

PARISH NEWS

THE NEWSLETTER OF FIRST PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH OF METUCHEN, NJ



JESUS MAFA. The Annunciation - Gabriel and Mary, from Art in the Christian Tradition, a project of the Vanderbilt Divinity Library, Nashville, TN.

Advent is the “New Year” of the Christian liturgical calendar. This season is full of anticipation as we ready ourselves for the arrival of the Messiah. The Advent Edition of the Parish news features various stories of arrival from voices of our congregation.

IN THIS ISSUE:

ARTIST IN RESIDENCE JOSEPH CASTRANOVA

TEDDY THE SEEING EYE DOG

CHRISTMAS STAR MAZE

UPCOMING VOLUNTEER OPPORTUNITIES

OUR ARRIVAL

Krithika McPherson

Arrivals are not the linear trajectory suggested by the map of my transatlantic flight taken decades ago. Instead, they follow winding paths, buoyed by hope, shaping peace, and inspiring joy and love, a cycle repeating on a loop, teaching until we learn its quadripartite rhythm. I counted down the days to my move to the States from India, my preteen brain fixing ETAs as finite moments of a trip, later learning they are caesuras in the syntax of journeys, pauses before we begin anew. Arrivals are not final and the process of arriving fully, at least for me, was an evolutionary process.

Upon arriving at JFK, Lady Liberty with her torch, a beacon of light and hope, welcomed us from a Terminal tower. My mother held my hand tightly in her fist, her other hand opening and closing rhythmically by her side, seeking her other daughter who remained behind to finish college. As others joined our taxi queue, we held each other close, wishing for the third person in our kindred trinity. We took in a new world with a bittersweet excitement, eager to meet the future that awaited us.

At our apartment, I felt peace, for I had finally arrived, the trip over at last, but I quickly learned that peace is handmade, fragile, and crumbles easily. Opening my case, I was not prepared for the heady scent of home that wafted up, for I had not pondered the air I breathed as a thing of its own right, separate from me. The enormity of distance I had covered in one day began to take its toll; sharp edges of my new milieu poked fresh holes in my recent peace. There was yet another journey ahead; I inhaled crisp September air, hoping for Christmas break to hurry to hasten my sister's visit to us.

Meanwhile, joy filled my soul, infused life into new dreams. Joy was insuppressible; like the rising sun it burned off wistfulness. Excitedly we counted down the days till my sister's arrival and set about creating our surprises: I sketched mountain ranges peering out of the mist, stacked unopened boxes of special treats, chased fall leaves that descended like precious jewels, kept a shaving of tree bark that held the Autumnal aroma of fire.

Not ever having seen snow before, we marveled at the snowflakes kissing our skin and stuffed handfuls of the fluffy cold batting into bags, saving them in the freezer for yet another surprise discovery to be enjoyed with my sister. Fog breath carried our songs of joy into starry nights; freshly fallen snow declared our messages of love. Time kept a fast-paced beat to the rollicking rhythm of our anticipation for the approaching festive season.

We laid our gifts beneath our Christmas tree and waited eagerly for my sister's arrival. When she finally came, she was speechless and amazed by our surprises, touched that we had saved moments to relive in the solidarity of our togetherness. She unwrapped one last brown paper package, pulling out the star I had made from straw and fall leaves. Three pairs of hands placed it atop our tree. Our tree shone upon the bounty of our gifts of hope, peace, joy and love, aglow from a light that seemed to emanate from our cores, replete with the gladness of all our arrivals.



WHEN WE GET THERE

Rev. Ashley Bair

I took a deep breath and sighed all the air out of my lungs. Looking down at my feet, inches away from the threshold, I took a step into the church sanctuary. I looked around at the white walls until my eyes gazed upon the red carpet adorning the pulpit and the benches at the front of the church; the ones I learned to kneel on to receive my first communion. I hadn't been back into the church of my childhood since I was 12 years old. It held complicated memories for me. I thought all at once about the times I struggled to find myself in that space. The times I watched women huddle in the kitchen, waiting until the men finished eating before they could eat themselves and the times I heard the catechism memorized and the times I watched the pastor enter a room with utmost authority.

After years of trying to understand what it meant, to me, to be a woman in the church, I found myself in seminary. I found myself reckoning with a call to something bigger than myself. And when my grandfather died, I found myself back in the place with the white walls and red carpet. I thought it might be strange, uncomfortable, or disturbing. But, I felt at ease as I walked down the aisle of the sanctuary and looked through the glass windows I had once stared through as a child. I felt calm, peaceful, and accepting. I felt I had arrived. Not to a place of resolve or complacency. I knew I had arrived at a place of comfort with myself and my calling. After years of trying to understand, it was the moment I walked into the place that once held struggle for me that I felt clarity. It's like the old adage: it's not about the destination, it's about the journey. Only I think it's about both, and sometimes we don't know where we will arrive until we get there.



