



*Everyone is welcome here*  
**UNITED PRESBYTERIAN  
CHURCH OF BINGHAMTON**



# **Congregational Activity Reports June 2022–May 2023**



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## Pastor Kimberly Chastain's Report



*Time, like an ever-rolling stream, bears all our years away;  
They fly, forgotten, as a dream dies at the break of day.*

Last year at the annual meeting, we celebrated that God brought us safely through the season of the pandemic, and we started thinking and praying about what the “new normal” might be for our congregation. We spoke of hopes and we made a few plans, humbly and cautiously, knowing that things might change in a heartbeat. And change they did!

After a two-year hiatus, we were able to host a LUMA event in September, as a last-minute guest “Snow Raven” came — initially to do one performance, but then expanding so that she did several each night.

We heard from community members who traveled to Israel, to Ghana, and to Sasabe, Mexico, about the worlds they encountered, and heard specific challenges from Dave Ruston & Greg Patinka about how we might better work to support the refugees who come to the borders from south and Latin America. They hosted a conversation at their newly built cabin and hope to lead additional training on the issue in the coming year.

We planned and celebrated a beautiful Advent season telling the stories that have shaped our understanding of Christmas and of incarnation, and we have continued to work



*As part of the 2022 LUMA Festival, we hosted a special performance by Snow Raven (Haar Suor), an indigenous Siberian wisdom-keeper.*



*Clockwise from left: Victoria Barics traveled to Israel with a group of Binghamton University students to learn about the Israeli–Palestinian conflict; Elikem Nyamuame delivered supplies to students at the Whuti-Srogboe Evangelical Presbyterian school in the Volta region of Ghana; Gail Cocourek and Dave Ruston told us of the Tucson Samaritans' mission at the Mexico–US border.*



together to assure that our worship is inclusive, educational, and open to the spirit of God. We purchased projection screens for the sanctuary, and have been experimenting with the best ways to use them in our worship life, including streaming guest preachers from New York City and from Tucson.

We evaluated and reshaped our Community Meal and Pantry program, and continue to adapt to the changing needs of our community. We started dreaming about a day center that would provide a warm and safe place for our unhoused friends to make calls, charge phones, do laundry, and perhaps even take showers. Then...

We began a partnership with the Addiction Center of Broome County, providing an overnight comfort station five nights each week, and hope that the program will expand to seven nights by the time cold weather comes again. This new venture has raised new questions about how we can best be stewards of the space and the resources entrusted to us. This conversation will continue, as we consider the changes that continue to happen in our congregation, our families, our communities and our world.

In May, after the CDC reported that Broome County's COVID risk and hospitalization rate has been low since March, the session voted to make mask-wearing in worship optional, recognizing that if the danger increases we will revisit the question. We continue to seek balance between our very human need for contact and community, and our desire to keep each other safe from harm.

And we celebrated the 10-year anniversary of our life together at United, as we gathered on the lawn for an outdoor worship service and picnic just as we did in June of 2013, when I first arrived.

As we look to the coming year and to the future of our congregation, we are planning a new series of conversations as we consider the best use of our time and our talents. The changes in our families and our congregation mean that we will have to start making choices about the programs and activities we want to put our energy into, and how we will define our mission in the next season of our ministry together. What are we going to emphasize, and what are things we might want or need to let go of?

A representative from the Presbyterian Foundation will be guiding some of these reflections with us in the year ahead; she told us that she works with the leadership of each congregation to discern God's calling and purpose. I immediately thought about who the leadership of our congregation is and concluded that each one, in your own way, leads some part of the work that defines our community. So I will be asking each and all of you to prayerfully consider these questions, and let's keep asking "what excites us about United? How can we keep building and sharing these things so that God is glorified?"

*O God, our help in ages past — our hope for years to come,  
Be thou our guard while life shall last, and our eternal home!*

Blessings,  
Pastor Kimberly



*The winds of the Holy Spirit nearly  
blew us away during our outdoor  
worship service on Sunday, June 4!*

## Pastor Becky Kindig's Report



Greetings friends!

It has been another wonderful year serving here at United Presbyterian Church of Binghamton. I am so happy to be part of this wonderful church community who serves God and others in so many ways. We have continued to show that we care for each other and our neighborhood, and have begun the process of praying about and discerning what ministry God is calling us to next in this unique time after a pandemic. During the pandemic, so many people were overwhelmed and exhausted at trying to live with this new normal. But now Kimberly and I can see energy and interest coming back in ways that we can be together again to build relationships, serve others, and learn about and worship God. And I am so thankful to be a part of a congregation that values everyone and finds ways to meet people where they are at.

One of those ways is our Sunday school packets. It continues to be a great joy as Associate Pastor for Spiritual Formation to spend time each week designing a lesson to send home to the 21 young people in our congregation that goes along with the scripture we are learning about in worship. Because we are striving to learn more parts of the Bible than just what the lectionary gives, it means that traditional curriculum often does not cover the stories that we are learning about. So it is a fun and satisfying challenge to create the material and crafts to send home each week that help to bring a piece of the lesson to each family for them to engage in. I often design a craft and make one in my office so I can take pictures of the steps to include in the instructions. As a result, I have quite the collection of example crafts in my office that remind me of all that we have learned this year (pictured below). Other weeks were activities or science experiments or pieces of a craft that I no longer have in my office. Many thanks goes out to Marilynn Guinane, who comes in most weeks to cut construction paper or yarn, count out pipe cleaners, label envelopes, fold letters, stuff the lessons into the packets, and get them to the post office! Because we mail them out each week, we can help all of the young people of our congregation have a chance to interact with the Bible lesson each week, not just the weeks that they're at church in person.



The weekly "Sunday School at Home" lessons usually include a craft. These are 23 weeks of those lessons.

