

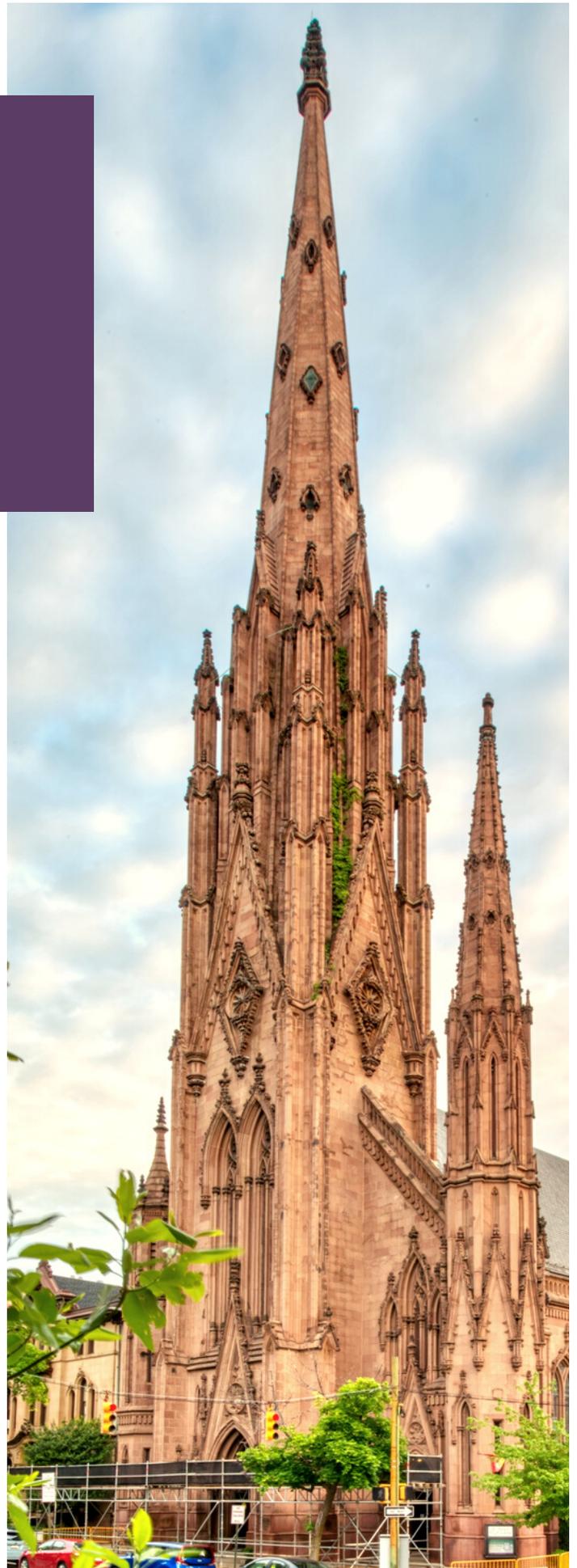
JANUARY 2023 NEWSLETTER

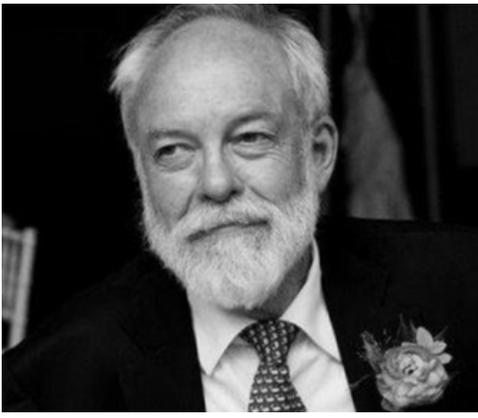
FIRST & FRANKLIN

PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH

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This New Year: Pray for Us, and Yourself.

BY REV. CHRIS IOSSO

When I am in Louisville, I periodically go to the progressive (or “Vatican II”) Roman Catholic parish to hear a woman friend preach. At baptisms they sing a catchy hymn as they make a line-dance following the priest or deacon and the parents, showing the child through their church in the round. They have a 5-6 person band—keyboard, drums, flute, guitar—but the hymn is not really a pop cultural piece. It is called “Litany of the Saints,” by John D. Becker. It lists many Biblical figures and saints in history, and they enlist some local and unofficial ones, asking the congregation to respond, “pray for us,” “save your people,” and “hear our prayer.”

When Holden Shenk is baptized on January 8, we will likely sing a more Reformed baptismal hymn, but we can also imagine the invisible “cloud of witnesses” of our congregation over time

joining in our joyful song over this young soul welcomed into our community. The words I use, invoking the Trinity with the sprinkling of the water, will also be the same as in all Christian churches. I may then pray to God as Creator, Redeemer, and Sustainer, but will have pronounced him baptized by the words of the long tradition: in the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, behold, a new member of the mystical Body of Christ.

