



The United Presbyterian Church of New Kensington

601 Fifth Avenue
New Kensington, PA 15068-6508
724-339-6618

E-mail: churchoffice@tupcnk.org

Website: tupcnk.org



March 2025 Newsletter



Our Mission

is to serve God by:
Preaching God's Word,
Teaching God's Love,
Healing God's People

Our Staff

The Rev. Becca Siddle Covenant Pastor
pastoroffice@tupcnk.org

Holly Lightner Organist/Choir Director

Mary Ellen Hicks Secretary
churchoffice@tupcnk.org

Lynn Crumley Custodian
Bob Berisko Custodian

Deacons Food Bank

Office Hours:
Monday — Thursday
9:00 am - 12:00 pm

Regular Worship Hours:
10:00 am Sunday School
11:00 am Worship



From the Pastor's Desk

I don't know about you, but in my neighborhood, there are still some Christmas lights up here and there; in fact, directly across the street from my house, a giant Santa Claus still greets me every morning when I raise my bedroom shade! My neighbors' décor got me thinking: we don't celebrate Lent the way we do Advent, do we? We don't put up a Lent tree or go through six rolls of Lent paper for wrapping gifts.

Lent, instead, calls us into a season of quiet reflection. And to be perfectly honest, Lent calls us into what is often known as liturgical *wilderness*. Figuratively at least, "wilderness" is one of the most recurrent themes throughout all of Scripture. When Moses encounters God, he does so in the wilderness. When the Israelites are wandering around for 40 years seeking the promised land, they are doing so in the wilderness. The wilderness is not a homey, peaceful place but instead, a setting for powerful experiences: hunger, illness, loneliness...poverty. It's often uncharted terrain, to be sure – but it's also a place where we unmistakably encounter God!

On **March 5**, Christians all over the world will observe Ash Wednesday, the official beginning of Lent – and Lent always begins with wilderness. The traditional act of "giving something up" for Lent is all about calling our attention to sacrifice – but more importantly, its purpose is to remind us that Christ is always with us in those moments of sacrifice! And in the larger scheme of life, its purpose is to remind us that Christ is also always with us when we are traversing our own wilderness.

We don't have to be a desert monk to understand what wilderness feels like - what it's like to be lonely, or to feel tempted, or defeated. We all know what it's like to be uncomfortable and unsure of own path. And yet, the distress of the wilderness is a crucial part of our faith. It's impossible to get to the JOY of Easter Sunday without the soul-searching wilderness of Lent! Barbara Brown Taylor writes, "anyone who wants to follow Jesus all the way to the Cross needs the kind of clarity and grit that is found *only* in the wilderness." As counter-cultural as it feels, my friends, Lent is about intentionally entering the wilderness and allowing its terrain to change you.

My prayer for each of you during this holy Lenten season is that, no matter how you are changed in or because of wilderness, you will recognize -at once- God's overflowing love for you while you are there.

May God bless you,
May God bless those whom you hold dear,
May God bless the Church, in all its giving and in all its vulnerabilities,

Becca

Pastor Becca

Faith & Fellowship

BREAKING NEWS



Our amazingly generous congregation donated a whopping **\$401.14** toward our Deacon's Food Ministry, as well as three carts **FULL** of non-perishable food items! This generosity is truly a blessing to many in our community because remember, it provides for what we call "emergency food" needs. In other words, these food resources are *separate* from what we receive and distribute via the Westmoreland Food Bank on a monthly basis. The need is real and we are so grateful for your generosity!



COLLEGE BOX DONATIONS

The Board of Deacons is once again requesting donations of treats for our three college students. We would like to have donations dropped off at the church by **Sunday March 9th** so we can pack the boxes on March 11th for mailing. Some suggestions (due to dietary needs) include: regular potato chips, tortilla chips & salsa, Swedish Fish, Skittles, Starburst, Sour patch candy, Hershey bars and Almond Joy. Help us to remind these members of our Church family that they are in our thoughts and prayers while they are away from home!

