

# THE OPEN DOOR

## SOUPER BOWL OF CARING 2024

*We need your help to tackle hunger!*

The 2024 Souper Bowl of Caring will help feed food insecure families and individuals through Roxbury Social Services and the Faith Kitchen in Dover.



Our Drive Thru Food Drive is Saturday, February 10, 9:00 - 11:00 a.m. at the First Presbyterian Church - 99 Main Street, Succasunna. Please bring your non-perishable donations and our Souper Bowl team will unload them from the trunk of your car! We'll see they are delivered to Roxbury Social Services. Be sure to tell us which team you're supporting in the Super Bowl and we'll post our Souper Bowl winner on our church's social media pages on Super Bowl Sunday!

If you cannot make it to the drive thru food collection on Saturday, February 10 we will also be holding a collection on Sunday, February 11 during worship.

Donate virtually! Make a donation directly to the Faith Kitchen through their new website: <https://faithkitchendover.org>

Mail it in! Make your check out to FPC Succasunna and indicate in the memo line either Faith Kitchen or Roxbury Social Services and we'll see to it that your donation gets to them, pronto!

Your donation is needed now more than ever with 14+ billion meals needed to feed food insecure families throughout our country including our neighbors right here in Roxbury and surrounding communities.

The First Presbyterian Church of Succasunna has participated in the Souper Bowl of Caring for nearly 20 years! You can help make this the most awesome Souper Bowl ever!

Thank you for your support and prayers!

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### AT THE OPEN DOOR

Pastor: Rev. Timothy Clarkson

Editor: Sandie DiDomenico

Church Office: 973-584-5238

Fax: 973-584-5140

E: [fpcsunna@optonline.net](mailto:fpcsunna@optonline.net)

Email March Open Door submissions to:

[FPCSOpendoor@gmail.com](mailto:FPCSOpendoor@gmail.com)

By February 19, 2024

## LECTIONARY

### FEBRUARY 4

- First Reading Genesis 24:50-67
- Second Reading 2 Timothy 2:14-21
- Gospel Reading Mark 10:13-22
- Evening Psalms 117; 139

### FEBRUARY 11

- First Reading Malachi 4:1-6
- Second Reading 2 Corinthians 3:7-18
- Gospel Reading Luke 9:18-27
- Evening Psalms 117; 139

### FEBRUARY 18

- First Reading Daniel 9:3-10
- Second Reading Hebrews 2:10-18
- Gospel Reading John 12:44-50
- Evening Psalms 42; 32

### FEBRUARY 25

- First Reading Genesis 41:14-45
- Second Reading Romans 6:3-14
- Gospel Reading John 5:19-24
- Evening Psalms 42; 32



## CALL TO THE ANNUAL MEETING OF THE CONGREGATION

Our Annual Meeting is Sunday, February 4, 2024 right after our 11am church service. Lunch will be potluck. So bring your favorite covered dish to share that day. Dessert, drinks and rolls will be provided. If you can help set up and clean up, please let Sue Anderson know. Thank you.



## Journey Circle

The ladies are meeting on February 12th at 7:00 pm at the home of Cathy Fellows. We will continue our discussion of Experiencing Contagious Joy.

Please contact Jean Greuzke at [jgreuzke@gmail.com](mailto:jgreuzke@gmail.com) with any questions.



## SUNDAY MORNINGS

We continue to explore Jesus's teachings in the book of Matthew. Join us in the chapel at 10am on February 11th and 25th. Contact Cindy Medici with questions ([cjmedici@gmail.com](mailto:cjmedici@gmail.com)).

## Gertrude Hawk Chocolate Orders



It's time for you to fill your Easter Basket with candy! Order through our church's fundraiser from Gertrude Hawk Chocolates for the delicious treats to share with family and friends. You can pick up a catalog and order form from the candy box in Fellowship Hall now. It also tells you how to order on line.

The orders are due February 21, 2024 so that the candy will be available here at church about March 20th for pick-up. In case you didn't realize, Easter is early this year. It is March 31, 2024.

Hope you can buy something to help support our church. If you have any questions, please contact Sue Anderson at 973 584-3816 or email at [sueanderson14@verizon.net](mailto:sueanderson14@verizon.net). Thank you.

