

First news

MONTHLY NEWSLETTER | DECEMBER 2023
FIRST PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH | 1 ELM STREET, WHITESBORO, NY 13492

Words for the Beginning

*My soul magnifies the Lord,
and my spirit rejoices in God my Savior,
for the Mighty One has done great things for me,
and holy is his name;
indeed, his mercy is for those who fear
him from generation to generation.
Luke 1:46, 49-50 NRSV*

On Sunday, December 1 we will begin the liturgical season of Advent and a new church year. As the calendar year comes to a close, a new church year begins.

Advent is a time of watching and waiting. It is a season of endings and beginnings. Christ's birth ushers us into new ways of living and loving. Yet, as we know, our world continues to spin madly on.

Think of the biblical characters whose stories are told in this holy season. A young woman named Mary was surrounded by endings – large and small, personal and political. But Mary proclaimed hope in the God who was and is making all things new. Christ's birth offered a beautiful new beginning for the humble shepherds and the

mysterious Magi alike. Meanwhile, King Herod tried to bring Christ's story to a brutal end.

As we navigate seasons filled with endings and beginnings, as individuals and as a congregation, we need reminders. We need to hear words that are like steady ground, like a path for our feet to follow as we step forward into an unknown tomorrow. During this liminal time, as we step across the threshold into the future God intends for us, each Sunday during worship we will hear again the familiar, yet always new story. We will listen for the Spirit's voice whispering words filled with blessings.

I invite you to enter this Advent season as a sacred new chapter in your spiritual journey. Listen for reminders that will strengthen you for the journey

ahead. As you embrace this holy season, may you find words of grace and hope. May you discover words for beginning again. Remember – no matter what challenges you may be facing – no matter what each new day may bring – God's constant, unchanging love is your beginning.

Grace and peace,
Mark S. Caruana | Interim Pastor

P.S. Plan now to join us on **Christmas Eve – December 24, 4:30 p.m.** for a special joint Christmas Eve Service hosted by First Presbyterian Church.



WORSHIP WITH US THIS ADVENT SEASON AT 9AM

DECEMBER 8



WE CAN'T GO ALONE

Texts: Ruth 1, Ecclesiastes 4:9-12
Title: *We Can't Go It Alone*
Theme: The life of faith is not a solitary endeavor. We need one another!



DECEMBER 15



DO THE GOOD THAT IS YOURS TO DO

Texts: Isaiah 58:9b-12, Luke 3:7-16
Title: *Do the Good That Is Yours to Do*
Theme: We are called to "repair the breach" in our world (Isaiah) and "bear good fruit" (Luke).



DECEMBER 22



HOPE IS WORTH THE RISK

Texts: Isaiah 9:6, Luke 1:18-25
Title: *Hope is Worth the Risk*
Theme: Hope is born when we risk embracing God's dream for us and our world.



DECEMBER 24 Christmas Eve (4:30 pm)



LOVE KNOWS YOUR NAME

Texts: Isaiah 9:1-7, Luke 2:1-20
Title: *Love Knows Your Name*
Theme: In Christ, the God of all creation is incarnated – becomes flesh – becomes personal. In Jesus, God has a name. In Jesus, God speaks our names.



Christmas Eve Service

WMO & FPC
INVITES YOU AND YOUR FAMILY TO JOIN US
TUESDAY, DECEMBER 24TH
4:30AM



FIRST PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH
1 ELM STREET | WHITESBORO

COOKIES FOR SHUT-INS

Calling all bakers! This year for our homebound members and friends, we ask for two dozen of your delicious cookies or goodies. All types are appreciated—cookies, bars, brownies, etc. This will be a great treat for all who cannot often leave home. Packing will be WEDNESDAY, DECEMBER 18TH at 11 am. Please bring your cookies in when you come or drop them off before Wednesday. All are welcome to come and package up the goodies for delivery.



Please excuse all errors, and omission, slight mistakes, and oversights.

SESSION NOTES

- **Plentiful Gifts Program** Our Session has voted to take part in the Presbytery-sponsored **Plentiful Gifts Program**, led by Rev. Sam Pendergrast. This 24-month program is designed to cultivate and develop the gifts that already exist within our congregation. We already have 3 members committed to participate in the training. **We have room for 3 more. *Everyone from the congregation is invited and welcomed.*** The program will focus on areas such as preaching, worship, caregiving, community outreach, and service.

The goal of **Plentiful Gifts** is to empower congregational leaders and identify the gifts of leadership within the church. Whether we have a full-time pastor, part-time leadership, or none at all, the program seeks to strengthen the identity and ministry of our church by equipping a team of leaders. These gifts are the blessings God has already given us, and through this training, we hope to distribute the responsibilities of ministry more evenly, avoiding burnout and strengthening our church family.

Stewardship 24'

Please make your charitable gifts to the church on or before December 29th in order to claim a tax deduction for 2024. Everyone served by the ministry of the church will benefit from your generous support. The 2024 pledges statements will be sent out after the first of the year.

No matter how you give, your support of the church is appreciated and we pray that God will supply all of your needs.

GIVING MADE EASY!

Scan the QR code to contribute to First Presbyterian online.

This cashless Giving Opportunity is now live and is a convenient way to seamlessly contribute to our ministries. Just scan the code and set up an account to give.



