



# Welcome to the Hilltop Spire

## First Presbyterian Church of Mendham, NJ

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MARK YOUR CALENDAR  
THE HILLTOP CHRISTMAS  
CONCERT SUNDAY, DECEMBER  
18TH AT 4 PM

### NEXT ISSUE:

Articles for the **Winter Issue (January/February)** of the Spire are due to the church office by **January 10th!** If possible please submit articles by email to [office@hilltopchurch.org](mailto:office@hilltopchurch.org). The Hilltop Spire is **available online** at [www.hilltopchurch.org](http://www.hilltopchurch.org)

### CONTACT US AT HILLTOP:

**Call** us at 973-543-4012 or  
**Fax** us at 973-543-0958.

### Advent and Christmas at Hilltop November 27th - The First Sunday of Advent

Pastor Scot to Preach  
"Sleepers, Wake!"

### December 4th - The Second Sunday of Advent

Pastor Scot to Preach  
"Stealing Christmas"

### December 11th - The Third Sunday of Advent

Pastor Scot to Preach  
"Darkest Before Dawn"

### December 18th - The Fourth Sunday of Advent

Pastor Scot to Preach  
"We Need a Little Christmas"  
Christmas Pageant

### Hilltop Christmas Concert Today at 4:00 p.m. "One Small Child"

### Christmas Eve Worship - Two Services This Evening!

4 p.m. Family Service

Christmas Candlelight Service

7:30 p.m. Special Music in the Sanctuary

8:00 p.m. Carol and Candlelight Service in the Sanctuary

Pastor Scot to Preach

### December 25th - Christmas Day

Presbytery Online Service

### Merry Christmas from the Hilltop Staff!

## From the Pastor

Comfort, O comfort my people, says your God. Speak tenderly to Jerusalem and cry to her that she has served her term, that her penalty is paid, that she has received from the Lord's hand double for all her sins. A voice cries out: "In the wilderness prepare the way of the LORD, make straight in the desert a highway for our God. Every valley shall be lifted up, and every mountain and hill be made low; the uneven ground shall become level, and the rough places a plain. Then the glory of the LORD shall be revealed, and all people shall see it together, for the mouth of the LORD has spoken."  
Isaiah 40:1-5

This scripture passage from Isaiah is my favorite Advent text. In these five verses, the prophet tells us everything we need to know about what God will do for us in Jesus Christ. We will be comforted, delivered from our sin, given a new kind of life through him, and ultimately see the glory of the Lord. Liturgically, Advent transitions us from the intense final days of Jesus' life, a time of politics and violence but also of great promise, as we learn again that Christ the King will surely return to us one day. Now, waiting for the King is intertwined with waiting for Jesus Christ our Savior, the Word-made-flesh, at Christmas.

Even as a child, Advent always evoked images of tranquility and comfort for me. I would envision myself standing on a dim mountainside lit only by a starry midnight-blue sky. The air is brisk enough that I see my breath, but I don't feel cold. I look down below on the little town of Bethlehem. It's quiet with just a few windows lit to break the darkness. And I wonder: "Are Mary and Joseph there yet? Are they still traveling? How much longer until the baby comes?" The peacefulness I've felt in those moments is unlike any other. It's not as though the troubles of the world are held at bay – put on hold just long enough to enjoy the Christmas season. It's more like they are reframed. My burdens melt into the scene somehow and then *they* look towards Bethlehem as well. Waiting for the child on that starlit mountain. The promise of Christ is not just greater than the whirlwinds of life; the promise is that he makes them his own. Christ becomes the Lord of our burdens and pain. And he comforts us. That is the promise God reminds us of every year at Advent.

This year, as always, we will wait for Christ together. We will share our children's pageant, the Oratorio Choir Concert, the Advent candles, Christmas Eve worship, and all our other cherished ways to mark the time as Jesus' birth approaches. We will also begin a new tradition. On the evening of December 21, we will join other Mendham churches with an Advent service called The Longest Night. The birth of Christ is a joyous occasion, but anyone truly suffering with pain like grief, addiction, financial hardships, or mental illness can tell you that the relentless cultural insistence upon good cheer and joyfulness takes a toll and can drive us deeper into despair. In the darkness of this longest night of the year, just days before Christmas, we will explore how to look for wholeness and reconciliation in the promise of Advent and the comfort of Christ. God wants nothing more than to take our hand, hear our anguish, and walk with us wherever our paths might lead. We will take our cue from Advent texts but from Psalmists as well, who found courage to cry out to God in anger, mourning, and fear.

