



February 2026

The Presbyterian

Church Office
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"The View from the Pew"
by Pastor Jeff Hatch



What an interesting juxtaposition of days this month: on the 14th we celebrate our loving relationships on Valentine's Day, and on the 18th we begin the season of Lent with Ash Wednesday (see below for more info about a fun worship service that evening). Valentine's Day is when we're supposed to be extravagant with candy or flowers to remember, rekindle, or romance the love of our life. And Lent is when we think about cutting back, or "giving up something" for Lent. They initially seem to point in opposite directions.

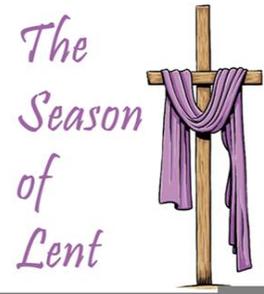
But perhaps the two aren't really so different. Lent is when we anticipate and begin to prepare for Easter. It's a time to focus our attention on God and try to turn away from the many distractions that life offers of a lesser concern. But what could be more joyful and loving a message to us than Easter? God's sacrifice, death on the cross, and resurrected triumphant return to his people in love is the crowning act of love in human history, and focusing on that during Lent is to focus on love. That's pretty similar to preparing for a successful Valentine's Day. A quote that pertains to both is from Pierre Vinet who wrote, "The Christian faith does not consist in the belief that we are saved, but in the belief that we are loved."

So, on **Ash Wednesday**, February 18th, we're going to meet at 6:30 PM in Room A/B beginning with a Potluck Supper, followed by an activity and informal worship around the tables, concluding with the imposition of ashes (and I offer to put the sign of the cross on either your forehead or on the back of your hand). It will be a warm get-together of the church family to enjoy a meal, sing a few songs, interactively do an activity, and worship our God as we begin the season of Lent. I hope to meet you there.



POTLUCK DINNER

Pastor Jeff Hatch



*"For God so loved the world
 that he gave his only Son,
 so that everyone who believes in him may
 not perish
 but may have eternal life.*

*Indeed, God did not send the Son into the
 world to condemn the world,
 but in order that the world
 might be saved through him."*

John 3:16-17

February Calendar Notes



Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
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



Please join us on Sunday, February 8th, following worship for our next Coffee Hour.

Church Office: The church office will be closed on Monday, February 16th, for President's Day.



ASH WEDNESDAY

Ash Wednesday is February 18th. We will celebrate Ash Wednesday starting at 6:30 PM with a potluck dinner in Room A/B, followed by an informal service of worship at 7:00 PM.



Lenten prayer services will be celebrated on Wednesdays during Lent. The services are sponsored by the Greater Freehold Clergy Association. More to come regarding these community Lenten opportunities.

Communion & Casa Sundays: We'll be collecting non-perishable food items for *Casa Freehold* on the first Sunday of the month. Bring what you can for our neighbors in need. If we all do a little, it adds up to a lot! Thank you for your continued generosity and support.

2026 Communion Calendar



January 4, 2026
February 1, 2026
March 1, 2026
April 2, 2026 (Maundy Thursday)
April 5, 2026 (Easter Sunday)
May 3, 2026
June 7, 2026
July 5, 2026
August 2, 2026
September 6, 2026
October 4, 2026
November 1, 2026
December 6, 2026
January 3, 2027

Gifts of Women Sunday



On March 8th, we'll be celebrating the **gifts of women** as they lead worship for us.

We have gifted women in our midst, using their creativity and talents, to bring the word of God to us in different ways in all humility. Make sure you don't miss this worship service!

Pastoral Search Steering Committee



Our temporary Pastoral Search Steering Committee continues to meet weekly and is diligently working to ensure that our congregation's weekly pulpit and pastoral needs are met.

We are grateful for the guest ministers who are blessing us with their leadership during this time of transition.

As we search for an Interim Pastor, please know that once an Interim is in place, a formal search committee will be established. At that time, the congregation will engage in a self-study and discernment process to help guide the search for our next settled pastor.

If you have questions about this process, please feel free to speak with any member of the Steering Committee:

- Berwin Guttormsen
- Sue Craig
- Sandra Whitehill
- Julie Heinsohn
- Sue Stoia
- Tammy Ciok

“Ask, and it will be given to you; search, and you will find; knock, and the door will be opened for you. For everyone who asks receives, and everyone who searches finds, and for everyone who knocks, the door will be opened.

Matthew 7:7-8

Session

The Session will continue to meet during our pastor search. The next session meeting is scheduled for Tuesday, February 17th. We are grateful to Reverend Robin Palmer-Burton, pastor at Old Tennent Presbyterian Church, for serving as our temporary moderator for our meetings.

