

The Steeple

December 2025-January 2026

Dear Friends,

Greetings in the name of Jesus! As we approach the holiday season, I can't wait to listen to Christmas music, which I absolutely love. I do try to hold off until after Thanksgiving but some of it sneaks its way into my ears that holiday is completed. It doesn't matter if it is secular in nature like Mel Torme's "The Christmas Song" or singing "Silent Night" by candlelight, the music puts me in the Christmas spirit. I even don't mind hearing Wham's "Last Christmas!"

In addition to enjoying the music, I am fascinated by the stories behind the song. For instance, "White Christmas" was written in 1942 by Irving Berlin for the film "Holiday Inn" and won the Academy Award for Best Original Song at the 15th Academy Awards. There is some debate whether the song about an old-fashioned Christmas setting in winter was written in California or Arizona. Either way, the composer was probably working on a warm sunny day. It is also interesting to note that one of our nation's most beloved Christmas songs was written by a Russian Jewish immigrant.

There are meaningful stories behind the Advent hymns and Christmas carols we sing in worship as well. Whether they are quoting scripture or infused with poetic imagination, they help us express our faith and grow in our devotion to the God. Sometimes they are the result of the author's wrestling with the events of their day, which can help us in the circumstances we are facing. Pastor Amanda and I will explore the lessons of some Advent hymns and Christmas carols during our Advent sermon series entitled "The Music of Christmas."

The message of Christ's birth as contained in the music of Christmas is really about God's love coming to earth. God chose to become flesh to break through the darkness of sin and death. The entirety of Jesus' life, ministry, death and resurrection is about God entering the world in unexpected ways. As Christians, we ask God to enter our lives and our world in miraculous ways.

Earlier this year we were praying together a "Break Through Prayer." That prayer made a difference in my life and in the life of others in our congregation. You may have noticed that we have been including a new "Break Through Prayer" in our bulletin. It is the prayer that many churches in our Annual Conference have been using. I hope that you will join me in praying it as we enter the New Year.

Break Through Prayer

God of healing and hope, Break through the messiness of our lives with the power of your Holy Spirit. Re-connect us with you, so that we can hear your voice more clearly and allow your love to be reborn in our hearts. Break through with your resurrection power to re-connect us with one another and lead us to new partnerships in our communities. Reveal to us your new and next steps for reaching, welcoming, and developing your people. Empower us to share the good news of your transforming love and new life. Amen

I am looking forward to seeing how God answers this prayer in your life and in the life of our congregation. As we celebrate God coming into our world in Jesus, I pray that the songs we sing and the lessons we learn will draw us closer to the Lord. I know that God has great things in store for us this Christmas season and into the coming year. May you have a Merry Christmas and 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

December Happenings....

Advent with DIGGing Deeper

Typical Advent studies focus on the gospels of Matthew and Luke. This Advent, DIGGing Deeper is using the book *The Christmas Letters* by Rev. Magrey DeVega. You may or may not know the story of your birth. If you do, there is something special about hearing your origin story again and remembering how it all began for you. That's why we observe Advent: to celebrate how it all began for us. In *The Christmas Letters*, Magrey deVega invites you to hear about the miracle of Christ's birth from those who first told the story. The letters in the New Testament, known as the Epistles, contain the first attempts by the church to understand and celebrate the mystery of the Incarnation. They point us to the origins of what we believe about Jesus, fully human and fully divine. By spending time with these holy, ancient words this Advent, you'll come to know the meaning of Christ's coming like never before.

Read the New Testament letters, Romans, 1 John, Philippians, and Colossians as your first Christmas letters of the season and find within them an invitation from God to deepen your understanding of the Incarnation and embrace a fuller commitment to Jesus Christ

The Neighborhood Table | Dec. 4 | 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.

Women's Annual Christmas Brunch Saturday morning, Dec 6 | 9:00am -with the return of Pastor Alyce and her message, "Waiting for the Lord", 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. 9 |Fellowship Hall

The Mission Team has been serving a monthly meal for The Lighthouse. If the Lord is calling you to par-

ticipate 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 7th**. We will be hosting the Lighthouse Toy Shoppe on Saturday, December 13th 9:00 am—1:00 pm. Your donations are greatly appreciated. It allows families in need to receive presents for Christmas for their children. ****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!

♪ ♪ **CHRISTMAS CHORAL CONCERT** ♪ ♪
Sunday, December 14| 6:00 P.M. | Bakerstown Ellwood City Area Civic Chorale and BUMC Sanctuary Choir

under the direction of Joyce Gindlesperger
Hosted by Opus I Music Society to benefit the scholarship fund.

♪ ♪ WHAT TO EXPECT ♪ ♪

Join us for an evening filled with the spirit of the season! Enjoy a mix of familiar secular classics and stirring religious repertoire that will bring the true meaning of Christmas to life!

