

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

February 2026

Joint Service To Mark Lent's Start On Feb. 18

Three downtown churches will join together for a community Ash Wednesday service that will include imposition of ashes and celebration of communion. The service will be at 7 p.m. on **February 18** at St. James Lutheran Church on Mifflin Street.

Participating churches are HPC, St. James Lutheran Church and the Abbey Reformed United Church of Christ. The Rev. Will Robbins, pastor of the Abbey Reformed Church, will bring the message.

Among the Lenten activities planned at HPC is the Presbyterian Women's weekly Lenten Bible Study, which also begins on Ash Wednesday, **February 18**. Details are on Page 4.

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PASTOR'S CORNER

Grace Gets Us to a Good Place

Recently, Melissa and I started watching a sitcom that ended a few years ago called *The Good Place*. It imagines what the afterlife is like in great comedic fashion. According to the show, there is basically an elaborate points system. If you have enough points, you can earn your spot in the Good Place. If you don't, you get stuck in the Bad Place.

I use the word "elaborate" for good reason. It isn't simple in that every good act earns you points while every bad act costs you points. Motivations also matter. Some people in the Bad Place did incredibly good things throughout their lives. But they did those good things for the wrong reasons: to gain approval from others, to prove their worth, or even to get into the Good Place.

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Photo by Bill Caufield

Christmas Carolers: Leaders of the Lessons and Carols Service on January 28 join in Christmas carols. Another photo, Page 2

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 also via Zoom.

Dates to Remember

February 1 – Rescheduled annual meeting
 February 3 – Deacons – 7 p.m.
 February 10 – Mission and Outreach – 9:30 a.m.
 February 15 – Session – 6:30 p.m.
 February 16 – Presidents' Day
 February 18 – PW Lenten study begins – 10 a.m.
 February 18 – Ash Wednesday service – 7 p.m.
 February 22 – First Sunday in Lent; communion
 February 22 – Classic movie – 2 p.m.

Food Pantry Donations

The Huntingdon Food Pantry is requesting **peanut butter** for February. 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 December and January was 35. Sunday services had an average of 97 live and archived Facebook views. There were 115 views of the Christmas Eve service.

Weekly Giving

Tithes and offerings for 2025 totaled \$193,486.20, or an average of \$3,721 a week. Primary Fund giving for 2025 was budgeted at \$195,000, or an average of \$3,750 a week. In 2026, it is budgeted at \$190,000, or an average of \$3,654 a week.

Per Capita Contributions

The 2025 per capita was \$41 per member, for a total of \$5,535. In 2025, per capita contributions totaled \$1,703. The 2026 per capita remains at \$41 for a total of \$5,289.

Newsletter Deadline

The deadline for the next newsletter is Sunday, **February 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.



Facebook Image

Lessons and Carols: Participants in the December 28 service of Lessons and Carols included Karen Fleming, Anita Nwaobilo and Sylvia Byers.

Statistical Report Shows HPC Membership at 123

Huntingdon Presbyterian Church ended 2025 with 123 members, down six from the end of 2024 because of death.

According to the annual statistical report prepared for PC(USA), the congregation consists of 71 women and 52 men. About half of the congregation is under the age of 70 and about two-thirds is over the age of 55.

The weekly Sunday service average attendance in 2025 was 70 both in-person and online.

Ash Wednesday Service

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Ash Wednesday begins the 40-day period of Lent (not including Sundays) that culminates in Easter, which this year is **April 5**.

The season of Lent is a time of prayer, fasting and self-examination in preparation for the celebration of the resurrection of the Lord at Easter. Its 40 days recalls the flood of Genesis, Moses' sojourn at Mount Sinai, Elijah's journey to Mount Horeb, Jonah's call to Ninevah to repent and Jesus' time of testing in the wilderness.



Christmas Gifts: Jenny Brockett assisted by son Tyler and by Eli Hoover gave out Chrismons to children at the Christmas Eve service. A long-standing HPC tradition, the Chrismons were given in memory of Helen Elliott.

Krislund Appoints Executive Director

Ryan Croft is the new executive director of Krislund Camp and Retreat Center in rural Centre County. He began his duties in January.

Prior to coming to Krislund, he served as executive director for the Hilltop Christian Camp in Columbus, Indiana, for six years. Before moving into camp ministry, he served in youth ministry for more than 20 years.

At Krislund, he will be assisted by Max Krohe, program director; Mary D'Ambrosia, office manager; and Charity McClain, registration and retreat coordinator.

Krislund is seeking more counselors for the upcoming camping season. If you know someone aged 18-24 who loves Jesus, loves children and is willing to learn, please suggest they consider a summer at Krislund.

Applications for camping and to serve as counselors are on the Krislund website, krislnd.org.

