INTERPRETATION Sewickley Presbyterian Church Newsletter Sewickley Presbyterian Church Newsletter

New YORK

Winter 2024

YOUTH SUNDAY PREACHERS

BOO EARLWINE, MEGAN CAMPBELL LIZZIE SZUBA, HADLEY HOEHL 2.11.2024

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SOCIAL MEDIA





By Rev. Derek Davenport, Pastor

As I write these words, we sit between two events.

These two events are simple enough on their own. They serve as high points of our calendar, but they are a part of our regular routine. If we are not careful, we may see them as regular or routine. Yet, taking the two together changes both. The whole becomes greater than the sum of its parts.

The events I have in mind are Founders' Day and Youth Sunday.

This coming Sunday we celebrate Founders' Day. It is one of the great disciplines of our church. We look back at those who have gone before us and prepared the way. We give thanks to God for the people who worked and sacrificed so that we can worship.

We gather in our sanctuary or chapel, facilities built by those who came before us. We remember those who saw the possibility of a bright future for the Church - for this Church, and who provided opportunities for us to live our faith and become leaders in this community. We tell the stories of those who have gone before us and who enabled our stories to unfold.

That will all happen this coming week.

Today, though, we are in between.

This past Sunday was Youth Sunday. Our youth led not one but two of our worship services. They sang. They led prayers. They preached. More specifically, they preached four times. More accurately, they preached four times at two services. In the midst of it all, we celebrated a baptism. Though we saw one of the newest members of our church receive baptism, and though we saw our preachers and prayer leaders and musicians, our youth also led in less visible ways. They helped run our technology. They ushered. They greeted us as we gathered. They spent time after school and on weekends preparing their words and duties They worked and sacrificed too so that we could worship. They worked and sacrificed so we could worship.

We gathered in our sanctuary or chapel, facilities that will be stewarded by those who will come after us. We see the bright future of this church - of the Church – with such incredible young leaders in our midst. We get to watch their stories unfold and provide for them every blessing we can.

Sometimes we miss God in the in-between places. One of our youth pointed that out on Sunday.

As I write these words, we sit in between two events. We give thanks for our past and we give thanks our future. These two disciplines of our church are so profound, and they become even more powerful when we see them together.



COLLEGE STUDENT VALENTINES

We were able to send 38 cards to our college kids for Valentine's Day! Thank you to everyone who donated Starbucks cards to be included in the card.

Pic: Rev. Mike Creamer personalizing each card.



BIG PROJECTS COMPLETED! By Laura Mikush. Business Administrator

Did you know that we completed two BIG projects in December? The dining room and kitchen flooring, that was damaged by the flood in December 2022, is now finally complete with the installation of new carpeting and flooring in the dining room. The elevator jack that cracked in May of 2023 has been replaced and the elevator is back in working order.

GIVING ONLINE IS EASY!

We make it easy to give online! You can make a pledge, weekly offering, event fee, etc., right on our website. Go to the Give tab (along the top) and choose Give Online. Enter the amount you'd like to give/pay, choose the destination



from the drop down menu, and enter your information. That's all there is to it! Instructions for how to give via text is also available under the Give tab.

How much would you like to gi	Presbyterian Church	
Amount \$ 0.00	Fund Stewardship/Offering/Pldg	<u>(</u> .
GiVE ONCE Cift date Today Email address johnsmith@gmail.com	Stewardship/Offering/Pldg Memorial Fund Pastor's Discret Donation Hunger Offering Sunday Memorial Flowers Capital Campp. 2023-2024	



LIFT EVERY VOICE CONCERT By Rev. Emily Miller, Associate Pastor

Members of our Justice Ministries Team, led by Jane Shadle, attended the *Lift Every Voice* concert of the Pittsburgh Symphony Orchestra at Heinz Hall on Saturday, February 3. The PSO, along with Grammy winning soloist Oleta Adams and the Lift Every Voice Unity Choir, paid tribute to "the spirit and richness of Black music in America and its enduring strength in times of tumult and trouble." Our group attended with others from our community church partners, for a total of 17 attendees. What a wonderful evening it was!



