



The First Presbyterian Church of Ridgewood

First Press Newsletter

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

May 2025

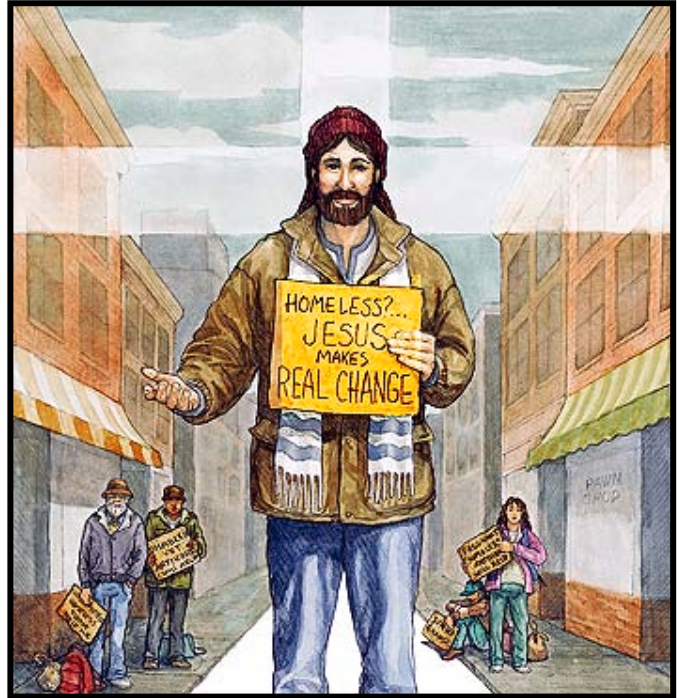
We are a welcoming community formed in Christ, committed to sharing his love with others – with feet that carry us out into the world, with hands that serve, and with hearts in fellowship and faith.

Dear Friends,

Since first volunteering with City Relief last summer, I have been receiving e-newsletters written by City Relief CEO Josiah Haken.

As one whose inbox is flooded with emails everyday, I can't say that I've read each email from Josiah. Having said that, each time I read one, I grow in my understanding of those who experience homelessness.

To say that homelessness is a complex issue would be an understatement. But each time I read what Josiah has to say, I feel as if another layer of complexity has been peeled away.



And each time I read what he has to say, I feel as if I'm learning to see and better understand the people who experience homelessness. So, it should not have come as a surprise that my understanding of our unhoused neighbors and the challenges they face was deepened when I read Josiah's book, *Neighbors with No Doors: The Truth about Homelessness, and How You Can Make a Difference*.

Here is just a snippet from the book's back cover: *The next time someone asks you for money on the street, Josiah Haken wants you to know what you're doing. He wants you to engage the human being in front of you with confidence, compassion, and a plan. Neighbors with No Doors is your guide to getting there. With over a decade of experience in homeless outreach, Haken contradicts popular falsehoods about the unhoused community and offers helpful, pragmatic steps to becoming a friend and advocate.*

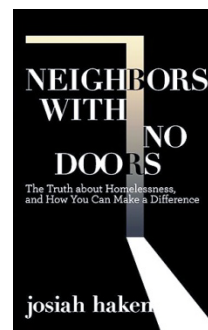
Having read the book, I would like to share it with you. Please join me in a four-week study during May and June as together we learn how to be better neighbors to those who live on the streets.

We will meet at noon on Wednesdays in the Minnema Room. Dates and topics are as follows:

May 21	Session 1	Introduction
May 28	Session 2	Laziness and Danger
June 4	Session 3	Mental Health and Substance Abuse
June 11	Session 4	Becoming a Good Neighbor

You may order the book through Barnes & Noble or wherever you buy books. Here is the B&N link:

[Neighbors with No Doors: The Truth about Homelessness, and How You Can Make a Difference by Josiah Haken, Paperback | Barnes & Noble®](#)



I hope you'll join me as we learn together what it means to be a good neighbor and how we might advocate on behalf of our neighbors with no doors. Friends are welcome!

Grace and peace,
Bruce



On Sunday March 30th we held our first-ever “Baskets of Hope” event!

Church families enjoyed trying to make the most free throws in 30 seconds, sharing in the fun of March Madness during the Lenten season. Additionally, we asked our families to donate candy to fill our “Baskets of Hope” Easter baskets for Social Service Association of Ridgewood and Vicinity, to bring hope to the less fortunate. Thank you everyone who participated in our basketball competition and donated candy to fill the Easter baskets. They surely made a big difference to the children who received them!

A huge THANK YOU to Lindsay Wall for her fantastic idea of creating this wonderful event. Everyone had a great time and we look forward to doing this annually!

***Winners of our Free Throw:** Congratulations to: Andrew Dickinson, John Dickinson, Hank Morris, Tony Morris and Luca Torielli. Tony Morris took the spot of overall winner with 9 baskets!





