

## February 2024 NEWSLETTER

### The First Presbyterian Church of Stirling and Meyersville Presbyterian Church

*Long Hill NJ Presbyterian Churches Partnering Together*

## NOTE FROM THE PASTOR

In English, the word “love” is over used. When we speak of love we mean our feelings toward our spouse, our parents or even a cup of coffee.

The ancient Greek used in the New Testament has a number of words for love. Philia (φιλία), refers to feelings one has towards friends. Yes, the “brotherly love” referenced in Philadelphia. This word was used in the New Testament to describe Jesus’ love for his disciples (John 20:2) and for Lazarus (John 11:3). There is Storge (στοργή). This Greek word refers to love we have for members of our family. The most common word for love used in the New Testament is Agape (ἀγάπη). Agape was frequently used to reference a distinctive love: the unconditional and self-sacrificing love of God and the kind of love which we should reciprocate and emulate.

This month Ash Wednesday is on Valentine’s Day, February 14th. This initially felt very odd to me. But upon further reflection, I think this confluence has a lesson for us. Valentine’s Day sells love short. The “only” love Valentine’s Day celebrates is romantic love. Romantic love can be wonderful— no doubt. But its not all there is. At its heart Valentine’s day is truly only about the sales of chocolate, cards and flowers (pun intended). On this day love is narrowed and commodified, it becomes a too sweet, too shallow version of love.

On Ash Wednesday we remember a love which never ends— that cannot be stopped even by death itself. We remember our mortality on Ash Wednesday. We acknowledge that we have not always loved our Creator as we should— we place ashes on our foreheads to show we know the fragility of our life and that we are sorry for our sins. We start the journey toward Easter this way, humbly, so that we are ready to hear again, and experience anew, the greatest love story of all time— the love born and reborn in Christ — offered to us unconditionally.

**Love is patient; love is kind; love is not envious or boastful or arrogant or rude. It does not insist on its own way; it is not irritable; it keeps no record of wrongs; it does not rejoice in wrongdoing but rejoices in the truth. It bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things. Love never ends.**

May God fill your heart with love this month,

Yours in Christ,

Rev. Stefanie Muntzel



## WORSHIP

### February Worship

We will worship at **The First Presbyterian Church of Stirling** in February.

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

### Handbell Choir Resumes

Would you like to make a joyful noise to the Lord? Our Handbell Choir will rehearse February 11– March 24th and play in worship on March 31<sup>st</sup>. The choir is open to anyone who is willing to try! Practice is held on Sunday afternoons. If you are interested please speak with Tatiana Akhounzianova, Organist and Handbell Choir Director.

### **Lent begins with Ash Wednesday on Wednesday, February 14 2024.**

The season of Lent is a time of prayer, fasting and self-examination in preparation for the celebration of the resurrection of the Lord at Easter. Easter is Sunday, March 31st this year. Lent is a period of **40 days** — like the flood of Genesis, Moses' sojourn at Mount Sinai, Elijah's journey to Mount Horeb, Jonah's call to Ninevah to repent and Jesus' time of testing in the wilderness. Lent begins with Ash Wednesday. It is a day of mourning for our sin and the sin of all humanity before God. On this day, and in Ash Wednesday services, we recognize our mortality and the grace of God which is offered to us so that we need not fear death. Non-Catholic Christians have in recent years embraced the tradition of the imposition of ashes. Ashes are a biblical symbol of death, repentance, mourning and sacrifice. On this day, we thank the Lord for creating us and we pray that God breathe new life into our burned-out, dusty lives once more. On our Lenten journey, we prepare to be remade once again in the Rising of Christ.



## LENT 2024

### Lenten Sermon Series “Less Can Be More: Sermon Series on Fasting”

The 40 days before Easter are often a time when people “give something up” for Lent. No chocolate, no meat, no swearing... This is a version of Lenten fasting. And many people may choose to fast, even just from red meat, without really understanding why.

This Lent I would like to share some history around Biblical fasting, explore the benefits of spiritual disciplines in our faith life, and consider what thought patterns and actions we might “Pause” in order to make space in our life for a deeper, fuller relationship with God. What is the fast which God asks of us? Not to starve our soul, but fill ourselves and the world with the goodness of God.

