

First Presbyterian Church

6 East Morris Street, Bath, NY 14810

607-776-6464

Tower Topics email
bathprest@gmail.com

Church Website
www.bathfirstpres.org

Church Office
officepreschurch@gmail.com

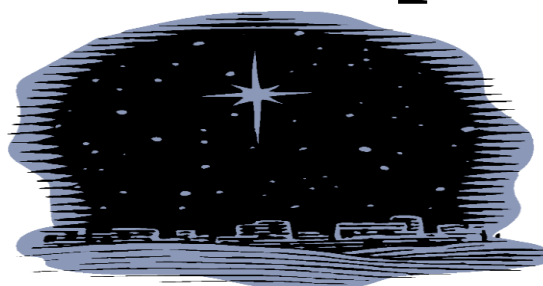
Pastor
jmwoodring@verizon.net



@FirstPresBath



Tower Topics



VOLUME LViii ISSUE 11
December 2023

SERVING WITH YOU

Pastor
John Woodring

Clerk of Session
Kathy Swan

Administrative Assistant
Valerie Brown

Treasurer
Velda Schmieg

Organist
Katie Klawitter

Senior Choir Director
Trevor Ward

Bell Choir Director
Vacant

Custodial Staff
Sandy Robinson
Leslie Lyons
Gene Overton

Nursery Care
Alberta Nunn

Historian
Helen Brink

Newsletter Coordinator
Sandy Robinson



SUNDAY WORSHIP SERVICE
9:30 a.m.

Youth Worship/Church
School During 9:30 Service

I walked outside into the chill, crisp air and gazed upwards at the stars. This particular night was cloudless and moonless and from my vantage point on Mt. Monroe road the dust of the Milky Way was hanging like a curtain of fog with fireflies sparkling all around and through. The stars seemed close enough to touch and yet at the same time the clarity of the night sky emphasized how far away they were.

I'm not much of a stargazer I must confess. I don't know much about the constellations, but I can find the Big Dipper, and the North Star, and usually Mars. Every once in a while, like this night, I have to hold my breath in awe at the mystery and beauty of God's creation. It doesn't matter how cold it is, or how warmly I'm dressed. God has stopped me in my tracks

It reminded me of God's promise to Abraham in Genesis 15, "*Look toward heaven and count the stars, if you are able to count them. So shall your descendants be.*" (v.5) Astronomy has shown us that what we can see of the stars with the naked eye is but a small fraction of the millions of stars and galaxies that exist. On this night, the whole sky was jam-packed with stars. I could have stirred it with a spoon.

The words of the Psalmist came to mind, "*When I look at your heavens, the work of your fingers, the moon and the stars that you have established; what are human beings that you are mindful of them, or mortals that you care for them?*" (Psalm 8:3,4)

(continued on next page)

The thought flashed through my head that I was actually seeing the light from where those stars had been however many light-years ago. There was a star that led the magi to Bethlehem. Some sign in the heavens that led them to the new King, the Christ-child. That star of wonder, star of light called them out of their everyday existence to a new reality, indeed, into the very presence of the "bright morning star," Jesus. I couldn't help but think of angels singing to the shepherds. "*Glory to God in the highest.*"

And then it struck me. It dawned upon me why those stars seemed so far away, yet were so close. I was being bathed in starlight that has been shining for eons as it traveled through and beyond the universe until it arrived to caress my face and open my eyes to God's reality.

Isn't that what Christmas is all about – the Creator of the universe bathing us in love? The God of power and might, holy and awesome and wonderful comes to us, as throughout all the ages, to gift us with love and salvation, drawing near to us, even abiding with us. "*The light shines in the darkness and the darkness did not overcome it... ...The true light, which enlightens everyone, was coming into the world.*" (John 1:5,9)

Then an owl hooted, and our puppy, Tucker, barked. And I went back in to the warmth and light of home. December 25th was still 6 weeks off, but Christmas had already come.

Pastor John

Beginning December 3 worship service will be starting at 10:00 until March 31.

Scripture Readings

December 3
Matthew 24:29-33
Unwanted Gifts: Judgement

December 10
Matthew 2:13-18
Unwanted Gifts: Pain

December 17
Matthew 1:18-24
Unwanted Gifts: Disappointment

December 24
John 1:6-10
Unwanted Gifts: Rejection
Christmas Eve
Jesus: The Wanted Gift

December 31
Mark 1: 14-20
Jesus' Ministry Begins



CHRISTMAS EVE

A candlelight service will be held on
Christmas Eve at 7 p.m.



