

The Steeple

December 24-January 25

Dear Friends

Greetings in the name of Jesus! When I was a child, I knew Christmas was coming because animated specials started appearing on our television screen. Yes, the picture was black and white, and we had to manually change the channel! But that's not the point. These shows about Frosty the snowman, Rudolph the red-nosed reindeer, the Grinch, and Santa Claus were a reminder that Christmas was approaching. I knew if I wanted presents, I better be on my good behavior because jolly old St. Nicholas would soon be making his deliveries. I did not want the dreaded lump of coal on Christmas!

As I recall those December evenings of my childhood, I realized in some way I was doing what the church has done for centuries. The season of Advent prepares us to celebrate the birth of Jesus and to look forward to the coming of God's kingdom. Christians mark time through lighting Advent candles and hearing familiar words of the prophets. In some ways those television specials helped me get ready for Christmas through the telling of stories and the marking of the days.

At Seminary I discovered that some movies and television shows contain themes like the stories in the scriptures. Others help us think about God in different ways. This was the idea behind a class called "Theology and Film". Students jokingly referred to it as watching movies for credit. This course helped me make connections between what I saw in a movie or TV show and theological concepts.

This Advent I will be preaching a series of sermons called "An Animated Advent". Each sermon will use a Christmas television special from my childhood to illustrate the scripture of the week and to help us think about the gospel message in a new way.

On December 1 we will discover what "Frosty the Snowman" can teach us about preparing for the second coming of Christ. "Rudolph the Red-Nosed Reindeer" will help us to consider the life and ministry of John the Baptist on the Second Sunday of Advent. Our resident Grinch expert, Pastor Alyce will preach about how joy transformed the Grinch and can change us too on December 15th. The fourth Sunday of Advent will take us to "Sombertown" and the television special "Santa Claus is Coming to Town," which reminds us of what Jesus brings to our lives. During our Carols and Candlelight service at 7:30 PM on Christmas Eve, we will hear what Christmas is all about through the eyes of Charlie Brown.

It is my prayer that your Advent and Christmas will be animated and that you will be drawn closer to God as we remember these shows of our childhood. Perhaps through the eyes of faith and imagination, the Spirit will teach us new lessons about who God is and what has been done for us in Jesus. May you have a merry Christmas and a blessed new year!

Blessings,
Pastor Keith

Join Us for worship! ON Sundays at 8:30am and 11:00am

Adult small groups at 9:45am

Nursery (available at 11:00am) Upper Education Wing **Nursery is available for infants and children up to 4 years old**

Junior Church will be dismissed after the children's moment at 11:00am worship

DIGging Deeper | Sunday's | 9:45am | Wesley Room Advent Study—December 1st

An Unlikely Advent - Extraordinary People of the Christmas Story is a four-week study that focuses on the experiences of four sets of often overlooked characters in the Nativity story. During this Advent season, Rev. Rachel Billups guides readers through the themes of hope, love, joy, and peace by sharing the stories of Elizabeth and Zechariah, Herod, the Magi, and the shepherds. Each set of unexpected characters has something to teach about living faithfully on the journey to Christmas. Rev. Billups is lead pastor of New Albany UMC in New Albany, Ohio. You are invited to join us as we dig deeper into An Unlikely Advent.



Autumn has arrived, and with it the splendor of bright blue skies and a multitude of colored leaves. It's a glorious time to be alive! And, it's also a good time to

give thanks for life and all of its blessings! Before you get busy with preparations for the approaching holidays, please take the opportunity to schedule an appointment to donate the life-giving gift of blood. The year's final Red Cross blood drive for Gibsonia and surrounding communities will be held from 1:00 to 6:00 pm on Tuesday, December 3, at Trinity Lutheran Church, Gibsonia. As always, you can make an appointment on-line at <https://www.redcross.org/give-blood.html>. Or, if you need help with scheduling, call the Trinity church office at 724-443-8110. Thank you!

The Neighborhood Table | Dec. 5 | Fellowship Hall

BUMC is continuing to partner with the Fox Chapel UMC to provide meals to the Sharpsburg Community.

