



THE TOWER

*First Presbyterian Church
37 Church Mall
Springfield, NJ 07081
www.SpringfieldPresbyterian.com*

VOL. 72 NO. 06

FEBRUARY 2021

Annual Meeting of the Congregation

The Annual Meeting of the First Congregation of the Presbyterian Church at Springfield will be held virtually at 1pm on Sunday, February 21, 2021 for the purpose of receiving annual reports of the boards and committees of this church, voting on amended by-laws, reviewing a summary of the Mission Study Team's report to the Session and Elizabeth Presbytery, receiving the report of the Nominating Committee and electing officers for the incoming class, as well as electing a Pastor Nominating Committee and any other business which might properly come before this meeting.

**s/Linda Amiano
Clerk of Session**

**s/Kenneth Bogden, President
Board of Trustees**

Note: If you are a church member who does not receive regular emails from the pastor, you are probably not in her email address list. If you would like to be sent the Zoom link, please send an email to pastor's email address by 2/17/21, so she can add you to her list. For those who do not have a computer, you might see if you can join on another member's computer, following healthy safety precautions, or call the office and you will be provided with the phone number to call-in to the meeting.

ASH WEDNESDAY- FEBRUARY 17, 2021

Pastors Rhonda and Dave Myers will share in leading a virtual Ash Wednesday service at 7pm on February 17th via YouTube. The service will be offered in the form of Taize worship—with scripture, prayer, meditation and quiet chants of petition to our Lord. The Sacrament of the Lord's Supper will be celebrated that evening; should you choose to participate, you will be invited to bring communion elements to the table for sharing at home. You can find the service on our YouTube channel: Springfield Presbyterian Church. It will also be posted on our Website by the following day. May a spirit of peace and the blessing of the Lord's sustaining presence be with you as we begin this holy season as we make our hearts ready for remembering Jesus' passion as we deepen our union with Christ through increased devotion and prayerfulness.



PASTOR'S LETTER—February 2021

**“Keep alert, stand firm in your faith, be courageous, be strong.
Let all that you do be done in love.” (1 Corinthians 16:13-14)**

My dear friends in Christ,

Throughout history, the church has struggled with forces that have affected its ministry. The church in Corinth, for instance, wrestled with issues of identity as a Christian community set in a Greek city which was, in turn, located in a Roman province. Talk about social confusion! Not only did believers have to deal with outside challenges to their unique theology—believing in one God versus believing in many “gods”—and to a moral code modeled on Christ rather than human desire, they were faced with internal dilemmas: pride, division, spiritual immaturity, judging others unkindly, and “cliques.”

The Apostle Paul wrote a strong letter instructing the church to set aside their differences and focus on the “big picture” of discipleship. He encouraged them to adopt deeper spiritual practices, and to serve side by side in ministry. Paul wrote this at a time of great social change where industry was growing, education was expanding, and wealth was being accumulated (by some). But society wasn't dealing with those transitions very well. Like was attracted to like, leading to division in the community and in the church.

We see evidence of similar splintering in our nation today. Americans have taken partisanship to new heights, resulting in an enormous uptick in violence, racial and economic discrimination, and a sense of personal entitlement which does not reflect well the love of neighbor. What's more, this pandemic, which has weighed heavily upon our collective spirit, has morphed public health measures into a political volleyball between “opposing sides.” And added to the political stewpot of allegiance to the “gods” of power, wealth, status and racial superiority, is the emotional foment of a nation which has become divided into groups around particular personalities. This is not a healthy place to be.

If Paul were writing to our nation today, he would undoubtedly call us to see the divisions we have fostered by our partisanship and instruct us to work hard at becoming better citizens of a bold democracy by: expanding our knowledge of the U.S. Constitution, electing leaders who are dedicated to serving the people while upholding that Constitution, being careful with our language, listening before we speak, and thinking about repercussions before acting on our impulses.

These same lessons are as applicable to the church as they are to the nation. The community is best served when we, as followers of Jesus Christ, focus on unity and mutual concern. And the church is best served when we expand our knowledge of Scripture, uphold our constitution (the PCUSA *Book of Order* and *Book of Confessions*), elect leaders who lead, listen well to others, judge without bias, act in a manner consistent with Christ's teachings, and welcome others into the fold with a spirit of hospitality regardless of their race, financial status, political authority, or gender identity.

