

# Easter 2024

Volume 15, Issue 2

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

## Holy Week Worship

### Palm Sunday, March 24, 10:00am – The Parade Returns!

This year, we will begin our worship with a Palm Sunday parade, led by our brass choir and singing, “When the Lord Came Riding In”. We will gather at the Lord’s Table and share in the feast, and tell the story of his Passion.

After the service, everyone is invited to come down to Fellowship Hall and help dye Easter Eggs for our Community Meal and Pantry guests.



Remember to return your Fish Boxes and your One Great Hour of Sharing envelopes!

### Maundy Thursday, March 28, 6:00pm – Soup Supper in the Upper Room



Everyone is invited to join us in the Upper Lounge for soup and bread and a time of fellowship. Soup and bread will be provided – bring your appetite and an open heart!

Starting at 6:30 after the meal, we will share in the Lord’s Supper and remember Jesus’s passion and death. The worship service will also be streamed on YouTube and Zoom.

After worship, we will depart in silence, returning to the sanctuary on Easter morning.

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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





### **Easter Sunday, March 31, 10:00am – Resurrection Day!**

The bell rings. The Christ Candle is brought into the sanctuary. We gather again at the Lord's Table, where the Last Supper is transformed into the Feast of Victory and we tell the good news once more: Christ is Risen! Risen indeed!

After worship, we will share a time of fellowship and our annual Easter Egg hunt will take place in the garden.

## **Worship Themes for Eastertide: Practices for Christian Living**

### **April 7: *The Walk To Emmaus***

*Luke 24:13–35*

The Easter message is that even death cannot stop God's redemptive activity from continuing. In the gospel according to Luke, there are three stories about the resurrection, beginning at the empty tomb and ending back in Jerusalem where the community had gathered. In between we have the story of Jesus coming alongside two disciples as they are trying to make sense of all that has happened. He joins them, teaches them, is persuaded to accept their hospitality, and then gives them the sign of his presence: "he took bread, blessed and broke it, and gave it to them."

The story gives us a model of our life together in Christ. We ponder, we study, we gather together, we practice hospitality and we recognize that Jesus is with us. At the same time, he goes ahead of us, into the world that God loves and calls us to serve.

### **April 14: *The Sound Track of Our Lives***

*Exodus 15:20–21; Psalm 22; Luke 1:46–56; 2 Corinthians 5:15–17; Revelation 21:1–4*

One of the important ways that we open our minds and hearts to God is through music, and especially through singing together. The psalms and hymns and spiritual songs that we sing together give us a frame for our lives, words that call us back to our faith, and a connection to that wordless presence that reminds us who and whose we are. We sing about God's call to freedom, we sing in lament when life is hard, we sing our dreams of a transformed life, and we sing our hopes for a new creation, made possible by God's grace.

What music forms a part of your soundtrack? Are there particular songs or pieces that carry you in hard times, or that help you give voice to joy?

### **April 21: *Fasting – Pastor Becky preaching***

*Matthew 6:16–18; Isaiah 58:1–12*

Fasting has been a part of the Christian tradition from its beginning and even going back to our Jewish ancestors. Many stories from both the Old and New Testament tell of people of faith entering into a time of fasting and prayer. Moses fasted on Mount Sinai while meeting with God. Jesus engaged in a time of fasting and prayer before his ministry. Paul took time to fast and pray when he encountered Jesus on the Damascus Road and was blinded. But we also hear in the Old and New Testaments how fasting can be offensive to God. This week we will look at the practice of fasting, why it was done, the pitfalls to avoid, and why many still find it a fulfilling spiritual practice today.

**April 28: Keeping Sabbath: Relationship and Resistance***Exodus 20:1–11; Luke 12:13–31*

Keeping the sabbath is the first of the commandments that God gives to God's people at Sinai, and it is the basis of everything that follows. God has brought God's people out of enslavement and into a world where they can live differently: from a condition where their value is in their productivity to a place where value is found in relationship. Every relationship needs commitment and attention to thrive, and the sabbath is intended to be the time in which we return our attention and our commitment to God. It is also the model and the basis for every other relationship: with our families, our communities, and the whole created order.

**May 5: Tithing as a Spiritual Discipline***Deuteronomy 6:10–12; 1 Peter 1:13–16*

There are over 100 verses in the bible that refer to tithing, but not a lot of information about why Christians should practice tithing and what it means for our lives. A tithe is ten percent; the practice refers to making conscious, disciplined choices to set aside part of your income and investments for the service of God. Today's scripture readings tell us why it matters: like the practice of Sabbath, it is intended to help us pay attention to God's place in our lives and what God is calling us to do and be. It is also a form of clarifying our relationships, as we make choices about what our priorities are and what we choose to invest in, not just with our hearts and minds but with our talents, time, and money.

**May 12: Looking up, Looking in, Looking out: Practicing Prayer***1 Thessalonians 5:16–18; Acts 1:6–11a*

Observant Jews pray at least 3 times every day; observant Muslims pray 5 times every day. Christians are instructed to "pray constantly," but what does that mean? Without specific instructions about when, where, and how to pray, it can feel awkward and clumsy to begin a prayer practice. And yet prayer is how we learn to be open to God in every part of life, to see what God is doing, and to be aware of God's presence. This week we will look at varieties of prayer and consider how to create and maintain a regular life of prayer.

**Pastors' Ponderings**

*Kimberly P. Chastain,*  
Pastor

**Three Possibilities for Future Studies***(let the pastors know of your interest!)*

The pastors were talking about ideas that we have or that someone has suggested to us for future studies, and three ideas were mentioned that both of us thought sounded interesting. We probably would not start any of them until the fall, but we can make choices about preparation if we know how much interest there would be for each.



