

Minds, hearts, hands, and voices in Christ.



the Spire

**Newsletter of the
Oak Tree-Iselin
Presbyterian Church**

February 2024

Rev. Chris Houtz, pastor

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the Spire is published for distribution electronically the first day of the month and sent by post the next business day. The deadline for submitted articles is the previous Wednesday.

We welcome any news you would like to share with the congregation. Please e-mail your WORD documents to:

Betsy Christensen, editor,
at Betson42@comcast.net or leave written articles in the mail box marked "*the Spire*".



✝ A Message from our Pastor,
Rev. Chris Houtz

Friends of Oak Tree-Iselin Church,

"Father, forgive them..."

"Today you will be with me in Paradise."

"Behold your son...behold your mother."

"My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?"

"I thirst."

"It is finished."

"Into your hands I commit my spirit."

These are the combined last words of Jesus on the cross from all four gospels. Now surprisingly, at least to me, Lent is just a couple weeks away at this point, so I want to share what our study will be on Wednesday nights. I heard many good things about our study last year from Rev. Adam Hamilton (Simon Peter: Flawed but Faithful Disciple). With that in mind, I have selected another study by Rev. Adam Hamilton called "Final Words from the Cross."

Here is a brief summary from the publisher:

"In life and in death, Jesus' words were powerful and meaningful. Despite the serious effort and increased pain required for Jesus to speak as he hung on the cross, Jesus spoke seven 'final words'—statements that have much to teach us about Jesus, his Father, and ourselves..."

Each chapter begins with the biblical account followed by a first-person story as might have been told from the viewpoint of one of the characters at the cross. Then the chapter explores the meaning of Jesus' dying words for our lives today. Following the last statement, a postscript recounts the words Jesus spoke following his resurrection, including what truly were the final words Jesus spoke while walking this earth."

We will be meeting every Wednesday starting on February 21st through Holy Wednesday, March 27th, to explore each of these seven final words from the cross. I hope you can join us each week! And if you need a ride, please let us know—we don't want anyone missing our fellowship time and bible study simply because you are uncomfortable driving at night. So, reach out—we will make sure you are there!

In Christ,

Rev. Chris



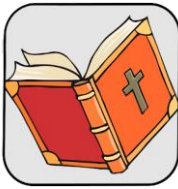
WELCOME



Join us
on Sunday morning
at 10:30 am
in the Sanctuary,
on our website,
or on Facebook.

SUNDAY MORNING BIBLE STUDY

Led by
Elder Ron Stamboly



AT 9:00 AM
IN
FELLOWSHIP HALL

**The First Annual
meeting of the
Congregation
and Corporation
of
Oak Tree-Iselin
Presbyterian Church
has been re-scheduled
for
Sunday,
February 11th, 2024,
following morning
worship**

Session actions of December 3, 2023

1. Motion was made to approve the agenda with no changes:
2. Motion was made by Andrea Harrison and second by Len Mesonas to approve the minutes (of October 29, 2023) as presented.
3. Motion was made to assign the homeless task to the Mission Committee for information and research.
4. Motion was made to postpone any further discussion on the homeless situation until the next meeting.
5. Motion was made to hire Paco Landscaping to clean the hill for approximately \$1,000.
6. Motion to remove the 2 yd trash container (for Oak Tree Outreach enter) for a larger dumpster.
7. Motion to set a budget of \$20,000 for the new sign.
8. Motion to approve signing the contract with Metuchen Mower for the snow removal.
9. Motion to hire a contractor to clean the gutters on the school building for \$200.
10. Motion was made to approve the building use request for January 20, 2024.
11. Motion to approve the new HR Policy and Procedures as presented.
12. Motion was made to raise Eun Mi Lee, custodian for Oak Tree, to the 2024 minimum wage of \$15 per hour.
13. Motion to have Communion at the Christmas Eve Service.
14. Motion to print the Session motions in the next Spire.
15. Motion to adjourn.

Session Actions of January 14, 2024

1. Motion was made to approve the agenda with no changes:
2. Motion approve the minutes as presented.
3. Motion to approve the 2023 Statistical Report as presented.
4. Motion to approve the transfer of Valerie Singh and Zena John to the First Presbyterian Church of Woodbridge.
5. Motion to remove Michael Listash from the active rolls.
6. Motion to purchase a new digital sign from Pac Signs in the amount of \$23,885.
7. Motion to approve the Oak Tree building request for a music recital on June 8th.
8. Motion to approve an Easter Egg hunt during Sunday service on Sunday, March 24th (Palm Sunday).
9. Motion to approve the lessons for Sunday school from the months of January thru March as presented in report.
10. Motion to approve the 2024 Terms of Call for Rev. Chris as presented.
11. Motion to have a Souper Bowl Sunday on Sunday, February 11th with a free will offering and a collection of canned soups to benefit the Deacon's Fund.
12. Motion to have a Shrove Tuesday Pancake Supper on Tuesday, February 13th at 6:00 pm in the Fellowship Hall.
13. Motion to approve creating some emergency packets for the homeless.
14. *Motion to print the Session motions in the next Spire.*
15. *Motion to change the congregational meeting from February 4th to February 11th.*

