

# INTERPRETATION

Sewickley Presbyterian Church Newsletter  
June-December 2020

*The Lord*  
**BLESS YOU**  
*and keep you;*

THE LORD MAKE HIS FACE

**SHINE ON YOU**  
*and be gracious to you;*

THE LORD TURN HIS FACE TOWARD YOU  
*and give you*

**PEACE**

*Numerous 6:24-26*

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## NEWSLETTER

If you would like to make submissions to the newsletter, or if you have any questions contact, Jennifer Johnson at [jjohnson@sewickleypresby.org](mailto:jjohnson@sewickleypresby.org).

## VISITATION

If you or a member of your family are in the hospital or are in need of prayer, please call the church office to let us know.

## SOCIAL MEDIA



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JOEY TOMALES  
Custodial Staff





# LOOKING BACK & AHEAD

By Rev. Kevin J. Long

I hope I'm not bursting anyone's bubble here, but Christmas is not historically accurate. Jesus was almost certainly not born in the wintertime. If the shepherds were out in the fields at night with their flocks, it would likely have taken place sometime between April and October. Maybe Christmas in July is actually right after all!

I used to think it unfortunate that Christmas came at the end of the year right after Thanksgiving. It always seemed to me that it would make more sense for us to celebrate Christmas first so that we would have a ready-made opportunity at Thanksgiving to express our gratitude for all that we had received. But now I see it a little differently. I think it is better that we celebrate Thanksgiving first, because only those with thankful hearts are truly able to recognize all that they have been given.

Therefore, I am glad to be celebrating Christmas in late December. It always gives me the opportunity to look back over the past year and give thanks for all the ways that I have seen the Savior at work in my life and in our church, for all the ways that Christ has demonstrated that he is God-with-us. It also gives me the opportunity to take all of my failures and disappointments from the past year and hand them over to the Savior, who alone has the power to redeem them.

And that has never been more important than in this challenging and frustrating year. Many of us have lost loved ones, some even to COVID. Others have suffered through COVID personally, or through some other health issue. There have been job losses and significant financial hardship. Many of us have suffered through depression and loneliness. And I think all of us have had great disappointments as so many cherished events and experiences had to be cancelled.



But as we prepare to celebrate the birth of the Savior, and begin a new year, I hope that each of us will take some time to look back and see how Jesus has been present in our lives, even in the midst of hardship and disappointment. Remember, we are never promised that Jesus is going to prevent us from experiencing hard times. What we are promised, however, is that he is Emmanuel, the God who is with us through all of it. And if Christ is always with us, then even our disappointments can be redeemed. Believe it or not, even 2020 can be redeemed. After all, as the angel Gabriel told Mary, "nothing will be impossible with God" (Luke 1:37).

So as we come to the close of a difficult 2020 and look forward with hope to a better 2021, let us proclaim with boldness the words of the great hymn, "Joy to the world! The Lord has come!" And let us give thanks for all the gifts of Christmas: hope, peace, joy, love, unity, healing, eternal life and grace. But most of all, let us give thanks for Jesus.

Merry Christmas!

Kevin

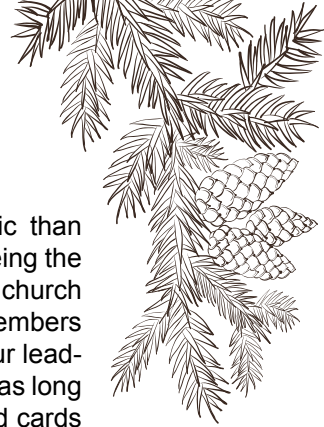


## STAYING CONNECTED

By Rev. Rebecca Reeder

It's hard to believe that I've now been your Associate Pastor longer post-pandemic than pre-pandemic. I miss seeing everyone in church, greeting you all after worship, and seeing the church family connect with one another. Thankfully, a few months ago the officers of the church and a few committees started working together with the pastors to reach out to our members during this time. You might have already received a card or call or email from one of our leaders! Our hope is that everyone in the congregation will be reached out to periodically for as long as the pandemic prevents us from gathering in-person in large groups. These calls and cards and other contacts are meant primarily to let you know that your church family is still thinking of you, praying for you, and care about your well-being.

If, at any point in time, you need or would like assistance, prayer, or just a listening ear, please do not hesitate to reach out to a leader of the church or one of the pastors. We are here for you, we pray for you, and I know I speak for more than just myself when I say I thank God every time I think of you all. I say it often because I feel it deeply: I feel blessed that God called me to this church family a year and a half ago – even if more than half that time has been spent adjusting to ministry in a pandemic – and I eagerly look forward to the day when I can see all your smiling faces in-person again!



## SUNDAY USHERS DURING A PANDEMIC

By Don Birnie, SPC Member

2020 has been quite a year! COVID-19 has touched every aspect of everything we do. We've been isolated and prevented from enjoying even the simplest things, like seeing our family & friends, enjoying dinner at a favorite restaurant, going to a Pirates or Steelers game, and for six months, attending worship in our beautiful sanctuary!

