

Prints of Peace



February 2026

Volume 31 Issue 2

At a recent congregation council meeting, we learned that POP's Treasures donated **\$30,000** in 2025 to various agencies, including PUMP, Safe Harbor, North Bangor Fire Co., and many more. (A full breakdown of the donations will be included in an "end-of-year financial report" of all of the church's finances, which will be available in the next month or so.) That amount is amazing!

But the thing that really blew me and other council members away was part of that donation – a portion they gave to an organization called **Undue Medical Debt**. Nationally, more than 100 million people are burdened by medical debt to the tune of \$220 billion. Medical debt is the leading cause of bankruptcies in the US. People with medical debt are also three times more likely to experience mental health burdens like anxiety or depression and significantly more likely to skip or delay mental healthcare. Simply getting sick is a stronger predictor of medical debt than insurance status or poverty.

Undue Medical Debt is an organization that works to change that. It is a national nonprofit that acquires medical debt belonging to those least able to pay in large, bundled portfolios for pennies on the dollar, while also shining a light on the broken system that creates medical debt. Through donations, they are then able to get that debt forgiven.

The POP's Treasures Committee found out about Undue Medical Debt through an article in the news and contacted the organization. They discovered that with a donation of \$20,000, they **could erase over \$3 million worth of medical debt, which would free about 2,000 people, all in Northampton County**. The committee decided to make this donation, and the people who received this debt relief have now received letters telling them that their debt is paid in full, and that was done through a gift from POP's Treasures, a ministry of Prince of Peace Lutheran Church.

Let that sink in. **With a donation of \$20,000, POP's Treasures has eradicated three million dollars of medical debt, almost all the medical debt in Northampton County.** I'm reminded of the story of Jesus feeding 5000 people with only five barley loaves and two fish. John's gospel tells us that these loaves and fish were provided by a boy (John 6:1-14). Just like that feeding, this debt relief is a miracle to people who need it most. **And we at Prince of Peace have provided it.** I think of us as the boy in the story.

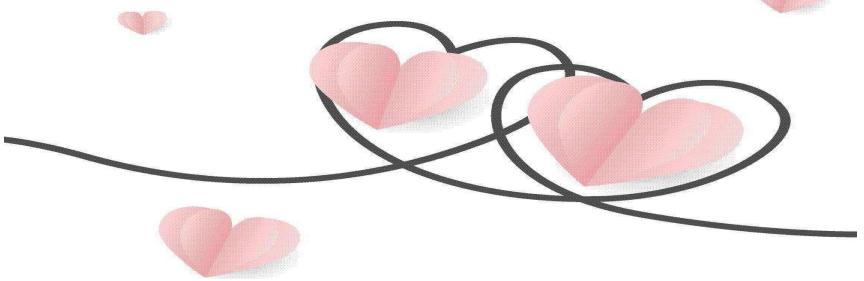
In the story, when the boy brought his meager loaves and fish to Jesus, they became something far more. When the boy faithfully offered what he had to Jesus, Jesus transformed them and performed a miracle. Jesus still does this with us. Whenever we faithfully offer what we have to Jesus, he can use what we have (which might seem so meager to us) and transform it into a miracle that changes the world.

POP's Treasures and Undue Medical Debt have done this in a very visible way, and I for one celebrate that! God can do this with everything we have. All we are asked to do is to **share it faithfully**.

I invite you to celebrate with me, and to join in faithfully sharing what you have! Together, we will see many more miracles!

In Christ,

Rev. Michael J. Schott



Celebrating FEBRUARY Birthdays

Please keep these people in prayer on
the anniversary of their birth!

Sandra Butler
Nicholas Walters
Larry Stauffer
Frederick Nemeth
Raymond Flyte, III
Keith Heard
Brenda Hughes
Cathy Steinmetz
Shirley Krauss
Alan Manicke
Bridget Reto
Kathleen Ott
June Jones
Jill Hill
Michele Harrison
Doris Thomas
Lauren Harrison
Traci Rumsey
Carmelo Blount
Quincy Miller

Be kind to each other,
tenderhearted, forgiving
one another, just as
God through Christ has
forgiven you.

EPHESIANS 4:32

Recent Pastoral Acts:
Funeral: Arlene Miller, January 6
(officiated by Tina Johns)



Join us for

Worship On-site (9:45 on Sundays)

Online / Facebook

Watch our worship each week at our website (popbangor.org/video-worship). Or watch it on our Facebook page (facebook.com/popbangor).

January 2026 Council Meeting Highlights

- We have elected new officers:
 - **Kale Baker:** President
 - **Tina Johns:** Vice-President
 - **April Miller:** Secretary
- We have some new **committee liaisons:**
 - Worship & music - Tina Johns, Mary O'Meally
 - Finance - (currently vacant)
 - Social Ministry- Kerri Miller
 - Scholarship- April Miller
 - Stewardship- Justine Saviet
 - Health & Wellness- Jean Janosa
 - Staff Support- Jackie Horn
 - Evangelism- Brenda Hughes
 - Faith Exploration- Alex Scholtes
 - POP's Treasures- Holly Blakeslee
 - Communication & Technology- Kale Baker
 - Property- Kale Baker
 - Endowment- Brenda Hughes
- **\$30,000 donations** given away in 2025 from POP's Treasures which included a gift that was able to forgive more than 3 million dollars in medical debt.

