



A Letter from Our Pastor

*In those days, a decree went out from Caesar Augustus
that all the world should be registered.
This was the first registration
and was taken while Quirinius was governor of Syria.
Everyone went to their own town to be registered.
Joseph also went from the town of Nazareth in Galilee to Judea,
to the city of David called Bethlehem,
because he was descended from the house and family of David.
Joseph went to be registered with Mary, to whom he was engaged,
and who was expecting a child.
While they were there, the time came for her to deliver . . . (Luke 2)*

Christmas 2025

Luke's story of the birth of Christ ~ a decree from Emperor Augustus; a mass and forced migration of people made to leave everything ~ homes, jobs, everything (In a tiny strip of land 25 miles long and no more than 7 ½ miles wide known as the Gaza Strip, 1.9 million people have been "displaced"; 117 million people in our world are refugees now. It was proportionate in Jesus' day.); a child born into that situation, swaddled as Isaiah says because that befits royalty, but perhaps equally because there were no onesies or fluffy baby blankets; a trough for a crib, and shepherds and angels and all the earth being wrapped in peace. It's a story about God choosing to enter a world much like ours, filled with violence and suffering, dictators and bullies, and lots of people just trying to make it. It's a story about a gift and a promise and hope.

It's a story we've told many times over our years together, deconstructing Luke's carefully crafted symbolism and references to prophecies like those from Isaiah. And all of that is important if we are to get to the bottom of Luke's message for an empire much like the one we currently live under. (More on that on Christmas Eve!)

And . . . what really hit me this year was: Mary was expecting—the time came for her to deliver.

What are we expecting now, as Queer people, trans people, black and brown and Asian people, Ukrainians and Palestinians and people from the DRC, women and migrants and preachers protesting and 6-year-old boys accompanying their father are targeted, detained, and denied due process.

What are we "pregnant" with/carrying with us ~ maybe inside ~ that if we just put it out there, just let go of it or "birthed" it, might enable new life or restore hope or even save someone—like 71-year-old Jane Mauldin, a pastor in New Orleans is doing, patrolling the streets for ICE violations, because what's in her is a passion for all God's children being welcome here and treated with dignity.

(continued on page 2)

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MCCNY 
METROPOLITAN COMMUNITY CHURCH OF NEW YORK

MCCNY is a member of Metropolitan Community Churches, a global movement of faith with congregations in 28 nations. The Rev. Elder Cecilia Eggleston, Moderator

Letter from Our Pastor (continued from page 1)

The time came for Mary to deliver—and she gave birth to her *proto tokos*, her first born, not her only born, an important distinction because it means the call to deliver is not a one-time thing. —That drag queen, Pattie Gonia, trekking 100 miles in full drag to raise money for climate activists. She's full of love for God's creation and put it out there. "I hope I can be a little bit of proof to you," she said, "that combining who you are {what's inside you waiting to be delivered, to take on life} and what you're good at to fight for the change you want to see in the world works . . ." It's supposed to happen more than once ~ more people are supposed to deliver.

That Japanese rapper, Cocona, coming out as transmasculine nonbinary. Letting his true self out, delivering the truth of who he is, changed, he says, the way he sees and understands the world and what he is here for.

What is it each of us is called to deliver right now ~ is it some truth about ourselves, or something emotional or spiritual or physical we just can't seem to put out there or let go of?

We hold on to a lot of stuff, a lot of things that serve no purpose until we let go of them ~ old wounds, tchotchke, old clothes that might come back into style, ways of doing things that don't really get us where we want to go.

Mary Jane and I have a storage unit. We convinced ourselves we needed it 37 years, 7 months and 20 days ago, for all the stuff we might need someday, things that had some now long lost meaning. But after all those years, none of it ever seeing the light of day, what purpose is any of it serving? Will we ever take anything out of storage? If we move, would we just drag it all along? To what end?

John Mogabgab writes that to deliver, to be part of the deliverance God is offering our world, we have to gather in ourselves both memory and expectation ~ both the memory of who God has been for us and the expectation of who God promises to be. It's why, as Isaiah puts it, people walking in "darkness" can see in that "darkness" a great light, because they carried experience and hope together.

We worship a God who sets people free. Remember that and hold to the hope that that's the plan for our world even now.

Our God is One who makes a way out of no way, so remember that and never lose hope or sacrifice your vision for the future to present circumstances.

The time came for Mary to deliver.

This was the oath you swore to our ancestors, Zechariah prays in the Temple after the birth of John the Baptist.

Deliver us from all that is evil, Jesus will teach disciples to pray.

The word Scripture uses means more than rescue. It's about not letting anything get between us and the promise of God for our world. It's time for us to deliver—so be a Mary! Gift the world with whatever you've been carrying around 9 days, 9 months, 9 years. Stand and deliver, and every day can be Christmas somewhere for someone.