As a church in transition, it is important for us to be mindful of our role as ambassadors for Christ and to heed Paul's counsel: *“Keep alert, stand firm in your faith, be courageous, be strong. Let all that you do be done in love.”* If our nation were to follow these instructions, too, we'd all be in a much better place.

As a church in transition, it is also important for us to consider the future and what our next steps will be in serving the Lord. Paul was always teaching his churches to keep up the good work, reach for the spiritual “prize” in Jesus Christ, and hold fast to hope that God has good things in store for us. Our Mission Study Team is finishing a report with recommendations for embracing a new era during this time of transition. Next, we will elect a Pastor Nominating Committee at an upcoming Congregational Meeting. So, in preparation for a new pastor, may we model our faithfulness in Christ, giving freely of ourselves to help bring forth a new day and a new kin-dom.

With thanksgiving for your support,

Pastor Rhonda

MISSION STUDY TEAM

REPORT TO THE CONGREGATION—FEBRUARY 2021

Your Mission Study Team has been hard at work for nearly a year. At the start, we were given four tasks:

- To look backward at the church's history and the heritage of leadership;
- To look outward at the neighborhood to identify ministry needs;
- To look inward at the visible and invisible strengths and challenges of our congregation, its members, values, goals, vision, passions, energy sources, spiritual life, assets and resources;
- To look upward at where God is calling the church forward, into a rich future of continued ministry in the community of Springfield.

We studied documents from our past. We reviewed demographics of our community—both current and projected. We looked at our assets and considered where we are strongest in ministry and where our growing edges might lie. We looked at our congregational “DNA” and our ministry through the years to get a sense of how our history and shared values have impacted our identity as a people of faith.

We discovered that this church does not flag or fail in the face of crises. 7 of our 8 longest pastorates occurred when our nation was at war. During these violent eras, our congregation not only survived, it thrived—sometimes “busting at the seams” with members engaged in ministry. We see this as important because just as JFK's assassination, the Challenger explosion, and 9/11 were defining moments for the American people, the COVID-19 pandemic has also been a defining moment. And we can let this moment slip by, just glad to see it over with at some point, or, we can use it as an opportunity for change, a chance to rebuild, and an occasion for welcoming a promising future for this particular body of Christ.

Blessedly, a world in crisis did not destroy our soul; rather, times of struggle led to innovation, such as worshipping in new spaces and plans for rebuilding. We believe that ours is a strong community fostered on determination and trust in a God-given purpose. We believe that our history has shaped our resolve to maintain sacred worship, even in new spaces. And we believe that rebuilding remains our calling today.

Looking at ministry from a post-pandemic frame of mind, it's likely online worship is here to stay and that fewer people are likely to attend worship *in our sanctuary*. But this doesn't mean they will be absent. It means they will worship virtually, in a place and time convenient for them. There's nothing shameful about this, as we will be making worship available 24/7 for those who come seeking connections to the holy.

Post-pandemic thinking has also led us to see that the internet is a “friend not an enemy,” that generational differences are not to be ignored, that “preferences” cannot take priority over our God-given purpose, and that we must shift our focus away from “gathering” to “connecting.” Our study has also led us to conclude that it is time to reassess our mission priorities as we seek to serve the larger community, also in transition.

We realize our thinking may prompt some significant changes in how we serve God and neighbor. But if we can embrace these changes rather than dismissing them outright, God will see us through this time of change. We may never “bust at the seams” in the same way as before. But we're confident Christ is calling us to rebuild and we would suggest that the mission of our church today is to be a congregation that is:

- building up in faith,
- building out for community, and
- building wide with care.

