

THE FIRST PRESBYTERIAN



CHURCH IN GERMANTOWN

ALIVE,

DECEMBER 17, 2017

CELEBRATING

& SERVING

THE LIVING LORD!

*The mission of The First Presbyterian Church in Germantown
is to reflect the loving presence of Christ
as we serve others faithfully, worship God joyfully and share life together
in a diverse and generous community.*

In preparation for worship please take the opportunity to speak silently to God.
At the close of the service let us greet one another with cheerfulness.
Please be sure that your cell phone is turned off during worship.

December 17, 2017

Third Sunday of Advent

ORDER OF MORNING WORSHIP AT 10:00 AM

GATHERING AS GOD'S FAMILY

Prelude: *Now Sing We, Now Rejoice*

J.S. Bach

Welcome and Announcements

Introit: *Savior of the Nations, Come*

Fourth Century

Savior of the nations, come, virgin's son, make here your home. Marvel now, O heaven and earth, that the Lord chose such a birth.

†*Lighting the Third Advent Candle

Allison and Bob Seed, Readers

Watch and wait for Christ's coming! Light candles of hope, peace, joy, and love, remembering the promises of God with prayer.

We light this candle in hope. (*Light the first candle.*)

We light this candle for peace. (*Light the second candle.*)

We light this candle in joy. (*Light the third candle.*)

Rejoice! For the Lord is coming into the darkness of oppression's exile to lead us home, as we hear in Isaiah 35:1-10.

(Isaiah 35:1-10) The wilderness and the dry land shall be glad, the desert shall rejoice and blossom; like the crocus it shall blossom abundantly, and rejoice with joy and singing. The glory of Lebanon shall be given to it, the majesty of Carmel and Sharon. They shall see the glory of the Lord, the majesty of our God. Strengthen the weak hands, and make firm the feeble knees. Say to those who are of a fearful heart, "Be strong, do not fear! Here is your God. He will come with vengeance, with terrible recompense. He will come and save you." Then the eyes of the blind shall be opened, and the ears of the deaf unstopped; then the lame shall leap like a deer, and the tongue of the speechless sing for joy. For waters shall break forth in the wilderness, and streams in the desert; the burning sand shall become a pool, and the thirsty ground springs of water; the haunt of jackals shall become a swamp, the grass shall become reeds and rushes. A highway shall be there, and it shall be called the Holy Way; the unclean shall not travel on it, but it shall be for God's people; no traveler, not even fools, shall go astray. No lion shall be there, nor shall any ravenous beast come up on it; they shall not be found there, but the redeemed shall walk there. And the ransomed of the Lord shall return, and come to Zion with singing; everlasting joy shall be upon their heads; they shall obtain joy and gladness, and sorrow and sighing shall flee away.

Let us pray: **O Lord, our redeemer, you lead us from languishing in sorrow's shadows into laughter's joy over your abundant restoration. Thank you that you are coming for us to lead us home along your way, Jesus Christ. Amen**

*congregation standing

† latecomers may be seated

CONFESSING OUR SINS TO GOD

Confession of Sin

Creator of all worlds, we confess to sporadic beliefs and inconsistent faithfulness. Before the mystery of the universe our minds cannot grasp a God who embraces infinity. In the face of natural disasters and cruel inhumanity we doubt that love reigns. Between our own actions and the best we know we see a wide gap that we cannot bridge. O God, reclaim us and help us to reclaim our baptism; we need your healing, forgiving, transforming Spirit. Amen.

Silent Meditation

Assurance of Pardon

†*Congregational Response 579: *Gloria Patri*

**Glory be to the Father
And to the Son, and to the Holy Ghost,
As it was in the beginning, is now,
And ever shall be, world without end. Amen, Amen.**

†*Sharing the Peace of Christ

Leader: The peace of Christ be with you.

People: And also with you.

(As worshipers, we come from diverse experiences and points of view. We have different racial, educational, and economic backgrounds. Yet we are all one in Christ. We symbolize this as we exchange with one another, by words and gestures, signs of peace and reconciliation such as, "The peace of Christ be with you. And also with you.")

