



Stirling Stuff

Volume 65, No. 7

Summer 2021

Pastor's Message

Dear Church Family,



The following is a condensed version of the sermon I preached on Sunday, July 11th, after hearing of the passing into the Church Triumphant of the Rev. Dr. Thomas T. Peters, pastor of the church for 30 years.

For I am convinced that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor rulers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor powers, nor height, nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord. Romans 8:38,39

Do you remember the nightmares you had when you were a child? The recurring ones? I think mine mostly took two different forms – the being chased ones and the chasing ones. Today, I want to talk about the chasing ones – the kind in which someone, a parent usually, is walking away and, despite calling and running, you never catch up. Whoever it is just keeps walking away and doesn't stop, doesn't turn back. Psychologists would say, I think, that the chasing dream is usually about death – fear that the loved one we are chasing would die. For a child, this fear has to do with the deprivation of love and also with survival – the loss of the one who takes care of us, who loves us no matter what - is a very scary idea. These dreams can continue into our grown-up lives as well.

What gives this particular chasing nightmare its power is that it touches one of our most primal fears: being left alone, deprived of the ones who love us. That need to feel connected, to be joined to and accepted by someone who loves us, to feel therefore safe, is one of the deepest needs of our species. Little wonder we are so attracted to orphan characters in literature — from Orphan Annie to Harry Potter. We see in these characters our worst fears realized and so we root for them because we are simultaneously grateful that it's not us in this predicament and hopeful that we'd face it with the same measure of grit and grace and with the same good outcome.

These days we are facing a fear that I suspect most of us having been harboring for a little while. As the news of Tom's illness got more and more worrying, the fear got closer and tighter in. We kept hoping, we kept praying, but Tom's ability to fight the transplant rejection could not keep up with the power of the illness. And so we are looking for answers, looking for some kind of justification for this blow to our expectations and our hopes, and the blow to our sense of justice and fairness. We think about the retirement not enjoyed, what a good person Tom was, and our own and the world's loss of such a fine, good, man. It isn't fair.

And I have to say that I don't have an answer for this loss, this injustice. I can't rationalize it or make sense of it either. I don't think we human beings really get to have that. What we get are love and assurance from Scripture, and we have the experience of those who have lost loved ones who can tell us about their experiences of grief and healing and hope.

Paul, in his letter to the Romans, acknowledges our deep fear of loss, fear of the chaos of things not being right, of the injustice of bad things happening to good people – things like hardship, persecution, peril,

war, injustice, illness, death. Paul acknowledges the reality of all those things. He knows they are real; the people in those little churches in Rome that Paul was writing to who were being fed to lions knew they are real. And, of course, we know they are real.

Paul did not provide an explanation to those persecuted and courageous Roman Christians. He did not provide a reason for their suffering, nor did he provide pie in the sky hope. He said in strong words that the suffering is real, and in equally strong terms, that the presence of God is real – and what is more, that there is nothing that can possibly ever get between us and God’s love for us. Psalm 23 says something similar: “Yea though I walk through the shadow of death, Thou art with me.” Not, I will take away the shadow; not I will fix this world for you, but I am with you, and I am for you.

And what is more, Jesus — the one who preached God’s kingdom and embodied God’s love, the one who suffered and died on the cross, who knows all about suffering and the experience of feeling lost, alone, ditched — this Jesus is now interceding for us. And since this is true, our future and hope are assured. Then comes the best part, the part so stirring we almost always read it at funerals: “For I am convinced that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor rulers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor powers, nor height, nor depth, nor anything else in all creation will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord.” And there it is — Paul addressing our deepest needs and deepest fears — that chasing dream, that fear of being left alone and uncared for. We will not, cannot, be separated from God. No matter what nightmares we may dream or experience, no matter where we may go or what we may do, no matter even what may be done to us, nothing can separate us from God. Paul’s list of possible separating nightmares is meant to be exhaustive, but of course we could add our own. However, it really doesn’t matter what we could come up with because: “Nothing will be able to separate us from God!”

So, I cannot answer the question of why bad things happen to good people — a question as old as forever. What Paul says in the face of suffering is that God’s love is with us. We get words of God’s love; we get assurances of God’s presence; we get faith; we get hope.

