

Dear Beloved, Peoples Congregational United Church of Christ,

As we *literally* slide into February, I find myself reflecting on my return to official duties on New Year's Eve after a brief leave as Interim Minister. It's been a month filled with challenges, growth, and the reaffirmation of our shared journey of faith. I've been diligently working to rediscover my rhythm in the pulpit and in my relationship with you, my congregation. Like any art form, preaching requires practice, and I appreciate your *prayerful* patience as I navigate through this process. Each sermon is a step toward reclaiming my mojo—a commitment to not just deliver words, but to speak from the heart.

This past month has felt particularly poignant, as I've walked alongside many in our community during times of grief. The weight of loss is never easy to bear, especially when it is compounded by challenging weather conditions that keep us apart.

Yet even amid the snow, ice, and cold, I've been blessed to participate in listening and sermon-talk-back sessions that have proven fruitful and enriching. Your voices and concerns are paramount, and they shape our mission as a church. It has been uplifting to witness our congregation's dedication during these discussions and share in a collective vision for the church's future.

I have also received numerous inquiries regarding the ongoing search for a new pastor and about what lies ahead for me. Let me assure you that the search is progressing, and your eagerness to understand the process brings comfort amid the uncertainty. I look forward to congregational discussions about this process to keep you further informed about the Pastoral Search Committee's activities and what to expect in the next few months.

As for my career and next steps, the truth is: I am keeping an open heart and mind, depending *solely* on God's guidance. **Proverbs 3:5-6** reminds us, "*Trust in the Lord with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding; in all your ways acknowledge the Lord, and the Lord shall direct your paths.*" My mantra every day, "Do not be anxious about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God. And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus."¹

¹ Philippians 4:6-7, New Revised Standard Version Updated Edition (NRSVUE).

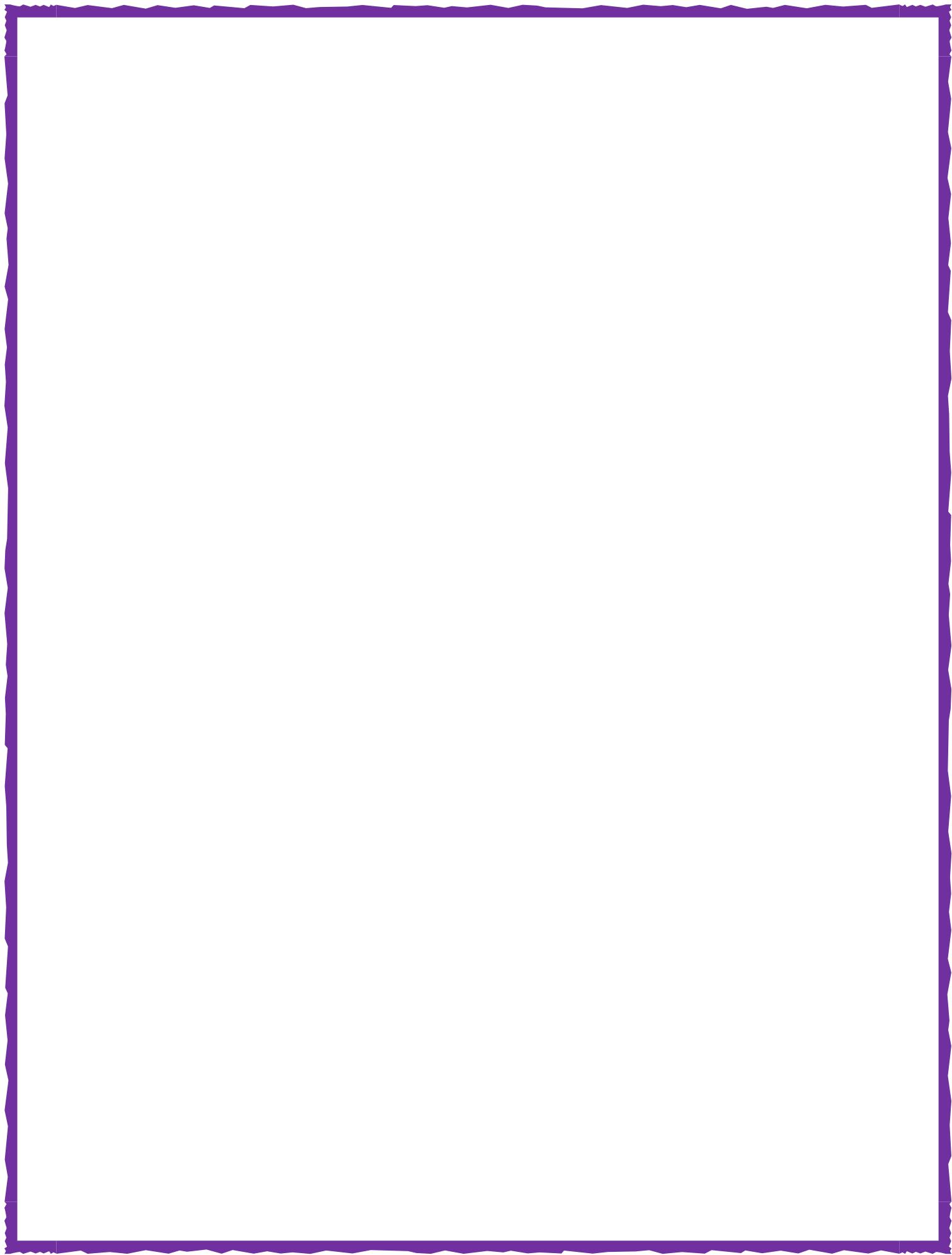
As we continue our journey together, let us remain anchored in faith, whether we find ourselves in joy or in sorrow. This seems particularly important as we embark upon our Lenten journey. I invite you to participate in the Lenten Institute 2026 (Wednesday, February 18 through Thursday, April 2), an intergenerational opportunity to engage all ages of our congregation.

