

The Congregator

First Congregational Church of River Edge, New Jersey

109 Continental Avenue, River Edge, NJ 07661

a congregation of the United Church of Christ

March 2024

Volume 75 Issue 3



Take time to “examen”

I’m grateful to live in an area with distinct seasons. Each time of year has unique characteristics that give way to the next. “For everything there is a season, and a time for every matter under heaven,” says Ecclesiastes 3:1 (ESV).

Each change of season also lends itself to *examen*, a spiritual practice that involves reflection. Typically done daily, examen invites people to recall past events (highlights, struggles, even mundane activities) and consider when they especially sensed God’s presence or when he seemed distant.

Try a deeper examen four times a year as the seasons change. As a starting point, use your answers to these questions:

- Looking back at the past season, when did I see God at work? What was life-giving to me?
- In what areas did I need God to work? What was life-draining?
- As I enter this next season, how is God inviting me to engage more with his presence?

—Janna Firestone

FROM THE PASTOR

In his book *The Whole Language: The Power of Extravagant Tenderness*, Fr. Greg Boyle writes, "Nothing is more consequential in our lives than the notion of God we hold." When pondering this notion, one may ask: If we simply believe in a power greater than us that we call God, will this have an influence on our lives? What happens when we believe in a loving God who desires healing and wholeness for all of creation? The latter is the God reflected in the life, teachings, death, and resurrection of Jesus of Nazareth. Our God dreams of a world where all of humanity lives in the right relationships with one another, with the right relationships being evidence of being free of exploitation, power differentials, and oppression. In such a world, peace-making is at the forefront, and resurrection is happening everywhere that justice and equality are manifesting a life-giving quality in society.

As Jurgen Moltmann writes:

Where Jesus is, there is life. There is abundant life, vigorous life, loved life and eternal life. There is life-before-death. I find it deeply disturbing and unsettling whenever I think about how we have become accustomed to death—to the death of the soul, to death on the street, to death through violence, to death-before-life.

Moltmann's reflection is indicative of a God who brings life out of death. As we navigate a society deadened by an overload of social media, overstimulating news, terrifying violence, and perpetual societal disenfranchisement, we are invited to emulate God's nature as we follow Jesus within the community of faith.

In his book, *Let Your Heartbreak Be Your Guide*, the Rev. Adam Bucko uses Jesus' wedding banquet metaphor (Matthew 22:1-14) to describe this invitation:

God has invited each and every one of us to the great feast that can be our life. It is a feast where joy overshadows our normal worries and pains and where the smallness of our lives is transformed into the largeness of God's dream. It is a feast where each of us has a place to sit, eat, drink, talk, and even dance, and where our wounds are transformed into gifts. It's a feast that transforms us into the likeness of Christ, God's very heart, and where our lives begin to echo the holy energies of God's compassion, which our world needs so much right now.

As Rev. Bucko encapsulates, the invitation into the life of God ultimately transforms us into the image of God. Thus, the season of Lent may be a perfect time to remember and act upon "the notion of God we hold." Through this discipline, we can allow it to transform us into the most loving and compassionate people God has called upon us to be. It is a season of saying "no" to death and "yes" to God's gracious and eternal life for society. That, church family, may be how we truly celebrate the resurrection.

In Christ,



Pastor Joe

LEGACY OF FAITH

A meaningful way to remember/honor loved ones and friends is to contribute to the Memorial Fund, Building Renovation Fund, Music & Arts Fund, Care Ministry or the General Fund of the First Congregational Church of River Edge.



WORSHIP



We gather together on Sunday mornings at **10 a.m.**, greet neighbors, friends, and visitors before settling in for an hour of worshiping God in word, prayer, and song. Listen to beautiful music, be inspired by a thought-provoking message, celebrate our children and youth, sing with vigor, pray with expectation. Experience the Holy Spirit's presence in our beautiful sanctuary.

If you can't join us in person, worship on Zoom! If you are not yet receiving the link in the weekly email blast, send your request to be put on the list to office@fccriveredge.org.

Links to past recorded services can be found on our website, fccriveredge.org.

thank you

Every Sunday is Special!

Every Sunday is special! Thanks to

....**Wayne Placek**, who led us in worship on Transfiguration Sunday, February 11, and inspired us with his relevant message "*Listen...*"

"For it is the God who said, 'Light will shine out of darkness,' who has shone in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Christ." – 2 Corinthians 4:6

....members of the **Altar Guild** who arrange the beautiful and season-appropriate paraments, banners, and trimmings that grace our sanctuary each week.

....our **ushers**, who prepare our sanctuary for worship services by lighting candles, setting out supplies, helping greet worshipers, distributing bulletins, assisting regulars and visitors in finding their seats, and collecting the offering. They invite you to join them in a fun and meaningful way to serve.

