

Madison Avenue Presbyterian Church

PASTORAL STAFF LETTER

announcements, updates, and information for the weeks ahead



December 17, 2020

A Letter from Rev. Beverly A. Bartlett

Dear Friends,

As I write this, I am enjoying my Christmas tree, listening to Christmas music, and looking out the window every few minutes as the snow falls. I can see the snow-bedecked church steeple, the neighbor's Christmas tree in the window across Madison Ave, and the beautifully lit Ralph Lauren store on the corner. A snowstorm is magical when you are warm, cozy, and have plenty to eat. I am grateful for these peaceful moments and the carols that remind me of the gift of Emmanuel, God-with-us.

I am also aware that my comfort and well-being is in sharp juxtaposition to what so many are experiencing who have run out of money to buy food, pay utility bills, put gas in their vehicle, pay for medications, and may be fearing eviction. I am very aware that our daily death toll from the corona virus now tops 3,000, and many hospitals throughout the country have reached capacity. I am kept awake at night with anxiety over what is happening in our country with millions of people convinced that an election that was remarkably secure and free of fraud was somehow "stolen" and

threatening people's lives over those conspiracy theories. I have no idea how to address the divide among us in this country that feels more and more like an uncrossable chasm. My Citizen app seems to be going off more frequently than ever with alerts of robberies and attacks, and on Sunday afternoon musician friends were caught up in the shooting at St. John the Divine that, thanks be to God, resulted in no deaths, apart from the deeply troubled shooter, but traumatized all who were there.

Yes, there is a disconnect between what I am enjoying in my warm, Christmas-y apartment watching this magical snow from the tenth floor and what is happening in the world around us. And yet, this season is a reminder to us that in the midst of darkness and human frailty, violence and cruelty there IS light and hope. Where do you find that hope? I encourage you to look for it, and to let it inspire you to live in such a way that your life embodies the hope, light and life of Christ. Here is one way you have brought life and hope: our friend, Abusa (Pastor) Pattison Chirongo is home after having his brain tumor removed. His recovery has been remarkable, and the gifts of many of you and of this church made his surgery and medical care possible. We continue to provide meals on Thursday evenings, and volunteers have already spent many hours sorting clothing donations for our future clothing closet. A team of deacons have regularly spent time with one of our older members in the hospital this week, either in person or by phone. The COVID-19 vaccine is starting to be administered. People are engaging in conversations about what it means to be the church in this time and going forward. Many who otherwise could not join us are worshipping with us online. There are signs and seeds of hope all around us--we just need to look for them, hold on to them, and nurture them, remembering as we prepare to celebrate Jesus' birth that "The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness did not [and will never] overcome it." (John 1:15).

Christ's peace be with you,
Beverly Bartlett
Associate Pastor

Worship

Please join us for online worship.

The Rev. Dr. J. Patrick Vaughn will be preaching this coming Sunday, December 20. The theme of the sermon is "Is It Really Christmas?"

Sunday Worship

Join us for pre-recorded services of worship on Sunday mornings.
Find all our services here:

[Click Here to Watch](#)

**Morning Prayer In-Person,
Sunday, December 20 at 10:30 am
in the Sanctuary**



Please Note--Please note there will be no in-person Morning Prayer services on December 27 or January 3.

We will continue to offer Morning Prayer on Sundays as long as the public health guidelines allow for indoor gatherings of more than ten persons. Continuing any form of in-person worship also depends on worshippers following the church's guidelines below:

--Please use the Sign Up Genius link below to sign up. Since we must limit the number of people in the sanctuary, we need to know how many people plan to attend.

--Masks completely covering both the mouth and nose must be worn at all times.

--Seating is marked, and worshipers may sit where the blue dots on the pews are located. If a couple or family occupies a blue dot, then the adjacent dot needs to be left vacant to allow for adequate physical distancing.

--As hard as it is, refrain from greeting and speaking with one another inside the sanctuary. Hold your conversations for outside on the sidewalk after the service. Talking together outside is exponentially more safe than inside.

--As much as we want to connect with one another, it is simply not safe for hugs, handshakes or other physical contact beyond the members of one's household. Please greet each other from a safe physical distance!

