

the Messenger

Light for a New Year



The **FIRST**
PRESBYTERIAN
CHURCH
in PHILADELPHIA

est. 1698

LECTIONARY

JANUARY 3

Jeremiah 31:7-14
Psalm 147:12-20
Ephesians 1:3-14
John 1:(1-9) 10-18

JANUARY 10

BAPTISM OF THE LORD

Isaiah 43:1-7
Psalm 29
Acts 8:14-17
Luke 3:15-17, 21-22

JANUARY 17

Isaiah 62:1-5
Psalm 36:5-10
1 Corinthians 12:1-11
John 2:1-11

JANUARY 24

Nehemiah 8:1-10
Psalm 19
1 Corinthians 12:12-31
Luke 4:14-21

JANUARY 31

Jeremiah 1:4-10
Psalm 71:1-6
1 Corinthians 13:1-13
Luke 4:21-30

I never paid much attention to light, at least not until fairly recently. As long as I had enough light to do whatever I needed to do, that was fine with me, and whether it was natural or artificial really made no difference. When I heard people talk about how special the light was in certain parts of the world or at certain times of the year, or how things looked so much better in certain kinds of light, I had no idea what they were talking about. To me, light was light, pure and simple.

Recently, though, I've begun to pay more attention to light. I'm not completely sure why. Part of it may have something to do with having cataracts removed from both my eyes, since my eyes are definitely more sensitive to light now than they used to be. I never used to wear sunglasses during the winter, but I do now. I have also noticed that a considerable variation in the nature of sunlight over the course of the seasons, and I don't just mean it varies by length of day. I'm

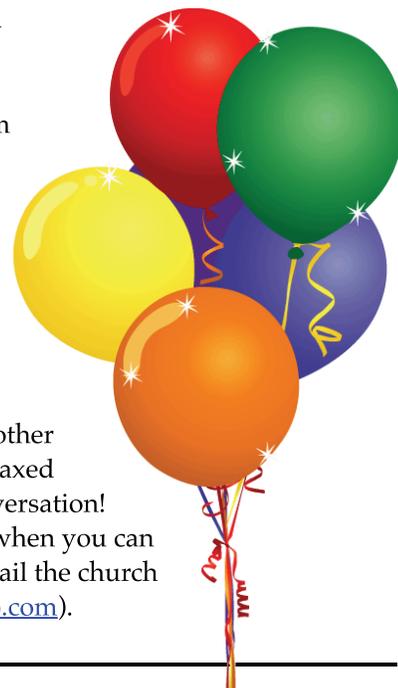
still not sure exactly how it's different, or why (the angle of the sun in the sky?). But the light is definitely different at different times of the year, and things really do appear different in that different light.

I've mentioned before that January 1 has never really seemed as much the beginning of a new year to me as other times during the year, especially Labor Day. That's mostly because my life (as husband of a school teacher, father of a school employee, and father of a student) still largely revolves around the school year which begins its new year around Labor Day. But part of that was also never really noticing anything particularly different on or around January 1. Now, though, I'm beginning to think there is something new at this time of year, and it's the light. Not simply more of it (though there is), but also a different cast to the light. A new light, as it were. For a new year.

—Jesse Garner

We're So Glad You're Here!

On Thursday, January 21st the Membership & Evangelism Committee is sponsoring a special event in Old Buttonwood Hall to welcome many of the new faces in our midst. If you are a visitor, a friend, a potential new member, or someone who has joined within the last year, we invite you to come for an informal reception. Our Elders, Deacons and Trustees will be there, so it's a great time to meet the folks who serve on the boards of the church, ask them questions, or volunteer to get involved. Most importantly, it is an opportunity to drop by after work, meet other "new" faces at the church, and get to know each other in a relaxed atmosphere. There will be plenty of appetizers and great conversation! The party will be held from 5:30-8:00 PM; feel free to drop in when you can and stay as long as you wish! If you plan to attend, please email the church office (office@fpcphila.org) or Fran Kraemer (fbksings@yahoo.com).



