

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

December 2025

PASTOR'S CORNER

When Holiday Cheer Is Hard to Find

How will you be spending your Christmas? What will you be doing on the most hyped-up holiday of the year? Maybe this Christmas will be pretty standard and traditional for you. You'll gather with family, exchange gifts and share in a meal together. You might even go through that pattern multiple times as you visit multiple families. Or maybe this year will be a little different for you. Perhaps you're planning on taking a trip to a faraway place where they decorate palm trees instead of evergreens.

No matter what your plans are, there can be an enormous amount of pressure to make this time of year especially cheery. The holiday season is supposed to be a time of happy feelings where good tidings just bubble up from the ground. I blame cheesy holiday movies for creating those expectations.

But for many people, holiday cheer is hard to come by. Broken family situations, financial problems and recent loss can be combined with cultural expectations of togetherness and happiness, which makes Christmas very bleak for those struggling through tough circumstances.

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Tis the Season for Christmas at HPC

You are cordially invited to join in the Christmas festivities as Huntingdon Presbyterian Church celebrates the birth of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ.

The Christmas season will reach its high point with the traditional Christmas Eve candlelight service at 7 p.m. on Wednesday, **December 24**. The service will include the sacrament of the Lord's Supper, served by intinction.

Leading up to Christmas, there are plenty of opportunities to get into the holiday spirit.

SEE PAGE 2



Photo by Bill Caufield

Artamarie Barclay places candles during
Hanging of the Greens. More photos, Page 10.

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

December 1 – PW Christmas luncheon – 1 p.m.
December 2 – Deacons – 7 p.m.
December 3 – PW Book Club – 10 a.m.
December 7 – Advent luncheon
December 13 – Festival of Song – 7 p.m.
December 14 – Deacons' cookie share
December 21 – Session – 6:30 p.m.
December 24 – Christmas Eve service – 7 p.m.
December 25 – Christmas – Office closed
December 28 – Service of Lessons and Carols

Food Pantry Donations

The Huntingdon Food Pantry is requesting **toilet paper** for December. Donations can be dropped off near the lift or in the south vestibule.

Worship Attendance

The average in-person Sunday worship attendance over four Sundays in October and November was 37. Services had an average of 77 live and archived Facebook views.

Weekly Giving

Tithes and offerings through October totaled \$149,530.77, or an average of \$3,477 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 is \$41 per member, for a total assessment of \$5,535. As of November 2, per capita contributions totaled \$1,562.

Newsletter Deadline

The deadline for the January newsletter is Monday, **December 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.

Christmas Events

Continued from Page One

On Sunday, **December 7**, the Mission and Outreach Committee will hold its annual Advent luncheon in Fellowship Hall after the morning worship service. **December 7** is also the last day to donate to Presbyterian Women's Angel Tree project benefitting Huntingdon House.

A holiday favorite of HPC and the wider community takes place at 7 p.m. on Saturday, **December 13**, when the Festival of Song returns to the HPC sanctuary after an absence of six years.

On Sunday, **December 14**, stop by the Memorial Family Room after the worship service and sample some cookies and other treats thanks to the deacons. Be sure to take home some cookies from the deacons' annual "taste and take."

December 14 is also the deadline to take part in the deacons' Christmas card shower by submitting cards to the gift bags in the back of the sanctuary.

On Sunday, **December 21**, contributions to the PC(USA)'s Christmas Joy Fund will be received. Throughout Advent, families will light candles each Sunday at the start of the worship service.

After Christmas, the traditional Service of Lessons and Carols will take place on Sunday, **December 28**.

The season of Advent started this year on November 30. Several holiday activities have already occurred, including bell ringing for the Salvation Army on November 22 and the Hanging of the Greens in the sanctuary on November 23.

IN MEMORIAM

The following member died recently:

Richard S. Norris, November 12, 2025

He will be greatly missed.

Please remember his family in your prayers.

Session Recommends Vote for Officer Slate

The session voted on November 16 to recommend that the congregation approve the Nominating Committee's slate of candidates at a special meeting on November 30. Nominations also were to be accepted from the floor.

