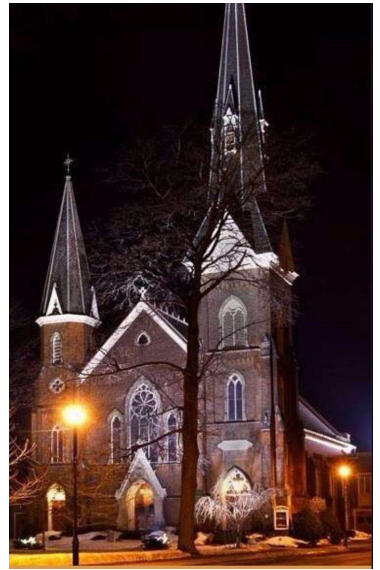


First Presbyterian Church of Westfield

49 S. Portage St
Westfield, NY 14787
(716) 326-2643



February 2020 NEWSLETTER



Church Office Hours

9:00 a.m. – 3:00 p.m.

Monday through Friday

Pastor

Rev. Dr. Shannon Smythe

pastorshannon79@gmail.com

Greeters

Carol & Spencer Drake

Deacon of the Month

Sharon Rau

The Sacrament of Baptism was celebrated on Sunday, January 12, 2020. Elena Lynn Gerdy, daughter of Natalie and Michael Gerdy, was baptized. Pictured above.

“Baptism reminds us that there’s no ladder to holiness to climb, no self-improvement plan to follow. It’s just death and resurrection, over and over again, day after day, as God reaches down into our deepest graves and with the same power that raised Jesus from the dead wrests us from our pride, our apathy, our fear, our prejudice, our anger, our hurt, and our despair.”

–Rachel Held Evans, *Searching for Sunday: Loving, Leaving, and Finding the Church*

A Message from the Pastor

Dear Friends,

On Friday, January 24, 13 folks from the congregation came together for a night of listening to one another’s stories, creating personal 2020 manifestos, and contributing insights into our church’s core values, strengths, passions, concerns for the community, and shared experiences, with the hopes of helping to create a 2020 church manifesto to guide us on the journey God is leading us into this year.

My challenge to those who gathered with me last Friday, and my challenge to all of us, is to **BE BRAVE** as we consider the journey that God is leading us on. I think back to the Israelites in the wilderness after God had liberated them from Egypt. They had to be brave to leave behind what had been in order to be open for the new thing God wanted to do in and among them. Fear is probably the greatest stumbling block to God’s work in the world, but bravery is feeling all the fear of change, of trying something new, of embracing new ideas, of exploring new terrain, of embracing new relationships, of accepting new jobs, of singing new songs, of living in new places, of saying goodbye to what was and still making that change and embracing what can be. May bravery come to us as we enter into the wilderness. We have left Egypt. What has been, is no longer. But what will be is not yet revealed. We are wandering in the wilderness dependent upon God. By the end of February, we will be entering into Lent, where we will fully embrace this wilderness theme for the season of Lent.

I would like to pose another challenge to us all now. **BE HONEST**. We must tell the truth about ourselves. It was revealing to me last Friday night to see that relatively little was written under the category of the church’s “Shared Experiences that have Shaped Us” (both highs *and* lows), especially considering how much has been shared with me, privately, about the hard reality of what has gone on in this church’s life and ministry through the years. It is critical for us to be self-aware as a congregation as uncomfortable as it may be. Denial of past pain only forestalls the healing that comes as grief and lament carve out a space for hope. Let’s seek to hold each other accountable in being honest.

Finally, as we, together, move into the journey God has us on, let’s not forget to **PRAY FOR GOD TO LEAD OUR CHURCH**. We need God to lead us because only God is in the business of making all things new. When the Israelites got scared in the wilderness and forgot to follow God, they made an idol and

God only gave them more time in the wilderness as a result. As we commit to coming before God in prayer, let's ask: 1.) If we continue doing what we're doing today, where will we be one year, two years, and five years from now? 2.) If we change, where will we be one year, two years, and five years from now? These are critical questions to consider but perhaps the most important question is this: 3.) **Why are we going on this 2020 journey?** I don't know how God will lead you to answer that question, but I hope it will be connected to your desire to truly follow after Jesus and the kingdom of God.

Christlove,

Pastor Shannon

Joshua 1:9 "I hereby command you: Be strong and courageous; do not be frightened or dismayed, for the Lord your God is with you wherever you go."

