



# INTERPRETATION

## SEEK FIRST HIS KINGDOM & HIS RIGHTEOUSNESS SEEK FIRST

Matthew 6:33

### WHAT'S INSIDE?

Office Info.....	2
An Advent Reflection.....	3
2018 Save the Dates.....	3
Many Thanks.....	4
FriendShip Preschool.....	4

Do You Love to Sing?.....	4
Dollars & Sense.....	4
SPC Committee Highlight.....	4
Building Healthier Relationships..	5
Read Scripture.....	6

SPC Kids.....	7
Youth Ministry.....	8
Advent Memories.....	11
A Look at Our Windows.....	BC





## OFFICE

### Hours

Monday - Friday 9 AM - 5 PM

### Phone

412.741.4550

### Fax

412.741.1210

### Address

414 Grant Street  
Sewickley, PA 15143

### Web Address

[www.sewickleypresby.org](http://www.sewickleypresby.org)

## NEWSLETTER

The SPC newsletter, **Interpretation**, is published once a month. The deadline for submitting content is the 2<sup>nd</sup> Tuesday of each month. Please make submissions to Jennifer Johnson at [jjohnson@sewickleypresby.org](mailto:jjohnson@sewickleypresby.org).

## VISITATION

If you or a member of your family are in the hospital and would like a visit, please call the church office to let us know.

## SOCIAL MEDIA



## SPC STAFF

### REV. KEVIN J. LONG

Pastor  
home: 412.741.2075  
[klong@sewickleypresby.org](mailto:klong@sewickleypresby.org)

### REV. SARAH BIRD

Associate Pastor  
[sbird@sewickleypresby.org](mailto:sbird@sewickleypresby.org)

### REV. STEWART LAWRENCE

Volunteer Parish Associate  
[jeanstewl@gmail.com](mailto:jeanstewl@gmail.com)

### SHARON BARBER

Assistant to the Pastor  
[sbarber@sewickleypresby.org](mailto:sbarber@sewickleypresby.org)

### DAVE BREIT

Media Engineer  
[dbreit@sewickleypresby.org](mailto:dbreit@sewickleypresby.org)

### MIKE CREAMER

Director of Youth Ministries  
[mcreamer@sewickleypresby.org](mailto:mcreamer@sewickleypresby.org)

### R. CRAIG DOBBINS, CCM

Director of Music Ministries  
[cdobbins@sewickleypresby.org](mailto:cdobbins@sewickleypresby.org)

### JEREMY FISHER

Worship Leader  
[jfisher@sewickleypresby.org](mailto:jfisher@sewickleypresby.org)

### JENNY HAY

Director of FriendShip Preschool  
[jhay@sewickleypresby.org](mailto:jhay@sewickleypresby.org)

### JENNIFER JOHNSON

Director of Communications  
[jjohnson@sewickleypresby.org](mailto:jjohnson@sewickleypresby.org)

### BRIAN MACK

Director of Children's Ministries  
[bmack@sewickleypresby.org](mailto:bmack@sewickleypresby.org)

### LAURA MIKUSH, CCA

Business Administrator  
[lmikush@sewickleypresby.org](mailto:lmikush@sewickleypresby.org)

### BETH ROM

Volunteer Coordinator  
[bethrom@live.com](mailto:bethrom@live.com)

### STEPHANIE SMITH

Administrative Assistant  
[ssmith@sewickleypresby.org](mailto:ssmith@sewickleypresby.org)

### ELIZABETH SZUBA

Youth Program Coordinator  
[eszuba@sewickleypresby.org](mailto:eszuba@sewickleypresby.org)

### CHARLIE BARNHART

### WILL BETTS

### JOEY TOMALES

Custodial Staff



We aspire to be a CHURCH where the GOSPEL of Jesus Christ is  
FAITHFULLY PROCLAIMED and FAITHFULLY LIVED  
in grateful response to God's love.



## THE LAST JEDI: AN ADVENT REFLECTION

Awesome it would be to have a purple lightsaber. I played all of the games that came out. I built the Lego Podracers. I loved and still do love Star Wars and would love to geek out with you about it. And yet, days after the release of what may be the most anticipated Star Wars movie to date, I still have not seen it, and it's killing me! I have never missed the premiere of a Star Wars movie before in my life. When the three prequels came out, my dad wrote sick notes for me and my siblings so we could leave school early to go see the movies before everyone else!

