

Pentecost 2025

Volume 16, Issue 2

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

Attention Knitters and Crocheters and Sewers!

The Wednesday Sewing Group has been organizing our materials and supplies recently. We have a lot of knitting needles and crochet hooks — all sizes and lengths, including double-pointed and circular needles, and a lot of yarn. We have several boxes of beautiful fabric for anyone who sews. We have many pattern books, too.

If you or someone you know could use some of these items, please contact one of the Sewing Group members. Feel free to join us any Wednesday or work on projects for the church at home.

Prayers for the group and the recipients of our labors are always welcome.

UPC Sewing Group — Antanette, Ellen Berti, Cindy Burger, Cindy Chadwick, Ann Cobb, Jean Hill, Betsy Perry, Nancy Walter

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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



Kimberly P Chastain,
Pastor

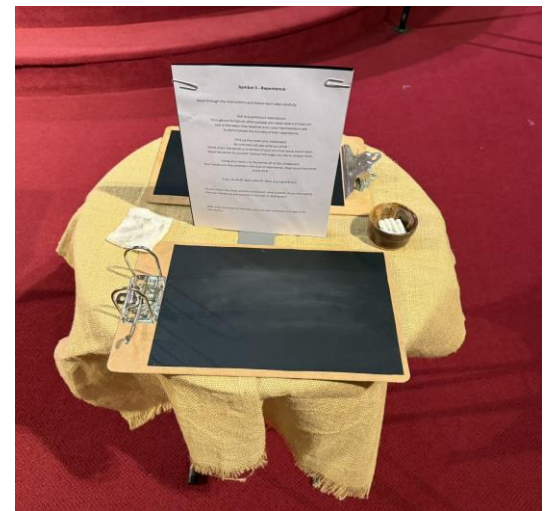
Dear Ones,
What an amazing,
nourishing, love-
filled time we have
had since the last
newsletter!

- We celebrated the
ruby anniversary
of my ordination
(40 years).



- We shared a deeply
meaningful Ash Wednesday
service (and Pastor Becky
and I gave “ashes to go” to
record number of students
at the university).

*Our worship service featured six
interactive stations to guide us to
understand different meanings
of ashes in the life of faith: Loss,
Mortality, Emptiness, Weakness,
Repentance, and Purification.*



- We had a wonderful Lenten series on “Art for The Heart” where we worked with pottery, watercolors, fiber arts, wax egg decoration, and drumming. Thanks to all of the special and talented folks who taught us about their ways of creating beauty, and to those who made soup and bread for us every week!

POTTERY



WATERCOLOR



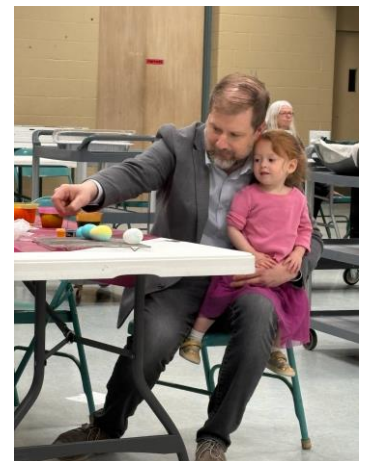
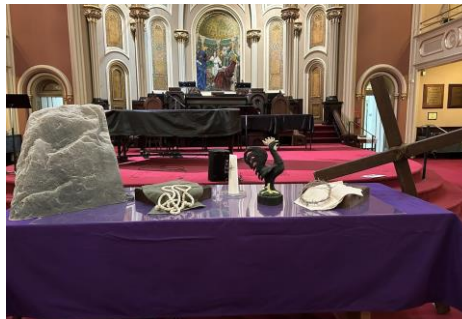
FIBER ARTS



DECORATING EGGS



- We told the story of Jesus's entry into Jerusalem and his passion in new ways on Palm Sunday, collecting many hats, gloves, socks and coats to help our guests keep off the cold. Then we all went downstairs to dye Easter eggs for our community pantry and meal guests!



- And we had more than 30 participants in our Maundy Thursday remembrance of the Passion, where we reflected on the witnesses who were present when Jesus suffered and died.
- We had a beautiful celebration of the Resurrection on Easter Sunday, with the front of the sanctuary decorated with flowers brought from home by families — featuring new banners on the front of the church and in the lobby, and we taught the children to say “The Lord is Risen! He is Risen Indeed!” Then after worship, the children ran around out on the front lawn as we held our annual egg hunt.



- We held a scripture memorization challenge — “100 sheep by Good Shepherd Sunday” — that taught the 23rd Psalm to the littles and a variety of other scripture verses to the participants. Lucien Westcott was the youngest participant and... there were many enthusiastic elders! We finished with 100 sheep and two hedgehogs in the pasture (I ran out of sheep) and celebrated with a party during worship, including a Psalm 23 bingo game!



