



FIRST & FRANKLIN PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH

COMMUNITY *News*

MAY 2021

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



WORSHIP CALENDAR

May 2: "Exchange: The Heart Of Worship and Community"

Matthew 10:40-42; I John 4: 7-12; 2 Cor. 8: 8-15; 9: 6-15.

Liturgist: Jason Kissel

Ushers: Judy and David Dadds

May 9: "Motherhood, Wisdom, and Security"

Proverbs: 3: 13-31, 33-35. 9:1-6.

Liturgist: Mike Johnson

Ushers: Judy Dadds and Paula Crews

May 16: "Joy, Carnival, and Ritual: Dionysus & Jesus"

2 Samuel 6: 3b-5, 12-16. Luke 7: 31-35.

John 15: 1-5a. Acts 8: 4-8.

Liturgist: Robin Hogle

May 23: PENTECOST: Acts 2: 1-36. "The Holy Spirit Makes Us Prophets"

(Please sign up for church if you can say this in another language; let us have as many as we can!)

Liturgist: Jack Hodges

May 30: "Statues, Stigma, and Sentinels"

(Memorial Day, May 31)

Ezekiel 33: 1-9; Hebrews 7: 1-10

Liturgist: Rev. Rhonda Cooper

Church Committee Meeting Schedule



5/3 - Mission & Education Meeting- 7:00 pm

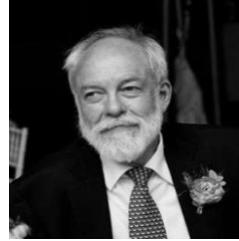
5/18 - Session Meeting - 6:30 pm

5/27 - Membership Meeting - 7:00 pm

5/25 - Finance Meeting - 5:15 pm

SIGNS FOR NEW TIMES

From the still-new Minister:



On April 26, as I was writing this column, a reporter from WJZ TV (the CBS affiliate) called to see if we could do an interview on the church's partial re-opening this Sunday. The result: <https://baltimore.cbslocal.com/2021/04/26/johns-hopkins-to-help-baltimore-houses-of-worship-reopen-safely/> Channel 13

was following up on an announced partnership of Johns Hopkins and Baltimore City to help houses of worship minimize Covid risks. The reporter chose us based on our website. A 30-minute visit by reporter and camera person, including footage of Chapel and Food Pantry, was condensed to 30 seconds. Still, a bit of witness.

Jesus speaks of discerning "signs of the times" in debate with Pharisees and Sadducees in Matthew 16:3. His disciples ask him to interpret "signs" or "portents" in passages like Mark 13. Jesus tends not to sugarcoat what he sees, and he is not superstitious. We have what oral tradition remembered of his words, sometimes after bitter confirmation (such as the Temple's destruction).

Previous First & Franklin newsletters and columns have carried names that included: *The Sentinel*, *PewsNews*, and *Intimations*. Naturally the focus is on "signs" in the church's own life, but our title, Community News, deliberately extends to our community beyond the pews, and (thanks partly to the internet) well beyond the Mt Vernon neighborhood.

The well-being of Baltimore and the well-being of First & Franklin are deeply tied, and always have been. As we re-open, the biggest challenge is still "the covid." Can we welcome friends from the Food Pantry and other neighbors, if they also register by noon Friday? Can we encourage them to be vaccinated, as most of our members are? Can we have a few live singers behind a screen—and can our weddings? When can Jason play live, so we can sing, even through our masks?

We will consult our city (and my alma mater, thank you) for best protocols. WJZ was impressed by what we already had in place. They edited my words to encourage other religious bodies to accept the science, as we do. They affirmed that we were part of the larger community, even if in a small way. Is it a sign we should get out there more?

Grace and peace, Chris

Rev. Christian T. Iosso, Ph.D., Interim Minister

SUCCESSFUL SPRING GARDEN CLEAN UP DAY!

A valiant team of members and staff spruced up the sidewalk islands and plantings around the church for several hours this past Sunday. With mulch brought in by the Bridges' pick-up, fresh flowering plants were put in and the soil restored. Members brought a variety of tools and trimmed the hedges and bushes. Trash—which is almost a constant when it is windy—was largely removed by staff. Some may remember the church winning a Mount Vernon—Belvedere Association award for plantings in 2014. This tradition is maintained! THANKS TO ALL WHO GAVE OF THEIR TIME AND GREEN THUMBS including Scot Spencer, Audrey Suhr, Randy Veale, Ruth Paradise, Elizabeth Alvarez-Paradise, Beth Seeley, Corena and Bill Bridges, David Sargent, Paul Fowler, Frank McNeil and Chris Iosso. Watch for news of another scheduled day to work on the Courtyard.



