



The Friendly News

The First Presbyterian Church of Woodbury Heights
December 2016//January 2017



Dear Friends,

Second chances. Third, fourth and fifth chances (and even more).

We all want them sometimes, don't we?

A chance to start over. A chance to begin again. A chance to put aside the past and embrace what the future will hold.

Isn't that what Christmas is? God's way of giving us another chance to live the life we always wanted to live? To live the life He wants us to live?

God has offered so many opportunities to His people to find their way to Him.

From the seminal event of the Exodus to the conquering of Canaan to the embracing of the Holy City of Jerusalem to the constant words of the prophets who were showing the way.

And so often, they threw it all away. Which led to the conquest of the northern kingdom by Assyria and the exile of most of the southern kingdom into Babylon.

But God gave His people a second chance, bringing them back to Judah and Jerusalem.

And even then, they did not take advantage of what He had to offer.

And then ...then ... He fulfilled the promises He had made through the prophet Isaiah: A child was born; a son was given, and the government was placed upon His shoulder. And He was called Emmanuel – God-with-us; Wonderful Counselor; Mighty

God; Everlasting Father; Prince of Peace; Yeshua (Joshua/Jesus) – Savior.

The ultimate second chance.

We weren't recycled on Christmas. We weren't just repaired. We weren't just spruced up, washed up, put in a new set of clothes and sent on our way.

We received the ultimate second chance – to go back to the beginning, at least our beginning, and start the journey of life all over again.

In my 40 years in the ministry, I've known a lot of people who hungered for a second chance but were afraid to take it for fear of being disappointed.

Couples who struggled to be vulnerable enough to open themselves up to each other once again.

Families whose seams were splitting and had difficulty finding the time and energy and willingness to repair those seams.

Parents whose skills at child-rearing were somewhat lax. And children who sometimes blamed their parents for their problems.

Employees and bosses who struggled to find the solution to the politics that created hostility in the office.

Even societies (dare I say it) which seem to keep building walls because they don't know how to build bridges.

But 2,000 years ago, there was a manger. In a stable. Behind an inn. In a village whose name meant 'House of Bread.'

And a child was born to give us a second chance.

To show us that we need not fear; that hope would rule; and that even if disappointments arose, there still would be something that waits for us to embrace.

See PASTOR on Page 2

December Birthdays

1 -- John David Geserick
 3 -- Joe Martino, Jr.
 3 -- Rachel Outten
 3 -- Shannon Woodrow
 5 -- Lilliana DeFinizio
 6 -- Russell Robinson
 8 -- Jimmy Clyde
 11 -- Nicholas Long
 11 -- John Battle
 11 -- Sarah Keedy
 12 -- Ada White
 22 -- Samantha Fennimore
 23 -- Jeanette Palmer
 24 -- Matthew Davis
 24 -- Winnie Higgins
 24 -- Stacey Spinosi
 25 -- JESUS
 26 -- Michael Golding
 26 -- Patrick Schoen, Jr.
 27 -- Holly Golding
 29 -- Phil String
 30 -- Jerry Baker
 30 -- Brett McMichael
 30 -- Alexander Pizarro

December Anniversaries

7 -- Kenny and Samantha Eachus
 13 -- Jeff and Kim Swanson
 17 -- Chuck and Joyce Elliott
 20 -- Matt and Melissa Woodrow
 21 -- Patrick and Peg Schoen
 22 -- Richard and Joy Love
 27 -- Dave and Linda Kershaw
 29 -- Quint Lerch and Judy Grantham

**January Birthdays**

1 -- Liz Billings
 2 -- Isabella Sammacicci
 3 -- Bea Truitt
 5 -- Steve Antosky
 5 -- Hayley Antosky
 5 -- Karen Bagnell
 5 -- Jean Woodrow
 6 -- Carl Kuehnepfel
 7 -- Eric Williamson

