



The Corner Stone

Stone Church ~ The Church on the Green

The purpose of Stone Church is to be an inviting, spiritual community of Christ, engaging in worship that inspires and challenges us to learn and grow as we reach out in caring and service, trusting in the love of God.

FEBRUARY 2026

WORSHIP AT STONE IN FEBRUARY

February 1, 2026 – 4th Sunday after Epiphany – The Lord's Supper

Micah 6:1-8 *What does the Lord require of us?*

Psalms 15 *Who may abide in God's sanctuary?*

1 Corinthians 1:18-31 *Christ, the power and wisdom of God.*

Matthew 5:1-12 *The Beatitudes.*

Sermon: "Too Clever By Half" – Pastor Scott Leonard preaching



February 8, 2026 – 5th Sunday after Epiphany (and Installation of Officers)

Isaiah 58:1-12 *God rejects false worship*

Psalms 112:1-10 *The blessings of the righteous*

1 Corinthians 2:1-16 *God's wisdom revealed through the Spirit*

Matthew 5:13-20 *Jesus has come to fulfill the law and prophets.*

Sermon: "Letter of the Law" – Pastor Scott Leonard preaching

February 15, 2026 Transfiguration Sunday – The Lord's Supper

Exodus 24:12-18 *Moses encounters the glory of God on mountain top*

Psalms 99 *Worship on God's holy mountain God bore witness to the truth on the mountain*

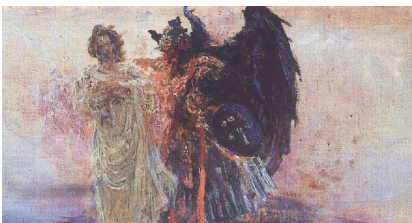
Matthew 17:1-9 *Jesus is transfigured on the mountain*

Helen Tracy preaching



February 18, 2026 – Pancake Supper and Ash Wednesday Service

A 6:00 p.m. Pancake Supper followed by a 7:00 p.m. candlelight service of prayer, silence and ashes.



February 22, 2026 – 1st Sunday in Lent

Genesis 2:15-17, 3:1-7 *The disobedience of Eve and Adam*

Psalms 32 *Blessed are those whose transgression is forgiven.*

Romans 5:12-19 *The sin of Adam and justification of Christ*

Matthew 4:1-11 *The temptation of Jesus*

Sermon: "Speak of the Devil" – Pastor Scott Leonard preaching

THE PASTOR'S

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R***The Long Night's Journey into Day***

"Why does February feel like one big Tuesday?" – Todd Stocker, author and pastor

While we here in Central New York are used to long winters, this season has been longer than most in a very long time ever since it started with a couple of feet of snow the day after Thanksgiving—and has not let up too much since then. So, by the time February rolls around many people are at wit's end (even if they sneaked down to Florida for a week break). Partly that's because we know even though the vernal equinox is next month that does not mean "spring" for us; we will still have snow on the ground.

The church calendar is a bit like that. Christmas seems so long ago and Easter is still far off. After Epiphany on January 6 (and the end of the season of Christmas), we are back to Ordinary Time until Ash Wednesday and the beginning of the season of Lent. But the date of Ash Wednesday is dependent on when Easter is and Easter is dependent on when the Paschal full moon is. Since that date varies, Easter Day floats between March 22 and April 25. Correspondingly, Ash Wednesday floats (40 regular days + 7 Sundays earlier) between February 4 and March 10. Like this year on February 18, around 72% of the time Ash Wednesday falls in February. But still, that variability can be unsettling. Why can't the dates be more regular, like Thanksgiving is always the fourth Thursday of November? While various reforms have been proposed, tradition dies hard.

But this variability is not random. The date for Easter is quite predictable—just not something you can do in your head. God is like this somewhat. God's actions aren't random, just not something we can set our watch to. While this can also be unsettling, it should also give us hope because we know as Christians that God is active in the world and in our lives. And it should also humble us that cannot put God in a box because as Jesus told his disciples in Acts 1:7, "It is not for you to know the times or periods that the Father has set by his own authority."

