



The First Presbyterian Church of Ridgewood

First Press Newsletter

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

April 2025

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,

By the time you read this, Ivan, Kateryna, Yan and Kira Mashliakevych will have begun settling in Charlotte, NC.

Although they are sad to leave us, the move is what is best for the family at this time. Ivan was offered a job earning considerably more than he was earning here, and the cost of living is lower in North Carolina than it is in New Jersey. What's more, they will now be closer to Kateryna's mother, who also lives in North Carolina.

It was nearly three years ago that the Mashliakevych family arrived in the United States. During the early days of the Russian invasion of Ukraine, their home in the city of Mariupol was bombed. They then fled to Poland, where they stayed briefly, before coming to the United States through the Uniting for Ukraine program.



The evening before their arrival, I received a text from a staff person from Stewartsville Presbyterian Church in Highlands Presbytery, asking if our congregation might be able and willing to walk alongside the family since they would be living in an apartment in nearby Garfield. The next day was a Sunday, and I shared this information with the congregation during worship.

Your response was amazing!

By that evening, we were able to deliver many of the items they needed to begin furnishing their apartment as well as a stroller for baby Yan. By the end of that week, thanks to members of First Pres, their apartment was completely furnished – including a refrigerator to replace the one that came with the apartment because it did not work. Shortly thereafter, many of you contributed to a love offering so the family could purchase additional items they needed.

During the past three years, members and friends of the congregation have truly walked alongside the Mashliakevych family:

- Offering friendship and inviting them into your homes for social gatherings.
- Helping Ivan find work as a handyman.
- Providing fresh vegetables through the Produce Mission.
- Providing Ivan with some drywall repair work at the church.
- Arranging for Yan to enroll in preschool as well as summer activities.
- Providing transportation for Yan to attend preschool.

- Arranging for a baby shower prior to the birth of Kira.
- Welcoming the family into the membership of the church and baptizing Yan and Kira.
- Assisting them financially through our mission budget.
- Securing Refugee Assistance Grants through the Presbytery of Northeast NJ to assist the family financially.
- Attempting to help Ivan find employment commensurate with his experience.
- Connecting the family to an attorney at Church World Service, who assisted them with their asylum application, which he believes stands a good chance of approval.
- Helping them pack and prepare for their move.

Both the Old and New Testaments teach us to welcome the stranger. In Leviticus 19:34, we read: *The alien who resides with you shall be to you as the citizen among you; you shall love the alien as yourself, for you were aliens in the land of Egypt: I am the Lord your God.* And in Hebrews 13:2, we read: *Do not neglect to show hospitality to strangers, for by doing that, some have entertained angels without knowing it.*

As your pastor, I am extremely pleased that this congregation has been so welcoming to Ivan, Kateryna, Yan and Kira!

As we prepare for Easter, I am reminded that ours is the God who specializes in resurrection – bringing new life out of death and destruction, healing where there has been pain, and hope in the midst of despair.

I am grateful that God has used us as instruments of grace to assist the Mashliakevych family as they rebuild a new life together out of the ruins of the home and the life they left behind.

Grace and peace,

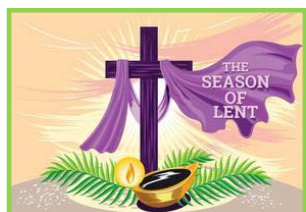
Bruce



L to R: Kateryna, Kira, Yan, Anzhela (Kateryna's mother) and Ivan



Our April Sunday school studies include Palm Sunday and lessons on Easter and John 20:19-3 (Jesus appears to the disciples)



Thank you to all who served as liturgists during our season of Lent! Cole Bellorgey, Olivia Davis, Maddie Eliya, Luke Eliya, Hudson Feeney, Luke Feltmann, CJ Torielli, Luca Torielli and Darvin & Hadley Wall!



