

# The Pastoral Staff Letter

MADISON  
AVENUE  
PRESBYTERIAN  
CHURCH  
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## A NOTE FROM JENNY

Dear Friends,

In elementary school, I had a brief but intense career as a Christmas criminal. My third-grade class was scheduled for a field trip to see *The Nutcracker* at the Fox Theater in downtown Detroit. It was mere days before Christmas break, we didn't have to wear our school uniforms, and there would be hot chocolate afterward. I was nearly delirious with eight-year-old holiday anticipation. My friends and I were in agreement: this would be the Best Day Ever.

There was only one problem: I forgot to get my permission slip signed ahead of time. On the day it was due, I looked down in horror at the blank line where my mother's signature should have been. I grabbed my pen, glanced around furtively, and signed her name with a flourish. Just like that, I gave myself permission to travel with my classmates.

Unfortunately, it's not always that easy. We can't always do it for ourselves. So this Christmas season, the Pastoral Staff is giving you a gift: we're giving you permission.

We're giving you permission to be sad. Holidays can be tough times. Christmas carols insist that this is "the most wonderful time of the year," but for many people, that just isn't true. After all, a season that emphasizes friends and family can sharpen the ache we feel over a loved one who isn't at the table for Christmas dinner. A season full of angels singing and bells ringing can intensify the silent struggles of our hearts. So, hear this: if you aren't in a celebratory place, that is okay. Whether your grief is brand new or years old, give yourself space to honor your feelings. The Light of the World is com

ing. Jesus isn't offended by your sadness. After all, he comes to redeem a broken world.

We're also giving you permission to be happy. This sounds a little silly, doesn't it? Who needs permission to be happy? You might be surprised. "I feel like it's not fair for me to be happy," she said. "When I find myself laughing or enjoying something, I catch myself. How can I be happy when [my husband] isn't here? It feels like being happy would mean I don't miss him anymore." This isn't an unusual comment. So often, those who are grieving feel as though any spark of joy dishonors their loss or their concern for others' pain. Know that this is not true. It's okay to find happiness. It doesn't lessen your love, your loss, or your concern. It is a reminder of the gospel truth we claim: there is a Light that no amount of darkness can overcome.

We're giving you permission to be however you are this Christmas season. Christmas is coming. Whether we are happy or sad, delighted or angry, grateful or frustrated, ready or not. Christmas is coming, and Jesus will meet us where we are. That's what incarnation is all about. And that's very good news.

See you Sunday,



## Sunday, December 16, 2018 ~ 3rd Sunday of Advent

**Worship Schedule: 9 am and 11:15 am**  
**Nursery: 4th Floor Phillips Building, 8:30 am - 1pm**

**Worship:** This Sunday Rev. Jenny M. McDevitt, will preach her sermon, Let There Be Joy, based on the lectionary texts and our Advent series, Let There Be Light: Zephaniah 3:14-20; Isaiah 12:2-6; Philippians 4:4-7; Luke 3:7-18.

Preview the latest bulletins [here](#), and listen to sermons and service highlights from previous Sundays [on the website](#).

**To check the church's calendar, go to [our website](#).**  
**MAPC is on [Facebook](#) and [Instagram](#).**

**Children's Worship, 9:15 am & 11:30 am,** Phillips Lounge

**Youth Worship, 9:15 & 11:30 am,** Dana Chapel

**Christmas Pageant & Fellowship Hour, 10:10 am,** Parish Hall

**Choir Rehearsal, 10:20 am,** Choir Room

**Fellowship Hour, 12:30 pm,** Lobby

**ESL Classes, 1 pm,** Fifth Floor

**14th Annual Carol Sing, 4 pm,** Sanctuary

**Youth White Elephant Christmas Party, 6 pm,**

Fifth Floor, Gym, Youth Lounge

**Overnight Shelter, 6:30 pm,** Shelter Space

## THIS SUNDAY

### **The Story of the First Christmas: Annual Christmas Pageant, Parish Hall, December 16th, 10:10 am**

Join us for a retelling of the first Christmas as it is presented through pose and rhyme. Over the last month, 16 children from our congregation have learned the story behind Christmas and practiced countless hours to share a new perspective on the first Christmas with you!

We hope that you will join us for pastries, coffee, and a time to reflect on "The First Christmas" with us. If you have any questions or want to know more, please reach out to Christina Cosby at [cac@mapc.com](mailto:cac@mapc.com) or by calling the church office.



### **14th Annual Carol Sing: Sunday, December 16 at 4 pm**

Join us for an afternoon concert of audience carols, reading, poetry and seasonal choral music—including excerpts from Vivaldi's *Gloria*—sung by the Choir of Madison Avenue Presbyterian Church and New York City Children's Chorus, accompanied by guest instrumentalists and conducted by Mary Huff and Andrew Henderson. Admission is free, though a freewill offering will be taken, and a reception will follow in the Parish Hall.

