

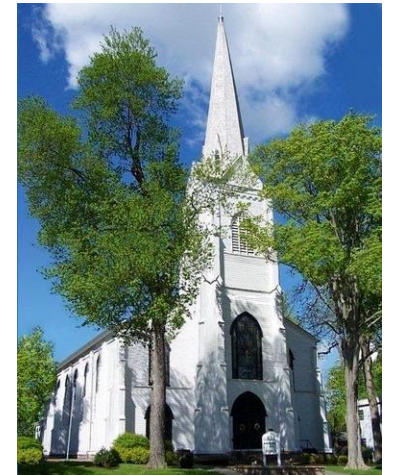
**First Presbyterian  
Church  
298 Main Street**

**FIRST PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH  
298 MAIN STREET  
HACKETTSTOWN, NJ 07840  
REV. ERIN HAYES-COOK  
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## **NOVEMBER 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!

I am glad to see that you have returned for another edition of *Light from the Steeple*.

As you can see, our calendar is full and has many activities to enjoy. Our gourmet groups will be meeting regularly throughout the month and as scheduled, our community dinner will occur on the second Saturday of November. Take a look at the highlights from October to witness the good fellowship experienced during these activities. We have much to be thankful for during this time of year.

I'd like to bring your attention to upcoming activities in November and December as a way to prepare for the season of thanks and the celebration of Jesus' birth.

To that end, each Sunday during worship we will hear stories of abundance and updates on the ministries of our congregation. In addition, please note that November 19 is Pledge Dedication Sunday.

Be sure to take a look at Pastor Erin's article so that you can prepare for the Advent season. We have many activities planned for December and this article will provide you with a sneak peak into those events during worship.

In closing, please peruse the articles in this edition to remind you of the wonderful ways we fulfill Christ's mission on earth here at First Presbyterian of Hackettstown. You are all a blessing to our community.

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

Until next time...

Yours in Christ,

MaryAnn Simmons

## **DATES TO REMEMBER - NOVEMBER 2023**

- 01: Yarn Girls - 1 PM - Conference Room
- 01: Evening Bible Study - 6:30-8 PM in the Conference Room
- 02: Music Rehearsals - FPCH Ringers at 6:30 PM and Senior Choir at 7:30 PM, both in the Music Room
- 04: Daylight Saving Time ends; set your clocks back
- 05: Worship and communion - 10 AM; livestream through Facebook; Sunday School for Pre-K through grade 5 only; Joyful Noise/Unity Chimes Rehearsal after worship
- 05: All Saints Day celebrated
- 06: Morning Bible Study - 10-11 AM in the Conference Room
- 07: Ladies Who Lunch - 12 PM at Enzo's Pasta Grill, Rt 57, Hackettstown
- 09: Music Rehearsals - FPCH Ringers at 6:30 PM and Senior Choir at 7:30 PM, both in the Music Room
- 11: Men's Breakfast at the Chapel - 8 AM
- 11: Community Dinner - 5:30-7 PM, at the Chapel
- 11: Highlands-Nairobi partnership meeting - 9AM-1PM at Camp Johnsonburg
- 12: 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 11:30 AM - 1:30 PM at the Chapel
- 12: Veterans' Day Celebration
- 13: PLEFF dinner - 6 PM at Maria Bonita's Rt 46, Hackettstown, NJ
- 14: Deacon's Meeting - 6:30 PM in the Conference Room
- 15: Updated website information needed to Al Ravo by today
- 16: Confirmation class meeting - 6:30-8 PM at the Manse
- 18: Women's breakfast at the River Star Diner - 9 AM
- 19: Worship - 10 AM; livestream through Facebook; Pledge Sunday; Joyful Noise/Unity Chimes Rehearsal after worship
- 21: Session Meeting - 6:30 PM in the Conference Room
- 23: Happy Thanksgiving and Happy Native American Heritage Day
- 26: Worship - 10 AM; livestream through Facebook; Sunday School; Joyful Noise/Unity Chimes Rehearsal after worship
- 26: Hymn Fest at Gethsemane Lutheran Church - 7 PM; bring a canned food item for the pantry
- 28: Decorate the church for Christmas - Time TBA
- 30: Music Rehearsals - FPCH Ringers at 6:30 PM and Senior Choir at 7:30 PM, both in the Music Room