CCM TEAM CELEBRATION

Members of our Congregation Care Ministry team gathered for an end of year lunch to celebrate a great year in December. This great group of folks helps to care for our church members throughout the year. Thank you!



A MEDITATION FOR YOU

By Rev. Emily Miller, Associate Pastor

Greetings fellow travelers on this journey with and towards God! Our "Longest Night" service this past Christmas was well attended by folks who wanted to feel part of the church during dark times in their lives. I thought I would share the brief meditation I gave during this service because I know there are others who can benefit from it, but could not attend. If you are feeling down during these dark winter months, I encourage you to read on and know that you are part of this body we call the church: "I would bet that each one of us has prayed and asked God to help us take away our pain."

In her book entitled Prayer in the Night, Rev. Tish Warren recalls a cold winter evening in January 2017, when she was new to Pittsburgh and having dinner at a neighbor's home. She was pregnant with her third child at the time, when suddenly, she felt some contractions and became very short of breath. After apologizing profusely to their hosts, Tish and her husband Jonathan made their way to the hospital. In the hot lights of the emergency room, she realized she was miscarrying. And, so, despite the nurses who were telling her to lie still, Tish yelled for her husband, "Compline! I want to pray Compline!" Jonathan pulled up the Book of Common Prayer on his phone and warned the nurses, "We are both priests, and we are going to pray now." And then they launched into the ancient words of the church that they both knew so well, saying:

Keep watch, dear Lord,

with those who work or watch or weep this night, and give your angels charge over those who sleep. Tend the sick, Lord Christ; give rest to the weary, bless the dying, sooth the suffering, pity the afflicted, shield the joyous, all for your love's sake. In Christ, Amen.

The full service of evening prayers is longer than that for Anglicans, but that part is known as Compline, the heart of a service designed for nighttime when fears can overtake us and a somber mood moves in. Jonathan bluntly says of that dark time in their lives, "What kept us alive was Compline."

Why is that? Why did this young couple, both priests, who certainly know how to come up with prayers, turn to an ancient prayer of the church during a medical emergency? Tish could still speak, and she knew words to express her feelings. But more than just expressing her hurt, she wanted to put her crisis in the middle of something greater. She wanted to put herself, "in the vast mystery of God, the sure-ty of God's power, and the reassurance of God's love...to take up the practices of the church. Specifically, by taking up prayer, the liturgy of the hours/Compline."

Different Christian denominations have done this over the centuries, like when Catholics pray the rosary or when Protestants pray the Lord's Prayer. When we recite the ancient words of the church, we place ourselves in something larger and ask the church to speak for us when we can't speak for ourselves. Liturgical prayers draw us out of ourselves and our own self-obsessed moment and pull us into the long story of Christ's work in and through his body, called the church.

Each one of us has been through something this year, just as Tish and Jonathan had. Whether it is new pain or old, fresh loss or the memory of a painful loss years ago, we've all been through something that has brought us here.

I would bet that each one of us has prayed and asked God to help us take away our pain. But sometimes, when we've prayed ourselves out and the words won't come, the best we can do is to allow the church to speak for us, saying words that call upon God to be with us and love us through it. For Tish, those words were Compline; for you, it might be the Lord's Prayer or the prayer on the little card over there that I give out at each of these Connect services, or some other prayer that caught your eye some time ago that you can return to. Whatever it is, I encourage you to let the church in all of its collective wisdom pray for you when you can't.

The other bit of wisdom we have comes not from a modern-day book, but from the Apostle Paul, who also offers advice for the times when we can't seem to conjure up the words to tell God how we feel. In writing to the church at Rome, Paul says:

> The Spirit helps us in our weakness, for we do not know how to pray as we ought, but that very Spirit intercedes with groanings too deep for words. Romans 8:26

So, Paul, who lived before the church as we know it was formed, and so before any formal liturgy, gives advice for those of us here tonight. He says that when we are so worn out by the events going on around us, when we have prayed aloud until we are hoarse in the throat, it's OK to say nothing. It's OK to sit in the stillness and let God hear the beating of your heart and allow the Holy Spirit to pray for you. For the Spirit helps us in our weakness, and in our relationship with God, no words are really necessary. Friends, God knows us; God knows what is going on inside of us. Psalm 139 says, "God, you discern my path from far away... you are acquainted with all my ways." God knows when our heart is happy and full, and God knows when our heart is empty. So, to sit in the stillness and let God be God and say nothing, is also a prayer we can pray. Let us sit now in the silence, and let the Spirit speak for us.