So, what are we to do? Well, the lectionary readings after Epiphany focus on Jesus's calling of disciples, the unfolding of his public ministry, and the dawning of God's light and salvation through him, leading from his Baptism (the first Sunday after Epiphany) to his Transfiguration (the Sunday before Ash Wednesday), showing how Christ's glory is revealed and calling believers to live out their own baptisms in preparation for Lent. The purpose then is to move from the manifestation of Christ (Epiphany) to the understanding and living out of his ministry. That is, it is for us to prepare ourselves for Lent by strengthening our baptismal covenant and focusing on Jesus as the light and way of salvation. For while the winter nights are long, we do see the light of day increasing daily. And that is one sign of hope to fortify us to the dawn of spring.

We then enter Lent on Ash Wednesday with ashes placed on our foreheads symbolizing our mortality and repentance ("ashes to ashes, dust to dust"). And we begin our journey to reflect, repent, and spiritually renew, drawing closer to Christ by detaching from worldly things. In that vein people often give up something like desserts, alcohol, or screen time. The value in doing so, though, should be to cause you to reflect: How dependent am I on drawing happiness from worldly things? How grateful am I that I have the luxury of giving up something temporarily when so many have no choice and are forced to do without indefinitely? What should I change to become more Christlike? This is also reflected in the traditional practices of prayer, fasting, and almsgiving.

We also will kick off our five-week ecumenical Lenten Study sponsored by the Clinton Area Ministerium on Wednesday 2/26/2026 at St. Mary's school starting with our traditional soup supper at 6:00 p.m. With the theme this year of "Faith and Imagination" Father Dan Caruso of St. Mary's appropriately enough will start us off with "Lenten Hymns and Prayers." It is not only a joy for us of different denominations to come together to search for Christ together but also vital as literally essential for life. Because in this hyper factionalized country we now live in, it is more important than ever that we come together as a *community* of believers. Not without our differences, but united in seeking to be the light that draws others to Christ by our example of living Christ-like lives, that is, a life lived by letting love shape every choice you make, especially when it costs you something.

So let us go forth with lives that are compassionate, self-giving, and courageous.

Shalom,

Scott

Historical Period Revisited---A Glimpse into Stone Church's Past

Our Christmas Service at Stone Church

For many years our church has had an evening Christmas Eve service that has been wonderfully presented and attended and this year was no exception. The service is coordinated between Scott Leonard and Rob Kolb. Scott had a script ready for the group to present the Christmas Story and with the help of both Rob and Lauralyn Kolb leading the wonderful choir part of the service.

As the story is told, those participating, light candles while the choir adds selected songs to accompany the Christmas story, both in script and music by the wonderful choir in superb assimilation and coordination. Each year the service gets better, is well attended and appreciated. This year was no exception. Thanks to all who participated in the beautiful Christmas Eve Program.

The Christmas Eve program is a great way to wish old friends in the church a Merry Christmas!

CLINTON AREA MINISTERIUM LENTEN SERIES

Tuesdays at 6:00 p.m. at St. Mary's School



Lenten Soup & Study Series: Faith & Imagination

Join us and Clinton church neighbors on **Wednesdays in Lent at 6:00 p.m.** at St. Mary's Catholic Church school on Prospect St. for a **tasty soup supper** and exploration of faith and imagination. In this Lenten season, we will listen together for how God might speak to us in our own imaginations and one another's. Each session stands alone, so all are welcome to join as able.

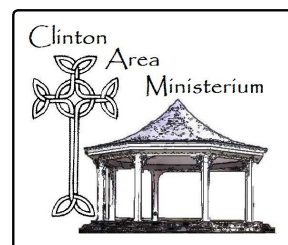
Feb 25: Lenten Hymns & Prayers – Fr. Dan Caruso

Mar 4: Watercolor Prayers – Mtr. Joanna Benskin

Mar 11: Service Bulletin Blackout Poems – The Rev. Abel Roy

Mar 18: Faith & Poetry – The Rev. Janet Griffiths

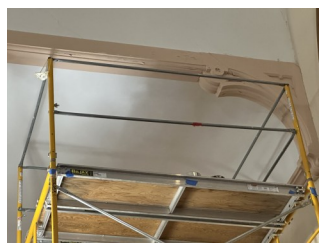
Mar 25: Jesus as Storyteller – Pastor Scott Leonard



Christ
is the center
of our *Home*
a guest at every *Meal*
a silent *Listener*
to every conversation

PROPERTY COMMITTEE REPORT

You may have noticed that there is some scaffolding in the sanctuary- see the photos.



