

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 2025



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From the Pastor's Nook:

Epiphany: A Light to the World

The year 2024 has been one in which exceptional and amazing things happened at our little church with a big heart. God has blessed us in big ways and small ways. Nearly everywhere I have looked, God's hands and heart have been present with this church....present with you. There will be plenty of God's work to see and hear about as reports for the 2025 annual congregational meeting begin to pour in and be shared.

With those blessings, it is understood that God's work in the world continues and likewise, we, as the church, continue to work towards God's kin-dom here on earth.

Part of my hope for blessings to the church come in ways that we continue to connect with one another. The ways in which the church body can continue to be relational is still key to our continued blessing and growth.

God's vision for us in being more relational lies in three ministry opportunities:

1. Deacons—I am hoping to restart the deacons in such a fashion that they become more of the hands and feet of the church. The essence of the work of deacons is to help support the congregation through worship and connecting with people, especially in times of need or support.
2. Welcome Team—As the church continues its growth, one of the things we need is a team that connects with people each Sunday morning. Think of this as being a greeter but also being MORE than a greeter. Making guests and visitors feel comfortable when they come to worship is key to our continued growth in being relational.

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BUILDING RELATIONSHIPS

BUILDING RELATIONSHIPS HELP TO BUILDS GOD'S LOVING KINGDOM

Every Sunday, we have the incredible opportunity to be the hands and feet of Christ by extending a warm welcome to those who walk through our doors. Whether it's a visitor seeking a spiritual home, a neighbor curious about our community, or someone stepping into church for the first time, our greeting can be the start of something beautiful—new relationships and a growing connection to God's loving kingdom.

When we greet someone new, we're doing more than saying hello; we're acknowledging their presence, showing that they matter, and inviting them into a space where they can experience God's love. It's a simple act with profound implications. A friendly smile, a handshake, or even remembering a name can make someone feel seen and valued.

Here are just a few reasons why greeting new faces is so important:

- **Fostering Connection:** People are longing for authentic relationships. When we greet warmly, we create an environment where connections can flourish.
- **Reflecting Christ's Love:** Jesus welcomed everyone with open arms. When we do the same, we mirror His love and compassion to others.
- **Building Community:** Each new person who joins our church brings unique gifts and perspectives that enrich our shared faith journey.

As our church grows, let's be intentional about creating a culture of welcome. Look for opportunities to introduce yourself to someone new, invite them to sit with you, or share information about upcoming events and ministries. You never know how a simple act of kindness might open the door to a deeper relationship with God and our community.

Together, we can build a place where everyone feels at home—a reflection of God's kingdom here on earth. Thank you for helping us create a church where love, connection, and belonging thrive.

FAITH FORMATION

By Carol Keil

Ring in the Season!

Bells of the renowned Notre Dame Cathedral in Paris will be ringing on Sunday, December 8, 2024, calling worshippers to the first service following 5 years of restoration brought on by the devastating fire on April 15, 2019.

Bells hold a unique place in the history of both religious and secular celebrations worldwide. The Chinese developed bell-making techniques around 2000 BCE. The earliest bells were made of clay. The development of bronze, created by combining copper with tin, allowed for the development of what we know today as bell-making or bell-founding.

We encourage you to look up bells, bell-making, and bellringing using your favorite search engine. It's great reading to learn how bells were created using the organic materials at hand and in very basic conditions to mold bronze bells still calling us to gather today!

The sound of church bells inspired poets Longfellow and Tennyson. Their words further inspired the creation of the hymns *Ring Out Wild Bells* and *I Heard the Bells on Christmas Day*. *I Heard the Bells on Christmas Day* entered the world of pop culture when Bing Crosby introduced his recording with music adapted by Johnny Marks.

Let us celebrate this Advent Season with "joyful noise"!



WORSHIP NOTES

As we begin the church calendar year, please be sure to remember some of the upcoming items in worship.

January 5th—The first Sunday worship of the month where we offer communion at the Lord's Table. Anyone is welcome to receive communion at the Lord's table even if you are not a member. And if you do not wish to receive communion, you are welcome to come and receive a blessing from Pastor Wade.

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LITURGIST SCHEDULE

We give thanks for all of those individuals who help to lead worship on any given Sunday. It is a gift to the congregation and to Pastor Wade to see the willingness of others to serve God's people.

