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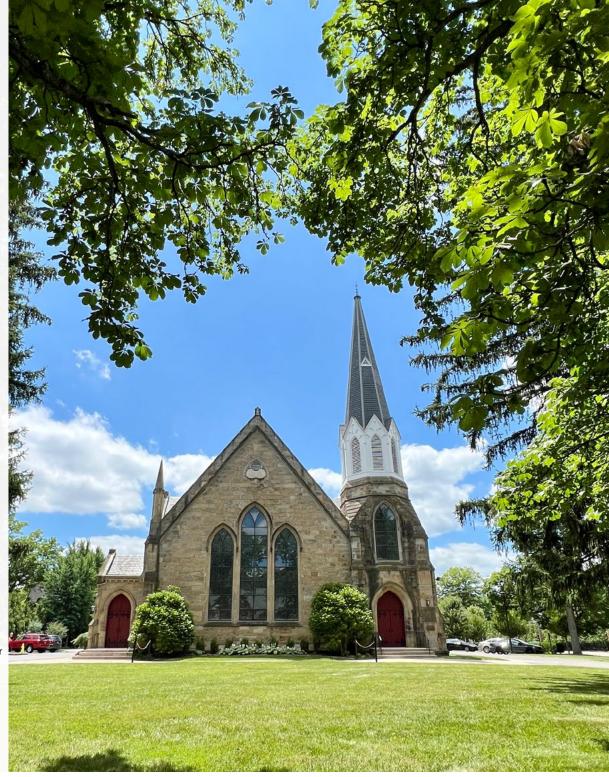
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SOCIAL MEDIA







GARDENS & EVERGREENS

By Susie Wardrop, SPC Member

On a beautiful sunny May day, our Evergreens group toured Newington, a 10 1/2 acre garden paradise right in the middle of Edgeworth. Jay Brooks, who is the sixth generation to live here, shared with us the history of his family's property and of the amazing old trees and plants growing there.

Daniel Leet (1748-1830), a surveyor of America's earliest expansion west, was awarded this choice piece of land which originally was over 250 acres, stretching to Big Sewickley Creek. Magnificent trees grace the property, one thought to be 350 years old, including a Chinese chestnut, a redwood and apple trees, thought to be possibly planted by Johnny Appleseed.

Jay's father spent years creating new rhododendron hybrids and his mother tended the formal boxwood garden, planted this spring with tulips and hibiscus.

We were all grateful for the lovely day and for Jay's warm hospitality and intriguing history lesson!





Every summer a group of around 20 people from SPC descend upon the Montreat Conference Center in North Carolina for the Presbyterian Association of Musicians' annual worship conference. It is a time of fun and fellowship as well as a chance to hone skills and explore interests with about 700 other Presbyterians from all over the country. This was my second year attending and I have to say that I'm impressed with how well the conference caters to diverse interests and ages.

For the children, the center seems to act as a summer camp. There is canoing on the lake, kickball on the green, and arts and crafts. But the children as well as the adults can be part of often large music-making ensembles. There are several choirs for children and youth, and classes are offered as well. Usually you see groups of similarly-aged kids clad in conference t-shirts, walking in groups from place to place with camp counselors.

For adults activities are just as various. There are some whose partner chooses to spend the week playing golf at the nearby courses. For those who want to practice their musical skills, there is a huge adult choir (at least 200) whose epic sound adorns the daily worship services, as well as three bell choirs who looked to have about 65 members each this past year. The majestic sound of these groups cannot be described adequately.

Then there are groups of instrumentalists who play in worship and give a concert around the lake every year. There is a whole slate of classes to choose from, many of which involve bible study or worship planning, and several seminars for directors of various types of choirs, lectures on hymnody, and let's not forget arts and crafts for the adults. If you need a break I recommend the ice cream shop, or just finding a bench by the lake and taking it all in.

There is certainly a lot to experience: The organ concert; The talent show; The hymn festival; Random conversations with strangers that you are glad to have had; New friends; Old friends; Hiking; Worship services that have been three years in the planning. Being amazed by a something creative during a service and saying to your neighbor "do you think we should try that at SPC?"

If this sounds appealing to you and you haven't tried it yet, you can send me an email at mhammer@sewickleypresby.org or call me at the office. Sign-up for next year is already upon us. There is good reason this conference is an SPC tradition.





CONNECTING WITH GOD

By Rev. Emily Miller, Associate Pastor

Shortly after I led my first Longest Night service at SPC in December of 2022, I sensed a desire in our congregation to continue having an intimate, more contemplative worship service. So, I went to the Worship Committee and got permission to do quarterly Connect services in our chapel. The Connect service is a quiet, prayerful, participatory worship service that employs Taize-style hymns for our congregational singing. At present, we are halfway through our Connect services for 2024!

