



Presbyterian Church Niagara Falls, NY Newsletter December 2024

Advent is here! It is the time of the year that we, as Christians, make time in our busy lives to prepare our hearts to celebrate the birth of our Lord and Savior on Christmas Day. Let us use these days of Advent to pray, reflect and hope. Let us sing the hymns of Advent remembering the expectation and joy the hymns bring to us.

In this season of Advent, let us embrace the growing dark as a place where new life and new worlds are born. Let us be stretched in our waiting. Let us be steady in our hoping. Let us remain steady and alert to receive Christ's birth with joy and expectation.

As we prepare our hearts for the birth of our Lord, Jesus, let us use this Advent time to ponder how we can serve our Lord going forward. May the lights and carols we all will enjoy bring us to a reverent and joyous recognition that our Savior was born on Christmas Day!

Wishing everyone the gift of PEACE to soothe your souls and soothe your way.

Wishing everyone the gift of JOY to brighten up your life each day.

Wishing everyone the gift of FAITH to see His promise shining clear.

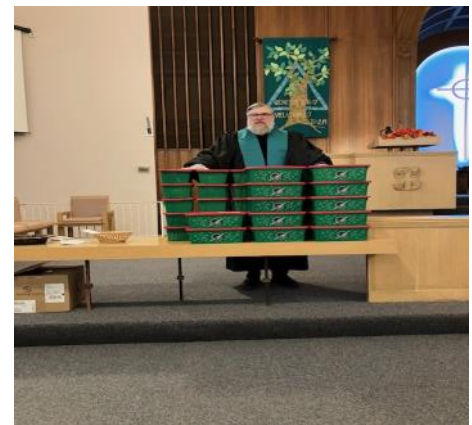
Wishing everyone His LOVE to guard you through the coming year.

MERRY CHRISTMAS EVERYONE!

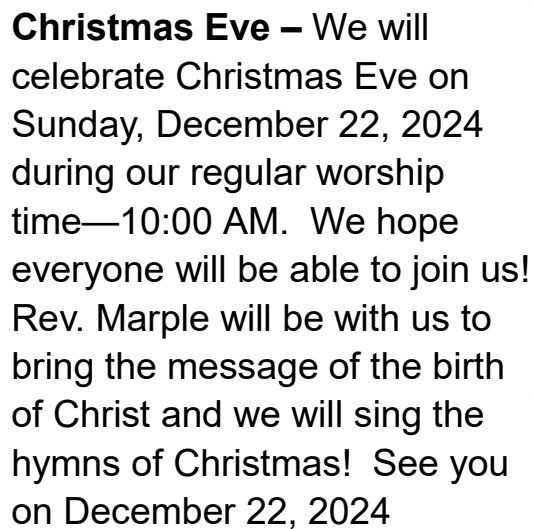
Carol Dashineau, Clerk of Session

Annual Congregational Meeting –The annual Meeting to elect Elders and Deacons will be December 1, 2024 at 9:45 AM. Please come early on December 1 so you can participate in the Annual Meeting.

On Sunday, November 3, Rev. Justin Marple blessed 43 Christmas Samaritan Shoeboxes. Thank you First Pres members for your support of this ministry. Thank you Lis Slenk for your commitment to the Christmas Samaritan Shoebox ministry.



Rev. Justin Marple blessing the 43 Samaritan Shoeboxes on Sunday, November 3.



Christmas Eve – We will celebrate Christmas Eve on Sunday, December 22, 2024 during our regular worship time—10:00 AM. We hope everyone will be able to join us! Rev. Marple will be with us to bring the message of the birth of Christ and we will sing the hymns of Christmas! See you on December 22, 2024

NAP December Dinner

The December NAP Dinner will be hosted by Lewiston Presbyterian Church, 303 Cayuga St, Lewiston, NY, Wednesday, December 4, 5:00 PM. The NAP dinners are a nice way to get to know your neighbors and enjoy fellowship and a meal. All are Welcome

The Three Wise Women

So do you know what would have happened if it had been three Wise Woman instead of Three Wise Men?

They would have asked directions. Arrived on time. Helped deliver the baby. Cleaned the stable. Made a casserole. Brought practical gifts. And there would be Peace on Earth.



Preaching Schedule

For the months of December, January and February, Rev. Justin Marple will be in the pulpit.

We hope to see everyone on Sunday morning. Remember it is an important concept in Christianity that Christians worship together!

Angel Tree Tradition.

The Session has decided to help our friend Joanne Lorenzo and her Light-house Women and Children's Center by donating Tops market gift cards. (Suggested amounts are \$10.00 or \$25.00.) The cards will be given to local families at the Center's Christmas Celebration. Please purchase your cards at any Tops store and Place them in the Angel box in the Sanctuary by December 15. Thank you for being an Angel.



