

Winter 2024

Volume 15, Issue 1

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

Epiphany Season: Our Stories of God's Faithfulness

The word "epiphany" refers to a time when someone is given new light and new understanding of the world. Epiphany season is a short season in the church year when we consider old beliefs and practices for the new insights that they bring. As we tell and hear the testimony of our ancestors of faith, we will be listening for God's word to us as people of God in Binghamton, New York in the 21st century.

This year, we are studying and praying together about what God is calling us to do and be, working to create a vision and mission statement that will guide us for the next five years. As a part of that work, we will be looking closely at who we are as God's people and what God has already done in us and for us.

January 7: *First Things*

Psalm 19; John 1:1–18

Each of us is part of a story that began before we were born and that shapes us before we even know it. When we tell our individual stories, we are always making choices about how much we will include of what has gone before and what our hopes are for the future. Throughout our lives, in every relationship, we tell and hear stories that make us who we are, through memory and hope. As people of faith, we claim that our lives are part of the story of God whose whole being is relational, creative, transformative, and conversational. We are not the center of the story, but we are part of a world that has meaning and purpose, and we all play a role in telling and showing that meaning.

January 14: *How did you get here? Where are you going?*

1 Corinthians 1:26–31; Deuteronomy 6:4–9, 20–25

How did you get here, and what do you think it means that you are a part of this congregation, this community, and this faith? For each of us, our story begins with our ancestors, biological and cultural. It is

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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



both deeply personal and connected to a larger story. The two scriptures this morning give us two different ways of entering the story of Christian faith — telling our story as people who are on a journey with each other and with God. The voice of Deuteronomy calls us to live faithfully and to pass on both the practices of faith and the meaning of those practices. The apostle Paul, writing to believers in Corinth, reminds us that God acts in surprising ways, and God has chosen each of us to be a part of the work God is doing.

January 21: *The Bible as Our Story and God's Story*

Psalm 9; Revelation 21:1–7

As Christians, we understand ourselves to be people of the book — specifically the book we call the Bible. Most of the words in the bible were spoken before they were written, in a variety of languages and dialects over a long period of time. It's kind of like a library, including ancestor stories, histories, poetry, prophecy, and even stories that might be considered fiction if they were created today. Every encounter with a Biblical text is an act of conversation and translation — understanding what it meant to those who heard it first, what it has meant to believers through the centuries, and what it means for us in our time and our context. Every generation hears and understands the Bible stories differently, and the bible stories we tell help us to understand our own story in different ways.

January 28: *Memory and Hope*

Psalm 137; Isaiah 11:1–9

The Bible tells the story of a God who acts, who transforms, who brings new possibilities to relationships and communities. Remarkably, it also includes stories of times when God seems to be absent or even acting against his people, when hopes are dashed and dreams of abundant life are far away. The way that Christians tell the story, this part of the relationship is almost hidden, yet it is the space in which a new understanding arises and hope is transformed. Today's first reading take us into the space where God's people cry out in bitterness and anguish, where the memories of God's abundance brings only grief. The second reading comes when the grief and sense of loss gives way to a new understanding. Isaiah offers the hope of a world transformed by the God who was hidden but not gone, who has already begun to act to bring about something new.

February 4: *God of Many Names*

Exodus 3:1–15; Acts 17:16–34

The testimony of scripture is to a dynamic God, who invites humanity to participate in creating and transforming our world through our relationships with God and with each other. In the first of today's stories, God sees, God hears, and God acts by calling Moses to lead the people to freedom. When Moses asks, "Who shall I say sent me?" God's answer is "I am who I am", or "I will be who I will be". God's freedom to act, to change, to be, is shown in God's activity and boundless generosity. When humans create systems that cause harm and injustice, God acts in and through relationships to bring new possibilities and new hope to individuals and to communities. In his speech to the people of Athens, the Apostle Paul announces that the activity of God is not limited by time and space, and challenges his hearers to join in God's redeeming activity. We are told that some scoffed, and some decided to travel with him.

February 11 — Transfiguration Sunday: *Who Do You Say That I Am?*

Exodus 33:12–23; Mark 9:1–8

Every year, we tell the story of the time when the disciples saw Jesus in communion with Moses and Elijah, and their eyes were opened to a new way of seeing Jesus and his ministry. This year, we are also

hearing the story of the time when Moses asked God to bring certainty to the people by showing them God's glory. God's response to Moses is that such a direct encounter is not possible for human understanding, but that God will grant that Moses can see where God has already passed by. The limits of human vision mean that we cannot know what God is doing now or in the future — we can only see what God has already done. As we remember and re-tell the stories of God's mighty acts of liberation and transformation, we see the ways in which we are still invited into the story, and God is still acting in and through creation to bring new possibilities and new hope. Mark ends the story that we call Transfiguration by saying that the disciples saw no one but Jesus. In Jesus and his ministry, we can join with the disciples in seeing God's activity in new ways, as our past and our present are joined together in the work of creating the future that belongs to God.