The season of Lent invites us into a time of introspection, renewal, and deepening our faith. It's a sacred season that encourages us to focus on our relationship with God and the ways we can serve one another. In light of this, my collaboration with the Diaconate Board and the Board of Christian Education will invite each of us to an initiative that engages all members of our congregation in meaningful ways. This journey will offer us all a chance to explore our faith together, fostering deeper connections and a collective understanding as we walk alongside one another. Please stay tuned for more information about the Lenten Institute. You will receive updates in the coming weeks, so please keep an eye out for those details. Your participation is vital, and together we can enrich our spiritual community and enhance our Lenten journey.

As we move forward, I send my blessings to each of you. May this Lenten season bring us closer to one another and to God, illuminating our path as we reflect, pray, and grow. Let us embrace this opportunity to have a deeper conversation about our faith and how we can support one another as a community.

Loving you into God's next for you,

Rev. Benjamin Ledell Bragg-Reynolds
Interim Minister





**Update from the Pastoral Search Committee
Peoples Congregational United Church of Christ**

January 27, 2026

In this update, we provide a process update, and "Frequently Asked Questions"



Process Update

This diagram outlines the Pastoral Search Process. The Committee is currently in the second segment, while the entire Congregation is working on readiness through prayer, fellowship, and worship. We are receiving and reviewing Ministerial Profiles, conducting interviews, and identifying candidates that we'd like to move on for further consideration. We've received over a dozen profiles and continue to receive additional candidates

each week. We will continue to consider candidates until we decide on a final recommendation. If you're curious about our position announcement or would like to review our Profile, you can view it at <https://oppsearch.ucc.org/web/fastsearch.aspx>.

Engaging with Us

We are committed to engaging with the congregation throughout this process. The information we have gathered through the survey and the focus groups, and our consultations with church leaders and members has been shaping our approach. At any time, you can reach us at pastoralsearchcommittee2@gmail.com.

Frequently Asked Questions

Will Rev. Bragg-Reynolds be eligible for consideration?

No. Rev. Bragg-Reynolds has elected to maintain his status as an "Interim" pastor and to honor the covenant that he made when coming to Peoples. He will not seek the Senior Minister position.

Will the congregation get to choose between two or more presented finalists?

We intend to follow the standard UCC procedure and our church by-laws that call for the Pastoral Search Committee to reach consensus and present a candidate to the Church Council for approval. Once approved by the Council, the candidate will be presented to the Governing Body for a vote. This approach ensures we avoid electoral or competitive dynamics from undermining what should be a process driven by spiritual discernment.

Can the congregation have a chance to provide feedback on candidates before a final candidate is presented for a vote?

The congregation will not be invited to provide feedback on specific candidates in advance of the Committee recommending a final candidate. It is important that the candidates are afforded confidentiality in this process. As with any leader interested in exploring a new position, it is expected that many of our candidates will not be ready for their interest in the Senior Minister position to be public or common knowledge. The Committee will continue to engage the congregation and seek input that will shape our candidate evaluation process.

