



CHURCH KEY NEWSLETTER

First Presbyterian Church
of Branchville, New Jersey



Volume 26, No. 2

February 2026

FEBRUARY AT A GLANCE:

8th – Souper Bowl of Caring Sunday

14th – Happy Valentines Day!

19th – Soup & Study Begins

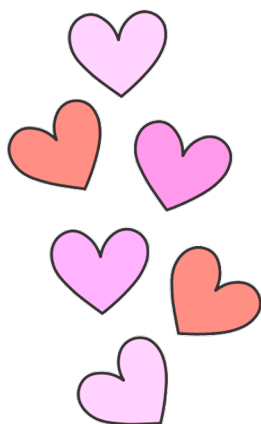
16th – Presidents' Day—Office Closed



Our Mission Statement:

"We Welcome all as we celebrate God's love."

INDEX	Pg.
Cover Page	1
Pastor Page	2
Prayer Concerns	3
Church News	4
Worship Notes	5
Session	6
Christian Ed	7
Mission	8
Birthdays/Recipe	9
Information/Calendar	10-11



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FIRST PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH
P.O. BOX 1
3-5 WANTAGE AVE.
BRANCHVILLE, NJ 07826



VOLUME 26, NO. 2

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Friends,

As I write this, I am preparing for my trip to Japan. Planning an international trip takes a lot of time and energy, as I have to shop, pack, book hotels, trains, and navigate a culture different than anything I've ever experienced before. While I am very excited for the trip, the preparation is taking a lot of time and energy.

We are fast approaching the next biggest season in the liturgical calendar: Lent. Lent begins February 18th, with the celebration of Ash Wednesday and runs for about 40 days, leading up to Maundy Thursday, Good Friday, and Easter Sunday.

Lent may not receive as much attention or excitement as Advent does, but it is no less important. It is a season of preparation, a season that encourages self-reflection and repentance so that we might be better prepared when we arrive on Easter Sunday, ready to greet the risen Christ.

While some people ignore Lent, others treat it as a season full of things they "have to do." I would like to flip the script a bit here. During Lent, we "get to" slow down and recenter on God. There is space for mourning, for doubting, for asking questions. There are times to come together with the church family that are not always present during ordinary time.

I'd like you all to try to see observing Lent as a privilege; an opportunity that only comes around once a year. Try and make the most of it. Come to Bible study. Join the choir or handbells. Take up your own personal practices of prayer and Bible readings. Make it a point to volunteer more. Reflect on your actions daily and pray for guidance in the days to come.

We are preparing for the journey to the cross. And like all journey's, it is one that is most fruitful when preparation is given.

Peace,
 Rev. Adrienne Poissant



Please offer prayers for these concerns that have been brought to our attention. They are collected each Sunday morning during the past month from the prayer concerns list used in worship.

- All those dealing with cancer
- Aaron & Ethan
- Amy & Family
- Amy L. & Molly fighting cancer
- Angel with cancer
- Barbara
- Bill Smith
- Bobby
- Bobby, Steff & Amy
- Brian
- Carol, Christine & Robert
- Carole
- Chuck
- College children away from home.
- David, Karen & Tyler
- Edie
- Eileen Diehl
- Hamish Hughes
- Joe with cancer
- John having surgery
- Joyce Gibbins
- Julie & Pat
- Karen Utter
- Karen, David & Tyler
- Kellie with brain tumor
- Kenny
- Kevin
- Linda having heart surgery.
- Mary, Alex & Ang
- Matt Velas
- Military
- Penny
- Ray in Hospice
- Reggie & Elaine Hocking
- Rita P.
- Ron & Katie Cain
- Ron Ostrander
- Royce
- Sara
- Susan
- The family & friends of Audrey Kimble on her passing.
- The family & friends of Carol Whalen on her passing.
- The family & friends of Joanna Zweig on her passing.
- The family & friends of Richard Martin on his passing.