*Becky Kindig,*  
Associate Pastor

**New Bible Study: Queering Scripture** — What does the bible have to say about gender, sexuality and heteronormativity? What is hidden behind our assumptions and the assumptions made by translators, and how can we recover some of those hidden stories? So often the "Christian" perspective is stereotyped and stereotyping, but the reality portrayed in scripture is much more nuanced.

**New Book Study: *Our Hidden Conversations: What Americans Really Think About Race and Identity* by Michele Norris.** In 2010, award-winning journalist Norris created “The Race Card Project”, distributing postcards that said: “Race. Your Thoughts. 6 Words. Please Send.” The postcards were left in bookstores, airport lounges, restaurants and hotel rooms. Six words is short enough to engage people but gives an opportunity for powerful snapshots. It allows insight into what people have experienced but never spoken. As the responses began to flood in, a question was added to the website: “Anything Else?” This beautifully designed book, just released, provides a window on what was shared and invites reflection about unshared and unseen experiences.



The project continues on the website [theracecardproject.com](http://theracecardproject.com).

**Educating Ourselves about Israel and Palestine.** What is the history? What is happening now? What is at stake and what is the official stance of our denomination? The story is painful and the destruction almost beyond imagining. But getting to the history behind the emotions and opinions is challenging. In a world where every point of view can be amplified or suppressed, we’d like to understand what the “sides” are, no matter what each one concludes after we learn together.

### Ashes to Go

Pastor Kimberly and Pastor Becky distributed “Ashes to Go” again this year on Ash Wednesday at Binghamton University. They have been offering this to the BU students, faculty, and staff for several years now through our partnership with the Binghamton University Interfaith Council. They received many thanks from students and staff who didn’t have another opportunity to get them in their busy schedule and appreciated this chance for this “holy interruption” in their day to remember that they are God’s beloved dust.



## Music Notes

### 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.

So far this year, the UPC Music team has sung a wide variety of musical styles to enhance Sunday morning worship. Our section leader team has offered up solos, quartets, and quintets.

The United Ringers handbell choir most recently played “Pears of Joy,” which was beautifully executed and lifted our spirits. The UPC Vocal Choir has sung music ranging from Broadway Musicals (“Seasons of Love” from RENT) to Latvian folk tunes (“By the Babylonian Waters”), and has enjoyed special guest



instrumentalists. Margaret Davis joined us twice in January with her violin, and on Transfiguration Sunday, we were treated to folk music led by Phil Westcott on guitar.

The centerpiece of this service was an arrangement Phil made of “Transfiguration” by Sufjan Stevens. Phil and Judy Westcott sang the lead vocal parts and were joined by the UPC choir as well as Sara Lieberman (trumpet), Justin Miller (euphonium), Riya Bolander (tuba), Arianna Windsong (flute), and Austin Shadduck (malleted handbells). We are always excited to welcome new members, and if you’ve been thinking about joining us, we would love for you to make a joyful noise with us!



**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!



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](mailto:music@upcbgm.org), or speak with them in person after worship.

## Upcoming Community Performances

### The Binghamton Philharmonic presents "Roman Holiday"

*Saturday, April 6, 7:30pm at the Forum Theatre, 236 Washington St., Binghamton*



*Audrey Hepburn and Gregory Peck in  
Roman Holiday*

*Daniel Hege, conductor*

**Roberto Sierra:** Fandangos

**Pyotr Ilyich Tchaikovsky:** Capriccio Italien

**Ottorino Respighi:** Pines of Rome

**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](http://binghamtonphilharmonic.org) or email [info@binghamtonphilharmonic.org](mailto:info@binghamtonphilharmonic.org)

Box office: 607-723-3931 ext. 1, Monday – Friday, 10am–4pm

### The Madrigal Choir of Binghamton and STAR present "America Speaks"

*Sunday, April 14, 4pm at St. Thomas Aquinas Church, 1 Aquinas Way, Binghamton*

This concert celebrates both American words and music as the Madrigal Choir joins with Southern Tier Actors Read (STAR) to share readings and musical settings of some of America's favorite poetry, including works by Robert Frost, Sara Teasdale, Randall Thompson, and others. STAR began in 2010 under the leadership of actors Judy McMahon and Heidi Weeks when they started a "Readers Theater" that met monthly to read classic and modern plays. If it was agreed that a particular play should be produced for the public at various venues around the area, they staged them. Since then almost 80 plays have been read, from "Little Foxes" to "These Shining Lights." The emphasis is on the words and the story, rather than sets, lighting, and costumes. STAR Directors Judy McMahon and Chris Nickerson are looking forward to collaborating with the Madrigal Choir for this special event!

Tickets at [madrigalchoir.com](http://madrigalchoir.com) or available at the door: Adults \$20, students free.



### The American Guild of Organists presents "Concert for the Future"

*Friday, April 19, 7pm at Trinity Memorial Episcopal Church, 44 Main St, Binghamton*

This "Concert for the Future" was developed by the artist, Randy Steere, to reflect his vision for the future of the organ and organ music that will attract and keep a growing audience. It will form the basis for a discussion on this important topic being held at the church the next morning at 10am.

The concert itself comprises a very diverse set of more contemporary composers to appeal both to a wider audience not familiar with organ music as well as the organ aficionado. New arrangements of "Amazing Grace" and "Kum Ba Yah" will be performed alongside meditative pieces from around the world, a rousing Toccata and even a fresh Wedding March! Just over an hour long, it will be an exciting concert to engage the audience on many levels!



