



# The First Presbyterian Church of Ridgewood

## First Press Newsletter

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

### November 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,

Recently, a First Pres member asked me, “What do we mean when we say that we are a Matthew 25 congregation?”

Good question.

#### **A Matthew 25 Congregation**

To be a Matthew 25 Congregation in the Presbyterian Church (USA) is to embrace and live out the values expressed by Jesus in his Parable of the Sheep and the Goats, which is found in Matthew 25:31-46. Here is an excerpt:



*For I was hungry and you gave me food, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink, I was a stranger and you welcomed me, I was naked and you gave me clothing, I was sick and you took care of me, I was in prison and you visited me.” Then the righteous will answer him, “Lord, when was it that we saw you hungry and gave you food, or thirsty and gave you something to drink? And when was it that we saw you a stranger and welcomed you, or naked and gave you clothing? And when was it that we saw you sick or in prison and visited you?” And the king will answer them, “Truly I tell you, just as you did it to one of the least of these who are members of my family, \* you did it to me.”*

#### **How Will First Pres “Do” Matthew 25?**

Last October, First Pres Session members took part in a retreat and discerned several ways in which God is calling First Pres to live into what it means to be a Matthew 25 congregation, with a focus on congregational vitality.

In order to increase our understanding of Matthew 25, we offered a Matthew 25 Bible Study in February; the *Eight Habits of Evangelism* video series in April and May; and I have preached on or referenced Matthew 25 in several sermons.

We have continued to offer opportunities for members/friends to volunteer in service to meet the needs of people in our community or nearby communities. And thanks to the work of members of the newly formed Matthew 25 Task Force, we have been expanding those opportunities.

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Here are a few ways for you to plug into our Matthew 25 efforts:

- Don't miss the Mental Health Awareness and Light Lunch Series on four Sundays in November. But just as important, share this worthwhile offering with others by inviting friends to join us!
- Join us in Paterson for our next Habitat Build Day on Saturday, November 9! Or, feel free to use your culinary skills to contribute to our monthly Meal Ministry to St. Paul's Shelter!
- Plan to join us for Pie Sunday on January 12 and be prepared to think about your talents and gifts and how best to use them to serve within the life of the congregation and in the world.
- We have begun to explore opportunities to partner with City Relief in New York City and Paterson. Look for information regarding the upcoming Hygiene Kit Project early next year!
- An adult mission trip to volunteer with Almost Heaven Habitat for Humanity is in the planning stage for Spring 2025. Eighteen members and friends have expressed an interest. Why not add your name to the list?

As your pastor, I am extremely pleased that following last October's Session retreat, we did not simply create a document and put it on a shelf to collect dust. During 2024, we have been faithfully working to bring our Matthew 25 goals to life!

The following members and friends have agreed to serve on the First Pres Matthew 25 Task Force: Grace Albergate, Joan Davies, Barbara Dunn, Donna Flagg, Bobbe Kutcha, Sandy Santangelo, Jessica Strader-Paz, Sally Teschon, Joe Unger and Marjorie Vanacore.

Please consider joining them in this exciting ministry! We always have room for more good ideas. Our next meeting is scheduled for Tuesday, December 3 at 7:00 p.m. in the Minnema Room.

Or, if your schedule doesn't allow for that, please join us, serving our Lord by serving others as various ministry and mission opportunities arise!

**Yours in Christ's Service,  
Bruce**



### Consecration Sunday



Following a special church service, we enjoyed a delicious catered luncheon to celebrate our commitment to our church on Consecration Sunday.



Anita Hutton announces the total of our pledges



The Sunday School lessons covered for October were:  
The Lord's prayer, Fall pumpkin parables:  
The parable of the mustard seed,  
the unmerciful servant, the vine and the branches, John 8:12.



*LET'S GATHER  
TOGETHER*



We invite you to join us for a **Thanksgiving Luncheon on Thursday, November 14<sup>th</sup> at 12 noon** in our church dining room! You will find an RSVP for the luncheon in the Interest Items in our weekly church bulletin or you can call the church office 201-652-2504 by November 10<sup>th</sup>.  
Please let us know the number of guests in your party.

Sunday, October 13<sup>th</sup> we held our Annual Bible Presentations during worship service!  
Congratulations to all the recipients!



Pictured from L to R: Hadley Wall, Grace Pavao and Darvin Wall.  
Students who were not present but will receive a new Bible are  
Claire Hlavacek, Davina Pierre, Juliet Horner, Hank Morris & Rosalie Torres.



