

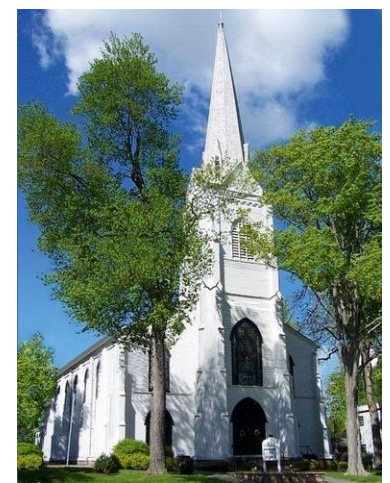
**First Presbyterian
Church
298 Main Street**

**FIRST PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH
298 MAIN STREET
HACKETTSTOWN, NJ 07840
REV. ERIN HAYES-COOK
OFFICE: 908-852-4011
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Church website,
<http://www.fpchackettstown.org>
Editor: MaryAnn Simmons
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**DECEMBER
2023**



*Light
from the*



Steeple

FIRST PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH
HACKETTSTOWN, NJ
CHURCH OFFICE: (908) 852-4011

Pastor: Rev. Erin Hayes-Cook
Choir Director/Organist: Lorinda Ravo
Treasurer: Al Ravo
Financial Secretary: Deborah Gulick-Shepherd
Head Usher: Kim Newton
Church Secretary: Pattie Huff

2023 SESSION

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

Clerk of Session: Donna Erickson

2023 BOARD OF DEACONS

Class of 2023	Class of 2024	Class of 2025
Gilles Djongang	Pat Gohlich	Ellen Bergman
Jackie Hammel	Janette Hendershot	Patricia Butts
Lorinda Ravo	Justin Simmons	Carol Miller

Moderator: Ellen Bergman

2023 HEAVEN SENT NURSERY SCHOOL BOARD OF TRUSTEES

OFFICE: 852-2006

Director: Jen Bujno

Ved Fernandez	- 2023	Pam Venturini	- 2025
Kaitlyn Elliot	- HS Parent	Heather Pittman	- HS Parent
Sharon Heil - Session Rep			
Rev. Erin Hayes-Cook - Ex-Officio			

A NOTE FROM OUR EDITOR

Hello, Readers!

Welcome to the December edition of *Light from the Steeple*.

I am honored to present the news of our congregation for this final month of the year. We have much to look forward to with the celebration of Jesus' birth and the planning of a new year.

Although this newsletter did not arrive in time for the first of the month, I know that you will take note of all of the events on the calendar which is filled with many noteworthy activities.

As we join in the celebration of Advent and Jesus' arrival, I hope that you will prayerfully consider Pastor Erin's message about joining together to move through the weary world in an effort to rejoice in the coming of our Lord and Savior. Find the goodness in life in the midst of the chaos that seems to overtake us, and to reiterate her point, find ways to practice joy.

While you read through the news I present to you, please consider the various opportunities that our church provides for each of you. Think about joining our newly created fundraising committee in an effort to help us find additional meaningful ways to raise money to meet the financial needs of our church. Think about attaining your food handler's license so that you can help us with our many dinners throughout the year. Finally, think about how this church has brought joy into your heart and find ways to give that same joy to others.

As always, I hope you enjoy the good news of our congregation and I look forward to seeing you all in church at worship.

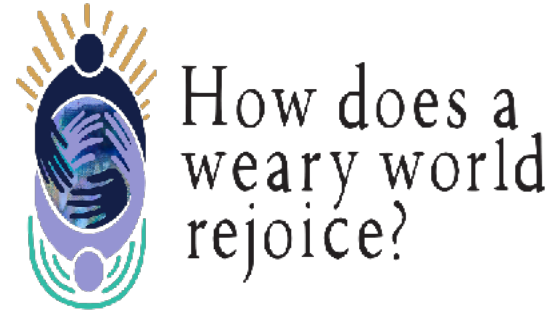
Merry Christmas to you and I hope you all find happiness in your lives during this special time of year.

