



First Presbyterian Church of Sussex  
**PRESBYTERIAN**  
**PRESS**

21 Unionville Avenue, Sussex, NJ 07461

December 2023-January 2024

## From the Pastor's Desk....

Merry (Almost) Christmas, Sussex Presbyterian Members and Friends!

For this month's pastor's note, I thought I'd do an experiment. I asked ChatGPT to write the note for me. This is the prompt I gave it: "Please write an inspiring message of hope and light during chaotic times. This is for a Christian church."

And here's what they wrote for us:

"In the midst of chaos, let us find solace in the unwavering light of hope that emanates from our faith. In these challenging times, we are reminded that our trust in God transcends the turbulence of the world around us.

"As we navigate the stormy seas of uncertainty, let us anchor our souls in the promises of God. His love is a beacon that guides us through the darkest nights and His grace is a steadfast rock upon which we can stand firm. In times of chaos, we are not abandoned, for the Lord is our refuge and strength.

"Remember, dear friends, that our faith is not a shield against the storms, but rather a source of strength within them. It is in our collective resilience and love for one another that we reflect the very essence of Christ. Just as Jesus calmed the tempest with a simple command, so too can we bring calmness and comfort to those around us through acts of kindness, compassion, and unwavering faith.

"Let us be beacons of light in the darkness, reminding each other that even in the chaos, God's plan unfolds. Our journey may be fraught with challenges, but with each step we draw closer to the dawn of a new day, where His mercy and grace will reign supreme.

"In times of uncertainty, let our faith be the anchor that holds us steady and our love for one another be the light that pierces through the darkest clouds. Together, as a community of believers, we shall rise above the chaos, shining as a testament to the enduring power of hope, faith, and the unwavering love of our Heavenly Father.

"May the peace of the Lord, which surpasses all understanding, guard your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus."

I have to say, not too shabby. It's not what I would've written, but that's why I went to it—to experiment. Hopefully, you'll still think I'm needed around here, especially as we get close to re-signing my contract (how has it already been almost three years of ministry together?).

All joking aside, know that God's mercy, grace, and love is here with you, with us all during this time. This time of turmoil and war. This time of grieving and loss. This time of joy and excitement. As we walk through Advent, we walk through knowing we're waiting for something better.

We're waiting for Jesus Christ's return. We're waiting for God's arch of justice to be seen clearly and by all. In Advent, we admit that we're waiting AND that we hate waiting. The truth of the matter is, only God knows what the future holds. So, we continue to wait.

If this Christmas season is a hard one for you and your family, for whatever reason, know that I'm here to listen and support you. And know that it's okay to not be joyful or merry as you normally would be. Our loving God knows the difficulties and sorrows of our lives—that's why Jesus Christ came down as a little baby. I give you full permission to live into this Advent, Christmas, and New Year however you need to. And know, no matter what, God is with you.



In Christ's Love,

*Pastor Katherine Scott-Kirschner (973) 771-4721 (cell)*

## Session Highlights



Session met on November 16<sup>th</sup>. The following items were discussed:

- The Cookie & Bread Walk is scheduled for December 17<sup>th</sup>, before and after the worship service.
- The Soup Sale is scheduled for February 12, 2024.
- Active membership is recorded at 101.
- Our congregation may have some ideas on improvements to our physical campus. Please direct ideas to Ruling Elders Eric Sives and Charles Bates.
- The children's Christmas program is scheduled for December 10<sup>th</sup> during the morning service.
- The High Point Regional High School Chamber Singers will once again be a part of our Advent Service on **December 13<sup>th</sup>**.
- The Christmas Joy Offering will be taken on **Sunday, December 24<sup>th</sup>**, during our morning service.
- Our Christmas Eve Service will be held on **December 24<sup>th</sup>**, 7:30 p.m.
- The next regular Session meeting will be held on **Tuesday, December 19, 2023**, at 6:30 p.m., on the ZOOM platform.