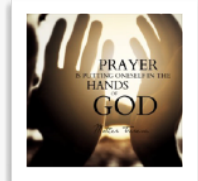
## PRAYERS & CONCERNS:

Georganne & Fred  
Stanley  
Sue B.  
Phyllis  
Doris  
Cathy  
Christina  
Harry Gedicke  
Mikaela  
Ellen

Dolores & Dave  
June  
Carol  
Tom  
Loraine  
Joyce  
Gabby  
Melissa  
Joey C.  
Nelda

John McLaughlin  
Paulina  
Susan  
Adelaide R.  
Bruce  
Mike H.  
Steven H.  
Brooke  
Renee  
Mary

Maisie  
Eve  
Rebecca  
Jo  
Erin  
Karen  
Freddy  
Jan  
David



**Please pray for the families of:** Dorothy Shaver, Mark Ippolito, and Blair family.

## SESSION SNIPPETS:

From the January Session meeting:

### Clerk's Report:

- Necrology report submitted to Presbytery with no changes
- 2023 Statistical report is due February 15 for which help will be needed from session members
- The need for a more formal Roll review to be completed was discussed
- Jean Acken offered to take minutes at next Session meeting and annual meeting of the congregation

**Membership:** 153

### Action/Discussion Items:

- Deacon moderator Kim Gedicke shared the Deacon's goals/activities for 2024
- Approved the minutes of the December 13, 2023 Session meeting as amended
- Treasurers report was received, discussed and approved
- Motion approved for Diane Agosta to continue as Clerk of Session until a replacement can be found
- Motion approved for Jim Ritchey to continue as Treasurer
- Motion approved for Special Offerings for the 2024 year:
  - One Great Hour of Sharing – Palm Sunday, March 24
  - Peacemaking – World Communion Sunday, October 6
  - Christmas Joy – December 22
- Motion approved for Communion to be first Sunday of month (except Sept-2<sup>nd</sup> Sunday) and Maundy Thursday
- Discussion and approval to allow Life Line to use church on future agreed upon date between 8:00am-5:30pm
- Discussion and motion approved for purchase of Philips automated external defibrillator for church at a cost no greater than \$1,750.00 –possibly ask for donations to fund this purchase



### Informational Items:

- Reports due January 19 for Annual Meeting of Congregation set for February 4
- Temple Shalom Museum Tour – January 28 at 1:30pm
- Souper Bowl of Caring – February 10 & 11
- Mosaic Art Classes: 6:30-9pm -1/12, 1/26, 2/16, 2/23, 3/8, 3/22; 11-1:30/2-4:30pm -1/13, 1/27, 2/17, 2/24, 3/9, 3/23

### Unfinished/Old Business:

- No update yet on new plaque to replace the chapel sign above the entrance that was removed

### New Business

- The next Presbytery meeting is on January 27, 2024 from 10am – noon via zoom
- Next Session meeting is scheduled for Wednesday, February 21 at 7:00pm

## GREETINGS, FIRST PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH OF SUCCASUNNA!

I am writing my first article for The Open Door in my second week as your pastor, yet, days before preaching my first sermon at the church (thanks to the snow January 7<sup>th</sup>). To date, I have met several members of the church and I am grateful for the ways everyone is making me feel welcome. I look forward to our getting to know one another.

While the January issue introduced me to you, perhaps this article can continue the story, and serves as an invitation for you to share your stories.

My sense of call to ministry took a long and winding road. Having become active in a nearby Presbyterian Church before I was a member (or even Presbyterian!), I was among people of the church who took turns leading worship and preaching sermons after the sudden passing of a beloved pastor, and assumed facilitating a spiritual development group modeled on the 12 Steps of recovery groups that the pastor had led.

Some of the congregation asked if I had considered going to seminary. Nearing 40 at the time, married, with two children and a beagle, I figured my days as a student were behind me. On the receiving line on another Sunday, a diminutive man poked a very firm finger into my chest and said, "I don't know what you think you're doing, but," pointing to the sanctuary, "is what you're supposed to be doing." (Another member of that church playfully notes if I fail to mention Bob Dylan or the Beatles in a sermon, he is not certain I was the one preaching.)

The music director loaned me *Let Your Life Speak* by Parker Palmer. Among its transformative insights was a quote from my now favorite writer, Frederick Buechner: Vocation is that place to which God calls you where your deep gladness and the world's deep hunger meet.

Despite my doubts, that propelled me to seminary, a 3 year curriculum I spread out over 6 years while I continued to work full time as a clinical social worker, writing most of my papers after the now three kids had gone to bed. They are now 24, 21, and 20 and Amy and I are blessed to be their parents.

