



CHURCH KEY NEWSLETTER



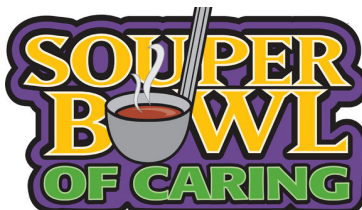
First Presbyterian Church
of Branchville, New Jersey

Volume 24, No. 2

February 2024

FEBRUARY AT A GLANCE:

11th – Souper Bowl of Caring Sunday



14th – Ash Wednesday 15th – Israel & Palestine Presentation



19th – Presidents' Day—Office Closed



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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VOLUME 24, NO. 2

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NOTE FROM THE PASTOR

For those of you who don't know, I am a P.K. (Preacher's Kid). I grew up going to morning and evening services, wearing my "Sunday best", smiling for pictures even when I was "less than pleased", coloring in the pew (but usually not on the pew!), and enduring a hot sanctuary in the summer and a cold one in the winter.

Having the "privilege" of 2 clergy parents means that our three children are PK's times 2! Growing up they would often complain to us that they didn't have a choice. They had to come to church. We reassured them that they ALWAYS had a choice: They could come to church "happy" ... or "not so happy!"

These days, with all the competing claims upon our time and with many activities being scheduled on Sunday it seems as though a sense of Sabbath is slipping away. For parents, especially those with small children, Sunday presents all kinds of challenges. We appreciate the efforts parents are making and the time and effort involved. This is equally true whether your children attend Sunday School or whether they are in the pew with you.

Recently I came across a blog article by Jamie Bruesehoff. It is addressed to parents, but it speaks to us all and reminds us of how important it is to welcome one another with the hospitality of Jesus. Here's what she has written:

Dear Parents With Young Children in Church

You are doing something really, really important. I know it's not easy. I see you with your arms overflowing, and I know you came to church already tired. Parenting is tiring. Really tiring.

I watch you bounce and sway trying to keep the baby quiet, juggling the infant car seat and the diaper bag as you find a seat. I see you wince as your child cries. I see you anxiously pull things out of your bag of tricks to try to quiet them. (CONTINUE PG. 3)

And I see you with your toddler and your preschooler. I watch you cringe when your little girl asks an innocent question in a voice that might not be an inside voice let alone a church whisper. I hear the exasperation in your voice as you beg your child to just sit, to be quiet as you feel everyone's eyes on you. Not everyone is looking, but I know it feels that way.

I know you're wondering, is this worth it? Why do I bother? I know you often leave church more exhausted than fulfilled. But what you are doing is so important. When you are here, the church is filled with a joyful noise. When you are here, the Body of Christ is more fully present. When you are here, we are reminded that this worship thing we do isn't about Bible Study or personal, quiet contemplation but coming together to worship as a community where all are welcome, where we share in the Word and Sacrament together.

When you are here, I have hope that these pews won't be empty in 10 years when your kids are old enough to sit quietly and behave in worship. I know that they are learning how and why we worship now, before it's too late. They are learning that worship is important.

I see them learning. In the midst of the cries, whines, and giggles, in the midst of the crinkling of pretzel bags and the growing pile of crumbs, I see a little girl who insists on going two pews up to share peace with someone she's never met. I hear a little boy slurping (quite loudly) every last drop of his communion wine out of the cup, determined not to miss a drop of Jesus. I watch a child excitedly color a cross and point to the one in the front of the sanctuary. I hear the echos of "Amens" just a few seconds after the rest of the community says it together. I watch a boy just learning to read try to sound out the words in the worship book or count his way to Hymn 672. Even on weeks when I can't see my own children learning because, well, it's one of "those mornings," I can see your children learning.

I know how hard it is to do what you're doing, but I want you to know it matters. It matters to me. It matters to my children to not be alone in the pew. It matters to the congregation to know that families care about faith, to see young people... and even on those weeks when you can't see the little moments, it matters to your children.

