

PARISH NEWS

THE NEWSLETTER OF FIRST PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH OF METUCHEN, NJ



The FPC Senior Choir during Lessons & Carols

CHURCH UNPLUGGED

- Using the labyrinth to unplug
- A journey through Luke
- Preparing your family for Advent

ALSO IN THIS ISSUE

- Order forms for votives and poinsettias
- Stewardship update
- Church staff transitions

THE SLOW PATH: HOW LABYRINTHS HELP US UNPLUG, REFLECT, AND RETURN TO OURSELVES

Khayla Johnson

In a culture that glorifies hustle, instant results, and constant connectivity, the concept of simply walking a slow, spiraling path may seem quaint or even indulgent. But for those who have experienced it, walking in a labyrinth is not only a form of meditation; it's a profound invitation to pause, to listen, and to return to a quieter, more centered self. Labyrinths are not new. In fact, they may be one of humanity's oldest contemplative tools, dating back thousands of years. Yet their relevance has never been greater than it is today.

What Is a Labyrinth? At first glance, a labyrinth might resemble a maze. But it's important to understand the difference. A maze is designed to confuse, with false turns and dead ends. A labyrinth, on the other hand, has a single, purposeful path that leads to the center and back out again. There's no getting lost. No decisions to make. Just one foot in front of the other. This distinction is key. While a maze mirrors the complexity and mental clutter of modern life, a labyrinth invites the opposite: simplicity, stillness, and trust in the process.

Labyrinths can be found in a variety of settings: church floors, gardens, hospital courtyards, parks, schools, and private homes. They may be made of stone, grass, sand, canvas, or even temporary chalk. The materials don't matter. What matters is the walk.

Historically, labyrinths have been used for prayer, pilgrimage, healing, and meditation. In the Middle Ages, when travel to Jerusalem was dangerous, people walked labyrinths in cathedrals as symbolic pilgrimages. In other cultures, labyrinths were seen as sacred spaces that connected the physical world with the spiritual.

Today, this ancient pattern is experiencing a quiet revival. Therapists, spiritual leaders, teachers, and healthcare providers are using labyrinths to support mental health, personal growth, and emotional clarity. And more individuals are turning to labyrinths as a tool for mindfulness and unplugging in a world that rarely stops moving. Walking a labyrinth engages the body, calms the mind, and offers a sense of refuge from

overstimulation. But unlike sitting meditation or digital detox strategies, it doesn't require retreating to a remote mountain cabin or shutting off your phone for days (though that might help too).

Here's why labyrinths are uniquely effective in helping us slow down:

First, The Body Leads, and the Mind Follows. The repetitive motion of walking the winding path activates the parasympathetic nervous system of your body's natural way of calming itself. With each step, your breath deepens, your heart rate slows, and your thoughts become quieter. Unlike other mindfulness practices that require concentration, the labyrinth offers a structure that does the focusing for you. You don't have to "try" to be present. The path brings you there naturally.

Second, It's Nonlinear Like Life. Labyrinths remind us that not all movement is forward and fast. Sometimes the path twists, doubles back, or loops unexpectedly. Just like life. But as in the labyrinth, we're still progressing even when it doesn't feel that way. This embodied metaphor allows us to reflect without pressure. As you walk, you may find that insights surface organically. What felt overwhelming before may seem more manageable, more clear.

Third, It Disconnects Us from Devices and Reconnects Us to Ourselves. Walking a labyrinth is a phone-free zone by default. You're moving, but with no destination. You're thinking, but with no goal. In this space, the frantic mental scrolling begins to slow. It's just you, your breath, and the path. Many people report feeling refreshed after a walk like they've had a mental reset. And often, they return to their busy lives with a renewed sense of perspective and peace.

Fourth, Labyrinths are for Everyone. You don't need to be spiritual, religious, or experienced in meditation to benefit from a labyrinth. People of all ages and backgrounds find solace in this practice. You can walk with a question in your heart, in silence, in grief, in gratitude, or just to see what arises. There's no right or wrong way to walk a labyrinth only your way. In a time when "doing nothing" feels almost radical, walking a

labyrinth is a gentle but powerful way to say: I choose to be present. I choose to listen. I choose to slow down. Whether you walk a labyrinth once or return to it regularly, each journey is a chance to reset your inner compass. And the effects don't end at the edge of the path they ripple outward into your relationships, your creativity, your decisions, and your sense of self. So what would happen if, instead of trying to fix everything all at once, you just walked... and let the path do the work?

