

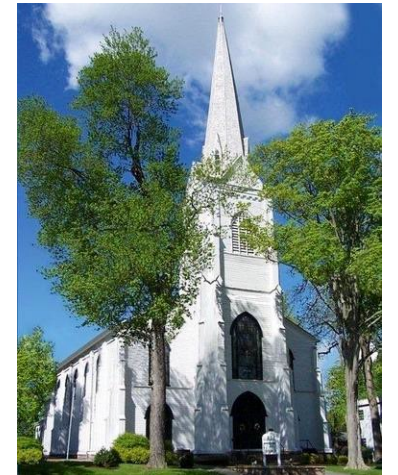
**First Presbyterian
Church
298 Main Street**

**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**

JANUARY



*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

2024 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

* denotes pending approval at the January congregational meeting

A NOTE FROM OUR EDITOR

Hello, FPCH, and Happy 2025!

The New Year is upon us and I cannot help but reflect upon the amazing missions FPCH held throughout 2024 in service to the Lord.

On behalf of First Presbyterian Church of Hackettstown, I would like to extend a warm thank you to all members of the congregation who actively took part in the diverse activities sponsored this past year. Whether you assisted with community dinners, the clothing drive, the free market, the Little Pantry, or made a generous donation to the church for the many projects that came up unexpectedly, you are deeply appreciated. I know that you have given your time and talent and treasure to the church because you know that you are leading by example how to live a Christian life.

Please note that I have included the newly nominated members of the session and the board of Deacons in this month's publication so you know who will be leading us throughout the upcoming year. We hope that you will be able to attend the congregational meeting on January 19th to vote these members in to service. I hope you will find time to preview the annual report when it comes out in two weeks so as to prepare for this meeting.

As you can see, I have provided the usual highlights of our church activities. I have also included information about our newly formed G-R-O-W Team and news about our grant application. I would also like to thank our outgoing members of the session and the deacon board for their service these past three year.

Finally, to echo the sentiments of Pastor Erin, I trust that you will allow Jesus to guide you through this new year so that you find peace, joy, and love in all that you do.

Until next month...

Yours in Christ,
MaryAnn Simmons

DATES TO REMEMBER - JANUARY 2025

- 01: New Year's Day - Church office is closed today
- 02: Music Rehearsals - FPCH Ringers at 6:30 PM and Senior Choir at 7:30 PM, both in the Music Room
- 05: Confirmation Class - 9 - 9:50 AM in the Conference Room
- 05: Worship and communion - 10 AM; livestream through Facebook; Sunday School; Joyful Noise/Unity Chimes Rehearsal after worship
- 09: Music Rehearsals - FPCH Ringers at 6:30 PM and Senior Choir at 7:30 PM, both in the Music Room
- 10: Annual Reports of Committees due to Pattie Huff by 9AM today
- 11: Men's Breakfast - 8:15 AM - location to be determined
- 12: Confirmation Class - 9 - 9:50 AM in the Conference Room
- 12: Worship - 10 AM; livestream through Facebook; Sunday School; Joyful Noise/Unity Chimes Rehearsal after worship
- 12: Second Sunday -11:30-1:30 PM in the Church -
- 14: Deacon's Meeting - 6:30 PM in the Conference Room
- 16: Music Rehearsals - FPCH Ringers at 6:30 PM and Senior Choir at 7:30 PM, both in the Music Room
- 18: Ladies' Breakfast - 9 AM - River Star Diner
- 19: Confirmation Class - 9 - 9:50 AM in the Conference Room
- 19: Worship - 10 AM; livestream through Facebook; Sunday School
- 19: Congregational Meeting after worship
- 21: Session Meeting - 6:30 PM, in the Conference Room
- 23: Music Rehearsals - FPCH Ringers at 6:30 PM and Senior Choir at 7:30 PM, both in the Music Room
- 26: Confirmation Class - 9 - 9:50 AM in the Conference Room
- 26: Worship - 10 AM; livestream through Facebook; Sunday School; New Member Sunday; Joyful Noise/Unity Chimes Rehearsal after worship;
- 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,

“Wherever you are this New Year’s Day and whoever is (or is not) with you, here is something you can do: open two doors, or two windows, and stand in the draft between them. What you’re feeling is the pulse of being alive on this earth, with the past passing through you and the fresh unknown ruffling the slightest hairs on your head. If there’s any place better to be, I can’t imagine it at the moment. Here’s wishing you new life in the new year, from my place to yours,” Rev. Barbara Brown Taylor.

