

Summer 2024

Volume 15, Issue 4

Our worship services are livestreamed on our YouTube channel: upcbgm.org/youtube

Worship Themes for Summer: Revisiting the Old, Old Stories [Part 2]

The Bible is full of stories about our ancestors in faith. Some of the stories are “Just So Stories”, explaining why things are the way they are. Some are origin stories, telling about how the God of the Bible called particular people and communities to worship and follow. Some seem to just be great stories that remind God’s people of their faith and God’s place as the creator, liberator, and source of their life.

This summer we are going to revisit some of the old stories, to retell them and to think about what they might mean for us as participants in God’s continuing story.

July 14, 21, and 28 – Pastor Becky preaching the book of Ruth



The Story of Ruth, Naomi, and Boaz from rotation.org

The book of Ruth is written as a parable rather than a history. Like any good parable, the story has lots of layers of meaning, much wordplay, and leaves spaces where the reader can think about the story applying to their lives. The book of Ruth cannot be dated accurately and is placed differently in the Christian and Jewish texts. It is at the end of the Book of Judges in the Christian Bible as a counter to the bad actions at the end of Judges in the time when there was no king in Israel. In the Jewish tradition, it is put in the writings section, possibly as a moral lesson to counter the story in

In this issue:

| | |
|---------------------------|----|
| Pastors’ Ponderings | 4 |
| Our Church Family | 7 |
| Our Life Together: | |
| An Overview | 14 |
| Ministry Reports | 19 |
| Programs & Events | 27 |
| Joys and Concerns | 31 |

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



Nehemiah about not taking foreign wives when the Israelites came back from exile in Babylon. No matter when it was written, or where it is placed in the canon, this book is rich with lessons on how God is faithful to us and how we as a community can live better when we follow God's call to love each other.

- **July 14 – *Loss and Loving Kindness*.** *Focus text: Ruth 1:1–19a.* This first week we will hear the beginning of the story with the introduction to the main character Naomi and her daughters-in-law, Ruth and Orpah. Naomi and her husband Elimelech and her sons set off to Moab from Bethlehem since there was a famine. While they find food and wives for their sons, the family also suffers the loss of Elimelech and his sons. The three widows have choices to make. Orpah follows Naomi's request, but Ruth – whose loyalty and loving kindness to Naomi is abundant and overflowing in a time of hardship and great loss – Ruth goes above and beyond by swearing an oath to stay with Naomi, follow her God, and go with her back to Bethlehem where she will be a foreigner.
- **July 21 – *Faithfulness and Compassion*.** *Focus text: Ruth 1:19b–2:23.* The second week we met the character of Boaz, an upright and compassionate man who is a follower of God. He also happens to be in the family of Naomi's late husband. In continuing to be faithful and caring to her mother-in-law Naomi who is overcome with grief, Ruth decides to go out and find food for them. And by coincidence, she comes to work in the field of Boaz, who upholds the laws of God to allow those without food to gather grain at the edges of his field. But Boaz goes a step further and provides more kindness than is required, opening Naomi to glimmers of hope.
- **July 28 – *Redemption and New Life*.** *Focus text: Ruth 3:1 – 4:18.* In the third and fourth chapters of this story, Naomi seems to reciprocate the care Ruth had shown to her and helps her to develop a plan for a more secure and happy life. Ruth carries the plan out boldly, and the storyteller gets very creative with the wordplay in this section. Ruth's actions continue to show compassion for her family in asking Boaz to marry her, invoking the tradition of kinsman-redeemer which would bring Naomi into protection as well. Moved by this act of love both towards him and to Naomi, Boaz moves forward with the plan that brings new life to all of them and new life into the world, thus demonstrating what following God's teaching can bring about.

August 4 – *The Whole Armor of God*

Focus text: Ephesians 6:10–20



The letter to the Ephesians was a “circular letter,” intended to be passed around among congregations and giving general instruction and encouragement to believers as communities grew and faced new challenges. In a world where faith in Jesus was not legally recognized and opportunities for believers to gather together were few and far between, the writer acknowledges that holding fast to beliefs and practices might sometimes feel like a battle. So he outlines the “armor” that believers should put on every day to keep them safe and close to God as they strive to be faithful. As we ordain and install this year's elected leadership, we'll consider the symbol and what the “armor of God” might mean for us in our lives today.

August 11 – *Interlude: Joseph's Dreams with Rev. Rose Niles*

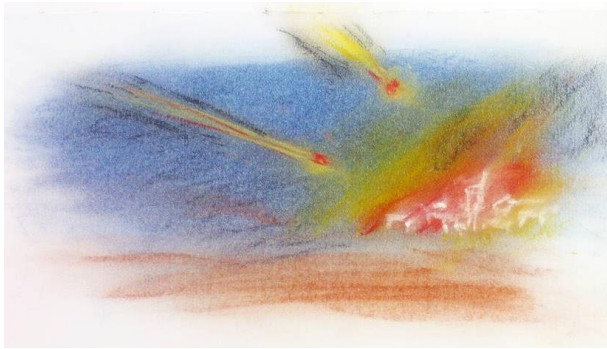
Focus text: Genesis 37:1–11, 18–25

As summer is coming to a close and we are beginning to consider the work of the next program year, we will be taking up the challenge of Project Regeneration again, considering our life and work together and where we believe the Spirit is leading us into the future. Rev. Rose Niles will talk about the ways in which

God spoke to Joseph in dreams and encourage us in our dreaming for what may come. We will also celebrate birthday Sunday in the sanctuary at the close of the service.

