



CHURCH KEY NEWSLETTER



First Presbyterian Church
of Branchville, New Jersey

Volume 23, No.12

December 2023

DECEMBER AT A GLANCE:

Sunday, December 3rd—1st Sunday of Advent

**Sunday, December 10th—2nd Sunday of
Advent**

**Sunday, December 17th—3rd Sunday of
Advent & Children's Christmas Pageant**

**Sunday, December 24th-Christmas Eve
10:00am—Worship Service
7:15pm—Carols in Sanctuary
7:30pm—Full Candle lighting Service**

CHURCH KEY NEWSLETTER



Our Mission Statement:

Our mission is to gather as a church family for worship and spiritual fellowship, to nurture and educate, and to proclaim the gospel to the world.

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FIRST PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH
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BRANCHVILLE, NJ 07826



VOLUME 23, NO. 12

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NOTE FROM THE PASTOR

Transition Time

I love reading about the travels of Paul. He made three trips around the eastern Mediterranean, meeting people, sharing the gospel, helping communities of believers get a start. I imagine the small groups of new Christians meeting with Paul; they would have questions, he would teach, and the Spirit would be working through it all.

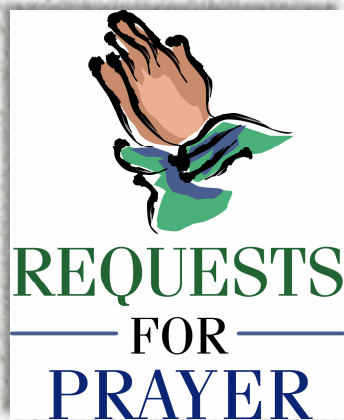
It is clear that Paul never intended to stay in any of these places he visited such as Ephesus, Thessalonika, Corinth, or any of the little villages along the way to these larger places. Paul had a very specific ministry – he was called to share the gospel with as many people as possible, including the Gentiles. This was a radical call, because the church council in Jerusalem believed the gospel was for Jews, not for anyone else. (The account of how this controversy was dealt with is found in Acts 15-16).

Transition times for congregations have some similarities to these early communities. A transitional pastor comes with particular training and gifts and with very specific tasks to accomplish while preparing a congregation for its next called pastor. 1st Presbyterian of Branchville has been waiting for this transition process to start since the retirement of Pastor Jeff Hatch. We see signs of faith and hope in this congregation; there is solid and active lay leadership and openness to the changes that come with new pastoral leadership.

As we enter into Advent, the season of waiting and preparing, we can look forward to the birth of Christ and then to our own season of waiting and preparing. May the wonder and joy of the Christmas season remain with us as we travel this transition time together!

God Bless,

Pastor Naraf



Please offer prayers for these concerns that have been brought to our attention. They are collected each Sunday morning during the past month from the prayer concerns list

- Aaron
- Andrew
- Ann
- Anita
- Ann & family on the loss of sister Pat
- Anna Mary Marchette
- Baby Matt
- Baby Michelle
- Barbara
- Beth
- Billy
- Bobby
- Bob McDowell
- Carla
- Casey
- Charlie
- Chase
- Dorothy
- Edie
- Edmund Zukowski
- Elizabeth
- Eric
- Esther
- Ethan
- Etta
- Evalyn
- Family of Andy Blackwood
- Fred
- Gabriel Titus
- Glen
- Greg
- Groo family
- Irene Clark
- Jackie Sheppard
- Jean Ransom and her family
- Jody
- Karen
- Karen V.
- Katie Leissler recovering from surgery
- Kayla
- Kelly O'Brien
- Kim
- Larry
- Laura S. Hip replacement surgery
- Linda Buehrer
- Little Edward
- John F. with head injury
- John G. for biopsy
- John Z..
- Marilyn DalCin
- Marion
- Marijorie
- Mary Marchette
- Mercedes
- Michele
- Michelle
- Mika
- Mr. Pipers
- Nancy
- Nia
- Patti
- Paul Opilla
- Paula Clarks Mother-in-Law
- Peace for Israel
- Prol Family with the death of Beth
- Robert Fedder who was in a bad accident
- Robin
- Susan Beck's Parents
- Tammy
- The family of Anna Kelso who passed on.
- The family of David Koch
- The Gobel family - loss of home in fire
- The Walsh family
- Tom Coulter
- Walsh family
- Wendy Piper



- Happy 43rd Anniversary to Mike & Karen Opilla - Nov. 15th



2023 CONTRIBUTIONS FOR 2023 - Any offerings that you wish to be posted for 2023 must be received by December 31, 2023

ANNUAL REPORTS ARE DUE - The deadline to submit your 2023 Annual report is Friday, December 29th. Please email it to the church office at: presbsec@ptd.net or drop it off. Thank you!