This quote certainly grabbed my attention on the first day of the year. I know that we stand on the amazing precipice of a year past and one that we will never see ahead of us. With that recognition comes a moment of awe and I hope, gratitude. We say thank you God for the moments of this past year that are filled with joy, the ones that challenged us, and the ones where we learned more about God. Most of all, we thank God for loving us and for the Spirit that sustains us.

Thanks to Lorinda Ravo who takes such great care to highlight the ministry of our church over this past year. If you are on Facebook you can see just a small portion of the amazing things that God has done through our hands. Through worship, education, Bible studies, clothing drives and outreach we lived out the gospel of Jesus Christ. We are blessed because each of you choose to follow after the words of Jesus, to love one another.

My hope and challenge for us as we stand in the doorway of the past and the coming days is that we take a moment to live with intention. Many of us will carry burdens and questions into this new year. I invite you to find a way to intentionally, ask and live into those questions so that Jesus might meet you and guide you to where you need to be. Whatever joys and dreams you have, ask for the best way to live them out according to God’s dreams for you. I can’t wait to see how God will work in you.

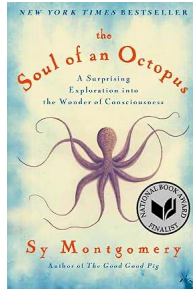
In Christ,
Pastor Erin



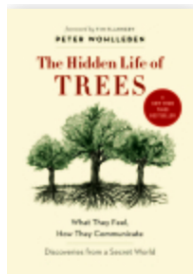
BOOKS FOR YOUR READING PLEASURE

BY: MARYANN SIMMONS

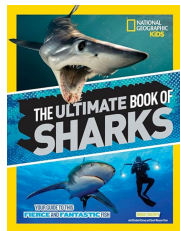
This month, I recommend some different reads about various living beings on this earth. Take a look into the creatures of nature and enjoy this journey learning about their social lives.



Sy Montgomery's *The Soul of an Octopus* is a tender and heartwarming exploration of the physical and emotional world of octopuses. Montgomery reveals the brilliant minds of octopus, their sense of humor and curiosity, and their ability to connect with humans. The book is a moving love story and a fascinating revelation on what octopuses can teach us about the meeting of two different minds. This book is a delight to read about Montgomery's visits with Athena, an octopus who resides in Boston's New England Aquarium.



In *The Hidden Life of Trees*, forester and author Peter Wohlleben makes the case that the forest is a social network. He draws on scientific discoveries to describe how trees are like human families: tree parents live together with their children, communicate with them, support them as they grow, share nutrients with those who are sick or struggling, and even warn each other of impending dangers. Wohlleben also explains the processes of life, death, and regeneration that he has observed..



Track the sharks of the world, from the teeniest dogfish to the everfeared great white. This book features every species of shark on the planet, with awesome photos, fascinating facts, the latest science, and firsthand stories of real-life encounters with these incredible creatures. Learn how sharks live, how they eat, the challenges they face, and whether or not you are actually on the menu.

I hope you consider one of these books for the month of January.
Happy Reading, all.

FPCH APPLIES FOR HOMELAND SECURITY GRANT

BY: PETE MILLER

Recently, The New Jersey Department of Homeland Security announced a Nonprofit Security Grant Program. A team from our church consisting of Pastor Erin, Al Ravo, Diane Hall, Dennis Huff, and Pete Miller researched what the grant was offering, the submission requirements, and decided to take advantage of some great project funding opportunities. The grant submission was due on December 22, 2024 and we should receive notification by May 1, 2025.



Based upon a thorough site evaluation previously conducted by the Department of Homeland Security, we were able to identify 5 major projects to submit. They include repairs to the front doors, replacement windows for the church basement and annex, additional perimeter fencing, exterior lighting, and a security system throughout the site. If we receive the grant we will begin work in May, with a projected completion date for all projects by December 31, 2025.

DO YOU HAVE A FAVORITE HYMN?

Beginning in January, we'd like to help you celebrate your birthday by playing your favorite hymn during the worship service: it might be the prelude, offertory, or the postlude on the Sunday closest to your birthday! Please use this short form, and give it to Lorinda. She'll be happy to play your favorite for you!