Fortunately, on September 13, we were finally able to attend worship in-person again at SPC! How exciting it was to set foot in our church that morning. It was made possible by many people – clergy, worship leaders, vocalists and musicians, church staff, our technical team, Session and Reopening Task Force members. And let's not forget our faithful ushers!

Pre-COVID ushers were more or less taken for granted. Handing out bulletins, greeting worshipers with a smile, collecting offering were just part of the ushering experience. We all assumed that ushers would show up and do their duties every week!

COVID-19 has definitely changed that. It's become apparent how indispensable our ushers are. Everyone is now well aware that without our faithful ushers, there would be no in-person worship on Sunday morning. Now ushers

greet us and check us in when we arrive. They coach us all on mask-wearing, social distancing, which pews are for families of 4 or 5, and how to leave the sanctuary in a safe and orderly manner. Ushers make us feel comfortable in church during this incredibly uncomfortable time. Several church members have observed that they now feel more comfortable in church than anywhere except at home.

Our church family owes a debt of gratitude to the 29 faithful ushers who have risked their own health, when many of us have not been ready (for good reasons) to attend in-person. They have selflessly served their Lord and Savior, their beloved church, and all who have worshiped at SPC week after week since September 13. These selfless people need to be recognized; Bob Bagans, Jane Birnie, Gretchen and Bob Burnham, Susie Cockrell, Bill deHaven, Amy Doz, Lisa Edelman, Beth and David Genter, Sophie Gledhill, Caroline Johns, Carlton Leeper, Rebecca Long, Madelaine and Colvin McCrady, Tim Merrill, Bonnie Moorhead, Wayne Murphy, Rita Niklewicz, Mike Orsini, Ollie Rea, Beth Rom, Jane and Bill Shadle, Jenny Valente, Steve Victor, and Mary Weber.

THANK YOU! Your service has been a wonderful gift to us all.





Dear Friends,

I am so grateful for our families at Sewickley Presbyterian Church! Thank you all for your patience, and abundance of love. Your support has helped to make this another memorable fall for our kids. We absolutely cherished the gorgeous fall weather. We enjoyed yoga on the Faith House lawn, and a trip to Fern Hollow Nature Center.

Each month, kids received themed activity boxes that included a variety of weekly opportunities to get involved. Every box contained a monthly mission goal that we worked on together.

I can honestly say that although it was a different kind of fall, nothing could ever change the amount of love and energy that comes from these special kids. They have the biggest hearts and I'm just so blessed to be a part of their spiritual journey!

Sunday school closed out 2020 with an awesome intergenerational Advent study. This is always such a unique experience to have everyone gathered together. There is so much that we can learn from one another. And the energy is contagious!

I know that this year has been really tough for many people. Difficult in ways that we couldn't even imagine one year ago. But I feel so much hope. I feel hope for the powerful lessons of faith our children have learned during these uncertain days. And I pray that someday down the road, when life throws yet another curve ball, that they will remember...the power of prayer, the gift of stillness, the strength of resilience, and the undeniable love of a strong church family. Wishing you all a hopeful New Year!

-- Sara Hoagland, Director of Children's Ministries



## Look What We've Been Up To!

- We gathered via Zoom for movies, pizza parties, and games.
- We shared our stories, jokes, and yes, our fears.
- We sang songs with Mr. Jeremy
- We learned about some amazing mission opportunities at SPC from Mr. Charles.
- And we LOVED our neighbors!
- We shared our blessings with our neighbors just around the corner at Center for Hope and globally too!
- We provided after school snacks and warm winter socks to the Center for Hope
- For our neighbors around the globe we filled boxes of small toys and necessities for Operation Christmas Child.





# PERFECT GIFTS

By Erin Leghorn, SPC member

We are fast approaching Christmas Day. For many of us, that means we are frantically trying to complete our December to-do list: send out cards, get and decorate the tree, put up lights, bake cookies - lots of cookies!, Make magical memories for our little ones, etc. Oh! And figure out how to do it all safely during a global pandemic! Even in 2020, one of the biggest things on my to-do list, and I suspect many of yours as well, is shopping for gifts. Not just any gift, but the 'perfect' gift.

But what is the 'perfect' gift? Is it the most expensive or flashiest gift? The gift that was #1 on someone's list? The gift that everyone wants? It can be easy to fall into the trap of believing that the perfect gift fits one of those categories. And maybe, for someone, it will, but I would venture to say, more than likely, none of those are the perfect gift. They are exciting to open, and fun for a while, but in my experience they are often the ones that quickly lose their luster. They might be the ones leaving the receiver wanting more, and the giver wondering why it wasn't good enough.

In the end, the 'perfect' gift is the one that comes from the heart. It's the one that the receiver didn't know they needed or wanted, but the giver knew was just right. It's the one that says, 'I see you. I know you. I love you.'

God, as our Creator, our Heavenly Father, has given each of us gifts. We may not see them, but they are there. Maybe we do see them, but we don't understand them. It's possible that, if we're really being honest, we may not even want the gifts He has given us, and, instead, are envious of someone else's gifts. We may wonder why God didn't give us those gifts, too.

