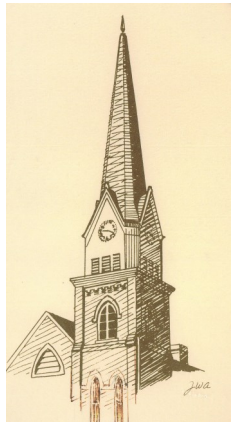


Sewickley United Methodist Church



December 2023 Newsletter

The Pastor's Peace

A Sanctified Art is a ministry that was born out of a desire to find fresh expressions of our faith through artistic displays. If you take a look at the world around you, it is clear God is infinitely creative. There are no boundaries to the imagination with which God exercised when creating us and the world. In the same way, there are no boundaries to God's deep love for us and desire that we might live out this beautiful creativity in our own lives and relationship with God. The heart of worship draws on our imagination as we raise our hands and envision God's presence with us. The heart of worship draws on our sense as we surrender them to be filled up by God. This advent, we tap deeper into our creative expressions of worship as we follow along with the Advent theme that A Sanctified Art ministry has developed for worship leaders to use.

This year's Advent theme is "How Does A Weary World Rejoice?" I find this to be rather appropriate for what the world is currently facing. It certainly feels weary sometimes. However, if you know your history, the world felt weary when Jesus was born as well. The birth of Christ has shown us, and empowered us, to feel joy in the midst of the weariness. There is a familiar Christmas Hymn called, "O Holy Night," which as the authors of A Sanctified Art have noted, "has an interesting history." It was originally written by a French poet named Placide Cappeau who was an atheist and the music was supplied by a Jewish composer. This song became a popular hymn for the Christian Abolitionist movement specifically because of verse 3. The lyrics go:

"Truly He taught us to love one another;
His law is love and His Gospel is Peace.
Chains shall He break, for the slave is our brother
And in His name, all oppression shall cease
Sweet hymns of joy in grateful chorus raise we
Let all within us Praise His Holy name
Christ is the Lord; O praise His name forever!
His power and glory evermore proclaim
His power and glory evermore proclaim

Those who found themselves in slavery, those who still find themselves in oppression know all about weariness and rage. Those who can't conceive but want to and those who hold the innocent while they breathe their last breath can't just turn the weariness off. A blind eye is not a privilege that all of us have. Christmas calls us to keep both eyes open and bear the weight of the weariness of the world all the while living in resistance to it because of the hope and joy that is found in Jesus Christ. This is an act we don't do alone but do together. In Jesus' name we pray, Amen!

From one light to another,

Pastor Hannah Loughman

Pastor Hannah's availability: I am available Monday—Wednesday and Friday, 9 am—5 pm. After 5 pm, by appointment only. On Sundays I am available following the church service till 4 pm. If I am not in the office, I can be reached via my cell phone. I am available after-hours on my cell phone for emergencies. My email address is open 24 hours a day and, with the exceptions of Thursdays, which is my day off, I will respond in a timely manner.

Church Office: (412) 741-9430
Pastor's Office: (412) 741-9433
Cell Phone: (412) 294-7587
E Mail: pastor@sewickleyumc.org
Website: www.sewickleyumc.org



Sunday, December 24, Christmas Eve

5 pm — Contemporary Candlelight Service
7:30 pm — Traditional Candlelight Service

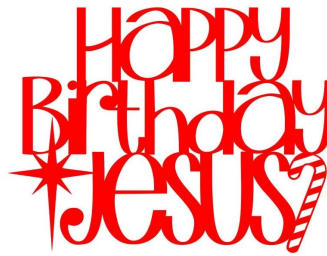
If you would like to help adorn the chancel with poinsettias for Christmas, please order online [here](#), or use an order form found in the rear of the sanctuary and outside the office, and return it to the office or place in the offering plate with your payment. You may also call the office. Orders are due by Tuesday, December 6. Dedications will be included in the Christmas Eve bulletins and in the January Newsletter. If you purchase a poinsettia, you may take it home after the Traditional Service on Christmas Eve.






