

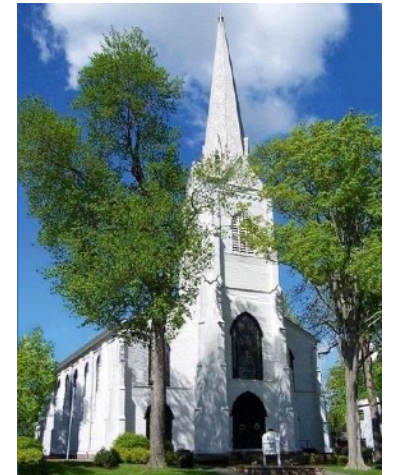
**First Presbyterian
Church
298 Main Street**

**FIRST PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH
298 MAIN STREET
HACKETTSTOWN, NJ 07840
REV. ERIN HAYES-COOK
OFFICE: 908-852-4011
e-mail: fpchnj@gmail.com
Church website,
<http://www.fpchackettstown.org>
Editor: MaryAnn Simmons
maryann.simmons3@verizon.net**

**DECEMBER
2025**



*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

2025 SESSION

Class of 2025	Class of 2026	Class of 2027
Donna Erickson	Bill Cors	Michele Cameron
Diane Hull	Geof Gohlich	Pete Miller
Ray Sookhoo	Sharon Heil	MaryAnn Simmons

Clerk of Session: Donna Erickson

2025 BOARD OF DEACONS

Class of 2025	Class of 2026	Class of 2027
Ellen Bergman	Jackie Hammel	Dennis Huff
Patricia Butts	Kathy Maier	Jose Irby
Carol Miller	Lorinda Ravo	Jean Zetterberg

Moderator: Ellen Bergman

2025 HEAVEN SENT NURSERY SCHOOL

BOARD OF TRUSTEES

OFFICE: 852-2006

Director: Jen Bujno

Pat Butts	- 2026	Pam Venturini	- 2027
Meghan DeCree	- HS Parent	Toni Fryer	- HS Parent
Sharon Heil - Session Rep			
Rev. Erin Hayes-Cook - Ex-Officio			

A NOTE FROM OUR EDITOR

Hello, FPCH Members!

December has arrived and we are glad to rejoice in the celebration of our Lord, Jesus Christ.

This month promises to be filled with many events that will help us feel the spirit of Christmas.

We look forward to Christmas Advent candle lighting during each service in December, our Christmas play which will be performed on December 21st by our Confirmation and Sunday School students, and Bible Study held each Monday at 7 PM.

As Pastor Erin has mentioned in her note from the Pastor and in her sermons throughout November, we have much to be thankful for, most importantly, the arrival of our Savior.

Won't you please join me in celebrating Jesus' life and birth and find it in your heart to wish everyone a new year in sharing in his good news?

As a quick reminder, the Church Office will be closed on December 26th and 31st for the holiday.

Merry Christmas and Happy New Year to you!

