

2 Lynch & Long



3 Singin' and prayin'



4-5 Redemptive art



6 Neil Simon revival



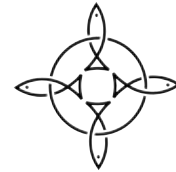
7 New staff



# The VOICE

January/February 2012

▲ Inside The VOICE



## Life After Life



Jean Erish (1937–2011)  
Richard Burrill (1951–2011)

The December issue of *The VOICE* was due to arrive from the printer the morning we learned of Jean Erish's death.

Erish, 74, a former officer of Fifth Avenue Presbyterian Church and a beloved presence here for more than 25 years, died in her home on Nov. 30. In an email to the congregation a few days later, senior pastor Scott Black Johnston wrote that he had wept over the loss of "a true pillar of the church and a dear friend of mine."

By stroke of grace or odd coincidence, *The VOICE* that appeared in the pews that Sunday invited the congregation to take part in "A Christian Conversation About Death." It introduced a book project (now underway) centered on a collective reading of Thomas Lynch's 1997 memoir, *The Undertaking: Life Stories from the Dismal Trade*.

"Thinking about death is something we ought to do as a Christian community," read the quote from Scott. "It's part of the Christian narrative—birth, death and resurrection. That's not just Jesus' story, it's our story, too."

Now it had become Jean's story. And just like that, a project conceived as a literary assignment, an exercise in theology, became real. And deeply personal.

A few weeks ago, it happened again. Just as dozens of us were buying up copies of *The Undertaking* from The Shop, and small groups were forming and scheduling time to discuss Lynch's book, Rick Burrill died.

If you didn't know Rick, you knew his kind face. Another longtime member of the church, and a former Deacon, he was a stalwart in the corps of Ushers and Greeters, often the first person you'd see here on a Sunday morning. He died on Dec. 30, only a few weeks past his 60th birthday.

Birth, death, resurrection. Rick's story.

The nearness of death can't help but raise questions of faith. *What do I believe—truly believe—about what comes next? Will we join Jesus in paradise, as he promised? Is there such a thing as eternal life?*

By stroke of grace, or odd coincidence, we have several opportunities in the coming weeks to reflect on these very concerns.

On Thursday, Jan. 26, FAPC will host an interfaith event titled "Life After Life." We will welcome congregants from Central Synagogue and the Mosque of Islamic Brotherhood to a panel discussion on the afterlife with Rabbi Peter Rubinstein, Imam Al-Hajj Talib W. 'Abdur-Rashid and Dr. Black Johnston, moderated by the Rev. Charlene Han Powell.

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The house I live in here on Liberty was built in 1880. It had a cistern in the cellar to collect rainwater and likely had a pump in the kitchen and an outhouse in the backyard surrounded by lilacs. Next to the kitchen was the birthing room where agreeable women of that age had their babies. And after the babies were born and showed good signs of living (no sure thing then—more than half of the deaths in 1900 were children under twelve), they were christened, often in a room up front, the priest or parson standing between the aunts and uncles and grandparents that populated the households of that era.

The homes were large to house multiple births and generations. There were households in which, just as babies were being birthed, grandparents were aging upstairs with chicken soup and doctors' home visits until, alas, they died and were taken downstairs to the same room the babies were christened in to get what was called then, "laid out." Between the births and deaths were the courtships—sparkings and spoonings between

boys and girls just barely out of their teens.... The room in which grandparents were waked and new babies were baptized and love was proffered and contracted—the parlor.

The funerals held in my funeral parlor lack an essential manifest—the connection of the baby born to the marriage made to the deaths we grieve in the life of a family. I have no weddings or baptisms in the funeral home and the folks that pay me have maybe lost sight of the obvious connections between the life and the death of us. And how the rituals by which we mark the things that only happen to us once, birth and death, or maybe twice in the case of marriage, carry the same emotional mail—a message of loss and gain, love and grief, things changed utterly.

.....  
 Thomas Lynch, *The Undertaking: Life Studies from the Dismal Trade* (1997). Reprinted with permission.