## **A NOTE FROM OUR PASTOR**

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

I recently went to a conference workshop where the presenters talked about living a life of faith with a mindset of abundance and not one of scarcity. Psychology shows that when we foster gratitude in our lives we are more resilient and happier. In a life of faith when we foster gratitude we are able to see the work of God and our blessings clearer. When faced with hardship or problems we have the ability to see how God's abundance shines through. As we approach our Dedication Sunday when we will bring our promises to God for giving for the next year, I encourage you to consider how we might multiply the ministry here at FPCH. We've grown in number and ministry this year, as our Sunday School, youth, and music programs grow. We also now host two weekly Bible studies. The community continues to fill our food pantry and we have dreams of rekindling our partnership with our ministry partners in Kenya. We can do this ministry because of your generous gifts of time, talent, and money.

For 2024 we hope to continue to grow our ministries do that is by meeting or exceeding our budget with projected giving. As we grow, and as the expenses rise, our needs have changed. We need your help to fill in the shortfalls and consider how God can multiply our giving. I hope that you prayerfully consider how you might partner with us and the Holy Spirit.

If you have not already received a Dedication Card in the mail, please let us know and we will be glad to get you one. Thank you for all that you do to make the kingdom of God come alive. I am so excited to see what God is going to do!

I am deeply grateful for the ways you continue to inspire me to be greater and to live life to the fullest. Please know that I carry you in my heart.

Dear Abundant God, we take our lives and blessings for granted. Help us to see with your abundance so that we might respond in gratitude. Help us trust you with our lives and the ministries here at First Presbyterian Church of Hackettstown. Stretch us and help us grow to respond to your call to give. May you multiply it all for your kingdom.

Pastor Erin

## **JOIN US FOR SECOND SATURDAY COMMUNITY DINNER NOV 11th**

All are welcome to enjoy a free meal and fellowship with friends from our church and our community. These monthly dinners hosted by the FPCH take place on the second Saturday of every month starting at 5:30 PM.

A full meal including dessert is served buffet style in the Chapel at 291 Main Street. Please consider joining us for some great food and fellowship and get to know other members of our community!

If you would like to volunteer to help with these dinners (set up, serving, cooking, cleanup) please contact Ryan VanOrden.

## **GIRLS KEEP ON WINDING THEIR YARN**

**BY: DEBORAH GULICK-SHEPHERD**

Did you ever want to create something that is a show of your compassion for others? If so The Yarn Girls is a group for you.

The Yarn Girls ministry began in 2010. It is for knitters and crocheters who wish to contribute to the comfort shawl ministry sponsored by the Deacons as part of their compassionate care. We make shawls, lap robes, baptismal blankets, chemo caps, and pocket crosses. We meet once a month on the first Wednesday. Some of our participants are unable to meet with us in person but are able to complete their creations at home. We dedicate the new projects 2 or 3 times a year during worship service. We encourage those who wish to learn to knit or crochet to join us.

The congregation participates by taking shawls, lap robes, or pocket crosses to those who might benefit from such a gift: those with health wishes, those who are mourning, and anyone who is experiencing a life challenge. If interested in this ministry, please contact Deborah Gulick-Shepherd.



## **TWO SPECIAL THANK YOUs TO OUR CONGREGATION**

**BY: DIANE HULL**

We never truly know how blessed we are as a congregation until the need for assistance arises. During the month of October, we had two unexpected situations that occurred which required the help of our members. To that end, I want to extend a sincere THANK YOU to all who lightened the burden of these challenges.

Early in the month, two trees fell in the cemetery due to inclement weather. I put out a plea to the congregation due to the unexpected cost associated with the tree clean up. You all heard the call loud and clear. We received enough donations to cover the \$7960 clean up cost plus additional money earmarked for the eventual removal of the trees. Estimates for the removal are being obtained and will be shared when received.