....the **recording team** members who stream and broadcast our services week after week.

"Serve the Lord with gladness; come into his presence with singing." – Psalm 100:2



The six Sundays in **Lent** began February 18 and continue through March 24; we commemorate Jesus' 40 days of fasting and prayer in the desert wilderness. Lent is a moving, contemplative, and even

introspective time for responding to God's love by giving of ourselves for others.

Spring forward March 10! **Daylight Savings Time** begins; set your clocks ahead one hour so as not to miss a minute of joining together in worship that morning.

On March 24 join the **Palm Sunday** parade celebrating Jesus' ride into Jerusalem!

From 3 p.m. to 6 p.m. on Tuesday, March 26 in Fellowship Hall, our 36-foot **Labyrinth** will be fully assembled and open to worshipers and seekers alike. Come walk the path of prayer and contemplation.

March 28 at 7 p.m. is our **Maundy Thursday** service commemorating Jesus' Last Supper with his disciples; communion will be served. In the Tenebrae ["Shadows"] tradition we honor his sacrificial journey to the cross.

March 31 is **Easter Sunday!** We joyously celebrate the risen Christ's triumph over sin and death.

USHERING OPPORTUNITIES

The ushers of the church invite you to join them in this important ministry!

Ushers gather at 9:25 a.m. to ready the sanctuary before each Sunday service: lighting candles, setting out flowers and supplies, helping greet worshipers, distributing bulletins, assisting regulars and visitors in finding seats, and collecting the offering.

Serving as an usher is a great way to connect with a friendly group, especially if you are a newer worshiper ready to step into your first easy commitment. Youth who are not already scheduled for a church-school or confirmation class are also welcome to participate. Please express your interest to Richard Metz in person, or by email to him at richardrmetz@gmail.com.



Celebrating a special occasion or honoring a friend or loved one? Share altar flowers for one of our worship services! Contact the church office at 201-261-

1712 or email office@fccriveredge.org to check on available dates. The cost is \$25, and the deadline for ordering is the Sunday prior to their being placed on the altar.

Joys/Concerns

Each Sunday, on the table to the right of the double doors to the Sanctuary, there is a place for you to write **prayer requests** you want read aloud during the service. Add your joys or concerns so that we may celebrate with you and lift up to the Lord your struggles and sorrows.

WALK THE LABYRINTH



A labyrinth is a winding path symbolizing life's twist and turns.

FCCRE's 36-foot labyrinth, painted purple on three sections of canvas, is a model of the eleven-circuit design found on the stone floor of the Chartres (France) cathedral

built around 1200 A.D.

"Walking the labyrinth" is a quiet exercise of prayer and meditation. Our labyrinth will be fully assembled and laid out in Fellowship Hall on **Tuesday, March 26**.

You are invited to participate in this spiritual practice from **3 p.m. to 6 p.m.** A worshiper walking at a slow or moderate pace might spend 20 minutes or more in contemplation and reflection; soft music and low lighting will enhance the experience. Instructions will be provided.

To preserve the canvas, participants must remove their shoes and walk in socked feet.

Willing to assist or need service hours? Assembling the labyrinth takes three volunteers one hour. Another hour is required to disassemble and store it. The Worship Team seeks volunteers for setup and dismantling, no experience required. If interested, please contact Kathleen Motoike in person or email her at summot@verizon.net.

Christian symbol



BUTTERFLY — The butterfly symbolizes resurrection, Easter and the new life we have in Christ Jesus. As a caterpillar disappears into a chrysalis, so Jesus' lifeless body was hidden in a tomb. The emergence of the butterfly, rising into the sky in its beautiful new body, reminds us of Christ's resurrection — and ours.

MEMBERSHIP

INQUIRERS GROUP

ARE YOU:

- New to First Congregational Church of River Edge?
- Thinking about becoming a member of First Congregational Church?
- Wanting to discuss basic Christian Faith?
- Wanting to know more about how First Congregational worships and works?

If you answered “yes” to any of these questions, then please come to the Inquirer’s Group which will gather on Sunday morning April 14TH following worship from 11:15 am - 12:15 pm.

After conclusion of the class, those who wish to become members of the congregation will be received as members on a future Sunday this spring.

The group will be facilitated by Pastor Joe and individuals from the Membership Team.

If you would like to participate, **please call the church office at 201-261-1712 or email office@fccriveredge.org**



A Progressive Dinner is being planned for Saturday evening June 1st.

Please consider hosting the initial gathering for appetizers/cocktails, one of the dinners, a final gathering for dessert in your home or plan on joining the fellowship, food and fun as a guest.

The Progressive Dinners are a wonderful evening for our members and friends!

