



AT FIRST BAPTIST

SENIOR PASTOR
Open

SUE NEELY VANBRUNT
Minister of Music

DEB WUETHRICH
Church Secretary

PAMELA PUTT
Financial Liaison

ROBERT FAULDS
Organist

CASEY DEGROFF
Social Media Specialist
Audio-Visual Technician

RACHEL GREEN
Custodian



A FOND FAREWELL TO THE HLADIK FAMILY

September has been a busy month at First Baptist! On Sunday, Sept. 4, Pastor Jason's family returned to Olean for a farewell from the congregation. In typical fashion, we sent them off with a special moment during service time and a favorite event—an Extended Fellowship table.

While Pastor Jason's plans were to remain in Olean and tie up loose ends until his final FBC Sunday in the pulpit on Sept. 18, his family is resettling in Rockford, Illinois where he will soon join them. Tiffany is teaching third grade, and Abigail and Abri are in classrooms just a few steps away.

Pastor Jason has made clear that his family's decision was the result of much prayer and sensing a leading by God to take these new steps. He is confident that he will be guided into a new role soon, and that God also has plans for FBC and the person He is already preparing. Thank you for your time here! We will miss you!



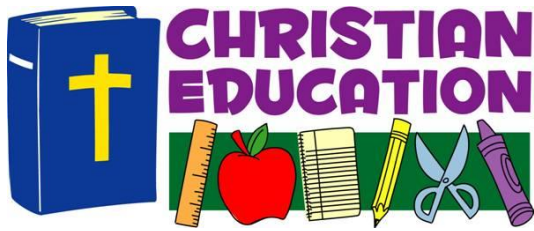
Abigail and Abrianna made many friends in the Olean community.



Stewardship Campaign Coming

It's time for us to prayerfully contemplate the coming year at Olean First Baptist and how we can each contribute time, talents and treasures. This year's theme is, "Building Strong Together," based on Ephesians 2:20-22. Pledge cards are scheduled to be mailed at the end of September. Stewardship Campaign Sundays are Oct. 16, 23, 30 (Commitment Sunday).

"... 20 having been built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ Himself being the chief cornerstone, 21 in whom the whole building, being fitted together, grows into a holy temple in the Lord, 22 in whom you also are being built together for a dwelling place of God in the Spirit." Ephesians 2:20-22



The 2022 Nominating Committee will soon be searching for new faces to serve on this (and other) board(s). If you would like to serve on the Board of CE, please contact Cheri O'Dell. We would love to welcome new board members with fresh ideas and energy!

In keeping with a mentoring theme, if you are interested in working with children's Sunday school programs or serving in the Nursery, please speak with one of the board members. We would love to have your help! Our goal is to provide programs that will guide the children here and keep them excited to learn, grow and find ways to serve Jesus in our community. Please encourage them to be consistent in their participation, reminding them that they are here to learn about Jesus. Your support and encouragement are vital in guiding their attitudes and responses.

A MUSICAL MOMENT

For many, music is a very natural way to communicate with others and with the Lord. At times we all feel the need to make some expression of love, frustration, fear, doubt or joy...but just don't have the words. I am so grateful to those who have been gifted to write songs that seem to express just what I was thinking or feeling.

Chris Tomlin wrote a song that I often sing when I'm 'stuck' and begin to complain or start with the 'why me, Lord?', 'why now, Lord?', 'why this, Lord?' questions. With all the blessings I've been given and the wonderful faithfulness of God to me, I need not ask such negative questions. Instead, I need ask: how can I keep from singing Your praise?

How Can I Keep From Singing Your Praise?

