



Sharing the faith, hope and redeeming love of Jesus Christ with all people.

AT FIRST BAPTIST

DAN MCDOWELL
Senior Pastor

MILLARD COOK
Asst. Pastor Senior/Adult
Ministries

SUE NEELY VANBRUNT
Minister of Music

BRUCE LAVERTY
Director of Family Ministries

ROBERT FAULDS
Organist

BONNIE KETTLE
Financial Secretary

PENNY SOROKES
Church Secretary

MICKI ELLIS
Audio Visual Specialist

GERALD NUTT
Custodian

NEW YEAR'S EVE CONCERT

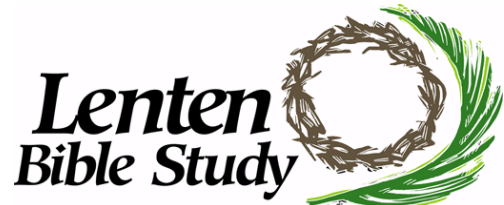
The Annual New Year's Eve Concert has been held here at First Baptist for over 35 years! Many folks in our community plan their reflection of the old year and the celebration of the new one, around this gathering! We'll gather at 7 PM to enjoy selections from In One A-Chord Handbell Choir, Karen & Cara Goodwin, a 4- handed piano duet by Sharon Boser & Penny Sorokes; Cari Matejka, Dana Boser & Emily Buteyn, Jack Ellis, Chi Chi Samuelson, the Chorduoy Barbershop Quartet, Erin Coatney, and Kim Whitney.

This is an evening you will not want to miss!! A love offering will be received to benefit those in need through the outreach of several local ministries.



ANNUAL CORPORATE MEETING TO BE HELD JANUARY 17

As required by our Constitution and By-Laws, the congregation will gather after worship on Sunday, January 17 to go over the reports of all the church staff members as well as our boards and committees and to pass a budget for 2016. A quorum of 50 people is required to carry out these procedures and we need your input, so please make your best effort to join us



February 10, 2016

Lenten Study Groups will be forming using the devotionals written back in 2004 by some who are still with us and others (like Ann Eddy, Bernie Mazza, Frances Sprague, John Mitchell, Barb Brookins and Janet Amore) who have gone on to their heavenly reward. Watch for opportunities to get involved to deepen your Lenten experience and prepare your heart for the Easter season.

CHRISTIAN UNITY SERVICE

JAN 31, 2016

At Epic Church

The world-wide Week of Christian Unity is celebrated in Olean with a "Christian Unity Service every year. This year the service (sponsored by the Greater Olean Association of Churches) will give the annual "Ecumen Award" to Father Greg Dobson of St. Mary of the Angels Roman Catholic Church and to Maureen Curry, founding (and retiring) Director of the Olean Food Pantry.

The service will be held at 3 pm on Sunday, January 31 at Epic Church (in the building formerly known as Ivers J Norton Elementary School). Pastor Vicki Hedlund, Chaplain at Olean General Hospital will serve as the keynote speaker.

Family of God



We extend our **LOVE AND SYMPATHY** to Ann Cole and her family on the loss of Pete Cole who passed away November 20.

Pete had been a

member here at Olean FBC for 58 years; and to Sharon and Dave Hornburg on the passing of Sharon's father, John L. Garey on November 27. John had been a member at FBC for 82 years.



of beloved members of our church family who went home to be with their Lord in 2015:

- ♥ Ruth Osgood – February 22
- ♥ June Hill – March 3
- ♥ John Piepho – June 17
- ♥ Glenn Lowe – August 12
- ♥ Carl Samuelson – October 15
- ♥ Pete Cole – November 20
- ♥ John L. Garey – November 27



UN-HANGING THE GREENS

We'll be un-decorating the church on Sunday, January 10, following Sunday School. Please plan to stay and help us put away the decorations that have made the Christmas season so festive.



