# News Bits



#### First Presbyterian Church of Blairstown, NJ

#### Pastor's Message



The Lenten Season is half over. "Lent" comes from the old English word for springtime, perhaps connected to the lengthening of daylight hours. Christians understand Lent as the forty days before Easter, beginning with Ash Wednesday and mirroring the forty days and nights Jesus spent in the wilderness, fasting and being tested by the Diabolical One, Satan. Like Advent, Lent invites us to the discipline of selfexamination, repentance, and remembrance. The psalmist invites God to search him and know his thoughts and his hearts (Ps. 139: 1-2). The psalmist also recognizes the cathartic power of confession, asks God to create within, to act mercifully toward him, and to create within him a clean and pure heart (Ps. 51: 1-10). So, too, it is true with us. Through our remembrance of Jesus' passion on the cross and his victory over the greatest enemy of all, the enemy of death (1 Corinthians 15: 54-57). God renews, reconciles, and restores. A few verses earlier St. Paul writes 'the last enemy

to be destroyed is death' (1 Corinthians 15: 26).

The biblical use of the word enemy fascinates me. Maybe that's why I find myself intrigued by Jesus' words in Matthew's gospel: 'You have heard it said, "You shall love your neighbor and hate your enemy. But I say to you, "Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you'" (Matthew. 5: 43–44).

There is a lot to this statement. The reader may be wondering where is he going with this enemy stuff? Simply put, for the remainder of the Sundays in Lent, I plan to preach a sermon series on the subject of: Love Your Enemies. In my preparation, I have begun to take note of biblical texts that address the enemies of Jesus. I'm particularly interested in how Jesus handles this delicate dilemma. Let me illustrate with an example from the Fourth Gospel, the story of the Samaritan woman at the well. Jesus and the unnamed Samaritan woman get to talking. It is a pretty normal though unusual conversation. As the woman wonders, why is Jesus, a Jew, talking to her, a Samaritan? A seven hundred year old rift had caused the two groups to hate each other; and yet before the conversation is over and the day is done, Jesus' words of warmth, his

devoted acts of kindness and compassion transform the estranged enemy (John 4: 1-25). We think politics in America is polarized. In this narrative, the enemy, the Samaritan woman and her community quite remarkably become Jesus followers, community believers, Christ loving faithful people. Is it fascinating how an experience with Jesus very often touches and transforms human lives, resulting in people finding faith, rekindling, hope, and discovering love they never conceived was possible — all because Jesus shows us how to the enemy? More on this story later.

So, over the next few weeks in Lent, I plan to examine the blessings, the challenges and the benefits of loving our enemies. We'll consider Jesus message as well as the method to his madness. And while our lives may not change like the blind man. We will learn how loving our enemies deliver us from our own blindness can change us.

Love your enemies. We never know how God's grace will work in our lives as we seek to do the impossible. And yet God specializes in the impossible!

See you in worship.

Pastor David



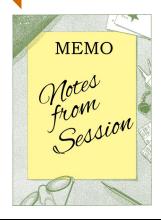


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#### **SESSION**

Clerk of Session: Deb Albrecht President: Chester Topolski Vice-President: Frank Wilson Treasurer: Betsy Gervasi Assistant Treasurer: Erika Wulster Secretary: Deb Albrecht Financial Secretary: Don Nicholls

#### **CLASS OF 2024**

Bill Olivier Frank Wilson Open

#### **CLASS OF 2025**

Zach Burke Pete Peterson Chester Topolski

#### **CLASS OF 2026**

Mark Nelke Gail Weber Open

#### **BOARD OF DEACONS**

Moderator: Judy Trigg Vice Moderator: – Secretary: Teri Harvey Treasurer: Joan Cameron

#### **CLASS OF 2024**

Stephanie Burke Teri Harvey Robin Kasprenski Open

#### **CLASS OF 2025**

Emily Arena Derek Cameron Open Open

#### **CLASS OF 2026**

David Conrad Kelly McElroy Judy Trigg Maggie Wilson

#### Session News

Session met on Thursday, January 19 and February 23, 2023 and approved the following recommendations and requests:

At the January 19, 2023 meeting:

