

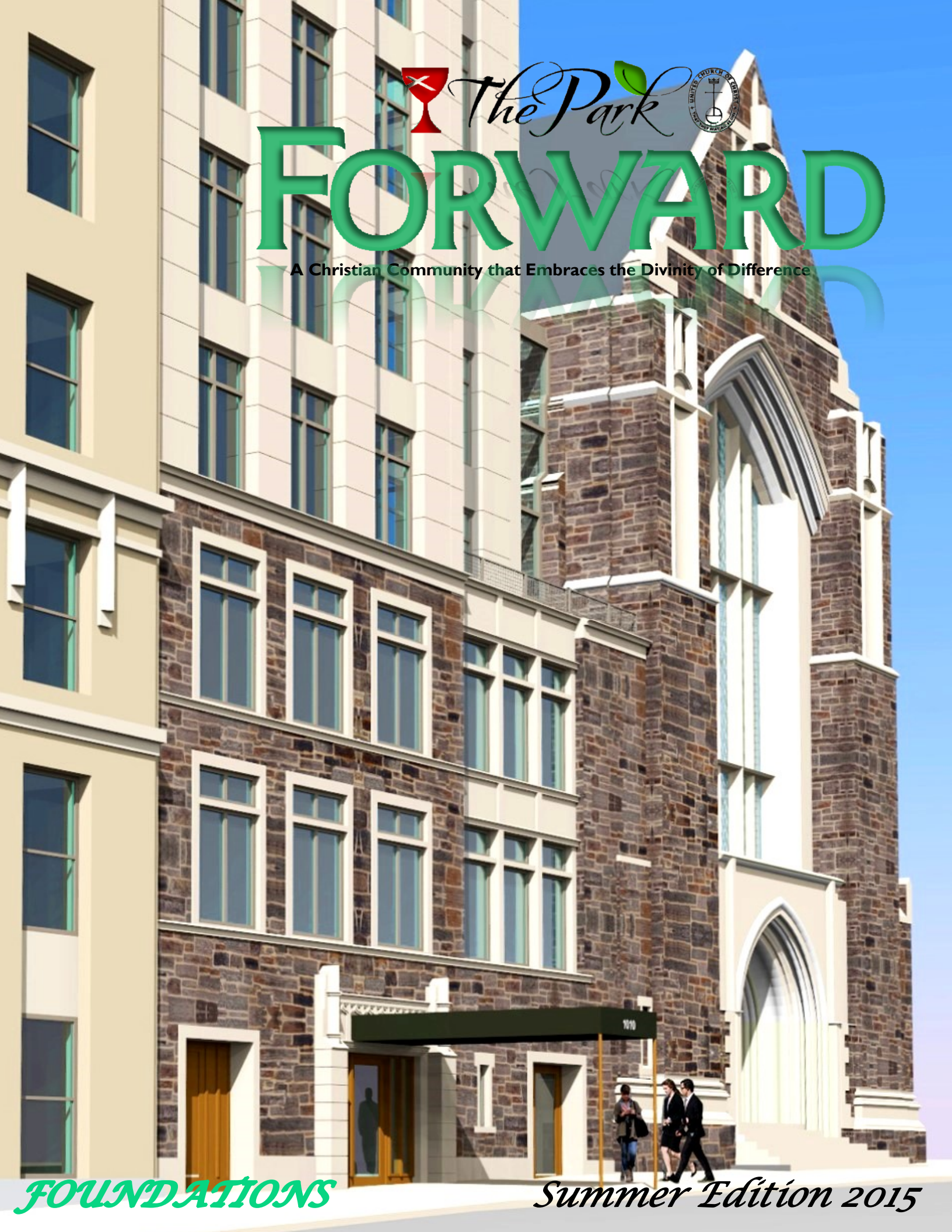


*The Park*



# FORWARD

A Christian Community that Embraces the Divinity of Difference



*FOUNDATIONS*

*Summer Edition 2015*

**PARK AVENUE  
CHRISTIAN  
CHURCH**

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

**Upcoming at *The Park***

**Thursday, July 9, 2015—**  
Conversation on Millennial  
Ministry, 7:00 PM

- For more information  
please contact Rev. Ste-  
phen Tickner at:

[stephenaticner@gmail.com](mailto:stephenaticner@gmail.com)

**Sunday, July 12, 2015 —**  
Holy Conversation following  
worship facilitated by the Tran-  
sition Team

**Sunday, August 2, 2015 —**

- Congregational gathering  
after worship to receive  
the report of the Transi-  
tion Team
- Endowment Policy present-  
ed by Finance Team for  
adoption by congregation.