Two Bell Anthems: *What Is This Lovely Fragrance?*

Traditional French Carol
arr. Cathy Moglebust

Echo Carol

Traditional German Carol
arr. Sondra Tucker

Children in grades five and younger may now leave for their classes.

PROCLAIMING GOD'S WORD

Prayer for Illumination

J. Randall Rosensteel, Reader

The First Lesson: Isaiah 61:1-4, 8-11

Page 650 OT

Leader: God's Word is a lamp to our feet, and a light to our path.

People: Thanks be to God!

*Hymn 25: *Away in a Manger*

MUELLER

The Second Lesson: John 1:6-8, 19-28

Page 86 NT

Leader: God we thank you for your Word.

People: The Story of your grace.

Anthem: *An Unquiet Joy*

Ted W. Barr

My soul doth magnify the Lord; my spirit hath rejoiced in God my Savior and my Lord; I hear a humble voice. Alleluia! Hosanna!

Sermon: **WITNESS TO THE LIGHT**

The Reverend Randal L. Bremer

RESPONDING TO GOD'S WORD

*Confession of Faith (*Apostles Creed*)

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I believe in God, the Father almighty, creator of heaven and earth.

I believe in Jesus Christ, God's only Son, our Lord, who was conceived by the Holy Spirit, born of the Virgin Mary, suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, died, and was buried; he descended to the dead. On the third day he rose again; he ascended into heaven, he is seated at the right hand of the Father, and he will come to judge the living and the dead.

I believe in the Holy Spirit, the holy catholic church, the communion of saints, the forgiveness of sins, the resurrection of the body, and the life everlasting. Amen.

Prayers of the People

The Reverend Kevin L. Porter

The Lord's Prayer

Our Father who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name. Thy kingdom come, thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread; and forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors; and lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. For thine is the kingdom and the power and the glory forever. Amen.

Offering of Our Gifts and Lives

Offertory: *O Little Town of Bethlehem*

Stephen Paulus

O little town of Bethlehem, how still we see thee lie! Above thy deep and dreamless sleep the silent stars go by. Yet in thy dark streets shineth the everlasting light; the hopes and fears of all the years are met in thee tonight. For Christ is born of Mary and, gathered all above, while mortals sleep, the angels keep their watch of wond'ring love. O morning stars, together proclaim the holy birth, and praises sing to God the King, and peace to all on earth. O holy Child of Bethlehem, descend to us, we pray; Cast out our sin, and enter in, be born in us today. We hear the Christmas angels the great glad tidings tell; O come to us, abide with us, our Lord Emmanuel!

*Congregational Response 592: *Doxology*

OLD HUNDREDTH

**Praise God, from whom all blessings flow,
Praise Him, all creatures here below,
Praise Him above, ye heavenly host,
Praise Father, Son and Holy Ghost. Amen.**

*Prayer of Dedication

GOING FORTH IN GOD'S NAME

*Hymn 23: *Angels We Have Heard on High*

GLORIA

*Charge and Benediction

Let your light shine before others, so that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father in heaven.

The Lord bless you and keep you; the Lord make his face to shine upon you, and be gracious to you; the Lord lift up his countenance upon you, and give you peace.

*Congregational Response 585: *Threefold Amen*

McNeil Robinson II

Postlude: *Toccatina on a French Carol*

Richard Elliott

WELCOME: If you are visiting with us today, please sign the Fellowship Pad at the end of your pew. We pray the hour will be meaningful to you and you will come and worship with us again. Everyone is cordially invited to a time of fellowship in the Longstreth Auditorium following the worship service.

THE MUSIC: On this Third Sunday of Advent, we emphasize the joyous anticipation of Christ's coming. As Mary declared at the Annunciation, "My soul doth magnify the Lord, and my spirit hath rejoiced in God my Savior." At the lighting of the Advent wreath, we light the rose candle today—the color representing joy that reminds us, even in a season of darkness, we are called to rejoice. Looking ahead, next Sunday, December 24: An extended piano prelude of Christmas carols will be offered beginning at 9:45 a.m.; the Children's Choir will sing during the 10 a.m. service; our 7 p.m. Christmas Eve Lessons and Carols service will be preceded by an organ recital at 6:30. The Internet livestream recording of our *Messiah* concert can be found at www.fpcgermantown.org/Messiah-2017.