Bell Tower restoration - The restoration project is still ongoing and will not be completed in 2024 as hoped. The Session decided to wait until spring to celebrate our 200th Anniversary and the completion of the restoration with a dinner. We will ring the bell as soon as it is installed and made safe to ring!

The Legend of the Christmas Prayer

Once upon a Christmas time, long ago, a man who had a big heart, but little money dreamt he could give his friends endless riches. When he awoke, the dream kept running through his mind, over and over. Finally, he asked himself, "If I could give my friends anything, what would I give?" He smiled as he began to think of all the wondrous things he could buy for them, but then he thought; "I am a happy man, yet I have none of those things." He began to think that perhaps real wealth could not be measured in riches. Perhaps there were gifts of great value than the things money could buy. In the still of the night, he pondered these things and thought of Christmas and what it meant to him. Taking out his quill, he began to write.

ON THE FIRST DAY OF CHRISTMAS, I pray for you joy in abundance and laughter, for laughter cures our ills and joy makes our spirits soar.

ON THE SECOND DAY OF CHRISTMAS , I pray for you a sigh when you need one, for a sigh clears the heart as a cough clears the throat, and with a sigh comes acceptance of what we cannot change.

ON THE THIRD DAY OF CHRISTMAS, I pray for you tears when you need them for tears clear the eyes to see the stars and cleanse the soul to let healing begin.

ON THE FOURTH DAY OF CHRISTMAS, I pray for you serenity for fights and wars start in individual's breast and that is where they must end.

ON THE FIFTH DAY OF CHRISTMAS, I pray for you wisdom, for our priceless gift is the gift of choice and we should use it well every day, in word and deed

ON THE SIXTH DAY OF CHRISTMAS, I pray for you patience, for most troubles pass if we wait them out, and success comes with patience.

ON THE SEVENTH DAY OF CHRISTMAS, I pray for you courage, for there may be many pitfalls and dangers ahead and problems can only be solved when faced.

ON THE EIGHT DAY OF CHRISTMAS , I pray for you compassion, for we cannot help others until we understand and we cannot understand them until we walk in their shoes.

ON THE NINTH DAY OF CHRISTMAS, I pray for you a willingness to work, for work turns dreams into reality, whether the dreams are ours or belong to those we can help.

ON THE TENTH DAY OF CHRISTMAS, I pray for you unwavering faith, for faith shapes our morals and our destiny and draws us closer to God.

ON THE ELEVENTH DAY OF CHRISTMAS, I pray for you a mind full of hope for hope determines our attitudes, sets our goals and creates our ideals.

ON THE TWELFTH DAY OF CHRISTMAS, I pray for you a year so full of love that every day you must give some away to those whose paths you cross.

And with each prayer, the man realized he was not giving a gift at all, but hoping that his friends would find the gifts they already had within themselves. Each time he wrote a prayer, a marvelous thing happened. It seemed to him that the prayer, although offered for his friends, remained in his heart and produced in him the very thing he prayed for them. The man copied his scroll and sent the Christmas prayer to special friends, (like you) and that is when the legend of the Christmas Prayer was lost in the mists of time. The man was never heard of again but, over the years, the Christmas Prayer began to appear all over the world. People in obscure villages and big cities at Christmas time would receive a copy of the Prayer from a friend, and so the wonder multiplied, until the story finally reached you. May you too, feel the warmth and enjoy the riches of the Christmas Prayer



Lewiston Choraleers Christmas Concert

Sunday, December 1st , St. Peter's Roman Catholic Church, 620 Center St, Lewiston, 2:00 PM, and Saturday, December 7th, Messiah Lutheran Church, 915 Oneida St., Lewiston, 2:00 PM. This is a great way to start the holiday season.





Symbols and Traditions of the Christmas Holidays.



Symbol of the Wreath—The Christmas wreath has decorated many a door with fresh greenery. Wreaths are often made of evergreens, including holly, mistletoe, pine and fir. Because they are green and bear fruit in the winter when other plants appear lifeless and bare, evergreens signify God's immortality and everlasting life. The wreath's circular shape reminds us of the circles of life, family and love.

Symbol of the Cardinal—Christened the Christmas bird for its spectacular red color, the cardinal has become a symbol of the beauty and warmth of the holiday season. A glimpse of this brilliant bird brings cheer, hope and inspiration on a gray wintry day. As nature's reminder for us to focus on our faith, the cardinal's scarlet plumage represents the blood of Christ shed for the redemption of mankind.

Legend of the Icicle—When Christ the Savior was born that first Christmas Eve, the heavenly angels cried in joyful adoration. Their tears of happiness gently fell to earth that crisp winter night, forming icicles on the edges of the stable and nearby evergreens. These tiny pendants of ice twinkled in the radiant starlight. To this day, icicle decorations are often used on Christmas trees as reminders of the joy celebrated over the birth of Christ the King.

