



the Spire



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

December 25 – January 26

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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*".

Minds, hearts, hands, and voices in Christ.

From the Pastor Nominating Committee



As we move into the Advent and Christmas seasons, let us share in the Joy of our coming Saviour, the love we have for our church and each other, the hope of finding a new Pastor soon, and the peace of knowing that God is always with us. Pray that we never lose our sense of purpose in God's world, always working to be obedient to His commands and faithful to his Word.



"I DIDN'T DO WHAT I WAS SUPPOSED TO DO AND DID WHAT I WASN'T SUPPOSED TO DO!"

From the Book of Common Prayer 1662

ALMIGHTY and most merciful Father; We have erred and strayed from thy ways like lost sheep. We have followed too much the devices and desires of our own hearts. We have offended against thy holy laws. We have left undone those things which we ought to have done; And we have done those things which we ought not to have done; And there is no health in us. But thou, O Lord, have mercy upon us, miserable offenders. Spare thou them, O God, who confess their faults. Restore thou those who are penitent; According to thy promises declared unto mankind in Christ Jesus our Lord. And grant, O most merciful Father, for his sake; That we may hereafter live a godly, righteous, and sober life, To the glory of thy holy Name. Amen.

This is the Prayer of Confession that we prayed every Sunday during my years at The Linden Reformed Church, where I attended until I married and came to Iselin. We knew it by rote. I long ago came to the realization that there is a difference between 'reciting', or 'saying', a prayer, and 'praying' a prayer.

During this season of Advent, as we follow the rituals and attend the activities, enjoying the music and decorations, let's slow down and think about what it all really means for us as Christians. The simple birth of a baby, but with the most profound significance for our lives – a gift freely given for us by a loving God!

From the editor

A Joyous Christmas to all

Welcome

to
Oak Tree- Iselin
Presbyterian Church



**Children's Sunday School
begins in the sanctuary at
10:30 and is excused to their
classroom after the
Time with the Children**

Join us
for Sunday morning
worship
at 10:30 am
in the Sanctuary, and for
Fellowship following the
service.

We can also be found on
Facebook Live.

**PER CAPITA
APPORTIONMENT
FOR 2026
HAS BEEN RAISED TO**

\$42 PER MEMBER

PC(USA) HAS BEEN DOING ITS
BEST TO KEEP COSTS DOWN,
AND WE HAVE NOT HAD AN
INCREASE IN SEVERAL YEARS.

Welcome - English

Session actions of November 9th

Motion to approve the painting and caulking of the outside of the stained-glass church windows not to exceed \$2,500.

The first Nativity scene is credited to St. Francis of Assisi in the year 1223. Hoping to make the story of Jesus' birth more tangible for everyday people, he staged a live re-creation in a cave in Greccio, Italy. With villagers playing the roles of Mary, Joseph, shepherds, and angels, and featuring real animals filling out the scene, the faithful could see the story brought to life right before their eyes.

The tradition spread quickly across Europe. By the Renaissance, artisans began carving wooden figures to replace live participants, making it possible for families to create smaller versions in their homes. These handcrafted sets became heirlooms, passed down through generations, while larger and more elaborate versions adorned cathedrals and town squares.

Today, Nativity sets range from minimalist wooden carvings to detailed ceramic figures, from traditional to modern designs. No matter the style, the intention remains the same: to reflect on the humble beginnings of Christmas.

*You are all invited
Sunday, December 7th
during Fellowship Hour*

**Baby Shower
for Mary**



**Donations of items to be taken to
Moms Helping Moms.**

See list of needed items on page 6



First Sunday of Advent
November 30th
Rev. Donald Pitches

Second Sunday of Advent
December 7th
CRE Linwood Bagby
Communion

Third Sunday of Advent
December 14th
Herb Williams

Fourth Sunday of Advent
December 21st
Herb Williams



**WE HONOR OUR
VETERANS
SUNDAY,
NOVEMBER 9TH**



Ron and Bill, our two present veterans, display the special cake provided by the Deacons.



Herb Williams and Ron Stamboly fold the flag to prepare for dedication and flying.



Rev. Donald Pitches dedicated our new flag held by Bill Anthony and Ron Stamboly.

