

# PARISH NEWS

THE NEWSLETTER OF FIRST PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH OF METUCHEN, NJ



Jason Wolver and Jim Thompson built this Ebenezer along the Lake Placid Trail, NY, to honor loved ones affected by Alzheimer's disease. They hiked 140 miles to raise funds for Alzheimer's research. Initially, the hike was to honor Jason's and Jen Thompson's mother, Elaine Luther, but it soon expanded to all impacted by the disease.

## **THE BEAUTY OF GENEROSITY**

REFLECTIONS ON THE MALAWI MISSION TRIP  
REDEFINING THE BAPTISMAL TRADITION  
COSMIC BEAUTY

## **ALSO IN THIS ISSUE**

SIGN UP FOR THE CHRISTMAS PAGEANT AND PARENTS' NIGHT OUT  
ORDER YOUR CHRISTMAS POINSETTIAS AND VOTIVES

# MALAWI'S WARM EMBRACE

Jen Edge and Sarah Teti

Landing in a foreign country is always a wild experience. Everything smells different, the light hits different, and the sounds... oh the sounds! Landing in Malawi is all of that plus some! After many many hours of flight travel you find yourself in a VIP lounge at the Malawi airport, your head spinning. That is, until you meet Sam. The Honorable Sam Chirwa, a first term elected member of the Malawian Parliament. His district is one of 193 constituencies in Malawi, each constituency representing about 40-50,000 people. By the sheer number of phone calls Sam fields each day we think that each of them has his contact information. He is always accessible to the people he serves, talking to everyone wherever we went. He greeted us for the first time with smiles and hugs helping any worry fade and was replaced with excitement for what this trip would reveal.

During our ten days in Malawi, we visited many villages with finished and ongoing projects. In Mchengautuba, in Mzuzu, a city in the north, we saw the magnificent church and school that Pastor Fred's Watertown congregation helped to build over the past twenty years. In Bandawe, we worshiped in Thipula church where, despite the dilapidated roof and ceiling, the congregation sang with joyous voices of their gratefulness of God's grace and their thankfulness of a visit from Mzungus (white folks) to their village church. In Mbowe, we watched the women who live in the Widow's Fund village sew together and share fellowship in an area built only for them with the help of church funds from the US. All of these projects would not be possible without Sam's leadership, the General Secretary of their region, and the US donors from Presbyterian Congregations like ours and the congregation in Watertown. And yes, Pastor



Mchengautuba congregation choir

(Left to right)  
Sam Chirwa,  
MP; Jen Edge,  
co-lead of FPC  
Deacons; and  
Sarah Teti,  
Director of the  
FPC food  
pantry at  
Elephant Rock,  
Malawi



Garry IS a celebrity there, and witnessing his impact and collaboration over the years and what has been accomplished, you can see why.

Leading many congregational trips to Malawi, Pastor Garry has ignited the productive spirit of the people in this region over the past twenty years by bringing together people whose purposeful collaboration and aligned goals have helped to bring about successes and support for people in need. A constant message from our visits was the clear resiliency, industriousness, and commitment to community that was evident in all the successful projects. Trust and friendship are essential to the successes of this work, built through visits, and handshakes and often, singing and dancing.

Surrounded by the energy and hopefulness of the women of the Widow's fund project was inspiring. The partnership has grown from initially helping to put iron sheets on a hovel for a widow to building them a beautiful house where they can thrive. Through the long-standing partnerships, the women in this community support one another as they sew, strengthen their community, and support their surrounding villages. The women work to sew for the PantiPlus project which provides much needed menstrual supplies to women and girls in the surrounding community. Without access to these supplies, girls cannot regularly attend school. The benefit of seeing these projects in person, is difficult to put into words. But playing even a small role in the support of people's self-determination is inspiring.

The first village we visited was Mzimba Luwerezi, the village where Sam grew up. We were the first Americans to ever drive out the long, bumpy dirt road to meet them. We were welcomed with



## MALAWI'S WARM EMBRACE (CONT.)

song, dance, and many celebratory speeches. The excitement was palpable as the chiefs of these villages looked to us to take them to the next step in their prosperity as a region. Each group of villages essentially needs three things to prosper and support their people. A clinic, a school, and a church. The villages can build a clinic, but to staff it, they must build two houses for their nurses to live in. Once there are two houses for nurses to live in, the government will send the nurses to open the clinic. The same goes for teachers for the school. Once the village has built two houses for two teachers, the government will send two teachers to work in the school. Lastly, the church needs a home for the reverend. Each house costs about \$12000 US Dollars to build. All of these projects are built collaboratively. Each village in the surrounding area contributed bricks for the project. We toured the area and could see the bricks ready and waiting on the additional capital needed for the cement. The people of Mzimba Luwerezhi have built their clinic and one nurse's house. Once they complete the second house, they will open the clinic. Right now, the 20,000 men women and children who live there have to walk two hours to reach the nearest hospital. A woman in labor cannot deliver safely in a hospital without traveling by foot for two hours, as there are no ambulances and most villagers do not have cars. The health and wellness this clinic will bring to the people in this region is immeasurable.

