



The First Presbyterian Church of Ridgewood

First Press Newsletter

722 E Ridgewood Ave, Ridgewood, NJ 07450
(201) 652-2504

May 2024

We are a welcoming community formed in Christ, committed to sharing his love with others – with feet that carry us out into the world, with hands that serve, and with hearts in fellowship and faith.

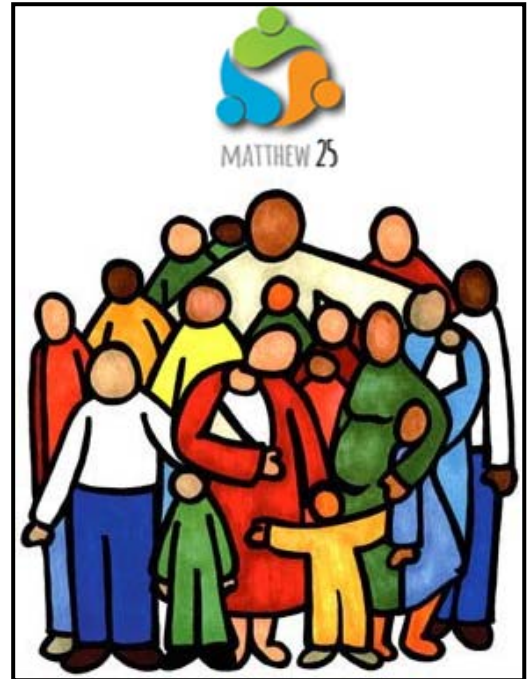
Dear Friends,

I'm sure you've heard by now that First Presbyterian Church of Ridgewood is a Matthew 25 Congregation! In Matthew 25:31–46, Jesus calls us to serve with and for “the least of these” — not as a group to be pitied, but as people who are deeply loved by Jesus.

The focus at First Pres will be *building congregational vitality*. As described on the PC(USA) website, we will build congregational vitality *by challenging members to deepen and energize their faith and grow as joyful leaders and disciples actively engaged with their community, seeing new disciples engaged in ministry and longstanding believers develop in faith as the gospel of Jesus Christ is shared in word and deed.*

Our Session has identified the following Matthew 25/Congregational Vitality goals:

- Offer a Matthew 25 Bible Study.
- Learn how the PC(USA) understands evangelism today, using *The 8 Habits of Evangelism* video series.
- Choose three Sundays a year to focus our congregation's worship on the Matthew 25 theme.
- Continue to offer opportunities for members/friends to volunteer in service to meet the needs of people in our community or nearby communities and expand those opportunities.
- Launch a new all-congregation program or project to serve our neighbors in Ridgewood or nearby communities.
- Make a commitment to walk alongside another refugee family.
- Support mental health by developing an event or a ministry focused on mental health issue(s).
- Continue responding to the needs of people in Paterson.



Please consider joining the Matthew 25 Task Force!

In order to strategize, plan and effectively work to achieve these goals, the Session has established the Matthew 25 Task Force. Six people have already agreed to serve, but we will be more effective in our work with the addition of a few more members. If you have a love for Christ and his church, if you have a heart for mission, if you care deeply for the poor among us, if you have good ideas for outreach and/or you have good organizational skills, please consider joining the Matthew 25 Task Force! We will hold an organizing meeting in May. Please let me know if you're interested in serving!

**Grace and Peace,
Bruce**

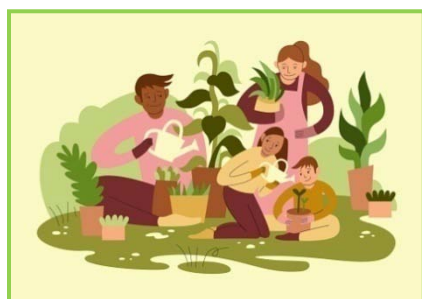


The Sunday School lessons for April are the Psalms!