Deadline
December 15th

ANGEL TREE

Sign-out a tag, buy and wrap the gift, attach the tag to the gift.

If you would like to donate the office will shop and wrap a gift for you.

315.732.5111 | questions
fpcutica@gmail.com

This Christmas season, our church will once again participate in the Angel Tree project, a beautiful opportunity to bring joy to children and families in our local community. Our focus will be on supporting families right here in Whitesboro. Working closely with a local social worker, every gift given directly meets the needs of our neighborhoods.

Unlike other years the toys requested will be provided through the "STUFF THE BUS" campaign. The holiday meal portion of the new endeavor has been generously underwritten by a local business.

The Angel Tree is up in the Sanctuary. Each tag on the tree represents the unique needs and wishes of a child or family, providing a chance to be part of their holiday in a most meaningful way. We invite you to take a tag and prayerfully consider what God might have you share with these families this Christmas season.

It may be a cozy winter coat, much needed socks, underwear or sneakers/slippers, every gift is a reminder that they are loved, cared for, and remembered. Please join us as we strive to make this Christmas season brighter for our community, one gift at a time.

****please reach out to the office if you have questions about a tag.**

Join First Church

pastor Mark

2021



BRUNCH AFTER WORSHIP

FELLOWSHIP HALL

1 Elm Street . Whitesboro, NY . 13492

Join us on Sunday, December 29th, as we celebrate Pastor Mark's incredible ministry and wish him well in retirement! A special brunch will be held in the Fellowship Hall immediately following worship.

Throughout the month of December, we will be collecting for a single purse from all to present to Pastor Mark as a token of our gratitude and appreciation. Please note your donation and make your check payable to FPC. Let's come together to honor his years of faithful service and bless him with our best wishes for health and prosperity on this new chapter of his journey.



HOLIDAY

The church office will be closed
Tuesday, Dec. 24th
through
Wednesday, Jan. 1st
Office hours will return to normal
Monday–Thursday 9 am - 4 pm

WEEKLY EMAIL BLAST

If you haven't subscribed to our weekly email updates being sent out to all that are excited to receive First News weekly. This will keep everyone informed of developments and events at our church. If you or you know someone that would like to receive the weekly updates please contact the church office to subscribe.

ANNUAL REPORTS DUE

All teams please submit final reports by
December 29th by e-mail to
fpcutica@gmail.com

Thank You for Supporting the Jared Box Project!

From everyone who contributed to the success of the Jared Box Project! Because of your incredible generosity, we were able to collect and pack countless boxes filled with toys, games, and activities designed to bring smiles and comfort to children in hospitals. From the individuals who donated items to the volunteers who helped pack the boxes, your efforts are a beautiful example of what happens when a community comes together with compassion and purpose. These boxes will now make their way to children in need, reminding them that they are not alone and that people care deeply about their well-being.



Thank you for being part of this meaningful mission and for helping spread hope, joy, and love. Together, we are making a difference!

Faith Forward 25' Pledge Campaign


Last week, we officially kicked off our Faith Forward 25' pledge campaign, and we're excited to see how God will work through us as we prepare for the future of our church. This campaign is an opportunity for each of us to step out in faith and commit to supporting the mission and ministries of our church in 2025.



If you haven't yet turned in your *Promise Forward* card, we encourage you to prayerfully consider your pledge and place your sealed envelope in the offering plate as it passes during worship. Together, let's move forward in faith, trusting God to guide and bless our efforts for His kingdom. Thank you for your generosity and dedication!

LAST MONTH'S HAPPENINGS





A Christmas Mosaic

Presented by
Mohawk Valley Choral Society

Directed by *Mr. David Kolb*

Featuring *Tenor Soloist, Juan Tello*

Sunday, December 8, 2024 *Our Lady of Lourdes Church of*
3:00 P.M. *Mary, Mother of Our Savior Parish*
2222 Genesee Street, Utica

Tickets \$12 in advance or \$15 at the door Mohawk Valley Center for the Arts, Little Falls New Hartford Presbyterian Church, , M-F, 9-3 Weisser'Jewelers, Herkimer	For reservations and/or further information, please call 315-826-3092 OR e-mail us at mail@mvalchoral.org
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See John Faust for tickets

LONGEST NIGHT SERVICE PLANNED

The Interfaith Coalition of Greater Utica is now planning a Longest Night Service. It will be held at St. Margaret's Ecumenical and Retreat Center on Dec. 21, 2024 at 5pm.



The Solstice happens earlier that day before dawn so the longest night is actually December 20-21 but 21-22 is close enough. Right? After the service, there will be a light supper.
<https://www.facebook.com/share/p/18EVfwsLy/>



Firstnews

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"Opening Doors, Minds, and Hearts: Serving Christ and Community."

The Rev. Mark C. Caruana | Interim Pastor

E-Mail fpcutica@gmail.com | www.fpcutica.net | Follow us at www.facebook.com/fpcutica



DECEMBER BIRTHDAYS

- 1 Steve Grotevant
- 1 Julia Coons
- 11 Mary Wilde
- 15 Alice Putnam
- 16 Christine Hunt
- 24 Bertha Morehouse
- 28 Peg Ward
- 28 Claudia Wattles



ANNIVERSARIES

- 20 Peg & Greg Ward