



St. Paul's Summer Hill UCC April 2026 Newsletter



Pastor's Page

Grace and Peace to you!

As I look out the window this week, I am struck by the persistence of Spring. There is something profoundly hopeful about the way the earth begins to stir—the soft greening of the hills in Schuylkill County and the determined blossoms beginning to unfurl. It serves as a beautiful reminder that even after the longest, coldest winters, life finds a way to break through. Just as the daylight stretches longer each evening, we are called to stretch our spirits and allow the light of Christ to reach the quieter, perhaps neglected, corners of our hearts.

This April, we find ourselves at the culmination of our Lenten journey. For weeks, we have been "tending the gardens" of our hearts, reflecting on our faith and asking ourselves the deep questions posed by our study, *"Why Did Jesus Have to Die?"* As we transition from the quiet reflection of Lent into the profound drama of Holy Week, I want to remind you that the church is here for you, no matter what "season" your soul is currently navigating. Whether you are in a season of joyful blooming or feeling the weight of a personal winter, St. Paul's is a place where you can find rest, renewal, and a community that walks beside you.

Our journey to the empty tomb takes us through several significant steps this month, and I invite you to be part of every moment:

The Path to the Cross: Holy Week

- **Palm Sunday (March 29):** We begin at 10:30 AM with our Palm Sunday Worship, celebrating Christ's entry into Jerusalem. This is also a wonderful day for our families, as we host **Sunday School and our annual Easter Egg Hunt.**

- **Maundy Thursday (April 2):** At 6:00 PM, we gather in the Fellowship Hall for our **Seder Meal.** This is a unique opportunity to experience the traditions Jesus shared with his disciples, followed by a Christian Service and Holy Communion.
- **Good Friday (April 3):** At 7:00 PM, we observe our **Tenebrae Service.** This service of increasing shadows allows us to sit with the reality of Jesus' sacrifice, preparing our hearts for the joy that is to come.

The Celebration of Life: Easter Sunday (April 5) The "Season of Rebirth" reaches its peak on Easter morning. I hope you will join us for this full day of celebration:

- **6:30 AM:** Easter Sunrise Service (Witnessing the light break the darkness)
- **7:15 AM:** Easter Breakfast (Food and fellowship for all)
- **8:15 AM:** Table Service and Holy Communion
- **9:15 AM:** Easter Sunday School
- **10:30 AM:** Traditional Easter Worship Service

Friends, I encourage you to immerse yourselves in these services. There is a special kind of healing that happens when we walk this path together. Let us finish this Lenten journey strong, looking toward the cross not with fear, but with the knowledge that it is the gateway to eternal life and a love that never lets us go.

I look forward to seeing the "garden" of our congregation in full bloom this Easter.

With Resurrection Hope,

Pastor Ken

Communion Offering

The April Communion Offering is designated to Locust Lake Camp Ministries.

The May Communion Offering is designated to Phoebe Ministries.

Holy Week

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.

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!



Kelly's Cleaning Resignation

After nearly 20 years a very dedicated service to St. Paul's UCC as our cleaning person, Kelly Palerino has submitted her resignation to the Consistory. She has always gone above and beyond what was expected of her in maintaining the cleanliness and order of the church. We will be ever thankful for her many long hours, days, and years of being conscientious and dependable to this church.

She has thankfully assured us that she will continue as the Administrative Assistant and will continue to keep the church office functioning as efficiently as always.

Thank you, Kelly!!

The Consistory

Church Cleaning Position Available

Seeking Responsible and Dedicated Cleaner

St. Paul's UCC is looking for a reliable individual to assist with cleaning. Duties include sweeping, mopping, dusting, and ensuring all common areas are presentable for services and events. These areas primarily include the sanctuary, vestibule, bathrooms, classrooms, conference room, fellowship hall, kitchen. Attention to detail and a commitment to maintaining a welcoming environment are essential.

Flexible hours are available. Previous cleaning experience is preferred but not required. If interested, please contact the church office for more details and to apply.

Fellowship Time

Join us for conversation, along with a cup of coffee and light refreshments following our 10:30am worship service on **Sunday, April 12**. We will gather in the rear of the Sanctuary. Catch up with old friends, make new ones, and stay up to date on everything happening at St. Paul's. Donations of treats (cookies, brownies, cupcakes, muffins, etc.) are greatly appreciated.