On Sunday, October 20<sup>th</sup>, 16 college boxes were prepped & assembled by Johnny Eliya, Luke Eliya, Maddy Eliya, David Edelbach, Jill Critchley, Sue Fischer, Mary Ellen and Pete Castaldo.  
They will be mailed to our First Pres. college students this Fall!



Beginning **November 17<sup>th</sup>** through **December 8<sup>th</sup>** we will be collecting unwrapped toys for Toys 4 Tots! You may place your donations in the "toys" box in the Cloister. Thank You!



Sponsored by our CE Committee, through the month of November, we will be collecting non-perishable food items to support Hawthorne's Borough Hall Pantry. They are in need of food items to stock their shelves. Please see the list below! **NO Glass Jars or Containers please!** Thank You!

**Non Perishable food Items that are Needed:**

- \*Canned proteins (chicken & tuna)
- \*Cake & Brownie Mix \*Dry cereals
- \*Instant oatmeal \*Canned Fruits & Vegetables
- \*Mac & cheese \*Pasta sauce\*Pasta or Spaghetti

- \*Peanut butter \*Jelly
- \*Boxed Mashed Potatoes \*Gravy \*Baked Beans
- \*Canned Chili & Beef Stew \*Stuffing
- \*Parmalat \*Pork and Beans

**\*\*The bolded items are needed the most!**

On Sunday, October 6<sup>th</sup> we held our Church School Families Fall Fest! It was a fun day painting pumpkins, playing games and sharing a meal together!

Shane and Axel won for best pumpkin decorating!







It was a beautiful day for our confirmands at our Johnsonburg Confirmation Day Retreat!







The Weekday Nursery School is bustling with activity!

The children did a great job in their Halloween parade and sing-along, their first performance of the year. This month the teachers are emphasizing thankfulness and acts of giving as we move toward the holiday season. Each class will be hosting its own Thanksgiving mini feast. The children are also busy learning their songs for our upcoming Christmas program, Friday, December 13th @ 9:15 am in the Sanctuary.

Students in our Afternoon Extended Learning, Fours Class, are enjoying a science unit all about nocturnal animals. As scientists, they observed trait differences such as sizes, weight, physical attributes, habitat, etc. In their writing journals, the students chose a nocturnal animal, wrote its name, then drew a picture of it. Their art included creating bats in the moonlight.



If you are looking for a quality, nurturing preschool for your child, or know of someone who is, please feel free to call and schedule a tour. Soon we will be enrolling for the 2025-2026 school year. Active members of First Presbyterian Church are eligible for a discounted tuition. If you have any questions about our program, please call Julia Bolt, Director, @ 201-445-2552.

We wish you and your families a Happy Thanksgiving.



### Kitchen 'Capers'

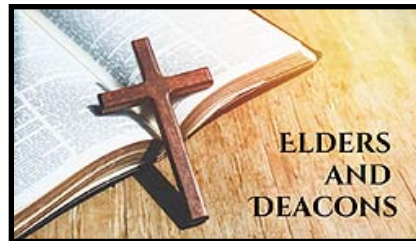
After a year of functioning without an 'up to code' working kitchen, we are now back in business with a beautifully designed and up to date facility.

Funding was made possible by a generous gift of \$100,000 from the Massey and Magrath families and a \$10,000 donation from Trinity Church. In addition, funds were donated from the Haffey Estate legacy and a \$20,000 contribution from the Endowment Fund. First Pres members made individual donations to stock the pantry shelves.

The ongoing growth of our Endowment Fund makes it possible for us to make unbudgeted gifts to needed projects in our church, while continuing to support mission projects.



**Blessings abound!**



On Sunday, September 29, the Deacons hosted a reception for the outgoing and incoming members of the Board Deacons and the Session (Board of Elders). Much gratitude to those who provided food or supplies: Deacons Janis Ax, Kathleen Barkho, Linda Cascardo, Jan Cross, Sue Dickinson, Diane Eliya, Emmy Eliya, Jeanine Jamieson, Lynn Malyso, Suzy McDevitt, Li Towt, Marjorie Vanacore, Nancy Walters, and Elders Anita Hutton and Marcia Unger.

Additionally, many thanks to all those who helped to clean up in the auditorium, dining room and kitchen, including Tom Carozza who washed the serving dishes and utensils; to Sami Eliya for picking up the dessert items and Donna Flagg for preparing them; and to Janis Ax for her decorating talent in making the tables look so beautiful! It was a lovely time and reception to congratulate those outgoing and incoming officers!

