

The Messenger & Stirling Stuff

DECEMBER 2023, ADVENT NEWSLETTER

The First Presbyterian Church of Stirling & The Meyersville Presbyterian Church

LONG HILL NJ PRESBYTERIAN CHURCHES

WORSHIPING TOGETHER

Pastor's Note

These 4 weeks before Christmas, in the season we call Advent, I'll be thinking about hospitality. Hospitality refers to the generous and friendly treatment of visitors and guests. It is a joy to experience when someone has the gifts of hospitality. There are so many details that a host pays attention to and steps that are taken in preparation to ready a space or a meal to truly make a visitor feel welcomed. It is a skill (and an art) which comes natural to some and to some others it is hard work to be welcoming. Either way, the effort and the intention, pays off as relationships and connection are nurtured and solidified through hospitality.

For some people this is a season of hosting— office parties, gift exchanges, festive dinners. There is great joy in sharing such happy occasions. But the typical secular celebrations are not why I want you to be thinking about hospitality with me. You and I have a very important guest coming. Guests don't have to be strangers. This visitor is near and dear to us. We have the chance to welcome them into our lives often. Yes, it is the Christ child who is coming. This is the season to make room for the hope, peace, joy and love of the Christ-child. This is the happy time for the light and love of Christ to be welcomed into the world, into our two churches, into our daily lives.

In this world of war and division, this is a perfect time to dwell on the gift of God's hospitality and practice holy welcome. What does Christ's coming into our lives mean for how we live in harmony with others? How might we learn from God who goes to such lengths to come near to us?

There are many ways you might chose to get ready this season. If we, who say we follow Jesus, put as much time and energy into making our spirits and hearts ready as we do to make our houses decorated— Oh the angels would sing! I hope that you might consider joining me each Thursday to read scripture and reflect on the divine hospitality of God. As we think about how God welcomes us, we will prepare ourselves to welcome him.



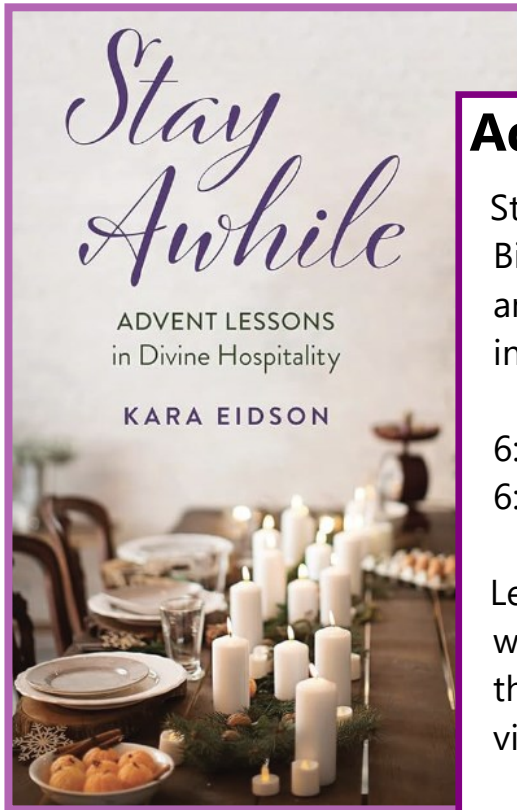
However you prepare to welcome Christ into your world,
I pray you do so with joyous expectation!

Yours in Christ,

Rev. Stefanie Muntzel

ADVENT 2023

Are you prepared to welcome the Christ-Child this season?



Advent Bible Study

Starting Thursday, December 7th we will host Bibles Study each Thursday in December: 7th and 14th, 21st and 28th. We will begin meeting at First Presbyterian Church of Stirling.

6:00 pm Simple Meal of Soup and Bread

6:30 pm Bible Study

Led by Rev. Muntzel will explore "How can we welcome Christ into our lives?" We will follow the book "Stay Awhile, Advent Lessons in Divine Hospitality" by Rev. Kara Eidson.



Advent Devotions

Set aside time for daily scripture reading and prayer in the 4 weeks leading up to Christmas.

Receive a daily Advent reflection to your email starting December 3rd. This year we are offering reflections from the resource "A Calendar of Devotions" by Rev. Sam McGlothlin. Each devotional includes a scripture, a reflection, and a prayer.

