



# The Beacon • February 2024

## Saint Peter's United Church of Christ

---

Rev. Dr. Kimberly Stryjak, Minister  
2901 Curtis Road, Reading, PA 19609 • [stpucc.com](http://stpucc.com) • [stpucc@yahoo.com](mailto:stpucc@yahoo.com) •  
610.678.3621

---

*Whether you turn to the right or to the left, your ears will hear a voice behind you, saying,  
"This is the way; walk in it." — Isaiah 30:21*

This past Sunday we had our Annual Congregational Meeting. We gathered at the end of worship to hear all the amazing things that happened in our church this year. It is through all your generosity that God is using each of you to do incredible things, and I am proud to be able to lead you on this journey.

We celebrated the baptism of Tripp Alton Motta; and welcomed visitors throughout the year worshipping in our midst. We mourned the deaths and celebrated the eternal lives of Wayne Lubas, Robert Mitzel, and John Mitchell.

We completed our church profile, giving us an idea about how we understand what Saint Peter's is all about in our community. This document will be a guide as we move into the future and live into the potential of our congregation. The people of God kept caring for one another and continued to show up in worship, service, and fellowship. Our average attendance in worship was 44, with our largest service being Christmas Eve at 96.

As we move forward into February, I invite you to continue to open your ears to God's voice and your eyes to the ways in which we can share God's love with others through our words and actions. God is at work in all our lives, and I pray that God will bring to light the ways in which we can be a catalyst for God's grace and love, bring inspiration to those we

meet, choose faith over fear, and be engulfed by God’s love each and every day. We can move forward in confidence trusting the words of Isaiah 30: 21 “... your ears will hear a voice behind you, saying, ‘This is the way; walk in it.’” God will lead us to the future we are meant to have.

*—Pastor Kim*

### *Parish News & Prayers*

We appreciate hearing news from our members. If you have something you would like to share with us and have us share on your behalf, we invite you to contact the church office to let us know.

Please always remember one another in your prayers. We are grateful for the power of prayer to keep us connected to God, renewing our strength and courage. If you have a prayer request or would like to join the list of those praying for others, please contact the church office.

### *Warm up This February*

The Fellowship and Stewardship Teams will kick off 2024 with a new event to brighten your winter days—a special chili cook off—scheduled for Sunday, February 25, at 5:00. Keep your eyes open for more details about this fun evening of chili, cornbread, games, and fellowship.

### *Women’s Ministry Meeting*

A meeting of Women’s Ministry is planned for Wednesday, February 7, 2024, starting at noon in the Welcome Center of St. Peter’s UCC. The purpose of this meeting is to plan our Fund Raiser and Community Outreach projects. Please bring a bag lunch; drinks and dessert will be provided. And please bring your ideas!

We hope you will be able to attend. Please notify Jane Brubaker if you plan to attend. In the event of bad weather, she will contact you to reschedule. If you are unable to attend and want to have something on the agenda, please let Jane know.

## Quack, Quack, Baaaaah!



The youth of St. Peter's UCC have explored [Heifer International](#) over the past few Sundays and decided to raise funds to support this important project. Heifer International works in 19 countries around the world alongside local farmers and business owners. They support farmers and their communities as they mobilize and envision their futures, provide training so they can improve the quantity and quality of the goods they produce and make connections to the market to increase sales and incomes.

The youth will raise funds to donate a goat because the recipients can consume the milk, butter, and cheese and sell goods as well. The youth also want to donate ducklings to positively impact a community.



How will our youth raise these funds? With great winter-themed raffle baskets!

- Peace, Love & Happiness Fleece Blanket Kit. Can you tie a knot? Then you can craft this warm and fuzzy throw with a flowery peace sign on the mint-green front and daisies on the lavender back.
- Map Blanket Kit. What if you can tie a knot but aren't into flowers? We've got you covered with a different blanket kit, one with a map of US national parks on a light green front and a green-and-white plaid back.
- H<sub>2</sub>O To Go. Slide down a hill during our next snowstorm in this 36-inch, brightly colored inner tube with oversized handles to fit your gloves.

## *The Beacon*

To make this project successful, we need your help. Between now and Sunday, February 11, you can purchase six raffle tickets for \$5, and there are two ways you can do that: By making a cash or check donation at church, or by using Saint Peter's PayPal account via <http://tinyurl.com/SaintPeterPaypal> or this QR code (no account required). In the "add a note" section of the checkout page, let us know which basket(s) you'd like to apply your raffle tickets to.



Winners will be chosen after church and announced on 2/18/24 along with the final details of the Heifer International youth mission project. Thank you for your support!

### *Wrapping up 2023*

At the annual meeting on January 23, the congregation of Saint Peter's approved the budget for 2024 and elected consistory members. Our 2024 elders are Lydia Batz, Bryan Sterner, and Kevin Unger; our deacons are Kim Barndt, Eric Lamm, Lisa Meleon, Allen Owen, Debbie Royles, Charlie Sterner, and Dan Witman.

