



TIDINGS

WINTER 2024

Good News from Brown Memorial Park Avenue

Upcoming Events

Christmas Decorating
In-person only
Saturday, December 16

Advent Education Series
Hybrid
Sunday, December 17

Christmas Pageant
Hybrid
Sunday, December 24

**Lessons & Carols
Candlelight Service**
Hybrid
Sunday, December 24

New Year's Eve Worship
Hybrid
Sunday, December 31

Event details Pg. 19 →



"...A time for every purpose under Heaven..."

ANDREW'S MESSAGE

By the time you read this, it will be mid-December. The days will be shorter, the light less, the temperatures colder. This newsletter takes time — time to wrangle authors, time to organize, edit, design and publish. What's more, this newsletter is being managed entirely by church volunteers. The personnel committee is working on a staff assessment of what the church needs to accomplish our mission today and into the foreseeable future. As a result, we've paused any decisions on staffing, including in the area of communication. This too, takes time.

Outside the church, a number of us have been working with BUILD on a \$2.5 billion vacants strategy to leverage another \$5 billion of private investment, rebuilding the city's neighborhoods, reversing the legacy of redlining without displacing those families who have survived the scourge of this blight. The campaign's been going on for nearly four years. It's taken lots of time.

Continued pg. 2 →

Trustee Report, pg 5
Tending our aging treasure

**Welcome New Christian
Educators, pg 7**
These are talented Christian souls

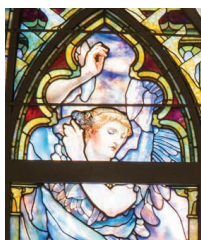
**Brown and the Afghan
Community, pg 12**
Blessings abound all around...

ANDREW'S MESSAGE CONT.

I feel impatient with all the waiting. I'd like to speed things up a bit in all these areas and others, too. But I've learned, over time, that there is a limit to what my urgent energy can produce. Fruits need time to ripen, flowers to unfurl.

Many years ago, Eugene Petersen (a pastor known best for The Message translation of the Bible) shared similar insights with a gathering of pastors. The megachurch movement was at its height, and those of us in less shiny mainline churches were feeling anxious. He reminded us then that not all growth is good. Most quick growth, he told us, is short-lived and even harmful over time. He compared the movement of God's people to that of a glacier over time. The speed is pretty slow, yes, but the movement of that glacier carves out mountains and valleys, reshaping the land over time. I've since learned that glaciers move faster than I imagined — an average speed of 25cm (9.8 inches) per day. Pretty fast for an earth shaping action.

What's important isn't so much the speed, as the power and direction of the movement. When I consider this church year, nearly halfway complete by the time you end up reading this, this slow, steady movement is what I see at work among us: Small groups renewing our relationships together in the wake of a still-debilitating pandemic. Worship, renewing our sense of hope and possibility present with God in the midst of a world being ripped apart from the lack of a solid moral vision centered on the care of neighbor. Global partnerships patiently renewing relationships across some of the worst of our divides — legacies of colonialism built and solidified over centuries. Our Trustees, renewing the literal foundations of our church that's been standing on this same corner since 1870.



It takes time to renew a community together.

When I consider the speedy things at work in my life and the world - from the phone in my pocket that keeps me incessantly reactive, to the oil and gas consumption in the last 100 years that is dangerously warming our planet, to the weapons snuffing out the lives of innocent people from Israel to Gaza to Ukraine, I learn not only to adjust to the slower march of truth and justice but to appreciate its deliberate pace. Truth and justice aren't creating a world defined by dehumanizing endless work or thoughtless destruction of the planet and its creatures. Truth and justice create a world that supports the intended grace of our humanity. The chance to notice the quotidian joys present each day in the world we did not create among neighbors who, like each of us, are cherished by God.

God's reshaping takes time because the changes that need to be wrought require a depth not simply obtained by the "insta"-fill-in-the-blanks that mark our time. I'm heartened that so many who call Brown Memorial home seem to know this. You invest yourselves — your time, your money, your energy and heart — not expecting to see immediate returns. You do this, I've noticed, with an intuitive hope that this is the way to build a community whose sole purpose is to give itself away. Your commitments not only inspire me, they reflect God's way of working in the world, recentering me in the life-giving roots of our faith that are, even now, working underneath the surface of what is seen, slowly and deliberately, preparing us all for God's renewal of the world which has already begun.

Peace, Andrew



"I am inspired by...

The courage of people who have faced more sorrow and carried much heavier burdens than I can imagine and yet are still able to laugh, love and give thanks to God. I am in awe of the ability of the human spirit to triumph over hardship and evil.

Beauty — in poetry or exquisite prose, music, movement, architecture, and the constantly changing panorama of nature."

FOUR QUESTIONS FOR GRETCHEN VAN UTT, PASTORAL ASSOCIATE

How do you define your new role at Brown?

The work is varied and delightfully collaborative. One of my primary responsibilities is preparing the liturgy for Sunday worship, making sure that it works with the texts, themes and music for the day. I also help to oversee the children's education program (though now that Rachel has returned from sabbatical, the real expert is back on the scene). I visit members and friends who are homebound, share leadership of the weekly Bible Study and, on occasion, preach and lead the adult ed class.

But, regardless of the job description, ministry begins with meeting people where they are and situations as they arise, which means that it often happens as much in the interruptions as in the intentions for any given day or week. Inevitably, the role needs to be somewhat fluid.

What unique experience do you bring to it?

I bring a lot of experience in Interim (Transitional) Ministry.

Though this is not a traditional interim position, and my role at Brown is not specifically focused on the transitional tasks you are facing, my understanding of those tasks and how to navigate change is certainly helpful. For over a year now, Brown has been going through an unusual amount of change.

Any change — even good change that we initiate — brings with it some degree of disruption and anxiety, grief for what we must leave behind and uncertainty about what lies ahead.

When the change is involuntary and involves the depth of grief that we, as a congregation and as individuals, have gone through, the challenges are multiplied and anger, exhaustion and conflict are inevitably thrown into the mix.

Brown has had extraordinary leadership throughout this difficult time. My hope is that I can provide a little extra support wherever it is needed, so that the leaders can recuperate and find time to do the visioning and planning that will reveal the path forward and new possibilities for the congregation.

