

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.

January 2024



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From the Pastor's Nook:

Happy New Year!

I hope that all of you had a very Merry Christmas and are looking forward to the year, 2024. All of us hope and anticipate that the New Year will bring with it new resolve and new life.

Here at PCSH, we look forward to all of the wonderful ways God will bless us in the upcoming year. We know at Christmas that God's resolve to be with us in Jesus is fulfilled; let us, therefore, resolve to be with one another in worship, in ministry and in mission.

Jesus will be with us in all things during the next twelve months -- the ups, the occasional downs, and all points in between.

Thank you for your continued faithfulness to this congregation, and especially your faith in our Lord Jesus Christ.

Blessed New Year to you all!!!!

Pastor Wade



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 first Smorgasbord Sunday following worship on January 28th!!!!!!

FAITH FORMATION

By Carol Keil

January 2024

With thanks to Merriam-Webster:

Epiphany: Capitalized, the proper noun Epiphany refers to the religious observance beginning on the Sunday closest to January 6 through the Sunday before Ash Wednesday. (January 7-February 11, 2024). Epiphany celebrates the good news made known through the coming of the Magi or Wise Men from the East, that the baby born in the Bethlehem stable was Jesus, Emmanuel: *God with us*. Tradition tells us a star led the travelers to the place where the Christ child could be found.

epiphany:

a usually sudden manifestation or perception of the essential nature or the meaning of something.
an illuminating discovery, realization, or disclosure.

The season of Epiphany is a reminder that God's gift of the Good News is for everyone and can be applied to our lives in meaningful ways.

1. Be open to new experiences: Use this time to consider learning a new language; plan a trip to someplace you've never been. Engage all family members in the planning.
2. Be generous: The Wise Men brought gifts to the newborn king. What gifts or talents do you have to share that will make a positive impact on our community, and our church?
3. Be inclusive: Epiphany celebrates the manifestation of Jesus Christ to both the Israelites and the Gentiles. Our willingness to work with others, regardless of their background or beliefs can help us build a more accepting and diverse community. Join a community, Scouting, or sports team that will introduce you to others outside your neighborhood.

For more resources to celebrate Epiphany and the upcoming season of Lent check out the PRC (Practical Resources for Churches) website at prcli.org

Learn to make epiphany stars at: woodlarkblog.com . enter the word "stars" then scroll through options for 1) DIY Paper Coffee Filter Stars and 2) How to Make Waldorf Window Stars

Enjoy!

WORSHIP NOTES

January is an interesting month for worship as there are a number of interesting things that happen during the month. Below we will find a number of items that can be celebrated in worship. However, while we can observe these opportunities, we don't necessarily do so in worship.

TWELVE DAYS OF CHRISTMAS—DECEMBER 25TH THROUGH JANUARY 6TH

The 12 days of Christmas in Christian tradition signifies the time between the birth of Christ and the arrival of the three wise men, also known as the Magi. It starts on December 25, which is celebrated as Christmas Day, and lasts until January 6, which is the Epiphany, also referred to as Three Kings' Day.

When the 12 days began, counting the days became an important facet of each holiday season. Even in the Dark Ages, in some Eastern European churches, the 12 days of Christmas meant attending daily church services. For Christians who lived during this extremely difficult age, the 12 days were a time of rededication and renewal. It was also a period when children were given small, simple, and usually symbolic gifts of faith. Thus, the twelve days were considered a holy period in both coded poems and public worship.

EPIPHANY— JANUARY 6TH

During the first week of January (6th) this year, we have the day of Epiphany where Jesus is first recognized by the secular world. When the magi appear before Jesus, Mary and Joseph, we find them worshipping the newborn king and celebrating by the giving of the gifts of gold, frankincense and myrrh. In worship, we recognize and remember this selfless act of giving every time we place our gifts, tithes and offerings in the offering basket (or give online).

BAPTISM OF THE LORD - SUNDAY JANUARY 7TH

This is one of my favorite Sundays during the church calendar. There is a great deal of good music available to celebrate and there are some very unique worship experiences that can happen as we remember our own baptisms. This year we will enter into a communal and spiritual worship experience for this special Sunday.

THE LITURGICAL COLORS OF DECEMBER ARE WHITE/GOLD DURING THE 12 DAYS OF CHRISTMAS/EPIPHANY AND THEN CHANGING TO GREEN FOR THE TIME LEADING UP TO ASH WEDNESDAY (FEBRUARY 14TH THIS YEAR)

WORSHIP NOTES (cont'd)

CHRISTMAS EVE WORSHIP

For the second consecutive year, we had two worship services on Christmas Eve; a family service and our traditional lessons and carols service. Since Christmas Eve was on a Sunday this year, our first worship service, the family service, was at 10 AM. The candlelight lessons and carols service was held at 9 PM.

In the lessons and carols service the story of Jesus' birth is told through the connective tissue of scripture readings and hymns sung throughout the service. The service crescendos with the sharing of candlelight and the singing of Holy Night.

We especially thank those individuals who dropped by a little early to practice a choir hymn to be offered during the service:

Carol Keil Laura Fallon Jessica Pond Jim Sommermeyer Tim Mason Pastor Wade

During the family service in the morning, the theme of Happy Birthday Jesus was present throughout worship. Joan Sommermeyer led a fun game of Jesus Bingo, utilizing some of the symbolism of Christmas (manger, star, sheep) and sharing the significance of these items in the telling of Jesus' birth. There was also a rousing rendition of Unwrapping the gift of Christmas which was a musical game of hot potato as children passed around a gift wrapped in multiple layers of paper until the music stopped and a layer of wrapping paper was torn off. As the last layer was torn off and the box opened, the children discovered the gift of Christmas, Baby Jesus, and Jessalyn got to place Baby Jesus in the manger (Wyatt was also enamored with Baby Jesus)! Pastor Wade shared the story of Jesus' birth in a fun and interactive story with the kids acting like shepherds sleeping and yawning and acting scared. Then Kaleb, who was typecast as an angel, talked to the shepherds. The angel told the shepherds that the savior was born and the shepherds went out and told everyone about how the savior was born!!!!