In early October, Building and Grounds committee also had scheduled a chapel basement clean up of many unwanted items. The work day was rescheduled twice since mother nature was not being our friend. Thanks to several volunteers on very short notice, the basement was completely cleaned out in one evening. Chip Cochran sponsored the cost of the dumpster which was \$550.00; therefore, there was no cost to the church.

Again, thank you to all who assisted in both the donations of money for the tree clean up and the dedicated time, effort, and donation to the basement clean up. You are all so very appreciated.



# SHARING OUR SMILES:

## REVEALING THE JOY IN OUR LIVES EACH MONTH

During the month of October, we had a number of 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](mailto:gohlich73@gmail.com)

Congratulations to **Larry Cook** who on October 1st completed a 75 mile bike ride to raise money for Multiple Sclerosis. Way to go for such a great cause, Larry.



Also on October 1st, **Torey Ravo** completed a Triathlon in Atlantic City. This involved a 1.2 mile swim in the bay, a 56 mile bike ride, and 13.1 mile run for a total of 70.3 miles. She performed this feat in 8 hours and 41 minutes. Way to go, Torey!

We are so proud of you.

Congratulations to **Harper Schneider** who was inducted into the Tiger Tunes musical group at Hackettstown Middle School. She and her fellow Tigers will participate in a choral festival later this year and have the opportunity to compete in other festivals throughout the country. Congratulations, Harper.

Kathy Maier's grandson **Matthew Burke** received his Master's degree in Organizational Leadership from Muhlenberg College on Saturday, October 14th. Congratulations, Matthew!



Congratulations to **Veronica Aquino** who earned her Yellow Belt in Tae Kwan Do. Way to go, "V"!

We are pleased to announce **Heaven Sent School** is now 35 years old. Congratulations, and September 10th was the **two year anniversary of our Community Dinners**. Thanks for this wonderful mission of FPCH.

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

This month the Deacons have been very busy with their annual clothing drive. Through the generous donations of our congregation members and their families and friends and other community members, we gathered 415 bags total - 350 bags of clothing, 58 bags of shoes, and 7 strollers, bikes, and toys. As a result, we earned \$766.20 for our mission outreach. Thanks to Bill and Mary Cors who sorted many of the bags prior to the arrival of the truck and to all who assisted with this event on Oct 21st.

In other news, our visits to members who are residing at the House of Good Shepherd continue. Grace Clegg will join Pastor Erin on these visitations. In addition, we continue to think of Joan Beddow and are staying in contact with other homebound members, including Alice Phoebus.

Our Little Pantry continues to be utilized by many in the community. Therefore, we are in need of many goods, especially personal care items, breakfast foods, and soups, and now that November is here, we will be seeking items for Thanksgiving Day dinner. In addition, Heaven Sent has collected and donated three boxes of healthy snacks for Halloween. They will also be collecting dinner items for Thanksgiving to be placed in the pantry during the month of November.

Lorinda Ravo is maintaining contact with our schools for ways to provide needed items for children who come from families that are on free and reduced lunch. To date, she has made and distributed 18 Kid Care Kits for 3 of the schools in Hackettstown and more have been requested. Ellen Bergman will start distribution at Great Meadows Middle School. In another mission outreach, Lorinda is inquiring about need for mittens and scarves at the schools. Please listen for more news about this during our announcements before services each Sunday.

Please see the article about the Yarn Girls ministry. We held a dedication on Sept 16th, and distributed 6 baby blankets, 6 shawls, 12 lap robes; since that dedication we have given out 21 shawls, 14 lap robes, 27 pocket crosses, and 1 baptismal blanket. Thank you, ladies for your gift of knitting and crocheting.

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.

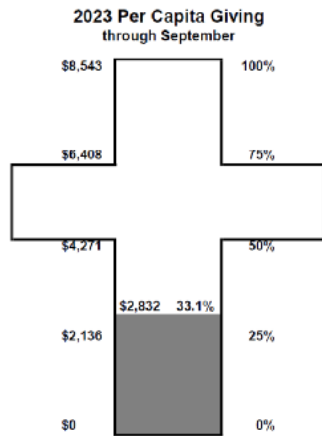
# SEPTEMBER 2023 FINANCIAL \$NAPSHOT

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.

