

INTERPRETATION

Sewickley Presbyterian Church Newsletter
Spring 2024



On April 23, Deacons, Masonic Village church member residents and church staff joined together for tea and cookies at Masonic Village. It was a great gathering as everyone was able to share a time of fellowship with each other.

The last time we visited Masonic for this type of get-together was in February of 2020, so we were long overdue!

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SOCIAL MEDIA





EXPRESSING OUR FAITH

By Rev. Derek Davenport, Pastor

On February 17th of 1838, the Presbytery of Ohio sent John Williamson Nevin and Joseph Reed to Edgeworth Female Seminary to organize a new congregation. Nevin's brother, Daniel Eagle, would serve as its first pastor.

Twelve years later, in 1850, Nevin published a pair of essays entitled "Human Freedom and a Plea for Philosophy." In his essays, Nevin mused about the intersection of Christianity with art. He questioned whether any human organization could dare to claim authority over the fine arts, and ultimately argued that God calls Christians to transform all spheres of humanity, such as art, to proclaim the gospel.

In his own words:

"It is a libel on Christ, to say that his religion has nothing to do with politics, or the fine arts, or the sciences, or common social life. It must unite itself with all these, inwardly and profoundly, so as to transfigure them fully into its own image, before it shall have accomplished its mission in the world. For how else should it deserve to be acknowledged the universal truth of man's life?" p.28.

For Nevin, employing art to proclaim the gospel was not an option available to Christians, it was a necessity to fulfill our ministry. To pretend otherwise was an insult to God.

Though theologians have debated the place of art in faith for centuries, our congregation has sided with Nevin. We have used art as a powerful tool to communicate our theology, particularly in ways that words fail us. Even today, you can find breathtaking sculptures, tapestries, paintings, and stained glass throughout our church buildings. These visible signs attempt to express invisible graces; they are our efforts to transfigure art into an expression of faith.

This summer, we will dive into that transfiguration. We will explore art that expresses our faith. Whether you are an artist yourself, an expert in the arts, an enthusiast, or even an outsider to the world of art, join us on this journey as we explore art that expresses our faith.



SAVE THE DATE

Women's Retreat

October 26 & 27

A QUIET PLACE

By Joan Murdoch, SPC Member

"Be still and know I am God" Ps.46:10



Our Sewickley Presbyterian Church chapel is a very special place – for worship, peaceful reflection and contemplation. During the Discipleship Committee's recent study of spiritual practices, I realized more than ever the importance of listening to God and taking time to simply be in the presence of our Lord. We are so blessed to be able to go to God anywhere and anytime: however, there are "occasions" when we need a place to go to meditate away from the pressures of our busy, scheduled lives. We all have the opportunity to simply visit the chapel during church hours (9 AM - 5 PM and Sunday mornings) and take time to adore and enjoy God as well as to pray and rest in His presence.

Jesus promised in Matthew 19:28 "Come to me, all who are weary and carrying heavy burdens, and I will give you rest." Our chapel is one place where we can simply be with God and feel His peace in a quiet space. I hope members of our church will make visiting this beautiful chapel a regular spiritual practice to receive renewed strength away from the busy pace of modern life and in the peaceful presence of God.



DOLLARS & SENSE

By Laura Mikush, Business Administrator

Like many Presbyterians, you may have wondered, "Exactly what does per capita do?" Per capita is the amount of support, per member, that our congregation remits to our Presbytery that is then sent to our Synod and the General Assembly. This money is part of the glue that holds Presbyterians together. It is the money that enables us to work with other Presbyterian churches in our Presbytery and across the country. It is also money that allows us to work with other churches to further the mission of Jesus Christ around the world.

Here is the breakdown of how Per Capita is figured:

	2023	2024
Presbytery	\$23.45	\$24.15
Synod	\$ 2.40	\$ 2.40
General Assembly	\$ 9.85	\$ 9.80
	\$35.70	\$36.35

The rate above is then multiplied by the church's active membership number from the prior year. So, for 2023 the rate of \$35.70 x 798 active members or \$28,488.60. For 2024 the amount was \$36.35 x 800 active members or \$29,080.00.

