



## St. Paul's Summer Hill UCC March 2025 Newsletter



### Pastor's Page

Greetings Summer Hill,

You have all heard the saying, "*If March comes in like a lion, it will go out like a lamb.*" It's one of those things that we all seem to say but never really give much thought to its accuracy. Like many old folklore sayings, this one seems to have come from an ancient belief that there should be a balance between weather and life. So, if a month came in bad (roaring like a lion), it should go out good and calm (docile, like a lamb).

However, with March weather being so unpredictable, in which we can see warm spring-like temperatures or late-season snowstorms, you can understand how this saying might hold true in some instances and other times not. We can only hope that if March starts stormy, it will end calmly, but the key word is *hope*.

Hope is also a keyword for the church liturgical season of Lent that begins on Ash Wednesday, March 5<sup>th</sup>. Lent is an ancient term initially associated with the approaching of springtime or the lengthening of the days, which gave hope to those who survived the brutal winters. Beginning around the 4<sup>th</sup> century, the observance of Lent became connected with a time of penitence and preparation before Easter. These forty days before the Christian faith's most sacred day (not counting Sundays!) have been kept ever since as a time for devotion and self-denial that comes forth from a faithful heart that dwells on God's Word and draws life and hope from it.

During the six Sundays in Lent, we will focus on the themes of temptation, God's mercy, the life of a disciple, the refreshment that God gives to his disciples, and the lordship of Jesus. These themes help us recognize that we all need the promise of

hope fulfilled by Christ's resurrection on Easter morning. It has also become a part of our tradition to provide an opportunity for reflective worship during the middle of the week to help us prepare our hearts and minds for the deeper meaning of Holy Week and the Passion of Christ.

This year, our midweek Lenten series begins on Ash Wednesday, with the Imposition of Ashes and Holy Communion, and concludes on Wednesday, April 9, before Palm Sunday and the beginning of Holy Week. During our Wednesday Lenten Services, we will focus on the key points of what Jesus taught and explore how we can live out these teachings in our daily lives. We will use Adam Hamilton's *The Message of Jesus: Words That Changed the World* to guide our discussion. During this six-week study, we will examine the most important themes in Jesus's teachings, why they matter, and how they speak to us today, including Jesus's preaching on the Kingdom of God, the Sermon on the Mount, the parables, the "I am" sayings in John and more. Jesus's message is not only life-changing but world-changing. Although you certainly do not need the book during this study, you can purchase the book from any major bookstore if you want to study more on each topic.

On Sunday mornings, the adult Generation's Sunday School class will dive even deeper into these lessons with interactive discussions on how we can apply them in our lives. Come and join us on this spiritual journey through Lent as we travel to Jerusalem with Jesus and the disciples, through Holy Week and to the cross, and then witness anew Christ's resurrection and the hope we receive for eternal life.

Hope-filled blessings,  
Pastor Ken

## Communion Offerings

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

The April Communion offering will support the Schuylkill Association General Fund.

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## Inclement Weather

Please note: During periods of inclement weather, please check the church Facebook page, emails or phone messages for cancellation notices. We will strive to make the decision to cancel church activities as soon as practical and in the best interest of the safety of our members

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## 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)

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## 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.

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## 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.



SUMMER HILL YOUTH GROUP

join us!

LET'S ROLL

ROLLER ROOST  
SPORTS ARENA

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.

## Lenten Study

Beginning **Sunday, March 9**, Pastor Ken will be leading the Lenten Study, "Message of Jesus: Words that Changed the World" by Adam Hamilton during the 9:15am Sunday School Hour. In this study, pastor and best selling author Adam Hamilton explores six of the most important themes in Jesus's teachings, why they matter and how they speak to us today. The book will explore Jesus's preaching on the Kingdom of God, the Sermon on the Mount, the parables, the "I am" sayings in John and more. The study will take place in the downstairs room B1. There is no cost and all are encouraged and welcome to attend.