Upon commencement, I had my heart set on being a full time pastor. Unfortunately for me at the time, none of the churches to which I applied were interested in calling someone fresh from seminary. That was a blessing I could not see at the time but Romans 8:28 is true!

Having been the steady pulpit supply preacher at Union Hill in Denville throughout much of the prior year, I was invited to serve as the covenant supply pastor there, and was ordained in October 2017 on World Communion Sunday.

Along with the church at Union Hill, I began as a hospice chaplain. In time, I realized that, as much as I valued the ministry of visits, I felt that strong sense of call to church ministry full time, while being convinced I am meant to stay at Union Hill. When Presbytery Leader Jeanne Radak shared with me that FPCS could be the way for that to happen, I was thrilled!

This is just the beginning of sharing our stories together in the ministry we share!

For now, please consider what that Buechner description of vocation suggests to you and this church. Wonder how Romans 8:28 is true for you and this congregation, especially whenever it seems most difficult to sense it. Read Deuteronomy 6 and sense the Presence of God with you. Please know that God is at work within, between, and among us. Look up "Merton's Prayer" and then live into it.

Then, if someone can please remind me of that last paragraph, I may have articles for the next few months of The Open Door!

~ Pastor Tim



# ROXBURY SOCIAL SERVICES

**Milk and Eggs to Feed Hungry Families**  
**Wednesdays, February 7 and 21**

***Help Roxbury Social Services Feed Families in Our Community!***

We are making regular donations of milk and eggs to Roxbury Social Services to help families in our community who continue to struggle with providing food for their families.



Here's how it works: Simply pick-up an extra dozen eggs and ½ gallon of milk when you are grocery shopping. Put your donations in the refrigerator at church on Sunday morning or no later than Tuesday for our Wednesday delivery. You may also make a monetary donation to the church towards the purchase of milk and eggs by placing it in a *Roxbury Social Service envelope* (in the narthex), or by indicating *Roxbury Social Services* in the memo line on your check. Thank you!

**nourish.NJ**  
feed lives . fuel futures

## Breakfast Bags for Nourish NJ

During Lent, we will be collecting ingredients for breakfast bags, which we will assemble on Palm Sunday, March 24 and donate to NourishNJ. Please consider donating the following:

- small boxes of cereal
- small boxes of shelf-stable milk, such as Parmalat or Horizon
- soft and healthy granola or protein bars
- clean paper bags, slightly larger than lunch bags, no wider than 6 inches and no taller than 12 inches, handles are okay
- money toward purchase of other components

Contact Cindy Medici at [cjmedici@gmail.com](mailto:cjmedici@gmail.com) with questions.

## Serve at the Faith Kitchen

***Thursday, February 29 – 8:30 a.m. to 1:00 p.m.***

*Your help is needed to prepare and serve a meal for 125 guests who frequent the Faith Kitchen in Dover. There are many ways you can lend a hand!*

- ***Before Sunday, February 25:*** Donate needed ingredients for the meal, oranges or bananas, pre-packaged snack/desserts. Please label and leave in Fellowship Hall kitchen. (If you wish to make a monetary donation, please indicate Faith Kitchen on the memo line of your check.)
- ***Sunday, February 25 @12:00 noon:*** Cooks of are needed to prepare Chili in Fellowship Hall kitchen.
- ***Thursday, February 29, 8:30 am-1:00 pm:*** Serve the meal at the Faith Kitchen, 123 Blackwell Street, Dover. (Located in the Trinity Lutheran Church building.)

*Join our FPC mission team in this effort! Faith Kitchen servers must be age 16 or over. More information to come. Look for our Sign-up Genius or FPC Facebook page for more info, or contact Cindy Medici or Kathy Ritchey.*