This project revealed itself to us slowly during our trip. Mzimba Luwerezhi was the first and last stop on our trip and it's clear why. Sam wants to bring his village, his home village, the prosperity and success of the other villages helped in years past. By the end of our trip, it was clear that we were the right people to help!

We would like to see the FPC Metuchen congregation take on this task. We would like to see our congregation of friendly enthusiastic Presbyterians visit Mzimba Luwerezhi this coming July. Our prayer is that this visit will be a ribbon cutting for their new clinic! We hope that when you meet Sam Chirwa in February, you can understand a bit of why he's come and what he brings to us. A trusted friend and official from a country who needs our help. The Malawian people showed us why their country is called the warm heart of Africa.



Top: Villagers at Mzimba Luwerezhi  
Bottom Left: Rev Fred gives a speech at Mzimba Luwerezhi  
Below: Villagers with Sam Chirwa, MP at Mzimba Luwerezhi



# REDEFINING TRADITIONS: EMBRACING GENEROSITY IN FAITH

Reverend Fred Garry and Lori Kellner

*Written by Reverend Fred Garry*

Many years ago I stopped offering pre-marital counseling. Couples have categorically been relieved when I say I do not offer it nor do I require it. I say to them, I am here to help with your wedding service. What happens in your marriage is up to you and the wedding ceremony has little if anything to do with the likely success or failure of your marriage vows.

The only pushback I have received from this has been from clergy. Essentially their concern is that the pastor is to approve, to guide, to define marriage for couples and I am not providing quality assurance. Pastors in weddings are there to ensure that what is happening is not only bona fide, but a solemn act before God and of God.

Knowing the sacramental history of marriage helps. The sacrament of marriage is performed by the couple (only they are getting married). The clergy historically have been there as an aid not as a judge. The only thing I am there to give is a blessing. There is nothing else I can or should do. Any other requirement on my part is for me. Any attempt to examine or the meeting of a requirement by the couple so to marry is an unnecessary burden.

For many years I have felt the same regarding infant baptism. The parents who express a desire to have their child baptized are told to wait for the next new members class and once approved in membership then a date can be set for their child. As long as I have been a pastor, I have heard the arguments: we take a vow for the children, the parents need to be serious about their commitment to bring the child to church once baptized.

And some do bring their children to Sunday School. Some of the children we baptize are later confirmed and become members. This is a lovely moment. Yet by in large families often move or simply don't attend once the child is baptized or they might attend only on Christmas and Easter. By requiring church membership of parents prior to infant baptism we create a requirement where there is little to no follow up.

This has bothered me for quite some time. Yet, unlike pre-marital counseling, what is required of pre-baptism is not up to me. This is a matter of church polity and tradition. As such I do not believe it is my place as the pastor to change the practice of the congregation. Metuchen First Presbyterian Church was in operation for 300 years before I arrived and all that time without my policy perspectives. If FPC Metuchen wants to require membership before infant baptism so be it.

This has been the policy until last month. Last month at the session meeting the elders voted to change the practice of the church. If someone wants to have their child baptized, great. If someone wants to join the church, great. But no longer will these be tied together, one a requirement of the other. This is a beautiful moment of generosity. No fence around the fount. What is even better for me is that I had no hand in it. I didn't write the new policy, nor did I call for it be written.

*Written by Lori Kellner, Session Member*

The Session of FPC Metuchen believes that, above all, we shall be guided by scripture. Jesus said, "Let the little children come to me, and do not hinder them, for the kingdom of heaven belongs to such as these."

Guided by the words of Jesus in Matthew 19:14, and in the spirit of welcoming all, we as a Church, have been guided by section W-3.03.02 in the Book of Order to view the sacrament of Baptism as an expression of God's gift of grace. It allows us to become one with Christ. We embrace the belief that, "in Christ, barriers of race, status, and gender are overcome; we are called to seek reconciliation in the Church and world, in Jesus' name".

It is by the guiding principles in scripture and God's grace that we choose to interpret the word "should" in the W-3.04.03 statement regarding parental church membership in the Book of Order as a recommendation, not a requirement for the baptism of minors. No child should have a barrier to Christ's love. If a non-member seeks baptism



## REDEFINING TRADITIONS (CONT)

for their child, we will strongly encourage them to join our congregation of believers, but we will also welcome them as non-members. We see this as an opportunity to reach out and share the gift of God's love and grace. We are also mindful that there is no membership requirement to take part in the sacrament of Holy Communion. Our table is open to all.

This is a great moment of grace. This is a beautiful moment of generosity.



## COSMIC BEAUTY: FROM ST. AUGUSTINE TO THE COMMUNITY GARDEN

Leksmana Leonard

One of the oldest sources of aesthetic theology is St. Augustine of Hippo, a church father from the 4th century. He said that theological beauty is created when human free will can be in harmony with the will of the Heavenly Father. In other words, beauty, according to Augustine, is harmony. This paradigm, at least, is close to how Indonesians understand beauty.

