

# Summer 2022

Volume 13, Issue 3

View more photos from church events via our website: [upcbgm.org/programs-and-events/photo-gallery](http://upcbgm.org/programs-and-events/photo-gallery)

Our worship services are livestreamed on our YouTube channel: [upcbgm.org/youtube](http://upcbgm.org/youtube)

## Congregational Activity Reports, January 2021–May 2022

Our 2021–2022 Congregational Activity Reports were distributed at the Annual Congregational Meeting on June 26. If you did not receive one, copies of the full printed reports are available at the church office. You can pick one up on Sunday morning, or contact the church office to have one sent to you if you can't get here.

Excerpts from the Congregational Activity Reports are included in this issue of the UP-Beat.

## Worship Series: The Seven Marks of Vital Congregations

July 17 – August 28

*Based on the PC(USA)'s Vital Congregations Revitalization Initiative*

Coming out of almost two years of living with and through COVID, our congregation is beginning to consider how our life together has changed and what God might be calling us to do and be in the years ahead. At the same time, the denomination has created a "Vital Congregations Initiative" to work alongside presbyteries and leaders of existing congregations to empower congregations to renew, recover, and live more fully into faithful discipleship.

While we are not participating in the program at this time, the description of the seven marks and the supporting materials for the program caught the eyes of Pastors Kimberly and Becky. It is our hope that as we spend time this summer considering the seven marks together, we will find ourselves renewed and transformed in our lives together.

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Our mission is to follow Jesus Christ by doing justice, loving kindness, and walking humbly with God.

*Everyone is welcome here*



UNITED PRESBYTERIAN  
CHURCH OF BINGHAMTON



Each week, we will consider one of the seven marks and invite you to reflect with us on questions about the particular focus area. We will also invite you to pray specifically for the church every day, using the "Seven Day Cycle of Prayer" created by David Gambrell. We will find ways for you to respond specifically to a couple of questions each week, so that the pastors and the Session can gain insight into your priorities and visions for our congregation. We hope that this series will stimulate lots of conversation and give us new insights into our life together, "strength for today and bright hope for tomorrow."

### **July 17: Introduction to the Marks and "Intentional Authentic Evangelism"**

*Focus Text: 2 Corinthians 4:7-15. Pastor Kimberly preaching.*

Even the word "evangelism" can be kind of off-putting to progressive Christians, especially those of us who take interfaith work seriously. How do we tell the good news of God's amazing love in a world where so many of the messages people here from Christians are negative, judgmental, and disheartening? Paul gives us the image of "treasure in clay jars" – using the ordinary things of our lives to think about and reflect on the ways in which our story is a part of God's story. This work is inevitably tied to...

### **July 24: "Lifelong Discipleship Formation"**

*Focus Text: Acts 2:42-47. Pastor Becky preaching.*

Being Christian is not a one-and-done conversion event; it is a lifelong relationship that begins with our baptism. What are the ways in which we can see our challenges and opportunities in the light of God and seek to understand our world through the lens of faith? What are the practices and activities that the church can provide to nourish our lives and our understanding of our life together in Christ?

### **July 31: "Outward Incarnational Focus"**

*Focus text: Romans 12:1-21. Pastor Kimberly preaching.*

If authentic evangelism is about intentionally sharing the Good News in relationships, and discipleship formation is about learning/understanding/living the Good News, then outward incarnation is about not limiting where and to whom we share the Good News. Outward incarnational focus is about being the gathered community of Christ sent out! Paul invites us to go into places where we are not comfortable to bring God's loving presence and God's care for the whole world, so that through us, people may know God's goodness. When we look around at our community and our world, where is Good News needed? How can we bring that Good News beyond the walls of our building and into our community?

### **August 8: "Empower Servant Leadership"**

*Focus Text: John 13:1-20. Pastor Becky preaching.*

In Christ, we all become ministers to each other and to the world in need. In John's gospel, Jesus shows us a powerful image of what it means to be a servant leader, by washing the feet of his closest followers, and telling them that they are to care for each other in the same way. Each of us has gifts and abilities, and each of us is needed for the church to be the whole body of Christ. What tools do we need to serve and lead? What are the resources that the church can provide to us as individuals and as a community to do the work that we are called to do?

### **August 15: "Spirit Inspired Worship"**

*Focus Text: Hebrews 5:1-10. Pastor Kimberly preaching.*

Worship is an encounter with God that we understand and do not understand. It is an act filled with mystery and awe, but in worship we have the opportunity to express our deepest desires to God and listen for God's voice. In worship, we also experience the call to serve and be in mission. Worship

should challenge, teach, transform, convict, and call us into deeper relationship with God and one another. What are ways that we encourage everyone to participate in worship, to connect their story to God's story, and to challenge each other to live God's love in the world?

### **August 22: "Caring Relationships"**

*Focus Text: Galatians 6:1-10. Pastor Becky preaching.*

It is the most simple and significant of commands, "to love the Lord your God, and to love your neighbor as yourself." Yet it is, in truth, the most difficult thing to live into. Christ's true and perfect agape-love is when the Spirit of Christ dwelling within me meets the Spirit of Christ in you, regardless of all else. What are ways that we can be more open to the power of love in our relationships with each other, and encourage each of us to be open and loving in the world beyond our walls?

### **August 29: "Ecclesial Health"**

*Focus Text: 2 Corinthians 5:16 – 6:8. Pastor Kimberly preaching.*

Ecclesial health is about all people of God coming together in what we say and what we do, because we believe that we are ambassadors of God's message of reconciliation in a broken and fearful world. It is about how we are church, how we enact and live out being church together. There are going to be critics and unhealthy functions of the church, because we are flawed and sinful human beings. Yet we have a Savior who is not finished reconciling the church and the world to God, and we get to be ambassadors and witnesses in Christ. What are the best things about our life together? What are the places where we still need God's healing and hope to inspire us?

## **Pastors' Ponderings**

We have so much to celebrate.

Our little ones are growing — all 23 in our gathering community, and more in our extended community. Although we have not been able to see all of them together, we know from pictures and reports that they are learning and changing and becoming who God created them to be. And more on the way!

Our elders have learned new ways to participate in the things they love, so that distance and disability does not prevent worshipping together and learning from each other.

Our young adults are finding their way forward into new relationships and new beginnings, here or in different places, and are building a new world that they share freely with us, so we are not left behind.

We have learned new ways to connect to each other, we have formed new friendships, and we have found ourselves called into new ministries, from food pantries to witness in different places, with immigrants and refugees.

We have new stories to tell, new adventures to share, and new dreams to dream.

We are finding our way forward after nearly two years of feeling like everything is up in the air. There's a Lewis Carroll kind of feeling to the way the many months of the pandemic have played out: nothing was happening, but it was all we could do to keep up!



*Kimberly P Chastain,  
Pastor*



“Well, in our country,” said Alice, still panting a little, “you’d generally get to somewhere else — if you run very fast for a long time, as we’ve been doing.”

“A slow sort of country!” said the Queen. “Now, here, you see, it takes all the running you can do, to keep in the same place. If you want to get somewhere else, you must run at least twice as fast as that!”

— *Through the Looking Glass*, chapter 2, p. 23

It was tiring, trying to figure it out as we raced along, not getting anywhere but not able to stop. Small wonder that adjusting to a “new normal” as we are coming back out of it has also felt tiring.

Both *Alice in Wonderland* and *Through the Looking Glass* ended with Alice waking up and finding it had all been a dream, with her life unchanged by all of the experiences she had in the stories. The calm at the end of the day was reassuring and hopeful for her, and for the readers of the stories.