Name _____

Birthday (day/month) _____

Favorite hymn _____

DECEMBER HIGHLIGHTS

Here are some highlights of our December worship services, music, Hot Cocoa and cookies after worship, Stone Soup Symphony concert, Wreaths Across America, decorating the sanctuary, Photos from Second Sunday, the Christmas play, and the winter concerts can be found with their respective articles. Enjoy these memories.



NEWS FROM THE DEACONS

BY: Justin Simmons

The Deacons had their final meeting of 2024 on the second Tuesday of December and invited the newly nominated members of the class of 2027. Since congregation approval will take place on January 19th, we will introduce those members to you in February.

The Deacons and some other volunteers decorated the church with the Christmas poinsettias on December 14th. Thirty-eight people sponsored 83 flowers, raising \$415.00 for various missions subsidized by the Deacons.

Diane Hull is pleased to announce that the Little Pantry storage room is ready for use in the Chapel. The Deacons plan to purchase metal locking cabinets for food storage.

In the Spring, Scout Kyle Largo will begin the building of a pergola at the prayer garden on the side of the church. He is currently working out details with purchase of materials through Amish Mike's, located on Route 46 in Washington Township. We anticipate a beautiful project.

During the month of December the Deacons sold Christmas ornaments which featured the church and the stained glass window which was replaced after the storm in the Spring of 2024. We will update you on our profit in the February newsletter.

Many Deacons expressed an interest in participating in the Town-wide garage sale in the Spring of 2025. We will accept items for donation only the day before the sale.

Finally, beginning in January, we will be collecting hats, scarves, mittens, and gloves in all children's sizes to be donated to our local schools. Please listen to the announcements each Sunday for more details.

We want to express our sincere thanks to the outgoing Deacons - Pat Gohlich, Janette Hendershot, and Justin Simmons - for their dedication to our efforts throughout their past three years of service. Thank you, also, Ellen Bergman, for serving as our moderator over these past three years.

As always, thank you for your continued support of our missions. If you have any questions or suggestions, please be sure to reach out to a Deacon.

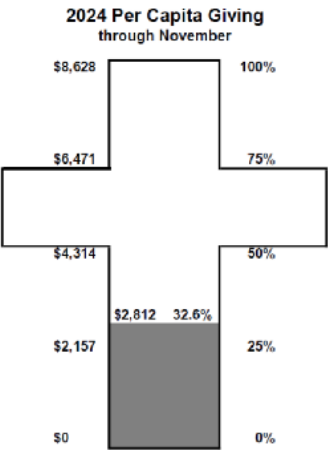
NOVEMBER 2024 FINANCIAL \$NAPSHOT

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	\$11,056.34	\$175,246.56
Expenses Paid	\$20,820.94	\$202,308.48
Net Operating Income / (Deficit)	(\$ 9,764.60)	(\$ 27,061.92)
Amount of Schwab/Edward Jones funds used to pay operating expenses	\$ 6,000.00	\$ 15,000.00
Amount Needed from Endowment	\$ 2,000.00	\$ 12,000.00
Total amount of Endowment, Schwab & Edward Jones funds used to pay Operating expenses in 2024	\$ 8,000.00	\$ 27,000.00

Financial Comments / Observations:



1.The five largest operating expenses in November were:

- 1.) **\$7,378.77** – Pastoral expenses (payroll, Board of Pensions, etc.).
- 2.) **\$5,642.50** – Insurance, quarterly (3 buildings).
- 3.) **\$4,133.82** – Staff payroll & payroll processing expenses.
- 4.) **\$923.10** – Gas (3 buildings).
- 5.) **\$580.00** – Salting parking lot & walkways (3 buildings).

2.The operating net income / (deficits) were **(\$9,764.60)** in November and **(\$27,061.92)** Year To Date.

•The actual November operating expenses were **\$1,487.61** above the average monthly budgeted

expenses.

- The actual November operating incomes were **\$5,776.99** below the average monthly budgeted incomes.
- The Year-To-Date operating expenses were **\$10,358.19** below the average YTD budgeted amounts.
- The Year-To-Date operating incomes were **\$9,920.11** below the average YTD budgeted amount.

