



# St. Paul's Summer Hill UCC

## February 2026 Newsletter



### Pastor's Page

#### Growing Together on Summer Hill

Greetings Summer Hill!

As I sit in my office looking out at the mid-winter landscape, I find myself caught in that familiar February feeling. The days are finally starting to stretch out, staying light just a little bit longer each evening. It's a subtle shift, but it's there—a reminder that even in the heart of winter, things are moving beneath the surface.

This year, I find that same sense of expectancy right here at St. Paul's. When I look around our sanctuary on Sunday mornings, my heart is full. I see our "regulars" who are the bedrock of this church. I see the smiling faces of younger families and the energy of children who remind us that we are a living, breathing community. By many measures, we are doing "relatively well." Attendance is stable, our programs are active, and the Spirit is clearly moving on the Hill.

But as I've been praying over our community lately, I keep coming back to a question: **What is God calling us to be next?**

In the Gospel of Matthew, Jesus tells his disciples that they are "the light of the world" and a "city built on a hill." He didn't say we should be a "dim light" or a "hidden city." He called us to shine brightly so that others might see our good works and give glory to God.

To reach that next level—to become the vibrant, transformative Body of Christ that I know we can be—we need to move from being "relatively involved" to being "radically committed."

That sounds like a big jump, but it starts with small, intentional steps on our journey as disciples:

- **Priority in Presence:** Life is busy, and Sunday mornings are often the only time we have to rest. But there is a unique strength that comes from gathering as a community. When we choose to be here every week—rather than just once a month—

we don't just receive a blessing; we *become* a blessing to the person sitting in the pew next to us.

- **The Power of an Invitation:** We have something wonderful here on Summer Hill. Why keep it a secret? I want to challenge each of you to think of one friend, one neighbor, or one co-worker this month. Don't just tell them about the church—invite them to come sit with you.

Our upcoming **Lenten Season** is a perfect time for this. We begin on **Wednesday, February 18th** with our traditional Ash Wednesday Service and the imposition of ashes. Following that, we will hold a more informal Lenten Meditation Service each Wednesday at 7:00 PM. These midweek gatherings are wonderful opportunities for friends to join us in a reflective, welcoming space.

Looking further ahead, we can also anticipate our special Maundy Thursday Seder meal service and our traditional Good Friday service. These are meaningful moments in our faith journey, and many people are just waiting for a simple, "Would you like to come with me?"

- **Deeper Involvement:** If you've been watching from the sidelines, now is the time to jump in. Whether it's helping with our youth, joining a committee, or simply helping us greet visitors, your unique Spiritual Gifts are needed to make our "Body" complete.

We are on the cusp of so many good things. God has planted the seeds, and we are seeing the first sprouts of growth. But for those sprouts to become a harvest, we need every one of you.

Let's make this February a month of "stepping up." Let's see what happens when we prioritize our worship, reach out to our neighbors, and fully embrace the call to be the light on Summer Hill. I truly believe that if we do, we won't just be doing "relatively well"—we will be thriving in the way God intended.

Warm Winter Blessings,  
Pastor Ken

## Communion Offering

The February Communion Offering is designated to the CWS (Church World Service) Blanket offering.

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## Prayer is Powerful!

Please call or email the church office with your prayer concerns. We believe in the power of prayer and want to pray for you.

St. Paul's has a prayer concerns email group AND also a prayer phone call chain for anyone interested. The phone call chain can be as simple as receiving a text and praying for the person. Please contact the church office if you would like more information or to be added to these lists.

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## QR Code For Online Giving

Our members, friends, and visitors give their offerings and donations to the church in many different ways, including electronically via apps like Tithe.ly and bank transfers. To accommodate the varied ways of giving, we have an offering box at the rear of the sanctuary for placing Sunday morning offerings as you enter or leave. We will also have ushers accept offerings during the Hymn of Reflection after the sermon as another option. Thank you for your financial support of the ministries of St. Paul's and your faithful giving in response to what God has given us!



## Boy Scout Sunday

...will be celebrated on **Sunday, February 8.**

Members of the Cub Scout Pack 651 and Boy Scout Troop 651 will participate in Worship at 10:30am.

## Recognition of 50th Wedding Anniversaries

On **February 8**, we will honor couples celebrating their 50th wedding anniversaries in 2026. If you are married 50 years, or you know of a couple in the church who is, please contact Kelly at the church office.