Sign-ups to host or attend will commence in April.



New Online Pictorial Directory

A new online Church Directory is being planned this spring through Instant Church Directory.

Marvin Orendain has graciously volunteered to take photos for directory (or members/friends may submit their own photos) but members and friends are needed to plan and coordinate this project.

Please contact Russell Van Wetering at **201-261-1795 or aprilsky@optonline.net** to volunteer for this short term project.

Thank you,

Russell Van Wetering



FELLOWSHIP TIME HOSTS & GREETERS ARE NEEDED

Greeters and Fellowship Time hosts are always needed and appreciated. All one needs to greet is a friendly smile and a warm hello.

Hosting Fellowship Time is a wonderful time of fellowship with our members, friends and visitors. Please consider hosting as an individual, with friends, as a group or as a family. It's a fun and rewarding experience.

Please contact Russell Van Wetering with any questions.

SHAWL MINISTRY



The next meeting of the Shawl Ministry will take place on **Thursday, March 8, at 1:30 pm.**

All knitters and crocheters are welcome to join us in making shawls...or bring your current yarn project and spend a relaxing afternoon in the Commons with us.

Everyone is welcome!

MISSION TEAM

March 10, 2024



It's Time to Share the Light



Our UCC One Great Hour of Sharing (OGHS) offering is a special mission collection which supports disaster relief in the US and abroad.

In 2023, our OGHS donations assisted victims of the devastating wildfires in Hawaii and the earthquake in Turkey.

Our OGHS donations not only help at the time of the disaster but provide longer-term support to communities as they struggle to recover. Your donations continue to assist fire/flood/landslide victims in Northern California, fire victims in Colorado, victims of the 2021 Hurricane Ida in Louisiana and Mississippi... and many others.

Because several Christian denominations work together, administrative costs are low, so a large portion of your donation goes directly to those in times of urgent need. Let's be generous in 2024.

Let's Share the Light

Mission Team - Thank-You Letter

“On behalf of everyone at Children's Aid and Family Service, I want to thank you for your generous and thoughtful donation of \$400...



Thanks to your support, we are making positive and lasting differences in the lives of young people like Tiara, a remarkable young woman who successfully navigated the challenges of aging out of foster care with the help of our Mobility Mentoring program. Mobility Mentoring, a program designed to help support at-risk youth entering adulthood by equipping them with essential life skills, is fully funded by generous donors like you. Contributions like yours played a vital role in her journey, providing her with one-on-one coaching to set goals, obtain higher education opportunities and achieve financial independence.

We are honored to have you as a valued supporter of our mission.”

EDUCATION

Souper Bowl of Caring Sunday

Thanks to all of you who helped us “Tackling Hunger”



with our Souper Bowl soup collection. We collected 151 cans of hearty soup and 44 other food items with a total of 195 items!

This is a wonderful contribution to our communities in need. All donations have gone to the Center for Food Action in Englewood and the food pantry at St. Peter's Church in River Edge.

Presentation of Confirmation Youth 3/3

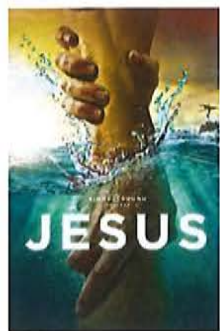
Join us in worship on 3/3 as our Confirmation Mentors present their Confirmands as they begin their journey of professing their faith to Jesus Christ. The congregation's support, encouragement, love and prayers are essential during this time of preparation.

Riverside Church Visit 3/10

The Confirmation class will be attending service at Riverside Church with their teachers and mentors on 3/10. This has always been a wonderful experience for our youth, and they are looking forward to it. A tour is also planned.

Sight and Sound Theater Matinee: Jesus 3/10

I am very excited to continue to offer these special opportunities to view some great Sight & Sound Theater productions right at FCC with our next matinee



of “Jesus”. Witness some of the most awe-inspiring, miraculous events in the gospels as Jesus sets sail with fisherman, challenges the Pharisees, and heals the hurting. From the bustling streets of Jerusalem to the raging Sea of Galilee, experience the greatest rescue story of all time as this

spectacular original production comes to life like never before. Join us on Sunday, March 10 at 4pm in The Commons. Refreshments will be served. This season pass is sponsored by our youth.

Easter Egg Hunt/Bring a Friend

Our annual Easter Egg Hunt is planned for Palm Sunday 3/24 after worship. Since this is a fun tradition, we have also made this “bring a friend to church school” that day as well. Children will be able to attend the Palm Parade leading into worship, church school then the egg hunt with a special friend. Make sure you put this wonderful event on the calendar! Keep your eyes open for the egg hunt Sign Up Genius. Photo opportunity with the Easter Bunny will also be available.

