

# Old Presbyterian Meeting House

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### Welcome the Confirmation Class of 2018!

On May 20, our Confirmands joined the Meeting House as adult members of the church, confirming the baptismal vows their parents had taken for them 13 or 14 years ago.

After a year of wrestling with biblical stories of God’s people, as well as their own individual faith stories, exploring our Presbyterian heritage, theologies, polity, and serving our church and the greater community –these young women and men wrote statements of faith as snapshots of where they each are now on their journeys of faith.

They also met with Session to discuss those beliefs, and were received into membership during the 11 a.m. worship service in which each of them took a part, including reading a collage of all their statements of faith, called “We Believe.”

Please join their teaching team of pastors and staff in welcoming Mara Boggess, Frances Browne, Allison Drury, Amelia Duncan, Anna Hargett, William Matney, Michael Best, Liam Shannon, Calum Wayer, and Grace Williams. *photo by Scott Simmons*

### Get Ready for Realm!

*by Ellen Haas*

The Meeting House is upgrading its church management system this summer to Realm. This means better group connectivity, more congregational engagement, and a modern back-end database to better serve the needs of the church. All the features of Connect will continue, including engaging with other church members, and making online donations and event payments. New features include a connect-anywhere mobile app and a user-friendly interface. More information coming soon.



323 South Fairfax Street  
Alexandria, Virginia 22314-3716  
703.549.6670 - phone  
www.opmh.org

Summer Office Hours:  
8:30 a.m. - 4:30 p.m., Mon.-Thurs.  
8:30 a.m. - 1 p.m. Fridays

The Old Presbyterian Meeting House is a congregation of the Presbyterian Church (USA) and the National Capital Presbytery, and a Covenant Network congregation.

## MEETING HOUSE STAFF

The Rev. Dr. Robert R. Laha, Jr.  
Senior Pastor  
rlaha@opmh.org

The Rev. Katherine A. Stanford  
Associate Pastor  
kstanford@opmh.org

The Rev. Ann E. Herlin  
Associate Pastor  
aherlin@opmh.org

Mrs. Noelle Castin  
Director of Christian Education  
ncastin@opmh.org

Mr. Samuel Baker  
Director of Music/Organist  
sbaker@opmh.org

Mrs. Mary Pratt Perry  
Youth Director  
mpratt@opmh.org

Mr. Aaron Siirila  
Church Business Administrator  
aaron@opmh.org

Mrs. Ellen Haas  
Computer Specialist  
ehaas@opmh.org

Mrs. Tania Ryan  
MHCP Director  
taniaryan@aol.com

Mr. David Heiby  
Superintendent, Presbyterian  
Cemetery & Columbarium  
dheiby@cox.net

Please submit materials for the newsletter through your ministry leadership for inclusion in the newsletter. [The deadline for the July/August issue is June 22.](#)

## VBS is Powered by Volunteers

Our VBS at the Meeting House is powered by volunteers, adults and teens. It truly “takes a village” to make VBS happen. Helping with VBS is a fabulous and fun way to get to know the children of our church family and community. It’s an opportunity to share God’s love with others. It’s a good way to meet other folks in our church community as well. There’s really no downside!

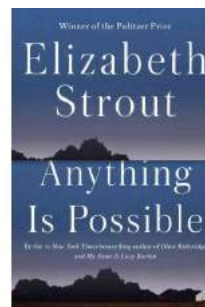
There are lots of different ways to help. Beth Simmons, this year’s director, is looking for people to help specifically with music, storytelling, and small groups. Come for a day or two – or come for the week. This is your baptismal covenant in action! To get involved, please contact Beth Simmons (bethsimmons@hotmail.com). VBS will take place July 9-13.

Want to show your support for VBS, but can’t help out the week of July 9-13? Help us by bringing a snack item. Check the bulletin board (near the window) in Fellowship Hall or the Sign Up Genius link on opmh.org and choose a snack item to donate (please pay close attention to brand names for allergy concerns). Please bring all donations anytime before Saturday, July 7. If you have any questions, please contact Noelle Castin (ncastin@opmh.org) or Pamela Vetrini (wurst.pamela@gmail.com).



## Summer Book Study

Save the dates for a summer book study, Mondays, July 9, 16, 23, 5:30-7 p.m. in Heritage Hall. We’ll discuss *Anything Is Possible* by Elizabeth Strout, winner of the Pulitzer Prize.



## Off to the Races Raises over \$37,000 for Family to Family

Thanks to the generous support of the OPMH congregation, this year’s auction raised over \$37,000 for our Family to Family ministry! Special thanks go to participants, item donors, and Angel/matching donors for making this annual event such a tremendous success!

## Night at the Nats

All Meeting House members and guests are invited to spend an evening at the ballpark to see the Nationals host the Phillies on Friday, June 22 at 7 p.m. Fans of all ages are welcome! The price is \$18/ticket. RSVP by June 12 to Tim Elmore (twelmore@gmail.com or 202-359-0179). Transportation to the ballpark is on your own and carpools are encouraged. Those who wish to take the Baseball Boat from Old Town should make a reservation as soon as possible.





