

THE GARDEN

“...some of the seed fell on good soil” Mark 4:8

Dec. 2024 – Jan. 2025
Newsletter

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**Pastor Barbara’s Office
Hours:** Available
Mondays, Wednesdays,
and Thursdays by
appointment.

Green Pond United
Methodist Church

www.greenpondumc.com

New Beginnings: Dancing into God’s New Creation by Pastor Barbara

As 2024 comes to a close and we step into the dawn of a new year, we are invited to see this season not merely as a reset of the calendar but as a fresh opportunity to step further into God’s unfolding story for His creation. This Advent season, we will be exploring themes from the beautiful ballet, *The Nutcracker*. In this enchanting tale, Clara finds herself swept into an adventure through what at first seems an ordinary gift—but this gift becomes the gateway to the extraordinary.

Clara’s curiosity and trust propel her into a journey where struggles are overcome, relationships deepen, and where she glimpses a world of unimaginable beauty. Similarly, as we enter the new year, we are challenged to see the ordinary elements of our lives—the routines, the struggles, the hopes—not as mundane, but as places where God’s transformative work is already underway. The prophet Isaiah reminds us, “See, I am doing a new thing! Now it springs up; do you not perceive it?” (Isaiah 43:19).

The gospel itself is a story of new beginnings—the story of God, through the infant Jesus, breaking into the world to launch His new creation. When we step into this new year, we are not simply resolving to be better or hoping for brighter days; we are stepping into God’s project of renewal, trusting the Author of life itself.

This coming year, I believe God has many dreams for Green Pond United Methodist Church to follow Him in order to connect in more meaningful ways with the community around us, as we seek to bring healing and hope. Clara’s journey in *The Nutcracker* invites us to consider what it means to follow faithfully. Just as she trusts the Nutcracker Prince to guide her through the snow and into the wonders of the Kingdom of Sweets, we are called to trust Jesus, the true Prince of Peace, who leads us forward through the uncertainties ahead. We may not know the shape of the year to come, but we do know the One who holds it. As Proverbs 3:5-6 says, “Trust in the Lord with all your heart...in all your ways submit to him, and he will make your paths straight.”

This year, let’s view every moment—whether filled with joy or challenges—as part of God’s choreography. Like the beauty of a well-composed ballet, our lives are part of God’s grand masterpiece, each step leading us in some way closer to His purposes. We are not, however, passive observers who sit in the balcony—we are invited to take our place in the divine dance, to step forward in faith, prayerfully partnering in God’s kingdom on earth as it is in heaven.



As a church family, let us embrace hope, transformation and joy, remembering that in Christ, the ordinary becomes extraordinary, and what seems impossible becomes the foundation of a world renewed. Together, may we look to this new year with courage, anticipation, and gratitude for the faithfulness of our God, who makes all things new. Blessings for a Happy New Year!

Announcements

GPUMC FINANCE SUMMARY OCTOBER 31, 2024

	OCT. 2024
INCOME	17,594.13
HOUSING REIMBURSE	1,833.33
EXPENSES	(21,865.98)
GAIN/(LOSS)	(2,438.52)
	YTD 2024
INCOME	168,576.25
HOUSING REIMBURSE	18,333.30
EXPENSES	(206,739.07)
GAIN/(LOSS)	(19,829.52)

GPUMC Cemetary Plots:

In 1960, a member of First United Methodist church purchased (20) burial plots for church members. When First United merged with GPUMC, the deeds were transferred. There are still (9) remaining plots at The Northampton Memorial Shrine, 3051 Green Pond Road, Easton, PA 18045 in the prime section B. Each plot is good for (2) burials. Our Trustees would like to ensure the congregation knows of their existence and offer them exclusively to our members for a price of \$2500. What plots remain after November 2025 will be offered to the public. For more information, please contact John Gerbino (610-810-6212).

Winter Weather Notifications—Helen Boddy

Wondering if we're still having services in snowy weather? Here's how you can keep an eye out for our winter weather updates.

- 1) If we decide to cancel services, we will send an email out to the congregation. If you are not on our email list and would like to be, please contact the office.
- 2) We will post a notice on the home page of our website if services are cancelled, so you can check there to find out if something's going on.
- 3) If services are cancelled or delayed, we will notify WFMZ's Channel 69 news, so you can check their list of delays/cancellations via TV or radio to see if we're on there.

Worship at Christmas—Pam Boddy

Christmas celebrates the heart of Christianity; that God dwelt among us. He left the perfection and glory of heaven and came into the world as a helpless baby, born in a stable. Every year we remember this throughout the season of Advent, culminating in the Christmas Eve service. This is also the time when people are most open to accepting an invitation from a friend to come to church. Please consider prayerfully whether someone in your life might be open to attending as we celebrate the event foretold by the prophet Isaiah:

“For unto us a child is born, unto us a child is given: the government shall be upon his shoulder; and His name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, the mighty God, the everlasting Father, the Prince of Peace.”

