

First news

FEBRUARY 2023 | NEWSLETTER
FIRST PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH
UTICA, NY

Lent: A Desert Journey

Then Jesus was led up by the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted by the devil. He fasted forty days and forty nights, and afterwards he was famished. Matthew 4:1-2

Lent is a season that invites us on a sojourn through the desert. It is a time that beckons us to a pilgrimage in the wilderness. During Lent we walk in the footsteps of the Hebrews who wandered in the wilderness for forty years before entering the Land of Promise. We follow in the way of Jesus of Nazareth who was led by the Spirit from the River Jordan, the place of his baptism, into the Judean Wilderness where for forty days he was tempted to trade his identity and calling for a less arduous pathway. It was the arid wilderness of physical deprivation and soul-deep testing that prepared Jesus to live a life of devotion, courage, and merciful service to others. Deserts have much to teach us about vulnerability, tenacity, and the interdependence of living beings.

I invite you to join me on a desert journey during the Lenten Season. We will be using **Rachel M. Srubas's** devotional, *The Desert of Compassion* as our guide. The author draws on her life and learnings as a



The Judean Wilderness looking north from the Dead Sea

contemplative pastor, spiritual director, and desert dweller to guide readers on a desert spiritual pilgrimage. The book provides daily Lenten sustenance for our journey inspired by Scripture, present-day insights, and personal experience. We will meet weekly **via Zoom on six Thursdays in Lenten, at 7:00 p.m. We will begin on Thursday, February 23 and conclude on Thursday, March 30.** Copies of the book in paperback or eBook can be ordered from Amazon.com or Westminster John Knox Press (<https://www.wjkbooks.com/>

[Pages/Item/60016/The-Desert-of-Compassion-Digital-Resources.aspx](https://www.wjkbooks.com/Pages/Item/60016/The-Desert-of-Compassion-Digital-Resources.aspx)) Please contact the

church office if you need help ordering a copy of the devotional.

I invite you to join me as we walk with Jesus for forty days in the desert. Please email me or the church office if you would like to participate, and you will receive an email with a Zoom link for all six sessions. My prayer is that in the Lenten desert we may learn to navigate our trials and temptations with trust in God and with compassion for ourselves. Because we have followed Jesus into the wilderness, may we learn to treat our neighbors, our dear ones, and all God's creatures with care, compassion, and wisdom.

Grace and Peace,
Mark S. Caruana
Interim Pastor

Session News...

- The Session urges we support our Mission Partner, the Rescue Mission of Utica. By participating and donating to the Walk a Mile in my Shoes fundraiser on 2/4.
- Annual Meeting with installation of elders will take place following the worship services on 2/5. When concluded we will gather for a light meal and fellowship in the Red Rug Room.
- We received a \$2500 grant from the Presbytery in support of our Seed of Hope food pantry.
- Volunteers to cook our once a month meal for Hope House are needed – contact Barb Shuck.
- The Presbytery has collected \$22,000 towards its goal of \$30,000 for RIP Medical Debt relief. There still remains the opportunity to contribute to this worthy cause.
- Plans are underway for the Lenten season with Rev. Mark Caruana leading an adult zoom study.

WELCOME NEW OFFICERS

*installation on February 5th
Presented by the nominating team:*

Class of 2025

* *Sue DePasquale* **
* *Barb Shuck* *
* *Rick Kincaid*

**denotes second term **denotes being granted permission by the Presbytery to serve an additional three-year term*

Many thanks to outgoing elder Becky Willsey for her dedicated time and service.



**February 22nd
6 pm
Red Rug Room First
Presbyterian**

Friends and members of First Presbyterian and WMO Churches are invited to a joint Ash Wednesday meal and service. We will begin our Lenten journey with a light meal. The meal will be followed by a worship time around the tables that will include:

- ▶ reaffirming our Baptismal vows
- ▶ the Sacrament of Holy Communion
- ▶ the imposition of ashes

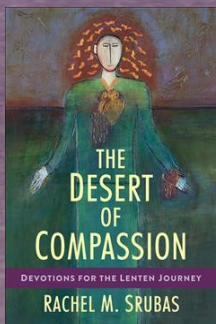
Sign-up in the Sanctuary or email the church at fpcutica@gmail.com

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 on Monday, February 20th, Presidents Day.



Thursdays Zoom study | 7 pm begins 2/23

- Sign-up in the sanctuary, call or email the church office at fpcutica@gmail.com.
- The beginning of each week a link to the zoom study will be forwarded via e-mail.
- Copies of the book in paperback or eBook can be ordered from Amazon.com or Westminster John Knox Press (<https://www.wjkbooks.com/Pages/Item/60016/The-Desert-of-Compassion-Digital-Resources.aspx>)
- If you would like the church to order you a copy please contact the office.

