

CLINTON PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH

WINTER EDITION 2026

From the Pastor's Pen



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Dear friends,

I find myself looking back with gratitude on the season we have just shared as a church. Just look at the fullness of life reflected in the pages of this newsletter. It has been a season marked not by perfection, but by presence—and that is no small gift.

My Star Word for 2026 is compassion. It's a gentle reminder for me to pay attention to how I respond to the people and world around me, to notice where grace is needed, and to let love guide the way I move. It is also helping to guide my work as pastor here.

My hope for us this new year is that our life together would model a more compassionate way of being in the world: patient rather than reactive, rooted rather than rushed, open-hearted rather than divided. May the community around us be impacted this year as we seek to be a people who listen well, care for one another, and practice love even when it's not simple.

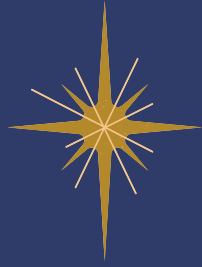
May God bless us with courage, kindness, and patience—and may we carry that blessing into the world each day.

See you in church,

Tracy

ACCESS OUR WINTER & LENT
PROGRAM GUIDE HERE!

ADVENT IN REVIEW



ADVENT SUNDAYS

Throughout Advent, we prepared for Christmas by taking a kind of house tour through the Gospels – stepping into the homes of Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John and noticing how each one tells the story of God coming into the world. From Matthew's widened sense of belonging, to Mark's urgency, to John's light shining in the darkness, we discovered again and again that God chooses to meet us in real life. On Christmas Eve, Luke's familiar story reminded us that God does not wait for perfection, but comes into the messiness of ordinary lives, making room for us all. Wherever we find ourselves, in Christ, we are already home.

Thank you to all of our musicians, liturgists, candle lighters, acolytes for lending a hand to make this season so special.

Thank you also to everyone who helped to decorate the sanctuary in advance of the season and to our worship and music team for "de-decorating" in early January. A true team effort!



COOKIES AND COFFEE

No frills, no agenda—just coffee, cookies, and company. That's how about 30 ladies spent an evening at the manse before Christmas. A few homemade treats courtesy of Davis Henry, were sprinkled in among the store bought goodies from Tracey - guess which ones disappeared first?!! It was a relaxed evening of visiting, laughter, and getting to know one another better, and a simple but meaningful way to connect during the busy Christmas season.



ADVENT IN REVIEW

PARADE

The 39th Annual Clinton Christmas Parade is in the books and CPC has been there for every single one! Thank you to Chrystie Lalor, Mark Holmsborg and Jill and Rich Prakopcyk for preparing the float (and packing it all away again!) and to the CPC kids who bundled up to ride along. We love being part of this Clinton tradition - bring on #40!

LIVE NATIVITY

This year marked our 6th annual Live Nativity, and it was truly a night to remember. Nearly 250 people from both our church and the wider community visited to experience the story of Christmas anew.

The real stars of the evening were our four-legged guests. A calm, curious baby camel named Cairo was a fan favorite, while kids and adults alike enjoyed visiting with sheep, rabbits, and of course a donkey. Many of our visitors ended the night lingering in the sanctuary, soaking in the stillness and peace of our sacred space.

Of course, this night would not have been possible without the amazing people working behind the scenes. Doug Pearson and Matt Hodulik, our AV and lighting specialists, made sure every detail looked and sounded just right, creating a warm, inviting space for everyone to experience the story fully. We are also so grateful to our actors and volunteers, and to Jill, Rich, Barb, and Jes for all their help with set-up and ahead of time prep - not to mention all the clean up! Your dedication and care does not go unnoticed.



PARADE



LIVE NATIVITY



ADVENT IN REVIEW

ADVENT BREAKFAST

After the pageant, ([see page 13 for Pageant photos!](#)) we gathered for our Advent breakfast—The room may have been standing-room only at times, but there was more than enough food for everyone to enjoy! A huge thank-you to our Fellowship Team who organised this breakfast and to everyone who brought goodies to share. What a wonderful morning!





CHRISTMAS EVE SERVICES

Christmas Eve at CPC was such a special and holy night. At 5pm families filled the sanctuary with joyful noisy excitement, our children's chorus led us in song while Katie Treese and Tina Dorbusch offered a Christmas medley later in the service, accompanied by Ted Brancato, Tristan Dornbusch and Zan Struebing.

