

DECEMBER 2026

SUNSET HILLS MESSENGER

UNITED PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH

Photograph by Ryan Gracey

A Message From Pastor Laura



"And the Word became flesh and lived among us." - John 1:14



That's hygge!

Hygge (pronounced "hoo-gah") makes a memorable appearance in the Broadway musical Frozen. After winter descends upon the Scandinavian kingdom of Arendelle, Princess Anna learns about hygge from a local merchant who explains the concept in song: "Hygge means comfortable. Hygge means cozy." He goes on to sing about sitting by the fire, rosy cheeks, candlelight, and even a game of Parcheesi! But the most important ingredient, he insists, is family and friends.

In this month's messenger

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9 am - 2 pm

Here at Sunset Hills U.P. Church, we're having a hygge Christmas! Although we're opting for the more familiar English word cozy, the spirit is much the same. This Advent, we're embracing the warmth, comfort, and togetherness that make this season so wonderful.

First, we're celebrating all the comforts of winter. Each Sunday will feature a different cozy theme, with festive sweaters, Christmas socks, scarves, and silly hats making appearances in worship. Our sermon series, A Cozy Christmas, will explore familiar symbols of warmth and welcome, from candlelight to open doors. I've also prepared a cozy Advent devotional, A World Made Warm, to accompany us through the season.

But hygge is about more than fuzzy socks and steaming mugs of hot chocolate. It's about being cozy together. And goodness knows, we have plenty of opportunities for togetherness at Sunset Hills! We'll gather for our annual Deacon Cookie Sale and Parents' Night Out, and we'll enjoy the singing of our Sunset Hills Preschool children during worship on Sunday, December 13. The following week, we'll head to the movies for a special Movies with the Minister outing to see the new Angel Studios film, Hershey. We'll also be collecting new socks throughout Advent, sharing a little warmth and comfort with neighbors who need it.

Of course, the goal of our Cozy Christmas isn't simply to make the church feel like a Hallmark movie. (Although I certainly won't object to a few twinkling lights!) It's to rest in the presence of the Prince of Peace.

Christmas has a funny way of becoming a pressure cooker of busyness. Between shopping, decorating, baking, wrapping, hosting, and attending every conceivable holiday gathering, we can arrive at Christmas Eve utterly exhausted. The very season meant to celebrate God's gift of peace can leave us feeling anything but peaceful.

And that's where the Christmas story offers us something better than the perfect holiday atmosphere. The Gospel of John tells us that "the Word became flesh and lived among us." God made a home with humanity. Not because we had everything ready, or because we'd created the perfect conditions for a divine visit, but because God loves us. God comes into messy homes, complicated families, busy lives, and hurting hearts. That's the kind of Christmas comfort that lasts long after the candles have gone out.

So get cozy with us this Advent season! Wear your favorite Christmas sweater, pull on those fuzzy socks, and feel free to bring a warm winter beverage to worship (just make sure it has an exceptionally secure lid). More importantly, come ready to enjoy the gift of being together as we prepare to welcome the God who has made a home with us. I look forward to sharing this sacred, wonderful, cozy season with you.

With tidings of comfort and joy,
Pastor Laura





MUSIC NOTES

SHELBY GRACEY, MUSIC DIRECTOR

During this Advent and Christmas season, we'll have a variety of beautiful music in our morning worship services. The Chancel Choir will sing some wonderful Advent & Christmas anthems each week, and the Campanile Bell Choir will ring on both November 29th and December 20th . Our Pre-School children will present some special music during the worship service on December 13th , and our GPM group will sing on December 20, as well as on Christmas Eve. Our Christmas Eve service will take place on Thursday, December 24 at 7:00 p.m. and will include liturgy, scripture, carols, candlelight, and several musical selections throughout the service. While it's not a Christmas carol that's included in our hymnbooks, there's a beloved secular Christmas song that references the annunciation to the shepherds, as described in Luke. "In October 1962, the U.S. and the Soviet Union were embroiled in the Cuban Missile Crisis. Noël Regney could feel the fear and despair as he walked New York City. A producer had tasked him with creating a Christmas song, but how could Regney focus on peace and goodwill when the world hovered on the brink of nuclear disaster? He knew firsthand the horrors of war. Like many Frenchmen during WWII, he'd been forced into the Nazi army, and he'd been shot before deserting to join the French Resistance.

