NEW CREATION NEWS

Nov. ~ Dec. 2026

St. Peter's United Church of Christ

1475 Orchard Park Rd., West Seneca, NY 14224

(716) 674-1233 • stpetersws@gmail.com • www.st-petersucc.org

PASTORAL PONDERINGS

It hardly seems possible that the church is forced to think about seasons of gratitude and Advent and Christmas now. We wonder at times that the challenges in our lives, in our families' lives, in the world around us and even in our church, make us recognize the importance of being thankful. Yet, there are many things to be thankful for. For those in good health or in the care of compassionate care givers, we can be thankful. There are those who have seen their families be strengthened due to crises and can be thankful. The upcoming elections could bring changes in the United States and amendments that are on the ballots, in local communities and we are able to be thankful for these. The Advent season that draws us closer to Christmas helps us focus on the Advent wreath on Sundays, four weeks prior to the birth of Christ. The hope, love, joy, peace and the light of Christ remind us of the importance of Advent. We celebrated the life of Milton Keim with 208 people present, involving standing room only. It became a great opportunity to share with his family and friends support as they grieve his passing. The ushers, those giving directions to the back of the building, providing food and helping with sharing that food following the service, informing visitors of the steps at the back of the sanctuary, giving up bulletins and finding ways to make more room in pews. St. Peter's shines when we host events like that. Join us on November 29th to decorate the Christmas trees and other decorations, taking ornaments that will hang on the special tree in the glass foyer we are able to give someone a gift who may not otherwise receive one. (Look at the mission projects that Kathy Reandeau will share later in this newsletter about ways to give at Thanksgiving and Christmas).

On November 29, we will have a special hymn and carol sing during worship. Please put in an e-mail or drop in the offering plate two of your favorite hymns or carols by Nov. 22 and we will enjoy singing them on the 29th. Questions can be addressed to Pastor Paula.

Christmas Eve we will again worship at 7pm. There will be a candlelight service with special music. If ever you want to invite someone to worship at St. Peter's, please invite them for Christmas Eve. We are able to worship together as we celebrate the birth of Christ.

Pastor Paula



St. Peter's Council 2026

DEACONS:	Linda Richards, President
	Kathy Reandeau, Treasurer
	Marina Stohr, Financial Secretary
ELDERS:	Paul Gannon, Vice President
	Christel Kasprzak, Secretary
	Sandy Fiegl
TRUSTEE:	Brian Welsh

CHURCH OFFICE HOURS: *Please call ahead.
The church office hours are Monday - Thursday from 9:00 am to 12:00 pm. The office is closed on Fridays.

PASTOR OFFICE HOURS: *Please call ahead.
Rev. Paula will be in the office on Tuesdays from 10:00 am - 12:30 pm and Thursdays from 2:00 pm - 4:00 pm.

PASTORAL CARE

Rev. Paula Gustafson is available to provide pastoral care for members of St. Peter's congregation. Rev. Paula can be reached by phone at 716-476-9261 or by email at pastorpaula2021@gmail.com.



ENCIRCLING IN OUR PRAYERS…

FOR GOD'S HEALING

John Sworen; Tim and Sue Schrader; Janet Hunt; Dorothy Probst; Esther Heppner; Mike Rogers; Karen Homonai; Paul Dimmig; Charlie Bushen; Chuck Brooks; Family of Milton Keim. Prayers for those lost, injured and traumatized by the mass shootings across the U.S.; Continued prayers for the people of Ukraine, Sudan, and the Middle East.

FOR GOD'S PRESENCE

For **those in the hospital and with medical problems** known only to God and their loved ones.

For **all victims of violence.**

For all **Gold Star parents** – those who have lost sons or daughters in the military—may God be with them and comfort them in their time of loss.