CHRISTMAS SINGERS

CALL FOR SEASONAL SINGERS!
We are looking for people to form a choir for the 7:30 pm traditional service on Christmas Eve. We will be singing a couple of songs to go along with Pastor Hannah's message for this special evening. Rehearsals will be on Thursday evenings, from 7:30 - 8, in the sanctuary, beginning December 7th. Contact Pamela Mayo for additional info: pemayo@verizon.net.



BREAKFAST FOR BABY JESUS

On Dec 17th at 11am. Breakfast meat will be provided by the Nurture Committee. Wear your favorite Christmas sweater and please bring a breakfast casserole, pastry, juice, milk or fruit for the table. There will be a signup poster in the narthex. ALL are welcome.
Join us to celebrate the birth of Jesus!



CALLING ALL DECEMBER GRADUATES!
Please notify Sandra Lane if your student is graduating in December. Email her at: slane819@yahoo.com

The Youth Group will be hosting a Christmas Party on December 17 from 12-2pm. A return of the sugar cookie decorating competition and other holiday games.



ECUMENICAL ADVENT CONCERT
On December 10th at St. Paul's Lutheran Church at 4pm, there will be an advent concert featuring music from several Sewickley area church musicians, including our Clocktower Ringers! It will be followed by a cookie reception



"Many hands make short work"

Help is needed with the Breakfast for Jesus and also with the December Soup Sale. Extra sets of hands make a big difference when setting up or taking down events. Please let Sandy Kuriger know you're willing to help: 412-559-9652

DOORS TO HOPE AT HOME/ RED STOCKINGS SPECIAL OFFERING SUNDAY DECEMBER 10TH

On December 10th, SUMC will take a special collection for the UMC Western PA Conference's Doors to Hope/Red Stocking programs. Donations will support the Conference's six regional mission agencies: the Erie United Methodist Alliance, United Methodist Human Services of Johnstown, WPA Prison Outreach Ministries, Connellsville Area Community Ministries, Greater Pittsburgh Ministries, and Eastbrook Mission Barn. These agencies extend the love of Christ to those who need shelter, food, clothing, skill-building support and loving care. You may donate through your regular offering or through SUMC's VANCO eGiving portal - please designate "Red Stocking."



Worship Opportunities - December 2023



Contemporary Worship Service: 9 am
 Traditional Worship Service: 11 am
 Our Worship Services are live streamed on
sewickleyumc.org and [youtube.com](https://www.youtube.com).

The recorded services are also available later on Sunday afternoon.

December 3, 2023

First Sunday of Advent

Sacrament of Holy Communion

Liturgist: Donna Sawhill

Scripture Lessons: Psalm 80:1-7, 17-19

Message: "We Acknowledge Our Weariness"

Are any of you weary, feeling grief, rage or hopelessness? Do you know someone who might use one of these words to describe how they feel? We live in a world that seems to give us reasons to be weary. We also live in a world that gives us reasons to be joyful. The birth of Christ helps us to understand that both emotions can exist within the same place. Join us this advent as we answer the question, "How does a weary world rejoice?"

December 10, 2023

Second Sunday of Advent

Rainbow Bells, Jr. Clocktower Ringers and
 Clocktower Ringers play 11 am service

Liturgist: Ron Smith

Scripture Lesson: Isaiah 40:1-11

Message: "We Find Joy in Connection"

Have you ever done something that brought you so much joy, but you were afraid to tell others about it? Have you ever discovered something about yourself but didn't feel others would embrace it? When Mary visits Elizabeth, who has been secluding herself since finding out about the pregnancy, the two of them give each other permission to rejoice. Sometimes we carry the joy for others, sometimes they carry ours and sometimes our connection increases our joy. There is joy in connection with one another.

December 17, 2023

Third Sunday of Advent

Christmas Pageant and Breakfast for Jesus

Wear your Christmas sweaters!

Message: "We Allow Ourselves To Be Amazed"

Just like the crowds were filled with awe and wonder when Zechariah's voice returned after naming his son John, the Christmas story gives us permission to allow ourselves to be amazed. Join us for a morning of amazement as that Christmas story is brought to life!

