

THE MESSENGER

March 2024

Shepherdstown Presbyterian Church
Shepherdstownpresbyterian.org

Pastor's Note: Emerging

Like many of you, I have loved the images of Striped Skunk, Black Bear (now named Jasmine) and Black Bear's babies (now named Bearie and King Charles II), peeking out from the basket of winter into the fresh air of spring in our worship these first two Sundays in the Season of Lent.

They, like we, are ready to emerge.

From a terrible history that needs to be told (see pg. 6-7). From a sanitized view of Jesus into a more nuanced appreciation of his complexity (see pg 8). From leadership transitions within our Deacon Shepherd ministry (see pg. 10). From significant concern about deficit spending to a deepening trust that God is indeed providing everything we need to thrive in our calling as a congregation (pg. 11).

Add in an in-depth profile of SPC's most populous family (the Scotts, with *seven children!* see pg. 9), and our emergence into the new life promised by the season of Spring is complete!

Emergence

I call out for Water Woman, my mother
I call out for Earth Woman, my mother
I emerge from below the earth's surface
I emerge from within sacred darkness
that cradles my mother Earth Woman's heart
I emerge at the House-Made-of-Thought
I emerge at the House-Made-of-Language
I am home
I am home

Manny Loley

translated from the Navajo by the author

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

CHURCH OFFICE HOURS FEBRUARY 26 – MARCH 29: Lynn Dampman has been called up for Jury Duty the month of February 26 – March 29. Office hours will depend on how that process unfolds. Please stay tuned for additional information.

PASTOR GUSTI IS ON VACATION: Monday, March 4 - Sunday, March 10. Rev. Dwight McCormick will serve as Guest Preacher on Sunday, March 10. Deacon Moderator Jen Jones is available to coordinate pastoral care in her absence: (681) 247-0193 or jenajones44@gmail.com.

SPC MONTHLY HYMN SING, SUNDAY, MARCH 3, 4:00 PM IN THE SANCTUARY. Bring your friends and family and join us for one hour of joyful singing. Requests are honored. All are welcome; there's no need to read music.

PRESBYTERIAN WOMEN will meet on Thursday, March 7 at 10 am in the Fellowship Hall. Our lesson is # 7, "An Ethiopian Eunuch Encounters the Good News of Jesus" 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 haven't read the lesson.

BIBLE AT THE BAR is canceled in March. Return Thursday, April 4, 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! **April'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.

EXPLORING SPIRITUAL PRACTICES (ESP) WILL MEET WEDNESDAY, March 13, 10:30 am-11:30 am BY ZOOM ONLY. Our theme will be "Discovering Wisdom Through Story Meditations." Included will be a talk entitled, "The Tyranny of Perfection" and an opening musical piece as well as opportunities to reflect and share. All interested adult members and friends are welcome. Feel free to join us.

"GRIEF MEETS GRACE," Wednesday, March 13, 7pm, with communion. A contemplative service, marking the vernal equinox, in support of those for whom the change of seasons enhances feelings of loss and loneliness, or who simply need a space to escape from socially enforced celebration. *In order to foster a safe community of personal sharing, this service will NOT be live-streamed.*

COLD WEATHER SHELTER, March 23-31. We need lots of help -- overnight chaperones, snacks and breakfasts. Some people have already put their names in the hat, but if you have not and you can do any of these tasks, please contact Bill Rule at 703-297-6248, billnbethrule@comcast.net. We will share a spreadsheet as we begin to get some of the blanks filled in. There is a signup sheet on the table in the fellowship hall or you can call the church office, 304-876-6466 Mon-Fri, 8am – 2pm and Lynn can help you put your name on the list.

Worship in March

“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 leads 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!

Sunday, March 3

The Thousandth Generation

Exodus 20:6

Third Sunday in Lent

Communion

First Pew: Lake Trout teaches us love, patience, confidence, and success
Sunday Seminar: Slavery; Old School/New School Schism

*I will show steadfast love to the thousandth generation
of those who love me and keep my commandments*

Sunday, March 10

The Cost of Discipleship (Rev. McCormick)

Luke 14:25-33

Fourth Sunday in Lent

First Pew: An introduction to Axolotl, the Patron Saint of Sunday Studio
Sunday Seminar: Colonization Society Movement

