

# 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,

As I sit down to type my first First Press article of 2022, I am reminded of the practice of adopting New Year's resolutions. And I recall the many resolutions I've sincerely written over the years and then kept for little more than a month, or even in some cases, a week. Cutting out junk food. Adhering to daily exercise routines. Eight hours of sleep a night. Reading a book a week. Reading through the Bible in a year. Keeping in touch with long-distance friends. Submitting First Press articles on time.

One could look at such attempts and subsequent lack of success and beat oneself up. But that is not exactly helpful. On the other hand, one could take a more constructive approach and once again look at the beginning of a new year as an opportunity for a fresh start, the beginning of a new and improved life.

As one whose responsibility it is to encourage growth in the spiritual dimension of life, I am going to take this opportunity to urge all of us to become more attentive to God in 2022. To be more attentive to what God is up to in our own lives, in our life together and in the world.

Throughout the centuries, people of faith have adopted spiritual practices as a way to be attentive to God. Daily prayer. Scripture reading. Morning devotions. Weekly worship. Committing time to serving others. These are time-tested methods of drawing close to God and listening for God's leading in our lives. To embark on one or more of these spiritual practices with an open mind and open heart often leads to spiritual growth.

Yet, to begin such a practice, and then falter and miss a day or days or more, is not the equivalent of failure. Nor is it any reason to abandon the practice. Instead, it presents an opportunity to begin anew.

One more thing: I am convinced that God is walking with each of us on our life's journeys. God is always there, willing to speak to us through the experiences of our lives. Willing to love, comfort, encourage, guide and teach us, if only we pay attention, if only we listen.

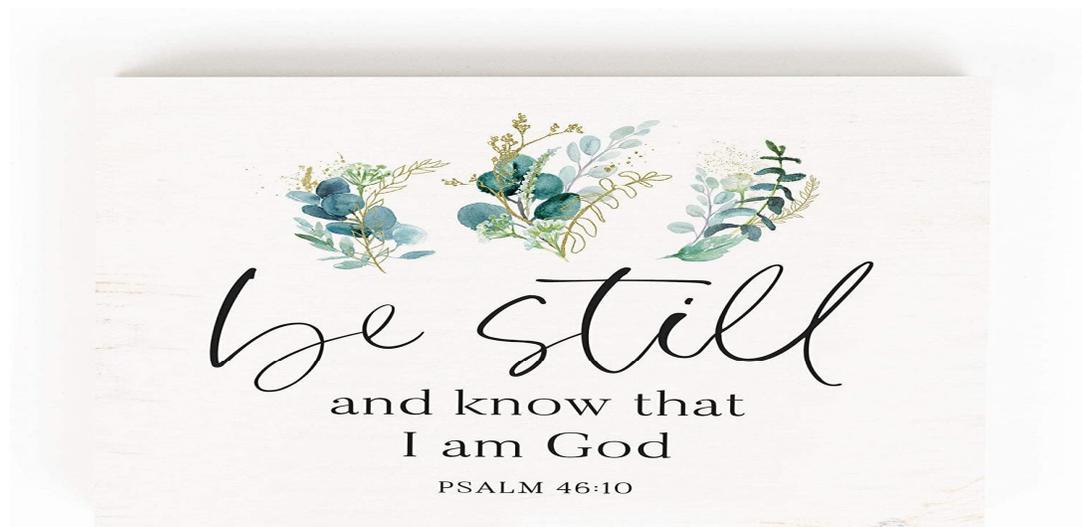
To this point, Frederick Buechner writes the following in *Listening to Your Life*:

“The question is not whether the things that happen to you are chance things or God’s things because, of course, they are both at once. There is no chance thing through which God cannot speak - even the walk from the house to the garage that you have walked ten thousand times before, even the moments when you cannot believe there is a God who speaks at all anywhere. He speaks, I believe, and the words he speaks are incarnate in the flesh and blood of our selves and of our own footsore and sacred journeys. We cannot live our lives constantly looking back, listening back, lest we be turned to pillars of longing and regret, but to live without listening at all is to live deaf to the fullness of the music. Sometimes we avoid listening for fear of what we may hear, sometimes for fear that we may hear nothing at all but the empty rattle of our own feet on the pavement. But *be not affeard*, says Caliban, nor is he the only one to say it. “Be not afraid,” says another, “for lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world.” He says he is with us on our journeys. He says he has been with us since each of our journeys began. Listen for him. Listen to the sweet and bitter airs of your present and your past for the sound of him.”