August 18 – *Sodom and Gomorrah*

Focus text: Genesis 18–19, selected verses; Ezekiel 16:49–50



"Destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah" by HowieHobbit on DeviantArt, deviantart.com/howiehobbit/art/Destruction-of-Sodom-and-Gomorrah-439254247. creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-sa/3.0

The story of Sodom and Gomorrah has been used for centuries to justify homophobia and exclusion of queer people from Christian churches — which is odd because the story has everything to do with the mistreatment of strangers and hardly anything to do with sexuality. In the first part of the story, angels tell Abraham that God intends to destroy the cities and Abraham bargains to save them for destruction. In the second part, Lot and his family attempt to save the angels from the “abominations” of the residents of Sodom; the conduct of the residents seals their fate and the cities are destroyed. Lot’s wife looks back, and is turned into a pillar of salt. This morning we will revisit the story, together with what the prophet Ezekiel says about “the sin of Sodom”, and try to make sense of this peculiar narrative and what has been done with it.

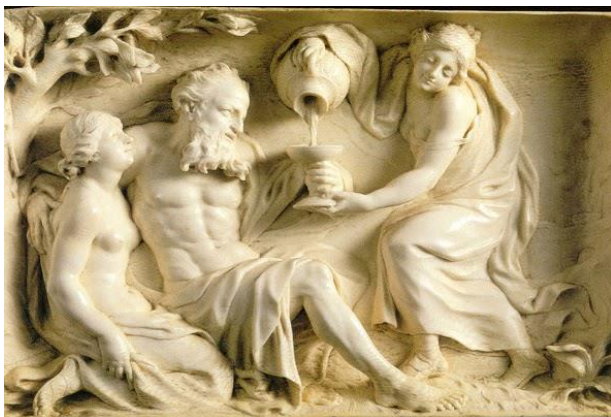
August 25 – *Interlude: The Walk With Me Program with Rozann Greco and Chamisse Morast*

The Walk With Me program provides critical services to those leaving Broome County Jail. The services include assistance with housing, obtaining valid identification, transportation, job applications, employment, support groups, peer advocacy and mentoring.

Our congregation has supported case managers for the program for about five years, partnering with Family Enrichment Network to assist those in need. Rozann Greco, the founder of the program, and Chamisse Morast will be with us to tell us about their work and to answer any questions you may have about the program.

September 1 – *Strange Heroes: Lot's Daughters*

Focus text: Genesis 19:30–38



The story of Sodom and Gomorrah ends with God raining down fire and brimstone on the two cities, which are utterly destroyed and the land laid waste. Abraham and his family flee in one direction; his nephew Lot flees with his family in another direction. Lot’s two daughters wake up and believe that the world has been destroyed and it now falls to them to repopulate the earth; they plot together to make Lot very drunk and then sleep with him to become pregnant. From these actions, we are told, came the Ammonite and Moabite peoples. Although the English-language editor of Genesis adds a title calling it

"Lot and his daughters", attributed to Francis van Bossuit, ca. 1670. From commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Francis_van_Bossuit_%28Attr.%29_-_Lot_and_his_daughters.jpg. creativecommons.org/publicdomain/zero/1.0/deed.en

“Shameful Origins,” there is no evidence in the story that the daughters were anything but heroic in their actions. This probably began as a “just-so” story, but it offers a cautionary note to believers — we should always remain humble about whether our actions are glorifying God or simply adding to chaos. What seems wrong in one context may seem heroic in another, and vice versa.

Pastors’ Ponderings

Dear Ones,

As we are inching our way into a consideration of what the future holds for us at United Presbyterian Church, it seems to me that there are questions that each of us will need to take seriously, as we look at our life and work together. Our annual report, and to some extent this newsletter, contains summaries of all of the work that happens in our building. Pay attention to the descriptions and see if there’s anything you didn’t know about, or that surprises you. Then ask yourself about each item, “Is this something I support or relate to in the work of the church? Would I miss it if it was gone? Could we let this go and still be who we say we are, followers of Jesus in downtown Binghamton?”

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

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

We are a self-described “Cottage Congregation in a Cathedral Building,” and for many years we have found ways to continue ministering at the size of our building, instead of at the size of our congregation. As we experience the shifts and changes in our congregation and begin to create a plan for our future, we will need to make some choices and some changes so that our ministry becomes sustainable at the size of our congregation. What that will look like will depend on you — on what you are willing to commit to and to support with your time, talent and treasure.

We can be very proud and grateful for the work that God has allowed us to do in our united congregation. We couldn’t do it without an exceptionally talented and committed core group of leaders, staff members, cheerleaders, cooks, table-servers, dishwashers, quiltmakers, computer geeks, card-writers, musicians, educators, envelope-stuffers, prayer warriors, tour leaders, and story tellers. Where do you find your place in our community?

What does it mean for YOU?

Grace and peace, *Pastor Kimberly*



*Kimberly P Chastain,
Pastor*



Greetings friends!

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

The first creative thing that stands out to me is all the art projects that were sent home in the monthly Sunday School packets. It’s a wonderful part of my job to find

Becky Kindig, Associate Pastor

ways to have our young ones use the scripture passages we read each week turn into something tangible and creative that helps them connect with the story or the lesson. It helps the kids and their grown-ups talk about the story as well. I try to have a variety of things over the year to hopefully make sure there is something enjoyable for everyone. This year we have done matching games, books, scratch art, wall hangings, musical instruments, Nativity stickers, tie dye Easter Eggs, a rainbow love wreath, planting seeds, a butterfly to remember migrants, and several others. Many thanks to Marilynn Guinane who puts the packets together each month!



