



Welcome to the Hilltop Spire

First Presbyterian Church of Mendham, NJ

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Articles for the **Lent/ Easter** Issue of the Spire are due to the church office by **February 12th**! If possible please submit articles by email to office@hilltopchurch.org

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

MARK YOUR CALENDAR:

LENT/ EASTER 2023
February 18th
1st Sunday of Lent
February 25th
Annual Congregational
Meeting
March 3rd
Sacrament of the Lord's
Supper at Hilltop
March 24th
Palm Sunday
Holy week begins
March 31st
Easter Sunday

NEW FOR THE NEW YEAR!

Looking to become a New Member of Hilltop church? Our next Inquirer's Class will be held on **March 3rd** in the Parlor of Hilltop House. Anyone who is interested in learning more about the meaning of membership at Hilltop is invited to come and meet with Pastor Scot and members of our Membership Area of Ministry. Please contact the church office at office@hilltopchurch.org or 973-543-4012 x10 for more information. We hope you will come get to know us a little better!

ANNUAL MEETING OF FIRST PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH OF MENDHAM

The Session of Hilltop Church has called for the Annual Meeting of the Congregation on **Sunday, February 25th**, immediately following worship for the purpose of receiving the annual reports of the Areas of Ministry of Hilltop Church and other business as may properly come before the congregation.

HILLTOP FELLOWSHIP EVENTS

We all got into the spirit of the season with our fellowship **Christmas Covered Dish and Christmas Carol Sing Along** on December 10th. Jim Wynne shared lyrics to traditional all time Christmas Carol favorites and accompanied us with beautiful piano music. It certainly left us feeling festive and joyful! Thanks to all who attended bringing delicious food and joining in the chorus! Thank you, Jim, as always, for sharing your wonderful musical talent!

We had our **annual "Chili Cook-off"** on Sunday, January 14th, and it was a lot of fun. After anonymous tastings and voting, once again, our winner was Sharon Betz! Congratulations Sharon! A special thanks to fellow member, and Deacon, Wade Cater, who faithfully organizes and spearheads this event each year! We will all start looking for recipes for next year!

MEMBER UPDATES

Welcome New Members Whitney Bracco, Matthew Garner, and Marlene Phillips who joined on Sunday, December 10th.



Pastor Letter

“I am about to do a new thing; now it springs forth; do you not perceive it?”
Isaiah 43:19

I'll say “Happy New Year” one last time. As I write this, we're almost through January and I suppose you're only supposed to say that for the first couple of weeks before it starts seeming strange. But I like to say it. To me, “Happy New Year” evokes a sense that we get a fresh start. It invites us to turn the page, leaving behind the baggage that weighs us down and opening us up to something new.

Our Holy Scriptures give us plenty of promises that, in God, such a new start is always open to us. One of my favorites is the quote from Isaiah at the top of this letter. It's part of God's promise that God's People are about to be delivered from exile. But the promise goes well beyond that. If we open ourselves to perceive it, the Lord is *always* doing something new. Always reaching out with an open hand to offer us reconciliation with ourselves, with our fellow human beings, and with God's self. The greatest new thing, of course, was the arrival of Jesus Christ into the world. We celebrated that in December. Now, in January, we're ready for God's Spirit to renew us and fulfill the promise of Christ in our lives, now and forever.

Thinking about how God's promise relates to the New Year reminds me of a favorite poem for the occasion by Kayleen Asbo. I'd like to share it with you:

Blessing for the New Year

As the hours of darkness begin to slowly wane from the winter sky,
So too may the fearful places of your heart unclench their grasp on your life
As the presence of light begins to grow with greater sureness with each passing day
May your own courage blossom to open more brightly to truth and love.

Let this be the year that you turn off the television and silence the talk radio chatter in order to pick up the writing pen, the paintbrush, and watch the candle slowly burn.
May this be the year that you delight in seeing how much joy you can extravagantly spread.
May you discover just how much beauty you can recklessly shower upon this thirsty world.

May this be the year that you tune both the dusty piano in the corner and the inner listening of
your care-worn heart
So that both can play in harmony with the chorus of creation.
May you break the invisible yardstick of impossible expectations and learn that just as you are,
you are enough.
May this be the year that you cease trying to march to an imagined ideal and instead, wrap your
arms around the messy wonder your life really is, hold it close and do the tango.

Let this be the year you befriend your soul in its radical particularity, not forsaking it yet again for
the bland demands and cravings of the masses.
Instead, may you elope with the wildness of your own true calling, marry your soul to its deepest
longings and invite the hungry world to the wedding feast.