Ancient Indonesian literature does not mention explicit descriptions of beauty, but harmony is always an emphasis and a noble value. Plurality and differences in culture, race, climate, soil texture, farming techniques, and social life require Indonesian people to embrace diversity, and harmony is one of the terms that often appear in our local wisdom. In eating etiquette, for example, my ethnic group, Sundanese, believes in not completely eating our whole meal on the plate. We spare some of the food and throw it on the ground. The purpose is for other creatures also to enjoy the blessings we receive from God. "Give us this day our daily bread" and share it with ants, soil, and plants so that other creations can enjoy the bread we receive this day.

For some cultures, cosmology is a way to understand their origins, but for Indonesians, it is a way of life. Because they are geographically vulnerable to natural disasters, Indonesians need cosmic awareness. Attunement to the movement

of the universe through animal migration, drastic climate changes, and land fluctuations are signs that need to be aware of to avoid various natural disasters. So, living in Indonesia, we need always to be connected to the universe's movement.

So far, beauty can be summed up into three. First, beauty is always relational. Harmony can only be found in a relationship between creations where difference is not a threat but a potential beauty. Second, beauty is always performative. It requires an effort to make it happen. Third, beauty is never final because it is performative in its very nature. Beauty is an ongoing process that is open-ended, just like everyday life. In other words, Indonesians interpret beauty as not a great work of art or a magnum opus but a lifestyle.

Here, this kind of beauty might be performed at FPC Metuchen through the Community Garden and the Food Pantry. We compost our food waste at home and take it to the Community Garden. The compost will fertilize the soil and help plants bear fruit with optimal nutrition. Then, the vegetables (or fruits) produced from the Community Garden are distributed to the Food Pantry for those in need. Isn't all of this beautiful?

I tried a cucumber from the Food Pantry once, and it tasted of cosmic beauty.

# ONE STITCH AT A TIME: PRAYERS FOR OTHERS

Jennifer Thompson

Once each month, FPC's Prayer Shawl Circle meets to continue a longstanding tradition of our church - creating prayer shawls for members in our congregation and community. Prayer shawls are made from simple materials, just yarn and either knitting needles or crochet hooks. The time required to create each shawl varies, but all shawls require many hours of knitting or crocheting to complete.

The mission of our Prayer Shawl Circle is beautifully worded by Janet Bristow, one of the creators of the Prayer Shawl Instructions we follow. She shares, "The making of a prayer shawl is a spiritual practice which embodies our thoughts and prayers for the receiver. It is a gift freely given with no strings attached. Made in prayer, as prayer, for prayer, the shawls are passed hand-to-hand and heart-to-heart."

The number of participants who meet each month ranges from three to ten, with others creating shawls at home and donating them once they are finished. We all agree that the time spent together, chatting and creating the shawls, is cherished. It gives us a time to slow down, reconnect and share our gifts with others.

FPC's Prayer Shawl Circle is open to knitters and crocheters of all ages and ability levels- including beginners. Please contact either Jennifer Thompson or Gilly McKie if you have any questions or would like to join or contribute in other ways to our mission.

This is the prayer we read together to begin our monthly meeting. It reminds us of our intentions - to bring prayer, love and healing to all who receive our handmade shawls - and to thank God, who is always good.

## Prayer Shawl Circle Prayer

(Prayer adapted from "Beginning to Knit Meditation" by Janet Bristow)

*Creator God, I ask a blessing from all who have come before me, whose hands have been instruments of creation and beauty;*

*who have picked up humble tools and homespun wool in order to provide cover and warmth for themselves and those they loved;*

*who have felt, as I will feel, the yarn in their fingers; who have seen, as I will see, the growth of the fabric; who have heard, as I will hear, the click of the needles and sliding over the hook.*

*Bless this yarn and these hooks and needles. May this shawl be a sign of your healing presence:*

*May it warm those who are weary, surround those who suffer and encircle those who are in pain.*

*May your gentle touch reach out to heal in the light of Christ. Amen.*

# SPREADING GENEROSITY: THE JOURNEY OF OUR MOBILE FOOD PANTRY

Tom Giordano

Our church has always had a strong presence in supplying food to people in need. I have volunteered at the food pantry for many years. I've seen so many people with serious food insecurities. As the years have gone by and our economic world has changed there are many more families and individuals coming to our pantry.

I wanted to do more. Sarah Teti, Director of Local

Mission, came up with the idea for a traveling food pantry popup to reach folks who can't get to our pantry very easily. We started a program to reach out to places where people have limited resources. We set up a day and time to go there with perishable and non-perishable items. We set up a minimart where folks can shop just like in our food pantry!

