

THE MESSENGER

December 2023

Shepherdstown Presbyterian Church
Shepherdstownpresbyterian.org

Pastor's Note: All Creation Waits

Every year I tell myself that this will be the year I embrace the true meaning of the Advent liturgical season: waiting, resting, reflecting, praying, contemplating, grieving, hibernating, seeking, trusting. All of the counter-cultural practices essential to Advent that go out the window when the busy-ness of Christmas preparations inevitably take over.

This year's Advent Worship Planning Team has sought to carve out space for these counter-cultural practices throughout the liturgical life of our community. Based on the children's book *All Creation Waits: The Advent Mystery of New Beginnings*, by Gayle Boss, our worship in December invites us into contemplative reflections through the darkness of rebirth. Chanting, Sentence Prayers, Extended Silence, and Simple Communion accompany stories of how various animals bed down for the winter. These stories show us how to adapt to the dark and cold in ingenious ways, trusting the God who comes, even in the darkest season, to bring us a new beginning.

Because Christmas Eve occurs on a Sunday this year, some of the treasured SPC traditions will need to be adjusted. Our "Prepare Ye" musical celebration with children and the nativity scene will take place at the conclusion of the 11am service on the *Third* Sunday of Advent: December 17. On the Fourth Sunday of Advent, the morning of December 24, the early service will be suspended and there will be no Sunday Studio or Choir offering.

Our Christmas Eve services will continue as always: a 5pm Family Service with The Friendly Beasts; an 8pm Service of Lessons and Carols with the Choir; and an 11pm Contemplative Candlelight Communion Service. The 5pm and 8pm services will be livestreamed.

We are also experimenting this year with a special contemplative service, Wednesday, December 13, 7pm, in support of those for whom the season enhances feelings of loss and loneliness, or who simply need a space to escape from socially enforced celebration. This will officially launch our *Grief Meets Grace* monthly gathering (see pg 7). In order to maintain the privacy of the participants, this service will not be livestreamed.

Throughout the season, whether we are able to maintain our contemplative composure, or end up surrendering to busy-ness, or somewhere in between, may our liturgical life together cultivate a faithful hope, peace, joy and love amid it all.

Pastor Gusti

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), Children and Youth Education Coordinator
Dr. Steve Grives (he/him), 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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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

Worship in December

Sunday, December 3

First Sunday of Advent

Waiting in Hope

1 Corinthians 1:7

You are not lacking in any gift as you wait for the revealing of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Sunday, December 10

Second Sunday of Advent

Congregational Meeting

Waiting in Peace

2 Peter 3:14

Beloved, while you are waiting, strive to be found at peace.

Wednesday, December 13

Grief Meets Grace

2 Thessalonians 1:4

We honor your perseverance and trust through difficult distress.

Sunday, December 17

Third Sunday of Advent

“Prepare the Way” Children’s Celebration

Waiting in Joy

1 Thessalonians 5:16

Rejoice always.

Sunday, December 24

Fourth Sunday of Advent

No Early Service, No Sunday Studio or Choir

Waiting in Love

Luke 1:38

“Nothing will be impossible with God.”

Christmas Eve Services

5:00pm Family Service (Sanctuary and Online)

8:00pm Lessons and Carols (Sanctuary and Online)

11:00pm Candlelight Communion (Sanctuary Only)

The Light Begins

Isaiah 9:2,6

Sunday, December 31

First Sunday After Christmas

No Early Service, No Sunday Studio or Choir

Springing Up

Isaiah 61:11

The earth will bring forth its shoots and a garden will cause what is sown in it to spring up.

CONGREGATIONAL NOTICE/MOTION

A Congregational Meeting of Shepherdstown Presbyterian Church, Shepherdstown, Jefferson County, West Virginia, will be held at 10:00 a.m. on Sunday, December 10, 2023, at which the following Motion will be made as authorized and recommended by the Session:

MOTION

That the several Trustees of Shepherdstown Presbyterian Church be authorized and directed to execute and deliver a Deed by which the Church will convey all of its right, title, and interest, both legal and equitable, at and for no consideration, to Contemporary American Theater Festival, Inc., a West Virginia non-profit corporation, in and to all that certain parcel of real estate situate in Shepherdstown Corporation District, fronting 206 feet on the south side of German Street and extending back (southerly) between parallel lines, 206 feet. [Tax Map 3, parcel 45]

BEING all and the same real estate which was conveyed from Henry Cookus (Henrich Kuches) to the "Presbyterian Church" in and adjoining Mecklenburg Town lying and being in the County of Berkeley in the Colony of Virginia by a Deed dated May 16, 1774, and recorded in the office of the Clerk of the County Commission of Berkeley County, West Virginia, in Deed Book 3, page 39, and recorded in the office of the Clerk of the County Commission of Jefferson County, West Virginia, as Exhibit 2 with a Deed recorded in Deed Book 1304, page 155.