As the summer approaches, I hope you will join me in looking for more ways to connect to each other, to our faith, and to the joy that refuses hate and fear. We know that our community, our nation, and our world are chaotic times. As we nourish our life of faith together, we want to shine the light of hope so that it illuminates not only the dark places, but also the new possibilities that we can bring to life together.

Here's a poem for you by the Rev. Steve Garnaas-Holmes, from his *Unfolding Light* project:

Hope is an act

Abandon your thoughts of thoughts or feelings,
the moods that come and go.

Hope is a practice, an act you can do
even as you mourn, or regret, or dread.

Hope is an act of trust, regardless
of what the future may hold,

trust in the gravity of grace,
the life that sings in all things:

the arctic tern facing an ocean
who lifts her wings, and goes,

the stream that unfurls through the woods,
the roots that reach and curl around stones,

the earth that circles around the sun
one more time, and one more again.

The child who turns to her mother.
The hand of the Healer on every torn thing.

Hope is not wishing but acting.
Birthing. Planting. Getting up.

Grace and peace,
Pastor Kimberly

Greetings friends!

It looks like we have emerged from the cold and rain to the warmer and rain with some sunny days sprinkled in between. But even though it may look and feel a bit dreary, there are signs of life and hope out there which I am looking for anywhere I can get right now.

It's been a bit rough for many of us with the chaos of the government directly affecting so many of us and those we know or love. We have seen it in church during the week with an uptick in people needing the community meal, pantry, and shelter. And we fear that the worst has not hit us yet with the proposed cuts in other food aid and healthcare.



So how do we resist the urge to just bury our heads into our work, or hobbies, or families and just try to hunker down and get through for the next several years? It's really tempting some days. But the need to build relationships and form communities is the answer that will help all of us through together. Yes, there are days that self-care is essential in this work since we are in a marathon, not a sprint. You need to find times to get out in nature, listen to music, read a great story, eat some delicious food, move your body or rest your body, and turn off the news and social media for a while. But the long-term strategy is working together. Jesus built a community of 12 disciples



*Becky Kindig,
Associate Pastor*

plus other close followers. Jesus was all about restoring people to community when he healed them. And Jesus didn't go in and directly confront the political leaders, he taught people to love each other, eat together, and reach out to others by inviting people in that weren't in their circles. And building up those communities that cared for each other got them through and built the wonderful parts of the Christianity we know today.

I know some of you are already community-builders and have a whole network of people you talk with and care for on a regular basis. And I know that for some of us, that skill takes more work. For those that have that skill, reach out to those you notice that don't. And consider taking a little time if you aren't already involved at church to use your skills at helping us build or care for the community here. For those that are not born community-builders, start with small achievable goals. Maybe start making a point to smile and wave at your neighbor, or call or send a card to someone you haven't heard from in a while, or talk with someone you don't know well at church, or join one of our activities and go from there. And if there is something that would help you form community that we don't have, let us know and we can help you build it.



Grace and Peace,
Pastor Becky

Musician Musings

We have had a marvelous time making music and joyful noises unto the Lord in UPC's music ministries this spring!

Our vocal choir's repertoire has ranged from the Renaissance (Orlando Gibbons' *Almighty and Everlasting God*) to African American spirituals (*Jesus Walked That Lonesome Valley*) to traditional Irish-inspired music (*Old Irish Blessing*). We are so fortunate to have a wide range of musical interests to share with the congregation.

On Transfiguration Sunday (March 2nd) we were fortunate enough to have the House of Worship's "Angels of Praise" dance team perform for us during the service. They danced to the song *Stand Up* from the movie *Harriet*, and their performance was moving and inspirational.



Our section leaders also blessed us with beautiful music these past few months.

Robbie Manners and Starletta Noll-Long sang *My Love Colors Outside the Lines* as a beautiful duet, Phil Westcott and Aimée Backus performed an Irish Reel (*Providence Reel*) on Saint Patrick's Day, and Austin Shadduck performed *Daiwagaku* ("Great Peace").

On Palm Sunday, bell choir performed *With Joyful Hearts*, and the vocal choir sang *The Entry into Jerusalem*. During the Palm Parade while the congregation marched around the sanctuary, Nate Raboy and Ernest Backus joined Becky Mebert in providing the accompaniment to "We Are Marching in the Light of God", the tune of which is *Siyahamba*, a traditional Zulu folk song. Starletta Noll-Long sang *Were You There* a cappella from the balcony in a beautiful and impactful performance. On Maundy Thursday,



Lana Ogden, Margaret Davis, and Becky Mebert provided all of the music for the meditative service; the mood their music created allowed us all to contemplate more fully the night that Christ was betrayed.