Your faithful and dedicated committee chairs shared reports of their 2023 activities in the 2023 annual report, and what follows are brief highlights. Please contact the church office if you'd like a copy of the full report.

The committee chairs and community liaisons—Kim Barndt, Lydia Batz, Jane Brubaker, Bob Jones, Eric Lamm, Larry Ross, Debbie Royles, Derek Rutter, Bryan Sterner, Dan Witman—were generous in their praise of all who lent a hand, and the long list of those people far exceeds the length of a newsletter. Thanks to all of you who make Saint Peter's a vital congregation.

### *President's Report*

Our most welcome announcement for 2023: Saint Peter's was blessed to call the Rev. Dr. Kimberly Stryjak, who was installed as our settled pastor in December.

New this year: Much-needed updated technology for Pastor Kim and Angela

Staying the course: We continued to provide a safe space for our community partners and beautified our church inside and out. We are a "Five for Five" church with donations to Our Church's Wider Mission, One Great Hour of Sharing, Neighbors in Need, The Christmas Fund, and Strengthen the Church, programs that support out the work of the United Church of Christ locally, nationally, and internationally.

## *Outreach*

Yay for youth: Delivery of children's books collected by our youth to the Second Street Learning Center and a raffle to support Children's Hospital of Philadelphia and a local animal shelter.

Continuing connections with outreach partners: Christmas gifts for children and youth, the Wilson Area Food Pantry, Western Berks Shepherding Ministry, New Journey Soup Kitchen, the Steven Yeager scholarship, and the Miller-Keystone Blood Bank—our 100<sup>th</sup> blood drive!

What's new: Breakfast with a Purpose, our free-will offering monthly meal, has raised over 1,000 to help local families in financial need and to provide Thanksgiving meals to home-bound members.

## *Stewardship*

The Stewardship Team's theme for 2023, A New Beginning, was perfect for a congregation emerging from the days of pandemic lockdown. We are especially grateful for those witnesses who spoke during worship this fall about their faith and commitment to Saint Peter's. We have 41 pledges to date, and if you haven't yet pledged, please contact the church office to support the work of Saint Peter's.

## *Fellowship*

It was with thanksgiving that the members of Saint Peter's began to gather in person once again for worship and fellowship. Working with the Stewardship Team, they created many opportunities for us to connect with each other again.

What's new: Oktoberfest with music and food in our pavilion.

Back from the past: Book club and Sunday coffee hour.

Back from the past with a twist: Advent dinner with bingo.

What's on deck: A February chili cook off. Read about it on Page 2.

## *Christian Education*

Back from the past: Adult Bible study in the office at 9:00 every Sunday. Youth Sunday school with Bible lessons and activities after the children's faith chat during worship services.

## *The Beacon*

Back from the past, but with a twist: Our youth dressed in the costumes created by Susie Hayden and put on a Christmas pageant in which all participated by bringing forward gifts for children and youth sponsored in the care of the Salvation Army and Bethany Children's Home.

### *Music and Worship*

Something new: We began recruiting volunteers by using sign-up sheets, which you'll find in the Welcome Center. Let the Spirit move you to lend a hand by greeting worshipers, reading scripture, opening the building on Sundays, providing altar flowers, preparing communion elements, or bringing coffee hour treats.

### *Pastoral Care Team (AKA The Care Bears)*

What's new: An at-home liturgy and training so our lay volunteers can distribute holy communion to members who can't be with us in person.

What's ongoing: Visits to members who can't leave home. If you would like to become a member of the Pastoral Care Team or if you know of a member in need of visitation, please contact a member of the consistory.

### *Scouts BSA*

What's old: This congregation's affiliation with Scouts BSA. Fifty years!

What's new: Girls in scouting at Saint Peter's, some of who are now Eagle Scouts

### *Women's Ministry*

Many hands, light work, lots of fundraising: Homemade candy, a plant sale, a Christmas gift card sale.

What's new: Lawn treatment and butterfly bushes for the church property, dry cleaning of the paraments, a contribution to West Reading Disaster Relief.

What's ongoing: A contribution to Saint Peter's to pay off the Cornerstone line of credit, memorial gifts to Saint Peter's in honor of members who passed into eternal life, donations to Hope Rescue Mission and Hoina, cookies for New Journey Soup Kitchen.

It's back: The women's Christmas dinner with fellowship and the traditional exchange of goofy gifts.

### *Property*

What's new: Improvements to fire safety, a lot of light bulbs, and many, many repairs and improvements to our building.

What's gone: Two dying pear trees.

What's spruced up: Two cinderblock retaining walls and, thanks to our members and Scouts BSA one cloudy day in May, our grounds.

### *Special Funds and Financial Team*

What's on target: The 2023 budget. Revenues were within \$1000 dollars of what was budgeted and expenses within \$5000.

What we've got to celebrate: Our line of credit is paid off!

### Dates to Remember



February 4	Communion
February 7	Women's Ministry Lunch Meeting
February 11	Spiritual Council Meets Bloodmobile Scouting Sunday
February 14	Ash Wednesday Service 6:30 PM
February 18	Pastor Kim away
February 25	Consistory meets