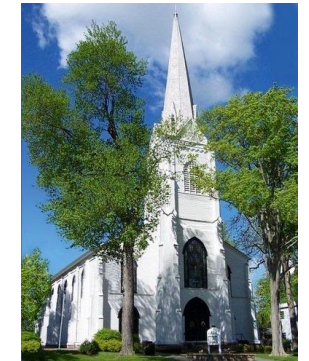


**First Presbyterian  
Church  
298 Main Street**

**FIRST PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH  
298 MAIN STREET  
HACKETTSTOWN, NJ 07840  
REV. ERIN HAYES-COOK  
OFFICE: 908-852-4011  
e-mail: [fpchnj@gmail.com](mailto:fpchnj@gmail.com)  
Church website,  
<http://www.fpchackettstown.org>  
Editor: MaryAnn Simmons  
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**JANUARY  
2024**

*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

### 2024 SESSION

Class of 2024	Class of 2025	Class of 2026
Bruce Bergman	Donna Erickson	Bill Cors*
Michele Cameron	Diane Hull	Geof Gohlich*
MaryAnn Simmons	Ray Sookhoo	Sharon Heil*

**Clerk of Session:** Donna Erickson

### 2024 BOARD OF DEACONS

Class of 2024	Class of 2025	Class of 2026
Pat Gohlich	Ellen Bergman	Jackie Hammel*
Janette Hendershot	Patricia Butts	Kathy Maier*
Justin Simmons	Carol Miller	Lorinda Ravo*

**Moderator:** Ellen Bergman

### 2024 HEAVEN SENT NURSERY SCHOOL BOARD OF TRUSTEES

**OFFICE:** 852-2006

**Director:** Jen Bujno

Pam Venturini	- 2025	Pat Butts *	- 2026
Kaitlyn Elliot	- HS Parent	Heather Pittman	- HS Parent

Sharon Heil - Session Rep

Rev. Erin Hayes-Cook - Ex-Officio

\* Indicates the nominees for the Class of 2026 on all boards

## A NOTE FROM OUR EDITOR

Hello, Readers!

Happy New Year to you all. I trust you had a wonderful Christmas and enjoyed your short respite from work or school.

As you can see, we have been blessed throughout the 2023 year and have many more reasons to feel blessed for the upcoming year.

This past month, we witnessed many beautiful events at the church. From community dinners, to gourmet groups meeting, to a new Christmas pageant performed before the congregation on Christmas Eve morning worship service, we have seen some spectacular activities before us. We hope to continue this tradition throughout 2024.

Throughout this edition of *Light from the Steeple*, you will notice a recap of the highlights that happened during this Advent season and Second Sunday. You will also be introduced to the new members of the Session and the Deacon Board as well as new members of the personnel, nominating, and Heaven Sent committees. I have also kept in this edition the article requesting people consider joining our newly created Fundraising Committee. In addition, you will recall the honoring of Lorinda Ravo for her 40 years of service to First Presbyterian Church as our Music Director and advocate for children's activities. We thank her, and all of you, for your service to our congregation.

This month, I feature three new contributing authors: confirmation students Alex Meussig, Gabe Roguso, and Ani McDonagh, who have written about the Christmas pageant.

Lastly, as indicated in Al Ravo's financial report, PLEASE remember, **the 2024 Per Capita amount at \$42.50 for each member of our congregation. This is the same amount as 2023.** Please consider sending in your portion in January or February so that our church may fulfill its obligation to the Presbytery.

May you all enjoy a wonderful and blessed 2024!

As always, thanks for your readership and continued support.