Yours in Christ,

MaryAnn Simmons



DATES TO REMEMBER - DECEMBER 2025

- 01: Advent Bible Study - 7 PM in the Conference Room
- 03: Yarn Girls - 1 PM in the Conference Room
- 04: Music Rehearsal - FPCH Ringers at 6:30 PM and Senior Choir at 7:30 PM, both in the Music Room
- 05: Confirmation Class Retreat at Camp Johnsonburg - arrive at 7:00 PM
- 06: Confirmation Class Retreat at Camp Johnsonburg - all day
- 07: Confirmation Class Retreat at Camp Johnsonburg - depart at 11AM
- 07: Worship and communion - 10 AM; livestream through Facebook; Sunday School; Joyful Noise/Unity Chimes Rehearsal after worship
- 08: Advent Bible Study - 7 PM in the Conference Room
- 09: Deacon's Meeting - 6:30 PM in the Conference Room
- 11: Music Rehearsal - FPCH Ringers at 6:30 PM and Senior Choir at 7:30 PM, both in the Music Room
- 13: Wreaths Across America - 12 PM - Ye Old Burial Ground
- 13: Stone Soup Symphony Concert - 3 PM in the Sanctuary
- 13: Community Dinner - 5:30 PM at the Chapel
- 14: Confirmation Class - 9:00 - 9:50 AM in the Conference Room
- 14: Worship - 10 AM; livestream through Facebook; Sunday School; Joyful Noise/Unity Chimes Rehearsal after worship; Cookies and Cocoa after worship
- 14: Second Sunday - 11:30 at the church
- 15: Advent Bible Study - 7 PM in the Conference Room
- 16: Session Meeting - 6:30 PM, in the Conference Room
- 18: Music Rehearsal - FPCH Ringers at 6:30 PM and Senior Choir at 7:30 PM, both in the Music Room
- 20: Men's Breakfast - 8:15 AM - at the Chapel; Ladies' Breakfast - 9 AM - River Star Diner
- 20: Swingtime Jazz Concert - 2:00 PM in the Sanctuary
- 21: Confirmation Class - 9:00 - 9:50 AM in the Conference Room
- 21: Worship - 10 AM; livestream through Facebook; Children's Christmas Play; Joyful Noise/Unity Chimes Rehearsal after worship
- 22: Advent Bible Study - 7 PM in the Conference Room
- 24: Christmas Eve Service - Worship and Candle lighting service - 7:30 PM
- 25: Christmas Day - Church Office Closed
- 28: Confirmation Class - 9:00 - 9:50 AM in the Conference Room
- 28: Worship - 10 AM; livestream through Facebook; Sunday School; Joyful Noise/Unity Chimes Rehearsal after worship; church brunch at the Chapel after worship
- 31: New Year's Eve - Church Office Closed

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A NOTE FROM OUR PASTOR

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ.

What do you fear? Insisting on Hope this Advent

Happy Advent! This season of preparation for Christmas reminds us that waiting is part of our spiritual lives. This year we will engage the question, "What do you fear?" I know that many times this question is used as a weapon to magnify our fears. I invite you this Advent to become faithfully curious about what you fear. They have much to teach us about what we want to protect and what we want to hold onto. And if we explore what we fear with the power of God's love, then we might grow from them.

The words, "Do not be afraid," were spoken to Zechariah, the father of John the Baptist, Joseph, the earthly father of Jesus and Mary the mother of Jesus. Our commentator, Rev. Dr. Boyung Lee, writes that that fear is the "soul's recoil from the unexpected, the mind's clamor in the face of uncertainty, the body's trembling at the threshold of something it cannot control." That'll preach. What a beautiful invitation to explore how God breaks in with Jesus. I pray that this Advent you take advantage of the devotionals, worship, advent calendars and prayers to bring your whole self to the message of the good news of Jesus! Invite someone new to join us in worship and share the light of Christ. And may this prayer be with you.

In a fearful world,
may you look for God's spirit.
May you reach for each other's hands.
May you choose courage whenever you can.
And in all things, may you remember
that good news is louder than fear.
In the name of the one who calls,
the one who sends,
and the one who journeys with—
go in peace and
be not afraid.
Amen.



A Sanctified Art LLC.

Pastor Erin

The Camp Johnsonburg Retreat is just one week away, so we want your daughter to be prepared for the upcoming weekend. Below you will find information received from the Camp regarding where to drop off your daughter, what to bring, and important details about any snacks that may enter the facility. You will receive an email from the camp directly since you have registered for her to attend, but this is a sneak peek so that you can get ready.

As of this point we have not received specific details about the schedule of events for the three days, but that will be forthcoming and we will be at the camp earlier so that we can have everything prepared for the girls when they arrive.

The following are important details regarding the retreat:

- If you need to contact someone at Johnsonburg anytime on the Friday, Saturday or Sunday of the retreat, please text or call 908.914.8520.
- Arrival time is between 7-7:45pm on Friday December 5th. Please reply to this email if that is a challenge.
- Check in at the Rec Center: What's the Rec Center? As you enter the driveway, keep right. You'll see a big concrete building with a metal, green roof. You can pull up in the front or park in the lot just beyond it. Please make sure to leave enough room for people to easily enter and exit the building.
- The retreat will run through Sunday December 7th at 11am.
- Please note that drugs, alcohol, tobacco products, and vapes are prohibited. Anyone found possessing these substances will be asked to leave the program without refund. Those with illegal substances are liable under the penalties of the law. Weapons including pocket knives, guns or firearms of any kind are not allowed. In order to encourage community, cell phone usage during the retreat is discouraged.
- In the event of an emergency please contact your youth's chaperones. If they are attending the retreat without a chaperone, text our host phone 908.914.8520.

