



Branches

Alexandria First Presbyterian Church

“I am the vine, you are the branches.”

February 2018

141 Little York-Mount Pleasant Road

Milford, New Jersey 08848

908-996-4333

Web: www.alexpres.org

Facebook: Alexandria First Presbyterian Church of Mount Pleasant

A Note from Nick

Dear friends,

Are your Christmas decorations still up? Have you put away your Christmas gifts yet? Even though some of us are still packing up our Christmas decorations and taking down the Christmas lights from the front of the house, it is time to turn our attention to Lent. The liturgical season of Lent begins this month on Ash Wednesday (Feb 14), so yes, Easter is a bit earlier this year. Sometimes I think we are caught off guard by Lent. After all, it was just a month ago that we celebrated the birth of our savior on Christmas morning. So why the rush? Why can't we just enjoy celebrating the newborn savior—why do we need to jump right to his crucifixion and death? I suspect that the movement from Christmas to Easter happens so quickly so that in part we remember the dramatic nature of Jesus' rejection. Before we can even fully understand what it means that the light of God entered our world—we are struck with the reality that the light of God is cruelly and violently extinguished. It would be nice to dwell in the joy of Christmas. It would be comforting to rest in the hope of the newborn savior. And yet, that isn't possible. Jesus came into the world to share the good news, and that news was rejected. Jesus suffers and dies for us. There is no getting around that. But his death isn't the final chapter in the story . . . the glory of Easter breaks through the darkness and has the final word. The light of Christ isn't extinguished forever. In fact, through the glory of the risen Lord we are given new life, we are blessed with eternal life. God again has the last word—and we can rejoice.

But in the meantime, as we prepare for the dark days ahead, we are faced with the reality of Lent. Lent is a time of preparation and discernment, as we thoughtfully consider what it means that Christ will die for us. I invite you to share with each other in that journey which begins on February 14 at our 7:00 p.m. Ash Wednesday service. We will gather in our sanctuary to celebrate communion and to receive ashes, as we together remember that cross is now before us. The Ash Wednesday service will also serve as an official start to the Lenten Bible Study, and all Lenten Bible Study participants are invited to come and take part in a special litany to begin the journey.



Yes, it may feel like it was just Christmas, but Lent is here! So before we celebrate the glory of Easter we remember that before there is joy, there is first agony. Please come on Ash Wednesday, and then each Sunday throughout Lent—for the Lenten journey is long and yet when walked together, within the comfort of a community of faith—it is a journey worth walking.

Peace,

Pastor Nick

Tending the Flock

Baptisms

We rejoice with those who are celebrating their baptism anniversary. It was in February that Nicholas Mahlon Folmar and Bentley Nicholas Yanovskiy became children of God through the sacrament of baptism. Congratulations and blessings!

Inclement Weather

During an instance of bad weather, an early-morning decision will be made whether to hold worship or not. Under consideration will be the condition of the roads in general and of our church parking lot specifically. Check the church website, Facebook page, or the outgoing message on our voice mail for information.

Birth

We join Alicia and Jeremy Apgar in giving thanks to God on the birth of their daughter, Hailey Mae born on December 24, 2017. Her proud big sister is Ariana Scurti. Congratulations to the Apgars!

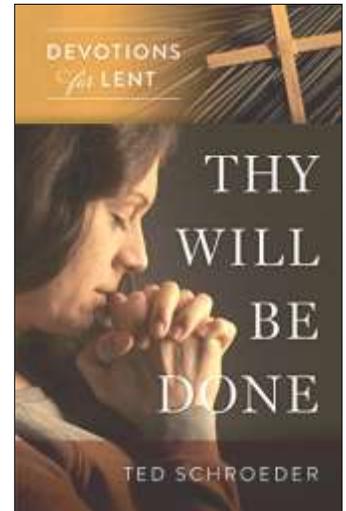
Giving Envelopes

For those of you who requested numbered giving envelopes for 2018, please pick up your box from Fellowship Hall. If you have questions, don't see your box, or want to request a box for the first time please contact Karl Nielsen.

