



# • Windows •

*The newsletter of The First Presbyterian Church in Germantown*  
February 2026

First Church family and friends,

It is February and this month holds much meaning in the life of the church and our nation. To begin, this month is Black History Month and as a nation we find ourselves engaged in struggles of justice to acknowledge the contributions of African Americans. Education that lifts up the value and importance of diverse perspectives on our history is under attack by our federal government and in many states that share the same misguided values.

As a congregation seeking to cooperate with God to build a world where people from all nations are invited to understand themselves as family under the loving care of God, our creator, I would encourage us to not remain idle in this struggle. Join us this month in our efforts to celebrate Black History, through participation in our events. Seek out podcasts, books, documentaries, and opportunities offered around our city to learn more of the stories, achievements, artist expressions of African Americans throughout our country's history up to our present day. Let us celebrate the richness of diversity among God's children and learn from the stories, the hopes, joys, and struggles of our brothers and sisters. In doing so, we embrace together how God has scattered gifts among his body for the building up of our world towards justice, mercy and humility.

February is also the beginning of Lent, a journey that our spiritual ancestors created to help us prepare and open our hearts and minds to receive the amazing truth and transformation we find in Christ through the Easter story. There is an explanation of Lent here in this newsletter that you are invited to read, with Ash Wednesday initiating our journey. In our Ash Wednesday worship service, together we're invited to begin Lent by contemplating our mortality and our limitations as human beings. When unexamined, both those aspects of our humanity can be anxiety producing. It has been the experience of the church through the ages that when we bring these truths and anxieties before God, as a community gathered in worship, God, who holds our lives and needs in God's loving hands, enables us to understand better the hope we find in God's provision for us in Jesus Christ. That hope grants us a freedom to admit our shortcomings and to live fully under God's grace in each of the numbered days we are granted.

And so we invite all our church family and friends to join us for our Ash Wednesday service of worship on February 18th at 7p. Through music and praise, confession and repentance, proclamation and prayer, we will hold fast to the promises of God; allowing God to prepare our hearts to begin this journey together, hand in hand, that we may trust anew in the life, death, and resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ.

-Rev. Christian Heyer-Rivera

Articles/announcements for *Windows* are due by the 22nd of each month. Send submissions to [office@fpcgermantown.org](mailto:office@fpcgermantown.org).



## February Birthdays

Liz Drum	Feb. 01	Deborah Thompson	Feb. 14
Andrea Horne	Feb. 03	Ian Cameron	Feb. 17
Amara McCord-Amasis	Feb. 05	Lee Vaughn	Feb. 19
D.J. Clever	Feb. 07	Regina Carter	Feb. 23
Herb Henze Arlene Ricketts	Feb. 08	Carolyn Ballard-Freeman	Feb. 24
		Shanise Gladden	Feb. 25
Mimi Kotto-Ohemeng	Feb. 09	Earl Ball David Corbin	Feb. 26
Evadney Miller	Feb. 10	Taleah Dixon	
Tamara Daniels Pamela Murray	Feb. 13	Rena Cameron	Feb. 27

## Church Closure

FPCG will be closed on 02/16, in observance of Veterans' Day.

## Church Officers

### Elders

2026	2027	2028
Sheila Heyer-Rivera	Arlene Grace	Anthony Webb
Andrew Hood	Randy Clever	Sara Greene
Peter Smith	Contina Lee Lundy, Clerk of Session	Klass Hoekema-Boerman

### Deacons

2026	2027	2028
Zaria Cuffee, Moderator	Lydia Cooper	Faith Lewis
Garth Herrick	Matthew Grewe	Andrea Horne
Madeline Valentine	William Lewis	Rosemary Williams

## Committees and Chairs

### **Admin & Finance**

Klaas Hoekema-Boerman

### **Christian Education**

Sheila Heyer-Rivera

### **Congregational Development and Fellowship**

A. Webb

### **Mission & Outreach**

Andrew Hood

### **Property**

Peter Smith

### **Personnel**

Randy Clever and Ingrid Harris

### **Worship, Music, & Arts**

Arlene Graee

## Service Time:

Sunday, 10AM

## Church Hours

Office:

