



THE MESSENGER

February 2025

Shepherdstown Presbyterian Church
Shepherdstownpresbyterian.org

PASTOR'S NOTE: "NO ORDINARY TIME"

Because Easter Sunday falls late this year, we find ourselves in an extended period of what we in the church call "Ordinary Time." Ordinary Time, in a liturgical sense, is just that. We are not focused on Advent or Christmas while preparing for a birth. The Baptism of Jesus is behind us, with the death and resurrection of Lent and Easter yet to come. In Ordinary Time we just live our lives, with The Way Jesus lived his as our guide.

And yet that Way is no ordinary way. That way calls us, as we will find this month: to claim a prophetic voice to the nations; to leave behind everything and follow; to sort through the blessings and the woes of a life in the Spirit; and to love our enemies and do good to those who hate us.

Jesus, himself, lived in no ordinary time. There was an unsustainable divide between the haves and the have nots. There was tyrannical power and religious capitulation to that power. There was rigid ethno-nationalism and xenophobia. Jesus lived in a time like ours.

Jesus knew such extraordinary times called for extraordinary measures: speaking the truth as we understand it in love, even if our voice shakes; radically re-orienting our lives for the sake of those most vulnerable in our midst; claiming the blessing inherent in it all, even as we lament, with anguish, the unbearable woe; and binding it all together with a strength of heart transformed by love and acts of mercy as the only way to respond to hate.

In these extraordinary times, some of us may find ourselves thrust into the spotlight as we pursue the extraordinary Way of Jesus. Most of us will do it in a quieter, more focused, radically local way: in a shared commitment to the safety and well-being of our children; in building coalitions for clean water we never imagined possible; in loving our actual neighbors, the ones right across the street, who vote differently than we do and think differently than we do and worship differently than we do.

In this extended season of "Ordinary Time," may we all consider our own extraordinary times and commit to both ordinary and extraordinary acts of faith in these times.

In the Ordinary Extraordinary,

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), Director of Children and Youth Formation

Sheila Melendez (she/her), 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

100 W. Washington Street

P.O. Box 268

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

“No Ordinary Time”

Worship in February at SPC

February 2 - 23, 2025

In this extended season of “Ordinary Time,”
we consider our own extraordinary times
and commit to both ordinary and extraordinary
acts of faith in these times.

Sunday, February 2

A Prophet to the Nations

Jeremiah 1:4-10

Fourth Sunday of Ordinary Time

Communion/Memorial Moment

Sunday Studio: Peacemakers Take a Step Back

Before I formed you in the womb I knew you.

Sunday, February 9

Rise Up and Follow

Luke 5:1-11

Fifth Sunday of Ordinary Time

Sunday Studio: Peacemakers Take a Step Back

They left everything and followed him.

Sunday, February 16

The Blessings and The Woes

Luke 6:17-26

Sixth Sunday of Ordinary Time

Sunday Studio: Peacemakers Seek to Understand Others

He came down with them and stood on a level place ...

Sunday, February 23

This Love That Is Good

Luke 6:27-38

Seventh Sunday of Ordinary Time

Sunday Studio: Peacemakers Seek to Understand Others

“Love your enemies; do good to those who hate you.”



CHILDREN AND YOUTH

Christa Mastrangelo Joyce

Director of Children and Youth Formation

The big news in Children and Youth is the delightful modern play that Christa and the youth group created and performed on Epiphany Sunday. The play was told largely through the voice of the narrators, while the cast physically demonstrated the action.

As the play opens, a young girl of 16 named Mary is employed at a local diner as well as at a local animal shelter. Mary is pregnant and working to save money. Mary is seen waiting on customers and even bringing coffee and sandwiches to people shivering outside the diner, who appear to be in need of food and warmth.

The first scene ends with Mary paying the check of a patron, Mel, who has forgotten his wallet. The story continues with Mel returning to repay Mary, only to discover that Mary is not at work. She has given birth at the animal shelter, because the vet has agreed to care for her employee who is uninsured. In the final scene, Mel and his friend bring gifts to Mary and her new baby.

The real story, though, is the transformation Mel experiences having witnessed Mary's profound love and care for others, even while she is in great need. Without being too heavy handed, the story was meant to reveal the way that we can find God's love born into the world, even in challenging places and circumstances.

In the realm of our younger folks of Sunday Studio, we wrapped up the final weeks with our theme "Do Not Fear." We are now entering the theme "Make Peace." Over eight weeks, we will explore four practices or aspects of peacemaking that are derived from the teachings of Jesus in the Gospels and are evident in the lives of great peacemakers: Cultivate Inner Peace, Overcome Fear, Share Resources, and Honor Every Living Thing.