The first Connect service of this year was held in March and was part of our Lenten partnership with fellow churches in Sewickley. The theme of that service was "forgiveness," and we had a full complement of musicians playing the Taizestyle music with us. The second Connect service was held at the end of May with a theme of "hope in Christ." There was a smaller group in attendance, but we had some powerful prayer time and were led in song by choir member Peggie Hatton.

The rest of the year looks like this:

September 25 at 7 PM December 18 at 7 PM – Longest Night service

All of us need to spend more time connecting with God, bringing us closer to our Lord Jesus Christ. For those who have enjoyed coming to this service, keep it up and bring a friend! For those who may be wondering what it is all about, join us in September for a special time of worship! If you would like to become involved with this service, please let me know.

Connecting with God and with you,

Pastor Emily

WELCOME

WE ARE GROWING!

We welcomed 8 new members to our church family on July 21!

If you see them, please make them feel welcome!

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



Brent Elliott



Virginia Elliott



Ed Freel



Joann Freel



Leanne McLaughlin



Lance Rose



Alice Silver

SAMARITA



Russell Silver



HONORING OUR CHURCH

By Beth Healy, Samaritan Counseling Center

Catch the Spirit of Samaritan! Please join Samaritan Counseling for our Samaritan Spirit Gala on Thursday, September 26, 2024 from 6-9 PM at the exquisite LeMont restaurant atop Mt. Washington. We'll be honoring our most faithful, generous church partner: YOU, the members and leaders of the Sewickley Presbyterian Church! Enjoy hors d'oeuvres and cocktails from 6-8 PM before sitting down to gourmet dining while listening to the incredible voice of Pittsburgh's own jazz artist Bethany James. Pastor Davenport will serve as our keynote speaker. Event proceeds will bring healing, hope, and life-changing growth to people seeking care at Samaritan—regardless of their ability to pay. Click the link to register or sponsor. Questions? Contact Beth Healey at bhealey@samaritancounseling.net or 724-987-2810. We hope to see you there! Thank you for blessing Samaritan with your support. www.samaritanspiritgala.net







GIVING TO THE CHURCH FROM YOUR IRA

By Shelley Newlin, SPC Member

With required minimum distributions, changing to the age of 73, you may want to consider creating a qualified charitable deduction (QCD) from an IRA.

In 2024, the QCD limit is capped at \$105,000 (a \$5,000 increase from 2023). This means that you can make a single QCD donation of up to \$105,000 to one charity or split your gift between multiple charities for a collective total of \$105,000 — but you can't exceed this limit.

SECURE 2.0 is also expanding the QCD. Previously, QCD gifts could only be made to qualifying charities. In 2024, you can also make a one-time transfer of up to \$53,000 to a charitable remainder annuity trust, a charitable remainder unitrust, or an immediate charitable gift annuity (a \$3,000 increase from 2023).

QCDs offer many benefits, including:

- -- Reducing your income taxes. Funds distributed from a traditional IRA are generally included as part of your taxable income which can increase your overall tax burden. But QCDs are an exception to this rule. These funds go directly from your IRA to your charity of choice, without going to you first. This lowers your overall income, which helps reduce your income taxes.
- -- Counting towards your annual RMD. Making a QCD donation counts towards withdrawing your RMD for the year. This benefits you because the amount of your donation isn't counted towards your taxable income meaning it may help you save on income taxes.
- -- Maximizing your charitable impact. A QCD lets you make a substantial gift in support of the causes closest to your heart. And because QCDs are generally not recognized as income, your favorite charities will receive the full amount of the gift completely tax-free.

QCDs can be complex, so it's important to understand the rules and regulations surrounding them before you make your gift. Now is a great time to learn more about QCDs, including how to use them and what benefits they have to offer. Be sure to speak with a financial or estate planning professional before making any gifts or transactions. They can answer your questions and help you make sure a QCD gift is right for your situation.



A NEW CHURCH MEMBER

By Michael Hammer, Choir Director & Organist

On July 21 several new members joined our church. Most were human-one was a piano. "Melody" (pastor Emily decided she needed a name) is a brand new Steinway B grand piano. She is 6'10 1/2", and weighs just over 800 lbs. She replaces our former piano, which had reached the end of its life (even becoming unplayable at the end). Having earned several degrees in piano performance from prestigious conservatories, I have played a number of large Steinway pianos in concert halls and teaching studios. Yet I still get a thrill when I sit down at this piano and play that first chord. It makes me think I had better bring my best because this piano has high standards! Like many Steinways, it has a clear articulation, with an action that will allow the tiniest flick of the fingers to produce the softest, subtlest sounds, yet it has a rich, fulsome bass and can project easily into a large room. It also reflects our large stained-glass window beautifully on its surface. Plans for a dedicatory recital are in the works—likely in September.