God Loves You

WE LOVE OUR VOLUNTEERS

February Altar Guild: Connie Itterly, Diane Searfass, **March Altar Guild:** Tara Flyte, Ashley Flyte

	February 1	February 8	February 15	February 22	March 1
Greeters	Sue Reinhart, Holly Blakeslee	Lisa and Wayne Jones	Scouts	Sherk and June Jones	Traci Rumsey, Connie Itterly
Council Greeters	TBD	TBD	TBD	TBD	TBD
Lay Readers	Brooks Baker	Kim Jennings	Scouts	Janet Martocci	Kale Baker
Assisting Ministers	April Miller	Kale Baker	Tina Smith	Marlene Stana	Tina Johns
Com. Assts.	Brooks Baker, Marlene Stana	Jim Jennings, Tina Smith	April Miller, Diane Hahn	Tina Johns, Brooks Baker	Jim Jennings, Marlene Stana
Ushers	Kale Baker, Sara Godshalk	Marlene and Butch Stana	Scouts	Traci Rumsey, Brenda Hughes	Sue Reinhart, Sara Godshalk
Power Point Camera	Tina Johns	Antonioli Family	Cathy Mullen	Tara Flyte	Jim Jennings
Acolytes	Taylor Baker	Fabian Vargas	Landon Horn	Ben Scholtes	Alex Scholtes
Offering Counters	Tina Johns	Mary O'Meally	Jean Janosa	Georgia Suranofsky	Connie Itterly
Pew Tenders	Sherry and Maci Hock	June Jones	Sara Godshalk	Traci Rumsey	Sherry and Maci Hock
Bread Baker	Diane Searfass	Karen Karner	Cathy Mullen		Alex Summy

Would you like to join the volunteer team? Contact the church office at 610-588-2355.

If you are unable to fulfill your assignment, please find a replacement and let Pastor Scholtes know of the change.

Real Readers: Join Us! We meet at 2 p.m. the 1st Thursday of each month...

Our book list for 2026:

- February 5 – “Educated” by Tara Westover (Linda)
- March 5 – “Raising the Titanic” by Marta Molnar (Sherry)
- April 2 – “Only by Your Touch” by Catherine Anderson (Liz)
- May 7 – “The Women” by Kristen Hannah (Jean)
- June 4 – “Sandwich” by Catherine Newman (Sandy)
- July 2 – “Clear” by Carys Davies (Karen)
- August 6 – “My Friends” by Fredrik Backman (Cheryl)
- September 3 – “The Paper Palace” by Miranda Heller (Terry)
- October 1 – “Broken Country” by Clare Leslie Hall (Patti)
- November 5 – “The Secret of Secrets” by Dan Brown (Cindy)
- December 3 – “Atmosphere” by Taylor Reid (Janet)



A little bit of everything for everyone. New members are always welcome!



4th Sun. after Epiphany (2/1)	Micah 6:1-8; Psalm 84; Hebrews 2:14-18; Luke 2:22-40
Monday, February 02	Psalm 37:1-17; Ruth 1:1-18; Philemon 1-25;
Tuesday, February 03	Psalm 37:1-17; Ruth 2:1-16; James 5:1-6;
Wednesday, February 04	Psalm 37:1-17; Ruth 3:1-13; 4:13-22; Luke 6:17-26;
Thursday, February 05	Psalm 112:1-9; Deuteronomy 4:1-14; 1 John 5:1-5;
Friday, February 06	Psalm 112:1-9; Isaiah 29:1-12; James 3:13-18;
Saturday, February 07	Psalm 112:1-9; Isaiah 29:13-16; Mark 7:1-8;
5th Sun. after Epiphany (2/8)	Isaiah 58:1-9; Ps. 112:1-9; 1 Cor. 2:1-12; Matthew 5:13-20
Monday, February 09	Psalm 119:105-112; 2 Kings 22:3-20; Romans 11:2-10;
Tuesday, February 10	Psalm 119:105-112; 2 Kings 23:1-8, 21-25; 2 Cor. 4:1-12;
Wednesday, February 11	Psalm 119:105-112; Proverbs 6:6-23; John 8:12-30;
Thursday, February 12	Psalm 2; Exodus 6:2-9; Hebrews 8:1-7;
Friday, February 13	Psalm 2; Exodus 19:9b-25; Hebrews 11:23-28;
Saturday, February 14	Psalm 2; 1 Kings 21:20-29; Mark 9:9-13;
Transfiguration Sunday (2/15)	Exodus 24:12-18; Ps. 2; 2 Peter 1:16-21; Matthew 17:1-9
Monday, February 16	Psalm 78:17-20, 52-55; Exodus 33:7-23; Acts 7:30-34;
Tuesday, February 17	Psalm 78:17-20, 52-55; 1 Kings 19:9-18; Romans 11:1-6;
Ash Wednesday (2/18)	Joel 2:1-2,12-17; Ps. 51; 2 Cor. 5:20-6:10; Mat. 6:1-6,16-21
Thursday, February 19	Psalm 51; Jonah 3:1-10; Romans 1:1-7;
Friday, February 20	Psalm 51; Jonah 4:1-11; Romans 1:8-17;
Saturday, February 21	Psalm 51; Isaiah 58:1-12; Matthew 18:1-7;
First Sunday in Lent (2/22)	Genesis 2:15-17; 3:1-7; Ps. 32; Rom. 5:12-19; Matt. 4:1-11
Monday, February 23	Psalm 32; 1 Kings 19:1-8; Hebrews 2:10-18;
Tuesday, February 24	Psalm 32; Genesis 4:1-16; Hebrews 4:14-5:10;
Wednesday, February 25	Psalm 32; Exodus 34:1-9, 27-28; Matthew 18:10-14;
Thursday, February 26	Psalm 121; Isaiah 51:1-3; 2 Timothy 1:3-7;
Friday, February 27	Psalm 121; Micah 7:18-20; Romans 3:21-31;
Saturday, February 28	Psalm 121; Isaiah 51:4-8; Luke 7:1-10;