**Discussion/Workshop, Saturday, April 20, 10am:** The presentation on Saturday morning “Paths to a Successful Future” will feature Randy’s articulation of his vision for the future of the organ, as well as reaction and input from all in attendance. All are encouraged to attend (especially if you are NOT an organist or a member of the AGO!). Your input will be very valuable as Randy facilitates a discussion pertinent to all area churches and music lovers.



**The Tri-Cities Opera presents “The Barber of Seville”**  
*Sunday, April 21, 3pm at the Forum Theatre, 236 Washington St.*

Join the TCO for “one of the greatest masterpieces of comedy within music”, *The Barber of Seville*! Described as the “opera buffa of all opere buffe”, this ever-popular work is the prequel to *The Marriage of Figaro*. We once again join Figaro, Count Almaviva, and Dr. Bartolo as they scheme their way to love... and it all starts with Rosina!

For more information, visit [tricitiesopera.com/barber](http://tricitiesopera.com/barber) or email [tickets@tricitiesopera.org](mailto:tickets@tricitiesopera.org)  
 Box office: 607-772-0400, Monday - Friday, 12pm-5pm

**Southern Tier Singers’ Collective and the Binghamton University Choirs and Symphony Orchestra present “Carmina Burana”**

*Sunday, April 28, 3-4:30pm at the Anderson Center Ousterhout Concert Theater, Binghamton University*

STSC joins forces with the Binghamton University Choirs and Symphony Orchestra in a choral ensemble of over 100 voices for Carl Orff’s epic meditation on springtime, love, and fate.

For tickets, visit [binghamton.edu/anderson-center/box-office.html](http://binghamton.edu/anderson-center/box-office.html)



**Binghamton Philharmonic Orchestra presents “Other Worlds: Superheros, Fantasy, & Sci-Fi”**  
*Saturday, May 4, 7:30pm at the Forum Theatre, 236 Washington St., Binghamton*



*Daniel Hege, conductor*

**Williams:** *Superman March*

**Gregson-Williams:** *Music from Wonder Woman*

**Göransson:** *Black Panther*

**Djawadi:** *Game of Thrones Suite*

**Shore:** *Fellowship Theme from Lord of the Rings*

**Horner:** *Avatar Suite*

**Strauss:** *Also Sprach Zarathustra*

**Horner:** *Apollo 13*

**Goldsmith/Simeone:** *Theme from Star Trek*

**Williams/Lowden:** *Close Encounters of the Third Kind*

**Williams/Ployhar:** *Theme from E.T.*

**Williams:** *Title Theme from Star Wars*

**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.

For more info, visit [binghamtonphilharmonic.org](http://binghamtonphilharmonic.org) or email [info@binghamtonphilharmonic.org](mailto:info@binghamtonphilharmonic.org)  
Box office: 607-723-3931 ext. 1, Monday – Friday, 10am–4pm

### **Southern Tier Singers' Collective presents "Memories from the Mediterranean"**

*Sunday, May 5, 3–4:30pm at St. James Roman Catholic Church,  
147 Main St., Johnson City*

Musical reminiscences and reflections from Spain, Italy, Greece, Turkey, and the Levant culminate in a world premiere by Palestinian-Jordanian-Canadian composer Shireen Abu-Khader.

For more information, visit [southerntiersingers.org](http://southerntiersingers.org)



## **Our Church Family**

### **In Memoriam**

**Gary Alan Ayres**, 79, of Binghamton passed away January 31 after a long illness. He was predeceased by his parents Jack and Mary Ayres; sisters Ruth Shrauger and Judy Ayres. He is survived by his loving sister Sherry Lee (David) Laskowski; his children: son Jason (Violet) Ayres and daughter Lisa Saunders; 3 nieces Diane Reiman, Pamela Boyst, Sarah Laskowski; and several more great-nieces and nephews. He was a man who was friendly to everyone, loved to shake a hand and give a hug. Gary loved cowboys but there was only one king of the cowboys, Roy Rogers, and Gary was an avid collector of his memorabilia. A graduate of Chenango Forks School who never missed a reunion, he was a member of United Presbyterian Church, Binghamton. A private burial was held at Vestal Hills Memorial Park. Donations can be made to the United Presbyterian Church/Community meals, 42 Chenango Street, Binghamton NY 13901. "Happy Trails to you, till we meet again."



**Marian B. Palmer** went to join her husband and soul-mate, Thomas, and her Lord on January 19. She is survived by her daughter Kristie Palmer, her sons and daughters-in-law Timothy & Kathleen Palmer, Jeffrey & Tracy Palmer, foster daughter Faith Stouffer and her husband Jeffrey, and five grandchildren: Colin and Katherine Palmer, Jake Simon, Lory Cosner, and Amy Villegas. She is also survived by her two brothers, Richard and Robert Badertscher and several nieces and nephews.

She was a long-time resident of Binghamton area, and a graduate of Binghamton Central High School and Ridley Lowell Business School. She worked for twelve years at the New York Telephone Company. Following her marriage and growth of her children, she found a second career for nineteen wonderful years as a Preschool teacher at the Jewish Community Center. She was a member of First (later United) Presbyterian Church of Binghamton, where she was active in the choir and served as Stephen Minister, Deacon, Elder, Sunday School teacher, and member of many committees. She loved spending time with family and friends at Heart Lake, and cherished any time she could spend with children.

