



Welcome to the Hilltop Spire

First Presbyterian Church of Mendham, NJ

Advent and Christmas at Hilltop

November 28th
The 1st Sunday of Advent
Rev. Dr. Merideth Mueller-Bolton to Preach

December 5th
The 2nd Sunday of Advent
Rev. Dr. Merideth Mueller-Bolton to Preach

December 12th
The 3rd Sunday of Advent
Rev. Dr. Merideth Mueller-Bolton to Preach

Hilltop Christmas Concert
Today at 4:00 p.m.
"The Songs of Christmas"

December 19th
The 4th Sunday of Advent
Rev. Dr. Merideth Mueller-Bolton to Preach

December 25th
Christmas Eve Worship
Traditional Christmas
Candlelight Service
Rev. Dr. Merideth Mueller-Bolton to Preach

December 26th
Sunday After Christmas
Rev. Dr. Merideth Mueller-Bolton to Preach

**Merry Christmas from
the Hilltop Staff!**

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MARK YOUR CALENDAR: DECEMBER 2021/ JANUARY 2022

December 19th-
Christmas Pageant

January 2nd - New Year/
Epiphany Communion

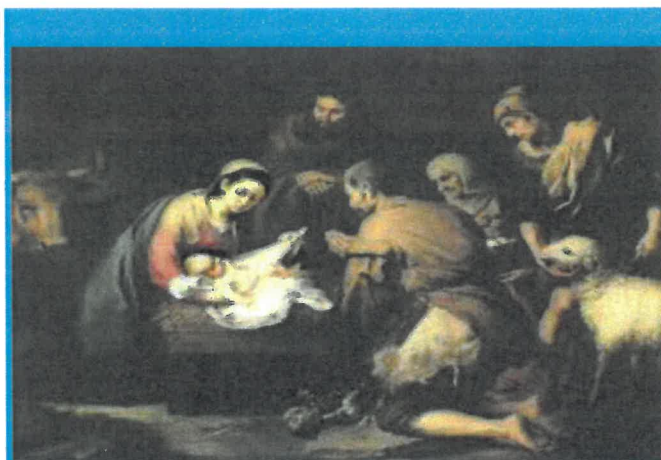
SAVE THE DATE:

February 6th- SouperBowl
of Caring Sunday

NEXT ISSUE:

Articles for the **Winter Issue (January/February)** of the Spire are due to the church office by **January 6th!** If possible please submit articles by email to office@hilltopchurch.org. The Hilltop Spire is **available online** at www.hilltopchurch.org

CONTACT US AT HILLTOP:
Call us at 973-543-4012



Hilltop Presbyterian Church presents
The Annual Christmas Concert
"Christmas Chorale"

December 12, 2021 at 4 pm

Tickets: \$15 Adults/ \$10 Students & Children (under 7 are free)

This concert will be in person and /or live-streamed.

Please consider becoming a Patron to help cover the cost of the concert. Your generous contribution allows us to keep our ticket prices affordable.

From the Pastor

Rejoice! Rejoice! Emmanuel shall come to thee, O Israel.

Dear Friends and Fellow Followers of Christ,

Advent is an expectant time. It's a time when the radical graciousness of God's plan takes shape and ripens into something new and brilliant. It's a time when heavenly beings bend near the earth and all of heaven holds its breath in anticipation of what's about to happen.

Advent is also a precarious time. It's a time when shiny, colorful things and bright lights and songs of the season compete for our attention. It's a time when it's easy to be distracted by all the things, right or wrong, that we attach to Christmas; easy to lose our focus on the great movements and seismic happenings in the divine realm.

What if we entered Advent a little differently this year? What if we entered Advent mindful of both the precariousness of the season and mindful of the awesome potential it holds for transformation and new beginnings?

In worship this season we'll be turning to the prophet Isaiah, to hear his words of both comfort and challenge in this waiting time. Come to worship, expecting to encounter God in new and startling ways. Come to the Christmas Eve service and experience the wonder, peace and joy of the Savior's birth.

