

*The Network... a Publication of  
University Presbyterian Church  
January, 2025*

**Greeting the New Year**

Tom Yorty, Interim Pastor

**Essential Gratitude**

*Andrea Potos*

Sometimes it just stuns you  
like an arrow flung from some angel's wings.  
Sometimes it hastily scribbles  
a list in the air: black coffee,  
thick new books,  
your pillow's cool underside,  
the quirky family you married into.

It is content with so little really;  
even the ink of your pen along  
the watery lines of your dime store notebook  
Could be a swiftly moving prayer.

What would happen if we approached 2025 with gratitude? There is much to be worried about and frustrated with. But even having the privilege of being worried and frustrated is a sign that we are caring creatures and something itself to be grateful for.

In the end, none of it, none of this need to have happened. But the Holy Life Force saw fit to bring it all into being—you, me, this vast, wonderful, flawed human family.

At the start of this new year take a step back. Look out the window. Look across the room—what you see, a bird, a person, a room with memories are, each one, a gift. A writer I like puts it this way: "Listen to your life. See it for the fathomless mystery that it is. In the boredom and pain of it no less than in the excitement and gladness: touch, taste, smell your way to the holy and hidden heart of it because in the latest analysis all moments are holy."

Happy New Year!!!



## Worship Column

### **Sunday, January 5, 2025**

*2nd Sunday of Christmas*

Jeremiah 31:7-14; Psalm 147:12-20; Ephesians 1:13-14;  
John 1 (1-9) 10-28

### **Monday, January 6**

*Epiphany of the Lord*

Isaiah 60; Psalm 72:1-7, 10-14; Ephesians 3:1-12;  
Matthew:2:1-12

### **Sunday, January 12**

*Baptism of the Lord*

Isaiah 43:1-7; Psalm 29; Acts 8:14-17;  
Luke 3:15-17, 21-22

### **Sunday January 19**

*2nd Sunday after Epiphany*

Isaiah 62:1-5; Psalm 36:5-10; 1Corinthians 12:1-11;  
John 2:1-11

### **Sunday, January 26**

*3rd Sunday after Epiphany*

Nehemiah 8:1-3, 5-6, 8-10; Psalm 19  
1 Corinthians 12:12-31a; Luke 4:14-21



2	Jude Hammer	17	Carolyn Harbison
5	Christopher Safulko	19	David Patel
8	Virginia Coon	19	Keylee Casseri
8	Erika Ray	22	Grace Yockey
10	John Lopinski, Sr.	26	Mason Appleton
11	Janet Mazzaroppi	29	Eric Dass
12	Sandra Boag		
14	Bilquis Dass		
15	George Kappen		



## What's Happening in January...

January 1	Wednesday	<i>New Year's Day</i>	<i>Office Closed</i>	
January 2	Thursday	12:00 pm	Food Pantry Open	
January 4	Saturday	10:00 am	Breakfast with Friends	
		10:00 am	New Officer Training	
January 5	Sunday	9:00 am	Choir	
		10:30 am	Worship Service	
		11:30 am	Fellowship	
January 6	Monday	7:30 pm	Deacon Zoom Meeting	
January 7	Tuesday	12:00 pm	Food Pantry Open	
January 9	Thursday	12:00 pm	Food Pantry Open	
January 10	Friday	Annual Reports Due!		
January 12	Sunday	9:00 am	Choir	
		10:30 am	Worship Service	
		11:30 am	Fellowship	
January 14	Tuesday	12:00 pm	Food Pantry Open	
January 15	Wednesday	7:00 pm	Session	
January 16	Thursday	11:00 am	Worship & Education Mtg.	
		12:00 pm	Food Pantry Open	
January 19	Sunday	9:00 am	Choir	
		10:30 am	Worship Service	
		11:30 am	Fellowship	
January 20	Monday	<i>Martin Luther King Jr. Day Holiday</i>		
		<i>Office Closed</i>		
		9:30 am	Adult Bible Study	
January 21	Tuesday	12:00 pm	Food Pantry Open	
		2:30 pm	Zoom Ministry to Community Committee Mtg.	
January 23	Thursday	12:00 pm	Food Pantry Open	
January 26	Sunday	9:00 am	Choir	
		10:30 am	Worship Service	
		11:30 am	Fellowship & Birthday Cake	

## Annual Meeting

Mark your calendar! The UPC Annual Meeting is being held February 2, 2025. All Committee chairpersons turn your reports in to Peg by January 10th. If you can't meet the deadline please contact her. Thank you.



