



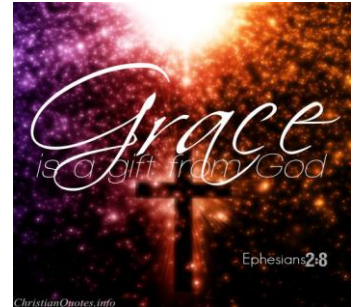
Stirling Stuff

Volume 66, No. 11

December 2022

Dear Church Family,

One of the joys of the approaching Advent and Christmas is the celebratory meals we enjoy. Special Christmas Eve food and Christmas dinner are meals at which we hope to enjoy good food and good company. There was a *Parade Magazine* article by Anne Lamott - someone you have heard me quote numerous times in sermons. I was surprised to see her byline in *Parade*, but its presence there tells me that more people are enjoying her unique and frank and inspiring writing. One of her books is called *Help, Thanks, Wow: The Three Essential Prayers*.



In this *Parade* article, Lamott wrote about grace at meals, particularly at these special holiday meals when the motley collection of family is gathered at the table. She tells about growing up with parents who were atheists and kept the pre-eating table ritual to “Cheers, dig in.” Even as a small child she longed for the graces said at her friends’ tables: the “Bless us O Lord, and these Thy gifts” at her Catholic friend’s home; the “GodisgoodGodisgreatletusthankhimforourfoodAmen” chant at the homes of boys who could barely wait to begin the meal; and even the “Thank you God for letting Granny be here with us yet another year” when Granny would just as soon not be made to feel half dead.

Lamott and her brothers grew up and became Christian believers. She has been a member of a Presbyterian Church for many years. She says,

So now someone at our holiday tables always ends up saying grace. I think we're in it for the pause, the quiet thanks for love and for our blessings, before the shoveling begins. For a minute, our stations are tuned to a broader, richer radius. We're acknowledging that this food didn't just magically appear: someone grew it, ground it, bought it, baked it; wow. We say thank you for the miracle that we have stuck together all these years, in spite of it all; that we have each other's backs, and hilarious companionship. We say thank you for the plentiful food. We pray to be mindful of the needs of others. We savor these moments out of time when we are conscious of love's presence, of Someone's great abiding generosity to our dear and motley family, these holy moments of gratitude. And that is grace.

So, I encourage you to be mindful, thoughtful, deliberate about your table grace at holiday meals, and at every meal for that matter. If saying grace at your table is new or an infrequent occurrence, ask someone ahead of time to be prepared to pray at the table so that it is not an awkward business but a true

pause for thanksgiving. Take that moment to remember your blessings and to be thankful to God for them. May you experience grace.

Yours in Christ,

Barbara



The First Presbyterian Church of Stirling
Feeding Those Who Hunger

Upcoming Worship Schedule

- Rev. Aspinall

During the month of December, we will worship in Meyersville.

Wearing face masks is optional, but we will continue social distancing and signing-in for purposes of contact tracing, if needed. Our online services will also continue each week and are accessible through a link delivered by email and on the church website, www.fpcstirling.org. The service can be viewed at any time. DVDs of the service are also available and may be requested through Janet Parziale.



If you need a ride to either church, please call upon a Deacon or fellow church member; we are happy to help.

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 just be a few minutes late. Latecomers are always welcome!

Annual Reports – Due January 13th



Reminder: Annual reports for all church committees/groups are due to the church office by no later than January 13th so they can be assembled and distributed in time for the Annual Congregational Meeting scheduled for January 29th. **Please send them as a Word document so they can be inserted into the report.**

Twelve Baskets Food Pantry

Our local Food Pantry, Twelve Baskets, is housed at All Saints' in Millington. Jointly sponsored by our church, All Saints', Meyersville, and LHT CERT, the food pantry has been serving guests on the first and third Saturday mornings of each month. Shelf stable food as well as meat, dairy products, eggs, and fresh produce are available for food insecure families in our area.



Volunteer help is needed to set up tables, put the food out, and then pack it up afterwards. Help is also needed for picking up food from the distribution center in Hillside. There is plenty to do, and the volunteer opportunities are well organized. **Please contact Lynn Blakeslee or Barbara Aspinall if you would like to contribute an hour or two of your time.** For more information on this program, go to: <http://www.allsaintsmillington.org/outreach.html>

If you or someone you know is in need of food or other non-grocery items, please call the food bank office at 908-647-0067 (Ext. 4) and leave a confidential message.