In the time of King Herod, after Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judea, magi<sup>[a]</sup> from the east came to Jerusalem, <sup>2</sup> asking, "Where is the child who has been born king of the Jews? For we observed his star in the east<sup>[b]</sup> and have come to pay him homage." <sup>3</sup> When King Herod heard this, he was frightened, and all Jerusalem with him, <sup>4</sup> and calling together all the chief priests and scribes of the people, he inquired of them where the Messiah<sup>[c]</sup> was to be born. <sup>5</sup> They told him, "In Bethlehem of Judea, for so it has been written by the prophet: <sup>6</sup> 'And you, Bethlehem, in the land of Judah, are by no means least among the rulers of Judah, for from you shall come a ruler who is to shepherd<sup>[d]</sup> my people Israel.'" <sup>7</sup> Then Herod secretly called for the magi and learned from them the exact time when the star had appeared. <sup>8</sup> Then he sent them to Bethlehem, saying, "Go and search diligently for the child, and when you have found him, bring me word so that I may also go and pay him homage." <sup>9</sup> When they had heard the king, they set out, and there, ahead of them, went the star that they had seen in the east, until it stopped over the place where the child was. <sup>10</sup> When they saw that the star had stopped,<sup>[e]</sup> they were overwhelmed with joy. <sup>11</sup> On entering the house, they saw the child with Mary his mother, and they knelt down and paid him homage. Then, opening their treasure chests, they offered him gifts of gold, frankincense, and myrrh. <sup>12</sup> And having been warned in a dream not to return to Herod, they left for their own country by another road.

### JANUARY 2024 SERMON (CANCELLED DUE TO SNOWY WEATHER)

As I was anticipating this sermon, this Sunday, it took a lot to quiet all that was swirling around in my mind. Various, my attention was holding onto Christmas energy, awaiting the sad task of de-decorating, managing expectations of beginning the New Year with two churches, at new times...and the sense of helplessness about the forecast's impact on gathering for worship. Thankfully, God has a way of settling our restlessness. In the midst of uncertainty and enthusiasm, in the midst of our ups and downs, God patiently waits for us to suspend our sometimes frenetic activity long enough to notice the light provided to us.

Today, we visit the passage of Scripture our Bible subtitles The Visit of the Magi. Though long before Edison's invention changed the world, these verses are what we might call a Light Bulb Moment.

January 6<sup>th</sup> being the date our church calendars mark as The Epiphany, this passage from Matthew essentially concludes the Christmas Season. What does Epiphany mean, after all? A revelation. Something revealed. We're reminded of the prophetic words from Advent: *The people in darkness have seen a great light.* This is all about a great, God given Light Bulb Moment.

We are told Herod was King and that Jesus had already been born in Bethlehem. Who ARE these visitors, anyway? *MAGI!* For centuries, people in and out of churches have wondered, really, who...what?...are these people? In this case, Magi does not imply they were magicians. If they were, why would they have bothered to consult Herod? Couldn't they just have conjured up a Harry Potter spell and commanded, "Accio...Christ Child!"?

More likely, they were seekers. Not people of Torah Law, they were perhaps considered priests within their own culture. Scripture does not tell us precisely where their native land was, but it may have been Persia, Babylon, modern day Iraq or Iran. Wherever the place, we may interpret that they were respected as wise...professors of special or secret wisdom. Of a time and place where every answer were not readily available at one's fingertips, these were people who literally looked to the heavens...to the stars... to make sense of life here on earth. Their life's work was seeking and being open to the Light Bulb Moments of life.

Arriving in Jerusalem, they begin asking the locals for the whereabouts of this child born to be their king. Not surprisingly, the reigning king, Herod, was troubled by news of a challenger. Renown for his tremendous and grand building projects, including the magnificent Temple, Herod was also greatly feared for his intolerance of dissent and paranoia, having executed many, including his wife and son, whom he considered disloyal to his authority. That kind of raging instability explains why all of Jerusalem was upset, too: Since Herod is a loose cannon, and he is disturbed, who knows how he will react? Herod, for entirely self-centered purposes, gathers his resident experts, his own priests and scribes, to ascertain where this threat may be located. Drawing from the Hebrew Scriptures, they tell him what we already know: Bethlehem is the place. Bethlehem: Where Jacob buried Rachel. The site of hometown hero David. Where Ruth married Boaz. This is the place to which the Magi are dispatched.

The Christ Child is not some vague idea. The Christ Child is real and among people. His location was not some general region. Rather, he was living in a particular, specific place.

The reality of this is our Light Bulb Moment!

More than an ancient story, this is our encounter with the Christ Child. As much as Jesus is up there, out there, in the heavens, beyond our capacity to comprehend, Jesus is real and present, in the midst of our very lives.

