

Oak Leaves

February 2026

FIRST UNITED CONTACT INFO

Pastor: Vern Gauthier

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Secretary: Elisabeth Gauthier

8:30-11:30am Office Hours

(717) 776-7525 - 1stupoffice@gmail.com

Clerk of Session: Jim Ellingsworth

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Moderator of Deacons: Sally Ann McCrea

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New phone numbers/emails/ address

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

Thanks

Elisabeth Gauthier

717-776-7525

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Happy February Birthday

4. Ginny English

10. Ron Glesner

10. Ethan Cunningham

13. Jan Roberts

Happy February Anniversary

none

Thanks

We thank the Deacons for the gift bag. It was very much appreciated, also the visit from Deacon Sally Ann McCrea. We thank the group of Christmas Carolers who visited us.

God Bless. *Sam & Barb Shenk*

Dear Deacons and carol Singers, all was greatly appreciated for your visit and gift.

Love Hope & Janice Glesner

Thank you to everyone who sent us cards and well wishes when we were prayer family. We are blessed to have such a wonderful church family. *Michele & Jesus Gomez*

Thanks for the cards and well wishes. Thanks to Mary Jane Spencer for the meal.

PV & Elisabeth Gauthier

Lenten Lunches

Feb 20

Fb 27

March 6

March 13

March 20

March 27

Meet here in the Fellowship Hall at Noon each Friday. Please come and join us

Session for 2026

Clerk- Jim Ellingsworth

Moderator- Pastor Vern Gauthier

Hale McCulloch

Lynette McCulloch

Elaine Fry

Mike Fry

Margie Fry

Nancy McCullough

Sherri Mains

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Greetings!



As we move into February, the year is already unfolding with both familiar rhythms and significant moments in the life of our congregation. This season invites us to stay attentive to where God is at work among us, even as we walk through

times of change together.

First, the season of Lent is just ahead. Lent begins on Wednesday, February 18, and with it comes the start of the Big Spring Inter Church Council's (BSICC) **Friday Lenten Luncheons**. The first luncheon will be held on **Friday, February 20, at noon**. Each luncheon includes a half-hour worship service followed by a light lunch. At this time, I know that the **Newville Church of the Brethren** will be leading worship on that first Friday. As I write, the remainder of the schedule has not yet been finalized by the BSICC, so please watch for additional details as they become available.

Second, since I last wrote to you, I have had a stent placed in one of the arteries leading to my heart. I am now scheduled to undergo **bypass surgery** at Hershey Medical Center on **March 6**. On the advice of my surgeon, Session has approved a **medical leave** for me **March 6 through April 3**. The surgeon has indicated that, after about two weeks, I may be able to resume some limited responsibilities if I feel up to it. My hope is to be fully back in order to lead Maundy Thursday worship on April 2, and then Easter worship on April 5.

During my absence, **Debby Madden** has graciously agreed to lead worship and provide pastoral care as needed. We are truly fortunate to have a caring and faithful friend like Debby, whose commitment to the well-being of this congregation is a great gift.

Third, as many of you know, I will be retiring at the end of November. As part of preparing for that transition, there are several responsibilities I currently handle that will need to be assumed by members of the congregation. Two areas that require some advance planning are the church's technology needs and the ongoing care of our Digital Music Library used in worship.

The **technology-related responsibilities** include tasks such as maintaining the church website, troubleshooting computer issues in the secretary's office and in worship space, and addressing occasional concerns with the church's Wi-Fi. These tasks require a basic level of comfort and experience working with technology, but not professional expertise.

The **Digital Music Library** role involves familiarity with worship music and the ability to organize and maintain a digital collection of music files. From time to time, this may include light editing of audio files, though this is not something we do frequently and may become even less necessary going forward.

If either of these ministries sounds like a possible fit for you, I would be glad to talk with you and share more details. It is not too early to begin learning what is involved so the transition can be as smooth as possible.

Finally, I want to say how deeply grateful Elisabeth and I are for the many expressions of care, encouragement, and prayer we have received as we navigate my current heart issues. Your kindness has been a source of strength and comfort for us both.

*In Christ,
Pastor Vern*

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Highlights of Session Meetings held on January 15, 2026

APPROVED the 2025 Annual Clerk's Report and the 2025 Church Statistical Report for the Presbytery.

- Stained Glass Windows – having enough funding in the Window Fund to repair the large window on the parking lot side, April Messenger has reached out to Cumberland-Stained Glass to see if our earlier quote is still good and to schedule the work. The quote of \$31,840 is still the price to do the repairs.
- **APPROVED** the Property Committee's recommendation to purchase a smaller snow blower at the cost of approximately \$1,500 that is lighter in weight and size making it more easily maneuverable on the sidewalks.
- **The ending checking account balance as of 12-31-2025 was \$6120.581. Income for December was \$58,568.58 and the year-to-date income is \$254,934.47. Expenses for December totaled \$55,691.68 and year to date expenses were 258,730.82.**
- There are NO changes in the list of Shepherding Groups for 2026 from the 2025 list.
- Lenten Luncheons to be held on the 6 Fridays during Lent from February 20 to March 27 as previously approved by Session.
- **APPROVED** Pastor Vern's request for a month's medical leave starting March 6 and

ending April 3rd 2026. March 6 is the day Pastor Vern is to have bypass surgery at Hershey Medical Center. Dr. Tamsko said if Pastor Vern feels up to it, he might return to some of his duties prior to April 3rd.

- The Newville Church of the Brethren was informed that First United has agreed to the sale of Handbells. Margie Fry or her parents will be meeting on January 22 at 5:30 pm with Sandy Armstrong and other member from the Church of the Brethren along with Ted Krocheski to look at and inspect the handbells. Submitted by Jim Ellingsworth – Clerk of the Session.(DISCLAIMER - "Notes from unofficial minutes and subject to change.")

BRIGHT SPOT

The CLC committee is planning a music and game event for all in the Newville area who have memory issues and their caregivers/loved ones. It is called Bright Spot because it is designed to encourage fun and relaxation—a time to get away from the tasks of daily living. **Saturday, February 21 at 1:30 pm** is the event's date. We will begin with a get acquainted game, then enjoy music with Chip Messenger followed by Bingo and light refreshments. We need a few volunteers to help set up tables, greet folks as they come in and to offer assistance, if needed, during the event. A couple batches of cookies are needed, too. A sign up sheet is on the table. Help us to share God's love with our community. Questions? Call Rausa at 717-776-9142.

Join us for the **Super Bowl of Caring!** We are collecting donations to buy beef for the Big Spring Area Food Bank. Our goal is to provide 1 lb beef packages to each family unit that the area food bank serves. Write Super Bowl on the memo line of your donation. We will finish collecting donations on February 8th.

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