

LAKE AVENUE BAPTIST CHURCH NEWSLETTER

January 2026, ISSUE 1, VOLUME 89

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NOTES FROM YOUR ASSISTING MINISTER, SUSAN MAYBECK

I am so appreciative to all of you who participated in Advent worship this year. It showed how many people are experienced Scripture readers, prayers, and worship participants. We have great, willing people in this church. What a blessing!

After Michael's tearful final Sunday as our Pastor on November 23, we were feeling sad and maybe even rudderless. We asked ourselves, "what would Michael do?" And of course we knew we would go forward.

We have travelled through Thanksgiving and Advent and Christmas. During Thanksgiving weekend we were thankful for the past, grateful for the strength of LABC and hopeful for our future.

The season of Advent is a time of waiting expectantly. We thought about the great **love** we experienced from each other and our families. Children brought us the **joy** as they anticipated vacations and gifts. Of course we were **hopeful** as we prepared to search for a pastor. And finally **peace** was in our hearts as we faced a world and our nation struggling to find a road to peace.

And then on Christmas Eve after we lighted the Christ candle. At the end of the service we lit our own candles, ready to bring Christ into our world. Singing our hearts out we moved from Silent Night to Joy to the World, the Lord has come.

Through worship we have travelled through sadness of the loss of Michael to the joy of anticipation of a potential

new life at LABC. Next Sunday (Jan 4, 2026) we enter a new year, a new beginning, a new experience in worship and the life of our church.

And I know that as you step forward to help in worship, you will step up again in this new year. We will be welcoming an Interim Minister who will need our guidance and our support. I am anticipating a great year!

HAPPY NEW YEAR, my friends.

Susan Maybeck, Assisting Minister

A Holiday Greeting and Church Updates from our Moderator, Soe Win

Hello all,

I hope you are doing well and enjoying time with your families during this holiday season.

We are still adjusting during this transitional period, but I want you to know that the staff and leadership team are doing their very best. Thank you for your trust and patience.

First, we are continuing the search for an interim pastor. According to the LABC bylaws, the council serves as the search committee for the interim pastor and will bring a candidate to the congregation for a vote. **A special congregational meeting will be held on Sunday, January 4 following service to vote on the interim pastor.** If everything goes well, we anticipate welcoming the interim pastor by the end of January or sometime in February. If the process does not move forward as expected, the council will need to repeat the search.

Second, we will hold **another congregational meeting on Sunday, January 25, immediately following the service, to vote on our annual budget.**

Lastly, please do not hesitate to contact me if you have any questions. I am available to listen and respond to your concerns, comments, recommendations, and feedback.

Wishing you peace and blessings this holiday season,

Soe

LABC COVENANT CIRCA 1941-1954

BY EVANN HASENAUER,

While I was digging through the sound room looking for something (I have since forgotten what I was looking for), I found a stack of copies of an old covenant credited to Dr Gerald Watkins, who was the minister here from 1941 to 1954. They are printed on stickers, clearly meant to be stuck in the fronts of hymnals or bibles used at the time (I tested one of them and they're even still sticky, better than any stickers I've worked with recently). I read the covenant out of curiosity and was struck by how similar this covenant from seventy years ago matches our current identity statement (found on the front page of our website). I'm including a picture of the old covenant, but in case the image is hard to read (or for anyone who might use a screen reader), the old covenant reads as follows:

"Covenant, Lake Avenue Baptist Church (written by Dr Gerald Watkins, Minister, Lake Avenue Baptist Church 1941-1954)

We, the members of Lake Avenue Baptist Church, having accepted Jesus Christ as our Lord and Master, do now joyfully and solemnly enter into covenant one with another as one body in Christ.

We promise to follow the Christian way of life as revealed in the teachings and example of Jesus Christ, to the very best of our understanding and ability. We resolve, with God's help, to become growing and useful members of this church doing all within our power to promote the Christian spirit in our community and throughout the world.

We resolve to contribute cheerfully and regularly to the support of the church and its worldwide mission.

