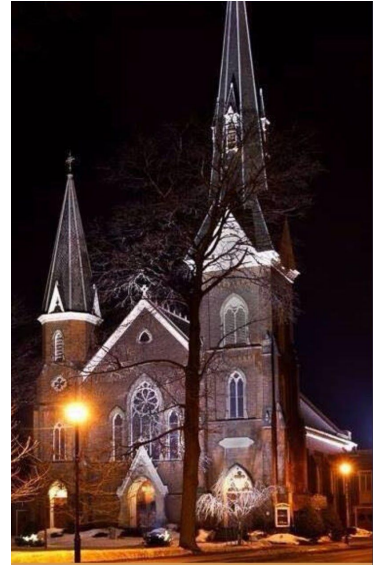


First Presbyterian Church of Westfield

49 S. Portage St

Westfield, NY 14787

(716) 326-2643



March 2020 NEWSLETTER

Lent is a season of reflection and action. During these 40 days we follow Jesus to Jerusalem, taking stock of where we willingly go and where we hesitate and turn back.

Church Office Hours

9:00 a.m. – 3:00 p.m.

Monday through Friday

Pastor

Rev. Dr. Shannon Smythe

pastorshannon79@gmail.com

Deacon of the Month

Nancy Smith



The Deacons participated in "BRINGING THE WILDERNESS IN," a contemplative liturgy to accompany creating wilderness vase displays to adorn the Sanctuary, Narthex and Parlor during Lent.



Save the Date: May 2nd, 2020

Tea with the Pastor, for members 85 years & up and their spouses. Hosted by the Deacons.

A Message from the Pastor

Dear Friends,

March brings us fully into the season of Lent. Lent begins in the wilderness. Many of us find ourselves in the midst of very personal wilderness experiences—the wilderness of discerning a major life change, the wilderness of starting anew under the shroud of grief, the wilderness of seeking connection in a deeply polarized culture, the wilderness of finding your way through a difficult season, the wilderness of listening for God in the swirl of questions and doubt, the wilderness of self-discovery and personal growth, the wilderness of getting lost over and over again. The good news of the wilderness is that nothing is static or still. Grains of sand harden into stone. The mid-day heat gets swallowed up by evening's chill. The creatures of the day fall quiet as the creatures of the night awake. Everything is always in transition, ever-changing. The wilderness is harsh and sometimes scarce, but new life persists in unexpected places. Even if you are walking in circles, you are getting somewhere. And so, this Lent, I invite you to ask, **“Where is God meeting me in the wilderness? What can the wilderness teach me? What do I need to learn before I can find my way out?”**

I find myself both comforted and awed by the fact that it is the very Spirit of God who guides Jesus into the wilderness. In the wilderness Jesus 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. The truth is that the wilderness is a liminal space--a place of ambiguity and transition--a place in between something that has ended and something else that is not yet ready to begin. Liminal spaces, wilderness spaces, are neither here nor there. They are places and times of unpredictability, disorientation, and limited vision. All we may feel we have at our fingertips in the wilderness is the memory of what we have always been and done. All that we may desire in a liminal time is to rush forward into a new sense of identity and new action to match it. **But the great secret of liminal spaces is that if we can slow down and embrace them, they can become the prime territory for holy transformations.** Fr. Richard Rohr counsels, “We have to allow ourselves to be drawn out of ‘business as usual’ and remain patiently on the ‘threshold’ where we are betwixt and between the familiar and the completely unknown. There alone is our old world left behind, while we are not yet sure of the new existence. That’s a good space where genuine newness can begin. Get there often and stay as long as you can by whatever means possible. It’s the realm where God can best get at us because our false certitudes are finally out of the way. This is the sacred space where the old world is able to fall apart, and a bigger world is revealed.” **The challenge, then, as we move through the wilderness of Lent, is to surrender, like Jesus did, to the wild leadings of the Spirit.**

Our church is in a liminal season. What has been is no longer. What will be, has not yet been revealed. As we find ourselves in this liminal season, I would encourage us to remain patient, to stay clear headed and honest, and to listen for the voice of Jesus to guide us in unpredictable ways.

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. The wilderness provides us with an opportunity to learn more of who God is and more of who we are. The wilderness offers us the chance to learn how to take the next step, how to find comfort with the unknown, and how to trust God's call to be shalom-bringers. In the wilderness, we are reminded

of what truly matters and what we can let go of. In the wilderness our faith is born, nurtured, challenges and resurrected. What more could we ask for.