Hope this helps. Walking with you in faith,

Pastor Emily



WE ARE GROWING!

We welcomed 13 new members to our church family in January.

If you see them, please make them feel welcome!

If you are interested in membership, please contact Sharon Barber in the church office.



Mitch Wilbanks



Holly Wilbanks



Laura Jack



Danielle Coggeshall





Amelia Dean



Steve Dean



Natalie Cockrell





Peter Cockrell



Liam Madden



Judy Packer



Bill Coates



Marcia Coates



MLK COMMUNITY SERVICE By Jane Shadle, SPC Justice Ministries

"Lift every voice and sing, 'Til earth and heaven ring, Ring with the harmonies of Liberty; Let our rejoicing rise High as the listening skies, Let it resound loud as the rolling sea."

More than 80 people sang these lyrics from the early 1900's hymn on a frigid Sunday afternoon. January 14, 2024, was the second ecumenical worship service honoring Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.

The service, hosted again by Sewickley Methodist Church, began this year with a hearty catered luncheon. Members of Sewickley Methodist, St. Matthews AME Zion, Sewickley Presbyterian, and St. Paul's Lutheran churches shared in this feast, with conversation developing among these neighbors in Christ. At the close of the lunch, Rev. Hannah Loughman, of the Methodist church, welcomed four youth from these partner churches to the podium.

These two young men and two young women, representing Sewickley Methodist, St. Matthews AME, and Sewickley Presbyterian, included SPC sixth grader Celia Meunier (*picture to the right*). The students eloquently spoke about what Martin Luther King, Jr., meant to them. They emphasized his faith and standing up in the face of injustice. They highlighted his courage, mentioning his 29 imprisonments. Martin Luther King, Jr., clearly inspired each of these middle schoolers in their own fight to overcome injustice, racism, and bullying.

The worship service, led by Rev. Loughman, Rev. Emily Miller, and Rev. William Rankin of St. Matthews, wove together prayers for peace, forgiveness, and love. Uplifting music surrounded all these prayers, with musicians from Sewickley Methodist, St. Paul's Lutheran, and our own Dr. Michael Hammer playing as the congregation – and the preacher- sang. Piercing words from Dr. King were read:

"A negative peace which is the absence of tension" is less than "a positive peace which is the presence of justice."

"Freedom is never voluntarily given by the oppressor; it must be demanded by the oppressed."

"Injustice anywhere is a threat to justice everywhere... Whatever affects one directly affects all indirectly."

And Dr. King's lament that "the contemporary church is often a weak, ineffectual voice ...so often the arch-supporter of the status quo..."

Following these meditations came the sermon, preached by Rev. Rankin. His text was Amos 5:21-24, which concludes with these words:

> "But let justice run down like water, And righteousness like a mighty stream."

Justice, emphasized Rev. Rankin, is a common biblical theme, mentioned in over 2,000 verses in both the Old and New Testaments. He spoke of God's priority for the poor and marginalized; of Jesus's command to love our enemies. Rev. Rankin challenged us to be prophets, like Amos and Martin Luther King; to rediscover our prophetic voice. This preacher in 2024 admonished and charged us to do the right thing and fight injustice in the world; as Dr. King did in the 1960's; as Jesus did over 2,000 years ago.

Before exiting the warm sanctuary to re-enter the cold January afternoon outside, we held hands, laid a hand on our neighbor's arm or back, or circled up in small groupsblack and white; Methodist, Lutheran, Presbyterian, or AME, praying in song this final verse of the civil rights hymn, We Shall Overcome:

> "God will see us through; God will see us through; God will see us through today. O, deep in my heart I do believe we shall overcome someday!"

"I DECIDED TO KNOW NOTHING AMONG YOU EXCEPT JESUS CHRIST AND HIM CRUCIFIED."