To attend faithfully its services and to pray and labor for the spirituality and prosperity of the church.

We hold it to be the mission of the Church of Christ to proclaim His gospel to all people, laboring for the progress of knowledge, the promotion of justice, the reign of peace, and the realization of Christian community.

We further engage to deal with each other in love; to remember each other in prayer; to aid each other in sickness and distress; to cultivate Christian sympathy in feeling, and courtesy in speech; to be slow to take offense, but always ready for reconciliation.

We moreover resolve that when we remove from this place, we will, as soon as possible, unite with some other church, where we can carry out the spirit of this covenant and the principles of our Christian Faith."



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LAKE AVENUE BAPTIST CHURCH
(Written by Dr. Gerald Watkins,
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For comparison, our current Identity Statement reads:

"Claimed by Christ...Committed to Community...Called to Serve."

Lake Avenue Baptist Church is a Christ-centered, diverse, urban, multi-ethnic, multi-cultural, multi-lingual, mission-driven congregation of gifted and caring people. We welcome, unconditionally, all seekers of Christ's love and direction: women, men, children, youth; people of diverse ages, races, histories, abilities and sexual orientations. We are American Baptist, with historically strong neighborhood and ecumenical commitments. We are:

** **Claimed by Christ:** We are God's own and are not here by chance. We open ourselves to God's Light and Love. We look to the Bible for guidance, and we respond to Christ's call to discipleship.*

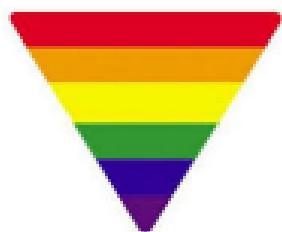
** **Committed to Community:** As members of Christ's Body, we are as family. We gather for creative and meaningful worship, helpful support and spiritual growth. We are building an open, welcoming, caring and respectful community. We uphold Baptist principles and support strong ecumenical and interfaith ties.*

** **Called to Serve:** We respond to Christ's call by sharing our gifts in acts of service. We reach out as a church to our neighborhood, our city, and beyond. We go into the world to do justice, make peace, and share God's love.*

I find the clear connections between these two covenants, separated by more than 70 years and many pastors and leadership teams, to be a powerful reminder that the DNA of our church remains the same. This is especially important to remember as we navigate our most recent transition. Whoever our interim pastor is, whoever our next pastor is, whatever changes come as a result of these and other changes in our church, at our soul, we are the same church we have always been. Likely, and I'm sure there are people in our congregation today who were there 70 years ago, or whose parents were there 70 years ago, who could tell you that the congregation today looks far different than the congregation of that time. The congregation of today even looks different than it did when I first started attending back in 2001.

Mark Your Calendars....Fundraiser - January 31, 2026

As part of our ongoing fundraising for the bathrooms, I will be organizing a fundraising event on Saturday, January 31, to start at 4pm. As part of the event, we will be holding a raffle, offering food and coffee, and providing other activities (to be determined as we continue to plan). I am asking people to help out as they are able, either by donating material goods that we can offer as raffle prizes, assisting with planning/organizing, helping with set-up and running the event on the day of, and/or attending the event. If you are able to help in any way, or for more information, contact me (Evann Hasenauer) at evann.hasenauer@gmail.com or in-person (I'm in the office every Monday from 9-1 and Wednesday 9-12).



THE WELCOMING AND AFFIRMING “BE YOU” MOVIE SERIES

The next movie in this series will be shown on **Saturday, January 3 at 6:00 pm** in classroom 1 (the conference room) is entitled *The Wedding Banquet*. This movie is a 1993 romantic comedy film directed, produced and co-written by Ang Lee. The story concerns a gay Taiwanese immigrant man (Winston Chao, in his film debut) who marries a mainland Chinese woman (May Chin) to placate his parents (Gua Ah-leh and Lung Sihung) and also to get her a green card. His plan backfires when his parents arrive in the United States to plan his wedding banquet and he has to hide the truth about his gay partner (Mitchell Lichtenstein). (Because many of the movies have adult themes, they may not be appropriate for children.)



