

# *The Bell Ringer*



## *Of the Presbyterian Church of Sweet Hollow*

No matter who you are or where you are on your life journey, you are welcome here.

**February 2024**



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### *From the Pastor's Nook:*

#### RETHINKING THE SOUL OF THE SMALL CHURCH

These are anxious times for small churches. The stressors of the post-pandemic loss, aging and shrinking membership, and an entire generation of non-church goers ("NONES") combine to raise hard questions. How long can we go on like this? Fail to connect with those outside our doors? Afford our pastor? Keep up this building?

Not everything about a small church needs to be fixed, and small churches are not deficient just because they are small. Sometimes our mindset needs to be changed, transformed or transfigured! Perhaps the times call for reawakening to a new sense of identity and mission, and maybe even radical surgery.

Small churches are not deficient just because they are small. So a necessary first step in any reform would be to locate the enduring substance of a small church, its soul which holds even when change is required in institutional forms.

What I am asking is "What is the soul of our small church?"

Surrogate family. Although there are the painful exceptions, small churches in general provide a healthy, family-like environment for the sharing of physical and emotional resources. Our prayer group on Wednesdays is a vital link to being part of that surrogate family. Who do you know that needs a surrogate family?

Small group religious experience. If you watch small church worship like a critical tourist, measuring what you see against what you've experienced in larger congregations, you are likely to be disappointed. The music is less disciplined, the passing of the peace is raucous, and the announcements go on too long. But if you approach that same worship service from the perspective of a curious tourist, you begin to detect a religious vitality that may remind you that most small churches began not as seeds planted by a preacher but as small groups of lay persons experiencing spiritual awakening and called to a particular mission.

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## BUILDING RELATIONSHIPS...SMORGASBORD SUNDAYS

Have you ever been to a smorgasbord? A smorgasbord has Swedish origins and is a buffet style of meal that became popular following the 1939 World's Fair in New York!

Wikipedia informs us that a smorgasbord is typically a celebratory meal and guests can help themselves from a range of dishes laid out for their choice.

Through conversations with the session and the church growth team, we have decided to evolve the Fourth Sunday Fellowship into Smorgasbord Sundays! **But we need your help!!!!!!**

### **We want to make Smorgasbord Sundays about you!!!!**

The evolution of this time of fellowship moves away from a model where one or two people bear the responsibility of providing refreshments for anyone attending. Instead, we are moving to a model where the community of faith comes together to provide refreshments!!!!

### **We would like to have you bring one dish, JUST ONE, to share with any of our worshipping neighbors on that Sunday!!!!**

Why are we looking to change this model???

1. To encourage more people to participate in an event that is about food, fun and fellowship!
2. To have a consistent event on our calendar that we wish to share with others and to invite our neighbors, friends and family!!!!
3. To lessen the burden by sharing something together, communal. Many hands make light work.
4. Jesus gathered with many people, friends and strangers, around a meal.
5. To show off the favorite dishes that we would like to make and share with our church family!

A substantial part of growing the church is about growing in relationship with one another. Food is one of the items that brings families of faith together and it is also something that brings guests into our collective presence.

Let us share a meal with one another in the fashion that Jesus would have shared a meal with friends and strangers!

### **Looking forward to our next Smorgasbord Sunday following worship on February 25th!!!!!!**

## FAITH FORMATION

By Carol Keil

Q. What or Who is a ***“Local Pilgrim”***?

A. The short answer: ***Local Pilgrim*** is the title of ***Presbyterian Outlook’s*** 2024 Lenten Devotional series.

A more complete answer will be found as we set forth on our personal Lenten pilgrimages to discover what God will reveal as we pause, seek, ponder, reflect, and pray.

The resource for each day includes a scripture reference, a reflection, and a prayer to guide our contemplations and our prayers throughout this coming Lenten season. Each day from Ash Wednesday through Easter Sunday we are invited to see the world around us with a renewed sense of purpose. Perhaps while following our routine schedules or perhaps seeking out an unfamiliar landscape from which to view the world.

This resource will be made available during the first week of Lent which begins with Ash Wednesday on February 14th.

May God Bless our Lenten journey.

## **WORSHIP NOTES**

This year, we find the season of Lent beginning in February (on Valentine's Day). The majority of February, we will focus on the Lenten themes of journey, self-giving and preparation.

### **ASH WEDNESDAY**

This year, as Ash Wednesday happens to share time with Valentine's Day (February 14th), we will do things a little bit differently this year.

