

# THE MESSENGER

November 2023

Shepherdstown Presbyterian Church  
Shepherdstownpresbyterian.org

## Pastor's Note: Introducing the Matthew 25 Initiative

November begins with All Saints Sunday and a Season of honoring Native American Heritage Month, accompanied by an introduction of the Matthew 25 Initiative of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.). Through it all, we are reminded: *the kingdom of God is justice and peace.*

God's kingdom of justice and peace is described by Jesus in a parable from Matthew 25:31-46. In the end, Jesus tells us, what really matters is how we as individuals, congregations, and even nations relate with those who are most vulnerable: those who hunger and thirst; immigrants (documented and undocumented alike); those who are sick in body, mind or spirit; and those condemned to prison. The point, Jesus is trying to say, is that living into the justice and peace that marks kinship with God and one another requires basic human compassion mixed with the impetus to *act* on that compassion.

This is what the Matthew 25 Initiative is all about: *acting* on compassion in at least one of three ways:

1. *Building Congregational Vitality* by deepening and energizing our faith and growing as joyful leaders and disciples actively engage with our community as we share the gospel of Jesus Christ in word and deed. - AND/OR -
2. *Dismantling Structural Racism* by fearlessly applying our faith to advocate and break down the systems, practices and thinking that underlie discrimination, bias, prejudice and oppression of people of color. - AND/OR -
3. *Eradicating Systemic Poverty* by acting on our beliefs and working to change laws, policies, plans and structures in our society that perpetuate economic exploitation of people who are poor.

The SPC Session has signed on to the Matthew 25 Initiative as a next step in our work toward racial justice. In addition, an intersectional priority of the Matthew 25 Initiative includes actions addressing Climate Justice, which is also near and dear to our hearts. Worship throughout the month will lead us into prayerful reflection on these themes, lifting up the wisdom of Native Nations Poetry, as we prepare ourselves to dwell within that Reign of Love which ushers in the kinship of God *on earth as it is in heaven.*

**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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[office@shepherdstownpresbyterian.org](mailto: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](mailto:gusti@shepherdstownpresbyterian.org)

## **Worship in November**

**November 5**

**Contemplation and Action**

**Matthew 25:31-46**

**All Saints Sunday**

**Communion**

**Stewardship Season: personnel**

*Introducing Matthew 25: The Matthew 25 Initiative of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) focuses on the parable of the sheep and goats: Jesus makes clear that what we do matters to God and how we treat others is important to God.*

Puppet Jesus returns with a question: where have you seen me lately?

**November 12**

**Holding Up Stars**

**Matthew 25:31-46**

**Reception of New Members**

**Stewardship Season: conclusion and commitment**

*Congregational Vitality: Vital communities follow Jesus into places of injustice and struggle. They bear the light of hope, demonstrating love and mercy, and working faithfully for justice and peace.*

Light Lunch to follow in the Fellowship Hall after the second service

**November 19**

**Repairing the Breach**

**Matthew 25:31-46**

**Transgender Day of Remembrance (Observed)**

*Dismantling Structural Racism: We will take on the hard work of dismantling, stone by stone, the systems of oppression that divide and subjugate our siblings. We will build, living stone by living stone, societies marked by justice and love.*

A Prayer for Transgender Day of Remembrance invites us to solidarity with the trans community

**November 26**

**The Honorable Harvest**

**Matthew 25:31-46**

**Communion**

**Reign of Love Sunday**

*Intersectional Priority: Climate Change: Through education, advocacy, training and partnerships, we seek to uphold the goals of the Paris Agreement to limit global average temperature to an increase of no more than 1.5 degrees Celsius from pre-industrial levels.*

Our Post-Thanksgiving reflection wonders: What is the Earth asking of us?