The Pittsburgh Presbytery does offer a 5% discount if we pay this amount in full by January 31st of the current year. We have taken this discount in 2023 was (\$1,424.43) and for 2024 was (\$1,454.00).

If you would be willing to help defray the cost of this annual expense to our church, please send a check to Sewickley Presbyterian Church, 414 Grant Street, Sewickley, PA 15143 Attention: Laura Mikush. In the "subject" line please write, Annual Per Capita. Any amount to cover the expense for you, and the members of your household, or any additional donation for this purpose would be greatly appreciated.



HAPPY ANNIVERSARY TO OUR SEWICKLEY COMMUNITY CHURCH PARTNERSHIP!

By Rev. Emily Miller, Associate Pastor

As I sit and look out at our empty sanctuary on the afternoon of Maundy Thursday, I envision the faces of the people who will come to worship that evening. Some of the faces I see are longtime SPC members, but some of the faces I imagine are members of our partner churches whom I have grown to know and love. That is because we have passed the one-year anniversary of our community church partnership!

The first year has been filled with both enthusiasm and growth. It seems that no matter who I am with or what meeting I am part of, SPC folks are celebrating this partnership. There is enthusiasm from the Justice Ministries Committee from whom this idea blossomed. There is enthusiasm from our staff who have formed friendships with the staff of the other churches – for instance, our Michael Hammer and St. Paul’s Gus Solczi are now friends who share a love for the organ! And when I am talking with SPC members about something completely different, folks will pause and say, “Emily, I just love our partnership with our friends in Sewickley!” Indeed, there is enthusiasm all around!

Our partnership has experienced growth in the past year as well. We began by worshipping together, but have also added Bible studies, movies, concerts, and even picnics. This year during Lent, SPC hosted three joint services (more than last year), and Pastor Mike and I went to the partner churches to preach as well. Due to the familiarity this year, I noticed increased attendance throughout Lent.

As I write this article, I await our Maundy Thursday joint community service. I am excited to welcome our ecumenical friends once again and show the power of us coming together to re-live the last few days of Jesus’ life. In this way, we strengthen our bonds of friendship, and we enrich our faith as people of God.

If you have any ideas for more joint efforts, please let me know! Making friends,

Pastor Emily





STEWARDSHIP

"God loves a cheerful giver"

STEWARDSHIP 101

By Shelley Newlin, SPC Member

Giving to the church in your will, also known as making a bequest, allows you to support the church's mission and work beyond your lifetime. It's a way to leave a lasting legacy and contribute to the church's future. Here are some key benefits:

- 1. Financial Support:** By naming your church as a beneficiary in your will, you can provide financial support to help it continue its work. This can include funding for programs, maintenance of facilities, and support for staff.
- 2. Legacy and Memory:** Including your church in your will allows you to leave a lasting legacy. It can be a meaningful way to remember a church that has been important to you or your family.
- 3. Tax Benefits:** there can be tax benefits for your heirs. Check with your accountant, attorney or financial advisor about the potential tax benefits.

