

THE MESSENGER

February 2024

Shepherdstown Presbyterian Church
Shepherdstownpresbyterian.org

Pastor's Note: Winter's Last Days

I have often joked that God must have made February the shortest month of the year because it is the hardest, at least when it comes to winter's grip on the human spirit. Thankfully, we at SPC have called upon the wisdom of the animals to cultivate within us the spiritual gifts of the season: surrender, acceptance, community, and trust. As February unfolds, these spiritual gifts continue to nourish us in our worship and spiritual life; in our children, youth, and adult education; in our mission and advocacy; and in our care and concern for the congregation.

February includes, as well, more than its fair share of transitions: a new class of Deacons, including the election of a new Deacon Moderator (see pg. 8); a new class of Ruling Elders serving on the Session; and a new liturgical season beginning on Ash Wednesday (see pg. 5). If the past four years are any indication, we at SPC will navigate these transitions with joy and grace, compassion and love, even as new faces step up to take on familiar roles.

On a somewhat sad note, our new-ish and already beloved Choir Director, Steve Grives, has informed the Personnel Committee and the Choir that the precarious nature of his position at Shepherd University, combined with the challenges of his long-distance marriage, has led him to focus his priorities on seeking a more stable long-term position closer to home. In the meantime, he will remain at SPC on a somewhat reduced schedule, at least through the end of April.

The Personnel Committee will meet with the Choir this month to discuss next steps, including a potential search for a new Choir Director, and inform the congregation as the process unfolds. In the meantime, Rie Wilson has stepped up to coordinate Special Music for the Sundays on which Steve will not be available to direct the choir.

We know this news will be disappointing for the congregation, as it is for me and the Choir. Steve is a joy to work with and a great asset to the staff and congregation. At the same time, I know you join me in desiring only the best for Steve, along with the gratitude we feel for his remarkable gifts for music ministry and the genuinely delightful "match" he has been and will continue to be for SPC for as long as we can keep him.

As we navigate this somewhat harder transition, may we continue to call upon the spiritual gifts of winter and trust that God is, indeed, working all things together for good, for those who live in love and are called to God's service.

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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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

Notifications

GODSPELL at St. Agnes Catholic Church, February 2, 3, 4, and 16, 17, 18, Friday/Saturday 8 p.m., Sunday 3 p.m. Youth of St. Agnes are joined by friends from SPC (Evelyn and Mileur Bailey), Asbury United Methodist Church, and the community to present this musical to open the season of Lent. **Godspell**, drawn directly from the teachings of Jesus, is a timeless celebration of Christian friendship, loyalty, and love based on the Gospel of Matthew. Free, but donations appreciated. For reservations call 304-876-6436 or visit stagnesshepherdstown.org. We hope you will join us, and "Prepare Ye the Way of the Lord!"

SPC SOCIAL JUSTICE INVITES YOU, STARTING FEBRUARY 18, 9:30AM - 10:30AM IN THE FELLOWSHIP HALL. Come explore our church's history through the lens of original session minutes and be a part of our shared discovery. Experts from Shepherd University, the Presbyterian Historical Society archivist and others will help illuminate the minutes and provide important context. Join us for five consecutive Sunday mornings during Lent. Watch E-News for more information and links to important resources. For more information/questions, Contact Lynn Coddington, lcoddington55@gmail.com

INCLEMENT WEATHER REMINDER. No one should risk life, limb or property to get to the church. Sunday morning services (8:30 and/or 11:00 a.m.) and other events may be cancelled if the pastor and other worship leaders cannot make it in safely. However, those who can get in safely are welcome to organize a service on their own using the order of service for the day, or something else. Bulletins may be found in the Narthex. Check the web site or office phone (304-876-6466) after 7:30 p.m. on Saturday for Sunday cancellation notices. In general, when Jefferson County Schools are closed due to severe weather conditions, the SPC office will be closed and scheduled meetings will be cancelled unless other arrangements are made.

