



Stirling Stuff

Volume 64, No. 11

December 2020

Dear First Presbyterian Sisters and Brothers,

This has undoubtedly been a rough year for all of us – COVID-19 being the most pressing problem for the whole world as so many have fallen very ill and many have died. For the rest of us who have not gotten sick, there are the restrictions that prevent us from being with family, friends, and neighbors except through a screen. We are missing loved ones; we are missing being with friends; we are missing being at church. Some of us are missing income from lost jobs. Then, on top of the virus, this year has brought a divisive election, increased awareness of racial injustice and, of course, for the Stirling church, the worrying illness of your pastor. 2020 has indeed been a rough year.

*Advent:
A Season
of Hope
and
Anticipation*



We now begin the season of Advent when we look ahead to the celebration of the arrival of God's Son on earth, when we welcome Emmanuel, God with us. And, though the season of Advent is a season of preparation and getting ready, I suspect this year we will not feel very ready for the birth of the infant Jesus. There will be uncertainties about gathering; there will be uncertainties about the usual shopping; there will be uncertainties about how we will be able to celebrate Christmas in our traditional ways; and, there will be uncertainties about Tom's health and about what happens after he retires in January.

However, there are no uncertainties about the arrival of the Christ child. He has come and he will come, regardless of our readiness. We could be Christmas treeless; we could be alone; we could be short of food; we could be without shelter; we could have no money to buy or even make gifts; but, Jesus will still arrive. His birth does not depend on our readiness. God's love will come to earth in the person of Jesus whether we are ready or not, or even whether we acknowledge him or not. He has come and he will come this year of 2020, ready or not.

Yours in Christ,
Barbara Aspinall



The First Presbyterian Church of Stirling
Feeding Those Who Hunger



Dear FPC Family,

We want to thank you for all of your wonderful support. The cards, the well wishes, and the prayers have meant so much to Tom and to our whole family. We told Tom we were writing this update for Stirling Stuff and asked if he wanted to share something. He said, "I'm alive and kicking!" As you can see, he still has his sense of humor through all this.

It certainly has been a difficult time. The week and a half following his chemo treatment has had its ups and downs. Through all of it, we remain hopeful that the chemo is doing what is needed so that he will be able to move forward to the next steps. If you would like specific updates, please feel free to follow his journey on the Caring Bridge website we have set

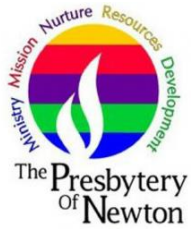
up: <https://www.caringbridge.org/visit/teamtomstrong>



Thank you again for your love and support! And we want to give a special thank you to Reverend Barbara Aspinall. Without her generous help at the church, this would be all the more difficult.

With immense gratitude,
Barbara, Ali, Trevor, and Nancy



Rev. Barbara Aspinall Appointed

The Presbytery of Newton has appointed Rev. Barbara Aspinall from the Meyersville Presbyterian Church as Moderator of Session of the First Presbyterian Church while Rev. Peters is recovering. Rev. Aspinall is available to provide administrative guidance and pastoral care. She can be reached through Paulette at our church office, 908-647-1033, the Meyersville office, 908-647-0390, or on her cell phone, 908-803-6800.

Stewardship**- Sandy Mackay****Weekly Offering**

If you are able, we hope you will continue to send in your weekly offering. You can use the **PayPal Online Giving Link**, which is on the home page of our church's website. Or, mail your check to the church or directly to Elsie Turqman, our Financial Secretary. Her address is in the church directory.

**2021 Pledge**

Several weeks ago, a Stewardship letter and 2021 pledge card were sent out to the congregation. Session is asking that you prayerfully consider your financial commitment to the church, and then return the pledge card to the church soon so budgeting can proceed for the coming year. Thank you!

Offering Envelopes

The 2021 offering envelopes have arrived. However, since we are unable to distribute them at this time, we ask that you continue to mail your pledges to the church office or directly to Elsie Turqman, or send them via the PayPal Online Giving Link, and be sure to note your "old" envelope number on your check.

**Annual Congregational Election Meeting**

At the Annual Congregational Election Meeting on October 25th, the following members were elected/re-elected to terms as church officers effective February 2021:

Class of 2023

Elders: Lynn Blakeslee
Kai Ihringer

Deacons: Kim Ridgway
Israel Sierra

Rev. Peters and the congregation expressed their thanks and appreciation to those officers whose current terms will end in January.

**Annual Reports – Due January 15th**

Reminder: Annual reports for all church committees/groups are **due to the church office by no later than January 15th** so they can be assembled and distributed in time for the Annual Congregational Meeting scheduled for January 31st. Since Rev. Peters will not be able to complete several of the reports as he has done in past years, **please confirm that someone on your committee is taking care of this.** Paulette has sent out copies of 2019 reports to assist in preparing the 2020 reports.