- The Young Family on the passing of Nancy's Father.
- William Smith



- The birth of Sawyer Cole Grau, Son of Brian & Michalena Grau. Grandparents John & Jeanne Grau



Church News



In February we are encouraged to think more about the love in our lives. It's also a great time to remember that, as Christians, we have the privilege and power to share the great Love of Christ far beyond our own limited reach. The 2026 Per Capita is \$44.00 per person. Our Per Capita is used to pay administrative costs of Presbytery, Synod, and General Assembly, and also

goes toward denominational missions. It would help us meet our budget if you would use the Per Capita envelope, or note on a check "Per Capita," to help us offset that part of our church budget. So please, in February, as you celebrate the many gifts of Love, remember to Love Your Church with your Per Capita gift.

THE 2026 SOUPER BOWL OF CARING - offering will be Sunday, February 8th, the day of SUPER BOWL!! Donations this year will be added to our 1st Quarter Mission - Manna House and Harvest House. We will have "Soup Pots" in church that day where you can drop your donation to help feed the hungry folks in our community. Checks may be made out to First Presbyterian Church of Branchville with "Souper Bowl" on the memo line. You can also give through e-giving by checking the fund list for Souper



MANNA HOUSE \$5 SPAGHETTI DINNER - Indoor dining or take-out, First Presbyterian Church, 54 High St., Newton (Church Street Entrance), February 10th 5:00 to 6:30pm. Adults \$5.00, Children 5-12 \$3.00, and under 5 Free. (Included are Spaghetti, Salad, Bread, Cookies)

JOYS & CONCERNS OF OUR CHURCH — Please use the "Thinking of You" box on the coffee hour counter or Sanctuary where anyone can submit for The Deacons attention, a name, address (if not a member in the directory), and perhaps a reason (if appropriate.) You can also send information to Alycia who will relay it to the Deacons. We look forward to connecting with more of you because who doesn't enjoy getting a card in the mail?!



THE FOOD PANTRY is in need of peanut butter, jelly and ramen noodles. Please consider donating to this continuous need in our community.

Worship Notes

What's the deal with the affirmation of faith?

Some of you may have noticed that our affirmation of faith changes every single Sunday. Rest assured, there is a method to this madness!

The affirmation of faith follows the sermon and acts as a response to it. The congregation has heard the Scripture readings, and heard the pastor's own response to them and now it is their turn to react. By confessing their faith, the congregation links the message they have heard with their own faith and the traditions of the church.

The Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) has a *Book of Confessions*, which acts as Part I of the denomination's constitution. The *Book of Confessions* contains twelve documents, a mix of creeds, catechisms, and treatises meant to encapsulate what it means to be a Reformed Christian. The documents span the length of time from the third-fourth century AD to the 1980s and act as guides to better understand God, the Church, and Scripture.

So why do we recite different ones each Sunday? Because there are gems hidden in each of the twelve documents. The authors of each one had different experiences with God, with humankind, and different reasons for writing down their faith. By incorporating a variety of faith statements, we have the chance to see both the breadth and the depth of Presbyterian faith.

There might be affirmations that speak to you more than others. This is a good thing! Consider why some words are more moving to you than others and see if that says something about your own faith. I personally enjoy bouncing around in the *Book of Confessions*, touching on ancient church creeds, catechisms from the Reformation, and modern statements of faith regularly. If we say an ancient creed on Sunday, you can anticipate that the next will be something more modern.

If you are curious about *The Book of Confessions*, it is available on the PCUSA website to read for free! And if you aren't curious, then I hope you can at least appreciate the excerpts we read from in worship each Sunday!

1ST QUARTER MISSION



1ST QUARTER MISSION — HUNGER! Our first quarterly Local Mission once again focuses on helping to feed the hungry in two local “soup kitchens”: Manna House and Harvest House. Both of these long-running programs have adapted to the changes that come with time as they continue to provide a solid meal to those in need. Your donations will ensure the food and supplies that are needed will be available in order to serve our local population in need. Please help us continue to support these well-established organizations with a check made out to FPCB with “1st Quarterly Mission” in the memo line. If you are in the sanctuary, you can use the special envelopes in the pew. Your donations really make a difference!

