



Dear Friends,

Among the countless Christmas legends, there is one involving a Christmas spider. According to this legend, when Joseph was warned in a dream to flee from King Herod and the massacre which he intended to inflict upon the children of Bethlehem, several animals from the manger decided to accompany the Holy Family on their journey. Each of the animals was determined to protect the baby Jesus, and each felt sure his or her talents would prove invaluable in that task. There happened to be a spider who wanted to come. Yet none of the other animals felt the spider would be helpful. After all, she was only a tiny insect. She had no keen ears or sharp teeth, no strong bones and no claws whatsoever. However, the spider persistently pleaded to be included, until at last the other animals agreed she could join them, provided she did not get in the way.

Unfortunately, as the journey unfolded, all the other supposedly brave animals either were frightened off or else were distracted. They ended up returning home or embarking on a more appealing adventure of their own. With Herod's troops on the march, and with the Holy Family growing more and more tired, Joseph and Mary had little choice but to try and hide. Finding a small and inconspicuous cave, they huddled inside, seeking shelter and rest, with the donkey and the spider their only remaining companions. Holding Jesus in her arms, Mary gently rocked him to sleep, and, for a while, it appeared everything would be fine. The only immediate problem was the chill in the air. Seeking to be of help in some small way, the spider carefully wove a web over the opening of the cave to try to keep the baby warm.

The spider had just finished her weaving when suddenly voices were heard outside the cave. The soldiers had caught up with the Holy Family, and they were diligently searching the entire area. When they came to the cave where the Holy Family was hidden, both Mary and Joseph held their breath, certain their doom was upon them. Yet the soldiers passed by the cave. One soldier said it was a waste of time to search the cave, since anyone who had entered the cave would have broken the spider's web over the opening. Thus, it was that seemingly insignificant spider who saved the day; and the legend goes on to give a reason why we hang tinsel on our Christmas trees...to remind us of the silver strands of the web which the little spider wove...and to remind us that no act of kindness, no act of courage, no act through which we seek peace with justice is ever wasted.

The legend also reminds me that someone once suggested we need not only to keep Christ in Christmas but also, believe it or not, to keep Herod in Christmas. For Herod like Pharaoh before him, worships the love of power rather than the power of love. And in turn Herod reminds us that we do not live in an ideal world but one where we often face both the threat and the destructive reality of violence. For those who try to imitate Christ, to be alive in Him...to be alive in the adventure the Christ Child calls us to...is to side with all those who are vulnerable, even as the Christ Child was vulnerable. It is to live in defiance of those who see the vulnerable as expendable. It is to refuse to bow to any and every Herod and to any and every ruthless regime. It is instead to kneel in the manger before the Prince of Peace and then to go out to weave whatever webs we can as we continue to commit ourselves to acting justly, loving tenderly, and walking humbly with God

Have a Blessed Advent and Christmas,

Pastor Jim

Mark Your Calendar

Facebook Devotions 8:30am.....Dec 2
 Facebook Devotions 8:30 am/Advent Brown Bag 11:30.....Dec 3
 Facebook Live 10:30 am.....Dec 4
 Facebook Devotions 8:30am/.....Dec 5
 Needles & Pins 10:00 am.....Dec 6
 Church School/Bible Study 9:00am
 Worship/Facebook Live 10:30 am/.....Dec 7
 Facebook Devotions 8:30am.....Dec 9
 Facebook Devotions 8:30am/Brown Bag Bible 11:30 am.....Dec 10
 Facebook Devotions 8:30am.....Dec 11
 Facebook Devotions 8:30am.....Dec 12
 Church School/Bible Study 9:00amWorship/White Gift
 Facebook Live 10:30am/.....Dec 14
 NO Facebook Devotions unless announced..... Dec 16-19
 Church School/Bible 9:00 am
 Worship/ Facebook Live 10:30 am/Cantata.....Dec 21
 OFFICE CLOSED CHRISTMAS EVE.....Dec 24
 CHURCH OFFICE CLOSED CHRISTMAS.....Dec 25
 CHURCH OFFICE CLOSED.....Dec 26
 Worship/ Facebook Live 10:30 am.....Dec 28
 CHURCH OFFICE CLOSED HAPPY NEW YEAR!.....Jan 1
 CHURCH OFFICE CLOSED.....Jan 2
 Facebook Devotions will resume January 6, 2026

