

FIRST PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH RIDGEWOOD, NEW JERSEY

2024 ANNUAL REPORT



Our Mission Statement

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.

TABLE OF CONTENTS FOR 2024 ANNUAL REPORT

	PAGE #
Pastor	3
Music	5
Worship & Arts	6
Christian Ed	9
Security	16
Property	17
Technology	21
Deacons	23
Nominating Committee	24
Growth & Hospitality	26
Personnel	27
Boy Scouts	28
Statistical Report	31
Mission, Peace & Social Righteousness Team	32
East Meets West	34
Hobbyist	35
Connections	37
First Presbyterian Nursery School – Julia Bolt	38
First Presbyterian Nursery School – Committee	40
Endowment	41
Finance & Stewardship	44
2025 Budget	48
Terms of Call	49

Dear Friends,

The year 2024 was an exciting year at First Presbyterian Church of Ridgewood New Jersey as we lived into our calling to be a Matthew 25 congregation, with an emphasis on congregational vitality!

A clear, although somewhat wordy, description of congregational vitality, provided by the PC(USA), includes the following:

- *challenging members to deepen and energize their faith,*
- *challenging members to grow as joyful leaders and disciples,*
- *encouraging active engagement with the community,*
- *seeing new disciples engaged in ministry,*
- *seeing long standing believers develop in faith,*
- *sharing the gospel of Jesus Christ in word and deed.*

Last year, we did all the things that make us a church. We gathered weekly for worship and fellowship; our Deacons and others provided compassionate care for our members when needed; we celebrated baptisms, received new members and held funeral or memorial services for some of our beloved family members; we taught our children in Sunday School about God's love and living the God way; and we engaged in mission with our money and our volunteers.

But in 2024, we also did some things with the intention of sustaining and enhancing congregational vitality:

- Formation of a Matthew 25 Task Force
- Matthew 25 Bible Study and *Gratitude* Book Study
- 8 Habits of Evangelism Video-Based Study
- Hammering for Habitat and Projects and Gatherings for Families with Children
- Vacation Bible School ~ Ministry to our Children / Mission to the Community
- Get Acquainted Breakfast Gatherings for New Members
- Lenten Supper & Worship Services
- Additional Worship Opportunities: Longest Night, Candlelight Meditation, Lenten Prayer Stations
- Continued Hands-On Engagement with Mission Partners: Meals for St. Paul's, Table to Table (Produce Mission), Family Promise (Camp Lots of Fun), Passaic County Habitat for Humanity
- New Hands-On Engagement with City Relief ~ a Ministry to Homeless People in NYC & Paterson
- Mental Health Awareness and Light Lunch Series
- Santa Songsters at Sunrise @ Franklin Lakes and Sunrise @ Woodcliff Lake
- First Wednesdays ~ Spiritual Inspiration and Fellowship for Women
- Fellowship Opportunities: Coffee Fellowship, Men's Breakfast, Woman's Guild, First Friends

No look back on 2024 would be complete without acknowledging with gratitude the generous gifts from Dwight and Jo-Ann Massey and Leo and Laura Magrath which enabled the renovation of the church kitchen. Thanks also to the Paul & Alpha Jo Haffey Estate, the First Presbyterian Church Endowment Fund and Trinity Presbyterian Church whose gifts helped fund the renovation as well. Our new kitchen is up to code, looks beautiful, and will meet our needs for food and fellowship events for many years to come!

And no look back on 2024 would be complete without acknowledging that we experienced, at times, cash-flow issues and/or cash-shortage issues – which made doing the work of the church challenging. Going forward, my hope is that we can continue to raise revenue through our giving and through the contributions from community partners who use our facility, while at the same time, acting as faithful stewards of the resources at our disposal.

As we look forward to 2025, I am excited to share with you that we are planning an adult mission trip to Lewisburg, WV to volunteer with Almost Heaven Habitat for Humanity, and 12 First Pres members have committed to participating.

Furthermore, the Mission, Peace & Social Righteousness Team and the Matthew 25 Task Force are planning a number of activities designed to engage members and friends as we strive to share the love of Christ with neighbors near and far:

- Passaic County Habitat New Home Dedication ~ Monday, January 20
- City Relief Outreach in Paterson ~ Saturday, February 1
- Fish & Chips to Benefit One Great Hour of Sharing ~ Tuesday, April 1
- Assembling Hygiene Kits for City Relief ~ A Lenten Coffee Hour Activity ~ Sunday, April 6
- Book drive to benefit children @ Boys and Girls Clubs ~ April 27 - May 18

In Matthew 25:35-40 (Parable of the Sheep and the Goats), we read Jesus' words:

"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."

Together, as a vital congregation, may we continue to answer the call to live the words of Matthew 25. May we continue to reach out with compassion and do to the least of these members of Jesus' family in 2025 and beyond!

Yours in Christ's service,

Bruce



The Chancel Bells



The Chancel Choir



The Sunday School Choir

MUSIC ANNUAL REPORT - 2024

O God, whom saints and angels delight to worship in heaven: Be ever present with your servants who seek through art and music to perfect the praises offered by your people on earth; and grant to them even now glimpses of your beauty, and make them worthy at length to behold it unveiled for evermore; through Jesus Christ, our Lord. Amen.

The Book of Common Prayer

2024 was another wonderful and spiritually fulfilling year of making music to the glory of God at First Pres. In my 14th year as Director of Music, I continue to be grateful for the talents of our excellent soloist/section leaders Vera Coleman, Carol Schmiedecke, Joshua LeRose (formerly our 2019-2020 Choral Scholar) and Mike Schuil, as well as our wonderful organist Linda Sweetman Waters, our instrumentalists guitarist Brian Princing, cellist Emma Schmiedecke, oboist Luka Marcoux, the talented and faithful members of the Chancel Choir, as well as the Chancel Bells, Chamber Bells, and Sunday School Choir under Carol's direction. Their good humor, fellowship and deep dedication and commitment to giving God their very best is a constant inspiration. It has been a year of growth for the Chancel Choir with the return of Rodger Yaden, and the addition of Wayne Teschon, Matthew Cardona, Joanne and Peter Hare, and Emmy Eliya. We have been truly blessed!

We celebrated Palm Sunday and Easter Sunday with trumpets, timpani and much fanfare featuring the Chancel Choir, the Chancel Bells and trumpeters John Luckenbill and Marcus Ryen, and June brought an especially inspired Music Sunday.

We continued our musical community outreach during 2024, again hosting the Ridgewood Singers and Orpheus Mens Chorus for their spring and holiday concerts, and the Ridgewood High School A Cappella groups in their spring concert to sanctuary-filled audiences. Our soloists/section leaders, along with singers Samantha McDevitt, Matthew Cardona, Cole Bellorgey, cellist Emma Schmiedecke and myself, continued to provide musical inspiration during the summer months.

Fall brought a return to rehearsals for the Choir and Bells, and the time passed quickly as we prepared music for Advent and our Christmas Eve service. The Sunday before Christmas Eve was dedicated to our annual Sunday School pageant, with the music for that service being provided by our youth, to the delight of the congregation. Our Sunday School Choir, directed by Carol Schmiedecke, grew from eight singers in the spring to 15 for this event! Carol also prepared vocal soloists Luke Eliya, Olivia Davis and Cole Bellorgey for their individual musical offerings, and worked each Sunday with our younger Sunday School Choir singers. The evening Christmas Eve service this year was one of the loveliest in recent memory, with the Chancel Choir, Chancel Bells, cellist Emma Schmiedecke and oboe/English hornist Luka Marcoux combining their inspiring and uplifting talents.

Once again, I would like to express my heartfelt gratitude to Pastor Bruce for his support, encouragement and inspiring leadership, to Joanne Bonwick and Diane Eliya and the Worship and Arts committee for their sustaining spirit, to MaryEllen Castaldo for her delightful camaraderie, to Dana Feeney, Tom Carozza, George Wood and our church leadership for their continued support and help with so many details. Finally, my gratitude to all the musicians of First Pres, young and forever young, for their commitment to giving God their very best each week. I look forward with excitement to even more wonderful and inspiring music experiences as we begin a new year in the life of our church.

Respectfully submitted,
Dr. Edward Schmiedecke, Director of Music
Carol Schmiedecke, Director of Handbells and Youth Music

Worship and Arts Committee Annual Report 2024

In Hebrews 10:25 we are advised, "Let us not give up the habit of meeting together, as some are doing. Instead, let us encourage one another all the more, since you see that the day of the Lord is coming nearer."