JANUARY SESSION HIGHLIGHTS

- **Examination of the Elected Nominees:** Pastor Gusti moderated the examination of recently elected Deacons and Ruling Elders who have not previously been ordained. The session approved and gratefully welcomed Eva Barnett, Elaine Hurd, Siri McDonald, Lynne Wiseman, and Diana Eldridge as ordained Deacons.
- **Treasurer's Report:** We ended 2024 with an operating deficit of about \$30K. This was better than our budget that planned for a deficit of about \$38K. Overall, our expenses were slightly higher than planned (about \$1.5K), but our operating income was about \$9K higher than planned (driven by general/plate giving as pledged giving was less than what was budgeted).
- **Budget Process:** A 2025 budget has been drafted based on input from the SPC committees and staffing costs developed by the personnel committee and approved by the session at their December meeting, including Pastor Gusti's terms of call approved at the Congregational Meeting on December 8. The session will finalize the 2025 budget at a special meeting on January 25 considering the pledged income, which to date falls short of the \$280,000 needed to support priorities.
- **Matthew 25:** The Matthew 25 initiative emphasizes the support for Community Cup, Food Security, and Clean Water. Activities in these areas include Christa leading yoga at Community Cup, three seminars this month on local water issues led by: Than Hitt, Bill Howard, and Kay Schultz, and food security advocacy training by the Mountaineer Food Bank on February 20 in Fellowship Hall.
- **Adult Ed:** The upcoming book discussion will be *Life After Doom: Wisdom and Courage for a World Falling Apart* by Brian McLaren.
- **Social Justice (SJ):** The committee's immediate focus is on local immigrant support. A "Know Your Rights" workshop designed for the immigrant community is being organized in coordination with Mountain State Justice, St. Agnes Catholic Church, and SJ members. SJ leadership and the Eastern Panhandle Youth Alliance are exploring how best to educate the non-LGBTQ community about the transgender community to become better allies in refuting widespread misinformation. An effort is underway to better understand the history of Indigenous people who lived in what is now the eastern panhandle of WV and to share the history with the congregation. Creating an internal display of some of the historical documents uncovered during the history project work in 2024 remains on the 'to do' list for this year.
- **Interdenominational Worship:** The session approved hosting mid-week Quaker worship rent-free on Wednesdays, 3-4 pm in the SPC Sanctuary.
- **Deacons:** The Deacons are coordinating with the Parish Care Committee to support SPC members and friends in the hospital and undergoing rehab. After a highly productive tenure, Jen Jones will hand the moderator role to Donna Dettling for 2025.
- **Leadership Retreat:** The session scheduled a retreat co-led by Pastor Gusti with Rev. Harry Daniel on Friday, February 21, 7 to 9 pm and Saturday, the 22nd, 9 am to 3 pm. Ruling Elders, Deacons, SPC Administrator, staff, committee chairs, trustees, and nominating committee will be invited participants.

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

BUDGET AT A GLANCE THROUGH December 31, 2024

Actual (12 months)

\$344,428	Total Income (Pledges, Additional Giving, Special Offerings)
<u>\$375,227</u>	Total Expenses (Pastor, Personnel, Property, Mission, Administration, Worship, Social Justice, Education, Special Offerings)
-\$30,799	NET INCOME*

Budgeted (annual)

\$335,085	Total Income
<u>\$373,238</u>	Total Expenses
-\$ 38,153	NET INCOME*

Unrestricted Reserves \$208,650

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

2025 Goal: 5% above 2024 pledges



Current pledges are 88% of our goal.

Your pledge will make a difference.

1/26/2025

DEACON TEAM UPDATE

Donna Dettling, Deacon Moderator Partner

In early January, all of the deacons (returning and incoming) participated in the Ordained Leader Training along with session members. Pastor Gusti led us in a thought-provoking and informational three-hour session. We reviewed the roles of session, deacons, and teaching elders, and learned about the two books that guide us: the *Book of Order* and the *Book of Confessions*, which we each received. We shared scripture readings from Numbers 11 (Moses and the Elders), and from Acts 6 (The Apostles and the Deacons.) Each of us reminisced about our baptism experience, and in pairs, we thought about **how we share the SPC core commitments** as members of leadership, and **how we experience those commitments** as members of the church. Of course, there was prayer and singing, and distribution of the Constitutional Questions for Ordination. It was a lovely and enlightening time of fellowship.