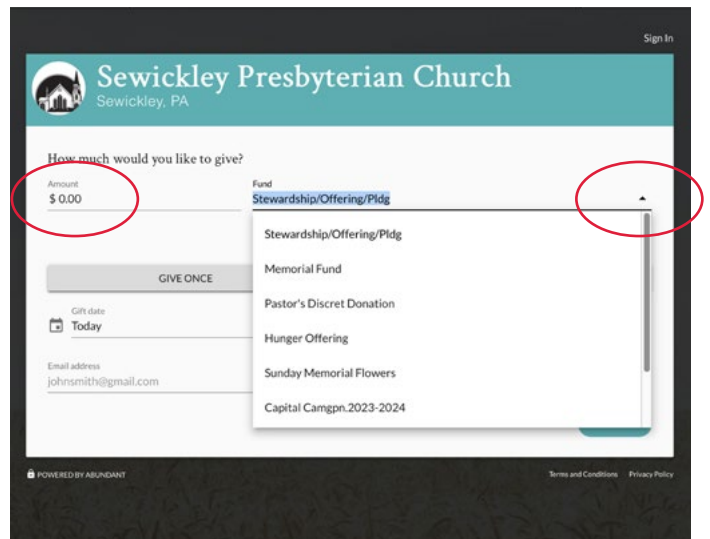
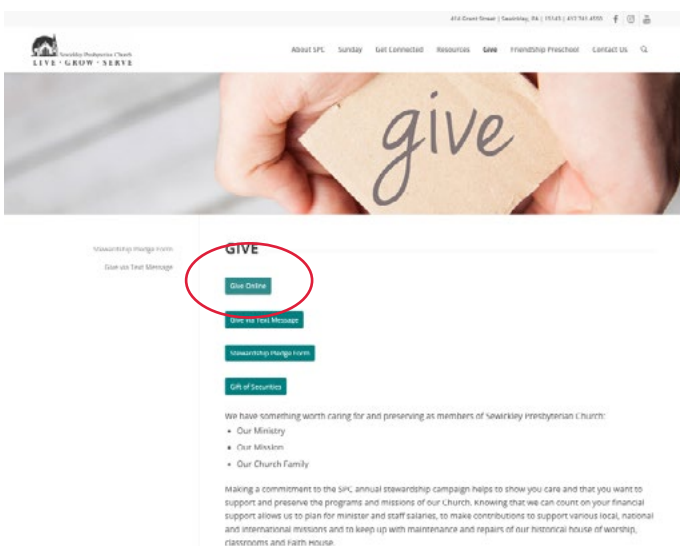
- 4. Support for Specific Programs:** You can specify how you want your gift to be used, such as supporting a particular ministry, mission, or outreach program.
- 5. Encouragement for Others:** Your decision to include your church in your will can serve as an example to others in your congregation, encouraging them to consider similar gifts.
- 6. Stewardship and Faith:** Including your church in your will can be an expression of your faith and a way to practice stewardship by supporting a cause that is important to you.

It's important to consult with legal and financial advisors when creating or updating your will to ensure that your wishes are carried out effectively and in compliance with applicable laws.

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.





Tour
Guide
Tim



QUEEN OF THE SUBURBS

By Elizabeth Szuba, Director of Congregational Care

Did you know that Sewickley was once dubbed “The Queen of Suburbs” by a writer in the 19th century? Have you taken the time to soak up the beautiful architecture of the homes and buildings in our town? Can you find the gargoyles in Sewickley and do you know the difference between a gargoyle and a grotesque?

You would if you attended the Evergreens walking tour of Sewickley with church member Tim Merrill. We had a delightful time walking the commercial area and residential neighborhood around our church. Tim shared the rich history of our community while drawing attention to the interesting architecture of the many beautiful homes and buildings. He also had some fun facts to share about Sewickley and how history has shaped this town.

Following the walk we gathered in the Faith House lounge for cookies and lemonade. We all shared something new that we had learned on the tour. The group was excited to find out that Tim not only offers tours of Sewickley but Pittsburgh as well. We were so lucky to have him share his gifts with us.

Stay tuned for our next adventure on May 16!



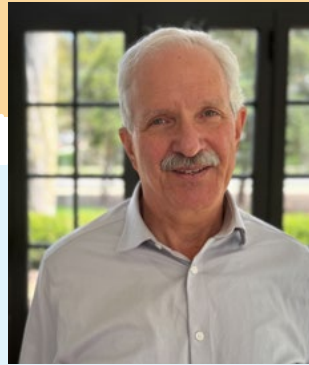
W E L C O M E

WE ARE GROWING!

We welcomed 11* new members to our church family on April 14!
If you see them, please make them feel welcome!
If you are interested in membership, please contact Sharon Barber in the church office.



Jane Corbelli



John Corbelli



Josh Graham



Lyndsey Graham



Ed Jackson



Shelley Jackson



Katie King



Rachel Miceli



Joe Miceli

*Andrea Freel & Brittany Cole-Lambert not pictured

SUMMER SERMON SERIES
BEGINS SUNDAY, JUNE 9

ART.

