

First United Presbyterian Church of Pine Plains

3039 Church Street
(to visit)
P. O. Box 313
(for mailing)
Pine Plains, NY 12567
Tel: (518) 398-7117

*To **know** the love of
Christ; to **show** the
love of Christ; and to
grow in the love of
Christ.*

All are welcome to
join us at our
weekly Sunday
worship service at
11:00 a.m.

Pastoral Care:

Pastor Ryan can be
reached for *urgent and
emergency* needs on
his personal mobile
phone 24/7, (518) 261-
0834. For non-urgent
calls, please leave a
message on the church
office phone: (518)
398-7117, which is
checked as few as
seven times/week and
not every day.

Hudson River
Presbytery:
www.hudrivpres.org

Agape Harvest

By the time you read this, the Church will have been decorated for the Advent season, some of which was done by your fellow congregants during worship on the First Sunday of Advent in what is called the “Greening of the Church”, or the “Hanging of the Greens”, a new tradition for First United. Which brings up the question, how did hanging evergreens in churches during Advent become associated with Christianity?

In northern Europe, hanging greens in the home was a secular practice that predated Christianity. In the millennia before electricity, this time of year marked the start of months of cold and darkness. Decorating their homes with greenery from outdoors helped sustain these people through the long winter, and this was adopted by early Christians as they similarly prepared for the coming of Christ during Advent. The evergreen, as its name implies, is “ever alive”, so it became symbolic of the everlasting life we have in Christ.

To the ancient Romans, the evergreen was a symbol of peace, joy, and victory, and it is believed early Christians in this part of the world decorated their homes with evergreens to signify the presence of Christ. Perhaps the themes of peace, joy, hope, and love that are represented by each of the four Sundays of Advent grew out of this practice.

The Advent wreath is made of evergreens in the form a circle, which has significance as well. The circle, which has no beginning or end, represents the eternity of God and the immortality of the soul.

The types of evergreens used in the greening ceremony are also symbolic. Laurel signifies victory over persecution and suffering. Pine, holly, and yew represent immortality. Cedar symbolizes strength and healing. The prickly leaves of holly remind us of the crown of thorns, with the red berries representing the blood of Jesus. Pine cones, nuts, or seedpods symbolize life and resurrection.

The Christmas tree probably came from Germany and the ritual of decorating a Christmas tree is thought to have originated with Martin Luther, the father of the Protestant Reformation.

Here is an excerpt of a World Vision radio broadcast by founder Bob Pierce from 1959, about the origin of this tradition:

“Martin Luther had six children: Hans, Elizabeth, Magdalene, Martin, Paul, and Margaret. He loved his children and wanted to do something to brighten the holiday season and the celebration of the birth of Jesus Christ in a different way for them. The beauty of the evergreen trees that were near his home often delighted his heart when he walked through the snow in the starlight. The little trees stood there bravely, keeping green while everything else around them went dry and drab and lifeless.

“So one day he cut one down and brought it into the house, thinking to bring some of its beauty into his home to fight against the bleakness of the winter. He wanted it to stand there “evergreen” as a reminder to his children that when the world was at its bleakest moment — sad and helpless and covered with a weight of sin — God sent his Son, everlasting life itself, to bring hope in the midst the dark and chill.

“He explained to his children that the tree is green in the winter like our faith in Christ. It stays fresh even in a time of trouble. Our faith in Christ stays green even in sorrow. It stays alive even in the midst of despair.

“Then Martin Luther put candles on the tree, saying, ‘The candles remind us of the star that led Wise Men to the Christ child.’ That was probably the first decorated tree.

“When all was done, he sat his children down and taught them a new carol he had written.”

May you find special meaning in the symbolism around you during this Advent Season.

--- Dyan Wapnick

Pastor's letter

Dear Church,

There is much I could say about the month ahead, even to Jan. 9th, with this magnificent season we entered with joy Sunday. Everyone present put fresh, bright, fragrant evergreens around our church to make it very beautiful in Advent. The first candle of Advent, which is now lit, has a hold on me via the Holy Spirit. In the following, you have words from Brother Roger of the fabulous Taize Community in France in an unknowing collaboration with me (he has died). I *need* a visit to Taize. Let me know if you want to go together, and/or to the Isle of Iona in Scotland.

