



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,

I daresay that for most people, Christmas is eagerly anticipated as a time marked by festive gatherings of family and friends, a time to decorate our homes and give beautifully wrapped gifts to those we love, a time to attend concerts, sing carols and celebrate the birth of Jesus. Christmas is typically experienced as a day and a season filled with great joy!

But that is not how everyone experiences Christmas.

For those who have lost a loved one, for those struggling with depression, for those going through separation or divorce, for those who have lost a job or who may be facing financial difficulty, for those caught up in addiction, for those afflicted by a serious illness, for those whose level of stress is off the charts, for those who feel discouraged for any number of reasons, Christmas and the days leading up to it can be difficult.

A Longest Night service, or Blue Christmas Service, as it is sometimes called, offers an alternative to the joy of the seasonal celebrations for those who find themselves in places of darkness. A Longest Night service is typically held on or around the winter solstice . when daylight is in short supply and darkness lingers. For those who find themselves caught in a long, dark night of the soul, such a service can provide a glimmer of light and hope.

Longest Night Service ~ Wednesday, December 20, at 7:00 p.m.

For the first time at First Pres, this year we will offer a Longest Night Service. It will take place in the Chapel on Wednesday, December 20, at 7:00 p.m. During this time of worship and contemplation, you are invited to a quiet refuge of prayer, music and remembrance. We will acknowledge our losses and ponder the everlasting hope that shines as light in the darkness.

You are invited to step into this space of calm, quiet and healing. And you are invited to bring a loved one or friend who might benefit from this experience.

Grace and peace,

Bruce



ENDOWMENT CORNER



The birth of Jesus ushered in a cultural revolution that challenged existing values and offered a way to be in the world that focused on kindness to others rather than self-aggrandisement, hope rather than despair, and love rather than indifference or hate. His message is still challenged daily and the hope of a peaceful world depends on not letting the light of His Word grow dim. We advocate for Endowment to help insure the present and future church so the light of the church will shine brightly to light the way toward a more peaceful world. Today's sacrifice is tomorrow's hope. Our faithful attendance, our participation and leadership in activities and our generous giving show our gratitude for the sacrifice of our Lord and Savior, Jesus, who gave His very life for us.

This Christmas season consider a small gift to Endowment and with it consider forgiving someone or extending a kindness to someone to make their Christmas a little brighter.

Checks can be made out to First Presbyterian Church with a memo to "Endowment Christmas"

Have a Blessed Christmas!



Mission



On Sunday, November 5, the McDevitts delivered dinner to the men at St. Paul's, made by volunteers from First Pres. On the menu was beef chili made by Sue Dickinson; ziti with meat Sauce made by Sue Sofka; chicken, rice, bacon and cheddar casserole made by Linda Strickland; roasted broccoli, cauliflower, carrots and cheddar casserole made by Suzy, and fruit and rolls provided by Nancy Walters.

Thank you so much to these ladies for their generosity and for their time and skill invested. The men at St. Paul's are treated to a delicious feast every time our First Pres volunteers are on the schedule!

If you are interested in helping out with this mission, please contact me, Suzy McDevitt, by email at suzyjmcd2@yahoo.com or by text at 201-315-2063. Likewise, if you just have questions or are considering helping out, but don't know what to make, reach out. I will be happy to answer all questions and give suggestions. We are ready to start scheduling for the Jan., Feb., and March meals in the New Year. (Dinners always take place on the first Sunday of each month.)

As an additional note, after scheduling and delivering the meals for St. Paul's for nearly 4 years now, I am ready to hand off the responsibility to another helping hand in the New Year. Ideally, this would be someone who has been regularly involved in cooking, and has held this mission near and dear to their heart. Please let me know if you would consider, and I will be happy to walk you through how I do things, and to answer any of your questions. And, of course, I'll be at the top of your list of volunteer cooks! Thanks for considering!