During Advent we will have several opportunities to spend some time with the labyrinth, so be sure to check the Sunday Paper. In addition, join us for a Labyrinth-Making Workshop and create your

own labyrinth on December 10th. If you're curious to experience the power of labyrinths firsthand or want to bring this practice into your own life or community join us for a special immersive event. In this hands-on workshop, you'll - Learn about the history and healing power of labyrinths. Explore different styles and layouts from classical to contemporary. Design and build your own labyrinth using natural and accessible materials. Discover how to use your labyrinth for mindfulness, reflection, and healing. Whether you want to create a temporary labyrinth in your yard or a permanent one in a shared space, this event will give you the tools, inspiration, and confidence to begin. No experience necessary. Just a willingness to slow down, engage your hands, and walk the path of presence.

A MAP LEADING TO A BETTER LIFE

Fred Garry

Each Sunday when I preach, the passage for the sermon is taken from Matthew, Mark, or Luke. I don't select a passage at random though. I practice *lectio continua*, which means "continual reading." Perhaps a better way of seeing this would be to say, I started preaching through the Gospel of Luke on November 12, 2023; I will conclude preaching through the Gospel of Luke in June of 2027.

I am never sure how many people know I do this. There is no mention of this discipline in sermons or in the reading during worship. For instance, I did not say on November 2nd, "today's second lesson from Luke is the 83rd reading from the gospel, we have 63 left to go." And rarely will I mention what part of Luke a reading is taken from. I find such information intriguing and fascinating, which usually means most people yawn and roll their eyes.

Although I rarely mention this discipline and preaching structure, we are about to enter a key moment in the Gospel of Luke, something unique and powerful. For six months we will be reading from the Gospel of Luke on most Sundays. These 23 lessons, from Luke 13:31-19:17, are a kind of treasury. Here Luke has gathered teachings, parables, stories, sayings all with one purpose: to empower the disciple of Jesus to live in freedom. What binds all these readings together is how they answer a question: how can we be better, live better, be better people?

Some could argue that every teaching of Jesus

can answer such a question. This is true. Yet, in the coming months we will slowly see the very purposeful list of Luke, his "order," how he decided



to offer the teachings of Jesus. This can be seen as Luke's creation. He didn't create the teachings and the parables, he didn't make up the stories of Jesus' life, but he did put them in order. Twenty-three teachings were arranged by Luke. It is as if he was arranging our release from fear, from anger, from sadness. These lessons are like a map leading to better life.

I also mention this to you for a personal reason. If I keep to my discipline, I will not preach through these lessons again until 2034. It's hard for me to even imagine a year from now, let alone 10. While the future is fuzzy, the past is clear. In 2014 I preached through this list of Luke and it was life changing. My faith became stronger, my hope became brighter, my love became more genuine. In a way this series of lessons are like a comet or a rare flower or the alignment of the sun on the pyramids. These lessons can be invisible, an order you need not see like a light streaming in the sky or an eclipse. Yet, once you know, you know. If you know where and when to look you can see the gears and grooves of the universe. Soon we will have a chance to see and hear the gears and grooves of the gospel of Luke.

ROOTED IN FAITH, GROWING IN GENEROSITY: OUR 2026 STEWARDSHIP CAMPAIGN

Niall Corbalis and Heather Koball

Each fall, we pause to reflect on the blessings of our church family and the ways we can continue to nurture its mission. Stewardship is more than a financial pledge—it's an act of faith, a commitment to sustain the ministries that shape lives and share Christ's love. This year's campaign invites us to look back with gratitude, while dreaming for the future.

Honoring Our History

For more than 300 years, First Presbyterian Church of Metuchen has been a place of worship, fellowship, and service. Founded to provide a spiritual home for a growing community, our church remains rooted in values of faithfulness, connection, and compassion. Past generations built the foundation we stand on today—and now it's our turn to carry that legacy forward. Stewardship ensures that our sanctuary remains a place of spiritual peace and growth, our programs flourish, and our outreach reaches those who need it most.

