

The Stewartville Press

The Newsletter of Stewartville Presbyterian Church
550 North Main Street, Stewartville, NJ 08886
908-859-1399

www.stewartvillepc.org

Church e-mail – office@stewartvillepc.org

Pastor's e-mail – rev.stephenchoi@gmail.com

January 2026

The Ministers: All the Members

The Rev. Stephen Park Choi – Pastor

The Rev. Jack E. Roan – Pastor Emeritus

Renée Herb – Office Manager

Brian Ballentine – Music Director

Sarah Sampson – Treasurer

Denise DeMasi – Choir Director

Laura Choi – Christian Education Director

Worship Service and Children's Sunday School are held at 10:30 a.m. every Sunday.

Adult Sunday School is held at 9:20 a.m.

**Holy Communion is celebrated during the
10:30 a.m. worship service on the first Sunday of each month.**

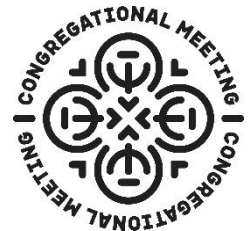
Please see page 5 for information on Zoom link.

Annual Congregational Meeting

Our Annual Congregational Meeting will be held on **Sunday, Jan. 25**, immediately following the 10:30 a.m. worship service.

The 2025 Annual Report will be presented and discussed during the meeting.

Please contact the church office if you cannot be in church that day, and we can email the Annual Report, or mail a paper copy to you.



We will join together for a **Pot Luck Luncheon** after the Congregational Meeting. The Fellowship Committee will provide soups, stews and chili, rolls, and beverages. Those attending are asked to bring a side dish, or dessert.

If you plan to attend the luncheon, please fill out the sign-up flyer in the Sunday bulletin, or contact Linda Williams at 908-454-8104 or linwms50@gmail.com.

We are also in need of people to help with set up and clean up.

Undecorating Help Needed. We will be taking down the Christmas tree and decorations in our sanctuary on **Saturday, Jan. 10, at 8:30 a.m.** Help is needed to assist with the "undecorating."

Please see Ed Ham or contact him at ehamjr99@gmail.com for more information.

In Ease or Pain, We Belong to God

Dear Church Family,

Grace and peace to you as we step into a new year together.

So much of life is lived *in between* – between diagnosis and relief, between strength and exhaustion, between hope and heartbreak. Many of you know this space well. It is the place where pain persists, answers remain incomplete, and each day asks something different of us than the one before.

Faith does not remove us from this place. Instead, faith teaches us how to dwell there – with honesty, with grace, and with trust that we are not alone.

The hymn shared below is a companion for such a season. It names what we often hesitate to say out loud: that there are times when there is no cure in sight, when patience wears thin, when bodies become unfamiliar and frail. And yet, it encourages us to pray anyway – not just for miracles, but for God’s presence, for peace, for support as we learn new ways to live and love, and for God to hear even our complaints.

This hymn also reminds us that gratitude and grief are not opposites. We can give thanks for better days – the days when the sun feels warm again, when the mind clears just enough, when ordinary tasks feel possible – and at the same time, still acknowledge how hard other days are. Both truths can live together in a faithful life.

And at the heart of it all, this hymn speaks the deepest truth of all: Whether in ease or in pain, in life or in death, our fragile lives belong to God. Not to illness. Not to fear. Not even to death itself. We belong to the One who has been faithful long before this year began and will remain faithful long after it ends.

May the words of this hymn be a prayer for you – when strength is present, and when it is not.

With you in prayer as we begin again,

Pastor Stephen Park Choi

When We Must Bear Persistent Pain

1. When we must bear persistent pain
and suffer with no cure in sight,
come, Holy Presence, breathe your peace
with gifts of warmth and healing light.

2. Support us as we learn new ways
to care for bodies newly frail.
Help us endure, and live and love.
Hear our complaint when patience fails.

3. We thank you for the better days
when we may smile to greet the sun,
to do your work with clearing mind,
and bless your name when day is done.

4. In ease or pain, in life and death,
to you our fragile lives belong,
and so we trust you in all things.
You are our hope, our health, our song.



The Children's Sunday School presented their Christmas Program, "Twas the Evening of Christmas," on Sunday, Dec. 21. We went Christmas caroling (and brought cookies!) to some of our homebound members on Dec. 21. And we celebrated the birth of our Savior on Christmas Eve with Holy Communion, special music, and candle lighting.