Whoever does not carry the cross and follow me cannot be my disciple

Wednesday, March 13

Grief Meets Grace

Isaiah 60:15

Healing Service, with Communion

*Although you have been forsaken,
I will make you the joy of all generations*

Sunday, March 17

Jesus Wept

John 12:27

Fifth Sunday in Lent

First Pew: Wood Frog teaches us sensitivity, looking within, and absorbing the elements

Sunday Seminar: wrap up and looking ahead

Jesus said, "Now my soul is troubled"

Sunday, March 24

A Terrible Story (That Has to Be Told)

Mark 15:24

Palm/Passion Sunday

Procession of the Palms

Cold Weather Shelter

And they crucified him

Thursday, March 28

Setting an Example

John 13:14

Maundy Thursday

Communion

Cold Weather Shelter

You also ought to wash one another's feet

HOLY WEEK AT SPC

Palm/Passion Sunday, March 24. Line up for Procession of the Palms by 10:50am

Maundy Thursday, March 28, 7pm, with Communion

Good Friday Vigil begins 8pm Thursday through Friday, March 29

Easter Services March 31, including Sunrise Service at Rumsey Memorial, 6:30am

ONE GREAT HOUR OF SHARING, SPECIAL OFFERING, through March. During Lent, we celebrate that God connects with us through Jesus' resurrection and connects us with "those who have least" – that's how Matthew 25 puts it – and that's what One Great Hour of Sharing (OGHS) is all about. Your gifts to OGHS are shared with the ministries of the Presbyterian Hunger Program, Self-Development of People and Presbyterian Disaster Assistance. Make checks payable to SPC and write OGHS in the Memo Line. You can place your offering in the plate on Sunday, mail your donation to SPC, PO Box 268, Shepherdstown, WV 25443 or give online using the GIVE icon and designating to OGHS in the memo.

SHEPHERDSTOWN PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH HISTORY

A Community Forum: Exploring our Roots

Sundays in Lent at 9:30am, Fellowship Hall/Zoom

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

March 3 - Presbyterian Church and Slavery; National Colonization Movement and the Church;

Old School/New School Schism
Presented by Nancy Taylor, E.D.,
Presbyterian Historical Society

March 10 - Presbyterian Church and the Colonization Society

Movement in Shepherdstown
Presented by Jane Ailes, Marie Tyler-McGraw,
African-American historians/researchers

March 17 - Wrap up and Looking Ahead:

How to Move Ahead
With What We've Learned

HOW SPC'S ANTI-RACIST WORK LED US TO EXPLORE OUR SESSION MINUTES

By Lynn Coddington, Chair, SPC Social Justice

What do we really know about the history of SPC? We know that the first Presbyterian congregation was established in 1743, that the original building burned in 1831 and was rebuilt in 1836 in the spot it occupies today. We know that wounded Confederate soldiers from the battle of Antietam were treated in a makeshift hospital in the sanctuary of the church. We also now know that we had Black members, some enslaved, some free. And we know that some of our members were the enslavers.

Since that time, SPC has worked to form itself into a “clear, luminous and dynamic force in our polarized world,” adopting a Charter for Compassion in a worldwide movement against anti-Muslim attacks following September 11, 2001. A Social Justice Committee was formed in 2018 to provide an institutional home and a sharper focus for SPC’s anti-racism justice work. SPC held a weekend of study about how to be anti-racist. We committed to social justice issues and to advocate for meaningful change, justice, wholeness and peace.

It would seem that our church is well on its way to its anti-racist goal. We are—and we aren’t.

Jessica Vasquez Torres, who led our racism and racial justice workshops in 2018, left us with a strong message: “Look more closely at yourselves and, more importantly, examine your history and engage in truth telling.” She cautioned us to dig deeper, because the answers will not come neatly packaged.

We found five handwritten minute booklets being held in Richmond in the Union Presbytery Seminary’s archives, residing there because SPC in the 1800s was part of the Winchester Presbytery. There was not yet a West Virginia or a Shenandoah Presbytery. Surely, the minutes of our past church leadership would shine a different light on what we might think we know.

Retrieved in December 2020 during COVID, the booklets were housed at the Byrd Center at Shepherd University until they traveled in 2022 to the Presbyterian Historical Society in Philadelphia to be digitalized for our use; the original booklets are now permanently in the historical society’s archives.

Once you read the original handwritten documents, you’ll understand why it has taken considerable time to reach this point. The minutes are hard to read! Thankfully, a small group of inquisitive folks got together to begin transcribing the documents for easier reading and to learn more about Shepherdstown Presbyterian Church in the tumultuous early 1800s, especially leading up to and including the Civil War.

