



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



# **Congregational Activity Reports June 2023–May 2024**



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## **Pastor Kimberly Chastain's Report**



We have just finished reading the Gospel According to John in our weekly Bible study. Reading the New Testament in the order that it was written has given us many new insights into the ways in which the four gospels are similar and different, and among the gospels, John is the most unique. Beginning with a liturgical poem and ending with 4 distinct resurrection stories, John's account of Jesus comprises a series of signs and declarations about who Jesus is and what his incarnation means for the life of the world and for individual believers. So nearly every incident, encounter, or speech in the gospel ends with the implied challenge to the reader, "What does this mean for YOU?"

As we are inching our way into a consideration of what the future holds for us at United Presbyterian Church, it seems to me that this is the question each of us will need to take seriously, as we look at our life and work together. And I find that I want to challenge you to ask yourself the same question, as you consider the reports and the ministries described in this little publication. We have included an overview of the missions and partnerships of the congregation, each marked with an icon or little logo. As you read through the overview, pay attention to the descriptions, and ask yourself, "Is this something I support or relate to in the work of the church? Would I miss it if was gone? Could we let this go and still be who we say we are, followers of Jesus in downtown Binghamton?"

Another important question is "What's missing? What do we need to add to our mission, worship, ministry, and life together to be faithful to our calling?"

No one is going to ask you to respond in any formal sense to those questions, at least not today. But the reflection process we began in November with our first Project Regeneration conversation will continue as the leadership gathers again with Rose Niles in August, and we'll continue to seek your input and your response to the question, "What does it mean for YOU?"

I've just described one way to answer the question — by literally reading through the reports and responding to what you read. If you need a paper copy of this annual report to mark up or take notes on to help you in your reflection process, we'll be happy to make additional copies available. If you have particular questions or concerns that you'd like to discuss or raise, I or any of the members of Session or staff will be happy to explore them with you.

We are a self-described "Cottage Congregation in a Cathedral Building," and for many years we have found ways to continue ministering at the size of our building, instead of at the size of our congregation. We couldn't do it without an exceptionally talented and committed core group of leaders, staff members, cheerleaders, cooks, table-servers, dishwashers, quiltmakers, computer geeks, card-writers, musicians, educators, envelope-stuffers, prayer warriors, tour leaders, and story tellers. Where do you find your place in our community?

What does it mean for YOU?

Grace and peace,  
*Pastor Kimberly*



## Associate Pastor Becky Kindig's Report



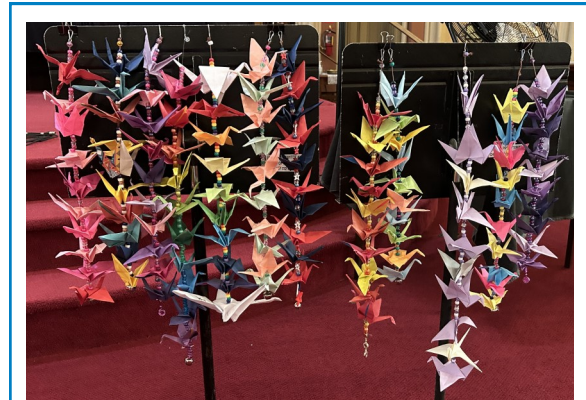
I love looking back at the year and reminiscing about all that we have done together. I am so thankful for all the ways this past year we have had fun and been creative.

The first creative thing that stands out to me is all the art projects that were sent home in the monthly Sunday School packets. It's a wonderful part of my job to find ways to have our young ones use the scripture passages we read each week turn into something tangible and creative that helps them connect with the story or the lesson. It helps the kids and their grown-ups talk about the story as well. I try to have a variety of things over the year to hopefully make sure there is something enjoyable for everyone. This year we have done matching games, books, scratch art, wall hangings, musical instruments, Nativity stickers, tie dye Easter Eggs, a rainbow love wreath, planting seeds, a butterfly to remember migrants, and several others. Many thanks to Marilyn Guinane who puts the packets together each month!



*A church year in art projects: the monthly "Sunday School at Home" lessons always include a craft.*

Another thing that stands out this year are the congregational activities. It was partly this idea of reflecting on scripture by being creative and making something tangible from the Sunday school projects, and then adding the idea of working together, that inspired us to have a congregational activity once a month this past year. We made paper cranes and doves for peace. We made wooden butterflies to remember migrants who died trying to get to safety. We thought together about our congregation with Rev. Rose Niles beginning Project







Regeneration. We made Christmas ornaments and then Easter eggs for our community meal guests. We had a Christmas cookie party, and we shared the love by collecting socks for our guests and making Valentines for our loved ones. Creating things together was a great way to learn, share, and grow.

I am also thankful that you send me to engage with the Binghamton University Interfaith Council and do creative ministry on campus. I have led Common Ground Conversations, Soul Care Events in a couple of the residence communities, provided “ashes to go” on Ash Wednesday, and held office hours.



In addition to Sunday school packets, campus ministry and congregational activities, I greatly enjoyed worshipping together and sharing our common desire to share God’s love with all people. I’m so lucky that I get to do that in numerous ways here during our special





holidays and the normal times in between: with music, preaching, Time for the Young at Heart, Communion, special events, Bible study, and fellowship.

Thank you for all the ways you join me in this ministry here at UPC. It has been a very fun, fulfilling, and creative year! I look forward to what God is calling us to next!

*Pastor Becky*

## **Session Members — 2023–2024**



***Left to right:***

### **Class of 2024**

Marilynn Guinane (2)  
Lou McKeage (5)  
Allison Nyamuame (6)

### **Class of 2025**

Andy Chadwick (4)  
Margaret Davis (1)  
Sally Hunt (1)  
Matt Johnson (2)

*(parenthetical number indicates years served)*



## Clerk of Session Reports

### Report of Session Activities for June 2023–May 2024

The United Presbyterian Church of Binghamton has continued to be a busy place during the past year. We continue to hold hybrid in-person/streamed services. A fair number of people tune in, but not all on Sunday morning. The streaming equipment requires dedicated people to share in the role of operating it; we are always looking for additional helping hands!

While Session continues to oversee the routine operation of UPCB, here are a few highlights from the past year:



*Andy Chadwick,  
Clerk of Session*

- The Addiction Center of Broome County (ACBC) has been operating their overnight Comfort Station for a year now. Physical changes continue to be made to our facilities, such as redoing the old Women's bathroom (redoing the floor and installing a walk-in shower).
- Vicki Brown and Charity Outman joined the church in the past year. On the other hand, we mourn the passing of four members – Charlotte Smith, Robert Walter, Marian Palmer, and Gary Ayers.
- A team from UPCB participated in the CHOW Walk last September; this is the first team we've had participate in several years.
- Josiah Rwabukwisi was baptized on September 3 last year.
- With the increasing number of young children attending services, Session is looking into staffing the Nursery on Sunday mornings.