Read these on your computer or on your phone! Go to DailyLectio.net, where you can sign up for daily emails, or download the app for iPhone or Android!



Join Us for POPS (Prince of Peace Seekers) in the conference room - Thursdays @ 10 a.m.

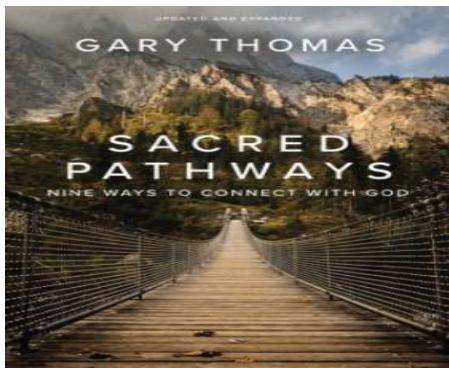
Please come and ignite your spiritual imagination! We meet each week for a time of spiritual growth, discussion, and fellowship. We continue to meet from 10 a.m.—Noon in the Conference Room. Coffee, tea, and snacks are available.

Our gathering in February begins with a two-week series using the book, *The Cup of Life* by Joyce Rupp, as a guide. We shall bring our favorite coffee cup to ponder as a symbol of our spiritual journey. Karen Karner, Sherry Hock, and Janet Martocci will lead the discussion. During Lent, from February 19 Through March 25, Pastor Scholtes will lead a six-week book study from Augsburg Fortress called "Together by Grace." There will be no cost for participants. He'll have handouts each week, instead of using a student book . Please join us! If you have any questions, please contact Karen Karner or Janet Martocci.



Join Us for Coffee Hour!

The Hospitality Committee will always provide coffee and tea and will be providing "sweets and treats" the first Sunday of each month. Congregation members are invited to supply some treats the balance of each month. A sign-up sheet will be in the Narthex for those who wish to participate. Coffee hours end on May 17th. Thank you, —**the Hospitality Committee**



Lenten Bible Study:

Have you ever wanted to discover your soul's path to God? Do you know which of the nine pathways you are strongest in? Join me for a 5-week book study based on Sacred Pathways by Gary Thomas. Come on a journey to explore the nine distinct spiritual temperaments, their traits, strengths, and pitfalls. We will meet every Tuesday from February 24th thru March 24th at 6:30 p.m. Soup and drink will be provided, bring a sandwich. Dinner from 6:30-7, study from 7 till 8:15 p.m. Any questions, see Tina Johns

Little Debbie Update:

Social Ministry thanks you for the donation of Little Debbie Cakes. Stella at P.U.M.P. was thrilled with the number of cakes that were delivered to P.U.M.P. She said the kids will be very happy to get them. This project was so successful we'll probably do it again, maybe once a quarter. Thanks again for your generosity!



Joyful Noise News:

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What a great year it was for Joyful Noise! Thanks to YOUR generosity \$1,554.50 was donated to this special collection. The Social Ministry Committee met and decided to disburse the funds as follows: \$554.00 to ELCA World Hunger; \$500.00 to FURR FIX in Bangor and \$500.00 to Safe Harbor in Easton. Hopefully 2026 will be another great year, and we can help even more organizations. Save up your coins and bills and donate them the last Sunday of every month. Social Ministry thanks you for your continued support of this ministry! Questions: see Mary O'Meally

