



First news

FEBRUARY 2024 | NEWSLETTER | FIRST PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH | WHITESBORO, NY 13492

Wander Heart

A Lenten Journey with the Apostle Peter

Lent comes early this year. Ash Wednesday happens to fall on Valentine's Day – February 14. We will conclude our Lenten journey with the celebration of the Resurrection on Easter Sunday, March 31.

This Lent, we are going to take a less familiar path to Easter. Rather than following the lectionary readings for the season, we will focus on the life and faith of one of Jesus' most famous disciples. In Jesus' disciple, Peter, we see a person who is both steadfast and unsteady, a dear friend and a betrayer, a follower and a wanderer. In Peter, we will often see ourselves. By following Peter's journey, we watch the story of Jesus unfold through the eyes of a very normal human trying to figure it all out – just like us.

In reflecting on Peter's faith journey, the lyrics of the old

hymn, Come Thou Fount of Every Blessing come to mind.

It's as if Peter himself wrote

*Oh, to grace how great a debtor
Daily I'm constrained to be.
Let Thy goodness like a fetter
Bind my wandering heart to Thee.
Prone to wander, Lord I feel it.
Prone to leave the God I love.
Here's my heart, oh take and seal it.
Seal it for Thy courts above.*

this song! Like many of us, Peter has a wandering heart. His journey is not polished, or linear, or perfect, but he is always tethered to the love of God.

This Lent, we want to embrace faith as a constant journey and steadfast pursuit. It is rarely a straight pathway. Rather, it is a winding trek. It is a living encounter that ebbs and flows. We will see all the ways Peter keeps going: he drops his nets, he walks on water, he runs to the empty tomb, he swims to the shore to

meet the risen Christ. He keeps searching and yearning and loving, even after missteps and mistakes. Ultimately, in Peter's story, we are reminded that God loves imperfect people, just like you and me. In fact, time and again, it is ordinary, flawed folks that God claims and calls.

This Lent, we will look at the steppingstones of Peter's story. We will reflect on the stages of our own faith journeys. We will celebrate who and what has shaped us along the way. In the words of Come Thou Fount of Every Blessing, as we wander, let us "tune our hearts to sing God's grace," so that we may "rest in streams of mercy, never ceasing."

*Grace and peace,
Mark C. | Interim Pastor*

Session News...

- Presbyterian Disaster Relief Funds for Flood Victims: An ad hoc committee, in collaboration with the Mission Team, is diligently working to process applications for the distribution of funds in Presbyterian Disaster Relief Funds. These funds will provide much-needed support to victims of the flooding in Whitesboro. We extend our gratitude to those involved in this compassionate initiative and appreciate the opportunity to demonstrate Christ's love in times of need.
- Securing an estimate for repairing the elevator remains a top priority for the Session
- The Whitesboro Church has been approved by the Red Cross as an emergency shelter in the event of a disaster, just as we had been so designated at the 1605 Genesee St. location.

