# THE MESSENGER

**December 2023**
**Shepherdstown Presbyterian Church**
**Shepherdstownpresbyterian.org**

## Pastor's Note: All Creation Waits

Every year I tell myself that this will be the year I embrace the true meaning of the Advent liturgical season: waiting, resting, reflecting, praying, contemplating, grieving, hibernating, seeking, trusting. All of the counter-cultural practices essential to Advent that go out the window when the busy-ness of Christmas preparations inevitably take over.

This year's Advent Worship Planning Team has sought to carve out space for these counter-cultural practices throughout the liturgical life of our community. Based on the children's book *All Creation Waits: The Advent Mystery of New Beginnings,* by Gayle Boss, our worship in December invites us into contemplative reflections through the darkness of rebirth. Chanting, Sentence Prayers, Extended Silence, and Simple Communion accompany stories of how various animals bed down for the winter. These stories show us how to adapt to the dark and cold in ingenious ways, trusting the God who comes, even in the darkest season, to bring us a new beginning.

Because Christmas Eve occurs on a Sunday this year, some of the treasured SPC traditions will need to be adjusted. Our "Prepare Ye" musical celebration with children and the nativity scene will take place at the conclusion of the 11am service on the *Third* Sunday of Advent: December 17. On the Fourth Sunday of Advent, the morning of December 24, the early service will be suspended and there will be no Sunday Studio or Choir offering.

Our Christmas Eve services will continue as always: a 5pm Family Service with The Friendly Beasts; an 8pm Service of Lessons and Carols with the Choir; and an 11pm Contemplative Candlelight Communion Service. The 5pm and 8pm services will be livestreamed.

We are also experimenting this year with a special contemplative service, Wednesday, December 13, 7pm, in support of those for whom the season enhances feelings of loss and loneliness, or who simply need a space to escape from socially enforced celebration. This will officially launch our *Grief Meets Grace* monthly gathering (see pg 7). In order to maintain the privacy of the participants, this service will not be livestreamed.

Throughout the season, whether we are able to maintain our contemplative composure, or end up surrendering to busy-ness, or somewhere in between, may our liturgical life together cultivate a faithful hope, peace, joy and love amid it all.

***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 December

**Sunday, December 3** **Waiting in Hope** **1 Corinthians 1:7**
**First Sunday of Advent**

*You are not lacking in any gift as you wait for the revealing of our Lord Jesus Christ.*

**Sunday, December 10** **Waiting in Peace** **2 Peter 3:14**
**Second Sunday of Advent**
**Congregational Meeting**

*Beloved, while you are waiting, strive to be found at peace.*

**Wednesday, December 13** **Grief Meets Grace** **2 Thessalonians 1:4**

*We honor your perseverance and trust through difficult distress.*

**Sunday, December 17** **Waiting in Joy** **1 Thessalonians 5:16**
**Third Sunday of Advent**
**"Prepare the Way" Children's Celebration**

*Rejoice always.*

**Sunday, December 24** **Waiting in Love** **Luke 1:38**
**Fourth Sunday of Advent**
No Early Service, No Sunday Studio or Choir

*"Nothing will be impossible with God."*

**Christmas Eve Services** **The Light Begins** **Isaiah 9:2,6**
5:00pm Family Service (Sanctuary and Online)
8:00pm Lessons and Carols (Sanctuary and Online)
11:00pm Candlelight Communion (Sanctuary Only)

**Sunday, December 31** **Springing Up** **Isaiah 61:11**
**First Sunday After Christmas**
No Early Service, No Sunday Studio or Choir

*The earth will bring forth its shoots and a garden will cause what is sown in it to spring up.*

# CONGREGATIONAL NOTICE/MOTION

**A Congregational Meeting of Shepherdstown Presbyterian Church, Shepherdstown, Jefferson County, West Virginia, will be held at 10:00 a.m. on Sunday, December 10, 2023, at which the following Motion will be made as authorized and recommended by the Session:**

## MOTION

**That the several Trustees of Shepherdstown Presbyterian Church be authorized and directed to execute and deliver a Deed by which the Church will convey all of its right, title, and interest, both legal and equitable, at and for no consideration, to Contemporary American Theater Festival, Inc., a West Virginia non-profit corporation, in and to all that certain parcel of real estate situate in Shepherdstown Corporation District, fronting 206 feet on the south side of German Street and extending back (southerly) between parallel lines, 206 feet. [Tax Map 3, parcel 45]**

**BEING all and the same real estate which was conveyed from Henry Cookus (Henrich Kuches) to the "Presbyterian Church" in and adjoining Mecklenburg Town lying and being in the County of Berkeley in the Colony of Virginia by a Deed dated May 16, 1774, and recorded in the office of the Clerk of the County Commission of Berkeley County, West Virginia, in Deed Book 3, page 39, and recorded in the office of the Clerk of the County Commission of Jefferson County, West Virginia, as Exhibit 2 with a Deed recorded in Deed Book 1304, page 155.**

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## Notifications

**SUNDAY SEMINAR**
**Sunday, December 3 and 17, 9:30am, Fellowship Hall and Zoom**

Join us for "Hearing the Christmas Story Again, As if for the First Time." The Rev. Harry Daniel will share a fresh look at the stories of Jesus' birth found in the gospels of Matthew and Luke. Each narrates the story in his own distinctive way with its own basic themes. And yet both share a lot in common. Wrestling with scripture can be fun and enjoyable, and prepare us for the celebration of Christmas! All are welcome!