NEW BEGINNINGS FOR PUPPIES & RAISERS ALIKE

Tom Giordano

Our family's Seeing Eye puppy adventure began about 20 years ago. Diane and our son Tom attended a Seeing Eye demonstration during a second hour forum. We were interested in hearing what was involved as Diane's brother had Seeing Eye dogs since he was in college. We listened to them talk about the program and decided to attend the next local club meeting. When we saw all the adorable puppies, we knew we were hooked and had to join the club.

We went to our first Middlesex County SE Puppy club meeting; the name of the club was Puppy PALS (Puppies Aiding the Less Sighted). There, we found a group of people who love puppies and were opening their homes and lives to nurturing and training them for a higher purpose. This meant preparing them for their future role as a SE guide dog.

We attended meetings and worked with puppies from other families. This gave us the opportunity to learn how to give the puppy commands and follow the SE training guidelines. We discovered that this was a passion that we would love.

We've worked with and trained over 15 puppies. They arrive at home at 7-weeks-old. Each is as cute as the one before it! They are never the same color, size, shape or weight. They all come with different personalities and temperaments, but they're always cuddly, love sleeping in your lap, and have sharp puppy teeth.

We chose to start with Labrador Retrievers. They are happy and playful but cannot resist their eagerness to please you. Labs attach themselves to the primary raiser but are also happy with anyone else in the family. They have endless energy and love to fetch or chase any toy you throw.

We also raised a German Shepherd named Bogey. He was attached to Diane no matter how much Tom worked with him. If he saw Diane enter a room, he'd race over to be next to her. At meetings, Diane would have to stay out of his sight so he would listen to Tom.



This is typical behavior for shepherds, who even whine if their person is not near them. They look ferocious, but they're one of the sweetest dogs we've raised. Bogey didn't like to be left home alone in his crate. He was constantly leaving a mess in the corner of his crate until one day we adopted back one of our puppies from the SE. Bogey was not alone in the crate anymore. With a friend, he miraculously stopped leaving us presents each day!

Presently, we have a Golden Retriever, Teddy. He was our first Golden and is a lover. All he wants to do is play and sit in your lap. He's a very silly boy but also very smart. He will bring you his toy to play with but *not* let you have it! He'll turn his head away as soon as you reach for the toy—his version of keep away. He will try to outsmart you with his toy. When you read this letter Teddy will have returned to SE, leaving again a hole in our hearts. The sadness is eased knowing that Teddy will start the next part of his journey with someone who needs him more than we do.

While Teddy looks forward to his purpose in life with a new person, we look forward to the arrival of our next puppy, beginning again with raising a 7-week-old puppy into a 14-month-old puppy who is ready to take on the world for a greater purpose.

I'D HAVE TO SAY IT WAS THE MUPPETS

Mike Draper

I'd have to say it was The Muppets.

I recently decided to attend the "March to End Fossil Fuels" that took place in New York City on Sunday, September 17. When I decided to attend, I mentioned it was only my second march ever. I was then asked to write this article about how I arrived at my decision to attend.

Yep, it was probably The Muppets.

I was raised on The Muppets. So it's no surprise that, on February 13, 1978, I (with substantially more hair) was seated in front of episode 221 starring Bob Hope. In the second sketch that night, some of the creatures from the 1977 holiday special "Emmet Otter's Jug-Band Christmas", in an idyllic forest setting, began to sing Buffalo Springfield's 1966 anti-war classic "For What It's Worth":

There's something happening here
But what it is ain't exactly clear
There's a man with a gun over there
Telling me I got to beware

As they sang, hunters began to enter frame and prototypical Muppet-ness ensued. The second verse was reimagined with anti-hunting lyrics and, as the story goes, it raised the ire of a Field and Stream writer who printed a response piece.

Admittedly I am not the quickest bunny in the forest (sure, I went there). But it took me over 45 years to figure out what that was all about.

No, it wasn't about war. Or even hunting. It was about using what you've got to make even a small difference.

Jim Henson had Muppets and music and an audience. And he used it all to say something.

Social justice is so very overwhelming. There are so many things that I would like to change about the world right now. But I am one middle-class, white, cisgender man. What can I possibly say to make a difference?

I can speak with my time. So I spent an afternoon marching to protect the planet that my sons and nieces and nephews will inherit from us all.

We have been blessed to be able to choose how and where we spend our money. So, when we have the opportunity, we can speak with our dollars and choose to spend it with women-, underrepresented community-, and LGBTQIA+-owned businesses.

I can write a letter. Or sign a petition. I can help organize a health and wellness fair. I can sit in an inspiring presentation on gender identity and learn to use pronouns respectfully and inclusively.