CONTINUED - SEE NOVEMBER 2024 FINANCIAL

NOVEMBER 2024 FINANCIAL \$NAPSHOT

CONTINUED FROM NOVEMBER 2024 FINANCIAL SNAPSHOT

3. In November, the value of the MassMutual Investment accounts increased \$10,604.22 to \$368,665.40.
4. The total endowment fund at the end of November was **\$371,767.38**. The total endowment fund was up **\$8,656.47** since the beginning of November and up **\$32,101.75** since January 1, 2024.
5. The November community dinner expenses were \$0.00. The donations collected at the dinner were \$0.00. The November Community was not held. The total cost to the church for all community dinners since November 2021 is **\$693.02**.
6. The Men’s breakfast expenses for November were \$0.00. The donations collected at the breakfast were \$0.00, the breakfast was held at River Star Diner.

The 2024 Per Capita is \$42.50 for each of the 203 members of our Church. (The number is the membership of FPCH on December 31, 2022.) The total amount due in 2024 is \$8,627.50 or \$718.96 monthly. In November, \$0.00 was received for Per Capita leaving the total received in 2024 at \$2,811.78 or 32.6% of the amount due. No payment was sent to the Presbytery of the Highlands of NJ in November leaving the total sent in 2024 at \$2,811.78 or 32.6% of the total amount due.

BUILDING ON GENEROSITY (BOG) CAPITAL CAMPAIGN

- Donations received during November, **\$1,177.00**.
- Total donations received from church members, non-members and anonymous from September 2019 (the BOG Kickoff dinner) through the last day of November 2024, **\$648,536.02**.
- Expenses paid using the BOG funds in November, **\$0.00**.
- Total BOG funds are **\$14,935.26**. The breakdown is **\$10,085.26** for the next BOG project with an additional **\$2,500.00** designated for parking lot pavement and **\$2,350.00** designated for the Chapel range hood replacement.
- Donations breakdown by source:
 - **5.3%** - **\$34,499.76 from nonmembers**
 - **86.0%** - **\$557,852.05 from members**
 - **8.7%** - **\$56,184.21 from anonymous & dinners**
 - **100.0%** - **\$648,536.02 Total**

Please contact Al Ravo for questions or to discuss the Church’s operating finances, the Endowment Funds, Per Capita or the Building On Generosity Capital Campaign.

GOD'S LOVE ENDURES FOREVER

We are saddened to learn of the passing of Eris-Marie Bunnell, age 96, on December 4, 2024 at Heath Village the Meadows in Hackettstown, NJ.

Eris was born on April 19, 1928 in Glen Ridge, NJ to the late Wilhelm and Iris Bronander. She grew up in Montclair, NJ and spent many years in Danville, PA. She resided in Canada and Argentina, as well, and in recent years at Heath Village Retirement Community. A lifelong learner, Eris attended several colleges, starting at Up-sala College and continuing to Bloomsburg University, where she earned a master's degree in Art.



Her career included serving as treasurer of her family's business, Scandia Manufacturing Company, and twenty years as a commercial art photographer. She produced many photo illustrations for books, a photo mural exhibit of the last around-the-world-voyage of a four-masted sailing ship for the Smithsonian Institute, as well as other mural exhibits at the Montclair Art Museum, NJ, and South Street Seaport Museum, NYC.

Eris is survived by her sons, Gabriel Aiello and his wife Karin of Columbia, NJ, and Peter Aiello of Edgewater FL, seven grandchildren, and numerous nieces and nephews. In addition to her parents, she is preceded in death by her husband Richard Bunnell and 3 brothers, Wilhem "Bill" Bronander, Jack Bronander, and Franklin "Burt" Bronander.

All services were held privately.

Arrangements were entrusted to Maguire Memorial Home.

Please keep her family in your prayers.

We give thanks to the God of the Resurrection whose love brings us hope everyday.

PLACES TO VISIT IN WARREN COUNTY AND SURROUNDING AREAS IN JANUARY

January on the weekends could get dull and boring, so I am recommending various day trips to one of many wonderful sites we have nestled here in Warren County, NJ and the surrounding areas. Below are some suggestions for a nice getaway that is just a short drive away.