**Sunday, September 13,  
2015 -** Bishop T. Garrett  
Benjamin, Jr. and his wife Bev-  
erly will be our special guest  
and preacher for Homecoming  
2015 at *The Park* and **Ministry  
Fair.**



**Leadership Development  
Retreat —**

*All Voices Matter and Welcomed!*

**Calling all LEADERS —**

Elders, Deacons, Team Leaders,  
Ministry Council and those who  
are interested in leading. A time of  
prayer, worship, planning, dream-  
ing, community building and even  
some fun!

**Possible Dates: Saturday,  
September 19th or Satur-  
day, September 26th — 10  
am — 4pm (location to be deter-  
mined )**

## Retirement Announcement

On Sunday, July 5, 2015 immediately following morning worship, our Senior Pastor, the Reverend Dr. Alvin O'Neal Jackson announced his retirement from the pastorate effective September 11, 2016. That date will mark the tenth anniversary of Tina and Alvin Jackson with our community.

The Jackson's comprehensive tenure will be long lasting and impactful beyond our 205 years history. Park Avenue Christian Church is the oldest congregation in the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) in the United States and Canada and predates the founding of the denomination in 1832.

Highlights of our collaborative endeavors are:

- **DISCERNING** that the most prudent and faithful stewardship of The Park's resources was that of selling of our "air rights", thereby making possible plans for a condo apartment development adjacent to our sanctuary. The Park will own three floors in the new building, and will receive \$24.5 million to build our endowment, preserve our sanctuary and continue to expand our ministry and outreach to the city and the world into the next millennium.
- **SHAPING** 2010 and 2020 Vision Plans that have guided the congregation's ongoing pursuit of "true community, deep spirituality and with a passion for justice." We have become ever more intentional in being a community that dares to embrace the dignity and divinity of difference as we seek to provide a radical welcome to all.
- **COMPLETING** a painful separation, but essential relocation of the Park Avenue Christian Church Day School following a fifty year relationship with the Park.
- **ESTABLISHING** joint affiliation between Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) and United Church of Christ (2011) and adopting a new organizational structure, Design and By-Laws.
- **GROWING** our membership and deepening our involvement. We have experienced cycles of decline and growth. And yet, most recently, we have seen an increasing number of young families, along with an array of couples and singles. Most of our members have been here five years or less. In many ways The Park is a new church start.
- **GROWING** our stewardship and increasing our commitment to missions. We have also made significant, major capital improvements to the church: central air conditioning, new front doors, handicap lift and complete renovation of the manse.
- **EXPANDING** our outreach with new, original, fresh, and innovative ministries and programs including SoulFood Fellowship Gatherings, Lifeline Recovery Ministry, Gospel Choir, Youth Choir, Quest, Arts in The Park, XY Fellowship (Ministry for Millennials), After School Program, Immigration Clinics, Water Wells in Haiti, Morning Prayers, Weekly Walk Offerings for Outreach to Hispanics.



**The completion of the development project gives us the opportunity to "renew" our building, our community, our mission and preserve our story for generations to come.**

Dr. Jackson has indicated a willingness to stay until January 2017 if necessary to complete the calling of a new Senior Pastor. The Jacksons plan to return to their beloved South Land, but will always have a love for The Park in this "big, bold, bustling, beautiful, and bodacious city called New York".

Prior to The Park, Alvin O'Neal Jackson served as Pastor of Loudon Avenue Christian Church, Roanoke, VA (1973-77); Associate Pastor of Second Christian Church, Indianapolis, IN (1977-79); Senior Pastor of Mississippi Boulevard Christian Church, Memphis, TN (1979-1997); Senior Pastor of National City Christian Church and President of the National City Christian Church Foundation, Washington, DC (1998-2006).

He attended Chapman University in Orange, Calif. and graduated with honors from Butler University in Indianapolis, IN with a Bachelor's degree in Sociology. He received his Masters of Divinity degree, also with honors, from the Duke University, School of Divinity, Durham, NC in 1973. In 1991 he completed the course work and was awarded the Doctor of Ministry degree from United Theological Seminary in Dayton, OH. He has received five honorary doctorate degrees for his service to church and community.

