

FIRST NEWS

MONTHLY NEWSLETTER | FIRST PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH | AUGUST | 2026

OUR SEASON OF GROWING

August is a transitional month. Summer lingers, but there are quiet signs of fall. School supplies are in the stores. The evenings are a little cooler and we sleep with the windows open. Our gardens fill with color, orchards begin to hint at harvest, and creation quietly reminds us that growth takes time, care, and the right conditions. As I watch the season mature, I reminisce on the sermon series on Paul's beautiful list in Galatians 5—the **Fruit of the Spirit**—and how these qualities grow most fully when we nurture them *together*.

Paul doesn't describe achievements or moral trophies. He describes **fruit**—living things that develop slowly, organically, and relationally. Love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control are not produced by sheer effort. They are cultivated as the Spirit works within us and as we walk alongside one another in the ordinary rhythms of life.

Galatians 5:22-23

But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, forbearance, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control.

In August, when the world feels both busy and reflective, I want to invite us to consider how each of these spiritual fruits is growing in our faith community:

Love deepens when we choose to see one another with compassion rather than assumption.

Joy expands when we celebrate each other's blessings as if they were our own.

Peace becomes real when we practice listening more than reacting.

Patience grows when we give others the same grace we hope they give us.

Kindness flourishes in small, unnoticed acts that brighten someone's day.

Goodness strengthens when we encourage what is honorable and true.

Faithfulness is shaped by showing up—consistently, humbly, and with care.

Gentleness emerges when we remember that every person carries burdens we cannot see.

Self-control becomes possible when we allow the Spirit to steady our hearts before we speak or act.

These fruits are not solitary virtues. They are communal gifts. They grow as we worship together, serve together, forgive one another, and learn from one another. They grow when we allow the Spirit to soften us, stretch us, and remind us that Christ is forming something beautiful within us—something that blesses the world. My prayer for August is simple: **May our congregation be a place where the Fruit of the Spirit ripens—slowly, steadily, and visibly—so that others may taste God's goodness through us.**

With gratitude for the journey we share,

-Pastor George

JOIN US FOR A...
FIRST CHURCH ANNUAL

CHURCH PICNIC

AUGUST 9TH 2026

KIRKLAND TOWN PARK

3314 Post Street | Clinton

Worship Service | 10 a.m.
Pot Luck following worship

Please RSVP 315-732-5111 or sign-up at church

We appreciate another opportunity to get together outside for a annual church worship service and a picnic following. With relaxed conversation!

The main entrée of hot dogs & hamburgers along with beverages will be provided. Bring a dish to pass and we'll see you at Pavilion #3 on Sunday, August 9.



For those who may not wish to attend the church picnic, an abbreviated Service of Prayer and Lessons will be held at the church at 10:00 a.m. in Fellowship Hall, with coffee available. Pastor George will be present this short service and will then travel to the picnic to share the message there as well, helping to keep both gatherings connected and equally supported.

We want to ensure that all guests and members will find the church open and welcoming that morning. Both worship opportunities have been planned so everyone can participate in the way that works best for them, while still sharing together in worship and fellowship.

PER CAPITA - 2026

JUST A LITTLE *Reminder*

We all work together to spread the Good News of Jesus Christ on many levels and in many places. The *per capita* is a financial assessment based on church membership which every congregation is responsible to pay for the missions work to the Presbytery of Utica. Our tradition is to include it as a line item in the budget. However, many congregations ask (never require) their members to pay their personal share in addition to their pledge. For 2026 each church member is assessed **\$46.50**. If you are able to pay your own *per capita*, it will have a positive impact on our cash flow.

Thank you to all who have been faithful in your pledge by mailing or dropping their tithes and offerings in the plate. Please remember to continue fulfilling your pledges. You can mail your check to the church office at anytime.



Don't
Forget
Your
Pledge
This Summer

Church Events

**August 9th—ANNUAL CHURCH PICNIC @
Kirkland Town Park @ 10 am**

**August 12th — Roof Task Force Team @ 1:30 pm
Admin. Team @ 2 pm
Worship Team @ 3:30pm:**

**August 19th—SESSION MEETING @ 1 pm
Horizons in Faith Funding Team @ 3 pm
Worship Team @ 3:30 pm**

**August 22nd—Congregational Care Team Picnic@
Wilde's Home**

August 23rd—Worship Leadership Training Day

Pastor AWAY August 31st - September 7th

HOW DO PEOPLE START ATTENDING CHURCH?

