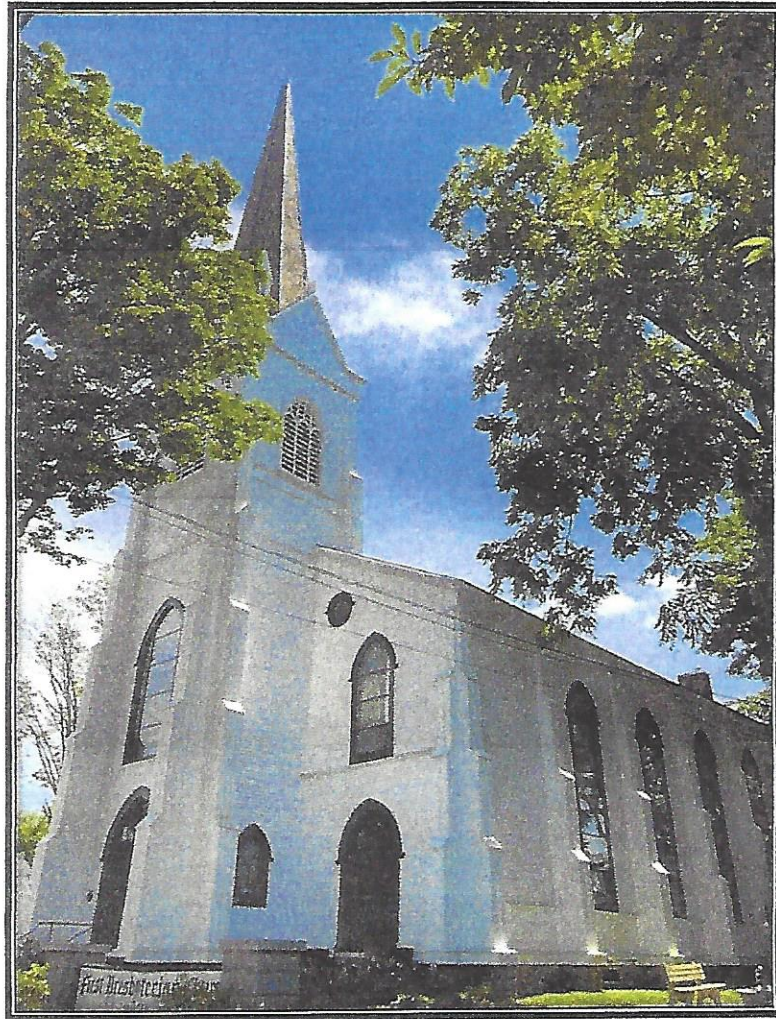


**First Presbyterian Church
Of Hackettstown
2023
ANNUAL REPORT**



**298 Main Street
Hackettstown, NJ 07840
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List of Contents

Church Staff and Officers	
In Loving Memory	
Report of the Clerk of Session	
Statistical Report	
Pastor's Report	
Deacons	
Board of Deacons	
Board of Deacons Treasurer's Report	
Committee Reports	
Buildings and Grounds	
Missions and Outreach	
Christian Education	
Fellowship and Nurture	
Nominating Committee	
Personnel	
Public Relations	
Internet and Social Media	
Stewardship Committee	
Worship Committee	
Ministry Reports	
Yarn Girls	
Music Department	
Heaven Sent Nursery School	
Treasurer's Report	
Treasurer's Narrative	
Income/Expense Statement with Variance	
2023 Monthly Operations Income vs Expenses Chart	
2023 Year to Date Operating Income vs Expense Chart	
Mass Mutual Endowment Fund	
Balance Sheet December 31, 2023	
2024 Annual Operating Budget	

CHURCH STAFF 2023

Pastor: Erin Hayes-Cook

Director of Music: Lorinda Ravo

Treasurer: Al Ravo

Financial Secretary: Deborah Gulick-Shepherd

Church Secretary: Pattie Huff

Sexton: Elizabeth Silva

Heaven Sent Director: Jennifer Bujno

CHURCH OFFICERS 2023

SESSION

Clerk of Session: Donna Erickson

2023	2024	2025
Geof Gohlich	Bruce Bergman	Donna Erickson
Sharon Heil	Michele Cameron	Diane Hull
Dottie Kappers	MaryAnn Simmons	Ray Sookhoo

DEACONS

2023	2024	2025
Giles Djongang	Pat Gohlich	Pat Butts
Jackie Hammel	Janette Hendershot	Ellen Bergman
Lorinda Ravo	Justin Simmons	Carol Miller

