

The Steeple

December – January 2027

Dear Friends,

"We Three Kings"
We three kings of Orient are; bearing gifts we traverse a far,
Field and fountain, moor and mountain, following yonder star.
O star of wonder, star of light, star with royal beauty bright,
Westward leading, still proceeding, guide us to thy perfect light.

Greetings in the name of Jesus! A lot can happen in two months! As I prepare for my December/January Pastor's Page, I realize that there will be three liturgical seasons of the church year occurring in those months. We will move from Advent, which is the four weeks preparing for Christmas, to the celebration of the birth of Jesus to the season of Epiphany.

"We Three Kings" is a hymn we often sing on Epiphany Sunday, which commemorates the story of the Wise Men coming to worship the Christ child. It takes poetic license with the story of the Magi from Matthew's gospel. For instance, the scriptures do not state the number of wise men or that they are kings, nor do they tell us the symbolism behind the gifts presented. The hymn does give us the meaningful image of the wise men being led by the light of a beautiful star!

I have been thinking and praying a lot recently by what it means to be led to the places God wants us to go. Over the past several months, we have been praying together a breakthrough prayer asking God to help us listen for his voice, to discern where he may be leading and to empower us to follow. We have had "Coracle Conversations" in October and November where we have sought God to lead us as individuals and the church. I am sure more of that will be revealed as we continue our journey together!

You may recall that the coracle is the boat without a rudder or sail. Tradition tells us that Saint Brendan of Ireland used a similar vessel in his journeys as the Spirit led him in his ministry. Our journey with God is sometimes like that. We allow God to lead and we follow by faith.

At other times, we may be like the wise men and have a clearer sense of our destination. There may be a star to guide us on our way! We may have a general idea of where we are going. The Magi knew they were going to pay homage to the newborn king of the Jews. They had to ask for help to know precisely where he would be born. They had to stop and ask for directions, which might be what made them wise men! We too need to consult with trusted guides such as pastors, mentors or friends. We also have the scriptures to keep us on the right path.

As we journey together through Advent, Christmas, and Epiphany, I pray that we will keep moving toward God, who came to humankind in Bethlehem. Like the wise men of old, who pressed on no matter how arduous the road, may we strive to go where we are led. May God bless each of us on our journey this Christmas and throughout the coming 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

December Happenings…

DIGGing Deeper's Advent Study | Sunday, Nov. 29th | 9:45am | Welsey Room
The Christian liturgical calendar features two prominent periods during which seasonal music reaches its zenith: Christmas and Easter. This year we will be digging deeper into some of our favorite carols of Christmas. What is their history? What is their message? What Bible passages are they based on? What is their theological foundation? And we might be singing them. Join along with us as we prepare for the coming of the infant Jesus by taking an in depth look at some of the carols of the season.

The Neighborhood Table | Dec. 3| Fellowship Hall
BUMC is continuing to partner with Roots of Faith 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.

Fourth Annual Women's Christmas Brunch!! Saturday, December 5th, 9:00am. A $10.00 donation is suggested. Great food by Chef Kevin. Men Doing Stuff serving. A fun skit. A sweet ornament. And we will top it all off with a special message from Pastor Alyce!! We are again collecting food items for the Deer Lakes Backpack Initiative – you may bring them with you or make a monetary donation. Sign up in the Narthex or call the church office. Hope to see you there!!

Men Doing Stuff – Making a Difference!
Men Doing Stuff (MDS) has been busy spreading a little Christmas cheer! In November, 12 MDS members rolled up their sleeves and got to work stuffing 50 shoeboxes for the Christmas Child Project. That's 50 boxes filled with gifts, goodies, and a whole lot of love, ready to bring smiles to children around the world. A big thank-you to everyone who pitched in and helped make this project a success!

Coming up next, MDS will be lending a hand at the Women's Christmas Brunch on **December 5th**. The guys will be helping with both the preparation and serving, making sure the ladies have a wonderful time and don't have to worry about doing all the work themselves! The brunch will be under the direction of Kevin McGrath, so we're looking forward to a great event and a little holiday teamwork.