Our right-hand man Dwight Dibble has been scraping, sanding, and painting the main beams and some areas of the ceiling. The ceiling was last painted during Project 2000 about 25 years ago (also by Dwight) and it held up well for the most part but now needs a little attention. Dwight will also be fixing the walls and painting in the “crying room,” doing some minor electrical work and replacing the timer for the outside lights. January is a great time to do this work since

we are in the Norton Room for our Sunday services. Fortunately, there is money left over from the roof project that should pay for the bulk of this work. Dwight thinks he will be done in time for our February 1st service in the sanctuary; it will be close!

Good luck, Dwight !



ANNUAL CONGREGATIONAL MEETING – JANUARY 25th. On a frigid, pending snowstorm Sunday, January 25, 2026 we conducted the Annual Meeting of the Congregation of Stone Presbyterian Church during worship in the Norton Room. Though the weather kept many congregants home watching on Facebook Live, we did meet our quorum of 10% of our membership (5 members out of 44) with 10 members in attendance plus two other attendees. Formally, we received committee reports, including the 2026 budget that the session approved, and elected our officers. Informally, we highlighted and celebrated all the wonderful activities that our small but mighty congregation did in the past year as a way we worship God beyond our Sunday services in line with Pastor Scott’s sermon “Good Tidings We Bring”!

WORSHIP IN NORTON ROOM: Once again, we worshipped in the Norton Room for the month of January. Besides saving a bit on heat, we enjoyed a cozy and more intimate worship experience, including a seamless transition to our hospitality time of drinks and treats and fellowship! We welcomed Helen Tracy as our guest preacher on January 18 and Nancy Ketz as our guest pianist on January 11 and 18. We also had a chance to celebrate Phil Conley’s birthday on January 18.





HAPPY Valentine

C L I J B B W T G J R C E K D U F A
 A Q P S O W A O R G O C A N D Y J L
 K P O Z L O V E O D S S N S P C J R
 E H C J L E S B N V E R C B I R X H
 P X G D O X F X E W S W E E T U C V
 O C I Q J V K C U P I D H K Q S F U
 E F F B E J C H O C O L A T E H L X
 M Z T F L O W E R C K D Y F B B S R
 O Q A D O V Q X H P J Z J Y S J Q H
 T V D E Z P V U K I W X J S Q M D N
 N W A C V A L E N T I N E A C P N C
 O D Y Y S D E L U L U N Y F B E S Q

Cake	Cupid	Poem
Candy	Flower	Rose
Chocolate	Gift	Sweet
Crush	Love	Valentine



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Stone Church has an online giving tool called Givelify that is also available as an app on your smart mobile device. Check it out on our web page.

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Thanks to Ondrej Balca (See Matthew 14:24-33)
 PETER FINDS HIS FAITH TO BE MUCH
 STRONGER IN THE WINTER

01-04-2008

HOPE HOUSE WISH LIST. Hope House continues to serve the unhoused and needy of Utica with three meals a day and a place for daytime shelter. We at Stone Church join their mission once a month by sending three volunteers to serve dinner there. As you know, we also have a Sunday (the 4th of the month) designated as an opportunity to bring in items for Hope House and their guests. Their needs for this month continue to be sugar and coffee, as well as full-sized personal items like shampoo, conditioner, and bar soap. Also in these winter months they could use mittens/gloves and hand warmers. We're always looking for more people willing to spend a couple of hours (3-5 pm) with us on the 4th Monday of the month serving dinner at Hope House. If you'd like to join us, you can use the sign-up sheet in the back of the sanctuary, or contact Lora Schilder at 315-790-1945 or lschilde@hamilton.edu.

COUNTRY PANTRY: The Pantry needs peanut butter and jelly, marshmallow fluff, Hunts canned tomato sauce, and cereal. Canned fruit and soup are always needed. Please help me fill my car on the 3rd Sunday of every month. Blessed are those who give!! Thank you.

THE FAIR TRADE SHOPPE: Valentine's Day is celebrated in honor of one of two early Christian martyrs named Saint Valentine, and through later folk traditions, has become a significant cultural, religious, and commercial celebration of romance and love in many regions of the world. Give a gift of love this Valentine's Day!

