



Stirling Stuff

Volume 67, No. 2

February 2023

Dear Church Family,

I am again indulging in horse talk. As many of you know, I spend a bit of my spare time riding horses, taking care of horses, and talking about horses. Fortunately, I have found some friends who also love horses and can tolerate substantially more horse talk than my family can.



Trovatore

One of these friends owned a quarter horse for many years. He lived to be about 36 years old – extremely elderly for a horse. By the time I knew him, nobody rode him anymore, but he was quite healthy and sound for a horse his age of 32. His most significant problem was his teeth. He had only three. And because a horse has to be able to chew grass and hay to a soggy pulp before it can be swallowed, the lack of teeth is a serious problem. Since dentures for horses have not yet been invented as far as I know, some kind of food had to be discovered that could be swallowed without much chewing. A solution was found. There is a kind of horse feed that is grass that has been cut up, dried, and pressed

into pellets that can be soaked with warm water to make a delicious green glop that Trovatore relished and ate by the bucketful.

My friend bought several large bags of these grass pellets – many months' worth. She joked that if Trovatore didn't live long enough to eat it all, she would probably have to eat it herself (the stuff is not cheap as horse feed goes).

The point of this story – aside from the opportunity to talk about horses yet again – is that in buying a large number of bags of the grass pellets, my friend made a significant commitment to the life of a beloved creature. She did not hedge her bets but decided to plan for a future that, though there was no guarantee, she hoped would be true – that Trovatore would live long enough to eat up at least what she had bought. He did and she had to buy many more bags for the several more years of well-fed contentment he lived.

The First Presbyterian and Meyersville churches have made a commitment to a future that is not guaranteed but which we hope will be true – a vibrant ministry of worship and mission with a new pastor. The budgets of both churches reflect this commitment and hope; the joint pastor search committee's work, the Sessions' and congregations' financial support and expenditure of time and energy reflect this commitment and hope. You are not hedging your bets or waffling about choices. You are planning for a future and trusting in God's good will that, though there is no guarantee, you hope will be true. Your two churches are acting now on your hopes for the future.



The next months will not be easy. There is much work to do in the day-to-day running of our

churches and Jan Somers, our new church secretary, cannot do it all. Others will have to step up to help in the office, connect to pulpit supply worship leaders, and take on other tasks so that the church can continue to do ministry, helping the congregation to be the body of Christ. There may be glitches from time to time as you rely on pulpit supply worship leaders but, with a flexible attitude, a sense of humor, and the love you bear for one another and your church, I know you will continue to act and live and minister based upon your hope for the future.

Yours in Christ,

Barbara

The First Presbyterian Church of Stirling
Feeding Those Who Hunger

Retirement Party!

You are invited! After 25 years as pastor of the Meyersville Presbyterian Church, Rev. Barbara Aspinall will be retiring at the end of February. Our worship service in Meyersville on Sunday, February 26th will be a special one and, after the worship service, there will be a retirement celebration in Pollard Hall at FPC Stirling starting at 11:30 am. To RSVP, call Doris Mertz or Laura Zijdel or email session@meyersvillechurch.com.

