

Summer 2023

Volume 14, Issue 4

View more photos from church events via our website: upcbgm.org/programs-and-events/photo-gallery
Our worship services are livestreamed on our YouTube channel: upcbgm.org/youtube

Fall Worship Schedule

This fall, we will continue our study of the gospel according to Matthew, and continue the practice begun in August of a special spiritual formation theme each month.

In September, the theme will be “Care for the Immigrant and the Stranger.”

On **September 10**, David Ruston will be giving us a brief overview of how the global immigration crisis has developed, and we will have a special guest Zooming in from Guatemala: Pedro Lucas, the director of Cento Mayo Xela Spanish School in Quetzaltenango. After worship, everyone is invited to come to the front of the sanctuary to help us begin to create a “Corner of Hope.” This will be a place where information about the world refugee crisis can be found and we can create memorial butterflies for those who have died in the desert outside Tucson. The T-shirts and handwork supporting Salvavision will be moved to this corner, which we hope will become a permanent resource for the congregation.

There are two other special occasions in September: On **September 3** we will baptize Josiah James Rwabukwisi and welcome him to our family of faith. And on **September 17**, Sharon Landon and Aeden Hickey will be providing the special music for the worship service.

In October, the theme will be “A Place at the Table.”

On **October 1**, we will celebrate World Communion Sunday, and receive the Peace and Global Witness Special Offering. On **October 15**, we will gather downstairs after worship for a **congregational potluck**. Phil’s Chicken will be provided, and everyone is invited to bring their favorite side dish, salad, or dessert to share. We will have “conversation cards”

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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



on each table to encourage conversation that will help us all get to know each other, whether for the first time or in a new way.

On November 5, we will celebrate the Feast of All Saints with Communion and the Bouquet of Remembrance.

One of our cherished traditions at United Pres is the Bouquet of Remembrance, which we will build together to remember and honor the cloud of witnesses that surround us in the communion of saints. We will place a flower and read the name of each member of our community who has died during the year, and we will have a slide show featuring our “communion of saints” during the celebration of the Lord’s Supper. Everyone is invited to bring flowers to place in the bouquet when we gather at the table for communion. Extra flowers will be available if you are unable to bring your own. To assist us in making this remembrance, please send the names and photos (if available) of all of those you would like to remember to the church office by **October 27**. If you need help sending a photo, please contact the church office (607-722-4219 or office@upcbgm.org) and let us know.

Pastors’ Ponderings



*Kimberly P Chastain,
Pastor*

Another New Beginning

It’s a funny thing to realize how often we declare a new beginning in Christian life. Somehow in our church life, it feels like we are always starting over again. There’s the start of a new program year, which roughly corresponds to the start of the school year, and the start of the Christian liturgical year, which happens around the end of November or the beginning of December. There’s the start of the new calendar year, and the start of the Lenten season, culminating in the great celebration of Easter, and then the Pentecost season, which begins with a celebration of the Holy Spirit.

In a church that worships in a strictly liturgical tradition, it is announced every week that, “Anyone in Christ is a new creation! The old has passed away — behold, the new has come!” And from time to time, it seems useful to wonder what it means to have so many new beginnings.

There are things that stay the same: the seasons come and go, the buildings look familiar, the routes we take from one place to another... It is easy to miss the changes that are happening all around us when we can follow the path of the familiar. But it is important to pause and take our bearings from time to time and to start again, to orient ourselves in the present and make choices about the future.

I was at a retreat last week where many Presbyterian pastors from all over the country were talking about what we have seen since March 2020, when we went through the global change of trying to respond to a pandemic. Most of us agreed that we are just beginning to understand its impact, in our lives and in our congregations. We shared together and prayed together about what it will mean to respond faithfully when “normal” has been disrupted and everyone is thinking differently about what we are called to do and be. We all thought that we “should” be adapting better and faster, that it was somehow a failure in our witness or our work that things were not settling into traditional patterns and familiar routines.

It was comforting, in a way, to find out that this experience seems to be universal. It was also faintly disturbing to realize that there is no blueprint for how we move forward into the next season of church life. After what feels like three years of improvising, it would be nice to find a script or perhaps a list of what to do next.

What do you notice in your own life and in the life of our congregation? Where do you feel connected? What brings you joy, and what tires you out? As we do the work of regrouping and working toward our future together, what are the things you want to honor and to work toward? What are the things that you feel are screaming for attention, or at least in need of more attention? And what are you willing to let go of, to leave behind so that we can, together, take the next steps toward accepting God's gracious abundance and sharing it forward?

