

April 2024



First Presbyterian Church of Verona

Come and Worship With Us

10:15 a.m.

10 Fairview Ave, Verona, NJ 07044

973-239-3561

Interim Pastor: Rev. Dr. Rhonda Myers

Director Music: Chaequan Anderson

Christian Education Chair: Cathy Franco

Sexton: Andy Turner

Admin. Assistant: Patti Beirne

E-Mail: veronapreschurch@gmail.com

Website: www.veronapreschurch.org

MISSION STATEMENT

We are a caring and welcoming church fully engaged in the mission and ministry of Jesus Christ. Empowered by the Holy Spirit, we live and worship in joyful fellowship with God, proclaiming the Good News through an active program of Christian education and music for children, families, and individuals of all ages. We are committed to sharing our gifts and talents to implement God's will and to assume leadership in our community, guided by the principles of Christian love.

ONLINE OPPORTUNITIES FOR SUPPORT AND WORSHIP

For those who are unable to attend, services will be streamed through this you tube site:

<https://www.youtube.com/channel/UC0czo7NSkhf56Ffx5OpA03Q>

On YouTube: <https://www.youtube.com/channel/UC0czo7NSkhf56Ffx5OpA03Q>
and subscribe to our channel.

Church Website www.veronapreschurch.org

2024 CHURCH OFFICERS

SESSION		DEACONS	
Cathy Franco Christopher Kiel Donna Kiel Donna Lauckner	Marilyn O'Neill Deborah Michelsen Margaret Whiting	Kathy Dougherty David Haimann Matthew Koroluk Michael McGough Trevor Mescia	Barbara Haimann Willow Pomponio Marion Shine Tennille Wasak Daniel Uniss

Margaret Whiting, Clerk of the Session Council
Dr. Michael Duhaney, Corporation President
Ken Lauckner- Treasurer
Kathy Dougherty & Donna Lauckner- Financial Secretaries
Michael McGough- Deacon Co-Chair

From the Pastor's Desk—April 2024

“Go therefore and make disciples of all nations.” (*Matthew 28:19a*)

My dear friends in Christ,

We have entered the Easter season and, as we do so, we recall the gifts of our risen Lord who brings new life into a world inclined to a fair measure of religious lethargy. In Christ, we find the strength to persevere in our conviction to do the work of his Kingdom on earth and to be the people of faith he invites us to be.

The disciples had a hard time, at first, receiving the good news of Jesus' resurrection and welcoming his gift of peace. But the women persisted in sharing that news and, as “they say,” the rest is history.

While Christianity continues to grow in other places of the world, the U.S. is another story and the *good news* is being shared less and less. A recent Gallup poll reveals that 56% of Americans say they seldom or never attend religious services. Gallup concludes that, “The most popular church in America might be St. Mattress, followed by Bedside Baptist. Those two—euphemisms for sleeping in on Sundays—increasingly describe the attitude of many Americans toward attending churches or other houses of worship.”

Many churches in America have experienced a significant decline in participation and the pandemic left in its wake some serious fissures in the foundations of many faith communities. While the Roman Catholic church has seen the largest downturn, even those traditions with the highest expectations for regular involvement (such as the Latter-Day Saints) have witnessed serious falloff. According to Gallup, “Overall, the percentage of Americans who never attend services has more than doubled since the early 1990s.”

Yet, that doesn't mean people have stopped yearning for a relationship with God. It more likely means that people are not being spiritually fulfilled at the churches and synagogues of their youth and are seeking that fulfillment elsewhere.

What do we in established churches do with this news?

We begin by recognizing that resurrection requires death—perhaps to the traditions and customs of a prior era that are more preference-driven than biblically based and do not resonate with those of younger generations. We move from there to asking, “What does God require of us in this changing era?” and “Are we willing to open ourselves up to God's leading in a new day, with new ideas, new plans, new energy?”

The congregational survey that so many of you participated in has given the Mission Study Team a good sense of the level of openness to the Spirit's leading, and we want to thank everyone who submitted a survey for your time and consideration. We will share with you the results of that survey soon.

Meanwhile, as we consider what's next for the people of God at the First Presbyterian Church of Verona, we continue to dwell in the peace of Christ knowing that we've been blessed with an Easter resolve to bring new life to our Kingdom work and new energy to our ongoing witness to Christ: sharing the good news of the One who comes in peace to bring grace and wholeness to a world suffering with heartache, greed, and a certain level of self-involvement.