What to Bring (Packing List):

- **Clothes:** Dress for the weather! Check it before you pack. Bring casual clothes that you do not mind getting dirty and a change of clothes if you do get dirty. (We would suggest jeans or sweatpants and sweatshirts.) There will be outside games and activities. Appropriate weight coats, raincoats, sneakers, extra shoes, mittens, gloves, etc....Layers if it will be a cold weekend. (We would also recommend a hat - baseball cap or wool cap for the cold weather.)
- **Linens:** Sleeping Bag or sheets/blankets, bath towel, pillow, washcloth
- **Miscellaneous:** Bible, flashlight, pen/pencil, paper/notebook; toiletries (soap, shampoo, toothbrush, hairbrush, hair dryer, eyeglasses and case/contact lens solution and case, hand sanitizer, etc.)
- **Optional:** Spending money for the camp store

WE ARE A NUT FREE FACILITY. Please do not bring any nut products or food that may contain nuts, including almond/cashew milk, onto camp. We provide an array of meals and snacks through the retreat. We ask that you limit the food and drinks you bring into the lodges.

SUNDAY SCHOOL NEWS

A Glimpse of the Confirmation Class Activities

BY: JAN COURTRIGHT AND MARYANN SIMMONS

This past November, the Confirmation class, under the direction of Jan Courtright, has been diligently studying what it means to be a member of the church, how to make a covenant to God, and the cornerstones of the Presbyterian church. The girls have also been rehearsing their parts for the Christmas Play *God Gave Us Christmas*, which will be presented to the congregation on December 21st.

This year, the girls, who are in grades 7-9, will be attending the Middle School Retreat at Camp Johnsonburg from December 5th through December 7th. They will be focusing on the theme of "Papers, Prophets, and Purpose: Using who you are to help others" and will be accompanied by Jan Courtright, MaryAnn Simmons, and Nadia Hanson. Parents, look for an email from Jan and MaryAnn and also see another article within this newsletter for more specific information regarding other details about what to bring to the retreat.

In the January newsletter there will be an article of the weekend experience the girls and chaperones had at Camp Johnsonburg.

Once the new year begins, the girls will be engaged in a rigorous study of how to pray, will create their own faith statements, and will begin writing a series of essays regarding their faith journey. They will also be meeting with the Session and Board of Deacons to understand how each group functions and to learn the importance of these two groups and their roles within the church.

Finally, the girls should continue to meet with their mentors each month through April, and they will present their essays and faith statements to the Session of Elders in April and May so that they can be accepted into the church as official members of the congregation.

Confirmation Day is on Pentecost Sunday, May 24th, 2026, which is the 49th day after Easter. We hope you will join us in celebrating the girls on this day.

G.R.O.W. TEAM NEWS

BY: BILL CORS

This month, we wish to highlight information regarding our new Scripts Fundraising initiative. NOTE: No link to your bank account is required.

Raise Right Gift Card Program to Benefit FPCH

The "What" and the "Why"

FPCH has partnered with RaiseRight to launch a gift card purchase fundraising campaign. With the purchase of gift cards through the Raise-Right system, our church will receive a percentage of the total amount from the **dozens** of merchants that participate in the program with a return to the church of anywhere from 1.5% to 16-20%.

The "How"

Attached are detailed instructions on a number of options as to how individuals can participate. Here are some high level tips:

To access online:

1. Download the "Right Raise" app from the App Store on your device
2. Simple "Step by Step" screens will guide you through setup
3. On "Customer/Code" use our FPCH identifier code of **YD7WX-PDJGTQV**
4. Choose how you want to order and pay and you're ready to go.

To order in person

1. Make check out to FPCH for the amount and list merchant(s) from which you wish to purchase gift cards
2. Give to a designated member of GROW Team after Sunday service OR
3. Alternatively your order and payment can be written out, placed in an envelope labeled "To RaiseRight Coordinator" and leave in the church office.

