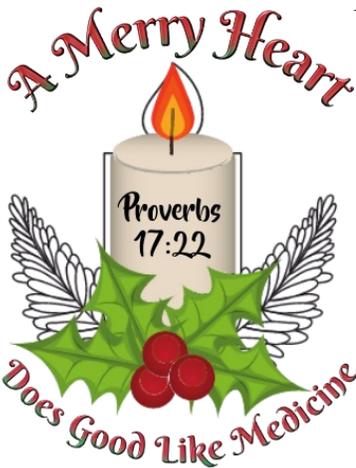




# Windows

The newsletter of the First Presbyterian Church in Germantown  
December 2020



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Items for the January issue of *Windows* are due on December 16th. Send to

Communications  
@fpcgermantown.org

## From the Pastor

I really wanted to see the Leonids meteor showers. Named after the constellation Leo through which the showers seem to fan out, the meteors are caused by Comet Tempel-Tuttle. It sweeps through the inner solar system leaving a "river of rubble" in its wake — a dense trail of dusty debris, that we see as spectacular meteor showers. They peaked this year early in the morning of November 17<sup>th</sup>.



I set my alarm for 5:30 a.m. I got up, snuggled into my winter jacket and boots, and went out onto my front porch. It felt almost as light as it is in the daytime with all the streetlights and porch lights ablaze. A few stars were shining weakly through the darkness, but no meteor was to be seen at all, much less a shower of thousands an hour. I had seen them streaking through the sky at this rate when they last appeared in 2002, and it was awe-inspiring. This year, not so much.

I thought at first I just needed to be patient. I watched and waited. I waited and watched. I went in and got a cup of coffee and came out and watched and waited some more. I eventually realized there was nothing to be seen. Or nothing to be seen in the night sky anyway. I decided that perhaps I should pay attention to what there *was* to be seen early in the morning on Greene Street.

A young man hunkered into his hoodie, hands in pockets, striding down the sidewalk. A homeless man pushing a shopping cart stuffed with bulging trash bags talking to himself or someone unknown. An older man in workman's clothes hefting a toolkit up the street. The occasional car, headlights skimming the asphalt in passing. I noticed a parking space in front of my home, so decided to move my car into it. I pulled up and when I got out of the car, I realized that I had left only a partial space behind me, so I got back in the car and pulled it up closer to leave another spot for someone else. When I got back up to my porch, I looked back and realized there still wasn't enough space for another car behind me and I was very close to the one in front of me. My move to be helpful had been ineffectual at best and annoying at worst.

I sat down on the porch swing again and thought about how that feels pretty much like this whole year. Expectations unmet, actions taken to no avail, a sense of helplessness in the midst of the vastness of the universe. Not unlike that Advent season so long ago.

We are used to talking about "watching and waiting" in the Christmas season, but it's very hard to separate that from the activities that we know are going to happen. We have the things we always do: the tree, the decorations, the cards, the cookies, the parties, the presents, the extended family dinner, the Christmas Eve service. This year, none of that is going to happen in the same way as it ever has before.

I think that's a good thing. Perhaps for the first time ever, we can let go of trying to make it all happen the way we think it should, and let it be what it is going to be. We can watch and wait and notice what shows up to bless us in the meantime, even if it's just some quite time to pay attention and a parking spot. We can detach from the expectations that we usually have and lean into what God has planned instead.

Meanwhile, take heart. The December Geminids are peaking on the 13<sup>th</sup>. And the observance of the Light coming into the world and a new year in which to celebrate it is coming right after that!

- Rev. Rebecca Segers



## JOIN US FOR WORSHIP ONLINE

Sundays at 10 a.m.

Everyone is invited to worship, study and enjoy friendships at The First Presbyterian Church in Germantown. There are service, outreach and fellowship opportunities in abundance. In addition to weekly and monthly scheduled services and activities, visit [www.fpcgermantown.org](http://www.fpcgermantown.org) and click on Special Events web pages for more information.

To learn more, please email [fpcg.germantown@gmail.com](mailto:fpcg.germantown@gmail.com) or call the church office at 215-843-8811.

