



The Messenger

Shelton Presbyterian Church

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September 2023



A BIG THANK YOU TO OUR DEACONS FOR THEIR WONDERFUL SERVICE AND HOSPITALITY SUPPORT DURING THE 3 MEMORIAL SERVICES IN AUGUST

SUNDAY SCHOOL (KIDS FOR CHRIST)

Do you have any children ready to learn more about Jesus? Then send them our way! Sunday School begins on September 10. We have four teams of teachers ready to share their love of God with your precious young ones. The class is structured for children 4 years old through 4th grade. Every Sunday there is a puppet show, a bible lesson, a craft, and lots of love and discussion. We will begin this year's curriculum with The Creation and God's Chosen People. Thank you to our volunteer teachers who make this program possible: Donna June, Katie Hill, Kathy Burleson, Beth Gregg, Kristi Holzgrove and Heidi Bursch.

Love INC will be beginning our canning workshop on September 18th and are in need of quart and pint jars. Jar donations are accepted at the Love INC office located at 109 South 2nd Street on Tuesdays, Wednesdays and Thursdays from 10am - 3:00pm.

WOMEN'S BIBLE STUDY

Encouraging One Another from the Women of Faith Bible study series will be our new study book this Fall. Cost is \$10.00 on Amazon.

We will start with Chapter one on Wednesday, September 13th, 10:00am at the Church. It is a 12 week study that should take us to our Christmas break. So get your book ordered - September is almost upon us.

Looking forward to seeing you all on the 13th.

Lori Matlock

NEW MEMBER CLASS

Mark your calendar for our next New Member class which is scheduled for Sunday, October 1st, following the Worship service. Lunch is provided.

WELCOME

I got an email this last week advertising a service called "Sermon Spark." So I went to their website to check it out. It's a company that helps pastors write their sermons. For a small fee they will *"find relevant quotes, suggest a biblical outline, compose a sample manuscript, and more."* And they can do all of that in only one to two days. How do they accomplish it with such a quick turnaround you ask? Well, according to their website their researchers *"use the latest technologies to streamline the process. Resources include web research, Scripture study, user contributed content from SermonCentral, original sources and commentaries, quotation databases, as well as generative image and text recommendations from various machine learning platforms."* It was that last phrase that got me, *"generative image and text recommendations from various machine learning platforms."* In essence, they are using their database of sermons and illustrations and an artificial intelligence text generating program like ChatGPT to write the sermon.

For fun, I decided to go to ChatGPT and ask it to write a sermon outline for me on Psalm 124 and God's protection, a topic I recently preached on. Within seconds it came back with an outline that broke down the psalm verse by verse. It wasn't great, but it also wasn't all bad. Then I asked it to turn the outline into a manuscript. It very quickly did so. The manuscript was brief and wooden in tone, but it was a basic sermon. But where the program really gets impressive is with follow-up questions and commands. "Give me an illustration of an historical Christian figure that God protected," I asked. The program returned an illustration of Corrie Ten Boom hiding her Bible from the Nazis in a concentration camp. I asked, "Are there any important Hebrew terms in Psalm 124?" The program returned half a dozen interesting Hebrew words with their definitions and theological significance. It was impressive. Still, there are some significant pitfalls with using AI to write a sermon.

While utilizing ChatGPT for drafting a sermon might offer convenience, it also presents certain risks. Sermons are not just about conveying information but also about sharing deep spiritual insights and connecting with the congregation on a personal and emotional level. Relying solely on an AI-generated sermon could lack the authenticity, genuine emotion, and spiritual depth that comes from personal reflection and spiritual inspiration. Moreover, AI-generated content might inadvertently misinterpret religious teachings or cultural nuances, leading to theological inaccuracies or offensive interpretations. A sermon is a sacred opportunity to guide and uplift a community, and while technology can be a useful tool, it should be approached with caution to ensure the message truly resonates with the congregation's spiritual needs.

Full Disclosure: the previous paragraph, in its entirety, is a ChatGPT response to the prompt, "Write a paragraph about the dangers of using ChatGPT to write a sermon." Not bad.

Let me assure you ChatGPT will not be writing the sermons I preach, nor will any other program or web page or service. I take the process of preaching too seriously to do that. It's important that I study the text, wrestle with it, and allow God to speak to me through that process. I believe that process not only produces a better sermon, but it also produces a better pastor. I need to let the text speak to me first before I can say something to you. That is not a process I can delegate to a computer. AI is a powerful tool that will continue to improve and can be used in some cases to provide insight or information, however, it can

never replace the work of God's Spirit speaking through the text.

In Christ,
Pastor Jeff

Bible Studies

Men's Bible Study

Men meet Thursday mornings at 8:00 AM in the Fireside Room. This study is led by different men in the church. Please join us.

Soup & Bible Study

This study is usually held the **1st and 3rd** Thursdays of the month at 7:00 pm. Enjoy soup at 6:30 and then study the Bible. The study is led by Pastor Jeff and is open to everyone. It is held in the lobby of the church. Please join us.

