



# FIRST & FRANKLIN PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH

# COMMUNITY News

## FEBRUARY 2022



210 W MADISON STREET | BALTIMORE, MD 21201 | (410) 728-5545 | FIRSTFRANKLIN.ORG

## FEBRUARY CALENDAR

### February 6:

“What’s the Game plan for F&F?”  
I Samuel 16: 1, 5-13. Luke 8:11-18.

Congregational Meeting After Church.

### Feb. 13:

“Deeper Water Fishing.”  
Jeremiah 17: 5-10. Luke 5: 1-11.

Ordination and Installation of New Deacons and Elders

Purple Ribbon Renewal Ceremony—  
Outside after worship.

### Feb. 20:

Guest Minister: Rev. Robin J. Hogle,  
Chaplain, Norton Children’s Hospital,  
Louisville, KY.

“That Alabaster Jar.”  
Isaiah 54: 1-8. Luke 7:36-50.

### Feb. 27

“A Transfiguration Story.”  
Luke 9: 28-36. II Corinthians 3: 12-18.

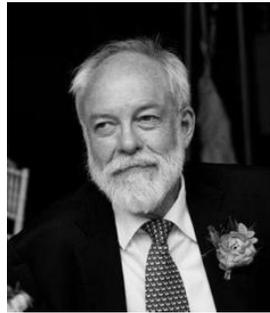
Inquirer’s Gathering After Church

### March 2

Ash Wednesday Service in Sanctuary  
7:00 pm

Shorter Lenten Vespers will be held  
in the Chapel on Wednesdays at 6pm  
from March 9<sup>th</sup> to April 13<sup>th</sup> (Lent)

## EPIPHANY TO LENT



I like what the Adult Forum has been doing since the arrival of the Magi to Bethlehem, 12 days after Christmas. Understanding “epiphany” as a revelation or showing of the Divine, they have looked at moments of revelation or realization in our own lives that are sometimes physical in their convicting power. Betty Loafmann started us off and others have added their own examples. Here is an example in poetry:

*My fiftieth year had come and gone  
I sat a solitary man in a crowded London shop  
An open book and empty cup on the marble tabletop  
As on the shop and street I gazed  
My body of a sudden blazed  
And 20 minutes more or less it seemed  
So great my happiness  
That I was blessed and could bless.  
(W. B. Yeats, Vacillations, Section IV)*

The season of epiphany is short in the church calendar, moving quickly to the Baptism of Jesus, and then 6-7 weeks before Lent. The Martin Luther King, Jr. and Presidents Day holidays fall within that period. Secular saints’ days.

The use of Lent for spiritual exploration, discipline, or growth has not been a Protestant specialty. We could say that in the stern or dour Presbyterian way, we were always living disciplined, focused lives (at least in theory!). Why did we need Lent? Maybe that’s a question to bring to the Lenten Vespers (evening services). The idea is that Jesus is going to Jerusalem for the last time, and he increasingly knows it’s the last time. Where are we going?

Our congregation is also on a journey or pilgrimage. Covid has made tending our inner, communal life difficult. The choir has a discipline, the Food Pantry, and there is a discipline in just going to worship, even on Zoom. In a city beset by continuous stream of gun grief, we extend empathy, through prayer, and we will re-dedicate the ribbons on February 13, after church. But where are any of our projects going?

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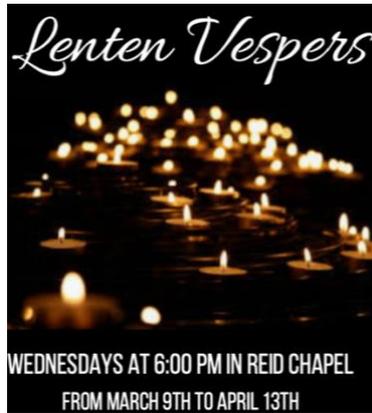
Maybe it is enough to be open to epiphanies. Maybe Lent is a time to unpack them, to see how they crystallize our sense of God and our sense of who we are at a given moment. We have a sense of the fullness of time. In Mark 10:49, when Jesus hears the blind man, Bartimaeus, he stands still. Healing follows, after this person has expressed his need, his want, his heart's desire.

May our church, in its worship and fellowship and even committees, be a vehicle for epiphanies.

Rev. Christian Iosso, Interim Minister.

## LENTEN VESPERS

Starting Ash Wednesday, March 2, and going through Good Friday's Service of Tenebrae, First & Franklin will be observing Lent. Those two services will be held in the sanctuary with the choir.



On Wednesday evenings from 6-7:45, in the Chapel, there will be a 25 minute worship service followed by Bread and Soup, and then a book discussion, led by the Adult Education Committee.