If there are any questions, please feel free to contact any member of the GROW Team (William Cors, Rayman Sookhoo, Ryan VanOrden).

The GROW Team

NEWS FROM THE DEACONS

By PAT BUTTS

We are looking forward to decorating our beautiful sanctuary with poinsettias. We will be accepting sponsorships through December 14th. Forms are available in this newsletter or at the doors to the sanctuary on Sundays. If you have any questions, please talk to Pat Butts, Carol Miller or any Deacon.

Our Little Pantry continues to be a wonderful way to fulfill the needs of the community. From its start during the pandemic until now, it has grown tremendously and the needs continue. The best part is that those who need it are so grateful and those who contribute are blessed that they can give to help others. This is just one small example of what our faith is all about. Thank you all.

Lastly, our next Clothing Drive has been confirmed for May 2, 2026.

As always, thank you for your continued support of our missions.

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OCTOBER 2025 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	\$15,573.81	\$184,175.18
Expenses Paid	\$16,043.98	\$201,547.21
Net Operating Income / (Deficit)	(\$ 470.14)	(\$17,372.03)
Amount of Schwab/Edward Jones funds used to pay operating expenses	\$ 0.00	\$ 6,000.00
Amount Needed from Endowment	\$ 0.00	\$ 19,000.00
Total amount of Endowment, Schwab & Edward Jones funds used to pay Operating expenses in 2025	\$ 0.00	\$ 25,000.00

Financial Comments / Observations:

1. The five largest operating expenses in October were:
- 2025 Per Capita Giving through October

\$8,918

100%

\$6,688

75%

\$4,459

50%

\$2,850

32.0%

\$2,229

25%

\$0

0%

1.) \$7,628.72 – Pastoral expenses (payroll, Board of Pensions, etc.).

2.) \$3,832.67 – Staff payroll & payroll processing expenses.

3.) \$879.84 – Gas (Church, Chapel & Manse, Sept. & Oct. bills).

4.) \$870.00 – Fire alarm monitoring (quarterly bill for Church).

5.) \$800.00 – Cleaning (Church & Chapel).

2. The operating net income / (deficits) were \$470.17 in October and (\$17,372.03) Year To Date. The actual October operating expenses were \$4,289.35 below the average monthly budgeted expenses.

•The actual October operating incomes were (\$1,092.86) below the average monthly budgeted incomes.

•The Year-To-Date operating expenses were (\$1,786.12) below the average YTD budgeted amounts.

• The Year-To-Date operating incomes were \$17,508.51 above the average YTD budgeted amount
- CONTINUED ON NEXT PAGE - OCTOBER, 2025 FINANCIAL SNAPSHOT
- OCTOBER 2025 FINANCIAL \$NAPSHOT
- CONTINUED FROM OCTOBER 2025 FINANCIAL SNAPSHOT
3. In October, the value of the MassMutual Investment accounts increased \$5,776.77 to \$377,165.22.

4. In October, the value of the entire Endowment Fund increased \$5,760.14 to \$394,108.61.

5. The October Second Saturday Free Community Dinner was not held. The total cost to the church of all community dinners since September 2021 remains at \$693.02.

6. The October Men’s breakfast was held in the Chapel.
- The 2025 Per Capita is \$43.50 for each of the 205 members of our Church. (The number is the membership of FPCH on December 31, 2023.) The total amount due in 2025 is \$8,917.50 or \$743.13 monthly. In October, \$0.00 was received for Per Capita leaving the total received in 2025 at \$2,849.62 or 32.0% of the amount due. No payment was sent to the Presbytery of the Highlands of NJ in October leaving the total sent in 2025 at \$2,849.62 or 32.0% of the total amount due.
- BUILDING ON GENEROSITY (BOG) CAPITAL CAMPAIGN
- Please note the following points regarding our BOG receipts and spending:
- Donations received during October, \$815.00.

• Total donations received from church members, non-members and anonymous from September 2019 (the BOG Kickoff dinner) through the last day of October 2025, \$656,092.02.

• Expenses paid using the BOG funds in October, \$600.00. This expense was paid to Advanced Tree Service to prune trees at the manse.

