

MAY 2025

“Striving to be the Church of Jesus Christ Where Every Member is a Minister”



AT FIRST BAPTIST

Interim Senior Pastor
Ivan Crossno
Secretary; Keyboards
Penny Sorokes

Minister of Music
Sue Neely VanBrunt
Audio Visual Specialist
Casey Sage
Custodian
Rachel Green

PHONE: 716- 372-5151

EMAIL: offbc133@gmail.com

WEBSITE: oleanfirstbaptist.com

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

Sunday Worship: 9:30 a.m.

Sunday School for All Ages: 11:00 a.m.



Our Board of Trustees is asking all of those who would like to offer some of their time and talents to help with our annual property and facilities clean-up. **“Clean-Up Days will take place on May 3, with a second scheduled for Saturday, June 7.** Work will begin at or around 9:00 am. In the event of inclement weather, we will work indoors. If the weather cooperates, we’ll have teams working both indoors and outdoors. There is a lot of work to be done so we need a large number of volunteers.

NOTE: Even if you cannot do manual labor, you might be able to help with delivering drinks or arranging food or getting tools, etc., so don’t assume you can’t help! Hope to see you then!



Memorial Day is a time to remember and honor military personnel who died in the service of our country, especially those who died in battle or as a result of wounds sustained in battle. The first “Decoration Day” was celebrated on May 30, 1868 at Arlington Cemetery.

Join with us on Sunday, May 25, as we honor the brave men and women from our country who have given the ultimate sacrifice for our freedoms. The Diaconate has planned a special tribute.

MOTHER’S DAY MAY 11



Mother’s Day is always a special occasion at First Baptist. The Board of Christian Education will have gifts for all of the mothers in our congregation. We’re hoping for a special refreshment following services, too!

GENESIS HOUSE ANNUAL SALE

The annual geranium sale is underway at Genesis House. This is the biggest fundraiser for our homeless shelter. The sale includes top-quality geraniums and hanging baskets. Order by May 8 at www.genesishouseofolean.org or by calling 716-373-3354. Pick up will be Thursday, May 15 from 10:00 to 2:00 at Forness Park in Olean. Geraniums are available in 4 ½” pots for \$7.00 in Red, White, Pink, Coral and Fuchsia. 10” Hanging Baskets of mixed flowers are \$32.00.



THE FAMILY OF GOD



We extend our **LOVE AND SYMPATHY** to Brian Sanders on the passing of his mother, Kay, on April 5.

CONGRATULATIONS TO:

Katie DeGross – accepted to Jamestown Community College – Jamestown Campus – with a swimming scholarship; **Leah O'Dell** – accepted to Jamestown Community College – Olean Campus; and **Cheyenne Rust** – accepted to Houghton University. We are all very proud of each of you and wish you all the best in this exciting new chapter of your life!



Join other FBC men at Perkins Restaurant in Olean at 11:45 am on Tuesdays for a weekly men's lunch.

Do we have your Birthday?...

Anniversary?.....

Current Address?....

Phone Number ?....

Email address?

**Please contact the church office
At 372-5151 or
ofbc133@gmail.com
to provide updated information**

Dedicate a Service

If you would like to be a part of this important ministry at Olean First Baptist by dedicating a service in memory or honor of someone, a sign-up sheet is posted on the window for 2025 dates. This is such a nice way to honor or remember someone on a special occasion.

Newsletter Deadline

Information and articles for the JUNE edition of At First Baptist are due to the church office by
THURSDAY, MAY 15

REMINDER: FOOD PANTRY DONATIONS ARE ACCEPTED MONTHLY IN THE COLLECTION BIN LOCATED IN THE LOBBY. YOUR GENEROUS OFFERINGS ARE APPRECIATED.



MAY BIRTHDAYS

2 Terry Schnell
Sue Neely VanBrunt
Jack Crowley
4 Frank Snyder
9 Sue Keim
Nancy Taylor
10 Jim Sorokes
11 Gwen Tyler
12 Mike Schultz
19 Elsa Porcello
21 Paul Cummings
Dawn Snyder
23 Nan Torrey
24 Faith Boyce
30 Jerry Nutt Jr.
Fiora Porcello



MAY ANNIVERSARIES



16 Jim & Penny Sorokes
27 Mike & Lori Funden
29 Dan & Terri McDowell

PULPIT COMMITTEE UPDATE

Yes, we are still working to find the next Senior Pastor for Olean FBC.

