

**MIDDLE OCTORARA PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH**

**March 2026 NEWSLETTER**



*Annual Lenten Tea  
March 14, 2026 2:00 p.m.*

*The Mission of Middle Octorara Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) is to provide a place of fellowship where a community of believers comes together to be spiritually renewed and enabled to effectively witness for Christ through service to others.*

## PASTOR JOHN'S THOUGHTS

*All around us are signs of spring. Good's Store has garden seeds in stock. A family-owned garden center I drive by most days is opening on March 2. I've seen my first snow geese at Middle Creek, and seen and heard lots of Canadians in the skies above my house. The temperatures are rising, and the days are getting longer. The season of Lent in our church year, forty days from Ash Wednesday to Palm Sunday and the beginning of Holy Week, always occurs at this time of year. Lent and Lenten are shortened forms of the words length and lengthen, pointing to the time of year when nights are getting shorter and days are getting longer, in other words, the spring of the year.*

*When we look at Jesus' death and resurrection through the lens of springtime, we come to a deeper understanding of the impact of these central realities on our lives as Christians, how new life can come from death. Not from just anyone's death, but from the death of the perfect man, the last Adam, the Son of God incarnate, taking the place of sinners and leading all who will place their trust in him to newness of life on earth and in heaven. Jesus said in John 12:24, "I tell you the truth, unless a kernel of wheat falls to the ground and dies, it remains only a single seed. But if it dies, it produces many seeds." In the previous verse our Lord said, "The time has come for the Son of Man to be glorified." The same word that is translated "glorified" in verse 23 is rendered "lifted up" in verse 32: "I, when I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all people to myself" and then explained in verse 33: He said this to show the kind of death he was going to die."*

*We are building to a climax, Easter Sunday morning. Jesus' resurrection provides forgiveness, freedom, and an eternal future for all believers, only because of his substitutionary death for sinners on the cross. In the fourth and final stanza of the Song of the Suffering Servant in Isaiah 53, we find these words in verse 11: "After the suffering of his soul, he will be satisfied; through their relationship with him, my righteous servant will justify many."*

*Springtime, new life, growth, change, and fruitfulness, all through the death of the One for the many. Aren't you glad that Jesus has died for you? I know you are, MO Friends, and it is a pleasure for me to be with all of you on this journey as your pastor.*

## CHURCH LIFE

**CHOIR** - We are fortunate to have such faithful choir members. I am so thankful! We have been working on music for Lent and Easter. I hope the songs touch your heart as we tell the Easter Story and the suffering of our Savior. We will again be participating with Little Britain Church at their Good Friday service. Put it on your calendar for April 3rd.

**DEACONS** - We are all familiar with the proverb, "What is the definition of insanity? Doing the same thing over and over again, and expecting a different result." I was thinking of the opposite idea: what happens when we repeat something that works? The same good result.

Our faithful Deacons perform the same tasks repeatedly, and get the same positive outcomes. People are greeted coming and going on Sunday mornings. First time visitors receive a nifty welcome bag appropriate to them. People are heard during announcement time and the sharing of joys and concerns as far as the public address system will carry their voices. People receive timely cards through the mail that mark their special days, and needs as they arise. People have caring contacts by phone and in person. All from our dedicated Deacons. Well done!

**MIDDLE OCTORARA PRESBYTERIAN WOMEN** - The ladies are planning for the Lenten Tea scheduled for March 14th at 2 PM. The program will be presented by Sue Duffield, a humorous, musical speaker. She was here many years ago and was well-received. She is from Tennessee but presents her program in many states. Invite your friends to join you for this fun afternoon. Anyone who enjoys baking small cookies to share, we would appreciate receiving some. Call Boni Henry to make reservations at 717-405-1113. There is no cost, but we are accepting donations. You may bring your favorite tea cup if you wish.

We profited over \$500 from our sandwich sale.

