

## Oak Leaves

### March 2026

#### FIRST UNITED CONTACT INFO

**Pastor:** Vern Gauthier

(717) 385-9526 - [1stuppastor@gmail.com](mailto:1stuppastor@gmail.com)

**Secretary:** Elisabeth Gauthier

8:30-11:30am Office Hours

(717) 776-7525 - [1stupoffice@gmail.com](mailto:1stupoffice@gmail.com)

**Clerk of Session:** Jim Ellingsworth

(717) 609-3102 – [jellingsworth22@gmail.com](mailto:jellingsworth22@gmail.com)

**Moderator of Deacons:** Sally Ann McCrea

(717)385-4734 [samccrea@gmail.com](mailto:samccrea@gmail.com)

#### New phone numbers/emails/ address

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

Thanks

Elisabeth Gauthier

**717-776-7525**

**[1stupoffice@gmail.com](mailto:1stupoffice@gmail.com)**

#### Happy March Birthday

1. Bob Kovanic
2. 11. Gunner Madorsky
12. Sharon Beatty
14. Ann Smith (91)
16. Elaine Gilbert
18. Luke Fry
22. Dick Smith (96)
31. Sherri Mains

#### Church Office

**Closed March 6<sup>th</sup> 9<sup>th</sup> and 10<sup>th</sup>**

#### Lenten Lunches

March 6

March 13

March 20

March 27-Meet here in the Fellowship Hall at Noon each Friday. Please come and join us

What does the Lord require of you? ...to do justice and to love kindness and to walk humbly with your God. Micah 6:8

#### The One Great Hour of Sharing Offering

provides the opportunity for you to share with the most vulnerable around the world. Our gifts show people they are not alone & that people they don't know, see them & care enough to respond. It helps those affected by flooding & other disasters to rebuild; & provides food & pure water for those in need.

You have the opportunity to contribute on **March 15, 22, and 29**. Thank you! Any questions ask Elaine Fry.

The Community Life Committee is looking for donations of candy for the **Easter Egg Hunt**. There will be a box in the hallway for candy donations. We are asking for small wrapped pieces of candy. We will be stuffing plastic eggs on Tuesday, March 17th at 6:30pm if anyone would like to join.

**Egg Hunt is Saturday March 28<sup>th</sup> at 4pm.**

**Debby Madden will be leading worship for the Sundays of March 8, 15, 22, and 29 while Pastor Vern is on Medical Leave. Debby will also be available to provide Pastoral Care during this time as well. She can be reached at (717) 440-1263.**

Please **send all Prayer Requests** to the church office at [1stupoffice@gmail.com](mailto:1stupoffice@gmail.com) or, (717) 776-7525.

Session has accepted Big Spring Presbyterian's invitation to observe **Maundy Thursday** with them on April 2. We are looking for 3 members of our congregation to take part as readers for the service. Please talk with Elaine Fry if you are interested.

## Oak Leaves



Greetings!

Have you ever felt like you were spinning your wheels, simply waiting for time to pass? That is how I am feeling as I await my upcoming surgery on March 6 and the recovery that follows.

If I am honest, I would gladly turn the calendar ahead to April when, Lord willing, I will be fully recovered. I even asked my surgeon when I might jog again. He said perhaps by April 15. I think I will hold him to that!

I truly have no reason to complain. I have been blessed with good health over the years, and I am grateful the blockages were discovered early, before any damage was done to my heart. Still, there is a very human part of me that wants everything put right immediately. Preferably yesterday!

But that is not how life works. We do not always get what we want, when we want it. Life requires waiting. Patience. Sometimes accepting reality over our preferences.

As someone once quipped, *"God, give me patience, and give it to me now."* Better still is the prayer written by Reinhold Niebuhr, now known as the Serenity Prayer: *"God, grant me the serenity to accept the things I cannot change, courage to change the things I can, and wisdom to know the difference."*

The Apostle Paul tells us that as we pray in every situation, the peace of God that surpasses understanding will guard our hearts and minds in Christ Jesus. Jesus himself says, *"My peace I give to you... Do not let your hearts be troubled and do not be afraid."* These are words I have offered many times as a pastor. They are perhaps easier to

hear as advice to others rather than when I must receive them myself.

At the January Big Spring Inter-Church Council meeting, I was prayed over by Pastor Don Snyder and others. One phrase from that prayer has stayed with me. He asked that I might be a witness to Jesus Christ in everything connected to this surgery, before and after.

That prayer reframed things. Instead of simply counting the days, It begged the question of how these days might count? How might waiting itself become a place of witness? How might hospital rooms, recovery time, and even limitations become occasions where Christ is honored?

Scripture speaks directly to that possibility: *"Whatever you do, in word or deed, do everything in the name of the Lord Jesus."* And Paul also writes, *"I have learned the secret of being content in any and every situation... I can do all this through him who gives me strength."*

The truth is, many of you are waiting too.

Waiting for test results.

Waiting for healing.

Waiting for clarity.

Waiting for strength to face whatever it is you are experiencing, or what comes next.

Waiting is not wasted time in God's hands. It is often the place where trust is quietly formed and peace takes deeper root.

So as I prepare for surgery, I carry your prayers and well wishes with me. Perhaps together we can learn that even in seasons we would prefer to skip ahead, Christ is present. Not only at the finish line, but in every step along the way.

Confident in his promise, *"I will never leave you or forsake you,"* we wait — but not alone.