Our St. Patty's Bingo Event was held on Sunday, March 16th. We had 30 Adults and children in attendance. Pizza, Popcorn and Cookies were served! It was Lots of Fun! A special Thank you to CJ, Dante & Luca Torielli, and Johnny Eliya for your leadership in calling BINGO numbers and checking cards, well done boys! Congratulations to all the winners! Andrew, John, Krystina and Lucy Dickinson, Hank & Jack Morris, John Eliya, Paul Eliya, Carol Schmiedecke, Darvin & Hadley Wall.



Procession of the Handbell Choir and Church School Families

On Sunday, April 13th church school families are invited to wave palm branches and process behind the Handbell choir at the beginning of worship service. Families will take their seats on their way up the aisle. Children will bring their filled "FISH BANKS" up to the front during the children's message and drop their banks in the designated box.



We are asking for **candy donations** for our Easter egg hunt. Small foiled chocolate eggs, jolly ranchers, any small candies that are individually wrapped that will fit in a small plastic egg. **NO NUTS PLEASE!** There will be a designated box in the hall outside the Collentine Room.



You are invited to our annual Easter Egg Hunt!

Easter Sunday, April 20, 2025: After our 10:00am worship service children ages 2-8yrs old and their families will meet in the auditorium, we will give each child an Easter bag, and then together we will walk to the "church manse" next door where children will hunt for eggs! Children 9 years thru high school will receive an Easter treat bag!

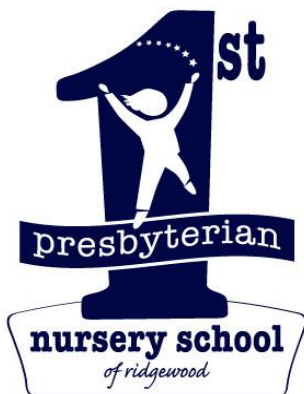
"SAVE THE DATE"

VACATION BIBLE SCHOOL PROGRAM AT FIRST PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH
722 E. RIDGEWOOD AVE.
MONDAY - THURSDAY, AUGUST 4TH TO THE 7TH 9:00am - 11:30am!



FOR CHILDREN AGES 4 TO 7
COST: \$35.00 PER CHILD

Program includes: Music, Bible stories, activities, snack time & craft time!
REGISTRATION FORM AND MORE INFORMATION WILL BE AVAILABLE IN JUNE



Last month, the children and teachers enjoyed a school wide theme of Read Across America. Everyone enjoyed special stories, creative crafts, and wearing silly clothes. Guest readers volunteered to read to each class.



Our Fours Class enjoyed a unit all about Simple Machines. They learned the difference between pulleys, levers and screws. They experimented with hands-on activities reflecting these types of machines.



Registration Ongoing

2 1/2 - 5 years old
Half Day 9:00 - 11:30am
Full Day 9:00 - 2:00pm

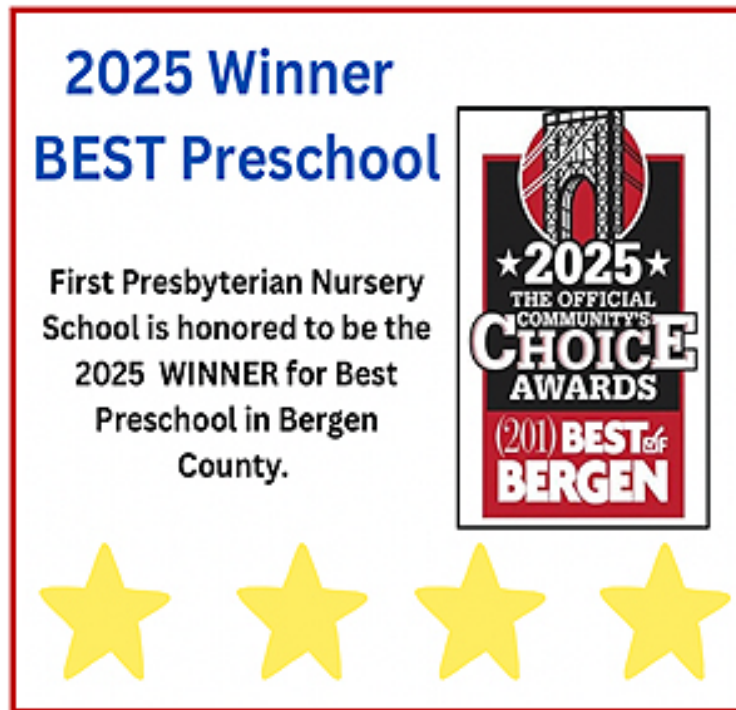


preparing our children for kindergarten. We look forward to hearing from you!

