

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.

March 2024



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From the Pastor’s Nook:

Lent has arrived, Hope.

Often the question I hear is, “what is Lent?” Lent is a time in the church year as we prepare for the coming of Easter. It is a time of reflection and self-examination. That is the shortened explanation of Lent, but I thought it would be good to dig a little deeper.

Lent starts the 40 days before Easter, but we do not count the Sundays because each Sunday is like a little Easter Sunday. It begins on Ash Wednesday. Ashes are a sign of mortality and repentance in Jewish and Christian history. Mortality, because when we die, our bodies eventually decompose, and we become dust/dirt/ash/whatever. Repentance, because long ago, when people felt remorse for something they did, they would put ashes on their head and wear sackcloth to remind them that sin is pretty uncomfortable and leads to a sort of death of the spirit. The sackcloth clothing is rough and scratchy. This was their way of confessing their sins and asking for forgiveness. The ashes come from our Palm Sunday service. On Palm Sunday we remember and celebrate when Jesus rode a donkey into Jerusalem while people waved palms and cheered him on. Less than a week later, Jesus was killed. The palms that were waved in joy became ashes of sorrow. In some congregations, we get the ashes for Ash Wednesday by burning them those palms and mixing them with a little oil. It's symbolic.

During the Ash Wednesday service the minister will make a small cross on your forehead by smudging the ashes. While the ashes remind us of our mortality and sin, the cross reminds us of Jesus' resurrection and forgiveness. It's a powerful, nonverbal way that we can experience God's forgiveness and renewal as we return to Jesus.

Lent often gives us more questions than answers. Are you searching for something more? Tired of running in circles, but not really living life with direction, purpose, or passion? It's easy to get caught up in the drama of classes, relationships, family, and work. Our lives are filled with distractions that take us away from living a life with Christ. We try to fill the emptiness inside us with mindless TV, meaningless chatter like some social media, stimulants, alcohol, too many activities or other irrelevant stuff. We run away from life and from God. Lent is a great time to return to God and refocus our lives to be more in line with Jesus. It's a 40-day trial run in changing your lifestyle and letting God change your heart.

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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 March 21st!!!!!!

FAITH FORMATION

By Carol Keil

Classic Labyrinth Design

For those who may not have the space or ability to walk a physical labyrinth, a finger labyrinth can be just as powerful. A finger labyrinth is a small, portable labyrinth that can be traced with your finger. It is a great alternative for those who are unable to walk a physical labyrinth or who prefer a more private and personal experience.

The act of walking the labyrinth can be a physical representation of your spiritual journey. It can help you to let go of distractions as you focus on your inner self. Whether you choose to walk a physical labyrinth or use a finger labyrinth, both can provide a sense of stillness and peace that is much needed in today's fast-paced world.

Walking a labyrinth is a practice that has been used for centuries as a tool for meditation and prayer. A labyrinth is a circular path that is designed to be walked in a specific way. Unlike a maze, there are no dead ends or wrong turns in a labyrinth. The path leads you to the center and back out again.



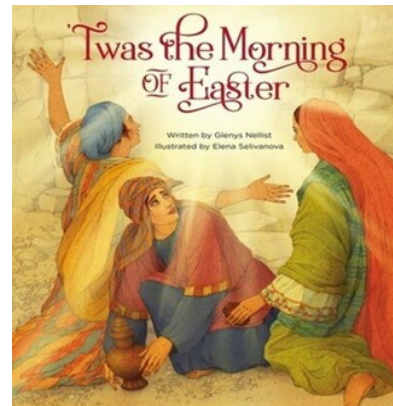
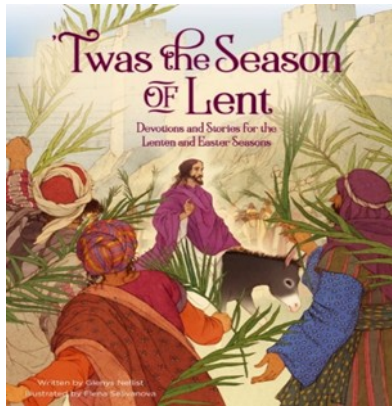
FAITH FORMATION

Continued

Lenten/Easter books for children 4-8 years

by Carol Keil

Glenys Nellist has written two picture books for children that share the story of the Lenten and Easter Season in prose and poetry with beautiful illustrations by Elena Selivanova: *'Twas the Season of Lent Devotions and Stories for the Lenten and Easter Season*, copyright Zonderkidz Publishing 2024 and *'Twas the Morning of Easter*, copyright Zonderkidz Publishing 2021



BIBLE/BOOK STUDY

The church has been blessed with growth on a multitude of levels. With that blessing there are also needs to be met. One of those needs is for faith formation that goes beyond Sunday mornings and devotion readings. With our growth now comes the responsibility and opportunity to build our own faith and build it alongside other individuals. Be ready to receive the news of new faith formation opportunities beginning some time in May!!!!