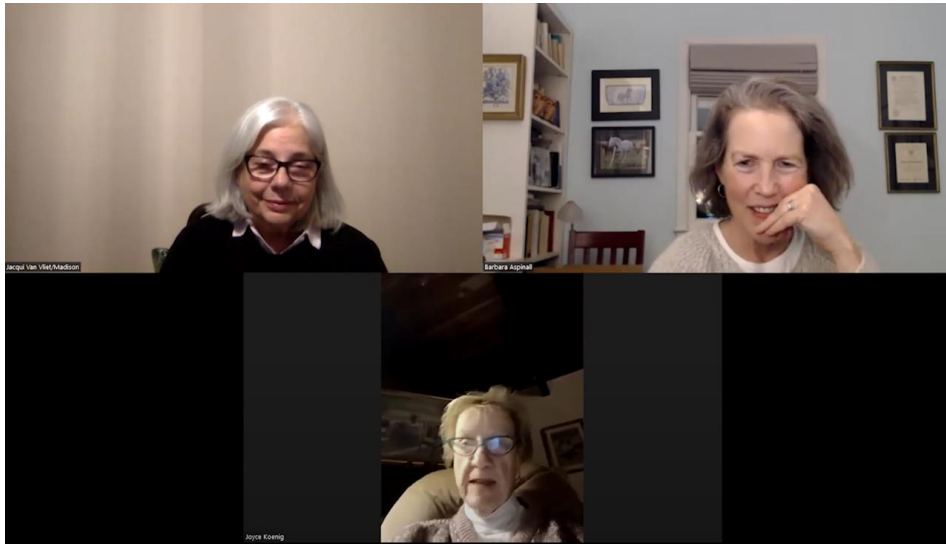


Presbytery of the Highlands Retirement Celebration

On Tuesday, January 31st, our presbytery hosted a retirement celebration for four pastors—Barbara Aspinall among them. The celebration was held on Zoom, and guests from the pastors' churches and representatives from the presbytery spoke about the ministries of the pastors. Doris Mertz and Laura Zijdel spoke about Barbara's 25 years with Meyersville and Joyce Koenig (backed by Lynn Blakeslee) spoke about her time with FPC. Presbytery Leader, Jeanne Radak, talked about Barbara's work in the presbytery. Barbara's mother, sisters, and niece, as well as members of both churches "came" to the meeting. Many thanks to all those who joined the celebration.

Pictured here are Jaquie van Vliet, Presbytery Committee on Ministry Co-Moderator, Barbara, and Joyce Koenig.

If you would like to see the recorded version of the celebration and hear what people said, you can find it at this link on the presbytery website. Barbara's portion starts at 55:13, but it was interesting to hear about the ministry of the other pastors as well! <https://highlandspresbytery.org/presbytery-meeting-videos/presbytery-videos/>



Upcoming Worship Schedule

- Rev. Aspinall

During the month of February, we will worship in Meyersville.

Wearing face masks is optional, but we will continue signing-in for purposes of contact tracing, if needed. **If you need a ride to church, please call upon a Deacon or fellow church member; we are happy to help.** Our online services will continue each week and are accessible through a link delivered by email and on the church website, www.fpcstirling.org. The service can be viewed at any time. DVDs of the service are also available and may be requested through the church office or any Deacon.

Notices of the worship location will be posted on the church doors so, if there is confusion, there will be time to dash to the other church and just be a few minutes late. Latecomers are always welcome!



Annual Congregational Meeting

The Annual Congregational Meeting was held following worship on January 29th. The following church members were elected/re-elected:

- Church Treasurer for 1 year: Kai Ihringer
- Financial Secretary for 1 year: Elsie Turqman
- Nominating Committee for 2023: Susan Brodziak, Dawn Mackay, and Carolyn Malfatone
- Elder for 3 years: Ed Gerech and Sandy Mackay
- Deacon for 3 years: Susan Gerech

Installation of the newly elected Elders and Deacons will take place on Sunday, February 19th, during morning worship in Meyersville.

Thank You for Serving**- Rev. Aspinall**

Our deepest thanks and appreciation to our church officers who have completed terms of office on the Session or the Board of Deacons. They have been dedicated to the ministry of Christ in Stirling, using God's gifts of intelligence, imagination, and love. Their energy and devotion have enabled and served the worship, work, and fellowship life of our congregation. From the Session: Susan Brodziak; and from the Board of Deacons: Dawn Mackay, Carolyn Malfatone, and Janet Parziale. Many thanks!

A special thank you to Susan Brodziak who, although she has completed her term serving on Session, has agreed to remain serving as our Clerk of Session. So, our accurate, timely, and complete recordkeeping will continue.

Thank you also to Kai Ihringer and Elsie Turqman who are continuing their duties as Church Treasurer and Financial Secretary. They do a lot of tedious, time-consuming work all year keeping track of the church's finances.

Stewardship**Per-Capita Apportionment**

Our 2023 per-capita apportionment to the Presbytery, Synod, and General Assembly is **\$43.50 per active member**. This represents our share of the administrative costs of the Presbytery and the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church USA. The Session is asking the congregation to consider paying the per capita for your family. In this way, you enable our church to use all pledge money for our church's operating expenses, church programs, and mission commitments. **If you are a member and do not contribute to the church financially, the *per capita* charge for you and your household comes out of our annual budget.** The *Per Capita* envelope can be found in the front of your offering envelopes box.

**Piano Recital, February 19th, 2 pm**

On Sunday, February 19th, Tatiana Akhounzianova will be presenting a recital of three of her piano students and herself at Meyersville. The recital will include compositions by Czerny, Bach, Greig, Schubert, Gounod, Schumann, Tchaikovsky, and others. Tatiana herself will be playing music by Liszt, Chopin, Durand, and Tchaikovsky.

All are most welcome and encouraged to come enjoy wonderful music and support Tatiana and her students.