Is the search limited only to pastors who currently have standing in the UCC?

No, but applicants are all initially vetted by the Central Atlantic Conference for basic qualifications; if we call someone who does not currently have standing, they will have to apply for standing in the UCC.

How often will the congregation receive updates from the Committee?

The Committee will provide bi-monthly updates to the congregation.

How will this process differ from previous processes?

We will follow the general UCC recommended process as previous committees have. Right now we are conducting interviews. Along with an interview process, we are reviewing sermon videos and plan to conduct visits to help with our candidate evaluation. Once we have recommended a final candidate, we plan to arrange a candidacy weekend that will include opportunities for the congregation to engage with the candidate before voting.

What is the committee's timeline?

The Committee will work diligently to identify the right candidate. We are focused on finding the best candidate and that will take precedence over speed. We will update the congregation on our activity as we go.

How will we ensure a process that promotes transparency, unity and collective discernment?

The Committee will provide updates on a regular basis. Our general approach will be to keep the congregation informed while maintaining confidentiality as required to protect the privacy of the candidates. Unity and collective discernment has to be top of mind for the congregation as a collective. We have to work on our readiness to receive a new minister through prayer, worship, and fellowship. We have to use these practices to prepare ourselves spiritually and emotionally, individually and collectively, to embrace change.

“Peoples Church FYI”

Prayer Meeting Dial-In

Wednesday Word Devotional Conference Call

605-475-5950 Access Code: 8964544#

Second and Fourth Wednesdays at 7:00 a.m.

Wednesday Noon Prayer Service

Call 518-992-1039, Access Code: 659959#

Prayer Service is every Wednesday at Noon.

Thursday Virtual Bible Study

Join Zoom Meeting: Click here to [join](#)

Dial-in# +1 301 715 8592 US

Meeting ID: 992 6852 3678 Password: 784420

Peoples Congregational United Church of Christ

Sunday Morning Praise and Worship Teleconference

Call-in-Number 720-740-9739 Access Code 4684874

The Line Opens at 6:55 a.m.

Virtual Adult Church School

Adult Church School Every Sunday from 8:00 a.m. - 9:15 a.m.

Join Zoom Meeting

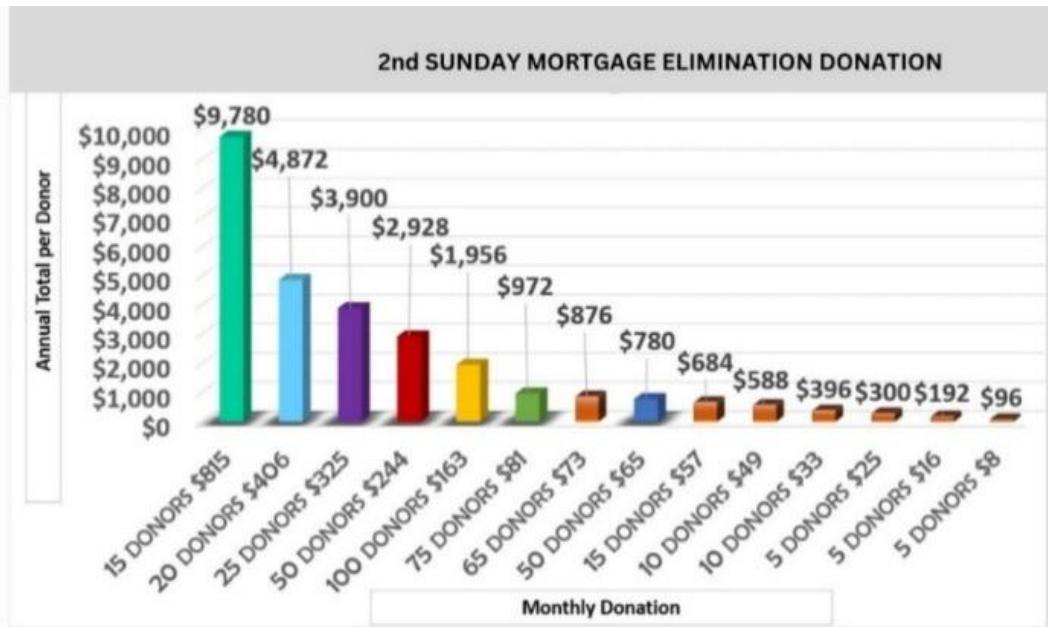
<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/88390857788?pwd=RmZoY2xqeTBIRVdTK09XWFY5cG9OQT09>

Meeting ID: 837 4429 8433 Passcode:

853640

**Church School meets every 2nd, 3rd and 4th Sunday at 10:00 a.m. in the
Elmes Center Classrooms from September- June**





2nd SUNDAY MORTGAGE ELIMINATION DONATION

Please consider selecting one of the Monthly Donation Categories in the 2nd Sunday Mortgage Elimination Donation Graph above to create your recurring financial gifts either online or by postal mail.