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 6th.***

We will be hosting the Lighthouse Toy Shoppe on Saturday, December 12th 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 Lighthouse 724-903- 0064.** 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 13-18 this year, so if you would like to donate one, they'd appreciate it.** Thank you so much for all of your support!**

Drive Thru Dinner | Dec. 8| 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 another questions, please contact Carol Skolnik at cnikskol@gmail.com.

United Methodist Men Hard at Work….

2026 was another eventful year for the men of Bakerstown UMC.

- We hosted 8 Pancake Breakfasts where we served 2762 customers.
- There were 64 different men, women or youth that volunteered their time to help at least once.
- From the proceeds of the breakfasts we were able to give $1812 back to BUMC for supplies used, $4225 in camping scholarships to youth and $7400 towards different needs at the church.
- We support a charitable organization at each month's breakfast where the UMM donate 10% of our proceeds and allow our customers to add additional donations.
- From those collections we sent a total of $5434 to these organizations:
- Cystic Fibrosis Foundation, Prison Outreach Ministries, Habitat for Humanity, Camp Allegheny/Jumonville/Wesley Woods, UMCOR cleaning kit supplies, Richland VFD, Operation Christmas Child Shoebox shipping, and The Wounded Warrior Project.
- The Men Doing Stuff group met 7 different times to enjoy food and fellowship while doing work around the church.

Some of the work done was: taking down Christmas decorations, deep cleaning the kitchen and Wesley Room, mulching, made desserts for the Drive Thru Dinner, packed the Operation Christmas Child shoeboxes and will be helping cook, serve and clean up for the Women's Christmas Brunch in December.
If you ever have an interest in helping out at any UMM or Men Doing Stuff event, just send an email to: bakerstownumm@gmail.com

January Happenings…

Men Doing Stuff
After the holidays, MDS will get back to its regular schedule in January, meeting on the first Monday of the month, **January 4th, 6:30pm**. We'll be putting our holiday muscles to work one more time as we take down the Christmas decorations. After all, somebody has to help Santa pack up and head home! We hope to see everyone there as we kick off the new year with good fellowship, a little work, and plenty of fun.

NEW THIS JANUARY!! The Thursday Morning Women's Bible Study will begin a new study on Thursday, January 7th, at 9:00am -**The Names of God: A Study on Who God Is and Who He Calls Us to Be.** From the opening chapters of Genesis through the final verses of Revelation, God is known by many names—names that reveal who He is, what He does, and how He relates to His children. He is El-Roi, "the God who sees me." He is Jesus, "the Lord is salvation." He is the Spirit, your Comforter and Counselor. And you? You have a name, too. You are His beloved child, a Christian, one who bears His name. In this 8-session Bible study for women, teachers Kristi McLelland, Caroline Saunders, Blair Linne, Jennifer Rothschild, Kelly Minter, and Elizabeth Woodson will walk you through the pages of Scripture. Together, you'll examine names for the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, and you'll discover the impact each of God's names has on your relationship with Him. Join us as we deepen our knowledge of God and our relationship with Him through a study of His names. Workbooks are $20.00.

The Neighborhood Table | Jan. 7 | Fellowship Hall
BUMC is continuing to partner with Roots of Faith 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.

Drive Thru Dinner | Jan. 12 | 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 another questions, please contact Carol Skolnik at cnikskol@gmail.com.

All-U-Can-Eat Breakfast! |Saturday, Jan. 16 | 8:00-11:00am | Fellowship Hall
Breakfast will be served from 8:00 am to 11:00 am, $8.00 for Adults, $4.00 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. 16 | 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

GriefShare's 2026/2027 Winter Schedule
GriefShare will continue with weekly Sessions on Wednesday Evenings through Dec 9th, from 7:00pm to 8:30pm. Then we meet once a month in January and February:

Monthly Winter Sessions - January 13th and February 17th – 7pm

**New Weekly Sessions begin on March 3rd, 2027

Note of Appreciation

Many Thanks to all who donated items for the Operation Christmas Child boxes.

