

CLOCK TOWER TIDINGS



Our mission is to share
God's word and the Good
News that Jesus loves us.

Huntingdon Presbyterian Church
Huntingdon, PA 16652
Founded 1789

January 2026



Photo by Bill Caufield

Not So Silent Night:
Organist Keith Sutton
leads the audience in
Christmas carols as
the Festival of Song
returns to HPC for the
first time since 2019.
Details, Page 3.

Annual Meeting Set for Jan. 25

The annual meeting of the congregation and the corporation will be held after the Sunday worship service on **January 25**.

The congregation will vote on Pastor Brett Hoover's compensation package for 2026. It contains a 3 percent increase to cover higher insurance costs.

A packet containing committee and board reports for 2025 will be available. Members can ask

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PASTOR'S CORNER

When the Christmas Glow Fades

What do you do after Christmas? Some families have timelines and traditions that mark the end of the Christmas season and the beginning of the new year. At the Hoover house, we keep our lights on and decorations up until Epiphany (**January 6**). After all, that's when the Christmas season officially ends. The tree might not get back down to the basement by then and the lights outside might not be removed until the weather cooperates. But all other decorations have been removed and we stop turning the lights on at night.

Our church goes through a similar transformation. When the tree is put away and the greens are "unhung," the result is often a feeling of stark plainness. There might be some lingering hints of the winter season. But by mid-January it becomes very clear

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UPDATE

Sunday Schedule

Worship is at 10:30 a.m. in the sanctuary. The service is streamed live on Facebook and on demand. Sunday school is at 9:30 a.m. in the Memorial Family Room and is also available via Zoom.

Dates to Remember

January 1 – New Year's Day; office closed
 January 5 – PW quarterly meeting – 1 p.m.
 January 6 – Mission and Outreach – 9:30 a.m.
 January 6 – Deacons – 7 p.m.
 January 7 – PW Book Club – 10 a.m.
 January 18 – Installation of elders, deacons
 January 18 – Session – 6:30 p.m.
 January 19 – Dr. Martin Luther King Day
 January 25 – Annual Meeting after service

Food Pantry Donations

The Huntingdon Food Pantry is requesting **canned fruit** for January. Donations can be dropped off in baskets near the lift or in the south vestibule.

Worship Attendance

The average in-person Sunday worship attendance over four Sundays in November and December was 40. Services had an average of 104 live and archived Facebook views.

Weekly Giving

Tithes and offerings through November totaled \$164,384.08, or an average of \$3,425 a week. Primary Fund giving for 2025 is budgeted at \$195,000, or an average of \$3,750 a week.

Per Capita Contributions

The 2025 per capita was \$41 per member, for a total assessment of \$5,535. As of December 15, per capita contributions totaled \$1,562. The 2026 per capita apportionment remains at \$41.

Newsletter Deadline

The deadline for the January newsletter is **Thursday, January 15**.

Deacons' Care List

If you or someone you know would like to be put on the deacons' Care List, please tell a deacon or call the church office at 814-643-1302.

Per Capita Assessment Remains \$41 for 2026

The per capita contribution for members of congregations in Huntingdon Presbytery remains at \$41 for 2026.

The presbytery's share of the per capita decreases by 42 cents to \$27.34, which offsets a 42-cent increase in the General Assembly's share to \$11.26. The Synod of the Trinity's share remains unchanged for the eighth consecutive year at \$2.40.

Based on a membership of 129 as of December 31, 2024, HPC's total per capita assessment for 2026 is \$5,289, compared with \$5,535 in 2025.

The work of the PC(USA), and in particular the work of the General Assembly, is only possible because members of the church have committed to connection through per capita support.

As of the middle of December, HPC had received less than \$1,600 in 2025 per capita contributions, with the remainder of the 2025 assessment having been paid using other church funds.

Annual Meeting

Continued from Page One

questions about the reports and the 2026 budget.

The 2026 budget was approved by the session on December 21. It anticipates \$190,000 in primary fund giving and \$10,000 in online giving. In total, the 2026 budget contains an estimated \$282,760 in all forms of income and an estimated \$257,929 in expenses.

All members are urged to attend the annual meeting.

IN MEMORIAM

The following member died recently:

Patricia Bachman, November 30, 2025

She will be greatly missed.

Please remember her family in your prayers.



Facebook Image

Take Note shows historic photos of Huntingdon while singing "Christmas in Our Hometown."

Festival of Song Marks Return to Sanctuary

The weather outside was frightful, but the music inside was delightful at the Huntingdon Area Forum of Church's Festival of Song the evening of December 13. It was the first time since 2019 that the concert was staged.