1 Corinthians 2:1

LENTEN SOUP SUPPERS & STUDY

"AND HIM CRUCIFIED"

Begins Wednesday, February 21 6 PM Soup Supper 6:45 PM Study for All Ages

Adult & Youth Study

As we make our way to the Cross this Lent season, we will learn what Matthew, Mark, Luke, John and Paul have to share about their experiences with the Cross and the message it carries to all of us. Dr. Steven Tuell will be our speaker throughout the five weeks of our studies. Don't miss this time to center your heart and mind on our Savior, Christ Jesus.

'Building a Neighborhood' Kid's Study

After supper, kids are invited to their own study. They will be Building a Neighborhood -- an actual neighborhood with boxes, roads, and decorations. As they are building, they will focus on how to extend the love of Christ to people and what makes a great community!

Please consider donating your favorite soup! Details on our website: sewickleypresy.org

RSVP EACH WEDNESDAY ONLINE

diving into friendship with GOO

202A 20ATIC NACATIC

July 28 - August 2 Registration opens March 1!

sewickleypresby.org



SPC KIDS NEWS



By Hanna Mellor, Children's Ministry Coordinator

What a fabulous fall and Christmas season we had at SPC Kids! We participated in many fun and new-to-us events last fall and we are preparing to do the same into the spring! Here are some highlights:

• Our Gingerbread Party was such a success and we loved to see so many families get together to make a messy fun project!

• Our hearts were also filled with excitement and energy as we performed in the annual Christmas pageant. For the first time for many of us, the pageant was integrated into the service. Our dedication and faith prevailed and it was such a lovely day that we are so thankful to have been a part of it!

• Our Club 345 group helped many as we participated in service projects along with our journaling throughout the fall and we still had plenty of time for silliness and creativity!

The Spring Season will include many fan-favorite events like Kid Night Out's and Easter Egg-Citements, but we will also include new endeavors such as (the most recent) Stuffed Animal Sleepover, Building Together, and much more! Keep an eye out on the church website and on our SPC Kids weekly emails for more updates and exciting opportunities!

In our Children's Church we journeyed through the 10 commandments in our donut-connection point style each week. It was a deliciously good time to spend and learn together! From the games to the treats, it was faith-filled. We are moving next into our Ice Cream Treat unit on our sweet adventure era of the 2023-2024 year to be followed by a Jelly Bean study to preamble the Easter season. What a way to emphasize that Jesus is always sweet!

In Sunday School, we will be exploring Bible story basics before we journey across the library nook to the Choir room for lessons led by Dr. Micheal Hammer and Mr. Jeremy Fisher. Our Children's Choir is coming to us soon for special performances! Stay tuned!

Mrs. Nicole will also be utilizing our lessons in Children's Church to lead Chapel time immediately following our Studio sessions to reinforce the lesson. This went swimmingly in the fall and we are excited to continue this into the spring! Apart from Chapel time, Mrs. Nicole has beautifully reinstated the Preschool Programming in our Childcare Room and is working with our young staff members of the room, Miss Hadley and Miss Emma, to have them lead lessons. It has been a joy to see this room grow so much in faith and in love in just a short amount of time!

Mrs. Nicole has also taken on a brand new 4th and 5th grade Sunday School class to challenge these kids' minds and have a more driven and thought provoking session built for them.

We are always looking for new faces to help inspire and grow our kids faith and enhance their church memories and experiences, so please prayerfully consider volunteering in one of our rooms on a Sunday morning! We only ask that you bring a positive "vibe" and kind spirit, Mrs. Nicole and I will take on the rest. Please reach out to either of us for more details, we would love to have you.



THE BELLS ARE CALLING!

By Michael Hammer, Choir Director & Organist

Imagine an instrument where a single player controls thousands of keys, switches, pipes, and controls, and is able to command the sound of an entire orchestra by themselves.

Now imagine the complete opposite. Instead of one player handling multiple sounds and groups of sounds, you need several people to even play a simple melody. One person alone can only play a few notes. By yourself you can't do very much.

The second scenario might sound pretty ridiculous if what you are looking for is efficiency or an easy way to coordinate lots of musical sound. But if you see no value in this second approach you are missing the point.

There are several good reasons to go about making music this way, and one of them is that it is just plain fun! And it teaches us a lot about community and fellowship. Additionally, for all the impressive musical sounds that can be made using the first approach, there is a special sound that you can't make with it, despite all the knobs and switches. The sound of approach number two is unique.