What I found were people who have seen hard times. Many of them can only walk to the corner



## SPREADING GENEROSITY (CONT)

store that has limited items. They are so thankful that now they can choose from fresh produce and a larger selection of non-perishable items. Besides being thankful for the food, they were happy to have someone to talk with and share their stories. Little did I know how much I would receive back from these people. I look forward to

seeing these popup families and share my stories with them too!

Our church has been able to not only feed these people but also lift their spirits by allowing them to share their stories with someone who is willing to spend time with them and listen.



Right: Tom Giordano, at the food pantry

Left: Food ready to be distributed through the pop-up pantry



## GENEROSITY, GRATITUDE, AND GRACE: A NOTE FROM THE 2025 STEWARDSHIP TEAM

Think about how our generosity really affects each one of us. Every time we reach out to support our church family, we receive far more than we give. Powerful ministries range from the community dinners that bring diverse community members to break bread together, the music programs that brings people to our church to be uplifted through joyful music and singing, to our elder care initiative with the Deacons to the youth programs which attract young folks to our programs whether their parents are members or not and the list goes on.

“Pay it forward” became a popular slogan a while ago. Let’s not forget about the energy each gesture of kindness and giving creates as it spreads from person to person to the next. That’s what your annual, pledge does = in support our church. Being grateful is a frame of mind that helps us focus on what is important to each of us- to the people we love- and not the stuff that is replaceable.

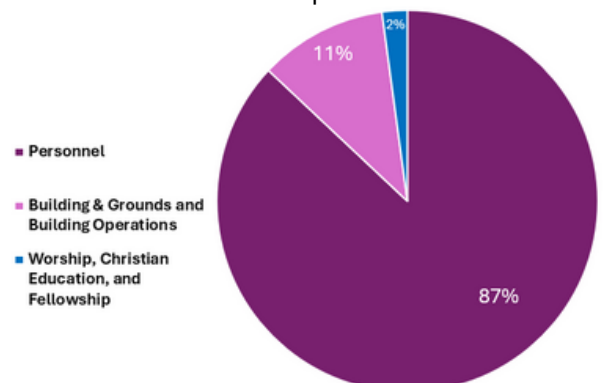
We often think of “grace” as an adjective that describes how someone moves, like a dancer with power and surety. But what grace really defines is how we live life’s purpose each day., Grace impacts every relationship we have. When

we develop grace, we are acting from our hearts without judgement or requirements to earn our love., We accept what makes us different or similar and honor these attributes and lift each other up.

Trend in FPC Pledges since 2021

Year	# of pledges	Total pledges	Avg. pledge
2024	166	\$419,056	\$2,524
2023	169	\$417,566	\$2,471
2022	185	\$452,568	\$2,446
2021	187	\$444,943	\$2,379

Expenses in 2024



# INCLUSION IS BEAUTIFUL

Mike Draper

Inclusion is beautiful. And generous of heart and spirit.

In fact, loving and embracing someone because of who they are (and not in spite of it) is one of the truest examples of the beauty of generosity. When FPC updated the Church's Mission and Vision statements, it put a spotlight for me on a variety of Bible verses that speak to inclusion as a bedrock of Jesus' love. One is Galatians 3:28: "There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is no male and female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus." It reminded me that FPC is a sanctuary of love for all in the name of Jesus.

While FPC has just begun this journey of discovering what inclusion is and can be, we have already begun to create programming that directly points to this verse: programs that love and embrace and care and hopefully create hope.

The first program the Social Justice Committee, in partnership with the Presbyterian Queer Fellowship, hosted a Gender-Affirming Closet run

by a local organization called OutFront Metuchen ([outfrontmetuchen.org](http://outfrontmetuchen.org)) focused on "uniting and empowering the LGBTQIA+ community in Metuchen". This was a "welcoming, inclusive event for LGBTQIA+ youth and allies to find free clothing, shoes, and accessories that empower their authentic selves." We valued welcoming the community to our space of love.

The second program happens on Sunday, November 24th at a Second Hour Forum in the Chapel following Church, the Social Justice Committee is blessed and honored to have Amy Bertelsen-Robles and Javier Robles speak about disability awareness, social justice and equity issues for individuals with disabilities, and ableism. Ableism is a form of discrimination that favors able-bodied people, and it often goes unaddressed in our society. It permeates various aspects of life, from public spaces that lack accessibility to stereotypes that limit opportunities for people with disabilities. Amy and Javier will discuss ways that we can confront ableism and advocate for a world where all individuals are valued and included. Please join us and share your love and support.

## SHARE YOUR TALENTS WITH THE COMMUNITY NURSERY SCHOOL!

Community Nursery School would love to welcome volunteers from the congregation to share their talents with the students. Talents can include reading a favorite story, cooking a small treat, making a simple craft, singing songs, playing a game or sport, doing a simple science experiment, teaching the students a foreign language or anything else that would be appropriate for 3-5-year-old children. Please reach out to CNS director Stacy Ambriz ([cns@fpcweb.org](mailto:cns@fpcweb.org)) with any questions or to set up a time to come in and share your talents.