If you have trouble making your reservation, please contact Beverly Bartlett at bab@mapc.com.

Here is the link for signing up:

[Reserve Your Spot Here](#)

Open Sanctuary in Advent

We can't all worship together but we do want to make it possible for you to spend a few moments in a familiar space, a safe space where God's people have gathered for more than a hundred years.

The sanctuary will be open on the following days and times:

Friday, December 18, noon - 2:00 pm

Monday, December 21, noon - 2:00 pm

Wednesday, December 23, 5:00 - 7:00 pm

Come and sit in your favorite pew. Enjoy the beauty. Read scripture. Reflect on the devotion we will provide. Listen to God. Sigh. Hum a Christmas song. Shed a tear. Consider how God comes to us in the weakness and vulnerability of a newborn. Ask yourself how God might be coming anew into our world through weakness and vulnerability. Pray for friends and neighbors and strangers. Or, simply sit and allow your mind to wonder from one memory to another.

We will observe social distancing, and no more than 25 will be allowed to gather at any one time. Blue dots mark the places where you may sit.

We hope this time in our sanctuary will prove to be a blessing as we prepare for the arrival of Christ.

Christmas at MAPC

Join Us for Virtual and In-Person Worship



VIRTUAL SERVICES:

- Our **Christmas Eve Family Service** will be on December 24 at 5 pm via Zoom. Everyone from our Church Family is welcome to participate in this service for children.
- Our traditional **Christmas Eve Candlelight Service** will include a sermon preached by the Rev. Dr. J. Patrick Vaughn, music sung by the Choir of Madison Avenue Presbyterian Church accompanied by guest instrumentalists, and the celebration of communion. A link to the service will be emailed on Christmas Eve.
- Our **Christmas Day Service of Lessons and Carols**, featuring plenteous carols sung by the Choir of MAPC and readings offered by members of the congregation will be emailed on Christmas Morning.

IN-PERSON SERVICES:

- **We will offer two-30 minute, identical services on Christmas Eve at 6 pm and 9 pm.** These services will be similar to our Sunday Morning Prayer services, with appropriate stringent precautions in place. Both services will feature congregational carols, scripture readings, and prayers, with music sung by members of MAPC's professional octet. **Advance registration for these services is required.** Please sign up below!

[Sign Up Here](#)

Donations for Christmas Flowers

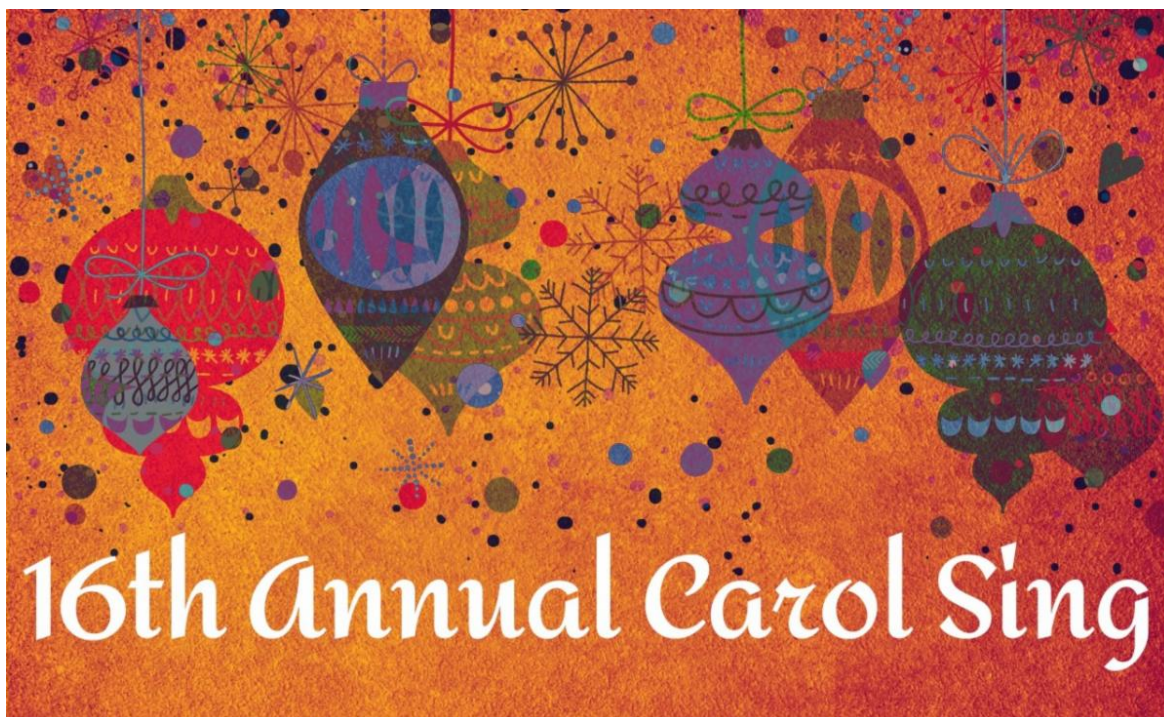
We are now accepting donations in memory or in honor of loved ones for the poinsettias and wreaths that are beautifying the sanctuary during the Christmas season. The suggested donation for each name is \$40. To make a donation, you may make a contribution through our [website](#) (click "Give Online" and select "Flower Fund" in the drop-down list) adding your loved ones' names in the "Note" field provided. You can also access a printable form [here](#) and return it with your contribution to the Church Office.