We are an Easter people. We are witnesses to the resurrection and have a God-given purpose to share the message of a living, loving Lord who seeks to be in relationship with all. May we welcome our calling and do our part to share our faith with others. Invite a friend or neighbor to church. Volunteer time in mission. Be a mentor to a Sunday School child. Offer up random acts of kindness. Initiate a small group dedicated to prayer, community building, bible study, or sharing stories of faith. Welcome those who come seeking Christ and be polite! (Never, ever open a conversation at the door to the church with anything that sounds like, "Well, where have you been?" or "Long time, no see.")

All these things and more can make a lasting difference in bringing renewal to the church while also meeting the needs of God's beloved children. Blessings to us all as we covenant to do this Kingdom work,
Pastor Rhonda

Ramadan Iftar Dinner

A **Ramadan Iftar Dinner** is being hosted by the Islamic Center of Verona and sponsored by the Verona Clergy Council on Wednesday evening, April 3rd, at the Community Center of Verona starting at 6:15pm. There will be a program led by the local clergy on the act of fasting from each of our faith traditions and then a lovely dinner will be served. The Iftar is a meal served at the end of the day during the Islamic season of Ramadan, to break the day's fast. Each congregation is limited to 20 participants for reasons of space. Please speak to Pastor Rhonda if you would like to be added to the list of participants. This is a wonderful way to learn more about our various faith traditions—and to receive the gift of a free meal.

Book Study

Our spring **Book Study**, in-person and online, will begin on Tuesday, April 9th. We will be reviewing Joan Chittister's exploration of *The Apostles' Creed* in her book *In Search of Belief*. Books are available from the church office at a cost of \$12 each or they may be purchased from Amazon or another bookseller. Notify Cathy Franco at turtlebacktwo@yahoo.com if you would like to join online.

Andrew Turner Scholarship

Friends of the church have asked the Session to create an **Andrew Turner Scholarship Fund** to support summer camp attendees and have made a deposit to establish that fund. In a letter dated March 7th, Marcia Amsterdam Kean and Dianne (Amsterdam) Kangisser enclosed a check in honor of our beloved Andy Turner. And the contents of that letter read as follows:

Dear Dr. Myers,

As you know, Andrew Turner has been a friend of the Amsterdam family for 75+ years. He is an exceptional person, and we have enormous respect and affection for him. We would therefore like to establish the Andrew Turner Scholarship in his honor. That scholarship can be used to send a deserving child to camp for a week each summer.

I hope you can help to implement this, and to let others know that Andy's humility and kindness – and love of children – are a beacon for us all. Many thanks for your assistance. *Cordially, Marcia*

We are grateful to the Amsterdam family for this gift, which they intend to fund every year in Andy's honor. And I am sure you will join me in saying, "What a wonderful gift of Christian generosity!" If you would like to expand this Scholarship Fund to support sending our children to summer camp, your gifts would be most welcome as the registration fees have grown substantially over the last 10 years. Please make your checks out to the church and put "Andrew Taylor Scholarship Fund" in the memo. Together, we can help raise the next generation of children to know Christ and to love our God.

Leader Training

Pastor Rhonda will be holding **Leader Training** on Saturday morning, April 20th, from 9 to 11am. This training is for **all currently serving Ruling Elders and Deacons**, as is mandated by the PC(USA)'s *Book of Order*. Coffee and snacks will be available by 8:30am.

Mission Study Team Hosting Small Group Discussions

Part of our Mission Study Process includes hosting small group discussions about the work of the church and its commitment to spiritual worship, mission, education, community building, and more. The Mission Study Team will be hosting these discussions on Sunday, April 21st before worship and during Coffee Hour. There will also be a Zoom option for those who cannot join us on the 21st. Please keep an eye out for further details. This is an important part of the interim process prior to electing a Pastor Nominating Committee. **We can only do this important work with your support.**

Deacons Meeting

The Deacons have chosen to meet on the first Sunday of each month in the Parlor. The next meeting of the Board of Deacons will be held following worship on April 7th.

Memorial Service

A Memorial Service for Anne Brillhart is scheduled for Saturday, May 4th @ 1pm. We hope you will put this date on your calendar and plan to join us in remembering this wonderful lady who was so integral to the work and worship of this congregation for many years.

GIFT WE ALL CAN GIVE IS THE "THE GIFT OF THOUGHTFULNESS."



Take some time to remember those who do not have email and/or are unable to attend Worship with us.

Check the church prayer lists that are provided in the Sunday bulletins and are on the weekly Spirit and choose some friends to remember with a note, visit or phone call. A gift that we all can give is the gift of remembrance.

If you would like some assistance in choosing persons to contact, please contact Dotty Ostella or Patti Beirne by phone or email.