With love,



The Rev. Elder Pat Bumgardner

The QUERY

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Sunday Worship Service
11 a.m. Celebration

Livestreaming on Facebook
facebook.com/MCCNY

Help MCCNY “Wrap Up” 2025!

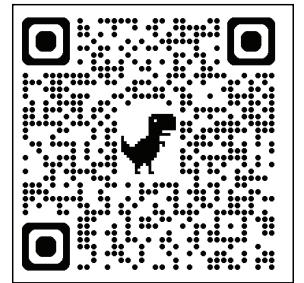
Your extra gift to MCCNY this holiday season can help the church end the year in sound financial shape!

The “Wrap It Up” campaign works like this: come to any service between now and the end of the year. You’ll receive a small red box and a lovely green ribbon. Just fold the box into shape, place your financial gift inside, and write your name on the top inside flap. Tie your ribbon around the box and: voilà, your gift is wrapped! Then, just place your box in the offering. You’ll be sharing a deeply meaningful present with all who call MCCNY their spiritual home.



Your “Wrap it Up” gift helps sustain programs like the Sylvia Rivera Food Pantry and Sylvia’s Place shelter for homeless LGBTQI+ youth, while also supporting Sunday services, including our phenomenal choir and music ministry! If you’ve gotten behind on your regular giving over the past year, this is a great time to catch up.

If you can’t make it to a service between now and the end of the year, or if you attend MCCNY virtually and would like to contribute to “Wrap it Up,” just scan the QR code at right to give online.



Thank you for your loving support of MCCNY! Merry Christmas!

Give a Gift to a Shelter Resident or Food Pantry Client!

To designate your online gift for a shelter resident or food pantry client, select *Sylvia Rivera’s Place* from the drop down menu on the donation portal.

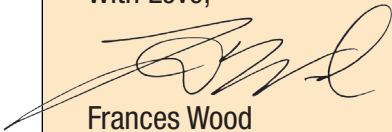
Letter from the Editor

Love is patient—I am often not. Or, patience is something I aspire to, but I sometimes find myself becoming impatient with the limits of my own imagination. If I can’t visualize something here, now, in its wholeness, I can’t fathom how it will possibly ever exist. This limitation applies when I approach something like writing this letter, and when I long for transformational things like justice, the fall of bigoted despots, and the creation of a new way of living defined instead by love. How can I bear the uncertainty of not knowing what comes next?

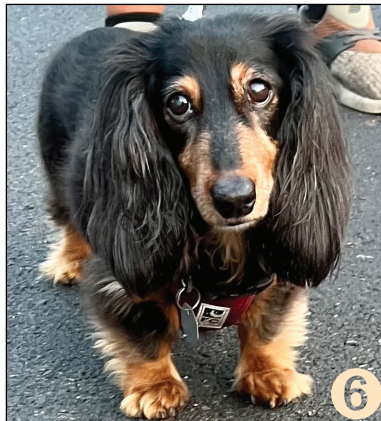
The Christmas story reminds me that great things often seem impossible until they happen. Like the birth of Jesus, who was not a king, and who would change the world with love. And Advent—the in-between time where the longed-for thing has not yet appeared, but is somehow in the process of happening in ways we cannot fully see. Maybe what I’m really talking about is a faith that affirms that there are no limits to divine imagination, and therefore no limits to our own. I see it when people come together to protect their immigrant neighbors: over 1,000 gathering in a sanctuary in Brooklyn to practice saying, in unison, “Let them go!” It’s in every protest sign and every person who approaches this world each day with love, or does the best they can, even, and especially, when it seems impossible.

In his Thanksgiving sermon, Les said: “Something that may be true is that our better selves, the people we most aspire to be, are also our most authentic selves, even if we fall short of being them. The process of moving toward them is what life is, or this is how life feels to me now.” I am holding on to this while moving forward, even if the process sometimes feels so slow as to seem impossible. Something is being realized; something glorious is taking shape.

With Love,



Frances Wood



Faces of MCCNY

1 Cliff Boone at the No King's March in October with his beautiful handmade sign!

2 Thank you to Deacon Brenton Buchanan for providing MCCNY's social hour reception every Sunday!

3 A Homecoming baby shower for June and Roxanna!

4 June, the sweetest Halloween pumpkin.

5 Our warmest thanks to The Imperial Court of New York, Danny Gonzalez, and Domingo Diaz, Jr. for organizing *Latin Explosion: ENCANTO* to benefit Sylvia's Place! Danny is pictured with Sylvia Rivera Food Pantry Manager Makailah Hayes who spoke at the November event held at Industry Bar.