We will need to receive your donation by **next Monday, December 21** in order to include names of loved ones in our pre-recorded and in-person Christmas services.

Christmas Joy Offering

The annual Christmas Joy Offering supports retired pastors and church workers in need and equips leaders in Presbyterian communities of color. We encourage you to give generously as we collect this gift during the Advent season. Please note "Christmas Joy" on your check or select Christmas Joy in the online giving drop down menu.

16th Annual Carol Sing



Our VIRTUAL Carol Sing was released last Sunday. If you missed it, here is the [link](#). It will remain "live" throughout the Christmas season and beyond, and we encourage you to forward it to your friends and family to spread some Christmas cheer far and wide! We are grateful for the support of many donors who have contributed to the work of our Saint Andrew Music Society during this unprecedented year; if you have not yet made a contribution, and would like to, you can make a donation online through our [website](#) (selecting "Saint Andrew Music Society" in the drop-down list).

Christmas in New York by NYCCC



Our New York City Children's Chorus's recording, *Christmas in New York*, was released last November and has received some rave reviews during the past year! Copies of the CD can be [purchased online](#) with free shipping within the USA or for will-call pick-up at the MAPC receptionist desk. The recording can also be purchased on iTunes, Amazon, Spotify, or wherever you download your favorite music!

NYC Children's Chorus on the TODAY Show

The NYCCC is delighted to share that they have been asked to appear on NBC's TODAY Show next Wednesday, December 23, during their morning broadcast. The NYCCC created a "virtual choir" video of O Come, All Ye Faithful featuring 75 choristers in grades 6 through 12 for this enormous and very merry project. We invite you to tune in and sing along!

Year-End Giving--Business Office Closing at 1 pm on December 31st

This is our annual reminder of the IRS rules concerning year-end contributions of cash and securities. In general, the delivery date determines the year in which a contribution can be claimed as a deduction. Checks mailed with a postmark of December 31, 2020 or earlier, or hand-delivered by December 31, 2020, will be credited as a contribution in 2020. Please note: The Church House and Business Office will close at 1 pm on December 31st! Please contact our Director of Administration & Finance, Roger Pierce or our Bookkeeper, Carmen Olmeda, by December 31st, if you wish to make a contribution or need assistance in making one. After January 1, 2021, contributions will be credited as contributions for 2021. For gifts of securities, the date of mailing is the delivery date; if hand-delivered, the date of receipt by the charity is the delivery date. When securities are delivered from a donor's bank or broker, the delivery date is the date the securities are transferred to the charity. To make a year-end gift of securities, please contact Roger Pierce at 212-288-8920. Please note that you can also make your year-end gifts online through our website at <http://www.mapc.com/giving>. Thank you!

Cold Weather Accessories Drive

Throughout the winter, we will be giving away gloves, mittens, hats, and scarves to our Open Table guests. If you are able, please ship something from [our Amazon wishlist](#) or send a monetary donation to the attention of the Outreach Committee.