Yours in Christ,
MaryAnn Simmons

DATES TO REMEMBER - DECEMBER 2023

- 02: FPCH Christmas Dinner - 5 to 7 PM - at the Chapel
- 03: Worship and communion - 10 AM; decorating of the Chrismon Tree; livestream through Facebook; no Sunday School; Joyful Noise/Unity Chimes Rehearsal after worship
- 03: Poinsettia forms and money due today
- 04: Blood Drive - 4-8 PM - at the Chapel
- 04: Morning Bible Study - 10-11 AM in the Conference Room
- 05: Ladies Who Lunch - 12 PM at Mattar's Bistro, Allamuchy, NJ
- 06: Yarn Girls - 1 PM - Conference Room
- 06: Evening Bible Study - 6:30-8 PM in the Conference Room
- 07: Music Rehearsals - FPCH Ringers at 6:30 PM and Senior Choir at 7:30 PM, both in the Music Room
- 09: Men's Breakfast at the Chapel - 8 AM
- 09: Stone Soup Symphony Orchestra concert - 3 PM in the Sanctuary
- 09: Community Dinner - 5:30-7 PM, at the Chapel
- 10: Worship - 10 AM; livestream through Facebook; Sunday School grades Pre-K - 5 and grades 6 & 7; Joyful Noise/Unity Chimes Rehearsal after worship; Second Sunday 11 AM - 1 PM at the Chapel - Christmas ornament making
- 12: Deacon's Meeting - 6:30 PM in the Conference Room
- 14: Music Rehearsals - FPCH Ringers at 6:30 PM and Senior Choir at 7:30 PM, both in the Music Room
- 16: Wreaths Across America - 11 AM at the Chapel; wreath laying at the Cemetery
- 17: Worship - 10 AM; livestream through Facebook; Joyful Noise/Unity Chimes Rehearsal after worship
- 19: Session Meeting - 6:30 PM in the Conference Room
- 21: Music Rehearsals - FPCH Ringers at 6:30 PM and Senior Choir at 7:30 PM, both in the Music Room
- 24: Worship - 10 AM; livestream through Facebook; Children's Christmas Pageant
- 24: Worship - 7:30 PM Christmas Eve Worship; livestream through Facebook.
- 25: Christmas Day - church office closed
- 26: Church Office closed
- 28: No Music Rehearsals tonight
- 31: Worship - 10 AM; livestream through Facebook; Joyful Noise/Unity Chimes Rehearsal after worship
- 31: New Year's Eve
- 01: New Year's Day - church office closed

A NOTE FROM OUR PASTOR



Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

My sense is that you can feel the weariness and anxiety so prevalent in our world. Our bodies and souls carry the weariness leftover from a pandemic, from the visions of war, the political divisions in which we live, inflation, and immigration. The list goes on. That is why we chose to engage the work of A Sanctified Art and live through this very relevant theme. How do we rejoice when we feel weary? That is the message of the gospel: Jesus chose to come to a weary world and show us what it means to rejoice. The arrival of the Messiah means that our weary souls can find rest in a Jesus who lived through the trials of life too. But how do we practice this real joy? How do we live as if the Christ Child has come and will come again?

Throughout Advent season we will move through the following themes: We find joy in connection. We allow ourselves to be amazed. We sing stories of hope. We make room. In prayer, poetry, and art we will truly discover how God invites us to rejoice in the midst of a chaotic world. I invite you this Advent season to do one of the following: pick up a daily devotional booklet, pick up a devotional card stack, join a Bible Study, pick up an Advent calendar for your family. Find ways to practice joy. Remember that this season is much more than busy schedules and shopping lists; it is our invitation to rejoice, for our Savior is here!

Pastor Erin

THANK YOU TO OUR CONGREGATION

BY: DONNA ERICKSON

As you know, the Church Christmas gathering took place on Saturday, December 2, which occurred just before the publication of this newsletter.

As always, the event was a wonderful affair filled with fun and fellowship. Approximately 40 people were in attendance and many brought wonderful side dishes and desserts to complement the roast beef and pork Carl Erickson and a number of assistant chefs prepared. After dinner and dessert, the company shared in games of drawing and Christmas Bingo. Winners walked away with some fun prizes.

On behalf of the Christmas Party committee, I would like to extend a big thank you to all who helped in preparing the event throughout the day - from the set up and cooking and preparing the activities, to the side dishes and desserts - all allowed for a splendid event of festivities.