HOPE FOR UKRAINE

The past deliveries of Warm Clothing and Afghans came to another 30+ boxes – Thanks to Dick Crawford and Thrift Shop

The biggest need currently is for canned food. Nothing that needs water added (like Campbell soup) Examples of needed food are - Canned vegetables and fruit, canned pie filling, canned meats & fish, canned coconut milk, etc . Everything is sent by boat and there are rats on the boats. They get into the shipping containers and make short work of any food not in cans.

Thank you all so much for your continued support and love of the Ukrainian people.

Велике спасибі. Хай вас Бог благословить.

Thank you all so much for your continued support and love of the Ukrainian people.

Christina Turkington

VOLUNTEER OPPORTUNITIES



There are numerous opportunities for church friends to share their talents. Opportunities are published from time to time. Ideas are always welcome. Feel free to speak with a Session member or Deacon. Lay Readers for Sunday Worship are always needed. If you would like to volunteer to lay read, please contact Beth Shorten for information: 973-641-2296.

LAY READERS

April 7 Joyce Cougan

April 14 Pat Heyer

April 21 Dotty Ostella

April 28 Janice Tierney



Our Chancel Choir continues to lead us in music on Sunday mornings. We continue to rehearse at 9:30, prior to Worship on Sunday mornings. As Chae's very busy schedule slows down, rehearsal times may change.

Children sang with the Chancel Choir on Palm Sunday. It is also hoped that they will be singing more often on Sunday mornings. The hope for 2024 is that we increase in numbers and include guitar players from time to time. *Peg Whiting*

CHRISTIAN EDUCATION NEWS



The year has been off to a busy start and the energy of the Christian Education Committee is continuing to grow with our parent input. Tennille, Melissa and Alexis have provided parent input to help guide where our emphasis is placed for the Sunday School program as well as sharing some ideas for our adult offerings as well. Riley Becker has joined the Sunday School teaching team and we are thrilled to have her. She is working with the younger class and has created very fun activities to help them learn about their faith. Cathy is now working with the older class so that Christina could return to singing in the choir. We do miss her teaching but she is still very active on the committee, helping with design of the curriculum for the students. We do love hearing her sing too. Our Sunday morning classes are averaging 6 students each week sometimes going up to more than 9 children learning about their faith. The Good Friday Children's Workshop occurs after the deadline for this newsletter so we will share our pictures in the May newsletter.



There is scholarship money available to students who attend Sunday School on a regular basis if they are interested in attending Camp Johnsonburg. Camp registration is open now, so please see either Reverend Rhonda or Cathy Franco if you would like to apply for scholarship money. The website for Camp Johnsonburg is <https://www.campjburg.org/> and the 1 week camp offerings are for children who are rising 1st through 12th graders.



The adult book study on *Unclobbered* ended on 3/26 and the next book to be discussed will begin on April 9th also using a hybrid set-up for those unable to attend in person. We will meet every other Tuesday. The next discussion is about the meaning of the Apostle's Creed. If you are interested in joining, there are books available for purchase in the office for \$12. Keep your eyes and ears open for a movie that will be shown near Memorial Day with a discussion following it.

-Cathy Franco, Chair Christian Education Committee

STEWARDSHIP

Stewardship
is heart work



"Do not store up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moths and rust destroy, and where thieves break in and steal. But store up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where moths and rust do not destroy, and where thieves do not break in and steal. For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also."
Matthew 6:19-21

We are a small but dedicated congregation and your response to our Stewardship Campaign has always been reassuring. Thank you to everyone who have made your pledges for 2024.

If you haven't already done so, **please consider paying your "per capita" fee of \$33.**

If you have any questions, contact Barbara Haimann, Donna Lauckner or Marilyn O'Neill

Barbara Haimann, Chairperson

PER CAPITA GIVING

We are asked to pay a per capita charge of \$33 per member to Presbytery. The purpose of the Per Capita giving is this:

"Through sharing in generous support of per capita and participating in the opportunities per capita funds, the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) uplifts and empowers all worshipping communities as an integral part of being the church. In these and in many other ways, per capita giving is shaped by the call that God has extended for us all to join in the pursuit and formation of God's kingdom. By gathering together in per capita giving, the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) commits to connection and is empowered to live out the ministry of the church."

GRANDPARENTS' GROUP

Our Grandparents Group meets on the second Thursday of the month via Zoom.

Please email patheyer75@gmail.com or call 973-239-3592 if you'd like to join us.



I am the good shepherd, and I know My own and My own know Me, ...

John 10:14

Welcome Visitors & Returning Members and Friends

Marcia Amsterdam Kean— Andy knew her as a child. Marcia came to visit and interviewed Andy. Andy introduced her to Pastor Rhonda. A few weeks Later, she spoke with Pastor Rhonda and sent a Donation to build the Andy Turner Scholarship Fund for Johnsonburg Camp. Session approved it and built it up to something new for the life of the Church.

