



St. Paul's Summer Hill UCC February 2025 Newsletter



Pastor's Page

Greetings Summer Hill,

At the beginning of every year, I look back over the past year and ponder how God has been leading us, and every year, I am amazed at how blessed we really are. Our journey is not unlike the story of the Exodus in the Bible. That was the time when Moses led the people who would become the Israelites out of slavery in Egypt and into the promised land. After they crossed over the dry bed of the parted Red Sea and watched the waters crash down upon the Egyptian army, which was in hot pursuit of them, the Israelites rejoiced and sang this song to God.

"I will sing to the Lord, for he has triumphed gloriously; horse and rider he has thrown into the sea. The Lord is my strength and my might, and he has become my salvation; this is my God, and I will praise him, my father's God, and I will exalt him."
(see Exodus 15:1-18, NRSV)

But that didn't last very long before the people got impatient and tired and began to long for what they thought were the good old days back in Egypt. The good ole days in Egypt weren't all that good, but some thought they were better than wandering around in the desert. Some people began to complain and wanted to give up on God because things did not seem to be getting better in their eyes. God was saddened by their actions and left the people to wander around in the wilderness for forty years before a new generation was finally allowed to enter the promised land.

How is that like our story, you may be asking right now? We, too, are quick to praise God when we see a big miraculous event in our favor, like the Red Sea crushing the Egyptian army. But we are also prone to forget how God blessed us when we

see that things are not like they used to be. At the pandemic's end, we rejoiced because we had survived all sorts of trials and sang praises to God. Many thought that we would immediately enter into the promised land. But some of us were disillusioned and began to fall away from the church, leaving the work to others. But God is always faithful to us, even when we become impatient with God.

Like nearly all churches, our attendance numbers are down from pre-pandemic levels but not as low as many churches. The economy has hit us hard, and although our overall giving is up over our low water mark during the pandemic, our expenses continue to outpace the gains. Our world has changed around us, and it sometimes feels like we are wandering around in the wilderness. Some have yearned to return to where they used to be, but we know our future lies in front of us, not behind us. So, we continue to march onward but are unsure when we will get to the promised land. But God is ever faithful, and we grow a little stronger each year.

In the end, God led the Israelites into the Promised Land, the land flowing with milk and honey, but it was not easy to get there. Let us be like those who endured and then thrived. Let us all continue to be a part of this faith community and work to build up the Body of Christ. Let us continue to be the shining beacon of hope on Summer Hill. As you begin this new year, prayerfully consider how you can use your gifts to bring the Good News of Jesus Christ to our neighbors near and far. Become involved. Because God is leading us to a better place, and you will not want to miss out on that!

Hopeful New Year Blessings,

Pastor Ken

Communion Offerings

The February Communion Offering will support the CWS (Church World Service) Blanket Mission.

The March Communion offering will support the Palisades Fires impacting California.

Boy Scout Sunday

...will be celebrated on **Sunday, February 2, 2025**.

Members of the Cub Scout Pack 651 and Boy Scout Troop 651 will participate in Worship at 10:30am.

AV System Volunteers

We are still looking for some additional people to help run our sound and video equipment on a Sunday morning! There will be a Tech Team Demo after church on **Sunday, February 2** for anyone interested in helping stream the worship services and run the tech equipment during church services. The demo will last approximately 30 minutes. Please see Craig Borger for more information.

Recognition of 50th Wedding Anniversaries

On **February 9, 2025**, we will honor couples celebrating their 50th wedding anniversaries in 2024. If you are married 50 years, or you know of a couple in the church who is, please contact Kelly at the church office.

“Souper” Bowl Sunday

“Souper Bowl of Caring”, **Sunday, February 9**. Please give \$1 and/or one food item to support the year-round ministry of the Schuylkill Haven Council of Churches Food Pantry. Committed volunteers from Council churches gather every Monday morning to sort food at the Food Pantry, located in the basement of the Walk In Art Center, donating an average of 180 hours of volunteer time each month. On the Monday before the third Friday, they assemble about 200 boxes of food, each box containing 25-30 food items, to give out that Friday

from noon to 3 PM. 4500-6000 items of food are needed for each month. In 2024, 1900 boxes were given to our neighbors in the Schuylkill Haven Area. Food distribution is coordinated with Schuylkill Community Action and Helping Harvest Food Bank. Boyer’s Food Market is key in providing local food and support. Your donation to the Food Pantry is key to “Serving Those in Need while Serving Christ in Deed.” Thank you for loving Christ through our neighbors. Look for the specially marked donation boxes and donation pots when you come to church on “Souper Bowl Sunday”!