• The total available BOG funds are \$7,435.28. The breakdown is \$1,685.28 for the next BOG project with an additional \$2,750.00 designated for the Chapel range hood replacement and \$3,000.00 for the Church parking lot.

• Donations breakdown by source:

o 5.3% - \$35,058.76 from nonmembers

o 86.1% - \$564,667.05 from members

o 8.6% - \$56,366.21 from anonymous & dinners

o 100.0% - \$656,092.02 Total
-
- Contact Al Ravo if you have any questions or would like to discuss the Church’s operating finances, the Endowment Funds, Per Capita or the Building On Generosity Capital Campaign.

HIGHLIGHTS FROM NOVEMBER

During November, we had wonderful music arrangements, celebrated our Veterans, celebrated Thanksgiving brunch, began again our Community Dinner, repaired chairs on the dais, and enjoyed fellowship with our gourmet groups. Below are snapshots from those events. Photos courtesy of Lorinda Ravo and MaryAnn Simmons.

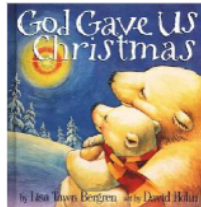


CHRISTMAS MAZE FUN



SUNDAY SCHOOL CHRISTMAS PLAY SET FOR DECEMBER 21st

On Sunday, December 21, our Sunday School students will present an original Christmas play based on the lovely storybook, "God Gave us Christmas" by Lisa Tawn Bergren and adapted by Lorinda Ravo. The play explains the many ways that we can find God and Jesus all around us. We hope that you'll join us that day for a very special service that involves all of our Sunday School students.



A NEW GROUP CONNECTION TO COMMENCE IN JANUARY

Attention all members who are in their 40s and 50s. Pastor Erin is looking to gather the group of members in your age group on Saturday, **January 10th or 17th** in the afternoon or early evening. The goal of this gathering is to connect people, have some fun, get to know each other and to find ways to pour into each others' lives and to learn about the ways that God is pouring into yours.

We will gather hoping to get to know each other a little more. We will have yummy snacks that you won't have to fix yourself. We will have childcare, should you need it, for free.

Our intention is that our gathering might be welcoming to folks who come to our church and those who do not. Therefore, feel free to invite friends who might enjoy our company in the presence of God. Please contact Pattie Huff in the Church Office via email (fpchnj@gmail.com) or phone: 908-852-4011 to let her know which date and time works best for you. Thank you.

MUSIC NOTES

BY: LORINDA RAVO

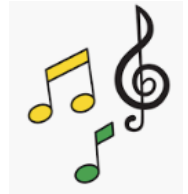
Our anthems during the month of December will be:

December 7: Advent Celebration-Sr. Choir

December 14: Carol of the Bells-FPCH Ringers

December 21: Were You There? Senior Choir

December 24: Bethlehem-Senior Choir
O Holy Night-Senior Choir



IN CASE OF INCLEMENT WEATHER

As we head into the winter weather season, we want to let everyone know that should we need to cancel church services, there are many ways that you can find out. Cancellations will be posted on the church Facebook page and on the church website. In addition, Pattie Huff will send out an email via Constant Contact. You can also call the church office at 908-852-4011 where the answering machine will have a message about the status of church services. Let's hope we have a mild winter so we don't need to cancel.

Sharing God's Bounty

December: New Year Resolutions

In chapter 4, beginning with verse 13, James talks about our planning. He reminds us that our lives and plans and futures are in God's hands, and that we should pray, *"If it is the Lord's will, we will live and do this or that"* (verse 15). With that preface, then, we can begin to do some self-evaluation of how we can best spend our time, abilities, and resources. A new year can provide a new resolve and commitment to do many things in a new and better way. We may find that our priorities are a little skewed. Our lifestyles could possibly use some redirection, and a New Year's resolution based on God's plan for us could be what we need.

How can we make our resolutions a reality? One way is to talk with one of the members of the church staff or the chairperson of one of our boards and volunteer our time, energy, and abilities. Another commitment may be to spend more time reading God's Word and join a Bible Study group to stimulate spiritual growth. We may find that God is leading us to increase our knowledge and commitment in the area of our financial stewardship as well. God has blessed us so we may be a blessing to others.

