



FIRST NEWS

MONTHLY NEWSLETTER | FIRST PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH | JULY | 2026

FAITH IN THE SUMMER SEASON

Ecclesiastes 3:1

*"For everything there is a season, and a time
for every matter under heaven."*

Summer is upon us. This is a time for enjoying the outdoors, going on vacations to see family or sights, and time at the camp. The Bible contains many examples of times when people stepped away from the work routine. It's true, Moses did not book an Airbnb at the Red Sea, and Jesus did not have a cottage on Lake Galilee. However, the Bible teaches the value of taking a break with the weekly Sabbath. It established seasonal rhythms and times for family travel. In the Bible, there were three major pilgrimage feasts (Passover, Shavuot, Sukkot) annually. Families traveled to Jerusalem. They gathered, feasted, and celebrated. It was basically a road trip to renew their relationship with God and reconnect with others.

The result is a lightened schedule on the church calendar. Meetings like the Session stay on the calendar, but there are fewer meetings and fewer events. The events are typically more "relaxed." However, the lightened schedule allows time to plan and prepare for the busy fall. Below are a couple of important upcoming opportunities.

- **Plentiful Gifts** has been referenced several times over the last year. You may remember that in February 2025, we met with the consulting group Forest Walk, who created a report with recommendations for our church. These included Congregational Care, Preaching, Connecting with our Community, and Faith Formation. The full report is available if you are interested. In March of this year, *A Menu for Plentiful Gifts* was provided with options for training and support in these key areas. The Menu was prepared by Dubuque Seminary in Iowa, which is administering Plentiful Gifts. Every participating congregation has an allowance for these training opportunities. Your Plentiful Gifts Team has identified several opportunities matching the recommendations. On **July 19th**, we will review the identified training opportunities so we can begin to enroll individuals in the courses. Would you like to know more? Join us on July 19th during worship and the Coffee Hour. Don't worry! It won't be long or boring!
- **Worship** is central to our church. The music, prayers, and teaching strengthen our faith for the daily Christian Walk. **Worship leaders** such as greeters, ushers, and liturgists shape the worship experience before and after the words of the hymns and sermon. They create a worship environment that is orderly, hospitable, spiritually focused, and free of distractions — allowing the congregation to encounter God fully. They are not simply extras to fill in the gaps. Greeters create hospitality, which is more than friendliness! The flow of worship is more than words on the screen read by a liturgist. Ushers do more than pass plates. On **August 23**, a full **Worship Leaders Orientation** will be provided. It is a time for current worship leaders to refine their skills. It is also for those who want to know more before signing up to serve in one of the worship roles. The topic will be introduced in worship, then after 30 minutes for coffee and snacks, we'll transition to the sanctuary. Everyone is welcome and encouraged to attend.

-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

Directions from church to Kirkland Town Park - Follow route 12S (arterial) pass Utica Mutual make a left turn at light on to Route 12B to Clinton. Keep left at the fork to go on E. Park Row/Rt-12B. Turn right onto S. Park Row/Rt-12B. Turn left onto Franklin Ave./Rt-12B. Turn slight left onto Post St. The town park is on the left. We will be located at Pavilion #3.

This year First Presbyterian will be hosting our annual outdoor worship service and picnic. 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 will be provided. Please RSVP by signing up on the bulletin outside fellowship hall and let us know what side dish, salad or dessert you will be bringing to this years picnic on Sunday Aug. 9th.



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 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.



SESSION

Plentiful Gifts & Upcoming Training

Our congregation continues its participation in the Plentiful Gifts initiative, a program designed to help churches strengthen key areas of ministry such as congregational care, preaching, community connection, and faith formation. This process has included a careful review of recommendations and the identification of training opportunities tailored to our church's needs.

On July 19, we will take an important next step as we gather to learn more about the available training options and how they can support our ministry together. These resources, a grant from the Lilly Endowment are administered by the University of Dubuque Theological Seminary. They are part of our shared effort to grow in effectiveness and deepen our impact in the life of the church.

Looking ahead, on August 23 we will also offer an in-house Worship Leaders Orientation. This session is designed both for current worship leaders seeking to refine their skills and for those who are considering serving as worship leaderships. The morning will begin with the topic introduced during worship, followed by a time of fellowship with coffee and snacks. After that, we will move into the sanctuary for a more focused orientation and practical training. All are welcome and encouraged to attend as we continue strengthening worship experiences together and for our anticipated guests.

Prayers –

July 12 (Boilermaker Race)



As the Boilermaker Road Race takes place next weekend, we lift in prayer all who will be participating—those running, walking, and serving as volunteers on **July 12**. We ask for a day filled with safety, strength, and good health for every person involved.