## OTHER EVENTS AND ANNOUNCEMENTS

### **Presbyterian Giving Catalog**

Need a gift for the person who has it all? Searching for a gift that helps create a better world? Consider the Presbyterian Giving Catalogues found in the pew racks. Buy piglets or chickens for a community farm; help educate a child, empower women, or donate a garden well. Show someone in your life how much you love them by providing an act of love for our neighbors in their honor.

### **Christmas Joy Offering**

Keep a watchful eye out for the Christmas Joy Offering on December 23rd, 24th, and 25th. Each year during the Advent and Christmas season, we turn our eyes to Bethlehem and celebrate the wondrous gift of Christ, our Savior. By giving to the Christmas Joy Offering, you honor this gift by providing assistance to current and retired church workers in their time of need and developing our future leaders at Presbyterian-related schools and colleges equipping communities of color. The generosity of Presbyterians means a brighter future and enhanced opportunities for leaders to use their talents and skills to serve God, the Church and the world for years to come. We certainly hope you will be able to give!

### **Shelter Hosts over the Holiday**

With the holiday season right around the corner and many volunteers away, we struggle to find volunteers to host the shelter. If you have been trained as a shelter host and will be in NYC the week before and after Christmas, we need your help! Volunteer now through the online database given to you when you first volunteered or contact Rebecca Heilman ([rmh@mapc.com](mailto:rmh@mapc.com)). If you have not been trained, but would like to volunteer over the Christmas holiday or any time after, please contact Rebecca Heilman ([rmh@mapc.com](mailto:rmh@mapc.com)) to set up a time to meet and get oriented with the shelter. Hope to hear from you!

### **White Elephant Christmas Party for Middle and High Schoolers, December 16th 6-8 pm, 5th Floor**

Join us for our annual White Elephant Christmas Party as we gather to ring in Christmas cheer. We will celebrate the holiday season early with a gift exchange, pizza, and games.

**When:** Dec. 16th after the Carol Sing

**Where:** On the 5th Floor

**What:** Bring a wrapped gift and a suggested \$10 donation to help cover the cost of dinner

### **Sign Up Now for Triennium, July 16-20!**

Presbyterian Youth Triennium is a time when 5000 Presbyterian Youth in grades 9-12 from all over the world gather at Perdue University to join in worship, share in fellowship, engage in conversation with one another and celebrate our common faith in God. The summer's theme is "Here's My Heart." To learn more, visit Triennium's event [website here](#). If you are interested in joining this year's trip to Perdue University, please reach out to Christina Cosby by phone at 212-288-8920 or email at [cac@mapc.com](mailto:cac@mapc.com). Sign-ups are due to the Presbytery by mid-January.





## Donations for Christmas Flowers

We are now accepting donations for the poinsettias and wreaths that will beautify the Sanctuary during the Christmas season. Gifts may be made in memory or in honor of loved ones. To make a donation, please use the special insert in the bulletins for the next few Sundays, **or print out a pdf copy here**. You may place your completed form and contribution in an envelope in the offering plate or mail it to Lissette Perez-Eraza in the Church Office. The suggested donation for each name is \$40. In order to include the names of loved ones in the bulletins on Christmas Eve and Christmas Day, **we must receive your donation by Monday morning, December 17.**

## Shelter Stockings

Everyone deserves a little bit of joy Christmas morning and sometimes that joy comes with a gift. The shelter leaders are looking for black socks, wool socks, candy, chapstick, tissues, and small travel size toiletries (preferably with no alcohol) to stuff 12 stockings for our shelter guests. **We need all items by this Sunday December 16th.** They may be dropped off to the receptionist or given directly to Rebecca Heilman on a Sunday morning. Email Rebecca at [rmh@mapc.com](mailto:rmh@mapc.com) with any questions or concerns.

## THIS WEEK AT MAPC

### Monday, December 17

<b>3:00 pm</b>	Andre Newburg Memorial Service	Sanctuary
<b>4:00 pm</b>	Andre Newburg Reception	Parish Hall
<b>6:30 pm</b>	Overnight Shelter	Shelter Space
<b>7:00 pm</b>	Long Term Planning Task Force	Room 608

### Tuesday, December 18

<b>4:00 pm</b>	MAPC Book Club	Library
<b>6:30 pm</b>	Overnight Shelter	Shelter Space
<b>7:00 pm</b>	The Service of the Longest Night	Dana Chapel
<b>8:00 pm</b>	Fellowship Hour	Phillips Lounge

### Wednesday, December 19

<b>8:00 am</b>	Trustees	Phillips Lounge
<b>12:30 pm</b>	Reading Through the Bible	Phillips Lounge
<b>4:00 pm</b>	Christmas Tableau Rehearsal	Sanctuary, Lobby
<b>6:00 pm</b>	Cocaine Anonymous	5th Floor
<b>6:30 pm</b>	Overnight Shelter	Shelter Space

