

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.

November 2023



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From the Pastor's Nook:

A Faith-Based Perspective on Gun Violence

In the wake of yet another mass shooting, this time in Maine, it is important for us to take a moment to understand what scripture and Jesus have to say about violence.

I am well aware that some people may view this perspective as one that is political in nature. In scripture, Jesus often did things that had an impact on politics. However, the reality is that what Jesus did was NOT about politics, it WAS about faith. The things he did just happened to have had political ramifications at that time. In that his ministry, Jesus reached "across the aisle" to share in the healing and restoration of a diverse group of individuals (Jews, Romans, Palestinians).

While the Bible does not explicitly mention guns, it does have a lot to say about violence and how we are called to live as peacemakers.

One of the most important biblical teachings on violence is that it is always wrong. In the Old Testament, God commands his people not to kill (Exodus 20:13). He also teaches them that he will avenge those who are killed (Genesis 9:5). In the New Testament, Jesus repeats God's command not to kill (Matthew 5:21). He also teaches that we should love our enemies and pray for those who persecute us (Matthew 5:44).

The Bible also teaches that we are all created in the image of God (Genesis 1:27). This means that every human life is sacred and valuable. When we take a life, we are not just harming another person, but we are also harming God.

So, how can we apply these biblical teachings to the issue of gun violence?

(continued on back page)



PUBLIC SERVICE ANNOUNCEMENT—PHISHING SCAMS

Hello friends!!

In the two-plus years that I have served as your pastor, there have been multiple attempts of individuals that have sent out emails or texts to you claiming that I have been asking for funds or gift cards to be sent directly to me. Please know, that I will never ask you for funds in that manner. These are fraudulent scammers trying to appeal to your highly generous nature as they look to impersonate me in their fraudulent requests. Again, I will never ask you for funds in that manner. My hope is that the funds you give (and give generously!) are through your offering to the church.

When an online entity attempts to impersonate another person online for the purpose of trying to steal funds from you it is often referred to as PHISHING. These phishing attacks will appear in many different ways using different types of social cues to try to get you to give them funds.

The best thing that you can do if you have even the smallest amount of suspicion if you receive an email or text claiming to come from me or the church for some type of fund request is to contact me or Lori at the church directly.

There are lots of articles available referring to Phishing.

Below are some of those articles that you can read about the topic.

<https://www.comptia.org/content/articles/what-is-phishing/>

<https://www.aarp.org/money/scams-fraud/info-2019/phishing.html>

Remember, if you even think you may have received a request for funds from me or the church that is abnormal, be a skeptic and contact me or Lori to get the truth!

BUILDING RELATIONSHIPS...THROUGH TRUNK OR TREAT

2ND ANNUAL TRUNK OR TREAT !!!!!

Trunk or Treat was a resounding event with lots of fun and spectacle and kids!!!! Due to the weather, we moved the event into the CEB Hall as we had our friends from Dogability and Melville Fire Department join us in the festivities. Along with that, Pastor Wade gave tours of the sanctuary and invited kids to ring the church bell. Many, many, many thanks to our church members who decorated and handed out resplendent treats to all of our visitors!!!!!!!



BUILDING RELATIONSHIPS...THROUGH TRUNK OR TREAT

2ND ANNUAL TRUNK OR TREAT !!!!! (cont'd)

Trunk or Treat was a resounding event with lots of fun and spectacle and kids!!!! Due to the weather, we moved the event into the CEB Hall as we had our friends from Dogability and Melville Fire Department join us in the festivities. Along with that, Pastor Wade gave tours of the sanctuary and invited kids to ring the church bell. Many, many, many thanks to our church members who decorated and handed out resplendent treats to all of our visitors!!!!!!



FAITH FORMATION

By Carol Keil

We thank Rev Traci Smith for the following resources found in her *Treasure Box Tuesday* blog.