Join the Online Zoom Coffee Hour**- Janet Parziale**

Our Zoom coffee hours continue every Sunday morning at 11:00 a.m. jointly with our friends from Meyersville. For many, these visits online with one another have been fun, therapeutic, and a great way to catch up with one another.



If you have not attended, please try it on an upcoming Sunday morning. You do not need any special software to join in the fun; just click the link in the email provided each week to participate. You can join with video or just with audio, and you can use your phone, kindle, tablet, or computer. If you need the link resent, please feel free to contact Janet Parziale at janetparziale@comcast.net or 908-647-2212. We hope to see you this coming Sunday!

Deacons' Corner**- Janet Parziale****Mission of the Month - December - We have two this month!****Angel Tree Program**

This year, we joined with Meyersville Presbyterian Church to help with their **Angel Tree Program**, sponsored by the Salvation Army in Plainfield. Meyersville received the names of ten children and their wish lists. This has been a favorite mission of our friends at Meyersville over the past several years. The information was shared at the November 22nd outdoor service at Meyersville. Since the gifts needed to be delivered by December 1st, several folks at that service selected a child to buy for or donated towards a gift, and Roseanne McGraw from Meyersville did the shopping. Many thanks to those who were able to support this mission event, especially in the tight timeframe.

**Market Street Mission in Morristown**

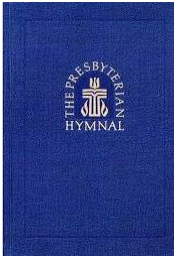
We will continue to collect donations for the **Market Street Mission throughout December**. During the Covid-19 pandemic, they are still providing 200 meals each day to those in immediate need. Besides providing meals, this organization also offers recovery programs and vocational training to those rebuilding their lives, community counseling services, and “regularly scheduled meetings and services that give people a solid foundation for stable lives.” This year we are supporting the Mission in two ways:

monetary and turkey donations. Thank you for helping them care for an individual's immediate needs as well as their long-term needs for a stable and independent tomorrow.

Gobble-Gobble Turkeys Collected!

Each Thanksgiving for many years, our congregation has stepped up and donated their free turkeys to the Market Street Mission to help with their efforts to provide a delicious Thanksgiving dinner to many homeless individuals. **The turkey collection was a big success with ten turkeys being donated.** Nine turkeys were taken to Market Street Mission and enjoyed by many at their Thanksgiving dinners. We also provided one turkey to a local family who expressed their sincere thanks to everyone at the First Presbyterian Church. Thank you for helping to brighten the holiday for the less fortunate. Our thanks to Tom Parziale for delivering the turkeys to Morristown.





Sign Out a Blue Church Hymnal

The Deacons are offering an option for our church members to sign-out a blue hymnal for use at home during worship services each Sunday. The hymnals are numbered, and the member's name will be recorded by a Deacon. Once the pandemic is over, you will be asked to return it to the church. If you want to sign out a hymnal, please contact Janet Parziale, and she will arrange to get one to you.

Need Help? Want to Chat?

During this time of staying at home, it is easy to begin missing that human connection. If you are in need of help getting groceries or just want to talk to someone, please feel free to call a Deacon. We are ready to help in any way we can. If you know of someone who needs assistance, please reach out to one of us, even if it's just for an ear to listen.



Know Someone Who Needs a Card?

Each week during the Prayers of the People, we remember members, friends, and family who need our prayers for joys and concerns. Many have attested to the power of prayer in helping to give strength to all those involved. A Deacon sends cards to let them know they're being thought of and they're in the prayers of the congregation to get well, share joyful wishes, or express sympathy.

If you know of someone who is in need of our thoughts or prayers, please let Janet Parziale know so that a card can be sent. Janet can be reached at janetparziale@comcast.net or 908-647-2212.



Worship Committee

- Janet Parziale

Shared Services with Meyersville Presbyterian Church



The Meyersville Presbyterian Church and the First Presbyterian Church of Stirling will continue to worship together through the Sundays in Advent. There will be an online service each week, accessible through a link delivered by email and on the church website, www.fpcstirling.org.

In addition, an in-person service will be held outdoors in the side yard of the Meyersville Church on Sunday mornings. This is a shortened service with music, and masks are required. Ruud Zijdel has set-up a screen for projecting responsive readings and songs. He also projects pictures that help to illustrate Rev. Aspinall's sermon. You may bring your own chair or chairs are available at the church. If the weather is truly inclement (rain, snow, or really, really cold) the outdoor service will be cancelled. DVD's of the service are also available and may be requested through Janet Parziale.

Hymn Sings by Tatiana!