If you have any questions, please see an elder. You can also reach out to the church office for assistance.

Prayer Requests



Please call or email the church office during the week to let us know of any requests for prayer you have.

If you have a prayer request on Sunday morning, please use the Prayer Cards in the narthex to write out your requests. A greeter or usher can assist you with any questions you may have.

I ask your prayers for:	
<hr/>	
<hr/>	
Name (If desired) _____	Date: _____
<p>For this service – hand to an usher <i>before</i> worship. For next week's service – put in the offering plate. THE FIRST PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH OF FREEHOLD, NJ</p>	

Your prayer requests are important. Thank you for helping us stay on top of your requests.

Join Us For Sunday School!

Ages 3 through High School
Class is held in Rooms A/B and the nursery.

Children are invited to the Sunday worship service in the sanctuary at 10:00 AM and then they can go to Sunday School after the Time for Children message.

FPC Sunday School Team

Samantha Daesener (732-547-2551)

Vera Musser (732-685-3125)

Carol Matino

Bob Musser

Nursery Attendant

Hanah Koch

We are happy to have Nursery attendant Hanah Koch to help us with the young children.



Carol Matino with the children – February 1, 2026



Sunday School - February 1, 2026



Hanah with the children – January 11, 2026

There is a Library Bookshelf with books and toys in the classroom. Take a look and borrow a book!

Lent starts on Ash Wednesday February 18th. For the Season of Lent, Sunday School students will be receiving One Great Hour of Sharing fish banks, sharing calendars, and story and coloring pages.

Please let Vera Musser or Samantha Daesener know when your children will be in Sunday School. Hope to see you in church!

Blessings,

Christian Education Commission



*"Start children off on the right path.
And even when they are old,
they will not turn away from it."*

Proverbs 22:6

Music Ministry at FPC: Many Ways to Be Involved

Music ministry at First Presbyterian Church is active, growing, and wonderfully diverse. From Sunday morning worship to weekday rehearsals, from recorded projects to gatherings in homes, there are many ways for people of all ages and abilities to participate, contribute, and belong.

Whether you enjoy singing, playing an instrument, reading aloud, helping behind the scenes, or simply opening your home in hospitality, there is a place for you in the music ministry at FPC.

✦ Making Music Together

Chancel Choir – Come Sing With Us Rehearsals: Sundays at 8:45 AM

The Chancel Choir continues to be a central part of our worship life, and new singers are always welcome. This is an especially meaningful time to join, as the choir prepares music for Lent and Easter, including upcoming recording sessions later this winter.

You do not need to be a professional singer, and you do not need to have sung recently—only a willingness to participate. Music will be provided in advance, with the opportunity to rehearse at home.

If you've ever considered singing, now is a wonderful moment to step in.

Kirk Ringers (Adults & Seniors) Rehearsals: Mondays at 1:00 PM

This weekday bell choir is a joyful, welcoming group and an excellent opportunity for those who enjoy focused,

collaborative music-making. No prior handbell experience is required—we'll guide you every step of the way. The group is currently preparing special music for Easter and welcomes new ringers.

Youth Bells & Youth Ensemble Rehearsals: Sundays after worship Upstairs rehearsal room

Our Youth Bells and Youth Ensemble are thriving, and it's exciting to see young musicians so engaged and enthusiastic. Youth Bells offers a hands-on introduction to music through rhythm and teamwork, while the Youth Ensemble welcomes students who play band or orchestral instruments. Both groups play regularly in worship and are always open to new participants.

Any young person interested in music is encouraged to check it out.

🎧 Creating and Sharing Music Beyond Sunday Morning

This year, the music ministry is expanding opportunities beyond the worship service.

Lenten Recording Project

The choir will be recording music for Lent. We'll be joined by a few special guest musicians, and additional singers are welcome to take part. This project-based opportunity allows participants to prepare music ahead of time and contribute meaningfully without a long-term commitment. Guests and community members are welcome.



Voices & Storytelling: **Weekly Devotional Recordings**

We have launched a new recorded devotional series that will be shared throughout the year. Each devotional is a brief, two-minute reading, and all materials are provided—participants simply read.

There are 52 readings available, and we are actively seeking volunteers. Recordings will typically take place on the **first Sunday of each month immediately following worship**. No prior experience is needed, and guidance is provided throughout the process.

This is a wonderful way to serve through the spoken word and share your voice in the life of the church.

Hospitality & Connection: **Host a Hymn Sing**

Many new families have joined our church, and hosting a Hymn Sing is a simple, joyful way to connect. If you've ever thought about inviting people over but weren't sure what to do, this is a perfect solution.