Pastors' Ponderings

Who We Are

In 2020, the General Assembly of our denomination, the PC(USA), adopted a new vision statement for the whole church. In the last sentence, the vision statement declares that we are called to be Prayerful, Courageous, United, Serving, and Alive. At the virtual gathering where the vision statement was presented, a new song was sung, written by Tracy Keenan as a reflection on the vision. We have heard it a couple of times in our congregation, and I am startled by how quickly it took up residence in my thoughts and prayer life about what it means to be a follower of Jesus in the 21st century.



*Kimberly P Chastain,
Pastor*

I'd like to offer the song to our congregation as a kind of theme song to accompany us on our journey of discernment in 2024, especially the first verse and the chorus, which declares:

We are people of prayer,
people of courage and people who dare;
we are people united to serve, because we're people who care,
and we're alive and rising, stirring and stirred by the life-breathing Word:
This is who we are — this is who we are!

I think it speaks to heart of who we are as the people of God at Binghamton United Presbyterian Church.

It took courage to begin the journey that has led us to this point, growing and changing and leaving behind what is familiar as we strive to be faithful to what is eternal. It has taken courage to step into the maelstrom of rapid change that came in 2020 with a global emergency, and to move forward without clarity when there were no roadmaps for how to proceed. It takes courage to grieve and keep going in times of uncertainty, when what is most obvious is that the old has passed away and the new has not yet come.

And we continue to come together for study and prayer, for music and service, and we keep finding new ways to be faithful and to be alive in Christ as we serve God's call in this time and place. We don't always get it right, and we sometimes need to redirect our thoughts and our efforts. It is altogether too easy to get distracted and to lose touch with ourselves and each other — and yet we dare to keep going, to be people who care enough to keep going. With new options for staying in touch and for reaching beyond ourselves, with new challenges that arise every day, we still understand ourselves to be united by the Spirit, loved by God so that we can better understand how to love each other.

4 ≡ UP-Beat Newsletter

You can find a recording of this song by following this link: <https://www.aijcast.com/episodes/2020/1/10/s11e06-this-is-who-we-are>

We will certainly be listening to it and singing it during the coming months as we continue the work of discernment we began in November.

May God bless our hearing with understanding.

Amen!

Tell Me the Old, Old Story

One of the themes we will be exploring in the season of Epiphany this year is the theme of story — our story and God's story. As followers of Jesus, we believe that story can be found in the Bible, and our life together is shaped by the story we find there. The Bible tells the story of a God who acts, who transforms, who brings new possibilities to relationships and communities. For many generations, Christians have found identity, meaning and purpose in the words of scripture.

My parents were believers in Vacation Bible School, and many of the stories that are most familiar to me are the ones I heard each summer (sometimes more than once, if there were several churches nearby that offered VBS). There are less familiar stories that have startled and challenged me, and so have become companions on my journey. And there are specific texts that I have heard so many times through the years that they are available to me when I have a particular need for prayer or insight.

When you think about the Bible, what are the passages that come to your mind? What are the words or stories that have accompanied you on your life's journey, that you claim as a resource for your own faith and you think should be in the spiritual repertoire of every believer?

I'm going to ask this question several times and in many different conversations this season, because I am hoping to use the season of Ordinary Time (after Pentecost) to look at the words that have shaped us as individuals so that we can share them in our life together. I'm not planning to look at the influence of the Bible on Western literature, although I think that would be a great course of study — I'm looking for the words that bring us life, and provide light when the way is dark.

Grace and Peace,
Pastor Kimberly



*Becky Kindig,
Associate Pastor*

Greetings friends!

As I sit here to write today, the scene out my window is idyllic. Big white snowflakes fall in my backyard covering the trees in their beauty while birds fly back and forth in the woods. It's so peaceful and beautiful. Just what I wish for at Christmas time.

But this Advent and Christmas season has been different for me this year since I have been sick. I have not



had a respiratory illness in 4 years, and definitely not since being on immune suppressants. Covid found me, I got treatment, rested patiently, started to get better, and then a sinus infection took hold and knocked me down again. More treatment, more rest, but my lungs are not happy.

I realize that it is the Myasthenia Gravis adding this complication to my recovery and I am trying to be patient with my body, yet diligent in making sure I stay ahead of symptoms so as not to land in the hospital. But this is not how I wanted to be spending December. I had been feeling so much better this year that I wanted to decorate the house a little, make Christmas cookies that I hadn't made in years, finish my Christmas shopping, and of course get to spend meaningful time with you all, and family, and friends.