Food items: baby food, applesauce, shelf-stable milk, cold cereal, crackers, chips, coffee, dried herbs and spices, canola oil, olive oil

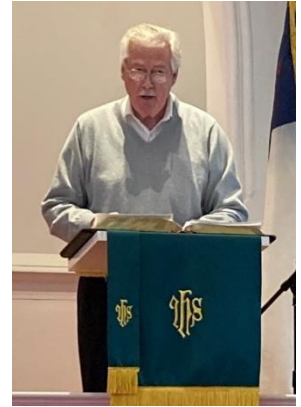
Non-food items: diapers, baby wipes, paper towels, toilet paper, household cleaners, soap, toothbrushes, toothpaste, shampoo, conditioner

These items can be picked up for a good price at Dollar stores.

There is a more complete list of needed items on the table in the narthex.

Stewardship Sunday

During worship on November 13th, we dedicated our pledges for the coming year. The service included skits suggesting many different methods by which we can help the church financially. Sandy Mackay narrated, and participants included Rev. Aspinall & Doug Smith, Marion Barker, Lynn & Ian Blakeslee, Sue & Ed Gerecht, Joyce Koenig, Carolyn Malfatone, Doris Mertz, and Laura & Ruud Zijdel. Suggestions included:



Placing a parking meter in the church parking lot:



Offering advertising in return for pledges:



Pickpocketing for some extra cash:



Making home visits to members to encourage pledges, despite their excuses:



Pawning things: your children, your wife's wedding ring, etc:



If you have not submitted your 2023 pledge, it's not too late.

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

The Deacons have selected **Bridges Outreach Lunch Program** to be the focus of **December 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, concentrates their efforts to make an impact on the lives of many homeless folks living in Newark, Irvington, Summit, and NYC. Their mission: "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." In the past, they have provided lunches, socks and underwear, toiletry kits, soup, and tons of clothing to over 21,000 homeless people. In addition to their street outreach, they provide case management services at their **Project Connect** office in Newark and see folks in Summit every Friday for their **Neighbors in Need** program. They also provide new backpacks and school supplies for more than 1,000 children eligible for free and reduced lunch in Summit and sheltered children in Newark and Irvington.



This special offering will be collected throughout December. **If you are not able to come to church, feel free to send your donation to the church office (158 Central Ave, Stirling, NJ 07980) or directly to Elsie Turqman.** Remember to include your name and/or your envelope number if you would like your donation to be recorded and mark it as "**December Mission of the Month.**" Thank you in advance for supporting this worthy mission program.

Update on the September-October Mission of the Month:
Church World Service Blanket Sunday Program

During the months of September and October, our congregation collected the amazing **record-breaking amount of \$700 for the Church World Service Blanket Program.** Through the incredible enthusiasm of our church family, we were able to provide funds for **seventy warm woolen blankets** to be used by those in need. These versatile blankets are used to keep the homeless warm; to carry personal belongings; to cover a window broken in a storm to keep the cold air out; and as a tent or ground covering, and in many other ways. A big **Thank You** to everyone who supported this worthy mission event.



Update on November Turkey Collection

Another record-breaking year for collecting **turkeys for Thanksgiving – 13 turkeys and one ham!!** Thank you to everyone who participated and made this program such a wonderful success!



Tom Parziale delivered 12 turkeys and one ham to Market Street Mission in Morristown on Saturday, November 19th. They were very grateful for our turkey/ham donations which will feed many of those they serve daily. Tom was also able to deliver one turkey to a local family who thoroughly enjoyed it on Thanksgiving! Our thanks to Tom for coordinating this much-needed mission program again this year.

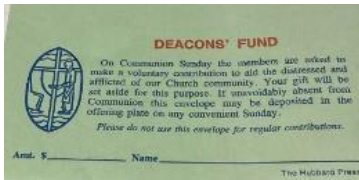


Annual Church Decorating

Mark your calendar! **The decorating of the church will be held on Saturday, December 3rd, 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.



Deacons' Fund Needs Your Help!