(Cont'd from page 6) In my time interning at the Pastoral Care department at the hospital while in seminary, the Chaplain asked me about my theology. After I answered, he said, "Ah! You are incarnational!" I said, "Actually, I am Presbyterian by way of the

Catholic Church." Playfully swatting me with a notebook, he said, "I mean that you experience Christ present here and now." "Yes," I said, "If not, then why bother?" For Matthew, for the Jewish Christian audience who first heard this Gospel account, this Light Bulb Moment of identifying Bethlehem need not be a surprise:

**In Jesus, there is the coming together of what the Hebrew Testament promised; and In Jesus, those outside the boundaries of Israel are welcomed into the love and compassion of God.**

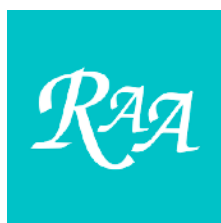
Interestingly, notice what happens. Those outsiders, those seekers, those mysterious travelers journey onward. The one seemingly with authority, Herod, could not tolerate the idea of anyone interfering with his narcissism. The ones with information, like the religious experts, stay home. We might have thought THEY were supposed to be wise, informed, and aware. The experts, the ones who knew from Scripture and tradition where Jesus was, were indifferent to seek something that might complicate the practice of religion. And we thought the modern church was the first group to say, "Well, we've never done it THAT way before"? Our translation says that were "overwhelmed with joy." Literally translated, they "rejoiced with great joy exceedingly."

Does the light bulb illuminate our imagination to hear the difference?

Scholar and pastoral writer Jill Duffield puts it this way: *When was the last time and experience of Jesus overwhelmed you with joy? When pointing to the brokenness and suffering of our world comes easily to us, seeing the holy right in front of us and responding with joy often eludes us. If where the Holy Spirit is, there is joy, then surely our lives and our worship and our congregations should be, at least some of the time, overwhelmed with joy.* (Duffield, Jill. 2019. In *Connections: A Lectionary Commentary for Preaching and Worship*. Year A, Vol. 1. Green, Long, Powery, Rigby, Sharp, Eds. Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press. P. 160).

As much as we are tempted to morph Gospels, placing everyone into Luke's stable on a cold night warmed with the rough company of barnyard animals and unkempt shepherds, Matthew's version does not give us that. The Epiphany visit, we are told, happens not in a barn but in a house. The travelers arrive at a house, not a stable. Jesus is likely a toddler with his mom, no longer a newborn on a bed of straw. Before presenting those famous gifts, they pay him homage. The word appears three times in these 12 verses. The word conveys much more than a tip of the cap, more than a gesture of a nod in deference. To pay homage is a significant physical display of submission.

In other words, they gave themselves before they gave tangible gifts. Perhaps that, too, becomes a Light Bulb Moment for us. In today's verses, in this Epiphany narrative, there is no clear voice of God splitting the sky or shocking people to the ground, trembling. Instead, there is a Star illuminating the path and dreams counseling the way... As the festive lights of Christmas get packed away until December, let's promise to God, ourselves, and each other, to remain attentive to the Light Bulb Moments God holds for each and all of us!



It's time to relax and enjoy some big band music on Sunday, February 18, 2024 at 4pm at the Roxbury Arts Alliance Citizens Bank Theater at 72 Eyland Avenue in Succasunna. The Silver Starlite Orchestra will entertain you.

For tickets and information go to: <http://www.roxburyartsalliance.org>.

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## Messy Church

Sunday, February 25<sup>th</sup>

More information to come!



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## DONATE BLOOD AT FPCS

Sunday, March 3rd, 9am-3pm

Donations are through the NY Blood Center; more info to follow.

## A WORD OF THANKS FROM PASTOR TIM



THANK YOU!

Two of life's most important words are: Thank you. I am taking this opportunity to express my gratitude for so many things since my recent start as your covenant supply pastor. The welcome the congregation extended to my family and me on our first Sunday together was humbling and affirming. The luncheon following our time of worship was a wonderful time to be together. (Yes, I am still learning your names.) That event did not happen without the planning and enthusiastic investment of so many. From set up, to arranging for the delicious spread, to clean up, this was a team effort for which I am genuinely thankful.

January 14<sup>th</sup> being our first Sunday morning together, I realize I do not begin to know all that has gone into your experience of worship the past several months between pastors. Scheduling pulpit supply, selecting music, stepping into roles and responsibilities members may not have otherwise anticipated having...all these are special and essential. The congregation of First Presbyterian Church of Succasunna deserves a pat on the back or a high five or an embrace or a heartfelt round of applause for the myriad ways God has been, is, and will be at work in each and every one of you!

PLEASE  
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### First Presbyterian Church

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Succasunna, NJ 07876

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