Later at 9pm our Chancel Choir and instrumentalists Maren Cowell and Mike Greene brought musical offerings to help us welcome the Christ Child, while Abby Thompson joined her father Kevin for a moving duet.

At both services, we made our final stop on our Advent Home Tour, lingering at Luke's house. Luke's story reminded us that God doesn't wait for perfection. God comes into our messy, ordinary, uncertain lives—crying babies, weary parents, and dusty shepherds alike. The good news isn't a picture-perfect moment; it's that God steps into the chaos, offering love, presence, and welcome. May we know God's presence with us in this new year and always.

DIAPER DRIVE



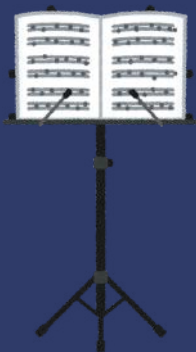
Thank you to everyone who brought a packet of diapers to our Christmas Eve services. These have been delivered to the Flemington Area Food Pantry. Your small act of kindness will be a blessing!



MUSIC IN REVIEW



As the days got shorter and the Advent candles grew brighter, our musical life at CPC stayed wonderfully full — new faces, familiar friends, joyous noise, quiet moments, and even a snow-day scramble. Here's a look back at what filled our sanctuary with sound as we rounded the corner into Christmas.



NOVEMBER 2 – ALL SAINTS DAY

We kicked off November with a beautiful moment: **Laura McGarry** made her solo debut, offering a deeply felt rendition of I Love The Lord, based on a traditional Irish melody. For the offertory, **Julie Baldassare**, supported by **Tom Fuller**, sang Come to the Table, inviting us all into that spirit of welcome. And marking another “first,” **Abby Dougherty and Amey Barnes** played a lovely flute duet — Delibes’ Duet from Lakmé — during communion.

NOVEMBER 9

A BIG music Sunday! **The Bell Choir** rang out Oh Happy Morning, with rhythmic assistance from **Adam Dougherty (cowbell!)** and **Ted Brancato (a.k.a. the wooden box thingy)**. The congregation was very much on board.

At the baptism of little Kaitlyn Beth Maloy, we all sang Jesus Loves Me to welcome her.

The Chancel Choir offered Joel Raney’s arrangement of At the Riverside — a real crowd-pleaser and it did not disappoint!

NOVEMBER 16

With Ted away in Washington State, **Zan Struebing** took the helm and did a terrific job. We heard Cornerstone sung by **Julie Baldassare**, with rhythmic support from **Glenn Gray** and guitar from **Bill Anthony, Jr.** Zan went full-organist on the hymns — pedals and all! Then **Amey Barnes and Kevin Thompson** sang a beautiful unaccompanied duet, Sing Praise to God.





MUSIC IN REVIEW

NOVEMBER 23 – THANKSGIVING SERVICE

The Children's Chorus, led by Vania Stevenson, charmed everyone with Fruits of the Spirit, complete with delightfully wacky choreography.

The Chancel Choir offered Handel's Hear Our Thankful Praise for the offertory — a perfect fit for the day.

NOVEMBER 30 – FIRST SUNDAY OF ADVENT

We opened Advent with a warm ukulele-and-vocals prelude by **Tom Fuller and Davis Henry.** Our "Response of Praise" shifted to My Soul Cries Out with a Joyful Shout, led by **Tom and Judy Maxfield.**

They also teamed up for the offertory, Caroline Cobb Smith's Lift Up Your Head, Be On the Lookout — a fitting message for the start of the season.

We wrapped up with the congregation singing Soon and Very Soon.

DECEMBER 7

The prelude featured Light of the World (Lauren Daigle), led by **Julie Baldassare, with backup vocals from Judy Maxfield and Laura McGarry.**

For the offertory, we welcomed **Tina Dornbusch** back from Puerto Rico, now living in Montclair, to sing Christmas Communion Music with **Tom Fuller,** supported by **Maddie Morman** on violin. Communion music came courtesy of the **Praise Team — Rick Hyman, Tom Fuller, Judy Maxfield, and Shelley Brankner** — with mandolin, drums, and all the trimmings from **Bill, Glenn, and friends.**

DECEMBER 14 – THE BIG SNOW

Well... the snow had other plans. The Presentation Brass and Ted were snowed out, but **Zan Struebing, Amey Barnes, and Tom Fuller** jumped in and pulled together a lovely worship service on the fly. A true CPC snow-day miracle.