The committee, co-chaired by Ann Dunlavy and Betsy Mason, presented the following slate:

Session: Paul Post and Kathy Criswell were nominated for their second three-year terms and Amanda Hetrick was nominated for her first three-year term. They comprise the class of 2028. There is one vacancy for a three-year term. Coupled with two current vacancies, next year's session will have nine members if no one is nominated and elected from the floor.

Deacons: Barb Williams was nominated for a second three-year term and John Brockett and Jay Periotti were nominated for their first three-year terms as the class of 2028. There is one vacancy for a three-year term. Coupled with a current vacancy, next year's Board of Deacons will have 10 members if no one is nominated and elected from the floor.

Personnel Committee: The congregation each year elects two members of the committee. Janet Rudy was nominated for a second term and Sue Lang was nominated for 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 nominated for her first term, Pam Kyper for her second term, and Jennifer Kann for her third and final consecutive term.

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



Photo by Bill Caufield

Traditional Tunes: Timothy Gatehouse plays the bagpipes at the Reformation Sunday service on October 26.

HPC Sanctuary to Host 2025 Festival of Song

Festival of Song, a longtime community Christmas tradition, returns to the HPC sanctuary at 7 p.m. on Saturday, **December 13**.

The festival has not been staged for six years, falling afoul of the Covid-19 pandemic. For some concert-goers, it will be their first chance to glimpse the sanctuary since it was renovated two years ago.

The festival shines a spotlight on local groups and performers ready to share their musical talent as a Christmas blessing for the community. The evening will culminate in a Christmas hymn sing with Keith Sutton on HPC's historic pipe organ.

Admission to the festival is free, but a freewill offering will go to the Huntingdon Area Forum of Churches to provide heating assistance to those in need in our community.

The concert is being organized by HPC Secretary Sylvia Byers, who has taken the lead reviving this Huntingdon holiday staple. Special thanks to Kathy Myers and Keith Sutton for helping with the return of this Christmas tradition.

The names of groups and performers will be announced when available.

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Photos by Jodie Shoemaker

Ann Dunlay struck a pirate theme.

Date Trick Doesn't Deter Trunk or Treat

Dressed as sharks, pirates, nursery book characters and ghoulish ghosts, members and friends of HPC dispensed Halloween candy – lots of candy – from decorated trunks during Trunk or Treat in the church parking lot.

The date of the annual event coincides with Huntingdon borough's trick or treat night. This year, the borough changed the date from October 31 – Halloween – to October 29 to avoid a conflict with a Huntingdon Area High School football playoff game.

Although the turnout seemed a little less than in previous years, the event still drew more than 100 costumed trick or treaters eager to get some goodies.

New this year, approximately \$500 in non-perishable grocery items was also available to families to combat food insecurity brought about by the recent government shutdown. Food items not dispensed at Trunk or Treat were sent to the Huntingdon Food Pantry.



Besides candy, nonperishable goods were available.

Photo by Sylvia Byers
Ruth Jackson
and Jodie
Shoemaker as
Minions.



Kathy Criswell and Artamarie Barclay were dressed as sharks.



Cindy and John
Brockett handed
out cartons of milk.

PRESBYTERIAN WOMEN

Program on Chrismons To Follow Luncheon

You are invited by Presbyterian Women to a light Christmas lunch at 1 p.m. on Monday, **December 1**, in the Memorial Family Room.

Following the Christmas luncheon, Nan Stewart will present a program about our Chrismons. The talk will include information about the history of Chrismons, and more specifically, how the Chrismons at HPC were started by longtime member Virginia Free. Also highlighted will be information on the meaning of many of our Chrismons.

All are invited to share this special holiday time together. If you plan to attend, please RSVP to Nan Stewart at nanstewart@hotmail.com or by phone at 814-643-5097. However, if at the last minute you find you can come, please join us.

