

POUGHKEEPSIE UNITED METHODIST CHURCH
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The Journey February 2025

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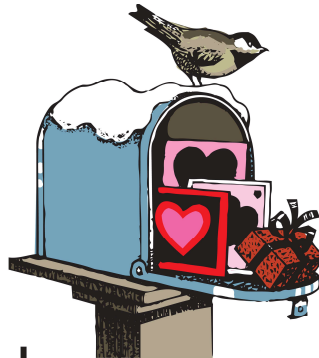
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DIRECTOR OF HARRIET
TUBMAN ACADEMIC SKILLS
CENTER

The Deadline for the March Journey is Wednesday February 12



February



Then the Lord said to Cain, "Where is your brother Abel?"

He said, "I do not know; am I my brother's keeper?"

Genesis 4: 9

This text from Genesis comes just after God created the first family, and they began to multiply: Adam and Eve gave birth to Cain and Able. There is also the first act of worship as Cain and Able bring their offering before the Lord. The text describes Able's offering as being the firstlings of his flock and offering the prime portions to God. Cain's offering is simply stated as being the "fruit of the ground," seemingly nothing special that signifies trust, thankfulness, or faith. It is easy to see why the author of Hebrews claims that Able's offering of the best and choicest is a more faithful response to God than Cain's offering. But Cain sees this as a competition for God's love and favor, and because there must be winners and losers, he kills Able to eliminate the competition.

God, who sees and knows all things, gives Cain a chance for confession, repentance, and forgiveness, as God plays dumb, "Where is your brother Abel?"

Cain, probably focused on hoeing a particularly stubborn patch of the garden and answering distractedly or evasively, says, "I don't know; am I my brother's keeper?" You can almost hear the hoe continue to scrape the ground as he is trying to relay the sense of, "Nothing to see here, just move on and look someplace else."

Cain's actions mirror the original sin of prioritizing self over God, revealing humanity's persistent struggle with ego and responsibility. The original sin is that humanity prioritized self over God, individualism rather than community, defining reality rather than living within it. Cain chooses to extend the distance from God to humanity as he seeks to avoid responsibility for his actions, bury his empathy with the spade of his ego, and risk expulsion rather than be caught in sin, faulty logic, and emotive overreach.

This raises a timeless question: 'Am I my brother's keeper?'

I think Jesus would respond to this question even as he does when asked about the greatest of commandments in Matthew 22:34-40: Love God first, and then love what God loves by loving your fellow human even as you love yourself. For me, that last part is as good a definition of empathy as any other.

Christ calls us to be our brother and sister's keeper, but he also redefines that role to include the relatedness of humanity, for he assures us that '...whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers and sisters of mine, you did for me.' (Matthew 25:40) As we care for one another, so it is that we find ourselves caring for Jesus. And anyone who cares for Jesus cares for God, for God's priorities, for the object of God's love, humanity.

Looking at the world around us, we should constantly hear God's question to Cain, "Where is your brother Abel?" This is not just a question of guilt but an invitation to responsibility, to care for others as Christ cares for us. Let us live Jesus' answer rather than Cain's response: "I am my siblings' keeper." Through our love and service, we reflect God's love and fulfill the calling to care for His beloved creation.

In Jesus' name, AMEN.



FRIENDSHIP CIRCLE

Friendship Circle will meet on February 10 @ 1pm in Fellowship Hall.

Fellowship Discovery Luncheon



Our February Fellowship Discovery Luncheon will be on Tuesday, February 25 @ 12PM. Our speaker will be church member Ray Polivka. Please let us know (by Thursday, February 20) if you plan to attend by scanning the QR code or as always you can contact the office.



The Church Council met on Wednesday, January 8. Highlights included:

A brief Council meeting was held on January 8th. Highlights included:

- Annual calendars are being developed, both for programs sponsored by the church and routine building maintenance tasks.
- The first Contemporary Worship Service will be held on Tuesday, January 14th at 7:00 PM. Currently a service is planned for once a month.
- The Finance Committee is making final changes to the proposed budget and will present it at the February Council meeting.
- The Angel Tree gifts were gratefully received by Hudson River Lodging. We are now able to serve meals there again and will continue to provide meals through the Street Ministry and Hope on a Mission.
- A church-wide early spring brunch will be served in mid-March.
- The Fellowship Discovery lunches will begin again in February. Pastor Kregg is also
- gggfdsgfdf

Pastor's Book Study

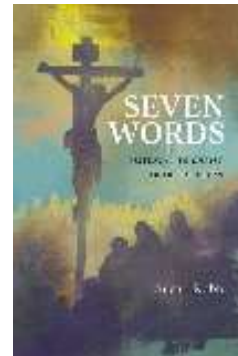
Our Lenten book study will begin on Tuesday, March 11 @ 10am

"Seven Words: Listening From Christ on the Cross"

by Susan G Robb

In *Seven Words*, Susan Robb looks at the seven last words of Christ on the cross through a lens that finds life and hope in his final sayings, while exploring each from a biblical and historical perspective. The book brings a hopeful and contemplative take on the cross during the weeks of Lent.