There is an episode of Friends where Monica ends up in a dance class. She's not a great dancer and the instructor calls out that Monica is not doing the dance right. To which Monica responds, "At least I'm doing it."

Well, moving forward, at least I'll be doing it too.

Which reminds me of the words I crave to hear every single Advent season:

*What can I give Him
I'll give Him my heart.*



ARTIST IN RESIDENCE

Joseph Castronova

At seven months into the residency, it's time to take stock of what the experience has been. What a unique way to work: Starting with a concept for a months' long exploration.

The entry point for my studio practice was winter's ending and the remains of last year's growth: the evidence of that time; collective and individual shed histories. I had made a drawing in Fall 2022 of the Greenway wilderness after the leaves had fallen. It captured the desolation and openness of that forest bottomland with its deep cover of leaves. The sense of loss and sense of possibilities was everywhere. As I focused on the forgiveness theme, I thought of collective lives and lives collected like leaves on the forest floor. Leaves are a magic formation of something from nothing: sunlight, water, air and trace minerals in the soil. They record experiences good and bad: from rapid growth to insect nibble, deluge to drought. The shed leaf is a form usable for new life. This idea has been with me for a long time. It was about casting off histories and growing anew.

“It was about casting off histories and growing anew.”

This became the starting point for the Residency. I collected leaves and drew them. I focused on leaves as metaphors, as histories, as building blocks. I drew in charcoal and oil pastel. At some point I knew that the leaf drawing would become the back of the painting. That felt right. I worked on it for weeks. I started to love and fear the idea that this record of my process would be lost and remade in to the painting. The backs have always been a visual component. This had become conceptual. I was creating a past to build a future. I was making a sacrifice to make something new. It quite unintentionally started to feel like healing. Spring had begun. Green started to poke through. I was ready to bring color to the work. I was ready for the new.



How do we talk about forgiveness through art?

I began to paint about rebirth, rebuilding, reassembly. I flipped over the leaf painting and began. Thinking about roots and pathways through history and experiences.

This now was feeling like my own spiritual journey. I was paralleling the world coming alive outside my window. I was not only an observer or portrayer of transformation. The work itself was the transformation. It held in its framework, in its cells, the evidence of the past. It was being fashioned from its life lived.

My artwork is very much about process and discovery. My finished pieces show the record of their evolution; of my discoveries. As I thought about forgiveness, I started to understand that there is a fourth dimension to it: time. It too is a process. The unfolding of this work paralleled the change of the season and the anticipation of spring. The painting of shed leaves as the back of the painting; forever present, absorbed into and revealed through the painting on the front. Forgiveness is a stepped act over time, embracing our history, rebuilding, then being: New without apology or expectation. This painting has followed that trajectory for me; spiritually and visually.



“The work itself was the transformation.”



HOW DID I ARRIVE HERE?

Rev. Dr. Glory Thomas

The question, “how did you arrive?” forces us to consider “where we are”. Like many of those who are reading this, I have lived over five decades; and unlike some of my readers, I have arrived at a destination I did not plan.

I work as a chaplain at the Veteran’s hospital in Menlo Park, while serving as a part-time pastor at the First Presbyterian Church in Carteret. It took me a very long and windy road to get here from where I started: In a Southern state of India called Kerala in 1982. I began my theological studies at a seminary in the capital city of Kerala, Trivandrum (or Thiruvananthapuram) that year. By the time I graduated from Princeton Theological Seminary with a Ph. D in 2002, I had already gone through two other seminaries in the US (Austin Presbyterian Theological Seminary and Pittsburgh Theological Seminary).

My immediate answer to the question, therefore, would be: “via a long and windy road.” However, life experiences have taught me the lesson (attributed to many including Ralph Waldo Emerson) that “it is not the destination, but the journey that matters.” I carry the memories of my encounters with so many wonderful people as well as encounters with events and moments that have made deep scars.

There have been times in life I have questioned my decision to turn one or the other direction at the crossroads on my journey and wondered “what if.” I no longer question the past or wonder about the “what if” paths. At this last leg of my journey, I am more conscious than ever that I am not alone in my path; God is always present even when I am unable to feel that presence; I am no longer trying to make meaning out of tragedies and painful experiences.

In his book, *Bread for the Journey*, Henry Nouwen says: “Nobody escapes being wounded. We are all wounded people, whether physically, emotionally, mentally, or spiritually. The main question is not 'How can we hide our wounds?' so we don't have to be embarrassed but 'How can we put our woundedness in the service of others?' When our wounds cease to be a source of shame and become a source of healing, we have become wounded healers.” In chaplaincy, we are encouraged to become those who use positive and negative experiences of life for the betterment of others, and this is my (earthly) destination.

I do not want to claim that I have arrived at my destination, but I do want to say the journey itself has been a meaningful one that only God could have planned.