SPECIAL COFFEE HOUR RECEPTION TODAY for Donna and Randy Bremer, sponsored by the Elders and Deacons, to thank Randy for his ministry with First Church and recognize his retirement from full-time ministry. Those interested in making a financial gift to honor Rev. Bremer are asked to make their checks payable to the "Rise Against Hunger" organization (formerly "Stop Hunger Now") and leave them at the church office or in the offering plate. The money will be used by Rise Against Hunger to purchase food items that will be packaged and sent to countries of need. A packing event will take place at our church on Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.'s birthday, Monday, January 15, 2018. Next week's coffee hour host: OPEN.

CHRISTMAS MEMORIALS: The poinsettias in the sanctuary during the Christmas season are in memory and honor of our loved ones. As is our custom, these flowers will be delivered after Christmas to the sick and shut-in of our congregation. Please contact the church during office hours: Monday through Friday from 9AM to 1PM if you would like your family members' or friends' names included in the worship bulletin. The cost is \$15 per line. Listings will be accepted until Tuesday, December 19, 2017.

STAFF APPRECIATION: Christmas is the time when we tangibly show our appreciation to our staff for all they do during the year to serve our congregation and the community. Most of us have experienced the "extra" each of these staff members put into their job. Staff Appreciation Christmas Gifts will be given to Kevin, Eileen, Tony, Sara, Evelyn, Christian, Heidi, Joan, Cindy, Terry, Whaley, Robert and Tanieya just prior to the holiday. You can contribute to these appreciation gifts after church today, when a member of the Personnel Committee will be available during the coffee hour to receive your contribution. *Please be generous.*

SPRING CONCERT: SAVE THE DATE! The Germantown Oratorio Choir & Orchestra will perform the Brahms *Requiem* on Sunday, March 18, at 4 p.m. Rehearsals begin on Tuesday, January 9, from 7:30-9 p.m. in the Sanctuary. The *Requiem* will be performed in English using the composer's own arrangement for four-hand piano accompaniment played by duo pianists Gayle Martin and Ted W. Barr. For more information or to participate, call 215-843-8811 or e-mail music.fpcgermantown@gmail.com.

COPIES OF THIS WEEK'S CALENDAR can be found on the literature table.

STEWARDSHIP: Gifts Given and Given Gladly. We are grateful to the many families who have made a financial commitment to support FPCG for 2018; to date we have received pledge commitments totaling over \$204,343 dollars. We are over 60% of the way toward our goal! We also are blessed by those who continue to give generously, even if they have not yet submitted a pledge card. Please consider submitting your pledge card before the end of the year. Thank you also to those who are committed to pray and to serve at FPCG; your prayers, gifts of time, and talents help to make our ministries a beacon of hope for our congregation, our community and the world. Please also remember to support the December Challenge Offering (Christmas Joy Offering), and consider making a year-end gift of appreciated securities, or if you are eligible, making a charitable IRA rollover distribution directly to FPCG. God has richly blessed the members of First Church in 2017, and we gratefully anticipate your continuing year-round generosity.

OFFERING ENVELOPES: To save the church the cost of mailing your 2018 offering envelopes, please pick them up during the coffee hour today. If envelopes are not there and you wish to have them, please inform the church office.

THE RACHEL CIRCLE, an arm of the Presbyterian Women USA, will hold it's monthly meeting at 11:00 a.m. in the Jennings Room on Monday, December 18. All women are encouraged and invited to attend. This month each attendee is asked to bring a food item to share during the chat and chew time.