Our Heartfelt appreciation to all who donated to our Food Non-Food Drive to support the Social Service Association of Ridgewood and Vicinity. We have lots of donations that will be stocked on the pantry shelves by our First Pres. Youth Group on Sunday April 21st!



“Family Planting Day”



In order to maintain our **Bicentennial Garden**, we are holding a 2024 “Family Planting Day” event with our church school families on Sunday, May 19, 2024, after worship/coffee hour. Come to church in your jeans! For a day of sprucing up our garden! If you would like to help fill our garden with annual & additional perennial plants and flowers, you can donate toward the purchase of flowers, plants and mulch needed to keep our Bicentennial Garden looking healthy and beautiful! Our garden is located on the East Ridgewood Ave. side of our church building.

Please help us to continue to beautify our “Bicentennial Garden”

Name: _____

I will send my donation in the amount of \$_____ to the church.

Please make checks payable to: First Presbyterian Church of Ridgewood

On your check, please write “Bicentennial Garden” in memo:

You can donate using VENMO. Please put “Bicentennial Garden” in your comment! **Thank You!**

VOLUNTEERS NEEDED!!
Vacation Bible School 2024



Monday, August 5th – Thursday, August 9th, 2024

Time: 9:00AM–11:30AM

We NEED Volunteers to help with Shepherding, Crafts, Snacks, Music and Activities. Please prayerfully consider helping with this amazing children’s program to make this a great success.

Please contact: MaryEllen Castaldo

email at marecmt@aol.com

Text or call: cell# 862-686-8956

YOUTH GROUP EVENT: SUNDAY, April 21st

After worship, our **Youth Group Coordinators, Helen Eliya, John Vasile and Steve Eliya** transported the donations from our March Food/Non Food Drive and brought them to the Social Service Association of Ridgewood and Vicinity and stocked the pantry shelves. They all enjoyed lunch at the Daily Treat and then attended Ridgewood’s **Earth Day Festival!** A fun day! **Youth in attendance: Hudson Feeny, Shane Strickland, CJ, Dante & Luca Torielli.**





A meaningful morning of worship as our Sunday school families joined with our choir and bell choir in the procession waving palms! And after worship our members and families were outside with our Friendly Petting Zoo from Mountainside Stables! It was so nice that children had the opportunity to feed the animals!



*Photography: Joanne Bonwick



What a beautiful day of weather for an egg hunt! Many families joined us for our annual event!



*Photography: Joanne Bonwick


“Rethinking Investing”



When we think of ‘investing’, we typically think of the stock market, savings accounts, and real estate, and of course endowment funds, to name a few. These things all relate to our financial status and our search for financial security and wellbeing. But wellbeing is so much more than being financially secure.

Members of the Endowment Committee like to think beyond the benefits of ‘feather-nesting’. The projects we develop are meant to encourage connections that enhance our humanity.

Our **‘Tree of Life’** project raises money while offering a place to permanently remember those who have passed or to honor or celebrate those currently in our lives. Our **‘War Dead Memorial’** project raised funds to purchase engraved leaves for each of the 11 First Pres members who served our country and never came home.

Our ongoing **‘Green Umbrella Note Cards’**  project raises funds at a nominal cost to recognize members with cards for different occasions such as an *Anniversary, Birthday, Thank You, Thinking of You, Birth, Appreciation, or an In Memory card.*

We’re ‘investing’ in relationships when we let others know they matter. A personal card and note is a lovely way to say, “You matter!” And your donation helps our Endowment Fund grow. Two birds, one stone!

Cards and instructions can be found on the table across from the large Bulletin Board. See Joanne Bonwick during Coffee Hour or contact Laura Magrath (201) 214-3499 or Joanne Bonwick (201) 652-7520.

Congregational Meeting

Scheduled for Sunday, May 12th



A congregational meeting for the purpose of electing Elders, Deacons and members of the Nominating Committee will take place in the Sanctuary on Sunday, May 12, 2024, immediately following the worship service. All members are encouraged to attend this important meeting.