Volunteers are needed to help prepare the meal at BUMC starting at 2:30 PM. The meals are then transported to Sharpsburg and volunteers are needed there to help serve and clean up afterwards. This has been a very rewarding ministry so far, so please consider vol-

unteering by calling Roger Cramer at 724-443-2847.

Women's Annual Christmas Brunch Saturday morning, Dec. 7th | 9:00am - with the return of Pastor Alyce and a



new Christmas message, a fun craft, and the always hysterical BUMC Women's Drama group – as well as Chef Kevin McGrath, his world famous cinnamon rolls, and his band of merry kitchen elves to provide the meal!! We will once again be supporting the Deer Lakes Backpack Initiative to Fight Hunger – which serves over 200 children weekly in our community. You may bring food items or a monetary contribution (make checks payable to D L Backpack Initiative or bring a cash donation). Please sign up in the Narthex or call the church office to register by December 1st, so we know how many to prepare for. Thank you!

Drive Thru Dinner | Dec. 10 | Fellowship Hall

The Mission Team has been serving a monthly meal for The Lighthouse. If the Lord is calling you to participate in this ministry either by helping with food prep in the kitchen, packing meals, delivering them to our church friends or to cars, please plan on coming to the fellowship hall at 2:30pm, or if you have any other questions, please contact Carol Skolnik at cnikskol@gmail.com.



Lighthouse Toy Shoppe at Bakerstown UMC—Pick a paper ornament from the Christmas tree in the Narthex. Bring back an unwrapped gift back

under the tree, with your paper tag attached **by December 8th**

We will be hosting the Lighthouse Toy Shoppe on Saturday, December 14th 9:00 am—1:00 pm. Your donations are greatly appreciated. It allows families in need to receive presents for

Christmas for their children. **If you would like to volunteer on Saturday, please contact the church office 724-443-3184.** We are always in need of younger teenager gifts...some suggestions for them are make-up, jewelry, fishing rods and tackle boxes, hoodies (hooded sweatshirts), nerf toys, remote control helicopters/airplanes/cars, etc. ****The Lighthouse is also giving out \$25 gift cards for teenagers aged 16-18 this year, so if you would like to donate one, they'd appreciate it.** Thank you so much for all of your support!**

Bakerstown Youth Group

All youth join us Sunday Nights from 6-7:30pm.

Here is what we will be covering in December.



Series: Remember When

Christmas is one of those holidays that feels timeless. The traditions, music, and made-for-TV movies

not only connect us, but also the other parts of our lives. It's a season that invites us to be nostalgic and think about memories from Christmases past. In this 4-week series from the Gospels, we'll take a look at the Christmas story to see how something we may have heard long ago can still help us grow today. As we reflect on these classic stories, we'll remember how Christmas reminds us Jesus is our Savior and that God can be trusted, to rely on each other, and to trust that God is with us.

No youth group on Dec. 1 or Dec. 29 due to holidays. Christmas Party on Dec. 22 at youth group!



Food Pantry Needs *Lighthouse Food Pantry Collection for the month of December!* **January are croutons, salad**

dressings, oil, chili, saltine crackers & canned soup.

The Neighborhood Table | Jan. 2 | Fellowship Hall

BUMC is continuing to partner with the Fox Chapel UMC to provide meals to the Sharpsburg Community.

Volunteers are needed to help prepare the meal at BUMC starting at 2:30 PM. The meals are then transported to Sharpsburg and volunteers are needed there to help serve and clean up afterwards. This has been a very rewarding ministry so far, so please consider volunteering by calling Roger Cramer at 724-443-2847.

Bakerstown Youth Group

All youth join us Sunday Nights from 6-7:30pm.



For January: **Series: From Now On**

During his time on earth, Jesus' message was clear- from now on, things will be different. Jesus spent his

life showing people how God wanted to connect with them and help them connect with each other. Because of Jesus, our world can be forever changed-we just need to follow him. In this 4-week series from the Gospels, we'll explore what it means to follow Jesus and look at the life he invites us into. We'll see how we can trust Jesus is with us, how Jesus gives us peace, that we can trust Jesus loves us, and how Jesus gives us a place to belong.

