



*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,

As I flew home on Monday, May 22, I reflected on my 10-day journey to take part in The National Evangelical (Presbyterian) Synod of Syria and Lebanon Partners' Consultation, held at Dhour Chweir Evangelical Center in Lebanon. In recent years, the people of Lebanon and Syria have experienced overwhelming challenges, one crisis on top of another.

In Lebanon, the problems include economic collapse (sky-high inflation, 40% unemployment, depressed wages, 85% of people living below the poverty line); migration (many educated Lebanese have left the country); an influx of eight million refugees from Syria; a corrupt political class; a government that does not function well; and the Beirut Port explosion. In Syria, the problems include years of war; life under a harsh, autocratic president; economic collapse (sky-high inflation, depressed wages and economic sanctions); mass migration; and the earthquakes in February of this year. And of course, on top of all the other challenges, people in both nations have had to deal with the COVID-19 pandemic.

To say that life is challenging for the people of these two nations would be an understatement. Yet, the churches of the Synod are responding to these challenges with faith, resilience, and compassion. In the words of Rev. Joseph Kassab, the General Secretary of the Synod: "God is calling us to take our tragic situations to bring sweetness out of bitterness. The church of Christ is an oasis planted by God in the desert of this world to irrigate the desert with peace and justice."

Ways in which the church *irrigates the desert* include providing schools for children; leadership development of women; maintaining three active, affordable health clinics and two *elderly houses*; by providing funds to repair homes damaged by the earthquakes; and of course, by ministering to the spiritual needs of the people, offering hope in the face of despair.

Following the conclusion of the conference, I, along with several other attendees, spent two days going out to see what the Body of Christ is doing in Lebanon, visiting a number of schools, clinics and churches. If you haven't done so already, I invite you go on the Ridgewood First Presbyterian Church Members and Friends Facebook page to see pics and brief descriptions of some of these visits, as well as some pics from Sunday worship, the conference itself, and a day of touring the beautiful country of Lebanon.

I believe all the ministries of The National Evangelical Synod of Syria and Lebanon are doing amazing work! However, one ministry stands apart. In 2018, the Synod created a separate NGO called The Compassion Protestant Society (CPS) for the purpose of supporting humanitarian work. And a significant part of that work is accomplished through four CPS Refugee Centers in Lebanon where young children of Syrian refugees, who otherwise would spend their days in the streets, can come to receive an education. Presently, there are 600,000 school-age Syrian refugee children living in Lebanon, and only 52% are in school. In the CPS schools, first and foremost, the children are learning to read and write. On Thursday, May 18, conference attendees visited the CPS Refugee Center in Tripoli.

If you haven't already done so, I invite you to take a look at the Facebook post for that day to see what this ministry looks like. Thanks to Sami Eliya for the daily Facebook posts from my time in Lebanon. Thanks to you for taking the time to read this email and learn a little bit about some of our neighbors in this global village we all call home.

Grace and peace,

Bruce

## ENDOWMENT SUNDAY A SPECIAL REMEMBRANCE



The installation of Doves on our Tree of Life is a cause for celebration. On **June 25<sup>th</sup>** the Endowment Committee will unveil two more Doves on our Tree. Doves are hand-crafted creations designed to remember and honor those who have passed but left an enduring legacy through their investment of extraordinary service or financial support to the work of First Presbyterian Church. We are deeply grateful for their faith and belief in the continued good works of our church family.

At this time we place a Patron Dove on the Tree for Bruce Crocco, who served faithfully for many years teaching youth and accepting many leadership roles. He also led the creation of our current successful Endowment Fund Program.

We also place a Donor Dove on our Tree for the Reitmeier Family who were longtime faithful members and gifted the church generously through their Will.



Please join us on this special day in gratitude for their gifts from which we all continue to be blessed.

*Come see where the Doves will land on our Tree!*

**THERE WILL BE CAKE!!**

Benefactor Dove ó for Legacy Gifts of \$50,000 +  
Donor Dove ó for Legacy Gifts of \$25,000 - \$49,999  
Patron Dove ó for Extraordinary Service over many years.

# MISSION



On Sunday, May 7, Joan Davies delivered dinner to the men at St. Paul's shelter, provided by volunteers from First Pres. On the menu for the evening was chicken and pork sliders made by the Torielli family, franks and beans made by Laura Magrath; macaroni and cheese provided by Elisa Cerrina and Suzy McDevitt (leftover from the Deacon-provided Lenten dinner and frozen), a green salad made by Rebecca Burger, and fruit and bread provided by Linda Strickland.

A big thank you goes out to Joan for jumping to action and volunteering just a week previously, to thaw and heat the macaroni and cheese, and to deliver all of the dishes to St. Paul's, when there was a last minute change of plans. And another big thank you to Rebecca, also, for volunteering just a week previously to replace the veggie dish. We have such a great and dedicated group of volunteer cooks. When that last minute call for help went out, so many reached out with offers to help!

