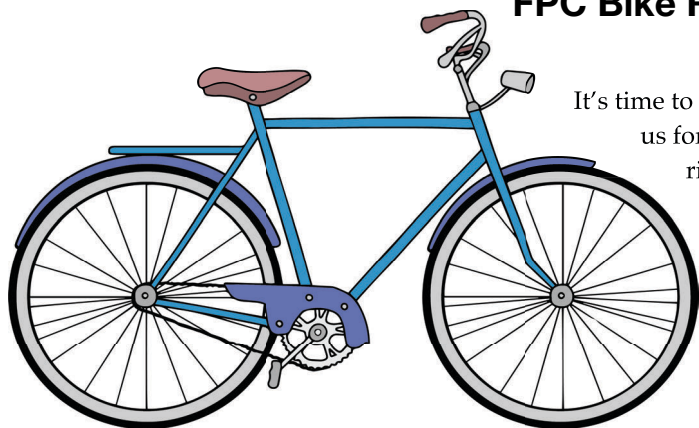
E-mail/ Phone: _____

Dedication (please circle) In Memory/ In Honor of _____

Check enclosed: _____

Inquiries can be referred to: Anita McLarin (anita.mclarin@gmail.com).

FPC Bike Ride on the Schuylkill Trail Saturday April 13



It's time to get that bike out and join us for a ride on the Schuylkill river trail. We'll meet Saturday April 13 at 10:00 AM at the entrance to the trail at 25th & Locust and enjoy an easy ride to Conshohocken (an

hour or so) where we will have lunch (location TBD). When we are ready we will ride back to where we started. This is beautiful ride along the Schuylkill river (no hills), and you don't have to be a "bike jock" to do it. Just make sure you wear a helmet. Can you join us? Questions? Contact Mac McLarin (mac.mclarin@fpcphila.org).



Saturday, May 4th
Join or sponsor the First Church team!

7th Annual Sojourner Truth Walk: Join our Team!

For the 5th year, FPCP's Missions Committee is sponsoring a team of walkers. This 3K walkathon will take place on Saturday, May 4, beginning in Clark Park (45th Street & Chester Avenue) at 10:00 AM. It is named in honor of Sojourner Truth, an African-American woman who escaped slavery and then fought to end it, while also speaking out for women's rights and economic justice. She, along with many others, has served as an inspiration and role model for generations to come. We are walking in their footsteps!

All participants are encouraged to walk in honor of a woman or girl whom they admire. Blank signs will be available on the day of the walk for you to write her name and/or attach a photograph.

This is a family-friendly event—all are welcome!

Please help build the leadership of Philly girls by sponsoring or joining our team (<https://bit.ly/2UgDiaU>)! All proceeds benefit Camp Sojourner, Girls' Leadership Camp, and help to fund scholarships for summer camp and year-round leadership activities.

—Beverly Cowart

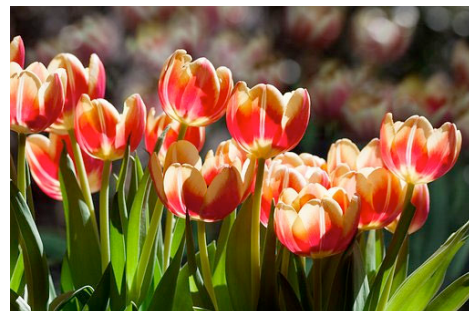


*Can you swing a hammer?
 Would you like to learn how?*

Volunteer Opportunity - HABITAT FOR HUMANITY

On Saturday, April 27th, First Church will be doing home repairs with Habitat's West Philadelphia Repair Initiative/Healthy Homes Initiative. We need 5-7 volunteers. No skill or construction experience is necessary—just a readiness to help out! The work day begins at 8:30 and ends at 3:30 or earlier.

For information or to volunteer, please email Missions Committee member Cindy Elliott at caeesq@aol.com.



Member News

Congregational Care Update

During the Lenten Season and the Easter holidays, you might want to remember in your prayers or with cards, some of our members who are on the Congregational Care List. I have greatly enjoyed visiting these folks while representing, along with others, First Church's care and ongoing concern for them.

Ada Allen is in a memory care facility, but you can send cards to Ed Allen, Ada's husband. Ada has a sweet disposition and a beautiful smile. Pray that Ada is comfortable and at peace.

Frank Baldwin is in a Bryn Mawr rehab center. Frank loves to hear news of the church and of the Presbytery, where he was Stated Clerk for a number of years. Frank loves to read mysteries and thrillers. May God bless his enjoyment of books.

Eleanor Buchanan is in a memory care facility in King of Prussia. Eleanor's dementia is advanced, but she loves to walk the halls while holding your hand to see what all is going on. Pray for Eleanor also, that she is comfortable and at peace.

Bill Cornwell was recently highlighted as "Resident of the Month" at the Veterans Center in Spring City, PA. Bill has lost both legs due to complications from diabetes, but presently is being fitted for a prosthesis for one leg, and when the other leg heals, will be fitted for a prosthesis for the other leg. Bill continues to play the organ and teach Bible Studies. Remember Bill.

Dr. Frances Grant, in a facility in Chestnut Hill, continues to amaze everyone at the age of 97. She recently had some health issues, but has rallied back to her warm, humorous, and wonderful self. Frances is interested in the world around her—national politics, city council and its politics, and just the makers and subjects of "the news." Pray for her health, and that she continues to be a blessing to all who care for her.