No youth group Jan. 26th due to the Current retreat!

If you want to be involved in our Youth Ministry Program, or have questions concerning a program, contact Pastor Amanda at 724-443-3184 or amitchell@bakerstowntnumc.org

Drive Thru Dinner | Jan. 7 | Fellowship Hall

The Mission Team has been serving a monthly meal for The Lighthouse . If the Lord is calling you to participate in this ministry either by helping with food prep in the kitchen, packing meals, delivering them to our church friends or to cars, please plan on coming to the fellowship hall at 2:30pm, or if you have any other questions, please contact Carol Skolnik at cnikskol@gmail.com.



NEW - Thursday Morning Women's Bible Study beginning January 9th through February 20th at 9:00am - **The Gospel of John: Savoring the Peace of Jesus in a Chaotic World** by

Melissa Spoelstra. Life. It seems to move at a break-neck pace. Days are filled with noise, screens, and appointments. Sometimes worry and fear are constant companions. The chaos can leave you looking for a place to be still, but that resting spot always seems to be an elusive destination. Jesus offers a different kind of life. He offers peace. He is peace.

Come join us for this 7-session study on the Gospel of John, where we will be encouraged to slow down and linger with the living Word – to savor the peace of Jesus in a chaotic world.

You'll appreciate the pace of the Savior who never hurried but completed all that the Father called Him to accomplish. As you turn the pages of John's Gospel, you'll be challenged to take on the posture of a learner— understanding that the peace Jesus offers is not an ease of circumstances, but a stillness of the soul. As a result, you'll grow in intimacy with Him and learn to live, serve, and rest in His peace in the midst of a hectic life. Sign up in class, in the Narthex, or call the church office. Workbooks are \$18.00.

GriefShare's Winter 2024/2025 Schedule

GriefShare will continue with weekly Sessions on Wednesday Evenings through Dec 11th, from 7:00pm to 8:30pm. We meet once a month in January and February: **Monthly Winter Sessions January 15th and February 12th – 7pm to 8:30pm**
**New Session Series begins again weekly March 12th,

All-U-Can-Eat Breakfast! |Saturday, Jan. 18 | 8:00-11:00am | Fellowship Hall Breakfast will be served from 8:00 am to 11:00 am, \$7.00 for Adults, \$3.00 for ages 6-12 and under age 6 eat for free. Come and get your choice of Plain, Blueberry, Buckwheat

or Chocolate Chip Pancakes and the options of eggs, bacon, sausage and/or home-fries to go with them. Wash it all down with coffee, tea or OJ.

A Stitch and a Prayer |Saturday, Jan. 18 |10am to 2pm| Old Fellowship Hall Sewing, knitting and crocheting blankets and prayer shawls for Linus Project, baptisms and ill in our church. Need help sorting, sewing, ironing, pinning, cutting.....all hands welcome. Bring a lunch!!!!

If you sew, crochet, or knit your talent can be used in making quilts for Project Linus, shawls for shut-ins or even lap robes for people in nursing homes. If you are not able to join us when we meet on the 3rd Saturday of the month from 10-2, please contact Louise Himes, Mary Pouchot or Marge Kirkpatrick if you have questions regarding how you can help.



Bakerstown Methodist Women's Second Annual "Sleep In Your Own Bed" Retreat!

Ladies – Please join with us on **Friday night February 7th from 7:00pm to 9:00pm and again on Saturday February 8th 9:00am to 2:30pm at the church.** Rev. Alyce Weaver Dunn will be leading this retreat for us. Last year we had 40 women attend!! Come and join us again in 2025 and spend part of a wintery weekend with Jesus and each other. You can even come in your jammies if you want! So grab a friend and sign up!! Snacks will be available Friday night and a Continental Breakfast and a Soup & Sandwich Luncheon will be served on Saturday. No need to bring anything except your Bible and yourself!! Cost is \$20 per person to cover the cost of food and supplies. Please RSVP to Lora in the church office or sign the sign up sheet in the Narthex by Friday January 31st. Hope to see you there!!!!!!!!!!