1. Crayola Factory
2. Delaware River Railroad Excursion
3. Easton Public Market
4. Jenny Jump State Forest
5. Rutherford Hall
6. Lakota Wolf Preserve
7. Land of Make Believe
8. Delaware Water Gap
9. Sigal Museum
10. Waterloo Village
11. Grounds for Sculpture
12. Liberty Science Center
13. Mountain Creek
14. Cape May Zoo
15. Popcorn Zoo Park
16. Trotter Hill Alpaca Farm
17. Red Mill Museum Village
18. New Hope Railroad
19. Medieval Times
20. Princeton University Art Museum

I hope you will consider one of these adventures. You never know what kind of fun you can have in the new year.

JANUARY GREETERS

- Jan 5: Al, Jen, and Veronica Aquino
- Jan 12: Sharon Stymacks and Katy Ratti
- Jan 19: Dennis and Pattie Huff
- Jan 26: Bruce and Ellen Bergman



SAVE THE DATES: SPECIAL DAYS IN FEBRUARY

Please note that we will conduct the ordination and installation of our new officers on February 2, 2025. We hope that you will be able to attend our worship service on this day.

In addition, Pastor Erin has designated February 22 as a day of training for our church leader, deacons, and elders. The time and location are to be determined. More information regarding this training will appear in next month’s newsletter.

FEBRUARY 2025						
SUN	MON	TUE	WED	THU	FRI	SAT
26	27	28	29	30	31	1
2	3	4	5	6	7	8
9	10	11	12	13	14	15
16	17	18	19	20	21	22
23	24	25	26	27	28	1

MUSIC NOTES

Music for the month of January will be:



- Jan. 5 Let All Mortal Flesh-Sr. Choir
- Jan. 12 My Son, the Beloved-Sr. Choir
This is My Prayer-Joyful Noise Bells
- Jan. 19: My Shepherd’s Amazing Grace-FPCH Ringers
- Jan. 26: Ora Poriaju Vereko-Little Lights Sunday School Choir
When We Talk to Him-Unity Chimes

IT’S NEVER TOO LATE TO JOIN

If you’ve been thinking about being a part of any of our music ensembles here at FPCH - Senior Choir, FPCH Ringers (adult chimes), Joyful Noise Bells (for young ringers) or Unity Chimes (for kids grade 3 and up) - please be sure to speak with Lorinda for more information! People are welcome to come in and give it a try at any time throughout the year.



THANKS FOR THE CHRISTMAS CARDS

Thank you to all who sent out Christmas cards to the church:

Sandy Archer, Bruce and Ellen Bergman, Terry Gretchen, Sharon Heil, Al and Lorinda Ravo, Fred and Sandy Sentner, Ron and Deb Shepherd, Jim, MaryAnn, and Justin Simmons, and Mark and Winnie Slachetka.

We appreciate your thoughts and prayers during this Christmas holiday.

Sharing God's Bounty

Being a Faithful Steward

As stewards, we demonstrate our faithfulness by how we manage the resources and gifts God entrusts to us. *"Now it is required that those who have been given a trust must prove faithful"* (1 Corinthians 4:2). We are to *"always give [ourselves] fully to the work of the Lord because [we] know that our labor in the Lord is not in vain"* (1 Corinthians 15:58). Our effort is invested in the Lord's winning cause.

Peter wrote, *"Each one should use whatever gift he has received to serve others, faithfully administering God's grace in its various forms"* (1 Peter 4:10). Through faith, we serve others by showing our love (3 John 5-6), by witnessing for Christ (Acts 1:8), by sharing with those in need (2 Corinthians 9:7-8), and by doing good to all people (Galatians 6:10). God is pleased when we use our time, talents, and treasures in ways that give Him honor and glory through our service for others.

As devoted and committed stewards who seek to do God's will, we receive his special blessings. The Lord will *"bring to light what is hidden in darkness and will expose the motives of men's hearts. At that time each will receive his praise from God"* (1 Corinthians 4:5). In 1 Samuel 26:23 we read, *"The Lord rewards every man for his righteousness and faithfulness."* We look forward to the Lord telling us, *"Well done, good and faithful servant! You have been faithful with a few things; I will put you in charge of many things. Come and share your master's happiness!"* (Matthew 25:23).

Until the Lord takes us to our eternal home, we are to be active and involved stewards faithfully seeking to please him. We can be faithful because he abounds *"in love and faithfulness"* (Psalm 86:15) to us. We press on as faithful stewards knowing that *"He will not forget [our] work and the love [we] have shown him . . ."* (Hebrews 6:10).

