

# **Newsletter**

## **September and October 2025**



**First Presbyterian Church of Verona**

**Come and Worship with Us**  
**All Are Welcome**

**10:15 a.m.**

10 Fairview Ave, Verona, NJ 07044

973-239-3561

Pastor: Erik Simon

Music Director: Kyle Blackburn

Christian Education Chair: Cathy Franco

Admin. Assistant: Danielle Christianson

Sexton: Gabriel Gonzalez

Sexton Emeritus: Andy Turner

E-Mail: [veronapreschurch@gmail.com](mailto:veronapreschurch@gmail.com)

Website: [www.veronapreschurch.org](http://www.veronapreschurch.org)

### **OUR MISSION STATEMENT**

**“Welcoming Hearts, Nurturing Spirits,  
United In Fellowship and Faith.”**

### **ONLINE OPPORTUNITIES FOR SUPPORT AND WORSHIP**

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

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

Online giving is available on our website: [www.veronapreschurch.org](http://www.veronapreschurch.org)

## CHURCH OFFICERS

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

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

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## FROM THE PASTOR'S DESK



Two months in, and I have gotten to know many of you. I am moved by the level of dedication to the church.

The HR Committee has been busy overseeing complete turnover in retiring church staff. The Buildings and Grounds Committee has tirelessly confronted the unending challenges of an old structure that isn't getting any younger. From my back yard I see how busy the Thrift Shop is three days a week, and every Sunday there's a group making sure we have a hearty spread for fellowship after worship.

As for Session, it's a tough job to begin with, all that fiduciary responsibility, but serving between ministers is especially onerous, and yours has performed with diligence and grace. None of this even counts the work involving Christian Ed, Finance, or the Plansoen Foundation.

I'm not just saying this to be nice. Those who know me know I don't say what I don't believe and do say what I do believe whether it's nice or not. Your church is filled with hardworking, dedicated servants of God. Now to the next phase:

We need to work harder at engaging with the community. This church is more insular and inward-looking than a church should be, and that's not a criticism, it's an observation, and it's not even anyone's fault. Sometimes it just happens in a way no one notices, and it takes an outsider's eye to see it.

But the good news here is that this work has already begun. The Christian Ed. Committee bought and filled new backpacks for some West Orange students in need. On our property, The Performing Arts Project NJ hosts workshops and camps throughout the year, serving thousands of children. The Session voted to provide four scholarships this autumn for children who want to participate but can't afford it. We're also donating 30 tickets to families in need for this year's Fish Fry, and Session is working to establish a Mission Committee dedicated to serving our community and world with money and time. In other words, we're just getting started.

And I'm thrilled to be here and be part of it.

*Pastor Erik*

## CHURCH PICNIC

On September 7<sup>th</sup>, following Worship we will celebrate our **Church Picnic**, on the front lawn, weather permitting. If the weather doesn't cooperate, we will be in Chamberlain Hall.

Please bring a "Pot Luck" covered dish or dessert.



Hot Dogs, Hamburgers, watermelon, drinks and paper goods will be provided.  
Call or text Ernie Kiel 973-464-9901 with any questions.

**HELP NEEDED** setting up and taking down the tables and chairs.

Please let Ernie Kiel know if you will be able to help 973-464-9901.

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## BLESSING OF THE ANIMALS

This is a favorite service in the Fall. Weather permitting it will be held outside on September 28<sup>th</sup> on the front lawn of the church. If the weather doesn't cooperate we will move the service inside to Chamberlain Hall.

Bring your pets - large or small, stuffed or real - to be blessed by Pastor Erik.

All are invited to our Coffee Hour following the service.

*"All Creatures great and small. All things bright and beautiful.  
All things wise and wonderful, and the Lord God made them all"*

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## ANNUAL FISH & CHIPS DINNER

Church Members and Friends,

We're at the end of Summer and hope all enjoyed the Season. Fall will be here shortly and we look forward to our annual Deacon's Fund Raiser Fish Fry. Let's make it a great event to bring our members, relatives, and friends together.



