

Winter 2025

Volume 16, Issue 1

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



Ash Wednesday, March 5

Worship services at 12:30pm and 6:00pm

We will gather in the sanctuary for a meditative service, where each person will be invited to travel among six stations to reflect on the meaning of ashes: loss, mortality, emptiness, weakness, repentance, and purification.

As we close our time together, worshipers will be invited to receive the sign of ashes on their hand or forehead.

Art for the Heart:

A Lenten Series of Creativity and Reflection

Thursdays, 5:30–7pm, March 6 – April 10

Join us on Thursday evenings beginning on March 6 to explore ways to nourish faith through the creative arts. We'll gather in the Upper Lounge at 5:30 for a simple supper, then move to the art studio at 6:00 for the evening activity, exploring ways that we can connect to God's love and purpose through pottery, watercolor painting, a drum circle, coloring Easter Eggs in the Lithuanian style, and working with fiber arts to create beauty. Rev. Paul Huh will reprise his meditation on the potter and the clay in Jeremiah 18, Jessica Lane will demonstrate watercolors, Elikem Nyamuame will lead a drum circle, etc. There will also be daytime studio hours for those who wish to spend more time or who cannot come to the Thursday gathering – watch for more details!



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We are a place where everyone is welcome as we support one another to act justly, practice kindness, and walk humbly with God.



UNITED PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH OF BINGHAMTON



Pastors' Ponderings

Greetings friends!

I don't know about you, but the time since Christmas has felt like a roller coaster! There have been highs and lows and it has gone by really, really fast. This past weekend over the President's Day break, I finally got a chance to slow down and take a break. I didn't listen to the news for 3 days, I visited with my family, I cleaned, and I did the Backyard Bird Count. And today I am feeling so much better. It's funny how we think squeezing more and more into our lives makes us more productive when actually taking time to connect with others, tune out the world, and doing things you enjoy do that so much better.



*Becky Kindig,
Associate Pastor*

I realized this weekend when my birding app told me that this weekend was the Backyard Bird Count that I hadn't spent any time watching birds for 2 months. And that is really sad, because watching birds and being in nature is something that really connects me to God. It's human nature to forget to take care of ourselves, and I think that is one of many reasons that God calls us to be in community with one another to remind each other to slow down on a regular basis and rest, recharge, and reconnect with God.

We see Jesus do this many times. Things start to get busy when crowds start to form around Jesus, and we hear he slips off to go and pray. And we all know the commandment from God about keeping a Sabbath day to do no work so you could worship, study, and rest. God tells us it is really important, and when we do find a way to work it into our schedules we do feel so much better. But it doesn't come naturally. We have to be intentional.

How do you rest, recharge, and reconnect with God? Do you have an answer for all three? Because all three are important and one thing rarely meets all three needs.

Ask yourself what you can do to really rest. What physical and mental demands can you put down or share with someone else for a few hours to let yourself do this. Make the boundary, put it on your calendar, and claim the time to rest. And being in community, you can ask someone else if there is a way that you can lighten someone else's load when you are rested. Or maybe help each other by making time to rest together.



How about recharging? What makes you light up or brings you joy? When was the last time you did that? Is it spending time with friends? Cooking? Playing games with family? Doing sports? Creating something? The list is endless. Try to find some time to build that into your schedule at least once a month if you haven't for a while, but ideally once a week. I know some people have a hard time making room for joy when the world seems to be in so much pain. But joy is contagious so you might inject a little of what the world needs right now. Joy can also be a form of resistance when others want you to be despairing. And feeling joy does not mean that the other feelings are not there, they just get a break too.

And how about reconnecting with God? What activity slows your mind and opens you to a sense of awe and wonder about God? It could be worship, reading the bible or other devotionals, or time of prayer. It could be engaging in work that helps others. It could be spending time in God's creation. It could be writing or art or music, or a meditative or gratitude practice. Or it could be something else and

can be multiple things. Finding what connects you to God is important, and once you find it, make time to keep doing it. And if you have one but have set it aside for a while, here is your reminder to engage again.

I know I struggle sometimes with feeling that it is selfish to take that time, but it really isn't. You can't be generous if you are running on empty.

Finding an answer to this is going to be really important in the weeks and months ahead as we deal with the monumental and dizzying change our government is going through at the moment. Keeping up has been overwhelming at times and we feel that we have to know what is going on. But I assure you, friends, that the news will still be there when you plug back in after your rest. And if you are really worried about missing something important, you can let a friend know that you are unplugging for a few days but to let you know if a particular thing happens. That is what being part of a community can do for you. Some people in the community are still engaged with the work while others recharge and come back to let you take a break.



Image credit: Greg Rakozy, Australian Academy of Science

♥ Caring for ourselves, and keeping our connection with God, ensures that we can keep going so we can spread God's love to those around us.

Grace and Peace,
Pastor Becky



*Kimberly P Chastain,
Pastor*

How are you feeling today? This week? This season?