**Concert Series, February 26th, 2:30 p.m.**

On Sunday, February 26th at 2:30 p.m., we will be hosting another performance in The Rev. Dr. Thomas T. Peters Concert Series when we welcome Violinist Claudia Schaer and Pianist Olga Gurevich. Their program will include sonatas for piano and violin by Bach, Beethoven, and Brahms as well as Dvorak's Romance in F minor and Kreisler's Miniature Viennese March.

A little about the musicians: Violinist Claudia Schaer is a native of Calgary, Ontario, is a graduate of Juilliard School's Accelerated Bachelor/Master program and served as concertmaster of the Juilliard Symphony. She has toured in Europe and given master classes in China. She completed a doctorate of

Musical Arts at Stony Brook University in 2011. Her recent recording of the Bach Sonatas and Partitas for solo violin is hailed for its “elegant, light touch and lucid timber ... a wonderful performance.”

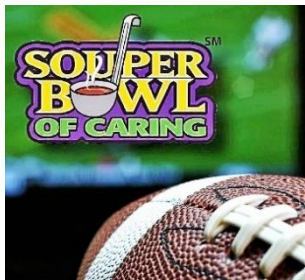
Pianist Olga Gurevich’s career spans the disciplines of concert artist, chamber musician, accompanist, and teacher. She studied in Moscow, Russia, finishing post-graduate at the Maimonides State Academy and earning her Master's Degree at the Gnesin Academy in Piano Performance, Piano Accompanying, and Piano Pedagogy. She has performed in numerous venues in NYC and internationally and has published several recordings.



Invite your family and friends to enjoy beautiful music in our sanctuary. As always, admission is free; a free-will offering is accepted. A short reception will follow the concert during which attendees may meet the performers.

Deacons’ Corner

- Janet Parziale



Mission of the Month - February - Souper Bowl of Caring

It's that time again--the 57th NFL Super Bowl game will be played on Sunday, February 12th. It will be an exciting time for football fans. It is also time for the annual Souper Bowl of Caring activity which occurs across the United States. The **Souper Bowl of Caring** is our **February Mission of the Month**.

Some history: in South Carolina in 1990, a simple prayer: "Lord, even as we enjoy the Super Bowl football game, help us be mindful of those who are without a bowl of soup to eat" inspired a youth-led movement to help hungry people. This movement has gathered money and food for those in need each year since then.

You can include your gift in the weekly offering or send it directly to the church or Elsie Turqman. Please note that it is for “Mission of the Month,” and remember to include your name and/or envelope number if you would like your donation to be recorded.

Last year we collected \$355, which was used to purchase much-needed goods for the Twelve Baskets Food Pantry, currently housed at All Saints Episcopal Church in Millington. Please consider donating to this worthy cause. Remember, the money we collect is donated to local organizations. The Deacons have decided the recipient will be Twelve Baskets Food Pantry this year.

Flowers to Beautify Our Sanctuary

Would you consider providing a bunch or two of flowers to be used during the recording of a worship service in Stirling in February? Deacon Kim Ridgway (908-458-0333) loves to make arrangements and could help you with that if you call her ahead. Kim (or another Deacon) will take care of arranging them into vases.



If you would like to provide flowers in February, please call the church office (908-647-1033) and leave the information (your name, the date you want, and who the flowers are in honor/memory of). Thank you very much for helping beautify our sanctuary!

Know Someone Who Needs a Card?

We know what the power of prayer can do in helping give strength to all those involved. If you know of someone who is in need of our prayers, please let Kimberly Ridgway know so that a card can be sent letting them know we are thinking about them.

**Worship Committee**

- Janet Parziale

February Lectionary Readings***February 5: Fifth Sunday After Epiphany***

Isaiah 58:1-9a (9b-12); Psalm 112:1-9 (10); I Corinthians 2:1-12 (13-16); Matthew 5:13-20

February 12: Sixth Sunday After Epiphany

Deuteronomy 30:15-20; Psalm 119:1-8; 1 Corinthians 3:1-9; Matthew 5:21-37

February 19: Transfiguration of the Lord

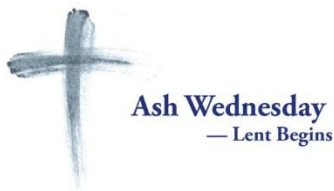
Exodus 24:12-18; Psalm 2 or Psalm 99; 2 Peter 1:16-21; Matthew 17:1-9