But our hope is in something completely different: we know that there is no “going back” — we have all been changed by our experiences. We know that the world has changed, some things forever, some for good. We also know that God has been at work in all of that time, in ways we can see and in ways we have not yet dreamed. And so we celebrate God’s goodness to all of us in giving us resilience and good companionship in our community, and dreams of a possible future.

As you read this newsletter, I hope you are celebrating our life together, and thinking about what you’d like to see growing and flourishing in the years ahead, and where you think God is calling us next. And I hope you will share it with each other, with the pastors, and with the session. As we remember, let us also dream.

Grace & Peace, Pastor Kimberly



*Becky Kindig,  
Associate Pastor*

Greetings friends!

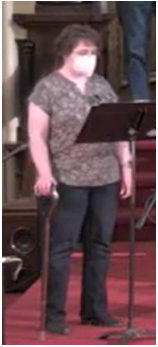
Another year and a half has been accomplished in our life together as United Presbyterian Church of Binghamton! Our last congregational report ended in December 2020 and we have come through this time with persistence, creativity, care, and joy, continuing to bring God’s love to our corner of the world. This year has seen us get our footing a little more as we come into this phase of the pandemic becoming endemic. We had learned how to protect ourselves and our community with masks, distancing measures, and doing things outside. We have also gained an arsenal of medical protections from vaccines to antiviral medication and found better techniques to help protect us.

So this year we celebrate that we can see the other side and we celebrate the things we learned along the way, even those things that we didn’t want to learn!

One of the things that I personally did not want to learn was that I have a rare autoimmune neuromuscular disorder called Myasthenia Gravis. I did not want to learn how to use a rollator/walker or a cane. I did not want to learn I needed surgery to remove my thymus gland. And I did not want to learn that I needed to be on strong immune-suppressing medication making me more vulnerable to germs — especially while we were in a pandemic! But I am thankful that I finally found an answer, found a doctor that knew what was wrong and that there is a treatment if not a



cure. I am thankful for K-N95 masks that allow me to be out in public a bit again. I am thankful for the technology that came out of the pandemic that allowed me to Zoom into meetings and conferences and Presbytery Assembly meetings from the safety of my home. And I continue to be thankful for Zoom because when my legs are not working well, I can continue to work. And if I'm honest, I like Zoom because I'm not disabled on Zoom. People only see my usual smiling face and not



the cane or the legs that are difficult to move. And I am extremely grateful for the care, concern, and encouragement that all of you have shown to me through this diagnosis, treatment, and especially my surgery. I am thankful to have been on the receiving end of your cards, quilts, and calls. And exceedingly grateful for those that stepped in to cover Sunday school and Easter egg hunt. Thank you! But I also learned that there is nothing like being in the same space with people. And now that things are safer and we do have the protections I mentioned earlier, and I am feeling better, it is so great to be with people again. And you all have been quite wonderful as I adjust to working with a differently abled body. You are gracious and kind, and no one has made me feel like I shouldn't be included even if I can't do all the things I used to. I hope that going forward, both being with people over technology and being with people in person can be used to build the kingdom of God.

As for this community here at United Presbyterian Church, I learned things too. I am thankful for how this community continued its commitment to caring for people, including me, during the pandemic. It's easy to say you care, it is harder to show it, but show it you did. And when times got tough, when many other people in the United States cared more about their own freedoms, this congregation said that you are committed to loving other people and keeping them safe. Even if it meant an inconvenience for yourselves. The way you all committed to doing things online, or outside, and to staying masked. To volunteer to drop off Advent packets, ashes for Ash Wednesday or palms for Palm Sunday, or meals from our Tuesday community meal to people who were too at risk to come out or who were stuck at home with Covid. You developed a card committee to make sure that everyone felt remembered on their birthday or cared for if they were sick or grieving and you called people regularly to check in.

As it was getting safer, we found ways in the spring of 2021 to do more things together like our Lenten Sunday's in the Park for Prayer walks. Groups of us met at local parks, I read a passage from the book Braiding Sweetgrass, and we set out walking spending time in nature with God and with each other. It was so good to try something new and get together in person, even though the walks started out in February very cold. But it was good to be in nature, marvel at the beauty around us, pray, and spend time with each other.



In the meantime, we continued our online worship with wonderful music, our Friday cocktail hour, and our reaching out to the community with our community meal to go and food pantry. And by May of 2021, our congregation has now been back into a hybrid worship setting, with some in person and some online, for a whole year, (with an exception of a snow storm in there!) Pentecost to Pentecost and now a little more.



During this year and a half, I was also blessed to be able to continue with my work with our youngest. Our Sunday school packets continue to be sent out on a weekly basis and we have added young at heart to our number! We are up to 23 young people that we send packets to. In a time where other small churches are losing young people, we have gained! And while I think that is partly because we choose to create and send Sunday school packets to each child every week so they feel connected, even when they can't be here, and that we continued to stay masked since our youngest are only now just able to receive the protection of vaccines, I think that the welcome

children receive in this congregation also has a big part to play. We welcome EVERYONE in our worship, and one way it shows is with the children who quietly play in the pray-ground, or who wander up the aisles giving coloring pictures to those in the pews or who decide to climb on stage and add drums to a musical offering. Kids feel welcome in this congregation because we all take interest in what they are doing, we talk to them and not ignore them or shoo them away. We ask them to help clean up communion, join in asking questions in worship during the time for the young at heart, and no one bats an eye when they dance around behind their dad who is reading the scripture lesson. All are accepted as they are, and our congregation is so much the richer because of it! We see the face of God in each person here and celebrate what they add to the mix.



But we don't just stay within our congregation. You will see in this newsletter many of the ways we are involved in the community here in downtown Binghamton and beyond. Our community meal, our food and hygiene products pantry, our prayer quilts, and our help with the asylum seekers from Afghanistan are some of the things you will read about in this newsletter. One extension of us into the community is our outreach to the Binghamton University community by our involvement with the Binghamton University Interfaith Council. Kimberly and I are members, and I continue to have the privilege to have part of my job here to spend time on campus engaging students, faculty, and staff in interfaith dialogue and pastoral care. We tabled at orientation to let them know there was a multi-faith group of clergy and congregations in the area new students could seek out. We offered monthly Common Ground Conversations to discuss what our different faiths had in common to foster dialogue across difference. And we showed up in dining halls to have conversation and we offered hot chocolate during finals to lift their spirits.



So what's next? That's a good question! Most of us alive have never come out of a pandemic before. And as we are coming to the



other side, we are realizing that priorities are different. We are different. We have realized that there are many places hurting in our world and our community but we have also realized that we are resilient and we can find a way to help when we ask God to show us and we faithfully listen and use our gifts to get to work. So I am sure that we will continue to have spirit filled worship filled with music, we will continue to strengthen our discipleship with book studies or walks in nature, we will continue to care for each other by being there for each other in numerous ways, we will continue to reach out to the community, and we will continue to be surprised at what we can accomplish when we answer God's call.

Kimberly and I say on a regular basis that we are so thankful for this community because you are so amazing in the way that you welcome and care for people and you continued to show that during this pandemic all the way through and continue to do so. Thank you for allowing me to serve with and for United Presbyterian Church of Binghamton! I look forward to what God has in store for us next!