*An undertaker and a theologian describe how funerals reflect our faith, and ourselves.*

A Christian funeral is a continuation and elaboration of the baptismal service. If baptism is a form of worshipful drama performed at the beginning of the Christian life, a funeral is—or should be—an equally dramatic, and symmetrical, performance of worship performed at the end of life. When Christians traveling along the baptismal path die, the company of the faithful who were there to guide them at the beginning are also there to carry them at the end. In baptism, new Christians are 'buried with Christ by baptism into death,' and they come up from the waters raised to 'walk in newness of life.' In funerals, these same Christians, having traveled the pilgrim way, are once again buried with Christ in death in the sure confidence that they will be raised to new life. In baptism, the faithful sang them into this new way of life; now they gather around to sing them to God in death. Just as they washed the new Christian in the waters of baptism,

they now lovingly wash the body of the deceased. Just as they adorned the newly baptized Christian with the garments of Christ, they now adorn the deceased in clothes fitting to meet God and perhaps place a pall, a symbol of the garments of baptism, over the coffin. As the church has been traveling with the baptized saint along the road of faith, the church now walks with the deceased on 'the last mile of the way' to the place of farewell.

The funeral, then, is not just a collection of inspiring words said on the occasion of someone's death. It is, rather, a dramatic event in which the church acts out what it believes to be happening from the perspective of faith.

.....  
 Thomas Long, *Accompany Them With Singing: The Christian Funeral* (2009). Reprinted with permission.



*continued from page 1*

Then on Sunday, Feb. 12, the Rev. Dr. Thomas Long will be our guest preacher during worship and will lead an Adult Education class that examines key topics from *The Undertaking*—in particular, the Christian approach to funerals—from a scholar's perspective.

"The reason the Jewish afterlife is interesting, in my opinion, is that theories have changed over time," says Rabbi Lisa Rubin, one of the organizers of the interfaith panel. "There has not been one, unchanged definition in our tradition. Rather, it has evolved throughout the Biblical, Rabbinical, Medieval and Modern periods. This is a remarkable indicator that Judaism was meant to change and adapt—there are many theories of the afterlife in Judaism."

The same is true of Christianity. In his book, *Accompany Them With Singing: The Christian Funeral* (2009), Long offers the example of purgatory, the classical Roman Catholic doctrine about a place for purification in the afterlife, the soul's first stop on its return

to God. The Reformation rejected purgatory as unbiblical, and Catholic teaching eventually shifted from purgatory as a location to a metaphysical transformation.

"The Muslim conception of the hereafter, like others of the Abrahamic faith traditions, centers on judgment, reward, punishment, heaven and hell," Imam Talib says. "The relationship between this life and the next is like the two sides of a coin—linked, joined. There is no Islam without a belief in the hereafter."

Perhaps the strongest common thread, in any faith, is hope. The promise of "life after life" offers the hope that Death will not get the last word.

After the news went out about Rick Burrill's death, one parishioner wrote back, "We never know when the Lord will call us home, do we? I applaud him in his triumphant victory."

**Learning Reverence**

*This winter, Adult Education offers a pair of courses addressing two of the fundamentals of worship—music and prayer. Nathan Fuhrman, choral associate, section leader and frequent soloist with the Choir of Fifth Avenue Presbyterian Church, leads a six-part course, "Introduction to Music & Voice Building." Linda Jiménez, Lilly Resident in Ministry, teaches a five-week course on "Rhythms of Prayer." The instructors invite you to join in.*



"Music is one of the most powerful, and often sacred, forces in our lives. Have you ever wondered how it 'worked'? Do you look at the hymnal with more confusion about what's on the page than when you see something written in a foreign language? Have you ever heard the beautiful singing, whether on your iPod or in church, and wanted to sing like that?"

"I've been singing and performing music my whole life; however, it doesn't take a whole lifetime to learn music. The Introduction to Music & Voice Building class is designed for everyone—from those of you who may have taken music lessons years ago to the novice. I'll be taking us through the fundamentals of music notation, rhythm and harmony with simple lessons and discussions.

"I've studied music theory, history and performance practice and been teaching for over 12 years. I'm excited about sharing this knowledge and love of music with you. I hope you will come and learn, but also along the way, have your spirits nurtured."

"Introduction to Music & Voice Building" began on Jan. 11 and continues for five alternating Wednesdays—Jan. 25, Feb. 8, Feb. 22, March 7 and March 21—at 7 pm in the Christian Education Center.



"Let's be real—prayer can be a scary thing. It can be weird trying to figure out what to say, what not to say. Should I have said Thee or Thou? God or Our Father? Should I have said Jesus' name a few more times? Should I have let the 'meditative silence' go a little longer before I said Amen?"

"Over the years, I have had to learn to work through my praying jitters. No, they haven't gone away entirely. However, through my experiences participating in small groups, prayer classes, retreats, as well as helping to lead prayer conference tracks and ministries, I hope to share with others some of the things I've learned along the way.