(Chris Tomlin)

*There is an endless song-I hear the music ring
And though the storms may come
I am holding on to the Rock I cling
How can I keep from singing Your praise?
How can I ever say enough how amazing is Your Love?
How can I keep from shouting Your name?
I know I am loved by the King –
And it makes my heart want to sing!*

Hoping you'll join me in singing endless songs of praise!
'Sing'cerely, Sue Neely Van Brunt, Minister of Music



'Giving Thanks' Music Sunday & Dinner

During the service of worship on Sunday November 6th, we will come together as a family of faith to thank the Lord during our GIVING THANKS MUSIC SUNDAY. Led by our Minister of Music, Sue Neely VanBrunt, our congregation will join our musicians in the music of the Thanksgiving Season. Stories and expressions of thanks and encouragement will be shared that will help us count our blessings. We will demonstrate our thanks to God for the gift of salvation as we gather around the table to celebrate Communion with our Lord. What a wonderful morning of worship! Following the service, everyone will move directly to Fellowship Hall for coffee and juice as we enjoy a few moments of fellowship before a brief GIVING THANKS PROGRAM for all ages. By 11:30 am we will begin the GIVING THANKS DINNER of turkey, stuffing, gravy and beverages prepared by the Diaconate and Fellowship Committee. Wonderful side dishes and desserts (or a monetary donation) may be provided by those who are able. Please sign up or call the church office by Oct. 30th. It would be wonderful if you and the entire church family would set aside this morning to come together in thanksgiving!

POTENTIAL OPPORTUNITY FOR FBC LADIES

Family Life Network in Bath is planning another Ladies Christmas Luncheon. Several of our members car-pooled to attend last year for lunch with a talk and mini-concert from Damaris Carbaugh. This year's event is scheduled for Thursday, Dec. 1 at midday. Jill Kelly (former Buffalo Bills quarterback Jim Kelly's wife) is this year's guest speaker. Details are still being worked out on whether this might be a Women's Ministry event or something individuals just choose to attend, so stay tuned to the Sunday bulletins. Deb Wuethrich is keeping a list of those with tentative interest in order to get an idea of how many seats might be required—if we can get tickets before they're gone! So, ladies. Think about it!



Rally Day Full of Fun and Surprises

Sunday, Sept. 11 was Rally Day, which is a time our church chooses to celebrate the new Sunday school year. The Board of Christian Education, comprised of Cheri O'Dell (Chair), Karen Moore, Carol Molyneaux, Pamela Putt and Matt Sage, coordinated the activities with Pastor Jason.

Children play a big role in Rally Day, from receiving certificates honoring their "move-up" to another grade level to a few third graders being presented their own Bible. This year, Bibles went to Lindell Downing, Elsa Porcello, Dakota and Savanna (Deb Hall's grandchildren).

Cheri O'Dell described current Sunday school opportunities, and recognized leaders. Our Kids Choir sang a medley with the Sr. Choir, then led "Jesus Loves Me."

Pastor Jason continued the Rally Day theme by dedicating a banner the children had made, and a sermon on "Josiah, Mentors at Work," (2 Kings 23:21-25.)

Rally Day continued with the pastor delivering a combined Sunday school lesson showing how faith can grow like a tiny mustard seed grows large. A picnic lunch was served in Fellowship Hall due to the rain. Like last year, the highlight of the day was a Pie-Your-Youth-Group-Member-and-Pastor event. The group sat at tables while others lambasted them with whip cream on paper plates. Katie DeGroff received the first hit this year. "Kids" of all ages took advantage of the opportunity to have some fun.

The Board of Christian Education would like to extend a Thank You to the congregation, those who helped set up, clean up or contributed in any way.



