



Stirling Stuff

Volume 65, No. 1

January 2021

Pastor's Letter

Dear Church Family,

I want to say how grateful I am to all of you for your prayers and support in the last 2 months. It meant a lot to me. Your cards, letters, and comments on Caring Bridge greatly lifted my spirits.

As most of you know, I've been home since Dec. 11th. I have two weekly sessions with a Physical Therapist, and I am regaining strength. I can walk upstairs now and go outside for very short walks.

I will be returning to RWJ Hospital in mid-late January for a bone marrow transplant. As I've shared with many of you, this is the cure for Acute Myeloid Leukemia. The transplant could only be done after I went through the chemotherapy, which I had last month. I will be in the hospital for 3-4 weeks.

I want to give a BIG SHOUT of thanks to Rev. Barbara Aspinall for all she has done in my absence and for her wonderful support. I also want to thank Paulette for keeping the office going, Tatiana for her hymn-sings, Janet Parziale for all of her tech work for the church along with her helper Tom, and everyone else who has stepped in to see that things continued as well as they could in a pandemic.



This is not the last newsletter article I envisioned writing some time ago, but 2020 was not a year that many of us could have imagined. The good news is that, throughout it all, God has been with us, and there is nothing that can change that.

May the Love of God,
The Grace and Peace of the Son, Emmanuel,
And the Fellowship of the Holy Spirit
Be with us now and into the eternal future. Amen.

Tom

The First Presbyterian Church of Stirling
Feeding Those Who Hunger

Session Report**- Susan Brodziak****Annual Congregational Meeting**

In accordance with the bylaws of the First Presbyterian Church of Stirling, the Session has called a meeting of the congregation for **Sunday, January 31st, 2021**, 11:00 a.m., via Zoom. The purposes of this meeting are:

1. to receive the 2020 reports of Pastor, church committees, and groups involved with the church
2. to elect the 2021 financial secretary
3. to elect the 2021 church treasurer
4. to elect the 2021 nominating committee
5. to review and receive the 2021 budget



Please plan to attend -- via Zoom -- this important event in the life of our Church as we look back over the past year and ahead to 2021.

Annual Reports - Due January 15th

Annual reports for all church committees/groups are due to the church office by no later than January 15th so they can be assembled and distributed in time for the Annual Congregational Meeting scheduled for January 31st. **Please confirm that someone on your committee is taking care of this.**

**Church Treasurer**

Bill Hopcraft, our church treasurer for the past several years, will be stepping down at the end of his current term. The Session is recommending that the position be filled by co-treasurers, Edward Gerecht and Kai Ihringer, who will be nominated at our annual congregational meeting.

Job Description

The Session has reviewed a job description for the position of Interim Pastor so that the search process can proceed.

Per-Capita Apportionment

The Per Capita amount for 2021 is **\$40.00 per active member**. This amount includes \$8.98 for the Office of General Assembly, \$4.10 for the Synod of the Northeast, and \$26.92 for Presbytery. This money is used to help fund the work of the different levels of the denomination. Please send your apportionment for each person in your family who is a member. You may send it to the church office or directly to Elsie Turqman, and note that it is for "Per Capita."

Stewardship**- Sandy Mackay****Weekly Offering & 2021 Offering Envelopes**

If you are able, we hope you will continue to send in your weekly offering. All but four boxes of offering envelopes were distributed thanks to Tom Parziale. He rode around town and delivered them personally. You can also use the **PayPal Online Giving Link**, which is on the home page of our church's website; or, mail your check to the church or directly to Elsie Turqman.



2021 Pledge

Several weeks ago, a Stewardship letter and 2021 pledge card were sent out to the congregation. Session is asking that you prayerfully consider your financial commitment to the church, and then return the pledge card to the church soon so budgeting can proceed for the coming year. If you no longer have the pledge card, you can just write your pledge on a piece of paper, along with your name and envelope number and send it in.

**Join the Online Zoom Coffee Hour****- Janet Parziale**

Our Zoom coffee hours continue every Sunday morning at 11:00 a.m. jointly with our friends from Meyersville. For many, these visits online with one another have been fun, therapeutic, and a great way to catch up with one another.

If you have not attended, please try it on an upcoming Sunday morning. You do not need any special software to join in the fun; just click the link in the email provided each week to participate. You can join with video or just with audio, and you can use your phone, kindle, tablet, or computer. If you need the link resent, please feel free to contact Janet Parziale at janetparziale@comcast.net or 908-647-2212. We hope to see you this coming Sunday!

