



Stirling Stuff

Volume 65, No. 11

December 2021

Dear Church Family,

The poet W.H. Auden composed a long poem in 1944 called *For the Time Being: A Christmas Oratorio* in which the various characters of the Christmas story speak in modern English in a contemporary context. Auden portrays King Herod as an eminently practical man who looks out over the civilization he rules with some satisfaction. He laments, however, the lack of routine and the lack of good common sense among the people, as evidenced by their reliance on Ouija boards, crystals, alchemy, and amulets. Despite all he has done for them, Herod finds that people still want a savior. "Legislation is helpless against the wild prayer of longing that rises, day in, day out, from all these households under my protection." The savior he says these people want, however, is one who will come on the peoples' own terms, who will arrive in a box to serve what they believe to be their immediate needs. He mocks their prayers: "O God, put away justice and truth for we cannot understand them and do not want them. Eternity would bore us dreadfully. Leave the heavens and come down to our earth...become our uncle. Look after Baby, amuse Grandfather, escort Madam to the Opera, help Willy with his homework, introduce Muriel to a handsome naval officer. Be interesting and weak like us, and we will love you as we love ourselves."



Later, in exasperation, Herod explains, "I asked for a God who should be as like me as possible. What use to me is a God whose divinity consists in doing different things that I cannot do or saying clever things that I cannot understand? The God I want and intend to get must be someone I can recognize immediately without having to wait and see what he says or does. There must be nothing in the least extraordinary about him. Produce him at once, please. I'm sick of waiting."

As we begin our annual Advent preparation, there can be a sameness and routine to our anticipation of the birth of our Savior. In our practical and sensible way, we plod through the season, the awesome wonder and grace of the Incarnation somehow eluding us. To the extent we look for God at all, we look for one who will do what we want and give us what we think we need. We know in our heads that this is ridiculous – that God does as God chooses, and not as we think we want. However, it can be another matter to live each day with expectant waiting, with hope, and with wonder and awe at what God has done, is continuing to do, and may do in the future. Because God will most assuredly interrupt our best laid plans; God will definitely disrupt our comfort; God will undoubtedly surprise us.

So, my wish for you is that you will be surprised this year at Christmas. May we all be astonished by the wonderfully remarkable thing that God has done in coming to us in Jesus the Christ.

Yours in Christ,

Barbara



The First Presbyterian Church of Stirling
Feeding Those Who Hunger

December Lectionary Readings

Dec. 5: 2nd Sunday of Advent

Malachi 3:1-4; Luke 1:68-79; Philippians 1:3-11; Luke 3:1-6

Dec. 12: 3rd Sunday of Advent

Zephaniah 3:14-20; Isaiah 12:2-6; Philippians 4:4-7; Luke 3:7-18

Dec. 19: 4th Sunday of Advent

Micah 5:2-5a; Luke 1:47-55; Psalm 80:1-7; Hebrews 10:5-10; Luke 1:39-45 (46-55)

Dec. 24: Christmas Eve

Isaiah 9:2-7; Psalm 96; Titus 2:11-14; Luke 2:1-14 (15-20)

Dec. 26: 1st Sunday after Christmas

1 Samuel 2:18-20, 26; Psalm 148; Colossians 3:12-17; Luke 2:41-52



Stewardship

- Sandy Mackay



Weekly Contributions

When we were not worshipping in our sanctuary, financial commitments still had to be met. Whether maintaining the buildings and grounds, paying our staff, or keeping up with our mission support, our expenses were ongoing. Now that we have returned to worshipping in the sanctuary, please try to keep your pledges current. If you will not be in church, please send your weekly offering/pledge (in your offering envelope) to the church office or directly to Elsie Turqman. Thank you.

Offering Envelopes

The **2022 offering envelopes** have arrived and will be available to be picked up at the church. Please look for your name on the envelope box.



Annual Reports – Due January 14th

Reminder: Annual reports for all church committees/groups are due to the church office by no later than January 14th so they can be assembled and distributed in time for the Annual Congregational Meeting scheduled for January 30th. If you need a copy of the 2020 report, please contact Paulette in the church office.

Rev. Dr. Thomas Peters Concert Series



We are pleased to present **classical pianist Yukiko Tanaka in concert on Sunday, Dec. 5th at 2:00 p.m.** This will be the first presentation in our newly renamed *Rev. Dr. Thomas Peters Concert Series* since Covid-19 started. Ms. Tanaka has performed here several times, all to standing ovations, and she always looks forward to playing for the Long Hill Township audience. Ms. Tanaka will be performing Tchaikovsky's *Nutcracker*, perfect for the Christmas season.

