



THE MESSENGER

November 2025

Shepherdstown Presbyterian Church
Shepherdstownpresbyterian.org

PASTOR'S NOTE: Introducing Mary Jane Hitt

Dear friends,

While Rev. Mary Jane Hitt will not officially begin serving as Guest Pastor for my sabbatical until February, she begins preparations for that service on November 1 as a part-time "Parish Associate," working from her home in Ohio. Mary Jane's service as Parish Associate will include: 1) Working with an SPC-provided Worship Planning Team to plan worship themes, liturgies, sermon topics, etc. for February - June; 2) Conducting worship, including preaching, at both services on Sunday, November 30; 3) Attending the monthly Session meeting on January 8, 2026 (via Zoom, if necessary); and 4) Attending an All Hands on Deck SPC Leader Retreat January 30 - 31, in person.

In addition to being the fabulous mother of SPC's own Than Hitt, Mary Jane brings decades of experience in social justice, higher education, and parish ministry, with degrees in sociology from WVU and Boston University, a PhD in Higher Ed Administration from WVU, and a Master of Divinity from Duke University. In her Statement of Faith, Mary Jane says, "The first photograph I have of myself is as a two-week-old infant in my father's arms on the steps of the church where he and my mother dedicated me to God. From that time until now, I have been part of faith communities that have shaped my life." She continues to say: "I have faith that when we come together as church, as the gathered people of God, we both experience and demonstrate the way of Jesus. ... I have faith that all people are loved by God and that one way we demonstrate that love is by caring for those on the margins ... I have faith that life is a good gift from God, that goodness is stronger than hate, and that love and justice will have the final word. ... [and, as we say each Sunday in worship,] "With believers in every time and place, I have faith that nothing in life or in death can separate me, and us, from the love of God in Christ Jesus, our Lord."

Mary Jane has begun to gather materials that will aid her in serving as Guest Pastor in February, and I have every confidence that, together, your ministry will be wildly successful in my absence.

In the meantime, we gather for the **Annual Meeting of our Congregation at 9:45 a.m. on Sunday, November 16, in the Sanctuary** (Hybrid link available from the church office.) Join us to receive updates from the Session, elect congregational leaders, and approve Pastor Terms of Call!

With you on the journey,
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)

Camryn Monroe (she/her), Nursery Manager

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

The Great Sabbath:

Reflections for Our Seventh Year

Autumn: Sabbath As Disruption

Advent: Sabbath As Incarnation

Christmastide: Sabbath As Fulfillment

Epiphany and Beyond: Sabbath As Practice

Sabbath in Scripture is God's gift of freedom, justice, and healing —
a holy interruption of endless striving and its harmful consequences
Through Autumn, we listen to the cries that make Sabbath necessary.

Sabbath As Disruption: Cries of Healing and Wholeness November 2025 Worship at SPC

Sunday, November 2

All Saints Sunday

Communion

Sabbath and the Cry for Rest

1 Kings 19:1-9a

He ate and drank and lay down again.

Sunday, November 9

Thirty-second Sunday of Ordinary Time

Introducing the Sabbath of Sabbaths

Leviticus 25:8-17

*And you shall hallow the fiftieth year,
and you shall proclaim liberty throughout the land to all its inhabitants.*

Sunday, November 16

Thirty-third Sunday of Ordinary Time

Sabbath and The Realm of God

Mark 2:23-28

"The Son of Man is lord even of the Sabbath."

Sunday, November 23

Reign of Love Sunday

Guest Preacher, Rev. Harry Daniel

TBD

Sunday, November 30

First Sunday of Advent

Guest Preacher, Rev. Mary Jane Hitt

TBD



OCTOBER SESSION HIGHLIGHTS

Suellen Myers, Clerk of Session

Session's October meeting was on the 9th. It was opened with prayer and there was a quorum present.