Yours in Christ,

MaryAnn Simmons

## DATES TO REMEMBER - JANUARY 2024

- 31: New Year's Eve
- 31: Worship - 10 AM; livestream through Facebook; no Sunday School for Pre K- grade 3 students; Joyful Noise/Unity Chimes Rehearsal after worship
- 01: New Year's Day - church office closed
- 03: Yarn Girls - 1 PM - Conference Room
- 03: End of year reports due to office from all Committee Chairs
- 04: Music Rehearsals - FPCH Ringers at 6:30 PM and Senior Choir at 7:30 PM, both in the Music Room
- 07: Worship and communion - 10 AM; livestream through Facebook; no Sunday School for Middle School Students; Joyful Noise/Unity Chimes Rehearsal after worship
- 09: Deacon's Meeting - 6:30 PM in the Conference Room
- 11: Music Rehearsals - FPCH Ringers at 6:30 PM and Senior Choir at 7:30 PM, both in the Music Room
- 13: Men's Breakfast at the Chapel - 8 AM
- 13: Community Dinner - 5:30-7 PM, at the Chapel
- 14: Worship - 10 AM; livestream through Facebook; Sunday School grades Pre-K - 5 and grades 6 & 7; Joyful Noise/Unity Chimes Rehearsal after worship
- 15: Martin Luther King Day
- 16: Session Meeting - 6:30 PM in the Conference Room
- 18: Music Rehearsals - FPCH Ringers at 6:30 PM and Senior Choir at 7:30 PM, both in the Music Room
- 21: Worship - 10 AM; livestream through Facebook; Joyful Noise/Unity Chimes Rehearsal after worship
- 21: Congregational meeting immediately after worship
- 23: Ladies Who Lunch - 12 PM at Applebee's Mountain Ave, H'town
- 25: Music Rehearsals - FPCH Ringers at 6:30 PM and Senior Choir at 7:30 PM, both in the Music Room
- 28: Worship - 10 AM; livestream through Facebook; Joyful Noise/Unity Chimes Rehearsal after worship

## A NOTE FROM OUR PASTOR

**Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,**

Happy New Year! I pray that the holiday season you were able to find grace and love amongst you. I can't believe that 2023 has come and gone so fast. As I look back over the Advent season, I see the expectation of hope and steadiness in our community. Many of us resonated with the theme of finding joy and hope in the weariness of the world. I truly believe that now more than ever God is inviting us to be real with our faith, real and vulnerable with what we need from God, and to see how we are willing to step into hope.

As we begin this year, let us begin with prayer. Let us steep ourselves in the presence of the divine. Let us find time in our day to take a deep breath and invite the spirit. May we find the spaces in our heart where we need to forgive and ask for help. Let us be willing to cast aside any behaviors that don't foster abundant life. May we be willing to carry the suffering in prayer so we can in turn find ways to alleviate that suffering. May we be willing to listen to understand other people and find the face of God.

Our communities are eager to hear stories of hope. They are waiting to know that new life is possible, that someone cares for them, that someone will listen. I wonder what wonderful opportunities for growth and ministry are awaiting us this year. You will notice our "fish" on display. We filled them out with hopes that our ministry will be multiplied this coming year. If you did not get a chance to fill one out we would love to know how you discern the Spirit of God calling to us. Let us continue to find ways to serve the God who multiplies!

**Pastor Erin**

# THANK YOU TO OUR CONGREGATION

## Christmas Wishes Felt in our Church

BY: DEB GULICK-SHEPHERD

Each year, we put up a display of the cards and Christmas wishes to the church our congregation members send in. Those cards are put on display on a “Christmas Card Tree” for all to see at the rear entrance of the church. . Thank you to the following people for their notes to the church:

Sandy Archer  
Bruce and Ellen Bergman  
Geof and Pat Gohlich  
Sharon Heil  
Dennis and Pattie Huff  
Sang and Haeja Kim  
Mike, Jessica, Ani, and Brynn McDonagh  
Al and Lorinda Ravo  
Ron and Deborah Shepherd  
Jim, MaryAnn, and Justin Simmons  
Mark and Winnie Slachetka  
Barbara Yankiv

Happy New Year, everyone!

## BOOKS FOR YOUR READING PLEASURE

BY: MARYANN SIMMONS

This month, enjoy some winter themed books through these three titles for people of all ages. Sit back and revel in the stories of snow and winter: *Winter Dance* by Marion Dane Bauer for kids, *The Snow Child* by Eowyn Ivey for young adults, and *Winter Solstice* by Rosamunde Pilcher for adults who wish to read about five different people.

**Cuddle in a blanket and enjoy these winter titles.  
Happy Reading, all!**

# WREATHS ACROSS AMERICA REMEMBERED

BY: MARYANN SIMMONS

Each year, National Wreaths Across America Day occurs in December across the world. The focus point is on wreath laying at Arlington National Ceremony plus 3700 additional locations in all 50 US states, at sea, and abroad. Our very own scout troop has participated in this activity over the years, and this year was no exception.