Women's Bible Study

Women meet Wednesday mornings at 10:00 AM at the church. The study is led by Lori Matlock. [Study resumes September 13th.](#)



September Birthdays



1 Dean Johnen	15 Paula Johnson
1 Jim Killian	17 Rachelle Anderson
3 Marty Brooks	17 Linda Lake
3 Kristi Holzgrove	18 Tom Allen
6 Arlene Bates	21 Madison Heinrich
7 Ethan Bursch	27 Dewayne Matlock
8 Joe Everett	29 Doug Watkins
9 George Bowen	30 Patty Berry
9 Harris Haertel	30 Bill Schumacher
11 Dan Dickey	30 Patrick Utley

WORSHIP ASSISTANTS

	September 3	September 10	September 17	September 24	
Lay Leader	Susan Casey	Harris Haertel	Mary May	Dan Dickey	

SPC Youth News

We will be making a few changes to Youth Group meetings this year. Youth group grades 6-12 will happen Thursdays from 6-8pm. In addition, we will be adding a Monday night hangout for grades 6-12 from 6-8pm. Monday nights will look somewhat similar to Thursday nights; there will still be games, snacks, and focus times, but will look a bit different than what we do on Thursdays. Games on Thursdays will be more organized, high-energy group games, whereas on Mondays, we will be hanging out in the portables and playing more relaxed games with smaller groups, such as ping pong, pool, and air hockey.

Focus times on Mondays will be more serious and in-depth than they are sometimes on Thursdays. These focus times will often include an interactive, reflective activity to accompany the teaching. One of the goals of Mondays is to allow the students to take the lead. If they want to organize a four-square or one-bounce game, that's fabulous! If they have a specific topic they wish to discuss during focus time or in a small group, that's wonderful! Here are some of the dates to keep in mind for the Fall. More details will be given as the time grows closer for the events:

Sept 14: First Youth Group of the Fall at 6:00pm

Sept 17: Church at 10:00am and...MARCUS IS BACK!!!

Sept 18: First Monday hangout at 6:00pm

Oct 2-8: Oysterfest week! Lots of help after school is needed.

Oct 5: Big All-Church Oysterfest Prep Night

Oct 7-8: Oysterfest! Students planning to go on the Mission trip in the summer must be signed up for at least two shifts at Oysterfest AND help with cleanup Sunday night.

Oct 9: No Monday hangout; we will all be recovering from Oysterfest!

We hope everyone enjoys their last little at home before starting a new school year! See you in the Fall!

Missions Committee Report - Back to School Project

In August, Shelton Presbyterian Church teamed up with the Shelton School District to fill backpacks with school supplies and personal items for students in need. Hundreds of backpacks were filled and distributed at the Back-to-School Fest held at Olympic Middle School on August 26. Christine Appleyard, her daughter, and Pat Sanborn inventoried our supply room and many of those items were added to the list of donations made by the congregation on Back to School Sunday. In addition to collecting \$477.00 in donations, SPC donated the following:

- 103 pkgs of erasers
- 102 boxes of crayons
- 92 pencil sharpeners
- 71 pkgs of colored pencils
- 76 reading and activity books
- 66 pkgs of glue sticks
- 51 folders
- 48 pkgs of markers
- 48 pairs of scissors
- 48 notebooks
- 26 composition books
- 29 water bottles
- 25 stuffed animals
- 10 pkgs of pens
- 1 tub of pencils and pencil cases
- 1 tub of socks and underwear
- 1 tub of personal hygiene toiletries
- 1 tub of dental hygiene items
- 1 tub of night lights

THANK YOU, SPC!



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Tina VanderWal

There have been times in my life when I was young when I have felt totally secure. Life seemed certain. Everything seemed to be going well for me, my family and throughout the nation and the world. Of course, now I realize that was never really true. Other people were having problems, wars were happening in other countries, it was just my own personal space that hadn't been invaded.

Now though, it seems that times are more tumultuous. Changing climates throughout the nation, tornadoes showing up where they never were before, hurricanes now hitting the west coast and wildfires everywhere, tragically in Maui claiming numerous lives.

We used to book plane flights and never worry about putting insurance on them. Now, we insure every flight. The thing is we don't know what may happen to us or to our destination. Case in point, we are going on a cruise with our daughter Misty and her family. She and her husband Tom are celebrating their 20th anniversary, and they invited us to come also on a cruise to Mexico with their two children. We're super excited to go, but then we find out that they are expecting a hurricane, Hillary at the same time as our cruise to hit lower California and Mexico. Will we be impacted? It's hard to say. What I do know is this – nothing is ever certain in life. Oh, some will argue that death and taxes are certain, but other than that... only Jesus is certain.

"Jesus Christ is the same yesterday and today and forever." Hebrews 13:8

So, we need to look to Jesus for our peace during these strange times. Like the bar that comes down and keeps us in our seat on the crazy roller coaster rides - Jesus is our shelter our protector throughout this wild ride that we call life. Hang on tight to Jesus and whatever comes in this life – you'll be all right.

Thank you for the certainty of You, sweet Lord every day of our lives.

The Lord gives strength to His people; the Lord blesses His people with peace." Psalm 29:11