Registration for the 2025-2026 school year is underway! We offer programs for children 2 ½ years – 5 years, 5 days/week. 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

Please feel free to like and follow us on our Facebook page, First Presbyterian Nursery School Ridgewood

We knew it all along...but now all of Bergen County (201) will know it...
First Presbyterian Nursery School, Ridgewood was voted number one Preschool in the County!
Congratulations to Director Julia Bolt and her staff for being recognized for
what you put forth for the children and for simply what you are...*the best!*



Mission:



Nothing brings people together like a home-cooked meal, and in March, several generous families and individuals stepped up to make sure those in need had a warm, delicious dinner.

The Wall family went all in with homemade lasagna—and not only that; they also delivered the feast, hot and ready to serve! The Torielli family kept things fresh with a crisp, green salad to round out the meal.

Adding to the feast, Sue Sofka contributed a savory hamburger casserole, while Carrie Werner delighted taste buds with her flavorful tortellini alfredo with peas and ham. And no meal is complete without fresh-baked goodness—Rebecca Burger delivered fresh bread and fruit, bringing the perfect finishing touch.

A huge thank you to all who contributed! Your kindness and generosity are making a real difference, one meal at a time. If you'd like to get involved please use the link below to signup:

<https://www.signupgenius.com/go/20F0845ACAE2BA7F49-51100449-stpauls>



~ Experience Lent in a New and Deeper Way ~

You are invited!
Come and be a part of these events!

Wonderful opportunities to take time to reflect on our spiritual and faith journey as we prepare our hearts and minds for Easter.

Lenten Supper Series - every Wednesday through April 9th.

During Lent, you are invited to attend the Lenten Suppers. It is a wonderful opportunity to enjoy a simple meal and worship on Wednesdays from **6:00 to 7:00 p.m.** During worship, members and friends will share a portion of their faith journey. We will meet in the Auditorium for each of the remaining Lenten Suppers.

<u>Date</u>	<u>Meal Preparation</u>	<u>Speaker</u>
4/02	First Pres Deacons	Rita Infante
4/09	First Pres Session	Carol Eliya

Dinner and worship will take place in the Auditorium.

A free-will offering will cover the cost of the meal.

MaryEllen Castaldo will offer an activity for children during worship.

*Come and receive food for body and soul.
One more thing: Invite a friend to join us!*

Worship Services:

April 13TH – 10:00 a.m.	Palm Sunday Worship Service in the Sanctuary
April 17TH – 6:00 p.m.	Maundy Thursday Service in the Chapel
April 18TH – 1:00 p.m.	Good Friday Service in the Chapel with Trinity Church
April 20TH – 10:00 a.m.	Easter Sunday Service in the Sanctuary

Also, Join Us for our Fundraiser Event

Lenten Mission Donation Drive to Help City Relief in Paterson
Collecting through Palm Sunday, April 13TH

Donate travel size items for hygiene kits and join others on
Palm Sunday to package the kits.

Endowment Corner - April 2025

'LENT' US A HAND!



What does Lent have to do with Endowment? Well, we could say everything or nothing and have both be right. The experience of Lent is preparation for the arrival of Jesus as savior of humanity. We mourn His passing as human but celebrate His triumphant return, gifting us with life eternal.

Giving to Endowment is saying we believe in the present and future life of the church and actively support its ongoing mission to faithfully serve in His name.

With grateful hearts we thank all who helped our Endowment Fund grow in 2024 and encourage all to join us to stay the course so those now and those who come after us will all rest in the assurance that God is with us always.

