



WINDOW

FEBRUARY 2026

The Monthly Newsletter of
First Presbyterian



From the Pastor....

I admit it, I am really feeling the countdown to retirement. Or, as I have been calling it, graduation! And it is a graduation, of sorts. You all have taught me so much and I will take it out into the world. Thank you! Like you, I have anxieties. What do I do on Sunday, April 12th? One of the hardest realities of retirement from ministry is that Barb and I can't come worship at First. I cannot do weddings and funerals. I cannot visit you in the hospital. I cannot take your calls to talk about the church. This is hard for me to write and perhaps hard for you to accept. Your job is to turn towards the new thing that God is doing. My job is to turn towards my new chapter and not to bring confusion or sow unintentional conflict.

If we see each other at the Community Center, Peden Stadium, the Convo, Donkey coffee, or on the street, OF COURSE we stop and greet and share what is going on in life. We will never stop caring for you all: "Blest be the tie that binds our hearts in Christian love!" And, frankly, when you call a new pastor that you are thrilled about, I may not want to hear about how great she is. How young and funny he is. How wonderful their sermons are and how swiftly the Session meetings fly by!! We will figure it out. Barb and I are so very grateful to you.

So, I wanted to give you a thumbnail sketch of the upcoming process.

Transition Update

The Session will meet with a liaison from the (Commission on Ministry) to learn what the steps are in the search process for a new pastor. In some ways it is a bit daunting. Yet, with the help and guidance of the Presbytery and common sense, it will all work out.

Here are the next steps:

1. My last Sunday is on April 5th. The Rev. Kathy Nice, our Executive Presbyter will preach on Sunday, April 12th.

2. Before then, the Session will call a Transitional (Interim) Pastor Nominating Committee. Working with the Presbytery, they will find a qualified pastor and make a recommendation to Session. Note: Finding a Transitional Pastor is an act of the Session not of the Congregation. A Transitional Pastor signs a contract for up to one year. Her or his job is to help the congregation get ready for the new called Pastor by listening and observing; guiding you into the next exciting stage. The hope is to have a Transitional Pastor either before my last Sunday or soon after.

3. The Nominating Committee works to form a Pastoral Search Committee (or Pastoral Nominating Committee). It is the hope of the Nominating Committee to find 7-9 persons who will say YES! to the awesome task of finding new pastoral leadership for First Presbyterian.

4. After the Congregation approves the Pastoral Search Committee, the committee will complete a Mission Study, fill out all the forms describing our church, and release it all into the world – and the search begins.

Calling a new pastor can take up to a year from the time the Search Committee begins its work. It will all come to fruition when their candidate, who has been approved by the Presbytery, preaches at First Presbyterian Church and the congregation votes. It will be one of the most wonderful days ever!

While the Search Committee has the awesome task of finding the new pastor, the rest of you have important work too. Keep coming to worship. Pray for the committee. Give generously and support the programs and mission and staff.

You are about to enter a Kairos time, an in-between time, a creative and slightly chaotic time... God time. It is not empty time. It is certainly not time to step back and just wait.

Grace and peace to you!

~Pastor Rob

*We are a Christian community of faith
that shares the love of God with all people everywhere."*

**Valentines “All Church” Breakfast
9:00 a.m. on Sunday, February 15th**

The FPC Valentine's Day Breakfast will be held at 9:00 a.m. Sunday, February 15th in Fellowship Hall. Bring your friends for this fun morning of food and fellowship. The Church Community Committee could use food contributions, and setup and cleanup helpers if you are able. Contact Sandy Nesbitt for details at sandynes@yahoo.com



ASH WEDNESDAY SERVICE

February 18th
5:30 p.m.

Ash Wednesday begins the season of Lent with a public act of confession and contrition. Acknowledging that all have sinned and fallen short of the glory of God, we stand in solidarity as fellow creatures before our Creator, acutely aware of our mortality. In the face of our mortality, we pledge ourselves anew to live unto God's Word in Jesus Christ, the eternal Word that remains forever.

Historically, Ash Wednesday was a time when penitents were presented for church discipline during Lent, culminating in reconciliation on Maundy Thursday. Ash Wednesday is also the occasion when would-be disciples of Christ known as catechumens were enrolled in the catechumenate, a special time of learning the basics of the faith in preparation for baptism on Easter Sunday or during the Easter Vigil. In some traditions, Ash Wednesday is a fast day, beginning the Lenten time of fasting and preparation for the Great Three Days that culminate in Easter.