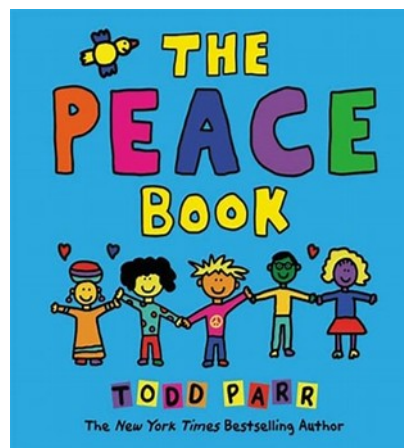
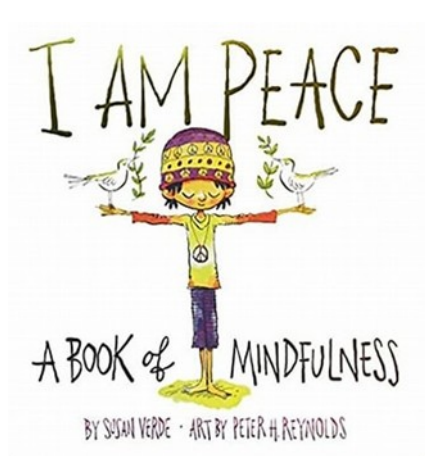
Regarding PEACE:

From NPR for the following link to their resource *How to talk to children about the violence in Israel and Gaza*: <https://www.npr.org/2023/10/11/1205017249>

Suggested for children ages 2-5 years: THE PEACE BOOK

Suggested for children ages 2-7 years: from the I AM Books series by Susan Verde and Peter Reynolds: I AM PEACE, A book of Mindfulness; I AM LOVE, A book of Compassion; I AM COURAGE, A book of Resilience.

Practice an Attitude of Gratitude each day this month with Rev. Smith's **Gratitude Every Day November** calendar found at this link: [GratitudeEveryDay_November2023.pdf](#)



WORSHIP NOTES

DECORATE THE CHURCH SUNDAY—NOVEMBER 19TH

Mark your calendars! Sunday November 19th we will be taking time to decorate the sanctuary for the upcoming Advent and Christmastide seasons! Pizza and refreshments will be provided.

Be sure to attend as it is sure to be a time of festive sound, brilliant colors and fellowship.

DROP IN CHOIR!!!!!! - DECEMBER 24TH

It's not too early to think about Christmas Eve!!!! On Sunday December 24th, we will be having two worship services. One occurring at our normal 10 AM worship service that will be oriented towards families and the other at 9 PM which is our Candlelight Service of Lessons & Carols. At the Candlelight service, we are hoping to gather enough interested individuals to drop in for a brief choir rehearsal that will offer an anthem sung at the Candlelight Service. Let Pastor Wade or Jason know if you are interested or available!!!!

CALLING ALL LITURGISTS!!!!!!

One of the greatest gifts that any of us can have is the gift of helping someone else. As a pastor, there are lots of occasions where I get to experience that kind of giving, particularly on Sundays. During Sunday morning worship, I am SOOOO thankful for those individuals who have taken time to serve as a liturgist. Over the past year those individuals have included:

Frank and Maureen Sansone

Carol Keil

Niaja Mowatt

Laura Fallon

Joan Sommermeyer

Melissa D'Angelo

Lynn Burke

So I would like to say thank you to all of you and encourage any of our regular congregants to do the same!

Also, being a liturgist is not a difficult task. Pastor Wade scripts out all of the readings about 5 days in advance so you have plenty of time to look over items. If you have questions about a name to pronounce, you are always welcome to give him a call! And serving as a liturgist is something that takes just a little bit of time and the commitment is very small.

Would you please consider being a liturgist? Reach out to Pastor Wade if you may be interested or have questions!

THE LITURGICAL COLORS OF NOVEMBER ARE GREEN CHANGING TO PURPLE

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 this Fall!!!!



