



The First Presbyterian Church of Ridgewood

First Press Newsletter

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

October 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.

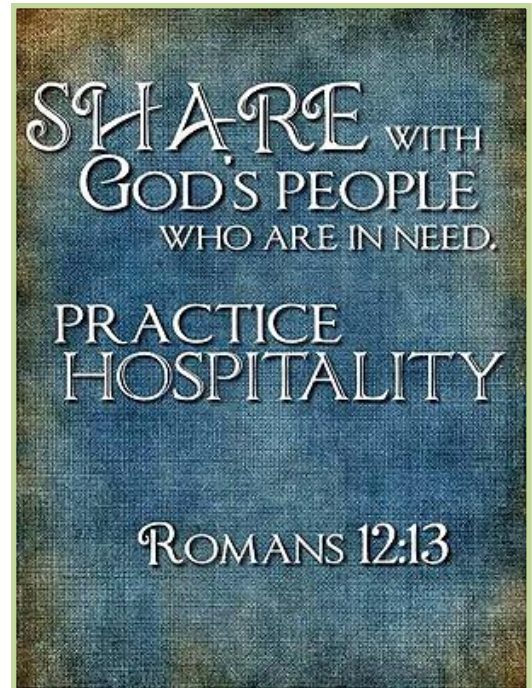
Do not neglect to show hospitality to strangers, for by this some have entertained angels without knowing it.

– Hebrews 13:2

Be inventive in hospitality. – Romans 12:13b (The Message)

A few years ago, during a retreat, someone asked me what First Presbyterian Church of Ridgewood does best. And while it's difficult to single out just one thing among so many things the congregation does well, what I came up with in that moment was *hospitality*.

We provide space for two other worshipping communities: Trinity Presbyterian Church and Church of Christ (formerly Living Water Church). We open our doors to numerous community groups throughout the week. And on Sunday mornings during our worship service, we warmly welcome visitors.



In fact, most of our new members have said that, following their initial visit, one reason they continued to worship with us and eventually joined First Pres was that they were made to feel welcome, and they sensed that people's friendliness was sincere. It isn't just the sermon or the children's message or the music or the prayers, as important as those ingredients are to anyone who visits us on a Sunday morning. But what motivates people to return is the warmth and welcome of the congregation.

In order that we might continue to warmly welcome the stranger and do so with even greater intentionality, I invite you to consider serving on our Growth and Hospitality Team. Our plan is to minimize the number of meetings, while maximizing our efforts to extend hospitality to each person who comes through our doors.

If you sense God is calling you to participate in this rewarding ministry, please reach out to me at pastorbruce@firstpresridgewood.org.

Grace and peace,

Bruce

Endowment Corner October 2025

Celebrating and appreciating the ongoing support of our Endowment Fund, Endowment Committee Members recently hosted an Endowment Coffee Hour. Additionally, during our church service, Chairman Richard Davies gave a Minute for Ministry talk highlighting the history and current status of the fund.

With over a million dollar principal, and still growing, we have been able to gradually refurbish and maintain the church's aging 200+ year-old structure both inside and out. The fund continues to honor its commitment to generously support mission outreach needs.

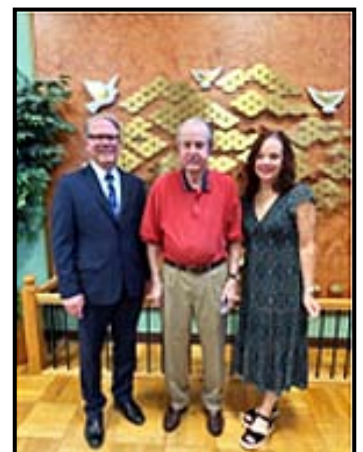
The most recent addition to our Tree of Life is a Patron Dove in memory of Mary Shaw. Mary began and supported several ministries in the church, many of which still continue to this day.