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Rev. Rebecca Segers  
John Walthausen

## December Birthday's

12/04 | Alfred Knup  
 12/06 | Susan Mills MacDonald  
 12/08 | Kelsi Scott-Lundy  
 12/12 | Lechelle Garnett  
 12/13 | Ingrid Harris  
 12/13 | Tara Payne-Jones  
 12/13 | Florence Smith  
 12/14 | Jasmine Greene  
 12/14 | Victoria Solomon  
 12/15 | Taye McCord-Amasis  
 12/16 | Kadeem Carter  
 12/17 | Christopher Scott Jr.  
 12/18 | Eugene Gardenhire  
 12/23 | Contina Lundy  
 12/27 | Betty King  
 12/28 | Joshua Overton  
 12/28 | Bernetta Washington

## Christmas Letter 2020 by Don Carlin

Mary had no idea a year before that first Christmas an angel would visit her. Her marriage plans would get complicated. A baby would be conceived in her by the Holy Spirit. Her baby would be born in a distant town. Her baby would be born among animals without the aid of a midwife.

Mary had no idea after that first Christmas the holy family would soon be fleeing in the wrong direction to live as refugees in Egypt. She would someday be standing at the feet of a cruel cross. Angry, scared, isolated and alone.

We had no idea a year before Christmas 2020 a pandemic would change our private worlds and the whole world. Storms of nature and storms of social unrest, political storms and economic storms would shake the world and likely be still raging on Christmas Day.

Like Mary, we had no idea. We have been surprised again and again and again.

And yet—we know beyond the manger and the cross there is resurrection and new life and Shalom.

We know even at the manger and at the cross, then and now, a loving God stands with us, never ever leaving us alone.

The Director of Music Ministry Search Committee, the FPCG Personnel Committee, and the session all voted unanimously in favor of and are delighted to introduce to you our new **Director of Music Ministry, John Walthausen**.

John is a sought-after organ and harpsichord soloist and ensemble artist with an expanding worldwide performance career. Accomplished as a recitalist in both Baroque literature and contemporary keyboard works, he has been heard in concert throughout Europe in Paris, Chartres, Poitiers, Toulouse, Hamburg, Milan, Treviso, Innsbruck, Basel, and Zurich. From 2015 to 2016, he served as Organist in Residence at Sapporo Concert Hall in Hokkaido, where he performed and recorded on the Hall's four-manual organ by Alfred Kern and in cities across Japan.

John is a collaborative artist who plays frequently in his home city of Philadelphia, as well as throughout the East Coast and the Mid-Atlantic region. He has recently appeared as a continuo player with ensembles such as the Washington Bach Consort, New York Baroque, Barock Band, and Variant 6.

In 2012, he won first prize at the Pierre de Manchicourt International Organ Competition in Béthune, France, a competition devoted particularly to North German music of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, featuring an international jury chaired by Michael Radelescu. In 2009, he was awarded first prize in the American Guild of Organists' Regional Competition for Young Organists.



Most recently, John has served as Organist and Choirmaster at St. Andrew's Episcopal Church in Glenmoore, Pennsylvania. There, he has been responsible for building and directing the adult choir, collaborating with children's and youth ministries for special projects, and creating a spring chamber music concert series. In concert with the vestry (the Episcopalian version of the session), John applied for and received a grant from the Russel P. and Elizabeth Crimian Heuer Foundation, putting together a community-wide task force to raise money for a Choral Scholars Program. Through this initiative, they hired students from West Chester University and young professionals to work as section leaders while offering them a high-quality formation in stylistic sacred choral technique, both broadening the appeal and the outreach of the choir. Additionally, in the time of the COVID19 pandemic, John initiated gatherings to keep the choir communities connected, as well mobilized his Choral Scholars to provide virtual recordings for online worship.

Prior to this, John acted as Assistant Director of Music at the Cathedral Choir School of Wilmington, Delaware, a choral music non-profit that serves primarily students in Title I Schools. There he developed choral singing and musicianship curricula while auditioning and managing a team of young professional choral scholars and planning, fundraising, and marketing a concert schedule of 40 performances per year. The training they offered was rooted in the classical tradition, but also gave pride of place to classic and contemporary choral settings of spirituals as well as gospel and music from global traditions.