What is the source of Christian hope?

At a times when people often have trouble finding reasons to hope, those who place their trust in God need to "give to anyone who asks, an account of the hope that is in [them]" (1 Peter 3:15). We have to understand what is specific about the hope that comes from faith, in order to root their lives in it.

Even if by definition hope refers to the future, through faith in God, hope is rooted in the *present*, in God's today. Hope is of a God who never stops seeking us, and who never fails.

In the Hebrew Bible, that mysterious source of life we call God makes Godself known by calling human beings to enter into a relationship. The Bible defines the characteristics of the covenant God using two Hebrew words: *hesed* and *emeth* (e.g. Exodus 34:6; Psalm 25:10; 40:10-11; 85:10). In general, these words are translated by "steadfast love" and "faithfulness." They tell us, first of all, that God is overflowing goodness and kindness who wants to take care of his people and, second, that God will never abandon those he has called to enter into fellowship with God.

That is the source of biblical hope. God is good! God never forsakes us! Then whatever difficulties may arise—if the world we see is far from justice, peace, solidarity and compassion—for people of faith, this is not the full or most lasting part of any circumstance.

This rootedness in the present is made even stronger with the coming of Christ Jesus. In him, says Saint Paul, all God's promises are already a reality (2 Corinthians 1:20). This does not only refer, of course, to someone who lived in Palestine 2000 years ago. For Christians, Jesus is the Risen Christ for whose coming we are preparing in each Advent (began last Sunday) and whose birth on a cold night on Earth we celebrate each Christmas. "I am with you always, until the end of the age" (Matthew 28:20).

How can we root our lives in Christian hope?

Biblical and Christian hope does not mean living in the clouds, dreaming of a better life. It is not merely a projection of what we would like to be or do. It leads us to discover seeds of a new world already present today, because of the identity of our God, because of the life, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. This hope is, in addition, a source of energy to live differently, not according to the values of a society based on the thirst for possession and competition.

In the Bible, the divine promise does not ask us to sit down and wait passively for it to come about, as if by magic. Before speaking to Abraham about the fullness of life offered to him, God says, "Leave your country and your home for the land I will show you" (Genesis 12:1). To enter into God's promise, Abraham is called to make of his life a pilgrimage, to undergo a new beginning.

Similarly, the good news of the resurrection is not a way of taking our minds off the tasks of life here and now, but a call to set out on the road. "[Humans] of Galilee, why do you stand looking up toward heaven? ... Go into the entire world and proclaim the good news to the whole creation... You will be my witnesses... to the ends of the earth" (Acts 1:11; Mark 16:15; Acts 1:8).

Writing to the Christians of Rome, Saint Paul speaks of the longing of creation and compares this suffering to the pangs of childbirth, which your pastor thankfully can only barely imagine. Then Paul continues, "we ourselves, who have the first fruits of the Spirit, groan inwardly" (Romans 8:18-23). Our faith is not a privilege that takes us out of the world; we "groan" with the world, but we live this situation in hope, knowing that, in Christ, "the darkness is passing away and the true light is already shining" (1 John 2:8).

As we embark on this life together, we are led to create signs of a different future here and now — seeds of renewal that will bear fruit when the time comes. Because of Jesus Christ, tiny communities sprang up everywhere in the Mediterranean world in those first years after His Resurrection. Going beyond the divisions of all sorts that kept people apart from one another, these people lived as siblings, as God's family, praying together and sharing their possessions according to the needs of each person (see Acts 2:42-47). They strived to have "one and the same love, united in spirit and focused on the same thing" (Philippians 2:2). In that way they shone out like points of light in the world (see Philippians 2:15). From the very beginning, Christian hope kindled a fire on the earth! May that good fire reach new heights of warmth, energy, and may it emanate from our collective love this Advent and Christmas, Lent and Easter, and may it be such a goodness as to never be extinguished.

In peace,
Pastor Ryan

A special note: You are very good to me in granting time away since my biological family lives so far. Your beloved Deacons: Amanda, Carol, Dora, Lynne, Marva, and Pam will take primary roles in most of your needs from Dec. 27 - Jan.7 while I vacation. We shall all give them our direct thanks for their ministries.