Our next community dinner will take place on Wednesday, January 21, 2026. We will be serving Chili. A sign-up sheet will be available on Sunday, January 11th at the Welcome Center in the Narthex. Even if you are unable to bring something, your presence is always welcome.



Give yourself a pat on the back for the fantastic job we did collecting mittens, gloves, hats, socks and scarves for our Mitten Tree!! Not only was it beautiful, but it also served a need. Those items will be donated to Cameron Community and, also, some will be kept at the church. This month we will be collecting hygiene supplies. This includes shampoo, soap, hand sanitizer, tissues, Chapstick, lotion, toothpaste, toothbrushes. Sample sizes are great but larger sizes are welcome. Please do not bring razors or mouthwash that contains alcohol. Again, these items will be dispersed between Cameron and LABC.

**The Aging Gracefully and Joyfully Group
will meet on Monday, January 5th at 1:00 pm in the Conference Room.
ALL ARE WELCOME!**

CONGREGATIONAL MEETINGS:

Please join us for a special congregational meeting this Sunday, **January 4th**, immediately following service. Also, mark your calendars for a church congregational meeting which will take place on **January 25** to discuss and vote on the **2026 church budget**



GINGERBREAD HOUSE DECORATING PARTY: A fun time was had by all who attended the Gingerbread House Decorating Party on Saturday afternoon; December 13th. Some very creative houses were assembled and other Christmas decorations were made including snowflakes from paper bags, wax candles, and beaded candy canes. The Christmas "elves" helping in these craft projects included Val and Dave Ketchum, Jane Grant, Karen Brokaw, Soe Win, Ken Setera, Evann Hasenauer, Manita Opoku, & Anika Sharma. Thanks to everyone who helped and thanks to all who brought snacks and drinks.



A STORY FROM YOUR OFFICE ADMINISTRATOR

I happened to run across this short story on the internet. It is a short spiritual and inspirational story to ponder for the New Year. It is “about letting go of the past to embrace new growth.” I hope you find it enjoyable and inspiring.

Ken Setera

The Old Stone & the River



An old, heavy stone sat by a riverbank, watching countless years of water flow past. Each year, as the ice broke and the new season arrived, the stone grumbled, "Another year, and I'm still here, burdened by the silt and memories of the last. My edges are dull; my purpose lost in the current."

One New Year's Eve, as the river churned with fresh snowmelt, a wise old willow tree whispered from the bank, "Why do you resist the flow, dear stone? The river brings change, not just debris."

"But I am solid," the stone replied. "I am meant to stay."

"You are meant to be part of the river," the willow chuckled softly. "Every New Year is a chance to be shaped anew. Let the water smooth your sharpest regrets, carry away your heaviest burdens. Become the polished pebble, not the immovable rock. Your strength isn't in staying the same, but in yielding to the journey, allowing the new waters to reveal the beauty you hold within."

The stone pondered this. As the first light of the New Year touched the water, it felt a gentle nudge. A wave, stronger than the rest, rolled over it, not to dislodge, but to embrace. The stone didn't move, but it felt different—lighter, cleaner, ready to reflect the new dawn, no longer just a stone, but a part of the river's endless, renewing song.

A Christmas Message from the New York State Council of Churches

Albany, NY- Christmas celebrates the birth of Jesus Christ, the light of the world. The story of his birth, the Nativity Story reminds us that God entered the world not in wealth or power, but in vulnerability. Jesus was born to a young family in humble circumstances far from home, seeking asylum from oppression, and displacement. Mary and Joseph's journey reminds us that the Christmas story is inseparable from the realities faced by immigrants and refugees today—families seeking safety, dignity, and the chance to flourish. From its very beginning, the Christian story is rooted in God's closeness to those on the margins.

This is why social justice is not optional to Christian faith—it is essential to living out God's Word. Jesus' teaching in Matthew 25 makes this unmistakably clear: how we treat the hungry, the stranger, the sick, and the imprisoned is how we respond to Christ himself. Faith is not fulfilled by asking what Jesus might have done in theory; it is embodied when we put our beliefs into action. Justice is love made public. Compassion becomes real when it shapes policies, institutions, and daily choices that honor the dignity of every person.