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## Fellowship Time

Join us for conversation, along with a cup of coffee and light refreshments following our 10:30am worship service on **Sunday, February 8.** We will gather in the rear of the Sanctuary the second Sunday of each month. Catch up with old friends, make new ones, and stay up to date on everything happening at St. Paul's. We have been having a wonderful response to our monthly fellowship times! Donations of treats (cookies, brownies, cupcakes, muffins, etc.) are greatly appreciated.

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## “Souper” Bowl Sunday Drive



We are joining thousands of other churches and organizations to tackle hunger by collecting canned food and/or cash donations. All donations stay right in Schuylkill County to help our neighbors in need through the Schuylkill Haven Council of Churches Food Pantry. From now until **February 8**, bring a monetary or food donation to the church and receive a raffle ticket for a chance to win three prizes generously donated by local businesses. Prizes will be drawn on **Sunday, February 8.** Contact Laura Carll with any questions at (484)269-4405.

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## Prayer Shawl Committee

The Prayer Shawl Ministry meets the second Tuesday of each month from 10am-12noon in the conference room. The next meeting will be on **Tuesday, February 10.** If you are interested in knitting and/or crocheting, we can hook you up! If you know of someone who could use a prayer shawl, please contact the church office or Nancy Dewald.

## Schuylkill Haven Area Food Pantry

The Schuylkill Haven Food Pantry is in great need and accepts all non-perishable food items and paper products. Items can be dropped off at the church during the week or placed in the shopping cart at the back of the sanctuary. Please make sure the food items that you donate are not out of date. We will be helping on **Monday, February 16** beginning at 8:30am and **Friday, February 20** beginning at 12pm. Please speak to Verna Ebling, Bill Reber or the church office.

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## Consistory Meeting

The Consistory will have the monthly meeting on **Tuesday, February 17** at 7:00pm in the conference room.

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## Ash Wednesday/ Lenten Season

A traditional Ash Wednesday Service will be held on **Wednesday, February 18** at 7:00pm in person and live-streamed. The service will include the imposition of ashes and the Sacrament of Holy Communion.

Wednesday evening Lenten services will be held each week from **February 25** through **March 25** at 7pm. Please join us!

A Palm Sunday Service, with the Blessing of the Palms, will be held on **Sunday, March 29** at 10:30am.

On **Maundy Thursday, April 2**, at 6:00pm, we will gather in the fellowship hall for our version of the Seder meal.

A Good Friday Tenebrae Service will be held on **April 3** at 7:00pm.

**Easter Sunday, April 5:** We will rejoice and celebrate Christ's resurrection beginning with our Sunrise Service at 6:30am on Easter morning. An Easter Breakfast will be held in the fellowship hall at approximately 7:15am followed immediately by a worship service with Holy Communion around the breakfast table (8:15am). Sunday School will be held at 9:15am, followed by the 10:30am Easter Worship Service with Holy Communion.

## Blanket Sunday, February 22



We will be collecting monetary donations on **Sunday, February 22** to be used toward the Church World Service Blankets+ Program.

Blanket offering envelopes will be available by the bulletin basket on the table in the narthex. Blankets+ is a special mission opportunity for all ages. Some 8,000 congregations and groups across the U.S. hold CWS Blankets+ events, providing funds to help people in need around the world, including the U.S.

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## Annual Congregational Mtg.

The Annual Congregational Meeting will be held on **Sunday, February 22** following worship. In the event of worship cancellation, it will be held on **Sunday, March 1**. Annual reports will be available prior to the meeting.

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## Youth Acolytes Needed

We are looking for youth to serve as acolytes on Sunday mornings during the worship services. If your child is interested in helping and would like to learn more, please speak to Laura Carll, Pastor Ken or the church office. Training will be provided.

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## Board of Christian Education Meeting

Anyone interested in learning more about our Sunday School program is welcome and invited to attend the Board of Christian Education Meeting on **Tuesday, March 3** at 7pm. Please speak to Laura Carll, any Sunday School teachers, Pastor Ken or the church office for you information.

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## Everybody's Birthday Party

Mark your calendars! We have the annual Everybody's Birthday Party event coming up on **Friday, March 13th**. It will be potluck style, and the Sunday School will provide a cake.