Respectfully submitted,  
Charles Bates, Clerk of Session

## Mark Your Calendars

The next regular Deacons' meeting will be held on **Sunday, February 11<sup>th</sup>**, 11:30 a.m., at the church; the next regular Session meeting will be held on **Tuesday, December 19<sup>th</sup>**, 6:30 p.m., on ZOOM.



## Christmas Joy Offering



*"What child is this?"* During this Advent Season, we celebrate leadership: past, present and future, through support of the Christmas Joy Offering. Please give generously to this offering, which will be collected **Christmas Eve, December 24<sup>th</sup>**, during our morning worship service. Special envelopes will be in our Sunday bulletins on **December 10<sup>th</sup>, December 17<sup>th</sup>, and December 24<sup>th</sup>**. If you won't be worshipping in person, you can mail your offering in to our Depositing Treasurer, Janet Hayzler, 96 Holland Road, Wantage, NJ 07461. Please make your check payable to "First Presbyterian Church of Sussex" and mark "Christmas Joy" on the memo line.

## Advent Hymn Sing

Give yourself a gift this Advent and come to the church on **Wednesday, December 13<sup>th</sup>**, at 7:00 p.m., to hear the High Point Regional High School Chamber Singers. You will be glad you did...and bring a friend!





## Christmas Eve Service

Join us on **Sunday, December 24<sup>th</sup>**, as we celebrate the birth of Christ at our service starting at 7:30 p.m., in person and on ZOOM. We will also have our regular worship service at 10:30 a.m.

## New Sermon Series

Pastor Katherine will present a new sermon series in January called, “Powers of Christ.” Join worship to learn the amazing powers of Christ!



## Pastoral Care



Pastor Katherine aims to be in the office on Tuesdays, Thursdays, and Sundays. She is available at her cell phone number (973-771-4721) the rest of the days and for longer conversations in the evenings. She sets aside Friday evening through Saturday evening as her Sabbath (around 5:00 – 5:00 p.m.) most weeks. If you have a pastoral emergency during this time, please still reach out.

## Sunday School News

Sunday school runs from 9:30 – 10:15 a.m., for Pre-K through Adult, September through June. Please see Ashley Ziccardi if you have any questions.



## Christmas Pageant



Please join us on **Sunday, December 10<sup>th</sup>**, when the children will present their Christmas Pageant “I Didn’t Think It Would Happen Like This” during our worship service. Please plan to attend this special presentation!

## Cookie & Bread Walk

The Presbyterian Women’s Group of the First Presbyterian Church of Sussex is planning to hold its annual Cookie & Bread Sale on **Sunday, December 17<sup>th</sup>**, before and after worship. We will once again fill our coffee cans. We need cookie bakers to help us have enough cookies so that our tables are full to overflowing! Please try to help us make this an adventure in cookie choosing for all our members who want to buy cookies. We also need bread bakers, but please remember that the cookies are needed just as much if not more. This is a very big fundraiser for our church. We have helped to make happen many of the big expenditures that our church has needed over the years. The last one was helping to pay for our beautiful clean parking lot. Please plan to come to church on **Sunday, December 17<sup>th</sup>**, to get your cookies, breads, and trays already made up for you to take to friends and family! Looking forward to all the goodies! Any questions, contact Penny at 973-764-3781 or 201-452-5082.



# How Are We Doing???

## For the Month of November

(Computers Connected During ZOOM + People Attending In-Person Worship)