Pastor & Youth After Pie Session



Eden Butler surprised Pastor



Pies were flying pretty fast



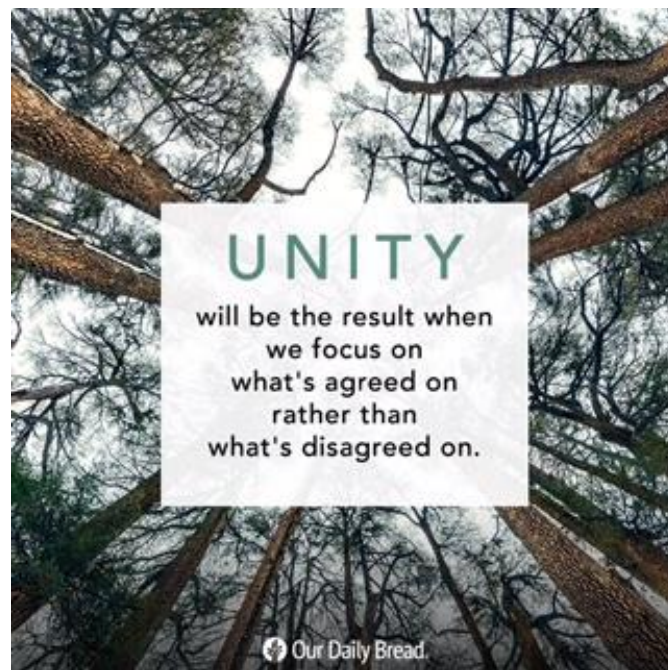
The oldest international Baptist mission agency in North America, International Ministries (IM) has been responding to the call of Jesus Christ since 1814. Every September and October, individuals and congregations come together for a time of awareness, advocacy, and action for global mission. Thousands across the country celebrate and support the ministries that God is using to transform the world. For the 2022 World Mission Offering, we are highlighting the Ministry Priorities of Discipleship, Theological Education, Peace and Justice, Education, Health and Wellness, and Economic Development. While these represent only a fraction of IM's ministries, they provide a window into what God is doing worldwide through our 125 global servants, 900+ volunteers, home staff, and 250+ international partners. Thank you for your support.

"I will keep my promise to you and to your descendants in future generations as an everlasting covenant. I will be your God and the God of your descendants." Genesis 17:7 Good News Translation



The 2022 Nominating Committee will soon begin the process of electing candidates to our Boards and Committees. ***Opportunities Abound!!*** Please prayerfully consider how you can use your spiritual gifts and talents to be of service to our Lord in 2023.

Answer "YES" to the call!!



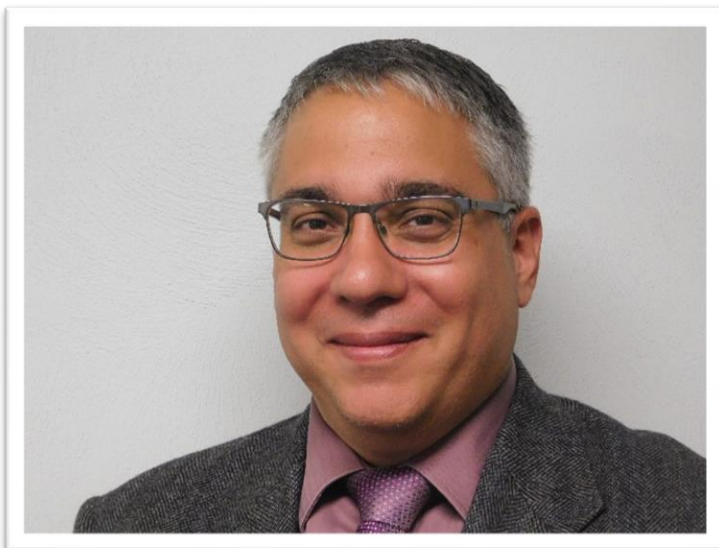
Thank You

Small Hands, Big Hearts wishes to thank all who participated in the Yard Sale, which garnered a total of \$2,600 for its designated charity: The LEEK Preserve, a hunting and fishing retreat for wounded warriors. Thank you for donating, helping or participating by purchasing good bargains!



PASTOR VACANCY BEING ADDRESSED

The Advisory Council is scheduled to meet again on Tuesday, Sept. 27. Part of the planned discussion will include ongoing needs and responsibilities surrounding the vacancy created with Pastor Jason's resignation. On Sunday, Oct. 9, Rev. Jim Kelsey, of ABCNYS will be in the sanctuary and will be speaking to the congregation about the process of calling a new pastor. Please plan to attend so that you may be well-informed.



