

First Presbyterian Church Hackettstown, NJ

January 4, 2026



Epiphany | What do you fear?
FEAR DOESN'T STOP US

THE RINGING OF THE BELL

WELCOME AND ANNOUNCEMENTS



CALL TO WORSHIP

In the dark of morning,
the stars still shine.

In the depth of winter,
the birds still climb.

At the start of the year,
tender and new,

God is here.

God is near.

Do not rest in your fear.

God is here.

So like the stars and the birds,

Let us worship holy God.

***HYMN**

As with Gladness Men of Old v. 1-3

150

As with gladness men of old did the guiding star behold;
as with joy they hailed its light, leading onward, beaming bright;
so, most gracious Lord, may we evermore be held to thee.

As with joyful steps they sped, Savior, to thy lowly bed,
there to bend the knee before thee, whom heaven and earth adore;
so may we with willing feet ever seek thy mercy seat.

As they offered gifts most rare at thy manger, rude and bare,
so may we with holy joy, pure and free from sin's alloy,
all our costliest treasures bring, Christ, to thee, our heavenly king.

OPENING PRAYER

ANTHEM:

Bring Forth the Kingdom

M. Haugen

Sr. Choir, Angel Anyangwe & Lila Roguso, soloists

You are salt for the earth, O people: Salt for the Kingdom of God!

Share the flavor of life, O people: Life in the Kingdom of God!

Refrain

Bring forth the Kingdom of mercy, bring forth the Kingdom of peace;
bring forth the Kingdom of justice, bring forth the City of God!

You are a light on the hill, O people: Light for the City of God!

Shine so holy and bright, O people: Shine for the Kingdom of God!

(Refrain)

CHILDREN'S MESSAGE *I Will Sing of the Mercies*

Psalm 89:1: I will sing of the mercies of the Lord forever, I will sing, I will sing. I will sing of the mercies of the Lord forever, I will sing of the mercies of the Lord.

CALL TO CONFESSION

PRAYER OF CONFESSION

Ever-loving God, we long for Christmas to usher in a season of peace and joy. However, we know that is not how the world works. Even just days after Christmas, we find ourselves face to face with fear once again. So today we pray—forgive us when we allow fear to stop us in our tracks. Forgive us when our own fear prevents us from following your call. Forgive us when fear is louder than love. Show us how to turn our fear into action. Show us how to live like the magi who searched for you in a fearful world. With hope we pray, amen.

ASSURANCE OF FORGIVENESS

Whether fear inspires us to action, or stops us dead in our tracks, God's love for us is boundless. We are seen. We are surrounded with grace. We are sent to serve. Thanks be to God! Amen.

***GLORIA PATRI**

Glory be to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Ghost. As it was in the beginning, is now and ever shall be. World without end. Amen, Amen.

SCRIPTURE LESSONS

Matthew 2:1-12, 16-18

SERMON

Rev. Erin Hayes-Cook

***HYMN** *We Three Kings of Orient Are* (v. 1-4) **151**

We three kings of Orient are; bearing gifts we traverse afar,
field and fountain, moor and mountain, following yonder star. (Refrain)

Refrain

O star of wonder, star of night, star with royal beauty bright,
westward leading, still proceeding, guide us to thy perfect light.

Born a King on Bethlehem's plain, gold I bring to crown him again,
King forever, ceasing never over us all to reign. (Refrain)

Frankincense to offer have I; incense owns a deity nigh; prayer and
praising, gladly raising, worshiping God Most High. (Refrain)

Myrrh is mine; its bitter perfume breathes a life of gathering gloom;
sorrowing, sighing, bleeding, dying, sealed in the stone cold tomb.
(Refrain)

***AFFIRMATION OF FAITH**

We have seen the valley. We have seen a sky without stars. We
have seen the longest night, and still we believe. We believe in a
with-us God. We believe in the hope of tomorrow. We believe that
good news is louder than fear. We believe this good news is for all
people. So even when our knees shake, even when our voice
trembles, even when fear is all around us, we will hold onto that
good news. We will reach for each other. We will look for God in
our midst. We will sing songs of joy. We will proclaim: Unto us,
love is born. We have seen the longest night, and we have seen
unimaginable love. So still, we believe. Amen.

OFFERING INVITATION

OFFERTORY *One Small Child*

***DOXOLOGY**

Praise God from whom all blessings flow.

Praise Him all creatures here below.

Praise Him above ye heavenly host,
praise Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, Amen.

*PRAYER OF DEDICATION

*COMMUNION HYMN *What Star is This with Beams So Bright?* v. 1-2 152

What star is this, with beams so bright, more
lovely than the noon day light? 'Tis
sent to announce a new born king, glad
tidings of our God to bring.

