

The Bell Ringer

Of the Presbyterian Church of Sweet Hollow

A Friendly Church; So When You Come — Bring a Friend

AUGUST 2022

Sunday worship services at 10:00 am

We Are Open . . . Come And Praise God!!!

From the Pastor's Nook

THE IRRELEVANT CHURCH

I talk with pastors who still long to go back to what was. I'm not one of them.

Don't get me wrong. I'm saddened by how many have left the church in the past two years. It breaks my heart for them. And I love a filled building as much as anyone else.

But, have you looked at the trends of what had been happening in the church in America before the pandemic? If so, I'd be shocked to hear anyone say that we should want to go back to the way things were. The church has been a broken-down, shadow-at-best version of representing Christ that has been losing its influence in droves for the past two decades.

We've heard a million times that what has happened during this pandemic has only accelerated a trend that we'd already been experiencing. But, I think we can lose sight of the fact that the movement before the pandemic was already declining at breakneck speed. A survey in FACT (2020) noted that worship numbers have declined by half (and continue to decline).

I understand that worship attendance is not the only determining factor in the health of a church, but you have to admit that it is a determining factor.

Furthermore, generationally, the numbers are lower and lower with those who identify with a church. In 2021, Gallup shared that church membership dropped below 50% nationally for the first time. Among Millennials, only 36% identify with a church.

So, we have to go back to asking a difficult question, "What is the reasoning behind the decline of those no longer attending or wanting to identify with a church?"

-----Continued on Page 3

Inside This Issue:

Birthdays & Anniversaries	2	August Mission Team Focus	7
Choir Rehearsal	2	Mission Team News	6
Faith Formation	3	Trunk or Treat Time	9
Prayer Corner	4	Ukraine Humanitarian Relief	10
Stewardship & Generosity	5	Amazon, Smile Shopping	11
Mission Team Message	6		
From the Pastor's Nook -			
The Irrelevant Church	1,3		
Next Issue Deadline	2		
Officers & Staff	2		

Presbyterian Church of Sweet Hollow

(631) 367 - 9249

www.sweethollowpresby.org

Rev. Wade Pond, Pastor

Jason Black, Director of Music Ministries

Lori Kevelos, Church Administrator

Jill Conroy, Treasurer

Monica Van Houten, Clerk of Session

Elders:

Ed Conroy

Melissa D'Angelo

Niaja Mowatt

Frank Sansone

Bill Von Brook

Deacons:

Jean Cavanaugh

Maureen Sansone

Other Groups & Activities:

- Book Discussion Sukey Walter
- Christian Education..... Carol Keil
- Fellowship, Outreach & Mission..... Maureen Sansone
- House & Property..... Bill Von Brook
- Nominating Barbara Martin & Niaja Mowatt
- Personnel..... Frank Sansone
- Prayer Circle Carol Keil
- Prayer Shawl Ministry..... Sukey Walter
- Budget & Stewardship
- Women For Women Maureen Sansone & Sukey Walter
- Worship Joan Sommermeyer
- Youth Group
- Church Historian.....
- Bell Ringer Editor..... Bill Chamberlain

 **Choir Rehearsal** 

7:00 pm Every Thursday Night

BELL RINGER DEADLINE

**for September 2022 Issue:
Wednesday, August 25, 2022**

**** Subject to change ****



August 2022

- 3Teddy Tanksley
- 7Carol Schiffmacher
- 15Ray Moder
- 18 Willow Engel
- 22 Tim Mason
- 22Mildred Schmitt
- 25Robbie Reiser
- 25Mickey Rogers



Happy Anniversary

August 2022

- 7..... Emily & Jason Wagner
- 8..... Sharon & Donald Krams
- 14..... Tim & Carol Mason
- 26..... Denise & Ray Moder

From the Pastor's Nook - - - Continued from Page 1

One answer stands above all others.....**RELEVANCE.**

Churches, filled with Christians, are doing a poor job, individually and collectively, helping others see how Jesus is relevant in our lives today. Unfortunately, the church that we offer is perceived to be irrelevant. Its irrelevance has only been growing in its numbers the past couple of decades. This is the number one reason we have been on the decline. Until we fix this, we will continue to lose numbers, influence, and significance in this world. People won't do, join, buy, or commit to something unless it is relevant to their lives.

We are fighting against irrelevance.

So, what can we do? Here are four ideas to ponder together (and will be the subject of a series of upcoming articles).

- 1) Do Something Different
- 2) Understand the Times
- 3) Solve Real Problems
- 4) Market Better

I, like many of you, love this little church with a big heart. You have become so very dear to me during our brief time together. It is time for us to roll up the sleeves and to be a Martha instead of a Mary and to be the church we know it can be.

