

**PARK AVENUE
CHRISTIAN
CHURCH**

Affiliated with
The Christian Church
(Disciples of Christ)
and
The United Church of Christ



FORWARD

A Christian Community that Embraces the Divinity of Difference

Vol. 115, No. 1

In continuous publication since 1899

Fall 2014

Important Dates:

- **October 6th**
6:30 pm—8:30 pm
Landmarks Committee of
Community Board 8
Location TBD
- **October 15th**
6:30 pm—8:30 pm
Community Board 8
Full Board Meeting
New York Blood Center
- **October 21st**
During the Day, TBA
Landmarks Preservation
Commission Hearing on
Certificate of Appropriateness
Municipal Building
One Center St./9th Flr, North

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Are We There Yet?

Believe it or not, a good New Yorker, but from the Deep South and I have given up my almost daily diet of bacon, eggs and pastries for breakfast and enjoy now delicious tasty smoothies made of veggies, fruits and nuts.

This means regular visits to the local fruit stand and an exchange with an older gentlemen from Bogota, Columbia. He's challenged with his English and my Spanish I am ashamed to say is non-existent. But it is always a friendly exchange of a few dollars for a few pieces of fruit and a smile and sometimes a wave.

But he said to me the other day as I was leaving – "summer, summer over, work, school." And I said yes, summer over, back to work, back to school.

That is really the message of this issue of our new quarterly edition of Forward – summer over, back to work, back to school and I would add back to church. We have missed many of you at church this summer, but hope that you have had a good summer break and time away and that you are ready now to return to the routines and rhythms of life, work and church in the city. The past year has been a difficult and challenging one for our congregation as we have made some big decisions around the development of our air rights and the separating of the Day School from the Church. This has not been easy work, but we press forward because we believe that the best way to insure our survival and the most prudent



Rev. Dr. Alvin O'Neal Jackson

and faithful stewardship of The Park's resources is the architectural development of the land space at 1010 Park Avenue.

It is impossible for a congregation of our size in today's economy to maintain these great treasures we have inherited. And so this new development project includes the preservation and enhancement of our historic Neo-Gothic sanctuary and the expansion of the present

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Meeting the Needs of *The Park*

PASTORAL NEEDS

Pastors Jackson, Heltzel and Cartagena will continue to serve our congregation as spiritual and program leaders. Margie Watrobski and Chantilly Mers are joining our ministry team as pastoral associates. Margie working with children and youth and Chantilly working with the

establishment of a second worship service and consulting on our approach and outreach to young adults.

**FINANCIAL/
ADMINISTRATIVE NEEDS**

Melissa Little will be serving as Manager of Programs and Operations providing support for our ministry and programs. Alvin Moonesar

will continue his work with us as a consultant in the area of finances, human resources and organizational structure.. Stephanie Wilson joined as a part-time Administrative Assistant/Receptionist providing support in both the office and the church.

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EVENTS & OPPORTUNITIES



Follow the Journey Each Week at *The Park*

**SUNDAY
SEPTEMBER 7TH
HOMECOMING SUNDAY**

Are We There Yet?
Exodus 12:1-14
Matthew 18:15-20

**SUNDAY
SEPTEMBER 14TH
INSTALLATION OF MINISTRY COUNCIL AND LAY LEADERS**

Are We There Yet? Pt 2
Exodus 14:19-31
Matthew 18:21-35
MINISTRY FAIR

**SUNDAY
SEPTEMBER 21ST
iCHURCH GATHERING**
Are We There Yet? Pt 3
Exodus 16:2-15
Matthew 20:1-16
DISCIPLES 101

**SUNDAY
SEPTEMBER 28TH
GUEST PREACHER: Dr. Tom Benjamin of Indianapolis, IN
HOLY CONVERSATION: BUILDING COMMUNITY AND THE NEW BUILDING**

**SUNDAY
OCTOBER 5TH
WORLD COMMUNION SUNDAY**
Are We There Yet? Pt 4
Exodus 20:1-9
Matthew 21:33-46

**SUNDAY
OCTOBER 12TH
THE PARK'S 204TH ANNIVERSARY**
Are We There Yet? Pt 5
Exodus 32:1-14
Matthew 22:1-14

**SUNDAY
OCTOBER 19TH
PREACHING: Rev. Dr. Peter Heltzel
UCC 101**

**SUNDAY
OCTOBER 26TH
iCHURCH GATHERING**
Are We There Yet? Pt 6
Deuteronomy 34:1-12
Matthew 22:34-46
HOLY CONVERSATION: BUILDING COMMUNITY AND THE NEW BUILDING



iCHURCH
(interested in church)
GATHERING

Interested in joining the church? Come meet with Pastor Jackson at 10:00 am in the Parlor.