Christmas Joy Offering - December 2025

Prepare the Way – Isaiah 40

*Listen! It's the voice of someone shouting,
 "Clear the way through the wilderness for the Lord!*

Make a straight highway through the wasteland for our God!"

your impact

The Christmas Joy Offering opens doors that lead to relief for church workers and their families when emergency needs arise and develops our future leaders at Presbyterian-related schools and colleges equipping communities of color

Please consider giving a donation to the Christmas Joy Offering.

Your contribution can make a difference. Your contribution will be matched by the Kathleen Smith Fund! Checks should be made payable to "First Presbyterian Church" with "Christmas Joy" in the Memo.

Thank you,
 The Stewardship Committee

First Presbyterian Church

Phone 908-689-2547 Fax 908-689-7911
 Web site: www.washingtonfpc.org

Pastor, James Scovell;
 Directors of Music, Peter & Julie Stevenson;
 Administrative Assistants Kerri Caldaro
 Church School Coordinator, Jean Bowers.
 Worship: 10:30 a.m.

The January issue will be published on the December 31st. The deadline is December 26th. Please submit articles to the church office or by email to: office@washingtonfpc.com





Jim and I would like to offer many thanks to our church family for their prayers and cards given upon the loss of her mother Geri Ross.
Sincerely,
Jim & Gail.



I am very thankful for my church family. The committees that do so much. The choir, Peter & Julie, the bells, Pastor Jim, Gail who brings our service to people at home. To our custodian who keeps our church clean and to Kerri who brings everything together. Thank you God for your many blessings.
Dawn Keenan.



Prayer: Merciful Savior, you loved the world so much that you gave your all...your very life...for us. We often receive your wonderful gift imperfectly, forgetting the abundance of it, and living instead in poverty of spirit. As we enter into the discipline of prayer, help us to understand that the healing of mind, body, and spirit, comes only by your grace and made known through the prayers of the faithful. Let us claim your wonderful promise, even now as we pray for the stranger, friend, and loved one.

Those ill or recuperating at home: Vince Smith, Stan Kubbishun, Peggy Westlake, Joan Miller, Jim Vlossak, Janet Young, Nancy Vlossak, Vicki Morgan, Eleanore Jensen, Doug Foley. Kerry & Lynn Webb, Charlene Jones, Linda Walsh, Joyce Parsons, Ronald & Joan Weber, Michael Housman, DJ Pesaniello, Tempe Schramm, Grace Murphy.

Relatives of church members: Lee Ann Kubbishun's brother in-law Harvey Hendershot, Penny Atkinson's brother David Jayne, Pauline Albrecht's cousins Kathy & Bill, Harold Teabo, Judy Ours cousin Aurelius Newbold, Jim Morgan, Joe Kresser's brother John, Charlie Kugelmeyer, John & Elaine Boreman's daughter & son in law Jill & Ross Duncan, Joe Caldaro, Peggy Westlake's son-in-law Travis Jablonski, Barbara Miller's daughter in-law Julie, Patricia Handlos's great nephew Bear Shaw, Barbara Miller's cousin Kayla Norvis, Robert Stacie Ullrich's dad, Dorothy Thoms son Don, Bob Pesaniello, Pauline Albrecht's cousin Pete Lekousis, Laura Housman's mother Betty Machauer, Fred Kulick's brother in-law Jon, Tami Phelps cousin Jimmy, Joan Miller's sister in-law, Nancy Vlossak's niece, Vicki Tensfeldt's mother & niece; Kerri Caldaro's mom & dad Gail & Fred Mosher.

Those in care centers: Connie Allen, Joan Vasko, Bob Pesaniello..

