Celebrating José V. Torres, ACT Superstar

This Spring, José V. Torres will retire after almost 45 years of work at the Cathedral, over 30 of which have been as Executive Director of Adults and Children in Trust, a program of the Cathedral that provides a safe haven where toddlers to teens from many faiths, cultures and economic backgrounds gather to learn, play, and grow through various programs and events.

José first became involved in ACT while working at the School, where ACT (then short for Athletics, Creativity, and Trips), served as the afterschool program for the School’s students. José and his wife, Nancy, whom he met when the two worked at The Cathedral School in the 1970s, both had many roles and together saw the potential for growth in the types of activities ACT could offer. They launched mini-ACT, a first of its kind parent and toddler class; grew the afterschool program by expanding offsite at nearby P.S. 163 and P.S. 75; and created the highly popular camp program we know today.

Along the way, the two also fell in love. “I remember the first time I saw José,” Nancy said. “I came into the School for my interview and José, who was the principal’s assistant at the time, was the one who greeted me.” For José, Nancy was just one of the many teaching candidates he met that summer. “It was when I became a teacher alongside Nancy and we started working together that I really got to know her.” Eventually, the two decided to get married.

As ACT evolved, it became clear to most that it had outgrown its initial mission at the School and as the audience for the programs began to include children from the neighborhood in addition to those attending the School. In 1982, Cathedral and School leadership decided ACT could better serve its mission as a community-based program of the Cathedral.

“Since becoming a part of the Cathedral,” José said, “ACT has been allowed to operate with a level of independence. We support the Cathedral’s mission, of course, but it would have been very easy for a Bishop or a Dean to suggest we make changes to our programs. No one has ever done that. I’m proud of the mix of children that come to these programs. At summer camp, you could have the child of the doctors and lawyers that live in the neighborhood in the same session as the child of the super across the street. Not only are we racially diverse, we are economically diverse. I wouldn’t have stayed for so long if the Cathedral hadn’t been supportive of that vision.”

That diversity adds to the depth of ACT’s programs, which are meant to teach children how to be successful people in this world. Each year’s themed camping trip (Medieval, Harry Potter, Worlds of the Future, etc.), splits kids into different groups that compete against each other in independent living activities, teaching life lessons while allowing the kids to have fun.

Not only did José have a major impact on the children in ACT programs, but the youth and adults he hired and trained to lead them. “José is the master of having people establish goals,” Nancy said, going into detail about his methods for helping his staff establish goals and supporting their execution of them. José added, “I learned that when I was working towards my Master’s in social work.”

*This is the type of manager José is,” Nancy said. “He was interviewing someone for a summer camp position. José is really professional in interviews—he has the list of questions and goes down them one by one. At some point, this guy said..."
The Cathedral Church of Saint John the Divine

The Right Reverend Andrew ML Dietsche
Bishop of New York

Pentagram
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Rebecca Merrill
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Isadora Wilkenfeld
Editor

The Cathedral Church of Saint John the Divine

A non-profit institution; contributions and gifts are tax deductible to the extent permitted by law.

Schedule of Daily Liturgical Services

Sunday
8 am Morning Prayer & Holy Eucharist
9 am Holy Eucharist
11 am Choral Eucharist
4 pm Choral Evensong
Monday through Saturday
8 am Morning Prayer
8:30 am Holy Eucharist
Tuesday & Thursday
12:15 pm Holy Eucharist
5 pm Evening Prayer

Cathedral Information
(212) 316-7540
sjo@stjohnsdivine.org

Reaching the Cathedral
The Cathedral is located at
1047 Amsterdam Avenue, at 112th Street.

By Subway:
#1 Train to 110th Street

By Bus:
#M4 to Amsterdam & 110th Street
#M11 to Amsterdam & 12th Street
#M104 to Broadway & 112th Street

Newsletter ©2018

A new chapter.

I am proud to be a part. I hope you are, too.

As a part of my “Stream of Wisdom,” earlier this year I accepted an amazing invitation to take a journey to Abu Dhabi (United Arab Emirates) with John Sexton, President Emeritus of New York University, and a dozen or so others (including Pat Carey, Dean of Student Affairs at NYU and a member of this Cathedral family). President Sexton is creating a university for the 21st century, and the campus in Abu Dhabi is one outgrowth as part of NYU’s presence in Abu Dhabi, and the vibrant American Laudes Organ, which will be accompanied by Associate Music Director Raymond Nagel.

We’re particularly excited for the performance on April 9: Immigrants – A Celebration of What Makes New York Great takes up the Cathedral’s proud mission to be a “house of prayer for all people.” A pre-concert tour of the Cathedral’s seven groundbreaking Chapels of the Tongues introduces this program, celebrating the immigrant communities that have made New York City one of the greatest cities in the world. Instrumental ensemble Rose of the Compass will present music from the cultures represented by Chapels of the Tongues, and the Cathedral Choir will answer with pieces by immigrants who composed in America, sharing their culture and their art. Composers will include Vincent Persichetti, whose parents came from Italy and Germany; F. Melius Christiansen, the great founder of the St. Olaf Choir; Rebecca Clarke and Tanya Tagaq, who both emigrated from the Inuit in the Far North; Jean Berger from Germany; and Igor Stravinsky from Russia. The concert will culminate with a world premiere by Robert Sirota, on a libretto by the Reverend Canon Victoria Sirota, celebrating New York’s identity as a melting pot of humanity.