## One Great Hour of Sharing Offering

On **Sunday, March 15**, we will receive the One Great Hour of Sharing (OGHS) offering. OGHS, the refugee, relief and development offering of the UCC, transforms lives through health, education, agricultural, and emergency relief initiatives in 138 countries. Special envelopes will be placed on the bulletin table prior to that Sunday.

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## SAVE THE DATE!!!

St Paul's will once again be having a **Yard Sale**

**SATURDAY, MAY 2**

~ Further details in the coming weeks ~

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## CWS Clean-Up Buckets

Following many natural disasters, clean-up buckets provide those affected with the essentials to begin getting their lives back in order. The Schuylkill Association, working with the UCC Disaster Ministries, helps provide these kits through Church World Services anywhere they are needed, to include right here in Schuylkill County. Our Association currently has empty five-gallon buckets that need to be filled. If you would like to help in this ministry by coordinating the filling of some of the buckets or can donate materials or money to buy the required materials, please contact the church office. Learn more at <https://cwskits.org/>.

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## Sunday School News

-The Sunday School is hosting its annual SOUPer Bowl Food Drive. Bring in a food or monetary donation to help our local food drive and to be entered into a gift card raffle.

-We will be having our next youth event at the end of February, so keep an eye out for more details coming soon!

-We are looking for kids who want to showcase their musical talents during Lent. Any kids who wish to perform can speak to Laura Carll.

-Our next Board of Christian Ed education meeting will be March 3 at 7 PM. We welcome anyone who would like to be part of our youth's faith journey!



Your Consistory met on December 16, 2025 and discussed the following items:

Discussed at length the prayer concerns during the announcements and the need to address prior consent for privacy reasons of individuals/families

Mentioned the poinsettia tree setup and candlesticks for Christmas Eve services

Installation of Officers to be held on Jan 11, 2026 during worship

January Communion offering will support Schuylkill Hope Center (formerly Women in Crisis)

February Communion offering will support CWS Blanket Mission

The next Consistory Mtg. will be held on January 20, 2026.

Respectfully yours,  
Trevor Smith, Secretary

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Your Consistory met on January 20, 2026 and discussed the following items:

We elected new officers as follows:

President – Pam Clauser

Vice President – Jeff Palerino

Secretary – Trevor Smith

Assistant Secretary – Terri Saunders

Treasurer – Lori Moyer

Financial Secretary – Kathy Kline

Discussed the purchase of Servant Keeper, a Church Management Database. It can hold various membership statistics and consolidate the numerous spreadsheets we currently have for different communications.

Noted the continued work on fixing the toilets around the church.

Congregational meeting to be held on February 22, 2026

February Communion offering will support CWS Blanket Mission

The next Consistory Mtg. will be held on February 17, 2026.

Respectfully yours,  
Trevor Smith, Secretary



### **Colson Brooks Bedway**

Colson Brooks Bedway was baptized on Sunday, November 23, 2025. He is the son of Derek Bedway and Shanelle Koch, and was born on May 17, 2025. His proud grandparents are Robert Guers & Brook Koch-Guers, Jeff & Kristin Bedway and Kim Miller. Colson's Godparents are Madison Sterner, Ryan Bedway, Ashlee Laubenstine and Justin Burke.

### **Margot Evans Carey**

Margot Evans Carey was baptized on Sunday, December 14, 2025. She is the daughter of Ryan and Heather Carey, and was born on February 25, 2025. Her proud grandparents are Bill & Marianne Carey and Ken & Ann McDowell. Margot's Godparents are Erinn and Jared Placitella.

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## **Thank You!!**

-to Earl and Lorraine Phillips for sponsoring the shut-in mailing for February 2026

-Dear St. Paul's,

Thank you for remembering us at our anniversary. We love that we are still able to be connected to our church family watching afar each week. Thank you for keeping up with the live stream each week. Sending warm hugs from Florida!

Eric and Kristy Reber

-Dear St. Paul's,

I have been having health issues for some time and prayers and the caroling visit to our house on Sunday, December 7, 2025 was heartwarming and so appreciated by Wayne and me.

Thank you to everyone from St. Paul's United Church of Christ of Summer Hill and St. Paul's Lutheran Church of Summer Hill for visiting me that day. Love and prayers and thank you again.

Cathy Krause

-Dear St. Paul's Carolers,

Thank you for your visit and singing my favorite Christmas carols. It really was a very pleasant surprise.

Thank you for my "goodie bag" and a beautiful prayer shawl to keep me warm.