### UPC Monday Morning Bible study Resumes January 20, 2025

Let us renew our faith by gathering on Monday mornings, 9:30-10:30 am, via Zoom. We begin on January 20th in honor of MLK Jr., and plan to follow the PW Bible study, "Let Justice Roll Down: God's Call to Care for Neighbors and all Creation," by Patricia K. Tull.

Please contact the UPC office, to sign up for your copy of the study, available through the UPC education fund.

Led by Gladys Gifford and others, we engage with the lesson through Bible study, prayer, and journaling. Detailed schedule will be arranged with the participants on January 20.

### 2025 Bible study theme: "Let Justice Roll Down"

In the Bible, the word "justice" is used throughout—in the Hebrew Scriptures, the works of the prophets, in the Gospels, and in epistles. In recent decades in the U.S., "social justice" has become politicized and used as a badge of honor for some, and a derogatory term for others. However, justice and restoration with the marginalized are at the heart of God's call to serve all nations.

As the prophet Micah names, our call to "do justice" is a call for global justice. Exploring environmental justice reminds us of that fact. We all share global resources of food, air, water, and land. The care (or lack of care) for creation and climate in one corner of the world affects all others. The call to examine ourselves and our impact on this planet is crucial to our lives as followers of Christ. If we claim to love God and love neighbor, then we must exhibit that care and love through sustainable action. If we are to care for creation, then we must first acknowledge the impact unjust practices have had on Indigenous peoples and other marginalized and oppressed peoples.

We are called to follow Christ's example to be in solidarity with those on the margins; therefore, we must change our behavior so that our actions reflect our intent. If we participate in restorative action and follow Christ's example that is found throughout Scripture, justice will be at the heart of our life and work together as Christians.

Study guide published by Presbyterian Women; author Patricia K. Tull



## News from your Ministry to Community Committee

MCC Minutes: To keep our church family informed, our minutes will be printed in the Network each month. This will also offer opportunities for increased participation in our committee's work.

- Annual Report: Elaine will write a report for the Congregational Annual Meeting.
- VOICE: Our UPC \$200 VOICE dues were paid for 2024. Howard attended and will follow up on the VOICE event "Defiant Hope: Communities not Cages: Statewide Day of Action" on December 16. Howard will write an announcement in the newsletter regarding VOICE'S "Disability Justice Roundtable" on January 29 from 6 to 8pm. Howard will consider being our Voice contact person.
- Peace and Global Witness Offering: UPC's portion of \$158.75 was rounded up to \$200 by Session and a check was sent to Back to Basics Outreach Ministries headed by Rev. James Giles, which includes the Stop the Violence Coalition.
- Alternative Christmas Gift Campaign for PDA: At the end of the third Sunday \$1400 has been given.
- Calvary and UPC Partnership: Approximately 1285 Thanksgiving dinners were delivered. There were 92 volunteers including 11 from UPC. Howard will write an article for the Network. Our joint day of service honoring MLK will be Saturday January 18. UPC is invited to join Calvary from 9:00 to 1:00 for breakfast, worship, preparation of "weekend bags" for students. Elaine will write an article for the January Network. Val will organize a car pool.
- Tower Fund: Howard received and shared a rebuilding update from Rev. Peggy Christiansen of First Presbyterian, Douglas, AZ. He suggests that we send a written communication to Rev. Christiansen and co-Pastor Joca Gallegos that UPC is committed to assisting with the rebuilding expenses. NOTE: When we know the specific financial needs for the rebuilding effort of the First Presbyterian Church in Douglas AZ, our committee will submit a recommendation to Session for money from the Tower Fund to be sent to the First Presbyterian Church in Douglas, AZ. Discussion will continue regarding Tom's suggestion and MCC agreement that this amount be dedicated to Howard and Lee Ann's 35 years of service at the border.
- Indigenous Peoples: At their November meeting, Session approved our Recommendation to endorse the Truth and Healing Commission on Indian Boarding School Policies Act (S.907, HR 5444), and sent a letter of support to our senators and representatives. A church wide email was sent out with printable letters and a request to do the same.
- Just Coffee: In 2024 339 pounds were sold. Since 2007 more than two tons of coffee have been sold creating good employment for coffee growers in Chiapas, for those who process the coffee beans, and for those working at Cafe Justo y Mas. After 18 years of organizing and providing the coffee to us, Lee Ann and Howard are stepping down from this monumental and worthy task. Thank you Lee Ann and Howard! Coffee may now be ordered by individuals at:  
<https://fronteradecristo.networkforgood.com/events/40433-coffee-and-compassion>  
Howard will submit an article regarding this to the February Network.

