

Newsletter of the Orchard Park Presbyterian Church

March 2026 Issue

The Grapevine



LENT 2026

A Breath Prayer

Inhale:

IN THE WILDNESS

Exhale:

WE BELONG TO GOD



A Message from Tom Yorty



Dear Orchard Park Presbyterian friends,

As I write this article for the *Grapevine*, Carol and I find ourselves in a “bomb cyclone” (ever hear of one of those? ;-) in eastern Massachusetts. Thousands without power (including us), shelters being set up, crews from other states coming to help the local power company get back online. It reminds me of that old chestnut about the man who lived close to a river and news reports said a flood was coming and advised evacuation. As the waters rose, neighbors offered to help transport him to safety. The man declined each offer and said to himself, God will save me if things really get bad. The waters were now lapping at the foundation of his house, and a boat came by and offered to rescue the man and his dog, but the man said again, God will save me. Finally, when the water rose to the second floor of his house and the man and his dog were forced to his rooftop, a helicopter came to save him but his reply was the same as before—God will save me. At last, as the wind and rain were unabated, the man began to question his faith in God. Sitting on his rooftop he proclaimed to the heavens, “Why have you not come O God to save me from disaster?” And a voice from heaven declared, “I sent you warnings on the radio, neighbors who offered to take you with them, a boat and a helicopter. Open your eyes and heart!”

The story suggests, not so subtly, that even though God is all around us we often fail to perceive God’s presence because, being all too human, we expect lightning bolt miracles and reversal of the laws of nature, when, in fact, God works with and for people through people. It is fair to say God is with us through our neighbor, through our church family, through the culture in which we live; God’s presence is conveyed by anything of this world which is the stunning, surprising, breathtaking message of the incarnation.

The Gospel readings for the next three weeks are taken from John. They are familiar stories of Jesus healing people and raising his friend Lazarus from the grave. First, he meets a Samaritan woman at a well and their conversation leads to his telling her her life story as well as who he is—the long-awaited Messiah. The second person is a blind man for whom Jesus restores sight. Both the woman at the well and the blind man in their conversations with Jesus recognize that he is the Messiah of Israel. Finally, Jesus raises his friend Lazarus from the grave and this too confirms that he is indeed the Messiah, Emmanuel, God with us!

The sermons for the next three weeks are titled “Discerning the Presence of God:” March 8, *In Everyday Life*; March 15, *When We Need Healing*; March 22, *When We Face the Forces of Death*. No doubt each one of us have been in each one of those life situations looking for God. You as a church family are, I suspect, searching for the presence of God in the deep and difficult change now taking place in Orchard Park Presbyterian Church. The first step to charting a path into the future is to discern the presence of God—in signs of hope and healing in the life of your congregational family. I look forward to meeting each of you—it will be especially good to worship together as we begin the time (I believe) God has called us together, while your interim pastor search committee seeks a long-term interim minister. We have work to do for which we have been made partners. We are equipped with everything we need to do it. I look forward to fulfilling our mission together.

All good wishes in Christ’s Service,

Tom Yorty

DIRECTORY CHANGES

For any directory updates, please contact Christine Cotton in the front office.



FROM THE PASTORAL ASSISTANT

“NAVIGATING CHANGE”

It was the last Sunday of June 1995, Fairport United Methodist Church. I preached my “last” “farewell-retirement” sermon after 37 continuous years in parish ministry. There was a farewell party, lots of well-wishes, and the anticipation of a new chapter as we moved into our home on Chestnut Ridge here in Orchard Park.

Never could I have guessed that five years later, a new path would beckon, leading to adventures in the Lord’s work I could never have dreamed of!

You opened the doors of your hearts not only of welcome, but to dare to embark on new and untried ventures. A Board of Deacons was instituted to augment the work already providing care to numerous individuals through the Stephen Ministry. You supported the creation of the staff position of Faith Community Nurse and the Health Ministry Team, which in turn led to the “Open Door Respite Ministry” benefitting caregivers and care receivers. This, along with “Let’s Do Lunch,” has provided an outstanding benefit and outreach to the entire community. So many of you have embraced “Disciple Bible Study,” and have witnessed the spiritual growth this series has provided.