For you’re interested in learning more about performances at the Cathedral, please consider becoming a Friend of the Cathedral.

The 2017-18 season of Great Music in a Great Space showcases precisely what the Cathedral is best known for: masterful works of the Western choral and organ canon, paired with compositions of evocative beauty from around the world, and presented in our majestically acoustically-live space, beautifully capturing the essence of this remarkable place in reaching back to our Anglican roots and forward towards an all-affirming, diverse present and future. Under the direction of Kent Tritle, the CPO’s performances span genres from early Gregorian chant to contemporary American compositions. Join us!

On Tuesday, March 6, Musica Sacra presents Light of Light, featuring the music of Lassus and Lauridsen, with Gregorian chant. This musical tour through the Renaissance extends back to the earliest roots of polyphony, with performances of the great Flemish composer Orlando di Lassus’s Missa super Oculum me and and Josquin Des Prez’s Extra me. Later, exhilarating motet Sursum Jesu and the vibrant American voices of Morten Lauridsen and Kevin O’Donah make this program a true de force guaranteed to take you to another time and place.

The concert on March 20, foregrounding Arno Pär’s Miiserere with additional works by Stravinsky and Kodály, explores music by these great modern composers. A piece ideal for the spacious acoustics of the Cathedral, Arno Pär’s Miiserere utilizes sparse but intense harmonies, along with perfectly timed silences, to fill the space in a unique and mystical way. Accompanying this masterpiece are other choral gems. Begonia Doles and O’Dee, notably by Igor Stravinsky, and Zoltán Kodály’s Laudes Organ, a virtuosic extravaganza for chorus and organ, which will be accompanied by Associate Music Director Raymond Nagel.

Finally, the season wraps up with Great Organ: Raymond Nagel, featuring our own Associate Director of Music playing Marcel Dupré’s set of preludes and fugues, paired with Sigrid Karg-Elert’s Symphony in F# minor. Dupré’s jazzy, exuberant works are well-matched with Karg-Elert’s program a sonic tour de force guaranteed to take you to another time and place.

We look forward to seeing (and hearing) what’s to come next season!
Looking back, you always hope that you do something to change the world,” José said. “I hope that I’ve done a little bit of that here. I’m leaving with a full heart—a tired heart—but a full heart.”

José and Nancy will be missed, but their legacy is abundantly clear on the Cathedral Close.

Running a camp is never an easy task, but running a day camp in the heart of New York City is a feat of astounding proportions. It takes an immense amount of hard work, logistical and organizational control and scheduling, a team of outstanding and dedicated staff, and an experienced leader who can adapt to an ever-changing environment.

I’ve known José Torres since I was 5 years old. I’ve known him as the goofy guy in a costume at Carnival who gave out ACT dollars, the guy in charge of the camping trips, the guy who we, as pre-teens, wanted to hate (the rule enforcer always has a tough job), but couldn’t.

As a Counselor-in-Training, and later as a Counselor, I got to know José in a much more serious role, as my boss. I learned how much planning and structure went into activities and trips I had always taken for granted. The long hours. The preparedness for the unknown. The quick-thinking. The actual physical labor. He was more than in charge, he was involved.

He, along with Nancy Torres and Marie Del Tejo, was an unwavering and unshakable adult figure every summer of my childhood. ACT was a place a safety, trust, diversity, learning, adventure, and fun for generations of kids, and ACT was ACT because of José.”

Julia Holden, ACT Alumni

José Torres has been a remarkable teacher, mentor and friend since I first met him while working at ACT 35 years ago. Since then, my family has had the great pleasure of remaining close friends with the entire Torres family. The example that José and Nancy (for those of us who worked at ACT Summer Camp, it is difficult to separate the two) have set by the lives they lead at work, home and in the community is truly inspirational. They are living proof that the love and care you give the world around you comes back to you tenfold. My family wishes José happiness and adventure on his new journey.

Andy Schattner, ACT Staff & Parent

“I have known José now for 32 years since the age of 6. It’s was such a blessing to have José and ACT be part of my upbringing. I personally owe José so much. I learned work ethic way before I entered in the military thanks to his guidance. He is such a wonderful mentor as a CIT and a Counselor someone to look up to and emulate. I have been overjoyed and thankful to have been back for two summer seasons after my military service. This is bitter sweet end of a great era. I can speak as a child in the programs and staff member when I say that José enriched our experience summer after summer.”

Chris Robles, ACT Alumni
**Children’s Quest Fund**

Help us to invite children from many countries, religions and economic levels under the shadow of the beloved Cathedral. While any amount will help, $1,000 enables a child from a low-income family to participate in a premier summer camp experience. Please send donations to the Cathedral, designated “ACT Children’s Quest Fund.”