A memorial service will be held on April 13 at United Presbyterian Church of Binghamton at 10:00am. In lieu of flowers, friends wishing to may contribute to Mitochondrial Disease Foundation (8085 Saltsburg Rd., Pittsburgh PA 15239) in honor of her daughter Kristie, or to the United Presbyterian Church (42 Chenango St., Binghamton NY 13901).

## Marian Palmer's Celebration of Life: Saturday, April 13

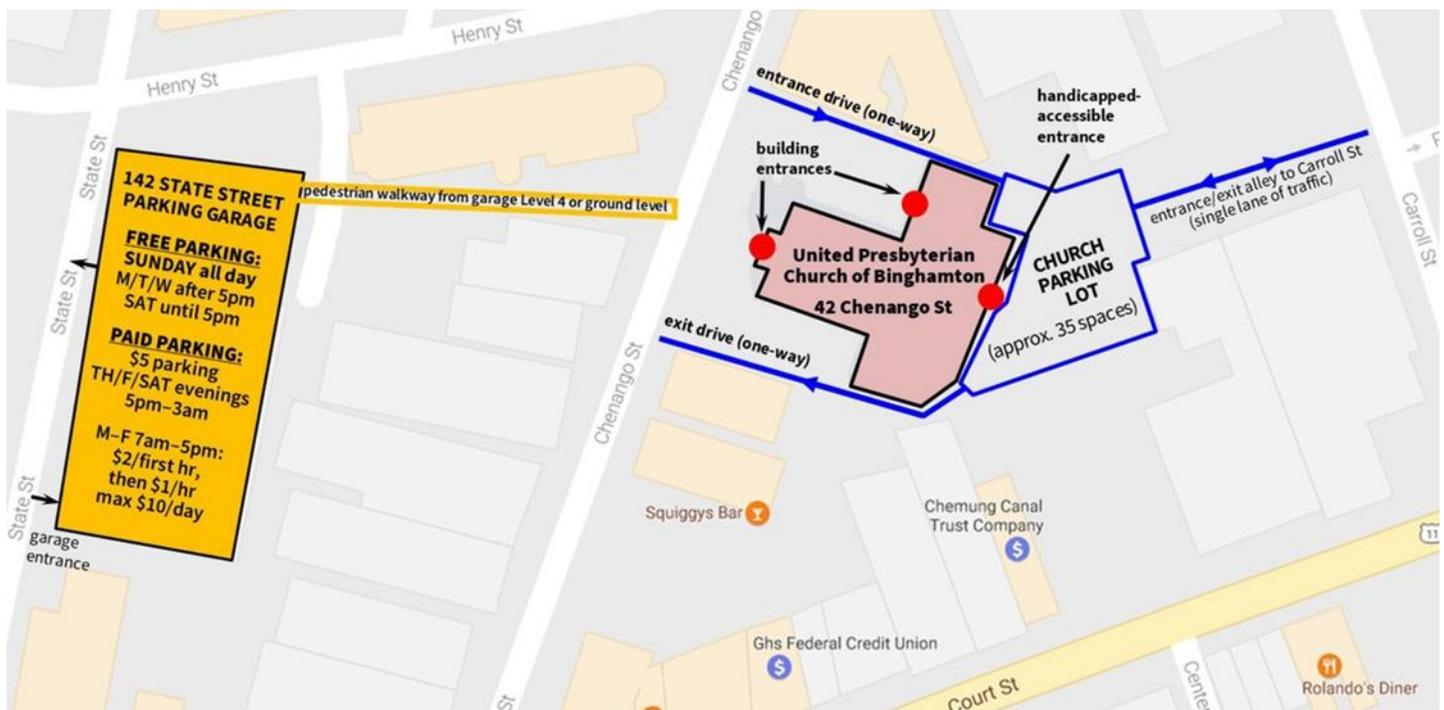
*Worship service at 10:00 am*

*Luncheon to follow in Fellowship Hall*

Everyone is invited to join in the celebration of Marian Palmer's life and the completion of her baptism, when we gather on April 13. We will gather in the sanctuary for a service of worship and remembrance, then continue to Fellowship Hall to share food and fellowship. The basics for a meal will be provided; you are invited to bring a special side dish or dessert if you have one you'd really like to share in her honor.

The service will be livestreamed on YouTube and recorded for later watching for those who are unable to attend in person, and can be accessed from our website or on our YouTube Channel [upcbgm.org/youtube](https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCpCbGm).

Wheelchair access is through the rear of the building, where there is limited parking available. Street parking is metered, but there is also a garage on State Street that is within easy walking distance from the church and is free on Saturdays.



## 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.upcbgm.org/zoom), and our website [upcbgm.org](https://www.upcbgm.org), 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:

- Air filtration units are deployed throughout the sanctuary to enhance your safety. 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 invited and welcome to use our online giving portal [upcbgm.org/give](https://upcbgm.org/give) 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 other parts of the service such as the sermon and the Prayers of the People. If you watch on a small screen and need the printed version of the worship guide, it is available for download from our website [upcbgm.org](https://upcbgm.org) each week, or it can be mailed to you upon request if downloading & printing is not an option.

To join the Zoom room online, go to [upcbgm.org/zoom](https://upcbgm.org/zoom)

To call in: Dial **1-646-558-8656**, then enter Meeting ID: **865 274 8433 #**

It would be good to have you with us.



### **Sermon transcripts**

*Transcripts of each week's sermon are available upon request, and are usually ready by the Tuesday following the service. So if you miss worship, or you hear a sermon that really spoke to you and you'd like to read again later, you're invited to contact the office and request the transcript. We can send it via email or snail mail; just let us know which format you'd like to receive.*

### **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.

## Special Day Coming Your Way?

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!