Jesus experienced forty days of testing and transformation in the rugged Judean desert. Whether disease, social injustice, personal loss, or other challenges have led you to the spiritual desert, it may seem doubtful that any good can come from hardship. Yet it was the arid wilderness of physical deprivation and soul-deep testing that prepared Jesus to live a life of devotion, courage, and merciful service to others. Deserts have much to teach about vulnerability, tenacity, and the interdependence of living beings. The season of Lent calls you to navigate your own trials with trust in God and compassion for ourselves. *The Desert of Compassion* provides daily Lenten sustenance inspired by sacred Scripture, present-day teachings, and personal experience. Join the discussion each week as we navigate this lent season together.

Contribution Statements

Statements of 2022 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. 2023 Per Capita is \$45 per member per year. **Your Per Capita is due as soon as you are able to add it to this year's pledge.**

Offering Envelopes

Each week you can find the envelopes in the pew. 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 2023.

Mission News

Cornerstone Community Church, our neighbors on Oneida Square at the Morrow Warming Center are helping homeless people get warm and fed. They need clothes so we are putting a box by the offering table at the front of the church sanctuary for the items. They need: **Sweat pants, sweat shirts, underwear, socks, boots, sneakers, leggings, coats, hoodies.** The box is in front of the sanctuary through February.

Hope House *submitted by* Barbara Shuck. Mission chair

Many thanks to all the teams who monthly have provided meals for Hope House on the 4th Friday. We are responsible for a main dish, which sometimes includes salad (depending on who is cooking). Menu is decided by the team of two or three people. They buy the ingredients and fix them either at the church or at Hope House. The meal is served at 4 p.m. by people at Hope House. We only provide the main meal but they often have desserts which we help cut and put on plates if we cook at Hope House. There is money in the budget for this. Receipts for the purchases are put into the offering plate on Sunday and sometime within the next two weeks the person who bought the food will be paid. No one is expected to use their own funds to do this service. I have asked many people to help with this and would like to hear from anyone who can help. It is work I enjoyed doing when I was more physically able but I am not strong enough to do the standing, lifting and stirring necessary so am grateful for the younger ones who carry on the tradition. Rev. Kirk Hudson who served our church was one of the founding fathers of this group and it has been one of our keystone mission projects through the years.

Seeds of Hope

We need your help! Save those empty egg cartons to help us package eggs for the clients.



Thank You!! St Paul's Textile

We're happy to report that in 2022 the impact to the community through this program.

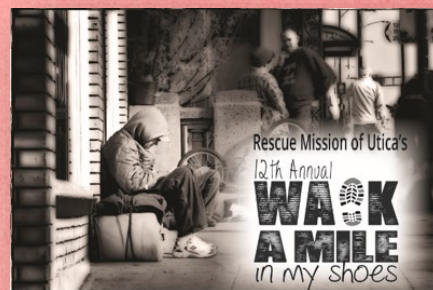
- ▶ 24,256 pounds of clothing were donated from your shed
- ▶ This was enough to clothe an estimated 4,468 people all over the world.
- ▶ Based on this volume of clothing, we received \$970.23

The clothing shed is a true blessing in the community.

Rescue Mission 12th Annual Walk

Returning to a live event!

Rescue Mission of Utica is hosting its 12th Annual Walk a Mile in My Shoes on 2/4. The Church has registered a Team, team fee is \$15. Sign-up in the Sanctuary or call/email the church to be a team member. For more details about the team and the walk see Tom Wattles or call the church office.



Minute for Mission

The Rescue Mission of Utica continues work to address the well-publicized homeless population that exists in Utica. It maintains an expanded 59 bed shelter for men on Rutger Street that provides safe lodging, meals, clothing, referrals to social service agencies, and finds permanent housing for those seeking help. Within the last year it has opened a new, fully staffed, clean, safe, Drop-in Center at the West Street Apartments located on a bus line at 1013 West Street. It provides a wide array of services for disenfranchised individuals, both women and men, and is now open 24 hours/7days a week. Beyond meals, clothing, and a warm place off the streets, other examples of help available are: mental help recovery, peer support, healthcare, health insurance enrollment, housing applications, job applications, obtaining an ID, and more. This center has been endorsed and supported by the City of Utica and the county. You can obtain a one-page complete list of all the programs and services available from the Mission in the church office. There also are available "business cards" with phone numbers, extensions, and addresses, of all the services a homeless individual would need. You might want to have one in your wallet or purse for quick reference or to give someone who approaches you needing help. Thank you for your years of continued support of the faith-based Rescue Mission of Utica.

Firstnews

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NO SUBSCRIPTION FEE



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"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	Abel Akins
13	Andrea Akins
13	Diane Todd
16	Carol Farley
21	Bernie Costner
24	Bill Smith



Join us each Sunday for...

Coffee Hour
Coffee Connect Community

Sundays

Following Worship
(Red Rug Room)

February 12th | themed week