We're in this together!

Christlove,

Pastor Shannon

Mission & Justice News



Monday, March 9, 11:30am-12:30pm, join Pastor Shannon & the Mission and Justice committee for lunch at Westfield Community Kitchen. This is a great way for our congregation to engage in relationships with community members outside the walls of our church.

"Sometimes the most radical act of Christian obedience is to share a meal with someone new." -Rachel Held Evans

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

One Great Hour of Sharing

For over 70 years, One Great Hour of Sharing has provided Presbyterians a way to share God's love with our neighbors in need around the world. This year's OGHS offering will be taken on Easter Sunday, April 12.

In a world of disaster, hunger, and oppression, millions of people lack access to sustainable food sources, clean water, sanitation, education, and opportunity.

The three programs supported by One Great Hour of Sharing - Presbyterian Disaster Assistance, The Presbyterian Hunger Program, and Self-Development of People -- all work in different ways to serve individuals and communities in need. From initial disaster response to ongoing community development, their work fits together to provide people with safety, sustenance, and hope.

Each gift to the One Great Hour of Sharing (OGHS) helps to improve the lives of people in these challenging situations. The Offering provides us a way to share God's love with our neighbors in need. In fact, OGHS is the single, largest way that Presbyterians come together every year to work for a better world.

Presbyterian Disaster Assistance (PDA)-- Works alongside communities as they recover and find hope after the devastation of natural or human - caused disasters, and support for refugees. Receives 32% of funds raised.

Presbyterian Hunger Program (PHP) -- Takes action to alleviate hunger, care for creation, and the systemic causes of poverty so all may be fed. Receives 36% of funds raised.

Self-Development of People (SDOP) -- Invests in communities responding to their experiences of oppression, poverty and injustice and educates Presbyterians about the impact of these issues. Receives 32% of funds raised.



Join the Moral March on Washington

Save the Date: Saturday, June 20, 2020

Join with **Rev. Dr. Shannon Smythe** and members of **First Presbyterian Church of Westfield** in attending the Poor People's Assembly and Moral March on Washington. Please contact pastorshannon79@gmail.com by April 15th if interested i so we can begin to plan transportation and overnight accommodations. We are planning to travel from Westfield on *Friday, June 19th* and return late at night on *Saturday, June 20th*.

2020 Task Force To Begin Meeting

The 2020 Task Force will begin meeting together in March, working with Pastor Shannon and our Consultant, Gregg Carlson. At our first meeting we will be reviewing the results of the Missioninsite study which covers the areas of Brocton, Portland, Westfield, Mayville and Chautauqua. Our meetings will be on the 3rd Tuesday of the month at 7pm. Please keep the Task Force in your prayers.

Faith Formation News



Join us for our Lenten Visio Divina Bible Study: For our Lenten wilderness journey, we will gather together for 5 weeks. There are two options: Wednesday nights (*March 4-April 1*), we will have a soup supper and study from 6-8pm (*come for dinner or study or both!*); and Sunday mornings we will have the study at 10am (*March 8-April 5*). Come for one or all five. Each session stands alone. This is a contemplative study with guided

meditation and prayer that blends visual meditation with group discussion and bible study. Visio Divina, latin for “divine seeing,” is a method of meditation, reflection, and prayer through a process of intentional seeing. Visio Divina extends the 6th century Benedictine practice of Lectio Divina by the use of visual imagery. Traditionally, Visio Divina was accompanied by Benedictine iconography and illuminations, however, different faith traditions have adapted the process over time, utilizing both secular and nonsecular images.

Four Ways to Engage with Lent at Home: Pick yours up at church

1. **Wilderness Devotional Booklet:** great for older youth and adults of all ages who like readings and prompts for weekly reflection
 2. **Words for Wilderness Devotional Cards:** great for middle and high school youth, college students, young adults, and adults of all ages who would like a short and sweet spiritual practice for every day of Lent.
 3. **“Pray with Color” Lent Calendar & instructions:** a way to doodle, color and pray through the days of Lent. Great for all ages.
 4. **Lent-in-a-Box:** A great way for families with children to engage interactively in Lent with a weekly hands on activity, an interactive prayer activity, and an encounter with Jesus devotion.
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Try a new spiritual practice during Lent. Join Pastor Shannon on a silent retreat on Saturday April 4th from 9am-4pm.

Carpool will leave from the church at 8:15am.



Location: 270 E Lake Rd, Erie, PA 16511. **Cost:** \$15, registration required. Bring your own lunch.