Let us invite Advent to invade us as it is meant to do: our hope, our joy, as well as our despair. Let us orient our whole selves to look through the starry midnight-blue sky to the little town of Bethlehem. Come, Thou Long-Expected Jesus!

See You on Sunday,

*Pastor Scot*

## *Our Life in Service and Mission...*

### **MISSION UPDATE:**

The Mission program Hilltop is sponsored by the hands, hearts, and dollars of our congregation.

The Hilltop Mission Committee (MSB) supports our mission partners in various ways. Some of our actions are hands-on activities. For example we cook and serve meals at Table of Hope and Homeless Solutions. We deliver meals and gift cards to Family Promise. We collect and sort food for the Interfaith Food Pantry. We support students on mission trips with ACT NOW. We collect coats and hats for Market Street Mission.

We walk to raise money for NourishNJ. We paint cabins at Camp Johnsonburg. We serve on local boards to address homelessness and food insecurity.

Hilltop also supports our mission partners financially. MSB has recently contributed to the Interfaith Food Pantry Network, Camp Johnsonburg, Morris Habitat for Humanity, and Family Promise.

If anyone is interested in participating in Hilltop's mission projects, please contact [sharonbetz52@gmail.com](mailto:sharonbetz52@gmail.com).

### **CHRISTMAS LIGHTS FOR ZIMBABWE**

This Christmas, give the gift of caring and brighten the lives of those in need by purchasing Simpler Christmas "lights". The 2022 Hilltop Simpler Christmas sale will benefit our 12-year mission of supporting the Zimbabwean village of our friends, Nomias and Oti. Come see the Mission Committee on December 3, 10, and 17th immediately after the service in the Fletcher Room, make a donation, and learn about the impact that you have made. Your \$10 contribution could purchase school supplies or kids' shoes in Zimbabwe. Your \$25 donation could purchase a chicken or a school uniform. And for each donation, you will receive a card and a Christmas scented votive candle to gift and spread Christmas cheer. Questions? Contact [cimalman12@gmail.com](mailto:cimalman12@gmail.com) or [sharonbetz52@gmail.com](mailto:sharonbetz52@gmail.com).

### **CHRISTMAS JOY OFFERING - THE WONDROUS GIFT IS GIVEN**

The Christmas Joy Offering gives us as Presbyterians a chance to support past, present and future church leaders. Past and present church leaders may have critical financial needs arising from a family emergency, health care crisis or even a natural disaster and this special offering can assist them. In addition, part of this offering goes to support future leaders attending Presbyterian-related schools and colleges in communities of color. Students are given an opportunity 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.

### **Thank you**

Thanks to all who donated to the **Fall Coat Drive** and helped keep someone warm this winter! We were able to deliver **35 adult coats, 18 coats for children, and 1 hat and glove set** to the Market Street Mission for their Coat Giveaway!

Thank you to everyone who participated in the **nourishNJ Walk** on Sunday, October 23rd!

The participants pictured here are members of Hilltop Church, Brookside Community Church and two members of the community (with their dogs)!



## OUR LIFE OF LEARNING...

December Update for Children, Youth and Families

by Stefanie Fox

It's hard to believe we are embarking on the Advent season! Hilltop youth have been busy this fall, discussing stories from the Bible during Sunday School and engaging in fellowship and fun during our Monday afternoon Quest program. Our Sunday School program continues to focus on bible stories in addition to Presbyterian history and hands-on mission projects. We have traditional Sunday School the first week of the month and a "special interest" class another Sunday during the month. Our Quest children have tons of fun each week and had their choral debut on November 20 during worship, and are practicing to sing again in December!



This month we will be busy with a Happy Birthday Jesus party during Sunday School on December 11. That date will also be our one and only run through of the pageant. Our No Stress, No Tears pageant will be on December 18 during worship and all youth (and young at heart!) are invited to participate. Even if someone cannot attend the practice, they can join the pageant on the 18th.



We would also like to congratulate and welcome Britany Gladhill as our newly hired Director of Youth and Family Ministries! Britany has been working tirelessly on launching the successful Quest program and will be blessing us even further as she takes on her new position beginning November 28.

Christmas Blessings to all and prayers for a peaceful Advent season for your families.