There are so many individuals who have made all this possible. I will not attempt to share names, for fear of overlooking someone. I will tell you that these 26 years have been the richest and most fulfilling of all the 62 years total! Emphasis is often placed on the pastor’s contribution to the congregation. But the reverse is equally true: the congregation’s ministry to the leadership cannot be overlooked!

As I close out this chapter, and end this professional portion, I ask you now to honor our new relationship together. I am no longer “Pastoral Assistant,” but a fellow traveler on the road. Please do not ask me to comment on current or past decisions. I will refrain from any discussion regarding policy or personnel going forward. I will refuse any administrative, liturgical or ceremonial involvement, such as weddings or memorial services.

I ask you to support the ministry of OPPC through your presence, your prayers, your gifts, and your service. Give Rev. Yorty your fullest loyalty and prayerful support. Stay together, pray for one another. Truly BE the Body of Christ!

As for me, I will always be your friend, and fellow pilgrim.

Rev. Allyn Foster



FILL THE SANCTUARY WITH EASTER FLOWERS!

When it is time to celebrate the Resurrection, Easter flowers in the Sanctuary add to the joy. Please consider providing flowers in memory of, or in honor of loved ones for Easter. Beautiful white lilies, pink hyacinths, and yellow tulips will be ordered from Lockwood’s Nursery. You may place your order by filling out an order envelope at the Welcome Center, enclosing a check or cash in the envelope, and delivering the envelope to Christine in the church office. The plants cost \$10 each, and **the deadline for flower orders is Wednesday, March 25.**

Rationale for the Administrative Commission's Recommendations

At the request of Pastor Hughes, the Administrative Commission was appointed by the Presbytery of Western New York on August 19, 2025. Our charge was to walk with Orchard Park Presbyterian Church during a season of conflict—providing guidance, mediation, and accountability—always with the hope of strengthening unity, witness, and mission.

The Administrative Commission knows Reverend Hughes as a colleague of deep faith, energy, and commitment to the gospel. He is a gifted preacher and scholar who cares deeply about the Church and about following Christ faithfully. Nothing in these recommendations is intended to diminish his calling, his character, or his dedication. Rather, the Commission's work focused on the health of OPPC and the kind of leadership required at this particular time.

Meeting with many congregational leaders, staff, and members, it became clear to the Administrative Commission that Orchard Park Presbyterian Church is living with long-standing systemic challenges, including weakened leadership structures, confusion around roles and authority, and unresolved impacts from previous transitions. These conditions require a pastor with a very specific skill set in systems repair, institutional leadership, and adaptive change. The Commission discerned that there was a fundamental lack of fit between the needs of the congregation at this moment and the pastor's leadership strengths. As a result, despite good intentions on all sides, the pastoral relationship did not have a realistic path toward health or sustainability.

As we listened, the Commission identified ongoing concerns related to governance and polity, including decision-making processes that strained trust and did not consistently reflect Presbyterian shared leadership. There were also significant challenges in staff supervision, communication, and collaboration, which contributed to anxiety, confusion, and declining trust among staff and congregational leaders. Over time, mistrust became widespread enough that meaningful repair no longer appeared possible.

For these reasons, and in keeping with the Commission's responsibility to act for the good of the congregation and the broader church, the Administrative Commission recommended the dissolution of the pastoral relationship as the most faithful course of action for the well-being of both the pastor and the congregation. This is not a judgment on the faithfulness or dedication of Orchard Park Presbyterian Church or Pastor Hughes, but a response to the realities before us and an effort to create space for healing, clarity, and renewed discernment about the church's future.

For these reasons, and in keeping with the Commission's responsibility to act for the good of the congregation and the broader church, the Administrative Commission also recommends the dissolution of the two ecclesiastical positions: Director of Education and Mission (concluding on May 17, 2026) and Pastoral Assistant (concluding on March 1, 2026). Linda Babcock and the Rev. Allyn Foster have served this church faithfully for 31 and 26 years respectively, and we give thanks for their long-standing commitment and love for Orchard Park Presbyterian Church.