More January Birthdays

9 -- Paul G. Belcher
 10 -- Kim Lambert Sharp
 10 -- Bonnie Lee Wilson
 11 -- Laura Seidelmann
 14 -- Kathy Pedicone
 14 -- Mike Urion
 15 -- Nolan Becker
 16 -- Jim Golding
 18 -- David J. Belcher
 18 -- Michael McCabe
 21 -- Matt Woodrow
 21 -- Nick Zorio Sr.
 23 -- Kay Pierson
 24 -- Dave Koehler
 25 -- Amy Peterson
 26 -- Linda Kershaw
 27 -- Bill Sharp
 29 -- Judy Milio
 29 -- Robinson Guerra

January Anniversaries

29 -- John and Denise Pitchford



A special thank you goes to chef Brad Gilmore for directing a top-notch spaghetti dinner fund-raiser on behalf of our music ministry. *Photo/Joyce Woodrow*

PASTOR, from the cover page

That child came into the world He created to change it.

This Christmas, amid the tinsel and cookies and sales and lines at the mall and the post office, on Black Friday or Cyber Monday, will you take the time to embrace He who is the Second Chance?

In Christ, John

News, notes from our pastor as we prepare for Christmas

Get well prayers are sent out to **Pat Wilkins, Dick Shaw** and **Gary Keedy**, who were all in the hospital recently.

Welcome to our newest member: **Madeleine Pheasant** (and son **Luke**). Good to have you with us!

Congratulations to **Nick and Erin Zorio** on the birth of **Nashville Arin** on Nov. 16. Welcome to our newest member!

Christmas services: A reminder: we will have two services on Christmas Eve – a family service at 4 p.m. and a meditative service at 7 p.m. There will be no 11 p.m. service on Christmas Eve.

On Christmas Day, we will worship at 10 a.m. in the Primary Room, with an informal service. Children can even come in their pajamas!

Thanks, Michelle: As in past years, Michelle Elliott will take charge of our Christmas card 'post office.' You can bring in cards beginning Nov. 27.



DECEMBER

2016

“For God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life.”

-- John 3:16

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
				1 Bell practice, 6:45 p.m. Choir practice, 7:45 p.m.	2	3
4 Sunday School, 9:30 a.m. Worship, 11	5	6 Esther Circle Christmas party at Sherry Outten's home, 7 p.m.	7	8 Bell practice, 6:45 p.m. Choir practice, 7:45 p.m.	9	10 Men's group, Piston Diner, 8:30 a.m. Pageant practice, 9 a.m.
11 Sunday School, 9:30 a.m. Worship, 11 a.m. Christmas Pageant, 6	12 PrimeTimers' Christmas luncheon, Terra Nova, noon	13	14	15 Bell practice, 6:45 p.m. Choir practice, 7:45 p.m.	16	17
18 Sunday School, 9:30 a.m. Worship, 11 a.m.	19	20	21 Mission, 6:30, Session 7 p.m., both at annex	22 Bell practice, 6:45 p.m. Choir practice, 7:45 p.m.	23	24 Christmas Eve services: Family, 4 p.m. Meditative, 7
25 Christmas Day Service, 10 a.m Primary Room	26	27	28	29	30	31

JANUARY

2017



“From its chamber comes the whirlwind, and cold from the scattering winds. By the breath of God ice is given, and the broad waters are frozen fast.”

-- Job 37:9-10

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
1 New Year's Day Worship only, 11 a.m.	2	3 Esther Circle, Ada White's home, 7 p.m.	4	5 Bell practice, 6:45 p.m. Choir practice, 7:45 p.m.	6	7
8 Sunday School, 9:30 a.m. Worship and Communion, 11	9 Prime Timers, noon	10	11	12 Bell practice, 6:45 p.m. Choir practice, 7:45 p.m.	13	14 Men's group, Piston Diner, 8:30 a.m.
15 Sunday School, 9:30 a.m. Worship, 11 a.m.	16	17	18 Mission, 6:30, Session 7 p.m., both at annex	19 Bell practice, 6:45 p.m.	20	21
22 Sunday School, 9:30 a.m. Choir practice, 9:30 a.m. Worship, 11 a.m.	23	24 Deacons meet, annex, 7 p.m.	25	26 Bell practice, 6:45 p.m. Choir practice, 7:45 p.m.	27	28
29 Sunday School, 9:30 a.m. Worship, 11 a.m.	30	31				



