



Advent

I hope you all had a very nice Thanksgiving. It's always been my favorite holiday of the year in large part because there is no "agenda" other than spending time with friends and family, and enjoying some very good food. In my case, too much food! The Garners had a great Thanksgiving this year. Both of our daughters were home for the week, and we all went to my brother's farm in upstate New York. Our two families don't see each other nearly as often as we'd like, so it was nice to have that time together.

Another highlight in November was Drew Harrison's installation as pastor of the First Presbyterian Church in Pitman, N.J. A number of our members made the trip over on Sunday afternoon for the service, and it was great to see Drew, Hannah and Jane again. Drew had asked me to give a "charge to the pastor" as part of the service, and it gave me an opportunity to reflect back over the course of my own career and offer some very

hard-earned advice. I'm sure we all wish Drew well.

Advent will be here soon, and with it a number of special events at the church that I hope you'll take advantage of. Please join us for our **Advent Luncheon** at noon on Sunday, December 10, always a very festive occasion. Another of the highlights of every Advent is our annual **Riverside Christmas party** for the residents of the Riverside Presbyterian Apartments at 23rd & Race. This year's party will be on Tuesday, December 12, at 7:00 PM and as always feature the inimitable talents of Owen Robbins and Ken Ross. If you've never been to the party, you owe it to yourself to attend. I guarantee there's no better way to experience the true spirit of Christmas.

Our annual Service of **Lessons and Carols** will be held this year on Sunday, December 17, at 4:00 PM with both traditional anthems and carols and new ones interwoven with readings from both Old and New Testament proclaiming the gospel story. There's no more beautiful service throughout the church year. Since

Christmas Eve falls on a Sunday this year, we'll have our usual 11:00 AM service that morning (officially the 4th Sunday of Advent), and then return for our **Christmas Eve services** that afternoon and evening at 4:00 PM and 10:45 PM. On Christmas Day—for the truly hearty—there's the re-enactment of Washington's crossing of the Delaware on Christmas Day in 1776. I know four people who'll be there.

This year we have a New Year's Eve surprise! **Margaret Somerville**, a life-long member of First Church and the daughter of the Rev. Ernest Somerville (pastor from 1956-1986) and the beloved (and much missed) Nan Somerville, will be ordained as a Presbyterian minister at First Church by a commission of the Presbytery of Philadelphia on Sunday afternoon, December 31, at 4:00 PM. After her ordination, Margaret will continue working on the staff of the Gladwyne Presbyterian Church in addition to her teaching duties at Friend Central School. Please plan to join us for this celebration.

—Jesse Garner



Advent Luncheon

The Deacons invite everyone—First Presbyterian Church members, visitors and friends—to our annual Advent Luncheon, following the 11:00 A.M. worship service on Sunday, December 10th. The Deacons plan and serve a beautiful meal with delicious food and great fellowship! It is a time when we can enjoy the company of our long-time friends, make new friends, and learn more about each other.

The meal this year will include roast pork, roasted potatoes, red cabbage and

more. A vegetarian option will also be available. No reservation is necessary and there is no cost to attend. If you are able, please bring your favorite pie to share. Please mark your calendars and plan to join us at this festive meal! Please contact Jean Witmer (jean.witmer@fpcphila.org) with questions.

A special treat will follow the Advent Luncheon at 1:30 as Chancel Choir member Calli Graver presents a Christmas Pops Concert. See page three for details.



DECEMBER 3
FIRST SUNDAY OF ADVENT
Isaiah 64:1-9
Psalm 80:1-7, 17-19
1 Corinthians 1:3-9
Mark 13:24-37

DECEMBER 10
SECOND SUNDAY OF ADVENT
Isaiah 40:1-11
Psalm 85:1-2, 8-13
2 Peter 3:8-15a
Mark 1:1-8

DECEMBER 17
THIRD SUNDAY OF ADVENT
Isaiah 61:1-4, 8-11
Psalm 126
1 Thessalonians 5:16-24
John 1:6-8, 19-28

DECEMBER 24
FOURTH SUNDAY OF ADVENT
2 Samuel 7:1-11, 16
Luke 1:46b-55
Romans 16:25-27
Luke 1:26-38

DECEMBER 24
CHRISTMAS EVE
Isaiah 9:2-7
Psalm 96
Titus 2:11-14
Luke 2:1-20
John 1:1-14

DECEMBER 31
FIRST SUNDAY AFTER
CHRISTMAS DAY
Isaiah 61:10-62:3
Psalm 148
Galatians 4:4-7
Luke 2:22-40