Church School Volunteers

The Education Team is in need of a few church school volunteers to fill in when a teacher is not available on Sunday morning. When the youth reach a certain age, it is important to separate them from the younger youth in order to give them a more focused lesson and time to engage with each other. It’s difficult to do that when we have to bring the whole group together due to the absence of a teacher. I will have some Confirmation commitments that bring me away from our church on Sunday mornings, so my Jr. Youth class will need a substitute. We have our curriculum in advance, so volunteers have time to plan if a teacher is scheduled to be off. Please consider getting involved in the faith development of our children.

Intergenerational Opportunity

In case this has gone unnoticed, I have an admiration for children. I really believe that we are role models to them in every situation, good or bad, fun or stressful.

I would love to have members of the congregation share stories or experiences about their faith development or life experiences with our children. I attempted to try this a few years back, but I had no takers. This is the perfect opportunity to engage with our youth. If you think you have a story to tell, please let me know! Keep in mind, you will be sharing during church school at 10am on Sunday morning.

NEW-Puzzle Exchange



Jigsaw puzzles are a fun activity for families to do together plus they are great for our mental health! The new puzzle exchange has been set up in The Commons where you can take a puzzle home or share a puzzle that you no longer need. I have a bunch to get us started, so join in the fun!

~Nicole

CELEBRATIONS



- 6 Zachary Bolognese
Chloe Heinzinger
- 7 Karl Hammerle
Edward Lanni
- 8 Amy Caughlan Carrera
Alison Donnelly
- 9 John Dewhurst
- 10 Annie Diana Stroh
- 13 Colin Hogan
- 14 Carole Meeks
Dorothy Berthe
Linda (Thomasian) Glagola
- 16 Slavina Zhelezova
- 17 Nicole Bolognese
- 18 Maryanne Keehn
- 19 Bryan Guerrieri
- 21 Nicole Lynn Cannizzaro-Garcia
- 26 Cole Heinzinger
- 26 Caleb Luise Asplint
- 29 Tom Rushforth
Nicholas Orendain



RIVER CROSSING CONCERTS

presents

Classic V Winds

Sunday, March 3 @ 4PM



Music by Coleman, D'Rivera,
Poulenc & Farrenc

WHAT are you in for?

- Interactive children's program @ 3pm
- Instrument petting zoo
- Explore wind instruments:
hear, touch, and see up close

Wine & cheese meet-and-greet with the artists

LOCATION:

First Congregational Church,
109 Continental Ave
River Edge, NJ 07661

www.rivercrossingconcerts.org

Free admission
Suggested Donation \$20

Scan code for tickets



FCC MUSIC MINISTRY

MARCH 2024



Dear FCC Family!

As we celebrate Women's History Month, I'm excited to share with you a vibrant Lenten musical journey, rich in musical styles and genres. True to our mission, we have been integrating music by women composers and lyricists throughout the year and this month is no exception, featuring choral works by Marian Foreman and instrumental pieces by Barbara Kinyon, Martha Sobaje, and Rachel Lauren. You will hear anthems in gospel, blues, contemporary (think Elton John!) and classical styles with new additions to our library by Lloyd Larson, Victor Johnson, David Cherwien and Dan Forrest.

Other exciting music happenings include River Crossing Concerts' 2024 season opener: **The French Connection**. Join us on **Sunday, March 3, 2024 at 4PM** to witness the magic of **Classic V Winds** as they explore virtuosity, color, and humor in cultural snapshots from Cuba, France and the Americas.

Don't miss this free-of-charge event, preceded by an **interactive presentation and children's instrument petting zoo at 3PM**, where kids get to explore and learn about wind instruments from the principal players of the New Jersey Wind Orchestra. promising an afternoon of musical discovery and cultural celebration.

Looking forward to sharing so much great music with you this month!

In community,

Slavina

Dates to remember

Sunday, March 3

- River Crossing Concerts:
Classic V Winds

Sunday, March 24

- Palm Sunday Service

Thursday, March 28

- Maundy Thursday Service

Sunday, March 31

- Easter Service

Sunday, April 21

- River Crossing Concerts:
GZ Piano Duo

Weekly Rehearsal Schedule

Thursdays

- 7-8- pm Chancel Choir
- 8:15-9:15pm Pilgrim Ringers
(every other Thursday)