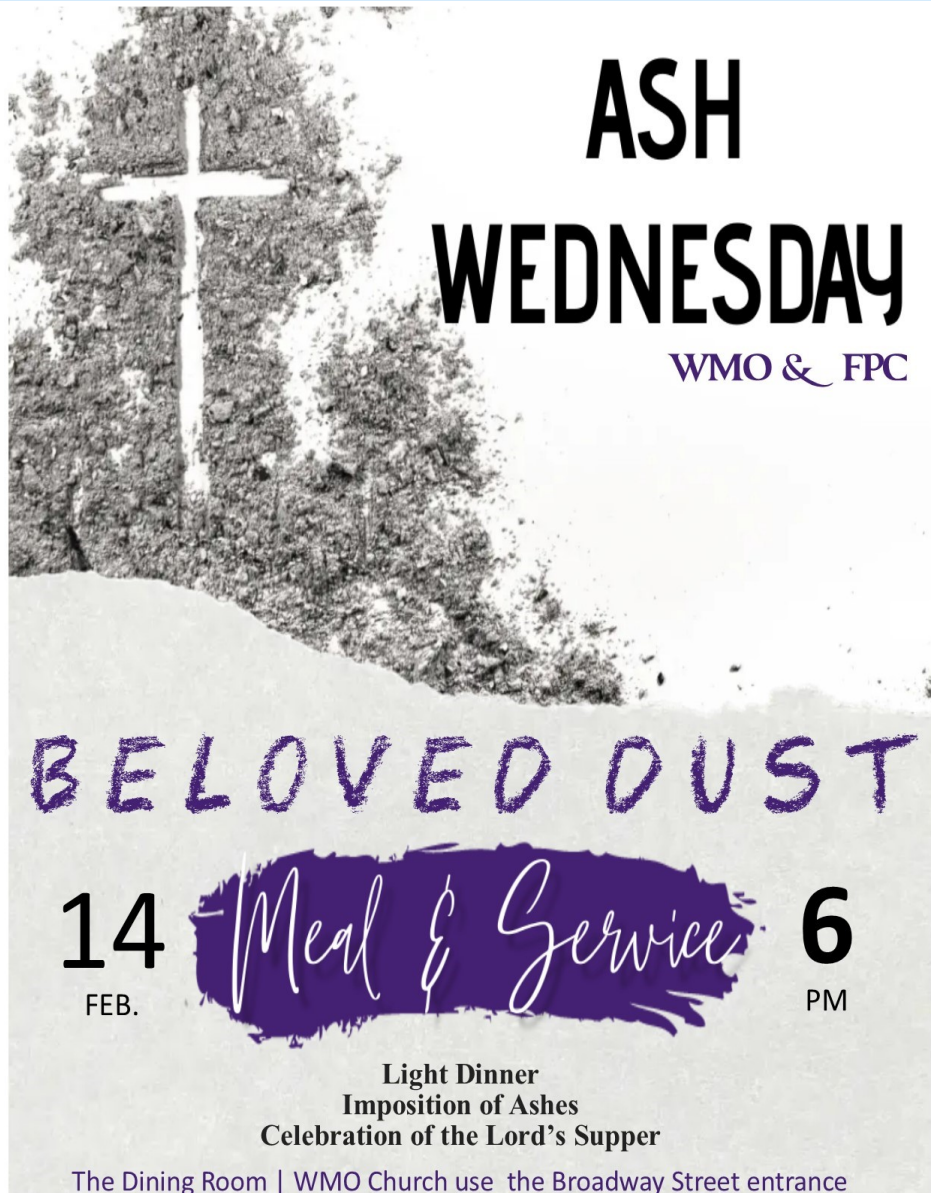
WELCOME NEW RULING ELDERS

*installation on January 28th
Presented by the nominating team:*

Class of 2025

- ▶ *Jim Beaton*
- ▶ *John Faust*
- * *Barb Hallenbeck*

Many thanks to outgoing elder Mike McHale and Tom Wattles for their dedicated time and service.



ASH WEDNESDAY

WMO & FPC

BELOVED DUST

14 FEB. Meal & Service 6 PM

Light Dinner
Imposition of Ashes
Celebration of the Lord's Supper

The Dining Room | WMO Church use the Broadway Street entrance

BELOVED DUST

Ash Wednesday Meal and Service
Wednesday, February 14 – 6:00 p.m.
The Dining Room – WMO Church
(Enter through the Broadway Street entrance)

The last time Ash Wednesday coincided with Valentine's Day was in 1934. These two holidays – holy days – feast days invite us to acknowledge two poles of our existence and faith. We are dust and to dust we will return. We are also God's beloved ones. We are created in love. We are redeemed in love. We are eternally loved by the Holy One.

Join us in the Dining Room (WMO) for a light dinner of soup and sandwiches. Following the meal, we will remain at the tables. Through a series of scripture readings, meditations, and activities, we will explore what it means to be beloved dust. Our service will conclude with a celebration of the Lord's Supper.

Reservations are encouraged so that we may know how many meals to make. Sign-up outside the Fellowship Hall on the bulletin board.