FOR THOSE IN SERVICE TO OUR COUNTRY:

Earle C. Heusinger III ★★★ Army
Justin Hurlburt ★★★ Army National Guard
Jacob Kruwel ★★★ Army
Caleb Tolley ★★★ Air Force
Holly Tolley ★★★ Air Force
Jack Welsh ★★★ Marine Corps

And for all firefighters, EMTs, law enforcement & border officers.

IN MEMORIUM



It is with great sadness that we announce the passing of our dear friend Milton Keim on October 6, 2026. Milton died while at the VA Hospital and was the father of Christel Kasprzak and Susan Schneider. A memorial service was held at St. Peter's on October 18.

Please keep Milton's family in your prayers.

Thank You From the Bottom of Our Hearts…

for the outpouring of love and support you've given us throughout our Dad's many hospital and rehab stays. Your cards, attendance at his Celebration of Life and warm hugs is truly appreciated. Thank you, as well, to those who ushered, directed traffic, brought a dessert for the luncheon, manned the kitchen or helped with teardown of the tables and chairs.

Love, Susan, Christel and Eric

St. Peter's UCC….

Faith, Fellowship and Service

Faith in Christ,
Welcoming **Fellowship**
and Loving **Service**

Neighbors in Need

Carry each other's burdens, and in this way you will fulfill the law of Christ. -Galatians 6:2

Submitted by Kathy Reandeau

The Neighbors in Need offering (NIN) is a special mission offering that is received in October as part of World Communion Sunday. It supports a variety of justice initiatives, advocacy efforts, and direct service projects. The money collected through the Neighbors in Need offering is shared, with two-thirds benefiting the justice and witness ministries of the UCC, including grants awarded for direct service and advocacy initiatives of local congregations and partners. In 2025 the Neighbors in Need Offering supported 26 grant recipients across the UCC who were engaged in projects of direct service and advocacy. The remaining one-third of the offering benefits the Council for American Indian Ministries (CAIM).

Through this offering we express our deep commitment to reaching out and touching our neighbors with justice and compassion. This allows us to speak prophetically and to advocate for a society where all people have a voice in decisions that affect their lives.

NIN funds are utilized by staff to develop curated and created resources, such as webinars, Bible studies, curriculums, advocacy tools, and more. Additionally, a portion of the monies collected are used to fund grants at various levels and needs:

- Direct Service grants provide funding to meet the immediate needs of an individual or group (i.e. food, clothing, utilities).
- Advocacy grants offer funding to assist communities who wish to change policy on a state or federal level via an advocacy campaign.
- Grass Top funding seeks to award uniquely innovative programs which can be replicated in other settings.

Ephesians 5 reminds us to *"be imitators of God, as beloved children, and walk in love, as Christ loved us."* Thank you for your gifts as we work together, sharing our burdens to support our Neighbors in Need.



MISSION MUSINGS

Submitted by
Kathy Reandeau

Sharing Christ's love and peace with all!

As I write this, it is a beautiful fall day, so it is very hard to think about fall and winter activities! But, the calendar does continue to turn, so I need to adjust my mindset as well and look ahead to Thanksgiving and Christmas. For Thanksgiving, we will help Plymouth Crossroads by providing appetizers, drinks and desserts. Sign-up sheets will be provided for this purpose. I also have another family that needs "fixings" to go along with a turkey that has been donated to them – items such as fresh produce and canned vegetables. I starting to pull together information for the Christmas Giving Tree. We have one request already and I will contact Plymouth to see what they need as well. Stay tuned for further information!

PLYMOUTH CROSSROADS: Plymouth's mission is to provide a safe, supportive, home-like environment for at-risk youth. November is National Homeless Youth Awareness Month. This observance draws attention to the causes of youth homelessness; including unsafe homes, poverty, and aging out of foster care, and emphasizes the need for policies and programs that provide safety, stability, and hope for vulnerable youth. National Network for Youth has free information from their Resource Center – found under "Learn" (https://nn4youth.org). National Child Traumatic Stress Network (NCTSN) has free-to-download Toolkits, informational sheets and resources in English and Spanish. Type "Youth Homelessness" in the Search Bar (https://www.nctsn.org).