STEWARDSHIP SUNDAY WITH MUSIC



Please join us in our beautiful courtyard for a church gathering to embrace Stewardship Sunday!

We will once again gather outdoors at a safe distance on Sunday May 16th!! We will ask that you bring your own chair (if able - we will provide folding chairs for those who need them) perhaps a stadium chair or nice folding or camp chair.

With an abundance of caution, we are also doing away with our regular potluck/buffet and ask that you bring your own lunch for you and your family. We will likely have people worshipping in person and remotely at that time so we will start at 12:30 pm, in order to give everyone time to get to the church, after the Zoom service.

We will also have some entertainment for the event, on the steps of Backus. Please see the biography and picture of this fine musician below. It will be so great to hear some live music and support local Baltimore talent, as well!



Originally from Harrisburg, PA, Lucas Chohany is often considered among the top folk musicians in the Baltimore/DC Area. He was previously the guitarist and mandolinist of the world-renowned April Verch Band. Lucas Chohany currently performs with several distinguished groups: The hammer dulcimer/banjo duo Ken and Brad Kolodner, Nick and Luke, the Bumper Jacksons, Uncle Baltimore, and Baltimore Swing Drop.

THE ANNUAL PIANO MARATHON

Jason Kissel, Minister of Music & Organist

The recording session for the **5th Annual Baltimore Piano Marathon** virtual concert took place on Saturday, April 24. Five local pianists gave deeply heartfelt performances along with engaging commentary on their chosen pieces. The professional team of Nick Hughes and Sean Mercer are producing the two-hour concert which airs on **Sunday, May 2 at 2:00 p.m.**

From artist Michael Sheppard—

"I am super grateful to have had my first solo performance outside of my living room today in well over a year. Thanks to Jason Kissel and First & Franklin church for making the journey back to normal—even as its lens filters may have changed—that much more tangible. Light at the end of the tunnel: felt."

NEWS FROM PARTNERS IN CUBA:

Short Video Interview from our Cuban Partner Church in Taguasco:

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JXxlBcGbn_4

Watch this for a firsthand report on that country's situation.



Michael Sheppard

Tian Lu and Yury Shadrin



CALL FOR USHERS, COFFEE-HOUR HOSTS, AND LITURGISTS

As we return to in-person worship, the roles of hospitality and worship leadership also return. Please consider serving in these roles on a regular basis. The easiest way to volunteer may be to call the church office, but we will post an electronic sign-up sheet so that people may sign-up well in advance. This helps for smooth planning and thoughtful preparation. Thank you!

LUNCH with CHRIS IN THE COURTYARD THURSDAYS 12 NOON – 2 PM

Weather, of course, will want to help us connect despite the need for a full all-clear on Covid. So please call ahead to the office and let us know if you would like to bring a lunch and share a bit of time to get acquainted with the interim minister. No serious agenda necessary, though if you have one, fine—we can chew on it together! Thursday, May 6th is the kick-off date! The next date will be Thursday, May 20th and the following Thursdays going forward.

MEMBERSHIP COMMITTEE PHONE CALLS IN MAY

Ruth Paradise, Chairperson

The Membership Committee will be calling all members and friends of First & Franklin during the next weeks to touch base and see how folks are doing after these long months of Covid shut-down. We want to let everyone know that we are returning to worship in the Sanctuary, to hear what concerns they may have, and to find out how we might offer support at this time. We know that for many across the world, Covid restrictions have meant loneliness, depression, and isolation.

Because worship on Zoom or Facebook has been our main connection for learning about matters for prayer, we are concerned to hear comments on how well that has worked. We also wish to encourage active relationships within the congregation beyond the cyber-world. What are new social, study, or spiritual life events you would like to begin or start up again?



2021 STEWARDSHIP CAMPAIGN

Over the past four weeks, we've heard meditations from many members of our congregation about what it means to them to give to First & Franklin -- and all that our community has given them in return. We hope that their words have inspired you to think about how you see God at work in this place and in your own life.