Rev. Iosso and Dr. Kissel are designing a service that will include the spoken word, silence and brief musical elements. The theme of the texts and brief meditations will be the Bible's accounts of depth experiences, leading to the spiritual suffering in Gethsemane and the physical suffering of the Cross.

The schedule will be:

**6:00 - 6:25 pm** Worship led by Chris and Jason, incorporating scripture, singing, and silence.

**6:25 - 6:45 pm** Soup and bread supper served by the Education Committee

**6:45 - 7:30 pm** Discussion based on the recently published book *The Church Cracked Open: Disruption, Decline, and New Hope for Beloved Community* by Stephanie Spellers. An Episcopal priest, she points to the pandemic and the racial-justice reckoning as factors disrupting churches already in decline, but sees them as a way God may be breaking us open for new possibilities. Reading the book is optional, but would deepen your participation.

## ADULT FORUM DISCUSSION THEMES

Sunday mornings at 9:15 in Backus House

February 6 -- We continue our conversations about epiphanies. Steve Hollaway will help us think about epiphanies in novels and movies, and how they are like our own.

February 13, 20, 27 -- Kris Stinson will lead a study of the early church theologian and biblical scholar Origen (185-254) who wrote before the New Testament was fully defined. *Christian History* magazine described Origen briefly:

*This third century "religious fanatic" gave up his job, slept on the floor, ate no meat, drank no wine, fasted twice a week, owned no shoes, and reportedly castrated himself for the faith. He was also the most prolific scholar of his age (with hundreds of works to his credit), a first-rate Christian philosopher, and a profound student of the Bible.*

Kris, a doctoral student in church history, will help us think about what we can learn from Origen about the Bible and faith.

March 6, 13, 20, 27; April 3, 10 (Sundays during Lent) We will have conversations around the themes of Richard Foster's book *Streams of Living Water* which describes what he calls the six great traditions of Christian spirituality. We will consider one tradition each Sunday and think about how it has shaped us and our church. The six traditions are: the contemplative tradition, the holiness tradition, the charismatic tradition, the social justice tradition, the evangelical tradition, and the incarnational tradition. It is suggested that you order the book (\$11.59 new, less used) and read the week's chapter in advance, but you do not have to read the book to enjoy the discussion. Each week's presenter will give a brief overview of the chapter.

## PURPLE RIBBON CEREMONY



After church on Sunday, February 13, there will be a gathering on the sidewalk next to the Purple Ribbons for a prayer service in which we will read the names and remember the homicide victims of 2021. We are looking for people to help read the names. Please let Ruth, Chris, or Betty know if you are interested. We hope you will join us in this public time of remembrance.

The Peacemaking Committee

## LITURGISTS TRAINING

Seven members and friends of First & Franklin gathered in the Sanctuary on Saturday morning, January 8, for a two-hour orientation session on how to be an effective liturgist. Some have been liturgists dozens of times in the past; some never have. We were led by Rev. Rhonda Cooper, an ordained Methodist pastor and long-time friend of our church.

Rhonda encouraged us to consider some theoretical questions: What kind of church is First & Franklin? What is the role of liturgist as a lay worship leader? How is worship a performance, and how is it not?

We also looked at very practical questions: How do I use the microphone? How loudly and how slowly should I read? How do I stand, use my hands, pace my walk up the pulpit stairs – if I go there at all? How do I learn correct pronunciation of Biblical names? How do I consult with the preacher to understand the theology in prayers and Scripture passages I am asked to read? Rhonda also raised up questions which combined theory, logistics, and spiritual: How does the liturgist prepare and practice? How do we keep the focus in worship where it belongs, and not make it all about ourselves? Most important, How can we read Scripture as if telling a story?

The Worship, Music, & Arts Committee of Session hopes to highlight the role of liturgist, as a witness to our Protestant tradition of lay leadership in the church. We aim to have quarterly sessions with Rhonda, to form a cohort of members and friends who take this on as a ministry and agree to serve a few times a year, scheduled in advance, with plenty of time for reflection and preparation. We will be looking at ways to ensure that anyone who feels called to try, regardless of physical challenges (or just nerves!), can be a liturgist.

Please pray to support this ministry, and stay tuned for announcements of future sessions.