MUSIC IN REVIEW

DECEMBER 21 – CHRISTMAS PAGEANT SUNDAY

A musical feast! Our vocal trio **The Good Jujus** — **Julia Morrisette, Julie Baldassare, and Judy Maxfield** — opened the service with All Is Well, supported by **Bill, Zan, Glenn, and Ted**.

The Children's Chorus delivered a spirited Who Was There That First Christmas Day, with **Tristan Dornbusch on alto sax and Zan on bass**.

For the offertory, **the Good Jujus** returned with Sandra McCracken's Jesus, What a Wonderful Child, backed by the CPC Band.



CHRISTMAS EVE – EARLY FAMILY SERVICE

Festive “gathering music” from **the CPC Band** welcomed everyone. **The Children's Chorus** reprised Who Was There That First Christmas Day for the prelude. Carols rang out with accompaniment by the dynamic duo of **Zan on organ and Ted on piano**.

The offertory featured a fun mash-up — Away in a Manger, Go Tell It on the Mountain, and Chris Tomlin's It's Christmas — sung by **Katie Treese and Tina Dornbusch** with guest drummer **Keith Csolak** and our **CPC instrumental lineup**. The postlude brought out our inner Charlie Brown with a jazzy Vince Guaraldi O Christmas Tree.



CHRISTMAS EVE – LATE SERVICE

“Gathering music” this time came from **Marin Cowell (trombone), Michael Green (trumpet), and Ted on piano**. **Kevin Thompson and Abby Thompson** (who jumped in for Amey) sang a gorgeous duet, The Wondrous Story. The prelude was Mozart's Alleluia with **Marin, Michael, and Ted**. **The Chancel Choir**, featuring soprano **Julia Morrisette**, sang Rutter's Love Came Down at Christmas. For the offertory, they lit up the sanctuary with the Caribbean-influenced Hallelujah, Christ Is Born, getting the whole congregation clapping on 2 and 4! We closed with the candlelit Silent Night followed by a triumphant Joy to the World, brass a-blazing.



DECEMBER 28

We ended the year in a peaceful, reflective way — a service filled almost entirely with Christmas carols accompanied by **Ted on organ and piano**. A gentle landing into 2026.

Another holiday season of amazing music! As always, I hope that the music brought you joy and inspiration during this holiday season. Please, if you have any desire to be in one of our musical groups, don't hesitate

to reach out to me. (tbrancato@clintonpresbyterian.net)

Thank you for your support of our talented musicians and vocalists!

STAR WORDS

If you were with us on Sunday, January 4, you received a Star Word—a small gift for the season of Epiphany, a simple invitation to pay attention to where God might be at work in your life this year.

If you weren't able to pick one up, or if you'd like to choose one now, Star Words are available at the back of the sanctuary.

You might keep it somewhere visible, return to it in prayer, or let it gently shape your reflections as the year unfolds.

Epiphany reminds us that God's light often comes quietly, guiding us one step at a time. May your Star Word be a small light along the way.

What can I do with my Star Word?

- * Find a scripture that anchors it
- * Look up the definition and its synonyms
- * Create a playlist of songs that reflect your word
- * Start a journal (written, drawn, really any expression) of how your word is showing up in your life

NEW MEMBERS

New year, new beginnings, new companions on the journey! We're thrilled to welcome these new friends who have joined our church family, bringing fresh energy, hope, and possibility. Welcome Dylan and Kevin Cowell, Susan Wallace Cowell, Ben Adamo, Katherine Stephens, Audrey LaBouillere and Sarah and Matthew Molle and congratulations on your baptism, Audrey!



EPIPHANY CAFÉ

On Sunday, January 11, our Epiphany Café was a wonderful celebration of connection, conversation, and community! Fellowship Hall was the place to be as members of every ministry team shared their work and their passion for serving our congregation and wider community. What a wonderful opportunity for all of us to find ways to get involved and share our gifts. And the hot cocoa bar was a sweet treat!

Raffle winners Adam Dougherty and Tony Celentano walked away with some CPC swag, while the big winner of the event was Elizabeth Kussmaul, who secured the coveted parking spot for the month of February.

A special thank you goes to our Welcome and Connection Team for coordinating and pulling together this wonderful effort.