If there were ever a message we need to hear in this transient and fear-ridden world, a world in which the medicine didn’t work, in which a very good, beloved man dies, it’s this one: our God loves us...all of us...forever...no matter what...and nothing — no, nothing! — can separate us from God’s love!

Gracious God, we say to Jesus along with the man whose son was possessed, Lord, I believe, help my unbelief. We pray for trust in your Word; we pray for confidence in your presence; we pray for peace in our grieving hearts. Amen.

Yours in Christ,
Barbara



The First Presbyterian Church of Stirling
Feeding Those Who Hunger

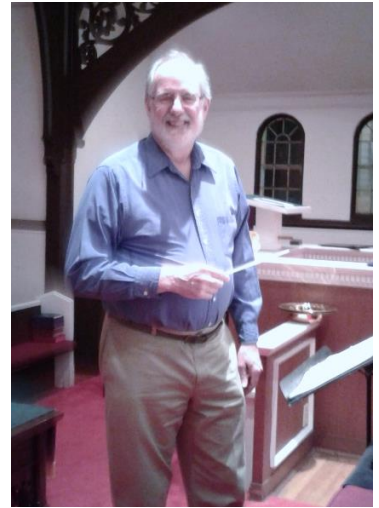
Memorial Service for Tom Peters

We were all saddened to hear of Tom Peters' passing on July 9th. Please continue to keep Barbara, Alison, Trevor, and Nancy in your thoughts and prayers as they go through this difficult time.

A Memorial Service will be held on Saturday, July 31st, 1:00 pm, at Wilson Memorial Church in Watchung. This service will be in the sanctuary, and it is requested that all participants wear a mask.

Below is the link to a beautiful obituary and video of pictures of Tom's life:

<https://higginsfuneralhome.com/tribute/details/4113/The-Rev-Dr-Thomas-Peters/obituary.html#tribute-start>



Summer Lectionary Readings

July 4: 6th Sunday after Pentecost

Ezekiel 2:1-5; Psalms 123; 2 Corinthians 12:2-10; Mark 6:1-13

July 11: 7th Sunday after Pentecost

Amos 7:7-15; Psalms 85:8-13; Ephesians 1:3-14; Mark 6:14-29

July 18: 8th Sunday after Pentecost

Jeremiah 23:1-6; Psalms 23; Ephesians 2:11-22; Mark 6:30-34, 53-56

July 25: 9th Sunday after Pentecost

2 Kings 4:42-44; Psalm 145:10-18; Ephesians 3:14-21; John 6:1-21

August 1: 10th Sunday after Pentecost

Exodus 16:2-4, 9-15; Psalms 78:23-29; Ephesians 4:1-16; John 6:24-35

August 8: 11th Sunday after Pentecost

1 Kings 19:4-8; Psalms 34:1-8; Ephesians 4:25-5:2; John 6:35, 41-51

August 15: 12th Sunday after Pentecost

Proverbs 9:1-6; Psalms 34:9-14; Ephesians 5:15-20; John 6:51-58

August 22: 13th Sunday after Pentecost

Joshua 24:1-2a, 14-18; Psalms 34:15-22; Ephesians 6:10-20; John 6:56-69

August 29: 14th Sunday after Pentecost

Deuteronomy 4:1-2, 6-9; Psalms 15; James 1:17-27; Mark 7:1-8, 14-15, 21-23

September 5: 15th Sunday after Pentecost

Isaiah 35:4-7a; Psalms 146; James 2:1-10 (11-13), 14-17, Mark 7:24-37



Family Promise of Morris County**- Jan Somers**

Family Promise is committed to motel sheltering of guests for the remainder of 2021. **Our Church is scheduled for Friday, July 23rd.** Although we will not be physically hosting on-site, they have requested support from volunteer groups through monetary gifts/gift cards. I have already dropped off \$125 in Shop-Rite Gift cards for use by the 5 families presently in the program. If you would like to contribute, please contact me or the church office. Thank you.

