†The Rod and the Staff†

A bimonthly publication of Shepherd of the Hills Lutheran Church, Whitehall (Egypt), Pennsylvania
✞ January, February 2026 ✞
Vol. 2026, Issue 1

PASTOR'S CORNER

Dear Sisters and Brothers in Christ,

Have you ever sat in the dark either by choice or maybe the electricity went off. What was your first reaction? We live in a world that is filled with light. From the LED and fluorescent lights that light up rooms to the flashlights on our phone that we use when we walk in the dark. We even have night lights to shine in the darkness so we can find our way. We need light!

Why do we need light? Psychologists say that we are affected by the early darkness and the dreary days during this time of the year. We become more depressed and we become more anxious as the darkness of the day lingers on.

As children of God, though, we can find peace even in the midst of the darkness. The True Light, Jesus Christ, brought light into a dark world when he was born as a baby in the manger. He brings peace and tranquility in a world that is often chaotic and troublesome. Even when we sit alone in the darkness of this world, we know that Jesus Christ shines for each one of us who calls Him our own personal Lord and Savior. We start now a new year—a year of uncertainties. We know there will be times of joy as well as sorrow during 2026. We know there will be moments of gloom as well as contentment. There will be moments of darkness as well as light. Throughout the whole year we need to remember that the Light of the World is with us each step of the way. May we all have a blessed and Light filled New Year.

Peace,

Reverend James Schlegel

CHRISTMAS EVE SERVICES

4:00 pm - Holy Communion and Children's Play
7:00 pm Holy Communion and candlelight
10:00 pm The 4 pm Service will be streamed on Facebook and our website

SUNDAY, DECEMBER 28 9:00 AM
SERVICE OF LESSONS AND CAROLS

There will be no Sunday School or Confirmation Classes.

SUNDAY, JANUARY 4
INSTALLATION OF CHURCH COUNCIL MEMBERS FOR 2026

TUESDAY, JANUARY 6
EPIPHANY SERVICE
7 PM

SUNDAY, JANUARY 18
THE ANNUAL MEETING ofSHEPHERD OF THE HILLS LUTHERAN CHURCH will be held immediately following the second service. All members are invited and encouraged to attend.

SUNDAY, JANUARY 25
YOUTH SUNDAY
Our youth will lead our 9 AM service. Come and support our young people.

This issue of the Rod and the Staff is sponsored by Todd and Melissa Sassaman.
Blessings to our Shepherd of the Hills family in the New Year.

THE WORD OF THE LORD

Come and join us for weekly Bible Study.

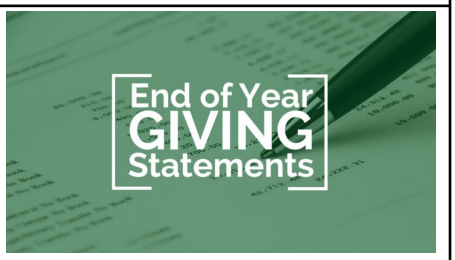
- Mondays at 10:00 am as we discuss the scripture lessons from the previous day.
- Wednesdays at 10:00 am. We explore God's Word.

Please put the dates in your calendar and come and join us.

ALTAR FLOWER POLICY

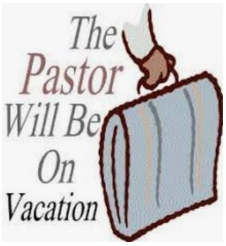
The Altar flowers each Sunday will be placed on the table at the top of the stairs. If you sponsor the flowers, you should pick them up by noon on Monday. Any flowers that remain after noon on Monday will be taken to a sick or shut-in member. This was approved by the church council.

If you need a copy of your Annual Statement of giving, for 2025, please call the office and one will be mailed to you.



The Mutual Ministry Committee: If you have any concerns regarding the Church Staff, you may speak to any member of the Mutual Ministry Committee about praise or concerns you are feeling. This committee meets on a regular basis with Pastor Schlegel.

Members are: **Jan Masonheimer, Terri Miller, Joe Kroboth and Karen Zimmerman.**



Pastor Schlegel will be on vacation January 7-13, 2026.

If you are in need of Pastoral Care, please call the church office.