"My hope is that the Rhythms of Prayer class will be a place where you will learn simple ways to pray that will help you grow spiritually. I also want it to be a space where you don't feel like your prayers are being graded. I want it to be a time when we can simply open our hearts to God."

"Rhythms of Prayer" begins Wednesday, Feb. 1, and continues weekly through Feb. 29. The class meets at 6:30 pm in the Corning Logan Room. To help establish trust within the community, this course will be closed to new participants after the first session.

## PORTRAITS OF THE ARTISTS



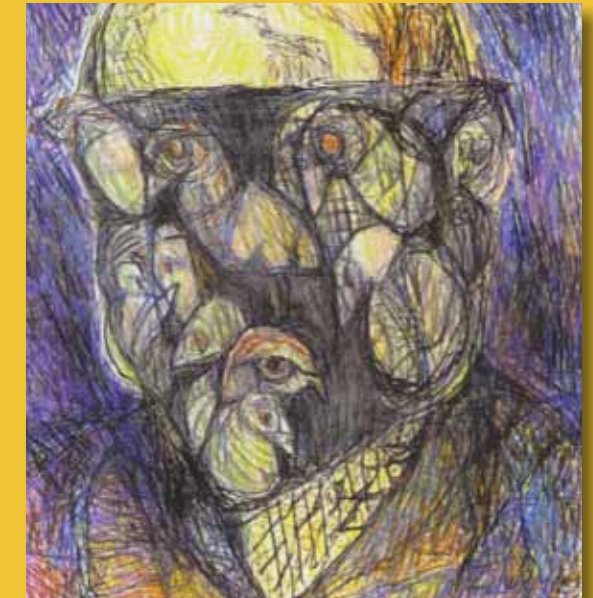
NYC 108th Street  
Michael Blamo  
Watercolor on paper



The Scarlet Coast  
Ira Brewer  
Acrylic on Canvas



Portrait  
Patricia Doherty  
Oil on Canvas



Self Portrait  
Scott Zwiren  
Graphite on paper

*None of the works in Expressions is explicitly religious, nor necessarily faith-inspired.*

*Yet each represents a story of redemption.*

**Robert Kaplan moved to New York City after graduating from college, intent on an art career. A psychological breakdown in his mid-20s derailed his plans.**

**Scott Zwiren lost his right arm and part of his right leg when he jumped in front of a subway train in 1986. He now draws with his left hand.**

**Rosalia Silva, a Mexican immigrant, has been a New Yorker for over a decade. An artist for just three years, her work was part of an exhibition at the Museum of Modern Art last fall.**

Their stories are as diverse as their art—a diversity that shines through *Expressions*, the exhibition on display until Easter in the Gallery of Fifth Avenue Presbyterian Church.

*Expressions*, sponsored by the Arts and Our Faith Committee, features 20 artworks by the Bridge Group Artists. Watercolors and acrylic paintings share the Gallery with pencil drawings, mixed-media collages, and dinosaurs rendered in tissues and twist ties.

The Bridge Group Artists are a select group of men and women from the art therapy program at The Bridge, a New York nonprofit agency that provides mental health, rehabilitation and housing services to individuals with mental illness, the homeless, and persons living with HIV/AIDS.

Most of the artists live with schizophrenia, bipolar disorder or other mental illness. They have survived homelessness, suicide attempts and substance abuse. For them, art therapy provides a means of creative expression for experiences and emotions that are often beyond words.

None of the works in *Expressions* is explicitly religious, nor necessarily faith-inspired. Yet each represents a story of redemption.

“The power of these paintings hits you when you understand something of the challenges these artists have faced and managed to overcome,” says Ron Cruikshank, a member of both the Arts and Our Faith Committee and The Bridge board of directors. “We hope they will be a source of inspiration and reflection, especially as we approach Lent and the Easter season.”

The Bridge Group Artists was first organized in 1988, shortly after art therapist Judith Raskin Rosenthal joined the staff of The Bridge. Although close to 100 of the agency’s clients are involved in art therapy and a poetry writing workshop, Bridge Group Artists is a unique group. Rosenthal invites only those artists who demonstrate particular talent and drive.

The program enables the most-talented artists to further develop their skills and to show (and often sell) their work in exhibitions sponsored by The Bridge or with partnering organizations like FAPC. A milestone last fall was *Imagination*, the group’s exhibit at MoMA.