HEAVEN SENT NURSERY SCHOOL BOARD OF TRUSTEES

2023: Ved Fernandez

2024: Sharon Heil

2025: Pam Venturini

HSNS Parent: Kaitlyn Elliot

IN LOVING
Memory
2023

*Since our last congregational meeting January 2023,
God has called to their eternal rest these beloved
members:*

Michael Ort	(Delay in letting us know)	2022
Lyman Gulick		01/23/23
Gerald Grover		03/07/23
Charles Lee		05/10/23
Rev. Jeff Archer	Beloved former pastor	06/04/23
Barbara Courtright		08/09/23
Nancy Budd		10/17/23
Roger George		12/24/23

“No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us. For I am convinced that neither death nor life, neither angels or demons, neither the present nor the future, nor any powers, neither height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Jesus our Lord.” Romans 8:37-39

2023 REPORT OF THE CLERK OF THE SESSION

- This was our first full year with The Reverend Erin Hayes-Cook as our pastor. Her leadership and ministry has been a blessing.
- This year Session had 11 regular meetings and 2 called meetings (to meet prospective members, and to approve an Eagle Project). All Session meetings were held in person although some elders attended through ZOOM. The annual congregational meeting was also held.
- Communion was served in person monthly and on special days.
- We welcomed 6 new members and had two baptisms.
- Seven members and our beloved former pastor, Jeff Archer were called to eternal rest.
- Sunday School is thriving thanks to Donna Annunziata's leadership. We confirmed five new members. Thanks to many individuals, our Second Sunday program has provided youth with a variety of activities. Camp Johnsonburg used the chapel for several months to provide activities for our youth and other area youth.
- Services were held in person and online. We had a Christmas Pageant at the Christmas Eve morning service that had four acts. Our children told a wonderful story. The Christmas Eve candlelight service was well attended and beautiful.
- During the year, elected commissioners and the pastor attended Presbytery of the Highlands meetings, virtually and in person. Commissioners represent this church and can vote on any motions brought up at the meetings.
- The Free Community dinners were held monthly and were well received.
- The Deacon's Little Pantry received new cabinets as the result of an Eagle Project and a new message board was done at the chapel from another Eagle Project.
- We partnered with the Hackettstown Rescue Squad in a fundraising dinner. We collected stuffed animals for them to distribute to children on their calls and collected toys to give to a young boy receiving medical treatment.
- We have seen an increase in attendance at church during the year.
- As clerk, I have had several trainings regarding the new Book of Order and the requirements that must be met for Presbyterian Church USA.
- Our faith has been strong through 2023 and we have continued to do God's work in the community. We look forward to 2024.

Respectfully submitted,
Donna Erickson, Clerk of the Session

2023 ANNUAL STATISTICAL REPORT

Communicant Members as of 1/1/23	203
Increase by Profession of Faith	5
Emma Fraumeni, Alex Annunziata, Brielle Plumbo, Ryan Chetangie, Andy Djongang	
Increased by Transfer of Membership	3
Karen Cramer, Pattie and Dennis Huff	
Increased by Reaffirmation of Faith	3
Jean Zetterberg, Della and Jose Irby	
Decreased by Death	7
Decreased by Transfer of Membership	2
Haeja and Sang Kim	
Decreased by Other	0
Membership as of 12/31/23	205
New Membership Received in 2023	11
Baptism in 2023	2
Maddox J. Fucetola	6/25/23 – Child of Jean Zetterberg
Alexander Emory Wojcicki	8/20/23 – Infant son of John Mark & Camerin Wojcicki

PASTOR'S ANNUAL REPORT – 2023

If I were to give a key phrase for the year of 2023 it would be, “bread from heaven.” This past Lent I led two Bible studies with the book called, “Lent in Plain Sight”. We explored theology and the biblical story around themes like bread and water. Bread from heaven illustrates God’s provision. For example, the daily bread we eat and the spiritual provision for our journey. As Jesus instituted the Last Supper he blessed and gave bread from heaven the story of his broken body for the healing of the world. I have seen tangible examples of God’s provision and Jesus reminding us of the redemption story, here’s how:

God’s provision by growth in the community and impact:

- We were blessed to welcome 11 new members to our congregation. I am grateful for the gifts that they bring to us.
- The impact of our worship grew as our attendance grew to 80-100 in person attendance and upwards of 50-100 views with our Facebook livestream.
- Our weekly Bible studies continue to grow in faith and now include more members of our community.