MIDWEEK LENTEN LUNCHEONS

wednesdays @ 11:30am

First Presbyterian Church
1 Elm Street, Whitesboro



**THE GOOD NEWS
CENTER**

www.thegoodnewscenter.org

21st
Feb.
2024



**RESCUE MISSION
of UTICA**

www.uticamission.org

28th
Feb.
2024



**SEEDS OF
HOPE**

www.sohutica.wixsite.com

6th
March
2024



**THE
CENTER**

www.thecenterutica.org

13th
March
2024



**THE
NEIGHBORHOOD
CENTER**

www.neighborhoodctr.org

20th
March
2024

MIDWEEK LENTEN LUNCHEONS

Wednesdays during
Lent – 11:30 a.m.

First Presbyterian
Church

1 Elm Street,
Whitesboro

315.732.5111

Seeing Christ in our
Neighbors

*Lord, when was it that
we saw you? Truly I
tell you, just as you
did it to one of these
brothers and sisters of
mine, you did it to me.
— Matthew 25*

Join us for a light
Lenten luncheon of
soup and sandwiches.
After lunch, stay and
learn about an organi-
zation in our commu-
nity that is ministering
to the needs of our
neighbors.

A voluntary offering
will be received each
week to support the
organization present-
ing its work with our
neighbors.

voluntary offering will be received to support presenters
for more details | 315.732.5111



One Great Hour of Sharing

Dear Church Family,

In Isaiah 58, the prophet exclaims, “Your ancient ruins shall be rebuilt; you shall raise up the foundations of many generations; you shall be called the repairer of the breach, the restorer of streets to live in” (Isaiah 58:12). As the people of Israel returned from exile and struggled to rebuild their lives, Isaiah questioned their efforts: Are you not called “to share your bread with the hungry, and bring the homeless poor into your house; when you see the naked, to cover them?” (Isaiah 58:7).

Then in Matthew 25, we hear Jesus calling to us, “For I was hungry and you gave me food ... I was a stranger and you welcomed me, I was naked and you gave me clothing. ... As you did it to one of the least of these who are members of my family, you did it to me” (Matthew 25:35–40).

Isaiah and Jesus are making an important point: faithfulness to God causes us to find solutions that will mend broken things—broken lives, broken spirits, broken hearts, broken relationships—things that happen to all of us throughout our lives.

When we give to the One Great Hour of Sharing (OGHS) offering on Palm Sunday, March 24th, we are combining our efforts with others across the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) to repair peoples’ lives — people who are hurting, broken, oppressed, lost or on the margins of society. These are the exact people about whom Isaiah and Jesus are speaking. They are the people we are called to connect with every day with the Good News of the resurrection.

In upcoming worship bulletins you will find information on how your gift to OGHS helps people all over the world and offer prayers for those who will receive monetary support through this offering. Our offering at FPC when added together with other Presbyterians’ gifts, make huge differences in the lives of our brothers and sisters in need.

I challenge you to give to the One Great Hour of Sharing offering to benefit Presbyterian ministries to combat hunger, provide assistance after disaster strikes, and to work with sustainable community development. I hope you will discover how giving opens your heart to God’s work in your own life. I hope that you’ll join us on Sunday, Palm Sunday, March 24th, as we collect this offering and tangibly witness to the love of God in Jesus Christ through One Great Hour of Sharing.

Grace and Peace,
Mark C | Interim Pastor



Contribution Statements

Statements of 2023 giving have been passed out or mailed in January. Please check the statements for accuracy. If there is any discrepancy with your records, please call/email the church office within the next few of weeks.

What is Per Capita?

The money contributed helps build up the Body of Christ.

Per capita is an opportunity for all communicant members of the Presbyterian church to celebrate being a connectional part of church. In 1 Corinthians 12:12-31, a reminder that all parts of the church are parts of one body. Doing your part takes both your contribution of gifts and per capita. These gifts are part of our call to be one church, one community. Through our gifts we support the work of our congregation, our presbytery, our synod, our national church, and beyond. 2024 Per Capita is \$45 per member per year. **Your Per Capita is due as soon as you are able to add it to this years pledge.**

Help is Needed

The Cornerstone Community Church, our neighbors on Oneida Square, hosts the Morrow Warming Center which helps homeless people get warm and fed. Many items are needed: sweat pants and sweat shirts; underwear, socks, personal size hygiene items; laundry soap; powdered drink mixes; snacks, sneakers and boots in all sizes; coats, and hoodies. Please contribute! The collection box will be in the front of the Sanctuary (Elm Street Entrance) through February.