**SESSION** - Easter Sunday schedule:

Alie/Cayla

7 am. Sunrise Service

7:45. Breakfast

9 am. Worship Service

10:10 Easter Egg Hunt

Come join us as we worship and celebrate our risen Savior.

**SILVER SISTERS** - Nine of us had a great meal at Miller's Smorgasbord. Lots of food and lots of choices!! We chose Dienners to be our next lunch destination on March 25 at 11:30. We have many good conversations when we are together. All widows are welcome!

**TRUSTEES** - This month the refurbished pews should be returned and re-installed. It certainly has been a process and we will be glad when it is finished.

The Board of Trustees have changed the date of work day. It's so muddy out, and so many other things going on, we are scheduling work day to be on April 25. We still will be removing the old decorations from the cemetery in March though. There will be a mid-morning brunch. We hope for lots of help. Hopefully there won't be any snow on the ground!!

We are working on allowing a couple more Sunday School rooms downstairs to be used, one for another class and the other for cub scouts. Some work needs to be done on one of them.

## MISSION MUSINGS

I was at Skeeter Hart's funeral on Friday and it made me think as funerals always do about family and friends who have passed into the arms of Jesus. It was a wonderful celebration of Skeeter's life with several family members telling stories and reminiscing about their memories of Skeeter. Pastor John led the service, read scriptures of comforting words and proclaimed the gospel with clarity as he always does.

The fellowship time back at the church was wonderful and made me think how important that time is following a funeral service. We are so blessed to have a room to hold these gatherings and are blessed by Shirley Miller and her helpers who prepare and serve a delicious meal.

This is another part of the MISSION of Middle Octorara to be the hands and feet of Jesus to comfort, console and serve others. We have lost three of our church family already this year and I trust and know we will continue to be supportive of those left behind with our words and deeds in the days, weeks and months ahead.

I am reminded how important a few words can be. When I received the call from Doug that our mom had passed away I called Rev. Richard and Rev. Mary as they were our Pastors at that time. I still remember Rev. Richard's words to me "it will be difficult but remember we do not grieve as those without hope". We can all take comfort and live with hope and assurance that because Jesus Christ gave His life and then rose from the dead our deceased loved ones as well as each of us will live for eternity with Him. Let's remember to live everyday with that hope and assurance and be quick to pass that hope and assurance on to others.

I also will always remember the Sunday morning in March of 2008 as my dad was near death. Mom, Doug and I were with him. A knock came at the door and there was Barry Girvin and Dick Keene who had come to visit dad between Sunday School and church. Dad had been expressionless all day and yet when he heard their voices a slight smile came across his face. He could no longer speak but that smile spoke volumes. I know that he knew they were there. Dad passed the next day.

This is how we can be the hands and feet of Jesus, just like Barry and Dick were that Sunday morning in March of 2008.

I remind each of you and myself to take time to send that card, make that phone call or visit. It will be appreciated now and for eternity.

1st Thessalonians 4:13  
Blessings, Dan Henry

# REFLECTIONS

by Barry Girvin

**2002 – 2027**

During our 275<sup>th</sup> anniversary in 2002, I was 62 and I am now 85. Shirley Graver was a member of the anniversary committee, and today, her daughter Beth Messick serves on the 300<sup>th</sup> committee. Many of the veterans we honored in 2002 have passed including two who spoke at the Sunday service – Roy Henry and Rev. Robert Tanguy. The other speaker, Paul Girvin, survives in spite of strokes and other constant pain relieved by a recent back operation.

We did not have cell phones or the constant bombardment from social media. We never heard of A.I. George W. Bush was president, and we did not have the division and hate that passes for politics today.

Some who are involved in 300<sup>th</sup> planning, at various stages of their lives, had important anniversary involvement going back to the 250<sup>th</sup> in 1977. Dick Keene and I have been on board for the whole ride. Deb Hoover, then Deb Frackman, was a member of my Sunday School class that produced the oral history project, “Voices From the Past.” Copies of those interviews can be found in the library – in the trophy case – left side. Voices the likes of Vesta Shea, Alan Beyer, Roland and Edith Mendenhall, Hiram Troop, Sr., Lillian Hanna, Miriam Crouse, Dorothy Beyer, and Mary Myers can still be heard.