Another piece of “meeting people where they are” for me is my work at Binghamton University with the Interfaith Council. This year we have hosted a monthly “Common Ground Conversation,” being able to discuss a topic and the ways each of our faiths understand it. We have hosted two “Soul Care” events helping students, faculty, and staff to slow down and nourish themselves. Our very own Elikem Nyamuame helped with one Soul Care event by hosting a Drum Circle on the quad, and the other event was a hike and



*Last fall, Elikem Nyamuame led a “Soul Care” drum circle on the quad at the Binghamton University campus.*

meditation in the BU Nature Preserve. We have office hours for students to stop in and talk or ask questions, and we table at orientation and accepted student days. We are having a good response to our presence, and we hear a lot from students and parents that it is great to see faith leaders from different religions working together and having

a good time together. We have also been invited to come to two different classes to teach about Interfaith Dialogue this past spring, and they were great opportunities to teach others about working together and about celebrating differences. Thank you for valuing this work at the University.

We continue to meet people where they are with worship, bible study, and meetings as well. Being able to have in-person, Zoom, or YouTube options has allowed people who have been away from our community for a while to take part. We feel that this is extremely important and will be committed to continuing it in the future. We also have heard over and over again how wonderful it is to see people in person or to have Zoom opportunities to get to know each other. We were able to catch up with so many of you at Christmas, Easter, and at the picnic. And our Friday night Happy Hour is still continuing on Zoom at 5:00 each week, when we share all kinds of things from our lives. Being a part of a community is not just worshipping together, it is sharing ourselves with one another.

Sharing the little bits of conversation about a trip you took or a book you read or a struggle you are going through. So in the next few months, we would like to work on ways to have book studies or walks or other types of gatherings to strengthen the relationships that are very important for a community to have as well. Jesus gathered with disciples, he sent them out in groups, and God is in community all the time. If we are created in God’s image, we need to take seriously the building of our community together. If you have ways that you would like to foster building our community, we would love to hear it!



*We welcomed the chance to gather together at the picnic on June 4.*

There are so many other wonderful things that have happened this year. It has been a joy to look back on them with the other reports in here. I hope you all enjoy learning about them or remembering them. And I look forward to where God is calling us next!

Grace and Peace,  
*Pastor Becky*

## Session Members — 2022–2023



*Left to right:*

### **Class of 2023**

Andy Chadwick (2½)  
Matt Johnson (1)  
Suzie Northrop Raboy (6)

### **Class of 2024**

Marilynn Guinane (1)  
Lou McKeage (4)  
Allison Nyamuame (5)  
Aaron Whitney (5)

*(parenthetical number indicates years served)*

## Clerk of Session Reports

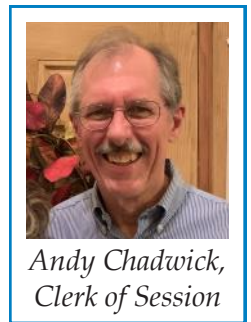
### **Report of Session Activities for June 2022–May 2023**

2022–2023 has continued to be a time of transition and experimentation for United Presbyterian Church. We have continued to hold hybrid in-person/streamed services. A fair number of people tune in, but not all on Sunday morning.

While Session continues to oversee the routine operation of UPCB, here are a couple of highlights:

- Session periodically revisited the question about masking during worship. Since Palm Sunday, the risk in Broome County has consistently been reported as low. Session voted to remove the mask mandate, but reserves the right to reinstate the mandate if the risk level in Broome County rises.
- The Addiction Center of Broome County (ACBC) has leased the Library Lounge, Terrace Room, and Chapel to operate an overnight Comfort Station. After several months of preparation, it began operation in May.

Please keep the pastors and Session members in your prayers.





**The United Presbyterian Church of Binghamton**  
**Minutes of the Annual Congregational and Corporate Meeting**  
**June 26, 2022**

The Annual Congregational and Corporate Meeting of the United Presbyterian Church of Binghamton, New York, was held on Sunday, June 26, 2022. The Rev. Kimberly Chastain served as Moderator. The meeting was properly called and a quorum was present.

***Call to Order and Opening Prayer*** at 11:15am by Pastor Chastain.

The minutes from the Special Congregational meeting held on January 30, 2022 were approved as published.

***Nominations and Elections:*** The following names were presented for election to Session:

Marilynn Guinane - 2-year term

Lou McKeage - 2-year term

Matthew Johnson - 1 year term

All three nominees were unanimously elected.

The following two names were submitted from the floor for election to the Nominating Committee:

Shawn Landon

Cindy Burger

Both nominees were unanimously elected.

***Finance:*** Lou McKeage, Treasurer, presented a discussion of the 2022 budget. Finances are in good shape, thanks to UPCB's legacy gifts.

A huge thank you was given to Scott Kindig, Office & Technology Coordinator, for making everything come together smoothly!

***Meeting Adjourned and Closing Prayer*** by Pastor Chastain at 11:30am.

Respectfully submitted,  
Andrew M. Chadwick, Clerk

Moderator: Rev. Kimberly P Chastain

**The United Presbyterian Church of Binghamton**  
**Minutes of the Annual Congregational and Corporate Meeting**  
**February 5, 2023**

The Annual Congregational and Corporate Meeting of the United Presbyterian Church of Binghamton, New York, was held on Sunday, February 5, 2023. The Rev. Kimberly Chastain served as Moderator. The meeting was properly called and a quorum was present.

***Call to Order and Opening Prayer*** at 11:15am by Pastor Chastain.

***Finance:*** Lou McKeage, Treasurer, presented the proposed 2023 budget.

**Pastors' Terms of Call:** Rev. Chastain reminded the members that a pastoral call involves three groups — the congregation who calls the pastor, the pastor who accepts the call, and the presbytery which oversees the call. She and the Rev. Becky Kindig then left the room and the Clerk presided to review the Terms of Call for the pastors.

On a motion duly made and seconded, the Terms of Call for Rev. Chastain and Rev. Kindig were unanimously approved. Rev. Chastain and Rev. Kindig then returned to the room.