Next meeting: Tuesday January 21, 2025 at 2:30 on zoom.



## Session Highlights from December

A training session for all new officers will take place on January 4<sup>th</sup>. The ordination and installation of officers will take place during the service on January 5<sup>th</sup>.

Session approved the hiring of Rebecca Kroetsch as UPC's Minister of Music/ Choir Director.

Session approved a cost of living raise for our staff.

Thanks to UPC's elders who are stepping down for their service to UPC and exiting words of wisdom! Thanks you to Allan Andrews, Sandy Boag, Howard Henry, John Maddock!

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## Calvary Baptist Church/University Presbyterian Church Thanksgiving Outreach 2024

On November 23 we delivered approximately 1285 Thanksgiving dinners to the Buffalo community. This was made possible by 92 volunteers from our two congregations plus other community groups working together. UPC volunteers were: Grace Agbemenu, Marietta Bratton, Lee Ann Grace, Jude Hammer, Howard Henry, Val Macer, Janet Mazzaroppi, Sharon Melius, Sandy Robertson, Matt Smith, Sarah Smith. Come join us in November 2025 for a week full of Soulful Service Connection. Contact person: Howard Henry, Ministry to Community member [hwhjr98@gmail.com](mailto:hwhjr98@gmail.com)

## Voice Buffalo

VOICE Buffalo – (UPC is a Community Partner) invites us to participate in the Disability Roundtable on Jan 29th, 2025. Would anyone from UPC care to attend and report back to the Ministry to Community committee? January 29, 2025 from 6 to 8 p.m. at 1021 Broadway St. Buffalo, NY 14212 - RSVP here: [bit.ly/DJTable](https://bit.ly/DJTable) ASL Interpretation available upon request. Wheelchair accessible. Contact person: Howard Henry, Ministry to Community member [hwhjr98@gmail.com](mailto:hwhjr98@gmail.com)



## FELLOWSHIP and COMMUNITY SERVICE EVENT at CBC January 18!

To help celebrate Martin Luther King Jr. Day, our friends at Calvary Baptist Church have invited us to join them on Saturday January 18 from 9:00 to 1:00. We will meet downstairs in the Kitchen/Fellowship Area for a light breakfast, a time of worship, and the assembling of 'weekend bags' of food to be distributed to local organizations, such as the Charles R. Drew Science Magnet School. The church is located at 1184 Genesee St., Buffalo, NY 14211. Val Macer is organizing carpooling for the event.

## Photos from our Annual Christmas Dinner







## **Pastor Nominating Committee Progress Report**

The Pastor Nominating Committee (PNC) met together 8 times during the Fall; committee members also did reading and writing “homework” preparation for meetings as we focused on developing the Ministry Discernment Profile that will be used to help match UPC with the best candidates to consider as our next permanent minister. Our initial meeting included Jamie Owens and Bob Sillars from the Committee on Ministry of the Presbytery; they shared information and advice about the process and responsibility of the PNC.

