

# FIRST<sup>news</sup>

MONTHLY NEWSLETTER | JANUARY 2024

FIRST PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH | 1 ELM STREET, WHITESBORO, NY 13492

## New Hope for the New Year

There is something about the promise of a new year that always gives me a sense of hope. The old year with all its tragedies, problems, disappointments, failures, and sorrow will soon be behind us, and a fresh page waits to be turned. A clean slate waits to be inscribed. The old has passed away and the new has come. Even now we are preparing to usher in 2024 with fanfare. When the ball drops in Time Square at the stroke of midnight on January 1, horns will sound, whistles will be blown, champagne will be uncorked, and hugs and kisses will be exchanged.

But there is a gnawing feeling deep within our souls that despite all our efforts to welcome the New Year with laughter and joy, that nothing has really changed in us or in our world. Soon the Christmas lights and decorations will be packed away for another twelve months. The carols proclaiming joy to the world and peace on earth will be silenced. And we will be left to survive another

*Arise, shine; for your light  
has come, and the glory of  
the Lord has risen upon you. -  
Isaiah 60:1*

dark, cold, bleak Central New York winter.

The sobering, hope-crushing reality is that we will enter 2024 with much that is unchanged. The cost of groceries remains astronomically high. Russian drones still bring death and destruction in Ukraine. Innocent civilians continue to pay the price of the war between Israel and Hamas with their blood and lives. The plague of gun violence in our nation's schools, houses of worship, and public spaces is unabated. The economic gulf separating the haves and have nots only grows wider. Illicit drugs claim the lives of our youth. Too many in our community have nowhere to call "home." The virus of racism continues to infect too many souls, while COVID still threatens our bodies. If we choose to give into its destructive power, hopelessness could easily overwhelm our faith as we begin a new year. As one com-

mentator aptly describes it, "the temptation is to stay with the familiar and the comfortable, to crawl back into bed and pull up the covers, or to sneak into the manger with Jesus, where it's warm, safe, and secure. The temptation is to stay where we are – in the dark crevices of depression or defeat, of fear or foreboding, in the deep ruts of sameness, boredom, or lethargy."

The first Christian Feast Day of the New Year is Epiphany, which we will celebrate on Sunday, January 7th. Epiphany is more than a celebration of the Magi's arrival. It promises us that Christ's light shines in the darkness. It reminds us that while life is often dark and challenging; revelation, growth, and new beginnings are possible. God offers us new roads that will take us to new adventures, new challenges, and new opportunities to be the persons and faith community God wants us to be.

Our challenge as we step across the threshold from the old to the New Year is to "arise, shine!" The Prophet Isaiah's challenge to the people of

Continued on next page

## Session News...

As we step into the new year, here are some important updates from our recent session meeting:

1. **Budget Approval for 2024:** The Session announces the passage of the budget for 2024. This budget reflects a significant reduction in expenditures, demonstrating our commitment to responsible stewardship. We believe this fiscally responsible approach will enable us to continue our mission and ministry in the most effective way possible.

2. **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 \$5300 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.

3. **Fellowship Team's Remarkable Efforts:** The Fellowship Team has received heartfelt compliments and thanks for their outstanding work in decorating the entire church. Their creativity has transformed our space into a warm and welcoming environment. Additionally, their dedication to collecting and distributing cookies to shut-ins has not gone unnoticed. We commend the Fellowship Team for their commitment to fostering a sense of community and care within our congregation.

4. **Musical Enrichment in Worship:** We want to express our gratitude to Becky Willsey for her exceptional leadership in providing uplifting and inspiring music during our worship time. The entire congregation has enjoyed and appreciated the musical contributions that enhance our worship experience. Thank you, Becky, for sharing your talents and enriching our worship together.

As we move forward into the new year, let us continue to support one another and find joy in serving our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. May these updates inspire us to actively participate in the various aspects of our church life and mission.

## ANNUAL CONGREGATIONAL MEETING!

We are announce this upcoming meeting that will take place on Jan. 21st, immediately following the worship service.

This gathering is a significant opportunity for us to come together as a community, share updates, and discuss important matters related to the life and ministry of our church. Your presence and participation are crucial as we seek God's guidance for the path ahead.

Agenda items included:

1. **Ministry Updates:** Stay informed about the latest happenings in our various ministries.

2. **Upcoming Events:** Learn about and get involved in upcoming church events and activities.

3. **Financial Report:** Gain insights into the financial health of our church and the stewardship of resources.

4. **Prayer and Vision:** Join in prayer for the church's mission and vision for the future.

5. **Final approval of the sale:** 1605 Genesee St. property.

6. **Election and Installation:** Elders to serve on Session for the class of 2026.