	September	Year to Date
Income	\$14,216.25	\$148,119.83
Expenses Paid	\$23,658.61	\$185,027.72
Net Operating Income /Deficit	(\$9,442.36)	(\$36,907.72)
Amount of Checking Surplus Used to pay operating expenses	\$ 0.00	\$14,500.00
Amount Needed from Endowment	\$ 9,000.00	\$22,000.00

## Financial Comments / Observations:



1. The five largest operating expenses in September were:

- 1.) \$7,960.00 – Jensen Tree Experts, cemetery tree cleanup.
- 2.) \$7,378.77 – Pastoral expenses (payroll, Board of Pensions, etc.).
- 3.) \$4,830.41 – Quarterly Insurance.
- 4.) \$4,053.73 – Staff payroll & payroll processing expenses.
- 5.) \$500.00 – Church grounds care.

2. The September and Year To Date operating net income / (deficit) are (\$9,442.36) and (\$36,907.89) respectively.

The actual September operating expenses were \$4,826 above the average monthly budgeted expenses.

The actual September operating income was \$2,159 below the average monthly budgeted income.

Both the Year-To-Date operating incomes and expenses are above the budgeted amounts by \$745 and \$15,528 respectively.

3. In September, the value of the MassMutual Investment accounts decreased \$11,619.01 to \$296,246.89

CONTINUED - SEE OCTOBER 2023 FINANCIAL SNAPSHOT

# SEPTEMBER 2023 FINANCIAL \$NAPSHOT

CONTINUED

4. The total endowment fund on September 30, 2023, was \$299,277.72. 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 \$11,844.04 since September 1, 2023, and down \$9,497.04 since January 1, 2023.

5. The community dinner expenses for the September dinner were \$113.24. The donations collected at the dinner were \$141.00.

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 September, \$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 September 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 September, \$731.00.
- Total donations received from church members, non-members and anonymous from September 2019 (BOG Kickoff dinner) through September 30, 2023, \$642,736.89.
- No expenses were paid using the BOG funds in September.
- Funds available for the next BOG project, \$5,315.38 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% - \$33,618.38 from nonmembers
  - 86.1% - \$553,279.30 from members
  - 8.7% - \$55,839.21 from anonymous & dinners
  - 100.0% - \$642,736.89 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.

## NOVEMBER GREETERS

- Nov 5: Jean Zetterberg and Maddox Fucetola  
Nov 12: Beverly Saunders and Kathy Maier  
Nov 19: Pete and Carol Miller  
Nov 26: Bruce and Ellen Bergman

GREETER

## SAVE THE DATE FOR OUR CHRISTMAS DINNER: DECEMBER 10, 2023

BY: DONNA ERICKSON

Get ready for the holiday spirit. We are preparing for our annual Church Christmas Dinner which will be held on Saturday, December 2, 2023 from 5 to 7 PM. The entree will include roast beef, roast pork and a vegetarian option with sides and desserts.

Please look for a sign up sheet which will be available in a few weeks. We are planning to have a free will offering to help offset the cost of the dinner.

We look forward to seeing all of you there. Come join the fun and fellowship and be ready for a great time.



## MUSIC NOTES

BY: LORINDA RAVO

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

- Nov 5: Sing the Beauty of the Earth - Sr. Choir  
Nov 12: For the Beauty of the Earth: FPCH Ringers  
As-Salaamu-Lakum - Little Lights Sunday School Choir  
Nov 19: Autumn Carol - Sr. Choir  
Nov 26: Rejoice in the Lord, Always - Joyful Noise Bell Choir

## MARK YOUR CALENDARS FOR HYMN FEST

BY: LORINDA RAVO

Our Senior Choir will join with the Chancel Choir of Gethsemane Lutheran Church in an evening of song on Sunday, November 26, at 7 PM. The choirs will combine for three anthems, and between anthems both congregations will sing well-loved and familiar hymns together. Hymn Fest will be held at Gethsemane Church (409 East Baldwin Street) and following the music portion, we are invited to join with the rest of the Gethsemane congregation for refreshments.

In lieu of an admission charge for this entertaining evening, participants are asked to bring a canned food donation that will then be donated to our own Little Pantry. We hope you'll come and support our choir and congregation!