This fall we hope that we can find ways to gather for deeper conversations about our lives as individuals and our life as a church. We will be providing focus topics and activities for coffee hour, hosting another potluck with conversation prompts, and gathering information with a consultant from the Presbyterian Foundation. Then starting in November, we will be asking the whole community to join together in a year of prayer and reflection called "Project Regeneration."

In the meantime, if you have a story to tell, a passion to share, a vision that is close to your heart, we invite you to speak up and speak out, so that as we listen to each other we can learn more about what God is calling us to do and be in the future.

Grace and Peace,
Pastor Kimberly

Greetings friends!



Welcome to September! There is always something surprising, daunting, and exciting about setting up the computer file for the next program year. Getting to the end of August a couple weeks ago as I was getting my coloring sheets saved for the prayer ground was surprising. It seemed like summer had just started and here we are needing to create a whole new year. And as I created the folders for September and the next year for the coloring sheets, the

Sunday school lessons, and the Binghamton University Interfaith Council events, all those empty folders looked daunting. But there is also something exciting about it. There is possibility for all kinds of fun and learning and faith formation. And this coming year seems even better because we are finally able to plan to be together.

This summer Kimberly and I took some intentional planning time, like we used to before Covid, and laid out themes for the upcoming year. We have heard many of you saying that you miss being together. We have also heard some of you saying, oh, I don't really know that person, they are new – but they have been with us for three years. Covid had us in ultra-safety mode, for very good reasons! But now that we have tools and strategies to keep everyone healthy, it's time to plan on things to strengthen our community. Learning together, doing projects together, eating together, hanging out together. It is really important as a church to build in ways people can build those relationships so that God can work among us. And it is really important for people to find ways to



*Becky Kindig,
Associate Pastor*

connect and feel a part of the community. So much in the Bible shows us that God really believes in doing things as a community.

This is true not just for the adults, but also for the children. They need to feel that they belong and have a role to play as well. They need to get to know other people and have those relationships. We have a great base to work from. Many of you have received pictures colored or drawn by some of our little ones on Sunday. What a joy! We have had wonderful feedback from the couple of group projects we had last year like decorating ornaments, making Easter eggs, and coloring the map and Easter banner. It was great to see people of all ages in this congregation working together and getting to know each other. So we are going to intentionally have a different group project that relates to worship each month. We had a "soft entry" in August with the folding of the paper cranes. In September we will be introducing the Corner of Hope from Dave Ruston. He has been dreaming of a space to remember the migrants who didn't make it during their journey. So we will be creating together a corner with



information on immigration issues but also inviting everyone to decorate butterflies together to hang in the corner as a sign of hope. And for the younger ones, we will send home Sunday school packets at the end of each month with some coloring pages, lessons, puzzles, and crafts for the worship themes the coming month. But all ages are welcome to do the monthly worship project in the sanctuary!

Now we realize that some of you in our community are at a distance, and that is okay! There are ways for you to interact with people and take part in these activities from where you are. People Zoom into Bible study, Sewing Group lunch, and our Friday evening Happy hour. Some people call others to keep them connected. Just let us know that you want to be a part of it and we can help you find a way to get involved.

But for those of you who can come on Sunday and haven't been in a while, know that you are missed and we would love to worship and sing and pray and talk with you again.

Kimberly and I have some other things that we are dreaming about doing as a congregation and are in the planning stages, but what are you dreaming about doing together? We would love to hear what the Holy Spirit is stirring in you!

I hope to see you soon!

Grace and Peace,
Pastor Becky



Music Notes

Fall Vocal and Bell Choir Beginnings

It's hard to believe that summer is ending and the start of another choir season is upon us!

Vocal choir rehearsals are **Wednesday nights from 6:30pm to 7:30pm** in the Music Room, and we will kick off this year on **Wednesday, September 13** with a potluck meal before our very first rehearsal to celebrate new beginnings, at the Backus's home. If you're interested in joining us for choir but are not on our email list, please contact the office so we can include you! We provide music for worship most every Sunday. We welcome new members at any time, and would love to have your participation. No prior choral experience is necessary. It would be good to have you with us!

This year we also have two new section leaders joining us. Please welcome Riya and Robbie when you see them!



