

SHENKEL HAPPENINGS – DECEMBER 2025

Greetings, Shenkel Friends and Family!

There's a Christmas tradition in our family to spend two hours, preferably a day or two before Christmas, watching my husband's all-time favorite movie, "It's a Wonderful Life." In case you've missed it, it takes place during the start of the Depression. It's the story of George Bailey (Jimmy Stewart), a young man who desperately wants to travel the world and design impressive buildings. An abrupt change in circumstances forces him to stay in his sleepy town of Bedford Falls to run the family building and loan started by his father. George marries and has a family, makes very little money, but does what is right, helping people when they are down and out. The immigrants. The local folks struggling financially. Good people who just need a break. But he's frustrated. He can barely keep his head above water while his friends thrive. He's at a breaking point and considers ending it all, but is stopped by an eccentric angel who needs to earn his wings by showing George what life would have been like for the townspeople had he not been there to help. And let me tell you, it's not pretty. The story is touching and thought-provoking, with a message worth hearing.

For those of us who have been on a path and changed course, it's tempting to think you could've done better. Maybe life would be easier if I had taken that job. Or gone to college. Or chosen a different vocation. Or a different partner. For some of us, it's easier to focus on the woulda, coulda, shouldas and miss what is right in front of us. Each of us has touched people in a positive way, whether we are trying to live out our faith or just trying to be good people. We may even have changed someone's life by saying what they needed to hear, being there when they needed someone to listen. You may or may not have built the "impressive buildings," but in the end it really doesn't matter what you did, just how you did it. With compassion. Kindness. Understanding. In this season of beauty and love, when God sent Love to earth in human form to change the world, let us remember that no matter what our circumstances, it really IS a wonderful life!

Now let's see what is happening at your church!

WORSHIP SERVICES

You have two convenient choices for worship each Sunday:

1. **REFLECTIVE SERVICE AT 8:30 AM**, a good choice if you prefer no music and time for discussion and reflection, and
2. **TRADITIONALISH SERVICE AT 9:45 AM**. You'll find everything you've always wanted in a traditional service plus more. Pastor Suzanne has added a time for centering at the beginning which people are really appreciating.

PLEASE NOTE: On the Third Sunday of each month, there is one service held in Fellowship Hall where we gather for worship around tables. People love the casual atmosphere!

CHRISTMAS SEASON SERVICES AND EVENTS

- **DECEMBER 21 after the 9:45 AM SERVICE** – It's cookie time! Join us after the service for cookies and Christmas Carols. What a fun way to put yourself in the Christmas spirit with your Shenkel friends! Bring your favorite cookie to share. (Homemade is nice, but if you're like me and baking isn't your thing, store bought will do!) Just come and enjoy time with your Shenkel family!
- **DECEMBER 21 at 7:00 PM – LONGEST NIGHT SERVICE** - We are surrounded by messages telling us that Christmas is a time for joyous family gatherings, parties, and laughter. In reality, many people struggle this time of year due to ongoing grief, mental health challenges, or addictions. Add to that the news of nationwide uncertainty and war in the Middle East and Ukraine, and it can all be overwhelming. And so, we come together on the longest night of the year to name our struggles, draw comfort from the presence of others, and see the grace of God for these difficult days. Let's help each other find peace.
- **PURCHASE YOUR LUMINARIES** – Help us beautify our church for Christmas Eve by purchasing luminaries to be displayed as you enter the church. The cost is \$5.00, and you can dedicate them in honor of, in memory of, or in celebration of someone. Please place your request in the offering plate with your money, your name and dedication request. **Deadline is December 14.** Look for the sign-up sheet in the narthex.
- **DECEMBER 24 AT 7:00 PM – CHRISTMAS EVE SERVICE** The beautiful candlelit sanctuary is the stage for our celebration of Jesus' birth. There is no better way to immerse yourself in the true meaning of Christmas than by spending an hour surrounded with peace and joy on Christmas Eve. Children are always welcome and enjoyed! I hope to see each of you there!
- **DECEMBER 28 at 9:00 AM – ONE SERVICE TODAY** – Fellowship is hosting a breakfast with service to follow at 9:45 AM. Please bring a breakfast item to share. Coffee, tea, and juice will be provided.

MARK YOUR CALENDARS!

