

TOWER CHIMES



Vol. 17 Issue 1

January 2026

FIRST PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH

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A shoutout to our 2025 Worship Support Team who kept us online and looking good!

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Susan Krivenko
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From Pastor Ed...

Dear Friends,

There's an episode in the book of Isaiah where he was sent to one of the kings of Judah to tell him some encouraging news. The king was evidently worried about some rumors he'd heard, that an alliance was being forged between his neighbors to the north, in order to make war on his country. So Isaiah was sent to tell him that nothing would come of the rumors. But the king was still worried, so God spoke to the king directly, saying, "Ask for a sign from me. Ask anything. Be extravagant. Ask for the moon!"

But the king replied, "No way, Lord! That would be putting you to the test - and I know better than that!"

Now, if the story stopped there, we might be inclined to applaud the king, because we do believe that faith isn't about asking for proofs from God. We've all seen the kind of faith that depends on absolute answers and concrete explanations for everything that happens. In the end, that kind of faith makes God too small.

The next part of this story was God's surprising reply to the king, which was, "Isn't it bad enough that you try human patience? Now you're trying mine too!?"

It's possible that the king had the best intentions. Perhaps he was trying to practice the sort of faith that trusts God to do what's best. However, this story has something more to say.

For one thing, this story is about the tendency we have, to avoid the risk of being disappointed. It's about all the times we meet when it's easier to settle for less, than it is to try for what could be better. This story clearly says that sometimes God has more in mind for us than we do for ourselves. This story invites us to pray audaciously, to dream big, and reach for the stars - but not because we'll always get them. Instead, this story says, it's better to try, even when we don't succeed, than not to make the attempt at all. That's pretty good news to remember, and to carry with us into a new year... because sometimes, the best *is* yet to come!

Peace, and Blessings!
Ed

Supporting Our Congregation's Mission

Seek God's Kingdom first, and everything you need will be given to you." Matt. 6:33

Hymn 175 in our hymnbook puts the verse above to music – and it is a simple and striking reminder of what our priority as followers of Jesus must be. This verse comes at the end of an entire chapter about serving God's mission in the world. There's the part that says, when you're giving charitably do it mostly for God's sake and not your own. There's the part about storing up treasures in heaven, which is basically giving from the heart. There's the one that says one can't serve both God and money. Then, the verse above comes at the end of the parable about all the material things we worry about losing.

The larger context in this entire chapter is about how our anxieties cause over-focusing on money, and more. In contrast, Jesus is saying that our daily needs are important but they are not the supreme concern. The biggest concern of our lives must be how I am participating in God's will with my life. Am I showing my devotion to God with how I earn my living, and provide for my family? Am I giving a portion of my resources to help care for those in need? Am I supporting the missions and ministries in my church that I care about? The promise, Jesus said, is that everything we need to do God's work is a given, as well as what we each need to thrive.

On **January 11 during worship**, we will dedicate the responses we have received from our congregation, given to support our church, and its mission. The "pledge" cards are ready for us in the narthex. Please pray and reflect to discern what portion of what you've received is for God's work in and through our congregation.



Happy 1st day of Advent!

After service, members came together to fill out cards for our local nursing home residents and to create Christmas ornaments!

Had such a wonderful time!

Family
For where your treasure is,
there will your heart be also.
Luke 12:34

Thank You!



Dear Church Family,

My sincerest thanks to all of you. Your prayers, cards, gifts, flowers, phone calls, visits and caring thoughts were so appreciated during my recent surgery and rehab. I'm doing well at home now, getting stronger every day. God is amazing.

Phone calls and visits are always welcome.

Prayerfully,
Flo



*Christmas Blessings sent from
Carmen & Geoff to all.*



This is going to be a GREAT Christmas.
I truly hope you enjoy as much as Geoff and I are.
Love you all
Carmen and Geoff



Jan.

