

# Branches

141 Little York-Mount Pleasant Road  
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908-996-4333

Web: [www.alexpres.org](http://www.alexpres.org)

<https://www.facebook.com/alexpres.org/>



ALEXANDRIA FIRST PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH

Volume 59

## A Note from Nick

January 2024  
Issue #1

Dear Friends,

As many of you know, Gayle and I both got COVID right at the beginning of December. Up until this point I had never had Covid before . . . but wow, did it come at a bad time! Testing positive late on a Friday sent me scrambling early Saturday morning to figure out how to arrange coverage for Sunday. Not only was the first Sunday of Advent just a day away, but our Christmas concert was that same day. I was crushed that I would miss these two very special days in the life of our church . . . and not sure how I could possibly find coverage at the last minute. As someone who tends to worry a lot . . . I was in hyper-worry mode!

But what I learned once again, is that God is in control, and we are very blessed at AFPC. I tried calling all the local pastors I knew to see if someone could preach and every one was already booked. In a last-ditch effort, I called the head of our Presbytery, Jeanne Radak, to see if she knew of any other pastors I could reach out to. Without even missing a beat, she told me that she was happy to help and she would start working on her sermon right away!

Over the next couple of hours, I reached out to Stefanie Watson, Pat Keefe, Flora Nielsen, LuAnn Keefe, Al Navarro, Brad Bondor and found everyone willing to pitch in and help out. Pat Keefe was going to help lead worship with Jeanne and make sure the first Sunday of Advent worship went smoothly. Brad Bondor agreed to set up the sound system and streaming service and make sure that both the morning worship and the Christmas concert were streamed on the internet. Stefanie Watson and Al Navarro helped fill in for me at the Christmas concert, leading the opening, the prayer, the offering and the closing. And of course, LuAnn Keefe and Flora Nielsen helped with all the "little" Worship & Music Team details that they do so well!

I then had so many calls and text messages offering to help out in big and small ways . . . lots of love poured out from the congregation!

Fortunately, Gayle and I didn't have very bad symptoms and even more fortunately the kids never tested positive for COVID. But what I learned again is the blessing of AFPC and all of you that do the work of God! There is the old saying "it takes a village" . . . well in this case "it takes a church family!"

I am so blessed and THANKFUL to have such a wonderful church family to not only care for me when I'm unable to care for you, but blessed for the ways in which you serve God at AFPC and how we are the Church together!

In Christ,

*Pastor Nick*

The Rev. Nicholas Hatch



# CHURCH FAMILY HAPPENINGS



3	Rich Erlandson	12	Alyssa Schuetz	22	Marth Harrison
4	Andrea Pederson	13	Isa Knapp	22	Nancy Schumann
5	Will Fritsche	14	Lu Branson	26	Claire Parsons
6	Isabel Navarro	16	Howard Thomas	27	Ryan Abelman
7	Tyler Unkert	17	Lisa Schneider	27	Sara Wardach
8	Craig Bender	18	Irene Fennell	29	Maureen Sutton
9	Alaina Fennell	21	Dean Erlandson	31	Scott Schuetz

## Baptisms

Baptism is the visible sign of an invisible event: the reconciliation of people to God. We rejoice with those who are celebrating their baptism anniversary this month. It was January that Luke Edward Bender, Patricia Kathleen McGuire Bender and Tyler Craig Bender were baptized. Congratulations and blessings upon being a child of God!