Instead of a dedicated Ash Wednesday service that traditionally happens in the evening, the church sanctuary will be opened and set up for a time of personal prayer and contemplation. From 10 AM to 3 PM, anyone could arrive at the church and receive the imposition of ashes at the church. Contemplative music will be playing in the sanctuary and prayer cars will be made available for your own personal time of prayer and reflection.

In this way, you can prepare yourself for the beginning of your Lenten journey while also celebrating the holiday with family and loved ones.

If you have any questions, please contact Pastor Wade.

**THE LITURGICAL COLORS OF FEBRUARY ARE GREEN FOR THE TIME LEADING UP TO ASH WEDNESDAY THEN CHANGES TO PURPLE IN OBSERVANCE OF THE LENTEN SEASON.**

## BIBLE AND A BREW

Would you be interested in joining Pastor Wade for a beer and a discussion about the intersection of our faith and some current events? Look for BIBLE AND A BREW coming soon!!!



## Presbyterian Church of Sweet Hollow

(631) 367 - 9249

[www.sweethollowpresby.org](http://www.sweethollowpresby.org)

Rev. Wade Pond, Pastor

Jason Black, Director of Music Ministries

Lori Kevelos, Church Administrator

Jill Conroy, Treasurer

Beatrice Reiser, Clerk of Session

Elders: Ed Conroy

Melissa D'Angelo

Niaja Mowatt

Frank Sansone

Bea Reiser

## February 2024

2.....Jean Cavanagh

3.....Jason Wagner

8.... Marc Young

21...Audra Schmitt

23...Kira Sansone

27...Jazlynn Pond

*Find our website and social media links!*

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<https://youtube.com/>

[@presbyterianchurchofsweeth1401](https://www.youtube.com/@presbyterianchurchofsweeth1401)

<https://www.instagram.com/presbysweethollow>

## SESSION MEETING!

The session meets monthly, typically on the third Monday of each month at 8 PM. Most meetings occur via Zoom. In person meetings occur February/May/September/November. Our February meeting will be held on the 19th. Any member of the church is welcome to attend. Ask Pastor Wade for details.

## **STEWARDSHIP AND STUFF**

Lent is the time to think and reflect on our faith and spiritual journey. It is a time for new beginnings. It's a ideal time for the Christian disciple to take stock, reassess and recommit to a life lived for and in Jesus Christ. Here are a few suggestions for the important areas of our faith life:

**Stewardship of Prayer:** Nothing is more important than cultivating a closer, deeper relationship with God. Make a new commitment to a time each day to listen to God's voice.

**Stewardship of Family:** How often in our busy lives does time with family get short shrift? Resolve to find a special time with each family member each week. Make sure that family meals are celebrated frequently. Plan a special family outing once or twice a month, and go to church together. Resolve that when your spouse and child speak, you will look at them and truly listen.

**Stewardship of Health:** Your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit. Without good health, we lack the energy to serve the Lord well. Resolve to make that doctor or dentist appointment. Make one healthy change in your eating habits. Add a few minutes of extra exercise to each day's routine.

**Stewardship of Possessions:** Want less. Live more simply. Do you own your possessions, or do they own you? Challenge yourself to sacrifice something you like but that you know another person needs more than you.

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## **STEWARDSHIP AND STUFF**

**(from previous page)**

**Stewardship of the Church Family:** Offer your service to serve the church through a ministry team or worship leadership in the New Year. Enrich your church and your church experience by becoming involved.

**Stewardship of Money:** Take charge of your budget and your checkbook. Reprioritize your financial goals to ensure that the Lord is coming first in the expenditure of your wealth. Plan your spending and don't spend reactively or impulsively.

**Stewardship of Work:** Do your best at your chosen profession. Be honest and faithful. Resolve to find a class or other forum that will strengthen your knowledge and expertise. Bring a prayerful attitude to your job.

**Stewardship of Mind:** Resolve to read something regularly that enhances your faith life. Resolve to learn more about your faith and learn more about the missions that are important to your church family and to fellow Presbyterians.

**Stewardship of Neighbor:** Be aware of those around you, whether it be your co-workers, fellow Jesu followers, neighbors, restaurant workers or store employees. Everyone needs a smile and Christian kindness.

**Stewardship of the Poor:** Resolve to give support and aid to the poor in some specific way this year. Bring them into your prayer life as well.

**Stewardship of the Outcasts:** Choose a group of people who are on the margins of society, the sick, the cognitively challenged, members of the LGBTQ+ community, the underprivileged and be a neighbor to them. We all need good neighbors.