I know that many people feel like we entered a strange new world as 2025 began. We want to protect and understand, to shelter and nourish. We feel woefully unprepared for the way things are unfolding, and wish we could prepare for a future that we cannot envision and don't want to understand. Every morning the news is filled with heartbreaking announcements, and we wonder how we can bring our faith and our hope into a world where there is so much need and anger.

As we enter into Lent this year, we will read about how Jesus prepared his followers for difficult times, and look for ways to nurture and support each other in the days ahead. In times of shadow and fear, our calling is to resist despair and to offer light to those around us. Pastor Becky has written about the spiritual discipline of rest, and I have been working on ways that we can practice joy in our life together, by trying new things and sharing our energy with each other.

So this newsletter is packed with invitations to join the community in simple ways or larger ways, so that the way forward is one we take together. We're offering a Thursday evening Lenten series called "Art for the Heart", where we'll explore different ways to create beauty together. There's a scripture challenge, learning scriptures that will come to mind when you need them. Special giving opportunities and worship experiences will direct our attention to the Love that will not let us go. We've got the Tri-Cities Opera coming on March 8 to share an evening of Rodgers & Hammerstein, we've got training events to teach us ways to offer safety and peace of mind to people who are at risk, and we'll be learning and teaching practices in prayer and in gratitude.

Many of you know that I have a "soundtrack" that plays in my mind when I'm pondering how we are to respond to a world in need; in recent weeks I've been hearing the music of an old favorite:

*When peace like a river attends all my ways,
When sorrows like sea billows roll,
Whatever my lot, you have taught me to say,
"it is well, it is well with my soul."*

This is our challenge and our hope – that we will care for each other in these difficult times as we care for each other in simpler times, so we will all be able so sing together, not because the world is perfect or our lives free from struggle, but because it is well with our souls.

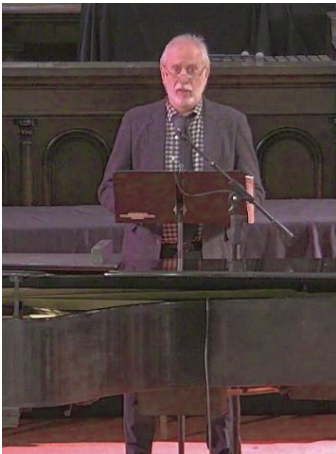
Grace & peace,
Pastor Kimberly

Music Notes

UPC's vocal and bell choirs have been enjoying a fulfilling season of making music during worship and in rehearsals. This year's Christmas Eve service was filled with joyful musical offerings. Aeden Hickey led the lighting of the Advent Wreath to "O Come, O Come, Emmanuel". We enjoyed a variety of styles and participants from saxophone duets (Austin Shadduck and Phil Westcott) and flute duets (Arianna Windsong and Aimée Backus) to vocal choir ("Spanish Shepherds' Song" and "Jesus Child"); bell choir ("Angels from the Realms of Glory" and "Gentle Mary Laid Her Child"); Margaret Davis lending her beautiful violin skills alongside Becky Mebert for reflective communion music ("Huron Carol"); Phil Westcott on guitar and vocals and Riya Bolander singing "Stille Nacht"; and the children of the congregation playing chimes to "Away in a Manger".

The Sunday after Christmas, David Berti led us in song with "Only a Baby Came" and "Mary's Little Boy Child." During January, we enjoyed beautiful solos from many different singers and instrumentalists: "Behold that Star" (Robert Manners); "Waltz on Rainbow Colored Roses" (Austin Shadduck and Becky Mebert); "Shall We





Gather at the River” (Starletta Noll-Long); “Ella’s Song” by Bernice Johnson (Andrea Gilebarto). Vocal choir also enjoyed performing gospel music: Keith Hampton’s arrangement of “Praise His Holy Name.”

We are getting ready for the Lenten season, and if you’ve been thinking about joining one of UPC’s music ministries, this is a great time to get involved. Vocal choir meets for rehearsals on Wednesday nights from 6:30 to 7:30, and bell choir meets after worship on Sundays from 11:30 to 12:30. We hope you can join us!



Upcoming Community Performances



Tri-Cities Opera presents “A Grand Night for Singing”
Saturday, March 8, 7:30pm at UPC Binghamton

At once a comic and loving tribute to the legendary song-writing duo, A Grand Night for Singing will have audiences laughing and humming along throughout the evening! Including some of the most beloved songs in Broadway history – highlighting musicals such as *Oklahoma!*, *South Pacific*, and *The Sound of Music* – Rodgers and Hammerstein’s creative partnership both dominated and became synonymous with the Golden Age of Broadway. Guided by the beautiful singing of TCO’s top-notch artists, be transported by the wit, charm, and melodies that put R&H in a class of their own.