**Soli Deo Gloria (Glory to God Alone)**

## FOUNDATIONS....

### Celebrating Sarah Mook



A member of The Park since she was a very small child, her parents and family coming to this country from China in the late 1890's and becoming active in the Chinese Sunday School at Park Avenue Christian Church. Dr. Sarah Mook is one of our most fascinating members. Pictured and sitting here on Easter Sunday with her cousin Martha Buck and Ima Jean Kidd as we said goodbye to the Hampton Adams Building, Sarah and her family have been actively involved in every aspect of the life and work of our congregation. Dr. Sarah has served in numerous capacities of lead-

ership in our church, in her neighborhood, in the city of New York and was named Woman of the Year in 2004 by the New York City Council. One of the most interesting times of her career as an Analytical Chemist were the years she worked with Admiral Hymen Rickover in insuring the integrity of fuel cells for nuclear vessels. For the last 22 years of her working career, she was a principal chemist at Bellevue Hospital. At the time she was the only woman principal chemist in the city of New York. Sarah Mook regrets that her health will no longer allow her to travel regularly from her home in Sheep Shed Bay to the city for worship, but her love and commitment to this community knows no bounds.

### Celebrating Melissa Little

The Ministry Council, at its February meeting, resolved to express our congregation's gratitude and appreciation to Melissa Little for her years of service to The Park. The Council shared with Melissa that her monitoring of the Development Project, with all its complexities and countless hours of administering, helped keep that dream alive, to this day! Her management of the facilities at 1010 Park Avenue provided innumerable examples of quick and creative thinking, saving us expenses and keeping us warm and safe. All the meals she prepared or arranged were much enjoyed.

"We know these administrative accomplishments are only the tip of an iceberg of work well done, most of which was behind the scenes and often unknown to others. And all this came only in the last few years, after impressive leadership of the Ministry Council, and before that, the Ministry Search Team that called Alvin Jackson to The Park, leadership of the Deacons, Christian Education, Trustees, and many other points of ministry within our congregation."

"You have made a wonderful difference in our community's life and work—and we hope you know that we are most grateful. And we hope now that you will continue to find a spiritual home with us, where you have so many friends and not a few admirers. "Good and faithful servant, well done!"

We are happy to report that we recently heard from Melissa and that she has closed her wedding/event planning business and relocated to northern Illinois. After 20+ years, she once again has a driver's license and a car! She wishes more churches/communities would embrace both "radical welcome" and the "divinity of difference", which is what made The Park...THE PARK.



### Celebrating Johnson Liu



Physician-Scientist and Hematologist. He and his wife Patricia also a Hematologist have been members of The Park since 2003, after relocating to New York from Washington, DC. He has served on various committees, a Deacon and since 2011 a member of the Ministry Council. He has most recently become an Elder. His daughter, Miranda loves going to Kid's Church at The Park.

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### **Celebrating Hillary Buckland**

Hillary Buckland and her husband Carl were married at the Park Avenue Christian Church on May 13, 1967. Both Hillary and Carl serve as active Elders of the congregation. Hillary has been a member since January 1965. She is a supervisor on the administrative staff of the New York City Housing Authority and has served as a member of the Ministry Council since its inception and for many years Treasurer of the congregation.

### **Celebrating Joyce Clevenger**

Just a few weeks ago we received this note from Joyce Clevenger who has served as Financial Secretary of the church for many years. Joyce wrote, "The time has come for me to stop working. I have chosen the last Tuesday in August, the 25th. I have enjoyed working with you all very much." We will miss quiet, confidential and always precise and efficient Joyce very much in the office, but look forward to her continued involvement in the life and work of our congregation. We will make plans to celebrate Joyce's years of service to the church during our Church Anniversary Reception in October.



## **A Candid Look at Our Newly Ordained**

On Wednesday June 17th, we celebrated the ordination of George Schmidt to Christian ministry. George is pictured below with his wife, the Reverend Larissa Romero, who is also recently ordained into Christian ministry.

George's ordination into the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) was intentionally placed alongside the Juneteenth Independence Day, which celebrates the announcement of the abolition of slavery in Texas on June 1865.



## **Introducing... The Rev. Canon Stephanie Spellers, Consultant working with The Park's Transition Team**



The Rev. Canon Stephanie Spellers, Canon for Mission and Vitality in the Diocese of Long Island, member of the faculty at General Theological Seminary and the Center for Progressive Renewal in Atlanta.

We are very fortunate to have her walking along side and working with our Senior Pastor and Team leaders during this time of monumental transition and change in the life and work of our congregation.

At General Seminary, she serves as Director of Mission and Reconciliation and Adjunct Professor of Church and Society. As a Senior Consultant, Vision and Ethos, at the Center for Progressive Renewal, her role is "gathering and resourcing progressive congregations and denominational leadership."