We hope that all who attended thoroughly enjoyed the dinner and the company and we look forward to another event in the near future.

THANK YOU FROM OUR FINANCIAL SECRETARY AND PASTOR ERIN

We give. God multiplies.

On behalf of Deb Gulick-Shepherd and the Session, I want to thank each of you who offered your pledge cards for the 2024 year. It is a great joy to receive your intention to give to the ministry here at First Presbyterian of Hackettstown. Your prayers will help us be able to faithfully plan for our upcoming year. And if you would still like to let us know how you plan to give then we'd be happy to receive it.

If you haven't already done so, we invite you to fill out the back of one of our colorful fish with a way you believe God is inviting us to multiply our ministry in 2024. Thank you to all who have already filled them out. Those fish will be on display so that you might join us in prayer in the new year.

To God be the glory for the things he has done!

CONSIDER THE CHRISTMAS JOY SPECIAL OFFERING THIS DECEMBER

According to PC(USA), the Christmas Joy Offering has been a cherished Presbyterian tradition since the 1930s. The Offering distributes gifts equally to the Assistance Program of the Board of Pensions and to Presbyterian-related schools and colleges equipping communities of color. The Assistance Program provides critical financial support to church workers and their families. Presbyterian-related schools and colleges provide education and leadership development while nurturing racial and ethnic heritage. This has been a Presbyterian commitment for nearly 140 years.

God has blessed the Church with incredible leadership in every time and place, but those leaders often need support from their communities as well. This Offering addresses the support our leaders need, including supporting leadership development for communities of color, and providing support for Presbyterian church workers in their time of need.

This month, between December 3rd and December 24th, please consider this offering during our Sunday service. By giving to the Christmas Joy Offering, you honor God's gift of Jesus Christ. Thank you.

For more information visit <https://specialofferings.pcusa.org/offering/christmas-joy/>



SHARING OUR SMILES:

REVEALING THE JOY IN OUR LIVES EACH MONTH

During the month of November, we had a few highlights to share. Join me in celebrating these joys in the lives of our congregation. If you have good news to share, send your info to Pat Gohlich at gohlich73@gmail.com

Congratulations to **Cameron Cochran and Michael Rossi** for their marriage on October 29th. We are so happy for you both!

Congratulations to **Della and Jose Irby** whose new granddaughter **Zoe** was born on November 30th.

We are proud to announce that **Audrey and Violet Tischler** are dancing in the Nutcracker presentation at Centenary University during the month of December. The girls will be performing on 12/16 at 5 PM and on 12/17 at 7 PM. Tickets are available through Centenary Stage Company. Congratulations, girls, on a wonderful ballet experience. We cannot wait to hear all about the performances.

Congratulations to **Harper Schneider** who earned her green belt this month in MMA. Excellent job, Harper!

Congratulations to all of our members who make us smile!!! Join us next month for another round of good news.

NEWS FROM THE DEACONS

BY: JUSTIN SIMMONS

As the year comes to a close, the business of the Deacons continues.

We are pleased to announce that we have been hard at work setting up a schedule for activities that will take place in the month of December as well as the new year.

Although we just finished our clothing drive campaign, our new Spring drive is scheduled for May 4, 2024. We will continue to collect clothing and shoes and accessories throughout the year and those items can still be dropped off at the garage in the church parking lot. As always, we thank you for your continued support of this event.

Our Little Pantry received a boost in donations primarily through the families from Heaven Sent Nursery School. The students voluntarily provided nutritious snacks in October so that the food insecure could have treats for Halloween, and in November, they provided over 8 boxes of food items for our families so that they could enjoy a Thanksgiving meal and other meals throughout the month. This December, they will again join in the effort to provide items by the end of the calendar year. These goods came at an opportune moment as we ran low on our supplies. We are still trying to determine how we might better serve more members of the community since we have noticed some community members do take many items when they are freshly stocked.

We continue to explore other ways that we can assist the children in our school district. We are considering a hat, scarf, and glove drive for the month of January to help students combat the cold weather. We also continue to send Kid Care Kits with personal hygiene products to those who do not have access to these items on a daily basis. We will continue to update you on our mission with the schools.

During this month we will send out Christmas packages to our home-bound congregation members.