Renewing our chapel:

- Thanks to a generous donation from a community member, we were able to redo the bottom floor of our chapel so we can continue to be a source of ministry and outreach.
- Thanks to two Eagle scout projects the food pantry cabinet got a makeover, yellow caution lines were painted on our steps, and a new bulletin board was installed.

Connection to our community:

- College students from Centenary continue to help serve dinner at our community dinners once a month.
- We sold yummy desserts at Hackettstown’s Maifest. All of the desserts were baked by our generous volunteers.

God’s provision in the challenge of being faithful stewards of our resources:

- The leadership and session prayed through how to do short term and long term financial planning. We decided to engage the creativity of our Ministry Relations Officer from the Presbyterian Foundation.

What I saw this year is a community eager to connect with one another, think creatively on how to be a presence in the community, and how to be faithful stewards of our resources. I thank God all the time for each and every gift you offer to the body of Christ. Each of us has a unique gift to share and we would not be who we are without all the willing hands and hearts of the congregation. Thanks be to God for a year of provision and challenge.

Rev. Erin Hayes-Cook

BOARD OF DEACONS REPORT – 2023

MEMBERS:

Class of 2023

- Gilles Djongang
- Jackie Hammel
- Lorinda Ravo

Class of 2024

- Pat Gohlich
- Janette Hendershot
- Justin Simmons

Class of 2025

- Pat Butts
- Ellen Bergman
- Carol Miller

The Deacons overall objective is to serve our congregation and community with compassion, respect, and empathy.

- Successfully collected and distributed items for our Little Pantry.
- Provided scarves, hats and gloves to Hatchery Hill and Willow Grove Schools.
- Provided hotel rooms for the members of the community in need.
- School lunch donations were made to Hackettstown and Great Meadows Board of Education.
- Distributed Kid Care Kits to Hackettstown and Great Meadows Middle Schools.
- Donated money for funeral arrangements for a long-time church member.
- Visited a family and donated toys for a child with leukemia.
- Collected stuffed animals for the rescue squad to be used as needed.
- Supported the Yarn Girls who provide blankets, shawls, and lap robes under the direction of Deb Gulick Shepherd.
- Mailings of devotions were sent to homebound congregation members for Christmas.
- College students and homebound members are regularly contacted throughout the year.
- Purchased table carts for the chapel.
- Donated to the Nairobi Kenya Fund.
- Cards of sympathy, care, or thanks were sent to several church members as needed.

In order to help fulfill our mission, we ran the following fundraisers:

- Easter and Christmas flower donations in memory/honor of friends and family.
- Clothing drives in May and October.
- Super Bowl of Caring collection for Little Pantry.
- We have ordered and intend to sell FPCH magnets.
- Ongoing sales of Christmas ornaments leftover from last year.

Highlights of the year:

- Thanks to Autumn Hoover for her Eagle Scout project designing and building the pantry shelves.
- Autumn collected and donated over 1,050 pounds of food, personal care, and pet products.
- Thanks to Heaven Sent Nursery for collecting and donating food items to the pantry.
- Appreciation to the congregation and friends for donating throughout the year to the pantry.
- Worked with the church and rescue squad by providing baked goods for Maifest to aid in the general church fund.

Respectfully submitted,
Ellen Bergman, Deacon Moderator

**COMMITTEE
REPORTS
2023**

BUILDINGS AND GROUNDS – 2023

The mission of the Building & Grounds Committee (Diane Hull, Al Ravo, John Mark Wojcicki, Pete Miller, Chuck Potter, Dennis Huff, Jose Irby) is to maintain and improve our historic buildings as needed, preserving them for the future.

The following items were completed in 2023:

Chapel (Established 1819):

- Upgrades were made in the main dining hall – new carpeting, new ceiling, painted throughout, new door on closet and table carts purchased.
- Upgrades were made to the front entrance – new flooring and hallway and bathrooms painted.
- Upgrades were made to the side entrance – new sub floor and flooring.
- Pantry storage room cleaned and painted.
- The basement received a much-needed deep cleaning of unwanted items.
- Eagle Scout Project – Autumn Hoover constructed and installed a new pantry and conducted a food drive to stock the pantry. Ryan Due repainted the caution line on the front steps and constructed and installed a new message board.
- Cemetery – During a storm two trees lost large sections and fell damaging several headstones. None of the cost was covered by insurance, leaving the expense of clean-up to be covered by donations. Tree removal and headstone repairs will be conducted once funds are available.

