First Presbyterian Church of Succasunna
99 Main Street, Succasunna, NJ 07876
973-584-5238 ~ www.fpcsuccasunna.org

December 2026



THE OPEN DOOR

CHRISTMAS JOY OFFERING

… TO WALK HUMBLY WITH YOUR GOD." — MICAH 6:8

The Advent season invites us to pause and listen to the promises of God and reminds us that the story of Christmas is not simply about celebration or tradition. It is about love made flesh. It is about hope dawning in a weary world. The prophet Micah says that God instructs us "to do justice and to love kindness and to walk humbly with [our] God." Walking humbly means remembering that we belong to one another; we are all connected through Christ. It means recognizing that every person is worthy of dignity, support, encouragement and love.



This is a distinctive part of our Presbyterian heritage. We believe that we understand the movement of the Holy Spirit when we are together with worship at the center of all we do. Walking humbly is how Presbyterians do ministry in the world, bringing people together for work rooted in strong relationships and local discernment that brings fullness of life to all. One way the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) seeks to live out that calling is through the ministries supported by the Christmas Joy Offering.

Through the Offering, assistance is provided to current and retired church workers and their families who may be facing financial crises, illness or unexpected hardship. The Offering also supports leadership development for people of color and Presbyterian-related schools and colleges equipping communities of color. And for the first time this year, it supports ministries with children at risk and nurtures the faith of youth and young adults through ministries like the Presbyterian Youth Triennium and Young Adult Volunteer program. (Continued on Page 3)

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AT THE OPEN DOOR

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By December 19, 2026

DECEMBER LECTIONARY

December 6
Isaiah 40:1–11
Psalm 85:1–2, 8–13
2 Peter 3:8–15a
Mark 1:1–8

December 13
Isaiah 61:1–4, 8–11
Psalm 126 or Luke 1:46b–55
1 Thessalonians 5:16–24
John 1:6–8, 19–28

December 20
2 Samuel 7:1–11, 16
Luke 1:46b–55 or Psalm 89:1–4, 19–26
Romans 16:25–27
Luke 1:26–38

December 24
Isaiah 9:2–7
Psalm 96
Titus 2:11–14
Luke 2:1–14 [15–20]

December 25
Isaiah 52:7–10
Psalm 98
Hebrews 1:1–4 [5–12]
John 1:1–14

December 27
Isaiah 61:10—62:3
Psalm 148
Galatians 4:4–7
Luke 2:22–40

MONDAY MORNING BIBLE STUDY

All are welcome to join us in Fellowship Hall on Monday mornings at 11:00 a.m. for Bible study lead by Pastor Tim. We will begin our Advent study, *Finding Our Place in the Manger,* on November 30. You will find lively conversation and perhaps discover new insight into scripture and your faith. Come be a part if this inquisitive group of fellow Christians!

For more information and Zoom link please contact Kathy Ritchey: kritchey@optonline.net.

The Annual Giving Tree

Ornaments can be taken from the tree for ideas of donations of toys and books. Any donations can be brought to the church by December 13th. Donations can be dropped off in the Chapel on the pew marked for the Giving Tree. If anyone cannot get an ornament, a donation for toys or books for any age child will always be appreciated.



The Membership committee is sponsoring an opportunity for all singles of the church to meet for supper and fellowship on Friday, December 11th, at 6:00 PM. We'll select a local restaurant closer to the date. Please RSVP to Jean at jgruezke@gmail.com by Monday, December 7th.



Christmas Cookie Exchange

Join us after Worship in Fellowship Hall on Sunday, December 13th, for a Christmas Cookie Exchange. Please bring a batch of your favorite recipe to share!



SHOPRITE GIFT CARDS - A quick, easy way to support our church

These cards make a thoughtful gift, or a donation to someone who could use a helping hand. Cards come in $20, $50, and $100 denominations; buy as many as you like. You get the full-face value of each card, while Shop Rite gives our church a 5% discount on every card. To buy cards, call, or text Bobby Doyle at 908-288-4639. Cards can be picked up at the church or delivered to you. Thank you for this quick and easy way to support our church. May you and your family find joy and peace this holiday season.