**Meeting Adjourned and Closing Prayer** by Pastor Chastain at 11:25am.

Respectfully submitted,  
Andrew M. Chadwick, Clerk

Moderator: Rev. Kimberly P Chastain

### UPC Binghamton 2022 Statistical Report

Total Active Members, 12/31/2021: 158

Losses during 2022:

Deaths: 1

Bette Auchinachie

Removed: 0

Inactive: 0

Transfer: 0

Total:

1

Additions during 2022:

New: 0

Transfer: 0

Reinstated: 0

Total:

0

Total Active Members, 12/31/2022: 157

## June 2022–May 2023 Worship Attendance Record (in person / online)

June 2022		July 2022		August 2022	
5	? / 80	3	25 / 51	7	? / ?
12	30 / 55	10	28 / 83	14	30 / 62
19	26 / 60	17	30 / 59	21	? / 52
26	48 / 39	24	25 / 49	28	? / 42
		31	22 / 41		
<i>Average</i>	<i>35 / 59</i>	<i>Average</i>	<i>26 / 57</i>	<i>Average</i>	<i>30 / 52</i>
September 2022		October 2022		November 2022	
4	32 / ?	2	46 / 34	6	52 / 56
11	? / 46	9	34 / 41	13	46 / 41
18	34 / 76	16	48 / 53	20	39 / 52
25	46 / 69	23	43 / 48	27	32 / 29
		30	35 / 50		
<i>Average</i>	<i>37 / 64</i>	<i>Average</i>	<i>41 / 45</i>	<i>Average</i>	<i>42 / 45</i>
December 2022		January 2023		February 2023	
4	51 / 37	1	— / 60	5	46 / 56
11	48 / 41	8	36 / 42	12	37 / 41
18	44 / 50	15	41 / 41	19	42 / 52
24	<i>Christmas Eve: 87 / 109</i>	22	39 / 50	22	<i>Ash Weds: 11 / 18</i>
25	— / 80	29	35 / 64	26	45 / 40
<i>Average</i>	<i>48 / 52</i>	<i>Average</i>	<i>38 / 51</i>	<i>Average</i>	<i>42 / 45</i>
March 2023		April 2023		May 2023	
5	32 / ?	2	54 / 59	7	39 / 40
12	? / 46	6	<i>Maundy Thurs: 20 / 46</i>	14	40 / 26
19	34 / 76	9	76 / 74	21	53 / 30
26	46 / 69	16	41 / 41	28	29 / 22
		23	28 / 48		
		30	41 / 40		
<i>Average</i>	<i>37 / 64</i>	<i>Average</i>	<i>48 / 52</i>	<i>Average</i>	<i>40 / 30</i>

**Averages, 6/22–5/23:**                      **In-person attendance**    **39**                      **Online views**    **51**

*Mid-week services are excluded from calculation of monthly averages.*

*Online figures represent number of “views”. There can be multiple people per view, but this also includes views by people who attended in person, or multiple views by the same viewer.*

*“?” indicates attendance was not recorded.*

*“—” indicates the service was online only.*

## **Nominating Committee Report**

We are grateful to Suzie Northrop Raboy for her time of service as a member of Session.

**The Nominating Committee places in nomination the following:**

**For the Session Class of 2025:**

***Matt Johnson***, to be reelected for a two-year term.

***Andy Chadwick***, to be reelected for a two-year term.

***Sally Hunt***, for her first two-year term.



Sally has served on the Session previously (2016–2022), and has been a member of the Worship & Music Team, the Seasons planning team, and the Communications Team. She sings in the choir and is a member of the United Ringers handbell choir.

**For the Nominating Committee, 2023–2024**, we place in nomination Cindy Burger, and we are seeking nomination of 1–3 members from the floor at the congregational meeting.

Two Session members will be selected at the next regular Session meeting.

Respectfully submitted,  
Lou McKeage, Matt Johnson, Cindy Burger, and Shawn Landon

## Mission and Community Partnerships

### GOALS:

- We are committed to the practice of hospitality, offering space to initiatives and groups that share our priorities.
- We are committed to building up Binghamton, including our own neighborhood, through alliances and outreach to the formerly incarcerated, the homeless, people with addictions, and the working poor.
- We seek to employ our resources of money, time, and talent in a variety of ways to accomplish the first two goals.

This has been a year of rebuilding and re-engagement, as the community emerges from the messy and stressful time that was the pandemic. We have streamlined and re-aligned our community meal and pantry programs and strengthened our partnership with the mutual aid program called “Stakeholders of Broome County”, supplying them with blankets, warm coats, clean socks, and small 8-hour tent heaters for the street teams to share with the unhoused in Binghamton. We supported this effort with a special offering on Palm Sunday again this year.



*We collected new or gently used coats and household linens on Palm Sunday, remembering the people who spread their cloaks on the road to pave Jesus’s entry into Jerusalem. After worship, the coats and linens were distributed to the unhoused in Binghamton through our mission partners, the Stakeholders of Broome County.*

**MISSION PROJECTS:** The two biggest mission projects in terms of time and energy invested were the Community Kitchen & Pantry and the Sewing & Knitting Group.

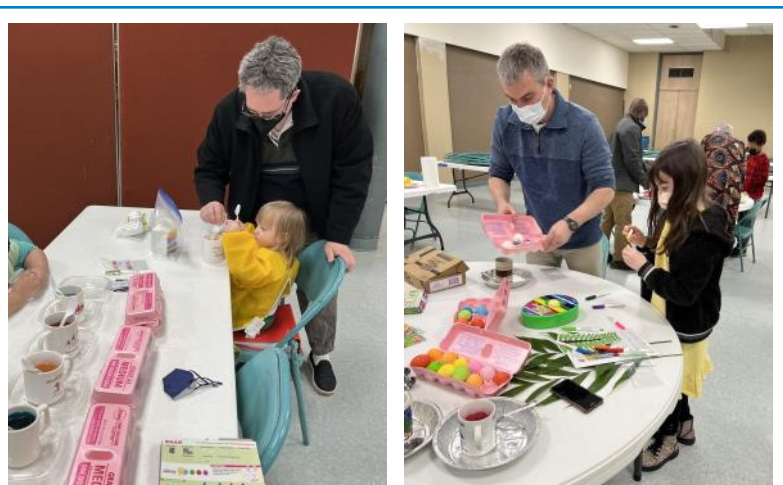


*Every Tuesday 3–4 volunteers prepare the food for the Community Meal, which serves about 150 meals each week.*