6 Remembering Dexter, beloved companion of Robert King and Barry Barr.

7 Merry Christmas from Bishop Jim Merritt and husband Al Leach!



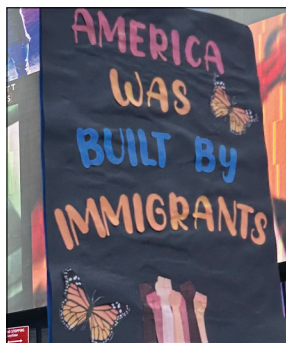
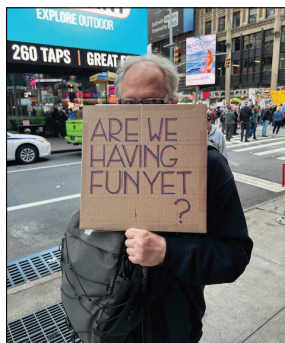
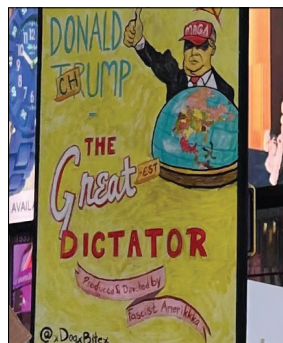
What's Rise of the Resistance? by Alva Bostick

Feeling overwhelmed by the state of our country? Want to take more action, but don't know what to do? Then Rise of the Resistance may be the group for you. We meet after church about once per month to share resources (e.g. where to find training for marches/rallies, info on boycotts/contacting our elected officials, etc.), brainstorm actions, and share good news. Participation in Rise of the Resistance is entirely voluntary and up to each individual.

Members are welcome to engage at their own comfort level, whether that means attending meetings, sharing resources, signing up for a task, or simply listening in for ideas and support.

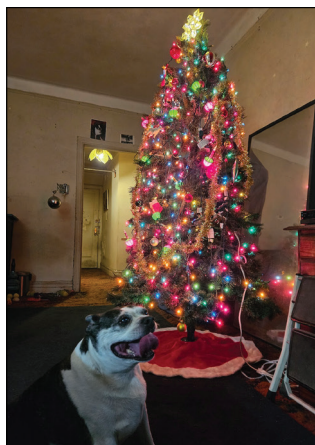
Next meeting is TBD in January. For more information, catch me after church.

Images from the No Kings March by Mary Elizabeth Poole



Sammy About Town

Sammy is on the move! From left to right: posing in front of the beautiful Christmas tree in the home he shares with loving companion Joe Kennedy; strolling on Hell Gate Trail on Randall's Island; and spreading Christmas cheer at Rockefeller Center. Sammy is a stalwart member of MCCNY, attending Sunday services every week. He and Joe walk to church each Sunday from their apartment on the Upper East Side.



MCCNY
ANNUAL



CONGREGATIONAL MEETING!

Please join members of MCCNY's Board of Directors on Sunday, January 25th following the 11am Celebration. Reports of the year will be received and a new budget presented.

Meet Margot Wagner: The Face Behind Virtual Church!

Hello MCCNY!

I just wanted to pop in and say hello to the blessed community :), and introduce myself to those who may not know me. I found my way to MCCNY while living in NYC and attending Union Theological Seminary, from 2019-2021. I interned for MCCNY in that time, and this church became my spiritual home during a time of deep seeking and struggle in my life. I am forever grateful for the respite I found in the MCCNY community during times of personal and communal turmoil.

I moved back to San Francisco in the fall of 2021, where I currently work as a hospice chaplain, and live with my loving partner Ixchel. I fell into the role of facilitating the virtual worship over a year ago, and it is deeply meaningful to me to be able to stay connected to a place that means so much to me. I appreciate everyone's grace when the demands of life and the time difference get the best of me! And, I always love to see how everyone greets and supports each other in the virtual worship just as lovingly and attentively as they do in person. I'm not sure when I will be back in NYC next, but lord knows I'll be back at church whenever the fates allow! Whether online or in person, I treasure our church and hold MCCNY in my heart always.

Sending love,

Margot



A picture of me (on the right!) and my bestie Sam Davis the last time I was in NYC, December 2024.

Global Justice in Lorwana, Botswana

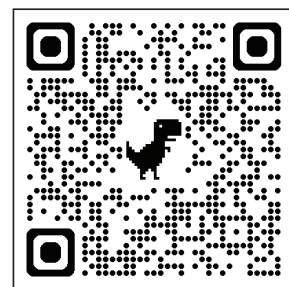


Sponsored by GJI, the farm project at Lorwana AME Church in Botswana continues to progress with the installation of gardening poles.

The project's three phases will include bringing electric and water access to the crop site, developing an ecologically sustainable farm on .6 acres of land, and completing construction on the church building in order to house future community programming.

Out lesbian pastor Rev. Chantell Fortuin is leading the effort to build an inclusive space, open to all.

To support this work in Botswana, scan the QR code at right.