Sundays

- 9:15-9:45am Chancel Choir
- 11:30-12pm Carol and Nowell
Choirs



STEWARDSHIP MOMENT



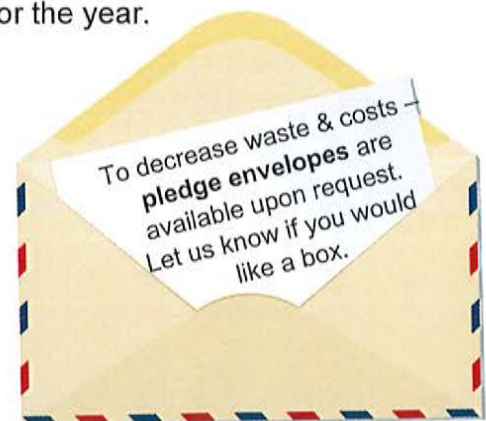
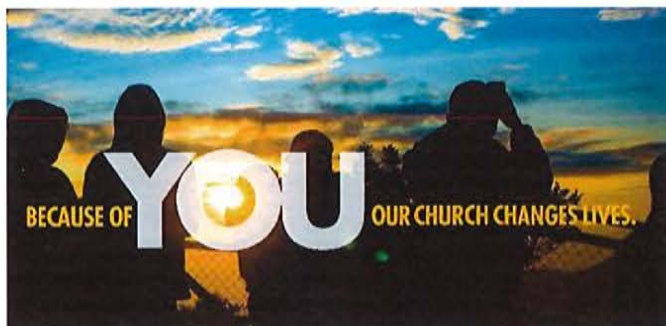
During the Annual Meeting on February 11, the congregation approved a deficit budget for 2024. There will come a day when this will no longer be viable, so we need to seriously consider how we are going to proceed financially as a congregation. Our church does so much good and important work, it is crucial that we find a way to guarantee it will continue.

FCC of River Edge provides meals and shelter for homeless families of Bergen County through Family Promise, collects food and monetary donations for local food pantries, supports students' education across the globe, provides comfort through shawls, collects emergency relief items for people who are living through devastation, provides beautiful music in our community. These are but a few of the ways our church makes a difference.

The untimely death of Pastor Bernie created a series of events increasing the actual costs over budgeted amounts for 2023. The teams have worked diligently to keep costs down, but it has become exceedingly difficult to do so. With rising costs in this economic climate, it is safe to assume that this could happen again.

The work of our church can only happen because of your generous financial support! Besides all the wonderful work you may or may not see that the First Congregational Church does, it takes a lot of financial resources to keep everything functioning behind the scenes. So far, 42 pledges have been received for 2024, ranging from \$100 to \$25,000 for the year.

YOUR PLEDGE DOES MAKE A DIFFERENCE!



Please let us know if you would like to spearhead a fundraising event!

WOMEN'S FELLOWSHIP

CWS Kits

Filled with Hope. Packed with Love.

In 1966, Church World Service created a hands-on opportunity for congregations, service groups, businesses and others to come together and love their neighbors in a tangible way. We have been participating in this effort for almost 30 years. CWS Kits are bags of supplies shared with neighbors in need. These small packages which cost \$15.00 or less to purchase are filled with hope and packed with love by volunteers like you.

Here's what is needed. Bring your donations to church and we'll package them up for pick up by CWS in mid-April.

Hygiene Kits:

- One (1) gallon Ziplock® bag
- One hand towel 15"x28" to 16"x32"
- One washcloth
- One wide tooth comb-removed from package & at least 6" of teeth
- One fingernail or toenail clipper removed from package
- One bath-size bar of soap in the original package
- One toothbrush in the original package
- Ten standard size Band Aids®



All items must fit inside the Ziplock® bag. Remove excess air from the bag and seal.

School Kits:

- One pair of blunt scissors – rounded top only and removed from packaging
- Three 70 count bound notebooks or notebooks totaling 200-210 pages.
- One 30 centimeter 12" ruler
- One hand held pencil sharpener removed from packaging
- One large eraser
- Six new unsharpened pencils with erasers. Use a rubber band to hold pencils together.
- Crayons – 24 pack
- One 12x14 to 14x17 finished cotton or lightweight canvas bag with handles. We will have some available – you bring us the supplies.



If your heart aches for homes brothers and sisters, *you are called* into this moment. If your spirit worries over children who want nothing more than to learn, *you are called* into this moment. If your prayer surround those who have lost everything, *you are called* into this moment.

Thank you for faithfully caring for your neighbors facing difficult times. Your generous gifts will be accepted through April 7.

Gratefully,
Michelle Heinzinger

LILIES AND HYDRANGEA FOR EASTER

To enhance the beauty of our Sanctuary on **Easter Sunday, March 31**, the First Congregational Church of River Edge is offering members and friends, the opportunity to order Easter plants to help complete the décor. Your purchase will commemorate or honor loved ones.

Each contributor may purchase a plant to be picked up after the Easter worship service. If you do not wish to purchase Easter Flowers, you can make a donation for the Flower Fund. The names of donors, and those in memory or honor of the flowers are given will be listed in the Church bulletin.