### Honor the memory of your loved ones this Holiday Season with these new offerings from the Hilltop Cemetery



The **CEMETERY CONE** has evergreen branches decorated with a bow plus 2 white branches, 2 pinecones and a decorative ball. **Price \$40\***

The **MEDIUM PREMIUM GRAVE BLANKET** will be constructed of evergreen branches. This blanket has a dome shape that is 10" - 14" high with a base approximately 20" x 12". Greens are supplemented with 4 white branches, 3 pinecones, 3 decorative balls and a bow. **Price is \$100\***

The **LARGE PREMIUM GRAVE BLANKET** will be constructed of evergreen branches. This blanket has a dome shape that is 10" - 14" high with an approximate 32" x 15" base. Greens are supplemented with 8 white branches, 4 pine cones, 4 decorative balls and 2 bows. **Price is \$125\***

The **LARGE LUXURY GRAVE BLANKET** will also be constructed of evergreen branches enhanced with 3 ferns. This dome shaped blanket is between 10" and 14" high and has an approximate 32" x 15" base. This blanket has 4 pinecones, and 4 decorative balls added to the Large Premium Blanket. **Price \$150\***

Order on-line at <https://www.hilltopcemetery.com>

Orders received by December 1 will be installed by December 10.

\*For your convenience prices include installation and removal.

## OUR FELLOWSHIP LIFE...



### THE WOMEN'S BIBLE STUDY

The Hilltop Women's Bible Study is a long established fellowship group. We are age diverse women all devoted to expanding our spiritual lives together.

Our studies are suggestions from the participants and selected by vote. We rotate turns leading the weekly sessions. Currently we have 16 ladies who meet on **Thursday morning from 9:45-11:30** in Hilltop House and by Zoom. Zoom is available for all meetings.

We have studied books of the Bible such as Isaiah, Kings, Genesis and John. Sample authors include Max Lucado, Adam Hamilton, Lois Tverberg, and Kathy Lee Gifford. We usually do

3-4 studies a year. Our Advent Study will conclude December 15. We will resume meeting in January and continue through May.

For additional information please contact, Ginny Gilman, 973-543-6699 or [gggilman@att.net](mailto:gggilman@att.net).

### HILLTOP MEN'S BIBLE DISCUSSION GROUP

Our group meets at **8:15 AM on Saturday mornings in the Parlor of Hilltop House** and averages about 12 men with friendly discussion over coffee and bakery goods.

There are always a few men away on business or traveling and **new faces are always welcome.**

The group is looking forward to the Advent/ Christmas season.

### 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 11th.** Thank you!

Forms should be returned to the church office by December 12th.

Please mark checks with "Poinsettias" In the memo.



### MEMBER UPDATES

**Baptisms:** Clay & Lillie Gladhill and Amanda & Lily Vittitoe

**New Members:** Pam Elliott, The Gladhill family, Jackie Spur and The Vittitoe Family

**Memorials:** This summer and fall dear members of our church family passed away. Inge Breves, Helen Brede, Eleanor Dorland, Bob Muir, Dr. Bennett Stein and Richard Lieb

#### Relocations:

**Ralph and Pat Rhodes:** 407 Pennington/Titusville Road, Titusville, NJ 08560

**Jane Bergman:** 1994 Cerny Court, The Villages, FL 32163

**Pat Maio:** 105 Country View Court, Ashton, MD 20861

**Linda Johnson:** 895 St. James Lane, Vero Beach FL 32967

**Lee:** 43 Bayview Drive, Southampton, NY

## Our Deacon's News...

### Christmas blessings to all from the Hilltop Board of Deacons!

#### Christmas Lovelines

Once again, Hilltop's congregation has generously offered support to our friends at the Center for Family Services during the Christmas season. This year we invite you to donate in one of three different ways. You can take an angel ornament from the tree in the Fletcher Room which lists a specific gift that has been requested by a child. These gifts will be gathered during the service on December 11<sup>th</sup>. Second, you are welcome to look over our sign up genius link:

<https://www.signupgenius.com/go/10C0A45AFA82FA7FC1-lovelines> Using this link, you can sign up to provide a gift card in the amount specified so that families can shop for gifts for their children. Finally, you may provide a monetary contribution with a check to Hilltop Church. If you choose this option, please be sure to include "Lovelines" in the memo of your check. Funds deposited in the Lovelines account via check will be used throughout the year to help support the many outreach efforts provided by Hilltop to the Center for Family Services. In addition to the children's gift collection during services December 11<sup>th</sup>, there are two other drop off dates possible: Sunday December 4<sup>th</sup>, 8-10am Hilltop House, or Sunday December 11<sup>th</sup> 8-10am Hilltop House. You can also drop gifts off at 41 Oak Knoll Road (Home of the Nervi Family) any time before December 11<sup>th</sup>.

#### Lunch with Friends

The Lunch with Friends Christmas luncheon will be held on Wednesday December 14<sup>th</sup> with a delicious holiday meal. Coffee, fruit, and snacks are available starting at 11am and lunch is served at 12 noon in Fellowship Hall. Volunteers are needed to bring food, set-up, serve, and clean up. Please contact Paula Raimondo with any questions or to volunteer (973) 285-5044/ [rickloribrett@verizon.net](mailto:rlickloribrett@verizon.net) This is always a lovely opportunity to gather together as a community. Please join us! All are welcome!