Tickets: \$30 regular, \$40 premium. Call 607-772-0400 (Box Office) or buy online at tricitiesoera.com

Madrigal Choir of Binghamton presents “Our Broadway Heritage”
Sunday, March 30, 4pm at St. Thomas Aquinas Church, 7 Aquinas St., Binghamton

Our Broadway Heritage is an enchanting afternoon of music celebrating the rich history and vibrant culture of Broadway. Join us as we journey through time, revisiting beloved classics and discovering hidden gems from the world of musical theater. Whether you’re a lifelong fan or new to the magic of



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Broadway, this performance promises to delight and inspire audiences of all ages. Don't miss this opportunity to experience the timeless allure of Broadway, right here in Binghamton!

Tickets available at the door – Adults \$20.00; Students 17 and younger Free

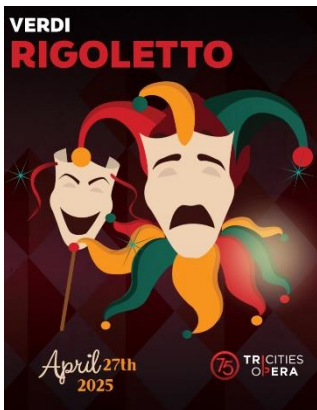
The American Guild of Organists Binghamton Chapter presents
Jean Herman Henssler – Sunday, April 6, 4pm
at Trinity Memorial Episcopal Church, 44 Main St., Binghamton

A light-hearted multi-media presentation/recital documenting Jean Henssler's recent 3-month return to college life at Oberlin College Conservatory of Music, Oberlin, Ohio. Free and open to the public; donations gratefully accepted.



Tri-Cities Opera presents "Rigoletto"

Sunday, April 27, 3pm at The Forum Theatre, 236 Washington St., Binghamton



In the twisted world of Rigoletto, love, lust, and revenge dance a scandalous waltz. Meet Rigoletto, a jester with a mean streak. His boss? A womanizing Duke who collects hearts like baseball cards. But when Rigoletto's own daughter gets caught in the Duke's web, it's game on. Cue the curses, deceit, a sprinkle of murder, and of course some of the most famous music ever written. Verdi's classic tale of honor and revenge, fathers and daughters, is never out of the repertory for long. An instant success from the night of its premiere, it has been moving audiences around the world for generations. Armed with a gripping story, a shocking twist, a blockbuster, reputation-making score, and a fabulous grand opera production style, Rigoletto is an indestructible, eternal testament to the sacrifices we make for our jobs, our families, and our honor.

Performed in Italian with English supertitles.

Tickets: Call 607-772-0400 (Box Office) or buy online at tricityopera.com

Presbyterian Association of Musicians 2025 Worship & Music Conference

June 15–20 or June 22–27 at Montreat Conference Center

Make a Joyful Noise: The Presbyterian Association of Musicians Worship & Music Conference, hosted in partnership with Montreat Conference Center, invites musicians of all ages to engage in a supportive community built on a shared love of the arts. Over the course of a week-long conference, you will be given the opportunity to grow your skills, network with other musicians, make new friends, and find time to simply relax. Whether you are a church professional, a choir member, or just a music lover, there are a myriad of ways that you can engage with this conference!

This is a great opportunity for any church musicians of many ages to go and learn with others. Whether you're a director or a choir or bell choir member, this has always been a highly regarded event. And the Presbytery of Susquehanna Valley's Faith Formation Scholarship can help adult musicians attend. susvalpresby.org/cclef-scholarship



This conference is also open to youth musicians (accompanied by an adult), and is eligible for the Presbytery's Campership program. susvalpresby.org/Camperships

Additional scholarship opportunities are also available from the Presbyterian Association of Musicians. The conference also has kid's club activities and child care available.

Register by April 30 to avoid late fees. With PSV funding, your registration cost would be **\$97.50** for adults or **\$87.50** for children & youth. (Housing & meals are not included.)

Learn more and register at presbysmusic.org/conference.

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, our Zoom room upcbgm.org/zoom, and our website 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 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

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.

download from our website 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

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.

UPC Choir: 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: 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, or speak with them in person after worship.

Worship in the Lenten Season

Transfiguration Sunday through Easter

March 2 – Transfiguration of the Lord, *Luke 9:28-51*

Luke's account of the Transfiguration, uniquely, says of Moses and Elijah that they were talking to Jesus "about his exodus, which he was to fulfill in Jerusalem" (9:33). As Jesus deliberately charts a path that will lead him into conflict with the Roman authorities and the temple leadership, the disciples are given new clarity about the nature and meaning of his mission. By connecting this journey with the Exodus, Luke makes clear that Jesus is creating a new way to freedom for all people.

The Angels of Praise, a praise dance team from the House of Worship on Riverside Drive, will be with us to share their interpretation of "Stand Up" from the movie "Harriet".

March 5 – Ash Wednesday, *worship services at 12:30pm and 6:00pm*

We will gather in the sanctuary for a meditative service, where each person will be invited to travel among six stations to reflect on the meaning of ashes: loss, mortality, emptiness, weakness, repentance, and purification. As we close our time together, worshipers may receive the sign of ashes on their hand or forehead.

