

# PARISH NEWS

THE NEWSLETTER OF FIRST PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH OF METUCHEN, NJ



Corby Eisbacher

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# MARY'S GOSPEL

Fred Garry

One of the great challenges of reading the bible is that the stories are not very nice. Lots of murder, oppression, crop failure.

I saw this when developing a Sunday School curriculum for young children. The hope was to find fifty stories we could teach children and help them find a "biblical imagination." We could find fifty, for sure, but often times the stories had a dark side, a moment where we said, "maybe that should not be part of the lesson."

One of the most favorite stories of the bible for children is Noah's Ark. One of my first memories of faith was eyeing a plastic Noah's Ark set in Sunday school. It was the grand prize if you had great attendance, memorized bible verses, and probably did some minor miracle. The set had the pairs of animals, a large boat, Noah, and his family. It didn't come with a rainbow, but it was on the lid of the box set. Children love this story.

Yet, the story of Noah and his ark is a terrible one. There is complete annihilation, wholesale destruction of all creation. And after the flood things go downhill fast. There is a rainbow and a dove, and God does say, "Hey, that was not the best idea; I shouldn't do that again." But there is a lot of the story that wasn't included in the Sunday School lesson.

The most beloved children's Bible story is the birth of Jesus in the manger on a silent night where shepherds kept their watch and a little drummer boy was heading into town. The manger scene, or crèche, is the only Bible scene we create in our homes. Consider how common it is to go into a home and see the birth of Jesus made manifest by porcelain figurines. This is a fun story to tell children. I spent a good portion of my childhood beneath a Christmas tree moving the figurines around.

What is also not often discussed is that the birth in the manger is one of a dozen stories about the circumstances of Jesus' birth and childhood. In Luke there is not just an account of Jesus' birth, but an account of the birth of the Baptist, the naming of Jesus, the song of Mary and the annunciation, as well as prophets who bless him as a baby and a rather troubling coming of age story where Jesus takes off and causes quite a stir.

These stories about Mary paint a picture of her that is not the "gentle Mary, virgin mild." She is a poet. She talks to angels. Prophets seek her out.

There is a great legend that these stories were not only about Mary, they were Mary's stories. The legend is that Luke met Mary in Ephesus and she shared these stories with him as a kind of "pre-gospel." Indeed, the opening chapters of Luke are best understood as the witness, the good news, the account of Mary. Luke simply attached them to his account of the life and ministry of Jesus.

Scholars debate this legend, but we don't need to. We need to simply pay attention to the fact that these stories are so beloved, so often the focus of Christian art, and, most importantly, a fount of hymns and sacred music. Mary's stories have a power and an impact no scholarly debate can deny. What we can ask or debate is this: what do the stories of Mary do to us? What impact do they have on our faith?

Mary makes protestants nervous. She does. We don't like that people pray to her. We get near apoplectic if someone calls her the "co-redeemer" and don't even mention to us that she is the "queen of heaven." Protestants like us like to keep God and humans separate. No intercessory saints helping us find lost items; no patron saints of the kitchen. Just Jesus!

# MARY'S GOSPEL (CONTINUED)

Fred Garry

Despite our concern, and oft times disdain,  
Mary keeps going. Her stories, or treasures,  
continue to inspire, enlighten, and uplift.

In the first three months of 2024, I will  
preach through the stories about Jesus told  
by Mary. For those who can never get  
enough of Christmas, these sermons are for  
you. Yet, mostly, what you might find is a  
unique opportunity to experience what Luke  
did so long ago. This is a moment where we  
can sit and listen to her stories and wonder,  
“What child is this, who, laid at rest on Mary  
lap is sleeping?”

What child is this? This was Mary's question  
to answer. And, answer she did. If we are  
lucky, she still does.

*Depictions of Mary, photos taken by  
Reverend Fred Garry*





# DEVOTION TO MARY IN CATHOLICISM

Protestants don't know what to do with the Virgin Mary. Her place of honor in the Roman Catholic Church is foreign to our iconoclastic ways. She is everywhere in art and you can find her adorning many yards. None of this sits well with our "God alone" reformed theology. Yet, we cannot help but concede there is something special and inspiring. In most of the articles this month we are exploring Mary. Mary as devotion; Mary in Scripture; Mary in song. Perhaps we will find what it is about Mary. - Fred Garry

Pete Bellisano

I was raised as a Roman Catholic, steeped in the old-world Italian version of Catholicism. It seemed like there was much more attention paid to Mary and the 'Saints' than to Jesus, and I was taught to pray to them as though they could relay my thoughts to God more effectively than I could express them on my own.