# GENEROSITY IN ACTION: SUPPORTING KENTINE AND NAHUM THROUGH WORLD VISION

Nancy Leardi

In Sunday School, our children are embracing the spirit of giving by supporting our World Vision child, Kentine, from Burundi. Over the past 12 years, we've witnessed her growth; at 15, she is thriving thanks to our contributions, which this year provided her with clothing and school supplies. Kentine shares her gratitude through letters, expressing how special it feels to celebrate her birthday with others and her commitment to caring for fellow children. Join us in celebrating Kentine's journey and the Sunday schools children's learning of generosity!

The FPC Deacons support Nahum. He is 9 years old and living in El Salvador. Nahum is in 3rd grade, attends school and community workshops. Our support pays for his clothing and food. We rejoice in hearing of his growth and love for school.



To contribute to our World Vision Sponsorship of Kentine or Nahum, use this link <https://bit.ly/4hLmIYR> and type "Kentine or Nahum" in the Miscellaneous line, or write a check to First Presbyterian Church of Metuchen with "World Vision Child" in the memo.

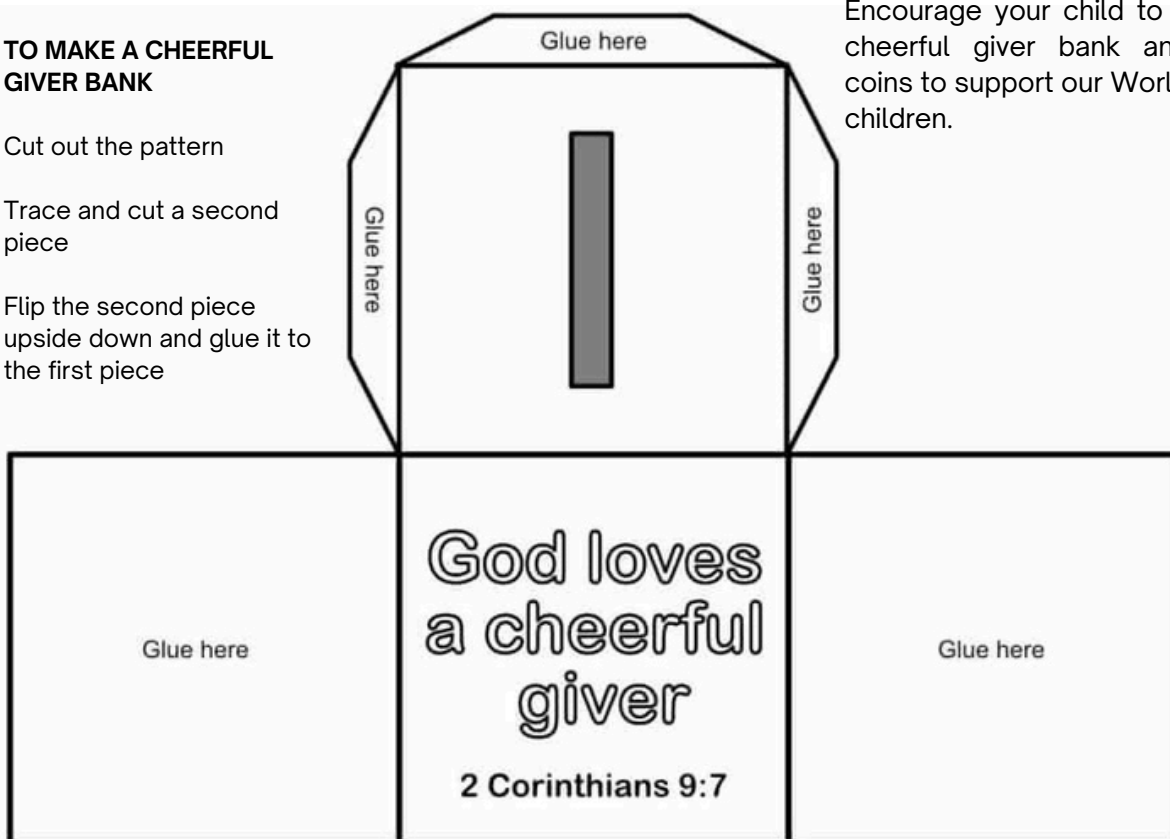
We encourage our children and youth to give their own offerings. Children giving envelopes are available outside the GLOW room or at the Christian Education office. Donations in these envelopes fund Kentine. Encourage your child to make a cheerful giver bank and save coins to support our World Vision children.

## TO MAKE A CHEERFUL GIVER BANK

Cut out the pattern

Trace and cut a second piece

Flip the second piece upside down and glue it to the first piece



# CANDLES AND GENEROSITY?

Jordan Klotz

We are taught that we reap what we sow, and that we get what we give away. In Paul's Second Letter to the Corinthians, he writes, "the one who sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and the one who sows bountifully will also reap bountifully," but what, exactly, should I be giving away? What can I offer to a world filled with anxiety, trepidation, and hopelessness?

