

INTERPRETATION

Sewickley Presbyterian Church Newsletter
November/December 2021



Women's Retreat | October 2021

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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.

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



Find us on
Facebook



Instagram

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ARE YOU LISTENING?

By Rev. Derek Davenport


Our congregation has decided to spend this year reading the Bible together. After the events of this past year, we find ourselves in the midst of so many transitions with more on the horizon. That's why we've decided to anchor ourselves in scripture.

We have a lot of Bibles in our church. Some of them are about as old as our church, dating back to the 1800s. We have one from Shields Presbyterian. We have one from the 1880s. We have some from former friends of our church and families of our congregation.

At one point, part of a story too long for this article, our church dedicated several items to be used in worship, including a chancel Bible. During the service, a former pastor, Lockhart Amerman, delivered the sermon. In his remarks, he said something fascinating about what it is like to worship at Sewickley Presbyterian Church. It works pretty well today – just substitute the name “Dobbins” for “Johnson.”

I think that perhaps in all our services we talk too much and listen too little. I am not speaking now of the immediate sounds, of what I have to say in a sermon, or of what this splendid new choir sings to you, or even of the loveliness that Mr. Johnson brings to us from the organ. These things are only vehicles for the Real Voice. Behind them there are deeper, truer sounds, the vibrations of deity, the speech of Wisdom, and the song of beauty. Have you ever listened to this old church with its whispered memories of bygone worshippers? If you find it hard to pray, there are hundreds of prayers for you to choose from in this wood and this stone and these arches.

I love this notion of listening behind the sounds. Listening to the “whispered memories of bygone worshippers.” There is something so powerful about being part of a community of faith that reaches back before our own time – a community that prayed, pledged, and prepared for us.



“There is something so powerful about being part of a community of faith”

So, of course, we strive to do the same, praying, pledging, and preparing for the next generations, gathering for worship either in person or on-line. As we do, so many of the things we see and hear point us to something deeper. Something greater. Something eternal.

And that brings us back to what we are doing this year. That's why we have chosen, in the midst of transition, to spend this year studying the Bible together. It helps us listen to what God is doing in our midst – to join our ears and hearts and prayers to those of our parents or grandparents, those of friends and neighbors from generations before us. We are studying the Bible together to listen to the “deeper, truer sounds, the vibrations of deity, the speech of Wisdom, and the song of beauty.”

DID YOU KNOW?

By Laura Mikush, Business Administrator

FriendShip Preschool replaced the carpet and flooring this summer in all of their rooms and hallways. The tile was replaced with a new wood laminate and carpet was updated in each room. During this process the majority of the walls in the hallway and individual rooms were repainted to give the entire area a fresh, new look. The church paid for the cost of the flooring replacement in the hallways and landings and

FriendShip paid for the cost of the updates in the individual rooms.

A thank you goes out to Brown Brothers Flooring for the replacement and the Hammer and Nails crew for painting and other repairs that were needed.



stewardship 2022
how are you
responding?

As we approach the end of the year and plan for a brand-new year, we are focusing on stewardship and what our grateful response should be.

Your gifts help us support our church ministries of worship, music, discipleship, youth activities and our outstanding staff that helps to make it all possible. Also supported are dozens of local, national and international missions who carry out the gospel all over the world.

Please consider supporting the ministry of our church by pledging a financial contribution in 2022. Pledges can be made online and also by contacting Laura Mikush in the church office: lmikush@sewickleypresby.org.

COFFEE TALKS WITH MIKE

WHERE?

Apple podcasts, Spotify, Anchor
<https://anchor.fm/mikecreamer>

Join Mike weekly as he reflects on different books he's reading, does sermon talk-backs, and deep dives into scripture passages he's been reading.



WORD SUNG

By Craig Dobbins, Director of Music Ministries

SUNDAY, NOVEMBER 21 AT 11 AM

Join us as the Word Sung returns to worship for the first time since November 2019! On this special day, we will listen to the Word sung, instead of preached from the pulpit.

Our soloists and Chancel Choir will join with members of the Pittsburgh Symphony Orchestra and organist Regina Kettering to perform works of Franz Schubert, Antonio Vivaldi, and William Boyce.