LOOKING FOR A CENTERING POINT?

WHAT ABOUT A WAY TO START THE WEEK?

Join **Peter Heltzel** at 8:30 am each Monday morning at *The Park* for a half hour of healing spiritual prayer.

**REGIONAL ASSEMBLY
OCTOBER 10-11
DANBURY CT**



Plan to be a part of this year's Regional Assembly. For the full agenda and a registration form, please contact the church office at (212) 288-3246.

Elders Update by Rev. Dr. Richard Sturm, Chair



The Elders of *The Park* are charged with concern for the spiritual welfare of the congregation, working with the Pastor for various ministry needs. The most visible of these ministries is weekly leadership at the Communion Table, where uniquely in the tradition of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ), Elders share in presiding at the table and offer the Words of Institution for the consecration of the bread and cup. Other pastoral concerns and support of the different ministry Teams, as well as representation on the Ministry Council, are also Elders' responsibilities. One of our most exciting tasks is the mentoring of candidates seeking ordination in the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ), and we are extraordinarily rich in this area, working with Chantilly Mers, Stephen Tickner, George M. Schmit, Margie Watrobski, and Drew Seisico. You will find biographical comments on these four persons in this FORWARD.

EVENTS & OPPORTUNITIES



NOTHING HAPPENS QUICKLY OR EASILY IN THIS BIG, BEAUTIFUL, BOLD, BODACIOUS CITY!

We are nearing the end of reviews and approvals from community groups and city agencies on the new building. **We need as many of you as possible to be at the following meetings and hearings and a few of you to be prepared to speak very briefly about what our church means to you.** Space will be limited and so it would be helpful to know the number attending for each meeting. Please call the office (212) 288-3246 x122 or email office@parkavenuechristian.com to let us know you will be in attendance.

October 6, 2014 – 6:30- 8:30pm

Landmarks Committee of Community Board 8
Location To Be Determined (closer to the meeting date)

October 15, 2014 – 6:30- 8:30pm

Community Board 8—Full Board Meeting
New York Blood Center
310 East 67th Street, Auditorium

October 21, 2014 - 4:00pm

Landmarks Preservation Commission—
Hearing on Certificate of Appropriateness
Municipal Building
One Centre Street
9th Floor- north

NEWS & NOTES

CONGRATULATIONS

To **Jean Wirth**, who celebrated her 90th birthday in June.

To **Nancy Zink**, former member of *The Park*, who was ordained into the Disciples of Christ Capitol Area Region on August 14th.

To **Rachel Payne**, who will be chairing the 2016 Caldecott Award Selections Committee. The award goes to the illustrator of the most distinguished picture-book published in the United States in 2015.

To **Gioncarlo Alicea Fernandez**, who received a 2014 award for Volunteer Service at the Museum of Natural History.

TRAVELS

Rev. Maria Lopez traveled to Puerto Rico in Late August to lead intensive clinical pastoral education program for Chaplains.

Katrina Mitchell had been working as a general surgeon with a pediatric burn unit program in Tanzania, following a general surgery residency training at Weill Cornell Medical Center (New York Presbyterian) Hospital. She returned to New York City in August and will be here through October for her medical board exams.

Hanna Taylor spent two weeks in the Democratic Republic of Congo, leading a health training program. She works with the International Rescue Committee.

Steven Crumb, Sarah Armstrong-Crumb and Baby Alice moved in July to St. Louis, MO. Steven has a position with Mary Institute and St. Louis Country Day School teaching high school students.

Rosy Taveras spent three weeks in the Dominican Republic seeing family and friends and traveling/spending time with Ryan. The Sunday School missed her but we are glad that she had the break.

Carol Griffiths, a long time member of *The Park* and a 30 year career with the UN, moved home to Australia on September 3rd. We look forward to her visit in NYC in the summer of 2015.

