



Presbyterian Church Niagara Falls, NY February Newsletter 2025

From the Pastor's Study

Now that we're past the time when everyone has given up on their New Year's Resolutions, let me suggest something that is more workable than a plan to read the whole Bible in a year. I mean no disrespect to those who manage to pull off reading the whole Bible in a year using a Bible reading plan of one sort or another. However, the reason that keeping such a resolution quickly fails for so many people is the guilt of missing a day. For those who do successfully manage to follow one of those reading plans year in and year out, you too might find the insights I'm going to share helpful for a different approach.

Let's start with a couple examples from the New Testament. I would suggest reading the Gospel of Luke and then the Book of Acts. It was originally meant to be a two-volume work; the latter continues the former. Acts 1:1 says, "In the first book, O Theophilus, I have dealt with all that Jesus began to do and teach." By summarizing the Gospel of Luke in such a way, the implication is that the Book of Acts tells what Jesus continued to do and teach through the Apostles. The next suggestion, however, may be less obvious. I suggest reading the Gospel of John and then the Book of Revelation. These two also are meant to be a two-volume work where the themes at the beginning of John are wrapped up at the end of Revelation. A rather obvious example is that John begins, "In the beginning..." with the first creation and Revelation ends with the new heavens and earth. I've shared this and other examples on Sunday mornings because I'm currently preaching from some of the first chapters of John's Gospel.

Now let's turn to a few examples from the Old Testament. If you're not reading the whole Old Testament, at least try to read one of these books as a single volume: 1 and 2 Samuel, 1 and 2 Kings, 1 and 2 Chronicles, or Ezra-Nehemiah. The only reason these books were later divided into two was the length of scrolls. These should be the books of Samuel, Kings, Chronicles, and Ezra-Nehemiah. So read them each as one book instead of reading them as two separate books. The short prophetic books—often called the Minor Prophets—are also intended to be read as one book.

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In Hebrew Bibles, the scribes only put three spaces between each of these books instead of the customary four spaces because they are meant to be read as separate chapters of one book. It is the Book of the Twelve. These books are in the same order as your English Bibles (Hosea, Joel, Amos, Obadiah, Jonah, Micah, Nahum, Habakkuk, Zephaniah, Haggai, Zechariah, and Malachi). I suggest looking for connections between the end of one of these chapters and the beginning of the next.

If you're going to read the whole Old Testament, let me suggest that you read them in the order of the Hebrew Scriptures. The Books of Moses are in the same order as your English Bibles (Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, Deuteronomy). The Books of the Prophets are in two parts. The former prophets are Joshua, Judges, Samuel, and Kings. The latter prophets are Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, and the Book of the Twelve. The third part of the Hebrew Scriptures are the writings: Psalms, Job, Proverbs, Ruth, Song of Songs, Ecclesiastes, Lamentations, Esther, Daniel, Ezra-Nehemiah, and Chronicles. This was the order of the Scriptures that Jesus knew. He said, "that everything written about me in the Law of Moses and the Prophets and the Psalms must be fulfilled" (Luke 24:44). He's referring to the three parts of the Hebrew Scriptures. The writings are fun also because they are a chiasm in order so you can benefit from reading Psalms and then Chronicles, Job and then Ezra-Nehemiah, Proverbs and then Daniel, Ruth and then Esther, Song of Songs and then Lamentations, and finish off with Ecclesiastes (the climax of the writings). Also, pay special attention to the beginning and ending of books and also of the three parts. In other words, pay attention to the end of Deuteronomy and the beginning of Joshua, the end of Malachi and Psalm 1, and the way that Chronicles ends with the New Testament. Likewise, note the worthy woman of Proverbs 31 and how Boaz says that Ruth is a worthy woman (Ruth 3:11). Song of Songs gives another example of the worthy woman (as is Esther). Consider too that Esther is a female Daniel.