Please note that the last day for orders of poinsettias is December 3rd. Please fill out the form if you are interested. Finally, as noted in a separate article, we are looking for people to consider applying for their food handler's license in an effort to involve more members of the church in our food related fundraising efforts.

As always, we thank you for your continued support of our missions throughout the year. If you have any concerns, ideas, or recommendations for the Deacons, please reach out to us.

OCTOBER 2023 FINANCIAL \$NAPSHOT

BY: AL RAVO

The Expenses Paid and Income amounts below do not include the funds transferred from the Endowment to meet the church operating expenses.

	October	Year to Date
Income	\$15,045.80	\$163,165.63
Expenses Paid	\$14,326.57	\$196,104.29
Net Operating Income /Deficit	\$ 719.23	(\$32,938.66)
Amount of Checking Surplus Used to pay operating expenses	\$ 0.00	\$14,500.00
Amount Needed from Endowment	\$ 2,000.00	\$20,000.00

Financial Comments / Observations:

1. The five largest operating expenses in October were:

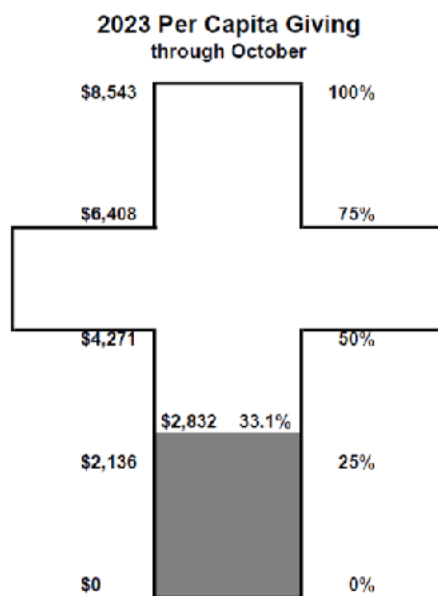
- 1.) \$7,578.77 – Pastoral expenses (payroll, Board of Pensions, etc.).
- 2.) \$4,146.67 – Staff payroll & payroll processing expenses.
- 3.) \$436.30 – Electric expenses (3 buildings).
- 4.) \$366.50 – Comcast phone and internet expenses.
- 5.) \$310.00 – Church grounds care.

2. The October and Year To Date operating net income / (deficit) are \$719.23 and (\$32,938.66) respectively.

•The actual October operating expenses were \$4,506 below the average monthly budgeted expenses.

•The actual October operating income was \$1,329 below the average monthly budgeted income.

- The Year-To-Date operating incomes are \$584 below the budgeted amount and expenses are \$7,771 above the budgeted amounts.



CONTINUED - SEE OCTOBER 2023 FINANCIAL SNAPSHOT

OCTOBER 2023 FINANCIAL \$NAPSHOT CONTINUED

3. In October, the value of the MassMutual Investment accounts decreased \$5,892.10 to \$290,354.79.
 4. The total endowment fund on October 31, 2023, was \$293,154.33. This is below the \$300,000 floor established in the church By-Laws which means funds can not be taken from the endowment to pay operating expenses. The total endowment fund was down \$6,123.39 since October 1, 2023, and down \$15,620.43 since January 1, 2023.
 5. No community dinner expenses were submitted for October. The donations collected at the dinner were \$65.00.
- The 2023 Per Capita is \$42.50 for each of the 201 members of our Church. (The number is the membership of FPCH on December 31, 2021.) The total amount due in 2023 is \$8,542.50 or \$711.88 monthly. In October, \$0.00 was received for the Per Capita leaving the total received in 2023 at \$2,831.50 or 33.1%. No Per Capita payment was sent to the Presbytery of the Highlands of NJ in October leaving the total sent at \$2,831.50 or 33.1% of the total amount due.

