

TOWER CHIMES



Volume 12 Issues 1 & 2 January / February 2021

FIRST PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH

Special points of interest:

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The Annual Congregational / Corporation Meeting will be taking place towards the end of March. More information will be posted on Facebook & our website as it becomes available. If you don't use Facebook or have email, you can call the pastor or the church office for updated information.

From Pastor Erin...

Each of us are created as a precious vessel of God's love. The stories of creation in the book of Genesis speak of a God who created us with her own breath. We know that this past year has left us tired and feeling broken. Therefore, we will spend this Lenten season from February 17-April 3 as a church community for recovery for our minds, bodies, and souls. Through online and at home worship, rituals, prayers and practices, we will journey as a community together towards the cross.

The theme, thanks to Worship Design Studio, is holy vessels. To this day I still love collecting sea glass from the beach. Light catches the beautiful colors.

"Ordinary pieces of tableware or beer or soda bottles are flung into the ocean. Years pass, or decades, and then one day, there it is upon the shore: a small shard from one of those long ago discarded objects. Shifting currents have rounded its edges; abrasion has polished its surface; exposure to the sun has altered its hue. And so, when we happen upon it, here amidst the shells and seaweed, we can't help but laugh with joy at what seems a miracle: this ordinary fragment of silica that time and adversity have transformed into something beautiful."

You are a beautiful creation of God. Let's take time this Lent to nurture what God has given us so that in turn we can nurture the holy in others.



Appreciation and Thanks to Many

THANK YOU ALL VERY MUCH It's almost approaching one year since most of us have been able to participate in normal church services and activities. When we did resume regular Sunday worship services in October, it was only for a brief time before the virus started to become more prevalent, and Session decided to err on the side of caution and virtual worship was resumed. During this time there have been many people who have made sure that everything is going smoothly.

In addition to her normal responsibilities, Pastor Erin had to expand and share her technology skills. She has successfully communicated with Session, our congregation, Presbytery (task of reconfiguring New Jersey's Presbyteries) and her cohorts in order to allow us to stay connected to discuss issues and enjoy recorded worship services. She also developed at home worship materials for our members that don't have access to computers or online services as well as a terrific advent booklet for us to use and advent wreaths for anyone who requested one. Currently she is working on things for Lent. Sometimes this was very challenging not only because it was something new, but sometimes there were technical difficulties that she had to learn how to overcome.

Lawrence Cook was instrumental in helping record the at home worship services in the beginning before we started virtual services via Facebook live. He also produced our wonderful Christmas Eve service which was truly outstanding.

Thank you to our members who have volunteered to participate in our online worship services by reading the scriptures, our members who served on the Task Force that planned how we should resume in-person worship, Carlos Allende who ordered and donated the supplies we needed to resume in-person worship, and Marissa Ebbe, who was a soloist during Advent.

Cheryl Anne Cammann is our Clerk of Session and throughout this pandemic she has served faithfully with many more responsibilities. Normally Session meets once a month, but at the beginning of this pandemic Session was having weekly meetings via Zoom. Cheryl Anne was always taking notes and sending out thorough minutes. As we became more familiar with Zoom, she became the co-host of our meetings, because sometimes Pastor Erin's voice didn't come through and as Erin was signing back on to the meeting Cheryl Anne could continue the meeting. We are grateful for all the work she has done throughout this time.

Carol Ann Bregman, our church administrator and bookkeeper, works very well with our church treasurer, Carole Huntley. Even though she has worked mostly from home due to the pandemic, she has made sure that our bills are paid; bulletins, worship materials, seasonal packets, and Tower Chimes are distributed; and announcements are sent out each week on the computer. Both of these ladies prepare our monthly, quarterly and annual financial reports and then Carol Ann makes sure they are ready for Session and then for our audit committee's annual review. Because of the pandemic this year the annual review will be done virtually. This was a challenge that Carol Ann met by putting all the necessary reports in a folder on Google drive. She also set up our online giving and arranged for electronic transfers for New Covenant and Rahway Savings Institution.

Robin Shipley, chairperson of the Finance Committee, has been diligent keeping up with our finances. She worked with our financial advisors from New Covenant and coordinated taking funds to pay for the Capital improvements to our church. Each month she presented a detailed report to Session about our finances even though the Finance Committee didn't meet due to the pandemic. Robin participates in financial webinars provided by Horizon Stewardship that benefits her role as the Finance chairperson. She also applied to the Board of Pensions to pay for Erin's pension for three months without any loss to her benefits. This waiver has helped us tremendously financially.