## GET TO KNOW THE FINANCIAL SECRETARY



My name is Victorious Schwarz, and I would like to introduce myself to you. I have recently joined the staff here at First & Franklin Presbyterian Church as the new Financial Secretary and I am truly delighted to be serving you in this capacity at such a time as this. Even though we are certainly deep in the midst of this long lasting and uncertain pandemic, I embrace this new role with nothing but optimism and good cheer. For me

it's not only a New Year, but also a new town and now, a new job. The Lord is truly "doing new things in my life" and it is wonderful for me; and I am hoping that my being here will be pleasant for you all as well. As I settle into this role, I hope to eventually meet most of you in person, however in the meantime here are a few things about me:

I recently moved to Baltimore from Long Island, New York. I am here with my son, Ramesses Nile and my adorable three-year old cat, Blaze. I am sure I do not have to tell you who is the boss in my house; yes, you guessed it, it's Blaze!! He is absolutely precious and is truly pampered by both, me and my son!

While in Long Island, I served as a Local Pastor (Commissioned Lay Pastor) for the United Methodist Church for five years and prior to that I worked as a Financial Controller within a law firm for more than five years. You could say that serving people and solving numerical problems is my forte. So being a Financial Secretary in a church, I'm loving it!

In my spare time I enjoy reading, hiking in Patapsco Park with my son and studying scripture. I would welcome recommendations about everything from places to volunteer .....to good places to eat.

There will be an announcement of my hours coming up soon so that you can feel free to call me at the office if you have any questions or just to say hi, I'd love to hear from you.

What is the new thing that God is doing in His church? "Behold, the former things are come to pass, and new things do I declare: before they spring forth I tell you of them" (Isaiah 42:9)

Get Excited! God is doing many good things!!!

God Bless You,  
Victorious Swarz

## GUNGIVE/BUY BACK WITH TJ SMITH



On Saturday January 22nd, Peacemaking Committee members and others once again met with TJ Smith, former chief spokesperson and communications advisor for the Baltimore Police Department. TJ continues to provide information and crucial support as we move forward with plans to host a Guns to Garden event in June.

The goal of this event is to offer people an option for how to dispose of an unwanted gun. Removing a gun from a home will prevent its use in a suicide or an accidental shooting, its falling into the hands of an unstable family member, or becoming a stolen gun used on the street. There is peace in knowing that the gun can never again be used to harm another.

Currently we are reaching out to other churches, local businesses and organizations with common interests or missions, that may be interested in partnering this event. We will also explore, together with police representatives, the logistics of the event and options for disposal of the disabled guns by forging them into garden tools that can then be used in Baltimore community gardens, in particular gardens where youths are involved. Sharing the tools and their story can serve as a teaching moment.

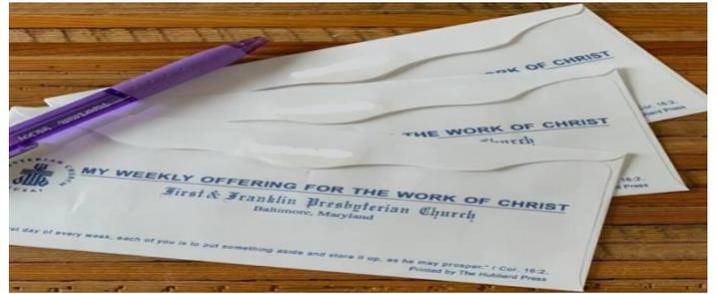
We will be telling you more about this project in the coming months. Please contact the Peacemaking Committee if you are interested in helping plan for and carry out this Guns to Garden event.

## UPDATED COVID PROTOCOLS

In the month of February we are inviting members, friends, and visitors to fellowship in Reid Chapel after service without food drinks.

Please be advised that masks are still required to be worn by all persons who are on church property regardless of vaccination status. No food or drink will be allowed on campus for any gatherings, including Adult Ed., etc. This applies to members, visitors, and staff inside any of our buildings for any purpose.

## CONTRIBUTION ENVELOPES FOR 2022



If you would like to use a box of envelopes in 2022, please email or call the office to be added to the list. If you prefer to use generic envelopes in the pews each week, please write your name on them before placing them in the collection tray. That will ensure we credit you with your donation. Your 2021 Contribution Statements will be mailed to you from the church office this week. Your support and generous contributions are a blessing to our church community.

## STEWARDSHIP 2022



Our Pledge Campaign is underway. Have you made your pledge online (at the top of our website) or by submitting a pledge card to the office? You can also drop it in the collection basket on Sunday. We

treasure your pledges so we can set our budget. With your help, we can limit our dependence on endowed funds. Large or small, your gifts matter. ANYONE is eligible to pledge - members, friends, visitors, out of towners, those who love beautiful {irreplaceable} architecture, those who love our missions. We are hoping to have many pledges submitted before our annual meeting on Sunday, Feb. 6th.

What about this concerning the Per Capita?