February 2026 Worship
First Reading (Liturgist) - *Italics* - Sermon Text

February 1 To welcome the stranger

First Reading Micah 6:1-8

Psalm Psalm 15

Second Reading 1 Corinthians 1:18-31

***Gospel Matthew 5:1-12**

February 8 Jesus' stump speech

First Reading Isaiah 58:1-9a (9b-12)

Psalm Psalm 112:1-9 (10)

Second Reading 1 Corinthians 2:1-12 (13-16)

***Gospel Matthew 5:13-20**

February 15 View from the mountaintop

First Reading Exodus 24:12-18

Psalm Psalm 2

Alternate Psalm Psalm 99

Second Reading 2 Peter 1:16-21

***Gospel Matthew 17:1-9**

February 22 Humility and surrender

First Reading Genesis 2:15-17, 3:1-7

Psalm Psalm 32

Second Reading Romans 5:12-19

***Gospel Matthew 4:1-11**



Christian Education and Other Upcoming Events at FPC

Weekly

Sundays during Worship - Children's Sunday School - Grade school and pre-school children are invited to attend Sunday School during Worship. The pre-school children will be learning from the *Growing With Gratitude* series and the elementary class lessons are from the *Amazing Adventures* curriculum with stories about Jesus' ministry. The children will also be making valentines for shut-ins, and preparing for the season of Lent. If you have questions or would like to help please contact Barb Martin at barbaramartin729@msn.com or phone the church office at 740-593-3351. Lesson plans and materials will be provided for all volunteer teachers.

Fridays at noon - Women's Book Study - via Zoom - Join the Women's Book Study on Fridays at noon via Zoom as those attending discuss *The Sacred Art of Lovingkindness* by Rami Shapiro. For more information or to join, please contact Joan Nease at christianed@athensfpc.org or the church office at 740-593-3351.

Sunday, February 8th

Souper Bowl Sunday-Youth will collect donations for hunger relief

Sunday, February 15th

9:00 a.m. - Valentine's Day Breakfast



Upcoming Events

Shrove Tuesday Pancake Supper - 5:30-7:00 p.m.

Lent begins on Ash Wednesday - February 18th

Daylight Savings Time begins - March 8th

Palm Sunday - March 29th

Holy Week - March 29 - April 4th

Easter Sunday - April 5th

**First Presbyterian Church
helping neighbors
in need.**

Court Street Clothesline Donations for Winter Needs - The Christian Education Committee and Mission/Outreach Committee invite everyone to donate new winter gloves, mittens, hats, and scarves for the FPC winter clothesline. A collection box is in the entry way of the church. Warm clothes will be hung from a clothesline along the railing on the Court Street side of the church for people in need during cold weather.



FPC Church Elders:**2025** Adrienne Nagy, Andrew Stuart, and David Tees**2026** Sharon Huge, Linda Parsons, Jane Woodrow, and Hugh Woods**2027** Harvey Ballard, John King, Susan Loughridge, and Sandy Nesbitt**FPC Board of Deacons:****2025** Alan Boyd, Mary Costello, Kim Jordan, Becky Pankratz and Ellen Sostarich**2026** Helen King, Joyce Mullins, Harold Robison, Riley Smoot, and Ayse Suer**2027** Carolyn Allen, Margaret Bourke, Bobbi Conliffe, Lois Harkins, and Carol Perry**February is Blanket Month**

The Mission Committee of FPC is sponsoring the February Blanket+ Month program for Church World Service. CWS works in partnership with local communities to identify needs in various ways: blankets, tents, food and other emergency supplies; tools & seeds for refugees returning home to replant; wells for families living in drought prone areas; and literacy training/micro-credit for women struggling to realize their potential. Donations will be accepted during the month of February.



**Make checks payable to First Presbyterian Church
with "Blanket Fund" in the memo line.**

Please give to this worthy cause!

February Birthdays

2 – Tirza Costello

11 – Keith Morrow

26 – Jeff Brown
Barbara Culbertson

3 – Ellen Sostarich

14 – Benji Martin

6 – Jesse Yun

16 – Hannah Bierlein

7 – Scott Broadbent
Patrick Tegge

17 – Caroline Nagy

8 – Charlotte Wright

19 – Danny Moates
Carolyn Sutherland10 – Will Parks
David Roderick

24 – Mary Ellen Borchert

**There are no
February Anniversaries**

Mission Outreach Committee Diaper Project Continues

The Mission Outreach Committee continues the Diaper Project for some of the Mission Partners here in Athens: Athens County Food Pantry and Cat's Cupboard. There is a box in the Narthex for your donation of diapers. Many donate food, but the Committee realizes that diapers can be expensive when a person is food insecure.