JANUARY SESSION MEETING HIGHLIGHTS 1/12)

- All background checks are completed for Session and those members of the congregation who work with our children.
- Sexual Harassment Prevention training has been completed by all members of Session. A few non-Session members still need to complete their training.
- Session approved an Apportionment Payment to Presbytery for the year in the amount of \$7,084.
- Pastor Adrienne’s father is a fire prevention professional and will be walking the property with members of Session to inspect for any potential fire hazards.
- We will be hosting joint Ash Wednesday services with the Frankford Plains church.
- Committee Assignments were finalized:
 - Christian Ed: Donna Havelin
 - Communication: Mike Opilla
 - Fellowship: Sandy Carlisle
 - Finance: Patrick Murphy
 - Missions: Chris Williams
 - Music & Worship: Karen Opilla
 - Personnel: Mike Lutz
 - Property: Corbin Opilla
 - Stewardship: Mike Lutz
- Session approved a Gift of Stock policy, which has been incorporated into the online Operations Manual.
- We are working on replacing the clothing drop box, which was taken away by the vendor without notice to us.



CHRISTIAN EDUCATION CORNER

SUNDAY SCHOOL SCOOP

- * It has been wonderful to see so many children in SS and church recently. Thanks to our parents and volunteers for helping to make this happen!!!
- * Please note that for the month of February, our children will attend SS on the first Sunday, since communion will be held on the second. All other Sundays will be the same.
- * We still have some openings for teachers and volunteers for the upcoming months. Please consider and sign up in FH to keep our SS going.. remember our church has no future without our parents and children that attend SS! On behalf of our SS and church, thank you!
- * The next CE meeting date is to be determined.

ADULT EDUCATION

- * Please take note and mark your calendars for our Lenten Bible Study of Mark to start on Thurs. Feb 19th at 5:30. Bring your own snack.

Mark Bible Study

Feb. 19th: 1:1-3:12 Introduction to Jesus and the Gospel of Mark

Feb. 26th: 3:13-6:6 Parables

March 5th: 6:6-8:21 Disciples and Ministry

March 12th: 8:22-10:52 Miracles and Predictions of Death

March 19th: 11:1-13:37 Jesus in Jerusalem

March 26th: 14:1-15:47 The Death of Jesus

April 2nd: 16:1-20 The Resurrection

- * **SOMETHING NEW:** Pastor Adrienne would like to start a NEW monthly adult education class after church (date and time TBD). Our first one will be held in Feb., where Adrienne will share information and pictures from her recent trip to Japan. She will also conduct a class in March. After that we will be looking for monthly volunteer opportunities to share your knowledge on any subject that you are interested in, (it doesn't have to be strictly faith based) such as the history of the churches of Branchville, etc. I know that there are a lot of knowledgeable people in our congregation, so please don't be shy and start thinking of subjects that you would like to share with us.

—OUR MISSION—

MINUTE FOR MISSION ONE GREAT HOUR OF SHARING 2026

“What does the Lord require of you but to do justice, and to love kindness, and to walk humbly with your God?”

Micah 6:8 explains to us how to connect our faith with our actions, to care for those in need with our walk with God. This is the focus of our One Great Hour of Sharing mission.

In this country and around the world, millions of people lack access to sustainable food sources, clean water, sanitation, education, and opportunity. The three programs supported by One Great Hour of Sharing — Presbyterian Disaster Assistance, the Presbyterian Hunger Program and Self-Development of People — all work in different ways to serve individuals and communities in need and to serve God in the way He desires.

In addition, this year we will also make a donation to Birth Haven, a local non-profit that supports young pregnant women with shelter and programs designed specifically for their needs.

OGHS is the single, largest way Presbyterians come together every year to work for a better world.