Thank you to:

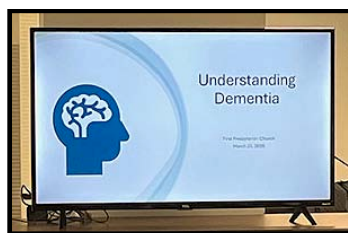
Pastor Bruce Ballantine	Doug & Denise Goudsward*
Joanne & Larry Bonwick	Claire Hothem
Joan Bulezo*	Rita Infante
Dee Dance*	Laura & Leo Magrath
Anthony Calabrese	Elise Marangi*
Joan & Richard Davies	Dwight & Jo-Ann Massey
Carol & Jim Davidson	Kurt & Don Schagen*
Melissa Davis	Dave & Mary Shaw
Roberta Dawson*	Robert Townsend*
Barbara Dunn*	Lindsay Wall
Janet Johnston	Joan Wilters*
Emmy Eliya	

During Lent we reflect on our blessings and ask for grace to carry His message beyond our doors with courage.

Won't you 'Lent' us a hand this Lenten season?

Your Endowment Committee,
Richard Davies, Chairperson, Joanne Bonwick, Don Dexter,
Peter Hare, Laura Magrath, David Shaw

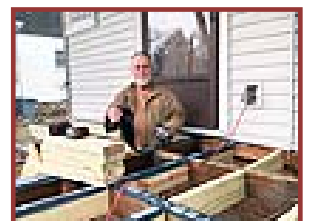
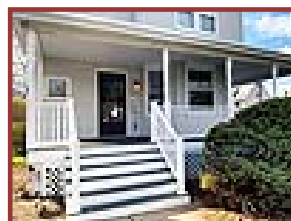
*Indicates non-member



Understanding Dementia Presentation by Maureen Braen 3/23/25



**Thanks to Passaic County Habitat and First Pres volunteers
who worked to repair the manse porch!**





FIRST PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH & NURSERY SCHOOL

CHILDREN'S BOOK DRIVE

GIVE THE GIFT OF READING & MAKE A DIFFERENCE IN THE LIFE OF A CHILD!

**JOIN US FOR A CHILDREN'S GENTLY USED OR NEW BOOK DRIVE TO BENEFIT
THE BOYS & GIRLS CLUBS OF HAWTHORNE, WAYNE, CLIFTON & PATERSON!**

Adults, children and youth, come and get your bag in the Cloister Hallway Book Center
beginning Sunday, April 27th.

Then fill your bag with children's gently used and new books, suitable for ages Preschool &
Kindergarten through 5th Grade.

Return your filled bag to the church on
Sunday May 4th, 11th, or 18th

and place it in a Little Red Wagon. Ask neighbors, relatives, and your children or grandchildren
to go through their books and donate.

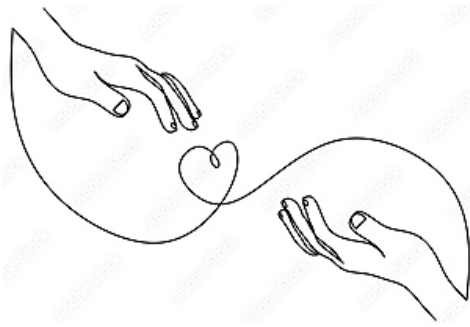
We thank Stop & Shop and Whole Foods, Ridgewood and Market Basket, Wyckoff
for donating the bags.

Questions? Contact Sally Teschon at 201-669-8589
or Nursery School Director Julia Bolt at 201-445-2552.

Sponsored by the Matthew 25 Task Force and 1st Pres Nursery School.

Thank you for your support!





Grateful Thanks from Our First Pres Ukraine Family
~ Ivan and Kateryna Mashliakevych ~

For the past two and half years, First Pres Church has had the opportunity to assist the Mashliakevych family, a Ukrainian refugee family in the process of resettlement. We have been blessed to be able to walk alongside Ivan and Kateryna, and their son, Yan who is now three years old. Their five-month-old baby girl, Kira, was recently baptized.