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

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



6 ≡ UP-Beat Newsletter



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

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

In addition to Sunday school packets, campus ministry and congregational activities, I greatly enjoyed worshipping together and sharing our common desire to share God's love with all people. I'm so lucky that I get to do that in numerous ways here during our special holidays and the normal times in between: with music, preaching, Time for the Young at Heart, Communion, special events, Bible study, and fellowship. Thank you for all the ways you join me in this ministry here at UPC. It has been a very fun, fulfilling, and creative year! I look forward to what God is calling us to next!

Pastor Becky



Our Church Family

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

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

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.

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 provide 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.

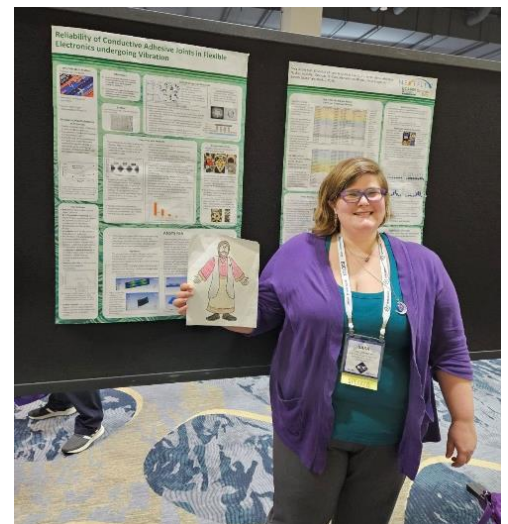


There is also a nursery space at the end of the hall at the front of the sanctuary that is open for use with a parent or guardian. It has a changing table, a rocking chair, and some toys appropriate for children ages two and under. There is a speaker in the room so you can listen to the service. Please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

With summertime upon us, the choirs are taking a break until after Labor Day. We 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.

The Adventures of Flat Jesus

A lot of people are traveling and visiting with friends this summer, so we gave out Flat Jesus pictures toward the end of May and invited folks to color him in and get some photos of all the places and faces that Flat Jesus visits.



Flat Jesus the Engineer joined Sara Lieberman in Denver for a materials engineering conference.



Flat Jesus attended the AGO concert in June with Pastor Becky and Scott Kindig.



Flat Jesus took part in the Presbytery of Susquehanna Valley’s June Assembly meeting in Nichols.



Flat Jesus hung out with some of his friends at the Burgers’ house.



Flat Jesus grabbed a bite at the Silver Spoon Diner in Clarks Summit.



Flat Jesus met Rep. Marc Molinaro along with members of the Broome County Hunger Coalition at a forum about the Farm Bill that is being considered by Congress this summer.

Flat Jesus joined Andy & Cindy Chadwick for their travels in the western US this summer — laminated for better durability! Here they are, getting ready for two months of camping.



at Mt. Gilead State Park, Ohio



helping Andy with some work at the Mt. Gilead campsite



getting through a major rainstorm when crossing the Mississippi River



at Gulpha Gorge Campsite, Hot Springs National Park, Arkansas



Flat Jesus in Flat Texas.



at the Dallas Zoo with the Walkers, former members of West Pres



in Dallas with Presidents Bush at Bush Presidential Library and Museum



in scenic Texas

10 ≡ UP-Beat Newsletter



on Historic Route 66 in Amarillo, TX



with sagebrush in New Mexico



with a rainbow, after a storm near Great Sand Dunes National Park, Alamosa, CO



having a picnic at Split Mountain, Dinosaur National Monument, Jensen, Utah



Flat Jesus & Andy at Dinosaur National Park.



in "The Middle of Nowhere", Idaho



at Hagerman Fossil Beds, Hagerman, Idaho



at City of Rocks National Reserve, Almo, Idaho



with names of emigrants carved in the rocks on their path west



in Seattle, near a church



on a ferry going across the Puget Sound, Seattle; Mt. Rainier is faintly visible in the background

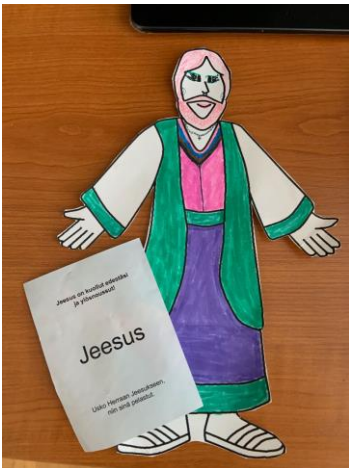


with wildlife in
Boedel Reserve,
Bainbridge Island,
Washington State



Flat Jesus also went with Pastor
Kimberly on her travels in Europe:

Flat Jesus jetted east to enjoy ice cream with Pastor Becky and
Scott Kindig at the Halo Pub in Princeton, New Jersey.



In Finnish, Jesus is
spelled with two E's.



Flat Jesus found a sheep!



Flat Jesus admired the
bathroom decor
at Tekkli Manor.



Flat Jesus rode
in the Mercedes
to Mikkeli, Finland.



Flat Jesus went
on a boat tour in
Savonlinna, Finland.

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).

Session News

A big thank you to the members of the Session Class of 2024, whose terms ended in June: Marilyn Guinane, Lou McKeage, and Allison Nyamuame. We are grateful to them for their time of service as members of Session.

At our Annual Meeting on June 16, we elected three elders to serve on Session. They will be the Session Class of 2026, and all are serving their first two-year term.

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

Sherry Conklin is employed by the church as our Community Kitchen Coordinator, and serves on the Hospitality Team which was formed this year.