ADVENT HORIZONS OF HOME

Rev. Leksmana Leonard and Isabella Novsima

Leksmana and Isabella are currently providing pastoral leadership to the Indonesian Fellowship as they pursue graduate studies at Drew University.

Everyone has a way of interpreting home. Some interpret it as a place. Well, it might be the most common one. But for some people, the loved one might be their home. Wherever you are, as long as you are with them, you will always be welcome, safe, or accepted. Some interpret home as feelings of calm, gratitude, happiness, or a condition of recovering from trauma. Others might interpret a house as their dream, a goal to be achieved in the future. There are many other possibilities for each of us to define a house.

Advent is a liturgical period when the church is waiting for the Messiah. It is as important as the Christmas season when the one that has been awaited has arrived. In some way, waiting is the art of being in a mystical experience where time could be relative. On the other hand, the process of waiting for the Messiah is also a good time for examining our deepest chamber of heart: our desire, what we are longing for. We can imagine that we are also waiting for our journey to get home. Waiting for the coming of Christ, at the same time, is also a reciprocal journey to home.

In this Advent period, we can also broaden our definition of home. Have we become a home for those who need one? Or maybe, as earthlings, the Earth is our home. Thus, our understanding of home must have an implication in our daily decisions.

Several Christian mystics wrote about their spiritual experiences about waiting for “their home.” Henri Nouwen, for example, is actively seeking a home with experience, with the academic community at Harvard, and the inclusive community with people with intellectual disabilities as their core members named L’Arche. We can learn from his experience and several other mystics’ spiritual experiences that we know that all of us long to return home.

Whatever your home is, wherever it is, or whomever they are, the most important is how we arrive with the awareness of God, who is the initiator in the gesture of love towards creation, and together with God, our Great Companion, we are arriving at home.



THE DREADED ORANGE BOOKS

Jordan Klotz

Every year, the choir moans and groans about the dreaded orange books. *Carols for Choirs 2*. The orange books, part of a colorful set with choral arrangements of carols for Advent and Christmas, grace the folders of choir members as we prepare for the Festival of Nine Lessons and Carols.

Needless to say, these books have long been a non-favorite of the choir.

Adam Lay Ybounden is on page 10. This carol, which follows the first lesson, Genesis 3, is the reason we get so much mileage out of *Carols for Choirs 2*. Its archaic text may be puzzling to our contemporary ears, but taking a closer look can transform how we experience Lessons and Carols.

***Adam lay ybounden, bounden in a bond;
Four thousand winter thought he not too long.***

Adam, representing all people, was bound by sin, and thought four thousand winters, representing the metaphorical four thousand years between Creation and the birth of Jesus, were not too long to be in such captivity.

And all was for an apple, an apple that he took,

As clerkes finden written in their book.

And all was for an the fruit of knowledge, as told of in Genesis 3, as clergy find written in the Bible.

Ne had the apple taken been, the apple taken been,

Ne had never our Lady abeen heavené queen.

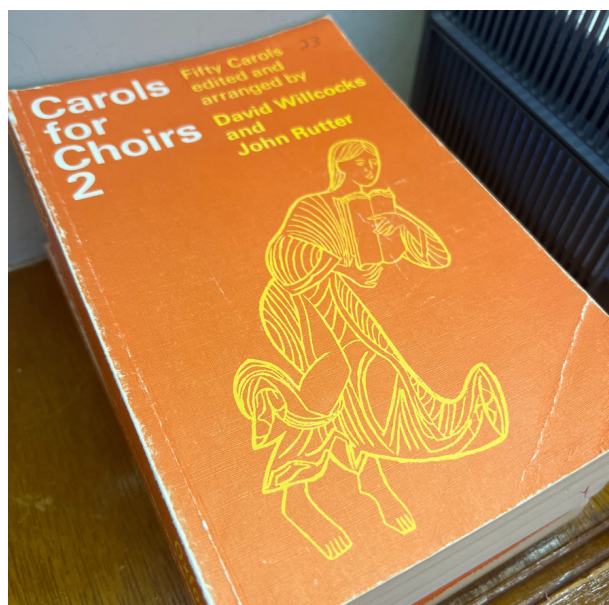
If the apple had not been taken, neither would Mary have been heaven's queen.

***Blessed be the time that apple taken was,
Therefore we moun singen, "Deo gracias!"***

Blessed be the time that apple was taken was, therefore we must sing, "Thanks be to God!"

Last year, I was shocked that my request, "please take out your orange books," was met with a bit of a grumble. The choral nerd in me couldn't fathom anybody disliking *Adam*. But, upon discussing the meaning of the text, the choir began to come around.

Perhaps, this year, the choir's annual griping will subside, and maybe they will like *Adam* a bit more than they did last year. Hopefully, a deeper insight into the text of this 15th century carol will help breathe more life into it. Hear it sung on Sunday, December 17, at our Festival of Nine Lessons and Carols.