Sunday School children learn the meaning of Advent wreaths

On the first Sunday of Advent, the children in our Sunday School learned about the meaning of the Advent wreath.

We sang some songs with Mrs. Harley. After that, Rev. Shedwick led us in prayer, and then an explanation was given as we lit each candle of the wreath.

The children in nursery and grades 1 and 2 made an Advent wreath from paper, and the students in grades 3 to 7 made an Advent calendar that they can use.

Our Sunday School is now focused on getting ready for the church's annual Christmas Pageant, which will be at 6 p.m. Dec. 11 in the sanctuary. Please plan to attend.



November report from Session

By Rev. JOHN SHEDWICK

1. Session approved vacation days for Rev. Shedwick from December 26th through January 2nd. Rev. Paul Milio will preach on January 1st.

2. The Mission Committee reported on the 2017 dates for Cathedral Soup Kitchen. They will be in the bulletin.

3. Financial reports were reviewed and discussed - at length. Your Session has very real concerns about our finances, including the issue of paying our per capita to Presbytery. But the Session is considering several ways to deal with this. You will hear more about this as time progresses.

4. The Building and Property Committee continues to investigate the installation of solar panels on the church building.

5. The Sunday School Advent program focused on Advent wreaths - their meaning and purpose. During the Sunday School hour before the Halloween Party, the students did a special mission project. It was explained during a recent worship service.

6. The Stewardship and Finance Committee discussed an update in our financial status. Read chairman Mike Camilli's story on Page 6. Please read it! Also, an insert will be in the bulletin reminding everyone when to get their 2016 tithes and offerings in so they can be recorded and be included on Form 1040.

7. Communion was celebrated on Nov. 27 - elders served. The Christmas Eve, Christmas Day, and New Year's Day schedule was discussed and is in this newsletter.

8. The Communication and Outreach Commission is working on a new promotional brochure; described updates to our website; and is looking into a sign we can use to publicize our Christmas events.

9. A report from Presbyterian Women was given as to how their funds were distributed. A lot of the money went to support missions and other ministries of our church!

10. The Youth Group spoke both of their participation in the 2017 30 Hour Famine on Feb. 24 and Feb. 25 and their Dance Marathon on April 22. More information about those events will be coming soon.

11. Tracey Urion reported on her attendance at the Nov. 15 meeting of West Jersey Presbytery.

12. The Nominating Committee reported that we have a full slate of officers.

13. The names of members to be transferred to the inactive role were presented.



Notes from the Organ Bench By Quint Lerch

“The Living Crèche” Christmas Pageant 6 p.m. Sunday, Dec. 11, sanctuary

This year for our annual Advent/Christmas celebration, we are proud to present our original pageant “The Living Crèche,” which debuted in 2008 and has been repeated in several versions since then. This pageant is unique in that it blends scripture, traditions and lore with traditional carols. Naturally it will feature the same characters you find in any pageant -- Mary, Joseph, the baby Jesus, the shepherds and the three kings, but it adds Martin Luther, St. Nicholas, a storyteller and a family. All of our youth choirs participate with the help of a few adults. The congregation will also sing some of the traditional carols. So, to help get you into the season of Advent and Christmas, join us on an almost-winter evening of story, scripture and song. Come for all of that and also to support our music program. And, at the end of the evening, you can stay for a piece of cake and some Christmas punch. It doesn't get any better than that. See you then. Oh, and if it snows, we'll see you at 6 p.m. Sunday, Jan. 8.