**A meal will follow the annual meeting in the Fellowship Hall. Please make plans to attend and stay for a time of food and fellowship.**

We value your input and encourage every member to attend this meeting. Your voice matters, and together, we can continue to grow as a vibrant and loving community.

Let us gather with hearts full of gratitude and anticipation for what God has in store for our church family. We look forward to seeing you there!

Continued from cover

Israel to "Arise, shine; for your light has come..." is also for us as people of faith ready to begin a new year. We no longer need to live in darkness. We can choose to rise and shine – to get up – to begin again. There is more to come. The story isn't finished. Our journey is not complete. There are new roads for us to travel in 2024. God hasn't given up on us or our world.

Dare to believe the good news – our light has come! Let us arise and shine!

Grace and peace

Mark S. Caruana | Interim Pastor

## PERCAPITA

As we begin 2024, we kindly remind those to include their per capita contribution to cover the requirement per member. The Presbytery of Utica requires each congregation to contribute \$45 per member.

Your per capita gift plays a crucial role in supporting our shared ministry within the Presbytery and the Presbyterian Church USA. It helps underwrite various initiatives that strengthen our collective mission and impact.

Your commitment, regardless of the method of giving, is deeply appreciated, and we sincerely pray that God will abundantly supply all of your needs.

Thank you for your ongoing support and dedication to the church. Together, we continue to make a positive impact in our community and beyond.

## Contribution Statements

Statements of 2023 giving will be mailed in late January. Please check the statements for accuracy. If there is any discrepancy with your records, please call the church office at 315-732-5111.



## 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.

Offering  
Envelopes



*The church office will be closed on...*

Monday, January 1st

Monday, January 15th | Martin Luther King Day.

We invite those who are interested in serving as liturgists or those who are serving to enhancing their skills in this area to a Liturgist Training Session on January 14th following coffee hour.

This training session is designed to equip individuals with the knowledge and confidence to lead our congregation in worship through the reading of Scripture and other liturgical elements. Whether you're a seasoned liturgist or considering this meaningful role for the first time, all are welcome!

If you feel called to contribute to the worship experience in this way, or if you simply want to deepen your understanding of liturgy, we encourage you to join us. Please bring your enthusiasm and any questions you may have. Let's come together to grow and serve in our worship ministry. We look forward to seeing you there!

## 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:

- **Pledge Deadline:** We kindly request that you prayerfully consider your financial commitment for 2024 and submit your pledge.
- **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](mailto:fpcutica@gmail.com). Pledge cards will be available in the Sanctuary beginning Sunday, Jan. 7. 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 available beginning Jan. 7th.
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.

## DON'T FORGET YOUR 2024 PLEDGE

PLEDGE FORMS CAN BE FOUND  
IN THE SANCTUARY BEGINNING JAN. 7TH

## MANY THANKS

Many thanks to all of you for the generous donations to the angel tree. This year we adopted 40 angels and all 40 were exchanged for gifts. All gifts were delivered to the Neighborhood Center. Many families had a warm holiday because of your generosity. Thanks for the blessing poured out on our community as we reach out.



## THANKS, LADIES!

Ladies from WMO & FPC helped pack cookies for the home deliveries. Cookies, Poinsettias, and Christmas cards were



distributed to members and friends who can no longer get to church regularly. Thanks to all who helped with these special deliveries.



## UPCOMING EVENTS

- **MISSION MEETING:** January 13th @10 am. All are welcome to meet at 10 Vine Circle, Whitesboro the home of Barb Shuck.
- **COFFEE HOUR:** If you enjoy baking or have a favorite treat to share, 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. Your contribution, big or small, adds to the warmth and fellowship of our coffee hours. It's a wonderful way to share in the joy of community and make our gatherings even more special.
- **GREETER:** As we continue to create a warm and welcoming environment in our church, we are in need of volunteers to serve as greeters each Sunday. If you have a friendly disposition and enjoy making people feel welcome, we invite you to consider volunteering as a Sunday greeter. For more details reach out to Becky Willsey.

# Firstnews

"FIRSTnews" is published monthly. NO SUBSCRIPTION FEE



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

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

The Rev. Mark Caruana | Interim Pastor

E-Mail [fpcutica@gmail.com](mailto:fpcutica@gmail.com) | [www.fpcutica.net](http://www.fpcutica.net) | Follow us at [www.facebook.com/fpcutica](https://www.facebook.com/fpcutica)

## January

- 1 Will Hampton
- 9 Rebecca Willsey
- 10 Sonya Linakis
- 11 Andrea LeFever
- 18 Mary Mosher
- 19 John Wilde



### *CANCELLATION POLICY*

If the church is closed due to weather, we will post an announcement on WKTV, WUTR, and on our Facebook page. If Whitesboro schools are closed, the church will also be closed.

*We wish you a Happy New Year!*  
*From everyone here at First Presbyterian Church*