I hope for you all that this Christmas has been just what you wanted, filled with joy and wonder, celebrations and magic, traditions and new memories. But for anyone who is also finding this season not what you hoped for, know that Christmas will still come. Because I have been reminding myself of this a lot these last two weeks, and it has helped. Yes there is still the disappointment, but I have found a deeper connection to that possible first Christmas this year that has been comforting.

Because I am reminded that the miracle of Christmas is not in all the stuff that society ties into it. The miracle is that God came to be with us, in flesh, incarnated, in this messy world we live in. God came as a human baby, filled with all the vulnerability that goes with it. God came to us knowing that life is full of both joy and exhaustion, gladness and mourning, wonder and sadness. First-century Bethlehem was filled with those juxtapositions too. And as that baby came into the world, hope was born, and community gathered, and love was spread to help people overcome the darkness of the day. And that love only continues to grow today.

So take heart if you are not feeling all the happy feelings you wanted to feel this year, and know that God still comes to surround you in love. Let go of the "shoulds" and rest knowing that the miracle of Christmas will still come. And whether you are weary or rejoicing this Christmas, or a mix of both, may you find comfort and peace in knowing that Emmanuel, God with us, is here for you.

Have a meaningful and Holy Christmas and Happy New Year!

Grace and Peace,
Pastor Becky



Music Notes

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.

UPC's vocal choir rehearses **Wednesdays, 6:30–7:30pm** in the **Music Room**. The vocal choir provides music for worship most every Sunday. We welcome new members at any time, and we would love to have your participation. It would be good to have you with us!



United Ringers handbell choir rehearses *Sundays, 11:30am-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. If you're interested in learning how to play handbells, please inquire. New members are always welcome! No previous experience needed. No auditions to start. If you can count to 4, you can learn to play!



From time to time, we offer an opportunity for children and the young at heart to join in playing handchimes with some of the hymns during worship — like we did on Christmas Eve during the singing of “Away in a Manger”. It's easy to do, and lots of fun!

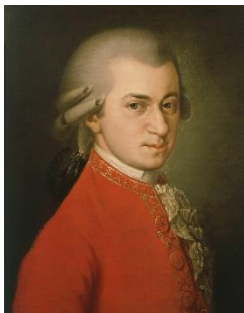
We also invite instrumentalists and vocalists who'd like to share their gifts to talk with any of our music leaders about providing special music for worship — you can call the church office, email music@upcbgm.org, or speak with them in person after worship.



Upcoming Community Performances

The Binghamton Philharmonic, the Southern Tier Singers' Collective, and the Binghamton University Chamber Singers present Mozart's “Requiem”

Sunday, January 28, 3pm at the Forum Theatre, 236 Washington St., Binghamton



Daniel Hege, conductor

Soprano: Juliette Tacchino

Mezzo-soprano: Katie Trigg

Tenor: Jackson Allen

Bass: Evan Gray

Vocal soloists by special arrangement with the Curtis Institute of Music

Kids 17 and under get in for free, courtesy of M&T Bank, BPO's Symphonic Series Sponsor. Call the Box Office to request free kids' tickets: 607-723-3931.

Pre-Concert Chat, 2pm, Recital Hall: Julia Grella O'Connell, D.M.A. (Binghamton Philharmonic Director of Education and Community Engagement)

For more information, visit binghamtonphilharmonic.org or email info@binghamtonphilharmonic.org
Box office: 607-723-3931 ext. 1, Monday – Friday, 10am-4pm

The Tri-Cities Opera presents “The Fantasticks”

*Friday & Saturday, February 9-10, 7:30pm; Sunday, February 11, 3pm;
at the Tri-Cities Opera Center, 315 Clinton St., Binghamton*

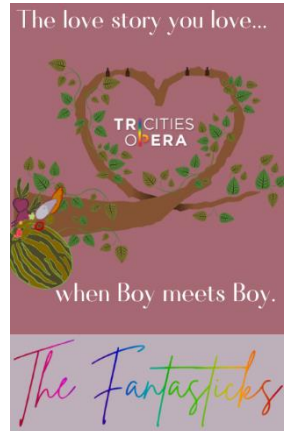
The Fantasticks was originally created in 1960 with music by Harvey Schmidt with book and lyrics by Tom Jones. It tells an allegorical story, loosely based on the 1894 play *The Romancers* (Les Romanesques), concerning two neighboring parents who trick their children into falling in love by pretending to feud. The original production closed in 2002. In 2022, the revival was an LGBTQIA+ focused rewrite featuring

two young gay men, Matt and Lewis, at the center of the story, instead of a young man and woman (the original characters were Matt and Luisa). It remains the longest running musical production worldwide.