On Easter Sunday, the vocal choir opened the service by singing *Alleluia, Christ is Risen*, and the bell choir played *My Joyous Praise* during the offertory. Sara Lieberman's and Nate Raboy's brass talents enhanced all of the hymns and helped us all raise our voices together.

Aoife Backus performed *The King's March* on piano during the first Sunday of Easter, and on Good Shepherd Sunday, we celebrated all of the sheep songs with *I Am Jesus' Little Lamb*, *Shepherd Psalm*, *Ballet of the Shepherds*, and a performance of the 23rd Psalm in Irish.

Both the vocal and bell choirs are preparing for our summer recess; however, our music doesn't stop over the summer! If you are

interested in lending your talents to UPC's music ministry while our large ensembles are on break, please contact Aimée Backus at music@upcbgm.org. We would be grateful to have you participate!

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/upcbgm.org/youtube), 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.

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 a nursery for infants through age four staffed with two nursery attendants, if that is a better choice for your family. The nursery is at the end of the hall past the bathrooms. Nursery staff are on duty from 9:00am to 12:00pm. Parents are welcome to stay in the room and listen to the service over the speaker, or to return to the sanctuary to worship. Please let us know if you have questions.

Welcome to our new Nursery Attendants



Starting June 15, we welcome our two new nursery attendants, Zoe and Emmanuel!

Emmanuel will be with us for the summer. He is a graduate student at Binghamton University studying Biomedical Engineering. He lives here in Binghamton, but originates from Ghana.

Zoe will be with us more long term. She is an undergraduate student at Binghamton University studying Biology. She lives in Vestal, but is originally from Kansas.

The nursery will be open on Sundays from 9:00am to 12:00pm, and can care for ages infant through 4 years old right now while they are settling in.

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.

With summertime upon us, the choirs will be 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.

Worship in the Summer Season

Ascension Sunday through mid-August

June 1 — Ascension Sunday, Acts 1:9–26

Luke begins the second scroll of his great work on the Acts of the Apostles in Jerusalem, when the disciples came back together in Jerusalem, received Christ's blessing for continuing the work of the kingdom, and witnessed his departure. On this Ascension Sunday, we will hear what the disciples did after Jesus departed from them as they waited for the Holy Spirit and began to organize for their new life.

June 8 — Pentecost, Acts 2:1–41

Today we are celebrating Pentecost, which is the Greek word for “fiftieth”. It comes fifty days after Easter, and most years it falls at the same time as the Jewish festival of Shavuot. In Judaism, the holiday celebrates the giving of the Torah at Mount Sinai. In Christianity, it celebrates the gift of the Holy Spirit to the community of disciples. God did not change the covenant relationship with the Jewish people but offered a new kind of covenant relationship to the rest of us, grounded in the knowledge of God's love as shown in Jesus, and guided by the Holy Spirit.

June 15 — Walk With Me, Isaiah 58:6–10

Many of the things we are involved in as a congregation are almost invisible on Sunday mornings, because we partner with other agencies to make them happen. The “Walk With Me” program, working with people returning from incarceration, is one of those things. We started the program with Justice and Unity for the Southern Tier and the Family Enrichment Network, and although we have a clothing closet for them in our building, they are housed at the Family Enrichment Network. This year we shared a case worker with Walk With Me, as Rozann Greco worked with our pantry guests on Wednesday afternoons.

June 22 — Covenants, Acts 3:1–4: 31

The first recorded act after the giving of the Holy Spirit is the healing of a lame man who is begging at the Beautiful Gate of the temple in Jerusalem. There are echoes of Isaiah 35:5–6 in the man's joyous response, which becomes the occasion for Peter's second sermon. He tells the crowd of the faithfulness of God shown in Jesus and declares that this healing is one of the signs that God will continue to be faithful if the people will turn from their evil ways. This sets off a controversy with the religious leadership, who arrest Peter and John and then release them, ordering them to stop bearing witness to Jesus. They refuse the order, returning to the gathered disciples, and pray that God will empower them to continue speaking his word with boldness, to enable healing and miracles, and to do so in the name of Jesus.

June 29 — Community, Authority, and Commitment, Acts 4:32–5:11

Luke then shows a beautiful and probably idealized picture of the earliest community of believers, who live together and share everything with each other. But the beautiful unity does

not last, and soon people are withholding their wealth from the common purse. The Holy Spirit strikes down both the husband and wife who have lied not just to their fellow believers, but to God. The story concludes with “and great fear seized the whole church and all who heard these things.”