The Sanctuary/Bell Choir spaghetti dinner – thanks for your support

It was a perfect November evening. The weather was crisp, but not too cold, and even the Eagles were finished in a game they (unfortunately) lost. More than 100 eager eaters gathered in Fellowship Hall for a delicious and memorable night of great food, cooked to perfection by Brad Gilmore and his helpers. If anyone left hungry it was their fault, because there was an abundance of food, topped off by delicious desserts baked and prepared by members of the Sanctuary and Bell Choirs. But most importantly, those people who attended were there to support our music program and choirs. Thanks for coming out and supporting our great musicians. We'll see you next year!

New Christmas schedule

4 p.m. Saturday, Dec. 24 – Family Christmas Eve service with Youth Choirs

7 p.m. Saturday, Dec. 24 – Meditative Christmas Eve service with Sanctuary and Bell Choirs

10 a.m. Sunday, Dec. 25 -- Christmas Sunday morning worship, Sunday School Primary Room

A time to reflect, give thanks and support our church

By **MIKE CAMILLI, Stewardship and Finance Committee chairman**

The Christmas season is a time to reflect on and give thanks for all the Lord has given us -- our spirituality, our family and our good friends. Obviously, our spirituality is the most important thing we have because without it, what would our relationships with family and friends really mean?

The conduit of our spirituality is, of course, our church. As someone who was born into and spent the vast majority of his life as part of a different denomination, I can tell you first-hand of my great appreciation for our denomination and our congregation. That is why I am making this heartfelt plea to our congregation:

Our church, the First Presbyterian Church of Woodbury Heights, is among those that comprise the West Jersey Presbytery, which provides spiritual, emotional and, when necessary, even financial guidance to us.

In return, the presbytery asks each church to provide its fair share of financial support. Each church member is asked to pay a fixed amount annually -- called per capita -- to help the church meet its obligation. The amount each member has been asked to pay in 2016 is approximately \$40.

Each year, our church chooses to pay the full amount it owes to the West Jersey Presbytery, even though it might not collect the full amount from its members. So far this year, it has collected only about 40 percent of what it owes. To meet its obligation, the church must come up with the difference from its general fund -- and right now, that amount is several thousand dollars.

So let's show what our church really means to us by paying our per capita (if you haven't done so already) by the end of 2016, so that our church and our presbytery can continue to function as the spiritual foundation that all of us need so badly in our world today.

DEACONS CORNER: Next meeting – 7 p.m., Jan. 24, 2017, annex



Thanks to all: Thank you to all who attended our decorating brunch on Nov. 26 and helped trim our tree and prepare the sanctuary for Christmas!

Goodbye and hello: We want to thank outgoing deacons Joe Williamson, John Pedicone, Margaret Schneeman and Judy Milio for their dedicated service. We will be welcoming Sue Reim, Nolan Becker and Joan Mullin as new deacons in January.

Christmas Giving Tree: All the tags disappeared within the first two days the tree was up...THANK YOU! Please have your gifts wrapped with their tags attached by Thursday, Dec. 15.

News:

Giving Tree: Seven of the 10 families who received Thanksgiving gifts responded for Christmas gift aid.

Communion: On Nov. 6, 88 people were served, and three others were served at home, meaning that 91 received communion. The next communion date is Jan. 8

Greeting cards: Cards were sent to commemorate 27 birthdays and four anniversaries. We also sent four get-well cards, four cards to special members, one thinking-of-you card, one sympathy card, one wedding card, one thank-you note and one new baby card – for a total of 44 cards sent in November.

Food collection: We received 285 items, for a year to date total of 1,047 items collected. Our goal of 1,000 items for the year is fulfilled! Thank you!!

Food items: For December and January, we suggest contributing peanut butter, jelly, tea and coffee. As always, these are only suggestions – all non-perishable food is welcomed.

Visitations: There were 46 visitations made by deacons during November.