Remember, these financial gifts are above and beyond your usual tithe and offering donations for our Beloved Church.

Of course, if you are unable to commit to the recommended donation amounts on the graph, all donations to the Capital Campaign Community of Faith are greatly needed and appreciated.

Select Peoples Church or REALM for Online Donations

Select Menu Option: Mortgage Elimination

[Complete the 2nd Sunday Mortgage Elimination Donation Form](#)

[DONATE at Peoplechurchucc.org](#)

[DONATE on REALM](#)

Send questions or comments to CapitalCampaignPUCC@gmail.com

SPECIAL CHURCH ANNOUNCEMENTS

Welcome to Peoples Church! All individuals who participate in our Worship and Liturgical Services and/or Events may have their images appear on our Social Media Platforms, Live Streaming, or communication documents. By attending these Services and Events, you tacitly agree to having your image displayed.

Dear Peoples Church Members,

We want to ensure that you have the best possible communication with our Interim Minister to address any needs, concerns, or messages you may have. His email address is interimminister@peopleschurchucc.org. Please note that the Pastor's Sabbath is on Monday, a time dedicated to rest and reflection. If you need to contact the Pastor via email, we kindly ask that you keep in mind the following schedule: if you send an email on Sunday or Monday, please understand that the Pastor is not likely to respond until Tuesday, as these are his days of rest. We appreciate your understanding and cooperation in respecting the Pastor's need for Sabbath rest. Your patience and consideration are highly valued as we seek to support our Pastor's well-being and continued service to the congregation. Should you have any urgent concerns, please do not hesitate to contact the Front Office. Thank you

Peoples Preaching and Worship Leader Schedule February 2026

Sunday, February 1 (Fourth Sunday after the Epiphany) *
“*Blessings Beyond Expectation*” Psalm 15; Matthew 5:1-12

- **Rev. Bragg-Reynolds, Preaching**
- **Minister Geneva Hudson, Worship Leader**

Sunday, February 8 (Fifth Sunday after the Epiphany)
“*Lifting Every Voice*” Psalm 100; Acts 2:17-18

- **Board of Christian Education Black History Program**
- **Julius Halstead, Guest Speaker**
- **Rev. Benjamin Ledell Bragg-Reynolds, Worship Leader**

Sunday, February 15 (Transfiguration Sunday)
“*Transfiguration*” Psalm 42:1-5; Exodus 34:29-35; Luke 9:28-36

- **Rev. Bragg-Reynolds, Preaching**
- **Dr. Helga Baskett-Tippett, Worship Leader**

Sunday, February 22 (First Sunday in Lent)
“*Scouting Through the Years*” Joshua 1:9; Matthew 5:14-15

- **Boy Scouts Annual Worship**
- **Boy Scouts, Leading Worship**
- **Roy Castleberry, Guest Speaker**

* Indicates Sermon-Talk-Back following the service in the Corbin Lounge

A Baking & Learning Opportunity!

Calling all bakers — and wannabe bakers!

The New Synagogue Project (NSP) invites Peoples members to participate in their monthly challah bread baking event. This shared experience is part of an effort to foster deeper relationships between Peoples and NSP by working and learning together. Each month, NSP members gather to bake challah bread for worship services and for their Sick and Shut-In Ministry. Peoples members are warmly welcomed to join in this meaningful and hands-on opportunity.

📅 Upcoming Baking Date

Friday, February 13

1:00 – 5:00 PM

📍 Church Kitchen

Future baking dates and times will be advertised monthly.

🔗 Interested in Participating?

Please contact:

Amanda Paulk

✉️ ampaulk@gmail.com

Come bake, learn, and build community — one loaf at a time!

Got a few hours each week that you can give to a worthy cause?