Wednesday Prayer

Weekly devotions will be posted on Wednesdays. We hope that with Wednesday devotions, Morning Prayer in person on Sundays and our recorded Sunday worship service you will find devotions and worship opportunities that help sustain you during these times. Click on the button below to find all of our videos.

[Click Here to Watch](#)

Opportunities for Fellowship & Study

Zoom invites are sent regularly by email.

Virtual Fellowship Hour

Sundays at 12 noon

Please join us for Virtual Fellowship Hour. Every Sunday.

****NOTE:** An email with the Zoom link will be sent out on Sunday mornings at 8 am.

A Walk in the Park

is on hiatus until January 9. Please join us then!

Young Adult Gatherings on Zoom

Mondays from 7 to 8 pm: Jan. 11, and Jan. 25

Young adults are studying Ephesians. Bring your drink for a mid-evening happy hour and join us for fellowship and discussion.

Chesna Hinkley & April Martin will lead this group on Zoom. Please watch your email for the link and more information.

Anti-Racism Discussion Group, Sunday mornings at 9 am

Last Sunday we finished our discussion of Ibram Kendi's book, "How to Be an Anti-Racist." We will meet again this coming Sunday at 9 am to discuss the future of this group. We encourage people to come with their ideas. There is much we can continue to read and watch to educate ourselves, but what else can we be doing? What would *you* find helpful as we grow in becoming anti-racist and addressing racist policies and structures in our society? Whether you have been involved in these discussions from the beginning of the summer, dipped in and out of them, or would like to join them going forward, you are welcome.

Bible Studies

Monday Evening Bible Study is on Hiatus

This Monday Evening Bible Study will be taking a break for the next several weeks. We will start up again with a study of the Saul and David stories in 1 and 2 Samuel on Monday, February 1.

Women's Bible Study

The Women's Bible Study, which is currently studying the Psalms, meets by teleconference. The next meeting is Monday, December 28. Please contact Lissette Perez-Erazo for more details: lgp@mapc.com

Youth and Children at MAPC

Youth (Ages 6th - 12th Grade)

YOUTH ON WEDNESDAYS: Please watch your emails for updates.

YOUTH IN 2021: In January, we plan to continue meeting via zoom. April is currently delivering youth bags with gifts and crafts which will accompany our Youth zoom meetings in 2021.

Children's Ministry (Connecting Virtually)

PRESCHOOL MINISTRY

Sunday School in a Box is delivered quarterly during the pandemic for at-home learning.

Contact Chesna Hinkley ceh@mapc.com for more info and watch this space for updates!

MONDAYS FOR KIDS! (K-2nd grade) **on Zoom**. The Winter Session of Mondays for Kids will meet January 11 to April 12. We will learn about what God is like.

Contact Chesna Hinkley (ceh@mapc.com) for more info.

PRETEEN CONNECT (3rd-5th grade) **on Zoom**.

Our Winter Session will run January 20 to April 7. We will learn about the Bible's call to gender equality, our place in God's plan, and using our gifts in the Body of Christ. Contact Chesna Hinkley (ceh@mapc.com) for more info.

Three Ways to Give to MAPC During this Time

We are grateful to all of you for your financial support of the church during this time. As you know, the church continues to be the church, with staff to pay, buildings to maintain, and ministries to carry out even though our buildings are closed. We understand that with job losses and furloughs, many people are not able to contribute financially. For those of you who are able to

continue your financial pledges and offerings, click on the link below to see the three ways you can give:

Give Now

Thank you for your faithful giving!

Links for MAPC Worship Services

Sunday Worship

See pre-recorded services of worship below.

[Click Here to Watch](#)

Children's Worship

Find all of our children's worship videos here:

[Click Here to Watch](#)

MAPC on Social Media

Facebook

Follow MAPC on Facebook for news, reminders, events, and pictures from everyday life at the church. It's a good way to engage in fellowship and to know what's going on each week.

facebook.com/MadisonAvenuePresbyterian/



Madison Avenue Presbyterian Church | 921 Madison Avenue, New York, NY 10021

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