



THE MESSENGER

November 2024

Shepherdstown Presbyterian Church
Shepherdstownpresbyterian.org

Pastor Gusti shares the following poem this month.

"Please, God..."

We plead for God to intervene,
even "just this once..."
But I don't think that's how God works:
the Holocaust would have been a good time to do so.
No, God doesn't stop the tyrant,
or nudge the car on the icy road.
God is not a Big Guy with a magic finger
he deploys now and then (but not always).

God is the Love at the heart of all being,
as constant as gravity, infinitely attentive,
and can't be more present or active than right now.

When we ask for God's help,
what we mean is to align ourselves
with the great power of God's grace already at work.
Like musicians in perfect tune,
we create harmonics, notes that sound
though none of us is producing them.
Our harmony with God creates an energy field
that does indeed change things.

In troubled times it takes great concentration
to align ourselves with grace instead of force,
with love instead of fear.
We begin by allowing ourselves to be loved,
along with all the rest of Creation,
and then we fall into that love,
and let that love flow through us into the world.

I think that's what we mean when we pray,
"Please, God..."

Steve Garnaas-Holmes

Shepherdstown Presbyterian Church: *An Inclusive Spiritual Community.* We welcome all who long for meaning, hope, and belonging. Our faith & practice are rooted in the way of Jesus and enriched by wisdom from all sources. We are committed to being and becoming people of radical compassion, working for justice and wholeness in ourselves and in the world.

The "core commitments" that guide us, and the underlying beliefs that support them are:

Radical Hospitality: We Choose Welcome

- Everyone and everything, and every part of ourselves, is included in the circle of God's love.
- Imperfections and suffering are integral to the spiritual path.

Holistic Spirituality: Everything Belongs

- The Way of Jesus is a path of transformation.
- Doubt and questions are essential to faith.
- We are connected in Love with all, including those who have gone before us, and all those yet to come.
- We value all sources of Wisdom.

Engaged Compassion: God is love, and those who abide in love abide in God

- The Way of Jesus is a way of being in this world, loving, serving and making things whole.
- Loving God means loving all of creation.

Church Staff

Rev. Gusti Linnea Newquist (she/her), Pastor

Christa Mastrangelo Joyce (she/her), Director of Children and Youth Formation

Sheila Melendez, Choir Director

Sam Jannotta (he/him), Accompanist

Mark Nutwell (he/him), Tech Support (Contract)

Olivia Gill (she/her), Nursery Lead

Lynn Dampman (she/her), Administrative Assistant

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Shepherdstown, WV 25443

Shepherdstownpresbyterian.org

Church Office Hours: 8am – 2pm, Monday through Friday; 304-876-6466

office@shepherdstownpresbyterian.org

Contacting Pastor Gusti: Pastor Gusti makes every effort to respond to communications as soon as possible between the hours of 9am and 9pm Saturday through Thursday. Fridays are her Sabbath. If you are having a pastoral emergency, please call any time, day or night. 681-283-5314;

gusti@shepherdstownpresbyterian.org

NOVEMBER WORSHIP AT SPC

Worship throughout Autumn at SPC will focus on various components of
The SPC Identity Statement:

*We are an inclusive spiritual community and welcome all who long for meaning, hope, and belonging.
Our faith and practice are rooted in the Way of Jesus and are enriched by wisdom from all sources.
We are committed to being and becoming people of radical compassion,
working for justice and wholeness in ourselves and in the world.*

Sunday, November 3

Always Being Re-Formed

Genesis 2:18-23

All Saints Sunday

Communion

On Being and Becoming

And God built the rib taken from the original human to form a new human ...

Sunday, November 10

Teaching, Healing, Feeding

Matthew 14:13-18

Thirty-Second Sunday of Ordinary Time

Radical Compassion

Jesus had compassion for them and cured their sick.

Sunday, November 17

Guest Preacher Rebecca Barnes

Matthew 25:31-46

Thirty-Third Sunday of Ordinary Time

Justice and Wholeness

I was hungry and you gave me food.

Sunday, November 24

Guest Preacher TBD

Reign of Love Sunday

Ourselves and the World



A NEW TITLE FOR CHRISTA!

by Larry and Joyce Neumark

Christa Mastrangelo Joyce has recently had a change in title for her work at SPC. She is now Director of Children and Youth Formation. Before we delve into that change, we wanted to get to know Christa a little better and what got her to where she is now.