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

During the month of **January**, we will be collecting donations for the **Bridges Outreach Lunch Program**. Currently, Toni Hopcraft and Janet Parziale prepare 40 bag lunches monthly containing a sandwich, fruit cup, drink, snack, mustard, spoon, and napkin. These lunches are then taken to the Bridges Outreach office in Summit where they get distributed to many grateful members of the homeless community in Summit, Newark, Irvington, and even New York City.

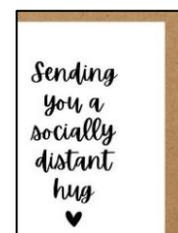


We need your help to continue our program. We have committed to providing lunches monthly through 2021. Last year, we did not miss a single month and were able to deliver 480 lunches. The cost of providing the 40 lunches is approximately \$80 each month. During the month of January, the Mission of the Month offering will be designated for our Bridges program. All donations will be used to purchase the items that go into the lunch bags and will help us to continue this worthy program.

To help support our Bridges effort in providing these lunches, please send your donation to the church office (158 Central Ave, Stirling, NJ 07980) or to Elsie Turqman. Remember to mark it as "January Mission of the Month," and include your name and/or envelope number if you would like your donation to be recorded. Thank you very much in advance for supporting this special mission program.

Need Help? Want to Chat?

During this time of staying at home, it is easy to begin missing that human connection. If you are in need of help getting groceries or just want to talk to someone, please feel free to call a Deacon. We are ready to help in any way we can. If you know of someone who needs assistance, please reach out to one of us, even if it's just for an ear to listen.



Know Someone Who Needs a Card?



Each week during the Prayers of the People, we remember members, friends, and family who need our prayers for joys and concerns. Many have attested to the power of prayer in helping to give strength to all those involved. A Deacon sends cards to let them know they're being thought of and they're in the prayers of the congregation to get well, share joyful wishes, or express sympathy.

If you know of someone who is in need of our thoughts or 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.

Christmas Cards Ministry Program



This year, the Deacons led a special Christmas Card writing event. Several ladies from the church wrote Christmas card greetings to many of our congregation members to let them know we are still thinking of them and they are not alone.



Since Covid restrictions have not allowed our congregation to meet together on a weekly basis for the past nine months, we all miss each other very much. Thankfully, technology has allowed us to create an online worship service and to meet via Zoom at our weekly coffee hours. However, not everyone has the devices needed to access these online activities, and this has been a very isolating time.

The Christmas cards were collected and sorted. Then, Tom and Janet Parziale drove around and delivered 10 cards to each person, along with a poinsettia, to make that much-needed personal connection. The Deacons thank all those who wrote the cards. We have received many verbal and written thanks from the recipients. They all greatly appreciated our efforts and the kind words written in the cards.

Pictured here: Tom Parziale delivers cards and a poinsettia to Marie Darby at Lounsberry Meadow in Stirling.