PNC UPDATE: We are excited to be moving forward in our pastoral search process. We've inserted a second flyer in today's bulletin that shares more information about our candidate. Did you know **you** are an important part of inviting a new pastor to First Church? Please visit the PNC "Sharing Table" during coffee hour and learn more about your role in the process. Important upcoming dates: reception **today** after worship honoring Pastor Randy and Donna; **Sunday, December 31**, Pastor Randy's last Sunday with First Church; **Friday, January 5** from 6:30 to 7:30 p.m., Youth Group Meet and Greet for FPCG youth and their families to get to know our candidate; **Saturday, January 6** from 1 to 3 p.m., Meet and Greet Reception-come to church to meet our candidate and her young adult daughter; **Sunday, January 7**, candidate leads worship and preaches, followed by congregational vote; **January-early February**, a series of supply preachers, graciously scheduled by Pastor Randy, will lead worship; **early February**, if the way is clear, the candidate will start at First Church!

CONGREGATIONAL MEETING

after worship on *January 7, 2018*

The Session has called a meeting of the congregation of the First Presbyterian Church in Germantown for the purpose of acting on the report of the Pastor Nominating Committee and the Terms of Call.

Please plan to attend this meeting.

December Session Highlights

PNC Update: PNC co-chair Contina Lundy requested the Session approve a congregational meeting for Sunday January 7, 2018. On that date, after hearing the pastor nominee preach, the congregation will be asked to approve the terms of call.

Worship: Reverend Bremer's last Sunday will be December 31. Until our new pastor joins us, the pulpit will be filled by Dale Williams (January 14), David Cassie (January 21), Kevin Porter (January 28) Ruth Santana Grace (February 4) and Christian Heyer-Rivera (February 11).

The Messiah Concert was a huge success with approximately 350 in attendance.

Administration & Finance: Health Savings Accounts, a tax advantage program, will be offered to FPCG's full time employees in 2018. There is no cost to the church for this benefit.

The Keystone State Boychoir lease agreement (through August 30, 2019) has been signed by both parties and approved by Session.

The stewardship pledge goal for 2018 is \$340,000. It appears there may be a shortage of about \$20,000.

Communication: Deborah Thompson reports articles for Windows are always needed and welcome. Dyhan Cassie has volunteered to update the calendar on the church website.

Evangelism: Ted Walkenhorst introduced our newest member, Raymond Johnson. Raymond has been a familiar face around FPCG for some time. Raymond told Session that his ministry is "helping people and keeping ourselves focused on God." Welcome!

Christian Education: The Christmas festival is set for Saturday, December 16th.

Fun was had by all on Friday, December 1 as we enjoyed pizza and were entertained by "The Muppet Christmas Carol."

"Animate", a seven week exploration of our faith, will begin January 28 during the adult Sunday school time. More to come later!

Mission & Outreach: The *Rise Against Hunger* food packing event, scheduled for Martin Luther King Day, January 15, 2018, is in need of donations. We are short of last year's total. See Gloria Bethea or Chris Scott to contribute and find out more about this great opportunity to help the world's hungry.

Congregational Development: The Christmas dinner was a big hit. 130 tickets were sold. The men's group collected \$1300.

Church Officers

Elders

2018

Marc DiNardo
Robert Seed
Ted Walkenhorst

2019

Joseph Leube
Delores Solomon
Deborah Thompson

2020

Gloria Bethea
Andrea Overton
J. Randall Rosensteel

Clerk of Session:
Madeline Valentine

Deacons

2018

Don Carlin
Vera Harrison
Dani Howard

2019

Ruth Cato
Diane Filter
Dick Liberty

2020

Randy Clever
John Orandosh
Carolyn Tarver

First Church Staff

Interim Pastor	Randal L. Bremer
Director of Adult Education and Community Life	Kevin L. Porter
Director of Urban Ministry	Eileen Jones
Director of Music	F. Anthony Thurman
Director of the Gospel Choir	Sara Carter-Blanford
Director of the Handbell and Children's Choirs	Evelyn Santiago
Director of Christian Education	Christian Heyer-Rivera
Parish Visitor	Heidi Mercado-Littles
Building Manager	Terry Boyer
Administrative Assistant	Joan Harris
Bookkeeper	Cindy Osborne
Sextons	Tanieya Matthews, Robert Patterson, Harold Whaley

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