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

Session Members — 2024–2025

Left to right: (parenthetical number indicates years served as of July 2024)

Class of 2025:

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

Class of 2026:

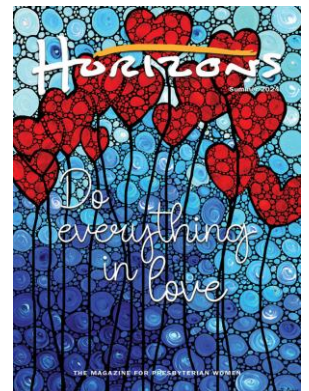
Cindy Burger (0)
Sherry Conklin (0)
Judy Girdwood Westcott (0)



For the Love of Creation

Chris Burger had an article published in the Summer 2024 issue of *Horizons* magazine, the official publication of the Presbyterian Women of the PC(USA). The article contained some of the same message that Chris preached about at UPC in the fall of 2022.

To learn more about *Horizons* and the Presbyterian Women, go to presbyterianwomen.org.



Supporting Our Mission and Ministry

Online Giving: 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.

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

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

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**, Andy Chadwick; **Hospitality**, Sally Hunt or Sherry Conklin; **Mission**, Pastor Kimberly or Sherry Conklin; **Personnel**, Cindy Burger; **Property**, Pastor Becky; **Sewing Group**, Cindy Burger.

News from the Presbytery of Susquehanna Valley

From the Lead Presbyter for Transformation, Rev. Dr. Greg Garis:

The merger of First Presbyterian Church of Johnson City and John Hus Presbyterian Church

On Sunday, June 23, I worshiped with members of John Hus Presbyterian Church and First Presbyterian Church of Johnson City. This was the last worship service for the John Hus PC. Both churches have decided to merge. The Presbytery of Susquehanna Valley also approved of this merger.

Rev. Joe Hein has been preaching at John Hus for the last several months. He began this service by saying that it was not a funeral service but a service focused on resurrection. He said that the members of John Hus will bring with them memories of the ministry that they have been a part of to the First Presbyterian Church, Johnson City. Also helping to lead worship was retired pastor Linda Breffle, who was the most recent pastor of John Hus. She served the church for 13 years. Rev. Hein preached the last sermon of the church based on Mark 4:35-42. In this passage, Jesus and his disciples go across a lake when a great windstorm arose and the waves beat into the boat. Jesus is asleep in the stern when the disciples wake him and ask if he cares that they are perishing. Jesus silences and stills the storm and asks if the disciples "Why are you afraid? Have you still no faith?"

Rev. Hein said that the disciples in this story made the storm about Jesus and asked the congregation if we don't do this too. Make the struggles that we face in life about God. He said that often the struggle is inside of us and because of our lack of faith in God. He proclaimed that God always delivers. When Jesus said "Peace, be still," Hein said that Jesus was not only



meaning to change the weather but to change the disciples' fear. He said that Jesus often points to what is going on inside of us and that it is easy to be afraid. But faith, Hein said, points us beyond our problems to Jesus. Hein encouraged us to stand firm in God's promises. God is always with us and Jesus said that he will never leave us.

At the end of the service, Rev. Robert Peak, pastor of First Presbyterian Church of Johnson City, led a litany titled "Merger Service Part 1". Part 2 of the litany would take place on Sunday, June 30, at First Pres JC.

Toward the end of the service members of John Hus Church carried items from the church that will be carried in next week to First Pres JC.

After the service, there was a potluck lunch and cake for those in attendance. Displayed throughout the fellowship hall was a display of pictures of past events in the church.

John Hus Presbyterian Church was organized in 1923 and was named after the 15th-century Czech priest who was martyred for offering communion to his congregation in defiance of the Roman Church, which at that time reserved the sharing of the wine to priests only. John Hus Church has had a vital ministry for over 100 years. One announcement that was made at this last service was that members had collected over 100 lbs. of food last week to give to the needy.

I was happy to be a part of the congregation in their last service. I'm truly sorry that I was unable to attend the service on June 30 when they carried items from John Hus into First Pres JC, while I was at the 226th General Assembly in Salt Lake City.

Well done, faithful servants of John Hus Presbyterian Church. You have touched lives with the life of Christ, and the Presbytery of Susquehanna Valley is grateful for your faithfulness and service.



Our Life Together: An Overview

Our Sunday morning worship life and practice is the heart and center of United Presbyterian Church, and increasingly, it is the time during the week when we "make time" for our common life. We have integrated most of our Spiritual Formation practices, our potlucks, our birthday celebrations and even some of our book discussions into the time we spend together on Sundays. And in many ways, this works pretty well, because in a world which places increasing demands on everyone, it is good to feel that there is one dedicated time and space where we can explore our life together.



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

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

During the week, we gather in smaller groups:

- On Mondays at 1:00pm for Bible Study. We have been reading through the New Testament in the order that it was written (we just finished the gospel of John, so we're about halfway through).

- On Wednesday mornings for our Sewing & Quilting Group. This small but intrepid crew created over 40 quilts this year, which we share with nursing homes, congregants who are managing long-term conditions, Mom's House, and Camp Sunshine. We give a quilt to each newborn in the congregation, and the pastors keep a few on hand in their offices in case we learn of someone who needs a special gift from the church. This year we have been joined regularly on Zoom by friends who are traveling and by a young disabled man named Alan, who calls in faithfully each Wednesday at noon and seems to enjoy the fellowship.



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

- On Wednesdays at 6:30pm for Choir practice. We have an amazing range of talent in our congregation, supported by section leaders and instrumentalists, and the choir supports and enhances our congregational worship and helps us to sing praises to God every Sunday. Choir members and friends will provide special music during the summer while the choir is on hiatus.