Richard Grossklaus - Stopped by and was happy to visit his parents in the Memorial Garden and see their names on the plaque. He gave me a history of the family's involvement in FPCV. I presented him with The ACTS 2023, and the March Newsletter, and invited him to visit again for a Sunday Worship Service.

Douglas Roberson currently lives in Nevada, His daughter Janice Nigro and her two daughters, Avery and Jaycee, paid us a visit because they had come to a Girl Scout program at FPCV the day before. Janice told them that this was the Church where she grew up. The girls wanted to come back and so they did. Both girls sang in the choir on Palm Sunday. Douglas and his wife will be buried in the Memorial Garden. *Patti Beirne*

BUILDING AND GROUNDS



The big Chamberlain Hall project is coming close to its conclusion. As of this writing, the 4 four doors are in place, and the finishing trim is going up. There is still some interior work to be done and some electrical additions.

As you may know, this important project was made possible with the generous grants provided from the Plansoen trust. Once the project is completed the room can be used for many events that will benefit the community as a whole. ~ *Charles Heyer*

HOLY SPIRIT FOOD PANTRY



The Holy Spirit Food Pantry continues to need our help.

You may use the 24-hour drop-off bin in their parking lot on 30 Gould Street for any donations. Please consider writing a check to: Episcopal Church of the Holy Spirit with "food pantry" in the memo line.

CHANCEL FLOWER DONATIONS



Just as decorating a home for guests is a sign of welcome and hospitality, decorating a sanctuary for worship is also an offering of hospitality. **The church has begun a relationship with Anderson Flowers for the regular delivery of fresh flowers to the church for Sunday worship.** To make this program work, we are asking for your support. Please consider signing up to provide fresh flowers in honor of a loved one, in thanksgiving for God's blessings, in celebration of a special event, etc. The cost is \$30 for one arrangement and \$60 for two arrangements. When making your payment to the church, please note that it is for flowers. Thank you for your support of the church and its ministry! **Contact the church office to check for the available dates.**

April		May	
7 th	Pastors David & Rhonda Myers in memory of David's Mother, Jeanette Myers	5 th	From Marilyn O'Neil
14 th	Open	12 th	From Janice Tierney with grateful appreciation for the blessing of ALL women who are nurturer's, mentors, caregivers and friends.. Happy Mother's Day.
21 st	Open	19 th	From Beth Shorten in In Memory of her parents, John S. & Elizabeth K. Foster on their anniversary.
28 th	Cathy Franco	26 th	Open

WISHING BIRTHDAY CELEBRANTS,a very Happy Birthday

Remember, the only way to be added to this list is by
reaching out to Dan Uniss or a deacon and providing your
birthday information (no year required)!



April	
Charles Heyer	9
Marion Shine	13
Peg Whiting	29
Andria Kiel	29

CALENDAR FOR APRIL 2024
(Adjustments will be made as necessary)

Monday, April 1

7:00 pm Mission Study Team Meeting via zoom

Tuesday, April 2

7:00 pm Book Study

Wednesday, April 3rd

6:15 pm: **Ramadan Iftar Dinner** at the Community Center of Verona

Thursday April 4th

11:00 am Grandparents' Group- Zoom

Sunday, April 7th Communion Sunday

10:15 am Sunday Worship
Deacon's Meeting following Coffee Hour

Tuesday, April 9th

7:00 pm New Book Study

Thursday, April 11th

7:30 pm Worship and Music-Zoom

Sunday April 14th

10:15 am Worship Service

Monday April 15th

7:00 pm Mission Study Team Meeting via zoom

Tuesday, April 16th

6:30 pm Presbytery of Northeast NJ Mtg via zoom

Monday April 15th

7:00 pm Mission Study Team Meeting via zoom

Tuesday, April 16th

6:30 pm Presbytery of Northeast NJ Mtg. via zoom

Saturday, April 20th

9:00 am to 11:00pm Leadership Training –
Coffee “and “ will be served beforehand at 8:30 am

Sunday April 21st

9:00 am Small group Discussion
10:15 am Worship Service
11:00 am Small Group Discussions

Tuesday, April 23th

7:00 pm New Book Study

Wednesday April 24th

Articles due for May Newsletter

Thursday April 25th

7:30 pm Session via Zoom

Sunday, April 28th

10:15 Worship Service

Monday, April 29th

7:00 pm Mission Study Team Meeting via zoom?

Saturday, May 4th

**1:00 pm: Memorial Service
Internment & Repass for Ann Brillhart**