- Pastor Harvey's request for vacation on Sunday, February 16, 2023.
- To restart having Ushers and Greeters collect the offering during worship services by passing the plate beginning on March 5, 2023.
- A request from Marlene Wilburn, Director of the Children's Center, to host a CPR/AED Training, at a cost of \$60 per person, that will be open to church members, date TBD.
- A 6% salary increase for 2023 for church staff.
- To establish a 3.90% rate monthly distribution for church operating expenses from the Enduring Gifts Fund for 2023. This is an increase from the previous rate of 3.50% in 2022.
- The 3<sup>rd</sup> reading of the 2023 budget.
- The 2023 Terms of Call, with a 6% salary increase, for the Pastor.
- To hire Ash Plumbing to replace the damaged flue liner at the Outreach Center.

At the February 23, 2023 meeting:

- The election of Deb Albrecht as Clerk of Session for a term of one year, ending in 2024.
- The election of the following Church Officers of the Corporation for terms of one year, ending in 2024: President: Chester Topolski
   Vice-President: Frank Wilson

Treasurer: Betsy Gervasi Assistant Treasurer: Erika Wulster Secretary: Deb Albrecht Financial Secretary: Don Nicholls

- Approved the Minutes of the 2022 Annual Meeting of the Congregation and of the Corporation held on February 5, 2023.
- The baptism request of Kristin and Jason Yock for their daughter, Josephine, on Sunday, May 14, 2023.
- The baptism request of Victoria and Alex Leontaris for their son, Theo, on Sunday, May 21, 2023.
- The request from Pastor Harvey to serve as the School Chaplain at Blair Academy for the 2023— 2024 school year.
- The request from Pastor Harvey to attend for continuing education the Institute for Teaching World Religions, June 19–22, 2023 in New York City in preparation for teaching World Religions at Blair during the 2023–2024 school year. Blair Academy will pay the cost of attending the program.
- To begin Elevator Building project Line of Credit loan repayment with \$6,000.00 monthly payments applied towards the principal and interest.

On February 12, 2023 at the 10:00 AM worship service the Ordination and Installation of the following Church Officers was held with Elder Deb Albrecht assisting:

- The Ordination and Installation of Kelly McElroy and Judy Trigg to Deacons for 3-year terms, ending in 2026.
- The Installation to Deacons of David Conrad and Maggie Wilson for 3-year terms, ending in 2026.
- The Installation of Robin Kasprenski for a 1-year term, ending in 2024.

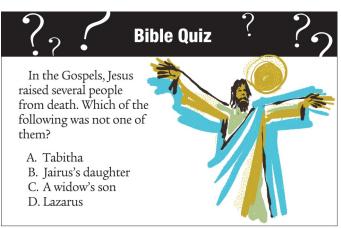
On February 19, 2023 at the 10:00 AM worship service the Installation of the following Church Officers was held with Elder Deb Albrecht assisting:

 The Installation of Ruling Elders Mark Nelke and Gail Weber for terms of 3 years, ending in 2026.

The next Stated Meeting of Session will be on March 16, 2023 at 7:00 PM at the Outreach Center and via ZOOM.

Respectfully submitted by,

Deb Albrecht, Clerk of Session



Answer: A (See Acts 9, Mark 5, Luke 7, John 11.)

#### **Deacon Ministry & Food Pantry News**

The following Deacons were nominated and elected to serve as Deacon officers at the March 5 reorganization meeting:

- Moderator: Judy Trigg
- Vice Moderator:
- Secretary: Teri Harvey
- > Treasurer: Joan Cameron

#### **Upcoming Calendar Dates:**

**April 8:** Our church will be providing lunch for Habitat for Humanity.

**April 16:** Pedals for Progress at Blair Academy.

**June 11:** Brunch for our graduates hosted by PW.

#### **Food Pantry News**

At the January Food Pantry day, the Foodshed Alliance again delivered "winter" vegetables: winter squash, carrots (all colors), apples, potatoes, and turnips. They have a warehouse in Newton and are able to store vegetables and eggs so that they can deliver all year.

Thirty-four families were served. With the announcement that the Snap (food stamps) benefits are returning to normal allocation (as they were prior to Covid) effective March 1, 2023, we are expecting a significant increase in patrons in March and April.