'Tis now fulfilled what God decreed, "From
Jacob shall a star proceed"; and
lo! The eastern sages stand to
read in heaven the Lord's command.

SACRAMENT OF THE LORD'S SUPPER

As a sign of hospitality we offer gluten free bread for communion.

INVITATION

PRAYER OF THANKSGIVING

The Lord be with you.

And also with you.

Lift up your hearts.

We lift them up to the Lord.

Let us give thanks to the Lord our God.

It is right to give our thanks and praise...(Pastor continues)

**Our Father who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name, thy kingdom
come, thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day
our daily bread. Forgive us our debts as we forgive our debtors. And
lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. For thine is the
kingdom and the power and the glory forever, Amen.**

WORDS OF THE INSTITUTION

SHARING THE ELEMENTS

PRAYER AFTER COMMUNION

*CLOSING HYMN *Gentle Mary Laid Her Child* v. 1-2 146

Gentle Mary laid her child lowly in a manger;
there he lay, the undefiled, to the world a stranger.
Such a babe in such a place, can he be the Savior?
Ask the saved of all the race who have found his favor.

Angels sang about his birth; wise men sought and found him;
heaven's star shone brightly forth, glory all around him.
Shepherds saw the wondrous sight, heard the angels singing;
all the plains were lit that night; all the hills were ringing.

***CHARGE AND BLESSING**

***RESPONSE** *Gentle Mary Laid Her Child* v.3 **146**

Gentle Mary laid her child lowly in a manger; he is still the undefiled,
but no more a stranger. Son of God, of humble birth, beautiful the
story; praise his name in all the earth; hail the King of glory!

POSTLUDE *We Three Kings* **arr. Young**

Serving Our Congregation Today

Preacher: Rev. Erin Hayes-Cook

Worship Leaders: Gabe Roguso

Music Director: Lorinda Ravo

Video: Pattie & Dennis Huff

Greeting: Della & Jose Irby

***The cards this week on the piano for you to sign are for our friends:
Chuck Potter & Jim Simmons***

WELCOME TO OUR CHURCH

Interested in joining our church as a member? We would love to talk more with you about our ministry here. Feel free to feel out a visitors card and hand it to one of our ushers or Pastor Erin and we will make sure to reach out to you!

NEW MEMBERS

Would you like to officially join the church? Have you already been a part of the community and are ready to say yes to being a member? Then join us for new members class in January. You are invited to come to all three in person meetings. We will discuss our church, what it means to become a member and how you might become more involved. Join us on **January 11, 18 and February 1**.

2026 CHURCH DIRECTORIES

Our 2026 Church Directories are now available. Please pick your copy at the sign up table in the front of the church.

DEACONS COLLECTING HATS, SCARVES, GLOVES AND MITTENS FOR LITTLE HANDS

During these cold winter months, the Board of Deacons will be collecting NEW gloves, mittens, hats, and scarves for children at Hatchery Hill and Central School (Great Meadows) who don't have those items to keep themselves warm! The collected outerwear will be given to the school nurses for distribution to the kids who need them. If you are out shopping and spy kid sized hats, mittens, scarves and/or gloves, we'd love you to put them in the collection basket in coming Sundays. They will be collected on **January 11th & 18th**. Thanks!

CALL FOR THE ANNUAL CONGREGATIONAL MEETING

By order of the Session, the congregation of the First Presbyterian Church of Hackettstown, NJ is called to meet for their annual meeting on Sunday, **January 25, 2026** after worship to conduct the following business:

- To receive the 2026 budget for information
- To receive the 2025 Annual Reports
- To elect elders to the Session, deacons to the Board of Deacons, members to the Personnel Committee and Nominating Committee, and a member to the Heaven Sent Board of Trustees.

CALL FOR THE ANNUAL MEETING OF THE CORPORATION

By order of the Session, the corporation of the First Presbyterian Church of Hackettstown, NJ is called to meet directly following the congregational meeting on Sunday, **January 25, 2026**, to conduct the following business:

- Report of corporate officers
- Election of corporation officers for 2026

Public notice of this meeting will be posted to two consecutive Sundays.

Donna Erickson
Clerk of the Session

THIS YEAR'S PER CAPITA APPORTIONMENT

Several have asked about the amount for the 2026 Per Capita. The Presbytery of the Highlands has set this year's amount at \$44.00 per active member. If you receive offering envelopes, there is an envelope in your box specifically to use for your per capita offering.

JANUARY SECOND SUNDAY!