Thank you to all our Sunday School families and youth who participated in our Palm Sunday procession following our amazing adult bell choir! It was a very meaningful time in our worship service!



Easter Morning was a beautiful day for an Easter Egg Hunt with our families at First Pres!
Thank you to all the amazing angels who donated the candy for our egg hunt and goody bags! Your generosity is greatly appreciated!





“SAVE THE DATE” Family Planting Day



On Sunday June 1st after worship/coffee hour our **2025 “Family Planting Day”** event will be held! Everyone is welcome, along with our church school families, to join together in sprucing up our garden! Come to church in your jeans! If you’d like to help plant our annual flowers (Vincas) and lay some mulch in our Bicentennial Garden, then please join us! We always have a fun time gardening together!

Upcoming: Vacation Bible School! August 4th – August 7th (9am-11:30am) for children ages 4 to 7.

The theme is Joseph’s Journey from Prison to Palace. Registration forms and additional information will appear in the June Newsletter! The children really enjoy themselves and it’s a great way for them to have lots of fun and learn Bible lessons at the same time! Email: MaryEllen at marecmt@aol.com for info.



Don’t forget our Children’s Book Drive!
Sponsored by First Presbyterian Church and Nursery School

Grab a bag in the Cloister Hallway Book Center and start filling it up with gently used and new books for kids aged preschool & kindergarten through 5th grade. The book drive will run through Sunday, **May 18th** and books may be dropped off any Sunday before then! Place your donations in a little red wagon in the Cloister Hallway. All donated books benefit the Boys & Girls Clubs of Hawthorne, Wayne, Clifton & Paterson. Give the gift that makes a difference.....a good book!



Website: www.fpnsr.com



The children celebrated a special day by sharing a morning at school with a special guest for Special Person Visitation Day. Everyone participated in an activity-filled morning of gym, music, and classroom projects.



We were all excited to have a visit from a sweet therapy dog (Stella the golden retriever) visit our school. The children enjoyed petting and brushing her.

We are accepting applications for our popular Summer Camp 2025. Our themes this year are 'Blast Off to Space Camp' & Mini Masters Art Camp'. Students can sign up for a fun-filled week of interactive & engaging educational activities. These activities include creative arts & crafts, science & discovery, stories & songs all based on our theme.



We're also busy practicing for our End-of-Year/ graduation program, which takes place in the Sanctuary on Friday, June 6th at 9:15 am. All Church members are invited to attend!

Registration for the 2025-2026 school year is underway! We offer programs for children 2 ½ years – 5 years, 5 days/week with half day and full day options. 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 preparing our children for kindergarten. We look forward to hearing from you!



‘Will’ingly Springing into Action!

It’s surprising how many people put off creating a Will. When we’re young death just isn’t in our plans. As time goes on and we begin to lose grandparents, parents, even children and other relatives or friends, we begin to feel the pull to get our affairs in order.

We realize that our expiration date is not stamped anywhere on our physical body. The ‘not knowing’ is what often pushes us to consider what we might want to leave when we pass from this life and to whom we would like to leave what remains of our worldly goods.

The Endowment Fund is, in a way, a living, working ‘Will’ created for our church. We wish to provide for the present and future of God’s Word to live into eternity. The basic purpose of the Endowment Fund is to ensure that God’s Word is the ongoing beneficiary of our efforts.

The interest and income from the Fund make it possible to support our church’s unbudgeted needs and to reach out to those in need as Jesus teaches us, to comfort, feed and care for all God’s children. We wish to leave a wealth of resources so that God’s Word will remain strong in our church and our church will always be a light in the world.

Leaves, Stones, Doves, Green Umbrella Note Cards and outright cash are only a few ways to help our Endowment Fund grow. Make all checks payable to First Presbyterian Church with a memo to Endowment.

Your Endowment Committee: Richard Davies (Chair) Joanne Bonwick, Don Dexter, Peter Hare,
Laura Magrath, David Shaw.





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

Spiritual Inspiration for the Month –Dawn Murdock

"Loving and Serving Others: The Practice of Risk-Taking Service and Mission" based on a chapter of the book Five Practices of Fruitful Living by Robert Schnase.

Date: **Wednesday, May 7, 2025**

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

Place: **First Presbyterian Church**
Minnema Room

Please RSVP by Friday, May 2 to Donna Flagg

Via Email or Phone

Email: flaggbda@gmail.com

Phone: **201-819-2327**



You're Invited to Volunteer with
City Relief
7:00 am -1:30 pm. Saturday, May 31

You are invited to join your First Pres friends as together we volunteer with City Relief and serve homeless people in Paterson. City Relief has been serving our unhoused neighbors in New York City and New Jersey since 1989.