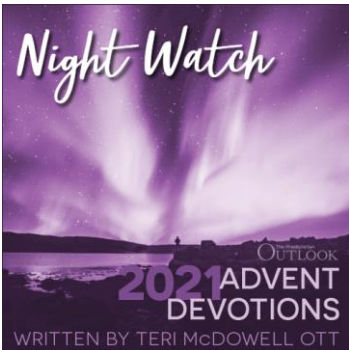
Admission, as always, is free. A short reception will follow the concert, during which attendees may meet the performer. **Masks must be worn, and guests must sign in for contact tracing, if needed.**

Annual Meyersville Tree Lighting, December 5th

If you still want to enjoy some Christmas music festivities, consider attending the **Meyersville Tree Lighting at the Meyersville Circle** (by the Meyersville Presbyterian Church) on **Sunday, December 5th, at 5:00 pm.** The circle is blocked off and folks enjoy snacks, Christmas music, a visit from Santa, and fireworks. Members of WHRHS's Tri-M chorus will be singing.



Advent Devotionals Available



Beginning Sunday, November 28, the first Sunday in Advent, a Daily Advent Devotional published by Presbyterian Outlook will be available. Included for each day of Advent is a Scripture reading, a brief meditation, and a prayer. The devotional will be emailed one week at a time to the congregation. For those who would like a hard copy, they will be in the narthex and in the church office. About the devotional:

"Hope is hard to find during a long pandemic. Dark feelings of grief, loss, anger, betrayal, and despair plague our souls and our communities. As the light fades and the evenings grow long this December, the season of Advent reminds us that God is with us in the night."

We can see and observe God at work in the dark, marvel at the beauty of creation lit by moon and stars, and rest from the day's labor. Darkness is often associated with evil and suffering, but a devotional exploration of "night" bears witness to Christ's Good News. Exploring biblical happenings that occur at night – visions, angel visits, prisoners set free – we will move through this Advent season as watchful disciples, keeping vigil for the One who is promised to arrive like a thief in the night.

Deacons' Corner**- Janet Parziale****Mission of the Month - December**

The **Market Street Mission in Morristown** has been designated for the **Mission of the Month again for December**. Throughout the Covid-19 Pandemic, they have continued to provide 200 meals each day to those in immediate need.

They also provide recovery programs and vocational training to those rebuilding their lives, community counseling services, and “regularly scheduled meetings and services that give people a solid foundation for stable lives.” In 2020, the Market Street Mission provided 86,207 meals to the homeless and poor in Morris County, hosted 21,316 shelter stays, and had 36 graduates from their *Life Change* recovery program.

- I am happy to report an all-time high collection of 12 turkeys in November. One was distributed locally and eleven were delivered to the Market Street Mission. Thank you to everyone from both churches and the community who donated a turkey to this very worthy cause!
- Monetary gifts collected through *Mission of the Month* will help them care for an individual's immediate needs today and their long-term needs for a stable and independent tomorrow.



If you are not able to attend church, please mail your donation to the church office or directly to Elsie Turqman.

Remember to mark it as “Dec Mission of the Month” and include your name and/or envelope number if you would like your donation to be recorded. Thank you in advance for supporting this program.

Annual Church Decorating

Mark your calendar! **The decorating of the church will be held on Saturday, December 11th, 10:00 am.** This is always a wonderful time of fellowship as we put up the tree, hang the ornaments and lights, and decorate the pews and windows. The Deacons welcome all to come and help with this joyful event! Please join us to help decorate and have some fun. You won't be disappointed!

**Christmas Poinsettias**

If you would like to order Christmas Poinsettias to place on the chancel for Christmas Eve in memory or honor of someone special in your life, please **complete the form on page 13 of this newsletter**. Orders are due in the church office by Sunday, December 12th. Checks should be made payable to FPC-Deacons.

**ShopRite Gift Cards**

Do you shop at ShopRite? Well, then, you cannot afford to pass up this deal to help support the church in another small way. For the past several years, the church has been purchasing ShopRite gift cards (known as our *Voucher Program*) to sell on Sunday mornings. For every \$100 sold, the church earns \$5; that is, we get 5% of all sales. Over the course of a year, at times that has translated to more than a \$1,000 earned.

The gift cards come in \$20, \$50, and \$100 denominations. They never expire; you can continue to use them until the balance is used up. To purchase these gift cards for yourself or as a gift, please see Yvonne Fletcher on Sunday mornings or call her at home during the week. She will be more than happy to help you out with your purchase. Thank you in advance for helping in this special way.