Deacon Update by Raymond Verrey, Chair



In our role, we share responsibilities for regular observance of communion at Christ's Table, help with worship celebrations and care for the sanctuary. We have been fortunate to have Deacons with experience and dedication so it was especially hard when we experienced a loss of a number of our long-standing Deacons who either relocated out of NYC or stepped down. We must first express a big THANKS for the many years of service (some whom have served

since the 1980's or longer). Those include: Jana Nordquist, Carol Griffiths, Melissa Little, Sarah Armstrong-Crumb, Nadeige and Stephen Sekyamah, and Angela and Christian Wells.

In an effort to expand our Deacon team, we worked diligently with the Nominating Team in recognizing other Deacons among us. We are thankful for the new Deacons who were voted in and accepted their nomination: Heather Bickham, Anita Kelso Edson, Harry Eicher, Norma Lopez-Eicher, Lawanda Greene, Marshalee McIntosh Jin, Ryan Jin, and Sandra Monroy. Thank you for accepting the call.

Those Deacons that complete our team, who will be sharing their experience and knowledge with the new Deacons are: E.B. Blakney, Iris Burroughs, Noel Cline, Lee Grisham, Eric Guy, Esther Jusino, Johnson Liu, Beth Mandelbaum, Connie Packard, Myrna Payne, Ephraim P. Tchandao, Frank Tyson, Steve Ziegler (currently on sabbatical), and Raymond Verrey. We give special thanks for your continued service to *The Park*.

The Park gives thanks for those who are, have been and will be called "Deacon".

Meet the Ordination Candidates here at *The Park*



George M. Schmidt is a member of *The Park* who is pursuing ordination in the Christian Church (Disciples of

Christ). He graduated from Union Theological Seminary in 2012 with his Master of Divinity and again in 2013 with his Master of Sacred Theology. He was a serious participant of the occupation Wall Street at Zuccotti Park. He is currently leading a mid-weekly worship service at Union Seminary and hopes to enter Naval Chaplaincy by next year. George is especially concerned about the ways Christian faith gets expressed in social action, and one of his major areas of focus is civil and economic justice for homeless individuals.



Chantilly Mers is a member of *The Park* who is pursuing ordination in the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ). She grew up in Hawaii and is a 2011 graduate of Union Theological Seminary in Theology and the Arts. After having served in ministry at Metro

Hope Church in Manhattan, Chantilly now serves as a social justice educator for the United Methodist Women at the Church Center for the United Nations. Besides serving occasionally as Liturgist in our Sunday worship, she will be helping Pastor Jackson and the Worship Team in order to provide a second, alternative worship experience.



Stephen Tickner is a member of *The Park* who is pursuing ordination in The Christian Church (Disciples of Christ). Born in Texas, and raised in Oklahoma, he graduated from Union Theological Seminary May 2013. He serves on the worship team of Metro Hope Church in Harlem. In recent months he has served as a worship leader once a month at *The Park*. During 2014 Stephen was project director of The Millennial Leaders Project of Union Seminary. This project sponsored a conference (July 13-17) that involved forty millennials (ages 21-35) from a variety of faith traditions who explored activism and spirituality.



Marjorie Watrobiski, a member of *The Park*, is pursuing ordination in The United Church of Christ. A native of upstate New York, she moved to New York City eighteen months ago to enroll in New York Theological Seminary. She continues with a full-time job with the State of New York while taking courses at the Seminary. After joining *The Park*, Marjorie soon connected with the children's ministry program. In the fall she will begin serving as Pastoral Associate—youth and children's ministry and will participate one Sunday a month as worship leader.



Drew Seisico is a member of *The Park* who is pursuing ordination in the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ). He graduated from Union Theological Seminary in May 2014 and is seeking a pastorate position in the Philadelphia Area. A neuroscientist and teacher, he is deeply concerned about the interrelationship of science and faith—as well as connecting spirituality with everyday life, including the practice of Christian hospitality.

NEWS & NOTES

WELCOME



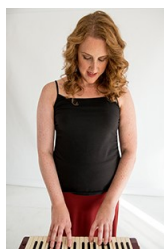
Stephanie Wilson, part-time Administrative Assistant/Receptionist joined the staff the end of August. She will have morning office hours on M-T-TH-F and alternating church hours on Sunday. Please welcome Stephanie to *The Park*.