**CATHEDRAL COMMUNITY CARES (CCC)**

All programs meet in the CCC office, the Sunday Soup Kitchen or the Cathedral ACT gym unless otherwise specified. Please visit sjtdjhvn.org for more information on CCC programs.

**Nutrition, Health and Clothing Center**

The Center hosts monthly HIV testing (in partnership with Care for the Homeless), as well as blood pressure, heart health, diabetes, and other screenings throughout the course of the year. Please visit our website for upcoming screening dates or contact (212) 316-7581, ccc@stjohndivine.org.

**Clothing Closet**

Gently used men’s, women’s, and children’s clothing can be donated to the CCC office Monday through Friday 10 am–5 pm. Tax receipts available upon donation request. Contact (212) 316-7581, ccc@stjohndivine.org.

**Sunday Soup Kitchen**

Every Sunday in the ACT gym.

Breakfast, 10 am; Lunch, 12:30 pm.

Contact: Robert Ferrin, Food Program Manager, (212) 316-7579 (T/W/Th after 12 pm).

**SNAP/Food Stamps Program**

(in partnership with the Human Resources Administration, The Food Bank for New York City, New York City Coalition Against Hunger, and Columbia University-SHOUT) Tuesdays and Wednesdays (by appointment only).

Pre-screening and, if eligible, help with online applications and recertification is available. Contact: (212) 316-7581, ccc@stjohndivine.org.

**PASTORAL EVENTS**

**2018 Baptism Dates**

March 31, 2018 – Easter Vigil

May 20, 2018 – Pentecost

If you or a family member are interested in baptism, and you are new to the Cathedral community, we encourage you to attend church regularly to get to know us better. Then, if you wish to make the Cathedral your spiritual home, we will schedule a baptism date. In the weeks leading up to the baptism, there will be baptism preparation classes, as well as a baptism rehearsal. Please contact the Pastoral Care office at (212) 316-7483.

**March**

**SELECTED PROGRAMS AND SERVICES**

**Brilliant Walls of Light**

Saturday, March 3, 10 am

Each window contains a unique style of stained glass drawn from the English, French, and German traditions. Explore the beautiful narrative and geometric windows by modern English and American artists and view the memorial to a stained glass artist. Ascend over 100 feet of spiral stairs for a closer look at windows dedicated to medical and communications achievements. Led by Senior Cathedral Guide Tom Fedorek. Participants must be 12 years of age and older for the ascent.

Tickets are $18 per adult and $15 for students and seniors.

Contact: (212) 316-7581, ccc@stjohndivine.org.

**Easter Eggstravaganza Children’s Workshop**

Saturday, March 24, 10 am–Noon; 2 pm–4 pm

Join us for our popular, annual egg decorating workshop! Children can create colorful patterns on their eggs with tissue paper, glitter, glue, and paint, and build a nest for decorated eggs with twigs, feathers, and clay. Please bring two hard-boiled eggs per child. Recommended for children ages 4–8 years old. $10 per child, with accompanying adult. Purchasing tickets in advance is highly suggested for both the 10 am and 2 pm workshop as there is limited space in the workshop and can be made online or by calling (866) 811-4111. Check in at Visitor Center upon arrival. Please note that this is an egg decorating activity, not an egg hunt!

**OBSERVING THE SEASON: HOLY WEEK AT THE CATHEDRAL**

**March 25, Palm Sunday**

9 am The Blessing of the Palms & Holy Eucharist

11 am Choral Eucharist with the Choral Ensemble: Cruix fidèlis – Roger-Ducasse, Crucifixus a 6 – Lotti Note: the 11 am service will start with the Liturgy of the palms outside, in front of the Town Building, on the south driveway between 111th & 12th Streets followed by a procession to Amsterdam Avenue, entering the Cathedral through the front entrance.

4 pm Choral Evensong

Responses: Rose

Service: The Westminster Service – Howells

Anthem: Cruix fidèlis – Roger-Ducasse

**Adults and Children in Trust (ACT)**

To learn about the many nurturing year-round programs for young people offered by ACT, please call (212) 316-7530 or visit www.actprograms.org.

**Suggested contribution** events may be purchased directly from the Cathedral’s website, sjtdjhvn.org, or by calling (866) 811-4111. Your contributions make it possible for the Cathedral to offer the many programs listed below. Please fill out the envelope and return it.

**Please visit the Cathedral’s website, sjtdjhvn.org, or call the Visitor Center (212) 316-7540 for updates and additional event and tour information.**

**Don’t forget to become a fan of the Cathedral on Facebook, Twitter and Instagram!**

**ONGOING PROGRAMS, TOURS, WORKSHOPS**

**The Great Organ: Meditative Monday**

Cathedral organists provide a 30-minute break for mind, body and spirit at 1 pm with an entertaining and informative demonstration of the Cathedral’s unparalleled Great Organ.

**The Great Organ: It’s Sunday**

The Great Organ: It’s Sunday invites established and emerging organists from across the U.S. and around the world to take their turn at the Great Organ and present a free 5 pm concert.