Budget and Finance reported that giving is as expected or slightly ahead and in line with expenses. On a motion from the committee, Session approved the transition to Erie Insurance. This will provide better improved coverage and a reduction in cost. B&F also brought forth a request from Debbie Romano for financial help in funding a mission trip (Sojourners Among Us) that is part of her work toward her MDiv degree from Pittsburgh Theological Seminary. The group will be visiting farm worker communities between Tampa and Fort Myers in Florida. The committee endorsed using the Pastor Discretionary Fund for this purpose. There is enough in the Fund to cover the \$1800 cost. Session approved the request.

Rev. Newquist reported that she will be officiating a memorial service to be held at the Bavarian Inn. The first Bible at the Bar meeting had 18 attendees. The discussion topic was Christian Nationalism.

Deacons continue their spiritual development work with Pastor Gusti. Deacons received name badges to wear during worship and at SPC events.

Adult Education – Sunday Seminars are being well attended. Stewart Acuff spoke on “The Power of Protests” on October 5, and Keri Mahoney spoke on “The Challenges of Education” on October 12.

Clerk – Communion was served on October 5 and will be served on November 2 as previously approved. The minutes of the September 11 meeting were approved as amended. The next stated meeting will be November 13, 2025.

After a closing prayer, and to the joy of all, Pastor Gusti adjourned the meeting at 7:50 p.m.

The SPC Session meets the 2nd Thursday of the month from 7-9 p.m. in the Fellowship Hall and via Zoom. Meetings are open to any member of the congregation who wishes to attend. Contact Suellen Myers, Clerk of Session, to learn more.

SPC'S FINANCIAL HEALTH REPORT

Dave Smith, Budget and Finance

Stewardship Season Has Arrived — Let's Build the Future Together

As we enter this season of reflection and gratitude, we invite you to join us in shaping SPC's mission for 2026. Pledge forms should have already arrived in your homes, and your commitment—no matter the size—makes a profound difference.

Your pledges are the foundation upon which we build our annual budget. They allow us to plan with confidence, sustain our ministries, support our dedicated staff, care for our sacred space, and extend SPC's impact far beyond our walls.

Thanks to your generosity, SPC remains financially stable. We're currently 75% through the year, and giving is slightly ahead of expectations—an encouraging sign. Expenses are on track, and with continued support, we anticipate finishing the year strong.

Every pledge is a promise—a promise that SPC will continue to be a place of worship, service, and community. Whether it's your first time pledging or you've been a faithful supporter for years, your gift matters deeply.

Please pledge what you can to support SPC's financial health.

Together, we can ensure SPC remains a vibrant and welcoming spiritual home for all.

BUDGET AT A GLANCE THROUGH SEPTEMBER 30, 2025

Income and Expenses	2025 Budget (12 Months)	Actuals* through September 30th	Actuals as % of the 12-Month Budget
Operating Income	\$395,104	\$341,842	87%
Operating Expenses	\$392,873	\$292,841	75%

**** Including major gifts***

SABBATICAL TEAM UPDATE: LEANING IN: A SPIRIT-LED SABBATICAL JOURNEY

On October 11, a vibrant and thoughtful group gathered to continue planning for Pastor Gusti's upcoming sabbatical—a time not just of rest and renewal for our pastor, but of reflection, connection, and spiritual growth for our entire congregation.

Building on the foundational work completed by another dynamic team in July, our session was filled with energy, creativity, and a shared sense of purpose. We explored how this sabbatical can be a time for our church to deepen its spiritual roots, take stock of where we've been, and envision where we hope to be when the sabbatical concludes.

Rather than leaning back, we felt called to lean IN—to embrace this season as an invitation to let the Spirit move among us. As Missy Wheeler beautifully put it, each of us has the opportunity to *"accept the invitation to feel joy."*

We're excited to expand this planning group—because we believe that when it comes to dreaming and doing, the more, the merrier! Among the ideas generated were:

- Reviving cherished traditions like the Soup and Spiritual Sharing series during Lent
- Hosting monthly events that bring joy and connection—think trivia nights, game nights, and more
- Encouraging everyone to "be like Becky (Phipps)" and host a supper or gathering—because magic happens when we come together
- Creating an SPC Timeline in the church to celebrate our past, honor our present, and look forward to our future

This sabbatical season is not a pause—it's a powerful opportunity to grow as a community, to rediscover joy, and to let the Spirit guide us into new and meaningful experiences.