The message of the Fantasticks remains unchanged while the characters embody a broader representation. Matt and Lewis lead the audience through a story that remains focused on the complexity of life — and while it is full of obstacles, it is possible for people to persevere and find their way.

Tri-Cities Opera is thrilled to bring the beloved tale of The Fantasticks to Southern Tier audiences. The rewritten version brings purposeful representation to our stage while furthering our mission of telling meaningful stories and making opera for everyone! The production is performed in English.

For more information, visit tricitiesopera.com/fantasticks or email tickets@tricitiesopera.org
Box office: 607-772-0400, Monday – Friday, 12pm–5pm



Castalia String Quartet

Sunday, February 11, 3pm at Phelps Mansion Museum, 191 Court St., Binghamton



Uli Speth, violin
Debrah Devine, violin
Amy Tompkins, viola
Ruth Berry, cello

Charles Tomlinson Griffes: Two Sketches for String Quartet based on Indian Themes, A. 99

Amy Beach: String Quartet, Op. 89

Antonin Dvořák: String Quartet No. 12 in F Major, “American”

Presented as part of the Binghamton Philharmonic Orchestra’s Garufi Law P.C. Phelps Mansion Museum Series.

For more information, visit binghamtonphilharmonic.org or email info@binghamtonphilharmonic.org
Box office: 607-723-3931 ext. 1, Monday – Friday, 10am–4pm

Binghamton Philharmonic Orchestra presents “Pops at the Forum”

Saturday, February 24, 3pm at the Forum Theatre, 236 Washington St., Binghamton



Daniel Hege, conductor

Wagner: Overture to Act 3 of Lohengrin

Hailstork: Fanfare on “Amazing Grace”

Rosas: Over the Waves

Fauré: Pavane

Rimsky-Korsakov: Flight of the Bumblebee

Tan Dun: Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon *featuring Philharmonic Principal Cellist Hakan Tayga*

Wagner: Ride of the Valkyries

Anderson: Bugler’s Holiday *featuring the Philharmonic Trumpet Section*

Sherman: music from *Mary Poppins*

Schwartz: music from *Wicked*

Led Zeppelin: Kashmir

Arnold: Colonel Bogey March

Williams: March from *Raiders of the Lost Ark*

Kids 17 and under get in for free, courtesy of Visions Federal Credit Union, BPO's Pops Series Sponsor. Call the Box Office to request free kids' tickets: 607-723-3931.

Pre-Concert Organ Recital, 2:30-2:50pm: Nancy Wildoner, Binghamton Theater Organ Society, plays the 1922 Robert-Morton IV/24 Theatre Pipe Organ.

For more information, visit binghamtonphilharmonic.org or email info@binghamtonphilharmonic.org
Box office: 607-723-3931 ext. 1, Monday – Friday, 10am–4pm



Southern Tier Singers' Collective presents "Arches in Sound"
Saturday, February 24, 7:30pm at St. Patrick's, 9 Leroy St., Binghamton

Ralph Vaughan Williams's soaring Mass in G Minor for double choir forms the centerpiece of this concert, which also features Renaissance works by Sulpitia Cesis and Vincente Lusitano, in the marvelous acoustics of Saint Patrick's Church.

For more information, visit southerntiersingers.org

Our Church Family

In Memoriam



Robert Charles Walter, Sr., 89, of Binghamton NY and Vero Beach FL, passed away on November 24, 2023. He was born February 3, 1932, in Oceanside, Long Island, NY, and grew up in Freeport NY and Clinton CT.

He graduated from Clarkson University with a degree in Mechanical Engineering and worked for Grumann Aircraft and Fairchild Camera before moving to Binghamton in 1965. Employed by Link as a Senior Engineer, he worked on the VAMP system to develop flight simulation programs for the Cobra attack helicopter, armored fight vehicles (AFVs), and other assorted government contracts.

He was an avid golfer, and was active with Boy Scouts and the Nimmonsburg Youth Association. Bob taught Sunday School, chaired the Christian Education Committee, and was an ordained Elder and Deacon in the First (now United) Presbyterian Church of Binghamton, where he was a member for over 55 years.

He was predeceased by his parents Frederick and Mildred Wahle Walter, his sister Gale Miller, and his sister-in-law Bette Hill Williams.

He is survived by his beloved wife of 57 years, Nancy Williams Walter; his children Robert, Jr. (Lynna Reese), of Jacksonville FL, and Kimberly (Ben) Urich of San Diego CA; granddaughter Alivia Jane Urich; nieces Nancy (Sergio) Stanko and Victoria Walter of Monroe CT; nephews Scott (Liz O'Connell) and Travis Miller, Westbrook CT; brother-in-law Stuart Larrabee Williams (Suzi Williamson) of Williamsburg VA and Vero Beach FL; nephews Stuart, Jr. (Jacks), Thomas, Daniel, and Anabel Williams of London, UK; and Tuckley (Liza), Ella, London, Clara, and Larrabee Williams of Santa Monica CA.