We haven't had any progress with the traditional approach through ABC/NYS so we have recently expanded our search options to include some on-line search sites. While these sites have yielded some resumes, we haven't yet located the one that we feel God has in mind for us. Please continue to keep the Committee, the process and the person that is meant to be here in your prayers.



**PASTORAL
SEARCH COMMITTEE**

Penny Sorokes, Pam Nutt,
Linda Longo, Laurie MacNeill,
Jamie Riesdorph, Eli Rust,
Dave Torrey, Judy Wightman



I am not particularly good at writing newsletter articles. You would not think that would be the case since I have written sermon manuscripts for decades and still write them today. But, for some reason not known to mortal man (that is me if you don't know it) I struggle with these articles. I think I waver between saying way too much and not saying enough. So, this is a plea for mercy as I offer these thoughts to you today.

I was reading our devotional guide graciously given to all of us by the Board of Christian Education called Come Alive. In the reading for Palm Sunday the author asks, 'Can you imagine what must have been going through the mind of Jesus?' Good question. From all the outward trappings of the crowd and the spreading of garments and waving palm branches coupled with the shouting messianic charged words like Hosanna, you would think things could not have been better for Jesus. I'm sure his disciples certainly thought so. Their dream, indeed, the dream of the entire nation, for a 'son of David' to be the Messianic King, seemed to be on the verge of being fulfilled. What a day!

But the author of our study guide rightly points out that Jesus knew what was coming at the end of this seeming glorious week. And what was coming? Betrayal and the Cross. So, if I had been writing the devotional for Palm Sunday I might have given it the title: It's Sunday, but Friday is coming! I think I even preached a sermon years ago with that title. It is a spin off the great sermons preached by S.M. Lockridge and Tony Campollo titled It's Friday, But Sunday is Coming. You can see the incredible difference in focus. One begins with all things good but ending in horrible tragedy and death. The other begins in horrible tragedy and death and ends in all things good because of the Resurrection of Jesus Christ.

As we move through the week of Easter and following, we need to hold these two thoughts together: It's Sunday, but Friday is Coming and It's Friday, but Sunday is Coming. They are essential to our faith as Christians and in some ways frame our lives in this world. What do I mean? Just a few quick words. For our faith Sunday required Friday for you and I to experience salvation. The Cross will fulfill the image of the

Passover Lamb and Day of Atonement. The death of Christ will satisfy God's righteous justice and purchased mercy for us. Dying on our behalf, Jesus died the death we deserved. When we acknowledge our need for forgiveness through repentance and believe in Christ's sufficient sacrifice, we are given the gift of mercy. Yes, Friday was required!

But Friday without Sunday would have been futile and accomplished nothing. Without the Resurrection we would have had sympathy without victory and justification. Satan, the great adversary, would have won. Without the Resurrection death would remain the final enemy. By our Lord's triumph in the Resurrection, Jesus has taken the fear and sting out of death. It has become the downpayment of what we will all experience on the Great Final Day—the Eschaton.

But, to tickle your mind a little, let me suggest that I have found life to follow the pattern of It's Sunday but Friday is Coming and It's Friday, but Sunday is Coming. I can remember in my life when all things were just glorious, sort of a Palm Sunday kind of day—but only have that glorious day come crashing down in family illness and loss. Have you been there? I also have been standing surrounded in my life with the broken pieces of hurt, pain, and loss, only to have the

God who raised Jesus from the death bring healing and wholeness and, yes, even victory despite the losses, indeed, even through them. Have you been there? Yes it was Friday but Sunday was coming. I have in those times experienced what Paul was trying to say in Romans 8:35-39. Well, think about these words and grant mercy to your pastor—poor old thing, he can go on so!

~Pastor Ivan



Linda Kennemuth is the contact person for our church **PRAYER CHAIN**. If you would like to be included in the circulation or if you have a prayer concern to share, please contact Linda at chico.lindy@gmail.com or 716-904-0860.

BOARD OF CHRISTIAN EDUCATION EVENTS:



IT'S ALMOST CAMP TIME!