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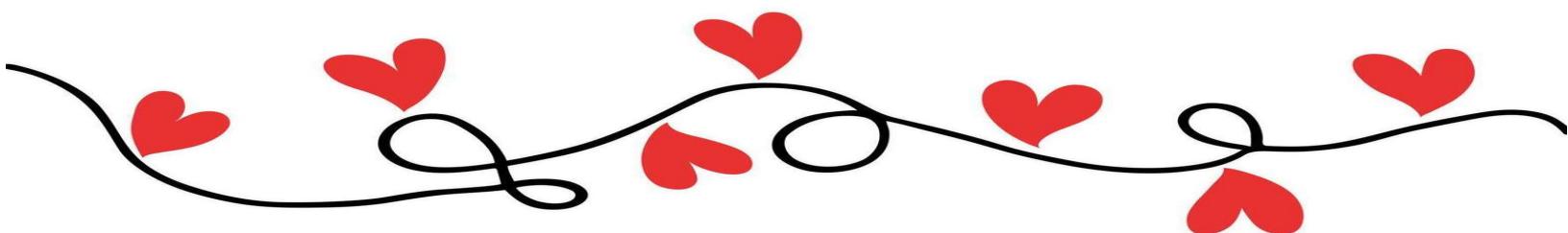
Dear Prince of Peace Church Members, On behalf of everyone at P.U.M.P., many thanks for your incredible donation of gifts for our Christmas program. There were 176 children on the list this year, and your thoughtfulness truly made the holidays brighter for these children in our community. The gifts, combined with the cold weather wearable items and coloring book bags provided these children with gifts, essential items, and for the cheer they might not have had otherwise. Your generosity makes a lasting difference. We could not have done this without your support. With sincere thanks, —**P.U.M.P. Volunteers**



Social Ministry Project for 2026:

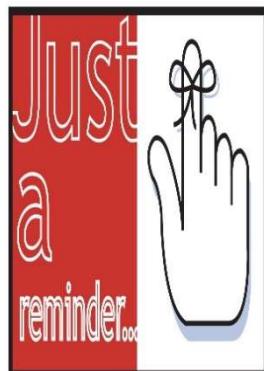
2025 was a busy year for us, but the needs of our local community keep growing, and we are God's army to do what we can to help! For the first quarter (January thru March) we are collecting socks and underwear for our veterans, both male and female. As you know most of our veterans sleep in tents in the woods, and since this is winter, thermal underwear is probably best, but any will do. You can place your donations in the box in the narthex. The project will **end on Sunday, March 29th**. As always, if you prefer not to shop a committee member will be happy to do it for you. Committee: Mary O'Meally, Sherry Hock, and Holly Blakeslee

Luke 3:11: Whoever has two tunics is to share with him who has none, and whoever has food is to do likewise.



P.U.M.P Special Requests Update:

P.U.M.P. requests peanut butter, cereal, rice, and any kind of pasta. As always, staples are always appreciated too. Social Ministry wants to thank you for the items donated, and your continued and generous support of P.U.M.P!



A quick note from property—Heat, Lights and Doors:

While we are now in the middle of winter, we would like to remind everyone about our heating system at church. We have a programmable system. It is currently programmed for our current usage and kept at a moderate temperature when not heavily used. We ask that you do not change or touch the system. If you need to use a room, please ask pastor, or a property member for assistance. Of course, the fellowship hall is electric, so you can turn on the heat and turn off units when finished. Also, after meetings and gatherings at POP, please make sure that all lights are turned off and all doors are closed and locked before you leave. Thank you. —**Property Committee**

Join us for our St. Patty's Family Game Night

Friday, March 20 from 5:30 p.m. – 8 p.m.

(Come when you can)

Everyone is welcome!

Bring your favorite game to share.

Chicken Noodle Soup and fresh bread will be provided for dinner.

Sign-up sheet in the Narthex

Questions? See Tina Johns

POP'S Treasures:

Our next sale will be on February 13th (10 a.m. -2 p.m.) and the 14th (9 a.m. –Noon) with drops on February 16th and 263rd, (1-2 p.m. and 6-7 p.m.) By now I'm sure everyone at POP knows about this ministry because it has been made abundantly clear that people are talking at work and community events, etc. about the mission work done at POP's Treasures. The growing number of volunteers put in A LOT of time making sure this program fulfills the mission that was approved by council 2 1/2 years ago. We all should be very proud of this little church in the country that is making a difference in many lives by our outreach. Make sure you reach out to the workers at POP's so they can tell you all about it.



Ash Wednesday Worship:

Lent begins on Ash Wednesday, February 18th. We will have two worship services that day, at 1:00 p.m. and 7:00 p.m. Ashes will be administered at both services, and communion will also be shared. There will not be a luncheon this year. —*Pastor Scholtes*

Sunday, March 29

from

11 a.m. - 1 p.m.

Join us for crafts 11-11:30, lunch 11:30-12:15, egg hunting and checking for prizes 12:15-1 p.m. Rain or shine. Come for part, come for all. Bring a basket. Bring a friend. This is an all-age event, even for the adults. Questions? See Tina Johns



Love is patient, love is kind.
It does not envy, it does not boast,
it is not proud. It does not dishonor
others, it is not self-seeking,
it is not easily angered,
it keeps no record of wrongs.

