

The First Presbyterian Church of Murrysville, PA Newsletter, November-December 2023

A note from our Pastor...

Greetings in the Name of the Lord,

November has been a busy but joyous month here at the First Presbyterian Church of Murrysville. While there have been many exciting programs and mission initiatives happening within the life of the church, nothing was as beautiful as the wedding that took place in our sanctuary on November 11. There are many memorable moments in a marriage ceremony – the sharing of wedding vows, the exchanging of the rings, the wedding prayer and blessing, and the presentation of the couple. The traditions continue following the worship service, including the bridal dance and the cutting of the wedding cake. After the reception, there remains the time-honored practice of the groom carrying the bride over the threshold of their home. This symbolic act reminds the couple that they are at a place of beginnings: transitioning from the loving relationships of their family to the onset of a new and exciting life together.

This newsletter is an example of crossing a threshold. In the following pages, you will see images and hear testimony of all the wonderful things that have happened at First Presbyterian in the month of November. It has been a month filled with blessings. Our volunteers, partnering with the Friends Kitchen served over 250 hot turkey dinners on November 1. The meals were served “take out” only, because we had to prepare for the Celebrate the Seasons sale 3 days later. The sale, which netted \$1,500, involved a quick turnaround, because 4 days later we offered up our facilities to the Westmoreland County Board of Elections on Election Day. Just 4 days later, we partnered once again with MC2 to provide the Great Coat Giveaway to our community. More than 200 winter coats were distributed free of charge to anyone in need. And, 8 days after this event, the Murrysville Cantata Choir presented a magnificent celebration of praise in our Sanctuary with 25 singers and a brass ensemble giving glory to God by remembering our veterans and giving thanks for God’s many blessings. It has been a season of Thanksgiving indeed.

It is fitting to give thanks to the Lord for the presence and power of God’s Spirit moving in our lives. And there is no better time to pause and reflect on God’s tender mercies and unfailing love than the month of November, when we recognize the Thanksgiving holiday. Thanksgiving is a time to remember - to look back with gratitude and express our thanks to the Lord. This newsletter bridges that gap – standing as a threshold between what has been and what is to come.

As you recall with fondness the blessings of November, let us look forward to the joy that awaits us as we step into December. Though the young couple received the love and grace of their family and friends on their wedding day, their true joy is to be found when they cross the threshold to a new beginning of life together. Even though we have been blessed in the past, the best is yet to come. There are new frontiers to be explored, lessons to be learned, and opportunities to grow.

The season of Advent is about beginnings. We can view it as a threshold, an entryway to be crossed opening ourselves up to a bright new future. We don’t just wait upon the coming of the King, but we enter into His presence with the excitement and enthusiasm of a young couple starting their new life together. Psalm 24 states, “Open up you ancient gates, yes, open wide the gates, and let the King of Glory in.” As we pass from a season of remembering those things that we are thankful for, let us embrace the new adventures that lie ahead. May we open up our ancient gates, swing them open wide, and allow the King of Glory into our lives in a great and glorious way.

Blessings my friends,

Rev. Ed

NOTES FROM OUR DIRECTOR OF MUSIC

November was an exciting time as we celebrated Thanksgiving and honored veterans at the “Patriotic Thanksgiving” concert by the choir that our church has hosted and sponsored since its beginning in 2018, the Murrysville Cantata Choir. This outreach of our church has ministered both to choristers who love to sing for the Lord and to people in the community who are blessed by experiencing this music as well as sacred choral works offered at Eastertime.

Looking ahead in December, we will observe the candle lighting of the Advent wreath to begin our worship services, with singing by the choir and congregation interspersed with readings that highlight a theme of the Advent season each week as we cycle through consideration of the hope, peace, love and joy gifted to us by our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

Christmas Eve falls on Sunday this year and we will celebrate with a single morning worship service at 10:00 a.m. that will include a service of Lessons and Carols as we hear the beloved Scripture passages of the Christmas story and sing along with the choir on a multitude of carols.

We return at 7:00 p.m. for our traditional Christmas Eve service as we celebrate with choir, instrumentalists and the singing of “Silent Night” by candlelight.

Come and worship together as we renew the old, old story and experience once again the joy of our Savior’s birth.

--Ruth Poscich

Our Deepest Sympathy to Bill Vance and his family on the death of Sharon; and to Charlie Frey and the Frey family on the death of long-time friend, Linda Raube.

Murrysville Presbyterian Preschool (MPP)....



Your preschool is bouncing along at full capacity and sharing in our community and church. Families are already asking about registration for next year! Thank you to those who supported the successful fundraising sales of Wax Mill Candles and Daughterty Pies. These funds will support facilities and initiatives to keep our school running at the level it has been.

The PreK classes visited Redstone Highlands for trick or treating then had a parade outside and sang songs. We thank the PreK teachers and aides for their willingness to deviate from the norm and bring joy to the residents at Redstone Highlands. The 3-Year-Old classes had a party then a parade at the church.

Our new and returning staff members are doing a wonderful job with our precious charges and continue to hone instructional and safety skills. The most recent safety initiative is the use of two-way radios so that the staff and office can seamlessly communicate when needed from anywhere on the property.