## December Flowers

**December 3: in memory of Ruth Koff by the MacWilliam Family**



## 'TIS THE SEASON TO **REMEMBER**

**In loving memory of Zachary Accardi** (Cindy & Joe Accardi)

**In loving memory of Virginia & Romulus Fleming and Anne  
& Louis Abelman** (April, Jason, Luke & Ryan, Margo &  
Richard Abelman)

**In loving memory of Frank S. Bondor & Howard W.  
McConnell** (Lois & Doug Bondor)

**In loving memory of Beth Collins & Ron Haase** (Jane Cowley)

**In Honor of Christ's Birth** (Alice & Jim Hansen)

**In loving memory of Barbara Hatch** (Nick and Gayle Hatch)

**In loving memory of Raymond Ghiorsi** (Heinbach/Doyle  
Family)

**In loving memory of Ruth Kopf, Eileen MacWilliam, Phil  
Kopf, Edwin MacWilliam & Susan Jenal** (MacWilliam Family)

**In loving memory of Anita "Nim" Pulis** (The Nardone Family)

**In loving memory of Karl Nielsen, Bill & Beulah Stamets**  
(Flora Nielsen)

**In loving memory of Hank Hampton** (Sassaman Family)

**In loving memory of Lawrence & June Solomon and William  
& Charlotte Whitman** (John & Sharon Solomon)

**In loving memory of Mareem & James Stein** (Jill Stein)

**In loving memory of Dick & Dottie Schenck and Gene &  
Ruth Taylor** (Doug & Carol Taylor)

**In loving memory of Dale Van Norman** (Carol Van Norman)

**In loving memory of Karl Nielsen** (Judy Zubb)



# HIGHLIGHTS

## COMMUNITY

### New Members Corner

#### **Scott Cowley**

Scott is a lifelong resident of New Jersey and served as a submarine auxiliaryman for the Navy in California. He is from a family of 5: 3 brothers and one sister. He currently works for a major financial firm in the engineering department.



#### **Jane Cowley**

Jane is a lifelong resident of New Jersey and is from a family of 5: 3 brothers and one sister. She is a graduate of Rutgers University/Douglass and before retirement, worked in the medical education and publications industry.

**Together, Scott and Jane have 3 children, 5 grandchildren and live in Alexandria township.**

#### **Amy Neary**

My son, Mikey, and I moved to Holland Twp in the Spring of 2020 with our two dogs, Chase and Annie. I am a native of Martinsville and the Blessed Sacrament Catholic Church. Most recently, we moved from Clinton Twp as members of Lebanon Reformed Church. My son and I keep busy with family functions, the 4H Deadeyes Club, weekend trips, volunteering for Habitat for Humanity ReStore, and K-9 Search & Rescue. We love animals, especially dogs. We enjoy the outdoors including hikes and working around our own home. I work in the Accounting Dept of a local, family-owned Plumbing & HVAC company, which is a part of my lifelong career in the construction industry.



***My son and I look forward to growing in faith and making new friendships with the AFP Church family.***

***Thank you, all, for the warm welcome!***

# HIGHLIGHTS

## COMMUNITY

### New Members Corner

**Olympia Bush**

Olympia grew up in Point Pleasant, NJ. She attended Monmouth College where she met her husband, Larry. They had two sons Jerry and James. She completed her bachelor's at Monmouth later and went on to get a Master of Biology from William Paterson. In addition to New Jersey, she has lived in Virginia and Arizona. She first became a member of a Presbyterian church in the 1960s. Her husband Larry passed away in 2019 and she moved back to New Jersey to live with her son James in 2021. She enjoys watercolor painting, sewing and crocheting.

**Becca Smith**

Becca is 19yrs old ( March 25, 2004) and currently lives in Hackettstown. She's comes from a farming family and works at the Hackettstown Livestock Auction as well as a veterinarian office in Morris Plains. She's currently in school to become a Veterinary Technician and wants to specialize in large animals to help address the need for veterinary services for farm animals. Her hobbies basically involve all aspects of farming but she also enjoys Country line dancing.

**Doug Taylor**

Hobbies include working on my '58 TR3, travel, keeping active through various sports and our grandchildren. Looking forward to fellowship and helping around the church in any way I can.

**Carol Taylor**

My hobbies include reading, yoga , travel and our grandchildren! I am looking forward to fellowship with fellow members and learning more about my faith through Bible and book studies.