JANUARY SESSION HIGHLIGHTS

Prayed for healing and remembrance of SPC members who died in December
Examined and approved those elected by the congregation for ordination
Approved 2024 Staff Salary and Benefits recommended by the Personnel Committee
Received updates from the Property Committee, the Matthew 25 Initiative, and Adult Ed
Celebrated the ministries of Paul Kradel, Lois Spreen, and Anne Teresa as they completed their terms of service

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.

Worship in February

“LIGHT RETURNS”

Baptism through Transfiguration

January 7 - February 11

The light is coming back, even as winter continues in earnest.

Worship this season celebrates

the light of insight, renewal, and recommitment
to the inner and outer work of transformation.

Black Bear, Wood Frog, Striped Skunk, and Lake Trout
continue their journey with us through the winter,
reminding us to hibernate, to become *one* with the elements,
to snuggle tight in community, and to trust what lies dormant to emerge
exactly when the moment is right.

Sunday, February 4

The Call to Serve

Mark 1:29 - 39

Communion

*As we mark a momentous transition
in the role of Deacon Moderator,
we reflect on the call to serve and celebrate
the many ways and through many people in which service is offered.
Special reception following the 11am service to honor
Debbie Romano's 23 years of service as Deacon
and 7 years of service as Deacon Moderator.*

Sunday, February 11

The Inner Work

Mark 9:2 - 9

Transfiguration Sunday

Souper Bowl Sunday

Palms to Ashes Ritual

*Before Jesus turns his face toward Jerusalem,
he takes the time to focus on his “inner work”:
surrounded by the ancestors, rooted in his heritage,
trusting in the promise of resurrection hope,
he re-commits to the journey that lies ahead.
And so do we ...*

“Memory, Light, Joy”

A Transformational Journey Through Lent

Wednesday, February 14 - Saturday, March 30

As the SPC history project presents its findings on the role of SPC in Shepherdstown and the larger church in the 1800s, our worship will lead us to reflect on the healing power of *truth-telling*. Striped Skunk, Black Bear, Lake Trout, and Wood Frog continue their journey with us as they emerge into Spring. Axolotl, the Patron Saint of Sunday Studio, will also make an appearance!

Wednesday, February 14
Ash Wednesday, 7pm

On Reconciliation

2 Corinthians 5:20

We entreat you on behalf of Christ: be reconciled to God

Sunday, February 18
First Sunday in Lent

Tested and Tended

Mark 1:12

First Pew: Striped Skunk teaches us to release negativity, outdated habits, and unhealthy ways of relating to one another

Sunday Seminar: Introduction to and Overview of the SPC History Project

The Spirit immediately drove him out into the wilderness

Sunday, February 25
Second Sunday in Lent

Named and Claimed

Genesis 17:15

First Pew: Black Bear teaches us to stand tall and face potential threats with power and courage, while fiercely protecting those who are most vulnerable

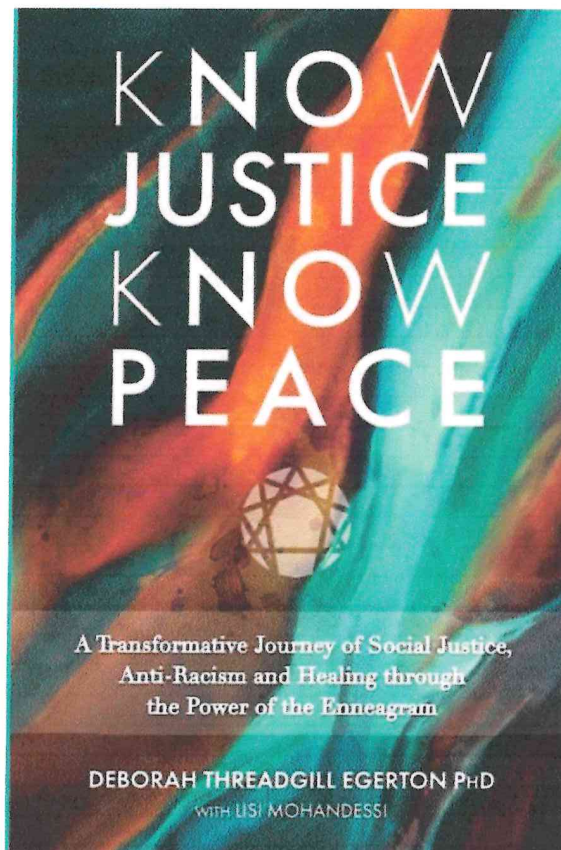
Special Litany of Naming SPC Members Who Were Enslaved by Other SPC Members

Sunday Seminar: Role of SPC and the Community in the 1800s

Sarah shall be her name

Do we really want to be part of the solution?