Prayers & Joys

JOYS

- Birth of Chase David Stellingwerf to Brian and Linda Stellingwerf
- Birth of Dillon Marshall Ritchey to David and Elisa Ritchey
- for the transition of Sandy Egbert to a new residence
- For Natalia and family as she recovers at home from complications with issues related to her liver
- Appreciation for Dina Stierli sharing her talent with us during worship
- The second state championship for Roxbury High School marching band
- Appreciation for all who prepared & served meals at Faith Kitchen in Oct
- Thanks for the November blood drive
- Appreciation from Pastor Tim and Amy for time away
- Josh Clarkson ran the NYC Marathon & achieved his goal.
- Joy and Hope of Stewardship of our Time, Talents, and Treasures
- Appreciation for our Veterans on Veterans' Day and always
- The Veterans' Concert held in partnership with FPCS & the DAR
- Jean's birthday
- Joy for Sue's visit with Joan Salmon this week
- Joy of Jim Ritchey's sister Diane improving - continued prayers for healing
- The Shortridges' 35th wedding anniversary
- Sandy Egbert's new home

CONCERNS

- Prayers for Betty Lou DeCroce and several others anticipating surgery
- Brodie Haughey recovering from a fractured finger
- Anita (friend of Cathy Fellows) who is managing issues after her husband passed
- Jeffrey and Chris being treated for blood cancer
- Ann, Barb, and Cheryl undergoing chemo treatments
- Nicole R., Kim, Rosa T., Lulu, AJ Singer
- Courtney, struggling with exhaustion and hoping for answers/relief from dr visits
- All anticipating and recovering from medical procedures, and those navigating struggles of body, mind, and spirit
- For a doctor who has been diagnosed with cancer, and has 3 children (2 young adults and 1 in high school), known to Carol Seeger
- For the ongoing recovery of Robert following liver and kidney transplants
- Susan, dealing with medical issues
- Bill Egbert, in Morristown Hospital
- For Max, who starts serial casting this week for a planned surgery on his right foot
- For Natalie's nephew Amir, going through a rough period

CONDOLENCES

- Dan & Dana and the entire Dyrness family after Joyce's unexpected passing.

HAVE YOURSELF A THRIFTY LITTLE CHRISTMAS…

Earth Friendly, too!

Saturday, December 5, 11am–3pm (during Home for the Holidays)
Sunday, December 6, 12:00 noon (following worship).

It's time for our annual Holiday décor sale, held in Fellowship Hall. A wide selection of gently used holiday and Christmas items including wreathes, ornaments, candles, garland, party and houseware items, even a tree or two! All is priced to sell and to fit anyone's budget. Checks, credit cards and cash accepted. Proceeds from the sale will go to support the organizations who provide shelter and housing in our community: Morris Habitat for Humanity, Homeless Solutions and Family Promise.

Volunteers are always needed!

- Set-up-Thursday, 12/3 and Friday, 12/4: (3-7pm)
  Creative merchandisers needed to set up and organize items for display.
- Sales - Saturday, 12/5: 10 am – 4 pm
  Sales teams to work the day of the sale.
- Clean-up- Monday 12/7: 4-7 pm
  Help break down tables, pack and store unsold items.

Please contact Kathy Ritchey or Cindy Medici to sign-up!

Re-purpose, recycle, re-use! First Presbyterian Church of Succasunna is an Earth Care congregation

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Christmas Eve Candlelight Service

Our Christmas Eve Candlelight Service will be held at 7pm on Thursday, December 24th. All are welcome.

CHRISTMAS JOY OFFERING

Continued from Page 1

Across the country, thousands of Presbyterian congregations join to share in this act of generosity and hope. Every gift, large or small, becomes part of a larger witness to God's love in action. Jesus taught us that we were never created to walk alone. We were created for community, compassion and mutual care. When one person suffers, we respond together. When one person flourishes, we celebrate together.

Our congregation will receive the Christmas Joy Offering on Sunday, December 20. Please give prayerfully and generously. When we all do a little, it adds up to a lot.

SESSION SNIPPETS:

From the November 2026 Session Meeting:

Through the efforts of our Membership Committee, the Church finalized the Membership Roll with 115 members. (Sadly, since the November meeting, we have sustained the loss of the much beloved Joyce Dyrness.)

Our average attendance through November 1st was 32.7.

The Deacons shared the November 1st Blood Drive provided 47 units!

Ruling Elder Natalie Lowry will begin exploring the grant application process for the stained glass window repairs. Those interested to be part of this effort are invited to speak with Natalie.

Work continues on creation of a "New Elder" packet to assist those who will come to serve on session moving forward.

Nominating Committee is having conversations with members about their sense of call to serve on Session or the Board of Deacons in 2027.