At our January 23 deacon meeting, we welcomed the whole team, which has swelled to 18 deacons! We spent time getting to know the new deacons, and shared how we heard the call to become a deacon. We identified the unique gifts that we hope to bring to this role, and learned what the returning deacons are most proud of accomplishing in their deacon role in 2024.



We had a joyful celebration for Paul Denchy, as his lengthy deacon term came to an end. Paul has provided years of dedicated deacon service to SPC, and supported new deacons coming into the fold. His care and concern for all members and friends of the church was evident in the stories that were shared. We hope you will join us in thanking Paul for all he has done, and continues to do, in the life of the church.

New flock assignments were handed out and discussed. Since we have a number of new deacons receiving a flock for the first time, and also made some adjustments to the flocks of returning deacons, you may have a different deacon this year! We plan to make the transitions as seamless as possible. **Please expect to receive an introductory communication from your new deacon, or a confirmation email from your continuing deacon in the upcoming month.** They would be grateful to hear back from you to welcome them, share with them, and in general, keep the communication flowing both directions!

We are happy beyond measure to have increased the deacon team, and look forward to the year ahead with each of you.

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 **Donna Dettling, Co-Moderator**

At our January 2 Presbyterian Women meeting, we continued the study of our new book ***Poverty, By America***, by Matthew Desmond. Donna led the 15 members in attendance in a discussion of Chapter 3, which addressed ‘How We Undercut Workers.’ There was lively discussion about the author’s statement that, “People and corporations clearly benefit from poverty in many ways, though no one wants to admit that poor people are being exploited.” We also had conversation about the impacts of raising the minimum wage and the decline in labor unions, and some of the statistics around poverty in the workplace.

We heard a report about items we collected in December for the **Bethany House shelter in Martinsburg**, which were delivered by Cathy Cross, and passed a basket for financial contributions from the group to send to the shelter later in January. We have been supporting Bethany House for a number of years, as they continue to provide much needed shelter for women and children in the area.

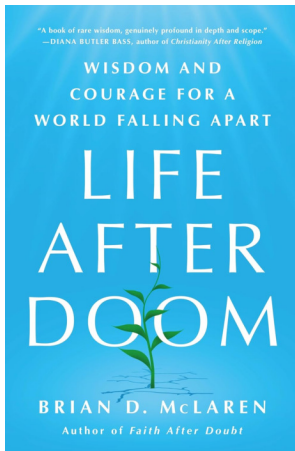
Anne Teresa provided information on a special worship service at **The Community Cup and More on January 24 at 7 p.m.**, which includes music, devotionals, communion, and yoga with our own Christa Mastrangelo Joyce! She encouraged our attendance at this event, and at the upcoming Sunday Seminar sessions.

After other business items and a meaningful prayer circle, we concluded the meeting with our traditional January soup and bread meal. Four delicious soups and three types of bread were the perfect comfort food for a chilly winter day, and we enjoyed group fellowship as we sampled this bounty.

We give thanks to the volunteers who brought food, made coffee, led the meeting, and set up the room, as well as those who contributed to Bethany House. We invite you to attend **our February 6 meeting at 10 a.m. in Fellowship Hall or on Zoom, to discuss Chapter 4, ‘How We Force the Poor to Pay More’**. The meeting is always nourishing to body and spirit, and you are most welcome to join us.

Poverty Facts

- In 2023, West Virginia's poverty rate was 16.7%, which is 5.6% higher than the national rate and the fourth highest poverty rate among the 50 states.
- West Virginia's child food insecurity rate is about 20%.



SUNDAY SEMINAR TO BEGIN FEBRUARY 9

The Adult Education book study for this winter/spring is entitled, *Life After Doom: Wisdom and Courage for a World Falling Apart* by Brian McLaren. McLaren's work confronts the realities of climate change, economic justice, and other issues with resilience and responsibility, wisdom and courage. Can we act wisely and compassionately regardless of the outcome? Blending insights from philosophers, poets, scientists, and theologians, McLaren explores the complexity of hope, the necessity of grief, and the need for new ways of thinking, becoming and belonging in our turbulent times. It is a balanced, thoughtful and heartfelt blueprint for navigating these difficult days.

Diana Butler Bass says: "He challenges both debilitating despair and false hope to awaken our capacity to dream and act courageously for the future...You will thank him." One reader called it "the most difficult reading I've ever done. It is also the most important...It has given me a much greater perspective on how to live in these days."

Meetings are Sunday mornings at 9:30 a.m. in Fellowship Hall or via Zoom. Books are available at Four Seasons Books; SPC members receive a discount. All are welcome to this study and important discussion! Watch the weekly E-News for more information.