Hello BUMC Children's Ministry friends and families!

This Fall, in Junior Church, we learned that God is a good God who keeps His promises. We learned that God made a special kind of promise to His people, called a covenant. This covenant is extremely special. Throughout the Old Testament we saw that God kept His promises, but God's people struggled to follow God and often needed help. I am so excited for us to continue learning about God being a good God who keeps His promises in the new year as we learn about God's promises in the New Testament!

During this Advent season, keep a lookout for an email from Ms. Jennie with a family devotional to go along with the preaching series. There will also be hard copies available on the Children's Ministry table beginning the last Sunday before Advent starts (11/24/24).

Junior Church:

Every Sunday, children ages kindergarten-5th grade will be dismissed following Children's Moment in the 11:00 service. We will head back to our room (s) (just past the library) in either one or two groups, k-2nd and 3rd-5th, depending on the size of attendance that week. This Fall in Junior Church we are learning that God is a good God who keeps His promises! We will be

exploring the Old Testament leading up to the birth of Jesus!

Please RSVP for your child here: [Jr. Church](#)

Volunteer for Junior Church:

We cannot make Junior Church work without help! Please consider volunteering to support BUMC's Children's Ministry. All materials and lessons will be prepped for you and any support you may need or want will be provided.

To volunteer, use this link: [Volunteer Here](#)

Note on Kingdom Kids for December

We are attempting to have a Kingdom Kids event on **Sunday December 8th from 12:15-1:45pm**. Kindergarten-2nd graders will stay after Junior Church, we will provide pizza and snacks for children as well as activities and games.

This is a drop-off event. However, *volunteers are always needed!*

To RSVP for your child(ren) or sign up to volunteer, please use this link: [Kingdom Kids](#)

January Kingdom Kids: Children who are enrolled in Kindergarten-2nd Grade are invited to attend Kingdom Kids on **Sunday, January 26th from 12:15-1:45pm**. Join us in New Fellowship Hall for a Bible lesson, snack, craft, game and more! This is a

drop-off event. However, *volunteers are always needed!*

To RSVP for your child(ren) or sign up to volunteer, please use this link: [Kingdom Kids](#)

January JUMP (Junior United Methodist Program): If you are a 3rd-5th grader, please join us for pizza and games on **Sunday, January 12th**. We will meet in New Fellowship Hall from 12:15-1:45pm for food and fun. This is a drop-off event, but *volunteers are more than welcome!*

To RSVP for your child(ren) or to sign up to volunteer, please use this link: [JUMP](#)

Note on Kingdom Kids and JUMP Dates moving Forward

Based on responses from informal conversations, surveys, and more, it seems that a majority of our families will be able to make Sunday after church work best for JUMP and Kingdom Kids times, therefore, the following times have been scheduled for the Spring term of Children's Ministry at BUMC. We are committed to adjusting to the needs of our church families.

Looking Ahead:

JUMP: February 2nd, March 9th,

Kingdom Kids: February 23rd, March 23rd

Combined JUMP and Kingdom Kids Event on May 4th.



From the Prayer Corner – Christmas and New Year's Prayers

An Advent Prayer to the Prince of Peace

Lord Jesus, in a season when every heart should be happy and light, many of us are struggling with the heaviness of life - burdens that steal the joy right out of our Christmas stockings. Loved ones are sick or have passed away this year, politics are divisive, world news is scary, violence erupts nearby, tragedy arrives as innocent victims suffer, and an inner voice whispers, "Be afraid!". We need your peace, Jesus. We confess that our hearts are too often filled with wonder of a different kind: fearfully wondering when the bills will be paid, when the terror will stop, when or if the healing will happen, when rest will come. Will it ever? Is the message still true? In a world where worry and turmoil, not peace, prevails, please, Jesus, stir up that Good News in us again.