### Thursday, December 20

<b>12:00 pm</b>	Day School: Christmas Chapel	Sanctuary
<b>1:00 pm</b>	Spiritual Growth & Faith Sharing	James Lenox House
<b>6:30 pm</b>	Thursday Open Table	Parish Hall
<b>6:30 pm</b>	Overnight Shelter	Shelter Space
<b>6:30 pm</b>	Recovery Group	Library
<b>7:00 pm</b>	Church Choir Rehearsal	Choir Room

### Friday, December 21

<b>6:30 pm</b>	Overnight Shelter	Shelter Space
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**Saturday, December 22** No Events Scheduled Church House Closed

## MARK YOUR CALENDARS: Annual January Fellowship Event Friday Night Fireside Jazz, January 25, 6 - 9 pm!

Come enjoy an evening of good food, great music and lively fellowship in the Church House Lobby. Chef Jim is preparing a New Orleans inspired menu, the jazz trio is booked, there will be a fire in the fireplace, and childcare will be offered on the 5th Floor if that makes it easier for you to attend. The suggested donation for the evening is \$40, and we ask for a donation of \$15 per child if you need childcare.

You'll be able to sign up in the Church House Lobby after worship on Sundays in January, or you can respond to Lissette Perez-Eraza at [lqp@mapc.com](mailto:lqp@mapc.com) or by calling the church office. Please indicate if you will need childcare. This is an evening you won't want to miss!



## CHILDREN AND FAMILY MINISTRIES

### Children's Worship

Children's worship takes place during both worship services at 9 am and 11:15 am. This is an interactive worship service designed specifically for children 3rd grade and under.

*Please note there will be no Children's Worship on December 30th. We invite all children to enjoy worship in the sanctuary with their family. If children need a quiet place to play, they are welcome to use the nursery or children's library.*

### Church School, Sunday Mornings at 10:10 am, 5th Floor

Church School is currently on hiatus due to our Christmas pageant rehearsals. We will begin again on January 6th!

### Kids Club and Wee Kids, Wednesday afternoons, 4-6 pm, Church House

Kids and their families are invited to join us on Wednesday afternoons from 4 to 6 pm for Kids Club. It's never too late to sign up, visit our website or contact Christina Cosby at [cac@mapc.com](mailto:cac@mapc.com) to register.

#### Dates to remember:

**December 16:** Christmas Pageant - 10:10 am

**December 19, December 26 & January 2, 2019:** No Kids Club

### Middle School Ministries

#### Youth Worship, 9 am and 11:15 am

Worship with your peers and friends in an interactive way in the Dana Chapel during both worship services every Sunday morning. Youth grades 4-7 are invited to join Christina Cosby for a time of worship as they learn about our worship practices at MAPC and lead their worship experience!

*Please note there will be no Youth Worship on December 23rd and December 30th. We invite all youth to enjoy worship in the sanctuary with their family.*

#### Sunday Youth Hour, Sunday Mornings at 10:10 am, Youth Lounge

Youth Hour is currently on hiatus over the Christmas and New Year holidays. We will pick up at 10:10 am on the 5th floor on January 6th!

#### T(w)een Club: Middle School Mid-Week Youth Group, Wednesday afternoons, 5-6:30 pm, Church House

Middle school students, join us for T(w)een Club Wednesday evenings from 5 to 7 pm. We'll share dinner and study the Bible with Rev. Jenny McDevitt. Haven't joined us on Wednesday nights before? This is the perfect chance to change that, and it's never too late to sign up! For more information contact Christina Cosby at [cac@mapc.com](mailto:cac@mapc.com) or visit [our website](#) to find the registration form.

#### Dates to remember:

**December 16:** Christmas Pageant - 10:10 am

**December 16:** White Elephant Christmas Party, 6pm

**December 19, December 26 & January 2, 2019:** No Kids Club

#### High School Fellowship, Sunday Mornings, 10:10 am 4th floor Phillips Building

Have you been looking for a space to call your own and reconnect with your church friends? Join us for High School Fellowship on Sundays as we continue the spiritual practice of Bible Journaling and encounter the Gospel of Luke.

## BIBLE STUDIES AT MAPC

Looking for a place to read Scripture together and get to know people at MAPC? Come to one of our Bible Studies; newcomers are always welcome! For more information, go to [MAPC website](#).

### Reading Through the Bible: Wednesdays 12:30-1:30 pm Phillips Lounge

Reading Through the Bible meets Wednesday, December 19 as we pick up reading Isaiah 17.