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

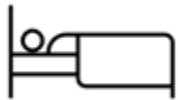
- On Fridays at 5:00pm on Zoom for a "virtual cocktail hour". Started during the pandemic, this is a small gathering of friends to talk about the week, share information, and stay connected to folks who can't get here in person.

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

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

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

Inside the building...



The UP Center is our newest collaborative project to build up our community. In 2023, we converted our Library Lounge, Terrace Room, and Chapel into a 42-bed warming station, providing overnight accommodation to unhoused people 5 nights per week in partnership with the Addiction Center of Broome County. Guests arrive at 7:00pm and are given a meal, an opportunity to get clean and a bed to sleep in, then are given breakfast and sent on their way by 7:00am. The shelter staff does a minimum of 8 loads of laundry every night in dedicated laundry machines (installed in a former Sunday school room), and this winter we were able to install a shower in one of the first-floor bathrooms for emergency needs. Guests of the shelter are able to use the church mailing address to get a Sheriff's ID card, which is a necessary step toward finding permanent housing.



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



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



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



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



VINES (Volunteers Improving Neighborhood Environments) has been a friend and co-conspirator with this congregation since 2014, building the raised-bed garden in our side yard, distributing farm shares in our lobby, cooking and serving the community meal on 5th Tuesdays, and using the offices in the lower level. They moved to their own purpose-

built offices this month, but they will continue to work with us on shared projects and our prayers go with them for continued success in their work.



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



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



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

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

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



The Presbytery of Susquehanna Valley is the regional body that resources the 42 PC(USA) congregations in this part of New York state. United Presbyterian Church provides storage



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



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



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

space and receives mail for our “office-less” presbytery. Pastor Becky and Chris Burger share the position of Stated Clerk for the Presbytery, and they work with churches around the presbytery, with the Lead Presbyter for Transformation Rev. Dr. Greg Garis, and with various commissions and committees to keep Presbyterians connected both locally and nationally. The pastors as well as the congregation are considered members of the presbytery, and we support the work of the presbytery and are supported by the presbytery in many ways.

In the Binghamton Community



United Presbyterian Church partners with the Family Enrichment Network to offer a program called “Walk With Me,” which provides critical services to those returning to the community from Broome County Jail. Our congregation supports a part-time case manager who works with people to help them get back on their feet and find their way. The services offered by Walk With Me include assistance with housing, obtaining valid identification, transportation, job applications, employment, support groups, peer advocacy, and mentoring.

On the Borderlands



David Ruston and Greg Patinka travel regularly to Arizona to minister with Salvavision and the Tucson Samaritans at the United States–Mexico border. This program searches for travelers in the desert in an effort to save lives at the Mexico–US border. Dave and Greg learned

about the migrants who come to our borders seeking refuge and safety, and participated in the humanitarian missions that offer water and other life-conserving services to the people who are in desperate need. We now have a

dedicated space in our sanctuary, the Esquina de la Esperanza (Corner of Hope), that keeps us mindful of the needs and gives us space to pray for and learn about the work and the needs.



In Ghana



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



Ministry Reports

Card Committee

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

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

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

The committee welcomes additional "card senders" and encourages anyone wishing to join the group to contact the church office or one of the members listed below. Also, we encourage church family and friends to let the committee know of any special occasions, milestone events, and birthdays.

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



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



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

Community Kitchen

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

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

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



Our food pantry occupies the north wing of Fellowship Hall.

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

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

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

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

Over the last twelve months, we’ve had to make some hard choices in the face of higher need and rising expenses. Last summer, the emergency funding that agencies received during Covid was discontinued, and at the same time, welfare recipients’ benefits were cut, and grocery prices were going up due to inflation. We had to change some of our procedures to control our expenses, because the grants and free food being provided to us by CHOW and the Food Bank were reduced. We stopped offering seconds at the meal, and ended our takeout option which we had begun to offer in 2020. We had to set limits on pantry items, and could no longer allow pantry clients to shop for another person or household. We also discontinued the monthly hygiene day. We now offer hygiene items on pantry days when they are available, dependent upon receiving donations of personal care products. This has helped us to serve our regular local clients better since we no longer have people coming from all parts of the county just to get free stuff on the hygiene day.

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

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

Hospitality Team

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

This past spring, the committee was instrumental in hosting (and all that entails) in two different Life-Celebration luncheons. Going forward, we have begun and will continue to celebrate our church family



birthdays each month. Please let us know if you would like to host or help with a specific birthday Sunday. We are a growing team that is open to new team members and suggestions.

Hospitality Team Members: Cindy Chadwick, Sherry Conklin, Sally Hunt, and Suzie Northrop Raboy.

Property Team

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

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

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

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

In the meantime, we were told that we were awarded a grant from the United Way that Pastor Kimberly had applied for in December of 2022 to provide a drop-in center with computers and a case



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

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

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

Another part of the grant money was used to upgrade our WiFi network so that we could provide WiFi in more parts of the building for staff, members, and guests. It has been beneficial to our guests who need to use the internet to sign up for benefits, apply for housing and jobs, and to keep in contact with their loved ones. And it is more secure, with a guest network that anyone in the building can use, and a separate private network for staff use that keeps our files and printers walled off from the public. New WiFi pucks were placed throughout the building and a new network hub was mounted in the office. Signs are posted throughout the building offering free public WiFi to anybody who needs it. We have more than enough network capacity to support the increased use during the week thanks to the high-speed upgraded internet that we use for livestreaming on Sundays.