Mary holds an exalted place in Catholicism, venerated to a degree almost approaching deification. I've read theories behind this, tying it to humanity's ancient yearning for connection to the 'Divine Feminine'. But I think it's much simpler than that when it comes to Italian Catholics who are raised to revere their mother. Mother is viewed as the intercessor between child and father (the titular head of the family over whom Mama quietly and patiently holds sway). Therefore, as Jesus' mother, Mary would be the ultimate intercessor; the one who could get you off the hook if you misbehaved; the one who could ask for favors you were too shy (or guilty) to ask of God on your own.

I recall being taught to pray to Mary, basically asking her to influence Jesus on our behalf. She was his mother. He had to listen to her, didn't he?

As an adult when I became more familiar with the Bible many of the rituals and doctrines I'd grown up with no longer resonated with me. The idea of intermediaries between myself and God no longer made sense.

Mary is of course to be honored with a special place in our faith tradition. And the 'Saints' (and all the saints) should be appreciated, emulated, and loved for being God's children of faith. But my journey to Protestantism has led me to no longer see Mary or the 'Saints' as emissaries or intermediaries to be venerated or prayed to (not to say worshipped). Now I can go to God on my own, with them rather than through them.



*Aldobrandini Madonna, 1509-1510 oil, Raphael.*



# QUESTIONS ABOUT MARY

Fran Bush

## Do I pray to Mary?

Yes, I pray to Mary. I do not worship Mary, but I honor her and the sacrifices she made when she accepted God's will to carry Jesus in her womb and to support him through his life. She accepted God's will knowing he would be rejected and betrayed by those He sought to teach and love. I honor Mary because God himself honored her when he selected her to bear his Son. The angel Gabriel, who was sent by God, honored and praised her by greeting her with "Hail, Mary, full of grace, the Lord is with thee. Blessed art thou among women." I can identify with Mary as a mother, who so deeply loved her son. She is an inspiration for how willingly she accepted God's will in spite of the hardships she knew it would bring. In this life we are tested. When things happen, I don't understand, that give me anxiety and fear, I can look to Mary's example as one who never wavered, was there throughout Jesus' life, and was there at the foot of the Cross when her Son gave his life to save the world. She trusted and accepted God's will so deeply and endured so much. It makes my own struggles easier to bear and pale in comparison. She is an excellent role model as a mother and a woman. She suffered so deeply, but was humble, obedient, compassionate and faithful. Praying to Mary comforts me.

## Do you believe Mary is our mediator?

I believe there is only one mediator with the Father, Jesus Christ.

## Do you entrust your cares to Mary?

I believe Mary intercedes for us and I do entrust my cares to her as well. She has a loving relationship with her Son. She is intimately connected to Jesus. I think

prayers to Mary are powerful because of her relationship with Jesus and the love they shared. Jesus performed his first miracle at her prompting. At Cana He told her "My hour has not yet come," but he then went on to work his first miracle because she asked him. Another example of their loving and intimate relationship is as Jesus hung on the cross, Jesus looked to his disciple John to care for Mary's future. Despite his own physical agony, he was concerned about Mary and wanted to assure her future security and protection. I believe Mary understands our needs and can present them to Jesus and fulfill them through Jesus.

As an aside, but a very important part of the Catholic faith, is the gift from of Mary the rosary. Mary urges us to pray the rosary to help people grow in faith, to convert sinners, and to bring about world peace. The rosary begins with the Apostle's Creed which is a summary of the great mysteries of the Catholic faith. It is an opportunity to meditate on the mysteries surrounding the birth, life and death of Jesus, and also invites us to mediate on Mary's role in Jesus' life.



Fran Bush joined FPC on Israel trip, 2020

# ON THE MAGNIFICAT

Jordan Klotz

If you ask a group of church musicians which passages of scripture are their favorites, you will inevitably hear many say, “the Canticles!” Canticle, coming from the Latin “cantare” (to sing) and the suffix “-icle,” meaning something smaller, means “little song.” There are several liturgical songs often referred to as Canticles, including the Song of Zechariah (from Luke 1), the Song of Simeon (from Luke 2), and perhaps most famously, the Song of Mary, or the Magnificat.