Less obviously related to my current role in the church, but valuable nonetheless, is my experience as a yoga teacher which has brought me more joy and spiritual growth than I could have imagined. It has also expanded and deepened my understanding of ministry. Historically, the church (the wider church, not Brown), has not done a good job of nurturing the whole person. It has addressed the mind and spirit but has not done as well with the heart (all those messy emotions), and has ignored, often denigrated, the body which is the vehicle we have been given to live out our lives, to embody our faith. Yoga is a whole-person practice that has helped me to better understand and appreciate the whole person I minister to, not only on the yoga mat, but in the pew and the hospital bed, the home or on the street.

What common threads run through your work? And, what particular experiences in your life have shaped your approach to your work?

A passion for social justice that was nurtured in the turbulent years of the late 60's and early 70's is central to



my life and work. If we stop speaking to the needs of the “least of those,” then I believe we cease to be the church, or at least the church that Jesus would recognize.

I also hold a palpable sense of the fragility and finiteness of human life. This comes from both the accumulated challenges and losses of aging and from sorrows and losses I experienced when I was younger, especially the loss of our home to fire when I was in high school, and the sudden and early deaths of both of my parents when I was in college.

When carried alone, our sorrows can isolate us from one another. But when shared, they bind us together in our common humanity and lead to richer relationships, greater compassion and, ultimately, deeper faith and more joy.

How do you rebuild, refresh, relax?

Yoga, including meditation, walking, reading and simply hanging out with my dear husband, George Fisher.



MUSIC MINISTRY

“Like most of us, our music ministry even needs a well-deserved break over the summer. We are ever grateful for all who participated in co-leading worship through music offerings. These summer offerings included many of our own musicians, different styles of music, and even our very own Soulful Review. The different offerings gave us a wonderful opportunity to see how broad our gifts truly are!

My first week with BMPA I was made to feel very at home by all, and I cannot thank you enough. Meeting the choir for the first time was such an affirming experience because we had some wonderful conversations and broke bread together. Your kindness and generosity has continued to show each and every day.

Our music ministry is thriving: We enjoy a full complement of professional musicians, a good balance of sections within the choir (with more always welcome!), a handbell director and ensemble that enriches our worship life. Our outreach though concerts included our first ever Spooktacular Organ Concert. We even hosted the annual Peabody Organ Conference.

“The beauty of music making is that it is human.”

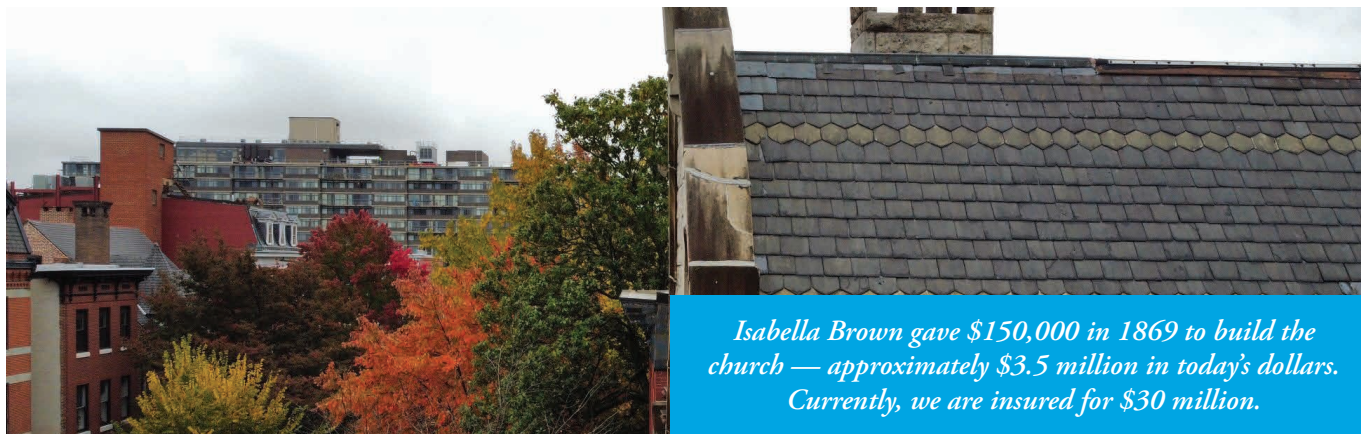
Jonathon Heyward, new Music Director of the Baltimore Symphony Orchestra

On behalf of the church at large, I would like to share thanks and appreciation to Taylor Branch for his many years of vision, dedication, and enriching our worship life with Soulful Review; and to Shirley Parry for her tireless help with our Tiffany Concerts, reaching well beyond our ministry and our walls to share an amazing experience with our community and beyond! To both of you, and the many more who help in making the music ministry one of purpose, of outreach, and of witness to God’s love that surpasses all understanding, thank you!”

**Adam Scott Graham,
Interim Minister of music**



In combination with music from the Anglican tradition, salsa, gospel, jazz, blues, pop, and reggae genres — we truly are living our calling to “build authentic relationships across historic boundaries of geography, race and class, trusting the Spirit [to transform us and lead us].”



Isabella Brown gave \$150,000 in 1869 to build the church — approximately \$3.5 million in today's dollars. Currently, we are insured for \$30 million.

LOOKING AFTER A BUILDING MORE THAN 150 YEARS OF AGE: TRUSTEES' REPORT

Bill Sheridan

Trustees are the men and women behind the scenes, responsible for maintaining the church property. An important aspect of their responsibilities is minimizing or eliminating any degradation of the facilities through capital projects.

Given the advanced years of these facilities, it's a tall order.

A comprehensive Five-year Capital Plan recently completed identifies the most urgent capital projects, as well as those that will likely need funding over the next few years.

This table summarizes expected capital needs and costs for the next five years:

CATEGORY	5-YEAR BUDGET (ESTIMATED)
Outer Shell Work	\$355,000
Safety and Signage	\$79,000
Floor and Wall Work	\$58,200
Bathrooms	\$20,000
Lighting	\$12,000
Noise Abatement	\$8,000
Total	\$532,200



In 2023, the Trustees also oversaw these important capital projects:

- A new air conditioning system for the Church House
- The repair of the parapet at the front of the Church House. The photo above illustrates the need for the repair.
- Replacement of storm windows on the church house to allow easier egress in case of a fire.
- Refinishing of the church doors at the front and rear of the sanctuary.
- The Trustees also have a Building Reserve Fund that is available for emergency projects. The recent loss of the church boiler is a perfect example of why we need this. The cost of replacing it – \$57,000 will likely use up all of the reserve fund balance.