Website: www.fpnsr.com

Wow how time flies! The school year is winding down at the preschool, but you would never know it by how busy we've been!

The children celebrated a special day by sharing a morning at school with a special guest for Special Person Visitation Day. Everyone participated in an activity-filled morning of gym, music, and classroom projects.



We also celebrated Earth Day and had so much fun learning that it is our responsibility to learn how to take care of our Earth. Our Learning with Legos and Dinosaur Enrichment classes have just begun and are in full swing! We're also busy practicing for our End-of-Year/ graduation program, which takes place in the Sanctuary on Friday, June 7th at 9:15 am. All Church members are invited to attend!



We are accepting applications for our popular Summer Camp 2024. Our theme is year is 'A Camping we will go'! Students can sign up for a fun-filled week of interactive & engaging educational activities. These activities include creative arts & crafts, science & discovery, stories & songs all based on our theme.

Registration for the 2024-2025 school year is underway! We offer programs for children 2 ½ years – 5 years, 5 days/week with half day and full day options. Please contact Julia Bolt, Director, at 201-445-2552 for more information and a tour of our preschool. Church members receive a tuition discount. We offer a fun, nurturing environment, while preparing our children for kindergarten. We look forward to hearing from you!



Kitchen Magician!

One day it was here the next day it was gone!
Reminder-Please do not enter the kitchen, coffee hour will be held in the auditorium!



FIRST FRIENDS

☺ April Gatherings Off to a Great Start ☺



Twenty-eight people signed up to be a part of First Friends, a great way to connect, get to know each other better, and meet new people in our church family by enjoying a meal together.

Two of the four groups met on Friday, April 19 for a fun evening of conversation as they shared a meal together.

New groups will be formed in the fall, so sign up during coffee hour in August/September to be a part of this fellowship ministry!



MISSION:



On the evening of April 7th, the **Torielli family** embarked on a culinary crusade, delivering a delectable dinner crafted with care by the compassionate souls of First Pres Volunteers to the gentlemen residing at St. Paul's shelter.

The menu boasted tantalizing delights such as Oven Fried Chicken by the culinary virtuoso **Bobbe Kutcha**, Ziti with a touch of perfection from **Linda Strickland**, **Suzy McDevitt's** savory Salisbury Steak, **Laura Magrath's** crisp and refreshing Fresh Coleslaw, and **Dana Feeney's** delightful Fruit and Bread ensemble.

Heartfelt gratitude is extended to these volunteers for their generosity, invaluable time, and culinary prowess. Their efforts not only nourished bodies but also warmed hearts. Amidst the exchange of food and conversation with the shelter staff, a sense of camaraderie and compassion flourished.

While the men at the shelter expressed profound gratitude for the feast bestowed upon them, the mission continues, and more hands are needed to uphold this noble cause. Opportunities beckon for volunteers to join in this endeavor, with slots awaiting fulfillment in May.

If you feel called to partake in this journey of kindness and sustenance, please reach out to the Torielli family via email at **Torielli@hotmail.com** or via text at **201-661-1452**. Your contribution, no matter how small, can make a world of difference in the lives of those in need.



Here's wishing you a great birthday and a wonderful year ahead...

Bruce Balantine
Michael Burger
Joanne Bonwick
Jan Cross
Richard Davies
Lew Dickinson
Carola Di Iorio
Helen Eliya
Ramzi Eliya
Dana Feeney
Sarah Hutton
Kirk Lavine
Lois Morris
David Schwartz
Gloria Tedeschi
Britt Tunick

Walk and Talk



Do you enjoy the outdoors? Do you enjoy walking?

Do you enjoy stimulating conversation?

Join Pastor Bruce and your First Pres friends for an hour of fresh air, exercise and fellowship! We'll walk & talk on Thursday evenings from 6:00 to 7:00 at the Duck Pond in Ridgewood!