### 20s/30s Bible Study: Next Meeting is Thursday, December 13, 6 pm

Across culture and time, food and wine have been enjoyed by many. This is no different throughout Scripture. We are going to look at the importance of table fellowship and the production of wine in scripture as we begin a new year. Come as we sample food, wine, and non-alcoholic beverages from different regions around the world and discover their Biblical roots.

### Women's Bible Study: 2nd and 4th Mondays, 6:30 pm, Phillips Lounge; Next Meeting is Monday, Jan 14, 2019

The minor prophets, who are they? What do they have to say to us today? These are the same questions we asked as we wondered what to study next. Come learn with us as we begin this new study! Join us at 6:30 pm every other Monday or come early with a bit to eat as we enjoy fellowship with one another. We cannot wait to see you there!

## Volunteer this Winter with Children's Worship and Youth Worship

Are you passionate about worship at MAPC? Worship is a time that we share a set liturgy as a way to reconnect with God and one another. Moreover, worship teaches us valuable patterns that we use across many areas in our lives. Each Sunday, we share the importance of this liturgy and pattern of life with our children as we worship in an interactive way in Children's Worship and Youth Worship. This valuable time for our families is made possible by your help! Sign-up and come experience worship in a new way!

Visit **Sign Up Genius** to volunteer in December!

## New York Common Pantry Grocery Carts

Far too often, a basic human necessity like food is expensive and scarce, especially in New York City. The New York Common Pantry works each year to reduce stress in people's lives by providing a pantry to those in need.

The pantry continues to ask for your help! **They need canned or dried beans, canned chicken/salmon/tuna, rice, dried pasta, fresh or canned vegetables, and peanut butter.** We simply ask for no glass containers! You may drop your items off in the provided grocery carts found in the Church House Lobby or the Sanctuary Narthex.

Or, since we are busy people in a busy city, you may also order groceries to be **delivered to the New York Common Pantry (8 East 109th Street, New York, NY, 10029, Phone: 917-720-9700)** by one of your grocers. Know that any items you give will not only impact a family, but also a child's life. And we are most thankful for that!

## STAY CONNECTED

### Stay Connected to Worship at MAPC

Did you know that even if you're away or unable to make it to church that you can listen to Sunday worship services at MAPC? Sermons and service highlights (including scripture lessons, hymns and anthems) are uploaded afterwards, and are permanently accessible. They can be downloaded to your electronic device or listened to directly on MAPC's **website**. Peruse this valuable online resource today! Once ready for print, our Sunday bulletins are also uploaded to our website on Thursday afternoons and are made permanently available for download.

### Flowers for the Sanctuary

Is there someone you would like to honor or remember through a gift of flowers for Sunday worship? If so, please contact Lissette Perez-Erazo at [ljp@mapc.com](mailto:ljp@mapc.com) or 212-288-8920. The cost for Sunday flowers is \$110.

## MAPC Serves Opportunities

### Youth Service Group for High School Students

Join us as we serve the vulnerable across our City with high school students in mind. We will be sharing in service and fellowship as we meet the needs of three communities: the elderly, the homeless, and children. Each month, we will offer three service opportunities that reach these three populations. We look forward to having you join us.

**Save these dates:**

**January 3, Thursday Open Table,  
6:00 pm, Parish Hall**



## OUTREACH

### Ways to get involved at MAPC with hands and hearts!

The following opportunities to participate in hands-on ministries are provided by the Outreach Committee. If you are interested in exploring any of these opportunities, email Rebecca Heilman at [rmh@mapc.com](mailto:rmh@mapc.com). Let's put our faith into action!

### The Thursday Open Table Needs YOU!

Can you spare 2 hours on a Thursday evening from 6-8 pm? If so, then you can help feed 120 hungry neighbors a hot meal, offering them Christian hospitality. Please contact Kathy Hoffman at [kfhoffman@earthlink.net](mailto:kfhoffman@earthlink.net) to volunteer for this opportunity.

### Hosts are needed at the Shelter

Hosts are needed for the Shelter! The Shelter is comfortable and the experience of helping these men get their lives back on track is one that will change your heart. Two shifts are offered each evening. Early evening hosts volunteer from 6:30 pm to 8:30 pm; overnight hosts volunteer from 8:30 pm to 7:00 am. Please contact Rebecca Heilman at [rmh@mapc.com](mailto:rmh@mapc.com) for more information.

### Search and Care

Can you spend an afternoon with an elderly person on the Upper Eastside to walk their pet, go with them to a doctor's appointment, help them shop, balance their checkbook or even just offer them the gift of companionship? If so, please contact Robin Strashun at [SandC@searchand-care.org](mailto:SandC@searchand-care.org) for more information.

### New York Common Pantry

The New York Common Pantry offers opportunities for volunteers to help pack and distribute food to the working poor on Saturday mornings and other times each week. MAPC has supported this very well organized and effective organization since its inception 30 years ago. This is a wonderful way to follow Christ's command to "feed my sheep!"