

The First Presbyterian Church of Ridgewood

First Press Newsletter

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

March 2025

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,

One of the highlights of the church year, for me, is our Lenten Supper Series. We gather for a simple meal, followed by a brief worship service. And during worship, we are privileged to listen as members and friends of our faith community share some portion of their faith journey with us. I am always inspired as I listen to their stories, and I am always surprised as I learn something new about someone I thought I knew well. I hope to see you at the suppers! Details below.



Grace and peace,
Bruce

2025 Lenten Supper Series: Journeys of Faith

During Lent, please join us at 6:00 p.m. each Wednesday for supper and afterward for worship. During worship, members and friends will share a portion of their faith journey. The evening will conclude at 7:00.

<u>Date</u>	<u>Meal Preparation</u>	<u>Speaker</u>
3/12	First Pres W&A / CE Committees	Rev. Brooks Smith
3/19	First Pres Matthew 25 Task Force	Matt Cardona
3/26	Trinity Presbyterian Church	Lindsay Wall
4/02	First Pres Deacons	Rita Infante
4/09	First Pres Session	Carol Eliya

Dinner and worship will take place in the Auditorium.
A free-will offering will cover the cost of the meal.
MaryEllen Castaldo will offer an activity for children during worship.

*Come and receive food for body and soul.
One more thing: Invite a friend to join us!*



Our March Sunday school studies include lessons on the Books of the Bible and the Old Testament.

Update: Denim Day



Thank you to all who donated \$10.00 to wear their jeans and comfortable clothes to church on Denim Day/Dress down day in January! We raised **\$423.00!** We split it in half between our Youth group activities and the Presbyterian Disaster Assistance to support those who were affected by the fires in California.



Thank you to all who attended our **Souper Bowl of Caring** event and donated to such a worthy cause. We raised over **\$560.00** for Eva's Village! Thank you to these wonderful boys & girls that served soup & chili and collected donations! Well Done! A HUGE THANK YOU to the soup & chili makers, you are all amazing and everything was delicious! Another BIG thank you to Pete Castaldo, Jill Critchley & Sue Fischer for all your help, you three are the best!



Sunday, March 16th

Our annual St. Patrick's Day Bingo, sponsored by the Christian Ed Committee, will be held in the auditorium after worship. There will be pizza, popcorn & prizes!

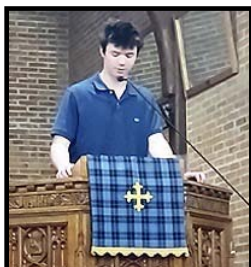


Lenten Devotional Booklets for Adults and children will be available and located on the tables outside of the Collentine Room and on the table in the Cloister Hall on March 2nd!

Youth Worship Service

Thank you to all the youth who participated and led our Worship service on Sunday, February 23rd. Cole Bellowgey, Olivia Davis, Luke, Johnny and Maddie Eliya, Hudson Feeny, Luke Feltmann, CJ & Dante Torielli, Darvin, Hadley and Hudson Wall. Our younger youth showed and spoke about their artwork: Jack, Hank and Tony Morris, Charlotte and Grace Pavao, Davina Pierre, and Shane Reade! Also included were Axel England and Rosalie Torres who were not present.

A special THANK YOU to Emma Schmeidecke & Brian Princing for sharing their beautiful gift of music with us! And to Linda Sweetman Waters and our wonderful choir!





The Weekday Nursery School has been very busy creating, and learning!

Gym Update: The children had fun with new gym equipment! They practiced hitting pucks with plastic hockey sticks.

Spanish: Mrs. Costic introduced weather words so that students can talk about the seasons. They sang “5 Little Snowmen” in Spanish

Music Update: The children took turns playing the djembe drum and enjoyed singing Valentine songs like “Hands Up” and “Everyone Asked About You”



Each of our classes celebrated Valentine’s Day by making special Valentine’s for their families and sharing special treats with their classmates. The children made color patterns with candy hearts, built hearts with tangram shapes, cut out heart shapes with Play-Doh and created valentine crafts with foil, stickers, glitter hearts, and dollies.