- **JANUARY 10 from 10:00 AM to NOON– SECOND ANNUAL NEW YEAR REBOOT** – Feeling stressed? Need to get back to prioritizing your health? Join us for our second annual New Year Reboot! This event was a huge success last year, and we heard your pleas to offer it again. We have two presenters eager to help us start 2026 on a healthy path. *Salil Gutt, a highly qualified Qigong*

instructor, returns and will be sharing the benefits of the Qigong lifestyle and teaching us a few basic moves. The practice of Qigong helps with stress reduction, improving physical health, and overall well-being. No worries—the moves are slow and gentle. We will also welcome *Lisa Fairman of Earth Rhythms*, who will bring an assortment of musical instruments for us to experience the art of drumming, an ancient practice that uses rhythm to reduce stress, promote self-expression, and boost physical and mental well-being. PLEASE NOTE: To allow for all of us to enjoy the full experience of these practices, this is an ADULTS ONLY event.

THANK YOU!

Our congregation is so generous! Thank you to everyone who contributed the 328 boxes of instant potatoes that Dan Jenkins and Pastor Suzanne delivered to the Cluster for their Holiday Meal Kits on November 18. That's an impressive number! Great job!

REQUEST FOR ALL FACEBOOK USERS

Stewardship is working hard to put together interesting and timely speaker series events, but we may not be getting the word out. So, if you are on Facebook, please follow Shenkel UCC and look for any posts on upcoming events that Julie Zachesky has so faithfully been creating and posting. Then share it on your own personal FB page. We need to reach as many people as we can, and this is an easy way for you to use social media to let people know about our events. Thank you!

CHURCH CHANGE CHANGES CHURCHES

Are your purses or pockets weighed down with coins from those trips to Wawa? We have the perfect place to put them: in our Church Change Changes Churches jugs! Yes, we are bringing back this opportunity for you to lighten your load and help chip away at our deficit. Coins will be collected starting in January until Easter. Keep an eye out for those jugs!

CONSISTORY HIGHLIGHTS

- A Congregational Meeting will be held on Sunday, December 28th after worship for action to be taken on the 2026 Current Fund and OCWM budgets. A copy of the proposed 2026 Current Fund Budget will be sent to all members after Christmas.

- We have reviewed our current liability insurance policy and will be making some changes to make it more affordable for Shenkel in 2026. Contact Randy Berriker if you would like a complete list of all the changes for 2026.

SHENKEL PRAYER GROUP

Enjoy a cup of coffee or tea and celebrate the Spirit of God moving among us as we pray together. The group meets at **9:00 AM on the first Thursday** of the month. All are welcome to participate!

CHURCH SCHOOL

Our youngest Shenkel learners meet for Sunday School on the **third Sunday of each month from 11:00-12:00**. They are learning about God's love and the life of Jesus. Each lesson includes music and singing (thank you, Susan Royer!), a Bible story, craft, and snack. Our group has grown this year, and we are always looking for new friends to join us! Please spread the word. Our next meeting is Sunday, December 21st. Future meetings are January 18, February 15, March 15, April 19, and May 17.

CAROL LYKENS FILL-THE-HAT CHALLENGE

GOOD NEWS: **We have met \$5,071.94 of our \$5,000 goal!** Let's not stop there! You can continue to honor Carol and her generosity. We will be accepting donations through December 31st in this second year of our five-year challenge matching \$5,000 of Carol's generous bequest to help fund our current budget. Great job! Please give what you can and generously if you are able. Make checks payable to Shenkel UCC and in the memo line write "Carol Challenge." If you are making an online donation, you'll find it on our website.

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YOCOM GROVE LANDSCAPING FUND

The times when volunteers were plentiful and eager to put their backs into taking care of our properties are long gone. This means we must pay for much of the work that needs to be done for upkeep and repairs. To address this need, the Yocom family has generously started a fund to pay for mowing and to maintain the grove and labyrinth. Feel free to contribute as you are able!

STEWARDSHIP

- Qigong classes are in full swing with Salil on **Thursdays at 11:00 AM in the Social Hall**. Everyone is loving Salil's calm presence as he teaches us the gentle movements used for centuries to improve health, reduce stress, and keep us in the present moment. Please wear comfortable clothing. There will be a charge of

\$12.00 per class payable by cash or check, which Salil has kindly asked be donated to our church. And remember to bring a friend!