ONE GREAT HOUR OF SHARING

The One Great Hour of Sharing (OGHS) offering is one of our church's special offerings. We will be receiving this offering during Lent, **March 5th through April 13th**. Each gift to One Great Hour of Sharing supports efforts to relieve hunger through the Presbyterian Hunger Program, promote development through the Presbyterian Committee on the Self-Development of People, and assist in areas of disaster through Presbyterian Disaster Assistance. All three programs work in different ways to serve individuals and communities in need. From initial disaster response to ongoing community development, their work fits together to provide people with safety, sustenance, and HOPE.

Envelopes will be available in the pew racks. Thank you for prayerfully considering your giving to the OGHS. This offering currently supports programs in over 100 countries!



IF WE ALL DO A LITTLE, IT ADDS UP TO A LOT!

The Bulletin Board



Prayer List: Please keep in mind that we will keep folks on the prayer list for five or six weeks unless Otherwise requested.

- Bobby Long* Jackie Chickerella
- Betty Tylinski* Gary Chickerella
- Lou Ann Burford* First responders
- Betty Lou Sharick* Military personnel
- Marge Landfried* Foster families
- Mildred Wagner Youth & young adults
- Nora Pastrick (sister of Bob Thomas)
- Marianne Irwin (friend of Bob Thomas)
- Carl Schultz (Randy's brother)

*Denotes those who are homebound and nursing home residents.

Please call the office to let us know of anyone in the hospital OR if you would like to receive a pastoral visit from either a deacon or Pastor Becca.

March	
David Capo	3/1
Karlee Thimons	3/2
Steve Powell	3/5
Addison Johnson	3/8
Aleigha Johnson	3/8
Jennifer Williams	3/11
Amy Grillo-Dameron	3/12
Kelly Conte	3/13
Charlotte Claypool	3/13
Jordan Alexander	3/20
Thomas Binder	3/20
Cherilynn Mosley	3/25
Matthew Yeamans	3/25
Donna Williams	3/29

If you would like to add someone to the prayer chain, please call the church at 724-339-6618 with your request. You may also notify any of the following:



- Charlotte Claypool
- Cheri Mosley
- Gloria Lauffer
- Robin Sorch

Planning for the Future of the Church: Congregation-Wide Opportunity

As you've heard or read many times over the past year, taking stock of the church's resources (and lack thereof) is a crucial step in planning for the future of the Church. As mentioned in last month's newsletter, both our Session and Board of Deacons have engaged in a strategic planning activity with Pastor Becca and on **Sunday, March 23** immediately after church, we want to hear YOUR thoughts as well. We will use what is known as the **SWOT** tool, which asks us to brainstorm as many perceived **Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats** for the church as we can. Please plan to stay after church for this session; we can complete it within 30 minutes. The Pens game isn't until 6 pm on this day and the Pirates will still be in Spring Training - so we can do this!

UPCOMING EVENTS



Lent Bible Study beginning Tuesday, March 4

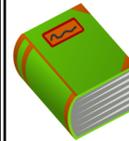
If you have thought about giving this discussion group a try, please don't wait any longer! Lent is truly the most special season of the Church Year to experience together in community. We will begin this 7-week study at **4:30 pm on March 4** and meet each Tuesday for seven weeks (find us in the chapel).

Ash Wednesday Service, March 5

Let's begin this holy season of Lent together as a faith family. We will begin by sharing a simple meal together in the chapel at **6pm**, then transition to worship (also in the chapel) by **6:45**. Ashes will be available for those who desire them and we will also partake of Holy Communion. We hope you will join us!

Lent

The **Prayer Shawl Group** is meeting **Wednesday, March 12th at 1:00** in the Library (note change for this month only). We do some knitting but we also do some fellowshiping! Come, enjoy some treats and renew old friendships (or perhaps make new ones)!



Book Club, 6:30 pm in the Church Library

March 26th—*All We Ever Wanted*
by Emily Giffin

Monday, March 17

**Happy
St. Patrick's Day!**



Adult MeeTUP

There will be no meet-up in March. We encourage you to enjoy the local Fish Frys on your own. On **April 25 at 6:00 pm**, we will meet at Mercurio's Pizza in Fox Chapel. Put the date on your calendar and we'll see you there!



Deacon's Report

February 8th Food Bank

- ◆ 97 Households: 16 New, 23 Senior Boxes, 13 Doubles
- ◆ 2 Birthday Bags
- ◆ We had 18 volunteers, working a total of 67.5 hours.