Our organist, Tatiana Akhounzianova, and Janet Parziale meet each Sunday at the church to record some familiar hymns that are used to create a Hymn Sing video. Some have called it "Church Karaoke!" You can sing along with them and also enjoy the beautiful landscapes, pictures of our church and memorial garden, and pictures from



the past and present of our church family all set to the music of the selected hymns. There are currently three Hymn Sing videos completed with the fourth coming out during the first week of December. It is hoped you will enjoy listening to them and singing along. You can access the hymn sings on our church website (www.fpcstirling.org) on the Recorded Services page (<http://www.fpcstirling.org/videoArchives.html>).

Advent Devotional Available



To help you observe the season of Advent, the church is providing a Daily Advent Devotional which includes a Scripture reading, a brief paragraph related to the Scripture reading, and a prayer. Both hard copies and an emailed PDF are available. If you would like the PDF emailed to you, please contact Rev. Aspinall at baspinall223@aol.com. If you would like a hard copy mailed to you, please contact Paulette in the church office at 908- 647-1033.

Photos Wanted!

As part of the joint holiday services with Meyersville, Laura Zijdel will be incorporating photos of creches. So, after you set up your creche, please take a photo and email it to Laura at directeur@klokhuis.com or text it to her at 908-432-5830 **by December 13th**. It will be fun seeing all the different varieties we have in our homes.



Blue Christmas Service



For many years, our church has held a Blue Christmas Service for people who are struggling through the Christmas season. This service is designed to connect people with the hope and promise that God has not abandoned them in their losses or struggles in life. The service includes lighting candles, symbolizing God's light in the darkness of loss and pain in people's lives.

With what we have all been going through in 2020, the Blue Christmas Service will be especially meaningful this year. Rev. Aspinall will be offering the service this year, and you will be notified when it is available to be viewed via the church website.

Please invite people you know who may have lost a loved one, are suffering from illness, or are feeling alone this Christmas season to view the service at www.fpcstirling.org when it is available.

Christmas Eve at Meyersville

Due to the pandemic, our Christmas Eve service will be a bit different this year. Rev. Aspinall will record a traditional service that will be available through our website (www.fpcstirling.org).

She is also planning a **short service at 7:00 p.m. outside by their Nativity Scene**. Those attending will hold lit candles and listen as Rev. Aspinall shares the Christmas story from the scriptures. We will join in singing familiar carols. As it will be outside, please come bundled up in a warm coat, scarf, gloves, and your mask, of course!



Christmas Eve in Stirling



Although there will be no Christmas Eve Service in our sanctuary this year, our church will be lit up. Everyone is invited to come by and view the decorations and poinsettias through the sanctuary door windows. And, perhaps, offer a prayer.

Mission Programs

Bridges Outreach Lunch Program

- Janet Parziale



The Bridges organization is still in need of as many lunches as we can provide, but we all want to ensure that they are prepared and delivered in a safe manner. They are asking that we bring them any day (Mon-Thurs) convenient for us. Only one person is handling the preparations during this time. We select a day when the sandwiches will be made and the brown bags prepared with non-perishable goodies, and one person delivers them to Summit.

We are always in need of small bottles of water and cartons of juice; snacks of cookies, nuts, Goldfish, pretzels; and small fruit cups, Jello, pudding, etc. Cash donations are also appreciated to help with the purchase of bread and lunch meat. You can drop items off in Pollard Hall (call the church office to confirm someone is there), or send cash donations to Janet Parziale.

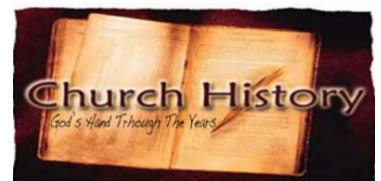
Church Website & Facebook Page

To keep up-to-date with what's happening at our Church, make it a point to check in regularly on the Church website, www.fpcstirling.org, and Facebook page, https://www.facebook.com/fpcStirling/?ref=aymt_homepage_panel. They are good sources for church news, Stirling Stuff, Pastor's sermons, Scripture readings, Church history, and more.

Church Archives

- Jan Somers

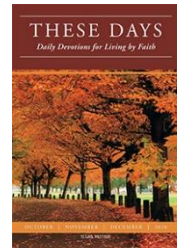
Please continue to forward news clippings, bulletins, programs, pictures, or other memorabilia regarding any member of our church family so our archives can be kept up to date. **Please be sure items are dated and, if possible, the names of church members and/or families are highlighted.** Items can be mailed to the Church (labeled "Archives"), or you can hold onto them until you are in the building. Thank you.



These Days

"To nurture the daily practice of prayer and the reading of Scripture, there is solid help in the pages of 'These Days.' The devotions wrestle faithfully with the doubts, joys, and challenges of Christian life."

Our Church has a subscription for copies of this devotional booklet. If you would like a copy, please contact the church office and it can be mailed to you.