- Our Heart Necklace is made from upcycled bull horn, a byproduct of the food industry in Vietnam. "You inspire me every day!" says the card that comes with this sweet red heart pendant on a gold-colored chain. Gift this necklace to a friend, a love, a child, a parent-someone you care about to let them know how you feel. If you can't find the words, the note that comes with it says it all.
- Bring a little nature with you everywhere you go with our one-of-a-kind resin and dried flower White Rain Flower Earrings from Peru. For that person in your life who can't get enough flowers, walking in the woods, or being outdoors.
- Traditional designs from Taxco, Guerrero, Mexico, our Pure Copper Adjustable Bracelet is created entirely by hand. Multiple beautiful designs will vary from product image. The mission of Costello's jewelry is to instill struggling artisans of Mexico with the economic security, confidence, pride and inspiration they seek as protectors of their cultural heritage.



These and MANY, MANY MORE uniquely handcrafted gift items from 38 different countries can be found at our **FAIR TRADE SHOP. STONE PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH, 8 SO. PARK ROW, CLINTON.** Our regular hours are 10am to 4pm every Thursday, **SECOND SATURDAYS**, and by appointment by calling 315-853-1070. **WE ARE HOLDING A 25% OFF SALE DURING FEBRUARY (some restrictions apply).** Purchasing fair trade items ensures artisans and small farmers fair wages and healthy working conditions, providing dignity, sustainable development and hope for marginalized people. **LET US BE YOUR GO-TO GIFT SHOP!** Visit us at <https://buildingstonesshoppe.square.site> or www.facebook.com/buildingstonesfairtradeshoppe.

PRAYER REQUEST

Matt Schementi
 Grace & Frank Whittemore
 Midge Bakos
 Helen Leonard
 Mary Ann Stiefvater
 John Stiefvater
 Bev Miller
 Peggy Weldon
 Tom & Ewa Lawrence
 Phil Conley
 Ruth Hughes



FEBRUARY BIRTHDAYS

1 - John Gilbert
 10 - David Goodfriend
 Elizabeth Menard
 13 - James Monohan
 Gayle Copfer
 17 - Celeste Clawson
 18 - Jill Pavlot
 21 - Jesse Dewey
 22 - Amanda Andrews
 Jim Gavett
 24 - Craig Lalonde



DON'T FORGET THE DEACONS!

Please keep the Deacons in mind on the first Sunday of each month. All of the loose money collected on those Sundays will go to support the ministry of the Deacons.

Questions? Speak with any of the Deacons — Linda Rance, Judy LaGasse, Mary Chamberlain, Trish Harris, Emily Hughes, Barbara Greene, Helen Leonard and Deb Lapoint



Want to see what's on the calendar? You don't have to call the office. Go to our home web page - stonepres.org, and click on the "Calendar" tab at the top or on the calendar icon.