December 24, 2023

Fourth Sunday of Advent

Liturgist: Mitch Amago

Scripture Lessons: Luke 1:67-80

Message: "We Sing Stories of Hope"

Once Zechariah makes right, his wrong his voice is opened in acknowledgment of the joy of justice. When Elizabeth blesses Mary, Mary sings a song about a God who flips the power of the world upside down by bringing the powerful low and lifting the lowly high. Our voices to, should be used to sign songs of praise for a future filled with hope where the both the oppressed and the oppressor are set free and justice is truly served.

December 24, 2023

Christmas Eve

5pm Contemporary Service

7:30 Traditional Service

Liturgist: Ron Smith

Scripture Lessons: Luke 2:1-20

Message: "We Make Room"

How does a weary world rejoice? It makes room for others. You might have heard it said, "we don't need bigger walls or fences, we need longer tables." Born in an unexpected place, at an unexpected time the King of heaven and earth did not make the entrance people were looking for. However, what took place at the very beginning of Jesus' life on earth was the breaking down of barriers and the opening of a bigger space. The manger made room for the rich and the poor, the young and the old, the wise and the unknowing, the local and the foreigner. All were invited and all who came were changed for the better.

December 31, 2023

New Year's Eve

Liturgist: Kristine Swaney

Scripture Lessons: Luke 2:21-38

Message: "We Root Ourselves in Ritual"

While looking forward to the unknown, Mary and Joseph found themselves grounded by rituals and the people who gave witness to them. When all seems up in the air, it is the familiar, the known, the shared, that brings us back to our feet.

Walking The Talk

TURNING INTENTION INTO ACTION

The Sewickley United Methodist Church and members of the St. Matthews AME Zion church continue to support the Walking the Talk Charity Toy Drive. This year they have added household products, small appliances and new clothing. Walking the talk proudly serves people from Sewickley, Leetsdale, Ambridge, Moon, Coraopolis, Crescent Twp, Aleppo Twp, Aliquippa and more. No one is ever turned away. Every single toy donated is provided to a local family in need. The toy drive is funded 100% by local donations. Donations of new, still in the package toys, can be given until December 8th. The Free Christmas Toy Store will be held here at the Church on December 9th from 9am-2pm. *Volunteers are needed Fri & Sat to help unload all of the toys!*



Praises and thanks to many.

I am excited to share that, based on the October 30th financials, while we are still short of balancing our budget, we are in much better shape than we were two months ago.

Several factors have helped to improve our ability to continue serving the needs of our congregation while also starting a renewed focus on ministry to children and youth. These factors include:

- Generous giving by our faithful congregation, October's contributions were higher than any month in the last two years!
- Thanks to many dedicated volunteers, we raised \$3000 over budget from the Pumpkin Patch! The Haunted House provided very positive revenue as well.
- Lower than budgeted expenses

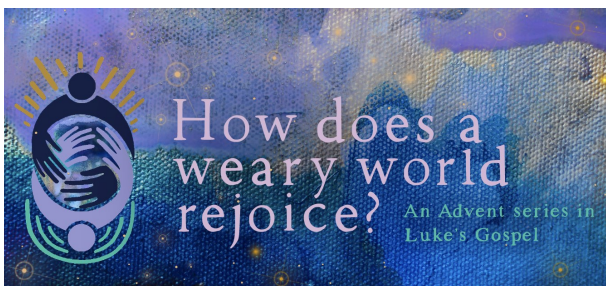
While our challenges continue, especially related to the expense of maintaining the very prominent and beautiful building which we have been entrusted with, our financial picture is significantly improved.

Although our finances are better than they were two months ago we will still need a year-end boost in giving.

Historically our contributions in November and December are higher than the earlier months. We are hoping for and praying that contributions for the last two months remain high. Contributions in October were almost \$29,000. If we collectively are able match or slightly exceed that amount, we should be able to end the year without a deficit.

If you are able to increase your contribution in December it will be greatly appreciated.