Folks, we need your help! Because we are only in our church every other month, the Deacons' Fund is desperately low. Prior to Covid, the Deacons' Fund was supported by the contributions and offerings so generously given by you in the little green envelopes found in the church pews. In recent years, this fund has been used to purchase the name plaques on the memorial boards in Pollard Hall, candles and oil for the sanctuary, stamps for cards to the congregation, provisions for the Bridges Lunch program, and the occasional purchase of special items like the cable for the remote TV used in Pollard Hall. It is also used to support some of the mission projects of the Deacons.

Every dollar is greatly appreciated and always put to good use. If you are able, please check the pew rack for that little green envelope and fill it up and place it in the offering plate or send your donation directly to Elsie Turqman. Many, many thanks in advance for your help in replenishing our Deacons' Fund!

Flowers to Beautify Our Sanctuary



Would you consider providing a bunch or two of flowers to be used during the recorded worship service in Stirling in December? Deacon Kim Ridgway (908-458-0333) loves to make arrangements and could help you with that if you call her ahead. Kim (or another Deacon) will take care of arranging them into one or two vases.

If you are interested in providing flowers in December, please call the church office (908-647-1033) and leave the information (your name, the date you want, and who the flowers are in honor/memory of). Thank you very much for helping beautify our sanctuary!

Know Someone Who Needs a Card?

We know what the power of prayer can do in helping 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.



Worship Committee

- Janet Parziale

December Lectionary Readings

Dec. 4th - 2nd Sunday of Advent

Isaiah 11:1-10; Psalm 72:1-7, 18-19; Romans 15:4-13; Matthew 3:1-12

Dec. 11th - 3rd Sunday of Advent

Isaiah 35:1-10; Psalm 146:5-10; Luke 1:46b-55; James 5:7-10; Matthew 11:2-11

Dec. 18th - 4th Sunday of Advent

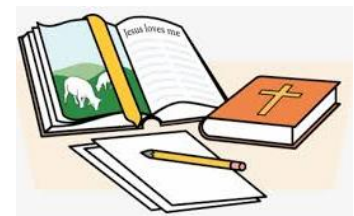
Isaiah 7:10-16; Psalm 80:1-7, 17-19; Romans 1:1-7; Matthew 1:18-25

Dec. 24th - Christmas Eve

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

Dec. 25th - 1st Sunday after Christmas

Isaiah 52:7-10; Psalm 98; Hebrews 1:1-4 (5-12); John 1:1-14



Advent Devotionals Available

One of the ways we can prepare for the arrival of the Christ Child is with a daily **Advent Devotional**. This year's Advent devotional comes from a book by Jill Duffield called *Advent in Plain Sight*. At Christmas, God came into our ordinary world in the form of a child, and still today, God is at work through the ordinary stuff of life, if we train our eyes to see. We will consider ten ordinary objects that appear in the Biblical narratives. Through objects such as gates, trees, cloth, light, and water, we will find new meaning in the Biblical account of Jesus' coming which will remind us that God still dwells among us, even in the most ordinary places. There will be a brief meditation about the reading, some thought provoking questions, and a prayer. Each day's devotional will be sent in an email. If you would like a hard copy of the devotional, please call the church office.



Handbell Choir

On Sunday, December 18th, the joint-church handbell ringers will be playing a medley of Christmas songs. Plan to join us for a special celebration of the season.

Blue Christmas Service, December 18th

Why Blue Christmas?

Blue? Yes, blue as in the blues. As in "I am feeling blue." Not everyone is up and cheery for the Christmas holidays. Dealing with the death of a loved one, facing life after divorce or separation, coping with the loss of a job, living with cancer or some other circumstance that puts a question mark on the future, and a number of other human situations make parties and joviality painful for many people in our congregations and communities. Much of our happy celebration of Christmas is focused on children, and if folks wanted a child but could never have one, have lost a child, are estranged from an adult child or parent, or had a difficult childhood, these celebrations can, at the least, ring hollow, and at worst, be quite painful.

A Blue Christmas service sensitively acknowledges this grief, this darkness, and tries to offer Christian hope in the midst of it. It is an opportunity to grieve but also to experience that hope. Blue Christmas services are sometimes called "Longest Night" and usually take place on or near the time of the winter solstice - the longest night of the year. Our Blue Christmas service will take place on December 18th at First Presbyterian in Stirling at 4 pm. All are most welcome. The service will also be available on the church's website, www.fpcstirling.org.



Christmas Eve Service in Stirling



On **Saturday, December 24th, at 8:00 p.m., we will hold the Christmas Eve Candlelight 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.

If you ordered a poinsettia, you may take it following the service.