An unknown writer once said, "In the worship service, people are being put back together." It's an observation those of us on the Worship and Arts committee often notice. Corporate worship can be healing.

We support the Pastor and Minister of Music in creating thought-provoking worship services, activities and outreach programs. In the last few years there has been a growing response to meditative services that provide quiet, reflective time for members to gather in silence away from the chatter of a noisy world.

Meditative Services offered in 2024 were:

- February 7th - **Candlelight Meditation Service in the Chapel** –
(Wed) music, prayer and silent meditation. (19 attendees)
March 28th/29th.) – **Lenten Prayer Stations** – a series of reflective stations provide personal
(Thr./Fri) quiet time with guided instructions to center the visitor on their individual
spiritual path. – 29 attendees
December 18th - **Longest Night Service**- this reflective service provides a quiet space for those
(Wed) who have experienced loss and find the holidays a difficult time. Dinner
reservations were available for those wishing to extend the evening.
(28 attended the service: 15 attended the dinner at the Park West Tavern)

Traditional Sunday Services:

Worship Services at 10:00 am

The Sacrament of Communion is celebrated on the first Sunday of every month.

The Sacrament of Baptism is celebrated during Worship as requested.

Special Sunday Services in 2024:

- | | |
|---|--|
| Epiphany of the Lord Sunday – January 7 th | Youth Sunday – June 9 th |
| Youth Sunday - January 28 th | World Communion Sunday – October 6 th |
| Palm Sunday - March 24 th | Consecration Sunday – October 27 th |
| Easter Sunday - March 31 st | All Saints Sunday – November 3 rd |
| Pentecost Sunday – May 19 th | Advent Lighting – December 1 st , 8 th , 15 th , 22 nd |
| Music Sunday – June 2 nd | Children's Pageant – December 22 nd |

Ongoing Annual Weekday Special Services and Activities:

- Ash Wednesday, February 14th
Lenten Wednesday Supper Series, February 21st, 28th March 6th, 13th
Maundy Thursday, March 28th
Good Friday, March 29th in the Chapel with Trinity Church
Candlelight Christmas Eve Service, Tuesday December 24th

Worship & Arts Outreach Events:

Santa Songsters: Members of the congregation joined us in our annual Christmas Carol Sing-A-Long for the residents of Sunrise Assisted Living in Franklin Lakes and Woodcliff Lake. Saturday December 7th

Advent for the Homebound: Committee members coordinated Advent lighting visits to five homebound members during Advent .

Music: Although Dr. Ed Schmiedecke, our Choir Director , presents a separate Annual report we wish to emphasize the important part music ‘plays’ in our worship service. It adds color and depth to the spoken Word of praise and glory . From our Choir Director, Dr. Ed, to our Hand Bell and Children’s Music Director, Carol Schmiedecke, to our Organist, Linda Sweetman Waters, Guitarist, Brian Prining, to our Section Leaders and Volunteer choir members and Bell Ringers, we are blessed with extraordinary talent.

Goals in 2024:

In September 2024 we reached our 2024 goal to recruit a full compliment of ushers to return to making collections a part of the Worship Service in accordance with the Presbyterian Order of Worship. It had been suspended during the pandemic. Thank you to the 20 members who committed to serving on one of five teams of four each to serve once a month to welcome visitors and pass the plates during the service.

Goals for 2025

We currently support several activities that have encouraged people to engage their faith more deeply. We would like to focus our efforts in 2025 on expanding the involvement of more members in these experiences . We could do this by intentionally reaching out to people to participate in the workings of the events such as the Lenten Suppers and Lenten Prayer Stations. We could also make an effort to personally invite members to attend events by email or by a personal phone call. The object is to bring people together to a place where faith is encouraged in a loving and supportive environment.

Thank You:

We happily acknowledge that all our efforts are enhanced by the cooperation of other working committees a dedicated office staff , the set up and cleanup crew, sound crew and every member and visitor who enters with the intent to deepen their faith. We thank Pastor Bruce Ballantine for steering us into becoming a Matthew 25 church and keeping us centered on the vision and purpose of Christian worship and thank you to Dr. Ed Schmiedecke who enlivens our hearts with the joyful sounds of inspired music. And a special thank you to Mary Ellen Castaldo and her teaching staff who have an amazing ability to herd “Kids like Kats” into truly meaningful contributions to our worship services.

To our committee we give thanks for always expressing sincere interest in serving with grace and heart for the glory of God.

Committee members include: Joanne Bonwick and Diane Eliya (Co-Chairs) , Sue Dickinson, Kali-Roy Eklof, Donna Flagg, Dawn Murdock, Marcia Unger. We said a heartfelt goodbye to long term member Susi Hudson who passed away after a long illness in 2024. Non-voting members include: Pastor Bruce Ballantine and Dr. Ed Schmiedecke.



Easter 2024



Santa Songsters Outreach



Advent Candle Lighting

Respectfully Submitted

Joanne Bonwick (Co-Chair)

Diane Eliya (Co-Chair)

CHRISTIAN EDUCATION COMMITTEE 2024 ANNUAL REPORT

with MaryEllen Castaldo, Director of Children & Family Ministries

Purpose

The objective of the Christian Education Committee is to foster the growth of Christian development among our church members of all ages by providing opportunities for spiritual growth through bible study, service, stewardship, and community.

Your word is a lamp to my feet and a light to my path

Psalm 119:105

Members

- Sue Fischer (chair) MaryEllen Castaldo (Director of Children and Family Ministries)
- Jill Critchley, Sue Dickinson, Linda Strickland

The Committee expresses its deep appreciation for the dedication and gifts of MaryEllen, our Children & Family Ministries Director, as demonstrated by the amazing array of CE engagement below!

Highlights of 2024

Volunteers – Child Safety

Throughout this year all First Pres. Staff, Church school teachers, volunteers and VBS volunteers and staff have received background checks and have completed the child safety training required.

*** Sunday Infant/Toddler Nursery:** Thank you to our Nursery attendants Sarah Eliya & Katie Pavao!

Sunday School & Special Activities

Church school lessons in 2024 are always posted in our monthly newsletter

Summer Sunday School - We had a good attendance this summer! The children learned the stories, Prodigal Son, Good Samaritan, Saul (Acts 9) Joseph and his brothers, Jesus feeds 5000, Jesus walks on water, Hannah prays for a child, God Calls Samuel, David is chosen, David & Goliath, Solomon rebuilds the temple.

THANK YOU! to those who helped with Sunday School this year: Jill Critchley, Sue Fischer & Linda Strickland, Jessica Strader!

***Baptisms:** During the year a gift of a framed prayer which was written by our Middle school students is presented to each infant/child who is baptized at First Pres.

Sunday, March 17 St Patty's Bingo- We held a family bingo game after worship in the auditorium Thank you to CJ & Dante Torielli, who called the numbers! Many winners many prizes and refreshments enjoyed by all!

Annual Easter Egg Hunt- Sunday March 31 , 2024 was held after worship service. Children received an Easter bag and then off to the Backyard of our church Manse to Hunt for eggs! For ages 2 through 7! Older Youth received Easter treats bags!

Family Planting Day, May 19th, after coffee hour, church school families planted flowers and plants in our Bicentennial garden, the youth at First Pres

Ice cream Sunday – July 21st: Our First Pres. members and children enjoyed ice cream with yummy toppings during lemonade time!

Vacation Bible School: August 5th thru 8th We held" Vacation Bible School. Our theme was "Camp Firelight" There were 30 children in attendance! Thank you to Carol Schmiedecke for leading music...it was absolutely

wonderful!! I couldn't have done it without the dedicated volunteers who helped! Thank you to all who made this community outreach possible!

"Blessing of the Backpacks" - September 8th during the children's message and then enjoyed a short lesson and an activity in the Minnema Room with Ice cream sundaes to celebrate!

Church school kick off! - September : We had "EYES OF THE WILD" WHO BROUGHT INTERESTING AND UNUSUAL ANIMALS. The presenter named their SUGAR GLIDER "SHANE" after one of our Sunday school students! How awesome! First pres. Nursery school Families and VBS alumni were invited! It was a fun day for everyone!

Bible Presentations - October 13th: First Pres. church school students Ben Hlavacek, Grace Pavao Davina Pierre, Hank Morris, Rosalie Torres, Darwin & Hadley Wall received new adventure bibles during worship service!

Church school Family BBQ/Picnic, October 6th held at the Manse, Children painted pumpkins, played games for prizes and we all enjoyed an assortment of foods and hotdogs cooked by Chef Pete!