BUILDING ON GENEROSITY (BOG) CAPITAL CAMPAIGN

- Donations received during October, \$150.00.
- Total donations received from church members, non-members and anonymous from September 2019 (BOG Kickoff dinner) through October 31, 2023, \$642,886.89.
- No expenses were paid using the BOG funds in October.
- Funds available for the next BOG project, \$9,515.38 with an additional \$2,500.00 designated for parking lot pavement, \$1,000.00 designated for the Chapel range hood replacement and \$2,000.00 loaned to pay operating expenses.
- Donations breakdown by source:
 - 5.2% - \$33,648.38 from nonmembers
 - 86.1% - \$553,379.30 from members
 - 8.7% - \$55,859.21 from anonymous & dinners
 - 100.0% - \$642,886.89 Total

Please contact Al Ravo if you have any questions or would like to discuss the Church's operational finances, the Endowment Funds, Per Capita or the Building On Generosity Capital Campaign.

DECEMBER GREETERS

- Dec 3: Della and Jose Irby
Dec 10:: Winnie and Mark Slachetka
Dec 17: Ginny and Brielle Plumbo
Dec 24: AM Service: Pat and Geof Gohlich
Dec 24: PM Service: The Roguso Family
Dec 31: Bev Saunders and Ellen Bergman



Kids, enjoy coloring this gingerbread house.



MUSIC NOTES

BY: LORINDA RAVO

In December, we welcome back our music ensembles to their participation in our services! Music selections for this month include:

- December 3: Child of Peace-Sr. Choir
December 10: Gloria, Gloria-Little Lights Sunday School Choir
Love Has Come-Unity Chime Choir
December 17: O Come, O Come, Emmanuel-FPCH Ringers
Let the Christ Child In-Sr. Choir
December.24: (am):
Christmas Meditation-FPCH Ringers
God Rest Ye Merry Gentlemen - Joyful Noise Bell Choir
I Call Him Lord-Sr. Choir
Poverty Carol-Women's ensemble
December 24: (pm)
This Peaceful Night-Sr. Choir
O Holy Night-Sr. Choir, Torey Ravo, soloist
December 31: TBA



Send in Your Christmas Cards

BY: DEBORAH GULICK-SHEPHERD

Traditionally, each year we share our Christmas cards with our church family by displaying them at church on the Christmas Card Tree. If you wish to participate in this activity, please get your cards either to the church office or directly to Deborah Gulick-Shepherd during the month of December.

THINK FAST CHRISTMAS

For this activity, think about the responses as quickly as possible, based on your knowledge of Christmas.

Name three :

Christmas colors

Christmas songs

items in the 12 Days of Christmas

relatives you visit after your personal celebration

types of Christmas trees

tree toppers

of Santa's reindeer

things you can do with snow

types of outdoor decorations

stocking stuffers

types of indoor decorations

types of Christmas cookies

Now compare your answers with those of the rest of your family members. See what responses are the same.

The Last Time I Saw God

Prayer by Sarah Speed, A Sanctified Art

The last time I saw God face
to face

I was looking at a bed of
tulips.

God was every color of red.

I was merely a mortal,
in awe of it all.

The time before that,
we were tying back the curtains,
looking for stars.

God was the deepest purple
and the brightest light.

The time before that,
the city was soft with snow.

God was the quiet
that tucked us all in.

And in between these small
gifts there were
newborn babies,
and sapling trees,
homemade bread,
the sound of a church
singing on Sunday.

...

Why, yes, we are lucky.
We are more than lucky
for the moments when
delight and awe
unzip the weight
we carry around.

Enjoy this poem as you enter
this season of advent. - Pastor Erin

HIGHLIGHTS FROM NOVEMBER

HIGHLIGHTS FROM “SECOND SUNDAY”

November proved to be a fun time

BY: LORINDA RAVO

What happens when you join a dozen kids and a wealth of adults in the chapel for a woodworking event? The creation of some very special apple bird feeders.

The project for November 12th Second Sunday welcomed the expertise of Pete Miller, who began his teaching career as an industrial arts teacher. He taught those in attendance about how the pieces of the feeder were created, and then how to work with wood glue to put pieces together, how to paint the feeders, and then to put them together with the apples in the middle.



Photos are available in this issue's newsletter and on the church's Facebook

page. The kids and assisting adults also enjoyed a light lunch, and heard the story of how ravens helped Elijah. They also played a game to identify different kinds of birds. Thanks to all who were part of November's Second Sunday!



On December 10, Erin Roguso will be helping the participants make Christmas ornaments. To help us insure that we have enough supplies, please be sure to preregister on the sign up sheet in front of the church.