Checks should be payable to First Congregational Church of River Edge and designated for "Easter flowers," in the memo section of the check. Checks must be received by the Church Office no later than **Friday, March 22**. Please fill in the order form below, and return it with your check to:

First Congregational Church of River Edge
109 Continental Avenue
River Edge, NJ 07661



I am ordering: # _____ **Double Lilies - \$22.00** # _____ **Hydrangea - \$25.00**

DONOR'S NAME _____ PHONE # _____

IN MEMORY OF _____

IN HONOR OF _____

INDICATE CHOICE: _____ Take home after the Easter Service
_____ No flowers but please accept my donation to the
Flower Fund.

DEADLINE IS FRIDAY, MARCH 22.

2024

Sunday

Monday

Tuesday

Wednesday

Thursday

Friday

Saturday



<p>3</p> <p>10:00 Worship Service/ Pastor Joe Medlin/ Communion/ Church School</p> <p>11:00 Fellowship Time</p> <p>12:00 NJ Giving Church</p> <p>4:00 River Crossing Concert</p>	<p>4</p> <p><u>Church Office Closed</u></p> <p>12:00 Noon Al-Anon</p> <p>4:00 All The World's A Stage</p> <p>7:00 Step by Step NA</p> <p>7:00 Worship Team</p>	<p>5</p> <p>7:00 Education Team</p>	<p>6</p> <p>10:30 Staff Meeting</p> <p>12:00 Brown Bags & Bible</p> <p>1:00 Worship Team</p> <p>7:00 AA</p>	<p>7</p> <p>7:00 AC of A</p> <p>7:00 Choir</p>	<p>1</p> <p>7:00 Tri County Bag Pipers</p>	<p>2</p> <p>8:30 KWIS</p> <p>9:00 Seventh Day Adventist</p> <p>7:00 AA</p>
<p>10</p> <p>10:00 Worship Service/ Craig Peterson, Guest Preacher/ Church School</p> <p>11:00 Fellowship Time</p> <p>12:00 NJ Giving Church</p>	<p>11</p> <p><u>Church Office Closed</u></p> <p>12:00 Noon Al-Anon</p> <p>4:00 All The World's A Stage</p> <p>7:00 Step by Step NA</p>	<p>12</p>	<p>13</p> <p>10:30 Staff Meeting</p> <p>12:00 Brown Bags & Bible</p> <p>1:00 Worship Team</p> <p>7:00 AA</p>	<p>14</p> <p>1:30 Shawl Ministry</p> <p>7:00 AC of A</p> <p>7:00 Choir</p> <p>7:30 RE Swim Club</p>	<p>15</p> <p>7:00 Tri County Bag Pipers</p>	<p>16</p> <p>9:00 Seventh Day Adventist</p> <p>7:00 AA</p>
<p>17</p> <p>10:00 Worship Service/ Pastor Joe Medlin/ Church School</p> <p>11:00 Fellowship Time</p> <p>12:00 NJ Giving Church</p>	<p>18</p> <p><u>Church Office Closed</u></p> <p>12:00 Noon Al-Anon</p> <p>4:00 All The World's A Stage</p> <p>7:00 Step by Step NA</p>	<p>19</p> <p>First Day of Spring</p> <p>7:00 Leadership Council</p>	<p>20</p> <p>Congregator Deadline</p> <p>10:30 Staff Meeting</p> <p>12:00 Brown Bags & Bible</p> <p>7:00 AA</p>	<p>21</p> <p>7:00 Choir</p> <p>7:00 AC of A</p>	<p>22</p> <p>Easter Flower Order Deadline</p> <p>7:00 Tri County Bag Pipers</p>	<p>23</p> <p>9:00 Seventh Day Adventist</p> <p>7:00 AA</p>
<p>24</p> <p>10:00 Worship Service/ Pastor Joe Medlin/ Church School</p> <p>11:00 Fellowship Time</p> <p>12:00 NJ Giving Church</p>	<p>25</p> <p><u>Church Office Closed</u></p> <p>12:00 Noon Al-Anon</p> <p>4:00 All The World's A Stage</p> <p>7:00 Step by Step NA</p>	<p>26</p> <p>3:00 Walk the Labyrinth</p> <p>7:00 Mission Team</p>	<p>27</p> <p>10:30 Staff Meeting</p> <p>12:00 Brown Bags & Bible</p> <p>7:00 AA</p>	<p>28</p> <p>7:00 Worship Service</p> <p>7:00 AC of A</p>	<p>29 Good Friday</p> <p>7:00 Tri County Bag Pipers</p>	<p>30</p> <p>9:00 Seventh Day Adventist</p> <p>7:00 AA</p>
<p>31</p> <p>10:00 Worship Service/ Pastor Joe Medlin</p> <p>12:00 NJ Giving Church</p>						

