

SHENKEL HAPPENINGS – JANUARY 2026

Greetings, Shenkel Friends and Family!

I had an epiphany—a handy thing to have since today, as I write this, is the beginning of Epiphany. It's when Christians commemorate the day the Magi brought gifts to baby Jesus. It's also an “aha!” moment when God taps us on the shoulder to say, “Hey, pay attention!”

It was another cloudy day, 33 degrees, and I decided enough was enough. I needed a walk in the fresh air. So, I grabbed my fuzzy hat with the pompom on top and fleece gloves and snuggled into what my teacher friends affectionately call my playground coat. You know, the down-filled one that falls below the knees and stops all gale-force winds. Anyway, as I walked, I thought, “This feels so good!” I was invigorated. My mind was not focused on the past or the future, just what I was feeling and seeing as I placed one foot in front of the other.

And then I spotted her: the lady I often encounter on my walks, our community Debbie Downer. You know the type. The sun can be shining, the birds can be singing, the flowers can be blooming, and she says something like, “Well, it's nice to be out but it's supposed to rain tomorrow.” Wah, wah. Sure enough, as she approached, we locked eyes and she said, “Well, I'd like to see a little sun.” Yep, I agreed and said, “But it feels so good to be outside!” Her face remained stern, and then she kind of sort of smiled and we continued in opposite directions.

I reflected on the experience. I was feeling energized, happy to be moving in the fresh air, and she tried to dim my light bulb. Not on purpose, I know, because she is who she is, and it must be working for her. But I thought about the times when I have been someone's Debbie Downer. Maybe I wanted to be prepared and was a little afraid to trust the good times. Yes, life is good now, but what happens when it's not? How many times have things been going well in my life, but there's always a little part of me that wonders when the next shoe is going to drop? Maybe that mindset resonates with you. But notice how that kind of thinking gets in the way of enjoying life fully and completely!

I invite you to join me in looking for all the big and little good things life has to offer, even, and perhaps especially, when life seems a bit cloudy and cold. Whether in the kindness of a stranger at the grocery store, or the phone call from a friend just when you needed it most. Or times you reached out to people who needed to talk. Or in the belly laugh of a child, or the cheep-cheep-cheep of the cardinal at your birdfeeder. God's love is present in everything. We just need to keep our eyes and hearts open to recognize it!

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!

- **JANUARY 25** – Pastor Suzanne will be away, and Rev. Pam McShane will be leading worship.

- **ASH WEDNESDAY SERVICE – FEBRUARY 18 AT 10:00 AM**

We are trying something different, offering a service on Ash Wednesday at 10:00 AM to begin the Season of Lent. Pastor Suzanne shares this:

"It is the middle of the week. We could be busy about many things, or nothing at all. Instead, we gather to remember what we usually try to deny or forget: sin and death are killing us. The litany of our sins is long. 'Have mercy' is our only prayer. Palm fronds, burned and ground, are smudged upon our brows. Every human triumph is reduced to ashes, every human tyranny crushed, every human creature returned to dust. This will be the end of all of us.

And this is our beginning. A season of lengthening days, the gift of time stretching toward life. Time to prepare to be born anew by water and the Spirit. Time to practice the way of Jesus, to tend the earth, to remember the poor, to do the things that make for peace. Time to turn and return to God who is gracious and merciful, slow to anger, and abounding in steadfast love. This is our beginning and our end." (Worship Guidebook for Lent and the Three Days, pg. 17, Augsburg Fortress)

- **TAIZE LENTEN SERVICES**

If you enjoy soft lighting, beautiful music, short readings, and short times for meditation and reflection, the Taize services may be just what you need! They will be held on **Wednesdays, February 25, March 4, 11, 18, and 25 at 6:30 PM in the Social Hall**. Surrounding yourself in the beauty of this meditative service will be the best 30 minutes of your week. Hope to see you there!

UPCOMING EVENTS – MARK YOUR CALENDARS!

- **PRIDE FESTIVAL PLANNING MEETING** – The first planning meeting will be held on Zoom on Monday, February 2 at 6:30 PM. Anyone interested in helping with the planning and in participating in some way is invited to let Pastor Suzanne know so she can send you the link.

- **LINE DANCING AND MORE!**

You won't want to miss this! Let's blow the winter cold away with a fun night of country line dancing and other dance forms with Sandra Dee on **SATURDAY, MARCH 21 FROM 7:00 TO 9:00 PM**. No partner required! Reach out and invite your friends—it'll be a blast! Look for more details next month.

CAROL CHALLENGE UPDATE

Our goal was \$5,000, and we outdid ourselves! A total of **\$5,446.94** was collected to help offset the budget deficit! Many thanks and congratulations!

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. **BETTER YET:** Personally invite your friends and neighbors—it works! Thank you for your help!

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

Consistory is meeting January 20th. Please watch for further information concerning the **Annual Congregational Meeting** coming up in the next few weeks.

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, January 18th. Future meetings are February 15, March 15, April 19, and May 17.

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

- Join us! As we start the new year, the Stewardship Committee (Chris Gray, Julie Yocom, Kim Yocom, Dan Jenkins, and Brenda Berriker) is looking for people to bring fresh ideas and/or a willingness to help brainstorm and implement ways to let people know what a great place Shenkel is! We have held concerts, drumming circles, Qigong sessions, as well as informational sessions with an elder law attorney and pastor who worked with people on end of life issues. Anything is possible, and we'd love your ideas and input! Contact any Stewardship member or Pastor Suzanne to help make our church the best that it can be!
- We will continue to hold Qigong classes led by a class member as our teacher, Salil, takes a hiatus until April. Join us **Thursdays at 11:00 AM in the Social Hall**. Qigong's gentle movements have been used for centuries to improve health, reduce stress, and keep us in the present moment. Please wear comfortable clothing. The suggested fee is \$12.00 per class payable by cash or check, but if that is prohibitive, pay what you are able. Adults only, please.
- Along with coming up with interesting events to help people in the community know who we are, Stewardship is also tasked with coming up with fundraising ideas. It looks like *our efforts have earned us close to \$6,500!* While the bulk of this is from rental of our facility by homeschoolers and Qigong classes, I think we are doing a great job! So please, if you know of anyone who needs a rental space for showers or birthday/anniversary parties, have them call the church office for information. Every little bit helps!
- 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

JANUARY: Canned oranges and canned pineapple

FEBRUARY: Canned chili and canned pasta (Chef Boyardee)

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.

JANUARY BIRTHDAYS

Kimberly 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

FEBRUARY BIRTHDAYS

Britnee Sanseverino	2/2/26
Barry Miller	2/4/26
Jesse Painter	2/4/26
Sandra Peterman	2/5/26
Nicole Meehan	2/10/26
Doug Allen	2/11/26
Audrey Dyott	2/13/26
Lori Skulski	2/15/26
Bill Sanseverino	2/24/26
Erika Manetti	2/25/26
Gary McDermit	2/26/26
Kathy Murphy	2/27/26

FEBRUARY PRAYER LOTTERY

Feb 1

Jim and Elaine Bevan

Bonnie Cox

Randy and Brenda Berriker

Jim and Clair Faust

Feb 8

Cameron Dushanko

Clay Zachesky

Stephanie Viti

Judy Miller

Feb 15

Rebecca, Joe, Grace and Cole Major

Richard Golden

Gene and Nick Takach, Eric Croom

Kelly Strunk, Steve, Madeline, and Jacoby Mest

Feb 22

Louise Hine

Peter and Adrienne Wanner

Olivia Dushanko

Morgan Scharneck

Enjoy your life!

Your Shenkel Happenings Editor,

Brenda Berriker