We are blessed to have such a beautiful historic church and the dedicated Trustees, but keeping the three church buildings and grounds in good working order is costly — and will continue to require significant funding.

Our Trustee are: Joseph Brandi
Christine Calderon
Barbara Christen

Bruce Curtis
Beth Gregory
Jayne Mauric

Charles Reichelt
Carole Tayman
Dave Urban

Teachers and Assistants

- Brent Bellinger
- Eloise Crew
- Rebecca Crew
- Rachael Edgin
- Sarah Egan
- Darrell Glaser
- Julie Hanks
- Jonathan Hensley
- Natalie Kelly
- Elizabeth Nash
- Ella Palmer
- Gillian Rainey
- Dianne Ross
- Katie Shaw
- Laura Urban
- Jim Veatch
- Theresa Veatch
- Nancy Yeadon



Special thanks to all of the teachers and assistants who generously give of their time and talents. We could not do this without you!

CHILDREN'S MESSAGE

Rachel Cunningham

Over the last year, we have been dreaming about new possibilities for our Children's Ministry. In September, these dreams came to fruition. A team of 16 teachers and assistants began working with children ages preschool through sixth grade during the worship hour.

This change is a direct result of the listening that took place during our annual meeting this past January.

Each Sunday, children split into two groups - PreK-2nd Grade, and 3rd-6th Grade — to engage in age-appropriate Bible lessons and activities. This year we are “seeking” together... Seeking God, Seeking Justice, and Seeking Peace. We began with a look at ways to deepen and transform our relationship with God and others. In January, we'll delve into Jesus' call for justice and we'll close the year exploring God's shalom so that we might take it out into the world with us.

SESSION/CLERK'S REPORT

Susan Stroupe and Vi Thorpe, Co-Clerks

- The Small Group Task Force begun at Session retreat has resulted in a successful Rally Day launch with seven small groups and almost 70 people participating so far! Those still wishing to join an existing small group should contact Judy Jones (jufrye@yahoo.com or any member of the committee.)
- Received report from the Personnel committee on three temporary staffing hires to cover youth work, worship support, and Confirmation duties. Additionally, received report from Personnel that they approved an overdue raise for our paid choir staff.
- Approved request from Personnel to hire an outside consultant to advise on staffing and hiring needs for the future. During this time of consultation and discernment, Personnel has temporarily suspended the search for a new Communications staff member and the Associate Pastor.
- Received report from the Trustees on budget needs for the next five years to address most urgent degradation issues.
- Received report from the Safety and Emergency Response committee that they are creating a training manual to address the most urgent safety needs for the church.

WELCOME BROWN'S NEW INTERIM STAFF!

In this time of significant change at Brown, the Personnel committee has been working with Andrew to manage the staff transitions and has hired a consultant to help identify the staff skills needed to carry out Brown's strategic priorities. We anticipate reporting the consultant's recommendations by late February, if not sooner.

The Committee feels it has made good progress on priority one, hiring several well-qualified individuals in the interim:



A daughter of a former Pastor of Hunting Ridge Presbyterian Church in Baltimore and currently a member of that church, **Eva Hendrix-Shovlina** will serve as Youth Director through the summer of 2024.

Known by her friends as "Eva the Beliva," she brings with her a passion for justice, peace, and

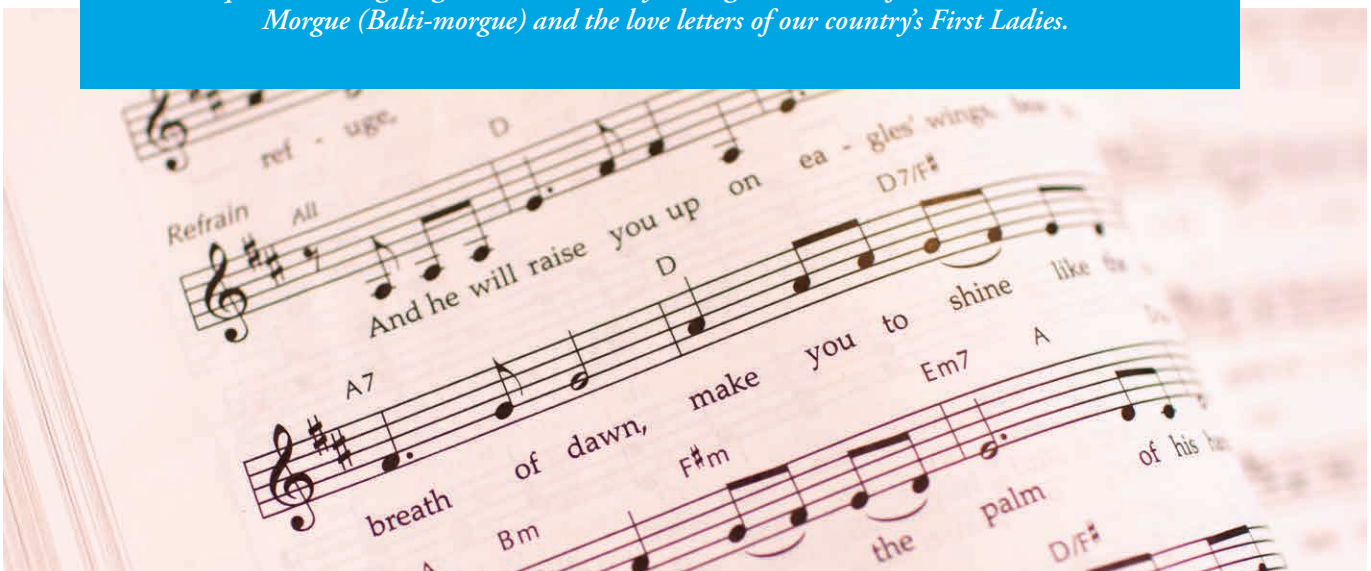
her faith. Friends call her fun, loyal, an old soul, one who marches to the beat of a different drummer. She's multi-talented — playing violin, piano and autoharp and singing.

In her work, Evas strives to build community amongst group members. She loves new and old movies, reads several hundred novels a year and loves learning.

Under her direction, the Tweens Group will meet twice a month with activities built around participants' interests and fellowship time together. Eva will also serve as a resource to parents and families.

This talented young woman lives in Charles Village, attended Baltimore School for the Arts, and graduated with an undergraduate degree in music education. She has worked with homeless youth in California and Baltimore. For 10 years she was a case manager in Baltimore, serving adults with mental illness, substance abuse, victims of domestic violence and in need of gender affirming care. She has also worked with geriatric groups. Currently, she is considering becoming certified in recreation therapy to enhance her group work skills.