January 2016 at a Glance

Sunday, January 3

- 9:00 am Celebration! Worship (Old Buttonwood Hall)
- 9:45 am Christian Education-Lectionary Study (MacColl Room)
- 9:45 am Spiritual Direction Group (Whitfield Room)
- 11:00 am Worship (Sanctuary)
- 12:15 pm Fellowship (Old Buttonwood Hall)
- 12:30 pm Young Adult Brunch

Monday, January 4

Church office closed

- 11:00 am Congregational Care Team

Tuesday, January 5

- 5:30 pm Worship Committee

Thursday, January 7

- 6:30 pm Deacons Meeting

Sunday, January 10

- 9:00 am Celebration! Worship (Old Buttonwood Hall)
- 9:45 am Christian Education
 - Adults (MacColl Room)
 - Children & Youth (Cochran Room)
- 9:45 am Spiritual Direction Group (Whitfield Room)
- 11:00 am Worship (Sanctuary)
- 12:15 pm Fellowship (Old Buttonwood Hall)

Monday, January 11

- 10:00 am Reading Buddies

Wednesday, January 13

- 10:00 am Planned Giving Team
- 7:00 pm Young Adult Bible Study (Cochran Room)

Thursday, January 14

- 6:30 pm Session Meeting

Sunday, January 17

- 9:00 am Celebration! Worship (Old Buttonwood Hall)
- 9:45 am Christian Education
 - Adults (MacColl Room)
 - Children & Youth (Cochran Room)
- 9:45 am Spiritual Direction Group (Whitfield Room)
- 11:00 am Worship (Sanctuary)
- 12:15 pm Fellowship (Old Buttonwood Hall)

Monday, January 18

- 10:00 am Reading Buddies

Tuesday, January 19

- 6:30 pm CE Committee

Wednesday, January 20

- 6:30 pm Will Harris Seminar: *Christianity's Humanity* (MacColl Room)
- 7:00 pm Young Adult Bible Study (Cochran Room)

Thursday, January 21

- 6:00 pm *We're So Glad You're Here* Party (Old Buttonwood Hall)

Saturday, January 23

- 10:00 am Will Harris Seminar: *Christianity's Humanity* (MacColl Room)
- TBD Young Adult Retreat

Sunday, January 24

- 9:00 am Celebration! Worship (Old Buttonwood Hall)
- 9:45 am Christian Education
 - Adults (MacColl Room)
 - Children & Youth (Cochran Room)
- 11:00 am Worship (Sanctuary)
- 12:15 pm Fellowship (Old Buttonwood Hall)

Monday, January 25

- 10:00 am Reading Buddies
- 6:30 pm Missions Committee

Wednesday, January 27

- 6:30 pm Will Harris Seminar: *Christianity's Humanity* (MacColl Room)
- 7:00 pm Young Adult Bible Study (Cochran Room)

Saturday, January 30

- 10:00 am Will Harris Seminar: *Christianity's Humanity* (MacColl Room)

Sunday, January 31

- 9:00 am Celebration! Worship (Old Buttonwood Hall)
- 9:45 am Christian Education
 - Adults (MacColl Room)
 - Children & Youth (Cochran Room)
- 9:45 am Spiritual Direction Group (Whitfield Room)
- 11:00 am Worship (Sanctuary)
- 12:15 pm Fellowship (Old Buttonwood Hall)

Christian Education Resolutions

Enjoy the January Announcements of the Christian Education Committee in the form of New Year's Resolutions! We hope that you endeavor to take them on this year.

- ❖ I resolve to attend Bible Study with Rev. Jesse Garner on Sundays at 9:45AM in the McColl Room!
- ❖ I resolve for my kids to attend Sunday School at 9:45AM in the Cochran Sunday School Room starting back on January 10th!

- ❖ I resolve to attend Will Harris' Constitutional Thinking Lectures on Wednesdays and Saturdays starting on January 20th through January 30th!
- ❖ I resolve to attend CE's Understanding Faith Series focusing on Buddhism starting on January 24th through February 7th!