In February, a lot of the donations for "Soaper Bowl" were on the shelves, when we



closed the doors at 11:30, very little was left. Thank you to everybody who participated! In both January and February, we were overwhelmed with baked goods from Acme and Panera; several boxes were delivered to the Hope Food Pantry.

Again the 4-H Club (Out of Our Shells) had a shelf filled with baked goods "home baked" at the Outreach Center by the members. It is always so nice when we walk in Saturday mornings and the shelf is decorated and filled with goodies. A big "thank you" to the busy bakers!

Thank you!

Erika Wulster, Deacon Moderator & Food Pantry Coordinator



Photo courtesy of Marilyn Shanley, 4-H leader





#### **Communion Sign-Ups**

March 5:	Betsy Gervasi
April 3:	Dave Conrad
Manager April /	D - 4

Maundy Thursday, April 6 · · · · · Betsy Gervasi / Erika Wulster

#### **Food Pantry Sign-Ups**

March 18: · · · · Robin Kasprenski / Emily Arena

 April 15:
 Dave Conrad

 May 20:
 Kelly McElroy

 June 17:
 Maggie Wilson

 July 15:
 Joan Cameron

 August 19:
 Maggie Wilson

 September 16:
 Robin Kasprenski

 October 14:
 Derek Cameron

November 18 · · · · · Stephanie Burke / Emily Arena /

December 16 ..... Joan Cameron (Teri Harvey for Giving Tree)

January 20 ····· Stephanie Burke

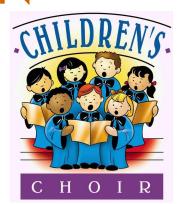
#### **Committees of Deacons:**

#### **Representatives to Session Committees**

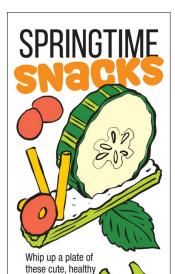
Mission Maggie Wilson
Membership/ Fellowship Joan Cameron
Nominating Robin Kasprenski
Property/ Grounds Erika Wulster
Stewardship/ Finance Betsy Gervasi
Enduring Gifts Erika Wulster
Presbyterian Women Teri Harvey



Each Sunday after worship we enjoy each other's company and some delicious refreshments. If you can bring baked goods and set up the coffee pot, we ask that you sign-up in Fellowship Hall. Thank you for helping make fellowship hour a special time and for helping our Deacons!



All children are welcome to participate in the children's choir! Practice is held for 15 minutes on Sundays following the worship service.



#### What you need:

treats!

- · Celery sticks
- Cherry tomatoes
- Cucumber circles
- Olives
- Cream cheese spread
- Fresh basil leaves (optional)
- Adult help

#### What you do:

- 1. Have an adult help you wash and cut the veggies.
- 2. Spread cream cheese inside the celery rods.
- 3. Place a cucumber circle upright in the cream cheese to make a bug body.
- 4. Add the tomato as a head.
- 5. Arrange basil leaves on a plate and place the veggie bugs on them.
- 6. Making different-shaped bugs with your favorite veggies. Enjoy!

#### Christian Education / Music & Worship Ministries

Spring time is just around the corner! As winter begins to fade into a distant memory, we will all undoubtedly begin to look forward to nicer weather and some much needed Sunshine! This period of earthly renewal also harkens us as followers of Christ to a time of spiritual renewal as well. Moving forward through the Lenten season, and into Holy Week, we are reminded of, and reflect upon, the Sacrifice made by our Lord.

The Lenten season began with an Ash Wednesday joint service on February 28 along with the United Methodist Church in our Sanctuary. During Holy Week, there will be services on both Maundy Thursday at 7 PM in our Sanctuary and on Good Friday at the United Methodist Church beginning at 7 PM. Easter Sunday will see two services, the first of which will be a Sunrise Service held at Blair Lake at 7 AM. The second service will be at the normal time of 10 AM in the sanctuary.

#### **Lenten Study DVD Series**

The adult Christian Education DVD Series, 'The CHOSEN' will continue as the Lenten Study. Join us at the Outreach Center every Sunday at 4:30 PM.

#### BRING A FRIEND TO SUNDRY SCHOOL!



More information to follow!