### Lenten Bible Study

#### MEETING JESUS AT THE TABLE

**The Gospels are full of stories of Jesus sharing meals with disciples, friends, even tax collectors and Pharisees.** Whether multiplying bread to feed a whole crowd, relaxing with his inner circle, or telling curious elites stories about even greater banquets, Jesus imparts wisdom as he shares the wine, and grants forgiveness, as he distributes the fish. This resource provides biblical insights along with thought-provoking queries regarding our own time.



**Tuesdays- Feb 13<sup>th</sup>, 20<sup>th</sup>, 27<sup>th</sup> Time: 1:30 PM Location: Stirling**

**Tuesdays– March 5<sup>th</sup>, 12<sup>th</sup>, 19<sup>th</sup> Time: 6:00 PM Location: Meyersville**

### **Joint Session Retreat**

Elders and Committee Chairs of both Congregations are invited to a time of conversation, learning and planning on February 17th at 9:00am-12:30pm. We will meet at the First Presbyterian Church of New Vernon.

## MISSION

### Bridges Outreach Lunch Program

This January, we began FPCS's 17th year of making lunches for the homeless through Bridges Outreach, located in Summit, New Jersey. As was noted in the FPCS's Annual Report, it is wonderful to be back again making lunches together with members of both churches. Our January 23rd date found Sue Hahn and Janet Parziale making 40 peanut butter and jelly sandwiches while Gail Duffe, Tom Parziale, and Tommy DiBartolo (pictured at the right) filled the brown bags with lots of good things, including water bottles, applesauce, and a delicious snack. The lunches were then taken to the Bridges Outreach office in Summit where they will be distributed to many grateful members of the homeless community in Summit, Newark, Irvington, and even New York City. As usual, the folks at the Bridges office were extremely thankful for our contributions.

This year we are again committing to provide monthly lunches throughout 2024. This program has been a huge success because of the dedicated help provided by members of both churches.

The cost of providing the 40 lunches is approximately \$90 each month, \$2.25 per lunch. We

accept donations of snacks, fruit cups or applesauce, and drinks throughout the year. If you are able to help with this, please drop your donations off at FPCS and mark it "Bridges Lunches." All monetary donations will be used to purchase the items that go into the lunch bags and will help us to continue this worthy program.

**Our next lunch-making date is Tuesday, February 20th in Pollard Hall. If you have an hour's time and would like to help, we would love to have you join us. Thank you.**



### Mission of the Month : **Bring a can of soup each Sunday in February!**

The Souper Bowl of Caring effort began as young people wondered: What if the over 100 million people who watch the Super Bowl donated one dollar and one can of food to help the 34 million Americans who struggle with hunger? TSBC has raised over \$193 million worth of support that stays completely local to make sure no one goes without **soup** in their **bowl**. We will participate in the Souper Bowl of Caring by supporting the 12 Basket food pantry as our Mission of the Month throughout all of February. Please mark your envelope for 12 Baskets.

## CONGREGATIONAL CARE

### Prayer Concerns

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

**PRAYER REQUESTS** 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](mailto:StefanieMinfaith@gmail.com).

Rev. Muntzel is available to prayer with you and visit with you!

Should you be admitted to the hospital, please contact Rev. Muntzel. Hospitals are not allowed to give even pastors information about your admission.

Rev. Muntzel: [StefanieMinfaith@gmail.com](mailto:StefanieMinfaith@gmail.com), cell phone 973 722 2304.

### Oscar Movie Night

#### **OPPENHEIMER Feb 2, 2024 6:30 PM**

The story of American scientist J. Robert Oppenheimer and his role in the development of the atomic bomb.

Emma Thomas, Charles Roven and Christopher Nolan, Producers

#### **KILLERS OF THE FLOWER MOON Feb 16, 2024 7:00 PM**

When oil is discovered in 1920s Oklahoma under Osage Nation land, the Osage people are murdered one by one - until the FBI steps in to unravel the mystery.

Dan Friedkin, Bradley Thomas, Martin Scorsese and Daniel Lupi, Producers

#### **MAESTRO Feb 23, 2024 7:00 PM**

This love story chronicles the lifelong relationship of conductor-composer Leonard Bernstein and actress Felicia Montealegre Cohn Bernstein.

Bradley Cooper, Steven Spielberg, Fred Berner, Amy Durning and Kristie Macosko Krieger, Producers

#### **POOR THINGS March 1, 7:00 PM; ANATOMY OF A FALL March 8, 7:00 PM**

Everyone Welcome! Bring a friend.

Enjoy the Big Screen at [Millington Fire House](#)!