# WORSHIP & MUSIC TEAM

## NEWS



Our Christmas Concert “Love & Light” held on Sunday December 3rd was a beautiful and festive event!

Thank you to Stefanie Watson, Minister of Music, the guest vocalists, musicians, youth choir, chancel choir and our new chime choir for sharing your gifts with us and beginning the holiday season musically.



# CHRISTIAN EDUCATION

2023 CHRISTMAS PAGEANT

## The Real Story of Christmas.

based on Luke 2:1-21

### Cast:

- **Narrator** . . . Nora H.
- **Lady** . . . Charlotte H.
- **Angel** . . . Josalyn C.
- **Mary** . . . Lexi C.
- **Joseph** . . . Belle S.
- **Narrator Donkey** . . . Madelynn F.
- **Little Donkey** . . . Hadley F.
- **Baby Donkey** . . . Sydney F.
- **Narrator Cow** . . . Danica D.
- **Little Cow** . . . Kenzie D.
- **Baby Cow** . . . Izzy D.
- **Little Sheep** . . . Kätelyn H.



# HIGHLIGHTS

COMMUNITY



## Poinsettia Deliveries & Christmas Caroling



POINSETTIA DELIVERY



Church members went Christmas Caroling and delivered poinsettias along with the Junior and Senior High Youth Groups on Sunday afternoon, December 17th. They met at the church and carpooled to some of our members and shut-ins.

***Everyone met in Fellowship Hall after the event for cookies and hot chocolate!***

# HIGHLIGHTS

COMMUNITY

## Poinsettia Deliveries & Christmas Caroling

POINSETTIA DELIVERY



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9

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# YOUTH GROUP NEWS

MISSION TRIP FUNDRAISER



## Items Accepted

- Men's clothes
- Women's clothes
- Children's clothes
- boots
- shoes
- sneakers
- belts
- purses
- jewelry
- outerwear
- children's toys
- games
- books
- sports equipment
- bedding (good condition)

**Please drop off donations in  
Sunday School Classroom #6  
Mon-Fri 9am-12pm or  
Sundays 10am-11am**

## The Clothing Drive

### Continues

Spring will be here before we know it! Clean out your closets to help fund the Youth Mission Trip!

Thanks to your generous donations, the clothing drive raised \$1,537.30 in 2023 to support the Youth Group Mission Trip. Let's hit \$1,500 in 2024 too! You can drop off clothes anytime in Sunday School Room 6, but it would be helpful to have Spring and Summer items by February 15th.

Stop in at **We Kids** and **The Consignment Shop** in Flemington and **Country Chic** in Frenchtown to thank these businesses for their support.

Karen Pardonner can also arrange pick-ups at your home. Please reach out to Karen for details (kpardonner@gmail.com).

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# JOIN US!

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## Fellowship

Each of us together shows all of God's graces to the world. No one is perfect. We all sin, but each of us has a purpose here on Earth to show aspects of God to those around us. Each of us has been given specific spiritual gifts. When we come together in fellowship, it's like us as a whole demonstrating God. Think of it like a cake. You need the flour, sugar, eggs, oil, and more to make a cake. The eggs will never be the flour. None of them make up the cake alone. Yet together, all those ingredients make a delicious cake. It is like that will fellowship. All of us together show the glory of God.



Please join us at our next Lunch Bunch on January 11th at 12:00pm. This is a fantastic opportunity for fellowship. Drinks and chips provided, just bring your sandwich and a friend!!