MANNA HOUSE \$5 SPAGETTI DINNER – Indoor dining or take-out, First Presbyterian Church, 54 High St., Newton (Church Street Entrance), December 12th from 5:00 to 6:30pm. Adults \$5.00, Children 5-12 \$3.00, and under 5 Free (included are spaghetti, salad, bread, and cookies or ice-cream)!

THANK YOU! - The deacons would like to thank everyone who donated a turkey and/or the fixings for a thanksgiving dinner. We were able to provide 18 thanksgiving baskets to our food pantry clients! "Rejoice always, pray continually, give thanks in all circumstances; for this is God's will for you in Jesus Christ" 1 Thessalonians 5:16-18



GIVING TREE STOCKING STUFFERS - The Deacons would like to provide a Christmas stocking for children whose parents use our food pantry. Deacons will provide the stockings, along with the age and gender of the child you are buying for. We will have the stockings available following the church service on December 3rd.

Some suggestions:

Provide 3 or more age appropriate items that fit in the stocking such as gloves, socks, hot wheels cars, markers, puzzle books, silly putty, card games, bubbles etc.

AND

\$25 gift card to Walmart (or a similar store) in our area.

Return the stocking to Fellowship Hall by Sunday, December 10th.

The Deacons are thankful for your help in putting a smile on a child's face Christmas morning. Any questions, please see Linda Osborne or contact me at 201-317-4756.





NEW MEMBERS' GATHERING - Would you like to find out more about Presbyterian beliefs and practices? Are you thinking about possibly becoming a member of this fellowship? Would you like a chance for some Q & A and dialogue with our Interim Co-Pastors, Nancy and David?

If you answered "yes" to any of these questions we should find a time to meet!

Please let Alycia in the office know of your interest. Call the Church Office: (973)-948-3495 or email to: presbsec@ptd.net. Alycia will let Nancy and David know so that arrangements may be made.

PASTOR NANCY AWAY - Pastor Nancy will be away in Minnesota Dec. 19-23 to be on hand for her mother's heart surgery. Pastor David will be holding down the fort.

INTERIM CO-PASTOR SCHEDULE - Nancy and David are serving as part-time interim pastors. They will each be in the church office one morning a week. They will also be available by appointment.

PRESBYTERY OF THE HIGHLANDS OF NEW JERSEY - Our presbytery meets every other month. It is usually by Zoom, although in the warmer months the meetings are often "hybrid" which means some commissioners gather in person while others attend via Zoom. The next meeting of our presbytery will be on Saturday, January 27, 2024 at 10 a.m. via Zoom. These meetings are open to all, but registration is required. Please see Pastor David for details.



COLLEGE CARE PACKAGE THANK YOU!

To My Wonderful Church Family,

I am so blessed to have you all and I thank you from the bottom of my heart for the care package!

It means a lot to have you all by my side through my journey in college.

With love & Thanks,

Tara Hughes

thank you!

4TH QUARTER MISSION



Since 1997, Family Promise of Sussex County has provided services to assist families and single men and women as they work towards housing stability and self-sufficiency. Family Promise of Sussex County works to eradicate homelessness in Sussex County and provides resources to strengthen children and families. They provide emergency shelter, meals, counseling,

and intensive case management services. Your contributions to the 4th Quarter Mission (October–December) will go to this very worthy program to help our Sussex County neighbors who are in dire need. You may mail a check made out to “First Presbyterian Church of Branchville” with "Family Promise" in the memo. Your contributions to special mission projects make a big difference!! Thank you for your generosity.