Canon Spellers is the author of *Radical Welcome: Embracing God, The Other, and the Spirit of Transformation*, "a guide for congregations that want to move beyond diversity and inclusion to present a vision for the church of the future: one where the transforming gifts, voices and power of marginalized cultures and groups bring new life to the mainline church."

### **Transition Team Members:**

David Mitchell, Chair; Richard Sturm; Eric Guy; Justin Grant; Matthew Walters; Marjorie Watrobski; Connie Packard; Stephen Tickner; Hugo Monroy; Joe Roberson; Luis-Alfredo Cartagena

## Introducing Our Ministry Leaders

### The Ministry Council



**Joe Roberson, Chair:** Longtime member of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) from North Carolina. Joe serves as Deputy 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 seventh well.

**Connie Packard, Vice-Chair, (to become Chair in January 2016):** 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 Nominating Team.



**Richard Sturm, Secretary:** Reverend Dr. Richard Sturm is Secretary of the Ministry Council, as well as Chair of the Team of Elders. He has served the church in several roles over the last four decades, and for twelve years Richard was Associate Minister at *The Park*, during his years at Union Seminary as an M. Div. and Ph.D. student. He also served over twenty years as a Professor and Director of the New York Program of New Brunswick Theological Seminary at St. John's University in Queens.

**Scott Edson, Treasurer:** 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.



**Rebecca Stanton: Member (to become Vice-Chair in January, 2016):** 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.

**Lee (Hudley) Grisham:** Lee Grisham has been a lifelong Disciple and found a place at the Park 6 years ago. He has been an on-off again member of the gospel choir and is currently a deacon and member of the Ministry Council. He works for City Year, an education focused non-profit, as a Development Operations Coordinator and lives in Forest Hills.



**Casey (CJ) Watrobski:** Casey has been attending *The Park* for almost 3 years. He is a member of the Ministry Council and a student at The Magnet Theater in NYC. Some favorite hobbies include performing improv, stand-up comedy, and motorcycle riding. He is married to Marjorie and is excited about his newest nephew, Tyler Andrew, who came into the world last July.

**Scott Sublett:** Scott and his wife, Sandy, have been members of *The Park* since 2013 after visiting regularly for several years. Scott currently serves on *The Park's* Finance Team. He is a private equity investment professional at a New York-based family office. Scott was born in California and grew up outside Houston, Texas. He lives in Yorkville with Sandy and their adopted dog, Tanya.



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**Stephen Sekyiamah:** You may wonder who is that man filming the church services every Sunday, and taking photos of church members after worship? It's Stephen Sekyiamah, the Park's Communications Team Lead. Stephen has been a member at The Park since 2010. He is married to Dr. Nadeige Genece-Sekyiamah and has a daughter, Simone and a son, Samuel. He is a native New Yorker, raising a family in the same home he grew up in! Stephen is a Graphic Design Editor at ABC News, and graciously offers his skills to The Park. The videos he takes every Sunday of the prayers and sermons are posted on The Park's website and Facebook page – please feel free to access them there, and share them with friends & family, to show what worship at The Park is like.

### New Deacon Chair

**Anita Edson - Deacon Chair:** A photojournalist who works for the ASPCA (American Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals), the country's oldest animal welfare organization. Prior to living in NYC and joining *The Park*, Anita and her husband, Scott, lived in Dallas where they were members of Northway Christian Church (Disciples of Christ). Born in Grand Prairie, Texas, Anita previously worked at the SPCA of Texas, as well as publishing/PR firms in Dallas, Los Angeles, and St. Louis, Mo. At the ASPCA, Anita helps document and publicize animal rescue, relief, outreach, and adoption efforts across the organization. She has also represented the organization during cruelty investigations and disasters like the Missouri 500 dog fighting case, Hurricanes Katrina, Rita, and Sandy, and the Joplin, Mo. tornado. Anita and Scott's household includes two adopted cats, Mary J and Dora.



### New Elders



**Johnson Liu (becoming elder):** Physician-Scientist and Hematologist. He and his wife Patricia also a Hematologist have been members of The Park since 2003, after relocating to New York from Washington, DC. He has served on various committees, a Deacon and since 2011 a member of the Ministry Council. He has most recently become an Elder. His daughter, Miranda loves going to Kid's Church at The Park.

