

Advent 2025

Volume 16, Issue 4

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

Come as You Are Christmas Pageant

Sunday, December 21, 10am



No rehearsals! Anyone who wants to play a part can have one. You get to choose which role you want to play in the pageant, and simple costumes and props will be supplied. Narrators will invite the players to come forward when it's time.

Board Game Fun!

Sunday, January 10 at 3:00pm
at United Presbyterian Church of Binghamton

Join the fun Sunday afternoon January 10 from 3pm to 5pm when we will gather to play board games, eat snacks, and enjoy hanging out together. Bring your favorite board games you would like to play with others and we will divide into groups to play different games. All ages are welcome!

In this issue:

Pastors' Ponderings	2
Musician Musings	4
Our Church Family	5
Programs & Events	12
PC(USA) News	15
Joys and Concerns	18

*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*

Three years ago, three days before Christmas, the call came to United Presbyterian Church: a shelter for unhoused people was needed, and the place that had been chosen to house the shelter pulled out. It was three days before Christmas, a killing cold was predicted, and there was “no room for the guests”. The Session voted unanimously, and the congregation agreed, that we could become a place of shelter. Partnering with the Addiction Center of Broome County, we provided space and a shower and whatever hospitality we could, and a 42-bed shelter has been open since April 2023.

In the first week of Advent this year, as we were reminded once again of Christ’s coming as a child, we learned that ACBC had lost its funding and their shelter will be closing. At first it seemed that we had another emergency at hand; the weather has again been bitterly cold and it seemed the shelter would be closing by January 1st. Again, the leadership and the congregation declared that we would step into the breach and reached out to other congregations and agencies to come up with a plan to keep some kind of shelter open.

One of the calls had an unexpected effect, and funds were found to continue the ACBC shelter through the season known as Code Blue.

The story doesn’t end there. The nascent coalition is continuing to meet and talk and seek for funding and a new model for the shelter, so a new journey is beginning as we seek for ways to be faithful to this call.

In the meantime... our pantry is feeding more people each week as SNAP funding became tenuous; our community meal has fed as many as 230 people on a Tuesday night; and we see fear all around us as the world we have known seems to be shifting.

And yet... 1,200 Christmas gifts were received this year by the GloryShines Toy Drive, housed in our building. Our tiny congregation has responded generously and with open hands to the Donohue challenge. The Sewing Group has found renewed energy, and is delivering quilts and bags and knitted items around the county to bring warmth to lonely and disabled people. New friends and family have come to join with us in our journey following Jesus, even as we grieve friends who have moved away or gone before. The small lights of faith and service shine ever more brightly to pierce the gloom of a world that seems broken.

Can you see the hope of Christmas in the gathered community? Can you hear the song of angels proclaiming that God has sent the Son to us, so that “the hopes and fears of all the years” are still met by God’s saving and redeeming love?

Let us return once more to the manger, to see and hear the glory of a world made new. Let us bring gifts to the promised One, and shape our congregation and our building and our life together to tell the good news of Emmanuel, God with Us. Amen!

*Merry Christmas,
Pastor Kimberly*



Greetings Friends!

Happy Advent and Merry Christmas!

This time of year is so busy! There are presents to buy or make, there are decorations to put up, there is food to plan and prepare, there are extra get togethers and events to attend, and there are travel plans to arrange or cleaning your house to prepare for guests. And if you are in school, there is end of semester finals, projects, and



*Becky Kindig,
Associate Pastor*

papers to finish or grade. And for parents, there are child care arrangements to make during the break. The busyness can make us forget that this is a time in our Christian lives to slow down and be intentional to prepare our hearts for the miracle of Christmas. So how can we balance the two sides?