December 10 is Preschool Sunday! Students and their families are invited to attend the 11:00 service, and the children share a couple of songs that they have learned in school. Afterward, we have a Sandwich Sunday reception for everyone. We hope to see you there to welcome and support our preschool families.

Registration is open for current MPP families on Tuesday, December 12. Registration is open to the public on Tuesday, January 16.

Our Celebrations

The first **Election Day** at Laird Hall



The Westmoreland County Board of Elections approached us to request that district balloting be done in Laird Hall. It was approved by the Session and the votes were cast.

Celebrate the Season Sale Thank you to those who helped with the sale. About \$1,500 was raised.

Congratulations to **Michael Walker** who was presented Murrysville Rotary Club's Volunteer of the Year Award.



Overcoat Giveaway

Over 200 coats were given away. About half to local people And organizations. The rest to "Red Door" which distributes to the homeless in the downtown Pittsburgh area.

A wedding was held in our sanctuary uniting Anna Stephens and Bryce Lauer on November 12.



The Cantata Choir Concert The Cantata Choir and the Community Brass of Community United Methodist Church presented "A Patriotic Thanksgiving" on Sunday, November 19. The music was both hymns of Thanksgiving and hymns celebrating our Armed Forces.



Our church celebrated St. Andrews Sunday on November 26 with Bagpiper, Matt Peterson. There was also a reception with delicious Scottish shortbread and other treats.



Looking Ahead

Celebration of the season of Advent, beginning December 3.

Receiving the "Peace Light" that will be used throughout Advent and the Christmas season.



Preschool Sunday, December 10 at the 11:00 worship service. Followed by a Reception in the conference room.

The MC2 Volunteer Appreciation Dinner is on Sunday, December 10 at 2:00 p.m. at the Delmont Fire Hall.

The First Presbyterian Church Annual Family Christmas Dinner, December 10 at 5:00. Sign-up sheets are in the Narthex and in Laird Hall.



Santa rides with Meals on Wheels Drivers.

Christmas Eve Candlelight Service on December 24 at 7:00 p.m.

December and January Birthdays & Anniversaries

Birthdays

Kimberly Stephens	12/4	Jane Hilton	1/4
Chris Senor	12/6	Sue Shilling	1/6
David Stephens	12/9	Aaron Mejia	1/7
Garnet Gibbon	12/10	Andrew Mejia	1/7
Elizabeth Morrison	12/13	Barbara Sterrett	1/10
Nancy Podey	12/14	Edward Gray	1/11
Kathy Hall	12/15	Bill Ramaley	1/14
Nancy Pottmeyer	12/15	Carol Ney	1/15
Elizabeth Dillon	12/18	Robert Holtz	1/16
Bryce Lauer	12/23	Alexander Ramaley	1/16
Kelly Jo Florida	12/27	Ann Himelein	1/19
Patricia Manno	12/30	Loretta Stoltenberg	1/23
		Michael Walker	1/28
		Randy Staab	1/29

Anniversaries

Carl & Lynn Staab	12/7
Keith & Karen Langston	12/27
Dave and Ann Troxell	1/28

POINSETTIAS FOR CHRISTMAS



Poinsettia Plants will be ordered for Christmas Eve again this year. The choice is red or white. The florist will make every effort to honor color choices. The cost will be \$9.00/plant.

INFORMATION NEEDED:

Color: _____Red _____White

Given by: _____

Please write your dedication message exactly as you wish for it to appear in the Christmas Eve bulletin:

Please include a check made payable to First Presbyterian Church and mail, or place in the offering plate, or the office. Order on or before 12/10.
(There will be order forms in the 12/3 bulletin.)

What's Going On...

FRIENDS' KITCHEN is becoming a growing fellowship that is being embraced by the community. All are welcome to come to Laird Hall the first Wednesday of every month between 4:00 and 6:00 p.m. for food and fellowship.



The next dinner will be Wednesday, December 6.

COLLECTION SUNDAY

Collection Sunday for Loaves and Fishes and for the Westmoreland Food Bank (laundry detergent) is the 4th Sunday of each month. We will try to announce a targeted need request the week before, but all donations are appreciated. Please put any donations on the table in the Narthex. Thank you for your charitable gifts.



SUPPORT FOR THE WESTMORELAND COUNTY FOOD BANK

We have committed to delivering 100 bottles (or more) of laundry detergent for the Westmoreland Food Bank at Mother of Sorrows. The laundry detergent should be the 32-Load size. Thanks to the Murrysville Presbyterian Preschool and the kindness of our church family, we currently have 87 bottles.



MEALS ON WHEELS

Murrysville Meals on Wheels is a long-running ministry in the area. Their Mission is to provide a complete, nutritious and hot lunch plus a cold supper to people who have difficulty preparing meals for themselves. An all-volunteer force of over 200 make teams of cooks, shoppers, bakers, substitutes, and drivers / runners who deliver meals. This also gives personal contact, a quality missing from the day-to-day lives of many homebound people.