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 25, 2023**

The Annual Congregational and Corporate Meeting of the United Presbyterian Church of Binghamton, New York, was held on Sunday, June 25, 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 11:25am by Pastor Chastain.

***Congregational Activity Reports:*** Reports from the pastors, the Clerk of Session, and the various committees and teams were received. The minutes from the Congregational meetings held on June 26, 2022 and February 5, 2023 were approved as published.

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

Andrew Chadwick – 2-year term  
Sally Hunt – 2-year term  
Matthew Johnson – 2-year term

No nominations were received from the floor. All three nominees were unanimously elected.

(Andrew and Matthew are currently on Session; Sally has been off Session for a year. The other members of Session not up for election this year are Marilynn Guinane, Lou McKeage, Allison Nyamuame, and Aaron Whitney. Suzie Northrop Raboy completed her second consecutive term on Session and was not eligible for reelection.)

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

Cindy Burger – nominated by the Nominating Committee

Sara Lieberman – placed herself in nomination

Both nominees were unanimously elected.

From her activity report, Pastor Kimberly lifted up the ongoing conversation about what excites us and what changes we, as a church, might want or need to make in the future. Please think about this.

A huge thank you was given to Scott Kindig, Office & Technology Coordinator, for making everything come together smoothly! Assembling the report and running the in-person/Zoom hybrid meeting is a major undertaking.

***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 Special Congregational Meeting to Elect a Ruling Elder September 24, 2023**

A Special Congregational Meeting of the United Presbyterian Church of Binghamton, New York, was held on Sunday, September 24, 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 11:25am by Pastor Chastain.

***Special Election:*** The purpose of the meeting was to elect an elder to replace Aaron Whitney, who had resigned due to moving out of town. The Nominating Committee nominated Margaret Davis for a two-year term.

No further nominations being received from the floor, nominations were closed and Margaret Davis was duly elected as a Ruling Elder to serve on Session for a two-year term.

***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 (Part 1: Finance)**  
**February 4, 2024**

The Annual Congregational and Corporate Meeting (Part 1: Finance) of the United Presbyterian Church of Binghamton, New York, was held on Sunday, February 4, 2024. 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.

***2024 Budget:*** Lou McKeage, Treasurer, presented the proposed 2024 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. Lou McKeage then reviewed 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.

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

Respectfully submitted,  
Andrew M. Chadwick, Clerk

Moderator: Rev. Kimberly P Chastain

**UPC Binghamton 2023 Statistical Report**

**Total Active Members, 12/31/2022:** 157

**Losses during 2023:**

**Deaths: 2**

Charlotte Smith

Robert Walter

**Removed: 0**

**Inactive: 0**

**Transfer: 1**

**Total: 3**

**Additions during 2023:**

**New: 1**

Vicky Brown

**Transfer: 0**

**Reinstated: 0**

**Total: 1**

**Total Active Members, 12/31/2023:** 155

## June 2023–May 2024 Worship Attendance Record (in person / online)

June 2023		July 2023		August 2023	
4	60 / 35	2	32 / 44	6	58 / 68
11	45 / 35	9	37 / 43	13	27 / 52
18	48 / 101	16	39 / 50	20	25 / 47
25	37 / 62	23	35 / 47	27	35 / 43
		30	29 / 54		
<i>Average</i>	<i>48 / 58</i>	<i>Average</i>	<i>34 / 48</i>	<i>Average</i>	<i>36 / 53</i>
September 2023		October 2023		November 2023	
3	58 / 44	1	51 / 38	5	56 / 39
10	56 / 46	8	44 / 79	12	51 / 37
17	48 / 51	15	54 / 68	19	52 / 44
24	37 / 34	22	37 / 60	26	31 / 34
		29	49 / 64		
<i>Average</i>	<i>50 / 44</i>	<i>Average</i>	<i>47 / 62</i>	<i>Average</i>	<i>48 / 39</i>
December 2023		January 2024		February 2024	
3	44 / 47	7	19 / 50	4	51 / 36
10	44 / 56	14	36 / 65	11	44 / 34
17	48 / 38	21	38 / 49	14 Ash Wed am:	17 / 8
24 (morning)	28 / 57	28	54 / 28	14 Ash Wed pm:	10 / —
24 Christmas Eve:	110 / 61			18	47 / 46
31	34 / 51			25	57 / 46
<i>Average</i>	<i>51 / 52</i>	<i>Average</i>	<i>37 / 48</i>	<i>Average</i>	<i>50 / 41</i>
March 2024		April 2024		May 2024	
3	45 / 45	7	33 / 49	5	42 / 42
10	45 / 39	14	50 / 34	12	49 / 35
17	54 / 47	21	44 / 45	19	37 / 41
24	58 / 49	28	45 / 26	26	29 / 19
28 Maundy Thurs:	21 / 28				
31	98 / 87				
<i>Average</i>	<i>60 / 53</i>	<i>Average</i>	<i>43 / 39</i>	<i>Average</i>	<i>39 / 34</i>
<b>Averages, 6/23–5/24:</b>		<b>In-person attendance</b>	<b>44</b>	<b>Online views</b>	<b>48</b>

*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 the service was in-person only.*



## **Nominating Committee Report**

We are grateful to Marilynn Guinane, Lou McKeage, and Allison Nyamuame for their time of service as members of Session.

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

**For the Session Class of 2026:**

***Cindy Burger***, for her first two-year term.



Cindy has served on the Session previously (2012–2018) and has served as Clerk of Session (2013–2021). She is a member of the Wednesday Sewing Group. She is also the Commissioner from the Presbytery of Susquehanna Valley to the Synod of the Northeast Commission on Mission and Ministries and the Presbytery's Ruling Elder Alternate to this year's General Assembly.

***Judy Girdwood Westcott***, for her first two-year term.



Judy has previously served on the Mission & Outreach Team, and was involved with the community meal for many years. Presently she enjoys singing in the choir and playing in the United Ringers handbell choir.

There is an open seat for the Session Class of 2026. We are seeking nominations from the floor at the congregational meeting. If there are none, we will endeavor to fill the vacancy over the summer.

**For the Nominating Committee, 2023–2024**, we are seeking nomination of 2–4 members from the floor at the congregational meeting.

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

Respectfully submitted,  
Sally Hunt, Matt Johnson, Cindy Burger, and Sara Lieberman

## Our Life Together: An Overview

Our Sunday morning worship life and practice is the heart and center of United Presbyterian Church, and increasingly, it is the time during the week when we “make time” for our common life. We have integrated most of our Spiritual Formation practices, our potlucks, our birthday celebrations and even some of our book discussions into the time we

spend together on Sundays. And in many ways, this works pretty well, because in a world which places increasing demands on everyone, it is good to feel that there is one dedicated time and space where we can explore our life together.

