

First Press Newsletter



We are a welcoming community formed in Christ, committed to sharing his love with others – with feet that carry us out into the world, with hands that serve, and with hearts in fellowship and faith.

Dear Friends:

I doubt that St. Paul realized that his letters to various first-century churches would one day become part of the Christian New Testament. Just as I doubt that he realized how often his words would inspire pastors in the centuries to follow. As he often does when writing to churches, Paul begins his Letter to the Philippians with words of gratitude: *I thank my God every time I remember you, constantly praying with joy in every one of my prayers for all of you.*

These words by Paul inspire me as I write to you, the members and friends of First Presbyterian Church of Ridgewood New Jersey. For like Paul, I thank God for each of you, for the privilege of knowing you, for the opportunity to serve in your midst, and for the many contributions you make to the Body of Christ in this place.

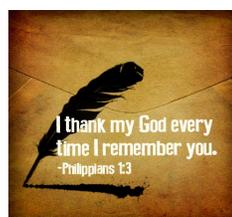
I am grateful for those serving on Staff, those serving as Elders and Deacons, as well as those serving on the Re-Entry Task Force and our many committees. During the last seven months as we have faced unforeseen challenges caused by the coronavirus pandemic, you have provided steady leadership, given generously of your time, and approached challenges with equal doses of faith, pragmatism and creativity.

Furthermore, I am grateful for those who show up in the sanctuary at 10:00 a.m. each Sunday and for those who join the service online, as well as those who tune in each week for MaryEllen's Sunday School lesson. I give thanks for those who prepare meals for Caring Cooks or St. Paul's Shelter, those who volunteer in the Produce Mission, those who send care packages to college students, those who make phone calls or send emails to check on members, those who food shop for others, and those who show up for porch visits with the homebound. Your every act of kindness is making a positive difference in someone's life.

I am grateful for those who pray for the church and its ministries, those who contribute financially and those whose greatest contributions are the gifts of their time and talents. I give thanks for those who bring the energy and enthusiasm of youth and those who offer the wisdom that comes from a long lifetime of experience, those who help others and those who need to be helped.

We are the Body of Christ, one body with many parts. And without each part making its unique contribution, the body would not function effectively. So, my friends, be assured that I don't take you for granted. In fact, I thank God for each of you everyday!

Yours in Christ's service together, Bruce



Endowment Corner



Gobble, Gobble! That's Turkeese for Dear Friends,

Thanksgiving is an American holiday but giving thanks is universal. As an Endowment Committee we give thanks each time someone contributes to our Endowment Fund. It means more resources available to share with those most in need and to help our own church sustain viability, even during a pandemic.

The true church exists to give itself away, not to squander but to help. In 2 Corinthians 9:7 it says "Each one must give as he has decided in his heart, not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver." (English Standard Version) We say thank you to God by sharing in generous measure our money, our love and our acceptance of all people through our promise to do His will.

Gifts to our Endowment Fund can be given at any time in any amount. Checks can be made to First Presbyterian Church with a memo to 'Endowment'.

Blessings from your Endowment Committee,
Richard Davies, Dave Shaw, Don Dexter, Al Schagen,
Laura Magrath, Joanne Bonwick



Feeding God's People

St. Paul's Food Ministry -

On October 4th, the McDevitt family delivered dinner for the men at St. Paul's Homeless Shelter.

A big thank you to all the volunteers who provided such wonderful food for the men. Joanne Bonwick made her meatballs, Linda Cascardo made a chicken casserole, Joan Davies made a corn casserole and mashed potatoes, the Torielli family brought fruit and bread, and Sue Dickinson made a lovely salad.

The men are always appreciative of the delicious homemade food that each volunteer brings.

Our church's next meal delivery will be on Sunday, November 1st. Please contact Sam McDevitt at sammcdev99@gmail.com or (201)-820-8056 for details, or if you have any questions. Thank you!

And don't forget the Produce Ministry -Sundays at 2:30 PM - at the Ridgewood Train Station!

Remembering Two Remarkable Women



Joy Maffei passed away on October 16, 2020. She is pictured with her granddaughter and daughter, Michelle during "Girls Night Out" in 2010. She is wearing a "free spirit" name tag which characterized her outlook on life. Joy was a longtime and beloved member of First Pres.



Laura Fleming passed away on October 12, 2020. She lived a life of faith, trusting in our Lord. Laura was a choir member, Sunday school teacher and served as a Deacon. Laura had a positive outlook on life even while battling Leiomyosarcoma, she was inspiring!



These amazing women will be deeply missed!

Please remember their families in your prayers.



We worship inside and outsidesocially distant



.....under blue skies and geese!

Sunday School News

Our Sunday Nursery Room for toddlers and babies has been renovated and completed. We are ready for when the little ones come!



Our youth rocked!



And carved pumpkins in the church parking lot!