In its review, the Commission determined that the current staffing model is not sustainable within the church's present financial realities. The congregation has experienced significant operating deficits in recent years, and the continuation of these roles would place ongoing strain on the church's resources. Beyond financial considerations, the Commission observed that the structure of these positions concentrates key areas of ministry in ways that limit shared leadership, complicate pastoral oversight, and make healthy transitions difficult. The recommendation to dissolve these positions is not a reflection on the individuals who have served in them, but a recognition that a different and more sustainable ministry structure will be necessary for the church's future vitality and growth.

The Commission makes these recommendations with care, humility, and prayer, trusting that God remains present and will continue to guide Orchard Park Presbyterian Church into its next chapter.



Family, Faith & Food!

We filled our plates—
and our hearts. Between bites,
we faced hard
truths about
hunger, and were
reminded that
abundance calls
us to action.

Mark your calendars for the next breakfast – **Sunday, March 22 9:30am in Fellowship Hall**
please note the date change! We'll plant Easter Grass after a delicious breakfast!

Souper Bowl of Caring

We had another successful
Souper Bowl of Caring on
Sunday, February 8, as the youth
tackled hunger by collecting
71 cans of soup and \$766.86.



Message From Session

In this season of Listening, we would like to outline what is coming up in the near future.

1. Rev. Tom Yorty will start as Temporary Pastor on March 2 with the intention of a 3-month stay.
2. A search committee comprised of 3 session members and 4 members of the Administrative Commission have met and begun preparations in finding an Intentional Interim Pastor. It will be a nationwide search where the committee will interview candidates from the Protestant denomination and with explicit Intentional Interim training.
3. The goal is that the Intentional Interim be installed by or around mid-June 2026.
4. The Interim will guide the church in examining all operational, programming, and structural duties as we prepare for the forthcoming traditional formation of the PNC and search for a new Pastor.
5. With this season of Listening, the session has requested a new email address be formed so that in this time of change, any and all questions can be directed to the members of session.

If you have any questions, we want to hear them. Please email session@oppchurch.org

Worship Notes

March invites us deeper into the Lenten journey – a season that asks us to slow down, to listen, and to trust that God is at work even when the path feels unsettled. As OPPC continues to navigate a time of significant transition, Lent offers us space to imagine how Christ's peace might take root among us – in the way we show grace to one another, in the way we stay connected, and in the way we hold hope alongside honesty. Transformation often begins quietly, through courage, compassion, and a willingness to walk forward together.

On **Sunday, March 1**, we will honor **Rev. Allyn Foster** as he leads worship on his final Sunday with us as Pastoral Assistant. After 26 years of faithful and devoted ministry, we will gather for a reception in his honor to express our gratitude and bless him as he steps into a new chapter. As we mark this moment of appreciation and transition, we also look ahead to welcoming **Rev. Tom Yorty**, who will begin serving as our Temporary Pastor on **March 2**.

Later in the month, we will enter Holy Week with **Palm Sunday** on **March 29**, lifting our voices in hope as we remember Jesus' entry into Jerusalem. As we move toward the cross and the promise beyond it, may we continue to lean on Christ and on one another, trusting that God is guiding us through this season of change with grace that is deeper than our divisions and hope that is stronger than our fear.

Important Notice to Our Congregation

We have been made aware that scam emails are once again being sent to members of our congregation by someone pretending to be our pastor. These messages are fraudulent and are not coming from our church. If you receive an email claiming to be from the pastor or the church that does not include our **@oppchurch.org** email address, do not respond, do not click any links, and do not provide any personal or financial information. If you are ever unsure about a message, please contact the church office directly to verify. **Please remember: official church emails will only come from an address ending in @oppchurch.org.**

The **Deadline for the April Grapevine** is Tuesday, March 24 at 9am. Please send any submissions to Xanda at xanda@oppchurch.org. If you would like to receive the Grapevine by email, please reach out to Xanda at the same email address.



Souper Bowl Service Blitz

Fellowship Hall buzzed with excitement as 18 Littles and 5 Bigs teamed up on **Sunday, February 8 for a Service Blitz**. The "teams" led by their "quarterbacks - Bigs/MS Youth" engaged in service projects. They packed **24 shelf-stable meal kits** for families staying at Hamburg Hotels (area shelters are full so families stay in hotels), **made Valentines** for OPPC Friends at Home, **soft snuggly pillows** for Orchard Heights folks who need a hug, and **dog treats** for clients at Genesis Center who have furry companions.



