



The First Presbyterian Church of Ridgewood

First Press Newsletter

722 E Ridgewood Ave, Ridgewood, NJ 07450
(201) 652-2504

December 2024

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,

Christmas is typically experienced as a day and a season filled with great joy! But that is not how everyone experiences Christmas.

For those who have lost a loved one, for those struggling with depression, for those going through separation or divorce, for those who have lost a job or who may be facing financial difficulty, for those caught up in addiction, for those afflicted by a serious illness, for those whose level of stress is off the charts, for those who feel discouraged for any number of reasons, Christmas and the days leading up to it can be difficult.



This December, once again, First Pres will offer a Longest Night service for those who find themselves in a place of darkness. A Longest Night service is typically held on or around the winter solstice – when daylight is in short supply and darkness lingers. For those who find themselves caught in a long, dark night of the soul, such a service can provide a glimmer of light and hope.

Longest Night Service ~ Wednesday, December 18, at 7:00 p.m.

If you could use a time and place of quiet rest during this season, you are welcome to join us in the Chapel for this meaningful service – a quiet refuge of prayer, music and remembrance. We will acknowledge our losses and ponder the everlasting hope that shines as light in the darkness.

Grace and peace,
Bruce

A Service of Hope and Healing



**First Presbyterian Church of Ridgewood
Wednesday, December 18, 2024
7:00 p.m. in the Chapel**

During the Advent and Christmas season, we are surrounded by sparkling decorations and cheerful music. It seems as if everyone is caught up in the joyful spirit of Christmas. For many people, however, the holiday can be difficult, sad and lonely.

The Service of the Longest Night will be held on the Wednesday evening before the longest night of the year. The "longest night" has become an expression for the spiritual journey of grief, loss and loneliness— a loss of a loved one, friend, relationship or a job. Our time together will be especially appropriate for those who have experienced a significant loss in the past year or years.

In this time of worship, you are invited to a quiet refuge of prayer, music and remembrance. We will acknowledge our losses and ponder the everlasting hope that shines like a light in the darkness. Therefore, we hope that this evening can be a gift to individuals and the community alike, providing a space of calm, quiet, and healing. You are invited to bring someone who may need prayer and encouragement.

~

**Following the service,
you are invited to share a meal together at the Ho-Ho-Kus Inn
Ho-Ho-Kus Inn Menu <https://hohokusinn.com/menu/>**

**If interested, please RSVP by Friday, December 13 to
Pastor Bruce: PastorBruce@firstpresridgewood.org
Donna Flagg: flaggbda@gmail.com**



Our December Lessons include Advent and the Story of Jesus' Birth.
We're also enjoying our Pageant rehearsals!



Our **Thanksgiving luncheon** was held on Thursday, November 14th at noon in our Dining Room. It was a lovely afternoon. Twenty one men and women gathered to share warm conversation, food and fellowship. A huge thank you to Greta Croucher for her delicious garlic mashed potatoes and Laura Magrath for a delicious spiral ham! A special thank you to Diane & Sami Eliya and Peter Castaldo for helping in the kitchen! Thank you to Tom Corozza for all your help!

First Pres. Church School is sponsoring a toy collection for Toys for Tots November 17th through December 8th. Please bring an unwrapped NEW toy or game for a girl or boy. There is a designated box in the Cloister Hall for all donations!

Thank You!



A BIG Thank you to all who donated to our Fall Food Drive throughout the month of November. You are all a blessing to so many! Our donations helped to support Hawthorne's Borough Hall Pantry. Thank You!

The Annual **Christmas bake sale** will be held on
Sunday, December 15th after worship!
Come and choose your favorite pie, cake, bars or cookies!
All proceeds are donated to Family Promise's "Camp Lots of Fun"!



Mitten Tree



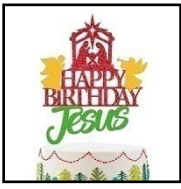
MITTENS, HATS, GLOVES, SCARVES

During the month of December, we are collecting NEW hats, gloves, mittens and scarves to support the Center for Food Action in Mahwah.

Our Mitten Tree is located in the hallway by St. Vincent's Door. Please place your items on the tree. Additionally, there will be a box marked Mitten Tree Donations.

Please help someone stay warm this winter season!

Sponsored by the Christian Ed Committee.



We invite you to celebrate our Savior's Birth on Sunday, December 8th in our auditorium during coffee hour. There will be a craft time, an activity and we will sing happy birthday to Jesus and enjoy birthday cake!

*This event is held in loving memory of *Diana, Kristina & Jennifer Collentine*.

CHRISTMAS MART



On Sunday, December 8th and 15th all church school students will have an opportunity to shop for their family and friends at our (no cost) Christmas Mart located on a table in the Sanctuary!



Please join us on Sunday, December 22nd for our 10:00am Worship Service and Annual **Christmas Pageant** entitled:

"The 12 Symbols of Christmas"



Come and celebrate the birth of Jesus with food & friends in fellowship!
Sunday, **D**ecember 22nd following worship service.

Reservations are *not* required.