Being a Christian is like being a **pumpkin**. God **picks you** from the patch, brings you in, and **washes off** all the dirt. Then He cuts the top and **scoops out** all the yucky stuff. He **removes the seeds** of doubt, hate, and greed. Last, He **carves you** a new smiling face and **puts His light** inside of you to shine for all the world to see!





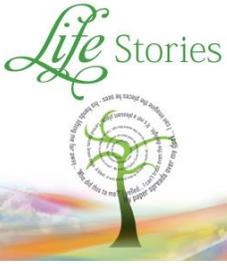
Pizza & Pop Party!



Thanks to the Growth Committee and MaryEllen a great time was had by all!

And we welcomed newly installed officers!





You are invited to join the First Pres Senior Ministry group in sharing snippets of your life stories. Send your writing of 200 words or less to Donna Flagg (flaggbda@gmail.com) by the 12th of the month. January Feature will be: ~ I Am Thankful For... ~

LIFE STORY VIGNETTES

November Feature

~ Family Stories of Sacrifice ~

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### *Help Is On the Way* by Joanne Bonwick

The current pandemic has reminded me of one of the flu epidemics in the mid 1960s. My Aunt Ruthie made daily calls to my mother to check in and catch up with any family news. Aunt Ruthie always had news as she had four young children who were serial mischief makers.

One day the call came to alert Mom that one of the children had come down with the 'flu'. And then, like dominoes, in the space of three days all six people in the family were bedridden. Aunt Ruthie was the last to fall. She called Mom that day exhausted and close to tears. Mom barked at her..."Get in bed, I'm coming over". She had no mask, no gloves, just a pot of soup and a bucket of TLC. She spent the whole day, taking temperatures, doling out aspirin, consoling, and fetching whatever anyone needed.

She was a first responder without PPE. She didn't worry about risk. She simply heard the call and showed up. When I asked her, "Weren't you afraid you'd catch the flu?" She just looked at me and said, "She needed help". Sometimes you don't ask questions, you just show up.

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As You Sow, So Shall You Reap by Greta Noel Croucher

Family sacrifice, what comes to me right away is my son Dennis and his wife Mary. During my husband's six year illness, about year four it became painfully apparent that we would have to sell our beloved Pennsylvania farm house. My Jim was no longer able to maintain the constant work that was required, it broke his heart. We had a complete household in Pennsylvania as well as our home in Fair Lawn. Without hesitation Dennis stepped in, packed up the entire home and large shed, called a real estate agent and got the house sold. What I haven't yet said is that he did all of this on weekends by himself for three months, leaving his wife and three children each weekend. God bless his wife Mary, she supported his hard work and efforts all the way. There are no words to express the gratitude I feel for the Healy family, then, now and always for their constant love and caring ways.

Reflections: *My husband, Jim often said "as you sow, so shall you reap." What we do for family and others is its own reward, as my son told me after he read my vignette. Thanks for the opportunity to include my husband's thoughts as well as my son's. I am always looking for any chance to use my husband's wisdom, it helps me to realize that he is still by my side. I am finding more each day that my son, Dennis has so many of the beautiful spiritual qualities within him that my husband, Jim held.*

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## ***Living a Life of Faith, Sacrifice and Compassion by Donna Flagg***

After serving in the US Army, my father returned to China in 1948 to accompany my mother to immigrate to the United States. As they boarded the ship to sail to America they were inspired by the words - *America streets are paved with gold*. My parents loved these lyrics, and with great anticipation and excitement they were ready to write the melody to their song of endless hopes and dreams. They knew life in America would allow them to be free from the communist regime, live in a land of opportunity as Christians, but not without trials and hardships.

Owning a Chinese Hand Laundry shop was typical of many Chinese immigrants which meant a lot of hours of hard work standing on your feet, and not making a lot of money. My father worked nights at a Chinese wet wash laundry factory feeding wet sheets through a hot machine standing on his feet for eight to ten grueling hours. My mother, the matriarch of the family worked two jobs along with parenting my brother and me. She worked in the laundry during the day and as a night substitute at the factory. Money was tight, memories of my mother counting the dollar bills and coins in the cash register to pay rent and buy food still flood my mind. Tears swell up in my eyes when I think of the sacrifices my parents endured so that my brother and I would be able to go to college.

My mother's faith and trust in God opened her heart to help family members and friends in financial need when our own family was struggling. At an early age, I learned a lot about compassion and kindness, and that faith gives you the strength to make sacrifices for the good of others. As I write the melody to my life song, I hope I can pay tribute to my parents by showering the "gold" paved streets of New Jersey with the lyrics of grace, hope, compassion, and justice for all.



**On October 20, 2020 a historic vote passed!**

Our Presbytery voted to approve a recommendation from the New Jersey Missional Communities Transitions Working Group to reorganize the current seven NJ presbyteries into four presbyteries.

Our church will be part of the "Northeast Presbytery" (name TBD), it will be composed of the Palisades Presbytery, Newark Presbytery and part of Elizabeth Presbytery. There will also be a Northwest, Central and Southern Presbytery.