Worship

Sunday Worship is at **11:00 am**
(indoors and adapted for COVID safety)

Notes on Current, Adapted Worship

We are worshipping in the church sanctuary. We are taking extra precautions now that we are worshipping indoors, with open windows, social distancing, fans etc. *If you come, please:* Bring a mask to wear ***even if you are fully vaccinated.*** We have decided to make this adjustment to our in-house worship due to the Delta variant. We have disposable masks available.

If you need to stay away from the gathering, we understand as we miss you. Worship service video streams at [facebook.com/groups/firstunitedpineplains](https://www.facebook.com/groups/firstunitedpineplains) Video is available there forever, to watch at any time. If you need another way to worship with us while you stay away from the gatherings, please ask Pastor Ryan. Perhaps a DVD you may play at home? Just ask.

Christmas flowers: if anyone wishes to donate Poinsettias please leave them in the kitchen with the name of who they are in memory of and given by. The flowers will be put out in the Sanctuary on Christmas Eve.

***Christmas Eve Candlelight Service of Lessons and Carols:** our service will be at 7:00 pm this year. *Please join us!* Communion will be served.

Sundays, Dec. 26 - Jan. 2 - It's Christmas! Our tree with Chrismons will light our sanctuary!

Twelfth Night Service on Tuesday Jan. 4, 2022, at 7 pm. This is a celebration that a lot of churches do but is new for First United. It concludes the Twelve Days of Christmas and is followed by Epiphany on Jan. 6, the coming of the Wise Men. We will sing Christmas carols.

**Denotes a worship with Communion: All are welcome to bring your own bread and something to drink if that feels safest. Elements are safely-prepared and will be available for all who wish to partake.*

Our Leaders

SESSION: Doug Hart (Clerk), Jeanne Valentine-Chase, Samantha Chase, Scott Chase, Deb Jackson, Jim Jackson, Ryan Orton, Jim Petrie, and Dyan Wapnick.

DEACONS: Marva Blackmar, Lynne Clinch, Dora Hage, Carol Hart, Pam Meccariello, and Amanda Zick.

Next session mtg. is Monday January 10, 2022, at 7:00 pm in the Fellowship Hall.

Our Annual Meeting will be back on schedule on Sunday, January 30, 2022, after worship.

Session Updates

Some of the recent votes from your Session

- Voted to make CROP Walk benefitting feeding ministries of Church World Service an annual collection unless we take further action. This year \$31 was collected by our church, over \$700 by Pine Plains churches as a whole.
- Informed of Pastor Ryan's help via Presbytery (our middle-governing body) to First Presbyterian - Millerton, as they will have a final worship service in January and end their long ministry as a church in that community
- Approved a fundraising policy that protects fundraising persons from any confusion that would cause trouble
- Three non-clergy staff persons were giving a cost-of-living adjustment in their rate of pay to match the adjustment given by the congregation to the pastor (1.3% for 2021, retroactive)
- Approved change in location and time for worship on Nov. 21 (a great day it was shared by all Pine Plains Christians!)
- Approved purchase of a church computer (we have had no working one from at least Dec. 2019). We now possess a fine machine for use with our gifted projector/screen, sound system, TVs, etc.

Note: stay tuned for a seasonal invitation to help the pastor show thanks for those who are in service to the church this year (think: party!)

Stewardship

Online giving with Venmo!

1. Log into the Venmo app on your phone or tablet
2. Click "Pay or Request" -- the big blue button at the bottom
3. In the "Add Recipients" box type @FUPCPP (stands for First United Presbyterian Church Pine Plains)
4. Select "FirstUnitedPresbyterianChurch Pine Plains" if it doesn't populate automatically
5. Enter how much money you would like to donate
6. Add "what it's for" -- you can do this in emojis which is fun!
7. Click "Pay" on the bottom right-hand side
8. Select your payment method
9. Click "Pay" -- the big green button at the bottom
10. You're all set!

Mission

Food Assistance



Willow Roots: Willow Roots is a non-profit community-based food pantry on South Main Street that compliments the Pine Plains Food Locker based at the Methodist Church. Willow Roots began several years ago by Lisa and Nelson Zayas as a way to receive excess produce donated by local farmers and gardeners and distribute to residents who experience food insecurity from around the Tri-state area. Willow Roots doesn't accept state or federal aid and relies exclusively on donations. They currently service 40+ households. Distribution is every Saturday *except* the 2nd Saturday of the month.