If you are interested in helping out with First Pres's mission at St. Paul's or just have questions, please contact Suzy McDevitt by email at [suzyjmc2@yahoo.com](mailto:suzyjmc2@yahoo.com) or by text at 201-315-2063. We are thrilled to be able to say that the schedules of volunteers for the months of June and July have been completed, thanks to amazing support!



On Saturday, May 6<sup>th</sup> church volunteers; Pastor Bruce, Joan Davies, Richard Davies, John Eliya and Donna Flagg built decks in Paterson under a beautiful blue sky and with direction from Andy Dunn!



There is another Habitat build date on Saturday, June 24<sup>th</sup>!

Sign-up sheets are in the auditorium or email

Donna Flagg at [flaggbda@gmail.com](mailto:flaggbda@gmail.com)

**Building Homes, Communities, and Hope!**





**The Summer Produce Mission is Coming and Needs Volunteers!**

If you are available on a Sunday afternoon to bring produce from the Farmers Market at the Ridgewood train station to the church, or to help load the truck on a Monday morning, please contact Sandy Santangelo! [gssantangelo6@gmail.com](mailto:gssantangelo6@gmail.com)

**A Community Conversation with Ali Stroker & Jim Stroker**

**An Afternoon of Inspiration, Music, Story-telling and Q & A**



**Sunday, June 25,  
3:30 p.m. - 5:00 p.m.**

**First Presbyterian Church of Ridgewood, New Jersey  
722 East Ridgewood Avenue, Ridgewood**

**Free-Will Offering to Benefit  
*Children's Specialized Hospital, an RWJBarnabas Health Facility  
and Family Promise of Bergen County – Camp Lots of Fun***



**200 Years of God's Grace and Glory!**

**FRIDAY, JUNE 9th, 2023 6:00 PM**

CATERED PICNIC | LIVE MUSIC | ACTIVITIES FOR CHILDREN

**SATURDAY, JUNE 10th, 2023 6:00 PM**

EVENING WORSHIP | HYMN SING REFRESHMENTS WILL BE SERVED

**SUNDAY, JUNE 11th, 2023 10:00 AM**

MORNING WORSHIP SERVICE FOLLOWED BY CATERED LUNCHEON

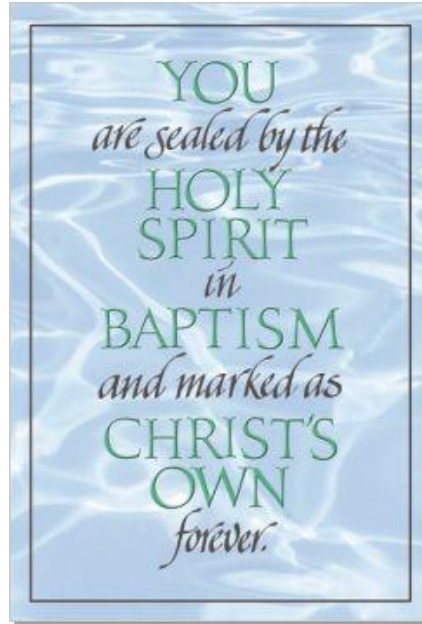
**RSVP BY 6/2/23 TO 201-652-2504 or  
[Dana.Feeney@firstpresridgewood.org](mailto:Dana.Feeney@firstpresridgewood.org)**



~ On April 30th Pastor Bruce baptized ~

Jackson Fretz Morris  
Henry Orfanelli Morris  
Anthony McDermott Morris  
William Blust Morris

Proud parents are Kendra and Matthew Morris!



**Welcome to our church family for we are all one in Christ Jesus!**

## SUNDAY SCHOOL NOTES



We are finishing up our lessons on Families in the Bible, we have covered Isaac and in May, we covered lessons on John 14:6, Mother's Day, Jesus' Ascension, and The Holy Spirit.

**Sunday, June 18:** Today is the last day of Church School and we are celebrating Father's Day!

**Sunday, June 25:** Summer Sunday School classes will begin for students thru 5<sup>th</sup> grade.

**We NEED Volunteers for Vacation Bible School, please prayerfully consider helping to make this week a successful one!**

### Vacation Bible School



**Monday, August 7th - Thursday, August 10th, 2023**  
**Time: 9:00AM-11:30AM**

### First Pres Nursery School Celebrates our 200TH BICENTENNIAL BIRTHDAY!



On Tuesday, May 23rd our First Pres. Nursery School celebrated our church's 200<sup>th</sup> Bicentennial Birthday! There was a story time in the chapel, a special craft, a yummy treat and goodie bags! Thank you to Sue Dickinson and Jeanine Jamieson for their help in making this day very special for all 60 students!





