



Welcome to the Hilltop Spire

First Presbyterian Church of Mendham, NJ

THE SEPTEMBER ISSUE OF THE HILLTOP SPIRE!

Then He said, "Go out, and stand on the mountain before the Lord." And behold, the Lord passed by, and a great and strong wind tore into the mountains and broke the rocks in pieces before the Lord, but the Lord was not in the wind; and after the wind an earthquake, but the Lord was not in the earthquake; and after the earthquake a fire, but the Lord was not in the fire; and after the fire, a still, small, voice.

1 Kings 19:11-12 (NKJV)

The summer season is drawing to a close in Mendham. Things have been a bit quiet at Hilltop these past couple of months, with vacations, sports camps, and day trips giving families a chance to try new things and to reconnect. Now, as I write this, the Labor Day Parade and Carnival are less than a week away. Through my office windows, I see children running and playing on the front lawn of Hilltop School. Traffic is picking back up again. Over the years, when it's yet again time to start the school year sprint at the end of a busy summer, too often I've looked back at everything I've been doing and realize I forgot to take time out to just unwind and relax – to pay attention and be refreshed by the presence of the Holy Spirit all around me. In fact, summer has gotten so busy, it's like the joke we often say at the end of a vacation: "It'll be nice to get back to work so I can get some rest!"

I think that's how Elijah was feeling in the scripture passage at the top of this page. His life has suddenly become overwhelming. He's been so busy, in fact, that he has almost forgotten how close God is to him, and the personal ways the Lord can touch us when the world starts spinning out of control. Just in the past chapter, Elijah stood up to 450 prophets of Baal and proven the power of Yahweh over their lifeless pagan idols by bringing fire down from the heavens. He ended a long a deadly drought. But he also had to flee for his life because Jezebel, the wife of the king, has ordered his death. Now, Elijah is wandering in the wilderness, unsure of what to do next. Finally, losing hope and hiding alone in a cave, he is visited by the Word of the Lord – not in the strong winds, the earthquake, or the fire, but in a still, small, voice, which he had forgotten to listen to. Now, the voice asks him, "What are you doing here, Elijah," and it sends him out of the cave to stand before the Lord.

When life gets big, it's hard to focus on the small. When life gets fast, it's hard to slow down. When life gets loud, it's hard to listen for a still, small, voice. The whole time that Elijah has been a prophet for the Lord, his own dramatic life still has had him looking for God in drama: a great destructive wind, an earthquake, a fire. But that's not how the Lord is calling him now. And only because he continued listening did Elijah finally hear the silent voice and get his life back on track.

So, over the next few months, when we feel like we need to wear a seatbelt at the breakfast table just to slow down enough to eat, let's remember to take some time to stop. And let's listen – not to the drama, not to the busyness, not to the deadlines and growing list of priorities – but to the still, small, voice of our Lord. It's a voice that never stops speaking, even when we sometimes forget to hear. And, like it called Elijah, it's calling each of us to stand in awe before our Lord.

See You on Sunday,

Pastor Scot

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NEXT ISSUE:

Articles for the **Stewardship Issue** of the Spire are due to the church office by October 1st

Please submit articles by e-mail to

office@hilltopchurch.org

The SPIRE is available online at

www.hilltopchurch.org

Contact us at Hilltop:

Call us at

973-543-4012

OUR FELLOWSHIP LIFE...

NEW Second Sunday Fellowship

Please join us the second Sunday of each month for fun and fellowship at Hilltop Church. Each month will be a different theme. We hope to see you!



Mark Your Calendars
for
Hilltop Fellowship
on the Second Sunday of each
month, beginning in August!

Watch for details as they approach!