A FRIEND INVITED ME - 86%

ORGANIZED VISITATION - 6%

PASTOR INVITE - 6%

ADVERTISING - 2%

PEOPLE BRING PEOPLE!

Generous Gifts Beyond the Grave!

One of the most meaningful ways we can leave a lasting legacy is by remembering the ministries that have touched our lives. Planned and legacy gifts provide an opportunity to continue sharing God's love and supporting the work of the Church for generations to come.

Recently, we were blessed to receive generous legacy gifts from the estates of Bill Wescott and Barb Shuck. We are deeply grateful that they chose to remember our church in this special way. Their thoughtfulness and faithfulness will help strengthen our ministries, support our mission, and ensure that the love of Christ continues to be shared within our community.

While Bill and Barb are no longer with us, their generosity continues to make a difference. Their gifts are a beautiful reminder that our faith and our commitment to God's work can leave an impact far beyond our lifetime.

We give thanks for the lives of Bill Westcott and Barb Shuck, for the many ways they enriched our church family, and for the lasting legacy they have entrusted to us. May we honor their gifts by using them wisely and faithfully as we continue to serve God and our neighbors.

If you have ever considered including the church in your estate plans or would like more information about legacy giving, we would be happy to have a confidential conversation with you. Planned giving is one way to ensure that your faith continues to bless future generations.



Continuing the Journey: Living the Fruit of the Spirit

As we move into August, our summer journey through **The Fruit of the Spirit** continues to challenge, encourage, and inspire us. Each week has invited us to grow a little deeper in our faith, allowing the Holy Spirit to shape not only our actions but also our hearts. Now, as we enter the final chapter of this series, we discover what it truly means to live out the character of Christ every day.

August 2 – Faithfulness

Faithfulness is more than simply staying the course—it is living a life that reflects God's steadfast love. As we learn to trust Him more fully, the Spirit forms within us a dependable faith that remains strong through every season.

August 9 – Gentleness

In a world that often values power and self-promotion, gentleness reveals the strength of Christ. We will explore how humility, compassion, and grace can transform our relationships and become a powerful witness to God's love.

August 16 – Self-Control

True self-control is not about willpower alone. It is the freedom the Holy Spirit gives us to choose what honors God, helping us align our thoughts, words, and actions with His purpose.

August 23 – Walking in the Spirit

All the pieces come together as we discover that the Fruit of the Spirit is not simply a list of virtues but the natural result of walking closely with Christ each day. Following the Spirit in everyday moments leads to a life of purpose, peace, and joy.

August 30 – Harvest of the Righteous

Our series concludes by looking beyond ourselves. The fruit God grows within us is meant to bless others. As we allow His Spirit to work through us, our lives become a source of hope, encouragement, healing, and love within our families, our church, and our community.

This has been more than a summer sermon series—it has been an invitation to transformation. As we complete this journey together, may we continue to cultivate lives that reflect Christ wherever He leads us. Whether you have been with us every week or are joining us for the first time, there is still room to grow. We invite you to finish the journey with us and experience the abundant life God desires for each of us.

Congregational Care Kick-Off Picnic

We're excited to expand our Congregational Care Ministry through the Plentiful Gifts initiative. If you'd like to help by sending cards, making calls, visiting home-bound members, delivering flowers, preparing meals, or simply caring for others, we'd love to have you Join us.

Saturday, August 22th

12:00–2:00 p.m.

Mary and John Wilde's home

24 Harts Hill Circle, Whitesboro
(off Henderson Street)



Please RSVP to Mary at **315-749-4510** and let her know if you can bring a dish to pass. Mary and Becky will provide the main course and beverages.

Choir members are welcome to join us after rehearsal. If possible, please bring a folding chair.

Come learn more about this ministry and how we can care for one another through simple acts of kindness.

Orientation—

As part of our ongoing Plentiful Gifts journey, we are excited to continue equipping and encouraging those who help lead worship. **Sunday, August 23rd**, we will host an in-house **Worship Leaders Orientation** for both current worship leaders who would like to strengthen their skills and anyone interested in exploring this meaningful ministry.