Prayerfully,
Jere Cowden
Finance Chair



ADVENT BIBLE STUDY OPPORTUNITIES

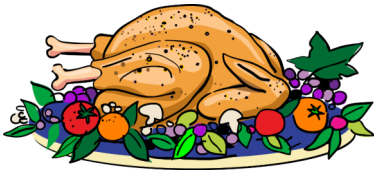
Join us on Tuesday nights in the Simpson room at 6 p.m. to 7:30 p.m. We will be going deeper in our week by week sermon series, "How does a weary world rejoice?" Devotional booklets will be provided. The study begins on November 28th and runs for 4 Tuesdays.

If you prefer an early morning study time I will be hosting a ZOOM bible study at 5:30 a.m. on Mondays over the Advent season. We will be doing the same content, "How does a weary world rejoice." Please let me (Pastor Hannah) know if you would like to

participate in that time together at pastor@sewickleyumc.org. The study begins on November 27th and runs for 4 Mondays. We will finish up by 6:15 every morning.



Each year during the Christmas season, we as a congregation have the opportunity to show our church staff our appreciation with a small token of appreciation. If you wish to donate, please give your donations to a member of our Staff Parish Relations Committee (SPRC) by Sunday, December 10th. Checks should be made payable in "CASH" with a notation on the memo line "Staff Purse." We will also accept cash contributions, or you may select "Pass Through" in our online giving, putting "Staff Purse" in the note line. Please note, Christmas Purse donations are not tax deductible. We thank you in advance for allowing us to honor and remember our wonderful staff at this special time of year. SPRC members are: Otis McAliley, Barbara Bower, Jennifer Jones, Virginia Heinzl, Johnathan Burnett, Ron Smith, Kristine Swaney, Laura Powell, and Debbie Chesney.



Thanks for Giving! -Thanks to many generous donors, SUMC provided the Sewickley

Community Center food pantry enough Thanksgiving meal bags and grocery gift cards to allow approximately 20 families to put full Thanksgiving meals on their tables. The food pantry staff was overjoyed with this generosity because the need was so great this year.



This year we continue our tradition of collecting NEW hats, mittens, gloves, scarves, socks and gifts for the children and youth at Kidcelerate (formerly Bethany House). Requested sizes range from toddler to adult. Clothing may be placed on the "mitten tree" in the sanctuary. The deadline to donate is December 17th. Watch for information about the Christmas gift program in future bulletins. Kidcelerate, located in Northview Heights, is a ministry of United Methodist Church Union, providing child-centered enrichment programming and nutritious meals to children and youth living in this economically distressed neighborhood of Pittsburgh.

THANK YOU!!

A heartfelt thank you to all who helped make the Cookie Walk a success. Without all of the bakers, workers, and everyone who buys the cookies, we would not be able to accomplish what we do. Bless you.



Dear Church Family,

As we gathered to pack Operation Christmas Child shoe boxes in September, we reminded the children that every box carried the voices of more than a dozen Sewickley UMC people singing, "Jesus loves you and we love you."

The Fellowship of the Cross would like to thank everyone who joined our chorus this year as we delivered 140 boxes for Jesus to share with His children.

We would like to thank everyone who donated shoe boxes, and Kara, Elliott and Evarett for wrapping the boxes. We would like to thank everyone who donated school supplies, toys, caps, shirts, socks, stuffed animals, dolls, jewelry, toothbrushes, sunglasses and other items. We would like to thank Pastor Hannah for her encouragement and for making time for our Christmas in July collection window. We would like to thank administrators Pam H. and Elizabeth P. for their energy and support. We would like to thank everyone who prayed over our boxes. We would like to thank everyone who offered financial



support. We would like to thank Diane B. and the pumpkin patch team for helping share our boxes with the community, and for recognizing that Kalai had a story to share with all of us.

We would like to thank the Burnett family for, as always, their help throughout the year and for making delivery day such an uplifting experience. We would like to thank Kalai for sharing her story in our worship services and reminding us that the love of Jesus packed in every box continues to resonate years later. The song never ends.

After 13 years, and more than 1,400 boxes, we are grateful for every opportunity to join with our church family to sing "Jesus loves you and we love you" for children around the world.

Blessings,
 Grace Rogansky
 Pamela Mayo,
 Bill Utterback
 The Fellowship of the Cross

For years, I had the children in my Sunday school classes create paper Christmas ornaments with “Be a shepherd” slogans. I asked them to hang the ornaments from trees or refrigerators or door knobs in their homes.