The first scenario of course describes the pipe organ. The second, the bell choir.

One of many musical groups to go on hiatus during the pandemic, the bells of SPC are back, and are holding regular rehearsals on Sundays after the 11am service. They will also be featured in worship on February 18 (at the 11 AM service). Currently the choir has nine members, and there is plenty of room to expand. SPC has five octaves of bells, and at the moment we are only using two of them. Which means you are welcome to come try us out! In addition to the fun (those peals of laughter downstairs after the services are coming from the bell choir), you can learn some very interesting things. Did you know, for example, that you can play two bells with the same hand, either by flicking the wrist, or at the same time? Did you know you can put the bells on the table and play them with mallets? Did you know there are multiple ways to make a bell stop sounding? People have gotten pretty creative with what at first might seem a fairly limited instrument. But it all starts with a simple motion anyone can make. You do not need to be an expert in bells to join. And you don't need to be able to sing or play an instrument. The bell choir is something completely apart from any musical experience you could have otherwise. Check us out!





JOIN OUR PRESCHOOL THIS FALL

By Erin Leghorn, Director of FriendShip Preschool

Registration for the 2024-2025 school year is open! Friend-Ship Preschool is an early childhood education program for children ages 2-5. Our mission is to provide a high-quality, early childhood education program in a Christian setting. FriendShip promotes social emotional, cognitive, and physical development in young children.

FriendShip uses play as the primary means to develop skills and promote growth while fostering discovery, friendships, and enjoyment in the preschool experience. Children who attend FriendShip build caring relationships with both their peers and their teachers, and love coming to school each day!

For information on how to register, email Erin Leghorn (eleghorn@sewickleypresby.org).

OUR PROGRAMS

CHILDREN'S CORNER

For children 24 months - 3 years old (must be 2 by September 1 to enroll, but do not need to be potty-trained) Meets 2 days/week - Monday/ Wednesday or Tuesday/Thursday 9 – 11:30 AM The focus of this class is to develop social skills, as well as language skills, while children play in a lively group setting.

FRIENDSHIP I

For young 3-year-old children (birthdays between March 1 & September 1; must be fully potty-trained) Tuesday/Thursday morning from 9 AM – 12 PM. Students stay for lunch. Beginning in January, students also attend on Friday mornings from 9 – 11:30 AM (no lunch on Fridays). Children experience learning through both group and individual play. They begin to learn the routines of a school day and explore concepts through themed units.

FRIENDSHIP II

For older 3-year-old & younger 4-year-old children (must be 3 by March 1; must be fully potty-trained) Monday, Wednesday and Friday from 9 AM to 12:30 PM. Students stay for lunch. Children learn to play and work cooperatively in small and large groups while learning about science, cooking, math, and language arts. Daily circle time includes a lesson, music, stories, the calendar and weather. Letters of the alphabet are introduced with each new weekly theme.

PRE-K

For 4 & 5-year-old children (must be 4 by June 1) Monday - Friday from 9 AM to 1 AM. Students stay for lunch. Children learn through meaningful play, self-expression, and exploration of their environment. Language and literacy development, as well as math concepts are taught through weekly thematic units, such as Friendship, Oceans, Health and Space. Children in this program also explore famous artists and their work each month.



"I'm so inspired and impressed each week

by their fresh knowledge and interpretations

of Biblical questions and the many

mysteries it presents us. It's so encouraging

how they WANT to be there, how respectful

they are of each other and how just their

presence each week at Starbucks is

inspirational to everyone who comes and

goes during the time we are there."

Mark Gensheimer reflects on

being a part of HS Breakfasts.

LEADING WITH THE LIGHT OF CHRIST

By Rev. Mike Creamer, Assoc. Pastor for Youth & Young Adults

There's been plenty of fun stuff happening over the last few months. We had our annual campfire, we made our return to high school Laurelville, we took up our stocking drive for the Center for Hope, and ended 2023 with our Christmas party. And these special events have been a real joy. But if I had to summarize the excitement of the last few months in our youth ministry in just one word, it would be *leadership*.