During Worship on January 24, we'll celebrate the dedication and ministries of our non-pastoral staff members. Our

Fellowship Committee will provide a special fellowship time following worship in honor of our staff. Please be sure to join us in worship that morning and take this opportunity to thank each of them for their service to our church and God's Kingdom.

RADIO MINISTRY

If you would like to be a part of this important ministry at Olean First Baptist by sponsoring a \$55 radio broadcast in 2016, please telephone the church office at 372-5151 for available dates. This is such a nice way to honor or remember someone on a special occasion.

MUSIC MINISTRY CHRISTMAS PARTY

The annual Music Ministry Christmas Party will be held at 6 PM on Thursday, January 7, at FBC. All members of the Senior Choir, Praise Team, and Bell Choir are invited to attend. The meat and table service will be provided; please register for the event at your group rehearsal by January 3 and bring a dish to share....and a guest!!



More than 30 years ago, the **SOUPER BOWL OF CARING** began with a simple prayer. "Lord, as we enjoy the Super Bowl football game, help us to be mindful of those without even a bowl of soup to eat." Our teens

will partner with the Mission Board to promote this and place labeled boxes in the church foyer on Sunday, February 7. Thank you for sharing your blessing by your continued support of this important project. Proceeds will go to the Olean Food Pantry.



Many church communications including the newsletter are now being emailed to save time, paper and postage costs. **If you make a change to your email address or if you**

have recently added email to your home, please give us that updated information in the church office. Copies of the newsletter are available at the church for those who do not have home computers and will continue to be mailed to our homebound/shut-in members without email addresses.

THANK YOU TO BOARD/COMMITTEE MEMBERS

We extend our thanks and appreciation to the following members who have completed their terms on their respective boards and committees:

Moderator: David Torrey

Assistant Moderator: Casey DeGroff

Board of Christian Education: Micki Ellis, Chris Rosel, Terri McDowell

Board of Christian Missions: Mike Schultz, Sandy Schultz, Faith Boyce

Diaconate: Maunie Ketchner, Shelly Woods, Bob Brookins

Trustees: Jodie Martin, David Anderson

Memorial Committee: Mary Ellen Olson

Music Committee: Casey DeGroff, Bev Firth

Pastoral Relations Committee: Jodie Martin

Nominating Committee: Dave Torrey – Assistant

Moderator, Penny Sorokes – Diaconate, Terri

McDowell – Board of CM, Chris Rosel & Micki

Ellis – Board of CE, Matt Sage – Trustees, Jim

Kirkpatrick – At Large

NEW OFFICERS ELECTED

The 2015 Annual Congregational/Corporate Meeting of the Olean First Baptist Church was held

December 6, 2015 for the election of 2016 officers with Moderator David Torrey presiding. Those

elected include: **Moderator:** David Torrey:

Assistant Moderator: Casey DeGroff ;

Church Clerk: Penny Sorokes; **Assistant Church**

Clerk- Deborah Wuethrich; **Trustees:** Matt Sage;

Diaconate: Shelly Woods, Donna DeLong, Jodie

Martin, Mike Hooten; **Board of Education:**

Chris Rosel, Micki Ellis, Terri McDowell;

Board of Missions: Sue Keim, Cari Matejka

Communications Committee: Vi Pettigrew,

Pauline Glenn, Gwen Tyler, Pat Sherry, Paul Geise,

Dave Anderson, Darlene Selph, Micki Ellis, Chris

Rosel, Sheila Milton, Molly DiCapua; **Memorial**

Committee: Mary Ellen Olson; **Music Committee:**

Bev Firth, Ashley Sage; **Pastoral Relations:** Jodie

Martin; **Ushers:** Paul Cummings, Larry Firth, Frank

Sherry, Vi Pettigrew, Gordon Olson, Willie Milton,

Art Brown, Jack Crowley, Matt Butler, Julie Kerls;

Fellowship Committee: Nancy Taylor, NanTorrey,

Maunie Ketchner, Jean Kwiatkowski, Rita Wymer,

Faith Boyce, Cheri O'Dell, Jim Sorokes, Larry Firth;

Nominating Committee: Casey DeGroff, Chris

Rosel, Val Kane, Mike Schultz, Gordon Olson – At

Large

(*Filling unexpired terms)



During the long winter months, remember our home-bound and shut-in members and friends. Take time to make their days special with a visit, card, or phone call.

