



Glory to the NEWBORN KING!

The one who is to be born will be holy. He will be called God's Son.
LUKE 1:35 (CEB)

Dear Friends,

Many years ago, I used to go to a Benedictine monastery that grew Christmas trees for its support. The first time I went there to cut my tree, I happened to meet one of the brothers traipsing through the rows in his robe and big snow boots. I looked at him and said, "I wish you a merry Christmas." He smiled and replied, "May Christ be born in you." In fact, that's what every brother I met there said to me.

What's great about that response is that it can snap us back from the commercialism of the season. There is a poignancy about it that aims straight for the heart.

There is a poem by Ann Weems that says whenever "some new heart finally hears, sees, and knows love, Christmas has happened once more. The Child is born anew." Christ "being born in us" reminds us that God is deeply interested in every single person. It reminds us that, new life in Christ is about transformation - the kind of change that reconnects us to our souls, and to who we are becoming as we follow God. It reminds us of the amazing lengths to which God will go in order to reach us - even to being born in a feeding trough in a stable.

So maybe that is a fitting Christmas wish to keep throughout this season. Maybe it can be a prayer we can whisper for others. "May Christ be born in us", so that we might know the love and hope that God longs for us to experience. Maybe it can be a daily prayer as we make our way out into the world. It can serve as a reminder that just as Christ came to shine God's compassion and justice into the world, so we are sent to do the same; at Christmas, and always.

Peace and Blessings

Ed

TOWER CHIMES



Vol. 16 Issue 12

December 2025

FIRST PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH

Special points of interest:

- Church Community News - pg. 3
- Prayer Requests pg. 9

Inside this issue:

Advent Invite / Pg. 2
Giving Tree

Save the Dates / Pg. 4
Faith in Action

Special Guest Pg. 5
Musicians

Next Steps / Pg. 6
Town Hall
Recap

Santa Pics / Pg. 7
Grinch
Breakfast

Meet Callie / Pg. 8
Grateful 2025



“Come thou long expected Jesus, born to set all people free. Source of strength and consolation, let us find our rest in thee.”

This is the season that many of us long for all year! This longing has become more critical because of some of the things that have happened around us. As people of faith, we pray for God to come with strength and hope to “keep us going forward”. In Advent, we celebrate the God who reaches out to our world with light to help us see our way through the darkness. We celebrate a God who helps us to see the things that need changing in the world, and in our lives, who then helps us to make it happen. Advent makes us aware of our neighbors' needs around us, so that we can join together to make a difference.

At First Presbyterian, we're invited to reflect on these themes in worship and throughout this season. We're invite to put “love into action” with hands-on projects we're doing or that are happening elsewhere in the community; to help others. (Check out our Union Street Resource Center initiatives.) We're invited to come to the Advent services at 10:30 am on Sundays, and to a Christmas Eve service at 7:30 pm on December 24th. Have a happy Christmas!



The **Chair Yoga** sessions have begun. The morning session is on Tuesdays at 9:00 a.m. The evening session will be on Thursdays at 6:30 p.m. *STARTING* on Thursday, December 4th. All are welcome. Bring 2 full water bottles to be used as weights or dumbbells if you have them.

The Christmas Season has arrived and this year the Giving Tree is going to take care of the residents in the Nursing Home in Rahway.

We will put together approximately 140 - 150 small bags holding a bag of pretzels or equivalent snack, a small package of tissues, a pair of "grippy socks", and a card & prayer card signed from "Friends at First Presbyterian Church". Each resident will receive a bag.

The deacons will purchase all supplies needed. Anyone wishing to make a monetary donation towards the supply cost, are welcome to do so; the deadline is Sunday, December 15th. The approximate cost per bag is \$5.00. If sending a check, please make it out to 'First Presbyterian Church' and put 'Giving Tree' in the memo.





Lita, thank you for all you've done for our church and community. We are going to miss you. Praying for a safe move and wishing you all the best.



Christmas Poinsettias



We will have our usual beautiful display of poinsettias in the Sanctuary for the holidays. If you would like to purchase a plant, they will be available in both red & white for \$8. To reduce waste / over-ordering only 10 plants will be displayed. If that should

change, we'll let you know (depending on availability).

If you're interested in a plant, please let Gail Anderson know. As in the past, your plant will need to be picked up no later than Christmas Eve.