March 2025 Food Bank

Truck Delivery - March 6
Distribution - March 8

Food Pantry / Cooler Ministry Wish List

- Jelly (plastic jars)
- Applesauce, Juice (plastic jars)
- Spaghetti Sauce (24 oz plastic jars)
- Canned potatoes
- Canned Soup (non-condensed)
- Cereal
- Canned Tuna
- Individually packaged crackers, chips

Funeral Dinners - None

Next Deacon Meeting: March 11, 2025
@6:30pm

Submitted by Amy Grillo Dameron
Deacon Secretary

HIGHLIGHTS FROM THE SUNDAY, FEBRUARY 9, 2025 STATED SESSION MEETING

The Session of The United Presbyterian Church of New Kensington met for a stated Session meeting on Sunday, February 9 at 12:15 p.m., in the Chapel.

Statistical Report: There are 134 members on the Active Roll.

A Lent Study will be conducted by Rev. Sidle – dates to be announced.

Ash Wednesday Service will be held on March 5 – a light dinner will be held at 6:00 p.m. and worship at 6:45.

The next Session meeting will be held on Monday, March 10 at 6:30 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,
Donna L. McLaughlin
Clerk of Session

*Sunday, March 9: Don't Forget
to set your clocks ahead!*



News from Knead Café

Celebrate winter's end with gentle movement, camp songs, and kindness at Knead Café on Tuesday, March 4, 10:30 am. A Free-will offering will support the Café and a farm table will be reserved for lunch.

If you have questions or would like to register, contact Arlene Mercurio by email at ajmerc538@gmail.com.

(Please do not call the café.)

March 2025

SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY
						1
2 10:00 Sunday School 11:00 Worship	3 10:00 Care Group 7:30 AA	4 3:30-5:30 Sonward 4:30 Lenten Bible Study	5 Ash Wednesday Lent Starts 6:00 Simple meal 6:45 Worship service & Communion	6 9:00 Food Truck Delivery 3:30-5:30 Sonward	7 Office Closed	8 9:00 Food Bank Clients
9 Start Daylight Savings Time 10:00 Sunday School 11:00 Worship	10 10:00 Care Group 6:30 Session 7:30 AA	11 3:30-5:30 Sonward 4:30 Lenten Bible Study 6:30 Deacons	12 1:00 Shawl Group in Library	13 3:30-5:30 Sonward	14 Office Closed	15
16 10:00 Sunday School 11:00 Worship	17 St. Patrick's Day 10:00 Care Group 7:30 AA	18 3:30-5:30 Sonward 4:30 Lenten Bible Study	19	20 3:30-5:30 Sonward	21 Office Closed	22
23 10:00 Sunday School 11:00 Worship 12:00 Strategic Planning Mtg.	24 10:00 Care Group 7:30 AA	25 3:30-5:30 Sonward 4:30 Lenten Bible Study	26 6:30 Book Club <i>All We Ever Wanted</i> by Emily Giffin	27 3:30-5:30 Sonward	28 Office Closed	29
30 10:00 Sunday School 11:00 Worship	31 10:00 Care Group 7:30 AA					

Southern California Wildfires

Presbyterian Disaster Assistance is in communication with the affected areas to offer resources in the aftermath of the fires. We pray for all those affected, from individuals and families to entire neighborhoods, from the wildlife to the very land itself; we pray for swift containment and the safety of first responders.

GIVE: Gifts can be made online at pcusa.org/CAfires, by phone at 800-728-7228, ext. 5885 or by check payable to Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) with "PDA-CF25-BI" written on the memo line and mailed to Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.), P.O. Box 643700, Pittsburgh, PA 15264 or to the Presbytery Office.

ACT: Assemble Gift of the Heart kits for survivors in the affected areas. For more information, go to pcusa.org/GOHkits.

PRAY: God, our refuge and strength, you are an ever-present help in trouble. You see the devastation caused by the California wildfires. You hear the cries of loss and know the exhaustion of those waiting and helping. For those forced to flee, grant rest. For those fighting fires, grant strength. For those mourning, grant comfort. For those still in danger, grant protection. May your Church be a presence of hope in Christ's name Amen.

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