Grant protection to all participants along the course. Guard them from injury, heat, and exhaustion, and give endurance to those who have trained for this challenge. Strengthen and sustain the many volunteers who will be offering support, direction, and encouragement throughout the day.

We give thanks for the spirit of community this event brings to our area. May it be a day marked by kindness, perseverance, and good sportsmanship.

Above all, we pray for a safe and healthy race day for everyone, and that all may return home refreshed, accomplished, and well. Amen.



Summer Worship Series: Fruit of the Spirit

A Season of Growth, Character, and Harvest

This summer, our worship life moves through a powerful journey in Galatians 5:22–23—the Fruit of the Spirit. Each week builds on the one before it, inviting us into a deeper, more visible, and more faithful walk with Christ. Think of it not as separate Sundays, but as one unfolding story of transformation.

We begin with how the Spirit shapes how we relate to others, move into how God forms our inner character, and finish by seeing how that inner work becomes a living harvest in the world around us.

— **July 12** - We start close to home: how faith shows up in everyday relationships.

Kindness reminds us that the Spirit's work is not abstract—it is visible in compassion, patience, and grace that reaches beyond comfort and convenience.

— **July 19** - Kindness grows deeper into something steadier. **Goodness** moves us from intention to integrity. It is the quiet strength of a life that reflects God's character in what is right, true, and faithful.

— **July 26** - In the middle of the series, we pause for a different kind of worship.

— **August 2** - The focus turns inward. **Faithfulness** is the Spirit shaping a life that can be trusted—steady, rooted, and anchored in God's promises over time.

— **August 9** - We continue the inward journey.

— **August 16** - The inner life comes into sharper focus.

Self-control is where desire and discipline meet grace. It is not sheer effort, but Spirit-led freedom that orders our lives toward God.

— **August 23** - Everything begins to come together. **Walking in the Spirit** is the daily practice of this whole journey—living under God's guidance in ordinary moments, not just Sunday worship.

— **August 30** - We conclude with a vision that reaches beyond ourselves. **Harvest of the Righteous** reminds us that what God grows in us is never meant to stay private. The Spirit produces fruit that becomes a blessing to others—hope, healing, and witness in the world.

This is not just a sermon series—it is a season of spiritual growth. Each week builds on the last, forming a rhythm of transformation: from how we treat others, to who we are becoming within, to what God is doing through us. Come for one Sunday, and you will be encouraged. Walk the whole journey, and you may find yourself changed.

JUNE'S HIGHLIGHTS

Village-Wide Garage Sale—Success!

What an incredible weekend! Thanks to the generosity, hard work, and enthusiasm of so many people, our Village-Wide Garage Sale was a wonderful success, raising **more than \$2,000** to support the ministries and mission of our church.



Events like this are about much more than selling treasures. They are about a church family coming together with a shared purpose. In the week leading up to the sale, donations poured in from members and friends of the congregation. Volunteers sorted, organized, set up tables, greeted shoppers, answered questions, and worked tirelessly throughout the event. Others baked delicious treats, helped with clean-up, or simply offered encouragement and support wherever it was

needed.

The sale welcomed neighbors from throughout the community, creating opportunities for conversation, fellowship, and hospitality. It was a joy to see so many familiar faces, meet new friends, and share the welcoming spirit of our church.

A heartfelt thank you goes to everyone who donated items, gave their time, baked goodies, helped with set-up and clean-up, worked during the sale, and supported the event in countless ways. Every contribu-



tion—large or small—played an important part in making this fundraiser such a remarkable success.

Together, we demonstrated what can happen when a congregation works side by side with willing hearts. The more than **\$2,000** raised will help strengthen the ministry and mission of our church, and we are deeply grateful for the generosity and dedication of everyone who made this event possible.

Thank you for making this year's Village-Wide Garage Sale one to remember. We look forward to what God will accomplish through these gifts and through the faithful service of this amazing church family.



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 and 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!



Church Events

July 7th—Communication Team @ 6:30 pm
 July 15th—Admin @ 11 am
 Session @ 1pm
 Horizons in Faith Funding @ 3pm
 July 19th—Plentiful Gifts Updates

Spark Positive Change

Light up local impact this month! Every \$2.50 reusable Fight Hunger Bag sold during July at our selected Hannaford sends our organization \$1. Help our community shine brighter!

SEEDS OF HOPE
 COMMUNITY FOOD PANTRY

1122 Mohawk Street,
 Utica NY

Seeds of Hope News

We are so excited to share that, for the entire month of **JULY**, Seeds of Hope has been selected by store leadership at the Mohawk St., Utica Hannaford to receive a \$1 donation from every purchase of the \$2.50 Community Bag. This is a great way to broaden awareness and help our cause. The Community Bag Program facilitates community support with the goal of making a difference where shoppers live and work. Let's get started! Share the news with friends and family. Call, send emails, and post on social media. The more people who purchase the Community Bag in **JULY**, the greater the donation we will receive from Hannaford.