Coffee Hour at the manse will be on Sunday, December 14, following worship. Dozens and dozens of cookies will be available for your taste-testing!

Olga Tymchenko will be providing music as well (see page 5).



Soda Tabs Collection



Way to go! The church has filled up another container of soda tabs for the Ronald McDonald House in New Brunswick. Let's fill up another container to help seriously ill children and their families.



Dec.

- 1 - Maurice (MJ), Jr.
- 6 - Samantha S.
- 9 - Ashley N.
- 11 - Kristen H.
- 13 - JoAnn R.
- 13 - Tara C.
- 14 - Scott N.
- 16 - Daniel D.
- 20 - Thomas M.
- 25 - Jesus
- 26 - Robin S.
- 27 - Charlotte K.
- 28 - Diana N.
- 29 - Carol D.
- 29 - Dawn M.



Dec.

- 5 - Megan & Andrew
- 11 - Terry & Arnold
- 29 - Laura & Randy

Thank you, Joan!

A big 'thank you' to Joan Cubino for volunteering her time and helping the church office bring the Church Register up to date. She was able to update 3 years of member information in one day—amazing!





December is shaping up to be an exciting, event-filled month. Mark your calendars and plan to attend all of these events.

December 7th - Christmas crafts after worship in Davis Hall.

December 10th - Pictures with Santa presented by Rahway's Best from 4pm - 6pm in Squier Hall.

December 14th - Guest violinist Olga Tymchenko will be accompanying Evan during worship and then providing musical entertainment during coffee hour at the Manse. Cookies and amazing music you won't want to miss.

December 20th - Breakfast with the Grinch from 9am - 10:30am, this is a fund raiser organized by Rahway's Best and will be held in Davis Hall. Half of the proceeds will benefit the Union Street Resource Center. Watch for ticket sale announcements.

December 20th - RSJC Community Holiday Celebration and Expo at the Hamilton Stage from 1pm - 9pm. 1st Presbyterian will have a booth at the Expo from 3pm - 5pm where we will be making and sharing the meaning of Chrismon ornaments.

December 24th Christmas Eve Service at 7:30pm - Olga Tymchenko and her duet partner, Laura Giannini, will be joining Evan in providing the music to prepare us for the birth of Jesus. Invite family and friends to come out and enjoy this wonderful celebration. (See page 5.)



Faith in action—a beautiful thing!

Cheryl Anne received an email on November 18th with a last minute request to help provide food baskets for needy families in Rahway to be distributed on November 20th. The request came through Councilman Dave Brown and Grover Cleveland Elementary School. The Masons from Lafayette Lodge were unable to provide baskets as they had in previous years and this caused a last minute scramble. Fortunately our Deacons were able to pool resources and shop for the items to fill 5 baskets. Thanks to Gail and Cheryl Anne for coming to the rescue and acting so quickly to help meet this need.



December 14th

We will be blessed again by the presence of Olga Tymchenko on December 14th to accompany Evan with the worship service music. You may recall that Olga is the professional violinist who joined us last year for our Easter service. In addition, Olga will extend her time with us and provide music during our coffee hour at the manse following worship. So plan on attending worship at 10:30am and move over to the manse for fellowship, cookies and amazing music.

December 24th

Make plans now to attend our Christmas Eve service at 7:30pm on December 24th. Gather friends and family and bring everyone to this very special service. This year we will have Olla Rhapsody, violin duo, accompanying Evan with the musical selections for the service. Olla Rhapsody is the professional duet of Olga Tymchenko and Laura Giannini. We have been blessed by Olga's gifts before and now we will get to meet her duet partner Laura and be surrounded by their unique talents. This is sure to be an amazing service of music to usher in Christmas Day. So definitely mark your calendars, tell family and friends and join us on Christmas Eve.



Born in Kyiv, Ukraine, **Olga Tymchenko** is a violinist trained in the Russian tradition of violin playing.

At age 8, she won her first violin competition for young artists in Kyiv.

She debuted then at age 11 on the National Philharmonic Concert Hall stage as a winner of the Kyiv City Competition.

Ms. Tymchenko first studied violin in the Gliere Music College with Anna Melnyk and then continued at the National University of Culture & Arts in Kyiv. Olga has been touring and performing in Ukraine, Russia, and the US.