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. We will be helping on **Monday, April 13** beginning at 8:30am and **Friday, April 17** beginning at 12pm. Please speak to Verna Ebling, Bill Reber or the church office.

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, April 14**. 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.

VBS Planning Meeting

There will be a Vacation Bible School Planning Meeting on **Tuesday, April 14** at 7:00pm in downstairs room B1. Anyone interested in helping at VBS, which will be held June 22-26, is invited to attend. Please speak to Bill Reber for more information.

Consistory Meeting

The Consistory will have the monthly meeting on **Tuesday, April 21** at 7:00pm in the conference room.

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.



Have you started your Spring cleaning?

St Paul's UCC is having a YARD SALE!!!

On **Saturday, May 2**, we will be hosting a Yard Sale for members of the church and their friends. We will have 12 available spaces in the fellowship hall as well as additional spaces in the parking lot for those who would like an outdoor stand. Spaces will cost \$10 and can be paid to Trevor Smith or the church office. There will be a sign up sheet on the table in the narthex for those who would like to have a stand. Deadline to sign up will be **Sunday, April 26th**.

In addition, we will also be having a small concession stand and bake sale. We are kindly asking for donations of food items and baked goods, as well as volunteers to help in the kitchen. There will be another sign-up sheet in the narthex for donations/volunteers.

Suggested Items Needed for Food/Bake Sale

Hot Dogs
Barbecue
Hot dog/Hamburger Buns
Macaroni and Cheese
Pierogies
Chips
Condiments (ketchup, mustard, relish)
Sauerkraut
Drinks (Bottled Water/Canned Soda)
Baked goods (brownies, cookies, cupcakes, rice krispie treats, etc.)

On **Friday, May 1**, the church will be open from 9am to 1pm and 3pm to 7pm for those that have an indoor space to set up their items. Food and bake sale items can also be dropped off during these hours. On Saturday, the church will open at 6:30am for outdoor setup and food preparations.

Thank you for your support! If you have any additional questions, please feel free to contact the church office or reach out to Trevor Smith at (570) 789-3701.

Prayer Concern Policy

As Christians, we fervently believe in the power of prayer — that's why we include prayer concerns in the weekly bulletin and lift folks up in prayer during worship! That said, the Consistory respectfully asks that before you add somebody to the prayer list or bring up their name during worship, please obtain that person's permission. We take medical privacy very seriously and make every effort to respect the wishes of individuals who do not want to be named publicly in a bulletin or live-streamed worship service. Thank you for your cooperation!

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/>.

Help is Needed- Mowing the Church Property

It's soon mowing season! Volunteers are needed to mow the church lawn- a zero turn mower is provided. A signup sheet is on the table in the narthex. Please contact the church office for more information.

Schuylkill Association Meeting

The Schuylkill Association of the Keystone Conference of the United Church of Christ will hold the spring meeting on **Sunday, May 3**. It will be held at Zion's Red Church, 1287 Centre Turnpike (Rt. 61), Orwigsburg, PA. Registration and fellowship will begin at 2:30pm, with worship and a meeting following from 3:00 – 5:00pm.

Sunday School Sandwich Sale

A Sunday School sandwich sale will be held on **Saturday, May 16**. Order forms and details will be available mid-April and in the May newsletter.



Sunday School News

"Jesus said, I am the Resurrection and the Life. Whoever believes in me, though he dies, yet shall he live," - John 11:25

Jesus is Risen!! A big Thank You to all who donated plastic eggs and helped with the Easter egg hunt. Thank you to Gary Bailey for donating the Prize Easter Baskets. Skipping ahead to the summer, be on the lookout for VBS info. Volunteer meeting will be held Tuesday April 14th, 2026 at 7:00pm.

Christian Education Secretary
Amy Zimmerman

Important Dates:
Tuesday, April 14th, 2026 @ 7:00pm



Your Consistory met on March 17, 2026 and discussed the following items:

Briefly noted the Anna Mae Minnchoff estate had money set aside for the church. Total amount finalized after affairs of the estate settled.