In recent months, several people from First Pres have taken part in City Relief Outreaches in NYC and Paterson and have found the experience to be very meaningful.

On Saturday, May 31, we have openings for a total of 6 volunteers. We will meet at First Pres at 7:00 a.m., then carpool to the City Relief Base in Clifton. There we will prepare soup and beverages, then travel by van to Paterson where we will serve the soup and beverages and distribute socks and hygiene kits. We will return to First Pres by 1:30 p.m.

To volunteer, please contact Pastor Bruce at pastorbruce@firstpresridgewood.org by Sunday, May 11.

On March 29, Passaic County Habitat dedicated 8 new homes in Paterson

Several First Pres members were on hand to present the new homeowners with welcome baskets provided by funding from the First Pres Mission/Benevolence budget. Pictured below is Pastor Bruce. Also attending were Richard Davies, Andy Dunn, Donna Flagg, Bing Lu, Ruth Plucinski and Joe Unger.



Mission:



April 6th at the shelter was a symphony of generosity and comfort food. Joan Davies played the role of culinary courier and chef, delivering a hearty veggie casserole from Barbara Dunn, Suzy McDevitt's classic mac and cheese, and an impressive bounty of breads and fruits from Lindsay Wall—including the unexpected delight of freeze-dried strawberries. Joan herself whipped up baked chicken and sweetened the spread with leftover Lenten cookies and apple pies unearthed from the church freezer. It was a meal stitched together with care, community, and just the right touch of surprise. If you'd like to get involved please use the link below to signup:

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



The Mission Peace and Social Righteousness Team would like to thank everyone who helped out and/or purchased food at the April 1st **Fish and Chips** fundraiser for One Great Hour of Sharing. The event was a big success!

Walk & 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 & fellowship! We'll walk & talk on Thursday evenings from 6:00 to 7:00 at the Duck Pond in Ridgewood!

Thursday, May 15th - Thursday, June 5th
See you at the flagpole by the front parking lot @ 6:00!

Rev. Dr. Rose Niles Leads a “Creating a Culture of Generosity” Workshop on Sunday, April 6



Thank You to All Who Donated Hygiene Kit Items.

Thanks to your generosity, we were able to provide 90 hygiene kits to City Relief for distribution to the unhoused people they serve in New York City and Paterson.

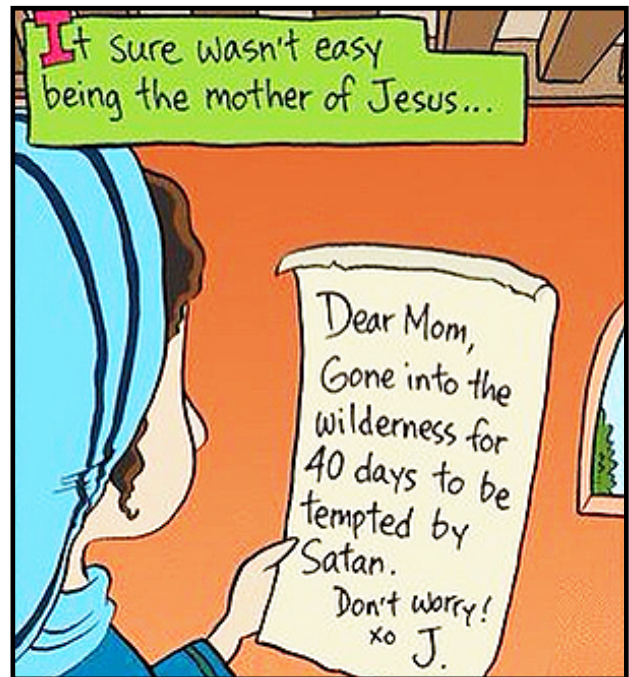


Bruce Ballantine
Joanne Bonwick
Michael Burger
Jan Cross
Richard Davies
Lew Dickinson
Carola Di Iorio
Helen Eliya
Ramzi Eliya
Dana Feeney
Sarah Hutton
Bobbe Kutcha
Kirk Lavine
Lois Morris
David Schwartz
Gloria Tedeschi
Britt Tunick

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

☺ Just for laughs ☺

HAPPY MOTHER'S DAY



A Mother's Love
by Unknown Poet

Her love is like
an island in life's ocean,
vast and wide.

A peaceful, quiet shelter
From the wind, the rain, the tide.
Tis bound on the north by Hope,
By Patience on the West.
By tender Counsel on the South
And on the East by Rest.
Above it like a beacon light
Shine Faith, and Truth, and
Prayer;
And thro' the changing
scenes of life
I find a haven there.

The Church Mouse:

Thought for the month:

"Mothers hold their children's hands for a short while, but their hearts forever."

...Eleanor Roosevelt



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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