Please Keep In Your Thoughts and Prayers:

A. Janice Abelovsky, Betty Ackerman, John Acuna
B. Carletta Bartholomew, Michelle Beck, Bill & Rosalie Beidleman, Janis Beidleman, Kim Beidleman, Kayla Belzecky, Carol Bennecoff, Brenda Benner, Alana Bird, Paul Blankenhorn, Marianne Blocker, Dylan Bold, Ann Borell, Jacob Braido, Angela Bressler, Sandra Bressler, Bonnie Brown, Janice Buckwalter, Pat Budd, Mark Buresh
C. Janice Campbell, Lisa Carl, James Caulder, Charles Church, Nick Cihylik, JoAnn Coppola
D. Nancy Dietz, Donna Detweiler, Ray Deutsch, Vanessa Dotter, Cheryl Dravuschak, Kelly Durst, Mike Durst
E. Kimberly Eastep, Austin Evans, Nash Evans
F. Beverly Fekula, Gloria Fischl, Donald Fister, Diane Flahart, James Foran, Annie Frack, Paul Frack, Cheyenne Frankenfield & family, Kay Fronheiser
G. Maxine Gantz, Ronald Gerlach, Teri Gerney, Sally Gibson, Jeff and Carol Gilbert, Jason Greiss, Rebecca Gross, Guy Grube
H. Glenn Hacker, Shelley Hanson, Cyndee Hart, Mike Hart, Dot Hartman, Brandon Heichel, Al Herman, Betty Hontz, Barbara Horvath, Elsie Huber, Susan Huber
J. Kim Jackson
K. Alex Katana, Bill Kiefer, Scott Knauss, Kathy Koch, Gerald Koenig, John Kotze, Keith Kramer, Russ Kramer, Zoe Kuchera, Barbara Kuhns, Adele Kunkle, Bruce Kunkle
L. Carlotta Lambert, Scott Lazarus, Wayne Lazarus, Baby Lily, Haden Long
M. Shirley Mack, Papa Mariano, Dan Markulics, Heather Markulics, Diane Masonheimer, Mia Mccleary, Denise Mensinger, Carole Mickley, Richard Miller, Christopher Moakley, Mason Moriarty, Tara Morrow, Al Mosser, Cora Mosser, Tiffany Mosser, Kevin Moyer, CJ Murray, Russell Myers
N. Cathy Nelcoski, Ava Nolan, Aiyana Nederostek
O. Dale Ott, Russlene Ouldcott
P. Barbara Pearlman, Mary Peters, Sandra Phillips, Karen Plesher
Q. Linda Quinn
R. Scarlet Randolph, Barbara Rapchak, Corey Rapchak, Keith Rapchak, Chris Reardon, Jean Reinert, Aida Reinhard, Debbie Reinhard, Jan Reinik, Betty Remaly, Wayne Remaly, Dee Renner, Lorraine Ritter, Austin Roth, Tonie Rothdeutsch, Mary Royer, Carolyn Ruch
S. Ruth Saadi, Johnny Sabo, Michael Saraceno, Nancy Scheidt, Barbara Scheirer, Irene Scherr, Stella Schlittler, Gloria Schmidinger, Bonnie Schneck, Linda Schock, Michael Schwentner, Joan Sears, Corey Seese, Helen Sefcik, June Sell,

Prayers (continued from page 2)
Sylvia Seregelyes, Martha Shafnisky, Jim Shope, Joan Shook, Grace Siegel, Sue Sill, Sean Skelonis, Denise Smith, Leroy Smith, Sherry Smith, Grace Smith, David Spangler, Helene Sterner, Jerry Stewart, Donna Strawbridge, John Strawbridge
T. Robert Tacker, Rosemarie Thrash
U. Paul Unger
W. Cathy Weaver, Bill Weighknecht, Jennifer Wentling, Jim Wick, Melissa Woodruff
Y. Malachi Yool
Z. Bob Zarrizski

And the families of Mary Zader and Robert France.

The Times News advertising for January 2026 is sponsored by Melissa Sassaman in honor of my son Scott's and my granddaughter Makaila's birthdays.

The Times News advertising for February 2026 is sponsored by Melissa Sassaman in honor of my husband Todd's, my son Brian's and my grandson Cristian's birthdays.

*Shepherd of the Hills Lutheran Church gratefully acknowledges memorial donations given in memory of **Lamont Hontz** by Cynthia and Herbert Mansmann.*

*Shepherd of the Hills Lutheran Church gratefully acknowledges memorial donations given in memory of **Debbie Messinger** by Terry Messinger.*

*Shepherd of the Hills Lutheran Church gratefully acknowledges memorial donations given in memory of **Mary Zader** by Carol and Paul Balascki.*

WINTER WEATHER CANCELLATION POLICY

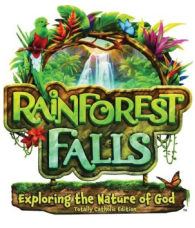
Our Continuing Resolution of Shepherd of the Hills Lutheran church states that all cancellations or delays for Worship Services and activities at the church will be posted on TV -WFMZ Channel 69.