Discussed the various repairs completed around the church

Voted on a motion for Clint to work on sealing the side of the church and the use of a lift to complete the various needs

Discussed the Cabinet meeting topics, involving continued small group activities as well as focusing on two demographics: young couples with small children and newly retired couples

April Communion offering will support the Locust Lake Camp Ministries

May Communion offering will support Phoebe Ministries

The next Consistory Mtg. will be held on April 21, 2026.

Respectfully yours,
Trevor Smith, Secretary

Thank You!!

-to Verna Ebling for sponsoring the shut-in mailing for April 2026

-to the Thrivent client directing \$9 in Thrivent Choice Dollars®

-to Gary Bailey for the donation of the prize Easter baskets for the Easter Egg Hunt.

*Easter is the proof that evil men never have
the last word about the things of God.*

—C. Neil Strait

The Revised Common Lectionary Readings:

April 2- Maundy Thursday

Exodus 12:1-4, (5-10), 11-14
Psalm 116:1-2, 12-19
1 Corinthians 11:23-26
John 13:1-17, 31b-35

April 3- Good Friday

Isaiah 52:13-53:12
Psalm 22
Hebrews 10:16-25 or Hebrews 4:14-16; 5:7-9
John 18:1-19:42

April 4- Holy Saturday

Job 14:1-14 or Lamentations 3:1-9, 19-24
Psalm 31:1-4, 15-16
1 Peter 4:1-8
Matthew 27:57-66 or John 19:38-42

April 5- Easter

Acts 10:34-43 or Jeremiah 31:1-6
Psalm 118:1-2, 14-24
Colossians 3:1-4 or Acts 10:34-43
John 20:1-18 or Matthew 28:1-10

April 12- Second Sunday of Easter

Acts 2:14a, 22-32
Psalm 16
1 Peter 1:3-9
John 20:19-31

April 19- Third Sunday of Easter

Acts 2:14a, 36-41
Psalm 116:1-4, 12-19
1 Peter 1:17-23
Luke 24:13-35

April 26- Fourth Sunday of Easter

Acts 2:42-47
Psalm 23
1 Peter 2:19-25
John 10:1-10

May 3- Fifth Sunday of Easter

Acts 7:55-60
Psalm 31:1-5, 15-16
1 Peter 2:2-10
John 14:1-14

April Birthdays

- 1 - Karen Schultz
 - Diane Trout
- 4 - Taylor Kerstetter
 - Mitchell McBreen
- 5 - Tanya Elo
- 6 - Samantha Rodnick
- 7 - Laura Carll
- 10 - Bonnie Marshall
 - Mathias Nagle
- 11 - Caroline Carll
- 12 - Helen Michelson
 - Becky Ulsh
 - Lynn Warke
- 13 - Nancy VanDeest
- 14 - Kelly Reber
 - Brantley Wolfe
 - Janet Pagotto
- 15 - Mae Halabura
- 16 - Paul Shealer Sr.
 - Samuel Marra
- 18 - Jordyn Moyer
- 19 - Irene Knorr
 - Gaike Guers
 - Jackson Phillips
- 21 - Ellie Richards
 - Erin Richards
- 22 - Terry Blankenhorn
 - Mike Rubinkam
- 25 - Lucinda Nagle
- 26 - Kathy Kline
 - Paul Moyer Sr.
- 27 - Jonathan Rodnick
 - Sadie Kerchner
- 28 - Donna Spotts
 - Crystal Lehr
- 29 - Julia Eckert
 - Kylah Ferguson

April Anniversaries

- 3 - Tom and Terri Saunders
- 9 - David and Libby Zimmerman
- 20 - Dr. Daniel and Linsey Nicholas III
- 21 - Richard and Debbie Clauser
- 22 - Daniel and Tanya Elo
- 23 - Kevin and Laureen Carpenter

- 25 - Craig and Victoria Borger
 - Rev. Ken and Ann McDowell
- 26 - Joseph and Christine Branca

April Baptismal Anniversaries

- Ella Sophia, daughter of Wade and Diona Sterner

Special Dates for April 2026

- Holy Week Continues, *March 29-April 5*
- Maundy Thursday, *April 2*
- Good Friday, *April 3*
- Easter Sunday, *April 5*
- Earth Day, *April 22*
- Administrative Professionals Day, *April 22*

Bible Quiz

According to Matthew's account, something remarkable happened to the earth on the day Jesus was crucified and again on the morning when Mary Magdalene and the other Mary visited the tomb. What occurred on both days?