December 2017 at a Glance

Saturday, December 2

9:00 am Men's Bible Study (Cafe @ DiBruno's)

Sunday, December 3 - First Sunday in Advent

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

9:45 am Advent Activities for all ages

Cardmaking for homebound members

9:45 am Spiritual Direction Group (Whitefield Room)

11:00 am Worship (Sanctuary)

12:15 pm Fellowship (Old Buttonwood Hall)

12:15 pm Young Adult "First Sunday" Brunch (Irish Pub)

Monday, December 4

10:00 am Reading Buddies (Old Buttonwood Hall)

11:00 am Congregational Care Team

Tuesday, December 5

6:30 pm PNC Meeting

7:00 pm Women's Bible Study

Wednesday, December 6

7:30 pm Young Adult Group

Thursday, December 7

6:30 pm Trustees Meeting

6:45 pm Deacons Meeting

Friday, December 8

6:30 pm Band of Boomers Christmas Party

Sunday, December 10 - Second Sunday of Advent

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

9:45 am Advent Activities for all ages

Trimming the Christmas Tree

11:00 am Worship (Sanctuary)

12:15 pm Advent Lunch (Old Buttonwood Hall)

6:00 pm Young Adult Christmas Party

Monday, December 11

10:00 am Reading Buddies (Old Buttonwood Hall)

Tuesday, December 12

6:30 pm PNC Meeting

7:00 pm Riverside Christmas Party

7:00 pm Women's Bible Study

Wednesday, December 13

7:30 pm Young Adult Group

Thursday, December 14

6:30 pm Session Meeting

Sunday, December 17

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

9:45 am Spiritual Direction Group (Whitefield Room)

11:00 am Worship (Sanctuary)

Caroling after worship on Walnut Street

12:15 pm Fellowship (Old Buttonwood Hall)

4:00 pm Lessons & Carols Service

Monday, December 18

10:00 am Reading Buddies (Old Buttonwood Hall)

Tuesday, December 19

9:30 am WiseRetirees

6:30 pm PNC Meeting

6:30 pm LGBT Christmas Party

7:00 pm Women's Bible Study

Wednesday, December 20

7:30 pm Young Adult Group

Thursday, December 21

7:00 pm Blue Christmas Service (Sanctuary)

Sunday, December 24

11:00 am Worship (Sanctuary)

12:15 pm Fellowship (Old Buttonwood Hall)

4:00 pm Christmas Eve Celebration Worship

10:45 pm Christmas Eve Traditional Worship

Monday, December 25

Church office closed through Tuesday, January 2nd

Sunday, December 31

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

11:00 am Worship (Sanctuary)

12:15 pm Fellowship (Old Buttonwood Hall)

Annual LGBT Christmas Party

—Always a great time of fellowship!

The LGBT Group of First Church will hold its annual Christmas Party at the home of Larry Slagle & Mete Egemen in Fairmount. For more information, contact Larry Slagle (lgbt@fpcphila.org).



CHEER! - A CHRISTMAS POPS CONCERT

SUNDAY, DECEMBER 10 @ 1:30 PM

Join us as First Church Chancel Choir member Calli Graver and friends present creative interpretations of seasonal classics and carols. This hour-long concert will be held in the sanctuary immediately following the Advent lunch. Please come and bring your friends and family for a wonderful Christmas program!



Blue Christmas

—A Service of Light on the Darkest Night

The Advent and Christmas seasons are not always seasons of joy for everyone. For many who mourn, who are anxious, who are afraid, who feel alone, who have suffered a loss, this can be a very difficult time. This time of earthly darkness is also for some a time of spiritual darkness. But the essence of Christmas is the light that God sent into the darkness: the light of hope, healing, and love.

First Church is offering a service of quiet meditation and reflection to bring light into the darkness. All are invited and encouraged to bring those they know who need the light. Barbara Chaapel will lead the service starting at 7:00 P.M. on December 21st, the darkest night of the year.

—Susy Christensen

Blue Christmas

A service of light on the darkest night

Thursday, December 21st
7:00 pm



The Advent Wreath

The Advent Wreath is a Christian tradition that symbolizes the passage of the four weeks of Advent in the liturgical calendar. It likely originated among German Lutherans in the 16th century when Johann Hinrich Wichern, a Protestant pastor and a pioneer in urban mission among the poor, invented it when children in his mission school in Hamburg would ask daily if Christmas had arrived. He purportedly constructed a large wooden ring from a cartwheel, with 24 small red candles and four large white ones that the children could light throughout Advent as a way of awaiting and expecting the coming of Christmas.