Last year in worship, we read the Gospel according to Matthew for the entire year, learning many things we had not heard before and hearing many things we thought we knew in a whole new way. In 2024, we have been working our way through the basics of Christian faith and understanding, and on being together as Christ’s Body in the 21st century.

During the week, we gather in smaller groups:

- On Mondays at 1:00pm for Bible Study. We have been reading through the New Testament in the order that it was written (we’re just finishing the gospel of John, so we’re about halfway through).
- On Wednesday mornings for our Sewing & Quilting Group. This small but intrepid crew created over 40 quilts this year, which we share with nursing homes, congregants who are managing long-term conditions, Mom’s House, and Camp Sunshine. We give a quilt to each newborn in the congregation, and the pastors keep a few on hand in their offices in case we learn of someone who needs a special gift from the church. This year we have been joined regularly on Zoom by friends who are traveling and by a young disabled man named Alan, who calls in faithfully each Wednesday at noon and seems to enjoy the fellowship.
- On Wednesdays at 6:30pm for Choir practice. We have an amazing range of talent in



*Our Sunday morning worship services are the focal point of our life together as a congregation.*



*Quilts are rolled and sealed with a bow before being donated to the various charitable organizations we partner with.*



our congregation, supported by section leaders and instrumentalists, and the choir supports and enhances our congregational worship and helps us to sing praises to God every Sunday. Choir members and friends will provide special music during the summer while the choir is on hiatus.

- On Fridays at 5:00pm on Zoom for a “virtual cocktail hour”. Started during the pandemic, this is a small gathering of friends to talk about the week, share information, and stay connected to folks who can’t get here in person.



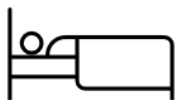
*The vocal choir provides music for our worship services nearly every week from mid-September through early June.*

During the year, we host the Sacred Sites tour on two Sunday afternoons, giving community members the opportunity to see our beautiful sanctuary and the dedicated spaces of our education building. We provide space for community gatherings and concerts, recitals and workshops, and we enjoy the variety of opportunities to offer hospitality and support to organizations that make a difference to our members.

This year, we have welcomed two new adult members, baptized two children, wished Godspeed to a member moving to be with family, and celebrated the completion of baptism for 4 members who have joined the communion of saints. We have begun a process of discernment with Project Regeneration, a program offered by the Presbyterian Foundation, to develop a strategic plan for the future of our congregation and its ministries.

The work that we support reaches far beyond our congregation, in ministry and service that members do with community organizations and groups, in the work that goes on in our building during the week, and in the ministries and efforts that we support financially here and around the world.

### ***Inside the building...***



The UP Center is our newest collaborative project to build up our community. In 2023, we converted our Library Lounge, Terrace Room, and Chapel into a 42-bed warming station, providing overnight accommodation to unhoused people 5 nights per week in partnership with the Addiction Center of Broome



*The Library Lounge and Chapel have been repurposed to provide overnight accommodation to unhoused adults. ACBC's "UP-Center" operates five nights a week with capacity for 29 men and 13 women each night.*

County. Guests arrive at 7:00pm and are given a meal, an opportunity to get clean and a bed to sleep in, then are given breakfast and sent on their way by 7:00am. The shelter staff does a minimum of 8 loads of laundry every night in dedicated laundry machines (installed in a former Sunday school room), and this winter we were able to install a shower in one of the first-floor bathrooms for emergency needs. Guests of the shelter are able to use the church mailing address to get a Sheriff's ID card, which is a necessary step toward finding permanent housing.



The GED/ESL program (General Education Diploma/English as Second Language) has been housed at 42 Chenango Street since 2011; they occupy the 2nd floor of the education building. In recent years, they have added a testing center for three counties and a self-contained class for students 18 and under who were not successful in a traditional classroom. We see about 20 students daily and enjoy supporting their efforts to better themselves. Church staff and members have been invited to the graduation ceremony each year; one of our staff is a graduate of the program and another is currently enrolled.



A4TD (Associates for Training and Development) is an agency that works with older adults returning to the workforce. They have maintained an office in the education building since 2019; the program funds people in training programs at community service and other 501(c)3 organizations. The benefits work two ways: the interns gain work experience and their placement gains from the energy and assistance the intern provides. This spring we added a new intern, Vincent Pope, to work at our Welcome Desk from 10am to 2pm Monday through Friday.



The Workers Center of the Southern Tier of NY is a grassroots organization focused upon promoting dignity and human rights in the workplace in order to bring about economic justice. Serving the people in and around Broome County, WCSTNY has maintained an office in the education building since 2016.



VINES (Volunteers Improving Neighborhood Environments) has been a friend and co-conspirator with this congregation since 2014, building the raised-bed garden in our side yard, distributing farm shares in our lobby, cooking and serving the community meal on 5th Tuesdays, and using the offices in the lower level. They moved to their own purpose-built offices this month, but they will continue to work with us on shared projects and our prayers go with them for continued success in their work.



JUST (Justice and Unity for the Southern Tier) advocates for change in social conditions and institutions that contribute to mass incarceration. They have had an office with us since 2019, and offer training programs and information services onsite, as well as offering direct support to people who are incarcerated and their families and legal actions to correct abuses of the system.



*Through VINES' Grow Binghamton program, urban youth learn hands-on about agriculture and participate in community outreach.*





We have served a community meal to all comers every Tuesday night for nearly 20 years. This was the first shared ministry of the two churches that joined to become United Presbyterian Church. Over the years, we have partnered with Texas Roadhouse, Rescue Mission, VINES, BU students, and SUNY Broome Culinary Institute students to provide nourishing meals and a respite for the weary while offering a deeper understanding of the needs of those we serve to our volunteers.



In the spring of 2020, we expanded our program to include a pantry. Partnering with the Food Bank of the Southern Tier, CHOW, and Panera Bread, we offer community members a chance to come and “shop” every Wednesday for food, hygiene products, diapers, clothes, and basic household items like linens and tableware.

Our food and hospitality program is staffed by Sherry Conklin, a member of the congregation, and provides part-time employment to a young man with autism a few hours every week. We rely on volunteers from within and without the church community to keep these programs running, and on contributions from the congregation and community to help offset the costs of the program.

The congregation supports the program in a variety of ways, making Christmas ornaments, dyeing Easter eggs, knitting hats, scarves, and mittens, and providing cotton tube socks to add warmth and comfort to our guests.



