

# First Presbyterian Church

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Pastor  
[jmwoodring@verizon.net](mailto:jmwoodring@verizon.net)



@FirstPresBath



## Tower Topics

VOLUME LIX ISSUE 1  
January 2024

### SERVING WITH YOU

Pastor  
John Woodring

Clerk of Session  
Kathy Swan

Administrative Assistant  
Valerie Brown

Treasurer  
Velda Schmiegel

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

At last, it's finally here. The marathon is almost over. The finish line is in sight. I'm writing this article a few days before Christmas. And maybe, like many of you, it seems like we've been through a gauntlet of consumerism rather than a joyous celebration of our Lord's birth. Part of that is because I've seen Christmas decorations in the stores since mid-September, and also because the Christmas craze begins after Halloween now instead of after Thanksgiving like it did when I was a child.

Historically, Christmas is a season rather than just one day. There used to be twelve days of Christmas and then a celebration of Epiphany (You know, when the wise men finally make it to Bethlehem.) on January 6<sup>th</sup>. That was the Christmas season. Christmas was just beginning on December 25<sup>th</sup>. But these days, Christmas ends on the 25<sup>th</sup>, the Christian calendar and antependia notwithstanding. When the 26<sup>th</sup> rolls around, the only things left of Christmas are the returns and indigestion. Somehow it seems that Christmas ought to be more than this one-day celebration of gifts and holiday food.

Isn't it odd, though? Isn't birth supposed to be a beginning? Of course, there's always the New Year's holiday just around the corner. That's when we begin again. But there's nothing spiritual about that celebration. Mostly resolutions that will be broken within the next few weeks. *"According to Phillippa Lally; a health psychology researcher at University College London, a new habit usually takes a little more than 2 months — 66 days to be exact — and as much as 254 days until it's fully formed."* (Elias Scully, The Startup, Aug 7, 2019) Resolutions only seem to lead to broken promises.

Would it make a difference if we were to ponder a new beginning for participation in God's creation and God's mission to all of us? Maybe we could spend twelve days figuring out twelve ways to pay the love of God forward? And find twelve different friends to do it with? And focus on one for each month of the year? Maybe we could envision ways in which we and our church family could positively impact our community in the coming year? Or maybe we can discover one or two ways to have a rebirth in our life with Christ? Maybe you could look for at least one opportunity that arises during each of those twelve days in which you notice God calling you to make a difference to those around you in both ordinary and extraordinary ways.

My suspicion is that this can best happen if we understand the opportunity of Christmas as a starting point rather than a finish line, as a birth rather than a birthday, as a season rather than an event. And we can enjoy the celebration of the 25<sup>th</sup> as a "bon voyage" party that kicks off the adventure. Imagine, if you will, all of us surprising or delighting the people of our community with 12 acts of blessing in creative and original ways. Even if only 50 people participated, that would mean 600 ways God's love has been dispersed by us and through us! Wow!

Of course, by the time you receive this newsletter, we'll be past the starting point of the 25<sup>th</sup>, but that doesn't mean you can't start now, or pick the first twelve days of January, or begin with Epiphany. Maybe you can put a note in December of your 2024 calendar, or cutout this article to

remind you of a different way to celebrate Christmas next year.

Can we make Christmas last more than just one day, or is this all there is to it, when all is said and done? Are hope, peace, joy, and love only candles that we'll extinguish as soon as the last carol is sung, the last present opened, and the last morsel of leftovers disposed of?

***Pastor John***



## **JANUARY WORSHIP**

### **Scripture Readings**

**January 7**  
**Mark 2:1-22**  
**Jesus Heals and Teaches**

**January 14**  
**Mark 4:1-34**  
**Parables in Mark**

**January 21**  
**Mark 5:1-20**  
**Jesus and the Gerasene Demonic**

**January 28**  
**Mark 5:21-43**  
**Jairus' Daughter Healed**

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This year's Narrative Lectionary Gospel is Mark. Unlike the other synoptic gospels, Mark doesn't have anything related to the story of Jesus' birth. He begins with John the Baptist and Jesus' baptism. Which is why it will feel odd to jump from Jesus' birth to his baptism from December 24th to the 31st. (It was a short 30 years!) Mark is the shortest gospel and has been thought to be written first, with both Matthew and Luke using some version of Mark to write their gospels. The main point is the question asked by Jesus in the middle of the gospel, "Who do you say that I am?" Another feature, if it can be called that, is Mark's portrayal of Peter as "a failed disciple" (per Amy-Jill Levine), perhaps as a representation of a typical disciple like you and me.

