



The First Presbyterian Church of Ridgewood

First Press Newsletter

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

February 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,

Several years ago, I preached a sermon at First Pres in which I encouraged us to keep the fourth commandment: “Remember the sabbath day, and keep it holy. Six days you shall labor and do all your work. But the seventh day is a sabbath to the LORD your God; you shall not do any work” (Exodus 20:8-10b)

In that sermon, I reminded us that the commandments are given by God for our benefit;

and a day set aside for rest and worship is good for us. A day of rest from our occupations or daily responsibilities is good for our physical, mental and spiritual health; and time given to weekly worship refreshes us and feeds us spiritually.

Recently, I ran across these wise words, written by Barbara Brown Taylor: “It does seem to me that at least some of us have made an idol of exhaustion. The only time we know we have done enough is when we are running on empty and when the ones we love most are the ones we see the least.”

If we find ourselves working such long hours that exhaustion is becoming our normal, then our lives are out of balance. If people ask us how we’re doing, and we answer that we’re exhausted as if that’s a good thing, then maybe we have made an idol out of productivity and, along with it, exhaustion. If we find ourselves spending endless hours working and too few hours with those we love, then maybe it’s time for a reset.

We need a day every seven days or so to rest and play. We need to take time away from the daily grind to spend with friends and family. We need to build in time for regular worship, a way to stay connected to God and remind us that we are loved by God, and that love is not tied to our productivity.

When church members comment on something I’ve said in one of my sermons, I often say that we preachers preach what we need to hear. Such a true statement! A few months ago, I began to notice that I was not taking a day off consistently. I was not building sabbath time into my week. Yes, I would take a morning off here or an afternoon off there. But seldom was I taking an entire day off. As a result of this realization, and with encouragement from the Personnel Committee and the cooperation of other church committees, I am now taking Monday as a day off.

So, with worship on Sundays and a day off on Mondays, your pastor is finally practicing what he preaches. The question I ask myself is: Why did it take me so long? That 24-hour block of time away from church responsibilities each week has been refreshing and rejuvenating!

(Con’t)



Friends, as your pastor, I encourage you to do likewise. If you're not already doing so, build sabbath time into your week. You won't be disappointed!

Grace and peace,

Bruce



Our February Sunday school studies include lessons on the Books of the Bible, and the Old Testament.



Denim Day/Dress down day was held on January 26th

Thank you to all who donated to our Denim Day/Dress-Down day fundraiser! For \$10.00 you were able to come to church in comfort! Proceeds will be split to go toward youth activities in 2025 and a mission organization chosen by our Youth Group! The Youth Group met in the Minnema room after church for pizza and making Valentine's day cards for shut ins.



Get into the game by making a donation in a "soup pot" after worship service on **Sunday, February 9th**.

Our Youth will be posted at all exits to collect your donations after worship.

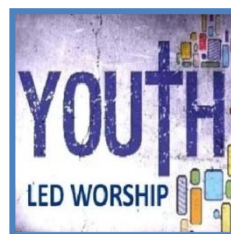
Let's come together! As we enjoy the Super Bowl and remember those who may not have a bowl of soup to eat.

We invite everyone to join us after Worship to enjoy a cup of soup or chili in our Auditorium!

Help us to support **Eva's Village** in Paterson, N.J.

So they can continue to be the place "where hope begins" for so many.

February 23rd is our Youth service on the 7th Sunday after Epiphany. We are excited to have our youth participate once again in leading our Sunday worship service!





All classes enjoyed the In-House Animal school field trip. Each student was very engaged in learning about a tortoise, a toad, a snake and a bearded dragon. The best part, they got to pet each one!

Our Fours Dramatic Play Area has transformed into a Veterinary Center. It is an active center with students signing “patients” in and pretending to be veterinarians healing animal friends.



We just completed our annual parent/teacher conferences in January. The Nursery School staff prepared a Developmental Checklist and Student Portfolio for each child. Student Portfolios and Developmental Checklist were shared with parents during their conference time.

If you are looking for a quality, nurturing preschool for your 2 ½ - 6-year-old child, or know of someone who is, please call us to arrange a tour of our school. We have begun registration for the 2025-2026 school year. We are offering half-day and full-day classes. Active members of First Pres. Church receive a tuition discount. If you have any questions about our program, please call Julia Bolt, Director, @ 201-445-2552.

Youth Triennium 2025

Attention all High School Students!



Get ready for an unforgettable adventure of faith, friendship, and fun! From **July 28th to 31st**, the Presbyterian Church (USA) invites you to join **thousands of youth from across the country** in **Louisville, KY** for **four incredible days** of worship, recreation, Bible study, outreach, and faith-building experiences—all centered around the inspiring theme: **“As If We Were Dreaming”** (Psalm 126:1).

Imagine diving deep into God’s Word, making new friends, serving others, and experiencing life-changing moments of worship that will set your heart on fire for Jesus!

Don’t miss out! This amazing opportunity only happens **once every three years!**
Registration begins February 3rd!

The Mission, Peace, and Social Righteousness Team is ready to support you by helping with the cost. So, no excuses—this is your time!