An Expression of Faith

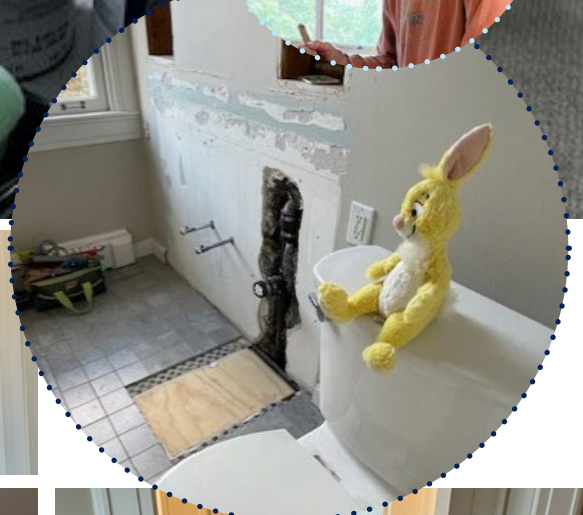
Join us this summer for a new sermon series about how Biblical themes are shared and expressed in various types of art such as paintings and music to literature and dance.

On June 9, Pastor Emily will kick the series off by preaching about a painting by artist Ain Vares called *Jesus Is the Way, the Truth and the Life*.

Don't miss this unique and intriguing way to view not only the artwork, but also the messages that God has given us in the Bible.



PAINTING THE MANSE



Have you ever seen the inside of the Manse or have you wanted to? Well, this is the perfect opportunity to see it and to help get it ready for when the Davenport family moves in this summer.

Many church members have been busy painting the inside. About 60% has been painted which means there's still plenty to do!

Painters are working during the week and also on Saturdays. We could really use your help. If you have a few hours (or more or less) please either stop in or send Mark Gensheimer a text/call (412-498-6653). Mark will let you know exactly what still needs to be accomplished.

Thank you!



..... YOU ARE INVITED

MAY 19 2024

JOIN US FOR THIS JOYOUS OCCASION!

We will be installing
Rev. Derek Davenport
as our Senior 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



SPC KIDS NEWS

By Nicole Quaka, Children's Ministry Event Coordinator



LENTEN SOUP SUPPERS

During the season of Lent, we had 15 children work together to creatively pursue loving our neighbor as ourselves by building an entire community out of cardboard boxes. Along the way, they learned how our own church members actively serve our church family as well as our community neighbors in the Sewickley area through organizations like Center for Hope and Amigos. We were all amazed by what the children of our church were able to accomplish together in just five weeks.

EASTER EGG-CITEMENT

Easter Egg-citement on Palm Sunday hosted 50 children from our church and community under beautiful sunny skies. SPC Youth helped hide over 700 filled Easter eggs for an under 2 egg hunt and a preschool to fifth grade egg hunt. In addition to the egg hunt, children colored plastic eggs and dyed over 30 dozen real eggs; they collectively worked on a sidewalk chalk cross mosaic, and created sand art crafts, bunny ears, and paper crafts to take home. From bringing in boiled eggs on Sunday to manning the craft stations, we thank all those who helped make this day special.

CHILDREN'S CHOIR ON PALM SUNDAY

On Palm Sunday our Sunday School Children's Choir made their debut. Sixteen children from preschool to 5th grade wore purple robes and sang an original Introit called "Sing Hosanna" in the most angelic voices led by our Praise Team Director Jeremy Fisher, who wrote the music, and were accompanied on the piano by Dr. Michael Hammer, our choir director. With echoes of "Hosanna" still playing on the piano, they then passed out palms to the congregation as they made their way throughout the sanctuary to the Robinson Room. It was a sweet and moving display of how blessed we are to have such amazing children in our church.



"When they sprout leaves, you can see for yourselves and know that summer is near. Even so, when you see these things happening, you know that the kingdom of God is near."
Luke 21:29-31



By Hanna Mellor, Children's Ministry Coordinator

Hooray for Spring! Thank the Lord for all of the wonderful weather changes we experience here in Pennsylvania. This spring and summer, for Children's Ministries, is going to be filled with love and fun. As much as we have jam-packed into the summer, let's take a moment to appreciate our winter and early spring!