Flowers for Our Recorded Worship

For the month of December, Rev. Aspinall will be recording on-line services in Stirling. If you would like to order flowers to be placed in the chancel for any of these services, please send an email to the church at secretary@fpcstirling.org or call the church office at 908-647-1033 and leave a message with Paulette, our church secretary. When leaving a message, **please include the specifics** (your name, the Sunday service you would like flowers for, and who they are given in memory/honor of). The cost is still \$30; your check (made payable to: Flowers on the Ridge) can be sent to the church office. Since recordings are done on Thursdays, the flowers need to be picked up by Israel Sierra on Wednesdays. Place your order at least one week prior to the Wednesday pick-up date to allow enough lead time to have them for the service you choose. You also have the option of providing flowers from your garden, etc. If you have any questions, please contact Paulette at the church office or Janet Parziale.



Know Someone Who Needs a Card?

We know what the power of prayer can do in helping to give strength to all those involved. If you know of someone who is in need of our prayers, please let Janet Parziale know so that a card can be sent. Janet can be reached at janetparziale@comcast.net or 908-647-2212.



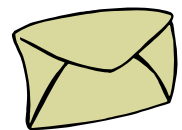
Deacons Fundraiser: First Presbyterian Church Notecards



The Deacons are selling packets of **ten cards and envelopes for \$5.00**. The note cards have a pencil sketch of our church on the front; they are blank inside, thus making them useful for any type of communication. If you are interested, please let any Deacon know or leave a message at the church office, and we will get a pack or two to you. They will also be available for purchase following worship services in Stirling. Proceeds will go into the Deacons' Fund. Thank you for your support of this project.

Deacons' Fund

The Deacons' Fund helps the Deacons do their Mission work and is funded by donations given so generously by the congregation. You may send your donation to the church or directly to Elsie Turqman. Please note "Deacons' Fund" in the memo section of your check and include your envelope number. Thank you very much!



Worship Committee

- Janet Parziale



The Meyersville and Stirling churches will continue to worship together through the Sundays in Advent. **For the month of December, Sunday morning worship will be held in Meyersville at 10:00 a.m.** There will also be an online service each week, accessible through a link delivered by email and on the church website, www.fpcstirling.org. The service is also available on a DVD; please contact the church office and one will be delivered to you.

Second Sunday in Advent

December 5th is the Second Sunday in Advent as we continue on our Journey to Christmas. Plan to join us each week as we light the Advent candles and get closer to the celebration of the birth of Jesus.



Liturgists Needed: For In-Person and On-Line Services



We need Liturgists each week to do readings for both our in-person and online worship services. Recordings for on-line services are done at the church, Stirling or Meyersville, on Thursday afternoons (other arrangements can be made if necessary).

To sign up, please contact Jan Somers. If Jan contacts you to ask you to read, please let her know as soon as possible if/when you will be available. Rev. Aspinall will send you a copy of your readings and confirm the location and time for the on-line recording. Thank you.

Blue Christmas Service

The Blue Christmas, or Longest Night Service, which **will be held in our sanctuary on Sunday, December 19th, at 4:00 p.m.**, is for those who are having a difficult time getting into the Spirit of the Christmas season. When you have lost someone, or lost a job, or lost your health, it can be difficult to deal with all the joy, lights, singing, and family gatherings of Christmas. On top of that, you may feel guilty that you feel this way. Maybe you used to love the Christmas season, but now it is difficult.



The Blue Christmas Service is designed to help people who are feeling blue to hear the Christmas proclamation in a way that speaks to their feelings. If you are one of those people, come and let the Christmas story speak to what you are feeling. Perhaps you know of someone who is having a difficult time this Christmas season; invite them to come to this service; or, better yet, pick them up and come with them so they know they have a friend who understands what they are experiencing. The service will also be available on the church's website, www.fpcstirling.org.

Christmas Eve in Stirling



On **Friday, December 24th, at 8:00 p.m., we will hold the Christmas Eve Service in our sanctuary**. We hope you will join us for this beautiful service of candles and carols as we prepare for the birth of Christ.

First Sunday Back in Sanctuary - November 7th

On November 7th we returned to worshipping in our sanctuary after a very long time. On that Sunday, we celebrated the Lord's Supper and All Saints'/Remembrance Sunday, when we remember those special people in our lives that we have lost in the past year. Here are pictures from the service:

Rev. Aspinall preparing to serve the Communion elements, Tom Parziale lighting candles as each name on our remembrance list is read aloud, and congregation members in the pews!



First Sunday in Advent and Heritage Sunday

On November 28th, we celebrated the First Sunday in Advent and our Annual Heritage Sunday when we remember the Scottish heritage of the Presbyterian Church. Once again, we welcomed David Palladino-Sinclair, Pipe Major and Director of the Rampant Lion Bands of NJ and a long-time friend of our congregation. It was a wonderful celebration, and we thank everyone for wearing their plaid and donating goodies for Fellowship Hour.