Hello all, my name is Riya Bolander. I am currently a senior at Binghamton University pursuing Bachelor's degrees in psychology and voice. I have been in

choir for as long as it has been an option to me, and I am thrilled to continue singing here at United Presbyterian! I have also been a part of the Southern Tier Singers' Collective in my time in Binghamton. In addition to singing, I also play the tuba (which is nearly my size) and I have performed with at least six different ensembles at Binghamton University. When I'm not involved with music or school, I enjoy cuddling with my cats, reading, and listening to fiction podcasts.



Hi everyone! My name is Robbie Manners, and I am so excited to be joining choir this year. I am a recent graduate of Binghamton University and have been singing my whole life, and cannot wait to meet each of you and share in

music-making with you. I teach elementary music in the area and have been singing with Southern Tier Singers' Collective for the past two years, and am starting a new endeavor as the concert manager for the Music department at Binghamton University. Outside of the music realm, I enjoy hiking and kayaking, reading (mostly about mythology), and visiting my family in Rochester. Two very important things for you to know about me are: my favorite ice cream flavor is cookie dough; and I absolutely love dogs, so please share all of your doggie photos with me!

The *United Ringers handbell choir* meets immediately following worship on **Sundays from 11:30am to 12:30pm** in the sanctuary. Our handbell choir plays 2-4 octaves of Malmark handbells and handchimes, providing music for worship about once a month. The first rehearsal for the bell season is on



The choir braved the blustery weather on June 4 at our outdoor worship & 10th anniversary celebration!



Sunday, September 17. All are welcome, and no prior ringing experience is required. If you're interested in learning how to play handbells, please inquire. If you can count to 4, you can learn to play!

We also invite instrumentalists and vocalists who'd like to share their gifts to talk with any of our music leaders about providing special music for worship – you can call the church office, email music@upcbgm.org, or speak with them in person after worship.

Our Church Family

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

We worship together on Sundays at 10:00am, both in person in the sanctuary and online. The service is livestreamed on our public YouTube Channel [upcbgm.org/youtube](https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCpCBGM), our Zoom room [upcbgm.org/zoom](https://www.zoom.us/j/9123456789), 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.

Everyone is invited to join us as we pray, hear God's word read and proclaimed, share our joys and concerns, and experience worshipful music.

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

- Masks are optional while our community's reported Covid rates remain low. Air filtration units are deployed throughout the sanctuary to enhance your safety, and doors are open to the outside (weather permitting).
- We will continue to have masks available, and if you have any symptoms of a potentially contagious illness, we ask that you put on a mask to protect those in our congregation who have compromised immune systems.
- Printed worship guides are placed by each door for you to pick up on the way in, and the hymns are printed in the worship guide.
- 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://www.upcbgm.org/giving/donate) or to mail a check to the church.

If you're worshipping with us online, all of the hymn music and prayer words are shown on the screen, and live captioning is used for unscripted parts of the service such as the sermon and the sharing of joys and concerns. If you watch on a small screen and need the printed version of the worship guide, it is available for download from our website each week, or it can be mailed to you upon request if downloading & printing is not an option.

It would be good to have you with us.

Session Highlights

Session has continued its business of governing UPC since the Spring newsletter. Much of the business is routine, but here are some highlights.

Sally Hunt was welcomed back to Session following the congregational meeting in June. She replaces Suzie Northrop Raboy, who completed two consecutive terms and was not eligible for reelection. Andy Chadwick and Matt Johnson were elected to second two-year terms. The June 2022–May 2023 Congregational Activity Reports that were presented at the meeting can be found at sites.google.com/upcbgm.org/congregational-activity-22-23

Session also accepted with regret Aaron Whitney's resignation from Session. His life in Florida is taking more time and doesn't allow him to commit the time necessary for Session. We wish him all the best as his job continues to develop and he and Steve prepare for their upcoming wedding.

There has been a slight change in UPC staffing. As of July 1, Becky Mebert has stepped back from her role as Music Coordinator; she remains the primary Accompanist. Aimee Backus has assumed the role of Music Coordinator as well as retaining her position of Choir Director.

The warming station operated by the Addiction Center of Broome County, now called the "UP Comfort Center" (since warming isn't appropriate in the middle of the summer), is up and operating. While its current schedule is Sunday through Thursday nights, the plan is to increase operations to 7 nights a week. A dialog has begun among surrounding businesses to address concerns and work together to remedy them before they get out of hand.