We would like to thank the people who have already worked together on this project and hope you'll join us on this journey. Whether by hosting an event, sharing your ideas, or simply showing up with an open heart, your presence matters. Let's lean in—together.

Keri Mahoney, Jen Jones and Donna Dettling, facilitators



Back row: Keith Loudermill, Anne Teresa, Joyce Neumark, Larry Neumark

Middle row: Keri Mahoney, Jen Jones, Diane Kradel, Mica Martin, Missy Wheeler

Front row: Jessica Brunk, Lynne Wiseman, Donna Dettling, Tim Artlip

Absent for picture: Rie Wilson



DEACON TEAM UPDATE

Donna Dettling, Deacon Moderator

Are you comfortable with prayer? As deacons, we are encouraged to pray with and for our flock members, which doesn't always come naturally. **At our October 4 deacon meeting, our spiritual development work with Pastor Gusti revolved around prayer.** We had open conversation about how we feel about praying with

and for others: our concerns and fears, our successes and personal practices. We studied verses from Matthew, where Jesus spoke about prayer with his disciples and instructed them how to pray using the Lord's Prayer. It was comforting to be reminded that even the disciples needed guidance on how to pray with others! We took home questions to ponder for our November meeting, when we will continue the prayer work. Our goal is to feel more confident and comfortable with prayer.

The deacons now have name badges they will wear to worship services and other church events! We hope this will help you connect with them and put names to faces. Don't be a stranger! We love getting to know you.

We have decided to sunset the existing Parish Care Committee, and re-imagine it as our "Share the Care Ministries," which echo the deacon's call to everyone to Share the Care with each other. These ministries will roll up under the deacons and the deacon moderator. We will celebrate and honor the wonderful work of the Parish Care Committee during the November 16 annual meeting, and welcome them and others in the congregation to participate in the following new and ongoing ministries:

- o **Sustained Care** – currently being established to assist when more than a meal or ride is needed during an illness, injury, or on a longer-term basis (volunteers welcome!)
- o **Young Adult** – recently started to keep connected with our youth who have moved from high school to college or work
- o **Support Group** – a refuge for those dealing with the impact of the current administration and needing a place to share and be supported
- o **Meals and Rides** – offers help from volunteers when food and transportation needs arise (additional volunteers needed!)
- o **Prayer Shawls and Baby Blankets** – are lovingly hand-knitted and presented to those suffering from loss, illness, and other concerns, or rejoicing a new baby (more knitters welcome!)
- o **Workshops and Educational Events** – offered periodically on topics such as End-of-Life Planning, Living with Chronic Illness, Understanding Alzheimer's and Grief Support

Please take a look at the new SPC Website

<https://shepherdstownpresbyterian.org/connect-engage/community-of-care/> to read more about our Community of Care offerings and all the other fantastic things our church is doing!

Have you received our new Deacon Brochure? If you didn't get one yet, there are copies in the Narthex and the Fellowship Hall, or you can ask the church office to email you a digital copy. We hope this will help you identify us and connect with us!

There are exciting things happening on the Deacon Team and we encourage you to get to know your deacon and how they can support 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:

1. Please make sure the person for whom you are requesting prayer has given their permission. Due to privacy considerations, we are unable to share requests without that permission.
2. Please indicate whether or not you would like this request to be shared in worship.
3. 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), or volunteer as one of the PrayerNet administrators, 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.

HAVE YOU SEEN THE NEW SPC WEBSITE?

Just search the web for Shepherdstown Presbyterian Church and land on this homepage to begin exploring everything SPC! New sections include our **Community of Care** which highlights all of the myriad ways to access any support you might need, **Our Work in the World** which is a new vision **for Mission, Social Justice and Matthew 25** engagement and giving, as well as the amazing **History of SPC**. Never miss a meeting or an event in the new **What's Happening** calendar on the homepage and in the **Events** section. You can even pledge and request a prayer online! New features will be added over the coming months, so stay tuned!