~PW

Faith Formation

By **Carol Keil**

Several weeks into the season of Pentecost Pastor Wade spoke to the children regarding the changes in the color of the "*parament*" or the ornamental "pulpit scarf" and Bible marker on the altar of our church. Pastor also displayed a variety of stoles that he has worn representing special seasons or celebrations.

You may have noticed that there has been the pattern of change in the parament colors as we moved from January into February using the green parament, switching to royal purple as we observed Lent. From Easter until the Sunday before Pentecost (Eastertide) the paraments were white. On June 5th red paraments boldly announced the flame of the Holy Spirit of Pentecost. The paraments will remain green for the balance of the year until we reach the last week in November and begin the observance of Advent with paraments once more in royal purple.

Green paraments, used most often throughout the year, help to remind us of the growth of the Holy Spirit within our congregation. As Spring has turned to Summer all nature echoes that potential for growth and renewal. This is the time to be thinking of how each of us can contribute toward the ongoing health and growth of the Holy Spirit in "The Little Church with the Big Heart" as well as ways each of us can make a real difference in caring for this Big Blue Marble: EARTH!

We would love to feature ways your family is working to actively preserve and protect our planet... Please contact Carol Keil at c1keil@aol.com if you would like to contribute to this column.

Prayer Corner - August 2022

By Carol Keil

We thank the **Rev. Teri McDowell Ott** and **The Presbyterian Outlook** for the following prayer:

Prayer for summer sabbath

"God of mercy, our need is great. The pandemic has left us tired, anxious and uncertain.

We have stretched beyond our limits and numbed ourselves to our pain. We have accepted getting by as good enough.

You alone know our needs, Holy God, that which weighs heavy on our shoulders, responsibilities that are unrelenting, duties that are exhausting. There are days when the burdens we carry overwhelm us, days when we cannot see ourselves free.

And yet, the sky is full of your promise---

The rainbow appears at the end of the storm, the fireflies dance when the sun goes down, the green leaves unfurl and reach for rain.

Turn our eyes, Holy God, to these signs of life and hope. Open us to the natural treasures of your uncompromising presence. Enlighten us to your glory as we pause to appreciate the summer days. Like a breeze cooling us in the hot humid air, your love embraces and satisfies the loneliest, most exhausted of souls. May our spirits know this summer sabbath, so we can know your peace. Amen"

We lift of consoling prayers for **Niaja Mowatt** and her family as they grieve and remember **Aunt Velma**.

We join the **Pond family** in prayers for **Miriam and Bob** grieving the sudden death of **Natalia**.

We lift prayers for healing and strength as **Chris Boken** prepares for surgery on August 11.

We rejoice in the celebration of **Teddy Tanksley's 90th Birthday** on August 3.

We raise prayers of thanksgiving for the ongoing healing for **Barbara Martin** and **Barbara Moder**.

We offer healing prayers for all who continue to face the challenges of Covid infection.

We pray with and for the **Schiffmacher family** as **Carol and Dan** comfort and support grandson-in-law **Erik Howard**, their granddaughter **Anna** and **Anna's parents Clea and Jamie** as **Erik has transitioned into hospice care**. We thank all who have joined with Prayer Circle to encircle Erik and Anna and their family in our prayers throughout their difficult journey.

Amen

Weekly Prayer Circle via Zoom

All are welcome to join in our weekly Prayer Circle Zoom gathering, Wednesday mornings at 10am. You'll find the Zoom meeting address in the weekly reminder email sent by Lori Kevelos.

Stewardship & Generosity

By Jill Conroy, Treasurer

Before becoming Treasurer of Sweet Hollow, I was told that “everyone knows that stewardship is more than money and finances.” I, however, did not know this. I assumed it was just your weekly contribution to the church in an envelope and that was all that was required of me. I have since learned that we seldom give time to explore the profound concept of stewardship in its many dimensions, including stewardship of time, work, body, mind, spirit, community, technology, and more. The idea of being generous through every aspect of a “living” church is very powerful. It increases discipleship and engagement. Generosity inspires people to rethink how they can use what they’ve been given – their time, money, influence, and opportunities. It is a way of becoming something bigger than themselves. The idea of generosity is more than just an uplifting and inspirational message; it’s a transformational way of life.

After researching stewardship, I found out some very interesting facts. Since the late 1980’s, church giving declined to about half of what it was before that time. Total giving continues to grow, which is a bit of an illusion. It seems that as Americans became wealthier, giving continues to be at approximately 2% of people’s income. What that means is that we are no more generous today than we were 50 years ago. This definitely impacts the church!! We need to look at opportunities that exist with generosity. We need to reimagine the future of our church with generosity at the core. People want to make a difference. They just don’t know how. Being generous obviously starts with money but it is about so much more. Learning to be generous is fundamental to discipleship. It’s important because it unites people, congregations and communities. I believe it provides an opportunity for church members to see the impact that they make which is joyful.