FAMILY FAITH MOMENTS

Encouraging simple practices for families of all ages, shapes, and sizes.

Our faith is not just something we check in with on Sundays; our faith is how we live lives of meaning and purpose every day of the week. Family faith formation is a journey, not a destination.

Here are everyday reminders of how we can grow in faith together:

1. Share your stories.

Sharing daily stories with each other reminds us that God is at work in our lives. These questions can spark conversation:

- Where did you see God today?
- Tell about a time this week when you felt that God was close to you?

2. Celebrate Milestones

Baptisms, birthdays, graduations, and personal “firsts” such as learning to ride a bike, losing a tooth, a first job, are all milestones that families can mark together in ways that point to God. Celebrate with a prayer of thanks and a conversation about God’s faithfulness in the life of your child and family.

3. Pray together.

Time spent in prayer and reflection brings us closer to God and closer to one another.



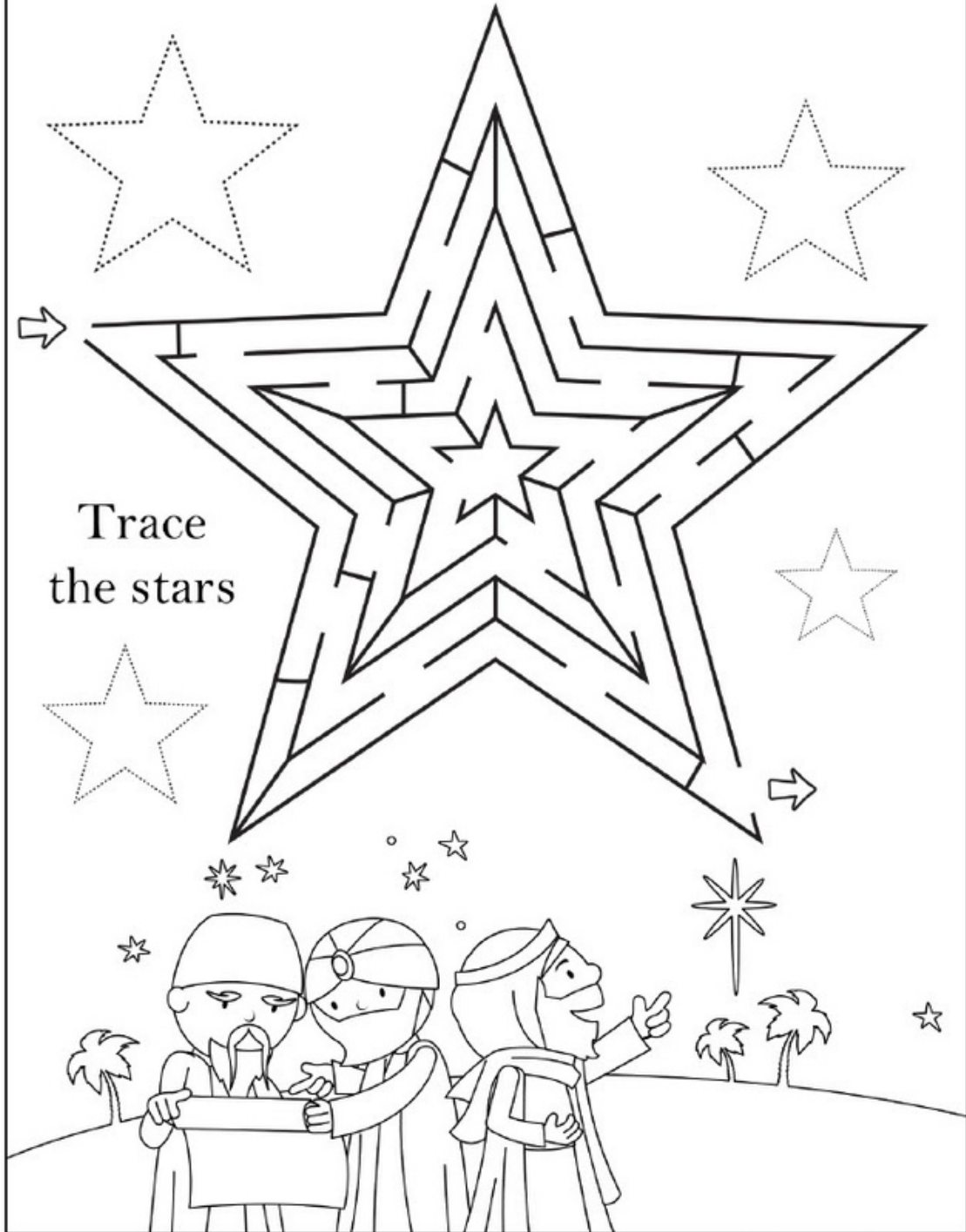
God’s Love

God’s love is all around us.
 God’s love is a hug.
 God’s love is beauty.
 God’s love is warmth.
 God’s love is family.

