



THE RED DOOR

FIRST PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH OF BIG FLATS, NY

Founded 1827 ----- "Pride In Our Past – Faith In Our Future"

[/www.bigflatsfirstpres.org/](http://www.bigflatsfirstpres.org/)

Dear Friends,

In the season of Epiphany when we celebrated The Magi's journey to see the Christ child we were reminded of our own journeys to healing and to wholeness, whether individually or collectively. As was true with the Wise Men, we too at times need to reassess and alter our routes. Our destination will not change, but the paths most assuredly will.

To embark upon our journey, we must stay alert and present to where we are being guided. We must travel with open hearts and open eyes and listening ears.

Today that is where we as a church find ourselves. Fortunately, we have been given markers, what I like to think of as cairns, those human-made piles of stones you can find along trails pointing you in the right direction.

First, it is important that we understand that when a pastor leaves, the congregation can lose its balance and may lose sight of its focus. If this is the case, we must steer ourselves back on course understanding that it takes time for the pangs of grief to subside. In December we hosted a Blue Christmas service for those dealing with any type of loss or grief who find the season less than merry. Moving on after grief and loss is difficult but it is possible with God's help.

Second, before moving into the future we must look to the past. It is a time to celebrate the congregation's joys and successes, but also to deal with painful stories that might keep it from functioning at its best. In December we began this process as you shared stories of when and why you chose to attend or to join this church.

Third, we begin the task of discovering a new identity. Remember that we worship a God who, in Christ, is continually "doing a new thing." Paul in his letter to the Corinthians, "So if anyone is in Christ, there is a new creation: everything old has passed away; see everything has become new!" (2Cor. 5:17). Who are we? Where are we being called to partner with God in the transformation of our world? What is our mission?

Fourth, we can take advantage of opportunities to engage with the Denomination. It may just prove to be a good time to better understand and embrace our denominational identity. This Fall Karen and Galer Perreault and I attended a regional Presbytery meeting hosted by North Presbyterian Church in Elmira. I am hopeful that more members will attend and participate in these gatherings.

A key component in this journey forward is commitment. I am not just referring to the ever essential commitment of money, time and talents, but something deeper. If you have not already, I encourage you to consider taking an important step and to become a committed Member of this church, this body of Christ.

As you move through this process of transition you will in time elect a Pastor Nominating Committee, a PNC, made up of thoughtful, trusted and committed church leaders. At that point you should have a better understanding of where you are going, and the type of minister who can best walk into the future with you, keeping in mind that any decision must be financially sustainable.

There is certainly work to be done and it will not be easy, but with these few markers illuminated by the divine light of the Holy Spirit we will find our way.

Peace,

Pastor Beth



FLORA BERKE (1927 - 2016)

Flora Berke passed away on December 3, 2016, at the age of eighty-nine (born August 28, 1927, in Hammondsport, NY). She was a warm and vibrant person and was very active in the life of our congregation (she was our Church Secretary for many years). In 2011, Flora moved to Mansfield, Texas, to be closer to her family. She was treasured and much-loved friend an important part of our faith family. Flora will be missed by all of us.

MELVIN D. SOUTAR (1929 - 2017)

Melvin (Mel) Soutar passed away on January 10, 2017, at the age of eighty-seven (born October 27, 1929, in Lafayette, NY). A veteran of service in the United States Army, Mel was later employed by Shepard Niles, Inc., of Montour Falls. He was active in our church and in a number of local civic groups. Mel was a true family man, raising seven children and helping to raise numerous grandchildren. Mel was a good man, and we will miss him.