Let Pastor Bruce know if you're ready to take part in this powerful journey of faith.
Your dream is calling—are you ready to answer?



Do you *need* transportation, or can you *offer* transportation?

As part of caring for our congregation, the Deacons realize that there is sometimes a need for a church member’s transportation to or from church on Sunday, to a church meeting or choir practice, or to an occasional appointment during the week.

In an effort to aid in arranging this occasional transportation need, we’ve asked for volunteer drivers. And while we’ve been able to start a list of volunteers, we are in need of more. Volunteers certainly do not need to be available all of the time, and are more than welcome to specify days/times when they may be available.

When we receive a request for help in arranging a ride, we will contact those volunteers who may be available; to see if anyone is able to accommodate the specific request. If one of the volunteers is able to accommodate, that driver and the member in need will be asked to get in touch with one another, and they will make the final arrangements together. Simple as that!

As a possible driver, consider this as an opportunity to get to know another member a little better, to engage in meaningful conversation as you provide some help, and to lighten the load for a fellow church member in need. Thanks so much for prayerfully considering!

If you are a member in need of transportation to church, a church meeting or an appointment, please feel free to reach out with your request in advance. We will do our best to try to find a ride for you!

Please contact **Suzy McDevitt** by text at **201-315-2063** or by email at **suzyjmcd2@yahoo.com** if you would like to volunteer, if you have some questions, or if you are in need of transportation.

Endowment Corner

THE FACES OF ENDOWMENT



In the month of February, we celebrate Valentine's Day which leads us to think of things and people we love. As I reflect on our committee, I can't help but think of the challenges that our very own members carry and the love that sustains them. Two members have the recent loss of a spouse. One has become a caregiver to a spouse. Two of us offer frequent loving support to young families while also being a support to aging family members. For some, there are ongoing health issues. Yet, there is a strong desire to serve a common purpose through our church community.

We are not unique in dealing with challenges, and still making time to serve that common purpose. For our committee, it's bringing light and life to our Endowment Fund. It's because we have protected our fund by not invading the principle that has grown and earned substantial income. In order to keep that income growing, we hold fast to the availability of funds that can be used for unbudgeted church projects and mission requests each year.

We hope you will continue to support our Endowment through gifts for our 'Tree of Life', our Green Umbrella Note Cards and outright cash donations. Please take note that when you make a donation to Endowment, by check, or Tithely, you **MUST** indicate by memo or by checking an available box that it is to be credited to Endowment. We don't want to miss thanking anyone for their donation. If the memo only says 'contribution', it will go to the General Fund.

Blessings and Happy Valentine's Day from your Endowment Committee,
Richard Davies (Chair person), Joanne Bonwick, Don Dexter, Peter Hare,
Laura Magrath, David Shaw.



Don, Laura, Richard, Dave, Joanne, Peter

MISSION:



On January 5th, we came together to lend a hand and a hearty meal to the men's homeless shelter at St. Paul's. Suzy dazzled with her signature lasagna, Barbara brought comfort in the form of beef stew over noodles, and Laura wowed everyone with perfectly cooked pork tenderloin. To top it off, the Torielli family provided a bounty of fresh fruit to add a refreshing and healthy touch.

Each dish was delivered hot and ready to serve, reminding us all that a warm meal can be a powerful way to share kindness and community. It's amazing what a little teamwork (and some excellent cooking skills) can do! Want to join this delicious cause? Click the link to sign up and make a difference. Thank you!

Sign up here:

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



Crafted with Love

Our charity knitting/crocheting group will begin on Tuesday, February 4th at 1:30-3:00 in the Minnema Room. We will meet the 1st and 3rd Tuesdays of each month to create charity projects beginning with pocket prayer shawls and hats for City Relief.

Please bring one skein of worsted weight acrylic yarn (ie Red Heart) in any color and a size 7 needle or size E crochet hook. Bobbe will bring the patterns. You may also bring a stitch counter or pad and pencil to keep track of your stitches in the pattern. Also, please bring a beverage for yourself...and dessert will be provided. Looking forward to a fun, social time to craft with love! Call Bobbe with any questions – (201)410-6461.



Jill Critchley

Kali-Roi Eklof

Salwa Eliya

Doris Greenleaf

Matthew Leibfred

David Marchionni

Andy McDevitt

Linda Strickland

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



First Wednesdays

February 2025

Ladies, join us for an evening of food, conversation, and spiritual inspiration. It's a wonderful opportunity for women of all ages to gather together with church friends and make new ones, as we discover fresh ways to connect with one another and with God. Each gathering will include a brief spiritual inspiration with most of the time for people to enjoy fellowship over food.

- What:** **February Hostess – Donna Flagg**
You are invited to bring a dish to the potluck dinner.
- Spiritual Inspiration for the Month – Suzy McDevitt**
Modern Day Miracles
- Date:** **Wednesday, February 5, 2025**
- Time:** **6:30 p.m. - 8:30 p.m.**
- Place:** **First Presbyterian Church**
Minnema Room

Please RSVP by Friday, January 31st to Donna Flagg

Email: flaggbda@gmail.com

Phone: **201-819-2327**

ReCapping First Wednesdays January Meeting

The group's first meeting of 2025 was held on January 6th and was an inspirational and delicious get together. One of our newest church members, Lindsay Wall, provided the group with a delicious homemade Lasagna meal and an inspirational program based on Epiphany and the Three Magi.