ADVENT LESSONS & CAROLS

By Craig Dobbins, Director of Music Ministries

Enhance your approach to Christmas this Advent by attending our annual Advent service:

Sunday, December 12 at 4 PM

The Chancel Choir, Calvin Handbell Choir, organist Regina Kettering, and brass quintet and percussionists will lead under the direction of the church's Director of Music Ministries, Craig Dobbins. Readers from the church staff, choirs, and congregation will share the story of Advent. Plan to invite your friends and neighbors to attend with you.

PRAYER REQUESTS & MORE

We want to provide care and support to all of our congregants. If you are ever in need of prayer or would like a home visit, please let us know! Just give Sharon Barber a call (or email) and she can arrange a time that works for you.

We publish our prayer list in the weekly bulletins and in our Thursday email. The list is helpful in sharing needs throughout our congregation. Prayer works wonders! Of course, if you would like your prayer request to remain private, we can arrange that too.

Our office is open Monday-Friday, from 9 AM to 5 PM. Please feel free to stop in anytime to speak with one of our staff members.

We have a wonderful group of congregational care members who are passionate about sharing the love of Christ to others. Please don't hesitate to make your needs known.



*Christmas
Eve*

**December 24
5 PM & 8 PM
services**



NEW THINGS ARE HAPPENING!

By Barb Kennedy, Interim Director of Discipleship Ministries

We have started a new format for our Discipleship hour (Sunday School) on Sunday mornings. Each week, families gather around a table to listen to *The Story* and do activities as well as participate in discussion questions. We've been having a lot of fun! One week, we created a "perfect world" as we heard the story of Creation. Another week we were blindfolded and given directions to follow as we talked about Abraham listening to God's directions to take everything he owned and move to a new land.

The class meets in the Dining Room at 9:45 AM on Sundays and is being taught by Barb Kennedy and Erin Leghorn. Join us as we learn about God's faithfulness throughout the stories of the Bible!

Special Note:

In the month of December, we will be doing some exciting Advent activities. One week we will make a family Advent wreath to take home. Another week, we will put together a Blessing Calendar and make cards for college students. You don't want to miss out on the Advent fun!

WE NEED HELP!

If you are willing to help in Children's Worship, we are in need of one extra volunteer each week to participate. Please see Barb Kennedy after church if you can help once a month or even every other month so that we can have two adults in Children's Worship every week. Thank you!

CHILDREN'S WORSHIP

Our Children's Worship has returned to its previous format. Each week after the Children's Message during the 11 AM worship service, kids in grades K-5 will be dismissed to the chapel. Any child younger than Kindergarten is welcome to be in our Children's Childcare.

During Children's Worship, we sing songs and have a short devotional lesson. We try to incorporate some service projects into our time together as well. Be sure to ask your kids what they heard about in our worship time together or better yet, ask them to teach you a new song!



Spread the word: Club 345 is back! Kids in grades 3 to 5 are welcome to stop in for some fun:

Tuesdays, November 9 & 16
3:45 - 5:15 PM
Faith House

Sara Hoagland will be leading the club and can't wait to see everyone again!



WITH GRATITUDE

by Mike Creamer, Director of Youth Ministries

Fall is in full swing and as the temperature drops, we're excited to be back in our rhythms together from week to week.

It seems like so much in the world has been changing. Covid has had an impact on every area of our lives despite our great efforts to resist the changes it has ushered in. But faith is about trusting God amidst the chaos and struggle to see what comes next. Hope is an act of faith, choosing to believe that God is working these things together for good even when we don't understand how that's possible. Although things might look differently than we imagined they would, we are looking toward how God might be leading our youth ministry into new opportunities and rhythms right now.

As we discern what comes next, we are grateful for every opportunity to be together, because a faith community is a group of people that chooses to come together and worship even when we don't know how or what comes next. So join us this week, this month, and this fall as we continue to listen together for what God is doing.

WEEKLY GROUPS

Sunday School

6th-12th grade

9:45-10:45 AM @ Faith House Lounge

Youth Group

6th-12th grade

4-5:30 AM @ Faith House Lawn

UPCOMING EVENTS

High School Laurelville | November 19-21

Ice Skating | December 11

Christmas Party | December 19



SPC Youth mailed Halloween care packages to 34 college students all over the country.

LITTLE LIBRARY

SPC member Jeb Stevenson, built a "Little Library" as his senior project. It is located near the playground. Feel free to take a book to read and leave a book for someone else to read. Books don't need to be returned. We hope you will take part and share your favorite books with each other!