Per Capita

The **PER CAPITA** is an amount of money assessed each member of the local church for the administrative costs of the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church (USA), the Synod of the Northeast, and the Presbytery of WNY. Said another way, it is a Presbyterian Covenant Community Fund — part of the glue that holds Presbyterians together. Because every Presbyterian shares in the benefit of the PC(USA)'s system of government, the expenses associated with coordinating and performing the functions of that system should be shared by everyone as well. This year Per Capita is set at \$34.10 (\$8.95 goes to the Office of General Assembly) per each active member of the congregation.

Any contribution to help defray the cost of the Per Capita expense would be very greatly appreciated. Please make your check payable to First Presbyterian Church, earmarked "Per Capita ~ Ecclesiastical Apportionment" and mail to the church office or place in the offering plate on Sunday mornings.

Our Presbytery is having trouble making budget because the expected Per Capita is not being met, making for a 32% shortfall. Last year, our church only gave 10% of our expected contribution.



Ash Wednesday Worship Service



Join us at 7:00pm on Wednesday, February 26th for our Ash Wednesday worship service and imposition of ashes.

Lent begins in the wilderness. The Spirit guides Jesus into the wilderness where he comes face to face with temptation and struggle. Yet, in his forty days of fasting, resisting, and wandering, Jesus is shaped and formed for ministry. Similarly, through the wilderness of Lent, we are invited to surrender to the wild leadings of the Spirit. We rarely enter the wilderness willingly, but hopefully through our wandering we remember who we are and whose we are. The wilderness can become sacred even if it remains dangerous. There is no wilderness space too harsh or threatening for God's love. This Lent, we welcome you to the journey.

Calling All Musicians & Singers!



Do you play an instrument? Do you enjoy singing? Would you be interested in serving God and church by sharing your gifts in worship? Could you, for example, be called upon occasionally to play/sing special music? Would you be able to learn the doxology or Gloria Patria to help us out in a pinch on a Sunday morning? The worship and music committee would like to create a database of musicians and singers and possible ways you would be open to contributing to our worship life. Please look for the sign-up sheet in Sunday service or contact Spencer Drake at (716) 485-8918 or gtrdrake@gmail.com.

Mission/Justice News



We encourage everyone to join us for the "SOUPER BOWL SUNDAE" Luncheon on February 2nd. You will be able to enjoy a delicious lunch. The Mission Committee invites you to its annual "Souper Bowl Sundae" luncheon get-together after church on Sunday, February 2. Come and join your friends for a bowl of homemade soup, salad, bread. And make-your-own Ice Cream Sundae for dessert. Coffee, tea and juice will be provided. A suggested donation of \$10.00 is requested along with a can of soup(s) which will be given to the Westfield Food Pantry. There will be NO charge for children and/or students.

Westfield Food Pantry Hours

Tuesdays: 1:00-2:30pm & 1st Wednesday of the month, 5:30-7:00pm

Join FPC Westfield for Lunch at Westfield Community Kitchen!

All in the Westfield community is enthusiastically encouraged to come for meals, anytime, at the Westfield Community Kitchen, and we especially encourage you to join Pastor Shannon and the Mission committee for lunch, beginning at 11:30am, on the 2nd Monday of every month. This is a great time to engage with our broader community by fellowshiping together over a shared meal.

For the month of February, we will be collecting some much-needed items for the Community Kitchen. The "Wish List" is as follows: small dessert plates, napkins, paper towels, salad dressings, decaf coffee, dry soup mixes, Jello, puddings, powdered creamer, canned carrots, biscuit mix, cake mixes, aluminum foil (wide), Sweet n' Low, bleach, bowls - 8 oz., 12 oz. and 16 oz. The Community Kitchen greatly appreciates our help.

Pennies for Hunger

Our church will again receive the "Pennies for Hunger" offering the last Sunday of every month. Place a jar or basket on your kitchen or dining room table. Each member of the family may put in two cents for each meal. Then bring all the pennies the last Sunday of the month. If everyone does this, you will be amazed at how much we can raise to help ensure no one in our community goes hungry. This would amount to about \$1.80 per person each month. Multiply that by 50 and we could raise at least \$90 during that time, or more than \$1,000 per year.

Cash for Causes

the simple solution to community fundraising



As a church we continue to participating in TOPS Markets "Cash for Causes" program. We have purchased TOPS "Cash for Causes" gift cards that are available to church members and friends. You pay the cash value of the card and the church earns 5% on each card sold. We all buy groceries! There is no additional cost to you; you simply use the gift card. Cards are available in \$50 and \$100 denominations. Please call (326-2643) or stop in the church office to purchase a gift card.

Please consider attending 2020 Vision: Climate Leap Forward, a forum to meet the climate crisis.