# ALL SAINTS DAY: A DAY OF REMEMBRANCE

BY: LORINDA RAVO AND MARYANN SIMMONS

During our worship service on Sunday, November 5th, we will be observing All Saints' Day, a day on which the church celebrates those Christians who achieved spiritual maturity. According to the Presbyterian Church USA, All Souls' Day, which usually is celebrated the day after All Saints' Day, is the commemoration of all the "faithful departed" at which time the church remembers and prays for our brothers and sisters who have died marked with the sign of faith.

This tradition began in 835 as a way to recognize those who maintained their faith during the darkest of times. In more modern times and in the Reformed tradition, we give glory to God for the ordinary, holy lives of those who demonstrated a faith in their Lord.

On Sunday, November 5th, we invite you to bring a photo (or photos) of loved ones who have passed away to be displayed on the Communion table that morning. If your photos are framed, that's great, and if they're unframed, we'll have a display board that you can put your photo(s) on. All pictures will be taken home after the service ends.



We hope that this day will be a celebration of the life of your loved ones. It will be a celebration of their faith and love of Christ. It will be a way to remember them before the church family. Please join us in this celebration!

# GET READY FOR ADVENT

BY: PASTOR ERIN HAYES-COOK

The first Sunday of Advent will begin on December 3. We are excited to share our Advent Theme, "How does a weary world rejoice?" Through song, poetry and art we will hold in our hands the holy expectation for Jesus to join our world. You will find ways to learn more in our Advent Bible study on Monday mornings at 10 AM and Wednesday evenings at 6:30 PM in the month of December. In addition, you may share in our weekly devotionals or daily prompts for refreshment. Here is to a wonderful and exciting Advent season coming soon and a sneak peak of some additional activities you will enjoy:

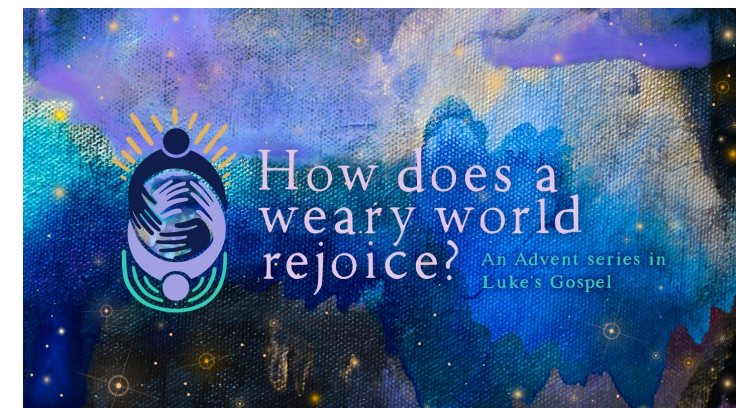
December 3 - decorating the tree with the beloved Chrismons;

December 24 - morning worship at 10 AM and Children's Christmas Pageant and Christmas Eve Candlelight service at 7 PM.

Please know, our youth will be playing a major role in these celebrations throughout the month. Note that there will be no in person worship on Monday, December 25.

How can you become involved during the Advent season? Sign up to be an Advent candle lighter; offer to read scripture during one of our special services; help with the Christmas Pageant.

If you have any questions or would like to learn more about this Advent study, be sure to see me either before or after church worship or email me at [revehayes@gmail.com](mailto:revehayes@gmail.com) for more information.





# HIGHLIGHTS FROM "SECOND SUNDAY"

October proved to be a fun time

BY: LORINDA RAVO

Second Sunday in October proved to be a fun time for all who attended to learn about the Lord's Table. Pastor Erin led the way, and helped the children and parents find ways to remember Jesus in our lives by getting their hands messy. Students created dough for bread in an effort to learn about the communion service held on the first Sunday of each month.



On Sunday, October 29th, the bigger kids shared in an activity of pumpkin carving. Torey Ravo and Sean Hardy assisted the 5th through 8th graders in some creative designing of pumpkins and then the kids took their pumpkins home for display just in time for Halloween. A special thank you to Best Fruit Farms who donated the pumpkins for this activity.