- 1 - William D.
- 2 - Princeton N.
- 8 - Dona M.
- 12 - Cheryl M.
- 12 - Lucas P.
- 20 - Selva V.
- 21 - Caroline D.
- 25 - James C.
- 25 - Megan R.
- 25 - Ukoha K.
- 27 - Hagen E.
- 29 - Rev. Erin Hayes-Cook
- 29 - "New Dawn"



Jan.

- 20 - Andrea & Sean



Chair

Yoga



2025 saw the completion of many of the renovations in Squier Hall. The latest work completed in December was in the old Choir Room (ceiling and walls repair, room painted) and the other room on the 2nd floor that will be another multi-purpose room on page 5 (floor repaired & refinished, room painted). The former Christian Ed store room had the ceiling repaired and was painted. Projects on the "To Do" list include lighting updates, bathroom floor stripping and cleaning, painting the south back stairwell, renovations to the Music Director office and bathroom. We will be having another work party so watch for more information.



Choir Room Renovations



**Our Mission Outreach:
Word is Getting Out**

The Fabulous Finds team received reinforcement in December from Destiny, seen here with Joan Cubino and JoAnn Roesch. She is in the Masters in Social Work program at Rutgers and sought us out for opportunities to volunteer. Destiny lives nearby in Linden and knew of the First Pres Church mission outreach so sought us out to complete course work.



2025

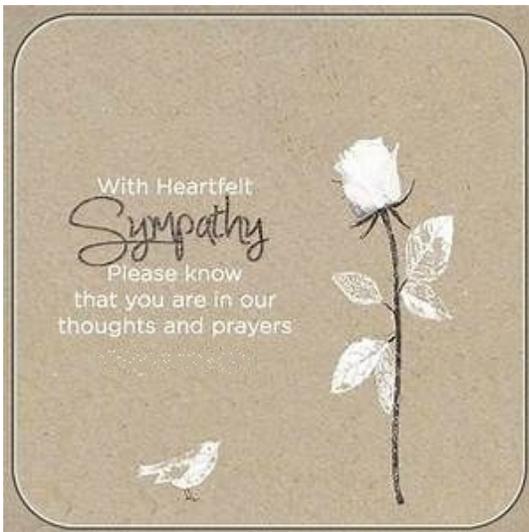


RECAP

Prayer REQUESTS

If you have a prayer request please give Ilanda a call at 732-382-6193 or send her an email: ikerobo@comcast.net. Ilanda will ensure that your request is addressed/sent to our wonderful prayer warriors.

Simpson & Hartlaub families, the Ross, Hoener, & Pender families, Dante B., Portia, Kaiser, William S. Jr., Carol & Jake, Roberta D., Edna, Sue K., Agnes N. & family, Anne H., Flo, Leo & family, Mike & family, Savannah B. & family, Carole H., Becky, John, Sam, Michael, Sara & Joan P., Mary "Cookie" F., Nicole, Allison, Mary R., Helen, Logan, Harper, Helene & Diane, Dorothy R., Amy



Our deepest condolences to...

Debby Russell & family, on the passing of her husband and one of our long time members, **Fred Russell**, on Monday, December 15th. He was a beloved husband, father, grandfather, brother, and friend. Please keep the family in your prayers during this most difficult time.

Prayer Persons

JANUARY

- Jan. 4th** - Lauris Beam
- Jan. 11th** - Scott Rickes & family
- Jan. 18th** - Sara Thode
- Jan. 25th** - Jonathan Russell

FEBRUARY

- Feb. 1st** - Cheryl Anne Cammann
- Feb. 8th** - Will Marsh
- Feb. 15th** - Gail Anderson
- Feb. 22nd** - Barbra Maskarinetz

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**DATED MATERIAL
PLEASE RUSH**



**Worship with us
Each Sunday at 10:30 AM**
In-person / Facebook & YouTube Live Streams
Recorded Video Available Also

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Rev. Ed Hoener: edhoener1@gmail.com

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