Left: New and more powerful access points in the basement make it possible for our kitchen volunteers and staff to make and receive WiFi calls and messages. Right: The tangle of ethernet cables and stack of network switches has been tamed and streamlined with a new network hub.



The new coating on the patio looks great!

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

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

Property Team Members: Chris Burger, Ken Mebert, and Pastor Becky Kindig; Bill Sands, adjunct consultant.

Sewing Group

During the annual reporting period of June 2023 to May 2024, members of the Sewing Group continued to meet every week, even during the summer months when many groups are on hiatus. Major activities continue to be designing and sewing quilts, and creating other items for the community.



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

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

The Sewing Group’s mission hasn’t changed in the more than half-century that the group has been active: to help others by providing items of comfort throughout Greater Binghamton and beyond. Members worked on projects at home and met every Wednesday in person at the church or via Zoom to keep in touch with each other and provide updates on current happenings within the church family. Even when some of our sewing group members relocated during the winter months, they stayed in close contact with the Binghamton group via Zoom, and worked tirelessly before they headed south so that the group had plenty to work on over the winter.

June 2023 – May 2024 Activities:

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



A sampling of the colorful creations of the Sewing Group.



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

Future Plans: The group will continue its mission of crafting comforting and functional items for those throughout the community, in addition to accepting and sorting fabric and yarn donations. Gratitude from recipients continues to be strong as witnessed by the thank you notes received. The group is always seeking new members, regardless of prior experience or skill level. For more information, please contact the church office or one of the group's members.

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

Worship and Music Team

Team Purpose: To oversee and coordinate all aspects of United Presbyterian Church's worship services.

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

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

Worship Highlights of June 2023 – May 2024

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

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

- **June 18th:** Becky Mebert gave a very informative talk about the journey she and Ken took on the Civil Rights Trail in the South. She shared a compelling pictorial narrative of their insights with us in our worship service.
- **August 6th:** We had a Hiroshima/Nagasaki Remembrance with Veterans for Peace. We heard from guest speakers Jack Gilroy and Jim Clune. In preparation for the event, our church made many origami peace cranes, which colorfully decorated the church!
- **September 3rd:** Josiah Rwabukwisi was baptized, and we received Vicky Brown into membership.
- **September 10th:** Dave Ruston gave us some general information into the crisis of migrants at the southwestern border, and why we have this crisis. He talked to us about his and Greg's assistance with the Tucson Samaritans' important work, placing water bottles in the desert, and providing resources for migrants once they crossed the border. In the sanctuary, several of our members established a "Corner of Hope", a memorial in front of the sanctuary for migrants who died in crossing the desert.



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

- **November 5th, Feast of All Saints/Bouquet of Remembrance Sunday:** We continued our tradition of remembering those who had died this year and in the past, with flowers for a big bouquet in the front of the sanctuary.
- **November 12th:** Dr. Rose Niles spoke to the congregation about Project Regeneration, an intentional process of strategic planning over the next five years. This also involved a workshop after the service, leading us in a time of conversation and exploration of our values, mission, and core beliefs.

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

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

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



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

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

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

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



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

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



March 28th, Maundy Thursday:

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

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

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

May 19th, Pentecost: We celebrated Pentecost inside in the sanctuary this year (as opposed to the windy one outside last year). We celebrated our togetherness as a church with communion. We also received Charity Outman into membership on this day, and had a celebration of May birthdays after the service.



Thank you from the Worship Team! We owe a huge debt of gratitude to our pastors, musical directors, musicians, choirs, and UPC's wonderful tech team: Scott Kindig, Ken Mebert, Sara Lieberman, Chris Burger, Andy Chadwick, Aeden Hickey, Emily Hugenbruch, Matt Johnson, Shawn Landon, Dave Ruston, and Felix Rwabukwisi. Worship services would not have been the quality they were without their skills and their ability to change with UPC's needs!

Musicians for worship services: We are blessed to have a talented and dedicated vocal choir under the leadership of Music Coordinator Aimée Backus, supported by accompanist Becky Mebert and section leaders Riya Bolander & Victoria Barics (soprano), Starletta Noll-Long (alto), Austin Shadduck (tenor), and Ernest Backus [summer 2023] & Robert Manners [fall 2023-present] (bass). The United Ringers handbell choir continues to grow and flourish under the direction of Austin Shadduck. And our congregational singing has been enhanced throughout the year with flute accompaniment by Aimée

Backus and Arianna Windsong alongside the piano or organ, with vocal support from our choir section leaders. Over the course of 2023–2024, Aimée Backus secured many talented people from our congregation and community. Among them have been: musical offerings by children in our congregation (i.e. children's handchimes); special vocal contributions from David Berti, Aeden Hickey, Sharon Landon, Ken Mebert, Catherine Micalizzi, Mackinaw Shutt, Judy Westcott, and Phil Westcott; and instrumental solos, ensembles, or accompaniment including Riya Bolander, tuba; Claude Cornwall, piano; Margaret Davis, violin; Henry Deuel, saxophone; Adrian Finney, tuba; Sara Lieberman, trumpet; Zeke Merlis, cello; Justin Miller, euphonium; Elikem Nyamuame, drums; Lana Ogden, recorder; Nathan Raboy, trombone; Austin Shadduck, shakuhachi; Mike Timson, trumpet; Alex Westcott, drums; Phil Westcott, guitar & saxophone; and the Flute Studio of Binghamton Faculty and friends (Aimée Backus, Amelia Baran, Teresa Deskur, Stephany Marilley, Lindsey Williams, & Ariana Windsong). We also welcomed substitute accompanists on several occasions when Becky Mebert was away: Carol Bartlett, organ; Andy Chadwick, organ & piano; Linden Foster, organ; Jean Herman Henssler, organ; and Cathy Murphy, piano.