**Community Kitchen & Pantry:** Our Community Kitchen & Pantry mission is staffed by our Kitchen Coordinator, Sherry Conklin. She reports:

So much has happened in the past year. The number of people that the Community Kitchen & Pantry serves is increasing monthly. Now that the federal emergency for COVID has ended and many of the extra benefits have ceased, we keep seeing more and more people. The pantry hours were decreased to once a week. The pantry is now open on Wednesdays from noon till five. Last year we averaged 35–40 families and now we are serving an average of 60–80 per week. Our meal program is growing also. We no longer offer takeout meals, but everyone that eats in the Fellowship Hall may have seconds or thirds depending on their desire.

Every Tuesday 3-4 volunteers prepare the food for the evening, planning on serving about 150-160 meals. We go through about 100 cups of coffee and about 15 gallons of lemonade or sweet tea. There is a food delivery from the Foodbank of the Southern Tier on most Fridays of 1,500-3,000 pounds of food. Most Fridays Sherry, Alex, and Carol also go to the CHOW warehouse and return with 300-500 pounds of food. We now cook extra meals on Tuesdays for the UP-Comfort Center, supplying 30-40 portions to be served.



*Families gathered after worship on Palm Sunday to decorate eggs for the guests of the Community Meal and Pantry.*

The toiletries/hygiene products program is growing also. This is offered on the third Wednesday of each month as part of our pantry. We have about 70-80 guests who come to participate in this. People are allowed to make their own choices for what they need. Diapers are available for adults and children on any Wednesday. The need for diapers and pull-ups is a big deal.

Starting in January, we began partnering with the Stakeholders of Broome County Outreach program to provide them with food to deliver to the “camps” or unhoused. And we give the volunteers gas cards to help with their expenses. This program was made possible with a grant from the Foodbank of the Southern Tier for deliveries.

Records and statistics are kept on all our services and reported monthly to CHOW and the Foodbank of the Southern Tier.

I try to keep ready-made sandwich fixings each week in the kitchen, as we have people arriving during the week that are unhoused and hungry.

Four wonderful volunteers participated in the Binghamton University “Move Out Project”. This was a student-run initiative aimed at diverting waste from the landfill and donating back into the community, which they do by collecting items from students moving out of their college housing and working with a variety of donation partners who can accept the items and redistribute them to the people they work with. Our volunteers were able to get small appliances, refrigerators, cooking utensils, dishes, linens, and food stuff for our pantry. So far, we have given out 4 microwaves in just 2 weeks. So many people are living in rooms without stoves and can only cook with microwaves.

And yes, we also give out clothing, blankets, coats, underwear, socks, and shoes. This is available on Wednesdays and by special request.

I belong to the “Broome County Food Council” and am on their “Families and young children” committee. These meet every other month to work on food insecurity as well as attending CHOW meetings.

I am so proud to be a part of this church family with missions that do so much for the underserved.

***Sewing & Knitting Group:*** During the annual reporting year of June 2022 to May 2023, members of the UPC Wednesday Sewing Group continued to meet every week, even during

the summer months when many groups are on hiatus. Major activities continue to be designing and sewing quilts, and creating other items for the community.

In December 2022, the group distributed 43 quilts, hats, mittens, and “carry bags” for use on walkers to area nursing homes and community groups. During the year, quilts were given to new babies, Camp Sunshine in the state of Maine, and members of the congregation and friends of the church who were in need of a quilt for emotional warmth.

The Sewing Group’s mission hasn’t changed in the more than half-century that the group has been active: to help others by providing items of comfort throughout Greater Binghamton and beyond. Members worked on projects at home and met every Wednesday in person at the church or via Zoom to keep in touch with each other and provide updates on current happenings within the church family. Even when some sewing group members were in sunny Florida during the winter months, they stayed in close contact with the larger group.



*Ann Cobb sews rows of quilt squares together. While pretty in pink, Sewing Group members are not required to match their outfits to the fabric they're working on!*

### June 2022–May 2023 Activities:

- Members worked at home or met in person at the church, creating nearly 60 quilts.
- Items were displayed in the sanctuary and dedicated on November 20, 2022.
- In December 2022, quilts, walker “carry bags,” scarves, hats, and mittens were distributed to Willow Point Rehabilitation and Nursing Center; Hilltop; Elizabeth Church Manor; Good Shepherd Fairview Home; YWCA; Bridgewater Center for Rehabilitation and Nursing; Ideal Senior Living Center; and NoMa (North of Main).
- Quilts were provided to Camp Sunshine in the state of Maine, a program that assists children with life-threatening illnesses, arranged by Chris and Cindy Burger.
- Hats, mittens, and scarves were provided to our UPC lobby community and guests at the Food Pantry. Others in the congregation and friends of the congregation donated hats and mittens to supplement the Sewing Group’s offerings.
- The group welcomed a new member, Marian Timson, who is a long-time member of the John Hus Presbyterian Church and joined our group after moving to the Good Shepherd-Fairview Home in Binghamton.



*Marian Timson, the Sewing Group's newest member, works on sewing together quilt squares.*

**Future Plans:** The group will continue its mission of crafting comforting and functional items for those throughout the community, in addition to accepting and sorting fabric and yarn donations received from the community. Gratitude from recipients continues to be strong. The group is always seeking new members,



*Jan and Len Hoover are long-time Sewing Group members. Len helps organize supplies, troubleshoots equipment, gets the group's lunch ready, and keeps the jokes flowing. Jan ensures that all of the quilts are pressed to perfection!*



*At noon, the group puts down their needles and thread and enjoys lunch and conversation. Pastor Kimberly and Pastor Becky are frequent attendees. Sewing Group members Zoom in from near and far.*

regardless of prior experience or skill level. For more information, please contact the church office or one of the group's members.