Session has also undertaken a project to address signage around the church facility in an endeavor to make our building more user-friendly for visitors and users who aren't familiar with the layout. Even members may be more confused as the use of various spaces within the building change. If anyone has thoughts on this, please talk to any Session member — your input can help us make our church more welcoming!

Congregational fellowship is back, at least on Sunday mornings! Originally, the idea was to hold coffee hour in the Narthex with the front doors open to allow for better air circulation. Since that's not the door most people use to enter and exit the sanctuary, coffee hour has moved to the front of the sanctuary. Sunday morning fellowship now joins the weekly Bible study, Sewing group, and UPC's Zoom Happy hour (virtual) as opportunities to interact with other members of the congregation. Additional possibilities that have been mentioned include a return to book discussion groups, a walking club, a UPC work day, small-group dinners, and a game day/night. We're open to other ideas you may have!

Please don't hesitate to ask any member of Session about what we've been doing!

Andy Chadwick
Clerk of Session

Snail Mail Still in Fashion

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



Members and friends of our congregation are encouraged to provide the church office with birth dates (if not already on file) so that we can be sure folks receive celebration greetings from our church family. No need to provide us with the year if you'd rather keep that to yourself!

We encourage you to let us know of any occasions to recognize, or if you know of someone who might simply enjoy receiving a special card from the church "just because."

The committee welcomes additional "card senders" and encourages anyone wishing to join the group to contact the church office or one of the members (Cindy Chadwick, Margaret Davis, Jenni McKeage, Lana Ogden, Suzie Northrop Raboy).

Online Giving to UPC

We are able to receive tax-deductible contributions online through our website (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.

Get Involved!

Our church teams are always welcoming new team members. If you'd like to help with or learn more about the workings of the church, talk to one of the pastors or the elders on Session: **Card Committee**, Pastor Kimberly; **Finance**, Lou McKeage or Andy Chadwick; **Personnel**, Marilynn Guinane; **Property**, Pastor Becky; **Worship & Music**, Andy Chadwick.

Programs & Events

Presbytery Worship Service and Assembly Meeting

Saturday, September 9, 9am at Northminster Presbyterian Church, Endwell, and on Zoom

All are invited to gather together as a community of faith for our quarterly Presbytery gathering. The Rev. Dr. David Anderson will lead worship (brief bio is at bit.ly/47ZDrCW), and our own Dave Ruston will report to the presbytery about his work on the migration crisis at the Mexico-US border with the Tucson Samaritans in Arizona and here in New York state. Further info, registration, and Zoom link are at susvalpresby.org/Next-Assembly. Pastor Kimberly, Pastor Becky, Chris & Cindy Burger, Sally Hunt, and Scott Kindig will all be attending, and we'd love to see you there too.

LUMA Projection Arts Festival

Friday & Saturday, September 8-9 in downtown Binghamton



UPC is once again one of the community sponsors of the LUMA Festival, and they are grateful for our support! To help make the festival a success, LUMA has a **big** need for volunteers before, during, and after the festival. Volunteers play an essential role in various aspects of the festival, such as promotion, tech support, and acting as "boots on the ground" during the

show. Our participation ensures a vibrant experience for everyone involved. And, there's a role for everyone on the LUMA team regardless of experience or skill! Many hands make light work. If you'd like to volunteer your time, contact Volunteer Coordinator Dylan Ruffo at 607-221-1728 or volunteers@lumaarts.org, or sign up via the Google Form at forms.gle/eev5VqHPgbJeu1iU6.

Women of Distinction Breakfast

Tuesday, September 26, 7:30–9am at the DoubleTree Hotel

The Girl Scouts of NYPenn Pathways cordially invite you to join them for breakfast on **Tuesday, September 26**, at the DoubleTree by Hilton Hotel, 225 Water Street, Binghamton, from 7:30am to 9:00am. Tickets are \$45 per person, RSVP due by September 19.



Women of Distinction are an exceptional group of women who exhibit outstanding leadership through mentoring, community service, and/or business; leadership that embodies the Girl Scout mission of building girls of courage, confidence, and character, who make the world a better place.

This year's honoree, Shanel Boyce, is a practicing clinical therapist and licensed practical nurse. A seasoned community organizer, activist, advocate, and consultant, Shanel specializes in intersectional anti-racism education and advocacy. She holds a breadth of personal and professional experience in housing, criminal justice reform, and education. A founding member of BAWSE (Black Activist Women for Social Equity), Shanel is also the proud mom of a Girl Scout.