Many thanks to our Worship & Music Committee, our staff, and all those who took time around their summer plans to make this a reality. It is already adorning our worship, and as the hymn says, allowing us to explore "a new dimension in the world of sound!"*

*When In Our Music God Is Glorified, verse 2 (text by Fred Pratt Green





DOLLARS & SENSE

By Laura Mikush. Business Administrator

Did you know when you set up online giving for SPC on the church website, you will be asked if you want to contribute towards processing fees? These can be significant for SPC, when considering the pledges that are given this way. Current fees for using a credit card are 2.75% plus \$0.45 per transaction for Visa, Discover and Mastercard. American Express is 3.50% plus \$0.45 per transaction and ACH is \$0.25 per transaction. The average annual cost for SPC for these fees over the past five years has been \$4,800.00. If you are not set up to cover these costs, we ask that you consider helping with this convenient way of giving.



THE BITTINGER CROSS

Last November, the "Bittinger Cross" was removed from the roof of our main church building due to cracks that were discovered in the base. Weighing in at over 300 lbs., we didn't want it to fall off the roof!

The Sewickley Valley Historical Society generously awarded our church with the SVHS 2024 Preservation Grant to help repair and install the cross. This is a mathcing grant. The SPC Memorial Fund will be used to pay for the balance.

The cross will be placed at ground level, on the Grant Street side of the church. You'll be able to see it in the front garden running along side of the sanctuary.

The cement base for the cross has been installed and we look forward to the delivery of the actual cross in the coming weeks. Keep an eye out for it!





Guest Speaker Rachel Fagan

YOU ARE INVITED



Women's Retreat

October 26 & 27

100% For You

Enjoy a night away! Join us as we relax and unwind, spend time in God's word, and enjoy spending time with old and new friends.



Antiochian Village

In God's Hands

Isaiah 64:8

Melt Me, Mold Me, Fill Me, Use Me



Register by September 23: sewickleypresby.org 🔑



Prior to becoming a life coach, Rachel was an elementary reading interventionist in a rural public school district in Butler County, PA, where she also served on the student support teams to help students struggling with areas outside of academics.

Rachel holds a B.A. in Music from Mansfield University of PA, a B.S.Ed. in Elementary Education from PennWest-Clarion, and a M.Ed. in Reading from Slippery Rock University. She earned her life coaching certificates through the Certified Life Coach Institute. Rachel has also received additional training in spiritual integration and mental fitness coaching.

Rachel is a current elder and active member of Calvin Presbyterian Church in Zelienople where she attends with her husband and two daughters.



Wrapping up the school year and starting summer is always bittersweet. While we all love the more relaxing transition into the summer months, it can be hard to slow down, especially after such an exciting and jam-packed year like Children's Ministry has had. From the children and teachers to the families and volunteers, we've all gained so much from the beautiful experiences we've shared together this school year at SPC.

BIBLE COMMENCEMENT

May was our final month of the school year and it was certainly filled to the brim with joy and celebration. On Sunday, May 5 we held our annual Bible Commencement in the Chapel. We handed out eight Bibles to upcoming Kindergartners and six Bibles to upcoming 4th graders. We then went to the studios to gather with families while children explored their new Bibles together and celebrated this time of new beginnings. You could feel the excitement as kids shared their Bibles with their church friends.

CLUB 345

We also celebrated our Club 345 members in May at our end of school year party which included a bounce house, games, and pizzas. Throughout the year, this wonderful group of 4th and 5th graders learned about their faith and discovered how to put it into practice within their daily lives. We had deep discussions about school and friendships, participated in contemplative journaling, and had Bible lessons. They helped with mission projects around the church and beyond such as re-imagining our childcare space, sorting food for our Christmas Basket program, and writing encouraging letters to veterans. They grew closer to each other through fellowship activities including games, cooking, and disastrous (but very memorable) slime making. We look forward to next year's Club 345 where we will have kids' committee meetings, mission projects, Bible lessons and discussions, and learn new skills that can be used to serve others in the future, such as cooking, knitting, making toys for local animal shelters, and so much more. We hope to see all of your 3^{rd} , 4^{th} , and 5^{th} graders this fall!