Symbol of the Christmas Tree—Because it stays green all through the year, the evergreen tree is symbolic of the eternal life offered to Christians through faith in Christ. The treetop points heavenward. A star signifies the special star that guided the wise men to Bethlehem. Lights represent Christ, the light of the world. Gifts beneath the tree are representative of God's gift of his only begotten Son, who brings hope, love, joy and peace.

Legend of the Poinsettia—Mexican legend tells of a boy who had no gift to put by the figure of baby Jesus in church on Christmas Eve. On his way to church, he heard an angel tell him to pick some dried weeds for his gift. As he laid them beside the others, the weeds turned into beautiful flowers. Dr. Joel Poinsett, the first U.S. ambassador to Mexico, brought the plant to the United States where it was named poinsettia.

The tradition of the Candy Cane—The candy cane begins with a stick of white candy. The white symbolizes the purity of the Christmas season. Red stripes are the blood shed by Christ on the cross so that we may have eternal life. The candy is formed into a "J" to represent the precious name of Jesus. It can also represent the staff of the Good Shepherd. Its hard consistency represents the Solid Rock, the foundation of the church, and the firmness of the promises of God.

THE MOST LOVED GIFTS CAN'T BE BOUGHT

During this season of gift giving, let us consider a few gifts of more lasting value, the ones you can't put a price tag on or even wrap.

THE GIFT OF APPRECIATION: We all enjoy being appreciated. It is amazing to see what a word of appreciation can do for someone's attitude. Who might need to hear these words from you. "I am glad you're here"?

THE GIFT OF CARING : Being cared about is something so desperately needed in our depersonalized world that people will crawl across a thousand miles of desert to get it. Who in your life needs, perhaps even desperately needs to know, how much you really do care about them? Telling them how much you care may be the best gift they receive this year.

THE GIFT OF BELONGING: One of the greatest human needs is to have a sense of belonging. In an emotional sense, it is like air is to the body. We will go to great lengths to feel that we belong to something or someone. Without it, the soul begins to wither. Who do you need to include in your gift of belonging this year?

THE GIFT OF POLITENESS: It is amazing how rude we can be. We want to believe it comes from a false sense of urgency and the perceived need to rush around getting everything done. From letting someone go in front of you in traffic to using magic words "please and thank you" small things can go a long way.

THE GIFT OF RECONCILIATION: People eventually forgive and come back together because we need friends and family more than we need pride. Is there someone with whom you need to reconcile? Perhaps something in a relationship that needs to be cleared up? Take the initiative. Make that phone call. Say the words. What a nice way to go into the new year!

THE GIFT OF WISDOM: It's been said that wisdom is the application of knowledge. Who needs the gift of your wisdom this season? Is there a specific skill you have that could be shared with someone who really needs it? What knowledge do you have that needs to be applied to your own life?

THE GIFT OF REST: We live in such a frenetic and stressful world and know very few people who feel rested with any regularity and yet, rest restores our energy, concentration and motivation. This gift is two gifts in one; give yourself the gift of rest and set it up so that someone close to you can get some rest as well.

Not all gifts come from the store or can be wrapped with neat little bows. The really nice thing is that these gifts can be most cherished by both the giver and the receiver. May the blessing of Christmas fill your house, your heart and your life all the year through!

THIRD CENTURY CAMPAIGN

Capital Fund Drive

Our Church, formed 200 years ago, is entering its third century of existence. Our church building on this site dates to 1849. It is showing its age! In 2022, we applied for and received a NY Environmental Protection Grant of \$426,464 which at the time was estimated to cover 75% of the restoration costs for the historic building, focusing on the bell tower. That was the percentage that the grant was authorized to cover. We get those funds through reimbursement as the restoration program proceeds. In 2023, we were also awarded architecture and construction grants totaling \$45,000 from the NY Landmark Conservancy's Sacred Sites program. We have received those funds.

We are entering the construction phase of our bell tower restoration project. The tower scaffolding is now up, and the 1848 bell has been removed for restoration. Asbestos and lead abatement are underway now. The tower restoration work will begin shortly. The estimate for the actual construction is now \$970,000. This is exclusive of administration costs, architect fees, and other fees such as asbestos monitoring and abatement. The construction work is now almost exclusively confined to the bell tower and the south turret, although our original estimate provided for the 2022 grant (\$636,000) covered more items such as resealing all windows and extensive repointing of the masonry beyond the bell tower. Since covid, costs have escalated, and probably the original value supplied for the EPF grant was underestimated as well.

