



# First Presbyterian Church of Harborcreek

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## January Newsletter Volume 2024, Issue 1

### Church Leadership

Pastor.....Rev. Mike Wilson  
Pastor Emeritus.....Rev. Sheldon "Tim" Logan  
Music Director.....Chris Thomas  
Organist.....Joyce Kriner  
Secretary.....Mary Stewart  
Custodian & Librarian.....Eileen Kriner  
Treasurer.....Barbara Griffith

### Committee Chairs—2023

Co-Clerks of Session.....Gil and Marlene Long  
Membership Care &  
Development..... Marlene Long  
Mission/Outreach.....Ann Nesgoda  
Barb Griffith  
Nominating & Training.....Don Duckett  
Mary Ellen Flowers  
Personnel.....Sue Kellerman  
Gil Long  
Scott Shunk  
Property..... Bob Kellerman  
Dave Maille  
Spiritual Formation.....Jennifer Wedzik  
Stewardship & Finance.....Dave Maille  
Bob Kellerman  
Barb Griffith  
Worship.....Scott Shunk  
Gil Long  
Jared Mosier  
Recording Secretary.....Cindy Skladanowski

### Deacons

Chairperson.....Bill Nesgoda  
Vice-Chair.....Nancy Way  
Secretary.....Nancy Way  
Treasurer.....Peggie Smith  
Caring Tree.....Nancy Way  
Correspondence.....Joanne Scott  
Flower Coordinator.....Sally Wakeley  
Funeral Dinners.....Sue Beighley  
Greeters/Liturgists.....Deacon of the Month

### *A Message from Pastor Mike...*

Quite a few years ago Mary Louise and I collaborated on a Christmas Eve/Day sermon that we sketched out on a long car trip. It's part memoir, part fiction and we've both delivered our individual versions of it a few times. We've decided to retire it from performance but I thought I'd share it with you. It goes like this...

I believe it was on our second Christmas as pastors that Mary Louise and I decided to travel for the first time to visit her parents in Richmond, Virginia, on Christmas Day. We were living in Leechburg and I was pastoring three churches. So I did one Christmas Eve-Eve service on December 23<sup>rd</sup> and two Christmas Eve services on December 24<sup>th</sup> at 7:00 and 11:00. And by the time we got home sometime after midnight on Christmas Day we were both a tired but also a little wired. We stayed up talking and didn't get to bed until after 2:00 a.m. So we slept in, had some breakfast, opened some gifts, called some relatives, packed our bags. And by the time we got on the road it was late afternoon.



After a few hours of driving we started asking ourselves why we were doing this. We should have left earlier or waited until the next day. The post-Nativity crash that most pastors feel was beginning to hit us. We were tired and hungry and still a ways away from Richmond. And since we were staying in one of the guest rooms at the retirement community where my in-laws lived, we knew there was not going to be a fridge full of leftovers or a pot of hot coffee waiting for us. So we started looking for someplace to stop and eat. But nothing was open. Even Cracker Barrel, our favorite restaurant when traveling, was closed. I knew for certain because we travel with a Cracker Barrel map and I found the nearest ones and called ahead to check. We'd already pulled off on a couple of exits with no luck when around Fredericksburg, we saw, set against the dark night sky, not a wondrous star but a sight that on that night was just as miraculous: eleven bright yellow rectangles with black letters spelling "WAFFLE HOUSE."

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Indeed, the Waffle House was open. And busy. As it turned out we were not the only hungry and weary travelers that night, not by a long shot. Others had been traveling and still had to travel farther and longer than we. We knew this because that night some Waffle House Christmas Miracle had dissolved



anonymity and turned the restaurant into a travelers' oasis – a warm and brightly lit bulwark against cool temperatures and cold hearts.

Let's face it. The Waffle House is not most people's first choice for fine dining. Don't get me wrong. You get a decent meal at a good price, breakfast, lunch or dinner. The people who serve you are usually courteous and efficient. But there's a reason Waffle Houses are located right off the interstate; your goal is to get in, eat, and get on your way. You don't go to the Waffle House to make new friends or discover cutting-edge cuisine.