PW to Make Donation In Memory of Jean Harden

Presbyterian Women will be presenting a donation to Meals on Wheels in memory of Neva Jean Harden. Monies received at the time of Jean's death on May 19, 2023, as well as afterward will be disbursed by PW.

Jean, as she was known to her Huntingdon Presbyterian family, was born October 25, 1925, in Beaver Falls, Pennsylvania. She and her husband, Ralph, were very active members and raised their five daughters at HPC. Jean was an elder, a deacon, and was very active in Women's Association, now Presbyterian Women. She also helped with Meals on Wheels.

After Ralph's death, Jean moved to the Harrisburg area to be near her children and grandchildren. After her move, Jean became active at Faith Presbyterian Church, Harrisburg.

PW Elects '26 Officers, Adjusts Meeting Dates

Presbyterian Women's officers for 2026 are Moderator, Susan Lang; Vice-Moderator, Nan Stewart; Secretary, Deb Hetrick; Treasurer, Sue Dodson; and Memorial Committee Chair, Nan Stewart.

A quarterly meeting schedule will be used in the new year: **January 5, April 6, August 3 and November 2** (all first Mondays of the month). The time and place remain the same: 1 p.m. in the Memorial Family Room. PW Book Club will continue on the first Wednesday of the month at 10 a.m. in the former choir room. NOTE: Book Club does not meet during Lenten Bible Study, which begins Ash Wednesday, **February 18**, 2026.

The 2026 Lenten Bible Study will be "Finding Resilience, Joy, and Our Identity in Jesus Christ" by Rhashell Hunter. Leading the study will be Anita Nwaobilo – thank you, Anita! PW is fortunate to retain the \$10 price for a study booklet. A more detailed preview of the study will appear in the January newsletter.

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. The Prayer Chain is an integral part of what women of faith do.

Pipe Dream Reminder: This is the last month to contribute to the final Pipe Dream of 2025, which benefits the Standing Stone Elementary School's Backpack Program. During this holiday season, please remember the backpack program.

Angel Tree Reminder: The deadline for Angel Tree monetary donations is Sunday, **December 7**. Make checks payable to Presbyterian Women.

Book Club Begins Year With Mma Ramotswe

December – it's beginning to look a lot like Christmas! And the December selection for PW Book Club reflects that holiday spirit.

On Wednesday, **December 3**, please join book club at 10 a.m. in the former choir room to discuss **A Quilt for Christmas**, a novel by Melody Clarkson.

While HPC has quilters among its church family, you don't have to be a quilter to enjoy the story of newcomer Vera, recently widowed, who finds no joy in the upcoming holiday. However, making a quilt for an ailing neighbor brings friendship to an unusual group of quilters.

Please join PW Book Club to lift up your Christmas joy through reading. Merry Christmas!

Now what will PW Book Club choose for the new year? A recommendation was made to read a novel in Alexander McCall Smith's popular series, the No. 1 Ladies' Detective Agency, and Book Club jumped on it.

The choice for January 2026 is **The Colors of All the Cattle**, released in 2018, in which Mma Ramotswe's friend will persuade her to stand for election to the City Council. "We need women like her in politics," Mma Polokwani says, "instead of having the same old men every time..."

Mma Ramotswe's slogan is "I can't promise anything; but I shall do my best!" Her intention "is to halt the construction of the Big Fun Hotel, a dubious, flashy business near a graveyard...an act that many consider to be disrespectful...but lurking around the corner is..." (Amazon)

Please join PW Book Club at 10 a.m. on Wednesday, **January 7, 2026**, in the former choir room. Happy 2026!



Photo by Bill Caufield

Kettle Duty: Bob and Janet Rudy (at left and far right) and Jody Shoemaker and Ruth Jackson were among HPC bell-ringers who tended the Salvation Army kettle at Ace Hardware in Smithfield the afternoon of November 22.

Drab Angel Trees Need Your Angel Ornaments

The words "Angel Tree Project" are much loved, joyful words to the Huntingdon Presbyterian Church. With Presbyterian Women's change to monetary funds rather than gifts for Huntingdon House, the Angel Trees no longer wear their paper Angels. They are very empty and very drab.