Grace and Peace,  
Pastor Becky



## Music Notes

It has been a joy to return to in-person choir rehearsals this year. Although we were grateful for the click-tracks that kept us singing during our time of remote worship, we were glad to trade them in for singing together in the same space in the fall of 2021. It's so much easier to sing together when we are together! We have been flexible this year with the ever-changing state of the pandemic, both with the amount of music we've tackled and our roles within the choir. This year, our section leaders Victoria Barics, Ernest Backus, Starletta Noll-Long, and Austin Shadduck have taken on a new leadership role of singing hymns from microphones at the front of the church to improve the quality of the sound for those viewing services online. Ernest Backus conducted the choir when Aimée needed to sing soprano or play flute for particular songs, and Margaret Davis and Lana Ogden have also enhanced worship with their instrumental talents. At Easter, Sara Lieberman resurrected her trumpet skills to make an inspired and UPC original performance of Rutter's "Christ the Lord is Risen Again". We are grateful for the capability, flexibility, and "can-do" approach of everyone involved in the choir.



## Music at UPC

Music is an important part of our coming together at United Presbyterian Church. We are excited to make music with every resource that we have, and to use a variety of styles, not all at once but intermingled. What emerges is a vibrant worship service with music that includes everyone who wishes to participate.



With summertime upon us, the choirs will be taking a break until after Labor Day. We invite instrumentalists and vocalists who'd like to share their gifts to talk with Becky Mebert or Aimée Backus about providing special music for worship. All musicians must be fully vaccinated and boosted. Contact the church office for more information.

## Our Church Family

### In Memoriam

**Bette C. Auchinachie**, 94, died peacefully on May 2, 2022, at Hannah BG Shaw Nursing Home in Middleboro, MA, with her family by her side. She is predeceased by her husband, Sandy Auchinachie, her son, Tim Auchinachie, and her brother, Dr. Samuel Clipp. She is survived by her daughters Deb Quelle (Lakeville, MA) and Wendy Miller (Melissa, TX), her grandchildren Mollie Quelle, Ian Quelle, Erica Fouts, and Danny Miller, two great-grandchildren Addi and Huddy, sister-in-law Ramona Auchinachie, and five nephews and one niece. Bette was born in Binghamton, NY, but lived most of her childhood years in Pennsylvania, primarily Ardmore. She moved back to Binghamton when she married Sandy, on December 31, 1955, where she lived for the next 60 years until moving to Massachusetts in 2015. Prior to her marriage she worked as a secretary, and continued to use her shorthand skills to write notes to herself over the years. Bette was a member of the First Presbyterian Church of Binghamton (now United Presbyterian) for over 65 years, and also a Deacon of the church. She was a proud member of the Monday Afternoon Club for many years. Bette was a homemaker, an avid gardener, had a knack for interior decorating, and loved dogs. She had many beautiful perennial gardens over the years, at her homes as well as at her cottage at Oteyokwa Lake (where she and Sandy spent summers for 30 years). Her love of dogs was lifelong, always having a dog by her side in her life. She passed this wonderful love of dogs onto her children. Most of all, Bette loved spending time with her family, taking many family vacations over the years. A private burial was held on June 5 at Vestal Hills Memorial Park. Donations can be made in Bette's name to the animal shelter of your choosing.



### Join Us for Worship — in person, online, or over the phone

We have returned to the sanctuary for in-person worship on Sundays at 10:00am. The service is livestreamed on our public YouTube Channel [upcbgm.org/youtube](https://www.upcbgm.org/youtube), our Zoom room [upcbgm.org/zoom](https://www.upcbgm.org/zoom), and our website, and is also accessible on YouTube any time. Those who can't access the worship videos online can call in on the phone to listen live on Sunday mornings, using the Zoom information listed below. So if you are not ready or able to come "in person", you are welcome to participate as you are able.

If you're joining us in person, here's what you need to know:





- We wear masks and keep social distance, and the pews are marked to help us sit safely.
- We keep the inside doors open throughout worship, and air filtration units are deployed throughout the sanctuary to enhance your safety.
- Pastor Kimberly removes her mask while preaching and leading prayers, to accommodate those who rely on lip-reading to assist their auditory processing.
- Offering plates are placed by the doors of the sanctuary, but we do not pass them during the offertory. You are still invited and welcome to give online at [upcbgm.org/giving/donate](https://upcbgm.org/giving/donate)

Everyone is welcome to join us as we pray, hear God's word read and proclaimed, share our joys and concerns, and experience worshipful music. Our music is presented in person. All of our musicians are masked and fully vaccinated, and the singers at the front of the sanctuary are at least 15 feet away from the first row of pews.

Our worship guide is available for download from our website each week, and it can also be mailed to you if downloading is not an option.

If you have been missing the time of shared prayer, join us at 9:30 before worship — either in the Chapel at church, or on Zoom — for a time of sharing and praying for the needs of our community. To join the Zoom room online, go to <https://upcbgm.org/zoom>. To call in: Dial 1-646-558-8656, then enter Meeting ID: 865 274 8433 #, then press # again, and then enter passcode: 42456 #

It would be good to have you with us.

## Session News

A big thank you to the members of the Session Class of 2022, Sally Hunt and Bill Sands, whose terms ended in June. We are grateful to them for their time of service as members of Session.

At our Annual Meeting on June 26, we elected three elders to serve on Session.

### For the Session Class of 2023:

*Matt Johnson* was elected for his first one-year term. Matt has been a part of the UPC congregation for about a year; he was active with the First Presbyterian Church many years ago, and during the pandemic felt that it was time to come home. Matt is a professor of psychology at Binghamton University with a special interest in marriage and married relationships. He is taking a one-year term

## Our YouTube Channel

Did you know that you can “subscribe” to the UPC YouTube channel? Did you know that it won't cost anything, and that when we have 100 or more subscribers, we get access to some special “perks” as a content creator?

Here's how it's done:

- Open YouTube to one of the United Presbyterian Church recordings, by following this link (<https://youtu.be/nn8ZBeTU0kw>) or searching on YouTube.
- Scroll down under the video until you see:



United Presbyterian Church of Binghamton

There's a button over here that says “SUBSCRIBE”. Click on the button.

That's it!

to get his feet wet and to help us adjust to our new schedule of elections; we are excited about the energy and vision that has brought him back into our midst.

### **For the Session Class of 2024:**

*Lou McKeage* was reelected for a two-year term.

*Marilynn Guinane* was elected for her first two-year term. Marilynn joined UPC in 2014, transferring her membership from Silver Lake Presbyterian Church when they decided to leave the PC(USA). She has a passion for mission and for education, taking the leadership in the PC(USA) mission offering program and working with Pastor Becky on the Sunday school packets that go out each week. She and her husband Jerry live in Hallstead, PA, which has sometimes made the “commute” to the church building a challenge. This will be her first term serving as an elder, and we are excited that she will be sharing her leadership and her gifts with us.

### **Session Members – 2022–2023**

**Left to right:** *(number indicates years served as of July 2022)*

#### **Class of 2023:**

Andy Chadwick (1½)

Matt Johnson (0)

Suzie Northrop Raboy (5)

#### **Class of 2024:**

Marilynn Guinane (0)

Lou McKeage (3)

Allison Nyamuame (4)

Aaron Whitney (4)



## **Supporting Our Mission and Ministry**

We are able to receive tax-deductible contributions online through our website ([upcbgm.org/giving/donate](https://upcbgm.org/giving/donate)). Contributions can be made by E-check or credit card, and can also be set up as a recurring gift.