UPC has partnered with Shanel and BAWSE on a number of community events, and we're proud to see her receive this prestigious honor! NYPenn Pathways covers 13 counties in the region, and Shanel is only the second Black woman to receive this honor from them.

Proceeds from this celebration support scholarships for GSNYPenn Gold Award Girl Scouts. The Gold Award is Girl Scouting's highest achievement.

Contact Angela at asmith@gsnypenn.org to reserve your ticket, or register at gsnypenn.org/wod

News from the Kitchen

by Sherry Conklin, Kitchen Coordinator

Many changes have been made to the programs in the past few months due to the increase in expenses and an increase in people's needs.

This year the emergency funding agencies received during Covid have been discontinued. At the same time, people have had their benefits cut. This is happening as inflation is rising, which has become a perfect storm of rising expenses and needs, while decreasing the available income.

CHOW did not receive the usual government grant HPNAP that they have gotten in the past years. This grant helped them cover the expenses of their food recovery program. As a beneficiary of CHOW, this affects us by decreasing the "Free Bounty" donations that are available for us to pick from.

The Foodbank of the Southern Tier is receiving far fewer donations of free foods from farmers and organizations. This again decreases the amount of free food we can receive from them. Every year the Foodbank of the Southern Tier receives grants which are passed on to community meals and pantries.

CHOW Hunger Walk

Saturday, September 23, 3pm at *Factory by Beer Tree Brew in the Oakdale Commons*

The annual Hunger Walk is CHOW's biggest fundraiser of the year. This year donations have been down, and CHOW did not receive the government HPNAP grant that they usually get, so the need is even greater.

We're putting together a team from the kitchen with the volunteers, and would like others to join our team and donate to CHOW. Sherry picks up between 300 and 600 pounds of food items from CHOW each week for the pantry and meal. These supplies mean so much to our program, so let's help them out by giving back. Please sign up with Sherry at **607-743-3476** or meal@upcbgm.org.



These grants enable us to purchase food from FBST at wholesale prices. The foods we purchase at wholesale prices are mainly shelf-stable milk and meats. The grants that they received are less than last year and so our grants from them are much less for this year. We are not alone in this, as this is affecting many meals and pantries in this area. Grants that used to last 6 months are being used up in 4 months.

To decrease the amount of money being spent by our program, we have had to change some procedures in both the pantry and meal. For the meal, we no longer allow "seconds" to be served and we do not allow any takeout meals. If there are any leftovers from the meal, they are given to the shelter in-house to use for their next evening snack. For the pantry we have cut back our pantry to one day from noon to 5pm. We are being very careful with buying food for the pantry and only obtaining staples and no extras. We give out enough to feed our guests for three days. Any free food that comes in is extra and available for selection. We have limits on everything in the pantry. We still allow our guests to select the food items they want and will use. A volunteer shops with each guest to assure they stick to the limits. No one can shop for another person; they all must be present in the pantry to get food. Another adjustment that we have made is to do away with the monthly "Care and Share" or "hygiene day". Personal hygiene items will be available during our regular pantry days, as donations allow. We believe that by not making it a special day each month, this will cut down on the number of people that were coming from all parts of the county just to get free stuff, and let us serve our regular local clients better.

We continue to serve a free meal on Tuesdays from 5pm to 6pm, and our pantry is open on Wednesdays from noon until 5pm. Our Foodbank orders are delivered most Friday mornings, our CHOW pickup is most Thursday mornings. Cooking for the Tuesday meal starts in the morning at 9:30am, with prep work often beginning on the Monday before.

For any donations or volunteer opportunities, please contact Sherry by email (meal@upcbgm.org), phone (607-722-4219), or through the church office.

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. 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 #**

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

Sew What's New?

by *Cindy Chadwick*



The Wednesday Sewing Group continues its mission of bringing warmth, joy and caring to the community by crafting comforting and functional items such as quilts, hats, mittens, scarves, and "walker bags" (to hang on walkers, for carrying essential items). More than a half-century strong, the group is stitching each week as it prepares to donate the fruits of their labor to community organizations in need this winter. Last year, more than 40 quilts were distributed to organizations, agencies, and new babies in our church family.