It seems that, even when it comes to the gifts given to us by our Father, we really want the impressive gift, the one

that is easy to see and brings accolades to the one who receives it. But, the Bible tells us this:

"Each of you should use whatever gift you have received to serve others, as faithful stewards of God's grace in its various forms. " (1 Peter 4:10)

God didn't give us our gifts to bring glory and praise to ourselves. He gave them to us to serve others, to carry out His work, to spread His word, and to glorify Him! You may not see your gifts, but someone else can. You may not understand your gifts, but God gave them to you for a reason. You may want someone else's gifts, but God chose your gifts because He knew they were just right for you. He gave each of us perfect gifts because, as our Heavenly Father, He knows us. He loves us. He created us!

When we doubt our gifts, or don't appreciate them, we are questioning God's perfect plan for us! But, when we recognize our God-given gifts, listen for His guidance, and use those gifts, we honor and obey Him! We do His will. We serve Him, while serving others. We can spread His word and share it with those who have not yet heard it. Let us cherish these gifts so that we may show our gratitude to Him and fulfill His perfect plan for our lives!

In the remaining few days before Christmas, as you search for those last few gifts, remember God's perfect gifts to you. If you haven't found them yet, ask Him to reveal them to you. Thank God for the gifts He has chosen just for you. Thank Him for the immense and perfect love He gives you each day. And, most importantly, thank Him for the greatest gift He has ever given us - His Son, Jesus Christ!

Merry Christmas!





## CONGRATULATIONS!

We have a BIG anniversary this month -- Rev. Stew and Jeannette Lawrence will celebrate their 65<sup>th</sup> wedding anniversary on Christmas Eve! Congratulations!

## DOLLAR & SENSE

By Laura Mikush, Business Administrator

While the building has been closed, we have made some outside improvements:

- New asphalt on the driveway from Beaver Street to Thorn Street, including new line stripes for parking.\*
- All of the outside doors on the Sanctuary, Grant Street entrance and Childcare room have been repainted.
- Stone repairs were made on the walls of the handicap ramp to the Sanctuary.\*
- A new roof was installed above the Friendship I room, and repairs were made to the Pre-K room to alleviate persistent leaks.\*



## PRESCHOOL UPDATE

Due to the COVID-19 virus, with great sadness the FriendShip Preschool has remained closed since March 13. Financial viability and our staff and their family needs have affected us from being able to reopen the school this fall and winter.

However, a new year is upon us and it is with much happiness that the preschool is moving forward with registration for the FriendShip Preschool for the 2021-2022 school year. Once we have made the necessary arrangements, we will update the website. Please check next month!

- Wrought iron handrails around the church have been painted.
- All sidewalks along Grant Street and Beaver Street had fill dirt and new grass seed set in place to prevent tripping.

\*These were part of the 2020 capital budget.

As part of an on-going signage project, we also had new outdoor signs put up around our property this year.



# FINANCIAL UPDATE

By Sally Shipley, SPC Member

As we head into the final weeks of 2020, it's time to take a look at the church's year-end financial position, even as we are planning for fiscal year 2021. In this peculiar season of coronavirus, we actually have some pretty good news to report.

As SPC reacted to unprecedented mitigation to slow the spread, flatten the curve, keep ourselves and others as safe as possible, we didn't know what it would mean to church income and expenses. Our office was closed, we weren't able to worship together in the sanctuary for months, and we had to quickly put together a way for us to more meaningfully worship online. We had no experience, no economic history to study!

In response to our needs for video streaming technology, we received very generous donations to finance the necessary purchases of lighting, cameras, video switching equipment, installation, wiring, etc. We were up and running so quickly, thanks to those gifts and the diligent work of church staffers Dave Breit and Jennifer Johnson and the technology committee.

At the same time, Business Manager Laura Mikush researched and applied for the federally funded Paycheck Protection Program (PPP). While this program, unsurprisingly, wasn't without its quirks, we were ultimately ap-

proved for funding that helped us cover the salaries of our staff for a 10-week period. We expect that this 'loan' will be fully forgiven, as that was always the intent of the program. The PPP money gave us ample 'room to breathe' over the course of the year.

As you all know, we made the difficult decision to not hold our beloved Day on the Lawn, which funds so much of our mission effort. Thanks to our SPC members, our Days off the Lawn campaign did raise a generous amount for the mission committee's distribution.

While pledged income and plate offerings are somewhat behind budget, our expenses are also under, so our current picture, as of November 30, is actually a good one. Though we have one more month, and there is no way to know for certain how December will unfold, we do expect that trend to continue.

Our SPC staff has done an amazing job in these many months of difficult circumstances, and we're thankful for each of them.

And, of course, we are also humbly grateful to all of you, our generous SPC congregation, for your faithful gifts throughout the year! Thank you!