MARCH COMMITMENT REMINDERS

Sunday, March 3, 2024

COMMUNION TEAM/USHERS – ☩ Jane Silane, Richard Metz
COUNTERS – Don Huggett, Tom Rushforth, Art Caughlan
GREETER(S) – Cindy Fordham
LAY READER – Linda Stark
ALTAR GUILD – Michelle Heinzinger, Sara Myers
FELLOWSHIP TIME- Medlin Family

Sunday, March 10, 2024

USHERS – ☩ Bill Hamilton, Don Huggett, Diane Lento
COUNTERS – Don Huggett, Tom Rushforth, Art Caughlan
GREETER(S) – Volunteers needed
LAY READER – Linda Stark
ALTAR GUILD – Michelle Heinzinger, Sara Myers
FELLOWSHIP TIME- Volunteers needed

Sunday, March 17, 2024

USHERS - ☩ Janet Arena, Marvin Orendain, Janet Masiello
COUNTERS – Don Huggett, Tom Rushforth, Art Caughlan
GREETER(S) – Volunteers needed
LAY READER – Joy Jacobs
ALTAR GUILD – Michelle Heinzinger, Sara Myers
FELLOWSHIP TIME- Volunteers needed

Palm Sunday, March 24, 2024

USHERS - ☩ Wayne Placek, Tom Rushforth, Jeff Keehn
COUNTERS - Don Huggett, Tom Rushforth, Art Caughlan
GREETER(S) – Volunteers needed
LAY READER – Richard Metz
ALTAR GUILD – Michelle Heinzinger, Sara Myers
FELLOWSHIP TIME- Volunteers needed

Easter Sunday, March 31, 2024

USHERS - ☩ Richard Metz, Inge Reist, Noreen Van Wetering
COUNTERS - Don Huggett, Tom Rushforth, Art Caughlan
GREETER(S) – Volunteers needed
LAY READER – Wayne Placek
ALTAR GUILD – Michelle Heinzinger, Sara Myers

☩ Team Leader

Volunteers are needed for greeting and fellowship time for upcoming weeks and months. Please contact Russell Van Wetering at 201-261-1795 or email aprilsky@optonline.net.

What My Time in Sodwana Bay Taught Me by Annie Babington

As most of you have probably heard, I have just returned from a month-long trip to South Africa. I went to volunteer with the organization Deep Blue Conservation who provide data for a research study on the significance of Nudibranchs regarding them being bioindicators of climate change and the overall health of the reef. After getting my PADI Open Water scuba certification, we went on several dives where we collected photographic data on the Nudis and other aquatic species; including sharks which are one of my favorite fish! During my time there, I stayed in a small beach town called Sodwana Bay. If I'm being completely honest, I never wanted to leave. It truly became my home away from home and I will deeply miss the environment and the people I have met there. One of my favorite things about Sodwana is that the bay is an MPA (Marine Protected Area), and the reefs are both gorgeous and full of life. The town also doesn't get that many tourists because it is quite small and tucked away, so that really adds to how special of a place it truly is.

As I sit here writing this, I keep thinking about how I almost canceled my plans to go on this trip entirely. Back in May 2023 I was really interested in solo traveling and was looking into all of my options. Traveling abroad has been something I have wanted to do since I was a little girl. Seeing the world was something I dreamed of because I can remember my favorite things have always been traveling to new places and gaining new experiences. When I brought up the idea of solo traveling to my mom, she wasn't quite thrilled about it. She did everything in her power to talk me out of it because of the many factors that involved my safety and if I would be in any danger being alone in a new place. As hard as she tried, she couldn't change my mind about something that I considered one of my many dreams. She knew how important this was to me, so she found a way that was a nice compromise. One of her coworkers from the college found a traveling company online that specializes in finding volunteering opportunities all around the world. I think the link she sent me was for opportunities based in the states, but of course I decided to look to see what they offered abroad. That is when I found one called Marine Diving Conservation, which is the one I ended up choosing. It seemed so perfect because I am currently studying for a career in marine conservation. I was so excited to apply for this opportunity and even though my parents were hesitant at first, the idea that I would be getting experience in something that I'm passionate about while also being with a group of people instead of entirely alone didn't seem so bad. I immediately started the process of applying and was eagerly waiting to hear back for the next steps. I was so excited until it was time to apply. I got an answer back from my initial letter of interest and was tasked with sending them some paperwork, a cover letter and other things they needed before they could let the organization know about my interest in volunteering with them. Even though I was super excited to apply, a lot of stuff started to happen in my life that made me become hesitant. I was going through a lot of personal issues and as time went on, my procrastinating in submitting the requested information started to progressively get worse. I struggle with a lot of things mentally and physically that can make being productive kind of difficult and the idea of me going on this trip started to not seem as obtainable anymore. I still knew that I really wanted to go but I struggled with finding the energy to continue the process of applying. After some time, I eventually made my final decision and got back to the travel company in October. I wasn't sure if they were going to still have availability in January, but I decided to give it a shot. There was a chance they were going to still accept my paperwork and then let me know if the organization thought I would be a good fit for their program. After I got everything in, I got an email back letting me know that I was accepted. Now everything was almost finalized, and it was official that I was going to be traveling to South Africa! I was very excited that I was going to be able to live out some of the dreams that I have always had.