We need **YOU!**

- Do you have cotton fabric that you or others would like to donate? We'll use it!
- Would you like to share your designing, cutting, sewing, tying, or hemming skills? Please join us!
- Do you have an interest in distributing quilts and other items to community organizations during the holiday season? If so, we can assure you it will bring smiles to you and the recipients!

The group is always seeking new members, regardless of prior experience or skill level. You can meet in person with the group each Wednesday in the Upper Lounge from 10 am to noon, with lunch from noon to 1 pm. If you can't make the meeting in person, you can work from home and Zoom in for the social time at noon if you wish.

Please reach out to one of the current members (Pastor Kimberly Chastain, Pastor Becky Kindig, Cindy Burger, Cindy Chadwick, Ann Cobb, Ellen Hancock-Berti, Jean Hill, Janet and Len Hoover, Margaret Sands, Marion Timson, and Nancy Walter) or the church office for further information or if you'd like to join us.

The Sewing Group would like to acknowledge the passing of Reeta Hayes, a devoted member of the Wednesday Sewing Group. Reeta was an expert seamstress and knitter, having made wedding and prom dresses over the years (including sewing 3,000 pearls on a wedding dress for a client). As a truly giving person, Reeta also shared her talents by teaching young girls to sew and knit at the local Girls' Club. Even when Reeta moved to Philadelphia to be



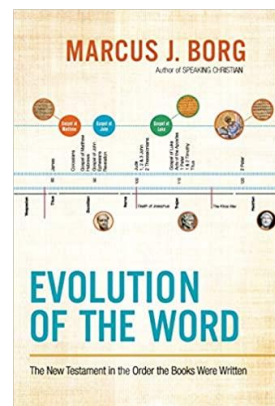
closer to her daughters (after living in Binghamton for nearly 60 years), Reeta continued to craft items from materials sent to her by Ann Cobb. Reeta then mailed them back to UPC for distribution through the Wednesday Sewing Group. Reeta passed away in June, just shy of her 88th birthday. We will miss her!

Bible Study

Mondays, 1-2pm, in the Study or the Zoom room

We're reading from Marcus Borg's *Evolution of the Word: The New Testament in the Order the Books Were Written*, and everyone is welcome to join us in person or on Zoom. Those who gather at the church meet in our new "Study" (Room 102, next door to the Nursery).

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.



Zoom Happy hour

Friday evenings, 5-6pm

Bring your own beverage, "Zoom in", and join the fun as we catch up on the events of the week and share how we're doing. It's a great way to keep in touch with friends near and far.

Fall Classes at Kirkridge Retreat & Study Center

A Progressive Christian and Activist Retreat Center just south of Stroudsburg

Kirkridge has a long, storied activist history (Dan and Phillip Berrigan had a favorite room and frequently led retreats and organized actions there) and an 80-year history of supporting LGBTQI Christians. It's the kind of place you all should know about. And there are a number of retreats coming up that you might be interested in attending:



Sept. 29-Oct. 1: *Wilderness Prophets and the Climate Crisis*. Come explore how the wilderness prophets are relevant to spiritual care and action in a time of climate crisis and discern your own prophetic call for this time. We'll read scripture, engage scripture and spend time in contemplation in the more-than-human world.

Oct. 6-9: *Wild Gender*. Come engage questions like "What do creatures, plants, landforms and waterways have to teach us about stealth and fabulousness? How does the more-than-human world invite us to authentic gender expression? And how can trans and genderqueer reclaim wilderness as safe space?"

Oct. 13-15: *Playing and Praying with Clay*. Potter, sculptor, philosopher M.C. Richards said, "It's not pots we are making; it's ourselves." Come to the mountain at the height of Autumn colors. Take some clay in your hands and listen to your life. Listen to the wind and leaves. Walk the stony paths. We'll listen and wonder and create as we reflect on our lives and our place in family of things. Along the way we may encounter wonder, grief, gratitude, and a sense of coming home to ourselves. No prior experience necessary.

Oct. 27–29: *Walking Awake into the Celtic New Year.* Come learn about Celtic spirituality at this particularly potent time of year. Practice listening for the seen and the unseen. Engage in ritual and ceremony. Wander the beautiful lands at the turn of the Celtic year.

Nov. 3–5: *GEEZ Magazine presents Communing Across the Veil.* Aligned with the Fall 2023 issue of GEEZ Magazine on ancestors, this retreat in the woods of the Appalachian mountains will offer altar building, storytelling, and listening for the guidance of those who came before us and continue to guide our work and lives today.