**Luis Alfredo Cartagena:** Reverend Luis-Alfredo Cartagena Zayas is a husband, a father and grandfather. He is also the Associate Pastor for Outreach at The Park. He serves at The Park to help bring justice to the immigrant and less fortunate in our local, national and international communities.



**Maria Lopez:** Reverend Dr. Maria Lopez has worked with the incarcerated for over 20 years. A graduate of New York Theological Seminary, she completed a Doctorate of Ministry at New Brunswick Theological Seminary. When she was working at Riker's Island, Maria became a member of *The Park*. John Payne was her pastor, and he and members of the church visited Riker's and engaged in dialogue with the incarcerated.

### New Elder Emeriti

**Bess Terry:** Long time member and leader at Stuyvesant Heights Christian Church in Brooklyn before becoming active at *The Park*. Bess Terry has served in national, regional, and local roads of leadership. Her leadership roles for the Northeastern Region of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) include Moderator and serving on the Commission on the Ministry. At *The Park*, she has served as an Elder, was the founder of the recent Flower Guild, and sang in the Gospel Choir. She is currently in the Amsterdam Nursing Home.



**Amsterdam Nursing Home  
1060 Amsterdam Avenue  
New York, New York 10025  
12<sup>th</sup> Floor - 1203B  
212.316.7700**



**Mark Leach:** (M.Div. in Interfaith and Ecumenical Studies from Union Theological Seminary NYC) was ordained at PACC. He is an Elder at *The Park*. Mark holds advanced degrees in Theatre and joined the Disciples after retiring from professional careers in the Performing Arts and Advertising. The church recently presented a play reading of "A Change of Heart" which was a major project in his work toward a Master of Divinity degree at Union Theological Seminary. He served as consultant and his son, Nathaniel, was director.

# NEWS & NOTES



By: Ima Jean Kidd  
(Our Ubiquitous Elder)

## CONGRATULATIONS

**WINTHROP N. GRUBER** graduated with the class of 2015 from the Lawrenceville School, Princeton, NJ. He is being recruited by the University of California (Berkeley) to row for their crew team.

**REV. MARIA LOPEZ** graduated from New Brunswick Theological Seminary in May with a Doctor of Ministry degree. Her thesis was: "At the Table of Awareness: Incarceration and Indigenous Clinical Pastoral Education at Park Avenue Christian Church (Disciples of Christ), New York, N.Y."

**EVAN MASTRONARDI**, former student intern at The Park, graduated in May from the City College of New York with a Masters degree in Public Administration from the Colin Powell School for Civic and Global Leadership. Upon graduation he became a full time staff member of the School.

**STEPHANIE STOVALL** graduated on May 15 with a Master of Divinity degree from Union Theological Seminary, NYC with majors in Ethics and Psychiatry. She has been taken under care by the elders of The Park, working toward ordination in the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ). During the summer she will lead at risk youth groups in the wilderness of Alaska.

**CHARLES DAVIS**, son of Pam Pagano, graduated from High School, June 2015.

## BIRTHS

### Congratulations To:

**KAYDEN NOELLE TICKNER** (daughter of Bianca and Stephen Tickner) arrived at 5:22 am on June 19, 2015, 7lbs, 4 oz. at Roosevelt Hospital.



Stephen Epps and Lisa Robateau on the birth of **EMERSON CAROLINE EPPS** on Friday, April 23, 2015, at 11:33 at New York Presbyterian Hospital. 7 lbs,0 oz. 18 inches long.

**LANGSTON JONATHAN GRANT**, a lovely addition to the family of Justin, Annika, and Noemi Grant.



**THOMAS WELLS** has been a grand addition to the family of Christian, Angela and Jessie Jean Wells. Even though they needed to move back to Colorado to be closer to family with the new addition, they very much want to keep in touch.

Send Greetings and Good Tidings to:  
Angela, Christian, Jessie Jean & Thomas Wells:  
164 S. Lafayette St., Denver, CO, 80209

## CELEBRATION

**REBECCA STANTON** has received a fellowship to participate in a HOSTOS College Study Abroad Professional Development Program in the Dominican Republic intended to help educational professionals who work with Dominican students learn about Dominican culture and heritage. This program features 10 days of cultural immersion complemented with visits to historical sites and educational institutions in the DR..

**REV. DR. PETER HELTZEL** recently taught a course at the Summer Institute of Reconciliation at Duke Divinity School in North Carolina.

**MOLLIE MARR**, active in the church during her degree work at New York University, and recently on staff of Bellevue Hospital, leaves NYC July 1, to begin degree work at the Oregon Health and Service University in Portland, Oregon. She will work on a PhD degree in behavioral neuroscience.