March 9 – Authority and Power, *Luke 9:1-27, 52b-62*

Reading backwards from the Transfiguration, we learn of the commissioning of the twelve apostles. Luke specifies that they have authority over demons and disease, and that their work is "to proclaim the kingdom of God and to heal the sick". Jesus gives them instructions that make clear that this work is not accompanied by special favors or status; they are to carry only the message, and to accept hospitality from any who offer it. If hospitality is not offered, they are to "shake the dust off" and continue their journey, not fighting or imposing their vision on those they encounter. When the apostles return, followed by crowds, Jesus continues the ministry of teaching and healing until the hour grows late. The disciples express concern about the crowds growing hungry, and Jesus replies "You give them something to eat." In another anticipation of the coming kingdom, everyone eats their fill, with more than enough for all. Leading them away from the crowds, Jesus asks them who they think he is, and Peter makes his bold declaration "You are the anointed of God." Jesus reiterates that this anointing does not bring power in earthly terms, but service and suffering.

March 16 – Seeds of Change, *Luke 8:1-21, 40-56*

Jesus continues the work of teaching and healing, and gives the disciples a parable about the work of the kingdom, reminding them that not everyone will hear the challenge and be able to act upon it. The success of the work is found in the faithfulness of the workers, not in the response of the crowds. The chapter closes with the intertwined stories of a woman who has been cut off from society for twelve years by a medical condition, and the restoration to life of a twelve-year-old girl, the daughter of a synagogue leader. Rather than use the platform of his success to broaden his influence, Jesus orders the parents to stay silent and continues on his way.



*Angels of Praise dance team,
under the leadership of
Evangelist Marie Osby (not pictured)*

March 23 – What Keeps Us Captive, *Luke 8:22–39*

Luke interrupts himself in chapter eight to tell two stories about fear. In the first, the disciples are terrified by a storm on the sea of Gennesaret, while Jesus slumbers in the bow, unaffected by their fears. In the second, a man is paralyzed by demons, unable to live among the ordinary people. Jesus casts the demons into a herd of swine, and this demonstration of authority over the “Legion” terrifies the villagers and they ask Jesus to leave. The healed man asks to go with Jesus; Jesus responds, “return to your home and declare how much God has done for you”.

March 30 – Families and Faithfulness, *Luke 7:1–17*

At the beginning of chapter 7, a Roman soldier sends some Jewish elders to beg Jesus for the healing of his – presumably Jewish – body slave, who was close to death. The elders argue that the soldier is “worthy” because he does good things for the Jewish people, but the soldier argues that he is not worthy, that he has no authority to command Jesus. Jesus commends his faith and heals the enslaved man. He then moves along the coastal highway to a place called Nain, where he restores life to a young man who was his mother’s only support. His fame is spreading, and rumors continue to spread about the meaning of his miraculous restorations.

April 4 – “Are You the One?”, *Luke 7:18–35*

Luke takes care to show a strong connection between Jesus and John the Baptist, yet when Jesus begins his ministry he takes a very different role in reaching people and announcing God’s reign. John, watching events unfold from his imprisonment, sends disciples to ask, “are you the One, or shall we wait for another?” John was looking for a purified nation and a warrior who would lead the people against the Roman Empire. Jesus models a different kind of prophetic activity. As we prepare our hearts for Jesus’ entry into Jerusalem and his confrontation with the Roman and religious leadership, we are challenged once again to hear that God’s reign is showing in building up the least and the lost, not in military confrontation or power struggles.

April 11 – Palm/Passion Sunday, *Luke 19:29–48*

As Jesus enters Jerusalem, he and his disciples create a procession and demonstration that is in direct contrast to the Triumph enacted by Pontius Pilate every year at Passover. The cries of the people name Jesus as true king. When the religious leadership tell him to quiet the crowds, Jesus answers that even the stones would respond if humans were silent. He weeps for Jerusalem, then enters the temple to overturn tables in the outer courts, setting off the events that will lead to his trial and crucifixion. We will begin with a parade and re-tell the story, celebrate the Lord’s Supper, and then move to a time of quiet reflection on the Passion. At the close of the service, the Christ candle will be carried out, to return on Easter Sunday when we proclaim the resurrection.

April 17 – Maundy Thursday, *6pm dinner, 6:30pm worship service*

We will gather around the tables in the Upper Lounge to tell again the story of the night when Jesus was given up to death, sharing a simple meal and remembering the fear, the suffering, and the despair of the disciples. We will depart from the service in silence, to ponder the love that never let us go and to await the promise of new life in the Resurrection.

April 20 – Resurrection Sunday! *Luke 24: 1–35*

Perplexity and terror, confusion, disbelief, and finally confidence in their Risen Lord that came when he was made known to them in the breaking of the bread. In a world where grief and loss seem to rule the

day, hope beckons when we gather together to hear and understand the promise that believers have told since that first Easter day: Christ has died! Christ is risen! Christ will come again.

