



The Beacon • January 2025

Saint Peter's United Church of Christ

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Matthew 2:12 - "And having been warned in a dream not to return to Herod, they left for their own country by another road."

Happy New Year! As we flip the calendar to a new year, we are greeted in our Christian faith with Epiphany on January 6th. Epiphany is associated with the visit of the Wise Men to Jesus. They were guided by the Star of Bethlehem that announced the newborn king.

When I think about the story of the Magi, I am reminded of Courage. Courage is universally admired. But as much as we admire it, many of us misunderstand what courage is. Many believe courage is essentially the absence of fear. The courageous person, we think, is someone who is utterly fearless in the face of danger. But this understanding is actually closer to a definition of what courage *is not*, rather than what it *is*. Genuine courage is not the absence of fear but rather the capacity to go ahead in spite of your fear.

When we reflect on the Magi, this is precisely the kind of courage they exhibit. The Magi had the courage to set out on a journey to find something new. This journey they went on was long, tiresome, and had many obstacles, but they did not let that stop them from finding Christ; this new baby who was bringing something new to the world. The Magi also showed courage as they defied Herod's oppressive plans by choosing to leave for their own country by a different route instead of returning to him. The Magi's story teaches us to be open to new ideas and not close our minds to God's guidance.

What the Magi can teach us is as we move into the new year, and face whatever the year brings, we can look towards Christ's light, not allowing our fears to paralyze us or keep us

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from moving forward. We can draw courage from knowing that God is with us even as we move through a place of fear.

We may not think of ourselves as courageous, but the fact is God has given us a far greater capacity for courage than we realize. And as January continues and we enter “ordinary time” of our liturgical year, the Magi remind us that there is nothing ordinary about living life in the present, in the here and now in the most radical ways that God asks us to live. The story of the Magi inspires hope that if we follow our epiphanies, if we rely on God, then we will, like the Wise Men, have our eyes open to new possibilities and new ways of seeing things.

God is at work in all our lives, and I know that if we allow God to work within us, we too, will be led to something new and experience the possibilities within our lives. May this year of new days bring to light the ways in which you can choose faith over fear courageously bringing forth God’s light and love and being an inspiration to those you meet.

New Year Blessings,

—*Pastor Kim*

A Message from the Consistory President

What a year we have had here at Saint Peter's! I sincerely thank you for putting your faith and trust in me as you elected me President of our church consistory. To revisit some of what I consider to be highlights of 2024...

We continued hosting Breakfast with a Purpose, helping a few families through some very difficult times. We could not have assisted these families without the generous help of all of you.

We held our annual Easter egg hunt for the children, started some fun traditions with families getting together for roller skating, summer water fun at the church, and bracelet making, just to name a few. And the children’s Sunday School program continues to thrive thanks to the creative efforts of all of our volunteers.

We organized our first craft/vendor fair, from which I believe we learned a few things and will be putting that newfound knowledge to use for our 2nd vendor fair this upcoming this year.

We held our first Spaghetti Dinner fundraiser which was a huge success, thanks to all of you, whether you sold tickets, donated, helped make food, helped get raffle baskets, helped that day or even if you sent prayers, we could not have done it without you!

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We have continued to be a strong location for blood drives and have honored all donors not once, but twice this year, so another big thank you for all the help with these efforts.

We once again hosted a fun, fellowship filled Oktoberfest on our grounds which many people enjoyed and we held a few more Sunday worship services in our beautiful pavilion, enjoying our beautiful outdoor space to the fullest.

In December we tried something else new and held a Blue Christmas worship service for those of us facing the holidays while dealing with the loss of someone or something important in our lives. Our children put on a Christmas pageant, telling the story of Jesus' birth while dedicating the holiday gifts our members donated to youth in need. Finally, we concluded the holidays, and the year, with a heartfelt Christmas Eve service which we all enjoyed together in our magically decorated church, allowing the special holiness of the season to surround us.