February 22: Ash Wednesday

Joel 2:1-2, 12-17; Isaiah 58:1-12; Psalm 51:1-17; 2 Corinthians 5:20b-6:10; Matthew 6:1-6, 16-21

February 26: 1st Sunday in Lent

Genesis 2:15-17; 3:1-7; Psalm 32; Romans 5:12-19; Matthew 4:1-11

**Ash Wednesday Worship**

Ash Wednesday, the beginning of Lent, is on February 22nd this year. There will be a service in Meyersville at 7:30 p.m. **If you need a ride to Meyersville for the service, please contact any Deacon or the church office (908-647-1033), and we will be glad to arrange that for you.**

The focus of traditional Ash Wednesday services is the brevity of life, that we came from dust and will soon enough return back to the earth, dust once more. Considering what we have gone through over the past few years, this is something we are all familiar with.

Liturgists Needed for Worship Services

We need Liturgists each week to do readings for both the in-person and on-line worship services. **For the month of February, we will be worshipping in MEYERSVILLE; recordings will be done in STIRLING.** Recordings are typically done on Thursday early evenings (other arrangements can be made, if needed).



To sign up, please contact Jan Somers. If Jan contacts you about reading, **please let her know as soon as possible if/when you will be available.** Rev. Aspinall will send you a copy of your readings and confirm the location and time for the on-line recording. **Thank you!**

Mission Programs

Bridges Outreach Lunch Program

- Janet Parziale

We continue to provide lunch bags to the Bridges Outreach organization for distribution to the homeless in Newark, Irvington, and NYC. Currently, one person is making sandwiches and one person is filling the brown bags. The children from the Montessori School often decorate the bags and write messages to the recipients. The sandwiches, drinks, and non-perishable goodies are delivered to Summit monthly.



We are always in need of small bottles of water or cartons of juice; snacks of cookies, nuts, Goldfish, pretzels; and small fruit cups, applesauce, 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 office to confirm that someone is there) or send monetary donations to the church office or directly to Elsie Turqman.

Twelve Baskets Food Pantry

Our local Food Pantry, Twelve Baskets, is housed at All Saints' in Millington. Jointly sponsored by our church, All Saints', Meyersville, and LHT CERT, the food pantry has been serving guests on the first and third Saturday mornings of each month. Volunteer help is needed to set up tables, put the items out, and then pack it up afterwards. Help is also needed for picking up food from the distribution center in Hillside. There is plenty to do, and the volunteer opportunities are well organized. **Please contact Lynn Blakeslee or Barbara Aspinall if you would like to contribute an hour or two of your time.** For more information on this program, go to: <http://www.allsaintsmillington.org/outreach.html>

If you or someone you know is in need of food or other non-grocery items, please call the food bank office at 908-647-0067 (Ext. 4) and leave a confidential message.



Food items: baby food, applesauce, shelf-stable milk, cold cereal, crackers, chips, coffee, dried herbs and spices, canola oil, olive oil
Non-food items: diapers, baby wipes, paper towels, toilet paper, household cleaners, soap, toothbrushes, toothpaste, shampoo, conditioner

There is a more complete list of needed items on the table in the narthex. These items can be picked up for a good price at Dollar stores.

Pop-Top Can Tabs

- Jan Somers



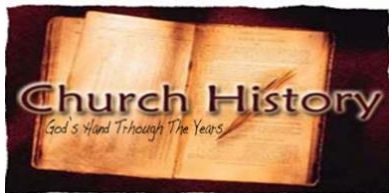
Please continue to save pop-top can tabs, any size. **The can tabs are sold by weight to recycling centers, and the proceeds are donated to Ronald McDonald House Charities—a nonprofit family and children's charity dedicated to supporting families with sick children in their time of need.** You can give them to me any Sunday morning, leave them in the church office, or I can pick them up from you. Thank you for your continued support of this program!

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 save 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 save them until you are in the building and put them in the "Archives" mailbox outside the church offices. Thank you.

Church Family News

Farewell and Happy Retirement to Paulette

Following morning worship on January 15th, the Deacons and others hosted a special Fellowship Hour in honor of Paulette on her retirement from 17 years as our church secretary. She was presented with a gift card from the church, flowers, and a special cake. We all wish her a happy, healthy retirement.

Paulette sent a beautiful note to the church thanking everyone for the farewell gathering, and especially for the unexpected gift card and beautiful flowers.



