WEST ONEONTA BAPTIST CHURCH

COMMUNITY PROFILE

West Oneonta is a small hamlet in the Town of Oneonta in beautiful central New York State, in the foothills of the Catskill Mountains. Settlers came to West Oneonta in the late 1700’s from Pennsylvania, Rhode Island, New Jersey and other areas. These settlers were predominately farmers, and there were still many Native Americans in the area at this time. Today, West Oneonta is basically a “suburb” of the city of Oneonta, housing various ages, from young families to older retirees. Some residents have lived in the area for many years, raised families, and remained in their homes. There are two mobile home parks in the area; one is for residents 55+. Young adults, especially, seem to leave the area to find better jobs, lower taxes, and better weather. There are also a significant number of “snow birds” who tend to go south for the winter months. With the recent real estate “boom” following the exodus from New York City after Covid, many properties in the surrounding area have changed hands, with the possibility of more young families.

In 2022, there was a reported population of 5,000+ residents within a 2.5 mile radius of West Oneonta, which tends to remain pretty much the same. The largest numbers come from those between 35 and 65 years of age. There is almost an equal amount of single vs. married people in the area. Most residents have at least a High School education (or GED), with a large number of Bachelor and/or Graduate degrees. Approximately 46% of those employed are in educational services, with the largest section of the population having household incomes of $50,000-$75,000. Most of the residents are white, with a small number of African-Americans and Hispanics.

Within the immediate West Oneonta area, there are 5 different religious groups–West Oneonta Baptist Church, Spirit & Truth Assembly, Kingdom Hall of Jehovah Witnesses, The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints, & Oneonta Seventh Day Adventist. In the city of Oneonta& surrounding area, there are Baptist, Methodist, Catholic, Episcopal, Lutheran, Assembly of God, Wesleyan, Quaker, Church of Christ, Unitarian Universalist, Salvation Army, and numerous non-denominational churches.

The nearby City of Oneonta, population approximately 12,500, boasts two colleges: SUNY @ Oneonta (enrollment 5,900+) and Hartwick College (enrollment approx.. 1165). Both colleges have various programs/entertainments opened to the public. Oneonta also has a Symphony Orchestra (Catskill Symphony), live theater at Foothills Performing Arts & Civic Center, a Collegiate Baseball League team (Oneonta Outlaws), a baseball camp (Cooperstown All-Star Village), parks, golf courses, etc. There are plenty of free of low-cost activities to offer for everyone.

CHURCH PROFILE

Founded in 1807, West Oneonta Baptist Church is a historic church that has faithfully served the community for over 200 years. In the grace of God the church has founded other churches in the area. Over the years people have come and gone and the building has been expanded, but our mission has remained constant: to serve and glorify God in our community. In the course of the years we have experienced high points of growth and low points of decline, and then growth again. We have learned to trust in the Lord and pray for help and guidance at all times. In the past we have had various ministries: a nursery school, a food pantry, a Spanish service, and a New Commandment men’s ministry. For a time we also employed a part time youth pastor to assist the pastor. These ministries have ended for various reasons.

In the wake of the pandemic, we are emerging from a period of decline; at times we struggle to have enough people for the ministries that we desire—but God is ever faithful to us in filling the needs of our current ministries. On Sunday mornings we meet for worship, followed by men’s, women’s and children’s Sunday School classes. (Adult classes combine in the summer months.) The women meet monthly in a women’s ministry, “Called Together.” The men have men’s breakfasts for fellowship and often, a work day.Several Bible study groups meet during the week. We conduct an annual Women’s and an annual Men’s Conference, attended by believers and guests from the area.

Wednesday evening we have (1) a well-attended Bible study and prayer meeting, (2) AWANA program during the school year and (3) our teen group. We conduct our Vacation Bible School the week after the school year ends. We have children’s Sunday School and children’s church Sunday mornings. We do not currently have a teen class for Sunday School.

Our church is located in a community where cultic groups meet nearby—the Jehovah’s Witnesses, the Mormons, and Spirit and Truth Assembly, a group that denies the Trinity. So West Oneonta Baptist holds forth the good news of Jesus in a community that needs the gospel. We are now served by an Interim Pastor, and, after a Venture Church Network assessment, have adopted a new constitution and by-laws. New elders and deacons will be chosen at our annual meeting in October.

Our congregation is small; we average 40-45 in attendance, many of whom are in their retirement years. The fellowship is warm; love in the church is palpable. The believers are committed to one another. We praise God for the people he has led to us, and we are determined to continue to seek God’s blessing to use our church to reach more people in our community with the gospel of our Savior, Jesus Christ.

PASTOR PROFILE

As we at West Oneonta Baptist Church (WOBC) search for our next pastor we must consider that we are all limited by our skills, time and experiences. Our next pastor will be likewise limited and cannot serve the church to the detriment of his walk with God, no matter the perceived need. We will be looking for someone who, first and foremost, prioritizes his own personal relationship with God, seeing this as crucial to the success of all that he endeavors to do. All other responsibilities will be fulfilled as he is able, whether done personally, delegated, or outsourced to other capable parties, either internal or external to WOBC.

We expect that our next pastor will be an avid student of the Word of God which he will present boldly, with clarity and applicability, and encourage the congregation to apply God’s Word in their daily lives. He should be able to conduct and coordinate the Sunday service(s) in conjunction with the worship team. He will also work with the Elders to lead WOBC in its mission to its members and the surrounding community by: identifying spiritual giftedness in its members; assisting in the development of their gifts; identifying and cultivating future spiritual leaders; delegating responsibilities among gifted individuals/teams; exhorting, motivating, and leading WOBC in reaching out with the gospel of Jesus Christ to the local community.

Our next pastor should also love and enjoy people, relating well to people in a sincere and humble way. Leading by example as he encourages the congregation to learn from and follow the Lord Jesus Christ. As he interacts with others he will strive to discern the needs of individuals in the flock and provide them with the necessary pastoral care; and be willing to warn, admonish, rebuke and correct, as necessary, the church as a whole or individual members. He should instruct them how to love and study God’s word, to love one another, to pursue God’s will, to bear spiritual fruit, and to make both disciples and disciple makers.

Here at WOBC we believe we are called to serve in the area of both Missions as well as Family and youth ministries. The pastor should keep this in mind, supporting ministries that are effective in these areas by encouraging and equipping those in the church with a gift and heart for these ministries.

The pastor should possess organizational skills adequate to coordinate the day-to-day operation of the church or be able to identify and recruit a church member with these skills. He must also coordinate with the Elders to visit individuals and families within the church and community; as well as encourage the congregation to demonstrate hospitality to one another and those in the community.

The pastor should possess some level of pastoral counseling skills for both formal and informal counseling opportunities as they arise. He should be able to dedicate a portion of his time each week to counseling people in the church. He should be able to wisely delegate counseling responsibilities among his fellow Elders, other gifted individuals within the congregation, and to professional biblical counselors in the area when the situation goes beyond his abilities or time limitations.

Finally, the pastor should promote his calling through professional growth, including meeting with likeminded Pastors and Elders for discipleship, study, and mutual encouragement. He should continue his education through classes, seminars, conferences, and the like.