July 6 — Unexpected Allies, Acts 5:12–42

The disciples continue the work of preaching, exorcism and healing, and they become so popular that crowds of people clog the way to Solomon’s porch, and the temple authorities have the disciples arrested again, and summon the council to bring them to trial. When they arrive at the prison, they discover that the Spirit has freed them and they have returned to the temple and continued their work. They are re-arrested and brought before the council, but a teacher named Gamaliel intercedes, pointing out that punishing the disciples may cause rioting, so the council flogged them and let them go.

July 13 — Conflict and Resolution within the Community, Acts 6:1–7

As the new community of disciples grew and expanded, a culture clash arose. Those who were part of the ministry during Jesus’s earthly life (the Twelve) were Hebrews, Aramaic-speaking Jews from Judea and the Galilee. Many of the new believers were Hellenists—Greek-speaking Jews who came from the diaspora communities around the Roman Empire. The Hellenists felt that their needs were often overlooked in the sharing that was a hallmark of the community. So the Twelve gathered the whole community together, and instructed them to choose seven among them to see to the needs of the people, thus initiating what came to be known as the diaconal ministry (or deacons). This “hinge” story also serves to introduce us to Stephen, whose story will come next.

July 20 — The Story of Stephen, Acts 6:8–7:60

The disagreements about power and authority in the new community of faith escalated when some of the Hellenists were dissatisfied with Stephen’s ministry and took their complaints to the Jerusalem Council, charging him with breaking the Mosaic covenant. In a very long speech, Stephen retells the history of God’s faithfulness to beginning with Abraham and continuing through the Davidic kingdom. He reminds his hearers that God continues to bring about new understandings and new covenants as the people fall away and prove faithless. He then accuses the religious authorities of opposing the work of the Spirit by persecuting the prophets and rejecting Jesus. After he describes a vision of the heavens opened and Jesus as the Son of Man, standing at the right hand of God, the listeners of the council took Stephen out of the city and stoned him to death. He echoes the dying words of Jesus in commending his spirit to him, and asks forgiveness for those who are killing him.

July 27 — The Samaritan Mission, Acts 8:1–24

In another brief hinge story, Luke introduces Saul as a persecutor of the church, and introduces Philip as a leader who rises to prominence when the community scatters beyond Jerusalem into Judea and Samaria. In Samaria, Philip heals many people and drives out many demons. The Jerusalem apostles send Peter and John to meet the new community. Included among the baptized is a man named Simon, who is identified as a sorcerer and who had already been healing people. Peter and John lay hands on the newly baptized, who immediately receive the Holy Spirit. Simon is excited to see the manifestation of the Holy Spirit and offers the

apostles money if they will teach him how it's done. Peter rebukes Simon and announces that the activity of the Spirit cannot be purchased, and Simon repents.

August 3 — The Road to Gaza, Acts 8:26–40

Philip is sent by an angel to the road to Gaza, where he meets an enslaved man, an eunuch who is from the court of the Candace in Ethiopia and has been in Jerusalem to worship. He is reading the prophet Isaiah, and Philip uses the text to teach him about Jesus. They see a pool of water by the road, and the man asks to be baptized. Philip is whisked away by the Spirit and is found next in Azotus. The text reflects the debates held in the early years of the church about authority and inclusion and who is worthy of grace, and still points the way to people of faith—we can teach and learn from each other, and God does not limit grace, but pours it out on all who seek it.

August 10 — Ruffled By Grace

Rev. Michele Wahila, the “Paris Pastor”, will be with us while she is home in Endicott to launch her newly published book called “Ruffled By Grace: Paris Wedding Blessings” (July 14, Tehom Center Publishing). Michele is a member of the Presbytery of Susquehanna Valley who lives in Paris, France, where she has carved out a specialized ministry working with couples preparing to wed or renew vows. She is a skilled preacher and writer; she continues to bring new vision and new challenges to the church as her ministry expands.



Session Highlights

by Andy Chadwick, Clerk of Session

It's hard to believe it's already June and nearly four months have passed since the last newsletter! It's been a busy Easter season.

Session has set June 29 as the date for the second half of our annual Congregational meeting. This is the time for the election of new officers and a summary of our activities over the past program year. If you are approached by a member of the Nominating Committee (or would like to put your name in for consideration), please consider serving. The church has many opportunities to volunteer and serve, and everyone's help is greatly appreciated!

UPC will be hosting the Presbytery meeting on June 14. Many helping hands are required to make this a success without burdening anyone. A signup sheet is located in the sanctuary – please consider participating.

The Presbytery of Utica is engaging in a project called **Presbyterian Responses to Slavery in the 19th Century**. We have given them permission to access our historical records stored at the Presbyterian Historical Society for their research.