POINSETTIAS

If you would like to provide a poinsettia, to beautify the church on Christmas Eve, please complete the form at the end of this newsletter.

DECEMBER



**Please Bring
CANNED FRUIT**

Personal care products are always needed and appreciated.

**Our Present Church Building
1956 to 2023**

**Church Anniversary Celebrations
1858 – 1908 – 1958 – 2008**

1858: With 165 members the church observed its 50th anniversary by making many improvements to the church building. Some of these included a 12 foot addition to the building, a furnace, painting of both the interior and exterior of building and the installation of gas lighting.

1908: With 400 members the church celebrated its 100th anniversary with three days of fellowship in January that year. Services featured speeches/sermons by the president of Auburn Theological Seminary, the moderator and stated clerk of the Presbytery, and the church pastor Rev. Dr. Charles Noble Frost. Historical sketches by the various church organizations were a highlight of the celebration.

1958: With 850 members the church celebrated its 150th anniversary during the first weekend in January with special services and programs which were attended by more than 700 people. Drawing the largest attendance was a speech delivered by the Rev. Dr. Eugene Carson Blake, stated clerk of the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church in the U. S. A homecoming reception and a birthday party featuring a huge cake in the model of the old church building were also part of the celebration. During this anniversary year 13,635 people attended Sunday morning worship services with the average Sunday attendance at 289!

2008: With 288 members the church celebrated its 200th anniversary year with many special events. These started in January with a kick-off service which featured the combined choirs of the Presbyterian, St. Mary's and Methodist Churches. Other events throughout the year included the Kirkin' O' th' Tartans (The Scottish Rite of Spring), Old Tyme Days with the congregation in period outfits, a float in two



DECEMBER CONTACT PEOPLE

**Elder Kathy Partridge
Deacon: Sue Gay**



**RING THE BELLS-
12/31/23**

Bring a bell with you when you come for service this day. You will be invited to ring your bell during the hymns in the service.



**DECORATING THE
CHURCH-12/2/23**

The worship team will be decorating the church on Saturday December 2 at 9:00 am. If you would like to come join the fun and get into the Christmas spirit, we would appreciate your help.

HISTORY



**Our Magnificent Place
of Worship!**

Helen Kelly Brink –

parades, a homecoming service, an historical pageant, and a New Year's Eve final event which featured the filling of a Time Capsule.



LIVING NATIVITY- 12/1/23

We will be presenting the Living Nativity in conjunction with the Spirit of Christmas on 12/1/23 with performances at 6:15pm, 6:45pm and 7:15pm. We will be looking for actors (angels, shepherds and wise men) these are all non-speaking parts. If you can help in any way, please contact Dar Grant.

Food will be provided.



CRAFTS AND LUNCHEON- 12/10/23

Mark your calendars! Join us on Dec. 10th for our second annual family luncheon/craft making day. We will begin after the morning service with a lunch of soup, chili, breads and desserts; followed by craft making activities for the whole family. Everything will be provided, come spend the day being creative and enjoy some holiday cheer!



CHRISTMAS PAGEANT- 12/17/23

Come worship with us in the Fellowship Hall on December 17th at the 10:00 service. The children will be helping us celebrate the 3rd Sunday in Advent and will be teaching us that the Christmas story brings hope to everyone.

The choir and the band will be singing! After the service soup and cookies will be served.



LESSONS AND CAROLS- 12/10/23

This year Lessons and Carols will be held at the Centenary Methodist Church on 12/10/23 at 4:00pm.



A Unique Christmas Gift

Have your parents told you, "We don't need a thing, just your love"? Well, if they have considered cremation, our church offers you a solution. A very loving gift would be a niche in our Columbarium for placement of their ashes. Or if that doesn't fill the bill, plaques on one of our Memorial Walls is another loving gift!

Our Columbarium has 64 niches which can hold one or two urns. Ashes are placed in an urn. Niches sell for \$800 for one urn or \$1100 for two urns. Plaques are placed on a Memorial Wall after the person is deceased. Plaques sell for \$275.

We encourage you to visit the Chapel where you will see the Columbarium and the Memorial Walls. For more information, contact the office or a member of this ministry team: Pastor John, John Jones, Sandy Mahnke, Bob Mesler, Barb Scudder or Helen Brink.