If you are interested in being part of or leading a study, please contact Pastor Wade!!!

WORSHIP NOTES

This year, we find the season of Lent continuing in March with Holy week beginning on Palm Sunday on March 24th and Easter Sunday on March 31st. In the church calendar, we mark the events and worship of Holy Week as the most significant events in our faith as followers of Jesus.

PALM SUNDAY—MARCH 24TH

Palm Sunday is celebrated one week before Easter Day. It marks the triumphal entry of Jesus Christ into Jerusalem, an event that is recorded in all four Gospels. Jesus rode into Jerusalem on a donkey, while the crowds waved palm branches and shouted "Hosanna!

MAUNDY THURSDAY—MARCH 28TH 7 PM

Maundy Thursday is the day when Christians remember the Last Supper, when Jesus celebrated the Passover meal with his disciples before being betrayed and arrested. This service is one of contemplation as well as an act of service in which participants are called to wash the hands of one another as a remembrance of the calling (mandate) of Jesus to serve one another.

EASTER SUNDAY —MARCH 31ST (10 AM) DROP-IN CHOIR (begins at 9 AM)

A worship service that celebrates the resurrection of Jesus as the most important tenet of the Christian faith. In observation of this celebration, all are invited to join the choir at 9 AM to learn a choral anthem to be shared at the 10 AM Easter Sunday service.

If you have any questions, please contact Pastor Wade.

THE LITURGICAL COLORS OF MARCH ARE PURPLE IN OBSERVANCE OF THE LENTEN SEASON THEN CHANGES TO WHITE FOR EASTER.

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

March 2024

4.....Joan Sommermeyer, Jessica Pond

5....Allison Paalz

8.... Frank Sansone, Monica Van Houten

22...Denise Moder

23...Kira Sansone

27...Jazlynn Pond

Find our website and social media links!

www.sweethollowpresby.org

Facebook/YouTube/Instagram

<https://www.facebook.com/sweethollowpresby>

<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 March meeting will be held on the 18th. Any member of the church is welcome to attend. Ask Pastor Wade for details.

STEWARDSHIP AND STUFF

A Challenge to Face, An Opportunity to Embrace

“When we hear the word “church,” one of the first things that comes to mind for many of us are church buildings. These brick and mortar, asphalt, and gravel pieces, of holy ground include the educational space where we went to Sunday School as a child, the gym in which we played church league basketball as a teen, the parking lot where our congregation held its annual Fall Festival, and the sanctuary where we worshipped over the years, and where we were baptized and got married. These and so many other real, tangible sites are connected to our faith journey and will always hold special places in our hearts.

Yet, the landscape of church buildings and property is changing at warp speed in the 21st century. Countless congregations are dealing with both declining attendance and decreasing revenue. As a result, their facilities suddenly feel way too large and have become a huge burden to maintain. We want to be honest that church physical plants have become a huge financial challenge for more and more congregations.”

For us here at PCSH, the burdens and financial challenges that we face have led the session at its February meeting to inquire about the path of selling a portion of the church property. By doing this we can provide financial security in both the current times, as well as the future for the church. The church is currently showing all the best signs of growth. Growth in numbers, in new participants, in new events and programs, increase in generosity, and increase in rental income and fundraising. These are all good indicators that allow us to proclaim the words of “growth” and “vibrant” as adjectives for the congregation.

Another adjective the session wants to add to that list of words is STABILITY. The sale of some of the church property will allow us to realize enough capital to do more with the church infrastructure that we are currently utilizing and to secure savings to ensure the church’s mission and ministry in Melville.

The decision from session is one that has developed over years of deliberation and prayer. And if the church were not in a current state of growth, this decision from the session to inform you of this discussion may have taken a different avenue.

The session is conversing with Long Island Presbytery to understand the processes and mechanisms that are necessary for the congregation to consider and vote on the proposal to sell. This process starts with the elected elders serving on session but ultimately comes down to the members of the congregation and the presbytery. The presbytery is involved on two levels. First, as guidance in the necessary steps and processes. Secondly, as the property is held in trust by the presbytery and thus the trustees of the presbytery, and the presbytery itself, must provide approval of the sale as well.

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STEWARDSHIP AND STUFF

A Challenge to Face, An Opportunity to Embrace

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There will be many steps in the discussion and consideration of the sale of church property. There will be more articles, more meetings with LI Presbytery, congregational town halls, and congregational meetings as part of this process. Questions are welcome. We ask that you expect a town hall conversation in April related to this process.

The property that the church owns is a gift. It is a gift from God, stewarded to us by previous actions of the congregation of Sweet Hollow. At this time, selling portions of the church property also feels like good stewardship. It is the type of stewardship that Jesus challenged the disciples as he asked them to follow him. Jesus Calls the First Disciples in Matthew Chapter 4:18-20:

“While walking by the Sea of Galilee, he saw two brothers, Simon (who is called Peter) and Andrew his brother, casting a net into the sea, for they were fishermen. And he said to them, “Follow me, and I will make you fishers of men.” Immediately they left their nets and followed him.”

