

# BE JOYFUL IN THE LORD

A Celebration of Smiles,  
Kindness and Community

## SCHEDULE AT A GLANCE

### FRIDAY, JAN. 31 • 7 p.m.

**EARLY MUSIC CONCERT:** All Excellent and Esteemed – The Bassano Family  
Piffaro: The Renaissance Band  
*Sanctuary*

### SUNDAY, FEB. 2 • 4 p.m.

**CONCERT:** Smiles – A Chamber Concert  
Exploring Nonverbal Communication  
Amy McLelland, Daniel Szasz, Xi Yang  
*Great Hall*

### MONDAY, FEB. 3 • 7 p.m.

**LECTURE:** Jousting Snails and Preaching Foxes: Humor and Religion in Medieval Art  
Maggie Crosland  
*Great Hall*

### TUESDAY, FEB. 4 • 7 p.m.

**LECTURE:** Laughing Matters...Seriously  
Jacob Myers  
*Great Hall*

### WEDNESDAY, FEB. 5 • 6 p.m.

**LECTURE:** Joy in the Mess: Practices for Weathering Chaos and Change  
MaryAnn McKibben Dana  
*Great Hall*

### THURSDAY, FEB. 6 • 6 p.m.

**BANQUET:** A Night at the Improv  
MaryAnn McKibben Dana  
*Great Hall*  
Banquet cost \$25. Reservations by Feb. 2  
(205) 933-3700 or [ipcmusic.org](http://ipcmusic.org)

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Kevin Long, Pastor  
Jeff McLelland, Director of Music and Fine Arts  
Nick Mathes, Administrative Assistant

If you are interested in helping to secure the future of the Religious Arts Festival at IPC, donations may be given to The Religious Arts Festival Endowment Fund. Please call the Music Office for further information.

# BE JOYFUL IN THE LORD:

A Celebration of  
Smiles, Kindness  
and Community

54th Annual Religious Arts Festival  
January 31 - February 6, 2025  
Independent Presbyterian Church, Birmingham, AL







**FRIDAY, JAN. 31**

**Concert · Sanctuary · 7 p.m.**

**All Excellent and Esteemed – The Bassano Family**

**Piffaro: The Renaissance Band**

“They are four brethren, all excellent and esteemed above all others in this city in their virtue,” was the report from King Henry VIII’s Venetian agent upon hearing the Bassanos. Not long after, many members of this family of wind players moved to Henry VIII’s court, while others remained in Italy as important players in the Venetian musical scene. Over the next few decades, this family extended the frontiers of instrumental music. The wind players of Piffaro, “the nation’s finest Renaissance wind band,” look at one of the most potent examples of musical immigration in 16th century Europe - the story of the Bassano family.

“Widely regarded as North America’s masters of music for Renaissance wind band” (*St Paul Pioneer Press*), **Piffaro** has delighted audiences throughout the United States, Europe, Canada and South America since its founding in 1980. Under the direction of Priscilla Herreid, Piffaro recreates the rustic music of the peasantry and the elegant sounds of the official wind bands of the late Medieval and Renaissance periods. Its musicians perform on an ever-expanding instrumentarium, which includes over 40 shawms, dulcians, sackbuts, recorders, krumhorns, bagpipes, lutes, guitars, harps, and a variety of percussion — all careful reconstructions of instruments from the period.

The Fine Arts Committee offers these programs as a gift to the community and encourages you to invite your friends. All events are free with the exception of the Thursday banquet which requires reservations.

For further information about the festival, or to make reservations, please contact the Music Office at (205) 933-3700 or visit [ipcmusic.org](http://ipcmusic.org).

**SUNDAY, FEB. 2**

**Concert · Great Hall · 4 p.m.**

**Smiles – A Chamber Concert Exploring Nonverbal Communication**

**Amy McLelland**, pianist and composer  
**Daniel Szasz**, violin · **Xi Yang**, cello

We smile dozens, perhaps even hundreds of times per day, yet do all smiles result from a state of happiness? Indeed, all aspects of facial expressions are complex and can display mixed messages. Through original compositions for piano trio, mixed media, and collaborations with AI, join us for a musical tour of the many ways we communicate nonverbally.