You provide the hospitality and invite 6–10 people; we take care of the rest (including the instruments, if needed) . We'll share a few hymns—old and new—enjoy good conversation, and build fellowship in a relaxed, welcoming setting. No musical expertise is required, and invitations can be provided.

If you're interested in hosting, see me to schedule your event.



Supporting Worship: **Sound & Broadcast Ministry**

Music ministry also happens behind the scenes. Volunteers are needed to assist with sound and broadcasting for Sunday worship, helping extend our services to those who join us online or from home. No musical background is required—training is provided, and this is a meaningful way to support worship and outreach.

An Invitation

Music ministry at FPC is not one thing—it has many paths, many voices, and many ways to participate. If any of these opportunities spark your interest, I would love to talk with you and help you find the right fit.

Please feel free to speak with me after worship or reach out during the week. I look forward to welcoming you into this vibrant and growing ministry.

Blessings,

John Cavicchio

Director of Music

Telephone: 732-558-7525

Email: cavicchiojohn@gmail.com



January 11th Worship Service

On January 11th, we welcomed Ruling Elder Sean Starke into the pulpit. Sean is an ordained Ruling Elder in the PCUSA; he serves on Commission on Ministry for the Presbytery of the Coastlands. A life-long NJ resident, Sean and his wife live in Middletown and worship at the Presbyterian Church of Shrewsbury. Sean was joined by liturgist Sandra Whitehill as we celebrated our Sunday worship service.



*The Freehold Youth Ensemble with John Cavicchio
January 11, 2026*

January 18th Worship Service

On January 18th, we welcomed Rev. Linda Goeddel into the pulpit. Rev. Goeddel is retired after serving as a Church Educator and most recently as a Chaplain for a senior community. She serves on the Council for the Presbytery of the Coastlands and on the Ministry Resources Committee. Linda and her husband, Tom, grew up in the Midwest, but have lived in Fair Haven for more than 40 years. They worship at the Rumson Presbyterian Church.

Rev. Goeddel was joined by liturgist Skip Schmidt as we celebrated our Sunday worship service.



Sandra and Sean Starke - January 11, 2026

We also welcomed guest musicians Matthew DeMarco and the Freehold Youth Ensemble.



*Matthew DeMarco with the Chancel Choir
January 11, 2026*



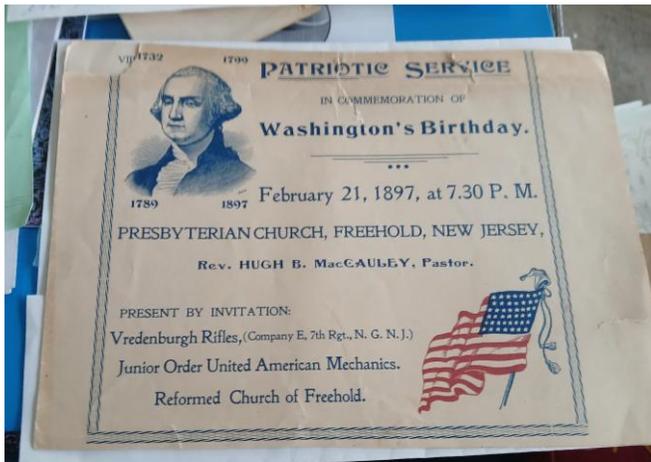
Skip and Rev. Linda Goeddel - January 18, 2026

Historic Records Committee

Happy Anniversary to us!

February is the month to celebrate our Anniversary and other seasonal events. Here are some things everyone should check out.

An original program from the George Washington birthday celebration in 1897 was found when my mom and I were sorting through some 'church papers.' What an exciting find! We'll also have pictures from that event.



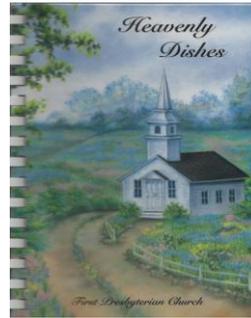
1897 George Washington Birthday Celebration Program

In our display case, you'll find pictures and programs from our Anniversary celebrations from various years. Nearby, check out the timeline of our history from the earliest beginnings to the present.

If you have any questions regarding the display case or are interested in joining the Historic Records committee, please speak with Susan Croft or Barbara Lloyd. Thanks for your support!

Susan Croft

Recipe Corner



In 2011, Presbyterian Women published **Heavenly Dishes**, a cookbook dedicated to all FPC members past and present who so generously supported PW over the years.