I find it kind of funny because I have always known that God works in very mysterious ways, but I haven't truly experienced that until this trip happened. Before I left, it just seemed like things were continuing to fall apart. I did get past some roadblocks and made the final decision to continue applying for this program, but it just seemed like my struggles weren't going away. For me 2023 was one of the worst years of my life. I experienced so much heartbreak, loss and severely struggled mentally and felt like I was fully crumbling. I had a couple jobs that were probably the worst places for me to work for my mental health. And I experienced a lot of grief that took a huge toll on me. Also because of my mental struggles I started struggling financially, which probably wasn't the best since the trip I was about to go on wasn't cheap. Before Thanksgiving I suffered a lot and had to seek help to better myself and discovered things about my mental health that wasn't on my 2023 bingo card, but I am glad today that I know.

Thanksgiving was also quite hard for me because the birthday of my grandfather who passed in September fell on that day. All in all, 2023 was not the best. What I didn't know at the time was that my 2024 was going to start off by changing my life.

When I left for my trip, it was the beginning of January, so I spent the start of the new year doing something I have never done before. It was probably the best decision of my life because I met some of the most amazing people and learned a lot about myself that I didn't really know before. This trip taught me how to truly love myself and that there are people out there who don't really care about how you look or your status. It was very healing and when I was there, all my insecurities didn't exist. I have never experienced that before, a true out of body experience. On this trip, I also fell in love with diving and can see myself continuing for the rest of my life; it became one of my passions. I am even planning on eventually going back to Sodwana to work towards getting my Dive Master certification. Going to South Africa has really put everything in perspective and taught me how to truly love the things that I have. I am very grateful for all the experiences I have been able to create and I'm excited to continue making more memories. It was very eye opening and as someone who has always struggled with figuring out what I want to do in my future, I have finally figured out my true calling with conservation with a specialty in sharks. I honestly think God was with me the whole time because he showed me how strong I actually am both physically and mentally, and I am very grateful.

Annie Babington

Here are some of my favorite photos from my trip:





March 2024

Gloria Holm, Bob Owens, Barbara Wieboldt, Tom Rushforth, Jennifer & Marty Leibowitz, Dona Berg, Tom Canzani, Judi Schmitt, Bob Drummond, Willie Jones, Diana Loeffel, Patricia Murphy, Carol & David Kuehne, Richard Smith, Barbara Carr, Hank Schroeder, Anthony Mirabile, Carol and Sue, Janet & Nicholas Post, Phil Ceppaglia, Mary Foley, Jennifer Hall, Marcia Schroeder, Bob Shrekast.

Those in Recovery, Homebound, Assisted Living Residences or Nursing homes

Jean Babington, Doris & Chet Price, Evelyn Waytowich, Phyllis Malley, Bob Owens, William Spencer, Bill Finch, Bill Lent.

Serving in the Military

Michael Shuler, Bob Bailey, Andrew Pohl, Noah Dahl, Matthew Agrusti

CHURCH OFFICE INFORMATION

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email -office@fccriveredge.org Website - www.fccriveredge.org

CHURCH OFFICE HOURS

Monday, closed. Tuesday – Friday, 9:00 am – 4:30 pm

Rev. Joe Medlin Pastor	revjmedlin@aol.com 808-785-4822
Slavina Zhelezova Director of Music	szhelezova@fccriveredge.org
Nicole Babington Minister for Faith Formation	nbabington@fccriveredge.org 201-956-3435
Keri Lampey Administrative Assistant	office@fccriveredge.org 201-261-1712
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Mission

Welcoming all, our mission is to help nurture and grow faith in God through dynamic, creative, relevant worship and to bring God's word and work into our community. Through our action and bold outreach programs, we set an example of love, acceptance, compassion and support that will stand as a testament to our faith in Jesus Christ.

Romans 15:7 "Welcome one another, therefore, just as Christ has welcomed you, for the glory of God."

Vision

We are a beacon of hope, a place to grow in love toward God and one another. With joy and energy, we share the teachings of Christ in our church, our community and our world.

Matthew 5:14 "You are the light of the world. A city built on a hill cannot be hid."