The church office will be closed during The Christmas Holiday from December 25th through January 1st.

ANNUAL REPORTS

Deacons please submit your reports to the office by January 5 2026.

SAVE THE DATE FOR RAINFOREST FALLS VBS— JUNE 22-26, 2026



YOUTH GROUP NEWS

On October 22, 3 youth members volunteered at the **Miracle League Trick or Treat.** We handed out candy and helped the trick or treaters play games. It was a beautiful night and we had a lot of fun with the Miracle League kids!

We sold 139 nut rolls and made a profit of $575. **Thank you** to everyone who purchased from us!!

On November 2, 4 youth group members filled **83 shoeboxes for Operation Christmas Child, which were sent to Tanzania!** The boxes were filled with items that were donated by VBS families and the congregation. This was the largest number of shoeboxes we have ever sent!! **Thank you** so much for your generosity!

We need to rebuild our shoebox collection since we filled so many boxes this year. If you have any **empty shoeboxes** that you don't want, please bring them in and put them downstairs in the Sunday School room next to the bathrooms on the right side of the hallway.

On **November 16**, 4 youth members ate lunch at Applebee's before our **community service work**. We then went to Target and shopped for 6 Miracle League Secret Santa gifts. And then we headed to Phoebe where a 5th youth member joined us. We talked to the residents and heard some fascinating stories.

Our gift card program was a **HUGE** success. We made a profit of $1,621.86, which was our highest profit!! **Thank you** to everyone who ordered gift cards from us!!

Beginning January 1, the youth group will be collecting for Parkland CARES Food Pantry. Youth members will be volunteering in February and will help to make snack pack pals for the Parkland School District. Please remember those that are suffering from food insecurities and consider picking up some of the following items: Chicken Noodle Soup, Small Cans of Tuna and/or Individual boxes of Granola Bars.

You asked for it, so here it is!! **The clothing drive will start January 1 and will continue through June 12, 2027.** Please bring any bags of clothing and put them downstairs in the last Sunday School room on the right. Make sure that all shoes are bagged separately. We are collecting new or gently used men, women and children's clothing, shoes, purses, belts, bed and bath linens, and stuffed animals. They will not accept quilts, comforters, pillows or blankets. The clothing that is collected is distributed to local thrift shops and in areas in need of clothing. The clothing will NOT be shredded!!! All clean wearable clothing and shoes are reused by less fortunate people and families. The clothing does not end up in landfills which helps to keep America green and clean.

Come and join us on **January 25 as the youth group leads the service for Youth Sunday**.

Our **hoagie sale** begins on February 1 and delivery will be on February 22. This is a change from previous years because the hoagie man is on vacation over Super Bowl Sunday. Call the church office at 610-262-1600 or Lisa at 610-533-0161 to place an order.

Save the date! Our PENNY PARTY will be on April 19!

Thank you for your continued support of the youth group!!

COMMITTEE NEWS

The Worship Committee Morning Prayer Each Thursday morning at 9:30 AM we are meeting in our church sanctuary to pray to the Lord. Come and join us at we gather together in the House of our Lord.

The Service Committee: Reach out to those in need! ***WHITEHALL COPLAY HUNGER INITIATIVE is asking for the following items:*** *Breakfast items: oatmeal boxes or pouches, pancake mix/syrup, cereal; Soups: vegetable, chicken noodle, tomato, creamed soups; Pasta: ravioli, spaghettios, macaroni and cheese; pasta or rice boxes or pouches, 1 pound bagged brown or white rice; spaghetti sauce (plastic jars or cans); canned or boxed potatoes/sweet potatoes; tuna; canned fruit (low sugar or light fruit syrup); peanut butter; gravy.*

Toiletries *Baby and adult diapers; feminine products.*

Dog and cat food.

Please reach out in God's love to those in need. God's Work, Our Hands. Please place your donations on the table in the narthex.

The Church Council meets on the third Wednesday of each month at 7 PM except in July and August, when it holds a single, summer meeting. Special meetings are held on rare occasions when it is determined that an issue requires immediate consideration.

All meetings are open to members of the congregation. Much of the council's agenda is generated from the six ministry teams which administer most of our congregational programs.