Since the beginning of the year, our events have ranged from Stuffed Sleepovers to our first Children's Choir performance in quite a while. Children's Ministries has been able to balance work and fun at a master's level and loving each point in it all. Our kids are always so willing and open and it is a joy to watch them grow their faith and friendships through each event, work or play-based! Also worth a shoutout is that we have had an average of 21 children in K-3rd grade Children's Church/Sunday School and nine per week in the Childcare Room for Preschool Programming and Sunday School since the beginning of the year -- numbers we have not seen in years! It is so exciting to witness first-hand and we are so thankful for our kiddos to keep on growing with us.

In Children's Church, we are continuing through the Jesus is Sweet lessons with candy bars being our connection point throughout the summer. YUM!

Upcoming, Children's Ministries is preparing for Move Up Sunday and giving Bibles to our friends moving on from preschool and 5th grade. It is a bittersweet time for Mrs. Nicole and me but nevertheless important! We could not be prouder of our "graduates!"

VBS season is approaching quickly. Let's make a splash this summer at Scuba VBS July 29-August 2 from 9 AM-12 PM this year. We will have a whale of a good time and learn all about friendship with God in our deep-dive. Sign up online! Volunteers and friends are more than welcome to sign up as well!

Other than VBS, we also plan to head to the movies for Inside Out 2, jump in bounce houses, volunteer appreciation day, and another Pool Party :) Maybe even more?!?! Look out for these dates and details ahead on our website. Friends are always welcome!

We eagerly await for what is ahead. Stay tuned!



EXCITING CHANGES

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

Springtime in Pittsburgh is a good metaphor for life: unpredictable. The weather has oscillated between winter, spring, and summer over the last few months as we have gone through the season of Lent together. There have been a lot of different avenues for learning and growth the last few months with our teens: community services, soup suppers, the Confirmation class's mentor dinners, middle school Sunday school continuing to learn about modern day Israel's connection to the stories of faith and we were able to have some of our teens join us to help lead the Praise Team at the 9 AM service, students help teach adult ed, and even seen students stepping into more leadership roles in the broader church both to serve and to model what it looks like for other teens to lead as well.

This month, our church made a number of changes to our by-laws, which may not sound very exciting (even to us Presbyterians). But a significant outcome of those changes is the addition of Youth Elders to our Session. Two of our seniors, Megan Campbell and Lizzie Szuba, have been attending Session meetings, sitting on committees, and serving in various capacities for the last six months. And now, with the by-law changes that were made, they have been

ordained to serve as youth Elders. We are excited to see their ministry to our church and the larger Church continue. I encourage you all to make sure to introduce yourselves and support them as they step into this new role.

We were excited to take some of our high schoolers to the Pittsburgh Kids Foundation Spring Session this month. It was a one-day camp experience that gave us some time to explore some topics on a deeper level. We spent the morning talking about community through the lens of koinonia (fellowship) and how it's crucial for our growth as disciples. And then we spent the afternoon thinking about how we can best live out our faith and share it with others. We had fun with the PKF team and we're looking forward to Surf City this summer!

As we wrap up our program year together in the coming weeks, we want to make sure you have the important dates and info located on the next page on your radars. Please let me know if your teens are interested in join our Confirmation Class this fall: mcreamer@sewickleypresby.org.

Picture: High School Breakfast at Starbucks



Mark
Your
Calendars!

APRIL 27 | SPRING CLEAN UP DAY

Every spring we get together as a church and prep the property and buildings for spring. It's a big part of preserving and prolonging the things we've been entrusted with here at SPC, which is a big part of stewardship! We hope you'll come out to help us spread mulch, pull weeds, and plenty more on Saturday for any amount of time you have to offer!