As in earlier anniversary celebrations, the 300<sup>th</sup> will feature a Presbytery meeting at Middle Octorara. Printed materials will include Minutes for History, Reflections, a new cookbook, a cemetery update, poetry and more. There will be special events throughout the year culminating with a birthday celebration on August 8, 2027. Why the eighth since the seventh is really our founding day? Because, August 8 is a Sunday.

The 300<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Committee is dedicated to making it all happen: Co-Chairs Deb Hoover and Barry Girvin, Pastor John Barlow, Dan Henry, Sara Kauffman, Richard Keene, Beth Messick, Jodie Mylin and Sam Reinhart.

Two sub-committees are being formed to help with the work – Calendar of Events and August 8 – Birthday Celebration. During 2026, your input will be important in deciding what events to include in the 2027 schedule and how to provide the resources needed.

The August 8 – Birthday celebration will include a full day of indoor and outdoor activities. There will be greetings from Pastor John Barlow and tributes from Presbytery leaders, pastors, and political leaders. There will be speeches, a sermon by Rev. David Henry (a son of the Church), special music, food, and much more.

**MISSIONS** - Thank you for the donations!!  
43 blankets going to the Linus Project  
and 20 lap robes going to the Salvation Army.



**March birthday's**

- 6 – Harold Probst
- 11 – Doris Woerth
- 12 – Kelly Wallace
- 13 – Mary Dalmas
- 21 – Douglas Hileman
- 24 – Kim Barlow
- 27 – Cody Ressel
- 31 – Jeff Frackman, Mary Groff

**Anniversaries**

- 20 – Barry & Shirley Girvin

**April birthday's through the 5<sup>th</sup>**

- 1 – Jeff Mowrer
- 3 – Edie Ambler Jackson
- 4 – Cayla Sallander, Gwen Lefever

Middle Octorara Presbyterian Church  
**Income and Expense Statement**  
**GENERAL FUND 01, February 2026**

02/23/2026 03:58 PM

BEGINNING BALANCE, February 1, 2026		<b>20,914.52</b>
<b>INCOME</b>		
Offerings	\$12,892.00	
Per Capita	1,022.00	
Manse Rent	1,408.95	
Account Interest	0.24	
Chapel Rent	100.00	
Benevolence	1,120.00	
<b>TOTAL INCOME</b>	<b>16,543.19</b>	
<b>TOTAL CASH &amp; INCOME</b>		<b>37,457.71</b>
<b>EXPENSES</b>		
Pastoral Salary	\$5,957.54	
Pastoral Mileage	743.13	
Pastoral Pension	2,579.96	
Pastoral Technology	50.00	
Secretary-Treasurer	1,236.00	
Accountant Fees	65.00	
Payroll Taxes	226.69	
Technology	533.95	
Office Supplies	150.59	
Copier Lease	120.32	
Choir Music- Senior	38.35	
Electricity	444.10	
Propane Gas	1,016.29	
Telephone/internet	118.53	
Cleaning Service	262.50	
Snow Removal	1,140.00	
Per Capita Payment	1,022.00	
Tsfr. Session Benev. Fund	1,120.00	
<b>TOTAL EXPENSES</b>	<b>16,824.95</b>	
<b>ENDING BALANCE, February 28, 2026</b>		<b>20,632.76</b>

# TREASURER'S REPORT

## GENERAL FUND & BENEVOLENCE FINANCES - February 2026

The following is the individual weekly breakdown of offerings:

February 1 -	General Fund	7,057.00	Benevolence	645.00
February 8 -	General Fund	1,434.00	Benevolence	125.00
February 15 -	General Fund	1,593.00	Benevolence	80.00
February 22 -	General Fund	2,063.00	Benevolence	220.00

An additional \$3,276.19 General Fund money and \$50.00 Benevolence money was received by mail etc.