Finally, John brings not only a level of expertise and musicianship which the First Presbyterian Church in Germantown values, but also has a deep commitment to service and community that connects with our church identity. As he wrote in his cover letter to the search committee: "At First Presbyterian, I look forward to working towards the congregation's mission of bringing together the finest possible music and worship in a true spirit of service. Faith has been the strongest motivating force in my life's dedication to music, and as a lifelong church member, I bring a faith-based approach to my mission, not just as a musician, but to my life as a colleague, neighbor and global citizen."

We look forward to John joining the staff at the First Presbyterian Church in Germantown, and to the future as he leads music across the diversity of our musical offerings.

(photo credit: Tatiana Chulochnikov)

## Advent/Christmas in the Time of COVID-19

These are unusual times and so we're doing things a bit differently at FPCG this Advent/Christmas season. We held a Zoom Advent worship service on the first Sunday in Advent, November 29th. Together we crafted lovely little Advent wreaths and made our way through each theme of each Advent week: Hope, Peace, Joy, and Love. (see photo)



Every Sunday through Advent: November 29, December 6, 13, and 20, we'll be holding our regular 10:00 a.m. worship service virtually, which can be accessed via our [fpcgermantown.org](http://fpcgermantown.org) website, YouTube, and Facebook by 9:45 a.m. on those days and anytime afterward. Additionally, we will be holding our Christmas Eve service virtually at 7:00 p.m., which can be accessed via those same platforms by 6:45 p.m. and anytime afterward. You will be receiving a package in the week before which will have items from a variety of committees to help you feel as though you are with your church community even while worshipping from your own home. It will include items such as the bulletin, Christmas candles for each member of your family, a "coffee hour" gift from the CDFC, etc. We hope this will help you to feel more connected to each and every person with whom you would ordinarily celebrate Christ's birth in the sanctuary on Christmas Eve. These will go out to every member of the congregation with enough items for each member of the household. If you are not a member but would like to be included, we would love to send to you too. Please contact Cherese Akers at [communications@fpcgermantown.org](mailto:communications@fpcgermantown.org) and let her know your address and how many are in your family.

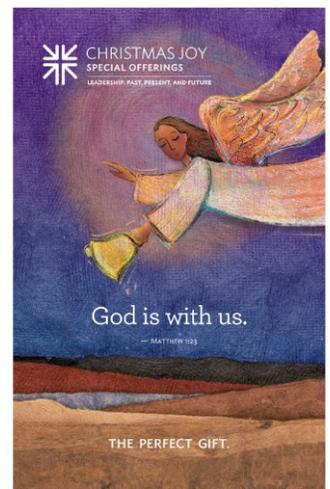
Meanwhile, we will not be hosting our regular Memorial Offering purchases of poinsettias this year. In deference to those who are struggling in the time of COVID and not able to purchase them, the fact that we will not be together in the sanctuary and able to see them, plus those in our church family living in institutions to whom we ordinarily deliver are not able to receive them because of the coronavirus, it seemed best to let it go for this year, trusting that things will be better next year and we can resume the practice when it is able to be enjoyed again.

We will do our best to travel through the Advent season faithfully together and enter into the Joy of Christmas as a church community. If there is any way we can help to make the season brighter for you, please do not hesitate to reach out and let us know!

## December Challenge Offering: Presbyterian Joy Offering

*SUPPORTING PAST, PRESENT, AND FUTURE LEADERS*

During this Christmas and Advent Season, we celebrate leadership; past, present and future through support of the Christmas Joy Offering. We do so because church leaders greatly impact our lives of faith, walking with us down the path to be more like Jesus. We want those church leaders and their families who find themselves grappling with a critical financial need to have the resources they need which are provided through the Assistance Program of the Board of Pensions. We also support the offering to help our future leaders in the church and world, like those educated at our Presbyterian-related schools and colleges equipping communities of color. Supporting these students helps the whole church develop leaders who reflect the wideness of God's intended diversity. For those supported through the Christmas Joy Offering, this help is truly a gift from above. May our gifts, and the leaders who receive them, point us always to the truth of the one whose birth we celebrate, Jesus Christ — the truly perfect gift.