Books will be \$12.00 and available in the office.





Shrove Tuesday Pancake Supper

Save the Date! Our annual Shrove Pancake Supper will take place on Tuesday March 4.
More info coming soon.

ANNUAL COOKIE WALK

Saturday, February 8, 9:00 AM-2:00 PM



PUMC will again host the Cookie Walk to benefit the ministry work of local churches through Love INC. Love INC supports those less fortunate through its various ministries and classes.

Please help by signing up to bake cookies. Sign-up sheets are in Fellowship Hall and the Narthex. You may send an email to Kathy Betz (katherinebetz1@gmail.com). Please provide your Name, a contact (phone or email), and quantity of cookies you expect to deliver.

Delivery of cookies will be Friday, February 7 9:00 AM – 8:00 PM.

Vacation Bible School!

Vacation Bible will return on July 10 – 12. The plan is currently to combine with Casa de Adoracion to create a dynamic and exciting joint VBS that will bring our congregations closer together. More information coming soon.



Movies With Meaning



The next showing of a MOVIE WITH MEANING by the Social Justice Team will be in Fellowship Hall on Saturday, February 22, 2025, at 6pm. Refreshments will be served. The particular movie is currently being selected by the Team from a list of potentials, and the choice will soon be publicized. Note, you can always stay current with the Social Justice Team's activities by visiting us on the PUMC website [i.e., pokumc.com > About PUMC > Missions > Social Justice or <https://pokumc.com/social-justice-ministry/>]

Altar Flowers

There are LOTS of openings for flowers. Please consider signing up to provide flowers. The cost is \$50.00 and the flowers are yours to take after the service if you would like. This is a wonderful way to memorialize or honor a loved one. There is a yellow form on the bulletin board in the narthex with all the information you need or you can contact the church office.



Altar Flowers

Hudson Valley Bridge Builders Fundraising Gala 2025



Please consider joining us for our Fundraising Gala! It's a night to learn about HVBB, meet some wonderful people and help us fundraise!

March 29th, 4-7pm at Living Water Church. \$40 per person

We ask that everyone attending the Gala bring a donation item

for Hope on a Mission (a list of needed items will be provided)

RSVP by March 14th via the QR Code or the link:

<https://checkout.square.site/merchant/MLEZKXHJA63QN/checkout/JLNZAI5BTJZNRUW/T2QN4GRFY>

NOTES FROM THE CHOIR ROOM



"LOVE IS LITTLE, LOVE IS KIND,
LOVE WILL MAKE MY SPIRIT GROW.
GROW IN PEACE, GROW IN LIGHT;
LOVE WILL DO THE THING THAT'S RIGHT"
South Union Shaker Settlement, Kentucky (1834)

When I think of February, my mind whirls around all the love songs, poetry, and art created by and for love. Already in the cold of January, store shelves are full of red hearts & candy. The question becomes-where does love come from-where has it gone? I feel a sermon coming on.....and a song!

Many, many years ago, I found a song for my New Paltz High School Choir. It spoke volumes to my students. Sometime later, I shared that same song with my Roy C. Ketcham Chamber Choir. It still speaks to students who keep in touch with me. Here are a few of the words....from "If We Only Have Love" from "Jacques Brel is Alive & Well" (composer and lyricist, 1929-1978)

"If we only have love, then tomorrow will dawn; and the days of our years will rise on that morn. Then with nothing at all, but the little we are, we'll have conquered all time, all space, the sun, and the stars."

WISHING YOU ALL A SPECIAL VALENTINE'S DAY FILLED WITH LOVE!

Polly James



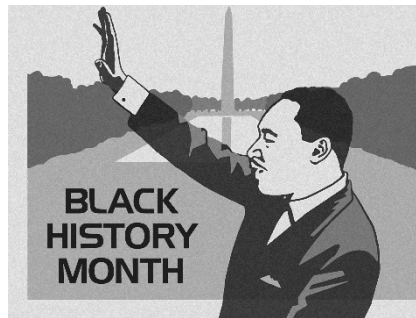
The PUMC choir would like to give a special "shout out" to Deb Carrier, who takes the time every year to collect and attain gifts for our choir director Polly and organist/pianist Stephen. She is so great at organizing things and getting just the right thing for both Polly and Stephen. And when we have special birthday celebrations at choir, she always makes sure we have something yummy and sweet to eat after rehearsal. Thank you Deb for all you do!! Blessings and Love, the PUMC Choir

Hymn Backgrounds
Jennifer Harmer

I am writing this entry on Tuesday, January 14, 2025. This past Sunday for our Hymn of Preparation we sang “When Jesus Came to Jordan” which, though probably not sung a lot during the year, was still a familiar hymn. However, I was struck when I looked to see the name of the tune – COMPLAINER. Yes, you read that right. COMPLAINER. Don’t believe me? Next time you have a hymnal in front of you, turn to hymn 252 and look at the bottom right at the end of the song and you will see it in capital letters. That stuck with me and then gave me inspiration to find out more about the hymn.