- All who donated money at the pancake breakfast to cover the shipping cost of the boxes ($500)
- Connie and Jay Martin for their help with organizing the items.
- The Men Doing Stuff group who packed the 50 boxes.
- Pastor Keith who prayer a blessing over the boxes.

From, Mike and Miriam Perriello

Children's Ministry and Youth Group News...

👧🏾 Children's Ministry News

We are entering a joyful Advent and Christmas season! Here is everything coming up for our families in December and January:

Junior Church Schedule & Lessons

December Dates: Junior Church will meet on **December 6th, December 13th, and December 20th**.

We are wrapping up our journey learning about Grace through the Old Testament by transitioning into the New Testament to explore the incarnational grace of Jesus—Grace made flesh!

Christmas Party (December 20th): Join us during Junior Church on **Sunday, December 20th** for a special celebration of the Greatest Gift of all!

Holiday Break & Return: There will be **no Junior Church on December 27th or January 3rd**. We will resume on **Sunday, January 10th** to kick off our Spring lessons!

Monthly Events & Family Resources

Monthly Children's Ministry Events: There will be **no extra Children's Ministry events in December or January**. Our monthly events will return in February! Be on the lookout for signups for volunteers and to register your child(ren)!

Family Advent Devotional: Be on the lookout for both physical copies at church and a digital copy sent via email! This devotional includes suggested family activities to help you dive deeper into our Advent sermon series themes at home.

Save the Date: Vacation Bible School (VBS)

Theme: *Crave: Stirring up a Hunger for Jesus*

Dates & Time: June 21st–25th from **9:00 AM – 12:00 PM**

Details: Open to all children **ages 4 through 5th grade**, and it is completely **FREE** for all attendees!

Registration: Opens **December 24th**.

🎁 Christmas Eve Youth & Children Welcome Bags

We need your help to ensure we warmly welcome every child and teen—from birth through the end of high school—to our church this Christmas! We will be offering gifts and goodie bags across three age categories: **Infant–Young Toddler**, **Preschool–Upper Elementary**, and **Middle & High School**.

Here is how you can be part of this outreach:

Sew Sensory Tag Pillows (by December 6th): If you are interested in sewing a few holiday-themed sensory tag pillows for our infant/toddler group, please let Miss Jennie know by **December 6th (through email, or by signing up on the table to the right of the Christmas tree in the Narthex)**. Patterns and instructions will be sent to everyone who signs up by that date.

Donate Goodie Bag Items: Want to help fill the bags? Check out our donation wishlist here: https://a.co/0032VcIn

Christmas Eve Bag Packing Party (December 20th): Join us in **New Fellowship Hall** on **Sunday, December 20th** right after the 11:00 AM service to help pack the gift bags! Light refreshments will be provided for everyone who stays to help.

🍕 Youth Ministry News

December Meetings: Youth Group will meet three times in December: **December 6th, December 13th, and December 20th** (our Youth Christmas Party!).

Holiday Break & Return: There will be **no Youth Group on December 27th or January 3rd**. We will return on **Sunday, January 10th**.

Winter Retreat — *Current* (February 19th–21st): Our youth will be attending *Current*, the Youth Retreat hosted by the Western PA UMC Conference at **Laurelville Retreat Center**!

Deadline: Please notify us of your intent to attend by **December 10th**.

Interest Form: Fill out the Jotform here to let us know you're interested: https://form.jotform.com/263218393679066

🙏 We Need Volunteers!

Our Children's and Youth Ministries thrive because of our church family! Whether you can serve once a month or help at an upcoming event, we would love to have you on the team.

Clearances: To volunteer with Children's or Youth Ministry, you will need clearances on file—**please do not let that stop you!** If you need clearances or aren't sure if yours are up to date, reach out and we will happily walk you through the process.