June Heineman: 331 Tompkins St. Olean
372-1180

Jim Molyneaux 05B3258
CCF-Main
P.O. Box 2001
Dannemora, NY 12929-2001

Gen Rinus: 210 N. 19th St. Olean 372-5479

Harriett Wilday: 2744 Olean-Hinsdale Rd.
Olean 372-7917

Helen Smith: 350 Front St. #206 Olean 372-3310

Louise Croft: 1304 Old Rock City Rd.
Olean 372-7764

Jim Bartlett 350 Front St. #202 Olean

Mary Anne Kirkpatrick 200 Jefferson Ave.
Allegany 373-0443

Marilyn Piepho 1979 Dugan Rd. Olean 373-7554

Marian Voigt, 1120 Promised Land Rd.
Olean 372-0915

Jerry Reynolds, The Ranch @ Cedar Park; 1301 W.
Whitestone Blvd.; Apt 137; Cedar Park, TX 78613
512-230-4135

<u>EDEN HEIGHTS</u> 161 S. 25 th St. Olean Ethel Hopkins, Marie Johnson	<u>THE PINES -OLEAN</u> 2245 W. State St. Olean Vi Eddy Dave Ross
<u>ECMC</u> 462 Grider St. Buffalo 14215 Dave Hollander	<u>THE PINES - MACHIAS</u> 9822 Rte 16 Machias 14101 Gloria Button



THANK YOU'S.....

Thank you for the generous gift of groceries. Donations such as yours enable Genesis House to continue ministering to temporarily homeless people. We are so thankful.

~Linore Lounsbury

Dear Ladies and Gentlemen: We here at Community Action would like to take this opportunity to thank you for your kind and generous donation. Your donation will be utilized through our domestic violence safe dwelling, offering assistance to women and children throughout Cattaraugus and Allegany Counties. Cattaraugus Community Action is an anti-poverty organization dedicated to helping people and changing lives. As you may or may not know, all of the donations that we receive are used to ease the conditions of poverty and violence and give new opportunities to low income people in Cattaraugus County. Thank you for your kind consideration.

~Angel Fisher, Executive Assistant

Thank you for your generous gift of 83.4 lbs of food.

~The Olean Food Pantry



SAVE THOSE STAMPS!!

The Alliance Stamp Ministries of Florida is asking for help collecting cancelled postage stamps. They resell the stamps that are attached

to envelopes – **cut 1/4 - 1/3” around the stamp.** With the proceeds, they write and print inter-denominational Sunday School materials to be distributed in 13 Latin American countries. After volunteers sort and package the stamps, they are sold to wholesalers. In 2012, the ministry earned \$25,000 and in 2013, they earned \$37,000. They are hoping to double that amount this year!



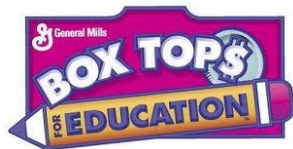
YOUNG MUSICIAN OF THE MONTH

Our final *Young Musician of the Month* for 2015 was Leah O'Dell. She is in the

3rd grade at Allegany-Limestone Elementary. We enjoyed hearing her vocal talents as she sang 'Away in a Manger' with the Children's Choir and her instrumental skills with Junior Bells at the Birthday Party for Jesus. She says she loves music 'about feelings and God and Jesus.' Her family tells us that she sings all the time and everywhere... at the dinner table, in the shower and with the radio in the car! We are glad that she sings at church, too!! Leah's parents are Geoff and Cheri O'Dell.