SESSION MEETING HIGHLIGHTS – DECEMBER 9TH 2025

- Pastor Scott Leonard officiated wedding of Victoria Cardillo and Fran Barres at 2:30 p.m., Wednesday 12/31/25 at Stone Church. This included snow shoveling 12/30/25 for the rehearsal along with Lee Kelso, John Menard, and Helen Leonard, and then again on 12/31/25. Donna Goodfriend helped secure 42 candles the couple had set up on the dais in addition to the dozen along the aisles. The wedding ceremony was about half an hour. They took pictures afterward for an hour and a half.
- Pastor Scott conducted funeral for Warren Evans at Stone Church, Friday 12/12/25. 10:00 a.m. calling hours, 11:00 a.m. service
- Good turnout Christmas Eve Service approx. 85.
- The church received a letter dated December 18, 2025 from Thomas Wattles, Clerk of Session, from First Presbyterian Church of Utica. They voted to dismiss Kay and Matthew Blancovich and family from the congregation's roll of membership by their request. By this letter all shall know that, as of the effective date of dismissal, Kay Matthew, and family were members in full communion and in good standing with First Presbyterian Redeemer Church in Scotia, NY. They are now dismissed and affectionately recommended to the fellowship of Stone Presbyterian Church. As of 1/01/2026 Kay and Matthew Blancovich were added to our membership list.
- Clerk Sherry Robinson received an email 1/09/26 from Stated Clerk Larry Beasley sharing the Presbytery of Utica 2026 Pastoral Compensation Memorandum that was voted and approved by the Committee on Ministry for compensation for 2026. The memorandum defining those standards was attached and forwarded to Treasurer Christine Menard for review.
- On 1/09/26 an email was received from Larry Beasley to Moderators and Clerks attached with a 2026 prayer calendar for the Presbytery of Utica. He asked that we forward to the person in our congregation that is responsible for communication. Sherry will forward the email to Officer Manager Janice LeFrois to make sure she has this calendar.
- On 1/07/26 a text was received from Janice LeFrois, asking if I had any information on the sexual harassment class for them to take. Sherry advised that she did not, but did google search and found a couple of free classes. Previously Christine Menard assisted us with this task. She was going to google sexual harassment course herself. Christine Menard thought Janice found a course to take.
- On 1/12/26 both Pastor Scott and Sherry received an email from Michelle Dolan our COM Representative. She wondered if she could invite herself to one of our meetings in March or April. Sherry will email her back to notify her that the course in March would be good with us.
- John Menard talked with Dwight Dibble today regarding the beams and the white wall in the sanctuary that is peeling, scaffolding will put up tomorrow so he can work on it. The crying room needs to be painted too. The outside light timer is broken, these lights are on the front doors and the rose window, Dwight will do some research on the timer and see if it can be fixed.
- Donna Goodfriend applied for the mission grant from the Presbytery of Utica to fix the floor in one of the Fair-Trade Shop rooms, but not knowing how much the grant will provide, she asked where would the difference come from. She has a quote of \$5,000. We can talk with Lauralyn Kolb for ideas and also ask the congregation if need be.
- Lora Schilder agreed to two more years as elder (she was installed 2/2025), class of 2028, Rosalie Wadsworth will come on board and serve as session member-install 2/2026, class of 2029. John Menard and Sherry Robinson will come back on session (to be installed 2/2026), class of 2029.
- Barb Green, Judy LaGasse, Trisha Harris staying on another term as deacons-install 2/2023, class of 2029. Bev Miller moved away in November. Scott Leonard received an email from Mary Ann Stiefvater due to health issues she needs to take time off of session, her term is up 2027, but we will regretfully remove her from session this January 2026. Donna Goodfriend will follow up with John Stiefvater as he may need the time to care for Mary Ann and might also want to come off of session until further notice as well.

DEACONS CORNER

THE HEART



The heart symbol is a universal representation of love and affection, especially prominent on Valentine's Day, symbolizing deep emotional connections and romantic sentiments.

The heart shape as a symbol of love has a rich history that dates back to the medieval period. Initially, the heart symbol did not represent love. It was used decoratively. However, as the concept of romantic love evolved in the 13th and 14th centuries, the heart began to be associated with emotions and affection. This shift was influenced by the idea that the heart was the seat of feelings and passion, as noted by medieval scholars. The first known non-medical illustration of a heart in a love context appeared in a poem around 1255.

Today, the heart symbol is ubiquitous on Valentine's Day, appearing on cards, decorations and gifts. The heart symbol transcends cultures and is recognized as a representation of love. It is often depicted in red, symbolizing passion and desire, and is frequently accompanied by other symbols of love, such as Cupid and roses.

In the world of technology today, we use emojis when sending an email or a text, and the heart is one of the most common ones we use. We already stated that the red heart represents passion and romance. Did you know that the yellow heart represents friendship and happiness, the green one represents nature/health, blue for trust and peace, purple for admiration/compassion, black for dark humor/mourning and white for purity/sympathy.

In summary, the heart symbol's meaning on Valentine's Day is deeply rooted in historical and cultural contents. We hope you all have a wonderful Valentine's Day filled with love, affection, and emotional connections as we celebrate this special day.

Hugs, Your Deacons



EARLY PLEDGES WANTED & APPRECIATED.

Because of heating bills, cash flow is more of a problem for our church in the winter months (January through April) than summer months, even during a relatively warm winter. Session is asking folks to consider giving more of their pledge upfront, if possible. And don't worry—we will keep good track of what you have paid towards your pledge!

NOMINATING COMMITTEE REPORT 2025

Because of our small size, we have been blessed for those continuing to serve even after taking a year or so off. According to our bylaws, five members is the minimum size for the session and for the board of deacons.

We lost Bev Miller as a deacon when she moved away in November. We thank her many, many years of devoted service! At John and Mary Ann Stiefvater's request the session agreed to release them from the one year remaining on their term with the hope they can rejoin session next year.