Endowment members, Richard Davies, Dave Shaw with daughter Annette and Joanne Bonwick



Tree of Life Cake with Patron Dove



Pastor Bruce, Dave and Annette



Patron Dove in honor of Mary Shaw



Dave and Mary Shaw Christmas '24



It's great to be back in the swing of things at the Weekday Nursery School! This year marks the 57th year of First Pres. Nursery School! In September, we had a well-attended Back to School Night. On the first day of school, parents and preschoolers explored their classrooms together and teamed up for a scavenger hunt adventure. This year there are fifteen new nursery school families.

Our preschoolers have been busy settling into new routines, making new friends and getting to know one another. It's been wonderful to see their confidence grow each day as they adjust and build connections in their classrooms.



We have a few fun events happening in October. We are looking forward to a visit from the Ridgewood Fire Dept. to acknowledge Fire Safety Month. In preparation for Halloween, our students are rehearsing for the annual Halloween Parade on Friday, October 31st @ 9:15 am in the Auditorium. Should you have any questions about our nursery school, please contact Julia Bolt, Director, @ 201- 445-2552.





This year we will be studying Heroes and Villains (from the Old Testament) of the Bible. Students will learn about Abraham, Moses, Daniel and Joseph!



≈ **Our First Pres. Church School Families are Invited** ≈

We hope you will join us for refreshments, pumpkin painting, corn hole, games & prizes!

Date: Sunday, October 12th 2025

Time: 11:15pm to 1:15pm (immediately following worship service)

Location: Backyard of the Manse (next to church) Address: 20 Circle Avenue, Ridgewood, N.J.

Please **RSVP** by emailing MaryEllen at marecmt@aol.com or text her at 862-686-8956.



Bible Presentations are on Sunday, October 12th, 2025. If your child is in 3rd grade or older and has never received an Adventure Bible, please contact MaryEllen Castaldo at marecmt@aol.com, and we will be happy to include them! Thank you!



SUNDAY INFANT NURSERY IS AVAILABLE TO PARENTS!

Nursery care is available for newborn babies through 3-year-old toddlers during Sunday School time and during the 10:00am Sunday worship service. Our Nursery attendants are Sarah Eliya and Katie Paveo! There will be a child sign-in sheet in the nursery. Parents are required to sign the attendance form when dropping off and picking up their children.



On Sunday Sept. 21st our **Church School Kickoff** was held with a Christian entertainer (magician) named Ron, formerly of The Greatest Show on Earth.

Ron performs a family show for children and parents. Thirty adults and children were in attendance including families from our weekday nursery school! Everyone had a magical time!



THE BIRTHDAY BAG PROJECT: September/October

Our Church school families were asked to fill birthday bags to donate to the Social Service Association of Ridgewood and Vicinity. They were in need of 9 birthday bags which are to be delivered on October 20th. THANK YOU TO ALL WHO HAVE DONATED! OUR CHURCH SCHOOL FAMILIES AT FIRST PRES. ARE THE BEST!



We are collecting items for our college boxes for our First Pres. college students! There are "13" college students and we need 13 of the following suggested items. There will be a designated box in the cloister, with a list of the items needed. Please write your name next to the item you will be bringing so we don't have any duplicates. You can also email MaryEllen at marecmt@aol.com and let her know what you are donating! Thank you! Our High School class will fill the boxes on November 2nd during worship!

Here is the list of the Suggested items:

Breakfast bars, granola bars, fruit bars, packaged cookies, packaged cheese crackers, Individual tissue packs, Individual trail mix packages, small popcorn bags, small pretzel bags, pencils, pens, gum, mints, candy, and hot chocolate packets that mix with water!

Sunday, September 14th was **Genesis Sunday** and we held the **Blessing of the Backpacks**. We discussed plans for the new Church school year and students enjoyed making their own ice cream sundaes!



Save the Date

≈≈Thanksgiving Luncheon≈≈

Thursday, November 13th at 12 noon
in our church dining room!