## YTD GENERAL FUND & BENEVOLENCE FINANCES

	Monthly Budget	YTD Budget	Monthly Received	YTD Received	YTD <b>Expenses</b>
General Fund	15,373.60	30,747.20	15,423.19	25,915.14	31,474.22
Benevolence	953.84	1,907.68	1,120.00	1,790.00	

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O R P H A N  
A S S I S T A N C E  
F O U N D A T I O N  
[www.transitionsoaf.org](http://www.transitionsoaf.org)

February 22, 2026

Dear Friends,

Our January trip to Odesa was atypical in several ways. First, we would be going in winter, not my favorite season anywhere. I don't like to be cold, and winter is undeniably cold in Ukraine. Second, I would be staying in the center of Odesa. I had not stayed there since the war began and it had been deemed safer outside the city center, but this choice actually made me exceedingly happy. The center is my home. I have missed the sights and sounds that I am so accustomed to and was looking forward to being truly "at home" again. Third, I was aware that Odesa had been a frequent target of the Russians, particularly to energy stations, and that there would be limited light and heat. I also knew that the center was more likely to be hit, since it sits right next to the port, another favored target. Still, I wanted to go and was looking forward to being in Odesa again.

We arrived in Odesa almost exactly 24 hours later than planned due to the delay of our first flight out of Orlando. We subsequently missed our next two flights and everything had to be rescheduled for the next day. It was twilight when we pulled up to our Airbnb apartment in Odesa and were greeted by our host on the sidewalk in front of our building. As she led us to the apartment, she explained that the power was off and that we could expect it to come and go randomly, but that we should have power for a few hours each day. It was a bit eerie entering a new space in the dark, but our host conducted her tour of the place by phone flashlight. We learned in short order that the apartment had an electric stove and electric heat, so cooking and keeping warm would be a challenge in this colder-than-normal winter in Ukraine. We would, however, have hot and cold running water. I reminded myself that I would be living like this only for a couple of weeks; Ukrainians are living like this 24/7. We adapted.

The days settled quickly into a routine of visiting our mission families and kids, carving out time to visit with personal friends that I had not seen since our last visit, and walking my beloved city. By daylight, the sights and sounds surrounding us were so normal: traffic on the streets, the squeaking brakes of the marshrutkas (mini buses), ambulances and police cars speeding to emergencies. Even the wail of frequent air raid sirens had become normalized to us from previous trips. One new sound stood out to me – the constant hum of generators on the sidewalks that kept life operating

for both homes and businesses. Businesses and restaurants alike offered for folks without generators to come in to get warm and to use their electricity to recharge devices. It was decidedly still the Christmas season in Odesa. Streets, houses, and buildings still had Christmas trees and decorations everywhere. It seemed fitting since we were there to wrap up our Christmas Project. We sat with our families for food and for fun. We had a night at the ballet with one of the orphans I had met in my first year in Odesa. Vlad is still in Odesa and has a little family of his own now. We met with our staff to catch up and to plan for the coming months. Our team made trips to the villages and the orphanage for the last of the Christmas camps. The foster kids sat with me one evening to make ornaments for me to bring back with me to share with donors who make all this possible. (Watch here in a short video created by Jesus Santiago. <https://youtu.be/bSjVyZPPrDk>) The days flew by. It is impossible to find words to explain what it meant for all of us to be together again.

Night was starkly different from day. Darkness comes early to Odesa in the winter. Most of Russia's attacks come under the cover of darkness. Where daylight was happiness, light, and normalcy to me, night brought a nervous anticipation of what might happen while we slept. Our first two nights were uneventful. I began to think that, somehow, quiet nights would be the norm for us while we were there.