This year we will hold two Christmas Eve services; at 3:00 in the afternoon, with music provided by Mark Dennis on the organ, and at 7:00 in the evening with Linda Schreiber on the piano. We hope to see you there!

Tree of Giving 2024—Megan Schaeffer

Our annual Tree of Giving is here again! If you would like to donate a gift to a child in need, there are three ways to participate!

1. Sign up online at <https://www.signupgenius.com/go/4090F4DA9AD23ABFA7-53423177-tree>
2. Take a tag from the tree in the lobby
3. Donate money and let our Teen Worship Class do the shopping for you! (Please note Tree of Giving on payment)

All gifts will go to children in Northampton County and your generosity will be much appreciated by these families! Once you pick a child, please use the

listed wish list as a guide for making a purchase. You may choose one gift or multiple items.

Please do not wrap the gifts. Instead, bring them in gift bags and make sure to note the number of the child you picked on the bag for reference. Please return gifts to the church lobby by Sunday, December 15. Any questions? Please see Megan Schaeffer (mehunt4@gmail.com) or Bonnie Hapstack.

The Impact of Your Giving—Pastor Barbara

Your financial commitment to Green Pond United Methodist Church is what makes possible our mission to draw people into a new and deeper relationship with Jesus Christ and build a community that seeks to reflect God's love. These funds allow us to provide education for children and adults, outreach projects of service, and maintain our building for both church and community groups.

If you have not had the opportunity to submit your "Intention of Giving" card for 2025, you may still do so. We know circumstances sometimes change, but knowing your giving plan, helps church leaders with their budgeting and planning. Cards are available at the church office (610-253-2731 or office@greenpondumc.com) or at Sunday services. We also provide convenient options for your giving:

ONLINE: Go to greenpondumc.com/giving to make a secure one-time or recurring gift. You can choose to make a weekly, bi-weekly, monthly, or yearly gift in any amount that is automatically deducted from your checking account or billed to your debit or credit card. Recurring gifts are most helpful, as they provide the church with greater financial and budgeting stability. You may change it or cancel at any time.

OFFERING PLATE: Located in the back of the sanctuary during Sunday's 10 AM services. Please use a check or put your money in an envelope to ensure that your offering is credited to you for tax purposes. Special pre-printed envelopes may be obtained by contacting the church office.

MAIL: Our volunteer team of counters and office manager check the mail at the church regularly to help you steward your gifts to the church. Please mail checks only.

Thank you so much for your faithfulness. We pray that your heart would be full and open to what God has in store for our congregation in 2025!

Qualified Charitable Distribution—Brad Schaeffer

Do you give money to the church? Do you own an IRA? Are you over age 70 ½? If so, you have the option to give directly from your IRA to the church tax free! The IRS calls this arrangement a qualified charitable distribution (QCD) and it reduces your tax bill by excluding from income your charitable donation. The amount of savings will vary by individual, depending on your particular tax bracket. Below are a few rules to follow in order to lower your tax bill using this method:

- IRA owner must be over the age of 70 ½
- Contribution must be paid directly from your IRA to Green Pond United Methodist Church
- Able to exclude from gross income up to \$105,000 of QCD

Benefits

- Can count towards your required minimum distribution (RMD) for the year (if applicable)
- Your tax savings could allow a more generous gift than simply donating cash

As you reflect on your giving, please consider how a QCD might help you and the church reach your goals together.

This article is for general educational purposes and does not constitute specific financial, tax, or legal advice. Contact a professional for precise advice applicable to your personal financial situation.

Children & Youth Ministry Announcements

Upcoming

Family Advent Night
Dec. 6 6:00 to 7:00pm

Teen Worship
Shopping Trip Dec. 15
at 9:45am

Grow in God's Love!

Kid Worship & Teen Worship

Kid and Teen Worship will continue throughout December and January. All ages will begin in the sanctuary with their families at 10am. Around 10:15am, the kids and teens will be dismissed from the service to attend Kid & Teen Worship for age-appropriate activities and discussion. Kid Worship is ideal for students in Kindergarten through 5th grade. Teen Worship is designed for students in grades 6 through 12.

As always, our Nursery and Pray-ground is open for younger toddlers and preschoolers.

Connect in God's Love!

Family Advent Night

Family Advent Night will be held on Friday, December 6 from 6 to 7pm in the church lobby. This event will be appropriate for kids, teens, and adults of all ages! We will complete several advent activities to share with others and take home with our families. Invite your friends and families! Please RSVP to Jen Biddle! We hope to see you there!

Serve in God's Love!

Tree of Giving Shopping

On Sunday, Dec. 15 the Teen Worship class will be going to Target to shop for some of the tags from the Tree of Giving. We will leave the church at 9:45am and should be back by the time the service ends or soon after. Please see Jen Biddle with questions!