Nov. 10–12: *A Raft in the Storm.* Join Bill Wylie-Kellerman and Joe Reilly for a conversation about the still-timely book by Thich Nhat Hanh and Dan Berrigan. The book is a record of their conversation over tea about such topics as memory, Eucharist, prison, exile, self-immolation, & communities of resistance.

We're also excited about our EVEN MORE ROBUST 2024 retreat schedule, which will likely include everything from decolonizing the psyche and unlearning white supremacy to writing and yoga retreats to straw bale construction and beyond. More information and registration are at kirkridge.org

Attend a Small Church Leaders' Conference with Funding from Presbytery

Here in the Susquehanna Valley, *all* of our congregations are small congregations (with less than 100 in worship weekly), so the Presbytery is offering funds this fall to encourage pastors and leaders in our congregations to participate in conferences for small church leaders. These conferences aspire to provide Christ-centered opportunities for inspiration, encouragement, and community among leaders of small-membership churches, so they can do the same in their congregations and regions. The Commission on Christian Leadership Formation will reimburse up to \$100 when you register for one of the following:

- **Sept. 24–26, "Looking Forward: Church, Hope, and the Future of [Small] Congregations",** Henderson Leadership Conference at Pittsburgh Theological Seminary: online \$25, in-person \$100 (lodging not included). pts.edu/henderson-2324.
Rev. Dr. Will Willimond's keynote lecture on Monday, September 25, at 7pm will be streamed online and is FREE to attend. Willimon has been listening to pastors and congregations in hundreds of American churches and has a hopeful, Christ-centered word for small churches and their leaders. And after the Tuesday morning lecture "Pastoral Imagination: Developing, Nurturing, and Sustaining It", Rev. Greg Garis will host a Zoom discussion group for those of us who attend online. Contact greg@susvalpresby.org for the Zoom link.
- **Oct. 9–11, Wee Kirk Northeast Small Church Conference** at Laurelville Mennonite Church Center, Mt. Pleasant, PA: online \$50, in-person \$175 (includes lodging, double-occupancy). wee-kirk-ne.org
- **Oct. 16–18, Wee Kirk Montreat Conference** at Montreat, NC: in-person only, \$380/person or \$405/couple. montreat.org/events/wee-kirk-23

Reimbursement info is at susvalpresby.org/small

Coming soon, Presentations on Small Church Vitality: The Presbytery is working to engage speakers for several Zoom presentations that will be offered this fall. Dates and topics will be announced soon. We'd like to arrange hybrid "watch parties" in a few locations so people can gather in small groups to attend the presentation and engage in discussions together. If you would like to

host such a gathering at your church (or even at a member's house), please contact Scott Kindig at cclefchair@susvalpresby.org.

The Small Church Vitality initiative is funded by proceeds from the sale of the Ross Memorial Presbyterian Church.

Presbytery Nominating Committee seeks Treasurer and Vice-Moderator nominations!

The Presbytery Nominating Committee will be calling many of you to fill seats in our Presbytery. It is most critical that we fill the vacancies of Treasurer and Vice-Moderator, but there are others. To be eligible for these two positions, you must be a PC(USA) ordained ruling elder or teaching elder (minister of Word and Sacrament).

Our current Treasurer, Rev. Lisa Heckman, has been called as the new Lead Presbyter for the Presbytery of Milwaukee. She starts her new position in October, but will continue working with us remotely until December to train a new Treasurer. The Treasurer is an Officer of the Presbytery elected for a three-year term. Duties include: approving checks or online payments to be issued; reviewing documentation prepared by the bookkeeper; informing Presbytery of updated regulations; providing monthly financial reports; overseeing investments; and working with financial institutions on behalf of our Presbytery. Treasurer should be able to communicate budget information clearly and have accounting and financial experience with the ability to use the computer and internet. This is a volunteer stipend position. For further information, please contact Finance Subcommittee Chair Dave Johnson at financechair@susvalpresby.org.

The position of Vice-Moderator is traditionally a "progressive" one, the first year of a three-year cycle. As Vice-Moderator, they will observe and learn the duties of Moderator: moderating Presbytery Assembly meetings and presiding at ordination and installation services in the Presbytery; which would become their position for the second year of the cycle. The third year they will serve as Cabinet Chair, moderating the Cabinet meetings. The Vice-Moderator, Moderator, and Cabinet Chair, along with the Lead Presbyter and the Co-Stated Clerks, form the Executive Committee, which can make decisions delegated to them outside of Cabinet meetings. We are currently seeking a ruling elder to serve as Vice-Moderator for the remainder of this year. There is a PC(USA) Moderator's Conference in Louisville KY each fall that we typically send our Vice-Moderator to so they can learn how to moderate Presbytery Assembly meetings. It is a great training and it is November 9-11 this year.