## SAR Ceremony on May 12 Honored Four Patriots of the Revolutionary War

photos by Olivia Michener



### Congregational Picnic

Nearly 100 OPMH members attended our annual church picnic on Sunday, May 6 at Fort Hunt Park. Attendees enjoyed a pot luck feast, fellowship, games, and a sing-along led by Sally Laha (who was accompanied by a surprise musician named Rocky)! All ages participated in face painting, whiffle ball contest, Frisbee golf, and cornhole, among other activities. A great time was had by all!

photos by Jeff Mullvihill



### “Take Out Church” is Back!

Beginning Sunday, June 3, we will have “Take Out Church” bags available for families to pick up during Lemonade on the Lawn. These drawstring backpacks are a treat for the children and a way for families to bring faith to life while on vacation this summer. The bag will provide ways in which families can worship God, grow as disciples, and love our neighbors. Enjoy!



### Cents-ability Offering – June 3

Don't forget to bring your Cents-ability cup to 10:00 a.m. worship on June 3. As we gather at the Lord's table to be fed and nourished physically and spiritually, we remember the many families who are hungry. The Cents-ability offering will be donated to ALIVE! to feed hungry Alexandrians.



## Youth Sunday, May 6

Youth Sunday took place on May 6 with over 40 middle and high school youth participating! This year's worship theme was centered around "identity" and the preachers were Anne Williams and Zoe Crawley. Thanks to all our youth advisors, teachers, and parents for supporting our youth throughout the year and as they prepared for this special day of worship!



*photos by Jerry and Carol Stalun*



## 2018 Youth Celebration



The Youth End of Year Celebration on May 20 was a fun evening to celebrate another great year of youth ministry, recognize our volunteers and seniors, and just have some quality time to reconnect and play together. One of the games included guests spelling out encouraging messages to our graduating seniors!

# class of 2018

## Congratulations to our High School Seniors!

Zoe Crawley  
Brody Dickson  
Caroline Gardner  
Noah Hannam  
Mary McCoy  
Lizzie Powell  
Mattie Powell  
Anne Williams  
Bobby Williams

## Senior Sidebar



June's Senior Speaker Series event will give you some great ideas for this summer! "Visit Alexandria" will share news about fun happenings in Alexandria, we'll hear from the YMCA about all the great programs they have for seniors, and Madison Reeder from Inova's PACE program will share delicious tips on how to make light, healthy summer dishes. Join us on June 20 at 9:30 a.m. at Westminster Presbyterian Church, 2701 Cameron Mills Road. Please RSVP by calling Senior Services of Alexandria at 703-836-4414 or at [www.seniorservicesalex.org](http://www.seniorservicesalex.org)

The newest resident community for individuals with memory impairment, Silverado Alexandria Memory Care located at 2807 King St., Alexandria, is providing rooms and associated services, at a rate that is 40% below market rate for two applicants who meet the eligibility criteria. To schedule a tour of Silverado Alexandria and obtain additional information about this program, contact Silverado Alexandria at 703-215-9110.

## Catching Up with Charlotte Vedeler

It was a delight to see Charlotte Vedeler at the Heritage Luncheon in April. Charlotte was a long-time Meeting House member who moved away several years ago. Charlotte also recently celebrated her birthday – Happy birthday, Charlotte! *photo by Margaret Whitesides*





## Reflections from Cuba Mission Trip

**“The purpose of the relationship is to affirm and build on the unity of the Presbyterian Church under Jesus Christ through a mutual exchange of people, communication, spiritual understanding, Christian education and Bible study, theology, cultural understanding (art, music, theater), financial support, and political understanding.”**

*from the NYAPC website*



*by Tom Roberts*

Six OPMH members (Nancy and Gerry Cooper, Tom and Norma Roberts, and Rob Thormeyer and Cathy Cash) visited the Primera Iglesia Presbiteriana-Reformada de la Habana in Central Havana for seven days in March. We participated in the annual mission visit coordinated by the New York Avenue Presbyterian Church in Washington, DC. There were 19 members to our team, including two from St. Mary's Catholic Church in Old Town, and two from St. John's Episcopal Church in DC. For our leader, Marilyn Seiber, this was her 19th trip to Havana, and one couple had been there 11 times before. And what an interesting and diverse group it was. And a FUN group sharing in a program called “relationship building.”

We really didn't know what to expect, and we were wonderfully surprised by the warmth and greetings of the Havana church. It was founded in 1906 and is an established part of the Central Havana community. Although the Revolution greatly reduced the influence of all churches in Cuba, this church is still relevant today. They have a new 28-year-old female minister, Pastor Liudmila Hernandez who is bilingual, mature, and has a great vision for the future of her church. We were there for Palm Sunday and the pews were full. Their youth, adult, and African choirs sang beautifully. I only wish I had a better understanding of the Spanish language so I could have understood the service and the sermon. But you could see by the emotions and smiles on their faces that the service was something special to all, including us.