Here, we'll look to share a recipe or two from that cookbook. This month we shine the recipe spotlight on *Rock Cornish Game Hens With Red Raisin Sauce*. Enjoy!

ROCK CORNISH GAME HENS WITH RED RAISIN SAUCE

Rock Cornish Game Hens

- | | |
|---------------------------------------|-----------------------------------|
| 4 (1 lb.) Rock Cornish hens | ½ c. chicken broth |
| salt and pepper | 6 T. butter |
| 2 c. seasoned croutons | 1 tsp. sugar |
| ½ c. wheat germ | 1 (16 oz.) jar spiced crabapples, |
| ½ c. finely chopped celery and leaves | drained, for garnish |

Preheat oven to 425°. Lightly sprinkle body cavity of hens with salt and pepper. Twist wing tips up and back under each hen, tucking neck skin under wings to secure. In large bowl, combine croutons, wheat germ, celery, chicken broth, 2 tablespoons melted butter, sugar, ½ teaspoon salt, and ¼ teaspoon pepper; lightly spoon into cavity of each hen. With string, tie legs of each hen together with tail to close body cavity. Brush hens generously with some melted butter; place breast side up on rack in shallow, open roasting pan. Roast hens for 1 hour or until a leg moves easily up and down, brushing occasionally with melted butter. During last 15 minutes of roasting, cut string around legs to allow heat to penetrate, then brush hens generously with sauce. Finish roasting. Serve hens garnished with crabapples or garnish of your choice. Pass remaining sauce in a small bowl.

Red Raisin Sauce

- | | |
|----------------------------------|-------------|
| 1 (10 oz.) jar red currant jelly | ¼ c. butter |
| ½ c. golden raisins | |

While hens are roasting, in medium saucepan over medium-low heat, cook jelly, raisins, and butter stirring until well blended and hot.

Susan Craig



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**Stay Connected with
First Presbyterian Church of Freehold!**

Want to stay up to date with the life of our church? "Liking" our Facebook page is a simple way to stay informed, inspired, and connected all week long!

When you follow us on Facebook, you'll enjoy:

- ✔ **Photos** from recent church events and activities
- ✔ **Reminders** about upcoming services and special programs
- ✔ **Clips** from worship services and sermons
- ✔ **Music highlights** from our talented musicians
- ✔ A chance to **connect** with your church family throughout the week

How to Like Our Page:

1. **Open Facebook** on your phone or computer
2. **Search for:** *First Presbyterian Church of Freehold*
3. **Click on our church's name** in the search results
4. Click the **"Like"** button (thumbs up icon) near the top of the page
5. Click **"Follow"** to see our updates in your News Feed

Let's grow our online community and share the love and life of our church with each other - like us today!

[Word Search Puzzle](#)



Welcome to our word search puzzle! Take a moment to read and reflect on the passage and then find the words on the list below the puzzle. The solution will be in the next newsletter. Enjoy!

Isaiah 43:18-19

- 18** Do not remember the former things
or consider the things of old.
- 19** I am about to do a new thing;
now it springs forth; do you not perceive it?
I will make a way in the wilderness
and rivers in the desert.

S	A	D	G	J	D	E	S	E	R	T	N
P	E	R	C	E	I	V	E	M	Q	E	T
R	W	W	U	Z	C	I	B	E	W	G	I
I	O	H	C	K	A	R	L	P	A	E	S
N	N	K	O	O	V	P	S	B	U	D	S
G	E	M	N	I	S	T	R	A	Z	R	E
S	N	D	S	W	L	Q	E	G	W	N	N
F	L	B	I	P	E	A	V	T	O	A	R
O	Y	X	D	I	G	L	I	R	L	P	E
R	E	M	E	M	B	E	R	E	S	K	D
T	A	E	R	N	J	V	O	M	R	O	L
H	N	Y	O	F	A	P	M	R	N	E	I
M	A	K	E	A	W	A	Y	O	T	M	W
T	Q	S	G	N	I	H	T	F	Y	A	N

- | | |
|----------|---------------|
| DO NOT | NOW |
| REMEMBER | SPRINGS FORTH |
| FORMER | PERCEIVE |
| THINGS | MAKE A WAY |
| CONSIDER | WILDERNESS |
| OLD | RIVERS |
| NEW | DESERT |

FIRST PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH OF FREEHOLD

SESSION

Bill Canning

Finance Commission

Tammy Ciok

Worship Commission

Berwin Gutformsen

Clerk of Session

Julie Heinsohn

Personnel Commission

Vera Musser

Christian Education

Susan Pascullo

Worship Commission

Chris Pilla

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Chuck Stapp

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