

Issue 3:  
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# FPC Faith in Action

*News of First Presbyterian Church of Forest Hills, NY*

*“Be strong and courageous. Do not be afraid or terrified because of them, for the LORD your God goes with you”  
--Deut: 31:6*

Our next issue is scheduled to be published in April. If you have a news item to contribute, or would like to write for the FPC-FIA, send an e-mail to Lois Anne DeLong at [betwink13@optonline.net](mailto:betwink13@optonline.net), or to church administrator David Barnett at [presbyfh@nyc.twcbc.com](mailto:presbyfh@nyc.twcbc.com). **Copy deadline for submitting news items to the April issue will be March 12, and for submitting complete articles will be March 19.**

Note that additional information on many of these events can be found at Pastor Jack Lohr's church blog post at <http://presbyfh.blogspot.com/> or the church web site at <http://www.presbyfh.org/>.

## **Responding to the Word and the World: Solidarity/Community Building in Forest Hills**

At a time when our country and the world has never been so divided, the First Presbyterian Church of Forest Hills has decided to build bridges rather than walls. With some of our neighbors, we have begun conversations to find common ground with others who may worship in different ways, but who share our belief that God calls on us to love and care for one another.

This journey actually began when we hung a sign outside our door declaring: “Immigrants and Refugees Welcome.” It was the church’s



## **Upcoming Events**

**Ash Wednesday:** Wed., March 1, 7 pm - Begin Lent together!

**Sunday 10 am Bible Study** Following Christ: A Lenten Reader to Stretch Your Soul by Carmen Acevedo Butcher (Jack Lohr has copies)

**Lenten Supper & Study:** Weds., 3/8 to 4/5, 6:30 pm Marcus Borg's Jesus: The Life, Teachings, & Relevance of a Religious Revolutionary.

**Meeting of NYC Presbytery** Sat., 3/25 ~9 am to 5 pm (approx.)  
*Our church is hosting so volunteers are needed.*

**Visit to Forest View** Sun. 3/19. 2 pm Come join us in singing for our friends at the nursing home. We'll meet right after church to rehearse and then will spend about an hour at the home.

**Palm Sunday** Sun. 4/9. 11 am - One Great Hour of Sharing received.

**Maundy Thursday** 4/13 8 pm - Ecumenical Service in Church Hall

**Good Friday** 4/14 Noon - Shared service at FPCFH with St. Luke's

**Easter Sunday** Sun. 4/16. 11 am - The Great Day. Don't Miss it!

way of declaring that we were prepared to offer sanctuary to all—a small but bold step. Shortly afterwards, on January 9, Pastor Jack Lohr and representatives of other Christian congregations met with Jewish and Muslim clergy at the Forest Hills Jewish Center to “begin ... interweaving the various ethnic, faith and vulnerable groups for mutual support and action,” according to its organizer Rabbi Gerald Skolnik. Queens Borough President Melinda Katz, and Police Captain Robert G. Ramos of the 112th Precinct were also present. In issuing the call for this meeting, Rabbi Skolnik noted that, “In (continued)

light of the pre-election rhetoric and post-election realities of fear due to expressions of prejudice and hate," he felt there was a need for "programs that bring the various groups together in both social and educational forums so as to build bridges between communities and create a more cohesive and vibrant spiritual life for all of us in Queens." It's a challenge for which all involved will be exploring options.



**Scenes from the Interfaith Gathering at the church. Left: The group forms a circle; center & right: Congregants join for small group conversations.** Photos: Bruno Razafindrakoto.

That same week, on January 11, our church welcomed more than 40 people of different faiths looking to share their beliefs and learn more about ours. The program, sponsored by the Central Queens YMHA, is one in a series of events offering the opportunity to address faith in a number of different settings. Pastor Jack welcomed the guests and shared some background on our congregation and the symbolism of the sanctuary. After the introductions, the group reflected on a series of questions, which included:

1. Do you believe in God? How do you imagine God--as a man with a white beard; as a holy word; as an invisible spirit; or...?
2. What is your view of Salvation? How is a person "saved"? From/for what?
3. In Christian belief, "grace" is defined as "the free and unmerited favor of God, as manifested in the salvation of sinners and the bestowal of blessings." Do you have a sense of God's grace?
4. How do you see "the world to come"? Is it a place we go to when we die? A reality that comes into this world from the future? Something that happens at the Resurrection? Something else?

These questions and others were considered in mixed groups of 3 or 4 people, before responses were shared as a whole.