We have a much longer report to share with the Session and Presbytery. Once published, you can ask for a copy by contacting the church office. After it's approved, the report will serve as the basis for our Ministry Information Form. We will soon elect a Pastor Nominating Committee, which will get to work on calling a new pastor. We would like to thank everyone who helped bring this Report to fruition. With thanks,

Dawn Clarke (MST leader), Angela Ruebling-Jass (MST secretary), and Heather Francis

FEBRUARY HIGHLIGHTS

January is nearly over and February beckons. Here are some of the highlights for the coming month:

- February 7th is Souper Bowl of Caring Sunday. If you care to make a special gift in honor of Souper Bowl Sunday, you can include that gift with your weekly or monthly pledge—just make sure to note where the money is to be applied so that we can pass those mission funds along to a hunger ministry.
- The Church Office will be closed on February 15th in recognition of Presidents' Day.
- The Presbytery of Elizabeth will meet by Zoom on February 16th, time to be announced. Dawn Clarke is our Elder Commissioner to this meeting.
- We will Livestream an Ash Wednesday service on our YouTube channel (Springfield Presbyterian Church) at 7pm on February 17th. It will be a short service with an emphasis on Lenten practices.
- There will be a Congregational Meeting held via Zoom on Sunday afternoon, February 21st at 1pm. See the full description elsewhere in the Tower. A Zoom link will be sent out prior to the meeting.

PRESBYTERY CHANGES

The number of PC(USA) Presbyteries in New Jersey will soon be reduced from 7 to 4. The Presbytery of Elizabeth, of which our church and its interim pastor are members, will soon become part of an as yet unnamed Presbytery—it is currently being called the Northeast Presbytery. The first official meeting of this new Presbytery will be held on the morning of February 13th. We are still awaiting more information regarding the time of the meeting, the docket, the slate of officers being presented for election, and break-out “meet and greet” groups. This is a time of significant change for our Presbytery, as it is one of the only Presbyteries being divided by this plan. Our Union County churches will join with the Presbyteries of Newark and the Palisades to form this new middle governing body. The hope is that, by reducing the number from 7 to 4, our Presbyteries will be made stronger (more people = more leaders = more ministry) and less costly as the administrative expense would be shared over a larger number of churches. Please keep our evolving Presbyteries in your prayers. We will keep you posted as new information is learned.



Feb 1 - Lynn Doll
Feb 2 - Clarence Davis
Feb 3 - Linda Amiano
Ken Guida
Jean Sim
Feb 5 - Eileen Clark
Heather Hecking
Feb 6 - Chase Werner
Feb 7 - Ryan Doremus

Feb11 - Megan Dauser Bickel
Feb 14 - Donald Hartman
Lore Ullrich
Feb 15 - Patricia Gahm
Feb 16 - Alyssa Williams
Feb 20 - Yolanda Rueda
Feb 23 - Mekenzie Doherty
Feb 24 - Scott Jones
Feb 26 - Melissa Guida Bliss
Feb 28 - John Bunnell
Walter Peterson



*If you don't see your birthday listed,
please provide month and date to the office.
We are happy to celebrate with all of our members!*

DVD Recordings of Worship Services for those without internet

With sincere thanks to Joshua Myers for recording the services and Russ Werner for downloading the services to DVD disks, we can offer copies to our members without internet.

Please contact Linda J. in the office, and she will arrange to mail the disks to your home, so that you can play the recording on your DVD player. The disks are yours to keep, with your church's appreciation for wanting to stay connected.



IN MEMORIAM

The sympathy of the Congregation is extended to the family and friends of Gladys Reed, who passed away on January 22, 2021. Gladys was a 46 year member of the Congregation who joined with her husband, Gilbert, in December 1974 after a move from Irvington. Prior to her home confinement, she was often joined in the pew by her nephew, Jeff Elker, his wife Linda and grandson, Nicholas.

2020 YEAR-END CONTRIBUTION STATEMENTS

The 2020 financial contributions statements have been mailed and we ask that you review them carefully. There have been many delays within the US Postal Service in the last few months, causing concern to many. If you find that your statement does not match your personal records, please contact Linda J, who will review the matter with you. Thank you for your ongoing support of your church!

2021 OFFERING ENVELOPES

For members and friends who use offering envelopes, arrangements can be made to pick up your box or have the office mail the box to your home. We thank those of you who have already done so!

PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH (USA) PER CAPITA

Each year, our congregation is assessed a fee to cover administrative fees for Presbytery and for PC(USA). The 2021 assessment is the same as last year, and we ask our members to reimburse the church for their share, if means allow. The assessment is \$45 per member (adults and confirmed young adults). If you use offering envelopes, there is one in the box for this purpose.