Average Weekly Attendance: 42

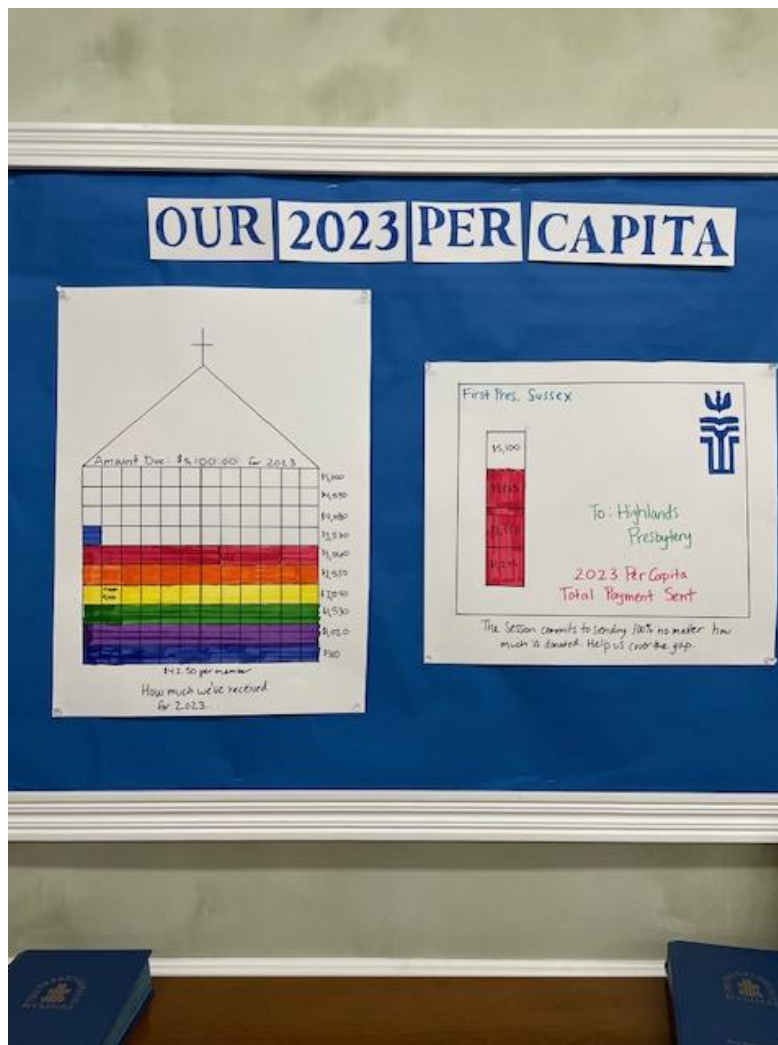
Monthly Offering: \$ 7,485.50



## Why Per Capita?

Per Capita exists as a way for all Presbyterians to share costs that belong to the whole church and to give meaning to the interdependent nature of Presbyterian polity. For 2023, each member's contribution is \$42.50. There is still time to pay your dues for 2023, **Thank you to everyone who paid their "dues" for 2023!**

Per Capita is part of the glue that holds Presbyterians together. It exists to allow the whole church to share equitably in those things that make us Presbyterian: our theological identity, our connectedness as communities of faith, our core structures that keep us together as a church, and our call to work for full participation in decision making. See the bulletin board display below.





## Worshiping In Person Update

The church leadership voted that masks will be optional for those vaccinated; for those not vaccinated, it is strongly recommended that masks continue to be worn. Child care in the nursery has resumed.

## Annual Meeting

The Annual Meeting of the Congregation and Corporation will be held on **Sunday, January 28<sup>th</sup>**, at 11:30 a.m., in the church sanctuary and on ZOOM (snow date: **February 4<sup>th</sup>**). Please mark your calendars, and plan to attend this important meeting.



## Annual Report

The end of the year is drawing near, so it's time to put together your reports for the 2023 Annual Report, which should be ready for the congregation on **Sunday, January 21<sup>st</sup>**. Please have your report in to Sharon Bove by **Tuesday, January 2<sup>nd</sup>**, so that she will have plenty of time to put the report together (in case we have bad weather to work around). **Thank you!**



## 2024 Church Envelopes

The 2024 church offering envelopes will be available on **December 17<sup>th</sup>**. Please take yours home with you when you come to church. Also, if you see a neighbor's envelopes, please take them and drop them off.