Before the pandemic we had eighteen church members who helped count the weekly offering and three members who recorded those donations on the office computer. Initially we didn't want many people in the building so JoAnn Roesch volunteered to count the money and record the donations on the computer. Since we began our online giving, she has served as our online coordinator.

Carol De Luca, a Deacon, created wonderful packets for our youngsters over the summer that taught them the Lord's Prayer through lessons and crafts which they made. These packets were distributed to all our youngsters. Again in

**Joyous News ...
Congratulations Susan & Gregory!**

Gregory and Susan of Pasadena, California became parents of twins on September 28, 2020. Proud grandmother is Barbara Androvich.



Grace Ilona & Brendan Albert

Grace was born at 11:22am & Brendan was born at 11:23am. They came 7 weeks early, so Grace weighed 3 lbs 3 oz & Brendan weighed 4 lbs 11 oz, but both are eating well and plumping up nicely! Brendan is already at 13 lbs 3 oz &

Grace is 11 lbs 10 oz.

Tax Info—Some Helpful Tips From the Finance Committee



By the time you are reading this edition of Tower Chimes, you should have received your 2020 church-contribution statement. Any 2020 contributions deposited in 2021 will not appear on the 2020 statements. If you have any questions on your statement, leave a message on the church phone and a financial secretary will get back to you.

When filing your 2020 U.S. Individual Income Tax Returns, consider the following three incentives for charitable giving in the Cares Act passed by Congress during the pandemic.

If you do not itemize deductions (you claim the Standard Deduction) on your 2020 tax return, you are eligible to take an “above-the-line” deduction for up to \$300 in cash gifts you make to charity. First Pres. is recognized as a qualified charity.

If you do itemize, you may deduct up to the entire amount of your adjusted gross income (AGI) for cash gifts you made in 2020, without reference to the 60 percent limitation that would otherwise apply.

Required minimum distributions (RMDs) from IRAs were waived for 2020. If you are age 72 or older, you might consider a tax-free, qualified charitable distribution (QCD) from your IRA in 2021. The IRA administrator must pay all (or part) of your RMD to the charity directly. You are not taxed on your contribution to the charity.



Jan.

- 1 - William Alexander D.
- 2 - Princeton N.
- 8 - Dona M.
- 12 - Cheryl M.
- 12 - Lucas James P.
- 21 - Caroline Alexandra D.
- 21 - Alyne B.
- 25 - James Jeffrey C.
- 25 - Megan R.
- 25 - Ukoha K.
- 27 - Hagen Michael E.
- 29 - Pastor Erin
- 29 - “New Dawn”



Jan.

- 20 - Andrea & Sean

Members & friends send in little notes with their contributions / donations. Even though we can't gather in person as of yet, church family is still very much together through all the good wishes being sent. So here's a “thank you” to those who brighten our days with their wonderful messages:

Dona MacFarlane, Kevin Crowley, Ros Casey, Audrey & Marty Kowalski, Gladys Bond, Eunice Schwietering, & Joan Cubino





2021 Per Capita Assessment

On March 1, 2021, the seven New Jersey presbyteries will be reconfigured into four larger presbyteries. Our church will become part of the newly created Northeast Presbytery. As our former Elizabeth Presbytery prepares for the transition, we have been notified that our per capita assessment will remain the same as it was last year - \$41.00.

Presbyteries are governing bodies of the Presbyterian Church (USA), which have the responsibility of spreading the Good News that Jesus Christ is the Son of God and that through his life, death, and resurrection, God has acted decisively to bring peace and reconciliation to all humankind. Presbyteries share their financial and human resources with the Synod, a regional body, and the General Assembly, the national body of our denomination.

A blessing of being a member of a connectional church is that we are able to support the work of our denomination through per capita giving. When we each share we enable our Presbytery – Synod – and General Assembly to do the creative work of the Holy Spirit throughout the world.

Our Church has always been faithful in sending our Presbytery the full amount we are assessed. Each year our budget contains a line item that covers the cost of each member on our role. It is important that each member of First Pres. pay their per capita amount of \$41.00. We are prayerful that this year as in past years our membership will respond. Young and old members, and all those in between, are asked to use the blue envelope to reflect your response.