*My soul magnifies the Lord, and my spirit rejoices in God my Savior, for he has looked with favor on the lowliness of his servant.*

*Surely, from now on all generations will call me blessed; for the Mighty One has done great things for me, and holy is his name.*

*His mercy is for those who fear him from generation to generation. He has shown strength with his arm; he has scattered the proud in the thoughts of their hearts.*

*He has brought down the powerful from their thrones, and lifted up the lowly; he has filled the hungry with good things, and sent the rich away empty.*

*He has helped his servant Israel, in remembrance of his mercy, according to the promise he made to our ancestors, to Abraham and to his descendants forever.*

When we imagine that the God of the Universe has asked a teenage girl to bear an unthinkable weighty task, it is shocking and inspiring that her response would be to echo such deep praise. However, there is more than mere exultation; her emphasis on God's favor toward the lowly is some of the most subversive language of the Bible.

"He has scattered the proud in the thoughts of their hearts. He has brought down the powerful from their thrones, and lifted up the lowly," reads as a prophetic call for social upheaval. It envisions a world where the mighty are humbled, the oppressed uplifted, and the hungry satisfied while the rich face emptiness. Is this not “So the last shall be first, and the first last” found in the book of Matthew?

Do we join Mary in her call for divine intervention to reshape a world marked by injustice, greed, and pride? May we remember the courage and spirit of Mary and her Song during the nearing Lenten season.



# AND A SWORD WILL PIERCE YOUR OWN SOUL

Jordan Klotz

Now that we have defined canticles, it is valuable to note that the Magnificat is not the only canticle found in the Gospel of Luke. In the second chapter of Luke, we hear the Song of Simeon, which is my personal favorite of the canticles.

*Lord, now lettest thou thy servant depart in peace, according to thy word:  
For mine eyes have seen thy salvation,  
Which thou hast prepared before the face of all people;  
A light to lighten the Gentiles, and the glory of thy people Israel.*

Simeon was told that he would not die until seeing the Messiah, and here, seeing baby Jesus and the Holy Family in the temple, he erupts in an outburst of praise.

I quote the King James translation of Luke 2:29-32, the Song of Simeon, because it is this text that has stirred my heart during countless choral rehearsals and worship services. Have you ever sat with a poem, a prayer, a quote, or a verse of scripture for so long that it moves you—it speaks to you—each time in a new and profound way?

I have written before about the service of Choral Evensong, and the Song of Simeon follows the Magnificat in being sung during these worship services. It is a powerful sequence; the music written with these verses is varied, complex, heart-wrenching, and has meant very much to me over the course of my journey experiencing my faith through music.

But, following this holy response to witnessing the infant Christ, Simeon turns to Mary:

*This child is destined for the falling and the rising of many in Israel and to be a sign that will be opposed so that the inner thoughts of many will be revealed—and a sword will pierce your own soul, too.*

*A sword will pierce your own soul.* Simeon bridges, for us, the joy of the birth of the Messiah with the sorrow of Mary at his death.

We Presbyterians often avoid bridging this gap, preferring to keep the joy and the sorrow separate, but I quite like it. The complexity, the layers of emotion, these are the things that move me about the Song of Simeon...it is not unlike the verse of the most widely-sung Epiphany hymn, *We Three Kings*, which goes:

*Myrrh is mine; its bitter perfume  
Breathes a life of gathering gloom;  
Sorrowing, sighing,  
Bleeding, dying,  
Sealed in the stone-cold tomb. O, star of wonder...*

Unlike Mary meeting Simeon in the temple, we have the perspective of Jesus' entire life, death, and resurrection. May we, like Simeon, experience each season remembering the other.

We journey through Advent and Christmastide with a mind to the future sorrow of Christ's condemnation.

May we journey through Lent with a mind not only to the coming resurrection of Christ, but also to his lowly mother, a young, nervous mother who accepted a call from God.

It is her son to whom we shout "Hosanna!" It is her son that Peter will deny. It is her son that will cry, "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?"

*And a sword will pierce your own soul.*





# THANK YOU

Rev. Ashley Bair

Dear FPC Metuchen, thank you for such a generous goodbye. I appreciate all of the kind words, cards, gifts, and time you shared with me as my time with you all came to a close.