The Season of Lent

February 14

The Season of Lent begins on Ash Wednesday, February 14. In the Christian year, Lent is a 40-day period of repentance and reflection that prepares us to renew our lives and freshly celebrate the joy and victory of Easter Sunday. During these 40 days of Lent we invite you to draw nearer to Christ by committing to the spiritual discipline of daily prayer. A Lenten devotional titled *Thy Will Be Done* is available for your personal study and reflection in the narthex brochure rack. You are warmly invited to continue your Lenten pilgrimage by taking a devotional for your home study and by joining us in worship. There are numerous Bible studies throughout the week you can join to deepen your faith. In addition, our denomination's web site www.pcusa.org/devotions/lectionary offers daily lectionary readings, readings from the Presbyterian Church USA's *The Mission Yearbook*, questions from our *Study Catechisms*, and other rich resources.



Ash Wednesday Service

Wednesday, February 14 | 7:00 p.m.

Join us for this solemn and meaningful hour of worship that begins at 7:00 p.m. The Chancel Choir will offer music and song. The Lord's Supper will be celebrated and the imposition of ashes will be received. The service will be a formal kick-off for the Lenten Bible Study.

Ash Wednesday marks the start of the Lenten Season. Come and begin this time of reflection with us.

11th Annual Churchwide Lenten Study

We are happy to report that 42 people have enrolled in this year's study during the weeks of February 11 through Easter week. The source books have been ordered and will be distributed upon the order's arrival. Payment will be collected by each group leader. (\$9.79, check payable to AFPC/Lenten Study or cash)

We've ordered extra books so; if you'd like to join us, contact Renee Skibinski

When? Where? Who?

1. Sunday, 11:30 a.m., classroom 5, leader: Nancy Schumann
2. Tuesday, 9:30 a.m., classroom 5, leader: Stacy Butz
3. Wednesday, 9:30 a.m., Gathering Room, leaders: Lu Ann Keefe, Jeri Bone, Flora Nielsen, Lainey Johns
4. Wednesday, 7:00 p.m., Skibinski's home, leader: Renee Skibinski
5. Independent Study: your home, your time, your schedule



Scout Sunday

February 4, 2018

A Scout is reverent. Scouting provides fun, fellowship and training to our youth while emphasizing honesty, self-reliance and respect. These values strengthen a Scout's character in family, community, and faith. Alexandria Church will celebrate Scout Sunday on February 4, 2018 during our family worship service beginning at 10:00 a.m. The Scout Sunday tradition was started to spread awareness through the

community and to allow Scouts to live out their duty to God. All Boy Scouts, Cub Scouts, Girl Scouts, and Scout leaders are invited to wear their Scout uniform or other Scout-friendly apparel for this special celebration. Come share your Scout spirit while doing your duty to God with Alexandria First!

Troop 112 Eagle Scouts in 2017

Alexandria Church has held the charter for Boy Scout Troop 112 of Alexandria Township since 1958 and provides space for their regular meetings. We enjoy seeing how their members have grown into responsible young men. Many have been in the program since their earliest days and have advanced through the ranks to the prestigious rank of the Eagle Scout, the highest rank attainable through the Boy Scouts of America. A Scout who attains this rank is called an Eagle Scout or Eagle. Since the beginning of the Scout program, on average only 2% of all members achieve this rank. Requirements include earning at least 21 merit badges and demonstrating Scout Spirit through the Boy Scout Oath, Scout Law, service, and leadership. This includes an extensive service project that the Scout plans, organizes, leads, and manages. In the year 2017, five Scouts from Troop 112 have attained the rank of Eagle. They are Will Armstrong, Mitchell Burns, Colin Jacobson, Jacob Saccal, and Timothy Unkert. Additionally, Jake Norgard from the Kingwood troop and John McDowall from the Holland troop earned the rank of Eagle as well.



Congratulations to the Scouts and their families for their dedication and perseverance!

February Birthdays

1 Doug Johns	9 Alice Muztafago	16 Chris Fennell	24 Kyle Kunich
2 Ken Gregory	10 Jimmy Hansen	17 Gabrielle Cascio	27 Owen Hatch
Brayden Schneider	Emilie Serrone	18 Jim Hansen	Rachel McKinnon
3 Avery Brunkus	12 Jamie Maglio	19 Barbara Sherwood	28 Jessica Doyle
Alexander MacWilliam	13 LeighAnne Cascio	22 Larry Reinfeld	
4 Jackson Koeller	15 Scott Heilig		



Praying over our January shipment

Caring Hands Crafters

Next meeting: Sunday, February 18 | 11:15 a.m.