CHRISTMAS JOY  
SPECIAL OFFERINGS  
LEADERSHIP, PAST, PRESENT, AND FUTURE

Ways to Give Below 



Through your congregation  
**FPCG Challenge Offering**



Text JOY to 56512 to learn more or donate

Online at



[pcusa.org/christmasjoy](http://pcusa.org/christmasjoy)

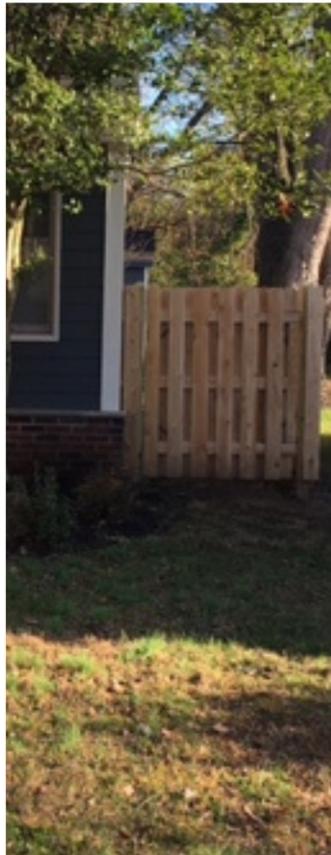
# Youth News

## Celebrate Youth Group and Confirmation Class Participants

While all youth groups have moved back to the online Zoom format, and both year 1 and year 2 confirmation classes have remained online throughout the pandemic, participation has remained solid for each of these 4 discipleship groups. Let us celebrate together the commitment of our youth and their families. They continue to come eager to grow in their knowledge of God and nurture the love and faith they've been gifted in Jesus Christ, who loves them immeasurably and longs to see them mature in their gifts and calling to work with and for God. Keep praying for our young people and their families! God is doing wonderful things!

## Fundraising for Puerto Rico Continues

The fence work being done for Ms. Ingrid Harris has been completed and others are signing up for a variety of work to be done at their homes (See pictures below). The COVID-19 pandemic has made us have to limit the number of participants who can be on site for the work, but even with small numbers, we've been able to safely get work done to help both members needing jobs done, and members who are planning to join us when we offer our time and energy to help rebuild Puerto Rico from the damage done by recent hurricanes and earthquakes. A special thanks to Ms. Ingrid and all those who have joined in this important fundraising effort. Please contact Christian Heyer-Rivera if you have any landscaping or light home repair that you would like completed in order to help our neighbors in Puerto Rico rebuild their homes as well!



## Christmas Festival baskets are coming soon!

The Christian Education Committee is preparing crafts and goodies to help our children celebrate the birth of our Lord! While our annual festival will not be possible due to the present efforts to slow the spread of the COVID 19 virus, celebrating God's dwelling among us in the person of Jesus Christ can't be stopped. All families with young people preschool to middle school aged of FPCG will have a basket prepared for you to help bring in the season with joy. Please reach out to Andrea Overton or Christian Heyer-Rivera if you have special needs as far as delivery times and dates.

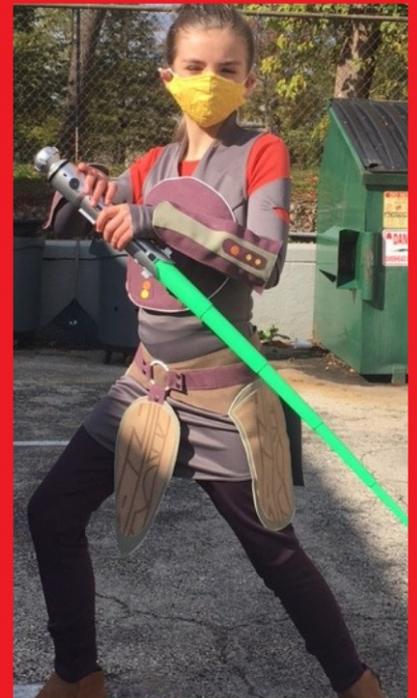
## A special thanks from the Heyer-Rivera Family!