Are you in **grades K–12 this fall**? Looking for a week full of **faith, fun, and friendship**? Join us for an unforgettable experience at **Camp JYC** in Franklinville, NY! Each week is packed with Bible learning, outdoor adventure, and time to grow closer to Jesus — and to each other!

Camp Dates:

- **Teen Camp:** July 6–11
(For students finishing grades 7–11)
- **Discovery Camp:** July 13–18
(For students finishing grades 3–6)
- **Adventure Camp:** July 20–25
(For students finishing grades 5–11)
- **Little Scouts Day Camp:** July 28–30 | 9:30 AM – 3:00 PM
(For students finishing grades K–2)

The cost to our campers is just \$25. The rest is generously covered by **First Baptist Church**. Payment is due at registration. **Registration Deadline: June 1st** Sign-up info is available outside the Board of Education office. **Scholarships are available!** **Want to Sponsor a Camper?** You can help send one of our young people to camp! Contact any member of the **Board of Education** for details.

WHAT'S NEXT AFTER WORSHIP?

Come for the Message — Stay for the Connection. Looking for a **meaningful way to spend your Sunday morning** after worship? Why not stick around and join one of our **Faith & Fellowship groups**?



We offer something for **everyone**: Engaging small groups for **adults and youth**



Fun and nurturing **Sunday School classes** for our youngest learners

It all begins at **11:00 AM**, giving you plenty of time to **grab a snack or a beverage** (thanks to our amazing Hospitality Committee!) and find a spot to settle in. Not sure which group is the best fit? No worries! Just stop by and chat with a **Board of Education member** — we'd love to help you get connected. Let's grow in faith, build friendships, and walk this journey together.

First Sunday Luncheon – May 4th at 12 PM

The Board of Education would like to invite everyone to our next luncheon. We're asking everyone to bring their **favorite salad** — get creative! Pasta salad, fruit salad, leafy greens, potato salad, or even that one wild recipe you only bring out for potlucks. Bring it on! **The Board of Education will provide the main dish**, so just bring a salad to share and your appetite for fellowship.

Sign-up sheets are located on the Board of Education bulletin board.

Our **June Luncheon** will be moved to **June 8th** due to **Children & Youth Sunday** — mark your calendars now!

Let's gather, grow, and give thanks together.





Reminder, we are accepting pictures for our Military Wall of Honor. If someone in your family or circle of friends is currently serving in a branch of the US Military, please bring a picture (up to 5x7) and address for the bulletin board in the lobby so that we can put a name with a face to offer a more personal prayer for safety and send a card or note of thanks to them. It is important that we don't forget those who are allowing us the freedoms that we enjoy every day.



A NEW CHURCH SAFETY POLICY

In response to a review of our church insurance

policy and a discussion with the church's legal counsel, the Board of Trustees decided to assemble a safety policy to impose some restrictions on the activities that church staff and volunteers can perform within the church and on church premises. These rules are being instituted to ensure the safety of those working around the church. All the provisions in the policy are consistent with those imposed by other organizations. The full policy is posted on the bulletin board in the church office. Copies can be made available upon request.

The Board recognizes that the policy is not perfect and further revisions and additions will likely be needed in time. However, we felt it was necessary to get an initial version released to address several unsafe practices that have been reported/observed. Regarding our motivation, first and foremost, we do not want to see anyone get hurt while offering their time and talents to the church. However, the church's annual insurance premium has "skyrocketed" over the past two years. Should a claim be filed against the church because of an injury that occurred due to unsafe practices, our premium would increase even further OR we might not be able to find an insurance provider that is willing to cover our church.

If you have any questions about this policy, please contact Matt Sage, Chair of the Board of Trustees.



Church World Blanket Program

"And don't forget to do good and share with those in need." (Hebrews 13:16)

For over 75 years, Church World Service has been helping people of faith bring God's hope and healing to people in the U.S. and around the world. When difficult times happen, a kind and loving response can make all the difference. That's why the CWS Blankets program was created—to give a kind, loving and tangible response to someone facing a difficult time, reminding them that they are not alone. Join other generous donors and provide comfort and warmth to our neighbors in need. Over the decades, the specifics of their programs have shifted and evolved. The CWS family has grown. And their foundation of collaboration and welcome has remained unshakable. We proudly serve as the toolbox that our neighbors near and far use to build healthy, dignified and safe lives. Here are a few examples: Our congregation is actively involved with the Church World Blanket Program. For many years, our church has been helping to keep their neighbors warm by providing blankets to families here in the United States. Our church will be taking special donation offerings on May 4 and May 11 (Mother's Day) to help provide blankets and other emergency items to the families who are devastated. Please stop by the table in the foyer and make a donation.