Join SPC's Adult Education as we read and discuss
Deborah Threadgill Egerton's *Know Justice Know Peace: A
Transformative Journey of Social Justice, Anti-Racism, and Healing
through the Power of the Enneagram.*



Sunday Seminar, beginning January 21, 9:30 - 10:30,
in person in the SPC Fellowship Hall and over Zoom.

Support our local economy (and get 15% off!) by purchasing a copy
of *Know Justice Know Peace* through Four Seasons Books.

For more information, contact
office@shepherdstownpresbyterian.org, or call 304-876-6646.

CHILDREN AND YOUTH UPDATE

Christa Mastrangelo Joyce,
Children and Youth Education Coordinator

Sunday, January 28, the youth group had such an important conversation and were incredibly attentive when Wendy Baraka, head of the counseling department at Shepherd University, came to generously participate as a guest speaker/leader. She led us through group conversation and activities in which we considered our own self-care, how we can better implement care in our lives through good boundaries, how we can learn to listen empathetically to one another for signs of mental distress, how to address suicide, myths and facts around suicide based on research from survivors (those who've attempted suicide or people who have lived through the loss of someone close by suicide), and scenarios for learning to speak honestly with people we may have mental health concerns for. She gave out some excellent emotional intelligence related handouts in addition to this rich and engaged conversation.

In other news from January, we had a fantastic time at the youth lock in on January 20th. We had the most fun playing pictionary I've ever personally experienced, a really wonderful lip-syncing contest, hide and seek in the dark sanctuary complete with a fun glow necklace sailing contest from the balcony, plus rich conversation related to communion and a connection to our Biblical roots, lots of junk food, and hardly any sleep! Hope to do this again--but maybe with more naps! It was truly a fabulous and important experience of connection and communion for these teens. I see them continuing to grow in love for one another and a feeling of deep peace and love for coming to the church.

Upcoming:

- February meetings are the second and fourth Sundays, February 11 and 25, 12:30 - 2:30. Our theme will be "crossing Borders" and I'm looking into some fun ways to incorporate this through food, maybe a trip to an alternate church, etc. I welcome suggestions, chaperones, helpers!
- February 10th is the Souper Bowl Sunday collection. Youth have been asked to collect donations. The youth have been invited to select where the money raised will go. Ideas under consideration include organizations that support transgender concerns, organizations that support environmental concerns, and the Community Cup coffee shop ministry in Martinsburg. A final announcement will be made in the February 7 E-News. Please support our youth with your generous donations to the ministry of their choice!
- We plan to reschedule our canceled youth retreat (was scheduled for January 19-21 and was canceled due to that Friday's big snow). New possible reschedule dates for the youth retreat are Sept. 6-8, October 11-13, November 1-3 or November 15-17.

DEACON SHEPHERDS, Ministries of Care

MODERATOR TRANSITION. This month Debbie Romano officially steps away from her role as Deacon Moderator in order to focus on her preparation for Ministry of Word and Sacrament. She has transferred from Wesley Theological Seminary to Pittsburgh Theological Seminary and from part-time studies to full-time studies. In addition, she will begin her supervised ministry practicum at another congregation this Fall and complete Clinical Pastoral Education in a chaplaincy setting in the following year.

As Debbie transitions her primary focus to ministry beyond SPC, we will transition her responsibilities here. The majority of Debbie's flock has been reassigned to our four newly ordained Deacons: Donna Dettling, Susan Lovell, Sherry Sykes, and Diana Wesley. A new Deacon Moderator will be elected at the February 3 Deacon Annual Organizing Meeting. A new PrayerNet coordinator will be named in the months to come, as will plans for pastoral care backup when Pastor Gusti is on vacation.