(Yes, I allowed liberal use of glitter. Yes, I heard from parents after the ornaments shed glitter on clothes, car interiors and carpets. Yes, glitter is now banned in my classroom.)

The lesson was simple: We can’t be Mary or Joseph or the angels, but we can all be shepherds. In Luke’s Christmas story, the angels shared the “good news ... great joy ... all the people” message with the shepherds, then returned to heaven.

The shepherds were left in the dark. No instructions. No commandments. It was a write-your-own script moment.

“ ... the shepherds said to one another, “Let’s go to Bethlehem and see this thing that has happened ... “ They chose to spend more time with Jesus. They made growing a relationship with Jesus their priority.

After spending time at the manger, the shepherds faced another write-your-own-script moment. “When they had seen him, they spread the word concerning what had been told them about this child.”



And here’s a really encouraging nugget from Luke’s account: “ ... all who heard it were amazed at what the shepherds told them about this child ... “ Luke didn’t say “many” were amazed, or “most” were amazed. Luke is reminding us that people need and want to hear more about the love of Jesus.

Let’s pray together for opportunities to grow closer to Jesus and then share His good news through this Christmas season.

On Dec. 3, as the sun sets around 4:54 p.m., from wherever you are, with whoever wants to join you, let’s ask God to grow us as shepherds.

Lord, show us how we can move closer to you. Help us to make prayer, worship, Bible study, meditation, service and sharing a priority. Show us how to step away from the chaos and seek your voice, your peace, your light.

Lord, show us how and where and when we can share the good news of your love for all people. Help us find the ailing, the isolated, the angry, the addicted, the anxious, the exhausted, the hungry, the uncertain and the unaware. Show us who needs to be amazed this Christmas.

Lord, help each of us to be a shepherd.

Please write to our shut-ins and keep them in your prayers. The church office can provide you with contact information.

Remember our Shut-ins

Sylvia Bajsec	B.J. (Elizabeth) Manzinger
Olive & Jim Chewning	Pat Rudy
Renee Gittins	Shirley Sye
Shirley Graham	Lura Zarembo
Virginia Harriger	

<p>Peace in the Holy Land John A. Hurst Bartley Carrie Blanchard Betty Burrows (Wilma Hamilton's sister-in-law) Family of Nancy Carson Anne Clifford (Jenine Furry's sister-in-law) Bruno Crapis Mollie Devine</p>	<p>(Renee Gittins' sister) Betty Dornetta Nick Devine (Renee Gittins' great nephew) Patti Ellis Clyde Grossarth (Steve's brother) Steve Grossarth Candy Grudovich (Joe Boward's sister) Rev. Jim Hamilton Beate Henkel Lucas James (Sel Dean's brother) Matthew Kania</p>	<p>Grace & Murch King Mike Kolesar Connie Kosick (Andrea Lewis's sister) Henrietta Kretzler Eddie Leindecker Carol Lewis (Susie Moffett's mom) Megan and baby Madelyn Marian Martin Sarah Oba Sandra Obeng Lorraine Offner Jean Reed</p>	<p>Family of Heather Rose (Jennifer Jones' cousin) Jim Rogansky Jasmine Ross Megan Shong (Renee Gittins' great-niece) C.R. & Lorraine Simpson (Edie Erkert's parents) Jacqueline Stancil Bill T Lauren Tillman Family of Ernest Wallace Rich Zahrobsky Dennis Zeveny Family of Jim Zoretich</p>
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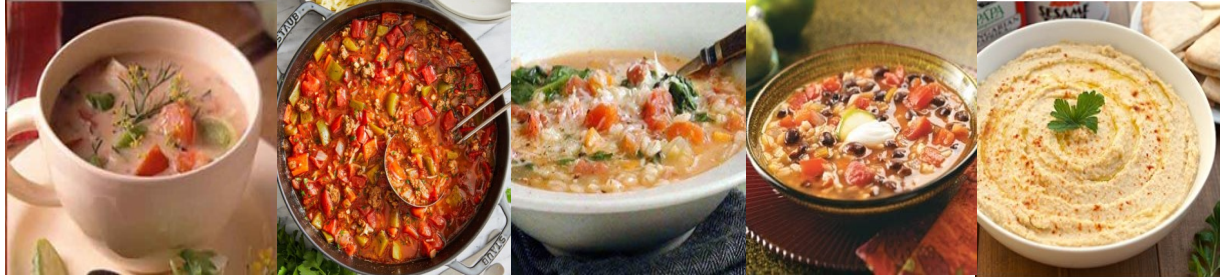
SOUP & HUMMUS SALE BY THE NURTURE COMMITTEE