## STEWARDSHIP

2021 Goal: \$1,200,000

Needed to reach goal



191 Pledges as of December

If you would like to make a pledge, our website has a secure online form you can use, or contact Laura Mikush in the church office: 412.741.4550, [lmikush@sewickleypresby.org](mailto:lmikush@sewickleypresby.org)

## NEW BASKETBALL HOOP

Thank you to Matt and Leslie Braksick for donating a new, permanent basketball hoop behind the Faith House. And thanks to Matt (Braksick), Mark and Xander Gensheimer, Rich Gratton, Tim Bingman, Mike Creamer, James and Kevin Long for helping to install it!

## SANCTUARY CROSS

We've all missed seeing the cross behind the pulpit for the past few months. It was sent out to be cleaned and shined and it's finally back! Thomas Jewelers refurbished the cross at no cost to SPC!





## QUITE A RIDE

By Mike Creamer, Director of Youth Ministries

The last six months have been quite a ride for all of us, but we have been very grateful for the different adventures we've been able to have with the teens this year. Of course, things have looked differently this year as we have all been adjusting, but in a lot of ways we have been able to do even more together this year. We're hoping that over the next few months we can try some new things as the weather gets colder, but here is a look back at some of the awesome stuff we've been able to do this year!

## GRADUATION SPRING 2020

Knowing that graduation would look very different for our students, we wanted to take the opportunity to celebrate our seniors' journeys through high school and their time with us at the church. With the help of Dave Breit, Matt Doeblner, and Jennifer Johnson we put on our first interactive, live service where we had seniors leading liturgy and music from their homes.



## CONFIRMATION 2019/20

Although it took longer than we had hoped, we were happy to confirm the 2020 class of nine students when we began in-person worship again in September. This group of students, led by Mark Gensheimer and Jeanne Bingman, went through one of the strangest confirmation experiences as class got extended for months and switched to Zoom. But they kept their spirits up throughout and we are so excited that they chose to get confirmed this fall.







## FALL KICK-OFF

As the fall began, we knew that we were going to shift all our normal programs to be outside. We figured if we would be outside we might as well get messy too, so we had an egg toss. The teens learned quickly that eggs are kind of gross when they're on your clothes, but that didn't make them any better at catching them. We all had fun watching each other failing in the toss anyways.



## LITTLE PANTRY

With growing needs for food security as COVID has continued to burden many people in and around the city, SPC was invited to participate in this project to build and decorate small pantries to set up around different boroughs to provide food for anyone who needs it!



## WEDNESDAY HANGZ

One of the cool new activities we started this fall was adding an extra night for fellowship on Wednesday nights. Knowing that so many things were canceled for students, we wanted to create a space where our teens could be together safely while also having fun. From playing 9-square, and basketball on the new hoop, to having bonfires and playing kickball we have been very fortunate to spend time this fall building community together.



## OUTDOOR ADVENTURES

Kayaking and paddle boarding at North Park was a real blast for everyone. We weren't necessarily the most impressive water sports athletes (and I use that term loosely), but we had spirit! The instructors from LL Bean were fantastic and made the entire afternoon so much fun. We're also very thankful to Lindsay Gibson for leading our hike on the Montour Trail loop. It was really cool to connect our faith to the outdoors and nature.



## YOUTH GROUP

Something that has stayed relatively normal this year as everything else has changed is Sunday night youth group. This has been a great anchor point for us to laugh, share, and dive into Scripture together. We've only gotten caught out in the rain once or twice, but not even that has kept us apart.



## CONFIRMATION

We are excited to have 12 students currently going through Confirmation this year. We're trying to do some new things between meeting outside, over Zoom, and getting involved in some outdoor service projects.

One project they took on was the task of raking and removing the leaves down at the Sewickley Community Center as they prepare for the winter months. Even with the overcast weather and wet leaves we can always find a way to laugh!







## NEIGHBORS IN NEED STARTING NOW

By Anneliese Perry, SPC member

Many local organizations are seeking donations to continue their work in these uncertain times. To respond to this call, the Neighbors in Need Committee has launched a Winter Collection Drive to benefit long standing partners at the Sewickley Community Center, Center for Hope, and the Ladle, as well as a new addition with the Sewickley Valley YMCA Free Little Pantry Program.

We are collecting these winter items from now through the end of February. Donations can be delivered to one of two convenient drop-off locations:

**- Stephanie O'Kane home**

**Edgeworth:** 315 Quaker Rd. Sewickley, PA 15143

**- Ron & Pam Charles home**

**Moon Township:** 113 Scottsdale Dr. Moon Twp, PA 15108

Please place donated items in the large tote labeled '*Neighbors in Need.*' Donations will be collected weekly

and delivered monthly to partner agencies who will distribute the products to the individuals and families they serve.

Financial contributions are welcome as well. Donations can be made on our website under the "Give" tab, or you can mail a check to the church. Donations will allow us to supplement the donated items.

The SPC Neighbors in Need committee members thanks you in advance for your support!