Deacons Fund



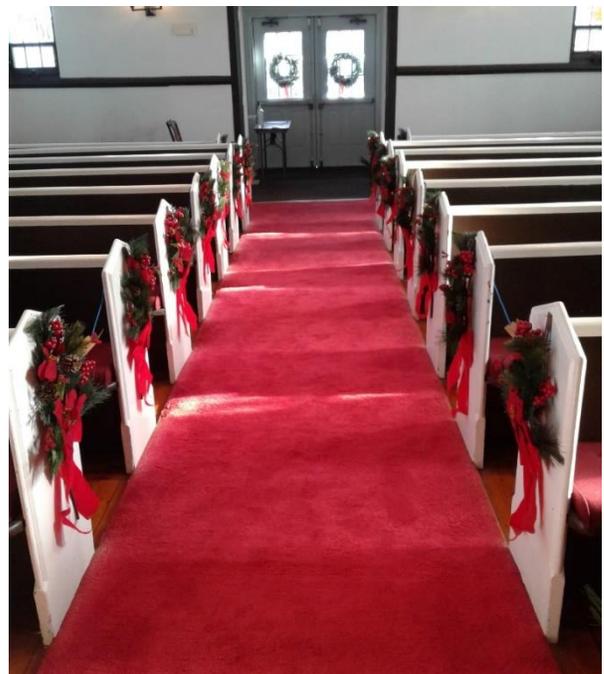
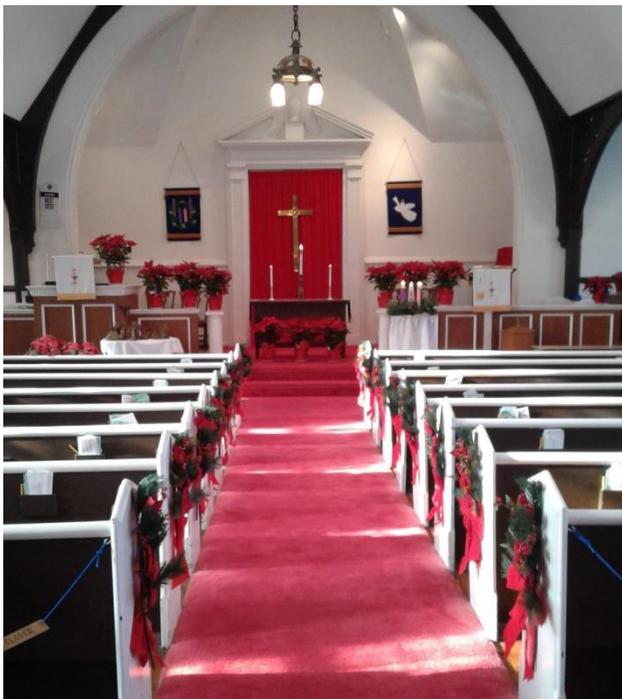
The Deacons Fund is used to help the Deacons do their Mission work. It is funded by donations given so generously by you in the little green envelopes found in the pew racks at church. Since we are not currently meeting for indoor services, you may send your donation directly to the church or to Elsie Turqman. Please note "Deacon's Fund" in the memo section of your check. Thank you very much!

Sanctuary Decorating

On Saturday, December 19th, a small group met at the church and socially distanced to do some Christmas/Advent decorating. Although we were not having a Christmas Eve service, we wanted the sanctuary to be inviting and festive for any one who stopped by to look in the windows or pick up their poinsettias. Luminaries were also prepared to light the way up the driveway and along the walkway, but the rainy, windy weather prevented us from putting them out.



Our decorators: Janet & Tom Parziale, Evelyn Smith, Carolyn Malfatone, Israel Sierra, and Jan Somers.



Worship Committee**- Janet Parziale****Shared Services with Meyersville Presbyterian Church**

The Meyersville Presbyterian Church and the First Presbyterian Church of Stirling will continue to worship together. There will be an online service each week, accessible through a link delivered by email and also available on the church website, www.fpcstirling.org. The service can be viewed at any time. DVD's of the service are also available and may be requested through Janet Parziale.

Since the winter weather has now arrived, there will be no outdoor services at Meyersville until further notice.

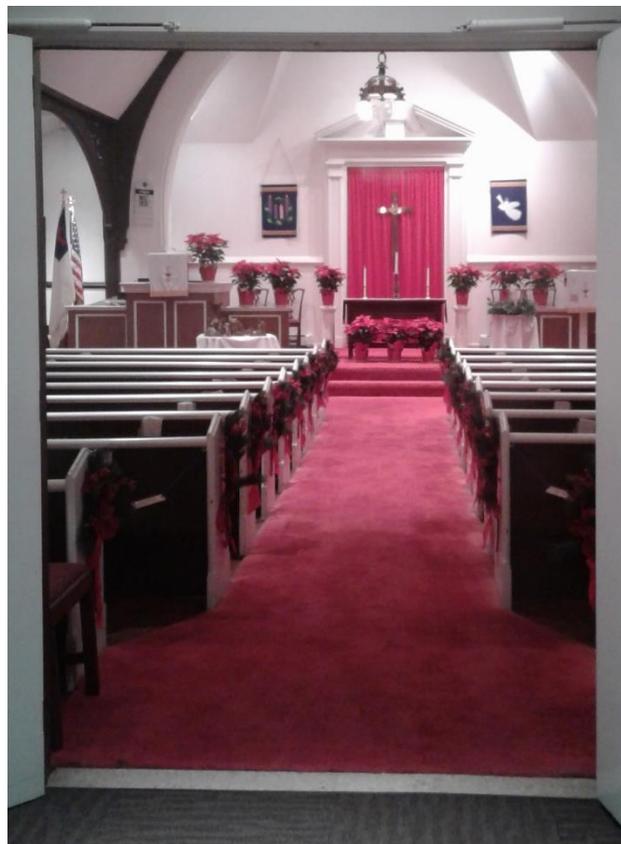
Hymn Sings by Tatiana!