Hope House

Volunteer Opportunity:

Volunteers are needed to assist in preparing meals for Hope House on the last Friday of every month going forward. If you are interested in contributing to this ongoing project, please reach out to Cindy Molesky. Your support makes a meaningful difference.

Thank You!! St Paul's Textile

We're happy to report that again in 2023 the impact to the community through this program. This program has been a blessing for the last four years.

- ▶ 24,256 pounds of clothing were donated from your shed
- ▶ This was enough to clothe an estimated 4,468 people all over the world.
- ▶ Based on this volume of clothing, we received \$1,165.81

The clothing shed is a true blessing in the community.

Offering Envelopes

Each week you can find the envelopes on the front tables in either the front or the back of the sanctuary. Blue envelopes are to be used for special offerings. You are encouraged to place your pledges in a white envelope and write your envelope number on it in order to help us better record your contributions for 2024. Your number is located on your contribution statement each year.

Stewardship

As we stand on the threshold of a new year, we are filled with gratitude for the countless blessings God has bestowed upon us this last year. With hearts full of thanksgiving, we embark on a new journey of faith, love, and generosity through our annual Stewardship Campaign for the year 2024. Stewardship is not merely a financial commitment; it is a spiritual practice that reflects our gratitude for God's abundant grace and our commitment to building and sustaining His kingdom here on Earth. Your generosity enables us to continue the transformative work of our church, both within our congregation and in the wider community.

Key Information:

- **Ways to Pledge:** You can fill out the pledge card found in the Sanctuary and put it in the offering plate or mail it back to us, or you may email your pledge to: fpcutica@gmail.com. Pledge cards are available in the Sanctuary. Your contributions, big or small, make a significant impact.
- **Impact of Your Pledge:** Your pledge supports various ministries, outreach programs, and the day-to-day operations of our church. It is an investment in the spiritual growth of our community and the fulfillment of God's mission.

How to Participate:

1. **Prayerful Consideration:** Take time to reflect and pray about the role of stewardship in your life and the life of our church.
2. **Submit Your Pledge:** Complete your pledge form by using the provided pledge cards.
3. **Join the Celebration:** Be a part of the celebration as we come together to consecrate our pledges and commit to another year of faithful stewardship.

Your commitment to this campaign is a testament to your love for our church and your dedication to God's work. Together, let us embrace the call to stewardship.

In the spirit of unity and gratitude.



Mission News written by Barb Shuck

In the 70s when Rev. John Sisley was pastor and Laurie Kraus-Neale associate pastor in our downtown location we were experiencing some vandalism at the church. It prompted us to think about what kind of neighbors we were and how we were living out the gospel in our community. Matthew 25 came quickly to mind and James 2:14-26. This continues to be the basis for the mission work of our church and this was the answer we gave, and continue to give, for our outreach into the community.

Rescue Mission 13th Annual Walk

Returning to a live event!
Rescue Mission of Utica
is hosting its 13th
Annual Walk a Mile in



My Shoes on 2/3. The Church has registered a Team, team fee is \$15. Sign-up by calling/email the church to be a team member. For more details about the team call the church office.

Minute for Mission

The Utica Rescue Mission remains committed to addressing the well-known issue of homelessness in Utica. Operating a spacious 59-bed shelter for men on Rutger Street, the mission provides secure accommodations, meals, clothing, referrals to social service agencies, and assistance in finding permanent housing for those in need. In the past year, a new, fully staffed Drop-in Center has been established at the West Street Apartments, conveniently located on a bus line at 1013 West Street. This center, open 24/7, offers a comprehensive range of services for disenfranchised individuals, catering to both women and men.

In addition to providing essential resources such as meals, clothing, and a safe haven, the center offers various forms of support, including mental health recovery, peer assistance, healthcare services, help with health insurance enrollment, assistance with housing applications, aid in job applications, obtaining identification, and more. Endorsed and supported by the City of Utica and the county, this initiative aims to address the multifaceted needs of the homeless population.