- Insert small intentional practices into your day to remember the reason for the season. Light a candle during a meal and talk about the Hope, Peace, Joy, or Love you experienced that day. Read a daily Advent Devotional or Christmas books with your children. Keep a gratitude journal and write things you were grateful for down before bed. Listen to some religious Christmas music in the car. Pray for people while you are doing a chore like washing the dishes or brushing your teeth.
- Do something weekly that refreshes your soul. Come to worship, make art or music just for you or to share, read the scripture for the week, spend time in nature or experiencing nature through a window, or do anything that opens you to a feeling of the divine, or a sense of awe and wonder, or joy and beauty.
- Choose a goal for the month such as making a charitable contribution to a cause you love, volunteer for an organization that helps people, help a neighbor with the shoveling, make a plate of Christmas cookies for someone, or spend time with someone who is lonely. Anything that reminds you what it feels like to give back to others or the community.



This is not an exhaustive list. There are countless ways that you can prepare for the miracle of Christmas, this is just a few things to get you started. If you have a special way that you prepare that is not on this list, I would love to hear about it. And if you would like help finding an Advent Devotional or suggestions on volunteer opportunities or something else on this list, we would be happy to help.

I wish you a spiritually nurturing Advent and a very Merry Christmas!

Grace and Peace,
Pastor Becky



Merry Christmas



Musician Musings

As fall gives way to winter, the shared music ministries have continued to grow and lead the congregation in worship with beautiful offerings! From the quiet and reflective instrumental music provided by Lana Ogden (recorder), Margaret Davis (violin), and Peggy Sniezik (bass recorder) for our All Saints celebration, to the stirring sounds of the March from Aida played by Sara Lieberman (trumpet) on Reign of Christ Sunday, to the beautiful anthems in many languages sung by the choir, we are blessed by all the talent in our midst. Phil Westcott has played guitar and saxophone, Ernest and Elikem have added drums — If you have a gift you'd like to share, speak to Music Director Aimée Backus or one of the pastors — we'd be glad to have you add to the sounds of praise in our sanctuary. The vocal choir rehearses on Wednesday nights from 6:30 to 7:30, and sings in worship on Sunday mornings on an almost weekly basis. The instrumentalists... fit rehearsals in when they are inspired or needed.

The United Ringers handbell choir has continued to astonish with beautiful selections in which a seemingly impossible number of bells are played by a mighty few. Sometimes director Austin Shadduck is playing with both hands as he directs the ringers, and the sounds that ring out are joyful and melodious. The United Ringers rehearse in the sanctuary most Sundays after worship, and new members are always welcome. Even if you've never played an instrument or don't know a flat symbol from an eighth rest, you can give it a try. If you can count to 4, you can learn to play!

We have been grateful to our guest accompanists, Andy Chadwick and Nancy McNamara, for their keyboard skills. The organ and the piano sound beautiful when they are supporting congregational singing, or playing solo music to enhance our worship. The search continues



for a permanent accompanist (spread the word) but in the meantime, we're grateful that they have been generous with their time and their talent!

This Christmas we'll have many traditional and contemporary selections in our Candlelight Communion service, as we welcome the baby Jesus and sing with the angels. Children are invited to participate while we sing "He is Born" by playing along with handchimes. The bell choir will end our service after we sing "Joy to the World" and extinguish candles.

Our Church Family

In Memoriam



Carol Pfordte Mabin, 81, passed away peacefully on November 7, 2025, surrounded by her beloved family. Carol waged a courageous battle with cancer for over seven years, exceeding all expectations.

Carol's life began June 21, 1944, in Binghamton, NY, the younger daughter of Robert and Miriam Pfordte. She was welcomed by a sister, Mary Jane, with whom she maintained a close relationship throughout her life. Nicknamed "Curly" by her parents, Carol graduated from Binghamton High School and attended Russell Sage College in Troy, NY, earning a degree in Elementary Education.

Carol met Keyle Mabin while working summers at Camp Van Schoonhoven near Troy, NY. Keyle served in the Army and they married in 1967. She followed him to Okinawa, Japan, where he was the Commanding Officer at Camp Kue, and they welcomed their first daughter, Diana Jean.

Carol and Keyle relocated to Connecticut after Keyle's service. They welcomed their younger daughter, Marsha Jane, in 1973. Carol taught first grade for a few years; however, she spent most of her time caring for her family. She was a doting mother and wife, "running the ship" for her entire life. They moved several times before buying the Deep River Motor Inn in Plymouth, New Hampshire, in 1987. This began their New England adventure and they cherished their time in the North Country.