Homelessness across Western New York is rising at an alarming rate, with new data showing the region facing its most severe crisis in decades. According to the 2026 Point-in-Time (PIT) Count, homelessness increased by 24% compared to last year — the highest level recorded since tracking began in 2005. 49% of the current homeless population in Erie County are families with children. These families go unseen, because it is illegal to be on the street with your children. But they are there, moving from couch to couch trying to avoid the shelter system, sleeping in living rooms or other temporary spaces where they have no privacy, and missing school, because buses cannot find these children. (As we have learned from Plymouth Crossroads, many young people are "couch surfing" — a hidden form of housing instability that often also goes unnoticed.)

In August, thanks to the Erie County Youth Services and the Summer Primetime grant program, the boys had an amazing day at Six Flags Darien Lake, and got to just be carefree kids, if just for a day. Plymouth also held its golf tournament in September, thanks to the leadership of the **Western New York Insurance Association**, many amazing sponsors, and the "duffers" who came out swinging to make the day a success!



Don't forget the Bills Viewing Party fundraiser on November 15! We want to have at least one, if not two, tables of St. Peter's Bills fans. See Linda Richards for tickets.

Visit www.plymouthcrossroads.org for more info.

NY/HELP HONDURAS: Since 1989, NY/HELP Honduras has been working with the indigenous people of La Laguna and surrounding communities to help them empower and improve their lives in these remote mountain communities. Donations gratefully accepted at: NY/HELP, c/o Arcade UCC, PO Box 95, Arcade NY 14009. Make checks payable to NY/HELP. For much more information, please contact: Ginger Comstock at gkcomstock@gmail.com or Dona Roll at Drroll@yahoo.com. NY/HELP also has a blog (http://ny-help.blogspot.com) and Facebook page.

REFLECTION – BE STILL AND KNOW THAT I AM GOD

As we move through increasingly busy and challenging days, it serves us well, spiritually, mentally, and physically, to pause periodically for 5 minutes, slow our breathing, and become centered. Slowly inhale, feel the breath of life expand your lungs, gently hold it as you count to 4, or as long as is comfortable, and then slowly release it. As you repeat this breathing process, recall the holy guidance we have been given. God reminds us:

Be still and know that I am God.

Be still and know that I am.

Be still and know.

Be still.

Be.



COUNCIL CORNER

And just like that, we go from thinking about the warm summer days, and waiting for the leaves to fall, to starting our preparations for winter and the holiday season. We have gone from "Yay, Bisons" to "Go Bills!" in the blink of an eye, and traded our water and iced tea for cider and hot chocolate. It can sometimes be difficult to keep up with the pace of everything, but we can rest assured in God's abiding love for us, and the steadfastness of our fellowship with one another.

Please remember that your regular financial contributions to St. Peter's are crucial. If you have fallen behind during the summer, or will be away for an extended time during the winter, you can mail your offering envelopes to the church office or donate online through our website at www.st-petersucc.org under the "Online Giving" tab. Some members have even set up a regular donation through their bank account, similar to the way they pay their household expenses, so they don't have to worry about it each week.

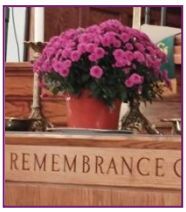
We made it through the summer and the first two months of fall with the continued participation of everyone in our congregation. Some people wear two or three hats, serving in multiple ways, but everyone does his or her best for the good of St. Peter's. We had great fun with our summer activities, and our September visit to the Bisons baseball game, but were just as happy to see our children back in Sunday School and resume our Game Nights. The return of the Craft & Vendor show was a big success, and we thank everyone for their support of this fundraising venture. We were also happy to welcome back the Safe Driver Academy, and are pleased to offer this educational outreach to our community.