We encourage you to lift up in prayer how God will use you to bless UPC in fulfilling our mission to do justice, love kindness, and walk humbly with God.

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## **Mission and Community Partnerships**

- 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.

We have been challenged to live into these goals during the pandemic. The need for physical distancing and concerns about ventilation made it difficult for us to use our building as the focus of our hospitality like we have in the past, and so we have had to adapt our programs and exercise creativity and stewardship to continue reaching the community.

## Mission Projects

The three biggest mission projects in terms of time and energy invested were the Community Meal & Food Pantry, the Sewing & Knitting Group, and the Afghan Resettlement project.

**Community Meal & Food Pantry:** The Community Meal and Food Pantry continue to serve a large number of guests each week. We have continued to be flexible throughout the pandemic. After serving meals as takeout only for more than two years, we reopened Fellowship Hall for inside eating in April 2022, and that option is becoming more popular with our guests. The volunteers and staff continue to adjust how we serve. Everyone — guests and volunteers — seem to enjoy the present system of serving the guests restaurant-style. The guests come in and are served drinks, then their order is taken, and the food is brought to them at the table. Since the guests can choose what is put on their plate, we seem to have less food waste. Any guest can have seconds and may take home a few meals for later or for the rest of the family.

A few of our guests do take meals to other apartment residents. We delay takeout meals until 5:15 now so those who are dining in can get served first. For the month of May 2022, we gave out 956 meals to 386 people.

The pantry stays very busy. Every Friday, Sherry, Carol, and Alex go to CHOW for orders and pick up anything extra that is available. We get a truck delivery from the Foodbank of the Southern Tier about 2-3 times a month. Each food delivery is over 1,000 pounds of food. This keeps the pantry stocked with choices. Our guests are allowed to come once a week to shop on their own, making their own choices. The pantry is open Monday and Wednesday, 12-5pm. We stock the pantry with multiple

choices of dairy, protein, grains, vegetables, and fruits. In the month of May we served 169 households; this includes 50 seniors, 148 children, and 248 adults, for a total of 446 people served. The third Monday and Wednesday of every month the pantry also offers and provides hygiene products and detergents to anyone in need. This has replaced the Care and Share program. We also provide emergency food boxes including dishes, flatware, a can opener, and microwave food to people who are placed in temporary housing following incarceration, rehabilitation, or emergency housing. We joined the Healthy Pantry Initiatives at the Foodbank of the Southern Tier to provide the healthiest food selections possible. Other service groups, such as Mothers and Babies, YWCA, and Project Hope, have been invited in to educate and assist our guests.

We provide some clothing to anyone in need. There are household items available to distribute to anyone in need. Binghamton University had a “drop off” drive for exiting students. Instead of taking things to the curb, students could drop off any items and food they would not be taking home with them. On Thursday, May 26, Sherry picked up an entire carload of food and items from this drive. So far, we’ve given away five microwaves, three toaster ovens, and various other household items.



*Ann Garcia's refried beans made a tasty addition to our taco casserole recently.*



*April 26, 2022 was the first time we served the meal indoors since the start of the pandemic. Our guests are doing a good job observing safe distancing while they eat.*





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

And last but not least, we cannot forget the congregational egg-dyeing event that was so much fun and will now be a yearly event. Decorated eggs were given to our meal and food pantry guests in celebration of Easter.

**Sewing & Knitting Group:** Throughout 2021 and thus far in 2022, members of the Sewing & Knitting Group have continued to meet, crafting quilts and other items for distribution to the community. 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 functional items of comfort throughout Greater Binghamton and beyond. Even with restrictions caused by the COVID-19 pandemic, the group made quilts, blankets, walker "carry bags," hats, scarves, mittens, stuffed animals and other items for donation to new babies, community groups, nursing homes, and those in need.

The inability to meet in person for part of this time didn't hinder the group. Sewing Group members worked on projects at home and met every Wednesday at noon via Zoom to keep in touch with each other and provide updates on current happenings within the church family. The group resumed in-person meetings in the fall of 2021 for those who are able to do so. The Zoom option for the lunch hour continues, with members tuning in from far and wide, including Florida and Philadelphia.



*Quilts produced by the Sewing Group go through many steps: choosing fabric, cutting blocks, designing and formatting, stitching blocks in rows, sewing rows together, adding a backing and batting, tying, and hemming. Teamwork makes all the difference!*

### **January 2021–May 2022 Activities:**

- Members worked at home and/or met in person at the church when possible, creating approximately 50 quilts, 19 walker bags, fleece and crocheted blankets, assorted pillows and stuffed animals, and dozens of mittens, hats, and scarves
- Items were displayed in the sanctuary and dedicated in November 2021
- In December 2021, the items were distributed to local organizations such as the YWCA, Willow Point, Elizabeth Church Manor, Bridgewater, Hilltop, Good Shepherd, and the Relocation Assistance Program



*A small sample of the quilts, walker bags, stuffed toys, hats, scarves and other items crafted by the Sewing & Knitting Group.*



*Each quilt has its own personality, from sophisticated to fun. A Gumby and Pokey quilt would bring a smile to any recipient!*

- Quilts were provided to Camp Sunshine in the state of Maine, a program that assists children with life-threatening illnesses, delivered by Chris and Cindy Burger
- Hats, mittens and scarves were provided to our UPC lobby community, and to guests at the Food Pantry
- Others in the congregation and friends of congregation members donated hats, scarves, and mittens to supplement the Sewing Group's offerings. A generous donation of more than 60 handmade hats was provided by crafters at Susquehanna Nursing Home.

**Future Plans:** The group will continue its mission of providing comforting and functional items for those throughout the community. Gratitude from recipients continues to be strong. 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.

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



*Sewing Group members Cindy Burger, Cindy Chadwick, Ellen Hancock-Berti, Janet and Len Hoover, Ann Cobb, Jean Hill, and Kathy Preston arranged handmade items in preparation for the "blessing of the quilts" in November 2021.*

**Afghan Resettlement project:** Among our mission projects this year, we had one that literally walked through UPC's door. An Afghan man who has resided in the Southern Tier for 30 years came to our church, asking for help in getting his family members out of Afghanistan after the Taliban takeover in the summer of 2021. They were in danger by being both an ethnic and a religious minority that the Taliban persecutes. So our pastors put out a call to area churches, temples, mosques, the American Civic Association, and Journey's End Refugee Services, asking for help. It was a joy to see so many people unite to aid in this endeavor! The first hurdle was to figure out the enormous amount of paperwork to file for Humanitarian Parole through the U.S. Citizenship & Immigration Service. We then had to recruit sponsors and submit fees for each application. The community came together with an overwhelming response, and 137 applications for Humanitarian Parole were submitted! We owe a great, big thank you to Pastor Becky and Scott Kindig for all of their efforts and hard work in organizing all of the above!

We then waited for weeks, hoping for some action to occur after filing all the paperwork. We were eventually told, though, that there was no movement on these applications by the USCIS because military bases around the United States were already filled with the Afghan families who had been evacuated by the U.S. military before our withdrawal in August. So, our community responded again with help, through "Sponsor Circles" set up in our Southern Tier area to resettle some of the Afghan families who were on these military bases.

The Sponsor Circles Program is a program set up by the government whereby groups of volunteers can seek to become mini-resettlement groups, who work with one of the nine national resettlement agencies in the United States. They raise money, get background checks, and take some



training to get approved to host a family from Afghanistan that was evacuated to a U.S. military base. The circle helps the new family directly by resettling them into the area. Some of the volunteers in our area from Temple Concord, Temple Israel, the Unitarian Universalist Congregation, and UPC set up a sponsor circle going by the name of “Binghamton Regional Afghan Immigration Network” (BRAIN). Sponsor circles were also established in Johnson City and Owego.