JOHNSONBURG DAY RETREAT, October 19th 3 confirmands and 2 leaders attended Johnsonburg! It was a beautiful day filled with activities, opening group ice breakers, boating, archery, zip lining and a lovely lunch served! David Edelbach, Luca Torielli and Hudson Wall attended with leaders MaryEllen Castaldo & Jill Critchley!

Thanksgiving Luncheon held Thursday November 14th: Over twenty men & women gathered in our church dining room for a Thanksgiving lunch. Tomato soup, smoked ham, garlic mashed potatoes, broccoli casserole and dilled carrots and an array of desserts! A huge Thank you to Diane & Sami Eliya and Greta Croucher (for your famous mashed potatoes) and for all your help serving!

December - Mitten Tree was placed in church our hall thru the month of December, sponsored by CE, we received many donated scarves, hats, gloves and mittens which supports Center for Food Action in Mahwah.

Birthday Party for Jesus - December 8th: we held this event during & after worship during coffee hour. We had the youth transform Mr. Castaldo into Frosty the snowman and hunt for the Holy Family! The youth made crafts, enjoyed snacks and birthday cupcakes and sang happy birthday to Jesus during coffee hour.

Our First Pres. Annual Bake Sale December 15th: was a great success and over \$1,800 for Family Promise and Camp Lots of fun! Thank you to all the amazing bakers who donated their time and delectable baked goods! A special THANK YOU TO SAIDE ELIYA, who donated her delicious RICE PUDDING!

Christmas Mart - December 15th & 22nd. Our First Pres youth had the opportunity to shop for friends and family, free of charge! Thank you to those who donated items this year!

Toys 4 Tots toy collection: First Pres. Church School sponsored toy collection from November 17th through December 8th. Thank you for donating so many unwrapped new toys and game! YOU made a difference in the lives of many young boys & girls this Christmas!

Annual Christmas Pageant: Sunday, December 22th We held our Worship Service and Annual Christmas Pageant entitled: "The 12 Symbols of Christmas". The youth led pageant and service was led by our youth, did a spectacular job taking part in our worship service, readings and singing. We are so very proud of them!

Children & Youth-Led Sunday Worship Services

Youth Service, Sunday, January 28th. Great Job! A BIG THANK YOU to all who wore their favorite denim/jeans and donated to "Denim Day" to support our youth group for future trips and events. \$801 was raised in total! What a blessing! Cle Bellogey, Isabella Burger, Olivia Davis, David & Patrick Edelbach, Luke Eliya, Hudson Feeney, CJ, Luca & Dante Torielli

Youth Service - June 9th. Ending our school year: Thank you to: Cole Bellorgey, Olivia Davis, Lucy Dickinson, David Edelbach, Patrick Edelbach, Luke Eliya, Maddie Eliya, Hudson Feeney, CJ Torielli, Dante Torielli, Hadley, Darvin and Hudson Wall. During the service, we recognized our **First pres. High school graduates** Isabella Burger, Francesca Feltman, Samantha Santangelo, Amanda Schnure and **our First Pres. College Graduates:** Jeremy & Spencer Lavine, Nicolas Santangelo, Will Sofka, Drew Freda Congratulations to all!

Family Mission and Ministry Activities

Denim Day on January 28th Thank you to all who donated to our Denim Day fundraiser and wore your jeans to church! For \$10.00 you were able to come to church in comfort! Proceeds will go toward our High School Youth Group trips and events! We are happy to say we raised \$801.00! Thank you to all who donated!

Souper Bowl of caring soup sale - February 11th sponsored by Christian Ed and Growth, was a great success! Thank you to all who **generously** donated to our “Souper bowl” of caring event! We exceeded our goal of 200 meals! We raised \$1,263.00 which provided many meals for Eva’s Village in Paterson! THANK YOU to our soup, chili and stew makers! Thank you to our soup servers

One Great Hour of Sharing – March 20th: our church school students received their Fish banks and they had an opportunity to bring their banks/donations for One Great Hour of Sharing to church during our Fish and Chips dinner on Sunday, March 20th. Our youth were invited to play a fishing game for prizes in the auditorium!

Annual Lenten Food/NonFood Drive - March/April: CE sponsored a Food and Toiletry collection supporting Social Services of Ridgewood, NJ

Youth Ministry

Those who served as Lenten & Advent season liturgists, include HS students & confirmands Cole Bellorgey, Olivia Davis, David Edelbach, Maddie Eliya, Luke Eliya, Hudson Feeney, Laurie Feltmann, Chris Feltmann, Shane Strickland, CJ Torielli & Dante Torielli, Luca Torielli & Hudson Wall!

Sunday October 20th College Student Care Packages: our Christian Ed committee members donated items, filled and prepped to be mailed to 16 of our First Pres. college students! We received many thank you’s from our college students.

YOUTH GROUP: SUNDAY, April 21st, our Youth Group Coordinators, Helen Eliya, John Vasile and Steve Eliya transported the donations from our March Food/Non Food Drive and brought them to Social Services of Ridgewood and stocked the pantry shelves. They all enjoyed lunch at the Daily Treat and then attended Ridgewood’s Earth Day Festival! A fun day! **Youth in attendance:** Hudson Feeney, Shane Strickland, CJ, Dante & Luca Torielli.

On Sunday, September 22, Our Youth group, led by Helen Eliya & John Vasile, including Luca Torielli, CJ Torielli, Dante Torielli, Hudson Feeney & David Edelbach **helped with our Produce Mission** and shared a meal together at a local eatery!

Adult Education

February Matthew 25 Bible Study : Matthew 25:31-46: Examining the Text/Context Feb. 12th &14th Three Foci of the Matthew 25 Vision Feb. 19th &21st Reading this Passage in Light of Jesus' Ministry Feb. 25th &28th How Then Shall We Live?

April-May The Eight Habits of Evangelism-Video based: Exploring the four of the eight habits. Each gathering began with a short video focused on a particular aspect of holistic evangelism, followed by a discussion Sunday, April 14 Sunday, May 5 Sunday, May 19 Sunday, May 26 on Fellowship, Worship, Teaching & Generosi.

Sept.-Oct: Book Study on Gratitude

November:Mental Health Awareness & Light Lunch Series Sundays November 3, 10, 17 & 24 : Mental Health Awareness Series: Calming the Anxious Mind speaker: Michael Tozzoli The Art and Science of Happiness Speaker: Jim Stroker, Health Benefits of Choosing to Live Gratefully Speaker: Bruce Ballantine, Stress and the Holidays Speaker: Michael Tozzoli.

First Wednesdays Women's Ministry: This is a ladies group who gather the first Wednesday of each month for an evening of food, conversation, and spiritual inspiration. It's a wonderful opportunity for women of all ages to come together with church friends and make new ones, and to 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 in sharing fellowship with one another. **Thank you to Donna Flagg for your vision and inspiration in forming First Wednesdays women's ministry!**

TROOP 5 : MaryEllen has presented the Invocation and Benediction at Eagle Scout Ceremonies for Troop 5 in 2024.

2024 Christian Education Goals

In addition to the ongoing ministry goals based on the CE Committee's purpose, the Committee will specifically focus on the following in 2025.

- 1) **Engage New Volunteers:** Two new members of the committee, including one parent of children in the infant to grade 12 age range; two new Sunday school teachers & two substitutes
- 2) **Foster children and youth developing deeper connections with each other and friendships** as they participate in active Christian learning, mission and social activities together.
- 3) **Support development of an active and growing youth group**
- 4) **Engage new member families and families with young children**, with a mix of parent/child together activities and activities for children only, providing the parents with adult fellowship time with each other
- 5) **Support new small group opportunities for adult Christian education**