**PUBLIC EDUCATION & VISITOR SERVICES**

**ONGOING TOURS & EVENTS**

Public Education & Visitor Services offers Cathedral Highlights and Vertical Tours. All tours meet for registration at the Visitor Center inside the Cathedral entrance, at 112th Street and Amsterdam Avenue. Highlights Tours: $14 per person, $12 per student/senior. Vertical Tours: $20 per person, $18 per student/senior. Vertical Tours: $20 per person, $18 per student/senior. Vertical Tours: $20 per person, $18 per student/senior.

**Highlights Tours**

Mondays, 11 am –Noon & 2–3 pm

Tuesdays–Saturdays, 11 am–Noon & 1 pm–2 pm

Explore the many highlights of the Cathedral’s history, architecture, and artwork, from the Great Bronze Doors to the seven Chapels of the Tongues. Learn about the Cathedral’s services, events, and programs that welcome and inspire visitors from around the world. $14 per person, $12 per student/senior. No prior reservation necessary. Meet at Visitor Center.

**Vertical Tours**

Mondays, 10–11 am

Wednesdays & Fridays, Noon–1 pm

Saturdays, Noon–1 pm & 2 pm–3 pm

On this adventurous, “behind-the-scenes” tour, climb more than 124 feet through spiral staircases to the top of the world’s largest cathedral. Learn stories through stained glass windows and sculpture and study the grand architecture of the Cathedral while standing on a buttress. The tour culminates on the roof with a wonderful view of Manhattan. $20 per person, $18 per student/senior. All participants must be 12 years of age and older and reservations are recommended. For reservations visit the Cathedral website or call (866) 811-4111. Bring a flashlit and be sure to wear comfortable shoes. Meet at Visitor Center.

**Nightwatch Crossroads**

The Nightwatch series offers two exciting and innovative programs: Nightwatch Crossroads Christian and Vertical Tours. All tours meet for registration at the Visitor Center inside the Cathedral entrance, at 112th Street and Amsterdam Avenue. Highlights Tours: $14 per person, $12 per student/senior. All participants must be 12 years of age and older and reservations are recommended. For more information and reservations, visit sjtdjhvn.org or contact: (212) 316-7518 / nightwatch@stjohndivine.org.

**Nightwatch Crossroads Interspiritual**

Friday, March 9, 6:30 pm

Nightwatch Crossroads is a Friday evening and overnight spiritual retreat for middle and high school age students, youth groups and their adult chaperones. The Interspiritual program explores music, spiritual disciplines, stories and wisdom from a variety of the world's religious traditions, including Buddhism, Hinduism, Judaism and Christianity. Visit sjtdjhvn.org for more information and reservations.

**Ordination of Transitional Deacons**

Saturday, March 10, 10:30 am

Visit dioceseny.org for more information.

**The Last Crusade: World War I and the Cathedral of St. John the Divine**

Saturday, March 17, 10:30 am

How does one align the will of God with the national interest? Join us for our popular, annual egg decorating workshop! Children can create colorful patterns on their eggs with tissue paper, glitter, glue, and paint, and build a nest for decorated eggs with twigs, feathers, and clay. Please bring two hard-boiled eggs per child. Recommended for children ages 4–8 years old. $10 per child, with accompanying adult. Purchasing tickets in advance is highly suggested for both the 10 am and 2 pm workshop as there is limited space in the workshop and can be made online or by calling (866) 811-4111. Check in at Visitor Center upon arrival. Please note that this is an egg decorating activity, not an egg hunt!
March 26 and 28, Holy Monday and Holy Wednesday
8 am Morning Prayer
12:15 pm Holy Eucharist
5 pm Evening Prayer
March 27, Holy Tuesday
8 am Morning Prayer
8:30 am Holy Eucharist
10:30 am Liturgy of Coletta, The Holy Eucharist & Consecration of the Sacred Chrism
5 pm Evening Prayer
March 29, Maundy Thursday
8 am Morning Prayer (St. Martin’s Chapel)
5 pm Evening Prayer (St. Martin’s Chapel)
7 pm Maundy Thursday Eucharist & Stripping of the Altar with the Choristers and Chorale
Service: Mass for Four Voices – Byrd
Anthems: Ubi caritas – Mealer
Jesus, the very thought of thee – Hallé
O sacrum convivium – Talls
9 pm The Reading of Dante Alighieri’s Inferno
After the 7 pm liturgy, join poets, actors, and lovers of great literature for the annual American Poets Corner reading of Dante Alighieri’s Inferno.
9 pm All Night Vigil
Immediately following the Maundy Thursday liturgy, all are welcome to join in a centuries-old tradition of prayer and meditation in the Cathedral Baptistry.
March 30, Good Friday
8 am Morning Prayer
12:15 PM The Liturgy of Good Friday Anthems: Crucifixus a 8 – Lotti
O vos omnes – Victoria
2:30 pm Stations of the Cross or Via Crucis
Readings, in Spanish and English, and congregational chanting and hymns take participants through twelve stations, ending in the Biblical Garden. Begins in the Narthex.
7 pm Stations of the Cross featuring David Briggs
Travel through the twelve stations of the cross with organ improvisations by Artist in Residence David Briggs on the Last Seven Words of Christ.
March 31, Holy Saturday
7 pm The Great Vigil of Easter with the Chorale
The Bishop of New York, the Dean of the Cathedral preaches, and the Cathedral Choirs sing.
Psalm settings by Hallé, Glenn, Neswick, and Nagem
Anthems: Sing ye to the Lord – Bainstow
Hac dies – Byrd

Cathedral Community Cares Blood Drive
Saturday, March 31, 12:30 am, Synod Hall
Hosted by Cathedral Community Cares in partnership with the Columbia University Red Cross Club.