**Current Members:** Cindy Burger, Cindy Chadwick, Ann Cobb, Ellen Hancock-Berti, Jean Hill, Janet & Len Hoover, Margaret Sands, Marion Timson, and Nancy Walter, and Pastors Kimberly Chastain & Becky Kindig.

## OTHER PROJECTS:

**Support for individuals returning from incarceration:** Through the “Walk With Me” program, we partner with the Family Enrichment Network and Justice and Unity in the Southern Tier to better the conditions of people returning to our community from incarceration. We fund two part-time case managers, and we reach out to community agencies to develop training, support, and job development as the reentry process progresses. We also provided space for the Southern Tier AIDS Program’s “Ready-Set-Work” class, which helps returnees to learn the skills necessary for finding and holding a job.

**Presbyterian Mission:** The Presbyterian Mission Agency is the ministry and mission agency of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.). The PMA strives to inspire, equip, and connect all Presbyterians for the church’s work. Our congregation actively supports the PMA through four special offerings:

- The One Great Hour of Sharing offering supports hunger and disaster relief, and self-development of people.
- The Pentecost offering supports children at risk, and youth & young adult ministry.
- The Peace & Global Witness offering supports peacemaking and reconciliation.
- The Christmas Joy offering supports church leaders — past, present, and future — with contributions divided 50% to the Assistance Program of the Board of Pensions and 50% to Racial/Ethnic Education at Presbyterian-related schools and colleges.

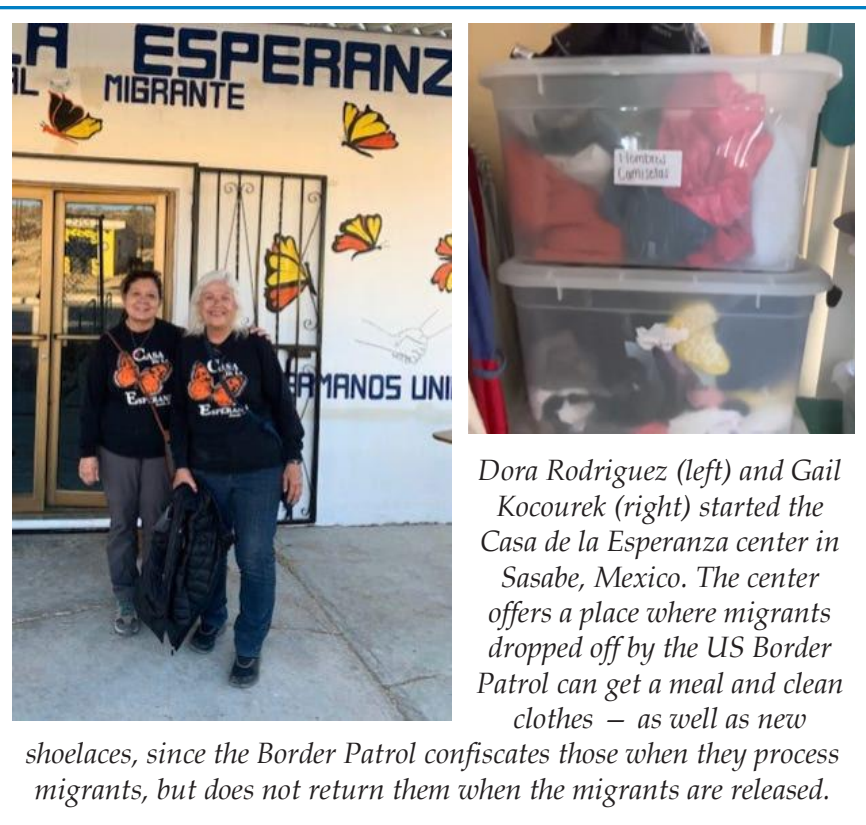
**Broome County Council of Churches:** Projects UPC is involved with include CHOW/ Broome County, Faith in Action (trains volunteer caregivers), and the Broome County Jail Ministry.



**International Gifts:** We are blessed to have a mission relationship with Whuti-Srogboe Evangelical Presbyterian Church (in the South Volta region of Ghana) through our member and their son, Dr. Elikem Nyamuame. The church runs the only elementary school in the region. We pledge \$1000 every year to support the work and periodically collect special offerings and donations of school supplies and musical instruments that Elikem brings to them when he visits his family there.

Our participation in the Afghan immigration project came to a successful conclusion as our sponsored family have all gotten jobs and green cards and are on their way to citizenship. We continue to partner with the ACA and other congregations, especially Temple Concord, to support efforts to settle refugees in our community.

Dave Ruston and Greg Patinka have opened the door for another kind of refugee involvement with their work with the Samaritans of Tucson and the Casa de la Esperanza in Sasabe, Mexico. This program searches for travelers in the desert in an effort to save lives at the Mexico-US border. Dave and Greg learned about the migrants who come to our borders seeking refuge and safety, and participated in the humanitarian missions that offer water and other life-conserving services to the people who are in desperate need. Two of their mission coworkers, Dora Rodriguez and Gail Kocourek, started the Casa Esperanza resource center in Sasabe, Mexico, to aid travelers after the US began deporting busloads of



*Dora Rodriguez (left) and Gail Kocourek (right) started the Casa de la Esperanza center in Sasabe, Mexico. The center offers a place where migrants dropped off by the US Border Patrol can get a meal and clean clothes – as well as new shoelaces, since the Border Patrol confiscates those when they process migrants, but does not return them when the migrants are released.*

travelers into a community with very limited services. These two dynamic women have joined us via Zoom and video message during worship to tell us more about their work and the people they encounter. We hope to have a more in-depth training program about the reasons and conditions that compel the waves of migration this fall.