Fellowship Time

Join us for conversation, along with a cup of coffee and light refreshments following our 10:30am worship service on **Sunday, February 9**. We will gather in the rear of the Sanctuary the second Sunday of each month. Catch up with old friends, make new ones, and stay up to date on everything happening at St. Paul’s. We have been having a wonderful response to our monthly fellowship times! Donations of treats (cookies, brownies, cupcakes, muffins, etc.) are welcome and very much appreciated. Please speak to Lori Moyer if you would like to help.

Prayer Shawl Committee

The Prayer Shawl Ministry will meet the second Tuesday of each month from 10am-12noon in the conference room. The next meetings will be held **Tuesday, February 11, 2025**. If you are interested in knitting and/or crocheting, we can hook you up! If you know of someone who could use a prayer shawl, please contact the church office.

Schuylkill Haven Area Food Pantry

The Schuylkill Haven Food Pantry is in great need and accepts all non-perishable food items and paper products. Items can be dropped off at the church during the week or placed in the shopping cart at the back of the sanctuary. **NO OUTDATED FOOD PLEASE**. We will be helping **Monday, February 17, 2025** at 8:30am and **Friday, February 21, 2025** at 12pm. Please speak to Verna Ebling or the church office if you would like to help or donate items.

Consistory Meeting

There will be a Consistory Meeting on **Tuesday, February 18** at 7:00pm in the conference room.

CWS (Church World Service) Blanket Offering

We will be collecting monetary donations on **Sunday, February 23** to be used toward the Church World Service Blankets+ Program. Blanket offering envelopes will be available by the bulletin basket on the table in the narthex. Blankets+ is a special mission opportunity for all ages. Some 8,000 congregations and groups across the U.S. hold CWS Blankets+ events, providing funds to help people in need around the world, including the U.S.

Annual Congregational Meeting

The Annual Congregational Meeting will be held on **Sunday, February 23** following worship. In the event of worship cancellation, it will be held on **Sunday, March 2**. Annual reports will be available prior to the meeting.

Board of Christian Education Meeting

Anyone interested in learning more about our Sunday School program is welcome and invited to attend the Board of Christian Education Meeting on **Tuesday, March 4** at 7pm. The meeting will take place downstairs in room B1. Please speak to Laura Carll, any Sunday School teachers, Pastor Ken or the church office for more information.

Sunday School Raffle

Every week that our youth participate in Sunday School, they will get a raffle ticket that will be entered into a drawing for a prize. Drawings will then happen quarterly at the Youth Group Events. (winners do not need to be present)



join us!

LET'S ROLL



**Saturday
March 1st
from
12:30-
3:30pm**

**Sunday School will pick a raffle
winner & cover the cost of
admission and skate rentals for
children 18 and under.**

**YOUTH MUST BE ACCOMPANIED BY A RESPONSIBLE CHAPERONE.
THIS EVENT IS DURING PUBLIC OPEN SKATE.**

Ash Wednesday/ Lenten Season

A traditional Ash Wednesday Service will be held on Wednesday, March 5 at 7:00pm in person and live-streamed. The service will include the imposition of ashes and the Sacrament of Holy Communion.

Wednesday evening Lenten services will begin **March 12** and continue through **April 9** at 7pm. Please join us as we journey with Jesus to the cross.

A Palm Sunday Service, with the Blessing of the Palms, will be held on **Sunday, April 13** at 10:30am.

On **Maundy Thursday, April 17**, at 6:00pm, we will gather in the fellowship hall for our version of the Seder meal.

A Good Friday Tenebrae Service will be held on **April 18** at 7:00pm.

Easter Sunday, April 20: We will rejoice and celebrate Christ's resurrection beginning with our Sunrise Service at 6:30am on Easter morning. An Easter Breakfast will be held in the fellowship hall at approximately 7:15am followed immediately by a worship service with Holy Communion around the breakfast table (8:15am). Sunday School will be held at 9:15am, followed by the 10:30am Easter Worship Service with Holy Communion.

Everybody's Birthday Party Friday, March 21; 6-9pm

You're invited to the Everybody's Birthday Party on **Friday, March 21** from 6-9pm. It will be a pot-luck style, so you may bring a dinner choice and/or a dessert choice. Come for fellowship and fun!!