## Fellowship Time

Join us for conversation, along with a cup of coffee and light refreshments following our 10:30am worship service on **Sunday, March 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 meeting will be held **Tuesday, March 11**. 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, March 17** at

8:30am and **Friday, March 21** at 12pm. Please speak to Verna Ebling, Bill Reber or the church office if you would like to help or donate items.

## Consistory Meeting

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

## Sunday School News

*"The Lord bless thee, and keep thee, the Lord make his face shine upon thee. And be gracious unto thee. The Lord lift up his countenance upon thee, and give thee peace."* - Numbers 6: 24-26

On **March 21st, 2025** is our annual Everybody's Birthday party- Potluck style, bring your favorite dinner or dessert. Be ready to sing, fellowship, play games and have fun!

### Important Dates:

**March 21st-** Everybody's Birthday party

**April 1st-** VBS planning meeting @ 7:00pm

**April 13th-** Annual SS Easter Egg Hunt @ 9:15 am

Christian Education Secretary,

Amy Zimmerman

## Everybody's Birthday Party



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 lots of fun!!

## Your Help is Needed for the Outdoor Spring Clean-up

An outdoor grounds clean up will be held on **Saturday, March 22** beginning at 8:00am. **ALL HANDS ON DECK** – Children would be great. Please bring gloves, rakes, shovels, wheelbarrows.

## 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.

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## Fifth Sunday Offering

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

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## VBS Planning Meeting

There will be a Vacation Bible School Planning Meeting on **Tuesday, April 1** at 7:00pm in room B1. Anyone interested in helping at VBS, which will be held June 17-21, is invited to attend. Please speak to Bill Reber for more information.

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## CPR/AED/First Aid Certification

There will be a Heart Association CPR, AED and First Aid Certification Class offered here at the church on **Saturday, April 5** from 9am-12 noon. The class will be instructed by John Borchick and should last approximately 3 hours. The cost is \$20 per person, and the certification is good for 2 years. A sign-up sheet is located on the table by the bulletin basket. Please speak to the church office for more information.

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## Summer Hill Cemetery

Please remove any arrangements from the cemetery that you want to keep for future use before **Tuesday, April 6**. After that date any outdated or worn arrangements will be removed.



There will be a Sunday School Egg Hunt on **Palm Sunday, April 13** that will take place during the 9:15am Sunday School hour. There will be goody bags after the egg hunt, so please make sure you get one from Amy

Zimmerman. There is a plastic egg donation sign-up sheet on the table by the bulletin basket. **PLASTIC EGGS ONLY**- please no real eggs. They may be filled or not, and can be placed in downstairs room B-1 by **Sunday, March 30**.

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## 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/>.



Your Consistory met on February 18, 2025 and discussed the following items:

Briefly discussed continued facility improvements in and around the church

Reviewed a Church Closure and Worship Service/Church Activity Cancellation paper drafted by Pastor Ken to have a written guidance of how decisions are made for potential closures of the church for inclement weather or other facility issues.

Congregational Meeting to review Annual Report to be held on February 23, 2025.

March Communion offering will support the Los Angeles Fires

April Communion offering will support the Schuylkill Association General Fund

The next Consistory Mtg. will be held on March 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.

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## Amid Life’s Storms

The hurricanes that battered the East Coast in fall 2024 also battered my soul. I was over the rain and humidity. I was tired of lugging my two preschoolers through the downpours and driving through flash floods at night. Yet I had no reason to complain. Our house was still standing, with no damage.

The news around us was worrying and heartbreaking. “What if that was us?” I wondered. “Would I be strong enough?”

Then the kids asked to play outside. Even though I knew they’d get wet and muddy, I gave in. When a rainbow appeared, I’d never been more humbled as I remembered: I don’t need to be anxious. I don’t need to be strong enough. God watches over us all. He knows the hurt and sorrow. And he promises to be “our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble” (Psalm 46:1, ESV).

Lord, forgive my unbelief. “Hear my cry, O God ... when my heart is faint. Lead me to the rock that is higher than I” (Psalm 61:1-2, ESV).