The Presbytery of Susquehanna Valley is the regional body that resources the 43 PC(USA) congregations in this part of New York state. United Presbyterian Church provides storage space and receives mail for our “office-less” presbytery. Pastor Becky and Chris Burger share the position of Stated Clerk for the Presbytery, and they work with churches around the presbytery, with the Transitional Leader, and with various commissions and committees to keep Presbyterians connected both locally and nationally. The pastors as well as the congregation are considered members of the presbytery, and we support the work of the presbytery and are supported by the presbytery in many ways.

### ***In the Binghamton Community***



United Presbyterian Church partners with the Family Enrichment Network to offer a program called “Walk With Me,” which provides critical services to those returning to the community from Broome County Jail. Our congregation supports a part-time case manager who works with people to help them get back on their feet and find their way. The services



*Our community meal is prepared every Tuesday under the direction of Community Kitchen Coordinator Sherry Conklin.*



*On Palm Sunday, the congregation was invited to decorate Easter eggs in Fellowship Hall, and it was once again a big hit with young and old.*

offered by Walk With Me include assistance with housing, obtaining valid identification, transportation, job applications, employment, support groups, peer advocacy, and mentoring.

### On the Borderlands

+ Los  
Samaritanos +



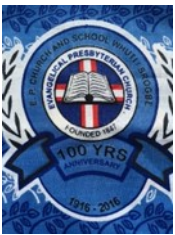
A healing presence along the border

David Ruston and Greg Patinka travel regularly to Arizona to minister with Salvavision and the Tucson Samaritans at the United States–Mexico border. 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. We now have a dedicated space in our sanctuary, the Esquina de la Esperanza (Corner of Hope), that keeps us mindful of the needs and gives us space to pray for and learn about the work and the needs.



### In Ghana



We are grateful that our congregation includes a family connected to the Whuti-Srogboe Evangelical Presbyterian Church of Ghana, an Ewe-language worshipping community that supports the local school and music programs for its community. We support their ministry with a contribution every year, and have sent musical instruments, school supplies, and other items to further their work.





## Ministry Reports

The following pages contain the reports from all of our ministry projects, teams, and committees 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!



If you feel God is calling you to join in any of the work being done by these ministries, talk with any of the people who are named in the report, or to one of the pastors. We'd love to have your help!



These reports are written by the ministries and include a brief description of what each ministry is, some highlights from the past 12 months, what they hope to accomplish in the coming year, and the names of those involved in the ministry.



## 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 2023 through May 2024, the Card Committee sent 480 cards to church family and friends. In addition, the committee:

- sent special holiday cards (Halloween, Thanksgiving, Christmas, Valentine's Day, Easter) to our homebound members, those who worship with us from afar, and Sunday School-aged children and youth;
- updated address and birthday lists (do we have yours?);
- provided monthly reports of committee activity to the pastors, Session, and UPC Office;
- and welcomed Margaret Sands to the committee.



*The Card Committee relies on old-fashioned snail mail to recognize special occasions.*



*Nearly 500 cards were sent to friends and family over the last year*

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.

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



## Community Kitchen

Our Community Kitchen ministry is in its 20th year. We started serving a free weekly dinner in 2005, and in 2020 during the pandemic we expanded our operations to offer a free food pantry, incorporating our monthly hygiene products “Care & Share” project into the new food pantry. We partner with the Broome County Council of Churches’ CHOW (Community Hunger Outreach Warehouse) program, the Food Bank of the Southern Tier, and the United Way of Broome County to help those in our community who grapple with food insecurity.

Each Tuesday evening, we serve a free community meal to anybody who wants to sit down and enjoy some good food and good company. So far this calendar year, we have served 1,982 adult meals and 68 children’s meals in the Tuesday Community Meal. VINES continues to cook for the community meal whenever there is a 5th Tuesday of the month, which happens four times a year. The rest of the time, we rely on volunteers to do most of the work. We need around a dozen people each Tuesday to prepare the meal, serve our guests, and clean up afterwards. We’ve been blessed with many new volunteers in the last twelve months and were delighted to partner with the SUNY Broome Culinary Institute in March.



*On March 19, the culinary students from SUNY Broome planned, cooked, and served the meal. It was exciting to see them in action!*

Our food pantry is open on Wednesdays from noon to 5pm. Since January, the pantry has served 927 families or 1,986 individuals. We allow our guests to choose enough food for 3 days and they can come once a week. When we can, we increase the allowed amount to enough for 5 days for each family. The choices always include proteins, fruits, vegetables, dairy, and grains, and some hygiene products.

On pantry days, we have sandwiches available for any homeless or hungry guest. On average, we usually give out 4 sandwiches each Wednesday.



*The Food Bank of the Southern Tier launched a pilot program this year to provide emergency food bags for people who are homeless or in temporary housing. We give out about 30 bags a month.*

In February we started to make and give out “emergency food bags” to anyone that is hungry, unhoused people, and those living in hotels. These bags include nutritious snacks, some microwaveable meals, individual tuna fish and peanut butter, as well as flatware and a microwaveable cup. These have been given to 164 individuals so far.

Clothing, linens, blankets, and towels are available to give out when needed.

Panera Bread in Johnson City donates leftover bread products to us every Monday night. Employees from ACBC collect donations throughout the week from various stores and eateries and share this wealth with us all week.

Over the last twelve months, we’ve had to make some hard choices in the face of higher need and rising expenses. Last summer, the emergency funding that agencies received during Covid was discontinued, and at the same time, welfare recipients’ benefits were cut, and

grocery prices were going up due to inflation. We had to change some of our procedures to control our expenses, because the grants and free food being provided to us by CHOW and the Food Bank were reduced. We stopped offering seconds at the meal, and ended our takeout option which we had begun to offer in 2020. We had to set limits on pantry items, and could no longer allow pantry clients to shop for another person or household. We also discontinued the monthly hygiene day. We now offer hygiene items on pantry days when they are available, dependent upon receiving donations of personal care products. This has helped us to serve our regular local clients better since we no longer have people coming from all parts of the county just to get free stuff on the hygiene day.



*Our food pantry occupies the north wing of Fellowship Hall.*

Between January and May 2024, all the programs have cost \$26,109.16. Of that sum, \$22,567.71 has come from grants and donations, the church expense is \$3,541.45. This year we were blessed by a grant from the United Way of \$20,000 to be spent by July. As of the end of May, we have spent \$11,000 of this grant, and we will be sure to spend the rest by July.