In 1st Timothy 4:12, Paul writes to encourage Timothy and says, "Don't let anyone think less of you because you are young. Be an example to all believers in what you say, in the way you live, in your love, your faith, and your purity." This fall has been an embodiment of this passage for our teens and we couldn't be more excited.

Our middle school students have been working with Caroline Johns for months, diving

deep into the connections between ancient and modern Israel, questions about how our faith should inform our understanding, and so much more. But they haven't kept this learning to themselves—Caroline and the middle school students led the adult Sunday School class, teaching them about all they've learned.

On top of that, one of our middle schooler, Celia, was a part of our community MLK service in January (see page

9). It takes a lot of courage to speak in front of a room full of people at any age, but Celia did it as a 6th grader in front of churches from around the community about what MLK means to her and her faith.

Our high schoolers have also been embracing this passage in 1st Timothy, too. Our high school breakfast program has

been bursting at the seams this year, to the point that we have literally run out of chairs at Starbucks (what a good problem to have!). But our students are the ones that take the lead at HS Breakfast. They come up with topics, questions, and passages to lead their peers in discussing and exploring. Our seniors usually lead, but they have modeled what that looks like so well that our freshman have been empowered to lead some weeks too!

I cannot convey to you all enough how wonderful spending time with

our teenagers is. These teens bring a passion and insight into faith that has been a true blessing to our church.

I encourage you to step out of your comfort zone, introduce yourself to a few teens this month, and see what we're talking about.









YOUTH SUNDAY 2024

We just wrapped up Youth Sunday with 30 kids leading worship and four senior's preaching. The common theme they all shared was how important this church has been in cultivating their faith.











HELPING OUR NEIGHBORS IN NEED

By Nancy Merrill, SPC Member

February is one of two months in the year when we collect personal care items for those in our community struggling financially and needing some extra help.

As you shop this month, please pick up some of the items listed below that are not covered by SNAP (food stamps). Additional details can be found on our website.

The following personal care items were requested by our mission partners: Center for Hope, Sewickley Community Center, The Ladle, and the Sewickley YMCA's Little Free Pantries.

Please place items in the bins labeled "Neighbors in Need" inside the church entrances.

Financial contributions are also welcome. Online: <u>https://sewickleypresby.org/give/</u> By check to 414 Grant Street, Sewickley 15143 Donations allow us to supplement the donated items.

Neighbors in Need also has an Amazon wish list: <u>click here.</u> Items ordered on Amazon are shipped to the church.

Questions?

Contact any SPC Neighbors in Need committee members: Nancy Merrill, Tara Nixon, and Stephanie O'Kane.

SHOPPING LIST (not travel size)

Deodorant Shampoo Conditioner Body lotion Toothbrushes Toothpaste lvory bar soap Dish detergent (medium size) Laundry detergent (medium size) Feminine products Toilet paper Shaving cream Razors Baby wipes (hypoallergenic) Diapers (size 4,5,6) Pull-ups (size 6) Ziplock bags Kitchen garbage bags

thank you!



We will be installing Rev. Derek Davenport as our Senor Pastor and would love for you to be a part of this celebration. Mark your calendars! May 19 • 3:30 PM



INSTALLATION SERVICE • PICNIC • BOUNCY HOUSE • GAMES



414 Grant Street | Sewickley, PA | 15143 www.sewickleypresby.org

Dated Material PLEASE EXPEDITE

This newsletter is published by Sewickley Presbyterian Church



- FEB 18 Founders' Day
 FEB 19 Office Closed
 FEB 21 Lenten Soup Supper/Study
 FEB 28 Lenten Soup Supper/Study
 MAR 1 World Day of Prayer Service
 MAR 2 Open Hands Youth Service Day
 MAR 6 Lenten Soup Supper/Study
 MAR 10 Community Lent Service
 MAR 13 Lenten Soup Supper/Study
 MAR 20 Lenten Soup Supper/Study
 MAR 21 Palm Sunday & Kids Egg-Citement Event
 MAR 28 Maundy Thursday Service
 MAR 29 Community Good Friday Service
 MAR 31 Easter Sunday
 APR 20 PKF Spring Session for Youth
- APR 27 Spring Cleaning Day