### REQUESTED ITEMS

Socks -- Hats -- Gloves  
(for women & men)  
Chapstick  
Bar Soap & Deodorant  
(for women & men)  
Masks

**Full-size items are requested rather than travel size.**

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## THANK YOU FROM DIACONIA ECCB

From Lucie Slamova, Czech Republic

Dear Sewickley Presbyterian Church,

Allow me to convey warm greetings from the warm summer Czech Republic to the whole Sewickley Presbyterian Church. I would like to thank you very much on behalf Diaconia ECCB and also on behalf the director, Jan Sobeslavsky, for your kind gift of \$5000. We are glad that this way, with your help, we have the opportunity to be helpful there where new needs and harms during the coronavirus crisis emerged. There are really many of newly arisen living urgencies and they affect especially those who are already struggling for a dignified life. We will use this amount of money for spendings that have been helping seniors and young people to overcome this difficult period.

Wish You God's protection for your health and blessings for decision-making steps and deeds.

Best -- Lucie



# LETTER OF RETIREMENT

From Burkhard Paetzold

Dear All,

Warm greetings from Berlin. Let me share with you that I am planning to retire from my position with PC(USA) World Mission on September 30, 2020 after accepting a voluntary separation package to employees 63 years and above.

It has been a particularly difficult decision for me to say Good Bye to you, because the Czech Republic and the ECCB in particular has been and will be close to my feelings about Central Europe. The Czech Republic has been among the first and closest partners in Central Europe I have visited in my position as a regional liaison for Central and Eastern Europe and Roma since 2001. I learned a lot from you and our cooperation and friendship have become of high value for me. And of course to leave is particularly difficult in times when a face to face visit is not possible.

I'm extremely thankful for the privilege to have served with the Middle East and Europe Office of World Mission for many years and together with you help building bridges between Christians in PC(USA) and ECCB.

I'm full of gratitude for many I have worked with in ECCB, in Diakonia and the faculty. It was a blessing to work with so many faithful and committed people. I have truly learned a lot from you all and I'm thankful for the contributions of PCUSA (and CoS) mission coworkers as well as for the ECCB-PC(USA) partnership network.

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## DAYS OFF THE LAWN

Giving to Benefit Local, City, and Global Mission

SPC mission giving is bolstered each year by the hard work of so many members of our congregation to host Day on the Lawn. This year, we were unable to safely host the annual rummage sale, but many of the mission organizations who benefit from this support are responding to increased need in the communities they serve while also adapting their operations to maintain safe practices during the pandemic.

Through the generous and creative contributions of the congregation, this year's Days Off the Lawn generated \$35,486 to support mission organizations. In addition to donations, members of the congregation organized yard sales and refurbished computers to collect donations. SPC kids even designed a cookbook to support mission. More than 25 organizations working to provide shelter, medical



We live in changing times. There are exciting challenges and opportunities ahead of us, which make it hard to leave. At the same time, I'm aware that I'm beyond retirement age and the time is right for me and my family and for other learning opportunities and potential adventures in my immediate geographical region – whatever God will provide.

I trust that your plans in ECCB and in your partnership networks to seek and pursue justice, peace and the integrity of God's creation will be shaped by faith, wisdom, multiple learning and solidarity.

Once again, I'm very grateful for having been allowed for many years to be a little part of it.

Grace and peace,

Burkhard Paetzold  
Presbyterian Church (USA), World Mission

## KNITTING FOR MISSION SALE

Thank you to everyone who purchased items from our Knitting for Mission Sale in November. The sale brought in \$2400 for mission!

support, justice and peace-building programs, food and furnishings, camps and youth programming, and emergency support will benefit from these donations through our Benevolence Giving. The organizations extend from local mission to global missions. Gifts for Days Off the Lawn can be received online until the end of 2020.

The Day on the Lawn Leadership Team has already begun collecting some furniture for the 2021 sale and will begin planning in the new year for Day on the Lawn 2021. We are hopeful we will be able to host the sale, so you'll have a place to donate the items you've been sorting through during these months of quarantine!

Thank you for your generous support!





## HELPING TO FEED OUR NEIGHBORS IN 2020

Food insecurity in southwestern Pennsylvania increased from 10.8% in 2018 to 15.4% in 2020 as a result of the coronavirus pandemic and its economic impact according to a recent study by Feeding America. The impact was even greater for children. Twenty-four percent of children in the 11-county region served by the Greater Pittsburgh Community Food Bank experienced food insecurity in 2020 compared to 15.5% in 2018.