Some of our congregation members have recently moved. We wish them happiness and good blessings in their new homes. Here are their addresses so you can keep in touch:

Toni & William Hopcraft
401 Beresford Road
Rochester, NY 14610

Arthur Fletcher (living with his daughter, Lorna)
75 Autumn Ridge Rd
Bedminster, NJ 07921



Jean Hoffman became a great-grandmother on January 13th when her granddaughter Laura and husband Nicholas welcomed Emma Michelle Bush. Emma weighed 8½ bs. Proud grandparents are Jean's daughter Wendy and her husband Dan.



On January 25th, Rev. Aspinall and Doug Smith became grandparents. Ava Brooke Smith was born to Nina and Andrew Smith, weighing in at 5 lbs. 14 oz.

Congratulations and best wishes to the happy families!

Church Directory is Being Updated

- Jan Somers



During the month of February, I will be updating our church directory. Please review your current listing and let me know if there are any changes to be made. If you don't have a copy, leave a message at the church office and I will send your information to you. I hope to have this completed by the end of the month, so please let me know asap.

A Few Requests from Your New Church Secretary

- Jan Somers

Now that I've been back at the job for about six weeks, I have a few requests to make of you. When I was in this job back in the 80s and 90s, email was not an issue. It may be a time saver but not always:

- a. Please send information regarding church/office business to my FPC email address: secretary@fpcstirling.org. I realize that many of you are used to using my personal email or text, but for "work" matters, it will save me a lot of time if I receive them directly at the office rather than having to forward them.
- b. If you are sending emails to other committee/Session/Board of Deacons members, etc. that do not require any action on my part, please don't "cc" me. Yesterday I had about 30 emails when I arrived at the office, and only about 5 of them regarded something I needed to know/do. This may sound picky, but I'm trying to make the most efficient use of my time in the office.

Please continue sending items for Stirling Stuff to my home email since I will continue preparing the newsletter at home. Thank you.

Meyersville Presbyterian Church

Rug Braiding Returns!

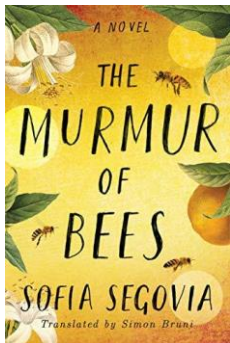
It won't be the same without Peg Arnold providing instructions; but, the rug braiding group is a generous bunch, and they will help get you started even if you have never done it before. The goal is to make a beautiful braided rug out of wool strips. They will be meeting on **Tuesdays at 10 am in Meyersville**. If you would like to participate, the best material for these rugs is medium weight 100% wool fabric. This can be fabric from sewing projects you never got to, or wool skirts, coats, jackets, blankets that have perhaps worn out in the middle. The church also has a good supply of wool to get you started. Just show up on Tuesdays. If you are a knitter or have some other project you are working on, you are welcome as the company is good even if you aren't braiding!



Meyersville Book Club

The **March** selection is *The Murmur of Bees* by Sofia Segovia. The group will be meeting on Wednesday, March 22nd at 7:30 p.m. via Zoom. Everyone is welcome to join the group; please leave a message at the Meyersville church office (908-647-0390) so you will receive the Zoom link. The book is available at local libraries in different formats.

From a Goodreads review:



From a beguiling voice in Mexican fiction comes an astonishing novel—her first to be translated into English—about a mysterious child with the power to change a family's history in a country on the verge of revolution.

From the day that old Nana Reja found a baby abandoned under a bridge, the life of a small Mexican town forever changed. Disfigured and covered in a blanket of bees, little Simonopio is for some locals the stuff of superstition, a child kissed by the devil. But he is welcomed by landowners Francisco and Beatriz Morales, who adopt him and care for him as if he were their own. As he grows up, Simonopio becomes a cause for wonder to the Morales family because, when the uncannily gifted child closes his eyes, he can see what no one else can—visions of all that's yet to come, both beautiful and dangerous. Followed by his protective swarm of bees and living to deliver his adoptive family from threats—both human and those of nature—Simonopio's purpose in Linares will, in time, be divined.

Set against the backdrop of the Mexican Revolution and the devastating influenza of 1918, The Murmur of Bees captures both the fate of a country in flux and the destiny of one family that has put their love, faith, and future in the unbelievable.

Ongoing Mission Programs:

Bridges Outreach Lunch Program
 Family Promise of Morris County
 Twelve Baskets Food Pantry

Please e-mail submissions for the
 February 2023 issue of Stirling Stuff to:
jsomers17@hotmail.com
 by **February 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 Lynn Blakeslee.

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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 Website: www.fpcstirling.org

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.

Why not invite a friend to church!

**Hello
 February**