PRESBYTERIAN WOMEN

Donna Dettling, Co-Moderator

Fourteen women gathered on October 2 for our Presbyterian Women's Group meeting. Susan Lovell led the discussion on Chapter 2 – Grieve - in our powerful book ***See No Stranger: A Memoir and Manifesto of Revolutionary Love***, by Valarie

Kaur. She walked us through the author's Revolutionary Love Compass, a framework for the practice of revolutionary love. This tool helps us develop a practice of loving another, an opponent, or ourselves, by using internal actions (where transformation happens primarily within one's own mind and body), interpersonal action (where transformation happens in relationship with other people), and social actions (where transformation happens within community). **We learned that grief is the price of love, and that grieving with others in community can help heal the wound. "You don't need to know people in order to grieve with them. You grieve with them in order to know them."**



At a special PW activity on Sunday, September 28, eleven people were treated to a delicious lunch and watched the movie "Resurrection" at Chris Madeo's "entertainment barn" in Boonsboro! Afterward, we had a very interesting discussion on spirituality and healing (the theme of the movie), and enjoyed a talk by Chris Duewel about the work of healer Edgar Cayce. Fun venue, fantastic food, great movie, wonderful discussion; thank you Chris for hosting us!

The next SPC-sponsored Midweek Manna Free Community Meal at The Community Cup in Martinsburg will be held on Wednesday, November 19 at 6:00 p.m. Please watch for the sign-up information and volunteer to provide or serve food. This, in conjunction with our

monthly Community Meal in Charles Town, is very much needed and appreciated by the many people we serve.

On Communion Sunday, November 2, we will be collecting non-perishable food for the Jefferson County Community Ministries and Shepherdstown Shares food pantries. Please bring your donations to church to place in the baskets during the introit, so that as we are being fed, we can share what we have with others who have less. Contributions can also be left any time, and PW volunteers will get them to the food pantries. Watch the E-News for current needs at these pantries.

We hope you will join our wonderful group at the next meeting on November 6 at 10:00 a.m. for book study, prayer, food, and fellowship! All are welcome and encouraged to attend and bring a friend. Please read Part 1 - Chapter 3 – "Fight" in the book *See No Stranger*.

SPC BEAUTIFICATION WORK DAY

On a recent Saturday in October, a group of ten SPC-ers worked to beautify the grounds around the church. They did a terrific job. When you see them, give them a “thank you.” Maybe you will consider being a part of the next workday!



Front row: Randall Lovell, Brad Toole, Jolene Jarrell, Connie Ross, Brenda Knapp
Back row: David Hatchett, Sam Jannotta, J.B.Crawford, Adam Ware, Susan Lovell



YOUNG ADULT MINISTRY AND THEY'RE OFF!!

Thanks to donations from the congregation, 25 care packages have been mailed to young adults. Each of the packages included sweet and savory snacks, desk supplies, a gift card, a few seasonal trinkets and a note of support. Thank you to those who contributed items, signed cards and are praying for these young people. Shown with the bags are Sherry Sykes and Susan Lovell.



SHEPHERD UNIVERSITY CHORAL CONCERT ON SATURDAY, NOVEMBER 8, 7:30 P.M., FRANK CENTER.

Ralph Vaughn Williams' *Dona Nobis Pacem* and *In Windsor Forest* will be presented by Masterworks Chorale, Chamber Singers and Camerata. **Sheila Melendez, SPC's choir and handbell director, will be the guest soprano soloist.**



SPOTLIGHT ON BETTY SNYDER

At a recent Sunday Seminar, Betty shared this poem which she had written several years ago.



YOU'RE SAFE WITH ME

Recently I heard about wearing a safety pin to tell everyone,
"You're safe with me," so now I'm wearing one.
Whether you're Christian, Muslim, Jewish or atheist,
Whether you're gay, straight, or transgender,
Whether you're Republican, Democrat, Libertarian or Independent,
Whether you're an immigrant – legal or not,
You're all safe with me.