On November 22, 1963, famed conductor Leonard Bernstein, Music Director of the New York Philharmonic, began his otherwise normal day in a meeting with a large group of staff. When commotion in the next room grew too loud to ignore, they learned that President John F. Kennedy had been fatally shot in Dallas, Texas.

Days later, Bernstein addressed the tragedy in a speech given to nearly 18,000 at Madison Square Garden,

"We musicians, like everyone else, are numb with sorrow at this murder, and with rage at the senselessness of the crime. But this sorrow and rage will not inflame us to seek retribution; rather they will inflame our art. Our music will never again be quite the same. This will be our reply to violence: to make music more intensely, more beautifully, more devotedly than ever before."

**"This will be our reply to violence:  
to make music more intensely,  
more beautifully, more devotedly  
than ever before."**

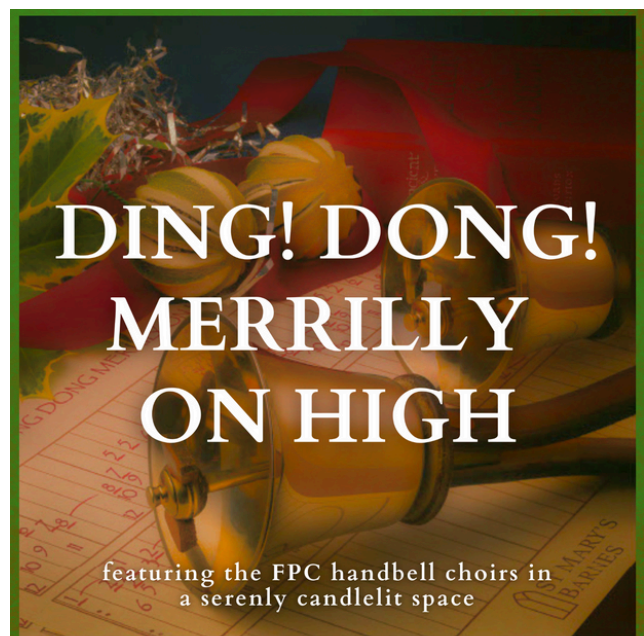
Bernstein's proposition that music is the answer to meet the moment could be accused of naivete. The inner literature-lover in me can't help but take this and draw a connection to Fyodor Dostoevsky's novel, *The Idiot*. Dostoevsky's protagonist, Prince Myshkin, says, "Beauty will save the world," a statement that helps justify the general consensus that Myshkin is naive, foolish, and childishly innocent.

I refuse, however, to accept the notion that the redeeming power of beauty is any less real than the violence and despair that we see all around us.

## **"Beauty will save the world."**

Perhaps it is naive and foolish to suggest that the Music Ministry's new Candlelight Concert Series can offer healing beauty, healing beauty that can have a real impact on people's lives. In a time of division and disagreement, what good are candles to people who have big concerns and big feelings?

We each need moments of respite, rest, and relief. We each are fed by beauty. I hope that our unique presentation of a calm, candlelit space, where people can leave their worries at the door and find a moment of peace, will take a note from Mr. Bernstein and Prince Myshkin. I hope that, in these concerts, we will be generous in offering beauty. I hope that we will sow and reap beauty, and that the world will be made better for it.



**Sunday, December 1 | 7:00 PM**

*The concert will follow the Metuchen Winter Festival's Tree Lighting on the Plaza*

**Suggested Donation:**

\$22/adults | \$18/seniors | 17/under FREE



# ADVENT & CHRISTMAS WORSHIP

**Sunday, December 1 | 9:30 AM**

First Sunday of Advent

**Sunday, December 1 | 7:00 PM**

Candlelight Concert Series:

Ding! Dong! Merrily on High

**Sunday, December 8 | 9:30 AM**

One Church Together Intergenerational Worship

Second Sunday of Advent

**Sunday, December 22 | 9:30 AM**

Festival of Nine Lessons & Carols

Fourth Sunday of Advent

**Tuesday, December 24 | 5:00 PM**

Christmas Eve Worship

with Christmas Pageant

**Tuesday, December 24 | 11:00 PM**

Christmas Eve Worship

Candlelight Service





# UPCOMING EVENTS

## NOVEMBER

### 24. Second Hour Forum on Disability Awareness and Advocacy

Chapel, 10:30AM

Presentation by Amy Bertelsen-Robles and Javier Robles

### 25. Thanksgiving Basket Packing for Food Pantry Clients

Social Center, 7PM

### 30. Hanging the Greens

Sanctuary, 10AM

## DECEMBER

### 1, 8, 15. Advent Study: Beguiled by Beauty

Chapel, 10:30AM

Approaching life from the perspective of beauty

### 7. Holly Fair

Social Center, 9AM

### 8. Community Dinner

Social Center, 5PM

Join us for a delicious home-cooked meal. Invite a friend, all are welcome!