Our church is in desperate need of additional volunteers to handle the front office reception desk. Duties include answering the phones, buzzing people in and out, greeting visitors, copying, sorting the mail and any other small administrative task you can think of.

Having adequate volunteers frees up the paid staff to concentrate on all the other administrative duties that help to keep our church running smoothly.

The requirements of the job are: a willing spirit, a warm heart, basic administrative skills and the ability to be consistently present for a few hours a week.

If that's you, please reach out to Reverend Bragg- Reynolds or Moderator Diana Haines Walton at the church main office number, 202-829-5211.

We will all be grateful for your time and energy.

"Confirmation"

Are you curious about your faith?

Calling All Teens Ages 13 & Up! Confirmation 2026 is coming — and you are invited

Do you have questions about God, justice, and what you believe?

Are you ready to explore who you are and discover your purpose in the world?

Confirmation is where you have the opportunity to explore

- Faith in a safe and judgment-free environment
- Ask real questions and have honest conversations
- Learn about what it means to be Christian and about your denomination
- It's not about having all the answers but, about showing up and being curious, and cultivating your faith, relationship with God, and building friendships and growing together.
- Stay tuned for registration details. If interested, contact Mrs Leslie Bowie or Dr. Helga Baskett-Tippett. We can't wait to walk with you on this journey.

Peoples UCC Music Ministry Announcements

There are several opportunities for you to participate in the music ministry at Peoples:

We invite you to come and be a part of Peoples Congregational Choir. PCC is a versatile choir singing anthems, spirituals, gospel, and classical music to the glory of God. Rehearsals are on Saturdays from 9:30 a.m. to 11:30 a.m.

There are also opportunities to sing with Peoples Praise, our praise & worship team. Formed in September 2024 and debuted in October 2025, this group of 8-committed singers welcome the presence and power of the Holy Spirit through praise and worship songs. This team invites the congregation to express our collective reverence, gratitude, adoration and acknowledgment of God's greatness and experience His presence for all in attendance. Peoples Praise is led by our Assistant Director of Worship, Minister Diedre D. Gray. Rehearsals are on Saturdays from 11:30 a.m. to 1:30 p.m.

The choir is a reflection of the overall church. You can help grow the music ministry by bringing or inviting a friend or family member to church.

You don't sing or play a musical instrument? We are also looking for a few people with the desire to help by providing administrative support. If you are interested, please reach out to Lise Stevens at: music@peopleschurchucc.org.

Do you remember the Hebrew words for praise found in scripture?

Yadah - THE OPEN HAND - HANDS TO GOD

Towdah - COURT OF LAW - TO EXTEND THE HANDS - TO SPEAK THE SAME THING

Shabach - A LOUD ADORATION - A TESTIMONY OF WHAT GOD HAS DONE

Tehillah - TO SING PRAISE

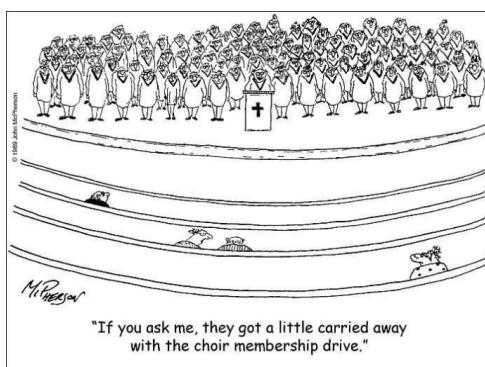
Barauch - ACT OF KNEELING OR BOWING

Halah - TO BE CLAMOROUSLY FOOLISH BEFORE THE LORD (the word Hallelujah comes from halah)

Zamar - TO SING SONGS OF PRAISE WITH INSTRUMENTS

How can we put these forms of praise into our Sunday worship experience? How do we put these forms of praise and worship into our daily lives?

Thank you for your continued support of the music ministry at Peoples. We welcome your comments and suggestions as we strive toward musical excellence to the greater glory of God.



Dear Parents, Guardians, and Youth,

We are pleased to extend an invitation to our children and youth ages 12 and up to participate in Confirmation Class for Confirmation 2026. Confirmation is a meaningful milestone in the life of the church and an important step in a young person's faith journey within the United Church of Christ.

We encourage families to prayerfully consider this opportunity and support their youth in participating. The weekly classes will begin in March, and will end with Confirmation Sunday which will be held on Pentecost Sunday, May 24, 2026. More details regarding dates, expectations, and registration will be shared soon. If you have any questions or would like additional information, please do not hesitate to reach out via email to confirmation@peopleschurchucc.org.