The third night, I was awakened by distant sounds of *boom, boom-boom*. I had not heard a siren warning, and I tried to convince myself that it was nothing. Still the booming continued. Then, very close by, I heard a drone pass overhead. Maybe it passed over my building, maybe it was a neighboring building, but it was unmistakably a drone, and it was too close for comfort. Still, I lay quietly, just listening. And then came the explosion that rattled our window and shook our bed. Or maybe it was me that was shaking. We jumped from the bed wondering what we were supposed to do and where we were supposed to go. (Our landlady had told us where the nearest air raid shelter was, but were we supposed to go there now?) In short order, when nothing else happened, we decided the right thing to do was to go back to bed. The rest of that night was quiet. I learned in the morning that an energy facility in our vicinity had been hit. Other nights, there were more booms, but we remained safe and sound throughout.

I learned to be in awe of those who tirelessly work on fixing the grids and restoring power to the city. We all had some hours of power each day, and we were thankful for each minute. That is just how it is now in Odesa and all across Ukraine. I heard few complaints; more than one person stated to me simply, "We are already used to it." I got used to it as well. Well, maybe not entirely. Even after we have returned home, my husband and I will hear a siren and think, *air raid*, or hear a motorcycle at night and think, *drone*. This stuff sticks with you.

I think that it is important that we went to Odesa. It was not an act of bravery to go, and it would not have been an act of cowardice to have stayed home. But I think that it was right and good to go and to experience life as our families and kids live it every day. It is right and good to be able to sit with them, to hug and to hold their hands, to listen to their stories and to understand their commitment to nurture, love, and care for orphans, even while war now rages around them. Some have reminded me of the dangers and asked me why I go there. After seeing all I have seen, and after experiencing all I have experienced, my answer is, *why would I not go?*

On our last night together, Sergei and Larissa (house parents) thanked us for making it possible for them to do what they love to do—to care for children who need a home and family. I reminded them that we couldn't do what we do without them. We need each other. And, not to be forgotten, our supporters and donors are an essential link in this chain, too. What we each contribute is right and good, and each one of us is necessary. Thank you, all of you!

With gratitude and love,  
Audrey

**Donation Information:** Checks may be written to: **Transitions Orphan Assistance Foundation, Inc.**  
541 Evening Sky Drive -or- 3530 Diamond Leaf Lane, Oviedo, FL 32765  
Online options to donate can be found on our website: [www.transitionsoaf.org](http://www.transitionsoaf.org)

(This letter from Audrey also contained a lot of pictures which there isn't room for in the newsletter. There are copies of her letter with pictures on the table in the vestibule if you wish to look at them.)



# st. Patrick's Day

## WORD SEARCH

Find the hidden St. Patrick's Day-related words. The words can be horizontal, vertical and diagonal. The letters that are left over, form a hidden message!

Blarney Stone	A G O G O L D C O I N O D F B
Cabbage	H S I R I E H T F O K C U L R
Celtic	I F O L K L O R E E N D A K I
Corned Beef	S E M E R A L D L I K R C E A
Emerald	F O K C I R T A P T N I A S U
Folklore	E O H S E S R O H E R R H D C
Gold coin	S H A M R O C K Y E R A C L A
Good luck	N C I T L E C S M L E I R O B
Green	E A F C L O T I V E R N A G B
Horse shoe	E H A R D O L T O F I B M F A
Leprechaun	R Y T I N I R T N D A O N O G
Limerick	G F E E B D E N R O C W D T E
Luck of the Irish	G N I N R O M E H T F O P O T
March	L U C G O O D L U C K K Y P T
Pot of gold	O H A L E P R E C H A U N V E
Rainbow	
Saint Patrick	
Shamrock	
Top of the morning	
Trinity	

HIDDEN MESSAGE: \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_

# How to keep all the cookies to yourself



## CALENDAR OF EVENTS

(Subject to change)