Windows ON: Amesville/New England Parish THIS MONTH'S NEWS

The Ministry Committee of the Amesville-New England Parish met on Sunday, January 11, 2026. The following information was shared.

The Christmas Stocking Gift/Gould Memorial Fund - \$788 was received this year, and four gifts were given to individuals in the community, amounting to \$1100. \$500 was sent to the Presbytery of Scioto Valley to support the work of Mark Hare and Jenny Bent (and Keila and Anika) and their mission work in Costa Rica.

A Bean Soup Dinner will be held after church on March 15, 2026, to provide camperships and help with other camp expenses for Parish Camp to be held at Geneva Hills, June 21-26, 2026.

Volunteers for Parish camp, as well as counselors, are being recruited for this summer. Anyone interested in volunteering or being a camper should contact Catherine Hare, harecf@frontier.com or (740)

448-6401. The tentative theme for Bible study, morning watch, nature study, crafts is "Every Day is Earth Day."

Monday Bible School continues to meet at the Amesville Presbyterian Church from 4 to 5:30 when school is in session. The theme has been "Jesus Cares and so Should We." The group was responsible for decorating the church and Christmas tree and then removing the decorations after the Christmas Season.

These projects could not be accomplished were it not for the children and youth who happily carry out these tasks. In early December, a make-it-take-it afternoon was held, where gifts were made for family and friends. Volunteers for this event included: Marcia Burchby, Kathy Elasky, Barb and Steve Hays, Marjie Shew, Sue Jago, and Catherine Hare.

Mark Hare and Jenny Bent continue to serve in Costa Rica as mis-

sion workers for the Presbyterian Church (USA). Their support is being raised by the Presbytery of Scioto Valley, so that their commitment to the UBL (Latin American Biblical University) through June of 2027 can be fulfilled. Money has been raised to support Mark and Jenny through October, 2026.

Worship each Sunday at the Amesville Presbyterian Church is at 10:00 a.m. Come and visit!



Prayer Concern Requests and Visitation

Prayer request slips are available in the narthex. If you would like others in the church to pray for a person or for a concern near to your heart, place the slips in the Prayer Request box in the narthex. If you or someone you know would enjoy a visit from Pastor Rob and a Deacon, or appreciate receiving communion at home, contact the office 740-593-3351.

Need a ride to Church? Know someone who does?

Contact Riley Smoot, Deacon of the Month

Email - rileysmoot@gmail.com

Church Office (740) 593-3351



Windows ON: Transition Lenten Soup and Study

2026 LENTEN SOUP AND STUDY

Dinner 5:30 p.m. – 6:00 p.m.

Study – 6:00 p.m. – 7:00 p.m.

Tuesday, February 24th

Tuesday, March 3rd

Tuesday, March 10th

Tuesday, March 17th

Tuesday, March 24th

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This Transition Lenten Study is an opportunity to listen and share together in discerning strengths for our shared ministry. The study involves gathering data and information about the church. It is broadly framed by these three questions:

- 1. Where have we been? (Our history,)
- 2. Where are we now? (Our current realities.)

3. Where do we believe God is calling us? (A sense of our vision for the future.)

According to Presbyterian polity, there are distinct responsibilities for the congregation, session, and presbytery during the transition between pastors. Following the departure of a pastor a mission study is conducted prior to a new pastor receiving a call.

- The Congregation: The congregation's responsibility is to participate faithfully in the mission study, and to pray regularly for those leading the congregation. During this time, the congregation may choose to study the basics of Presbyterian polity as outlined in the Book of Order.
- The Session: The Session is responsible for appointing the mission study team/task force,

naming a moderator, and providing necessary funding and resource support, and for maintaining open communication with the Presbytery of Scioto Valley Commission on Ministry. The team appointed by Session should be inclusive of the diversity of the congregation in terms of race, ethnicity, age, sex, disability, geography, or theological conviction.



### College Lunch News

College lunches continue this semester on Thursday from 11:30 to 1:00 p.m. Lee Gregg continues to serve as the food coordinator with the wonderful volunteers who cook and serve each week. If you are interested in helping to cook, serve, clean-up or just drop in to visit with the students contact Lee or give a call to the church office at (740) 593-3351.

