



February 2025

# The Presbyterian

## PROPERTY MATTERS

On Wednesday, January 22<sup>nd</sup>, I had another one of those things-they-don't-teach-you-in-seminary events: I got to appear before the Planning Commission of the Borough of Freehold and testify on behalf of First Presbyterian Church. This was part of the process to get a permit to begin the work of repaving the church's parking lot. The end result was a mixed verdict. More on that, later.

I wasn't alone at the meeting. Several members of the Property Commission were there, including Scott Fox, Berwin Guttormsen, Larry Moran, and Chris Pilla. We were also joined by our attorney, Vincent Halleran, and our engineer, Brian Sive. I figured I would go, wear my collar, and lend moral support. It's not like I'm a lawyer or an engineer, or even someone who knows about construction. However, I'm a lot more comfortable at public speaking than the other members of the Property Commission, so I spoke on behalf of the church.

At issue is a 1965 law that stipulates that houses of worship must be situated on at least three acres of property. The lot that the church occupies is approximately 1.4 acres. Neither FPC nor most of the churches in the Borough are in compliance with the 1965 law, as most of these churches were built long before these zoning laws were enacted. That means that if we want to make major improvements to the property, we have to obtain a variance to the law. In other words, we're allowed to do maintenance on our property, but if we want to build

something new, then we have to get a variance from the Planning Commission.

The Property Commission submitted the plans for our parking lot to the Borough several months ago. In those plans, we added two parking spaces to the lot and we wanted to build a cement pad, next to the parking lot, so that we could move the dumpster out of the parking lot and closer to the street. This would allow our trash hauler to use a different parking apron and pick up the garbage without entering our parking lot. This is where things get complicated.

After we submitted the plans for the parking lot to the Borough, the Borough ruled that our plans constituted new construction, rather than maintenance. That meant that we would have to have a public hearing; all of our neighbors were invited to attend and offer their feedback on the plans. Unsurprisingly, several of our neighbors complained about the dumpster—they objected to having it right there on Brinckerhoff.

In addition to those complaints, the attorney for the Borough asked us if we owned the adjacent lot on Brinckerhoff. (Honestly, I was surprised he didn't already know that we own it.) I told him we did. The Brinckerhoff lot is a little over an acre, and combined, the lots are about 2.5 acres. If we were to merge the two lots, we would be closer to compliance with the 1965 law. The Borough's attorney stated that, by law, the two lots were already merged. Our attorney and engineer did not agree with that interpretation of the law.

The Planning Commission granted FPC conditional approval for the request for a variance. The first condition was to move the dumpster away from the curb, somewhere out of sight. (The Property Commission is planning to move it behind the CE building.) We agreed to that condition. We want to be good neighbors. The second condition is that we merge the two lots. The members of the Property Commission were squarely against this condition.

Our finances at FPC are strong—we're in the best financial position that we've been in for a generation, at least. While our offerings are not as strong as they used to be, we've made up for that with our rental income. We're doing really well, right now. But there may come a day when we might consider selling the Brinckerhoff lot.

If we were to merge the two lots, and then later, want to sell the Brinckerhoff lot, we would have to go back before the Planning Commission to get a variance to allow us to subdivide the lot before we could sell it. What a nightmare!

In my first couple years in ministry, I used to joke with my colleagues that we didn't really need all those theology courses in seminary. What we really needed was a course in HVAC systems, and plumbing, and roof repairs. Now I'm thinking that a course in real estate law might be a good idea.

Our next step is to consult with our attorney and determine if we're going to fight the Borough's attorney. This is very frustrating and it may take some time. We will keep you updated on the process.

At the same time, this whole situation is a reminder to me that ministry is so much more than preaching and leading Bible studies. Ministry is also the work of holding open this physical space for worship and outreach to the community. Ministry is standing with the saints of this congregation who do the work of keeping this space open. And sometimes, ministry is stepping in and speaking for those whose gifts are in that work, rather than speaking about that work. I am frustrated that the attorney for the Planning Commission interpreted the law in a way that makes things more difficult for us. At the same time, I'm filled with gratitude for all the helpers in this congregation. This task is way bigger than we realized; we can't accomplish this task without the talents, the time, and the treasure of so many members of this congregation. I am thankful for each and every one of you!

