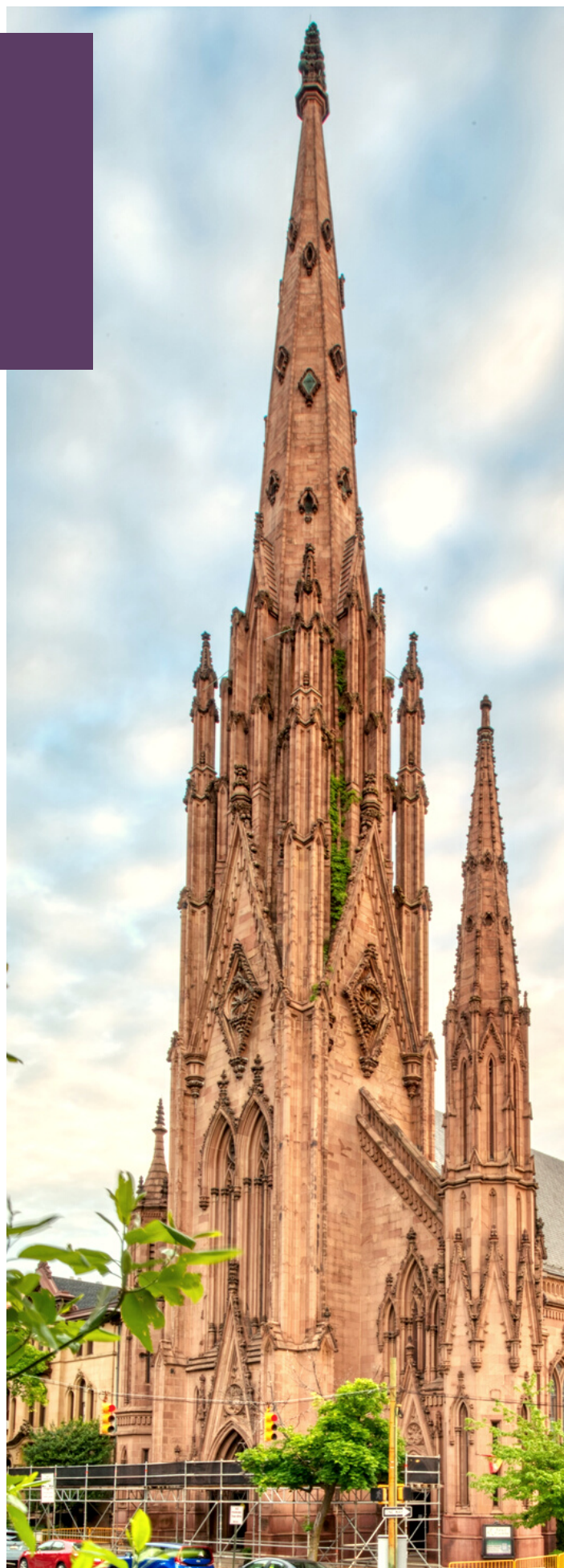


DECEMBER 2023 NEWSLETTER

# FIRST & FRANKLIN PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH

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## A WORD FROM REV. STEVE NOFEL

When I was a kid our family had the neatest Christmas tree stand. It was painted a sparkly mother of pearl. Its greatest feature was that it spun the tree. As it spun the tree it played an instrumental version of Silent Night.

The only thing was, it played this incredibly beautiful piece of music at a manic pace. When we sang along with the musical stand, we had to run all the words together, "Silentnightholynight..." So to this day more than a half-century later, whenever I hear or sing Silent Night, I am thinking, "Speed it up. We are singing it too slow." I have allowed my norm to be that this beautiful music be manic.

I am sorry to say, my Advent and Christmas seasons have become much like that. I get so focused on what I need to do. What needs done. What needs cooked. What needs bought. What bulletin and sermon need written, I move at a manic pace. Is it the same with you?

I want to generalize and say many of us have gotten so used to the manic pace we set in December, that it has become the new norm.

Well stop it! I am just kidding about making it an order.

However, I am challenging myself and all of us to slow down and appreciate Advent and Christmas this year. One of the best ways is to focus on worship. I am making a point of being prepared early in the week for each Sunday of Advent: Dec. 3, 10, 17, and 24. So each Sunday, I can slow down and appreciate worship, be in fellowship with my siblings in Christ, and focus on the beautiful story of the coming of the Savior of the world.

For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Savior, which is Christ the Lord. Luke 2:11

I urge you to slow down some in December. Make a point to attend worship this year. Let others be manic while we focus on Jesus' Advent. The Coming of the Son of God.