On December 16, 2023, all of our Scout and Cub Troops partnered with the Blairstown Masonic Lodge for this activity. A ceremony at the Chapel first took place, then Mr. Charles Prestopine provided a speech giving an overview of the Revolutionary War and its significance in the Hackettstown area, and finally volunteers placed wreaths on the graves in The Old Burial Ground. Members of the Colonial Musketeers Fife and Drum Corp attended to the pomp and circumstance. As part of this year’s ceremony, members of the Masonic Lodge and Scout and Cub Troops donated canned and packaged goods to our Little Pantry. What a blessing to receive these offerings which will provide items for the food insecure in and around Hackettstown.

The mission of Wreaths Across America touches the lives of thousands of school, scout, civic and religious groups across the country through fundraising for wreath sponsorships. These groups help ensure that a wreath is placed on each hero’s grave. In return, the groups receive fundraising dollars that assist in furthering their own goals and projects.

Next year’s Wreaths Across America will take place on December 14, 2024. We hope to see you again at the Chapel and then at the Cemetery for the placing of the wreaths on the graves of the heroes who sacrificed their lives for our country.

# WINTER COLORING

Hey, kids, have fun coloring this snowy image!



## NEWS FROM THE DEACONS

BY: JUSTIN SIMMONS

The monthly meeting of the deacons occurred on December 12, 2023. At that meeting, we welcomed Kathy Maier as our newest nominated Deacon member for a 3-year term, which she will begin in January.

Pastor Erin reported that she used money from Pastor's Discretionary Fund to cover an emergency situation. In addition, she notes that she will be setting up homebound visits. During the month of December, we sent out Christmas mailings to homebound members, including a book of carols and devotions called O Holy Night. Also during this past month, we established a new date for the bi-annual Clothing Drive: May 4, 2024. Please mark your calendars.

Our Little Pantry continues to thrive, especially with the assistance of our Scout Troop members. Although items are depleting quickly, Eagle Scout Autumn Hoover has graciously donated over 1,000 pounds of food, personal care, and pet supplies to the Little Pantry as part of her eagle scout project. Thank you, Autumn, for your generosity and kindness.

Since our personal care items go immediately upon stocking the shelves of the pantry, we are considering other options to make sure these toiletry items are available to as many people as possible.

We continue to create and provide Kid's Care Kits for elementary and middle schools in Hackettstown and in Great Meadows Middle School. Also, beginning in January, we will be collecting hats, scarves, and mittens for our elementary schools in Hackettstown and Great Meadows. See the article about this initiative.

In other news, decal magnets, being designed by James Tischler, will be ordered soon. We hope to sell these decals to the congregation in an effort to raise some money for our missions. Remaining Christmas ornaments were sold after church worship during the month of December.

Poinsettia sponsorship raised \$495 with 38 sponsors. White poinsettias are from Rose Green. Deacons were responsible for setup, removal, and cleanup of flowers.

Because no one has come forward with interest in food-handler certification, we are still seeking interested members to consider this opportunity.

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.

# NOVEMBER 2023 FINANCIAL \$NAPSHOT

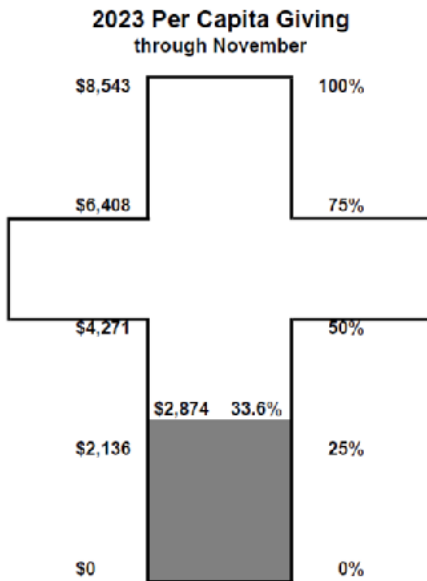
BY: AL RAVO

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

	November	Year to Date
Income	\$13,819.38	\$176,985.01
Expenses Paid	\$16,077.39	\$212,181.68
Net Operating Income /Deficit	(\$2,258.01)	(\$35,196.67)
Amount of Checking Surplus Used to pay operating expenses	\$ 0.00	\$14,500.00
Amount Needed from Endowment	\$ 0.00	\$20,000.00