"Near his apartment, Regney passed two mothers with smiling babies in strollers. His mood lifted. The babies reminded him of innocent lambs, and the words came to him: 'Said the night wind to the little lamb…" He rushed home to pen more lyrics, loosely basing Do You Hear What I Hear? on Jesus' Nativity as told in the Gospels. He asked his wife, Gloria Shayne, to compose the music, though it was Shayne who usually wrote the lyrics for Regney's compositions. The couple was moved by the promise of the child who would 'bring us goodness and light.' As Shayne recalled, 'It broke us up. We cried.' "Regney's poignant plea for peace has been recorded by more than 120 artists, including Bing Crosby (whose 1963 version sold more than a million copies), Robert Goulet, Johnny Mathis, and Whitney Houston. In these times, in all times, the immortal words echo: 'Pray for peace, people, everywhere.'"



Said the night wind to the little lamb, do you see what I see?
Way up in the sky, little lamb, do you see what I see?
A star, a star, dancing in the night with a tail as big as a kite.
Said the little lamb to the shepherd boy, do you hear what I hear?
Ringing through the sky, shepherd boy, do you hear what I hear?
A song, a song, high above the trees with a voice as big as the sea.
Said the shepherd boy to the mighty king, do you know what I know?
In your palace warm, mighty king, do you know what I know?
A Child, a Child shivers in the cold, let us bring Him silver and gold.
Said the king to the people everywhere, listen to what I say.
Pray for peace, people everywhere! Listen to what I say.
The Child, the Child, sleeping in the night, He will bring us goodness and light.

(Guideposts Magazine, Kimberly Elkins, December, 2025)

MONTHLY RECIPE

CHRISTMAS MORNING CINNAMON ROLL FRENCH TOAST BAKE



Ingredients

- 2 cans (12.4 oz each) refrigerated cinnamon rolls with icing
- 4 large eggs
- ½ cup milk
- 1 teaspoon vanilla extract
- 1 teaspoon ground cinnamon
- ¼ cup maple syrup
- 2 tablespoons melted butter
- Powdered sugar for dusting (optional)

Instructions

1. Preheat oven to 375°F and grease a 9×13-inch baking dish.
2. Cut each cinnamon roll into quarters and spread evenly in the dish.
3. In a bowl, whisk together eggs, milk, vanilla, cinnamon, maple syrup, and melted butter.
4. Pour the mixture evenly over the cinnamon roll pieces.
5. Bake for 25–30 minutes, or until golden brown and the egg mixture is fully set in the center.
6. Drizzle with the icing included in the cinnamon roll packages. Serve warm and enjoy!

THANK YOU

I would like to extend my sincerest gratitude to the wonderful staff of Sunset Hills Presbyterian Church, the dedicated staff of our Nursery School, the Sunset Hills Community and our incredible church community for the overwhelming kindness, love, and support you have shown me during my recovery. Your thoughtfulness, encouragement, and generosity have meant more to me than words can express. Each kind gesture has brought me comfort and made my healing process so much smoother. I feel truly blessed to be surrounded by such a caring and compassionate community. Thank you all, from the bottom of my heart, for making me feel so supported and appreciated. Your kindness will never be forgotten.

With heartfelt gratitude,
Missy Voto Sullivan

C C C C C C C

A special thank you to our wonderful Deacons and Congregational Care team for their hard work and dedication in making the Thanksgiving Dinner at Sunset Hills United Presbyterian Church such a beautiful gathering. Your time, kindness, and generosity helped bring our church family together in the true spirit of Thanksgiving. We are so grateful for all that you do!