Deacons Class of 2024 (Outgoing): Kathleen Barkho, Sue Dickinson, Robert Morris, Jeanine Jamieson, Linda Strickland. Deacons Class of 2027 (Incoming): Evelyn Kender, Marjorie Vanacore, and Rita Infante. Elders Class of 2024 (Outgoing): Anita Hutton, Laura Magrath. Elders Class of 2024 (Incoming): Richard Davies, Glen Santangelo.

Continuing Deacons: Janis Ax, Linda Cascardo, Jan Cross, Diane Eliya, Emmy Eliya, Lynn Malyso, Suzy McDevitt, Li Towt, Nancy Walters, Rodger Yaden. Continuing Elders: Sam Barkho, Robin Byrne, Jill Critchley, Sue Fischer, Dawn Murdock, Jessica Strader, Marcia Unger.

Thanks again so much for ALL those hands that helped!  
Your reception co-chairs,  
Janis Ax and Suzy McDevitt



**MISSION:**



**Founder's Day for Habitat for Humanity was held on October 17<sup>th</sup>, celebrating the magic for 40 years of transforming lives and communities.**



**Barbara and Andy Dunn were honored by Scott Millard, CEO, for their many years of dedicated service.**

**Congratulations!**



**1 Corinthians 3:9: "For we are God's servants, working together; you are God's field, God's building".**



Attending from First Pres - Pictured from L to R: Joan and Richard Davies, Donna Flagg, Pastor Bruce and Ruth Plucinski.



Barbara and Andy Dunn



**The Mission, Peace and Social Righteousness Team** will be conducting a winter coat drive to benefit Jersey Cares from November 10<sup>th</sup> -24<sup>th</sup>.

Please place your GENTLY USED, CLEAN WINTER COATS **ONLY** in the boxes in the Cloister. These coats will then be distributed by Jersey Cares throughout NJ to those greatly in need of warm outerwear. All sizes will be much appreciated. Thank you!



## MISSION:



**October's** food delivery to the homeless shelter was a culinary triumph! **Joan Davies** delivered a delightful spread of goodies from the church freezer providing a stash of cookies, brownies, and some heartwarming tomato, rice, and veggie soup! **Barbara Dunn** spiced things up with sausage and peppers, while **Joan Davies** came in the clutch with her baked chicken.

**Nancy Walters** kept it healthy with mixed veggies, and the **Torielli Family** didn't mess around, bringing a tater tot casserole and coming through with requested soda and paper plates, like true pros. **Rebecca Burger** rounded dinner off with a lovely assortment of bread and fruit. It surely was quite a feast! If you'd like to get involved in the coming months please use the signup genius link below! Thank you!

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



**First Wednesdays  
November 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 spent enjoying fellowship and dining together.

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**What:** **November Hostess – Donna Flagg**  
You are invited to bring a dish to the potluck dinner.

**Spiritual Inspiration of the Month –Joan Davies**

*Finding God's Grace in Laughter!*

Laughter is a powerful gift from God, we will look at some biblical stories and also some wisdom from Susan Sparks' book, "Laugh Your Way to Grace".

Bring a good joke to share during dinner!

**Date:** Wednesday, November 6, 2024

**Time:** 6:30 p.m. - 8:30 p.m.

**Place:** First Presbyterian Church  
Minnema Room

**Please RSVP by Friday, November 1 to Donna Flagg**

**Email:** [flaggbda@gmail.com](mailto:flaggbda@gmail.com)

**Phone number:** 201-819-2327

# Mental Health Awareness & Light Lunch Series

## Sundays November 3, 10, 17 & 24

### @ 11:30 a.m.

**November 3**                    **Calming the Anxious Mind**  
**Michael Tozzoli, LCSW and CEO**  
**West Bergen Mental Healthcare**

You have deadline pressures at work. A relationship is getting complicated. Or your child is having problems at school. Maybe even a health concern nagging at you. Suddenly, anxiety has taken over your life. But there are strategies you can use to take that anxious feeling to a more manageable level.

**November 10**                **The Art and Science of Happiness**  
**Jim Stroker, Life Coach and Motivational Speaker**

Inspired by the book, Build the Life You Want, by authors Arthur C. Brooks and Oprah Winfrey, Jim will share practical, research-based practices one can use to build a life of happiness.

**November 17**                **Health Benefits of Choosing to Live Gratefully**  
**Bruce Ballantine, Pastor, First Presbyterian Church**

Did you know that choosing to live with gratitude or developing a grateful disposition can improve one's spiritual, emotional and physical health? Pastor Bruce will draw on the research and writings of Psychologist Robert Emmons and Theologian Cornelius Plantinga to unpack those benefits and suggest ways to cultivate a life of gratitude.