We recognize once again all of our Young Musicians this year: Logan Funden, Ashley Sage, Lorelei Kenyon, Hannah Hooten, Matthew Kirkwood, Jacob Peck, Katie DeGroff, Xavier Laverty, Cheyenne Peck, Lucas O'Dell and Leah O'Dell. May God continue to bless them as they return their talents for His praise and glory!

Mission stations also need Betty Crocker "Box Tops for Education" and Campbell company bar codes with their icon and/or coupon for points. These coupons are redeemed for



many needed items. Cut them out on the dotted line and put them and the cancelled

postage stamps in the collection box on the entrance table in the lobby.



PRAYING FOR THE NEW YEAR

Go to now, ye that say, today or tomorrow we will go into such a city, and continue there a year, and buy and sell, and get gain: Whereas ye know not what shall be on the morrow. For what is your life? It is even a vapour, that appeareth for a little time, and then vanisheth away. For that ye ought to say, If the Lord will, we shall live, and do this, or that. (James 4:13-15)

With excitement we should begin the journey through this new year with a real faith in God. Life during this year will be a task. It should be a mission. It may be a contest. It probably will involve battle.

Here James is warning against taking life for granted or thinking that you are in control of all that will happen in the coming year. Rather we need to be praying for God's will to be accomplished in and through our lives.

Many of the old hymns are actually prayers that we are singing to God.

I. Let Us Pray For Proper Motivation

Our motives are those desires and needs that drive us to action. As a follower of Christ our highest motivation should be our love for Christ. (John 14:15) So let us unite in praying for more love for Christ. You may have many goals but with the wrong motives. Our purpose on this earth is to bring glory to God through our worship, service and life. The only way to fully accomplish this is by the Holy Spirit's work of producing love and fruitful service through us. So as the hymn writer wrote "More love to thee O Christ, More love to Thee! Hear Thou the prayer I make on bended knee"

II. Let Us Pray For Proper Guidance

As we face the journey of the new year we should recognize that there are some dangers involved in every journey. It so easy to live life by habit rather than by the guiding hand of the Lord. Did you think to ask for the Lord's guidance this morning or only go about your day as you always have. If we are to walk through this year confidently and in a manner that glorifies God, we need divine guidance. So let us sing in our hearts "Savior like a shepherd lead us, Much we need thy tender care; In thy pleasant pasture feed us, for our use Thy fold prepare."

III. Let Us Pray For Proper Purpose

The controlling purpose of one's life is of tremendous importance. Some people never achieve anything of real significance because they have no goal or purpose. The Bible teaches that to receive a blessing is to be a blessing to others. Jesus came not to be ministered unto but to minister (Mat. 20:28) If I am to be like Jesus I should have the same purpose that He had. I should look at this new year or this new day as an opportunity to be a blessing to someone.

Let us unite our hearts in prayer together praying "Make me blessing O Savior I pray, Make me a blessing to someone today."

IV. Let Us Pray For Personal Dedication

Life is made up of decision. The Christian life, if it is genuine and fruitful, is made of a continuous series of decisions that bring us closer and closer to God's purpose. We need to seek to be in that place of full surrender to His will each day of the coming year. So with grateful hearts we sing a prayer of "All to Jesus I surrender, All to Him I freely give; I will ever love and trust Him, In His presence daily live."

~Pastor Millard

RETIREES LUNCHEON WITH PASTOR DAN

Pastor Dan is inviting any and all retirees of our church to a luncheon on Monday, **February 1** at noon. He will offer some devotional thoughts as well as an opportunity for food and good fellowship. Transportation to this event is available for any who need it. There is no charge but donations will be gratefully accepted. Please sign up on the bulletin insert or call the church office by Thursday, January 28, if you would like to attend.



FREE PASTA DINNER AND COAT GIVE-AWAY @ EPIC CHURCH SAT. JAN 9, 2016 Noon - 3:00 pm

Do you have a good used overcoat that you are willing to donate to someone in need? Bring them to our church or call 378-1664 for more information!