Lee Tomboulian, Interim Choir Associate, joined the music staff on Sunday, September 7th. Lee will be working with Deanna in all aspects of the music program at *The Park* including direction of both Choirs. Please welcome Lee to *The Park*.

IN THE NEWS, LITERALLY

Deanna Witkowski was interviewed for the article "Made for Worship"



which was published in the Fall edition of the *Wheaton Alumni*. The article discusses how worship services are changing (or not) and how *Wheaton* graduates are helping to make it happen. Visit the link: <http://www.wheaton.edu/Media-Center/Wheaton-Magazine/Autumn-2014/Feature-Articles/Made-for-Worship>.

CELEBRATIONS



Rev. Jennifer Crumpton and David Ross were married in an interfaith service on June 14th, at *The Park*. Pastor Jackson and Rabbi Fridkis officiated.

Heather Bickham and Lucy Chen

were married on August 9th, at the Jewish Heritage Museum Park. Pastor Jackson officiated.



ICE CREAM SOCIAL

Everyone enjoyed a little ice cream!



Children's & Youth Ministries Update by Marjorie Watrobski



While we may not have been mighty in numbers, we definitely stayed active over the summer. We were happy to put on our 1st Annual Ice Cream Social for the congregation. Many smiles were seen around cones and sundaes on that Sunday. Our Sunday School had a good time going to the Metropolitan Museum of Art to look at the stained glass windows there. We were able to look at the different colors, feel the different textures and make up stories about what may have been happening in the windows. We even saw the windows made by Tiffany, the same artist who made our beautiful window.

We have been hard at work planning for the upcoming year, beginning with the familiar fall Harvest Festival and then adding some new events to the sched-

ule. In September we will host a City-Wide Youth Project, helping out at the Saturday Lunch Program at Community of Hope and putting together care packages for immigrant children caught in the turmoil of coming to this country. In November, there will be a rummage sale/flea market. More information to come about these events.

As announced in "Meeting the Needs of The Park", Margie Watrobski has joined the ministerial team as a Pastoral Associate working with the Children's & Youth program. With this, Tina Jackson, who has led this program for the last seven years, will transition out. We give thanks to Tina for her leadership, dedication and guidance of this program and the children for so many years. Remaining with us are our wonderful teachers, Laura Feliz and Rosy Taveras, who make this program possible.

All are welcome on this journey as



Margie leads the visioning and enhancing of this ministry.

Getting to Know the Lay Leadership at *The Park*

Ministry Council



Randall Tucker: A native Virginian, and with his husband Raymond Verrey have been active members of *The Park* for many years. Randall worked on both the 2020 Vision Statement and the new Design (2011). Currently he leads the Administrative Team and serves on the Minister of Music Selection Team. He has more than 12 years of experience in business management and currently leads Global Diversity & Inclusion at Starwood Hotels & Resorts Worldwide, which made DiversityInc's list of the "Top 50 Companies for Diversity" and recognized by the Human Rights Campaign as one of the "Best Places to Work for Lesbian Gay Bi-sexual Transgender Equality."



Connie Packard: (Vice Moderator) Retired clinical social worker and family therapist. She has served as board member and advisor to a number of community groups and has been a committed member of *The Park* for the past several years. Is currently a Deacon, as well as a member of the Stewardship Team.



Joe Roberson: (Secretary) Longtime member of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) from North Carolina. Joe serves as Associate for Operations of Church World Services and is active with the Elders and Mission Team. Joe was responsible for spearheading the Immigration Clinics at *The Park* as well as visiting Haiti and organizing the Haiti Well Project which we are currently working to fund our sixth well.



Hillary Buckland: (Treasurer) Long-time member of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) from Kingston, Jamaica and a member of *The Park* since January of 1965. Hillary is an accountant for the New York City Housing Authority. She has served as an Elder and on various boards and committees of the church over the years.



Scott Edson: Along with his wife, Anita, first visited and then joined *The Park* several years ago after moving to New York from Dallas, Texas, where they were members of Northway Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) and served on the

Fellowship Committee. Scott currently serves on *The Park's* Finance Team. He is a consultant who helps organizations implement and improve their accounting systems. Scott likes to swim, bike, run, and snow ski, and enjoys riding his motorcycle. He and his wife are also animal lovers and have two adopted cats, Mary J and Dora. Scott was born in Pittsfield, MA and grew up in Philadelphia, PA, Schenectady, NY and Jackson, MS.