Other Things to Watch For As We Gather to Worship

Breath Prayers: We will open and close our time of reflection on scripture by practicing breath prayers – simple two-line prayers that can center and ground us. In times of stress and uncertainty, a breath prayer offers a moment's peace and stillness that can give us the strength to go on.

Special Sunday Offerings:

- Every Sunday in Lent we will have “*commitment cards*” that you can place in the offering plate to express gratitude to God or to name an intention for Lenten devotion. Watch for the cards & plan how you might respond in gratitude for all that God has done.
- *One Great Hour of Sharing Offering* – We receive it on Palm Sunday, including the “fish boxes” that the children fill during the weeks of Lent.
- *Special Coat and Sock offering* – Luke does not describe branches being laid down on Palm Sunday, he says that people laid their cloaks down. In previous years we have received various linen offerings; this year “most needed” are socks and coats. Bring new socks and new or gently used coats and jackets to help share the warmth with those who are in need.

How to Practice Breath Prayers

During times of turmoil and stress, it is important to stay grounded and centered in what you know and trust. One of the techniques that Christians have used for centuries is the praying of breath prayers – short, simple prayers that are repeated over and over while you breathe deeply and evenly. This year during our Lenten worship times, we will open and close our reading & reflections on scripture with a breath prayer practice, to develop your comfort with this kind of prayer.

Breath Prayer is an ancient form of prayer and it is easily adaptable. Simply choose one or two lines to meditate on and inhale and then exhale through them. It really is that simple.

- You can pray a breath prayer literally anywhere without any special rituals or whatever, but I've found that I like to find a quiet corner for a few minutes, and I usually start by lighting a candle.
- Then just quietly become aware of your body. Sit in a way that is comfortable for you, a position that will allow you to take a deep breath in and out. Close your eyes.
- Imagine a room or a place where you feel safe, your own sanctuary: It can be a real place or one that exists in your imagination.
- Breathe slowly and deeply while holding that place in your mind for a few moments, until you have all the details of it gathered around your soul.
- You'll enter into your time of prayer or meditation from within that sanctuary.

One historic form of breath prayer is known as **The Jesus Prayer**. So, with that as an example, here's how it works:

Inhale. Fill your whole self with breath. Feel the air in your lungs. And then pray aloud or to yourself:

“Jesus Christ, son of God,”

Exhale slowly and fully.

“Have mercy on me.”

And then simply repeat this practice. Start with ten good breaths in and out, with the words being spoken aloud or quietly held in your mind, it's up to you.



Scripture Challenge: **Let's Get 100 Sheep into the Pasture by Good Shepherd Sunday (May 11)**

Every Sunday and Thursday, a new verse or passage from scripture will be given for memorization.

Every time you are able to recite a new text to a Pastor when you see her, you will receive a sheep sticker and a small resin sheep will be placed in the "pasture" on the communion table.

If you already have a text memorized, recite it to a pastor and receive a sticker, then place a sheep in the pasture. You get extra credit if you can explain what it means.

There are special bonus texts like the Lord's Prayer, the 23rd Psalm, and others. Watch for more information!

If we get 100 sheep into the pasture by Good Shepherd Sunday, we will have a party to celebrate! Prizes will be awarded to special people for special accomplishments.



ANYONE CAN PLAY! NO AGE LIMIT!*

**Choir members may be limited in how much of Handel's "Messiah" they are allowed to recite.*

Session Highlights

by Andy Chadwick, Clerk of Session

Welcome to 2025! The beginning of a new year has brought new challenges to United Pres.

A successful Congregational meeting was held February 2. The purpose of the meeting was to present the 2025 budget and renew our covenant with the pastors. Session is responsible for developing the budget, but the congregation must approve the terms of call for the pastors. The budget was presented, questions from the congregation were answered and, after the pastors left the room, the congregation voted unanimously to approve the pastors' proposed financial packages.

"Private" signs have been posted on various doors around the building. Session approved their placement to indicate areas that law enforcement may not enter without an official judicial warrant. We have joined other churches in creating safe spaces for those seeking refuge if needed.

We are working with the Addiction Center of Broome County (ACBC) on a plan to enable the comfort center to be open 7 nights per week, at least through the cold weather.

Please don't hesitate to talk to any member of Session if you have questions or would like further information about any of our activities!

And the Presby Goes to...

On Sunday evening, February 2, you may have tuned into the 2025 Grammys. But earlier that day, UPC hosted a star-studded awards ceremony of its own: the 2025 Presby Awards.

New this year, and happening on the red carpet right in our sanctuary, church family and friends were honored for their skills, commitment, dedication, and work to keep UPC and its mission, programs, and projects alive and well. Nearly 100 awards were bestowed upon deserving recipients.