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

Beatrice Reiser, Clerk of Session

Elders: Ed Conroy

Melissa D'Angelo

Niaja Mowatt

Frank Sansone

Bea Reiser

November 2023

- 3.....Lori Kevlos
- 6.... Niaja Mowatt
- 9.... Donald Krams, Malachy O'Connor
- 28....Colin Keil

National Calendar Days

- 1....All Saints Day
- 2....Deviled Egg Day
- 4....Candy Day
- 5....Donut Day, Daylight Savings Time Ends
- 6....Nachos Day
- 11...Veterans Day, Sundae Day
- 14...Pickle Day
- 17....Baklava Day
- 18...Adoption Day
- 20....Peanut Butter Fudge Day
- 23...Thanksgiving
- 26...National Cake Day
- 28...Giving Tuesday

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.

STEWARDSHIP AND STUFF



Mission Commitment Sunday – November 19

So what in the world is Mission Commitment Sunday? Mission Commitment Sunday (MCS for short), is an expansion of our stewardship commitment. Mission Commitment is all about ensuring that we lean into our mission to be the Little Church with a BIG HEART. MCS is about sharing the load of our mission through our spiritual practices.

Our spiritual practices include (but are not limited to) things like prayer, scripture reading, giving of our financial resources, fasting and dedication to service. These are the practices that keep the church vibrant, sharing the good news of the gospel with our neighbors.

MCS allows us to provide a space for the about 200 members of the Huntington Seniors group to gather each week. MCS allows us to provide a safe space for Alcoholics Anonymous to meet regularly as these individuals continue to heal and lift up one another in their struggles. MCS helps us to ensure that we have a place to collect an abundance of clothing for veterans or to provide food for the hungry.

Mission Commitment Sunday is about all of those things and MORE! MCS is the day that we COMMIT, PROMISE, PLEDGE and ENGAGE in the practice of **HOPE**. The act of giving regularly and intentionally through our spiritual practices helps us grow in faith and become more mature spiritually. It serves as a continual reminder of God's claim on our lives. It requires us to put our own needs and wants into proper perspective, to set aside our own interests for the sake of God and others. Generosity is a tool God uses to shape our hearts. It is the active engagement of HOPE.

As the leadership of the church, we are responsible for envisioning our prayer-filled HOPE requests. Our finance team is currently working on assessing the needs for 2024.

What is in your HOPE box for the church? What is in your HOPE box for your lives? What is in your HOPE box for others? That is what your spiritual commitment is all about! We have lots of HOPE in our hearts and dreams in our heads for the church. In November, we will gather together, with HOPE in our hearts, as we share in our Mission Commitment Sunday.

Thank you,

Your Finance Team – Jill Conroy (Treasurer) Melissa D'Angelo & Pastor Wade.

STEWARDSHIP AND STUFF

Enough: Discovering Joy Through Simplicity and Generosity

One of Jesus' great teaching parables involves a sower who cast seed along the ground. The sower hoped the seeds would sprout, grow, and bear good fruit. Some seeds did just that, producing a great harvest. But others, Jesus said, fell among thorns and, though they began to grow, these good plants were quickly choked out. Jesus said the thorns were "the cares of the world and the lure of wealth" (Matthew 13:22).

In a culture where having "enough" seems to have become a never-ending pursuit, Jesus' parable remains incredibly relevant. Many of us are chasing the American dream in ways that lead to stress, anxiety, and fear—thorns that can rob us of the ability to enjoy the abundant lives of purpose that God intended for us.

All of us have struggled with these issues at one time or another. They are important issues that we cannot ignore. This is why our Mission Commitment this year will focus on this idea of having Enough! Over the next couple of weeks you will see communication related to this theme that explores what the Bible teaches us about financial management. We'll hear expert advice and stories about what others have learned by working through financial challenges. Each week we will provide you with some practical tools you can use to assess your financial situation and develop a financial plan with a biblical foundation.

At the conclusion of the emphasis, we will have the opportunity to make personal commitments of our offerings to God through our church in the coming year. We will consecrate these commitments in the worship service on November 19th.

I hope you will join us in the coming weeks as we look at how we can manage our financial resources and truly experience simplicity, generosity, and joy.

STEWARDSHIP AND STUFF

Six Key Financial Principles

As part of our mission commitment, the finance team wishes to share some wisdom with you as you prepare for your mission commitment for 2024. Here you will find some wisdom that has been curated from scripture highlighting Six Key Financial Principles, which are summarized below.