THE PASTOR'S PAGE

Dear friends and family of Olean First Baptist Church,

I want you to know just how grateful I am to have served alongside of you these past few years. You have been my brothers and sisters in Christ, my support in times of crisis and my friends. I have entrusted my children to your care and you have not disappointed me. As a father and as a pastor I have watched them grow in their understanding of God's love and take their first steps in faith. Thank you for being a strong example of Christ to them and to me.

I have treasured our moments of ministry together, and sitting with you sharing a meal or a cup of coffee. I loved being your teacher and preaching the Word of God to you each Sunday. It has been a deep honor to care for you in times of grief and celebration.

On days I missed an opportunity to serve you or times I may have unintentionally caused offense, I apologize. We are all made in the image of God, but also all fall short of His glory. I will carry no resentments with me as I leave this church.

I do feel led to leave you with this thought. "Finally, brothers, whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is just, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is commendable, if there is any excellence, if there is anything worthy of praise, think about these things." (Ephesians 4:8)

Just as no human is perfect, there is no church that is perfect. Olean First Baptist Church is a good, God honoring congregation and I believe He is pleased with our worship and our service to our

community, but we are a collection of human beings and far from perfect. We have all fallen short of God's glory and at times we have stepped on each other's toes or have been less than our best to one another. It is easy to feel hurt. I have learned the unspoken history of this church and I know there are pains and resentments.

It is very normal to dwell on these things, but God is calling us not just to be normal. He is calling us to be the image of Christ Jesus, the one who could forgive even those who were crucifying him. Don't dwell on what is broken, but think on the ways the members of our church have been true, honorable, just, pure, lovely, commendable and excellent. Don't ignore what is broken. Seek ways to fix it, find healing and forgiveness, but dwell on what is good, because that is God at work through our church's congregation.

My stepping away has created a lot of work and uncertainty for our future, but I know the leaders of this church and I know they will do all they can to see you through this time of transition. I will always treasure this time of ministry with you and will continually hold you and Olean in my prayers.

Your servant in Christ,

Pastor Jason Hladik

***Goodbyes are not forever,
Goodbyes are not the end.
They simply mean, "I'll miss
you; until we meet again."***

--Author Unknown



*We'll miss you,
too, Pastor,
including your
openness to ideas
and being a
good sport!*

National Collection Week
Nov. 14–21, 2022



As you are likely aware, 2022 continues to present unusual, unprecedented, and even unstable supply chain issues, shortages in materials, and increases in prices across nearly every spectrum. Samaritan's Purse remains committed to wise stewardship of the resources God has provided. Due to these rising costs, we unfortunately find the need to raise the price of our preprinted shoeboxes. Beginning today, Aug. 30, our specially designed preprinted plastic shoeboxes will be available for \$23 per carton of 12. Our cardboard shoeboxes will be available for \$33 per package of 50. You also may notice increased shipping costs when you place your order. In 2022 a year of community and personal challenges, in God's beauty, mercy, grace and provision; millions of children around the world will receive a personal shoebox gift that will deliver the Good News and Great Joy of Jesus Christ, as God promised is for **ALL people**.

Thank you for your support

God Bless

Sharon Anthony ☩



Coming Up in November:

- ❖ Music Sunday, Giving Thanks Dinner/Advent Kick-Off—tentatively scheduled Nov. 6.
- ❖ Veteran's Day Sunday, Nov. 13.
- ❖ Operation Christmas Child Collection Days, Nov. 14-21.
- ❖ Hanging of the Greens/Pizza, Nov. 20



THE OCTOBER BOARD MEETINGS

will be held on:

Sun. Oct 9 @ Noon: Board of Christian Mission

Tues. Oct. 11 @ 6:30 PM:

Board of Christian Education

Diaconate, Trustees



CHURCH OFFICE HOURS

MONDAY thru FRIDAY

9:00 a.m. – Noon

Morning Devotions approximately 9:00-9:30

During our transition as we seek a new pastor, if you stop by and find "nobody home", we ask for your patience and understanding. We will do our best to be here during posted office hours.)

Sunday Worship: 9:30 a.m.

Sunday School: 11:00 a.m.