**Congratulations,
Diana Nwosu**

Diana received a Bachelor of Fine Arts in Graphic Design at the University of Memphis.

In a year full of challenges, you did it! Your church family is so very proud of you, Diana!

God bless you on your journey, and may the road ahead hold many successes.



Feb.

- 4 - Kathleen R.
- 8 - Ilanda K.
- 9 - Nicholas T.
- 10 - Scott R.
- 18 - Linda G.
- 20 - Andrew John R.
- 22 - Asher R.
- 23 - Hillary M.
- 28 - Nathan Alexander H.



Feb.

- 15 - Shawna & Allie

Hope

IS THE ABILITY TO HEAR

THE MELODY OF THE FUTURE.

Faith

IS THE COURAGE

TO DANCE TO IT TODAY.

Major Restoration Work Taking Place in Sanctuary



In February 2020, Session was directed to hire a contractor to paint and repair the exterior of our church buildings or face being dropped by our insurance company, Brown & Brown. On Monday, March 9, 2020, North Jersey Specialists, Inc. began the work of repairing and painting the façade and steeple. The work would be extended to include repairing tuck pointing cracks in the bricks of Squire Hall. The work was done during the pandemic and completed in May.

With the outside complete and looking as good as new, it was time to turn our attention to the interior. The sanctuary had been in need of painting as evidenced by large paint chips falling from the ceiling. The condition of the sanctuary had further deteriorated after months of being closed due to the pandemic. To this end, in December, Session signed a contract with North Jersey Specialists, Inc. to take on the project of restoring the sanctuary and narthex. Work was started during the last week of January.

The job is truly a major undertaking. Before the scraping and painting was started, plastic coverings were placed over the entire floor and pew area. A number of pews were temporarily removed to allow for the positioning of scaffolding. Loose paint will be scraped from the walls, ceiling, and trim. Ceiling and walls will be sanded and cleaned. All seams and cracks will be caulked after which one full coat of primer/sealer, and a finish coat will be applied. Specified trim will be painted with semi-gloss enamel. The narthex walls and ceiling up to the balcony will be included in the project.

The price of the job, \$43,860.00, includes all labor, materials, and equipment.

The contractors hit one snag they hadn't included in their bid. During their first week of work, they discovered the walls were once covered with wallpaper that they would have to remove. Yes, wallpaper removal. It seems, a few times in the past, painters had simply painted over the wallpaper. We were blest in that our contractor did not charge us for the extra job.

Another task that must be completed is the removal of curtains and speakers from the north- walls. Sheetrock will be installed over the six openings. A generous donation has been offered to cover the cost of this work.

The fact that our congregation is currently not meeting in the sanctuary turns out to be advantageous as the work is being done.

Session believes the time to do this work was overdue and that when we have our reopening service, a freshly restored sanctuary and narthex will bolster our spirit as we move forward in a post pandemic era.



Continued from page 2

November Carol created more wonderful packets for our youngsters for fall and advent filled with crafts that they enjoyed making.

The Deacons sent out gift cards to our “front-line workers” to thank them for their services during this pandemic. Gail Anderson continued the tradition of “The Giving Tree”. She coordinated a collection of gift cards to be given to needy families so that they could purchase presents for their children and make a nice Christmas dinner. She also made beautiful gift bags for our seniors with candies, cookies and other goodies for them to enjoy during the holidays. Everyone who received a bag was delighted and appreciated First Pres. giving them a “holiday hug”. Richard McCarthy often sends out postcards to church members and calls them frequently to keep in touch. He’s a deacon who’s a “beacon of cheer” all year.

During the summer Ted and Allison Padavano cut the lawn. Ryan Crowley, Andy Roesch and Al Shipley occasionally helped trim some shrubs and weed the flower beds around the church. Throughout this time Al has also changed the message on our sign board.

Ted is the usual caretaker of our property. He comes to the church regularly to check that our boilers are working, to check for roof leaks, and to replace rotten piping. He had to replace one of the pumps on the hot water boiler saving the church \$2,000. He also has helped with clogged drains and any other problem that has arose. It is wonderful that he cares so much and that he shares his time and talents looking after our church and saving us from very costly repairs that need to be done.