## Windows ON: Christian Education Committee

### “SOUPER” BOWL SUNDAY

It began in 1990, a simple prayer: "Lord, even as we enjoy the Super Bowl football game, help us be mindful of those who are without a bowl of soup to eat" was delivered to a small youth group at Spring Valley Presbyterian Church in Columbia, SC led by Brad Smith, who was serving as a seminary intern at the time.

This gave birth to an idea. Why not harness the energy and enthusiasm of Super Bowl weekend, a time when people come together for football, food and fun, to unite the nation for a higher good? Individuals and groups could collect dollars in

soup pots and canned food for those in need and send every dollar and food donation DIRECTLY to a local charity of THEIR choice.

The first year they invited 22 churches to join them and raised \$5,700 for local charities.

This year the youth of Athens First are inviting congregation members to donate to local hunger causes. The youth will be available in person to collect donations on February 8th following worship. Congregation members unable to attend can send a check made out to Athens First to the

church office at 9 North College, Athens, OH 45701, marked Souper Bowl in the memo line. The youth will decide on the local ministry to receive the funds and plan for future service in the Athens community. Together we can alleviate some of the need in Athens County.



### SHROVE TUESDAY PANCAKE SUPPER

February 17th from 5:30-7:00 p.m.  
Fellowship Hall

Who doesn't like breakfast for dinner? Come and celebrate Fat Tuesday or Shrove Tuesday on February 17th, beginning at 5:30 p.m. in Fellowship Hall with pancakes and sausage for dinner. There will be King Cake to enjoy for dessert.



The name Shrove comes from the old word "shrive" which means to confess. In the Middle Ages, people would confess their sins on Shrove Tuesday to begin the penitent Lenten season with a clean slate. Shrove Tuesday is a day of celebration as well as repentance. Lent is historically a time of giving things up, so Shrove Tuesday is the last chance to indulge. Pancakes are eaten on this day because they contain fat, butter, and eggs (significant, flavorful food groups which were forbidden during Lent).

### 2026 Per Capita

Presbytery of Scioto Valley

Total Per Capita for 2026 is \$46.00 and was approved by the Presbytery of Scioto Valley as follows:

Presbytery of Scioto Valley \$31.34  
Synod of the Covenant \$3.40  
General Assembly \$11.26

Your financial support makes a difference and is a vital part of the connectional church. We are grateful beyond measure!

**Presbyterians advocate for Haitian neighbors as a federal judge blocks, for now, an end to temporary protective status.****Presbyterian News Service****Cindy Corell, Global Ecumenical Liaison**

A federal judge on Monday blocked the Trump administration from terminating temporary protective status for Haitians. The decision came a day before this program, a safe haven from deportation, was expected to end. A spokesperson for Department of Homeland Security said on social media that the government would appeal the decision to the U.S. Supreme Court.

In Springfield, Ohio, where 15,000 Haitian people depend on the program, the worse news was that later in the week, they expected that federal detention officers would come to town to begin deportations. Even in the midst of this fear though clergy and worshipers of many faiths from Springfield to Spokane, Washington, surrounded neighbors in love and advocacy. St. John Missionary Baptist Church in Springfield, Ohio, Filled to standing-room-only Monday morning.

With hundreds in the pews, clergy of many faiths stood near the front. Others were scattered among the crowd. They prayed. They sang. Beyond the worship, advocacy endures. Temporary protective status offers immigrants legal standing, worker permits and protection from deportation. It first was offered to Haitian immigrants living in the U.S. after the 2010 catastrophic earthquake that destroyed much of the capital city, Portau-Prince, and other cities.

The Rev. Jody Noble, pastor of Covenant Presbyterian Church in Springfield, was among the many clergy present Monday morning. "I am so grateful for the court's extension of TPS and this opportunity for our Haitian brothers and sisters to live safely here in our country," she said on Monday evening. "I also recognize that TPS was still in force when ICE actions in major cities occurred and ask for the continued prayers for God's peace to reign in our communities," she added. The scope of the community's outreach for their Haitian neighbors was vast, Noble said. "We also had a two-hour prayer time [Sunday] evening where we thought 50 people from our canopy churches would come," Noble said. "And we had more than 150 people from a wide variety of churches in Springfield and Clark County."

Like they have in years past, the community of Springfield is standing up for their neighbors. Not that long ago, this former manufacturing municipality faced enormous economic issues. As companies left, so did the jobs. With too few jobs available, workers had to leave. Local leaders revitalized downtown and attracted more companies. By then they had jobs, but no workers. So, the city invited immigrants to fill the positions, and the immigrants from Haiti were happy to oblige.