We collected the One Great Hour of Sharing special offering on Palm Sunday, April 14. The children collected \$64.28 in their fish boxes.

Joint Office of the Governor and Office of the New York State Attorney General Guidance to Private and Non-Profit Organizations and Entities: This guidance document is intended to provide information in evaluating how to respond to requests from federal immigration authorities while protecting the rights of our residents, clients, patients, members, and staff. Copies will be made available to anyone who is interested.

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!

News from the Kitchen

by Sherry Conklin, Community Kitchen Coordinator

There is sad news that the Salvation Army Mission center on Washington Street has been closed by our mayor indefinitely. This mission served 100 to 200 people with 6 dinner meals a week, breakfast 5 days a week, hygiene and food pantry, and bread line. This creates a big hole for the food-insecure. Although they have been able to resume serving meals five days a week from a food truck located further down Main Street, they are served to-go with no sit-down option, so some individuals are finding their way to United Presbyterian for food. I made up emergency bags and box lunches to hand out when anyone asks.

I am looking closely to see what the federal government financial cuts will be making to our missions. So far, the pantry and meals are not being affected much. I can no longer order some of the products that I used to, or products that our clients like the most. We are still able to provide each family with two meat choices (or one meat and a dozen eggs), dry milk, shelf-stable milk, vegetables, fruit, soups, pasta, cereal, canned meals, and snacks every week. In March there were 15 tractor trailers full of dairy and meat products that were destined to the Food Bank or the Southern Tier in Elmira — this is the food bank that I use to obtain about a thousand pounds of food per week. These trucks were halted by the USDA and the food was wasted. This food was originally funded by the Community Credit Corporation and amounted to 14% of the bonus TEFAP food and was valued at over \$434,000. I continue to stock up to stay ahead of any new cuts when they come. In addition to the food I get from the Southern Tier, I am able to obtain about 500 pounds of food weekly from CHOW. Panera Bread in Johnson City donates 100–200 pounds of bread items per week.



Supplies for our emergency food bags are getting very low. I ask anyone that can donate items to please do so. I am looking for any single-serve items, mostly high in protein. The bags contain: crackers, applesauce or canned fruit, peanut butter, beef jerky, protein bars, etc. Any single-serve items that do not require refrigeration are greatly appreciated.

The large food deliveries arrive mostly on Thursday and Friday mornings. All of it is delivered upstairs and needs

And here's what a thousand pounds of food looks like when it arrives from the Food Bank! Once we get it downstairs to the pantry, it all needs to be unwrapped and stocked onto our shelves.

to be transported downstairs and put away. I have some wonderful volunteers that help with this, but I can always use more.

Even school-age kids can be a help with sorting and organizing the canned foods onto the pantry shelves, with an adult to direct and guide them. So if your kids (or grandkids) have some time while school is out, call or email and let me know any Thursdays or Fridays when you'd like to pitch in!

I am looking for a volunteer to help in the pantry every Wednesday from 3 to 5. This would be to either serve clients or fill out intake forms. Anyone is welcome to come and volunteer to serve or clean up on Tuesdays from 4:30 to 7:00. If interested, please give me a call.

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.

Planned Giving: The church received a \$98,000 bequest this spring from Carleton Cleveland, Jr. It will be managed by the Presbyterian Foundation as the Carleton A. Cleveland, Jr. Memorial Fund with the income available to the church with no restrictions.

Making a planned gift is not just for those who have wealth or special financial expertise but for anyone with a generous spirit who wants to designate their gifts while they are living. Whether it is a bequest through your will, naming the church as a beneficiary of a life insurance policy, a life income gift through a trust, or a designation of a portion of your retirement savings assets, your legacy gift can help ensure the continued vitality of UPC from one generation to the next. While a planned gift brings a sense of fulfillment to our own lives, it may also provide financial benefits to the donor, including tax savings, reduced capital gains and estate taxes, and release from financial management.

More information about planned giving, including sample bequest language for a will, can be found on our website at upcbgm.org/giving.

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.

Programs & Events

Bearing Witness Against the Violence in Gaza

On May 23, a coalition of military veterans, religious and humanitarian organizations started a 40-day "Veterans & Allies Fast for Gaza" (fosna.org/2025gazafast), and have invited others to join in the fast and to gather each Thursday through the month of June at the Court Street Metro Mall and make visits to Congressman Riley's office and the office of Senator Charles Schumer, a block away at the Federal Building. Both legislators have been silent on the issue of US-supported genocide of the people of Gaza.