Lee Grisham: Longtime member of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) from Cleveland, Tennessee and has been at *The Park* for five years. Lee is an educator, active with the XYers, the Hospitality and Fellowship Team, a Deacon, a Greeter and sings with the Gospel Choir. Lee currently lives in Harlem.

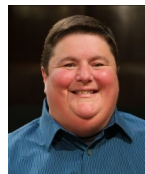


Johnson Liu: Is a physician-scientist and hematologist (blood specialist). He and his wife, Patricia (also a blood specialist), have been members of *The Park* since 2003, after relocating to New York from Washington DC. He has served as a Deacon, on various committees of *The Park* and since 2011 on the Ministry Council. His daughter, Miranda

loves going to Kid's Church at *The Park*.



Rebecca Stanton: Originally from Nebraska, found *The Park* via a connection with Lifeline. After becoming a member several years ago, she was elected to be an Elder in 2013. Besides being a frequent marcher in the Pride Parade, Rebecca is a jubilant member of the Gospel Choir, and a volunteers with the Immigration Clinics. She teaches in the Teaching Residents at Teachers College program at Columbia University and lives in East Harlem.



Casey (CJ) Watrobski: A creative project manager in advertising who moved to New York City a year and a half ago and joined *The Park* shortly thereafter. He has been supportive of the Youth Ministry program, marched in the Pride Parade and is frequently "snapping" pictures at *The Park's* events for inclusion in our Social Media outlets. CJ has a great sense of humor and spends a lot of his free time doing improv at the Magnet Theater. CJ, formerly known to many as Cindy, is married to Marjorie Watrobski and we are delighted that he is open to serving on the Ministry Council.

Are We There Yet?

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Adams building to accommodate several floors of residential living space, as well as work and meeting space and classrooms for the church and thinking about our new space as an opportunity to create a community center to serve the Upper East Side and the city of New York.

We will need the involvement and participation of everyone in the community. Soon we will announce a capital campaign to complete some of the long overdue repairs and updates in the sanctuary. And with the new funds from the development project we will be able to build a strong endowment that will allow us to build on our good works and ministry in the city.

This is a big project and big moment in our 204 year history. **We are building a new building even as we build our community.**

And the question we hear more than any other is – ‘Are We There Yet?’

Well, not quite and maybe still a ways to go. And so I am starting a sermon series on Homecoming Sunday, September 7th – Are We There Yet? Following the readings in the lectionary from the book of Exodus of the journey of the children of Israel from bondage and captivity in Egypt through years of wandering in the wilderness to finally the land of freedom and promise.

But maybe we never completely get to that place of total freedom and promise. For maybe it is really all about the journey.

I hope that you will join us in person or online each week and stand with us in prayer and solidarity and even give generously of your time, talent and treasure as we continue this new and exciting chapter in the life and work of The Park!

Mission Update by Rev. Hugo Monroy, Chair



The Mission Team has three main initiatives as well as oversight for the Saturday Community Lunch Program, headed by Rev. Luis-Alfredo Cartagena. Initiatives: Immigration, Wells in Haiti and Prison Ministry.

The Park, at the guidance of Rev. Joseph Roberson, partnered with Church World Services to provide Immigration Clinics. Currently we have one clinic per quarter. These are set up to receive applicants to discuss their particular situations and if applicable, meet with an attorney all free of charge. Besides hosting the clinic, we also provide volunteers to assist with completing paperwork utilizing language skills which enable open communications with the applicants.

Last month we held an Immigration Sunday, focusing on the current Immigration Crises. The emphasis was to discuss how *The Park*, as a community of faith, could play an active role in aiding the children with moral support, government awareness and personal comfort.