Friends of the church: Kerri Caldaro's friends Mary Mason & Jason Leonard, Pat Hawkins sister Susan and her husband John, Stuart Ours friend Don Walker, Diane Van Dongen and family, Grace Sweet, Fred & Karen Graf's friend Renee Wise, Karissa Caldaro's friend Annabelle, Carol Kain's friend John Vybiha. Joe Groff friend of Doug & Jolene Foley, Melinda Velez friend of Don Johnson, Gale Soler & Ellen Gulick friends of Joan Miller, Barbara Miller's friend Patrick O'Malley, Carol Novak, and Vlossak family's friend Hallie.

Also, pray for our servicemen and women and their families: Albrecht's nephew Captain Kyle Mogensen, Vimp Smith's grandson Cory, Stephanie Farley's nephew John, Kathy Perry's nephew Jimmy, Linda Darwin's friend Sean Devine.



December 3

Jean Hanemma
Lee Ann Kunbbishun

December 5

Kendall Kubbishun

December 6

Stuart Ours

December 7

Jean Bowers

December 8

Dick Strusz

December 8

Lynn Webb

December 10

Roberta Kugelmeyer

December 15

Amanda Phelps

December 18

Karissa Caldaro

December 21

Bonnie Byerlee

December 28

Stephanie Farley
John Hildebrant



DECEMBER 2025

Here we are again...approaching ADVENT. We are on the cusp of a very busy season with many fun things to look forward to, but let's not get ahead of ourselves! Enjoy the moment. Experience ADVENT, the season of waiting. This is a time to prepare our hearts anew to make room for Jesus as the centerpiece of our lives.

I have probably mentioned this to you in previous years, but a favorite book of mine at this time of year is **WINTERING** by Katherine May. I dusted off my copy this morning and will begin reading it once again. It is a meditation on the power of rest and retreat in difficult times (and aren't these "difficult times"?). Winter approaches as our days get shorter and shorter. This year, our **20th Annual Christmas Cantata** will be presented in worship on December 21 which happens to be the Winter Solstice. How fitting this is. We can celebrate the joy of Christmas on the shortest, darkest day of the year!

The Christmas season is not always a joyful time for everyone. Each person you meet is going through something...processing grief, loss, loneliness, financial instability, health issues, relationship problems, etc. There is no shortage of pain and suffering in our world! As Christians, we proclaim that Jesus is the light of the world. Being kind to one another is perhaps the best way to share God's love and light.

I invite you to join me in the sanctuary on Tuesday, December 23 at 11:00 a.m. for a **BLUE CHRISTMAS** service. This is a time for reflection through music, readings and prayer where we acknowledge the "blue" feelings we may experience at this time of year. And, the very next day, on December 24 at 9:00 p.m. it is my hope that you will also join us for **Christmas Eve** worship where we celebrate the birth of Christ with scripture and carols, candles and choirs, bells and organ, singing and joy! *"The Light shines in the darkness and the darkness has not overcome it."* (John 1:5)

So we do have much to look forward to but please take time to experience the moment and acknowledge your feelings. Be kind to one another. Enjoy the music of the season. Make soup. Wear those cozy slippers and hunker down with a fleece blanket. Prioritize restorative sleep. Read. Write in a journal. Burn candles at home and cook your favorite comfort foods. Drink tea. Gather with friends and family. Open your heart once again to the love of God.

Peace,
Julie Stevenson

20th ANNUAL CHRISTMAS CANTATA
SUNDAY, DECEMBER 21
10:30 worship

Mark your calendars and invite your friends and neighbors to join our enhanced choir and orchestra in worship on December 21 for A CELEBRATION OF CAROLS by Joseph Martin, under the direction of Peter Stevenson.

Even though Thanksgiving is still on the horizon, the stores are filling up with Christmas decorations already! I believe that it is important to soak in each day as it arrives and celebrate the moment (which I realize is very counter culture!) but, knowing how hectic the Christmas season can become, I also think it is important to mark up your calendar in advance so you don't miss out on the blessings yet to come.