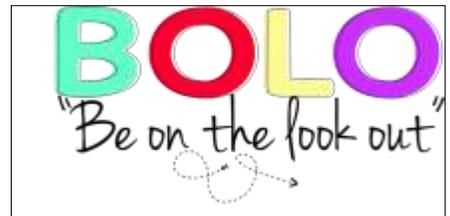
Last month the CHCers made lovely warming caps and PICC line covers in reds and whites, perfect for Valentine's Day. In the coming months we'll create green items to send to California's Knots of Love in time for St Patrick's Day along with some animal-themed caps just for fun. We're happy to consider suggestions from the congregation, so please reach out to Alice Hansen or Pati Tiedeman with your requests.

Bible Sunday

It was with great joy on January 7 that we presented the third graders of our Sunday school with their first Bible. Traditionally, our students are given a Bible at this age to help them further study the Word of God and to develop a routine of daily Bible reading. Prayers for those continuing their spiritual walk are extended to Michael Folmar, Cole Fritsche, Conor Goldman, Ellie Lyons, and Julianna Soos.

Ambassadors for Christ

As Christians and members of Alexandria Church, we are all ambassadors of our church. When you see new faces on Sunday morning, please feel free to welcome them with the warmth and friendship that you received when you yourself came for the first time. We have terrific welcome booklets in the narthex and outside the church offices that give an overview of what we do and who we are. Also in the pew racks you'll find succinct info cards. Both are good tools to hand to visitors. Don't forget to ask them to sign the fellowship pad too. We won't bug them with any solicitations; we simply want to send them a welcome letter after their visit. Thanks for being on the lookout!



Food Pantry

The Board of Deacons collected 102 items for the Frenchtown Presbyterian Food Pantry this month! They received a thank you note from the pantry director:

"Thanks so much for all the goodies. All is always appreciated and the clients will put them to good use."

Mission Interpretation

It's What We Do



CLOTHING DRIVE SUCCESS!

Look what you did! A big thanks to all who purged closets and basements and brought in over 100 bags of gently used clothes to donate to the Trenton Rescue Mission. The truck arrived midday Saturday, January 20 and emptied our room into their waiting truck. We can't thank you enough for your generous donations!

submitted by Robin Vogel



*Over 100 bags await pick up
from our classroom*



*Inside the Trenton Rescue
Mission's truck*



A HUGE THANKS TO OUR KIDS!

The Sunday school's joint Christian Ed/Mission Interpretation teams' family of chickens drive was a whopping success. The kids gleaned over \$44 dollars from their own personal piggy banks. With your Global Peace Offering's 25% donation, 5 families of chickens were purchased via Presbytery's Giving Catalog. Big thanks also to our parents who are inspiring the grace of giving in our youth. Special thanks also to CE chairs Barb Pederson and Cyndi McDowall for their leadership in this project.



SCORE BIG WITH SOUP! Mission Interpretation's Super Bowl Soup Can Drive is Back February 4 – 11, 2018. Please see the flyer below and look for the goal posted plastic bins Sunday February 4 located in the narthex and the Fellowship Hall. Thanks for thinking 'healthy' and considering donating salt-free soups and stews. For questions please see any Mission Team member.



COME DRIVE WITH US! America's Grow-a-Row winter grocery store gleaning continues through Spring 2018. Come join our team of AFPC volunteers drive produce from Clinton Shop Rite to Phillipsburg Branching out Food Pantry every other Thursday (just over an hour door to door). Sign up on the mission bulletin board outside the choir room or contact Lainey Johns.

submitted by Lainey Johns



UP and COMING: CARE TO SHARE! (stay tuned!)





to benefit the **NORWESCAP Food Bank**
Mission Team
Souper-Bowl Soup Can Drive



February 4 - February 11, 2018

We will be collecting cans of soup for the NORWESCAP Food Bank located in Phillipsburg, New Jersey. The Food Bank distributes over 2 million pounds of food annually to

100 charitable feeding agencies in
Hunterdon, Sussex and Warren counties.