They heard a story about a girl who grew a 40-pound cabbage that led to a meal that fed 249 people at a soup kitchen. They ate snacks and played games. A big thanks to **Erin Homer, Liz Nellis, Amanda Putnam and Mrs. B** who "coached" and our squad of "QBs" - **Devin & Dylan Mania, Ricky Pallante, Adya Prabhaker and Nora Quinn** for making our Souper Bowl of Caring Service Blitz a memorable one!



MISSION MATTERS



Thanks to **Anne, Mario, Mike, Dave and Mrs. B** for serving up beef stew to 190 folks at the Genesis Center in February. If you are interested in serving the meal on Friday, March 20 from 3:45-6pm, contact Mrs. B at lindab@oppchurch.org to sign up.



90 sandwiches were collected in February. Thank you to **Deb Galloway and Barb Olandt** for receiving and delivering the sandwiches to St. Luke's.

The next Sandwich Sunday is March 15.

The **Mission Ministry Team** allocated funding to purchase two sets of household items for when Churches in Action (CIA) rehomes another family.



Jesus' Baptism



Jesus in the Wilderness



Jesus and the Scripture



At Christ's Table



The First Sunday of Lent

Pray & Play

First they pray....



then they play!

Adult Education: Sermon Discussion

Beginning March 15, we will resume viewing a recording of the previous week's sermon, then we will discuss it. Classes will be held in The Meeting Place at 9:15am and run about forty-five minutes. Robert Mustard will be our "Guide on the Side." Hope to see you there!

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
<p>March 1 Second Sunday of Lent</p> <p>8:30a Worship 9:30a Church School 10:30a Worship 11:30a Celebration for Allyn</p>	<p>March 2</p> <p>1p PW CT-TMP 7p Co-Op Board-CR 7p OP Chorale-S</p>	<p>March 3</p> <p>9a TWT</p>	<p>March 4</p> <p>10a Staff-CR 10a Mission Workshop-TMP 10a Friendship Circle-IIR 6:30p One Light Many Paths Book Club-TMP 7p Christian Ed Ministry Team Meeting-CR</p>	<p>March 5</p> <p>6p Quaker Quilters BOD-RR 7p Quaker Quilters-RR 7:30p Al-Anon-IIR</p>	<p>March 6</p> <p>10:30a Music with Miss Sarah-UC 5:30p Alcoholics Anonymous-IIR</p>	<p>March 7</p>
<p>March 8 Third Sunday of Lent</p> <p>8:30a Worship 9:30a Church School 10:30a Worship 11:30a Worship Ministry Team Meeting</p>	<p>March 9</p> <p>5:45p OP Chorale BOD-CR 7p OP Chorale-S 7p MDO Board-Ed Wing</p>	<p>March 10</p> <p>9a TWT 10:30a PEO-TMP 1p Communications Committee-CR 6:30p A&F MT-CR</p>	<p>March 11</p> <p>10a Staff-CR 10a Mission Workshop-TMP</p>	<p>March 12</p> <p>7:30p Al-Anon-IIR</p>	<p>March 13</p> <p>10:30a Music with Miss Sarah-UC 5:30p Alcoholics Anonymous-IIR 7p Theatre & Conversation</p>	<p>March 14</p> <p>10:15a Daisy Troop-Ed Wing</p>
<p>March 15 Fourth Sunday of Lent Sandwich Sunday</p> <p>8:30a Worship 9:15a Sermon Discussion Group 9:30a Church School 10:30a Worship</p>	<p>March 16</p> <p>6:30p Deacons-TMP 7p OP Chorale-S</p>	<p>March 17</p> <p>9a TWT 7p OPPC Book Group-IIR</p>	<p>March 18</p> <p>9:30a Co-Op Speech Testing-IIR 10a Staff-CR 10a Mission Workshop-TMP 6p Lenten Supper-RR 6p Bell Choir Rehearsal-S 6:30p One Light Many Paths Book Group-TMP 7p Choir Rehearsal-CH</p>	<p>March 19</p> <p>7:30p Al-Anon-IIR</p>	<p>March 20 Confirmation Class</p> <p>10:30a Music with Miss Sarah-UC 3:30p Genesis Center 5:30p Alcoholics Anonymous-IIR</p>	<p>March 21 Confirmation Class</p> <p>1p Presbyterian Women's Spring Program</p>
<p>March 22 Fifth Sunday of Lent</p> <p>8:30a Worship</p> <p>9:15a Sermon Discussion Group 9:30a Family, Faith & Food-FH 10:30a Worship</p>	<p>March 23</p> <p>6p Membership/Confirmation-IIR 7p OP Chorale-S 7p Session-TMP</p>	<p>March 24 Grapevine Deadline</p> <p>9a TWT 5:30p Personnel Committee</p>	<p>March 25</p> <p>10a Staff-CR 10a Mission Workshop-TMP 6p Bell Choir Rehearsal-S 7p Choir Rehearsal-CH</p>	<p>March 26</p> <p>7:30p Al-Anon-IIR</p>	<p>March 27</p> <p>10a Grapevine Mailing-CR 10:30a Music with Miss Sarah-UC 5:30p Alcoholics Anonymous-IIR</p>	<p>March 28</p> <p>10:15a Daisy Troop-Ed Wing</p>
<p>March 29 Palm Sunday</p> <p>8:30a Worship 9:15a Sermon Discussion Group 9:30a Church School 10:30a Worship</p>	<p>March 30</p> <p>7p OP Chorale-S</p>	<p>March 31</p> <p>9a TWT 7p Organ Concert-S</p>	<p>April 1</p> <p>10a Staff-CR 10a Mission Workshop-TMP 10a Friendship Circle-IIR 6p Bell Choir Rehearsal-S 6:30p One Light Many Paths Book Group-TMP 7p Choir Rehearsal-CH</p>	<p>April 2 Maundy Thursday</p> <p>7p Worship-S 7:30p Al-Anon-IIR</p>	<p>April 3 Good Friday</p> <p>10:30a Music with Miss Sarah-UC 5:30p Alcoholics Anonymous-IIR</p>	<p>April 4</p>

