

## PRAYER PROFILE: BATAVIA FIRST PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH

Happy New Year!?

We all welcomed 2020 with joy, hope and plans. Even though it has only been eight months it seems like a decade ago. Since then Batavia, like all churches in the Presbytery of Genesee Valley, has experienced many changes due to Covid-19. Batavia First is definitely doing church even though they are not worshipping in their beautiful historic building. Since March, Batavia has offered Sunday worship services online. As Rev. Roula says, they are adapting to change and doing something new. She feels God has been preparing them for this venture as they have been researching how to do online services for a couple years. All they needed was a push—but certainly did not anticipate the push would be a world-wide pandemic.

The church also hosts Saturday evening worship using their own parking lot and that of the neighboring Baptist church. Folks either sit in lawn chairs or remain in their cars. Music is recorded, passing the peace is a sign language of sorts, those in their cars listen to the service on their car radio (just like a modern drive-in movie), and, on communion Sunday, participants bring their own elements. They have also done several youth and prayer events outside in parks and backyards. Rev. Akhouri says this is fun and folks are happy to be together again.



Despite the challenges, Batavia has not only continued with their community outreach programs but has expanded the outreach as well. They host food collections with the Salvation Army and reach out to schools, nursing homes and hospitals. The Tuesday knitting/craft group has been busy making blankets for children who are served by the Justice for Children Advocacy Center. Vacation Bible school opened and closed with in-person festivities in the church parking lot—materials were dispersed and songs and story time occurred online. Another way they reach out is through care cards; 350 cards were collected and given to Batavia's nursing homes residents.

Prayers for Batavia First:

1. How do we continue to be the church?
2. To be able to do meaningful ministry, to always be on our toes and be ready for what happens next
3. Prayers for families dealing with loss
4. Reopening the building safely

### Batavia First Presbyterian Church

**Address:** 300 E. Main St., Batavia, NY 14020

**Pastor:** Rev. Dr. Roula Akhouri

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