Christa grew up mainly in Maryland through her college years due to her father's position as a Park Ranger. They lived briefly in WV for his job, but later returned to Maryland. They spent a great deal of time in Shepherdstown during this timeframe.

Christa is a graduate of Towson University; however, two years of her undergraduate work were taken at Shepherd University. She has an MFA degree in creative writing from Antioch University in Los Angeles, but began her teaching career at Dean College in Massachusetts in the English department, where she stayed for four years until she and her husband Greg moved to Shepherdstown in 2005. She was then hired by American University to teach in their English department. Her move to Shepherdstown in 2005 was to partner in a restaurant called Stone Soup Bistro. A lot of her family lived in the area and she wanted to be near them as well as fulfill a dream of restaurant ownership. Christa helped operate the restaurant for several years.

After her daughter Ava was born, Christa did not want to return to full-time teaching and commuting to American University. However, she longed for a way to teach that brought together mind, body, and spirit. She took yoga training and earned her certification to teach and began teaching yoga in 2006. By 2009 she was teaching one class in her brother's former juice bar location. This grew organically into one studio by the end of 2010, then three studios by 2020. Needing a change of pace in 2020, she closed all of the locations in 2021 and now offers only one class each week at a new location. She also trains others to teach and has attended international yoga retreats.

In addition to her daughter who is now 18 and will graduate in 2025, Christa also has a son Michael (15), who is a sophomore. She has homeschooled her children from kindergarten through high school, with a brief respite when her children attended a hybrid school.

Her involvement with SPC started in 2009 when she was invited to attend a Peacefest event at SPC by two of her yoga students. This was her first visit to a Presbyterian church and she was enticed to stay by the energy of the congregation, the music, vision, and involvement of other local families.

With her new title and expanded hours, the professionalism of the position has made it possible for her to begin connecting with other ministries within SPC with the hope of connecting joint missions for the church community. She has also been able to connect with folks outside the church in an effort to expand the "church" community outside the walls of SPC. She will be taking some classes to gain important professional development training and to utilize this training to grow her work with the youth and children. Four years ago, she never would have imagined all this. She states, "It has become one of the greatest surprise gifts of this period of my life. The beauty of this is that it feels like my whole formation journey, from my lifetime of spiritual development to my years of professional development, has led to where I am now."

Christa tells us “writing and words were my first love and one of the first ways I related to God.” The focus of Christa’s MFA was in poetry and she had many individual poems published during those years as well as one full manuscript of poetry. Through college and beyond she wrote for a local Baltimore magazine called *Style* and for *Women’s World*, as well as a variety of local newspapers. She still writes poetry and has a dream of writing a book, but now her writing mostly appears on her weekly Substack publication called “Your Sunday Retreat.”

When asked about whom she admires (past or present), she says she would have had a different answer if she were in her 30s. She now realizes that she admires people who are fully themselves, who show up in the world fully, are willing to love and be loved, are able to listen across divides, and are full embodied beings.

As for any favorite books or films, she says she is revisiting a long-held favorite, *Tattoos on the Heart*, by Father Gregory Boyle. The films *Life is Beautiful* and *Babette’s Feast* are two of her favorites.

Thank you, Christa, for sharing your background with us. And congratulations on your new title! We have every confidence that you will excel in your work with the children and youth of SPC.



OCTOBER SESSION HIGHLIGHTS

- **Stewardship Campaign:** This year’s Focus on the Future stewardship campaign has begun, aiming for a pledge income goal of \$280,000 to support budget priorities. Look for the pledge letters and respond early.
- **Maintaining the church building:** Under Daryl Kuster’s guidance, new flooring will soon be installed upstairs of the FH and a new HVAC will be installed in the downstairs of the FH. Thank you, Daryl and Sam, for responding to flooding caused by the old HVAC’s failure.
- **Guns to Gardens:** Thank you congregation for giving generously to the special offering to support the G2G event. The fundraising goal was met and the event was a success!
- **A Focus on Food Insecurity:** Planning is underway to host Rev Rebecca Barnes, Coordinator of the Presbyterian Hunger Program, who will facilitate a community workshop on food security on Saturday, November 16, and preach the following Sunday, both at SPC. Local stakeholder groups from food pantries, food security advocates, local farmers, and faith leaders will attend the workshop.
- **Cold Weather Shelter:** This will now become an All-Weather Shelter and JCCM will coordinate volunteers to support the shelter at a central location. Look for a request for volunteers to help those in need of shelter.
- **Week in prayer November 3 through 9:** As part of a week in prayer, sponsored by the SMA, SPC will host an interdenominational service on the evening of Sunday, November 3, centered on music, poetry, and readings.