DOING WHAT WE CAN FOR OUR NEIGHBORS

Pat Hamilton

Immigrant and Refugee Support Committee (IRSC)

Since there will never cease to be some in need on the earth, I therefore command you, "Open your hand to the poor and needy neighbor in your land."

- Deuteronomy 15:11

Many people in our community are very worried about what will happen to our immigrant neighbors, especially here in the Panhandle. The new administration has threatened some unsettling actions, including mass deportations, separation of families, detention without hearings and requiring proof of citizenship based on appearance. The members of the committee have been busy preparing for the worst, but also maintaining awareness of the needs of immigrant families right now.

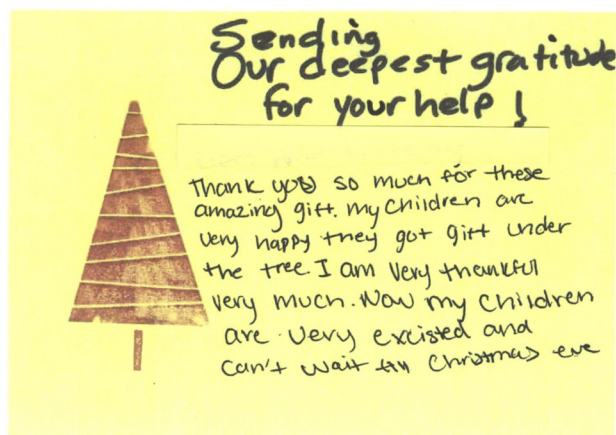
Committee member and SPC deacon, Siri McDonald, works for Jefferson County Schools and is part of the Hispanic/Latino Association. She and other counselors once again identified some newly arrived families who might benefit from assistance as they and their children find their way through the complexities of their first year in a new country. Earlier in 2024, IRSC asked for donations and was able to assemble 20 backpacks with school supplies at the beginning of the children's school year. This past Christmas, two families were chosen to receive gifts and food to make their holiday more cheerful and welcoming.

In November the committee sent out a request to SPC and the Shepherdstown community to donate gifts for the children from a list created around their individual needs. And, once again, the community stepped up and fulfilled all the gifts on the list in time for us to wrap and deliver before Christmas. Gifts under the tree were, of course, a hit.

Besides gifts for six children, parents received gift cards for gasoline and groceries as well as a generous box of food and supplies from the Shepherdstown food pantry. Siri said that one of the teachers who helped deliver the gifts remarked that the children, "...were jumping up and down and grinning from ear to ear. I let them know they were from a church that wanted to help and the bikes were a huge hit".

Direct support to immigrant families in need has always been one of the many goals of IRSC. Now, more than ever, IRSC will be focusing on the tactical ways SPC can support the individuals and families who now call the Panhandle their home. We are working with Mountain State Justice to arrange pro bono legal assistance for individuals facing unjust deportation or detention. Additionally, St. Agnes and SPC are collaborating on educational sessions which will inform the community about ways to assure that immigrant rights are protected. IRSC is also making available **Know Your Rights** cards for immigrants and allies alike to understand their legal obligations and protections. We will continue to reach out to SPC and the community with educational opportunities as well as tips on being an advocate locally and at the state level.

In the meantime, thank all of you who contributed to Christmas for our immigrant neighbors and walk with us as we do the work of assuring that justice is not just a gift under the tree.



Translation:

Thank you for your gifts. They are a blessing for my children. May God bless you all.

February 2025

January 2025

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February 2025

S M T W T F S

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March 2025

S M T W T F S

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23 24 25 26 27 28 29

30 31

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
	27 ¹	28 ²	29 ³	30 ⁴	31 ⁵	1 ⁶
8:30 am Early Service of Worship with Communion 9:30 am Sunday Seminar - FH/Zoom 11:00 am Service of Worship with Communion/Hybrid 11:00 am Sunday Studio - Classroom 2 4:00 pm Hymn Sing - Sanctuary 5:00 pm Community Meal - Charles Town	3	4	5	6	7	8
8:30 am Early Service of Worship 9:30 am Sunday Seminar - FH/Zoom 11:00 am Service of Worship/Hybrid 11:00 am Sunday Studio - Classroom 2	9	10	11	12	13	14
8:30 am Early Service of Worship 9:30 am Sunday Seminar - FH/Zoom 11:00 am Service of Worship/Hybrid 11:00 am Sunday Studio - Classroom 2	15	16	17	18	19	20
8:30 am Early Service of Worship 9:30 am Sunday Seminar - FH/Zoom 11:00 am Service of Worship/Hybrid 11:00 am Sunday Studio - Classroom 2	21	22	23	24	25	26
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