In medieval times, Advent was a fast during which people's thoughts were directed toward the expected second coming of Christ. Today it is understood as leading up to both the coming of Christ at Christmas and to his second coming.

The custom did not reach churches in the United States until the 1930s, when it had changed into a smaller evergreen wreath with four red or purple candles for the Sundays of Advent, and a central white candle for Christmas.

The candles are lit in worship successively each Sunday during Advent, beginning with one, and ending on the final Sunday with all four, as we await and expect the coming of the Light of the world. Tradition understands the first candle as symbolizing hope, the second peace, the third joy, and the fourth love. The white Christ candle is lit on Christmas Eve.

Each Sunday in our worship, families or groups of friends will carry the light into the sanctuary at the beginning of worship to light the candles on the wreath as the choir sings a stanza of a Korean hymn, *Come Now, O Prince of Peace*, written for the 1988 World Conference for the Peace and Reunification of the Korean Peninsula.

This year, Sunday, December 24 is both the fourth Sunday in Advent and Christmas Eve, so we will have the rare opportunity to experience the height of our Advent waiting closely followed by its fulfillment in the coming of God's Light into the world in the birth of our Lord. We will celebrate the conclusion of Advent at 11:00 A.M. and Christmas Eve at 4:00 and 11:00 P.M. Do join us.

—Barbara Chaapel

A Small Thing?

One by one the cleaning supplies piled up until it seemed no longer a “small thing,” but a huge pile of items destined to help those who suffer in the wake of disasters like hurricanes and fires. And YOU did it! Our original target was supplies to fill 30 buckets. This seemed reasonable given that our last bucket effort filled 22 buckets. Then Jesse upped the ante—way, way up—by announcing a revised goal of 100 buckets. And you did it! On November 11 several volunteers met to fill some 94 buckets which will be shipped this week, along with a check to Presbyterian Disaster Assistance for \$1,000, enough to fill 16 more buckets! This is cause for rejoicing!

We ask for one more thing. As you reflect on your blessings during Thanksgiving and the fast approaching Advent season, please pray for those who are experiencing or will suffer hardships and have a need for these buckets. Instead of a “blanket” prayer for those in need, make it as personal as you can. For example, I was touched when Barbara Chaapel told me that when she and Herb shopped for the cleaning supplies, they imagined the people who might use the items, their desperate circumstances, and the relief the items may give. They also told the cashier at the store that they were purchasing the items for hurricane victims as a sort of evangelism and a way to pass on the message. Importantly, they also prayed. Our prayers and focus on those in need are a way to really connect and make our efforts much more powerful. Because when we’ve done work in God’s name, it is “God that giveth the increase” (1 Corinthians 3:6-7).

Thank you!

—Paula and Bob (the Bucket Man) Gross



Celebrate the Joy!

A Festival of Lessons & Carols
Sunday, December 17 at 4:00 P.M.

Prelude music at 3:40 P.M.

Christmas Eve
Sunday, December 24

Traditional Worship - 11:00 A.M.

Christmas Eve Services
4:00 PM & 10:45 PM

Chancel Flowers

Every Sunday, together with the Word and Music, the beauty of flowers in the chancel have helped to attune our hearts to being in the presence of God. The cost of chancel flowers is generously donated by members and friends to commemorate and honor loved ones with their dedications printed in the bulletin.

I am in the process of setting up the flower calendar for 2018. Please consider signing up for a Sunday that is meaningful to you. The cost of an arrangement is \$75. Arrangements and dedications may be shared. If you are interested in donating chancel flowers for 2018, please contact me.

On behalf of the deacons, I thank you for considering this valuable contribution. Thanks to those of you who have already indicated a willingness to donate an arrangement for next year.

—Anita McLarin
[\(anita.mclarin@fpcphila.org\)](mailto:anita.mclarin@fpcphila.org)