He was a kind and gentle man of integrity who could fix anything and loved his family deeply. He will be greatly missed.

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/8652748433), 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 use our online giving portal 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.

If you plan to attend worship online and would like to Zoom in for the social time afterwards, we ask that you post a message in the chat during worship, and then we will set up the big Zoom monitor to turn on during coffee hour. Or else you can notify us in advance by emailing the church office by 5pm on Friday. To join Zoom online, go to [upcbgm.org/zoom](https://www.zoom.us/j/8652748433). To call in: Dial **1-646-558-8656**, then enter Meeting ID: **865 274 8433 #**

It would be good to have you with us.

Children in Worship

"Let the little children come to me..." —Matthew 19:14

We are glad to have children and families in the congregation, and we welcome and encourage them to be in worship with us. We truly believe that a community of faith is made up of people of ALL ages. There is a PrayGround space with coloring sheets and



quiet toys in the front of the sanctuary, which can be used there or taken to another pew if that is more suitable to the family's needs. Sunday school materials are mailed to our families once a month to do together at home.

There is also a nursery space at the end of the hall at the front of the sanctuary that is open for use with a parent or guardian. It has a changing table, a rocking chair, and some toys appropriate for children ages two and under. There is a speaker in the room so you can listen to the service. Please let us know if you have questions.

Wordclouds from Our First “Project Regeneration” Conversation

In November, we welcomed Dr. Rose Niles from the Presbyterian Foundation to begin a strategic planning process called “Project Regeneration.” She led conversations and discernment sessions with a small group of congregational leaders on Saturday, and then led the worshipping community in further discussions during the service and afterward over pizza. She challenged us to begin our process by thinking and talking about our Values, Mission, and Vision.

As a follow-up, Rose sent me two “wordclouds”, full of the responses that our leadership and our community wrote on post-it notes in response to two questions. She commented that most congregations respond with single words; we had a large number of phrases that she had to fit into the program, like “Concern for the Wider Community,” and “music enhanced worship”.

The first question, answered by the leadership group, is “what are the values that inform the mission of our congregation?” and the answers form a beautiful picture:



The second picture shows the responses of the worshipping community to the question, “what brings you joy in your mission as Binghamton United Presbyterian Church?” It is clear from the answers that some of our children were with us in worship; it is also clear that our values and our joys are similar:



I'd love to hear what you think about these wordclouds. (If you need to see the words in a list in order to make sense of them, let me know & I can send you a list.)

- Are there any surprises?
- How are these things reflected in our budget and our communications?
- What are some ways that we can enhance/expand our work to reflect these values?

There will be more conversations and additional wordclouds as we continue the process, but one of the things that brings me joy is to see the shared joys and values expressed by you all, and to know that we are a prayerful, courageous, united, serving, alive community of Christ!

Keep watching for the next round...

– Pastor Kimberly

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, Margaret Sands).

Come-as-you-are Christmas Pageant — December 24, 10am worship

The 4th Sunday of Advent was Christmas Eve morning, so the Worship Team decided to try something new and fun this year in worship. We had a "Come-as-you-are Christmas Pageant", where we told the story of Jesus's birth as a play with fun costumes and lots of people participating. A come-as-you-are pageant means there is no rehearsal and anyone who wants to play a part can have one. As Pastor Kimberly and Cindy Chadwick narrated, people who wanted to play Mary or Joseph, animals, angels, shepherds, or magi could come forward and take a mask, prop, or crown and come forward to play the part. It was a joyous way to worship and tell the story this year. Many people said that they hope we can do it again next year.



Christmas Eve worship — December 24, 4:30pm



Many Thanks from all of us to all of you!

United Presbyterian Church staff would like to thank everyone who helped to make this year a great one, and especially those who worked so hard to make the Holiday season brighter:

the teachers the singers the players the cooks

the setters-up the cleaners-up the pickers-up the frienders

the followers the greeters the readers the quilters

the callers the carers the servers the folders

the writers the ringers the ushers the drivers

the riders the lighters the proofreaders the visitors

the visited the givers the huggers the helpers

the believers the dreamers the prayers, and the web-designer

"I thank my God through Jesus Christ for you all, because your faith is being proclaimed throughout the whole world."

Romans 1:8



Supporting Our Mission and Ministry

We are able to receive tax-deductible contributions online through our website (upcbgm.org/give). Contributions can be made by E-check or credit card, and can also be set up as a recurring gift. And of course, you can always mail a contribution to the church office if you prefer.