## Thursday January 11th

# LUNCH BUNCH



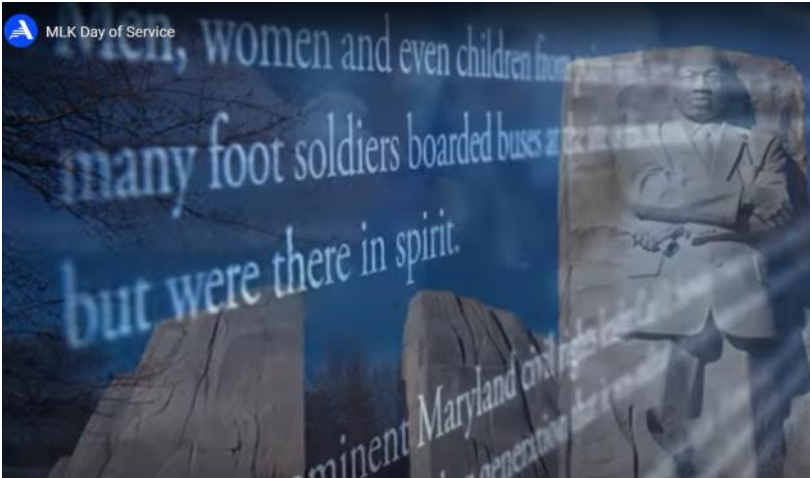
Bring your own sandwich and we will provide  
chips, a drink and dessert

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# JOIN US!

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## Fellowship



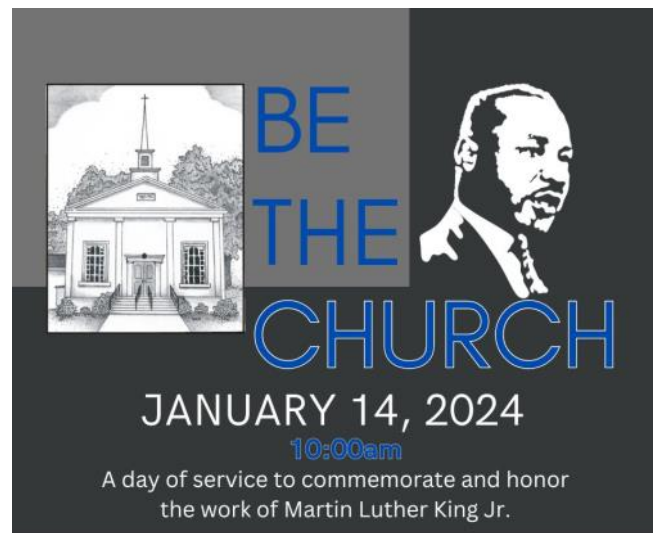
On Sunday January 14th Pastor Nick will hold a special “Be The Church”, Martin Luther King Jr. Day service at 10:00AM. **Join us this MLK Day as we come together to build a Beloved Community through unity, service, and transformation.** Let's honor Dr. King's

legacy by working toward a more just and equitable society, where everyone is valued and respected, regardless of their race, ability, religion, or background.

**By participating in service projects, we can bridge divides, heal wounds, and create lasting change that will benefit our communities for years to come.**

MLK Day is the only federal holiday designated as a **National Day of Service** to encourage all Americans to volunteer to improve their communities. During the last quarter-century, the MLK Day of Service has grown, and its impact increased as more Americans embraced the idea that citizenship involves taking an active role in improving communities.

We have many opportunities for you to participate in service no matter what your talents are, there are service projects for everyone!



# MISSION TEAM NEWS

JANUARY

"...rather serve one another in love." - Galatians 5:13



## BE THE CHURCH

JANUARY 14, 2024

10:00am

A day of service to commemorate and honor  
the work of Martin Luther King Jr.

Theme for this year is  
*Creating the  
Beloved Community*  
and Lifting Up *the  
Least of These*  
(Matthew 25)

After this special  
worship service  
there are multiple  
opportunities for  
service.