1 Corinthians 13:4-5





**The Layette Shower is postponed until
Sunday, February 8th at 8:30 a.m.**

From Social Ministry:

Michele Harrison and Joanne Schipps have been organizing the Layette shower for 20 years. Michele has informed me that 2026 will be their last one. They have done an amazing job through the years, and we're sorry to see them give it up, but understand their decision to do so. It's Social Ministry's hope there's an individual in our congregation that would like to take it over. Prayerfully think about it, and if it's you, please speak to Michele and Joanne, or you may see me, Mary O'Meally.

POP's Treasures Update: As posted on Facebook.

Today we would like to share that in our yearly giveaway we are giving back to Prince of Peace Church. While we stand by our answer that "POP's Treasures was developed solely for outreach programs", we must remember that "we" have been given a great opportunity to do a ministry that has in so many ways surpassed our initial vision! This outreach program (because of all our generous donors, shoppers, workers and friends) has become a force upon itself. If you have visited the boutique, everything was to be in 1 room (the one where you see the glassware/household items). As you can see, it has taken over a large space in our church. Because we believe in what we are doing, outreach to the church means so much more. We have chosen to tithe to POP church, because we have been so fortunate to be housed, heated, and loved.

"To whom much is given, much is expected" (from Luke 12:48) means that people are responsible for using their blessings-talents, wealth, knowledge, time-to benefit others, not just themselves, highlighting that greater resources come with greater duties, famously echoed in "with great power comes great responsibility". It's a call to selfless stewardship, using advantages to help the world, not hoard them, turning blessings into tools for good.

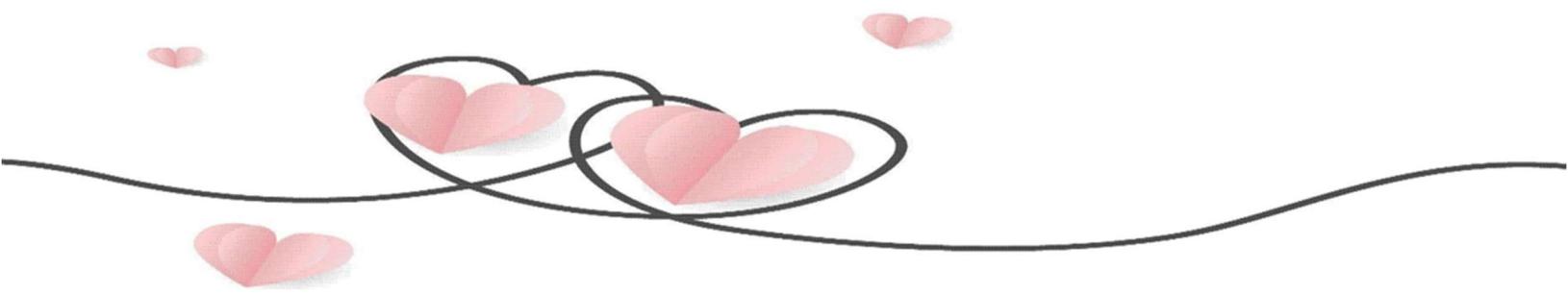
Our tithe is not given to pay bills, it is used to enhance needs within the church, that our budget is not used for. It can be used also for POP church to do more ministries, and outreach.

While we continue to show our greatest admiration for the community in helping us to achieve so much, we cannot forget to give greatest thanks to our Lord and our religious community, for without them, POP's Treasures would not exist.

Our 2025 giveaways are as follows: POP Church \$2923.90; Girl Scout Troop \$30; Undue Medical Debt \$20,000; P.U.M.P. \$2,000; North Bangor Fire Co. \$1,000; Street to Feet \$250; Safe Harbor \$1096.10; Tannersville Lutheran Church \$100; Safe Monroe \$1,000; Valor \$600; Good Gifts/ 50 well visits \$500; Foster Care \$500.

Grand Total...2025 giveaway.....\$30,000

Thank You, —***POP's Treasures Committee***



PRINCE OF PEACE EV. LUTHERAN CHURCH, BANGOR, PA
NARRATIVE OF SUPPORT – 2026

The Ongoing Purpose and Passion of Prince of Peace

The purpose statement of Prince of Peace is this: **“We the people of Prince of Peace Evangelical Lutheran Church will actively seek and serve Christ in all people.”** We continue to recognize that we live this out through being the **“Helpers’ Helpers.”** We are not on the front lines. But we support those who are. We continue to make a tremendous difference through the way we support PUMP, the foster program, Slater Family Network, and more. We believe that Christ is at work in many ways outside the church in our community, and we see it as our job to support those who are doing it. We are *serving Christ in the people* who are on the front lines. None of us can do this alone – we continue to remind each other that ***none of us is expected to individually support all of these opportunities.*** It’s as a *community* that we make the difference we do.