Now that I live a few hours away from my parents, it makes keeping traditions like dodging responsibilities to attend movie premieres difficult. So in the heart of keeping a special tradition, I have been waiting eagerly to see Star Wars with my dad, and will be able to do so in a few days when we are all together for Christmas.

It's crazy how this has impacted my entire mindset over the last few days. I have thought about sneaking off to go see it by myself every day since its release. Nobody would know, so what would the harm be, right? I just want to see it so badly! But alas, I have fought the temptation and still haven't seen it. I have avoided social media like the plague for fear of spoilers. I've been watching the other movies to get myself ready for what comes next. It's sad, but it's been hard to keep Star Wars off of my mind. I shouldn't care that much about Star Wars, right?

Well, maybe that's true. But the other night I was on my way home from a friend's house and it dawned on me that the true sadness is that I have been so preoccupied with the new Star Wars movie that

I have spent little to no energy in comparison thinking about or preparing for Christmas. Advent is the season leading up to Christmas, a time of anticipation for celebrating the birth of Christ, reflecting on how the Incarnation changed everything. We celebrate hope, peace, joy, and love throughout Advent to remind us and prepare us for the celebration of Christ's birth on Christmas Day. The time spent in Advent focusing on these four themes and the hope of the Incarnation is supposed to make our celebration of Christmas that much better, focusing in on our need for a Savior. In the same way that I have been watching the previous Star Wars movies in preparation for The Last Jedi, in Advent we prepare ourselves for Christmas.

Maybe you have enjoyed Advent to the fullest this year and have focused in on how great the gift of the Incarnation is to us. But maybe, like me, you have allowed yourself to be distracted by everything else in your life that seems so important at the time that you have almost been robbed of this special time entirely. Maybe it isn't Star Wars that has been distracting you from Jesus this Advent season, but maybe it's been the frantic shopping, cleaning, or mental preparation for those family members that will be visiting soon.

The scary part of the spiritual life is that there will always be something new to distract us if we allow it. And that's precisely why we have the Church calendar. Maybe the idea of seasons like Advent or Lent are foreign concepts to you (like they were to me for years), but they are part of the Christian year for exactly that reason: to help us focus our attention on Christ rather than allowing the things around us to distract us further. So as you've just celebrated Christmas and are starting a new year, allow the gravity of what this celebration is to move your soul to worshipping God incarnate, Jesus Christ. Amen.

-- Mike Creamer, Director of Youth Ministries



## SAVE THESE DATES

January 7	DR Mission Trip Commissioning
	Officer Ordination & Installation
January 20	Produce to People
January 28	No 8 or 9 AM Worship - 11 AM only
	Annual Meeting
February 4	Youth Sunday
February 13	Mardi Gras Dinner
February 14	Ash Wednesday

February 18	Founders' Day
February 21	Lenten Soup Suppers Begin
February 25	New Member Dinner
March 3	New Member Class
March 4	New Members Join
	Brass Spectacular Concert
March 18	Choir Lite Concert

## MANY THANKS

Thank you to those who for joined us in Adult Ed on Sunday, December 3, to learn more about Work and our families in Haiti. For those that have supported us the last three years, our families are on a successful path to a bright future because of you! Our families are healthy, kids are in school (and have the chance to be kids!), moms and dads are in training and being placed into good, dignified jobs, and there is food on the table.

To everyone new to the organization, we are grateful to have you as a part of the family and will continue to share updates regularly. We truly believe in the power of Work and the impact it has on an individual, a family, and their community. Each and every trip to Haiti we bring your love, well wishes and blessings to the entire community of Menelas that we work alongside.

To our 1:1 Donors, you are the heart and soul of the organization and allow us to continue to grow our work one block at a time, while building a strong, meaningful relationship. Thank you to Sandy & Matt Cooper, Don & Jane Birnie, Nancy & Ken House, Keelie & Rich Garbee, Madelaine & Colvin McCrady, Julie Throckmorton, Wayne & Dawn Carson, Jeb & Shelly Blaugrund, Annie & Mark Gensheimer, Barb & David Swan, Dorothy Getty, Jan & Marc Pereira, Jenna Stevenson, Mary & Rich Weber, Matt & Leslie Braksick, Alex & Neill Simakas, Paul & Celine O'Neill, Sarah & Ed Heres, Suzanne Watters, and Shirley Stevens. To join, visit us at [www.dowork.org/accompanyone](http://www.dowork.org/accompanyone). From all of us at Work and our families in Haiti, we thank you from the bottom of our hearts. Cheers to you and your acts of kindness both locally and globally this holiday season. Merry Christmas!