Each member of the Heyer-Rivera family would like to thank each member and friend of FPCG that prayed for us and reached out through call, card, grocery shopping and meal delivery during our struggle with the COVID virus. We want to praise God that we can report that we have all fully recovered from the virus and to the best of our knowledge we were able to contain the spread of the infection to just our own immediate family. There was never a moment where we didn't feel the encouragement and support of our community of faith. The care given to us was a testament to God's Spirit at work within our community. To have been ministered by the church in this way was a tangible reminder of how God unites us as a family through faith in Jesus Christ. We thank God for each of you even as we continue to pray for an end to this pandemic with the hope of the coming of effective vaccines and advancements in lifesaving treatment given to those who have unfortunately contracted this virus as well as those who will contract it.

# Youth News continued.....

## Youth Group Pumpkin Carving

While these photos could not be included last month due to the event taking place after the deadline, we've included them in this edition. The event was both fun and done in a way that was safe for all FPCG members and friends who participated. The original hope for this event was to make it an outreach event for the community, but the times we are living in made us have to limit our numbers and delay the larger invitation for next year when we've hopefully moved beyond the present pandemic. Next year the event will hopefully have pumpkins on site for purchase and include our neighbors throughout the broader NW community. Make plans now to join us as we create Jack-o-lanterns to celebrate the fall season together.





FOR EVERYTHING  
THERE IS A  
SEASON, AND A  
TIME FOR EVERY  
MATTER UNDER  
HEAVEN:

- ECCLESIASTES 3:1



HEIDI MERCADO-LITTLES

2020! What a year it has been! By the time you read this, I will have quietly celebrated my 70th Birthday, without fanfare, in a 2020 fashion. At the end of 2020, as planned, I will retire from my position of Parish Visitor, closing a chapter that began, on a six month trial basis, in February 2001, when Rev Nancy Muth was serving First Church as “Interim-Interim” Pastor. Although I was a Special Education Teacher, with no formal religious training, Rev Nancy had confidence in my ability to serve in this capacity. Over the years I served under Rev Nancy, Rev Herb Valentine, Rev Randy Bremer and the last three years under Rev Rebecca Segers, and throughout, alongside Rev Kevin Porter. I am thankful beyond words for the unconditional support and encouragement I have received from each of them along the way. I am also thankful to have been part of an amazing team of hard-working, dedicated, kind and generous colleagues. Every member of First Church Program and Building Staff has been a steadfast partner in ministry. I am also thankful for the opportunity to serve with the Board of Deacons, and especially with the Funeral Hospitality Team. Most of all, I step down with my heart overflowing with gratitude for each of you. You have trusted me with your deepest sorrows and concerns, and with your greatest joys. You have inspired me with your thoughtfulness, kindness and generosity to each other and to our community, with the way you live your Faith. You have helped me grow and learn, you have sung with me, you have made me think, you have made me cry and you have made me laugh. I am retiring from my position, but I am not leaving First Church.

You will always be my family.



## Staff Christmas Appreciation Gift



Christmas is a time we can show our appreciation to our staff for all they do during the year as they serve our congregation and community. That service has been made more difficult during this year of the COVID pandemic. Remembering our staff in this way has been a Christmas tradition at First Presbyterian for decades. Your gift will be shared with the staff just prior to the holiday.

