

THE MESSENGER

October 2023

Shepherdstown Presbyterian Church
Shepherdstownpresbyterian.org

Pastor's Note: A Great Longing is Upon Us

October begins with World Communion Sunday and unfolds into a Season of Creation, accompanied by Stewardship Season at SPC, all wrapped up in a four-part series in response to a request for a sermon on forgiveness.

Through it all, a thread of longing runs: *to live again in a world made of gifts.*

These are the words of Robin Wall Kimmerer, enrolled citizen of the Citizen Potawatomi Nation, botanist and author, with whom I had the privilege to study in August: *A great longing is upon us, she says, to live again in a world made of gifts.*

Musician Laurence Cole has set these words to music, in a chant that will introduce our worship each Sunday this month. Additional music, liturgy, and preaching on the themes of forgiveness, peacemaking, creation-affirmation, and table fellowship invite us to sing, pray, and speak the truth of our longing, even as that longing is fulfilled in the same act of worship.

In addition, we will participate in a Litany of Creation for three Sundays (October 8, 15, and 22) and a Litany of Youth Affirmation on October 29. Please come to worship each Sunday with a small container of the element of creation that is our focus for the day: October 8: earth; October 15: water (preferably from a natural source); October 22: plants. Perhaps the element will come from land on which you dwell, perhaps from a park or along the river. We will invite the children to combine their elements together during First Pew and engage the entire congregation in a Litany of Creation with the elements later in the service. Containers of elements will be provided for any children who are not able to bring their own.

As we recommit to Creation - and ourselves as *part* of Creation - we also re-commit ourselves to the care and flourishing of this community. Each member household will receive a Stewardship Letter and Pledge Form for 2024, highlighting our theme: *Keep the Faith, Mind the Gap.* Moments for Stewardship in worship throughout the month will highlight the impact of your pledges on our commitments to mission and advocacy, children and youth, worship technology, and equity in staff salaries and benefits. Please pledge as generously as you are able - up to a 5% increase if possible - to help build this long term vision for SPC.

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

Worship in October

October 8

Forgive Us Our Debts

Matthew 6:7-13

Indigenous Peoples' Sunday

Season of Creation: earth

Stewardship Season: overview

A four-part series in response to the request for a sermon on forgiveness begins with an acknowledgment that we owe a debt to the land and the people of the land that can never be repaid. Therefore, the human capacity to forgive must flow first and foremost from the forgiveness we have received from God.

A Litany of Creation reminds us, We Are One Earth

October 15

As We Forgive

Matthew 18:15-22

Season of Creation: water

Stewardship Season: mission and advocacy

Our series on forgiveness continues with a meditation on healthy patterns of responding when harm is inflicted upon us and the teaching of Jesus to forgive "seventy times seven."

A Litany of Creation reminds us, Water Is Life

October 22

Forgiving Ourselves

John 3:1-8

Season of Creation: plants/air

Stewardship Season: online worship

When self-guilt runs rampant over real and imagined failings, what practices of self-love invite us deeper into grace?

A Litany of Creation reminds us: We Share One Breath

October 29

Forgiving God

TBA

Reformation Sunday

Stewardship Season: children and youth

A Litany of Youth Affirmation reminds us: Your Story is Our Story

Guest Preacher, Rev. Dwight McCormick, reflects on his emerging ministry with the recovery community in Martinsburg and the challenges of forgiving God for being who God is, and not who we want God to be.

A Litany of Reformation reminds us: We Are Not Alone

SEPTEMBER SESSION HIGHLIGHTS

Discussed our hopes and needs for the coming Program Year
Finalized plans for the 2024 Stewardship Campaign
Received a positive report from the Budget and Finance Committee (see pg. 5)
Received updates from the Safety Team, Social Justice Committee, Property Committee, and more
Endorsed the Jefferson County Community Ministries Neighbor Project Coalition
Approved an action to align SPC with the Matthew 25 Initiative of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.)
(Stay tuned for communication about this initiative in November)
Concluded with expressions of gratitude for emerging from the COVID pandemic and entering a new program year full of promise and possibility

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.