St Pattys bingo



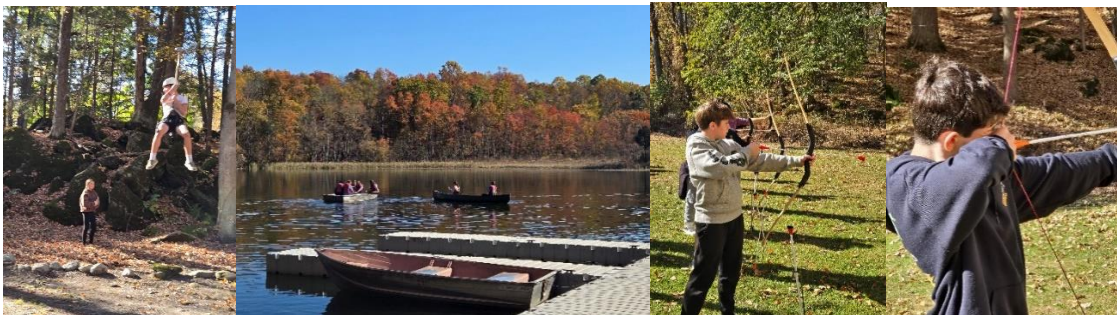
Palm Sunday

Easter Egg Hunt



Church school kickoff w/Eyes of the Wild

Bible Presentations



Johnsonburg trip in October



Church school Fall Fest BBQ/Picnic



Annual bake sale



Birthday Party 4 Jesus

The First Presbyterian Church
Security Annual Report January 2025

Members: Andy Castaldi, Pastor Bruce, Tom Gibson, Jill Critchley

Background: In November 2023, we were awarded \$96K from the NJ Office Of Homeland Security and Preparedness from their NJ Non-Profit Security Grant Program. The funding is for specific site security improvements to be implemented over a 3-year period. The grant requires projects to be pre-approved, managed and tracked through NJ.GOV and their Grant Tracking System, and reimbursed after completion. Projects include improved controls for how buildings are accessed and by whom, strengthening windows and doors, adding exterior and interior video monitoring for more of our buildings, and situation training. There will be announced and unannounced audits as we go through the process, and we have an assigned liaison to help up though the process.

2024 Accomplishments:

- We completed the Environmental and Historic Preservation Assessment to ensure we can conform to the historic society regulations and we are now moving forward with improving the safety of our building and occupants.
- This year security film was applied to 140 windows in the Main Office, Education Building and in the Chapel. We are obtaining bids for cameras and replacing the door entering the Education Building by the office with a more secure door. Also fire evacuation procedures have been written for the Sunday School through the Christian Ed Committee.

2025 Goals:

- Complete installation of video cameras and Security Door.
- Fire Drill practice (to be completed every year)
- Complete procedures for Sunday School through Christian Ed Committee in case of a Terrorist attack
- Develop Safety Education Programs for congregation and anyone using our facilities to prepare to respond to violent events. Please reach out if you are interested or can offer some guidance in this area.

Critical dates:

Grant Agreement: 11/20/2023 (completed)
Environmental and Historic Document Submission: 1/13/2024 (completed)
50% Encumbrance: 02/01/2025
100% Encumbrance: 02/01/2026
Final Reimbursement: 07/31/2026
End of Program: 08/31/2026

As it is very unfortunate, we are in these times where added security is mandated, we are very thankful that we now have funding to help us get there. We pray God continues to keep us safe.

Do you think I cannot call on my Father, and he will at once put at my disposal more than twelve legions of angels? Matthew 26:53

Respectfully submitted,

Jill Critchley and Tom Gibson

The First Presbyterian Church

Property Committee Annual Report

January 2025

The Property Committee oversees the Church and manse properties. We keep the buildings in good structural condition and our infrastructure in sound operating order. We also negotiate contracts to maintain the grounds and parking lots and we oversee capital improvements approved by Session.

Acknowledgements:

- This committee wants to recognize great work from Laura Magrath, Marjorie Vanacore, and Joan Davies to renovate our kitchen. We also recognize the generosity of the Massey and Magrath families, the Haffey bequest, the Endowment Fund and Trinity Church to make the project possible. The new kitchen has layout improvements, is bright, and is ready to serve our congregation.
- Recognition also goes to Joe Jackson and his basketball camp for coordinating a PSEG program to install new energy-efficient lighting in the gym AND exterior lighting around all church buildings. This work was done at no cost to us.
- Finally, Many thanks to our maintenance staff, Tom Carozza, George Wood, Michael Bertani and Jim Goudsward for your good work to keep our systems running and our buildings well-maintained.

2024 Summary:

All of our buildings are aging, as evidenced by the sanctuary approaching its 100th birthday in early 2026. Our newest buildings are 40 years old. With their age come ever-growing maintenance and repair costs. The work summarized below is the result of dedicated efforts from our committee members: Joel Torielli, Sandy Santangelo, Andy Castaldi, Richard Davies, Marjorie Vanacore, Tom Carozza, Pastor Bruce, and Tom Gibson (chair).

- Worked with families, sourced, and installed Memorial Garden bricks to remember three past members: Richard Vanacore, Lorraine Sproul, and Alan Maxfield.
- In support of the Security Team (see separate report), coordinated security film installation on education building and chapel windows to deter break-ins
- Contracted a building inspections company to evaluate the manse and church structures and identify areas that require near/medium term attention.
- Completed repairs to the manse foundation, closed and sealed a large crack in a corner of the gym, and restored brick and mortar in the cloister hallway. Moisture infiltration that caused damaged to the cloister was also addressed.
- Improved chancel illumination with additional track lighting. Thank you Jessica Strader-Paz for helping us specify and source the fixtures
- Refreshed the auditorium. Work included repairing cracked walls, reorganizing low voltage wiring for a cleaner appearance, and repainting the room. Thank you, Ivan Mashliakevych, for helping repair the walls and to Sandy (committee member) for extraordinary effort to rent and transport scaffolds, obtain all supplies, and coordinate the activities.
- Replaced the sanctuary's AC condenser fan motor that failed, forcing us to hold Sunday service in the newly refreshed, repainted auditorium.
- Re-piped the steam boilers to achieve significant reliability improvement. Many thanks to our Endowment Committee for funding this necessary project.
- Replaced a burned-out circulation pump that provided hot water heat to the chapel and library.
- Filled and repaved a sunken section of the Van Dien parking lot (across the street)
- Scraped and repainted the storage barn.
- Replaced the manse dishwasher
- With the personnel committee, updated job descriptions for the sexton and evening cleaner positions.

The First Presbyterian Church
Property Committee Annual Report
January 2025

Property Committee Priorities For 2025:

- Continue to address maintenance/repair needs identified in our 2024 building assessment. Our first priorities include
 - Cracking of tar on flat roofs and spot leaks into the buildings
 - Repairs needed to manse front porch and stairs
- Replace the sanctuary air conditioner
- Identify other mid-term capital needs
- Continue to assist Security Team with 2025 activities.

Please feel free to contact the committee chair or any of our committee members with your questions, suggestions, and offers of support.

Respectfully submitted,
Tom Gibson
Committee Chair

2025 Committee Members

Tom Gibson
Joel Torielli
Sandy Santangelo
Andy Castaldi
Richard Davies
Tom Carozza
Pastor Bruce

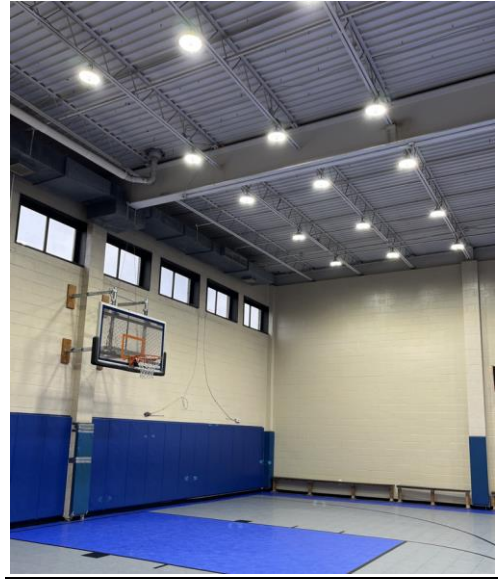
Some 2024 Activities

A NEW KITCHEN



Made possible through the generosity of the Massey and Magrath families, the Haffey bequest, the Endowment Fund and Trinity Church

NEW GYM LIGHTING



Made possible through the generous efforts of Joe Jackson's and his Basketball Shooting Lab

NEW AND IMPROVED EXTERIOR LIGHTING



Some 2024 Activities

AUDITORIUM “REFRESH”

Some of the volunteers who repaired and repainted the auditorium. Thanks to all who participated !



Gymnasium Corner
BEFORE



Gymnasium Corner
AFTER repair



MASONRY WORK

Cloister Hallway BEFORE:

Shows disintegrating bricks and mortar



AFTER:



Technology Committee Annual Report for 2024

Co-chairs: Sami Eliya, Jill Critchley

The Technical Support Staff includes Dave Ciccolella, Leo Magrath, Tom Carroza, and our technical assistant. This year we said to good-bye to Maiah Reidel (as she is off to college) and we welcomed Gina Vaynshteyn to be our assistant. We cannot thank you enough for your technical expertise and dedication!