Carol and Keyle welcomed repeat customers at the motel for sixteen years, then moved to the beautiful country home next door when they retired. Here, Carol helped raise her grandchildren Fletcher and Reese, looked forward to visits from Diana, Laurel, and Ava, and hosted countless family and friends.

Carol worked for several years at the Plymouth Water District and was on the Speare Memorial Hospital Patient Family Advisory Council. She volunteered for years at the front desk at Speare, assisting patients and families navigate their hospital visit. Carol treasured her years at Speare, making many of her dearest friends there. It was with gratitude that her family was able to spend her last days with her in a Hospice Room, which she helped to update while at Speare.

Carol is survived by Keyle, her husband of 58 years, her daughters Diana and Marsha, her grandchildren, Fletcher (Morgan), Reese, Laurel, and Ava, and her sister, Mary Jane. She was preceded in death by her parents, her brother-in-law, and his wife.

The family would like to extend their deepest gratitude to Britt McDonald, Dr. Bonnem, and the wonderful team in the Oncology Department at Speare. Their exceptional care made Carol's regular visits more tolerable. We thank you from the bottom of our hearts.

In lieu of flowers, donations can be made in Carol's name, Attn: Cheryl Callnan, Speare Memorial Hospital, 16 Hospital Road, Plymouth NH 03264 or online at spearehospital.com/donate/make-a-secure-online-donation/

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:

- 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.

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.

- 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.

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 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.



The UPC Choir rehearses in the Music Room on Wednesdays, 6:30–7:30pm. 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!

The United Ringers rehearse in the sanctuary after worship on Sundays, 11:30am–12:30pm. Our handbell choir plays 2–4 octaves of Malmark handbells and handchimes, providing music for worship once or twice a month. If you're interested in learning how to play handbells, please inquire. No previous experience needed. If you can count to 4, you can learn to play!



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.

Advent–Christmas–Epiphany Worship Schedule

November 30 through December 21 — Advent: “From the Manger”

This Advent, we are using curriculum from Illustrated Ministry called “From the Manger”. “From the Manger” gathers around the birth story in Luke 2, embracing the playful symbolism of a newborn Jesus being laid down to sleep in a feeding trough in a town called “House of Bread.” Beginning Advent with the birth of Jesus may feel a bit unconventional. Still, we hope this liturgical dissonance will invite you to reflect on the life-sustaining hope, peace, joy, and love Jesus brings and notice how the baby born in a bread town continues to feed a hungry world today.

November 30 — Advent 1: Hope, *Luke 2:1–7*

When Jesus was born, he was placed in a feeding trough in Bethlehem, the “House of Bread.” Amy-Jill Levine reminds us that the manger connects not only to the Last Supper but to all moments where Jesus shares meals. Jesus begins his ministry by feeding the hungry and understanding their needs. Without food, hope withers. On this First Advent Sunday, hope grows from the manger, symbolizing that where Jesus is, hope is found. May we find hope easily this season.

December 7 — Advent 2: Peace, *Luke 2:8–16*

Peace be with you! We say this every week, but we all know that peace is easier said than done. On this Second Sunday of Advent, we are invited to reflect on peace, which feels even more elusive given the ongoing violence, war, and turmoil in our world. It is still the night of Jesus’s birth, but the scene now zooms out from the manger to reveal a vast pasture. The good news of the Savior’s birth first reaches those who labor in the fields at night, not those who feast in palaces. The peace this Savior brings begins with those who are humbled by God’s glory, not those who glorify themselves. This good news is then affirmed by a multitude of the heavenly host: “Glory to God in the highest heaven, and on earth peace among those whom God favors!” (Luke 2:14).

December 14 — Advent 3: Joy, *Luke 2:15–20*

Advent stirs our hunger for joy, leading us to reflect on our blessings. The shepherds, filled with joy after meeting Jesus, spread it to all they met. Joy inspires us to care for our families and communities. On this Third Advent Sunday, joy grows from the manger, touching Mary, Joseph, and even the animals. May we feel this joy too.