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**, Margaret Davis; **Finance**, Lou McKeage or Andy Chadwick; **Mission**, Pastor Kimberly; **Personnel**, Marilynn Guinane; **Property**, Pastor Becky; **Worship & Music**, Andy Chadwick.

Programs & Events

Sewing Group Keeps on Stitching!

Wednesdays, 10am-1pm, in the Upper Lounge (and on Zoom at noon for lunch hour)

by Cindy Chadwick

The Wednesday Sewing Group continues its mission of supporting community members in need of warmth and comfort. Each Wednesday, the group gathers to cut fabric and design, sew, and tie quilts to give to others. Group members often work on projects at home throughout the week to keep production going. Gathering each week to craft crib- and lap-sized quilts for the community, the group also makes "carry bags" for use on walkers, mittens, hats, scarves, pillows, and more.

The group's creations are donated to the following charities and care facilities:

- Willow Point Rehabilitation and Nursing Center
- Hilltop
- Elizabeth Church Manor
- Good Shepherd Fairview Home
- YWCA
- Bridgewater Center for Rehabilitation and Nursing
- Ideal Senior Living Center
- NoMa (North of Main)
- Camp Sunshine (for families affected by life-threatening childhood illness)



Sewing Group members Jean Hill, Ann Cobb, Marian Timson, Ellen Hancock-Berti, and Cindy Burger with some of the many items made by the group in 2023.

Quilts are also given to newborns and other special people in our congregation. Hats and mittens are provided to our Food Pantry and Community Meal guests as needed.

Want to help spread warmth and hope? Join the Sewing Group on Wednesdays from 10am to 1pm in UPC's Upper Lounge. No extensive sewing experience is necessary. Projects can be worked on at home if you're unable to attend on Wednesdays. (You'll miss the cookies, chips, pickles and tea, though!) 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.

Even if sewing isn't your thing, everybody is invited to join us at noon for our social lunch hour. Those who can't come to the church in person can join us in the Zoom room. Bring your own lunch and enjoy the company!

Sincere in its mission to provide warmth, comfort, and care to others, Sewing Group members gain much in return. As aptly said by Ann Cobb, a 50-plus-year member of the Sewing Group, "Where there is love, there is hope, and we love what we do." Pardon the puns, but the cohesiveness of this group mends

their souls and keeps them in stitches as they work to help others. Please join! Reach out to the church office if you'd like more information.

News from the Kitchen

This Advent season we made ornaments after worship to give as gifts to our guests at the Community Meal and Pantry. People gathered after worship the first 3 Sundays of December and filled clear plastic globe ornaments with festive paper, puff balls, and ribbon. Over 100 ornaments were made and given out at the Community meal on December 19th to help spread some holiday cheer. Thank you to everyone who made ornaments and who help to set it up!



Through the year we saw many changes to the Pantry and Meal programs. We were able to serve many people in need. Everyone is so grateful to us. Through the generosity of this church family and others we can usually supply anything to a person in need when they ask. Wishing everyone peace and happiness in 2024.

– Shery Conklin, Kitchen Coordinator

Presbytery Book Study “How To Pioneer: A Step-by-Step Guide for Starting New Kinds of Faith Communities”

Tuesdays, Jan. 9 – Feb. 13, 10–11:30am on Zoom, with co-leaders Rev. Greg Garis and Rev. Ernie Varga

You're invited to join others in the presbytery for a study of the book *How To Pioneer: A Step-by-Step Guide for Starting New Kinds of Faith Communities* by David Male. For the first meeting on January 9, please read chapters 1 and 2 of the book.

Regarding this book: Small new Christian communities created by pioneer ministers, both lay and ordained, are popping up everywhere — on housing estates, in community centers, schools, and cafes, among different age groups and in numerous other contexts beyond the local church. This practical book is for all who want to be engaged in this form of ministry, and it begins by identifying some basic principles from a wide variety of creative examples of pioneer ministry.

Purchase the book at freshexpressions.com/product/how-to-pioneer. The cost of the book is \$9.99 plus shipping.



All are welcome to attend this book study.

Join us on Zoom: bit.ly/3Qx7paD or phone (+1) 646-558-8656, Meeting ID 821 2614 5670, Passcode: PSV

Finding Common Ground: an interfaith conversation

with Binghamton University Interfaith Council

Monday, January 22, 7:30pm in University Union West room 325

We're invited to join Pastor Becky and the Binghamton University Interfaith Council for their monthly Common Ground conversations. Although specific doctrines may differ, many common themes run

through our religious and spiritual beliefs. Gather with BUIC and campus community members as we explore common ground together – no expertise needed.