April
Easter Day
Sunday, April 1
8 am Holy Eucharist
11 am Festival Eucharist for Easter Day
The Cathedral will be bimming, as we sing together great hymns for Easter with glorious brass accompaniment. The Cathedral Choirs sing and the Bishop of New York celebrates and preaches.
Service: Missa Sollemnis – Vienne
Anthems: Laudate Dominum de cælis – Langalss
Hac dies – Byrd
4 pm Festival Choral Evensong with the Cathedral Brass Responses: Radowtsev
Service: Friedel in F
Anthems: Hac dies – Byrd

Nightwatch Crossroads: Christian
Friday, April 6, 6:30 pm
Nightwatch Crossroads is a Friday evening and overnight spiritual retreat for middle and high school age students, youth groups and their adult chaperones. This Christian-oriented evening focuses particularly on the wisdom teachings of Jesus. Visit stjohndivine.org for more information and to register.

May
Nightwatch Crossroads: Christian
Friday, May 4, 6:30 pm
Please see details for April 6.

Blessing of the Bicycles
Saturday, May 5, 9 am
A Cathedral tradition, this special blessing ceremony, open to all, celebrates the lives of bike riders and cycling in its many forms.

The Cathedral in Context: Spotlight on Morningside Heights
Saturday, May 5, 12 pm
Please see details for April 15.

Nightwatch Crossroads: Christian
Friday, May 11, 6:30 pm
Please see details for April 6.

Ordination of Permanent Deacons
Saturday, May 12, 10:30 am
Please visit dioceseny.org for more information.

Within the Walls: Exploring Hidden Spaces
Saturday, May 19, 10–11:30 am and 12–1:30 pm
This extended vertical tour features “behind-the-scenes” climbs in both the eastern and western ends of St. John the Divine. In the east, descend into the unfinished crypt and then ascend Rafael Guastavino’s beautiful spiral staircases to incredible views high above the altar. The western climb presents an amazing view down the entire length of the world’s largest cathedral. Led by Senior Cathedral Guide John Simko. Tickets are $25 per adult and $15 for students and seniors.

The Cathedral in Context: Spotlight on Morningside Heights
Saturday, May 20, 1 pm
The event is open to the public and admission is free. Visit justilderd.edu for more information.

Nightwatch Crossroads: Interspiritual
Friday, April 20, 6:30 pm
Please see details for March 9.

The Cathedral in Context: Spotlight on Morningside Heights
Saturday, April 21, 1 pm
Please see details for April 15.

Great Organ: Raymond Nagem
Thursday, April 26, 7:30 pm
Marcel Dupré’s set of preludes and fugues struck the musical world like a bolt of electricity when they were published in 1920. jazzy, exuberant, atmospheric, and notoriously difficult to play, they have been audience favorites ever since. Joining them on this program is Sigfrid Karg-Elert’s Symphony in F minor. This mammoth piece was written in 1930, but lay undiscovered in a publisher’s archive until 1984. Come hear Karg-Elert’s little-known masterpiece, one of the summits of the organ repertoire, in a dramatic and passionate performance by the Cathedral’s Associate Director of Music, Raymond Nagem.

With Angels and Archangels: Spotlight on Angelic Images
Saturday, April 28, 10:30 am
Discover images of angels in the Cathedral’s glass and stone. Learn about the role of angels in the Hebrew, Christian and Islamic scriptures, the angelic hierarchy and how to identify angels by their field marks. The tour concludes with an ascent to the triforium for a birds-eye view of the breathtaking Archangels Window. Participants must be 12 years of age and older for the ascent. Led by Alumni from the Cathedral Chorister program will join the choir at Evensong to show us they’ve still got the chops! Come hear music of Vaughan Williams, Dyson, and Jennings.

The Last Crusade: World War I and the Cathedral
Saturday, May 12, 10:30 am
Please see details for March 17.

Cathedral Chorister Alumni Evensong
Sunday, May 20, 1 pm
Alumni from the Cathedral Chorister program will join the choir at Evensong to show us they’ve still got the chops! Come hear music of Vaughan Williams, Dyson, and Jennings.

The Cathedral in Context: Spotlight on Morningside Heights
Sunday, May 27, 1 pm
Please see details for April 15.

Memorial Day Concert
Monday, May 28, 6 pm
The New York Philharmonic presents the first in their series of free summer concerts at the Cathedral, one of our most cherished signature events. Tickets for seating are provided on a first-come, first-served basis on the day of the performance. The audio of the performance will also be broadcast onto the adjacent Pulitzer Green, weather permitting.

Nightwatch Crossroads: Christian
Friday, May 4, 6:30 pm
Please see details for April 6.