As a member of the Manhattan Symphonie Orchestra, she played at David Geffen Hall, Carnegie Hall, Bargemusic, and Merkin Concert Hall and recorded contemporary and film music.

A resident of Nyack, Olga Tymchenko has performed in Rockland and Westchester counties with various chamber groups and as a soloist. Also a devoted violin teacher, Ms. Tymchenko is a faculty member of The Performing Arts Department at Masters in Dobbs Ferry, NY, and the RiverArts.

Olga is thrilled to be a co-founder and performer of the Olla Rhapsody Violin Duo since 2019.



Laura Giannini is an Italian violinist and music educator based in NYC. At age 19, she was selected by the violinist Uto Ughi to perform as a soloist and member of his Festival Omaggio a Roma Orchestra. Awarded in duo and piano trio competitions throughout Europe, Laura collaborated there with Accademia dei Cameristi, A.Gi.Mus. Roma, Musica a Piazza Navona, and Deutscher Tonkünstlerverband, among others. In 2006 she contributed in the Ensemble Méditerranée to the first world recording of chamber works by Raffaele Gervasio in a CD entitled "Rapsodia su Canti di Puglia," produced by DAD Records. Her playing was also featured in 2012 on Deutschland Radio Kultur during the Kammerensemble Nordwind live broadcast of Schönberg's Pierrot Lunaire and last year on the WVOX radio in a musical interview about South-Italian composers. Ms. Giannini has played with Semplice Players – Mark Peskanov's chamber group at Bargemusic, Kollektive366, The Symphony Orchestra of the Americas, and Ensemble Leonarda. Three years ago, she joined the Connecticut-based New Britain Symphony, whose Music Director is the conductor Toshiyuki Shimada. The same orchestra recently featured her playing for its virtual Music Monday series. In duo and ensembles, she has performed at renowned venues across Europe, Asia, and the U.S., including Carnegie Hall, DiMenna Center for Classical Music, Opera America, Shinmin Art Center, Yuanlin Performance Hall, Die Glocke, Temple du Foyer de l'Âme, and Auditorium Parco della Musica.



As a chamber music enthusiast, Laura is a founding member of the OLLA Rhapsody Violin Duo and the QueensSound Ensemble.



Our New Year Next Steps are COMING!

Beginning in January, we will be completing our transitional journey, by engaging in some very important tasks. The first will be to do our **Mission Study** as a congregation. We will schedule several times and places so that we can get maximum participation and input.

To help us prepare for that Mission Study, we will be taking a different approach this year concerning our annual giving. This year, we will be reflecting each Sunday in Advent on another aspect of what we are doing towards be-

ing a **Missional congregation**. This focus is an outcome from what we learned in our Firebird Spirit seminar, and the several initiatives we've been taking toward helping our neighbors. Each week, we will take the time to prayerfully discern how we each will support our mission to the community around us. We will celebrate and dedicate our giving for 2026 early in January.

Following the Mission Study, the next major task will be **electing a PNC** (Pastoral Nominating Committee), which will prepare our congregation's "resume" that makes connections with prospective pastors seeking a call. 2026 is going to be an exciting time in the life of our congregation! Stay tuned to our website and our other communications as we pursue these next steps into the future!



Neighborhood Town Hall

On Saturday, November 8th we held our very first Public Town Hall meeting to introduce the mission and vision of the Union Street Resource Center to our community. We advertised the event by delivering flyers to the homes in the 2 blocks around the church and on Election Day to the 2nd ward voters when they came to Davis Hall to cast their vote. We had several speakers in addition to Ed and Cheryl Anne including Councilperson Darlene Eastman, Joie Nodarse from Rahway's Best and David Holmes who will be heading up the community garden project. We shared ideas about how we can support our community and even gained more volunteers. The group had a very worthwhile and productive morning together. We will be having more of these gatherings so keep an eye out for the announcement and plan on participating.



Rahway's BEST
After School Program & Summer Camp @ T.M.A.R.

PICTURES WITH SANTA

SAVE THE DATE
December 13th
(4pm - 6pm)

FREE EVENT

MEET SANTA, ELSA & THE GRINCH
Must register online to save your child's spot!
Bring your own camera!

**THE CENTER- 1731 CHURCH ST
RAHWAY NJ 07065**

INSTA: @rahwaysbest @rahwaystigers @besthoopsrahway @bright&bestdance

Rahway's BEST
After School Program & Summer Camp @ T.M.A.R.