*In Christ,*

*Pastor Vern*

# Oak Leaves

## Session Speaks

Traditional Christian hymns have way of weaving themselves into the fabric of daily life, offering comfort, grounding, and inspiration even in the most ordinary moments. Their melodies are familiar, their language timeless, and their messages deeply rooted in faith, hope, and perseverance. For many people, these hymns become more than songs sung in church—they become companions that speak to the heart.

“**Amazing Grace**” was written by John Newton, a man transformed by God’s mercy after years spent in the slave trade. His hymn is a testimony to the power of redemption. For Christians, it remains a reminder that God’s grace reaches into the darkest places and brings new life.

“**Be Thou My Vision,**” rooted in ancient Irish Christian prayer, expresses a heartfelt desire for God to be the guiding focus of every thought and decision. Its message encourages believers to seek God’s wisdom above all else, especially in a world full of distractions.

“**When I Survey the Wondrous Cross,**” written by Isaac Watts, invites us to reflect deeply on Christ’s sacrifice. Its meditative tone helps us approach the cross with humility and gratitude, especially during Lent and Holy Week.

“**A Mighty Fortress Is Our God,**” penned by Martin Luther during a time of great turmoil, boldly proclaims God as our refuge and strength. Christians have long sung it as an anthem of courage, trusting that God remains steadfast even when the world feels uncertain.

“**It Is Well with My Soul**” carries one of the most moving stories in hymn history. After losing his four daughters in a tragic shipwreck, Horatio Spafford wrote this hymn as an expression of trust in God despite overwhelming grief. It continues to comfort believers walking through seasons of loss.

“**What a Friend We Have in Jesus,**” originally a poem written by Joseph Scriven to encourage his ailing mother, reminds us that Christ welcomes every burden we bring to Him. Its simple message of friendship and prayer resonates with anyone seeking peace in difficult times.

“**Precious Lord, Take My Hand,**” written by Thomas A. Dorsey after the death of his wife and newborn child, has become a cornerstone of gospel music. Its plea for God’s guidance in moments of despair has strengthened countless Christians facing hardship.

“**Abide with Me,**” composed by Henry Francis Lyte as he approached the end of his life, is a gentle prayer for God’s presence through every season. It is often sung at funerals and memorials, offering comfort and hope to grieving hearts.

“**Blessed Assurance,**” written by Fanny Crosby, celebrates the joy and confidence believers find in Christ. Blind from infancy, Crosby wrote from a place of deep spiritual insight, and her hymn continues to inspire trust and gratitude.

Together, these hymns form a beautiful tapestry of Christian faith—songs that teach, comfort, challenge, and uplift. As we sing them in worship, we join voices with believers across centuries, celebrating the same faithful God who walks with us today.

What songs hold deep meaning to you, give you strength or inspire you?

*Elder Hale McCulloch*

## Oak Leaves

**Highlights of Session Meetings held on February 19, 2026 APPROVED** the request of the BSWA to hold their monthly meetings on the 2<sup>nd</sup> Thursday of the month from 6:30 to 8:30 pm during 2026. They meet 10 times during the year, in July and December, they don't hold meetings. A \$400 donation will be made to the Church for the use of the building.

- Super Bowl of Caring collection on Sunday, February 1<sup>st</sup>, 8<sup>th</sup>, 15<sup>th</sup> – monetary collection to fund purchase of ground beef for the Food Bank--collected greater than \$600 so it was determined to make the donation into 1 ½ pound packages for the 120 families
- **The ending checking account balance as of 1-31-2026 was \$1,061.86. Income for January was \$19,434.30 and the year-to-date income is 19,434.30. Expenses for January totaled \$24,425.52 and year to date expenses were \$24,425.52.**
- **Due to income shortfalls \$10,053.92 of interest income was transferred to the general checking account to assist paying our monthly expenses.**
- **APPROVED** to pay Debby Madden once, after the 4<sup>th</sup> Sunday of March \$800 (\$200 per week) plus milage at the current IRS rate which comes out to \$69.60 (\$17.40 x 4) for her services in the month of March
- **APPROVED** an additional stipend of \$200 (\$50 per week) and mileage reimbursement for any Pastoral Care travel at the current IRS rate of \$0.725 per mile for Debby Madden in recognition of her willingness to be on call for Pastoral Care during the four weeks of Pastor Vern's medical leave.
- **Maundy Thursday: APPROVED** the invitation to share in worship with Big

Spring Presbyterian Church as last year. A minimum of 3 readers are needed from First United. Elaine Fry agreed to be the liaison for First United to arrange the 3 readers needed from our Church

- Update on the sale of the Handbells to the Newville Church of the Brethren: Margie Fry reported that along with Ted Krocheski they met with Pastor Hess and 2 other representatives from the Church of the Brethren. They are very interested in purchasing the Handbells and were impressed with the amount of music and other accessories that would be part of the purchase. Due to the cost of purchasing the handbells the congregation at the Church of the Brethren will need to approve the purchase and their representatives hope this can be done by mid-April.
- **APPROVED** the regular monthly March 19<sup>th</sup> Session Meeting be cancelled, since Pastor Vern would not be available to moderate the meeting while on medical leave.

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

### Session for 2026

Clerk- Jim Ellingsworth  
Moderator- Pastor Vern Gauthier  
Hale McCulloch  
Lynette McCulloch  
Elaine Fry  
Mike Fry  
Margie Fry  
Nancy McCullough  
Sherri Mains

# **Oak Leaves**