

First Press Newsletter



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,

Nineteenth-century English poet John Keats once wrote: “Nothing ever becomes real till it is experienced.” I discovered the truth of that statement during my recent visit to Lebanon and Syria. Prior to leaving home, I learned what I could about these two Middle Eastern countries by talking with First Pres members who once lived there, by reading newspaper articles and by reading a book about the work of early Presbyterian missionaries in that region. But the life experience of the people of Lebanon and Syria did not become real to me until I spent the better part of two weeks in their midst. Even then, I caught just a glimpse of what it’s like to live there.

Most of my time during this Outreach Foundation trip was spent in Syria, a nation still recovering from years of war. Bombed-out buildings are common in and around Aleppo. And military checkpoints dot the streets and highways throughout the country. But war hasn’t been the only problem facing the people of Syria in recent years. Economic sanctions have crippled the Syrian economy. Hyperinflation has caused the cost of consumer goods to go through the roof. The average income is now \$30-\$50 per month. And it is estimated that 90% of the Syrian population now lives below the poverty line. To say that life is hard there would be an understatement. Countless young people told members of our team that they hope to finish their education, then leave, because their opportunities to build a life in Syria are extremely limited.

Yet, the people I met in the churches of Syria face these challenges with faith and resilience. During worship services, the sanctuaries are packed, the singing is robust, and the conversations during coffee hour are filled with joy and laughter. Just as important, the churches are doing the important work of sharing the love of Christ with their neighbors.

The National Presbyterian Church of Aleppo is a case in point. The congregation has provided a faithful Christian witness in the historic old city since 1853. However, in 2012 the sanctuary of the church’s building was destroyed by radical Islamist groups in two consecutive explosions which reduced the building to rubble.

Once Aleppo was liberated by the government of Syria, and relative peace had returned to the city, a new worship center for the congregation was constructed in another part of the city. Across the street from its new location, the congregation has established the Children of the Word Health Clinic, providing free or low-cost health care to the poor people of the neighborhood. And recently, the church purchased an adjacent building which, when renovated, will provide space for its swelling Sunday school program.

Furthermore, because the church’s original site is located in the historic center of the old city, the National Evangelical Synod of Syria and Lebanon (Presbyterian) has made the commitment to re-establish its presence with a new structure on the site of the destroyed building. Once construction is completed, The Aleppo Christian Center will serve as a place for outreach to the community, theological training, ecumenical conferences and religious dialogue. As members of our team toured the construction site, I was truly amazed at the progress. And it occurred to me that this new building has already become a symbol of resurrection following the devastation of war.

As I think about this Aleppo congregation and the other Presbyterian churches of Syria which I visited, I am reminded of the Apostle Paul's words to the church in Rome: "And not only that, but we also boast in our sufferings, knowing that suffering produces endurance, and endurance produces character, and character produces hope, and hope does not disappoint us, because God's love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit that has been given to us." (5:3-5)

It seems to me that the church in Syria has suffered much, but through its suffering has learned endurance, developed character, and lives in hope ó all because of God's great love. To say that I have been inspired is an understatement. Indeed, I have been reminded that all things are possible with God!

Grace and peace,

Bruce



Evening Worship Service in The National Presbyterian Church of Aleppo

"I am the vine, you are the branches..."

- John 15:5



Tree images are often used as symbols in stories to bring clarity to something perhaps only vaguely understood. Even *Genesis* begins with the tale of Adam and Eve and the dreaded apple that fell from the tree which changed the course of human history. Surely we know what happened wasn't the apple's fault.

Endowment's new Committee Chair, Laura Magrath, had her own revelation of the "Tree" as image recently, which she shared with us.

"As I was out on my morning five mile walk recently, I thought of the Endowment Fund represented as a tree. Contributions are the fertilizer which make it grow and the fruit is harvested to share through our donations. BUT, and this is the most important part, we can't lop off branches too often to satisfy a short-sighted need or we will reduce the future harvests."

Your contributions deepen and strengthen the roots of the Fund. The Endowment Committee is dedicated to preserving the integrity of distributions so the Fund will continue to serve us well, now and in the future.

Gifts to Endowment are gifts that keep on giving!

To learn more about ways to give, pick up brochures on tables in the hallway or call or email Joanne Bonwick (201) 652-7520 / joannedbonwick@gmail.com

Thank You For Giving!

Mission



On October 2, Joan Davies delivered dinner to the men at St. Paul's, made by First Pres volunteers. Dinner consisted of lasagna from Marcia Unger, chicken Francaise and rice from Fay Reid, beans with hot dogs from Laura Magrath, fruit and bread from Rebecca Burger, and salad/veggies from Joan Davies.