And perhaps allow this prayer, written by John Harvey, to guide you and prepare you this Advent season:

At this time of Advent,
fire our imaginations
with the sweep of your salvation.
Catch us up
in the cause of your kingdom,
already breaking into this world
in our ransomed lives
yet waiting for its final fulfillment when Christ shall come again.
And let your Spirit,
wild as the wind,
gentle as the dove,
move within us and among us,
to enliven our worship and strengthen our faith
and send us out with anticipation and joy. Amen.

Wishing you all joy and peace in believing...
In Christ,

Merideth

CHRISTMAS POINSETTIAS

Your generosity makes it possible to decorate our church for Christmas. Your contribution in any amount may be given in memory or honor of loved ones and will be acknowledged in the bulletin if you so choose. **Flower Forms are available below the name tags in the Narthex or at Hilltop House now through December 7th.** Thank you!

Forms should be returned to the church office by December 8th.

Please mark checks with "Poinsettias" In the memo.

Stewardship...

We have welcomed the Rev. Dr. Merideth Mueller-Bolton as our Transitional Pastor, and her energy and immediate commitment to our Hilltop family is already making a positive impact. Attendance at our weekly services is growing, our Choir is back together in person, we successfully participated in the recent Hunger Walk to benefit Nourish NJ, and our fellowship and Bible Study groups are meeting in person again. Our doors were open for last Friday night's Halloween presentation of the Phantom of the Opera, performed to rave reviews by our own Jim Wynne.



We also gratefully recognize the strong and generous response to the **emergency fundraising appeal** issued earlier this year. Over 50 households responded to the appeal, raising an additional \$60,000 in pledges, including the addition of 10 new pledging units. As a result, we were able to balance our budget and return our focus and our resources to Hilltop's many critical ministries.

In John 16:24, Jesus stated "Ask and you shall receive, and your joy will be complete." There can be no doubt that when we asked for your support, we did indeed receive. **Thank you!**

To build upon the momentum generated by the emergency fundraising appeal, we are proud to introduce our **2022 Commitment Campaign**, formerly known as our annual Stewardship Drive.

Please submit your 2022 Commitment during November. You can pledge online by emailing mitzihilltop@gmail.com. Or you can return the enclosed card during worship or return it to the church office any time this month. We will dedicate all pledges on **Sunday, November 21st**. Thank you again for your faithful participation and giving. Please pray for our congregation and its leaders. It is a privilege to worship and serve alongside you.

Eye On Stewardship *From The Finance & Stewardship Area of Ministry*

Presented in the table below are the four-month results for our new fiscal year which started July 1 as well as results for the prior two fiscal years. We are off to a great start! These results reflect the very positive response to the emergency fundraising campaign "Faith in Action: Funding our Future." A combination of new pledges plus the fulfillment of outstanding pledges helped drive the strong increase in Income. And tight cost control resulted in a meaningful decrease in Expense, such that the Church performed very well on a Net Income basis.

We are incredibly appreciative of our congregation's financial support for Hilltop Church. As always, we encourage all members of the Hilltop Church family to remain current with their pledges throughout the year, and if possible, to increase their level of giving. Through our gifts to Hilltop Church, we can continue to fund the work that God calls us to do both here locally as well as in the broader world community.

FOUR MONTHS JULY-OCTOBER	2021 \$(000)	2020 \$(000)	2019 \$(000)
INCOME	\$142	\$119	\$131
EXPENSES	\$104	\$107	\$163
NET GAIN OR	\$38	\$12	\$32

Our Life of Learning... *December Calendar for Children, Youth and Families*

Important Christmas Pageant Information:

Pageant held December 19th, 10am in Sanctuary

Beautiful, "No Fuss, No Stress" Script.

December 12, rehearsal at 10am in Fellowship Hall.

Narrative parts to be assigned followed by a Birthday Party for Jesus.