Church (Established 1861):

- A workday was organized to decorate the sanctuary for Christmas.
- Decorations were done throughout the year making the sanctuary and narthex welcoming to all who came.
- Hosted several concerts (Stone Soup Symphony, Heaven Sent Ceremonies and Scouting Awards Ceremonies)

Church Annex (Established 1963):

- New LED lighting was installed in the youth room, downstairs kitchen and offices.
- New LED lighting installed in Heaven Sent classrooms 3 and 4.
- Historian's office and downstairs kitchen were cleaned out of much unwanted items.

Manse (Established 1890):

- The existing dryer was no longer working properly. Due to the age of the unit, a new dryer was purchased and installed.
- The existing dishwasher was not filling properly. A repair service was called to assess the situation. A new pump & motor was needed, purchased and installed.
- A grant was received from the Presbytery, covering 50% of the cost for seven new windows in the dining room, front hallway and front living room areas.

Parking Lot:

- A large section of the parking lot, closest to the church, was repaved due to the large amount of decay.

Workdays:

- The following workdays were held:
 - Spring Clean-up
 - Chapel basement clean-out
 - Historian Office/downstairs kitchen clean-out
 - Pantry storage room clean-out/painting
 - Chapel front hallway and bathrooms painted
 - Decorating/undecorating of sanctuary for Christmas
 - Decorating float for Memorial Day Parade

Chapel Use: The following groups have used the chapel throughout the year:

- Scouting
- AA
- NA
- Stone Soup Symphony
- Jazz Band
- Colonial Musketeers
- Wreaths Across America
- Birthday Parties
- Repasses
- 2nd Sunday

Note: A contractor (all trades) list is maintained with updated certificate of insurance placed on file.

Thank you to all who always answer the call to help clean, repair, paint, decorate, etc. to maintain our beautiful historical buildings.

Respectfully Submitted,
Diane Hull – Chairperson

MISSION & OUTREACH REPORT – 2023

In 2023, the church continued its outreach efforts to the community and beyond.

- Free Community dinners were provided on the second Saturday of each month with varied menus. Meals were served both in the chapel and for take-out with 35 to 50 meals served. A free will offering was collected to help with the expenses.
- The church provided 50 backpacks filled with school supplies for needy children in Warren County through the NJ Department of Children and Families.
- The church supported several Cub Scout and Boy Scout troops who meet in our chapel. The church was the recipient of the results of two Eagle projects: a new message board at the chapel and an expanded and new Little Pantry.
- The Deacons, with support from the congregation, continued their Little Pantry. In the Fall food was donated by Camp Minsi to the Pantry and for the free community dinners. Other organizations also collected and donated food.
- We supported missions outside the church:
 - Pentecost offering monies received 25% supported young adult volunteers, 25% ministries with youth, 10% to children at risk and 40% went to provide scholarship funds for Camp Johnsonburg.
 - Received Christmas Joy offering that provided assistance to current and retired church workers and their families in time of need and develops future leaders at Presbyterian related schools and colleges equipping communities of color.
- The church provided outreach and support through the use of our chapel for the following groups: Narcotics Anonymous, Alcoholics Anonymous, the Scout Troops, Stone Soup Symphony, the Hackettstown Jazz Band and a regular blood drive.
- We hosted Wreaths Across America for their ceremony and placed wreaths on veteran's graves in our cemetery.

We hope to continue our outreach in 2024 and hope to resume our relationship with the Kenyan water project.

Respectfully submitted,
Donna Erickson

CHRISTIAN EDUCATION REPORT – 2023

Christian Education at First Presbyterian Church of Hackettstown has been rewarding for both the students and the educators. We explored various new opportunities for our children in grades Pre-K through 8, as well as Bible study sessions for our adults throughout the year. Below is a breakdown of the activities that occurred during 2023.