*Indigenous Wisdom highlighted throughout the month from When the Light of the World Was Subdued, Our Songs Came Through: A Norton Anthology of Native Nations Poetry*

## **Notifications**

### **NEW MEMBER CLASS**

**Sunday, November 5, 12:30pm**

For those interested in learning more about membership at SPC, we will review the history and current commitments of our congregation, introduce Presbyterianism-In-A-Nutshell, and invite you into the spiritual practice of life in community. *Contact the church office if you need a light lunch and/or childcare.*

### **SUNDAY SEMINAR**

**Sundays, 9:30am, Fellowship Hall and Zoom**

*In Defense of Kindness: Why It Matters, How It Changes Our Lives, and How It Can Save the World*

When did kindness become a sign of weakness? These days we view kindness as an inert act based solely on the absence of being a jerk, or as heroic and herculean, beyond the reach and capability of mere mortals. But what if kindness actually had the power to fight injustice and save the world? In his engaging new book *In Defense of Kindness*, Presbyterian pastor Bruce Reyes-Chow shows how being kind (which is different from being nice) has the power to transform our relationships in all areas of our life. Books are now available in the Four Seasons Bookstore. Tell them you are a member of SPC to receive a discount.

### **LOCAL AFRICAN AMERICAN HISTORY**

**Sunday, November 12, 11:45am, St. Agnes Catholic Church**

The Racial Justice Initiative of St. Agnes is hosting a presentation on local African American history by local historian and author Emilie Amt.

### **TRANSGENDER DAY OF REMEMBRANCE: A Community Vigil**

**Monday, November 13, 3:30pm, McMurrin Hall**

The event, which is free and open to the public, will provide a space for campus and community member to share stories, remember those who have been lost to violence, and draw awareness of continued violence against trans people. The event will conclude with a call to action and commitment to work to make our university and community safer for everyone, regardless of gender identity or expression.

*Hosted by the Shepherd University Office for Multicultural Student Affairs*

*Pastor Gusti will be speaking at this event*

### **COMMUNITY FORUM: THE ISRAELI-PALESTINIAN CONFLICT**

***Perspectives & Constructive Dialogue on Recent Events***

**Thursday, November 16, 7 - 8:30pm**

**Shepherd University Student Center Storer Ballroom, 2nd Floor, 210 N. King Street**

The objectives are to learn how Israelis and Palestinians perceive these current events; to participate in a constructive dialogue; and to consider follow-up engagement. Panelists will discuss their perspectives on the context, underlying issues, causes, and possible effects (medium to long term) of the current Israeli-Hamas war; relate how the respective parties on the ground understand the situation; and consider constructive ways participants can engage on this issue.

*Seating is Limited to 150, please RSVP by November 14: [isc.shepherdstownrotary.org/forum](https://isc.shepherdstownrotary.org/forum)*

*SPC is a co-sponsor of this event.*

## OCTOBER SESSION HIGHLIGHTS

Prayed with and for the people of Israel-Palestine  
Received a positive report from the Budget and Finance Committee (see pg. 5)  
Analyzed options for repairing the HVAC system  
Received updates from the Safety Team, Social Justice Committee, Deacons, and more  
Concluded with prayers for peace in the world

*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.*

## CHILDREN AND YOUTH UPDATE

**THE LAMBS AND THE WHALES ARE BACK!** We are delighted to resume the practice of a two-room Sunday Studio offering for the 2023 - 2024 Program Year: K - 2 and 3 - 5. If you have not already signed up to teach Sunday Studio, please do so! Contact Christa Joyce or the church office for information.

**THE NURSERY IS AVAILABLE!** Infants through Pre-K are always welcome in the nursery under the direction of the fabulous Olivia.

**YOUTH GROUP MEETS TWICE A MONTH** and other special occasions throughout the program year.

## DEACON SHEPHERDS, Ministries of Care

**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](mailto: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](mailto: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](mailto:jeanne27@gmail.com), 410-746-8605 if you would like to volunteer.

**"988" SUICIDE AND CRISIS LIFELINE:** Call or text "988" to connect directly with mental health professionals at the 988 Suicide and Crisis Lifeline, formerly known as the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline. The 988 Lifeline provides 24/7, confidential support to people in suicidal crisis or mental health-related distress.