FROM THE PASTOR'S HEART (Part One)

The end of one year and the beginning of another – those are times for looking back as well as looking forward. So I thought I would reflect on some of the things that I enjoyed working on last year in the life of the church before I take a look at some things I'm looking forward to in 2016.

In January of 2015 (it's hard to believe 2015 is almost over!) I began a sermon series on the Old Testament book of Joshua. I took a break for Lent, Easter, Mother's Day and Father's Day (as well as vacations) but other than those dates, the series took us all the way into the summer months.

In February we invited former pro wrestler Ted (The Million Dollar Man) Dibiase to be here for the Men's Conference we hosted. It was an exceptional experience for all who attended. Several pastors in the community (myself included) led workshops for the men.

February was also the beginning of Lent and we hosted several Lenten discussion groups using the Chip Ingram curriculum on Romans chapter 12.

March brought Dave and Joyce Reed to us for a Sunday night dinner and presentation. Dave and Joyce are our special interest missionaries. They serve in Mexico on the Baja Peninsula but they were home last year on sabbatical. They are launching a new phase of their ministry this year that will take them to South America and the Caribbean Islands on assignment. You can check out information about them on the Missions bulletin board in the foyer.

The highlight of April was obviously was Easter and the annual Easter Dinner. We served a record number of people and did it for the first time without Judy Wightman's leadership. It was an adventure, but we did it! Now to find a director for *this year's* event!

May was begun (as usual) with the annual spring clean-up event, followed closely by our Mother's Day observation. We needed to schedule another clean-up day in June after the hard winter however. At the end of June I was able to attend the Biennial meetings of the American Baptist Churches/USA in Kansas City. There, I participated in discussions about leadership development and future planning and farewell events for our General Secretary and Home Mission Society Director. While I was gone to KC, we hosted another very successful Vacation Bible Camp here with over 70 kids attending!

July was an especially momentous month at First Baptist! First, after approximately 70 years on AM radio, we moved our broadcast to an FM station (EAGLE 99.1). It hasn't always been a smooth transition due to technical issues at the station but things seem to be getting straightened out as time goes on. The change has helped to boost the size of our broadcast area and provides a "cleaner" sound, especially for our music ministry.

The other milestone event in July was the Gold City Southern Gospel concert on the 4th of July weekend. The atmosphere was electric for this! We are hoping to bring them back this coming Independence Day weekend. A few weeks after this, Dave DeGroff came home to us and led a sermon in song and mini concert followed by a chicken barbecue. Meanwhile Pastor Bruce again led a midweek summertime outreach to the folks living in the projects at Alder Court. That outreach culminated in late August with a backpack giveaway to the children and teens there.

I spent several weeks in July focusing our attention during worship on the Christian heritage that is such an integral part of the American legacy. In addition to sermons, we had a discussion group on these topics during the Sunday School hour.

In August we held another successful rummage sale, enjoyed a church picnic and intergenerational Sunday School class at War Vet's Park (as well as taking advantage of the swimming pool there) and our ladies traveled to Philadelphia for the final year of Women of Faith gatherings.

In recent months of course we launched the stewardship theme under the "Thrive" theme, hosted another gospel music concert with the Jonathans, celebrated Pastor Appreciation month, sent the teens to another American Baptist Youth Convention, hosted another free Veteran's Day Breakfast, enjoyed the Giving Thanks Dinner, took offerings to benefit the chaplaincy Program at OGH and World Missions, hung the greens for Christmas, hosted a Ladies Christmas Retreat with Proverbs 31 Ministries speaker Wendy Pope, went caroling, hosted a candlelight service for families who have lost children, enjoyed another Christmas Cantata and the candlelight Christmas Eve service.

Nobody can say we haven't had a full year! Interspersed throughout those events were ministries like home visits and home communion, weddings, memorial services, baby dedications, baptisms and the welcoming of several new members. All in all, 2015 was a very good year at First Baptist Church of Olean!