Free will donation only!

BAPTISM

During our church service on November 17th Alina Rose Hutton was baptized. She is the daughter of Michael and Brianna Hutton. We rejoice with Alina and her family on this significant day in her life.



Anita Hutton and Brianna Hutton
with baby Alina.



Pastor Bruce with baby Alina.



On behalf of the entire First Pres. Nursery School, we wish each of you a blessed Christmas and a Happy New Year!



ENDOWMENT CORNER:



Christmas Blessings

Do you have friends and family members on your Christmas gift-giving list for whom buying is difficult? We are often so blessed that there is no 'thing' that we really need.

The Endowment Committee is introducing our 'Christmas Blessings' campaign which provides the perfect gift for the person who has everything.

For a \$25 donation to Endowment, you will receive a 'Christmas Blessing' greeting card which includes an insert which explains how you have made a donation to our Endowment Fund in the recipient's honor this Christmas season.

Stop by the Endowment Fund table at Coffee Hour each Sunday in December to purchase your 'Christmas Blessings' cards.

If you are unable to get to church, you can email Laura Magrath (magrath@optonline.com) to arrange for delivery!

MISSION:



In November we delivered a meal that was made with heart and a dash of culinary magic! Thanks to our wonderful volunteer chefs, we served a dinner that impressed and, as always, smelled delicious.

We served up Bobbe Kutcha's cranberry chicken, Sue Dickinson's pulled pork with coleslaw, and Joan Davies' mac and cheese—comfort food at its finest! Plus, Suzy McDevitt's broccoli cauliflower casserole added the perfect veggie touch, along with Barbara Dunn's fresh bread and fruit that completed the spread. All was delivered hot and ready to eat by the Torielli family. This meal surely brought some warmth to a chilly night! ♥

Want to join this delicious cause? Click the link to sign up and make a difference. Thank you!

<https://www.signupgenius.com/go/20F0845ACAE2BA7F49-51100449-stpauls>



COAT DRIVE UPDATE!

The Mission, Peace and Social Righteous Team is very pleased to announce that our Coat Drive received 40 donated coats of assorted sizes, colors and styles to benefit Jersey Cares! Thank you for your kindness and generosity in keeping many people warm this winter!



**First Wednesdays
December 2024**

Ladies, join us for an evening of food, conversation, and spiritual inspiration. It's a wonderful opportunity for women of all ages to gather together with church friends and make new ones, as we discover fresh ways to connect with one another and with God. Each gathering will include a brief spiritual inspiration with most of the time for people to enjoy fellowship over food.

- What:** **December Hostess – Donna Flagg**
You are invited to bring a dish to the potluck dinner.
- Spiritual Inspiration of the Month – Donna Flagg**
The Advent Wreath – A Spiritual Practice
- Date:** **Wednesday, December 4, 2024**
- Time:** **6:30 p.m. - 8:30 p.m.**
- Place:** **First Presbyterian Church
Minnema Room**

**Please RSVP by Friday, November 29 to Donna Flagg
Via Email or Phone**

Email: flaggbda@gmail.com
Phone number: 201-819-2327

First Pres Members and Friends Volunteer at Passaic County Habitat





Journeying Through Grief A Six-Session Series Led by Pastor Bruce

**Video Resource: The Grief Journey
By Ann-Marie Lockmyer & Ron Gray, LMFT
MyGriefCare-Grief & Trauma Healing Network,LLC**

**We will meet on the following Wednesdays at Noon in the Manse
for discussion and sharing along with a light lunch.**

January 8	Intro to the Grief Journey
January 22	The Grief Journey ~ Surviving
February 5	The Grief Journey ~ Existing
February 19	The Grief Journey ~ Seeking
March 5	The Grief Journey ~ Healing
March 19	The Grief Journey ~ Living Again

**RSVP by January 3rd to PastorBruce@firstpresridgewood.org or 215.337.5623
or to the Church Office at office@firstpresridgewood.org or 201.652.2504**



Advent and Christmas Happenings at First Pres Church

Sunday, December 1st, 8th, 15th, & 22nd - Advent Candle Lighting During Worship - Join us in the sanctuary or online for this meaningful service, which will include the traditional lighting of the Advent Candle(s).

Sunday, December 1st - Celebration of Light and Tree Lighting 6:00 p.m. - Come and gather with others to celebrate the lighting of our evergreen tree, sing some carols, enjoy refreshments and have fun at the craft table.

Saturday, December 7th - Santa Songsters Caroling at Sunrise Senior Living Facilities - Enjoy caroling with others to bring cheer to residents at Sunrise in Franklin Lakes at 2:00 p.m. and Sunrise in Woodcliff Lake at 3:30 p.m.

Sunday, December 8th – Church School Celebrates Savior’s Birth - Come celebrate our Savior’s birth during Sunday School and coffee hour as we talk about the birth of Jesus, decorate cookies, enjoy crafts, games and cake.