There were multiple narratives we needed to create so that prospective candidates will have a comprehensive and accurate understanding of our church and congregation. We were very fortunate that the Interim Search Committee had done such an excellent and thorough job of creating the MDP that was used to call Dr. Tom Yorty as our interim minister; we were able to use their documents as guides to begin our process.

The PNC worked diligently, thoughtfully and prayerfully each step of the way, and we discussed wording and meaning for every sentence of each narrative. We used the information generated from the three congregational meetings held over the summer to insure that we were taking into account the feelings and ideas of our whole congregation about our past, present and future.

The Session approved our final draft of the MDP at the November meeting, and then the Presbytery Committee on Ministry approved it as well, even noting that they were impressed with our work- saying it was one of the best MDPs they had seen! We all took a moment to celebrate that – and then we began to prepare for the next steps: the MDP will be submitted to the Church Leadership Connection website in January, and we will again meet regularly to receive and review candidate referrals and matches.



Each member of the PNC has taken this assignment very seriously and our committee has grown into a hardworking close-knit group. We are ready for this next phase of the process and we ask the congregation for your prayers as continue our work to find the right person to be the next minister at UPC. We will update the congregation again when we have information to share on our progress. As we move forward, if you have any questions or concerns, you may contact any member of the Pastor Nominating Committee.

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Gladys Gifford (schuford@earthlink.net)

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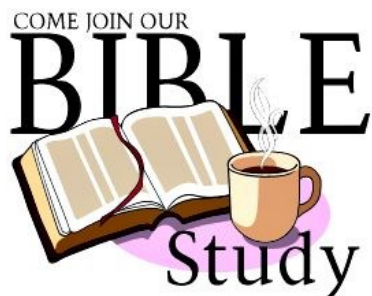
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## **UPC SUNDAY MORNING ADULT EDUCATION JANUARY THROUGH MAY 2025**

Following an interesting and stimulating fall season of Adult Education we will continue to feature Sunday morning presenters on a wide range of subjects, appropriate to the seasons of the year. For the most part these sessions will take place in the meeting area downstairs in the Fellowship Room from 11:45am to 12:45pm. The lineup for this winter and spring is as follows:

January 12, 19: Bible Study with John McClester. You'd have to search long and hard to find a more compelling, informative and entertaining study of the Bible equal to John's method of teaching. He is a master teacher and deeply serious student of the Bible.

February 9, 16: Black History Month, Elder Craig Steger, board member of Buffalo's national landmark and longest running jazz club in America, The Colored Musicians Club, will share the storied history of the club and the greats who have played there along with its current mission and recent acquisition of an adjacent building and creation of The CMC Museum. The grand opening of which will be this spring.

March 9, 16: UPC member Matt Smith will lead discussion on the theme of "Surrender" during these two weeks of Lent. Matt's personal experience with the topic through reading and practice will enhance our Lenten observance and preparation for Holy Week and Easter. Typically, Lent is a time of giving up to learn greater dependence upon and make room for the spiritual resources that give healing, hope and renewal.

April 6, 13: Val Macer, Jude Hammer, and Christine Falzone are UPC's representatives to the Tyler St. Community Garden. Other UPC members participate in the opportunities to learn about gardening and grow vegetables right here in University Heights. In a time of urban food deserts and rising food costs the Tyler St. Garden (a UPC supported mission) plays a key role in Jesus' call to 'feed the hungry.'

May 4: PCUSA Legacy Sunday, this session led by a PCUSA Presbyterian Foundation representative and Interim Pastor Tom Yorty will address the subject of 'end of life' preparations not only with personal assets but also regarding health proxies and Christian celebration of life.

May 18: Holocaust Remembrance, a representative from the Holocaust Remembrance Society will present and lead discussion on this critical act of justice—remembering the Holocaust of Nazi Germany so that never again will such evil be visited upon the human family. Indeed, there have been genocides perpetrated since WWII all the more reason to learn the history of genocide in Germany at mid-20<sup>th</sup> century and the early and warning signs of genocide today.