OUR STORY — GOD'S FAITHFULNESS: EXPLORING THE HERITAGE OF 2 CONGREGATIONS

Every church has a story. Ours is a story of faith, perseverance, service, and God's enduring presence through generations of change. It is a story that stretches back more than 230 years and is rooted in the rich heritage of two congregations: the Whitesboro Presbyterian Church and the First Presbyterian Church of Utica.

While many know the history of one congregation or the other, fewer are familiar with the remarkable connection that has existed between them since the earliest days of settlement in the Mohawk Valley. Long before Whitesboro and Utica became distinct communities, Presbyterian settlers worshiped together as part of the United Society of Whitestown. From those shared beginnings emerged two congregations that would faithfully serve their communities for generations while remaining connected by common roots and a common faith.



The Whitesboro Presbyterian Church was formally organized in 1795, becoming one of the oldest congregations in Oneida County. Just a few years later, the growing settlement at Fort Schuyler—later known as Utica—

established its own congregation, which was incorporated as the First Presbyterian Church of Utica in 1804. Though serving different communities, both churches shared a commitment to worship, discipleship, mission, and service to Christ.

Over the centuries, both congregations witnessed tremendous changes in the Mohawk Valley. They endured wars, economic upheavals, population growth, technological advances, and cultural shifts. Through it all, generations of faithful members gathered for worship, baptized children, cele-

brated marriages, mourned losses, served their neighbors, and proclaimed the good news of Jesus Christ.

In 2023, a new chapter began when the First Presbyterian Church of Utica sold its historic Genesee Street property and continued its ministry and

worship in Whitesboro.

In many ways, the story came full circle. Two congregations whose his-

“One generation shall commend your works to another, and shall declare your mighty acts.” — Psalm 145:4

tories had been intertwined from the very beginning once again found themselves sharing ministry, mission, and a vision for the future.

Over the coming months, we invite you to journey with us through the history of these congregations.

Through photographs, historical records, and significant milestones,

we will explore how God has guided and sustained His people from the frontier days of the eighteenth century to the present day.

As we look back, we do so not merely to remember the past, but to celebrate God's faithfulness and to gain inspiration for the future. The same God who guided our ancestors in faith continues to lead us today.

This is an introduction to a series discovering our story—one rooted in history, shaped by faith, and filled with hope for the generations yet to come. Continue reading alone over the next couple of weeks in the e-blasts, bulletin and newsletter as we dive into OUR STORY.



MOHAWK VALLEY GIVES -- SEPTEMBER 18TH

Supporting Seeds of Hope Food Pantry

Mark your calendars for **Friday September 18th** as we join in supporting the Mohawk Valley Gives campaign—a 24-hour community-wide day of generosity that connects neighbors, friends, and organizations in support of local nonprofits making a real difference.

This year our focus is the Seeds of Hope Food Pantry, a growing ministry that continues to meet the rising need for food Assistance in our area. Week after week, individuals and families come seeking help, and this outreach responds with care, dignity, and practical support.

The need has not slowed, and neither has the commitment of this congregation. Through Mohawk Valley Gives, we have an opportunity to strengthen and expand this vital work—ensuring that pantry shelves remain stocked and that those who walk through the doors are met with compassion and stability. Our goal is simple but meaningful: to come together as a church family and community to support the ongoing mission of Seeds of Hope. Every contribution—large or small—directly helps provide nourishment and hope to those facing food insecurity in our region.

As the day approaches, we will share more information about how to give and how to help spread the word. For now, we invite you to prepare your hearts for a day dedicated to generosity, shared purpose, and care for our neighbors. **September 18th** is more than a date on the calendar—it is an opportunity to make a tangible difference, together.



MANY THANKS

- ♦ A heartfelt thank you goes out to Cindy Molesky and her team who tirelessly coordinate and cook each month for our Hope House Mission. Your dedication and hard work make a significant difference in our community, and we are incredibly grateful for your continued support.
- ♦ A BIG thank you to all the volunteers and cooks who support Your Neighbors by providing nutritious meals to shut-ins. Thanks to your generosity and hard work, we were able to provide more than 100 homemade meals to those in our community. When we arrived, the freezers were completely empty. Because of your compassion and willingness to serve, they were filled once again with nourishing meals that will bless individuals in need. Thank you for being the hands and feet of Christ and for making such a meaningful difference.



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

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

Firstnews

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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

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

Birthdays

JULY

- 4 Beverly Ryan
- 13 Carol Colerick
- 28 John Faust
- 31 Peggy Beaton



Anniversaries

- 12 John & Mary Wilde