Calling All Sunday school teachers! Our church school is growing! We really need help in teaching church school this year. Please prayerfully consider teaching one or two Sundays during the school year! Or at least if you can sub when a teacher is absent. We would appreciate any time you can give us! So please help us to make this 2025-26 new school year a successful and joyful one for the children at First Pres!
Please email MaryEllen Castaldo at marecmt@aol.com. Thank you!

Mission:



We continue to be amazed and grateful for the generosity of our congregation! The latest food shelter delivery in September was a delicious success!

Suzy McDevitt made Mexican Lasagna. Sandy Santangelo delivered fresh corn 2 ways, fresh watermelon, and a bounty of baked goods from the Produce Mission. The Torielli family cooked up pasta with fresh vegetables and the Davies made Ham and cheese sliders. In addition, we delivered coffee, utensils, and bedding. Our minivan was packed as usual and smelled amazing! The men at the shelter were grateful for the massive delivery.

Please, if you're able to help, the shelter is currently in need of twin-size sheets (both fitted and flat) in addition to bath towels and washcloths!

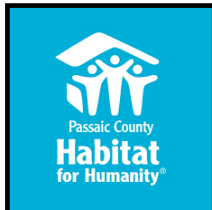
If you'd like to get involved please use the link below to signup:

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

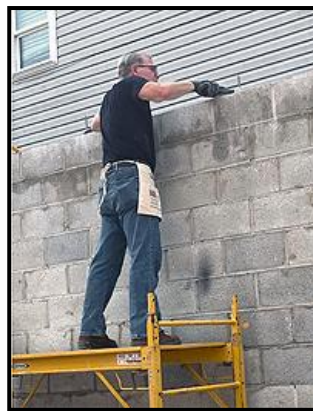
Produce Mission Volunteers

On Sunday afternoons our volunteers pick up local, fresh produce from the farmers market at the Ridgewood Train Station. They then transport the items to our church kitchen and ready them to be picked up by *Table to Table* on Monday mornings. *Table to Table* then makes the donation to local food banks.

It's wonderful to be a part of this mission food chain!



First Pres. Members Volunteer with Passaic County Habitat
Members and friends volunteered for this mission on September 6th



**Join First Pres. Members & Friends ...
as we build with Passaic County Habitat!**

**Saturday, November 1ST
8:00 a.m. – 12:00 Noon**

**No previous construction skills or experience needed –
just a servant's heart!**

Ages 16 and older are welcomed to volunteer.

**To sign up, email Pastor Bruce at pastorbruce@firstpresridgewood.org
or sign up during Coffee Hour.**

Walk and Talk



**Do you enjoy the outdoors? Do you enjoy walking?
Do you enjoy stimulating conversation?**
**Join Pastor Bruce and your First Pres friends for an hour of fresh
air, exercise and fellowship!**
**We'll walk & talk on Thursday evenings from 6:00pm to 7:00pm
at the Duck Pond in Ridgewood!**
Thursday, October 2nd - Thursday, October 30th
See you at the flagpole near the front parking lot @ 6:00pm!



**First Wednesdays
October 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: October Hostess – Donna Flagg
You are invited to bring a dish to the potluck dinner.

Spiritual Inspiration for the Month – Donna Flagg
Trust: The Bridge to Joy

Date: Wednesday, October 8, 2025

Time: 6:30 p.m. - 8:30 p.m.

**Place: First Presbyterian Church
Minnema Room**

**Please RSVP by Friday, October 3rd
to Donna Flagg**

Email: flaggbda@gmail.com Phone number: 201-819-2327



Question: How does a penguin build a house?

Answer: Igloos it together!

Question: Why don't skeletons fight each other?

Answer: They don't have the guts!

Just Sayin'.... I understand being a responsible adult...but every day? Every single day?
That just seems a little excessive...Just Sayin'

The Church Mouse:

Thought for the month:

"Success is to be measured not so much by the position that one has reached in life as by the obstacles which he has overcome."

... Booker T. Washington





Peter Castaldo
Susan Castaldi
John Dickinson
Steven Eliya
Rob Strickland
Joel Torielli
Luca Torielli
Nicole Torielli

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.