**SUPPORT THROUGH PROVIDING SPACE:** Our building is used for so much more than worship and church programs. UPC maintains many integral community partnerships to create the largest impact on our friends and neighbors. We engage with the community around us by providing information and resources to help as we are able, and by serving as a meeting space and home to other agencies whose missions align with our own. By keeping various programs going, we are creating trust and friendship with people from downtown Binghamton and all the surrounding neighborhoods. In measuring the church's impact on the local community, we are able to make note of that change. We as a congregation are blessed to see change in the lives of those we serve, and change in our spiritual lives for the better.

Associates for Training and Development (A4TD), with a handicapped-accessible office on the second floor, administers the U.S. Department of Labor's Senior Community Service Employment Program in central New York and northeast Pennsylvania. The SCSEP is a work-based job training program for income-eligible, unemployed job seekers age 55 or older.

We continue to host the **Binghamton City School District's Adult Education and Alternative High School**, which occupies most of our second floor. This year they graduated 25 students.

For several years, one of our major partners has been **VINES** (Volunteers Improving Neighborhood Environments). Housed in the basement office suite, VINES makes it possible for people of all incomes to grow their own food or access locally grown produce. VINES serves over 2,000 families through its community gardens (including the one in our front yard), Grow Binghamton youth program, and Farm Share veggie subscription program, as well as offering cooking and gardening classes for the community. This year VINES broke ground on a 4,000 square foot "Net Zero Energy" building at 157 Susquehanna Street. When completed, this building will combine all of VINES offices, produce coolers, warehouse spaces, and equipment under one roof.

We support advocacy and civil rights through our partnerships with two organizations whose offices are on our second floor. The Labor/Action Coalition **Workers' Center of the Southern Tier** is a grassroots organization focused on bringing about economic justice through promoting dignity and human rights in the workplace. Justice and Unity for the Southern Tier (**JUST**) is a community organization dedicated to dismantling mass incarceration and mass policing in the Southern Tier. JUST advocates for change in social conditions and institutions that contribute to mass incarceration, including poverty, racism, the criminalization of persons with disabilities, and the school-to-prison pipeline. We regularly work with the Stakeholders of Broome County, providing them space and use of equipment for their community programs such as tenants' rights and anti-racism training.

We partner with many individuals and groups in our local arts community, including the **LUMA Projection Arts Festival**, the **Tri-Cities Opera**, and the **Classical Pianists of the Future**. We've been delighted to provide space to a couple of local piano studios who have used the sanctuary grand piano for their recitals.



*The VINES Grow Binghamton program recently marked its first year employing youth throughout the year, adding in a spring and fall session in addition to the traditional summer session. A full-year program provides more time for positive youth-adult partnerships, additional field trips engaging in local policy advocacy around food, farming, and nutrition, and youth involvement in building community gardens. This allows Grow Binghamton Youth to put to use and share the skills they honed in the summer, bolstering the understanding of agriculture within the community.*

Our partnership with the **Presbytery of Susquehanna Valley** continues as we house the Presbytery's records archives and provide storage for equipment used for events and assembly meetings. Since April 2022, we have also served as their "post office", receiving their mail and faxes and passing them on electronically to the appropriate committees or to the presbytery's staff. The Co-Stated Clerks are our own member Chris Burger and Pastor Becky. The new Lead Presbyter for Transformation, Rev. Dr. Greg Garis, occasionally stops by to borrow our scanner/copier or to have a small-group meeting in the Study.

Most startling for all of us was the request we received in December from the **Addiction Center of Broome County** to house an overnight comfort center with 42 beds. We cleaned out four rooms on the first floor and underwent some remodeling to make the space usable, added two industrial washers and dryers in what used to be a Sunday School room, and opened our doors to the new program the week after Easter. The program is fully staffed and administered by ACBC; our Community Meal program supplies some meals for the guests each week, and our community has rearranged the way we use some of our spaces.



*The Library Lounge and Chapel have been transformed into an overnight comfort station where unhoused adults in our community can sleep five nights a week in a secure and climate-controlled space.*

We are so happy that we can partner with so many organizations that are helping to make a real, positive impact on the lives of people in downtown Binghamton and the surrounding area. Thank you for your support in welcoming all of these groups into our building to do ministry with us!

**FUTURE PLANS:** It is our hope that we will be able to continue expanding our programs as we move forward into 2023-24. We anticipate that VINES will move into their new building in 2024, and we look forward to what new partnerships may develop in the coming year as the basement office space becomes available for use. We are grateful that God has given us the resources to be a mission center in downtown Binghamton. We would be glad to hear from you about the priorities you hold as we begin to envision the future anew.

## Team Reports

The following pages contain the reports from all of our teams doing the work of the church. Many thanks to all who serve on a team or who have helped a team with what God is calling us to do!



These reports are written by the teams and include a brief description of what each team does, some highlights from the past 12 months, what they hope to accomplish in the coming year, and the names of the team members.



If you feel God is calling you to join in any of the work being done by these teams, talk to one of the team members listed, or to one of the pastors. We'd love to have your help!



## Card Committee

The Card Committee continues its mission to support and strengthen our church family by acknowledging special events, milestones, joys, and concerns. This includes births, baptisms, birthdays, deaths, illness and injuries, surgeries, challenges, travels, graduations, new jobs, retirements, thank-yous, moves, anniversaries, and other occasions and situations.

From June 2022 through May 2023, the card committee sent 433 cards to church family and friends. In addition, the committee:



- sent special holiday cards (Valentine’s Day, Easter, Halloween, Thanksgiving, Christmas) to our homebound members, those who worship with us from afar, and Sunday School students;
- sent remembrance cards on All Saints’ Day to those who lost a loved one during the year;
- updated address and birthday lists (do we have yours?);
- provided monthly updates of committee activity to the pastors, Session, and UPC Office

The committee welcomes additional “card senders” and encourages anyone wishing to join the group to contact the church office or one of the members listed below. Also, we encourage church family and friends to let the committee know of any special occasions, milestone events and birthdays.