With love,  
Christina  
Work, *Formerly Team Tassy*  
[Christina@dowork.org](mailto:Christina@dowork.org)



## SPC COMMITTEE HIGHLIGHT WORSHIP & MUSIC

The Worship and Music Committee works together with the church staff to plan all of our worship services. They help to organize our music, ushers, lay readers, Communion, funerals, weddings, and the beautiful floral arrangements you see each week at the podiums.

There are many ways to serve on this committee -- for example:

- Be a member of the committee. They meet once a month to plan and discuss the various worship related needs.
- Help to arrange flowers for Sunday mornings
- Welcome people on a Sunday morning as they enter the building
- Help with serving Communion
- Be a part of the Funeral or Wedding sub-committees
- Sing or play in one of our many ensembles

If you would like more information about how to serve in the above areas or would like to know other ways you can be a part of this committee, please contact Matt Doebl, Committee Chair, at [doebtown@gmail.com](mailto:doebtown@gmail.com).

## FRIENDSHIP PRESCHOOL

Registration for the 2018-2019 FriendShip Preschool programs is taking place for children 22 months - 5 years of age. FriendShip is located on the 2<sup>nd</sup> floor of the church and offers four developmentally based preschool classrooms. The mission of the preschool is to provide our community with a high quality, Christian, faith based, early childhood program promoting social, cognitive, emotional, and physical development in young children. The FriendShip children live under the Fruit of the Spirit. God's teachings about love, faithfulness, generosity, joy, self-control, peace, kindness, patience and gentleness guide us in our daily living.

To obtain registration forms, or for further information, please contact Jenny Hay, Director, 412-741-4550, ext. 225, or [jhay@sewickleypresby.org](mailto:jhay@sewickleypresby.org).

-- Jenny Hay, Director of FriendShip Preschool

## DO YOU LOVE TO SING?



Are you in grades 6-12? You should sign-up for Youth Choir starting in January! We are looking for enthusiastic singers to join us for our spring performances, including Choir Lite on March 18, 2018! Rehearsals take place on Sundays immediately following the conclusion of the 11 AM service.

If you have any questions, or if you would like to sign up to participate, please contact Colin Farley directly at [colinfarley410@gmail.com](mailto:colinfarley410@gmail.com). We would LOVE to have you sing with us!

## DOLLARS & SENSE

Now that the Samaritan Counseling Center is occupying the 3<sup>rd</sup> floor of the Faith House we have added some new signage. There is a new sign at the back door and one by the elevator so Samaritan clients know how to find the counseling center.





## Rev. Dr. Graham Standish

**Are your relationships healthy?**

**Are they sometimes frayed?**

**Do you find yourself caught up in conflict without ever really understanding why?**

**Do you want to enhance your friendships, your family life, your marriage?**

*If you answered yes to any of these questions, then join us for:*

### **BUILDING HEALTHIER RELATIONSHIPS**

**January 21:** Adult Ed & Guest Preacher

**January 28:** Adult Ed

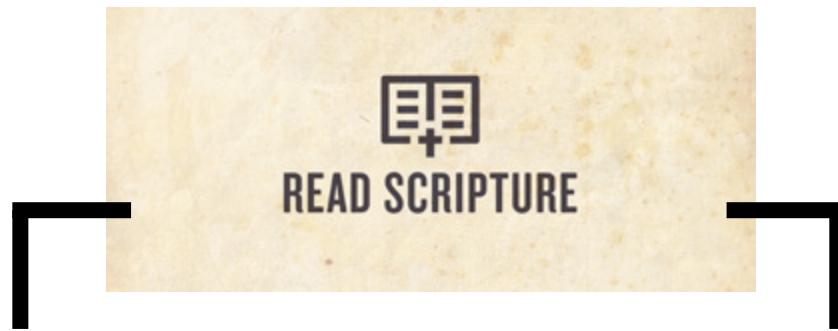
**February 4, 11, 18:** Adult Ed

Drawing on his experience as a pastor, therapist, spiritual director, and coach, Rev. Dr. Graham Standish, M.S.W., will explore ways to make your relationships healthier so that your life can become less stressful and more joyful.