MAY 12 | MOVE-UP SUNDAY

This will be our last Sunday of the program year, which means it will be the end of three services, Sunday School, and Youth Group until the fall. But it's also the day when we invite our 5th graders to move up to Middle School Sunday school, meeting Mrs. Johns and our current middle schoolers as they show them the ropes of what we do together.

Picture right: Confirmation
Picture below: PFK Spring Session

JUNE 2 | CONFIRMATION SUNDAY

Join us at 10 AM in the Sanctuary to celebrate the journey of all our Confirmation students as they join the church!

JULY 21-26

High School Surf City | Sign-up Online

AUGUST 4-9

Middle School Surf City | Sign-up Online





THE BELLS ARE CALLING!

By Michael Hammer, Choir Director & Organist

For our Word Sung service this semester I've chosen Gabriel Faure's "Requiem." I chose it for a couple of reasons:

It is a masterpiece of the choral literature, well-known and much beloved by singers. The choir was very excited when I told them what we are singing this spring. Faure writes many straightforward and simple melodies which are attractive to the ear, and contrasts these with moments of rich, choral beauty. There are moments of joy, terror, and everything in between. The ensemble includes harp and solo violin, with a pair of horns and several low string instruments rounding out the ensemble. Each of these brings its own personality to the piece, and, as Faure employs his forces sparingly, you will get to hear changes of instrumentation with each shifting mood. Faure himself died one hundred years ago, which might explain why so many choral groups in the area are also doing "Requiem" this semester.

A Requiem is a funeral service. This may seem an odd choice for a Sunday morning. Though themes of death and resurrection are surely not foreign to our faith, we seldom meet them head on to this degree, at least in a regular church service. Initially I had thought that it would be a chance for us to acknowledge our griefs in living through the past few years. With everything from a pandemic to political unrest, these years have been hard on all of us, and having a chance to corporately express that and experience a service that allowed us to mourn everything

from our lost sense of normality to those whom we lost to Covid seemed like a good idea. Since the time that "Requiem" was first planned, however, there is an even more immediate reason for it. We are in the midst of a season of memorial services at SPC. Some eight services with nine decedents have been scheduled for this semester. Ironically, preparation for this "Requiem" mass has been challenging precisely because of all the extra funeral services this month.

There is an old hymn which goes back hundreds of years that begins "In the midst of life we are in death." Although this is always the case, it is particularly on our minds these days. This is not all we are in the midst of, however. As I write this, we just had a rose on the altar to celebrate a new birth, and over a dozen members joined our congregation.

Faure's "Requiem" recognizes this panoply of deep human emotions. There are moments of darkness, yet, even in these there are places where the clouds part and for a moment there is a foreshadowing of great beauty to come, as in the "offertory" when the cellist hints at the joy of the following "sanctus." There is a place when the grief of the opening returns, only to subside once again into peace. Faure wrote his Requiem to comfort the living and because he did not think of death as a painful thing. As he weaves his themes together, we experience the great mystery of life and death in a half-hour journey that begins in gloom and hurt, but finds its way to paradise.



SUMMER READING & LEMONADE!

Did you know we have a library on the second floor of the main church building? It is called the Christine Griggs Nimick Memorial Library. It is full of books -- some new and some not-so-new.

With summer being right around the corner, we thought it would be fun every Sunday to make books available that you can check out! Our church librarian, Laurie Holding, will provide a cart of books at our Lemonade on the Lawns for you. Stop by and see if anything interests you.

The first Lemonade on the Lawn will be on May 26, right after the 10 AM worship service. If you would like to visit the library, it's open Monday - Friday 3 - 8 PM, and on Sundays.



MISSION MATTERS



EVEN THE SON OF MAN CAME
NOT TO BE SERVED, BUT TO
Serve



A POWERFUL WITNESS

By Ann Strong, SPC Member

World Day of Prayer (WDP) is celebrated annually on the first Friday of March. Each year the service is written by women of a different country. In 1929, women from ten area churches held the first World Day of Prayer service in Sewickley at SPC. Ninety-five years later this tradition continues as women from eight area churches planned and participated in a World Day of Prayer service at Sewickley United Methodist Church (SUMC) on March 1 followed by a luncheon. A number of people from SPC attended.