Registration for the 2025-2026 school year is underway. Feel free to stop by and check out the Nursery School happenings! There are still openings for the 25/26 school year. We offer programs for children 2 ½ years – 5 years, 5 days/week. Please contact Julia Bolt, Director, at 201-445-2552 for

more information and a tour of our preschool. Church members receive a tuition discount. We offer a fun, nurturing environment, while preparing our children for kindergarten. We look forward to hearing from you!



~ Experience Lent in a New and Deeper Way ~

**You are invited!
Come and be a part of these events!**

Wonderful opportunities to take time to reflect on our spiritual and faith journey as we prepare our hearts and minds for Easter.

Lenten Prayer Stations and Ash Wednesday Service, March 5TH.

9:00 a.m. – 11:00 a.m. Lenten Prayer Stations in the Auditorium
5:00 p.m. – 7:00 p.m. Lenten Prayer Stations in the Auditorium
7:00 p.m. – 7:30 p.m. Ash Wednesday Service in the Sanctuary
7:30 p.m. – 8:30 p.m. Lenten Prayer Stations in the Auditorium

There will be eight interactive stations that we hope will facilitate a unique prayer experience for you. Each station has a theme and takes you through a guided activity with instructions and all the materials needed that will help you pray creatively. One of the stations will be “Come to the Table” and you will be invited to join Pastor Bruce in the Chapel for a time of prayer and communion. For those who are not able to attend the Ash Wednesday Service, Pastor Bruce will be offering the imposition of ashes as well.

Lenten Supper Series - every Wednesday from March 12th through April 9th.

During Lent, you are invited to attend the Lenten Suppers. It is a wonderful opportunity to enjoy a simple meal and worship on Wednesdays from 6:00 to 7:00 p.m. During worship, members and friends will share a portion of their faith journey. We will meet in the Auditorium for each of the five Lenten Suppers starting Wednesday, March 12th.

April 13TH – 10:00 a.m.	Palm Sunday Worship Service in the Sanctuary
April 17TH – 6:00 p.m.	Maundy Thursday Service in the Chapel
April 18TH – 1:00 p.m.	Good Friday Service in the Chapel with Trinity Church
April 20TH – 10:00 a.m.	Easter Sunday Service in the Sanctuary

Also, Join Us for These Fundraiser Events:

Fish (or Chicken) and Chips Dinner – Tuesday, April 1, 5:00 p.m. – 7:00 p.m.

Our 5th annual church fundraiser for One Great Hour of Sharing.

This is a takeout event, but tables will be set up for those who wish to eat onsite.

See the flyer in this newsletter for all of the information.

Lenten Mission Donation Drive to Help City Relief in Paterson

Ash Wednesday, March 5TH to Palm Sunday, April 13TH

Donate travel size items for hygiene kits and join others on Palm Sunday to package the kits.



**First Pres Church's
2025 Lenten Mission Campaign
to Help **City Relief** in Paterson**

City Relief is an organization that has pop-up care centers, where staff and volunteers provide outreach on the streets of Paterson. They provide the essentials to survive a day, serve hot meals, distribute hygiene kits, socks, and pray for the needs of the people.

How You Can Help!

Donate travel size items for hygiene kits:

Toothpaste & toothbrushes

Dental floss

Shaving cream & razors

Shampoo & conditioner

Body wash

Deodorant

Hand sanitizer

Soap

Donation Drive starts on Ash Wednesday, March 5th

On Palm Sunday, April 13th during coffee hour,
people of all ages - children, youth, Woman's Guild, etc...
will come together to package the hygiene kits.

Questions: contact Donna Flagg

First Pres Members and Friends Volunteer with City Relief in Paterson, NJ



Members and Visitors are Invited to Participate!