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



Programs & Events

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 #**

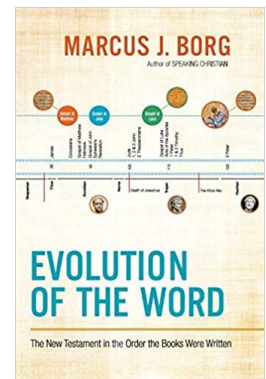
If you have questions or need help using Zoom, feel free to call the church office for assistance.

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*. We are on a break until August 12; when we resume, 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.



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.

Hartwick Seminary Summer Institute of Theology

Sunday July 28 to Friday August 2 at Hartwick College, Oneonta

Hartwick Seminary Summer Institute of Theology is a Christian education opportunity for laity and clergy that is open to all for personal enrichment and continuing education. People of every faith (and those seeking) are welcome. Two types of classes are offered:

- **Courses** meet for one hour each day Monday – Friday
- **Seminars** are 2½-hour single sessions held Monday–Thursday (afternoons and evenings). Two-part seminars do not require attendance at both parts.

The Theologian in Residence this year will be the Rev. Patrick (Paddy) Rooney, Senior of the Society of the Holy Trinity (STS) – a delightful Irish American who will be teaching three classes. Faculty faith traditions include American Baptist, Assembly of God, Lutheran, Orthodox Church in America, Presbyterian, Roman Catholic, and United Methodist.

This year Rev. Cynthia Walton-Leavitt (pastor of Red Door Church in Oneonta) is offering a seminar entitled *Palestinians* on Monday, July 29, at 6:30pm. The seminar will offer historical background to a conversation about *The Other Side of the Wall: A Palestinian Christian Narrative of Lament and Hope* by Munther Isaac, Pastor of Christmas Lutheran Church in Bethlehem. Other seminar topics include Christian spirituality, forgiveness, pastoral visitation, prison chaplaincy, and more.

Look over the list of offerings in the HSIT Brochure (bit.ly/4cm6vpI) to see if there is a course or seminar that piques your interest. The registration form is at bit.ly/4cGpn2q. Individual seminars cost \$60 each, week-long courses are \$90 each, or commuter tuition is \$275 including all meals. Scholarships are available for active members of UPC through the Gladstone Christian Scholarship Trust fund; contact the church office for more info.

For further details about HSIT, please contact Paul Messner, Pastor of the Otsego County Lutheran Parish, and Administrator of the Hartwick Seminary Institute of Theology at prpaul_theoinst@hotmail.com

The Presbytery of Susquehanna Valley's Commission on Christian Leadership Formation encourages everyone in church leadership to consider Christian enrichment opportunities. May God bless our ministries of education and faith formation.

News from the Presbytery of Susquehanna Valley

Our presbytery's newsletter, "Thursday Thoughts" (susvalpresby.org/thursday-thoughts), is published every week and includes announcements from our partner congregations in the region, news from the PC(USA) denomination, and links to webinars & resources available to us through the presbytery.

Thursday Thoughts often announces classes and retreats offered by churches, seminaries, and other agencies, some in person and others online.

We are all invited to expand our understanding of the church and its mission through a broad variety of topics. Check it out, you might find something that sparks your interest.

Practical Resources for Churches

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 programs and webinars are available at no charge to you through our paid subscription, and most webinars are recorded and available for later viewing if you missed it live.

Here are three webinars from PRC that are coming up soon:

- **Responding Effectively to Christian Nationalism – Thursday, July 18, 2-3pm:** The dangers that Christian Nationalism poses to both church and state are increasingly understood, but it is hard to know what you and your congregation can do about a problem so big. This webinar will explain what Christian Nationalism is (and isn't), how many mainline and progressive Christians inadvertently advance its cause, and how individuals and communities can practically respond. Registration for this webinar is required: bit.ly/4cHN36j.
- **The Gifts They Bring: How Children and the Gospels Can Shape Inclusive Ministry – Tuesday, August 13, 2-3pm:** Explore familiar Gospel stories together envisioning afresh the experience of childhood in Jesus's world and what they might mean for children and families in ministry today. We will reconsider the age and relationship of well-known and lesser-known Bible characters, and read each of these stories in conversation with experiences of real children in the church today, revealing the varied gifts that children bring in a practice of inclusive ministry – such as participation, proclamation, advocacy, listening, sharing, and partnership. Participants will grow more attuned to recognize the gifts that we each bring – children and adults – as essential members working together as one community in the body of Christ and so to share in the gift of Christ together. bit.ly/3Sb29Kn
- **Managing Stress Before It Manages You – Thursday, September 12, 2-3pm:** In this webinar you'll learn an evidence-based tool to better combat stress and develop your resilience. Webinar leader Charles Stone coaches and equips pastors and teams to effectively navigate the unique challenges ministry brings. By blending Biblical principles with cutting-edge brain-based practices, he helps them enhance their leadership abilities, elevate their preaching/teaching skills, and prioritize self-care. For more info and his blogs, visit charlesstone.com. Register at bit.ly/3XE1Pap.

These webinars are free to you, funded through the Presbytery of Susquehanna Valley's subscription to PRC.

The "Pew to Pulpit" series is for church folks who find themselves leading worship – whether stepping in for a pastor on leave, helping during a transition, or moving to stronger congregational leadership. The series is part practical support, part art, and part encouragement. Recordings of workshops in the series are available on PRC's website.