ANNUAL REPORTS

Annual reports from all boards, teams, church organizations and ministries are due in the church office the week of January 8th



FINANCIAL REPORT

As another year draws to a close, our team is studying 2023 spending and crafting a budget guide for 2024. While we did have

some months of deficits, most lines were within budget and we again, are so grateful for the Crosby endowment.

The 2024 budget will go to Session in December as we needed to wait for major obligations numbers from Presbytery. Some adjustments were made in Mission and we needed to adjust the maximum amount we were offering to potential candidates to facilitate the PNCs search. Fortunately, they can do so much of this digitally, which is a savings. It was a blessing to fill the organist and choir director lines and this was a budget neutral as Melody was paid for both.

It is good news that the stewardship campaign is running a bit above last year. It is not unrecognized that all are checking their own budgets to keep up with inflationary prices on everything. We continue to be grateful for all the support of our church and its programs.

May your holiday season be blessed with family, health and happiness.



END OF YEAR CONTRIBUTIONS

Don't forget all financial contributions you would like to claim on your 2022 taxes must be in the church office by December 31st(not just in the mail) or they will be credited to your 2023 statement.



CONGRATULATIONS TO OUR STUDENT ATHLETES

For the first time in school history the Haverling girls soccer team won the New York State Class B soccer championship. The team consisted of our own Skylar Lyke, daughter of Matt and Andrea Lyke, Lydia Dickson, granddaughter of Phil and Lee Dickson and Ella Yartym, granddaughter of Jim and Sandy Robinson. This was a wonderful way for the girls to end their Haverling soccer career. All will be graduating and moving on to their next adventure.

Alexa Wolfe, daughter of Brian and Lyndsay Wolf, granddaughter of Jan and Bill Mishook qualified for and ran in the state Cross Country 3 mile run. She came in 37th out of 135. She ran this in 21 mins. What a great accomplishment. Alexa is a sophomore this year so I am sure we will be hearing more about her in the years to come.



Presbyterian Coffee Project:

Equal exchange items from the Presbyterian Coffee Project: Before Covid, Gary Brown was our "coffee guy." He ordered coffee for

the coffee hour and church meals. He also ordered other items like chocolates and cocoa, as well as various specialty coffees, for members to use at home. Gary is still willing to order such items for members of the congregation, so call him or see him on a Sunday to discuss this possibility.

A "Presbyterian Adventure" Helen K. Brink

We recently hosted a sanctuary tour as a reunion event for several Haverling classes graduating in the 1960s. One of the attendees was Ellen Werner who sent the following

account of what she calls her “Presbyterian adventure.” With her permission it follows here: My family moved to Bath in 1949. We are Jewish and churches in Bath were not part of our lives. My brother David’s knowledge of the church never extended beyond the rooms in the basement. His Boy Scout troop held their meetings there. My interaction with the Presbyterian Church was a bit more dramatic. One summer when I was maybe 8 or 9, many of my friends were going to summer church camp. We were Brownies, we went to school, we had dancing lessons – we did many activities together. I saw no reason why I couldn’t also go to summer church camp with them. It was camp! Needless to say, the idea did not sit well with my parents Harry and Anne. After much begging I convinced my mother that it would be okay. She talked to my father. He reluctantly agreed – very reluctantly. First day we met in the basement rooms and colored and played. At lunch we went outside. Going in we formed a line on the east side of the building. We were taught a song to sing as we entered and we “marched” in singing the song. That evening at dinner I was asked how it went, what did we do. I proudly stood up and began marching around the room, singing on the top of my voice, “Onward Christian Soldiers Marching As To War....” My father erupted, “Anne, enough!!! She is not going back!” That was my first and last day of Presbyterian summer camp!

FREE Sunday Supper Meals December 3rd,
17th and 24th St. Thomas Episcopal Church
(Red Door Church) 3:00pm – 4:00pm Sit down
meal only



CHRISTMAS JOY

Christmas Joy Offering has been a Presbyterian tradition since the 1930s.

The Offering distributes gifts to the Assistance Program. The Assistance Program provides critical financial support to church workers and their families. In 2022, 272 retired church workers and surviving spouses were assisted, 223 recipients were able to stay in their homes, assisted living or long term care, 621 emergency grants were issued to help people facing economic hardship.

Christmas Joy envelopes are attached to this newsletter for your thoughtful consideration.