About 80 folks braved the wintry mix of snow and freezing rain to attend the revival of a longtime community Christmas tradition in the HPC sanctuary. There was no charge for the concert, but a freewill offering of \$425 went to the Forum's Emergency Utility Fund.

Performers included singer and guitarist Mark Spangenberg; pianists Kathy Myers and Priscilla Gibboney; vocalists Vivan Seibert and Craig Shope; and the singing group Take Note, with guest dancer Amelia Launtz.

The audience was invited to sing Christmas carols accompanied by Keith Sutton on the pipe organ at the beginning and end of the program.

HPC secretary Sylvia Byers spearheaded the festival's return, aided by Keith Sutton and Kathy Myers. Zack and Mickie Byers streamed the concert live on the HPC Facebook page and then archived the concert for future viewing.

The Festival of Song was a community staple at HPC for many years until it was halted by the Covid-19 pandemic.



Photos by Bill Caufield
Pianists Kathy Myers and Priscilla Gibboney, above, combine for a duet. Below, Mark Spangenberg performs "Mary Did You Know?"



Amelia Launtz
dances to a
Take Note
selection.

PRESBYTERIAN WOMEN

Pipe Dream to Help Fund Spread the Warmth

The PW Pipe Dream for the first three months of 2026 benefits the Huntingdon Area Forum of Churches' Emergency Utility Fund.

Winter has arrived, and PW hopes the cold will be a constant reminder to drop your quarters in the pipes during January, February and March. The Forum's fund – also known as the heating fund or fuel fund – provides much-needed assistance to families during the winter months.

Of course, all donations are welcome (if giving by check, please make it out to Presbyterian Women; in the memo line, please write Heating Fund). PW appreciates the congregation's continued support for our Pipe Dream endeavor, which began in 2013. Thank you.

PW NOTES

Prayer Chain: Men as well as women can join the Presbyterian Women's Prayer Chain. Just contact Deb Hetrick at 814-643-5424 (home) or 814-644-1653 (cell). If you have a request for the Prayer Chain, Deb's contact info is the same. All prayer chain requests will be kept confidential unless directed otherwise.

Meeting Dates: In 2026, Presbyterian Women switches to a quarterly format for regular meetings: **January 5, April 6, August 3 and November 2**. The dates are all first Mondays of the month; meetings will begin at 1 p.m. in the Memorial Family Room.

Christmas Lunch Apologies: Presbyterian Women apologizes for cancelling the Christmas lunch planned for December 1. A program about the history of the Chrismons that adorn the sanctuary's big Christmas tree was to follow the lunch. However, PW is committed to sharing the story of the Chrismons in some fashion in 2026.

Club's Focus Turns To Actress-Inventor

Presbyterian Women's Book Club enters the realm of historical fiction for its February selection – **The Only Woman in the Room** by Marie Benedict. It's a "powerful book based on the incredible story of [a] glamour icon and scientist." (Amazon)

Who was it? MGM screen star Hedy Lamarr! This novel "... celebrates the many women in science that history has overlooked." (Amazon) Hedy's beauty and acting career meant keeping her intellectual ability and scientific skills hidden. Who would take her seriously?

The Austrian-born Hedy's beauty saved her from the rising Nazi party – her parents were Jewish – and led to marriage with an Austrian arms dealer at age 18. She escaped to London, met Louis B. Mayer, head of MGM, and sailed to America, leaving her husband and country behind.

But she kept a secret more shocking than her heritage or her marriage: she was an inventor. She "invested her spare time, including on set between takes, in designing and drafting inventions, which included an improved traffic stoplight and a tablet that would dissolve in water to create a flavored carbonated drink." (Amazon)

Have you ever heard of frequency-hopping spread spectrum technology (FHSS)? Me neither. But that's Hedy at work. FHSS became fundamental to many modern wireless communications such as Wi-Fi, Bluetooth and GPS.

Calling all book lovers! Please join the book club Wednesday, **February 4**, at 10 a.m. in the former choir room. Happy Reading!

And don't forget that the book club will be discussing Alexander McCall Smith's **The Colors of All the Cattle** on Wednesday, **January 7**. The novel set in Africa features Mma Precious Ramotswe, head of the No. 1 Ladies Detective Agency.

Lenten Study Offers Hope in Stressful Times

It has been a rough decade – stress and change, conflict and anguish. Changes in churches, families, work, sociopolitical environments – we try to adjust, but our lives are different than before.

We all experience stress and anxiety. But there is hope.

In the 2026 Presbyterian Women's Lenten Bible Study, resilience will be explored and modeled for us by several biblical characters, Gospel and epistle writers, as well as Jesus. **Finding Resilience, Joy, and Our Identity in Jesus Christ** by Rhashell D. Hunter will guide PW's group discussions.