Or to put it another way, remember the promise of Advent: Emmanuel, God with us. May we pay attention.

Grace and peace,

Bruce



*The Service for the Installation of Reverend Bruce Ballantine 11/28/2021*



*"Heart of mine own heart whatever be fall, still be my vision O Ruler of all"*

# The Reception, Caroling and Tree Lighting!



With special thanks to~

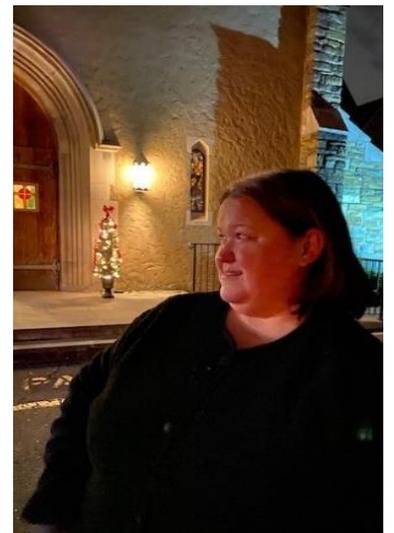
Friends who came from near and far!

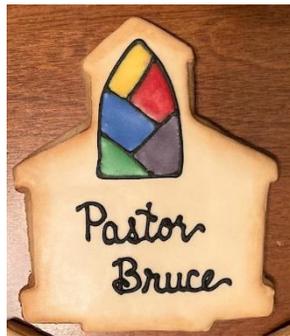
Ed & Carol Schmeidecke and Donna Burdick for leading us in song and Brian Princing for playing the keyboard behind closed doors!

Suzy for beautiful & yummy cookies!

The ad hoc reception committee ~ Anita, Sandy, Donna, Joan, Rick & to all who helped set up and clean up!

**And to God for the glorious night!**





# Mission



Thank you to everyone who participated in the Angel Tree Prison Fellowship Program!

Thirty of God's children were sponsored by our church!

**Praise the Lord!**

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Did you know socks are the number one item requested by homeless shelters?

During the months of January and February the Mission Committee will hold a sock drive!

Please help by donating **new socks only** (white crew socks preferred) and place in the collection box in the cloister.

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## St. Paul's Update~

On Sunday, December 5, the McDevitt family delivered dinner to the men at St. Paul's men's shelter. This was a delicious complete meal for about 25 men. Laura Magrath made macaroni and cheese with ham, Joel Torielli made sausage with onions and multi-colored peppers, and rice with tomato sauce, Suzy McDevitt made a Mexican chicken casserole, Linda Cascardo brought rolls and lots of fresh fruit, and Donna Flagg made green bean casserole.

The men are always so grateful to receive the many trays of food, and I'm sure they enjoyed every bite! Thank you all, once again, for the generosity of your donation, your time and your skill!

We are currently planning for the January, February and March meals, always taking place on the first Sunday of each month. Please contact Suzy or Sam McDevitt if you would like to help out with part of one of these meals, or if you have any questions about how it works. You do not have to be a good cook to help out!!

Suzy -- [suzyjmc2@yahoo.com](mailto:suzyjmc2@yahoo.com) or text at 201-315-2063

Sam -- [sammcdev99@gmail.com](mailto:sammcdev99@gmail.com) or text at 201-820-8056

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In December the Mission Committee, on behalf of First Pres, purchased \$2500 in Shop Rite gift cards. They were equally divided and distributed to:

The Center for Food Action in Mahwah, Eva's Village in Paterson, Oasis a Haven for Women and Children's in Paterson, St. Paul's Shelter in Paterson, and CUMAC in Paterson.