Helping Out

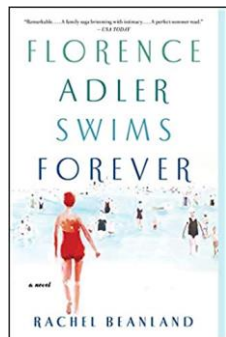
- Jan Somers

It looks as though we'll need to be wearing masks for some time. So, Elsie Turqman and Jan Somers are still available to sew fabric face masks in different sizes. If you or someone you know needs one, please contact Elsie or Jan.

Meyersville Book Club

- Jan Somers

The Book Club's current selection is **"Florence Adler Swims Forever,"** a novel by Rachel Beanland, based on a true story. The group will meet via Zoom **on Tuesday, January 5th, 7:30 p.m.** to discuss the book. Local libraries have copies



available in different formats. Everyone is welcome to join the discussion; please contact Rev. Aspinall so you receive the Zoom link.

Every summer, Esther and Joseph Adler rent their house out to vacationers escaping to "America's Playground" and move into the apartment above their bakery. The apartment is where they raised their two daughters, and Florence, and, despite the cramped quarters, it still feels like home. Now Florence has returned from college, determined to spend the summer training to swim the English Channel, and Fannie, pregnant again after recently losing a baby, is on bedrest, leaving her young daughter in Esther's care.

Esther wants nothing more than to keep her daughters close and safe but some matters are beyond her control: there's Fannie's risky pregnancy, not to mention her always-scheming husband, and the fact that Stuart Williams, the heir of a hotel notorious for its anti-Semitic policies, seems to be in love with Florence.

When tragedy strikes during one of Florence's practice swims, Esther makes the shocking decision to keep the truth about Florence's death from Fannie--at least until the baby is born. She pulls the rest of the family into an elaborate web of secret-keeping and lies, forcing to the surface long-buried tensions that show us just how quickly the act of protecting those we love can turn into betrayal. Told with humor and tenderness and based on a true story, it is a breathtaking meditation on the lengths we go to in order to keep our families together. At its heart, it is an uplifting portrayal of how the human spirit can endure--and even thrive--after tragedy.

Christmas Poinsettias Order Form

The Deacons are coordinating the ordering of poinsettias for the Christmas season. Please use the form below to place your order and specify if you are ordering in memory or honor of someone special in your life.

The deadline to order is Saturday, December 12th

Price: \$17.50 each

Colors: Red, White, or Pink

<u>What Color</u>	<u>How Many</u>	<u>Total Price</u>
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____
TOTALS	_____	_____



Purchased in MEMORY / HONOR of:
(Please circle one)

Given By: _____
Please print clearly

Please check one: To be picked up at the church: _____ To be donated: _____

Please submit your order and payment to Israel Sierra or the church office.

Make checks payable to: **Flowers on the Ridge** and note: **Christmas Poinsettia** on your check.

*****Deadline to order: Saturday, December 12th**

As usual, you may pick up your poinsettia on Christmas Eve between 7pm – 8pm. Janet and Tom Parziale will open the church during this time for you to stop by.

Ongoing Mission Programs:**Items collected for various causes:**

- ✓ Full-sized and "courtesy"-sized bars of soap, shampoo, conditioner, shower caps
- ✓ Fabric: about ½ yard minimum, to make small bears for children, totes for wheelchair patients, etc. Yarn: to make lap robes for wounded veterans, afghans for battered women, and hats for newborns in hospitals

Please e-mail submissions for the
January issue of *Stirling Stuff* to:
jsomers17@hotmail.com
by **December 23rd**. Thank you!

Ongoing Fundraisers**ShopRite Gift Cards**

- ✓ No additional cost to you to use
- ✓ Purchase cards at face value
- ✓ Church earns 5%
- ✓ Denominations available are:

\$20, \$50, \$100

Gift Cards are available from Yvonne Fletcher.

iGive

- ✓ No cost to you
- ✓ Log on / sign up / find out more at:
<http://www.igive.com/FirstPresbyterianChurch-StirlingNJ>
- ✓ E-mail this information to your friends

Stirling Stuff is the newsletter of

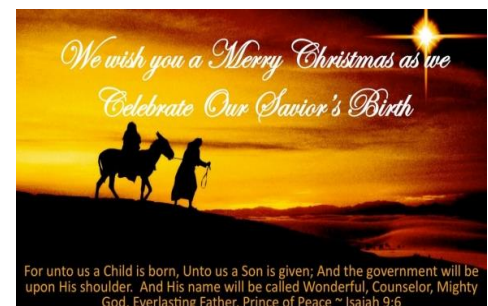
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Why not invite a friend to online church?

**Our Mission**

Jesus said, "Feed My Sheep." This welcoming and caring family, empowered by the love of Christ, shares the grace and peace of God's blessings by serving those who are hungry in body or spirit.