Since the December 9th announcement of my departure (call or email for a copy), my five Sundays for farewells was reduced when Robin and I both came down with Covid. Some of my parting words are already in my sermons, but I want to lift up some people who I pray will be a steady presence in the church’s continuing transition.

- The online worshippers, some of whom I have never met in person. These are stalwart members and friends who put up with sometimes spotty transmission to hear our services. They are connected to us partly by memory, but there are also a number who find us online and hear enough good to stay with us and sometimes seek us out. Pray for them.
- Those who stay with the church despite the break-up or passing of a partner or close friend. It is difficult to stay active when part of the joy of church was being with someone you loved, and sometimes the church itself changes considerably. Pray for them.

- Those who have serious health concerns, some of whom are in assisted living situations and cannot travel, some in hospice care. I admire them deeply and thank them for welcoming me into their rooms and homes. Pray for them.
- The Peacemaking pillars who guide the Food Pantry, coordinating volunteers and bringing resources, welcoming neighbor volunteers, getting to know the people who depend upon the bags of groceries and the kindness of non-strangers. Pray for them.
- The regular ushers and fellowship snack providers and liturgists and “Table Guild,” who prepare communion. You may wish you were more extroverted, comfortable starting up conversations, quick at remembering names. Your sincere welcomes will be what continues to count. Pray for them.
- Those who invite an interim preacher to a meal, or help host a dinner. Covid reduced that number, and people in small apartments may not feel they can entertain. Yet even a very basic shared meal has been very appreciated. Pray for them.
- Those who have allowed themselves to be lured back. This includes children and even grandchildren who find something to be loyal to, and find loyalty to family or friends a part of their faithfulness to God. Pray for them.

- Those who give to create a joyful sound. These are not only the choir members, handbell-ringers and chief musician, but those who photocopy and archive the music and organize and support events. Pray for them.
- Those who keep giving and often pledging, even when unasked, because you know your contribution is needed. Jesus named you, when he said, you “keep your hand to the plow and don’t look back.” I hope your new pastor, when she or he comes, will make haste to thank you—even if you give and even tithe because it is part of how you know the grace of God. Pray for them.
- Those who will work for the church, often alone, “not only for pay, but out of a genuine desire to serve” God’s mission (paraphrasing I Peter 5:2). Pray for them.
- Those who take responsibility—leaders elected and self-selected—rather than let it not get done. Yes, you may want to do it your way, but you know how fragile groups can be when people insist on their own way—See I Corinthians 13. Pray for them.
- Those who struggle to put their vision or hope for the church into words. No one’s individual memory or image is enough—one reason why I have read so much of First & Franklin’s history. Pray for them/us/yourselves.

Churches and other non-profits can be anxious places. What does the future hold? Sometimes we get anxious on each other’s behalf. Others are quiet and can be neglected. Expectations among members and staff inevitably differ, as our gifts differ. Let us pray for each other, that our vision of God’s hand in this place can be open, strong, and gracious.

Grace and peace,

Rev. Christian Iosso
Interim Minister

Sunday School Celebrates Advent

Deborah McCrimmon
Director of Christian Arts & Education



Our multiage class completed the calendar year with a rich reading from the Book of Mark at church service on December 18th. They looked their parts in Biblical Magi costumes. To quote Jason Kissel, “I thought the children read so well on Sunday, and their energy and commitment felt so strong!”

As their teacher, I give the parents much credit for the strong presentation. They helped their children prepare for the reading. The parents and students have been supportive of all that I’ve asked of them. The students take their learning seriously!



On January 8, 2023, the older students will begin studying the life of Christ from His birth through the Resurrection. Our youngest student will primarily focus on The Creation Story. It remains a pleasure to work with such smart and conscientious students.



Teaming Up for Coffee Hour

Some changes to coffee hour!! The church budget mostly pays for the coffee, tea and juice, creamers, sweeteners and paper goods. Snacks are 100% donated.

The food pantry frequently has baked goods that are left over and can serve our needs during coffee hour. In the case they do not, we need to provide some kind of bread, snacks, cookies, pies, etc. about 44 Sundays every year to serve after worship. They do not need to be expensive, homemade or more than enough to give a bite to eat to 25 people. We have divided up our community into 4 teams assigned a calendar quarter. Each household in a team will be providing snacks on the Sunday that they choose in their assigned quarter (allowing for flexibility). Someone from the membership committee will contact everyone to learn which Sunday they want to sponsor early in 2023.