More information about these key leadership positions can be found at susvalpresby.org/Ministry-Opportunities

If you or someone you know would like to serve in either of these positions, please contact any member of the Nominating Committee:

JoAnn Aymar jmaymar16@gmail.com
Linda Breffle paddlerlin@yahoo.com
John Helgeson revhelgeson@yahoo.com

Lynn Reeves polygalagay@gmail.com
Bruce Gillette pastorbrucegillette@gmail.com
or call the Presbytery office at 607-323-4477.

There is so much that our Presbytery does for all of our churches. Please keep our Presbytery in your prayers so we may compassionately and faithfully serve and lead.

More news from around the presbytery can be found at susvalpresby.org/thursday-thoughts

Joys and Concerns

Preparing to Wed: Keith & Allison; Mary & Kolin; Christina & Evan; Aaron & Steve; Andrew & Margaret

New Beginnings: Jess & Emma; Brittany & Tom; Geneva & Sean; Madelyn; Aeden; everyone starting a new school year/semester

For Healing: Sr. Kathy, Cindy B., MacKenzie, Cleo, Dolores, Jerry, Sharon, Dyllan, Mary Jane, Derek, Ed, Holly, Marian

Grieving – Friends and Family of: Peg Johnston, Pat Dewitt Thomas, Benita Roth, Char Smith, Candy Stroub, Joe Paz, Reeta Hayes, Bob Montgomery, Billie D. Anderson, Penny Anderson

Living with Cancer: Mary Ann, Molly, Carl, Frank, Leah, Suzy



Ongoing: Kristie; Scott N.; Michael; Natika; Rachmani family; Larry & Ethel; Chynna; Lynnlee; Kathiss; Charisse; Darry; Travis; Jerome; Janai; Melchi; Leah; Curtis & family; Jen; Carlos; Richard C. & Deloris M. & family; Rupee J.; Marian; Jazmine & family

Other Concerns: We pray for

- people with severe mental illness
- people who are housing-insecure
- people struggling with addictions
- gun violence around the country
- Turkey & Syria
- Ukraine & Russia
- Israel/Palestine

Upcoming Birthdays

September

2 Josiah Rwabukwisi

4 Ethan Nyamuame
Starletta Noll Long

6 Clyde Jones

7 Sherry Conklin

9 Morgan Chadwick
Julie Njoroge

15 Ruth Anderson

20 Emma Kindig

28 Brian Morse

October

2 James McKeage
Patrick McKeage

3 Christina Bauman

4 Lauren Hickey
Sam Richardson

5 Oliver Richardson

7 Kathy Preston

11 Philip Hazen Westcott

15 David Ruston

16 Dean Ogden

24 Bill Campbell
Marian Palmer

25 Marcy DiRosa

27 Shelby Livingston

29 Ken Mebert

30 Kristine Valashinas



November

2 Julia Jurena

4 Gail Wilson

7 Sally Menges
Lana Ogden

19 Margaret Sands

22 John Wilson

25 Elizabeth Boland-Hayes
Fred Russell

30 David Sands



Everyone is welcome here

UNITED PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH OF BINGHAMTON



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☎ 607-722-4219 • ✉ office@upcbgm.org • 📘 UPCBinghamton

Address Service Requested

Tri-Cities Opera Andrew Lloyd Webber revue **Friday, September 22 at 7:30pm at UPC**

Join us for an unforgettable night of music as the Tri-Cities Opera celebrates the 75th birthday of the legendary composer, Andrew Lloyd Webber, and marks the grand opening of their sensational 23/24 season!

Prepare to be captivated by an enchanting evening filled with beloved melodies from some of Webber's most iconic musicals. From the heartwarming ballads of *Cats* to the rousing anthems of *Jesus Christ Superstar* and the soul-stirring songs of *Phantom of the Opera*, this concert promises to be a true feast for the senses.

A limited number of complimentary tickets are available to our congregation in gratitude for the use of our sanctuary for this event. Contact the church office (607-722-4219 or office@upcbgm.org) if you're interested in attending this event.