Tuesday-Friday, 9AM-1PM

Building:

Monday-Friday, 8AM-4PM

Saturday, 8AM-3PM

Sunday, 8AM-5PM

## Pastor Christian's Office Hours

Tuesday-Thursday,  
10:30AM-1:30 PM

*Windows* is a publication of The First Presbyterian Church in Germantown. For questions regarding the information published here or to submit content, please call or email the church office.

**Contributors:** Rev. Christian Heyer-Rivera, Cari States-Codding, Duane Horne, Sheila Heyer-Rivera, John Walhausen



### Service Learning Opportunity

The CE committee is partnering with our neighbors at Whosoever Gospel Mission on Chelten Ave. FPCG has, for a long time, been connected with this mission and we are hoping to have an opportunity for members to learn more about our partners in ministry. On February 7th, we will be taking a group from FPCG to Whosoever Gospel where Heather Rice, the executive director, will share with us about the mission and give us a tour. We are then invited to join the residents for lunch. We are asked to bring desserts to share and decorations to decorate their common space for Black History month!

**When :** February 7th -11am-1:30pm

**Where:** meet at the church, then walk as a group to the mission.

**Who can come:** Up to 20 people. All ages are welcome!

Please sign up at coffee hour or reach out to Rebekah Davis, Sheila Heyer-Rivera or anyone on the CE committee

-Sheila Heyer-Rivera

### February Challenge Offering

This month, the recipient of the Challenge Offering is the Friends of Vernon Park. The Friends of Vernon Park is a non-profit organization of volunteers dedicated to the restoration and upkeep of Vernon Park. Their partnership with the Department of Recreation and Philadelphia Green has completely transformed the park from an eyesore to a beautiful oasis that borders our church. The park is now used by the community and by our own Freedom School. Help keep Vernon Park beautiful with a generous donation to the February Challenge Offering. Checks should be made payable to First Church and marked Friends of Vernon Park

### January Sermons

Please check our website if you'd like to catch up on (or re-watch) any of January's sermons.

01/04: Cari States-Codding, *Grace that Gathers*, Jeremiah 31:7-14; John 1:(1-9), 10-18

01/11: Rev. Christian Heyer-Rivera, *Godly Power Bends Low with the Broken*, Matthew 3:13-17

01/18: Don Carlin, *Testimony Time*, John 1: 29-42

01/25: Rev. Christian Heyer-Rivera, *What's Left Behind When Seeing and Hearing Clearly*, Matthew 4: 12-23

<https://www.fpcgermantown.org/sermons/2026/01/>



## Worship and Music Committee Update

This February, the Worship, Music, and Arts Committee is celebrating Black History Month with a special workshop by Ja-Tun Thomas after worship on February 8 (for more info please see page 3) as well as special anthems and organ music by Black Composers all through the month. We will also feature a number of hymns from the Black Church tradition- so be sure to come to worship ready for discovery and in good voice!