Therapeutic creative arts is just one of an array of services that The Bridge provides to nearly 2,000 New Yorkers every year. The

organization was founded in 1954, at a time when the state of New York was aggressively working to “de-institutionalize” its mental health system. More than 85,000 patients have been discharged from the state’s psychiatric hospitals over the past 30 years. Many of them wind up living on the streets or in substandard housing, with little or no access to health and rehabilitation services.

The Bridge now offers training and job placement services, transitional and permanent housing, substance-abuse recovery programs and mental health services. Among its innovative programs are urban farms, located at two of its residential facilities, where residents practice horticulture, learn about better nutrition, and prepare for job opportunities in horticulture and food service.

A 2011 benevolence grant from FAPC will enable The Bridge to open a third urban farm at its facility in Harlem this year.

*Expressions* will be on view in The Gallery through Easter Sunday, April 8. Many of the artworks are available for sale; information is available in The Gallery.

For more information on The Bridge, visit [thebridgeny.org](http://thebridgeny.org).

## PUTTING ON A SHOW

*This month, Broadway stretches a few blocks east—all the way to Fifth Avenue.*

### Broadway Bound

**Opening night: Friday, Jan. 27 • 7 pm**

*Additional evening performances*

Jan. 28; Feb. 1, 2, 3 & 4 • 7 pm

*Matinee performances*

Sundays, Jan. 29 & Feb. 5 • 2 pm.

### Tickets

All tickets are \$18.

FAPC members may purchase tickets during coffee hour following Sunday worship on Jan. 22 and Jan. 29.

Tickets are also available online at [www.smartix.com](http://www.smartix.com) or by calling 212.868.4444.



On stage: Director Jonas Goslow with Theatre Fellowship chair Linda Ferm (right) and volunteer Arline Thienel.

*Broadway Bound*, a revival of the award-winning play by Neil Simon, opens in Jones Auditorium on Friday, Jan. 27, for eight performances. The production at Fifth Avenue Presbyterian Church is the Theatre Fellowship's first Off Off Broadway Showcase in three years.

*Broadway Bound* is directed by Jonas Goslow and produced by Linda Ferm, chair of the Theatre Fellowship. Three performers and more than 40 volunteers from the congregation are involved in the production.

Goslow, a native of San Francisco, studied at the Guthrie Theater in Minneapolis and worked in the company there for four years. He's performed with such noted actors as Mark Rylance and Harriet Harris and performed starring roles in *Two Gentlemen of Verona* and *Arsenic and Old Lace*.

As a director, Goslow has a passion for telling classic American stories. "*Broadway Bound* is a story of a family struggling to find a new American dream," he says. "The play is full of humor, pain, love and struggle. Simon takes us on a great American journey, into the memoirs of a young man who must finally leave his home behind."

*Broadway Bound* is set in 1949 at the Jerome family home in the working-class neighborhood in Brooklyn known as Brighton Beach. Brothers Eugene and Stanley have begun writing comedy sketches for television, hoping this will be their first step on the road to fame. The 1986 stage hit is the final play in Simon's autobiographical trilogy, preceded by *Brighton Beach Memoirs* in 1983 and *Biloxi Blues* in 1985.

The six-member cast of *Broadway Bound* is drawn largely from the Actors' Equity Association. Three performers from FAPC—Bob Brennan, Ed Fagan and Janet Luhrs—are featured in pre-recorded vocal performances.

"A production on this scale takes a community, and that is what the Theatre Fellowship is all about," Ferm says. "We are a community of people who love theatre and see it as an expression of our faith, as well as an outreach for FAPC. Members of the congregation are handling stage management, set construction, ushering, marketing and other key aspects of production. We could not mount this play without their amazing assistance and dedication."

*Broadway Bound* is an approved Actors' Equity Association Showcase production produced by special arrangement with Samuel French, Inc.



## NEW2FAPC

Meet our new colleagues in Outreach and Family Ministries

### Aram Bae ▼

**Position** Director of Family Ministries

**Start Date** Jan. 3, 2012

### Short Bio

Aram was born in Seoul, South Korea, and emigrated to the States before her second birthday. She has lived in four different states—Virginia, most recently. Her parents live in Richmond, where her father is a Presbyterian minister, and her younger brother lives in Washington, DC. Aram's been in New York City for six years, working on a doctorate in Practical Theology (with a focus on Religion & Education) at Union Theological Seminary. She graduates in May. She also has an M.Div. from Princeton Theological Seminary, a Master of Christian Education from Union Presbyterian Seminary in Richmond, and an undergraduate degree from Smith College.