~ First Friends ~

During the spring and fall of 2024, First Pres started a new fellowship ministry which was well-received. Twenty-eight people signed up to be a part of First Friends, a great way to connect, get to know each other better, and meet new people in our church family by enjoying a meal together.

New groups will be formed this spring, so sign up during coffee hour in March to be a part of this fellowship ministry!

Once you sign up, we will create groups of 6-8 people. Groups will generally meet in each other's homes for a simple meal and conversation on a Friday evening during the three-month period from April to June. The host for of the month provides a main course while members of the group help to round out the meal by bringing side dishes, appetizers or desserts.

COME be a part of the table fellowship!

**Sign up during coffee hour
Or**

Email Donna Flagg – flaggbda@gmail.com

“Be Ready When the Luck Happens!”



I recently read Ina Garten’s memoir of the above title. Ina went from working at the White House in the Office of Management and Budget to becoming a wildly successful chef with her own cooking show. When she was interviewed by Oprah Winfrey, who asked how that happened, Ina replied, “I was really lucky”. When Oprah responded, “You weren’t lucky, you worked really hard”, Ina remembered the time she had stayed up all night in a little café she had bought, to make a thousand baguettes by morning. She was so tired that she curled up on a shelf under the counter and fell asleep where her employees found her in the morning. It wasn’t luck after all, it was working hard so that when opportunity came for something bigger she was ready.

Those of us on the Endowment Committee can relate to that. We work hard to protect the principal of the fund so it continues to grow while we spend only the dividends and interest on the principal each year. It’s a financial recipe for success. When the Covid 19 pandemic hit we were able to contribute substantial aid to keep the church open. We weren’t ‘lucky’, we were ready in a time of real need. It is our hope that the fund will continue to grow so our resources will be there to meet the needs of future challenges.

Meanwhile, the larger the principal grows, the more we will have available, from interest and dividends, to spend for unbudgeted church programs and mission. How ‘Lucky’ is that?



A Mission Fundraiser for One Great Hour of Sharing!

Fish (or Chicken) and Chips Dinner ~ provided by Tastefully British



Date: Tuesday, April 1st (rain or shine)

Time: 5 PM to 7 PM

Where: Food truck will be in the front church lot (unless you require handicap parking please park in the back parking lot or on Circle Avenue)

Cost: \$20.00 for Fish or Chicken, French fries and Coleslaw

ALL fish or chicken orders must be received by Sunday, March 17th

To order email joandavies916@gmail.com
or call the church office at 201-652-2504

You can pre pay by check, Tithe.ly (Fish and Chips) or pay at pick up.

**Please note: Once you place an order we are obligated to pay for your dinner!
All meals are cooked to order once you arrive & take about 5 minutes.**

You can dine in the auditorium or take the food home!

If you are picking up more than one meal to go, please bring a bag.

The three programs supported by One Great Hour of Sharing - Presbyterian Disaster Assistance, the Presbyterian Hunger Program, and Self-Development of People - all work in different ways to serve individuals and communities in need. From initial disaster response to ongoing community development, their work fits together to provide people with safety, sustenance, and hope.

The need is great and so is our calling, please support this cause!

MISSION:



We were delighted to share that our February meal delivery to the homeless shelter was a heartwarming success. Thanks to the generous contributions from our wonderful community:

- The Torielli family prepared delicious meatloaves.
- Linda Strickland crafted flavorful pasta with vodka sauce.
- Bobbe Kutcha made savory oven-fried chicken.
- Barbara Dunn provided fresh bananas, a beautiful assortment of cut fruit, and fresh bread.
- Nancy Walters contributed crisp, fresh green beans.

The Torielli family delivered the meal hot and ready to eat! They truly enjoyed their time talking with Thomas, the shelter's director, and connecting with some of the residents.



Dante and CJ Torielli with St. Paul's director, Thomas

Your support and kindness make a real difference. Let's continue this spirit of giving! If you'd like to participate in our next meal delivery or contribute in any way, please reach out. Together, we can keep spreading warmth and hope. Sign up here: <https://www.signupgenius.com/go/20F0845ACAE2BA7F49-51100449-stpauls>

First Pres Staff Members Gather for a New Years Luncheon





REQUEST FOR NOMINATIONS!