The women of Palestine wrote this year's service based on Ephesians 4:1-3, "I beg you...bear with one another in love." The service featured the stories of three Palestinian Christian women. The stories, which were written several years ago, before Hamas attacked Israel on October 7, were a powerful witness to Jesus' call to bear with one another in love. Their stories were particularly poignant to me and the other pilgrims from SPC who travelled to Palestine in 2016 where we met Palestinian Christians and learned of their suffering. Pastor Hannah Loughman of SUMC preached a powerful sermon based on Ephesians 4:1-3 and John 15: 12, 13, and 17.

The service next year will be held at St. Paul's Lutheran Church and is being written by women from the Cook Islands. The theme is "I Make You Wonderful" centered on Psalm 139:14 (1 to 18). In 2029, the 100th Anniversary of WDP will be held at SPC.



HELPING OUR NEIGHBORS

By Sarah Stoessel Heres, SPC Member

Our congregation continues to generously give to the 4th Sunday Hunger Offerings which provide valuable financial support to local organizations -- Center for Hope, The Ladle and the Sewickley Community Center. The fourth organization, the Pittsburgh Presbytery Hunger Fund allows our financial support to reach a variety of food programs serving communities in Allegheny County.

Diane Glas and Sarah Heres, members of the Hunger Fund, participate in the bi-annual distribution of the Pittsburgh Presbytery Hunger Fund awards. Last December over \$11,000 was awarded to Clark Memorial Baptist Church for holiday gift cards, Olivet Presbyterian Church for an after school meal program, and for the food pantries at South Hills Presbyterian, Pleasant Hills food Pantry part of Northside Common Ministries, and the local Sewickley Community Center food pantry.

This Spring, the group will make another round of awards. If you know of a 501(C)3 organization in our Presbytery that is addressing hunger insecurities, the grant application can be located on the Pittsburgh Presbytery website under Justice Ministries, Hunger Fund Ministry Team. (grants are limited to Allegheny County)

Please contact Sarah Heres (ssheres@comcast.net) or Diane Glas (dbglas5@verizon.net) for more information or if you want to join them in doing our part to address hunger in Allegheny County.

MISSION MATTERS



BLANKET SUNDAYS | May 5 & 12

Imagining what's possible through your compassion doesn't stop when neighbors receive a warm blanket. The possibilities are endless and includes prayer too!

For over 75 years, Church World Service has been helping people of faith bring God's hope and healing to people in the U.S. and around the world. When difficult times happen, a kind and loving response can make all the difference. That's why the CWS Blankets program was created—to give a kind, loving and tangible response to someone facing a difficult time, reminding them that they are not alone. Join other generous donors and provide comfort and warmth to our neighbors in need.

Stop by the Robinson Room to purchase a blanket for \$10. Your donation allows for a blanket to be sent to those in need around the world. When tough times arise, a simple act of kindness can make all the difference!



"When I donate to the CWS Blanket offering at my church each year, I am joining other caring people to provide warmth and comfort to our neighbors who could use some extra love."

— MARCIE D. SYRACUSE, NY





Sewickley Presbyterian Church

LIVE · GROW · SERVE

414 Grant Street | Sewickley, PA | 15143

www.sewickleypresby.org

Dated Material
PLEASE EXPEDITE

This newsletter is published by
Sewickley Presbyterian Church

What's Happening in May?

May 3 & 4

Sewickley House Tour begins at the Faith House

May 5

Blanket Sunday, Word Sung, Coffee Care, Bible Handout

May 10

Rev. Davenport graduates with his PhD from RMU

May 12

Blanket Sunday, Move-Up Sunday, No Sunday Class for Adults

May 16

Evergreen Outing

May 18

Club 345 End of Year Celebration

May 19

Summer Schedule Begins, Rev. Davenport Installation, Church Picnic

May 22

Connect: Healing & Wholeness Service

May 26

Lemonade on the Lawn & Summer Reading begins

Summer Choir starts

May 27

Memorial Day Parade gathering on the Front Lawn