Session is motivated to revisit the church website. (Pastor Tim met with another pastor who has a side business creating church websites. Her proposal will be considered at the December Session Meeting.)

From Finance, the difference between income and expenses through October reveals a deficit of around $20,000 this calendar year. While partially offset by tapping reserves for nearly $17,000 so far this year, the discrepancy is significant.

In an effort to make sure the congregation has the most up to date and accurate information from each committee, the elders will review their committees' submissions to the Open Door each month ahead of publication.



Christmas Choir

Do you miss the Christmas pageant? This year, there will be something new! On the 4th Sunday of Advent, we will be presenting an abridged, simplified version of Handel's Messiah, with both spoken and sung parts. We invite you to join with the choir in singing for this event, as well as for Christmas, a short-term commitment to boost your optimism during the busy holiday season.

Our rehearsals are on Sunday mornings, 9:45 - 10:45, Dec. 6, 13 and 20. The Messiah presentation is on Sunday, Dec. 20 at 11 AM. The Christmas Eve service is on Thursday, Dec. 24 at 7 PM. Come and lift your spirits by giving glory to God in music! Please contact Jane at janemaryor@gmail.com so we have music ready for you.

ADVENT-AGEOUS

Happy New Year, everybody! Lest you worry that your pastor has gone off the deep end (again), I am merely being liturgically correct: the church year begins with Advent, the first Sunday of which was November 29th. For the first three Sundays of December, we will be making our way to Bethlehem again. The pilgrimage to the Christ Child happens annually at this time. As many Advent and Christmas seasons as we have lived, there is always something fresh and new God reveals to us, inviting us to enjoy.

As I write this in mid-November, I truly cannot say I know how it will unfold. What I do know is this: in the course of a conversation about a month ago, someone used the word "advantageous." The topic had nothing to do with Advent or Christmas. Even so, as she said it, there seemed an epiphany (of course, to use THAT word is really accelerating the season!).

My mind made the leap from "advantageous" to imaging the word as "Advent-Ageous."

Some pastors plot out literally a year's worth of sermons ahead of time. I am not one of them. Ask Jane or Debbie or the worship committee. For someone as intentionally focused and committed to preparing as I am, I prefer that the themes and messages of each weekly worship service be as fresh as the morning newspaper (if you remember what those are/were).

Still, I am moved to have this new season be one that embraces – or more aptly put, is embraced by – this word play notion of Advent-Ageous!

As the calendar year ends and the church calendar begins, let us be attentive, open, receptive, and responsive to how and where we may experience, enjoy, celebrate, and share what is Advent-Ageous to us!

I hope that includes your making participating in worship as frequently as you can. Perhaps, you may be among those who open worship with lighting the candles of the Advent Wreath.

Might your donning the Yuletide apparel of a Home for Holidays shirt on December 5th give someone the evidence that, yes, Virginia, not only is there a Santa Claus, but Presbyterians have a sense of humor and fun?



Will your contribution add to the collection of poinsettias that adorn the chancel in time for Christmas Eve worship?

Maybe what you need is not another frantic, pressured trip to the mall or the commercialism of cyber shopping but the pause button of the Advent retreat Amy is co-leading at Union Hill December 12th.

What if you gift is being part of the December 13th Fellowship Hour cookie exchange that caringly prevents me from eating every cookie available?

If you were moved by the Concert for Veterans, please consider participating in the Wreaths Across America event December 19th that the Daughters of the American Revolution, including our very own Sue Anderson and Linda Smith coordinate faithfully every year.

Following worship December 20th many hands will make light work of preparing the sanctuary with the candles that will make the 7 pm Christmas Eve service so special.

I look forward to sharing the season of Arrival, the season of Coming, the season of Advent with you as we journey toward Christmas.

May we all take note of where and how the experience is Advent-Ageous!

ROXBURY SOCIAL SERVICES

Milk and Eggs to Feed Hungry Families
Wednesdays, December 2 and December 16
This Christmas, Help Families in our Community!

Want to be part of this mission outreach? 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 Monday for our Wednesday delivery. (Please note that the there is no access to the church on Tuesday.) 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. Thanks so much!

~ The Mission Committee

DEACONS DOINGS

The Deacons continue to support our members and community.

We hosted a blood drive on November 1, which produced 47 life-saving units of blood. This wrapped up 17 years of hosting a Blood Drive for our community. Many thanks to Ken Johnston for spearheading this effort. Our next drives will be March 7th and August 1st.