Liturgy for February



February 4th

Isaiah 40:21-31
Psalm 147:1-11, 20c
1 Corinthians 9:16-23
Mark 1:29-39

February 11th

2 Kings 2:1-12
Psalm 50:1-6
2 Corinthians 4:3-6
Mark 9:2-9

February 14th Ash Wednesday

Joel 2:1-2, 12-17
Psalm 51:1-17
2 Corinthians 5:20b-6:10
Matthew 6:1-6, 16-20

February 18th

Genesis 9:8-17
Psalm 25:1-10
1 Peter 3:18-22
Mark 1:9-15

February 25th

Genesis 17:1-7, 15-16
Psalm 22:23-31
Romans 4:13-25
Mark 8:31-38

From the Deacons

Ministry of Compassion

A receptacle has been placed in the foyer for donations to the food pantry. Items needed are:

Canned:

vegetables, beans, fruit, tuna fish, pasta sauce, soup, gravy

Peanut Butter
Jelly
Rice

Pasta
Stuffing
Soup

Instant potatoes
Mac and cheese
Cranberry

The next distribution will be February 12th.



February 14, 2024

Will be held at Community Presbyterian Church
75 Glenville Road, Edison, NJ 08817

At 7:00 pm

If you would like to carpool, meet at our church at 6:30 pm,
or call Betsy at 732/407-2965

Hosted by the
Worship & Music
Committee



Lenten Soup & Bread Suppers and Devotion

We begin at 6:00 pm
on Wednesday, February 21st,
and continue each Wednesday evening
during Lent.

A sign-up sheet can be found in Fellowship Hall for those
who wish to volunteer to make soup or donate bread.

See Sue Ramirez for further information.

Wednesday Bible Study

11:00 am in
Fellowship Hall
Led by Rev. Chris

Thursday
Congregational Call
at 11:00 AM



Phone 805/706- 4409
PIN: 3944



SHROVE TUESDAY

PANCAKE SUPPER

AND FELLOWSHIP

Hosted by the Mission Committee



TUESDAY, FEBRUARY 13TH AT 6:00 PM



ALL ARE WELCOME



Aluminum tabs for Ronald McDonald House



A collection container
can be found in
Fellowship Hall

Your tab contribution was gratefully received by the Avenel Presbyterian Church VBS Program, which sponsors the Ronald McDonald effort. Please continue to save tabs for the next collection in July, 2024.



Shop-Rite gift cards are now available each week during Fellowship Hour in \$25, \$50, and \$100 denominations. Simply bring cash or check and receive your card(s).

2024

**Per capita
apportionment
will remain at
\$40.00**



Memory Verse For February

- 10 Create in me a clean heart, O God; and put a new and right spirit within me.
11 Cast me not away from your presence; and take not thy holy spirit from me.
12 Restore to me the joy of your salvation; and uphold me with thy free spirit.
13 Then I will teach transgressors thy ways; and sinners shall be converted unto thee.
14 Deliver me from blood-guiltiness, O God, thou God of my salvation, and my tongue shall sing aloud of thy righteousness.

Psalm 51:10-14



Dear Reverend Chris Houtz and the Oak Tree Presbyterian Church of Iselin,

Please accept our sincerest thank you for donating items to Moms Helping Moms Foundation. We are so thankful for your support of our mission to provide underserved families in New Jersey with equitable access to the basics they need to provide their children with a safe and healthy start.

You donated 2,860 wipes, 1,207 diapers, 87 pieces of clothing and many other baby essentials!

Donations such as yours are vital to our organization because they include much-needed supplies but also help raise awareness in our community about diaper need and period poverty. Your donations are an investment in strengthening families and help to alleviate caregiver stress, ease financial strain, and provide the supplies they need to keep their children and themselves healthy. We could not do the work we do without you.

Thank you again! We hope that you will consider us for future donations.

Sincerely,

Allison and the MHM Team

[Moms Helping Moms – A New Jersey Baby Supply and Diaper Bank](#)

February Mission Focus



February 11, 2024

It's not just "soup"!

This year, in addition to our annual donation drive, we are asking each member to bring in a can of soup to add to our food pantry. A can of soup can be stretched a long way to provide a nutritious, filling meal for a food insecure family:

A can of condensed tomato Basil Soup can be added to ground beef with grated onion, breadcrumbs, egg and grated cheese to make meatloaf.

Cream of mushroom soup can be added to cooked chicken, with dried herbs, evaporated milk, and other seasonings to serve over pasta.

Gravy made from canned consume thickened with flour, sour cream, and cream of mushroom soup, added to browned ground beef and onion, can be used to flavor Beef Stroganoff. Serve over pasta, potatoes, or rice.

Chicken Tetrizzini can be made by adding sour cream and frozen or canned peas and carrots to a can of Chicken Noodle Soup. Add some shredded mozzarella and cheddar cheeses to add more protein.

The possibilities are endless...

All donations, monetary and soup cans, will be used to benefit our own Deacon's Food Pantry.