

Reflections at the Turning of the Year...

Happy 2019! I have had several opportunities lately to reflect over the year that has been. I would be remiss if I didn't say that my reflections were marked with gratitude.

I am very happy to be the pastor of the First Presbyterian Church in Philadelphia. Lester and I felt so welcome from the very start. It truly was a season of celebrations this fall. We're starting a new year, and I have a number of thoughts on my mind, some of which I've written about for you to read in this newsletter. But chief among the thoughts in my mind is this: I promised you at the start that we would take a long time to get to know one another. Then, with no input from me on this, Paul Roberts (the preacher at my installation) reminded us together of the importance of taking this time to get to know one another... he said to us over and over, "You have this one chance," and what he meant was that we only get to start this season of the life of First Church once.

He's right. And that's something I want us to keep in mind. It would be very tempting to race ahead on some conclusions, but we need to resist those temptations. To be sure, there are some actions that demanded to be taken immediately upon my arrival—pursuing a loan so that we can begin exterior maintenance on the building in the spring would be a great example of that. But we have deliberately spent this fall worshipping together, giving me time to understand the unique governance of this congregation, and how our finances piece together, and how our operations run. I'm grateful for that time.

And now, this is the time when we start to test some assumptions. I'll be working with our leadership this spring to see where there are areas we might want to do some things differently. The answer may be no, the answer may be yes—we don't know yet; that's why we test our assumptions. As anything comes up, you can expect to hear from me about it. This space will be a good place to look for updates on what we are doing, but you can always ask me in person if you wish. And like I said from the very start, anything we decide will be decided together with the leadership of this congregation.

Having said all of these things, there is one area of our common life together about which I would like to offer you some reassurances, because it tends to be the area of a church's life together that can produce anxiety if folks don't know what is going on with it, and that is worship. Simply put: I love the way we worship at First Church, and I think we do it very well at both of our services. Any changes that may come about in worship will be subtle, not drastic.

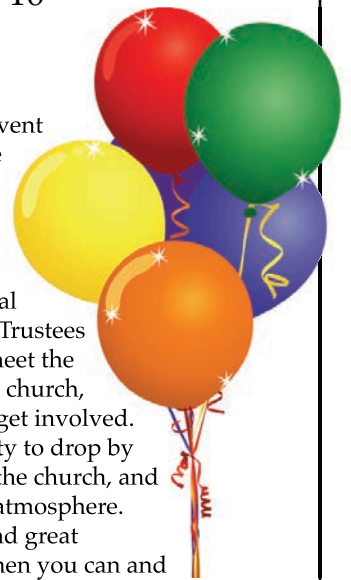
That's what I have to say to start this new year. I pray that it will be full of blessings for each of us, blessings that we will see as our relationships together deepen and mature. I'm grateful to God for each of you, and I wish you a happy, healthy new year!

—Baron Mullis

We're So Glad You're Here!

Wednesday, January 16th
5:30-7:30 PM

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! 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).



JANUARY 6
EPIPHANY OF THE LORD
Isaiah 60:1-6
Psalm 72:1-7, 10-14
Ephesians 3:1-12
Matthew 2:1-12

JANUARY 13
BAPTISM OF THE LORD
Isaiah 43:1-7
Psalm 29
Acts 8:14-17
Luke 3:15-17, 21-22

JANUARY 20
Isaiah 62:1-5
Psalm 36:5-10
1 Corinthians 12:1-11
John 2:1-11

JANUARY 27
Nehemiah 8:1-3, 5-6, 8-10
Psalm 19
1 Corinthians 12:12-31a
Luke 4:14-21

January 2019 at a Glance

Tuesday, January 1

Church office closed.

