



First news

MONTHLY NEWSLETTER | DECEMBER 2025
FIRST PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH | 1 ELM STREET, WHITESBORO, NY 13492

IN THE SEASON

best wishes for a blessed christmas!

Holiday decorations and retail promotions started long before Thanksgiving. Culturally, we now are “IN THE SEASON.” Lights are going up in our neighborhoods. Retail stores are decorated. The holiday season now begins with a shopping focus with Black Friday, Small Business Saturday, and Cyber Monday. Did you know the Sunday after Black Friday is sometimes called “Black Sabbath”? I find it ironic in this crazy season of decorating, shopping, parties, baking, etc. that the rock group Black Sabbath sang a song called Crazy Train. So, are you on the “Crazy Train” of the Holiday Season? We may want to consider that it is okay to silence some of the noise of the season for the better health of your heart, mind, and spirit.

The church calendar for the Holiday Season always begins with Advent. Advent means in Latin,

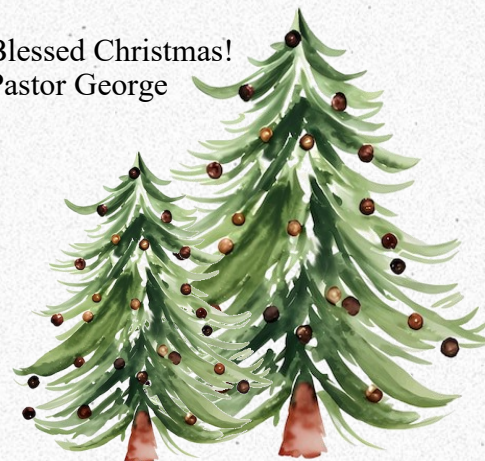
“coming” or “prepare.” Advent is intended as a time of preparation for the coming birth of the Christ Child. It is a time to prepare spiritually and emotionally for the celebration of the birth of Jesus. Research has found that the current craziness of the season has high expectations, which leads to increased stress, anxiety, and depression, loneliness and sadness, and financial pressures.

This past Sunday, the sermon was entitled “The Quiet Announcement.” We were introduced to Zechariah. He was alone in the Holy Place of the Temple with Incense Offerings of prayers. Gabriel told him that he and Elizabeth would have a baby who would be named John. Ultimately, their son, John the Baptist, “prepared the way” for the coming of Jesus’ ministry. Zechariah questioned Gabriel because he and Elizabeth were “advanced in years.” Gabriel stated, “And now you will be silent and not able to speak until the day this happens, because you did not believe my words, which will come true at their appointed

time.” (Luke 1:20) He was silent until John was born.

In a world of so much noise, we underrate solitude, stillness, and along time for reflection. Celebrate this Christmas Season. Shop to buy gifts for family and friends as an expression of love but do so within your current financial means. Decorate, but there is no need to light up the entire neighborhood. When preparing Christmas dinner, make enough for everyone, but not so much “you can feed an army.” Go to parties, but be responsible. But most of all, take some quiet time to prepare your heart and spirit for the Coming of the Christmas Child. Please accept my deepest and heartfelt wishes for a truly

Blessed Christmas!
Pastor George



WORSHIP WITH US THIS ADVENT SEASON AT 10AM

DECEMBER 7

Mary: The Faithful Servant

Text: Isaiah 7:10-16; Luke 1:26-45

Focus: Mary's humble "yes" to God's plan despite uncertainty.

Key Point: God often calls ordinary people to extraordinary purposes.

Application: Trust God's promises even when the path is unclear.

DECEMBER 14

Joseph: The Righteous Protector

Text: 2 Samuel 7:8-17; Matthew 1:18-25

Focus: Joseph's quiet obedience and protective love.

Key Point: True strength is shown in faithfulness and integrity.

Application: Live out your faith through actions, not just words.

DECEMBER 21

The Shepherds: The First Witnesses

Text: Psalm 23; Luke 2:8-20

Focus: God's message of peace and joy comes first to the lowly.

Key Point: The gospel is for everyone, regardless of status.

Application: Share the good news with boldness and joy.

DECEMBER 24 Christmas Eve (4:30 pm & 6:30 pm)



Join us on
Christmas Eve
24th December

4:30 pm | Children's program, gifts & A special visitor
6:30 pm | Candlelight - Communion

1 Elm Street, Whitesboro, NY
facebook.com/fpcutica www.fpcutica.net

COOKIES FOR SHUT-INS

Calling all bakers! This year for our homebound members and friends, we ask for two dozen of your delicious cookies or goodies. All types are appreciated—cookies, bars, brownies, etc. This will be a great treat for all who cannot often leave home. Packing will be **MONDAY, DECEMBER 15TH** at 1 pm. Please bring your cookies in when you come or drop them off before Monday. All are welcome to come and package up the goodies for delivery.



