

**The Good News Gazette**  
**The First Presbyterian Church**  
**94-96 Main Street Chester, NY 10918**  
**January 2017 – Happy New Year!**

I am no longer my own, but yours.  
Put me to what you will, rank me with whom you will;  
put me to doing, put me to suffering;  
let me be employed for you, or laid aside for you,  
exalted for you, or brought low for you;  
let me be full,  
let me be empty,  
let me have all things,  
let me have nothing:  
I freely and wholeheartedly yield all things  
to your pleasure and disposal.  
And now, glorious and blessed God,  
Father, Son and Holy Spirit,  
you are mine and I am yours. So be it.  
And the covenant now made on earth, let it be ratified in heaven.  
Amen.

This prayer is the Wesley Covenant Prayer. Its origins are subject of much debate over who first wrote it and who it can be attributed to – whether English puritan or influences of German piety or echoes of the high church (Anglican) tradition from which Wesley sprang. Yet, in 1755, John Wesley adapted it for a Covenant Renewal Service. While it is true, this is typically considered a Methodist prayer and often found in their liturgy and prayer books, other denominations, like ours, have been known to use it from time to time.

And what better time to consider it than the beginning of a new year? During the new year people seem to make so many resolutions... some having to do with exercising or dieting, some having to do with working less or more, some having to do with spending more time with family or less money on frivolous things, some having to do with travel plans or bucket lists, but very few have anything to do with God. So this year, maybe we can all turn our hearts to the words of this prayer, renewing the covenant with our God, to put God first and foremost in our lives. Maybe this can be our new year's resolution. This new year maybe we can reflect on the past year and all the places we let the world be put first, where we failed, and make a resolution to do better this year. Chances are we will still fail again this year with always putting God first (no one is perfect), but the more we consider how we can put God first, the better chance we have of actually being able to do it.

There was a man named Brother Lawrence. He was a monk living in a monastery in the 17<sup>th</sup> century and took on the role of cook. Every day he worked on putting God first, seeing God in everything. He would offer up prayers while washing dishes. While cooking he would wait to hear what God might have to say to him. He believed that no matter what, we should come to God with everything, always, even with the simplest things in the plainest ways, freely speaking to God and

asking for assistance. Perhaps these are the small steps we can take each day to renew our covenant with God, to try to keep our resolution to put God first, by taking each moment of the day as they come and asking for God's assistance, whatever it may be. Continually renewing our covenant day by day.

Pastor Erin

### **A New Year Filled with New Things!**

We are starting our new year off by announcing new ways of giving! We are now making giving easier for everyone!

#1 We can now set up direct deposit giving. This can be done for anyone who has a checking account to make things easier. It can be scheduled monthly or weekly, whatever frequency works for you. The donation gets deposited directly into the church's account, so you don't need to write out anymore checks or worry about missing a week of church. If you typically break your donation up into the different categories (general, benevolence, building and grounds, etc...) this can still be done, so no need to worry! Also, if you are on the fence about this idea, please consider how it would make things easier for our treasurers (which is always a plus!). Anyone who is considering this but has concerns about placing something in the offering plate, we will have designated slips of paper that you can put into the offering plate. This way you can still offer up your tithes, gifts, and self before God during our worship services. Any questions can be directed to Pastor Erin or Alan Eckard.

#2 Through the Presbyterian Foundation we also now have access to online giving! We have an account set-up that anyone all over the country and the world can give via credit card. It is simple and easy. Donations can even be made completely anonymously and the person will still receive an end of the year giving statement for their taxes. Right now, we are working to get the "give button" and link on our website. It can currently be found on our facebook page ([www.facebook.com/chespresny](http://www.facebook.com/chespresny)) as well as searching for First Presbyterian Church and zip code 10918 from this page: <http://presbyterianmissionexchange.org/giving>. We hope to have the link on our website before the end of the month and make an announcement in our next newsletter.

#3 We are working on getting online giving set up for the Food Pantry as well! We are hoping this will make donations easier for everyone who would like to give! More announcements will be made in our February newsletter. Stay tuned!

#4 The Presbyterian Foundation workshops some of us attended really had us reflect on ways we often overlook or take for granted different ways of giving. So this year, session hopes to take a look at these different ways and share them with you. For example, we take for granted bequeaths either assuming someone who was active in the church will consider leaving some of their estate to the church or assuming we shouldn't be asking those sorts of questions. While it is true, some may find it a touchy subject and us Presbyterians don't like to be pushy or talk about money, we also miss out on having great conversations about what it means to give. We miss out on conversations on giving in general – giving of our time, talents, finances, and our selves. We miss out in conversations that have to do with giving that helps this church, this community it serves, and this God that we serve together. So with that, we ask that you be open in engaging in some new conversations around giving.

#5 We will be starting up our Stewardship Campaign within the next few months. Planning is in the works but we certainly need some more help. Please consider helping with this endeavor! Also, part of this campaign will involve a Capital Campaign. So please consider being a part of that team. We can certainly do some great things but we need everyone's participation, even if it's just the littlest bit – it can go a long way!

## **A Happy New Year from the Deacons**

Exciting things are happening with the Food Pantry. The Key Club would like to paint the Food Pantry and are talking with Building and Grounds to choose a color. Some people have voiced concern about painting over the animal mural that is currently there from the days of the nursery school. We shall let the Key Club know of this concern.

We served 60 families for Thanksgiving. A donation of Christmas candy bags will be distributed at the Christmas distribution of food and we are sure all will enjoy the treat.

### **Looking Ahead**

**January 5 – Bible Study 10am**

**January 8 – Communion Service and Epiphany  
Session meeting following worship**

**January 12 – Bible Study 10am**

**January 16 – Music and Worship meeting 1pm**

**January 19 – Bible Study 10am**

**January 22 – Congregational Meeting following worship**

**January 23– Tentative date for food pantry truck**

**January 24 – Women’s Council 1pm**

**January 26 – Bible Study 10am**

**Food Pantry Distribution Day**

**January 27 – Collaborative screening of “Just Eat It” at the Green Onion at 7:30 pm**

If you have an article or announcement you would like to have in the next newsletter, please have it into the church office by January 23rd.

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Moderator of Deacons: Okey Barrett (845) 651-4707

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If you are in need of pastoral care, please contact our pastor at the church office number (845-469-4877).