Grace and Peace,  
Pastor Steve Nofel

# DECEMBER 2023 CALENDAR

12/01 Fri 12:00pm-1:00pm | Al-Anon (Backus House)  
12/01 Fri 5:00pm-6:00pm | BSA: Chorus & String Orchestra Concert  
12/02 Sat 10:30am-1:30pm | 12-Step NA Meeting (Reid Chapel)  
12/02 Sat 1:00pm-3:00pm | Food Pantry (Backus)  
12/03 Sun 9:00am-10:00am | Adult Education: Advent Book Study  
12/03 Sun 9:00am-10:00am | Sunday School  
12/03 Sun 10:30am-11:30am | Guest Preacher: Rev. Nicole Reibe  
12/03 Sun 11:30am-12:30pm | Alternative Christmas Mini-Market  
12/03 Sun 11:30am-12:30pm | Nominating Committee  
12/05 Tue 6:30pm-7:30pm | Session Meeting  
12/05 Tue 7:00pm-8:30pm | Peacemaking Committee Meeting  
12/07 Thu 6:30pm-9:00pm | Choir Rehearsal (Sanctuary)  
12/08 Fri 12:00pm-1:00pm | Al-Anon (Backus House)  
12/09 Sat 10:00am-12:00pm | Choir Rehearsal (Sanctuary)  
12/09 Sat 10:30am-1:30pm | 12-Step NA Meeting (Reid Chapel)  
12/09 Sat 1:00pm-3:00pm | Food Pantry (Backus)  
12/10 Sun Sun 9:00am-10:00am | Adult Education: Advent Book Study  
12/10 Sun 9:00am-10:00am | Sunday School  
12/10 Sun 10:30am-11:30am | Bridge Pastor: Rev. Steve Nofel (Communion)  
12/10 Sun 4:00pm-5:30pm | Candlelight Choral Concert  
12/11 Mon 7:00pm-8:30pm | Church Life Committee Meeting  
12/14 Thu 7:00pm-9:00pm | Choir Rehearsal (Reid Chapel)  
12/15 Fri 12:00pm-1:00pm | Al-Anon (Backus House)  
12/16 Sat 10:30am-1:30pm | 12-Step NA Meeting (Reid Chapel)  
12/16 Sat 1:00pm-3:00pm | Food Pantry (Backus)  
12/17 Sun 9:00am-10:00am | Adult Education: Advent Book Study  
12/17 Sun 9:00am-10:00am | Sunday School  
12/17 Sun 10:30am-11:30am | Guest Preacher: David Harris  
12/17 Sun 12:00pm-1:00pm | Deacons Meeting  
12/18 Mon 5:30pm-7:30pm | Worship, Music, and Arts Committee Meeting  
12/19 Tue 6:30pm-8:30pm | Session Meeting  
12/20 Wed 5:30pm-6:30pm | Finance Committee Meeting  
12/21 Thu 6:30pm-8:30pm | Building and Grounds Committee Meeting  
12/21 Thu 7:00pm-9:00pm | Choir Rehearsal (Reid Chapel)  
12/22 Fri 12:00pm-1:00pm | Al-Anon (Backus House)

# DECEMBER 2023 CALENDAR (CONTINUED)

12/23 Sat 10:30am-1:30pm | 12-Step NA Meeting (Reid Chapel)  
12/23 Sat 1:00pm-3:00pm | Food Pantry (Backus)  
12/24 Sun 9:00am-10:00am | Adult Education: Advent Book Study  
12/24 Sun 9:00am-10:00am | Sunday School  
12/24 Sun 10:30am-11:30am | Bridge Pastor: Rev. Steve Nofel  
12/24 Sun 4:00pm-5:00pm | Special Service: Lessons and Carols  
12/25 Mon | Christmas Day - Office Closed  
12/28 Thu 7:00pm-9:00pm | Choir Rehearsal (Reid Chapel)  
12/29 Fri 12:00pm-1:00pm | Al-Anon (Backus House)  
12/30 Sat 10:30am-1:30pm | 12-Step NA Meeting (Reid Chapel)  
12/30 Sat 1:00pm-3:00pm | No Food Pantry  
12/31 Sun 9:00am-10:00am | Adult Education  
12/31 Sun 9:00am-10:00am | Sunday School  
12/31 Sun 10:30am-11:30am | Bridge Pastor: Rev. Steve Nofel

## DECEMBER CELEBRATIONS

### ANNIVERSARIES

Onyeka and Obiora Anaedozi  
Geoffrey Genth and Rachel Eisler  
Zhenya Gnezdilova and William Fleming  
Jim Peters and Rod Wright

### BIRTHDAYS

Kylie Pucino Amin Rose  
Bob Armenti  
Peggy Drake  
Joseph Jaffa  
Mike Johnson  
Diane Newman  
Steve Noffsinger  
Allie Pyan  
Daveen Rim  
Beth Seeley  
Evan Smith  
Jeremy Tibbels  
Randy Veale



## DECEMBER FINANCE & STEWARDSHIP UPDATE

It's that time of year when we all start to think about year-end giving and planning for the next fiscal year. This month, I'd like to take a moment to address a few important topics related to First & Franklin's church budget.