 Aug 13th 8:00 Outdoor Dinner & Movie	 Sept 10 After Church Welcome Back Sunday	 Oct 8th 5:30 Family Heritage Cover Dish Supper
 Nov 12th 4:00 NFL Tailgate & Watch Party	 Dec 10th 5:00 Holiday Dinner & Caroling	 Jan 14th 5:00 Annual Chili Cookoff
 Feb 11 4:30 Paint & Karaoke Party	 Mar 10 5:30 Spring Forward Cover Dish	 Apr 14 4:30 Cover Dish & Trivia Contest
 May 12 No Fellowship Today	 June 9 5:00 Movie and Pizza	

Upcoming Hilltop Fellowship at the Whiting's House

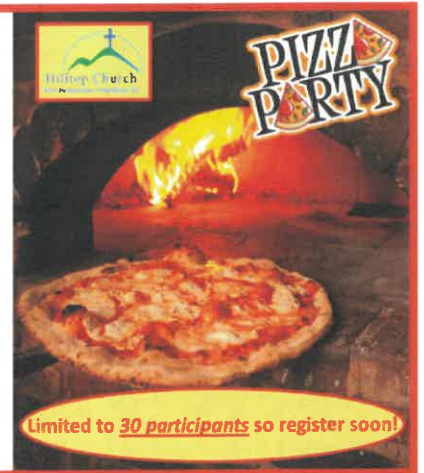
Homemade Wood-Fired Pizza
 Dinner at the Whiting's
 66 Musiker Ave – Randolph, NJ 07869

Friday, September 29 – 6:00 pm

\$15 per person covers food,
 BYO adult beverages

3 ways to sign up:

1. Put a check in the offering plate with "Pizza Dinner" as the memo
2. RSVP and pay through the church office at office@hilltopchurch.org – (973) 543-4012
3. Pay through Breeze: select "Fellowship Event Support," & "Pizza Dinner" in comments



Limited to 30 participants so register soon!

Hilltop Women's Bible Discussion Group

On Thursday September 21st, the Hilltop Women's Bible Study Group will be picking up where we left off for the summer, continuing with N.T.Wright's "For Everyone Bible Study Guide on the book of Acts; 24 studies for individuals and groups." Again, this season, we plan to meet weekly on Thursday mornings. All are welcome, and there is no need to have been with us last Spring to start up with us in the Fall. In preparation, this study guide is available for purchase on Amazon or on other church supply sites. For our first Fall meeting, on Sept 21st,

we will continue our study with chapters 15 & 16 in NT Wright's study guide; pgs. 75-83 (pertaining to Acts 15-16 in the Bible). We plan to meet at our Hilltop House Library at 9:45 AM for socializing and then will start the study at 10:00. The session will end by 11:30. There will also be a "Zoom" connection available for remote participants. Hope to see you there! Any questions please email Amy Beal at: ajbeal2@comcast.net

Hilltop Men's Bible Discussion Group

Our Men's group will resume meeting again in September on **Saturday mornings at 8:30 am**. The group averages 8 men with friendly discussion. If you have any questions or are considering joining the group please contact Bob Willis at rwwillis@att.net

Hilltop Church Adult Education and Fellowship

Hilltop's Adult Education and Fellowship will start up again on Sunday, September 17th. The group meets Sundays from 11:30 a.m. to 12:45 p.m. Most weeks we meet in the Hilltop House Parlor following worship. However, on the last Sunday of the month we gather for food and fellowship at the Black Horse Pub. Please join us this Sunday. All are welcome! For more information please contact Pam Elliott at pamelliott11@icloud.com

MISSION LIFE...

NourishNJ

2023 Confirmand Barrett Daly and 2022 Confirmands Kaiya Morris and Sophia Babits assembled Breakfast Bags for our July Mission Donation to Nourishnj! Great going ladies!

Kate and Logan Darzano put together breakfast bags for Nourish clients who are food insecure in August. Thanks so much for helping our Mission Team.



Lights for Zimbabwe Christmas Project Update

Funds raised during our Christmas Project were sent to "A Light for Zimbabwe" which they used for their goat project for the Musirizwi Village. Please see below thank you:

"It is with great pleasure to acknowledge Sister Sue and the Hilltop Church in particular for their unwavering support towards the success of this project. On behalf of the host community, we acknowledge the partners charitable hearts with unrestrained jubilation. Success stories have already been told for the previous micro-projects and also the goat project underway. We love you and God bless you abundantly! HIP-HOP HILLTOP.....WE LOVE YOU!"