And I would bet that very few of us *wanted* to be at the Waffle House that night. We were all united by the common bond of being somewhere we didn't want to be.

Not the couple sitting next to us at the counter with whom we quickly struck up a conversation: they were traveling out of medical necessity so that she could get a particular treatment at a particular hospital. Not the family with small children who clearly would have rather been at home in their jammies and playing with toys than heading off to his or her parents'.

Not the truckers still on the road.

Not the waitresses or cooks or manager. It's possible some of them had volunteered to work because Christmas was just too complicated to deal with – maybe you've worked with folks who didn't mind taking the Christmas shift.

But I think it's safe to say that most of us there would rather have been somewhere else.

But rather than curl into ourselves, and glare at each other, we all gave in to some kind of spirit of giving that pulled us out and mixed us up. That couple who, when they found out we were pastors, asked us to keep them in our prayers. That mom and dad who somehow kept it all together in the face of cranky kids. Our waitress did say she volunteered to work on Christmas Day because it was better than being home alone. She was great; she got my Texas bacon double patty melt platter to me really quickly and she kept my coffee cup filled. I highly recommend the Waffle House melts. And get the platter because then you get hash-browns. Delicious.

I don't know. Sometimes I wonder if we make this stuff up, turning our plain experiences into pretty stories. Mary Louie and I often reminisce about that night when we're trying to remember where we've spent our married-life Christmases. It all could be some trick my memory is playing on me. Some lovely story pieced together and condensed from little bits of different encounters in different restaurants over the years. A mosaic or collage. But Mary Louise and I agree, generally, that it happened that way, that we felt that way. We remember it similarly.

And really, if I was going to embellish this story, I might add some other characters. Maybe a young couple. They walked in just ahead of us and got the last booth. And good thing too because she was pregnant and not just a little bit. It would be nice to think that if we'd gotten there first we'd have given them our booth. Maybe. We're always better than ourselves in stories.

Anyway, there they were. And parked not far from us either. A an old F-150 that had seen better days; some rust and a bent bumper. Too much stuff in the bed for them to be traveling for pleasure. No, they were moving somewhere for something. On Christmas Day. Maybe he lost his job and a brother or cousin had some work for him somewhere south. Or north. Displaced and on the move. Certainly not going someplace they'd call home. And certainly not heading that night for the Best Western or the Sheraton or the Hilton. No, no place for them in inns like those.

Still, the way she gently rested her hand on her stomach. That look on her face that said wherever this child is, is home, is sacred space, even the Waffle House. I watched as the waitress came over to take their order. She just kind of lit up when she saw that mom-to-be. Asked "where y'all from? When's the baby do? Where y'all headed. Must be hard traveling on Christmas."

At first the couple seemed a little surprised at all the attention, wondered what kind of greeting this might be. But they were both real polite and answered all the questions. Or rather he did. She was kind of quite and just seemed to be taking it all in. Kind of treasuring the moment, pondering. The waitress went back to place their order with a big smile on her face and telling the others about this nice young couple that's going to have a baby.

On a normal day, we might have looked rather peculiar. But on this night, it just fit. All the barriers went down. People just blended together like we'd known each other for years. Those big yellow blocks that filled the night sky might just as well have spelled out "Peace on Earth."

Yeah, that was some night at the Waffle House. All of us somewhere we didn't want to be. But as I remember it, there's no place I'd rather have been. Something special was going on that night. Something that doesn't happen all that often. Some little bit of God's kingdom broke through and held sway that night.

Now there are far better stories about unusual things that happen on Christmas. Long lost friends find each other. A church burns down and a whole new community is born from the ashes. If you go looking, I promise you will find a more dramatic story. All we had was a dreary highway, growling stomachs, miles ahead of us, and the only restaurant that was open. Oh, and that young couple.