The team informed us that in December we had SIX livestream services with more viewers online than ever! This is an indication that people are finding us and appreciating the services online. On the average we have 50% viewers online with 50% attending in-person on Sunday. This service is vital in attracting new members and enabling those who cannot attend in person attend virtually.

This service does not come without a cost. We thank (AGAIN) the Endowment Committee for paying for these services as we don't have enough contributions to cover these expenses. Please consider this when make church contributions.

To keep the website up to date, committees need to review and work with Dave to make appropriate updates.

Dave guiding Gina before church service.



2024 Accomplishments:

Live Stream- 7 Hours per week

Other Technology Needs (up to 6 hours/month)

Website Updates

Newsletters, Bulletins, Promotions-

Computer needs and Consulting.

YouTube/Facebook updates.

Livestream services- Successfully run Livestream Sunday Services 52 weeks without issues. Memorial Services, Wedding services, and all Sunday are available on the website. **First Pres Website:** **firstpresridgewood.org.**



We maintain an annual license for **ZOOM conferencing** capabilities and use the **Geek Squad** for other support as needed through an annual subscription for hardware and software support for our staff.

Dave also develops, maintains and supports the Nursery School website and any technical issues that arise. **Nursery School Website: fpnsr.com**

2025 Goals and Visions:

- Continue to inform current members, and attract new members of the happenings of our church.
- Continue to improve our social media and LiveStream technology to best reflect First Pres.

And He said to them: "Go into the world and proclaim the gospel to the whole creation". Mark 16:16.

Respectively submitted,

Jill Critchley, Sami Eliya

First Presbyterian Church of Ridgewood, New Jersey

Board of Deacons Annual Report

2024

“The Ministry of Deacon as set forth in Scripture is one of compassion, witness, and service....” (Book of Order, G-2.0202). Deacons support the church and its membership in a variety of ways, particularly in serving those in need of comfort, assurance, support, and care both within and beyond the community of faith. Each Deacon serves an assigned geographic section of members in addition to his or her general responsibilities. Deacons work on one or more of the following standing committees: Care, Caring Cooks, Communion, Flowers, Visitation, Transportation and Reception. They also serve regularly as liturgists, communion servers, greeters and ushers and assist the Pastor during Baptisms.

There are currently 13 active deacons serving on the Board for the 2024-2025 term: Janice Ax (Co-Chair Reception & Co-Chair Communion Committee) Linda Cascardo, Jan Cross (Care), Diane Eliya (Vice-Moderator & Secretary), Emmy Eliya, Rita Infante (Flowers), Evelyn Kender (Treasurer), Lynn Malyso, Suzy McDevitt (Co-Chair Reception), Li Towt, Marjorie Vanacore (Caring Cooks), Nancy Walters (Moderator), and Rodger Yaden (Co-Chair Communion Committee).

In 2024, we welcomed Evelyn Kender, Marjorie Vanacore and Rita Infante as new Board members in June, and thanked the following retiring Deacons for their dedicated service: Jeanine Jamieson, Sue Dickinson, Linda Strickland, Kathleen Barkho, and Robert Morris.

The Deacons hosted a Deacon’s Reception on Sept. 29th organized by our Reception Committee and it was very well attended. Our Care and Caring Cooks have been very busy keeping up with members that need support and/or meals. Our Flower Committee delivers the donated flowers every Sunday to members to cheer them up. Our Visitation Committee continues to be in contact with and visit in person the church members that are not able to attend services for one reason or another. Our Communion Committee has adapted to the set up and sign ups that go along with serving Communion by Intinction the last few months.

The Deacons continue to reach out to their Section members throughout the year. Donna Flagg put together an Advent & Christmas Happenings that the Deacons sent out to their Sections to keep them apprised of all the activities going on during the Holiday Season.

As we work to stay connected, we want the congregation to know that support is available for meals, transportation and visitation.

We are grateful for the opportunity to serve our church in many ways and thank everyone who support our efforts.

Nancy Walters, Moderator

NOMINATING COMMITTEE ANNUAL REPORT 2024

“From him the whole body, joined and held together by every supporting ligament,
Grows and builds itself up in love, as each part does its work.” Ephesians 4:16 (NIV)

The Nominating Committee is a committee of the congregation. It is tasked to provide a slate of candidates for the leadership of the church to be elected by the congregation at Congregational Meetings. It is chaired by an Elder and comprised of Elder and Deacon representatives along with church Members-at-Large who are also elected by the congregation.

The nominating process is guided by the “Book of Order” and church by-laws. The Nominating Committee is charged to search and select active members to serve as church officers and to ensure they reflect the rich diversity of the church’s membership. This committee does this by encouraging members of the congregation to recommend leadership candidates, to answer a call they heard to self-nominate and through a process of discernment.

This year, during a series of meetings and prayerful discussions, the committee developed a list of potential candidates. This was done in consultation with the “Companion to the Constitution of the PCUSA” to identify members who had demonstrated gifts and leadership along with a commitment to the life and ministry of First Presbyterian Church. Members were then invited to consider the invitation to serve as an Elder, Deacon or on the Nominating Committee through telephone calls and emails when in-person opportunities were not available.

On Sunday, May 12, 2024 the Congregational Meeting was held to elect the following officers: **Elder Class of 2027** - Richard Davies, John Eliya, Tom Gibson and Glen Santangelo. **Deacon Class of 2027** - Rita Infante, Evelyn Kender and Marjorie Vanacore. **Congregation-At-Large Nominating Committee members** - Sue Dickinson, Donna Flagg, Sandy Santangelo and Britt Tunick.

Our committee would like to welcome our new officers and extend our thanks and gratitude for their gracious acceptance to serve in the leadership of our church. In bringing their gifts, talents, and willing hearts to the church, they answer God’s call to be “faithful stewards of God’s grace in its various forms” (1 Peter 4:10). Thanks also goes out to our officers completing terms for their years of leadership and dedication: **Elders** Anita Hutton and Laura Magrath. **Deacons** Kathleen Barkho, Sue Dickinson, Jeanine Jamieson, Robert Morris and Linda Strickland. Special thanks go out to Pastor Bruce Ballantine and members of the Nominating Committee for their time and deep commitment to First Presbyterian.

The Nominating Committee will continue its work in 2025 to recruit members to fill vacancies on Session, the Board of Deacons and Nominating Committee. We ask that you keep our committee in your prayers as we endeavor to develop the next slate of candidates for the Classes of 2028. These leadership roles directly affect how we as a church support one another and the community through worship, mission and care while fulfilling Jesus' teachings to serve one another in fellowship and faith.

Marcia Unger, Chair (Retiring)
Elder Representative: Marjorie Vanacore
Deacon Representative: Jeanine Jamieson
Members-at-Large: Richard Davies, Donna Flagg, Sue Fischer

(Respectfully submitted by Marcia Unger, Chair of the Nominating Committee)

2024-25 LEADERSHIP OF FIRST PRESBYTERIAN

Officers of the Corporation of the Board of Trustees

President - Richard Davies. Vice President - Rick Friedl
Treasurer - Andy Castaldi Secretary - Joan Davies
Pastor/Head of Staff - Rev. Bruce Ballantine

Elders of Session: Robin Byrne, SamBarkho, Jill Critchley, John Eliya, Sue Fischer, Tom Gibson, Richard Davies, Glen Santangelo, Marcia Unger

Board of Deacons: Janis Ax, Linda Cascardo, Jan Cross, Diane Eliya, Emmy Eliya, Lynn Malyso, Suzy McDevitt, Li Towt, Nancy Walters, Rodger Yaden, Rita Infante, Evelyn Kender, Marjorie Vanacore

Nominating Committee: Richard Davies, Linda Cascardo, Sue Dickinson, Donna Flagg, Sandy Santangelo, Britt Tunick

Standing Committees of Session:

Christian Education	Nursery School	Mission, Peace & Righteousness
Finance/Stewardship	Personnel	Growth/Hospitality
Property	Technology	Worship & Arts

2024 Growth and Hospitality Annual Report

Jessica Strader Paz

Welcoming

Each Sunday a member greets visitor and members attending worship service with a smile and passes out a bulletin and any other material such as communion kits. Greta Croucher has returned to greet. Thank you to Nada Wood and Donna Flagg for their contributions as well.

New Visitor Welcomer

Whenever someone new is visiting the church for the first time, they are given a brochure of the church. If they return a second time, they receive a welcome bag. This has been a wonderful effort sparked by the Worship and Arts Committee and Donna Flagg. Thank you, Donna.