## Financial Comments / Observations:

- The five largest operating expenses in November were:
  - 1.) \$7,378.77 – Pastoral expenses (payroll, Board of Pensions, etc.).
  - 2.) \$4,260.69 – Staff payroll & payroll processing expenses.
  - 3.) \$782.45 – Gas expenses (3 buildings).
  - 4.) \$649.95 – Facilities Supplies & Maintenance.
  - 5.) \$430.68 – Electric expenses (3 buildings).
- The November and Year To Date operating net income / (deficit) are **(\$2,258.01)** and **(\$35,196.67)** respectively.
  - The actual November operating expenses were \$2,756 below the average monthly budgeted expenses.
  - The actual November operating income was \$2,556 below the average monthly budgeted income.
  - The Year-To-Date operating incomes are \$3,140 below the budgeted amount and expenses are \$5,015 above the budgeted amounts.
- In November, the value of the Mass Mutual Investment accounts increased \$21,165.20 to \$311,519.99.
- The total endowment fund on November 30, 2023, was \$314,413.78. The total endowment fund was up \$21,259.45 since November 1, 2023, and up \$5,639.02 since January 1, 2023.
- No community dinner expenses were submitted for November. The donations collected



at the dinner were \$87.00.

# NOVEMBER 2023 FINANCIAL \$NAPSHOT CONTINUED

**The 2024 Per Capita amount at \$42.50 for each member of our congregation. This is the same amount as 2023.**

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 November, **\$42.50** was received for the Per Capita bringing the total received in 2023 to **\$2,874.00** or **33.6%**. A Per Capita payment of **\$42.50** was sent to the Presbytery of the Highlands of NJ in November bringing the total sent to **\$2,874.00** or **33.6%** of the total amount due.

## BUILDING ON GENEROSITY (BOG) CAPITAL CAMPAIGN

- Donations received during November, **\$0.00**.
- Total donations received from church members, non-members and anonymous from September 2019 (BOG Kickoff dinner) through November 30, 2023, **\$642,886.89**.
- No expenses were paid using the BOG funds in November.
- Total BOG funds are **\$12,965.38**. The breakdown is **\$9,515.38** for the next BOG project with an additional **\$2,500.00** designated for parking lot pavement and **\$1,000.00** designated for the Chapel range hood replacement.
- 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.

## JANUARY GREETERS

- Jan 7: Pattie and Dennis Huff  
Jan 14: Carol and Pete Miller  
Jan 21: Jean Zetterberg and Maddox Fucetola  
Jan 28: Kathy Slater and Bev Saunders

## LORINDA RAVO HONORED FOR 40 YEARS OF SERVICE AT FPCH

BY: MARYANN SIMMONS

Second Sunday, December 10th, began with a great celebration of our very own Lorinda Ravo who has served for the past 40 years as our music director and has had a huge impact on our children's programs here. She began as director in 1983 and then became our full time organist in 2001. In addition, she has been instrumental in running our summer Vacation Bible School program and when that ended, she instituted the Second Sunday programs which began three years ago. To that end, the children presented her with a beautiful bouquet of flowers. Needless to say, she was totally surprised.



**Congratulations, Lorinda,** on a wonderful career at First Presbyterian Church Hackettstown. We are blessed to have you as our Music Director and coordinator of children's programs!

## MUSIC NOTES

BY: LORINDA RAVO

In January, our special music during worship services will include:

- January 7: Let Us Break Bread Together-Sr. Choir  
January 14: The Mighty Hills of God-Sr. Choir  
January 21: Promised Land: FPCH Ringers  
Santo, Santo, Santo: Little Lights Sunday School Choir  
January 28: Come, Peace of God-Sr. Choir  
Amazing Grace-Unity Chime Choir



In 2024, we will celebrate a VERY early Easter: March 31 to be exact. We'd love to have another Easter Choir to sing that morning. If you'd like to be part of the choir for our Easter service please let Lorinda know, and she'll get you the music!

Did you know that in 2023, our musicians provided so much music for us to enjoy? The Senior Choir sang more than 30 anthems, our FPCH Ringers played 13 pieces, and our Little Lights Sunday School choir sang each month, Jan-June, and then Sept. – Dec. Our Joyful Noise Bells and Unity Chimes also played more than 12 times in 2023.