Celebrating Our Impact

Since the pandemic, our mission work has grown in remarkable ways. Our Deacons now host a monthly Community Dinner, serving over 200 guests a warm, home-cooked meal. Under the leadership of Sarah Teti, Director of Missions, our food pantry clientele has expanded substantially. We now offer not only groceries to families in need, but warm meals for those housed in hotels and ready-made meals to unhoused people. Further, the food pantry doesn't just give people food, it focuses on preventing homelessness by offering \$4000 per month in emergency assistance for rent and utilities and connecting clients with necessary social services. Globally, we've partnered with communities in Malawi—thanks to your generosity, we built a nurses' house to support a local clinic.

Our music ministry, under the leadership of Director of Music Jordan Klotz, continues to elevate our worship experience with beauty and depth. This year, we welcomed several talented choral scholars to the choir, enriching our sound and spirit. We've also strengthened ties to the local arts community through the Candlelight Concert Series and by hosting a variety of choirs

that bring people together in meaningful ways.

Our youth ministry, guided by Associate Pastor Rev. Khayla Johnson, is thriving. Seventeen kids, almost triple the number from the year prior, youth participated in Habitat for Humanity this year, serving others while growing in faith and fellowship. The youth group continues to expand, creating space for connection and spiritual growth. Meanwhile, Vacation Bible Camp, led by Director of Christian Education Nancy Leardi, welcomed more than 70 children this past summer—a joyful week of learning, laughter, and faith formation.

These ministries—and so many others—are possible because of your faithful pledges. Your generosity fuels the programs that shape lives and strengthen our community.

Our Goal and Why It Matters

Last year, we raised \$460,000 in pledges—a testament to your generosity. For 2026, our goal is \$500,000, with hopes of reaching \$506,000 through a 10% increase in giving. These funds sustain worship, music, youth programs, mission projects, and local assistance. Every pledge, no matter the size, helps keep our ministries vibrant and our doors open.

How You Can Participate

- The Giving Tree was set up in the Narthex—a symbol of generosity and hope. When you pledge, tie the ribbon from your pledge envelope (or use the extra ribbons in the Narthex) on the Giving Tree.
- Pledge cards are placed in every pew and available in the Narthex.
- November 23: Stewardship Sunday—we'll collect pledge cards and celebrate with a cake Coffee Hour.

Looking Ahead

Stewardship is not just about meeting a financial goal—it's about deepening our connection to God and one another. It's about ensuring that our church remains a beacon of hope for generations to come. As we move toward 2026, let's embrace this campaign with open hearts. Together, we can honor our history, live our

mission, and build a future filled with faith and generosity.

Thank you for being part of this journey. Your prayers, pledges, and participation make all the difference.

HOW TO PLEDGE

Please pledge by Nov 23. You can

- place your pledge card in the offering plate,
- visit the church website www.fpcweb.org and click on Give,
- call Kevin Trolaro in the church office (732-491-2303),
- Or scan the QR code.



OUR FOOD PANTRY FRONT LINE WORKERS!

Sarah Teti

As many of you know, 42 million people in the United States woke up to no money on their food stamps card on November 1. That's 800,000 New Jersey residents. As this newsletter goes to print, the future of food stamp benefits remains unclear.

For some people, this has been a minor inconvenience. But for others, food stamps are a major part of their income as they live on the poverty line. Some people have been forced to decide on a daily basis whether they should pay their rent or utility bill because there's not enough money to do both. These are people who are caring for their children and/or their family members just as you might be, working jobs just like you and me, and renting or paying mortgages. With the recent rising costs for food and gas and utilities, although incremental, it has caused those on the poverty line to fall below. That is why I am so proud of the \$4000 a month our local mission commission allocates for rental and utility assistance to local families!

Our food pantry team and Local Mission committee are on the front lines, once again. Our focus is on getting food and giving it away. Our focus is on making sure that the people in my neighborhood aren't going to bed hungry. Food is a basic human right.

So many people in our community have reached out to me to ask how they can help. The answer is so simple. We always need non-perishable food and grocery store gift cards. That will get us through this month. The FPC Food Pantry is opening up their doors to any person in need of food assistance in the month of November, regardless of where they live for how many times they've been helped. Each person who comes in will be given an emergency bag of food that

Right: Jane Brown and Karen Rybarski sort food for the pantry.