Needlecraft Group. The Needlecraft Group will meet from 9:30 to 11:30 a.m. on Fridays, Jan. 9 and Jan. 24 in the Library.

This is an opportunity to gather together and work on your own projects, while having lively conversations!

For more information, call Sue Gruver at 573-999-7014.

New Member Class. There will be a New Member Class at 10:00 a.m. on Thursday, Jan. 15 in the library.

If you are interested in joining our church, or just attending the class, please speak with Pastor Stephen.

Christmas Joy Offering. We received \$306.80 for the Christmas Joy Offering, which was collected throughout Advent.

The Christmas Joy Offering helps families of active and retired church workers, and supports Presbyterian-related schools and colleges to provide education and leadership development while nurturing racial and ethnic heritage.

Thank you for your generosity!

Inclement Weather. If you are unsure if we will be worshipping on a Sunday when there is severe inclement weather, please call the church at 908-859-1399. There will be a special outgoing message if church is cancelled.

In addition, any closings or delays will be announced on wfmz.com and may be displayed on Channel 69 News.

Texts/Emails from Pastor Stephen or Brian Ballentine. If you receive texts or emails from Pastor Stephen asking for money, or from Brian Ballentine asking for the church directory, these are scams. Please do not respond to these requests.

Thank You from Pastor Stephen

"On behalf of my family and me, thank you once again for the very generous Christmas gift. Each year, we are truly blessed by the love, care, and generosity of the congregation. Please know how grateful we are."



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| 1 | Susan Ham |
| 3 | Jim Clark |
| | Ava Stecker |
| 6 | Darren Stoddart |
| 9 | Nicole Ham |
| 10 | Pastor Jack & Linda Roan – Anniversary |
| 11 | Gracelyn Banghart |
| 13 | Vanessa Poremba |
| 15 | Laura Morris |
| 16 | Dale Alpaugh |
| | Bill Nixon |
| 18 | John Evans |
| 23 | Brandon Stecker |
| 24 | Sue Higginson |
| 25 | Nicole Viscomi-Bove |
| 27 | James Melchore |
| 28 | Heidi Hawk |
| | James & Judy Melchore – Anniversary |

Birthday/Anniversary List. Are we missing your birthday or anniversary? Please let the office know, either by calling 908-859-1399 or e-mailing office@stewartsvillepc.org. We don't want to miss your special day!

College Student Gift Cards. Our Deacons sent out gift cards to 4 college and graduate school students from our church, and 5 UrbanPromise fellows.

The gift cards were sent out at the beginning of December.

Thank You!

Thank you to our office helpers: **Peggy Smith, Jean Bradbury, Betty Corio, Carol Nixon, Sis Nuss, Kay Piperato, Kim Stone, and Pam Alercia-Horton**, who come in and work in teams on Fridays to fold the bulletins. Also, thank you to **Mary Lou Gary** who helps with the monthly newsletter and special projects. We are able to get a lot accomplished because of their assistance!

SUNDAY ZOOM WORSHIP

The Zoom worship service is held at 10:30 a.m. each Sunday. It is broadcast live during the in-person worship service.

Holy Communion will be celebrated on the first Sunday of each month. Please be prepared with bread and juice/wine.

Please join us every Sunday morning by using the link below or by calling with the Meeting ID.

The great thing about Zoom is even if you do not have a computer or smartphone, you can still phone in to listen to the service.

If you have any questions, please contact the church office at office@stewartsvillepc.org or call the church during our regular office hours, 9:00 a.m. to 1:00 p.m. on Mondays, Wednesdays, and Fridays.

Join Zoom Meeting

<https://zoom.us/j/94418910396?pwd=WlQwMHByZHZUMy9sTFpQaThEMkRvdz09>

Dial by your location

1-646-558-8656 (New York)

Meeting ID: 944 1891 0396

Passcode: 08886

Adult Lunch Group. "Grazing with Grace," our Adult Lunch Group will meet on Thursday, Jan. 8, at 11:30 a.m. at Pizza Village Café, 665 Columbus Ave., Phillipsburg.

We had 19 people attend the December luncheon, and we collected \$47 for the NORWESCAP Food Bank. Each month we encourage participants to bring a can of soup or \$1 to the luncheon to donate to the Food Bank.

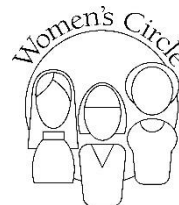
In celebration of Christmas, the Adult Lunch Group collected \$150 as a donation to St. Jude Children's Research Hospital.