PRESBYTERIAN WOMEN

The Jam Fundraiser continues in the office for those of you who where unable to come to the drive-by and in-office event in December. Thank you to those who did! We sold about half our supply!

For each \$5 donation to the PW, supporters may choose a jar of homemade jam or jelly. A limited supply of the following flavors are available: *Pear, Dutch Apple Pie, Hot Pepper, Ray's Apple Butter, Cran-Raspberry, Cran-Strawberry, Cran-Citrus Marmalade, Pineapple Ginger and Sugar Free Blueberry, SF Apricot, SF Black Cherry and Jan's Sugar-Free Bread & Butter pickles.* Cash and checks payable to Presbyterian Women are accepted in the office on Mondays, Wednesdays and Fridays 9am-12pm and by appointment in the afternoons.

Puzzle!

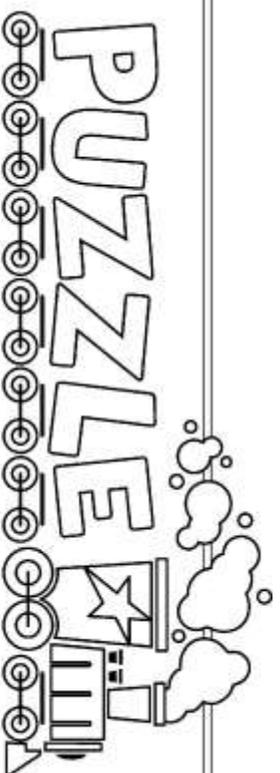
Complete each saying below. Then place the words from those blanks in the correct order to complete Proverbs 23:4.

1. When the going gets tough, the tough _____ going.
2. People who live in glass houses should _____ throw stones.
3. If the shoe fits, _____ it.
4. "It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for someone who is _____ to enter the kingdom of God."
5. Good things come _____ those who wait.
6. When in Rome, _____ as the Romans do.
7. Don't wear _____ your welcome.
8. If you want something done right, do it _____.

Write the unscrambled proverb here:

_____ PROVERBS 23:4

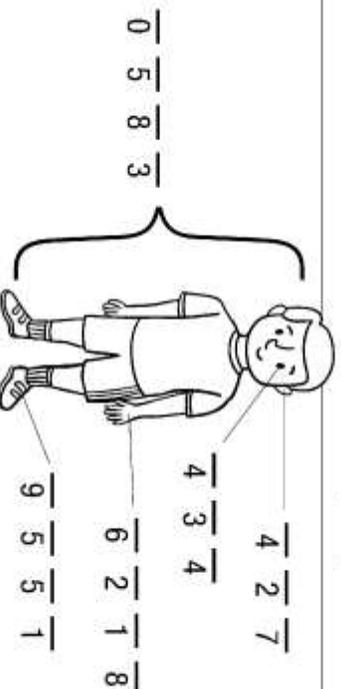
Answer: Do not wear yourself out to get rich. Proverbs 23:4



WORKING IN UNISON

Just as body parts work in unison, the church — the body of Christ — is to work together for God's purposes.

Directions: Fill in the letters for each body part. Add up each part's number total, and use those totals to complete the Bible passage.



Now if the _____²⁰ should say, "Because I am not a _____¹⁷, I do not belong to the _____¹⁶," ... And if the _____¹³ should say, "Because I am not an _____¹¹, I do not belong to the _____¹⁶," it would not for that reason stop being part of the _____¹⁶. If the whole _____¹⁶ were an _____¹¹, where would the sense of hearing be? If the whole _____¹⁶ were an _____¹³, where would the sense of smell be? ... As it is, there are many parts, but one _____¹⁶.

1 CORINTHIANS 12:15-17, 20, NIV

Answer: body = 16, eye = 11, hand = 13, head = 17, foot = 20

THE FIRST CONGREGATION OF THE
PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH AT SPRINGFIELD
37 CHURCH MALL
SPRINGFIELD, NJ 07081

Place
Stamp
here

PLACE ADDRESS
LABEL HERE



Please note that the Church Office will be closed on Monday, February 15th in honor of Presidents' Day. The office answering machine is always on, and you can leave a message for the staff or access emergency contact information. As a reminder, you must call the main number, 973-379-4320 to leave a message at the office. Pastor's cell number is : 973-255-0846.