Pine Plains Food Locker:

The monthly drive items for December is cereal.
Toiletries are always welcomed.
Please send \$ donations to the
Pine Plains Food Locker
2852 Church Street Pine Plains, NY 12567
Distribution is on the 2nd Saturday of the month.



Food Pantry
Donations Needed

Christmas Outreach

Our “Mitten Tree” is to be found in our sanctuary again this Advent Season. This is a long-standing project begun many years ago by our Sunday School teachers and our congregation has continued this tradition. Donations of children and adult size mittens, gloves, scarves, hats and socks are greatly appreciated and will be distributed to Willow Roots and the Community Food Locker.



The Adopt-a-Family Program raises money and solicits new toys and clothing for children in need 13 years old and under who attend the Webutuck and Pine Plains Central School District schools. Now in its 27th year Adopt-a-Family provides gift cards from an array of participating local businesses and individual gifts of clothing and age-appropriate toys. Donors can give by adopting an entire family, by buying individual gifts, or by contributing funds. Tax-deductible contributions may be made by check to Adopt-a-Family and either dropped off at Moore & More Printers located at 17 Dutchess Ave. in Millerton or mailed to PO Box 880, Millerton, NY 12546. Gifts may be dropped off at Moore & More as well. Requested toys include battery operated toys, sporting equipment, games, puzzles, dolls, books, Legos and art supplies. Electronic games are not accepted. Other requested items include diapers, blankets, hats, mittens and gloves. All clothing should be new and pre-matched to requested sizes. To learn more about what items are needed and what size clothing is being requested please email Moore & More Printers at mooreandmore@taconic.net or call (518) 789-4508.

We will be collecting the Christmas Joy Offering on Christmas Eve. This Offering addresses the support needed by some of our leaders, including supporting leadership development for communities of color, and providing support for Presbyterian church workers in their time of need.

Thank you!

Thank you to everyone who helped with the Grab 'n Go Thanksgiving Dinner. We sold all 180 dinners and with donations took in over \$3,000. We were also able to give 6 high school students community service credit. Our dinners are not just fund raisers. They are a great way for volunteers to socialize and for the church to be part of the community.

Events and Committees

Thursday, December 2 @ 7 pm - New Care & Communications Committee (all are welcome to join the fun!) We work on how we use our means to spread messages, to reach out to people, plan times of fellowship amongst us, and to make sure everyone has all they need in Christian caregiving.

Sundays, December 5th-19th - Advent continues! In two major pieces: an excellent **study of the stories around the birth of Jesus Christ** through the work of Professor Amy-Jill Levine from **9:50am** preceding worship, and **worship at 11am** featuring the music of Advent.

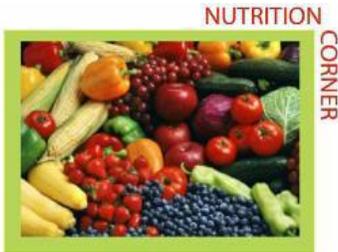
Advent Devotional: Many Christians take Advent as a time to spend some of each day with a devotional (or several). Pastor Ryan commends to you the one from his seminary. It will be emailed directly to all who have shared their email with the church. You may join that list anytime by emailing your wish to dyanwapnick@optimum.net. The devotional may be found directly at : <https://www.austinseminary.edu/resources/publications/advent-devotional>



Christmas Concert: Our annual Christmas concert will be on **Saturday, Dec. 18 at 4 pm**. The line-up of musicians is almost unbelievable, our favorites! Come listen to our talented community and church members, and “Margaret”, our wonderful 95-year-old Estey pipe organ named for its first organist, Margaret Moser.