ANNUAL FRIENDSHIP PRESCHOOL HALLOWEEN PARADE!





CELEBRATE WITH US!



Laura Mikush, our Business Administrator celebrates 30 years with SPC on November 7! Laura has guided and helped us through many changes over that time. She is a key employee when it comes to making sure our services and events run smoothly, that our property is well taken care of, also managing the financial aspects of our church -- the list is incredibly long! Her favorite part of her job is interacting with and helping the congregation. We are so thankful to have her as a part of our church family and are grateful to have her as a partner in the ministry of Christ.



On November 1, Jennifer Johnson celebrated 10 years with us. As our Director of Communications, she has played an integral part in creating processes that help to keep us all well-informed about what's happening here at SPC. She says the best part of her job is the variety it affords her -- from web development, graphic designing, helping to plan events -- to name a few -- and being able to work with such a great group of people every day. She is thankful for such a wonderful place to work!

NEW MEMBERS: THE SHOOKS



We recently welcomed Keith, Caitlin and Levi Shook to our church family. If you see them, please introduce yourself and make them feel welcome!



KNITTING FOR MISSION HOLIDAY SALE

Support missions and Christmas shop at the same time!

November 7 & 14, 9 AM - 12 PM
Robinson Room

November 7 (after 1 PM) - 20 | Online
spcknitformission.square.site



On October 29, the family of Ed Clarke gathered in front of the Faith House to dedicate a dogwood tree in honor of Ed's faithfulness to the SPC ministry. Ed was an integral part in the planning and implementation of the Faith House project. This is a wonderful way to remember and honor him. Make sure to stop by and check it out!

NEW FACES at SPC!



If you haven't heard yet, we have two new employees! Rici Brockinson joined our staff on September 19 as our Broadcast Producer. Rici holds a degree from the Art Institute of Pittsburgh in Photography. She's also been a photography and videography teacher at Manchester Craftsman Guild, along with a long list of experiences that make her perfect for managing the services we live stream. If you see her on a Sunday morning stop and introduce yourself. Even better, let her know you are willing to volunteer!



Rev. Barb Kennedy joined SPC as our Director of Discipleship Ministries on September 14. Barb has worked in several Presbyterian churches including Riverview Presbyterian and Ken Mawr Presbyterian. She has been an Associate Pastor at East Union Presbyterian in West Deer and Parkwood Presbyterian in Allison Park. She comes with experience doing children, youth, women, and family ministry. Barb graduated from Pittsburgh Theological Seminary and was ordained in 2006. She has been married to her husband Ed for 15 years and they have two children - Sonia (11) and Josiah (10). They are in the process to adopt two kids from Haiti - Sheelove (7) and Jeff (3). They have been in the adoption process for 7 years and are waiting to bring Sheelove and Jeff home.

CHRISTMAS FOOD BASKETS

Let's face it. Food is essential to sustain life. In fact, it forms the very foundation for our development as human beings. Don't underestimate the power of food in our lives. Our personal choices of food are a major determinant of our health and well-being. It serves as a social common denominator, keeping us connected with family and friends. It is a source of comfort in our lives. It's no wonder that food is uppermost in our thinking.

Every November, the Board of Deacons organizes a Christmas food basket project to address food insecurity in the Glenfield-Sewickley-Leetsdale-Ambridge area. In order to accomplish the goal of distributing 100 food baskets to our neighbors, cash donations are needed to purchase the food. In addition, 65 volunteer delivery teams are needed to distribute the food baskets to the recipients.

Due to COVID, it was necessary to make some changes to our processes in 2020 that we are continuing this year. Instead of shopping for actual items, we ask that you sponsor either a partial basket, a full basket, or donate for more than one basket. One basket is \$150. To reach our goal of 100 baskets, we will need to raise \$15,000. Safran's grocery store will take care of the shopping and will even put the baskets together for us! SPC's delivery volunteers will make sure that each food-insecure recipient will receive a food basket on the morning of December 18.

Please donate as you are able. The Deacons are grateful for any and all donations. **Donations need to be received by November 30.** Please contact the church office with any questions. Thank you!



VOLUNTEERS NEEDED

WE NEED AT LEAST

65

PEOPLE TO DELIVER BASKETS
SIGN-UP ONLINE!



TWO WAYS TO DONATE

1

Mail a check to the church office. Please note that it is for the Food Baskets.