Several local organizations are working tirelessly to meet this increased need as well as quickly adapt their operations to safely distribute meals and food items. Our church has provided support to these organizations providing hunger relief by:

- Volunteering to pack and distribute take-away meals at the Center for Hope, the Ladle, and Bethlehem Haven women's shelter.
- From March-December, SPC served 1,850 Grab 'n Go dinners at the Center for Hope (an increase to 185/month in 2020 from 65-100/month in 2019).
- Pre-packaged meals were provided monthly for 30 women staying at Bethlehem Haven women's shelter.
- The Ladle served 140-175 Grab n' Go meals every Monday through 20+ partner organizations, including SPC's support for four dinners.
- Total Sit Down Meals at the Ladle: 2018: 3933, 2019: 3490, 2020: 5920
- Collecting in-kind donations to stock the pantries at Center for Hope, Sewickley Community Center, and the Ladle.
- Providing monetary support through the monthly hunger offering donations and allocations from our annual mission committee budget to The Center for Hope, the Ladle, Sewickley Community Center, Pittsburgh Presbytery Hunger Fund, Greater Pittsburgh Community Food Bank, Northside Common Ministries, Bethlehem Haven and Meals on Wheels.
- In partnership with the Sewickley YMCA, the Hammer and Nails sub-committee built five Little Free Pantries where neighbors can take what they need or donate items directly. These pantries, brightly painted by SPC youth, offer a bit of hope to those in need. The Neighbors in Need sub-committee will be collecting items to help stock the pantries starting this month.

Thank you for your continued and increased support throughout 2020 to helping our neighbors access enough food for their families.







# SIGNS OF HOPE DURING COVID-19

By Barb Swan, SPC Member

**“...a threefold cord is not quickly broken.”**

Ecclesiastes 4:12

October 2020 was to be the year Pittsburgh hosted visitors from Malawi and South Sudan as part of the Pittsburgh International Partnership. This 26-year-old partnership pairs congregations in Pittsburgh Presbytery and in Blantyre Synod, Malawi. Seven years ago, South Sudan was added, forming a tripartite partnership. It was with great disappointment that the planned visit was cancelled due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

In the meantime, we have been holding Zoom meetings with members of the partnership. The theme of these meetings has been Signs of Hope. Despite the challenges of different time zones and unreliable Internet these meetings have been a blessing to all involved. We have heard about food distributions in flooded areas of South Sudan. We have shared how our congregations are managing

services with social distancing. We have shared in the joy of confirmation classes and weddings. It is helpful to hear how our brothers and sisters in other parts of the world are dealing with their challenges and continuing God's work in difficult circumstances. Our Mission Committee has sent \$7,000 through the Partnership to be divided between food relief in South Sudan and Zumba Theological Seminary in Blantyre Synod.

We hope and pray we will be able to host brothers and sisters from Malawi and South Sudan in October 2021. We need a new leader for the SPC partnership with our sister congregation, Chonde CCAP. If you would consider this, contact Barbara Swan ([barbdavidswan@comcast.net](mailto:barbdavidswan@comcast.net)).

Mulungu akudalitseni (*God Bless You in Chichewa*)



**Photo:** SPC Members Hudson Miller & Barb Swan traveled to Malawi last year as part of the Pittsburgh International Partnership.





## CFH KIDS IN THE KITCHEN

By Annie Gensheimer, SPC Member

SPC did its first online Kids in the Kitchen class with five children on November 4. Snack ingredients were delivered to the children's homes and together we assembled owls from rice cakes, peanut butter, bananas, sunflower seeds, berries and crackers.

We also played a game called "what's missing." I showed them a tray full of objects and then would remove an object and show them the tray again. The first person to correctly identify what was missing earned a point. It wasn't quite the same as being together in person, but worked out pretty well!



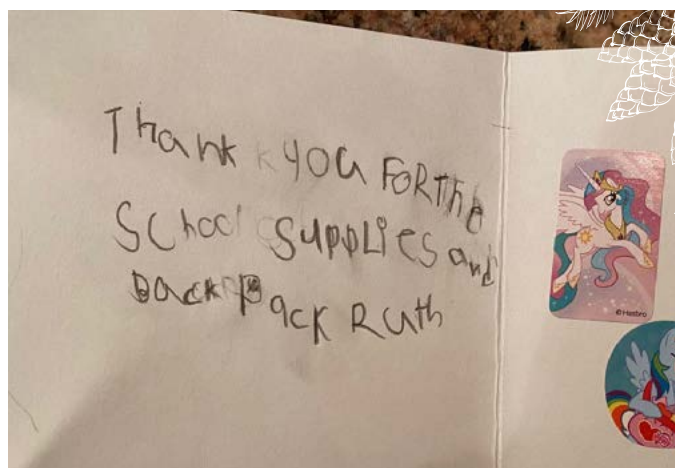
## BACKPACKS IN JULY

SPC Deacons

Thanks to all of you, we were able to deliver 100 back-to-school backpacks to the children at the Center for Hope on August 13. We also collected an additional \$2,076 which was sent to the Center to be used for additional school supplies.

Thank you to our church family for remaining faithful to this project every year. It makes a difference!

A thank you note from one of the students is shown on the right.







## CAMPBELL SCHOLARSHIP RECIPIENTS FOR 2020

By Barb Swan, SPC Member

Even a small scholarship can mean a lot to an international student pursuing an education in the United States. Below are the responses received upon informing recipients of their Campbell Scholarship awards.