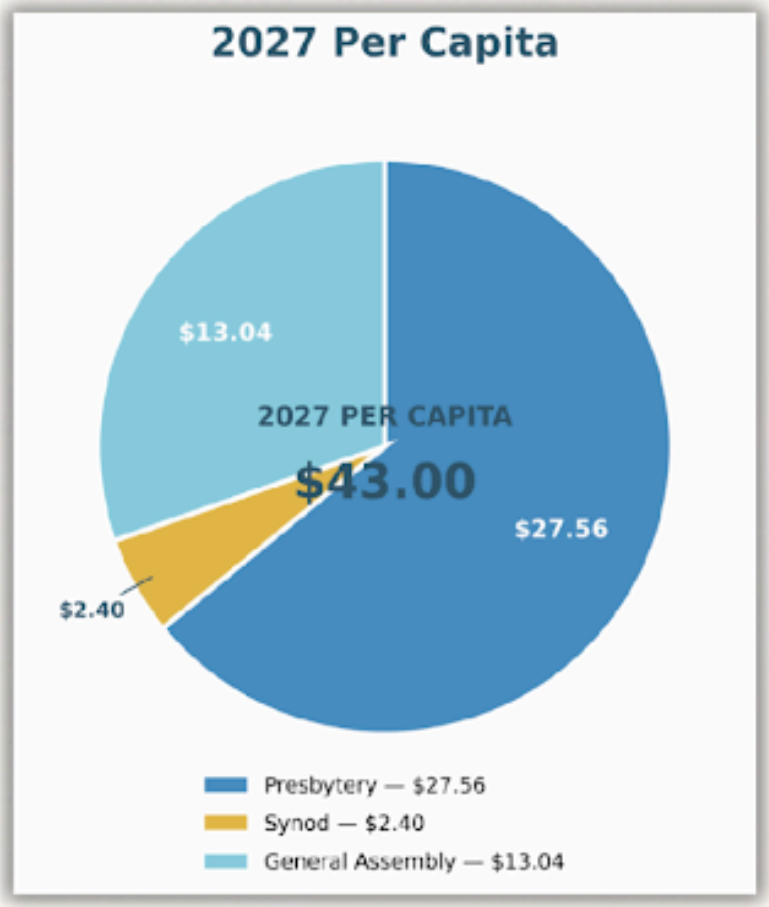
PITTSBURGH PRESBYTERY

2027 Per Capita



$43 per member supports the work of the Pittsburgh Presbytery, the Synod of the Trinity, and the General Assembly of PCUSA

The work of the Presbyterian Church (USA) is only possible because members of the church have said they are "all in" and committed to connection through per capita support. It takes all of us together to answer God's call.



Get Cozy at SHUP this Christmas

NOVEMBER 29

FESTIVE SWEATER SUNDAY

DECEMBER 6

CHRISTMAS SOCK SUNDAY

DECEMBER 13

HOLIDAY HAT SUNDAY

DECEMBER 20

SCARF SUNDAY



CALL FOR BAKERS

CALLING ALL BAKERS

The deacons' annual Christmas cookie sale is right around the corner on December 5, 2026. The cookie sale is the deacons' annual fundraiser to support our ministries to the congregation and to the Sunset Hills community.

Won't you support our ministries by baking for the cookie sale? You can sign up on the signup sheet outside Findley Hall. It doesn't have to be cookies. Our customers love all sorts of home-made holiday treats: cookies, candy, quick breads, scones.

Some details:

♥ Contributions can be dropped off at the church on Friday, December 4, from 6:00 pm to 8:00 pm or on Saturday morning, December 5, from 8:30 am to 9:30 am

♥ Please label your cookies with your name and a phone number where we can reach you

♥ Label cookies that contain nuts (we have separate tables for these)

♥ Please bag your cookies in small serving bags, such as small Ziplocs or self-sealing adhesive bags. Two or three cookies per bag is best.

♥ Home-made treats only, please

Any questions? Please call Debbie Edwards, co-chair of the sale, at 412-860-1541, or email her at deborahlynnedwards@outlook.com. And thank you!





Christmas Cookie Sale

PROCEEDS SUPPORT THE DEACONS' MINISTRIES

DECEMBER 5

10:00 AM - 12:00 PM

SUNSET HILLS U.P. CHURCH

900 Country Club Drive, 15228

Christmas Eve

CANDLELIGHT WORSHIP



DEC **24** 7 PM

SUNSET HILLS UP CHURCH

900 Country Club Drive
Children and Families Welcome

JOIN US FOR

PARENTS' NIGHT OUT

DECEMBER 12
4:30 – 7:00 P.M.

Sunset Hills United Presbyterian Church

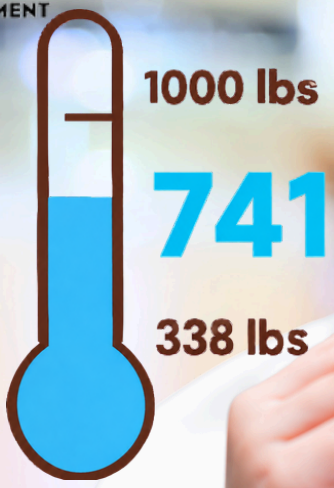
Kids ages 3 -10 are invited to join us for an evening of Christmas-themed games, stories, crafts and more! There will be breakfast for dinner and kiddos are invited to attend in their pajamas. Donations welcome.