Wednesday, January 2

7:30 pm Twenties & Thirties (T&T) Group

Thursday, January 3

6:45 pm Deacons

Sunday, January 6 - Epiphany of the Lord

9:00 am Celebration! Worship (Old Buttonwood Hall)
 9:45 am Adult Christian Education Meeting (MacColl Room)
 10:00 am Children's Sunday School (Cochran Room)
 11:00 am Traditional Worship (Sanctuary)
 12:15 pm Twenties & Thirties "First Sunday" Brunch (Irish Pub)

Monday, January 7

11:00 am Congregational Care Team

Tuesday, January 8

7:00 pm Women's Bible Study

Wednesday, January 9

10:00 am Worship Committee
 7:30 pm Twenties & Thirties (T&T) Group

Thursday, January 10

530 pm Membership & Evangelism Committee

Saturday, January 12

9:00 am Men's Breakfast Group (Cafe @ DiBruno's)

Sunday, January 13 - Baptism of the Lord

9:00 am Celebration! Worship (Old Buttonwood Hall)
 10:00 am Children's Sunday School (Cochran Room)
 11:00 am Traditional Worship (Sanctuary)
 12:15 pm Fellowship (Old Buttonwood Hall)
 12:15 pm Festival of Faith Committee Meeting

Tuesday, January 15

9:30 am WiseRetirees
 7:00 pm Women's Bible Study

Wednesday, January 16

5:30 pm We're So Glad You're Here Reception
 7:30 pm T&T Group

Thursday, January 17

6:30 pm Session

Sunday, January 20

9:00 am Celebration! Worship (Old Buttonwood Hall)
 10:00 am Children's Sunday School (Cochran Room)
 11:00 am Traditional Worship (Sanctuary)
 12:15 pm Fellowship (Old Buttonwood Hall)
 12:30 pm New Member Class

Monday, January 21

Church office closed.

Tuesday, January 22

7:00 pm Women's Bible Study

Wednesday, January 23

7:30 pm T&T Group

Sunday, January 27

9:00 am Celebration! Worship (Old Buttonwood Hall)
 10:00 am Children's Sunday School (Cochran Room)
 11:00 am Traditional Worship (Sanctuary)
 12:15 pm New Member Reception (Old Buttonwood Hall)

Monday, January 28

6:30 pm Missions Committee

Tuesday, January 29

7:00 pm Women's Bible Study

Wednesday, January 30

7:30 pm T&T Group

Nationally Renowned Scholar to Preach and Teach at First Church



Dr. Bill Enright is the gold standard in talking about faith and giving. As a mentor of mine, he influenced a generation of pastors in being willing to talk about faith and money honestly. But more than that, Bill is interested in having faith conversations. As the founding director of the Lake Institute on Faith and Giving, he helped congregations and leaders see giving as being about more than money. Bill has a new book out, called *Kitchen Table Giving*, and I want our leaders and our congregation to read it together. Here at the church, we make an annual ask of the congregation to support the church's work in

a meaningful way financially. Now that the stewardship season is just about over, I want us to reflect back on the spiritual dimensions of giving. It's not just about money!

Because of our friendship, Bill has agreed to be our first Festival of Faith speaker. Recognizing that congregation members want opportunities to dig deep into the life of faith, we hope to bring thought leaders to First Church annually to challenge us, to test our assumptions about faith and to enrich our conversations as a congregation. Let's learn together!

—Rev. Baron Mullis

Faith Formation Starts off the New Year

Greetings from our Sunday School in the Cochran classroom downstairs! I am delighted to have the opportunity to begin to share with you more about the ways in which we are expanding our programming to include the youngest members of our worshipping body.

As Baron mentioned in our last newsletter, I have been tasked with the responsibility of growing our programming for young children and their families. Over the past year, we have been blessed to welcome many younger children and babies into our worship, and over 25 of those children have become regular attendees at one of our services.

With that in mind, we have begun to explore how we might engage in faith formation with these children and their families on Sunday Mornings. We have initiated a Faith Formation Hour, in which we explore our faith through prayer, song, and story. We have also begun to think ahead to ways in which we can support families in their faith at home, and we hope to begin promoting opportunities for parents to connect with one another through monthly "coffee club" gatherings as well as periodic family friendly get-togethers outside of Sunday morning.

It may go without saying, but the success of our ministry to families and children in particular depends upon all of us. Our church is gifted with a particular love and passion for ministry to young adults, and I encourage you to continue providing that crucial fellowship, support, and prayers to those young families in our midst who are raising little ones. When you take the time to get to know them, you are demonstrating God's love, and bearing fruit worthy of the gospel.

If you have a particular heart for young families, please reach out to me (sarah.weisiger@fpcphila.org). And if you are a part of a young family in need of support (or if you know someone who might), please know that I am here to pray with you and to support you in the ways that may help you grow deeper in your faith. My door is always open!