Coffee Hour and Lemonade Hour

Thank you to Marjorie Vanacore for stepping in for several months and picking up the baked goods for coffee hour. This year we were able to have members sign up to pick up and cut the baked goods. Thank you to all the volunteers. Thank you to the Deacons for hosting Lemonade Hour!

Social Media

We took out ads on Facebook for our Mental Health Series which was well attended. It also gave visibility into our church Facebook page

Getting Acquainted Breakfasts

We held a series of breakfasts in February and October where prospective members and visitors who were interested in learning more about our church were invited to meet before church for a light breakfast, meet some members and staff of FPC, and find out more about being a Presbyterian and specifically, First Pres of Ridgewood. We have so much to offer! Thank you, Suzy McDevitt for all your help with the breakfasts!

First Friends

Donna Flagg spearheaded the First Friends group where 6 - 8 people have dinner once per month and rotate who hosts the meal. There were several groups that formed and became good friends over good food. Thank you, Donna!

Events

We were blessed to contribute and collaborate with other committees during the Souper Bowl of Caring, St. Patty's Bingo, Lighting of the Christmas Tree, and the Bake Sale. Thank you, Sandy Santangelo, for your help with Events.

In 2024 new members received were: Joanne Hare, Peter Hare, Grace Albergate, Matthew Cardona, Susan King, Bing Lu, and Justin Torres.

We are so blessed to continue to grow. Please reach out to me if you would be interested in supporting one of our pillars of growth. We would love to have you.

Jessica Strader Paz, Chair

So then, just as you received Christ Jesus as Lord, continue to live your lives in him, rooted and built up in him, strengthened in the faith as you were taught, and overflowing with thankfulness.

- Colossians 2:6-7

Personnel Committee

Annual Report 2024

Like good stewards of the manifold grace of God, serve one another with whatever gift each of you has received.

1 Peter 4:10

Purpose

The Personnel Committee oversees the employment and retention of competent staff responsible for church operations and support to ministries under the supervision of the Pastor, Head of Staff. The Committee develops, implements and ensures adherence to personnel policies; manages job descriptions, annual performance reviews, salary administration, the Pastor's Terms of Call, and budget recommendations.

Members

Personnel Committee members are drawn from other key church committees which work with church staff.

Dawn Murdock, Chairperson [Worship & Arts]
Andy Castaldi [Finance, Nursery School]
Sue Fischer [Christian Education]

Joseph Suplicki [Nursery School]
Marjorie Vanacore [Property]
Pastor Bruce Ballentine

Key 2024 Accomplishments

- Updated staff Job Descriptions, in collaboration with key committees
- Developed an annual staff performance review process and forms
- Prepared a Performance Review addendum to the Personnel Manual
- Implemented annual staff performance reviews of 2023
- Re-structured sexton and custodian schedules for each to be five days per week, coordinated with the Nursery School cleaner, such that all duties are covered; secured a substitute custodian to cover any absences of these three staff members.

The Personnel Committee recognizes and deeply appreciates the dedication and hard work of our church staff and Pastor in 2024, ensuring effective church operations and providing critical support for our church and our many ministries. We are grateful to Pastor Bruce for his service to and leadership of our church.

2025 Personnel Committee Goals

- Implement the Annual Performance Review process in January-February, which will be a recurring timeframe to ensure its effectiveness.
- Continue to address any personnel issues arising in a timely manner.

Troop 5 2024 Annual Report

We would like to thank the First Presbyterian community for their continued support and especially thank Mary Ellen Castaldo, Dana Feeney and Pastor Bruce for their guidance in 2024. We are looking forward to continuing the Scouting traditions at First Presbyterian in 2025. In 2024, Troop 5 provided Scouts with opportunities and experiences that helped them learn leadership skills, build character, and experience the importance of giving back to the community. There are currently 38 Scouts registered in the Troop, ranging in age from 11 – 17. This is a decrease of 7 Scouts from 2023.

As it has done for decades, Troop 5 focuses on boy-led planning of meetings, and instruction of younger Scouts by older Scouts in subjects such as first aid, camping, cooking and, of course, tying knots. We have continued to have scouts practice leadership and teaching skills, earn merit badges, and progress through rank advancement. Games are held at the end of some meetings, keeping things fun and engaging for the Scouts.

Troop 5 maintains one of the most ambitious schedules of all of the Scout Troops in New Jersey. In addition to weekly Monday night meetings at First Presbyterian and monthly weekend trips during the school year, over 80% of Troop 5's Scouts attended at least a week of summer camp. Eighteen Scouts, ages 11-17, attended a week of residential camp at Camp NoBeBoSco, where they learned Scout skills and earned merit badges towards rank advancement. Eight Scouts, ages 11-17, experienced a weeklong canoe trip at Floodwood Scout Reservation, where they worked together as a team to navigate treks of dozens of miles through the Adirondack State Park.

For its weekend camping trips, in addition to making traditional visits to local Scout camps and State Parks in New Jersey and New York, Troop 5 camped at Pine Hill Scout Reservation in Pine Hill, NJ. The Scouts used the camp as a base for a visit to Philadelphia and Independence National Historic Park. On these camping trips, Scouts engaged in outdoor hiking, cooking, cleaning, camp set-up, rank advancements and service projects.

Troop 5 values and instills in its Scouts a spirit of community service. Scouts learned the value of giving back to the community through donating gifts to the Valley Hospital at Christmas time, hosting the popular "tinker table" at the Ridgewood School District's Super Science Saturday, and participating in various Eagle projects. One of our Scouts is serving on the Super Science Saturday Executive Board helping plan the event for 2025. In these pursuits, the Scouts have learned the importance of being hands on, helping others, and giving with their hearts.

Eagle Scout is the highest rank in Scouting and the Eagle service project is a key part of earning the Eagle rank. In 2024, Troop 5 was honored to have four Scouts, Zachary McCotter, Isaac Lee, Jason Groehnert and Nathan Fenster, achieve the rank of Eagle. Zachary and Isaac completed their Eagle projects in 2023 but earned Eagle in 2024. Their projects were described in the 2023 annual report. Jason and Nathan's Eagle projects were painting the exterior of the Ridgewood Social Services building, and building benches and installing trail signs for the Teaneck Creek Conservatory, respectively.

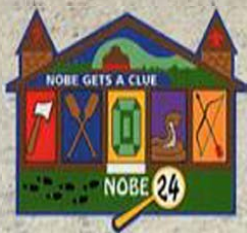
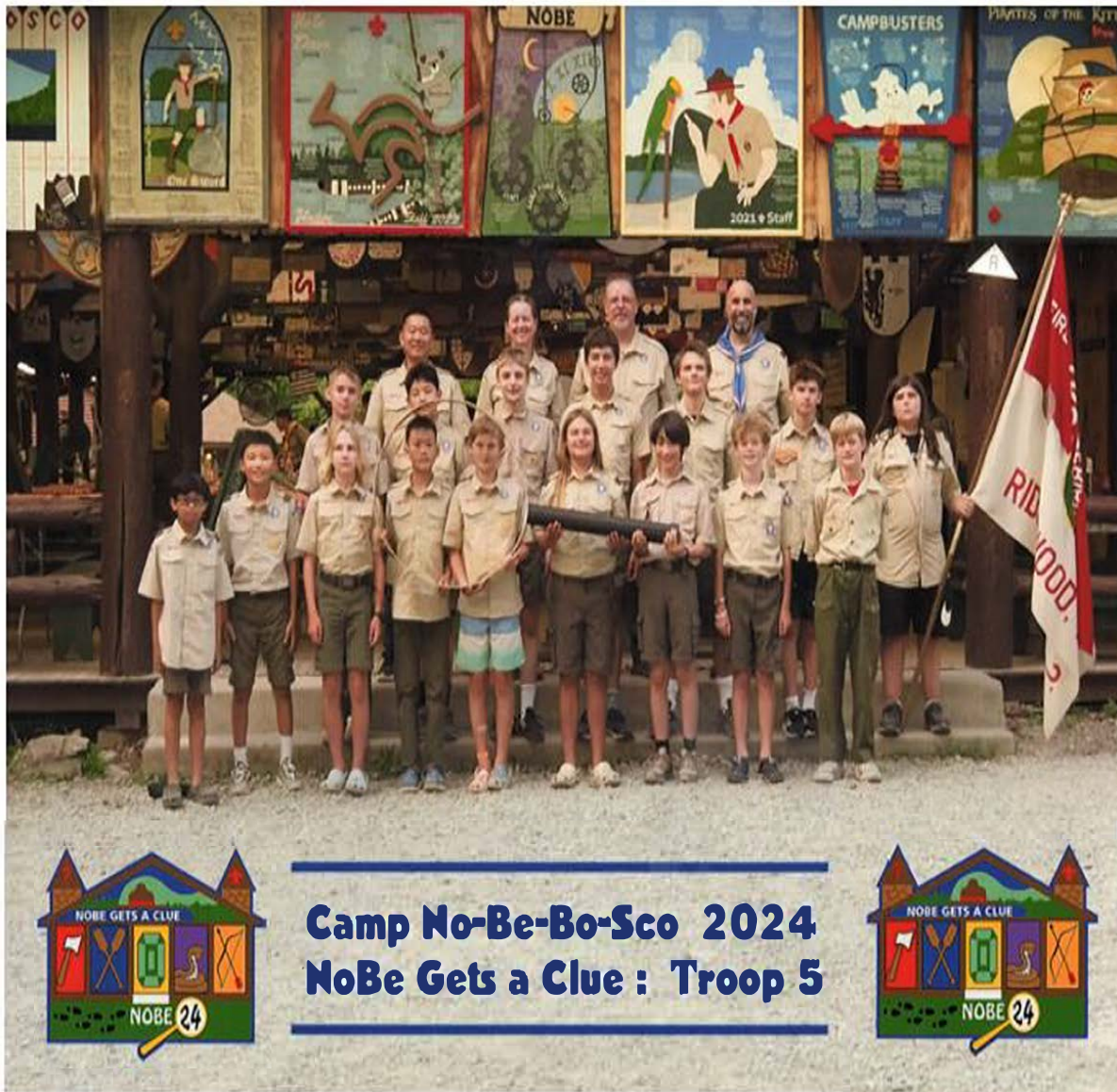
On May 1st, long-time Troop 5 Assistant Scoutmaster David Bock, was awarded the prestigious Silver Beaver award at the Northern New Jersey Council annual recognition dinner for years of exceptional service to Scouting. In addition to being an active Assistant Scoutmaster, Mr Bock is the current Floodwood Mountain Scout Reservation Camp Director, a Ramapo Valley District commissioner and the Ramapo Valley District Camping Committee Chair. Troop 5 is very lucky to call Mr Bock our own.