We all were asked to select a cut out Star, which had a special word printed on the reverse side. Each word became our "Star Word" to carry with us in thought and deed throughout the year. Come January 2026, we will revisit our Star Word at our First Wednesdays meeting and discuss how we evolved into recognizing and incorporating our Star Word throughout the year!



Lindsay Wall, Donna Flagg & Laura Magrath



Hammering 4 Habitat is BACK!

Join us for **Hammering 4 Habitat**, where community spirit meets construction! This exciting, family-friendly event is your chance to help us build walls for future Habitat homes while strengthening our mission of hope and transformation in Passaic County.

Build a Wall: Put your skills to work building framed walls that will become the foundation of a Habitat home. (*Register to build by 2/14*)

Sign & Decorate: Add your personal touch to our walls by signing and decorating studs with messages of hope for the future homeowners.

Fun for All Ages: Enjoy games, crafts, and activities, plus refreshments—all included with your **FREE** admission!

The flyer features a blue background with a circular photo of volunteers building a wall. Text includes the event name, date, time, location, and a QR code. A 'JOIN US!' call to action is in a speech bubble, and a sponsor logo for Visions Federal Credit Union is at the bottom right.

PASSAIC COUNTY HABITAT FOR HUMANITY'S
HAMMERING 4 HABITAT
Wall Building Event
at First Presbyterian Church of Ridgewood

JOIN US!

10:00 am - 1:00 pm
Saturday, February 22, 2025
722 E Ridgewood Ave., Ridgewood, NJ

For more information & to register to build a wall:
Visit www.habitatpc.org/h4h
or scan the QR code.

Light refreshments will be provided.
Parking available on S. Van Dien Ave

For more information, please contact Wodline at wodline@habitatpc.org.

Sponsored by:
VISIONS
FEDERAL CREDIT UNION

Don't miss this opportunity to swing a hammer, make memories, and help build brighter futures. Together, we'll create homes, strengthen communities, and bring hope to families in need, see you there!

Passaic County Habitat for Humanity

PO Box 2585
Paterson, NJ 07509

Families and individuals partner with us to build or improve a place they can call home.

Tuesday Morning Yoga with Jim Stroker

Certified Yoga Instructor Jim Stroker will offer Restorative Yoga Classes in the First Presbyterian Church Minnema Room from 9:00am - 10:15am on Tuesdays.

February 4th, 11th, 25th and March 4th

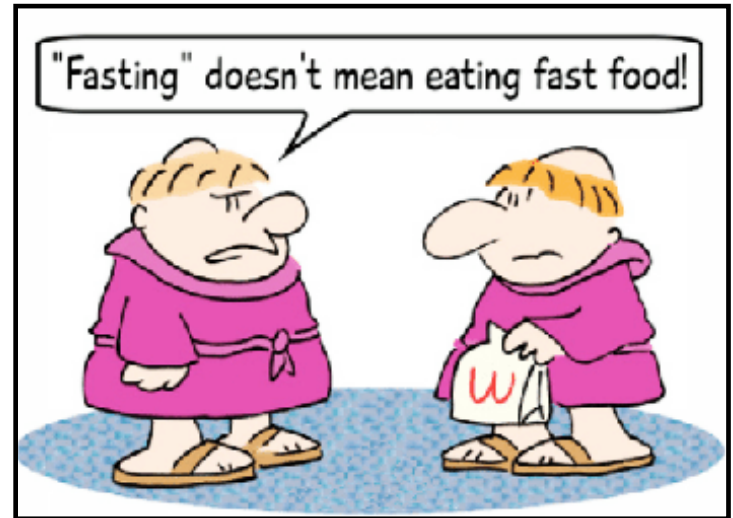
Restorative yoga is appropriate for practitioners of all levels.

In Jim's words, "The only prerequisite is you can breathe."

Cost is a free-will donation, and participants must bring their own yoga mat.

Register by contacting the church office at (201) 652-2504 or email
Dana.Feeney@FirstPresRidgewood.org





Question: Did you hear about the two radios that got married?

Answer: I heard the *reception* was amazing!

Question: What did the cucumber say to the pickle?

Answer: "You mean a great *dill* to me"

Just Sayin'.... It's not that *diamonds* are a girl's best friend; it's your best friends who are *your diamonds....Just Sayin'*

The Church Mouse:

Thought for the month:

"--After all, why should your life be just about you?"

... Cecile Richards



Happy Valentine's Day



Pie Sunday was held on January 12th

Pie Sunday was adorned with awesome pies and great information about areas of our church that we can contribute our time and talents to. While happily dining on pie, we listened to speeches from the leaders of church committees that highlighted several opportunities to volunteer.



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 Feeny

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.