Register online: <https://www.eriebenedictines.org/stillpoint-registration>



Church Musician Meeting: March 15th, following worship.

Join with Crystal Lee and Spencer Drake to discuss ways to engage musically and share your gifts in worship.

March Faith at Home Focus: Kindness

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

All families want their children to be kind to one another, but how often do we treat it as a skill to be learned, alongside any other sport or extra curricular? Take some time to exercise the kindness muscle with your children this month.

- Do a kindness role play at dinner. Ask children to recall something that happened on the playground (whether it be something positive or negative.) Act it out around the table and talk about opportunities to show kindness.
- Reinforce the virtue of kindness by placing a reminder in a prominent location in your home. “In this home we strive to be kind,” or “Be kind to others.”
- Have a “secret kindness week” where all family members do secret acts of kindness for each other without revealing who did what. At the end of the week, debrief about how it felt to be both the giver and receiver of kindness.
- Learn gentle and kind parenting techniques. Not every parenting book advocates the type of parenting that leads to kindness and compassion towards ones children. Most of us could use a refresh in this area.
- During daily check-in time, incorporate questions about kindness alongside questions about other aspects of the day. “Did you have an opportunity to show kindness today?”

Memory Verse: [and] be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, as God in Christ has forgiven you. Ephesians 4:32

Faith Practice Spotlight: Kindness Meditation - Think of three people in your life (they can be neighbors, friends, or strangers) and spend 30 seconds wishing them peace and wholeness.

Kindness Resources:

[Making Kindness Common Project](#)

[Mine! A Counting Book About Sharing](#)

[Imperfect Families](#)



Youth Game Night at the Church

Friday, March 20th, 6-9pm. Youth are invited to join us for a night of outrageous fun. We'll have a make your own Pizzas and an Ice Cream Sundae bar. We'll play games like Corn Hole, Psychiatrist, Spoons, Board Games and even some Minute to Win-It games. Cost is \$5 to help cover the cost of the pizza and ice cream.



Intergenerational
COOKIE BAKE
benefiting Habitat for Humanity

Intergenerational Cookie Bake is Back!

Saturday, March 21st, 10am-noon. Join Pastor Shannon and bring a friend or family member of any age or stage for a fun morning of baking cookies together to benefit the hardworking Habitat for Humanity volunteers.

Easter Lilies



Donations are now being accepted for Easter Memorials. The contributions make possible the palms on Palm Sunday and the beautiful display of Easter lilies on Easter. If you would like to give an Easter Memorial or Honorarium please call the church office/326-2643 **or fill out the form in the bulletin and return to the office.** The price per Lily this year is \$11.00. After the Easter service the lilies are distributed by the Deacons to the ill and shut-ins.

Should you elect to take your donation to one of our members or otherwise, it is important that you please let us know your intentions so enough lilies can be ordered.

New Member Class in March: Join Pastor Shannon for a New Member inquirer's class. We will get to know one another, talk about the ministries of the church, what it means to be Presbyterian, and how to get involved. We will meet at 12:45 p.m. on March 29 at Webb's. Please RSVP by March 22 so we can reserve a table. We will receive new members on Easter Sunday. There will also be another opportunity later in the year (*possibly May or September*) as well as a Confirmation class later in the year.

Session is Proposing a New Time for our Sunday Worship Service. They would appreciate your input. Plan A: to go into effect Memorial Day Weekend and remain all year round, including the summer: 10:00 am, 10:30am, or 10:45am. Plan B: to go into effect Memorial Day Weekend: 10:00am through August & then 10:30am for the rest of year. We will have a formal ballot for you to give your input on Easter Sunday, April 12.



Census Sunday is Coming: March 29, 2020

Everyone in each household should be counted. During Fellowship Hour on March 29, we will have a laptop out and available in the parlor for where you respond to the census online.

The U.S. Constitution requires a complete count of the nation's population every 10 years. Census data impact decisions at the national, state, tribal, and local levels—from congressional representation to the annual allocation of more than \$675 billion. These resources are essential to the well-being of all of our neighbors, supporting schools, hospitals, fire departments, and more. About one million young children weren't counted in the last census—the highest of any age group. Responses to the 2020 Census are safe, secure, and protected by federal law. They cannot be used against respondents in any way.

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, February 18, 2020.