**COMMUNITY KITCHEN MINISTRY MEMBERS:** Regular volunteers include Dave Beers, David Berti, Stacy Bush, Andy & Cindy Chadwick, Kay & Ed Corcoran, Dave & Margaret Davis, Josh & Lisa Dolphin, Tori Douglas, Joe Faraci, Ann Garcia, Megan Geir, Marilynn Guinane, David Jones, Karen Mayonie, Bob McCarthy, Ken Mebert, Julie Njoroge, Charity Outman, Suzanne Northrop Raboy, Jeff Rake, Ann Scala, and Joe Young. Staff support: Sherry Conklin, Community Kitchen Coordinator; Alex Hayes, Kitchen Staff.



## Hospitality Team

As we all know, there are a variety of details and tasks before, during, and after in putting together a meal for a group, small or large. The Hospitality Team was developed in part to help organize and facilitate our church family gatherings that include a meal and/or refreshments and desserts.



This past spring, the committee was instrumental in hosting (and all that entails) in two different Life-Celebration luncheons. Going forward, we have begun and will continue to celebrate our church family birthdays each month. Please let us know if you would like to host or help with a specific birthday Sunday. We are a growing team that is open to new team members and suggestions.

**HOSPITALITY TEAM MEMBERS:** Cindy Chadwick, Sherry Conklin, Sally Hunt, and Suzie Northrop Raboy.



## **Personnel Team**

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

**STAFF:** 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 2023 to May 2024, the number of UPC staff members (17, including music section leaders) was unchanged with the exception of adding a Welcome Desk Receptionist. By design, the position had been vacant since spring 2022 and was filled in May 2024 in response to current needs of the church. Vincent Pope was hired in partnership with Associates for Training & Development (A4TD), a private, non-profit workforce development organization located in our building. A4TD's program pays Vincent for his Monday through Friday, 4-hour per day position.

Effective July 2023, Aimee Backus became Music Coordinator (previously held by Becky Mebert) and Becky Mebert began her role as Accompanist.

Robbie Manners joined as baritone vocalist in place of Ernest Backus who had been serving as bass section leader.

We bid a fond farewell to soprano section leaders Victoria Barics and Riya Bolander as they graduate from Binghamton University and move on to new endeavors.

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

- reviewed Music Coordinator and Accompanist position changes for approval by Session;
- compiled the personnel budget; recommended increases for staff members to assist with cost of living increases;
- partnered with A4TD to hire a Welcome Desk Receptionist;
- began the process of reviewing position descriptions;
- continued to review the Employee Handbook of Personnel Policies to identify necessary updates and clarifications;
- began researching possible options for a nursery attendant for Sunday mornings;
- met with staff members as needed.

**FUTURE PLANS:** The Team will continue to review job descriptions to ensure that they reflect current duties and responsibilities of each position and finalize updates to the Employee Handbook.

**PERSONNEL TEAM MEMBERS:** Cindy Burger, Cindy Chadwick, Marilyn Guinane, 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 Coordinator*

Aimée Backus (she/her), *Music Coordinator*

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

Vincent Pope (he/him), *Welcome Desk Receptionist*

Mark Barnes (he/him), *custodian*

James Favor (he/him), *custodian*

Dave Schneider (he/him), *custodian*

Rebecca Mebert (she/her), *accompanist*

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

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

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

Robert Manners (he/him), *bass section leader*

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

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



## Property Team

The Property Team strives to have us be good stewards of the physical resources that we have so that we can continue to be a place for God's mission in this community. That job entails:

- Making sure the building is welcoming, clean, and safe — for worship, programs, and mission that takes place here.
- Being consciously ecologically-minded in the ways in which we manage the building.
- Working to keep what we have in good working order, making repairs as necessary, and upgrading what does not meet new standards.

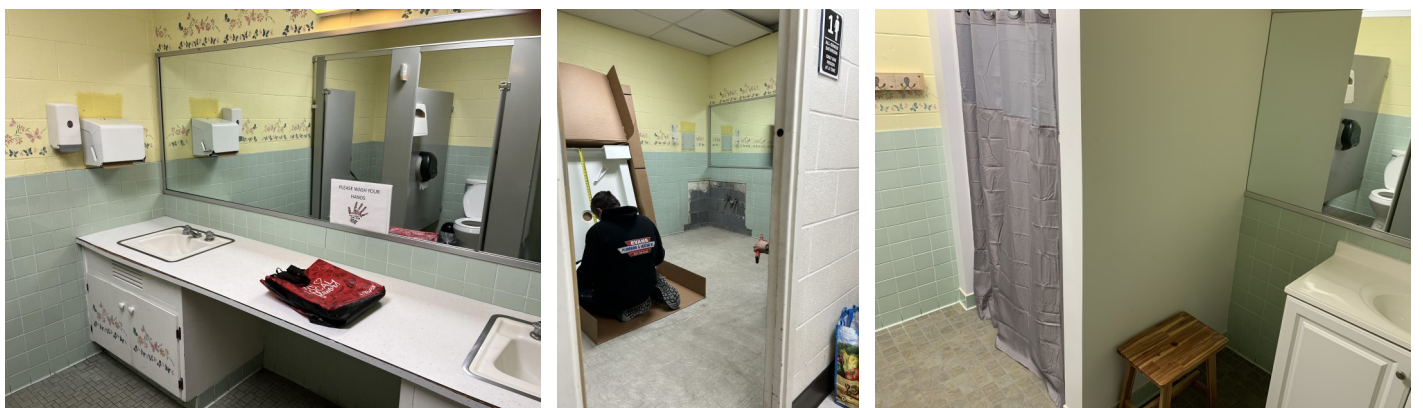
Three major projects were accomplished this year to help our building become more functional and welcoming for our members, mission, and guests.

One of those was the renovation to the middle of the first-floor bathrooms, the former women's bathroom. The mastic that held the tile to the floor had failed and tiles were coming up, making it unsafe. After thinking about this project for several months last year and doing some research, Ken Mebert was able to contract with a company to re-tile the floors.

In the meantime, we were told that we were awarded a grant from the United Way that Pastor Kimberly had applied for in December of 2022 to provide a drop-in center with computers and a case worker. After she applied for the grant, we then were asked by ACBC to think about providing space for a shelter, and the drop-in center grant was forgotten about until last June — when we were awarded the grant! Pastor Kimberly talked with United Way, since the original drop-in center was no longer an option because we did move forward with the UP Center shelter. United Way worked with us and provided funds that still could be used in ways to help the community!