For more than 50 years, Krislund has been a joint ministry of the presbyteries of Huntingdon, Northumberland and Carlisle.

Deacons Plan To Share Their Greeting Cards

Through the years the deacons have accumulated a wealth of greeting cards. They would like to share them with the congregation in a new project that is anticipated to start on Sunday, **March 1**.

The deacons soon will be placing in the sanctuary a box with a variety of cards and envelopes. If you would like to send a card to someone, just help yourself to one from the box.

Write your message, address the card and put it in the outgoing mail basket. The basket will be checked weekly, and the deacons will see that your card is delivered – either by hand or by mail. No postage will be necessary; the deacons will cover the cost of mailing.

Please feel free to take the opportunity to let someone know that you are thinking of them.

FROM THE DEACONS

At the Board of Deacons reorganization meeting on January 6, officers and committee members for 2026 were selected.

The officers are: Jodie Shoemaker, moderator; Kathy Cella, vice moderator; Yvonne Wilson, treasurer; and Pam Thompson, secretary.

In addition, Kathy Cella will be the deacons' representative on the Personnel Committee. Jodie Shoemaker will represent the deacons on the Mission and Outreach Committee. Pam Thompson will represent the deacons on the Nominating Committee.

Annual Meeting Rescheduled

The annual meeting of the congregation and corporation has been rescheduled for after the worship service on Sunday, **February 1**. The worship service and annual meeting scheduled for January 25 were cancelled due to the forecast of heavy snow in the area on that date.

PRESBYTERIAN WOMEN

Next Book Club Meeting Scheduled for May 6

The PW Book Club will not meet in February as previously announced. The next book club meeting will be on Wednesday, **May 6**.

The novel to be read remains Marie Benedict's **The Only Woman in the Room**, an historical fiction novel based on actress and inventor Hedy Lamarr.

The book club traditionally doesn't meet during Lent to allow members to participate in the Lenten Bible study. Apologies for any confusion resulting from the book club announcement in the January newsletter.

Angel Tree Donations Total \$1,190 for Shelter

Thank you, church family, from Presbyterian Women for your generous participation in the Angel Tree Project benefitting Huntingdon House. In a three-week period, \$1,190 was raised to support our local domestic abuse shelter and program.

The Huntingdon House staff was truly grateful for the generosity of HPC and PW. Also, the angel ornaments you hung on the Angel Trees in the rear of the sanctuary were delivered and were much appreciated by Huntingdon House's residents and clients.

Classic Movie Set for Feb. 22

HPC's winter classic movie matinee will be at 2 p.m. on Sunday, **February 22**, in the Memorial Family Room. The film will be **O Brother, Where Art Thou** starring George Clooney. The 2000 comedy-drama is set in the Depression-era rural South and features period-specific folk music.

PW Lenten Bible Study Starts Ash Wednesday

Ash Wednesday, **February 18**, is the beginning of Lent and also the beginning of a new Lenten Bible Study hosted by Presbyterian Women and led by Anita Nwaobilo.

Finding Resilience, Joy, and Our Identity in Jesus Christ, authored by Rhashell D. Hunter, is the **PW/Horizons** Bible Study for 2026. This Bible study is written by Presbyterian women for Presbyterian women; however, all interested adults are welcome.

“Sometimes, our life experiences get the best of us, but there is a path that offers healing and the ability to spring back into shape. There is a way that leads to joy and resilience. The way is by connecting to the One who sustains us in times of anxiety and confusion, our Savior Jesus Christ.”
(R. D. Hunter)

Join Presbyterian Women for six consecutive Wednesday mornings during Lent (**February 18 and 25, March 4, 11, 18, 25**) at 10 a.m. in the Memorial Family Room for lively and thoughtful conversations of devotion and faithfulness.

PW NOTES

Current Pipe Dream: The PW Pipe Dream project for January, February and March benefits the Huntingdon Area Forum of Churches' Emergency Utility Fund. Please drop your quarters in the pipes during these cold days of winter! It's amazing how quickly the quarters can grow. All donations are welcome. Thank you.

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.

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.

Presbytery Meeting: Huntingdon Presbytery was scheduled to hold its first stated meeting of 2026 at 9:30 a.m. on Saturday, January 24, at State College Presbyterian Church. The meeting was hybrid, with attendance both in-person and by Zoom.

Save the Date for Potluck: The date for the congregation's annual potluck is **Sunday, March 22**. The event, sponsored by the Mission and Outreach Committee, will have a "Welcome Spring" theme.

Thanks for Musical Help: Thanks to Joann Weber, Sarah Peachey and church musician Ivan Yumagulov for sharing their musical talent on recent Sundays.

Yes, Liturgists Are Still Welcome: We haven't had liturgists for the last few months, but that doesn't mean they aren't 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.