The coming months look to be just as eventful, and we hope we can count on your continued involvement. We would like to have a table (or even two!) of St. Peter's football fans at the Plymouth Crossroads Bills Viewing Party Fundraiser, and are planning a dinner get-together at Ilio DiPaolo's Restaurant for their Wednesday Flight Night on December 2. We will be decorating the church for the Christmas season on Sunday, November 29.

We are currently working on the financial outlook for 2027, and plan to hold our budget meeting on Sunday, December 6 after the worship service – the Bills game isn't until 4:25, so there should be no reason to miss these important deliberations. One item we will be discussing is St. Peter's contributions for the various components of our UCC "dues" – covenantal shares for the WNY Area Churches in Covenant, per capita contributions for the New York Conference, and giving to Our Church's Wider Mission (OCWM).

Our mission work will be front and center during the upcoming holidays as well. Look for information on our Thanksgiving and Christmas giving activities. Council meets monthly to discuss the overall business and activities of the church, the deacons focus on building issues and financial matters, and the elders are recreating the entranceway to make our church move inviting and provide a quiet area for our little angels.

Upcoming Council meetings are scheduled for November 16 and December 14, beginning at 6:30 p.m., with an open forum available for the first fifteen minutes. May Thanksgiving blessings be with you all, and may the peace and love of our savior shine in your hearts during the season of Advent and Christmas! We look forward to entering 2027 in the spirit of joyful anticipation.



SERMON THOUGHTS

Be concerned about spiritual food for our soul as well as physical food for our body. Remember that the Strike The Rock name derives from the Bible verse where God commanded Moses to strike the rock at Horeb and water will flow from it.

What makes us good Christians? Reaching out to strangers for one - we can cast off their "strangeness" and view them as fellow humans. God will sometimes put you where you need to be at the exact moment you need to be there. There is always forgiveness and grace when we turn to God in prayer.

What stuff do we have in our lives that keeps us from seeing what is most important? Jesus tells us to love ourselves and our neighbors more than the temporal things of this world.

Forgiveness is transactional and mercy is releasing someone from a deserved punishment. Mercy needs to be our compassion, and we apply it with God being present to us. What does God want of you, but to seek justice, love mercy, and walk humbly with your God.

The first shall be last, and the last shall be first. As in the scripture story of the manna and quails, we are all cared for and provided for by a loving God. God's love prevails!

Since we are created in the image of a loving God, our net worth is infinite to Him. When we climb the ladder of success, we are only comparing ourselves to others, but it is our life in Christ that gives us real value. "Look not to

your own interests, but to those of God. Don't just follow your passion - bring it with you!"

We need to be accountable. What we give to God is what has been given to us. Guard the good and the positive, for we are in the presence of God!

We are challenged to learn to disagree in good faith, so the other person is neither "right" nor "wrong." Focus on the subject, not the person - be of the same mind in God. "In conclusion, my friends, fill your minds with those things that are good and that deserve praise: things that are true, noble, right, pure, lovely, and honorable."

"Render to Caesar that which is Caesar's, and render to God that which is God's." While Caesar's image may be stamped on the coin, God's image is truly stamped in our hearts. We bear the image of God in all that we do.



SONG NOTES:

"Come, Ye Thankful People, Come"

At this time of year, we usually focus on the music of Christmas, and look forward to having a holiday hymn sing on November 29. But there are several beautiful hymns about harvest and Thanksviging. One of these, "Come, Ye Thankful People, Come," is an English Christian harvest festival hymn written in 1844 by Henry Alford.

Alford wrote "Come, Ye Thankful People, Come" while he was rector of Aston Sandford in Buckinghamshire, England. It was first published in Hymns and Psalms in 1844 with seven verses under the title "After Harvest.. The song was set to George J. Elvey's hymn tune St. George's, Windsor in 1858. In 1865, Alford revised the hymn, and it was republished in his Poetical Works with only four verses. In 1861 there had been a number of unofficial revisions of the hymn, including one in Hymns Ancient and Modern, which led to Alford publishing a footnote in Poetical Works stating his disapproval of these revisions that had been made without his agreement. Despite this, Alford revised the hymn again in 1867 in Year of Praise. The hymn later gained popularity in the United States where it is used as part of Thanksgiving celebrations.