## 2024 Calendars

Pinkel Funeral Home has generously donated scenic calendars with our church's information on it. Please feel free to take home as many as you'd like. They are available in the narthex.



**In that region there were shepherds living in the fields, keeping watch over their flocks by night. Then an angel of the Lord stood before them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were terrified. But the angel said to them, "Do not be afraid; for see – I am bringing you good news of great joy for all the people: to you is born this day in the city of David a Savior, who is the Messiah, the Lord.**

**- Luke 2:8-11**

## From the Finance Committee



Even though we re-opened the church, not everyone is ready for in-person worship. Our bills still need to be paid. For those of you who are not returning to in-person worship, please remember to keep up with your weekly contribution. If you pay your bills using online banking, consider scheduling your weekly or monthly giving like other regular payments. This will greatly assist with our cash flow. Thank you!

**We have online giving!** There is a 'donate here' link on our website, [www.sussexpresbyterian.org](http://www.sussexpresbyterian.org) or you can download the GivePlus Mobile App (Vanco) to your smart phone. Our online giving program is provided by the Presbyterian Foundation in partnership with Vanco Services, LLC. Both the Presbyterian Foundation and Vanco Services have very good reputations, and this online giving program came highly recommended by other churches.

## Refreshments After Worship

Refreshments are served in the fellowship room. Please sign up to bring in goodies on the sign-up sheet in the narthex. Please call Penny Bates if you have any questions.



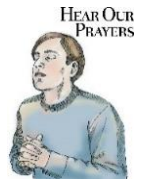
## In Our Thoughts & Prayers



Please pray for **Teresa Belcher** (friend of The Batemans), **Madelyn Coykendall**, **George Clark**, **Frank Del Sardo, Jr.**, **Bob & Donna Gibson**, **Rev. Bruce Gillette & Family**, **Charlie & Dodi Lain**, **Lorraine, Betty Martin**, **Rev. Tim Marvil**, **Art & Carolyn Van Houten**, **Pat Walker**, **Lois Wright**, **Barbara Young**, and **Brian Young**; and the families of **Ann Cosh** and **George Martin**. Please let the Deacons or the office know who to add and who to remove. **Thank you!**

## Prayers of the People E-mail

Pastor Katherine sends out a weekly email with the prayer requests lifted up in worship. If you would like to receive this e-mail, please contact the church office.



## Deacons' Fund Offering



A part of the Deacons' ministry is our monthly Deacons' Fund Offering, which assists charitable, nonprofit organizations. The Board of Deacons would like to thank all those who donated to Skylands Outreach Depot, our Deacons' Fund recipient for November.

Our Deacons' Fund for December is Father John's Animal House in Lafayette. Father John's is a nonprofit 501c(3) organization which is supported entirely by donations, grants and fundraising events. This special place provides love, companionship, shelter, food, socialization and medical care for many homeless animals waiting for a permanent loving home. It is a no-kill center, ensuring that the animals housed there will continue to receive the best of care for as long as it is needed.

For January, it will go to the Center for Prevention and Counseling. Please give generously!

## Deacon of the Month

When Pastor Katherine is not available or needs assistance, the following Deacon will be on call for the month of December – Nancy Barta; for January – Paulette Touw.



## Prayer Shawl Ministry



Prayer Shawl Ministry

Our Prayer Shawl Ministry has been sending prayers and love in the form of beautiful knitted, crocheted, or quilted shawls to people in need of physical, emotional, or spiritual comfort. The shawl maker begins with prayers and blessings for the recipient, and keeps these thoughts in mind throughout the creative process. Our shawls are delivered with a message expressing the feelings of love and comfort with which they were made. If you know anyone who could benefit from a prayer shawl, please call Janet (973-875-9252) or see her after worship. If you would like to create these beautiful shawls, a 20 x 60-inch rectangular shawl requires five skeins of yarn. If you don't knit, crochet, or sew, or don't have the time, you can purchase yarn or donate funds for materials.