2024 brought some continuity to the adult leadership of Troop 5. Key Three Leadership (Mrs Castaldo, Mr Moomjy and Mr Glynn) remained the same as did many of the existing Assistant Scoutmasters and Committee Members. We also had some parents of younger Scouts join the adult leadership team. Unfortunately Mr Shah stepped down as the Summer Camp Coordinator, so Mr Glynn picked up the slack while searching for a new Summer Camp Coordinator. In 2025 Mr Cheng will step down as Treasurer, so the Troop will need to fill that role as well.

Troop 5 2024 adult leadership:

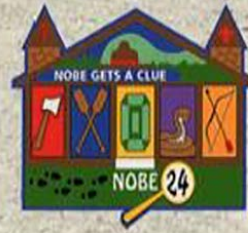
Troop Committee		Assistant Scoutmasters and Committee Members	
Mary Ellen Castaldo	Charter Organization Rep	David Bock	Reed Richardson
Robert Moomjy	Scoutmaster	Craig Fenster	Lou Lembo
Jack Glynn	Committee Chairman	Scott Reynolds	Michael Gallant
Jerry Cheng	Treasurer	Erick Perez	David Melican
Elizabeth Kennedy	Advancement Chair	Bill Karins	Christine Truhn
Jason Harper	Eagle Scout Coordinator	Chad Carter	Tim Truhn
Open Role	Summer Camp Coordinator	Ray Tom	Yu Sun
Michelle Arenciva & Maggie Fahey	Fundraising Chairs	Dan Morgan	David McPadden

2024 had an unusually large number of Scouts age out of the program. With eight (8) Scouts aging out, the Troop will be very young in 2025. This will pose leadership challenges as BSA is a youth run organization, but it will also provide leadership opportunities to younger Scouts who might not have received these opportunities otherwise. In 2025 the Troop will continue its weekly meeting and monthly camping schedule. We will return to Camp NoBeBoSco and Floodwood Scout Reservation in July. Lastly, we anticipate three (3) current Life Scouts will earn Eagle in 2025.



Camp No-Be-Bo-Sco 2024

NoBe Gets a Clue : Troop 5



First Presbyterian Church, Ridgewood, NJ Statistical Report for 2024

So then, you are no longer strangers and aliens, but you are fellow citizens with the saints and also members of the household of God, built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, with Christ Jesus himself as the cornerstone; in him the whole structure is joined together and grows into a holy temple in the Lord. Ephesians 2:19-21

Total Membership as of January 1, 2023: 278

Losses:

Deletions - 0

Transfers - 0

Deaths - 5

Additions:

Profession of Faith - 0

Reaffirmation of Faith - 9

Letters of Transfer - 1

Total Membership as of December 31, 2024: 283

Baptisms -2

Weddings – 0

Members & Baptized Members who entered into God's Eternal Kingdom in 2024

Lazarus Kozak James W. Davidson William B. Morris

Susan E. Hudson Fay M. Reid Karen B. Dexter

Submitted by Joan Davies,

Clerk of Session

2024 Annual Report

"The King will reply, 'Truly I tell you, whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers and sisters of mine, you did for me.'" — Matthew 25:40

Team Members

Robin Byrne (Co-Chair)
Jessica Strader Paz (Co-Chair)
Joan Davies (submitted report)
Rick Friedl
Bobbe Kutcha
Pastor Bruce Ballantine

2024 Highlights of Hands-On Ministries

Fish and Chips Food Truck

Raised a record-breaking \$1,357.00 for One Great Hour of Sharing.

Jersey Cares Coat Drive

Collected over 52 coats for those in need.

City Relief

MPSRT volunteers served food and prayed with the homeless in New York City and Paterson.

Passaic County Habitat for Humanity Volunteer Days

Organized by Donna Flagg, team members contributed their time to building homes and hope.

St. Paul's Shelter in Paterson

Monthly food preparation and delivery, led by Joel Torielli.

Produce Mission

In partnership with Table to Table, spearheaded by Sandy Santangelo, this mission continues to support local food distribution.

Matthew 25 Task Force

Focusing on Mental Health Awareness, held a Light Lunch Series to promote understanding, ways to cope and how to get care.

"Serve the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul." — Deuteronomy 10:12

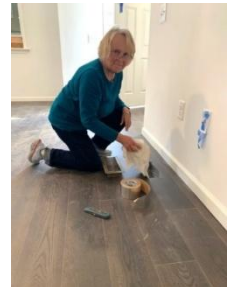
2024 Financial Contributions

Local and International Outreach

- **First Presbyterian Church of Ridgefield Park:** \$800 (for construction work)
- **Ridgewood/Glen Rock MLK Day Scholarship Fund:** \$150
- **Valley Hospital Butterfly Program** (in honor of Mary Shaw): \$500
- **PC(USA) Restoring Creation Fund:** \$400
- **One Great Hour of Sharing (OGHS) Mission/Benevolence Match:** \$4,633.00
- **Pittsburgh Theological Seminary:** \$250 (in honor of Pastor Bruce Ballantine)
- **United Presbyterian Church, Paterson Safe Space Summer Camp:** \$800
- **Presbyterian Disaster Assistance:** \$500 (Hurricane Helene Relief)
- **Living Waters for the World:** \$2,500
- **Pastoral Discretionary Fund:** \$5,000
- **Carol Eliya (Youth With a Mission):** \$500
- **Almost Heaven Habitat for Humanity:** \$120 (deposit for 2025 adult mission trip)
- **Passaic County Habitat for Humanity:** \$1,000
- **Johnsonburg Camp & Retreat Center:** \$1,500
- **Prison Fellowship (Angel Tree Program):** \$250
- **Mashliakevych Family:** \$600
- **Passaic County Habitat for Humanity Welcome Baskets:** \$575.08

Total Disbursed: \$20,078

We thank everyone who contributed their time, energy, and/or resources to make 2024 a successful year of serving our Lord. Together, we made a difference, and we eagerly anticipate increasing our impact in 2025!



East Meets West Committee

Robin Byrne

The East Meets West Committee met to discuss and proceed with our collaborative joint/worship picnic held in August 2024 at First Presbyterian Church. It was a huge success with about 100 members enjoying a catered lunch and sides and desserts from both congregations. West Side members joined our First Pres choir and helped greeting at our doors. Music was provided by Pastor Marc's band! We will continue to meet and discuss future activities that our congregations can participate in.



