

Oak Leaves

SEPTEMBER 2026

FIRST UNITED CONTACT INFO

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New phone numbers/emails/ address

Please update the Church Office whenever
you have **NEW** information

Thanks

Elisabeth Gauthier

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Happy September Birthday

- 1. Margie Fry
- 4. Brenda Kovanic
- 4. Pat Brown
- 11. Catherine Bitner (97)
- 11. Martina White
- 15. Jill Davis
- 15. Lauryn Truax
- 20. Hale McCulloch

Happy September Anniversary

- 16. Denny & Nancy McCullough
- 25. Joe & Ginny English

Dear Friends,

Thank you for making Mike's 80th Birthday
extra special by sending your wonderful
Birthday Wishes!

Prayers & Blessings,

Mike and Elaine Fry

The Family of Samuel D. Shenk express their
sincere thanks for all the love, support cards
and flowers during this very difficult time. We
also want to thank Pastor Vern and Owen
McCulloch for providing such a beautiful
service for my husband, father, grandfather,
and great grandfather,

Blessings-Barbara J Shenk

CHURCH OFFICE WILL BE CLOSED

SEPT 7 THRU AND INCLUDING SEPT
11.TH. PLEASE PLAN TO HAVE A KEY
ETC IF YOU ARE COMING TO THE
CHURCH. THANKS.

You have the opportunity to join our sisters and
brothers in Christ in spreading justice, and hope
throughout the globe. Your contributions to the
World Wide Communion Offering provides
communities with fresh, healthy meals, helps
farmers get paid fair prices, supports justice for
women, girls and all races. Your offering
supports Christian-led organizations work
toward reconciliation and sustainable peace
through interfaith experiences. This offering
will be collected on September 27 and October
4. Thank you for your contributions.

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Greetings,

Recently I preached a sermon that affirmed along with Psalm 124 that God is indeed on our side when it comes to our transformation and redemption.

I further asked the question, *“If we are on God’s side?”* and how do we know if we are indeed on God’s side? I referred to the first 8 verses of Romans 12 in giving a starting point on what being on God’s side might look like in our lives.

In verse 1 Paul says, *“Therefore, I urge you, brothers, in view of God’s mercy, to offer your bodies as living sacrifices, holy and pleasing to God — this is your spiritual act of worship.”*

What I took from this is that being on God’s side is more than just pledging our allegiance during worship but then going out into the world and with our actions making the grace and truth of Christ real to others. I reminded those present the teaching ascribe to Teresa of Avalia, *“Christ has no body now but yours. No hands, no feet on earth but yours...”*

In verse 2 Paul writes, *“Do not conform any longer to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God’s will is — his good, pleasing and perfect will.”*

What I took from this is that being on God’s side is to let our thinking be transformed according to the Holy Spirit and the Word of God. I reminded those present of Paul’s well-known words to his protégé Timothy, *“How from infancy you have known the Holy Scriptures, which are able to make you wise for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus. All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness, so that the servant of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work.”*

In the remainder of these verses, Paul turns to how that transformation is lived out in community. He reminds us to have a sober understanding of ourselves and the gifts God has given, remembering that *“each member belongs to all the*

others.” Paul then names some of the ways these gifts can become living sacrifices in the ordinary life of the community.

What I did not speak about then, and what I would like to say here, is this: if God is on our side, and we are on God’s side, should we not also be on each other’s side? If our relationship with God is reflected in how we live with our brothers and sisters in Christ and with our neighbors, then how we treat one another, especially when we disagree, matters.

As you know, shortly I will be retiring and no longer be your Pastor. With my leaving comes unavoidable transition and change, especially after a pastorate of 25 years. As you work together to discern not only who your next Pastor will be, but who God wants you to be as a congregation going into the future, there are bound to be differing views and competing ideas.

My prayer for you as you go through this process is that you will remember that God is on your side, so there is no need to lack peace; that collectively you are on God’s side, united in your desire to live faithfully for God; and that, because you are in Christ and belong to one another, God calls you to be on each other’s side.

Paul speaks of this kind of life when he calls us to be *“bearing with each other in love”* (Ephesians 4:2), and Peter urges us to *“love one another deeply, from the heart”* (1 Peter 1:22). Being on each other’s side does not mean that we will always agree. It means that even when we disagree, we remember that the person with whom we disagree is someone to whom we belong, and who belongs to us. Being on each other’s side calls us to make room for differences, to be patient with one another, and to seek what is best not simply for ourselves but for the whole body of Christ.

In Christ, Pastor Vern

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Highlights of Session Meetings held on August 20, 2026

APPROVED to reaffirm an email vote take on July 1 to designate the \$10,000 gift Mike and Elaine Fry recently gave be used to help fund the repair of the Sanctuary Air Conditioner.