For details on any of these programs, please contact Jeff Halili (jeff.halili@fpcphila.org).

—Jeff Halili

Young Adult News

The Young Adult Group's Christmas Giving Tree project received an overwhelming response! We had to rent a U-Haul truck to transport all of the donations! On Sunday, December 13th, we loaded the truck full of clothes, appliances, and other home supplies to deliver to The Village for their Teens in Transition program. Thanks to everyone who participated in our effort! We cannot thank you all enough for your generosity. This was a very special Christmas for many of The Village's young adults.

We would also like to thank Suellen and Michael Smith for hosting us in December for dinner and a seminar on the

Magi, as well as Dave Huting for hosting our Christmas party. We are very grateful for your hospitality and thank you for making the season so memorable.

This month, we will return to our regularly scheduled weekly bible study, starting on Wednesday, January 13th. We are also planning a winter retreat on January 23rd. For more information or to get involved, contact youngadults@fpcphila.org.

—Chip Rotolo



The Young Adult's Christmas Giving Tree project was an enormous success!



The Smiths hosted the Young Adults in December for a seminar on the Magi.



The Young Adults Christmas Party at Dave Huting's house.

The Music Continues...!

I'm writing this on the evening of December 23rd. A spectacular Lessons and Carols, with all of its pomp and flash, is now behind us; and by the time you read this, we'll have gotten through two wonderful Christmas Eve services, and perhaps even a "lite" Sunday morning. With all of the attention paid to our stupendous Lessons and Carols and Christmas Eve services, it sometimes eludes us that Christmas is actually twelve days, lasting right up to Epiphany (itself still within the "feeling" of Christmas). And a side note, which I'm sure many of you don't know, the "season" of Epiphany lasts all the way until February 2nd, which is the day when Christians traditionally celebrate the Presentation of Christ in the Temple. So, if you like having your Christmas trees and Crèches up, you may officially leave them up until February 2nd without breaking any rules. However, if any of you put your tree on the curb before Epiphany, I'll be banging on your door!

All that is an introduction to say we will, musically, draw out the Christmas/Epiphany season a little more than usual this year. On January 3rd, our morning service will be chock-a-block with wonderful carols — both for the choir, and for the congregation. You might call it an "Olde-Fashioned Christmas." The choir will be singing eight or nine of the Kings College favorites. In addition, there will be about a half dozen hymns. We will be doing original versions of favorite Christmas hymns also (with all of their stanzas) — "Once in Royal David's City," "God Rest Ye Merry," "It Came Upon the Midnight Clear," etc. For the last of those, we'll use the Arthur Sullivan's noble tune "Noel," which is the popular tune in England, as opposed to "Carol" on this side of the pond — BUT it is much more appropriate as it adds gravitas to a pretty weighty lyric:

*Yet with the woes of sin and strife
The world has suffered long;
Beneath the angel strain have rolled
Two thousand years of wrong;
And man, at war with man, hears not
The love-song which they bring;
O hush the noise, ye men of strife
And hear the angels sing.*

*And ye, beneath life's crushing load,
Whose forms are bending low,
Who toil along the climbing way
With painful steps and slow,
Look now! for glad and golden hours
Come swiftly on the wing.
O rest beside the weary road,
And hear the angels sing!*

On January 10th, we'll celebrate Epiphany in a fashion we've never tried at First Church. The first part of the service will consist of an Epiphany Procession. The choir will sing three anthems from three different stations around the sanctuary. They will be accompanied by three readings, those being the visit of the Magi, Jesus baptism in the Jordan River, and the wedding at Cana. There will be hymns to connect all of these together thematically while the choir moves around the building. The second part of the service will be our second Bach cantata of the season, *Liebster Emmanuel, herzog der Frommen*.

Bach wrote the chorale cantata in his second year in Leipzig (1725) to conclude a set of Christmas cantatas on the Feast of the Epiphany. The prescribed readings for the feast day were taken from Isaiah (the heathen will convert), and from Matthew (the wise men from the east bringing their gifts). The cantata text is based on the chorale in six stanzas by Ahasverus Fritsch (1679).