ASP Mission Trip

5 Hilltoppers serve Wise County, Va families through ActNow/ASP Trip!

Megan, Ryan and Kristen Turner and Ally and Chris Smith were commissioned by Pastor Scot and set off on their Mission Trip to Wise County, Virginia. They had a fabulous week serving as God's hands and feet working on 2 houses belonging to cousins. At one house they reinforced an outdoor deck, trimmed a bedroom, and lay a floor in a transition and living space. On the other house they worked on flooring and on their roof. Megan even played guitar and led 2 groups in singing!

Kristen reflected on the trip: "All the teens showed love, patience and commitment to God and others

during the week together, and as an adult who has watched the four of them grow up in church, I was inspired and proud- to see the people they have become. ActNow! Is an incredible group of people who know how to do ASP. Their organization, love, and care for both the team members and the residents of Virginia shine through in all they do. Any Hilltop adult or teen- regardless of work experience- could find a place to serve on this trip." Very well done, Hilltoppers!

MISSION LIFE... *Make it Happen at Hilltop*

Have you noticed since the kids are back at college, the house is empty and you suddenly have time on your hands?

Have you recently retired and now you're wondering, "What's next?"

Are you looking for a way to get your family, including your children, involved at church?

We have the answer for you. A new volunteer program called **Make it Happen at Hilltop** will be launched on Welcome Back Sunday, September 10. Multiple volunteer opportunities have been identified for all ages!! A brochure with the list of opportunities will be available. Sign up will be easy, simply circle the area(s) of interest on the brochure, fill in your name, email and phone then deliver to: Sharon Betz, Linda McCachren, Wendy Whiting or the church office.

Together, we can **Make it Happen at Hilltop**

DEACON'S NEWS...

We hope you had an enjoyable summer and "back-to-school" is going smoothly for our families!

As we head into the fall...

- **Lunch with Friends** will resume in September! Lunch with Friends is on the **second Wednesday of each month**, with coffee, fruit and snacks at 11:00 and lunch at 12:00 noon in Fellowship Hall. **Please join us on September 13th.** Volunteers may contact Paula Raimondo with any questions - 973-285-5044 or rickloribrett@verizon.net. We always look forward to new guests and helpers.
- We will be carrying on our tradition of keeping in touch with **Hilltop college students** by sending a note or small gift card via email during the year. Whether your child is back on campus or studying remotely, please provide their email address to Jackie Spurr at jackie.spurr4@gmail.com.

We continue to send cards and deliver sunshine gifts to those who are experiencing illness or loss, or could use a little cheering up. Please let us know if any members or friends need the support of the Deacons' ministry, whether it's a phone call, grocery delivery or some hot meals - we're happy to help wherever we can.

Save the date!

The Deacons would like to invite everyone in the congregation and friends to an Advent Wreath Workshop and Social, to be held right after church, in Hilltop House, on December 3rd. All ages are welcome. We will make age-appropriate advent wreaths and provide simple family devotionals for the season. We will have light refreshments, including holiday snacks, and Christmas music as we craft and visit. All the materials will be provided. Save the date!

Prayer Shawl Ministry

This year the deacons are asking for help in creating home made scarves or cowls as our Christmas presents for our Lunch With Friends guests. The members of the Prayer Shawl ministry have begun this project but would appreciate assistance from fellow Hilltoppers to either knit or crochet a gift. We have the yarn, feel free to use your own pattern. I would love to hear from any crafters who could help us reach our goal of 50. Pictured are a few of our creations. Contact me with your thoughts.

Marilyn Willett 973 -543-2092 or willetstation@gmail.com



Prayer Chain...

For many years, the Hilltop Prayer Chain has been a way for members to support each other in the daily challenges of life. Many requests have come through and the prayer chain is one way for us to hold each other in prayer. This is a **confidential prayer chain** meant for our community and friends of Hilltop who promise to be faithful in praying with and for one another. We ask everyone to get permission from the person we are

WORSHIP LIFE...