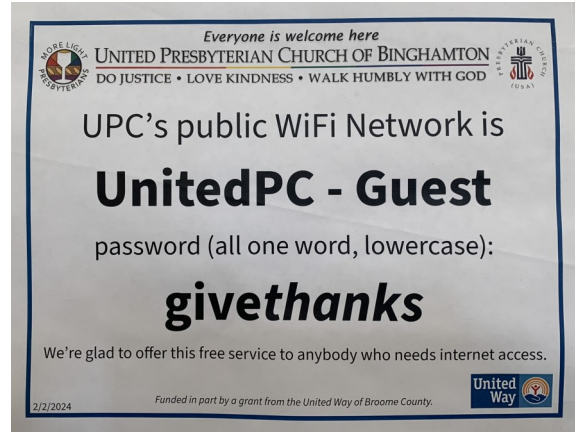
One of those ways was to fund putting in a shower in the bathroom we were already planning on working on. It was decided to put the shower in the corner where one of the sinks used to be. The counters were showing their age from years of water, so it was good to replace the counter with a waterproof one. The shower has been an immense blessing to people who stay here overnight, and the UP Center staff is coordinating its use very well.

Another part of the grant money was used to upgrade our WiFi network so that we could provide WiFi in more parts of the building for staff, members, and guests. It has been beneficial to our guests who need to use the internet to sign up for benefits, apply for



*First-floor bathroom renovation: before, during, and after.*

housing and jobs, and to keep in contact with their loved ones. And it is more secure, with a guest network that anyone in the building can use, and a separate private network for staff use that keeps our files and printers walled off from the public. New WiFi pucks were placed throughout the building and a new network hub was mounted in the office.



*Left: New and more powerful access points in the basement make it possible for our kitchen volunteers and staff to make and receive WiFi calls and messages. Middle: The tangle of ethernet cables and stack of network switches has been tamed and streamlined with a new network hub. Right: Signs are posted throughout the building offering free public WiFi to anybody who needs it. We have more than enough network capacity to support the increased use during the week thanks to the high-speed upgraded internet that we use for livestreaming on Sundays.*

The third major project that we accomplished this year was putting a new coating on the deck leading to the parking lot. The coating that was on the concrete had come to the end of its life and was coming apart. This left openings where water was getting in and eroding the concrete underneath. It took over a year to find a company that could remove the old coating and put a new one down. Ken finally found one and work began this spring. It was loud for several days while they ground it off. And then we had to be patient with the rain and wait for good weather to pour the new coating. But at the end of May, we were able to close that entrance for a couple of days during nice weather and the new coating was applied. It should last many years.

This summer we are scheduling our mason to come back and work on re-pointing the brick in several places of the education building where the mortar has deteriorated and is letting water into the building. He will also fix the water leaking into the basement along the wall.

**PROPERTY TEAM MEMBERS:** Chris Burger, Ken Mebert, and Pastor Becky Kindig; Bill Sands, adjunct consultant.



*The new coating on the patio looks great!*



## Sewing Group

During the annual reporting period of June 2023 to May 2024, members of the 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 2023, the group distributed 39 quilts, 16 “carry bags” for use on walkers, and assorted hats, scarves, mittens, stuffed animals, pillows, shawls, and blankets to area nursing homes and community groups. Throughout the year, quilts were given to new babies, Camp Sunshine in the state of Maine (a retreat center for children with life-threatening illnesses and their families), and members of the congregation and friends of the church who were in need of a quilt for emotional warmth.



*A sampling of the colorful creations of the Sewing Group.*

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 of our sewing group members relocated during the winter months, they stayed in close contact with the Binghamton group via Zoom, and worked tirelessly before they headed south so that the group had plenty to work on over the winter.



*Quilts galore and other items were blessed in the sanctuary in November 2023.*



## JUNE 2023 – MAY 2024 ACTIVITIES:

- Members worked at home or met in person at the church, creating 39 quilts and 16 walker “carry bags”.
- Janet and Len Hoover arranged to have all of UPC’s sewing machines cleaned, tuned, and repaired so they would be in top working order.
- In December 2023, quilts, walker “carry bags,” scarves, hats, and other items were distributed to Home Instead, Good Shepherd Fairview Home, Willow Point Rehabilitation and Nursing Center, Hilltop, Elizabeth Church Manor, the YWCA, and the NoMa (North of Main) community center in Binghamton’s First Ward.
- Quilts were provided to Camp Sunshine in the State of Maine, arranged by Chris and Cindy Burger.
- Hats and scarves were provided to our UPC lobby community and guests at the Food Pantry.
- Donations of fabric and yarn were sorted and organized for future use; items not suitable for the Sewing Group were recycled or “free-cycled” to local non-profits.
- The group said good-bye to member Marian Timson, who moved to Arizona in March.



*Sewing Group member Ellen Hancock-Berti sorts items for distribution in the community.*



*Cindy Burger created a quilted wall hanging which was given to VINES as a “housewarming” gift when they moved into their new building this year.*

**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. Gratitude from recipients continues to be strong as witnessed by the thank you notes received. The group is always seeking new members, regardless of prior experience or skill level. For more information, please contact the church office or one of the group’s members.

**SEWING GROUP MEMBERS:** Cindy Burger, Cindy Chadwick, Ann Cobb, Ellen Hancock-Berti, Jean Hill, Janet and Len Hoover, Marian Timson, and Nancy Walter; Pastor Kimberly Chastain and Pastor Becky Kindig. We are joined most weeks by Alan, a friend of the church who participates via Zoom.

## Worship and Music Team

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

Our congregation continued to worship both in-person and online throughout this year. We still have a healthy online presence, and it is wonderful to have the choice of different ways to access worship. It provides us with a way to hear from members who are doing work farther afield, as with the Tucson Samaritans, and spiritually connects us with homebound members in our corporate worship.

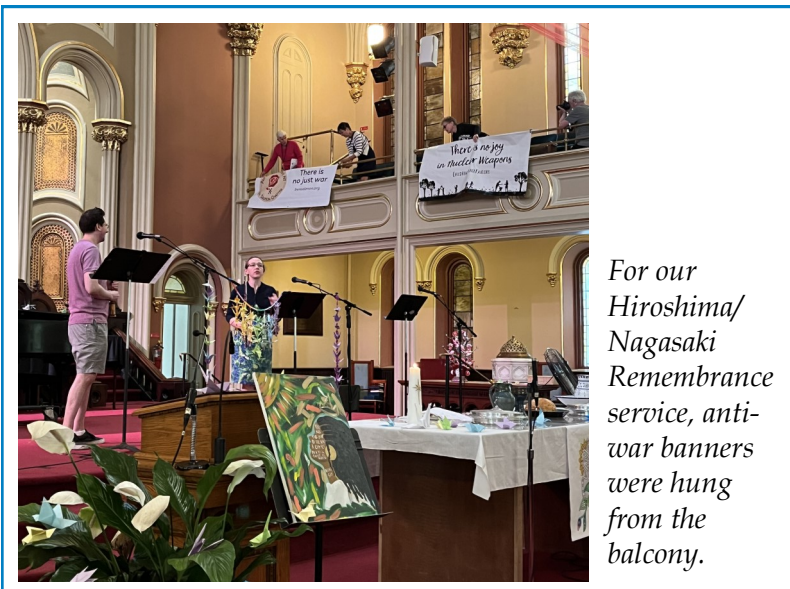
This past year UPC offered YouTube viewing, the Zoom Room, the 9:30 Prayer time, and our after-service Coffee Hour. We continued to include as many people as possible from our congregation in our worship services through musical offerings, as liturgists, and as participants in the services.