**Friday, October 24<sup>th</sup>, 2025**

**Hours will be from 5:00pm pm to 7:00 pm. Take Out or Dine In.**

**The cost is \$20.00 per person.**

Fish Fry Tickets have been distributed to the Deacons and a few Church members.

*Peace and Blessing, Marion Shine*



## THANK YOU, PATTI BEIRNE

"Having spent five remarkable years at FPCV, I have made the decision to resign from my position. I feel profoundly blessed and grateful for the people, experiences and ecumenical growth I've encountered here at the church. A multitude of wonderful individuals have brought me considerable love and joy. I wish the Church continued success under the Pastoral guidance of Erik Simon. Blessings to all."

*Patti Beirne*

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## WELCOME DANIELLE CHRISTIANSON

We are thankful that Danielle Christianson has joined our staff as our new Administrative Assistant. I know that all will welcome Danielle and be patient with her as she assumes the position and all it entails.

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## AJ GOES TO COOPERSTOWN

AJ Wasek's travel baseball team has been preparing to play at Cooperstown for the past two years. It's a rite of passage for 12-year-old boys. His team (and parents) have had countless fundraisers to support the team to get there. It finally happened. We just wanted to share some pictures since so many people in the congregation supported his dream to go.

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## CHARLOTTE CUNNINGHAM REMEMBERED



Charlotte Cunningham, dedicated and beloved Music Director and teacher at the First Presbyterian Church of Verona for 43 years, died last fall. Family and friends remember her enthusiasm for all types of music: Her musical talent was obvious notably when performing on the piano or the organ and when directing musical performances.

She was a magical leader, especially with children learning to sing solo or in a group in front of an audience. During her time with us, Charlotte led six choirs, including two bell choirs and a men's special group.

Since Charlotte's passing, the Church Session has been thinking an appropriate way to honor and celebrate her many years with us. Now, we have found the perfect answer. The organ in FPCV needs to be replaced. At its recent June meeting, the Session voted to honor Charlotte by dedicating the new organ in her memory.

Please consider contributing to the Charlotte Cunningham Memorial Fund: Please send your donation to The First Presbyterian Church of Verona, 10 Fairview Avenue, Verona, New Jersey 07044. Please note the "CC Memorial Fund" on the Memo line.

*Thank you, Virtual Pipe Organ Team*

## PLANSOEN GRANT

For many years, the FPCV has received a significant grant from the Plansoen Foundation. In the past and currently, the Church has requested funds for continuing support of the music program including concerts, professional musicians especially during Worship Services, maintenance of the organ and other musical instruments, and children's programs.

Previous grants have enabled restoration of the stage, new doors including an ADA- compliant door and an exterior walkway for Chamberlain Hall, completed in 2024, and support for food kitchens especially during the pandemic. Funds were used to add a much-needed ADA bathroom across the hall from Chamberlain Hall.

We are most grateful for this amazing support, all started many years ago because of the close connection of Charlotte Cunningham, former Music Director, and the Plansoen Foundation.

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## MUSIC MINISTRY



After a summer of learning, prayer, and practice, I'm looking forward to the return of Choir season! If you have any questions or interest about joining the choir, feel free to talk with me before or after a Sunday service or email me at [fpcvmusicdirector@gmail.com](mailto:fpcvmusicdirector@gmail.com) for more information. Choir rehearsals will be moving back to Wednesday nights to better accommodate schedules.

As we begin a new academic year, my focus will be on strengthening and maintaining resources we already have in our church and congregation. I've begun and will complete a full tuning cycle for all of our pianos and will be establishing new protocols for documenting maintenance for our instruments. Our Choir program will resume rehearsals and focus on strengthening core skills in singing such as breath support and intonation through regular singing in and out of the pews. Additionally, our Choir library is in the process of being cataloged to provide a more varied and spiritually tailored experience for those singing *and* those listening. With over 22 filing cabinet drawers full of music spanning several centuries and genres, this has been quite the task!