The Apostle Paul tells us, *"work out your salvation with fear and trembling, because, he adds, "it is God who works in you to will and to act according to his good purpose."* (Philippians 2:12-13). To the faithful, God has made known his will and purpose which is *"to bring all things in heaven and on earth together under one head, even Christ* (Ephesians 1:10). God wants us to have a relationship with Jesus as the head. The personal relationship Jesus develops with us compels us to serve and honor him through our faithful stewardship. Faith enables us to understand that we *"are God's workmanship created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do"* (Ephesians 2:10). May it be our resolve and commitment to do what we were *"created to do"* as God's workmanship.

In looking to the coming year, remember that rooted deeply and firmly within scripture and our Christian tradition is the vision that we are expected to be faithful stewards of all we are and all we have. This can be done by making the best use of our talents, the time allotted to each of us, and the monies we possess. Stewardship must be seen as a life-long attitude and ever-deepening commitment.



CHRISTMAS POINSETTIA



In celebration of the 2025 Christmas Season the Deacons are asking you to help fill the sanctuary with color by sponsoring a silk Christmas Poinsettia. Sponsorships are \$5.00 per plant. May be *In Thanksgiving for...* anyone dear to you or *In Memory of...* friends or family that have enriched your life.

Please make checks payable to The Deacons and mail to: First Presbyterian Church, c/o The Deacons, 298 Main Street, Hackettstown, NJ 07840 or you may drop off your forms and payment in the church mailbox.

All forms and payment must be received no later than Sunday, December 14th.

Please return this form with your payment. If you need additional space you may use the back of this form or submit an additional piece of paper, thank you!

Sponsor:

In Memory of:

In Thanksgiving for:

Plants Sponsored:

Amount Enclosed:

Have questions? Need more Information?
Please contact: Pat Butts – 908 391-2006
or Carol Miller – 908 763-2777

NOVEMBER SECOND SUNDAY GETTING INTO THE HOLIDAY SPIRIT

November and December are times for crafts and fun activities, especially during our Second Sunday meetings. These activities never disappoint.



This past month, on Sunday, November 9, we welcomed Ellen Bergman who led a Thanksgiving Second Sunday where the kids heard a Thanksgiving story and made a beautiful

Thanksgiving decoration. The attendees thoroughly enjoyed this story telling time, and were glad to create beautiful Fall crafts. Thanks to Mrs. Bergman for a very lovely activity.

On December 14, we will be “Getting our Christmas on!” as Mrs. Shepherd will help us all make a special



Christmas ornament. In addition, we have the opportunity to decorate Miss Winnie’s AMAZING Christmas cookies! These two activities always are big hits during the month of December, and we cannot wait to see the end results.

To help us guarantee that we have enough supplies, please be sure to pre-register on the sign up sheet in front of the church.



As always, these two Christmas events promise to be fun. We look forward to seeing you all in attendance. Please join us.

MUSIC MEMORIES AT FPCH AND HYMN FEST



DECEMBER GREETERS

- | | |
|--------------|---------------------------|
| December 7: | Jose and Della Irby |
| December 14: | Pete and Carol Miller |
| December 21: | Kathy Maier and Pat Butts |
| December 24: | Pat and Dennis Huff |
| December 28: | Bruce and Ellen Bergman |



TEACH YOUR CHILDREN HOW TO PRAY

A CHRISTMAS TREE BLESSING

This tradition allows families to bring a moment of spirituality to the secular tradition of decorating the tree. Try having a different family member read the blessing each year.

Designed for all ages.

Time Investment: 1-2 minutes

Materials: Blessing (printed below), Christmas Tree (before decorating), and manger scene (optional)

How to:

1. Before the tree is decorated, gather everyone together and read the following blessing:

God, who created the birds in the air, the fish in the sea, the stars in the sky, and the trees in the ground, bless this tree as we decorate our it and make it a joyful symbol in our home. May its branches remind us of the shade and shelter you provide for us and for many creatures. May its trunk remind us of your strength. May its lights bring us peace May we remember your gift to us this season, the gift of the baby Jesus. Amen.