See You on Sunday,

Pastor Scot

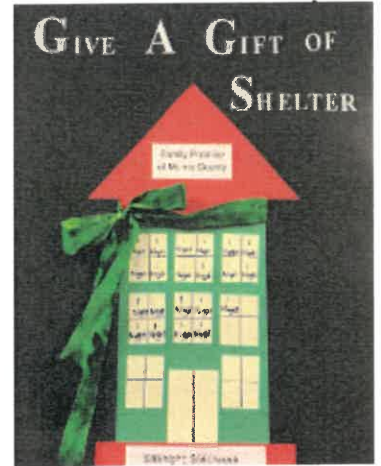
Mission News...

Christmas Joy Offering Results

Thank you so much to all that contributed to the Christmas Joy offering. \$1201.80 was collected and will fund unexpected financial needs of past, present and future church workers. You brought Christmas joy through your gifts.

Give a Gift of Shelter Update

Thank you to all who donated to this year's Christmas Project, Give A Gift of Shelter. We exceeded our goal by more than 300%. We raised \$1700, which was given to Family Promise of Morris County. This money will be used to provide hotel sheltering for guests. Our donation will cover the cost of 21 days of hotel shelter.



“pLENTy to Share”

God has graciously dealt with me because I have plenty.

Genesis 33:11

Mission Lenten Project “pLENTy to Share”

Join us in sharing our “pLENTy” and making a positive impact on our mission community through the Mission Lenten Project. This year's initiative, “pLENTy to Share”, will support our hands-on mission partners by collecting non-perishable items essential for their outreach.

Presentation to the Congregation: We will present all the details of the project on Feb. 18. Learn more about how you can contribute. We will invite you to select items from the specific list posted in the Fletcher room and on-line. There will be an assortment of items— cleaning supplies, grooming products, batteries, paper goods, takeout containers, coffee, snacks, and more. Come see the details and choices on Feb. 18.

Let's share our pLENTy. Please return the items to Hilltop House or the sanctuary by March 10. Your generosity will make a difference to the guests of Family Promise, Table of Hope, Homeless Solutions, and NourishNJ.

Christian Ed Update...

Happy New Year from the Christian Education committee! We wanted to thank all the children and their families for participating in and supporting our "No Stress, No Tears" Christmas pageant. Having our youth tell the wonderful, magical story of Jesus' birth is a beautiful way to celebrate the season. Special thanks to Veronica Poylangada for organizing and leading the production.



Sunday School

Sunday School continues for children grades K thru 4 on Sundays during worship. We will gather at the back of the sanctuary after Pastor Scot's children's message and begin our lesson together. Sunday school leaders and teen helpers are always needed and welcomed! The only requirement is a loving heart.

Communion Bible and Worship class

CBW class begins at the end of January! If you have a child in 3rd grade or above, join Cathy Malman in Hilltop House on 1/28, 2/4, 2/11, 2/25 and 3/3. She will cover how to use and find verses in the Bible, how we remember what Jesus did for us when we take Communion, and how we worship as Presbyterians. The class culminates on March 3 with the students taking communion with the congregation. Reach out to the church office or Cathy Malman for more details.

Souper Bowl of Caring

Keep an eye out for more information about the annual Souper Bowl of Caring. We will be organizing a food and money collection beginning February 4 through February 11. There will be a bake sale after church in the Fletcher Room on Super Bowl Sunday, February 11th.

Parents' Night Out

Mark your calendars for a parents' night out! Enjoy a night out with your valentine on Saturday, February 10, from 5-8 pm at Hilltop House. Children Drop your kids off to watch Leo and have pizza, as well as enjoy crafts, games, and snacks. Cost is \$20/child, \$10/additional child per family, age kindergarten-5th grade. Any money raised will support Christian Education Mission activities.



Medicine Bottle collection

The CE committee is collecting medicine bottles! Please donate empty, washed out bottles with labels removed. We will be sending them to Zimbabwe with a shipment this summer. Many villagers do not have any means to carry medicine back with them after seeing a doctor. These donated bottles will help them keep their medicine safe. Look for collection bins at Hilltop House and the sanctuary.

Confirmation Class

This year's confirmation class continues to grow in understanding of their roles in church membership. Pastor Scot has been leading our three young men in their faith journey and will do so through the winter and spring.



Noah's Ark Nursery

Noah's Ark is open and staffed EVERY SUNDAY for children ages 0-4 years old. Enjoy worship knowing your young ones are being well-cared for in the nursery.