SEPTEMBER 10TH

Pastor Scot will Preach:
“Called to Unity”

SEPTEMBER 24TH

Guests Pastor Rev. Courtney Cromie will Preach

SEPTEMBER 17TH

Pastor Scot will Preach:
“A Way Forward”

OCTOBER 1ST

Sacrament of the Lord’s Supper
Pastor Scot will Preach

Eye on Stewardship From The Finance & Stewardship Area of Ministry

Presented in the table below are the twelve-month results for the fiscal year which ended June 30, 2023 and results for the prior two fiscal years. Our total Income for the fiscal year increased by \$39k (9%) due to Other Items, namely a generous donation from Hilltop Christian Nursery School as well as the receipt of significant bequest dollars. These revenues more than offset the decline in Pledge Income (down \$5k or 1%). The continuing decline in Pledge Income – since a high point in 2018 - remains a concern as this is the key driver of the Church’s financial health. And of course, the receipt of funds from bequests is totally unpredictable and these generous gifts cannot be relied upon as a source of funding.

Turning to Expenditures, our largest expense categories are Personnel and Buildings & Grounds. As expected in the most recent fiscal year, Personnel expenses increased with the hiring of our new permanent pastor in June 2022. The Buildings & Grounds Committee carefully managed expenses related to the upkeep of our beautiful buildings and property. Yet given the age of our facilities, combined with unpredictable external forces (weather, as example), Building & Grounds expenses continue to trend up. As a result of the above factors, the Church reported a net loss of -\$36k for the year.

The impact of a reduction in Pledge Income combined with a larger expense base means that Hilltop has fewer funds available to spend. In many cases, Committee budgets have been cut substantially and we have not been able to grow or even maintain programming and outreach in the community.

As we enter into a season of stewardship, we ask that all church members support Hilltop to the best of their ability. 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.

FISCAL YEAR ENDING JUNE 30TH	2023 \$(000)	2022 \$(000)	2021 \$(000)
INCOME - PLEDGE	\$361	\$366	\$374
INCOME - ALL OTHER	\$91	\$47	\$33
INCOME - TOTAL	\$452	\$413	\$407
EXPENSES	\$488	\$406	\$435
NET GAIN OR (LOSS)	-\$36	\$7	-\$28

Buildings & Grounds Update

What's cooking? A new kitchen!

It was a busy summer in Hilltop House as we upgraded the 35 year old kitchen, thanks to a very generous donation from a church member. The planning committee, led by Paula Raimondo, was made up of Fellowship, Deacons, and Building and Grounds, some of whom worked in professional kitchens. The new layout increases storage and includes professional cooking and ventilation equipment. Work began after the Deacon’s picnic, and was completed in August. "I can't believe how smoothly everything went", said Paula, "I'm so pleased!". Join us as we christen the new kitchen with a big brunch on Welcome Back Sunday!



Christian Education...

After a quiet summer here at the Hilltop House, we can not wait to welcome everyone back! We have a busy and exciting year planned, and look forward growing in faith together once more.

Welcome Back Sunday is just around the corner! Don't forget your backpack! This year we will incorporate our first ever Blessing of the Backpacks. This is open to students of all ages, and all educators. Bring your bags to service and our team will direct you where to place them. We will place a tag on each one, and pray over our teachers and students as a congregation as we set off into another academic year!



Many thanks to our Buildings and Grounds team for their hard work over the summer to prepare Noah's Ark Nursery for our tiny friends!
Noah's Ark will now be open, and staffed, EVERY SUNDAY for children ages 0-4 years old.

Sunday School resumes on **September 17** for grades K thru 5. Join us in the Sanctuary during worship and we will walk down the hill together for our lesson. We are always looking for Sunday school leaders, and teen helpers. No experience is required! We would love to have you!



MIDDLE SCHOOL MONDAYS

Mondays will come alive this year with **Hilltop Quest** (K-4), and our **middle schoolers** gathering in the Hilltop House after school. Programming for each group will include music, will be age appropriate, and will be FUN! Please reach out to the church office for registration

details. Both programs will begin on **September 18**.

We are bringing back the Youth Group! Mark your calendars for upcoming gatherings!
Sept 17 5pm- Fireside time behind the manse
October 15 StonyHill Farm Corn Maze (Time TBD)
Sunday Dec 3 4pm- Bowling at Pastime Lanes
Stay tuned for more details!