Blessing of the Bicycles
Saturday, May 5, 9 am
A Cathedral tradition, this special blessing ceremony, open to all, celebrates the lives of bike riders and cycling in its many forms.

The Cathedral in Context: Spotlight on Morningside Heights
Saturday, May 5, 12 pm
Please see details for April 15.
The American Poets Corner: Willa Cather

Willa Cather (1873–1947) was born near Gori, Virginia, in 1873. She is perhaps best known for her works of fiction, including Death Comes for the Archbishop (Alfred A. Knopf, 1927); One of Ours (Alfred A. Knopf, 1922), which won the Pulitzer Prize; My Antonia (Houghton Mifflin, 1918); and O, Pioneers! (Houghton Mifflin, 1919). She was inducted into the American Poets Corner in 1990.

The Cathedral appreciates the generosity of the Dru Heinz Trust and Mrs. Edward T. Chase, whose support ensures that poetry continues to be an important part of arts at the Cathedral.

Looking Back

2017, for many of us, felt like a whirlwind of a year. Political turmoil was in the headlines seemingly every day, and our cohesion as a country felt strained almost to the breaking point. Yet our commitments to our communities—diverse and multifaceted as we are—emerged strengthened in the face of these threats. We came together to discuss strategies, protect the vulnerable, and reaffirm the importance of conversations around citizenship, compassion, and consent.

At the Cathedral, the hectic pace of the daily news was steadied by the comforting regularity of the liturgical calendar and our annual signature events. This year, we celebrate the 125th anniversary of the laying of our corner stone, and we intend to weather at least another 125 years here, providing a spiritual home for people of all backgrounds and a convening space for the important conversations of the day.

Beginning the winter season with a much-needed dose of joy, Crafts at the Cathedral, sponsored by the Congregation of St. Saviour, truly lived up to its name. This year’s fair was held in the Nave itself, and vendors and visitors mingled cheerfully in the grand setting. A special opening-night reception on November 30 featured music by the Bloomingdale School of Music JAPAZ Combo, further enlivening festive gathering.

On December 5, we braved the rain to unveil the latest sculpture on the Cathedral Cloisters: Homeless Jesus, by artist Timothy P. Schmalz. Inside, installed directly to the South of the Cathedral façade on the eastern Avenue, and serves as a reminder that “whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers and sisters of mine, you did for me.”

Ensemble in Residence Early Music New York, led by Frederick Renz, frequently serves as the herald of Advent events. Their 2017 series of Christmas concerts, beginning December 10, this year explored Burgundian musical traditions ranging from the sacred to the secular.

December at the Cathedral is a banquet for music lovers! The Cathedral Christmas Concert, on December 9, enchanted listeners with brilliant music by Britten and Vivaldi and New York composer James Bassi’s radiant Quem pastores Laudavere. The 38th Annual Winter Solstice Celebration, from December 14–16, brought out Artist in Residence Paul Winter, the Winter Wonder Consort, vocalist Theresia Thomason, and the dancers and drummers of the Forces of Nature Dance Theatre for a series of performances welcoming back the strengthening winter sun.

Christmas at the Cathedral is of course a major highlight of the season. A holiday season comes in both intimate and in scale. The Cathedral Peace Tree is a perfect symbol: Lore Schirokauer, a friend of the Cathedral, was the first to suggest this unique Christmas tree in the mid-1980s, and since that time, friends and volunteers, particularly Congregation member Catherine Skopik, have taken up the charge of adorning it each year with hundreds of origami cranes, symbolic of our united wish for universal harmony.

Christmas Eve Lessons and Carols, and the festive mass setting and anthems, as well as the classic Christmas carols, and special guests Paul Winter and Susanna Phillips joined to celebrate the Christmas spirit.

Christmas Eve fell on a Sunday in 2017, and our Cathedral Community Cafes staff offered a special CCC Sunday Soup Kitchen Christmas Eve Meal (SEE BOX), ensuring that no one went hungry or without companionship that day. The New Year’s Eve Concert for Peace is one of the Cathedral’s most beloved annual events, bringing friends together for over thirty years. Led by Kent Tritle, the 2017 concert included Handel’s Water Music, Suite No. 3, then flowed into a moving set of contemporary pieces, including the U.S. premiere of The Wretched Strangers by Lucas Wingerink, and excerpts from Leonard Bernstein’s Mass in celebration of his centennial year. Artists in Residence Jason Robert Brown and Judy Collins made their own musical offerings, and the evening concluded with Joseph Haydn’s Fe Deum, welcoming the new year with affirmation and joy.

On January 11, the Cathedral was treated to a performance of a slightly different sort. Organist and composer for the Cathedral, Elizabeth Howard, the Buzzard & the Peacecock Project: An Evening of Poetry, Music and Dance reimagined a collaboration between composer Lucia Dlugoszewski and poet and educator Ned O’Gorman who also showcased the innovations of their friend and contemporary, modern dance pioneer Erick Hawkins. Destinee Ross, Quemuel Arroyo, and Nicholas Birns performed patriotic and creative contemporary dance as they lead the poem “The Buzzard and the Peacock,” and the Erick Hawkins Dance Company, led by Katherine Duke, performed two pieces set to thrillingly unusual music.