Our per capita contribution for 2022 is \$38.13 per person. {less than \$0.74 per week.} This is the amount that the church pays to the Presbytery on your behalf for the

work they do for all of the churches in the Baltimore Presbytery. It also maintains the structure of the larger denomination. We pay this for each person on our rolls regardless of whether you make a contribution so please consider offsetting this annual expense for us by donating your portion. You can use the blue envelope in the front of your contribution box or indicate "Per Capita" on your check or Paypal contribution. Thank you!

PER CAPITA APPORTIONMENT	
Every church is apportioned a share of the expenses of the presbytery, the synod, and the General Assembly for ecclesiastical purposes. The apportionment is based on church membership. The amount varies with the needs of the presbytery, synod, and General Assembly, and is a regular expense payable by this church at the spring meeting of presbytery. The amount to be paid this year is \$38.13 per person.	
2022 Per Capita:	\$ 38.13 per person
	(\$76.26 per couple)
Presbytery:	\$ 28.00
General Assembly:	\$ 8.98
Synod:	\$ 1.15
Name:	_____ member is

# Beyond Tithing: The Meaning of Stewardship

Faith at Work is an organization that grew out of Church of the Savoir in DC. I had the privilege of attending a wonderful weekend retreat that they offered entitled "Minding of Money". Each participant was required to prepare and submit in advance a personal history of the role money played in our lives. This article was a result of that.

by Dr. Anne E. Culbertson

When I was a child, I asked questions every year as "Stewardship" Sunday rolled around. The most I could figure out in the way of an answer was something about wine and about burying things in the ground. I had no idea *what* "talents" were, and I certainly didn't know which ones, if any, I possessed (presumably none for wine-making. Anyway, we were Methodists!) Gradually I learned about offerings, pledges, and giving in general. It is only recently that I have begun to understand a few things about tithing.

## Money

Scripture instituted tithing not for God's benefit but for ours. The person who out of love gives one-tenth of his or her income is doubly blessed. First of all, the remainder — that part of God's bounty which is left — seems to go farther. (According to my mother, my grandmother used to say that once she and my grandfather began to tithe, their money problems seemed to disappear.) The second benefit comes in seeing what that one-tenth can accomplish. It is a glorious gift from God to be a vehicle through which His love flows to others. I rejoice in that gift.

Once the fundamental decision to tithe is made the only question we must answer on a monthly (or weekly) basis is how it will be used. A wonderful sense of freedom accompanies this decision. When we become aware of Who really owns the material goods of this world, it then becomes a privilege for us to have a say in how they are distributed and used.

We become God's money managers, as it were, and the creative challenge we face is to get the best value we can for His people. Enter stewardship. Thrift. Frugality. Parsimony. Call it what you will.

*But stewardship extends beyond money.  
The things in our lives can also play a part.  
Those things that clutter our houses and our  
minds can also cloud our souls.  
Things we don't need.  
Things others could use.  
Clothes, books, baubles, whatever.*

## Things

But stewardship extends beyond money. The things in our lives can also play a part. Those things that clutter our houses and our minds can also cloud our souls, Things we don't need. Things others could use. Clothes, books, baubles, whatever.

We need to be lean and fit and ready for action — stripped of all that is extraneous — if we would best serve God. That means getting rid of the things that are extra. It means dispensing with those things that weigh us down materially, physically, and emotionally, and thereby limit our ability to act on our love. Didn't our Lord ask those of us who have two coats to give one to someone who has none?

## The Environment

If stewardship means actively taking care of resources, caring for our environment cannot be overlooked. We cannot disregard a single person's potential to contribute to God's creation or to detract from it. "One person's actions don't matter" is the song of irresponsibility. One person, after all. Is all any of us has.

By refusing to pollute the world around us and by taking the time to recycle whatever we can, we make a statement. The actions we take to protect our environment reflect what we value. Everything we do reflects what we believe.

## Talents

And now to the most difficult area of all. I am least clear about this. Must one discover his or her talents before one can use them? Do we have to look inward before we can see beyond ourselves? Or does that coveted knowledge about our own gifts come only while we serve others?

Elizabeth O'Connor in *Eighth Day of Creation* talks about gift-evoking as one of the jobs of small groups in churches. Certainly, it helps us to clarify and pinpoint our gifts when another person affirms our talents.

Someone once said that talent without works does not exist. Time seems to be the missing ingredient in that equation and my current thinking is that these two, talent and time, are inseparable.

Stewardship can begin with small things and in little ways. We can glorify God in everything that we do. The power to become an instrument of love and healing is ours. The Source of that love and healing is God.