Lastly, I'd like to make a small note regarding our new hymnals: With the change of hymnals there is always a need for flexibility. While I do my best to make sure there is always at least one familiar hymn tune (if not text) each Sunday, I would encourage everyone to take on a student's mindset as we go "Back to School" and learn new hymns.

*Kyle Blackburn: Music Director*



## CHRISTIAN EDUCATION COMMITTEE



And we are off and running. Sunday School resumes on 9/7 for both the younger and older classes however we got a jump start the end of August when we filled 20 backpacks for local area students in need. Students in grades K – 2 received the backpacks before the start of the school year. After filling the backs full to the brim we prayed over them that each of the students would have a good school year knowing that God loves them and is watching over them.



Cathy Franco will be teaching the upper grades and Donna Kiel will be working with Sabrina Perez teaching our younger class. Our beloved Riley Becker is not able to return this year as she is heavy into her college studies. Sabrina Perez is a Senior at Verona High School and is excited to work with Donna to create the lessons based upon Bible stories to our youngest followers of Christ.

We do need additional adults to help out during the year. Since Sabrina has not yet turned 18 we do need an adult in the room when she is teaching so please let Cathy know if you are available. Donna Kiel will be leaving the end of October so we will definitely need help through the Advent Season and the winter. Cathy is willing to teach either class so if you are more comfortable with the older class, Cathy will work with Sabrina and the younger ones. Curriculum is used and weekly lesson plans are available for substitutes to follow.

The children will be participating in the Blessing of the Animals on 9/28 and then we begin our annual Mischief to Ministry at the start of October. We will be collecting items typically used for mischief (toilet paper, shaving cream, soap, toothpaste) and donating the items to the Holy Spirit food pantry at the end of October.

In early October, the children will also be filling our “love boxes” to send to the college aged members of our church who are away at college. If families haven’t already given Cathy Franco the mailing address for their college young adult this year, or some special items that they could use, please do so.

Our annual Trunk or Treat will occur the last Sunday in October, so start thinking of what Bible story or message you want to have in your trunk for all to see.

Adults, keep your eyes out for when Pastor Erik begins his first bible study in the early fall. It will be offered in a hybrid manner as we have done in the past and it will be in the early evening, likely on a Tuesday (again). People are invited to come in-person to the church but those unable to make the trip can join via a zoom link.

*Cathy Franco*

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## BUILDING AND GROUNDS

As you probably know, our steeple is in disrepair. This will be attended to when the weather is cooler. (It’s been a hot summer). A new DOOR has been installed at our Pine Street entrance, making the building more secure and weather tight. The upgrading of our kitchen is still in progress.

A “WELCOME” sign for our front lawn is in process this fall.

The bushes around the church building will be trimmed and shaped this fall.

*Debbie Michelsen & Charles Heyer, Co-chairs of the B&G Committee*



### ANDY TURNER SCHOLARSHIP FUND

Gratefully, our friend Andy Turner has been back to visit his friends at FPCV. With help from his grandson, he has already made a number of visits, the last being on his birthday in August. Andy has gotten to know, Gabriel, the new sexton, and they have already developed a friendship.

Andrew Turner has been a friend of the Amsterdam family for 75+ years. Because of their enormous respect and affection for Andy and his humility, kindness, and love of children Marcia Amsterdam Kean and Dianne (Amsterdam) Kangisser established the “Andrew Turner Scholarship Fund” in March of 2024 with a generous check with the intent to fund it every year in Andy’s honor. The Scholarship Fund is being used to send a deserving child, or children, to Camp Johnsonburg for a week each summer.

We are grateful to the Amsterdam family for this gift. If you would like to help 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.

I hope we 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.



Please make your checks out to the church and put “Andrew Turner Scholarship Fund” in the memo. Together, we can help raise the next generation of children to know Christ and to love our God.

**Andrea Kiel** was the lucky recipient of the award this year. She thanked everyone at a church service after she returned from her time at Camp Johnsonburg.