The morning will begin with the topic introduced during worship, followed by a time of fellowship over coffee and light refreshments. We will then gather in the sanctuary for a hands-on orientation that will cover the role of a worship leader, practical tips for leading confidently, and ways to help create a welcoming and meaningful worship experience for our congregation and the guests God brings through our doors.

Whether you are an experienced worship leader or simply feel God may be calling you to serve in this way, we invite you to join us. Together, we can continue building a worship ministry that reflects hospitality, excellence, and the love of Christ.

Plentiful Gifts Survey—

At the July 19th service, the menu for Plentiful Gift opportunities was passed out

If you would like a copy of this menu, please contact the church office at fpcutica@gmail.com. We can provide it electronically or we can mail it to you.

SEEDS OF HOPE FOOD DRIVE

First Presbyterian Church
JULY • AUGUST • SEPTEMBER

ESPECIALLY NEEDED ITEMS:
(BUT ALL NON-PERISHABLES WELCOME)

DROP-OFF LOCATION:
ELM STREET FOYER

Let's sow seeds of compassion together!

SEEDS OF HOPE
COMMUNITY FOOD PANTRY

Collecting Non-Perishable Food Items
SEEDS OF HOPE food pantry is in need of non-perishable food items to support families and individuals facing food insecurity. We are calling on **FIRST CHURCH** during **JULY, AUG., and SEPT.**

ITEMS TO DONATE—

Peanut Butter and Jelly, Canned meats (chicken, tuna, vienna sausages, etc), Canned Vegetables, Canned Fruit, Canned soups and chili, Bottles Juice, Snacks, Macaroni and cheese, Pasta and Sauces, Tuna & hamburger helper, Mashed potatoes (Instant), Beans (one-pound bags or canned), Rice (one-pound bags), Breakfast cereal.

Non-perishable food donations are crucial as they have a long shelf life and can be stored easily, ensuring a steady supply of nutritious food for those in need. Your contributions will help fill the pantry shelves and provide reliable meals to many in our community. Donations can be dropped off at church and place them in the box provided. Together, we can fight hunger and make a significant impact. Thank you for your support and generosity!

MOHAWK VALLEY GIVES -- SAVE THE DATE!

Supporting Seeds of Hope Food Pantry

SAVE THE DATE

Mohawk Valley Gives — Friday, September 18th
Mark your calendars for Friday, September 18th, and join in for Mohawk Valley Gives, a one day community-wide day of generosity supporting local nonprofits.

This year, our focus is Seeds of Hope Food Pantry. As the need for food assistance continues to grow, Seeds of Hope is there week after week, providing food, dignity, and hope to individuals and families in our community.



Through Mohawk Valley Gives, we have an opportunity to strengthen this vital ministry and help keep pantry shelves stocked for our neighbors in need.

Did you give to Seeds of Hope through Mohawk Valley Gives last year? We are grateful for your generosity. This year, we prayerfully invite you to consider giving again—and, if you are able, perhaps increasing your gift. Every contribution, large or small, helps provide nourishment and hope to our neighbors. Together, as a church family and community, we can help Seeds of Hope continue this important work throughout the Mohawk Valley.

More information on how to give and get involved will be coming soon. **September 18th — Save the Date.**



CHRISTIAN EDUCATION THIS FALL

The CHOSEN

Come, See, Discuss!

Join us for a meaningful journey through **The Chosen (Season 1)** – the life of Jesus and His followers come to life.

We will watch one episode per Sunday for eight (non-consecutive) Sundays, then have a discussion afterwards. Each session concludes with a Prayer Focus and recommendations for further study.

"The series draws from the four Gospels of the New Testament. But it is noteworthy how often the show makes reference to the Old Testament – in quotes, allusions, or flashbacks – because the story of Jesus and humanity's deep-seated need for Him began at creation (Genesis 3:15). And so, the intertwining story threads from the Old Testament to the New Testament are intricate and profound – and also cool."
— FROM THE CREATORS OF THE CHOSEN

START DATE Sunday, September 13	ANTICIPATED END DATE Sunday, November 15	TIME 11:30 a.m. – 1:00 p.m.	LOCATION Upstairs Conference Room	FACILITATOR Rebecca Willsey
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All are welcome!

Whether you've seen The Chosen or are brand new to the series, you are invited to come watch, discuss, pray, and grow together in faith.