## FINANCIAL STEWARDSHIP

STEWARDSHIP SEASON CONCLUDES! Each household should have received a Stewardship Letter and Pledge Form for 2024 highlighting our theme: *Keep the Faith, Mind the Gap*. The Session has made strategic investments in worship technology, children and youth ministry, staff benefits, and increased giving to mission and advocacy beyond the congregation. However, to maintain and build upon these investments into the future (and keep up with inflation), our total annual congregational giving needs to increase by \$45,000 - \$75,000 (15% - 25%). Please pledge as generously as you are able - an additional 5% per year for the next 5 years, if possible - to help bridge the gap and build the long term vision.

A COMMITMENT TO “TITHING.” In 2022, the Mission Committee asked the Session to prioritize external giving to mission and advocacy beyond the congregation as the “first fruits” of our budgeting process. In response, the Session directed a “Tithing Team” to review the biblical understanding of tithing, how tithing has been and continues to be practiced by individuals and congregation, and how the needs and values of SPC would impact our approach to “giving first.” That team recommended, and the Session approved, moving toward a 10% tithe toward external giving by the 2024 budget. For Session purposes, the concept of external giving includes the Mission Budget, the Social Justice Budget, Adult Education anti-racism programs, the Youth Mission Budget, and the Campus Ministry Budget (beyond the \$5000 gift from the Westminster Foundation).

### Year to Date Budget at a Glance – as of September 30, 2023

Actual (9 months)

\$239,749	Total Income (Pledges, Additional Giving, Special Offerings)
<u>\$236,223</u>	Total Expenses (Pastor, Personnel, Property, Mission, Administration, Worship, Social Justice, Education, Special Offerings)
*\$3,525	NET INCOME

Budgeted (annual)

\$310,923	Total Income
<u>\$347,460</u>	Total Expenses
*-\$36,537	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.

*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.

*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.

*Choir Rehearsal*, Tuesday, 7:30pm, Choir Room. Led by Dr. Steve Grives, Choir Director.

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

*Bible at the Bar*, 1<sup>st</sup> Thursday, 7pm, 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!

*Youth Group*, 2<sup>nd</sup> & 4<sup>th</sup> Sunday, 12:30pm – 2:30pm. Led by Christa Mastrangelo Joyce and other adult supervisors. Age appropriate lessons and activities for Grades 6 – 12.

*Hymn Sing*, THIS MONTH ONLY 2<sup>nd</sup> Sunday, 4pm, Sanctuary. Led by Terry Tucker. Reading music is not necessary.

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

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

*Prayer Gathering*, 2<sup>nd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> Friday, noon via Zoom. Led by Debbie Romano.

*Men's Breakfast*, 3<sup>rd</sup> 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.

*Grief Meets Grace*, hosted by Pastor Gusti; date and time TBA, in person, drop in as you feel led. A light liturgy followed by shared conversation on where we might find grace through the many griefs we carry.

# November 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 Presbyterian Women, Fellowship Hall, 10am  
Bible at the Bar, The Meck, 7pm
- 4 Shenandoah Presbytery, Opequon Church, 9:30am
- 5 New Member Class, Pastor’s Office, 12:30pm  
Community Meal Drop-Off, Kitchen, 3:45pm
- 6 Teach the Preacher, Zoom, 7pm
- 8 Exploring Spiritual Practices, Zoom, 10:30am
- 9 Session Meeting, Fellowship Hall/Zoom, 7pm
- 10 Gathering Space for Prayer, Zoom, noon
- 12 Local African American History, St. Agnes Catholic Church, 11:45am  
Light Lunch, Fellowship Hall, 12:15pm  
Youth Group, Basement, 12:30pm  
Hymn Sing, Sanctuary, 4pm (Note different date)  
Aging Faithfully, Classroom 1, 4pm
- 13 Transgender Day of Remembrance, McMurrin Hall, 3:30pm  
Teach the Preacher, Zoom, 7pm
- 16 Community Forum: The Israeli-Palestinian Conflict, Shepherd Storer Ballroom, 7pm
- 18 Men’s Breakfast, Fellowship Hall, 7:30am
- 20 Teach the Preacher, Zoom, 7pm
- 25 Yarns & Threads, Fellowship Hall, 1pm
- 26 Youth Group, Thanksgiving Meal Gathering, 5pm
- 27 Teach the Preacher, Zoom, 7pm
- 29 Staff Meeting, Fellowship Hall, 11am