"Please tell your church how much they blessed me." Tala Bautista successfully passed her thesis for an MA in Conflict Transformation at the Center for Justice and Peacebuilding at Eastern Mennonite University in June 2020. She is now working on her one-year practical training, including pursuing certification as a trainer for Strategies for Trauma Awareness and Resilience. Her goal after completing her training is to return to the Philippines and continue her work in local communities. She received \$2,000 in 2019 and \$3,000 in 2020.

"Thank you so much for giving me this opportunity and allowing God to bless me through this organization." Joy Wade is from Liberia, and is studying for her LPN at Ultimate Health School in Manassas, VA. She expects to graduate in February 2021. She has not had an easy life. She was physically and emotionally abused by her father, which adversely affected her college schoolwork. She was recently homeless but is now being sheltered by a caring family. Her goal is to become a physician. She received \$2,000 in 2020.

"I am so glad and grateful that you have given me this scholarship in support of my degree pursuit at Lancaster Bible College." Golden Aina, from Nigeria, is pursuing a Master of Divinity at Lancaster Bible College, with expected graduation in the spring of 2022. Citing a past addiction to pornography, his stated goal is to become a pastor and start a ministry "that empowers men to live according to the full potential that God has called them." He received \$2,500 in 2020.

"Oh, this is huge, I can't believe it really." Mariana Adel, another student at Center for Justice and Peacebuilding at Eastern Mennonite University is from Egypt. She is studying Restorative Justice with expected completion of a master's degree in May 2021. She was traumatized when her father left the family when she was seven years

old. During her work with impoverished children in Cairo, Egypt, she saw physical and emotional violence used as discipline. Her goal is to change the normalization of violence and "to help targeted parents to heal from their own traumas and learn tools to create a safe environment for their children." She received \$2,500 in 2020.

"Please express my appreciation to the Scholarship and Mission Committees and all involved for the beautiful gesture of Christ's love and care they have shown to me. Much appreciated." Oscar Siwali graduated from Center for Justice and Peacebuilding at Eastern Mennonite University with a Master of Conflict Transformation on May 3, 2020. He has returned to Cape Town, South Africa where he is director and founder of SADRA Conflict Transformation, an organization that works to build a society that embraces non-violence and peaceful methods of resolving differences. He received \$2,000 in 2019 and \$2,500 in 2020.

"Receiving your email made me just jump and dance for joy!" Crisol Gonzalez is from Chihuahua, Mexico. She is pursuing a Master of Arts in Transformational Leadership at the Center for Justice and Peacebuilding at Eastern Mennonite University. Her goal is to introduce restorative justice practices into the public educational system in her area, and eventually the country. She received \$2,500 in 2020.

"My joy knows no bounds at receiving this email. Once again, thanks for this huge assistance and your generosity. May the good Lord keep moving His Church forward. Amen!" Oluyemi Adebawale, from Nigeria, is working toward a Doctorate in New Testament Theology at Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary. He plans to return to Nigeria to minister within the Nigerian Baptist Convention, and to work on church planting. He received \$2,000 in 2019 and \$2,500 in 2020.

If you would like to become a member of the committee that reviews applications for the Campbell Scholarship, contact Barbara Swan at [barbdavidswan@comcast.net](mailto:barbdavidswan@comcast.net).



# WORSHIP NEEDS: WILL YOU HELP?

By Jennifer Johnson, Director of Communications

Without hesitation I can say “What a year it’s been!” We’ve all made adjustments, big and small, involving work, school, travel, family, friends, and even life at home. I could never have imagined all the changes I’ve been through since March. There have been both positives and negatives over the past 10 months.

One BIG positive is our ability to now worship at home via video streaming. For years we’ve been able to listen to our worship services live, and video is a welcome addition.

It’s been fun, exciting, a challenge, and a huge learning experience for all involved in getting our sanctuary set-up with the necessary equipment to video stream. We’re still learning and still adjusting, and we are happy to have our processes set up and a smooth-running system now.

There are, of course, many steps to video streaming our worship service. Beginning early in the week our staff plans the service and the order of worship. We create the slides, including the Call to Worship, scripture reading, song lyrics, the Children’s Message videos, and other worship elements shown on the screen in the sanctuary and on your viewing devices. Finally, the staff puts together a “tech version” of the bulletin/order of worship detailing the camera shots and other notes for the service.

Both staff members and volunteers help run the video streaming equipment. One person advances the slide-show, and one or two operate the video switcher, which simply changes the on-screen view as the service proceeds, that is, the slides that show you song lyrics, scripture, etc., as well as video of the sanctuary, view of the pulpit and the musicians.

While it sounds (and maybe looks) complicated, it’s really not. It does require focus, the ability to push buttons and to follow the tech notes. We’ve successfully trained folks to work the slideshow and switcher, and we always need more help, as more volunteers help to make the load lighter for all.

Here’s what to expect: when a Sunday tech volunteer/staff arrives on Sunday morning, the preparation work is already complete. The team does a quick review of the service, and then the slideshow and switcher operators follow the tech bulletin as the worship service moves along, ensuring that viewers at home see the service as close as possible to being there in person.