Invite loved ones, friends, and neighbors to share the joy of music and community with us! We promise your heart will be filled with warmth and love!



Bakerstown Youth Group | Sunday | 6-7:30pm
Open to all 6th-12th graders!

At youth group this month our theme is Unexpected. This is a series from the Gospels, we'll explore the Christmas story to reveal the unexpected wrapped in

the gift of Jesus!

- No youth group on Dec. 14th due to a concert being held at the church.
- No youth group on December 28th due to Christmas holiday.

Christmas party at youth group on the 21st!

I hope you will join us! Please contact Pastor Amanda at amitchell@bakerstownumc.org if you have any questions.

Mission Team News....

As 2025 draws to a close and 2026 is on the horizon, the mission team is so very thankful! We are blessed with the generous support of our congregation, dozens of volunteers who willingly give of their time and talents, and the opportunity to share the love of God in various places and situations all over the world. Over the past year we have seen the numbers of folks in our area, who experience food insecurity, grow to record numbers. Our November drive thru dinner was the largest by far since we began serving monthly meals five years ago. Our annual Friendsgiving was attended by a record number of folks as well. While we can tally the number of meals served this year, and dollars spent supporting mission projects around the world, what we cannot tally is the impact that our efforts have made on countless people. That tally awaits us in heaven. Thank you for supporting the mission team and its work in 2025. Get ready, because here comes 2026!



Pancakes at Work—The Men's Group hosted 8 Pancake Breakfasts in 2025.

Here are some fun facts about the breakfasts and how the men made use of the funds the breakfasts generated:

266 total volunteers at the breakfast (59 different people that worked at least one of the breakfasts)

2650 customers served (many received second, third or even fourth servings!)

\$11,968.82 profit

\$1282.00 donated back to BUMC for supplies and utilities (10% of the proceeds we clear at each breakfast)

\$1282.00 donated to the different charities we supported with breakfast proceeds (we choose a charity every month to support with 10% of our proceeds)

\$3078.00 our customers donated to those charities

\$2500.00 for the handicap accessible curb cutout at the Fellowship Hall entrance

\$3870.00 to 9 different youth that attended the conference Christian camps over the summer

\$1500.00 to the conference camps (\$500 each to Camp Allegheny, Jumonville and Wesley Woods)

\$1000.00 towards the cost to replace the 9 year old computer in the sound booth

\$593.10 towards supplies and shipping for the Operation Christmas Child shoeboxes

\$200.00 to a Boy Scout from our congregation to help fund his Eagle Scout project

\$250.00 to the Network For Life organization

Many thanks to everybody that patronizes the breakfasts and those that volunteer their time to help out at them. We could not do it without you!

Hope to see you at the next breakfast on Saturday, January 17, 2026.

Children's Ministry News....

We have an exciting start to the New Year! Mark your calendars for these special events and opportunities.

December

Please note there will be no extra children's ministry event in December. Instead, we will celebrate Jesus' Birthday on Sunday, December 21st, in Old Fellowship Hall during Junior Church!

January

- The January Children's Ministry Event will be on Sunday, January 18th from 12:15 PM to 1:45 PM in New Fellowship Hall following the 11:00 AM service.
 - o This month's ministry focus will be on the Light-house food pantry that our church supports.
 - o Lunch will be included.

Here is a link to register your child for the event:

vbspro.events/p/bumcjan-cmevent

If you would like to volunteer, please do not hesitate to reach out!

Note: Our monthly children's ministry events are drop-off events and are open to all children in PreK through 5th grade.



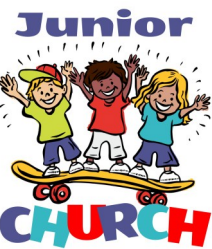
Save the Date: Vacation Bible School (VBS)

We are excited to announce the dates for VBS next summer!

- VBS will be June 22nd-26th,

2026 from 9:00 AM-12:00 PM.

- Registration for children and volunteers will be shared on Christmas Eve!



Junior Church Continues!

Junior Church is held every week during the 11:00 AM service for kids in PreK through 5th grade.

- This spring, our focus will be on the New Testament with a specific look at the amazing emotions that God gives us and how we see those

in the Bible.

- No sign-ups are needed ahead of time—just bring your kids, and they will be dismissed after the Children's Message.



How to Get Involved

Children's ministry can't happen without your help! We have great opportunities to serve both directly with kids and behind the scenes.

Join the Hearts & Hands Team

- Our next team meeting is on Tuesday, January 16th beginning at 6:00 PM. Food will be provided! The more the merrier! If we have enough helpers, we will have some working on prepping materials and others assisting with reorganizing the children's ministry storage in the balcony.