**CONGREGATIONAL MEETING**
**Sunday, December 10, 10am, Sanctuary and Zoom**

Receive updates from the Session, elect congregational leaders, approve Pastor Terms of Call, and resolve a centuries-old property issue related to the Reformed Church Cemetery on German Street (see pg. 4).

**PRESBYTERIAN WOMEN**
**Thursday, December 7, 10am, Fellowship Hall and Zoom**

Our lesson will be lesson 4 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 have not read the lesson.

**POINSETTIAS!**
**Deadline Sunday, December 10**

Decorate the Sanctuary this Christmas Season with a Poinsettia! $10 each. Make check payable to SPC; memo, poinsettia. To place your Poinsettia “In Honor of …” or “In Memory of …” please fill out the information on the form found in your bulletin this week and/or the table in the Fellowship Hall and leave it in the offering plate or on Lynn’s desk. Or mail a check to: Shepherdstown Presbyterian Church, PO Box 268, Shepherdstown, WV 25443.

**GRIEF MEETS GRACE**
**Wednesday, December 13, 7pm, Sanctuary and Zoom**

A contemplative service in support of those for whom the season enhances feelings of loss and loneliness, or who simply need a space to escape from socially enforced celebration.

**VOLUNTEERS ARE NEEDED FOR WORSHIP LOGISTICAL SUPPORT**
Contact Debbie Romano if you are able to assist with sanctuary or worship service preparations.

## NOVEMBER SESSION HIGHLIGHTS

Reflected on the ways the Session Committees incorporate the SPC Identity Statement into their work
Received a positive report from the Budget and Finance Committee (see below)
Approved a bid to repair the HVAC system
Voted to co-sponsor a forum on the Israeli-Palestinian Conflict
Voted to postpone the annual meeting of the congregation to December 10
Received updates from the Safety Team, Mission Committee, Matthew 25 Implementation Team, and more

*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

**2024 STEWARDSHIP CAMPAIGN:** If you have not already, please prayerfully consider the contribution God is calling you to make to the ministry of this congregation and return your pledge.

### Year to Date Budget at a Glance – as of October 31, 2023

Actual (10 months)

| | |
|---|---|
| $270,735 | Total Income (Pledges, Additional Giving, Special Offerings) |
| $261,780 | Total Expenses (Pastor, Personnel, Property, Mission, Administration, Worship, Social Justice, Education, Special Offerings) |
| *$8955 | NET INCOME |

Budgeted (annual)

| | |
|---|---|
| $311,928 | Total Income |
| $350,102 | 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.

## 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. This month meets only on the 1st and 3rd Sundays

*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. This month Sunday Studio does not meet on December 24 and 31.

*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. This month Teach the Preacher does not meet on December 25.

*Choir Rehearsal*, Tuesday, 7:30pm, Choir Room. Led by Dr. Steve Grives, Choir Director. This month Choir does not meet on the last Tuesday.

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

*Bible at the Bar*, 1st Thursday, 6pm, 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! Note the time change from previous months. This month's topic: the birth of Jesus, Luke 2.

*Youth Group*, DECEMBER AND JANUARY ONLY 1st & 3rd Sunday, various times. Led by Christa Mastrangelo Joyce and other adult supervisors. Age appropriate lessons and activities for Grades 6 – 12. December 3 at 3:30pm and December 17 at 4:30pm.

*Hymn Sing,* 1st Sunday, 4pm, THIS MONTH ONLY at McMurran Hall for Caroling. Led by Terry Tucker. Reading music is not necessary.

*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. CANCELED THIS MONTH.

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

*Grief Meets Grace* BEGINS THIS MONTH, hosted by Pastor Gusti, THIS MONTH AS A WORSHIP SERVICE; 2nd Wednesday, in person and online. In future months: a light liturgy followed by shared conversation on where we might find grace through the many griefs we carry.

*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.

*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.

## December Calendar

Sunday Schedule

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|---|---|
| 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 Deacons Meeting, Fellowship Hall, 10am
3 Youth Group, Fellowship Hall, 3:30pm
Community Meal Drop-Off, Kitchen, 3:45pm
Youth Group serving at the Community Meal in Charles Town, WV, 5pm
Hymn Sing/Christmas Caroling, steps of McMurran Hall, SU, 4pm
4 Teach the Preacher, Zoom, 7pm
7 Presbyterian Women, Fellowship Hall, 10am
Bible at the Bar, The Meck, 6pm
8 Gathering Space for Prayer, Zoom, noon
10 Congregational Meeting, In person and Online, 10am
11 Teach the Preacher, Zoom, 7pm
13 Exploring Spiritual Practices, Zoom, 10:30am
Grief Meets Grace Contemplative Service, Sanctuary, 7pm
14 Session Meeting, Fellowship Hall/Zoom, 7pm
16 Men’s Breakfast, Fellowship Hall, 7:30am
Celtic Concert, Sponsored by Shepherdstown Music & Dance, Sanctuary, 3pm
17 Youth Group Christmas Gathering, Fellowship Hall, 5pm
18 Eastern Panhandle Youth Alliance, Fellowship Hall, 6:30pm
Teach the Preacher, Zoom, 7pm
20 Staff Christmas Party, 11:30am
22 Gathering Space for Prayer, Zoom, noon
24 Family Service in Sanctuary and Facebook Live!, 5pm
Service of Lessons and Carols in Sanctuary and Facebook Live!, 8pm
Candlelight Communion Service in Sanctuary, 11pm
25 Happy Birthday Jesus! CHURCH OFFICE CLOSED
30 Yarns & Threads, Fellowship Hall, 1pm