Hobbyists Unlimited Review 2024

As the Hobbyists fast approach its 60th year, it continues to provide both its members and the community with valuable service. 2024 in part was a year of renewal and below, we highlight some accomplishments.

Membership

After several years of decline and stagnant growth brought on by Covid, current membership stands at 419, an increase of 29 from last year. Our member profile is trending younger with the average age at 76. Our new online application process makes it easier to apply.

Social Activities

Our annual Holiday Dinner Dance at Seasons was attended by more than 160 people. This past May, our 1950s/60s theme Dinner Dance was attended by 88 people.

Each month, ROMEO (Retired Old Men Eat Out) meets at local restaurants and provides members with reasonably priced fare and opportunities to interact with colleagues. On average, about 25 Hobbyists regularly participate. Our annual picnic at Graydon Pool was attended by more than 50 people who enjoyed games, friendship and ice cream donated by Van Dyk's of Ridgewood.

The Trips & Tours group provided an interesting mix this past year. More than 50 people visited the Locust Grove Estate of Samuel Morse in Poughkeepsie, N.Y. The annual 3-day trip to Woodloch Pines (our 15th year there) was enjoyed by 65 people. The Wind Creek Casino in Bethlehem, Pa. included a stage show reprising songs by The Four Seasons and enjoyed by 26 people. Rounding out the year is a planned visit to the home and birthplace of Teddy Roosevelt, lunch at Carmine's and a trip to Grant's Tomb.

Community Outreach

Our volunteers that support Passaic County Habitat for Humanity were hard at work on new construction for eight single-family homes in Paterson.

Our Volunteer Service Club continued to provide support at Eva's Village in Paterson. The group helps set up and serve two seatings of a hot and nutritious lunch for those in need twice each month on Tuesday.

Personal Interests

In April, we reactivated the Investors Group with several well-attended Zoom presentations offered by financial experts. Our Book Club discussed works of fiction, history and even poetry with more than 20 members usually attending its monthly meetings. Movie Lovers provided interesting monthly showings at The Village Hall that are also open to the public. Our Winemakers Club, with 31 active members, had a busy year in producing classic blends of Chilean Carmenere, Cabernet Sauvignon and Merlot. They also received a prestigious award for its 2023 Opus One blend. Military History, Gourmet Cooking, Music Lovers, and World Affairs, among others, continued to provide valuable programs.

Sports and Games

Golf, our most popular activity with about 110 participants, had another busy year. In addition to their weekly outings, four tournaments and a golf trip to Atlantic City took place. Our league bowlers completed a 32-week season with 14 teams and some 60 players. Pickleball, a new offering, started in April with outdoor play and an interest in moving indoors in Winter. The Hiking group added some new members and now sponsors two hikes each week year-round. In addition, a 3-day overnight trip and an annual co-ed bar-b-que were well-received. The Walkers also added some new members and continued their weekly 4-mile jaunts starting at the Ridgewood Duck Pond. Bocce, Tennis and Fishing groups continued their popular outdoor activities. Indoors, we continued to offer Bridge, Chess, Blackjack, and Pinochle.

Last, but not least, we wish to thank Pastor Bruce, Dana, Tom and all others at the Church for their continued support of our organization. Without it, we could not exist.

Peace.

Mark Singer
President, Hobbyists Unlimited

Connections

Dear Pastor Bruce,

My year as President of Connections is drawing to a close and I would like to update you on our activities.

It has been quite a year and we are most thankful for having the First Presbyterian Church as our home for some of our activities. We currently have three weekly activities: Rummikub, Writing, and a Book Club. We have a Movie Group, and a PBS review once a month, and of course our once monthly General Meeting. Our membership is thriving, in fact we currently have 250 members. It is a great opportunity for women to meet others with the same interests or to take up a new activity.

Dana and Tom have always been a great help with any questions and setup.

We look forward to continuing our relationship with the First Presbyterian Church.

Thank you and have a blessed Christmas season.

Sincerely,
Jacquie Hinrichs
Connections 2024 President



Weekday Nursery School Annual Report 2024

www.fpnsr.com



First Presbyterian Nursery School

Our school has been serving the community since we opened our doors on October 7, 1968. This 2024-2025 school year marks the 56th year of First Presbyterian Church Nursery School's service in the Ridgewood Community. First Pres. Nursery School is dedicated to developing the emotional, intellectual, social, and physical growth of our students. We believe that education is a cooperative effort among students, parents, and staff, designed to stimulate the creativity and achievements of each individual child. We feel that each young person entrusted to us is important, and we consider it a privilege to be a part of each child's life! All our classes are taught by experienced, caring, and creative teachers. All teachers have a background in Early Childhood Education through college certification and/or experience and are required to attend a minimum of 12 additional hours of early childhood education training annually. All classroom teachers are CPR/First Aid certified. We are fully licensed by the state of New Jersey, with licensing renewal inspections occurring every 3 years, in addition to annual state 'mini-inspections'. At the time of this report, we have our permanent license. The next licensing audit renewal for the Nursery School will be November 2025. We are currently awaiting our annual student health record/immunization audit conducted by Valley Hospital's Community Health Dept., on behalf of the State of NJ.

In 2024, the N.S. has been actively implementing several strategies to enhance our visibility within the community. These include enhancing our marketing efforts, expanding community outreach, and introducing new programs designed to meet the evolving needs of families. Examples of these are adding testimonials to our website, launching a Facebook page, sponsoring an FPNS Ridgewood Kickball Team, being featured in the September issue of Ridgewood Living Magazine, receiving a nomination for Best Preschool in the Best of Bergen 201 Magazine, and creating school branded T-shirts to promote our identity. Our program options now include a Half Day or Full Day option for our Threes and Fours. In addition, our Twos now have the option to attend school 5 Half Days. Our Spanish, Music, and Gym curriculum continues to be very well received by our students, staff, and parents.

Registration for the 2025-2026 school year is underway. We are hosting an Open House on January 24, 2025. Interest in the Nursery School continues, and tours are being conducted for prospective families.

The success of the Nursery School is a collective effort. We appreciate our dedicated and talented staff, our supportive N.S. committee members, our N.S. Parent Committee Volunteers and all our First Pres. families.

The Nursery School, a vital part of the First Presbyterian Church revenue stream, is self-supporting with an annual budget submitted through the Finance committee and approved by Session. Fundraising efforts have raised approximately \$2,000 YTD. Proceeds from our fundraisers are funding our "in-school" field trip programs for our students as well as classroom supplies and equipment.

Respectfully submitted,
Julia A. Bolt, Director
201-445-2552.

Weekday Nursery School Annual Report 2024

2023-2024
Graduation
with
Alumni



Teacher Appreciation Breakfast



FPCNS 2024 Graduate



RHS chorus, First Pres. students and Hobbyist.



N. S. Staff



1ST PRESBYTERIAN NURSERY SCHOOL COMMITTEE - ANNUAL REPORT 2024

Nursery School Committee:

Marcia Unger and Evelyn Kender, Co-Chairs
Anita Hutton, Secretary
Robin Byrne

Andrew Castaldi
Donna Flagg
Joseph Suplicki
Pastor Bruce Ballantine
Julia Bolt, Director

Proverbs 22: "Train up a child in the way he should go: even when he is old he will not depart from it."

This has been another very successful year for the Nursery School. The children participated in the regular school curriculum as well as other enriching activities including Summer Camp, Special Person Visitation Day and In House field trips.

The Nursery School has fully transitioned to the new model of offering classes 5 days a week. This includes the options of Half Day/Full Day and includes Music, Spanish and Gym Classes. Lunch Bunch and Enrichments have been integrated into the program for Full Day students as part of the Afternoon Extended Learning focus for 3 & 4 year olds. In addition, the younger (2-1/2 year old) children will be offered 5 Half Days beginning in January, 2025.

As the NS Committee oversees the workings of the School, we are involved in working through the salary and tuition increases, making sure that our salaries are commensurate with other schools in the community and seeing that the tuition remains competitive. All of our staff except Director, Julia Bolt, are part-time.

For Teacher Appreciation Week, the Committee treated the staff to a light breakfast to honor all that they do for their students and parents. A "first" at our school was the invitation to alums to attend the end of the year program. In addition to former students, there were happily several alum parents who attended and sang the school's song with the students. See photo within NS Annual Report.

Last but certainly not least, the Committee would like to recognize the enthusiasm, dedication and creativity displayed by Julia Bolt and her staff in meeting the daily challenges of running a successful Nursery School such as ours.

Respectfully submitted, Marcia Unger & Evelyn Kender, Co-Chairs