In this season of gratitude, I am grateful for the memories of wonderful times we shared together. Not all of them have photos, but some of them do. I compiled some of the ones that do here to say thank you for these times that brought me joy and will stay with me. We did a lot in 2 years!

I hope you find joy in these memories, too, as you start a new season and a new year. My prayers are with you.



A joyous river boat cruise and climb onto the largest of the three pyramids of Giza, Egypt!



Habitat team - all of them semi-pro selfie takers.





Annual visit of the Staff to Hot Dog Johnny's, frosted buttermilk included.



Youth Leaders extraordinaire!



Worship with the incredible volunteers at the Youth Day of Service



VBS with the best local theater troupe.



Climate march with Social Justice committee members!

## VOICES OF OUR FOOD PANTRY VOLUNTEERS

In the Fall issue of the Parish News, we shared the voices of the food pantry clients. In this issue, we share the volunteers' perspective about the food pantry.

I was inspired to volunteer because of my contact with Sarah (Teti) during the Windows of Understanding public art project. As part of the project, the Metuchen Arts Council, of which I am a member, held "Community Conversations" in conjunction with the Metuchen Human Relations Commission which discussed in detail the work of the Pantry. I decided then that this would be an important use of my time. My favorite part of the Pantry is being a part of the community that runs it and getting to know the community that uses it. My favorite experience is feeling and seeing the relief and gratitude our clients have for the food and services the pantry offers, especially when I'm shopping with new clients who are shopping with us for the first time and can't believe the number of choices they have.

- Grace Shackney

Volunteering at the FPC Food Pantry appealed to me because it was serving my local community. When I saw that it was client choice - actual shopping - I was sold.

I enjoy chatting with clients about meal preparation, ideas on stretching food to feed a family, and nutrition topics. Sometimes we swap recipes!

The holiday experiences are great, but any day with our volunteer group and our clients is time well spent.

- Mary Kay Sessa

When I was working, I wanted to volunteer at the food pantry, but it didn't fit into my schedule. I knew that, when I retired, this would be a new place I would focus my energies. I didn't realize, however, how involved I would become!

Shopping with clients, distributing pre-packed bags of food at our drive through during the pandemic, handling our "Farmers Market" table of fresh produce and also refrigerated-frozen food - all is a true labor of love. In addition to getting to know our many clients, another wonderful benefit of this effort is I now have a food pantry family - other volunteers who are kind, positive and a joy to be around!

- Alicia Parr

When I first joined the Presbyterian Church the food pantry was looking for volunteers. I thought it would be a good way to meet other members of the church. After a few weeks of volunteering, I knew I made a great choice. I will always cherish the friendship of all the volunteers, both church members and members of the community.

Over the years the pantry has grown in so many ways and being a part of that growth has been exciting, but most of all the feeling of helping those in need is overwhelming. Seeing the satisfaction and thankfulness of the clients is rewarding and heartwarming.

- Karen Rubarski

I was inspired to work with the food pantry during the pandemic, and finally had the time to spend on such a worthwhile organization in Metuchen since working from home.

My favorite part of working at the food pantry is being able to bond with the amazing volunteers. They are always upbeat and eager to help in any way possible when it comes to any and all FPC activities, community and mission programs.

- Nancy Stewart



## VOICES OF OUR FOOD PANTRY VOLUNTEERS

I have always been passionate about food security, and I find that volunteering at the food pantry is very rewarding. Nutritious food is not a luxury, it is a necessity. The concern about not having food and going hungry is far too large of a burden to carry, especially for children. I love that our food pantry empowers parents to provide the simple necessity of food for their children. No matter what else is going on in their lives, the members of our food pantry families can walk through the door and be met with kindness and compassion. Our volunteers are there for them. While shopping, I like to share recipes with our clients. We talk about how they can turn individual items into a delicious meal. I enjoy hearing stories from our clients about how some food items have a connection to happy times in their past. This could be a grandmother's recipe or something they cooked with their mom when they were younger. At the end of the day, sometimes sitting down to a nutritious meal with your family is all you need to feel safe and loved. It is a blessing that our church can help provide this to so many local families.

- Amy Jeney



Food Pantry Volunteers, August 2023

From a young age I was taught the importance of giving back. Although I had donated to the FPC Food Pantry over the years, I started volunteering in 2019.