**MYRNA PAYNE** is being recognized for five-plus years of service as a volunteer for Open-HouseNewYork. Open House New York (OHNY) is a 601(c)3 organization that promotes a greater appreciation of the city's built environment; broadens public awareness by exposing audiences to distinctive examples of architecture....In 2011 and 2012, the sanctuary of The Park was one of the many venues during the annual OHNY weekend in NYC.

On June 15, 2015, the **REV. ALLEN HARRIS** began serving as Regional Minister of the Capital Area

of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ). Currently 45 congregations in Maryland, Delaware, the District of Columbia, a small portion of Northern Virginia, and the panhandle of West Virginia, are in the Capital Region.

Allen Harris began a 12-year ministry and was ordained as associate minister of Park Avenue Christian Church as in 1991. He has recently completed fourteen years as pastor of Franklin Circle Christian Church in Cleveland, Ohio.

In the larger church Allen has been an active leader in GLAD Alliance (Gay, Lesbian, and Affirming Disciples.) He was a founder of the "Open and Affirming" Program of the Disciples.

## MORE NEWS NOTES

**STEPHEN AND NADEIGE SEKYIAMAH** are baptizing their precious son, Samuel during service on August 2, 2015.

Back on May 4, 2015, **HEATHER DARSIE**, descendent of our Darsie founders had visited the church of her ancestors to wonder and marvel at our development.

She writes:



Stephanie Wilson, Office Administrator, left  
Heather Darsie, right

To the congregation,

I came to visit the church my ancestors helped found. I am glad to see it is still active and well cared for. May you long endure!

Sincerely,

Heather R. Darsie

Rockford, IL

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CHRISTIAN CHURCH

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The Forward...in continuous publication since 1899

parkavenuechristian.com

Please help us be good stewards of postage and trees. If you receive the Forward via mail and would prefer to receive an email version (or pick up a printed copy at The Park), please let us know. Keep in mind, a benefit of the emailed version is earlier delivery. The Forward will be published quarterly.

### Birthday's at *The Park*

#### JUNE

Susan Jaquith 6/1  
LaToya Nelson 6/1  
Lyntonia Coston 6/6  
Toshiharu Ichikawa 6/7  
Nicole Castro 6/8  
Christina (Tina) Zizzo 6/8  
Maia Alejandro 6/8  
Randall Tucker 6/9  
Steven Crumb 6/10  
Mark Leach 6/11  
Stephenie Stovall 6/14  
Emily Cunningham 6/16  
Melissa Little 6/17  
Raymond Verrey 6/17  
Diane Paulsell 6/19  
Bess Terry 6/21  
Benjamin Louis Pagano 6/22  
Beth Mandelbaum 6/22  
Kyle Hawkins 6/24  
Jean Wirth 6/24  
Jessica Wray-Nieves 6/24  
Rachel Frey 6/26  
William J. Vila 6/29  
Elizabeth Cooper 6/30  
Karon Bihari 6/30

#### JULY

Nelson Gomez 7/1  
Jenny Xie 7/2  
Allen Foster 7/4  
Sandra Sublett 7/4  
Bonnie English 7/6  
Michaela Guy 7/6  
Stephen Epps 7/7  
Georga Osborne 7/7  
Ted LeFevre 7/8  
Rev. Dr. Alvin O. Jackson 7/10  
Ariana Zizzo 7/11  
Brad Bond 7/16  
William Giles-Tesdell 7/21  
Jonathan Mars 7/21  
John Lau 7/22  
Jana Nordquist 7/23  
Audrey Choi 7/26  
Betty Lau 7/26  
Aaron Levitt 7/27  
Gregg Bevenssee 7/28  
Heather Bickham 7/29  
Karin Coonrod 7/31

#### AUGUST

Ashley Stafford 8/4  
John Virga 8/5  
Mary Searl 8/6  
Rev. Mary Anne Glover 8/6  
Norma Eicher 8/7  
Claudia Highbaugh 8/9  
Dona Vaughn Raines 8/13  
Donna Bevenssee 8/13  
Wade Payne 8/14  
Onleilove Alston 8/18  
Jack Shuler 8/23  
Nancy Nicalo 8/23  
Wendy Bagger 8/24  
Noel Cline 8/24  
Eric Guy 8/25  
Peter Lynett 8/27  
Rev. Jennifer Crumpton 8/29  
Jeannie Walden 8/31  
Francis English 8/31