The demands of the fast are

1. Full humanitarian aid to Gaza under UN authority and
2. No more U.S. weapons to Israel.

The protest began in Binghamton on May 29 with a press conference at Metro Court Mall. I was unable to be present, but I sent the following statement to be distributed:

Imagination fails when we try to grasp the horror that continues to play out in Gaza. The horror is twofold: First, that people who believe they are responding justly to a government's violence can participate in the devastation of families, hospitals, and even relief sites. Second, that the world can watch — again — as this violence is inflicted on the innocent and the defenseless. The sheer scale of Israeli reprisals against Hamas for taking hostages is almost beyond understanding: the UN reports that more than 50,000 have been killed, with more than a third of the dead under the age of 18.

The U.S. is complicit in so many ways: we have sold the weaponry of war indiscriminately to all comers, we have refused to intervene to assure humanitarian aid can reach the desperate, and we have pursued policies that further the interests of a few at the expense of the many. More than 500,000 are suffering from hunger and thirst in the siege conditions imposed by the Israeli army and accepted by inertia as the world watches.

It is reported that Palestinian civilians have access to about 240 calories of food per day — that's about the number in a Starbucks Caffè Latte Venti with 2% milk, or about half the amount of calories in a Big Mac. People of conscience are participating in a 40-day fast in solidarity with the Palestinian people, calling once again for immediate cease-fire and the restoration of humanitarian aid.

As a person of faith, I join with others to call upon our government to end the violence and support a humanitarian response that is not controlled by the military or outside contractors. If we cannot imagine the cruelty that is being enacted in the eyes of the world, let us commit ourselves to imagining an end to the siege and compassion for those who must now bury their loved ones and build a new society in the rubble that is left.

Rev. Kimberly P Chastain

Pastor, Binghamton United Presbyterian Church

Presbyterian Foundation Day of Learning: Storytelling, Stewardship, and Generosity

Thursday, June 26, 11:30am–3:30pm

The Presbyterian Foundation is bringing back our popular Day of Learning program to offer support for churches, ministries, and mid councils on financial sustainability. Join us on **Thursday, June 26**, for a series of workshops on Storytelling, Stewardship, and Generosity, all online, and offered free of charge.

You'll hear from experts on our staff who will share knowledge and tactics with you. You'll walk away with actionable steps you can implement in your congregation, grounded in theology. Our focus is on you: helping you build generosity in your congregations to stabilize and grow your ministry.

- **11:30am–12:00pm Keynote: Storytelling**, presented by Robyn Davis Sekula, Vice President of Communications and Marketing
- **12–12:45pm Workshop: Stewardship**, presented by Rev. Ellie Johns-Kelley, Ministry Relations Officer; followed by a time of Questions & Answers
- **2–3pm Workshop: Planned Giving**, presented by Rev. Sandra Moon, Ministry Relations Officer and Karl Mattison, VP of Planned Giving Resources; followed by Q&A

Register at:

presbyterianfoundation.org/day-of-learning-storytelling-stewardship-and-generosity



Being Transgender: Medical History, Church, Society, and Families

Monday, June 30, 6:30pm

an educational webinar from the Joint Justice in Ministry and Mission Team of the Presbyteries of Susquehanna Valley and Cayuga-Syracuse

Presenters:

- **Dr. Carolyn Wolf-Gould** is the founder of Bassett's Gender Wellness Center, a rural-based interdisciplinary center for transgender healthcare, clinical training, advocacy, and research

in upstate New York. She is co-editor of *A History of Transgender Medicine in the United States: From Margins to Mainstream*. Sweeping in scope and deeply personal in nature, this groundbreaking volume traces the development of transgender medicine across three centuries, centering the voices of transgender individuals, debunking myths about gender-affirming care, and empowering readers to grasp the complexities of this evolving field.

- **Stephanie Nawyn** is an associate professor in the Department of Sociology at Michigan State University (MSU). Her research and teaching expertise are in migration, gender, and refugees. She is the former director of MSU's Center for Gender in Global Context, where she oversaw the Women's and Gender Studies program and supported research and activities related to sex, gender, sexuality, and feminist studies. She is also the mother of two wonderful young men, Henry (age 20) and Zach (age 16).
- **Zach Nawyn-Hellinga** is a high school junior who aspires to study engineering in college. He enjoys robotics and building electronic devices, biking, and theatre. He has participated in a community children's theatre program since he was very young, performing on stage and working on the crew (especially building sets).

Stephanie and Zach are members of the Presbyterian Church of Okemos, Michigan, where Zach's baptism was reaffirmed with his true name in January of this year.