~Pastor Dan



FROM THE PASTOR'S HEART (Part Two)

As I look ahead to 2016 I am already anticipating several ministry opportunities. I would like to explain a little about what has moved me to suggest them.

For most of the time I have been here, people who have belonged to this church for decades have reminisced about the concerts we used to host here. For a few years we hosted Jazz Vespers, offering local talent on a monthly basis on Friday nights until the leadership for that ministry stepped aside. Then recently our Diaconate began contemplating the launch of an “Event Ministry”. We have considered a variety of Christian artists (musicians, painters, comedians, etc.)

We decided that the first event we wanted to sponsor was a Southern Gospel group – and we wanted it to be someone with tremendous name recognition. We were shocked to find that Gold City was going to be in the area and available on a free-will offering basis. This seemed like an answer to prayer! Although we had very little time to promote the concert, we felt it was an opportunity we could not pass up. One of the top 10 gospel groups in the country right here in our sanctuary!

Frankly the turnout was not what we hoped for but the atmosphere in our sanctuary was electric! Even Gold City commented on the strong presence of the Holy Spirit there. And they expressed an eager desire to return to us next year!

Since then we have hosted The Jonathans and Wendy Pope from Proverbs 31 Ministries. We were tremendously blessed by both of these experiences yet we remain somewhat disappointed by the attendance. What can we do to improve and take these events to the next level?

One thing that we have done is we formed a committee to help with the promotion and advertising of the events. It is our plan to get ahead of things as early as possible and to seek as many venues as possible to get the word out (newspaper, radio, television, posters and social media). Ultimately we know that the success or failure of these events will rest on the shoulders of the members of this church to spread “word of mouth” that will generate sincere enthusiasm for them.

Recently we discussed the possibility of expanding the event ministry to a monthly format

similar to Jazz Vespers. Unfortunately we just did not find the support for it yet. Those who have been working on these events are filling many different roles in our church, and this was just “one thing too many” (at least at this point). But we plan to revisit the idea in the future.

Meanwhile Cari Matejka, Dana Boser, Jodie Martin, Josh Anderson and myself have been meeting to plan a trip to Uguanda (Africa) this coming summer. As you know Cari has made several trips with Embrace It Africa (EIA) to the Bethlehem Parents School (BPS) and Orphanage there. Many of us have followed her travels there with rapt interest and of course we have invited her to speak about her experiences there on several occasions.

This past summer it became clear to me that if our congregation is going to continue to be invested in the work that Cari and Embrace It Africa have begun there, we need to get a better first-hand idea of what we can do. Cari has some ambitious visions about what can be accomplished – visions that our congregation alone is unlikely to fulfill. But we need to start somewhere.

So on June 27 of 2016 the team I listed above (and anyone else who might be feeling led to join us) will depart for Africa. I will be there for 10 days. Cari and the others may stay longer. Meanwhile I have spoken to the Board of Mission about taking our support for this ministry “up a notch”. We are going to consider sponsoring a teacher or 2 at BPS and will continue to encourage people in our congregation and elsewhere to sponsor students.

There seem to be some issues on the EIA website that Cari and I are trying to clear up in order to make these sponsorships possible, but I can assure you that you will be hearing more about this in the months to come. Stay tuned.

I have also been planning for some time now to accompany my daughter Sarah and her husband Alfonse to Pakistan (Alfonse’s native land). His family has been very active in the Christian ministry in Lahore – the largest city in Pakistan. Recently they launched an exciting new ministry called the CosmoVision Center (a primary school, orphanage and trade school for Christians in Lahore). Going there will also allow me to meet Alfonse’s family for the first time.

I originally planned to go in November but doors closed preventing us from going. So we rescheduled for February or 2016. Those doors appear to be closing now too. November seems the most likely alternative. I will keep you informed! ***Pastor Dan***

NEW MEMBER SAYS OFBC DISCUSSES AND FOLLOWS BIBLE

By Deb Wuethrich

Sharon Anthony, one of our newest members at Olean First Baptist, was born in St. Thomas in the U.S. Virgin Islands, the youngest of 12 children.