Our organist, Tatiana Akhounzianova, and Janet Parziale meet regularly at the church to record some familiar hymns to create Hymn Sing videos. Some have called them "Church Karaoke!" You can sing along with them while enjoying the beautiful landscapes, pictures of our church and memorial garden, and pictures of our past and present church family all set to the music of the selected hymns. It is hoped you will enjoy listening to them and singing along. You can access the hymn sings on our church website (www.fpcstirling.org) on the Recorded Services page (<http://www.fpcstirling.org/videoArchives.html>).

**Christmas Eve**

Christmas Eve at our church, looking through the sanctuary door windows:

If you gave a poinsettia that you want to pick up, please contact Paulette at the church office (908-647-1033) and arrange to come by when the building is open. If you would like to have it delivered to you, locally, please call Janet Parziale (908-647-2212).



Outdoor Christmas Eve Service - Meyersville

Rev. Aspinall pressed on despite the wind. The luminaries did not survive!

**Message from Rev. Aspinall**

Dear First Presbyterian Sisters and Brothers,

For everything there is a season, and a time for every matter under heaven: a time to be born, and a time to die; a time to plant, and a time to pluck up what is planted; a time to kill, and a time to heal; a time to break down, and a time to build up; a time to weep, and a time to laugh; a time to mourn, and a time to dance; a time to throw away stones, and a time to gather stones together; a time to embrace, and a time to refrain from embracing; a time to seek, and a time to lose; a time to keep, and a time to throw away; a time to tear, and a time to sew; a time to keep silence, and a time to speak; a time to love, and a time to hate; a time for war, and a time for peace. Ecclesiastes 3:1-8



I know that the beginning of a new year is often an opportunity to make resolutions – to be kinder, have more patience, get more exercise, and eat more healthily. But it seems to me that over this

past year, we have had to have more than enough resolution to keep wearing masks, keeping our distance, and staying at home. I'm pretty much over the whole idea of resolutions for the moment.

Perhaps this new year, a more interesting option would be to intentionally take stock and consider how we have used our time in the past, how we would like to use time in the coming year, and to think about intentionally lining up how we spend time with what matters most to us.

The words of Ecclesiastes 3 offer a wonderful model by which to measure all that has been, all that we hope to be, and all that we hope for the world to be. We can consider birthing and dying, planting and harvesting. We can think about what needs to be 'killed' – perhaps within us or in our daily habits or routines --- and which relationship is in need of healing. We can look back and measure our tears and the times we have laughed until we cried.

And, so, we can ask ourselves questions:

- What does it mean to be born to new life or to “die” with family members, among friends and neighbors, or with coworkers?
- What might it mean to ‘plant or to harvest’ in the daily tasks to which we are called? How might we be more discerning about which is most appropriate?
- What does it mean in a time of mourning to remember that there will be dancing again?
- How much would we (and all those who associate with us) benefit from our remembering that there is, in fact, a time to keep silent? And to also remember that there are times when our words of courage and hope are desperately needed?
- How do we understand when a ‘time for war’ is appropriate and what does that mean, really, and what does peace look like in our world now?

As we ask ourselves these questions, we get to remember that God holds us through all of our times.

In fact, it is this certainty of God's unending love that allows us to explore and wonder about these important questions in the first place. So, as we pass from the long and difficult year of 2020, when so much of our lives was dictated by the pandemic, to a new year with some degree of knowledge about how to deal with the virus and with vaccines well on the way, we have an opportunity to think more intentionally about the choices we want to make, the kind of lives we want to live, the kind of relationships we want to have, and how we want to spend our precious time, knowing that God's everlasting arms surround and support us ALL the time.



Yours in Christ,
Barbara Aspinall

Mission Programs

Recent Mission of the Month offerings were designated for two programs our church has supported for many years-- Family Promise of Morris County and Bridges Outreach Lunch Program. Our church received very gracious thank you letters from them, stating that they could not continue doing their work without our ongoing support. Thank you to everyone who has continued to donate to these very worthy organizations.

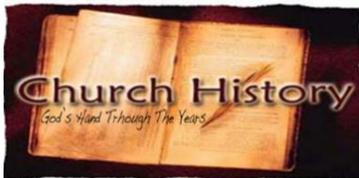


Church Website & Facebook Page

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

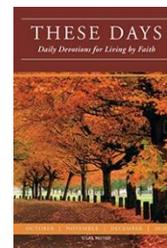


Please continue to forward news clippings, bulletins, programs, pictures, or other memorabilia regarding any member of our church family so our archives can be kept up to date. **Please be sure items are dated and, if possible, the names of church members and/or families are highlighted.** Items can 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."