- **APPROVED** to reaffirm an email vote taken on July 16 to donate 8 cases of bottled water for the "Many Voices, One Song" program on August 30th, 2026 at Second Presbyterian Church of Carlisle and that the monies come out of the Community Life Committee's Budget.
- **APPROVED** the request from Sherri Webber-Mains for the potential use of the Fellowship Hall on Sunday, August 23rd for a family reunion, if it should rain that day.
- **APPROVAL** was given to the Community Life Committee to prepare a list of the items to be given free (old VBS and children's SS curriculum, books, old costumes from plays in the past) to other Churches and submit the list to the Big Spring Inter-Church Council to determine their interest in the items.
- **APPROVED** Sherri Webber-Mains and Margie Fry as the Co-Chairpersons for this year's Nominating Committee.
- **The general consensus of the Property Committee and the members of the Session is that the air conditioning systems need to be repaired in the following order once firm quotes from the contractors are known: 1. FELLOWSHIP HALL 2. SUNDAY SCHOOL ROOMS BELOW THE**

FELLOWSHIP HALL and 3. SANCTUARY

- **The ending checking account balance as of 7-31-2026 was \$4,232.22. Income for June/July was \$42,605.73/\$9,661.92 and the year-to-date income is \$169,043.09. Expenses for June/July totaled \$47,595.66/\$26,626.28 and year to date expenses were \$171,008.24. Investment Balance increased year to date by \$13,073.**
- **Notes from the Church Treasurer:** July ended with \$4,200 plus in the checking account once all transfers were made. Mission and Per Capita is paid through June. Taxes of \$3,286 are due in August. Payroll and the Board of Pensions also needs to be paid mid-month which is \$3,171.
- The BSICC met at a special meeting on July 15, to discuss the future of the Newville Meals on Wheels (MOW) which had suspended its deliver to clients on June 20 due to losing Green Ridge Village as a meal's provider. The meeting was well attended with a dozen congregations represented. A consensus was reached that perhaps MOW was no longer needed as a ministry as there are a number of other options available through the Big Spring Senior Center, Cumberland County Office of Aging, the Big Spring Food Bank, and Mom's Meals depending on the needs of the particular client. The content of this meeting was distributed to all BSICC member churches, along with the intent to take up the motion of the MOW Board to permanently disband the ministry at its September 16th meeting.

Pastor Vern has been asked to participate during the August 30th "Many Voices, One Song" service at see over:-

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- Second Presbyterian Church Carlisle which begins at 4:00 pm.
- **APPROVED** Pastor Vern's request that the week of November 23-30 as vacation. This would include the Sunday of November 29th. This makes November 22nd his last Sunday leading worship at First United. Debby Madden has already been approved by Session to lead worship on the 29th.

Submitted by Jim Ellingsworth – Clerk of the Session.(DISCLAIMER - "Notes from unofficial minutes and subject to change.")

SESSION SPEAKS- MIKE FRY

After turning another decade older, there's one thing I can say for sure, "The Times They are A-Changin". As we go back as far as the Creation, "Times" have always been changing, we see this through Abraham & Sarah, Jacob and Esau, and Joseph being sold into slavery and later becoming the 2nd most powerful ruler in Egypt. The list goes on through David and Solomon. It comes down through the years to a young woman & young man in Galilee, whose Son changed the world. Christianity today is based on His teachings of compassion & understanding. Now as we prepare for the retirement of Pastor Vern, we're going through transitions that bring many challenges. How we face these challenges depends on how the Holy Spirit leads and how we listen. As we go into this time, we need to look forward and not in the rear view mirror. Sometimes I look at the church like a bus. The mirror on the sides of the bus are reaching out, the rear view is looking backwards. The bus driver looks through the windshield & goes forward. This is what 1st church has to do. We have to be willing to step onto the bus, as well

as reach out and remember that God is the driver and He will show us the way.

Let's look at these words from Ecclesiastes 3:1 as we go through these transitions. "For everything there is a Season & a Time and Purpose for everything under heaven."(KJV)

God grants us peace through these times and all times as stated in Philippians 4:7, "And the peace of God, which passes all understanding, will keep your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus."

Mike Fry

The CLC would like to thank everyone who participated in the Church Picnic! We are grateful that even though there was a change in venue, that did not dampen our spirits!

The CLC has been hard at work on a few activities for the fall. We will be having a "Lost and Found Sheep Brunch" where we will have brunch and then work on a congregational artwork. No artistic experience needed! This will occur after Church on Sunday, September 27. For the brunch part of the afternoon. We ask that everyone bring a brunch type food to share after the Sunday Service. There is a sign-up on the hallway table to give us an idea of how many people may be coming. We ask that you bring your own place-setting. The CLC will provide coffee, tea, orange juice and water.

Can you believe that it has been a year since we did our church coloring project? We need to refresh the bulletin board and we would like your help! We are all part of God's Flock. The artwork will portray a shepherd with his flock. You will put your name on a sheep and maybe even decorate the sheep with cottonballs. We will then hang the sheep with the "Good Shepard" to remind us that we are never lost but always found.

Another annual activity that we are planning is our Annual Pumpkin Bash that will occur the night of the Newville Halloween Parade, which is on October 26. More information to follow.