### **WORSHIP HIGHLIGHTS OF JUNE 2023 – MAY 2024**

***Pentecost, June 4th, 2023:*** Pentecost was told by a mash-up of stories from Acts 2. We also had our annual Church Picnic. This day could be dubbed as “windy Pentecost” as we gathered, trying to keep everything from blowing away. We celebrated our 10 years together as UPC! We had a good time looking back on our decade together, and recounting all of our fondest memories.

***From Pentecost through November 23rd:*** Pastor Kimberly preached a series on the whole Gospel of Matthew. It provided us with a more in-depth way of reading scripture, and a better understanding of the context of the times in which it was written.

- ***June 18th:*** Becky Mebert gave a very informative talk about the journey she and Ken took on the Civil Rights Trail in the South. She shared a compelling pictorial narrative of their insights with us in our worship service.



*For our Hiroshima/Nagasaki Remembrance service, anti-war banners were hung from the balcony.*

- ***August 6th:*** We had a Hiroshima/Nagasaki Remembrance with Veterans for Peace. We heard from guest speakers Jack Gilroy and Jim Clune. In preparation for the event, our church made many origami peace cranes, which colorfully decorated the church!
- ***September 3rd:*** Josiah Rwabukwisi was baptized, and we received Vicky Brown into membership.
- ***September 10th:*** Dave Ruston gave us some general information into the crisis of migrants at the southwestern border, and why we



have this crisis. He talked to us about his and Greg's assistance with the Tuscon Samaritans' important work, placing water bottles in the desert, and providing resources for migrants once they crossed the border. In the sanctuary, several of our members established a "Corner of Hope", a memorial in front of the sanctuary for migrants who died in crossing the desert.

- **November 5th, 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 12th:** Dr. Rose Niles spoke to the congregation about Project Regeneration, an intentional process of strategic planning over the next five years. This also involved a workshop after the service, leading us in a time of conversation and exploration of our values, mission, and core beliefs.

**December 3rd, the first Sunday in Advent:** The Sanctified Art curriculum was based on Luke, with the theme "How does a Weary World Rejoice?".

**December 24th, Christmas Eve Sunday:** We had two services on this 4th Sunday of Advent.

- In the 10am morning service, we had a "pick-up Christmas Pageant". It was a more informal service, in which all ages could participate. We donned hats or masks for all the characters in the manger scene, including the animals.
- The 4pm service was a more traditional service of lessons, carols, and "Reflection" by Pastor Kimberly. The lovely musical offerings were from Aimée Backus and Arianna Windsong on flute and Austin Shadduck on the shakuhachi; the United Ringers handbell choir; Aeden Hickey singing a solo, with Becky Mebert on piano; Christmas "Brass" with Riya Bolander on tuba, Sara Lieberman on trumpet, Nathan Raboy on trombone, Phil Westcott on saxophone, and Aimée Backus on flute; the UPC Children's Choir; and the UPC Choir.



**January 7th, 2024, and throughout the Season of Epiphany:** Pastor Kimberly preached on the theme, "Our Stories of God's Faithfulness". Prior to this series, Pastor Kimberly had asked us to reflect on the Bible stories that we remember the most.

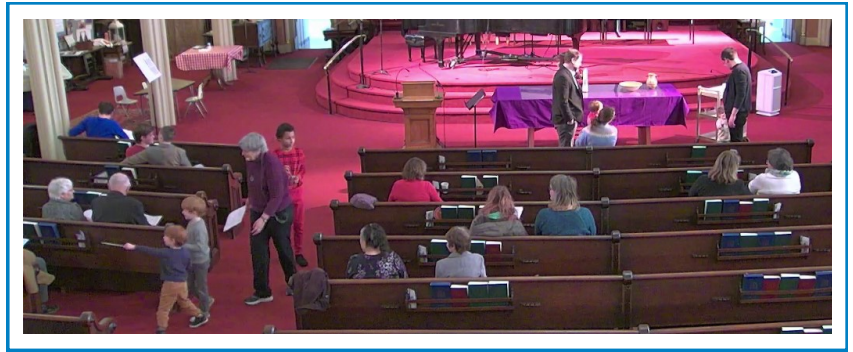
**February 14th, Ash Wednesday:** The pastors offered "Ashes To Go" at the university from 10am to noon. We worshiped at 12:30pm and 6pm, both in the sanctuary and streaming on YouTube.

**February 18th – March 17th, Season of Lent:** Pastor Kimberly preached on the common practices, language, signs and symbols of our faith, in order to understand and deepen our identity as children of God. We looked at practices of our faith such as baptism, communion, confessions of our faith, remembrance of Jesus's death and resurrection.



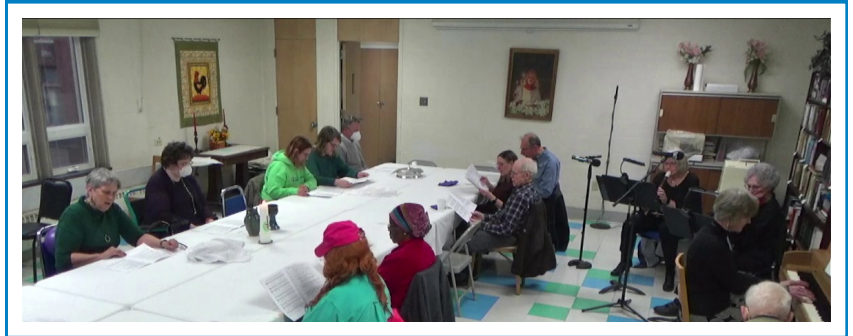
- **February 25th:** We did a “remembrance of our baptism” Sunday. The children had a great time, dipping their paintbrushes in water and sprinkling the congregation.

- **March 17th:** The Flute Studio of Binghamton Faculty and friends (Aimée Backus, Amelia Baran, Teresa Deskur, Stephany Marilley, Lindsey Williams, & Ariana Windsong) treated us to some lovely Irish music for St. Patrick’s Day Sunday.