Sign Up to Serve: If you are signing up to volunteer, it is on Microsoft word, you don't need a word account to edit if you use a computer, not a mobile device.

Junior Church December-May: Junior Church December-May Volunteer sign up.docx

Youth Group December-May: Youth Group December-May Volunteer sign up

Thank you for your generosity, prayers, and support as we share the love of Jesus with our kids and youth this Christmas season!

From the Prayer Corner – Jesus is the Reason for the Season!

Are you one of those people who loves EVERYTHING leading up to Christmas: the planning, the shopping, the gift giving, the present wrapping, the card sending, the decorating, the Christmas cookie baking, the Advent services, the parties, the Children's Christmas programs, and the Candlelight Services??

Yet these same things can leave us feeling overwhelmed and stressed. As we celebrate Jesus's birth, it's important to see Jesus's presence to find heart happiness and peace amidst the chaos of the season. While things may be busy for you, do you have friends who find Christmas to be the loneliest day of the year? Maybe it is due to the death of a friend or family member. Or perhaps they never married or had children even though that was a great desire. Maybe they recently lost a job and finances are tight. Maybe they struggle with anxiety or depression.

No matter where you fall, a truly happy heart comes by connecting with Jesus and with others during this holiday season. Seeking Jesus can transform our attitude and our soul – and reaching out to others will bless us and them. A happy heart that's in the process of being transformed by Jesus changes the view of our circumstances.

Christmas may be full or empty for you, but the greatest gift we could give ourselves is to connect with Jesus through prayer, reading our Bible, or simply sitting and resting in quiet reflection. Happiness and peace can be found there, even amidst the chaos of Christmas when we remember Jesus is the reason for the season.

This holiday season, ask Jesus to bring to mind someone who might be lonely, someone who may be sad or depressed, or someone who doesn't know Him. Reach out to them, perhaps with a phone call, a card, or a small token gift, that will remind them that they are not alone and that Jesus is the reason for the season.



Merry Christmas and Happy New Year

from the Staff of

Bakerstown United Methodist Church

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**
Isabel Conley - **Secretary**	Chad Edwards	Nicole Edinger	Joan Donaldson	Patsie Evans
	Nancy Hollinger	Jim Fritz	Connie Martin	Deb Lokay
		Justin Schmidt	Patti Sworden	Kathleen Meuschke
Memorial Comm.	**Lay Leader**			
Evelyn Dick	Paul McCLeister			
Penny Fischetti				
Louise Himes				

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 2027, 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 **lstafura@bakerstownumc.org**

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

Church Council	**Trustees**	**SPRC**	**Memorial Comm.**	**Nominations**
Nicole Edinger	Ben DeVore	Jay Martin	Allisa Negley	Don Gindlesperger
	Peggy Hill	Patsie Evans	Diana Werkmeister	Susan McGrath
	Larry Halliwell	Justin Schmidt	Ray Wilson	Mary Pouchot
Lay Leader				
Tim Shipley				

December/January Birthdays & Anniversaries

12/08 Sue Myers
12/09 Owen Cramer
12/10 Pam Lunn
12/11 Jeff Howard
12/12 Sue Fritz
12/17 Jeff Reynolds
12/19 Jonathan Ometz
12/24 Troy Lunn
12/24 Jamie Khambatta
12/26 Tracey Rossi
12/30 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
01/10 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

Trustees Corner..

The Trustees remained busy this fall attending to the physical needs of the church and its properties.
One item that has generated much discussion is the Lee Road parsonage. As you know, Pastor Amanda moved out of the Lee Road parsonage in June this past summer. Trustees and Church Council have been discussing and evaluating various options to determine the future of this parsonage.