BRAIN raised the minimum amount of money required to sponsor an Afghan family, completed the other requirements, and sent in the application. After doing this, we were informed that we would be receiving a family of five on February 10th: a father, a mother, a 27-year-old son, an 18-year-old daughter, and a 13-year-old son. Many people from temples, mosques, and churches committed their time and resources and helped to make this happen. With these resources, the sponsor group helped the family find a place to live, painted and cleaned the new residence, and set up their household. After they arrived, we helped to set up social services and medical benefits, enrolled the children in schools, took them to doctors’ appointments, and are presently helping them find jobs. We have been blessed to work with and get to know this wonderful family! We also are so blessed to be in a community that has contributed time, talents, and financial resources to make this family thrive and feel welcome!

Our work will continue with this family and possibly others yet to come. There is also still the hope that the Binghamton man who first came to UPC’s doors for help might be able to bring his loved ones here from Afghanistan as well.

Thank you for all your support and prayers in this mission!



*On February 10, members of our Sponsor Circle drove up to Syracuse Airport to greet the Afghan family and take them back to their new home in Binghamton. They said they never expected such a warm welcome!*



*After locating a suitable apartment for the Afghan family, volunteers helped clean and paint it in advance of their arrival.*

## 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 provide 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 Bount, Faith in Action (trains volunteer caregivers), Hospital Ministry (serves both UHS hospitals with 24/7 pastoral care, and trains volunteers for support and advocacy), 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.

In the winter/spring of 2022, UPC members David Ruston and Greg Patinka spent several weeks working with the Tucson Samaritans, a ministry of the Southside Presbyterian Church. This program searches for travelers in the desert in an effort to save lives at the Mexico/U.S. 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 co-workers, Dora Rodriguez and Gail Kocourek, started the Casa Esperanza resource center in Sasabe, Mexico, to aid travelers after the U.S. began deporting busloads of travelers into a community with very limited services. In Dave's video messages about their work, he told of meeting a group of Guatemalan kids in Sasabe, ages 10-17, who were "unaccompanied minors" planning to try and cross into the U.S. to reunite with their family members who are already living in the States. We took a special collection and provided mission funds to support the Casa Esperanza center.



*The Casa Esperanza center in Sasabe, Mexico, offers a place where migrants dropped off by the Border Patrol can get a meal, clean clothes, and shoelaces — the Border Patrol confiscates them when they process migrants but does not return them when the migrants are released.*

## 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 offering space to gather and socialize, 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 spring they graduated 20 students, including our own Jazmine Meade. (Congratulations, Jazmine!)



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, Grow Binghamton youth program, and Farm Share veggie subscription program, as well as offering cooking and gardening classes for the community.

We support advocacy and civil rights through our partnerships with the Labor/ Action Coalition Workers' Center of the Southern Tier, whose office is located in our building, and through the Justice and Unity for the Southern Tier's "Walk with Me" support system for people who have recently been released from the Broome County Jail. We regularly work with Citizen Action of New York, providing them space and use of equipment for their community programs such as anti-racism training.

We partner with many individuals and groups in our local arts community, including the Binghamton chapter of the American Guild of Organists, the Classical Pianists of the Future, and local piano studios who use our space and instruments for their recitals.

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 the departure of their office administrator this spring, 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 Co-Stated Clerks (who are our own member Chris Burger and Pastor Becky).

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 2022-23. 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 Report Highlights

### Card Committee

The Card Committee works to ensure that special events, milestones, joys, and concerns within our church family are acknowledged. This includes births, baptisms, birthdays, deaths, illness and injuries, surgeries, difficulties, travels, graduations, new jobs, retirements, thank yous, moves, anniversaries, and other occasions and situations. In the last 17 months, the Card Committee has sent 578 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 and those we were unable to see in person during the pandemic
- sent remembrance cards on All Saints Day to those who had lost a loved one
- arranged for gifts for those moving
- distributed paintings donated by a local artist and friend of the church to homebound members and those with special circumstances
- updated address and birthday lists
- provided monthly updates of committee activity to the pastors, Session, and UPC Office

The committee welcomes anyone who would like to join the committee to contact the church office or one of the members listed below. Additionally, we encourage church family and friends to let the committee know of special occasions and milestone events.

**Current Card Committee Members:** Suzie Northrop Raboy, Lana Ogden, Jenni McKeage, Margaret Davis, Cindy Chadwick.

### 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.

Our Property team this last year and a half has thankfully had a bit a breathing room. We have only had a few big projects and of course keeping up with the regular and surprise maintenance of the building. Here are a few of the things that they have accomplished.



- Purchased air purifiers in winter of 2021 so that it would be safer for staff to work and to meet in person and now have them in worship
- Had a new ramp installed in the back entrance to the back parking lot that is now fully up to ADA compliance



- New railings for the back stairs, new ramp, and parking lot kitchen emergency stairs
- Had the ceiling in the tower stairs to the radio room patched and re-plastered as well as re-plastering around the pipes in the fellowship hall now that the leak from the parking lot has been fixed
- Had new electrical outlets placed in the sanctuary to run air purifiers and technology for streaming the service.
- Continued to have brick re-pointed, this time around the roof of the education building to stop a leak in room 207
- Repaired a vacuum relay of the dishwasher in the kitchen that was leaking
- Repaired items that were not working such as drains in the kitchen and the heat pump in the chapel (which happily was under warranty!)

### Future Plans

- Remove and replace the waterproof membrane on the back deck that is failing
- Remove the rest of the cherry tree that was damaged in the front of the office that was damaged in the heavy April snowstorm. Many thanks to Dave Ruston who took care of the big limbs that were down!
- Replace the tile floor in the 1st floor bathroom (that used to be the women's room) since the mastic underneath has come to the end of its life



**Current Team Members:** Bill Sands, chair; Chris Burger, Ken Mebert, Kathy Preston; Pastor Becky Kindig; Cindy Burger, secretary.

### Worship and Music Team

The pandemic has continued through the 2021–2022 period, and our worship services have continued throughout, too! We have tried to embrace the many challenges of these times, and have had to switch gears with each change. We have gone from totally pre-recorded services, using a Facebook platform...to in-person/hybrid services, streamed on YouTube with the music pre-recorded and assembled by our audio and video technicians...to our current in-person services with live musicians, still live-streaming on YouTube. Through our technology, we have increased and maintained a sizable online viewership for our worship services.

We have tried to build connection with those worshipping online through the UPC Zoom Room, with our 9:30am Prayer Time and our after-service “virtual coffee hour”. We have also tried to stay connected with each other by including as many people as possible from our congregation in our worship services through musical offerings, as liturgists, and as participants in the services so that we can still see each other and feel like we are a congregation, united together in worship.