For session, the committee nominates Lora Schilder for a two-year term after serving for one year; John Menard and Sherry Robinson for new three-year terms after a year hiatus, and new member Rosalie Wadsworth to be ordained and installed for a three-year term.

For deacons, we thank Trisha Harris, Barbara Greene, and Judy LaGasse for willing to serve second terms.

Installation of officers will be during worship on February 8, 2026.

Respectfully,

Donna Goodfriend, Nominating Committee Chair and elder representative
Mary Chamberlain, deacon representative

<u>Elders</u>		<u>Deacons</u>	
<u>Class of 2027</u>	<u>Installation</u>	<u>Class of 2027</u>	<u>Installation</u>
Donna Goodfriend ¹	2/2021	Deb Lapoint	2/2024
		Helen Leonard	2/2024
<u>Class of 2028</u>		<u>Class of 2028</u>	
Pat Joseph	2/2025	Mary Chamberlain ¹	2/2022
Lora Schilder	2/2025	Emily Hughes ¹	2/2022
		Linda Rance	2/2025
<u>Class of 2029</u>		<u>Class of 2029</u>	
*John Menard	2/2026	*Trisha Harris ¹	2/2023
*Sherry Robinson	2/2026	*Barbara Greene ¹	2/2023
**Rosalie Wadsworth	2/2026	*Judy LaGasse ¹	2/2023

*Candidates nominated as officers

**Candidate to be ordained and installed
Second three-year term


Sherry Robinson to continue to serve as Clerk of Session
Donna Goodfriend to chair the Nominating Committee
Mary Chamberlain to continue as Moderator of Deacons

WANTED: YOUR PER CAPITA! Please note that per capita payments for the New Year are now being readily accepted!!! The 2026 per capita charge this year remains at \$46.04 per member, the same as last year. The church is assessed this amount for each member on the membership roll. The per capita is the cost of our representative democracy as a church and supports the meetings and operations of the Presbytery, Synod and General Assembly. Please consider sending your per capita either directly to the church office (P.O. Box 33, Clinton, NY 13323) or enclosing it in with your pledge envelope. It is helpful if you pay the per capita explicitly even if it comes from your overall financial commitment to the church for the year. Thank you in advance for your help.

WORSHIP: We will begin having worship along with the choir back in the sanctuary starting February 1st.



Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
1 10:30 am - 11:30 am Worship	2	3	4	5 10 am - 4 pm Fair Trade Shoppe	6	7
8 Officer Installation-During Worship 10:30 am - 11:30 am Worship	9 7 am - 9 am Session Meeting	10 12:15 am - 1:15 am CAM Meeting	11	12 Lincoln's Birthday 10 am - 4 pm Fair Trade Shoppe	13	14 Valentine's Day 10 am - 4 pm Fair Trade Shoppe
15 10:30 am - 11:30 am Worship Service-Guest Preacher- Helen Tracy	16 Presidents' Day	17	18 Ash Wednesday 6 am - 7 am Pancake Dinner 7 pm - 8 pm Ash Wednesday Service	19 10 am - 4 pm Fair Trade Shoppe	20	21
22 10:30 am - 11:30 am Worship	23 3:30 pm - 5 pm Hope House	24	25	26 10 am - 4 pm Fair Trade Shoppe	27	28

 **The Corner Stone**
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Clinton, NY 13323

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CHANGE SERVICE REQUESTED



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Rev. Gerald R. Platz, Pastor Emeritus

Director of Music: G. Roberts Kolb

Office Manager: Janice LeFrois

Sexton: Lee Kelso

Office: 315-853-2933

www.stonepres.org

www.instagram.com/stonepresbyterian/

Clerk of Session: Sherry Robinson

Newsletter Editor: Midge Bakos

Treasurer: Christine Menard

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www.facebook.com/stonepres

Sunday Worship 10:30 a.m. in person, streamed & recorded on Facebook Live
Church Office hours: 9:00 a.m. - 1:00 p.m. M,W,Th & F—Closed on Tuesday

Newsletter team:

Many thanks to Mary Chamberlain, Linda Rance & Donna Goodfriend who have folded, taped and labeled this issue of *The Corner Stone* just for you!



Please note...

The deadline for the issue of the March newsletter is Friday, February 16th.

To see a color version of this newsletter in pdf format, visit stonepres.org.