“When Jesus Came to Jordan” was written by Rev. Fred Pratt Green (1903-2000) in 1973. Rev. Green was a British Methodist minister in addition to a hymn writer. He was born in Roby, Lancashire, England and was ordained in 1928 and served in this capacity until 1969. Rev. Green wrote several hymns while serving churches but did not write the majority of his hymns until after retirement. There are several hymn tunes that have been used with “When Jesus Came to Jordan” with the three most popular being DE EERSTEN ZIJN DE LAATSTEN, OFFERTORIUM, and KING’S LYNN. COMPLAINER was a tune written in 1835 by William Walker that was set to the hymn “I am a Great Complainer” found mostly in The Southern Harmony and Musical Companion.

“When Jesus Came to Jordan” is suggested for use on the Baptism of the Lord Sunday in both Year A and Year C as it is related to Matthew 3’s telling of Jesus being baptized by John. It is only published in 23 hymnals. (References from Hymnary.org)





Readings Toward Social Justice:
White Poverty, by William J Barber II

Our Social Justice Team will be writing a book review column each month for books that might be of interest to the congregation.

“We are not a nation divided by racial identity and political ideology. We are, instead a people who have been pitted against one another by politicians and billionaires who depend on the poorest among us not being seen.”

With this startling statement, the Reverend Dr. William J Barber II, founding director of the Center for Public Theology and Public Policy at Yale Divinity School, begins his book, White Poverty.

“It [poverty] is everywhere,” Barber asserts. He goes on, “[W]hite people are by far the largest racial demographic among America’s poor.”

But because of obsolete standards of measurement the figures for poverty in general use are at best inaccurate and at worst distorted. We remain blinded to the real situation and to the real possibilities.

According to Barber, there are 4 myths which keep us blind to the widespread reality of poverty and to a vision of dealing with it together. The first that pale skin is a shared interest, that poverty-stricken whites believe they have more in common with white politicians who keep them in poverty than they do with poverty-stricken Blacks, perhaps those in the same community. The second is that only Black folks want change in America. The third myth is that poverty is only a Black issue; and, finally, that nothing can be done to overcome the divisions among us.

Barber debunks each of these myths. And he holds out hope that we can build coalitions to transform our nation from the bottom up. His hope is for a government to be more truly for all the people and not primarily for the wealthy and the corporations. As increasingly seems to be the case.

This is a paradigm-shifting book, well worth reading.

Steve Allen, Social Justice Team Member

REMEMBER IN OUR PRAYERS



Our members: Barbara Bates, Cheryl Cass, Will Cass, Janet Cole, Ron Cole, Dylan Coughlin, Sandra DeGuzman, Irene Feller, Veronica Gordon, Emily Griess, Roy Griess, Betsy Grover, Gwen Higgins, Tom Halloran, Sandra Hansen, Pat Hughes, Dick James, Donna Jonnigan, Danny Jones, Betty Longobardi, Millie Milkovich, Julia Miller, Kathleen Nicodemus, Michelle Olavarria, Karla Quinlan, Arnette and Robert Schmidt, Diana Silverman, Michelle Simonis, Jeff Tryon, Catherine White, Sarah-Grace White, Marilyn Zier.

Friends of our church in your prayers: Georgia Kustas-Beurket, Cris and John Burke, Jordan Fidler, Bryan Foy, Lee, Margot Madalengoitia, Edgar Martinez, Adonis Marzan, Hilary McAllister, Joe Pollen, Rob Post, Jean Slater, Wayne Surico, Robert Thompson-Gee, Ronald Tomaso, Jackie Triguero, Clifford Zier. All the innocents affected by wars and conflicts around the world.

Members of the military, active and/or retired, in your prayers: Michael Clear, Staff Sergeant in the Army, Joshua Lord, 1-69 Infantry Medical Platoon Sergeant, NYC; Randal Middleton, Naples, Italy Naval Base, Major Jason Oliver, Texas.

February Calendar of Important Dates

Wednesday, February 5th – Church Council @ 7pm

Saturday, February 8th – Cookie Walk

Sunday, February 9th – SPRC @ 11:30am

Monday, February 10th - Friendship Circle @ 1:00pm

Wednesday, February 12th – Journey Deadline

Saturday, February 22nd - Movies with Meaning @ 6:00pm

Tuesday, February 25th – Fellowship Discovery Luncheon @ 12:00pm