December 21 — Advent 4: Love, *Luke 2:1–20, Matthew 2:1–2*

On this Sunday before Christmas, we invite everyone to share the joy by participating with us in our “Come as You Are Christmas Pageant”. You get to choose which role you want to play in the pageant, and simple costumes and props will be supplied (it will be okay if we have lots of Marys or only a couple of shepherds). Narrators will invite the players to come forward when it’s time. We’ll sing lots of carols, and have a joyful, informal service of celebration as we tell again the great good news of God-With-Us!

Wednesday, December 24 — Christmas Eve: Candlelight Communion Carol Service at 4pm

We know that Christ is born in a crowded, unlikely place. And yet, God makes a place here anyway. God draws the circle wider as shepherds and unexpected guests arrive. This Christmas,

let us also make room — for strangers and neighbors alike. For this is good news of great joy for all people.

We will celebrate Emmanuel, God-With-Us as we join together in the Lord's Supper, and at the close of the service we will dim the lights for our traditional candle-lit singing of "Silent Night" and "Joy to the World".

It would be good to have you with us.

December 28 through February 15 — Christmas, Epiphany, and the season leading to Lent

December 28 — First Sunday After Christmas, *Luke 1:46–55, 68–79; 2:25–35*

Luke's telling of Jesus's nativity has three songs scattered in it: Mary sings the Magnificat, Zechariah sings of the child who will grow up to guide us on the path of peace, and Simeon sings of the hope that all people will be redeemed by God's coming among us. In a time of darkness and confusion, we can find again the hope and the courage that these songs reflect, and dream again of a world redeemed by hope, peace, love and joy.

January 4 — Epiphany Sunday, *Matthew 2*

We love to celebrate the coming of the Christ Child with joy and laughter and light. But Matthew's telling of the story reminds us that the hope of Christ comes in a time of danger and uncertainty. Well meaning astrologers unleashed catastrophe by alerting an unstable ruler to his birth. His family fled from danger and became refugees; there was destruction and fear behind them. Even so, the promise of Emmanuel, God-with-Us, went with the holy family and is still with us today. To a world that seems broken and despairing, Jesus brings the hope of healing and renewal.

January 11 — Baptism of Jesus Sunday, *Mark 1:1–11*

Jesus was not a lone superhero who lived, died, and was resurrected in isolation. He was nurtured in a community; his ministry was shaped to return God's wandering children home. Mark gives us a very simple telling of Jesus's baptism, where he experiences the calling of God and then retreats to explore what his path would be. We will remember and renew our baptisms as we consider what God is calling us to do and be in the coming year.

January 18 – February 8, The Servant Songs of Isaiah, *Isaiah 40, 41, 42, 49*

We say that Jesus is the Messiah, the Christ, the Anointed of God (the three titles mean the same thing in Hebrew, Greek and English). The stories and teaching of the prophet Isaiah, told for generations to believers in Judea and the Galilee, were part of the story of exile and redemption that gave them hope that a messiah would come. We'll consider these four "servant songs" as the context in which Jesus's ministry and teaching took place, then during Lent we'll tell those stories, and during Holy Week we will listen to the fifth Servant song, found in Isaiah 53.

February 15 — Transfiguration Sunday, *Mark 9:2–13*

The story of the Transfiguration is another way that the gospel writers remind us that Jesus was part of God's ongoing relationship with his people, and that believers then and now are heirs to the same tradition that nurtured him. Mark's telling is very simple — some of the disciples saw Jesus in a special way, together with Moses and Elijah, who came before him. They were excited and wanted to preserve the moment by building shrines, but the moment passed, leaving them to wrestle with the question of what it meant.

Welcome to the Pierre Family!

In November, we were glad to welcome Abraham and Love-Djina Pierre into our congregation, and baptize their two children: Harlen (2 years old) and Rose Mica (5 months). The Pierres have come to us from Haiti via New Jersey; they work for Amazon here in Binghamton. They heard that we are a friendly and welcoming congregation and they hope to raise their children as Christians with us.