*Dr. Anne E. Culbertson lives in Baltimore, MD where she was the Lower School Music Teacher for 27 years at Friends School of Baltimore.*

## ANNUAL CONGREGATIONAL MEETING – 2/6

The Session invites all members and friends to join us for our Annual Congregational Meeting on February 6<sup>th</sup> immediately following worship both in person and on Zoom. The 2022 budget approved by Session will be presented and the congregation will be electing new officers. An annual report summarizing our activities since our last meeting in June 2021 will also be distributed. We are moving to calendar year schedule for both our budget and officer elections which is why the meeting has been moved from June.

## FROM THE PRESBYTERIAN-REFORMED CHURCH in Taguasco, Cuba

Our sister church in Taguasco, Cuba is now back to worshipping in person. They were very happy to be able to hold their annual pageant since it was not able to last year.



In Cuba, a very high percentage of the citizens have been vaccinated four times and the government has been very heavy handed on mandating their gatherings, but now they are slowly starting to open up again. Our friends have sent us a Christmas message and photographs of their Christmas celebration.

Two weeks ago during a Zoom meeting with two other US churches who are partners with Taguasco, we had a live conversation with Lore in Cuba. He has sent an open invitation to us to come visit as soon as we are comfortable coming. Maybe we can travel to Cuba in 2022!

**¡Feliz Navidad para todos!**  
Merry Christmas to everyone!

**Nos sentimos muy orgullosos de ver podido compartir con ustedes este día en que a todos se nos saltaron las lágrimas.**

We are very proud to be able to share with you this day that brought tears to everyone's eyes.

**¡Feliz Navidad y paz en toda la tierra!**  
Merry Christmas and peace to all in the world!

[Click here two watch a two minute video of the service.](#)

## CONGREGATIONAL SURVEY FOR 2022 MISSION STUDY

One of the first steps in a New Pastor Search is a Mission Study. The last Mission Study conducted at First & Franklin was completed in 2014. Much of the excellent work done in that study still holds true for the congregation today. Our intention in this 2022 Mission Study is to create the clearest picture possible of who we are as a congregation. We want to explore our specific DNA. We have created a survey to collect information from as many congregants as possible! The feedback you provide in this survey will be critical in finding a Pastor who is ideally suited to lead this church. We ask that you prayerfully and thoughtfully engage with this process.

To complete the survey electronically: [Click Here](#)

To receive a paper copy please email [information@firstfranklin.org](mailto:information@firstfranklin.org)

Once completed, paper surveys can be brought to service on any Sunday or mailed to the office:  
210 West Madison St  
Baltimore, MD 21201

**The deadline to complete a survey is Sunday, February 20<sup>th</sup>**



### Birthdays

1 – Sonce Reese	20 – Miriam Costa
7 – Gail Rice	20 – David Harris
10 – David Rice	21 – Zhenya Gnezdilova
14 – Davis Bradley	22 – Muddassar Iqbal
14 – Jan Trammell-Savin	23 – John Wolford
18 – Bonnie Thomson	25 – Becca Hollaway

### Anniversaries

1 – Haswell & Madge Franklin	9 – Mara & Lou Dudrow
5 – Betty & Jim Schroll	10 – Sonce & Jeremy Reese

## CHURCH KEYS

Do you have a master key to the church? Please let [George Meagher](#) know or call the church office and inform them.

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## CALL FOR USHERS AND LITURGISTS



### **VOLUNTEER IN THE NEW YEAR**

We need **YOUR** help to fill our schedule with ushers and liturgists.

Please consider this donation of your time as part of your gift to your church. Pull out your calendar and let's fill up those open spaces. Please reach out to the Worship Committee or the Church Office to sign up! Sign-up Sheets are also available on Sunday during Fellowship Hour in Reid Chapel or in the Narthex before service.

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## CHURCH OFFICE HOURS



### Regular Hours

Monday – 9:00 am to 4:00 pm  
Tuesday – 10:00 am to 2:30 pm  
Wednesday – 2:30 pm to 6:00 pm  
Thursday – 10:00 am to 3:00 pm  
Friday – 10:00 am to 3:00 pm

## SHARE YOUR GOOD NEWS & IDEAS!



We would love to receive and share your news in the upcoming Newsletters. What would you like to see? Do you have milestone events to share – graduations, weddings, family updates? Please send them to the church office. You can call, email or use the Contact Us link on the website.

**Please submit all entries for the March Newsletter by Monday, February 21<sup>st</sup>, 2022**

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## FOLLOW US ON SOCIAL MEDIA



Please follow us on Facebook and Instagram to keep up with the latest church news and exciting pictures!

[Instagram](#): Firstfranklinpresbyterian

[Facebook](#): Firstfranklinbaltimore