Confirmation is not simply a class; it is a season of intentional learning, reflection, and discernment. During this time, participants are given the opportunity to explore the foundations of the Christian faith, the history and theology of the United Church of Christ, and what it means to live out their faith in the world today. Youth are encouraged to ask questions, think deeply, and begin to articulate their own beliefs in a supportive and loving environment.

Our youth will learn that faith is both a gift and a responsibility. They are invited to consider how God calls them to love, serve, and seek justice, and how the church can be a lifelong community of support and growth.

We believe Confirmation is an important time for youth to:

- Develop a deeper understanding of God, Jesus Christ, and the Christian faith,
- Learn the values, commitments, and traditions of the United Church of Christ,
- Build relationships with peers and church mentors, and
- Discern how faith can guide their choices, actions, and sense of purpose

We look forward to walking alongside our youth during this important season of faith formation.

God's Joy,

Dr. Helga Baskett-Tippett
Ms. Leslie Fogg Bowie

Wellness Corner

Heart Smart Diets

February is recognized as American Heart Month, making it an ideal time to focus on strategies to prevent heart disease and, in some cases, even reverse its effects. Heart disease stands as the leading cause of death in the United States (U.S.) and has held this position for more than one century, beginning in 1921, as reported by the CDC and the American Heart Association. In addition to heart disease, stroke ranks as the fifth leading cause of death in the country.

Alarmingly, half of all Americans are affected by some form of cardiovascular disease (CVD), including conditions such as heart failure, stroke, and high blood pressure. Cardiovascular disease is particularly prevalent among individuals with diabetes, with the majority of those diagnosed with type 2 diabetes eventually developing some form of CVD.

And so, if we hope to improve our heart health, we would do well to work on those known factors that can lower our risk of getting these chronic diseases. What we have learned is that diet and lifestyle can help lower our risks. There may be a place for medicine, but long before we realize that we have the disease, there are actions we can take in the area of prevention.

- **Prevention:** Learn about risk factors (high blood pressure, cholesterol, smoking, inactivity) and take steps to lower them.
- **Awareness:** Recognize signs of a heart attack, understanding that women may have different experiences from the men. Women may experience shortness of breath, nausea, or back/jaw pain, in addition to chest pain.
- **Action:** Adopt a Heart Smart Diet. Select a Diet that will provide foods that will nourish the body and provide you with a balanced meal. There are several heart-smart diets, but each that I mention has commonalities: they are chock full of plant-based foods, though not exclusively.

The American College of Cardiology recommends several Heart Smart Diets, listed on their CardioSmart website. At the top of their list is the MEDITERRANEAN, DASH and VEGETARIAN/PLANT BASED DIETS. These Heart Smart diets are really a way of eating that becomes part of your lifestyle. An in depth information can be found at: : [CardioSmart Heart Healthy Diets](#).

The Mediterranean Diet uses olive oil as primary fat, fish/poultry moderately, and minimal red meat/sweets.

The DASH Diet focuses on low sodium, fruits, veggies, whole grains, lean meats, and low-fat dairy, and

The Vegetarian Diet excludes meat and poultry, focusing on plant-based proteins, grains, fruits, veggies, nuts, seeds, and legumes, with dairy/eggs optional (lacto-ovo). The . Cardiovascular disease is particularly prevalent among individuals with diabetes, with the majority of those

diagnosed with type 2 diabetes eventually developing some form of CVD **Vegan Diet** is a subset of the Vegetarian diet, and is fully plant based, to the exclusion of dairy, eggs and meat.

Eat whole foods. A key focus of each of the diets above is fruits, vegetables, whole grains, beans, nuts, seeds, legumes, herbs, spices. All three diets prioritize whole, unprocessed foods. These dietary foods are nutrient-rich, with reduced intake of refined grains and added sugars. *Pub Med (PMC) NLM.*

Limit/avoid most processed foods. Cardiologists generally advise avoiding processed meats (bacon, sausage), sugary drinks (soda, sweetened juices), and fried/fast foods (French fries, donuts), as these are high in sodium, saturated fats, trans fats, and added sugars, which raise bad cholesterol, blood pressure, and diabetes risk, clogging arteries and increasing heart attack/stroke risk.