We are so pleased to share the following highlights of our church worship during the month of November. Included here are selected photos from the musical ensembles, church decorating, and All Saints Day and Veterans' Day. Photos courtesy of Diane Hull, Lorinda Ravo, and MaryAnn Simmons.



HYMN FEST AT GETHSEMANE A HUGE SUCCESS

Each year in November, our choir attends the hymn fest held at Gethsemane Lutheran Church. This year, we had many members attend to sing the following hymns: “We Gather Together; Holy, Holy, Holy; Joyful, Joyful, We Adore Thee; Take My Hand; It is Well. Anthems by combined choirs included We Will Walk This Road Together; United in Praise; and The Lord Bless You and Keep You; and many more.



Thank you to Laura Petrie, Director of Music at Gethsemane, who coordinated this event and thank you Lorinda Ravo who conducted the anthems. Finally, thank you all who attended this celebration of music and donated a food item to our Little Pantry. The event was well attended and a great success.

SUNDAY SCHOOL NEWS

BY: MARYANN SIMMONS

December is a busy time for our Sunday School students who are preparing for the Christmas pageant each year. This year, the members of the middle school and confirmation classes are joining efforts to assist with the presentation of the pageant with our younger students.

We are pleased to announce a new pageant, *A Very Special Child: An Advent/Christmas Pageant Inspired by the Stories in Luke 1-3*, written by Rev. Anna Strickland and prepared through A Sanctified Art. The play contains four acts and students will present the pageant at the 10 AM worship service on Christmas Eve morning.

We look forward to this presentation of a beautiful story.

HEAVEN SENT NURSERY SCHOOL SHARES AND CARES

Students Donate Food Items to Little Pantry

BY: MARYANN SIMMONS

During the month of October, you may recall that our Heaven Sent families provided snacks for the Halloween season to be placed in our Little Pantry. This past month in the spirit of Thanksgiving, the families again joined efforts to supply the pantry with goods for special dinner options.

In the last week of November, the 40 plus students of Heaven Sent provided 8 full boxes of food items that the pantry offered to the community so that the town's food insecure could celebrate a day of thanks.

As part of the learning experience, Mrs. Ravo incorporated a lesson about giving and sharing during the children's sermon in the month of November. You can see photos of that lesson here and on our Facebook page.



Thank you, Mrs. Bunjo and the children of Heaven Sent School. We are truly blessed to have such caring students. We also look forward to your donations in the month of December for the Christmas holiday.

ATTENTION ALL FOOD AFICIONADOS

BY: ELLEN BERGMAN

We know many of our congregation members enjoy food and all that goes into preparing it. We have those who bake and provide nutritious snacks for our fellowship Sundays each month, those who prepare the monthly community dinners, and those who assist whenever there is a fundraising dinner to raise money for our many missions and expenses.

To those who enjoy such activities, we are asking that you consider attaining your food handler's license in an effort to assist with the production of any of our activities that take place at the chapel and to lend a hand with the preparation at one or some of the community monthly dinners.

To that end, the Deacon's are willing to provide you with all of the information regarding how to go through this process. Most courses take place online and include nine modules: the importance of food safety, how food becomes unsafe, employee health and personal hygiene, receiving and storing food, preventing cross-contamination, time and temperature control, preparing and handling food, cleaning and sanitizing, and pest control. A fee is attached to this endeavor, but it is minimal, and most courses take 60-90 minutes to complete. Most sites suggest contacting your local health department to confirm local regulations and to verify acceptance of the program selected.

For more information, please contact Ellen Bergman who can provide you with all of the details and which site to consider using for acquiring this certification.

We hope that you will prayerfully consider joining in this effort so that we can include more people in our dinner activities and fundraising efforts.

FPCH SEEKING MEMBERS TO JOIN FUNDRAISING COMMITTEE

BY: GEOFF GOHLICH

We all know that it takes many hands and people to successfully raise funds for any organization. Our church is no different. To that end, we are looking for willing and able members of the congregation to become a part of our newly created Fundraising Committee.

As you are aware, First Presbyterian of Hackettstown spends a lot of time and energy running various dinners as ways to raise funds. Most of the people who join in that effort are constantly working and need some additional assistance, but the session believes we can find alternative ways to accomplish the same goal - raise money for the many missions and various financial needs of the church.