## Just Plain Change Ministry

*I give you a new commandment: Love one another; as I have loved you, so you are to love one another. If there is love among you, then all will know that you are my disciples.* - John 13:34-35

Please remember to empty your pockets/ purses to help our neighbors in need. Listen to your neighbor, your co-workers, your friends, cashiers at the places where you eat or shop and/or the waitresses where you eat. If you find a need to cheer or support, write down your suggestion on a slip of paper. Put it in the jar in the back of the sanctuary or contact any Deacon. **You can also mail in your donation to Janet Hayzler.**



Yes, your quarters, dimes, and pennies do make a difference in the lives of those around us!

### Small Change Suggestion

*(The suggested amount limit is \$50.)*

Recipient/situation: \_\_\_\_\_

Contact information (name, address, phone #): \_\_\_\_\_

Your name (optional): \_\_\_\_\_

How do you want to have the "gift" delivered? (By yourself or by a member of the committee? Or other suggestion?): \_\_\_\_\_

Please continue to listen to your neighbor, classmate, and community members, as each has a story to tell. If we at the First Presbyterian Church of Sussex can help, let someone on the Board of Deacons or Sharon Bove or Pastor Katherine know. There are also papers on the back table in the sanctuary that can be filled out and placed in the glass jar. **Do you know of someone who needs a little boost?**

## Care Package Ministry



In early November, six care packages were cheerfully packed and sent on their way to our hard-working college students. The boxes were stuffed with all kinds of snack foods, health care items (tissues, bandages, and cough drops), along with some school supplies. Prayer shawls were sent to all first-time recipients. Also included were words of wisdom and encouragement, along with a card reminding these students that they are being prayed for and thought about by our church family. Our students remain connected to their home church through the various donations and reminders we have sent them. Whether they are nibbling on a granola bar between classes, sharing a candy bar with a friend, or loaning a pen to a fellow student, this small item will be a big reminder that their church stands behind and supports them. The deacons want to thank all who contributed to this very important ministry! The 2023 care package recipients were Lydia Alheidt, Andrew Eckert, Liam Klein, Brian Lewis, Sam Touw, and Trent Wright.



Dear Church Family,

Thank you all for the care package! It was so thoughtful and filled with the perfect things, and came at a perfect time in the semester, just enough goodies to finish out the semester!

Thanks again,  
Lydia



## Potluck Luncheon

On October 22<sup>nd</sup>, the Deacons hosted a potluck luncheon after worship. Good food and fellowship were had by all who were there!





## December Birthdays

- (8) Karen Hardin
  - (13) Christine Sarno
  - (21) Carol Tomasula
  - (24) Amy Mills
  - (25) Jesus Christ
- Pastor Katherine Scott-Kirschner



## January Birthdays

- (1) Ryan Hayzler
- Betsy Sives
- (5) Reyes Madera
- (10) Betty Martin
- (11) Barbara Madsen
- (16) Kristen Hayzler
- (18) Owen Demeter
- (22) Melanie LiTrenta
- Lois Wright
- (24) Dawn Klein
- (25) Justin Smisko
- (29) Julie Jordan Scott
- Kyle DeGroat



## Lectionary for the Lord's Day

### December 2023

- 3 **1<sup>st</sup> Sunday of Advent**  
Psalm 80:1-7, 17-19; Mark 13:24-37
- 10 **2<sup>nd</sup> Sunday of Advent**  
Psalm 85:1-2, 8-13; Mark 1:1-8
- 17 **3<sup>rd</sup> Sunday of Advent**  
Psalm 126; John 1:6-8, 19-28
- 24 **4<sup>th</sup> Sunday of Advent**  
Psalm 89:1-4, 19-26; Luke 1:26-38