We are always happy to welcome new singers or ringers to our music program. Why not make 2024 the year that you become part of a very fulfilling opportunity to make a "Joyful Noise to the Lord!"

## **DEACONS TO COLLECT WINTER ACCESSORIES FOR CHILDREN**

Drive to Benefit Children in Hackettstown and Great Meadows Elementary Schools

**BY: JUSTIN SIMMONS**

As we see children in town walking to and from school in these winter months, we notice too many of them without warm outerwear. To help alleviate that issue, in January, the Deacons, along with Heaven Sent Nursery School and the members of the middle school Sunday School and Confirmation classes, will be collecting NEW winter hats, gloves, mittens, and scarves that will be given to the Hackettstown and Great Meadows elementary schools for distribution to children who don't have those items to keep them warmer while outdoors. Look for the collection bin in the church, and thanks for helping us help children!

## **NEW SESSION AND BOARD OF DEACONS MEMBERS TO BE INSTALLED INTO THE CLASS OF 2026**

New Committee Members also to be Elected

**BY: BRUCE BERGMAN**

FPCH would like to inform you of the new members who will be officially elected at the January 21 congregational meeting. The class of 2026 of Elders includes **Bill Cors**, Geof Gohlich, and Sharon Heil. The class of 2026 of Board of Deacons includes Jackie Hammel, **Kathy Maier**, and Lorinda Ravo. All will be installed at the February 4th worship service.

The following members of the congregation will be elected to one year terms: Nominating - **Erin Roguso**; Personnel - **Jan Courtright**; Heaven Sent Trustee - **Pat Butts**.

Congratulations to all, and thank you for your service.

## **BUILDING AND GROUNDS UPDATE**

**BY: DIANE HULL**

Our building and grounds committee has been diligently working to maintain the Church, Chapel, and Manse this past December. To that end here is an update of all that is on the agenda for the new year.

On the third floor of the church, Heaven Sent conducts its classes throughout the day. As you are aware, inspections occur regularly and to that end, there is a need for new carpeting in a number of classrooms. Thanks to the efforts of Jen Bunjo and a parent of our Heaven Sent class, the carpeting will be installed free of charge!

I would like to extend A SINCERE THANK YOU to all who came out to decorate the Sanctuary for Christmas. As you witnessed, the church looked beautiful and many adults and older children assisted in this project.

The Manse Grant offered by Presbytery is again available for 2024. Over the last couple of years we have replaced windows on the first floor to improve energy efficiency. We have three windows (living area) left to complete the first floor. The Session has advised applying for this grant again so that the Manse window situation will be complete.

At the Chapel, I would like to thank Lorinda Ravo and Kim Newton for decorating the entrance area for Christmas and John Mark for setting up the Christmas Tree. Wreaths Across America was again a success on December 16th, with joint efforts from the Masonic Lodge of Blairstown NJ, our very own Scout Troops and FPC.

As always, I want to thank my committee and the session for all of their support throughout the year to make our church buildings and grounds look amazing. I look forward to a productive 2024.



# HIGHLIGHTS FROM “SECOND SUNDAY”

## Creating Christmas Ornaments and Decorating Cookies Was So Much Fun

BY: LORINDA RAVO

Second Sundays always promise much fun and creativity at the Chapel each month. During worship we celebrated a milestone of our very own Lorinda Ravo (see article on page 7). After worship many of our children headed over to the Chapel to enjoy a day of crafting Christmas ornaments and decorating Christmas cookies. Many thanks to Mrs. Roguso and Miss Winnie for providing so much fun at our December Second Sunday event. The participating kids made ornaments for their Christmas trees, and also got to decorate (with edible markers!) sugar cookies the Slachetkas made. Paints, markers, glue, glitter, paper folding, and more were all on the day’s agenda, and it was wonderful.



In 2023, we held 9 Second Sundays and 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.

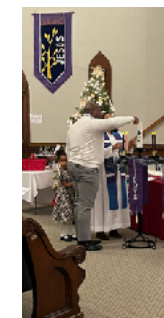
We welcomed the participation of so many adults who shared their knowledge and skills with us, and we couldn’t have done it without our dedicated “lunch ladies” who made sure that our “bagel time” lunches were waiting for us when we arrived at the Chapel.