Because they are learning English as they go, we provided worship guides and copies of the baptism service in Haitian Kreyol for their use, and the English-language worship guides also included the Apostles' Creed and the Lord's Prayer in both languages. Both Abraham's and Love-Djina's mothers and siblings were able to be with us, a true blessing with an active 2-year-old and an uncertain 5-month-old.

Byenveni, Abraham, Love-Djina, ak Harlen ak Rose Mica!
Nou kontan out e mete tet ansanm avek nou nan Kris la!



News from the Kitchen

by Sherry Conklin, Community Kitchen Coordinator

What a year it has been for our food missions. We survived the federal shutdown and the suspension of the food stamps. The need for serving people continues to grow. The Tuesday night meals are dine in and/or take out. We are presently plating 200 to 250 meals each week. I am so glad to have new volunteers helping with serving and cleaning. Thank you to all our volunteers: Bob, Torie, Dave, Margaret, Suzie, Karen, Cindy, Angel, David, Bret, Dave, Greg, Kay, Ed, Allison, Elikem, Ethan, Ellis, Sara, Chauna, George, Alex, Joan, Jeff, Sharon, and Keith. Yes, it takes an army to prep, serve, and clean every week. The regular pantry volunteers that I am grateful for: David, Lillian, Alex, Joan, Dolores, and Suzie. We still need a regular volunteer for Wednesdays from 2 to 5. We serve 75 to 100 families every week in the pantry. Any new volunteers are welcome. We regularly send out pantry boxes to 10 immigrant families that cannot come in person to the pantry.

We have given out numerous rolling suitcases, sleeping bags, and blankets, as well as knit hats, scarves, gloves, and warm socks. The First Ward knitting ladies supply the hats, gloves, and scarves. And our clothing bank is growing and has been well-received.

Right before Thanksgiving, we received another huge donation of clothing! Word is spreading that we accept all kinds of donations. If we can't use them or give them away, we'll get them to somebody who can.

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: 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 200 meals 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**, Lou McKeage lmckeage@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

Handel's "Messiah" presented by the Binghamton Downtown Singers and orchestra

*Saturday, December 20, 7pm at United
Presbyterian Church of Binghamton*

The Downtown Singers invite us to their annual Messiah performance in their new venue — our sanctuary!

Tickets: \$20

Online: downtownsingers.org/tickets

Email: tickets@downtownsingers.org

Call: 607-205-8741



Christmas in Palestine

*Saturday, December 20, 5:30–8:30pm at St. Francis of Assisi
Church, 1049 Chenango St., Binghamton*

Binghamton Solidarity for Palestine invites you to celebrate a Christmas in Palestine. This will be a fun and educational family-friendly event that will offer free Christmas activities for the kids.



**Fun for All | Christmas Tree Decorations | Gingerbread Houses
Christmas Cards | Arts & Crafts | Cookie Decorating | Story time**

Join us as we gather to honor the true meaning of Christmas and reconnect with its roots in the land where the story began — Palestine. We'll reflect on Bethlehem's traditions and the enduring hope that unites Christians worldwide, bringing that spirit into our own community.

Christmas with BRIO! vocal ensemble and Friends

Sunday, December 21, 3pm at Endwell United Methodist Church, 3301 Watson Blvd., Endwell

"Joy has come to us!" Celebrate the birth of our Savior in music.

Along with our choral music, you will hear solos on instruments like violin, flute, and harp, vocal solos, a duet, a trio, a piano duet and selections from “Amahl and the Night Visitors”. More congregational carols have been added for all to enjoy.

The concert is directed by Craig Johnson with Carolyn Corse as accompanist.

Guest musicians are: Wendy Stafford, flutist; Meredith Kohn Bocek, harpist; Jean Herman Henssler, organist; and the Vivace Recorder Ensemble.

There is no admission charge, but a love gift offering is greatly appreciated so we can continue to build our music library.

We give our concerts to say “thank you” to our great God for what God has done for us. Come and share the joy of this blessed season.