Please let us know of any other special occasions, and also about difficult times and prayer needs where a card or supportive message may be appreciated.

You may contact the church office or a member of the Card Committee (Margaret Davis, Suzie Northrop Raboy, Jenni McKeage, Lana Ogden, Margaret Sands, and Cindy Chadwick).

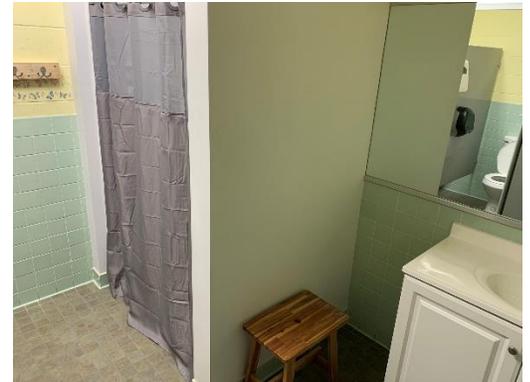
## Bathroom Renovation

We have updated one of the bathrooms on the first floor and it looks great so far!

Some of you may have seen the construction going on in there the last couple of months. It needed a new floor since the mastic holding down the tile was disintegrating and tiles were popping up, making it a safety hazard.

At the same time that we were looking for a contractor to re-tile the bathroom, we received a United Way grant to use to help our work with the community. We were able to use some of that money to install a much-needed shower unit in that bathroom. This shower can be used during the day for emergencies instead of getting people to the truck stop in Conklin for a \$15 shower. The ACBC overnight center can also allow use of the shower. They are limiting it to 2 a night at the moment.

We still have some finishing touches to do, like paint, moisture resistant ceiling tiles, and upgrading the exhaust fan, but the bathroom is fully functional again! Many thanks to Ken Mebert for shepherding this project. Feel free to take a peek next time you are at church!



## 2024 Ministry & Mission Budget Allocation

*Editor's Note: At our congregational meeting in February, Treasurer Lou McKeage presented our 2024 budget and reported on our income and investments. He also presented the pastors' proposed Terms of Call (compensation packages), which are a covenant between the pastor, the congregation, and the presbytery that must be renewed each year. The Terms of Call were unanimously approved by the congregation.*

*The information presented on the next two pages is the "Narrative Budget", the story of how our ministry and mission impacted the community in 2023 and our aspirations for 2024. Further details on our income sources, investment values, and the pastors' Terms of Call are available from the office upon request.*

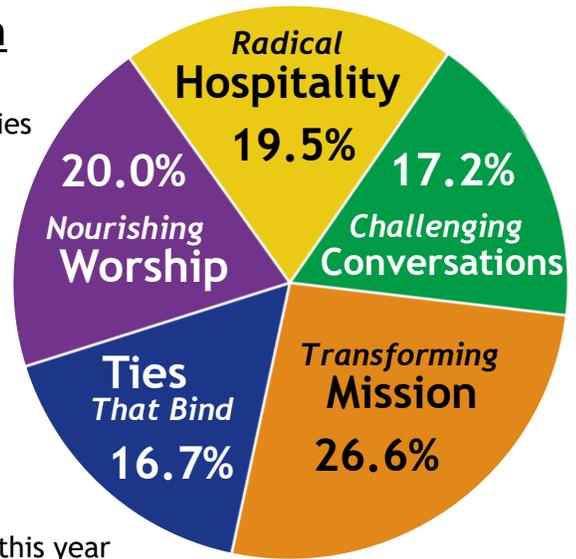
United Presbyterian Church of Binghamton is an active community-focused congregation. We have been blessed through the years with dedicated and committed membership. As such, our endowment has steadily grown through the years. At the same time, membership has not experienced the same growth. Because of this, for the last several years our budget has relied more on endowment funds than membership contributions to engage in the work of the church. The economic market conditions of the past have led to solid gains in the investment arena.

# 2024 Ministry & Mission Budget Allocation

The charts and brief descriptions we provide to the congregation every year have been chosen by the Session to reflect the priorities that guide our decisions about finances, the building, the staff, and the community. We have crafted the report in order to show readers what the total cost is for each of the five areas we have established: Nourishing Worship, Radical Hospitality, Challenging Conversations, Transforming Mission, and the Ties That Bind (congregational connections and fellowship).

It has been suggested elsewhere that it would be helpful in understanding the cost of our ministry to provide breakouts of the specific administrative categories under which bills are paid, like “property” and “personnel”. If you would like to see those breakouts, they can be found in the detailed budget report, available upon request.

During our first ten years together, we have been focused on developing a clear understanding of who and whose we are, and this year we are beginning a strategic planning process with the Presbyterian Foundation. So we would like to hear from you as you consider the information in this presentation: Do you believe that the priorities that we have identified are still the priorities for the congregation in the next ten years? What would you continue to support, and what would you change?



## 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 and of neurodivergent adults and children.
- 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.