CHILDREN'S CHOIR

Our Children's Choir performed at Rev. Dr. Derek Davenport's installation service in May as well! They sang a joyful song led by Jeremy Fisher, our Praise Team Director, called "A Glad Song" during the Introit wearing their purple robes to celebrate that very special day. Children's Choir practices will be resuming in September during the Sunday School hour for children in K-5th grade and children in Pre-K are welcome to join if they are interested.

SUMMER READING

Following our church picnic with our legendary bounce houses and games, SPC Kids looked forward to summer with our new Summer Reading program led by SPC Librarian, Laurie Holding. During Children's Church, kids in grades K-5 learned about our children's library in the mezzanine hallway. They learned how to use the card catalog system to check out books over the summer. Our first summer reading Bingo winners were Lydia Davenport and Elliot Quaka. Keep filling up those Bingo cards! There are more prizes to win! Kids can check out and return books anytime.

SUMMER POP UPS

To help us all transition into summer, every Friday in June, children of our church enjoyed special fellowship time at Pop Up: Popcorn and Popsicles. They explored their faith through Bluey videos paired with corresponding Bible lessons. They played games and used their creativity to paint, draw, and construct. They discussed Jesus and His love for us while getting to know their church family friends in a less structured setting with lots of free play and exploration. We thought it was the popsicles that kept these children coming back every Friday, or maybe all the popcorn seasonings, but we soon realized it was so much more than that. They genuinely enjoyed making best friends at church and we pray these connections will continue to grow for many years to come.











ONE HUNDRED & SIX!

By Hanna Mellor, Children's Ministry Coordinator

This summer has been anything but a bummer! Specifically, Vacation Bible School has been an extra exciting time at our church as we welcomed 106 youthful faces into our program this year with 65 amazing volunteers to help us along on our undersea adventure!

We made many new changes to incorporate the amount of children this year and it worked out wonderfully! One of the biggest changes is that our opening and closing ceremonies were hosted in the Sanctuary. In this station, we danced and sang along to multiple worship songs, as well as opened our minds to the daily Bible point, verse, and Buddy who helped us to remember the lesson of the day!

We also had a visitor each day, Sydney Shores, that made us giggle as Sydney (aka Rev. Derek) reinforced the Bible lesson of the day. The sanctuary was so much more spacious and inclusive for our youngest to feel comfortable and welcome, compared to trying to squeeze everyone in Ansby Hall. Another change we did was to contain all of our deep blue adventuring stations in the main building of the church (besides our Rec Reef games that met on the front lawn on the sunniest days). Our preschoolers were welcomed to their very own FriendShip Island for the first time in many years and made a splash! FriendShip Island on our shore was a bit more to coordinate than in previous years, but a worthy program we want to bring back for years to come!

Overall, it was such a blessing to be able to spread the message of our individual friendships with God. God is indeed a friend we can trust, that loves, and that will last forever! Thank you all for all the efforts made for this special week in our Children's Ministries year! From making snacks, to donating, to volunteering, and all the in-between -- we are so thankful for the overwhelming support and care given to these kiddos at Scuba VBS!



SUMMER FUN

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

It was a great end to our summer together as we took our middle and high school students to the sand dunes of Surf City! Camp is always a wonderful time to get away, laugh, have some crazy adventures, and learn about our faith together. From water tubing and zip lining to jet skis and sand castle competitions, we kept everyone busy at camp this summer. None of it would have been possible without our leaders Hanna and Hadley. We are grateful for their bravery as they spent a week of their summer with us in Michigan. We cannot wait to make our return next year!



SPRING UPDATES

Move-Up Sunday

We were so excited to continue the tradition of Move-Up Sunday this year, having our 5th graders end the year by joining us at middle school Sunday School. Caroline Johns had each of our middle schoolers take the reigns by leading the class, showing the 5th graders the ropes. From chalk talks and breakout discussions to ice breakers and final thoughts, it was a nice morning together for the students to get connected!

Confirmation Sunday

It was a special day in our church having 12 students decide to get confirmed after 9 months of classes, mentor nights, retreats, and more. Each of these students brings new insight, gifts, passions, and personality to the life of our church, and we cannot wait to see what God has in store for them as they continue their journey of faith.

Graduate Recognition

There is something appropriate about recognizing our seniors before they go off to college on the same day as Confirmation. When we remember our baptismal vows, we recognize that caring for those in our church doesn't stop at birth, baptism, Confirmation, or graduation—we continue to live as a church family wherever God leads us. And as we were able to send off so many wonderful seniors this year, it was a great reminder for them and for all of us that this is not the end of their time with SPC, but rather that we will always be their church family!