Our Church has a subscription for copies of this devotional booklet. If you would like a copy, please contact the church office, and it can be mailed to you.



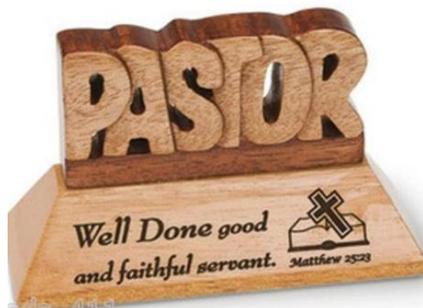
Helping Out

- Jan Somers

Elsie Turqman and Jan Somers are still available to sew fabric face masks in different sizes. If you or someone you know needs one, please contact Elsie or Jan.

Congratulations Graduate!

Lucas Ihringer, son of Lisa Wernett and Kai Ihringer, has completed his undergraduate Degree in Finance at McGill University in Montreal, Canada. He plans to go on to graduate school next fall, preferably in Europe. Congratulations to Lucas and his proud family!



Celebration for Rev. Tom Peters

A celebration of Rev. Peters' 30 years as Pastor of our church and his retirement at the end of January will be held via Zoom, on **Saturday, January 9th at 4:00 p.m.** All the information is included in the following letter. Please share it with others you know of who may be interested in attending but who are no longer on the church mailing list.



First Presbyterian Church

A welcoming and caring family, empowered by Christ
to share God's blessings through worship and service to others.

December 28, 2020

Dear Friends and Families of the First Presbyterian Church,

I am writing to you today to invite you to celebrate an important milestone in our church history. Thirty years ago, after reviewing candidates and listening to a heartfelt sermon, the congregation called The Rev. Tom Peters to be our pastor at First Presbyterian Church. It does not seem that long ago that Rev. Peters, Barbara, kindergartener Trevor, and preschooler Ali joined our church family.

Due to social distancing, the Session will host a special Zoom gathering on **Saturday, January 9th at 4 pm** to celebrate Rev. Peters' thirtieth anniversary and retirement. Everyone is invited to attend and encouraged to have a favorite drink ready to toast him with during the celebration. Mark your calendar now to save this special date to celebrate with Tom.

You will receive a Zoom link two days before the celebration. If you do not receive it, please call the church or email the church secretary or Janet Parziale to be added to the list of participants. Arrangements will be made for those who do not have internet access. The Zoom conversation will be structured to allow everyone to have an opportunity, if desired, to contribute a thought or story. Please think about what you would like to say. Suggestions include: an FPC service that was especially meaningful and why, an event or activity you were involved in that you enjoyed, two or three words that describe Tom, something meaningful or funny that happened involving Tom.

Beginning with Tom's ten-year anniversary, Ellen Easty created a photo album of memories through his first ten years with First Presbyterian Church. Since that time, every five years, Ellen and Rene' Phelan, and now Janet Parziale, have added new installments of photos marking special events and memories. Several individuals have also submitted special messages that will also be included in the book. If you have not had the chance to send in your message, there is still some time. You may **send your story or memory** to Janet at janetparziale@comcast.net or mail it directly to the church to her attention. Janet is planning to complete the book by the beginning of January, so please send your submission by January 3rd.

During the Zoom gathering, we will present Tom with a special gift to mark this wonderful milestone in his life and the life of our church. If you would like to **contribute to this gift**, please send your check to the church via snail mail (to First Presbyterian Church at the address below). You may also send them directly to Elsie Turqman (her address is in our directory). Checks should be made out to the church and noted "Tom's Retirement Gift."

So, please mark your calendar to save January 9th and join us on Zoom to share in celebrating this wonderful event with Rev. Peters and his family. We hope to see you there!

Thank you very much.
The Session

158 Central Ave., Stirling, NJ 07980; Phone: 908-647-1033; www.fpcstirling.org

Ongoing Mission Programs:

Items collected for various causes:

- ✓ Full-sized and “courtesy”-sized bars of soap, shampoo, conditioner, shower caps
- ✓ Fabric: about ½ yard minimum, to make small bears for children, totes for wheelchair patients, etc. Yarn: to make lap robes for wounded veterans, afghans for battered women, and hats for newborns in hospitals

Please e-mail submissions for the February issue of Stirling Stuff to:
jsomers17@hotmail.com
 by **January 21st**. 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

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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.

Why not invite a friend to online church?