Calendar

December 2021						
Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
28 First Sunday of Advent 9:45 am - 11 am Adult Advent Study 11 am - 12 pm Sunday Worship (Church) - Hanging of the Greens	29	30	December 1	2 7 pm - 8 pm Care & Communications Committee Mtg. (Fellowship Hall)	3	4
5 9:45 am - 11 am Adult Advent Study 11 am - 12 pm Sunday Worship (Church)	6	7	8 Feast of the Immaculate Conception	9	10	11
12 9:45 am - 11 am Adult Advent Study 11 am - 12 pm Sunday Worship (Church)	13	14	15	16	17	18 4 pm - 5:30 pm Christmas Concert
19 9:45 am - 11 am Adult Advent Study 11 am - 12 pm Sunday Worship (Church)	20	21	22	23	24 Christmas Eve 7 pm - 8 pm Christmas Eve Service (Church)	25 Christmas Day
26 11 am - 12 pm Sunday Worship (Church)	27	28	29	30	31	1 New Year's Day



By Lynne Clinch

My Baking Recipe

When you read this I will be in Florida starting my winter as a “Snowbird”. I do not neglect my baking activities though. The USPS does get to transport the precious cookies to my grandchildren hopefully in a timely manner. Prior to leaving I gather all the usual cookie recipes; sort them and decide which ones I’ll be making this year. Each has a favorite you know and so can’t disappoint!

As per usual a new recipe will be tried. I usually don’t make shortbread cookies but decided to try one this year. It sure is easy but offers many options.

Shortbread Cookies

350 oven for 13-16 minutes, yield 30-36 cookies

2 sticks unsalted butter cut into cubes	1 tsp. vanilla
½ c. granulated sugar	1 ¾ c. flour
¼ tsp. salt	

In bowl of stand mixer add butter, salt and sugar and blend until combined. Add vanilla and mix. Put in flour all at once and mix until combined. Roll dough on floured surface until 1/3 inch thick. If too sticky then chill and try again. Cut into rectangles or squares by hand or use a cookie cutter if preferred. Make the cookie shape about 1 X 3 inches. Place on parchment lined cookie sheets and refrigerate for about 30 minutes. Then remove and place in pre heated oven, one sheet at a time. Bake in middle of oven until edges start turning brown and are set. Let cook on cookie sheets then transfer to cooling racks. Continue process until all baked. Dip cookie end in melted chocolate and sprinkle chopped nuts or sprinkles on before chocolate hardens. Or use decorators frosting to add your touch. Just have some fun with it.

I always make chocolate chip cookies at Christmas time because my son loves them. I like to have a chocolate cookie too. This year I’m going to change it up a little and make white chip chocolate cookies. Recipe on Nestle Toll House white morsels package found in the baking aisle of any super market. I’ve had them with added nuts which I highly recommend. They are delish!

Russian Tea Cakes are another favorite. Also known as Mexican Wedding cookies or Snowballs, they are an easy to make cookie. I use a cookie scoop to aid in the rolling process and then drop on cookie sheets. Bake them, cool slightly then roll in confectioner sugar. Recipes easily found on the web or many cook books. These are favorites of my other son and one of my daughter-in-law’s. My other daughter in law loves the Peanut Butter Kiss cookie. The Snickerdoodle cookie goes to one grandson while the family sugar cookie is the favorite of the rest of the grandchildren. The recipe has been in the family for generations and always can be found on a cookie tray at Holiday time in our homes.

I was looking for another new recipe to share at the time of this writing. I went through the church’s last cook book. I found a great looking cookie recipe submitted by Shirley MacPherson. I’m sharing...

Chocolate Pecan Bars

350 oven, bake time see directions, use 9 X 13 pan

1 ¼ c. flour	½ c. cocoa
1 can condensed milk	2 tsp. vanilla
1 c. confectioners’ sugar	1 c. margarine or butter (cold)
1 egg	1 ½ c. chopped nuts

Combine first 3 ingredients in bowl. Cut in the butter as if making a pie crust. When texture is crumbly press firmly into bottom of 9x13 inch baking pan. Bake in 350 oven for 15 minutes. While baking the crust combine remaining ingredients mixing well. After this first 15-minute bake time remove from oven. Pour the liquid batter over the crust. Spread evenly then return to oven and bake for 25 minutes longer. Cool completely and cut into squares keeping in mind these are sweet but so yummy looking.

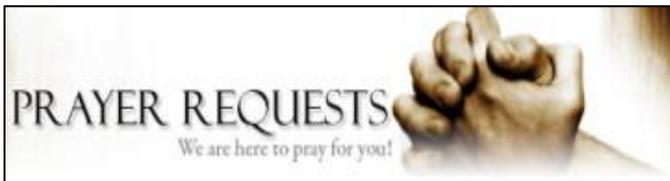
This next recipe was submitted by me. I’ve used it for years and is a great one to do with children. Cut outs and sprinkles; what fun!