**November 24**                **Stress and the Holidays**  
**Michael Tozzoli, LCSW and CEO,**  
**West Bergen Mental Healthcare**

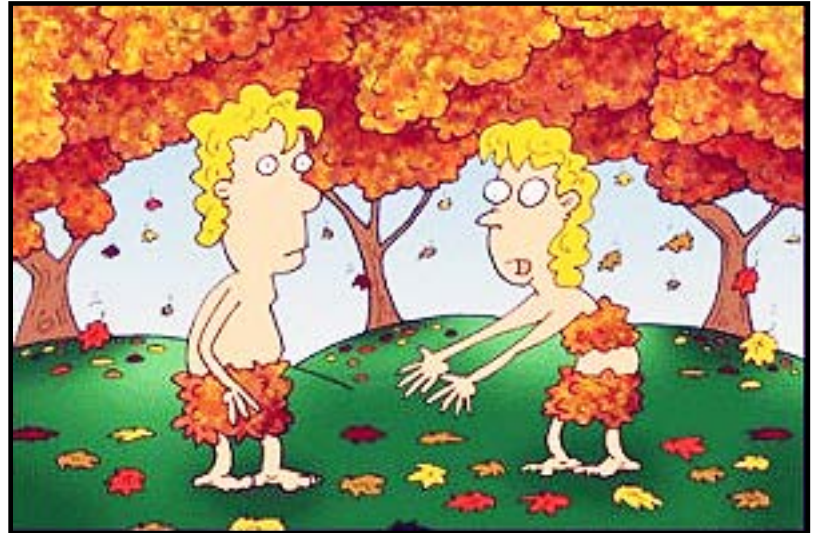
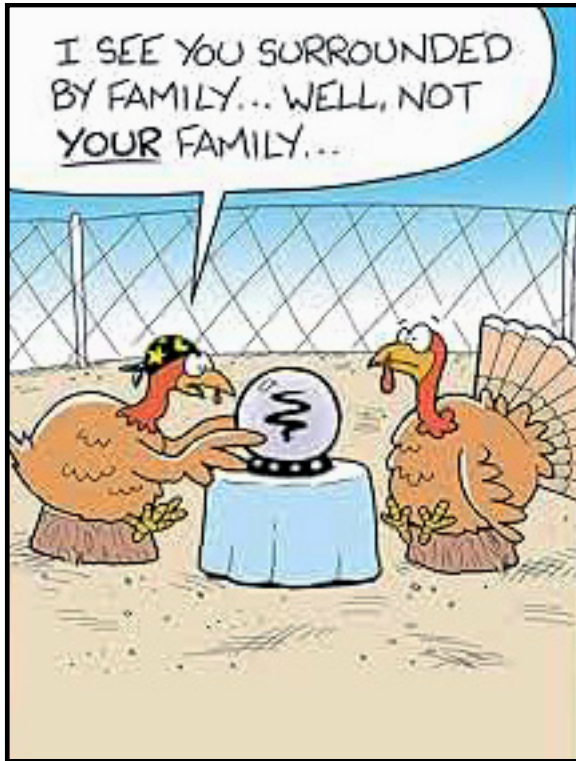
Everyone loves the holidays! But it's easy during this season to feel stressed out by the extra social obligations, financial pressures, as well as personal or family expectations. Fortunately, there are ways to set boundaries, lower expectations, lower the stress level, and thoroughly enjoy the holidays.

**RSVP by Wednesday each week to the Church Office:**  
**office@firstpresridgewood.org or 201.652.2504**





☺ Just for laughs ☺



Will you please pick up all of your clothes?!

**Question:** Why is Thanksgiving soup so expensive?

**Answer:** It has *24 carrots!*

**Question:** Why can't you take a Turkey to church?

**Answer:** They use *fowl* language!

**Just Sayin'....** My dentist said I need a crown.....I said "*I know, right?*"

**The Church Mouse:**

**Thought for the month:**

"Give thanks for unknown blessings already on their way."

... *Native American proverb*



It's time to "fall back" an hour! So remember to Set your clocks back an hour on Saturday night November 2nd as Daylight savings time ends at 2:00 am on Sunday, November 3rd!



**Joe Amoruso**  
**Mary Ellen Castaldo**  
**Steven Eliya**  
**Claire Hothem**  
**Michael Reid**  
**Ryan Schnure**  
**Palmer Yates**

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

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

**Church Web Site:** [www.firstpresridgewood.org](http://www.firstpresridgewood.org)

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

**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)