A church musician who leads a youth choir, Eva is also involved in a community choir that is unique in creating songs that teach history through the stories of Baltimore — Baltimore Morgue (Balti-morgue) and the love letters of our country's First Ladies.



INTERIM PERSONNEL, CONTINUED



Reverend Michael Cuppett will lead Brown’s confirmation classes. Michael’s passion for youth ministry grew from belonging to his church’s youth group, an experience, he says, that encouraged him to be himself, develop meaningful connections with other group members, and feel a sense of belongingness that encouraged him to participate in the church. At Brown, he will strive to create that same welcoming environment for our youth. In so doing, he hopes to give these young people a fuller sense of what it means to know God and Jesus and be a Christian and a Presbyterian — key to their own faith journey.

He will teach Confirmation classes twice a month on Sunday evenings. Participants will share dinner, play games and enjoy a spring retreat trip to Massanetta Springs, Virginia. Brown members Allison Witschey and Judson Arnold will help Michael with lesson plans and share with confirmands what the Church means to them and how it impacts their lives.

Currently, Michael serves as one of the clergy of Catonsville Presbyterian Church. He has his undergraduate degree in music and holds a Master of Divinity and MA in Christian Education from Princeton Theological Seminary. Part of his youth ministry has been dedicated to serving as a chaplain focused on behavior emergencies related to pediatric and adolescent mental health work. His experience with youth, ability to play the piano, passion for Christian education, love for the church, and his undergraduate degree in music make Michael a great person for our youth to get to know. And, his love for classical music and interest in the organ make him a perfect fit for Brown.

Please see pages 3-4 for the profile of Gretchen Van Utt, our Parish Associate who has agreed to assist with pastoral care, visitations, worship service, and Christian education through 2024.

“Michael’s love for classical music and interest in the organ make him a perfect fit for Brown.”



NEW MEMBERS

Brown welcome's new members

Al Fisher, writer/editor



Bob Pownall

“I was born just outside Chicago but grew up mostly in Ohio. I went to college at Purdue University in Indiana (BS and MS in Electrical Engineering), where I played trumpet in the marching band, basketball pep band, and concert band. Later, I received a PhD in Electrical Engineering from Colorado State. I’ve worked mainly in the semiconductor/ integrated circuit industry, first in Oregon, then Colorado, then Idaho, but I’m currently working with superconductors. For leisure activities, I read (mainly science fiction and history) and attend cultural events - plays, concerts, dance performances, etc. I sing bass in the Chancel Choir at Brown Memorial, as well as a couple other community choirs in the area. As far as family is concerned, I’m single, with two cats (Allegra and Andante). I occasionally do some cat fostering for BARCS (the Baltimore Animal Rescue and Care Shelter). I was drawn to Brown by the outstanding music program here.”

Cliff Trent



“I grew up in West Philadelphia, about a block north of the Market Street Elevated line, and I spent many a Sunday afternoon traveling through the city using the “EL” and other trolley car lines.

There aren’t many trolleys left today. But when I visited the Baltimore Trolley Museum with my grandson this summer, I shared my adventures in Philadelphia and was made an honorary member. I even got to drive a trolley around the museum grounds.

As a young guy, I attended an African American Southern Baptist Church, an experience I found warm and enlightening!

A most rewarding experience was serving in the Navy during the 1960’s (the Cold War era) as an engineer aboard a nuclear powered ballistic submarine. It felt fantastic to serve with 140 shipmates aboard the most powerful weapon ever devised! We believed we were the deterrent preventing any conflict with the USSR.

After my service, I spent close to 20 years as an engineering consultant to the commercial nuclear power industry, working with staff to ensure that our power plants remained as safe as possible. I spent the last 20 years of my career as a Software Quality Assurance Engineer in the health care industry, working with organizations such as Social Security and the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Systems.”

“I have attended Brown Memorial for close to a year, and after each service I have come away with a feeling of complete and total fulfillment. I am looking forward to a long relationship and fully intend to be a very active member!”

Cliff Trent

NEW MEMBERS, CONTINUED

*David and Carol Myford*

David was born and raised in Warren, Ohio. He and Carol met at Hiram College in Ohio as music majors. They attended graduate school at the University of Georgia, where David graduated with a masters in violin performance. He won a position in the Atlanta Symphony Orchestra, then conducted by Robert Shaw. After moving to Chicago in 1985 so Carol could pursue her PhD at the University of Chicago in measurement, evaluation, and statistical analysis, David played with the Lyric Opera of Chicago and Grant Park orchestras.

When Carol completed her doctorate, they moved to the Princeton, New Jersey area, where Carol was a research scientist at the Educational Testing Service, and David performed with original instrument chamber ensembles in New York, Philadelphia, and Wilmington, Delaware. After a decade in Princeton, they moved back to Chicago. David retired from public performing and pursued a degree in school social work at the University of Illinois-Chicago.

After receiving his MSW, he worked as a high school social worker in a special education cooperative, where he remained until he retired in 2017. David is an avid train buff, volunteering with the B&O Railroad Museum and participating in a local model railroad club. He was raised in the Presbyterian church and was an ordained elder in their church in Atlanta. He is a certified Stephen Ministry leader and has led Stephen Ministry training classes for Stephen ministers.

He is also a certified grief group leader. David continues to play the violin and is always grateful to play during worship.

Carol was born and raised in Hiram, Ohio, a small town near Cleveland. Her extended family members are fourth-generation farmers raising peaches, strawberries, cherries, raspberries, pears, and apples in the summer and fall and making maple syrup in the winter and spring. She and David moved to Baltimore last July to be closer to their daughter, son-in-law, and grandson, who live in Alexandria, VA.

Before she retired in 2015, she was a professor in the Department of Educational Psychology at the University of Illinois at Chicago. Through the Fulbright Specialist Program and other sponsoring organizations, she had the privilege of teaching in numerous higher education institutions around the world, including Japan, South Africa, and Russia.

In retirement, she enjoys international travel, camping, reading, drawing, playing the piano, and sewing. For the last several years, she has sewn infant burial garments from wedding gowns that women have given to her. The bereavement gowns are then given to grieving families who are experiencing the pain of losing a newborn.

Carol was raised in the Disciples of Christ and Methodist churches and has taught Sunday School, served as a counter for church offerings, sung in choirs, and was a member of a Staff-Parish Relations committee.