The Cathedral’s annual Martin Luther King, Jr. Sunday service and events were held on January 14, and we were delighted to again host an afternoon Spiritual Sing with Alice Parker, Artistic Director of Melodious Accord. On the following Monday, a bevy of volunteers participated in an event for the New York Urban League Young Professionals came out in force to support donations in the CCC Clothing Closet, pack hygiene kits and prepare meals for our CCC clients, and offer inter-generational workshops for kids, families, and seniors.

Our most near-and-mid Artist in Residence, David Briggs, performed his transcription of Mahler’s 5th Symphony for organ on January 16. Friends of Music were invited to a pre-recital gathering and talk, at which Briggs described his passion for the instrument and the magical work that goes into transcribing music. (An excerpt of an interview with Mr. Briggs is included in this newsletter—visit the Cathedral’s blog for the full conversation.)

Nightwatch Crossroads, beginning on January 19 this year, continued to bring fresh young faces to the Cathedral, as youth groups joined us to explore their spiritual landscapes. The Diocesan Chorister Festival, on January 27, likewise brought out some of the brightest and best young singers from across the Diocese of New York for a full day of activities and rehearsals, culminating in a festive Choral Evensong.

On January 29, the Cathedral presented Faith, Hope, Reconciliation: The Church’s Role in Prison Reform, a panel discussion moderated by The Reverend Winnie Varghese, Director of Justice and Reconciliation at Trinity Church Wall Street. The conversation was ever-Reverend Varghese, The Reverend Canon Petrus Sabune, former Protestant (Chadag) of Sing Sing Prison, the Cathedral’s Ensemble in Residence, the New York Department of Corrections and Community Service, and Ms. Cheryl Wilkins, Senior Director of Education and Programs at Columbia University’s Center for Justice, focused on ways we can all push for change in the criminal justice system from both inside and outside the church.

Kent Tritle presented his much-anticipated organ recital on February 6. Performing pieces ranging from the elegance and swagger of the French Baroque composers Couperin, Marchand and Marchand, to the subtlety and virtuosity of the 20th century composers Martinu and Kodaly, Martin Luther King, Jr. Sunday service and events were held on January 14, and we were delighted to again host an afternoon Spiritual Sing with Alice Parker, Artistic Director of Melodious Accord. On the following Monday, a bevy of volunteers participated in an event for the New York Urban League Young Professionals came out in force to support donations in the CCC Clothing Closet, pack hygiene kits and prepare meals for our CCC clients, and offer inter-generational workshops for kids, families, and seniors.

On February 9, singers and musicians from across New York traveled to the Cathedral to join us for a glorious weekend of music, Global Solidarity. We’re proud to be part of the global community, and this event provided a wonderful opportunity to reaffirm the values we believe in and imagine the America we want to live in: where everyone and anyone can contribute to the creation of our shared world.

On Ash Wednesday, February 14, was observed with the liturgy of the Holy Eucharist and the Imposition of Ashes at four services throughout the day. At the afternoon and evening services, the Cathedral Choir offered contemplative music befitting this solemn occasion, including pieces by Allegri, Tomkins, Adesmann, and Dawson. This year, we’re also pleased to host one of the fourteen institutions hosting Stations of the Cross: Art, Passion, Justice (SEE BOX).
Looking Ahead

Winter has its joys: festive music and services abound during the Christmas season at the Cathedral, and taking down the Peace Tree and decorations is always a bittersweet reminder of the changing seasons and return to everyday life. But there’s so much to look forward to in the next three months!

Spring is a time of renewal, when we celebrate the great mystery of Holy Week, temperatures rise, and the first new blades of grass and bright daffodils and tulips poke their heads above the dirt. Read on for some of the programs, concerts, events, and services taking place this season (and don’t forget to check the calendar for further information).

On March 3, the Diocesan Adult Choir Festival brings crowds of singers from across New York for an exciting day of workshops and performances. The next few months are packed with performances to tempt all music-lovers: in particular, the next few months are packed with performances to the Cathedral. On March 6, Anna Yatskevich joins us once again for a recital on the Great Organ. Marcel Dupré’s jazzy and exuberant preludes and fugues are joined on this program by Sigfrid Karg-Ellert’s Symphony in F# minor, a hidden gem of a piece that went unheard until 1984.

The Blessing of the Bicycles, on May 5 this year, is one of the quintessential Cathedral events. For those who have never attended, it’s an only-in-New York confluence, bringing bikers, rollerbladers, and anyone who gets around the city on two wheels into this sacred space for a (surprisingly brief) service of goodwill and hope for safe travels in the year to come. At time of press, the official date for the Cathedral’s 37th annual Spirit of the City Awards Gala had not yet been confirmed. More information on the ceremony will be available on our website in the coming weeks.