It matters that they learn that worship is what we do as a community of faith, that everyone is welcome, that their worship matters. When we teach children that their worship matters, we teach them that they are enough right here and right now as members of the church community. They don't need to wait until they can believe, pray or worship a certain way to be welcome here, and I know adults who are still looking to be shown that. It matters that children learn that they are an integral part of this church, that their prayers, their songs, and even their badly (or perfectly-timed, depending on who you ask) cries and whines are a joyful noise because it means they are present.

I know it's hard, but thank you for what you do when you bring your children to church. Please know that your family -- with all of its noise, struggle, commotion, and joy -- are not simply tolerated, you are a vital part of the community gathered in worship.

We hope to see you soon!

*This post originally appeared on [I Am Totally *That* Mom.](#)*

Pastor David




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

- Irene Clark and Family for their loss
- James Starkey
- Jenny
- Joey Greene
- John and Connie Dubas
- Karrie Barlette
- Kenny Bekin
- Kim
- Kin
- Linda
- Linda Buehrer
- Margie
- May
- Mike Blackburn
- Paul Opilla
- Paula Clark & Family on the loss of her Mother-in-Law.
- Sam Castimore
- Suzi
- Tammy
- The Haskin's family
- Tom
- Tom Coulter
- Anita
- Anna Mary Markette
- Bev Keur
- Bev Simon
- Bill
- Bob Fedder
- Casey
- Cathy
- Charlie
- Cindy Jones
- Deb
- Deb Seo
- Edmund Zukowski
- Ellen
- Esther
- Evalyn Novotny and family of loss of Mother-in-Law
- Fred
- Glenn Bischoff - My Aunt Anna Mary Marchette and prayers for my health concerns.


For God 


So lo**V**ed the world

th**a**t HE gave


HIS only 

begott**e**n


 So**n** so



 th**t**hat whoever

 bel**i**eves

 i**n** HIM shall

 hav**e** everlasting

 **life**

 John 3:16 



Church News



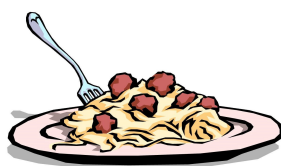
MISSION NEWS - It's a new year – with an age-old challenge: HUNGER!

Our first quarterly Local Mission once again focuses on helping to feed the hungry in two local “soup kitchens”: Manna House and Harvest House. Both of these long-running programs have adapted to the changes that come with time as they continue to provide a solid meal to those in need.

Your donations will ensure the food and supplies that are needed will be

available in order to serve our local population in need. Please help us continue to support these well-established organizations with a check made out to FPCB with “1st Quarterly Mission” in the memo line. If you are in the sanctuary, you can use the special envelopes in the pew. Your donations really make a difference! And, if you have time to contribute, we often need volunteers to help prepare and serve the meals at the First Presbyterian Church of Newton on the 4th Tuesday of the month. You can contact the church office or Bev Simon for more information. It is a wonderful experience!

THE 2024 SOUPER BOWL OF CARING - offering will be Sunday, February 11th, the day of SUPER BOWL!! Donations this year will be added to our 1st Quarter Mission - Manna House and Harvest House. We will have "Soup Pots" in church that day where you can drop your donation to help feed the hungry folks in our community. Checks may be made out to First Presbyterian Church of Branchville with “Souper Bowl” on the memo line. You can also give through e-giving by checking the fund list for Souper Bowl of Caring and checking the box next to it. As always, thank you for your support!!



MANNA HOUSE \$5 SPAGETTI DINNER – Indoor dining or take-out , First Presbyterian Church, 54 High St., Newton (Church Street Entrance), February 13th 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)!

OUR FOOD PANTRY is in need of canned stew, spam and chili. Please consider picking up a few items while doing your own household food shopping. Thank you!



DAISEY ROE will meet Wednesday, February 14th in the Fellowship Hall, Room 4 at 1:00pm for Easter crafts and our meeting at 3:00pm. Debbie and Gay will serve refreshments. Hope you'll join us. Our thrift shop and other fundraisers were very successful in 2023. Thanks for your help. Please mark your calendars and plan to volunteer and join our activities and projects this year.