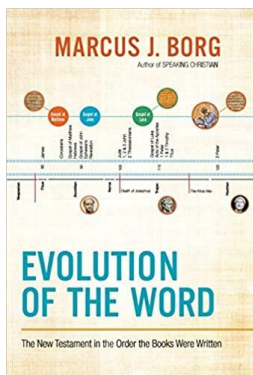
UPC's “Zoom room”

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.

14 ≡ UP-Beat Newsletter

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.

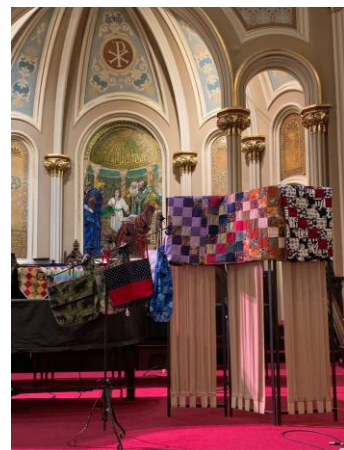
Blessings Abound

On November 16, the sanctuary was filled with vibrant colors, thanks to an array of quilts, carry bags for walkers, hats, mittens, blankets, and scarves that were designed and crafted throughout the year by the Wednesday Sewing Group. During our church service, our pastors blessed all of these items in advance of distribution to the community. As of this writing, the fruits of the group's labor are being prepared with bows and tags for delivery to area organizations during the Christmas holiday. Dozens of handmade items will go to those in need.

This year, despite supply chain issues for some of our supplies, travel schedules, and changing membership, the group created 36 comfy quilts, 13 stylish and functional walker bags, 2 crocheted blankets, and two dozen warm wearables.

Ellen Hancock-Berti is our expert creator of bags for walkers, which conveniently help recipients carry necessary items on their walkers hands-free. Over the years, hundreds of quilts and other items have





been provided to those in need in the community and beyond, to new babies in our church family, and to those needing a little extra comfort.

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. Stayed tuned for more information in the next newsletter, where we'll let you know where our donations were given.

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.

PC(USA) 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.



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 (12/8/2025) letter is at conta.cc/48nW99x

Hands to Work, Heart to God online craft group — 3rd Thursday of the month, 7–8pm: Join us on Zoom as we share our love of crafting and desire to connect with God online. Bring any “lap work” you may have. While we craft, we will listen to and discuss readings from Joyce Rupp’s book, *Constant Hope*. Contact Karen Smith, karen@prcli.org, 631-821-2255.

Cultivate: growing in faith — Christian Education and faith formation resources, ideas, and anecdotes for adults, children, youth, families, and multigenerational ministry. The December 2025 letter is at bit.ly/4iZ6f4t

Synod of the Northeast News

Spirit-Led. Transformative Faith. Boundless Welcome.

This is the proclamation of the Synod of the Northeast as we look forward to Reimagining the Church in the World.

At the Special Assembly meeting on November 15, the Synod Assembly took the following actions:

- unanimously approved the final report of the Discernment Team which lays out the Synod’s new vision, “Reimagining the Church in the World”
<https://online.fliphtml5.com/zkpz/ayuj/>
- unanimously approved the 2026 Synod Budget
<https://online.fliphtml5.com/zkpz/zcpv/> with no increase in Per Capita for 2026
- unanimously elected Rev. SanDawna Gaulman Ashley to a 5-year term as our Synod Leader
- unanimously approved a new staff structure for the Synod (as described in the Narrative Budget), including a new Mid Council Resident for Programs, Leadership Development, and Administration, as well as a new Funds Development Internship

Starting in Fall 2026, the Synod Assembly will meet three times a year. Each presbytery is to elect one Teaching Elder Commissioner, one Ruling Elder Commissioner, one Young Adult Advisory Delegate, and one Alternate Commissioner. Commissioners will serve three-year terms, which will be staggered so they don’t turn over all in the same year.

Participation in the work and ministry of the Synod is being opened up to at-large members of congregations and presbyteries, regardless of ordination status unless required otherwise by the Book of Order. Each of the six “Ministry Pillars” outlined in *Reimagining the Church in the World* include Teams which will be seeking participation from members of the Synod community.