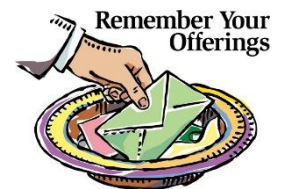
Thank you for being a part of our mission to end family homelessness!

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 please note that it is for "Per Capita." Thank you.

Weekly Contributions

Although we are not worshipping in our sanctuary, there are still financial commitments that need to be met. Whether it's maintaining the buildings and grounds, paying our staff, or keeping up with our mission support, our expenses are ongoing. Please send your weekly offering/pledge to the church office or directly to Elsie Turqman so that we can meet our obligations. Thank you.

**Message from Rev. Aspinall**

I encourage all those who have not yet gotten their **COVID 19 vaccine** to do so. It has been approved by our rigorous FDA and proven to be safe and effective. It is important for all the citizens of our nation to take seriously our responsibility to not only safeguard our own health, but also the health of our fellow citizens. As more of our congregation is vaccinated, the closer we get to being able to hold worship services in our sanctuary. For more information about the vaccines, please go to www.nj.gov/health/vaxfacts

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

Our Zoom coffee hours continue every **Sunday morning at 10:30 a.m.** during the summer (unless otherwise announced) jointly with our friends from Meyersville.

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 contact Janet Parziale at

janetparziale@comcast.net or 908-647-2212.

Deacons' Corner**- Janet Parziale****Mission of the Month - July & August**

For the summer months, the Deacons have selected **Bridges Outreach** to be the focus of our **Mission of the Month**. Many of you are familiar with our Bridges Lunch Program, where we provide 40 lunches monthly.



Bridges Outreach, located in Summit, did not let the pandemic stop their efforts to make an impact on the lives of many homeless people living in Newark, Irvington, Summit, and NYC. Although their volunteer base was smaller this past year, they kept the faith and continued to make an amazing difference for the homeless population they serve. Their mission is *"Bridges ends homelessness through volunteer-driven outreach and individual case management focusing on health, housing, and independence. We form relationships with those experiencing homelessness while meeting their most urgent needs."*

Each year, more than 2,000 volunteers deliver 65,000 brown bag meals, 10,000 pairs of socks and underwear, 7,500 toiletry kits, 49,000 cups of soup, and literally tons of donated clothing to over 21,000 people in Newark, Irvington, and NYC. In addition to their street outreach, they provide case management services at their **Project Connect** office in Newark, meet with people in Summit every Friday for their **Neighbors in Need** program, and provide new backpacks and school supplies to more than 1,000 children eligible for free and reduced lunch in Summit and sheltered children in Newark and Irvington.

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 "July-August 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.

Update on the May-June Mission of the Month - CWS Blanket Program

During the months of May and June, **our congregation donated \$320.00** for the Church World Service (CWS) Blanket Program through the Mission of the Month program. Through the amazing enthusiasm of our church family, we provided funds for **thirty-two warm woolen blankets** for those in need. These versatile blankets are used to keep the homeless warm, carry personal belongings, cover a window broken in a storm to keep the cold out, as a tent or ground covering, and in many other ways. **A big Thank You to everyone who participated.**

Flowers for Worship

For the month of July, outdoor services will be held at First Presbyterian Church. If you would like to order flowers for any of the outdoor services, please call the church office or Israel Sierra.



During August, Rev. Aspinall will be recording services in Stirling. If you would like to order flowers to be placed on the chancel for any of these services, please call the church office or Israel Sierra. Since recordings are done on Thursdays, the flowers need to be picked up by Israel 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.

Please leave a message with 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. If you have any questions, please contact Janet Parziale.

Deacon Fundraiser - First Presbyterian Church Notecards

While reorganizing the church office, Rev. Aspinall and Paulette found a box of note cards with a pencil sketch of our church on the front. The cards are blank inside, thus making them useful for any type of communication. The cards were printed by Creeko Creations in Wisconsin. The Deacons will be selling packets of **ten cards and envelopes for \$5.00**. 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 our outdoor worship services on Sunday mornings. The money collected will go into the Deacons' Fund. Thank you in advance for your support of this project.



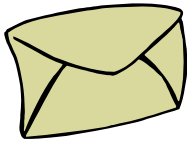
Know Someone Who Needs a Card?