Are you familiar with the story of Elijah and the ravens? After our November 12 Second Sunday event, kids who attend will be! Following their light lunch, the kids will hear the Elijah story, and then make their own bird feeders. Please note: because this month's activity involves working with wood, participants in grade 1 and younger MUST be accompanied by an adult. We will be meeting in the Chapel from 11:30 AM -1:30 PM. (Take note of the later dismissal time.)



# HIGHLIGHTS FROM OCTOBER

We are so pleased to share the following highlights of our church worship during the month of October. Included here are selected photos from the musical ensembles, scarecrow contest, gourmet groups, clothing drive, and pumpkin carving. Photos courtesy of Lorinda Ravo and MaryAnn Simmons.



# SUNDAY SCHOOL NEWS

BY: MARYANN SIMMONS

The members of the “littles” and the Middle School students who attend Sunday School each week are doing well.

In October, the elementary students continued to learn their Bible stories, make crafts associated with those stories, and enjoyed a Halloween party in honor of the last day of the month.

The middle schoolers learned about the monsters in the Bible from the books of Revelation and Daniel to understand how the evil acts that occurred during Biblical times are relevant and still present in today’s society, just in a different way. The students also assisted Miss Donna and Mr. John Mark with the celebration of Halloween by guiding the younger kids during fun game activities and snack time.



Our confirmation students met on October 9th to learn about each other’s strengths and weaknesses and engaged in prayer by looking at verses from the Bible. Pastor Erin and Mrs. Simmons met with the students from 10 AM - 1 PM and found creative outlets, such as an artistic representation of scripture and ways they encounter Jesus on a daily basis, for the students to discuss their faith journey. These students will meet again on Thursday, November 16 from 6:30-8 PM at the Manse to continue their paths toward spirituality. Throughout the month, many of our confirmation candidates also met with their mentors to learn about how these adults are leading lives of social justice through their work with the church. We would like to thank these teachers and mentors for their dedication in helping these preteens learn about the ways of Jesus.

# HEAVEN SENT NURSERY SCHOOL SHARES AND CARES

## Students Donate Snacks to Little Pantry

BY: MARYANN SIMMONS

First Presbyterian Church has been the proud sponsor of the Heaven Sent Nursery School since its inception in 1988 under the auspices of Mrs. Lorinda Ravo. Upon Mrs. Ravo’s retirement, Mrs. Jennifer Bunjo assumed the role of Director. This month, the nursery school decided to partner with our Little Pantry to donate snacks during the Halloween season for all those children who come from food insecure homes.

In the last week of October, the 40 plus students of Heaven Sent provided 3 full boxes of goodies that the pantry offered to the community so that the town children had some special treats for a Halloween celebration.

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 November for the Thanksgiving season.



# GOD'S LOVE ENDURES FOREVER

We regret to inform you of the loss of Nancy Budd, age 90, who passed away on October 17, 2023 at her home in Florida.

While she lived to the sage age of 90, her determination and zest for life never waned. One of her final accomplishments was editing her two published books "*Budding Thoughts*" and "*Will She Remember ?*" for overseas sales.



Nancy Budd has had a varied career which included registered nurse, wife, mother, restaurateur and volunteer.

She retired to Fort Myers FL in 2001 from Hackettstown (Budd Lake) NJ and is survived by her husband of 66 years, Jerre, sons Bill (Pauline) and Dan (Bridgit) daughter Bonnie, 2 grandchildren Eli (Yun) and Mariah (JJ) and 3 great grandchildren Wilder, James and Charlie.

Nancy attended the First Presbyterian Church of Hackettstown in New Jersey and the

Sanibel Captiva Community Church on Sanibel.

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



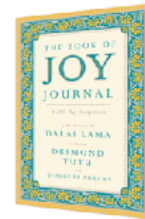
# BOOKS FOR YOUR READING PLEASURE

BY: MARYANN SIMMONS

As a way to continue with Pastor Erin's theme of "multiplying what we give God," I have selected some titles that focus on gratitude. These choices are available for readers of all ages. Please consider one of these books and feel free to seek out other members who may have read one or all of them and share your thoughts and observations with each other.