- A. There was a flood on both days.
- B. There was an earthquake on both days.
- C. There was a huge fire on each day.
- D. There was complete darkness on both days.

Answer: B (Matthew 27:51; Matthew 28:2)

Yes, I Can!

I cannot end poverty, but I can feed one hungry person. I cannot stop war, but I can offer peace to my neighbor. I cannot prevent death, but I can hold the hand of someone who is dying.

These may seem like small acts, yet they are far harder—and far more meaningful—than any grand plan for social change. Christ reminds us of their worth: “Whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers of mine, you did for me” (Matthew 25:40, NIV).

Christian Symbol



PEACOCK —

The beautiful peacock is likely one of the lesser-known Christian symbols. Based on an ancient myth that its flesh doesn't decay after death, early Christians appropriated the bird as a symbol of immortality. The molting of its tail feathers each year to be replaced

with supposedly more beautiful ones led to use of the peacock as a sign of resurrection and glorification.

Additionally, the eye-like pattern in the peacock's tail feathers made it a symbol of conscience and of God, who sees all. However, the peacock also represents arrogance as it struts to show off its plumage. During the Baroque period, the peacock was often part of artwork at the 10th Station of the Cross, depicting Jesus stripped of his clothing—atonement, according to some teachings, specifically for our sin of vanity.

Early Christians believed peacocks shriek when they catch sight of their feet, which they consider ugly. Christians took this as a reminder that we, too, should lament our spiritual imperfections that detract from the beauty of life lived in Christ.

The Joy of the Resurrection



We Christians simply cannot get over the reality of the Resurrection. For us, the fact that God raised Christ from the dead proves that Christ's way alone is God's answer to the sins and horrors of the

world. The truths Christ taught when he walked on earth stand solid and irrefutable. The light he brought is the only light that never goes out, for it is the

eternal light of God's glory. Christ's life is the clearest example of how God intends for us to live. His way is the way that makes the most sense for our lives on this earth. The saints throughout history have shown that again and again.

The hope Christ offers is the only true and lasting hope. Ultimately, it is our assurance that life can be good and joy-filled for all. Consider the words St. Paul wrote to the church at Rome and apply them to your own life: "Just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, so we too might walk in newness of life. For if we have been united with him in a death like his, we will certainly be united with him in a resurrection like his" (Romans 6:4-5, NRSV).

If that is not a tremendous cause for abiding joy, then what is?

The Romans Sent a Message; God Sent One, Too

The rulers of the Roman Empire wanted everyone under their power to understand clearly that it would be very costly to try to overthrow their government. They conceived the idea of crucifixion as a way of sending an unforgettable message to all people under their control. Death on a cross would be a slow, excruciatingly painful death. The cross would be put in a very public place so as many as possible would get the message: Don't even think of defying Roman rule!

That is why Christ was crucified on Golgotha hill close to a busy road where no passerby could miss the shocking scene. Christ was guilty of nothing. Yet his enemies hated him so much that they told Pilate, Rome's representative in Jerusalem, that Jesus was a danger to Roman rule. Christ's enemies said to Pilate, "If you release this man, you are not Caesar's friend; everyone who makes himself a king sets himself against Caesar" (John 19:12). Pilate caved in to the clamor of the crowd and allowed Jesus to be crucified.

But those who saw to it that Jesus suffered death on the cross did not know that God had a message to

send as well. God victoriously raised Christ from the dead! God touched the precious body of his Son and infused it with life, glorious, dynamic life, life in all of its fullness.

God turned the cross, the executioner's tool of death, into a dramatic symbol of victory. The empty cross and the empty tomb, along with the resurrected body of Christ, reveal God's victory over the worst deed humans might do — the assassination of the Holy.

That is why we put crosses everywhere: boldly, proudly, joyously, triumphantly. It is why we glory in the cross always. It stands eternally "towering o'er the wrecks of time" (John Bowring).

After the Resurrection, Jesus' friend, Peter, explained God's message to all of Christ's enemies with these bold and certain words: "This Jesus, you crucified and killed ... But God raised him up, having loosed the pangs of death, because it was not possible for him to be held by it ... This Jesus God raised up, and of that we are all witnesses Therefore know assuredly that God has made him both Lord and Christ, this Jesus whom you crucified" (Acts 2:23-24; 32, 36). That is what Easter is all about. All praise to the living Lord!

