



Stirling Stuff

Volume 57, No. 11

December 2013

Pastor's Letter

There is a humorous story about a guy who prayed the same prayer every morning: "Lord, if you want me to witness to someone today, please give me a sign to show me who it is." One day, he found himself on a bus and a big, burly man sat next to him. The bus was nearly empty, but this guy sat next to our praying friend. The timid Christian anxiously waited for his stop so he could exit the bus. Before he could get very nervous about the man next to him, the big guy burst into tears and began to weep. He then cried out with a loud voice, "I need to be saved. I'm a lost sinner, and I need the Lord. Won't somebody tell me how to be saved?" He turned to the Christian and pleaded, "Can you show me how to be saved?" The believer immediately bowed his head and prayed, "Lord, is this a sign?" Are **you** looking for a "sign" to start witnessing?



It would be nice if God shone a light from above on those we need to invite to church or those we need to share our faith with. However, that is not how it happens. We must live expecting that God will call us to reach out to someone and then be ready to do it. In many ways, that is what Advent is all about--us waiting for God to reach out to us.

This Advent, I want to encourage you to practice evangelism, and we've made it easy for you to do it. Our new vision statement says that we are a church that is **Feeding those who hunger**. We have several opportunities during December to feed people who are hungry physically, spiritually, and emotionally this Christmas. On Sunday, December 15th, we will be hosting our Community Christmas Carol Sing and Ring at 6:00 p.m. There will be invitations to this event available in the church bulletins for you to hand out to those who need help getting into the spirit of the season. On Sunday, December 22nd, at 5:00 p.m., I will once again be leading a Blue Christmas Service. I encourage you to invite those you know who are having a difficult time with Christmas because of loss or suffering they have experienced in their lives to attend this service. I invite you to come with them as a show of your support. As you will read on page 4 of this newsletter, this year we will be collecting food to provide Christmas dinners for several families in the area. Please be sure to help us out with this project.

Don't wait for a sign. This can be a difficult time for people. Please be aware of those who are struggling, and reach out to them. Invite them to come and join us in waiting for Christmas as we reach out to serve others in need.

See you in Church!

Tom



Worship Services and Scripture Passages for December

December 1, 2013

- *First Sunday of Advent / Heritage Sunday*
- *Sacrament of Holy Communion*
- *Non-Perishable Food Collection*
Isaiah 2:1-5; Psalm 122;
Romans 13:11-14; Matthew 24:36-44
How's The Fishing?
Zechariah 8:20-23; Matthew 4:12-20

December 8, 2013

- *Second Sunday of Advent*
Isaiah 11:1-10; Psalm 72:1-7, 18-19;
Romans 15:4-13; Matthew 3:1-12
It Takes Both Halves To Create Wholeness

December 15, 2013

- *Third Sunday of Advent*
Isaiah 35:1-10; Luke 1:47-55;
James 5:7-10; Matthew 11:2-11
Have You Found Your Patience Yet?

*Worship begins at 10:00 a.m. on Sunday mornings,
followed by Fellowship Hour in Pollard Hall.*

*Child Care is provided in the Nursery.
Children join their families in church and then leave for
Christian Education classes after the Children's Talk.*



December 22, 2013

- *Fourth Sunday of Advent*
- *10:00 a.m. - Children's Pageant*
Isaiah 7:10-16; Psalm 80:1-7, 17-19;
Romans 1:1-7; Matthew 1:18-25
- *5:00 p.m. - Blue Christmas Service*
The Comforting Presence In A Harsh World

December 24, 2013

- *8:00 p.m. - Christmas Eve*
Isaiah 9:2-7; Psalm 96;
Titus 2:11-14; Luke 2:1-20
The Incarnation Is What Saves Us

December 29, 2013

- *First Sunday After Christmas*
Isaiah 63:7-9; Psalm 148;
Hebrews 2:10-18; Matthew 2:13-23
***When It Seems God Is Nowhere
To Be Found***

**Scriptures that are listed after the first Gospel
reading are non-lectionary passages
that will be used in the sermon.
All the scriptures are provided here for
any weekly Bible reading you may do.**

Rev. Peters' sermons and the scripture readings
are posted on the church website.

Visit: www.fpcstirling.org, click on:
"Sermon Archive," then select the sermon
and/or scripture reading date you would like.