In the words of Joseph Martin:

"As Advent approaches, we begin to decorate our days with sights and songs of this blessed season and prepare our hearts for the warming candle of Christ's birth. With reverence we take from the closets of our heart the special memories of

Christmases past and place them thoughtfully in our homes like sacred relics. Our places of worship reverberate with the time-honored carols of our faith and we remember that we are loved. As you hear and sing along on the celebration of carols, may you be reminded of Christ's mercy and grace. And as you hear the timeless story, may you grasp hope with all of your heart and experience the rich abundance that is the true gift of the season. May joy and peace surround you."

Julie



FIRST PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH

40 East Church Street

Washington, NJ

Enhanced Choir and Orchestra presents:

20th ANNUAL CHRISTMAS CANTATA

Sunday, December 21, 2025

10:30 A.M.

All are welcome!

Come for the music!

Come for the door prizes!

Come for the free luncheon!

Come to be blessed this Christmas season with

A CELEBRATION OF CAROLS

By Joseph Martin

Under the direction of Peter Stevenson



All Church Christmas Card Tree

*Wish a joyous Merry
Christmas to everyone with
just 1 card!*



*Save a stamp &
join the fun
starting Nov. 30*

Bring a card with your holiday
message/signature to church & the
Membership Committee will hang it on the tree!

Be sure to look at the tree each Sunday to read
the holiday messages from members
and to admire the beautiful cards!



A festive poster for a holiday concert. The background is a deep red with a dense pattern of white, sparkling confetti. At the top, the text "HACKETTSTOWN COMMUNITY BAND" is written in a white, sans-serif font. To the left of this text is a white eighth note, and to the right is a large, stylized white treble clef. Below the band's name, the words "Holiday Concert" are written in a large, elegant, white cursive script. Underneath that, the phrase "Music of the season and more!" is written in a smaller, white, italicized sans-serif font. The date and time, "December 14, 2025" and "3:00 pm", are centered in a white sans-serif font. To the left of the venue information is a white circle containing the word "FREE!". The venue details, "First Presbyterian Church", "40 E. Church St.", and "Washington, NJ", are listed in white sans-serif font. At the bottom of the poster, there is a white rectangular box containing two circular logos and a line of text. The left logo is the Seal of the County of Warren, and the right logo is the Seal of the New Jersey State Council on the Arts. The text between them reads: "Made possible by funds from the New Jersey State Council on the Arts, a partner agency of the National Endowment for the Arts." The bottom of the poster features a white silhouette of a small house with a star on its roof, a white comet streaking across the sky, and a large white treble clef on the left. On the right side, there are several white musical notes, including a quarter note and an eighth note.

HACKETTSTOWN
COMMUNITY BAND

Holiday Concert

Music of the season and more!

December 14, 2025
3:00 pm

FREE! First Presbyterian Church
40 E. Church St.
Washington, NJ

Made possible by funds from the
New Jersey State Council on the Arts, a partner
agency of the National Endowment for the Arts.

BLUE CHRISTMAS

A time of reflection through music, readings and prayers

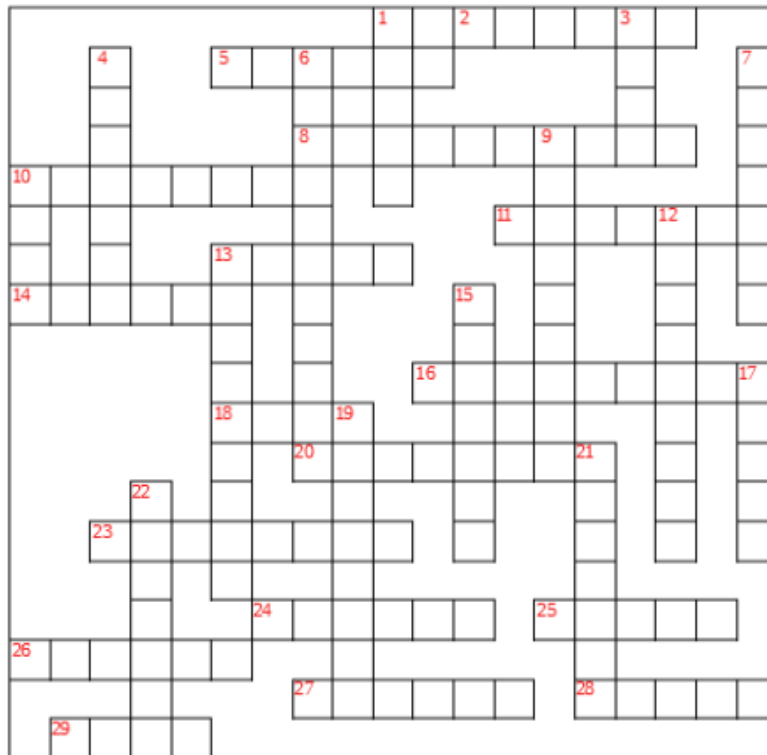
Tuesday, December 23
11:00 a.m. in the sanctuary