The new flag was purchased by CLEF to replace the tattered flag on the hill. It was dedicated on Sunday, November 9th, just in time for Veteran's Day.

Thank you, Rev. Pitches, for helping to honor our flag and the men and women who served to protect our freedom.

Photos by Sara

**Wednesday Night
Advent Fellowship**
6:00 PM
In Fellowship Hall
Led by Elder Herb Williams
December 3rd, 10th, 17th
Bring a substantial hors d'oeuvre
or dessert and a friend.

Christmas Eve
Service of
Lessons and Carols
7:00 PM



Liturgy for December

December 7th

Second Sunday in Advent

Isaiah 11:1-10
Psalm 72:1-7, 18-19
Romans 15: 4-13
Matthew 3:1-12

December 14th

Third Sunday in Advent

Isaiah 35:1-10 or Luke 1:46b-55
Psalm 146:5-10
James 5:7-10
Matthew 11:2-11

December 24th

Fourth Sunday in Advent

Isaiah 7: 10-16
Psalm 80:1-7,17-19
Romans 1:1-7
Matthew 1:18-25

December 24th

Christmas Eve

Isaiah 9:2-7
Psalm 96
Titus 2:11-14
Luke 2:1-14 (15-20)

December 28th

First Sunday of Christmas

Isaiah 63: 7-9
Psalm 148
Hebrews 2:10-18
Matthew 2:13-23

Liturgy for January



January 4th

Second Sunday of Christmas

Jermiah 31: 7-14
Psalm 147:12-20
Ephesians 1: 3-14
John 1:(1-9)10-18

January 11

Baptism of the Lord

Isaiah 42:1-9
Psalm 29
Acts 10: 34-43
Matthew 3: 13-17

January 18th

Second Sunday after Epiphany

Isaiah 49: 1-7
Psalm 40: 1-11
1 Corinthians 1:1-9
John 1:29-42

January 25

third Sunday after Epiphany

Isaiah 9:1-4
Psalm 27:4-9
1 Corinthians 1:10-18
Matthew 4: 12-23



Happy Birthday



December

Grace Rozger	12-04
Paul Raghunandan	12-10
Betsy Christensen	12-16
Jared Doodnauth	12-18
Cecelia Bolton	12-20
Alaine Pakla -Bolton	12-29

January

Jim Durgana	10-10
Kate Scott	01-10
Ron Stamboly	01-14
Andre Raghunandan	01-15
John Lillie	01-25

 **Johnsonburg**
Camp & Retreat Center

Men's Retreat

**Friday, February 27, 2026 -
Sunday, March 1, 2026**

**Theme: The Constitution and
the Bible**

**Led by George Erlandson, Pastor
Community Presbyterian Church of
Edison**

**Register at www.campjburg.org
Registration closes
Monday, February 16**

Ronald McDonald House



We are again collecting aluminum soda can tabs for the Ronald McDonald House Mission effort of the Avenel Presbyterian Church. Together, let's make a difference! You will find a collection canister in Fellowship Hall.



Shop-Rite Gift Cards

are available each week during Fellowship Hour in \$25, \$50, and \$100 denominations.

Oak Tree-Iselin Presbyterian Church receives 5% back on each card sold.

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, soups and broth.
Mac'n'Cheese, Cereal, Peanut Butter, Jelly, Pasta, Rice**

Help Make Someone's Holiday Happier



Thanksgiving and Christmas Baskets:

**Instant potatoes, Stuffing mix, Gravy,
Yams, Cranberry Sauce
Frozen Turkeys or Turkey breast,
Frozen or canned Hams,
Frozen Chickens**



Also accepted: feminine products and personal hygiene products.

**The Holiday distributions will be on
Monday, December 15th and January 12th**

Prayer Shawl Ministry

**Thursday Nights
at 7:00 PM
In the
Choir Room**



Come and learn to knit or crochet (we'll supply yarn and needles) or just come for the conversation!

Coastlandspresbytery.org



The Christian Flag



The **Christian Flag** is an ecumenical flag designed in the late 19th century, designed by Charles Overton and R. E. Diffendorfer to represent Christianity and Christendom. Since its adoption by the United States Federal Council of Churches on January 23, 1942, it has had varied usage by congregations of many Christian traditions, including Anglican Baptist, Congregationalist, Lutheran, Mennonite, Methodist, Moravian, Presbyterian, and Reformed, among others.