NOVEMBER SESSION MEETING HIGHLIGHTS (11/13)

- The organ and hand bells have been added to our insurance policy.
- The Terms of Call worksheets have been signed by Pastor Nancy and Pastor David Young.
- Pledges are behind by \$27,000 YTD.
- Member Giving is behind by \$14,000 YTD.
- Other (not pledged) is behind by \$22,000 YTD.
- Per Capita is behind by \$400 YTD.
- Fundraisers are behind by \$8600 YTD.
- E giving is ahead by \$16,442 YTD.
- Pastor David will preach on December 24th.
- We are experiencing a lack of Sunday School teaching staff. Anyone interested in becoming a Sunday School teacher, please speak with Debbie Anderson.
- Five College Care packages were mailed out in October.
- Halloween candy was handed out on Halloween.
- We will be building graham cracker houses on December 3rd after worship.
- Our 3rd quarter mission, DonorsChoose.org raised \$460. Books were donated to a kindergarten classroom in Hardyston and energy release equipment for classes at High Point High School.
- Paul Adams will be giving us an accounting of our pianos for their value and condition.
- Advent lessons will begin on December 7th and run for 3 weeks from 5:30 until 7:00 pm and will include a soup supper.
- Mark Hontz will preach on March 3rd.
- The Officer & Personnel Committee has finalized the Video and Alcohol Policy.
- The Personnel Policy and Terms of Employment Policy has been finalized and approved.
- The Scouts have asked Mike Opilla to re-sign their charter with us.
- The pack is getting to be very small and Mike would like to help promote and hopefully grow the pack.





Step Up and Out for Stewardship

“We three kings of orient are. Bearing gifts we traverse afar. Field and fountain. Moor and mountain. Following yonder star.

O star of wonder, star of night. Star with royal beauty bright. Westward leading, Still proceeding. Guide us to the perfect light.”

John H. Hopkins (1857)

What is Stewardship: December is Advent

We all know the above carol! We see the light. We believe. We want to give gifts. This month’s message has a lot to do with preparing the way. While many are preparing for Christmas, it feels like there’s way too much to do and not enough hours in the day. Advent teaches us to slow down and become more deliberate in preparing the way for Jesus. We don’t become good stewards of our time, talent, and resources overnight or by accident. We need good teachers to guide and model for us.

Take some time this week to breathe.

Look around you and consider what really matters.

P: Presbyterians Participating & Privileged to believe and share the Light

L: Live generously with the Love shared with GOD

E: Experience the joy & Excitement of stewardship during Advent

D: Demonstrate commitment & Discipleship

G: Be Grateful of God and Give Gifts in his name

E: Envelopes for offerings

(S): Stewardship & Support Our

Sing your favorite carol.

Please consider coming out of the darkness, give light, give a gift by completing and returning your 2024 pledge card.

Yours In fellowship –

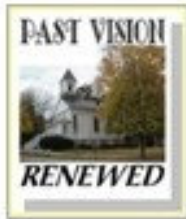
Susan Parson

Stewardship Chair

sepk@icloud.com

551.358.1266

Donation to the PVR "Past Vision Renewed" Campaign



-and/or-

Live, Red Christmas Poinsettias For the Sanctuary

We are proud of the improvements that have been made to our church, but the list isn't complete. We encourage you to continue supporting the PVR projects.
Thank you in advance for your support.

Please make checks payable to:
"First Presbyterian Church"
and return to Gail Burckes or our Church Administrative
Assistant Alycia.

Deadline for listing in our Christmas Bulletin is December 15th.

Donation to PVR campaign \$ _____

-and/or-

LIVE Red Poinsettias _____ x \$15 each

Given by: _____

Given in Memory of: _____

-or-

Given in Honor of: _____

Thank you in advance for your Holiday donation.

HAPPY BIRTHDAY DECEMBER

Julie Willis	12/2	Jeremy Willis	12/15
Jesse Bambrick	12/4	Patrick Murphy	12/15
John Newcomer	12/6	Susan Kurland	12/20
Cathy Bambrick	12/7	Karen Utter	12/31
Lisa Hughes	12/11		
Barbara Mueller	12/11		

RECIPE OF THE MONTH

Easy Truffle Recipe

INGREDIENTS

- 3 cups semisweet chocolate chips
- 1 can sweetened condensed milk
- 1 tablespoon vanilla
- Toasted finely chopped nuts
- Assorted sprinkles



PREPARATION

1. Place chocolate chips and milk in a microwave-safe bowl; microwave on high for 3 minutes, stirring halfway through. Stir in vanilla. Refrigerate, covered, until firm enough to shape, about 3 hours.
2. Shape into 1-in. balls; roll in nuts or jimmies. Place in a 15x10x1-in. pan; refrigerate until firm, about 1 hour.