The SPC Session meets the 2nd Thursday of the month, 7pm, in the Fellowship Hall and via Zoom. Meetings are open to any member of the congregation who wishes to attend. Contact Dave Smith, Clerk of Session, to learn more.

SHEPHERDSTOWN MINISTERIAL ASSOCIATION

WEEK OF PRAYER AND WORSHIP

Sunday, November 3 - Saturday, November 9, 2024

The Stubblefield Institute and the Shepherdstown Ministerial Association invite the entire community to A Week of Prayer and Worship during the first week of November 2024. We welcome all to join us for evening and midday gatherings as we ground ourselves spiritually through prayer, contemplation, song, healing, and meditation. All events are open to people from any faith tradition - or none at all! - in the hope that we might meet each other with compassion and open hearts. **Feel free to drop in on any event or attend them all!**

The Stubblefield Institute will host two civil discourse community events, an introductory panel, "Community Over Politics," on Tuesday, October 29, and a concluding "Affirmation of Community" event on Tuesday, November 12.

The Shepherdstown Ministerial Association events will take place Sunday, November 3 - Saturday, November 9:

Tuesday, October 29, 7 pm	Community Over Politics	Stubblefield Institute
Sunday, November 3, 7 pm	Why Pray? Reflection & Song	Shep Presbyterian
Monday, November 4, noon	Quaker Silent Worship	St. Agnes Catholic
Monday, November 4, 7 pm	Taizé Contemplative Chanting	St. Agnes Catholic
Tuesday, November 5, 6:30a - 7:30p	Drop-in Prayer Vigil	All* communities
Wednesday, November 6, noon	Quaker Silent Worship	St. Peter's Lutheran
Wednesday, November 6, 7 pm	Contemplative Healing Service	St. Peter's Lutheran
Thursday, November 6, noon	Quaker Silent Worship	New Street UMC
Thursday, November 7, 7 pm	Lectio Divina	New Street UMC
Friday, November 8, noon	Quaker Silent Worship	Trinity Episcopal
Friday, November 8, 7 pm	Compline	Trinity Episcopal
Saturday, November 9, noon	Guided Stillness	Quakers at Shepherd
Saturday, November 9, 7 pm	Who Are Quakers?	Quakers at Shepherd
Tuesday, November 12, 7 pm	Affirmation of Community	Stubblefield Institute

- * St. Peter's Lutheran Church will host a labyrinth walk
- * Trinity Episcopal Church will be a polling location and, therefore, not open for public prayer.
- * **The Quaker Community will be distributed throughout the other congregations, rather than hosting their own drop-in prayer vigil.**

More detailed information and event locations are available at <https://stubblefieldinstitute.org/event/community-over-politics/>. (Scroll down below the Community Over Politics description and map.)

FINANCIAL STEWARDSHIP

BUDGET AT A GLANCE THROUGH September 30, 2024

Actual (9 months)

\$237,185	Total Income (Pledges, Additional Giving, Special Offerings)
<u>\$296,959</u>	Total Expenses (Pastor, Personnel, Property, Mission, Administration, Worship, Social Justice, Education, Special Offerings)
-\$59,774	NET INCOME*

Budgeted (annual)

\$330,032	Total Income
<u>\$368,681</u>	Total Expenses
-\$ 38,649	NET INCOME*

Unrestricted Reserves \$201,542

BUDGET NOTES

*With an increase in pledges for 2024 and the stability of SPC reserves, the Session voted to maintain current strategic investments in mission and advocacy, ministry and children and youth, and online worship capacity.

GIVING

The congregation has been asked to increase pledged giving for the next 5 years by 5%. There are many ways to satisfy your pledges, special offerings and individual contributions for a project or program dear to you:

- By check: Made out to SPC, PO Box 268, Shepherdstown, WV 25443
- Online: www.shepherdstownpresbyterian.org, use the GIVE icon on the home page. You may use PayPal or a credit card
- In Church: In the offering plate on Sundays

DEACON TEAM UPDATE

by Donna Dettling, Deacon Moderator Partner

We had a spirit-blessed meeting on September 26. We gathered again in the sanctuary, as Pastor Gusti led us through another powerful exploration of prayer. We shared our own personal, meaningful words to The Lord's Prayer after learning more about the significance of each part of the prayer. This Deacon development work is designed to help expand our knowledge of prayer, and increase our comfort around praying with our flock members.