Below: A few of the many food packages the pantry received during the beginning of November



consists of a few pantry staples. Rice, beans, canned meat, canned vegetables, pasta and sauce, cereal, and snacks. It's not a ton of food, but it'll keep your family fed for a few days. Additionally, we will continue to serve the 150 families a month to come through our doors with our client choice pantry and we will register new clients on an as needed basis. Our volunteers are stepping up their game and coming in on days that we're not even open to make sure that people looking for food are not met with a locked door. Local friends and community leaders have stopped by my office to let me know that they're buying food and donating money and the response has been overwhelming already. Thank you all for the support that you've shown us! We are not going to back down. We made it through a global pandemic, we'll make it through this, too.

UNPLUGGED AND UNWRAPPED: ADVENT ACTIVITIES FOR PRESBYTERIAN FAMILIES

Nancy Leardi

As the Advent season approaches, our calendars fill quickly — concerts, shopping, travel plans, and yes, plenty of screen time. But Advent invites us to slow down, to prepare our hearts for Christ's coming with intention and wonder.

This year, I invite our families to try something a little countercultural: an unplugged Advent. Step away from the glow of screens and into the glow of candlelight, conversation, and community. Below are some simple, faith-filled ways to do just that.

Create an Advent Prayer Chain

Cut colorful paper strips and write a prayer, a Bible verse, or a small act of kindness on each one. Add a new link each day as you count down to Christmas. By Christmas Eve, you'll have a beautiful chain of prayers and love to hang in your home.

Light and Listen

Each Sunday of Advent, light a candle on your wreath and take a few quiet moments together. Ask each family member to share where they've seen hope, peace, joy, or love during the week. Sing a short carol or pray together. No screens needed—just sacred light and conversation.

Build a Bethlehem Village

Gather your nativity figures (or make your own from clay, paper, or even LEGO bricks!). Each day, add a new figure or building — a shepherd, a sheep, a stable. Use the story of Luke 2 to guide your storytelling as you watch the village of Bethlehem slowly come alive.

Story Time by Candlelight

Choose a favorite Christmas story or Scripture reading, make some cocoa, and turn off the lights. Read aloud together by candlelight or the glow of your Advent wreath. Let this be a nightly moment of peace in a busy season.

Take a "Silent Night" Walk

Bundle up and head outside for a quiet evening walk. Notice the lights, stars, and stillness. End your walk with a prayer of gratitude for the beauty of God's creation and the gift of one another.



Scenes from the 2024 Christmas Pageant

See page 8 for sign up information



This Advent, may our unplugged moments become the ones we treasure most — the laughter around the table, the candlelight prayers, the gentle wonder of waiting together.

As Presbyterians, we know that God meets us not only in worship on Sunday, but in the rhythms of our homes and the rituals of our waiting. So this season, let's step away from the buzz of technology and step into the quiet joy of Emmanuel — God with us.

ADVENT WREATH

Email or call Nancy Leardi (nleardi@fpcweb.org 732-491-2264).

Celebrate Advent with us by creating a beautiful family wreath to take home and enjoy throughout the season as we prepare for Christ's coming. Let us know if you'd like to join so we can have supplies ready



THIS SEASON'S WORSHIP & MUSIC OFFERINGS

Jordan Klotz

Our congregation's vibrant Music Ministry is in full swing this Advent and Christmas season, offering a range of opportunities to celebrate the season through music. All of our choirs and bell choirs, with musicians from age 4 through adults, will participate in "Peace on Earth," the second performance of the 2025-2026 Candlelight Concert Series. This concert*, in collaboration with the Friends of Metuchen Arts, will also feature faculty musicians from the Westerhoff School, making it a truly special event.

This Advent, we also welcome you to experience the serenity of the labyrinth in several ways. On Wednesdays, December 3 and 17, meditative music (Dec 3: Eleanor Rees, soprano; Dec 17: Karen Stern, harpist), will set the tone as participants are invited to walk the labyrinth, reflecting on the season's quiet beauty. Additionally, on Wednesday, December 10, we will host a Family Labyrinth Night, featuring fun, family learning and activities.

Mark your calendars for our annual Festival of Nine Lessons and Carols on Sunday, December 21. This beloved service will feature a blend of new and familiar music, with special guest harpist Karen Stern returning to enrich our worship. This year, we are excited to welcome the Junior Choir (grades 3-6) and the Westminster Choir (grades 7-12) as they join in the carol celebrations. The Senior Choir, working diligently in preparation, will even present a movement from Handel's Messiah.