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.

Just One More Page – A monthly book review blog. prcli.org/prc-book-review-blog

Cultivate: growing in faith – Christian Education and faith formation resources, ideas, and anecdotes for adults, children, youth, families, and multigenerational ministry. The June 2024 letter is at bit.ly/4eLwnwU

Youth Ministry Design Workshop – Sunday, August 25, 2–6:30pm (dinner included) *at Johnsonburg Camp and Retreat Center in New Jersey*

Facilitated by Liz Moore, Assistant Director, IYM, Princeton Theological Seminary

Sponsored by the Young Leader Formation Team, Presbytery of the Highlands

Are you interested in trying new forms of youth ministry? Join us on August 25th for a Youth Ministry Design Workshop run by the Institute for Youth Ministry at Princeton Theological Seminary! Bring a new

idea or project that you would like to see come to life or bring an existing activity/program in your ministry you would like to reimagine. This workshop seeks to help you refine your ideas, identify the resources and support you will need, and encourage you as you partner with God for the care of young people in your context!

Come early or stay late and enjoy the beautiful grounds of Johnsonburg Camp and Conference Center either before or after the scheduled workshop time!



There is no charge for the workshop – Freewill donations are welcome.

Dinner cost is \$18, payable at the gathering. Deadline for registration is August 11. Register at highlandspresbytery.org/young-leader-formation-team

Workshop Leader: Liz Moore – Liz Moore is the assistant director of the Institute for Youth Ministry, where she oversees the Certificate in Youth and Theology Program and develops training and resources for youth workers. Liz has more than a decade of experience in youth ministry and pastoral leadership. A sought-after teacher and preacher, Liz is passionate about listening prayer, sustainable ministry, and social change. She holds a BA in Religious Studies from Trinity College in Connecticut and an MDiv from Duke Divinity School.

Frontier Fellowship

As part of God's mission to the world, Frontier Fellowship invites believing communities to engage people groups where the Good News of Jesus and his Kingdom is not yet known.

Read their summer newsletter bit.ly/3VLSzOH, and check out their summer prayer guide, *Called to Pray*, at issuu.com/frontierfellowship/docs/called_to_pray.

Announcing a new opportunity for fellowship through prayer: Beginning August 1 at 8:00pm EDT, Frontier Fellowship will host *Called to Prayer* gatherings via Zoom on the first Thursday of every month. We would love to have you join us each month (or as often as you are able!) to focus our hearts on God and His love for all peoples. We want every person on the frontier to know Jesus and experience the blessing of knowing Him personally. You can learn more and register at frontierfellowship.com/called-to-prayer.



Starting as a mission of the United Presbyterian Church of Portland, Oregon, for more than 40 years Frontier Fellowship has been following a call to engage the Church — inviting, educating, inspiring, gathering, and equipping followers of Jesus to embrace their God-given roles in making his name known among every nation, tribe, people, and language. Unreached people groups are ethno-linguistic communities with little or no access to the Gospel. Researchers estimate there are over two billion people from more than 6,500 unique groups in the world today who've never heard about Jesus. Learn more about Frontier Fellowship at frontierfellowship.com.

Joys and Concerns

Graduates: Kayla Pelton, Victoria Barics, Riya Bolander

Preparing to Wed: Keith & Allison; Andrew & Margaret; Emma & Jessica

Newlywed: Sarah & Christian

Expecting a Baby: Tom & Brittney

Traveling Mercies: Elikem, Chadwicks, Burgers, Meberts

For Healing: Cynthia, Eugene, Robyn, Bernie, Tony, Marilyn, Carol, Elikem's dad, Dave J, Jack, Anthony, Bruce, Andy (brain bleed)

Grieving: Dave & Cheryl, death of Cheryl's mom;

Friends & Family of: Chrissy Lovelace, Dominick, Lloyd, Dale

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



Ongoing: Evelyn, Felix, MacMyne family, Jean, Jimmy, Kristie, Scott N., Michael, Natika, Rachmani family, Jen, Carlos, 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

July

- 1 Linda McDevitt
- 9 Ramona Auchinachie
- 11 Evan Kindig
- 14 Sarah Willis
- 19 George Cummings, Joyce Donohue
- 21 Doug Jones, Kayla Pelton
- 22 Ann Garcia
- 28 Bobbie Hickling, Cleo Pelton

August

- 1 James Favor
- 4 Owen Westcott
- 6 Mark Barnes
- 10 Aimee Backus, Judy Girdwood Westcott
- 11 Holly Red Elk
- 14 Linda Hessian, Leonard Hoover
- 15 Brian Hugenbruch
- 19 James Spencer
- 23 Ed Hickey
- 28 Elizabeth Rose Jurena

- 30 Cindy Burger, Margaret Davis

September

- 2 Josiah Rwabukwisi
- 4 Ethan Nyamuame, Starletta Noll Long
- 6 Clyde Jones
- 7 Sherry Conklin
- 9 Morgan Chadwick, Julie Njoroge
- 20 Emma Kindig
- 28 Brian Morse



Everyone is welcome here

UNITED PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH OF BINGHAMTON



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Address Service Requested

Congregational Activity Reports, June 2023–May 2024

Our 2023–2024 Congregational Activity Reports were distributed at the Annual Congregational Meeting on June 16. If you did not receive one, copies of the full printed reports are available at the church office. You can pick one up on Sunday morning, or contact the church office to have one sent to you if you can't get here.

Excerpts from the 2023–2024 Congregational Activity Reports are included in this issue of the UP-Beat.

