



A Second Look

An Invitation to the Life and Work of Our Community of Faith and Fellowship

A S E C O N D L O O K D E C E M B E R 2 0 1 7

Second Presbyterian Initiates Concurrence With Overture on Syria

In its October Meeting the Session approved a resolution on the conflict in Syria that was sent to the Presbytery for its approval as an Overture to next year's General Assembly. The Overture comprised four parts. The first two are directed at PCUSA's advocacy in DC and elsewhere: 1) to stop the killing in Syria and bring about a durable ceasefire; 2) to work for reconciliation in Syria. The second part also includes PCUSA's efforts: 3) to alleviate the suffering, welcome refugees, and to revise economic sanctions against Syria so that affect ordinary people are not harmed; 4) to deepen our partnership with Syria Christians here and in the Middle East.

The Presbytery of New York City concurred with the Overture in its November meeting. As other presbyteries have also approved resolutions for this Overture, it is now on the agenda for the General Assembly in June.

2 6 1 Y E A R S O F M I N I S T R Y

Advent: Feast or Fast?

It is hard to imagine but Advent was once a season of prayer and fasting in the Western Church and still is in the Eastern Church. It was known as "The Little Lent". In some traditions, including PCUSA's, Advent's liturgical color is purple, just like Lent. It signifies both repentance and kingship. That is an odd combination on the surface, but one I take to mean that in coming into the presence of a king one sees how shabby one truly is.

The season of Advent begins on the fourth Sunday before Christmas which this year means it begins on December 3rd. Nowadays it hardly feels like a separate season as Christmas shopping officially kicks off the day after Thanksgiving with



Advent candles herald the coming of the Light.

Black Friday and ends frantically on Christmas Eve. For many people it is a season of extreme busyness between the shopping, the baking, the home decorating, the Christmas cards and the Christmas parties, and, for students, exams. It is also marked

by excess by way of rich foods and alcohol, party clothing, and glitzy decorations in homes and stores.

Several years ago I decided I no longer wanted to attend Christmas parties and stopped doing so. I'm not much of a party person anyway, preferring small get-togethers, but I found the excess of "Christmas parties" jarring. To me, the beauty of Advent is in the music from carols like "O Come, O Come, Emanuel" and in a quiet and hopeful waiting for the birth of the Christ child.

At Second Church we have a special opportunity to experience a simpler, more prayerful Advent at the Sunday Taizé service on December 3rd. We can yet reclaim the season.

- Elder Cecilia Blewer

Second Presbyterian Church

Sanctuary: 6 West 96th Street / Office: 3 West 95th Street

212-749-1700 / www.secondpresbyteriannyc.org

Rev. Stephen H. Phelps, Transitional Pastor

Eunjung Ahn, Minister of Music

Worship at 10:15 am Sundays

Two Great Hearts of the Congregation

Our dear friend Fern Bartner has been joining the choir every Wednesday, singing, smiling and sharing her sweet spirit as she continues her heroic recovery from a major accident a year ago. "It's the best, most uplifting, loving and supportive group a girl could ask for," Fern said about the choir, "helping me through my recovery in heart and soul."

It was in November 2016 when Fern was standing in front of her apartment building on 96th Street that she was struck by a car that had lost control. Her right leg was amputated below the knee, and she sustained extensive damage to her left leg.

Fern has made tremendous progress in the year since, and has good days and less-than-good days. She is now in outpatient therapy and receives loving round-the-clock care from her brothers Clayton and Lloyd. As Fern works through ongoing pain and mobility issues, she is not able to attend Sunday worship for now. Her Wednesday visits with her friends in the choir get her "out and about" and help her feel a growing sense of normality. Fern said she feels accepted despite the pain and the particular needs she is facing.

Choir members are grateful to worship with Fern by singing together. Fern has brought great cheer and energy to every session, and those singing with her are transformed by her strength and determination. Fern sends love and thanks to everyone in the congregation for being a guiding light to her and for your heartfelt wishes and prayers.

- Elder Elaine Song



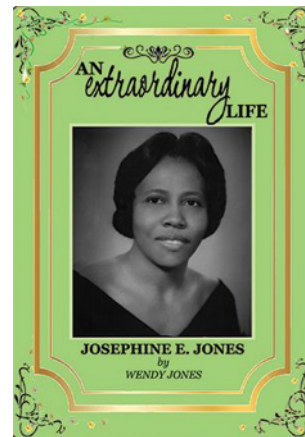
This photo was taken during choir practice on Nov. 15. From left, seated: Elaine Song, Fern, Minister of Music Eunjung Ahn. Behind them are: Judith Thatcher, Susan Gordon-Clark, Fern's brother Lloyd Bartner, Margaret Neuer and Soloist Lena Lee.

An Extraordinary Life: Josephine E. Jones by Wendy Jones, published by Ida Bell Publishing, Springfield, NJ, 2017.

Wendy Jones, author, playwright, and publisher, recounts the life story of her mother, former Second Presbyterian Church member, deacon, and elder, Josephine Jones. Based on the author's extensive interviews with her mother, the book tells how the daughter of a sharecropper, driven since childhood by a desire for education and advancement, moved to Harlem in 1946, raised her child, and used her talents in the culinary arts to become the first black supervisor of food services at a Fortune 500 company. Along the way, she also became a community activist, tenant organizer, caregiver for a nephew in the early days of the AIDS crisis, and a mainstay for her family and Harlem community.

As the book jacket says, this is "an American story, a Great Migration story, a New York story, a black family's story, a mother-daughter story, and the story of a woman's fight for creativity in the workplace." The book is available online at IdaBellPublishing.com.

- Clerk of Session Nancy M. Hughes



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December Calendar

Susan Gordon-Clark is worship co-ordinator for December; Gordon Bakoulis is deacon co-ordinator

Sunday worship at 10:15 am

Choir rehearsal at 7:00 pm on Wednesdays

Christmas Joy offering collected throughout the month

Sunday, December 3: *First Sunday in Advent* - Worship in the style of Taizé.

Wednesday, December 6, 6:00 pm: Chimes rehearsal.

Sunday, December 10: *Second Sunday in Advent* - Chimes included in musical service.

Thursday, December 14, 6:00 pm: ARS Holiday program.

Friday, December 15-Monday, January 1: ARS closed for the holiday.

Sunday, December 17: *Third Sunday in Advent* - Special music at worship; Coffee Hour and carol singing in Carnegie Library with sandwiches provided by deacons, others encouraged to bring cookies or other baked goods. Last day for donation to memorial Christmas flowers.

Tuesday, December 19, 6:00 pm: Joint Trustee and Session Meeting in Head of School office.

Sunday, December 24: *Fourth Sunday in Advent* - 10:15 am regular service of worship; 6:30 pm, Christmas Eve caroling around the piano followed by a brief service.

Sunday, December 31: Cecilia Blewer preaching; Susanna Nason provides music.

Sunday, January 7: Baptism of the Lord - Holy Communion.

Special Music on the 17th

For Sunday worship on December 17th, Minister of Music Eunjung Ahn is planning a special celebration of music with Camille Saint-Saëns' Christmas Oratorio (Oratorio de Noel), which is based on the Old and New Testaments and other biblical texts and sacred liturgies. The prelude, postlude and the choir pieces will all come from the Oratorio. Soloists and special instrumentalists are also planned.