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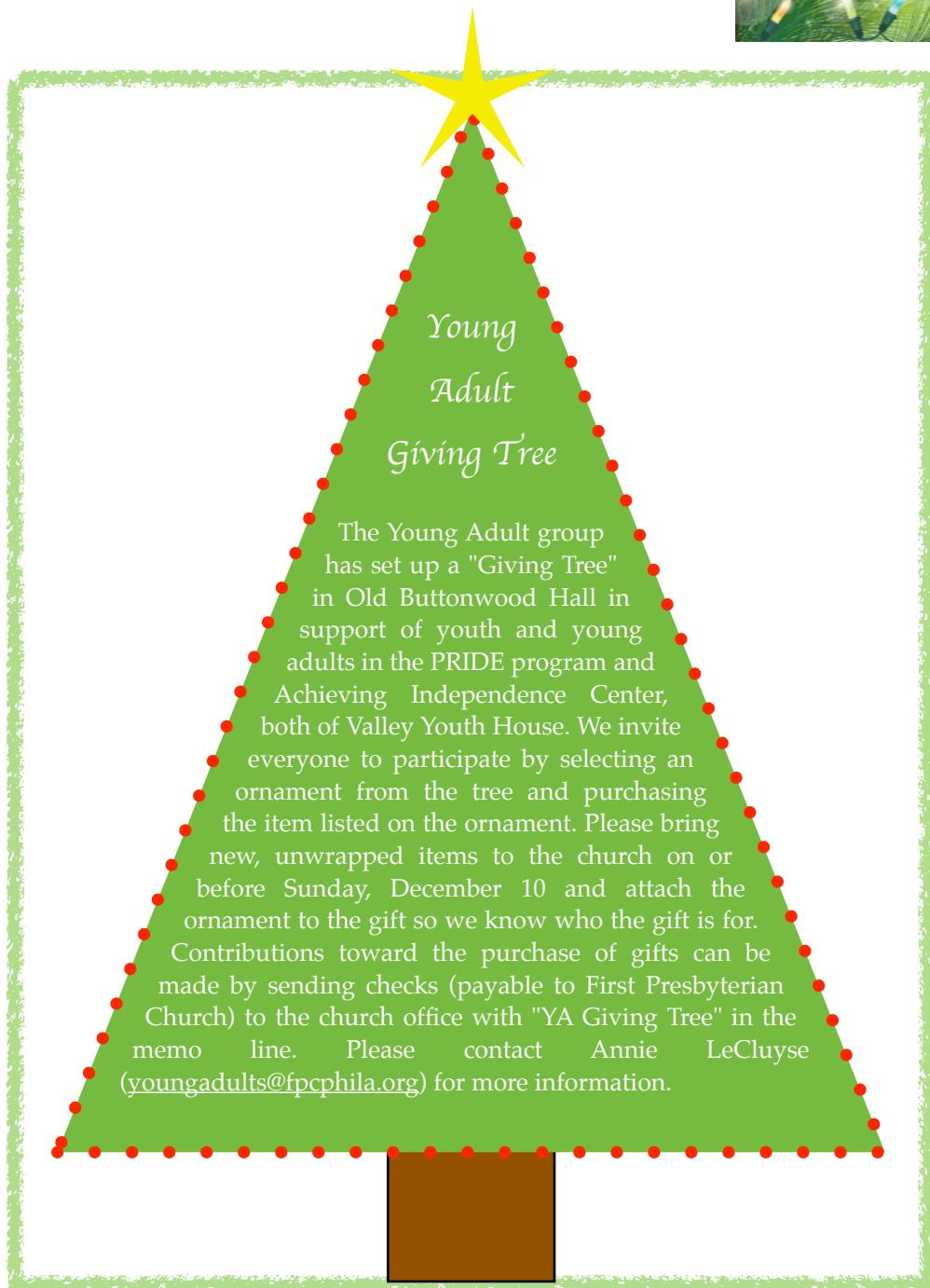
www.pennsvillage.org.



The Annual Riverside Christmas Party!

All are invited to join First Church in bringing holiday cheer to residents of Riverside Presbyterian Apartments on Tuesday, December 12th at 7:00 PM. The Riverside Apartments, at 23rd & Race Streets, is a subsidized living space for both senior citizens and those who have special needs. Volunteers are needed to provide baked goods, healthy snacks, and entertainment—a song or reading of the season. Each year this event touches the hearts of so many people. Please contact Jordana Woodford (jordana.woodford@fpcphila.org) or the church office (office@fpcphila.org).

—Jordana Woodford



VOLUNTEER OPPORTUNITIES:

Reading Buddies Begins for 2017-18 School Year

Reading Buddies is a program pairing adult volunteers with young students for an hour of reading together each week. Reading Buddies at First Church is held on Mondays at 10 A.M. in Old Buttonwood Hall. We began with the children from Greenfield Elementary School on November 27. We invite anyone interested in being a Reading Buddy to contact the church office (office@fpcphila.org or 215-567-0532).



This is the new crop of Reading Buddies meeting on November 20th in preparation for the first meeting with children on November 27th.