We continued in a state of reverence as a group of the *Threshold Singers* sang for us and presented information about this ministry of comfort, care and dignity. Many of us were brought to tears by their tender voices. Deacons were invited to connect their flock members with the Threshold Singers for transitional life events, by contacting Leslie Williams.

Group and individual photos were taken for the Deacon handout we are preparing, which will help connect SPC members and friends with our team and inform them of the ministry we perform. All Deacons were strongly encouraged to attend the Boundary Training on October 3, delivered by the Presbytery. Seven Deacons participated in this valuable training, and others will take it on a later date.

Our next meeting is Thursday, October 24, when we will consider how flock members might feel when they make a PrayerNet request, and how we can match our responses with their expectations.

PrayerNet

Please send your prayer requests to prayernet@shepherdstownpresbyterian.org. You may also call the church office at 304-876-6466 during office hours (Monday - Friday, 8am - 2pm). A couple of practical reminders as you make your requests:

- Please make sure the person for whom you are requesting prayer has given you permission. Due to privacy considerations, we are unable to share requests without that permission.
- Please indicate whether or not you would like this request to be shared in worship on Sunday morning.
- You may also indicate that you prefer to keep this request confidential among the PrayerNet Team (currently Pastor Gusti, Lynn Dampman, Jen Jones, and Mica Martin.)

If you are having a pastoral emergency (death of a spouse or child, life-threatening medical emergency, etc.), please contact Pastor Gusti directly at 681-283-5314. If you would like to participate in our larger PrayerNet community (as one of the 90+ who have agreed to pray), contact Lynn at the church office: lynn@shepherdstownpresbyterian.org

Deacon Shepherd for Animals

Carol Wood was commissioned to remind us of the holiness pets add to our lives. This includes care to those who have lost a dear companion, assistance during final days with a pet, and support when bringing a new pet into the home. Contact Carol at cwood453@aol.com.



PRESBYTERIAN WOMEN

by Donna Dettling, Co-Moderator

At the October 3 Presbyterian Women meeting, Diana Eldridge led fourteen of us in a discussion about Chapter 1 in the book ***Always with Us? – What Jesus Really Said about the Poor***, by Rev. Dr. Liz Theoharis, titled 'Is Ending Poverty Possible?' We talked about some of the misrepresentations about people struggling with ongoing poverty, and Diana shared a story about the uncertainties caused by a time of financial insecurity in her own life. We watched a short video from the Poor People's Campaign that highlighted the poignant stories of the impact of poverty on real individuals who were willing to let their voices be heard. We listened to the Deuteronomy 15 passage about the forgiveness of debts, and discussed roadblocks to the establishment of programs to provide meaningful help, instead of merely handouts, to the poor.

Ideas were captured from the group on possible projects we might do to enhance our study on poverty, and about ways to welcome and include those who have interest in the PW group but aren't able to meet with us on weekday mornings. Watch for more on these conversations!

As always, we are grateful to those in attendance last month, as well as those who volunteered with various aspects of the meeting. We hope you will join us on **Thursday, November 7, at 10:00 am in the Fellowship Hall (or on Zoom) as we discuss Chapter 2 in the book.**



BEYOND FOOD PANTRIES:

FOOD INSECURITY IN OUR COMMUNITY

by Anne Teresa, Matthew 25 Initiative

On Saturday, November 16, SPC will host a workshop to begin exploring possible solutions to our area's chronic need for access to adequate, fresh and nutritious food. The Reverend Rebecca Barnes, Coordinator of the PCUSA Hunger Program, will be with us to facilitate this workshop, which will include local food pantry volunteers and advocates, clergy, farmers and civic leaders. We hope to explore together the issues of hunger and food access, begin to build partnerships to address the problems, and learn about the work of other PCUSA churches.