### Aram on Aram

"Fried chicken, barbecue ribs and sweet potato fries—these are the things that make me smile and mark me as a Southern gal at heart. A theologically sound Sunday School curriculum, children engaged in interactive learning, and teens who have ownership of their own faith journeys—these are the things that make me smile even bigger and mark me as an educator at heart. I have a passion for Christian Education, one that involves a commitment to children and youth in their spiritual development. Teens truly do care about faith matters. They are not shy about asking the tough questions, and not afraid to seek the answers. I look forward to meeting the families at FAPC, and hope to meet all of you in the coming months."

### Amanda Ashcraft ▲

**Position** Interim Director of Outreach Ministries

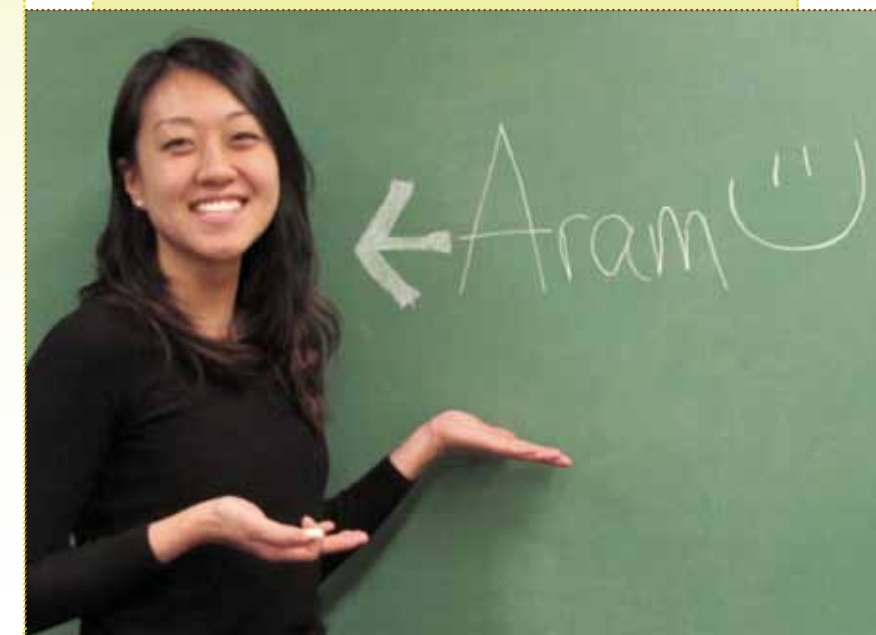
**Start Date** Jan. 8, 2012

### Short Bio

Amanda was born in Georgetown, Kentucky, and has lived in Alabama, Virginia and New York. She is the second-oldest of five siblings: Older sister Logan is a lawyer at the ICC in the Hague, sister Erin is working on a PhD in clinical psychology at the University of Kentucky, sister Gentry works at Georgetown Pediatrics (the practice their father began in 1986), and brother Rhodes is a pre-med student at Furman University. Amanda has a Master of Divinity degree from Baptist Theological Seminary in Richmond and a BA from Samford University. For the last four years she was the Outreach Coordinator for Rauschenbusch Metro Ministries at the historic Metro Baptist Church in Hell's Kitchen. Husband Graham has an M.Div. from Duke University and is working for the NYC Department of Education as he pursues an MBA at Baruch College.

### Amanda on Amanda

"My friends know me as ARae, as I am fond of my middle name Rae, which I share with my mother, grandmother and three-year-old niece Amie. My friends also know me to spend too much time in Irregular Choice (the funky shoe store in Soho), to dream about the past on Orchard Street (my old neighborhood on the Lower East Side), and to be a devoted Kentucky basketball fan. Family and friends are paramount to me, and I hope to count each of you as such as my time at FAPC continues. I am honored to work in a place that values mission and cares as much about what happens outside our walls as it does inside. Cultivating a passion within our congregation to continually ask, 'How can we usher in the kingdom of God?' will keep me happily busy in my office on the sixth floor. Come see me, and we can ask and dream together."