CHRISTIAN EDUCATION CORNER

SUNDAY SCHOOL SCOOP

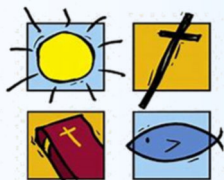
- This month's theme is "The Love of God and his Son Jesus"
- Sunday Feb 11th is "Friendship Day", So bring a friend to Sunday School.
- We will continue to meet the first 3 Sundays of the month.



WE NEED YOU!!!

- There is a rotating schedule so, you are needed for only 3 weeks, as the children will attend church for the final Sunday.
- Easy curriculum will be provided.
- Sunday School is one of the cornerstones of our church, and we cannot share God's love with future generations without your help!
- Sign-up sheet will be in Fellowship Hall.
- Christian Ed Meeting will be 2/11/24 at 11:10am in the Fellowship Hall

ADULT EDUCATION



PRESENTATION ON ISRAEL AND PALESTINE - The First Presbyterian Church of Branchville is inviting our congregation and greater community to a presentation about the issues and conflict between Israelis and Palestinians in what we commonly refer to as The Holy Land. The Rev. Dr. Christopher Doyle, pastor of the Oak Ridge and West Milford Presbyterian Churches, will be presenting a program on the evening of Thursday, February 15th, at 7pm, that will

hopefully bring some clarity to a situation that is complex and confusing, to say the least. Chris studied, worked, and lived in the Holy Land for nearly 15 years. He will be sharing some of the history of the Holy Land, as well as his experiences and insights into what everyone in the world has seen taking place there. Thursday, February 15th @ 7 PM, Fellowship Hall.

ADULT SOUP & STUDY

- ◇ Meets Thursdays 5:30 -6:45pm, Currently "The Gospel of Mark" until February 8th.
- ◇ Lenten Study begins Thursday, February 22nd, 5:30 - 6:45pm. Through Thursday, March 21st.
- ◇ Please join us for a delicious soup supper and study. Sign-up sheet in the Fellowship Hall.





In February we are encouraged to think more about the love in our lives. It's also a great time to remember that, as Christians, we have the privilege and power to share the great Love of Christ far beyond our own limited reach. The 2024 Per Capita is \$42.50 per person. Our Per Capita is used to pay administrative costs of Presbytery, Synod, and General Assembly, and also goes toward denominational missions. It would help us meet our budget if you would use the Per Capita envelope, or note on a check "Per Capita," to help us offset what we have to pay out of our church budget. So please, in February, as you celebrate the many gifts of Love, remember to Love Your Church with your Per Capita gift.

JANUARY SESSION MEETING HIGHLIGHTS (1/08)

- The Session approved by consensus that the Deacons will get an email/telephone chain together for letting the congregation know of any announcements.
- The Fellowship Committee will put a new member process together.
- Officer training (Elders & Deacons) will take place on January 20, 2024 from 10 am until noon in Fellowship Hall.
- There will be a Session retreat. Date and time to be determined.
- Two Elders and three congregational members will be needed to form a team for discernment study.
- We will need some members to volunteer to be Sunday School teachers.
- Our year ended with the following figures:
 - Pledges are \$56,699
 - Member Giving is \$41,403
 - Per Capita is \$4,044
 - E giving is \$24,979
- The Missions Committee collected \$145 to be added to the budgeted amount of \$250 for a total donation amount of \$395 for our fourth quarter mission, Family Promise of Sussex County.
- There will be another soup & study classes beginning January 11th.
- Pastor Chris Doyle will be here on February 15th to give a program on the current situation on Palestine.
- We still have two positions open for Deacons and two positions open for Elders. Please volunteer. Your talents are needed.
- A motion was made and approved for the additional costs for hooking up the new stove up to \$2,000.
- So far, \$73,400 has been pledged for 2024 vs. the budgeted \$80,000.
- 31 pledge cards were returned vs. 110 sent out.
- Our website needs to be updated and we will need an I. T. person.
- Another Adult Study was approved by the Session on "Who Jesus Is". Dates to be announced.
- members. This is 35% less pledges received to date compared to last year.
- This is \$56,420 in pledges vs. the \$80,000 budget.