To be read at both services (8:30 and 11:00) held on December 3 and on December 10.

Notifications

SUNDAY SEMINAR

Sunday, December 3 and 17, 9:30am, Fellowship Hall and Zoom

Join us for "Hearing the Christmas Story Again, As if for the First Time." The Rev. Harry Daniel will share a fresh look at the stories of Jesus' birth found in the gospels of Matthew and Luke. Each narrates the story in his own distinctive way with its own basic themes. And yet both share a lot in common. Wrestling with scripture can be fun and enjoyable, and prepare us for the celebration of Christmas! All are welcome!

CONGREGATIONAL MEETING

Sunday, December 10, 10am, Sanctuary and Zoom

Receive updates from the Session, elect congregational leaders, approve Pastor Terms of Call, and resolve a centuries-old property issue related to the Reformed Church Cemetery on German Street (see pg. 4).

PRESBYTERIAN WOMEN

Thursday, December 7, 10am, Fellowship Hall and Zoom

Our lesson will be lesson 4 from PW's *Horizons Bible Study*. *Sacred Encounters: The Power and Presence of Jesus in Luke - Acts* by Olive Mahabir. You are welcome to attend even if you have not read the lesson.

POINSETTIAS!

Deadline Sunday, December 10

Decorate the Sanctuary this Christmas Season with a Poinsettia! \$10 each. Make check payable to SPC; memo, poinsettia. To place your Poinsettia "In Honor of ..." or "In Memory of ..." please fill out the information on the form found in your bulletin this week and/or the table in the Fellowship Hall and leave it in the offering plate or on Lynn's desk. Or mail a check to: Shepherdstown Presbyterian Church, PO Box 268, Shepherdstown, WV 25443.

GRIEF MEETS GRACE

Wednesday, December 13, 7pm, Sanctuary and Zoom

A contemplative service in support of those for whom the season enhances feelings of loss and loneliness, or who simply need a space to escape from socially enforced celebration.

VOLUNTEERS ARE NEEDED FOR WORSHIP LOGISTICAL SUPPORT

Contact Debbie Romano if you are able to assist with sanctuary or worship service preparations.

NOVEMBER SESSION HIGHLIGHTS

Reflected on the ways the Session Committees incorporate the SPC Identity Statement into their work

Received a positive report from the Budget and Finance Committee (see below)

Approved a bid to repair the HVAC system

Voted to co-sponsor a forum on the Israeli-Palestinian Conflict

Voted to postpone the annual meeting of the congregation to December 10

Received updates from the Safety Team, Mission Committee, Matthew 25 Implementation Team, and more

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.

FINANCIAL STEWARDSHIP

2024 STEWARDSHIP CAMPAIGN: If you have not already, please prayerfully consider the contribution God is calling you to make to the ministry of this congregation and return your pledge.

Year to Date Budget at a Glance – as of October 31, 2023

Actual (10 months)

\$270,735 Total Income (Pledges, Additional Giving, Special Offerings)

\$261,780 Total Expenses (Pastor, Personnel, Property, Mission, Administration, Worship, Social Justice, Education, Special Offerings)

*\$8955 NET INCOME

Budgeted (annual)

\$311,928 Total Income

\$350,102 Total Expenses

*-\$38,174 NET INCOME

*The Session approved a 2023 budget with a sizable deficit, covered by reserves, due to increasing costs from inflation, a larger commitment to supporting external mission and advocacy, investments in ministry with children and youth, and online worship tech support. The Session based these decisions on the information gathered from the Congregational Assessment Tool and the Strategic Issues Team from 2016 – 2019. The 2024 Pledge Drive invites the congregation to consider increased congregational giving by 5% per year over the next 5 years in order to decrease reliance on reserves to fund these commitments.

Monthly Gathering Schedule

Sunday Seminar, Sunday, 9:30am; Fellowship Hall and Zoom. Led by the Adult Education Committee. Discussion for adults on a book of topical interest. This month meets only on the 1st and 3rd Sundays

Sunday Studio, Sunday, during 11am service; Upstairs Classrooms. Led by various teachers coordinated by Christa Mastrangelo Joyce. Age-appropriate lessons and activities for K-2 and 3-5. This month Sunday Studio does not meet on December 24 and 31.

Teach the Preacher, Monday at 7pm on Zoom. Hosted by Pastor Gusti, drop in as you feel led. Reflecting on your questions and comments around the Scripture lesson for the coming Sunday. This month Teach the Preacher does not meet on December 25.

Choir Rehearsal, Tuesday, 7:30pm, Choir Room. Led by Dr. Steve Grives, Choir Director. This month Choir does not meet on the last Tuesday.