*This year we had fun on the fourth Sunday of Advent, when we staged a “no-rehearsal Christmas pageant” and hymn sing – participants and watchers alike agreed that we should do it again.*

## 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 be 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 and the alternative high school for students who need a different environment.
- 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 year, we partnered with the Addiction Center of Broome County to open a 42-bed overnight shelter for unhoused people. The Library Lounge, Terrace Room, and Chapel are dedicated spaces for this program, which is open Sunday night through Friday morning each week. There are laundry machines installed in one of the former Sunday school rooms, and a shower is being installed in one of the first floor bathrooms.*



## Transforming Mission

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

- Support a case manager in the “Walk with Me” program in partnership with the Family Enrichment Network, helping people returning from incarceration.
- Support community cultural programs such as Tri-Cities Opera, LUMA, and PorchFest. This year we also supported Juneteenth and the Black Excellence Awards.
- We partnered with Pax Christi and Veterans for Peace on Hiroshima Day, folding paper cranes and praying for an end to violence and especially nuclear escalation.
- Participate with VINES, CHOW, and the Food Bank of the Southern Tier to ensure that everyone has access to nourishment. This year we are participating in the FBST “Healthy Food” initiative.
- Through our pantry, we offer hygiene products not covered by government assistance as well. We have been able to add children’s diapers and adult protective wear to our pantry, and we maintain a small clothing closet that always has tube socks available and other items as they are donated.
- We continue to support the Whuti-Sgroboe congregation in Ghana, sending gifts each year and listening to the stories of their school and congregation.
- This year, we joined Transnational Friends (Tri-Cities, NY and Nairobi) in funding menstrual hygiene products for schoolgirls in low income communities in Nairobi.
- We continue to support Dave Ruston and Greg Patinka in working with immigrants at the Mexican border, and created a “Corner of Hope” in the sanctuary to educate and inform community members.



## 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.

- Conversations during worship and at potluck luncheons that focus on understanding our diversity and our values as a congregation.
- Sunday morning mission speakers that bring social justice to the forefront of the conversation.



- Bible study that focuses on the meaning of the texts in their time and context, then considers what they mean in the 21st century.
- Maintain a presence and a witness at Binghamton University through the Interfaith Council, participating in campus events and conversations about faith and life.
- Monthly education packets are sent to families with children, including activities and materials to enhance understanding of Christian practices and stories.
- Monthly service projects and craft activities that are accessible to all ages and abilities, coordinated with mission and worship themes.

## Ties That Bind

The old hymn begins, “Blessed be the ties that bind our hearts in Christian love...” By God’s grace we have continued to welcome new people even as we have said goodbye to old friends. We hope that in 2024 we will be able to expand these offerings:

- We have begun a strategic planning process with the Presbyterian Foundation, to explore our values, mission and ministry as a congregation and community. We gathered for the first working session in November and additional conversations are planned.
- We 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.
- A popular gathering was a Christmas cookie party, held after worship in the sanctuary. Many brought cookies to share, and we all enjoyed decorating sugar cookies together.



Current conditions in the financial markets are best described as very uncertain, but most investments have experienced real declines in value, and it has affected our ability to rely on our investment income. While our endowment value remains substantial, we have carefully evaluated our spending for the coming year to ensure that it is in line with our mission and our ability to serve the community.

In 2023, we received several grants that reduced our reliance on the endowment slightly, and our partnership with ACBC in creating the UPCenter helped to offset our building costs. But we know that the market decline has been more aggressive than our cutting has been.

As we continue to explore the possibilities for how we can extend our ministry in the community in light of these conditions, we would like to challenge friends and members of United to help “close the gap” by increasing your support for our work in the world as you are able.

### Supporting Our Mission and Ministry

**Online Giving:** We are able to receive tax-deductible contributions online through our website ([upcbgm.org/give](http://upcbgm.org/give)). 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!** Without any doubt, the ministry of our congregation depends largely on the dedication and selfless contributions of volunteers – the incredible individuals who give generously of their time, energy, and unique talents. Here are some ways you can help us do Christ’s work in our community:

**Community Meal & Pantry:** Each Tuesday at 5pm, we offer a sit-down meal that is free for anybody, serving about 120 people a week. Volunteers are needed during the day on Monday and Tuesday to help with food preparation, and on Tuesday evening to serve the meal and clean up afterwards.

On Wednesdays from noon to 5pm, we run a free food pantry that also offers personal care & hygiene items when they’re available. Volunteers help staff the pantry, and donations of non-perishable food and personal care items are always welcome.

Contact Kitchen Coordinator Sherry Conklin for more info: [meal@upcbgm.org](mailto:meal@upcbgm.org)

**Worship services:** You may not have noticed how many people are involved in our Sunday morning worship services, but most weeks there are at least a dozen of us, and often there are more than 20: folks who read prayers and scripture, greet visitors, share musical talents, operate technology, set up refreshments, help serve communion, or contribute their ideas and support behind the scenes. If you’d like to take part, contact Worship Team chair Suzie Raboy or the church office: [office@upcbgm.org](mailto:office@upcbgm.org)

**Other ministry teams:** 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.

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## Programs & Events

### News from the Kitchen

*by Sherry Conklin, Kitchen Coordinator*

I am pleased to announce that we have six new volunteers. Jeff and Joe are experienced cooks and will be a big help with the meals. Adrian and Wendy are new for serving. Peter is helping in the pantry and is

available to help people with spoken English, filling out forms, and finding our guests specialized help. Bret has joined us to help with the dishwashing.

Last month we served crème brûlée for dessert. Chef Jamie from VINES borrowed a kitchen flamer from Lost Dog's chef and flamed all the desserts for us. This dessert was a big hit.

On March 19, the culinary students from SUNY Broome planned, cooked, and served the meal. They made lasagna, Caesar salad, carrots, garlic bread, and peach cobbler. It was exciting to see them in action. Our guests appreciated it.



The Foodbank of the Southern Tier has asked the pantries to increase the amount of food being given out in the pantries, so we have increased from 3 days' meals to supplying enough food for 5 days at each visit.