Grace & Peace,



Pastor Alan

*To each is given  
the manifestation of the Spirit  
for the common good.*

*1 Corinthians 12:7*

FIRST PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH OF FREEHOLD

SESSION

**Bill Canning**  
Finance Commission

**Berwin Guttormsen**  
Clerk of Session

**Julie Heinsohn**  
Personnel Commission

**Carol Matino**  
Worship Commission

**Larry Moran**  
Property Commission

**Vera Musser**  
Christian Education

**Susan Pascullo**  
Worship Commission

**Chuck Stapp**  
Mission/Outreach Commission

**Sandra Whitehill**  
Mission/Outreach Commission  
Nominating Commission



BOARD OF DEACONS

**Judi Cavicchio**

**Lenora Chu**

**Robin Fox**

**Peggy Guttormsen**

**Barbara Jean Keune**

**Jean Pennett**

**Marie Schlechtweg**

**Michele Williams**

FIRST PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH OF FREEHOLD

2025 HOLIDAY SCHEDULE

Wednesday, January 1<sup>st</sup>  
*New Year's Day*

Monday, January 20<sup>th</sup>  
*Martin Luther King, Jr. Day*

Monday, February 17<sup>th</sup>  
*Presidents' Day*

Monday, April 21<sup>st</sup>  
*Easter Monday*

Monday, May 26<sup>th</sup>  
*Memorial Day*

Friday, July 4<sup>th</sup>  
*Independence Day*

Monday, September 1<sup>st</sup>  
*Labor Day*

Tuesday, November 11<sup>th</sup>  
*Veterans Day*

Thursday, November 27<sup>th</sup>  
*Thanksgiving Day*

Friday, November 28<sup>th</sup>  
*Day after Thanksgiving*

Thursday, December 25<sup>th</sup>  
*Christmas Day*

The church office will be closed on the aforementioned holiday dates.

Church staff will be working remotely 12/26, 12/29 to 12/31 and 01/02/26.

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**Church Office**

**Telephone: 732-462-0234**

**Email: [fpcsecretary2@gmail.com](mailto:fpcsecretary2@gmail.com)**

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CALENDAR NOTES



**Please join us on Sunday, February 9<sup>th</sup> following worship for our next coffee hour.**

*Coffee hour is a wonderful opportunity to catch up with your church family; to spend time with old friends and get to know some new ones. Coffee hour is monthly on the second Sunday following worship. We look forward to seeing you there!*

**Sunday School Calendar:**

There will be no Sunday School classes held on **Sunday, February 16<sup>th</sup>**, due to the Presidents' Day holiday.

**Church Office:**

The church office will be closed **Monday, February 17<sup>th</sup>** for Presidents' Day.

**Book Club:**

The FPC Book Club meets the first Monday of each month from September to June at 10:00 AM in Room A/B. **The next meeting will be on March 3<sup>rd</sup>** and the book we'll be discussing is *The Women* by Kristin Hannah. Please come join us! If you have any questions, please email Robin Fox at [Beachwalker127@yahoo.com](mailto:Beachwalker127@yahoo.com).

2025 COMMUNION DATES



- January 5<sup>th</sup>**
- February 2<sup>nd</sup>**
- March 2<sup>nd</sup>**
- April 6<sup>th</sup>**
- May 4<sup>th</sup>**
- June 1<sup>st</sup>**
- July 6<sup>th</sup>**
- August 3<sup>rd</sup>**
- September 7<sup>th</sup>**
- October 5<sup>th</sup>**
- November 2<sup>nd</sup>**
- December 7<sup>th</sup>**



HELP WANTED

**Grant Writer:**

The church is looking for someone in the congregation (or maybe outside) who is familiar with searching for, and filling out applications for grants that the church may be eligible for.

If you feel that you can help us with this, or if you know someone else who can, please contact Larry Moran and let him know.

**FROM MISSION/OUTREACH**



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 generosity and support.



**Gifts of Women Sunday**

On March 16<sup>th</sup>, 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!



**One Great Hour of Sharing**

April 13<sup>th</sup> is when we observe **Palm Sunday** this year. It's a very joyful start to Holy Week in the Christian calendar, as the more somber events to the Last Supper, the arrest, crucifixion and death of Jesus unfold, culminating in Easter's triumph.

So, it's on Palm Sunday that we hold a special second collection for One Great Hour of Sharing.

It's a huge event that aims to receive funds for the Church to use during the year to physically deal with issues of hunger, disasters, and specific needs of the poor.



Please give generously; if we all give what we can, it adds up to a lot.



**Thankful for...**

For meeting to worship and sing and ring bells together as a church, even when warm beds tempt us to linger in them on these cold Sunday mornings. And for watching on-line as a great Plan B.

We are so grateful for the various groups of bakers and coffee makers who provide refreshments after worship on the second Sunday of each month. Come and make new friends over a cup of tea or coffee; you belong here!

*I give you a new commandment,  
that you love one another.  
Just as I have loved you,  
you also should love one another.*  
**John 13:34**



SHARING FELLOWSHIP

Peggy Guttormsen recently visited with Ginny Yanchus at Preferred Care in Wall. A time for sharing God's love and grace.



*Ginny Yanchus  
January 14, 2025*

Fellowship. Sometimes it's conversation. Other times it's just listening or reading the Bible together and praying. These are some of the ways in which the Deacons share God's love and grace and reconnect homebound members with their church family.

If you would like to schedule a visit or home Communion, please contact the Deacons or Pastor Alan. You can also reach out to the church office for assistance.