For information about the Adult Lunch Group, contact Louisa Miers at 908-763-3861.

Women's Circle. The Women's Circle will meet on Thursday, Jan. 22, at 6:00 p.m. at Tio's Diner, 1110 Route 22 East, Phillipsburg.

All women are invited to join us for a meal, good conversations, and the opportunity to encourage one another.

For more information or to make a reservation, please call Linda Williams at 908-454-8104.



Catholic Charities Food Pantry. We continue to donate food and toiletries to the Catholic Charities Food Pantry.

In December, we donated 4 bags of food and toiletries.

At this time, the Food Pantry is in desperate need of toiletries and cleaning products, such as shampoo and conditioner, bath soap, laundry detergent (pods preferred), and dish detergent, as well as grocery bags.

2026 Offering Envelopes. The 2026 Offering Envelopes are available on the table in the back of the sanctuary.

Please contact the office if you need your envelopes mailed to you.

Capital Campaign. As of Dec. 31, we have received \$12,450.26 for our Capital Campaign. Our goal is to raise \$30,000.
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Church Officers, Class of 2028 (2026-2028)
These officers will be ordained and installed during the
10:30 a.m. worship service on Sunday, Jan. 25

Elders

Judy Melchore joined the Stewartsville Presbyterian Church in 2017 after the closure of the First Presbyterian Church of Bloomsbury. She and her husband Jim have lived in Bloomsbury for over 44 years. They have a daughter Jennifer, a son Jason, and 3 grandsons: Anthony, who has graduated college and is working; and Nicholas and Michael, both seniors in college. Judy is a retired Registered Nurse. She ran a home child care for over 40 years. Many of those “babies” are still part of her life. Judy enjoys traveling, needlework, reading, and her family – not necessarily in that order!

Nancy Sampson has been a member of our church for 40 years. She lives in Bethlehem, PA, with her husband Bob. Nancy has served as a Deacon, has been on the Fellowship Committee, and enjoys the Adult Sunday School class and the Women's Evening Circle. She has been on mission trips, and she has been enjoying doing the children's sermon. Nancy is looking forward to serving as an Elder.

Linda Williams lives in Harmony Township with her husband, Paul, and has been a member of Stewartsville Presbyterian Church since 1987. After being asked to serve on the Pastor Nominating Committee, she became more involved in church activities. Linda is very involved with Fellowship and our Women's Circle in the church. She enjoys working in food service at school, cooking, baking, and spending time with her grandchildren and friends.

Deacons

Laura Diacopoulos lives in Phillipsburg with her husband, Michael. She has a son, Westley. She was a member of Westminster Presbyterian Church in Phillipsburg for 38 years prior to its closing. Through the years, she was a Sunday School Teacher, Choir Member and also served as Clerk of Session for 5 years. Since joining Stewartsville Presbyterian Church in 2023, Laura has taken an active role in being a Greeter, Lay Reader, helping with Fellowship, and attending the Women's Circle dinners. Out in the community, Laura has been an active member of the Phillipsburg Fire Department Ladies Auxiliary since 1992 and has been elected President for 2026. She enjoys her job as an Activities Coordinator at an assisted living facility, spending time with family, and being outdoors.

Bob Hurte has been a member of the Stewartsville Presbyterian Church for 35+ years. He is married to Barbara and they have 3 children: Matthew (deceased); Tegan (31); and Samuel (27). Bob gives Children's Sermons and has served as a Sunday School teacher, Lay Reader, Deacon, and Elder. He worked for more than 21 years at AT&T, 10+ years at Catholic Charities, and as a substitute teacher in the Phillipsburg sending district. Bob served as VP of Greenwich Recreational Commission, served as Vice Commissioner of Greenwich Historical Commission, and coached youth baseball and soccer in the community for 10+ years. He is a published author, and a former Podcast host. Bob's hobbies include hiking and writing, and he has completed 18 marathons.

Lisa Muentener lives in Stewartsville with her fiancé, Scott Goff, and her 3 sons, John III, Luke and Jake. A member of Stewartsville Presbyterian Church since July 2023, she enjoys participating in the Woman's Circle, Fellowship, and the Community Garden. For 23 years, Lisa has worked as a Research Chemist at Church & Dwight in Princeton, NJ. In her free time, she loves baking, cooking (especially crock-pot meals), hiking, and spending time with her boys. Lisa is honored to be considered for the role of Deacon and looks forward to serving the congregation of the Stewartsville Presbyterian Church.