As spring transitions into summer, the Cathedral salutes the final days of May with our annual Memorial Day Concert on May 28. The first of the New York Philharmonic’s series of free summer performances, this beloved concert is particularly grand when experienced on the fresh green lawns of the Grand Lawn. The concert opens at 8 pm and features Maestro David Zinman conducting a favorite American masterpiece: Samuel Barber’s Adagio, accompanied by the Cathedral Orchestra. The program also includes the overture to Rossini’s William Tell, with its famous air “William Tell,” performed by the New York Philharmonic. The evening concludes with a firework display.

On April 9, Great Music in a Great Space presents Immigrants – A Celebration of What Makes New York Great. Noted world music ensemble Rose of the Compass, together with the Cathedral Choir, will perform music from many of the cultures that passed through Ellis Island on their way to becoming the origins of modern America. Prior to the performance, a tour of the Cathedral’s Chapels of the Tongues—each dedicated to the patron saint of one of these formative ethnicities—grounds the celebration in the rich heritage of the Cathedral.

Nightwatch Crossroads overnights continue throughout spring, and on April 20, young people are invited to experience Nightwatch Crossroads Internsipital. The Internsipital retreat is an inclusive program created for youth of all faiths, exploring music, spiritual disciplines, stories and wisdom from a variety of the world’s religious traditions, including Buddhism, Hinduism, Judaism and Christianity.

On April 26, Raymond Nagin, the Cathedral’s Associate Director of Music, gives a recital on the Great Organ. Marcel Dupre’s jazzy and exuberant preludes and fugues are joined on this program by Sigfrid Karg-Ellert’s Symphony in F# minor, a hidden gem of a piece that went unheard until 1984.

Stay in Touch

We welcome your suggestions and thoughts on the newsletter. Please write us at editor@stjohndivine.org.
CCC Thanks You!

Cathedral Community Cares, the Cathedral’s outreach and advocacy arm, brings seasonal cheer to our friends and neighbors over the Christmas holidays with warm and nourishing meals and clothing and toy drives. This year, CCC served over 500 individuals at breakfast and lunch on Christmas Eve. We’d like to thank everyone who helped provide CCC with delicious treats for the Christmas meal! Many people donated, and a few truly rose to the occasion, bringing racks of roast beef, roast chickens, pies, and cakes to the Soup Kitchen. Roop Metharamni, T. Hollosi, Gail Felix, Percy Lambert, Richard Moore: our hardworking CCC staff thanks you for helping make the season bright!

Staff Spotlight on David Briggs

The following is excerpted from an interview published on the Cathedral’s website. To read the full article, visit stjohndivine.org/blogs.

Name: David Briggs
Title: Artist in Residence
Neighborhood/Town you live in: Washington Heights, NYC
Length of time the Cathedral: Since October 1, 2017

What is your Cathedral origin story?
I first performed at the cathedral in April 2013 for the premiere of my transcription of Gustav Mahler’s Second Symphony, the ‘Resurrection Symphony’. I completely fell in love with the wonderful Aeolian-Skinner Opus 150A organ, with it’s almost limitless resources of color and power. At that time, I was Artist in Residence at St. James Cathedral, Toronto. My 5-year tenure in Toronto came to an end last summer and I’m thrilled now to be based at St. John the Divine.

What is your favorite event or ongoing program at the Cathedral?
Each liturgy is a favorite event! I also greatly enjoyed performing in the New Year’s Eve concert—what an enormous privilege to share the stage with the great Judy Collins! I was struck by the diversity and powerful sense of unity through diversity which overflowed from that iconic concert.

What is your favorite item in the Cathedral or on its grounds?
The wonderful Aeolian-Skinner Opus 150A organ, intrinsically linked to the glorious acoustic of the cathedral. I have the privilege of quite frequent rehearsals alone in the building and always start by spending 10 minutes walking from the High Altar to the West End and back to the organ tribune. The word ‘awesome’ is often used rather colloquially these days, but every time this word sums up the experience. You’re really aware of the infinite grandeur, warmth and serenity of God.

Standing with the Coalition of Immokalee Workers

At our annual convention this past November, the Episcopal Diocese of New York voted to endorse a boycott of the fast food restaurant chain Wendy’s, joining churches and communities across the country in speaking out against the human rights abuses rife in Wendy’s current produce-harvesting system, and in favor of a more equitable, just system, organized by the Coalition of Immokalee Workers and the Alliance for Fair Food.

The Coalition of Immokalee Workers, a farmworker-led group of activists, educators, and everyday workers, returns to New York City this spring to continue their campaign for fair treatment. Between March 11–15, dozens of farmworker women and men and consumer allies will come together for a five-day Freedom Fast. The fast is the next step in the Wendy’s boycott, calling on Wendy’s to join the CIW’s Fair Food Program, a social responsibility initiative designed by farmworkers that has finally put an end to the harassment and assault for tens of thousands of workers by harnessing the purchasing power of more than a dozen of the world’s largest retail food companies. The Freedom Fast will culminate in a major Time’s Up Wendy’s March on Thursday, March 15.

The Cathedral is proud to stand with the Coalition of Immokalee Workers in their actions to implement a system that works for everyone: farmworkers, consumers, families, and agricultural communities. If you’re interested in volunteering with the CIW this March, please get in touch with patricia@allianceforfairfood.org for more information on how to help out!

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