Thank you, as always, to our faithful volunteers who keep this mission going! Your generosity of time, ingredients, skill and heart is very much appreciated by many!

If anyone is interested in helping out with this mission, or has questions about how it works, please contact Suzy McDevitt by email at suzyjmc2@yahoo.com or by text at 201-315-2063. We are currently scheduling for December and January.

Thank you to everyone who donated items to Warren Point Presbyterian Church's food pantry!



Surrounding our gifts is Pastor Maria Santos and Elder Donna Frohn Apfel.

Your donations were very much appreciated. Their food pantry supports over 35 families in Fair Lawn and Elmwood Park.

Our giving is a reminder of the blessings God gives us and gave to us through Jesus Christ.



For the past 26 years, The Jersey Cares Coat Drive has mobilized the collection and distribution of thousands of "gently used" winter coats to men, women, children, and infants in need.

Last year, Jersey Cares collected more than 20,000 coats throughout the state of New Jersey.

This year, The Mission Peace and Social Righteousness Team is asking people in our area to participate by donating new or gently used coats.

There will be a collection box in the cloister from **November 6th until December 31st**

Announcements



There were 2 meals taken to **Peggy Niemann** in the end of September by Britt Tunick and Sue Sofka. Peggy is very grateful for the meals and a brief visit. If you are able to visit with her, please do, she enjoys the company.



Team 200 is selling once in a lifetime, limited edition, gold plated, church bicentennial ornaments for members, friends and families!

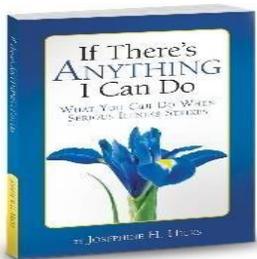
Cost is \$20.00 with all proceeds going towards our bicentennial celebrations being planned for 2023.

You will find a table set up in the auditorium on most Sundays, or stop by the church office and see Dana Feeney on any Tuesday through Friday morning.



The Team 200 Holiday Photo Fundraiser was a great success. With thanks to Sandy Santangelo, Sue Dickinson, Donna Flagg, Jessica Strader Paz and Joan Davies.

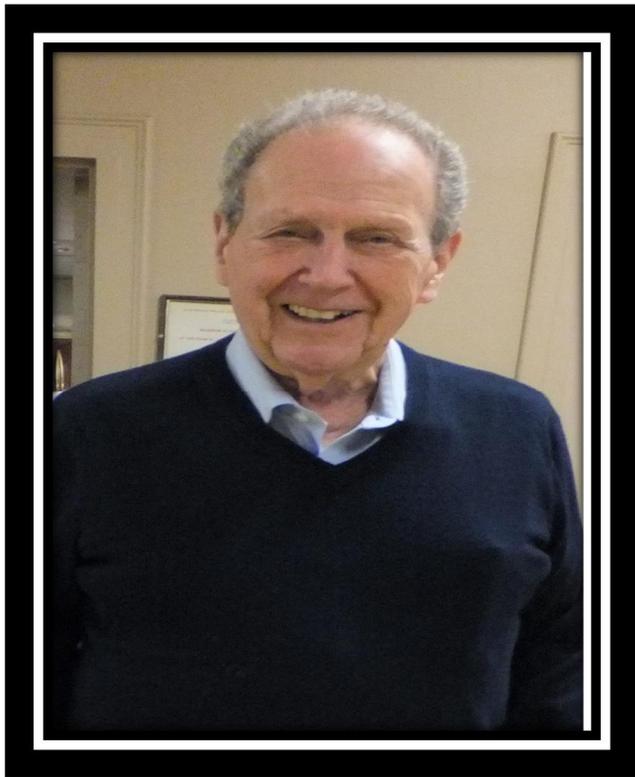
The backdrops will remain in place until our outside tree lighting. If you use them to take your own family pictures, please consider a donation to Team 200!



Thank you to Dawn Murdock and Sue Dickinson for leading a 3 week series based on this book!

It provoked thoughtful and meaningful discussions!





We Remember Albert W. Schagen

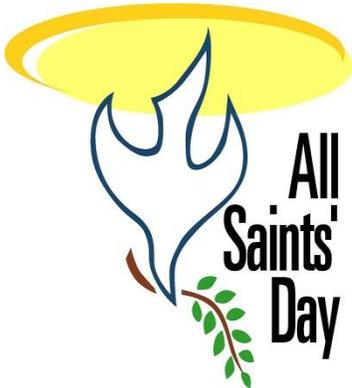
Al was a member of First Pres for over 50 years and beloved by all!

He served as an Elder and Clerk of Session for over 30 years and he was a member of the Endowment Committee for many years.