“Picture the Olean town limits and that’s as far as you could go,” she said, with the borders being beaches, the weather tropical.

At 16, Sharon’s father sent her to New York City to care for her sick mother. While attending high school in Manhattan, Sharon later had to walk blocks to the hospital to see her mother, who had cancer. On her deathbed, her mom made her father promise he’d see that Sharon could go to college. He’d made plans for her to attend Villa Nova. But Sharon was so impacted by her mother’s death, she needed time to think about her future. She realized her father had her whole life planned out for her.

“In the islands, it’s a cultural thing,” she said. “Parents even pick out who you’re supposed to marry.” The thought felt too confining. Although she’d always believed, she also admits she was kind of mad at God at the time.

“One day, I just got on a plane and joined the navy,” she said. Sharon served in Maine in an aviation squadron for five years, and was later stationed on a base in Connecticut. Then it was time to go out to sea. A brand new ship had been pre-commissioned and when it sailed, she was on it.

“That was in the early stages where women were finally allowed on combatant ships,” she said. She saw combat in the First Gulf War around the time the USS Cole was bombed in a terrorist attack in Yemen while refueling, and also after 9/11.

“There were 100 ships in the Gulf so you could see mortars coming in,” she said. “I was on the bridge, qualified for weapons. I watched a missile come up from the silo and go off the ship. Each one of those cost a quarter of a million dollars and we shot off 25.” That was on the US Oscar Austin.

Her second ship was the James E. Williams that served off the Horn of Africa as a supply ship.

“There was human trafficking going on as people came up out of Somalia,” she said.

Sharon served on two other ships out of Virginia, and her final tour was headquartered in Mechanicsburg, Pennsylvania. She’d been tagged as part of a team to supply and detail a specific class of destroyers and train those who would be on it.

In 2010, she retired after 24 years in the navy. Sharon had visited friends in the Olean area.

“I looked around and said, ‘This is pretty nice,’” she recalls. She owns 100 acres in the Bolivar area and purchased a home in Richburg. Sharon said she had attended an Episcopal church all her life, but this past year felt God was leading her on a different path. She’d experienced prompting earlier with questions she’d had about her faith.

“I had a friend in the navy who always read his Bible,” she said. Over time, he encouraged her to dig deeper into the Word.

“I also started watching a lot of Christian TV and listened to preachers like Joyce Meyer,” she said. Soon she started to gain a sense of peace she hadn’t had before. When she came to Olean First Baptist late last summer, she began to notice a new joy bubbling forth.

“The way I believe has not changed,” she said. “But the concept of getting into the Bible studies and the Word was different. You have a Bible in every pew here and you live and walk out your faith.”

Sharon said she may have been more works oriented in the past, and does enjoy serving others, but realizes each person has to explore the fact that “God is within you.”

“If you’re not walking out this Book, it makes no difference what else you do,” she said. “Here, I’ve found a community mirroring the Bible. I can sense the Holy Spirit here.”

Sharon has two Masters degrees, one in Accounting, one in Business Administration with concentration in Finance. She is currently seeking employment and has faith she will find something.

“Every dollar I have came from the Lord,” she said, adding that she faithfully returns a tithe, even in down times. “I’m a blessed woman in the sense that my life has been full. By spending time in the Word I see the world through God’s eyes. Coming here is making me grow as a Christian, and made me a better person.”





Katie DeGross, Leah and Lucas O'Dell pose with some of the Thanksgiving turkey hands they created for this year's Giving Thanks dinner. The kids made them to prompt table discussion on things for which those in attendance were thankful.



Proverbs 31 Ministries speaker Wendy Pope delivered an inspirational message at our Third Annual Ladies Christmas Retreat on December 5. She encouraged us all to unwrap the gift of Jesus EVERY DAY...not just on Christmas—to make Him part of our lives all the time so that He can guide us in our behavior, thoughts, decisions etc. Everyone enjoyed a wonderful time of spiritual uplift as we sang, worshipped, and fellowshiped over a delicious brunch. Several even went home with door prizes!!