*I Want to Thank You* by Gina Hamadey: In today's world of constant connection to our phones and the internet, Gina Hamadey realized that instead of bringing her closer to those around her, scrolling through social media was actually making her feel less connected and emotionally depleted. So she made the decision to put down her phone and write a thank-you note to someone every day for a year. She saw how creating a lasting gratitude practice can shift your experience and make you a happier, more connected person. Won't you give this a try?



*The Book of Joy Journal* by Dalai Lama, Desmond Tutu and Douglas Carlton Abrams is a book which aims to teach you how to build a lasting gratitude practice into your daily life. Each page contains inspirational quotes that help prompt you to share your joy! It sounds like a book that will guide you to live a fulfilling life.



*Celebrations* by Maya Angelou is a beautiful collection of poetry infused with Maya Angelou's signature grace and hope on every page. Here she chronicles the everyday celebrations, both public and private, that make this life worth living: the birthdays, time with family and friends, memorials, rituals, and prayers. Each poem will deeply resonate with you. Here, each day is a cause for celebration.

Enjoy these titles and have a great month of reading and gratitude.

# Sharing God's Bounty

## Can I Be Trusted with Much?

Oswald Chambers wrote, "Not every man can carry a full cup. Sudden elevation frequently leads to pride and a fall. The most exciting test of all to survive is prosperity." This quote provides a clear warning: Those who become prosperous are also very likely to become filled with pride. Pride can cause inflated egos and self-worthiness. Agur, a writer of proverbs, gave us this warning: ". . . give me neither poverty nor riches but give me only my daily bread. Otherwise, I may have too much and disown you and say, 'Who is the Lord?' or I may become poor and steal and so dishonor the name of my God" (Proverbs 30:8-9). When our bills are paid and we have money in the bank, we may feel secure and depend only on ourselves. In speaking about the curse of success, someone once said, "Ninety-nine people out of 100 can handle adversity whereas only one out of 100 can handle prosperity." The wealth that many seek can be more of a curse than a blessing.

God blesses us with work and the ability to earn our incomes. Unfortunately, we may foolishly begin to believe that we are solely responsible for the success we've achieved. As Moses wrote, "You may say to yourself, 'My power and the strength of my hands have produced this wealth for me.' But remember the Lord your God, for it is he who gives you the ability to produce wealth . . ." (Deuteronomy 8:18). We should understand that only by God's grace are we able to have a place to call home, a savings account, and a retirement plan. God's Word is clear that we are managers, not owners. "The earth is the Lord's and everything in it, the world, and all who live in it" (Psalm 24:1).

Even though it is difficult to pass the test with money, the Holy Spirit, working through the Word, enables us to understand that all we are and have are gifts from God. Joseph provides us a good example of stewardship. Separated from his home and family, he still trusted God and feared him, refusing to give in to the temptations that came with the position God enabled him to fill. As second in command in Egypt, one of the most powerful kingdoms of his day, he retained his humility, realizing that he was only the manager of Egypt's resources. But he managed those resources well, working at it "with all [his] heart, as working for the Lord, not for men" (Colossians 3:23). Just as God empowered Joseph in his stewardship, so he does for us today, whether our resources are vast, as were Joseph's, or small.

### NOVEMBER BIRTHDAYS

- 1: Mark Heil
- 2: Roy Pierson  
Cody Gelsinger  
Jackie Grover
- 3: Harry Knauer
- 4: Margo Gregory
- 5: Grace Clegg
- 6: Sandy Sentner
- 7: Tyler Newton
- 15: Linda Gardner  
Amari Melendez
- 20: Bev Saunders
- 21: Lori Fleischman  
Otto Fleischman  
Pat Butts
- 28: Quinn DeCaro
- 29: Megan Gelsinger
- 30: Cindy Pierson  
Les Carpenter

## CONGRATS TO ALL!

### NOVEMBER ANNIVERSARIES

- 6: Mark & Marsha Gulick
- 23: Bruce & Ellen Bergman
- 26: Gianni & Heather DeRosa

### PRAYER LIST

Please keep the following  
in your prayers:

Gwenn and Louis  
Bartku  
Joan Beddow  
The Budd Family  
Eris Bunnel  
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  
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