Jesus is asking the fishermen to drop the things that are a burden, to drop the things that are weighing them down, so that they can go to the world sharing the teachings of Jesus.

The session feels that the sale of church property is an act of faith, a calling to follow Jesus; to lay down burdens and to share God's love with all that we can.

As your session, transparency in the process is something that we promise to you. Questions are welcome. In the vows that we took in our process of ordination, we look to lead you through this conversation with energy, intelligence, inspiration and love.

Thank you for the opportunity to serve you.

Humbly and respectfully in faith, your session.

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

***Soles4Souls* March 2024 Shoe Drive**

Presbyterian Church of Sweet Hollow is proud to participate as a collection partner of the **Northport-East Northport Rotary** annual ***Soles4Souls*** shoe drive **throughout the month of March**. Please deposit your donations of new or gently used shoes in the ***Soles4Souls*** collection boxes.

At ***Soles4Souls*** unwanted shoes are turned into opportunities by keeping them from going to waste and putting them to good use-providing relief, and empowering people to establish their own small businesses to break the cycle of poverty.

In 2023, ***Soles4Souls*** distributed more than 5.5 million pairs of shoes in 138 countries around the world and in all 50 states to help provide relief and create economic opportunities. ***Soles4Souls*** works directly with over 1,200 domestic and international non-profits to distribute free shoes to people in need and in times of disaster.

Soles4Souls focuses on the following program areas to fulfill its goal:

Free Distribution- distributing new shoes donated by corporate partners to people in need in the US and around the world.

Micro-enterprise- helping hard-working entrepreneurs build their own small businesses selling donated shoes.

Learn more about the ***Soles4Souls*** impact on poverty and the planet at <https://soles4souls.org>

SOLES 4 SOULS
WEARING OUT POVERTY™

Prayer Corner

by Carol Keil

Lenten Prayer

Dear God of our whole selves, as we journey through this season of Lent,

Teach us how to give, so that we can joyfully respond when you call us to serve.

Teach us how to pray, so that we can be closer to you in all that we do throughout the day.

Teach us how to let go, so nothing can stand in the way of our connection with you.

Teach us how to prepare, so we can be ready to receive your love, wisdom, and blessing.

Help us to remember that in all ways we belong to you.

Amen

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“God speaks in the silence of the heart. Listening is the beginning of prayer. Prayer is not asking. Prayer is putting oneself in the hands of God, at His disposition, and listening to His voice in the depth of our hearts.” Mother Teresa

“True prayer is a way of life, not just for use in cases of emergency. Make it a habit, and when the need arises you will be in practice.” Billy Graham

Holy One,

As we journey through this Lenten and Easter season help us to see God at work amid the pain and suffering in the world. Guide us to serve our neighbors as Jesus taught us.

We pray with thanksgiving for the fellowship and caring relationships in this family of faith.

We join in prayer with those who seek employment, housing, healing of relationships, relief from pain, healing in body and spirit.

Lord, hear our prayers,

Amen.

Find our website and social media links!

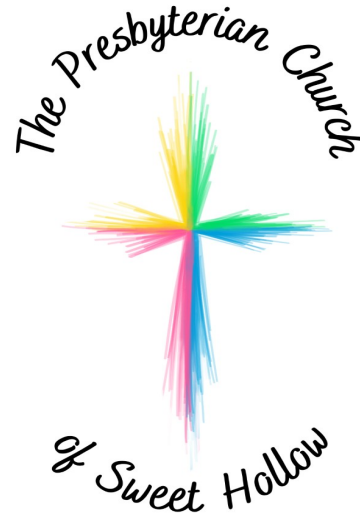
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From the Pastor's Nook (continued)

During the time of Lent you can fast, and some people have gone without food for 40 days. That's not the only way to fast. You can fast by cutting out some of the things in your life that distract you from God. Some Christians use the whole 40 days to fast from candy, TV, soft drinks, cigarettes, or meat as a way to purify their bodies and lives. You might skip one meal a day and use that time to pray instead. Or you can give up some activity like worry or reality TV to spend time outside enjoying God's creation. Think about what do you need to let go of or "fast" from in order to focus on God. What clutters your calendar and life? How can you simplify your life in terms of what you eat, wear, or do? Some Christians take something on for Christ. You can collect food for the needy. You can commit to help a different stranger, coworker, or friend everyday of Lent. Serving others is one way we serve God. Christians also use Lent as a time of intentional prayer. You can pray while you walk, create music or art as a prayer to God, or savor a time of quiet listening. All can be ways of becoming more in tune with God. Lent is a time to draw closer to God!

Pastor Wade

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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.