-Traci Smith,
Prayers for Faithful Families

The Bourne Family

Christmas Star Maze



ADVENT & CHRISTMAS WORSHIP

DEC. 10: One Church Together

All generations come together for this season's intergenerational worship. Worshippers of all ages will participate in the leading of the liturgy. All children's choirs will sing.

DEC. 17: Lessons & Carols

This traditional liturgy, alternating readings of scripture with carols and hymns, is an opportunity for all to enjoy the story of the season told through Word and song.

DEC. 24 (9:30 AM): Advent IV

Christmas Eve falls on a Sunday once every six or seven years. When this occurs, the fourth Sunday of Advent is observed in the morning and Christmas Eve in the evening.



DEC. 24 (5:00 PM): Pageant

An annual family favorite, the FPC Christmas Pageant provides an opportunity for children to help tell the story of Christ's Nativity.

DEC. 24 (11:00 PM): Candlelight

Gathering in the dimly-lit sanctuary, we move through the late hours and enter into twilight together to celebrate the birth of Jesus. Candles are lit as we sing "all is calm, all is bright," inspiring feelings of awe and joy.

CHRISTMAS PAGEANT SIGN-UP INFORMATION

All Church youth ages 4-18 are invited to participate in the Christmas Pageant, Sunday, December 24 at 5:00 pm.

Children must be signed up in advance so that costumes and parts can be prepared.

Sign-ups are now taking place online at the link below or by scanning the QR code.

<https://forms.office.com/r/wdPjKqXJNU>



HAVE YOU EVER MOVED A CHINA HUTCH?

Rev. Dr. Fred Garry

Have you ever moved a China hutch?

It's a process. First you empty it.

Next you detach the top from the bottom if possible.

Then, and only then, do you recruit a few folks to help.

Never would you try to move this as is by yourself.

Leading a church is like moving a China hutch again and again. If you do it right, it's a careful process of prayer and discernment with planning and vision that ultimately leads to a group of people working together.

FPC Metuchen does this really well. The elders and the deacons are working to articulate a new vision and mission for the future. The Finance commission has eliminated all debt and developed new ways to keep our campus vibrant. And our local mission is nearing an expansion of our social center for the food pantry.

We are, in a way, at the last step of moving the China Hutch. We need a few folks. The staff of FPC has seen a lot of change. We have welcomed a fantastic new music director, Jordan Klotz, and gained a highly skilled executive director of mission, Heather Koball. Sarah Teti has grown in her role from food pantry coordinator to be the director of local mission. We have been blessed with the interim work of Rev. Ashley Bair and will initiate a search process for a new associate pastor soon.

To see this growth and direction happen, we need to increase our stewardship from \$417,000 to \$500,000. This is what it will take to staff our mission and ministry. A 20% increase is bold and challenging. It may take us a few years to get there, but we need to start now.

FPC Metuchen is very fortunate to have great staff and programs. We need to ensure this for the future. This is the moment to move the hutch.



ORTHODOXY AND HERESY

Rev. Dr. Fred Garry

The Shorter Catechism of Westminster begins with a great question: What does it mean to live; what is your end, purpose? How is that you have lived well?

According to the Westminster Shorter Catechism the answer is: to glorify God and enjoy God forever?

If you are older than 50 and were made to memorize this, you know I made some edits. The question, as it was posed in the 17th century was: What is the chief end of mankind? And the Answer: To glorify God and enjoy him forever. I changed some pronouns and some nouns. These changes only took a few keystrokes and really didn't affect the power of the question and the answer.

Some might balk at such changes. You are erasing history! You can't edit the past! I understand this concern. Yet, the real changes to the Westminster confession and catechisms have not been a matter of inclusive pronouns. The real change to the Westminster and the theology is how few people believe what is being confessed in Westminster.

The Westminster Confessions, written to be the standard of faith for England after the Presbyterians took over was first and foremost a declaration about the Bible as an absolute authority, and, secondly, a belief that life is absolutely determined by God (the Doctrine of Election). These two beliefs formed the basis of not only the church, but also the government.

Today not many Presbyterians confess a belief in the Bible even remotely close to the Westminster divines. And while many do acknowledge a level of control or providence to God, the average Presbyterian would be aghast at the idea of "predestination" as put forth by our ancestors. Such differences are not a matter of pronouns and gender expressions. This is a level of fundamental difference.

For instance, the Westminster Confession makes clear early on that God chooses some for heaven and some for hell. By the decree of God, for the manifestation of his glory, some men and angels are predestinated unto everlasting life, and others fore-ordained to everlasting death. (6.016)

This would be fine if the Westminster confession and the catechisms were obscure documents that a few people adhered to for a time. But these are the bedrock expressions of faith for Presbyterians for over three centuries. This was the only confession of the PCUSA for many, many generations.