Sewickley Presbyterian Church
414 Grant Street, Sewickley, PA 15143

2

Visit our website and use the drop-down menu on the Give page for Food Baskets.

www.sewickleypresby.org





PCUSA and ECCB Partners Convene Virtually to Encourage one Another in Faith

By Deborah Murdoch, Mission Committee Chair

*I long to see you so that I may impart to you
some spiritual gift to make you strong—that is,
that you and I may be mutually encouraged
by each other's faith.*

Romans 1:11-12

The PC(USA) and SPC have a long and active partnership with the Evangelical Church of the Czech Brethren (ECCB). Over the years there have been many exchanges between our church and partners in the Czech Republic, including conferences in both the US and Czech Republic, visits from ECCB members and pastors to our congregation, and a SPC mission trip to the Czech Republic in 2018. While the partnership conference planned for 2021 in the Czech Republic was postponed to 2023 due to pandemic travel restrictions, partners found new ways to meet and encourage one another in faith.

In March 2021, more than 55 participants from many congregations in the US and the Czech Republic joined Prayer and Praise in the Pandemic: A Conversation about worship in the Season of COVID-19. Dr. Petr Slama, professor at the Protestant Theological Faculty in Prague opened the meeting with theological introduction about the meaning of worship. This was followed by witnesses from three congregations from the US and the Czech Republic about worship in this season and break-out discussions for participants to meet and share their own experiences.

A second meeting focused on the involvement of youth in the church was hosted in October 21. Discussions were led by Jan Dostal and Jan Levicky of the ECCB together with Rev. Sarah Bird Kneff and Destini Hodges, interim coordinator of the PCUSA Young Adult Volunteer Program. Participants discussed youth involvement in civil society and as leaders in the church as well as how summer camps, conferences, and volunteer opportunities provide opportunities for growing one's faith.

The ECCB has more than 70,000 members and 250 congregations in the country and is the largest Protestant denomination in a very secular society. Over the years, SPC members have been encouraged in our faith by hearing our friends in the ECCB church share their testimonies of how their faith and church persevered through four decades of communism. Today, we continue to be encouraged in faith as we meet online and share questions about worship and education, Christian life and witness and the mission of the church in society and worldwide with our Czech partners. Partners are also working to create a joint advent devotional for 2021 that will be available to SPC members.

WORK and Medical Benevolence Foundation Lend Support for Haiti Earthquake Relief

By Deborah Murdoch, Mission Committee Chair

On August 14, a 7.2 magnitude earthquake hit southwestern Haiti about 90 miles from the capital city of Port-au-Prince. UNICEF estimates that more than 1.5 million people were affected by the earthquake, including more than 500,000 children; an estimated 30,000 people have been left homeless. Two mission organizations, WORK and the Medical Benevolence Foundation, were among the first to respond, and the SPC mission committee approved \$10,000 above and beyond our annual giving to these organizations to support their relief efforts.

WORK's mission is to accompany families in Haiti out of poverty through good, dignified jobs. They support landfill communities providing wrap-around services with an end goal of placing two heads of the household into a dignified job. Two days after the earthquake, WORK sent a 6-member team of Haitian staff and program graduates to check on the families impacted and address critical needs including medical needs, burial support, mental health support, supply and food distribution, and construction of temporary shelters. WORK is continuing to raise funds to rebuild as many homes as possible; they estimate ~90 new homes



will be needed for families in the Les Cayes area, one of the hardest hit areas.

Medical Benevolence Foundation (MBF) partners with local church-owned hospitals, clinics, and medical schools to establish a Christian Medical Network operated by and for locals in the counties where they work. SPC has supported work of MBF at Mulanje Hospital in Malawi for many years. Two days after the earthquake, a team from one of MBF's sites, Hôpital Sainte Croix (HSC), gathered supplies and equipment to take to Les Cayes. They were joined by nursing students and spent four days a week on the road operating a mobile clinic for the villages that had no medical care and have since conducted 8 mobile clinics for patients in Les Cayes, Maniche, Jeannette, Beraud, and other areas.

These efforts are just the beginning of a lengthy recovery period for Haiti, where they are also experiencing political upheaval and increased insecurity. Both WORK and MBF remain committed to continuing to meet the needs of Haitians and are well-placed to respond as a result of their long-term investments in building local capacity.