Colossians 4:2-4 (The Message)

2-4 Pray diligently. Stay alert, with your eyes wide open in gratitude. Don't forget to pray for us, that God will open doors for telling the mystery of Christ, even while I'm locked up in this jail.

Pray that every time I open my mouth I'll be able to make Christ plain as day to them.

What I’m saying is that it is important to be generous in all aspects of your life; giving to the church is essential to both life-changing ministry impact and our own spiritual growth. Giving generously is part of your discipleship and part of our church’s mission.

It is extremely important to Sweet Hollow that we be generous with our time and talents since we do not have a large membership; however, it is also imperative that we have a consistent connection to the church with our personal financial generosity. With the monies given to the church, we are able to do great things. God is constantly doing great things through our church and with this we prayerfully ask that you consider increasing your financial contribution. You may want to calculate the percentage of income your household is giving to the church and consider increasing it by one or more percent or even possibly consider signing up for recurring giving so that your financial support is present even if you are unable.

What you choose to do is up to you, but be mindful of the fact that the survival of Sweet Hollow may depend on your generosity.

Message From The Mission Team

By Jill Conroy, Treasurer

Our Church, The Presbyterian Church of Sweet Hollow, has been serving our community for more than 193 years and 45 charter members. During that time, we have stood strong in the face of recessions, national disasters, 40 presidents and several pastors. The year ahead should be no different as we continue ministry to all who come our way.

Mission is a matter of Christlikeness: “As the Father has sent Me, I also send you” (John 20:21). Therefore, in one sense, the mission committee is a Christlikeness committee. Your time must not be wasted and God will not be disappointed. Our Mission Team invites our congregation members and their friends to participate in whatever capacity they can to help others in need. In the spirit of Matthew (Matthew 25:35) – “for I was hungry and you gave me food, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink, I was a stranger and you welcomed me.”

Our Mission Committee is hard at work. Their purpose – to serve the congregation and pastor by encouraging, resourcing and facilitating involvement in local, national and international missions, particularly focusing on missionaries and missionary organizations that have been approved by the church is headed by Maureen Sansone and Jane Beller. Every month our Mission Committee is hard at work by raising money for organizations such as “Souper Bowl of Caring” which benefits the Huntington Community Food Council, “Healthy Snacks” which benefits the Tri-County kids, Project Hope, Helping Hands Rescue Mission and so many more.

Right now we need your help. Our operating budget is experiencing quite a strain. For the year we are down about 50-60%. Much of this due to unexpected hurdles and a few of our families that have been hit hard by the economic crisis.

If this continues by 2025 some of our important ministries will suffer as well as the survival of the church. This church has never failed to live up to our responsibilities and obligations. We still have time to finish strong but we will need the help of our faithful members.

If you have been giving regularly would you see if the years end offers you any chance for an extra gift? If you are behind on your pledge would you try to catch up? If you have not begun to give, could you remember us this week with a generous offering? Together we can come through this crisis and be stronger than ever.

“Let us not become weary in doing good, for at the proper time we will reap a harvest if we do not give up. Therefore, as we have opportunity, let us do good to all people, especially to those who belong to the family of believers” (Galatians 6:9-10).

God bless you for your continued love of our church.

August Mission Team Focus: "Giving The Tools To Discovery"

The Mission Team's Summer Focus, "**Giving The Tools To Discovery**" continues, as we accept donations of School Supplies and Healthy Snacks to benefit the children of the Tri-CYA. These items will be blessed on Sunday, August 14th and will subsequently be delivered to the Tri-CYA for distribution to the families which they serve. Below is a list of suggested snacks (individual packets of crackers, pretzels, etc. are requested) and school supplies; please feel free to donate any other appropriate items:

Healthy Snacks

Applesauce Cups
Goldfish Crackers
Juice Boxes
Pudding Cups
Animal Crackers

School Supplies

Composition Notebooks
Loose Leaf Binders/Loose Leaf Paper
Glue Sticks
Washable Markers
Pens and #2 Pencils

Donations may be brought in on Sundays, (there's a receptable at the back of the sanctuary) or may be dropped off in the Church Office during office hours (8 AM to 12 PM) Monday through Friday. Please call the office at 631-367-9249 to be sure someone will be there. **Thank you in advance for helping local children get a jump start on a good school year!**



Your Mission Team-
Maureen Sansone &
Jane Beller, Co-Chairs,
Carol Keil, Lynn Burke,
Frank Sansone, Melissa
D'Angelo, Sukey
Walter & Pastor Wade

Mission Team News

The next project for the Mission Team is our **Annual Clothing Drive for Veterans** to benefit Beacon House. We ask you to bring in used/gently used clothing such as shirts, pants, jackets, coats etc that we will donate in October. Collection will take place during September and October.

We have a new idea that we are asking for feedback from our members:

Trunk or Treat!