Sadly, the Deacons hosted another repast for a dear church member on November 21. We are also financially supporting fellowship time and luncheons. Let a Deacon know if you or a church member would like a visit, a card, or some soup.

Christmas Poinsettia

FPCS will be ordering poinsettias from Lakeland Florist to decorate the sanctuary for Christmas. If you wish to order plants, please fill out a paper form found in the narthex and place it in the offering plate, or fill out the online Poinsettia form.

ORDERS MUST BE RECEIVED BY DECEMBER 7th. Submit your payment by mail to First Presbyterian Church of Succasunna, 99 Main St, Succasunna, NJ 07876, or by placing it in the offering plate. Make checks payable to FPC Succasunna with "Poinsettia Order" in the memo. Place cash in an envelope labeled with your name and "Poinsettia Order".

You may pick up your plant(s) to enjoy at home any time after the 7:00 PM Candlelight service on Christmas Eve.



It's the Most Wonderful Time of the Year!

Stewardship Season, of course! (I'm guessing you were not expecting that.) Seriously, as the calendar nears turning to a new year, the time comes for each of us to prayerfully discern and decide what we are able to pledge for the 2027. While many things in life are those we may prefer to delay or ignore, providing the church finance team information about what we plan to contribute to the mission and ministries of this church makes possible forecasting a budget. Stewardship is not a day, week, or month; it is an everyday commitment. Our pledge is our response to what return on investment we will make to what God in Christ is at work doing within, between, and among us here.



Think of what makes this church wonderful, all year long, and your place in it:



We gather to worship and enjoy each other's company in a safe, comfortable space, with beautiful music emanating from the organ, a place where every generation from Sunday School to two Bible study options has a physical space and safe community to learn and grow in faith. We are the stewards entrusted to care for this space and property, in an age when it is not secret that energy costs are escalating. Central to the community, we hold special concerts, events, and the cemetery tour.

This church prepares delicious soups appreciated by members unable to travel regularly to worship. Beyond our membership, we commit to providing milk and eggs consistently to the board of social services, and occasionally serving lunches to the hungry in nearby Dover. Gifts are provided to children who may not otherwise have something under their Christmas trees every year.

There is dynamic worship and the warmth of friendship that keeps bringing us together.

All this takes the time, talent, and treasures of all of us to happen. We may assume that if the doors are open and the lights are on that everything is fine. While grateful the doors are open and the lights are on, the truth is this is happening at a current deficit.

At this point, the deficit, the difference between income and expenses this calendar year, is around $20,000, and we know that costs - salaries, benefits, energy, property insurance – are going up substantially in 2027.



With God's help and each of our 114 members and close friends of the congregation, all of us are invited to thoughtfully assess what we can realistically pledge to the church for 2027. The church realizes it is not only church costs that have taken a hit; everyone's groceries, energy, and vehicle fuel are substantially higher than they were a year ago.

Appreciating that reality, the church asks where at all possible that each of us considers increasing our pledge beyond what we committed and contributed for this year. Using either the paper form or the online option, please provide your pledge information to the church, by December 15th if possible for budget planning purposes. As always, thank you.



RE - JOYCE - ING

I realize as I am writing this that those of you who attended the funeral of beloved church member Joyce Dyrness may have heard elements of this article during that service November 21st. Even so, it is worth hearing again.

While I only had the privilege of knowing Joyce for the past (almost) three years I have been your pastor, I can truthfully say that at every time I saw her – at church, the hospital or at Merry Heart for rehab – she exuded and exhibited joy! Ever immaculate in her own presentation, Joyce always observed and complimented whatever tie I was wearing (to which I always acknowledged Amy's mom as the source... and usually Amy confirming what I selected matched my shirt).

Considering myself to be someone with a fairly well-developed sense of humor, Joyce always had a witty question, comment or comeback. Whether or not the weather was ideal or circumstances seemingly a reason to be upbeat, Joyce personified positivity.

The last time I saw Joyce, at Merry Heart, she was over the moon at having received a postcard from her granddaughter, who was spending the semester in Ireland. Joyce was happy for her. She was happy about her. She was happy!



I have no way of knowing if in naming their daughter Joyce's parents were acknowledging the joy at being her parents. I recently heard of a culture that intentionally waits a period of time – maybe up to a year – to name children to reflect their personalities. Had Joyce not been named until her first birthday, her parents could scarcely have been mistaken for including "joy" within her name.

I want you to do something without thinking, without waiting. To do something immediately...the first thing that comes to your mind:

Picture Joyce Dyrness. What do you see?