DECEMBER
USHERS

Deacon of the Month—Linda & Judy
3rd – Nancy Clink/Kathleen K.
10th – Marion/Buzz Alden
17th – Judy Casey/Gay Plog
24th – Linda Osborne/Debbie Anderson
24th – Linda Osborne/Open
31st – Open/Open

LAY READERS

3rd – Linda Wistermayer
10th – Patricia Cherney
17th – Open
24th – Open
24th – Open
31st – Donna Havelin

First Presbyterian Church of Branchville
PO Box 1
3-5 Wantage Avenue
Branchville, NJ 07826
Phone 973-948-3495

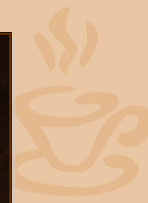


View our website at:
<http://www.fpcbranchville.org>

and Facebook at:
<http://www.facebook.com>

You may e-mail
the secretary at presbsec@ptd.net

View a daily devotion at:
<http://www.d365.org>



DECEMBER COFFEE HOUR

DAISEY ROE

DECEMBER FLOWER CHART:

If you would like to provide flowers for any of the dates, please see instructions below:

Dates:

3rd –
10th –
17th –
24th –
31st –

Call Lisa the week before your signup to have flowers delivered. Gail Burckes will contact you for your dedication or memorial.

Flowers By Lisa 862-268-3123





First Presbyterian Church of Branchville, NJ

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday																																																																																			
<div style="display: flex; justify-content: space-around;"> <div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 5px;"> <p style="text-align: center; font-size: small;">Nov 2023</p> <table style="width: 100%; border-collapse: collapse; font-size: x-small;"> <tr><th>S</th><th>M</th><th>T</th><th>W</th><th>T</th><th>F</th><th>S</th></tr> <tr><td></td><td></td><td>1</td><td>2</td><td>3</td><td>4</td><td></td></tr> <tr><td>5</td><td>6</td><td>7</td><td>8</td><td>9</td><td>10</td><td>11</td></tr> <tr><td>12</td><td>13</td><td>14</td><td>15</td><td>16</td><td>17</td><td>18</td></tr> <tr><td>19</td><td>20</td><td>21</td><td>22</td><td>23</td><td>24</td><td>25</td></tr> <tr><td>26</td><td>27</td><td>28</td><td>29</td><td>30</td><td></td><td></td></tr> </table> </div> <div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 5px;"> <p style="text-align: center; font-size: small;">Jan 2024</p> <table style="width: 100%; border-collapse: collapse; font-size: x-small;"> <tr><th>S</th><th>M</th><th>T</th><th>W</th><th>T</th><th>F</th><th>S</th></tr> <tr><td></td><td>1</td><td>2</td><td>3</td><td>4</td><td>5</td><td>6</td></tr> <tr><td>7</td><td>8</td><td>9</td><td>10</td><td>11</td><td>12</td><td>13</td></tr> <tr><td>14</td><td>15</td><td>16</td><td>17</td><td>18</td><td>19</td><td>20</td></tr> <tr><td>21</td><td>22</td><td>23</td><td>24</td><td>25</td><td>26</td><td>27</td></tr> <tr><td>28</td><td>29</td><td>30</td><td>31</td><td></td><td></td><td></td></tr> </table> </div> </div>				S	M	T	W	T	F	S			1	2	3	4		5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	22	23	24	25	26	27	28	29	30			S	M	T	W	T	F	S		1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	22	23	24	25	26	27	28	29	30	31				<p style="color: red; font-size: 2em;">1</p> <p style="font-size: x-small;">6:00 PM Branchville Tree Lighting</p>	<p style="color: red; font-size: 2em;">2</p> <p style="font-size: x-small;">9:00 AM - 12:00 PM Daisy Roe Thrift Shop Christmas Sale/Final Sale</p>
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