Please keep Al's family in your prayers, a celebration of his life will be held at First Pres at a later date.



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All Saints' Day will be observed at First Pres on November 13th.

During the worship service there will be a Litany of Remembrance and Prayer of Thanksgiving to thank God for members, family members, and friends who have died in the previous 12 months.

If you would like to have a family member or friend included in the prayer, please notify the church office by Monday, November 7th.

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Don't forget to set your clocks back ~and then come to church on Consecration Sunday November 6th !

There will be the guest preacher followed by a catered luncheon in the auditorium.

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Reminder-If you would like the church to have your designated emergency contact person/information, please contact the church office.

Sunday School Notes

Thank you to our High School students Amanda Schnure and Francesca Feltmann who served as liturgists on Communion Sunday in October!

Our First Pres. Elementary student's lessons in October ...

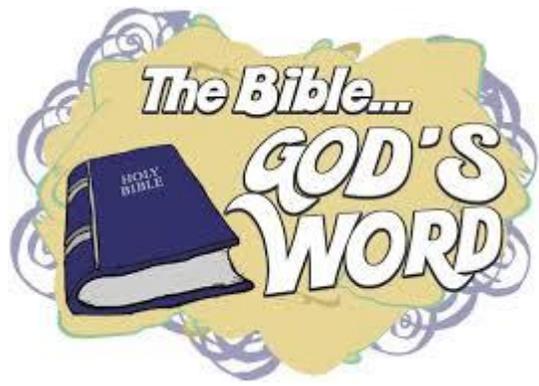
Ecclesiastes 3:1-11 Seasons change but God never changes, Parable of the Mustard Seed, The Persistent Widow, The Thankful Leper, Zacchaeus meets Jesus.



FOOD, FUN &
FELLOWSHIP!

Wonderful afternoon
gathering for families
with young children on
Saturday, October 1st





BIBLE PRESENTATIONS

On October 16th, four of our First Pres students received a new Adventure Bible during our Sunday worship service!

Andrew Dickinson
Sarah Park

2nd grade
2nd grade

Lucy Dickinson
Charlotte Paveo

4th grade
3rd grade



Taking a child, He set him before them, and taking him in His arms, He said to them, "Whoever receives one child like this in My name receives Me; and whoever receives Me does not receive Me, but Him who sent Me." Mark 9:36-37



The Weekday Nursery School is bustling with activity!



The children enjoyed a visit from the Ridgewood Fire Dept. in the beginning of October to acknowledge Fire Safety Month. Everyone did a great job in their Halloween parade and sing-along, their first performance of the year. This month the teachers are emphasizing thankfulness and acts of giving as we move toward the holiday season. Each class will be hosting its own Thanksgiving mini-feast. The children are also busy learning their songs for our upcoming Christmas program, Friday, December 16th @ 9:15 am in the Sanctuary.

Students are enjoying our Creative Builders and Around The World Enrichment Classes. In Creative Builders, the students engage in a variety of construction projects utilizing STEM-based designs and young architect block designs. They enjoy working with large and small blocks, manipulatives, and Legos. In Around the World, students visit a new country each week! Each country has something different to share; a sprinkle of literature, a dabble of maps and flags and a whole lot of art. The students have discovered the thrill of the journey without leaving school!



If you are looking for a quality, nurturing preschool for your child, or know of someone who is, please free to call and schedule a tour. Soon we will be enrolling for the 2023-2024 school year. Active members of First Presbyterian Church are eligible for a discounted tuition. If you have any questions about our program, please call Julia Bolt, Director, @ 201-445-2552.

We wish you and your families a blessed Thanksgiving.







Annual Tree Lighting and caroling happening later this month!

Watch the bulletin for more details!



If you shop online, remember First Pres! Visit smile.amazon.com. Sign in with your Amazon.com credentials. Search for **First Presbyterian Church**- Location: Ridgewood, NJ



NOVEMBER
BIRTHDAYS

Joe Amoruso

Larry Bonwick

MaryEllen Castaldo

Michael Reid

Ryan Schnure

Palmer Yates

If you are not on our church birthday list, please email davies333@aol.com

Church Staff~

Pastor	Rev. Bruce Ballantine
Director of Children & Families	MaryEllen Castaldo
Director of Music	Dr. Ed Schmiedecke
Organist	Linda Sweetman Waters
Director Cherub Choir and Bells	Carol Schmiedecke
Administrative Manager	Dana Feeney
Tom Carozza	Sexton
Custodian	George Wood
Director Nursery School	Julia Bolt
Newsletter Editor	Joan Davies (Volunteer)

Church Phone (201) 652-2504

Pastor Bruce: (215) 337-5623