The Haiti Wells project began two years ago when Rev. Joseph Roberson and Dr. Brian Sumner traveled to Haiti to assess the extent of unresolved damage caused by the 7.0 earthquake of 2010. One central area with great need is north of Port-au-Prince. One major source of help is to provide fresh water to the villages. Thus the “wells project” was born. To date, *The Park* has placed five wells (\$2,500/each) from generous donations. Currently working on well #6 with the goal of completion by the end of 2014. The Rev. Joseph Roberson has pledged a matching gift of \$800 to help *The Park* reach this goal. **Now it is time for each of you to give generously to the sixth well so we can match Joe’s gift and provide more fresh water to the people of Haiti.** We just heard from Dr. Maklin our Haitian contact that there is a peak of cholera and the new well is greatly in need.

Rev. Maria Lopez is leading the Prison Ministry. Look in the next *Forward* for a spotlight on this special initiative.

Second Worship Service Opportunities

A small planning group has been engaged in conversation and discernment about a second worship service during the week at *The Park*. This would provide a mid-week worship time and an opportunity to reach new people and grow our community. We have been visiting other worship services and meeting for prayer, planning and discussion. Tentative plans are a pilot service in November and again in December with go live the first of 2015. For information, contact the lead, Chantilly Mers at icmers@gmail.com.

Meeting the Needs of *The Park*

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MUSIC TEAM

Deanna Witkowski will continue to serve as our Interim Minister of Music at least through June of 2105. Lee Tombouljian joins us as the Interim Choir Associate assisting Deanna with the Directing of the choirs with a special focus on the Gospel Choir.

We are all committed to *The Park’s* journey. We are here to work with you and provide support on this journey.

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The Forward...in continuous publication since 1899

Birthdays at *The Park*

SEPTEMBER

Allen Merritt 9/2; Emily Ney 9/6; Patricia Scales 9/6; Steven Macdonald 9/6; George Schmidt 9/6; Kathryn Brewer-Calvert 9/7; Judith Wray 9/8; Carol Somplastsky-Jarman 9/9; Maggie Adolph 9/10; Agnes Leyden 9/10; Scott Edson 9/10; Jonathan Spencer 9/10; Sandra Monroy 9/11; Alison Ney 9/12; Will Pagano 9/12; Alec Wirth 9/13; Paul Vasile 9/13; Joyce Clevenger 9/13; Wayne Plumer 9/15; Leslee Sumner 9/15; Leena Sanders 9/15; Keith Pinkston 9/15; Robert Castro 9/16; Kay Mcfarland 9/16; Scott Sublett 9/18; Alexis O'Reilly 9/18; Katrina Mitchell 9/19; Casey Watrobski 9/22; Deb Wada 9/23; Chuck Lengstorf 9/26; Fredericka Cunningham 9/29; William Shipman 9/30

OCTOBER

Alison Gurin 10/1; Rev. Dr. Anne Coffman 10/2; Bonnie Thorton Dill 10/5; Beth Pease 10/5; Lee Grisham 10/6; Joseph (Joe) Roberson 10/6; Carol Griffiths 10/6; Frances Manners 10/8; Iris L. Burroughs 10/12; Rev. Dr. Harry Baker Adams 10/13; Vincent (Vince) Pagano Jr 10/14; Lynn Marie Macy 10/17; Andrew Seiscio 10/18; Amenan Kouadio 10/18; Dr. Sherry Giles 10/21; Preston Davis 10/22; Nadeige Genece Sekyamah 10/22; Mona Lisa Martin 10/24; Bruce Carlson 10/26; Estella Pate 10/27; Mary N. Cochran-Schlottmann 10/27; Rev. Gerry Brague 10/28; Sarah Mook 10/29; Michael Camara 10/31

NOVEMBER

Rev. Dr. Richard Strum 11/1; Stephen Tickner 11/2; Rev. Betty Brewer-Calvert 11/4; James (Jim) Gaynor 11/4; Andrew Adams 11/4; Carrie Hamby 11/5; Rev. Dr. Daisy Machado 11/8; Barbara Shacklett 11/9; Rev. Maria Lopez 11/10; Donald Wong 11/11; Jasmine Briggs 11/11; Rev. John Payne 11/14; David W. Wallace 11/15; Samantha Manners 11/15; Charles Gruber 11/19; Joseph (Joe) Lynett 11/22; Phil Chester 11/23; Matthew James Gruber 11/24; Norman Bell 11/25; PJ Lovejoy 11/25; Jonathan Robert Culver 11/26; Angela D. Starks 11/28; Christina Crowe 11/29