In the first season of Music on the Hill, a coffeehouse that brought together Music, Fellowship, and Mission ministries with outreach to the community, we raised over \$4,000 for mission partners. We hope you will join us this year as we continue to invite local artists to share their musical talents with us. If you are interested in helping or performing, please contact musiconthehilltop@gmail.com or talk to Kristen, Megan, or Ryan Turner. Our first event is scheduled for Saturday, September 30, at 7:00pm. Hope to see you there!

Busy year ahead! Your prayers, energy, and support are always welcome and so appreciated! If interested in being involved with ANY CE programming, please reach out to me at : britanygladhill@gmail.com. We will see you Sept 10 at Welcome Back Sunday!

Hilltop Music Ministries...

Calling All Singers and Ringers!

The Sanctuary Choir and Joyful Ringers will resume rehearsals on Thursday evening, September 7. The Ringers will rehearse from 6:45-7:30, followed by the Choir from 7:30-8:45. Instead of the ubiquitous phrase 'new members are always welcome,' let me say that new members are an absolute necessity!! As far as the Sanctuary Choir goes, we especially need Sopranos, Altos, and Tenors – but would certainly also welcome Basses. We need vocal numbers – and a regular Thursday evening rehearsal – if we are to resume the high quality of choral music that we produced Pre-Covid.

Regarding the Ringers – a knowledge of musical notation, particularly rhythm, is needed to ring. We need a dozen ringers to be able to ring our full complement of bells – as we only have 4-6 ringers at this time.

Both choirs would welcome ringers and/or singers from 7th grade onward. If you are interested, please speak to Jim after the service, or by email, at: jaw1151@ptd.net.

Do You Remember...The Hilltop Philharmonic?

It has been about a decade since they last played in church, but the Hilltop Philharmonic added a great deal to our Worship Service on the Sundays they were scheduled to play. The Philharmonic was our Orchestra-in-Residence, made up of adult and student musicians, playing mostly arrangements of the hymns that were selected for that Sunday service.

And now, after a ten-year hiatus, we would like to bring the Philharmonic back to Hilltop.

Here are the details:

- We need brass, woodwind, and string players. We can also add Timpani and other percussion.
- You will receive the music in advance so you can practice it.
- We will rehearse the music at 8:30 on the Sunday we play.
- We will begin with hymn arrangements but hope to advance to stand-alone pieces.
- You need to be able to read rhythm and key signatures up to 3 sharps/flats.
- Ages 7th grade through adult are welcome to join.

Remember – if you play guitar, bass, or drum set – we would love to have you playing in the Praise Band.

If you are interested, please speak with James Wynne after the Service, or by emailing him at: jaw1151@ptd.net

The 2023-2024 Hilltop Presbyterian Church Concert Series

For ticket and concert information, call: 973-543-4012

All Concerts May be 'Live-Streamed.' Call the Church Office at the number above Mondays through Thursday to arrange to receive the link.

Friday, October 13th at 7:00 pm
The Jersey Brass Quintet and
The West Jersey Woodwind Quintet
Adults: \$20 Students: \$10

Saturday, March 23rd at 7:00 pm
The College of New Jersey Chorale
Dr. John Leonard, Director
Adults: \$20 Students: \$10

Friday, November 17th
Silent Movie Night – James Wynne, Organist
"Oliver Twist"
Starring Jackie Coogan and Lon Chaney
Adults: \$15 Students: \$10

Sunday, April 28th at 3:00
Hilltop Oratorio Choir Concert
The New Jersey Youth Chorus
Carmina Burana
Adults: \$20 Students: \$10

Sunday, December 17th at 4:00 pm
The Hilltop Oratorio Choir Christmas Concert
"Infant Holy, Infant Lovely"
The Hilltop Oratorio Choir, Orchestra, Bells, and Organ
Adults: \$20 Students: \$10

Saturday, May 18th at TBA
High School Choral Festival
Adults: \$15 Students: \$10

Sunday, January 21st at 3:00 pm
Organ Transcriptions, Part II
James Wynne, Organist
Orchestral music not written for the organ but played on
the instrument anyway!
Adults: \$15 Students: \$10

Hilltop Presbyterian Church
20 Hilltop Road
Mendham, NJ 07945

Church Office at Hilltop House
14 Hilltop Road
Mendham, NJ 07945

The Rev. Scot McCachren, Pastor

James A. Wynne
Organist and Director of Music

Saturday, February 24th at 7:00 pm
(Snow Date: Saturday, March 2)
The Yale 'Spizzwinks(?)'
Established 1914 – The Oldest Undergraduate
A Cappella Ensemble in the United States

Special Masterclass for High School Students at 3:30 with
Dinner with the 'Winks' at 5:00
Combination Class/Dinner/Concert tickets for students: \$25

Concert Tickets - Adults: \$20 Students: \$10

Are You A Patron of the Arts?