Beyond what the grants provide (\$471,464), the costs will be borne by the church, through donations and through our capital funds. This amount will be approximately \$600,000. The church's capital funds that we can spend on this project now generate investment income and (usually) capital gains which help us cover our deficit budgets. It has been and still is important to our existence that we maintain this reserve as much as possible.

We have initiated a low-key capital fund drive to attract donations for those who would like to contribute. There will be no pledge cards or mail solicitations. Donors will be kept confidential though amounts pledged or donated will be published. If you feel that this is a cause our Lord would like you to support and you are willing, please let the Church Treasurer (Carolyn Goddard) know. Gift checks may be made out to the church with "restoration" indicated as the purpose. Thank you, and may God bless the work of First Presbyterian Church of Niagara Falls in its third century!

Please Pray for Those Who are Sick or Shut-in



Shut-Ins

Dolores Coleman Tony Pryor
Jane McNaughton Bob McNaughton

Prayer List

Bill Karches Jillian Horner
Mark Tarbell Collette Sorg
Brian Tarbell Rita Horner
Cathy Rieley-Goddard
Christine Malinowski

December Volunteer Schedule

Lay Readers

December 1 - John Goddard
December 8 - Carol Dashineau
December 15 - Lis Slenk
December 22 - John Goddard
December 29 - Carol Dashineau

Communion Servers

December 1 - Jeanette Lamorie and Dori Parry

Wise men still follow the Star



Sunday Worship on You Tube

Each week the Sunday morning worship service is video-recorded. The video is uploaded to First Pres Niagara Falls early in the week. Check it out. The link to You Tube is youtube.com/channel/UCV8PmvV_gWm7wjggyl-q03g.

December Birthdays

December 19 Jane MacNaughton
December 23 Sophia Bush
December 25 Shelby Marple
December 31 Charlene Bush



Happy Birthday

Budget Report for October 2024

	<u>Actual \$</u>	<u>Year to Date \$</u>	<u>Budget YTD \$</u>
GIVING	4,104	25,034	23,890
Investment Income, Other	10,215	37,359	31,670
TOTAL INCOME	14,319	62,393	55,560
EXPENSES	11,293	92,110	110,980
NET (Deficit)	3,026	(29,717)	(55,420)

We were positive \$3026 for October due largely to the third quarter Permanent Endowment income. Expenses included insurance (\$3570), audit (\$900), gas (\$405). Cleaning (\$380), fire alarm contract (\$288).

DECEMBER

2024

Sun

Mon

Tue

Wed

Thu

Fri

Sat

<p>1</p> <p><i>Congregational meeting</i></p> <p><i>1st Sunday of Advent</i></p> <p><i>Communion</i></p>	<p>2</p>	<p>3</p> <p><i>Giving Tuesday</i></p>	<p>4 <i>NAP Dinner</i></p> <p><i>Lewiston Presbyterian</i></p> <p><i>5:00 PM</i></p>	<p>5</p>	<p>6</p>	<p>7</p> <p><i>Pearl Harbor Remembrance Day</i></p>
<p>8</p> <p><i>2nd Sunday of Advent</i></p>	<p>9</p>	<p>10</p>	<p>11</p>	<p>12</p>	<p>13</p>	<p>14</p>
<p>15</p> <p><i>3rd Sunday of Advent</i></p>	<p>16</p>	<p>17</p>	<p>18</p>	<p>19</p>	<p>20</p>	<p>21</p>  <p><i>First Day of Winter</i></p>
<p>22 <i>4th Sunday of Advent</i></p> <p><i>Christmas Eve Service</i></p>	<p>23</p>	<p>24</p> <p><i>Christmas Eve</i></p> 	<p>25</p> <p><i>Christmas</i></p> 	<p>26 <i>First Day of Kwanzaa</i></p>	<p>27</p>	<p>28</p>
<p>29</p> <p><i>1st. Sunday of Christmas</i></p>	<p>30</p>	<p>31 <i>New Year Eve</i></p> 				

The Newsletter of First Presbyterian
Church of Niagara Falls, N.Y.

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Return Service Requested



We're on the Web:

www.firstpresnfny.org

You Tube <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Lsk4U35pI2I>

Face Book <https://www.facebook.com/First-Presbyterian-Church-Niagara-Falls-117888153453785/>



CHURCH OFFICE

Hours: Monday, Tuesday and Wednesday 9:00 AM
to 1:00 PM

Telephone: 716-285-3555

Sunday Worship 10:00 AM
Communion First Sunday of Month

News and letters may be submitted by mail to:
First Presbyterian Church, 311 First St., Niagara Falls,
NY 14303
ATTN: First Press



News may also be submitted via e-mail to the Church
Secretary at firstpresnfny@gmail.com or may be dropped through the mail
slot of the church office.

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DECEMBER

2024