Now, as we begin to enter the next season in the life of the church, we humbly ask that you help us plan this community's financial future. Sometime in the past month, you received an invitation in the mail to make your pledge for June 2021-July 2022. You can pledge by mailing the enclosed card back to the church office, or you can fill out our online pledge card at [this link](#).

However you choose to give, and whatever amount makes sense for your household, your gift will be vital to the ongoing work of our congregation in our community and the wider world. If you choose to pledge, please do so by **Friday, May 14**. We'll celebrate Stewardship Sunday in May with a socially distant gathering, and we look forward to expressing our gratitude in person.

BREAD for the WORLD LETTERS

Did you know:

- 270+ million people are facing extreme hunger – up from 135 million before the pandemic?
- 1 in 4 kids are at risk of hunger in the U.S.?
- 40% of Black and Latino families struggle with feeding their children?

The Mission/Education committee is asking you to participate in the annual Bread for the World's **Offering of Letters** during the month of May. Bread for the World is a collective Christian Voice urging our nation's decision makers to end hunger here and abroad. The Offering of Letters Campaign is their annual invitation to pick up a pen to encourage our leaders to support legislation that impacts hungry and poor people. Model letters and information will be available at the church and in our bulletins. The letters will be gathered and blessed in the May 30 worship service, then sent to the legislators.

FOOD PANTRY UPDATE

Thanks to your continued generosity, the Food Pantry has been able to meet the needs of our neighbors. We continue to staff a food pantry in Reid Chapel **every Saturday** from 12:00- 2:00 p.m. There is a growing flow of neighbors with whom we are building relationships. We have built connections with residents at Westminster House for whom we drop off additional bags of food for those who cannot make the walk to Reid Chapel.

The good news is that we have seen a lessening of need, from 30+bags to around 20 bags shared each week. The sad news is that the need for food assistance still exists in our neighborhood. Your food and monetary donations support the church's ability to share God's love, which is a blessing for all.



Please continue to choose food items from the following list plus any items that you think would make meals a little special (such as condiments). Personal items are also accepted, such as soaps, shampoos, and feminine personal products. Peanut butter and jelly are items we try to pack in every bag and thus they run out first.

Please only send unopened containers and paper or plastic bags are needed for packing.

Here is the list of foods we try to provide:

Apple sauce, canned fruit and dried fruit
Rice and beans, Peanut butter and jelly
Cereal or oatmeal and canned or powdered milk
Tuna fish and other canned meats
Spaghetti or pasta and tomato sauce
Soup, Canned vegetables, Popcorn and cookies
Paper towels, Toilet paper

How else can you help? We need volunteers to help collect and distribute food every Saturday. Sabrina Schumann is coordinating the volunteers. You may reach her by email at ssschuma@gmail.com or phone 240-481-6929. You can also help by spreading the word to those you know who are facing food insecurity.

Thank you, The Peacemaking Committee

(Note: under the new Committee structure, this venerable committee is part of Education & Mission)

Share YOUR Good News and 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 to send information to Wanda.



5/7 Christine Wallace
5/8 David Dadds
5/10 John Kyle
5/10 Michael LaPenta
5/11 Lou Dudrow
5/12 Judy Dadds
5/14 Frank McClelland
5/17 Denise Brandon
5/19 Laura Oldham
5/20 Sam Quigg

If we are missing your birthday or anniversary, please contact the church office!

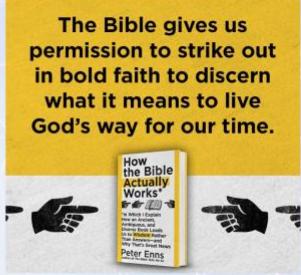
Theology on Tap
Online

Join us as we study Peter Enns' "How the Bible Actually Works*"

May 13 & May 27, 2021
7-9 p.m.

Zoom link on our website!
www.firstfranklin.org
FIRST & FRANKLIN
PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH

The Bible gives us permission to strike out in bold faith to discern what it means to live God's way for our time.



POEMS FOR THE SOUL

Steve Hollaway has kindly agreed to suggest poems in the public domain for the Newsletter. We include two in this issue.

The Gardener 85

BY RABINDRANATH TAGORE

Who are you, reader, reading my poems a hundred years hence?