Followed by BYO lunch

Join Julie Stevenson for a time where we can acknowledge the “blue” feelings at Christmas time. For many who have lost a loved one, this is a time of sharp loneliness. For others, who have lost a relationship, health, a job, or had a financial setback it may be a time of pain, confusion, or fear. This is not a joyous season for everyone.



Christmas



Across

- 2 Famous snowman
- 5 Traditional dairy drink
- 8 An opener or a famous ballet
- 10 Hung over the fireplace
- 11 Carrot-nosed figure
- 13 Christmas song
- 14 Circular decoration
- 16 Dance of the ____ Fairy
- 18 Tree topper
- 20 Christmas month
- 23 Tree decoration
- 24 Santa's ride
- 25 Santa's helpers
- 26 ____ Bells
- 27 Green Christmas thief
- 28 Plant with red berries
- 29 The First Christmas, "The First ____"

Down

- 1 ____ Pole
- 3 Green Christmas decoration
- 4 Mean or miserly person
- 6 Treat used to build miniature houses
- 7 How Santa gets in
- 9 Striped sweet
- 10 Frozen rain
- 12 Christmas "kissing" plant
- 13 Gift giving holiday
- 15 Little ____ Boy
- 17 ____ Christmas; A season's greeting
- 19 Rudolph and friends
- 21 Lead reindeer
- 22 Kris ____

DECEMBER 2025

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
	1	2 Facebook Devotions 8:30 am Deacon's Meeting 7pm	3	4	5	6 Needles & Pins 10:00am
7 Church School/ Adult Bible Study 9:00am Worship/ Communion 10:30 am Facebook Live	8	9 Facebook Devotions 8:30 am PW 1:00 pm	10 Facebook Devotions 8:30 am Brown Bag Bible Study 11:30 am Carillonnaires 7:00-7:45 pm Chancel 7:45-8:45 pm	11 Facebook Devotions 8:30 am	12 Facebook Devotions 8:30 am	13
14 Church School/ Adult Bible Study 9:00am Worship 10:30 am Facebook Live WHITE GIFT SERVICE Hackettstown band concert 3pm	15 Pastor Jim may have Ju- ry duty this week. TBA	16 NO Facebook Devotions 8:30 am	17 NO Facebook Devotions 8:30 am Brown Bag Bible Study 11:30 am TBA Carillonnaires 7:00-7:45 pm Chancel 7:45-8:45 pm	18 NO Facebook Devotions 8:30 am Session 7pm	19 NO Facebook Devotions 8:30 am	20
21 Church School/ NO Adult Bible Study or Confirmation Class 9:00am Worship 10:30 am Facebook Live CANTATA	22	23 Facebook Devotions 8:30 am BLUE CHRISTMAS 11:00-11:45 AM BROWN BAG LUNCH	24 Christmas Eve Service 9:00pm CHURCH OFFICE CLOSED	25 MERRY CHRISTMAS CHURCH OFFICE CLOSED	26 CHURCH OFFICE CLOSED	27
28 NO Church School/NO Adult Bible Study 9:00am Worship 10:30 am Facebook Live	29	30	31 NEW YEARS EVE!	1 HAPPY NEW YEAR! CHURCH OFFICE CLOSED	2 CHURCH OFFICE CLOSED	3