Each week during worship, we remember members, friends, and family who need our prayers for joys and concerns. We know what the power of prayer can do 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 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' Fund



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

Worship Committee

- Janet Parziale

Upcoming Summer Worship Schedule

Online services will continue to be available weekly. We will also hold services outside on Sunday mornings—weather permitting. We will continue to social distance. Feel free to bring a lawn chair. Each church will also have a few folding chairs available for those who are not able to bring one. No sign-ups are necessary to attend.



You may call the church office (908-647-1033) on Fridays to find out where the outdoor service will be held for the following **Sunday morning at 9:30 a.m.** We look forward to seeing you there!

Following is the schedule for the outdoor in-person services.

All Sundays in July will be at Stirling at 9:30 a.m.

All Sundays in August will be at Meyersville at 9:30 a.m.



Notices of these dates will be posted on the church doors so if there is confusion, there will be time to dash to the other church and only be a few minutes late. Latecomers are always welcome!

Liturgists Needed



We need Liturgists each week to do readings for the online worship services. Recordings are done at the church, Stirling or Meyersville, on Thursday afternoons until 6:00 p.m. (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 recording. Thank you!

Mission Programs

Bridges Outreach Lunch Program

- Janet Parziale

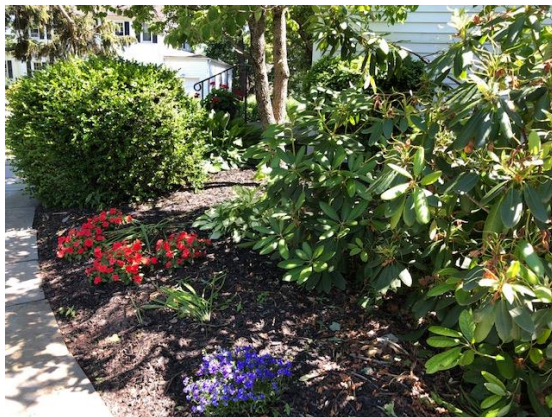


The Bridges organization is still in need of as many lunches as we can provide. One person is making sandwiches and one person is filling the brown bags. One day each month, the sandwiches, drinks, and non-perishable goodies are delivered to Summit.

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 church office to confirm someone is there) or send cash donations to Elsie Turqman.

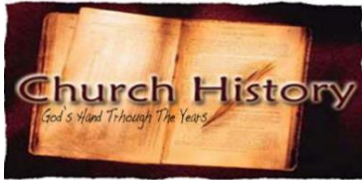
Property & Building Maintenance

Many thanks to everyone who has been working hard during this hot summer to beautify our church gardens by weeding and seeding: Carolyn Malfatone, Joyce Koenig, Janet Parziale, Elsie Turqman, Lynn Blakeslee, and Susan Brodziak. Thanks also to Tom Parziale and Lynn Blakeslee for handling the watering chores around the property. Everything really looks beautiful!



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.

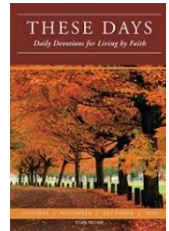
Church Archives**- Jan Somers**

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

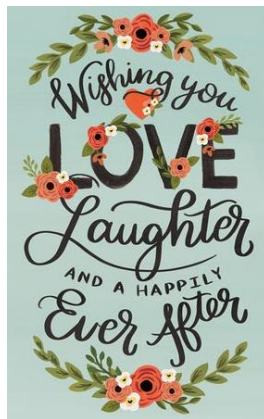
“To nurture the daily practice of prayer and the reading of Scripture, there is solid help in the pages of ‘These Days.’ The devotions wrestle faithfully with the doubts, joys, and challenges of Christian life.”

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

**Class of 2021**

Congratulations to Jacob Sawyer on his graduation from Voorhees High School in Glen Gardner. Jacob is the son of Dawn (Crawford) and John Sawyer and grandson of former long-time members Joyce and Ken Crawford. He is pictured here with proud grandma, Joyce.

Congratulations to all of our graduates and their proud families. Our best wishes to you all!