Our clients and volunteers are my favorite part of my time at the food pantry. I love getting to know our clients & their families. I'm honored that they share their lives with me. We're there to celebrate the happy life events - the birth of a child or grandchild, graduations, and weddings. We're also there to help during difficult times and offer comfort - death of a loved one, job loss, devastating medical diagnoses, homelessness.

Our volunteers are the greatest examples of kindness. We accomplish what we do on a weekly basis because of our hardworking volunteers and the generosity of our congregation and community.

For me personally, volunteering at the food pantry has been both a humbling and rewarding experience. I have found joy in serving and helping others. It's hard to pick just one favorite food pantry experience. Every day I feel the love and gratitude with each smile and hug from our clients, who have become family.

What I know from my time spent with our clients is:

Food starts the conversation.  
 Food is more than nourishment.  
 Food provides a connection.  
 Food is community.  
 Food is Love.

- Wendy Kukowski

# FAMILY FAITH MOMENTS

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



The Ryder Family

Happy New Year!

A new year is often a time for new rituals, scheduled mindful moments and new resolutions. In 2024 we can renew our reflections on God's presence in our lives. This can be done alone or during daily or weekly family moments. Remember God's continued presence with one of these activities today.

- Light a candle at mealtime or prayer times to help your family remember that God is with you.

- Sometimes the Holy Spirit is described as a wind. Go outside and let the wind blow on you, remembering that God's spirit is with you always.

- On a smooth stone, write "God is with you" with a marker. Carry that stone in your pocket to remind yourself that God is with you.

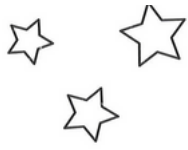
- Use a permanent marker to draw a cross on a nightlight so that you'll remember God is with you at night.

- Set aside weekly family game time and begin with a prayer of thankfulness for the day and God's presence.

\*excerpts from: Everyday Family Faith, author Sandy Swartzentruber

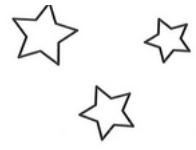
## Grow with God!

Fun and learning for caregivers and toddlers at First Presbyterian Church of Metuchen! Kat Davis will lead Christian-themed songs, activities, and a craft in this engaging class for children able to walk through 4 years old. Singing, dancing, bubbles, jumping, and joy for all. Simple, welcoming Christian lessons will encourage a positive and playful introduction to God, Jesus, and our church family. Caregivers will remain with the children. No church affiliation is required or expected; this class is interdenominational.



# Jesus Teaches

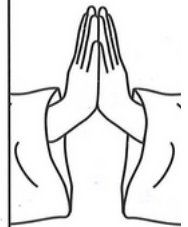
## Various Books



Find and circle the underlined words in Jesus' teachings below.



U	F	E	R	A	H	S	F	U	G	F	L
G	U	O	W	C	K	Q	T	Z	R	B	O
E	L	V	R	G	O	O	D	K	N	G	V
N	J	J	P	G	I	H	P	L	I	S	E
D	E	L	T	K	I	H	R	T	L	N	B
N	E	F	L	G	U	V	S	T	R	L	D
H	D	O	G	M	W	D	E	S	Q	P	J
H	R	T	B	N	N	X	D	U	T	R	W
D	T	L	V	I	N	Y	W	R	Z	A	X
U	E	I	M	R	Y	P	N	T	O	Y	I
M	N	U	A	L	C	R	S	Z	D	E	X
I	L	I	B	F	T	O	K	U	D	R	C



Have FAITH in God. - Luke 11

FORGIVE those who wrong you. - Matthew 18

Believe in GOD. - John 3

Be a GOOD Samaritan. - Luke 10

HELP others. - Luke 10

Be HUMBLE. - Luke 14

Be KIND to strangers. - Luke 10

Love the LORD. - Mark 12

LOVE your enemies. - Luke 6

Say the Lord's PRAYER. - Matthew 6

SHARE with others. - Luke 12

TRUST in God. - Matthew 6



# A CONVERSATION WITH STACY AMBRIZ, NEW CNS DIRECTOR

## Tell us a bit about yourself.

I grew up in Northern California in a small town called Crescent City. I grew up with my mom and one younger brother. I spent the summers in Southern California with my dad, stepmom and three stepbrothers. I currently have two children Annabella (Belle) 7 and Levi 10. My hobbies include almost anything outside, I enjoy snowboarding, going to the beach, spending time with friends and cheerleading.