**We are living up to our Lord's command to feed His sheep!**



Thank you to our students who served as liturgists and candle lighters during our Advent Season: Isabella Burger, Patrick Edelbach, Kyle Feltmann, Luke Feltmann, Samantha McDevitt, William Rae, Amanda Schnure, Madeline Santangelo, Samantha Santangelo, Palmer Yates & Will Yates!



Second Saturday  
Service 12/11/2021



Please join us in the chapel on January 8, 2022 for the next Second Saturday Service!

## ENDOWMENT CORNER

As we go slip sliding into 2022 let's try to stay on our feet and not find ourselves upside down on the sidewalk, driveway, kitchen floor or at the bottom of the stairway, having travelled the distance making contact with every part of our anatomy but our feet. Maintaining balance is a good way to get through life in just about every area. Risk is part of life but so is caution.

And what does all this have to do with Endowment? Endowment can be a cautionary tale told by some churches and other institutions who took the risk of not bothering to provide for the possibility of the financial challenges that can upset an otherwise stable institution, like say, a pandemic. First Pres has weathered the pandemic, in great part, because your gifts over many years helped prepare us for an unexpected event.

We invested in conservative growth with a commitment to oversee and monitor the gifts we receive, spending only those dollars from interest and earned income. Our principal has remained stable. Our task is to continue to grow the principal of the Endowment Fund which will help secure the present and future church for generations to come.

But our true business is not to gather and keep money. It is to build a foundation from which we are enabled to support our church and answer God's call to share our resources with those who don't yet have enough. We are charged to spread the Word and spread the Wealth.

"Whoever has two tunics is to share with him who has none,  
and whoever has food is to do likewise."

-Luke 3:11

Gifts to Endowment can be given at any time in any amount. Make checks payable to First Presbyterian Church with a memo to Endowment. Balance your checkbook and balance your life.

**May your abundance be a gift to those in need in the New Year.**



## HEAR YE! HEAR YE!

Happy 2022! It is often said “New Year, New You”. Rather than making this year’s resolutions about dieting, exercising or other “to dos” on the traditional list of resolutions, why not make this year about service! Service is the one gift you can give yourself by gifting it away to others.



Your Nominating Committee will soon be developing the 2022 slate for candidates to serve in the life of First Pres as Deacons and Elders. These leadership roles directly affect how we as a church support one another and the community at large through worship, mission and care as we fulfill Jesus’s teachings to serve one another with hearts in fellowship and faith.

So let the new year of 2022 spur you “toward love and good deeds” (Hebrews 10:24-25) by volunteering to serve as a Deacon, Elder or on a church committee. You might just find that this year’s resolution of “serving with a joyful and willing heart” is the easiest one to keep!

Please feel free to reach out to anyone on the Nominating Committee for more information or drop a note in Anita Hutton’s church mailbox.

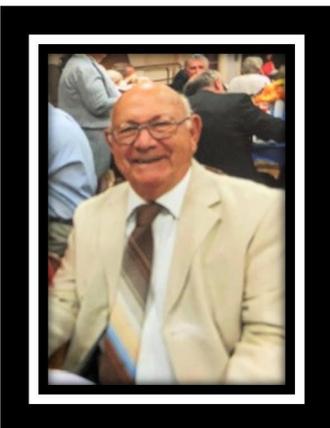
Nominating Committee: Anita Hutton, Carol Davidson, Sue Fischer, Jeanine Jamieson, Dave Shaw, Marcia Unger, Marjorie Vanacore



Save the Date! The Annual Congregational Meeting will be held after Worship on Sunday, January 30, 2022. It will be in the Sanctuary and on ZOOM.

*January 30th  
following service*

Lou Maffei a longtime member died on November 21<sup>st</sup>.



**John 14:3** %And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come back and take you to be with me that you also may be where I am+.

Lou was a member of the Property Committee for many years until his health declined. His loving wife Joy passed in October of 2020.

A Memorial Service will be held at a later date. Please keep Lou’s family in your prayers.

## DOING GOOD THINGS!



### CARING COOKS:

Our culinary volunteers delivered six meals this past month.

A grateful thank you to Sandy Santangelo, Suzy McDevitt, Greta Croucher, Joanne Bonwick and Li Towt.