However, in September, a church member expressed interest in renting the parsonage. Mutually agreeable terms were reached between BUMC and the tenant and the parsonage became occupied once again in late October. This situation was a win-win for the tenant and the church and has allowed us to continue our investigation on the future of the Lee Road parsonage.
Late summer and early fall rains brought some flooding to the lower level of the church in the Day School Kindergarten Room. After careful study, the problem was traced to several conditions. The Trustees promptly responded to remedy these conditions. The biggest improvement was the upgrading and repairs to our gutter and downspout system at the southeast corner of the Education Wing roof. Early monitoring of subsequent rains is favorable, and we hope that this problem has been largely resolved.

Recently, Trustees have moved forward with a project at the North Entrance. Roger Cramer recently remarked that this action is "an enhancement to our open-door policy here at BUMC". The front entrance doors in the North Entrance were temporarily removed and have been refinished and refurbished. Carl Stevens has been working very hard and very meticulously on this project. Thanks to Carl for these upgrades to beautify our Main Entrance.

In September, the UMM approached Trustees about a need for more storage space for some of their cooking equipment, In response, Trustees agreed and have contracted with a company to construct an exterior shed to house the two griddles and one grill used by the UMM for the pancake breakfasts and other large dining events. This project is currently going through Richland Township approval stages. We hope the approvals are granted and the storage shed is fully constructed by year's end.
As the cooler weather of the fall arrived, unfortunately the furnace that serves the Nursery Room failed. It was determined that a new furnace would be more cost effective than repairing the old furnace. Thus, Trustees had a new furnace installed to service the Nursery Room in early November.

Other projects under consideration by Trustees are some additional improvements at the rear of the building to remedy the problematic ice conditions which have developed at the rear entrance and sidewalks. Trustees have a plan and hope to have this work completed prior to winter. The Trustees are also evaluating a problem roof leak which has developed in the sanctuary below the church steeple. Action on this item is pending further investigation. Thanks to Bob Grier for his efforts in studying and developing solutions to these problems.

Other projects are under consideration and will be acted upon as funding becomes available. Thanks to everyone who contributes to the maintenance and beautification our church and grounds.

Mission Team News..

The Mission Team served over 200 community and congregation members at our annual Friendsgiving Dinner on November 17. Thanks to the efforts of church members, day school staff, and other community members, everyone left with full bellies, leftovers for later, and thankful hearts. Our church has been blessed to have so many generous folks who regularly provide their time, talents and financial support to ensure that the mission team can carry on loving our neighbors near and far. Thanks to the many, many people who made Friendsgiving a success, especially our outstanding McGrath brothers who manage to come up with new culinary delights year after year!





Bakerstown United Methodist Church
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Our mission is to make disciples of Jesus Christ for the transformation of the world.



Staff:

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Wednesday, December 16th—7:00pm A Blue Christmas Service
A service of reflection and remembrance. A service of healing and hope.

Thursday, 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.

Thursday, 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 3rd—8:30am & 11:00am—Epiphany

Financial News....

	Sept. 2026	YTD Sept.. 2026	Oct. 2026	YTD Oct. 2025
Current Fund Giving	$30,365.48	$388,567.53	$49,657.96	$368,656.33
Current Fund Expenses	$40,019.35	$408,240.24	$31,042.25	$412,225.06

Hello Church Family...Wow has the weather been gorgeous but soon enough we will be snug and cozy by the fireplaces enjoying the heat they produce. Thank you for your generous support of the church. Last year we had to take money out of the reserve account in order to cover our expenses.
Because of your generosity we did not have to do that this year. We have paid all of our bills. But as we all know, winter season comes with its own challenges and expenses.

Come and plug into the activities of the church, especially during this Holy Season where we anticipate our Savior's birth. See you at some of these activities. Kay Cramer, Financial Secretary 724-443-2847

Looking Ahead to 2027
What a blessing to share that Church Council approved our 2027 operating expense budget during the November meeting at virtually the same amount as this year's. We are careful stewards who spend less than budgeted, yet rising expenses still affect our church. Please prayerfully consider stepping up your giving for 2027 so Bakerstown UMC can continue the vibrant ministries happening here.