No...this is not a grammatical error. This is about TRUNK or TREAT!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!

The mission committee is reaching out to you to assess the interest of congregation members in participating in a unique Halloween-type event. We are looking for 10 people who would be willing to decorate their car in a unique theme. Imagine decorating your car with a theme like Dr. Seuss, or football, or a giant spiderweb and handing out goodies to a horde of kiddos dressed up in their best Halloween theme.

The mission committee wants you to decorate one car (or more if you wish) as an outreach to families in our community, providing them a safe space to TRUNK or TREAT on Friday, October 14th from 6-8 PM.

Do you have that Halloween spirit? Do you like your ghosts and superheroes and princesses to come to our little church with a big heart?

Decorate a car for TRUNK or TREAT! Contact Lori or Pastor Wade for information or to sign up!

Also, if you have a family member or friend or small business that might be interested, have them contact the church as well!

Further details on next page.

BOO!!!!

The Mission Team looks forward to hearing from you!

Trunk or Treat Time!

No...this is not a grammatical error. This is about Tricking out your Car Trunk with Treats.

The Mission Team is reaching out to you to assess the interest of congregation members (friends too) in participating in a unique Halloween-type event. We need at least ten people who would be willing to decorate their car in a distinctive way. Imagine decorating your car with a theme like Dr. Seuss, or football or a giant spiderweb and handing out goodies to a horde of kids dressed up for Halloween.

As an outreach to families in our community, will you be willing to provide a safe space to Trunk or Treat on Friday, October 14 from 6-8pm? Do you have that Halloween spirit that wants ghosts, superheroes and princesses to come to our "Little Church with a Big Heart"? Contact the church or any mission team member if you are interested in signing on. If you have a family member, friend or small business that might be interested, have them contact the church too.



Boo... Your Mission Team

Maureen Sansone

Carol Keil

Sukey Walter

Melissa D'Angelo

Lynn Burke

Frank Sansone

Pastor Wade

Jane Beller

Humanitarian Relief for Ukrainian Refugees

Have You Been Wondering How You Can Help Our Fellow Humans In Ukraine?

Since the war began between Ukraine and Russia on February 24, 2022, according to a report released in June by the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), over 7 million people have been displaced-almost 5 million of which have been recorded across Europe.

What is being called the largest refugee crisis since World War II has become a far-reaching humanitarian disaster, threatening economies across Europe, causing rising inflation and shortages of food and other goods. Relief and recovery efforts continue. Here are some ways in which we can help our brothers and sisters in need:

1-Dr. Marta McKeague is an ophthalmologist with OCLI who grew up in Ukraine. Her community of Holy Trinity Ukrainian Church in Staten Island has established contacts with doctors in Ukraine and are sending specific supplies requested by specific hospitals and doctors. Many of the millions of people who have left, only have the bare necessities. The need is great, so please consider donating to this cause by going to the website [gofundme](https://www.gofundme.com/c/humanitarian-relief-for-ukrainian-refugees) and search "Humanitarian Relief for Ukrainian Refugees".

2-Save The Children-According to Save the Children, 7.5 million kids are in danger of physical harm, emotional distress, and displacement due to the invasion in Ukraine. Even before the conflict began, there were already 400,000 children there who needed humanitarian aid. On their official website, Save the Children states they "will use donations made to their Ukraine Crisis Relief Fund to help families meet their basic needs such as food, medicine and shelter". To donate, visit their website: www.savethechildren.org

3-Samaritan's Purse is providing food, clothing and personal hygiene items to suffering families in Ukraine, while airlifting medical supplies into the country as fighting rages on. In partnership with churches in Ukraine, they are transporting these urgently needed relief supplies to families who are struggling in areas impacted by this conflict. To donate, please visit their website: www.samaritanspurse.org.

**THE PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH
OF SWEET HOLLOW**

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Melville, NY 11747*

Phone: 631-367-9249



We're on the Web!

www.sweethollowpresby.org

“SHOPPING, shopping and more shopping on AMAZON SMILE.”

This past May we were given a little over \$50 from the AmazonSmile program. I hope as more people become aware they can select our Presbyterian Church of Sweet Hollow appearing in the charity list of the **Amazon Smile** program, that the benefits will grow. In a time where every dime counts to help the church, this program can help you get what you need and give back to our church...think of it like a two-for-one offer. Hopefully those diehard shoppers on Prime Day back in July helped our church reaps the benefits of online shopping.



- **If you were having an issue with *changing your charity on Amazon Smile*** on your phone, it seems you have to go onto your computer and change it to Presbyterian Church of Sweet Hollow and then your phone connection will be updated and say our church's name. Happy Shopping and thanks for changing your Amazon Smile charity to our church... smile.amazon.com -- Jane Beller



Amazon donates to your charity 0.5%
of the price of your eligible purchases.