HAVE YOU HEARD THE CALL?

First Presbyterian Nominating Committee

It's that time of year again and your Nominating Committee is looking for dedicated members to serve in the leadership of our Church!

These leadership roles directly affect how we as a church support one another and the community through worship, mission and care as we fulfill Jesus' teachings to serve one another with hearts in fellowship and faith.

Would you like to serve as a Deacon? Elder? On a church Committee? Is there someone you would like to nominate to serve? If so, or if you would just like to discuss the **possibility** of serving or nominating, you may contact Sue Fischer through a note in her church mailbox, by emailing her at fdsrcd@optonline.net or by phone at (201) 670-6735.



Crafting with Love



Please join us on the 1st and 3rd Tuesdays each month from 1:30-3:00 in the Minnema Room for charity knitting and crocheting projects....and fellowship, too! See Bobbe or call 201-410-6461 for details. We would love for you to join us!



Church member, Ann Hovan, was gifted the *first* Pocket Prayer Shall while visiting with Sue Dickinson. Ann resides at Sunrise in Woodcliff Lake.

Hammering for Habitat

In late February members and friends gathered to help build walls for future Habitat homes! This fun and meaningful event strengthened our community ties and helped bring our mission of hope and transformation to Passaic County families in need.





Many of us know someone, perhaps a family member or friend, who is experiencing some form of dementia. And as the baby boomer population ages, it's likely the occurrence of dementia will increase.

On Sunday, March 23, we are privileged to host Dementia Specialist Maureen Braen, who will offer a presentation from 11:30 a.m. to 12:30 p.m. in the Minnema Room. A light lunch will be served.

Description: Gain a clearer understanding of what dementia is and isn't. This session unpacks common misconceptions, explains the different types of dementia, and provides insights into the changes associated with brain disease. Empower yourself with knowledge to better navigate the dementia journey.

Maureen is the founder of RISE Dementia CARE LLC and is a specialist in the field. On the RISE website, she writes:

RISE Dementia CARE is more than just my work—it's personal. As a care partner to loved ones on the dementia journey, I've experienced firsthand the challenges, joys, and deep connections that come with supporting someone living with brain change. This work is full circle for me, and it fuels my passion for empowering others to navigate this journey with confidence and compassion.

My mission is simple yet profound: to empower care partners, families, and organizations to navigate the dementia journey. With over 15 years of experience in senior living and dementia care, I've dedicated my career to fostering dignity, connection, and well-being for individuals living with dementia and those who support them.

Please share this event information with anyone who might benefit from attending.

RSVP to the church office @ Dana.Feeney@firstpresridgewood.org or 201.652.2504 or sign up during Coffee Hour!

Sponsored by the First Presbyterian Church
Matthew 25 Task Force



Do you *need* transportation, or can you *offer* transportation?

As part of caring for our congregation, the Deacons realize that there is sometimes a need for a church member's transportation to or from church on Sunday, to a church meeting or choir practice, or to an occasional appointment during the week.