Drew Harrison Is Installed at Pitman Presbyterian Church

Rev. Drew Harrison, Membership and Congregational Care Director at our church for over a year, was installed as Pastor of the First Presbyterian Church in Pitman, NJ, on Sunday, November 12.

Our pastor, Rev. Jesse Garner III, gave the "Charge to the Pastor." Based on his own life as a minister, with warm eloquence, he shared six simple rules that he urged Drew to heed throughout his ministry. At Drew's request, Mary Kathryn Dean, a member of our church and a ministerial candidate, delivered the sermon, "To Equip the Saints."

Drew thanks all from our church who attended the installation and recalled the overwhelming support our congregation gave him during his service with us.

—Fred Barfoot



Rear, L to R: Ken Ross, Luke Sindall, Jack Melvin, Drew Harrison, Joe Bedont, Don Williams; Front: Becky Yep

Women of Wit & Wisdom

The First Church Fellowship Group Women of Wit and Wisdom will welcome the New Year with a luncheon at Positano's Restaurant, located in Old City, 212 Walnut Street, across from the Ritz 5 movie theatre, on Wednesday, January 10th at 12:30 PM.

Positano's boasts an extraordinary dining experience with amazing cuisine and breathtaking atmosphere. Their menu of creative dishes offers options for

everyone at an affordable price. We look forward to an afternoon of food, fun, and fellowship.

Our Women of Wit and Wisdom wish God's richest blessings on our entire First Family during this season of Advent, as we celebrate the birth of Him who came that we might have life, and have it abundantly.

—Ginnie Mesibov

CHRISTMAS DECORATIONS

We celebrate the Christmas season with the annual tradition of decorating First Church. At this time, we are requesting donations to cover the expense of flowers and greens. Please complete this form and place it with your donation in the box located in the church office marked "Christmas Flowers." There is no designated amount. However, PLEASE DO NOT ENCLOSE CASH! Please make checks payable to First Presbyterian Church and note "Christmas Flowers" in the memo line.

The deadline for responses is **December 17**.

Your Name: _____

Phone/E-mail: _____

Check enclosed: _____

Dedication (Please select: In Memory / In Honor):

Questions may be referred to Anita McLarin (anita.mclarin@gmail.com).

The First Presbyterian Church

IN THE CITY OF PHILADELPHIA

201 South 21st Street • Philadelphia, PA 19103
215-567-0532 fax: 215-567-7697 • fpcphila.org

CHURCH STAFF

The Rev. Jesse B. Garner, Minister

The Rev. Megan LeClyuse, Celebration Team Leader

Mr. Andrew Senn, Director of Music & Organist

**The Rev. Jerry K. Foote, Director of
Congregational Care**

Ms. Sue Riemann, Church Administrator

Mrs. Patti Sassoli, Director of Communications

Ms. Annie LeClyuse, Young Adult Leader

The Rev. Barbara A. Chaapel, Parish Associate

The Rev. Kenneth Ross, Parish Associate

The Rev. Herbert D. Valentine, Parish Associate

CHURCH OFFICERS

ELDERS

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Jen Johnson, Rebecca Melley,
Allan Schimmel, George Schneider

Class of 2019

Beverly Cowart, Karen Marston,
Philip McMunigal, Emily Roan, Patricia Sassoli

Class of 2020

Susy Christensen, Heather Coyne,
Cynthia Decrucq, Michael Smith

DEACONS

Class of 2018

Fred Barfoot, Miles Davis,
Cathy Lever, Jean Witmer

Class of 2019

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Anita McLarin, Evelyn Schwartz

Class of 2020

Jack Melvin, Cynthia Olds-Greeley, Courtney
Russ-Friedman, Don Williams, Philip Woehr

TRUSTEES

Class of 2018

Jeannie Boehner, Gary Christensen,
Tom Lever, Leila Vaughan

Class of 2019

Craig Boddorff, Andrea Bowman, Mike Carl,
Jennifer Gay, Robert Romano

Class of 2020

Rebekah Horowitz, Robert Linck,
Cade Massey

THE MESSENGER

Patti Sassoli, Executive Editor

Owen Robbins, Layout and Design

Please submit all information for the
January issue of The Messenger to
communications@fpcphila.org by **Friday,**
December 22nd.



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.

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 October.

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@mannapha.org.

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.

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.

Norris Square promotes change through youth education, community leadership, green spaces, the arts and the celebration of Latinx cultures.

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.

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.

**FOR INFORMATION ON
VOLUNTEER OPPORTUNITIES
CONTACT**
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