In his blog on the event, Pastor Jack singled out Peggy Kurtz of the Central Queens Y, our own Michelle Loeb, and Selim Ozcicek of the Turkish Cultural Center," for their efforts in making the event possible.

The Y will also be sponsoring the following interfaith events:

- March 2, 6:30 p.m. - Visit to a mosque. A service begins at 6:30 p.m., followed by a tour of the mosque with the imam, discussion, and light refreshments.
- March 30, 7 p.m. - Interfaith Passover Seder - at the Central Queens Y.
- May - Interfaith Iftar Dinner (Date and time to be determined)

For more information on these events, contact Peggy Kurtz at the Y at (718) 268-5011 ext. 151 or [pkurtz@cqy.org](mailto:pkurtz@cqy.org) or go to Pastor Jack's blog: <http://presbyfh.blogspot.com/2017/02/upcoming-interfaith-events-co-sponsored.html>.

## Welcoming New and Returning Officers

January 29, our congregation once again looked back on a year of achievements, while looking forward to a new year of challenges. As always, the two primary tasks of the Annual Meeting were to vote on proposed incoming elders and deacons, and to review the financial reports and the budget for the coming year. The nominating committee, which was headed by Ruth Stanton, faced some reluctance in getting people to sign on, particularly to serve in the 2019 class of Deacons. Several individuals, though, stepped forward at the meeting, and so our current slate of officers is as follows:

Milton Balram	Session	2017
John Biswas	Session	2019
Lois DeLong,	Session	2019
Herndon Lackey	Session	2019
Tiana Andriananjason	Deacons	2017
Ingrid Anthony	Deacons	2019
Rachel Razafindrakoto	Deacons	2019
Mary Tembo	Deacons	2019
Karen Wood,	Deacons	2018

(*Welcoming Officers, continued*) Stanton and the other committee members—Milton Balram, Luis Gallego, Michelle Loeb, and Melinda Lackey—were thanked for their efforts, before a new nominating committee was selected. Jeanette Dilorio, Martha Knight, and Karl Stayna will serve, along one member of Session, and one member of the Deacons, who will be chosen by those boards to complete the committee.

The new officers were installed Feb. 12 and immediately got to work in a joint Session/Dacons visioning session after worship. Please pray for these people as they endeavor to lead and support our church in the years ahead. And, beyond that, think of what you can do to join them in advancing the mission of this church.



**The congregation gathers for its Annual Meeting on January 29.**  
Photo: Bruno Razafindrakoto.

## Mission Partner Spotlight

Our church has a rich tradition of supporting mission initiatives, both overseas and at home. But, how well do you know the men and women who conduct this work? Or what their work entails? Or the special challenges they may currently be facing?

In this issue, we launch a new ongoing column that will briefly address some of these questions. We start with a list of all the mission partners supported by the church in the past year, along with a short profile of two of the local organizations on this list. Future issues of the newsletter will include similar write-ups on the other people and groups on this list.

In the meantime, feel free to use these links to get acquainted with these individual/groups on your own. And, see if maybe God isn't calling you to join in the good work they are doing as a volunteer or through individual donations.

Group	Contact Name	Website or e-mail
<b>Presbyterian Disaster Assistance</b>		<a href="https://pda.pcusa.org/">https://pda.pcusa.org/</a>
<b>PCUSA- Africa</b>	James McGill & Jodi McGill	<a href="http://ift.tt/2jZkafm">http://ift.tt/2jZkafm</a>
<b>PCUSA-Europe</b>	Rev. Doug Baker & Elaine Baker	<a href="http://ift.tt/2kiGNJo">http://ift.tt/2kiGNJo</a>
<b>PCUSA- South Korea</b>	Kurt Esslinger and Hyeyoung Lee	<a href="http://ift.tt/2jZbeq9">http://ift.tt/2jZbeq9</a>
<b>PCUSA-Haiti</b>	Mark Hare	<a href="http://ift.tt/2kiuWed">http://ift.tt/2kiuWed</a>
<b>PCUSA-Colombia</b>	Kara Watkins	<a href="http://ift.tt/2jZbfKJ">http://ift.tt/2jZbfKJ</a> <a href="http://ift.tt/2kiAe9y">http://ift.tt/2kiAe9y</a>
<b>PCUSA- Madagascar</b>	Dr. Daniel Turk and Elizabeth Turk	<a href="http://ift.tt/2jZgcDn">http://ift.tt/2jZgcDn</a>
<b>Forestdale Parity</b>	William Weisberg, Exec. Director Rev. Marian Edmonds-Allen, Executive Director	<a href="http://www.forestdaleinc.org/">http://www.forestdaleinc.org/</a> <a href="http://parity.nyc/">http://parity.nyc/</a>
<b>Hour Children Mentoring Program</b>	Sister Tesa Fitzgerald, CSJ – Executive Director	<a href="http://ift.tt/1VNZkwz">http://ift.tt/1VNZkwz</a>
<b>Young Women of Color Health Advocacy Coalition</b>	Claire Simon, Co-Director/Co-Founder	<a href="http://us.ywchac.org/">http://us.ywchac.org/</a>
<b>SharetheCareGiving, Inc.</b>	Sheila Warnock, Founder, President, CEO	<a href="http://ift.tt/2kiAPIp">http://ift.tt/2kiAPIp</a>
<b>Women for Afghan Women</b>	Manizha Naderi, Executive Director	<a href="http://ift.tt/1iv3ySS">http://ift.tt/1iv3ySS</a>