We hope you'll join us!

A LEGACY OF FAITH — BUILDINGS, MINISTRY, AND A WITNESS TO THE COMMUNITY

Throughout the twentieth century, First Presbyterian Church of Whitesboro and First Presbyterian Church of Utica continued to grow and adapt as their communities changed. While each congregation developed its own identity, both remained committed to the same mission: worshipping God, serving neighbors, and sharing the love of Jesus Christ.

The Story of First Church

As Utica grew into a thriving city, the First Presbyterian Church of Utica expanded its ministry. The congregation's first dedicated church building was completed in 1807 on Washington Street. As membership increased, a larger building became necessary.



In 1827, the congregation dedicated a beautiful brick sanctuary designed by prominent architect Philip Hooker. The building featured a towering 208-foot steeple, an organ, and expanded space for worship and Christian education. It became a landmark in the growing city.

Tragedy struck in 1851 when fire destroyed the building. Yet, as has happened throughout the history of God's people, the congregation responded with resilience and hope. A new sanctuary, known as Old First Church, was built at Washington and Columbia Streets and dedicated in 1852.

The congregation continued to grow in ministry and influence. In 1843, it established one of the first Home Missionary Societies in the nation, supporting outreach beyond its own walls. A Women's Missionary Society followed in 1877, expanding the church's commitment to global mission and service.

By the early twentieth century, the congregation needed additional space. In 1920, the church purchased the McKinnon House property on Genesee Street. The mansion, originally built in 1899 for industrialist Robert McKinnon, became part of the church campus.

A new sanctuary designed by renowned Boston architect Ralph Adams Cram was constructed and dedicated in 1924. Built in the Georgian Revival style, the sanctuary reflected the beauty, dignity, and permanence that generations associated with the church.

The building became a place where thousands worshiped, celebrated weddings, baptized children, gathered for fellowship, and served the community. In 1961, the church expanded again, connecting the sanctuary with the McKinnon House and adding classrooms, offices, Fellowship Hall, a kitchen, and additional ministry space.

The sanctuary's beautiful interior, including its distinctive design elements and Casavant Frères pipe organ, became a treasured part of the congregation's worship life. In recognition of its historical and architectural importance, the church complex was added to the National Register of Historic Places in 1988.

The Story of Whitesboro Church

Meanwhile, First Presbyterian Church of Whitesboro continued its own remarkable journey. For more than 200 years, the church stood as a spiritual anchor for the village and surrounding communities.

The church preserved important historical records, including early membership registers, marriage records dating back to the late 1700s, and handwritten documents reflecting the spiritual life of early residents. These records tell the story of generations who sought to follow Christ and serve their neighbors.

The congregation was deeply connected to movements of compassion and justice. Its history included involvement with the Oneida Institute, a school known nationally for its commitment to educating Black and white students together and its role in the abolitionist movement.

The church building itself experienced challenges. In 1979, a devastating fire severely damaged the sanctuary. Yet the community rallied together, rebuilding and restoring the place of worship. A stained-glass window continues to commemorate that season of loss, renewal, and hope.

Throughout its history, the church remained a welcoming place where people experienced God's grace through worship, fellowship, and service.

A Season of Change

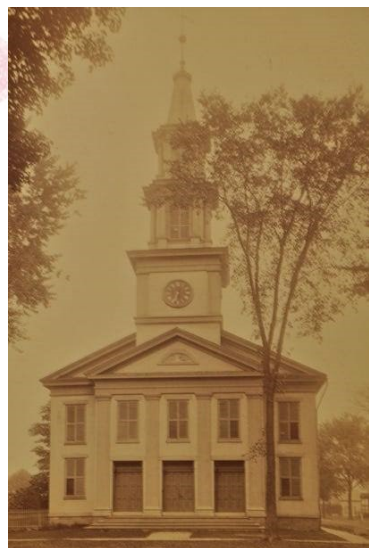
Like many historic congregations across the country, both churches faced changing realities in the twenty-first century. Membership patterns shifted, financial pressures increased, and maintaining historic buildings became increasingly challenging.

First Presbyterian Church of Whitesboro prayerfully faced difficult decisions about its future. After years of faithful ministry, the congregation made the difficult decision to close as a separate congregation in 2023, ending more than two centuries of worship in its historic building.