Church Events

Dec 6th – Choir Practice @ 10 am

Dec 9th - Bible Study @ 6:30 pm

Dec 10th - Plentiful Gifts @ 6:30 pm

Dec 13th - Choir Practice @ 10 am

Dec 14th - Worship Team-following service

Dec 15th - Cookie Pack @ 1 pm

Dec 15th - Craft Connection @ 1:30 pm

Dec 16th - Bible Study @ 6:30 pm

Dec 18th - Angel Tree Wrapping Party @ 10 am

Dec 19th - Angel Tree Pick-up @ 11 am

Dec 24th - Christmas Eve Services

4:30 pm—Family Christmas

6:30 pm—Traditional Candlelight

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



GROWING IN GENEROSITY

2 CORINTHIANS 9:7

GROWING IN GENEROSITY: As we look ahead with hope and excitement toward the 2026 ministry year, we continue to reflect on what it means to *grow in generosity* as a community of faith. Each act of giving—whether through time, talent, or financial support—helps sustain the mission and ministries that touch lives within our congregation and far beyond our doors.

Our annual giving commitments are a vital part of planning for the year ahead. They allow our church leadership to faithfully and responsibly prepare for worship, outreach, education, and the many ministries that make our church a place of welcome, compassion, and spiritual growth.

If you have already turned in your card for 2026, **thank you** for your prayerful support. Your support strengthens our shared work and helps us continue to shine Christ's light in the world.

If you have not yet completed your commitment, we gently ask that you prayerfully consider doing so. Your commitment—no matter the amount—makes a meaningful difference. It reflects your partnership in our mission and your hope for what God will continue to do through our church in the coming year.

Thank you for your generosity, your faithfulness, and your willingness to grow with us. Together, we will move forward in gratitude, trust, and joyful expectation for all that 2026 will bring.

First Presbyterian Church presents --

1st Annual HOLIDAY RAFFLE FUNDRAISER

DRAWING DATE: DECEMBER 21st @ coffee hour

Fundraiser Event

TICKETS:
2 FOR \$5.00
15 FOR \$10.00



First Presbyterian Church | 1 Elm Street, Whitesboro 13492

Craft Connection

3rd Monday of each Month @ 1:30 pm

Craft in a fun, relaxing environment — perfect for hobbyist and beginners alike!

What You'll Be Doing

- ✓ Finish Existing Projects
- ✓ Starting a New Project
- ✓ Maybe Learning from Someone else
- ✓ Great Conversation!

Bring your own materials!

Craft Connection



Contact Betty:
315-734-3358

Email:
abcaramone@verizon.net

@ First Presbyterian Church
Fellowship Hall
1 Elm Street - Whitesboro, NY



SESSION NOTES



Left to right are Bill Barry; Mike and Janet Butler; Jessica Thomas; Brent Thomas.

THANKSGIVING DINNER!

We offer our heartfelt appreciation to everyone who helped us reach our financial goal to purchase all the ingredients needed for a full Thanksgiving meal for 125 guests at Hope House. A special thank-you goes to Judy Stanek of Our Savior Lutheran, who once again secured a Visa gift card—an invaluable contribution that greatly supported this effort.

Pictured are the loyal members of our longtime kitchen crew, who faithfully come together each year to prepare this meal, whether it was at our former Genesee Street location or now at Hope House. Their dedication continues to make this tradition possible.

****This all comes together thanks to our coordinator, Tom!**

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STEWARDSHIP

Please make your charitable gifts to the church on or before December 31st in order to claim a tax deduction for 2025. Everyone served by the ministry of the church will benefit from your generous support. The 2025 pledges statements will be sent out after the first of the year.

No matter how you give, your support of the church is appreciated and we pray that God will supply all of your needs.

GIVING MADE EASY!

Scan the QR code to contribute to First Presbyterian online.

This cashless Giving Opportunity is now live and is a convenient way to seamlessly contribute to our ministries. Just scan the code and set up an account to give.



FIRST PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH INVITES YOU TO JOIN THE

Christmas ANGEL TREE

NOVEMBER 30 - DECEMBER 16

NOVEMBER 30 - DECEMBER 16

Please help make sure the students/children of Whitesboro District have a Merry Christmas by picking an Angel from the Angel Tree

SIGN OUT - TAGS

Buy gift on the tag & wrap it.

Drop Off Deadlines

Any time on or before
December 16

Call the church at
315-732-5111
with any questions!

This Christmas season, our church will once again participate in the Angel Tree project—an inspiring opportunity to bring joy to children and families in our local community. Our focus remains on supporting families right here in Whitesboro. Working closely with a local social worker, every gift given will directly meet the needs of our neighbors.

Again this year, the toys requested will be provided through the “STUFF THE BUS” campaign.

The Angel Tree is now up in the Sanctuary. Each tag on the tree represents the unique needs and wishes of a child or family, offering us a meaningful way to share God’s love. We invite you to pick up a tag and prayerfully consider how you might bless a family this Christmas season.

Whether it’s a cozy winter coat, much-needed socks, underwear, or sneakers/slippers, every gift is a reminder that these families are loved, cared for, and remembered. Please join us as we strive to make this Christmas season brighter for our community—one gift at a time.

****please reach out to the office if you have questions about a tag.**

LAST MONTH HAPPENINGS

Sip-n-Paint



THANK YOU FOR SUPPORTING THE JARED BOX PROJECT!