In 2025 I am looking forward to continued traditions, new projects and exploring more ways to make our church a safe haven for the community for many years to come. Again, I thank you for everything you give to Saint Peter's in so many ways.

Happy New Year!

— Lydia Batz

Stewardship Update

We have concluded our most recent Stewardship campaign and are very grateful to all those who have returned pledges for 2025. Saint Peter's values *you*, our church family, and we wish to sincerely *thank you* for your pledged help towards continued success in 2025.

Although the campaign phase may be completed, please know that pledges will still be gratefully accepted.

Giving envelopes for 2025 are available in the Welcome Center for those who indicated on their pledge card that they wished to continue giving with envelopes. Please find the box labeled with your name.

Congregational Meeting

We are in the planning stages for our annual congregational meeting, which is scheduled to take place on Sunday, January 26, 2025, immediately following worship. All members are invited to attend either in person or via a virtual attendance option that will be shared by email just prior to the meeting. We encourage everyone to attend and learn where Saint Peter's is through updates on various aspects of our church life. Following the meeting we will host the next Breakfast with a Purpose.

Working Together in 2025

Special people, strong attendance and collaborative participation are what set Saint Peter's apart as a congregation. To continue to grow in that important aspect of our church life, we ask that you sign up to take part in the important participant roles we have each worship service. There are fresh new sign-up sheets in the Welcome Center to kick off worship in 2025.

We sincerely appreciate everyone who gives their time during worship, helping out in the office, at events or around the facility. On this volunteer note, we will be taking down the Christmas decorations this Sunday, January 5, and extra hands will be most welcomed.

Women's Ministry Update

Thank you to all the bakers for your donations to our New Journey cookie outreach project on December 8th. We were able to donate 174 baggies of cookies to be distributed through their bagged lunch program. Through this effort, Saint Peter's was able to spread some Christmas cheer!

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.

Beacon Submissions

Whether you are in a leadership role, part of a committee or an individual member who has something you would like highlighted in the Beacon, your submissions are always important and welcomed. Please send your submission to us via email by the 3rd Tuesday of the month so we have adequate time to include your content.

Power of Prayer

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.

Thank You Letter Received

Hope Rescue Mission Clothing Drive



**645 N. 6th Street
Reading, PA 19601
610-375-4224
HopeForReading.org**

November 19, 2024

Dear St. Peter's UCC,

Thank you so much for your support in our work! It is such a blessing to see God's faithful promise to care for the poor and those in need, in action, through the support from generous partners like you! Your kindness has a profound impact that will echo through generations to come.

Thank you for being a faithful partner in fighting homelessness. We look forward to your next clothing drive for the Mission and LightHouse!

May you be blessed by blessing others!

Thank you,

Diane Schenk

Director of HopeThrift Distributors

WE SHOW COMPASSION TO EMPOWER AND TRANSFORM

Make An Impact in The Community



Keep warm by tasting soup from over 25 restaurants all while raising funds for a good cause when Opportunity House holds the 23rd annual “Souper Bowl” soup competition fundraiser.

Scan the QR code or learn more and purchase tickets here:
<https://e.givesmart.com/events/EbZ/>

SOUPER BOWL

**Monday, February 3
5:30-7:30 pm**

**Penn State Berks Beaver Athletics
& Wellness Center**

1801 Broadcasting Rd., Wyomissing

**Purchase tickets online at
opphouse.org/souper-bowl starting Jan 1**

General Admission - \$45

- Unlimited soup tasting from over 25 restaurants from 5:30-7:30pm
- Choice of a beautiful handmade pottery bowl



Preview Party - \$115

- Early admission to event from 4:30-5:30pm
- Hors d'oeuvres and beverages
- Unlimited soup tasting from over 25 restaurants
- First choice of a beautiful handmade pottery bowl

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Dates At a Glance

January 5	Spiritual Council meets Take down of Christmas decorations
January 19	Consistory meets
January 26	Congregational Meeting Breakfast with a Purpose
February 2	Communion & Boy Scouts Sunday during worship