This Advent 2024, make it real in our hearts. Never have we needed Your joy and peace more than now. Thank You for the gift of Yourself, Jesus, our Immanuel, the Word made flesh, God with us. We not only need Your peace and joy; Lord, we crave it. You've promised rest for the weary, victory for the battle-scarred, peace for the anxious, healing for the hurting, and acceptance for the broken hearted - not just at Advent, but every day of every year. Your name is still called "Wonderful," "Counselor," "The Mighty God," "The Everlasting Father," and "The Prince of Peace." We know that peace on earth can only come when hearts find peace with You. You are still our Joy. You are still our Peace. You are always our Salvation and our eternal home. You are no longer a babe in the manger. You are Lord of lords and King of kings. And we still celebrate and praise You as our Lord and Savior —this Christmas and always. Thank You Jesus!

(Portions taken from an article by [Rebecca Barlow Jordan](#).)



Healthy New Year's Resolutions for 2025

Some of us start off the New Year with goals of learning new things – maybe take an online class, learn a new language, or teach ourselves a new craft or new skills. Many of us also start off the New Year with goals of eating healthier and being more physically active. Experts suggest eating more healthy fruits and vegetables and whole grains, and taking up a walking program of 30 minutes or 3000 steps a day for 5 days a week. Did you know that Jesus has a "Learning" and a "Walking" program for us too?!

"O loving Lord Jesus, trusting you, we devote our hearts to learning about You, and our lives to walking with You in this New Year 2025.

Teach us truth, that we may walk with courage.

Teach us mercy, that we may walk with gentleness and humility.

Teach us forgiveness, that we may walk with compassion.

Teach us grace, that we may walk with strength.

Teach us wonder, that we may walk with joy and praise.

Teach us goodness, that we may walk with those in need.

Teach us love, that we may walk in love with You.

O loving Lord Jesus, learning from You and Your Word, may we walk well with You through this New Year 2025. In Your Precious Name we pray, Amen."

(Portions taken from an article by [J. Bradley Wigger](#).)

Mission Team News...

It can truly be said that every member of the Bakerstown congregation is a member of the mission team. Here's the proof:

- In the last few months we have seen larger than normal crowds at Roots of Faith and at the Drive Thru Dinner. That means an increase in everything!
- Advent calendars were given to each DTD family with children in November to help them prepare for the coming of the Christ Child.
- Our faithful cooks provided pumpkin pies for the November DTD. Yum!
- Over 160 folks attended the 3rd Annual Friendsgiving Dinner on November 19. Kudos go to our outstanding kitchen crew and all of our many volunteers. It could not have happened without them!
- The women of the church have been busy baking for these events and planning for December. They are providing a box of Christmas cookies for each Drive Thru Dinner recipient in December, along with a blessing bag for each family. Each blessing bag will contain a number of useful items and a \$25 Giant Eagle gift card. With approximately 60 families (nearly 300 people) that's an amazing feat!
- Meanwhile the mission team has been reviewing our budget and planning for year-end gifts to other ministries. Stay tuned next month for a detailed account of our spending.

Your prayers, financial support, and volunteer hours allow us to reach our local communities and the wider world. The Gospel is shared because of each and every one of you. Thank you!



December/January Birthday's and Anniversaries

12/08 Katie Mawhinney
 12/09 Owen Cramer
 12/10 Pam Lunn
 12/12 Sue Fritz
 12/17 Jeff Reynolds
 12/19 Jonathan Ometz
 12/24 Troy Lunn
 12/24 Jamie Khambatta
 12/26 Tracey Rossi
 12/28 Phyllis Brown
 12/30 Loretta Irwin
 12/30 Alyce Weaver Dunn

12/11 Chris &Tish Miller
 12/27 Tim & Marcia Shipley
 12/27 Randy & Maura Burd

01/02 Ray Wilson
 01/03 Jim Fritz
 01/04 Payton Streiff
 01/05 Debbie Lokay
 01/07 Lyla Kennah
 01/08 Paul Sullivan
 01/10 Jayne Cain
 01/13 Leonard Brennan
 01/15 Miriam Perriello
 01/15 Benjamin Brennan
 01/17 Michelle Fischetti
 01/19 Ian Holcomb
 01/19 George Kress
 01/19 Chris Sasada
 01/22 Reid Rinker
 01/23 Liz Sasada
 01/24 Kim Szelc
 01/24 Grace DeVore
 01/24 Clark Peters