If you have questions about the Synod, you can contact Scott Kindig or Cindy Burger, who are two of the Presbytery of Susquehanna Valley's Synod Commissioners; or you can contact Pastor Becky or Chris Burger, the Presbytery's Co-Stated Clerks, at statedclerk@susvalpresby.org; or contact Lead Presbyter Greg Garis at greg@susvalpresby.org or 607-323-4477.

The Power of \$3

During the Synod of the Northeast's 2025–26 budget presentation, we learned of a shortfall in the 2025 budget. "Designated giving" dropped significantly this year — from about \$16,000 in 2024's focused fundraising initiative to just \$2,920 through October 2025. The reason for the drop was that there was no focused fundraising campaign in 2025.

"What if we could increase giving through a simple fundraising strategy that does not impose, but enhances the inclusive and connectional aspects of our denomination?" asked Rev. Dr. Gregory Simpson, Synod Treasurer.

If the 100,000+ congregants across the Synod each contributed just \$3 per year — not per week, not per month, but per year — it would dramatically strengthen the Synod's financial foundation. This modest ask (less than a cup of coffee at Starbucks) could collectively generate \$300,000 annually, transforming the Synod's capacity to fulfill its mission to be "a grace-filled, connected, and accessible Synod body where presbyteries, congregations, and leaders build trust, share resources, and boldly live Christ's call to justice, equity, and beloved community."

Think about that just for a minute. Think about the increased training that pastors could benefit from. Think about the ways we could strengthen presbyteries. Think about the ways we could build new advocacy, strengthen lay ministry training programs, and simply strengthen every aspect of each of the 19 presbyteries working in the Synod. Just think about that for just a minute!!

Even though the 2026 budget of \$2,118,820 prioritizes equipping gospel communities (including a new Funds Development Intern position), communication efforts, and maintaining mission granting while strategically using reserves for fiscal sustainability, we can do more. The \$3 campaign represents not just financial stewardship, but a democratic approach to sustaining the Synod's work in building congregational vitality, dismantling structural racism, and eradicating systemic poverty — core commitments of the Matthew 25 initiative, from a denominational perspective, but also significantly strengthening the capacities of our presbyteries.

To make a donation to the Synod of the Northeast, go to synodne.org/donate.

More news from the Synod can be found in their newsletter: conta.cc/4aES7Lc.

PC(USA) releases updated action guide for "times like these"

The Presbyterian Office of Public Witness has updated its classic "Holy Discontentment" guide for those who want to engage in public life through advocacy, organizing, and witness. Grounded in the Reformed tradition and the social witness policies



of the PC(USA), the newly released guide offers both theological grounding and practical tools for individuals and congregations seeking to respond to injustice.

Learn more and download the resource: upcbgm.org/news251121.

Joys and Concerns

Preparing to Wed: Emma & Jessica

New Beginnings: Becky & Ken Mebert, moved to Colorado

For Healing: Nate M, Mary Rose, Vicki, Marianne, Cheryl, Ann, Ethel, Art, Margaret, Robin, Marilyn, Becky, Jean H, Kathy P, Hajrah A, Peg C, Star, Lois C, Denise R, Sharon F, friend with leukemia, friend with depression

Recovering from Surgery: Cindy B, Barb B, Dave D

Grieving: Jean Henssler; Nyamuame family; family & friends of Roger D, Joe T, Rich Smith, and Carol Mabin

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

Ongoing: Jean, Bill, Darlene, Adam, Felix, Bob & Esther, George, Kate, Dick, Ann, Alice, Jessica, Dean

Prayer After Restriction of Refugees

God, our heart's true home, Father and Mother of us all:

We can no longer pretend to be distant from the heartbreak afflicting your children
who have fled in fear for their lives, the violence and war in their homelands;
who must turn their backs on home
to survive famine, catastrophe or drought.