While categories didn't cover "Best Album," "Song of the Year," or "Best New Artist," UPC's awards did include the following:

- The Gracious Presence Award
- The Faithful Steward Award
- The Bold Witness Award
- The Singing and Ringing Psalmist Award
- The Grateful Heart Award
- The Kitchen Queen Award
- The Faithful Friend Award
- The Peacemaker Award
- The Servant Leader Award
- The Compassionate Heart Award
- The Kodak Moment Award
- The Most Likely to Solve a Problem with a Spreadsheet Award
- The MacGyver Award
- The Superglue Award
- The Prayer Warrior Award
- The Rock and Roller Award
- The Bright Spark Award
- The Global Presbyterian Award
- The Walking Wikipedia Award
- The Joyful Spirit Award
- and many more!



Pastors Kimberly and Becky presented the special awards to each honoree, which consisted of a personalized paper plate, fancy ribbon and shiny award sticker (much more budget-friendly than gold-plated Emmys, Grammys, Oscars, or Tonys!). Some of the awards had a humorous twist, but all awards were given with serious and sincere recognition for the valuable contributions of UPC's family and friends. For those not in church that day, awards are being hand-delivered or mailed to recipients.

While "Music's Biggest Night" might have highlighted glitz and glam, UPC's awards hit close to home with deep-seeded, heartfelt thanks to the humble, generous givers of time and talent in our church community. True winners!

News from the Kitchen

by Sherry Conklin, Community Kitchen Coordinator

We continue to serve 120 to 150 meals every Tuesday evening. We have added two new volunteers to serve (Ann and George). We could still use volunteers to serve from 4:30 to 6:30 if anyone would like to volunteer.

The pantry on Wednesday serves on average 50 families. Our pantry received two refrigerators for free. One came from the Health Department and the other from Cornell Cooperative Extension. This helps out greatly for our guests' shopping needs. We can store more dairy and produce when available.

With assistance from the Health Department, we reorganized our pantry layout, making healthy foods more prominent and easily accessible.

Now it's set up so people see healthy foods first and snack foods last. (See this WBNG news interview: upcbgm.org/wbng022725.)

The clothes closet continues to grow and get used regularly. We gave out 5 sleeping bags to people living outdoors. We have donated bed linens, towels, dishes, and small appliances to 3 people in apartments. And we give out numerous blankets.



UPC's Souper Bowl of Caring

This year UPC's youth led a fundraiser to Tackle Hunger and care for others in our community through the Souper Bowl of Caring on Super Bowl Sunday, February 9th.

On February 2nd and 9th, some of the older youth helped to promote it during the announcements during worship. And then on February 9th, any youth that were there held soup pots at the doors to collect donations. All the donations went to our food pantry at UPC to help people in our community. The youth then went downstairs and got a tour of our food pantry from our Meal and Food Pantry Coordinator, Sherry Conklin, and then Andy Chadwick helped them count the money. **We received \$281.25!** We have reported our totals to the TackleHunger.org website and the money will help buy food for our neighbors. Thank you for your generosity!

Matthew 25: "For I was hungry, and you gave me something to eat, I was thirsty, and you gave me something to drink, I was a stranger, and you invited me in." "I assure you that when you have done it for one of the least of these brothers and sisters of mine, you have done it for me."

You can learn more about the Souper Bowl of Caring or the Tackle Hunger program at tacklehunger.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: **Campus Ministry**, Pastor Becky bkindig@upcbgm.org; **Card Committee**, Margaret Davis mdavis.margaret@gmail.com; **Community Outreach**, Pastor Kimberly pastor@upcbgm.org or Sherry Conklin meal@upcbgm.org; **Finance**, Andy Chadwick cchadwick1@stny.rr.com; **Hospitality**, Sally Hunt shunt1@stny.rr.com or Sherry Conklin meal@upcbgm.org; **Personnel**, Cindy Burger csburger@frontiernet.net; **Property**, Pastor Becky bkindig@upcbgm.org; **Sewing Group**, Cindy Burger csburger@frontiernet.net; **Worship & Music**, Margaret Davis mdavis.margaret@gmail.com.



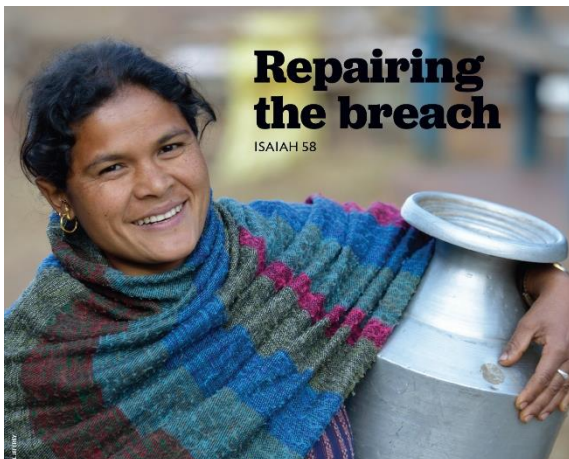
ONE GREAT HOUR OF SHARING
SPECIAL OFFERINGS
HUNGER • DISASTER • DEVELOPMENT

March 5 – April 20, 2025

Join with Presbyterians worldwide in sharing God’s love with our neighbors-in-need around the world by providing relief from natural disasters, food for the hungry, and support for the poor and oppressed.