We hope you will take time this week to read these principles and Scriptures. They will make a great table devotional for you and your family. By practicing these biblical principles, all of us can find greater simplicity, contentment, generosity, and joy for our lives.

Put God first in your living and giving. (2 Corinthians 9:6-7)

Put God first in your living and your giving. Give your tithe and offering from the “top” of your paycheck, and then live on whatever remains.

Prepare a spending plan and track all expenses monthly. (Proverbs 27:23-24)

Creating a budget means developing a plan in which you tell your money what you want it to do. Tracking your expenses is like getting on the scales to see how you are doing.

Simplify your lifestyle; live below your means. (Matthew 6:19-33)

Because this discipline is critical to the success of any financial plan, it is often a focus found in scripture.

Provide immediately for an emergency fund. (1 Timothy 6:9-12)

An emergency fund is an account separate from checking or long-term savings that is set aside specifically for emergencies.

Pay off all credit card debt; use cash or debit cards, not credit cards. (Proverbs 22:7)

As you are building your emergency fund, begin to pay off your credit card debt and start using cash or debit cards for purchases. If you must use a credit card, be sure to pay off the debt monthly.

Practice long-range saving and investing habits. (Luke 14:28)

Saving money is the Number 1 wise money management principle everyone should practice. There are three types of savings we should have: emergency savings, savings for wants and goals, and retirement savings.

CHURCH GROWTH

INVITE A FRIEND TO CHURCH—NOVEMBER 19TH!!!!

One of the easiest yet most challenging aspects of church growth is the act of inviting someone to church!!!!

In our church growth team meeting two weeks ago, the conversation about invitation came up. It is a conversation piece that I have shared in every church that I have served. And there are always a couple of common responses that occur:

“Everybody I know already goes to church,” or “I don’t know anyone to invite” or “everybody I know is attending church somewhere else.” The challenges of these responses are that it takes the inviter off the hook for inviting new people. Unfortunately, these responses are typically based more out of fear than out of fact. Inviting others to anything is a scary proposition. The goal for a church invitation is an invite that leaves space for others to say yes and that doesn’t paint an overly negative or rosy picture.

The challenge is we really do not like inviting individuals to church. The fear of rejection is one of the main reasons. Understandably most of us do not enjoy rejection at any level. Yet, if we are serious about sharing God’s transforming and inclusive love displayed in our little church with a big heart, then inviting others to a place where that can happen is important.

Clues for Inviting Others

1. The invitation should be about a genuine connection and not staged. It is best to invite individuals to an event that has bearing on their life or appeals to their interests. It comes across as a genuine connection and not something staged that comes out of left field. For instance, our Christmas tea is expected to be a fabulous event in December. Invite a friend and buy them a ticket to join you! “I have an extra ticket for our Christmas tea on December 2nd and I would love for you to come with me.” The connection is authentic because they have an interest in sharing time with you while experiencing some music, dance and magic to go along with all of those appetizing teas and treats! If we translate this to inviting someone to church, then we share with them about some of our mission ventures like Cause for Paws, the backpack program and feeding the hungry. The point is the invitation comes across as thoughtful and something that connects with the other person.

(continued on next page)

CHURCH GROWTH

INVITE A FRIEND TO CHURCH—NOVEMBER 19TH!!!!

2. Be specific. Often, when we do invite, our invitations are very general. If I say to someone, “come to dinner at my house on Sunday,” it leaves out important information, like the time of dinner and where I live. A better dinner invitation is “come over at 5 p.m. on Sunday and my address is 123 Main Street, which I will text you so you can Google directions.” The same principle applies to church. Simply saying, “Why don’t you come to my church on Sunday,” is not as specific as “I would love for you to come to the Presbyterian Church of Sweet Hollow at 10 a.m. Our address is 95 Old Country Road, and I will meet you in the parking lot.” Be specific!