Karen Stokes

For more than 35 years, Karen worked with a wide variety of nonprofit organizations and government agencies. She was the director of New York City's first Emergency Food Program, and the director of New York's Emergency Housing Program for Homeless Families. More recently, she was the Chief Executive Officer of Strong City Baltimore. This 50-year-old grassroots nonprofit raises over \$12 million annually in support of more than 100 initiatives that strengthen neighborhoods, education, youth development, and social innovation. She has also served as a management consultant for Moveable Feast, a nonprofit meals delivery program for people with HIV/AIDS. She retired in 2020.

Karen has a bachelor's degree in urban studies from Georgetown University and a master's degree in social work from Columbia University. She lives in the Oakenshawe neighborhood of Baltimore with her husband, Ed Stokes, and she has three adult children, all of whom graduated from Baltimore City Public Schools.

She has been connected to Brown Memorial since 2006, and she has been a supporter of the El Salvador Godparent program, in which her son participated. During her retirement she is volunteering as a tutor for adults learning to read; she is also studying Spanish and piano. Through October 2023, she is walking the pilgrimage route, el Camino de Santiago, in Europe.



*A woman who lives her faith,
Karen has spent a lifetime in
public service.*



elcome

BROWN AND THE AFGHAN COMMUNITY

Dr Barbara Cook, primary liaison and mother hen to the Afghan community

Peace Be Upon You **مكي لع مالس لا**

“Our fellowship community has been at the forefront of assistance to new Afghan arrivals since Labor Day, 2021. At that time, the Baltimore Presbytery alerted us to a dire situation — the fact that there were over 100 Afghan immigrants residing in motel rooms near BWI.

Brown Memorial Ministry of Welcome reached out to this community with the help of Susan Krehbiel, Associate for Refugees and Asylees at Baltimore Presbytery. At that time I met Shakera Rahimi, an organizer with Luminous in Howard County and together we began to address the many needs of these traumatized, anxious families.

In February 2022, we learned that 15 families and as many single men had been resettled in three large apartment buildings at the end of Eutaw Place across the street from Druid Hill Park — 1 1/2 miles from our church. Our work began with supplying furniture, kitchen supplies, transportation for grocery shopping and locating Halal grocery stores. We learned that it is customary in Afghanistan for all of the floors in their homes to be covered with carpets. That was the most common request from the families. Meanwhile, the sponsoring refugee organization here in Baltimore, IRC, arranged for them to have SNAP benefits, rental assistance, temporary cash assistance and Medicaid. Once these basic needs had been met, we were able to focus on projects that would enable them to be more independent.

Programs geared to Afghan needs

One of our first programs was a diabetes education program for those with diabetes. After the sessions, folks were able to identify their medications and describe how often they were to take them. We gave them colorful handouts with pictorial examples of how to eat properly.

Other programs included helping them take on the landlord to address problems with vermin, broken elevators, stoves and refrigerators. Thanks to your generosity, each school-age child got an allowance for clothes and, at Christmas, we launched a successful winter coat drive for all who were in need. In the summer of 2022, we raised several thousand dollars so that six children could attend summer camp at Friends School.

We have organized English classes with volunteers. We have sponsored classes at our church to teach women how to pass the test for a driver’s learner’s permit. We have organized sewing classes and provided sewing machines and donated fabric. Many volunteers from Brown came to the St. Francis Neighborhood Center to assist the families in applying for energy assistance.

The generosity of the Brown congregation has been remarkable — a little over \$34,500 has been raised from 54 donors and three institutions. Over 50 volunteers have assisted with transportation to doctors appointments, child care, summer camp, sewing classes.

Blessings abound

We have sponsored classes at our church to teach women how to pass the test for a driver’s learner’s permit

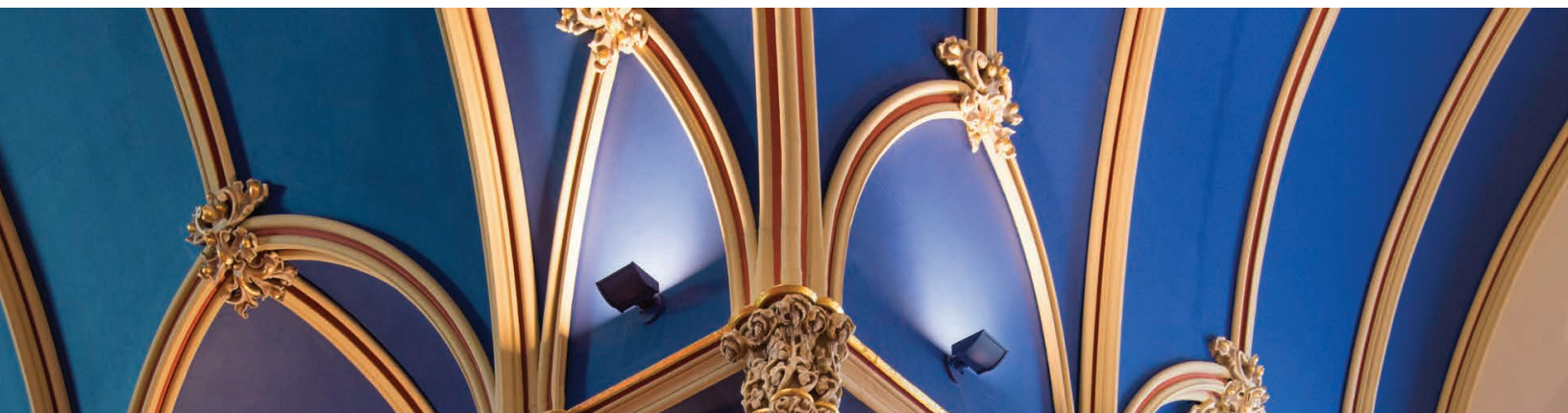




We've hosted two beautiful events - EID dinner in May of 2022 at our church where we served dinner to celebrate the end of Ramadan and a cookout/pot luck at the Cook house to celebrate the 4th of July.

We have been blessed by this relationship and we have blessed our Afghan neighbors abundantly. We have enjoyed their food and their tea and their hugs and their smiles. We have shown them the way to become good neighbors to one another as no one knew anyone else when they arrived. Now they cook for a mom recovering from back surgery, they babysit for one another, they celebrate together.”