Ivan accepted a higher paying position as the Director of Engineering with Sonesta Hotels. They will be moving to Charlotte, NC. Although, we are happy for them, we are also sad to see them leave NJ and our church.

As you can imagine, Ivan and Kateryna are filled with mixed emotions. They are sad to leave the friends they have made and their First Pres Church family. But they are grateful for the work opportunity and a chance to provide a better quality of life for their family.

Ivan and Kateryna have written the following beautiful, heartfelt letter to First Pres Church:

Dear Pastor Bruce, Donna and Church Family,

We are writing to express our heartfelt gratitude for the kindness and support you have shown us during this hard time after the experiences during the war. Your generosity and prayers have truly made a difference in our lives and we are deeply thankful for the love and care you have extended to our family.

The assistance you provided, such a financial aid, furniture, food donations, help with a baby stuff for Kira and Yan, school assistance for Yan, emotional support, and prayers have been a great blessing.

Thank you so much also for helping with the move. It is a testament to the compassion and faith that defines this wonderful church community. Your willingness to serve and uplift others is truly inspiring, and we feel blessed to be a part of this family of faith.

Please extend our gratitude to everyone who played a role in helping us. We pray that God continues to bless the church and each of you abundantly for the kindness you have shown.

With a thankful heart,

Mashliakevych Family





Preaching on Sunday, April 6 ***Reverend Dr. Rose Niles***

Rev. Dr. Rose Niles, who serves as a Ministry Relations Officer for the Presbyterian Foundation, will be our guest preacher on Sunday, April 6. Her sermon title: *The Joy of Generosity*, based on Matthew 14:13-21. Following worship, she will offer a workshop, *Creating a Culture of Generosity*, in the Minnema Room. A light lunch will be served.

Dr. Niles works with Presbyterian Church (USA) congregations in Maine, New Hampshire, Vermont, Massachusetts, Connecticut, Rhode Island, New York, New Jersey, and the Pennsylvania Presbyteries of Philadelphia and Donegal.

Prior to joining the Foundation, Dr. Niles served as Development Officer at Austin Presbyterian Theological Seminary. She also served with the Committee of Theological Education for almost seven years as Associate for Theological Education and Seminary Relations. She served as pastor to congregations in the New York area and in Louisville.

A life-long Presbyterian reared in the Bronx, she served as the Vice Moderator of the Synod of the Northeast at a young age. Later, as a young pastor, she served as the Moderator of the Synod. During her time at New York Theological Seminary, she taught in multiple programs, supervised DMin projects, and taught in their master's program in Sing-Sing maximum security prison.

A graduate of the Bronx High School of Science, Rose has degrees from Harvard University and New York Theological Seminary.



Question: Why is Peter Pan always flying?

Answer: Because he *Neverlands*.

(I love this joke because it never *grows old*.)

Two windmills are standing on a wind farm.
One asks, "What's your favorite kind of music?"
The other replies, "I'm a big *metal fan*."

The Church Mouse:

Thought for the month:

"The happiest man is he who learns from nature the lesson of worship".

... Ralph Waldo Emerson



April 22, 2025

The global theme of Earth Day 2025 is "Our Power, Our Planet," emphasizing the importance of renewable energy and collective action to protect the planet. Earth Day raises awareness of the need to protect Earth's natural resources for future generations. Let's try to do our part, no matter how small we may think it is. Recycle, avoid single use plastics like plastic straws, support our local and National Parks, strive for natural energy sources, and support climate change programs.

We only have one mother Earth. Let's treat her right!



Robin Byrne
Lily Cohen
Vera Coleman
Emmy Eliya
John Eliya
Collin Feeney
Hudson Feeney
John Hutton
Samantha McDevitt
John Plucinski
Stephanie Strickland
Gianna Torielli
Rodger Yaden

Here's Wishing everyone a *great birthday* and a *wonderful* year ahead...

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.

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He is Risen! Happy Easter