Meals were delivered to Linda Sweetman Waters, George and Nada Wood and Michele Danckwerth (daughter of Lou and Joy Maffei).

We always welcome new cooks to our list of willing volunteers. If you would like to join us, grab your apron and give Mary Shaw (201) 652-5356 or Joanne Bonwick (201) 652 -7520), a call.

### Paterson Habitat for Humanity



Over the last 21 months, we've seen a significant decline in volunteer activity which meant our construction staff had even heavier loads to lift. But week after week a dedicated group of volunteers, lovingly called our "regulars", consistently showed up and supported our construction staff. When our to-do lists were long, and we were shorthanded, they stepped up and took on any task or job put in front of them. We can't thank them enough for all they have done to help us Build Hope.

Pictured in the back row is one of the regulars-Richard Davies, Joe Unger another regular is not pictured.

Thank you both for your dedication on behalf of First Pres!



Thank you to everyone who baked and bought Christmas goodies to support Camp Lots of Fun!



Special thanks to Jessica Strader and Kathleen Barkho!



Thank you to all our First Pres youth who participated in our Pageant and Worship Service. You were all Amazing! God Bless you all!

Speaker 1	<b>Amanda Schnure</b>	Speaker 2	<b>Luke Feltmann</b>
Speaker 3	<b>Dante Torielli</b>	Speaker 4	<b>Sam McDevitt</b>
Speaker 5	<b>Frankie Feltmann</b>	Speaker 6	<b>CJ Torielli</b>

The Christmas story through scripture

Reading 1 & 2	<b>Hudson Feeney</b>	Reading 3	<b>Dante Torielli</b>
Reading 4	<b>CJ Torielli</b>	Reading 5	<b>Patrick Edelbach</b>

Readings about the Customs of many Countries

Customs of Stars & Customs of the Nativity **Kyle Schnure**

Custom of the Angel's Message of Peace & Customs of the Bells **Gianna Torielli**

Customs of the Lights **Mrs. Castaldo**

**Luca Torielli did a wonderful job hanging our ornaments on the tree! Well Done!  
Thank you to our Mary & Joseph! Maddy & Samantha Santangelo! Nice Job!**

Singing in the Pageant: **Olivia Coleman, Olivia Davis, David Edelbach,  
Johnny Eliya, Luke Eliya, Maddy Eliya, Samantha McDevitt and Luca Torielli**

Worship Service

Welcome & Announcements/Call to Worship: **Francesca Feltmann**

Prayer of Confession: **Patrick Edelbach**      Offering: **Samantha McDevitt**

Benediction: **Luke Eliya**

Advent Candle Lighting: **Amanda Schnure, Madeline Santangelo & Samantha Santangelo**

Merci, Gracias,  
Obrigado,  
Dakk, Danke  
schoen,  
Grazie!



Sunday School Thanks YOU!



Thank you to all who generously donated hats, scarves, mittens and gloves for our Mitten Tree collection to support Center for Food action during the month of December.

You have blessed someone by keeping them warm this winter!



Our sincere thanks to all who donated gifts for our Toys 4 Tots drive! You have brought hope to so many through the gift of toys, exhibiting what Christmas spirit truly means.



All creatures  
**GREAT** and *small*  
the **LORD GOD**  
made them all





Thank you to the participants in the Christmas Eve Candlelight Service and to the donor of the nativity scene!



Happy Birthday to January celebrants:

Chris Feltmann

Marcia Unger

Craig Walters

Chet Greenleaf

Francis Dear

Sami Eliya

Derek Schnure

Jordan Kender

And to Peter Chapas who had a birthday in December!

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Pastor

Rev. Bruce Ballantine

Director of Children & Families

MaryEllen Castaldo

Director of Music

Dr. Edward Schmiedecke

Organist

Linda Sweetman Waters

Director of Youth Music and Handbells

Carol Schmiedecke

Administrative Manager

Dana Feeney

Youth Leader

Jessica Strader

Tom Carozza

Sexton

Custodian

George Wood

Director Nursery School

Julia Bolt

Newsletter Editor

Joan Davies (Volunteer)

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

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

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