Peace has been showered upon them



SMALL GROUPS

“Getting to know people beyond Sunday morning” *Judy Jones*

“The idea of small groups appeals to me,” says Brown member Laura Urban. “I like the flexibility, the open-endedness, the chance to get to know others beyond Sunday.” Another member of a pre-Covid small group echoes Laura’s sentiments: “Shortly after coming to Brown, I was put in a group that met regularly over dinner, no formal thing, just getting to know one another. Being in that group helped me adjust to a new church and made me feel as though I belonged.”

Apparently, this chance to get to really know one another, to make connections in small group gatherings, appealed to quite a few Brown members and attendees. At the annual meeting early in the year, restarting such groups after Covid had closed them down was the number one response to the question: “what can the church do for you?”

Some 70 people responded to the effort to form new small groups around common interests. While these interests were many and often quite different, polling identified these primary groups: arts, cooking, eating together, retirees and ‘No Preference.’ Folks gathered to meet one another at a September 10 kickoff.

At this writing, some groups have met and are moving along with plans for the future. Retirees, for example, have focused on diving deep to truly get to know one another. Each gathering one person introduces him/herself, with others asking questions. Another group plans Bible study.

The process is slow and deliberate, frustrating to some. But, as Andrew noted in a recent sermon: “if we want connections, we have to work on them. People require time and patience. It’s worth the effort to share pain and joy. Peace IS being in relationship with people.”

So, if you’re in a group that’s been slow to start, consider taking the lead. And, if none of the groups named above appeals, create one. Consider a group for:

Dog lovers	Readers	None of the above
Runners	Painters	Some other

Join an existing group, help kickstart the one you’re in, start a new one. Small groups make so much difference in fostering deeper ties within a large community. The effort — as so many small group members can attest — is worth it.

For help, please contact someone on the Small Group Committee (or let us know if you start your own group):

Rose Glorioso
 Judy Jones
 Susan Stroupe
 Page Campbell
 Vi Thorpe
 David Lascu
 Joyce Edington
 Nadia Hensley
 Gillian Rainey
 Anna Hess
 Bill Sheridan

STEWARDSHIP

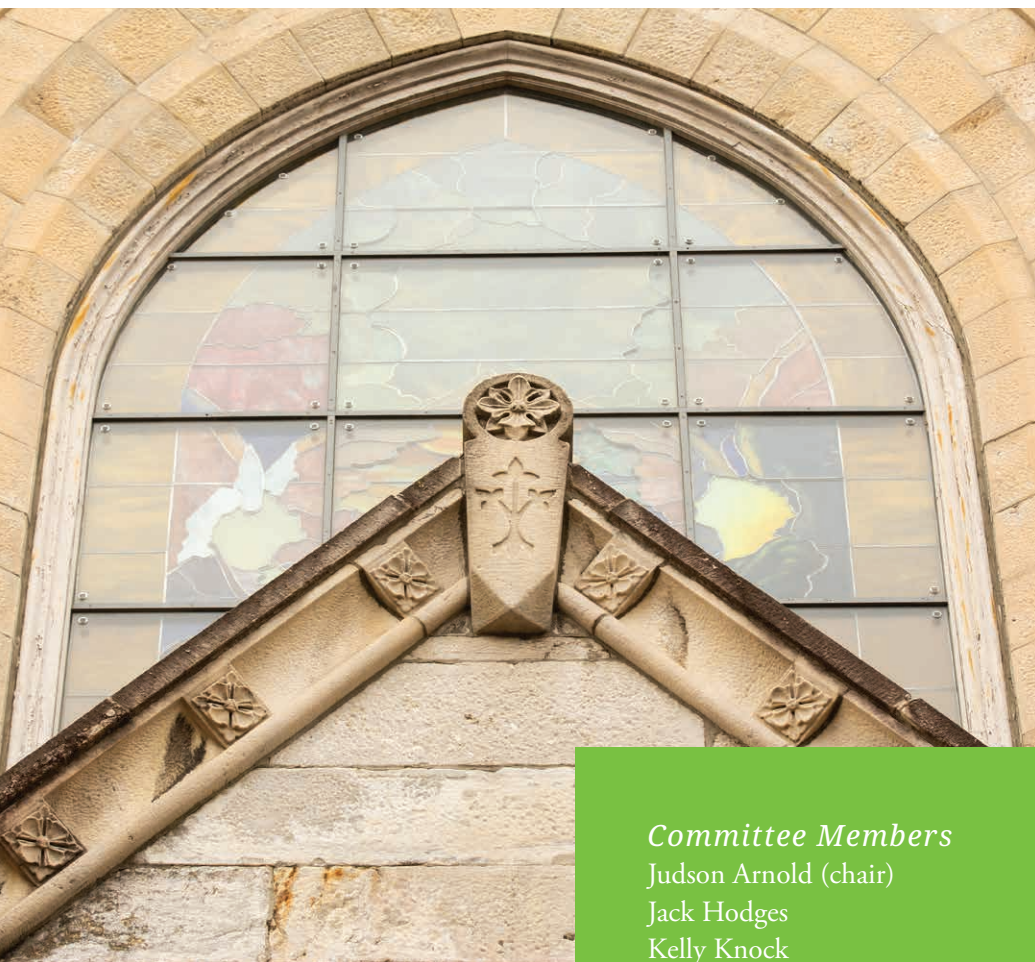
David Nyweide

Renewal is the theme of this year's stewardship season. The stewardship committee felt that the theme of renewal captured several strands of sensations enlivening the church in 2023. Almost all of the congregation has returned to worship in person now in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic. Renewed life in the church is palpable with new small groups forming. And we continue to discern what God has in store for our music ministry and with a new associate pastor.

Throughout November, Brown Memorial was focused, while Commitment Sunday was a target date

for members and friends of the church to make a monetary pledge to Brown Memorial for 2024. Pledging helps households budget their giving to the church on a weekly basis while, collectively, helping the church budget for clergy and staff salaries; sanctuary, fellowship hall, and church house projects and maintenance; ministries of the church; and mission activities locally and globally.

So, please prayerfully consider what you're willing to give next year, meditating on the ways in which you sense renewal is alive in and around Brown Memorial.



Committee Members

Judson Arnold (chair)
Jack Hodges
Kelly Knock
David Nyweide
Ann Teaff



TUTORING

Tracy Cerrato

In 1963, a group of Brown Memorial Church members began a Saturday children’s program at Mount Royal Elementary School. Today, the Brown Memorial Tutoring Program, which has grown in both scope and mission, has become a valued partner with Baltimore City Public Schools. We enroll children in first through fifth grades from Mt. Royal Elementary/Middle School, Dorothy I. Height Elementary School, and Baltimore Montessori Public Charter School.