The Mission Peace and Social Righteousness Committee donated \$250 to sponsor 10 children this year.



If you too would like to donate to this worthy cause and brighten a child's Christmas you can do so at their website ~

www.prisonfellowship.org/about/angel-tree

To donate by phone: 800-206-9764

To donate by mail: Prison Fellowship, PO Box 1550, Merrifield, VA 22116

“Remember those who are in prison, as though in prison with them, and those who are mistreated, since you also are in the body.” Hebrews 13:3

200 Cans for 200 Years Food Drive

WE DID IT!

211 cans were donated to the Center for Food Action just in time for their Thanksgiving Food Drive!

Thank you to all who supported this mission!



Announcements



Team 200 is still selling once in a lifetime, limited edition, gold plated, church bicentennial ornaments for members, friends and families!

Cost is \$20.00 with all proceeds going towards our bicentennial fund.

You will find a table set up in the auditorium on most Sundays, or **stop by the church office on any Tuesday through Friday morning.**



The Annual Celebration of Lights and Tree Lighting will take place on **Sunday, December 3rd at 5:30 PM** in the front parking lot. Join us for s'mores, cider, hot chocolate, and caroling!

There will be crafts for children and music led by the Schmiedeckes and Brian Princing.

Please consider bringing a donation for the mitten tree.

MITTEN TREE

During the month of December we are collecting NEW hats, gloves, mittens and scarves to support the Center for Food Action in Mahwah. Our Mitten tree is located in the church hall. You can place your items on the tree. There will be a box in the Cloister Hall marked Mitten Tree donations as well. Please help someone stay warm this winter season! Sponsored by the CE committee.



Caring Cooks is a vital ministry that was originated almost 20 years ago. We are a group of volunteers that will cook a meal and deliver it to a member of the congregation that may be in need. We are called upon if someone has had surgery, an illness, a hospital stay or a death in the family. Caring Cooks has been a blessing to many in our congregation, and we always welcome new members to join in our work. Please email Nancy Walters at momksj14@msn.com to join this ministry. Also, if you are in need of a meal for any reason, please contact Nancy.

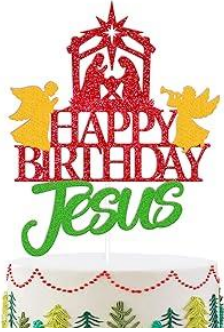


December lessons-Advent, the story of Jesus' birth, and Luke 2:22-40 (Simeon & Anna)



CHRISTMAS MART

Sunday, December 10th and 17th all church school students will have an opportunity to shop at no cost for their families and friends at our Christmas Mart located in the Sacristy!



We invite you to come celebrate our Savior's birth on Sunday, December 10th! During Sunday school we will talk about the birth of Jesus and play games for prizes. During coffee hour in the auditorium there will be a craft time, we will decorate gingerbread cookies, sing happy birthday to Jesus and enjoy birthday cake!

This event is held in loving memory of Diana, Kristina & Jennifer Collentine.



Calling all bakers and goodie lovers!
The Annual Christmas Bake Sale will be held following Worship on Sunday, December 17th! Please contact MaryEllen if you can bake at marecmt@aol.com or text/call 862-686-8956.

All proceeds go to Camp Lots of Fun!



First Pres. Church School is sponsoring a toy collection from November 26th through December 10th! Please bring an unwrapped NEW toy or game for a girl or boy there will be a designated box in the Cloister Hall! Thank You!



**Our Sunday School Families BBQ Picnic
was held on Sunday October 29th**

It may have rained, but we still had a fun time for those who gathered in the Minnema Room! We enjoyed painting pumpkins, a picnic lunch, fellowship and the children took home a Halloween goodie bag or two!

Thank you for helping ~
Jill Critchley, Sue Dickinson, Sue Fischer and Chef Pete Castaldo!



The First Pres Youth Group had a fun afternoon at Fairlawn's Bowlero Lanes on Sunday, November 5th!