Looking back on Pastor Kimberly's sermon series, it feels like they have mapped our journey for this year and a half, from "Unraveled" to "Full to the Brim":

- **Lent/Easter 2021:** "Unraveled: seeking God when our plans fall apart" from A Sanctified Art. This series talked about the different ways we find ourselves falling apart, and the ways our community can be knit back together (i.e. social justice, meditation, contemplation).
- **Spring 2021:** A series on "Chaos and Connection"
- **Summer 2021:** A series on "Lies We Have Loved: things we think are in the Bible (but really aren't)", followed by a series on the Letter to the Ephesians
- **Fall 2021:** "Why do we do what we do?": A brief look at Christian worship throughout history. We got to read and understand lots of unfamiliar words, concepts, and history from the early church.
- **Advent/Epiphany 2021-22:** "Close To Home" theme from A Sanctified Art
- **Winter 2022:** A series called "Portable Faith"
- **Lent/Easter 2022:** "Full to the Brim, an Expansive Lent" theme from A Sanctified Art. It was a great and inspiring theme to hear, that in the midst of trying times, God's love is ever-present and abundant!
- **Spring 2022:** A worship series on the Lord's Prayer

### Highlights of January 2021 – May 2022

- **Epiphany Sunday, January 3, 2021:** The year began with our worship services in pre-recorded format, premiering live Sunday mornings at 10am on YouTube.
- **Annual Congregational Meeting, January 31:** Voting by raised hands on Zoom
- **Ash Wednesday, February 17:** We had a short service on Zoom. Ashes were packaged, prior to Ash Wednesday, and delivered to the homes of our congregation members.
- **Sundays in the Park for Prayer, each Sunday afternoon in Lent 2021:** We spent time in God's creation and spent time with each other masked and socially distant. We met at different parks in



the area and had 10-25 people each week. Pastor Becky led us, reading a short passage from the book *Braiding Sweetgrass: Indigenous Wisdom, Scientific Knowledge, and the Teachings of Plants* by Robin Wall Kimmerer. Then we spent about an hour walking or hiking or sitting in nature and marveling at God's creation. Then we came back together, sharing where we saw God during our time, and a prayer.

- **March 14:** We welcomed guest preacher, Pat Raube, pastor of Union Presbyterian Church in Endicott, to our virtual pulpit.
- **Palm Sunday, March 28:** In preparation for Palm Sunday, we delivered palms and took photos for our virtual Palm Parade during the week before, and celebrated our community and Christ's coming, in our YouTube worship service.



- ***Maundy Thursday, April 1:*** We celebrated communion, with a Tenebrae-like service (extinguishing candles for each station of the cross).
- ***Easter, April 4:*** We had our regular Easter communion service, streamed on YouTube, which was beautiful. At 4pm later that day, we gathered at the church for an outdoor devotional time with a "Road to Emmaus" theme. We walked around the neighborhood, reflecting on what is in need of resurrection in our own lives and in our neighborhood.
- ***Pentecost, May 23:*** We took the joyous step of coming back to church for in-person worship services (and continued to live-stream on YouTube), with portions of the service pre-recorded. We celebrated communion together, which was very meaningful after not seeing each other, except virtually. We were hopeful that we were making accommodations for everyone, whether they could come back to the sanctuary or not. To minimize Covid aerosols, music was pre-recorded. We continued to mask, kept the doors of the sanctuary open, and every other pew was blocked off for social distancing. For communion, we came to the front of the sanctuary, and picked up our communion of bread and blueberries (for our "fruit of the vine").
- ***Summer 2021:*** We were thankful for the pre-recorded videos (virtually, via "click-tape" and metronome) from the musicians during the pandemic, but really delighted to see live in-person musicians on several Sundays this summer!
- ***June 27, July 18, and August 23:*** We joyously celebrated lots of baptisms! These beloveds were: Owen Westcott, Charlotte Livingston, Declan Jones, Elinor Hugenbruch, Khиро and Tyson Brunson, and ***Zander Rwabukwisi***.
- ***September 5:*** Pastor Becky preached, and did an interactive activity (a menti.com poll) with the congregation, asking "What does UPC praise God for today?", and then generated a word graph, based on the answers, for the next Sunday's worship guide.
- ***October 3, World Communion Sunday, Rally Day, Congregational Meeting, and Church Picnic:*** We had a hybrid Zoom/in-person format for the meeting. We elected the Session class of 2024 and voted on changes to the Bylaws of the United Presbyterian Church of Binghamton regarding the size of Session and the length of Session terms. Afterwards, we gathered by the garden in the front yard for a congregational picnic. It was a "bring your own meal" style picnic (with some "grab-and-go" meals for visitors), in order to reduce the risk of Covid.
- ***November 7, 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 that we brought for a big bouquet in the front of the sanctuary.
- ***Christmas Eve, December 24:*** We had a hybrid Christmas service at 4 pm. It was a lovely service of readings from members of the congregation, carols, and candlelight!





- **Christmas Sunday, December 26:** This was an online, pre-recorded service only. It was a service of many musical offerings from our congregation, with reflections from Pastor Kimberly.
- **Ash Wednesday, March 2, 2022, 5:30 pm:** Like last year, we had a short, meaningful service on Zoom, using packaged ashes sent to each of our homes.
- **Palm Sunday, April 10:** We celebrated the beginning of Holy Week in quite a different way. The scripture reading came from the Gospel of Luke's account. In this account, Jesus's triumphal entry into Jerusalem was greeted by people spreading their coats and garments along the road, rather than palms. So, the congregation was invited to bring gently worn coats and household linens, which were laid on the communion table, and later given to those in need. There was a huge congregational response, and quite an accumulation of offerings!
- **Maundy Thursday, April 14:** We gathered in the sanctuary for a service of communion and candles.
- **Easter, April 17:** We had a communion service in the sanctuary, which was also streamed on YouTube. The service was beautiful, and it felt like resurrection to see so many more people in attendance, after such a long haul through the pandemic! And, we loved hearing the festive notes on trumpet from Sara Lieberman!



**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 deacons" team, which has expanded in membership: Scott Kindig, Phil Westcott (2021), David Williams (2021), Andy Chadwick, Ken Mebert, Sara Lieberman, Andrew Beaty, Shawn Landon, Juliann Wanjama, Chris Burger, and Emily Hugenbruch. Worship services would not have been the quality they were without their skills and their ability to change with UPC's needs!

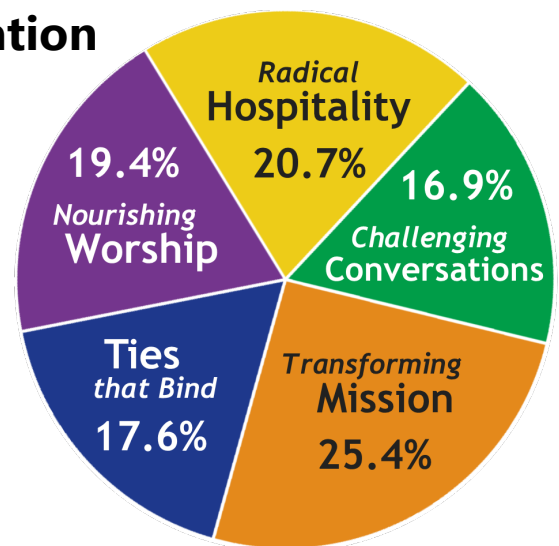
**Musicians for worship services:** Becky Mebert has secured many talented people from our congregation and community over the course of 2021-2022. Among them have been: Our wonderful choir, and choir section leaders — Starletta Noll-Long, Victoria Barics, Austin Shadduck, Ernest Backus, and choir director Aimée Backus; UPC's United Ringers Handbell Choir; musical offerings by children in our congregation (Aeden Hickey, The Hickey and Nyamuame children, and the spontaneous addition of percussion by Aoife Backus); accompanists Andy Chadwick and Jean Henssler (organ & piano); vocalists David Berti, Katie Micalizzi, and Rebecca Grabarchuk; instrumentalists Aimée Backus, Ernest Backus, Austin Shadduck, Lana Ogden, Margaret Davis, Claude Cornwall, Emma Schenemann, Peggy Snizek, Sara Lieberman, Elikem Nyamuame, and Cara Miller; with pre-recorded offerings by the Presbyterian Peacemaking Program Virtual Choir, the Choir and Orchestra of Saint Lillian, Lianne Aharony, Cole Tornberg, Lene Weiss, Ryan Holleran, Julia Naldjian, Steve Quay, Jason Mesches, Phil Westcott & Eleanor Hough, David Williams, Nathan Raboy, Andrew Beaty, and Becky, Emma, & Scott Kindig.