—Kristen Greene

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***“I alone cannot change the world, but I can cast a stone across the waters to create many ripples.”***

—Mother Teresa

## Resting in Jesus

An old hymn declares:

*I heard the voice of Jesus say,  
“Come unto me and rest.  
Lay down, O weary one,  
lay down your head upon my breast.”  
I came to Jesus as I was, so weary, worn and sad.  
I found in him a resting-place,  
and he has made me glad.* (Horatius Bonar, 1846)

Many people these days feel exhausted by division, the news, hatred that seems louder than love. More than ever, we who are “weary, worn, and sad” need to hear Jesus say, “Come unto me and rest.”

Jesus wants to be our resting place — but not so we can hide forever from reality. Instead, he offers a place of refreshment where we can relax long enough to remember that not everything is bad; there is gospel to share. Not everything is hatred; God’s love is stronger.

Resting in Jesus, we focus on God’s goodness. We are reminded of love shown by kind people to those in trouble, bold voices speaking for justice, warm friendships that brighten our days. Gladdened by rest, we rise again. Jesus walks with us, as always. We can lean on him every step of the way.

—Heidi Hyland Mann

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## Two-Way Benefits

“When you do nothing, you feel overwhelmed and powerless,” observed Connecticut politician Pauline Keezer. “But when you get involved, you feel the sense of hope and accomplishment that comes from knowing you are working to make things better.” Indeed, it’s impossible to shine light in someone else’s life without lighting up your own.

We might think being generous toward another with our time or possessions leaves us with less. But as Jesus said, “Whoever loses their life for my sake will find it” (Matthew 10:39, NIV). How common it is that when we minister to others in Christ’s name, we find we have also — or perhaps even more so — received ministry. This is the miracle of God’s love at work.



SCAN FOR



CAMP'S  
WEBSITE!

*Lets Go To*  
**SUMMER  
CAMP**

**OVERNIGHT  
CAMP  
SUNDAY-FRIDAY**



*At* **BEAR CREEK CAMP**

BEAR CREEK CAMP'S OVERNIGHT PROGRAM IS CENTERED ON SPIRITUAL GROWTH, OUTDOOR LIVING, AND SMALL GROUP DEVELOPMENT FOR ALL CHILDREN WHO HAVE COMPLETED GRADES 1-12.

**THE BOARD OF CHRISTIAN EDUCATION AND THE CHURCH WILL COVER 75% OF THE COST. THE FAMILY WOULD PAY 25% OF THE COST.**

**Please speak to Laura Carll for more information.**

# STEWARDSHIP

It cannot be said enough. St. Paul's Summer Hill UCC is very blessed to have such a faithful and generous community of faith supporting our ministries. While we hear about the increasing number of church closures due to declining membership, attendance, and giving, St. Paul's is thriving and committed to being a beacon of light shining Christ's love to all.

Our membership is steady, our worship attendance is rebounding, and our giving has increased year on year during some of the most difficult economic times we have seen in decades. We all should praise God for the gifts we have been given and entrusted with.

A recent study on giving to church ministries revealed:

- A generation ago, regular church attendance meant attending worship weekly, while missing church only a few times a year for vacation or sickness. While today, regular attendance means attending once a month.
- During the 1950s, churches received 70% of all charitable contributions, but that declined to about 50% in the 1980s and today churches only receive 27% of all charitable donations.
- Before the pandemic, the vast majority of church giving on a national level was in person with cash or check, whereas today, 49% of giving comes by electronic means.

These and many other trends affect how churches continue to be communities of faith. Long gone are the days when the church was the social center of the community, and congregations were trying to figure out how to spend all the money they had been given. The biggest challenge for most churches today is how to keep the lights on and doors open instead of planning a church building expansion project.

St. Paul's Summer Hill ended 2024 in good fiscal health. Unlike some churches, we do not have a large endowment to draw upon, so we are dependent on the gifts from our members. Although we fell short of our budget for general weekly giving by \$20K, we were able to make up the difference with fundraisers, special gifts, and drawing upon some investments and savings in order to remain positive for the year.