"My mother drew a distinction between achievement and success. She said that achievement is the knowledge that you have studied and worked hard and done the best that is in you. Success is being praised by others and that's nice too, but not as important or satisfying. Always aim for achievement and forget about success."

Helen Hayes

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FPCH INTRODUCES THE G-R-O-W TEAM

BY: BILL CORS

The Session of FPCH recently endorsed a new team, Growing Resource Opportunities Wholeheartedly (G-R-O-W), or simply, "The G-R-O-W Team." This is an attempt to explore new ways to grow the financial, talent, and human resources to support and expand our congregation's mission as disciples of Christ in this region.

FPCH is blessed with a multitude of current missions that significantly impact and benefit our region. In 2025, the G-R-O-W team will work with the congregation to better understand our current missions through heartfelt stories of how they impact people in a very tangible way. Part of that understanding will be not only what is being done but what is required to get it done, to grow it, and to sustain it going forward. In healthcare, there is an old saying, "No money? No mission!" The G-R-O-W team will seek ways to grow the pie so that the FPCH missions not only maintain but flourish and expand.

The foundation of this team is based on the parable of the mustard seed which reminds us that from a small beginning, a much larger end point can be reached. FPCH is blessed in that we are more than a mustard seed; there is room for a more bountiful plant to take root and grow right here in our midst. By examining what we have, by looking for ways to grow and expand all our resources, and by telling stories of what we do and how it gets done will be the 2025 goals of the G-R-O-W team. If you wish to be part of this exciting initiative, please feel free to reach out to Bill Cors or Ray Sookhoo or Ryan VanOrden or Chuck Potter.

Stay tuned...



SECOND SUNDAY RECAP

We will be holding our own Winter Olympic Games here in the church on Sunday, January 12th. After our light lunch in the music room, we'll be making our own Olympic torches, having a parade of nations with the many flags of participating countries, and then having Olympic contests including "skiing", curling, "skating" and more! Be sure to pre-register on the sign up sheet in the church or by calling the church office at 908-852-4011.

And while we're talking about Second Sunday, our December event was wonderful, thanks to Miss Winnie baking her delicious cookies and bringing along edible markers to decorate them, and to Mrs. Bergman for helping us make angel ornaments. We also had fun painting our wooden animal ornaments that were used in the Christmas play.

As always, thanks for allowing your kids to take part in this worthwhile monthly event to learn about the Bible and enjoy a fun craft to help make the lesson remain in their minds.



PHOTOS COURTESY OF LORINDA RAVO.

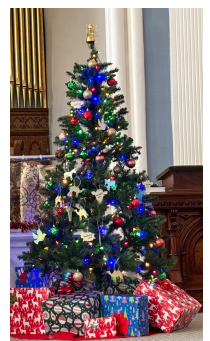
CAN YOU SHARE AN INTEREST OR TALENT WITH SOME TERRIFIC KIDS?

Later in this year, 2025, we'll be celebrating three years of our Second Sunday program. Do you have a talent or an interest or a hobby that you'd like to share with kids? We'll help you develop an event showcasing your talent and providing an experience for and with our kids. Please speak with Lorinda if you'd like to be part of the fun.

"THE FRIENDLY BEASTS" COMES TO LIFE ON STAGE AT FPCH

BY: LORINDA RAVO

For this year's Sunday School Christmas presentation, we decided to try something new. Rather than a traditional "pageant" with angels, and shepherds, and wise men, we decided to create a play based on "The Friendly Beasts", an old English Christmas carol about the gifts that a donkey, cow, sheep, camel, and dove in the stable give to Baby Jesus on the night he was born. The current lyrics were written in the 1920s, and our Sunday School students, along with Mr. Ryan VanOrden and Ms. Torey Ravo, helped to bring the song to life. The kids all wore headbands of the animal that they chose to be that they colored themselves. They also painted wooden ornaments of their animal and hung them on the tree throughout the play. Thank you, children, for sharing this beautiful story with our congregation.



TEACH YOUR CHILDREN HOW TO PRAY

NEW YEAR'S EVE

Welcome back to our "Teach Your Children How to Pray" section. As a way to introduce the new year, I have selected a sacred moment within the home for remembering God's blessings in the past year, designed for children of school ages and older.

