

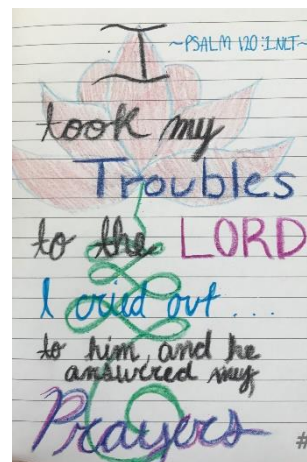
PRAYER PROFILE: FIRST PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH OF BYRON - Byron, N.Y.

We were introduced to Byron First Presbyterian Church in May 2019 when we first began doing prayer profiles. Byron was founded in 1818 and has been led by the Rev. James Renfrew since 2000.

What are they up to now?

Like all our Presbytery of Genesee Valley churches they have been cancelled to Sunday worship in the sanctuary since the middle of March 2020 due to Covid-19. Has that stopped or slowed them? NO. They have adapted to this “new” life by teaming up with the Rev. David Fish of the North Bergen Presbyterian Church and Zoom-ing their worship services. They have found this very successful and find both “old” friends and “new” friends worshiping with them.

Jim told me the church has three very competent members who are able to run the “Zoom” service for them and that the challenge for using music on Zoom—to comply with copyright laws—has been addressed by securing an annual “One License” contract, allowing most hymns to be used on Zoom. The children's message is part of the Sunday Zoom service and is a big hit with the children.



Lily Thompson, Elba HS student, creates covers for virtual Sunday worship bulletins

Children's Sunday was held in June. Eighty balloons and goodie bags were delivered to all the children during the week and on Sunday they were encouraged to wave their balloons and make a joyful noise during the Zoomed service. Fun was had by all.

Two years ago Byron was the recipient of a Presbytery grant which was used to purchase sewing machines and material. These are now being used to make face masks that are given out free to those who need them including area farm workers.



Balloons equal fun for kids at Byron Presbyterian



Church doors were decorated for Easter while 120 people worshiped virtually



Celebrating the 98th birthday of Byron's oldest member

Some challenges Jim and his congregations are facing:

- The church re-opened for in-person worship on July 19 and church leadership continues to work hard to prepare safety protocols to reduce the health risks while regathering. Please pray for our leaders!
- Sunday school is cancelled for the time being, so we pray for insights about ways to stay connected with children and their families.
- Jim is a face-to-face type of person and finds ministry through phone calls, e-mails, and Zoom a challenge: “But we are grateful for the willingness of church participants to adapt to these new forms of communication. We cannot come to church, but let's be the church! That's our most important prayer!”
- Loss and grief are difficult at any time, but celebrating the life of a key church leader, Gwen George, during this time of isolation has been an enormous challenge. We pray for our loss, but also the losses felt in the other congregations of our Presbytery.

First Presbyterian Church of Byron

Address: 6293 Main St., PO 206, Byron, NY 14422

Pastor: Rev. James Renfrew

Clerk of Session: Shannon Thompson

Music Program Director: Larry Tallman

Worship time: Sundays, 9:45 a.m., in-person or via Zoom

Thanks to Kay VanNostrand, Relationships Group, for preparing this profile.