We all hope economic forces will improve in the coming year, and the Consistory will continue to take any appropriate cost savings measures available, but we still need the help from our members in order to be able to continue providing ministries to our community.

Our year end budget report showed that overall giving to the general fund increased 5% during 2024, which is great, although less than the increased cost of expenses.

We found that the top 20% of our giving units (33) contributed 74% of our total budget or about \$75 per week per giving unit. We praise God for their generosity and are so grateful for their dedication to St. Paul's.

This also tells us that 80% of our giving units (123), contributed only 26% of our budget, or \$45,651 for an average of about \$7 per week per giving unit. 35 giving units gave less than a dollar a week.

While many of those in the 80% may already be giving as much as they can, our biggest potential to meet our budget in 2025 lies within this group. If even half of this group could give at least \$10 a week more than last year, we would easily recover from our current deficit and meet our 2025 budget.

So, the message is clear! We need your help! Every member of St. Paul's is important and needed to keep our ministries going. Every gift is important. Remembering to give your weekly offering to the church, even on those Sundays when you cannot be here in person, is important.

Please prayerfully consider how you can help us meet our 2025 goals by increasing your giving by whatever amount God has enabled you to give. No one will know how much that is, except you and God. But we will all be thankful for every gift!

Blessings,

The Members of St. Paul's Consistory

## Lectionary Readings:

### 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

### Second Sunday in Lent, March 16

Genesis 15:1-12, 17-18

Psalms 27

Philippians 3:17-4:1

Luke 13:31-35

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

### Third Sunday in Lent, March 23

Isaiah 55:1-9

Psalms 63:1-8

1 Corinthians 10:1-13

Luke 13:1-9

### Fourth Sunday in Lent, March 30

Joshua 5:9-12

Psalms 32

2 Corinthians 5:16-21

Luke 15:1-3, 11b-32

### Fifth Sunday in Lent, April 6

Isaiah 43:16-21

Psalms 126

Philippians 3:4b-14

John 12:1-8

## Thank You!!

-to the Mark and Nancy Dewald for sponsoring the shut-in mailing for March 2025

-to the Thrivent Choice® members for the deposit of \$255.00



- 1 - Carol Sullivan
- 3 - William Heffner III
  - Abby Ulsh
  - Abram Nagle
  - Carl Yeich
- 5 - Beth Satterwhite
- 7 - Steven Pagotto
- 8 - William Carll
- 9 - Joan Berkheiser
  - Debbie Bailey
  - William Mattes
  - Alayna Rodnick
- 11 - Gatlin Wolfe
- 13 - Kevin Carpenter
- 13 - Adam Zimmerman
  - Brianna Peiffer
- 14 - Rev. Ken McDowell
- 17 - Barbara Jucker
- 18 - Luke Hower
- 19 - Devon Moyer
- 22 - Dana Clauser
- 24 - Harold Miller
- 26 - Kermit Fix
- 27 - David Fique
- 28 - Tammy Krause
  - John Ulsh Jr.
- 31 - Carson Kerstetter
  - Carolyn Richards



- 22 - Thomas and Mary Jane Toomey

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*"If your ship doesn't come in, swim out to it!"*

—Jonathan Winters



## March Baptismal Anniversaries

- Kylah Leigh, daughter of Charles and Kayla Ferguson
- Kaycee Layne, daughter of Charles and Kayla Ferguson

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### Special Dates

- Transfiguration Sunday, *March 2, 2025*
- Ash Wednesday, *March 5, 2025*
- World Day of Prayer, *March 7, 2025*
- Daylight saving time begins, *March 9, 2025*
- First day of spring, *March 20, 2025*

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### Christian Symbol



**ANKH, OR ANSATE CROSS** — Originating in Egyptian hieroglyphics, this symbol represented life and regeneration. The shape and meaning made perfect sense to ancient Christians, who appropriated it as a sign of eternal life.