### January 2024

- 7 **Baptism of the Lord**  
Psalm 29; Mark 1:4-11
- 14 **2<sup>nd</sup> Sunday after Epiphany**  
Psalm 139:1-6; John 1:43-51
- 21 **3<sup>rd</sup> Sunday after Epiphany**  
Psalm 62:5-12; Mark 1:14-20
- 28 **4<sup>th</sup> Sunday after Epiphany**  
Psalm 111; Mark 1:21-28

## Can You Help?



Worship Committee

Mike Kosco, Chair of the Worship & Sacraments Committee, is looking for people to serve as liturgists and ushers. You can be liturgist in church or at home on the ZOOM platform. If you have done it before, or even if you haven't, please contact him at 973-875-7412, or see him after worship on Sundays. Communion preparers and servers are also needed. A schedule (*through January*) of liturgists, ushers, communion preparer, and communion servers is listed below. **If you cannot volunteer on your scheduled date, please "swap" a date with someone else and notify Sharon Bove at 875-4760. Thank you!**

### Schedule of Liturgists

December 3 <sup>rd</sup>	Charles Bates
December 10 <sup>th</sup>	Penny Bates
December 17 <sup>th</sup>	Mike Kosco
December 24 <sup>th</sup> (a.m.)	Janet Hayzler
December 24 <sup>th</sup> (p.m.)	Richard L. Hayzler
December 31 <sup>st</sup>	Betsy Sives
January 7 <sup>th</sup>	Sheryl Dekmar
January 14 <sup>th</sup>	Richard L. Hayzler
January 21 <sup>st</sup>	Penny Bates
January 28 <sup>th</sup>	Mike Kosco



### Schedule of Communion Preparers and Servers

#### Preparers

January 7<sup>th</sup> - Penny Bates  
February 4<sup>th</sup> - Nancy Barta

#### Servers

January 7<sup>th</sup> - Charles Bates  
February 4<sup>th</sup> Penny Bates & Paulette Touw

### Schedule of Ushers



December 3 <sup>rd</sup>	Sheryl Dekmar & Paulette Touw
December 10 <sup>th</sup>	Paulette Touw & _____
December 17 <sup>th</sup>	Mary Alice Hosking & Niki Lepes
December 24 <sup>th</sup> (a.m.)	Richard L. Hayzler & Betsy Sives
December 24 <sup>th</sup> (p.m.)	Kyle DeGroat & Janet Hayzler
December 31 <sup>st</sup>	Chris & Chuck Sarno
January 7 <sup>th</sup>	Ken Enhoffer & Sheila Stormes
January 14 <sup>th</sup>	Mary Alice Hosking & Niki Lepes
January 21 <sup>st</sup>	Joanne Cosh & Sheryl Dekmar
January 28 <sup>th</sup>	Kyle DeGroat & Janet Hayzler

## Local Food Pantry News

The Sussex Help Center is open from 10:00 a.m. to 12:00 noon on Wednesdays, and from 10:00 to 11:00 a.m. on Mondays/Fridays. They appreciate all donations, and they especially need everything. Please let Walter Houck know if there is a family in need.



## Sussex Elks



**Veterans:** The Sussex Elks are still collecting needed items for our Veterans, as well as DASI. The Veterans need: body wash, shampoo/conditioner, and toothpaste/toothbrushes. DASI needs: toilet paper, paper towels, tissues, napkins, laundry detergent, Dreft (baby detergent), cleaning products, dish soap, female hygiene products, deodorant, soap, hair-care products, shampoo and conditioner (full size), cereal, canned tuna/chicken, individual snacks, juice boxes, mac & cheese, and soup. Also, small and medium dog/cat food bags, and gift cards for Walmart, Shoprite, and gas in \$10 increments. The following new items are also needed: pillows, twin-size bed sheets, hand towels, larger size women's pajamas, children's pajamas (boys and girls), sweatshirts and sweatpants (XXL), socks, and slippers. Drop-off location: Sussex Elks Lodge #2288. Please leave by the door.

## Our Church Sign

*(Thank You Phil Hardin, with help from Richard L. Hayzler)*