**March 24th, Palm/Passion Sunday:** We celebrated the Palm Sunday half of the service with our yearly palm parade, and observed the Holy Week Passion for the latter half of the service. The beautiful musical offerings were: The UPC Choir; Robert Manners, vocal solo; Ernest Backus, percussion; Adrian Finney, tuba; Sara Lieberman, trumpet; Zeke Merlis, cello; Elikem Nyamuame, drums; Nathan Raboy, trombone; Phil Westcott, saxophone; the United Ringers handbell choir; Phil Westcott (again!), vocals and guitar; Starletta Noll-Long, vocals; and Becky Mebert, piano.

**March 28th, Maundy Thursday:** We gathered in the Upper Lounge for a worship service, which included a soup-and-bread potluck, communion, and reflective music offered by Margaret Davis, violin; Lana Ogden, recorder; and Claude Cornwall, piano.



**March 31st, Easter:** We had a joyous service together, with communion, wonderful music from the United Ringers handbell choir, Riya Bolander, Sara Lieberman, Robert Manners, Becky Mebert, Starletta Noll-Long, Nathan Raboy, Phil Westcott, Aimée Backus, Ariana Windsong, Austin Shadduck, the United Ringers handbell choir, and the UPC Choir. The children exited after the service to enjoy their annual Easter Egg hunt out on the front lawn.

**April 14th – May 12th, Eastertide:** Pastor Kimberly continued preaching on the practices of our faith (through music, fasting and praying, keeping the Sabbath, and tithing).

**May 19th, Pentecost:** We celebrated Pentecost inside in the sanctuary this year (as opposed to the windy one outside last year). We celebrated our

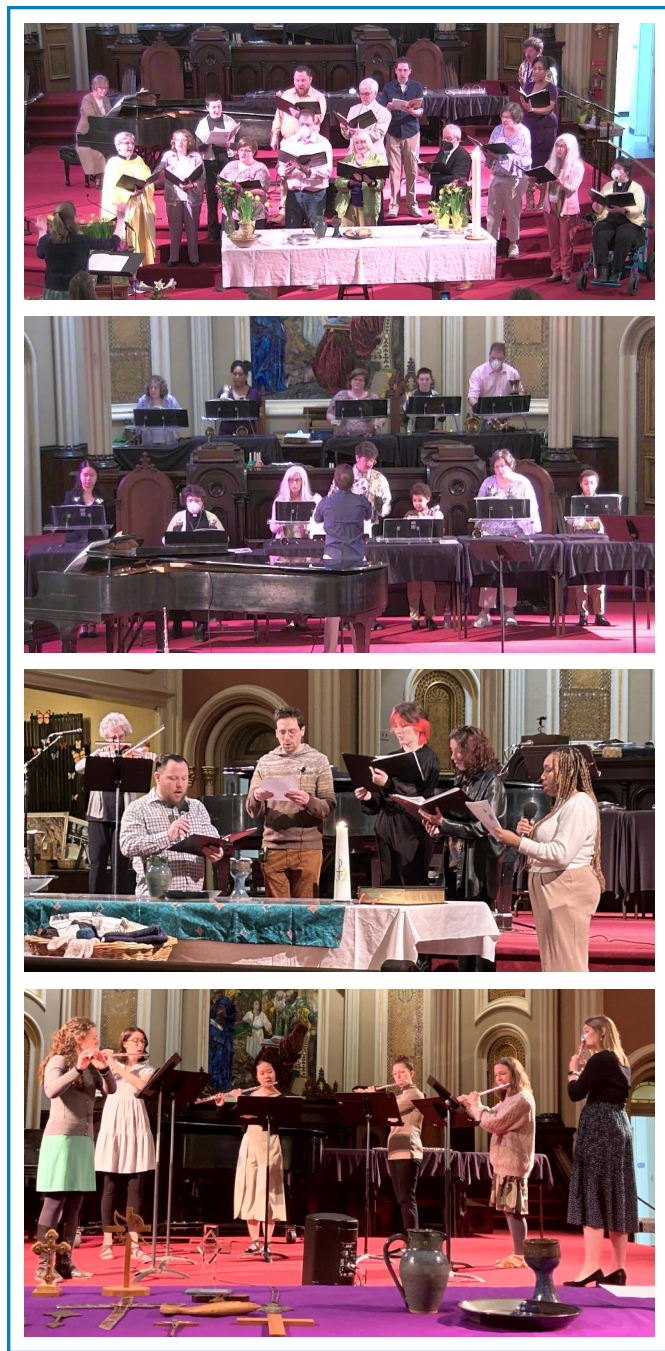
togetherness as a church with communion. We also received Charity Outman into membership on this day, and had a celebration of May birthdays after the service.

**Thank you from the Worship Team!** We owe a huge debt of gratitude to our pastors, musical directors, musicians, choirs, and UPC’s wonderful tech team: Scott Kindig, Ken

Mebert, Sara Lieberman, Chris Burger, Andy Chadwick, Aeden Hickey, Emily Hugenbruch, Matt Johnson, Shawn Landon, Dave Ruston, and Felix Rwabukwisi. 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:*** We are blessed to have a talented and dedicated vocal choir under the leadership of Music Coordinator Aimée Backus, supported by accompanist Becky Mebert and section leaders Riya Bolander & Victoria Barics (soprano), Starletta Noll-Long (alto), Austin Shadduck (tenor), and Ernest Backus [summer 2023] & Robert Manners [fall 2023–present] (bass). The United Ringers handbell choir continues to grow and flourish under the direction of Austin Shadduck. And our congregational singing has been enhanced throughout the year with flute accompaniment by Aimée Backus and Arianna Windsong alongside the piano or organ, with vocal support from our choir section leaders. Over the course of 2023–2024, Aimée Backus secured many talented people from our congregation and community. Among them have been: musical offerings by children in our congregation (i.e. children's handchimes); special vocal contributions from David Berti, Aeden Hickey, Sharon Landon, Ken Mebert, Catherine Micalizzi, Mackinaw Shutt, Judy Westcott, and Phil Westcott; and instrumental solos, ensembles, or accompaniment including Riya Bolander, tuba; Claude Cornwall, piano; Margaret Davis, violin; Henry Deuel, saxophone; Adrian Finney, tuba; Sara Lieberman, trumpet; Zeke Merlis, cello; Justin Miller, euphonium; Elikem Nyamuame, drums; Lana Ogden, recorder; Nathan Raboy, trombone; Austin Shadduck, shakuhachi; Mike Timson, trumpet; Alex Westcott, drums; Phil Westcott, guitar & saxophone; and the Flute Studio of Binghamton Faculty and friends (Aimée Backus, Amelia Baran, Teresa Deskur, Stephany Marilley, Lindsey Williams, & Ariana Windsong). We also welcomed substitute accompanists on several occasions when Becky Mebert was away: Carol Bartlett, organ; Andy Chadwick, organ & piano; Linden Foster, organ; Jean Herman Henssler, organ; and Cathy Murphy, piano.

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







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