Materials: basket/box labeled with the year AND pencils and scraps of paper.

Time investment: varies

How to:

1. In January, place a large box or basket in a prominent location in the house with the year labeled on it.
2. Throughout the year, put significant items in the basket, such as ticket stubs, programs, church bulletins from important holidays, etc.
3. Use scraps of paper to write down or draw pictures of important memories and events that happened.
4. On New Year's Eve, take turns pulling items from the basket and reflect upon where God was present in that day.
5. Conclude by holding hands and saying, "Thank you, God, for the many ways you were with us last year, in good times and in difficult ones. We are thankful for the many blessings of this year. Amen."

Notes:

- It might be tempting to put only happy memories in the box, but consider also adding memories of more challenging times as well (evidence of hospital stays, bulletins from the death of a loved one, etc). God is with us in good and difficult times, and it is valuable to remember sad times, too.
- The age listed for this activity is school age and up. Certainly, younger children can be a part of the family moment in which the memories are shared and recalled, but it might be more challenging for them to remember to add to the basket.

Variations:

- Instead of collecting memories throughout the year, try to sit down on New Year's Eve and remember key moments throughout the past year.
- Use mealtime as a time to write down memories.
- Gather together on a specific day of the week to write down memories to add to the box.

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

STONE SOUP SYMPHONY & SWINGTIME JAZZ BAND PRESENT CONCERTS AT FPCH IN DECEMBER

FPCH "Home" to Several Music Organizations

BY: LORINDA RAVO

During the month of December, FPCH was pleased to host both Stone Soup and Swingtime Jazz concerts in our sanctuary, welcoming hundreds of concert goers to their performances. Both of these ensembles delighted their audiences with holiday music as well as symphonic and jazz standards.

The Stone Soup concert brought the audience to their feet playing such holiday classics as "Sleigh Ride" and familiar Christmas carols, and the Jazz Band filled the sanctuary with jazz arrangements of "Deck the Halls", "Jingle Bells" and jazz standards like "Birdland" and "Stardust".

At its recent Holiday Concert, The Swingtime Jazz Band's director Mike Kallimanis pointed out that our church is "home" to three out of four of the local, all volunteer, independent music ensembles in Hackettstown: the Swingtime Jazz Band, the Stone Soup Symphony Orchestra, and the Colonial Musketeers Fife and Drum Corps. All three of these terrific groups either use our Chapel in which to store instruments, and/or for a rehearsal space.

The Jazz Band rehearses in our Chapel on Monday evenings, and the Stone Soup Orchestra rehearses, also in our chapel on Wednesday evenings. You can find out more about both of these groups, and about the Colonial Musketeers online!



AT LEFT IS STONE SOUP SYMPHONY AND AT RIGHT IS SWINGTIME JAZZ BAND. PHOTOS COURTESY OF LORINDA RAVO.



JANUARY BIRTHDAYS

2: Kaz Tang
 4: Winnie Slachetka
 6: Dana Carpenter
 7: Makayla Chetangie
 10: Donna Ghetti
 12: Sofia Fraumeni
 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 Gelsinger
 29: Pastor Erin Hayes-Cook
 31: Emma Rabuano
 Matthew Gelsinger



**CONGRATULATIONS
TO ALL!**

JANUARY ANNIVERSARIES

14: Fred and Sandy Sentner

PRAYER LIST

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

Bunnell family
 Rod Cameron, father-in-law of
 Michele Cameron
 Eugenie Chetangie
 Churches throughout
 the U.S.



FPCH and Friends of
 FPCH
 Dan Gardner
 The Family of Rose Green
 Dick Gregory
 Terry Gretchen
 Joan Grover
 Barbara Hall
 The Family of Ralph Lamar
 Carol Levine, mom of Michele
 Cameron
 Maikuu congregation,
 Kibwezi Kenya
 Members of the Armed Forces
 Barbara Pace, niece of the
 Prestopines
 Alice Phoebus
 Pam Sampson, sister of Jan
 Courtright
 Mark Slachetka (and Winnie)
 Carol Spitzer
 Muriel Stellingwerf
 Gail Thompson, cousin of
 Diane Hull
 The food insecure
 The homeless
 Those struggling with
 addictions and mental health
 Those recovering from surgery
 Richard Westby
 Barbara Yankiv