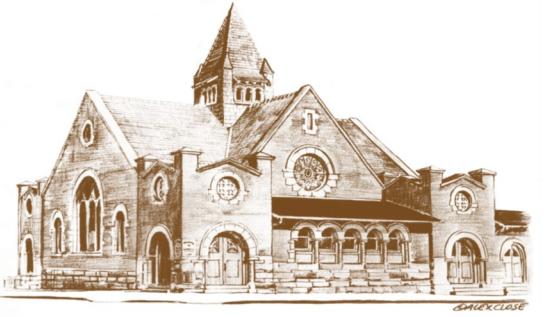
They did more than just fill the jobs. They opened businesses, spent money locally, and bought homes. Springfield thrived. As many as 20,000 people from Haiti, many of them on TPS, settled in Springfield and surrounding communities. Since then, they have opened at least 10 new businesses, including seven markets, restaurants, and a food truck. A number of them worship in two area Presbyterian churches as well as several other places of worship. The Federal Reserve Bank of Cleveland reported that Springfield economy saw the second-largest growth in Ohio since the pandemic. The city's economy grew 2.3% from February 2020 through March 2024. But life in Springfield has not been easy for immigrants from Haiti.

In September 2024, then-candidate for President Donald Trump amplified a now defunct claim by then-candidate for Vice President JD Vance that Haitians in Springfield were stealing and eating pets. Vance has since admitted this was a lie, but the damage was immediate. Schools in Springfield were closed; death threats were made and the Haitian community lived in fear. Should they be subject to ICE arrest, that fear is multiplied for all Haitians threatened with loss of TPS.

Community advocacy is essential, according to Catherine Gordon, representative for international issues with Presbyterian Office of Public Witness. "Local, public advocacy matters profoundly in moments like this," she said, "when people are being taken off the streets, families being torn apart. "Visible, collective action — showing up together, praying publicly, and standing alongside Haitian neighbors — is how communities refuse to normalize fear, abuse of power, and the violation of basic rights."

**First Presbyterian Church**  
**9 North College Street**  
**Athens, OH 45701**

**February 2026**



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<https://www.youtube.com/athensfpc>

**Pastor:** Rev. Dr. Robert E. Martin

**Church:** Corner of Court and Washington Streets  
**Office:** 9 North College Street

**Summer Office Hours:** Monday - Friday - 9:00 a.m.-1:00 p.m.

**Clerk of Session:** Andrew Stuart

**Choir Director:** David M. Tadlock

**Organist:** Janice Robison

**Bell Choir Director:** Peter Haley

**CE Co-Directors:** Richard and Joan Nease

**Administrative Assistant:** Debbie Perry

**Church Custodian:** Tom Medley

**Phone:** (740) 593-3351

**E-Mail:** [office@athensfpc.org](mailto:office@athensfpc.org)

**FAX:** (740) 593-3352

**Web:** [www.athensfpc.org](http://www.athensfpc.org)

**Worship Service:** In person service and can be seen live on YouTube. It is also recorded and under Worship Archives.

**Bible Study:** Tuesdays at 12:00 Noon in the church library and via Zoom

**March 2026 Newsletter Deadline**  
**Friday, February 20th**

**First Presbyterian Church, Athens, Ohio** - FPC has occupied its site in the center of Athens, Ohio since 1809. Among the founding fathers was Ohio University's first president, a Presbyterian minister, the Rev. Jacob Lindley. Dr. Lindley served this congregation as Moderator and Pastor until 1824. Over the years, thirteen pastors of the church have been either university presidents or members of the faculty. Dr. William Holmes McGuffey, author of the McGuffey's Readers, was called to serve as President of Ohio University and served as pastor of the church in 1839.

**Presbytery of Scioto Valley** - The Presbytery of Scioto Valley encompasses twenty-six counties in south central Ohio. From Ironton in the south to Iberia in the north; Hanover in the east and London in the west, FPC's presbytery consists of 95 congregations many of them historic where Presbyterians today are carrying on a long tradition of witness and service in their communities. All over FPC's presbytery, Presbyterians reach out to welcome the stranger, sharing the Gospel and God's love as Christ bids us to do.

**Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.)** - The PC (U.S.A.), with denominational offices in Louisville, Kentucky, has approximately 2.3 million members, more than 10,000 congregations and 14,000 ordained and active ministers.

Presbyterians trace their history to the 16th century and the Protestant Reformation. Its heritage, and much of its doctrine began with John Calvin (1509-1564), whose writings crystallized much of the Reformed thinking that preceded him.