**Amy Aberg McLelland** is an award-winning pianist whose playing has been described as “ravishing ...with a wonderful variety of tone colors and nuance of interpretation.” She holds certification through The Golandsky Piano Institute and coaches advanced pianists and instrumentalists across the U.S. and Europe in the Taubman Approach.

From Romania, violinist **Daniel Szasz** has been the Concert Master for the Alabama Symphony since 1997. Mr. Szasz has won numerous awards in national competitions in Romania, Italy and the U.S. His performances have been described as “breathtaking” and “exquisite” and have generated great enthusiasm among his audiences and in the press.

From China, **Xi Yang** has played cello for the Alabama Symphony since 2018. Her concerts have taken her across the globe to notable venues such as New York’s David Geffen Hall, Berlin and Vienna’s Konzerthaus, and the Great Hall of Moscow Conservatory.



**MONDAY, FEB. 3**

**Lecture · Great Hall 7 p.m.**

**Jousting Snails and Preaching Foxes: Humor and Religion in Medieval Art**

**Maggie Crosland**,  
*Birmingham Museum of Art, Curator of European Art*

In this talk, Maggie Crosland, the curator of European art at the Birmingham Museum of Art, will explore the surprising role humorous images played in the medieval Christian church. From foxes preaching to chickens to toilet humor, religious objects made in the years between 1200 and 1500 AD included a wide range of strange imagery meant to invoke both laughter and devotional contemplation. If you have ever wondered why snails go to war, or why elephants hate dragons, this is your chance!



**Maggie Crosland** is a specialist of medieval European art, with a particular interest in illuminated manuscripts and how people interacted with them.



**TUESDAY, FEB. 4**

**Lecture · Great Hall · 7 p.m.**

**Laughing Matters...Seriously**

**Jacob Myers**,  
*Associate Professor of Homiletics at Columbia Theological Seminary*

Laughter and Christianity have been at odds for much of Church history. In this lecture, we’ll explore the untapped potential of laughter and comedy to forge deeper connections, and to mend social and political divisions. Looking through the lens of stand-up comedy, we’ll see how certain forms of humor and comedy stand ready to open our hearts and minds to the differences that divide us.

A graduate from Princeton University and Emory University, **Dr. Jake Myers** has developed an alternative worship gathering called “rechurch,” and works to connect the ancient gospel with contemporary contexts and cultures.

**WEDNESDAY, FEB. 5**

**Lecture · Great Hall · 6 p.m.**

**Joy in the Mess: Practices for Weathering Chaos and Change**

**MaryAnn McKibben Dana**

Joy is one of the fruits of the Spirit... perhaps the juiciest! Join us as we explore the world-changing power of joy in our families, communities, and the world at large. We’ll find joy in the biblical story, in real-world examples of movements for change, and in practical tools to improvise in the face of life’s most difficult challenges... together.



**The Rev. MaryAnn McKibben Dana**

is a writer, pastor, speaker, and ministry coach living in the Virginia suburbs of DC. She is author of three books, and serves as associate pastor at Trinity Presbyterian Church in Herndon, VA.

**THURSDAY, FEB. 6**

**Annual Festival Banquet Great Hall · 6 p.m.**

**A Night at the Improv with MaryAnn McKibben Dana**

Join us as we cap our festival with an interactive “improv jam”—a series of games and exercises designed to put Wednesday night’s ideas into practice and get folks playing together. Whether you applaud appreciatively from the audience or feel moved to jump right into the action, we will build joy and share smiles together through the power of play and community.

Banquet cost \$25. Reservations by Feb. 2: (205) 933-3700 or [ipcmusic.org](http://ipcmusic.org)