JOYS AND CONCERNS

Many people worked very hard to make Advent and Christmas a truly joyous time for our community of faith. We are very thankful to have such dedicated and caring friends in our congregation. Highlights of the last two months include:

- Thanks go to all who worked to make our December 4 Silent Auction and luncheon so successful.
- Our quilt raffle was a huge success, raising nearly **\$1000**. Thanks go to our wonderfully talented quilters and to all those who sold tickets and supported our fundraiser!
- Thanks to the **Prices and Deans**, who supplied our sanctuary Christmas tree and to all who helped decorate.
- Thanks, also, to **the Slowik family**, for leading a drive to place a beautifully decorated tree in our Church House social area.
- On Sunday, December 18, our church hosted a "Blue Christmas" service of hope and healing for those who find the holiday season a time of sadness and emotional pain. Thank you, **Pastor Beth and Music Director Nancy Compton**, for making this such a very special and moving time!
- On Christmas Eve, many volunteers from our congregation rang the bell at Miniers to raise funds for the Community Food Pantry. Thanks to all!
- And thank you to **Pastor Beth, Nancy Compton, Mary Ellen Rudnick**, our vocal and bell choirs, and all who made the Christmas Eve Service so joyous and so meaningful. Special thanks to **Joyce Dean** for the stunning display of poinsettias!
- We installed our new Session elders on January 15. Congratulations to: **Sarah Cory, Pat Fitzgerald, Bill Powell, and Luke Gromer**. Thank you for being willing to serve our church in this way. A special thank you to those elders who are leaving Session: **Tom Halm, Kathy Johnston, Ann Slowik, and Gigi Price**. We appreciate your gifts of time and talent.

Circle of Love



Many in our faith community need our help and support. The sympathy of our entire congregation is extended to the families and friends of **Flora Berke and Mel Soutar**. Among our other concerns this month, we ask for prayers for: **Phil Hubbard, Galer Perreault, Bob and Rose Byland, Brandon Davis (nephew of Sheila French and Lisa McGill), Wendy Fought (niece of Sheila French and Lisa McGill), John Elder (brother-in-law of Bill Powell), Denise Wiskowski (sister of Debbie French), Peter Middaugh, Alan Giglio (Pat Fitzgerald's nephew), Heinz Weissenbuehler, Reva Soutar, Nick Rudnick, Emma Gardner, Irene Hooey, Ginnie Schweizer, Dudley & Marie Shea, Marge Larocque (Gigi Price's mother)**, and others who are dealing with ill health, surgery, loss, or life changes. Please remember our shut-ins, and please continue to pray for our servicemen and women and their families and for peace in our troubled world.

Do you have a special joy or concern that you would like to share with our faith community? See Pastor Beth or Bill Howells, and we will include your news in our Joys/Concerns column.

BLANKET SUNDAY SET FOR FEBRUARY 12

For some fifty years, the Church World Service Blanket Program has helped in making life more bearable for those who have been affected by a disaster, such as flooding or fire. We will be taking a special collection on **Sunday, February 12**. Every \$10.00 that we give can provide a good wool or cotton blend blanket (quantity purchase keeps costs down). Please support our church's participation by donating to this very worthy cause during morning worship on February 12.



POTLUCK DINNER TO BEGIN OUR OBSERVANCE OF LENT – MARCH 1

On Ash Wednesday, **March 1, at 6:00 PM**, our church will mark the beginning of the season of Lent in a special way. We will have an informal gathering and potluck supper. Please bring a dish to pass -- place settings will be provided. There will be time for those attending to share, telling why Lent has special meaning in their lives. Don't have time to prepare a dish? Decide to come at the last minute? No problem! All are welcome!

IT'S PER CAPITA TIME!

Each year the church must pay a fee to our Presbytery for each member. This year that individual member fee is **\$50.00**. Our total per capita amount for 2017 is **\$6750**. These monies are used to fund outreach programs, disaster relief, the resource center for the churches, and Camp Whitman programs. In your offering envelopes box, you will find a "Per Capita" envelope. It would be great if we could all pay our individual per capita assessment and, if possible, a little more. Just ten cents a day would really help to meet our budgeted goal. If anyone would like to start a "matching" drive/challenge, please let the Finance Committee or Session know of your willingness. Thanks for your help in balancing our budget. By the way, contributions (money, stock, etc.) can be made directly to our church's Reserve Fund. If we can "grow" this fund it can generate enough interest each year to make a major impact on our budget. See **Mark Slowik** for more information.