- We're always looking for new ideas for our Speaker Series! Do you have a particular topic you'd like to explore? Know someone (community member, college professor, friend, to name a few) who could present a 1-to-2-hour program on a topic of interest? Please let anyone from Stewardship know your thoughts: Chris Gray, Dan Jenkins, Julie Zachesky, Kim Yocom, or Brenda Berriker.

CLUSTER NEEDS

DECEMBER: Peanut butter and jelly

JANUARY: Canned oranges and canned pineapple

LOCAL MISSION OPPORTUNITY

Shenkel folks are caring individuals who want to help those in need. We yearn to make a difference, but sometimes don't know where to start. Here is an opportunity to show you care: The **4th Monday of each month**, a handful of our members help serve a **Community Lunch at Christ Episcopal in Pottstown**. Our church is an active participant in this local mission. Pastor Suzanne brings 70 salty and sweet snacks that are given out at lunch. These are purchased at Giant using the Giant gift cards that we also sell at church. These caring volunteers would love to welcome more helpers! You can serve lunch from 11:30-1:00, and/or go earlier to help sort food donations and prepare dessert trays. Don't worry—Shenkel is not responsible for the meal as we were years ago. We are simply willing helpers who are there to do whatever tasks need to be done.

GIANT AND REDNER'S GIFT CARDS

You're doing a great job! This is an easy way to raise money for our church. Purchase your cards Sunday mornings or in the Church Office Tuesday-Thursday, between 9:00 and 1:30. Thanks for doing your part!

ONLINE GIVING/QR CODE

It's easier than ever to catch up on your giving to support and sustain our church. Just go to www.shenkelucc.org, open up Online Giving, and choose where you want your donations to go. Simple! In addition, QR codes are in the pews and will be on the table in the grove for an easy, fast way of contributing. Thank you in advance for your continuing support of your church.

PASTORAL RELATIONS COMMITTEE

This committee is tasked with supporting the Pastor as well as bringing to her any concerns of the congregation. Information discussed is confidential. Members are Sandy Rowe, Dan Jenkins, and Tootie Hine. Please feel free to discuss any joys or concerns you have with any member of this committee.

DECEMBER BIRTHDAYS

Isabelle Chidawu	12/4/25
Mari O'Drain	12/4/25
John Jonides	12/8/25
Abigail Dise	12/9/25
Analexis Foss	12/15/25
Judith Gergle	12/20/25
Betty Bortz	12/21/25
Bonnie Cox	12/21/25
Jim Faust	12/22/25
Josh Palubinsky	12/23/25
TJ Augustine III	12/24/25

DECEMBER PRAYER LOTTERY

Dec 7

Kim Yocom and Barry Peterman
Jim and Clair Faust
Maryln Rohrbach
Danielle Petersen

Dec 14

Gary and Susan Stultz
Peter and Adrianne Wanner
Joan Granger
Jesse Painter
Rachel Berriker

Dec 21

Judy Gergle
Cara Bevan
Connie Armbruster
Collin Gray
Anthony Gulotta

Dec 28

Ben Mocarski

BJ Peterman

Eric Klein

Roberta Peterman

Betty Bortz

JANUARY BIRTHDAYS

Kim Yocom 1/4/26

Susan Miller 1/5/26

Barry Peterman 1/5/26

Olivia Dushanko 1/9/26

James Heath 1/10/26

Brandon Foss 1/13/26

Delia Sanseverino 1/18/26

Mike Martin 1/21/26

Aurora Keim 1/22/26

David Braley 1/24/26

David Klein 1/24/26

Eric Klein 1/27/26

Joseph Bradley 1/29/26

Suzanne Spaulding 1/30/26

JANUARY PRAYER LOTTERY

Jan 4

Lynne and Cody Moyer

Joel Sweinhart

Mark Dushanko

Mindy Chidawu

Jan 11

Anthony Gulotta

Ken and Betsy Bevan

Lilly Keim

Glen and Debbie Hoff

Jan 18

Stacey, William and Aurora Keim

Stacia and Joseph Bradley

Dan Jenkins

Barbara Brown

Jan 25

Andrew, Linda, Lexi, Brandon, Aaron, Michael and AJ Foss

Linda and John Jonides

Brian and Pam McShane

Ted and Chris Gray

Wishing you all a Blessed Christmas and Healthy New Year!

Your Shenkel Happenings Editor,

Brenda Berriker