The first verse is written as a celebration of the harvest, calling for people to give thanks to God for it. The last two verses are based on the Parable of the Tares, and discuss the last harvest at the Second Coming of Jesus.

"Come, ye thankful people, come,
Raise the song of harvest home!
All is safely gathered in,
Ere the winter storms begin;
God, our Maker, doth provide
For our wants to be supplied;
Come to God's own temple, come;
Raise the song of harvest home!"

Tell us what a song means to you, or you might even go online to learn about its history or find the exact words that touch you the most. Let's sing out our praises of St. Peter's music!

WELLNESS RESOURCES

November is **National Family Caregivers Month:** This month is set aside to "highlight the dedication, challenges, and societal value of family caregivers. It is currently estimated that 53 million American family caregivers are providing care to a loved one." Resources for further information and support include:

- The Caregiver Action Network (CAN) (https://www.caregiveraction.org) provides free education, peer support, and resources to download/print in English and Spanish
- The National Council on Aging (https://www.ncoa.org) has information about caregiving and support found under "Aging Well"





CRAFT & VENDOR SHOW

Submitted by Christel Kasprzak

As the saying goes "Many hands make light work". It was a total team effort with set up, tear down and everything in between in order for the craft and vendor show to be successful. A million thanks to everyone who helped, but a special shout out to Donna, who ran a top notch kitchen selling BBQ pulled chicken sandwiches, brownies, cookies, chips and drinks and Marina who coordinated the raffle baskets. We welcomed wonderfully talented crafters who sold everything from baked goods, to cross body bags to homemade dog biscuits, along with a steady stream of shoppers throughout the day. Word has it, from the vendors, that we ran a very well organized event. (Apparently, other craft shows have been a bit of a nightmare!) Total profit for the day, including vendor fees, kitchen sales and raffle basket tickets was $2,626.77. In addition to Donna and Marina, thank you so much to Linda, who made the BBQ chicken and helped with the raffle, Mark and Dan with set up and tear down, along with most everyone else listed here, Susan Schneider with set up, Gloria, Pam and Carol Puckett for helping in the kitchen, Kathy with the raffle, Karen and Sandy for selling raffle tickets and to those who donated baked goods. Last but not least, thank you to everyone who donated a basket or an item for the raffle. We had more than 60!!! I truly hope that I haven't forgotten anyone. Please forgive me if I have. Hopefully, we'll be able to host another show in 2027.





























BIRTHDAY CELEBRATIONS

NOVEMBER	10	Emma Heppner
	14	Pam Rost
	17	Jeffrey Mikula
	20	Paul Dimmig
	26	Susan Mikula
DECEMBER	3	Henry Heppner
	28	Mary Jane Krantz

ANNIVERSARY CELEBRATIONS

NOVEMBER	28	Carl Paul & Deborah Dimmig
DECEMBER	30	Dave & Gloria Elersic

Join us every Sunday at 10:00 am
for in-person worship service.
All are welcome.



Billboard by Karen Buranich



Charlie Hunt's Wood Carved Noah's Ark Display by Christel Kasprzak



Game Night – November 20
Advent Decorating – November 29
Flight Night at Ilio DiPaolo's – December 2
Budget Meeting – December 6
Christmas Eve Worship Service – December 24



DECEMBER 24 at 7:00 pm
All are Welcome!

Stay up to date with all of the St. Peter's UCC events by visiting our Website or Facebook page.

Check back often so that you don't miss anything!

Website: www.st-petersucc.org
Facebook: St. Peter's United Church of Christ—West Seneca