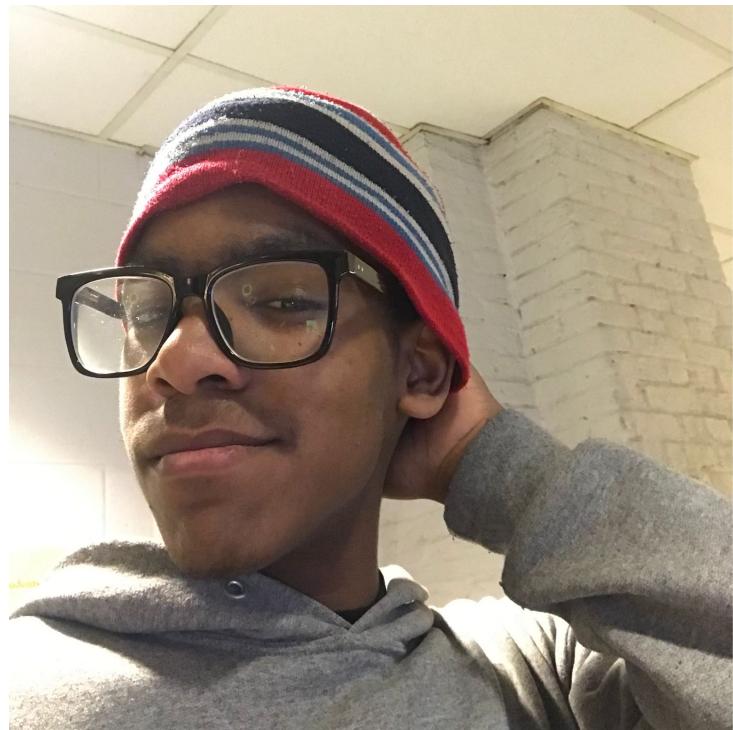
Our two high school choral scholars, Taron and Sahj, continue to learn and grow singing in the choir and also benefit from weekly sight-singing lessons with the director of music. If you haven't met our choral scholars yet, be sure to introduce yourself at coffee hour!

In the month of February, one of the Jennings Room murals "The Woman at the Well" will be restored by Violet Oakley specialist Steve Erisoty with the help of art conservator Andrew Fearon. Both specialists commend the church in its diligence protecting these artistic treasures in Germantown!

*-John Walthausen*



*Taron*



*Sahj*



### Monthly Newsletter

If you'd like to receive FPCG's monthly newsletter, as well as regular church emails, please scan this QR code to sign up.

Crafts  
for kids  
and  
young  
at heart!

*In support of ongoing efforts in  
Puerto Rico, FPCG is hosting:*

**Fat Tuesday**

**Pancake Dinner**

*Tuesday, February 17, 2026*

*5:30pm-7:30pm*



ADULTS:  
\$10  
CHILDREN  
12 & UNDER  
\$5

***The First Presbyterian Germantown***

***35 W. Chelten Ave. 19144***

**Black History Month 2026 at  
The First Presbyterian Church in  
Germantown**

THE FIRST PRESBYTERIAN  
CHURCH IN GERMANTOWN




**02/01, Holy Communion Sunday**  
Join us for Holy Communion as we kick off Black History Month! All who are baptized are welcome to receive communion at FPCC.



**02/08, Guest Preacher Arlene Grace**  
Our very own Arlene Grace will share the good news with us.



**02/08, Guest Vocalist Ja-Tun Thomas**  
After lending her voice to worship, Ja-Tun will lead a workshop titled "Being a Vessel". Attendees will explore improvisation and other modes of musical expression by the Black Church Tradition.



**02/15, Luncheon**  
After service, join us for a celebratory luncheon.



**02/22, Guest Preacher  
Rev. Dr. Ethelyn Taylor**  
Recently retired from Oxford Presbyterian, Rev. Dr. Taylor will share the good news with us.

## Why Palestine Matters: The Struggle to End Colonialism

Join Philadelphia Yearly Meeting's Middle East Collaborative for a six week online course through Zoom developed by the Israel Palestine Mission Network of the Presbyterian Church (USA).

Six Thursdays from 7:00-8:30pm Eastern time  
Feb. 12, 19, 26  
March 12, 19, 26

*Why Palestine Matters* is a collection of personal stories, history, data, experience, and the thinking of a variety of people with the experience of the area and the knowledge of history with a Middle East lens. It is a curriculum that provides context for the challenges of Palestinian lives that have continued to be upended since the 1930s. It adds to our ability to address justice for Palestinians and safety for Israel. The curriculum helps uncover the history of the land that has not been shared broadly.