A Note to Parents

Parents, the Evangelism and Membership Team wants you to enjoy fellowship after church for the New Year 2018. It will be easier for you now that the Sunday school teachers and high school helpers will bring your children up to you, instead of you heading downstairs to get them after church. Please feel free to stay in Fellowship Hall after church and enjoy fellowship with your church family and we will bring your children up to you. We will make sure all children are reunited with their parents upstairs, but as always if you have any concerns please feel free to contact Barbara Pederson or Cyndi McDowall. Happy fellowshiping!



Grace the Sanctuary with Flowers

New Simplified Procedure

We have a new, simplified procedure for donating flowers for Sunday morning worship! The 2018 flower chart is on a bulletin board in the Fellowship Hall along with the flower request forms. Put your name on the chart for the date you wish to donate flowers. Then grab a form and jot down the information to be listed in the bulletin and check off the appropriate box for providing flowers or making a payment. *Please do not leave payments in the offering plate*, but instead simply return your form and cash or check back to the bulletin board envelope. If you have any questions, please talk to Lois Bondor. Remember, you are welcomed to take the flowers home with you at the conclusion of the service. Thank you for participating in our flower ministry!



January Flowers

- January 7** Flowers were given to the glory of by Oscar Philkill in loving memory of his wife Doris
- January 14** Flowers were given to the glory of God
- January 21** Flowers were given to the glory of God by LuAnn and Pat Keefe
- January 28** Flowers were given to the glory of God by Jerry Phelps in memory of his beloved grandmothers

Fellowship Events

Game Day: Do you like board games? February 11 is your lucky day! Join us from 2:00 - 4:00 p.m. in Fellowship Hall for a fun time. We will have a variety of games for the young and the young at heart. Bring a friend, bring a game, bring your Valentine, or just show up. Did we mention there will be refreshments?

Third Annual AFPC Dinner Out: Join us for this popular event on Saturday, March 3 at 6:00 p.m. This year we will have a private room for our group at Marianna's Restaurant, 224 Stockton St, Phillipsburg, NJ. This evening is for adults only and the cost is \$25 per person which includes appetizers, a lavish buffet, dessert, taxes, and tip. Non-alcoholic beverages will be provided and there will be a cash bar for those who would like to have wine or beer. We even plan to have live music! You will not be disappointed. Sign up on in Fellowship Hall or call Lois Bondor or Carol Van Norman. Payment can be in the form of cash or a check made out to Lois Bondor.

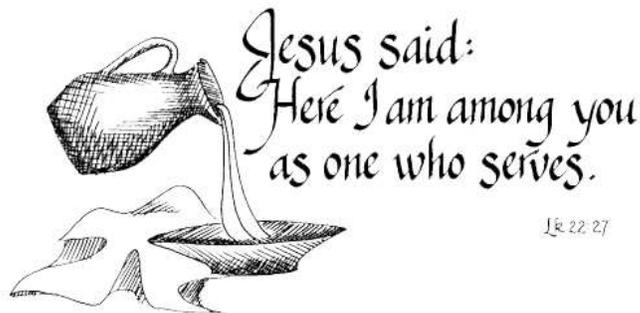


Session Highlights

December 13, 2017

- Elder Barbara Pederson offered opening devotions and prayer
- Deacon Pat Keefe raised up cares and concerns of the congregation; thirteen complete Thanksgiving boxes were put together for the Frenchtown Food Pantry; the deacons will sponsor 2 families for Christmas gifts this year; poinsettias were delivered to shut ins; the deacons expressed a desire to become more involved with the mission projects of AFPC
- The treasurer's report was received for November with receipts to date totaling \$ 198,494.53; the free-will offering from the Christmas concert was \$1,918.00
- The search for a permanent Clerk of Session continues
- Elder training focused on *Transformational Leaders*, Session 6
- Christian Education reported in response to a concern regarding dwindling attendance at coffee time after church, parents are to pick up Sunday school children in Fellowship Hall after class; teachers and youth will bring children to Fellowship Hall
- Elder Laura Navarro presented the proposed terms of call for Pastor Hatch for 2018. After discussion a motion was made and approved to present them to congregation at winter congregational meeting for approval.
- The following motions were approved:
 - Pastor Hatch's terms of call; approval granted to present them to the congregation at the winter congregational meeting
 - a fellowship event of board games on February 11, 2018
 - the winter congregational meeting on January 28, 2018; a light lunch of sandwiches, chili, and dessert will be served; elders are asked to provide 5 sandwiches each
 - Music Director Jerry Phelps will give piano lessons at the church
- Elder Karl Nielsen is still collecting the 12 outstanding pledges; once the budget is complete, session will meet briefly before church in January to approve budget
- Elder Jim Hansen reported that he has received 3 copies of the signed and sealed plans from architect; generic copies have been made up for use in bids from contractors; a generic copy will be on display after church on January 14, 2018 so congregation can take a look at them; refreshment will be served
- Rev. Hatch will share his plans for his sabbatical with the congregation at the winter congregational meeting on January 28, 2018
- Financial Recording Secretary Alice Muztafago will be acknowledged at the winter congregational meeting for her many faithful years as Financial Recording Secretary
- Elder Howard Jones informed the group that George Erlandson will be taking his ordination exam