In previous years we had people who had to sponsor more Sundays than was fair. Spreading the job around 44 ways shouldn't be a burden at all and once a year everyone gets to host a little party. See Mike Johnson (mikejohnson9747@gmail.com) if you have any questions.

Increasing Accessibility in 2023

Session has approved the construction of the ADA Bathroom project in the narthex of Reid Chapel. First and Franklin has received grant funding from multiple sources including the Baltimore National Heritage Area and the Presbytery of Baltimore. We are also grateful to have received a \$10,000 donation from an anonymous friend of the church. We hope to begin the project in the first quarter of 2023. For more information and copies of the architectural drawings, please contact Dave Pierson.



First Impressions at First & Franklin

Here are some tips that all of us can use regarding visitors. A short sincere welcome is really all that matters. While you are sitting in the pew, feel free to turn around and wave, smile and welcome anyone that you do not recognize.

While walking by someone that you do not know, say "I don't think that we have met, my name is ____" (I am Bill. It's my first time.) "Great, we are happy to have you here."

After worship, during the postlude, please invite people you do not know to have coffee hour in the chapel. "Hi, hope you can stay and have refreshments with us."

If you meet someone who says they have worshipped with us several times, ask "Do you get the weekly email update?" If not, have an usher get a connect card from the welcome table in the narthex and fill it out OR get out your phone and use the camera or a QR reader and scan the code at the bottom left of the card. They will be signed up in no time.

Call for Food Pantry Volunteers

The Peacemaking Committee is grateful for the support of everyone who continues to donate food and money to keep the Pantry shelves full. We want everyone to know that our neighbors are very grateful for your generosity. They are also learning more about our church community and it was nice to see a few join us for the Christmas Concert.

As this pantry approaches its third year of service, the Peacemaking Committee will be evaluating its mission and will look to alternatives in delivering its service. The need for food has not stopped and the financial commitment from the First & Franklin community has sustained the pantry. However, we need a new model in volunteering.

Would you be able to commit to helping one or two times a month or to be on a substitute list? Should we be open fewer Saturdays? Would you be willing to be a shopper or pick up donated fresh food? Please keep the mission of the Pantry in your prayers as we wrestle with these questions and be open to the call to serve those struggling with food insecurity. Let Corena Bridges, Betty Schroll, Diane Newman, Judy Dadds, Steve Hollaway, or Paula Crews know if you are interested in joining the Pantry Crew.

In addition to donating food, bags for packing are always needed. We prefer to use paper bags when possible, but plastic bags also work. Thank you.



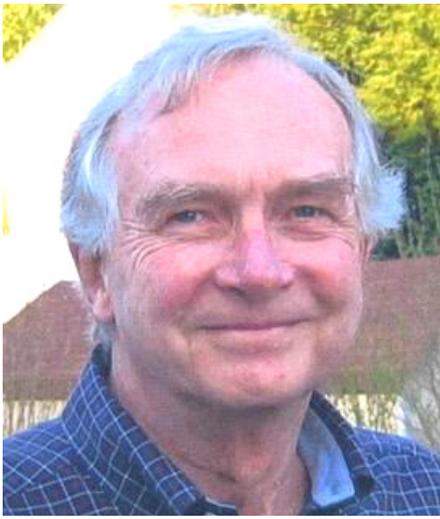
Alternative Christmas Market Gives Back

Thanks to all who generously gave to the Alternative Christmas Market. Your kindness will be felt far beyond your doors as the donations are used to help those in need, to take a stand against gun violence, and to build new relationships. A total of \$2,780 was donated with the Dakota Learning Camps receiving \$315, the Food Pantry receiving \$1070, the Guns 2 Gardens Project receiving \$465, and the Taguasco, Cuba Partnership receiving \$930. We hope your friends and family will also enjoy being part of these missions.



Finance & Stewardship Updates

- 2023 Giving Envelopes – If you need new envelopes, please contact us at finance@firstfranklin.org and we will provide you with a new box. Please note, we are not ordering new envelopes for 2023. If you have existing envelopes, feel free to use those, just crossing out the pre-printed dates and writing in the correct date.
- 2022 Reimbursements – If you have (or will have) any outstanding expenses and receipts from 2022 that need reimbursement from the church, please get these to the church office no later than Friday 13 January so that we can close our 2022 books.
- 2023 Pledges – We encourage you to make a pledge for your 2023 giving to First & Franklin. Your pledge, besides helping us plan our budget, is a personal commitment to support the life and work of our church. Many people find that taking the time to prayerfully consider how much you can pledge deepens and strengthens connections to the church. We ask that all pledges be received by the end of January 2023. You can find more information and pledge online at www.firstfranklin.org/pledge.