Saturday, February 29, 9am-3pm at Westminster Presbyterian Church in Buffalo. Cost: \$10, Students: \$5, lunch provided

The Bible calls communities and nations to preserve the earth. A leading voice for climate responsibility, the Rev. Dr. Jim Antal, will share models for activism in the church across the nation and explore with us the climate challenges to Western New York. We will discern how God calls us to collective action and send participants back to their congregations to encourage commitment and action to climate justice.

Limited spots are available; advance registration at wpcbuffalo.org/climate

Agenda:

Keynote and Questions with Rev. Dr. Jim Antal
Breakout Group Discussions
Group Reports to Plenary
Rev. Dr. Antal's Response and Charge
Concluding Worship

Clergy Session and Breakout Groups & Facilitators include:

"Creation Justice for Congregations" – Roger Cook and Rev. Katelyn Nutter Dowling
"Eco-Justice on West and East Sides of Buffalo" – Joshua Wallace
"Youth Strike" – Rev. Micah Nutter Dowling
"Our Sacred Waters" – Lynda Schneekloth
"Renewable Energy (Wind/Solar)" – Bob Ciesielski
"WNY as a Region for Climate Refugees" – Brendan Mehaffy & Anna Mongo
"Climate Disaster Relief Responsibility" – Rev. Amos Acree
"Is Climate Change Real: What Scientists Tell Us" – Dave Kowalski, PhD



The Rev. Dr. Jim Antal, author of the acclaimed book, Climate Church, Climate World, is immediate past President of the Massachusetts Conference of The United Church of Christ and a long-time activist, speaker, and author.

February Faith at Home Focus: Interfaith Dialogue

© Traci Smith, Author www.traci-smith.com.

In a world where people come from many different countries and have many different traditions, it's very important to be able to converse with others whose faith traditions may be different from yours.

Here are some ideas for teaching interfaith dialogue at home:

Get reading! Ask your local children's librarian to help you find books about world religions, particularly those that are most practiced in your neighborhood.

Look for opportunities to attend an interfaith worship service in your community. The chance to learn about another culture and religion in a service like this is invaluable.

When celebrating Christian holidays, take care to remind your family that not everyone celebrates. Though the culture wars angle gets overplayed in the media, training yourself and family to say "Happy Holidays" is a nice way to encourage tolerance.

Learn the names of different houses of worship and use them appropriately

Notice the broad range of holidays on the calendar. Learn their names and when they occur throughout the year.

Faith at Home Practice Spotlight: The Golden Rule

Many religions have some version of the Golden Rule (do unto others as you would have them do unto you). Research the Golden Rule in other faith traditions and talk about how it unifies human beings across cultures and religions.

Memory Verse

"In everything do to others as you would have them do to you; for this is the law and the prophets."
Matthew 7:12

Interfaith Dialogue Resources

[God's Paintbrush by Sandy Eisenberg Sasso](#)

[One World, Many Religions, Mary Pope Osborne](#)

[Golden Rule Poster](#)

Faith Formation News

Book Group (Jan 8th -- Feb 19th)

Each Wednesday at noon, 5-6 folks have been joining together to discuss the book *Searching for Sunday: Loving, Leaving, and Finding the Church* by Rachel Held Evans. Conversations and fellowship have been very meaningful, and we will continue meeting on February 5 (Part V), February 12 (Part VI), and February 19 (Part VII). Anyone is welcome to join in as they are able.

Looking Ahead

There will be a contemplative bible study on Wednesday nights and Sunday mornings (same offering but Wednesday night will be facilitated by Pastor Shannon and Sunday morning by Mark Smith) throughout Lent. During the Easter season, we will switch back to a book group (date and time TBA). Our book will be *The Very Good Gospel: How Everything Wrong Can Be Made Right* by Lisa Sharon Harper.

Youth Skate Saturday

Join Pastor Shannon and background checked adult volunteers for an afternoon of ice skating at SUNY Fredonia's Steele Hall Ice Rink. We will meet at the church at 1:30pm on Saturday, February 22nd and carpool to the rink for open skate time. We'll grab snacks at Arctic Bites before heading back to the church by 5pm. Bring \$4 cash to rent skates and money for a snack at Arctic Bites. Bring your friends!

Youth must come to the church with a parent to make sure a completed 2020 church youth permission form is on file and to sign the SUNY ice rink release form.

Session Highlights

Following the call to order by Moderator Rev. Dr. Shannon Smythe, devotions, and prayer, the Session took up the work of the church on Tuesday, January 21, 2020.