**Congratulations Newlyweds**

On July 3rd, Andrew Smith, son of Barbara Aspinall and Doug Smith, was married to Nina Sabatini. Our congratulations and best wishes to the happy couple and their families.

Welcome Little Ones . . .*Benjamin Gates Parziale*

Our extended church family grew by three during the month of June!

Benjamin Gates was born on June 3rd to Brooke and David Parziale. The happy family includes big sister, Eleanor, and proud grandparents, Janet and Tom Parziale.

Bert Lare excitedly announced the birth of her first great-grandchild, Zelda Marie, born on June 17th to Jessica (Lare) and James Hodgdon. The proud family includes Bert's son, Steve, and his wife, Diane, first-time grandparents.

*Zelda Marie Hodgdon**Amelia Dorn Turqman*

Elsie Turqman welcomed great-granddaughter, Amelia Dorn, born to Erica and Alexander Turqman on June 17th. Proud grandfather is Elsie's son, Eric.

Our congratulations and best wishes to all of these blessed families!

Bridges Outreach Program – Congratulations to Us!**2021 BRIDGES COMMUNITY AWARDS**

Our Church was recognized by Bridges in June. They noted:

*Each year at the Bridges Annual Meeting, we recognize those groups and individuals that have made a substantial difference in our work to end homelessness. **We are excited to honor First Presbyterian Church this year, specifically for the consistent delivery of lunches and much kindness!***



“The giving community at First Presbyterian Church has stepped into consistent monthly giving of fresh lunches. With each drop off comes a commitment to living out their mission and changing the lives of others.”

Rev. Aspinall and Toni Hopcraft attended the Zoom meeting representing FPC-Stirling. We received a certificate, a wooden plaque, and a special note acknowledging our efforts this past year to keep up with our monthly commitment to provide 40 lunches. **A special thank you to everyone who continues to work on this much-needed program by donating money and/or supplies, preparing brown bag lunches, and delivering them.**

Memorial Day Parade

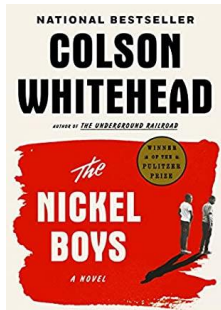


Rev. Aspinall offered the benediction in front of Central School in Stirling at the conclusion of the Memorial Day Parade on May 31st. Ed Gerecht, Millington Volunteer Firefighter and Boy Scout Leader, marched in the parade with the fire company.



Meyersville Book Club**- Jan Somers**

The Book Club's current selection is "**The Nickel Boys**," a novel by Colson Whitehead. The group will meet via Zoom on Monday, August 16th, 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.



The Nickel Boys describes life in a reform school. Whitehead based Nickel Academy on the real life Dozier School, a Florida facility that ran for over a century, until a university investigation publicized its racist and abusive practices.

The story recounts the life of an African American boy, Elwood Curtis, growing up in Florida during the early years of the Civil Rights movement. Elwood, who lives with his grandmother, is dutiful, industrious, and filled with idealism. He excels in school, works hard, and has a strong support network of teachers, his employer, and his grandmother, who envision a bright future for young Elwood. Their hopes seem fulfilled when Elwood gets into a local Black college, where he will take advanced classes available to high-achieving high school students. The college is far from Elwood's home, so he decides to hitch a ride rather than walking the seven miles. After a man driving a stolen car picks him up, a police officer pulls them over. Elwood is implicated in the theft, and a judge sentences him to time in Nickel Academy, a notorious institution for juvenile offenders.

In Remembrance

Former member and Deacon, Barbara Nugent, passed away on June 26th. Please keep Barbara's husband, Mike, her sister, Linda Hamma, and their family and friends in your thoughts and prayers during this difficult time. Condolences may be sent to:

Michael Nugent
85 Old Highway 28
White House Station, NJ 08889

Linda and Charles Hamma
269 Essex St.
Stirling, NJ 07980

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
September issue of Stirling Stuff to:**
jsomers17@hotmail.com
 by **August 19th**. 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

Why not invite a friend to on-line church?

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.

**HAPPY
SUMMER**