A limited number of hard copy devotionals are also available.



A Calendar of Devotions

SAM MCGLOTHLIN



WORSHIP



December Worship

We will worship at **Meyersville Presbyterian Church**.

Our online services are accessible through a link delivered by email and are also posted on social media and on both church websites.

Advent 1 December 3rd

We will light the Advent candle of **Hope**. We will hear from the prophets of old as we reflect on the coming of the Christ child. This will also be a communion Sunday.

Advent 2 December 10th

We will light the Advent candle of **Peace**. We will hear from the angels who brought news that the Prince of Peace was to be born.

Advent 3 December 17

We will light the Advent candle of **Joy**. We hope to hear from our bell choir, who is doing their best to be ready to offer their "joyful noise".

Blue Christmas Service

A Blue Christmas Service will be held on December 17th at 3:00 pm at the First Presbyterian Church of Stirling.

For many, Christmas is not 'The Most Wonderful Time of the Year' (as the song goes). Some people experience depression in the darkening days of winter or others are grieving the loss of loved ones. A Blue Christmas service can offer some healing and hope.

Advent 4 and Christmas Eve

10:00 am—The morning service will be held at the First Presbyterian Church of Stirling. We will light the fourth candle of Advent for the Love of God born to us. We will sing beautiful carols of the season as we also experience the story of Christ's birth through a simple pageant.

7:30 pm —The evening service will be held at Meyersville Presbyterian Church. This will be a service of lessons and carols. We will light the Christ candle and sing Silent Night.

Both Sessions have discussed that our two congregations find it meaningful to have Advent and Christmas Eve services in their own individual sanctuaries. This year the fourth Sunday of Advent is also Christmas Eve. We will hold a service at The First Presbyterian Church of Stirling on Dec 24th at 10 am. The evening Christmas Eve service will take place at Meyersville this year at 7:30 pm. We will adjust our worship calendar so that next year Advent and Christmas Eve services will be at the First Presbyterian Church of Stirling. This will be accomplished by holding services at Meyersville again in January 2024.

MISSION

Mission of the Month:

The joint mission of the month for December 2023 is **Family Promise**. Family Promise is the leading Morris County nonprofit addressing homelessness and housing insecurity by providing a variety of services to ensure safe shelter and housing is accessible to all. Our support helps make their mission a reality by offering families and individuals in our community the promise of home. Please make a contribution and mark your check or envelope with **Family Promise**.

Angle Tree

They say there are angles amongst us! And some angels came forward to provide for over 10 children in need with gifts this season. You may drop off your unwrapped gifts to Doris Mertz before December 10th, to her directly or to her attention at either church. These gifts will be delivered to Salvation Army for children in Plainfield on the 11th. Thank you for your generosity!

Special thanks to all who donated Turkeys or made contributions to our Turkey collection. The Market Street Mission was so very thankful.

Advent Calendar of Kindness

Consider preparing for Christ's coming by sharing acts of care— anonymously or without fanfare. Pick one a week or try to do one a day from a list or just as you. Here is a sample of "good deeds" that cost little but might make room in your heart for extra Christmas joy.