So, don't let yourself sink into a post-Christmas slump! Come and revel in this glorious music, heralding our Savior's birth — God in flesh made manifest! I'll close with another of my favorite Christmas stanzas, now removed from most hymnals.

Peace and blessings for a healthy and musical new year!

— Andrew Senn

*Where children pure and happy pray to the blessed Child,
Where misery cries out to Thee, Son of the mother mild;
Where charity stands watching and faith holds wide the door,
The dark night wakes, the glory breaks, and Christmas comes
once more.*



Thank You to Chancel Flower Donors

It is a pleasure for me to serve the church by taking care of the chancel flowers as a deacon. The minor challenges that the last year brought were met by several people who cheerfully offered to donate. I want to thank them and all the regular donors who responded in the past and also committed to giving this year. It makes my job rewarding and a joy. I would also like

to thank the volunteers who on those Sundays when I am absent, readily take over the job of distributing the flowers. It's good to know that I have a backup crew.

With my best wishes for a blessed new year,

— Gudrun von Auenmueller

FIRST CHURCH COLUMBARIUM PROJECT APPROVED

The Session at its December meeting approved a request from the Planned Giving Team to oversee the planning for and construction of a columbarium. The columbarium, a consecrated area with individual niches for urns containing ashes of the deceased, will be located in the space in the hall between the sanctuary and Old Buttonwood Hall currently occupied by the library. The initial phase of the project contemplates the placement of about 270 niches, each one of which will have space for two urns, in the cabinet currently occupied by bookshelves.

The first steps will be to obtain the cost estimates and services of an architect, an engineer, a fabricator, and a carpenter. At the same time the Planned Giving Team will be developing procedures governing the operation of the columbarium, including the pricing of the niches and the method of reserving a niche.

The columbarium is to provide additional end-of-life options with a spiritual dimension to those associated with First Church. As a spiritual home during our lifetime, many will find First Church an appropriate home for their remains. In many ways, this columbarium will be a modern version of the historic local parish church graveyard.

The word "columbarium" is derived from ancient Roman subterranean sepulchre with niches for urns holding remains, called *columbarius*, which in Latin means "dove-

cote," so-called from the resemblance to dove cotes. The research conducted in our study of cremation has revealed that increased interest in cremation began in the 19th Century in Europe, and has become increasingly common in the United States because of ecological concerns for scarce land resources and concerns about the increasing expense of the more traditional forms of internment requiring burial of remains in a casket. For many, especially those living and worshiping in urban communities such as Philadelphia, many have found a columbarium located in their church home to be spiritually more desirable than a remotely located secular cemetery.

The expectation is that the initial cost of the columbarium will be offset by up-front contributions and the fees generated over time for the reservations of the columbarium niches.

The Planned Giving Team will be providing periodic updates as work on this project progresses. If you desire more information or are interested in making a financial contribution toward the cost of constructing the columbarium, please contact Bill Leonard or one of the other members of the Planned Giving Team: Phil Steinberg, Sheila Ferguson, Patricia Quigg, Patti Sassoli, Herb Valentine and Jesse Garner.

—William Leonard

MUSICOPIA

Hope seemed to be hard to come by this Christmas season. But on Tuesday nights it flourishes in our church when a group of young people play their instruments with gusto. On November 10th, a group of officers from First watched in awe.

Dedicated conductors led the youngest members as they learned the basics with a patience that seems unfathomable. The older intermediate level orchestra started to play in sync like a well tuned engine that downshifted on curves and upshifted on hills.

Musicopia truly is an amazing thing to watch and hear. If you get the chance to watch Musicopia in action you should do so.