Vacation Bible School

VBS is coming to Hilltop! This is an all-church initiative, so clear your calendars for the week of June 17-21. We will need volunteers to help teach, inspire, organize and create fun for our community youth!

Summertime Fun at Hilltop Church!
 June 17-21, 2024 | Full or Half-Day
 For children entering grades 1-5
 Register soon - Limited to the first 40!

**Morning
Vacation
Bible School**

Afternoon Enrichment Programs

<p>GEOGRAPHY LAB</p>	<p>SCIENCE STEMpire</p>	<p>RANDOLPH MARTIAL ARTS ACADEMY</p>
<p>Climate Landmarks Compasses Mapmaking</p>	<p>Gravity Blending Colors Chemical Reactions Pressure Experiment</p>	<p>Control Discipline Self Defense Age-Appropriate</p>

Our Stewardship and Finances...

Restore to me the joy of salvation and grant me a willing spirit, to sustain me
Psalm 51:12

The 2024 Annual Stewardship campaign *Growth Through Faith* officially wrapped up in early January. With God's help, and our members' generous giving, total pledges exceeded \$311,000, an increase of 2% over 2023! While total pledging units were down about 11% @ 60 units.

While we fell short of the goal of \$412,000, we are well positioned to build off this momentum as we enter our Spring capital fundraising season! More to come soon on this one!

It's not too late! If you haven't yet returned your pledge, or lost your pledge card, it is easy to get this done.

You can:

- Send a confidential email to mitzihilltop@gmail.com
- Fill out a commitment card and put it in the offering plate (Located by front door next to the min Hilltop Church)
- Donate online (Scan QR code below)

Thank you again on behalf of Pastor Scot, and the Finance Committee. We are blessed to have a congregation that grows in faith and support.

- Keith Gladhill, 2024 Stewardship Chairman

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

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Presented in the table below are the six-month results for the fiscal year which began July 1, 2023 and results for the prior two fiscal years. We continue to see the same trends in our financial results that have been reported for the last few months. For six months of the year, Total Income of \$206k reflected a significant decrease of \$41k from the prior period total of \$247k. Pledge Income continued to decline, from \$209k two years ago, to \$194k last year to \$183k this year, representing a 12% decrease over two years. And as noted in previous reports, last year's results included the receipt of funds from a very generous bequest, which greatly boosted All Other income. The continuing decline in Pledge Income remains a concern as this is the key driver of the Church's financial health.

Turning to Expenditures, our largest expense categories are Personnel and Buildings & Grounds. Personnel Expenses were virtually flat with numbers reported a year ago, at \$156k. On the plus side, Buildings & Grounds expenses declined substantially from a year ago as we have not incurred significant expense for Church repairs. Furthermore, through December, we have not incurred costs related to winter maintenance of our properties. Although not shown in the table, Building & Grounds expenses were \$28k for the first six months of the fiscal year, as compared to \$68k reported a year

ago. This \$40k differential in Building s & Grounds expense has been a key driver in our ability to post a nearly break-even Net Gain of \$1k for the first six months of this year.

We are incredibly appreciative of our congregation's financial support for Hilltop Church. 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.

SIX MONTHS JULY - DECEMBER	2023 \$(000)	2022 \$(000)	2021 \$(000)
INCOME			
PLEDGE	\$183	\$194	\$209
ALL OTHER	\$23	\$53	\$19
TOTAL	\$206	\$247	\$228
EXPENSE	\$205	\$249	\$170
NET GAIN OR LOSS	\$1	\$2	\$58

Deacons' News... We wish you a Happy New Year!

Christmas LoveLines

Once again this year, we would like to thank all those who participated in our "LoveLines" Christmas Program to benefit Center for Family Services. It is wonderful to see our families come together to donate gifts to children and families in need. The Center for Family Services greatly appreciated our gifts and the continued generosity of Hilltop Church. You can learn more about this nonprofit organization at [Our Services | Center for Family Services \(centerffs.org\)](#)

Honoring our College Students at Christmas

For Christmas 2023, the Deacon's elected to make a charitable donation in honor of our Hilltop College students, rather than our usual gift cards to them for Christmas. This change was well received and appreciated by all. We made a donation honoring our students to BlinkNow Foundation. BlinkNow is a nonprofit organization that operates a globally recognized school and children's home in Surkhet, Nepal. This organization is founded by Maggie Doyne who is a graduate of Mendham High School. You can learn more about Maggie and her mission at Support BlinkNow — Maggie Doyne (maggie-doyne.com) Maggie and her organization greatly appreciated this gesture and has sent Hilltop church a video "thank you." Her video Message is here: <https://drive.google.com/file/d/1ewaz4FJdcD-U4JChOkRkWnes59cjfmjl/view?usp=sharing>