Pastor's Coffee Klatch

The December Coffee Klatch will be held on Saturday, Dec. 7th. Rev. Peters will be at the Stirling House Diner at 9:00 a.m.

If you have a question, just want to talk, or have a friend you want to introduce to our church, plan to join Rev. Peters at the Diner. Since he will not be doing any counseling, if you come and someone else is sitting with him, pull up a chair and join them.

Christian Education Committee**- Lore Pateman****Christmas Pageant**

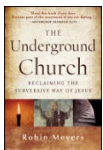
This year's Christmas Pageant, "*Reflections*," by Margaret Aron, will be presented by our Church School students on **Sunday, December 22nd**, during morning worship.

The participant schedule is as follows:

- Sun., Dec. 1 No Practice
- Sun., Dec. 8 Mandatory Practice during church
- Sun., Dec. 15 Mandatory Practice 9:00-11:00 a.m.
- Sat., Dec. 21 Mandatory Practice 10:00-11:30 a.m.
- Sun., Dec. 22 Performance; arrive at church by 9:00 a.m.

**Adult Education****- Debra Sprague****Fourth Sunday Focus****- Tom Parziale**

Due to other activities taking place, there will be **no Fourth Sunday Focus in December**. Our next "Fourth Sunday Focus" gathering will be on **January 26th**. If you have a topic you'd like to discuss, please contact Tom Parziale.

**Adult Book Study**

The Book Study on "*The Underground Church: Reclaiming the Subversive Way of Jesus*," by Robin Meyers, **will begin on Thursday, Dec. 5th**. Those attending are asked to read the first three chapters. If you do not yet have a book, speak to Rev. Peters, or you may order a copy on amazon.com.

Worship Committee**- Janet Parziale****Non-Perishable Food Collection, December 1st**

On the first Sunday of each month, we collect donations of non-perishable food during the worship service. While we are receiving the Lord's Supper, we also want to provide for others. The food is donated to the township food pantry at St. Vincent Church. We continue to collect non-perishable food in the baskets located in the church entry-ways during the rest of the month.



Heritage Sunday

On **December 1st**, the church will celebrate Heritage Sunday. Once again, Dave Paladino will be our guest bagpiper and will perform, “Stirling on the Hill,” the tune Richard Streeton composed for our church. Following worship, there will be a special coffee hour with lots of Scottish goodies to enjoy. The Worship Committee invites anyone who enjoys baking to bring their favorite Scottish goodies to share. A fine pot of tea will also be served!



Please plan to join us for this festive service as we celebrate our church’s Scottish heritage, and remember to wear a wee bit of plaid.

First Sunday of Advent

December 1st is also the first Sunday of Advent, and we will begin a special program that will continue for the four Sundays leading up to Christmas. We will be asking for participation in lighting the Advent candles and doing the readings.

**Mission Committee****- Madeline Hahl****Tree of Plenty - Adopt a Family’s Christmas Dinner**

Beginning on December 1st, there will be Christmas tree in Pollard Hall decorated with tags containing information about needy families in our community and how we can help provide their Christmas dinner. In the holiday spirit, we invite you to select a family by taking a tag and choosing the listed items you would like to donate. Let’s make it a Merry Christmas for our deserving and less-fortunate neighbors. Together we can make a difference. **Please bring donated items to Pollard Hall by Sunday, December 22nd**, so they can be distributed in time for Christmas. Thank you.

“Road to Bridges” Program

Session has decided to discontinue the *Mile of Pennies* program that we have been supporting for several years. The amount collected this year, \$511, will be sent to Kenya to help provide student scholarships.

A new Mission program, Road to Bridges, is being started. The *Bridges* organization provides meals for homeless people in New Jersey and New York. Our church provides 40 lunches per month, and this collection will help defray some of the costs of the project. We hope you will participate with your usual generosity. Please look for the collection box/jar in Pollard Hall or the Church office. Thank you.

Bridges Outreach Lunch Program**- Jean Hoffman, Coordinator**

Our next commitment date for preparing 40 lunches is: **Friday, Dec. 6th, 9:30 a.m.**, in Pollard Hall. **We welcome donations of juice boxes, small water bottles, fruit/pudding cups, snacks of all kinds, fruit, and plastic spoons.** You can drop these items off in Pollard Hall on Sunday mornings.