DAY ON THE LAWN

The final numbers are in! Thank you to everyone who helped make Day on the Lawn a success this year. All of the monies raised will go to support missions. DOL income is used above and beyond the regular mission budget, so it's always a joy to be able to send monetary support to those in need when they are least expecting it.

We are still accepting underwriting donations, so if you'd like to donate to help offset expenses, please use our website (GIVE) and use the drop-down menu to choose "Day on the Lawn underwriting" or you may send a check to Laura Mikush in the church office. Thank you!



NET SALES
\$53,709

UNDERWRITING
\$10,950
EXPENSES
\$15,337

DIFF: -\$4,389



Malawi/South Sudan Partnership Update

By Glenis Levine, Mission Committee

The International Partnership of Pittsburgh Presbytery states the following on its homepage:

"There is no part of the church of Jesus Christ that can be whole and complete without the gifts available to it from the whole church. Only in partnership with each other can the various parts of the church effectively respond to the spiritual, social and physical needs of the people of God."

With this in mind in 1991, Pittsburgh Presbytery and the Synod of Blantyre, Malawi, Africa developed a partnership. Then in 2013, this partnership was expanded to include South Sudan. It has been an opportunity for hundreds of people and dozens of congregations on both sides of the Atlantic Ocean to grow in their faith and learn to serve God patiently, obediently, and passionately."

Thirty years ago, this partnership, which warmly connects like-minded Christians from across the Atlantic, began. Today, amidst the challenges of a pandemic, the partnership continues through prayer, God's grace, and Zoom. And although travel between the countries did not occur for a second year, there is hope and talk of a trip for 2022.

As for the current situation with our partners, the Synod of Blantyre in Malawi and the South Sudan Presbyterian Evangelical Church, there are several updates.

First, the Zomba Theological College (which belongs to the General Assembly of the Church of Central Africa Presbyterian) is seeking funding for external auditing in order to move towards becoming a University. As a part of attaining accreditation status, it must "conduct and produce audited financial statements." The aim is to become a self-sufficient institution, continuing to train Presbyterian Pastors who will eventually serve both Malawi and congregations abroad.

Next, the South Sudan Presbyterian Evangelical Church is about to hold its 3rd General Assembly. They had hoped to convene every two years, but due to the political situation in the country have not been able to meet since 2013! This year they are inviting delegates from within and outside the country to form a new body of leaders to "achieve the goal of creating a healthy democratic Church which will act as a beacon of integrity, transparency, and change within our nation."

Another area for celebration is the Evangelical School – Pochalla in eastern South Sudan. On April 5th children, ages 4-7, attended open air classes for the first time since 2013. This remote area is determined to build classrooms, support teachers, and equip children to become eventual leaders of their communities. "Our school project started with absolutely nothing except determination and hope. Our philosophy is to take bold action expecting God to do the impossible"

Finally, the Mulanje Mission Hospital of the Blantyre Synod continues to be a source of inspiration. Caring for the most vulnerable in their community, struggling through three severe waves of Covid with high rates of infection and low levels of medical supplies, and dealing with water and sanitation control is all met with unfailing determination. Through these difficult days the hospital continues to seek ways to improve: creatively finding ways to generate more income, planning to build houses to accommodate much needed doctors, and serving young mothers through training programs.

Our wonderful partners appreciate your prayers for these areas of concern and hope. Please keep them in your prayers, just as they continue to pray for us.



Center for Hope Holiday Auction Starts “Online” Thanksgiving Day!

Auction begins to “close” Sunday evening December 5th.

Register to bid: 24/7 www.SHAuctions.com

**View auction items Saturday 12/4 from 11am-12:30 in the Center
for Hope Café- 740 Park Road, Ambridge PA.**



WHAT'S IN YOUR STOCKING?

One of the best parts of Christmas morning is discovering what is inside your Christmas stocking. Every year we gift 100 stockings to the Center for Hope so that kids can have that same feeling! Please visit our website to find out how you can shop and/or give to help fill these stockings.

COLLECTION DATES
November 21 - December 5

COLLECTION INFO
Robinson Room
Place in container labeled “Christmas Stockings”



Sewickley Presbyterian Church

LIVE · GROW · SERVE

414 Grant Street

Sewickley, PA 15143

www.sewickleypresby.org

Dated Material

PLEASE EXPEDITE



FALL CLEAN-UP: JOIN IN!

**SATURDAY
NOVEMBER 6
9 AM - 12 PM**