I picture her smiling, maybe even laughing. Perhaps you do, too. In all likelihood, Joyce had her difficult days. I suspect, like the rest of us, there were days when she was tired or bored or stressed...yet still full of joy!

The next time life confronts the rest of us with challenges, with more to do than time or energy to do it, with diminished motivation or the worries that come with uncertainty, remember to revisit that mental picture you have of Joyce. Maybe we all will benefit from spending some time Re-Joyce- Ing!



Please note that the church office will be closed from December 31st to January 10th, 2027. Have a great holiday season!



Home for the Holidays

Saturday, December 5, 2026
11am to 3 pm

We are having a Bake Sale table at Home for the Holidays, which takes place at the Roxbury Library and FPCS. **If you can make something to sell that would be great.** Also come out and buy some goodies. The money is going to our church.

We are also having our CAFÉ where you can purchase a hot dog and chips for lunch along with Hot Chocolate, Hot Cider, cold soda and water, or perhaps a cup of coffee or hot tea to go along with what you bought at the bake sale table.

Also, buy some Christmas decoration for your house; wouldn't that be nice?

Come out and support First Presbyterian Church of Succasunna and it's missions!

WREATHS ACROSS AMERICA

Saturday, December 19, 2026

Come out at 10am to help place a wreath on all the veterans graves in Succasunna (703 of them!). Have a hot cup of coffee or hot chocolate with a muffin or bagel first.

Then at 12 noon, there is a Memorial Service to honor Veterans in the Presbyterian Church at 99 Main Street in Succasunna.

After the Ceremonial Wreaths are placed outside along Main Street for everyone to see, followed by a light lunch in the Fellowship Hall at the Presbyterian Church.

Help us honor our Veterans from all the wars and services in our cemeteries in Succasunna. Sponsored by Ferro Monte Chapter DAR.



Gertrude Hawk Chocolate-Coming Soon

Looking ahead, we will be selling Gertrude Hawk Candy for Easter. Look for information in the next Open Door.

If you have any questions, please speak with Sue Anderson at 973-584-3816 or sueanderson14@verizon.net.Thank you.

FPCS December 2026

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
		1 7:30-8:30 PM *Roxbury Arts Association*	2 SS Milk/Eggs 9 AM-noon Office Open 9-10 AM *Aerobics Class* 5:30 PM Discernment 7 PM Session	3 9 AM-noon Office Open 3-7 PM Set Up for Home for the Holidays 7-8 PM Chime Choir	4 3-7 PM Set Up for Home for the Holidays	5 8 AM Set Up for Home for the Holidays 11 AM-3PM Home for the Holidays
6 10 AM Bible Study 10 AM Choir 11 AM Worship and Sunday School	7 9-10 AM *Aerobics Class* 11 AM - noon Bible Study 4-7 PM Clean Up for Home for the Holidays	8	9 9 AM-noon Office Open 9-10 AM *Aerobics Class* 6 PM Deacons	10 9 AM-noon Office Open 7-8 PM Chime Choir	11 6 PM Singles Supper 6-9:30 PM *Mosaic Art Studio*	12 10 AM-2 PM Advent Retreat 10 AM-6 PM *Mosaic Art Studio*
13 10 AM Bible Study 10 AM Choir 11 AM Worship and Sunday School Noon Cookie Exchange	14 9-10 AM *Aerobics Class* 11 AM - noon Bible Study 6 PM Journey Circle	15	16 SS Milk/Eggs 9 AM-noon Office Open 9-10 AM *Aerobics Class*	17 9 AM-noon Office Open 7-8 PM Chime Choir	18 Open Door Submissions Due Noon-4 PM *Set up for Wreaths Across America* 6-9:30 PM *Mosaic Art Studio*	19 8 AM-4 PM *Wreaths Across America* 10 AM-6 PM *Mosaic Art Studio*
20 10 AM Bible Study 10 AM Choir 11 AM Worship; No Sunday School	21 9-10 AM *Aerobics Class* 11 AM – noon Bible Study	22	23 9 AM-noon Office Open 9-10 AM *Aerobics Class*	24 7 PM Christmas Eve Candlelight Service	25 *"For unto us, a child is born."* **Merry Christmas!**	26
27 10 AM Bible Study 10 AM Choir 11 AM Worship; No Sunday School	28 9-10 AM *Aerobics Class*	29	30 9 AM-noon Office Open 9-10 AM *Aerobics Class*	31	**Happy New Year!** 	