Do you have a skill or talent that you’d like to share with the kids of our congregation? We’d love to have your participation too. Just speak to Lorinda and we’ll get you on the schedule.

We will NOT have a Second Sunday in January, but be ready for more fun on February 11.

# HIGHLIGHTS FROM ADVENT 2023

We are so pleased to share the following highlights of our church worship during the month of December, beginning with the decorating of the Chrismon Tree. Photos courtesy of MaryAnn Simmons.



# SEVENTH AND EIGHTH GRADERS CREATE BACKDROPS FOR PAGEANT

BY: ALEX MEUSSIG AND GABRIEL ROGUSO

As you know, we have been preparing for our annual Christmas pageant which occurs in December to honor the birth of baby Jesus.



On Second Sunday, December 10th, some of our confirmation and middle school students got together to create the backdrops for this pageant. Students drew and colored each backdrop, which were hung behind the events for each of the four acts of the play.

As the day drew to an end, some of the younger kids, including Arden Cook, Kaz Tang, and Brynn McDonagh, assisted in the process of coloring the backdrops after they completed their Second Sunday activities. Although time consuming, the backdrops came out beautifully.

Above, you can see Chris Ratti working on his sketch, and below to the right, you see the finished backdrops: a temple scene, a city scene, the mountain scene, and the stable where Jesus was born.

Thank you to Alex Meussig, Gabe Roguso, Chris Ratti, Ani McDonagh, and Amari Melendez for your artistic talents. A special thank you goes to Lila Roguso and her mom for putting the finishing touches on the images so that we had colorful backdrops.

We are so grateful to have such talented students in our midst. Great job!



PHOTOS COURTESY OF LORINDA RAVO AND MARYANN SIMMONS

# CHRISTMAS PAGEANT BRINGS TO LIFE THE BIRTH OF JESUS AND JOHN THE BAPTIST

BY: ANI MCDONAGH

This year's Christmas pageant was definitely one for the books. Pastor Erin chose "A Very Special Child: A Pageant inspired by the stories in the gospel of Luke chapters 1-3." Written by Rev Anna Strickland of A Sanctified Art, it basically tells the story of the birth of Jesus and John the Baptist and their importance to christianity.

Everyone did such a great job and really portrayed their characters well all throughout the pageant, which was presented to the congregation on the morning of December 24, 2023.

The main point of the pageant was to portray the birth of baby Jesus in four acts. Some of the people who really took the show were Kaz (Angel Gabriel), Gabe (Zechariah), Ani (Mary), Brynn (Angel Gabriel), Maddox (Joseph), Alex and Amari (Elizabeth), Violet (an angel), Harper (Mary), Lila and Veronica (neighbors), Lila and Andrew (Narrators), and all the other little angels and shepherds.

We put on this pageant because we wanted to show how important Jesus is and how much of an influence he has on our lives.

Thank you for all who watched it either in person at the service or online.



## **GOD'S LOVE ENDURES FOREVER**

This month we regret to inform you of the passing of Roger G. George, a long time member of the church, who died peacefully on Christmas Eve at the home of his daughter, Gwenn Bartku, Hackettstown, NJ. Roger was 88 years old.

Roger, born March 24, 1935 in Treichlers, PA, is the son of the late Howard and Carolyn Knecht George. He was the husband of the late Carolyn L. George who died in 2012. They were married fifty-five years. Roger earned a B.S. degree in Child Psychology and an M.A. degree in American History. Upon graduation, Roger served three years with the U.S. Army Security Agency in a special mobile intelligent unit in Germany. Upon discharge from the army, he taught eight years at the Hackettstown Middle School and twenty seven years at the West Morris Central High School in the Social Studies Department. He also served as the Audio/Visual director and sponsored a fly fishing club at West Morris Central. Each May, the club took a trip to the Beaverkill River in New York's Catskill Mountains.

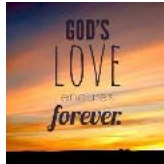
Roger was an Ordained Elder of the First Presbyterian Church, Hackettstown, NJ. He served on the board of Hackettstown Public Library, was a Board member and Chairman of the Hackettstown Recreation Commission in the 1970s and was instrumental in planning For Hackettstown's Public Swimming Pool. Roger was a Charter member of the Catskill Fly Fishing Center and Museum in Livingston Manor, NY.