All of this is just to say that the order in which we read the Scriptures makes a difference because of the new connections we might see. Obviously I'm only scratching the surface with these observations but I hope that they might encourage you to spend some time in God's word this year. After all, it is better to spend time in God's word for the right reasons (like seeing Jesus Christ) than it is to spend time in God's word because you feel obligated to do so. For that reason, you might consider starting with whatever connections sparked your interest when you read this.

A Joyful Welcome to Our New Pastor and Family!

We are delighted to welcome Reverend Justin L. Marple and his wonderfully vibrant family to our church community! Justin and his wife Shelby share their loving home as licensed foster parents with their beautiful crew: Sahara, Josiah, Arwen, Elizabeth, Chloe, and Lillian. The family is bubbling with extra joy as they await Elizabeth Virginia Marple's final adoption, which is expected any day now.

Rev. Marple returns to us in Niagara Falls after serving as Pastor of the First Presbyterian Church of Chittenango, NY. His Western New York roots include seven years at Niagara Presbyterian Church, two years at MacAlpine Presbyterian Church in Buffalo, and service as a two-time General Assembly commissioner.

The Marples bring an absolutely delightful array of talents! In winter 2022, Justin produced while Shelby directed *Nuncrackers: The Nonsense Musical*, there are whispers of future productions (with session approval hint, hint: a certain optimistic red-headed orphan might make an appearance!). The whole family embraces performing arts, from professional productions to *The Nutcracker Ballet*, with Justin good-naturedly being voluntold for everything from running spotlights to Fort Niagara reenactments!

While pursuing a dual Master's in Education and Inclusion at Daemen University (graduating this spring!), the Marples maintain active careers with the City of Niagara Falls School District. Rev. Marple is also completing his Doctor of Ministry and is planning to finish his capstone project here at First Church.

From serving parishes in Kentucky to chaplaincy work and journeys from Puerto Rico to Maryland, his path has finally led him home to Niagara Falls. Please join us in giving the Marple family the warmest of welcomes as they begin this new chapter with our church family. We look forward to growing together in faith, fellowship, and service—and maybe catching a theatrical production or two along the way!





Marple Family's League of Their own

Groundhog's February Day

Poet: Catherine Pulsifer

February brings a special cheer,
The 2nd day we hold so dear.
Will the groundhog see his shade,
Or will spring's arrival be displayed?

Eyes are watching, hopes run high,
For winter's end or cloudy skies.
A bit of fun, a little tease,
Groundhog Day is sure to please!



Pictures of the Children's Christmas Pageant during the Christmas Eve Worship Service



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 Jane McNaughton
Bob McNaughton

Prayer List

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

February Volunteer Schedule

Lay Readers

February 2 - Carol Dashineau
February 9 - John Goddard
February 16 - Lis Slenk
February 23 - Carol Dashineau

Communion Servers

February 2 - Jeanette Lamorie and
Dori Parry



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-g03g.

February Birthdays

February 11 Jonathan Bush
February 26 Collette Sorg



Happy Birthday

Budget Report for December 2024

	<u>Actual \$</u>	<u>Year to Date \$</u>	<u>Budget YTD \$</u>
GIVING	2,195	29033	28,660
Investment Income, Other	24,705	62,441	38,000
TOTAL INCOME	26,900	91,474	66,660
EXPENSES	10,583	105,436	133,124
NET (Deficit)	16,317	(17,962)	(66,464)

We were positive for the month, though negative for 2024. Expenses included \$1431 for gas heat. Investment income was largely from the Permanent Endowment 4th quarter dividends, the Special Funds 6 month dividends, and earning from the Marshall Trusts.

February

2025

Sun

Mon

Tue

Wed

Thu

Fri

Sat

1

February is Black History Month



2



Ground Hog
day
Communion

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13

14

15

Valentine
Day

16

17



18

Session
7:00 PM

19

20

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22

23

24

25

26

27

28

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

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Return Service Requested

Happy
Valentine's
Day



We're on the Web:

www.firstpresnfny.org

You Tube <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=L5k4U35p12I>

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

Pastor: Rev. Justin Marple



President's Day, February 17, 2025.

Government Buildings, Post Office, banks
and most schools will be closed.

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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2025