We look forward to sharing this season of music, peace, and joy with you!

*Grant funding for this performance has been provided by the Middlesex County Board of Commissioners through a grant award from the Middlesex County Cultural and Arts Trust Fund.

Sunday, November 30:

- First Sunday of Advent, 9:30 AM Worship Service
- "Peace on Earth," 7:00 PM Candlelight Concert

Wednesday, December 3

- Advent Labyrinth Walk with meditative music by Eleanor Rees, soprano, 7:00-8:30 PM

Sunday, December 7

- Second Sunday of Advent, 9:30 AM Worship Service

Sunday, December 14

- Third Sunday of Advent, 9:30 AM "One Church Together" Intergenerational Worship Service

Wednesday, December 17

- Advent Labyrinth Walk with meditative music by Karen Stern, harpist, 7:00-8:30 PM

Sunday, December 21

- Festival of Nine Lessons & Carols, 9:30 AM

Tuesday, December 24

- Christmas Pageant & Christmas Eve Family Service, 5:00 PM
- Christmas Eve Candlelight Service, 9:30 PM

Scan to purchase tickets to the Candlelight Concert:



THE HANDS AND FEET OF CHRIST: CELEBRATING OUR DEACONS

Heather Koball

At the heart of our church's mission to serve with love and compassion are the Deacons—eighteen amazing individuals who embody what it means to be the hands and feet of Christ. Led by co-chairs Gilly McKie and Jen Edge, this dedicated team pours their time, energy, and hearts into ministries that touch lives in profound and lasting ways. The Deacons demonstrate generosity and commitment to care for others. Whether organizing meals, delivering flowers or Christmas presents, or offering a listening ear, they are always ready to serve.

Their ministries reach not only our congregation but the wider community. During the Advent season, the Deacons organize Advent Angels, led by Betty Kopetz, Mary Ann Eide, and Joan Kenyon. Through this program, members donate gifts to over 100 children and elderly individuals in need in New Jersey, reminding us of the power of generosity during the holiday season. Look for the Advent Angel Tree in the Deacons' Room starting November 23.

One of the Deacons largest events is the monthly Community Dinner, which draws over 200 guests and reflects Matthew 25:35: "For I was hungry and you gave me something to eat, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink, I was a stranger and you invited me in." Many attendees are seniors or clients of the FPC food pantry, and for some, this dinner is a lifeline. One guest recently shared, "This is the only time during the month I get to talk to people. I look forward to this event so much!" These evenings offer more than a meal—they create connection and belonging. The Deacons' Soup Ministry also provides nourishment and care by delivering over 30 quarts of soup each month to seniors, homebound church members, and others in need.

The Deacons foster fellowship through a monthly lunch and game day, led by Sue West, and by organizing the annual church picnic. They also serve the community beyond our church walls, by organizing blood drives, led by Mary Ann Eide and Wendy Kukowski, and maintaining the Medical Closet, a resource for borrowing medical equipment.

Many Deacons work generously behind the scenes to provide care. Deacon Nancy Regan quietly makes a big impact by sending personal cards to seniors and homebound congregants on birthdays or during illness—small acts that remind us we are never alone. Gilly McKie and Jen Thompson organize the Prayer Shawl Circle, a group of talented women who knit and crochet shawls for those facing illness or hardship. The Helping Hands program, led by Reynolds Shaw and Bill Volz, assists with light chores for those who need extra help. And, the CARE Team, overseen by Wendy Kukowski, ensures seniors and homebound members feel remembered through visits, calls, and thoughtful deliveries of soup or flowers. (Stay tuned for more about this ministry in the next Parish News.)

The church decorated with votives by the Deacons, Christmas Eve 2024



From soup and flower deliveries to ushering on Sundays, the Deacons are always present, always serving. Their work is a living testament to faith in action. May we all be inspired by their example to serve with open hearts and willing hands.

If you would like to support the Deacons, consider purchasing a votive candle (order form in this issue of the Parish News) or a Deacons' Ministry cookbook. Your generosity sustains these vital ministries and the love they bring to our church and community.