## SPOTLIGHT 1: Parity



**Parity's mission in graphic form, with symbols representing such goals as support, worship, advocacy, education for social change, and empowering LGBTQ and all allied youth.**

Rev. John Russell Stanger spoke here in 2015 and met with the Youth Group and adult Bible study group to explain the mission of Parity, an organization initially formed as "Presbyterian Welcome" to advocate for more inclusive policies in the PC(USA) when it came to ordaining gay and lesbian pastors. Many of us left worship that day challenged by the vision he shared, particularly the work the organization is now doing with LGBTQ young people looking for their place in a faith community that, in the past, had not found a place for them.

The Manhattan-based organization took a much wider focus in changing its name. Its web site makes the bold statement: "We believe nothing should stand between you and God – certainly not sexual and gender identity." Rev. Stanger stepped down last year (he plans to pursue an MA in Marriage & Family Therapy at Louisville Seminary) but group's vision remains unchanged. Its three primary areas of work are:

1. Support emerging LGBTQ pastors...as they live into their callings.
2. Empower LGBTQ and allied young people to integrate their spiritual, gender and sexual identities through a range of programs.
3. Proclaim this message of reconciliation through the Not So Churchy worshipping community.

Now under the direction of the Rev. Marion Edmonds-Allen, Parity currently has ten programs, each of which supports one of the goals mentioned above. A connecting thread that seems to run through all of their initiatives is creativity. This is evident in their "Not So Churchy" program, described as "a small worshipping community that creates our own monthly services, outside the structures of the traditional church... filled with discussion, prayer, Grace and Chocolate Hour." Their outreach to young people includes a "Youth Arts Showcase," that provides a vehicle for sharing their individual and collective stories, and a youth theatre program.

## SPOTLIGHT 2: Forestdale



As the logo shows, Forestdale, serving Queens for 161 years, seeks to support families—no matter what challenge they face. What sets them apart from other non-profits is that they do not limit their focus to ensuring children's safety. They want to see children "make long-term gains" by "healing trauma – both at its onset, when maternal bonds are interrupted causing non-secure attachment; as well as continuing through childhood into adulthood where they may directly experience physical, sexual or emotional abuse, or witness unrest, dysfunction and violence within their homes and communities." In short, Forestdale understands that to heal and support the child, you must meet needs of parents, extended family, and the communities where they live.

To achieve this broad goal, Forestdale uses several programs. The "Strong Fathers/Strong Mothers" programs combine parenting skills with practical initiatives, such as health and job training programs. They also partner with NU's Colleges of Nursing and Dentistry to provide free medical and dental care for families.

The web site suggests several ways that you can get involved with Forestdale.

### Community Calendar:

Capping off this issue's emphasis on community building and the world beyond our church's doors, here are a few upcoming events in Queens that might be of interest.

**February 26: 11:00 a.m. -- 2 p.m.** Queens Stands Together Rally, MacDonald Park, Queens Blvd. between Yellowstone Blvd. and 70 Rd., Forest Hills. Rally to encourage unity in New York City's most diverse borough.

**March 5: 2:00 p.m.** St. Pat's for all Parade, 43<sup>rd</sup> St. and Skillman Ave. to 58<sup>th</sup> St and Woodside Ave., Woodside, NY. This annual parade prides itself on having always been open to all Irish and Irish-Americans who wanted to march, even when the more famous parade in Manhattan was excluding some. TV personality Phil Donahue is one of the two grand marshals this year.