January 5th—Sheri Myers
 January 12th—Laura Fallon
 January 19th—Niaja Mowatt
 January 26th—Lynn Burke

Serving as a liturgist is a gift to the church. You don't have to be a bible expert, a linguist, or have a seminary degree to serve as a liturgist. A liturgist has a heart to help and lead others. Remember that Moses was called to lead and speak in front of people despite his difficulties speaking: "How then should Pharaoh heed me—who gets tongue-tied!" ([Exod. 6:12](#)). Moses has already pointed this issue out a few chapters earlier, protesting that he has "never been a man of words" and is "slow of speech and slow of tongue." Scholars believe that Moses was afflicted with the challenge of stuttering. Look how he turned out with God's help!

If you have questions about serving as liturgist, talk to Pastor Wade. It is a joy to those explore the calling to serve.

ANNUAL MEETING!

The congregation's annual meeting will be held Sunday January 26th following worship. The congregation will get to see the various committee reports, vote on elders and deacons, review the budget for 2025 and vote on the pastor's compensation.

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

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. The next meeting is January 20th. Any member of the church is welcome to attend. Ask Pastor Wade for details.



December 2024

1...Rachel Fogel

22...Owen Moder

23...Wyatt Wagner

30....Wade Pond

Anniversaries

6...Monica & Paul Van Houten

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>

STEWARDSHIP AND STUFF

PER CAPITA 2025—\$42.09 per church member

Paying per capita is similar to

- contributing one's dish to a potluck meal
- paying to be connected to the Internet
- paying for the benefit of utilities, such as electricity, water, and telephone
- pitching in with other passengers to pay for gasoline for a road trip
- participating in community supported agriculture (CSA) or a similar co-op

What is per capita?

The official definition: "Per capita is an opportunity for all communicant members of the Presbyterian church through the [mid councils] to participate equally, responsibly, and interdependently by sharing the cost of coordination and evaluation of mission; and of performing ecclesiastical, legislative, and judicial functions that identify a Reformed Church, while at the same time strengthening the sense of community among all Presbyterians" (GA Minutes, Part I, 1995).

In essence: Per capita is a set amount of money (apportionment) per member that congregations pay to

the larger Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.). Every Presbyterian shares in the benefit of the PC(USA)'s system of government, so every Presbyterian is asked to share the expenses associated with coordinating and performing the functions of that system.

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Who pays per capita, and how much?

Congregations (through their sessions) pay an annual amount of money per church member — per capita apportionment — to their presbyteries. The annual per capita amount is a combined request from a congregation's presbytery, synod, and the General Assembly — based on their respective budgets for the coming year. A presbytery's per capita rate depends on its geographical location and size, its mission needs, and the needs of the respective synod. The 2025 cost of the Presbytery of Long Island's membership is \$42.09. This apportionment is applied to each member of each church in the entire presbytery.

Even if the church member does not pay their own per capita, the church is responsible for that payment and those funds are paid out of the church's reserve funds.

As a member of the church, we ask for you to joyfully and faithfully pay your per capita funds for 2025. This will go a long way towards helping the church to reduce the financial stress for the fiscal year!

STEWARDSHIP AND STUFF

PROPERTY SALE UPDATE

On December 15th, the congregation of the church unanimously voted to sell the back portion of the church property to Suffolk County for \$400,000 as part of the Open Space Preservation Program offered by the county.

WHAT DOES THIS MEAN FOR THE CHURCH?

These funds could serve as reserves that will allow us to continue operating for years to come. There is more work to be done in the process with the presbytery and the congregation to finalize any transactions and receive those funds. These overall processes could take 6 to 9 months.

WHAT'S NEXT

The Presbytery of Long Island's Board of Trustees must meet to start their process to authorize the sale. This vote will occur on January 15th. If passed by the trustees, the sale will then be sent to the Presbytery of Long Island for a final vote on February 4th. At this same time, there are some final items that the county needs to enact to complete their end of their processes. As these items take some time, we will continue to monitor and provide updates.

STAY TUNED FOR MORE UPDATES

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 most needed and enjoyed. The **Sharing Bags** are just a guide; you may add to or bring in other snacks that you may have already purchased:

Applesauce Packs
Saltine Crackers
Graham Crackers
Goldfish Crackers

Veggie Chips
Ritz Crackers
Pudding Packs

Juice Boxes
Popcorn Snack Bags
Granola Bars

Please pick up a Sharing Bag or two and return them to church by January 26, 2025, when the food donations will be blessed and then delivered.

The Mission Team thanks you all in advance for your generosity.



TOYS OF HOPE

A photograph of two My Life dolls in their packaging. On the left is a purple and white plush doll named 'My Pet Violet Smarty Paws' in a green box. On the right is a girl doll named 'I Am Posajolie' in a pink and white box. Both boxes are sitting on a wooden surface.



MISSION & MORE

COMING IN FEBRUARY!