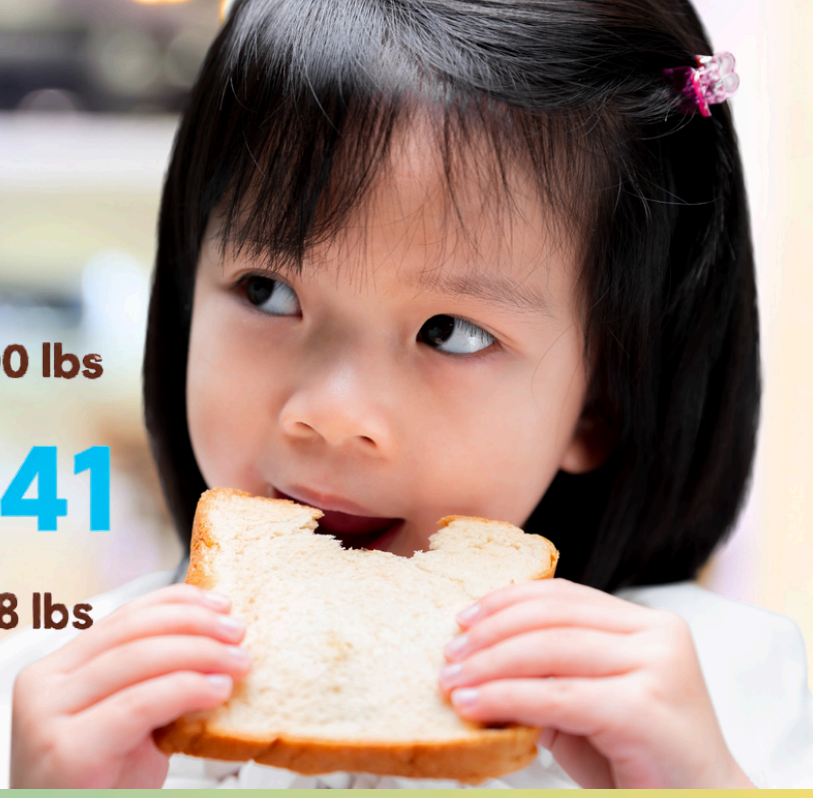
TO REGISTER EMAIL:
revlaurastrauss@gmail.com

shim
SOUTH HILLS INTERFAITH MOVEMENT

Sunset Hill's 2026 Food Contribution:

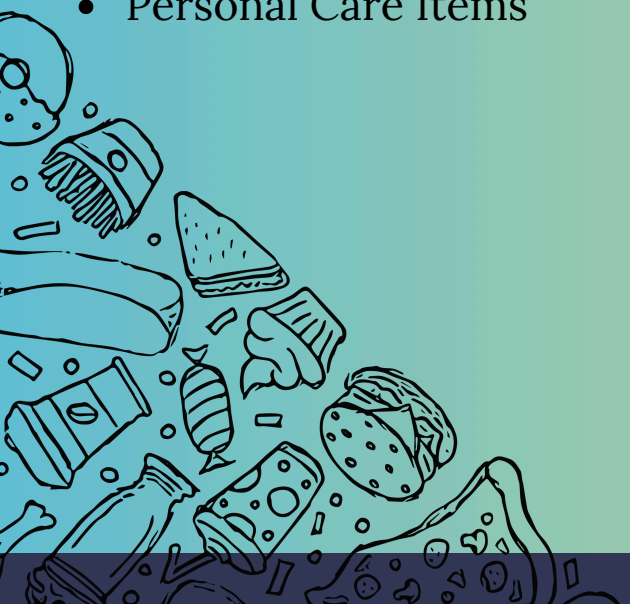
741 lbs





Most Needed Food Items

- Dried Beans
- Pasta
- Lentils
- Pasta Sauce Jars
- Cereal & Oatmeal
- Soup
- Condiments
- Spices
- Dog & Cat Food
- Personal Care Items



SHIM Clothing Closet

Accepting donations of in-season clothes, shoes, and linens. Please no large household items. Located at Church of the Nazarene, 5601 Library Road.

Drop-Off Hours:
Monday 10:00am - 1:00pm

If you are unable to deliver your donations, you can leave them in the closet outside of Findley Hall and a Mission Commission member will deliver them for you.