IF WE ALL DO A LITTLE, IT ADDS UP TO A LOT!



HAPPY BIRTHDAY FEBRUARY

Mike Opilla
Alicia Opilla
Erika Clausen

2/4
2/12
2/20

Paul Sutphen
Bryant Hatch

2/23
2/27

RECIPE OF THE MONTH

Cherry Pie Bars

INGREDIENTS

- 3 cups Purpose Flour (all)
- 1 cup Granulated Sugar
- ½ tablespoon Cornstarch
- 1 teaspoon Baking Powder
- ½ teaspoon Salt
- 1 cup Unsalted Butter (cold)
- 1 Large Egg
- Cherry Pie Filling

GLAZE:

- 1 cup Powdered Sugar
- ½ teaspoon Vanilla Extract
- ½ teaspoon Almond
- 3 Tablespoon Milk



PREPARATION

1. Preheat the oven to 350°F. Grease a 9×13-inch baking pan and line it with parchment paper. Set aside.
2. In a large bowl, whisk the flour, sugar, cornstarch, baking powder, and salt to combine.
3. Add the butter and cut it in with a pastry cutter or rub in your fingers until crumbly.
4. Add the egg and mix until just combined. The dough should be crumbly but hold together in your hand when pressed.
5. Press about 2/3 of the dough evenly into the prepared pan and bake for 8 minutes. Remove the dish from the oven and pour the cherry pie filling evenly over the top. Sprinkle the remaining crust crumbs evenly on top.
6. Bake for 20-25 minutes or until golden brown and bubbly. Let cool in the pan.
7. For the glaze, whisk the powdered sugar, vanilla and almond extract, and enough milk to reach the desired consistency. Drizzle over the cooled bars.



FEBRUARY VOLUNTEERS

USHERS

1st – Wende Clausen/Gay Plog
 8th – Buzz & Marion Alden
 15th – Brian Detz/OPEN
 22nd – Nancy Clink/OPEN

LAY READERS

1st – Patrick Murphy
 8th – Debbie Anderson
 15th – Mike Lutz
 22nd – OPEN

First Presbyterian Church of Branchville
 PO Box 1



3-5 Wantage Avenue
 Branchville, NJ 07826
 Phone 973-948-3495



View our website at:
<http://www.fpcbranchville.org>

and Facebook at:
<http://www.facebook.com>

You may e-mail
 the secretary at presbsec@ptd.net

View a daily devotion at:
<http://www.d365.org>



FEBRUARY COFFEE HOUR

CHANCEL CHOIR

FEBRUARY FLOWER CHART:

If you would like to provide flowers for any of the dates, please see instructions below:

Dates:

1st –
 8th –
 15th –
 22nd –

Call Lisa the week before your signup to have flowers delivered. Gail Burckes will contact you for your dedication or memorial.

Flowers By Lisa 862-268-3123





FEBRUARY 2026



Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
1 10:00 AM Worship 	2 	3	4 10:00 AM -12:30 PM Food Panty 	5 7:00 PM - 8:00 PM Chancel Choir 	6	7
8 10:00 AM Worship Communion 	9 4:00 PM Music & Worship Meeting 7:00 PM Session Meeting 	10	11 10:00 AM -12:30 PM Food Panty 	12 7:00 PM - 8:00 PM Chancel Choir 	13	14 
15 10:00 AM Worship 	16 Office Closed 	17 7:00 PM Deacons Meeting 	18 10:00 AM -12:30 PM Food Panty 	19 5:30 PM Bible Study 7:00 PM - 8:00 PM Chancel Choir 	20	21
22 10:00 AM Worship Praise and Worship 	23	24	25 10:00 AM -12:30 PM Food Panty 	26 5:30 PM Bible Study 7:00 PM - 8:00 PM Chancel Choir 	27	28

Jan 2026

S	M	T	W	T	F	S
				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	29	30	31

Mar 2026

S	M	T	W	T	F	S
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
29	30	31				