There's something about the way real innocence looks when it's in the form of a young woman and a man who could have taken other turns. That couple could have looked so many other ways. They didn't look naïve, but they also didn't look like they'd never been anywhere. They just looked like they were trusting the night, trusting the universe, trusting their lives, able to put themselves into someone else's hands and feel comfortable with that. I began to wonder when I've ever felt so comfortable, out there in places I didn't want to be.

And yes, I know they weren't really there.

But really they were. That baby – *our* baby – was there. And the space was sacred. And there are people who put themselves into God's hands and let life unfold in whatever amazing way it will unfold, and they call it good.

That's what last night and today is about. It's about how time and space, past and present, real and imagined collapse into a singular experience of sacred community as we allow ourselves to be there – whether it's a cattle barn or a Waffle House – to be there where that baby is.

And to know that wherever that baby is we are home.

Wherever that baby is we are loved.

Wherever that baby is we are family.

Wherever that baby is, we are not alone.



One of my favorite writers writes poetically about how the crucified Christ is eternally on the cross, forever taking on the sins of the world. And we Christians take it on faith that the risen Christ is forever and always present, in our midst.

It's not much of a leap then to imagine that the newborn savior is forever wrapped in swaddling clothes and lying in a manger.

Forever inviting wonder and amazement.

Forever calling shepherds and waitresses and weary travelers and the just plain weary.

Forever calling you and me and everyone into love, community, grace, eternity. Now. Always. And forever.

Merry Christmas.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Mike". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

## Christ's Nativity

By HENRY VAUGHAN

Awake, glad heart! get up and sing!  
It is the birth-day of thy King.

Awake! awake!

The Sun doth shake

Light from his locks, and all the way  
Breathing perfumes, doth spice the day.

Awake, awake! hark how th' wood rings;  
Winds whisper, and the busy springs

A concert make;

Awake! awake!

Man is their high-priest, and should rise  
To offer up the sacrifice.

I would I were some bird, or star,  
Flutt'ring in woods, or lifted far

Above this inn

And road of sin!

Then either star or bird should be  
Shining or singing still to thee.

I would I had in my best part  
Fit rooms for thee! or that my heart

Were so clean as

Thy manger was!

But I am all filth, and obscene;

Yet, if thou wilt, thou canst make clean.

Sweet Jesu! will then. Let no more  
This leper haunt and soil thy door!

Cure him, ease him,

O release him!

And let once more, by mystic birth,  
The Lord of life be born in earth.



## Lectionary Readings January 2024

Below are the readings suggested by the Revised Common Lectionary for this month.

|                              |                                  |
|------------------------------|----------------------------------|
| <b>January 7, 2024</b>       | <b>Baptism of the LORD</b>       |
| <i>Genesis 1:1-5</i>         | <i>Psalm 29</i>                  |
| <i>Acts 19:1-7</i>           | <i>Mark 1:4-11</i>               |
| <b>January 14, 2024</b>      | <b>2nd Sunday after Epiphany</b> |
| <i>1 Samuel 3:1-20</i>       | <i>Psalm 139:1-6,13-18</i>       |
| <i>1 Corinthians 6:12-20</i> | <i>John 1:43-51</i>              |
| <b>January 21, 2024</b>      | <b>3rd Sunday after Epiphany</b> |
| <i>Jonah 3:1-5</i>           | <i>Psalm 62:5-12</i>             |
| <i>1 Corinthians 7:29-31</i> | <i>Mark 1:14-20</i>              |
| <b>January 28, 2024</b>      | <b>4th Sunday after Epiphany</b> |
| <i>Deuteronomy 18:15-20</i>  | <i>Psalm 111</i>                 |
| <i>1 Corinthians 8:1-13</i>  | <i>Mark 1:21-28</i>              |

## January Worship Leaders

|            | <u><b>Liturgists</b></u> | <u><b>Greeters</b></u> |
|------------|--------------------------|------------------------|
| January 7  | Sam/Matt Wedzik          | Linda & Bob DeAngelo   |
| January 14 | Oliver Palmer            | Patty & Kevin Graff    |
| January 21 | Kyle Foust               | Bob & Sue Kellerman    |
| January 28 | Don Duckett              | Tracy & Ava Conner     |

## Media Ministry

We are asking for volunteers for the media ministry. Jeremy Stewart, Bill Nesgoda, and Jared Mosier have been bringing the streaming program to you for over 3 years now every Sunday.