These our neighbors —

stopped at the borders of countries too overwhelmed to welcome;
held in trains, awaiting a word of hope;
huddled in camps and overcrowded shelters;
with nowhere to turn and no way to turn back —
these neighbors need the welcome of America,
where Liberty still stands vigil in New York Harbor,
still singing give me your tired, your poor, your huddled masses yearning to breathe free
as she has sung for two centuries, as she sang for our own forebears.
Her torch blazes still, a light that shines in darkness,
bidding us to walk alongside,
to be once again a city set on a hill whose light cannot be hidden.

Jesus, who said, *let the children come to me:*
We know the truth —



Other Concerns: We pray for

- Cameroon, Gaza, Ukraine, Yemen, Thailand & Cambodia
- people affected by storms & flooding
- wildfires
- people struggling with addictions
- those living in fear
- working class fighting to afford healthcare, retirement, housing
- international students and migrants caught in political tangles
- those who are homeless, and all who are working on the housing crisis

All of these children are our sons and daughters,
 and their parents are our brothers and sisters,
 and we owe them a room in the inn, a place of safety, a chance to live and thrive.
 We pray in gratitude for the many nations who have already welcomed so many,
 whose resources are strained under the burden of hospitality
 but who are still willing to do more.

We pray for ourselves:
 citizens in a land of plenty who hesitate,
 fearful for our safety, afraid there will not be enough,
 whose time for action is upon us.

May we challenge fear, inspire a better vision, and welcome extravagantly.
 We pray that you will help us to do better, to be better.

Spirit of Light, who descended, resting like fire on the heads of frightened and defeated disciples,
 even though we seem to walk in darkness,
 we are called to be light for the world.

Help us, as our country's policies push closed our nation's doors,
 to stand with those strangers who need our help
 to let our voices be heard,
 to make a way where there seems no way.

Help our citizenry, made strong by the gifts of many nations
 And unified by our common commitment to liberty and justice for all
 To find again our heart and our hope,
 And to say with one voice, we choose welcome. Amen.

—Rev. Dr. Laurie Kraus, Presbyterian Disaster Assistance, January 25, 2017, after executive orders were announced to restrict immigration and refugee resettlement, and build a wall to close the US southern border

Recent & Upcoming Birthdays

December

2 Aoife Backus
 3 Anne Boyer Cotten
 9 Douglas Hill
 10 Declan Jones
 14 Linda Griffin
 15 Chris Burger
 17 Jessica Lane-Rwabukwisi
 19 Lee Day
 Andrea Livingston
 20 Isla Jones
 25 Grace Hickey
 27 Jon Morse
 30 Nancy Walter
 31 Peter Griffiths

January

3 Dave Schneider
 9 Jackson Seman
 10 Gabriel Hickey
 11 Elikem Nyamuame
 18 Suzanne Souza
 20 Allison Nyamuame
 29 Andrew Chadwick
 Zack Meade
 31 Harley Meade

February

Elinor Hugenbruch
 1 Sarah Chadwick
 4 Dave Davis
 8 Jullian Wanjama
 14 Pastor Kimberly
 Peter Westcott
 Tết Cheryl Nguyen-Wishneski
 Maya Nguyen-Wishneski
 Arianna Windsong
 18 Jenni McKeage
 19 Cathy Ciganek
 26 Ron Glowacki
 Emily Hugenbruch
 27 Aaron Whitney





Everyone is welcome here

UNITED PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH OF BINGHAMTON



42 Chenango Street • Binghamton, NY 13901 • www.upcbgm.org

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

Address Service Requested

Christmas Eve worship service — Wednesday, December 24, at 4:00pm

Christmas truly is the most wonderful time of the year. As the new church year begins and the calendar year comes to a close, Christ's birth ushers us into new ways of living and loving. We hope you'll join us in celebrating the Good News at our family-friendly service of carols and candlelight on Christmas Eve, Tuesday, December 24 at 4pm. You can attend in person, join us online via our YouTube Channel upcbgm.org/youtube or Zoom upcbgm.org/zoom, or join over the phone by calling 646-558-8656 and then enter Meeting ID 865 274 8433. The service can also be viewed later on our YouTube Channel.