Please join us on December 24th at 10:00 AM

for our Annual Christmas Pageant entitled "Christmas Prayers"!

We remember Jim Goudsward who went to his heavenly home on November 13th.

Jim was a long time member of First Pres serving as a Sunday school teacher, a Trustee and an Elder.

Jim always had a kind word and a smile on his face.

öBut we do not want you to be uninformed, brothers and sisters, about those who have died, so that you may not grieve as others do who have no hope. For since we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so, through Jesus, God will bring with him those who have died.ö

1 Thessalonians 4:13-14.

Our hope comforts us knowing through faith, Jim is now in the company of those who have gone before him.

Please remember the Goudsward family in your prayers.



Five new members were received on Sunday, November 12th.
Anya Lelescu, Rita Infante, Bobbe Kutcha, Carrie Werner, and Neculai Lelescu (not pictured).
We give thanks to God and we are glad you are here!

In 200 Seconds what First Pres means to:



Linda Sweetman Waters



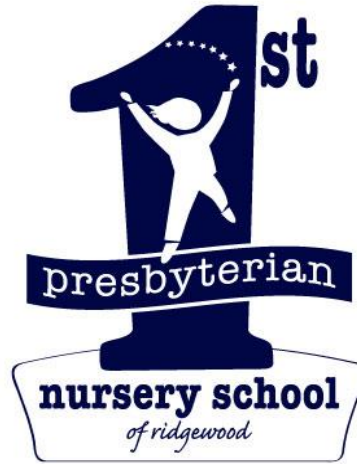
Linda Strickland



Craig Walters



Marjorie Vanacore



On behalf of the entire First Pres. Nursery School, we wish each of you a blessed Christmas and a Happy New Year!





Calling all Santa Songsters

Join us as we bring tidings of comfort and joy to our senior friends. Accompanied by Christopher Vehmas we will sing carols on December 9th at Sunrise of Franklin Lakes from 2:00-2:45 PM and at Sunrise of Woodcliff Lake from 3:30-4:15 PM! Please let Diane Eliya know if you will be attending- 201-481-1036 or Eliyad@hotmail.com

First Wednesdays- Women's Fellowship
Wednesday, December 6th from 6:30 PM-8:30 PM.
Join us for an evening of food, conversation, and spiritual inspiration.

December Hostess- Jeanine Jamieson
Spiritual Inspiration - Dawn Murdock

Please RSVP to Donna Flagg: flaggbda@gmail.com or 201-819-2327

Christmas Eve Candlelight Service

~7:30 PM on December 24th~

Let's celebrate the birth of our Lord together!



Consecration Sunday



On Sunday, November 19th
Rev. Brooks Smith preached a sermon
tilted "EZ Christianity".

The music was wonderful and the
luncheon that followed was delicious!

Special thanks to Anita Hutton and the
Finance and Stewardship Committee!

Everything we have is a gift from God,
and all belongs to Him!



Thankful
Grateful
Blessed!



Larry Bonwick
Sophia Burger
Alex Cascardo
Linda Cascardo
JoAnne Massey
Robert Morris
Fay Reid
Victoria Schnure
Joel Schwartz
Glenn Santangelo

If you are not on our church birthday list, please email joandavies916@gmail.com

Pastor	Rev. Bruce Ballantine
Director of Children & Families	MaryEllen Castaldo
Director of Music	Dr. Ed Schmiedecke
Organist	Linda Sweetman Waters
Director Cherub Choir and Bells	Carol Schmiedecke
Administrative Manager	Dana Feeney
Sexton	Tom Carozza
Custodian	George Wood
Bookkeeper	Lavonne McMillen
Director Nursery School	Julia Bolt
Newsletter Editor	Joan Davies (Volunteer)

Church Phone (201) 652-2504

Pastor Bruce: (215) 337-5623

www.firstpresridgewood.org