Our Lenten forums are not only about the Session minutes, but also what was happening in Shepherdstown during this time. It is interesting to learn what our Session leaders included in the minutes—and what they omitted. Much time is spent addressing the personal behavior of the congregants, but underneath those mundane details are clues to how SPC acted and reacted in this unsettling time, giving us insight into our legacy.

We know we had ‘colored’ members, but not what happened to them as they disappeared from the church rolls. The church was rebuilt possibly with bricks made by enslaved persons. Our side door near the front of the church now functions as an accessible entrance—was that the ‘colored’ entrance? SPC ministers had some role in the American Colonization Movement to send Black persons to Africa.

The minutes offer us a peek—but not an explanation. For that, and to take a step toward truth telling, it seems we have much work to do.

CHILDREN AND YOUTH UPDATE

Christa Mastrangelo Joyce,
Children and Youth Education Coordinator

This past month we focused on the theme of "Crossing Borders," in both the youth group and Sunday Studio. Our biblical themes had us leaving comfort zones in Genesis 12:1-9, Making Choices to Cross Borders based on Ruth 1:1-17, Challenging Exclusion from Acts 8:26-39, and Speaking God's Language of Love from Acts 2:1-4 and 17-18. We thought about how we might change our perspective on situations or people, how we might leave our comfort zones safely, how we might have more in common with those "across the borders" than we even might imagine, and how God really does speak across all borders.

The prompts allowed for many rich conversations, artwork, and discovery. In the youth group, we discussed the desire to cross borders with other places of worship, and potentially to visit a nearby mosque, temple, or other place of worship. We welcome any connections from parents and church members with help to make this possible.

The youth group also attended the final showing of *Godspell* at St. Agnes Catholic Church, where we had the privilege of seeing our own Mileur and Evelyn Bailey perform alongside youth from St. Agnes, Asbury United Methodist, and Shepherdstown proper. Led by St. Agnes Youth Director, Joe Yates, the group put on a wonderful production, with fantastic singing, dancing, and recreating of the original musical.

This showing prompted many theological questions from the youth about "the real Jesus" and why the portrayal seemed so different from their own understanding. Because of this, Pastor Gusti and I are planning for a *Godspell* After-Party event, where our pastor will share some wisdom with the youth. More details to come.

I was grateful to the youth for coming out on Souper-Bowl Sunday to collect money for this special event. It was fun to see all of the youth sitting together in the balcony and then rallying to gather containers and make football team logos to spice up the collections. In the end, after a wonderful Quaker style conversation / discussion about where the money should go, the youth voted unanimously to give it all to the Community Cup in Martinsburg. I have since made contacts with Pastor Dwight from The Community Cup and with our own Anne Theresa so that we can find out how we might come alongside their mission and go to see what the Cup is up to in Martinsburg.

This coming month, our theme focus with Children and Youth is titled "Love God, Neighbor, Enemy." I am excited to witness what unfolds through these weeks together. If anyone has any ideas for places to "cross borders" and visit, or would like to come hang out with us at the youth meeting or upstairs to teach the kiddos, please let me know!

Thank you all for your continued support, love, encouragement, and curiosity as we walk alongside these youth in their journey with and toward God.



How did a guy from Seattle, Washington, end up in West Virginia? Meet Nick Scott, a new face at SPC. It was the military that brought Nick to the East Coast, and marriage that brought him to West Virginia. He and his wife Tracey have seven children (3 boys and 4 girls, ages 9-21). They first attended SPC on Easter Sunday 2023. Hearing about “radical hospitality,” they felt a kinship right away. Seeing the Pride flag (later replaced by the Progress flag), Nick felt “our common values” were aligned with SPC. While attending the worship service he said, “It’s not for show.” They reside in Bunker Hill, WV, about a 35-40 minute trip to SPC. “But when the church aligns with your core values, ideals and beliefs, it’s worth the trip.”

Nick has a degree in Elementary Education from Shepherd University, but chose to stay home to raise the kids. Tracey has a degree in English from Shepherd and now owns a real estate business. Nick is the photographer for her properties. Nick grew up in a home where religion was non-existent; Tracey went to Evangelical churches. With a primary focus on their own personal journey and health, they were participants and leaders in a 12-step recovery program with folks who were trying to turn things around. This changed Nick’s view of the church. He and his wife started a non-denominational home church and had four people the first week, which, within a month or two, grew to 50-60 people. The church continued for about 10 years until Covid hit and they shut their doors. During this time, whatever money came in went back out. They bought 800 pairs of shoes and gave them away to six elementary schools in Berkeley County for five or six years before the pandemic. Opening for a while after Covid, they continued to have 30-40 people, but then decided the kids needed to be with more kids of their own ages, so they began looking for a church.