Our pantry and two others are in a pilot program with the Foodbank of the Southern Tier to give out emergency food bags to the homeless and/or those in temporary housing. These bags consist of single serve snacks, soups, microwavable meals, paper cups, plastic flatware, cereal, and power bars. So far since January, we have given out 25 bags a month.

The UP-Center shelter is sharing the kitchen with us on nights they are open, and this is working out well.

I am looking forward to our annual-egg dyeing event on Palm Sunday. Hope to see everyone there.

My want list at this time is for can openers from the dollar stores and for reusable grocery bags. And we can always use suitcases or duffle bags with wheels to give to our walking guests, if anyone has some old ones lying around.

## Finding Common Ground: an interfaith conversation

*with Binghamton University Interfaith Council*

**Monday, April 15, 7:30pm** in University Union West room 324

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 food. Hear about special foods that play a role in different faith traditions or spiritualities and what the stories are that go with them. We will bring some foods from different faiths for everyone to try, and you are invited to bring some to share as well! Come and join in the conversation and learn more.



### **Workshop on the Gospel of Mark: a consideration of Mark's major themes**

**Saturday, April 20, 9:30am-12pm on Zoom**

Here's a free workshop for lay pastors and preachers and anyone else with an interest in Mark's gospel, led by Rev. Allen L. Presby.

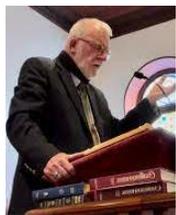
The Gospel of Mark is our primary gospel focus for the current lectionary B cycle. The workshop will provide an introduction to Mark, considered by most scholars to be the earliest of the four gospels. In particular, we will concentrate on the half-dozen themes that repeatedly emerge in any careful reading of Mark's gospel.

Please register at [susvalpresby.org/register](https://susvalpresby.org/register)

To attend via Zoom: [bit.ly/3Hy1flg](https://bit.ly/3Hy1flg) or phone (+1) 646-558-8656

Meeting ID: 835 2997 0546 Passcode: PSV

Questions? Email [cclcfchair@susvalpresby.org](mailto:cclcfchair@susvalpresby.org) or call 607-323-4477



*Pastor Allen Presby retired in 2011 after six years serving the First Presbyterian Church in Delhi and this year celebrated the 50th anniversary of his ordination. Since "retiring," he has served three part-time contracts with churches in our presbytery and is currently serving as pastor of the Nineveh Presbyterian Church. Allen recently concluded the three-year cycle of Vice-Moderator, Moderator, and Chair of Cabinet for our presbytery. Home for Allen and wife Carol is up in the hills above Unadilla.*

### **Webinars from PRC**

**Practical Resources for Churches** ([prcli.org](https://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.

Here are a few webinars from PRC that are coming up soon:

#### **Managing Investments and Endowments for Churches – Thursday, April 18, 2-3pm**

Pastors and other people without a financial management background or education still have fiduciary duties. In addition, endowment and investment management can be a source of conflict within congregations. This webinar will help people navigate in what may be a foreign land for them. What are the right questions to ask? How do you evaluate the answers to these questions? What are common pitfalls and how do we avoid them? How do you bring theology into the conversation? Where can you find resources and allies? The goal of this webinar is to equip and encourage people to engage in oversight of endowments and investments. This often leads to opportunities to strengthen the mission and ministries of the congregation. Register at [bit.ly/49SjEFB](https://bit.ly/49SjEFB)

#### **Raising Kids Beyond the Binary in Church – Tuesday, May 7, 2-3pm**

The church is a better, more faithful place when transgender, non-binary, and gender-expansive young people are a part of it. The debate around transgender children rages, making it more important than ever for people of faith to understand God's call to love and affirm young people in who God created them to be. In this workshop, we will talk about what it looks like to boldly, loudly, and joyfully celebrate the young people in our midst, how to advocate for them in our ministry settings and beyond, and how to

create reasonably safe spaces where they can grow in their connection to God and all of God's children. We're not always going to get this right, but workshop leader Jamie Bruesehoff will help participants understand how we can show up in faith and grace for ourselves and our communities while protecting the most vulnerable. Register at [bit.ly/49Rg52X](https://bit.ly/49Rg52X)

### **How to Create Transformative Ministries Through Theological Innovation – Thursday, May 9, 2-3:15pm**

In this interactive workshop, you'll be guided through the Innovation Lab's five-phase Theological Innovation Process as a pathway for designing creative and transformative ministries in your unique context. We'll apply the innovation process to a case study of a challenge facing people nationwide – the epidemic of loneliness in America. Together we'll brainstorm innovative ministries that could address this challenge in a theologically-grounded way. You'll learn a new framework for developing ministries that authentically meet the needs and engage the assets of people in your own community. You'll also receive a resource you can use to develop transformative ministries in the future. Register at [bit.ly/4chk9ea](https://bit.ly/4chk9ea)

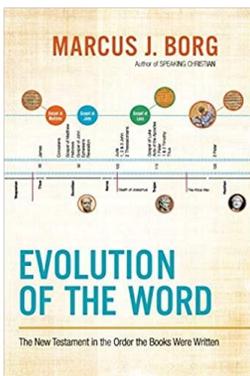
### **UPC's "Zoom room"**

Modern technology is marvelous! Thanks to the Zoom meetings system, we can gather virtually even when it's difficult to 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 <https://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, 1-2pm, 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.

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.