Actions taken at the meeting are summarized as follows:

1. Session adopted a Safe Church Policy for our church
 2. Due to scheduling challenges, Session will now hold its meetings on the 2nd Tuesday of the month at 7pm in the Parlor.
 3. Session approved a motion to remove John Daily as an elected elder, not installed, due to the fact that he regrets being unable to make the commitment at this time.
 4. Session approved a motion to participate in the PCUSA's Board of Pensions "Healthy Pastor, Healthy Congregations" program.
 5. Session has decided to build a time for food and fellowship around our Wednesday night Lenten Visio Divina bible study. There will be a simple soup supper provided at 6pm, prior to the bible study at 7pm.
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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.



Proudly brings you the Westfield performance by:

Chautauqua Chamber Singers

"How Can I Keep from Singing"

Steven Woods, Director

Charles F. Johnson, Accompanist

Saturday, March 14, 2020

First Presbyterian Church (Sanctuary), Westfield 4:00 p.m.

No Admission - Freewill Offering

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

Sharon Bane, Barb Lynn, Mark Robbins, Dorothy Near, Elaine Hall, Ople Gollnitz, Pat Hayes, Elaine Parker, Pat Sciarrino, Laurie Diehl, Lillian Saunders and Mary Ann Buettner.

Family and Friends of our Congregation

Darrell Colgrove, Jon Belcher, Abigail Jopek, June Beers

OUR SERVICEMEN

Senior Chief, Jam "JD" Watkins (*Grandson of Betty Reid*)

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

Celebrations of Life

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

Nancy R. Harner ~ Friday, January 31, 2020 (*Sister of Mike Ricketts*)

Jane Adelle (*Thompson*) Mead ~ Thursday, February 6, 2020

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

MARCH BIRTHDAYS

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

11th

Micah Subers

12th

Andy Fochtman

Drew Norton

15th

Ashlin Helman

Camden Rogers

16th

Ann Weidman

17th

Daxon Perkins

19th

Bobby Udell

20th

Scott Rogers

21st

Jim Deakin

Linda Kelley

Felicia Lawson

22nd

Harry Barton

Lynnell Ellis

Bob Wilmarth

25th

Carol Webster

Lisa Young

27th

Marilynne Northrop

28th

Mary Jo Gollnitz

30th

Giana Long

Jaime Long

MARCH 2020

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
1 10:00 a.m. Choir Rehearsal 10:00 Christian Nurture 11:00 a.m. Family Worship & Children's Ministry ~ Communion ~ 12:00 Noon Fellowship Hour	2 7:00 p.m. Mission & Justice Meeting	3	4 5:00 p.m. WAVE Fair at WACS Lobby 6 - 8:00 p.m. Lenten Soup Supper & Visio Divina Bible Study	5 7:00 p.m. Lake Shore Center for the Arts Musical Program ~ Sanctuary ~	6 World Day of Prayer	7
8 10:00 a.m. Choir Rehearsal 10:00 Lenten Bible Study 11:00 a.m. Family Worship & Children's Ministry 12:00 Noon Fellowship Hour	9 11:30 a.m. Lunch at Community Kitchen 5 - 6:30 p.m. Westfield Hospital Auxiliary Dinner	10 7:00 p.m. Session Mtg.	11 10:00 a.m. Pastoral Support Team Meeting 6 - 8:00 p.m. Lenten Soup Supper & Visio Divina Bible Study	12	13	14 4:00 p.m. Chautauqua Chamber Singers "How Can I Keep from Singing" ~ Sanctuary ~
15 10:00 a.m. Choir Rehearsal 10:00 Lenten Bible Study 11:00 a.m. Family Worship & Children's Ministry 12:00 Noon Fellowship Hour	16	17 7:00 p.m. 2020 Task Force Meeting	18 6 - 8:00 p.m. Lenten Soup Supper & Visio Divina Bible Study	19	20 6 - 9:00 p.m. Youth Game Night	21 10:00 a.m. - Noon Intergenerational Cookie Bake
22 10:00 a.m. Choir Rehearsal 10:00 Lenten Bible Study 11:00 a.m. Family Worship & Children's Ministry 12:00 Noon Fellowship Hour	23	24	25 6 - 8:00 p.m. Lenten Soup Supper & Visio Divina Bible Study	26 7:00 p.m. Lake Shore Center for the Arts Musical Program ~ Sanctuary ~	27	28
29 10:00 a.m. Choir Rehearsal 10:00 Lenten Bible Study 11:00 a.m. Family Worship & Children's Ministry 12:00 Noon Fellowship Hour	30	31				