Reverend Barnes will also be SPC's guest preacher on November 17. This effort is part of SPC's Matthew 25 Initiative. For further information, please contact Anne Teresa at ateresa@comcast.net

Purge and Play Update

by Donna Dettling

Despite the reality that the tasks of sorting, purging, and organizing are not everyone's favorite activities, we had a great response to our call for volunteers to do just that throughout the church building. There was a hive of activity during the week of August 12 – 16, as around 20 people showed up to help at different times, in a specific area, or wherever they were needed. The most significant purge was done in the library, with countless books being removed from the shelves and 30+ boxes of them taken to Wonder Books after the congregation had a chance to rehome some.

There was also considerable work done in the choir room, the youth and children's areas, and the kitchen. The first upstairs classroom was turned into a dedicated meeting room, and numerous closets were given a new, orderly life! Many bags and boxes of trash, recycle, and donatable items were disposed of, given to community organizations, or taken from the giveaway tables in Fellowship Hall.

But the question that remains is, "Have all unneeded items been purged?" And the resounding answer is, "NO!" There is more work to be done in certain areas around the building, and this will be a continuing priority. We plan to take photos of the organized areas to be posted in those spaces for reference. We will also put together an inventory list to keep in the office, noting items and their storage places, to keep searching to a minimum and remind folks where to return things they might have used.

We hope the church is starting to feel lighter and more welcoming to all who come through the doors, and especially those who have reason to go beyond the sanctuary. Grateful thanks to all who participated in this new annual event! Many hands made light work, and we couldn't have done so much without you.





SPECIAL POOR PEOPLE'S CAMPAIGN SUNDAY SEMINAR

The Sunday Seminar on November 10 at 9:30 a.m. will be a special day in the life of SPC. We will have an opportunity to hear tri-state leaders of the Poor People's Campaign (PPC) speak firsthand about their involvement for peace and justice. Our friend Debbie Romano, presently serving as clergy tri-chair of the West Virginia state

coordinating committee for the movement, will speak briefly about the organization and introduce the panelists. As a Matthew 25 church, this will be a vital time for learning and experiencing more about a crucial issue that affects us all. Yet as Rev. William Barber, co-chair of PPC and Yale Divinity School professor says, it is an issue "people don't want to acknowledge." Hopefully, this may be an opportunity not only to acknowledge, but to act as well. Please join us for a unique experience in Fellowship Hall or via Zoom. The Zoom link is:

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/3048766466?pwd=cnhPY3kyeG9pbUdGSmZQVVIEM2Jodz09>

from the Church Office ...



Directory **Update**

ADDRESS CHANGES:

Bill and Beth Rule
6807 Shenandoah Court
Adamstown, MD 21710

Lynn Dampman
925 Beechwood Drive
Hagerstown, Maryland 21742

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
27	28	29	30	31	1	2
3	4	5	6	7	8	9
SMA Week of Prayer & Worship Events - Booklets Available						
8:30am - Early Worship Service with Communion 9:30am - Sunday Seminar - FH 11am - Worship with Communion in Person/Hybrid 11am - Sunday Studio - Classroom 2 12:15pm - Youth Gathering - Downstairs 3pm - Friends of Music Concert 7pm - Prayer & Worship Service	7pm - Choir Rehearsal - Choir Room	7pm - Choir Rehearsal - Choir Room	7pm - Choir Rehearsal - Choir Room	7pm - Stated Session Meeting - FH/Hybrid	Matthew 25 Workshop with Guest Speaker	
8:30am - Early Worship Service 9:30am - Sunday Seminar - FH 11am - Worship In Person/Hybrid 11am - Sunday Studio - Classroom 2 12:15pm - Youth Gathering - Downstairs	9:30am - Staff Meeting - Sanctuary	7pm - Choir Rehearsal - Choir Room			2pm - Bill Kaplin Celebration of Life Service in VA	
8:30am - Early Worship Service 9:30am - Sunday Seminar - FH 11am - Worship In Person/Hybrid 11am - Sunday Studio - Classroom 2 12:15pm - Youth Gathering - Downstairs Guest Preacher Rebecca Barnes	6pm - Communications Team Meeting - FH	7pm - Choir Rehearsal - Choir Room			1pm - Yarns & Threads Group - FH	
8:30am - Early Worship Service 9:30am - Sunday Seminar - FH 11am - Worship In Person/Hybrid 11am - Sunday Studio - Classroom 2 12:15pm - Youth Gathering - Downstairs	Happy Thanksgiving Holiday Church Office Closed					