Impact Beyond Our Budget

Our identity as the *Helpers’ helpers* is seen through our impact on the community *beyond our budget*. We use almost no church funds for these outreach endeavors. The difference we make is because of your generosity *beyond* giving directly to the church. Thank you! And yet, the congregation continues to be the “home base,” the *infrastructure*, for this. We have the gift of worship, the gift of pastoral care, the gift of a building where items can be stored and sent from, the gift of evangelism to grow our faith community, the gift of education. We have a pastoral leader who is connected with both the wider church and the community. We have all *these* things thanks to the grace of God, and through your generous gifts *directly to Prince of Peace*. Thank you! ***The budget of Prince of Peace continues to provide the infrastructure that allows even more ministry to occur.***

We make a difference in the world because we have these three things: a strong *infrastructure*, a *generosity* above and beyond that infrastructure, and the *abundance* of God’s grace alive in us. This Narrative of Support concerns the *infrastructure*, the congregation itself and our assets (such as building and staff).

The Status of our Infrastructure

At this point, our infrastructure is funded primarily from three sources: through our **offerings**, through **fundraisers**, and through disbursements from our **Endowment Fund**. All three of these sources are experiencing increases.

- Thanks to close to 1,000 volunteer hours, we raised well over \$25,000 in 2025!

- Thanks to gifts from Charmaine Collins and Marijane Getz, our *Endowment disbursement* for 2026 will be strong (around \$90,000).
- Offerings have stayed steady, averaging about $\frac{1}{2}$ % increase over 2024.

Moving into 2026

With diligence, our infrastructure will remain strong. What will that take? For one thing, it will take **continued dedication to fundraising**. With your help, we will continue to staff these important events, and we have to continue to grow at recruiting people to staff them.

Secondly, it will take **wise use of Endowment sub funds**. The sub funds we approved for 2026 will continue to provide resources to take care of our infrastructure, with a focus on our building, our land, our paid and volunteer leaders, and our technological tools. In addition, we have approved a new sub fund called “Let’s Try It,” which is focused on ways we can grow our faith community in creative ways!

And thirdly, it will take a continued dedication to your giving. The budget for 2026 targets an increase in offerings of about 2.5%. We need your help to reach that target.

Could you consider the possibility of growing your giving by 2.5% in 2026?

Dreaming of the Future

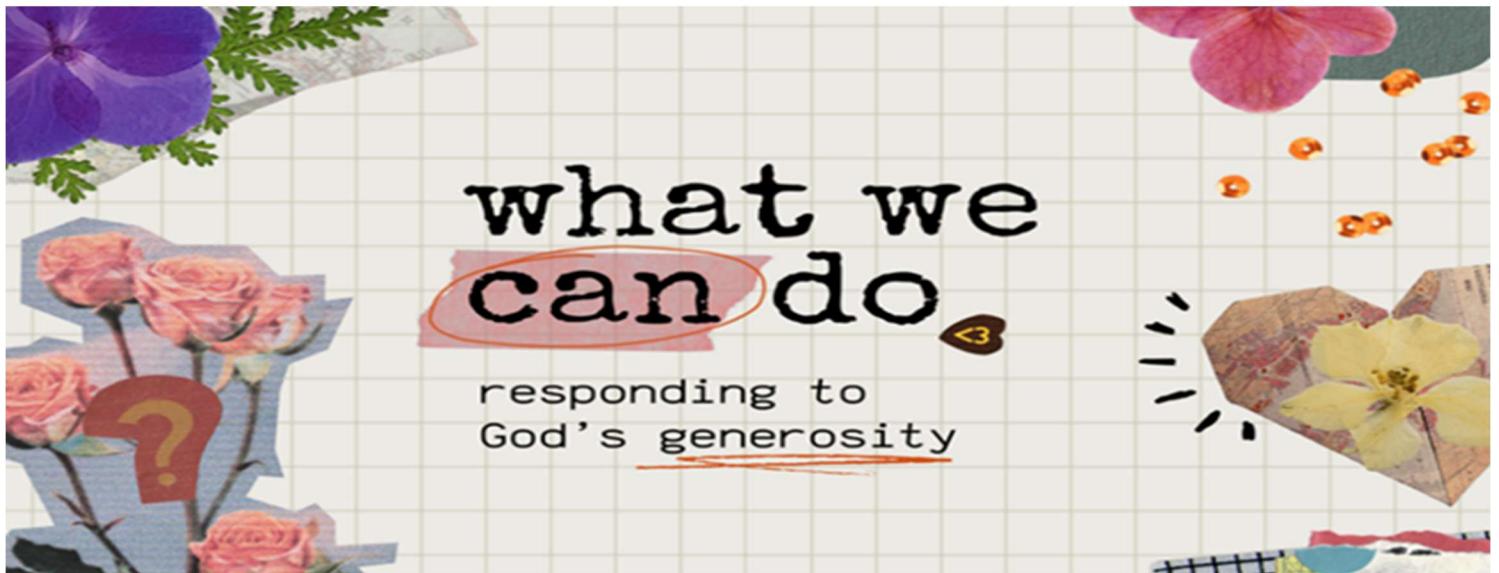
As you have heard, congregation council has created a task force to explore what our future might look like, including the possibility of an expanded building. This is purely in the brainstorming and “dreaming” phase at this point. We are imagining together what the future could be, what more we could accomplish with more space.

- Could POP’s Treasures reach even more people?
- Could we provide a community center or an emergency shelter?
- Could we provide more ministries to children, or to senior citizens?