Here are pictures from the service: David playing the Processional, followed by Rev. Aspinall, Tom Parziale carrying the Heritage Sunday banner, and members of the Handbell Choir; Carolyn Malfatone and Joyce Koenig lighting the First Advent Candle; the Handbell Choir; Rev. Aspinall with our piper, David; Scottish decorations provided by Janet Parziale and Carolyn Malfatone; Fellowship Hour hosted by the Worship Committee with lots of Scottish treats; Rev. Peters' bagpipes, which he donated to the church when he retired.







Mission Programs**Community Food Bank of NJ**

- Kai Ihringer

After a two-year absence, our church is excited to resume our mission to "Feed the Hungry." I have scheduled a trip to the Community Food Bank in Hillside for **Saturday, December 4th**. Volunteers are needed to help sort and package food for delivery to those in need.

**Here is the relevant information:****Date:** Sat., December 4th**Departure:** Meet at 8 a.m. in the church parking lot; leave by 8:15 a.m.**Food Bank Slot:** 9 – 11 a.m.**Return:** Back at church between 11:30 a.m. and 12 noon**Cell Phone (Kai):** 908-361-2845**Here is information from the food bank website regarding Covid-19 volunteer requirements:**

- ✓ All volunteers must be aged 12 or older.
- ✓ Fully vaccinated volunteers who can show proof of vaccination will not have to do onsite screening.
- ✓ Unvaccinated volunteers must go through onsite screening upon entering the facility.
- ✓ Face masks are required and will be provided if necessary.
- ✓ All work areas maintain social distancing guidelines.

If you plan to attend, please contact Kai asap. Also, let him know if you are willing to drive and how many available seats you have. Thank you.

Family Promise of Morris County

- Jan Somers



Our church is responsible for hosting the guests of Family Promise on December 17th. Guests have been housed in motels since Covid-19 started and that will continue through 2022. Hosts are asked to provide gift cards so the families can purchase food and other necessities. Donations of \$225 received through our Mission of the Month collection will be used for this purpose. Thank you to everyone for your continued support of this mission

Bridges Outreach Lunch Program

- Janet Parziale



The Bridges Outreach organization is in need of as many lunches as we can provide. Currently, one person is making sandwiches and one person is filling the brown bags. The children from the Montessori School often decorate the bags and write messages to the recipients. The sandwiches, drinks, and non-perishable goodies are delivered to Summit monthly.



We are always in need of small bottles of water or cartons of juice; snacks of cookies, nuts, Goldfish, pretzels; and small fruit cups, applesauce, pudding, etc. Cash donations are also appreciated to help with the purchase of bread and lunch meat. You can drop items off in Pollard Hall (call the office to confirm that someone is there) or send cash donations to Elsie Turqman.

Facilities & Property Management

During the past several weeks, there have been issues in the church building with the heat and bathroom leaks, which affected the Montessori School. Tom Parziale has spent a tremendous amount of time on site and making calls to have these problems corrected in a timely and cost-efficient manner. Many thanks to Tom for all of his time and efforts on the congregation's behalf!

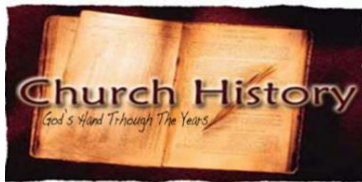


Church Website & Facebook Page

To keep up-to-date with what's happening at our Church, make it a point to check in regularly on the Church website, www.fpcstirling.org, and Facebook page, https://www.facebook.com/fpcStirling/?ref=aymt_homepage_panel. They are good sources for church news, Stirling Stuff, Pastor's sermons, Scripture readings, Church history, and more.

Church Archives

- Jan Somers

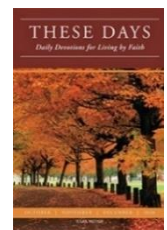


Please continue to save news clippings, bulletins, programs, pictures, or other memorabilia regarding any member of our church family so our archives can be kept up to date. **Please be sure items are dated and, if possible, the names of church members and/or families are highlighted.** Items can be mailed to the Church (labeled "Archives"), or you can save them until you are in the building. Thank you.

These Days

"To nurture the daily practice of prayer and the reading of Scripture, there is solid help in the pages of 'These Days.' The devotions wrestle faithfully with the doubts, joys, and challenges of Christian life."

Copies of this devotional booklet are available in the church narthex.