FREE

**SUNDAY
SUPPER MEALS**



DECEMBER BIRTHDAYS

December 2	Tom Tunison
December 6	Skylar Thomas
December 8	Joyce Stevens
December 10	Brett Inglis
December 12	Georgia Dickson
	Holley Kolodziejczak
December 13	Suzette Tunison
December 15	Linda Taggart
	Dianne Osmin
	Janet Ruger
December 19	John Jones
	Kris Von Hagn
December 26	Keith Joint
	Richard Shoemaker-Moyle
December 27	Abigail DeArmitt
December 29	Kyle Inglis
December 30	Harry Carr
	Isabelle Folckemer
December 31	Stephanie Oest

To provide a poinsettia to beautify our sanctuary for the Christmas Eve Service in Memory of or In Honor of someone; please have it delivered to the church no later than Thursday December 17th. All names will be listed in next month's newsletter. All names to be listed in the Christmas Eve bulletin need to be given to the office by 12/18/23.

PLEASE MAIL THE FOLLOWING FORM OR CALL THE CHURCH OFFICE AT 776-6464

A poinsettia given
 _____ In Memory or _____ In Honor of:

Given
 by _____



SYMPATHY

Our heartfelt sympathy is extended to the family of

Larry Bates who passed away on November 13, 2023.



Helen Dildine, Sherry Parke, Dan Bussman, Lois Warren, Andi Morse, Megyn Melnyk, Diane Lathrop, Sharon Ward, Sarah Tiffany, Tom Moore and your **Pastor Nominating Committee: Dean Chatfield, Kathy Forrester, Sharon Gonsolus, Bob Mesler, Velda Schmieg**

POINSETTIA



December 2023

<i>Sunday</i>	<i>Monday</i>	<i>Tuesday</i>	<i>Wednesday</i>	<i>Thursday</i>	<i>Friday</i>	<i>Saturday</i>
					1 <i>Living Nativity</i> <i>Times: 6:15pm,</i> <i>6:45pm, 7:15pm</i>	2 <i>9:00am</i> <i>Decorating for</i> <i>Christmas</i>
3 <i>10:00am</i> <i>Worship Service,</i> <i>Communion</i> <i>3:00pm Sunday</i> <i>Supper St. Mary's</i>	4 <i>4:45pm PNC</i> <i>5:30pm HR</i>	5 <i>3:30pm NY</i> <i>State Mandated</i> <i>Sexual Harass</i> <i>ment Training</i>	6	7 <i>6:00pm Choir</i> <i>Rehearsal</i>	8	9 <i>9:00am</i> <i>Crafting Set-up</i> <i>for Sunday</i>
10 <i>10:00am</i> <i>Worship Service;</i> <i>Potluck & Crafts</i>	11 <i>4:45pm PNC</i>	12	13	14 <i>6:00pm Choir</i> <i>Rehearsal</i>	15 <i>9:00am-5:00pm</i> <i>Crafts & Sewing</i>	16 <i>9:00am-5:00pm</i> <i>Crafts & Sewing</i>
17 <i>10:00am</i> <i>Worship Service;</i> <i>Children's</i> <i>Pageant</i>	18 <i>4:45pm PNC</i> <i>Poinsettia name</i> <i>requests due to</i> <i>Valerie in office</i>	19	20	21 <i>6:00pm Choir</i> <i>Rehearsal</i>	22	23
24 <i>10:00am</i> <i>Worship Service</i> <i>7:30pm</i> <i>Christmas Eve</i> <i>Worship Serv.</i>	25 CHRISTMAS <i>DAY Office</i> <i>Closed</i>	26 <i>5:30pm MCY</i>	27	28 <i>6:00pm Choir</i> <i>Rehearsal</i>	29	30
31 <i>10:00am</i> <i>Worship Service</i>						



TOWER TOPICS

December 2023

FIRST PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH
6 EAST MORRIS STREET
BATH, NY 14810

Non-Profit Org
U.S. postage

PAID

Permit No. 121
Bath, NY

Address service requested



- DECEMBER 1- LIVING NATIVITY-6:15, 6:45, 7:15**
- DECEMBER 2- CHURCH DECORATING 9:00AM**
- DECEMBER 3- WORSHIP STARTS AT 10:00**
- DECEMBER 10- CRAFTS AND LUNCHEON AFTER
WORSHIP SERVICE**
- DECEMBER 10-LESSONS AND CAROLS 4PM AT METHODIST
METHODIST CHURCH**
- DECEMBER 17-CHILDRENS PAGEANT-10AM**
- DECEMBER 24- WORSHIP SERVICE AT 10:00 AM
AND 7:00PM**
- DECEMBER 31- BRING A BELL TO WORSHIP(more info inside)**