If you have an item to be considered by our Congregation Council, contact President Tracy Tacker at least ten days in advance of the meeting so that your concern can be placed on the Council agenda (some concerns will be referred to a ministry team for study and a recommendation before they are considered by the full Council).

The 2026 Congregation Council

President:	Tracy Tacker
Vice President:	Jan Masonheimer
Secretary:	Melissa Sassaman
Treasurer:	Drew Null
Financial Secretary:	Carl France
Learning Team Deacon:	Tara Henry-Morrow
Witness Team Deacon:	Mary Lou Young
Worship Team Deacon:	Denise Smith
Service Team Deacon:	Barry Wexler
Support Team Deacon:	Gary Easton
Youth Deacon:	Lisa Kroboth
Youth Representative:	Ian Bordenick
Pastor:	The Rev. James W. Schlegel

Thank you to all for serving on Church Council. Thank you to Dylan Rapchak for completing his term as Youth Representative. Council welcomes Ian Bordenick as 2026 Youth Representative.

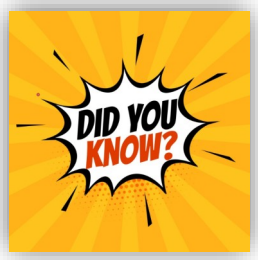
THANK YOU

- **To all the people who decked the halls at Shepherd of the Hills**. What a wonderful time! Thank you to all the strong people who put up the tree.
- **To those who served on Church Council.** Thank you for serving our church and our Lord.
- **To The Neffs National Bank** for its generous donation of $300 to Shepherd of the Hills.
- **To Donald and Maxine Gantz, Robert Klock, Jan Masonheimer** and **Melissa Sassaman** for directing their Thrivent Choice Dollars to Shepherd of the Hills in November.
- **To everyone** who helps with the Newsletter**.**
- **To our dedicated Sunday School teachers and youth leaders.**
- **From Pastor Schlegel** for all the gifts and recognition of my Thirty Year Anniversary of my Ordination.
- **From Glenn Hacker** for the many cards and letters he received during his recovery from surgery.
- **From Lehighton Borough Police Department** for "your generous monetary donation and support of *Operation Give a Gobbler*", which raises funds gathers food items to support The VALOR Clinic Foundation.
- **From Whitehall-Coplay Hunger Initiative** for nearly 875 pounds of food donated by Shepherd of the Hills members between September and November 2025.

The Ingathering Committee would like to thank everyone who participated in the 2025 Christmas Collection. We collected for three organizations: Kids Peace, Ripple and the Allentown Rescue Mission. Congregational members generously donated a vast assortment of food, toiletries, clothing, toys and tote bags. The Joyful Noise collections were used to purchase Christmas gifts and other small items to assist in filling 200 gift bags for Kids Peace. In addition, each of the participating churches donated $30.00 to Bloom for Women. Bloom offers sanctuary, care and employment for survivors of sex trafficking and sexual exploitation in the Lehigh Valley.

Your gifts and financial contributions have richly blessed others during the Holiday Season. Thank you for your overwhelming support and generosity.

The Ingathering Committee
Linda Forand, Laurie Andrew and Karen Zimmerman



The Whitehall Lions Club meets at Shepherd of the Hills on the first and third Mondays of each month at 6:00 PM. You are welcome to join them as they plan and execute service projects to benefit the Whitehall community.

If you'd like more information about the Lions Club, see Joe Ebner, Judy Ott or Melissa Sassaman.

Remember our special friends. Send them a Christmas greeting.

Gloria Fischl
Phoebe Home
1925 W. Turner St.
Allentown PA 18104

Martha Shafnisky
4300 S. Church St.
Whitehall PA 18052

Betty Hontz
6043 Lower Macungie Rd.
Legend Assisted Living Rm. 330
Macungie PA 18062

Marianne Blocker
1782 Newport Ave.
Northampton PA 18067

Irene Scherr
4230 Dorney Park Rd.
Apt. 208
Allentown PA 18104

Linda Schock
6043 Lower Macungie Rd.
Legend Assisted Living Rm. 122
Macungie PA 18062

Paul Frack
545 Washington Ave.
Northampton PA 18067

Sandra Phillips
4 Pine St.
Lehighton PA 18235

Scarlet Randolph
Independence Court of
Quakertown Room 104
1600 Park Ave.
Quakertown PA 18951

Jean Reinert
8435 Sensinger Rd.
Germansville PA 18053

Janis Beidleman
85 Archery Ln.
Retirement Living
Tamaqua PA 18252

Robert Tacker
4124 Hillcrest Ave.
Whitehall PA 18052