### **Sewing Group**

#### **Wednesdays, 10am-1pm (with Zoom lunch hour, 12pm-1pm)**

by *Cindy Chadwick*

As many of you know, each year before the Christmas holiday the Sewing Group prepares the quilts crafted throughout the year for distribution in the community. In 2023, nearly 40 quilts and 16 walker bags were gifted to church members and the following organizations:

- Camp Sunshine
- Willow Point Rehabilitation and Nursing Center
- Good Shepherd Fairview Home
- YWCA
- Hilltop
- NoMa (North of Main)
- Elizabeth Church Manor

Some of our donations also included handmade hats, mittens, scarves, pillows, and stuffed animals.

And here are some of the heartfelt messages received in return:

“Thank you for your donations in support of our community!” – The NoMa Team

“A heartfelt thank you for the beautiful quilts from your Sewing Group. Your generosity brings warmth and comfort to those in need and we appreciate your kindness.”  
– Gratefully, Crystal Sackett (YWCA)

“Thank you so much for your donation of the wonderful walker bags for our ‘Be a Santa to a Senior’ program! The walker bags are such a big help to the seniors! They also help brighten their days with the colorful materials and craftsmanship. Thank you! Our seniors will be blessed!”  
– Sandy Atwood, Home Instead Program Coordinator

We are pleased to help others and bring warmth to the community!



*Ellen Berti organizes walker bags and hats for community distribution.*



*Quilts are rolled and sealed with a bow.*



*Lots of colorful quilts ready for distribution!*

In other news, the Sewing Group is bidding a fond farewell to group member Marian Timson (*pictured in the foreground*) as she is relocating to Arizona this month. We'll miss Marian's warm and wonderful presence! We wish her all the best and thank her for her contributions to the Sewing Group.

If you'd like to join the Sewing Group, which meets Wednesdays from 10am to 1pm in the Upper Lounge, please contact the church office. No experience needed!

## Zoom Happy hour

Friday evenings, 5-6pm

After nearly four years of “Zooming” together, our weekly social-distance gathering is still going strong. 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.

## Joys and Concerns

**Godspeed:** Marian Timson, moved to Arizona in March

**New Home:** Betty, Julie, & Jullian

**Preparing to Wed:** Keith & Allison, Aaron & Steve, Andrew & Margaret

**Welcome to the World:** Pearl Guinane, born 3/18/2024 to Emily & Wyatt (Marilynn's great-granddaughter!)

**Expecting a Baby:** Jason & Danielle, Tom & Brittney

**For Healing:** Carol, Cleo, Kathy, Jenni, Dick, Greg, Elikem's dad, Linda, Lauren, Dave J.

**Grieving – Friends & Family of:** Ann, Marian Palmer, Gary Ayres, Shirl Walford, Frank Ciganek, Jacob, Joe, Paulette, Sue, Gina Livingston Nicolette, Charlie; Kimberly, death of beloved dog Luke; Gene & James, death of 3 cousins; Victoria, death of aunt; Eleanor, death of aunt; Eugene, death of beloved dog Ocean

**Living with Cancer:** Mary Ann, Molly, Carl, Leah, Suzy, Zeke, Pam, Joann



**Covid-19:** Pam, Backus Family, Jones family, Bertis, Landons, Donohues

**Ongoing:** MacMyne family, Jean, Jimmy, Kristie, Scott N., Michael, Natika, Rachmani family, Jen, Carlos, Richard C. & Deloris M. & family, Maida, Rupee J., Jazmine & family, Sister Kathy

**Other Concerns:** We pray for

- people with severe mental illness
- people who are housing-insecure
- people struggling with addictions
- those affected by gun violence around the country
- those affected by cartel violence in and around Sasabe, Mexico
- Turkey & Syria
- Ukraine & Russia
- Israel/Palestine

## Recent & Upcoming Birthdays

### March

- |   |  |
|---|--|
| 4 Ellen Hancock-Berti                   | 7 Chloe Brauer   |
| 5 Dick Bartholomew                      | 8 Kathy Kopp   |
| 7 Suzie Northrop Raboy,<br>Maida Thomas | 9 Amanda Licht Jones, Laurie White                     |
| 8 Becky Mebert, Bill Sands              | 12 Tyson Brunson                                       |
| 12 Chelsie Hill Bennett                 | 14 Janet Hoover  |
| 13 Scott Kindig                         | 20 Angela Garcia-Meade                                 |
| 15 Barbara Rocke                        | 21 James Stehli, Suzy Ogden,<br>Dominic Ruston-Patinka |
| 17 Marne Ward                           | 22 Maria Kutz, Charlotte Livingston                    |
| 22 Khiro Brunson                        | 23 Dick Aswad  |
| 24 Imogen Backus                        | 24 Pastor Becky  |
| 25 Ann Cobb                             | 26 Greg Patinka, Zander Rwabukwisi                     |
|   | 28 Jim Menges  |

### April

- |                   |                              |
|-------------------|------------------------------|
| 1 Aeden Hickey    | <u>May</u>                   |
| 2 Matt Livingston | 7 Adana Brauer, Norma Stehli |
|                   | 13 Ellis Nyamuame            |



- |                                  |
|----------------------------------|
| 15 Eugene Favor                  |
| 16 Matthew Johnson               |
| 17 Shawn Landon,<br>Betty Wambui |
| 19 Nate Raboy                    |
| 23 Barbara Geiser                |
| 27 Felix Rwabukwisi              |
| 28 Ernest Backus,<br>David Berti |
| 31 Cindy Chadwick                |



*Everyone is welcome here*

UNITED PRESBYTERIAN  
CHURCH OF BINGHAMTON



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