Volunteer for Junior Church

- **WE NEED VOLUNTEERS FOR JUNIOR CHURCH!**

Signups will be available on paper in the Narthex, and a digital signup will be emailed to the congregation.

Important Clearance Notice: In order to volunteer, the church will need to have copies of your clearances. If you are unsure if we have your clearances, please reach out and we will let us know.

Contact Information

If you are interested in volunteering or coming to the Hearts and Hands team meeting, please email Jennie at jsmith@bakerstownumc.org.

Donation Request: VBS Prize Table!

As we are looking forward to Vacation Bible School (VBS) this coming summer, we need your help!

Last year, we had a prize table that was a major hit! Children who brought offering money for the mission team were given tickets for a daily prize drawing.

If you happen to see some small prizes while out and about and would like to donate to our prize table, please pick them up! Examples of great items are:

- Sensory toys
 - Small stuffed animals
 - Small containers of slime or putty
- Other small novelty items

You can place them in the bin outside of Jennie's office that is marked VBS prize table donations. If you'd prefer to purchase something online, linked [here](#) is our Amazon wishlist.

Thank you so much for your support!

January News...

The Thursday Morning Women's Bible Study will continue the 8 week study begun in November - The Way of Wisdom: A Study in the Book of Proverbs, on **January 8th through February 5th at 9:00am**. We will be learning about Wisdom in Friendships, Wisdom at Work, Wisdom at Home, and Wisdom with our Words. Come and join us!! No homework! No workbook!

The Neighborhood Table | Jan. 8 | 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.

Drive Thru Dinner | Jan. 13 | 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.

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 14th and February 11th – 7pm to 8:30pm **New Session Series begins again weekly March 4th.

Pancake Breakfast price increase

Due to the ever rising cost of the food and supplies used at the pancake breakfasts, the prices will go up starting with the January 17, 2026 breakfast.

The new prices are:

Adults: \$8.00

Youth ages 6-12 years: \$4.00

Under age 6: Free

It will be the same great all-you-can-eat style breakfast, and the price increase will help the Men's Group continue to be able to support many different activities within the church and the community.

All-U-Can-Eat Breakfast! | Saturday, Jan. 17 | 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. 17 | 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 Third Annual "Sleep In Your Own Bed" Retreat!

Ladies – Please join with us on **Friday night January 30th from 7:00pm to 9:00pm and again on Saturday January 31st 9:00am to 2:30pm at the**

church. Rev. Alyce Weaver Dunn will be leading this retreat for us. Last year we had 44 women attend!! Come and join us again in 2026 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 23rd. Hope to see you there!!!!!!!!!!



**Food
Pantry
Needs**

Lighthouse Food Pantry Collection for the month of December/January are cooking oil, croutons, salad dressing, chili, saltines, canned soups and stews.

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
Denise Grier – Chair	Marie Edinger – Chair	Mary Pouchot	Sharon Platt	Joan Donaldson
	Mike Perriello	Howard Cope	Ryan Kennah	Gayle Santillo
	Jaison Rinker	Tracey Rossi	Chris Sasada	Bruce Smith
Memorial Committee				
Isabel Conley				
Dawn Conroy				
Gregg Platt				

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 2026, 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	Finance	Trustees	SPRC	Nominations
Kellen McGrath	Lake Barrett	Tim Jarosz	Mark Jorden	Denise Grier
	John Brumberg	Nancy Hollinger	Jamie Khambatta	Deb Lokay
		Bill Shepherd	Gary Torick	Jim Skolnik
Memorial Committee				
Gregg Platt				
Marge Kirkpatrick				
Patsie Evans				

Day School Open House | Sun., Jan. 25th | 12:30- 2:00pm

We will open our doors to the church and public to visit our day school, meet our teachers and see our beautiful learning spaces. Current day school families will also be here to talk with you and share their perspective on our school. We have a special preview time for church members at 12:00 p.m. We will open our doors to the public at 12:30 until 2:00 p.m. Registration for the 2025/2026 school year will accepted. Please stop by; we'd love to see you! Please spread the word to families looking for classes for children aged 2 up through Kindergarten!

Two Year Old Classes: Mon. & Wed. OR Tues. & Thurs.	9:00-11:30 a.m.
Three Year Old Classes (2 Days) Tues. & Thurs.	9:00-11:30 a.m.
Three Year Old Classes (3 Days) Mon., Wed. & Fri.	9:00-11:30 a.m.
Four Year Old Classes (3 Days) Mod., Wed., Fri.	9:00-11:30a.m.
Four Year Old Classes (4Days) Mon., Tues., Wed., Thurs.	9:00-11:30 a.m.
Full Day Kindergarten: Mon., - Fri.	9:00-3:00 p.m.