**CURRENT CARD COMMITTEE MEMBERS:** Cindy Chadwick, Margaret Davis, Jenni McKeage, Lana Ogden, Suzie Northrop Raboy.

## Worship and Music Team

**TEAM PURPOSE:** To oversee and coordinate all aspects of United Presbyterian Church's worship services.

Our congregation has worshiped both in-person and online throughout this year. As of May 14th, 2023, we have made mask-wearing optional, as the Covid pandemic has waned. We have discovered that there is still a healthy online presence, even though many of us have come back to worship in the sanctuary. UPC will continue to provide this hybrid approach as it suits the needs of many of us, and try to build ways for all of us to connect in our corporate worship. We have discovered, too, through the use of all of our technology, the added benefit of being able to bring people to the pulpit from afar, increasing our awareness of the wider world and its issues.

UPC offers YouTube viewing, the Zoom Room, the 9:30am Prayer Time, and our after-service Coffee Hour. We will continue to include as many people as possible from our congregation in our worship services through musical offerings, as liturgists, and as participants in the services.

### WORSHIP HIGHLIGHTS OF JUNE 2022 – MAY 2023



***Pentecost, June 5th:*** We celebrated a different tradition of the “quiet Pentecost”, as told in the Gospel of John. It is not a story revealed with “tongues” and “fire” imagery, as in book of Acts, but rather as “breath” to the body of Christ. It is the quiet activity of the Spirit that works secretly in our presence. Austin Shadduck’s musical offering on the shakuhachi was a wonderful expression of the quiet nature of this theme.

***Juneteenth, June 19th:*** Our worship on this day, which is the day of delayed emancipation for Black Americans, acknowledged the continuing wounds of racism in our nation. We recommitted ourselves anew to standing up against the oppression of people everywhere.

***Worship, Annual Congregational Meeting, and Picnic, June 26th:*** We enjoyed hearing the children of our church playing handchimes during the last hymn of our worship. A joyous time was had by all at the picnic, as we shared our stories, having come through the worst of the pandemic.



### ***Summer 2022:***

- Over the course of the summer, we were so happy to celebrate 7 baptisms! Owen Westcott, Declan Jones, Charlotte Livingston, Elinor Hugenbruch, Khиро & Tyson Brunson, and Zander Rwabukwisi were baptized.
- ***July 10th*** – Dr. Douglas Jones, a member of our congregation, reflected on “Certainty and Authenticity in Religion”.
- ***July 17th–August 28th*** – Pastor Kimberly and Pastor Becky did a worship series on “The Seven Marks of Vital Congregations”.

**September 4th–October 9th:** We celebrated the “Season of Creation”.

- Prayers, music, and reflections from the global church, with a South African folk song, “Senzeni Na? (“What Have We Done?”), used as a weekly prayer response, and a land acknowledgement which we offered to the Onondaga nation.
- A celebration of the waters of the earth on September 11th.
- Elder Chris Burger, a member of our congregation, reflected on “Care of Creation” on September 18th.
- We had a Blessing of the Animals, via projected photos, and Potluck Picnic on September 25th.
- A celebration of the entire living family on Earth, and Worldwide Communion on October 2nd.
- On October 9th, our congregation reflected on the ways we can respond to our “Season of Creation” series, with 4 circles of care (care for creation, congregation, community, and the wider world). We set up stations around the church and used sticky notes to write our responses, inviting our online viewers to post in the live chat or send us a message via email or Facebook.



**We encourage you to share your ideas about these topics!**

- Post in the Chat or Comments
- Email [office@upcbgm.org](mailto:office@upcbgm.org)
- Facebook Messenger to our page @UPCBinghamton

Service resumes  
in approximately

**14:35**

### Circles of Care

Care for  
Creation

Care for our  
Community

Care for our  
Congregation

Care for  
the Wider  
World

*In each of these categories:*

What are you  
already doing  
to respond to  
the needs  
around you?

What’s something  
that you know  
our congregation  
is already doing  
to respond to  
these needs?

How might you  
(or we) expand  
our witness  
to bring hope  
to our  
community?

**October 16th:** Victoria Barics, a UPC vocalist, reflected on her recent trip to Israel.

**November, 6th, Feast of All Saints/Bouquet of Remembrance Sunday:** We continued our tradition of remembering those who had died this year and in the past with flowers for a big bouquet in the front of the sanctuary.

**November 13th:** Dr. Elikem Nyamuame, a member of our congregation, reflected on the work of our sister congregation in Whuti-Srogboe, Ghana.

**November 27th:** We began the Advent season, with the theme “From Generation to Generation”, inviting people to decorate the church with some of their favorite Christmas memorabilia and to share their memories of past Christmas times throughout the season of Advent.

**December 24th, Christmas Eve, 4:00 pm:** We had a hybrid Christmas service at 4 pm. It was a lovely service of readings, carols, and candlelight! The festive musical offerings were from the UPC choir, the United Ringers handbell choir, the Nyamuame family with a traditional Ghanaian carol, and “Away in a Manger” with trumpeter Sara Lieberman, trombonist Nate Raboy, organist Becky Mebert, and members of the United Ringers accompanying on handchimes.



**December 25th (Christmas Sunday) and January 1st:** We had online, pre-recorded services only. Christmas Sunday was a service of beautiful musical offerings, from our congregation, and New Year’s Sunday was one of readings and meditative offerings.

**January 8th (Epiphany) – February 19th:** Pastor Kimberly began preaching a series on the Gospel of Matthew, which included stories that don’t usually make it into the lectionary.

**February 12th:** In Sunday worship, we had Dave Ruston, from our congregation, and Gail Cocourek, of the Tuscon Samaritans and Casa de la Esperanza, talk about their mission and work in the Southwest U.S., aiding refugees.

**February 22nd, Ash Wednesday, 12:30pm and 6pm:** We worshipped both in the sanctuary and streaming on YouTube. The congregation was invited to participate in a pruning and planting meditation. The pastors offered “Ashes To Go” at the university.

**February 26th – March 26th:** For the Season of Lent, Pastor Kimberly preached a series on Paul’s Letter to the Romans.