Pop-Top Can Tabs

- Jan Somers



Please continue to save pop-top can tabs, any size. The can tabs are sold by weight to recycling centers, and the proceeds are donated to assist people on dialysis. There is a collection canister in the church office, or you can just give them to me any Sunday morning. Thank you for your continued support of this program.

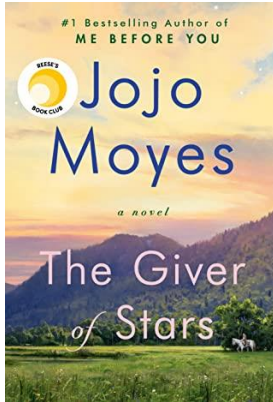
Advent Event at Meyersville Church

Are you crafty? Or not? Regardless, you are invited to an **ADVENT EVENT on Sunday, December 12th, after the worship service at Meyersville**, to make a Christmas ornament or decoration. The supplies for the crafts will be provided. This is a fun way to get into the Christmas spirit with your church friends. It would be helpful if you could bring a pair of sharp scissors with points if you have them. All are welcome.



Meyersville Book Club**- Jan Somers**

The Book Club's current selection is a novel, *"The Giver of Stars,"* by Jojo Moyes. It is based on a true story rooted in America's past. The group will meet via Zoom on Monday, December 20th, 7:30 p.m. to discuss the book. Everyone is welcome to join the group; please contact Rev. Aspinall so she can send you the Zoom link. Libraries are open and the book is available in several different formats.



Alice marries handsome American Bennett Van Cleve hoping to escape her stifling life in England. But small-town Kentucky quickly proves equally claustrophobic, especially living alongside her overbearing father-in-law. So, when a call goes out for a team of women to deliver books as part of Eleanor Roosevelt's new traveling library, Alice signs on enthusiastically.

The leader, and soon Alice's greatest ally, is Margery, a smart-talking, self-sufficient woman who's never asked a man's permission for anything. They will be joined by three other singular women who become known as the Packhorse Librarians of Kentucky.

What happens to them—and to the men they love—becomes an unforgettable drama of loyalty, justice, humanity, and passion. These heroic women refuse to be cowed by men or by convention. And though they face all kinds of dangers in a landscape that is at times breathtakingly beautiful, at others brutal, they're committed to their job: bringing books to people who have never had any, arming them with facts that will change their lives.

"The Giver of Stars" is unparalleled in its scope and epic in its storytelling. Funny, heartbreaking, enthralling, it is destined to become a modern classic—a richly rewarding novel of women's friendship, of true love, and of what happens when we reach beyond our grasp for the great beyond.

Christmas Poinsettias Order Form

The Deacons are coordinating the ordering of poinsettias for the Christmas season. Please use the form below 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 12th

Price: \$20 each

Colors: Red, Pink, or White

What Color	How Many	Total Price
TOTALS		



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

Given By: _____
 (Please print clearly)

Please check one: To be picked up at the church: _____ To be donated: _____

Please submit your order and payment to the church office or place it in the offering plate on Sunday.

Make checks payable to: **FPC-Deacons** and note: **Christmas Poinsettia** on your check.

*****Deadline to order: Sunday, December 12th**

You may pick up your poinsettia following the Christmas Eve service.

Ongoing Mission Programs:

Family Promise of Morris County
Bridges Outreach Lunch Program
Local Food Pantry

Please e-mail submissions for the
January 2022 issue of *Stirling Stuff* to:
jsomers17@hotmail.com
by December 23rd. Thank you!

Ongoing Fundraisers**ShopRite Gift Cards**

- ✓ No additional cost to you to use
- ✓ Purchase cards at face value
- ✓ Church earns 5%
- ✓ Denominations available are:

\$20, \$50, \$100

Gift Cards are available from Yvonne Fletcher.

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

Stirling Stuff is the newsletter of

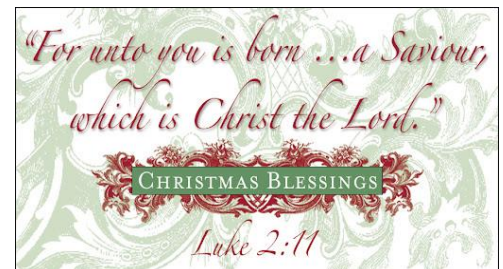
The First Presbyterian Church of Stirling

158 Central Avenue
Stirling, NJ 07980

Editor: Jan Somers

Rev. Barbara Aspinall, Interim Pastor
baspinall223@aol.com
Paulette Irlander, Office Manager
Secretary@fpcstirling.org
Church Office: 908-647-1033
Website: www.fpcstirling.org

Why not invite a friend to church

**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.