Upcoming Date: January 10th

Family Promise of Morris County

- Chris Scott & Phyllis Clemson

Our final responsibility for 2013 for hosting Family Promise clients at the Shrine of St. Joseph was on Nov. 19th. Thank you to everyone who helped out by providing meals and hosting.

Our dates for 2014 are: Tuesday, January 14th
 Thurs., February 27th
 Friday, November 21st through Saturday noon, November 22nd

Please watch for more information in upcoming issues of the newsletter, and sign-up to help when you can.

Paper Products Collection

Thank you to everyone who donated paper products for the *Family Promise of Morris County (Interfaith)* network. We had a wonderful response to this collection which will benefit people right in our own "backyard."

Thanksgiving Turkey Donations

Thanks to your generous support of our annual Thanksgiving Turkey collection, Lynne & Bill Combs were able to deliver 9 turkeys and 17 boxes of stuffing mix to the Market Street Mission in Morristown for distribution to needy families.

**Blankets & Baby Food Collection**

- Jean Hoffman

We will continue to collect blankets and baby food for St. Joseph's Social Services in Elizabeth. These items are very much needed and appreciated. Please place items on the pew inside Pollard Hall. Thank you!

Community Food Bank

- Kai Ihringer

We had **seventeen** church members and friends volunteer at the Community Food Bank in Hillside on Saturday morning, Nov. 23rd. I want to give a really big thank you to everyone in the group, which was split pretty much evenly between adults and teenagers. One note of interest is that almost half of the participants had never volunteered at a food bank before. Everyone worked hard and had a good time.



Pictured here is our group of volunteers:

Garrett & Ian Blakeslee
 Susan Brodziak
 Smiley Flores
 Amanda, Susan, & Ed Gerecht
 Katherine, Kai, & Lucas Ihringer
 Brooke Kupferman
 Tom Parziale
 Tom Peters
 Joshua Rodriquez
 Chris Scott
 Lynn Tasker
 Mariella Zijdel

Deacons Corner**- Katherine Ihringer****Sanctuary Decorating**

The holiday season is approaching and it is almost time to decorate the church! Please join the Deacons to help **decorate on Sat., Dec. 14th at 9:30 a.m.** All help will be greatly appreciated! I hope everyone has a safe and peaceful holiday season.

Community Christmas Carol Sing & Ring

Please join us in singing Christmas carols by candlelight on the front lawn of the church on **Sunday, Dec. 15th at 6:00 p.m.** Afterwards, come inside and warm up with Christmas wassail, hot chocolate, and cookies while listening to some musical selections by our handbell choir. If you would like to donate cookies, please bring them to morning worship that day or when you come to the carol sing.

**Game Night**

The church game night is coming up soon. It is scheduled for **Friday, Dec. 27th at 7:00 p.m.** Please join us, and bring a game and friends! There will be snacks served.

Deacons Fund

There are green envelopes in the pews for donations to the Deacons Fund. This fund is used to support their Mission work. Thank you.

Church Flowers

Don't forget to sign-up on the Flower Chart in Pollard Hall if you would like to place flowers on the chancel for Sunday morning worship in honor or memory of someone. Allow enough lead time to have them ordered for the date you would like. The cost is \$30, and cash or checks (made payable to: Flowers on the Ridge) should be given to Israel Sierra.



When you sign up on the flower chart, please be specific, i.e. *in memory, honor, given by*, and print clearly.

Water Available During Worship

There will be a pitcher of water and cups available in the Church narthex in case you need a drink during worship, especially during the winter months when the air is very dry. Please feel free to help yourself or signal an Usher to bring it to you.

Christmas Poinsettias Order Form

The Deacons are coordinating the ordering of poinsettias to decorate the sanctuary for the Christmas season. Please use the order form below, or the forms available in the Sunday bulletin, to place your order and specify if you are ordering in memory or honor of someone special in your life.

The deadline to order is Sunday, December 15th

Price: \$16.50 each
Colors: Red, White, or Pink



<u>What Color</u>	<u>How many?</u>	<u>Total Price</u>
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____

TOTALS _____

Purchased in MEMORY/ HONOR of:
(Please circle one)

By: _____
Please print clearly

To be picked up following Christmas Eve worship: _____ **To be donated:** _____

Please submit your order and payment to Israel Sierra, the church office, or place in the offering plate.