Throughout history, faith communities have played a decisive role in shaping movements that many now take for granted. The abolition of slavery, the struggle for workers' rights, the civil rights movement, and ongoing efforts for housing, healthcare, and economic fairness were fueled by churches that understood faith as a call to transformation. These movements did not emerge from comfort, but from conviction—rooted in Scripture, prayer, and courageous action.

The New York State Council of Churches stands within this long tradition of faith-based leadership for the common good. As we look toward the New Year, the Council will continue lifting up stories of congregations and faith leaders across New York State who are serving as change agents in their communities. Our upcoming newsletters will highlight how faith communities are responding to today's challenges with creativity, moral clarity, and hope—building bridges, advocating for justice, and caring for neighbors in tangible ways.

As we celebrate the birth of Christ, we are called to walk alongside the vulnerable, to welcome the stranger,

and to work together for a more just and compassionate world. As we move into the New Year, may we recommit ourselves to a faith that is lived boldly, shared generously, and expressed through actions so that hope is not only proclaimed, but practiced.

We wish you a Very Merry Christmas and Happy New Year!

The Christmas Message from Rev. Dr. Gina C. Jacobs-Strain – General Secretary of American Baptist Churches USA

Dear Beloved American Baptists,

As we celebrate the joy and hope of this Advent Season, I want to thank each of you for the wonderful ways you support the mission of American Baptist Churches USA. In this season, we remember the birth of our Savior, Jesus Christ, who came to bring peace to a world that desperately needed it. As the angelic host proclaimed to the shepherds that night, "Glory to God in the highest heaven, and on earth peace among those whom he favors!" (Luke 2:14, NRSV). This message of peace is not just for the past but is a gift to us today, and it calls us to be bearers of that peace in our world.

In the midst of the challenges we face, I believe Christmas reminds us that Christ is the hope for a future filled with restoration and healing. The light of Christ shines in our hearts and in our communities, dispelling darkness and guiding us into a future where the kingdom of God is more fully realized. We are called to embody this hope in all that we do, and as followers, we are given a clear mission: to go and make disciples of all nations, sharing the Good News of God's love and salvation with the world. This is the Great Commission, given to us by Christ Himself: "Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit" (Matthew 28:19, NRSV).

As we reflect on the birth of our Savior, let us also embrace the diversity that has been wonderfully woven into God's creation; each of us made in the image of God. The Body of Christ is a beloved community, a community that is made up of people from every nation, tribe, and tongue. In the Gospel, we see that Jesus came for all of humanity. We are called in John 13:34-35 to love one another as God has loved us, building a community where all are welcome and valued, where diversity is celebrated, and where we strive to live in harmony with one another. This Christmas, let us love and serve one another, knowing that our differences are gifts and opportunities to reflect the fullness of God's creativity and grace.

I pray that this Christmas fills your heart with the peace of Christ, and that the year ahead brings renewed hope. May we continue to walk in God's light, together as one beloved community, fulfilling the Great Commission with faith, love, and a heart for all nations.

Merry Christmas!

Rev. Dr. Gina C. Jacobs-Strain
General Secretary, American Baptist Churches USA

THE MARTIN LUTHER KING JR. HOLIDAY WILL BE CELEBRATED ON MONDAY, JANUARY 19, 2026. IN HONOR OF HIS BIRTHDAY, THE PITTSFORD COMMUNITY IS PRESENTING THE FOLLOWING EVENTS.

MLK Living the Dream Series



Presented by Pittsford CommUNITY
All events held at:
123 S Main. Pittsford NY
pittsfordcommunity.org for more info



14
Jan

7PM

Mobile Museum of
Tolerance
Short Films & Discussion

21
Jan

7PM

Spoken Word
Performance & Open
Mic/Poetry Slam

25
Jan

3PM

Interfaith
Family Service