The theme for this month's conversation is the role of clothing in your religion. Do you or your faith leaders wear particular items of clothing for religious significance? Or does your faith tradition practice modesty? Have you wanted an opportunity to respectfully ask about the meanings of stoles or yarmulkes or hijabs? Come and join in the conversation and learn more.



The Common Ground series meets on the third Monday each month. Upcoming conversations:

- February 19: Music with show & tell
- March 18: Rituals
- April 15: Food

If you anticipate a need for disability-related accommodations or auxiliary aids to attend or participate, please contact buic@binghamton.edu or call 607-777-3010. We ask that you provide us with at least 3-5 days of advance notice regarding your equal access needs.

Webinars from PRC

Practical Resources for Churches (prcli.org) is a resource that the Presbytery of Susquehanna Valley's Commission on Ministry subscribes to so all congregations in our presbytery can access their programs. You're encouraged to check out all they have to offer and take advantage of the abundance of programs and information. Many of their programs and webinars are available at no charge to you through our paid subscription. They also have links to resources on a wide variety of topics including caring ministries, spiritual practices, small church life, social justice, and environmental stewardship.

From Pew to Pulpit: Preaching Your First Sermon – Tuesday, January 16, 2-3pm

Are you getting ready to prepare your first sermon? Have people told you what you need to do, or the sermon needs to have this or that or it's not really a sermon? Do you even know, or care, what "sermon" means? This session is about you and the opportunity you have to share the gifts, strengths, and love of the gospel that are yours with your church. It's about connecting with yourself, with the Word of God, and with others.

Register at bit.ly/3TnTEgp

GENeratiONs Together with GenOn – Thursday, January 18, 2-3pm

Discover what GenOn Ministries offers to support intergenerational church communities. Led by Liz Perraud, GenOn's Executive Director, and Betsy Dishman, GenOn's Training Director, we'll explore foundational tenets of intergenerational ministry, paths to develop intergenerational community, and resources that support intergenerational gatherings.

Register at bit.ly/3vjdUpo

Out of the Pew and Into the Community – Thursday, January 25, 7-8pm

Does your church have ministry programs but no one signing up to volunteer? Here are ideas for generating passion and excitement in the congregation about stepping into meaningful outreach that engages members' gifts and interests, and deepens their faith.

Register at bit.ly/47hxVdd

Leading Your Congregation at the Lord's Table: A Communion Training Workshop for Elders

Saturday, February 24, 9:30am–12:30pm at Nineveh Presbyterian Church

Many congregations find themselves in need of leadership on communion Sundays when a pastor is not available. A ruling elder who has been duly trained may be commissioned to step in at such a time. You could be such a resource for your congregation, or could be a help for other Presbyterian congregations in our area.

All churches, particularly those whose churches do not have pastoral leadership, are invited to send ruling elders in good standing (they don't have to be on the Session currently) to this event. The training will be led by Rev. Allen Presby at Nineveh Presbyterian Church, 2997 NY Route 7, Nineveh, NY 13813.

Please register for this event at susvalpresby.org/register. Questions? Email cclefchair@susvalpresby.org or call 607-323-4477.



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 #

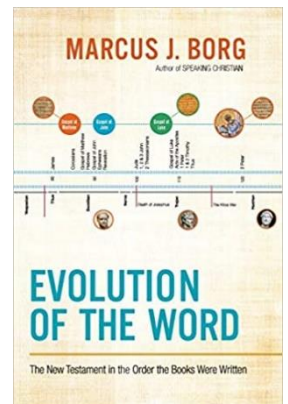
If you have questions or need help using Zoom, feel free to call the church office for assistance.

Bible Study

Mondays, 12:30–1:30pm, in the Pastor's Office 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 Pastor Kimberly's office.

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.

Funding for Church Energy Efficiency or Renewable Energy

A message from the Presbyterian Hunger Program

For congregations, there are many great webinars and websites out there about how to fund and pursue energy efficiency and renewable energy with financial resources, tax incentives, and pathways provided by this year's legislation passed through the U.S. Congress. In addition to the curated list below, you can find other great webinars from Interfaith Power and Light (youtube.com/@InterfaithPowerandLightOrg) as well as Presbyterians for Earth Care (youtube.com/@presbyteriansforearthcare420).