2. Optional (see note below) - After decorating the tree, set up a manger scene below the tree.

NOTE: In the US, there seems to be a sharp division between secular Christmas traditions (the tree, the stockings, Santa) and the Christian traditions (the manger scene, attending church, singing Christmas carols). As the tree is the focal point in many homes during Christmas, blessing the tree and setting up a manger scene under the tree can highlight the Christian significance of the day, something culture has lost sight of.

Variations:

Print the blessing on an ornament and say it as the ornament is hung on the tree.

Write a new blessing each year and say the blessing before the tree is cut down and brought home.

Adapt the language of the blessing to the age of your children or your own traditions and culture.

"This practice is excerpted from the book **Faithful Families: Simple Practices for Daily Family Life** by Traci Smith, published by Chalice Press, 2017, All rights Reserved. Used by Permission.

Christmas Blessings



May this Christmas season wrap your heart in peace and your soul in joy. May the gentle light of Christ's love guide your every step, bringing hope where there's been worry, and warmth where there's been waiting. May laughter echo through your home, and may even the quiet moments feel full—full of grace, full of gratitude, full of God's promises. May you find beauty in the simple, blessings in the ordinary, and miracles tucked in the smallest corners of your day. As the star once led wise men, may you be led into a new year with renewed faith, deeper love, and a heart ready for all God has prepared for you. Merry Christmas, and may His peace be with you now and always.

In Jesus Christ's name, Amen.

SPECIAL DAYS IN DECEMBER

BY: MaryAnn Simmons

December promises to be a busy month. See important dates below.

- 12/5-7: Camp Johnsonburg Retreat for Confirmation Class
- 12/7: Second Sunday of Advent - Communion
- 12/13: Wreaths Across America - Ye Old Burial Ground - 12 PM
- 12/13: Stone Soup Symphony concert - 3 PM in the Sanctuary
- 12/14: Third Sunday of Advent - Christmas photo booth and Christmas sweater/cookies/cocoa following worship; poinsettia forms due
- 12/20: Swingtime Jazz Concert - 2 PM in the Sanctuary
- 12/21: Sunday School Play: *God Gave Us Christmas*
- 12/24: Christmas Eve service - 7 PM
- 12/25: Christmas Day - Church Office Closed
- 12/31: New Year's Eve - Church Office Closed

THANK YOU IN ADVANCE

As we enter the month of December, the Session and Board of Deacons and Pastor Erin want to thank you ahead of time for all of your Christmas cards that will arrive throughout the month.

When the church receives your cards, they will be put on display on the Christmas Card tree which will be located at either entrance of the church.

During this celebration of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, we all wish you and your family members a very Merry Christmas and a Blessed New Year.

As always, we look forward to seeing you at worship each Sunday.



DECEMBER BIRTHDAYS

- 2: Diane Hull
- 3: Scott Annunziata
Pattie Huff
- 7: Noah Ligarzewski
- 8: Jackie Hammel
- 13: Cathy Van Orden
- 15: Carol Miller
- 23: Alex Annunziata
- 24: Ani McDonagh
- 26: Matt Erickson
Mark Gulick
- 27: Veronica Aquino

WE CELEBRATE YOUR DAY WITH YOU!

DECEMBER ANNIVERSARIES

- 4: Stephen & Danielle
Carpenter
- 9: Richard & Margo Gregory
- 13: John Mark & Camerin
Wojcicki
- 23: Chris & Jennifer Bramley

PRAYER LIST

**Please keep the following
in your prayers:**

Centenary University Staff
and Students
Eugenie Chetangie
Churches throughout the U.S.
Our Confirmation Class
Pam Covert
Al Cruts and family
Shirley DeLoia, sister of Phyllis
Prestopine
FPCH and Friends of
FPCH



Dan Gardner
Terry Gretchen
Joan Grover
Barbara Hall
Leaders at Camp Johnsonburg
Maikuu congregation,
Kibwezi Kenya
Members of the Armed Forces
Barbara Pace, niece of the
Prestopines
Alice Phoebus
Deb Shepherd
Jim Simmons
Carol Spitzer
The food insecure
The homeless
Those struggling with
addictions and mental health
Those recovering from surgery
Those traveling