### 11. Men's Breakfast

Social Center, 7:30AM

### 12. Holiday Bazaar for Food Pantry Clients

Social Center, 7:00AM

### 14. Indonesian Fellowship Christmas Party

Social Center

### 18. Deacons Lunch and Games

Social Center, Noon-3PM. All are welcome!

### 18. Prayer Shawl Knitting and Crocheting Circle

Session Room, 7-8:30PM. Beginners to experts are welcome!

## ONLINE CHURCH CALENDAR

<https://fpcweb.org/resources/events/calendar/>

Stay up to date on all church activities! Scan the QR code or click the link above to visit the online church calendar.



## SIGN UP FOR CHRISTMAS FUN!

First Presbyterian Church of Metuchen  
270 Woodbridge Ave. Metuchen, NJ 08840



**Kids Night Out = Parents' Night Out**

For kids 3 years and older \*  
**Friday, December 6<sup>th</sup>**  
5:30 to 7:00 p.m.  
Room 109 of the Education Bldg.

\*Registration required

Dine or shop without the wine! Have a relaxing evening knowing your kids are in a fun, safe and supervised place. Our Presbyterian Youth and Presbyterian Young Women (PYW) are offering this babysitting event as a fundraiser for their activities. A night of games, music, and just a fun time for all kids is being planned!

Requested donation  
**\$10.00**  
Per child  
Includes pizza, fun and games

Please RSVP if you think this maybe something your children would attend. Contact Christian Ed. Director Nancy Leardi:  
Email [nleardi@fpcweb.org](mailto:nleardi@fpcweb.org) | Call (732) 491-2264

First Presbyterian Church of Metuchen



**Christmas Pageant**  
December 24, 2024 at 5:00 p.m.

Sign up for the Christmas Pageant! Scan the QR code

- Children must be at least 4 years old by 10/1/24.
- Children must attend the rehearsals on Dec 1, 8, and 15, after church, and the dress rehearsal Dec 19 at 4:15PM.
- Adult volunteers needed as well!

Questions? Email [fpcpageant@fpcweb.org](mailto:fpcpageant@fpcweb.org)



## OPPORTUNITIES TO GIVE

Advent marks the "New Year" of the Christian calendar. It's a season of generosity, where we share our gifts, hospitality, time, and love.



### IT'S EASY TO BE AN ANGEL



Beginning on November 24, select an Angel from the tree in Room 109 (moving to the Narthex on Dec 1).

Return the requested gift(s) under the Advent Angel Tree no later than **Dec 15, 9:30AM**. Gifts may be wrapped or placed in gift bags.

SECURELY attach the Advent Angel to the gift. Our Deacons will deliver the gifts in time for Christmas.

If you have any questions, please call or text: Mary Ann Eide (714)-812-1934



Help make FPC's 9th annual participation in the Jersey Cares Coat Drive a success! Please donate gently-used and new winter coats for adults, children, and infants in all sizes. **CLEAN JACKETS ONLY**. Other winter accessories are not being collected. You may drop off during office hours: Monday - Thursday 9AM-2PM until January 10.

Volunteers are also needed to help sort coats. Stay tuned for details about this. Questions? Please call NJ Cares at 973-533-1993 or email: [coatdrive@jerseycares.org](mailto:coatdrive@jerseycares.org)

## CELEBRATING GENEROSITY AT FPC

We are lucky to be part of such a generous church! Here are some recent highlights

- October: Collected \$2,015 on World Communion Sunday. 25% will go to the Alliance Center for Independence in Edison, NJ, an organization that helps people with disabilities live independently. The rest goes to the Presbytery and the Presbyterian Mission Agency.
- November: Served free homemade meals to nearly 200 people during the monthly Community Dinner. The numbers of attendees grows every month!
- Holidays: We expect to pack food baskets for 150 families during both Thanksgiving and Christmas. Monthly, we pack over 200 sandwiches for people experiencing homelessness and serve about 450 people at our food pantry, also providing financial assistance to those at risk of homelessness.
- Mission Commission: Contributing to PantiPlus, as described on page 2 in the article about the mission trip to Malawi.

Thank you to everyone who contributes to making a difference in our community!

## 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 22. 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 9th**.

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.

## VOTIVE ORDER FORM

Celebrate the wonder of Christmas! On Christmas Eve, we'll decorate our church steps and walkways with paper luminaries and votive candles. They will beautifully welcome everyone attending the services and shine through the night. ***Proceeds from the sale of luminaries will help fund the Deacon ministries.***

Names of those remembered and donors will be listed in worship bulletins on December 24, 11PM service.

Make checks payable to First Presbyterian Church with note: Votive.

Send the form and payment to the Church office by **Monday, December 9th**.

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

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

For Bulletin Listing of Donors (Please print)

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

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

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

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

Number of plants@ \$5 each \_\_\_\_\_

Total Amount Enclosed:\$ \_\_\_\_\_

( ) Please indicate if you wish to take your luminary home after Christmas Eve services.