PHONE: 372-5151

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WEBSITE: oleanfirstbaptist.com

FACEBOOK: [oleanfirstbaptistchurch](https://www.facebook.com/oleanfirstbaptistchurch)

PLEASE KEEP US INFORMED

If you've had an important event in your life such as a birth, death, wedding, or an accomplishment, or if you can provide an update to a prayer concern, please let us know in the church office. We like to acknowledge everyone's special moments but we need your help to make sure that we have the correct information. It is also imperative that you let us know when you or a loved one are going to be in the hospital and would like to be visited. Current privacy laws make it difficult to know who is hospital.



THE MODERATOR'S MUSINGS

The Moderator's Musings

Well, here we are at
another edition of the monthly

newsletter and the Moderator is on the road *again*!! As I write this edition, I am sitting on the back patio of Larry & Karen Benka's home in Houston, TX. [Larry & Karen asked me to pass along a "Hello" or "Howdy" to all who remember them. Consider it passed!] Penny and I are near the end of our latest journey that took us to Phoenix, AZ, across New Mexico and most of Texas. In last month's edition I commented on the beauty and power of the ocean while we were in Nags Head, NC. This latest journey took us through more of God's creations... the desert, the mountains, incredibly flat high plains, and other fantastic scenery!! I was struck by the wide range of terrains we experienced and how vastly different the desert is from the Atlantic coast. Yeah... yeah... I know. Pretty obvious... but to experience these less than a month apart was striking! The sunset over the desert was just as breathtaking as the sunrise or sunset over the Atlantic! Wonderfully different, yet equally beautiful!! Much the same as it is with God's people!! We are also so incredibly different, but we are equally beautiful in God's eyes. Each of us brings different gifts, different opinions, and different life experiences to the table. That diversity of thought and experience can be a tremendous asset, but it can also be a destructive curse. Much depends on how open or closed-minded people are. A willingness to compromise or lack thereof can make or break any organization. As more and more demand to have things "their way", unity and togetherness become impossible to achieve.

I can almost hear you thinking, "Oh no! Here he goes again on the unity theme." Yes, I know I can sound like a broken record... or a scratched CD... or an intermittent streaming broadcast (some might not remember records or CDs), but I feel that unity is incredibly important... especially in a church that is going through a difficult transition. And the transition isn't just the changing of our senior pastor. That is daunting enough, but we also must recognize that our church is NOT what it was 20 or even 10 years ago. Gone are the days when we could claim 700+ members (though I admit being skeptical about that number) or 300+ attendees at our Sunday service. We rarely crack the 100 mark during Sunday worship

these days... other than maybe on Easter or Christmas. As Bob Dylan wrote, "The times, they are a changing!!" Olean's population is no longer over 20,000. The number, I believe, is hovering around 13,000. There are also more churches in the Olean area than at any time in the past, so spread fewer people over more churches and the size of each congregation drops. Further, unfortunately, and this is probably our biggest concern, church is no longer a priority to a growing number of people. This is further exacerbated by the increasing amount of other activities that folks can do on a Sunday morning... like going shopping... or participating in youth sports... or simply watching a church service on TV or the internet. Yep. There are lots and lots of reasons why church attendance and church membership has dropped. The times, the folks, they are a changing.

So... what is the future of Olean First Baptist Church? I wish I knew... but I don't. At times, I see a promising future, but more often than not I see a church in continual decline, that will ultimately close unless something *dramatic* happens. I truly hate to be so negative, but unless our church leadership and our congregation can put aside their differences... unless we can find common ground and a unified sense of direction... unless we seriously come to grips with the realities of our situation, I do not believe Olean First Baptist Church will exist all that much longer. I hope... I pray to God that I am wrong.

In closing, I will soon be stepping down as Moderator, having been in this office for nearly 5 years. It has been a privilege to serve, and it has been my pleasure to write these articles for the last few years. I have a couple more articles to write and I will try to make those more uplifting than this edition... but I felt compelled to write this article at this time.

I remain your brother in Christ,
-Jim Sorokes, Moderator

**Where there is unity there is
always victory.**

--Publilius Syrus