First Presbyterian Church of Utica also began a season of transition. After decades of ministry at the Genesee Street location, the congregation made the decision to sell the historic property and seek a smaller, more sustainable place for ministry.

These decisions were not endings—they were acts of faith. They reflected a belief that the church is not defined by buildings, but by the people of God and the mission entrusted to them.

And God was preparing a new chapter.—there is more to OUR STORY.



ANNOUNCEMENTS

- **200th Anniversary**—Forest Presbyterian Church, 4019 Center St, Lyons Falls, would like to cordially invite us to help celebrate their 200th anniversary on Saturday, August 29 and Sunday, August 30th, 2026. **On August 29**, the festivities will begin at 10:00 am at the first site of the church across the river with a service to honor the land and history of Forest Church. Everyone is invited to the current site of Forest Church for a walk through its history, music by the Adirondack Community Chorus @ 1pm and CAPO 3 @ 2:30pm, food from our local firemen, a horse drawn carriage ride, and activities for the kids. The festivities will wrap up around 4:00 pm. We would then like to invite everyone back to the church on Sunday at 10:00 am for a wonderful service filled with hymns from the past, a verbal history, and fun memories shared from former pastor's families, as well as, members who love the church. We would love to have anyone who would like to join your voice in celebration in the choir on Sunday to please contact Tricia Kennison ASAP @ 315-376-6049 (home) 315-405-2421 (Cell) or @ triciakennison@yahoo.com, to let her know if you would like to be a part of the choir. The choir will sing the introit: We Are An Offering and the anthem: Hand in Hand, plus lead the Hymns

Blessings, - Elizabeth Smith CRE

- **WHAT'S GOING ON IN THE VILLAGE —**
 - * **2026 Farmers Market!** The market is open every Monday from 2 - 7pm on the Village Green, at the corner of Main and Clinton Streets, running through September 28th. A variety of vendors with local produce, cheese, honey, flowers, popcorn, meats, crafts, and more. And as always, there will be food truck vendors to make sure no one leaves hungry. The Market is open come rain or shine.
 - * **Summer Concert Series** —August 5 Vinyl Logic - August 12 Uncle Charlie & The Meatballs - August 19 2 Minutes 2 Midnight - August 26 Riptide. **Wednesday's 6:00-8:00PM on the Village Green.** In case of inclement weather or other unplanned circumstances, cancellations will be posted on the Village Facebook and Website by 3:00pm on the day of.
 - * **The End of Summer Barbecue Contest** will take place on Saturday August 29th at 15 Flagg St Park. Entertainment will be on hand from 12 noon till 4PM with the Jessie Kay Duo performing from 2PM till 4PM. Judging will take place at 4PM and our winner will be crowned. More details to come.

SYMPATHY -

We extend our heartfelt sympathy to the family of **George Campbell**, who passed away on **July 29, 2026**. George, a resident of Acacia Village, was a cherished part of our church family. We give thanks for his life and ask that you keep Doris, their children, grandchildren, and all who loved him in your prayers.

We also extend our sincere sympathy to Kathy Bogner on the passing of her sister, **Linda Weiss**, on **Wednesday, August 5th**. Please keep Kathy and her family in your prayers, asking God to surround them with His comfort, peace, and strength in the days ahead.



Prayer List:

We believe in the power of prayer and the peace it brings in every season of life. If you or someone you know would like to be added to our prayer list, please contact the church office. Let's join together in faith—supporting one another with love, and heartfelt prayer.

Jeremiah 30:17—For I will restore health to you, and I will heal you of your wounds.

- | | | | |
|------------------------|------------------|-------------------|----------------------|
| • Reid Simpson | • John Dibleby | • Conner Family | • Walt Rosendale |
| • Luke Graham & Family | • Mike Coluzzi | • Ashley McMillen | • Rod Morgan |
| • Barb Wuest | • Michael Taylor | • Debbie Kiefer | • Kaylie & Tom Brown |
| • David Coons | • Wells Family | • Bill Smith | |

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

Firstnews

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NO SUBSCRIPTION FEE

First Presbyterian Church | 1 Elm Street, Whitesboro. NY 13492

315.732.5111

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

The Rev. George Cooper | Pastor

Newsletter written and Edited by Beth Decker

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

August Birthdays

AUGUST

2 Valerie Phillips

10 George Abel