The Session





Confirmation

February 11 | 11:15 a.m.

The first meeting of this year's confirmation class will be February 11 after the worship service for all 8th graders. The meeting will be in the Gathering Room. Classes will be every Sunday between February 11 and May 13 except for Easter. Please see Pastor Nick with any questions.

Deacons Highlights

The Deacons

January 2, 2018

- Deacon Helen Jones led the opening devotions with a reading from Mark's account of the visit by the Magi since this Sunday is King's Day
- The cares and concerns of the congregation were shared including those who are ill, a new baby, hospitalizations, a funeral, and a death
- Reminder that the deacons provide desserts at a funeral reception
- Ministry team reports were received:
 - Building and Property: architectural designs are out for bids
 - Mission Interpretation: gleaning continues every other week. Arrive 8 a.m. on Thursday at Clinton ShopRite and deliver to food bank in Phillipsburg. Extras are dropped off at Grow-a-Row
 - Stewardship and Finance: Stewardship campaign winding down. No official results yet
- Tammy handled the Christmas gifts for families
- Carol coordinated flowers for shut ins for Christmas
- Pat handed out suggested items for care packages which will be sent to military personnel
- Jim Morris will be leaving for a retirement community in April. Helen will approach Session about having a luncheon, corsage for wife, testimonials
- Yankee swap on Saturday evening, January 6, at the Bondors
- Deacons will coordinate meals for a member recently hospitalized and for a new mom
- Helen closed the meeting in prayer

*Loving creator,
I am not asking to overcome my weakness,
but to use it in some way to glorify you.
Let me be aware of
the many ways you reach out to help me today
and let me stand in awe of the power
that you use in such loving ways.*



Please share this flyer with friends or stick it on your fridge!

**Play Games!
Have Fun!**

Annual Game Day

Alexandria Church

Sunday, February 11

2 to 4 p.m.

Come with your favorite board game
Stay for the fun and food
All ages encouraged to join us

Worship Assistants

- Feb 4** Scouts
Feb 11 Pat Keefe
Feb 14 Jim Morris
Feb 18 Nancy Schumann
Feb 25 Matt Butz

Ushers

- Feb 4** Scouts
Feb 11 Stagg family
Feb 14 Alice Hansen, Barbara Pederson
Feb 18 Jane Pursell, Mary Schuetz
Feb 25 Gunderman family

Communion Servers

- Feb 4** Doug Bondor, Lois Bondor,
Pat Keefe, Sharon Solomon
Feb 14 Jim Bush, Helen Jones, Howard Jones,
Renee Skibinski

Special Dates

Also see the main calendar on page 12

- Feb 4** Communion, Scout Sunday
Feb 11 Confirmation kick off, Game Day
Feb 14 Ash Wednesday, communion

Coming Up

- March 3** Fellowship dinner, Marianna's
March 4 Youth Sunday
March 25 Palm Sunday
March 29 Maundy Thursday
March 30 Good Friday
March 31 Clean up day



Our Ministry Team Officers

Building and Property Marty Gunderman (E), Jim Hansen (E)

Christian Education Alicia Apgar (D), Cyndi McDowall (E),
Barbara Pederson (E)

Evangelism/Membership Lois Bondor (E), Howard Jones (E),
Cathy Torrey (D), Carol Van Norman (D)