Former Interim Minister Ted Dürr Passes at 90

The Rev. Dr. William Theodore (Ted) Dürr, age 90, passed away peacefully in the early morning of December 24, 2022 surrounded by loving family. Born in Baltimore City, he was the husband of 64 years to the late Barbara T. Dürr. The father of Fred Dürr, Debbie Smeton, and Dawn Ryan, he also enjoyed his 9 grandchildren and great-granddaughter.

Throughout his career, Ted Dürr served as the organizing pastor of Perry Hall Presbyterian Church for 12 years, stood as interim pastor to 13 churches in the Baltimore area - including First & Franklin - and completed his service in 2008 at the Roland Park Presbyterian Church. He was a passionate social activist for the causes of civil rights and peace, and will be dearly missed by all who knew him. A complete obituary can be found in the Baltimore Sun newspaper or online.

Remembering Our History of Social Justice

First & Franklin is conducting an Oral History Project around LGBTQ History in the city of Baltimore and the pivotal role First & Franklin played in the Social Justice campaigns from the 60s to today.

If you have reminiscences about those years, we would like to record and/or video your recollections. For instance, First & Franklin hosted the first AIDS Crisis meeting in Baltimore on June 8, 1983.

We would love to schedule an interview with you at your convenience in the coming weeks of January. Your history will be archived and potentially featured on our website. Please contact Dave Pierson or Kris Stinson to help us share your histories.

Dave Pierson | akahuey@aol.com

Kris Stinson | kstinso@gmu.edu



Looking Back on Januaries Past

01/15/1849 | Robert Purviance Jr. publishes "EVENTS WHICH OCCURRED IN BALTIMORE TOWN DURING THE REVOLUTIONARY WAR."

01/18/1879 | Allison House is built for elected pastor James Leftwich at 808 Park Ave. Land donated by George Brown.

01/07/1980 | "More Light" policy adopted towards full participation of gay people in the life of the church & society.

JANUARY

HAPPY BIRTHDAY

- 4 - Bill Bridges
- 6 - Meredith Piplani
- 7 - Jean Trout
- 16 - Phil Adams
- 18 - Betsy Wadsworth
- 27 - Harry MacGillis
- 28 - Bob Resek
- 29 - Kris Stinson
- 31 - Heidi Dessecker
- 31 - Robin Hogle
- 31 - Marianne Shick

HAPPY ANNIVERSARY

- 1 - Peter Satten & John Kyle
- 16 - Miriam and Michael Costa

*December
2022 in
Photos*



Corena Bridges, Bryce St. Clair and Ben Riniker light the Advent Candles



Beth Seeley, Laura Oldham, and Chris Wallace at the Hanging of the Greens



Chris Iosso, Doug Savin, Jan Trammell-Savin, and Onyeka Anaedozie at the Celtic Solstice 5-Miler



The Sanctuary Choir performs at the Candlelight Choral Concert



January 2023 Calendar

- 1/1 | Sun | No Adult Education or Sunday School
- 1/3 | Tue | Peacemaking Committee | 7:00pm
- 1/6 | Fri | BSA Chorus and Orchestra | 5:00pm
- 1/8 | Sun | Holden's Baptism at Sunday Worship | 10:30am
- 1/13 | Fri | Al-Anon Meeting | 12:00pm
- 1/16 | Mon | Martin Luther King Jr. Day
- 1/16 | Mon | Worship, Music, & Arts Committee | 5:30pm
- 1/17 | Tue | Education Committee | 7:00pm
- 1/18 | Wed | Night Heart | 7:30pm
- 1/19 | Thu | Deacons Meeting | 7:00pm

This calendar is current as of 12/29/22.

Upcoming Spire Series Events

- 3/19 | Sun | The Ken & Brad Kolodner Quartet | 2:30pm
- 4/21 | Fri | Jessica Tong & Michael Sheppard | 7:30 pm
- 5/25 | Thu | Baltimore School For the Arts | 7:00 pm
- 6/4 | Sun | Prelude to Pride with Sara Davis Buechner | 3:00 pm

Tickets on sale at www.firstfranklin.org/the-arts/the-spire-series



Thank You!

The First & Franklin Presbyterian Newsletter is designed, edited, and formatted by Church Office Administrator Anna Pollitt. Special thanks to this month's contributors: Chris Iosso, Mike Johnson, Jason Kissel, Beth Seeley, Deborah McCrimmon, Alex Mendelsohn, Dave Pierson, Betty Schroll, and Audrey Suhr. If you have announcements, news, photos, or more that you would like to share in our February 2023 newsletter, please contact Anna Pollitt at apollitt@firstfranklin.org or call the church office at 410-728-5545 by January 25th, 2023.