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### Bible Quiz

Complete this sentence which introduces a well-known Bible story: “The hand of the LORD was on me, and he brought me out by the Spirit of the LORD and set me in the middle of a valley; it was full of \_\_\_\_\_.”

- A. flowers
- B. sheep
- C. rocks
- D. bones

Answer: D (See Ezekiel 37:1, NIV.)

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## The Lenten Desert

During the Lenten season, which begins on Ash Wednesday (March 5 this year), Christians figuratively follow Jesus into the desert. Just as our Savior spent 40 days fasting and facing temptation, we focus on self-reflection and contrition.

In an 1873 hymn, Claudia Hernaman wrote, “O Lord, throughout these forty days, you prayed and kept the fast. Inspire repentance for our sin, and free us from our past.”

The desert experience of Lent serves a clear purpose, filling us up rather than depleting us. “This is what Lent is meant to be,” writes theologian Ron Rolheiser. “Time in the desert to courageously face the chaos and the demons within us and to let God do battle with them through us. The result is that we are purified, made ready, so the intoxicating joy of Easter might then bind us more closely to God and each other.”

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## Fasting and Feasting

During Lent, consider this practical — and biblical — advice from Arthur Lichtenberger, a former presiding bishop of the Episcopal Church:

- Fast from criticism, and feast on praise.
- Fast from self-pity, and feast on joy.
- Fast from ill-temper, and feast on peace.
- Fast from resentment, and feast on contentment.
- Fast from jealousy, and feast on love.
- Fast from pride, and feast on humility.
- Fast from selfishness, and feast on service.
- Fast from fear, and feast on faith.

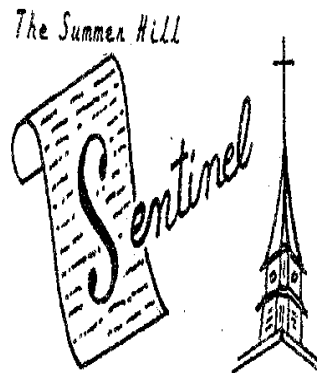
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*“The spiritual life does not remove us from the world but leads us deeper into it.”*

—Henri J.M. Nouwen

**March 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](mailto:summerhillucc@gmail.com)**

**Website: [www.summerhillucc.com](http://www.summerhillucc.com)**

**Address Service Requested**

**Visit the Pennsylvania Southeast Conference –**

**[www.psec.org](http://www.psec.org)**

**Visit the United Church of Christ – [www.ucc.org](http://www.ucc.org)**

### **Church Staff**

**Pastor:** Rev. Ken McDowell

**Church Administrator & Custodian:** Kelly  
Palerino

**Music Director/ Pianist:** Rae Ann Borger

**Organists:** Jacob Challenger/ Colin Andrew  
(Supply)

### **Church Leadership**

**Consistory President:** Pam Clauser

**Consistory Vice President:** Jeff Palerino

**Consistory Secretary:** Trevor Smith

**Consistory Assistant Secretary:** Terri Saunders

**Treasurer:** Lori Moyer

**Financial Secretary:** Kathy Kline

**Consistory Elders:** Pam Clauser, Robin Ferguson  
and Jeff Palerino

**Consistory Trustees:** Mike Reber, Clint Clauser  
and Kelly Palerino

**Stewardship/Mission- Deacons of Consistory:**

Kathy Kline, Carol Mengel, Trevor Smith,  
Lori Moyer, Tom and Terri Saunders

**Board of Christian Education Chairperson &**

**Summer Hill Youth Group:** Laura Carl

**Board of Christian Education Vice-**

**Chairperson:** Vicky Borger

**Board of Christian Education Secretary:**

Amy Zimmerman

**Sunday Morning Coordinator:** Trevor Smith

**Assistant Sunday Coordinator:** David Deibert

**Budget Committee:** Pam Clauser

**Personnel Committee:** Lori Moyer

**Prayer Shawl Ministry Chair:** Nancy Dewald

**Altar Committee Chairperson:** Kelly Palerino

**March 2025**