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 currently studying the Letter to the Hebrews. Let the office know if you wish to attend the study by Zoom.

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.

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Photo by Bill Caufield

Installed: Pastor Brett installs newly elected deacons and elders at the January 18 service.

SESSION HIGHLIGHTS

The session approved the following during its monthly meeting on January 18 held in person and via Zoom:

- Special offerings for 2026 as follows: To HPC: Initial Offering, Easter, Thanksgiving and Christmas envelope. To PC(USA): One Great Hour of Sharing, World Communion and Christmas Joy.
- Dates for communion: February 22, First Sunday of Lent; April 2, Maundy Thursday; May 24, Pentecost; July 12, Second Sunday in July; October 4, World Communion; November 29, First Sunday of Advent; December 24, Christmas Eve
- Extension of the pastor's study leave for a conference in March to March 8-March 12
- The statistical report for PC(USA)
- Transfer of funds from HPC checking account to investments, split between money market account and unrestricted account
- Re-election of Heather Beckwith as treasurer and Artamarie Barclay as clerk of session
- Acting as trustees of the corporation, the session elected officers of the corporation: Bob Barclay, president; Paul Post, vice president; and Artamarie Barclay, secretary
- Combination of the Worship and Christian Education committees into one new, permanent committee called Spiritual Advancement
- Use of the HPC parking lot by the Rotary Interact Club during Huntingdon's Mayfest

Pastor's Corner

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It's easy to imagine how the complexity of morality can create enormous anxiety in the people who thoughtfully consider it. I have often talked about how Martin Luther was deeply anxious about the state of his soul. His conscience was so wracked that when he was a monk, he often exhausted his confessor (the person who heard his confession of sins) with hours of confession over the most minor things. It wasn't until he rediscovered the concept of grace that he finally found peace. That grace, that unmerited forgiveness and love in Christ, stands in stark contrast to the points system of The Good Place.

But the questions the show raises are still interesting. Is it enough that we do good in life or must we also do that good for the right reasons? What even are the right reasons? Is it legitimate to do good things with the goal of earning some kind of favor with God?

This is a great time of year to reflect on these questions because the season of Lent is about to begin. Lent is a time of intentional reflection and repentance. We're most familiar with Lent as a season of fasting. We intentionally refrain from something we enjoy until Easter. But have we stopped to consider why we fast?

Protestants tend to have a complicated relationship with fasting. We can read Jesus' teaching about fasting and plainly see an assumption that his follower would be doing it. But there is also a warning about fasting for the wrong reasons. The Pharisees did it to draw attention to their righteousness. It became a public display. Protestants criticized these tendencies as they continued to pop up through history. They also criticized the often inconsistent obligations to fast under the Catholic Church.

But perhaps most important, they rejected any motivation for fasting that involved the idea of earning extra merit or favor with God. If we fast with some expectation of earning something from God or gaining more "God points," then we're doing it wrong.

I've seen these attitudes about fasting pop up from time to time. I recently heard one person talk about

the length of their fasting like some kind of personal record. It almost felt like their fasting was a test of resolve or endurance over anything else. But my own thoughts about fasting have been misguided in the past. I've fasted before making major decisions. Perhaps I believed in some way that God would make His purposes for me more clearly known if I demonstrated my righteousness through some act of devotion. How often are we tempted to have that attitude with other spiritual practices? Do we ever add on a few good deeds to our prayers in hope that they will make our petitions more readily heard?

Well, the good news of the gospel is that there is no point system. If God did keep score over us, we would all be doomed. We aren't judged on the basis of our righteousness. We're given Christ's righteousness through faith. This doesn't just secure our place in eternity. It frees our motivations from self-interest. Things like fasting and prayer are freed from enslavement to merit or a sense of obligation. We can do them with the goal God intended.

Fasting can stop being about earning extra favor and resume its original intention. Fasting allows us to see with fresh eyes our dependence on God as our true provider. In this sense, it can reinvigorate our joy and thankfulness in all that God gives us. Fasting also allows us to put aside things we mistakenly believe we can't live without. That can reignite trust in God to provide for our true and deepest needs.

A fresh understanding and application of grace can really open up experiences of joy. We aren't subject to a cosmic grind of work in order to earn sufficient points. We're given the riches of God's love as a free gift in Christ. And because it's a gift, all our works are freed to be given in joy instead of obligation. May we all rediscover that joy this Lent.

Yours in Christ,
Rev. Brett D. Hoover

"When you fast, do not look somber as the hypocrites do, for they disfigure their faces to show men they are fasting. I tell you the truth, they have received their reward in full. But when you fast, put oil on your head and wash your face, so that it will not be obvious to men that you are fasting, but only to your Father, who is unseen..."

– Matthew 6:16-18a