—Rev. Sarah Weisiger

Minister for Membership Development and Faith Formation

Dates Available for 2019 Chancel Flower Dedications

The 2019 Chancel Flower Calendar is posted on the bulletin board across from the church office. If you have a Sunday preference for donating, please sign up on the calendar and/or contact Anita McLarin (anita.mclarin@fpcphila.org). The cost is \$75 per week, to be left in the church office. Dedication information for the bulletin should be provided directly to Anita McLarin.

Do You Want to Be A Part of the Adult Sunday School Conversation?

Baron Mullis and Megan LeCluyse will meet with a group of adults on January 6th at 9:45 AM in the MacColl room to talk about what's next in adult education at First Church. With Jesse's retirement came the conclusion of his Sunday morning lectionary bible study, but it also brought an opportunity for us to take a deliberate look at what we hope to accomplish with our Sunday School hour. What would get you to come to church an hour early, or stay an hour later, depending on which service you attend? Do you want to hear about Mission? Or is church history your thing? Perhaps you have a particular book of the Bible you are interested in exploring...would you like to read a book together and discuss it? The sky is the limit and we want to foster. Your church staff wants to know two things specifically from you: What will you consistently show up to study, and are you interested in helping to lead?

Come to the MacColl room on January 6th, and let's start a conversation about adult education!

—Rev. Baron Mullis

Riverside Christmas Party



A good time was had by all!

WOMEN OF WIT & WISDOM

What Does Baron Think?

The Women of Wit and Wisdom will find out at our brown bag lunch on Thursday, January 10th at 12 noon in Old Buttonwood Hall. Our new pastor, The Rev. Dr. Baron Mullis, graciously has agreed to a Q&A session. Topics of discussion may range from the depths of doctrine to tiresome tasks and everything in between. This event is not to be missed—an excellent opportunity to get to know Baron better, along with his theology, both practical and spiritual, and to express whatever thoughts, ideas, and matters of interest we may have. To RSVP email womenwitwisdom@fpcphila.org or call Diane at (609) 980-5421. Bring your lunch and beverages will be served. Join us for this enlightening experience.

—Ruth Camisa & Diane Rogers

CONNECTING WITH OTHER FAITHS:

Epiphany in Ethiopia

Timkat, which celebrates the baptism of Jesus Christ, is the Ethiopian Epiphany Day observed by Christians in Ethiopia on January 19 every year. Crowds gather and processions form, interweaving priests and pilgrims, traditional drums and silk robes, gleeful music, dance, and song. Christmas is the most celebrated Christian holiday in Ethiopia, but Timkat is second.

Ethiopia has had its own strain of Orthodox Christianity since the first century A.D., and over 40 million people there are active in daily religious practices. Ethiopians believe that the original Ark of the Covenant resides in their country, guarded by priests who maintain their watch night and day.

One of the best places to discover Timkat is Ethiopia's ancient capital of Gondar, where a long-ago emperor built a royal bath which is filled every year on this holy day. After a night's prayerful vigil, the water is blessed and pilgrims splash into the water, symbolically reenacting Jesus' baptism and their own. Eventually, all make their way to feasts and further celebrations.

Whether you travel to Gondar, to the current capital of Addis Ababa, or anywhere in Ethiopia, Christians are joyfully marking this important holiday.

Looking ahead, mark your calendars: On February 24th at 9:45 AM, the adult education class will feature Rev. Megan LeCluyse, Campus Minister and Director of the Christian Association and Patricia Anton, Chaplain of the Muslim Life Program at the University of Pennsylvania. Having shared the same space at the university over the past year, the two chaplains will discuss how they and their students have benefited from this interfaith experience.

—Diane Rogers & Carol Cook



Advent at First Church 2018



Member News

Births

CRYSTAL and NICK REECK joyfully welcomed their first child, JORDAN ELIZABETH REECK, just before Christmas. Everyone is happy and healthy and Crystal looks forward to introducing Jordan to her Church Family.