Global Justice Institute Statement on Transgender Day of Remembrance

The Transgender Day of Remembrance (TDoR), observed annually on November 20th, is an observance dedicated to memorializing transgender, non-binary, and gender non-conforming persons who have been murdered due to transphobia. Originating as a vigil in 1999 by Gwendolyn Ann Smith to honor the memory of Rita Hester, a Black transgender woman killed the previous year, TDoR became an international yearly event. TDoR serves both to mourn the loss of lives and to raise public awareness about the extreme violence the Trans* community faces.

TDoR shines a light on anti-transgender violence which is often rooted in intersecting systems of oppression, disproportionately affecting Black and Latina transgender women.

The annual reading of names during vigils is a powerful act of grief and defiance, ensuring that those who were too often misgendered or erased by media and law enforcement are seen, honored, and remembered by their community.

Ultimately, TDoR is a call to action. By exposing fatal bigotry, the observance demands us to advocate for a world where transgender people can live authentically and safely. It reminds allies and community members that the fight for justice is ongoing and demands collective support and perseverance every day of the year.

The Council of Bishops of the Global Justice Institute affirm the sacred value of the transgender, non-binary, gender nonconforming, and gender queer children of God. Members of the Trans* community are part of the Rainbow diversity of the world that God has called “very good.”

The Trans* community is a vital part of LGBTQQIAA+ culture and queer history, an integral part of the inclusive, liberating Church of Jesus the Anointed, and siblings worthy of love and respect in the human family. We bless you and ask God to grant you that peace which can guard your hearts and minds in the love of Christ.

Standing with you,

Presiding Bishop Pat Bumgardner, Bishop Jim Merritt, Bishop Robert Griffin, Bishop Durrell Watkins



Global Justice Institute Statement on World AIDS Day

World AIDS Day, observed annually on December 1st, is more than a mere health awareness day; it is a critical global moment of remembrance and recommitment.

Established in 1988, the day serves to honor the more than 32 million lives lost to AIDS-related illnesses and to demonstrate international solidarity with the 39 million people worldwide currently living with HIV. Its core purpose is to maintain political urgency, push back against societal stigma, and fuel the momentum required to meet the 2030 goal of ending the epidemic.

The day's importance lies in its ability to galvanize funding for life-saving initiatives. World AIDS Day centers global health equity and underscores that stigma and discrimination remain dangerous barriers to testing and treatment. It serves as a reminder that complacency is deadly in the ongoing fight against a preventable and manageable disease. Former presidents have acknowledged HIV care and prevention to be a matter of national security. The U.S. government's current dismissal of the day is profoundly egregious.

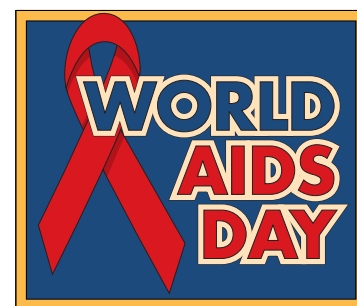
The instruction by the White House administration to skip the formal commemoration of World AIDS Day, coupled with cuts to HIV prevention funding (both domestically and globally) is a moral disgrace. To claim, as the current administration has done, that “awareness is not a strategy” is a cynical insult to the millions lost and a dangerous statement of apathy toward those currently living with HIV and it appears to place political messaging over public health.

World AIDS Day is meant to challenge the world to confront the ongoing reality of the epidemic. When our highest authorities choose silence or neglect, it highlights the need for increased community action. Continued progress requires both the tireless work of activists and consistent financial and rhetorical support from the government, ensuring the fight against HIV/AIDS remains a national priority.

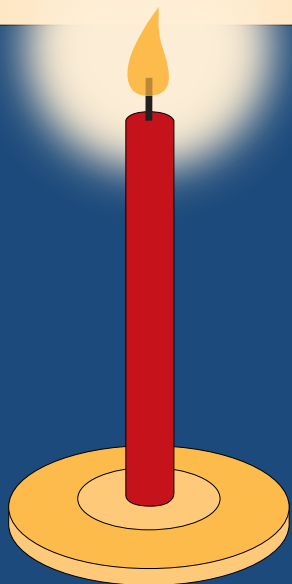
The Global Justice Institute Council of Bishops is praying today for all who are living with HIV, for all who work to find a cure, and for all who lost loved ones far too soon to a viral assault that has taken too many. May God's healing love enfold us all.

Faithfully,

Presiding Bishop Pat Bumgardner, Bishop Jim Merritt, Bishop Robert Griffin, Bishop Durrell Watkins



Celebrate with MCCNY



Christmas Eve
by Candlelight

December 24 at 7pm

Gala Holiday Party to follow!

The Rev. Elder Pat Bumgardner, preaching



Christmas Day
with Lessons & Carols

December 25 at 11am

Sumptuous Holiday Brunch to follow!

The Rev. Dr. Robin Gorsline, preaching



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