## CHURCH STAFF

### First Presbyterian Church Metuchen (11/17/2024)

#### CLERGY

**Rev. Dr. Fred Garry** ..... 732-491-2330

Senior Pastor/Head of Staff .. fgarry@fpcweb.org

**Rev. Khayla Johnson** ..... 732-491-2302

Associate Pastor . . . . . kjohnson@fpcweb.org

**Rev. Dr. Glory Thomas**, Parish Associate

**Rev. Leksmana Leonard**, Intern Pastor

**Rev. Robert A. Beringer**, Pastor Emeritus

#### CHRISTIAN EDUCATION

**Nancy Leardi** ..... 732-491-2264

Director Christian Ed. .... nleardi@fpcweb.org

**Kat Davis** ..... katdavis@gmail.com

Christian Education Production Leader

#### MUSIC MINISTRY

**Jordan Klotz** ..... 732-491-2266

Director of Music Ministries. . jklotz@fpcweb.org

**Elaine Hansen** . . . . . hansenelaine06@gmail.com

Assistant Bell Director and Accompanist

**Brenda A. Day**, Minister of Music Emeritus

#### SUPPORT STAFF

**Heather Koball** ..... 732-491-2268

Exec. Director of Mission and Operations

..... hkoball@fpcweb.org

**Colleen Walker** . . . . . 732-491-2303

Treasurer . . . . . cwalker@fpcweb.org

**Jonathan Hollenbeck** . . . . . 732-491-2270

Facilities Manager . . . . jhollenbeck@fpcweb.org

**Bob O'Connell** . . . . . 732-491-2270

Facilities Assistant . . b oconnell@fpcweb.org

**Vicky Lacson** ..... 732-491-2301

Administrative & Communications Coordinator

..... vlacson@fpcweb.org

**Nate Brown** . . . . . 732-347-9951

Technical & 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 . . . . . cns@fpcweb.org

**Vacant** ..... 732-491-2242

Assistant Director

## UNICAMERAL BOARD

*Unicameral Board meets the 2nd Tuesday of each month at 7:30 p.m.*

Moderator: Rev. Dr. Fred G. Garry

Clerk of Session: Paul D. Gunsser

President of the Board of Trustees: Lori Kellner

Vice President/Secretary of the Board of Trustees: Bob Rosko

#### Class 2025

Helen Burr-Cackowski  
Mary Kay Dangremond  
Russ Dickow  
Mike Draper  
Lori Kellner  
Tracy Regan

#### Class 2026

JoAnne Bedenek  
Bernard Niall Corbalis  
Gary Ostermueller  
Kristina Scoglio  
Brian Smith  
Kevin Trolaro

#### Class 2027

Pete Bellisano  
Fred Blake  
Isidoro Garcia  
Arthur Jemmy  
Jan Margolis  
Bob Rosko

## COMMISSIONS

*A Commission is a body provided for by the Unicameral Board of the Church to oversee a particular part of the Church's life & ministry. Each Commission has the authority to carry out the goals established by the Unicameral Board, and regularly reports its decisions and actions to that Board.*

#### **Christian Education Commission**

**Chair: Fred Blake**

- Sunday School and Confirmation Class, Adult Education, VBS, Puppet Ministry, Triennium, Young PW, and Library

#### **Finance Commission**

**Lori Kellner — Pres. Brd. of Trustees**

- Buildings & Grounds, Community Nursery School, Insurance, Investments & Endowment, and Technology.

#### **Mission & Outreach Commission**

**Chair: Russ Dickow**

- Food Pantry, Local Mission, Benevolent Grants, International Peace and Social Justice.

#### **Personnel Commission**

**Chair: Brian Smith**

- Helps to Build a Healthy Work Environment, Performance Review, and Staff Support.

#### **Stewardship Commission**

**Chair: Bernard Niall Corbalis**

**Co-Chair: Jan Margolis**

- On-going Interpretation and Development of our Stewardship Program, and Fundraising Task Force.

#### **Worship and Music Commission**

**Chair: Gary Ostermueller**

- Indonesian Fellowship, Sanctuary and Sacraments, and Music & Arts.

#### **Youth Commission**

**Chair: Michael Draper**

- Youth Fellowship, Mission Trip, Day of Service, Scouts, and Young Adults.

## BOARD OF DEACONS

*Board of Deacons meet the 1st Tuesday of each month at 7:30 p.m.*

Co-Moderators: Jennifer Edge and Gillian McKie

Secretary: Nikki Walter

Treasurer: Maggy Cook

#### Class 2025

Eli Duhme  
Jennifer Edge  
Betty Kopetz  
Gillian McKie  
Jennifer Thompson  
Bill Volz

#### Class 2026

Mary Ann Eide  
Nancy Regan  
Beth Russian  
Reynolds Shaw  
Nikki Walter  
Sue West

#### Class 2027

Martin Brennan  
Heather Casey  
Maggy Cook  
Wendy Kukowski  
Sandra Laluw  
Karen Sorensen

## ADVENT 2024 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

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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 [hkoball@fpcweb.org](mailto:hkoball@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