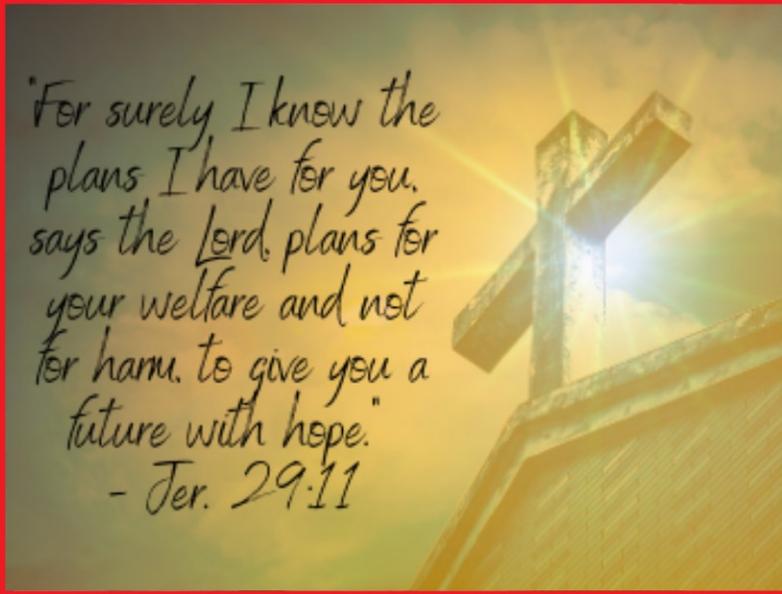


You can make your Christmas appreciation gift to the staff in one of two ways: 1) mailing your contribution (checks payable to The First Presbyterian Church in Germantown) to the church office (35 West Cheltenham Avenue, Philadelphia, PA 19144) marked “Staff Christmas Gift” or 2) by using the convenient online method at the FPCG website [<https://www.fpcgermantown.org/giving/ways-to-give/>]. **Please note** Staff Christmas Gift in the "Add special instructions to the seller" line that appears on the final screen beneath your donation amount so that it may be properly designated. Please be as generous as you can.

*Thank you. Ingrid Harris, Chair of the Personnel Committee*

# A Time For Stewardship

By: Faith Lewis



We are approaching the end of this year and we shall be happy to have a fresh start with, renewed hope in our hearts. Life has been fraught with difficulties, job losses, violence, Covid19, our national leadership seems to be “riding on only one rail”. You can add more to the list, I’m sure. Our lifestyle changes may come and go. And “new normal” may change on a daily basis, but the church at the crossroads is still here. Yes, FPCG is still alive and well and serving our living God. I look forward to the day when we are able to come together in our beautiful sanctuary and worship God in the “old normal” way. That day will come. Be assured. Meanwhile, we can continue to support our church home. It’s stewardship season. It’s that time of year when we pledge our financial support to our church. Please, be as generous as you can. First Presbyterian Church in Germantown; your church, thanks you.

## Hello, From John

It has been such a joy in my first week at First Church to connect to so many folks within the parish. I am so grateful for the warm welcome that so many have already shown me in my first days here. When I first began conversations with the search committee, I was so impressed by the committee members’ huge level of commitment to this church, and I continue to see this and learn this in all my conversations with parishioners, choir members, committee members, and staff here. The past week, I have been occupied not only in connecting with people at First Church, but also making music for virtual worship and overseeing maintenance of First Church’s incredible collection of musical instruments, including seven (!) pianos and the justly famous McLean Memorial Pipe Organ. I am also looking towards possibilities for making music for our online Christmas Eve service, which expects to be a very unusual Christmas for all of us. If we haven’t connected yet, I would love to hear from you! Please do not hesitate to send a message at [jwalthausen@fpcgermantown.org](mailto:jwalthausen@fpcgermantown.org).



Merry Christmas from The First Presbyterian Church in Germantown

## NOTICE OF ANNUAL CONGREGATIONAL MEETING

Notice is hereby given that the Congregational Meeting of the Congregation of the First Presbyterian Church in Germantown, in the County of Philadelphia, PA, will be held on Sunday, December 13, 2020, via Zoom following the worship service at 11:30 a.m.

The following will be presented:

- Annual Report 2020
- Preliminary Budget 2021
- Pastor's Terms of Call 2021

Any other business which properly comes before the Congregation may be transacted at this meeting.

Attest: Robert Seed, Clerk of Session  
Rev. Rebecca L. Segers, Moderator



THE FIRST  
PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH  
IN GERMANTOWN

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**35 West Chelten Ave.**  
**Philadelphia, PA 19144**  
**215-843-8811**  
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