Worship



Fellowship



Learning



Family Ministries



Outreach

## ▲Check out our video series

### January

- 22 **Adult Education: Celtic Chant and Prayer, Part 2.** An exploration of Scripture, meditative chant and prayer, led by the Rev. Randy Weber. Concludes Jan. 29. 9:45 am, Boardroom.
- Adult Education: Economy and Ethics.** A panel discussion with Dr. Katharine Henderson, president, Auburn Seminary; Glenn Hubbard, dean, Columbia Business School; and John Weisel, partner, Ernst & Young. 12:30 pm, Jones Auditorium.
- Bowery Mission.** FAPC volunteers have led worship and served dinner once a month at this historic shelter for more than 40 years. 5:45 pm, 227 Bowery, between Prince and Rivington Streets on the Lower East Side.
- 25 **Eccentric Existence.** Twice-monthly discussion group on faith, prayer and discipleship, led by senior pastor Scott Black Johnston. Continues Feb. 8 & 22. 7:07 am, Romeyn Room.
- Adult Education: Introduction to Music & Voice Building.** Led by Choral Associate Nathan Fuhrman. Continues Feb. 8 & 22, March 7 & 21. 7 pm, Christian Education Center.
- 26 **Adult Education: Life After Life.** Interfaith panel discussion on the theology of the afterlife, with the senior clergy and congregants of Central Synagogue, Fifth Avenue Presbyterian Church and the Mosque of Islamic Brotherhood. 7 pm, Bonnell Hall.
- 27-28 **Women's Winter Sabbath.** Led by the Rev. Kate Dunn. 6 pm Friday through 4 pm Saturday. House of the Redeemer, 7 E. 95th St.

# JAN FEB

### February

- 1 **Adult Education: Rhythms of Prayer.** Five-week course led by Linda Jiménez, Lilly Resident in Ministry. Weekly through Feb. 29. 6:30 pm, Corning Logan Room.
- 6 **Mom's Bible Study.** Sponsored by Family Ministries, this study group meets at 9:30 am on the first Monday of the month. For information, contact Mollie Duggal ([mollieduggal@yahoo.com](mailto:mollieduggal@yahoo.com)).
- 7 **Employment Advisory.** 6:30 pm, Corning Logan Room.
- Adult Education: Future of Faith.** Monthly, three-part series begins. Author and filmmaker Irshad Manji speaks about her Muslim faith and presents a segment from her PBS film, *Faith Without Fear*. Future events will be held at Brick Presbyterian Church and First Presbyterian Church. 7 pm, Christian Education Center.
- 8 **Eccentric Existence, Introduction to Music & Voice Building, and Rhythms of Prayer continue.** See Jan. 25 & Feb. 1 (*above*) for details.
- 11 **Parents Night Out.** 3:30 pm, Christian Education Center.
- 12 **Adult Education: The Undertaking.** The Rev. Dr. Thomas Long, professor of preaching at the Candler School of Theology, Emory University, discusses the erosion of Christian tradition in modern funeral practices. Dr. Long also is our guest preacher during worship. 12:30 pm, Jones Auditorium.
- 19 **Third Sunday Youth Hike.** Monthly outing by the FAPC Youth Group. 12:30 pm, 55th Street entrance.
- Adult Education: A Historical and Architectural Tour of Fifth Avenue Presbyterian Church.** Insider's walking tour led by longtime member Gail Crane and Derek Maddalena, director of facilities. 12:30 pm, Jones Auditorium.
- 20 **Presidents' Day Holiday.** Building closed.
- 21 **Employment Advisory.** 6:30 pm, Corning Logan Room.
- 22 **Ash Wednesday.** Services at 12 noon and 6:30 pm in Kirkland Chapel.
- Eccentric Existence, Introduction to Music & Voice Building, and Rhythms of Prayer continue.** See Jan. 25 & Feb. 1 (*above*) for details.
- 26 **Adult Education: What We Believe.** The new members' class, led by the Rev. Randy Weber. 12:15 pm, Boardroom.
- Adult Education: The Many Faces of Job.** Monthly, three-part series led by Dr. Choon-Leong Seow, professor of the Old Testament, Princeton Theological Seminary. Continues March 25 & April 25. 12:30 pm, Jones Auditorium.
- Bowery Mission.** Monthly worship and dinner service led by FAPC volunteers. 5:45 pm, 227 Bowery, Lower East Side.
- 29 **Rhythms of Prayer concludes.** See Feb. 1 (*above*) for details.

The VOICE is published 10 times a year for members and friends of Fifth Avenue Presbyterian Church.  
Editor: Tim Palmer • Design: Vasheena Dougherty

7 West 55th Street • New York, NY 10019  
212.247.0490 • [fapc@fapc.org](mailto:fapc@fapc.org)