One Great Hour of Sharing Offering

On **Sunday, March 30**, we will receive the One Great Hour of Sharing (OGHS) offering. OGHS, the refugee, relief and development offering of the UCC, transforms lives through health, education, agricultural, and emergency relief initiatives in 138 countries. Special envelopes will be placed on the bulletin table prior to that Sunday.

Fifth Sunday Offering

The fifth Sunday Offering on **Sunday, March 30** is designated to the Pastor's Emergency Relief Fund.

CWS Clean-Up Buckets

Following many natural disasters, Clean-Up Buckets provide those affected with the essentials to begin getting their lives back in order. The Schuylkill Association, working with the UCC Disaster Ministries, helps provide these kits through Church

World Services anywhere they are needed, to include right here in Schuylkill County. Our Association currently has over sixty empty five gallon buckets that need to be filled. If you would like to help in this ministry by coordinating the filling of some of the buckets or can donate materials or money to buy the required materials, please contact the church office. Learn more at <https://cwskits.org/>.

CPR/AED Certification

If you are CPR/AED certified, please contact the church office. We are updating our church certification list for our AED machine on site.

Please contact the church if you would be interested in an upcoming class to be certified.



Your Consistory met on December 17, 2024 and discussed the following items:

Pastor Ken purchased a hanging rack for our paraments that will be placed in the sacristy

Discussed at length various sign ideas to replace the old ones along Rt. 183

Discussed the Christmas Eve service format for offering, communion and candle lighting

Thanked Mike Fessler for his time on Consistory

Installation of Officers to be held on Jan 12, 2025 during worship

January Communion offering will support Women in Crisis

February Communion offering will support CWS Blanket Mission

The next Consistory Mtg. will be held on January 21, 2025.

Respectfully yours,

Trevor Smith, Secretary

Your Consistory met on January 21, 2025 and discussed the following items:

We elected new officers as follows:

President – Pam Clauser
Vice President – Jeff Palerino
Secretary – Trevor Smith
Assistant Secretary – Terri Saunders
Treasurer – Lori Moyer
Financial Secretary – Kathy Kline

Discussed various improvements regarding indoor facilities

Noted the continued work on fixing the church sign on Rt. 183 - installing the updated one in nicer weather

Briefly noted the encouragement in having young children being acolytes for worship

Congregational meeting to be held on February 23, 2025

February Communion offering will support CWS Blanket Mission

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The next Consistory Mtg. will be held on February 18, 2025.

Respectfully yours,

Trevor Smith, Secretary

Altar Prep Volunteers

We are still in need of altar prep volunteers. Everyone is welcome! It will be a rotation schedule on a weekly basis. You can sign up for one week or multiple weeks. Your assistance is needed to change the altar paraments, make sure altar flowers are changed and the oil candles are filled. “Training” will be provided! It’s a minimal commitment, but a great help in keeping our services running smoothly. If you would like to learn more about how you can help, please speak to Kelly Palerino.



Dale and Judy Frantz

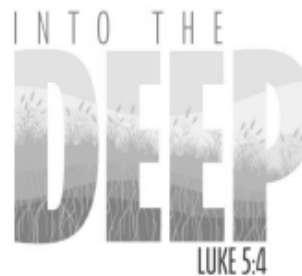
Dale and Judy Frantz joined St. Paul’s UCC on Sunday, November 10. They reside in Pottsville, PA. Dale graduated from Blue Mountain and is employed by Hydro. Judy graduated from Conrad Weiser and retired from the Blue Mountain School District. They have two children, Dina and Jared. Dale enjoys hunting, and Judy enjoys gardening and fishing.

Michele Keller

Michele Keller joined St. Paul’s UCC on Sunday, November 10. She resides in Auburn, PA and is retired.

Welcome to the St. Paul’s church family!

General Synod 2025 — July 11-15, 2025



Every two years, General Synod brings together faithful members of the United Church of Christ for inspirational worship, fellowship with friends (old and new), and public witness including through engagement with the business of the church.

July 11-15, 2025, we are excited to welcome thousands from across the country for General Synod 35 in Kansas City, Missouri – the barbecue capitol. Together, we will discern resolutions of witness, church structure, and function. We will celebrate our faith. And we will join in spirit-filled worship each day.

Please bookmark generalsynod.org and check back frequently for updates around registration, keynote speakers, workshops, resolutions, travel, lodging accommodations, and much more.