REBEKAH and MICHAEL HOROWITZ are delighted to share that MOLLY LEANNE HOROWITZ was born at a healthy 8 lbs 4 oz on December 19th. Mom and baby are doing well. Molly Leanne's first name honors Michael's grandmother Miriam and grandfather Max. Her middle name is Rebekah's original middle name and honors her great-uncle Lee. Michael shares that Molly can't wait to meet everyone in her church family.



Weddings

EMILY UNGER, daughter of RICK and SHELLIE UNGER, was married to CONOR DALY at First Church on Monday, December 31. The Rev. Dr. Baron Mullis presided.

Deaths

It is with great sorrow that we share the news that VALMAE BROWN, mother of GARY CHRISTENSEN, passed away shortly following a surgical procedure on December 17th in Australia. Gary writes that "she was a brave and spiritual woman with a very big heart, and will be deeply missed." Our prayers are with the Christensen family as they give thanks for Val's life, and mourn her loss.



Interested in First Church? New Member Class Forming

Do you have questions about what it means to be Presbyterian? Have you wondered about the history of our particular church? Perhaps you have contemplated membership and are wondering what it entails? If so, we would like to invite you to consider joining us for our quarterly membership class on Sunday, January 20th at 12:30 PM. Our membership class is an excellent opportunity for you to learn more about our history and our values, how our past has shaped us and how we believe God is leading our church in the present. Attendees will have the opportunity to learn about the various ministries of our church, as well as meet with representatives from our leadership team. We will be providing lunch, so we ask that you kindly RSVP to Sarah Weisiger (sarah.weisiger@fpcphila.org) if you are interested in attending.

Musicopia String Orchestra Concert Saturday, February 2!

The Musicopia String Orchestra (MSO), which rehearses weekly at our church, will be holding its winter concert on **Saturday, February 2 at 4:00 PM at the Church of the Holy Trinity on Rittenhouse Square**. The orchestra will perform works by Richard Meyer, Soon Hee Newbold, Carl Nielsen, and more. The Musicopia Chamber Orchestra and the Musicopia Young String Players will also perform. The MSO program 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.

The concert is free (no tickets needed) and open to the public.



Join Penn's Village as we celebrate 2019 and Look to our Future

Thursday, January 10, 5:30 – 8:00PM
Thomas Jefferson University
130 S. 9th Street (Alumni Hall)

Penn's Village invites you to celebrate our many successes of 2018 and welcome 2019 as we strive to achieve even more accomplishments. Here are some service statistics we are especially proud of in 2018:

- Number of zip codes served 8
- Available volunteers 90
- Services provided by volunteers 1,000 (68-98/mo.)
- Most requested services Companion and Transportation
- Programs presented / attendees 50 / 1,000
- Newly established blog, #posted / #viewed 18 / 6,000

Penn's Village belongs to residents and businesses that care about the vitality of Central Philadelphia neighborhoods. We are neighbors of all ages who want our community to work for residents who wish to thrive in their own homes as they age.

Please join us to learn about future plans and to toast 2019. Snacks, wine and soft drinks will be served. The hit musical *Hamilton* is coming to Philadelphia and we will be introducing our raffle for what promise to be difficult-to-obtain tickets. Yes, we already have them!

Please register by contacting info@pennsvillage.org or 215-925-7333. For further information about Penn's Village visit our website: www.pennsvillage.org or call us at 215-925-7333. Read our newsletter and blog too!

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 October.

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@mannapa.org.

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



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PLANNED GIVING
Planting Seeds for the Future

**Become a member
of the
Buttonwood Circle!**

www.fpcphila.org/planned-giving/



Please submit all information for the February issue of The Messenger to communications@fpcphila.org by **Friday, January 25th**.

The First Presbyterian Church IN THE CITY OF PHILADELPHIA

Church Staff

The Rev. Dr. Baron Mullis, **Pastor & Head of Staff**
 The Rev. Megan LeCluyse, **Celebration Team Leader**
 Mr. Andrew Senn, **Director of Music & Organist**
 Ms. Sue Riemann, **Church Administrator**
 The Rev. Jerry K. Foote, **Minister for Congregational Care**
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 Ms. Annie LeCluyse, **Young Adult Leader**
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 The Rev. Kenneth J. Ross, **Parish Associate**
 The Rev. Herbert D. Valentine, **Parish Associate**

the Messenger

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 Owen Robbins, **Layout Design**

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