Thank you to Mindy Martin Phillips for her generous donation of beautiful, inspirational chalkboards (used as door prizes) and to our Women's Ministry Team (Casey DeGross, Pam Nutt, Jodie Martin, Nancy Taylor, Cheri O'Dell and Penny Sorokes) for their time and effort in putting together this and other events to encourage the women of our church family.

Watch for details on the next event to be held in February 2016.....JOIN US!!!

Men
OF THE
Church



JOIN PASTOR MILLARD AT PERKINS RESTAURANT IN OLEAN AT NOON ON THURSDAYS FOR A WEEKLY MEN'S LUNCHEON.

MEN'S CONFERENCE TO BE HOSTED AT EPIC CHURCH ON FEB 19-20 THIS YEAR!

The third annual Olean Men's Conference will be held this year at Epic Church (411 W. Henley St., formerly known as IJN School)

The theme will be "Reposition Yourself!" and will feature keynote speakers **Rev. Stanley Parks** (Epic Church in Lakeland Florida and former pastor of Mt. Zion Christian Assembly, **Pastor Steve Beatty** of the United Pentecostal Church and **Rev. Tom Sember** from the Assemblies of God.

Workshops will also be offered by **Pastor Wes Gilbert** of Rock of Revelation Church, **Pastor Gerald Slack** from Sacred Temple, **Pastor LaMont Higginbottom** of Trinity United Methodist Church and **Pastor Adam Stein** from Creekside Chapel.

Here is the schedule:

Friday

6:30 pm: Dinner at Epic Church
7:30: Worship with Pastor Parks

Saturday

8:00 am: Breakfast
9:00 am: Worship with Steve Beatty
10:45 Break
11:00 am: Workshop 1
11:45 am: Break
Noon: Workshop 2
12:45 pm: Break
1:00 Lunch
1:30 Worship with Rev. Tom Sember

Cost (including meals) is just \$20.00!
Groups of 10, \$15.00 each

JANUARY BIRTHDAYS

- 3 Carole Laverty
- 4 Kaitlin Taylor
Cheri O'Dell
Nathan Kirkwood
- 5 Kody Putt
- 6 Isaac Caton
- 7 Bobbi Kirkwood
Hannah Hooten
- 8 Jess Anderson
Robert Putt
- 9 Francis Peck
- 11 Cari Matejka
- 13 Brandyn DeLong
- 15 John Samuelson
- 16 Donna Smith
- 17 Steve Rosel
- 20 Pam Nutt
- 22 Gaylord Sage
- 24 Gloria Spiller
- 26 Marian Voigt
- 27 Larry Firth
- 30 Lylah Butler

FEBRUARY BIRTHDAYS

- 1 Megan Sorokes
- 3 Miesha Brown
- 6 Lenny Brown
Mary Ellen Olson
- 7 Alison Kane
- 9 Darlene Selph
- 12 Dana Boser
Sarah McDowell
Nan Norton
- 14 Samantha Wolters
- 16 Katrina DeGroff
- 17 Jacob Peck
- 21 Gloria Button
- 24 Brian Sanders
- 25 Mel Cunningham
- 27 Terri McDowell
G. Jane Robinson
- 28 Elizabeth Spiller



Articles and Information for the March issue of At First Baptist is needed in the church office Thursday, **February 11**. The Newsletter Committee will meet @ 4 PM on Tuesday, February 23 to prepare the newsletter for mailing to homebound/shut-in members without email addresses.

JANUARY BOARD MEETINGS

Sunday, January 10 @ Noon
Board of Christian Missions

Monday, January 11 @ 6 pm
Board of Christian Education

Tuesday, January 12
@ 6:30 pm – Diaconate
@ 7 pm – Trustees

Tuesday, January 26 @ 7 pm
Advisory Council