- “Holy Heat Pumps!” (youtu.be/a67_a115zT8) explains how heat pumps work and how to lower the costs for installation at your church with the new government funds available to congregations for the first time.
- The “Tools & Resources to Green Congregations” (youtu.be/AI3g4RWBQ94) webinar covers the ways houses of worship and religious institutions can update their facilities to become more energy efficient and save on their energy bills. It also offers important information regarding first-time federal funding available to nonprofits to support investment in energy efficiency and renewables.
- In the “Summer Solstice Webinar on Solar Financing” (youtu.be/uEJI46YHfLA), learn about the different ways congregations can finance solar from Jerry Bernstein, author of IPL’s Solar Financing for Congregations. Then take a deeper look at power purchase agreements, one of the options allowing a congregation to install solar with no up-front costs.
- Presbyterians for Earth Care (PEC) offers a webinar on Federal Funding Resources for Houses of Worship with Tiffany Hartung. (youtu.be/p8XqhCX24bg)
- PEC has tips to save money on church energy bills. (youtu.be/v12FcVckEx8)
- Interfaith Power and Light’s “federal funding” webpage (interfaithpowerandlight.org/federal-funding) has a lot of content; this spreadsheet of IRA and IJA Resources (bit.ly/3vh4H0x) might be particularly helpful to you, as it has things broken down by types of work.
- This U.S. Department of Treasury website deals with what is covered by “direct pay.” (bit.ly/3Ry9ZfV)
- This FAQ may also be useful. (bit.ly/486TwGx)

In addition to these webinars and web sites about public funding and tips for saving energy and money, a reminder about the Restoring Creation Loan from the Presbyterian Investment and Loan Program (pilp.pcusa.org/restoring-creation-loan). Many congregations have made use of this great resource as a way to get started.



PRESBYTERIAN
COLLEGE

The Presbyterian Promise — An \$80,000 Scholarship over 4 years for all students who are Presbyterian

The Presbyterian Promise Scholarship is a commitment by Presbyterian College to recognize students for their merit and affiliation with the Presbyterian Church. Presbyterian College seeks to develop students academically and spiritually in this signature scholarship. Students who are members of Presbyterian churches will receive a scholarship for a minimum of \$20,000 per year for up to four years — that’s an \$80,000 commitment to you. For more information and to apply, visit presby.edu/presbyterian-promise.

Joys and Concerns

We are so proud of Charlotte, who received a special award for Gratitude at School this month! Congratulations to Charlotte, Shelby, Andrea, and Matt!



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

Welcome to the World: Rosalie, born to our neighbor Alex of Alexander's Café

Expecting a Baby: Jason & Danielle

For Healing: Nate, Gary, Kathy, Greg, Maida, Marian, Ryan, Frank, Peggy

Grieving: Ken & Becky Mebert, death of Ken's sister;

Friends and Family of: Rev. Ronald Thomas, Shirlee Goldman Hertzog, Ted Dylan, Tiffany, Jose, Bob Walter

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

Covid-19: Shawn, Evan, Becky, Scott, Mark, Marian T., David, Ellen

Ongoing: Kristie, Marian P., Sue, Scott N., Michael, Natika, Rachmani family, Charisse, Darry, Travis, Jerome, Janai, Melchi, Veah, Curtis & family, Jen, Carlos, Richard C. & Deloris M. & family, Rupee J., Jazmine & family, Sasabe & cartel violence

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

Recent & Upcoming Birthdays

January

- 3 Dave Schneider
- 9 Jackson Seman
- 10 Gabriel Hickey
- 11 Elikem Nyamuame
- 18 Suzanne Souza
- 20 Allison Nyamuame
- 27 David Jurena
- 29 Andrew Chadwick
Zackk Meade
- 31 Harley Meade

February

- 1 Sarah Chadwick
- 4 Dave Davis
Elinor Hugenbruch
- 8 Jullian Wanjama
- 14 Pastor Kimberly
- 18 Jenni McKeage
- 19 Cathy Ciganek
- 26 Ron Glowacki
Emily Hugenbruch
- 27 Aaron Whitney





Everyone is welcome here

**UNITED PRESBYTERIAN
CHURCH OF BINGHAMTON**



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Address Service Requested

Congregational Meeting to Renew Congregational Covenant with the Pastors Sunday, February 4, 11:15am, in person or on Zoom

On Sunday, February 4, at 11:15am, there will be a meeting of the Congregation and Corporation to present the budget for the 2024 year and to renew the congregational covenant with the pastors by voting to support their terms of call. This meeting will be hybrid, immediately following the worship service, in the sanctuary and in the Zoom room, upcbgm.org/zoom or via phone call (+1) 646-558-8656, Meeting ID 865 274 8433.

“Terms of call” is the PC(USA) language for what, in the business community, is called a “compensation package”. Recognizing that God’s call to pastoral ministry is expressed in a three-way covenant between the presbytery, the congregation, and the pastor, each year you are asked to support the work of the pastors by agreeing to support them financially as well as through your prayers and participation. After the congregation votes, the terms will be sent to the presbytery for their approval.