God Bless all of you for remembering me and a job well done.

Love, Verna Ebling

-to those members who designated Thrivent Choice Dollars® in the amount of \$121.00

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## **The Revised Common Lectionary Readings:**

### **Fourth Sunday after the Epiphany- Feb. 1, 2026**

Micah 6:1-8

Psalm 15

1 Corinthians 1:18-31

Matthew 5:1-12

### **Fifth Sunday after Epiphany- February 8, 2026**

Isaiah 58:1-9a (9b-12)

Psalm 112:1-9 (10)

I Corinthians 2:1-12, (13-16)

Matthew 5:13-20

### **Transfiguration Sunday- February 15, 2026**

Exodus 24:12-18

Psalm 2 or Psalm 99

2 Peter 1:16-21

Matthew 17:1-9

## Ash Wednesday- February 18, 2026

Joel 2:1-2, 12-17 or Isaiah 58:1-12

Psalms 51:1-17

2 Corinthians 5:20b-6:10

Matthew 6:1-6, 16-21

## First Sunday in Lent- February 22, 2026

Genesis 2:15-17, 3:1-7

Psalms 32

Romans 5:12-19

Matthew 4:1-11

## Second Sunday in Lent- March 1, 2026

Genesis 12:1-4a

Psalms 121

Romans 4:1-5, 13-17

John 3:1-17 or Matthew 17:1-9



## February Birthdays

1 - Linsey Nicholas

2 - Megan Shawver

4 - Jonathan Phillips

7 - John Halabura

8 - Jett Clauser

12 - Brian Clauser

- Robin Ferguson

13 - Gary Bailey

15 - Justin Clauser

- Wyatt Krause

16 - Hank Deibert

20 - Kevin Kerstetter

22 - Katie Fessler

23 - Wyatt Malis

24 - Ella Sterner

- Jeremiah Nagle

25 - Ashley Brown

- Carter Krause

- Spencer Krause

- Chelsey Zagar

- Margot Carey

26 - Richard E. Clauser

- Travis Spotts

## February Anniversaries

20 - Zach and Lexi Palerino

22 - Joseph and Carla Lassandro

29 - Travis and Alyssa Spotts

## February Baptismal

### Anniversaries

- Bryant Lawrence, son of Zachary Bitting and Jessica Borden
- Joseph Francis, son of Joseph and Breanna Bassininsky

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## Special Dates for February 2026

- Black History Month, *February 1-28, 2026*
- Groundhog Day, *February 2, 2026*
- Valentine's Day, *February 14, 2026*
- Presidents Day, *February 16, 2026*
- Ash Wednesday, *February 18, 2026*

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## Bible Quiz

The New Testament uses several Greek words to describe love. Which of the following best represents the selfless, sacrificial love that God shows to humanity?

- A. Eros
- B. Phileo
- C. Agape
- D. Storge

Answer: C (See John 3:16 and 1 Corinthians 13)

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## Christian Symbol



### CORNERSTONE

— The cornerstone is a symbol for Christ. It has Old Testament roots in Isaiah's prophecy (Isaiah 28:16). In the New Testament, Christ is called the cornerstone in Ephesians 2:20. The IHC and XP on the stone's sides are abbreviations for "Jesus" and "Christ" in Greek.

# STEWARDSHIP: The Heartbeat of Our Ministry

While February is often focused on the love we have for our families and friends, it is also a beautiful time to reflect on our love for God and the community He has gathered here at St. Paul’s Summer Hill. When each of us joined this family of God’s people, we took a solemn oath to participate in its life and mission, sharing regularly in worship and enlisting in the work of the local church.

**The Power of Regular Rhythms** Faithful stewardship is a spiritual discipline—a joyful act of worship where we use the gifts God has given us to further His work. While we often think of "big" gifts, it is actually the routine, weekly offerings that serve as the heartbeat of our church. These consistent gifts keep the lights on, the heat running, and our doors open.

When we give regularly, we aren’t just paying bills; we are ensuring that we can continue our vital outreach, such as the Schuylkill Haven Food Pantry, the Soup Kitchen, and the School Weekend Food Backpack program through the Council of Churches, or our own Sunday School, Youth, and benevolence programs.

**Bridging the Gap Together** – We are profoundly grateful for our core group of faithful givers. However, we currently face a challenge: approximately 20% of our membership provides nearly 80% of our budget needs. For our ministry to be truly sustainable, we need the participation of our entire church family.