Roger is survived by his children, Gwenn (Louis) Bartku, Philip (Wendy) George, Andrew (Rebecca) George, seven grandchildren, Lindsey, Gregory, Rachel, Sarah, Aaron, Alanah, Audrey, and eleven great grandchildren and brother Larry George.

Visitation was held on Thursday, December, 28, 2023 from 4-8 pm at the Cochran Funeral Home, 905 High Street, Hackettstown, NJ 07840. Funeral Services were held at the First Presbyterian Church, 298 Main Street, Hackettstown on Friday, December 29, 2023 at 11 am.

In lieu of flowers, donations may be made to the Disability Access Fund of the First Presbyterian Church, 298 Main Street, Hackettstown, NJ 07840 in memory of Roger.

**We give thanks to the God of the Resurrection whose love brings us hope every day.**



## **FPCH SEEKING MEMBERS TO JOIN FUNDRAISING COMMITTEE**

**BY: GEOF 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 still looking for willing members of the congregation to become a part of our newly created Fundraising Committee.

FPCH spends a lot of time and energy running various dinners to raise funds. Most who join in that effort are constantly working and need some additional assistance. 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 have a special talent for understanding how to raise money creatively, please consider joining this team. We are looking for ten people - of all ages - 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, corned 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. Thus, 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

## Forgetting What Is Behind

“Forget about it.” It’s a phrase we may say to ourselves when we don’t want to face up to something. Perhaps we give it in the form of advice to someone who’s complaining about an offense he’s received. According to Paul, it’s a good thing to do. It’s counsel he followed himself: *“Forgetting what is behind and straining toward what is ahead, I press on toward the goal to win the prize for which God has called me heavenward in Christ Jesus”* (Philippians 3:13b-14).

Paul had a past anyone would want to forget. In his Pharisaical zeal, he had caused the imprisonment, persecution, and even death of many who were followers of the Way. All that changed, we know, when he himself faced Jesus on the road to Damascus.

Yet, from our reading of Scripture, we know he didn’t “forget what was behind.” He brought it up many times as he explained the change that Jesus had brought about in his life to the other apostles and as he testified in the highest courts of the day.

Like Paul, we can’t forget about our past sins – and maybe that’s good, as long as we remember that Christ has forgotten them! Remembrance of our sins serves the purpose of keeping us humble and grateful, aware that we walk in God’s ways only as we rely on him to lead us, thankful that he forgives all sin, past, present, and future. Then we are not encumbered by guilt (1 John 3:20). We can *“[forget] what’s behind”* and *“press on toward the goal”* that Christ has lain out before us as we serve him with all the gifts he so graciously gives us.

We begin a new year in God’s grace. We also begin each day, sometimes each moment, as newly forgiven, cleansed stewards equipped through Word and Sacrament to fulfill God’s purposes for our lives.

*Our own growth and the growth of our church depend on the willingness of us all to invest that talent for others. As a member of your church, you are called to share in all aspects of its life. Membership is responsibility - the response to the call to ministry, and service. To be a church member is to answer that call with time and talent.*

### JANUARY BIRTHDAYS

02: Kaz Tang  
04: Winnie Slachetka  
06: Dana Carpenter  
07: Makayla Chetangie  
10: Donna Ghetti  
13: Gianna Fryer  
16: Muriel Stellingwerf  
17: Robert Roome  
20: Scott Cameron  
21: Britney Gulick  
22: T.C. Zellars  
25: Jeff Newton  
26: Rebecca Ruballos  
28: Morgan Gelsing  
29: Pastor Erin Hayes-Cook  
31: Emma Rabuano  
Matthew Gelsing

### CONGRATS TO ALL!

### JANUARY ANNIVERSARIES

14: Fred & Sandy Sentner

### PRAYER LIST

Please keep the following  
in your prayers:



Gwenn and Louis  
Bartku and the  
George family  
Joan Beddow  
The Budd Family  
Eris Bunnell  
Eugenie Chetangie  
Churches throughout  
the U.S.  
FPCH  
Friends of FPCH  
Dan Gardner  
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  
Muriel Stellingwerf  
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