However, PW is changing the purpose of Angel Trees that are placed in the back of the sanctuary. Instead of "Take an Angel" and return a gift, PW is changing the message to "Give an Angel!"

Once the sanctuary undergoes its beautiful Christmas transformation, please put an angel ornament(s) on the Angel Trees. Any spare angel ornaments you have at home or you make or you buy at a dollar store will be perfect. Then the angel ornaments will be collected and given to Huntingdon House clients.

A new holiday spin for the Angel Trees – "Give an Angel."

FROM THE DEACONS

- The deacons' annual Christmas card shower will run from November 16 through Sunday, **December 14**. Gift bags to collect cards will be at the back of the sanctuary, along with a selection of blank cards for your use.

Please send Christmas wishes to the following church friends: Jamie Howe, Pat Papp, the Bachmans, Nancy Taylor, Jane Brown, Alice Heine, Sue Docherty, Jeff Schawe, Nancy Shelow and the Morningstars.

- Join us in the Memorial Family Room following worship on **December 14** for our annual Christmas cookie "taste and take." Enjoy some coffee, Christmas goodies and fellowship while you select Christmas treats to take home for your own Christmas celebrations.



Gift bags for Christmas card shower are lined up on the radiators in the back of the sanctuary.

Annual Advent Lunch Scheduled for Dec. 7

The Mission and Outreach Committee will host its annual Advent luncheon in Fellowship Hall on **December 7** following Sunday worship.

Once again, we will be offering a meal of ham, scalloped potatoes, green beans, and the fixings. Water and iced tea will be available. Desserts will be provided by members of the session and by the deacons.

Please plan to join your church family for a lovely meal and great fellowship to mark the Advent season.

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Photos by Bill Caufield

Volunteers surround table to assemble kits.

Volunteers Assemble 144 CWS Hygiene Kits

The Mission and Outreach Committee has decided to do several mission projects throughout the year in conjunction with the deacons, rather than just one project at Christmas.

This fall the committee raised more than \$1,000 to buy the items for Church World Service hygiene kits, also known as Heart Kits.

On November 20, a dozen volunteers gathered in the Memorial Family Room and in just over 30 minutes assembled 144 kits. Each kit contained nine items, such as toothbrushes, soap, wash cloths and nail clippers.

The next mission project with the deacons will be aimed at helping the people of Ghana.



Pastor Brett checks finished kits for shipment

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Facebook Image

Guest Speaker: Ken Lynch, a certified lay preacher from Altoona, brought the message during the November 9 worship service. His sermon was titled “Understanding God’s Plan.”

Pastor’s Corner

Continued from Page One

There is no special magic about the holiday season that shields us from experiencing the realities of life. Even families that have the shiniest veneer of perfection can find this time of year to be full of worry, stress and sadness. I don’t mean to be a “downer” here, but it is worth remembering that many people struggle through the holidays, or at the very least find it to be a time filled with stress.

I find that truth to be enormously significant because God didn’t come to earth in perfect circumstances. We tend to idealize the Christmas story with serene nativity scenes and cute Christmas pageants. But the truth is that God in the flesh was born in a barn to an unwed teenage mother. He was wrapped in rags and put in an animal feeding trough. And then was made a spectacle of by a bunch of smelly, uninvited shepherds. This is not a nice story. This is a mess.

If God came into the world in the midst of that kind of mess, then He can come into any kind of circumstances. He can come into our broken and

worry-filled lives and bring hope and true life and joy. That is what God is all about. God isn’t waiting for you to be perfect before He can have a relationship with you. He is reaching out to you right now, mess and all. That is the true wonder of Christmas. God has come to us and is still coming to us.

It is my hope that you are experiencing the joy of Christmas, of God’s presence, in your life right now. If that presence seems distant or uncertain, then I invite you to come to worship with us. Hear the hope of the gospel and learn how to experience God’s nearness again.

Rejoicing in His Birth,
Rev. Brett D. Hoover

“In him was life, and that life was the light of all mankind. The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it.”