“Love is something eternal; the aspect may change, but not the essence.”

—Vincent van Gogh

STEWARDSHIP

Believe it or not, there is more to St. Paul’s Summer Hill than just what you see on Sunday morning! Some of those things include teaching Sunday School, Confirmation, and Bible Study Classes. We participate in mission projects like the Schuylkill Haven Food Bank, Servants to All, and the Council of Churches. Organizations like the Boy Scouts and numerous church committees during the week use the church as a meeting location. We organize and participate in church fellowship and community events. We visit those in hospitals and nursing homes, comfort those who experience loss, and provide spiritual care to those in need. We plan weddings and banquets, work with the Schuylkill Association and the Pennsylvania Southeast Conference, and plan ecumenical events with other area churches of all denominations. We also work to maintain the church building and property, which, as you know, is not an easy thing to do!

All of these things are planned and prepared by leadership and staff who are deeply committed to our becoming who God is calling us to be. Our church's ministry and mission take place because of the spiritual and financial gifts our members and friends choose to offer. These are the resources that fuel our mission, and yes, it does cost real money to provide these spiritual things!

Giving a gift is a choice, but it isn't an option as a follower of Jesus! Based on what we have received, we are encouraged to give something – out of thanksgiving for what God has done and as a sign of faithfulness and commitment to be a part of the good things God is continuing to do in our world. We have the gift of Jesus and are invited to respond to what God has given us with our own generosity.

Making that gift may mean giving something away that you might use for something else. To do that may require choosing not to buy a fancy coffee, or deciding to carry a sack lunch into the office once a week instead of buying lunch. The amount may seem insignificant, but did you know that if just half of our family giving units increased their gift by just \$5 every week, we would easily close the gap between our budgeted expenses and current giving rate. Your gift matters – it matters to you as the giver and to the church, which utilizes it as a resource for mission.

Financial stewardship is a spiritual discipline and a way to grow our faith. There is joy in practicing generosity, and it begins with a simple commitment to contribute regularly. The gifts we bring make good things happen. Thank you for being a part of it.

The table below shows the overall impact that a small weekly increase in each of our giving would have. Challenge yourself to give regularly and be disciplined. I promise you won’t regret it.

If this number of Giving Units	Gave this much more each week.....					
	\$1	\$5	\$10	\$15	\$20	\$25
131	\$6,812	\$34,060	\$68,120	\$102,180	\$136,240	\$170,300
100	\$5,200	\$26,000	\$52,000	\$78,000	\$104,000	\$130,000
80	\$4,160	\$20,800	\$41,600	\$62,400	\$83,200	\$104,000
60	\$3,120	\$15,600	\$31,200	\$46,800	\$62,400	\$78,000
40	\$2,080	\$10,400	\$20,800	\$31,200	\$41,600	\$52,000
20	\$1,040	\$5,200	\$10,400	\$15,600	\$20,800	\$26,000
	We could add this much to our yearly Giving!!					

Lectionary Readings:

Fourth Sunday after Epiphany, February 2, 2025

Jeremiah 1:4-10

Psalms 71:1-6

1 Corinthians 13:1-13

Luke 4:21-30

Fifth Sunday after Epiphany, February 9

Isaiah 6:1-8, (9-13)

Psalms 138

1 Corinthians 15:1-11

Luke 5:1-11

Sixth Sunday after the Epiphany, February 16

Jeremiah 17:5-10

Psalms 1

1 Corinthians 15:12-20

Luke 6:17-26

Seventh Sunday after the Epiphany, February 23

Genesis 45:3-11, 15

Psalms 37:1-11, 39-40

1 Corinthians 15:35-38, 42-50

Luke 6:27-38

Transfiguration Sunday, March 2

Exodus 34:29-35

Psalms 99

2 Corinthians 3:12-4:2

Luke 9:28-36, (37-43a)

Ash Wednesday, March 5

Joel 2:1-2, 12-17 or Isaiah 58:1-12

Psalms 51:1-17

2 Corinthians 5:20b-6:10

Matthew 6:1-6, 16-21

First Sunday in Lent, March 9

Deuteronomy 26:1-11

Psalms 91:1-2, 9-16

Romans 10:8b-13

Luke 4:1-13

*“Try to be a rainbow
in someone’s cloud.”*

—Maya Angelou

Thank You!!