So follow along with the Daily Readings listed in each bulletin to prepare yourself for Sunday's sermon. They can also be found at our website

[www.firstpresbath.org](http://www.firstpresbath.org).



## JANUARY

Please bring

**Pasta and Rice, Spaghetti Sauce and Tomato Sauce**



## INSTALLATION OF OFFICERS- 1/21/24

The following officers will be installed/ordained on 1/21/24.

### Ordination:

Deacons: Debbie Vonderlin- 3 years

### Installation:

Deacons: Marge Mesler-3 years

Mary Jane Jones- 3 years

Elders: Donna Montgomery -3 years

Bob Mesler- 3 years;

Susan Martin- 2 years.



## JANUARY CONTACT PEOPLE

Deacon: Sue Gay

Elder: Doug Schmieg

## ANNUAL MEETING 1/28/24

Annual Meeting will be held on January 28, 2024 during worship service.



## HISTORY



## HISTORY TIDBITS!

Helen Kelly Brink –

The theme of “Tidbits” this year will be about the many items that have been donated to our church, who donated them and, in some cases, why they were donated. This month donations by the Cole family will be featured.

In January 1955 eight Gorham brass offering trays were given to our church in memory of Dr. and Mrs. Ernest E. Cole, late members, by their son Robert E. Cole and others. In May 1955 a 25 bell English tuned electronic carillon installed in the church’s east tower as a memorial to Dr. and Mrs. Cole by the Cole family was dedicated. Ernest E. Cole was born in Savona in 1871. He graduated from Haverling in 1892 and from Cornell in 1895. He was admitted to the New York State Bar that same year but, from then until 1916, he taught school and served as principal at Howard, Greenwood, Painted Post and Addison. In 1916 he began a successful law career and became active in politics. He was a member of the NYS Assembly in 1920 to 1922 and a member of the NYS Senate from 1923 to 1926. He became chairman of the Senate Committee on Public Education during his tenure with that group and, while serving as such, he sponsored the “Cole Laws” in 1925. Those laws provided for the centralization of schools, state aid to education, school bus transportation and uniform tax rates. In 1928 he was made a deputy commissioner of the education department. In 1940 he was made NYS Commissioner of Education. From teaching in a one-room schoolhouse to becoming head of the NYS educational system was certainly a giant step for this man who our church was proud to claim as a member and friend! In 1896 Ernest Cole married Minnie M. Pierce, also from Savona. They became the parents of

three sons – Robert Ernest Cole, William Sterling Cole and James Pierce Cole.

Dr. Cole died in 1949 and Mrs. Cole died in 1954. Both are buried in Seamans Cemetery in Savona.



Children's  
Christmas Program

## CHRISTMAS PAGEANT-

### Round the Back!!

This year's children's Christmas pageant was a reader's theater adapted by Eleata Mitchell. It was originally written by Sheila Hamil, who had adapted it from a famous children's story entitled "Jesus Christmas Party" by Nicholas Allen. Andrea Lyke and Eleata Mitchell created the scenery and props and directed the children. Bill Joint was the stage crew and prop performer! Doug Schmeig was in charge of sound and costumes were gathered from Dar Grant's collection in the church basement and Eleata's barn.

The performance was the story of the first Christmas from the innkeeper's point of view. The innkeeper was very tired. It had been an extremely busy day. So many people were coming to Bethlehem because of the census. His inn was full. He had hung the no vacancy sign and was looking forward to a good night's sleep.