I cannot send you one single flower from this wealth of the spring, one single streak of gold from yonder clouds. Open your doors and look abroad.

From your blossoming garden gather fragrant memories of the vanished flowers of a hundred years before.

In the joy of your heart may you feel the living joy that sang one spring morning, sending its glad voice across a hundred years.

A Better Resurrection

BY CHRISTINA ROSSETTI

I have no wit, no words, no tears;
My heart within me like a stone
Is numb'd too much for hopes or fears;
Look right, look left, I dwell alone;
I lift mine eyes, but dimm'd with grief
No everlasting hills I see;
My life is in the falling leaf:
O Jesus, quicken me.

My life is like a faded leaf,
My harvest dwindled to a husk:
Truly my life is void and brief
And tedious in the barren dusk;
My life is like a frozen thing,
No bud nor greenness can I see:
Yet rise it shall—the sap of Spring;
O Jesus, rise in me.

My life is like a broken bowl,
A broken bowl that cannot hold
One drop of water for my soul
Or cordial in the searching cold;
Cast in the fire the perish'd thing;
Melt and remould it, till it be
A royal cup for Him, my King:
O Jesus, drink of me.

CHURCH BOARD NEWS

F&F Doings You Should Know About

As most members and friends of First & Franklin know, the church's leadership has been quite busy. Here is a summary of some of the work of your Session and its Committees:

1. *Church Leadership Retreat*—held outside on the cool morning of Saturday, April 17, to work with the interim minister to discern patterns and values in the mission of our church. Participants contributed memories and analysis to a timeline from the 1970's forward. A copy of this work-in-progress is available upon request. Other discernment work is on-going. Several long-time members have graciously helped this task.
2. *Success on Parking Lot* classification. Thanks in large part to David Wallace's long perseverance, the St Andrews Properties was wound up as a separate entity and removed from the tax rolls. Though managed by a specialized company, our parking lot is a single parcel and part of the church.
3. "*Highest and Best Use Analysis*" by a rental and real estate firm. Building & Grounds has commissioned a study to assess market rates for the use, sale, or re-development of the three non-sanctuary buildings, either individually or as a campus unit. This will provide data to the Session for its on-going planning and budgeting. B&G has also reviewed the church's insurance on all properties and activities.
4. *Conversation with "The Center"* representatives on April 21 via Zoom. This urban mission education group has been bringing church youth groups to Hodge for about 7 years since F&F and the Presbytery upgraded that facility. How much do The Center's and F&F's goals and financial abilities align going forward? This was an important and cordial discussion. The Center may end up leaving for another church in the presbytery but at least we will have explored some future options together.
5. *Upgrading the church's audio-visual capacities.* Because we intend to continue the virtual worship option, several substantial investments in a new sound and 3-camera transmission system have been evaluated and several generous donors have begun a process of improving our capacities. The goal is to

strengthen our worship, music, and social media witness, possibly with an online interview "show" in addition to Spire and other programs.

6. *The Egenton-Roberts Board*, though separate from F&F, is composed of church members for purposes of caring for disadvantaged girls in the Baltimore area. The Christian motivation of the original donors has been updated and broadened over time; grants are given to programs for girls' holistic development rather than to an orphanage. With skillful support from Haswell Franklin's management firm, and the creative work of Chris Wallace and others to establish ongoing relationships with good programs, this good work continues in Baltimore. The two original bequests and boards are being brought into further alignment for unified filing of all legal and oversight documents.
7. The *Theology on Tap* group is going to move to an outdoor but in-person venue—stay tuned for word on this.
8. *Stewardship and budgeting:* We have a strong but limited number of pledges so far. Your Stewardship & Finance Committee has been working to streamline the budget for clarity, and to bring fund balances in line with actual holdings while reducing our draw on the endowment. Much good planning work has been done in recent years since the major (and beautiful!) renovation of the sanctuary and your capital campaign to support that effort in 2009-10. Today we are planning changes in the operating budget to help us grow.

NEW DIRECTORY!

We have developed a template for a New F&F Directory. We are excited to be including your photo which will be a great way to get to know each other by sight as we re-enter in-person worship. After a year plus of Covid shut-down, we want to strengthen our community. This will also help with pastoral care and the work of Deacons and Membership Committee.

NEXT NEWSLETTER DEADLINE: May 24
(5 business days before end of month)