Rev. Dr. Graham Standish, who grew up at Sewickley Presbyterian Church, joined the leadership staff of the Samaritan Counseling Center in November, 2017 as Executive Director. Prior to coming to Samaritan, he served for 22 years as the pastor of Calvin Presbyterian Church in Zelienople, PA, where he tripled the size of the congregation and garnered national attention in several studies. One of these studies was done by Diana Butler-Bass who included Calvin Church in her groundbreaking book, *Christianity for the Rest of Us*.

Before his ministry at Calvin, Graham served as a therapist in a pastoral counseling agency, as a drug and alcohol therapist, an intern as a hospital chaplain, and as an associate pastor at a growing church in Murrysville, PA. Graham is an experienced teacher, retreat leader, spiritual director and has a background in individual, marital, and family therapy. Furthermore, he had served on Samaritan's board of directors as well as on the editorial board of Presence, the journal of Spiritual Directors International.

Graham earned his Ph.D. in formative spirituality from Duquesne University, his Master of Social Work from the University of Pittsburgh, and his Master of Divinity from the Pittsburgh Theological Seminary.



# Read the Bible in just ONE year!

Have you ever wanted to read through the entire Bible but needed some guidance as to how to go about it in the best way? Or are you the kind of person who needs encouragement to stick to

it? Well, starting on January 1, 2018, you can join others at SPC as we read the entire Bible through together! The plan we have will get you through the ENTIRE Bible by December 24, 2018!

The plan is simple and easy to follow. There are TWO ways to follow the plan:

1

Download the **Read Scripture** app (it's free!).



Log in on January 1 and begin reading!

Everyday you will read from the Old Testament (or New) and also from the book of Psalms.

At the end of each day's reading, hit the check mark and the app will keep track of how far you have come and how far you have to go!

2

Grab a **Read Scripture Plan** in the Robinson Room.



Begin on January 1!

The plan gives you a day-by-day guide as to what to read.

Check off each day as you read!

## Begin on 1.1.2018 & end on 12.24.2018!





Club 345:  
Emily Bablack & Hanna Stein

# Acts of Kindness

Looking back to 2017, there are a lot of adjectives you could use to describe it. Crazy, hectic, unpredictable, entertaining, etc. but I'm guessing one of the words you would choose, wouldn't be kind. At a glance, kindness wouldn't be seen as an overarching theme of 2017, that is, unless you know the right places to look. Children's Ministry sent out an Advent calendar with 24 ideas for "Random Acts of Christmas Kindness" you could do with your family each day leading up to Christmas. Some of these ideas were simple and pretty easy to do, like "Call a far away relative or friend" on the 11<sup>th</sup>, or "Let someone go ahead of you in line" on the 7<sup>th</sup>. Others took a bit more planning. One suggestion was to "Candy Cane Bomb a parking lot," which you may have noticed one of our families taking to heart on December 10<sup>th</sup> at church. If you were like my wife, your reaction was some sort of a surprised giggle, followed by a look of wonder as you looked to see where it came from, which led to a smile on your face for at least the rest of your drive home (especially if you forgot the candy cane and left it on your windshield like I did). There were a number of other random acts of kindness you may have noticed last month -- some might have been at the direction of our Advent calendar, but some may have just been out of the kindness of someone's heart, unprovoked, and truly random.

When we look at Jesus, he wasn't always nice or polite as we may expect (flipping tables, calling out hypocrisy, etc.), but he was always kind. People often get nice and kind confused, but kindness is more than an action. Have you ever watched a child do something wrong, to then swiftly be told, "Hey, be nice," to which the child responds with a meek "sorry," or a fake smile? Nice can seem shallow, or insincere, but kindness is rarely seen as such. We are called to follow Jesus, and Jesus was, as I said, kind. He was kind to children when others would push them aside. He showed that same kindness to the people he healed, and in His teachings. If we are to truly follow Jesus, kindness should be a part of our lives every day.