**EXCITEMENT IS BUILDING AS WE TAKE
THE "SOUPER BOWL OF CARING" CHALLENGE INTO THE FIELD**

"Souper" Bowl Sunday is officially February 9. For the entire month of February, we are accepting canned goods, non-perishable foods, checks/cash (earmarked for "Souper" Bowl"), and grocery store gift cards. Items will be blessed on Sunday, March 2nd, and will then be donated to the Huntington Community Food Council. Be part of the team and give something to boost someone's game day.



Prayer Corner

As we step into a new year, January offers us a unique opportunity to renew our commitment to prayer—both for one another and for the world around us. Prayer is not just an individual practice; it is a communal lifeline that strengthens our bonds, uplifts our spirits, and aligns us with God's will. This month, let's explore the many ways we can use prayer to support and bless those within our church family and our broader community.

1. Praying for Our Church Family

Our church is more than a building; it is a family. Each member faces unique challenges and celebrates personal victories. As we pray for one another, we build a spiritual foundation of love and care. Here are some ways to focus your prayers for our church family:

- **Healing and Comfort:** Lift up those who are sick, grieving, or facing difficult circumstances. Pray for God's healing touch and His peace that surpasses all understanding.
- **Encouragement and Growth:** Pray for each member's spiritual growth, asking God to draw them closer to Him through His Word and their personal walk of faith.
- **Leaders and Volunteers:** Remember to pray for our pastors, our elders, and volunteers. They carry the responsibility of guiding and serving the congregation, often with unseen sacrifices.

2. Praying for Our Community

Our mission extends beyond our walls, reaching into the streets and hearts of our neighbors. Prayer is a powerful tool to intercede for the needs of our community:

- **Schools and Children:** Pray for students, teachers, and administrators as they navigate the challenges of education. Ask for wisdom, protection, and inspiration for young minds.
- **First Responders and Public Servants:** Lift up those who work tirelessly to keep us safe—police officers, firefighters, healthcare workers, and others. Pray for their safety, strength, and discernment.
- **Local Needs:** Ask God to guide our church in identifying and meeting the practical and spiritual needs of those around us. Whether it's hunger, loneliness, or addiction, prayer can pave the way for meaningful action.

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Prayer Corner (Continued from Previous Page)

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3. Practical Ways to Engage in Prayer

Prayer isn't confined to quiet moments alone; it can be woven into our daily lives and routines:

- **Prayer Groups:** Join one of our church's weekly prayer groups to pray collectively for personal, church, and community needs.
- **Prayer Walks:** Consider walking through your neighborhood or around the church grounds, praying for each home, business, and person you encounter.
- **Prayer Calendar:** Use a prayer calendar to focus on specific individuals, ministries, or causes each day. This tool ensures that no one is overlooked in our prayers.

4. Encouraging One Another Through Prayer

Finally, let's remember the power of praying *with* and *for* one another. When someone shares a burden or a need, take the moment to pray with them right then and there. It is a simple yet profound way to show that you care and to invite God into the situation.

As we begin 2025, let us embrace prayer as the heartbeat of our faith and ministry. Together, we can create a ripple effect of hope, love, and transformation through the simple but mighty act of prayer.

Let's make this a year where prayer becomes not just a practice, but a lifestyle that draws us closer to God and each other.

Find our website and social media links!

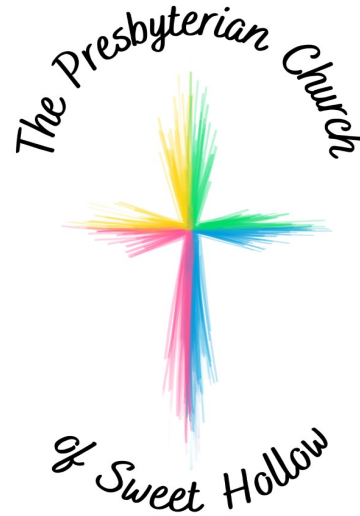
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FROM THE PASTOR'S NOOK (Cont'd from front page)

3. Digital Ministry—The spaces of digital ministry have become the front door of churches. Spaces such as the church website, the Facebook Page, email, etc. reach more people than any other communication medium. A couple of dedicated volunteers who can work alongside the pastor can really make for an effective avenue of communication to reach a broad scope of people.

If any of these are the types of ministry you think God is calling you to, please let Pastor Wade know. Also, do not be surprised if Pastor Wade reaches out to you to talk about this type of calling for YOU!

Let us journey together with open hearts and joyful anticipation, trusting that God is guiding us toward a future filled with promise and possibility. ~PW

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