If you cannot attend 12/12, but would like a part, please let Veronica know, veronicapoylangada@yahoo.com

Mission Gifting Cards — During our recent shut-downs, many of us have realized more than ever that we have plenty of possessions and blessings. The Mission committee is presenting our annual Christmas mission support program. Rather than shop for a gift for someone on-line, or go out to a crowded mall, or deal with current shortages in the stores, *shop with us at Hilltop Church!* Don't just get routine store gift cards — instead get **Mission Gifting Cards!**

We have gift suggestions for our 8 hands-on mission partners. For \$10, \$25, \$50, or any amount you wish, you can choose one of Hilltop Church's mission partners and purchase a needed item to be donated to that agency. Maybe a life jacket for Camp Johnsonburg, or a hammer for Habitat, or a pillow for Homeless Solutions, or a gas gift card for Family Promise would make someone on your gift list feel the Christian Spirit of Christmas. We have gift ideas for Nourish.NJ, Table of Hope, ACT NOW, and the Interfaith Food Pantry Network as well. You will receive a Mission Gifting Card to send someone with a message telling of your gift and explaining the agency's mission. Each agency will receive a cash donation according to the donations made.

Along with the card, you may also take a paperwhite flower bulb. Paperwhites are winter blooming flowers that symbolize renewal. Let's renew Hilltop's dedication to our mission program.

Mission Gifting Cards will be available after the service on Dec. 5, 12, and 19. There will also be a display during the weeks between at Hilltop House where you can come help yourself. Questions? sharonbetz52@gmail.com

Christmas Joy Offering — The Christmas Joy Offering reflects that God is with us, through the generous gifts that support church leaders among us, retired, present and future, who have pointed us to God. Even as we support our current and former church leaders through the Assistance Program of the Board of Pensions, God is calling new leaders for our Church and world, through the ministry of Presbyterian-related schools and colleges equipping communities of color - offering students the means for a brighter future and enhanced opportunities to use their talents and skills to serve God, the Church and the world for years to come.

Please consider a contribution to the Christmas Joy special offering during Advent. Special Christmas Joy offering envelopes will be available in the Sanctuary or give online through Breeze.

PNC Update November 2021 — The PNC gratefully welcomes Rev. Dr. Merideth Mueller-Bolton as our interim pastor at Hilltop. We have met with her and are energized by her wisdom, thoughtfulness and leadership. Our committee continues to make progress in our discernment, recently downloading and reviewing an additional 97 Pastor Information Forms (PIFs) that were matched to us. This almost doubles the number of candidates we have seen, as we have read close to 150 PIFs to date. Additionally, we have had 15 enlightening conversations with potential pastors, a few that have been very fruitful. The PNC has experienced great disappointment as well. After conducting in-depth discussions with several candidates, some followed God's will to a call other than Hilltop. We carry on with hope and dedication to our faithful congregation. Continued appreciation for your support and prayers. - Jeffrey Betz, Stefanie Fox, Per Ralamb, Cassandra Tarentino, Bob Willett

Christmas LoveLines — Hilltop's congregation has generously supported the Family Intervention Services Christmas LoveLines program for many years and we are pleased to continue this tradition. To donate, go to SignUp Genius <https://www.signupgenius.com/go/10C0A45AFA82FA7FC1-christmas> and select among available slots for **new unwrapped toys** (please provide wrapping paper, ribbon, tape, etc. so the family can wrap the gift) or **gift cards (Walmart, Target or VISA)**. There will be two drop-off dates: Kathy Claxton and Wade Carter will be at Hilltop House on Sunday, November 28 and Sunday, December 5 from 9 am to 12 noon to collect the gifts and gift cards. Alternatively, you can make a monetary contribution by check to Hilltop Church with "LoveLines" in the memo, or through Breeze by selecting "LoveLines" from the drop-down menu. We all feel the joy of Christmas as we provide gifts for families in need. Thank you!

Lunch with Friends — The Lunch with Friends Christmas luncheon will be held on December 8th with ham and a variety of side dishes offered. Coffee, fruit and snacks are available starting at 11:00 and lunch is served at 12:00 noon in Fellowship Hall. Volunteers are needed to bring food, set-up, serve and clean up - contact Paula Raimondo with any questions or to volunteer - 973-285-5044 or rickloribrett@verizon.net. We always look forward to new guests and helpers, as well as a visit from Santa!

Prayer Shawl Ministry — Do you like to knit or crochet or would you like to learn? The Prayer Shawl Ministry has started up again on the the third Wednesday of the month. The group will meet at 10:30 on December 15 in the Hilltop House parlor. All supplies are provided. Contact Marilyn Willett at willetstation@gmail.com for more information.