#### Prayer Shawl Ministry

If you like to knit or crochet, or would like to learn, please come join the Prayer Shawl Ministry on the 3<sup>rd</sup> Wednesday of the month. Please contact Marilyn Willet for more information at [willetstation@gmail.com](mailto:willetstation@gmail.com)

### Hilltop Christian Nursery School Update... by Victoria Legacki

Our classrooms are busy with learning, laughing, praying and singing at Hilltop Christian Nursery School. We are preparing for our big Thanksgiving Feasts on Monday and Tuesday. Each class will prepare a special part of our meal including corn bread, pumpkin muffins, popcorn, apple sauce, cookies and trail mix along with our turkey, fruit and cheese. The children will join Mrs. Legacki at chapel to



learn the story of the first

Thanksgiving and say a prayer of thanks to God before heading to

their feast. They then will sit together in one long table which stretches across the length of Fellowship Hall- it is always a special day! If you are on Instagram, consider following us at @hcns.mendham to see all the fun we have celebrating. The teachers and staff at HCNS wish you and your families a happy Thanksgiving!



## Stewardship...

Our church has much to be thankful for this season! We welcome Pastor Scot and his enthusiastic commitment to Hilltop Church – both appreciating our rich history, and planning for our bright future ahead. One of his priorities is to engage children and welcome young families. For example, his idea for the Quest after-school program has introduced new families to our church and strengthened our presence in the community. His popular children’s sermons and the new monthly family service enhance worship for all ages. We’re reaching out to hire a part-time person to keep this momentum going and grow the programs for young people.

It is indeed wonderful to see things returning to normal. We are so very, very thankful to all the members and friends who supported Hilltop Church during the pandemic and the long pastoral search. Those were challenging times, but we worked together, went online, wore our masks, improvised a little here and there. And through it all, we stayed connected with smiles, helping hands, and generous financial support. Our foundation is strong!

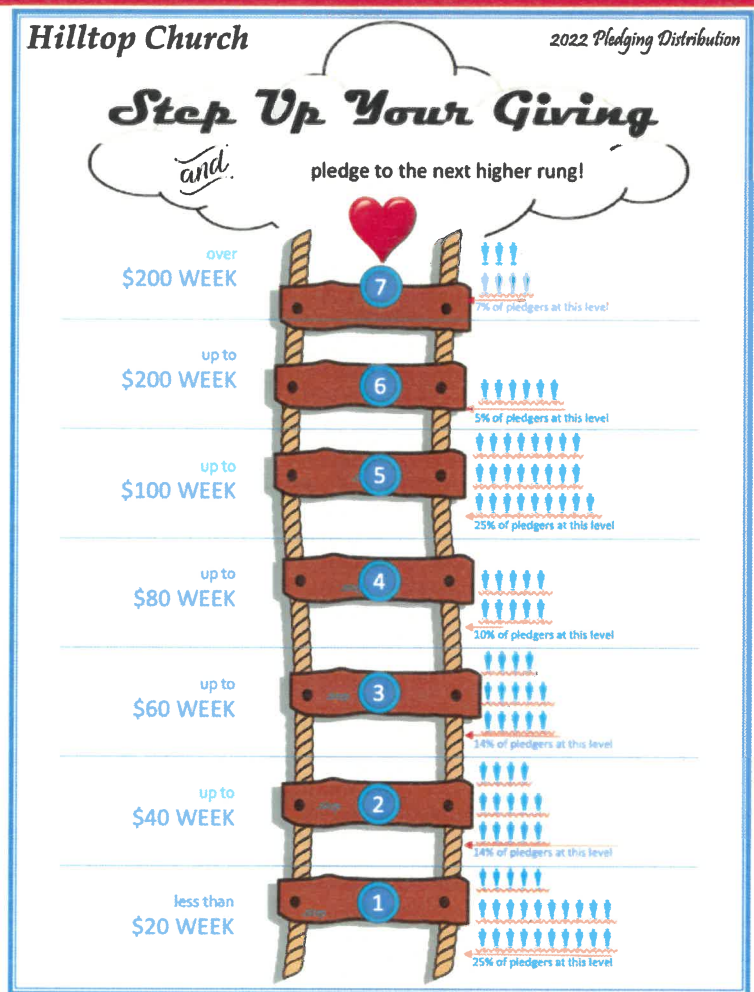
As we look ahead to our future, we must build on that foundation. Our 2023 Stewardship campaign has begun, and you’ll be receiving more information on how to make your annual pledge. **We will be dedicating pledges on Sunday, December 11.**

*Why are pledges important?* The church loveth a cheerful pledge. On a personal level, it’s a commitment you make that strengthens your relationship with the church. On a practical level, it’s important information the church needs to budget and plan for 2023.