OUR DEACONS

Co-Moderators: Gilly McKie and Jen Edge

Martin Brennan

Heather Casey

Maggy Cook

Eli Duhme (Youth)

Mary Ann Eide

Joan Kenyon

Betty Kopetz

Wendy Kukowski

Sandra Lалуw

Nancy Regan

Beth Russian

Reynolds Shaw

Jennifer Thompson

Bill Volz

Sue West

June Young

THE CHURCH BUILDING: NEVER UNPLUGGED

Heather Koball

This year, our church has embraced the theme “Unplugged”—a call to slow down, reflect, and reconnect with God and one another. Yet, while we seek spiritual stillness, our church building is never truly unplugged. From worship to community events and mission, the physical space of First Presbyterian Church of Metuchen is a hub of activity.

This is a blessing: our building is a sacred space that serves many purposes and people. But it also requires careful coordination to ensure that everyone—congregants, and community partners—can use it well and feel welcomed.

A Hub for Church Life

Our many commissions, committees, and church groups—Session, Deacons, Youth, Finance, Personnel, Worship and Music, Stewardship, Christian Education, Presbyterian Women, Building & Grounds, Mission, Social Justice, CARE team, and Local Mission—meet regularly in the Social Center and the church building to guide the spiritual and operational life of the church. These monthly gatherings help shape our direction and ensure faithful stewardship.

Beyond governance, our building hosts many church fellowship gatherings, such as the monthly Indonesian Fellowship, the Deacons’ Lunch and Games, the Men’s Breakfast, two book clubs, Horizon’s Bible studies, the PW Craft Circle, and the Prayer Shawl Circle, and a weekly Bible Study led by Rev Garry—groups that nurture spiritual growth and offer ministries of care and creativity.

Seasonal Celebrations and Community Events

Twice a year, our building transforms for the Rummage Sale and once a year for the Holly Fair, raising funds and fostering joyful generosity. Candlelight concerts, choir and Deacon retreats, and Rise Up Choir performances add to the rhythm of celebration and reflection.

Our music ministry is especially vibrant, with eight bell and voice choirs rehearsing weekly in the church building. Weekly youth group meetings, monthly Junior Club and First Tuesdays, and puppeteer retreats and practice, offer young people space to grow in faith and friendship.

Serving the Wider Community

Our church is also a resource for the Metuchen community. We host three AA meetings each week, seven scout troops each month, and several community groups like the PEO, Outfront Metuchen, and the Garden Club. For the past several years, we have hosted the Temple Emmanuel High Holy Days and several of their services throughout the year, as they renovated their Temple. Metuchen High School holds two annual awards ceremonies at the Social Center. Our monthly lunch packing program and mission volunteer nights offer hands-on service opportunities.

In addition to this service we provide to the community, FPC also rents out the Social Center regularly for parties, and we rent out most of the parking spaces at the back of the Social Center.

Coordinating all this activity is the church staff who program the doors, keep the calendar organized, and set up and break down the tables and chairs.

As we embrace the spiritual stillness of being “Unplugged,” our church building remains a hub of ministry and community life. This blessing comes with responsibility: ensuring that every group, event, and mission can share the space well. Thoughtful coordination keeps this space welcoming and functional for all. Our building powers ministry every day, and it takes all of us working together to keep it running smoothly.

CHRISTMAS PAGEANT SIGN UP

To participate:

- Children must be 4 years old or older by 10/1
- Children must attend rehearsals on Sundays, December 7, 14, and 21, from 10:45 to 11:45 am, and the dress rehearsal on Dec. 23 at 4:00 pm.

Adult volunteers are needed as well; please sign up to help!

Visit the FPC website or scan the QR code to sign up. Questions?
Email fpcpageant@gmail.com



STAFF TRANSITIONS AT FPC: WHAT'S HAPPENING IN THE CHURCH OFFICE?

Over the past two years, FPC's church office has slowly settled into the post-Sue Harmon era. Absent her expert guidance, there have been some growing pains and the occasional misadventure, but this year brings a renewed stability as staff have transitioned into new and complementary roles. These transitions reflect our commitment to strengthening both our mission outreach and internal operations, ensuring that our church continues to thrive as a welcoming and impactful community.

Sarah Teti: Expanding the Mission

We are excited that Sarah Teti has transitioned into a new role as Director of Missions. Formerly the part-time Food Pantry Director, since 2017, Sarah now leads all mission-related work at FPC, extending her reach beyond the pantry to encompass the full spectrum of our mission efforts.