Mark Your Calendars!

4 p.m. Dec. 24 – Family Christmas Eve service. Remember to bring flashlights for your young children. Candles are only for older children and adults.

7 p.m. Dec. 24 – Meditative Christmas Eve service

11 a.m. Jan. 8 – Communion

12:15 p.m. Jan. 8 – Take down decorations after church.

**** Please continue your donations in the green offering envelopes!**

And most importantly: **Please inform us of anyone needing assistance or a visit. **

God Bless - In Christ's service,

Your Board of Deacons:

Steve Antosky, Liz Billings, Cassandra DeFinizio, Steve Elliott, Kayleigh Reim, Nancy MacDermott, Judy Milio, John Pedicone, Andrew Reynolds, Margaret Schneeman, Peg Schoen, Dottie Shedwick, Sydney Sheehan, Ada White, Joe Williamson, Joyce Woodrow, moderator

Bulletins from the past tell us about ourselves

This article was researched and written by Janet Koehler of our church's History Committee.

From the Sunday bulletin of June 16, 1946: "On June 26, the pastor and Mrs. Eckels will attend the 220th Anniversary of the founding of the New London, Pennsylvania, Presbyterian Church.

The pastor was called to this church from Princeton Seminary in February, 1907, and was pastor four and a half years. It was first called New London Cross Roads and was the station for changing horses on the Philadelphia Baltimore Stage. The old inn still stands.

Some historians claim that the old New London Academy was the beginning of the University of Pennsylvania.

Early Presbyterian churches established many of these academies, which were the only institutions preparing for college entrance.

Only two or three of them are in existence today, since high schools now prepare for college. Practically all of the early colleges were established by different denominations of the Christian Church."

From the Oct. 24, 1943 bulletin: "This is the first of what we hope will be a regular Sunday morning bulletin. Our purpose is to make the worship service more dignified and attractive by their use (the use of bulletins)."

This month, Presbyterians around the world are celebrating the 300th anniversary of the Westminster Assembly.

It was in 1643 that this group of spiritual leaders met under God to bring forth "The Westminster Confession of Faith." This document has been acknowledged by many as the greatest statement of Christian belief ever set forth.

Our church is pleased and proud to be able to unite with our fellow Presbyterians in all nations as we pay tribute to these men of other years.

We must pay an even higher tribute to the God whom they acknowledged, however, and to the great principles of faith which they discovered ... "Sovereignty of God" ... "Supremacy of the Scriptures" "Freedom of the "Conscience" ... "Christian Unity."

These are fundamental doctrines, and they have bulwarked the Christian church for the 300 years."



PrimeTimers plan ahead during November luncheon

On a beautiful day in November, 18 PrimeTimers met in the church lounge for lunch, dessert and fellowship.

Judy Milio set a beautiful table, graced by a delicious apple cake baked by Nancy MacDermott. Janet Koehler brought a chocolate cake. The two hostesses also provided iced tea, cider, pretzels and ice cream. The Milios provided bags of nuts and potato chips. No one left hungry.

Our Christmas party will be at Terra Nova restaurant in Sewell. There is a choice of veal parmigiana, chicken parmigiana or crab stuffed tilapia. All members are reminded that Ginny Naylor will be collecting for this luncheon.

Our president, Paul Milio, graciously agreed to continue as our leader for another year. Esther Culbert will continue to be our secretary, and Ginny Naylor stays on as our treasurer. We will continue to be in good order with this accomplished slate of officers.

We sang "God Bless America," which we dedicated to all our veterans and those in active service to our country, and we sang our birthday greeting to Dana Milio.

We heard several bulletin bloopers from Paul Milio and enjoyed each other's company. Thankful we are to have gathered in our church, aware of the innumerable blessings we share, we wish to extend to all a joyous and spiritual season ahead.

Happy Thanksgiving, a blessed Advent, Merry Christmas and Happy New Year!