**Current Worship & Music Team Members:** Suzie Northrop Raboy, chair; Andy Chadwick, Margaret Davis; Music Coordinator Becky Mebert, Office & Technology Coordinator Scott Kindig, Pastor Kimberly Chastain, Pastor Becky Kindig.

## 2022 Ministry & Mission Budget Allocation

Our budget process for 2022 was affected by the pandemic, as everything else in our lives has been. So this budget is based on what we actually spent in 2021, what we believe we might spend in 2022, and what we hope might happen as we move into a future that is very different from the world we left behind when we went into “lockdown” in March of 2020. This year’s budget does not reflect the reality that we have become aware of in the first two quarters of this year: that with the market retrenchments, it will soon be time of for us to start making some prayerful choices about priorities.

May God bless our efforts and our intentions with effectiveness, and grant us eyes to see our way forward for the future.



### Nourishing Worship

The vital center of our life as a congregation is the Sunday morning worship service, when we gather as a family of faith. This is where our work begins and is nurtured – in the love and worship of God, and the community we are building to glorify God.

- We welcome people of all ages and cultures, and are open and affirming of LGBTQIA+ families.
- We share the Word in a range of styles and experiences, striving to accommodate special needs.
- The preaching is practical and focused on understanding and living the gospel in our world.
- The music is varied and inclusive, featuring instruments from organ and piano to shakuhachi and drums, with a bell choir as well as a talented vocal choir to lead our singing.
- As we pray for each other in good times and hard times, we grow together in faith.
- Children are encouraged to participate in the conduct and leadership of the worship as they are able from an early age. A “Pray Ground” offers a space to play and participate in age-appropriate activities within the context of the worshipping community.

We returned to worshipping in person in on Pentecost in 2021. Interestingly, while our in-person worship fluctuates, our online worship numbers have remained high. The flexibility to choose whether to worship at home or in the sanctuary has been a gift to many of our members! We continue to send Sunday School packets to 23 children each week. They include the story from scripture and activities that can assist the children to understand the message or theme of the day.

### Radical Hospitality

Early in our life together as United Presbyterian, the Session decided that we will welcome anyone who shares our vision of a place to grow, to gather, and to build each other up. Every encounter is challenging, and every day we learn more about how to love God’s people and provide a safe place for people to come together and grow together.

- Training programs for community activists in the housing crisis and the work of anti-racism in Binghamton.
- A chance to start again for adults who did not finish high school at the usual time.
- A community coming from all walks of life, to serve and share a meal around tables every Tuesday night.
- A community garden and food pantry that help to supply nourishment for those in need.
- A venue for arts groups such as LUMA and Tri-Cities Opera to share their work in the downtown area.

*This may be the place that we have felt the impact of the pandemic the most. We have adapted the lobby, the bathrooms, and the building use guidelines to be as welcoming as possible. We have returned to serving our community meal in person, but in a modified form, and we continue to provide many “carry out” meals for those who prefer not to sit in an enclosed space. The food pantry that we started at the beginning of the pandemic served 89 people in 36 families on the day that this report was created, and the need is increasing as supplemental aid has been cut back. We are still experiencing change in who we welcome into our space and how, so we expect these numbers to change again when we start the budgeting process for next year.*

## Transforming Mission

We work to transform our community through alliances and outreach to people at risk in our society: the formerly incarcerated, the homeless, people with addictions. We share space, support PC(USA) mission programs and offerings, and:

- Support two case managers in the “Walk with Me” program, helping people returning from incarceration.
- Minister to the incarcerated through the Jail Ministry of Broome County Council of Churches.
- Support community arts programs such as Tri-Cities Opera, LUMA, and PorchFest. This year we also supported both Juneteenth and the Black Excellence Awards.
- Work together with NAACP, PLOT, Justice and Unity for the Southern Tier, STAP, and A4TD to end racism, confront violence, and bring new possibilities for life together in Broome County.
- Participate with VINES, CHOW, and the Food Bank of the Southern Tier to ensure that everyone has access to nourishment. Through our pantry, we offer hygiene products not covered by government assistance as well.
- We have been active in the effort to bring Hazara families from Afghanistan so that they may live in safety. The Hazara are a religious and ethnic minority in Afghanistan who have been targeted by the Taliban since 1996. We are partnering with others in a support circle to help settle four families that have come to the Southern Tier.
- We continue to support the Whuti-Sgroboe congregation in Ghana, sending gifts each year. This year we supported Dave Ruston and Greg Patinka in working with immigrants at the Mexico-U.S. border, and hope to build our awareness and our partnership with them. And we have participated in relief efforts for Ukraine as they are battling the Russian invasion.

## Challenging Conversations

Our growth as Christians begins in the worship of the living God, and is grounded in common prayer, study, and conversations with each other and with those who can teach us more about our world and how we can respond to it.

*This part of our life together has been deeply affected by the pandemic. Finding the time, the energy, and the passion to engage in the ways we did before has been hard. Everyone is tired from adapting to so much rapid change, and we have benefited from doing and being “less” as we all learn these new ways of being. We are trying out some new ways to re-engage with each other in the year ahead, and we hope to use all that we have learned in our time together and our time apart.*

*The potluck picnic we shared when these reports were presented is a symbol of our transition to more in-person social gathers, and with the help of God we will find many ways to keep connecting and challenging each other.*

## Ties that Bind

The old hymn begins, “Blessed be the ties that bind our hearts in Christian love...” It is a measure of God’s grace that we have continued to add to our congregation and to welcome new people even when we have not been able to be together in person for nearly two years.

We have seen the flourishing of a new “card committee”, and we have enjoyed a virtual cocktail hour every Friday at 5:00 pm in the zoom room.

Some of the things we hope to do in the coming year to strengthen our community include:

- Small dinner parties and larger potluck dinners, visiting programs, shared work parties, and a congregational retreat.
- Continue to expand our ministry of presence, building on the work of the prayer ministry and the card ministry to make sure that no one gets left behind, whether homebound, traveling, or going through a season of struggle and difficulty.
- Bring pastoral care and resources to Binghamton University through the Interfaith Council, renew our participation with the Children of Abraham, and explore new partnerships with Black congregations in the downtown area.
- Work together with More Light Presbyterians toward the full participation of LGBTQIA+ people in the life, ministry, and witness of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) — and in society.



## Programs & Events

### Bible Study: Evolution of the Word

**Mondays, 12:30 pm, Chapel or Zoom Room**

We started reading Marcus Borg's *Evolution of the Word: The New Testament in the Order the Books Were Written* during the pandemic, to learn about how Christianity developed in the early centuries and see how it affects our understanding of the New Testament. We stopped in June of 2021 because we were feeling overwhelmed by life (not by the book).