### Ways to participate:

- **The Linus Project** - crafting no-sew fleece blankets for children 0-18 yrs old in the US in need
- **Hygiene Kits for Women** (Church World Services) - donations needed by Sunday January 14 and kit assemblers and packers
- **Depends & Diaper Drive** (United Way of Flemington) - any size donations needed by Sunday January 14th
- **Valentines for Meals on Wheels & Senior Citizens** - write Valentine's cards for MoW & Seniors
- **Spruce up the Sanctuary** - touch up painting and more

Tags for items  
needed are in  
the Narthex

Please prayerfully consider where your talents and time can best  
be used and sign up here or email the church office for the link.

*Light refreshments will be served*

**All donations needed in Fellowship Hall  
the morning of Sunday January 14**

Sign Up: <https://www.signupgenius.com/go/30E044BA5AD28A4F49-bethechurch1>

We hope you can join us in celebrating community service and diversity!

Questions? Contact Marie Knapp at (908) 797-5310 or knaptime@verizon.net

# MISSION TEAM NEWS

JANUARY M4M

## Church World Service

# WOMEN'S *hygiene kits*

**you can help end period poverty**

**PROVIDING WOMEN'S HYGIENE KITS IS AN EASY WAY  
YOU CAN HELP SHARE YOUR LOVE WITH OTHERS**

It's a chance to be an even greater blessing to individuals who lack access to necessary feminine care supplies. And it's easy!

### WOMEN'S HYGIENE KIT ITEMS

- 1 - Gallon Ziploc bag:
- 2- Hand Sanitizer (2oz)
- 3 - Bathroom Trash Bags (4 gallon)
- 1 - Wet Ones (travel pack)
- 1 - Bar Soap (3oz or larger, no Ivory/Jergen's)
- 1 - Unscented Wipes (42 count, flushable)
- 10 - Unscented Tampons (reg & super absorbency)
- 10 - Unscented Sanitary Napkins (long, super, ultra-thin)
- 6 - Laundry Detergent Sheets

**Church World Service - [www.cwskits.org](http://www.cwskits.org)**

**Now - January 14**

The Mission Team is collecting items for CWS. We are providing Women's hygiene kits to help end period poverty. It's an easy way you can share your love with others. It's a chance to be an even greater blessing to individuals who lack access to necessary feminine care supplies like sanitary napkins, tampons and soap. And it's easy!

By making these simple kits, you will be offering women and girls a sense of dignity!

# WORSHIP

SELF MINISTRY

## OUR DAILY BREAD

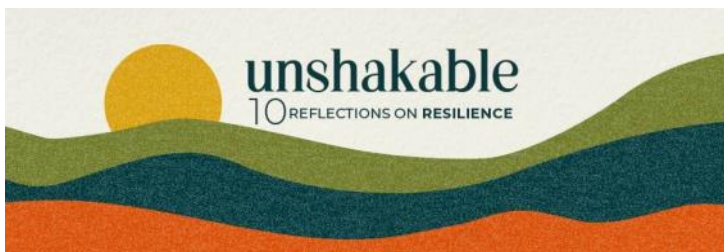


Our Daily Bread  
Ministries™



The new quarterly issue and a 90 day introductory issue of the daily personal devotional Our Daily Bread will be available in the narthex, fellowship hall or by the offices for each family. Please check the brochure rack and take a copy home with you to study. The daily devotional can also be found on line at [www.odb.org](http://www.odb.org). Both versions are available at no cost to you.

## SPECIAL DEVOTIONAL



A devotional dedicated to becoming unshakable in our faith during life's challenges. Pick one up anytime from the Narthex , Fellowship Hall or outside the church office.

***If you are aware of any senior citizens that are experiencing food insecurity, please share the following information.*** Food Stamps for Seniors guide, a great meal

program that is available to low-income households to encourage healthy food choices:

<https://www.retireguide.com/social-security/benefits/food-stamps-for-seniors/>

# DEACON'S CORNER

JANUARY

## Military Care Packages

The Deacons would like to remind any member or relative of our church family who is on active military duty of our love and support with a care package.

**Please contact Karen Pardonner by February 7th** to share the name and contact information for any active duty military person who can receive a care package.