We look forward to where God is leading, confident that God is indeed doing a new thing!



## FALL FOOD DRIVE

We are collecting non-perishable food items thru the month of November to support

Social Services of Ridgewood



instant mashed potatoes    stuffing mix    cereals    cake mixes  
 instant oatmeal or rolled oats    canned vegetables    granola bars  
 canned fruit    canned frosting    dry pasta and jar sauce  
 canned pasta    cranberry sauce    canned gravy    brownie mix  
 pancake mix and syrup    rice and rice meals    peanut butter and jelly  
 macaroni and cheese    canned soups and stews    cookies

\*\*\*\*\*Please NO GLASS jars or containers\*\*\*\*\*

There will be baskets in the cloister hall at the church to drop off food items.  
The church is open Mon-Fri from 9 to 3 or bring to Worship on Sunday!

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## This year's Stewardship Campaign is underway!



If you have not received a pledge card please call the church office at 201-652-2504.

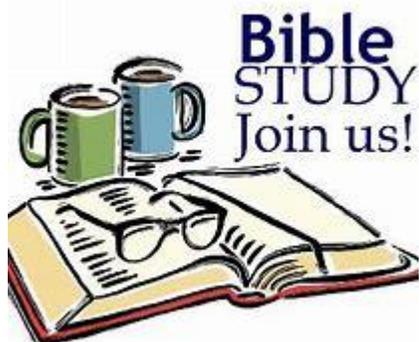
You can drop off or mail in your pledge card at any time, the total amount pledged will be announced on Sunday November 22<sup>nd</sup>!

Please pray and consider with grace, gratitude and generosity what you can give to God's church.

**~ Living into the Beloved Community ~ A Video based Bible Study was held over 7 weeks.  
It was an informative and enlightening series thanks to Pastor Bruce and Donna Flagg!**

The group explored how race and racism affects ourselves, families, congregations and communities. For those who could not participate, if you would like to view the videos they are listed below.

1. **%Be the Light, Open Your Hearts to Grace+**  
Bill & Gloria Gaither - Amazing Grace ft. Wintley Phipps (Live) (8:35 mins)  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qNuQbJst4Lk>
2. **%Adam Hamilton Sermon: Jesus, Justice and Repentance+**  
Adam Hamilton Sermon on Racial Justice (36.08 mins.)  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=s3czHOWLYyc>
3. **%Silence Isn't the Answer+**  
50 years of racism -- why silence isn't the answer James A. White Sr (14.40 mins.)  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=r9DDE7NV1Nw>
4. **%The Roots of Racial Injustice+**  
Let's get to the root of racial injustice - Megan Ming Francis (19.37 mins.)  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-aCn72iXO9s>
5. **Recognize and Overcome Our Biases+**
  1. Inside the AC360 doll study May 17, 2010 (5.27 mins.)  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DYCz1ppTjiM&feature=youtu.be>
  2. Study shows how children view race bias May 18, 2010 (5:18 mins.)  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=EQACkg5i4AY>
  3. Show Video Clip  
Verna Myers: How to overcome our biases? Walk boldly toward them (17.53 mins.)  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=uYyvbglNZkQ&feature=youtu>
6. **%Grace, Justice & Mercy+**  
Grace, Justice, & Mercy: An Evening with Bryan Stevenson & Rev. Tim Keller - Redeemer Presbyterian Church, NYC (1:10.52 mins.)  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MyBfOX5OHRQ>
7. **%Guest Speaker: Rev. Mack Brandon, Metropolitan A.M.E. Zion Church, Ridgewood+**  
Krista Tippett Reconnecting with compassion (15.38 mins.)  
[https://www.ted.com/talks/krista\\_tippett\\_reconnecting\\_with\\_compassion#t-108334](https://www.ted.com/talks/krista_tippett_reconnecting_with_compassion#t-108334)



Stay tuned for the next Zoom Bible study over advent:

**Season of Peace**

## Church Staff~

|                                       |                         |
|---------------------------------------|-------------------------|
| Pastor                                | Rev. Bruce Ballantine   |
| Director of Children & Families       | MaryEllen Castaldo      |
| Director of Music                     | Dr. Edward Schmiedecke  |
| Organist                              | Linda Sweetman Waters   |
| Director of Youth Music and Handbells | Carol Schmiedecke       |
| Administrative Manager                | Dana Feeney             |
| Youth Leader                          | Jessica Strader         |
| Tom Carozza                           | Sexton                  |
| Custodian                             | George Wood             |
| Director Nursery School               | Julia Bolt              |
| Newsletter Editor                     | Joan Davies (Volunteer) |

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**Church Phone** (201) 652-2504

**Pastor Bruce:** (215) 337-5623 **please contact him directly for Pastoral Care**  
[www.firstpresridgewood.org](http://www.firstpresridgewood.org)