We've started again at the beginning, and everyone is welcome to join us in person or on Zoom. The general format is to read the introductory material for each section, then to read through the biblical texts and talk about what it meant for early Christians and what it might mean for us today. We try to discipline ourselves to keeping the conversation to an hour every week. Copies of the book are available in the church office.

### Donate to keep books flowing into the Broome County Jail

**"Thank you, it is SO good to have books."**

It's amazing what a simple used \$5 novel can do. It is, after all, desperate times in our COVID hotspot jail. Most sections are locked down, meaning women and men often spend 20 hours or more locked in their cages. The jail's mass solitary confinement endangers everyone's health and sanity. Seeking freedom now, persons inside most often ask for books. Science fiction, novels of every description, history books, dictionaries, large print bibles, and Korans. The joy they bring is incalculable:

*"Having crossword books is wonderful... I get to actually engage my brain and think! It is a mindless, sad existence here... thank you again."*

*"You sent me Harry Potter, and I will be forever grateful. Thank you so much. You have no idea how much better life in here is with a good book. I look forward to hearing back. Thanks again!"*

The Book a Month Club, through Justice and Unity in the Southern Tier ([justicest.com](https://justicest.com)), provides one book at \$15.00 or under by request for those incarcerated in the BC Jail. The program takes requests from the JUST visiting/calling crew, letter, or the GettingOut website ([gettingout.com](https://gettingout.com)), and has the books sent, according to jail mandates, directly to the individual at no expense to them. The program has been supported solely by donations.

You can donate by using JUST's PayPal ([tinyurl.com/bd6mu99s](https://tinyurl.com/bd6mu99s)) or Gofundme for Books (via [justicest.com](https://justicest.com)), or by check paid to "Justice and Unity for the Southern Tier", JUST, PO Box 93, Bible School Park, NY 13737. Please specify you want your donation to go to books. If you want to request a book for someone inside BC Jail, please write to Victoria Delaney c/o JUST, PO Box 93, Bible School Park, NY 13737.

All donations to the book drive in 2022 are tax-deductible.



## Sacred Sites Open House, Sunday, July 24

The Preservation Association of the Southern Tier (PAST) is co-sponsoring with The New York Landmarks Conservancy a Sacred Sites Open House on Sunday, July 24, at various times between 11am and 4pm. This state-wide event is free and open to the public. To obtain a listing of the twenty Sacred Sites open in the Southern Tier, Binghamton, Johnson City, Endwell, and Endicott, go to [pastny.org](http://pastny.org), or to local libraries, history centers, or religious sites. The theme this year is "Re-Opening Our Doors". This is an opportunity for the public to be a tourist in their own neighborhood and view the interiors of these magnificent buildings.

[Clockwise from top] *The Landmark Church, the Unitarian Universalist Congregation of Binghamton, and the Masjid AL-TAwheed Islamic Awareness Center are amongst the religious structures featured in this year's Sacred Sites Open House.*



## UPC's "Zoom room"

Modern technology is marvelous! Thanks to the Zoom meetings system, we can gather virtually even though we can't be together in person. We've used our "Zoom room" for worship but also for prayer groups, book studies, hymn sings, and social times.

You can join our meetings and worship services online via your computer, tablet, or mobile device by going to [upcbgm.org/zoom](http://upcbgm.org/zoom). If you've never used Zoom before, you'll be prompted to download the Zoom meetings app, which will ask for permission to use your microphone and your camera. We use our "Personal Meeting ID" for worship and most of our programs, so they're always in the same familiar place.



You can also call in over the phone, if you don't have a microphone on your device or you can't join online. To join as a phone call:

- dial **1-646-558-8656**
- then enter our Meeting ID: **865 274 8433 #**
- press # again, then enter the passcode: **42456 #**

If you have questions or need help using Zoom, feel free to call the church office for assistance.

### **Sewing Group: Wednesdays, 10am–1pm (with Zoom lunch hour, 12pm–1pm)**

The Sewing Group meets every week in the Upper Lounge on the 2nd floor, working to create crib-size or lap quilts, decorative pillows, and walker "carry bags," as well as knitted hats, sweaters, mittens, scarves, and baby items. Anyone interested is encouraged to join them on Wednesday mornings starting at 10am. No special sewing skills are needed for cutting squares, design layout, pinning, tying, setting the table for lunch, or heating water for tea. Sewing machine and hand hemming skills are a plus.

Each Wednesday at noon, those who can't join the Sewing Group in person at the church are invited to "Zoom in" for their lunchtime social hour. Everyone is welcome; bring your lunch and enjoy the company.

### **Zoom Happy hour: Fridays, 5–6pm**

All are invited to bring your own beverage and join the conversation on Friday evenings for this social hour in the Zoom room. We talk about the events of the week and share what's going on in our lives. It's a great way to keep in touch while it remains complicated to be together in person.



## **Joys and Concerns**



### **Welcome to the World!**

We are delighted to announce the birth of Lucien Frederick Hough-Westcott to Eleanor Hough and Philip H. Westcott. Lucien was born on June 28 at 3:40 am, at the University of Kentucky-Lexington Children's Hospital. Everyone is doing well.

The Westcott family address is:  
812 Maxwell Street, Apt. 1  
Lexington KY 40508.



**Expecting a Baby:** Ben & Margie (& Evelyn), August (girl); Jessica & Felix (& Zander), September (boy)

**Gratitude:** caring medical professionals; our congregation; beauty of the summer; new life

**Moved to a new place:** Jean Hill, Morgan Chadwick (starting medical school!)

**Grieving:**

*Friends & Family of* Bette Auchinachie, Tony Diagostino, Jessica Duffey, Rev. Ed Kang;

Suzie, death of friend Kathy; McKeages, death of a beloved pet; Andrea & Shelby & Matt, death of beloved aunt

**Healing:** Bill; Adley; Pat

**Facing surgery:** Dave D.

**Recovering from fall:** Ann C.; Barbara G-W

**Covid-19:** Janak; Loren; Tom; Jazmine & kids; Jeffrey; Haakan; Cindy's sister

**Living with Cancer:** Molly; Karen; Amy; Brendan



**Homebound/Managed Care:** Gail C.; Kristie P.; Marian P.; Char S.; Jim S.

**Hospice:** Dick Donohue

**Other Concerns:** We pray for

- Migrants and those who minister to them
- Those living through a divorce
- Mass Shootings around the country
- Ukraine
- Difficult diagnoses
- Graduates, especially Emma & Jaz
- General Assembly & new co-moderators, Rev. Shavon Starling Lewis and Rev. Ruth Santana Grace
- All those placed at risk by recent Supreme Court decisions

## Recent & Upcoming Birthdays

### July

- 9 Ramona Auchinachie
- 11 Evan Kindig
- 19 George Cummings  
Joyce Donohue
- 21 Doug Jones
- 22 Ann Garcia
- 28 Bobbie Hickling

### August

- 4 Marion Adams
- 10 Aimee Backus  
Judy Westcott
- 14 Linda Hessian  
Leonard Hoover
- 15 Brian Hugenbruch
- 19 James Spencer
- 23 Ed Hickey
- 28 Gail Covert  
Elizabeth Rose Jurena
- 30 Cindy Burger  
Margaret Davis

### September

- 4 Ethan Nyamuame
- 6 Clyde Jones
- 7 Sherry Conklin
- 9 Morgan Chadwick  
Julie Njoroge
- 20 Emma Kindig
- 28 Brian Morse





*Everyone is welcome here*

# UNITED PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH OF BINGHAMTON



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