As we helped our kids end 2017 with a focus on kindness, I hope that you'll join us in trying to make 2018 more kind, more caring, and more sincere than 2017. There is a lot of work to do in our world, but I know, that with God's help, we can live up to the challenge.

Brian Mack  
Director of Children's Ministries





## LAURELVILLE RETREAT

In December, we took 15 high schoolers on a retreat! We spent the weekend at Laurelville with the Pittsburgh Kids Foundation and roughly 150 other high schoolers. What made this exciting is that it was the first retreat for all high schoolers (apart from their confirmation retreats) that we've had in years. Taking our students out of Sewickley and experiencing an atmosphere of worship alongside other Pittsburgh churches and youth was a special experience for us. We all need to be reminded to see the bigger picture of our faith. Despite the cold, we had a fantastic time together. We played basketball, football, had a dance party, stuffed ourselves with pizza, and some of us even braved the mud pit. We are thrilled that this went so well, and are looking forward to other opportunities with PKF in the future!

Mike Creamer, Director of Youth Ministries







## CFH STOCKING PROJECT

For the last few years our middle schoolers have taken on a project to fund-raise \$1000 to buy and stuff Christmas stockings for 100 kids at the Center for Hope. The goal of the project is to provide for children who may not be getting anything for Christmas this year.

One of the coolest parts of this project is that it has a couple of steps and cannot be completed overnight. Our students have time to process what the project is and why they are doing it over several months, giving them a real opportunity to understand the magnitude of what they are doing. Something special we did this year was to take some of our students over to the Center for Hope to meet some of the children and youth receiving the stockings, and they got to hear firsthand how much these stockings mean to the kids at the CFH. Our hope is that our efforts to help meet these kids' needs will enable them to experience God's love firsthand from our middle school students. Thank you for your continued support for this effort!



## CHRISTMAS & OUR YOUTH

Another Christmas has come and gone, but it wouldn't be Christmas time without our annual Youth Christmas party! The hot chocolate bar made a return -- loading kids up on enough sugar to keep them awake all the way through Christmas. The White Elephant gift exchange was quite the experience, with gifts being shuffled and thrown all over the place. The cookie decorating battle was messy, but delicious. And the ugly sweater contest got, well, pretty ugly. And to go along with the hideous sweaters, we had a craft station where students were making Christmas sweater ornaments. There was laughter and dancing and caroling and so much more. It was a great way to end the year, and we are looking forward to meeting again in January. See you then!





# theEVENT

JANUARY **21** 6:30-8:30 PM

GRADES  
**6-12**

Beulah Presbyterian Church

Join the fun!



**Be a part of this great night!**

**Music by**  
Westminster Presby Church  
Worship Team

**Keynote Speaker**  
Mark Oestreicher  
**"MARKO"**

games • contests • music • fellowship

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[www.sewickleypresby.org](http://www.sewickleypresby.org)



# Advent Memories







Sewickley Presbyterian Church

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414 Grant Street | Sewickley, PA | 15143

[www.sewickleypresby.org](http://www.sewickleypresby.org)

## Dated Material

**PLEASE EXPEDITE!**

This newsletter is published by  
Sewickley Presbyterian Church



## A LOOK AT OUR WINDOWS

### “MADONNA AND CHILD”

(Tiffany Studios)

in memory of

John Beyers Warden (1865-1890)

Elizabeth Fleming Warden (1866-1892)

**J**ohn and Elizabeth “Bessie” Warden were married in 1889, just one year after Elizabeth was baptized into the church. Mr. Warden died in 1890 at age 25, and Mrs. Warden died two years later at the age of 26. Rev. Dr. William Oliver Campbell said this of Bessie Warden, “My friendship with this beautiful young woman was very close and tender. Compressed within a very few years was all that various service which a pastor is called to render to his people. In July 1888, I baptized her, receiving her into the church on confession of her faith. The next year I married her to Mr. John Warden, and in a short time, she, her husband and child were called home to God. Thus ended a life of beautiful promise.”

With the Madonna, robed in white, are symbols representing the star of Bethlehem, the Book of Truth and a crescent moon. The Madonna’s veil is an example of creamy opalescent glass, and her robes are drapery glass.

The purpose of Christ’s mission, “To deliver man,” is inscribed at the base of the window in a colorful panel.