**Location Legend: S –Sanctuary; RR—Reception Room; CH—Choir Room; GR—Green Room
CR—Conference Room; IIR—Irene Irving Room; FH—Fellowship Hall; UC—Undercroft;
MG—Memorial Garden; PW—Presbyterian Women; TMP—The Meeting Place; EC—Ed Wing Classroom**

Our calendar sometimes has changes after the GV goes to print, stay up-to-date by viewing the complete [calendar](#) on the church website.

RUMMAGE SALE ~ April 24 & 25

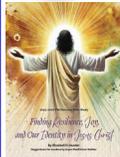
Donations and volunteers are needed! Please start setting aside your gently used items that you no longer want or need. Frequently in demand at the sale are household items, linens, toys, sporting goods, books, clothing, jewelry and small furniture. Items may be dropped off in the hallway behind the Fellowship Hall stage starting on **Saturday, April 11**. Also, many volunteers will be needed to set up tables, sort and price donated items, staff the sale, and pack up unsold goods. Dates and times will be listed in the April Grapevine. Watch for opportunities to volunteer for this fun event! Please – no televisions, computers, exercise equipment or shoes as these create a disposal problem.



If you have any questions, please call Sue Sager.



Friendship Circle will meet on **Wednesday, March 4 at 10am in the Irene Irving Room**. Ladies, you are cordially invited to join us for fellowship and Bible study. Lesson Six of **Finding Resilience, Joy and Our Identity in Jesus Christ** will be discussed. For more information, please call Barbara Roberts or Sue Sager.



Presbyterian Women's Coordinating Team



will meet on **Monday, March 2, 1pm** in The Meeting Place.

You Don't Need an X-Ray Machine to See That at This Year's **PJs & PIZZA** Family **MOVIE** Party



OK... no peeking.



Is it a rainbow?



Hey, nice throw!

Everyone Had a Great Time **INSIDE AND OUT**

The "German Organ Mass" A Recital Mini-Series

At 7pm on **Tuesdays**
March 31 and April 7,
Alex Hamilton will present an
organ recital mini-series with
vocalist Dr. Holly Bewlay,
professor of voice at Buffalo
State University.