Of course, you can't have a Happy Birthday Jesus worship with cake! At the conclusion of worship, we feasted on birthday cake and cupcakes!!!!

Throughout both services, music enhanced the joyous opportunities to celebrate the birth of Christ. We especially want to thank our talented music director, **Jason Black**, for his gift of music and creativity. These services don't happen without his gifts and service to the church. Be sure to say thank you to Jason!!!!

May the hope, joy, peace and love of Christ be with us all in 2024!!!!



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

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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

January 2024

- 3....Rachel Fogel
- 22....Owen Moder
- 23.... Wyatt Wagner
- 30.... Wade Pond

National Calendar Days

- 1....New Years Day
- 4....Spaghetti Day
- 8....Bubble Bath Day
- 11....National Milk Day
- 15...National Bagel Day
- 18...National Winnie the Pooh Day
- 20...National Cheese Lover's Day
- 24...National Peanut Butter Day
- 30...National Croissant Day

www.nationaldaycalendar.com

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 November meeting will be held on the 20th. Any member of the church is welcome to attend. Ask Pastor Wade for details.

ANNUAL MEETING!

Our regularly scheduled annual congregational meeting will be held following worship on Sunday, January 28th. Please be sure to attend!!!!

STEWARDSHIP AND STUFF

January Stewards

January is traditionally the time for New Year's resolutions. 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.

(cont'd on next page)

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 months of January until Game Day. Items will be donated to the Huntington Community Food Council. Be part of the team and give something to boost someone’s game day.



tacklehunger.org



"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
SOUPER BOWL OF CARING



MISSION & MORE

Mission Team Focus for January:

Sharing Bags for Tri-CYA



The Sharing Bags for the children at Tri-CYA are up in the sanctuary.

We're collecting healthy snacks to nourish the children who attend their after-school programs. The following are the items that are most needed and enjoyed.

The Sharing Bags are just a guide; you may add or bring in other snacks that you may have already purchased:

Applesauce Packs

Veggie Chips

Juice Boxes

Saltine Crackers

Ritz Crackers

Popcorn Snack Bags

Graham Crackers

Pudding Packs

Granola Bars

Goldfish Crackers

Please pick up a sharing bag or two and return them to the church by January 28, 2024 when the food donations will be blessed and then delivered.



Prayer Corner

by Carol Keil

January 2024

This Prayer Corner was inspired by the January 2024 edition of **THE PRESBYTERIAN OUTLOOK** magazine. The cover story by Outlook Editor Teri McDowell Ott is titled "***Small is beautiful: Church vitality is more about spirit than size***".

Holy One,

Hear our prayers of thanksgiving for:

The hum of excitement within our sanctuary walls on mornings after ***Trunk or Treat*** and ***The Christmas Tea Party***.

Those who join the teams of "servant leaders", making these events possible.

The precious gift of **connection** we feel for each other. The warm hugs and handshakes that greet us, the genuine connection felt in ***Passing the Peace***. The **comfort** found in shared joys and concerns.

The leadership of our elders and deacons.

The skill of church members and friends who volunteer their time and talents in the upkeep of the manse, church complex, and the grounds.

The support/partnership of our tenants: Centro Missionero, DogAbility, and Huntington Township Seniors.

The faithful Mission Team members who sponsor, organize, and deliver the monthly mission commitments.

The commitment of the Church Growth Committee and the leadership of Rev. Wade Pond.

The Prayer Circle, meeting in prayer, via Zoom each Wednesday at 10 AM.

Hear our prayers of comfort and strength for all who seek healing, for those who mourn.

Amen

" Bigger may be better in some circumstances, but Jesus had 13 people, counting himself.

And, apparently, that was enough." AMEN

Find our website and social media links!

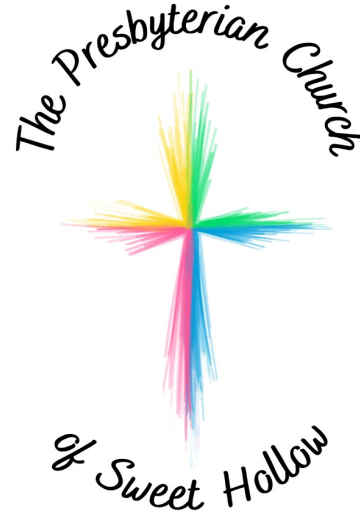
www.sweethollowpresby.org

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Session Notes:

The session is glad to share with you that there are a couple of changes on the way to help make us more efficient in our day to day operations.

The lights in the CEB Hall are due to be replaced with brand new LED lighting. The lighting will benefit the church by being more efficient for energy consumption and a substantial portion of the costs are covered by grants designed to help with some green initiatives.

The church is switching its internet and phone provider services to a higher speed, more reliable and more cost-efficient service. During this time of transition, Thursday December 7th, the church will have a service interruption on that day.

Bell Ringer Delivery: To have your copy of the Bell Ringer delivered by e-mail instead of on paper, please call the office, e-mail <peshsecretary@hotmail.com> or Pastor Wade.

You will receive your copy faster, the pictures will be in color, it will save the cost of paper and toner, and it will reduce the time needed to print, collate and label your copy. It will also save the cost of postage if you are not in church to pick up your copy.