All proceeds from this sale go toward the General Fund.

To order, [click here for the online order form](#), call 412-741-9430 or email (admin@sewickleyumc.org), bring your form to the office or place it in the offering plate.


Name: _____ Phone Number: _____

Cash Amount: _____ or Check (made to SUMC) # _____ or eGiving Total Amount Enclosed: _____



Choices	Indicate quantity below
	\$12 Quart
Tomato Dill	
Stuffed Pepper	
Chicken and Wild Rice	
Southwestern Bean (vegetarian)	
Sandra's Hummus	\$6 for ½ pint

Orders are due by Sunday, December 8th and will be ready for pickup Friday, December 15 or Sunday, December 17. Include payment with your order or pay when you pickup your soup or hummus. *If using eGiving, please include the processing fee.*



	Cheryl & Tom Barwell	12/10
	John & Edie Erkert	12/20

- Renee Gittins 12/2
- Breonna Frisk 12/3
- Jennifer Jones 12/3
- Mark Wiggins 12/9
- Laura Geason 12/10
- Megan Guzma 12/15
- Sophia Geason 12/17
- David Malarik, Jr. 12/17



- Jacob McCoy 12/18
- Willie Nicholson 12/19

- Kristen Ryerson 12/21
- Evarett Briggs 12/22
- Nick Martinez 12/25
- Jessica Leety 12/28
- Barb Bower 12/29
- Mary Jablonski 12/29
- Gail Hiles 12/31

DECEMBER 2023

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
					1 6pm –9pm Light Up Night 6:30pm AA	2
3 9am Contemporary Service 10am Adult Sunday School 11am Fellowship of the Cross 11am Traditional Service	4 5:30am Advent Study on ZOOM 6pm Worship Committee 7pm AA	5 6pm Advent Study: How Does A Weary World Rejoice? 7pm AA	6 5:30pm Play Rehearsal 6:30pm Leap of Faith	7 6:15pm Bell Choir 7:30pm Christmas Choir Practice	8 9am Walking the Talk Toy Giveaway setup 6:30pm AA	9 9am –2pm Walking the Talk Toy Giveaway
10 9am Contemporary Service 10am Adult Sunday School 11am Fellowship of the Cross 11am Traditional Service 4pm Community Worship Service @ St Paul's Lutheran Church	11 5:30am Advent Study on ZOOM 7pm AA	12 6pm Advent Study: How Does A Weary World Rejoice? 7pm AA	13 Preschool Christmas Party Sing-a-long 10am SUMC Prayer Group 5:30pm Play Rehearsal 6:30pm Leap of Faith	14 Preschool Christmas Party Sing-a-long 6:15pm Bell Choir 7:30pm Christmas Choir Practice	15 6:30pm AA	16 Possible Play Rehearsal
17 10am Joint Service 11am Breakfast for Baby Jesus	18 5:30am Advent Study on ZOOM 7pm AA	19 6pm Advent Study: How Does A Weary World Rejoice? 7pm AA	20 6:30pm Leap of Faith	21 6:15pm Bell Choir 7:30pm Christmas Choir Practice	22 6:30pm AA	23
24 9am Contemporary Service 10am Adult Sunday School 11am Fellowship of the Cross 11am Traditional Service 5pm Contemporary Christmas Eve Service 7:30pm Traditional Christmas Eve Service	25 7pm AA	26 7pm AA	27 6:30pm Leap of Faith	28	29 6:30pm AA	30
31 9am Contemporary Service 10am Adult Sunday School 11am Fellowship of the Cross 11am Traditional Service						