This mini-series will feature Johann Sebastian Bach's
1739 *Clavierübung III*, also known as the "German
Organ Mass."

Written in 1735-36, this collection presents ten
16th-century Lutheran hymns arranged for organ, plus
various duets and free works. Bach chose these ten
hymns specifically because they reference the
structure of the Lutheran service of his time. For each
hymn, Bach includes at least one setting for a single
manual and one setting for two manuals with pedals,
likely conceived as possibilities for a smaller "village
organ" and a larger "cathedral organ."

These works date from Bach's later years and
showcase his most mature and sophisticated style,
showcasing his mastery of each musical genre and
trend from the era.

The March 31 recital (45 minutes) will consist of the
more introspective one-manual settings, appropriate
for the penitential atmosphere of the Tuesday during
Holy Week. The April 7 recital (80 minutes) will feature
the more extroverted full-organ settings suited to the
brighter Easter season. Together, these two recitals
take the form of full musical worship services, with
vocal statements of the hymns given before the
corresponding organ arrangements.

Come hear the full breadth of the OPPC Austin pipe
organ and how Bach's 50-year composition career
culminated in this monumental summit to his faith.

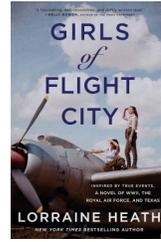
**Our Deepest Sympathy is extended
to the family of Gregory D. Brown
who died on February 2, 2026.**

He was the son of the late Margaret & Floyd Brown.

OPPC Book Group Presents

Girls of Flight City
by Lorraine Heath

Tuesday, March 17, 2026 7pm
in the Irene Irving Room



NY Times best-selling author Lorraine Heath
was born in England but soon after moved to
Texas, the daughter of a British beauty and a
Texan stationed at Royal Air Force Bovington.
This novel is based on the true events about the
brave American women who were training
British Royal Air Force pilots in Texas during
WWII, weaving both of her heritages.

Jessie Lovelace is a talented aerialist and
certified flight instructor who has to fight for a
job in training. Her younger sister Kitty likes to
dance with the charming young RAF cadets.
Their brother Jack enlisted with the
all-American Eagle Squadron in England. Their
good friend Rhonda can give a trainee a wild
ride in a flight simulator, the Link Trainer.

Focused on the resilience, courage and
strength within not only the military but those
who supported them, this is a tale recounting
history. The RAF pilots had to fly from Great
Britain to Canada first, then enter the United
States in this secretive endeavor to train more
RAF pilots needed for the war effort, a deal
between Winston Churchill and Franklin D.
Roosevelt. Thousands of British pilots earned
their wings in the US between 1941 and 1945.

Lives from both sides of the Atlantic were
forever changed by love and loss. Please join us
as we discuss this little-known part of our
history.

**April 21, 7pm: *Theo of Golden*
by Allen Levi**

The **Presbyterian Women's Spring Program** with "Make your own
Sundaes" will be held on Saturday, March 21, 2026 at 1pm in the Reception
Room. As we enjoy our ice cream sundaes, **Jo Ann Litwin-Clinton**,
Orchard Park's Village Mayor and Town Historian, will present
"Orchard Park: Past, Present and Future". We will discover some of
Orchard Park's history, learn about current happenings and gain insights into future
plans. The cost of the program is \$3 and reservations are appreciated and can be made
on March 1, 8 and 15 at the table by the church office or by calling Sue Sager.

We hope to see you at this very interesting program!





Orchard Park Presbyterian Church
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Orchard Park, NY 14127-2611

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 never seen
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THE NEXT UNFORGETTABLE
 THEATRE & Conversation
 EXPERIENCE

Presented
 with Free Admission by
 OPPC's Hospitality-Fellowship
 Ministry Team



*A Timely, Thought-Provoking One-Act Play
 by Nassim Soleimanpour*

**Friday,
 March 13**

One Show at 7:00 p.m.

Community Is Welcome

Orchard Park Presbyterian
 4369 South Buffalo Street
 Orchard Park, NY 14127



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