01/29 Leo Gagen
 01/30 Benjamin McLeister
 01/31 Kevin McGrath

01/14 Brian & Kim Szelc
 01/16 Sam & Julie Cramer
 01/31 Don & Joyce Gindlesperger

Committee News: As the New year begins we would like to welcome all the new committee members: Please be sure to keep an eye on the bulletin and newsletters for upcoming meetings.

Church Council	Finance	Trustees	SPRC	Nominations
Diana Matusik	Cindy Rice	Bob Grier	Wes Shipley~ Chair	Camille Barrett
Frank Ferguson	Sue Fritz	Dave Meuschke	Don Allaman	Jayne Cain
		Anne Stevens	Nancy Parris	Leslie Olson
			Dan Pouchot	

Memorial Committee

Darrick Brown
 Becky Kyle
 Sherry Torick

The Trustees will be meeting the 2nd Wednesday of the month, Church Council will be meeting the 3rd Wednesday of the month, and SPRC will be meeting the 4th Wednesday of the month. Finance will determine their own meeting schedule.

If you are new to a committee in 2025, please make sure the church office has a current email address so that you can receive meeting notices and other important information throughout the year.

Thank you. Please email the church office at Istafura@bakerstovnumc.org

We also want to thank those that served over the past 3 years:

Church Council	Finance	Trustees	SPRC	Nominations
Camille Baret	Mike Perriello	John Cleary	Jayne Cain	Kathleen Meuschke
	Tracy Rossi	Parvez Khambatta	Paul McLeister	Nancy Shipley
		Elaine Schmidt	Jackie Smith	Andy Detar

Memorial Committee

Mary Pouchot
 Evelyn Dick
 Paula Shepherd

Bakerstown United Methodist Church
 5760 William Flynn Highway
 Gibsonia, PA 15044
 724-443-3184
www.bakerstownumc.org



*Our mission is to make disciples of Jesus Christ
 for the transformation of the world.*

Staff:

Rev. Keith Dunn
 Senior Pastor
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Rev. Amanda Mitchell
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Joyce Gindlesperger
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Jennie Smith
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jsmith@bakerstownumc.org

Tracy Hefner
 Worship Leader
thefner@bakerstownumc.org



Wednesday, December 18th—7:00pm A Blue Christmas Service

A service of reflection and remembrance. A service of healing and hope.

Tuesday, December 24th, Family Service—4:30 pm

This Worship service is particularly designed for families with children. There is a celebration of Christ's birth in a relaxed atmosphere appreciating the child in all of us as we welcome the birth of the child of heaven. We will be using LED candles at this service.

Tuesday, December 24th, Carols & Candlelight—7:30pm This services is a celebration of Christ's birth with joyful singing of carols and the beauty of candlelight. Enjoy the surrounding beauty and the warmth of God's love during this special time.

Sunday, January 5th—8:30am & 11:00am—Epiphany



THANK YOU FOR YOUR
**FINANCIAL
 SUPPORT**

	October 2024	YTD October 2024	YTD October 2023
Current Fund Giving	\$26,352.72	\$359,399.50	\$351,521.78
Current Fund Expense	\$33,737.10	\$378,089.14	\$364,451.24

Hello friends...Welcome to fall. I think. The weather has been quite different this fall, hasn't it? But our church is a constant. We stay grounded in our faith when we gather together to worship. Our church finances also stay constant. We have been able to pay all of our bills, but rising costs are also affecting the finances of our church, just like everywhere else. I am also kind of constant...vacations and grandson's games take me away sometimes...so make sure to say hi as you come into church. It's where you meet Jesus and meet your friends in Christ. Kay Cramer, financial secretary. 724-443-2847