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### LAY READERS

September 7th		Dotty Ostella
September 14th	Communion Sunday	Chris Kiel
September 21		Pat Heyer
September 28		Janice Tierney
October 5th	Communion Sunday	Dotty Ostella
October 12		Pat Heyer
October 19		Chris Kiel
October 26		Janice Tierney

## VOLUNTEER OPPORTUNITIES



There are numerous opportunities for church friends to share their talents. Please consider how you might use your gifts and talents to support the vital work of the church during this season of transition.

- The **choir** continues to seek new members and are grateful for the new voices who have joined.
- **Sunday School substitute teachers** would be appreciated as some of the regular subs are away for the winter months.
- The Worship & Music Committee would love to have some additional **lay reader participants**. Let the Church Office know if you are interested. 973.239.3561
- Providing **fresh flowers** on a Sunday would be most welcome.
- Contributing “**socks for the homeless**” and/or **food for the hungry** would be appreciated.
- **Coffee Hour Hosts** are needed. Individuals or groups could work together.

Our membership vows include a commitment to being a faithful disciple of Jesus Christ and devoting ourselves to the work of the church. Let's be sure to uphold those vows!

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## STEWARDSHIP IS VITAL TO THE FUTURE OF THE CHURCH

### Stewardship – What is Per Capita Apportionment?



Per capita is a set amount of money per member that congregations pay to the larger Presbyterian Church (USA). It is a way for all Presbyterians to share in the costs that belong to the whole church – like paying to belong to the internet. Our own Presbytery of the Northeast, NJ shares in the apportionment of our per capita payments. Over the past two years the Presbytery of Northeast, NJ has worked closely with us to help us in our search for a new pastor and they offer to us an array of resources that we have taken advantage of at no charge. We were also fortunate to receive a \$5,000 Grant from our Presbytery for cleaning services during covid. Based upon the membership of our church our Per Capita rate is \$38. At the present time we have an outstanding balance due, but we are hoping to get this amount paid by the end of the year. If you have already paid your Per Capita, we thank you. If not, we hope that you will consider doing so.

*The Stewardship Committee, Barbara Haimann, Donna Lauckner, Marilyn O'Neill*



## NEWS FROM THE THRIFT SHOP

Regular Hours

10:00 am to 1:00pm

Tuesday, Thursday and Saturday

Thrift Store Shopping - Always Things to Buy at the Thrift Shop

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## HOPE 4 UKRAINE SEPTEMBER - OCTOBER

Привітання та щасливого літа.

There is a need for Canned Foods. Vegetables, fruit, pie filling, yes, even pet food. Please Leave the food in the Ukraine Container in the Church foyer. If anyone would like to write notes or draw pictures that would be awesome.



Все, що ви робите одному з найменших братів моїх, те ви робите мені.

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## 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. However, you may leave donations here at our Church. Each Tuesday Dick Crawford brings them over to Holy Spirit.

Please consider writing a check to: Episcopal Church of the Holy Spirit with "food pantry" in the memo line.

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## GRANDPARENTS' GROUP



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

Please email [patheyer75@gmail.com](mailto:patheyer75@gmail.com) or call 973-239-3592 if you'd like to join

## 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)



### September

Chris Kiel	2
Alexandra Kiel	9
Chuck Becker	16
Willow Pomponio	28
Cathy Collins	29

### October

Willy Burgos	18
David Haimann	21
Debbie Michelsen	22
Danielle O'Brien	22

## CHANCEL FLOWER DONATIONS 2025



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. **Chancel Flowers** may be ordered through the church office for delivery from Anderson's Florist in Verona. \$32 for one bouquet and \$64 for two ( A slight Increase for 2025 ).