Debbie will maintain a smaller flock for one more year as a Deacon Shepherd before rotating off altogether. Please hold Debbie, the soon-to-be-elected Deacon Moderator, and the entire Deacon Shepherd Ministry Team in your prayers as we navigate this momentous transition.

Note: Debbie's many years of ministry as Deacon Moderator will be honored in worship on Sunday, February 3. A reception in her honor will be held after the 11am service. Those wishing to honor Debbie in a more tangible way are encouraged to donate to the SPC Seminarian Fund: note Seminarian Fund on the memo line of your check.

THE PRAYERNET is available to share your joys and concerns throughout the week. Sent out via email to a group of SPC-ers who have agreed to hold your prayers in their hearts. To share your prayers with the PrayerNet and/or to join the PrayerNet, contact Debbie Romano at romano.debbie@gmail.com.

DEACON SHEPHERD FOR ANIMALS, Carol Wood has been commissioned to remind us of the holiness they add to our lives. This includes a card ministry for those who have lost a dear companion Animal as well as celebrating those who have brought a new Animal into their home. It also includes support when an Animal's time has come for that last journey to the vet for euthanasia, be it driving the family to the vet's office or meeting them there to accompany them into the room where the procedure is performed, if so desired. Contact Carol at cwood453@aol.com

VOLUNTEERS AVAILABLE FOR MEALS AND RIDES. When life throws difficult things at you, your Church Family is here to help. Surgery, illness, new baby, etc., are times when you might appreciate some extra support. There are people in our congregation who have volunteered to provide meals and rides when others are in need. Contact Pastor Gusti, Debbie Romano or your Deacon Shepherd if there is something you need help with. Contact Jeananne Stine jeanne27@gmail.com, 410-746-8605 if you would like to volunteer.

BIBLE AT THE BAR, First Thursday of the Month, 6pm, The Meck.

Hosted by Pastor Gusti and Adam Ware, we grab a table and dive into your questions about the Bible, theology, and anything else you want to discuss!

February's Topic: *How we read the Bible, based on Presbyterian Understanding and Use of Holy Scripture: Biblical Authority and Interpretation.* Printed by the Office of the General Assembly, this booklet contains two papers written in response to the need for a common basis in a diverse church for understanding and using Scripture. This booklet may be downloaded in its entirety from <https://www.pcusa.org/resource/presbyterian-understanding-and-use-holy-scripture/>

Guidelines concerning how the text is rightly used include, but are not limited to:

The Use of Knowledge: "The way in which the biblical testimony should be used needs to be thought out in the light of contemporary claims, insights, and theories that bear on the question."

The Use of Experience: "Out of their individual and corporate experience members of the church become sensitive to dimensions of Scripture not previously discerned."

The Centrality of Jesus Christ: "any teaching of the Bible on a matter of faith or life is to be used in a manner consistent with scriptural accounts of Jesus' own teaching and embodiment of the person and will of God."

The Interpretation of Scripture by Scripture: "texts should not be selected arbitrarily to support a position in disregard of other texts that qualify or contradict the position."

The Rule of Love: "No interpretation of Scripture is correct that leads to or supports contempt for any individual or group of persons either within or outside the church."

The Fallibility of All Interpretation: "no doctrinal or ethical interpretation of Scripture, whether long established or new, is to be accepted as a final word, but is always subject to possible revision and correction as a result of further study of Scripture."

The Relation of Word and Spirit: "neither careful rationale nor logical deduction, nor use of all the tools of critical-historical exegesis, can guarantee the right interpretation of Scripture. After we have done the best we can with all the means at our disposal, we depend on God's Spirit to enable us rightly to hear and believe and obey."

March's Topic: *The Book of Revelation*, focused specifically on Chapters 21 and 22. Based on Barbara Rossing's *The Rapture Exposed: The Message of Hope in the Book of Revelation*, which makes the case for reclaiming Christianity from fundamentalists' destructive reading of the biblical story and back into God's beloved community.