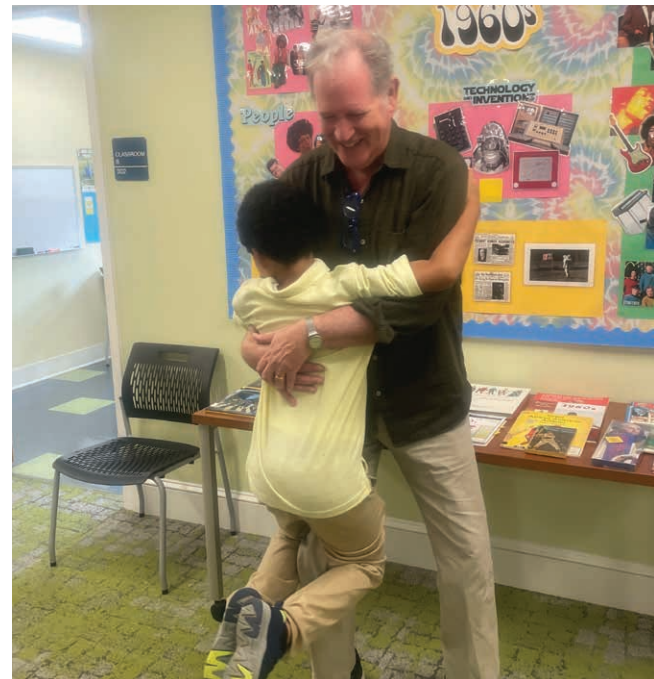
For the 2023-24 tutoring year, 62 tutors work with 72 children who have been recommended to us by their teachers. All students, dramatically behind their peers in reading, come from low-income families.

Enrollment depends on the number of volunteers who commit to tutoring. Importantly, all our volunteer tutors are trained in the Orton-Gillingham Approach, which is a structured and multi-sensory way to teach reading and writing that is especially effective in helping children who struggle to learn or have learning differences.

What makes our Tutoring Program unique is that our sessions take place during the school day at our Center, and our students work with the same tutor for 75 minutes each week for an entire school year. The bond that develops between tutor and student, especially in tutor pairs that stay together for more than a year, has such a positive impact on both child and tutor.

Celebrating 60 years of serving Baltimore school children

The Abell Foundation has described the Tutoring Program as a “stalwart in the Bolton Hill community.”



Martha Socolar is the Program Director, Karlin Scudder is the Assistant Director, and Tracy Cerrato, Development Director.

PEJUHUTAZI FAMILY LEARNING CAMP

Bill McConnell

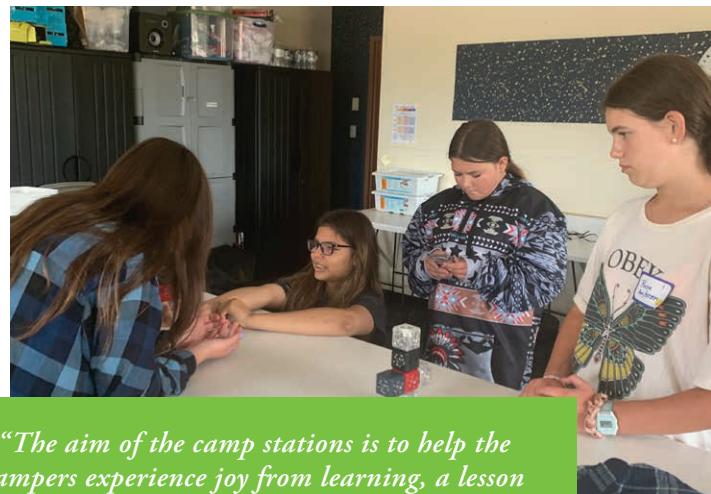
Since summer of 2013 Brown Memorial Park Avenue and other area churches belonging to the Baltimore-Dakota Partnership have sent a contingent of families to the Upper Sioux Community in Granite Falls, Minn.

The camp features learning stations for reading, math, science, physical education and Dakota art. Campers range in age from kindergarten through middle school. Each year we bring our own kids to participate as campers. High schoolers can serve as camp counselors alongside the adults.

Camp stations aim to help the campers experience joy from learning, a lesson that helps them be enthusiastic for the coming school year. Aside from the educational mission, one of the most wonderful parts of the camp is the bonds that developed between the kids over the years, including fun times during the off hours.

Each year the kids have come up with some new activity that turned them into fast friends—the first year it was making crazy videos on iPads and playing Ghost in the Graveyards. Other years it was trips to the community pool in the afternoon. As the kids got older, intense basketball games became an evening staple.

In 2023, with many the original group being in college, we brought an entirely new group of kids from Baltimore to Upper Sioux. Joining us are the Reiman (Sarah and Landon and Gareth) and Brown (Emily and Rosa and Auggie) families. Tyler McPherson also joined as a new teen counselor as did Sarah Stephens as our Hands on Science and Math Games Station Leader.



“The aim of the camp stations is to help the campers experience joy from learning, a lesson that helps them be enthusiastic for coming school year.”

The new kids wasted no time following their original group’s example—only a day or two into the camp week, the Baltimore group invited two boys from the community to join their friends who were already part of the camp.

That same day a couple former campers from the community, now young adults, stopped by say hi and update us on their lives. They also mentioned they had sent a text earlier to my son Liam, poking fun at my now 20-year-old child for not returning to camp this year. I hope our latest campers will be joking that way with their new Minnesota friends a few years down.

We hope that more families and individuals from Brown will join us this summer as we return to the Upper Sioux Community to reunite with all of our friends. The PFLC is a mission built on relationships and friendship and has changed many lives of both the Baltimore and Upper Sioux participants. It is a mission of doing “with” and not “to or for.”

For more information, visit the website for BDLC – www.baltimorelearnincamps.org. Or contact Chrystie Adams (443-474-2200) or Julie Hanks (410-598-0888).



While in Cuba, we attended a Bible study session

CUBA

On visiting our sister church in Cuba
Morgana Kinlan

“The purpose of the trip is to deepen the relationship between Brown Memorial and our partner church, Iglesia Presbiteriana de Camajuani. It doesn't matter that you are new — that's exactly how it was for me on my first trip. I didn't know any of our Cuban partners, but I felt so welcomed when I arrived. It was wonderful talking to people, sharing stories and experiences, and making connections.