ADVENT MISSION DRIVES VERY SUCCESSFUL



Our congregation responded with great generosity to our 2016 Advent mission drives. Our "**Shower for Mary**" is an important effort which helps victims of domestic abuse at the **Elmira Salvation Army's Safehouse**, and our "**Gifts for Joseph**" program helps men (and families) served by the **Catholic Charities Samaritan Center**. Both of these drives were extremely successful, overflowing a station wagon with donated items on delivery day! We also had a number of monetary donations.

Thank you to all who participated in this vital outreach. **Special thanks to our Mission Committee for a generous cash donation to both these programs.**



FROM THE CHOIR LOFT

The choir continues to need a few more members. Three or four of our members will be away for part or all of the winter. Please think about contributing some time on **Sunday mornings (9:30-10:15)** for rehearsal and join us. No night rehearsals, no fuss, no muss, just come and be a part of our little group. We thank you for your consideration and we'll save you a seat.



PANCAKE BREAKFASTS CONTINUE -- NEXT SLATED FOR FEBRUARY 18



Well into our sixth season, our fund-raising Pancake Breakfasts have proven to be a big hit! Enthusiastic patrons have flocked to our Church House for gourmet breakfasts of pancakes, eggs, sausage, fruit cup, and beverages. We thank all who have helped to make these meals so successful.

Our next breakfast is slated for **Saturday, February 18, from 8:00 - 10:00 AM.** Subsequent breakfast dates are **March 18, and April 9.** The cost for each meal has been set at \$5.00. There is no charge for those under six years old.

This series of meals is an ambitious project for our little church, and it takes a lot of help to ensure success. Sign-up sheets will be posted for each meal. Please do your part by pitching in to help and also with your patronage. Questions?? Talk to **Sarah Cory.**

CONGREGATION WRITES A POEM

Editor's note: During our worship service on Sunday, January 1, we read Psalm 148, a beautiful and joyous work of praise. Following this, Pastor Beth led us to brainstorm some ideas, feelings, sounds, etc. of praise. Our collective contributions are woven into the following poem. (Please feel free to alter/add ideas and phrases).

Praise!

Praise is love,
And it is light.
It is gold and aqua, sunny yellow and white.

It is encouragement and reward,
Triumphant exaltation and enthusiasm,
Cymbal and song,
As trumpets herald.

Praise is expansive,
Giving feeling to voice,
Giving praise to the Lord.
O Heavenly Host.

Rejoice!
Smile!



PHOTO GALLERY



ANNUAL REPORT: Our “*Annual Report for 2016*” was distributed during our Congregational Meeting on January 29. This booklet gives an overview of the past year at our church, including reports from committees, a financial report, a copy of our budget for 2017, and a listing of members and friends of our congregation. Additional copies are available on the tables in the back of our sanctuary. Our ushers will be happy to assist you.

FEBRUARY



WEEKLY EVENTS

SUNDAY	9:30 AM	Choir Rehearsal
	10:30 AM	Morning Worship
TUESDAY	12:00 – 2:00	Food Pantry is open
	6:30	Boy Scout Troop #87

SPECIAL EVENTS

February 5	Holy Communion
February 5	“Souper Bowl” Sunday
February 12	Blanket Sunday – collection to help disaster victims
February 18 (Sat.)	Pancake Breakfast – 8:00 - 10:00 AM
February 26	“Pennies from Heaven” collection during morning worship
February 26	Information due for the March RED DOOR
March 1 (Wed.)	Ash Wednesday – Potluck Dinner – 6:00 PM

COMMITTEE MEETINGS

Worship Committee	Meets following church service on February 12
Property Committee	Wednesday, February 15 – 6:00 PM
Session	Wednesday, February 15 – 7:00 PM

“SOUPER” BOWL SUNDAY – FEBRUARY 5



Go Falcons! Go Patriots! It doesn't matter which team you are supporting. Here's a way that everyone can be a champion! Each year our church participates in **“Souper” Bowl of Caring Sunday**. Wear your favorite team apparel and bring cans of soup (other canned goods and cash are also gratefully accepted) for the benefit of those who are served by our Food Pantry. We will be passing around the soup kettle on **Sunday, February 5**, and we hope that you will join us in helping those in need.

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