If asked what category I fit into, I will happily tell you...
I am an imperfect child of God, trying to follow the teaching of Jesus:
To love my neighbors and my enemies, to turn the other cheek, to forgive 70 times 7.

I am a proud citizen of this great country,
Remembering with pride what is written on our Statue of Liberty,
"Give me you tired, your poor, your huddled masses yearning to be free,
The wretched refuse of your teeming shore,
Send these, the homeless, tempest-tossed to me.
I lift my lamp beside the golden door."

I am a respecter of this beautiful earth, trying to reduce my carbon footprint.
Do I always succeed? Of course not,
But I look around and see many other people
Doing a better job than I do and I am inspired.
So every morning I get up and attach a safety pin to my shirt and TRY!

November 2025

October 2025							November 2025							December 2025						
S	M	T	W	T	F	S	S	M	T	W	T	F	S	S	M	T	W	T	F	S
			1	2	3	4							1		1	2	3	4	5	6
		5	6	7	8	9	10	11					2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
		12	13	14	15	16	17	18					9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16
		19	20	21	22	23	24	25					16	17	18	19	20	21	22	23
		26	27	28	29	30	31						23	24	25	26	27	28	29	30
													30							31

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
8:30 am Early Worship Service with Communion 9:30 am Sunday Seminar - FH & Zoom 11:00 am Sunday Studio Classroom 2 Worship with Communion In-Person & Hybrid 12:30 pm New Member Class Youth Group Meeting 5:00 pm Community Meal in Charles Town		3 5:00 pm SPC Support Group via Zoom	4 7:30 pm Choir Rehearsal - Choir Room	5 10:00 am Presbyterian Women - FH/Zoom 6:00 pm Bible at the Bar - The Meck	6 Office Hours 10-2 11:00 am G2G Steering Team Meeting - Fellowship Hall 7:00 pm Session Meeting - Fellowship Hall & Zoom -----Lynn out of the Office-----	7 Office Hours 10-2
8:30 am Early Worship Service 9:30 am Sunday Seminar - FH & Zoom 11:00 am Sunday Studio Classroom 2 Worship In-Person & Hybrid 12:30 pm New Member Class Youth Group Meeting	9 Office Closed 5:00 pm SPC Support Group via Zoom 6:15 pm Speak Story Series - Sanctuary & Facebook Live	10 Office Closed	11 6:30 pm Handbell Rehearsal - Sanctuary 7:30 pm Choir Rehearsal - Choir Room -----Lynn out of the Office-----	12 Office Hours 10-2 6:30 pm Handbell Rehearsal - Sanctuary 7:30 pm Choir Rehearsal - Choir Room	13 Office Hours 10-2	14 Office Hours 10-2
8:30 am Early Worship Service 9:45 am Congregational Meeting 11:00 am Sunday Studio - Classroom 2 Worship In-Person & Hybrid 12:30 pm Youth Group Meeting	16 *17	*18 5:00 pm SPC Support Group via Zoom	*19 6:30 pm Handbell Rehearsal - Sanctuary 7:30 pm Choir Rehearsal - Choir Room	*20 Office Closed	*21 Office Closed	*22 Office Closed
Guest Preacher Rev. Harry Daniel 8:30 am Early Worship Service 9:30 am Sunday Seminar - FH & Zoom 11:00 am Sunday Studio - Classroom 2 Worship In-Person & Hybrid 12:30 pm Youth Group Meeting	*23 *24	*25 5:00 pm SPC Support Group via Zoom	*26 Office Closed	*27 Office Closed	*28 Office Closed	*29 Office Closed
Guest Preacher Rev. Mary Jane Hitt 8:30 am Early Worship Service 9:30 am Sunday Seminar - FH & Zoom 11:00 am Sunday Studio - Classroom 2 Worship In-Person & Hybrid 12:30 pm Youth Group Meeting	*30 *30	*31 *31	*32 *32	*33 *33	*34 *34	*35 *35

* Pastor Gusti will be on vacation November 17 through December 2