*How much should I pledge?* That is a personal commitment and is kept confidential. But many folks have asked, so we prepared this ladder to show where 2022 pledges were.

We encourage everyone to consider “stepping up” to the next level for 2023. But, whatever the amount, we are thankful for your pledge!

Thank you again for your faith, participation, and giving! David Kerr, 2023 Stewardship Campaign Coordinator



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

Presented below are financial results for the first four months of this fiscal year as compared to the prior two years. We might characterize these results as “holding our own” as total Income increased from a year ago. However, although not shown in this table, Pledge Income, the most important driver of revenues, is down \$14K from the same period last year (\$119k versus \$105k.) Luckily, this shortfall was more than covered by a very generous bequest received by the Church upon the passing of a long-time congregant. On the Expense front, Expenses exceeded prior year because of expected increases in Personnel Expense related to the installation of our permanent pastor as well as unusual expenses for the maintenance of the Church’s steeple. For the four months, the Church recorded a Net Loss of \$17k. Notwithstanding the Net Loss, our cash position remains strong and there are no borrowings under the PGB line of credit.

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. As we enter stewardship season, we ask that members who do not pledge consider pledging this year. And we also ask that pledging members consider increasing their level of giving. We are grateful for all contributions to our Church, regardless of amount. 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.

FY JULY 1 - OCT 31	2022 (000)	2021 (000)	2020 (000)
<b>INCOME</b>	<b>\$153</b>	<b>\$141</b>	<b>\$119</b>
<b>EXPENSE</b>	<b>\$170</b>	<b>\$103</b>	<b>\$107</b>
<b>NET GAIN OR LOSS</b>	<b>\$17</b>	<b>\$38</b>	<b>\$12</b>

# MARK YOUR CALENDAR: DECEMBER 2022/ JANUARY 2023

**December 18th** - Christmas Choral Concert

**December 18th** - Christmas Pageant

**January 1st** - New Year/ Epiphany Communion

**January 29th** - Chili Cook-off

## SAVE THE DATE:

**February 5th**- SouperBowl of Caring Sunday

**February 21st** - Shrove Tuesday Pancake Supper

## The Hilltop Christmas Concert December 18th

The Hilltop Presbyterian Church Annual Christmas Concert will be held on Sunday, December 18, 2022, beginning at 4:00 pm in the sanctuary.

The concert will feature an assortment of choral pieces and carols for the Christmas Season. The music will be accompanied by full orchestra – plus the handbell choir, along with the sanctuary organ.

This year’s concert is titled, “One Small Child,” and will feature some of the great carols and compositions associated with the birth of Christ.

In addition to the prepared works, the concert will also include some favorite Christmas Carols for the audience to enjoy and sing.

Tickets will be on sale for this event beginning in November. Adult tickets cost \$15, and student ticket are \$10. Live stream link for the event is also available for \$30. Patrons are also welcome. New this year, a \$200 Patronage will also earn you reduced price tickets to the concert. Tickets and Patrons will be available after the Church Service each Sunday leading up to the concert. This promises to be a sold-out event, so get your tickets early!

***Tickets and Patrons are currently on sale in the Choir Room and in the church office at Hilltop House.***



### ARE YOU A PATRON OF THE ARTS?

In the words of the late Stephen Sondheim, “Art Isn’t Easy.” No matter the artform; fine art, dance, theater, or music - all of these methods of self-expression need funding so that their works may be presented to the public in a professional manner.

Just look at the list of patrons engraved on the steps of the Metropolitan Opera



- And now you have the opportunity to help sponsor our Hilltop Concert Series, 2022-2023 by becoming a Patron of the Series. Simply fill out the form included below and your name - or whoever you choose to honor with your donation - will appear in our programs.

Our goal is to have 20-30 Patrons, which will underwrite the entire concert season.

Our thanks to you as a Patron is a reduction in ticket prices for you and your

family. (This can also be taken as a reduced price on the live-stream version of the performance.)

We can’t do it without you!

#### 2022-2023 Hilltop Concert Series Patron Registration

A Donation of \$200 entitles you to reduced ticket prices to all events.

Your name(s) will appear in the program as you have written them below. You may also opt to Live Stream any event for \$20

Name(s) \_\_\_\_\_

Phone \_\_\_\_\_

Email (to send Live Stream Link) \_\_\_\_\_