For more information and to register:  
<https://www.pym.org/event/wpm2026/2026-02-12/>

## Book Study with the Presbytery

The Presbytery is hosting meaningful and engaging conversations centered on the book *Black and Presbyterian: The Heritage and the Hope*, by Gayraud Wilmore. These gatherings will offer space for thoughtful dialogue, shared learning, and faithful reflection on history, identity, and hope. The Presbytery encourage members across our Presbyterian community to join this three-evening discussion at 6PM on 02/10, 02/11, and 02/12. Light refreshments will be provided, and all discussions will be held at the Presbytery (915 E. Gowen Ave.).

## Lent 2026

### Ash Wednesday

*“Remember that you are dust, and to dust you shall return.” - Genesis 3:19*

Ash Wednesday marks the beginning of Lent. The alleluias are set aside, until Easter, as we begin the journey to the cross. Our first step in this journey calls us to acknowledge and confront our mortality. This first day of Lent reminds us that, if we cannot die to our old selves, we cannot be raised to new life in Christ. This is symbolized by marking your forehead with a cross, called “the imposition of ashes”. The ashes, traditionally, are burned palms from the previous year’s Palm Sunday service. These ashes symbolize the dust and debris of our lives, as well as the reality that each of us will eventually die. Join us, as we begin our Lenten journey, on February 18th, at 7PM.

*-Cari States-Codding, paraphrase of “Companion to the Book of Common Worship”, pages 109-110*



### Soup and Sabbath

Join fellow congregants and friends for **Soup and Sabbath** -- a short Lenten reading and thoughtful conversation over a simple meal of soup, bread, and fruit. It's a great way to get to know others while reflecting together during this holy season as we prepare for Easter.

**Soup and Sabbath** will be held on Sunday evenings, March 8, 15, and 22, 5 – 7 pm, in locations throughout the NW Philadelphia area – Germantown (the Church), W. Mt. Airy (the Davis home), and Roxborough (the Cassie home).

Sign up at church during coffee hour, or contact Carey Davis at [careymdavis@gmail.com](mailto:careymdavis@gmail.com). You need only bring yourself and a heart open to listening for God and learning from each other.

“The season of Lent is a time of prayer, fasting and self-examination in preparation for the celebration of the resurrection of the Lord at Easter. It is a period of 40 days — like the flood of Genesis, Moses’ sojourn at Mount Sinai, Elijah’s journey to Mount Horeb, Jonah’s call to Ninevah to repent and Jesus’ time of testing in the wilderness. (The Sundays in Lent are not counted in this reckoning of the time between Ash Wednesday and Easter, as every Lord’s Day is a celebration of the resurrection of Jesus Christ.) In the early church, Lent was a time of preparation for the celebration of baptism at the Easter Vigil. In many communities of faith it remains a time to equip and nurture candidates for baptism and confirmation and to reflect deeply on the theme of baptismal discipleship.” -PC(USA)



## An Update from the Property Committee

### A picture is worth a thousand words:

The below photograph taken by our sound system consultant during the summer of 2024 speaks volumes about our congregation. Her observation after seeing the interior was that, as beautiful and inspiring the interior of the building was, the real beauty and inspiration was the work our church was doing to help minister to this community; the line of souls waiting to be fed at “This Church at the Crossroads” deeply moved her. These are the people we serve here in Germantown who are in line for the food distribution by our Germantown Avenue Crisis Ministry.



Also please notice the tower on the left just below the steeple we recently repaired. Moving to the right notice “The Victory of Life” stained glass window by Tiffany, and the exterior wall we waterproofed in 2021 and recently repaired and painted its interior this past December. Also observe three distinct periods of time in which our building was constructed; moving left to right, the original construction with its tower (1871-1872), the east transept with the large stained-glass window (1891) and on the far right, the educational wing (1937).

Most importantly though, are the people at the bottom of the frame.