When using Anderson Florist, we can generally use them for more than one week unless you specify otherwise. **Please sign up using the Flower Chart outside Chamberlain Hall or contact the Church Office by calling 973.239.3561 or emailing [veronapreschurch@gmail.com](mailto:veronapreschurch@gmail.com).** Your order must be into the church office by the Wednesday prior to delivery. **Contact the church office to check for the available dates. Or use the sign in sheet located outside Chamberlain Hall.**

SEPTEMBER		OCTOBER	
7th		5th	Marion Shine In loving memory of her father, John Kucek
14th	Martha McNinch In loving memory of her husband, Robert	12th	
21st		19th	
28th		26th	

# CALENDAR FOR

## September and October 2025

(Dates are subject to change when necessary)

<p><b>Monday, September 1</b> <b>Labor Day</b> <b>Office Closed</b></p> <p><b>Wednesday, September 3</b> 7:00 pm Worship &amp; Music Meeting - Zoom</p> <p><b>Sunday, September 7</b> 10:15 am Worship Service Sunday School Begins Blessing of the Back Packs 11:15 am Church Picnic</p> <p><b>Thursday, September 11</b> 11:00 am Grandparents' Group - Zoom</p> <p><b>Sunday, September 14</b> <b>Communion Sunday</b> 10:15 am Worship Service 11:00 am Christian Ed Com Mtg. during Coffee Hour</p> <p><b>Thursday, September 18</b> 7:00 pm Meeting with Investment Counselors – In Person</p> <p><b>Sunday, September 21</b> 10:15 am Worship Sunday</p> <p><b>Thursday, September 25</b> 7:00 pm Session - Zoom</p> <p><b>Sunday, September 28</b> 10:15 am Worship Service  <b>Blessing of the Animals</b> Will be an outdoor Service Weather permitting</p> 	<p><b>Wednesday, October 1</b> 7:00 pm Worship and Music Mtg.– Zoom</p> <p><b>Saturday, October 4</b> 10:00 am Memorial Service for Barbara Levenson In the Parlor, followed by internment in the Memorial Garden</p> <p><b>Sunday, October 5</b> <b>Communion Sunday</b> 10:15 am Worship Service <b>Mischief to Ministry Collection Begins</b></p> <p><b>Thursday, October 10</b> 11:00 am Grandparents' Group - Zoom</p> <p><b>Sunday, October 12</b> 10:15 am Worship Service 11:00 am Christian Ed Com Mtg. during Coffee Hour</p> <p><b>Sunday, October 19</b> 10:15 am Worship Service <b>Trunk or Treat</b> (Rain Date October 26<sup>th</sup>)</p> <p><b>Thursday, October 23</b> 7:00 pm Session Mtg – Zoom</p> <p><b>Friday, October 24</b> 5:00 – 7:00 pm <b>Fish Fry “Dine In or Take Out”</b></p> <p><b>Friday, October 24</b> <b>Deadline for November &amp; December Newsletter</b></p> <p><b>Sunday, October 26</b> <b>All Saints Day/ Reformation Sunday</b> 10:15 am Worship Service <b>Rain date for Trunk or Treat</b> <b>Mischief to Ministry Collection Ends</b></p> <p>REMINDER: <b>Sunday, November 2</b> <b>Daylight Savings Time Ends</b></p>
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## **WEST ESSEX MUSIC TOGETHER**

September 15 to November 20

Mondays 9:30 to 11:30 am

Wednesdays 4:30 to 5:30 pm

Thursdays 9:30 to 10:30 am

## **TPAPNJ (THEATRE GROUP)**

September 15 to December 19

All classes in Chamberlain Hall unless indicated otherwise

No class: 10/13, 10/31, 11/27-28

Mondays 4:00 to 6:30 pm

Tuesdays 4:00 to 5:00 pm Parlor  
5:30 to 7:30 pm

Wednesdays 4:00 to 7:00 pm

Thursdays 4:00 to 9:00 pm

Fridays 4:00 to 6:00 pm

## **AA MEETINGS**

Meeting in Chamberlain Hall

Tuesdays, 8:30pm – 9:30pm

## **AL-ANON MEETINGS**

Meeting in the Parlor during the Summer

Fridays, 12:30pm – 1:30 pm