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.

“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

PEACE & GLOBAL WITNESS OFFERING: We will be collecting this offering through September. The envelopes are in the pews and on the tables in the Narthex and Fellowship Hall. Please write "Peace Offering" in the Memo section. You can donate online as well, just indicate "Peacemaking" when doing so. 25% of the Offering stays with local congregations, and 25% with mid councils to unite congregations to support peacemaking in their regions. The remaining 50% is remitted to the Presbyterian Mission Agency.

STEWARDSHIP SEASON BEGINS! Each household will receive 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 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 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 August 31, 2023

Actual

\$223,374	Total Income (Pledges, Additional Giving, Special Offerings)
<u>\$208,949</u>	Total Expenses (Pastor, Personnel, Property, Mission, Administration, Worship, Social Justice, Education, Special Offerings)
*\$14,425	NET INCOME

Budgeted

\$310,165	Total Income
<u>\$347,460</u>	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.

New Gatherings Scheduled

We are thrilled to have folks signed up with interest for ALL of our New Gatherings Under Consideration.

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.

Bible at the Bar, hosted by Pastor Gusti and Adam Ware; first Thursday of the month, 7pm, in person at the Meck, 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!

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.

Teach the Preacher, hosted by Pastor Gusti; Mondays beginning October 16 on Zoom, drop in as you feel led. Reflecting on your questions and comments around the Scripture lesson for the coming Sunday.

Monthly Gathering Schedule

Sunday Seminar, Sunday, 9:30am; Fellowship Hall and Zoom. Led by the Adult Education Committee. Discussion on a book of topical interest for adults.

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.

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

Hymn Sing, 1st Sunday, 4pm, Sanctuary. Led by Terry Tucker. Reading music is not necessary.

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

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

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.

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

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.

Notifications

The Shenandoah Presbytery invites you to a Service of Installation for

REV. DWIGHT J. MCCORMICK, III, Pastor
The Community Cup
New Worshipping Community

Sunday, October 22, 3pm
Community Cup Coffee and More
114 Burke St, Martinsburg

Pastor Gusti and Adam Ware will represent SPC on the Presbytery Installation Commission

NEW MEMBER CLASSES!

Sunday, October 29, 12:30pm - or - 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.

BLESSING OF THE ANIMALS

Sunday, October 29, 3pm
Morgan's Grove Park Pavilion

Bring your beloved Animal companions for our Annual Blessing of the Animals service - a brief litany, a hands on blessing, and a celebration of our interconnections - this time expanded to Morgan's Grove Park.

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.

October 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 Community Meal Drop-Off, Kitchen, 3:45
- Monthly Hymn Sing, Portico, 4pm
- 3 Handbell Rehearsal, Upstairs Hallway, 1pm
- 5 Presbyterian Women, Fellowship Hall, 10am
- 6 Bible at the Bar, The Meck, 7pm
- 7 Deacon Shepherds Meeting, Fellowship Hall, 1pm (Note different time)
- 8 Youth Group, Basement, 12:30pm
- Aging Faithfully, Classroom 1, 4pm
- 11 Exploring Spiritual Practices, Zoom, 10:30am
- 12 Session Meeting, Fellowship Hall/Zoom, 7pm
- 13 Gathering Space for Prayer, Zoom, noon
- 16 Teach the Preacher, Zoom, 7pm
- 17 Communications Team, Fellowship Hall, 6pm
- 18 Mission Committee, Fellowship Hall, 4:30pm
- 21 Men’s Breakfast, Fellowship Hall, 7:30am
- 22 Youth Group, Basement, 12:30pm
- Presbytery Service of Installation, Community Cup, 3pm
- 23 Teach the Preacher, Zoom, 7pm
- 25 Staff Meeting, Fellowship Hall, 11am
- 28 Yarns & Threads, Fellowship Hall, 1pm
- 29 New Member Class, Pastor’s Office, 12:30pm
- Blessing the Animals, Morgan’s Grove Park Pavilion, 3pm
- 30 Teach the Preacher, Zoom, 7pm