– John 1:4-5

2026 Offering Envelopes Ready

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.

Krislund Seeks Summer Staff

Krislund Camp and Retreat Center in Centre County is actively recruiting summer staff. If you know a young person between the ages of 18–24 who is a Christian and enjoys working with children, please ask that person to consider applying to Krislund for next summer. Max Krohe, program director, is the contact person.

Consider a QCD in 2025

If you must take a required minimum distribution from your Individual Retirement Account in 2025, please consider making a qualified charitable distribution (QCD) to HPC. Please consult with your tax advisor or IRA custodian for details on how to make this tax-free donation before the end of the year.

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 at the back of the sanctuary. Thanks to Judy Post for volunteering to serve as liturgist in October.

Happy Birthday: Jamie Howe celebrated his 100th birthday on November 25. To mark the occasion, an open house was held at his Smithfield home the afternoon of November 23.

Called to Philipsburg: On November 9, the members of the First Presbyterian Church of Philipsburg voted to call the Rev. Adam Clever as their next pastor, and he accepted the call. On November 11, he was examined and approved for presbytery membership at the stated meeting of Huntingdon Presbytery in Bedford.

Last Chance to Pay 2025 Per Capita: HPC members who haven't done so already are urged to pay this year's \$41 per capita assessment. As of November, \$1,562 was contributed; HPC's per capita assessment for 2025 is \$5,535.

Thanks for Musical Help: Thanks to Xiang Su and church musician Ivan Yumagulov for sharing their musical talent on recent Sundays.

Digging Deeper: 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 now discussing the Letter to the Hebrews. Let the office know if you wish to attend by Zoom.

Christmas Joy Offering Dec. 21

On Sunday, **December 21**, Huntingdon Presbyterian Church will join other Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) congregations in receiving the annual Christmas Joy offering.

This offering is shared equally by the Assistance Program of the Board of Pensions, which provides assistance to retired church workers and their families, and Presbyterian-affiliated racial ethnic schools and colleges.

SESSION HIGHLIGHTS

The session approved the following during its monthly meeting on November 16 held in person and via Zoom:

- The designation of the sanctuary Christmas tree (at right) as the Heine-Brown Memorial Christmas Tree. For many years the Heine and Brown families annually furnished a cut tree for the sanctuary. The current tree is artificial.
- Purchase of a new computer and software to be shared by the HPC treasurer and financial secretary
- The Huntingdon Area Forum of Churches' Thanksgiving service in the HPC sanctuary at 3 p.m. on Sunday, November 23. The service had originally been scheduled at another church.
- The slate of officers presented to session and to be voted on at the special called congregational meeting on November 30



2024 File Photo

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.

2025 Giving Deadline Is Fast Approaching

If you intend to contribute to Huntingdon Presbyterian Church and receive tax credit for this current year, Financial Secretary Sharon Caufield would appreciate receiving your final donation in the offering plate on Sunday, **December 28**, or in the church's mail by Monday, **December 29**, at the latest.

Even if a check is dated 2025, it will not appear on your statement as a tax deduction for 2025 if it's received too late (it will go on your 2026 statement).

Statements covering giving for 2025 will be mailed fairly early in January. If you have questions concerning your statement, please contact Sharon Caufield immediately at 814-643-7282 or at wscaufield@yahoo.com



Photos by Bill Caufield

Preparing the Way: Zack Byers places a Chrismon on the Heine-Brown Memorial tree at the Hanging of the Greens on November 23.



Photo by Bill Caufield

Pastor Brett and the Rev. Josh Massey.

HPC Hosts Thanksgiving Service

The Huntingdon Area Forum of Churches' annual Thanksgiving service was held at HPC on November 23. The Rev. Josh Massey, pastor of the First Church of the Nazarene in McConnellstown, brought the message. Freewill offerings went to the Forum's fuel fund. Organist Joann Weber played for the service.



Jane Brown and Marci Muir string lights behind the pulpit.



John Brockett adjusts wreath on sanctuary wall.