Palm Sunday, April 2 Worship Service:

Church Sanctuary & online at 10:00 AM

Easter Egg Hunt for Sunday School Students following the service

Thursday, April 6 Maundy Thursday Service:

Church Sanctuary & online at 7:00 PM

Friday, April 7 Good Friday Service: United Methodist Church Sanctuary at 7:00 PM

Sunday, April 9 Easter Sunrise Service: Blair Lake at 7:00 AM

Sunday, April 9 Easter Worship & Communion:

Church Sanctuary & online at 10:00 AM



#### Presbyterian Women

I am so excited about our plans for Presbyterian Women this year! We've already learned about Camp Johnsonburg and the Red Bird Mission trip. Katlyn & Kelly McElroy along with Angelina Plut shared their experiences with us on Sunday, February 19, during Coffee Hour. Thank you for such an interesting presentation!

We also collected new towels (washcloths, hand towels, bath towels in colors) and new twin size sheets (extra long) for Veteran's Haven North. Thank you to everyone who donated. The sheets and towels will be dropped off on March 23 along with additional towels and sheets collected by Blair Woman's Club and the Friends of Rachel Club at North Warren Regional High School.

As you know, Presbyterian Women support people who wish to attend camp. This month we're searching for camp applications from young people who are interested in attending Camp Johnsonburg this summer. Please submit your letters soon!

On March 25 (rescheduled from March 11 due to wintry weather), we will hold a Covered Dish Breakfast in Fellowship Hall followed by a presentation about the Peterson's trip to the Holy Land. Deb Albrecht and I will be the hostesses. Please join us if you can.



Be on the look out for our Gift Card Sale to support Betsy's Garden renovation, and in April help to support PW efforts by purchasing Easter flowers.

On Sunday April 16, we hope you all participate in "Kindness Rocks" right after church!! We want you to paint rocks with symbols of kindness, lay them in certain areas around the church where others may decide to take some home for their own gardens.

On May 13, a Saturday, we're going to create floral arrangements in tea cups for Mother's Day. If you have teacups & saucers, please consider donating them.

We will also be creating a Memorial Day Tree of Honor to recognize our family members and friends who were veterans and are now deceased.

Finally, in June we're going to celebrate our graduates. We plan on holding a Graduation Brunch following church on June 11. Let me know if you know someone who is graduating this year.

That's quite a calendar! We try to keep busy while helping others and having fun.

We do need volunteers to be hostesses and read devotions at our activities and to be flower people for a month of Sundays. Let us know if you can help out.

We hope you join us for all or some of these activities.

Thanks for all you do!! Presbyterian Women

**Executive Board** 

Gail Weber, Jennifer Plut, Erika Wulster & Teri Harvey

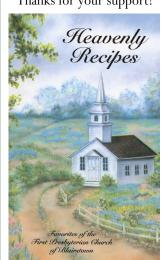


Did you know that anyone can donate flowers to honor/ remember/celebrate a person or occasion? Altar flowers can be cut or potted; from your garden, a store, or even delivered from a local florist! Please let the church office or the flower lady of the month know if you'd like to provide flowers by signing up in Fellowship Hall or through SignUpGenius which can be accessed through our website at https://fpcbnj.org/altar-flowers/



First Presbyterian Church Heavenly Recipes cook books are available at church or at the Outreach Center for only \$5.00! (Please make check(s) payable to Presbyterian Women.)

Thanks for your support!







EASTER FLOWERS Continuing with the tradition of placing Easter flower dedications in memory of or in celebration of, you may do so through April 5. The cost of each plant this year will be \$12, and donations should be made to Presbyterian Women. Visit our website fpcb-nj.org/pw/ and in the weekly bulletin for more information!





#### FPCB BOOK CLUB

The next meeting of the FPCB Book Club will be held at 7:00 PM on Wed., April 26 (tentative). We will be discussing the heartbreaking, page-turning new historical novel by Lindsey Hutchinson: The Runaway Children. The Book Club meets every 6-8 weeks, and we read a variety of titles: fiction and nonfiction; mysteries and suspense. New members are always welcome. If you have any questions or would like a copy of our reading list, please speak with Teri Harvey or Kaye Evans. Happy Reading!