CHILDREN & YOUTH

CHAOS

FRIENDSGIVING

CHAOS Friendsgiving was a night full of joy, good food, and generous hearts. We started with a fun game, gathered around the table for a full Thanksgiving meal, and then spent an intergenerational hour serving alongside our Mission Team and Youth Ministry Team. Together, our teens filled Thanksgiving baskets, baked treats, created centerpieces for Family Promise, Safe in Hunterdon, and Anderson House, and wrote encouraging notes to include with each gift. We are so proud of this community and the way gratitude turned into action.



CHILDREN & YOUTH

CHAOS

REINDEER GAMES

Our CHAOS Christmas party was full of laughter, energy, and connection. From Santa sleigh relays to Christmas Family Feud (and plenty of silly moments in between), Reindeer Games reminded us that joy and togetherness are at the heart of this season.



SUNDAY FUNDAY

JINGLE JAM

Jingle Jam was a sweet mix of high-energy fun and meaningful moments for our 4th & 5th graders. Between candy games, a festive candy hunt, and a very silly round of "Name That Tune" (with lots of ho-ho-hos!), kids filled their stockings and shared plenty of laughs. We also slowed down to tell the Christmas story using tangram shapes, a quiet, creative way to remember why we celebrate in the first place. This special group brings so much joy to our church.



CHILDREN & YOUTH

PAGEANT

Doo Doo Doo Doo You Know the Christmas Story? Our children brought the Christmas story to life with humor, music, and a whole lot of heart. From singing sharks to familiar scenes told in creative ways, this pageant was a joyful reminder that the good news of Christmas is worth sharing again and again!



CONFIRMATION

The 2025-2026 Confirmation class is on a roll! Students have received their Bibles, are asking thoughtful questions, and have begun building meaningful relationships with their adult mentors. It's been encouraging to watch them dig deeper into faith and conversation together. Way to go, Confirmands! The journey has just begun!



JOY SCOUTS



There was no shortage of joy this season as far as our Joy Scouts were concerned! They traveled to Country Arch Care Center, Feeding Hands Food Pantry, Tabby's Place, Creature Comfort Pet Therapy, the Flemington Food Pantry and more. They sang, shopped, packed and made applesauce through the season. We are so proud of this group and the impact they have on the lives of so many.



PRESCHOOL



December was a joyful and meaningful month at our preschool. Our 3's and 4's enjoyed chapel time with Pastor Tracey, where they listened to a story and sang a new song (with some fun dance moves!) to learn about Baby Jesus and the real meaning of the season.

Later in the month, our 3's and 4's enjoyed a wonderful day joined by their parents and other special grownups. They shared the sweet Christmas songs they had been practicing, followed by snacks and a special craft made together. The 3's wrapped up their month wearing their PJs, snuggling with stuffies, and watching a short movie, while the 4's ended on a magical note with a PJs, hot cocoa, and The Polar Express up in Fellowship Hall.

We are so thankful for our families and their continued support to make December so memorable for our children, and we are looking forward to even more fun and learning in 2026!



MISSION

THANK YOU FROM THE MISSION TEAM

THANK YOU, Clinton Presbyterian Church, for all your kindness and generosity during this season of giving!

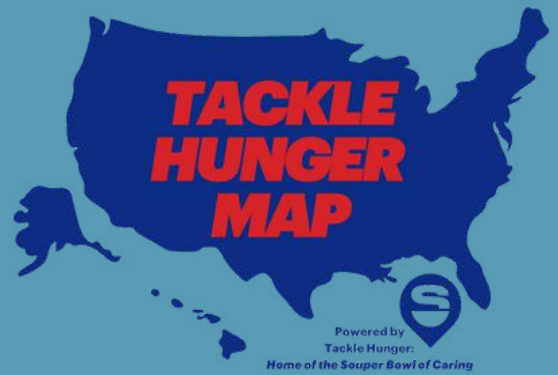
Thanks to all of you, we delivered 23 Thanksgiving baskets of food to families within our community. Thank you for all the donations of food and money as well as your time delivering to families. CPC's youth helped with decorating and filling the boxes. Additionally, we had a group of students from Hunterdon Central Regional High School donate some items and help on delivery day. So, we had many helping hands on delivery day to make everything go quick and smooth. We are grateful to ShopRite for their annual generous discount on our food purchased at their store.

Thanks to everyone who took a tag from the giving tree and bought gift cards, children's clothing, winter coats and boots, books and toys for kids, hats and mittens and other needed items that went to several agencies and families right here in Hunterdon County and across the miles to old friends in Maine.

Thanks to everyone who donated diapers on Christmas Eve, which helped families who go to the Flemington Food Pantry.