Actions taken at the meeting are summarized as follows:

1. Pastor Shannon recommended the following elders to chair the following committees for 2020: Nominating Committee: Gloria Colgrove and Laura Shearer; Worship & Music: Jane Nelson McMaster; Finance and Stewardship: Marilynne Northrop; Mission & Justice: Marjory Fritz; Personnel: Terri MacCubben; Property: Joe Seminatore; Faith Formation: Pat Sciarrino; Communion, Outreach and Growth: unfilled. Pastor Shannon nominated Laura Shearer as the Clerk of Session and Marie Edwards as the Treasurer (pro tem).
2. We discussed the large difference between the number of “active members” that we reported this month to the denomination for their yearly statistical report (207) in comparison with a more realistic picture of “active members,” which is more like 64-86, depending on how we measure “active membership.” The problematic nature of this was noted but no action was taken at this time.
3. We had a good discussion about a draft of our possible new Safe Church Policy. The policy draft looks good, but is complex, as it has to be. After a few changes in wording for further clarity, we hope to do one final review in February and then adopt it as our policy going forward.
4. We discussed the need for an increase in fundraising efforts this year. There are a few ideas out there and some workers, but no one person or team committed yet to taking the lead, which is what we need.

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5. Our church consultant, Gregg Carlson, has asked for the geographic area we want covered in the Missioninsite study his consulting company will provide to the church. Session decided on the areas of Westfield, Mayville, Chautauqua, Portland, and Brocton.
 6. At the February meeting we will be discussing the possibility of changing our worship hour to a slightly earlier time, which would be effective year-round.

Pastor Shannon's Study Leave

Pastor Shannon will be out on Study Leave from February 27 through March 4. The Rev. Bruce Archibald will be preaching and presiding over communion on March 1.

A Note from Session

On January 23, an article appeared in the Jamestown Post Journal and Dunkirk Observer entitled "[Local Church Named in Child's Victim Act Complaint](#)." According to the article, FPC Westfield and the PCUSA are named as defendants in the lawsuit. It is important to state, at the outset, that Rev. McNulty was the installed pastor during the time frame mentioned in the suit. Rev. Durbin was not a PC(USA) ordained pastor, but was a volunteer junior high fellowship leader at the church. We have not yet seen the lawsuit, and so cannot comment on it, but the allegations, as we understand them from the news article, are truly devastating. The church takes very seriously the gravity of the alleged victim's pain. The church's deep concern is for this Westfield man. Let us keep him in our prayers.



The Chautauqua Area Habitat for Humanity is an ecumenical Christian Ministry that welcomes to its work all people dedicated to the cause of eliminating poverty through housing. They are currently working at 127 Union Street, Westfield. There is a job for everyone; no special skills required. The work sessions are Saturdays from 8:30 a.m. to 12:30 p.m. If you would like to provide refreshments for the Habitat Volunteers please contact Mike Ricketts at 338-8864. Refreshments are needed for Saturday mornings at 10:00 a.m.

Celebrations of Life

Our deepest sympathy as a congregation is extended to the family and friends upon the death of their loved one:

Judy Womeldorf ~ Thursday, January 23, 2020

Amy Gregory ~ Friday, January 3, 2020

Our thoughts and prayers continue to be with all who have lost loved ones recently.

Prayer Concerns

A special prayer that you'll be blessed with tender care and needed rest, warm thoughts of friends that mean so much and most of all, God's healing touch.

Members of Our Congregation

Dorothy Near, Sharon Bane, Mark Robbins, Barb Lynn, Pat Hayes, Pat Sciarrino and

Ople Gollnitz, Elaine Hall and Elaine Parker

Family and Friends of our Congregation

Darrell Colgrove, Abigail Jopek, Jon Belcher, June Beers, Darren Best & the Best Family.

Our Servicemen

Chief Petty Officer, James "JD" Watkins (*Grandson of Betty Reid*)

Lt. Victor Gutierrez, U.S. Army Rangers (*Grandson of Jack Beckman*)

February Birthdays

We all in extending Greetings and Best Wishes for a Happy Birthday. May this day be Richly Blessed with Peace and Joy.

1st Mae Machemer

2nd Bill Bills, Ralph Bohall, Tim Truitt

4th Larry McGuinn, Brenda Steele

5th Dean Mead

9th Jennifer Banschback

14th Dean Gollnitz

15th Ryan Norton, Cole Tenamore, Montana Truitt

18th Mindi Guest, Al Hall

19th Carolyn Bills

23rd Barry Wright

24th Peter Bills, Mary Beth Boyle, Ople Gollnitz, Erica Sanderson

25th Gini Gollnitz

28th Jeremy Riedesel

February Anniversaries

A special Anniversary Prayer... That God's eternal love will fill your heart this day with joy and blessings from above.

7th Cindy & Doug Norton

18th Bonnie & John Wysard

23rd Trudy & Wade Gollnitz