Breakfast with THE GRINCH

MERRY GRINCH-MAS

INCLUDES:

- BAGELS
- COFFEE
- DONUTS
- ORANGE JUICE
- COOKIES
- APPLE JUICE
- FRUIT CUPS
- GREEN EGGS & HAM EXTRA \$3

\$17 EACH PERSON
\$47 FOR A FAMILY OF 4

ALL PROCEEDINGS ARE BEING DONATED TO
PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH/ UNION RESOURCES CENTER

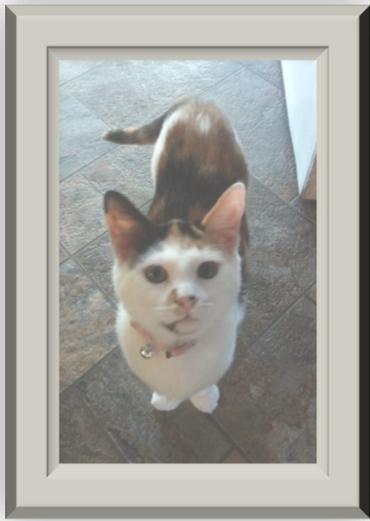
DECEMBER

19 **20** 21

**9am - 10:30am Davis Hall
561 W. Grand Ave Rahway NJ 07065**

INSTA: @rahwaysbest @rahwaystigers @besthoopsrahway @brightandbestdance

A special opportunity for a unique experience. 'Who' among us does not love Dr. Seuss stories and characters??? Well, on December 20th from 9am-10:30am you can have Breakfast with the Grinch. Rahway's Best holds a fundraiser every year and donates the proceeds to local programs. ***This year they have selected the Union Street Resource Center to receive half of all the proceeds.*** Check out Rahway's Best Facebook page for more details and to purchase tickets. So please get the word out, share this incredible opportunity to have green eggs and ham with none other than Dr. Seuss' Grinch.



Pet of the Month

We all love our pets, so let's celebrate them each month! Email your photo(s) to the church office so they can be included on our Facebook and Instagram accounts.

Meet Callie (Cheryl Anne's cat)

I was born on February 9, 2016 and was one of 6 kittens. I loved playing with the laser beam when I was a youngster but now I much prefer to watch the squirrels and birds in the backyard. I usually wake Mommy up to feed me and sometimes I really have to paw hard at her to get her up. I usually run when someone comes to the door but my curiosity definitely gets the better of me and I have to come out to see who it is. I do like my food and Mommy says that I am not fat, I just have 'big bones'. My other favorite thing is nap time, which is pretty much any time of the day. Maybe one day I will meet you.





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.

Prayer Requests

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...

Barbara Wheaton, at the age of 99, passed away on October 15. She and her husband were once very active members of our church. Please remember her family in your prayers

Ellen Ross passed away on November 4th at 6:45 pm. She was surrounded by her loved ones. Please keep the Ross, Hoener, and Pender families in your prayers during this most difficult time.

James Musacchio, a former organist at First Pes., and married to the daughter of a former pastor, passed away on November 5th. Please keep Carolyn and their family in your prayers.

Laura Hartlaub, Linda Simpson's sister, passed away suddenly leaving the family heartbroken over their devastating loss. Please keep the Hartlaub and Simpson families in your prayers for comfort and strength.



Prayer Persons

DECEMBER

- Dec. 7th** - Helene Haith
- Dec. 14th** - Kalu family
- Dec. 21st** - Bill & Dana Marsh
- Dec. 28th** - Nwosu family

JANUARY

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

FIRST PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH
1731 CHURCH STREET
RAHWAY, NJ 07065
732.382.0803

NON PROFIT ORGANIZATION
U.S. POSTAGE PAID
RAHWAY, NJ 07065

**DATED MATERIAL
PLEASE RUSH**



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

**In-person / Facebook & YouTube Live Streams
Recorded Video Available Also**

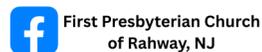
**Office: office@1stpresrahway.org
Rev. Ed Hoener: edhoener1@gmail.com**

1stpresrahway.org



QR Code for donations

Follow us on social media!



May hope, peace, joy, & love be yours this Christmas!