# MISSION TEAM NEWS

DECEMBER RECAP

## Christmas Gift Giving 2023



Our Mission Team organized with a local organization and ran a Christmas Gift Drive for some local families. Many gifts were purchased and donated to make some families Christmas magical. Thank you to everyone who generously donated to this campaign!

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# CHURCH FAMILY

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## HAPPENINGS

*Save the date:* January 20th, 6:00pm for a cozy winter get together at Lois & Doug Bondor's home. Please bring an appetizer or dessert to share. Come prepared to have some fun!



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# CHURCH FAMILY

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## HAPPENINGS

**Save the date:** January 21st for the youth mission trip fundraiser brunch.  
ALL ARE WELCOME, Please join us!

The youth will share their stories on their previous experiences and what they are looking forward to this summer.

### YOUTH MISSION TRIP FUNDRAISER BRUNCH

SUNDAY JANUARY 21ST - DIRECTLY FOLLOWING WORSHIP

Everyone is invited to celebrate our youth  
and encourage them as they prepare for  
their trip to Ohio in July

SUNDAY  
JANUARY  
21ST



# CONGREGATIONAL NEWS

ANNUAL CONGREGATIONAL MEETING

## ANNUAL CONGREGATIONAL MEETING—JANUARY 28, 2024

The annual Congregational Meeting has been called for Sunday January 28th, immediately following worship in the sanctuary. The purpose of the meeting will be to receive statistical and financial reports for 2023, to act on changes in the pastor's terms of call for 2024, to nominate and elect financial officers, and to address matters of the corporation. Please join us!

## THE ANNUAL CHURCH *Congregational* MEETING



JAN | 28<sup>th</sup> | 2024

Directly Following Worship

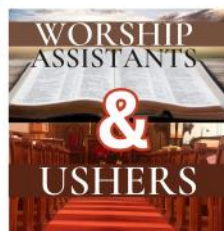
Looking For



One New Thing?



Volunteer for:



Worship & Music is in need of Worship Assistants and Ushers, please consider this ministry. Reach out to Tammy Sassaman, Flora Nielsen or the Church Office if interested in volunteering.

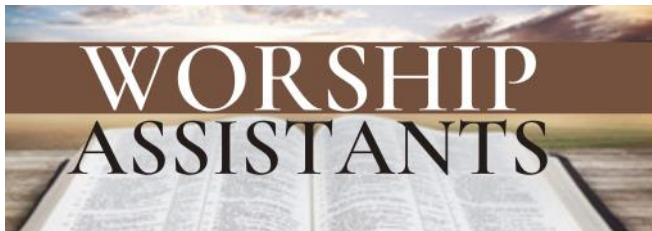
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20

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# SERVICES



January 7: Teen  
January 14: Steve Cameron  
January 21: Jim Bush  
January 28: Robin Pulsinelle



January 7: Pat Keefe & Tammy Sassaman  
January 14: Christina Heilig & Athena McDowall  
January 21: Kelsey & Steve Pardonner  
January 28: Carol Van Norman & Patty Em



January 7: Tammy Sassamand, Pat & LuAnn Keefe

## CHURCH STAFF

Reverend Nicholas C. Hatch, *Pastor*  
Stefanie Watson, *Director of Music Ministry*  
Marci Nardone, *Administrative Specialist*

## Our Ministry Team

### Officers

#### Personnel

E- Flora Nielsen  
D- Karen Pardonner

#### B&P

E- Jim Hansen\*  
E- Marty Gunderman\*  
D- Doug Bondor  
D- Tammy Unkert

#### Christian Ed.

E- Mary Goldman\*  
D- April Abelman  
D- Athena McDowall

#### Worship & Music

E- Flora Nielsen\*  
D- Karen Pardonner

#### Evangelism & Membership

E- Lois Bondor\*  
E- Christina Hielig  
D- Carol VanNorman  
D- Christine Hammerstone