### You may also be interested to know:

- The ventilation system in our sanctuary exceeds code requirements.
- We do not purchase gas for our new boiler from PGW. We procure natural gas from out of state in order to obtain the most favorable pricing. We use PGW’s infrastructure to pipe the gas to us.
- Our electrical system has its own substation. We are fed High Voltage (13,200 volts, 3 Phase) from PECO. This is the same arrangement as the large building and many industrial sites in Philadelphia.
- A creek runs beneath the building foundation and its flow can be witnessed from a door in the youth lounge. The property committee installed a multi-stage dewatering pump station years ago to minimize flooding in the basement during heavy rains.

### Funding for Property Upkeep:

The church operating budget is about \$800,000 per year; about 17.5% is for the church property budget (\$140,000). This includes operating costs including utility costs (including heating), church routine maintenance, several service contracts (HVAC, water treatment, pest control, rubbish removal, fire alarm and life safety, etc.) transportation costs (van), housekeeping supplies/ services and interior furnishings/equipment.

This does not include any reserve for “large” expenses i.e. major items such as roofing repairs, major system replacements and/or enhancement such as the boiler replacement we completed in 2022.

Fortunately, we have several other revenue sources. There is a capital expense fund, separate from the operating budget, that is funded with \$25,000 each year as a part of the endowment gains taken from the church endowment funds. We also have a Growth and Rehabilitation Fund, supported by a percentage of bequests to the church that are undesignated. Lastly, we have specific gifts made and sponsored for a specific property cause.

Not included in these costs are insurance, which is covered elsewhere, organ and music related equipment expenses and personnel costs.

In summary our building is a treasure, but it is not without costs – some known and some unknown.

It is always a challenge to balance what is needed with the available resources.

## **2026 Major Projects:**

- Sanctuary Handrailing - During the 2nd quarter we plan to address an issue which has been somewhat problematic from day one: We are investigating the possibility to install railing on the chancel to assist worshipers with mobility issues to more easily transit from the nave to the pulpit. Given the multi-functionality of this area not only for worship, but also as a performance venue, and, given the flooring is imported marble, great care must be taken to plan and execute the best way to do this. In consultation with the Worship Music and Arts and the Congregational Safety and Wellness Committees, it will be some time before we have a plan in place that will allow us to move forward. The few members we have shared our intentions with are excited to see that something will be done. One couple has already committed to making a sizable donation to the project.
- Jennings Room Carpet Replacement - Also on the agenda is replacing the carpeting in The Jennings Room. We consulted an architect who specializes in interior finishes. She has provided us with product specifications and a list of manufacturers. We have selected a possible vendor and have obtained samples that meet the specifications. Our own Kathy Caho is reviewing all of the 100+ samples and will have a recommendation for us to select from shortly.

## **Members of FPCG:**

The Property Committee is a standing committee of the session. There are seven members on the committee. Each member brings her or his own gifts to contribute towards the benefit of the church. Would you be willing to provide a few hours per year as an ad hoc group to support the upkeep and wellbeing of our remarkable church building? If you are interested, please contact me or Peter Smith, Property Committee Chairman at (215) 266-3361 or [psmith6831@gmail.com](mailto:psmith6831@gmail.com) to discuss further.

*-Duane Horne*

## A Statement in Memory of Renee Nicole Good

*The Presbyterian Office of Public Witness laments the death of a mother shot by an ICE agent in Minnesota*

The Presbyterian Office of Public Witness has released a statement on the death of Renee Nicole Good, a 37-year-old Presbyterian woman whose fatal shooting by a U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement officer last week in Minneapolis has sparked protests around the country. The statement, mourning her death and affirming the right to "peaceful protest and lawful observation" without the threat of deadly government responses, can be read in full below.

### **Remembering Renee Nicole Good**

*"This is my commandment, that you love one another as I have loved you. No one has greater love than this, to lay down one's life for one's friends."*

*John 15: 12-13*

Jesus teaches that there is no greater love than the willingness to make the ultimate sacrifice for others, to lay down one's life for someone else. It is to offer oneself unselfishly for the sake of others, especially the defenseless and the vulnerable.