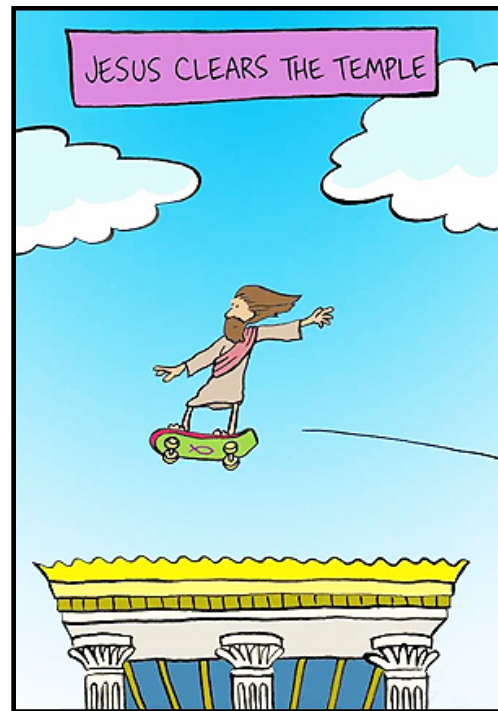
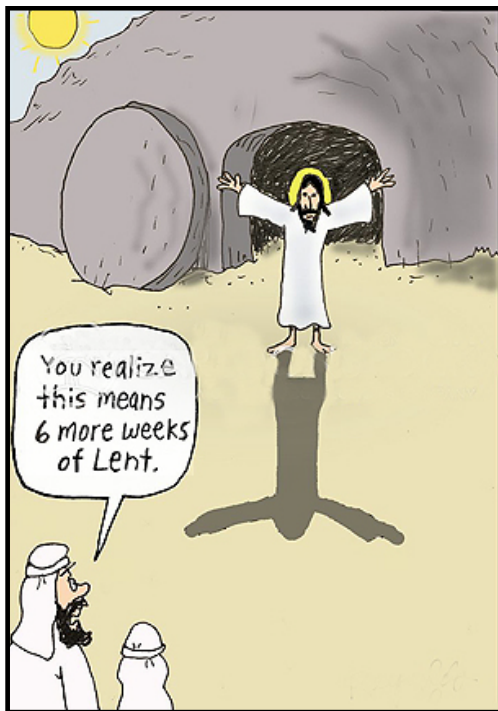
In an effort to aid in arranging this occasional transportation need, we've asked for volunteer drivers. And while we've been able to start a list of volunteers, we are in need of more. Volunteers certainly do not need to be available all of the time, and are more than welcome to specify days/times when they may be available.

When we receive a request for help in arranging a ride, we will contact those volunteers who may be available; to see if anyone is able to accommodate the specific request. If one of the volunteers is able to accommodate, that driver and the member in need will be asked to get in touch with one another, and they will make the final arrangements together. Simple as that!

As a possible driver, consider this as an opportunity to get to know another member a little better, to engage in meaningful conversation as you provide some help, and to lighten the load for a fellow church member in need. Thanks so much for prayerfully considering!

If you are a member in need of transportation to church, a church meeting or an appointment, please feel free to reach out with your request in advance. We will do our best to try to find a ride for you!

Please contact Suzy McDevitt by text at 201-315-2063 or by email at suzyjmc2@yahoo.com if you would like to volunteer, if you have some questions, or if you are in need of transportation.



Question: What do dentists call their x-rays?

Answer: *Tooth Pics!*

Question: What do you get when you drop a piano down a mine shaft?

Answer: *A flat minor!*

The Church Mouse:

Thought for the month:

"Create the highest, grandest vision possible for your life, because you become what you believe".

... Oprah Winfrey



Sooo...who really was St. Patrick?

Saint Patrick, who lived during the fifth century, is the patron saint of Ireland and its national apostle. Born in Roman Britain, he was kidnapped and brought to Ireland as a slave at the age of 16.

He spent six bleak years there as a herdsman, during which time he turned with fervor to his faith. He later escaped and reunited with his family in Britain, but returned to Ireland and was credited with bringing **Christianity** to its people.

So...Saint Patrick was actually a missionary that we celebrate on St. Patrick's Day! (He was never officially canonized as a Saint by the Catholic Church).

The Legend of the shamrock has St. Patrick explain the concept of the Holy Trinity, three persons in one God, to an unbeliever by showing him the three-leaved plant with one stalk. **Happy St. Patrick's Day!**





Dennis Ax
Rebecca Burger
Andy Castaldi
Violet Cohen
Steven Dear
Laurie Feltmann
Jeanine Jamieson
Dawn Murdock
CJ Torielli
Dante Torielli
Marjorie Vanacore
Mary Weyant

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

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)