Sour Cream Sugar Cookies

350 oven for 10 – 12 minutes

Cream together 1 c. shortening, 1 ¾ c. sugar, 2 eggs, 2 tsp. vanilla, 1 c. sour cream. When thoroughly mixed add dry ingredients: 1 tsp. baking soda, 4 ½ c. flour, 2 tsp. baking powder and ¼ tsp. salt. Take care not to over mix. Remove to plastic wrap and chill for several hours. I’ve made this at night and baked off in the morning. It needs to be well chilled. Cut in quarters then roll out into ¼ inch thickness. Cut with floured cookie cutters. Try to keep the same size cookie on each sheet. That helps with correct baking. Cool completely then decorate as desired. I use a glaze then add sprinkles and sanding sugar.

Now you have it. My plan for holiday baking. Make your own plan and enjoy the holidays. Until next time....Happy Cooking!



Please remember the following in your daily prayers:
the family and friends of

Ryan Doyle,

Kathleen Couse (sister-in-law of Virginia Kemp and Bob Couse),
essential workers who have died while serving during COVID lockdown,
our pastor, our congregation, our children, our loved ones,
and all of those who have lost loved ones in the past year.

Darcy (Linda's daughter), Ethan Malkin (grandson of Scott Chase and Jeanne Valentine-Chase), Bob Clinch, Marva Blackmar, Laura Dennis, Marge Parlman (Shirley's sister), Ron Brandt (Ancramdale), Roberta Cerniglia, Steven Hay (Linda's son-in-law), Trang (Linda's friend), John & Piper (Laura's daughter), Ellen White, Shirley & Walden MacPherson, Millie Hinsch (Dora's mother), Ola Yannetta (Linda Wendover's aunt), Liane McGhee (Jim and Margo Jackson), Clifford Thorpe, Carol Foley (Regeneration Church), Irene Dieter (Ancramdale Church), Adalyn Forgey and her family (Carol Hart), Bridget and Aylee, Mort Jackson, Laurena Mesnard, Teresa Maleonski (Marva), Craig Shelley, Joe (Susan), Barbara Gurbel, Randy Burns (Dyan), Jim Fabrizio, Kyleigh Cummings, Millie Sheldon, Bobby Wendover, Victoria Hull (Dot), Carey (Amanda Zick), Ron & Cathy Osofsky, Anthony Silva, Emo #4 (Rosanne's son-in-law's aunt), Lynn (Linda Wendover's sister), Antonio Gonzalez (Dyan), Melissa and Anthony, Gene Jernigan, Chun Ok Blackie (Jim and Margo Jackson's sister-in-law), Caitlin Edge (Deb), Joann Amelio, Debra Rose, Marge (Laurie), Marjorie Bright, Judy MacMorran (Barbara Gurbel's daughter), Debbie (Laurie), Brittany.

Geer Nursing Home: Linda Bartolomeo

Noble Horizons: Lek McNeill, RuthAnn Pulver, Charlie Napoli

Meadows (formerly The Baptist Home): Ron Parlman

The Manor at Woodside: Rod Davis

In the military or Reserves: Pierre Mesnard, Spencer Johnson (Iraq), Patrick Brooks, Garrett Pendleton (South Korea), Lewis and Denzel Jackson (Keith Jackson's sons), Garrett Cummings, Daniele Casazza, Kyle Moskowitz, Matt Cade, Zach McDonnell - Reserves, John Cort, Mark Hall, Jacob Coons, Danny Hoysradt, Brian Montross, Eric Wiltsie (Tom and Renee Strudwick's nephew), TroiHunter Cookingham (Fort Campbell, KY).

And all those who have served in our military.

Share a Blessing!

Next Issue: January 2022

Submission deadline: Dec. 25, 2021

Send submissions to:

dyanwapnick@optimum.net

To add to these prayers, Pastor Ryan is always glad to pray with you (518-398-7117 to find the best ways). If you wish to directly add to the list, please e-mail dyanwapnick@optimum.net