Liturgists Needed for Worship Services



We need Liturgists each week to do readings for both the in-person and on-line worship services. **For the month of DECEMBER, we will be worshipping in MEYERSVILLE; recordings will be done in STIRLING.** Recordings are typically done on Thursday early evenings (other arrangements can be made, if needed).

To sign up, please contact Jan Somers. If Jan contacts you about reading, **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!**

First Sunday in Advent and Heritage Sunday

On November 27th, 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 Band of NJ and a long-time friend of our congregation.

Here are pictures from the service: Carolyn Malfatone and Lynn Blakeslee lighting the First Advent Candle; Doug Smith as Isaiah for a special reading; Rev. Aspinall with our piper, David; Scottish goodies and decorations including Rev. Peters' bagpipes, which he donated to the church when he retired. It was a wonderful celebration, and the Worship Committee thanks everyone for wearing their plaid and donating Scottish goodies for Fellowship Hour.



Dedication of Church Historic Plaque

Following morning worship on November 6th, we gathered in front of the church and dedicated the historic plaque identifying the building that is the First Presbyterian Church of Stirling as a Long Hill Township historic site. The plaque was installed by Matt Wagner, owner of Matmar Construction in Millington. As you may remember, Fred Hunt, a member of the Long Hill Township Historic Preservation Advisory Committee, worked with members of our church to complete the applications to get our church building listed as a historic site. Check out the plaque the next time you are at the church!



Pictured: Rev. Aspinall & Fred Hunt

Mission Programs

Bridges Outreach Lunch Program

- Janet Parziale

We continue to provide lunch bags to the Bridges Outreach organization for distribution to the homeless in Newark, Irvington, and NYC. 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 monetary donations to Elsie Turqman.

Pop-Top Can Tabs

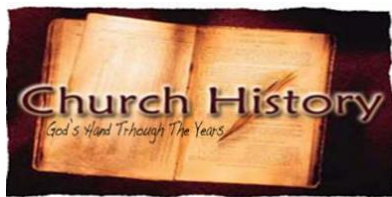
- Jan Somers



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 Ronald McDonald House Charities**—a nonprofit family and children's charity dedicated to supporting families with sick children in their time of need. You can give them to me any Sunday morning, leave them in the church office, or I can pick them up from you. Thank you for your continued support of this program!

Church Website & Facebook Page

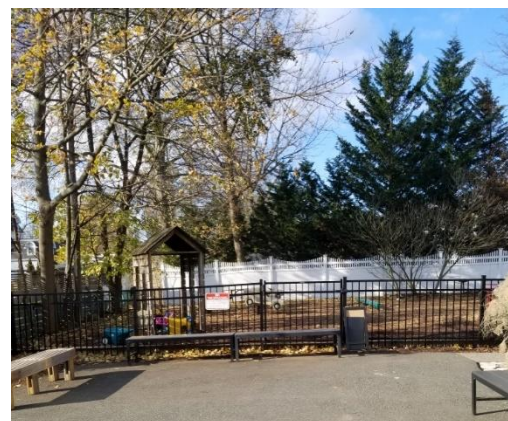
To keep up-to-date with what's happening at our Church, make it a point to check in regularly on the Church website, www.fpcstirling.org and Facebook page, https://www.facebook.com/fpcStirling/?ref=aymt_homepage_panel. They are good sources for church news, Stirling Stuff, Pastor's sermons, Scripture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

Boy Scout Troop 59 Eagle Scout Project: Church Playground Fence Replaced

The playground on the church property was in need of a new fence. In cooperation with the Long Hill Montessori School (providing funding and grants) and Boy Scout Troop 59, a plan was put in place. Boy Scout Troop 59 meets weekly at our church, and Ed Gerecht is one of the Scout leaders. Eagle Scout candidate, Matt Weddle, submitted and received approval to take on this project. Once the new fencing hardware arrived on site, Matt brought together a Boy Scout team of workers and they started on the project. Technical leadership for the project was provided by Matt Wagner, owner of Matmar Construction in Millington. The team made steady progress, and the installation of the new fence was completed on November 27th. A big thank you to Matt Weddle (Eagle Scout Candidate), the Boy Scout work team, and Matt Wagner.