MAY BOARD MEETING SCHEDULE

Sunday, May 4

Board of Christian Missions

Monday, May 12

@ 5:30 pm - Board of Christian Education

Tuesday, May 13

@ 6:30 pm - Board of Trustees

Sunday, May 18

@ 12:15 pm - Diaconate

Tuesday, May 27

@ 6:30 pm – Advisory Council



THE ASSISTANT MODERATOR'S MUSINGS

So much to write about... so little time!! As I sit down to write this

month's edition of the Musings, we are in the midst of Holy Week... or Passion Week... or Easter Week... whatever name you want to apply to the days leading up to Easter. By the time you read this, Easter 2025 will be in the past and we will be counting down the days to Pentecost...or will we? Will our thoughts be on the incredible happenings that Sunday morning near Jerusalem... that Jesus the Christ arose from the dead... defeated death... and ensured eternal life for all who believe in Him??? Or will we be thinking about what we are going to do with all the Easter candy, colored eggs, dinner leftovers? Will our focus be on what is awaiting us at work... or that upcoming doctor's appointment... or figuring out what that weird noise is coming from under the hood of our car... or who the Bills will take in the NFL draft??? Will the crush of daily life push aside any thoughts about what we were to celebrate over the prior week... Maundy Thursday... Good Friday... A seemingly endless Saturday... before morning broke on Resurrection Sunday??

An event that rocked our world should keep our attention for more than a few days, eh? But in our world today, so many are totally clueless about what Jesus did... what He said... what He taught... what His life, death, and resurrection truly means for those who believe. And that is incredibly sad! Yeah... yeah... yeah... you've heard or read it all before. If only more people were to following Jesus... live as He would have us live... what a wonderful world this would be!

But how will others ever know the Good News if no one tells them?? Each day we read more and more articles about how people are falling away from the church... not seeing the value in belonging... finding other things to do on their Sunday mornings. And yet they feel a void in their lives. They crave meaning or purpose. And many are lonely... seeking fellowship or friendships. But for some reason, they don't see church or Christianity as the answer. Why is that??? Why is it so difficult for the unchurched to try church??? What must the "churched" do to reach the "unchurched"??? How do we make them feel the need to attend?? If you were in their position, what would you want to see... want to hear... want to feel??? If you were in their shoes... if you could see

church through their eyes... OK... if you are looking for answers here, you will be very disappointed, because I don't know the answers... but maybe if we put our heads together, we could come up with some. The Seekers Class has been delving into questions like these and will continue to do so for another few weeks. If you'd like to join in the conversations, stop in on Sunday morning after the worship service. We can use all the clever ideas we can get!!

Grabbing another gear, a few weeks ago a stranger wearing hospital garb entered our sanctuary with his belongings and sat down in the front row. After the worship service, several folks approached him, looking to provide support and to show Christian compassion. They discovered that the man had just gotten out of the hospital and needed a ride home. The natural Christian instinct was to do whatever we could to help. Ultimately Pastor Ivan drove him home. But here's the rest of the story. The pastor of this man's home church called the following day to warn us that the man was mentally unstable, that the Wellsville church had a restraining order against him and that he is not allowed on their church property because he becomes very violent if he does not get what he wants. In short, we were very lucky that he didn't become violent at our church or in Pastor Ivan's vehicle and hurt someone... like Pastor Ivan. The takeaway here is that we need to be careful in how we approach and deal with strangers. In our desire to help, we might trigger a response we don't want or expect if we ultimately can't deliver on our promises. Sad but true!!

On a personal note, congratulations to Deb Wuethrich for getting her latest book published. I know how long she worked on that book and how much she struggled to get it finished. And she even made the front page of the Olean Times Herald! Way to go, Deb!!

Listening to that still small voice,

-Jim Sorokes

Assistant Moderator