You can contribute to the One Great Hour of Sharing special offering by doing any of the following:

- use a Special Offering envelope to donate in one of the offering plates in the sanctuary
- write a check to **United Presbyterian Church of Binghamton** with the memo “special offering”
- give online at pcusa.org/give-oghs
- text OGHS to 91999



Thanks to your heartfelt gifts, OGHS currently supports programs in over 100 countries. **If we all do a little, it adds up to a lot!**

To learn more about how your gift to One Great Hour of Sharing makes a difference, visit pcusa.org/oghs.

Programs & Events

UPC's "Zoom room"

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

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

You can also call in over the phone, if you don't have a microphone on your device or you can't join online. To join as a phone call, dial **1-646-558-8656**, then enter our Meeting ID: **865 274 8433 #**

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

Bible Study

Mondays, 1-2pm, in the Upper Lounge or the Zoom room

We've been reading from Marcus Borg's *Evolution of the Word: The New Testament in the Order the Books Were Written*. 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.

UPC Sewing Group

Wednesdays, 10am-1pm in the Upper Lounge, with Zoom lunch hour at 12pm

As many of you know, the Wednesday Sewing Group works throughout the year to create quilts, carry bags for walkers, hats, mittens, and scarves for organizations in our community.

This past holiday season, the Sewing Group focused its donations on three local organizations: the YWCA of Binghamton, UHS Neonatal Unit, and NoMa ("North of Main"). NoMa is a partnership of local residents, small business owners, community organizations, and local leaders invested in maintaining and enhancing the quality of life on the west side of Binghamton between Front, Jarvis, and Main Streets.

The YWCA's heartfelt thank-you stated that, "Your thoughtful gifts will bring warmth and comfort to those we serve, and your kindness makes a meaningful difference in their lives. The handmade items not only provide physical warmth, but also remind the women and children at our shelter that they are cared for and supported by our community. Your generosity brings both comfort and hope to those who need it most. Thank you for standing with us in our mission to empower women, support families and strengthen our community." This response makes it all worth it!

Every Wednesday in the Upper Lounge, the UPC Sewing Group meets to design, cut, sew, tie, and hem quilts, and create carry bags that can be used on walkers. If Wednesdays don't fit your schedule, projects can also be worked on at home. The group continues to bring much to the mission of UPC by enhancing our internal and external church spirit and providing functional gifts to help others and spread kindness.

Thank you to those who have donated cotton fabric for use in making quilts, worked on items at home for the greater good, or participated on Wednesdays. We welcome new members at any time. Join us on Wednesdays, 10 am to 1 pm. At noon we enjoy lunch together (chips, tea, and cookies are provided); if you can't be there in person, we have a Zoom option to join us at lunch.



Marion Dice (left), Jean Hill (center, in the background), and Betsy Perry bring years of experience to the Sewing Group.

Zoom Happy hour

Friday evenings, 5-6pm

After more than 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.

Presbytery News

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.

Join with fellow Presbyterians in the fight to end child poverty in New York

a message from the Presbytery's Justice in Mission and Ministry Team

Children growing up in poverty is a tragedy that we see in all our communities. In December, a petition was sent to Governor Hochul asking her to include measures to cut child poverty in her 2025 executive budget. The petition was delivered by a group of children and adults just before Christmas. It had been signed by over 2,000 people and 35 organizations, including six Presbyterian churches across the state. Many members of PSV churches who wanted to see fewer children in poverty were among those who signed.

New York ranks above 46 other states in the percentage of children who live in poverty. In 2021, the state legislature passed the Child Poverty Reduction Act, which was signed into law by the governor and

commits the state to reduce child poverty by 50% by the year 2031. The Child Poverty Reduction Advisory Council released its recommendations late last December. Gov. Hochul's 2025 executive budget addressed only two of the Council's four areas of needed actions, and those far below the level necessary.

But it's not too late. Budget negotiations between the State Assembly, the State Senate, and the governor are ongoing. Presbyterians who want less child poverty in our state can contact their Assemblyperson and their State Senator, urging them to include more of the Advisory Council's recommendations in the state budget. A letter to the editor of your local newspaper is also important.

Spending their childhood in poverty leaves severe scars on people as they become adult members of our communities – physical, emotional, and spiritual problems. To learn more about the issue and what you can do, contact Rev. Earl Arnold: EarlBArnold@gmail.com.



Presbytery of Susquehanna Valley Camperships

supporting and enhancing kids' Christian faith journeys

The Presbytery of Susquehanna Valley's campership program is open for applications beginning February 1. Campership funds are offered to all school-age students (K-12th grade) and also to adults with developmental disabilities.

Camperships are provided to ALL families (regardless of family income) involved in churches in the presbytery, to promote Christian faith formation experiences for K-12 students. They are an incentive, not a "financial aid" program.