The ground is white, representing purity. In the upper corner is a blue square, the color of the waters of baptism, emblematic of heaven, the home of the Christian; also a symbol of faith and trust. In the center of the blue is the cross, the ensign and chosen symbol of Christianity: the cross is red, typical of Christ's blood.

There are two primary versions of the pledge to the Christian flag. The most widely used version, common in many evangelical and conservative churches, goes as follows:

"I pledge allegiance to the Christian Flag, and to the Savior for whose Kingdom it stands; one Savior, crucified, risen, and coming again, with life and liberty to all who believe."

An older, original version written by Lynn Harold Hough in 1908 is also still used by some, particularly in more liberal traditions:

"I pledge allegiance to the Christian flag, and to the Savior for whose kingdom it stands; one brotherhood, uniting all mankind in service and in love." *

Editor's note:

This second version is the one I remember reciting on Sunday mornings in Sunday School.

*Taken from Wikipedia, citations removed



Thank you, Katherine, for asking the question!



New Logo!



Serving Underserved Families in New Jersey

Moms Helping Moms Foundation (MHM) is a baby supply, diaper and period supply bank dedicated to creating a future without childhood poverty by providing babies with the essentials to ensure a safe and healthy start.

We collect new and gently used baby items, diapers and period supplies and with the help of over 600 volunteers, distribute them through our community service partners to underserved families who reside all throughout the state of New Jersey.

WE ACCEPT THESE NEW OR GENTLY USED ITEMS:

- Diapers – All Sizes (open packs okay)
- Adult Incontinence Products (open packs okay)
- Clothing Sizes 0-5T
- Books for Ages 0-5
- Swaddle Blankets
- Diaper Bags
- Pack N Plays (less than 5 years old)
- High Chairs (less than 5 years old)
- Strollers (less than 5 years old – no jogging strollers)

WE ACCEPT THESE ITEMS NEW ONLY:

- Wipes (unopened)
- Baby Hygiene Items (unopened)
- Period Products
- Formula (unexpired and unopened)
- Breast Pumps
- Breast Pump Bottles & Storage Bags (unopened)

- Breast Pads
- Nursing Pillows (ie: Boppy pillows)
- Bottles
- Pacifiers
- Sippy Cups

Please bring unwrapped items to display at the Baby Shower on December 7th. They will be delivered to Moms Helping Moms the following week.

Thank you.

The Mission Committee

SATURDAY, JANUARY 10TH AT 5:00 PM

THE "UN-GREENING OF THE CHURCH" AND PIZZA PARTY



The tree is drooping, its branches bare;
the wreaths are dusty and faded.
The candles, burned low, have lost their glow,
And the candy dish has been raided.

It's time to pack up the ornaments,
the creche with its shepherds and kings.
But let's keep our hope, love, peace and joy,
and stories and rememberings.

Come join in the joy of work that is shared,
And the love that we find for this place.
Come share in peace and hope without cease,
As we prepare for a new year of grace.

A FREE WILL DONATION WILL BE RECEIVED FOR PIZZA



Dear friends of Oak Tree-Iselin Presbyterian Church,

I went on this road trip with a clear purpose. I love my dog Moonie and want to show the world how much love and joy a pet can bring. So, I decided to dedicate my miles and time to the organization that gave me Moonie, Animal Lighthouse Rescue. I prayed on this decision, and the message from God was clear. People want to connect, support and donate when they can. We had so much fun visiting old friends across the country and spending time with my husband's family in California. I'm proud to say we raised over \$3,000 for Animal Lighthouse Rescue. One third of that donation came from the wonderful members of Oak Tree, of CLEF, and the biggest thanks of all goes to fellow *sato* mom Betsy who, with the Mission Committee, organized *A Little Fall Fun* and kept **the Spire** full of vacation pics from our drive. Did you know you can still donate to the campaign? Check out the good work at www.alcares.com and as for me, now that we're back, we are fostering dogs for adoption. Thank you all and God bless.

Andrea



Congratulations
Alaine  *David*

November 14, 2025



May God
richly bless
your new life
together.



2026
HAPPY ☆ NEW ☆ YEAR