Please register at: upcbgm.org/jimm250630reg

Join the Zoom meeting on June 30, 6:30pm: upcbgm.org/jimm250630

Meeting ID 872 1730 2511 | Passcode 691603

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 #

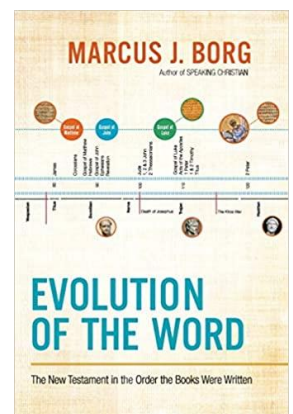
If you have questions or need help using Zoom, feel free to call the church office for assistance.

Bible Study

Mondays, 1–2pm, in the 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 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.

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.

Zoom Happy hour

Friday evenings, 5–6pm

After more than five 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.

The Presbytery of Susquehanna Valley believes that this Statement of Faith is needed in light of the current events going on in our country.

Presbytery of Susquehanna Valley Faith Statement

We are the Presbytery of Susquehanna Valley. We are followers of Jesus Christ, empowered by the Holy Spirit, and entrusted by God our Creator to serve “the least of these.” Jesus calls us to feed the hungry, refresh the thirsty, clothe the naked, tend to the sick, and visit the imprisoned. And while some in our nation try to erase efforts to celebrate the diversity of God’s people (Revelation 5:9), the equity that God expects (Isaiah 11:3–4), and the inclusion of all those created in God’s image (Genesis 1:27, John 3:16), we affirm that we — the Presbytery of Susquehanna Valley — will strive to be a Matthew 25 people: building congregational vitality, dismantling structural racism, and eradicating systemic poverty.

Because we remember the Great Commission of Jesus to “*go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you*” (Matthew 28) and the whole Biblical witness, we will try to follow the commandments to ...

- Go forth into the world in peace (John 16:33)
- Be of good courage (Philippians 4:13)
- Hold fast to what is good (1 Thessalonians 5:14)
- Render no one evil for evil (Romans 12:17)
- Admonish the idle, strengthen the fainthearted, support the weak (1 Thessalonians 5:14), and help the afflicted (2 Corinthians 1:4)
- Honor all people (1 Peter 2:17)
- Love and serve the Lord (Deuteronomy 10:12), rejoicing in the power of the Holy Spirit (Romans 14:17).

We are more than members of any political party or nation. We are members of the Body of Christ. And we proclaim again that Jesus is our Lord and Savior.

Approved by the Presbytery of Susquehanna Valley April 12, 2025, with thanks to the Presbytery of Charlotte for developing this statement.

Announcement from the Merger Visioning Team

Dear Members of Cayuga-Syracuse Presbytery and Susquehanna Valley Presbytery,

This letter is written for the purpose of communicating with the Presbyteries about the progress made concerning the idea of a merger. Both presbyteries have voted to proceed with exploring merging together. As those motions begin to take root and movement begins to happen, it is important to understand what that means.

Several committees of each Presbytery have met to discuss ways to collaborate. There is a desire on the part of the committees to work together to help one another in a more intentional way. This grassroots reaction to exploring a merger is encouraging and exciting as committees find ways to do together what we are finding it hard to do alone.

The leadership of both presbyteries have appointed three individuals (Susquehanna Valley: Rev. Dave Johanson, Elder Jeff Smith, Elder Robbie Jean Rice; Cayuga Syracuse: Rev. Lorrie

Cooney, Elder Steve Eidt, Rev. Steve Plank) plus Rev. Greg Garis (Lead Presbyter for Transformation) as staff resource, to be a team of seven to work as a Vision Team to move the presbyteries forward toward a merger that would make us stronger at being a witness for God.

This Vision Team is tasked with forging a path toward merger. As we continue to explore, guidance is being sought from the Synod, from other presbyteries that have merged and possibly a consultant with experience in bringing ecclesiastical entities together. The possibilities are wide open as far as what a merged Presbytery's mission would be, how it would function, how it might be structured and how we move into the future.

To this end, the Human Resource Committee of Cayuga-Syracuse Presbytery and the Personnel Committee of Susquehanna Valley Presbytery have met several times since the fall of 2024. They have proposed an idea to the leadership councils of both presbyteries to share Rev. Dr. Greg Garis between them and to hire an Assistant to the Lead Presbyter to work with Greg in serving both presbyteries.

The idea of sharing Greg is beneficial to each presbytery: Greg working with both presbyteries will offer consistent and continued leadership, guidance and support to Cayuga-Syracuse who does not have a Lead Presbyter at this time and to Susquehanna Valley as they explore a fresh approach to ministry.

On a practical side, Susquehanna Valley's Synod grant, which supports 28% of the Lead Presbyter's compensation packages, ends in April 2026 and Cayuga-Syracuse Presbytery would benefit from staff support.