And many, many more ideas. Certainly accomplishing this will eventually take money, but we’re not at that point yet. At this point, we’re dreaming. Are we ready to take a major leap into an uncertain future? Maybe not yet, but perhaps we will be sooner than we think!

For now, though, we encourage you to continue to give generously as you have been. Whatever the future may bring, your gifts enable the church of the present to be strong, faithful, and working for God’s kingdom. We encourage you to consider a modest increase to your giving in 2026, to keep our infrastructure strong as we dream together. **If it’s possible in your budget, could you consider the possibility of growing your giving by 5%, 10%, even 20% in 2026?**

Thank you for your generosity in the past, and your continued generosity in the future. Your generosity is the key to us continuing to spread the good news of God’s love.



Our theme this year is “what we can do... responding to God’s generosity”. We hope you have found the materials for the campaign helpful in answering the question of “what we can do”. The weekly activities for all ages have been an inspiring addition to the campaign.

You should receive a letter with a commitment card by the end of January asking you to possibly consider increasing your offering. Instructions will be in the letter on how to complete and return the commitment card. Please consider signing up to use the online giving option on the website at www.popbangor.org/giving. Extra commitment cards are available in the narthex.

We hope you will prayerfully make a decision that reflects your gratitude to God and all the ministries he has put before us. Your increase in offering will help us grow our infrastructure as we continually strive to live out our purpose statement to actively seek and serve Christ in all people.

Please review the Narrative of Support on the next page while you prayerfully make your decision to consider an offering increase.

We hope you will join in the fellowship gathering after worship on February 15th for a meal of soup, sandwiches and desserts. Remember to bring soup for the SOUPER BOWL FOR P.U.M.P. on February 8th!

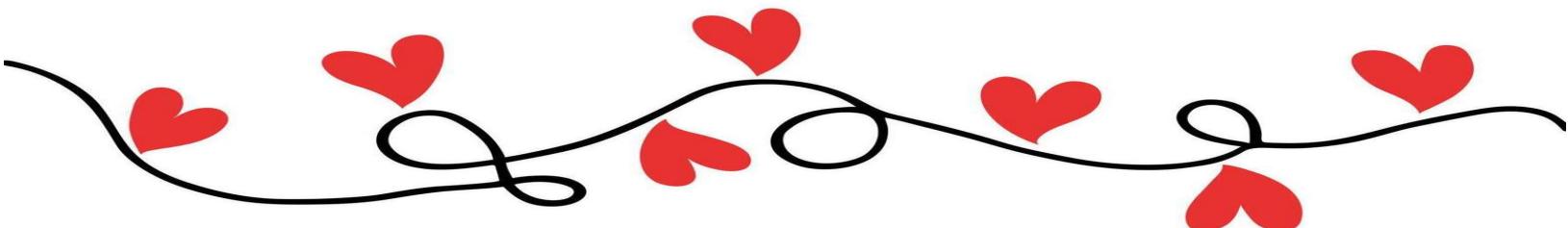
Thank you for your generosity in the past!

Joyful Noise Good News!

Collection for December totaled \$197.00!

Your giving in 2025 totaled \$1,554.00!

Thank you for your continued generosity!





***Love
each other
with genuine
affection,
and take
delight in
honoring
each other.***

- Romans 12:10

Prince of Peace Lutheran Church
2445 Lake Minsi Drive (Johnsonville)
Bangor, Pennsylvania 18013
Office Phone: 610-588-2355
Website: www.popbangor.org

Online Coordinator: Evelyn Diabo

**Worship and Holy Communion Schedule:
Sundays at 9:45 a.m. – Join us!!**

- Pastor: Rev. Michael J. Scholtes
- Minister of Music: Martin Yazdzik
- Bookkeeper: Rev. Joyce Weishaupt
- Financial Secretary: Brenda Hughes
- Custodian: Brittnee Evans
- Parish Nurse: Justine Saviet, RN
- Administrative Assistant: Annette Buss

Congregation Council Members

Kale Baker, President
April Miller, Secretary
Tina Johns, Vice President
Alex Scholtes, Youth Rep.
Jean Janosa
Mary O'Meally
Holly Blakeslee
Rev. Michael J. Scholtes

Jackie Horn
Justine Saviet
Brenda Hughes
Connie Itterly
Kerri Miller
Brittany Walters

Would you like to place an article in the monthly newsletter? Highlight your ministry? Post a Thank you? Make an announcement?