**Graduate Update**

Jan Somers' grandson, Aidan, graduated from North Hunterdon High School in June. Beginning in January, Aidan will be attending Colorado State University in Fort Collins, CO, where he will be majoring in Zoology and Wildlife Biology. Proud mom is Jan's daughter, Denise.



Special Church Bell Ringers

On Sunday, November 6th, we had two special visitors who helped Ed Gerecht ring the church bell prior to worship and then joined in the fellowship hour. Samantha and Thomas DiBartolo were spending the weekend with grandparents, Janet and Tom Parziale.



It was wonderful to see the twins who are growing up so quickly.



Ordination of Alison Peters

Following morning worship on November 6th, the congregation gathered on the chancel to video a message of congratulations to Ali, which will be shared during her upcoming ordination. This was a very special event in Ali's life and in the life of our congregation that so loved and nurtured Ali during all the years of her father's ministry. We were able to view the ordination service via Zoom.



Ali's ordination took place on Saturday, November 12th, at the Unitarian Universalist Association in Wisconsin, where she had been serving as Assistant Pastor at the Fox Valley UU Fellowship. She is now the Minister of the Southwest Unitarian Universalist Church in Royalton, Ohio.



Ali received a beautiful handmade stole from a member of the Fox Valley UU Fellowship



Ali's family: mom Rev. Barbara Peters, brother Trevor, and husband Justin "Laying on of Hands" during service



Barbara Peters shared a story from Ali's childhood



Ali shares her thoughts with everyone

Meyersville Presbyterian Church

Meyersville Book Club

The Book Club will not be meeting in December. Our January selection is "***The Magnificent Lives of Marjorie Post,***" a novel written by Allison Pataki that fictionalizes the life of a woman who actually lived. **The group will meet via Zoom on Wednesday, January 4th, 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. The book is available at local libraries in different formats.



Growing up in the modest farmlands of Battle Creek, Michigan, Marjorie was inspired by a few simple rules: always think for yourself, never take success for granted, and work hard—even when deemed American royalty, even while covered in imperial diamonds. Marjorie had an insatiable drive to live and love and to give more than she got. From crawling through Moscow warehouses to rescue the Tsar's treasures to outrunning the Nazis in London, from serving the homeless of the Great Depression to entertaining Roosevelts, Kennedys, and Hollywood's biggest stars, Marjorie Merriweather Post lived an epic life few could imagine.

Marjorie's journey began gluing cereal boxes in her father's barn as a young girl. No one could have predicted that C. W. Post's Cereal Company would grow into the General Foods empire and reshape the American way of life, with Marjorie as its heiress and leading lady. Not content to stay in her prescribed roles of high-society wife, mother, and hostess, Marjorie dared to demand more, making history in the process. Before turning thirty she amassed millions, becoming the wealthiest woman in the United States. But it was her life-force, advocacy, passion, and adventurous spirit that led to her stunning legacy.

And yet Marjorie's story, though full of beauty and grandeur, set in the palatial homes she built such as Mar-a-Lago, was equally marked by challenge and tumult. A wife four times over, Marjorie sought her happily-ever-after with the blue-blooded party boy who could not outrun his demons, the charismatic financier whose charm turned to betrayal, the international diplomat with a dark side, and the bon vivant whose shocking secrets would shake Marjorie and all of society. Marjorie did everything on a grand scale, especially when it came to love.

Bestselling and acclaimed author Allison Pataki has crafted an intimate portrait of a larger-than-life woman, a powerful story of one woman falling in love with her own voice and embracing her own power while shaping history in the process.

Ongoing Mission Programs:

Bridges Outreach Lunch Program
Family Promise of Morris County
Twelve Baskets Food Pantry

Please e-mail submissions for the
January 2023 issue of *Stirling Stuff* to:
jsomers17@hotmail.com
by December 22nd. 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 Lynn Blakeslee.

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

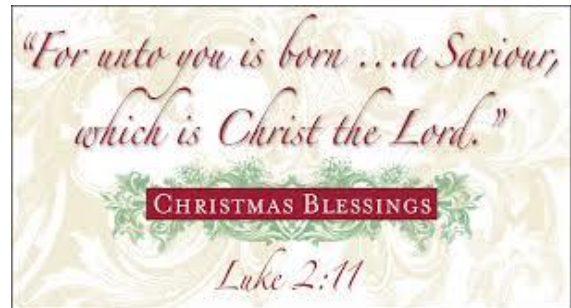
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Why not invite a friend to church!



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.