- **Confirmation Class: 2022-23** offered a sad farewell in May 2023 to Deb Shepherd as the confirmation class teacher and September of 2023 welcomed Pastor Erin and MaryAnn Simmons as co-teachers of the class, which consists of six 8th graders. This year, we decided to use a modified curriculum of Mark Hinds entitled Changing the World: Confirmation for the Missional Church in an effort to encourage students to become lifelong participants of the church once they conclude their confirmation. To that end, students were assigned a mentor who serves as a role model of faith. Mentors and students meet each month at a convenient time and location in order to discuss ways in which students can “see” in action the ways in which people lead lives of faith within the church community. In addition, the students meet one evening each month with Pastor Erin and MaryAnn Simmons in order to explore their belief in Jesus and the gospels of the Bible through prayer and other activities, held either in the chapel or the sanctuary. Students will complete a service project during the year in an effort to demonstrate their faith to the Lord and the community at large. Many of our youth from this class volunteered to work at the community dinners and various church decorating events, as well as Sunday school activities, including this past Christmas pageant. They have also assisted as worship leaders, ushers, greeters and videographers during worship. Many also took part in the Christmas Eve service, serving as ushers, acolytes, or greeters.
- **Middle School Class:** grades 6 and 7 - has 4 students who began their endeavors in September with MaryAnn Simmons as teacher. Students regularly attend each Sunday. Each session is held in the conference room after the children’s lesson during worship until the end of the service. Students remain in church for worship on the first Sunday of the month in order to receive communion. This class is continuing with the Bible study program called Echo the Story which provides lessons from both the Old and New Testaments with video options and journaling opportunities. Students will continue lessons through May of 2024. Many of our youth from this class volunteered to work at the community dinners and various church decorating events, as well as Sunday school activities, including the Christmas pageant. They have also assisted as ushers or worship leaders during worship. Many also took part in the Christmas Eve service, serving as acolytes or greeters.
- **Sunday School: Pre-K through grade 5** - has 19 students enrolled. Miss Donna (Annunziata) teaches the children and Mr. John Mark (Wojcicki) is the class helper. Students meet downstairs after the children’s lesson during worship and remain until worship is over. Students met from Sept 10 through December and will continue through mid May of 2024. This year, Pastor Erin purchased a program called Simply Loved through Group.com. This program provides stories from both the Old and New Testaments of the Bible and video and arts and crafts options. Using animals and other creatures like Savanna the Giraffe, Rea the Giant Manta Ray, Decker the Crab, Mack the Rhino, Tina the Termite, and Guac the Iguana, this program teaches the children the importance of God’s love for all of us. Often times, we have parent volunteers who assist with the activities that take place during our Sunday School endeavors.

- Looking into next year we need a new Sunday School coordinator for our growing program. Please see Pastor Erin or MaryAnn Simmons if you are interested.
- **Highlights** of their year include:
 - Easter Egg Hunt,
 - Halloween festivities
 - A new Christmas Pageant purchased through A Sanctified Art entitled “A Very Special Child: A Pageant inspired by the stories in the gospel of Luke chapters 1-3,” and written by Rev. Anna Strickland. Many of these students attend Second Sunday sessions.
 - Second Sunday: In 2023, we held nine Second Sundays between January and December, thanks to the efforts of Lorinda Ravo and her team of adults. The activities included: painting kindness rocks, rubber band art creations, a board games day, a day to learn to knit, crochet, or weave baskets, our annual Super Soaker Sunday, a Legos building day, bread making, woodworking as we made bird feeders, and creating Christmas ornaments and cookies. We welcomed the participation of so many adults who shared their knowledge and skills with us, and we enjoyed the support of our dedicated “lunch ladies” who made sure that our “bagel time” lunches were waiting for us when we arrived at the Chapel.
- **Adult Bible Study:** We are pleased to offer Bible study opportunities to our adults in the congregation. Throughout the year Pastor Erin led weekly Bible studies one in the morning with 6-8 attendees and one in the evenings with 10-15 attendees.

I would like to thank all who have volunteered to teach our children and who assist with Sunday School and Second Sunday. Finally, I wish to thank Pastor Erin for her continued support in our endeavors. We at FPCH are excited to watch our programs continue to grow in 2024.

Respectfully Submitted,
MaryAnn Simmons

FELLOWSHIP AND NURTURE REPORT - 2023

The purpose of fellowship and nurture is to promote fellowship and encourage gatherings of the congregation, making all feel welcome.

- Fellowship time was held after worship most months. Those who helped were Winnie Slachetka, Ellen Bergman, Grace Clegg, Kathy Maier, Della Irby, and MaryAnn Simmons. Many enjoyed the refreshments and the time to get together.
- The Christmas dinner was held on December 22, 2023, and close to 50 people attended. Main dishes were prepared, and everyone brought a side or dessert.
- Games were played and everyone had a wonderful time.
- The Ladies breakfast was held on the third Saturday of each month.
- The PLEFF dinners were held at various locations each month, organized by either Winnie Slachetka or Jan Courtright.
- The Ladies Who Lunch were held each month at various restaurants, organized by Sharon Heil.
- The Men's breakfast continued in the Chapel each second Saturday. These were coordinated by Don Luques and Carl Erickson.