Resilience is the ability to spring back, to adapt well. People who survive and thrive well in change are resilient. Joy is sometimes confused with happiness. Joy is the second fruit of the spirit, preceded by love and followed by peace (Gal 5:22-23). Identity is more than who we are or who we show ourselves to be. For Christians, our identity is found in Jesus Christ.

In the words of study guide author Rhashell D. Hunter, "this is an invitation and an opportunity for you to become grounded again, renew your faith, and reconnect to Christ. Join me in this quest."

Lenten Bible Study begins at 10 a.m. on Ash Wednesday, **February 18**, in the Memorial Family Room, meeting every Wednesday for the next six weeks. PW is very happy that Anita Nwaobilo returns as our Bible study leader.

PW is pleased that the cost of a 2026 Lenten Bible Study booklet remains at \$10. Please order a booklet through Sylvia, our church secretary and PW's "guardian angel," or email Susan Lang at suelang2009@comcast.net. Booklets will be available this month.

Also, remember that the Presbyterian Women's Book Club does not meet during the Lenten Bible Study.

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Photos by Bill Caufield

Taste and Take: Anita Nwaobilo samples a cookie at the deacons' Taste and Take cookie exchange on December 14. There was also a table, below, full of a variety of cookies in bags to be taken home to enjoy.



HPC Has First Shift Of '26 for Hearts Meal

The HPC crew of volunteers will be responsible for the first Hometown Hearts meal of 2026 on Thursday, **January 8**.

Ten local churches and civic organizations handle preparing and serving the weekly meals on a rotating basis at St. James Lutheran Church. HPC is also scheduled for the Thursday meals on **April 23, June 18 and July 9**.

For more information or to join the HPC crew, please contact Artamarie Barclay. If you can provide desserts on any of those four dates, please contact Jane Brown.

Congregation Elects 2026 Slate of Officers

The congregation voted on November 30 to approve the Nominating Committee's slate of officers for 2026. There were no nominations from the floor.

Ann Dunlavy, co-chair of the committee with Betsy Mason, presented the following slate:

Session: Paul Post and Kathy Criswell were elected to their second three-year terms and Amanda Hetrick was elected to her first three-year term. They comprise the class of 2028. There was one vacancy for a three-year term. Coupled with two current vacancies, the 2026 session will have nine members.

Deacons: Barb Williams was elected to a second three-year term and John Brockett and Jay Periotti were elected for their first three-year terms as the class of 2028. There was one vacancy for a three-year term. Coupled with a current vacancy, the 2026 Board of Deacons will have 10 members.

Personnel Committee: The congregation each year elects two members of the committee. Janet Rudy was elected to a second term and Sue Lang was elected to her third and final consecutive term. Other committee members are named by the session and deacons.

Auditor: The congregation each year elects three auditors. Judy Post was elected to her first term, Pam Kyper to her second term, and Jennifer Kann to her third and final consecutive term.

Nominating Committee: The congregation each year elects three members of the committee. Deb Hetrick and Zack Byers were elected for their first term and Ann Dunlavy was elected to a second term. Other committee members are named by the session and deacons.

New elders and deacons will be installed in their offices during the Sunday worship service of **January 18**.



Facebook Image

Lighting the Way: Jodie and Jeff Shoemaker handle the candle lighting for the second Sunday in Advent at the December 7 service.

Denomination Reduces Special Offerings to 3

Beginning in 2026, the PC(USA) will receive three churchwide special offerings instead of four. The Pentecost Offering has been dropped, and ministries it supported will now be part of the Christmas Joy Offering.

In another change, the Peace and Global Witness Offering usually received in October has been renamed the World Communion Offering.

Besides the Christmas Joy and World Communion offerings, the denomination's third special offering remains the One Great Hour of Sharing Offering. At HPC, this well-supported offering occurs during the spring in conjunction with the annual OGHS Auction.

The former Pentecost and Peace and Global Witness offerings allowed a percentage of contributions to remain with individual congregations and presbyteries. In 2026 all the donations to the World Communion Offering will go to the denomination, which has established a new grant-making process to handle applications for funds to support local and regional ministries.

The changes were approved in 2024 at the 226th General Assembly.

FOR YOUR INFORMATION

Pastoral Care Available: Pastor Brett Hoover is available in the church office Tuesday through Friday from 9 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. for pastoral care and calls. If you need pastoral care, please call the office at 814-643-1302 or you may email the church office at huntpc1789@gmail.com. In case of emergency, please call Pastor Brett at 724-331-5798.

Liturgists Still Needed: If you are interested in sharing your gifts in Sunday worship as a liturgist, please contact the church office or add your name to the list on the Information Station located at the back of the sanctuary.