### Year-End Giving for the 2023 Budget

Our annual budget for 2023 depends on \$275,000 in contributions. We are grateful if you have already given to the church. As of November 30, we have only received 64% of our budgeted contributions for 2023. Are you able to help us finish this year strong?

If you would like your gift to be on your 2023 giving statement, we request receipt by the church office no later than noon on Friday, December 29, 2023.

### Pledging and Planning for the 2024 Budget

When we start planning for the 2024 budget, one of the key pieces we use to determine our ability to maintain our buildings and support ministries and mission is the level of giving that we can expect to receive. Your pledge is a non-binding indicator of how much you expect to be able to give this coming year.

The Finance & Stewardship committee has set a goal of having \$200,000 in pledges this year. This represents about 80% of our budgeted giving for 2024. Thus far, we have received pledges totaling \$138,968 (69%) of our goal. If you have not pledged yet, please consider your ability to go "all in" and to give generously in 2024. You can make your 2024 pledge at [www.firstfranklin.org/pledge](http://www.firstfranklin.org/pledge).

We depend on both contributions and fees that we earn from things like space rentals, weddings, and ticket sales to pay the bills for First & Franklin. Without your help, we will continue to draw on our endowment in an unsustainable manner. I will talk more about this in future updates.

### How does grant funding fit in?

We are incredibly grateful for the grant money that we have received thus far for both the ADA bathroom and the initial study for spire repairs/restoration. However, it is important to remember that these grant funds do not help us cover our operating expenses (staff, utilities, ministries, etc.). Grant funding helps us with projects that we would not otherwise be able to afford. We will continue to seek grant funding so that we can continue to revitalize our campus and buildings.

If you have questions about anything in this update, you can always feel free to contact me at [amendelsohn@firstfranklin.org](mailto:amendelsohn@firstfranklin.org).

Alex Mendelsohn  
First & Franklin Presbyterian Church  
Chair, Finance & Stewardship





## CANDLELIGHT CHORAL CONCERT

The First & Franklin Sanctuary Choir, directed by Jason Kissel, will present their annual Candlelight Choral Concert on Sunday, December 10 at 4:00pm. This yearly tradition celebrates the holiday season with choral music including Vivaldi's *Gloria* with Baroque ensemble and carols. We also welcome gifted harpist and friend of the choir Jacqueline Pollauf. Join us in the glow of the candlelight to revel in music, beauty, and the joy of Christmas. No tickets required - a free will offering will be taken.

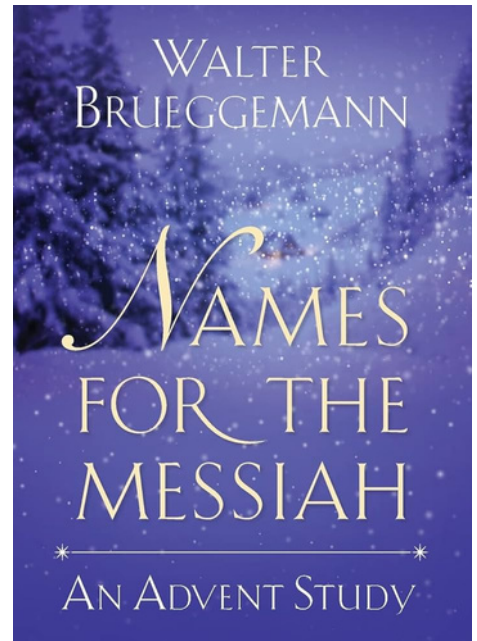


## COOKIE RECEPTION

Tis the Season for Cookies! We have begun preparations for the cookie reception after the Candlelight Concert on Sunday, December 10th. If anyone would like to sign up to make homemade cookies for the reception, please email [churchlife@firstfranklin.org](mailto:churchlife@firstfranklin.org) with the type and how many you would like to bring. Thanks!

## ADVENT BOOK STUDY

The Church Life Committee has been excitedly looking ahead to Advent and has picked a short study to guide our reflections as a church: Walter Brueggemann's *Names for the Messiah: An Advent Study*. This four-week study looks at the names given to the Messiah in the Old Testament (specifically the Isaiah passages that became the basis for Handel's *Messiah*) and wrestles with how Jesus both fulfilled those expectations and maybe even challenged them. Join us in Reid Chapel at 9 am on Sunday mornings starting December 3 as we draw near to the Messiah whose presence we celebrate during Advent. Please either order a copy online, on kindle, or reach out to [churchlife@firstfranklin.org](mailto:churchlife@firstfranklin.org) to request a copy. Donuts and coffee will be provided.