We look forward to 2024 and looking into other activities to bring Church members together.

Respectfully submitted,
Donna Erickson

NOMINATING COMMITTEE REPORT - 2023

Committee Members

- Torey Ravo
- Peter Miller
- Jackie Hammel
- Pam Venturini
- Mike McDonagh
- Ryan Van Orden
- Peg Russack
- Bruce Bergman, Moderator

Nominations for FPCH positions for 2024

- Bill Cors Session
- Kathy Maier Deacons
- Jan Courtright Personnel
- Erin Roguso Nominating
- Pat Butts Heaven Sent Trustees

Nominees will be subject to a vote by the Congregation on February 4, 2024.

Respectfully submitted,
Bruce Bergman, Nominating Moderator

PERSONNEL REPORT – 2023

Personnel Committee Members – 2023

Sharon Heil – Session Chair

Bruce Bergman – Session Representative

Justin Simmons – Deacon Representative

Jan Courtright – Congregational Representative

Pam Venturini – Congregational Representative

The mission of the personnel committee is to oversee the church staff and their annual reviews, fill staff positions when they become vacant, evaluate and update job descriptions, as well as recommend cost of living adjustments.

This committee worked very closely with Pastor Erin considering and implementing all aspects of its duties. During 2023 the Personnel Committee:

- Wrote an At-Will Employment Agreement for the position of Office Administrator.
- On January 31, 2023 Patricia Huff was hired as FPCH office administrator.
- Reviewed and evaluated the job performance of each staff member including the Heaven Sent director looking for ways to support our staff.
- Updated personnel file folders for all staff.
- Updated and reviewed with staff all job descriptions and a copy was placed in each employee's file folder.

Respectfully Submitted,
Sharon Heil, Session Chair

PUBLIC RELATIONS REPORT – 2023

Members: Michele Cameron (Chair)
Jan Courtright (Secretary)
Richard Gregory
Al Ravo
Lorinda Ravo

A look at 2023:

In 2023 we continued to promote the church and events. We took part in the new church video and expanded our visibility. We continued to develop the relationships that we created in 2022. To list a few:

- Centenary University continues to send volunteers each month for our community dinners.
- We became the recipient of a food drive done by Hackettstown BID.
- Pastor Erin was interviewed by WRNJ.
- We partnered with the Hackettstown Rescue Squad for events and dinners.

For 2024:

While we will continue to foster and strengthen community relationships, we will also find creative ways to build new relationships.

- We are hoping to expand our reach to local businesses to help supply and partner with community dinners and the pantry.
- The new website is live. Having a new website allows us the correct format to add additional social media platforms for visibility and engagement.
- Photos are an extremely powerful marketing tool; we will expand on photo taking at all our events throughout the year.
- We will expand on social media strategies and management by looking at engagement and determining what's working and what's not.
- We will be creating a PR Committee policy so there is a set guideline of what it is we do. This will also act as a guideline for future committee members.
- Remind our congregation that they are our biggest voice. We would like to engage more with the members of our church to help promote our events.
- Stay open to new opportunities as they arise throughout the coming year.

The goal of the public relations committee is to share with our community and the communities around us how wonderful FPCH is and to serve the church by communicating everything in God's will.

Respectfully Submitted,
Michele Cameron

INTERNET & SOCIAL MEDIA REPORT – 2023

Church Website - www.fpchackettstown.org

A new website was launched in the summer of 2023 with a cleaner and more streamlined flow. Although some new pages and names appear, the information and features found on the new website remain the same and include:

- Church information about worship services, a new video about FPCH along with community activities and meetings taking place in our buildings.
- Heaven Sent Nursery School information, forms, calendars, and pictures.
- The ability to make online donations.
- The current and prior eleven issues of the 'Light from Steeple' monthly newsletters along with recent worship bulletins.
- Contact information, the church staff and members on the various church boards and committees.
- The ability to contact the church or Heaven Sent Nursery School through the website to seek various types of information or to make inquiries.
- A calendar of events.
- A gallery with pictures and videos of worship services and church activities.

Additional social platforms for the church will be investigated in 2024.

CHURCH FACEBOOK PAGE – 2023

The church Facebook page provided:

- Online streaming of worship services and special events.
- Pictures of recent events, activities, services and projects.
- Announcements of upcoming events, activities and services.
- Inspirational messages and words of wisdom.
- Humorous pictures and cartoons.
- Videos and music of the FPCH Ringers Chime Choir, the Joyful Noise Bell Choir, Senior Choir, the Little Lights Sunday School Choir and the Unity Chime Choir.