## FAMILY PLANTING DAY

Saturday, May 6<sup>th</sup>, after a light breakfast, First Pres. families and members planted flowers in our Bicentennial garden. The youth also buried a time capsule with some interesting contents! It was a fun time and a beautiful day of weather!

THANK YOU to all who participated and for all your hard work! Peter Castaldo, Paul, Luke, Maddie and Johnny Eliya, Sue Fischer, Ben and Charlotte Pavao and Shane Strickland.

A special thank you to Jessica and Steve Paz for their help in picking up 30 bags of mulch! You two are the best!

Our heartfelt appreciation to all of you who donated and continue to donate flowers/plants for our Bicentennial Garden! God Bless You, each and every one!



LIFE BEGAN IN A  
Garden



## Congratulations to our Graduates- Class of 2023!

### **William Rae**



I am graduating from Ridgewood High School in June. I have been on the honor roll for all 4 years. The sports I have played during high school are lacrosse, football and cross country. I have been involved in the ski, fishing, drone, and engineering clubs.

Outside of high school, I have a drone photography business and build quadcopters. I also began flight training in April 2022, and have recently earned my Private Pilot License. I am licensed to fly a single-engine piston aircraft and carry passengers for non-commercial purposes. My future plan after high school is to attend Florida Institute of Technology in Melbourne, Florida. My major will be Aviation Management/Flight with a minor in Unmanned Aerial Systems. While I attend school there, I will be working on my ratings at Florida Tech's airport, to earn a commercial pilot license. After college, my goal is to work for the airlines.

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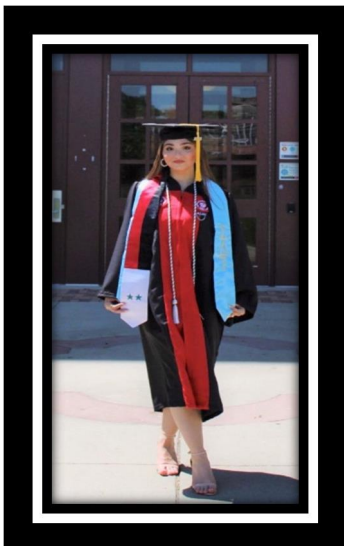
### **Alexandra Santangelo**

Alex graduated Summa Cum from Syracuse University's Industrial & Interaction Design program. She received the VPA Scholar Honor as well as Outstanding Senior Award. At the end of the summer Alex will be joining IBM iX as a UiUx designer in New York City. There she hopes to continue user research, the practice of empathetic design, and leveraging technology to solve problems and improve the human experience.



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### **Samantha Barkho**



Samantha is a recent graduate from Montclair State University where she studied Business Administration with a Concentration in Marketing, minor in Business relationships and Professional selling. She graduated a semester early with the honors of Magna Cum Laude. She will be continuing her journey in marketing working full time.

***“Be strong and of good courage;  
do not be afraid, nor be dismayed, for the LORD your God  
is with you wherever you go.” Joshua 1:9 NKJV - 9***



**200 Seconds-** What First Pres means to Dawn Murdock, Paul Eliya, Lavonne Mcmillen and Joel Torielli!



Please note: If you are too shy to share your “200 Seconds” during worship but would like to submit it in writing, email to [joandavies916@gmail.com](mailto:joandavies916@gmail.com) and it will be included in a fall newsletter.

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On behalf of First Pres, Pastor Bruce presents a home communion kit to Rev. Ibrahim Nseir for use with the homebound or hospitalized members of his Aleppo congregation.



For more pictures of Pastor Bruce’s trip to Lebanon, check out our church Facebook page.

<https://www.facebook.com/firstpresridgewood/>

A big thank you to Rev. Susan Friedl for preaching while Pastor Bruce was away!



Michael Burger      Jim Davidson      Lucy Dickinson      Andrew Dickinson      Carol Eliya  
Luke Feltmann      Kyle Feltmann      Michael Hutton      Anita Hutton  
Sandy Santangelo      Dave Shaw      Lindsay Strickland      Shane Strickland      Lucy Sourial  
Rob Tedeschi      Kate Yates

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## Church Staff

Pastor	Rev. Bruce Ballantine
Director of Children & Families	MaryEllen Castaldo
Director of Music	Dr. Edward Schmiedecke
Organist	Linda Sweetman Waters
Dir. of Youth Music and Handbells	Carol Schmiedecke
Administrative Manager	Dana Feeney
Bookkeeper	Lavonne Mcmillen
Sexton	Tom Carozza
Custodian	George Wood
Director Nursery School	Julia Bolt
Newsletter Editor	Joan Davies (Volunteer)

**Church Phone (201) 652-2504**

[www.firstpresridgewood.org](http://www.firstpresridgewood.org)

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**Pastor Bruce: (215) 337-5623 please contact him directly for Pastoral Care**