3. Be honest about what we know and do not know. Another reason many of us do not invite is that we are afraid someone may ask us questions to which we do not know the answer, such as, “Why do bad things happen to good people?” It is okay if we do not have all the answers. In many cases others are relieved that we do not know everything. This communicates to others that you are not trying to sell them a bill of goods. We all have been in situations where a salesperson was willing to tell us anything to get us to buy the product. To exaggerate the point, imagine a salesperson saying you need this vacuum cleaner (that works well on shag carpet) when they know you only have hard-wood floors in the house. This would leave a bad taste in your mouth. Honesty goes a long way and individuals respect those who are upfront with them.

4. It is important to invite with expectant hope. Do not invite with a defeatist attitude. There are times when we so underplay the invitation it comes across as if we really do not want the other person to come. For instance, a friend saying, “My family reunion is on Saturday. It probably won’t be fun, but you might want to come if you have absolutely nothing else to do.” This is not a compelling invite! But it’s equally important not to go to the opposite extreme and be overly effusive. The goal is an invitation that leaves space for others to say yes without painting an overly negative or rosy picture.

Inviting others to anything is a scary proposition. This is especially true for church because of the personal nature of faith. I believe it is helpful to make a genuine connection, be specific, be honest and avoid shading the picture too bleakly or too rosily. Ultimately, we are inviting others to experience a transforming relationship with God.

Ultimately, keep asking. Most people need to extend an invitation at least 7 times before receiving that first yes! And in doing so, you may make a difference in someone’s life!

MISSION & MORE

TAKE A BITE OUT OF HUNGER



As we roll into November, we shall once again be supporting Thanksgiving Meals for the Helping Hand Rescue Mission! Our donations to this Annual Thanksgiving Turkey & Food Distribution drive will provide food for two families FULL Thanksgiving meal, from breakfast to dessert. Meeting an increased local need after the Pandemic disruption is still key for helping to serve over a thousand families for Thanksgiving.

Through guidance and the grace of our Lord, we strive to make life more stable and fuller of love and support for those in need. Ways to Help: · Purchase items to help us fill a box to feed a family: Stuffing mix, Cranberry sauce, small canned yams, rice, turkey gravy, macaroni and cheese, instant mashed potatoes, canned corn, brownie/quick bread mix, cake mix and icing, canned fruit, pancake mix, syrup, snacks, and family size juice, holiday paper products, cooking tins, festive decorations. If you can donate, sign up on the clipboards in the sanctuary or email Jane Beller @ looneychick36@yahoo.com so she can put you on the list. Delivery of the two boxes is slated for November 13 so they can have it for distribution that week. Don't want to shop... Write the church a check and earmark it for HHRM Turkey and we shall do the shopping. Thank you Sweet Hollow Congregation....The Little Church With a Big Heart!!!!Mission Team

MISSION & MORE

FILL a box, FEED a Family!

Recipients are families coming to the Helping Hand Rescue Mission

Help us overflow the boxes with Thanksgiving Essentials

2 boxes Stuffing

Juice 64 oz.

Tea bags/Coffee/Hot Chocolate packets

Cranberry Sauce

2 Instant Potato bags

2 cans Corn

2 cans Green Beans/Peas

Tortillas (corn or flour) 2 lbs dry Rice

Lg can Sweet Potatoes/Yams or 2 small cans

Pancake mix 32 oz.

Cake Mix and Frosting

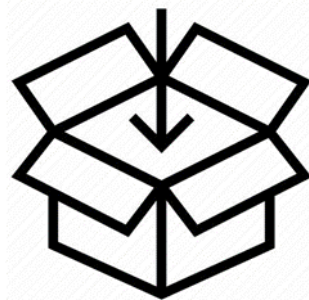
Syrup 24 oz.

2 boxes Mac and Cheese

Candy (sealed)

Gravy (can/jar/packets)

OPTIONS: Grocery gift cards festive decorations



Prayer Corner

by Carol Keil

We pray for PEACE!

Jesus said, "Peace I leave with you, my peace I give to you....Do not let your hearts be troubled, and do not let them be afraid." John 14:27

We thank **Arianne Braithwaite Lehn** for the following excerpt from her prayer:

When I'm longing for peace, within and without

"Beautiful Spirit of Peace,

I am longing for peace within and peace around....