West Virginia Poor People's Campaign

Gathering at the State Capitol, Charleston
Saturday, March 2,
noon

West Virginia is joining with more than 30 states across the nation holding simultaneous assemblies and marches at their state capitals on Saturday March 2, 2024. The

West Virginia's Poor People's Campaign members and allies will be in Charleston to raise our voices in non-violent solidarity and make our demands to WV State Legislators. We will deliver a moral indictment of the cynical priorities and immoral policies of the WV legislature toward the poor and low-income citizens of our state.

Our state capitals are not just symbolic, they are the policy hubs whose decisions directly impact people facing systemic poverty and interlocking injustices keeping families and individuals in generational poverty. You are invited to join with us, The Poor People's Campaign, a National Call for Moral Revival when we gather next month.

Our movement includes poor and low-income people, clergy and faith leaders, and activists and advocates that will send a message to the legislators responsible for the unrelenting policy violence against the more than 660,000 poor and low-income people in our state. These state-wide rallies will focus on demanding policy and action toward creating living wages, voting rights, stopping voter suppression, equal rights for all, worker and labor rights, environmental justice, access to housing and healthcare, fully funded public education and abolishing poverty, the fourth leading cause of death in the U.S.

Our movement acts in a unity of love, rejecting the acceptance of injustice. We won't be silent anymore.

Debbie Romano, faith leader and tri-chair, WV Poor People's Campaign

FINANCIAL STEWARDSHIP

Year - End Budget at a Glance – as of December 31, 2023

We are thrilled to announce that our 2023 total income came in above budget and our 2023 expenses came in below budget, allowing us to break even in 2023!

Actual (12 months)

\$328,772	Total Income (Pledges, Additional Giving, Special Offerings)
<u>\$327,123</u>	Total Expenses (Pastor, Personnel, Property, Mission, Administration, Worship, Social Justice, Education, Special Offerings)
*\$1648.90	NET INCOME

Budgeted (annual)

\$317,322	Total Income
<u>\$356,117</u>	Total Expenses
*-\$38,794	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.

Year - Beginning Budget at a Glance – 2024

The Session is pleased to report the congregation has stepped up generously in response to our request to increase pledges by 5% per year over the next five years. Total 2024 pledges as of January 20 are 2.5% above 2023 pledges. We will continue to encourage the congregation to give as generously as you are able. ***If you are able to increase your 2024 pledge even further, please do not hesitate to let the church office know.*** We are grateful for you!

2024 Budget (passed on January 20)

\$315,920	Total Income (does not yet include Additional Giving and Special Offerings)
<u>\$353,573</u>	Total Expenses
*-\$37,653	NET INCOME

* Based on the increase in 2024 Pledged Giving, the stability of our Reserves, and the frugality of congregational spending, the Session decided to continue its strategic investments, in spite of the sizable deficit, in external mission and advocacy, ministry and children and youth, and online worship tech support. This deficit will be covered by reserves, in the trust that congregational giving will continue to increase in the next four years.

February 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.

- 1 Presbyterian Women, Fellowship Hall, 10am
- Bible at the Bar, The Meck, 6pm
- 3 Deacon Meeting, Fellowship Hall/Zoom, 10am
- 4 Monthly Hymn Sing, Sanctuary, 4pm
- Community Meal, Zion Episcopal Church Social Center,
215 E. Washington St., Charles Town, WV 25414, 5pm
- 6 Teach the Preacher, Zoom, 7pm
- 8 Session Meeting, Fellowship Hall/Zoom, 7pm
- 11 Youth Group Gathering, Downstairs, 12:30pm
- 13 Teach the Preacher, Zoom, 7pm
- 14 Exploring Spiritual Practices, Zoom, 10:30am
- Mid Week Ash Wednesday Service of Worship, 7pm
- 17 Men’s Breakfast, Fellowship Hall, 7:30am
- 19 Eastern Panhandle Youth Alliance (EPYA), TBD, 6:30pm
- Teach the Preacher, Zoom, 7pm
- 24 Yarns & Threads, Fellowship Hall, 1pm
- 25 Youth Group Gathering, Downstairs, 12:30pm
- 27 Teach the Preacher, Zoom, 7pm