You have all helped make a happy holiday season for many of our friends and neighbors in need. We are looking forward to more service opportunities in 2026!

Many Thanks,
— Your Mission Team



SUPER BOWL OF CARING - FEBRUARY 8TH

Get ready to play for a good cause this Super Bowl Sunday! Our Confirmation Students will be collecting cans of soup and monetary donations for the Flemington Area Food Pantry, and they'll be cheering you on as you help score big with your generosity. Look for the giant soup pots at the exits — let's see if we can fill them to the top!



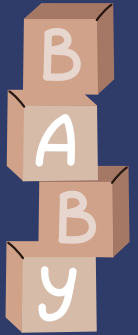
SAVE THE DATE: 15TH ANNUAL ROTARY SOUP COOK-OFF:

FEBRUARY 23, 2026
5:00 – 7:00 P.M.

We're thrilled to announce that CPC is joining the Hunterdon County Rotary Soup Cook-Off for the very first time and our team is serving up what we know is an award-worthy soup!

BAPTISMS

What a privilege to continue to gather at the font often as we welcome little ones to the Family of God.
Congratulations to the Maloy and Bruno families.



AUBREY MARGARET BRUNO
DECEMBER 7, 2025



KAITLYN BETH MALOY
NOVEMBER 9, 2025

GRANT APPLICATIONS HOMELAND SECURITY



NEW JERSEY

**Office of Homeland Security
and Preparedness**

As we shared previously, CPC is currently assessing safety and security measures in and around our building to help keep everyone safe. Some necessary changes will require funding and to help offset costs we have explored funding opportunities through state and federal level grants. Much of this work has been shouldered by Gwili Marsh and Ali Miller. In early January, we learned that we were not approved for the state grant. However, we are continuing to explore potential funding opportunities at the federal level. In addition, we have established a safety team to help us thoughtfully assess needs and next steps.

THANK YOU CPC!

Hello,

I wanted to reach out to thank you again for all of the help the Clinton Presbyterian Church provided for our High Bridge Community again this year. The generosity and caring for our students was much appreciated.

I hope you have a wonderful holiday season.

**School Nurse
High Bridge Middle School**



Hello church family

Thank you so much for sending Aubrey this adorable bib! She is 6 months and loving food! Pictures attached 😊

The Bruno's

Jackie, Mike and Aubrey

Our heartfelt thanks to all who helped make the Advent season beautiful and meaningful.... Troop 121 for transporting decorations to and from the basement; those who participated in the Hanging of the Greens which allowed the sanctuary and building exterior to look amazing! Thanks to Lee Longell who shared his floral talents and the Prakopcyk/Bruno Family for their Christmas Eve support. Our Committee Chair, Amey Barnes, constructed a new stable for the outdoor nativity. Thanks, Amey, for your time and talents! And also our thanks to Paul Morrisette who supported Amey in the installation and in the resolution of "bugs" that were encountered.

As we start a new year, we think back with much gratitude, to the congregants, deacons, elders and all who made worship wonderfully meaningful throughout 2025 - the entire music ministry team for sharing their musical talents under the direction of dedicated Ted Brancato; Matt Hodulik and the AV team; ushers, liturgists, communion servers and stewards. Thanks also to Ali, Zach and Pastor Tracey who continually support the Worship Team.

We look forward with much anticipation to a successful 2026!