Occasionally we get to have a Sunday off but those are rare. We would love to be able to spend time to join our families during the worship services also.

## NEW FELLOWSHIP OPPORTUNITY



JOIN us on the Second Sunday of each month to celebrate the upcoming birthdays of the next month. Our first "Birthday Party" will be on January 14 immediately following worship. Come for some light refreshments and fellowship as we say HAPPY BIRTHDAY! And celebrate those born in January.



Wine and The Word  
Resumes January 7,  
2024

6:00 p.m.

On Zoom

Debts, trespasses or sins? With only those small differences, the Lord's Prayer is perhaps the only bit of liturgy held in common by all Christians. It is prayed by fundamentalists, evangelicals, Mainline Protestants, Baptists of all persuasions, Roman Catholics, Orthodox, conservatives and progressives...the entire Christian spectrum. Yet too often it is recited by rote; we say the words with a cadence and melody that can sometimes mask the prayer's profound—even revolutionary—meaning.

For our next Wine & The Word series, we'll explore this ageless prayer with particular focus on its contexts in Matthew and Luke, its seven petitions and doxology, how it fits within the Apostle Paul's theological framework, its relevance and urgency for us today...and yes, we'll talk about debts, trespasses and sins.

Our winter W&W sessions will be on Zoom beginning Sunday, January 7 at 6:00 p.m. We will meet every other week via Zoom. Pastor Mike lead the sessions and send out the Zoom link. Please message him at [pastormike@hcpresbyterian.org](mailto:pastormike@hcpresbyterian.org) if you would like to participate.

# Spiritual Formation...



Breakfast and a Movie will resume On Sunday, January 7. Breakfast starts at 9:15, with the movie starting at 9:45.

Watch Sunday bulletins for more information.

Come join us!



We, as a church family, care deeply about you and your family and friends. Through our Prayer Chain we can surround those in need with prayer. As we reorganize our chain, we invite you to join us in two ways:

1. If you would like to join the ministry of the prayer chain and receive prayer requests either by phone or text message, please call Pat Feddersen at 814-899-6054 or Nancy McNally at 814-450-2577 and have your name added to the list.
2. And if you have a prayer request do not hesitate to call either Pat or Nancy with your need. You need to let them know what information can be shared and if you want to add a name to the prayer list in the bulletin and newsletter.



## 2023 LAKE ERIE PRESBYTERY PRAYER LIST

Churches & Pastors, Commissioned Pastors (CP),  
Members-at-Large (MAL),  
Honorably Retired (HR),  
Validated Ministry (VM) & Other Leadership

### January 7

Harborcreek and Emmanuel—  
Rev. Mike Wilson, Pastor

Rev. Keith Sundberg (HR)  
Resource Consultant  
Presbytery of Lake Erie

### January 14

Rev. Tim Harmon—  
Stated Clerk of the Presbytery of Lake Erie

Participants in The Presbytery of  
Lake Erie's Bubble Up!

### January 21

Rev. Michael R Wilson—  
Stated Clerk of Synod of the Trinity

Rev. Charlie McClung (HR)

Rev. John Dietz (HR)

### January 28

Westminster, Erie—Darin Alvis, Preaching  
Conneaut Lake—Sam Heagy, Preaching

## Christmas Quotes

- \* A hug is the perfect Christmas gift, one size fits all
- \* It's not what's under the tree that matters, it's who's around it
- \* This Christmas, be on the lookout for the miracles all around you.
- \* The thing about Christmas is that it almost doesn't matter what mood you're in, or what kind of year you've had—it's a fresh start.—Kelly Clarkson
- \* The gift of Christmas is a special reminder that we are loved
- \* You don't hear it—you feel it, you know it, you believe it.—Kevin Alan Milne
- \* Don't spoil Christmas Day by anticipating how it will be. Let it unfold as it does, and be grateful for whatever comes.—Toni Sorenson