## **Fourth Sunday Focus**

Everyone is invited to join us at the next “Fourth Sunday Focus” gathering on \*\*\* Sunday-- February 25th \*\* Fourth Sunday Focus gatherings give us an opportunity to connect with other members of our church in a relaxed atmosphere: a pot of tea, a Box o’ Joe, Munchkins . . . and conversation. All are welcome. We meet in the Meeting Room and start around 8:45 a.m. and end by about 9:45 a.m. --- but come and join us whenever you can.

—Tom Parziale



## **DEACONS CORNER**

### **CARDS OF CARE**

If you know of someone who is in need of our thoughts or prayers, please let Deacon Kim Ridway (First Presbyterian Church of Stirling) or Deacon Carol Boyle ( Meyersville Presbyterian Church) know so that a card can be sent. Deacon sends cards to extend a get well wish, share joyful wishes, or express sympathy.



## THE FIRST PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH OF STIRLING UPDATE

The Building & Grounds committee is pleased to report that the previous garbage bin structure has been replaced with a new, red cedar structure. Regency Landscaping did the project. We plan to consider staining the structure when the weather gets warmer in the spring. "



## MEYERSVILLE PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH UPDATES

### Almost-Spring Rummage Sale and Bake Sale

The "Almost-Spring Rummage Sale" at Meyersville Presbyterian Church is back! The rummage sale will be a 2-day event this year: Friday, March 15th and Saturday, March 16th from 9am to 4pm each day.

The sale will include an interesting assortment of old and new items as everyone has been cleaning out their houses throughout the winter. Look for lots of kitchen and household items like pots and pans, bakeware, Sunbeam mixer, glassware, office and craft supplies, linens, and interesting knickknacks.

Children have grown so there are lots of nice infant and toddler toys and Madame Alexander dolls to be found at great prices. There will be antiques and collectibles, small furniture, art/frames, workshop items, some power tools and it really will have treasures from "Granny's Attic". Everything you'd expect at a classic church rummage.

Delicious homemade Baked Goods will be available for sale too. Come enjoy and find a treasure or two to take home. There is a little something for everyone.

The church is located on the circle at 223 Hickory Tavern Rd in the Meyersville section of Long Hill Township.

For more information, call 908 647-0390.



## February 2024 Calendar

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
				1	2	3 Eleanor Keilblock Funeral 11 am
4 @ FPC 10 am Worship Service 11 am Fellowship 11:15 am Worship Comm	5	6	7	8	9	10
11 @ FPC 10am Worship Service 11am Fellowship Meyersville Annual Mtg	12	13	14 Ash Wednesday	15	16	17 Session Retreat 9-12:30 pm @ New Vernon PC
18 @ FPC 12 am Worship Service 13 am Fellowship	19	20	21	22	23	24
25 @ FPC 14 am Worship Service 15 am Fellowship	26	27	28	29		

### OFFICE MANAGERS OFFICE HOURS:

**Tues., Wed., Fri.: 10am – 1pm @ FPCS**

**Thursday: 10am – 1pm @ MPC**

### PASTOR OFFICE HOURS:

**Tues. and Thurs 11am – 3pm @ MPC**

**Wed. and Fri. 11am – 3pm @ FPCS**

**Mon. – Pastor's Day Off**

**Pastor's emergency cell: 973 722 2304**



## THE 2024 PER CAPITA

Every year, every member of every Presbyterian Church (USA) is asked to pay “per capita” . This annual payment is how local churches support the ministry of The Presbyterian Church (USA) denomination.

The total per capita in 2024 is \$42.50 per member.

Please pay this separately from your yearly pledge— marking your check or envelope with Per Capita. We are required to make a payment to the Presbytery based on the number of people on our membership role.

Of this total, \$28.55 is used by our local Presbytery. The remainder is sent, as required, to the regional Synod, \$4.10, and national General Assembly, \$9.85.

Learn more by watching this video:

[What is per capita?](#)

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 February newsletter is Tuesday, February 20th.

Submissions can be sent to Rev. Muntzel.

Rev. Stefanie Muntzel, Pastor [StefanieMinfaith@gmail.com](mailto:StefanieMinfaith@gmail.com)

Office email for Meyersville Presbyterian Church: [office@meyersvillechurch.com](mailto:office@meyersvillechurch.com),

Office email for The First Presbyterian Church of Stirling. [fpcschurchsecretary@gmail.com](mailto:fpcschurchsecretary@gmail.com)

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