And such claims might be tempered with, "hey, we addressed this decades ago, and removed the Westminster Confession from our Constitution." But we can't say that because we didn't do that. In corporate speak, "God ordains that some people will go to hell" is still our official policy.

In November and December Helen Burr-Cackowski and I will finish a four-part series on early Christology. A big part of this series is to understand the challenge of what is orthodox and what is heretical. The challenge is compounded when you begin to see how orthodoxy is a moving target and how what is deemed heretical is often more a matter of power than praise.

Orthodoxy in literal translation is "right praise." *Heresy* at its etymological root means "choice."

To be orthodox means you give praise to what is good and true and beautiful.

To be a heretic means you chose. But your choice, it would seem, is wrong.

You didn't choose to praise what is good in the right way with everybody else.

How we speak today is one of the most important questions. What is "correct" speech? How do you address, describe, or recognize someone? When you look to the early Christological debates you will find these are the very sort of questions being asked 1,700 years ago. What is more, their answers were always being debated because the questions just found a new expression.

On November 19 and December 10, we will explore questions of what does it mean to say Jesus is a human? What does it mean to do something "in the name of Jesus Christ" as an authority, a power? What does it mean for us to choose the words of praise?

VOLUNTEER OPPORTUNITIES

Looking to serve and wondering where to go? Here are some opportunities that might be right for you!

Advent Angel Tree

We will have 2 Advent Angel trees: one in the Church Narthex and one at the Social Center Foyer. We are also collecting NEW mittens/hats/socks and jackets. Decorated bins will be placed next to both trees to collect items from which the children will be able to choose from.

To be an angel, simply:

1. Select an Advent Angel(s) as soon as possible and leave your gift under the Advent Angel tree no later than 9:30 am on Sunday, December 17.
2. The Angels are color-coded with information about the destination of the gift, as well as gift suggestions.
3. All gifts may be wrapped and/or placed in gift bags.
4. Please SECURELY attach the Advent Angel to the gift bag or wrapped gift.

Mission Commission Sock Drive

The Mission Commission is sponsoring a Winter Sock Drive for Food Pantry clients beginning Sunday, November 19 through Sunday, December 17. Please place new socks for adults and children in the decorated box in the Narthex.

Jersey Cares Coat Drive

New and gently used winter coats for infants, children and adults may be dropped off in the collection bin in the Social Center. Groups dropping off coats should drop off directly in the Container parked in the Social Center lot. See us in the office if bringing bulk donations.

The Soup Ministry:

Our wonderful soup ministry delivers homemade soup to congregants who are homebound, recovering from surgery, grieving, feeling isolated, or in need of some love from our church family.

We welcome anyone new who would like to assist, and you don't need to cook! We deliver soup monthly from October to March. Please reach out if you are interested in:

- making a pot of soup
- delivering soup
- making phone calls to schedule deliveries

If you know someone who could use some "soup love" or would like to help, contact Laura Draper at draperfam44@gmail.com.



UPCOMING EVENTS

NOVEMBER

4: PW Presbytery of the Coastlands Fall Gathering

9:00 AM-1:00 PM in the Social Center

All Presbyterian Women are welcome to join in a day of fun and fellowship. Registration opens at 8:30.

5: Art Dedication & Artist Forum

After Worship in the Social Center

Final presentation by our Artist-in-Residence, Joseph Castronova, as he dedicates the commissioned artwork to the First Presbyterian Church of Metuchen.



5: La Fiocco Early Music Concert

3:30 PM in the Sanctuary

Enjoy a free concert of baroque and renaissance music featuring young musicians.

16: Health & Wellness Fair

9:30 AM-12:00 PM in the Social Center

This free event will host basic medical screenings, mental health experts, financial education and guidance, self-care demonstrations and more!



20: Local Mission Thanksgiving Basket Packing

7:00-8:30 PM in the Social Center

As we consider all of the things we are grateful for, join us to help bless other families during the Thanksgiving season.

21: Local Mission Thanksgiving Basket Delivery

9:00-11:00 AM

Packed baskets will be distributed the following day.

DECEMBER

2: Holly Fair

10:00 AM-3:00 PM in the Social Center

Shop an extensive collection of "next to new" items with the Presbyterian Women at another annual Holly Fair!

3: Hanging of the Greens

After Worship in the Sanctuary

Assist us as we prepare for the Advent/Christmas season by bringing beauty into our worship space.



UPCOMING EVENTS

DECEMBER (cont.)

9: Indonesian Christmas

6n the Social Center

The Indonesian Fellowship hosts its annual Christmas celebration.

10: One Church Together

9:30 AM in the Sanctuary

All generations of our community have a hand in leading this intergenerational worship service.