My first trip to Cuba was an inspiring event. Our 2022 trip was Sunday-Thursday, so we were only there for about three days in-country (travel days typically take at least a half-day, sometimes the whole day). While in Cuba, we attended a Bible study session, a women's group meeting, and visited with elderly members of the congregation. We spent one day visiting a neighboring church, and another afternoon visiting Santa Clara.

The goal of our Partnership is to form a closer bond with our partners and let them know that Brown Memorial cares about them and their well-being, that we share in their concerns and that they aren't left alone. It's extremely difficult for them to travel out of the country, so they really enjoy having visitors.”

EL SALVADOR

Dr. Barbara Cook

For over thirty-five years Brown Memorial has been in a covenant relationship with the beloved community of Maria Madre de los Pobres in San Salvador. This relationship has had a profound effect both on those of us who have visited and our dear friends there. It has been particularly impactful for our young people. The pandemic has kept us away for five years so we are ready to visit again. We are also looking for those of you who would like to become “godparents” to children in the parish who use our financial assistance for school tuition, school supplies, uniforms, and medical care - just \$300/year. Contact Barbara Cook for more information.



EVENT LIST

Christmas Decorating - In-person only

Saturday, December 16 · 10am-Noon

Help us adorn the sanctuary with greens and poinsettias for Christmas. Many hands make light work. All ages are welcome! Contact Julie Hanks for more information: Jmhanks@verizon.net

Advent Education Series - Hybrid

Interfaith Reflection on the Significance of Jesus

Sunday, December 17 · 12:15pm (Following Lunch)

Rabbi Daniel Burg (Judaism)

How does Judaism contemplate the arrival of the Messiah? How does contemporary Christian focus on the birth of Jesus limit the deeper understanding of the incarnation? What does the Quran teach about the significance of Jesus? Join us this Advent as we learn from colleagues from different faiths the teachings of their traditions that help us explore the significance of Jesus' birth for our community.

Christmas Pageant - Hybrid

Sunday, December 24 · 10:30am

Join us at our regular worship time for this time honored tradition.

Lessons & Carols Candlelight Service - Hybrid

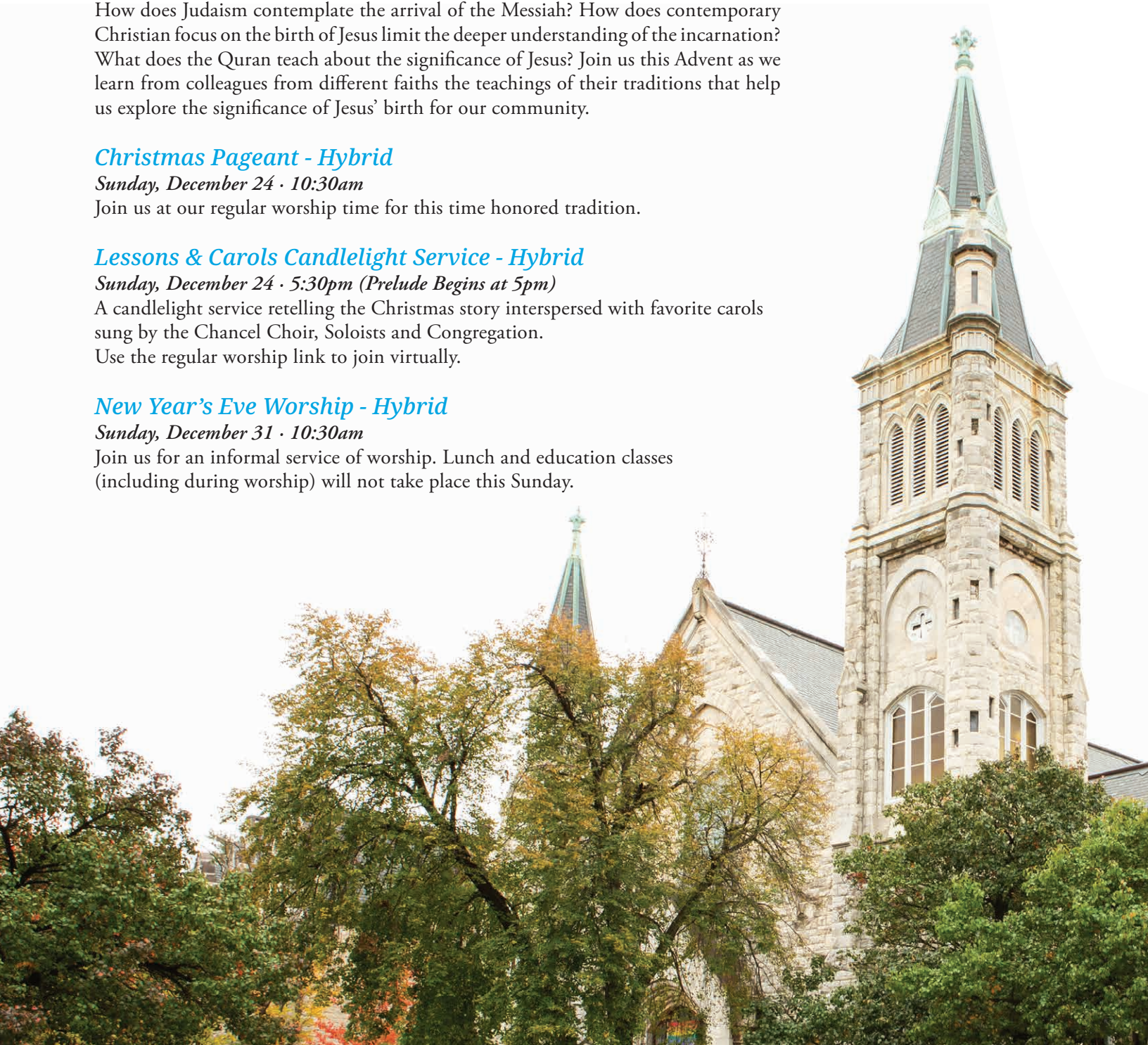
Sunday, December 24 · 5:30pm (Prelude Begins at 5pm)

A candlelight service retelling the Christmas story interspersed with favorite carols sung by the Chancel Choir, Soloists and Congregation. Use the regular worship link to join virtually.

New Year's Eve Worship - Hybrid

Sunday, December 31 · 10:30am

Join us for an informal service of worship. Lunch and education classes (including during worship) will not take place this Sunday.



A very special thank you to all those who contributed to the creation of this edition of TIDINGS:

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It wouldn't have happened without you!



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TIDINGS

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