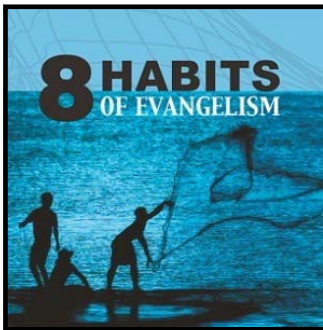
Thursday, April 25 - Thursday, May 30

See you at the flagpole near the front parking lot @ 6:00!



Classes for Confirmation begin this **Fall** in **October of 2024** for **8th** and **9th** grade **students**. If your child has not received his or her confirmation or if your child is older than 9th grade, please contact **MaryEllen Castaldo**.

Email: marecmt@aol.com or text or call, **862-686-8956**.



During the month of May, on three Sundays following coffee hour, we will hold a gathering to continue to explore four of the eight habits. Each gathering will begin with a short video focused on a particular aspect of holistic evangelism, followed by a discussion. And each gathering will take place in the Dining Room or Minnema Room.

(Sunday, April 14 Fellowship)

Sunday, May 5 Worship

Sunday, May 19 Teaching

Sunday, May 26 Generosity

Happy Mother's Day

Sunday, May 12th



"Honor her for all that her hands have done, and let her works bring her praise at the city gate."

Proverbs 31:31

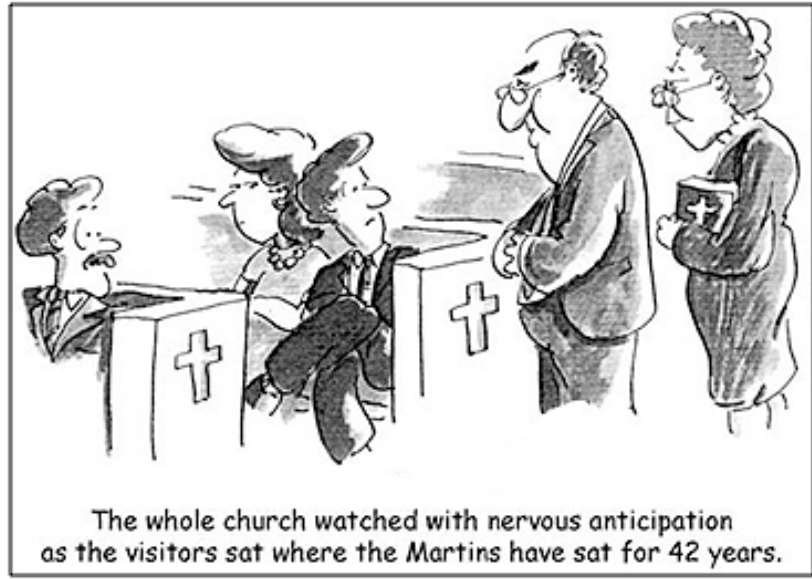
"The man called his wife's name Eve, because she would become the mother of all the living."

Genesis 3:20

"Mother is the name for God in the lips and hearts of little children."

William Makepeace Thackeray

☺ Just for laughs ☺



The Church Mouse:

Thought for the month:

"Life is a promise. Fulfill it."

... Mother Teresa



Church Staff

Pastor Rev. Bruce Ballantine

Director of Children & Families: MaryEllen Castaldo

Director of Music: Dr. Edward Schmiedecke

Organist: Linda Sweetman Waters

Director of Youth Music & Handbells: Carol Schmiedecke

Administrative Manager: Dana Feeney

Bookkeeper: Lavonne McMillen

Sexton: Tom Carozza

Custodian: George Wood

Director Nursery School: Julia Bolt

Newsletter Editor: Carrie Werner

(Volunteer)

Photography and Community

Bulletin Board: Joanne Bonwick (Volunteer)

Church Phone: (201) 652-2504

Church Web Site: www.firstpresridgewood.org

Pastor Bruce: (215) 337-5623 Please contact him directly for Pastoral Care.