Sunday, December 8th & 15th – Church School Students Christmas Mart - Children and youth are invited to shop at no cost for their families and friends at the Christmas Mart located in the Sacristy,

Sunday, December 15th - Annual Christmas Bake Sale to Support Camp Lots of Fun - Join us following worship to purchase and enjoy delicious baked products. Proceeds will fund scholarships for homeless children to attend Camp Lots of Fun during the summer. Bakers and buyers needed!

Wednesday, December 18th - Longest Night Service in the Chapel 7:00 p.m. - Come to this special service that can provide a glimmer of light and hope for those who are feeling sad and/or have experienced losses in their lives. During this time of worship and contemplation, you are invited to a quiet refuge of prayer, music and remembrance. As you step into this space of calm, quieting and healing, we will acknowledge our losses and ponder the everlasting hope that shines as light in the darkness.

Sunday, December 22nd - Annual Christmas Pageant 10:00 a.m. - Don't miss this annual tradition as our talented children lead us in worship. It is one of the very special services of the church year highlighting the musical and performing talents of the children. **Christmas Brunch** - Come and enjoy fellowship time over brunch after worship.

Tuesday, December 24th - Christmas Eve Candlelight Service 7:30 p.m. - Come and have your spirit nourished during this traditional service of Lessons and Carols ~ a service rich with familiar readings and beautiful music!

Sunday, December 29th - Carol Sing During Worship Service - Come for worship and a Christmas Carol Sing! Enjoy with others as we sing our favorite Christmas Carols, a perfect way to continue to celebrate Christmas with a festive spirit!

**Remember our Coat Drive, Food Drive,
Mitten Tree, and Toys for Tots!**

Friends of First Pres Church Events



NJ Choral Society "Illuminare" Holiday Concert Live Performances

Linda Sweetman-Waters, Pianist/Organist

December 14th, Saturday at 7:30 p.m. at Our Lady of the Valley Church in Wayne NJ

December 15th, Sunday at 3:00 p.m. at Our Lady of the Valley Church in Wayne NJ

December 17th, Tuesday at 7:30pm at West Side Presbyterian Church in Ridgewood NJ

Orpheus Men's Chorus Holiday Concerts

December 14th, Saturday at 7:30 p.m. at First Presbyterian Church Ridgewood NJ

December 15th, Sunday at 4:00 p.m. at First Presbyterian Church Ridgewood NJ

The Ridgewood Singers Holiday Concert

December 8th, Sunday at 2:00 p.m. at First Presbyterian Church Ridgewood NJ



~ Calling all Santa Songsters ~

**Join us as we bring tidings of comfort and joy to our senior friends.
Accompanied by Christopher Vehmas, we will sing carols.**

**December 7th at Sunrise of Franklin Lakes from 2:00-2:45 PM
and at Sunrise of Woodcliff Lake from 3:30-4:15 PM!**

Sign up during Coffee Hour!

**Or let Diane Eliya know if you will be attending
201-481-1036 or Eliyad@hotmail.com**

Christmas Day

by Joanne Hare

It is the pure joy, more than anything.
The wellspring of love pouring from the heart.
The promise made flesh, of which angels sing.
The gateway to heaven, needing no chart.

The birth of Jesus, from the virgin's womb.
The mighty kings kneeling on humbled knee.
The beggars who feast in this banquet room.
The sinners who worship the holy three.

The true destiny that will take its course.
The cross of salvation raised on a hill.
The resurrection of terrible force.
The goodness, flowing from blood meant to spill.

The miracle of life, meeting no end.
The death, leading the way to the eternal.
The strings of the harp, and voices to blend.
The word of the Lord, all believers tell.

The rejoicing, with praises sung aloud.
The infant cuddled on a bed of hay.
The adoring few, praying with head bowed.
The miracle of peace on Christmas day.





Question: What is a dog's favorite Christmas Song?

Answer: *Fleas Navidad*

Question: Why was Santa's little helper depressed?

Answer: Because he had very low *elf* esteem!

Just Sayin'...."When what to my wondering eyes should appear, ten extra pounds on my hips, thighs and rear..."

The Church Mouse:

Thought for the month:

"Each year's regrets are envelopes in which messages of hope are found for the New Year."

... John R. Dallas Jr.



! MERRY CHRISTMAS !





Sophia Burger
Alex Cascardo
Linda Cascardo
Sue Fischer
Spencer Lavine
JoAnne Massey
Jean McGarry
Robert Morris
Glenn Santangelo
Victoria Schnure
Joel Schwartz
Li Towt

Here's Wishing everyone a *great birthday* and a *wonderful year* ahead...

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 & Handbells: Carol Schmiedecke

Administrative Manager: Dana Feeney

Bookkeeper: Lavonne McMillen

Sexton: Tom Carozza

Custodian: George Wood

Director Nursery School: Julia Bolt

Newsletter Editor: Carrie Werner (Volunteer)

Photography and Community

Bulletin Board: Joanne Bonwick (Volunteer)

Church Phone: (201) 652-2504

Church Web Site: www.firstpresridgewood.org

Pastor Bruce: (215) 337-5623 Please contact him directly for Pastoral Care.