Camperships are available for Christian summer camp programs of any length up to one week long. This can be an overnight program, a day program, or a virtual program. The presbytery will pay up to 75% of the cost of a one-week program at a PC(USA) camp, to a maximum of \$575 per camper. Lesser awards are offered for non-PC(USA) camps. For information and applications, visit susvalpresby.org/Camperships.

Questions? Talk to (or email) Pastor Becky or Scott in the church office – they are both on the presbytery team that is responsible for the Campership program.

Practical Resources for Churches

Practical Resources for Churches (prcli.org) is a resource that the Presbytery of Susquehanna Valley's Commission on Christian Leadership Formation 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, and most of their webinars are recorded and available for later viewing if you missed attending it live.

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. Other resources include:

What's Next – A biweekly sharing of timely resources and upcoming webinars. The current (2/24/2025) letter is at conta.cc/3QljChB

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 February 2025 letter is at bit.ly/4aQAdmS

Joys and Concerns

Preparing to Wed: Andrew & Margaret; Emma & Jessica

Expecting a Baby: John & Erica

Gratitude: Ghana's election, UP Center, new Presbytery leadership, Madeline has an apartment, ceasefire in Palestine/Israel

Traveling Mercies: Chadwicks, Meberts, Burgers, Pastor Kimberly, Sara

New Beginnings: Kathy, moving to Massachusetts

Recovering from Surgery: Dean, Allison's dad

For Healing: Bob, Ellen, Ann, Joyce, Cayden, Pastor Becky, Ernie

Grieving: Friends & Family of: Billy Rozelle, Maryann Stratton Ogden, Mika, Bob, Martha Colgan, Elikem's professor friend, Tom Jones, John Gaudet, Bill's nephew, Rev. John Buchanan, Kathleen Hartley, Elinor Budine

Living with Cancer: Martha, Molly, Leah, Suzy, Zeke, Pam, Joann, Danny, Charlie, Dave

Covid-19 and winter illnesses: Ken, Emma, Lana, Kimberly, Cindy, Suzie, Ellen, David, Greg, Sharon, Hemant

Recent & Upcoming Birthdays

March

4 Ellen Hancock-Berti
5 Dick Bartholomew
7 Suzie Northrop Raboy
8 Becky Mebert
Bill Sands
12 Chelsie Hill Bennett
13 Scott Kindig
15 Barbara Rocke
17 Marne Ward
22 Khiro Brunson
24 Imogen Backus
25 Ann Cobb

April

1 Aeden Hickey

2 Matt Livingston
8 Kathy Kopp
9 Laurie White
Amanda Licht Jones
12 Tyson Brunson
14 Janet Hoover
20 Angela Garcia-Meade
21 Suzy Ogden
Dominic Ruston-Patinka
Jim Stehli
22 Maria Kutz
Charlotte Livingston
23 Dick Aswad
24 Pastor Becky
25 Zander Rwabukwisi



26 Greg Patinka

28 Jim Menges

May

7 Norma Stehli
13 Ellis Nyamuame
15 Eugene Favor
16 Matt Johnson
17 Shawn Landon
Betty Wambui
19 Nate Raboy
23 Barbara Geiser
27 Felix Rwabukwisi
28 Ernest Backus
David Berti
31 Cindy Chadwick



Ongoing: Evelyn, Felix, MacMyne family, Jean, Jimmy, Kristie, Scott N., Rachmani family, Jen, Carlos, Rupee J., Angela & Jazmine & family, Bob & Esther, Bernie, Bill, Darlene, Adam

Other Concerns: We pray for

- Homelessness in Binghamton
- Fires in California
- the new presidential administration
- those losing their government jobs
- people with severe mental illness
- people struggling with addictions
- those living in fear
- working class fighting to afford healthcare, retirement, housing
- those affected by cartel violence in and around Sasabe, Mexico
- Ukraine & Russia
- Middle East
- Haiti



Everyone is welcome here

**UNITED PRESBYTERIAN
CHURCH OF BINGHAMTON**



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

Address Service Requested

Mark Your Calendars!

March 5: ASH WEDNESDAY services at 12:30 and 6:00

March 6: Lenten Series begins (six weeks, ending on 4/17 with Holy Thursday worship)

March 8: Tri-Cities Opera Concert, “A Grand Night for Singing” in our Sanctuary, 7:30pm

March 10: Session meeting

March 20-23: Aeden Hickey starring in “Mary Poppins” at Seton Catholic (Thurs, Friday, Sat at 7pm, Sunday Matinee at 2pm)

March 21: Harriet Tubman Statue Unveiling, Riverwalk, 11am-1pm

March 27: National Faith & Climate Forum, 12:00-5:30pm

April 7: Session meeting

April 13: Palm Sunday

April 20: Easter! Egg hunt following the worship service

April 25: Book Release Event, Rev. Dr. Liz Theoharis, “You Get What You’re Organized to Take”, 6:00-7:30pm

May 9-10: Building Bridges Retreat (susvalpresby.org/2025retreat)