-to the Meck Family for sponsoring the shut-in mailing for January 2025

-to Earl and Lorraine Phillips for sponsoring the shut-in mailing for February 2025

-to the member who donated \$30.00 of Thrivent Choice® dollars

-to the member who donated \$47.00 of Thrivent Choice® dollars

-Dear St. Paul’s,

A heartfelt thank you to everyone for the outpouring of gifts, cards, and Christmas wishes. The kindness you show to Ann and I is wonderful, and we are so blessed to be part of this wonderful faith community.

May this new year be full of blessings for each of you and your families, as you have been to ours.

In Christian Love,
Pastor Ken and Ann

-Dear St. Paul’s,

Thank you for all the wonderful Christmas cards, gifts and well wishes! You are so thoughtful and so very much appreciated. I’m extremely grateful for my St. Paul’s church family!

With love, Kelly

-Dear St. Paul's:

I just wanted to say a huge thank you for all of your love and support and prayers following my brother, Dean Dewald's hospital stay and subsequent passing. It was quite unexpected, and I was faced with some very serious and difficult decisions that I wasn't always sure I was making the right ones. I thank God for my wonderful husband who was beside me every step of the way. I truly appreciated any help that Barbara Johnson and Jack Satterwhite gave me in any way asked. Thank you to Linda and Chris Clauser for wonderful tips on navigating the trips to U of Penn and Philadelphia and to Ardith Moyer for checking on me "just to see how I was doing". Always, thank you to Pastor Ken for just being wonderful by calling or texting words of encouragement. Like he said to me, St. Paul's will always be my home. Thank you to all of you who reached out to me, which was unexpected but so

appreciated. Not many know this, but we were able to support Gift of Life following Dean's passing, hopefully donating skin, bones, and possibly corneas. I hope he will be able to help many others in need.

In Christian love,
Dawn Mattes and family

- Dear St. Paul's Prayer Shawl Ministry and Christmas Carolers,

Thank you very much to the Christmas Carolers for the goodie bag and the prayer shawl. Thank you again. Happy Holidays!

Verna Fidler

-Dear St. Paul's Prayer Shawl Ministry and Christmas Carolers,

I thank you so much for my beautiful prayer shawl. It does bring me comfort and strength. The prayer is also very comfortable. The words are beautiful- I read them every day.

My "thanks" also to the Christmas carolers. It was a beautiful Sunday afternoon.

Thak you all. I wish you a happy and blessed Christmas!

Nancy Sweitzer

- Dear St. Paul's Prayer Shawl Ministry and Christmas Carolers,

I want to express my heartfelt thanks for the beautiful Christmas caroling and thoughtful gifts of the prayer shawl and snack bag.

The Christmas caroling was wonderful! Your voices filled the air with joy and made the holiday season even more special. It was a beautiful reminder of the love and light that Christmas brings.

The prayer shawl is a meaningful reminder of the love and support of our church family. I am truly grateful for your kindness and the prayers that surround me along with the warmth and peace it brings.

The snack bag was such a lovely surprise and a sweet gesture of kindness. It is such a blessing to be a part of such a caring church family. Thank you for making the season so special.

With gratitude and blessings, Joan Berkheiser

-Dear St. Paul's Prayer Shawl Ministry and Christmas Carolers,

Thank you for the prayer shawl. It is very pretty. Thank you everyone for coming Christmas caroling. It was very beautiful.

Arlene Moyer and daughter, Elaine

-Dear St. Paul's,

We want to thank everyone who came to do Christmas caroling at our home.

A special thanks for the goodie bags, and to the prayer shawl committee for the wonderful shawl and blankets.

Thanks to all for keeping us in your prayers and thoughts as it means so much to us.

God Bless,
Ron, Cookie and Carol Mengel

February Birthdays

- 1 - Linsey Nicholas
- 2 - Megan Shawver
- 4 - Jonathan Phillips
- 7 - John Halabura
- 8 - Jett Clauser
- 12 - Brian Clauser
 - Robin Ferguson
- 13 - Gary Bailey
- 15 - Justin Clauser
 - Wyatt Krause
- 16 - Hank Deibert
- 20 - Kevin Kerstetter
- 22 - Katie Fessler
- 24 - Ella Sterner
 - Jeremiah Nagle
- 25 - Ashley Brown
 - Carter Krause
 - Spencer Krause
 - Chelsey Zagar
- 26 - Richard E. Clauser
 - Travis Spotts

February Anniversaries

- 20 - Zach and Lexi Palerino
- 22 - Joseph and Carla Lassandro
- 29 - Travis and Alyssa Spotts

February Baptismal Anniversaries

- Bryant Lawrence, son of Zachary Bitting and Jessica Borden
-

Special Dates

- African American History Month
 - Valentine's Day, *February 14, 2025*
 - Presidents Day, *February 17, 2025*
-

Kindness Kickbacks

Random Acts of Kindness Day, observed each year on February 17, is a reminder of the power of altruism. Followers of Jesus express kindness selflessly, out of love for God and our neighbors. Yet in return, we reap emotional — and even physical — benefits.