## Why did you decide to work at Community Nursery School?

I heard about CNS, when I was looking for a job closer to my house. After meeting and interviewing everyone, I knew this was the place for me. The way everyone is like family, CNS isn't just a school it's a community. With the support from the families and the church, CNS teachers can create a program for children to grow and develop.

## I know you used to work at an airport, what was that like?

I worked at Teterboro airport which is the largest private airport in the United States, which means it was very busy 24/7. The workplace was very fast paced and since it is private a lot of the people flying were celebrities, so I got to meet a lot of people. Aviation has lots of moving parts, working within the FBO I worked with passengers, crew members, maintenance teams, and other coworkers. This helped me learn and work with many different personalities.

## What do you like about working with little kids?

I started working with kids at a young age and fell in love. I enjoy helping children grow and develop to their full potential. The best thing about working with children is building a bond where the children feel comfortable sharing their feelings, jokes, and stories with you.

## What do you see for the future of the school?

The school will continue to grow and create learning experiences for children, that will help them to learn and develop through hands-on activities. We are building strong relationships with families and within the community, to support positive expectations for the children.

## What are you looking forward to in 2024?

I'm looking forward to coaching my daughter's cheer team and hopefully making it to the finals in Disneyworld this year.



Stacy and Belle Ambriz

# LENTEN DEVOTION

Fred Garry

Give your alms in secret.

Pray in secret.

Fast in secret.

At the heart of the sermon on the mount are three directions of Jesus where he calls to act in secret.

Giving is an act of generosity; it is a matter of spirit.

Praying is a path of memory and hope; it is a matter of the soul.

Fasting is a challenge of impulses; it is a matter of the body.

At the heart of the sermon on the mount Jesus calls upon us to master the spirit, the soul, and the body. We are to make progress, to grow, to be born again in each of these three.

There are many spirits we can possess and can possess us in return. We are not a spirit. We have one; we have many. We are given a Holy Spirit; we can also have a spirit of compassion. Jesus begins with alms giving, and the spirit of generosity because it is the easiest to master and yet the one that does the most damage day in and day out. Everything from greed to control erode our spirit of generosity. Fear of money; fear of poverty; having a sense of scarcity shape us and corrupt us, until they don't. Giving your alms in secret is a path where we can be set free from the fear of not having enough and the forceful grip greed can have on us.

We only have one soul. Your soul is your memory, your will, and your mind. Each has a power and life and a shape all their own. Or, better put, a shape that is unique to us. Our memories can be shared, but they are uniquely a part of us. We can be forced to do

something only if we surrender our will. And as much as we try to know the mind of others, there is more than enough of our mind to consider. Jesus bids us to venture into the soul through the door of prayer. Follow his petitions by praying his prayer; remember the soul is fueled and made right with mercy. We can set off on this great adventure within if we pray.

We have one body. There is a limit to us. The body is splendid and at the same time the body is feared and a persistent matter of shame and embarrassment. We often feel helpless to control our body and we most certainly cannot abort the certain end of our physical existence. We have a limit and are ever limited. In fasting Jesus invites us, opens a door for us, to master the body, to understand it, to remember we are made in the image of God, and, most importantly our body can "walk in the spirit." Jesus offered the mastery of the body as the last of the three secrets because this one may only be mastered after gaining clarity of the spirit and soul. The body is the greatest challenge to master.

During Lent this year my hope is to offer a devotional based upon the three acts done in secret. In some ways this is the briefest part of the sermon on the mount (three teachings), but in other ways it is the most expansive as it includes a whole picture of life. Again, this part is very direct: give, pray, fast; yet, in another sense it can go anywhere if we see each direction as a door to enter. Hopefully the devotional will be ready by Ash Wednesday and can serve as a path of daily meditation.

# PICTURES OF THE PAST

Brenda Day

A few weeks ago, Rev. Ashley Bair called me to ask if I could help with a photo project she was about to tackle. In the youth closet, she had found years and years (and years) of pictures of youth events –meetings, social events, but mostly pictures from past youth mission trips. These photos dated all the way back to the early 1990’s, when Lucia Jackson, (the then Associate Pastor for Youth), began our mission trips.

Ashley and I met one morning to begin the process. It was one of those projects where you have no idea where to start. There were loose photos, photo albums, as well as large boards with pictures glued to them. Photos everywhere. The first thing we did was to remove all photos from the albums and start sorting them by year, and event, well, as best we could.