# More News...



*...you won't need a special star  
I'm no longer just in Bethlehem,  
I'm right there where you are.  
You may not be aware of me  
amid the celebrations –  
You'll have to look beyond the stores  
and all the decorations.  
But if you take a moment  
from your list of things to do  
And listen to your heart, you'll find  
'm waiting there for you.  
You're the one I want to be with,  
you're the reason that I came,  
And you'll find me in the stillness  
As I'm whispering your name.  
Love, Jesus*

## *Recycle! Recycle! Recycle!*

We are still receiving donations for special mission projects. This is an easy way to make a big difference in the lives of people in our community and around the world! Just collect and drop off at church.

♥**Aluminum Cans** for the Dick Smith Fund to benefit community members with emergency needs.

♥**Travel Sized Personal Care Products** to be given to the homeless at The Upper Room.

♥**Cancelled Stamps** Here is an easy way to help others—by saving your cancelled stamps on from the mail you receive. Simply cut them out (please leave a large border) and place them in the basket at the back of the sanctuary.

♥**Used Greeting Cards** to be sent to be sent to St Jude's Ranch for them to repurpose and sell in their gift shop and on their website. Please do not cut cards or change cards in anyway. They need them whole for them to be transformed.

## ***SPECIAL DONATION OPTIONS***

During the year you may want to make a special donation in memory (or in honor) of someone.

Following are the many options available:

**Memorial Fund:** This is a special account to collect funds to be used within the local church for worship and education related expenses. Monies can be earmarked for special projects and sometimes a plaque is dedicated to the memory of a loved one.

**Endowment Fund:** Generally donations (often memorials) can be directed to this Fund that is managed by the Presbyterian Church USA Foundation and their New Covenant Mutual Funds. Yearly dividends are split between missions and capital improvements for our church.

**Capital Improvement Fund (CIF/Building Fund):** As with most endowments, numerous options for bequests and investing are available.

Donations directed to this account are used to make payments towards any loans (none at this time) and to provide 'seed money' for future projects. Recent ones were exterior painting and maintenance of the church and manse and a new bell tower roof, paving of parking lot.

**General Fund:** Of course donations are gratefully accepted any time to help support the general running of the church and its programs.

Feel free to contact any member of the Stewardship & Finance Committee with your questions. Current members are Dave Maille, Kevin Graff, Bob Kellerman, Linda Blum, Lisa Baumgardner, Barb Griffith, Cindy Skladanowski.

# Church Family News...



## **Birthdays**

- 15 Michael Schrimper
- 23 Peggy Nelson
- 30 Nancy Way
- 30 Kathy Stewart
- 31 Mary Ellen Flowers



## **Anniversaries**

- 15 Bill & Ann Nesgoda



Prayer List: For those serving in the armed forces: Adam Bojarski (Suter). For the Lake Erie Presbytery & its leaders; for our pastor, Mike Wilson, for church members, family & friends, we pray.

*If someone can be removed from the prayer list or if you have someone to add, please call or email the church office with the information.*

|                 |                         |                   |
|-----------------|-------------------------|-------------------|
| Barb Bemis      | Fannin Family           | Yvonne Peters     |
| Claudia Brown   | Joan Graham             | Wilda Resinger    |
| John Brown      | Family of Chuck Hellman | Sandy Spangler    |
| Connie Carrier  | Judy Johnson            | Rich Smith        |
| Margaret Crider | Bridget Laughlan        | Carl Steiner      |
| Robin Cuneo     | David Lyon              | Sandy Stewart     |
| Ed Ellwood      | Dick May                | Marge Suter       |
| Dave English    | Mellish Family          | Tina Wasiela      |
|                 | Jeannie Pamula          | Abigail Wilkinson |



## **Church Office Hours**

Pastor Mike is usually in the office on Mondays and Wednesdays around 9:00 a.m. If you have a pastoral emergency, please call Mike at 412-298-9196.