Through his wife’s real estate connection with Adam Ware, they were introduced to SPC. Impressed with the common values which SPC embodies, they feel they have found a home at SPC. Nick’s favorite movie is “Willy Wonka and the Chocolate Factory.” His favorite book is “the last one I’ve read,” although he has found Richard Rohr’s *The Universal Christ* to be noteworthy. Nick and family enjoy traveling, especially to National and State parks. They love to hike and spend a lot of time on the Potomac River in the summer. Nick and Tracey both teach in Sunday Studio, and Nick is a member of the Communications Team at SPC. Welcome, Nick and family!

DEACON SHEPHERDS, Ministries of Care

WELCOME NEW MODERATOR JEN JONES! At its February 3rd organizational meeting, the Deacons elected Jen Jones to be their new moderator. Jen brings to this role an extensive background in organizational development, specifically as a consultant with Franklin Covey, and is looking forward to testing some of those organizational strategies with the SPC Deacons.

WELCOME NEW DEACONS DONNA DETTLING, SUSAN LOVELL, SHERRY SYKES, and DIANA WESLEY! Our newest Deacons have received their flocks and are reaching out to introduce themselves. Each one brings unique gifts and experience to their role and is excited about the opportunity to serve SPC in this way. Please make a special effort to get to know our newest Deacons and thank them for their service.

DEACON VISIONING RETREAT, MARCH 23, Shepherdstown Library. *If SPC were the best cared-for congregation on the planet, what would be happening?* This is the question that will guide the Deacon Shepherd Visioning Retreat this month. Through various individual and group exercises, the Deacons will co-create a vision for congregational care, with follow-up meetings in the next several months to coalesce that vision into a shared reality. Stay tuned for the exciting results of this retreat! In preparation for the retreat, Deacon Moderator Jen Jones and Pastor Gusti are meeting individually with each Deacon to learn more about their unique gifts and how we might all collaborate more effectively in caring for the congregation.

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, Jen Jones, 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.

FINANCIAL STEWARDSHIP

Year-to-Date Budget at a Glance – as of January 31, 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!

Actual (one month)

\$58,082	Total Income (Pledges, Additional Giving, Special Offerings)
<u>\$26,990</u>	Total Expenses (Pastor, Personnel, Property, Mission, Administration, Worship, Social Justice, Education, Special Offerings)
*\$30,472	NET INCOME

Budgeted (annual)

\$315,920	Total Income
<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 SESSION HIGHLIGHTS

Welcomed our newest members: John Gonano, Stephanie Jamieson, and Wanda Stewart
Learned about the Enneagram and its application to spiritual formation and social justice
Approved Personnel Policies related to inclement weather
Approved NOWA DIAMOND SHINE LLC as our new cleaning service
Received updates from the Social Justice Committee, the Matthew 25 Initiative, and Adult Ed
Discussed various options related to SPC's membership in the Still Point Retreat Center

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.

March 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.

- 3 Monthly Hymn Sing, Sanctuary, 4pm
Community Meal, Zion Episcopal Church Social Center,
215 E. Washington St., Charles Town, WV 25414, 5pm
- 4 Pastor Gusti on Vacation through March 10
NO Teach the Preacher
- 7 Presbyterian Women, Fellowship Hall, 10am
NO Bible at the Bar
- 10 Youth Group Gathering, Downstairs, 12:30pm
- 11 Teach the Preacher, Zoom, 7pm
- 13 Exploring Spiritual Practices, Zoom, 10:30am
Grace meets Grace Service of Worship, 7pm
- 14 Session Meeting, Fellowship Hall/Hybrid, 7pm
- 16 Men's Breakfast, Fellowship Hall, 7:30am
- 18 Teach the Preacher, Zoom, 7pm
- 21 Communications Team Meeting, Fellowship Hall/Hybrid, 6pm
- 23 SPC Hosts Cold Weather Shelter through March 31, Fellowship Hall
Deacon Shepherds Retreat, Shepherdstown Library, 10am
Yarns & Threads, Fellowship Hall, 1pm
- 24 Youth Group Gathering, Downstairs, 12:30pm
- 25 Teach the Preacher, Zoom, 7pm