What a wonderful trip down memory lane this turned out to be for me. I started working at the church in 1983, so, while I didn’t recognize everyone, there were many youth and youth leaders that I did remember. I recalled the many faces of the children and teens who sang in the choirs who are now well into their 30’s; some now with their own children in the same choirs. Mixed in with the youth pictures were also pictures of past pageants and vacation bible schools.

These photos are a powerful reminder that the love shared with our children will carry our church forward, secure in the knowledge that our love, Christ’s love, will be passed on and grow in our children’s hearts.

The project isn’t nearly done. We desperately need those who have been a part of the life of this church to put names to the faces of those who have contributed to the over 300-year-

old foundation of Love on which we continue to build. “I Love to Tell the Story” is one of my favorite hymns and in that spirit, I hope that you will take just fifteen minutes to help with this project. You will be helping to tell the story of your children, friends and family by remembering them and bringing their acts of love to life. This will surely inspire those who will stand on your shoulders to continue the work of our church. Please contact Colleen Walker at [cwalker@fpcweb.org](mailto:cwalker@fpcweb.org) or call her at 732-491-2303.



FPC Carol Choir, 1972



# VOLUNTEER OPPORTUNITIES

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

**Community Dinner**

The Deacons are delighted to re-launch the free community dinners. All are welcome to join us for a home cooked meal. Dinners will be held in the Social Center at 5 pm. We look forward to seeing you there! Those interested in volunteering, please email [Gilly@mckie.com](mailto:Gilly@mckie.com) or call the church office for further information.

Feb 10 - Kitchen Orientation

March 2 - Community Dinner Relaunch

**Prayer Shawl Ministry**

The prayer shawl ministry continues to bring comfort to those facing difficulties or illness. We need knitters and crocheters to make more beautiful prayer shawls. If you would like to help, please contact the church office for more information 732-491-2300

**Historic Church Documents**

There is an amazing collection of old documents about the church's history that need loving attention. To help organize them and determine the best way to store them, please contact Heather Koball in the church office at [hkoball@fpcweb.org](mailto:hkoball@fpcweb.org), 732-491-2268

**Save Your Stuff for the Spring Rummage Sale**

The Presbyterian Women are looking forward to the Rummage Sale this spring! Start setting aside your gently used clothing, books ,CDs, and household items. And keep an eye out for Sale details, coming soon!

**Help Identify Congregants in Church Photos**

In this Parish News, Brenda Day writes about the extensive collection of old photographs that she and Rev. Bair have been organizing. We need help identifying people in some of the photos. Please contact Colleen Walker at [cwalker@fpcweb.org](mailto:cwalker@fpcweb.org) or call her at 732-491-2303 to help out!

**Flash Food Drive**

On February 3, please bring your donated food items to help refill the Food Pantry during this critically low period of the year. The time is TBD.

**Soup-Making for the Choir**

The choir will be hosting a soup sale after worship on Sunday, February 4. If you are interested in making a batch of soup, email Laura Draper, [lauracubbage@gmail.com](mailto:lauracubbage@gmail.com)

**Presbyterian Women Coordinating Team**

The Presbyterian Women have an open volunteer position on the PW Coordinating Team for a recording secretary, taking minutes when PW meets once per month. Bring your talents and be in-the-know as a member of the PW Team.

**Easter Flowers**

Celebrate the glory of Easter by helping us decorate with your choice of flowers in honor of your loved ones. Names of those remembered and donors will be listed in the Easter worship bulletin. Make checks payable to First Presbyterian Church with note: *Easter Plants*.

**Send the form and payment to the Church office by Monday, March 18th.**

Your Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Phone/Email: \_\_\_\_\_

**For Bulletin Listing of Donors (Please print)**

**Given by:** \_\_\_\_\_

**In Memory of:** \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

**In Honor of:** \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

**In Gratitude:** \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

**Write your order for each plant choice.**

White Lilies  Yellow Tulips  Pink Tulips

**Total number of plants @ \$8.50 each** \_\_\_\_\_

Pick up flowers after the Easter service

Leave flower for Deacons to deliver.

# UPCOMING EVENTS

## JANUARY

### 15: Community Nursery School Open House

10AM-12PM CNS

Come see all that CNS has to offer for children ages 2-5. Early Bird discounts for those who sign up early for 2024-2025 school year.