Eileen Hall, in a care facility in Ephrata, PA, though in bed most of the time, has a wonderful mind, and very humorous wit. She loves to hear about those folks she has known at First church, and really appreciates the cards sent to her. Her Parkinson's disease makes her unable to write back to folks, but she sends her thanks and best wishes to you all. Pray for her health.

Marc Lloyd, a former deacon at FPC, has middle stage dementia. He always recognizes Chuck and me when we come, and is always hungry for news of the church. He also loves to talk Philadelphia sports anytime. When I pray for Marc, he always closes with a prayer of his own. His love of the Lord always inspires and uplifts me.

Ruth McCandless is in a memory care facility in Wallingford, PA. Ruth's health has declined, but she continues to love having visitors and being served communion. She also likes to talk about the church in her younger days in West Philadelphia, and her role as a Sunday School teacher. Pray for and remember Ruth.

Margarite and Jerry Vallery will be moving in the Spring to the Watermark Apartments. We are so glad, as their home is too large for them to take care of. Margarite still suffers from sciatica, but goes to physical therapy twice a week; and Jerry, who was practically bedridden, has gained 25 pounds and is moving well with a walker, and has inspiring stories of his life to tell. Thank God for miracles!

These folks' addresses are in the Member Directory. They all have rich and ongoing histories with FPC. Pray for them; send them a holiday card, and remember what Jesus said: "As you do it to the least of these, my brothers and sisters, so you do it unto me."

—The Rev. Jerry K. Foote
Minister for Congregational Care

Twenties & Thirties News

Spring is here and after a long winter, the Twenties & Thirties are gearing up to get back outdoors. We have seen many new faces this winter and are very excited to expand the group. In April, we will continue our Wednesday night gatherings discussion on Faithful Citizenship during the Lenten Season. During April we will also be joining others at the church on a Saturday morning Bike Ride, and will have our annual T&T Easter egg dyeing afternoon.

As the weather gets warmer we will begin hiking and exploring Philadelphia. We are working on the summer calendars so if you are interested in hosting the T&T's please let Annie know. We enjoy getting to know those outside of the Twenties & Thirties group! Our goal is to grow closer together as a group, fostering friendships, building trust, and creating a community of support and love for one another. For more information, contact: youngadults@fpcphila.org.

Band of Boomers Spring Event

The spring Band of Boomers event will be a trip to Adventure Aquarium in Camden, NJ on Sunday, April 7th at 1:00 P.M. We will meet in Old Buttonwood Hall after the 11 o'clock service and coordinate transportation. We will eat lunch at the Aquarium upon arrival. Please contact Rick and Shellie Unger (boomers@fpcphila.org) for more information.



Volunteer Opportunities

The University City Hospitality Coalition (UCHC) provides hot meals to anyone in need on Monday, Wednesday, Thursday, Friday and, during the academic year, Sundays, at sites in the University City area. Volunteers to serve meals are needed during the summer and academic breaks, when students are not available. In addition, First Church sponsors quarterly casserole "blitzes," in which we prepare 30–40 casseroles to be served at UCHC meals.

The Arc of Philadelphia advocates with and for all children and adults with intellectual and developmental disabilities and their families, to promote active citizenship, self-determination, and full inclusion.

Urban Tree Connection (UTC) is a nonprofit organization that engages children and adults from some of Philadelphia's most disadvantaged neighborhoods in community-based, urban-greening projects.

Hosts for Hospitals provides families in need of lodging when coming from out-of-town to the city for medical care the option of staying at a locally administered volunteer host-home or group facility.

Girls' Leadership Camp program at Bartram's Garden is to help build a new community garden and farm while learning about the environmental impact of growing our own food. Volunteer days are every month on second Saturdays starting in April.

Habitat for Humanity's West Philadelphia Repair Initiative (WPRI) is an urban ministry that assists homeowners in West Philadelphia with repairs to their homes. The organization needs volunteers. Work can involve painting, installing sheetrock, windows, flooring, carpentry, etc. Volunteers do not need any experience.

MANNA, an organization founded by First Church, needs volunteers to help prepare or deliver meals for people battling life-threatening illnesses. Contact Manna's Volunteer Services at 215-496-2662 or volunteers@manna.org.

FOR INFORMATION ON VOLUNTEER OPPORTUNITIES
CONTACT missions@fpcphila.org.



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Planting Seeds for the Future

**Become a member
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www.fpcphila.org/planned-giving/



SHUT UP & DANCE

APRIL 13

BENEFITS
MANNA DELIVERING NOURISHMENT IMPROVING HEALTH

Shut Up & Dance 2019

Saturday April 13th 2019 - 8:00 pm

The Forrest Theater, 1114 Walnut Street

Shut Up & Dance, presented by Dancers of Pennsylvania Ballet, is back for its 27th year! This year, Shut Up & Dance is hosted by Martha Graham Cracker and John Jarboe of the Bearded Ladies Cabaret! To purchase tickets, visit <https://donate.mannapa.org/event/shut-up-and-dance-2019/e220760> or call (215) 496-2662 x7.

Please submit all information for the May issue of The Messenger to communications@fpcphila.org by **Monday, April 22nd**.

The First Presbyterian Church IN THE CITY OF PHILADELPHIA

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