**EARLY SUBMISSIONS ARE
APPRECIATED!**

March 2026 Newsletter is:

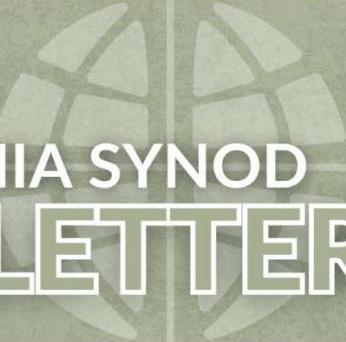
**Tuesday,
February 10th at Noon**

****Please submit items in a Word Document
not PDF format, thank you!!****

****Items received after the deadline
will go into next month's
newsletter.****

**OUR PURPOSE
STATEMENT**

***We, the people of Prince of
Peace Evangelical
Lutheran Church,
will actively seek and serve
Christ in all people.***



NORTHEASTERN PENNSYLVANIA SYNOD MONTHLY NEWSLETTER

Learning to Stay in the Conversation

Written by: The Rev. Samantha Drennan, Co-Convener, Synod Racial Justice Team

I have been doing racial justice work with my colleagues in the Northeastern Pennsylvania Synod since late 2020. I have long known about widespread racial injustice in the United States, and the fact that systemic racism is deeply rooted in our long-established institutions, including the church. However, like many white people, for a long time I tended to avoid frank conversations about the injustice faced by people of color in the US. It was – and still is – a topic that makes people uncomfortable. And I felt helpless to change anything.

A shift came for me upon seeing the events of what is sometimes called “The Summer of George Floyd.” Thanks to outspoken leaders like The Rev. William Barber, the late civil rights leader Congressman John Lewis, and the local group POWER Interfaith, I became aware how widespread these injustices are. I came to realize that these incidents, including but not limited to racial profiling by law enforcement, would never be addressed until white people began talking about them. As a result, in late 2020 I joined a group of Synod laypeople and clergy who had come to the same realization and wanted to do something. After many conversations, we began to plan an event where those who felt called would start having these difficult conversations.



On May 22, 2021, the Northeastern Pennsylvania Synod hosted a virtual conference called “Trouble the Water,” a day comprising worship, a keynote speaker, and workshops. The participants were invited to join together in that “troubled water” – to come willing to experience the discomfort caused by openly confronting racism, then hopefully joining us in generating the waves of change and progress we hoped to make. Following worship, the Reverend CeCee Mills (then Director of Evangelical Mission of the North Carolina Synod) delivered a powerful keynote address, after which two sets of concurrent workshops were offered on a range of topics. It was a first attempt at providing space for honest, difficult conversations.

Following this event, the Northeastern Pennsylvania Synod Racial Justice Team was formed. In the past four years, the team has submitted two resolutions (which both passed at their respective Synod Assemblies): one requiring anti-racism training for rostered ministers in the Synod; and another adopting a Land Acknowledgement statement. The team has also facilitated an online book study and has held six in-person anti-racism training sessions.



Last Fall (October 30 – November 1, 2025) I had the privilege of attending the first ever Synod Racial Justice Leader Gathering at the ELCA in Chicago. This gathering brought together approximately 50 individuals, both clergy and laypeople, who organize racial justice work in their respective Synods. Planned and overseen by Jennifer De Leon (ELCA director for Racial Justice) and Rev. Christina M. Montgomery, ELCA Racial Justice Manager, it was a deeply impactful and inspirational experience for me. The schedule included devotions, reflections, workshops, and small group time with other leaders from our regions.

Williams, who represented an organization called “A Long Talk about the Uncomfortable Truth” – “A Long Talk” for short. His official job title is “Chief Empowerment Officer.” He began by telling us a deeply moving story of how this 21-day anti-racism activation experience came to be.

Kyle then shared their mission: to energize and empower allies in the pursuit of this shared purpose; and their process – to engage in an ongoing conversation focused on truth, understanding, and problem solving. He explained that many people will say they are not racist, and that’s fine. However, for many people being not racist or non-racist is not enough. What some people need is a way to become actively anti-racist.

Since I have begun doing this work, time and time again people have said to me “look, I know racism and white supremacy are wrong, I get it. But when someone says something like that around me, I get nervous/frustrated/angry and I don’t know what to say.” I understand this frustration; I too have found myself angry and at a loss for words. What was so impactful about Kyle’s presentation was that I now finally have a workable and direct response.

Kyle led us through a process called CPR, which stands for Clarify, Probe, Redirect. He said our goal should be to “get curious, not furious”; to engage the speaker’s critical thinking ability by asking questions following a racist statement. Briefly, it looks like this:

Clarify:	(example) “What do you mean when you say ___”
Probe:	(example) “How do you think it makes ___ feel when you say that?”
Redirect:	(example) “What would happen if you supported ___?”

“A Long Talk” gathers an online cohort to explore this process. Participants first watch a video on the history of race in America, then take part in a two-hour Zoom session discussing connections between American history and current realities. A follow-up session, held either in person or on Zoom, focuses on using the CPR protocol to challenge racist comments and beliefs. Ongoing support encourages continued growth and engagement in anti-racism efforts. More details about the upcoming “A Long Talk” coming soon at godslove.org/racial-justice-team.



“A Long Talk” cohort (Zoom sessions)

Saturday February 28 at 10:00am (1 of 2)

Saturday March 7 at 1:00pm (2 of 2)

REGISTRATION COMING SOON

alongtalk.com

A LONG TALK
ABOUT THE UNCOMFORTABLE TRUTH

 This event is organized by the Northeastern Pennsylvania Synod Racial Justice Team