Presbyterian Women, 1st Thursday, 10am, Fellowship Hall. Led by a rotating group of members on various books and topics of interest.

Bible at the Bar, 1st Thursday, 6pm, in person at the Meck. Hosted by Pastor Gusti and Adam Ware, drop in as you feel led. We will grab a table and dive into your questions about the Bible, theology, and anything else you want to discuss! Note the time change from previous months. This month's topic: the birth of Jesus, Luke 2.

Youth Group, DECEMBER AND JANUARY ONLY 1st & 3rd Sunday, various times. Led by Christa Mastrangelo Joyce and other adult supervisors. Age appropriate lessons and activities for Grades 6 – 12. December 3 at 3:30pm and December 17 at 4:30pm.

Hymn Sing, 1st Sunday, 4pm, THIS MONTH ONLY at McMurrin Hall for Caroling. Led by Terry Tucker. Reading music is not necessary.

Aging Faithfully: Tea & Discussion, hosted by Diana Patterson; 2nd Sunday, 4 – 6pm; Classroom 1. Connections and contemplations for age 50 and older. Inspired by a book by Alice Fryling. CANCELED THIS MONTH.

Exploring Spiritual Practices, 2nd Wednesday, via Zoom. Led by Larry Neumark. Reflections on a monthly theme, followed by a meditation practice.

Grief Meets Grace BEGINS THIS MONTH, hosted by Pastor Gusti, THIS MONTH AS A WORSHIP SERVICE; 2nd Wednesday, in person and online. In future months: a light liturgy followed by shared conversation on where we might find grace through the many griefs we carry.

Prayer Gathering, 2nd and 4th Friday, noon via Zoom. Led by Debbie Romano.

Men's Breakfast, 3rd Saturday, 7:30am followed by program around 8am; Fellowship Hall.

Yarns & Threads, Last Saturday, 1:00pm, Fellowship Hall. Knitters, crocheters, embroidery-ers, etc.

Dream-Tending As Spiritual Practice, hosted by Pastor Gusti; date and time TBA, in person. This gathering is full and closed. Please let the church office know if you would like to be included in a future group.

December Calendar

Sunday Schedule

- 8:30am Early Service of Worship, Sanctuary
- 9:30am Sunday Seminar, Fellowship Hall and Zoom
- 10:00am Choir Rehearsal, Sanctuary
- 11:00am Service of Worship, Sanctuary and Facebook Live

FACEBOOK LIVE ONLINE WORSHIP, 11 a.m. Sundays. Access the service at <https://www.facebook.com/groups/spcworks> and wait for the "live stream" box (with the triangle arrow pointing to the right) to appear. THE BOX WILL NOT APPEAR BEFORE 10:50 a.m., please wait for it. Information and worship materials at the SPC website under WORSHIP, then Meeting House Live! Link is also in the 3rd paragraph. Facebook account is not required to access this service of worship.

COVID PROTOCOL: Masking is recommended but not required for those who are vaccinated. Masking remains required for those who are not vaccinated. Masking remains required for everyone when entering the church office.

- 2 Deacons Meeting, Fellowship Hall, 10am
- 3 Youth Group, Fellowship Hall, 3:30pm
Community Meal Drop-Off, Kitchen, 3:45pm
Youth Group serving at the Community Meal in Charles Town, WV, 5pm
Hymn Sing/Christmas Caroling, steps of McMurrin Hall, SU, 4pm
- 4 Teach the Preacher, Zoom, 7pm
- 7 Presbyterian Women, Fellowship Hall, 10am
Bible at the Bar, The Meck, 6pm
- 8 Gathering Space for Prayer, Zoom, noon
- 10 Congregational Meeting, In person and Online, 10am
- 11 Teach the Preacher, Zoom, 7pm
- 13 Exploring Spiritual Practices, Zoom, 10:30am
Grief Meets Grace Contemplative Service, Sanctuary, 7pm
- 14 Session Meeting, Fellowship Hall/Zoom, 7pm
- 16 Men's Breakfast, Fellowship Hall, 7:30am
Celtic Concert, Sponsored by Shepherdstown Music & Dance, Sanctuary, 3pm
- 17 Youth Group Christmas Gathering, Fellowship Hall, 5pm
- 18 Eastern Panhandle Youth Alliance, Fellowship Hall, 6:30pm
Teach the Preacher, Zoom, 7pm
- 20 Staff Christmas Party, 11:30am
- 22 Gathering Space for Prayer, Zoom, noon
- 24 Family Service in Sanctuary and Facebook Live!, 5pm
Service of Lessons and Carols in Sanctuary and Facebook Live!, 8pm
Candlelight Communion Service in Sanctuary, 11pm
- 25 Happy Birthday Jesus! CHURCH OFFICE CLOSED
- 30 Yarns & Threads, Fellowship Hall, 1pm