The secretary's regular office hours are: Monday, Wednesday and Friday mornings from 9:00 a.m. to noon.

There may be times that the hours may be changed; Please call the church office to verify.

Church Office Phone number:  
814-899-1031  
New Email Address:  
office@hcpresbyterian.org  
Website: hcpresbyterian.org

## **Remember Our Homebound**

*Some of you have asked about what you can do to keep connected to those who struggle to come to worship or participate in church activities. Listed below are some of those you could send a card or a note of encouragement.*

|                                                                              |                                                                                             |                                                                  |
|------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Margaret Crider<br>Twinbrook Room 212<br>3805 Field Street<br>Erie, PA 16511 | Jessie Dennison<br>Wellmore Unit 4129<br>580 Robert Daniel Drive<br>Daniel Island, SC 29492 | Jacque Foust<br>8467 East Lake Rd.<br>Erie, PA 16511             |
| Dick May<br>6568 Iroquois Avenue<br>Harborcreek, PA 16421                    | Peggy Nelson<br>2 Gibson St. Apt. 102<br>North East, PA 16428                               | Esther Noonan<br>7554 McGill Road<br>Harborcreek, PA 16421       |
| Yvonne Peters<br>3913 Dexter Avenue<br>Erie, PA 16504                        | Wilda Resinger<br>5456 East Lake Road<br>Barnabas Court South<br>Room 120<br>Erie, PA 16511 | Sandy Spangler<br>227 W. 22nd Street<br>Room 9<br>Erie, PA 16509 |
| Carl Steiner<br>c/o Heather Steiner<br>4847 Tamarlac Lane<br>Erie, PA 16505  |                                                                                             |                                                                  |
| Ron Washe<br>4147 Bell Street<br>Erie, PA 16511                              |                                                                                             |                                                                  |





# January 2024

| Sun                                                                 | Mon                                                                                        | Tue       | Wed       | Thu                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                     | Fri       | Sat                                         |
|---------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------|-----------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------|---------------------------------------------|
|                                                                     | <b>1</b><br><i>Church Office Closed</i><br><br>Women's AA<br>5:00 p.m.                     | <b>2</b>  | <b>3</b>  | <b>4</b>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                | <b>5</b>  | <b>6</b><br><br><i>Epiphany of the Lord</i> |
| <b>7</b><br><i>Baptism of the Lord</i>                              | <b>8</b><br>Deacon's Meeting<br>2:00 p.m.<br><br>Women's AA<br>5:00 p.m.                   | <b>9</b>  | <b>10</b> | <b>11</b><br><br>Session Meeting<br>6:15 p.m.                                                                                                                                                                                                           | <b>12</b> | <b>13</b>                                   |
| <b>14</b><br><br>Fellowship Gathering<br>following worship          | <b>15</b><br><i>Church Office Closed</i><br><br>Women's AA<br>5:00 p.m.                    | <b>16</b> | <b>17</b> | <b>18</b><br><br>Prayer Shawl Ministry<br>2:00 p.m.                                                                                                                                                                                                     | <b>19</b> | <b>20</b>                                   |
| <b>21</b>                                                           | <b>22</b><br><br><i>February Newsletter Information Due</i><br><br>Women's AA<br>5:00 p.m. | <b>23</b> | <b>24</b> | <b>25</b>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                               | <b>26</b> | <b>27</b>                                   |
| <b>28</b><br><br>Annual Congregational Meeting<br>following worship | <b>29</b><br><br>Women's AA<br>5:00 p.m.                                                   | <b>30</b> | <b>31</b> | <div> <b>Every Sunday Morning:</b><br/>           Breakfast 9:15 a.m.<br/>           Children's Sunday School 9:45 a.m.<br/>           Adult Sunday School/Movie 9:45 a.m.<br/>           In-Person &amp; Live Stream Worship 11:00 a.m.         </div> |           |                                             |