Collection For Christmas

For the past three years, during the season of Advent, we collected travel-sized toiletry items that were donated to Familylinks – a local nonprofit organization in the South Hills that services youth, adults, and seniors. Their mission is to positively impact lives through integrated community, behavioral, and social programs. This year, following the theme of "A Cozy Christmas" that Pastor Laura will be focusing on during Advent, we're making a change to our collection. What can be cozier than a warm, comfortable pair of new **socks**! When Familylinks was contacted to see if they could use socks in their mission, they enthusiastically accepted our idea for this new collection this year, as they can always use socks in their shelters. They requested that they be new with tags on, or in unopened packages. They can accept a variety of sizes from school-aged children up to adults.

During each of the four Sundays of Advent (starting November 29), stockings will be hung on the ends of the pews down the center aisle of the sanctuary. If you have a single pair of socks to donate, please place them into one of the Christmas stockings. If you prefer to buy a larger package of socks, there will be a decorated box in the narthex where you can leave your donation. We will continue this collection until the end of the year, at which time all the donated socks will be distributed to Familylinks in early January.

Thank you so much for participating in this important mission and ministry!

FAITH AND THE WORLD: COOKIE CHATS

SHUP TALKS

10 JAN

LONELNESS AND BELONGING

We're living through what some researchers call an epidemic of loneliness. What is loneliness doing to us, and what does the church have that social media, streaming services, and busy schedules cannot provide?

7:00 - 8:30 PM, Church Library — **Led by Pastor Laura**

14 FEB

WAR AND JESUS

Jesus said, “Blessed are the peacemakers” and “Love your enemies.” So can Christians ever support going to war? We will wrestle with whether violence can ever be morally justified—and, if so, where the lines should be drawn.

7:00 - 8:30 PM, Church Library — **Led by Pastor Laura**

14 MARCH

INDEPENDENCE

What happens when the independence we've enjoyed all our lives begins to change? We'll explore balancing our desire for autonomy with the concerns of those who love us.

7:00 - 8:30 PM, Church Library — **Led by Pastor Laura**

11 APRIL

PRIVACY

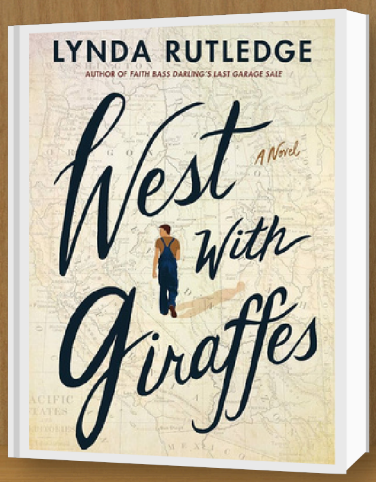
We are fully known by God, which is a source of comfort, not fear. But what about when corporations and governments gather information about us? And what about smartphones, surveillance cameras and AI?

7:00 - 8:30 PM, Church Library — **Led by Pastor Laura**

Join Us! Cookies will be provided. Bring your own coffee/tea/cocoa.

Book Club Picks

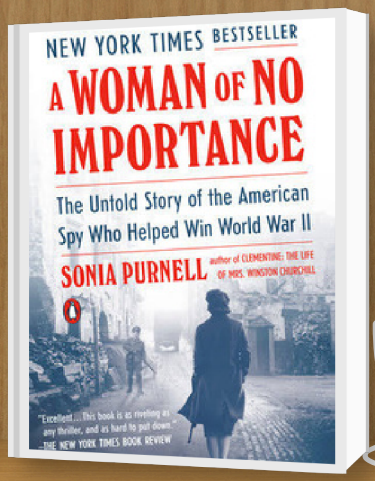
JOIN US FOR DISCUSSION WITH PASTOR LAURA ON THE LAST WEDNESDAY OF EACH MONTH AT 7:30PM IN THE CHURCH LIBRARY



