



*"I am the vine, you are the branches.  
He who abides in Me, and I in him, bears much fruit;  
for without Me you can do nothing."* John 15:5

**Happy New Year**  
Newsletter • January 2026

## CROSSING INTO THE NEW YEAR WITH FAITH

As I see it, 2026 is now here with its uncertainties. As we step into it, we do not come empty-handed, but we bring with us the memories, lessons, joys, and struggles of the year that has passed. Pastoral wisdom invites us not to rush forward without reflection, but to pause and entrust the coming days to our God.

The New Year is not only a change on the calendar, but it is an invitation to renewal. Isaiah 43:19 and 2 Corinthians 5:17 reminds us that God is a God of new beginnings. The scripture promises new mercies each morning, new strength for each season, and new hope even when the road ahead is unclear. We may not know what the year will hold, but we know the One who walks with us through it.

As a community of faith, we are called to begin this year together. Some enter the New Year with gratitude and excitement, others with weariness or unanswered questions. The church remains a place where all are welcomed, where burdens are shared, and where no one walks alone. In caring for one another, we reflect God's love in tangible ways.

The New Year also calls us to recommit ourselves to what truly matters. Faithfulness, compassion, justice, and prayer are important to us as Christians. Small acts of kindness, consistent service, love for one another and daily trust in God often shape our lives more deeply than grand resolutions. Growth happens step by step as we are guided by the grace of God.

May this New Year be marked not by fear of the unknown, but by confidence in God's presence. As we move forward, may we walk humbly, love each other generously, and hope steadfastly, trusting that God is already at work in every day ahead.

Happy new year!

Pastor Ezekiel

# December Wrap Up

Baldwin First had many memorable events and fellowship opportunities during December! All of these events took much planning and organizing from team leaders and volunteers. Thanks to the following who helped organize and spearhead these activities:

- Soup Supper--UWF/UMW, Donna Curran-Chair and those who provided food or worked the event
- Christmas Cards---Tara Welch and hospitality team
- Living Nativity--Katherine Cook and Tricia Batchelder and those who participated
- Children's Service / Program--Cynthia Perez and Jill Dodge
- Advent Choir--Kelley Bethell-Smith, director
- UWF/UMW Christmas Brunch and all who participated
- Poinsettias and Community Emergency Fund--Donna and Mike Curran
- Worship Team--Pam Sharp, Kathleen Thomas, skit group, and Gary Keller

## Music Mission



The first semester of voice lessons as part of Music Missions wrapped up in December. Kelley Bethell-Smith gave free voice lessons. Instead of charging for the lessons, Kelley had participants in this mission bring donations for the Community Food Pantry.

Pictured is Sophie Manny, a junior from Wellsville. She was Kelley's last lesson for the semester. Sophie arrived wearing a Santa hat stating, "I come bearing gifts." This is just one example of how neat it has been to see kids coming with different items (and the thoughtfulness they have demonstrated with the items as they think about it more and more) to give for the food pantry.

This semester included instruction for 7 different students for a total of 50 hours.

## SUNDAY WORSHIP

Worship	9:30 am
Sunday School	10:45 am
BLAST JH/HS Group	
Adult Bible Studies	10:45 am
Young Adult Bible Study	10:45 am

Childcare service for Pre-K and under is available in the lower level across from Fellowship Hall.

Children's bags can be borrowed during service. They may be found in the narthex.

## UPCOMING EVENTS

### January 10 & 24

Food Pantry  
9 - 10:30 a.m.

### January 22

Widow/Widower's  
2:00 p.m.

### February 8

Confirmation  
Lunch following Service

### February 14 & 28

Food Pantry  
9-10:30 a.m.

# UWF/UMW Christmas Brunch

Following a Christmas Brunch, a small but mighty crew of UWF/UMW members decorated and filled 90 Christmas stockings for care center residents and put together 30 gift bags for women who are patrons of the Community Food Pantry. The gift bags were given to the Community Food Pantry.