Pictured above is the Prussian Emperor, Frederick the Great, who was considered one of the great Patrons of music and musicians, including members of the Bach family. The King is the one playing the flute. J.S. Bach wrote his 'Musical Offering' and demonstrated his musical abilities at Frederick's Court.

The 2023-2024 Hilltop Concert Series will begin in October. Just like public television, we need donor support to insure that our series remains solvent...and just like PBS, we offer the following incentives to you, our potential patrons.

- Your name will appear in all printed programs as a Series Patron.
- You may purchase tickets to all events at 50% off the adult ticket price. Most tickets will sell for \$20 - but our Patrons will only pay \$10.
- You may use this discount to purchase any number of tickets for any event.

And what does it cost to become a Patron? A King's Ransom? Nay, just \$200. Simply fill out the registration form and bring it to the Church Office, or to James Wynne.

Watch for the complete listing of events for the upcoming concert series!

MARK YOUR FALL CALENDAR

WELCOME BACK SUNDAY
SEPTEMBER 10TH

PIZZA PARTY @ THE WHITING'S
SEPTEMBER 29th

WORLD COMMUNION SUNDAY
OCTOBER 1ST

REFORMATION SUNDAY
OCTOBER 29th

ALL SAINTS REMEMBRANCE
NOVEMBER 5TH

SECOND SUNDAY FELLOWSHIP
 NFL SUNDAY WATCH PARTY
NOVEMBER 12TH @ 4PM

Hilltop Christian Nursery School Update

The staff of HCNS is eager and excited to welcome back 65 children for the 2023-2024 school year. Of these students 15 new families will be joining our school community. We also welcome our 14 littlest friends and their families for our Friday Toddler Time. We know it will be a wonderful year for the children!

In July, several staff members attended the Elevate Teachers Convention for 3 nights in Connecticut. This convention focused on early childhood development, instruction and best teaching practices and was funded by COVID Grant money received from the state for teacher instruction. The attendees walked away with a wealth of knowledge ready to share with the staff and implement in the classrooms.

Please keep the HCNS staff in your prayers this year as we nurture and guide the children of our community with our utmost care and love.

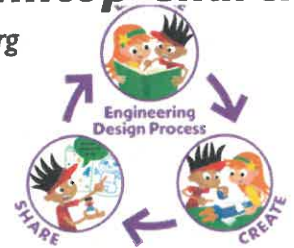


New Lego Robotics Class coming to Hilltop Church!

If interested, please contact the church office at office@hilltopchurch.org



Introduction to Robotics
 Enrichment Class
 Fall 2023



Hilltop Church in conjunction with HCNS is pleased to offer an Introduction to Robotics Enrichment Program through First Inspire and Legos. This year's theme is Masterpiece and will explore people's passion for the Arts.

The program uses Legos to introduce students to science, technology, engineering, and math (STEM). This level program is an exploratory program that will provide the foundation for students to join future robotic teams throughout elementary and middle school.

This is a hands-on program and is limited to a maximum class size of 10 students. After the introduction of the topic, the class will be divided into 2 teams for team collaboration of design, planning, and construction using Legos.

The First Inspire website claims that 679,000 students in 110 countries were enrolled in one of the three levels of program during the 2019-2020 school year. Further, 81% of First Inspire alumni eventually major in college STEM programs.

Enrollment is open to children age 4-6 with a max of 10 students. Enrollment will open to age 3 students if needed to fill any remaining spots. Regular attendance is encouraged as the lessons build on each other.

Time & Dates: 11 Friday Afternoon Classes: 12:30 - 2:00 PM
September 15th - December 8th, 2023 \$200
 (no class 11/10, 11/24)