### 24: Lunch and Games

12-3PM, Social Center Dining Room

The Deacons are hosting an afternoon of lunch and games on the fourth Wednesday of the month. Everyone is invited to bring a brown bag lunch, including a beverage. If you have a favorite game (or a deck of cards) bring it along. Games will also be available to share. If you are interested, please call Sue West, 732-556-7511. (Or, if you forget to call, come anyway!) If you would like to come, but need a ride, please call, we have volunteers willing to drive others.

### 22: Men's Breakfast

7:30 AM, Dining Room

### 27: Tacos and Trivia Night

7PM, Social Center

Try your hand at a game of trivia, enjoy a taco bar, and put your guacamole recipe to the test with a guac contest! BYOB! Tickets are \$15 to support the 2024 Choir Tour.

## FEBRUARY

### 3: Youth Day of Service

9AM-1PM, Social Center

A morning fill of service and community

### 3: Flash Food Drive

TBD, Social Center

A one hour drive-up food blitz to refill the Food Pantry during a critically low period of the year.

### 11: Have Tea Served by the Girl Scouts

After Worship, Social Center Auditorium

Join us after worship for an elaborate Coffee Hour, hosted by PW, and served by the Girl Scouts.

### 18: Lent in Plain Sight

After Worship, Chapel

A daily devotional for Lent led by Helen Burr-Cackowski and Amy Bertelsen-Robles. The class meets Sundays during Lent.

### 18: Blood Drive

9AM-2PM, Social Center Auditorium

Come give in Feb. for a \$20 Amazon.com Gift Card. See [rcblood.org/heart](http://rcblood.org/heart) There will be about 35 appointment slots. The schedule is open and ready for scheduling.

### 21: Lenten Bible Study

Wednesdays, 7PM PW Lounge

Pastor Garry will host a Bible Study during Lent called, In Secret: The Three Great Disciplines. Books for the study will be available on Ash Wednesday.

### 26: Men's Breakfast

7:30 AM, Dining Room

### 25: Pour and Paint

6-8PM, Social Center

A night of fellowship for moms to paint and enjoy wine/cheese (byow- bring your own wine - per church policy). Supplies provided by the Christian Education office.



Pour and Paint, 2023

## MARCH

### 3: Community Dinner

5PM, Social Center

The Deacons are delighted to re-launch our free community dinners. All are welcome to enjoy a home cooked meal and gather in community fellowship. Dinners will be held monthly. We look forward to seeing you there!

### 19: Men's Breakfast

7:30 AM, Dining Room

### 31: Easter Egg Hunt

Easter morning, Social Center Field

# LENTEN CALENDAR

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## FEBRUARY

### **14: Ash Wednesday Service**

*7:30PM in the Sanctuary*

### **28: Lenten Concert Series**

*Noon in the Sanctuary*

Brenda Day, organ

## MARCH

### **6: Lenten Concert Series**

*Noon in the Sanctuary*

Victoria Borrelli, mezzo-soprano

### **13: Lenten Concert Series**

*Noon in the Sanctuary*

Jordan Klotz, tenor

### **17: Cardigan Service**

*9:30 in the Sanctuary*

Join us in honoring Mr. Rogers Day by wearing a cardigan to worship.

### **20: Lenten Concert Series**

*Noon in the Sanctuary*

Nancy Scharff, singer-songwriter and guitarist

### **24: Palm Sunday & One Church Together, One Great Hour of Sharing**

*9:30 in the Sanctuary*

An intergenerational worship service with a procession of palms at the beginning of Holy Week and a collection to help our neighbors around the world.

### **27: Lenten Concert Series**

*Noon in the Sanctuary*

Edison High School Choirs

### **28: Maundy Thursday Service**

*7:30PM in the Sanctuary*

### **31: Easter Sunrise Service**

*7AM in the Cemetery*

### **31: Easter Sunday Worship**

*9:30 in the Sanctuary*



## LENT 2024 PARISH NEWS

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

NONPROFIT ORGANIZATION  
US POSTAGE PAID  
NEW BRUNSWICK, NJ  
PERMIT 746

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TO:

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### 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](mailto: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](mailto: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](mailto:fpc@fpcweb.org)

### Sunday Worship Service 9:30 am

Online Sunday Morning Worship 9:30 am

Livestreamed on FPC Metuchen Facebook