—Bruce Rapsher

Editor's note: *Founded by Musicopia in 2005, the Musicopia String Orchestra (MSO) serves students throughout the greater Philadelphia area, with an emphasis on those who lack cultural opportunities and constructive, creative outlets. Musicopia, a nonprofit music education organization, has worked closely with the School District of Philadelphia and other community partners to create this inclusive ensemble. The MSO provides structured instrumental skill-building and performance opportunities to mostly inner-city youth, ages 7–18, with wide-ranging string instrument skill levels who have demonstrated musical talent and interest. The MSO is based on the philosophy that participating in serious, long-term musical endeavors can have a transformative impact on students, encouraging discipline, teamwork, and personal and creative development. MSO makes its home at First Presbyterian Church in Philadelphia where it holds weekly full orchestra rehearsals on Tuesday evenings.*



2016 Winter Seminar with Will Harris

Wednesdays January 20 and 27 @ 6:30 pm and Saturdays January 23 and 30 @ 10 am in the MacColl Room

Christianity's Humanity

Does Christianity change human nature, or simply adapt to its pre-existing fundamentals, accentuating what (we can only hope) is good in individuals or groups of persons, while projecting another world where the human being as such will be transformed for the better? If the religion does change humanity itself, here and now as its regime of right and wrong comes into effect, how fundamentally might it do so?

I am going to treat Christianity as a constitutional order. No surprise there — except that, more typically, I approach the political Constitution from the perspective of a Biblical order. (For example, last Winter's seminar on "Redemptive Constitutionalism.")

The key project of any constitutional order is to establish a design for the citizen. In fact, the origin of the word, "polity," signifies "citizen organization." The structure of governance is an add-on to this *collectivity of citizens*, a later stage, however logically it may seem to be implicated.

As the *ultimate constitutional order of humanity* — in its self-understanding — Christianity is grounded on an elaborated understanding of the human being, conceived of as the culmination of Creation. **But this Creation is on-going: ramifying, self-replicating, and reiterative at different scales.** Genesis may have provided its beginning, but the Covenant opens up its future. The Incarnation and Resurrection may keep it open.

A fully constitutional enterprise anticipates that — as its values are successfully manifested, and as its promise is earnestly pursued, with self-conscious attentiveness to what the seeking of its fulfillment may disclose — the very character of *citizenship* (not just the *citizen*) advances. So it may be that Christianity, insomuch as it may be a flourishing constitutional order, would not only draw particular human beings to embody its model of citizenship, enhancing their moral qualities to meet the standard. **Christianity (or any valid religion, as such) might also be expected to move that standard for humanity itself forward, increasing not just character but capacity in a process that its own dynamic would require to be open-ended.**

Does Christianity, therefore, make humanity evolve, or should it lead to such evolution? **Might this "species-being" have, by now, progressed beyond the understanding of human nature that provided the foundation for this moral constitutional order of humankind?** If so, should the constitutive qualities of this religion itself evolve? And, if that is plausible, what are the stakes for Christianity as we think we know it, or for Presbyterianism as a reform-oriented denomination?

The purpose of the 2016 Winter Seminar, the eighth at First Presbyterian Church, is to set up a framework for this inquiry and **then to pursue the questions through the reflections and interactions of the participants.**

—Will Harris

A Note of Thanks

There are no words I can use to thank First Presbyterian Church for remembering my birthday with cards, members and minister visit along with a most delicious cake and flowers.

Your outgoing love and caring is something I can't really explain. I hope you can feel my love and caring for all of you. Since I couldn't write to all of you, I thought about thanking you in The Messenger!

First Presbyterian Church will continue to grow with such caring and loving members.

I want to thank you again during this joyous season and hope you have a year of happiness.

Sincerely,

Dr. Frances E. Grant

Riverside Christmas Party Gratitude!

Many thanks goes to all the new faces and helpers that made the Riverside Christmas Party on Monday, December 7th a success! The Riverside Christmas Party is an annual First Church tradition that has been going strong for at least thirty years and we intend to keep it going at least thirty more! Plenty of punch, snacks, Christmas cookies, new friends, songs, poems and prayer were had and were greatly appreciated by the residents of the Riverside Apartments, a subsidized housing complex for seniors and those with special needs. The Christmas Spirit was definitely present to all who participated at Riverside!