*On Ash Wednesday, Pastors Kimberly & Becky were joined by Rev. Alicia Dixon-Garrard to offer “Ashes To Go” at Binghamton University.*



**April 2nd, Palm/Passion Sunday:** We returned to the Gospel of Matthew for our reading. Matthew included the cutting of branches and the cloaks and garments on the road, so we used the tradition of palms and repeated the coat and linens drive that we did the previous year.



**April 6th, Maundy Thursday, 7pm:** We gathered in the sanctuary for a service of communion and candles.

**April 9th, Easter:** We had a joyous service together, with communion, wonderful music from our UPC choir and United Ringers handbell choir, and Sending Music with Sara Lieberman on the trumpet. The children exited the service to enjoy their annual Easter Egg hunt out on the front lawn.

**April 16th:** Rev. Dr. Andrew Stehlik, a former West Presbyterian minister, was the guest preacher, reflecting in his sermon, “Samaritan Water of life” on his recent trip to the Tuscon Samaritans in the southwest U.S. and his work there.

**April 23rd through the end of May:** Pastor Kimberly resumed preaching from the Gospel of Matthew, with the intent to cover one chapter per week through the end of the church year in November.

**Thank you from the Worship Team!** We owe a huge debt of gratitude to our pastors, musical directors, musicians, choir, and UPC’s wonderful tech team: Scott Kindig, Ken Mebert, Sara Lieberman, Chris Burger, Andy Chadwick, Aeden Hickey, Emily Hugenbruch, Matt Johnson, and Shawn Landon. Worship services would not have been the quality they were without their skills and their ability to change with UPC’s needs!

**Musicians for worship services:** Music Coordinator Becky Mebert has secured many talented people from our congregation and community over the course of 2022–2023. Among them have been: Our wonderful choir, and choir section leaders — Starletta Noll-Long, Victoria Barics, Ernest Backus, and Riya Bolander; UPC’s United Ringers Handbell Choir; musical offerings by children in our congregation (such as children’s handchimes); Andy Chadwick (organ, piano); Ian Chung (piano); Claude Cornwall (piano); Kailey Labrecque (flute); Sara Lieberman (trumpet); Elikem Nyamuame (drums) & his family (vocals); Robert Manners (vocals); Ken Mebert (vocals); Lana Ogden (recorder); Phil Westcott (saxophone); Aimée Backus (flute, soprano vocals, & Choir Director), Austin Shadduck (shakuhachi flute, vocals, & Bell Choir Director), and Becky Mebert (piano, organ); with additional participation through pre-recorded videos provided by the Whuti-Srogboe Evangelical Presbyterian Church congregation, Andrew Beaty, David Berti, Cathy Ciganek, Margaret Davis, Eleanor Hough, Sharon Landon, Justin Miller, Julia Naldjian, Peggy Sniezek, Alex & Jackie Westcott, and Becky, Emma, & Scott Kindig.

**CURRENT WORSHIP & MUSIC TEAM MEMBERS:** Suzie Northrop Raboy, chair; Andy Chadwick, Margaret Davis, Sarah Willis; Music Coordinator Becky Mebert, Office & Technology Coordinator Scott Kindig, Pastor Kimberly Chastain, Pastor Becky Kindig.

## **Personnel Team**

**TEAM PURPOSE:** To select and support paid personnel and provide fair treatment for all staff.

**STAFF IN 2022–23:** Our staff is our face to the community and multiplies the effectiveness of the congregation's ministry and mission, including hosting several partner organizations in our building. Office and building employees are indispensable to this community outreach.

From June 2022 to May 2023, staffing levels and those holding each position were unchanged. In mid-May, Riya Bolander joined our music department. Riya will share the soprano section leader role with Victoria Barics in the coming months, as Victoria is approaching completion of her Master's degree at Binghamton University. We welcome Riya to our church family and look forward to getting to know them!

Last fall, the Personnel Team reevaluated the Welcome Desk Receptionist position (the position became vacant in spring 2022; it was decided that the position would not be filled during the summer months but revisited in the fall). It was decided that the position would not be filled based on current needs of the church and building partners. Staff members cover the front lobby desk during peak times and as needed.

**ACTIVITIES:** During the last year, the Personnel Team:

- met with staff members as needed for situations such as medical and maternity leaves of absence; consulted as necessary with the Finance Administrator;
- worked on the personnel budget; recommended increases for staff members to assist with cost of living increases; made market adjustments if warranted;
- reviewed the Employee Handbook of Personnel Policies to identify necessary updates and clarifications;
- gained Cindy Burger and Marilynn Guinane as new Team members in January 2023; Kathy Preston left the committee in January 2023.

In the coming year, the Team plans to continue to review job descriptions to ensure that they reflect current duties and responsibilities of each position and finalize updates to the Employee Handbook.

**CURRENT TEAM MEMBERS:** Cindy Burger, Cindy Chadwick, Marilynn Guinane, Lou McKeage, and Pastor Kimberly Chastain.



**OUR STAFF** (left to right, top to bottom):

Rev. Kimberly P Chastain (she/her), *Pastor/Head of Ministry*

Rev. Becky Kindig (she/her), *Associate Pastor*

Scott Kindig (he/him), *Office & Technology Coordinator*

Eugene Favor (he/him), *Building Manager*

Sherry Conklin (she/her), *Community Kitchen & Pantry Coordinator*

Rebecca Mebert (she/her), *Music Coordinator*

Vanessa Warren (she/her), *Finance Administrator*

Mark Barnes (he/him), *custodian*

James Favor (he/him), *custodian*

Dave Schneider (he/him), *custodian*

Aimée Backus (she/her), *UPC Choir Director*

Austin Shadduck (he/him), *United Ringers director and tenor section leader*

Ernest Backus (he/him), *bass section leader*

Victoria Barics (she/her), *soprano section leader*

Riya Bolander (they/them), *soprano section leader*

Starletta Noll-Long (she/her), *alto section leader*

Alex Hayes (he/him), *kitchen staff*



*Our mission is to follow Jesus Christ  
by doing justice, loving kindness, and  
walking humbly with God (Micah 6:8).*