## **STEWARDSHIP AND STUFF**

### Why pay the Per Capita early in 2024?

Sweet Hollow is required to pay the \$38.90 for ***every member*** on our rolls. Please consider paying your family's Per Capita dues sooner than later. If members do not earmark their per capita portion, we must take money from our budget to fulfill our responsibility towards the Presbyterian Church (USA). This payment ensures that we can easily use resources, borrow from the Presbytery office, and receive advice and support from the General Assembly.

Thank you for helping us meet OUR church's obligation of the  
**Individual Per Capita Apportionment of \$38.90 this year.**

Thanks for using the [blue envelopes](#) earmarked for this--Jane Beller





## MISSION & MORE

### EXCITEMENT IS BUILDING AS WE TAKE THE “SOUPER BOWL OF CARING” CHALLENGE INTO THE FIELD

“Souper” Bowl Sunday is officially February 11, and we are accepting canned goods, non-perishable foods, checks/cash (earmarked for “Souper” Bowl), and grocery store gift cards throughout the entire month of February. Items will be donated to the Huntington Community Food Council. Be part of the team and give something to boost someone’s game day.



"LORD, EVEN AS WE ENJOY THE  
SUPER BOWL FOOTBALL GAME,  
HELP US BE MINDFUL OF THOSE  
WHO ARE WITHOUT A BOWL OF  
SOUP TO EAT"

**TACKLE  
HUNGER**  
with the  
**SOUPERBOWL  
OFCARING**



## MISSION & MORE



***Coming in MARCH!!!!!!***

***Shoe Drive... collecting new and  
gently used footwear***

## Prayer Corner

by Carol Keil

**Family**, according to *Wikipedia*, “ is a group of people related either by birth or affinity, such as marriage or other relationship. It forms the basis for social order. The purpose of the family is to maintain the well-being of its members and of society.”

We pray with thanksgiving for the many ways our family of faith at Presbyterian Church of Sweet Hollow works to maintain the well-being of its members and friends and to serve our neighbors.

We join the **Pond family** in prayers of joyful celebration as **Jordyn’s** adoption into the family is finalized.

We join the **Schmitt family** in prayers that Millie may find healing, strength, and comfort.

We join the **Moder and Burke families** as they mourn the recent death of beloved family dogs **Maggie Mae** and **Molly**. We pray with thanksgiving for the joy and comfort of our 4-legged family members.

“Darkness cannot drive out darkness, only light can do that. Hate cannot drive out hate, only LOVE can do that.”

Martin Luther King, Jr

“I’ve learned that people will forget what you said, people will forget what you did, but people will never forget how you made them feel.”

Maya Angelou

“ A friend is someone who knows all about you and still loves you.”

Elbert Hubbard

AMEN

*Find our website and social media links!*

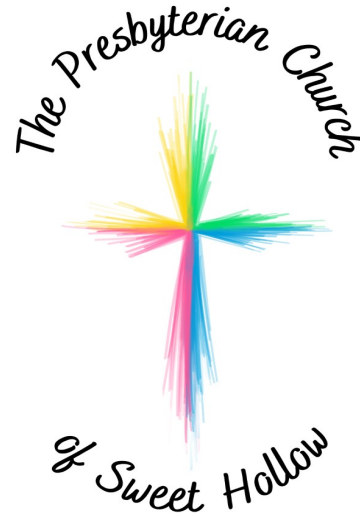
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From the Pastor's Nook (continued)

A plentitude of spiritual gifts. You have everything you need, Paul tells the church at Corinth; “you are not lacking in any spiritual gift” (1 Cor. 1:5-9). Attention to this Spirit-generated energy shifts focus away from scarcity of resources, the ghoul that haunts so many small church decisions. It helps congregations focus instead on activities that are drenched in being relational and rational.

The PCUSA has over 8,600 congregations approximately 80% of those congregations have 100 or fewer members. The reality is that the small church is the norm for our denomination and our presbytery.

As a congregation we are growing and shrinking in a variety of ways. The session is about to proceed with some substantial decisions where we must realize our own soul as a small church. That is hard work of realigning practice with vision and mission, as we adjust and rethink who we are today and in the future. Financial and property systems have already begun to adjust and more is on the way.

As we journey down this road, we also need to pause long enough to feel the pulse of the Spirit-animated life before us. What is our soul and how do we share that soul with others? What is essential and to be protected? I once heard a surgeon explain his caution in words something like this: “You want to make sure that the nerve you cut isn’t the one that connects the body to its soul.”

I encourage you to be part of the rethinking of the soul of our small church.

Pastor Wade

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