—Jeff Halili

A Celebration Advent and Christmas

This December, the Celebration service had several special ways that we recognized the Advent and Christmas season. Each week, one of the families who attend this service lit our advent wreath. By the table we had a manger, which we prepared for the arrival of the baby Jesus, much as we each need to prepare for the Christ Child to enter our own lives and hearts. A silver star appeared in the back of Old Buttonwood Hall on the first Sunday of Advent. Each week, it moved closer to the manger, guiding us to the place we too are beckoned to come. We also had our first Celebration Christmas Eve service, at which the Christmas story was told on the storyboard we use each Sunday morning, and we heard Frederick Buechner's "A Christmas Triptych" as our Christmas message.

Come join us each Sunday at 9:00 AM to see what is happening at the Celebration service!

—Rev. Megan LeCluyse



The Christmas Spirit



Caroling on Walnut Street on a balmy December Sunday!



Gloria McMeans made this delicious house for fellowship hour! (It was too pretty to eat!)



Nativity tableau



Card-making



Santa visited too!



Advent Luncheon



A decorator selfie (with Susy Christensen, Jean Witmer, Joann Bailey, Jordana Woodford, Evelyn Schwartz). Thanks to this group for decorating First Church so beautifully throughout the Advent season!

The First Presbyterian Church

IN THE CITY OF PHILADELPHIA

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CHURCH STAFF

- Rev. Jesse B. Garner, Minister**
Mr. Michael S. Rotolo, Seminary Intern
Rev. Megan LeCluyse, Celebration Team Leader
Rev. Drew Harrison, Membership and Congregational Care Director
The Rev. Barbara A. Chaapel, Parish Associate
The Rev. Kenneth Ross, Parish Associate
The Rev. Herbert D. Valentine, Parish Associate
Mr. Andrew Senn, Director of Music & Organist
Ms. Gwendolyn Scott, Church Administrator

COMMITTEES OF SESSION

- BUDGET & STEWARDSHIP** • Dave Huting, *Chair*
CHRISTIAN EDUCATION • Jeffrey Halili, *Chair*
MEMBERSHIP & EVANGELISM • Larry Slagle, *Chair*
MISSIONS • Beverly Cowart, *Chair*
PERSONNEL • Allan Schimmel, *Chair*
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- Class of 2017*
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THE MESSENGER

Patti Sassoli, *Executive Editor*
 Owen Robbins, *Design Director*

Please submit all information for the February issue of *The Messenger* to communications@fpcphila.org by Saturday, January 23rd.

Volunteer Opportunities

MANNA, an organization founded by First Church, needs volunteers to help prepare or deliver meals for people with HIV, diabetes, undergoing chemotherapy, or other conditions requiring quality nutrition. Contact Jen Stackhouse, Volunteer Manager at 215-496-2662 ext 138 or volunteers@mannapa.org.

READING BUDDIES volunteers are needed to help children learn to read, and make a friend. Volunteers are needed at First Church and other locations throughout the city. Contact Pat Quigg at readingbuddies@aol.com.

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. If you have interest in being a volunteer, please contact the Missions Committee at missions@fpcphila.org.

WINTERSHELTER volunteers are needed to serve meals each Monday evening during the cold weather months at Trinity Memorial Church, 22nd & Spruce Streets. Contact Suellen Smith (suellen.smith@fpcphila.org).

URBAN TREE CONNECTION (UTC) is a non-profit organization that engages children and adults from some of Philadelphia's most disadvantaged neighborhoods in community-based, urban-greening projects. Visit urbantreeconnection.org or contact Bruce Rapscher at utc@fpcphila.com.

PENN'S VILLAGE, an aging-in-place program for Central Philadelphia seniors, needs volunteers for driving, friendly visiting, light household tasks, administrative and technical assistance, and committee work. Call 215-925-7333, email info@pennsvillage.org or visit www.pennsvillage.org.

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. These typically occur on the first Saturday of February, May, August and November, but check the bulletin for announcements. Contact Beverly Cowart at missions@fpcphila.com.



The Sanctuary on Christmas Eve



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