The purpose of our trip was relationship building and an exchange of ideas. We had a full schedule with meetings in the mornings, afternoons, and evenings and we discussed everything from aging, community outreach, health care, church membership, immigration, and the U.S. embargo with its effects on everyday Cuban life. Gerry, as the current chair of the board of Alexandria Senior Services, spoke to them about aging issues and what SSA does for the seniors in Alexandria with the Friendly Visitor program, Meals on Wheels, and Groceries To Go. We talked about the various partnerships OPMH has within the Alexandria and international communities and what these partnerships do for those in need. For example, we talked about Friends of Guest House and how they help women successfully reenter the community from incarceration. They were very interested in what we had to share with them.

We also listened and learned from them. They have a “Su Telefono Amigo” (“Friendly Telephone”) program which was started about 14 years ago. This crisis hotline was started by two college-educated Cuban psychologists who work out of the church. They counsel callers on everything from suicide, drugs, spousal abuse, unemployment, infidelity, chronic and terminal health issues, and even children who watch TV all



day long. These women were the first in Cuba to offer this service, and after publishing an article in a Cuban journal and presenting this to the Cuban Assembly of Psychologists, it has been replicated all over Cuba.

We spent an afternoon visiting senior members of the church in their 4th floor walk-up apartments without air conditioning. They talked about their faith, their lives, and their families who lived in the United States. They talked about the difficulty of getting visas, and their inability to visit their families in the U.S. or their families to visit them in Cuba. Some of them walk a mile to the church several times a week.

We also had a fun night with music by the band Villazul. They played for us and they showed us how to dance to their wonderful Cuban music. They were much better dancers than we were. We had a “game night” which included Pictionary. It was perfect since we didn’t need to speak Spanish or English to draw pictures. And there was the Wednesday morning Tai Chi class. We also had the opportunity to eat lunch at the Paladar San Cristobal which was several blocks from the church. This is where President Obama ate with his family during his 2016 visit to Cuba.

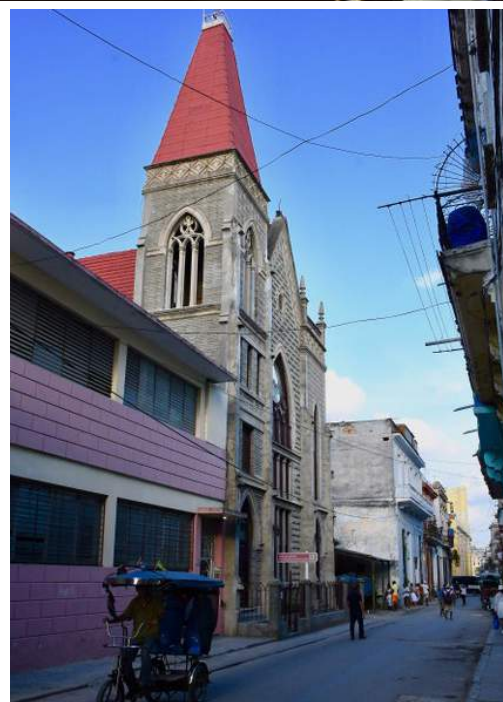
On a one-day trip to see the countryside west of Havana, we passed traditional large-plot vegetable farms where dairy cattle and chicken farming is done for both personal and commercial sale. We visited a towering rock climbing wall that at least one member of our trip compared to Yosemite’s El Capitan. Cuba has its own version of Luray Caverns, with magnificent natural underground rock formations which locals and tourists explore daily.

Thank you to all who made donations. All 19 in our group checked an extra bag with these donated items. It was amazing how much we brought with us to the Havana church. Remember, there are no CVS’s or Rite Aids in Cuba. There is no place to buy Advil or Neosporin, and if they can find it, it would cost a week’s wages. The Havana church acts as a community center and shares the resources we brought. It is not only for their congregation, but for all those in need in their community.

We were encouraged by the multitude of ways First Havana Reformed Church is practicing Service and Justice within their neighborhood community. Clearly the church, its pastor, and staff are well-respected by the government and the local people who visit there daily.

We learned a lot from one another on the trip and from the members of the First Havana Reformed Church. We prayed together, we ate together, and we laughed together. It was a wonderful week for all of us as we made new friends and built better relationships. It is interesting how life and God takes us places we never would have expected, and yet, gave us so much in return. *photos by Tom Roberts*

Photos, clockwise from top: several members of the Cuba mission trip; the Primera Iglesia Presbiteriana-Reformada de la Habana Church; enjoying the Cuban cuisine; learning about Su Telefono Amigo; visiting with senior church members; and a bulletin board outside the church.



# Summer at the Meeting House

**June 21-24**

**Massanetta Middle School Youth Conference**

**June 22**

**Phillies v. Nationals baseball game**

**July 9-12**

**Vacation Bible School, "Rolling River Rampage"**

**July 15-21**

**Montreat Summer High School Youth Conference**

**Join us for worship at 10 a.m.**

**Classes for adults, youth, and children will resume in September.**

*Old Presbyterian Meeting House*

323 South Fairfax Street, Alexandria, VA 22314-3716

[www.opmh.org](http://www.opmh.org)

**To see a calendar of upcoming events, visit  
[www.opmh.org](http://www.opmh.org) and click on "Calendar."**