MISSION MATTERS



SUMMER CLOTHING DRIVE

By Gretchen Burnham, SPC Deacon Chair

The Center for Hope Summer Clothing Drive was a huge success and the CFH is very grateful to all the donors who provided clothes and shoes.



WARMING THE WORLD

Thank you to everyone who purchased a blanket in May as part of Blanket Sunday -- an amazing mission project that provides blankets to people in need. We raised \$2,955.00!

BACK TO SCHOOL BACKPACKS

On August 15, 105 backpacks were delivered to the Center for Hope thanks to our generous congregation. School supplies, backpacks, and monetary gifts made it possible to help many students in the Ambridge area. We were also able to purchase snacks that the students can easily take to school. Thank you to everyone who donated their time and resources to this project.









SERVING AT THE LADLE ==

Four times a year, we serve dinner at The Ladle in Ambridge, PA. Members of our church family provide a warm cooked meal, serve it to those in need, and then clean up afterwards.

The Ladle is an ecumenical soup kitchen and food pantry housed at St. John's Lutheran Church in Old Economy, serving dinner every Monday evening. SPC has been a supporter of this important local ministry since its inception in 2008, providing financial resources and recruiting church

members to prepare and serve dinner on four to five Mondays each year.

A seated meal is served from 5-6 PM and approximately 12-15 volunteers are needed each time. Please contact Hayes and Patricia Stover if you would like to be added to the email list of those willing to prepare and/or serve food on one of SPC's scheduled serving dates.

Contact: hpstover@verizon.net









WE NEED YOUR HELP WITH OUR BIGGEST MISSION PROJECT!

September is quickly approaching and with that our Day on the Lawn rummage sale. We've been planning and preparing for it since springtime while collecting donations from all of you, ordering supplies and tents, and preparing for Prep Week and the day of sale. We need all the help we can get! Prep Week is exactly that -- a week to prepare which means:

- · setting up departments
- · pricing merchandise

The day of sale will bring over 1,000 shoppers to the church campus. It's an incredible sight to see! The sale runs from 9 AM - 3 PM. We need your help during those hours for:

- · customer service
- · taking payments
- · direction giving
- · loading furniture into cars
- · clean up after the sale
- · traffic control



DATES & DETAILS

Sunday, September 1

After worship move: Help to move items from various storage area in the main church building to the sanctuary.

Tuesday, September 3

Home Goods, Wall Art & Linens Help | Begins at 3 PM

These departments have the most merchandise to get ready for the sale. We need all the help we can get to carry items outside (from the sanctuary) and place under the tents they will be sold in. We'd appreciate any and all help! We'll provide a simple dinner and will work until 7 PM.

Wednesday, September 4

All Hands on Deck & Great Furniture Move 5:30 PM Dinner, 6 PM Work

All Hands on Deck: Join us for pizza and then help to setup various departments in the tents they will be using. All ages are invited to help. Includes: carrying items outside from the sanctuary, placing items on tables, pricing, etc. Items are not heavy and easily carried.

Great Furniture Move: We have a TON of furniture donations this year so we need 30 or more people to move the furniture out of storage to the tents. Pizza will be served! We will work until the furniture is all moved so please come when you are able.

Thursday, September 6

All Day: Baked Goods & Deli Items for Bakery & Deli

Do you like to cook or bake? We are looking for items to stock our Bakery & Deli. Here are some suggestions: Any type of sweet treats and deli goods such as soups, casseroles, pasta dishes — frozen or fresh!

- Sugar-free, gluten-free, grab-n-go items
- Items wrapped in disposable containers with a clear cover, labeled with item names and allergens
- Cookies packaged either in baggies with 1-3 cookies or as a full dozen

Please drop-off homemade baked goods and deli items in the church kitchen on September 6.

4:30 - 6:30 PM | DOL Presale

If you have helped in ANY way with Day on the Lawn, you are invited to our presale. In order to shop, you will need to wear a presale shopping bracelet. They will be available outside of the Ansby entrance beginning at 4:30 PM on Friday, September 6. Please plan on taking all purchases home with you that evening. In order to keep with our focus on mission, please ask your family and friends to wait until Saturday to do their shopping. Thank you!

Saturday, September 7 9 AM – 3 PM Day on the Lawn Rummage Sale



www.sewickleypresby.org

Dated Material PLEASE EXPEDITE

This newsletter is published by Sewickley Presbyterian Church



or 11 AM. We'll also meet at 10 AM for Discipleship classes.