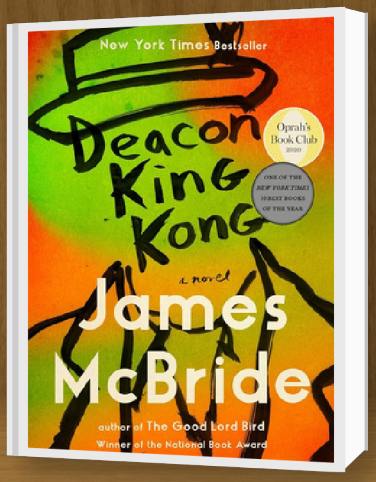
December 2



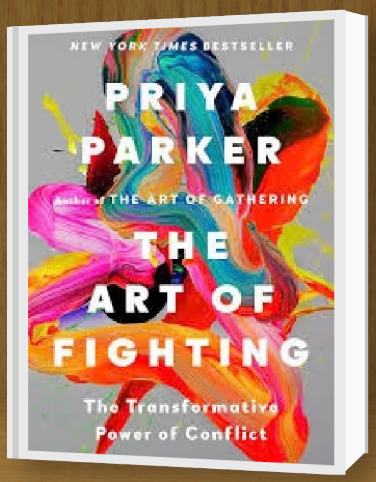
January 6



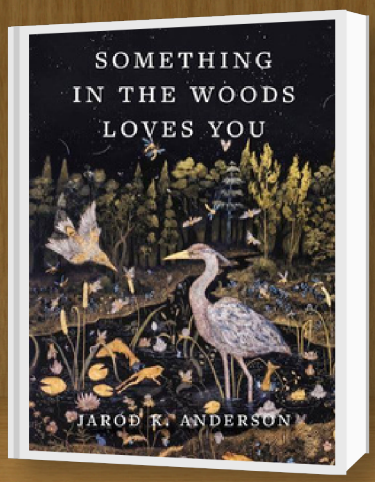
January 27



February 24



March 31



April 28

Have you seen me?

lost *cat*



Benny - grey tabby
please check your garage and shed!

Please call Jack at 412-343-5758

All Shall Be Well Women's Retreat

Journey to medieval England and discover Julian of Norwich! Pastor Laura will share how Mother Julian's wisdom about God's love continues to inspire us today. Enjoy a restorative day of worship, history, conversation, creativity, delicious food, and fellowship!

Saturday, March 6, 2027

9:00 am - 3:00 pm

SUNSET HILLS U.P. CHURCH

COST: $35.00 BY CHECK OR CASH, INCLUDES CONTINENTAL BREAKFAST AND LUNCH

CALL 412-561-6261
TO REGISTER



Upcoming Events

Sundays
9:00 am Adult Sunday School – Findley Hall
9:00 am Children's Sunday School - Library
10:15 am Worship – Sanctuary
10:45 am Children's Church
2:00 pm Girl Scouts
4:00 pm Girl Scouts

Mondays
9:00 am Monday Marvels
1:00 pm Women's Bible Study

Tuesdays
12:30 pm Tuesday Bible Study - Cort Room
6:30 Handbell Choir - Choir Room
7:00 pm Square Dance Class – Crystal Hall
7:00 pm Counseling Group
7:30 pm Choir - Choir Room

Wednesdays
10:00 am Days for Girls – Wilson Hall
10:00 am Quilters - Findley Hall
2:00 pm Parkinson's Group - Findley Hall

Thursdays
6:15 pm Fall Yoga

Fridays
5:00 pm - AA

Interested in taking part in an upcoming event?

Parkinson's Group
Contact Jeanine Hartman
412-215-2391

Peanut Squares Dancing Club
Everyone is welcome, no partner or previous experience is necessary. The cost is $5/class.

Unable to join us in person for worship?

A video of the service is posted to "Sunset Hills Church" Youtube channel the Monday after the service. A copy of the bulletin is available on the homepage of www.shupchurch.org.



"How very good and pleasant it is when kindred live together in unity!"
— Psalm 133:1

December Birthdays

1 Colby Sembrat
1 Grace Hricko
5 Tim Fako
12 Dick Fleming
13 Anna Daniels
19 David Kastner
21 Emily D'Amico
24 Carol McCallum
27 Catherine Duffner
27 David Hinkelman
27 Elinor Hricko

Prayer Circle

December 6 Jessica Weidensall, Lily Weidensall, Amelia Weimer
December 13 Jeremy Weimer, Joseph Weimer, Maria Weimer
December 20 Barbara Winton, Keith Yanda, Wendy Yanda
December 27 Amelia Yates, Daniel Yates, Emily Yates

Prayer List

Lucy Josephine Escobar
The Family of Marlaena Cochran
The Lynch Family
Catherine McCoy
Harriet Rickard
Captain Sam Wright
The Becker Family
Jessica Allison
The Family of Dr. Idris Evans
The Stilley Family
The Family of Marjorie
Rich Simone
Ron Sumner
Nancy Brumfield
Rev. Mark Adams and Miriam Maldonado Escobar and their children

shim
SOUTH HILLS INTERFAITH MOVEMENT

Most Needed Food Items

- Dried Beans
- Pasta
- Lentils
- Pasta Sauce Jars
- Cereal & Oatmeal
- Soup
- Condiments
- Spices
- Dog & Cat Food
- Personal Care Items

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