Deadline to order: Sunday, December 15th

Make checks payable to: Flowers on the Ridge and note: Christmas Poinsettia on your check.

iGive Ongoing Church Fundraiser**- Debra Sprague****Make the holidays even more special for First Presbyterian Church, Stirling**

Lots of people shop online, especially at this time of year.

If **you** plan to do any online shopping - or even if you only plan to LOOK online - please consider using the information and link in the following email. It doesn't cost you anything, all costs are paid for by the stores, and it might earn a few dollars for the church. (You can forward the link to others to use, too - we get credit for anyone who uses the link.)

Our church can earn an **extra \$5** for every new member who tries the **iGive Button**, even if they don't end up shopping. **Share now** by forwarding this link, posting on Facebook, or even tweeting.

Here's the special link you must use: <http://iGive.com/welcome/warmwelcome.cfm?c=60807&m=717498>

It automatically makes sure that a portion of your on-line purchases at over 1,000 stores means a free donation to the Church. Shopping = Giving year 'round. Use an iPad or iPhone? It's very easy to help - just visit iGive.com and start your shopping there.

Thanks for considering this!

Church Website

Reminder: Our Church website, www.fpcstirling.org, is your source for church news, the Church calendar, Stirling Stuff, upcoming events/programs, Pastor's sermons, Scripture readings, Church history, and more. Please make it a point to log on regularly and keep up-to-date with what's happening.

These Days

Our Church has a subscription for multiple copies of the devotional booklet, *These Days*. The latest issue is available in the Church narthex.

Labels/Box Tops for Education; Pop-Top Can Tabs**- Jan Somers**

Please continue to save Labels for Education, Box Tops for Education, and pop-top can tabs.

The labels are used by parent organizations to earn educational and recreational items for students. The can tabs are sold by weight to recycling centers, and the proceeds are donated to Ronald MacDonald House to help fund their programs for hospitalized children and their families. There is a collection canister in the church office. Thank you.



Ongoing Mission Programs

Road to Bridges

Change (and more) collected during coffee hour supports Bridges Program, providing 40 lunches per month for NJ/NY homeless.

Township Food Pantry

Items can be left in baskets labeled "Food Pantry Donations" in the Church narthex and on the table outside of Pollard Hall.

Toiletries

Full-sized and "courtesy" sized bars of soap, shampoo, and conditioner, and shower caps are donated to various causes. Place on the pew inside Pollard Hall.

Sneaker Project

Place used pairs of sneakers (any size) on the pew inside Pollard Hall. They are sent to the Somerset Food Bank and other charities.

Eyeglasses, Sunglasses, Cell Phones

Place used glasses and cell phones on the pew inside Pollard Hall.

Yarn & Fabric

Yarn is used to make lap robes for wounded veterans, afghans for battered women, and hats for newborns in hospitals; any color is acceptable. Fabric (with the exception of wool and stretchables) of about 1/2 yard is used to make small bears for children, totes for wheelchair patients, etc. Place on pew inside Pollard Hall.

Ongoing Fundraiser

ShopRite & Kings Gift Cards

- ✓ No additional cost to you to use
- ✓ Purchase cards at face value
- ✓ Church earns 5%
- ✓ Denominations available are:
 - ShopRite: \$20, \$50, \$100
 - Kings: \$25, \$50, \$100
- ✓ Cards are available each week during Fellowship Hour or by contacting Jean Hoffman

iGive

- ✓ No cost to you
- ✓ Log on / sign up / find out more at:
<http://www.igive.com/FirstPresbyterianChurch-StirlingNJ>
- ✓ E-mail this information to your friends

**Please e-mail submissions for the
January issue of Stirling Stuff to:
jsomers17@hotmail.com
by December 22nd. Thank you!**

Why not invite a friend to church?



Stirling Stuff is the newsletter of the

First Presbyterian Church

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Our Mission

Jesus said, "Feed My Sheep." This welcoming and caring family, empowered by the love of Christ, shares the grace and peace of God's blessings by serving those who are hungry in body or spirit.

First Presbyterian Church of Stirling
Feeding Those Who Hunger