HISTORIC RECORDS COMMITTEE



*February 2025 display case  
in the sanctuary*

February is FPC's anniversary month. One hundred and eighty-seven years! That's a lot of history and the theme of this month's display. There is also a photo of the 1897 Washington's Birthday celebration held in the sanctuary.

Please check out the display case in the back of the sanctuary. The committee changes the display each month or by the liturgical season.

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

## MUSIC MINISTRY NEWS

### **Special Sundays & A Call for Choir Members**

As we journey into the upcoming months, our church music ministry is preparing for several meaningful worship services filled with inspiring music.

#### **March 16 – Gifts of Women Sunday**

On this special Sunday, we celebrate the gifts and leadership of women in worship. We are delighted to have **Kay Hatch** serving as our organist and **Susan Croft** as our choir director for the service. Their talents and dedication will help lead us in a beautiful time of worship.

#### **April 27 – Special Choir Presentation**

Mark your calendars! On April 27, our choir will present **Mendelssohn's Hear My Prayer** during the morning worship service. This beloved choral masterpiece, featuring the timeless plea, "O for the wings of a dove," is sure to be a moving and uplifting experience for all who attend.



#### **A Call to Join the Choir!**

Do you love to sing? Have you considered lending your voice to our choir? We welcome singers of all skill levels, and now is the perfect time to join! Whether you've sung in a choir before or simply enjoy making a joyful noise, we would love to have you. Rehearsals are filled with fun,

fellowship, and the joy of making music together.

For more information or to get involved, please see John Cavicchio after worship or email him at [cavicchiojohn@gmail.com](mailto:cavicchiojohn@gmail.com).

Let's make a joyful noise together! 🎵

Blessings,

John Cavicchio  
Director of Music Ministry, FPC  
732-558-7525

## SUNDAY SCHOOL NOTES

### **Kindergarten through 12th Grade**

Classes are held in Rooms A/B and the nursery from 9:00 AM to 10:00 AM. Come join us on Sunday mornings!



The children play games and make craft projects about the Sunday lectionary reading. They cut out the Star Words and handed the stars out to the congregation at both the January 5<sup>th</sup> and January 12<sup>th</sup> worship services.

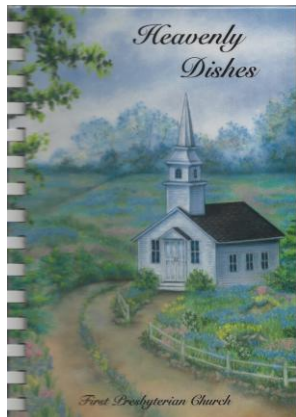
The children also enjoy playing the chimes to start the Sunday worship service and then with taking part in *A Time for Children*.

Parents, please let us know if your children will be in Sunday School so we can plan accordingly. Vera Musser can be reached at 732-685-3125 and Samantha Daesener at 732-547-2551.

**Growing in Faith Together**



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 **Chicken Fajita Soup**. Enjoy!

CHICKEN FAJITA SOUP

- 2 T. vegetable oil
- 1 lb. skinless, boneless chicken breasts, cut into strips
- 1 (1.27 oz.) pkt. fajita seasoning
- 1 sm. can chopped green chilis
- 1 red bell pepper, cut into thin strips
- 1 green bell pepper, cut into thin strips
- 1 poblano pepper, cut into thin strips
- 1 lg. onion, cut into thin strips
- 1 (14.5 oz.) can fire roasted diced tomatoes
- 1 (15 oz.) can seasoned black beans
- 2 (14 oz.) cans chicken broth
- 1 dash hot sauce
- salt and pepper to taste

Heat oil in a large soup pot over medium heat. Place chicken in the hot oil; cook, stirring only occasionally, until brown, about 10 minutes. Sprinkle fajita seasoning over the browned chicken and stir well to coat. Add the red and green bell pepper, poblano pepper, and onion to the seasoned chicken. Stir and cook over medium heat until the vegetables are soft, about 10 minutes. Pour the fire roasted tomatoes, green chilis, black beans, and chicken broth into the pot with the chicken and vegetables. Bring the soup to a boil over high heat, then reduce the heat to medium-low, and simmer, uncovered, for 30 minutes, stirring occasionally. Season the soup with hot sauce, salt, and pepper to taste before serving.

*Dona D'Auria*

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!

Romans 12:4-8

<sup>4</sup> For as in one body we have many members and not all the members have the same function, <sup>5</sup> so we, who are many, are one body in Christ, and individually we are members one of another.

<sup>6</sup> We have gifts that differ according to the grace given to us: prophecy, in proportion to faith; <sup>7</sup> ministry, in ministering; the teacher, in teaching; <sup>8</sup> the encourager, in encouragement; the giver, in sincerity; the leader, in diligence; the compassionate, in cheerfulness.



- ONE BODY
- MANY MEMBERS
- CHRIST
- GIFTS
- GRACE
- MINISTERING
- TEACHING
- FAITH
- SINCERITY
- CHEERFULNESS

January 2025 Puzzle Solution