For those interested in a detailed overview of all programs and services offered by the Mission, a one-page document is available in the church office. Business cards with contact information, phone numbers, extensions, and addresses for all the services required by homeless individuals can also be obtained. Carrying one in your wallet or purse can serve as a quick reference or be given to someone in need. We appreciate your ongoing support of the faith-based Rescue Mission of Utica.

Cancellation Policy

If church is cancelled due to weather, we will post cancellation on WKTV, WUTR, and on our Facebook page. If Utica schools are closed, the church is closed.

Office Closed

The church office will be closed Friday, Feb. 2nd through Friday, Feb. 9th and will resume regular hours Monday, Feb. 12th. Office hours are Monday through Friday from 10am to 4pm. The office will be closed for the President's Day holiday on Monday 19 February.

Presbytery of Utica's RIP MEDICAL DEBT UPDATE

THANK YOU to everyone who have so generously responded with a donation to the Presbytery of Utica's RIP Medical Debt Campaign! We're now less than \$5,000 from reaching the goal of \$30,000 to relieve and forgive past due medical debt in New York and beyond! Your gifts will lift the burden of medical debt for many!

You can make a year-end contribution and help those in aching need. Write a check payable to the Presbytery of Utica with "RIP Medical Debt" in the memo line; mail it to Presbytery of Utica, PO Box 127, Holland Patent, NY 13354. If you need more information, contact Larry Beasley at uticastatedclerk@gmail.com or call 315-794-9124.

With Sympathy

We remember with appreciation First Church member Greg Molampy, who died on December 27, 2023, at the age of 67. Greg became a part of the First Church family after a chance meeting with former custodian Mike Entwistle as he worked on the church grounds. As he grew more comfortable with the church, he became an active volunteer, helping out wherever he could despite constant pain from a work-related injury that left him disabled. He even coped with the treacherous choir room stairs so he could be a choir member! In recent years he was primary care-giver for his mother, who passed away November 5 at the age of 97. Despite great personal challenge, Greg had a twinkle in his eye and an ever-present sense of humor. May God's peace be with all who helped sustain him.

Coffee Hour

Coffee • Connect • Community

Sundays
Following Worship
(Fellowship Hall)

February 11th | themed week

Join in each week for coffee, refreshments and conversation!

COFFEE HOUR:

- Please consider signing up to bring snacks for one of our upcoming coffee hours. Sign-up sheets are conveniently located in the hall just outside the fellowship hall.



January Cook-In: Spreading Warmth and Kindness in the Neighborhood

In times when the world can seem fast-paced and disconnected, the January cook-in served as a beautiful reminder of the strength that lies within a community. The idea was simple but impactful: neighbors coming together to create delicious and nutritious meals to share with those who may be in need or simply in search of a warm, comforting dish.



Those who participated were Judy, Claudia, Susan, Debi, Marcia, Donna, Jackie, Sharon, Cindy, Becky, and Barb. Each brought their unique talents to the table, quite literally. The star of the day was, of course, the food that was prepared. The team worked tirelessly to create a diverse array of flavors, from classic chili to hearty vegetable soup. The kitchen became a hub of creativity and collaboration. 36 cups of soup and 141 meals were packaged. Each cook brought their favorite recipes in a delightful assortment of meals that would not only warm the body but also the soul.



Looking Ahead Into Lent...

Easter Flowers

Deadline | Sunday, March 3rd

It's time to think about ordering your Easter flowers. Plants are \$8.50 each this year. Watch for all the details coming soon.



Excuse any errors, corrections, or slight imperfections in this message, but we couldn't wait to share the wonderful news with you! Your understanding is appreciated as we strive to communicate the latest news and updates with you.

*Palm
Sunday*

BRUNCH

MARCH **24** SUNDAY

STICKY BUNS | EGG BAKE

Juice | Coffee | Tea

Donations welcome



First Presbyterian Church | 1 Elm Street, Whitesboro, NY 13492 | 315.732.5111

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

The Rev. Mark Caruana | Interim Pastor

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

February Birthdays

- 2 Bill Wescott
- 5 Gail Dorn
- 12 Andrea Akins
- 13 Diane Todd
- 16 Carol Farley
- 21 Bernie Costner
- 24 Bill Smith