There's Something Better Coming

The Easter season is a precious time for Christians to celebrate the source of our hope: Christ is risen, and he invites us to rise with him into new life. Easter reminds us that God is still at work, even in the places where we've felt stuck or discouraged.

Easter is an invitation to try again—with his strength—to break habits we thought were unbreakable. There's something better coming.

Easter is a chance to breathe new life into a marriage we feared was beyond saving. There's something better coming.

Easter is an opportunity to slow down, reach out, and reconnect with those we've unintentionally neglected. There's something better coming.

Easter is an invitation to look at our lack of love and seek God for compassion. There's something better coming.

Easter is a chance for all no-hopers to regain their vision of what can be! There's something better coming.

Easter is an opportunity to renew our faith. There's something better coming.

Easter is a chance to "renew our strength and mount up with wings as eagles; to run and not faint." There's something better coming.

Addressed to God

A letter written in a childish scrawl arrived at the post office addressed simply to "God." Unsure what to do, a postal employee opened it and read: "Dear God, my name is Jimmy. I am 6 years old. My father is dead, and my mother is having a hard time raising me and my sister. Would you please send us \$500?"

Moved by the boy's plea, the employee shared the letter with coworkers, and together they collected \$300 to send to the family.

A couple of weeks later, another letter arrived. Jimmy thanked God for the money and added one final request: "Next time would you please deliver the money directly to our home? If you send it through the post office, they deduct \$200."

*God expects from [people]
that their Easter devotions
would in some measure
come up to their Easter dress.*

—Robert Smith

*Easter is the great proclamation
and promise of God
that nothing can overcome God's love,
not even the murder of the Son of God.*

—Charles Ferrell

STEWARDSHIP

Planting Seeds for Today and Tomorrow

As the earth awakens this April, we are reminded of the beautiful cycle of growth and renewal. Just as we plant seeds in our gardens expecting a future harvest, our stewardship at St. Paul's Summer Hill is an act of planting seeds—both for the immediate needs of our ministry and for the generations who will follow us.

Nurturing Our Current Mission The resilience of our church family was on full display during the challenging winter months we just navigated. While the snow has finally melted, it left behind a "weather-related" challenge for our finances. Due to several canceled services and low attendance during the ice and snow, our giving early this year saw a significant dip. At the same time, the costs of keeping our sanctuary warm and our lights on increased.

These "routine" weekly gifts are the heartbeat of our church; they ensure our doors stay open for worship and that our vital outreach programs, like the local food pantries, continue to serve those in need. As we move into this new season, we invite you to help us "bridge the gap" by:

- **Catching Up:** If winter weather kept you away, please consider making up those missed weekly offerings.
- **Intentional Giving:** The easiest way to provide the church with a stable foundation, regardless of the weather, is to set up a recurring automatic draft through your online banking or via TINYURL.COM/GIVETOSUMMERHILL.

Leaving a Lasting Legacy While we tend to the needs of today, faithful stewardship also calls us to look toward the horizon and consider the profound impact of Estate Planning. If you have felt called to do more than just give in the "here and now," you might consider leaving a legacy gift that will bless this church long after we are gone.

God's future for St. Paul's is ripe with possibility, and a legacy gift ensures that the "shining light on the hill" continues for our children and grandchildren. There are several simple ways to include the church in your final plans:

- **Bequests:** Specify a dollar amount or a percentage of your estate in your will or trust.
- **Beneficiary Designations:** Name the church as a beneficiary on a life insurance policy or retirement account.
- **Charitable Trusts:** These can provide you with tax benefits now while providing for the church later.

Every gift, whether a weekly offering or a legacy bequest, is a witness to the work of Jesus Christ. Thank you for your continued faithfulness as we grow together in this season of new life.

Every Gift is Important!

Faithfully Yours,

St. Paul's Consistory

April 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
Website: www.summerhillucc.com

Address Service Requested

Visit the Keystone Conference of the United Church of Christ- <https://keystoneucc.org/>

Visit the United Church of Christ – 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: Colin Andrew/ Jacob Challenger
(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

April 2026