10: Christmas Dinner and a Show

5:00 PM in the Social Center

Join the Music Ministry for this festive fundraiser featuring food of Chef Dan Slobodien and music from Brenda Day, Sarah Teti, and the Senior Choir.



14: Food Pantry Holiday Bazaar

7:00-8:30 PM in the Social Center

Pantry clients will again have a chance to shop gifts for their families for free. New gifts for adults and children are being accepted and donations can be dropped off at the Food Pantry.

19: Local Mission Christmas Basket Packing

7:00-8:30 PM in the Social Center

Help make the Christmas season merry and bright for all by assisting with the packing of Christmas baskets.



20: Local Mission Christmas Basket Distribution

9:00-11:00 AM

21: Homeless Persons Memorial Day

6:00 PM behind the Social Center

Join Middlesex Country in a short vigil to commemorate county residents that have passed while unhoused.



CHURCH STAFF

First Presbyterian Church of Metuchen
(as of October, 2023)

CLERGY

Rev. Dr. Fred G. Garry 732-491-2330
Senior Pastor/Head of Staff fgarry@fpcweb.org
Rev. Ashley Bair 732-491-2260
Interim Associate Pastor abair@fpcweb.org
Rev. Robert A. Beringer, Pastor Emeritus
Rev. Glory Thomas
Parish Associate

CHRISTIAN EDUCATION

Nancy Leardi 732-491-2264
Director Christian Education nleardi@fpcweb.org
Kat Davis katddavis@gmail.com
Christian Education Production Leader

MUSIC MINISTRY

Jordan Klotz 732-491-2266
Director of Music Ministries jklotz@fpcweb.org
Elaine Hansen ehansen@fpcweb.org
Assistant Bell Director and Accompanist
Brenda Day
Minister of Music Emeritus

SUPPORT STAFF

Heather Koball 732-491-2264
Executive Director of Missions hkoball@fpcweb.org
Joshua Krongold 732-491-2302
Director of Finance jkrongold@fpcweb.org
Jonathan Hollenbeck 732-491-2270
Facilities Manager jhollenbeck@fpcweb.org
Bob O'Connell 732-491-2270
Facilities Assistant boconnell@fpcweb.org
Vicky Lacson 732-491-2301
Administrative & Communications Coordinator
vlacson@fpcweb.org
Colleen Walker 732-491-2303
Office Assistant cwalker@fpcweb.org
Nate Brown 732-347-9951
Technical and Sound Design Consultant
nbrown@fpcweb.org

Sarah Teti 732-491-2325
Director of Local Mission foodpantry@fpcweb.org

COMMUNITY NURSERY SCHOOL

Stacy Ambriz 732-491-2242
Director cnsadmin@fpcweb.org

POINSETTIA ORDER FORM

In keeping our Christmas tradition, help us decorate our worship space with poinsettias.

Names of those remembered and donors will be listed in worship bulletins on December 17 and 24. Plants may be taken home after the 11:00 PM service on Christmas Eve.

Make checks payable to First Presbyterian Church with note: *Poinsettia*.

Send the form and payment to the Church office by Monday, December 4th.

Your Name: _____

Phone/Email: _____

For Bulletin Listing of Donors (Please print)

Given by: _____

In Memory of: _____

In Honor of: _____

In Gratitude: _____

Number of plants@ \$9.25 each _____

Total Amount Enclosed: \$ _____

Please mark one of the following:

___ I will bring home my plant after the 11 pm Christmas Eve Service.

___ Leave poinsettia for Deacons to deliver.

ADVENT 2023 PARISH NEWS

FIRST PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH OF METUCHEN
270 Woodbridge Avenue, Metuchen, NJ 08840

NONPROFIT ORGANIZATION
US POSTAGE PAID
NEW BRUNSWICK, NJ
PERMIT 746

ADDRESS SERVICE REQUESTED

TO:

The information contained herein is for Church use only. Individuals using this information must receive permission of the Session of the First Presbyterian Church of Metuchen, NJ

Stay up to date with just one click!

We are now using Mail Chimp to bring to you the latest church happenings. Sign up to make sure we have your correct email address.

Visit the church website, send an email to fpc@fpcweb.org or use your cell phone to go directly to the link using this QR code.

We promise not to spam you!



First Presbyterian Church of Metuchen is a congregation of the Presbyterian Church (USA).

Parish News Submission

Items for the upcoming newsletter may be emailed to
vlacson@fpcweb.org

Church Office

270 Woodbridge Avenue, Metuchen, NJ 08840
Office Hours: Monday - Friday 8:30 am to 4:30 pm
Telephone: (732) 491-2300
Email: fpc@fpcweb.org

Sunday Worship Service 9:30 am

Online Sunday Morning Worship 9:30 am

Livestreamed on FPC Metuchen Facebook