## TOY DRIVE UPDATES

Thank you for already filling our first box of new toys for sick children at nearby University Hospital. Your gifts will make sick children very happy. Our fifth-grade students are looking forward to gifting the new toys and games to The Child Life Program. The acceptance of donations will end on Sunday, December 17th, and on Monday, December 18th, at 9:30 AM, the gifts will be delivered to the hospital via Ms Elizabeth Connelly, Child Life Specialist. Donations are not accepted on Sundays because of limited staff and for obvious reasons, our students will not be allowed on the hospital floor. We will get a picture of the staff person accepting the donations.



Again, keep the gifts coming and a big thank you. Gift suggestions: Arts and crafts, baby dolls, board games, children's books, card games, Bluetooth speakers/headphones, coloring books, dry erase boards and markers, Fisher-Price Little People® toys, Hot Wheels cars/track sets, infant/toddler toys, journals, Legos/Duplo/Mega Blocks, Play-Doh, puzzles, etc.



## EAGENTON~ROBERTS FOUNDATION UPDATE

The Egenton-Roberts Foundation awarded Ballet After Dark (BAD) a first-time grant in 2023. BAD is a nonprofit healing enterprise with a mission of helping Black and Brown girls and women impacted by sexual violence and various traumas. BAD's programs work to heal the participants' minds and bodies with trauma-informed care, holistic resources, comprehensive education, dance therapy, and somatic interventions.

The Egenton-Roberts Foundation grant supports Periodt!, an interactive four-week comprehensive curriculum on menstrual and reproductive health for Black and Brown girls ages 8 to 12.

BAD was founded by Tyde-Courtney Edwards, a classically trained ballerina, art model, and survivor of sexual assault. Born and raised in Baltimore City, she is a graduate of the Baltimore School for the Arts and has over 20 years of dance training and experience. Trained in various styles of dance including classical and contemporary ballet, pointe, modern, lyrical, jazz, tap, and hip-hop, she conceptualized BAD after struggling with recovery following her sexual assault. Tyde-Courtney has trained with Debbie Allen Dance Academy, Dance Theatre of Harlem, Peabody Conservatory, Joffrey Ballet, Alvin Ailey, and other institutions while receiving training from local dance pioneers such as Anton Wilson and Stephanie Powell.

BAD's headquarters are located at the Eubie Blake Cultural Center, 847 N. Howard Street, around the corner from First & Franklin. For more information on BAD programs, to make a gift, or to volunteer, visit [www.balletefterdark.com](http://www.balletefterdark.com).

Note: BAD's annual Gatsby Gala will be held Friday, December 8 at the Hippodrome M&T Exchange. Ticket information can be found on BAD's website under Classes/Events.

## FOOD PANTRY UPDATES

During the month of November, the First & Franklin Presbyterian Church Food Pantry distributed a total of 250 grocery and produce bags to the residents in Mt. Vernon. Some of our regulars have been coming since day one in June of 2020, and we continue to serve new visitors each week. Donations of canned goods, pantry items, and household essentials are still greatly needed for the Food Pantry. Donations can be placed in the boxes in the church narthex by the Sanctuary doors.



## COFFEE HOUR SPONSORS NEEDED

Volunteers are needed to provide coffee hour refreshments on Sunday, December 10th. Members with the last name A-D are encouraged to sign up. It only costs about \$10-15 - enough to provide snacks for 20-25 people. A cake, pie, or pastry, a box of crackers, some bite size fruit, bread and jam, cheese, cookies - two or three of these items are a perfect choice! Any questions? Contact [information@firstfranklin.org](mailto:information@firstfranklin.org) or call the church office at (410) 728-5545.

## BIRTHDAY FUN WITH MIKE JOHNSON

On my birthday, December 23rd, I am organizing a group to go see the annual showing of "It's A Wonderful Life" at the Senator Theater. The admission is a small donation to a local food bank. You have to be in line before 9am for the 9:30 showing so there is lots of time to chat and enjoy a warm beverage and or portable breakfast while we wait. Feel free to bring along friends and family. RSVP is not necessary. For more details send an email to [churchlife@firstfranklin.org](mailto:churchlife@firstfranklin.org) or grab me in person. Don that gay apparel! For those who wish, we can wear name tags identifying our wonderful congregation. Maybe we will inspire some people to come to services for Christmas Eve? It will be fun.





## STEWARDSHIP LUNCHEON PHOTOS



## HANGING OF THE GREENS PHOTOS





# ALTERNATIVE CHRISTMAS MARKET PHOTOS