#### Stewardship & Finance

E- Craig Bender\*  
D- Brad Bondor

#### Mission & Interpretation

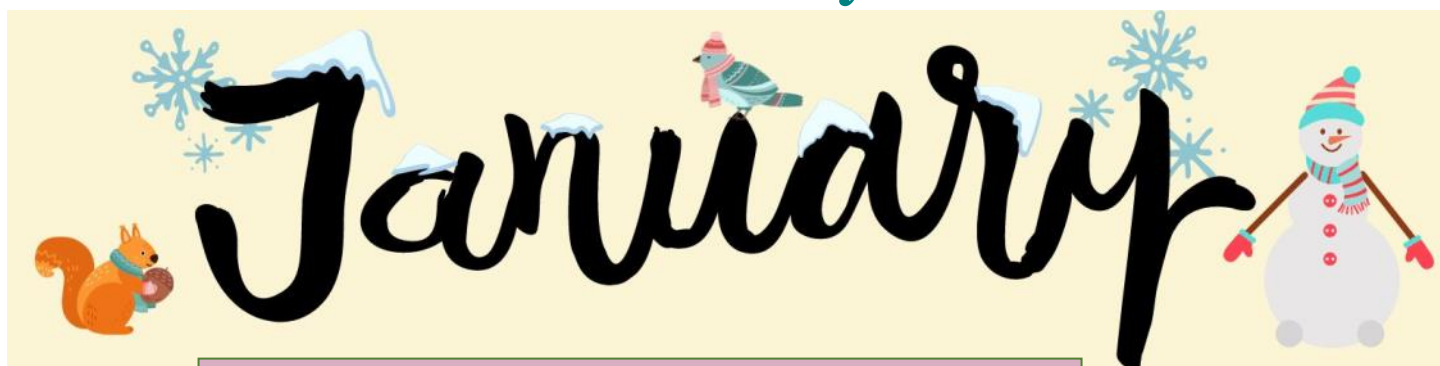
E- Marie Knapp\*  
E- Lainey Johns  
D- Laurie Gregory  
D- Pati Tiedeman

#### Nominating

E- Craig Bender\*  
E- Vacant  
D- Carol VanNorman

\* Denotes chair or co-chair

# Alexandria First Presbyterian Church



## Deacon of the Week

January 7: Pati Tiedeman

January 14: Athena McDowall

January 21: April Abelman

January 28: Carol Van Norman

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
31 New Year's Eve 10:00 Worship	1 New Year Day (Office Closed)	2 7:00 Boy Scouts 7:30 Chancel Choir	3 9:00 Bulletin Deadline 7:00 <b>Deacon meeting</b> 11:00 <b>Book Study</b>	4	5	6
7 10:00 Worship	8	9 7:00 Boy Scouts 7:30 Chancel Choir	10 9:00 Bulletin Deadline 11:00 <b>Book Study</b> 7:00 <b>Session</b>	11 <b>12:00 Lunch Bunch</b>	12	13
14 10:00 Worship <b>Be The Church/MLK</b> 11:15 <b>Book Study</b>	15	16 7:00 Boy Scouts 7:30 Chancel Choir	17 9:00 Bulletin Deadline 11:00 <b>Book Study</b>	18 9:00 Feb Branches Deadline	19	20
21 10:00 Worship <b>Youth Mission Trip Fundraiser Brunch</b> Directly after Worship 11:15 <b>Book Study</b>	22	23 7:00 Boy Scouts 7:30 Chancel Choir	24 9:00 Bulletin Deadline 7:00 <b>Building &amp; Property meeting</b> 11:00 <b>Book Study</b>	25	26	27
28 10:00 Worship <b>Annual Congregational Meeting Directly after Worship</b>	29	30 7:00 Boy Scouts 7:30 Chancel Choir	31 9:00 Bulletin Deadline 11:00 <b>Book Study</b>	1	2	3