Thank you to everyone who contributed to the success of this year's Jared Box Project! Because of your incredible generosity, we were able to gather and pack countless boxes filled with toys, games, and activities—each one created to bring comfort and joy to children in hospitals.

From those who donated items to the volunteers who helped with packing, your efforts reflect the true spirit of community. When people come together with compassion and purpose, amazing things happen.

These boxes will soon be in the hands of children who need a little extra cheer, reminding them that



HOLIDAY

The church office will be closed
Wednesday, Dec. 24th
through
Friday, Jan. 2nd

Office hours will return to normal
Jan. 5th -Monday—Thursday 9 am - 4 pm

WEEKLY EMAIL BLAST

If you haven't subscribed to our weekly email updates being sent out to all that want to receive First News weekly. This will keep everyone informed of developments and events at our church. If you or you know someone that would like to receive the weekly

ANNUAL REPORTS DUE

All teams please submit final reports by December 30th by e-mail to fpcutica@gmail.com

LAST MONTH HAPPENINGS

CHRISTMAS CARD MAKING

Thanks to all who came out to make cards — 38 cards were donated to the Congregation Care Team for Shut-ins.



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 | • Judy Westerhoff |
| • Tom Harrington | • Jon Fuller |
| • Davis Family | • Bill Smith |
| • Capraro Family | • Bill Wescott |
| • Morris Family | • Ruth Ward |
| • Barb Wuest | • Barb Shuck |
| • Mariana Tata | • Helen Lynch |
| • Linda Weise | |

SYMPATHY

We extend our heartfelt sympathy to **Karen Jones** on the passing of her brother, **Cleon**. Please keep Karen and her family in your prayers during this difficult time. May God's comfort, strength, and peace surround them in the days ahead.



STUDENTS GIVE BACK IN BIG WAY

The Seeds of Hope Food Pantry extends heartfelt gratitude to the students, teachers, and staff who recently organized a collection to support local families in need. Their generosity and spirit of giving have made a meaningful impact at a time when many households rely on community assistance.

The coordinated effort brought in a wide range of much-needed items, all of which will be used to help ensure that families in the area have access to essential food and supplies. Pantry representatives praised the school community not only for their contributions, but also for the valuable example they set in teaching kindness, compassion, and service.

“We are truly grateful for the care and support shown,” the Food Pantry shared. “Your donations will help us continue our mission and provide comfort and stability for those who need it most.”

Seeds of Hope expressed its appreciation for the ongoing partnership and commended everyone involved for giving back in such a thoughtful and impactful way.



CHRISTMAS EVE SERVICES AT FIRST CHURCH

Join us as we celebrate the joy of Christ's birth!

4:30 PM – Family Christmas Service

A special service for children featuring Christmas songs, small gifts, and a chance to meet Joe Christian—and a very special guest... *Ho Ho!*
Bring the whole family for this joyful time together.

6:30 PM – Traditional Candlelight Service

Celebrate the wonder of Christmas with beloved carols, Holy Communion, and the beauty of candlelight as we welcome the Christ Child.

ALL ARE WELCOME

COME AND WORSHIP WITH US!



Join us on...

Christmas Eve

December 24th

4:30 pm | Childrens Program & Gifts
with a special visitor

6:30 pm | Candlelight - Communion

1 Elm Street, Whitesboro, NY  www.facebook.com/fpcutica

SEEKING HELP TO REFRESH OUR SOCIAL MEDIA

As we continue to grow and connect with our community, it has become clear that our social media pages are in need of a little cleaning up and a fresh, updated look. From sharing photos and updating information to creating engaging posts that reflect who we are, there's plenty of opportunity to make a meaningful impact.

We are looking for a few with an eye for organization, creativity, or basic social media know-how to help us refresh our online presence. Whether you have experience in digital media or simply enjoy working with technology, your help would be greatly appreciated.

If you're interested in lending a hand, please reach out to the church office. Together, we can create a warm, welcoming, and vibrant online space that truly represents our church and its mission.



Not your Average Holiday Concert!

The Mohawk Valley Choral Society
Presents

"The Many Moods of Christmas"

A wide selection of holiday songs and carols
Arranged by

Robert Shaw and Robert Russell Bennet

With a

Symphony Orchestra

Under the direction of

Randy Davis

On Sunday, December 7, 2025

At 3:00 PM

Faro de Luz Seventh Day Adventist
Church

(Formerly First Presbyterian Church)

1605 Genesee Street, Utica New York

Admission: \$15.00 in advance

\$18.00 at the door

**Tickets are
available at the
door the day of
the concert!**

Firstnews

First Presbyterian Church | 1 Elm Street, Whitesboro, 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



DECEMBER BIRTHDAYS

- 1 Steve Grotevant
- 1 Julia Coons
- 11 Mary Wilde
- 15 Alice Putnam
- 16 Christine Hunt-Ferris
- 23 George Cooper
- 24 Bertha Morehouse
- 28 Peg Ward
- 28 Claudia Wattles



ANNIVERSARIES

- 20 Peg & Greg Ward