But what he was hoping for did not happen. He learned quickly that it was not going to be a peaceful night.

Skylar Lyke narrated the story telling us about how Mary (Leah Barros) and Joseph (Carter Daley) were the first visitors to wake up the innkeeper(Dalton Rook). The innkeeper's voice was narrated by Caleb Lyke. He had no room but he told them they could stay "Round the Back" in the stable. Then he was awoken by others looking for Mary and Joseph. An angel (Olivia Barros) brought bright lights and loud music.



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Shepherds (Torin Lyke and Weston Daley) wanted to know where Mary and Joseph were too. The innkeeper was getting more and more upset by the many interruptions to his sleep. Finally, he decided to go "Round the Back" himself. He was surprised to find a wonderful baby boy had been born. A peace came over him as he saw the child and he shared the news of the incredible birth with the congregation.

### CAST OF ROUNDTHE BACK



Back row: Skylar Lyke, Dalton Rook, Caleb Lyke  
Middle row: Carter Daley, Leah Barros, Torin Lyke  
Front row: Weston Daley, Olivia Barros

Our praise band provided us with entertainment before the play.



Tom Tunison- vocalist, Kirk Mishrell- guitar  
Jim Wallace- drums, Bob Mesler- bass guitar  
Jim Robinson -keyboard (missing from photo)



Helen was a member of this church for over 50 years. In those years she was very active in many areas of the church.

Election night spaghetti dinner was one area she had been involved with for many years. She was in charge of the kids who were working in the dining room. She made sure they waited on the tables they had been assigned to as well as clearing and resetting the tables. If they forgot, or got busy visiting with friends, she would gently remind them.

Lenten lunches would find her in the kitchen helping to get the food ready. One of her jobs was cutting the pies. She would painstakingly cut the pies to make them look delicious. They had to be individually put on a plate and when placed on the buffet table they had to all be facing the same way, if not she would fix them.

The Tower Topics was also an area where she had dedicated a lot of years. She was an expert with getting it assembled and ready for the post office. She knew little tips and tricks for getting it accomplished.

Helen was a member of the kitchen committee, When there were dinners or luncheons, she was the one in charge of setting up the diningroom. When the dishes had been washed and ready to be put away, she always sorted the silverware to make sure the good silver was kept separate from the everyday. This was a priority to her. As clean up was ending she would always say, "leave the stove and I will come back tomorrow and clean it", and she always did.

Helen was the Church Person of the Year in 2010.

Helen is missed, but will **never** be forgotten.



**POTLUCK LUNCHEON –  
1/14/24**

There will be a potluck luncheon on 1/14/24 with Dar Grant as the host. She will be providing goulash. Please feel free to bring a dish to pass.



**SYMPATHY**

Our heartfelt sympathy is extended to the family of Helen Dildine who passed away on December 10, 2023 and her daughter, Lois George, who passed away on December 9, 2023.



**JANUARY BIRTHDAYS**

- Jan 1 Diane Kiff
- Jan 2 Bob Mesler
- Jan 4 Steven Joint  
Steve Pospiech  
Michelle Rougeux
- Jan 6 Daniel Tunison
- Jan 7 Karen Matteson  
Phil Schumarker
- Jan 9 Brian Casey
- Jan 10 Ashleigh James
- Jan 13 Sue Hudson  
Katie McKinley
- Jan 15 Hilary Lang Sullivan  
Barbara Barney
- Jan 17 Bruce Baxter  
Alison Zimmerman
- Jan 18 Tom Tunison
- Jan 21 Carolyn Jones  
Richard Moyle
- Jan 23 Lori Brockway
- Jan 24 Emily DeArmitt
- Jan 25 Alexa Wolfe
- Jan 27 Christine Snyder



To beautify our sanctuary, poinsettias were lovingly given:

**In Memory of:**

- Martha Brown  
By: Gary Brown
- Kathryn Dunning and  
Charlie & Hazel Wilson  
By: Bryan & Nicole Dickson
- Wes Moore  
By: The Moore Family
- Dildine & Robinson Family Members  
By: Jim & Sandy Robinson
- Loved Ones  
By: The Shuart Family
- Sara Johnson and  
David Swan  
By: The Swan & Johnson Families
- Betsy Robinson, Lois & Clifford  
Robinson and Tom & Harriet Griswold  
By: Bob & Mary Ann Robinson &  
Family

Poinsettia Memorials (cont'd)

**In Memory of:**

Larry & Brenda Burton,  
Roy & Virginia Tunison  
and sweet sister Ginnie Tunison  
By: Suzette & Tom Tunison

Dr. Mary Anne Browne Woodring  
Jack & Maryse Crisman  
By: John & Jackie Woodring

Our beautiful son, Graham,  
Forever missed and forever  
loved  
By: Karen & Tom Andrus

**In Honor of:**

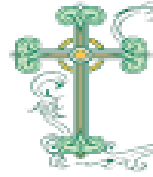
The Faithful Volunteers of First  
Presbyterian Church  
By: Gary Brown



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



The office will be closed  
on January 15, 2024.



**GIFTS HAVE BEEN GIVEN TO:**

**RESTORATION FUND**

In Memory of Larry Bates  
By: Jim & Sandi Mahnke  
Ruth Moore  
Helen Brink  
Jim & Sandy Robinson  
In Memory of Pat & Sandra Burns  
By: Lee Dickson  
In Memory of Dianne M. Burns  
By: James Burns  
In Memory of Anne Williams  
By: F.B. Williams  
Brad Williams  
In Memory of J&A Taggart &  
G&J Crosby  
By: John & Linda Taggart  
In Memory of Church Family & Friends  
By: Gretchen Casey  
In Memory of Helen Dildine  
By: Jim & Sandi Mahnke  
In Memory of Arlene Brundage  
By: Phil & Lee Dickson  
Jim & Sandi Mahnke

**MUSIC FUND**

In Memory of Larry Bates  
By: Patricia Seger  
In Memory of Arlene Brundage  
By: Dick & Gail Martin

**KITCHEN FUND**

In Memory of Helen Dildine  
By: Patricia Seger

**BURTON SCHOLARSHIP**

In Memory of  
Larry & Brenda Burton  
By: Derwood Burns

**MCY- CAMP WHITMAN**

In Honor of Phil & Lee Dickson  
By: Dana & Matt Dickson

<b>January 2024</b>						
<b>Sunday</b>	<b>Monday</b>	<b>Tuesday</b>	<b>Wednesday</b>	<b>Thursday</b>	<b>Friday</b>	<b>Saturday</b>
	1/ <b>New Year's Day</b>	2/	3/	4/ 6:00pm Choir Rehearsal	5/	6/
7/ 10:00am Worship Service, Communion, Rev. Anne Waasdorp 3:00pm Sunday Supper St. Thomas	8/ 2:00pm Worship Team 4:45pm PNC 5:30pm HR	9/	10/ 4:00pm Building & Grounds Mtg 5:00pm MCY Mtg	11/ 6:00pm Choir Rehearsal	12/	13/ 9:00am Removal of Church Christmas Decor
14/ 10:00am Worship Service, Coffee Hour (Dar Grant) 3:00pm Sunday Supper St. Thomas	15/ <b>Martin Luther King Day</b>  Office Closed	16/	17/	18/ 6:00pm Choir Rehearsal	19/ 9:30am – 5:00pm Sewing & Crafts	20/ 9:30am – 5:00pm Sewing & Crafts
21/ 10:00am Worship Service, Installation of Church Officers, 3:00pm Sunday Supper St. Thomas	22/ 4:45pm PNC	23/	24/	25/ 6:00pm Choir Rehearsal	26/	27/
28/ 10:00am Worship Service, Annual Church Meeting 3:00pm Sunday Supper St. Thomas	29/ 4:45pm PNC	30/	31/			



January 2024



## TOWER TOPICS

**January 2024**

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*



**1/14/24- Potluck Luncheon**

**1/21/24- Installation of Officers**

**1/28/24- Annual Meeting**