We understand that balancing a household budget is difficult in today’s world. But consider this: many of us easily spend \$5 or \$10 a day on "nice-to-have" luxuries, like fancy coffees, or pay many hundreds of dollars to belong to hunting or social clubs, or participate in outside youth activities, like sports or dance. If even a portion of that—perhaps \$25 or \$50 a week—were redirected toward the church, we would never have to worry about budget shortfalls or dipping into limited savings to cover our obligations. Every gift, no matter the size, is essential to keeping St. Paul’s a shining light upon the hill.

**A Simple Way to Be Faithful** – One of the easiest ways to move from "occasional giving" to "intentional giving" is to set up a routine automatic draft. This ensures that your support continues even when you are traveling or unable to attend worship in person.

## Taking the Next Step:

- *Online Banking:* Set up "St. Paul’s Summer Hill UCC" as a recurring Bill Pay recipient through your bank.
- *Give Online:* Visit [TINYURL.COM/GIVETOSUMMERHILL](http://TINYURL.COM/GIVETOSUMMERHILL) to set up recurring giving through Tithe.ly.
- *Proportional Giving:* Review a percentage giving chart to see how you might move toward the goal of a tithe by increasing your gift incrementally.

God has blessed us with so much. As we look toward the future, let us prayerfully consider how we can each do our part to ensure our mission continues to grow.

<p>Every Gift is Important!</p> <p>With Thankful Blessings,</p> <p>The St. Paul’s Consistory</p>	Sample Weekly Giving Chart (Based on Annual Income)				
	Annual Income	Weekly Giving (1%)	Weekly Giving (3%)	Weekly Giving (5%)	Weekly Giving (10% - Tithe)
	\$25,000	~\$5	~\$14	~\$24	~\$48
	\$40,000	~\$8	~\$23	~\$38	~\$77
	\$50,000	~\$10	~\$29	~\$48	~\$96
	\$75,000	~\$14	~\$43	~\$72	~\$144
	\$100,000	~\$19	~\$58	~\$96	~\$192

**February 2026**

**St. Paul's United Church of Christ  
1235 Summer Hill Road  
Auburn, PA 17922**



**Church Phone: 570-754-7225**

**Rev. Ken McDowell, Pastor: 610-207-4783**

**Office Hours: Monday– Thursday 9am - 2pm**

**Email: [summerhillucc@gmail.com](mailto:summerhillucc@gmail.com)**

**Website: [www.summerhillucc.com](http://www.summerhillucc.com)**

**Address Service Requested**

**Visit the Pennsylvania Southeast Conference –**

**[www.psec.org](http://www.psec.org)**

**Visit the United Church of Christ – [www.ucc.org](http://www.ucc.org)**

**Church Staff**

**Pastor:** Rev. Ken McDowell

**Church Administrator & Custodian:** Kelly  
Palerino

**Director of Youth Ministries:** Laura Carll

**Music Director/ Pianist:** Rae Ann Borger

**Organists:** Jacob Challenger/ Colin Andrew  
(Supply)

**Church Leadership**

**Consistory President:** Pam Clauser

**Consistory Vice President:** Jeff Palerino

**Consistory Secretary:** Trevor Smith

**Consistory Assistant Secretary:** Terri Saunders

**Treasurer:** Lori Moyer

**Financial Secretary:** Kathy Kline

**Consistory Elders:** Robin Ferguson, Jeff  
Palerino and Mike Reber

**Consistory Trustees:** Clint Clauser, Kelly  
Palerino and Trevor Smith

**Stewardship/Mission- Deacons of Consistory:** ,  
Lori Moyer, Tom and Terri Saunders, Kathy  
Kline, Mike Rubinkam and Pam Clauser

**Board of Christian Education Chairperson &  
Summer Hill Youth Group:** Laura Carll

**Board of Christian Education Vice-  
Chairperson:** Vicky Borger

**Board of Christian Education Secretary:**  
Amy Zimmerman

**Sunday Morning Coordinator:** Trevor Smith

**Assistant Sunday Coordinator:** David Deibert

**Budget Committee:** Pam Clauser

**Personnel Committee:** Lori Moyer

**Prayer Shawl Ministry Chair:** Nancy Dewald

**Altar Committee Chairperson:** Kelly Palerino

**February 2026**