Luke Muentener was confirmed as a member of the Stewartsville Presbyterian Church in June 2025. He has been attending our church for 2 years and enjoys helping out with the Broadcast Team. Luke lives with his family in Stewartsville and is a high school sophomore at Phillipsburg High School. He runs on the track team and is working toward his Eagle Scout award in Boy Scouts. Through athletics and scouting, Luke has developed teamwork, discipline, and a strong commitment to service, and he looks forward to supporting his peers as a Deacon, serving a one-year term – bringing energy, responsibility, and a willingness to learn and serve the congregation.

Session Notes – December 22, 2025

- We opened our meeting together with the lighting of the Christ candle and devotions led by Elder Denise DeMasi.
- We reviewed the active membership roll of the church.
- The 2026 General Fund Budget was approved. More information will be given in the Annual Report and at the Annual Congregational Meeting on January 25, 2026.
- The 2026 Communion Dates were approved. We will continue to celebrate the Lord's Supper on the first Sunday of the month and on Christmas Eve.
- We will not have an Ash Wednesday Service in 2026.
- An annual review for Pastor Stephen was completed by the Session.
- We will have a special Session meeting to receive new members on Sunday, January 18.
- Our next regular Session meeting is scheduled for Monday, January 26.
- Pastor Stephen will be attending a Synod of the Northeast Leadership Retreat in Connecticut, January 20-22.
- Treasurer's Report:
As of November 30, we have a year-to-date deficit of \$6,648 in our General Fund Budget.
- As we concluded our meeting, we committed to praying for one another and our church, lifted up our joys and concerns, and closed with the Lord's Prayer.

Per Capita Offering. Every Presbyterian church is apportioned a share of the expenses of the Presbytery, Synod and the General Assembly based on church membership.

The Per Capita apportionment for 2026 is \$44 per confirmed member.

Please prayerfully consider contributing your portion so that it does not come out of our General Fund Budget. Our church pays Per Capita for each of our members, regardless of whether or not you give.

There is an envelope for Per Capita in your 2026 offering envelope box. To give Per Capita online, go to the church website (www.stewartsvillepc.org), Give Now, General, and specify "Per Capita" in Notes.



Souper Bowl of Caring. We will be collecting canned soup for the Souper Bowl of Caring on Sunday, Feb. 8. We will receive monetary donations throughout the month of February.

All donations we receive stay in our local community. Monetary donations will go to the NORWESCAP Food Bank, and donations of canned soup will go to the Catholic Charities Food Pantry in Phillipsburg.

There is a "Souper Bowl" envelope in your 2026 box of offering envelope. If you would like to donate online, please go to the church website (www.stewartsvillepc.org), Give Now, Special, and specify "Souper Bowl" in Notes.

Stewartsville Presbyterian Church – January 2026

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
				1 Happy New Year!	2	3
4 10:30 a.m. Worship Service and Children' Sunday School with Holy Communion 6 pm AA	5	6	7 7 pm Deacons Meeting 7 pm AA	8 11:30 Adult Lunch Group, Pizza Café #4 7 pm Grange	9 8 am Friday Devotional Group 9:30 am Needlecraft Group	10 8:30 am Undecorating Sanctuary 10 am Samplemakers
11 9:20 am Adult Sunday School 10:30 am Worship Service and Children's Sunday School Time for Fellowship after Worship Service 6 pm AA	12	13	14 7 pm AA	15 10 am New Member Class 7 pm AA Men's Group	16 8 am Friday Devotional Group	17
18 9:20 am Adult Sunday School 10:30 am Worship Service and Children's Sunday School Reception of New Member Youth Chor Rehearsal after Worship Service 6 pm AA	19	20 Pastor Stephen attending Synod Leadership Retreat through Thursday, Jan. 22	21 7 pm AA	22 6 pm Women's Circle, Tio's Diner 7 pm AA Men's Group	23 9:30 am Needlecraft Group	24
25 9:20 am Adult Sunday School 10:30 am Worship Service and Children's Sunday School Ordination & Installation of Church Officers Annual Meeting after Worship Service Pot Luck Lunch after Meeting 6 pm AA	26 7 pm Session Meeting	27	28 7 pm AA	29 7 pm AA Men's Group	30	31