Sarah works closely with the Mission Commission, Social Justice Committee, Local Assistance, and Presbyterian Women/Malawi Mission. Her responsibilities include coordinating mission budgets with the Director of Finance, developing hands-on mission opportunities, organizing speaker events, and ensuring that mission activities are well-communicated to both the congregation and the broader community. She also supports fundraising and grant efforts, and co-leads our annual trips to Malawi, managing logistics and international partnerships. Sarah's passion will help deepen our church's engagement with mission work, connecting faith with action in meaningful ways.

Heather Koball: From Missions to Operations

Heather, who served as the Executive Director of Missions for the past three years, transitioned last month into a new role as Director of

Operations. In this part-time position, Heather will oversee the day-to-day functioning of the church office. Her focus includes coordinating building use; overseeing the Parish News, website and Facebook communications; supporting logistics for funerals and weddings; and liaising with various church committees including Building & Grounds, Deacons, and Personnel. Heather also plays an important role in human resources, onboarding new staff, managing benefits enrollment, and ensuring compliance with background checks and training.

Vicky Lacson: Continuing Her Vital Support

Vicky Lacson remains in her part-time role as Administrative and Communications Coordinator, where she continues to be a central figure in our church office. She supports Reverend Garry and other church leaders with administrative tasks, manages key church communications such as the Sunday bulletins, programs, and flyers for the many FPC events, and maintains church records for membership and baptisms. Vicky also assists Commission Chairs with communications and creating written materials, supports new member classes, and helps coordinate special events. Her warm presence and attention to detail ensure that our church remains organized, informed, and welcoming.

Kevin Trolaro: Stewarding Our Finances

As shared in our previous newsletter, Kevin Trolaro has stepped into the full-time role of Treasurer, overseeing all financial aspects of the church. He manages budgets, payroll, bills, and financial coordination for mission disbursements and special events. Kevin also supports stewardship efforts and works closely with other staff to ensure financial transparency and sustainability. His expertise and dedication provide a strong financial foundation for our church.

CONTACTING THE PASTORS OR CHURCH STAFF

To reach the church office or any staff member, please call 732-491-2300, during office hours, Mon-Thurs 9AM-2PM. If you would like to speak with Rev. Fred Garry or Rev. Khayla Johnson, please call the church office or call Rev. Garry at 315-771-3590 or Rev. Johnson at 843-312-7288.

POINSETTIA ORDER FORM

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

Deadline for ordering is **Monday, December 8th**.

- The names of those remembered and donors will be listed in the worship bulletin on Sunday, December 21st.
- Make checks payable to "First Presbyterian Church" with note: Poinsettia
- **The plants may be taken home after the 9:30 pm service on Christmas Eve.**
- Our Deacons will take the remaining plants for shut-in families.

Your Name: _____

Phone No.: _____

For Bulletin Listings of Donors (Please print.)

Given by : _____

In Memory of: _____

In Honor of: _____

In Gratitude: _____

Number of plants @ \$10.00 each _____

Total Amount Enclosed \$ _____

Payment: ____ Cash _____ Check #

Please mark (X) on one of the following:

☐ I will take my plant home after the 9:30 PM Christmas Eve Service.

☐ Leave poinsettia for Deacons to deliver.



(2025 Form)

LUMINARY ORDER FORM

Celebrate the wonder of Christmas!

On Christmas Eve, we will decorate our church steps and walkways with paper luminaries and votive candles. They will beautifully welcome everyone as they arrive for the services, and shine through the night. Proceeds of the luminary sale will help fund the many ministries of our Deacons.



- The names of those remembered and donors will be listed in the 9:30 PM Christmas Eve worship service bulletin.
- Make checks payable to "First Presbyterian Church" with note: Votive
- Send the form and payment to the Church office by **Wednesday, December 17th**.

Your Name: _____

Phone No.: _____

For Bulletin Listings of Donors (Please print.)

Given by : _____

In Memory of: _____

In Honor of: _____

In Gratitude: _____

Luminary order @ \$5.00 each _____ pieces

Total Amount Enclosed \$ _____

Payment: ____ Cash _____ Check #

Please indicate if you want to bring your luminary home: ☐ Yes, I will bring home my luminary.

(2025 Form)

ADVENT 2025 PARISH NEWS

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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

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