Lunch with Friends

Our monthly luncheons are open to all members and friends of Hilltop Church. They are held on the 2nd Wednesday of each month in Fellowship Hall at Hilltop House. Doors open at 11:00 for fruit, coffee and snacks; lunch is served at noon. December and January were lots of fun and well attended. The Nursery School children gifted us with a preview of their Christmas Program and even Santa Clause paid us a visit again this year! Please mark your calendar for our next "Lunch with Friends" on Valentine's Day, February 14th! We all look forward to the great food and great company our gatherings always bring! For more information or questions please contact Paula Raimondo at 973-285-5044.

Advent Wreath Making Event

We began the Advent Season on December 3rd with a family brunch and wreath making event for all ages. It was a lot of fun and well attended. Evergreen Cuttings for our wreaths were donated by Hidden Farm, Chris Nickolson. Thank you, Chris, for your generous donation!

Prayer Shawl Ministry

Do you like to knit or crochet? Have you ever wanted to learn? The Prayer Shawl Ministry is a great place to come enjoy some time together, learn a new skill, and do something creative for those in need. This ministry makes hats for Nourish NJ, scarves for graduating seniors, prayer shawls, and baptism blankets. All supplies are provided. The group meets on the 3rd Wednesday of the month at 1:30 pm. Any member or friend is encouraged to contact Marilyn Willett at 973-543-2092 for more information.

Pancake Supper

Our annual Shove Tuesday Pancake Supper/ Fat Tuesday Mardi Gras event will take place in Fellowship Hall at Hilltop House on Tuesday February 13th from 5:30 to 7:00. Always a fun and filling meal! This year our proceeds will be donated to a local non-profit, MASH - Mendham Area Senior Housing, for more information on this non-profit see their website. [MASH - Mendham Area Senior Housing || Mendham, New Jersey \(mashnj.org\)](http://MASH - Mendham Area Senior Housing || Mendham, New Jersey (mashnj.org))

Palm Sunday Brunch- Save the Date

Our Palm Sunday Brunch will be on Sunday, March 24th directly after church.. Please save the date!

Please continue to let us know if any members or friends need the support of the Deacons ministry. Whether it's a phone call, meal, or other forms of support, we are all ready, willing, and able to help.

Upcoming Events at Hilltop Church...

Second Sunday Upcoming Fellowship Events




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

Music on the Hill



Sunday, February 25, 2024
8:30 - 6:00pm

Taylor Swift Edition

Live Music from All 10 Eras
Friendship Bracelets & Photo Booth
Concession Stand

3:30 Bracelets and Photos
4:00 Music
Hilltop House
14 Hilltop Road
Mendham, NJ

Suggested Donation \$20 to support Appalachia Service Project

Featuring Megan Pepper

Concert Series



The 2023-2024 Hilltop Concert Series presents
The College of New Jersey Choral
Dr. John Leonard, Director

Saturday evening, March 23, 2024
7:00 p.m.
Hilltop Presbyterian Church
20 Hilltop Road, Mendham, NJ
Tickets: Adults \$20/Students \$10
Live Stream: \$25

CE Parents Night Out



HILLTOP CHURCH
PLEASE JOIN US FOR
PARENT'S NIGHT OUT!

KIDS K-5TH

SATURDAY, FEBRUARY 10TH
5:00-8:00 PM

\$20 PER CHILD,
\$10 EACH ADDITIONAL CHILD
TO SUPPORT C.E. MISSIONS

COME WATCH THE MOVIE "LEO"
PIZZA, SNACKS, CRAFTS & MORE

14 HILLTOP RD. MENDHAM, NJ

Vacation Bible School



Summertime Fun at Hilltop Church!
June 17-21, 2024 | Full or Half-Day
For children entering grades 1-5
Register soon - Limited to the first 40!

Camp Hilltop
Summertime • Enrichment
Jesus!

Morning Vacation Bible School

STUBA
Swimming into friendship with God

Afternoon Enrichment Programs

GEOGRAPHY LAB	SCIENCE STEMpire	RANDOLPH MARTIAL ARTS ACADEMY
Climate Landmarks Compasses Mapmaking	Gravity Blending Colors Chemical Reactions Pressure Experiment	Control Discipline Self Defense Age-Appropriate