On Wednesday, Jan. 7, Renee Nicole Good was shot while moving her car, attempting to follow the orders of an Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) officer. Her last words, captured on video, were, "I'm not mad at you."

We lament and mourn the loss of Ms. Good, a widow of a veteran, a wife and a mother who put herself in harm's way not out of any desire to do harm, but to observe and bear witness to the actions of ICE. We affirm the right to peaceful protest and lawful observation for all Americans, without the threat of repressive or deadly responses by government and law enforcement authorities.

Alongside Ms. Good, we remember George Floyd, whose life was taken at the hands of law enforcement in 2020, within one mile of where Ms. Good was murdered at the hands of enforcement officers, a stark and enduring reminder of the deadly consequences of injustice and the unfinished work of truth, repentance, and transformation to which God continually calls us.

As Presbyterians, we hold a twofold connection to Renee Good. First, we are bound by our shared faith in a God of justice, who calls us to engage the powers of this world and to counter hate with love. Our tradition compels us to oppose injustice with a prophetic word from the Lord and to participate in the transformation of the world God loves.

Our second connection is more personal: Ms. Good was one of us. She was a fellow Presbyterian. Edgewater Presbyterian Church in Illinois remembered her with these words: "Renee Nicole Good lived out the conviction that every person deserves kindness, regardless of their background. ... Her story is a testament to the power of the Presbyterian mission and a challenge to our conscience. We mourn a fellow Presbyterian whose quiet smile and creative spirit touched lives from Colorado to Northern Ireland to Minnesota."

In the coming week, we will remember the life and witness of the martyred Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., who called this nation to a "radical revolution of values." Values that demand divestment from racism, materialism and militarism. Ms. Good's life and death echo this same moral call.

Her memory also stands in a sacred lineage of faithful witnesses who have risked and lost their lives in defense of human dignity. We remember the four Maryknoll Sisters — Sisters Ita Ford and Maura Clarke, Ursuline Sister Dorothy Kazel and Lay Missioner Jean Donovan — who were abducted, abused and murdered in El Salvador in 1980 for standing alongside the Salvadoran people.

We also remember the Rev. Elijah Lovejoy, who was murdered for his opposition to the evil of slavery and for whom the Presbytery of Giddings-Lovejoy is named. These are not isolated tragedies but part of a continuing story of costly discipleship.

We must remember her name: Renee Nicole Good. We remember her as a testament to Jesus' teaching that God does not change the world through violence but through faithful presence amid struggle, and that love refuses to abandon the work of acceptance, justice and compassion.

Ms. Good's wife, Rebecca Good, offered a fitting memorial:

*"On Wednesday, Jan. 7, we stopped to support our neighbors. We had whistles. They had guns. We were raising our son to believe that no matter where you come from or what you look like, all of us deserve compassion and kindness. Renee lived this belief every day. She is pure love. She is pure joy. She is pure sunshine. Renee was a Christian who knew that all religions teach the same essential truth: We are here to love each other, care for each other, and keep each other safe and whole."*

Through this remembrance, we rededicate ourselves to advocacy in the name of Christ Jesus. We stand with those who are detained or killed by ICE, treated unjustly and vilified, whom God defends as bearers of the divine image. We proclaim a God who values all people and who calls us again and again to remind the world to value the lives of all.

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. While much could be added to this statement, we believe that this captures the most essential elements of our mission today as revealed through the words, thoughts and actions of the congregation. This mission statement is not only rooted in the life of the congregation; we believe that each promise this statement makes is rooted in Scripture as well:

- We will reflect the loving presence of Christ – Matthew 28:19-20
- We will serve others faithfully – Mark 10:43-45
- We will worship God joyfully – Colossians 3:16
- We will share life together – Acts 2:42-47
- We will be a diverse community – 1 Corinthians 12:15-19
- We will be a generous community – 1 Timothy 6:18-19



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Philadelphia, PA 19144  
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