If you would like more information on how to be a part of the Sunday Tech team, please let me know! I promise that you will enjoy the experience of helping all while learning a new skill.

Email: [jjohnson@sewickleypresby.org](mailto:jjohnson@sewickleypresby.org)







## MUSIC & WORSHIP THIS YEAR

By Craig Dobbins, Director of Music Ministries

Aspects of leading music during worship in this unique time in which we find ourselves living and working are both familiar and new. Because our 9 AM and 11 AM worship services have been live streamed for over two years, continuing to do so was no problem for our Associate Director of Music Ministries, Jeremy Fisher, and me, nor for the clergy and IT persons involved. Because persons were not permitted to attend, the decision was quickly made to hold and broadcast only one service, in which contemporary and traditional music would be blended.

However, because of the recommendations from the Center for Disease Control and other federal and state agencies, suddenly beginning on Sunday, March 22, 2020, we were wearing masks, socially distanced, and limited to only ten persons, i.e., usually only four musicians, two worship leaders, and the persons needed to technologically handle the broadcast of the service. During this time before our services began to be also broadcast visually, when asked by church members about the layout and feel in the Sanctuary, I would respond that it looked like and felt like a recording studio. Other staff members and I were pleased to arrive on Sundays very casually attired.

Once the broadcast included the visual, as well as the aural, aspects of the service beginning on May 24, 2020, the Sanctuary remained as it had been since March 22, 2020. However, when in-person worship began on September 13, 2020, the Sanctuary was configured as it is currently, in order to open up sight lines for better shots of the pulpit and to keep the musicians safely distanced from congregational members. Also, shortly after in-person worship resumed, the Flower Committee graciously resumed creating beautiful floral arrangements each Sunday. They add so much to the feel of the room.

Much of the order of worship remained from pre-pandemic days until persons returned to the Sanctuary. However, as persons in the pews are recommended not to sing by the CDC, since mid-September there are fewer musical pieces aimed for congregational involvement.

In addition, I was delighted when Session made the decision to resume the celebration of The Lord's Supper monthly beginning on World Communion Sunday, October 4, 2020. Celebrating Communion has been welcomed by those who attend in person, as well as those who drive to the church to pick up the prepackaged Communion wafer and grape juice shared in the service as they depart. On October 4, about thirty persons came to the church in the early afternoon to pick up the packets and on November 1 the number was in the mid-twenties.

During the pandemic, most committees, Bible studies and other covenant groups, and even the knitters continued to function virtually via Zoom. However, it has been impossible for musical ensembles to meet and, because of the numbers of persons involved and the necessity for distancing, it has been impossible for the musical ensembles of the church to rehearse and participate in worship leadership. Many of you have told me via e-mail, text, and in person how much you miss this aspect of our worship services.

Please know that both Jeremy and I look forward to the time when it will be safe for us to gather regularly with singers, instrumentalists, and handbell ringers. That day cannot arrive quickly enough. Meanwhile, know that you and your loved ones are in our thoughts and prayers. We miss regularly interacting with you, too.





# TRY SOMETHING NEW THIS WINTER

We have many groups that meet weekly and monthly. Some gather for a book study, Bible study or to create things, all the while providing much needed fellowship

and to grow new and old friendships. All of the groups welcome new members. If you would like to try one out, visit our website for contact information.

**SUN  
DAY**

## WOMEN'S BOOK STUDY

**Frequency:** Bi-Monthly

**Leader:** Rita Hoepp

**Book:** *Here All Along*, by Sarah Hurwitz, Harvard Law graduate and former Presidential speech writer

**MON  
DAY**

## MEN'S HUDDLE

**Frequency:** Weekly

**Leader:** Rich Weber

We welcome all men of the church and our community, regardless of denomination, to join us on Monday nights to grow as disciples of Jesus Christ and to enjoy the fellowship of other Christian men.

**Book:** *The Essential Commandment: A Disciples Guide to Loving God and Others*, by Greg Ogden

**TUES  
DAY**

## KOINONIA

**Frequency:** Weekly | 9:30 AM

**Leader:** Rev. Rebecca Reeder

This group is open to all women.

**Current Study:** *The Gospel-Centered Life* by Robert H. Thune and Will Walker

**WEDNES  
DAY**

## BIBLE BASICS

**Frequency:** Weekly | 11 AM

**Leader:** Rev. Kevin Long

**Book:** A book of the *Bible*

All are welcome to join in on this informal study. We are starting a new book of the Bible in January. Stay tuned!

**THURS  
DAY**

## KNITTING FOR MISSION

**Frequency:** Weekly

**Leader:** Nancy Merrill

If you have a passion for knitting, then this is the group for you. Contact Nancy Merrill if you'd like more information on projects the group is working on and how you can become involved.

**FRI  
DAY**

## JOURNEYMEN

**Frequency:** 1<sup>st</sup>, 3<sup>rd</sup> Fridays | 8 AM

**Leader:** Dale Allerton

A Bible study for men of all ages.

**Current study:** *Quiet Strength* by Tony Dungy



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