Mission Interpretation Brad Bondor (E), Evelyn Cameron (D),
Lainey Johns (E)

Nominating Joan Carroll (E), Cyndi McDowall (E)

Personnel Joan Carroll (E), Helen Jones (D), Laura Navarro (E)

Stewardship and Finance Pat Keefe (D), Karl Nielsen (E),
Robin Vogel (E)

Worship and Music Jeri Bone (E), LuAnn Keefe (E),
Tammy Sassaman (D)

(E: Elder, D: Deacon)



The vision of Alexandria First Presbyterian Church is to gather in God's grace and to be led by the Holy Spirit. We joyfully worship, prayerfully seek, and gratefully share as a loving family growing in Jesus Christ.

**THE DEADLINE FOR THE NEXT ISSUE
OF BRANCHES IS THE 3rd THURSDAY
OF THE MONTH**

Branches is a publication of Alexandria First Presbyterian Church (USA), 141 Little York-Mount Pleasant Road, Milford, NJ 08848. The newsletter is published monthly—except during August—to inform members and friends of church programs, news, and events. *Branches* is online in the "News/Our Newsletter" tab at

www.alexpres.org.

Editor: churchoffice@alexpres.org

 Alexandria First Presbyterian Church of Mount Pleasant

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PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH (USA)**
141 Little York-Mount Pleasant Road
Milford, NJ 08848
Web: www.alexpres.org
Office: 908-996-4333

THE STAFF of ALEXANDRIA CHURCH
Reverend Nicholas C. Hatch

Pastor

Jerry Phelps
Director of Music Ministry

Pati Tiedeman
Administrative Assistant



How to Reach the Pastor

Rev. Nick Hatch

- Through the church office Monday through Thursday from 9 a.m. to 3 p.m. 908-996-4333
- By the church's website on the "contact us" link: www.alexpres.org
- Via his email: nhatch@alexpres.org

Alexandria Presbyterian Church

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
Deacon of the Week February 4 Helen Jones February 11 Tammy Sassaman February 18 Alicia Apgar February 25 Evelyn Cameron			1		2	3
4 <b style="color: red;">Scout Sunday 9:00 Christian Ed meets 10:00 Worship, communion 11:00 Refreshments, fellowship 4:00 Boy Scouts 5:30 Boy Scouts	5	6 9:00 Bulletin deadline 9:30 Bible study 6:30 Boy Scouts 7:00 Deacons	7 9:30 Bible study 7:00 Bible study, Skibinski home 7:00 Boy Scouts 7:00 Session	8 6:30 Brownies 7:00 Chancel Choir 7:30 Boy Scouts	9	10
11 10:00 Worship 10:15 Sunday school 11:00 Refreshments, fellowship 11:15 Confirmation 2:00 Churchwide Game Day see p 7 4:00 Boy Scouts	12	13 9:00 Bulletin deadline 9:30 Bible study 6:30 Boy Scouts	14 <b style="color: red;">Ash Wednesday 9:30 Bible study 7:00 Boy Scouts 7:00 Worship service, communion	15 3:00 Staff 7:00 Chancel Choir	16 7:00 Cub Scout pack	17 8 a.m. to noon Girl Scouts
18 <b style="color: red;">1st Sunday in Lent 10:00 Worship 10:15 Sunday school 11:00 Caring Hands Crafters 11:00 Refreshments, fellowship 11:00 Caring Hands Crafters 11:15 Confirmation 11:30 Bible study, room #5 4:00 Boy Scouts	19 <b style="color: red;">Presidents' Day Office closed	20 9:00 Bulletin deadline 9:30 Bible study 6:30 Boy Scouts	21 9:30 Bible study 7:00 Boy Scouts 7:00 Bible study, Skibinski home	21 9:00 March Branches deadline 7:00 Chancel Choir	23	24
25 10:00 Worship 10:15 Sunday school 11:00 Refreshments, fellowship 11:15 Confirmation 11:30 Bible study, room #5 4:00 Boy Scouts 5:30 Boy Scouts	26	27 9:00 Bulletin deadline 9:30 Bible study 6:30 Boy Scouts 7:00 Building and Property 7:00 Mission Interpretation	28 9:30 Bible study 7:00 Boy Scouts			

Together in Lent