If you possess a special talent for understanding how to raise money in creative ways, we would love for you to consider joining this team. We are looking for approximately ten people - of all ages from our congregation - to become a part of this committee. We realize that dinners bring in funds, but we need to vary our efforts and create a schedule for all additional activities. Pastor Erin will work with all who join and will assign tasks for each member. Keep in mind you will not have to be involved in all events, just the ones you wish to be a part of, but you will need to chair at least one.

We will continue to have our annual fish and chips, corn beef and cabbage, and roast beef dinners, and look to continue our new partnership with the First Aid and Rescue Squad and their dinner activities. Now we need to put on our thinking caps and take a chance on other endeavors. Therefore, we need your help and support.

Please see Geof Gohlich or Pastor Erin if you are interested or if you have ideas. Thank you.

Sharing God's Bounty

Overjoyed by the Star

In Matthew 2, we read about the Visit of the Magi. Following the star, inquiring at the king's palace, informed by the priests where to find the Child, they trudged with determination to Bethlehem, bringing with them the gifts they planned to present as they worshiped him. *"When they saw the star, they were overjoyed. On coming to the house, they saw the child with his mother Mary, and they bowed down and worshiped him. Then they opened their treasures and presented him with gifts of gold and of incense and of myrrh"* (Matthew 2:10-11).

What did the Wise Men from the East know about this Baby or his family? Not much. Yet they came in faith, bringing gifts with them to honor him. How far did they travel? How long was their trip? We can surmise, but what's important to know is that, for them, the trip with all its drudgery was worth it. "They were overjoyed."

How long a trip are we prepared to make this Christmas to worship the Christ Child? Are we willing to put up with inconvenience and sacrifice in order that we might come before him with our gifts, offering them in faith, as the Wise Men did?

What causes our joy this Christmas season? Is it seeing the eyes of little children light up when they open their presents? That's good. Is it finding exactly the right gift for someone special? That's good, too. But are we "overjoyed" when we see the star? Contrary to the messages we hear in the commercials and even the seasonal songs, the only thing Christmas is about is the birth of Jesus, the Savior of the world.

Along with doing all the wonderful things that are good to do at this time of the year, including the visiting of sick and the shut-in, the baking of goodies for food banks, the sharing of financial resources with those in need, and all the shopping and caroling and everything else, let's find our joy in seeing the star. That star points us to Jesus and leads us to the Cross. Let us "open our treasures" and worship him with our best and most precious gifts as the Wise Men did.

Perhaps the real significance of giving is what it does to the steward. What matters to God is not the gift, but the giver. Stewardship is God's invitation to a way of life. It helps us to overcome our selfishness and love of things. What we do with what we have been given is a sign to God and to the world of the depth and meaning of our commitment.

DECEMBER BIRTHDAYS

02: Diane Hull
03: Scott Annunziata
Pattie Huff
07: Noah Ligarzewski
08: Jackie Hammel
13: Cathy Van Orden
15: Carol Miller
23: Alex Annunziata
24: Ani McDonagh
26: Matt Erickson
Mark Gulick
27: Veronica Aquino

CONGRATS TO ALL!

DECEMBER ANNIVERSARIES

04: Stephen & Danielle
Carpenter
09: Richard & Margo
Gregory
13: John Mark & Camerin
Wojcicki
23: Chris & Jennifer Bramley

PRAYER LIST

Please keep the following
in your prayers:



Gwenn and Louis
Bartku
Joan Beddow
The Budd Family
Eris Bunnel
Eugenie Chetangie
Churches throughout
the U.S.
FPCH
Friends of FPCH
Dan Gardner
Roger George (father
of Gwen Bartku)
Terry Gretchen
Joan Grover
Maikuu congregation,
Kibwezi Kenya
Members of the Armed Forces
Edna Ort
Barbara Pace, niece of the
Prestopines
Shirley Pennington
Alice Phoebus
Carol Spitzer
Students on holiday break
Those who are food insecure
Those who are homeless
Those struggling with
addictions and mental health
Those recovering from surgery
Those suffering from acts of
terrorism by the Hamas/Islamic
Resistance Movement