Both presbytery "councils" (Coordinating Council/Cabinet) have given permission to the Human Resource/Personnel committees to work out an agreement, in essence a "new call", outlining this shared presbyter idea. Finance committees will be consulted during this process about the compensation package. We have proposed a start date of September 2025 for this to begin. In the meantime, there will be a vote on pursuing this path of a shared Lead Presbyter role and an Assistant at the May presbytery meeting of Cayuga Syracuse and the June meeting of Susquehanna Valley.

It is exciting and encouraging to know that some committees of each presbytery are already working together. The possibilities are great for a future single Presbytery in the central New York area to join in the work that God is already doing in our communities and in each presbytery. We do not know what the future will hold nor exactly what it will look like, but we sense the strong movement of the Holy Spirit and are excited to move forward trusting the way will be made known. We are hopeful you will join in this excitement and become actively involved as opportunities arise in seeing what "new thing" God is doing in our midst.

Grace & Peace in the name of our Risen Christ,

Vision Committee

*Rev. Lorrie Cooney, Elder Steve Eidt, Rev. Dave Johnson,
Rev. Steve Plank, Elder Bobbie Jean Rice, Elder Jeff Smith*

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 (6/10/2025) letter is at conta.cc/4kz5JtT

Just One More Page — A monthly book review blog. prcli.org/book-reviews

Cultivate: growing in faith — Christian Education and faith formation resources, ideas, and anecdotes for adults, children, youth, families, and multigenerational ministry. The June 2025 letter is at bit.ly/3FKbtla

Joys and Concerns

Preparing to Wed: Andrew & Margaret; Emma & Jessica

Graduations & New Beginnings: Andrea Gilebarto, Holly Red Elk Pelton, Sam Richardson, Cleo Pelton, Nate Manewith (joined the Marines), Alex & Marina (married 5/4)

Welcome to the World! Eileigh Skye Hunt, born April 26 to John & Erica; Louise Jane Panny, born May 30 to Mark & Lauren (Menges) and brother Roger

Kidney transplant July 11: Bernie

Praying for Kidney transplant: Tony

For Healing: Mary Rose, Vicki, Marianne, Cheryl, Ann, Ethel

Grieving: Hugenbruch family, death of Emily's dad; Dave & Cheryl Schneider, death of her sister; Chastain family, death of Marjean, Matt, and Abby; all those who mourn Pope Francis; Families of those who have died by suicide; Elikem, death of mentor & two family members; Lorrie & family, death of grandbaby at birth; family and friends of Sandy Brown and George Frasca

Recent & Upcoming Birthdays

June

- 5 Alexander Westcott
- 12 Jean Hill
Sally Hunt
Darlene Ward
- 13 Madelyn Parsons
- 14 Taylor Chadwick
Jazmine Meade
- 20 Sharon Landon
Lou McKeage
- 21 Marilynn Guinane
- 22 Eleanor Hough
Dylan Pelton
- 23 Sara Lieberman
Austin Shadduck

25 Lucien Hough-Westcott

26 Bill Donohue

27 Jacalyn Westcott

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 Cleo Pelton

August

1 James Favor

4 Owen Westcott

6 Mark Barnes

10 Aimee Backus
Judy Girdwood Westcott

11 Holly Red Elk Pelton

14 Linda Hessian
Leonard Hoover

15 Brian Hugenbruch

19 James Spencer

23 Ed Hickey

30 Cindy Burger
Margaret Davis



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

Ongoing: Kristie, Bill, Darlene, Adam, Felix, Bob & Esther, George, Kate, Dick

Other Concerns: We pray for

- Gaza, Ukraine, Yemen
- community as it deals with murder at Salvation Army
- those losing their government jobs
- people struggling with addictions
- those living in fear
- working class fighting to afford healthcare, retirement, housing
- international students and migrants caught in political tangles





Everyone is welcome here

UNITED PRESBYTERIAN
CHURCH OF BINGHAMTON



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Address Service Requested

Annual Congregational Meeting ***Sunday, June 29, after worship***

Our annual Congregational and Corporate Meeting (Part 2) will be on Sunday, June 29, immediately following the worship service. We will gather on this Sunday to conduct the ongoing business of the church for this year, knowing that the Lord of love and light goes with us every step of the way! We will elect the Session class of 2027 and the Nominating Committee for 2025–2026, and receive the team and project reports for the program year.

This meeting will be hybrid, immediately following the worship service, in the sanctuary and in the Zoom room, upcbgm.org/zoom or via phone call (+1) 646-558-8656, Meeting ID 865 274 8433.

It would be good to have you with us, either in person or online.