On January's Second Sunday, **January 11**, we'll be welcoming Ms. Diann Carrajat back to help us paint a winter scene. Please be sure to pre register so that Ms. Carrajat can have enough supplies for all participants.



Epiphany | What do you fear? FEAR DOESN'T STOP US



King Tingz

by Nicolette Faison

Inspired by Matthew 2:1-12, 16-18

30"x40" Acrylic, paper, markers, synthetic hair on canvas

If there is one thing I can't stand, it is when people disregard the spiritual use of herbs, metals, and the stars. For years, there has been a nasty practice of shaming indigenous practices, such as the usage of sage, when high church settings actively use incense in worship. We have come to a tension where anything that does not look like a particular type of Christian practice is perceived as pagan or satanic. For years, I have been reminding people that Jesus was gifted gold, frankincense, and myrrh by people who followed the stars to find him. That is the heart of my piece, *King Tingz*. I wanted to emphasize the sky and the importance of the stars, a reminder that this was essential to their witness. I wanted to bless each king with a different gift which is found in different places of their attire.

Of the magi, the one bowing is marked with the flower of frankincense on their robe. On their left

shoulder is a map of modern Persia, reminding us of their journey back home having to take a new route because they defied the request of Herod. They are crowned with cornrows and covered with more greenery because of their position to the ground. While we celebrate the stars, I wanted there to be some grounding to the earth. As Jesus is both divine and human, he holds space in both worlds.

The king to the right has soft myrrh flowers on her elbow and collar. Her outer arm is holding an infant, not Jesus, while her sleeve holds the Palestinian flag with the Arabic word *Nakba*,¹¹ reminding us of the genocide of 1947. She is weeping for the children that Herod commits to murdering because of their defiance. She holds a child in the palm of her hand with deep lament. Her golden crown is surrounded by a blue bandana, a quiet nod to Chola culture found on the West Coast, as Latino Christians have always emphasized the importance of *los reyes*.¹²

The one to the left is draped in a starry durag and plated in gold. He has a subtle gold bottom grill and his face is celebrated in a gold pattern. He looks up to the sky, more concerned about navigation, as he is the guiding force for the three of them. I gave this king a durag after some research on Persian magi showed me variations of headwear or turbans that emulated that of a durag.

Above all, if there is something I have learned from living in a Hispanic community and attending a Spanish-speaking church, it is that BIPOC¹³ communities do not play about *los reyes*. I wanted aspects of my culture and other American subcultures to be able to see bits and pieces of themselves in this art. But to also see our connection to the stars and the earth alike. I urge this to be a reminder that even if your church does not celebrate herbs, crystals, metals, and the stars, that does not mean they are not Christian practices nor that they are satanic. **-REV. NICOLETTE FAISON**

¹¹ Meaning "the catastrophe," this refers to the events of the 1948 Palestine war in which Palestinian Arabs were ethnically cleansed and displaced from their homes. These events continue to shape the ongoing Israeli-Palestine conflict.

¹² Meaning "the kings."

¹³ This is an acronym for "Black, Indigenous, People of Color."

FYI-INFORMATION

12/24/25 Christmas Eve	In Person Attendance Virtual Attendance Offering	141 157 \$1,961.00
12/28/25	In Person Attendance Virtual Attendance Offering	64 102 \$1,873.18

WEEKLY ACTIVITIES at FPCH

Sunday	10:00 am	Worship
Sunday	11:05 am	Joyful Noise Bells rehearsal
Sunday	11:20 am	Unity Chimes rehearsal
Mon/Fri	9:00 am-12:00 noon	Church office open
Mon/Fri	9:00 am-12:00 noon	Heaven Sent Nursery School
Thursday	6:30-7:15 pm	FPCH Ringers rehearsal
Thursday	7:30-8:30 pm	Sr. Choir rehearsal

WEEKLY ACTIVITIES in our Chapel - January 4 - 10, 2026

Monday	10:30-11:30 am 7:00-9:00 pm	AA Step by Step Jazz Band
Tuesday	7:30-9:00 pm	NA Change or Die
Wednesday	7:30-9:00 pm	Stone Soup Symphony
Thursday	10:30-11:30 am	AA New Beginnings
Friday	Storage use only 7:00-9:00 pm 7:30 pm	Colonial Musketeers Colonial Musketeers Sr. GA Meeting
Saturday	7:00 pm	12 Steps



FOR PASTORAL CARE,

Pastor Rev. Erin Hayes-Cook Cell:908-963-8341
 Email: revehayes@gmail.com
 Call the church office at: 908-852-4011
 Church email: fpchnj@gmail.com
 Church Website: www.fpchackettstown.org