Step Up and Out for Stewardship

“Do not lay up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy and where thieves break in and steal, but lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust destroys and where thieves do not break in and steal. For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.” Matt. 6:19-21

What is Stewardship: Love Your Church

February is cold and snowy this year. We celebrate Valentine’s Day on the 14th. Aside from showing your love to your partner, child, grandchild, etc. please show your love to our church. The good news is that among all the rising costs we are seeing, the 2024 PER CAPITA remains the same as last year. \$42.50. Please show your love to our church and pay the per capita. As listed in the bulletin there are multiple ways to pay your per capita.

- ◇ Via text: chose per capita.
- ◇ Attend worship in person and place in offering plate
- ◇ Mail to First Presbyterian Church of Branchville

Jesus taught us about investing in the future, not hoarding. If you have yet to complete and hand in your 2024 pledge, we ask you to please do so.

Physical pledge cards are available in the sanctuary and will be mailed to you along with the Narrative Budget if you missed the congregational meeting. If completing the physical card is not an option, please email your pledge to me at sepk@icloud.com or to the church office at presbsec@ptd.net.

Please include in your prayers to see, understand Christian kindness and a guidance for giving to the church for our community and mission

Yours In fellowship –
Susan Parson
Stewardship Chair
sepk@icloud.com
551.358.1266

HAPPY BIRTHDAY FEBRUARY

Richard Martin	2/2	Carly Swanson	2/19
Alycia Gardner	2/3	Erika Clausen	2/20
Mike Opilla	2/4	Paul Sutphen	2/23
Jim Rawson	2/10	Aidan Becker	2/27
Ember Morris	2/18	Bryant Hatch	2/27



RECIPE OF THE MONTH



Strawberry Valentines Chex Mix

INGREDIENTS

- 4-6 cups Rice Chex cereal
- 1 8- oz bag Strawberry Candy Melts OR
- 1 bag of white chocolate baking chips
- 1 box of Strawberry Creme Jell-O Pudding
- Valentines M&M's and/or Sprinkles



PREPARATION

1. Measure out Chex cereal into a large bowl. Note: if you're using the Strawberry Candy Melts, you'll use 4 cups of cereal. If you're using the white chocolate chips + pudding mix, you'll use 6 cups of cereal.
2. Pour chocolate into a small glass dish. Add 1/2 tsp shortening, if desired, to help the chocolate coat the cereal easier. Microwave for 1 minute 20 seconds. Let sit in the microwave for 3 minutes. Remove and gently stir. If chocolate loves its shape and looks smooth, it's done. If not, return to the microwave in 15 second increments, letting it sit for 2-3 minutes each time, until melted and smooth.
3. If you used White Chocolate Chips + Pudding Mix: Add 4 TBSP of the strawberry creme pudding into the white chocolate and stir gently until smooth. Add 2 drops of red food coloring, if desired.
4. Pour the chocolate mixture over the Chex cereal and stir gently to coat.
5. Transfer cereal mixture to a large piece of wax paper. Sprinkle with M&M's and Valentines sprinkles, if desired. Let cool to set. Break pieces and store in an airtight container to save. Candy can be made up to 3-4 days ahead, if desired. It saves well!



**FEBRUARY
USHERS**

Deacon of the Month—Lisa Hughes

- 4th – Ann Bain/Judy Casey**
- 11th – Judy Casey/OPEN**
- 18th – Lisa Hughes/Nancy Clink**
- 25th – Linda Osborne/Gay Plog**

LAY READERS

- 4th – Bev Simon**
- 11th – Debbie Gardner**
- 18th – Mike Opilla**
- 25th – Sandra Carlisle**

**First Presbyterian Church of Branchville
PO Box 1**

**3-5 Wantage Avenue
Branchville, NJ 07826
Phone 973-948-3495**

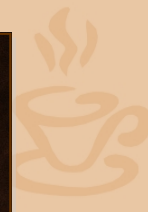


**View our website at:
<http://www.fpcbranchville.org>**

**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>**



FEBRUARY COFFEE HOUR

CHANCEL CHOIR

FEBRUARY FLOWER CHART:

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

Dates:

- 4th –**
- 11th –**
- 18th –**
- 25th –**

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

Flowers By Lisa 862-268-3123



FEBRUARY 2024

First Presbyterian Church of Branchville, NJ

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday																																																																																										
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