Peace for people ripped open by painful divides on streets and conversations.

Peace for all whose greatest fears actualized before their eyes, and sighs and tears became a daily language.

Peace that holds all of us in wholeness when we're carrying grief or heartache, chaos or tumultuous questions.

I ask you, Spirit of peace and hope, to blow a breath of balm upon the wounds, and lead us toward bone-deep belief.

I thank You that peace is not a dream, but a promise.

And You are the Giver of Peace.

Amen

Remembering the Saints

Today is November 1st and it is the day that we traditionally remember the saints that have gone before us in faith. There are many ways which we remember the important people in our lives. Sometimes it is by sending cards, looking at pictures of loved ones, lighting a candle for someone (as we did in worship) or buying a flower or planting a tree in memory of someone near and dear to us.

A few weeks ago, you may have noticed a small Japanese Maple tree planted near the entrance of the sanctuary doors. This tree was planted by Rob Reiser in memory of his dearly departed wife Kathy. It is a tree that enhances the beauty of our property while connecting us with this dedicated saint of the church.

On this All Saints Day (November 1st), perhaps it is appropriate for us to take brief moment to reflect.

Read: Matthew 5:1-12. The Beatitudes (meaning blessedness) listed in this reading are a series of blessings announced by Jesus. A blessing is defined as a gift or favor bestowed by God. Society often misinterprets a blessing as a possession of the wealthy, the healthy,



and the assertive, but Jesus blesses the poor, the sick, and the meek and promises a reversal of fortune. The source of that reversal is God. This includes the work of saints called by God. The saints are the children of God sent to us to heal, to forgive, and to renew life in Jesus' name. As we remember those saints who have come before us, we give thanks that they have been the source of blessings to enrich us, comfort us, and be merciful to us. Their actions reflect the kingdom of God. We take time to give thanks for all the saints, especially those who have personally touched our lives with God's love in Christ. This divine love promises to reverse the way things are to make them consistent with the ways of God. Discuss: Who are some of the saints who have touched your life? Pray: Eternal God, we thank you for your many blessings, especially those that have come to us through saints we have known and loved through Christ Jesus, our Savior and Lord. Amen

Find our website and social media links!

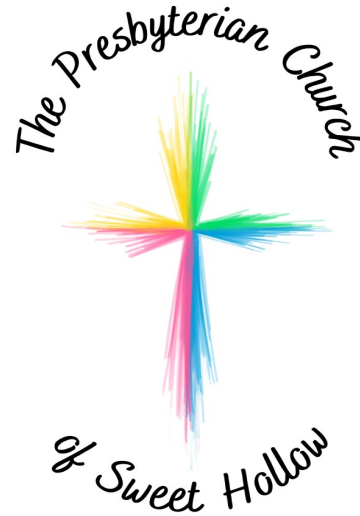
www.sweethollowpresby.org

Facebook/YouTube/Instagram

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

<https://youtube.com/@presbyterianchurchofsweeth1401>

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



From the Pastor's Nook (cont'd from page 1)

First, we need to recognize that gun violence is a problem. It is estimated that over 100,000 people are killed by guns in the United States each year. This is a tragedy, and it is something that we need to work to address.

Second, we need to commit to living as peacemakers. This means resolving our conflicts peacefully and avoiding violence whenever possible. It also means working to create a more just and peaceful society.

Third, we need to support policies that reduce gun violence. This may include things like universal background checks, bans on assault weapons, and red flag laws.

Finally, we need to pray for those who have been affected by gun violence. We pray for the victims, their families, and the communities that have been torn apart by this violence. We also pray for wisdom and guidance as we work to create a more peaceful world.

Here are some specific things that Christians can do to address gun violence:

- Educate yourself about the issue of gun violence and the policies that can help reduce it.
- Support organizations that are working to reduce gun violence.
- Contact your elected officials and urge them to support policies that reduce gun violence.

Pray for those who have been affected by gun violence and for wisdom and guidance as we work to create a more peaceful world.

Amen.

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.