Robin called Andy, the Clerk of Works. In the spring he had acquired bids to have the steeple repaired and the outside of the church painted. Once Session approved North Jersey Specialists, Inc. to do the work, Andy would go regularly and check on the progress of that project. In the fall he had acquired bids to have the sanctuary, balcony and narthex painted. Session again approved North Jersey Specialist, Inc. to do that project. They started several weeks ago, so now Andy is checking on the progress of this restoration.

This fall Andy and Ted picked Eric Rickes’s brain for his knowledge of the boiler and what to do to solve some of its problems.

During this time Carol and Jake Hayes and Gail Anderson have taken things several times to a consignment shop in Westfield to help acquire funds for the Flea Market.

When we stopped meeting last March in the sanctuary, everything was just left there. Before the painters could start working, everything needed to be removed. Thanks to Gail and Ken Anderson, Tara, Eric and Ryan Crowley, Carol and Jake Hayes, JoAnn and Andy Roesch, and Robin and Al Shipley for removing all the bibles, hymnals, pew cushions, and anything else that was left in the sanctuary in March. Thanks to Ted Padavano, Andy Roesch and Patrick Weaver for removing all the things that were in the balcony of the sanctuary. Thanks to Scott Chapin who meet with Andy to determine what speakers were for the organ and what speakers were not needed. Thanks to Ted for removing all those unnecessary speakers. Once the sanctuary is completed, we will need to bring the cushions, bibles and hymnals back to the sanctuary. However there are many cushions that have wax on them and we need several volunteers to help remove that wax before they are brought back. If you are interested, please let Carol Ann know. There were many undedicated hymnals. If you are interested in dedicating a hymnal, please let Carol Ann know that as well. Hymnal dedications are \$20.00.

Thanks to Ryan Crowley, Ted Padavano, Andy Roesch, Al Shipley and Patrick Weaver who braved the cold temperatures and removed the snow from the church sidewalks and driveway.

Perhaps there are others who have done something to help keep things going. If we have overlooked anyone, please accept our apologies. We are truly blessed by all these “church angels” and we just wanted everyone to be aware that even though we are not meeting, there are many people and many things being done so that when we are able to resume worshipping together, you will be greeted by many smiles and many improvements to our church. We are also very grateful to all our members who have continued to support us financially as well as spiritually. God Bless and keep everyone until we can meet again.

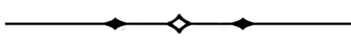


Please consider either calling or sending a card to church family who are homebound; call the church office (732-382-0803) if you need phone numbers and/or addresses.

Prayer Requests

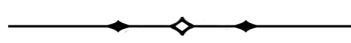
Alyne B., Andrea S., Dan & Cheryl M., Debbie, Debbie C., Helen M., Jay B., Kyle P., Lynn H.

Those that are homebound—Caroline Balla, Doris Kapus, Beverly Woolley



Prayer is the breath
That revives my soul.
Prayer is the balm
That makes my spirit whole.
Prayer is my path
Into the realm up above.
Prayer is the wave
That fills my heart with love.
Prayer is the key
That opens the bolted door.
It is the battle plan
When I find myself at war.
Prayer is the gift
That I send a distant friend.
It's prayer, the lifeline
I will use right to the end.

—A. Alabi



Prayer Persons

JANUARY

- Jan. 3rd - Helen Miller
- Jan. 10th - Jay Beam
- Jan. 17th - Sarah & Rachel Remelgado
- Jan. 24th - Chloe Trahan
- Jan. 31st - Ernest Awutey

FEBRUARY

- Feb. 7th - Doris Kapus
- Feb. 14th - Mimi Zahradnik
- Feb. 21st - Carlos Allende & Erwin Altona
- Feb. 28th - Mykelti Thomas

FIRST PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH
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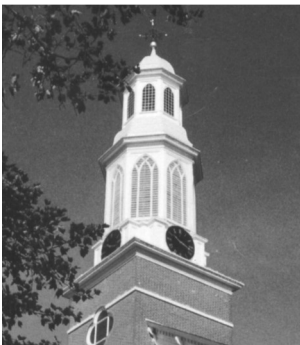
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PLEASE RUSH**



**Worship with us
Each Sunday at 10:30AM**

Office: office@1stpresrahway.org

Pastor: revehayes@gmail.com



1stpresrahway.org