Avoid ultra processed foods. People tend to overeat UPFs (ultra processed foods). ” It is not willpower. Australia, alongside the US and UK, has one of the world’s highest consumption rates of ultra-processed foods which have been linked to “multiple diet-related chronic diseases”. *The Guardian, The Lancet. Dr. Mathilde Touvier.*

Practice portion control, Fill half your plate with produce, one quarter of the plate with protein plant-based or lean meat, and one quarter of the plate with whole grains.

Read food labels. Select foods that are low in sodium, sugar, especially added sugar, and saturated fat. Eat whole foods. Avoid Trans fats which can be found in many baked goods. Avoid ultra processed foods which may have industrial ingredients like guar, xanthan, maltodextrin and emulsifiers. Extensive processing changes the food structure to make it more palatable. Think of junk or salty snack foods, even some ice creams.

Water is essential. Water is essential to heart health, too: How much should we drink? The guidelines from the Mayo Clinic can help you determine what is best for you. Click on link: [Mayo Clinic Healthy Lifestyle and Water.](#)

A Heart Smart Lifestyle is full of whole foods with fruits, vegetables, whole grains, and unprocessed or minimally processed foods. The less processed our food, the better. Portion control, time restricted eating and intermittent fasting are all strategies that can be used in conjunction with the heart smart diet, or any diet. Exercise is a key component of a healthy lifestyle. Brisk aerobic exercise, such as walking , swimming, even pickleball are great ways to increase your heart rate, helping blood flow and reducing stress.

In conclusion, eat nutritious food, stay active, stay away from processed and ultra processed foods, and get regular checkups and labs . Eat Well, Be well and show love to your heart!

Happy American Heart Month!



Happy Birthday to:

Cyril-Patrick Enyi	2-28
Diane Kern	2-18
George Loines	2-23
Shirley Moseley	2-23
Ralph Neal	2-24
Thirza Neal	2-24

Bible Quiz

1. Who restored Paul's sight after the Lord blinded him?
 - a. Peter
 - b. Luke
 - c. Matthew
 - d. Ananias
2. How did Paul escape Damascus when the Jews were trying to kill him?
 - a. He was let down from the city walls in a basket
 - b. An angel lifted him out
 - c. An earthquake created the means of escape
 - d. Silas came to his rescue
3. Where was Paul stoned?
 - a. Melita
 - b. Samascus
 - c. Galilee
 - d. Lystra

**Peoples Congregational
United Church of Christ**

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Phone: 202.829.5511
Follow us on Twitter
@PeoplesCongUCC

We are on the Web!
www.peopleschurchucc.org



Love God & Love Neighbor

Prodder Guidelines

**Newsletter
DEADLINE**

The Peoples Prodder is our Monthly Newsletter, which informs our community about recent announcements, updates, and information pertaining to the life of our congregation.

All announcements and flyers for the upcoming edition of the Prodder must be submitted by 12:00 Noon on the 20th of the prior month.

Announcements and flyers can be emailed to yhunter@peopleschurchucc.org.

Please do not mail information; electronic submissions are required.

Announcements should be a maximum of 90 words and informational about Peoples Church events or members and their families. All announcements may be edited, and submissions are subject to final approval by the Ministers.

Contact Information

Interim Minister

Rev. Benjamin Ledell Bragg-Reynolds
interimminister@peopleschurchucc.org



Church Moderator

Diana Haines Walton
moderator@peopleschurchucc.org

Administrative Staff

Operations Specialist
Yvette Hunter
yhunter@peopleschurchucc.org

Maintenance Staff

Towanda Chew
Sterling "Stan" Evans
DeVonte Robinson

In Memoriam	
Thomas Pinder Passed on January 10, 2025	Judith Rhodes Passed on August 17, 2025
Mary Elizabeth Rowe Passed on January 26, 2025	Jacqueline Jackson Passed on February 23, 2025
Joan Stanley Passed on July 13, 2025	Thomas Hammond Passed on September 28, 2025
Jessie Mae Robinson January 12, 2026	

Sunday Service in January





PEOPLES

CONGREGATIONAL

United Church of Christ

Realm Registration



Scan the QR Code: Peoples Realm
Sign-Up, Sign-in or Make a Donation

CHANGE OF CONTACT INFORMATION

Have you moved? Do you have a new e-mail address? Has your contact information changed? If so, please fill out the form below and place it in the offering plate so that we may update your contact information. Thank-you!

Name(s) _____

Old Address _____ City _____ State _____ Zip _____

New Address _____