Respectfully submitted,
Lorinda and Al Ravo

STEWARDSHIP COMMITTEE REPORT - 2023

Stewardship Committee Members

- Ryan Van Orden
- Chuck Potter
- Ray Sookhoo
- Bruce Bergman, Liaison

Events Leading Up to Pledge Sunday

- Ryan Van Orden addressed the congregation regarding the need to pledge.
- Michele Cameron prepared the pledge cards.
- Pastor Erin prepared the Congregational letter regarding stewardship.
- Pastor Erin continually referred to multiplying gifts and mustard seeds in the pulpit.
- Fish were handed out to the congregation asking for hopes/dreams in '24 for FPCH.
- Pattie Huff stuffed envelopes with pastoral letter and pledge cards and mailed them.
- Pledge Sunday was November 19.
- Total pledge cards received as of December 19 were \$78,388 by 59 members.
- On November 27, session met by zoom with a representative from the Presbyterian Foundation. Her name was Rose Nile, and she laid general groundwork to help our church improve our approach to stewardship and to our general economic outlook. There are plans to meet with her again for more specific applications to our church.

Respectfully submitted,
Bruce Bergman, Stewardship Liaison

WORSHIP COMMITTEE REPORT – 2023

We would like to thank the Committee Members:

Lorinda Ravo – Director of Music

Kim Newton – Head Usher

Ellen Bergman – Greeters

Pam Venturini – Camera Operator and Secretary

Della Irby

Accomplishments:

- Planned and provided for our traditional, inspiring Sunday and Special Worship Services.
- Planned communions and scheduled Elders and Deacons to administer.
- Provided Livestreaming of our services to members and the public at home.
- Planned for communions and baptisms.
- Provided for an excellent pulpit supply to preach and worship leaders. A special thank you to our church members who have preached and led worship.
- A special thank you to Lorinda Ravo and to our senior and children's choirs, bells and chime ringers, and soloists who have enriched our services.
- Thank you to all who have assisted in our worship services this year, including worship leaders, bell ringers, greeters, musicians, camera operators, ushers, and many others.
- We have planned for and set up decorations with the Deacons for many special services:
 - Souper Bowl of Caring
 - Lent
 - Maundy Thursday and Easter
 - Pentecost
 - Worldwide Communion
 - All Saints Day
 - Veterans Day
 - Thanksgiving
 - Advent and Christmas
- We received a \$2,000 technology grant from the Presbytery to update our technology for online ministry.

Thank you to Rev. Erin Hayes-Cook for her leadership and inspirational sermons. We are growing in members and new programs for the Glory of God.

Geoffrey Gohlich
Worship Committee

**MINISTRY
REPORTS
2023**

YARN GIRLS REPORT – 2023

The Yarn Girls are part of the compassionate ministry of the Deacons.

- We met once a month year round on the first Wednesday of the month barring any complications.
- We created handmade knitted and crocheted items to be given to members of our church family and their family, friends, neighbors, and co-workers. The shawls and lap robes are given to those with health issues, those in mourning, or those experiencing life's difficulties.
- This year we were able to distribute:
 - 21 shawls
 - 17 lap robes
 - 38 pocket crosses
 - 1 baptismal blanket.
- New items were dedicated on January 29 and September 10.
- A number of folks attended meetings and/or knitted or crocheted items.
They are: Ellen Bergman, Pat Butts, Grace Clegg, Sharon Heil, Kathy Maier, Heather Melendez, Rita Schedel, and Muriel Stellingwerf.

I thank all these generous souls who so willingly share their time and talents for the purpose of making something that will bless and be a comfort to others. The congregation as a whole is reminded that their part in this ministry is to ask for a shawl, lap robe, or pocket cross whenever they are aware of a need.

**Respectfully submitted,
Deborah Gulick Shepherd,
Coordinator of FPCH Yarn Girls**

FIRST PRESBYTERIAN MUSIC REPORT – 2023

2023 was our first "full" year back since the Covid-19 pandemic that provided challenges for our church's music department. It was the first year since 2019 that our musicians returned to their regular schedule of enhancing our worship services from January-June and then September-December. We were grateful to our guest musicians who also provided special anthems, including Deb Shepherd, Torey Ravo, Mark Slachetka, Jess Pomeroy, Ved Fernandez, and Michelle Littwin.