2026 Offering Envelopes: Please pick up your box of church offering envelopes for 2026 in the rear of the sanctuary. If your envelope box is not there, please inform Sharon Caufield, financial secretary, and she will make sure you get one.

Thanks for Musical Help: Thanks to Xiang Su and Kathy Myers and church musician Ivan Yumagulov for sharing their musical talent on recent Sundays. Sarah Peachey is scheduled to provide special music at the worship service on **January 4**.

Joins Visioning Team: Pastor Brett Hoover starts a four-year term on the Huntingdon Presbytery's Visioning Team beginning in 2026. The team oversees and provides guidance to the presbytery while coordinating and evaluating the presbytery's vision and mission. Pastor Brett previously served on the presbytery's Committee on Ministry.

Contributing Flowers for Worship: If you would like to contribute flower arrangements – either fresh or artificial – for the Sunday worship service, please contact the church office.

Scheduling Pastoral Visits: If you would like a pastoral visit, please let the office know, and a visit with Pastor Brett will be scheduled. The office phone is 814-643-1302.

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Photos by Bill Caufield

Lunch Bunch: The annual Advent luncheon was served to HPC members and friends December 7 by the Mission and Outreach Committee in Fellowship Hall, which was decorated for Christmas.



SESSION HIGHLIGHTS

The session approved the following during its monthly meeting on December 21 held in person and via Zoom:

- Pastor's time off from December 26 through January 1.
- Request for the use of Memorial Family Room on January 11 for a gathering
- HPC's operating budget for 2026
- Recommended the pastor's terms of call for 2026 to be presented to the congregation for approval on January 25
- Increasing the compensation for visiting musicians to \$125
- Formation of a Technology and Media Task Force to be headed by Pastor Brett

Pastor's Corner

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that Christmas is past and we begin the march through the cold, dark of winter toward Lent and Easter.

It's hard not to feel a little sad during this transition. The Christmas season often brings along with it many things that feel like obligations in the moment but are missed when all is said and done. We miss the warmth and light of the decorations that were a bit of a hassle to put up and take down. We miss the many gatherings and opportunities to get together with friends and family even if all the hustle and bustle threatened to drive us crazy at times. We might even miss the music and movies that drive us a little crazy every year.

For some people, their life of faith can enter a similar post-Christmas slump. For many, the "slump" is merely a return to normal habits. Christmas Eve is one of the few times when there is still at least some culture incentive or even pressure to attend a worship service. Without that tradition or cultural expectation, "business as usual" starts up again. Sunday is just a day to sleep in or keep up with some other expectation or activity.

For others, the end of Christmas feels almost like a missed opportunity. We were so distracted by all the wonderful things I've mentioned before that we feel like we missed the joyful celebration of Jesus' birth and all its wonderful implications. Those folks often wished they were more "present" for what really mattered.

But there is another group that experiences this post-Christmas slump in a different way. This group was fully "present" for the celebration of Jesus' birth. They heard in some fresh way the ancient story of God entering His creation, becoming one of us, thus giving an ultimate expression of His love for us. The joy and gratitude they felt was real. Their faith was meaningfully nurtured. Then came the gradual return to normal patterns of life. The mundane nature of getting by day to day crowded out the wonder of the Word becoming flesh. Fresh

experiences of the darkness of life eclipsed the brightness of any star.

What do we do with these "slumps"? How can we use this post-Christmas time well? The answers to these questions largely depend on what is causing the slump. Those who aren't engaged in worship regularly should be encouraged to give it a try. Try worshiping every Sunday from Christmas to Easter. That's three months. Give it a try and see if anything changes, if God feels nearer or more real. If someone is part of the crowd who feels like they "missed out," I have good news. Jesus is present with us every other worship service too. Every one of us could benefit from being more intentional in our worship, in entering that sacred space and asking God to show us Christ in a new way.

For the final group, I could only offer this encouragement. The ups and downs of our perception of God are a natural part of a life of faith. There are great moments of clarity, wonder and awe followed by seasons of doubt and seeming disconnection. But God is still just as present with us and just as much at work in us in those moments. If we persevere in those seasons, if we keep serving and worshiping God even when it feels like we aren't getting as much in return, those are the times when we mature and grow the most.

Christmas is over, but God is still Immanuel, still God with us. God remains faithful to us in every season, through every circumstance. Let's strive to be faithful in return.

Yours in Christ,
Rev. Brett D. Hoover

"God, who has called you into fellowship with his Son Jesus Christ our Lord, is faithful."

– 1 Corinthians 1:9

Dig Deeper into Hebrews

Want to dig deeper into your faith and the Bible? Then join the Digging Deeper study group that meets at 9:30 a.m. each Sunday in-person in the Memorial Family Room and online via Zoom. The group is currently studying the New Testament's Letter to the Hebrews.