Researchers have identified a “helper’s high” that can ease anxiety and depression. Spontaneous or planned acts of “pro-social spending” have been shown to reduce blood pressure, improve heart health, reduce pain and even extend longevity.

For maximum impact, experts recommend getting creative with random acts of kindness and mixing them up. But no matter how you spread kindness, you’re bound to experience blessings in return!

A prayer for Presidents Day

Lord of heaven and earth, we offer you our deepest gratitude for this country and the freedom to worship you. Stir up a sense of stewardship so we all may care for our nation and each inhabitant of it.

We pray especially for our leaders, that you will bless them with wisdom and humility. Prompt everyone in positions of authority to pursue righteousness, justice and the welfare of all.

Remind us of the psalmist’s teaching: “Happy is the nation whose God is the Lord” (Psalm 33:12, NRSV). May that promise be fulfilled “from sea to shining sea.” Amen.

Christian Symbol



CENSER & INCENSE — A censer (or thurible) is a vessel for burning incense during worship. Eastern Orthodox and Roman Catholic churches, as well as some Protestant ones, often do this on special occasions. Censers come in many sizes, shapes and designs. A worship leader may swing a chain censer to waft the fragrant smoke over the congregation during a procession or benediction. As incense burns in a censer and smoke wafts upward, it symbolizes prayers of the faithful, floating to God. "May my prayer be set before you like incense; may the lifting up of my hands be like the evening sacrifice" (Psalm 141:2, NIV).

Bible Quiz

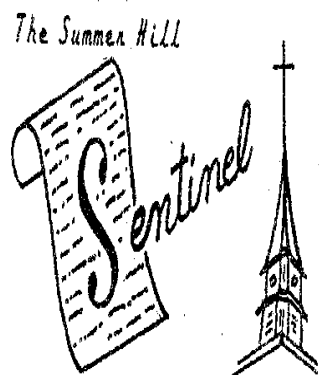
The short Old Testament book of Lamentations is a set of communal laments (sorrowful songs) about the destruction in 587 B.C. of which city, by which people?

- A. Babylon; the Assyrians
- B. Jerusalem; the Babylonians
- C. Rome; the Greeks
- D. Caesarea Philippi; the Romans

Answer: B (See Bible commentaries.)

February 2025

**St. Paul's United Church of Christ
1235 Summer Hill Road
Auburn, PA 17922**



**Church Phone: 570-754-7225
Rev. Ken McDowell, Pastor: 610-207-4783
Office Hours: Tues.– Friday 9am - 2pm
Email: summerhillucc@gmail.com
Website: www.summerhillucc.com**

Address Service Requested

**Visit the Pennsylvania Southeast Conference –
www.psec.org
Visit the United Church of Christ – www.ucc.org**

Church Staff

Pastor: Rev. Ken McDowell
Church Administrator & Cleaning: Kelly Palerino
Music Director/ Pianist: Rae Ann Borger
Organists: Jacob Challenger/ Colin Andrew (Supply)

Lay Leaders

Consistory President: Pam Clauser
Consistory Vice President: Jeff Palerino
Secretary: Trevor Smith
Assistant Secretary: Terri Saunders
Treasurer: Lori Moyer
Financial Secretary: Kathy Kline

Board of Christian Education:

Chairperson - Laura Carll
Vice-Chairperson - Vicky Borger
Secretary - Amy Zimmerman
Sunday Morning Coordinator: Trevor Smith
Assistant Sunday Coordinator: David Deibert
Stewardship/Mission: Kathy Kline, Carol Mengel, Trevor Smith, Lori Moyer, Tom and Terri Saunders
Budget Committee: Pam Clauser
Personnel Committee: Lori Moyer
Prayer Shawl Ministry Chair: Nancy Dewald

February 2025