Photos taken by  
Donna Curran



## 2026 Advent Choir

Thank you to all who participated through voice, instrument, and participation in this year's Advent Choir. I wanted you to know how thankful I was for you before one single note was sung or played. The work and preparation was already done, and that in of itself was worthy of gratitude. Your pieces were an offering and a GIFT to the congregation!

Kelley Bethell-Smith, Director



## Leadership Team

Jeanne Stanley, Chair

Ryan Berg

Mike Curran

Christi Darnell

Susan Butell

Marcial O'Neil

Glen Sharp

Katherine Cook, Secretary

Coleen Burgess, Finances

## CONTACT US

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[@baldwinfirstumc](http://@baldwinfirstumc)



**BALDWIN FIRST**



# Children's Program

Cynthia Perez organized a beautiful children's program, "Our Finest Gifts" on Sunday, December 13.

The advent choir sang "*The Little Drummer Boy*" with the children.

What a joy it was to celebrate our church's finest gifts: our children, our children's ministry team, our choir, our congregation, and our pastor!

Thank you to Dr. Frank Perez and Mark Dodge for the wonderful pictures.



# CHILDREN'S MINISTRY

Jilly Dodge, Marcia O'Neil,  
Amy Berg, Cynthia Perez  
Barbara Pressgrove, Nursery  
Angela Murry, BLAST Leader

## TECHNOLOGY TEAM

Dr. Frank Perez, Mixer/Editor  
Ryan Berg, Worship Technology

## WORSHIP TEAM

Pam Sharp, Piano  
Madelynn Knisely, Vocals  
Cynthia Perez, Vocals  
Donna Curran  
Kathleen Thomas

## MISSIONS TEAM

Susan Butell  
Nancy Arnold  
Marilee Beins  
John Beins  
Coleen Burgess  
Kelley Bethell-Smith  
Martha Harris  
Robin Schrack  
Corey Schrack

# Hospitality / Fellowship

The hospitality team gathered joyfully to send Christmas cards to friends and members of the congregation.

Thank you to all those who participated in the Living Nativity. It was truly a solemn and heart-warming sight.



Holy Family:  
Mack, Kayla, and Grace Curry

Photos taken by Katherine Cook



Wise Men:  
Glen Sharp, Tyler Bailey, and  
William Darnell



Shepard: Walter Berg  
'Lamb' provided by the Martin family



Angels:  
Juliette McQuarrie,  
Korey Canterbury, and  
Juliet Martin

# UWF/UMW

Barbara Bailey  
Heather Ballinger  
Linda Ballinger  
Amy Berg  
Kelley Bethell-Smith  
Jan Boyd  
Coleen Burgess  
Susan Butell  
Samantha Cheek  
Sheryl Cleverley  
Katherine Cook  
Marlene Courtney  
Sharilyn Cromer  
Donna Curran, Chair  
Kayla Curry  
Carolyn Groves  
Martha Harris  
Kay Kuhlmann  
Peggy McMillon  
Kelsey Nolte  
Michelle Patterson  
Cynthia Perez  
Barbara Pressgrove  
Effie Rinke  
Jeanne Stanley  
Kathleen Thomas  
Tara Welch  
Cindy White  
Letha Williamson  
Virginia Wilson

# FELLOWSHIP / HOSPITALITY

Linda Ballinger  
Tricia Batchelder, Co-Chair  
Coleen Burgess  
Samantha Cheek  
Sheryl Cleverley  
Katherine Cook, Co-Chair  
Christi Darnell  
Jill Dodge  
Jennifer Fulton  
Lori George  
Carolyn Groves  
Kay Kuhlmann  
Peggy McMillon  
Marcia O'Neil  
Jeanne Stanley  
Kathleen Thomas  
Janet Venable  
Tara Welch  
Letha Williamson

# Poinsettias and Community Emergency Fund

Twenty-six beautiful poinsettias adorned the altar at Baldwin First and over \$500 was donated to the Community Emergency Fund.

Thank you to those who donated in memory of or in honor of loved ones. Photo Credit: Donna Curran