#### Stewardship & Finance

Our Stewardship Campaign this year is Reconnecting with God's Love. When you think about it, everyone needs to reconnect with God. The question becomes how do we go about it and why do we want to reconnect with God.

Everyone is busy. We wake up with a list of errands and chores or with the best intentions to get started on that certain something. Suddenly the phone rings, your child needs your attention or you notice it's a nice day and decide that reconnecting with God can wait. In some ways, we lack discipline and have let other things supersede our time with God.

One way to connect with God it to identify things in our lives that we are grateful for. I try to remember to include three things I'm grateful for in my daily prayers. I find that it helps me to be more positive about life. Perhaps you're someone who keeps a daily journal and would benefit from verbalizing your gratitude to God.

I think another way to reconnect with God is to gather with others who share your beliefs. If you have not been coming to church, consider joining us next Sunday. If you're someone who has become inconsistent in your attendance, set a goal to at-

tend more. If you attend church every Sunday, consider taking a more active part by being an usher, greeter, or worship leader.

Enjoy the music, listen to God's words, pray, enjoy the company of others and reconnect with God, and perhaps by reconnecting we will truly understand this Bible verse from John 15:5 I am the vine; you are the branches. If you remain in me and I in you, you will bear much fruit; apart from me you can do nothing (John 15:5).

Gail Weber, Chair

#### Mission Ministry

#### One Great Hour of Sharing

Your gift to the Special Mission offering, One Great Hour of Sharing, enables the church to share God's love with our neighbors-in-need around the world by

providing relief to those affected by natural disasters, provide food to the hungry, and helping to empower the poor and oppressed. We will receive the OGHS Special Offering through Easter,

Apr. 9. You may contribute to OGHS electronically on the church website: fpcb-nj.org or by sending your offering to the church.

#### Other Bits of Interest

ATTENTION KIDS! Check out the Johnsonburg Camp Summer Schedule!

Register for Camp Johnsonburg 2023 at

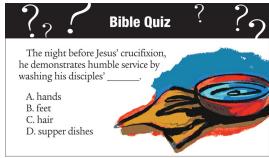
https://www.campjburg.org/summer-camp/

#### EPIC Elementary Grades 2-12 Wonderfully Made > Grades 2-5 Mystery Camp M.A.D. Camp Grades 2-5 Grades 6-12 Night Owl Grades 6-12 Grades 1-3 S'More Camp - A Snack Size Session Grades 2-5 S'More Camp - A Snack Size Session Grades 6-8 **EPIC** Elementary Grades 2-5 The Summit - High School Conference Grades 9-12 Middle School Mayhem Grades 6-8 Middle School Adventure Trek Grades 6-8 High School Hangout Grades 9-12 **HS** Rides and Slides Grades 9-12 Grades 9-11 Pre-Leadership Training Program (PLTP) EPIC Elementary Grades 2-5 Middle School Mayhem Grades 6-8 Middle School Night Owl Grades 6-8 Genesis (3 Nights - July 30-Aug 2) Grades 1-3 Grades 6-8 Middle School Adventure Trek **EPIC** Elementary Grades 2-5 High School Hangout Grades 9-12 Middle School Mayhem Grades 6-8 Leadership Training Program Grades II-12 MS Rides and Slides Grades 6-8 Grades 9-12 High School Hangout High School Adventure Trek Grades 9-12 p Registration Opens January 9



Friday Mornings
12:30 PM at the Outreach
Center or via Zoom
Meeting ID: 851 8394 1364
Passcode: 699382

Join Easter.



Answer: B (See John 13:1-17.)



#### MARCH Birthdays

- 5 Annelise Fisher
- 7 Robin Kasprenski
- 9 Jerret Belcher
- 15 Susanne Zwarych
- 18 Ethan Lynch
- 22 Erika Wulster
- 24 David Conrad
- 25 Jason Sliver
- 28 Lorelei Oelschlager
- 29 Bridgett Scheer
- 29 Renee Scheer

# \*\*\* MARCH Anniversaries

- 11 Peter Porzio & Lydia Timcenko
- 18 Renee & Robert Scheer

# March 2023 S M T W T F S 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11 12 13 14 15 16 17 18 19 20 21 22 23 24 25 26 27 28 29 30 31