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|---|---|
| * GIVE A COMPLIMENT. | FERENT FROM YOU. |
| * LEAVE A BIG TIP. | * BRING PACKAGED COOKIES TO FIRE OR POLICE STATION. |
| * SORT BELONGINGS AND DONATE BEST ITEMS. | * SEND A THANK YOU NOTE TO SOMEONE YOU APPRECIATE, JUST FOR WHO THEY ARE. |
| * GIVE UP YOUR SPOT IN LINE. | * PUT MONEY IN A PARKING METER OR IN THE 'PENNY' JAR . |
| * BUY A CHILD YOU DON'T KNOW A GIFT. | * ASK THE PERSON CHECKING YOU OUT AT THE STORE HOW THEY ARE- AND REALLY LISTEN. |
| * LET SOMEONE MERGE IN FRONT OF YOU IN TRAFFIC. | * BAKE FOR A NEW MOM OR A STRESSED-OUT FRIEND. |
| * PICK UP TRASH. | * ASK TO SPEAK TO A MANAGER AT A RESTAURANT OR STORE — AND GIVE A GIANT COMPLIMENT ABOUT THE STORE AND/OR ONE OF THE EMPLOYEES. |
| * BUY A \$5 GIFT CARD TO HAND TO SOMEONE ON YOUR WAY OUT OF THAT STORE/SHOP/RESTAURANT. | * DROP OFF FLOWERS AT A NURSING HOME OR AN EMERGENCY ROOM- "FOR THE CARE GIVERS". |
| * SAY THANK YOU. | * HOLD THE DOOR OPEN FOR SOMEONE. |
| * BUY SCRATCH-OFF LOTTERY TICKETS AND PLACE THEM ON WINDSHIELDS IN PARKING LOT. | |
| * SET PRE-PACKAGED SNACKS OUT FOR THE PEOPLE DELIVERING YOUR MAIL AND PACKAGES. | |
| * DONATE BLOOD. | |
| * SMILE AND GREET SOMEONE YOU DON'T KNOW. | |
| * DO YOU HAVE SMALL BUSINESSES THAT YOU FREQUENTLY VISIT? LEAVE THEM A GREAT REVIEW . | |
| * TAPE WRAPPED CANDY CANES IN PUBLIC PLACES. | |
| * LEARN SOMETHING NEW ABOUT SOMEONE WHO IS DIFFERENT FROM YOU. | |



CONGREGATIONAL CARE

Prayer Concerns

Please prayer for peace in our world and for our members, family and friends...



PRAYER LISTS

Please let Rev. Muntzel know if someone you requested prayers for should be removed. Send names to be added to our lists to Rev. Muntzel's email, StefanieMinfaith@gmail.com.

Deacons Corner

If you ordered a poinsettia from the FPCS deacons, it can be picked up after the 10 am morning service at the First Presbyterian Church of Stirling on Christmas Eve.



Fellowship Hour

Please consider volunteering to host a coffee hour!

You can do so yourself or by partnering with a deacon, congregational life committee member or just another church friend.


Our Fellowship Hours are thoroughly appreciated by everyone.

If you wish to host Fellowship Hour for Sundays when we worship at First Presbyterian Church of Stirling please speak with deacon, Susan Gerecht (FPCS) or sign up in Pollard Hall. And to host or help with Fellowship Hour when we worship at Meyersville Church, speak with Kelly Roshto (MPC).

FELLOWSHIP OPPORTUNITY

Oscar Movie Night returns on Friday, December 8th at 7:00 pm at the Millington Fire house! We will watch "The Barbie Movie"!

DECEMBER 2023 CALENDAR

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
					1	2 1:00 pm @ FPCS Decorating 2:00 pm @ MPC Olmsted Funeral 4:00 pm @MPC Decorating
3 Advent 1 10:00am @ MPC Worship Fellowship Bell Practice 4:30 pm @MPC Caroling 5:00 pm Tree Lighting	4	5	6	7 6:00 pm @ FPCS Soup and Bread 6:30 pm Advent Study	8	9
10 Advent 2 10:00am @ MPC Worship Fellowship Bell Practice	11	12	13	14 6:00 pm @ FPCS Soup and Bread 6:30 pm Advent Study	15	16
17 Advent 3 10:00am @ MPC Worship Fellowship	18	19	20 6:30 pm @ MPC MPC Session	21 6:00 pm @ MPC Soup and Bread 6:30 pm Advent Study	22	23
24 Advent 4 10:00 am @ FPC of Stirling Advent 4 worship 7:30 pm @ Meyersville PC Christmas Eve Service	25 	26 <i>Office Closed</i>	27	28 6:00 pm @ MPC Soup and Bread 6:30 pm Advent Study	29	30
31 10:00am @ MPC Worship Fellowship						



Happy 150th Anniversary to
The First Presbyterian Church
of Stirling!

What a wonderful celebration!
Delicious food was contributed by
many to mark Heritage Sunday.
Special thanks to those who worked so
hard on the archives!



Congratulations to the Meyersville pie makers! Their creations filled the church and many homes with delicious scents and a reminder of the goodness of God! Great work!



The Messenger & Stirling Stuff is the **combined newsletter** of
The Meyersville Presbyterian Church and The First Presbyterian Church of Stirling, both in Long Hill NJ.
The deadline for November newsletter is December 18th.
Submissions can be sent to Rev. Muntzel.

Rev. Stefanie Muntzel, Pastor StefanieMinfaith@gmail.com

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