Throughout the 2023 calendar year, the Senior Choir provided over 30 anthems during regular Sunday services and special services including Maundy Thursday, Christmas Eve, and Hymn Fest. We also had the fun experience of creating our first ever "flash mob" choir on Easter Sunday that featured an ensemble of kids, Senior Choir members, and members of the congregation.

Our FPCH Ringers Chime choir also provided music throughout the year, playing 10 anthems, and even providing accompaniment for one of the Senior Choir's anthems. These dedicated musicians bring their talents, commitment, and love of music to both their rehearsals and performances.

Kids are also a very important part of the music program here at FPCH. From our very youngest pre-K aged kids to those in Middle School and High School, we welcome having children grown in their love of music, and their comfort level in performing in front of an audience. Our Joyful Noise bell choir is made up of children as young as kindergartners, and this year they showed us how much they're learning as they played both bells and boomwhackers. The Unity Chime Choir are for kids in Grade 3 and up, and they use the same chimes that our adults do. This year, they even "graduated" to a piece that our adult chime played when they were newly learning how to ring. They play every 4-6 weeks.

Finally, our Little Lights Sunday School choir sang throughout 2023, and in the fall, they continued their journey around the world where they are learning about other countries, their culture, and their music. It has been a learning experience for not only our kids, but also the congregation as we are reminded that all across the world, people are singing their praises to the God who loves us all-no matter language we use to sing those praises.

While we are clearly indebted to all of the musicians, from our newest to most experienced, I am also so very grateful to a congregation that encourages and supports all of our musicians. It is a blessing to see and hear the appreciation of those who enjoy the fruits of our labors. After all, musicians also need clappers and cheerers!

This year saw the loss of Charles Lee who graciously substituted for me and who regularly encouraged me to take a Sunday or two off to rest and recharge. In that loss, we had to find a new substitute, and we were lucky to welcome Jessica Pomeroy, who substituted for me last summer.

I continue to feel very fortunate to serve as the Director of Music for our church. I was very honored to be recognized in December for the 40 years that I have served this church. As I have said in past years, serving this church and God has been a blessing for me, and I welcome the constant support of this congregation, the musicians in the vocal and instrumental choirs, and the assistance of so many who help to make our music program work. It is certainly a big commitment to be a part of the music program at a church, but the benefits and fellowship are repaid many times over. We are grateful that our music ensembles have returned and invite any of you who might consider adding your talents to ours to come to just one rehearsal to see if you feel comfortable! You'll be warmly welcomed with open arms: and by the way, being able to read music or sing solos, or even audition aren't necessary. As the Psalmist says: "Make a joyful noise to the Lord, all the earth!"

Respectfully submitted,

Lorinda Ravo

HEAVEN SENT NURSERY SCHOOL – 2023

Greetings from Heaven Sent Nursery School. If I were to describe this past year in one phrase, it would be “building back”. Least year at this time, we were recovering from all of the protocols and learning how to be a nursery school pre-covid. We experienced some changes in staff a year ago in November and January, but God provided each time we needed someone. We ended our 2022-2023 school year with once again a need for a teacher and an assistant in our classic nursery school classroom (3 day 4 year old and 2 day 3 year old). I prayed for stability in this classroom. We had had a lot of change in that classroom over the last year and a half and I felt the urgency to find teachers who would stabilize the change in staff that kept occurring.

In the summer of 2023, we welcomed Kelly Bunk as the lead teacher and Becky Funcheon as Kelly’s teacher assistant in the classic nursery school classroom. My prayer for stability was answered and the two of them are wonderful additions to our school. Our enrollment for the 2023-2024 school year has been on the low side due to children moving into their public preschool program or being homeschooled. However, with lower class numbers, the new teachers have had a chance to orient themselves to the routine of our school easily.

Looking into the 2024 year, we began right away with a new hire for our school custodian job. Jaden Sims is a wonderful young man from Hackettstown High School and has shown to be thorough and reliable. This new year we are anticipating new carpeting in all of the classrooms, office and hallway. This was gifted to us by a generous Heaven Sent family and their family business. This work will be completed in June of 2024. In the spring of 2024, we will also have a relicensing inspection for our school.

Our enrollment for our 2024-2025 is coming along nicely. We have 2 programs full and 3 programs almost full. We continue to be thankful for the children and families that God provides to fill our school.

I lastly want to thank the church community for supporting us and showing us love. The church building committee is always ready to help us meet our needs and to that, we say a big thank you. I want to lastly thank the Board of Trustee family who are always there for our school and to support me and our staff.

Submitted by,
Jennifer Bujno