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
March 1	March 2	March 3 Session Mtg. 6:45 p.m.	March 4 ROMEO Club 9:00 a.m. Prayer 4 p.m. Choir practice 7:00 p.m.	March 5	March 6	March 7
March 8	March 9	March 10 Trustee Mtg. 7:00 p.m.	March 11 ROMEO Club 9:00 a.m. Prayer 4 p.m. Choir practice 7:00 p.m.	March 12	March 13	March 14 Lenten Tea 2:00 p.m.
March 15	March 16	March 17 	March 18 ROMEO Club 9:00 a.m. Prayer 4 p.m. Choir practice 7:00 p.m.	March 19	March 20	March 21
March 22	March 23	March 24	March 25 ROMEO Club 9:00 a.m. Silver Sisters 11:30 a.m. Prayer 4 p.m. Choir practice 7:00 p.m.	March 26	March 27	March 28
March 29	March 30	March 31	April 1 ROMEO Club 9:00 a.m. Prayer 4 p.m. Choir practice 7:00 p.m.	April 2	April 3	April 4

## **CONTACT INFORMATION FOR REV. JOHN BARLOW**

Address: 433 W. Lincoln Ave, Myerstown, PA 17067

Cellphone: 717-377-4570

Email: [barlowjohn604@gmail.com](mailto:barlowjohn604@gmail.com)

### **CHURCH CONTACT INFORMATION**

**Mailing Address:** P.O. Box 68, Bart, PA 17503

**Physical/Shipping Address:** 1199 Valley Road, Quarryville, PA 17566

**Phone:** 717-786-3402 or 717-786-8284

**Email:** [mopc\\_sec@comcast.net](mailto:mopc_sec@comcast.net)

**Website:** [middleoctorara.org](http://middleoctorara.org)

**Facebook:** middle octorara

**Church Secretary/Treasurer** Debbie Hoover

**Phone:** 717-786-8284

**Email:** [thehoovers@comcast.net](mailto:thehoovers@comcast.net) or [mopc\\_sec@comcast.net](mailto:mopc_sec@comcast.net)

**Address:** 2115 Mine Road, Paradise, PA 17562

### **Youth Ministry Leaders**

Alie Armstrong - [aparmstrong527@gmail.com](mailto:aparmstrong527@gmail.com)

Cayla Sallander - [Caylamiller96@gmail.com](mailto:Caylamiller96@gmail.com)

**Senior Choir Director** Rose Griest

**Accompanists** Boni Henry, Shirley Girvin, Sue Herr

**Technology Team Leader** Mike Hoover

**Email:** [mopc\\_av@comcast.net](mailto:mopc_av@comcast.net)

**Superintendent of Cemeteries** James Williams

**Phone:** 717-517-6968

### **Personnel Committee:**

2024-2026- J. Barry Girvin

2025-2027- Sue Ressel

2026-2029 – Brenda Roark

### **CHURCH BOARDS**

#### **Session**

***Clerk of Session:*** Dan Henry

**Phone:** 717-381-9947

**Email:** [danhenny55@aol.com](mailto:danhenny55@aol.com)

2024-2026-Shirley Girvin, Richard Keene, Jonathan Welch

2025-2027-Vivian Caldwell, Dan Henry, Jerry Garver

2026-2028-Stephanie Miller, Sue Ressel, Brenda Roark

#### **Deacons**

***Administrator:*** Pastor John Barlow

**Phone:** 717-377-4570

**mail:** [barlowjohn604@gmail.com](mailto:barlowjohn604@gmail.com)

2024-2026-Kim Barlow, Dixie Clark, Linda Farmer, Sue Herr

2025-2027-Koryn Barrett, Andy Keene, Val Keene, Elaine Ressel

2026-2028-Nancy Cox, Annie Frackman, Kathy Harvey, Cathy Miller

#### **Trustees**

***President:*** Jeff Frackman

**Phone:** 717-989-6896

2024-2026-Jeff Frackman, Herb Girvin, Nancy Minchoff

2025-2027-Bob Mowery, Dale Phillips, Rick Ressel

2026-2028-Boni Henry, Jim Miller, Sam Reinhart