- The Worship Team

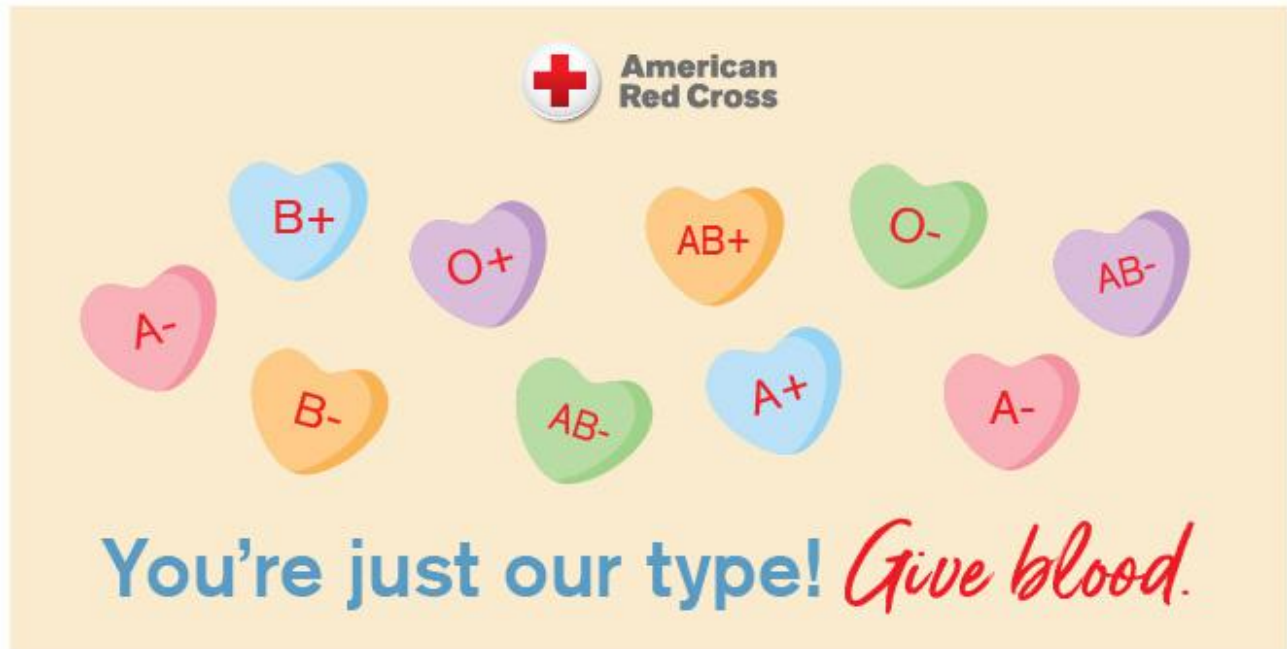


CLINTON PRESBYTERIAN CURCH
91 CENTER STREET
CLINTON, NJ 08809
CLINTONPRESBYTERIAN.NET



At the American Red Cross Blood Drive hosted at CPC on December 15th, we collected 26 units of blood **SURPASSING** the goal of 24 units!

Sadly, the Red Cross is teetering on the edge of a blood shortage and we want to do everything we can to help. Please consider signing up for our next blood drive in February! Click the flyer below to find our registration page.



Blood Drive **Clinton Presbyterian Church**

Fellowship Hall
91 Center Street
Clinton, NJ 08809

Monday, February 9, 2026
2:00 p.m. to 7:00 p.m.

Please visit RedCrossBlood.org and enter:
ClintonPres to schedule an appointment.

Maximize your blood donation. Help more patients.
If you are an eligible type O, B - or A - donor, consider making a Power Red donation.
Red blood cells are the most commonly transfused blood component.



Come give blood 1/26-2/28 for a \$20 e-gift card to your choice of merchant. See rcblood.org/heart

[133] Order ID: 6503336 - Item ID: 9303336 - Qty: 1 of 1 - \$5.99 - ZDS-APL-059 - APR2 - 250300

COMMUNITY

Pink Pony Club

WHO?

Middle and high schoolers who are part of the LGBTQ+ community. Whether you are questioning, exploring or want to show that you are an advocate ~ you are welcome. Youth focused with supportive adult presence.

WHAT?

Time to gather, create safe space, share about experiences. Maybe even do a little light crafting.

WHERE?

The Den at Clinton Presbyterian Church. Using the preschool entrance - head down the stairs to the 1st room on the left.

WHEN?

One Saturday per month from 2:00 to 3:15pm.

Meeting dates:

January 10, 2026

February 21, 2026

March 14, 2026

April 18, 2026

May 2, 2026



Everyone can benefit from more safe spaces and reminders that they are loved.

Contact Zan Struebing or Ali Miller with questions.

Email: drstruebing@gmail.com or office@clintonpresbyterian.net

91 Center Street Clinton, NJ 08890



COMMUNITY



Hang &
Do what you
Love 



When?

**Jan 8th, Feb 12th, Mar 12th, Apr 9th,
May 14th, Jun 11th
7:00-9:00pm**

Where?

**91 Center St. Clinton, NJ
(Please use the Office Entrance to meet in
Fellowship Hall at Clinton Presbyterian Church)**

Who?

**Hunterdon County Adults, 21 & over,
with Cognitive Disabilities**

Why?

**To enjoy a variety of activities while
building relationships among other
special needs adults & the community**

email hdl@clintonpresbyterian.net for more information