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

kdunn@bakerstownumc.org

Rev. Amanda Mitchell

Associate Pastor/Youth Director

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Joyce Gindlesperger

Director of Music

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Lora Stafura

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Jennie Smith

Children's Ministry Director

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Tracy Hefner

Worship Leader

thefner@bakerstownumc.org



Wednesday, December 17th—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 4th—8:30am & 11:00am—Epiphany

Financial Update

	September 2025	October 2025	YTD Oct 2025	YTD Oct 2024
Current fund giving	\$36,430.43	\$33,853.59	\$368,656.33	\$359,399.50
Current fund expenses	\$50,743.63	\$34,684.44	\$412,225.06	\$376,888.77

Hello Church Family.

Our church has felt the crunch of higher costs and maybe the impact of members facing those same higher costs. In order to pay our bills we needed to tap into our reserve fund in the amount of \$15,000.00. The trustees and Major project funds were not given any funds during September and October due to this cash flow problem.

Thank you for supporting your church. Prayerfully consider what you can do to support your church in the spirit of gratitude in this season. If you have any questions, please let me know. Kay Cramer,
Financial Secretary 724-443-2847

2025 Trustees Report

The Trustee's Committee had a busy year caring for the physical assets of Bakerstown United Methodist Church. While we believe our facility and properties are in good condition, there are many work items that must be addressed to keep our facilities in serviceable condition.

The Trustees wanted to share an overview of the various work items we completed in 2025. As we look back, much work was completed to maintain, service, and upgrade the physical plants of our church.

Early in the year, efforts were focused on upgrading the flooring in the Stitch and a Prayer Room.

Another major project included the retrofit of new light fixtures into the choir and chancel soffit. This was a major project which was successfully completed. Thank you to Bill Shepherd for his relentless work in seeing this project through to completion. I am sure that the choir is also grateful for his efforts.

While many work items were completed at both parsonages, the Lee Road chimney required attention last winter. This chimney was inspected and cleaned to ensure safe operation for venting.

Another lighting project completed this year was the replacement of the balcony soffit and stairwell lights. Again, Bill Shepherd administered this project and worked hard to see its successful completion. The dimming controls were also upgraded as part of this work.

The United Methodist Men requested that Trustees investigate the possibility of installing a handicap accessible entrance at New Fellowship Hall. Through the generosity of the UMM, they made partial funding available which allowed us to complete this project in late March. The new entrance has proved to be both an improvement and a benefit for all those using this entrance for various events.

As the weather improved, the Trustees worked to have the open mortar joints in the brick piers at the North Entrance ground and repointed. This was a necessary item to extend the life cycle of the masonry in this area.

Trustees also entered into an important HVAC contract to service the various pieces of equipment and systems that are located throughout our facilities and parsonages.

After one of the harsh spring storms, flashing was dislodged on the high sanctuary roof. Trustees worked to secure a contractor to make the repairs before any damage occurred in the Sanctuary ceiling area.

As the year progressed, the Trustees completed their duty of performing the annual parsonage inspections. While other work was planned, these inspections identified items that also needed to be addressed for both maintenance and safety reasons. The Trustees are working on a comprehensive list of items to improve the living quarters for the Dunns at the Hytyre Farms parsonage and Pastor Amanda and her family at the Lee Road parsonage.

As summer arrived, the Trustees focus shifted to the grounds of our church. Tree removal and tree trimming was performed for safety considerations near the children's playground. Other work included site cleanup, mulching, and weeding. This work was ongoing into the Fall with hopes of completing this site maintenance before the snows of winter arrive. Thank you to Peggy Hill for her work on this project.

This past year, Trustees were approached by two Eagle Scout candidates for small improvement projects on the building site. These projects are in the planning stages and may become a reality as the necessary plans are finalized, funds are raised, and the work completed. More information will be forthcoming on these projects as details are finalized.

In September, Trustees were faced with two problematic exterior hose bibbs. Both the hose bibb by the kitchen, and the one near the North Entrance were replaced. A big thank you goes to Bob Grier for his efforts in investigating and coordinating the work to replace these problem devices.

More recently, new lights were purchased and installed to better illuminate our signage along Route 8. Again, another thanks goes out to Bill Shepherd for his work on these lights. Our landscaping contractor also reworked some of the island areas to eliminate the ground cover and installed river gravel to eliminate longer term maintenance.

Thanks also go out to the many volunteers and groups that help out and do work to preserve and upgrade our facilities. Trustees are grateful for these efforts, and we hope this work continues.

As the end of 2025 approaches, the Trustees will continue with the parsonage projects and the site/landscaping projects.

Thanks again to all involved as we continue to make BUMC a warming and proud place to worship.

Trustees Committee