# Birthdays & Anniversaries

## Birthdays Anniversaries

- Livia Angelone Matthew Hillsdon
- 3 Ashley Bechtel Margaret McLain
- Christopher Harvey
- 5 Edward Belcher
- 6 Angelina Plut
- 8 Kylie Kalafut
- 14 Sharon Jeges
- 17 Ian Schumacher
- 18 Monica Salvadore
- 23 Samantha Cheevers
- 27 Craig Evans

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- 12 Ellen & Paul Nagy
- 11 Kristin & Jason Yock
- 19 Jennifer & Peter Plut

April 2023							
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#### **Our Daily Prayer List**



The Human Family: Persons and individuals impacted by the COVID-19; essential workers; the homeless; people of Afghanistan, Haiti, and the Ukraine; families impacted by gun violence

Men & Women Serving in the Armed Forces & America's Veterans Those in elected office: The President, the Congress, State Assembly, local community servants

### Healing for Friends & Families with:

Cancer: John Abney, Judy Dales, Gordon Dugan, Samantha Elwell, Olivia Hollis, Adam Hubble, Tracy Lance, Troy Lutz, Caitlyn McMorrow and her family, Jay Ohland Jr., Bill S., Andrew Shan, Robert Talmadge, Gerry Walker, Tracy Wolfe, Molly Grace Young, Alicia, Audrey, Darlene, Eva, Gail, Liza

Illness & Injuries: Les Ashburner, Sue Bonkowski, Derek Cameron, Elaine Canonico, Kyle Canonico, Lucy Cuipa, Noah Haiduc-Dale, Cameron McIntyre, Carol McLain, Jan Smith, Margaret Stephens, Betty Ann Weir, Ann, Tracy, Carter

#### **Prayers of Condolences**

for the family of Dr. Ron Harris for the family of William Chadwick, Sr., father of Bill Chadwick who served as the youth pastor a few years back. Please remember Bill, his wife Holly, their children, Will and Teddy, and Bill's sister A Note
To the Church
Family of Blairstown
First Presbyterian
Church,

Thinking of you with much appreciation for all you do—kind thoughts and visits, prayers, good food, and on and on.

Love, Carol McLain

### FIRST PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH OF BLAIRSTOWN, NJ

Post Office Box 385, 1 Main Street Blairstown, NJ 07825

Phone: (908) 362-5254 Fax: (908) 362-8060 Food Pantry: (908) 362-5254 Children's Center: (908) 362-7887 E-mail: fpcb@ptd.net fpcb-nj.org ¦ facebook.com/FPCBNJ





### FPCB Calendar of Events — March & April 2023

(schedule is subject to change)

- Worship: Sundays at 10 AM in the Sanctuary or online. (Zoom Meeting ID: 848 4980 5011; Passcode: 751360) (Easter Sunday: Sunrise Service at 10 AM @Blair Lake; 10 AM Service in the Sanctuary) Maundy Thursday Worship: Apr. 6 at 7 PM
- "The Chosen" Lenten Study DVD series: Sundays at 4:30 PM @OC/Zoom
- Friday Morning Bible Study: 12:30 AM @OC/Zoom (Meeting ID: 851 8394 1364 | Passcode: 699382)
- Music & Worship and Christian Education: Tuesday, Mar. 7 & Tuesday, Apr. 4 at 7 PM @OC/Zoom
- > Session: Thursday, Mar. 16 and Thursday, Apr. 20 at 7:00 PM @OC/Zoom
- ➤ 4-H Club: Meets the Friday evening prior to food pantry at 5:30 PM in the OC
- Food Pantry: Saturday, Mar. 18 and Saturday, Apr. 15 at 9:30 AM
- Administration Ministry: Wednesday, Mar. 22 at 2:00 PM
- Presbyterian Women—Trip to the Holy Land Presentation on Saturday, Mar. 25 at 10 AM (breakfast and brief business meeting at 9 AM) and Kindness Rocks after worship on Apr. 16
- > Letter to PW (church office) by Friday, Mar. 31 for Johnsonburg Summer Campership(s).
- > Stewardship & Finance: 9:30 AM on Wednesday, Apr. 19
- Earth Day Event: Friday, Apr. 21 at 6:30 PM @OC
- May News Bits Articles Due: Tuesday, Apr. 25