



# THE MESSENGER

September 2025  
Shepherdstown Presbyterian Church  
[Shepherdstownpresbyterian.org](http://Shepherdstownpresbyterian.org)

## PASTOR'S NOTE: Our Sabbatical Year

This fall, toward the end of October, you and I will enter our seventh year of ministry together.

Can you believe it?!

Seven, as I have shared with the congregation many times, is a biblical number of completion. The seventh day is the Sabbath. Creation is complete. God rests and celebrates and the people do, too. Sabbath in Scripture is more than “a day off”: it is God’s gift of freedom, justice, and healing — a holy interruption of endless striving and the harm that follows our human hubris.

The seventh year is also a sabbatical. An agricultural cycle is complete. For an entire year, the land (including the economy of the land) rests and celebrates, and the people do, too.

In this seventh year of ministry together, we at SPC will embrace an adapted approach to the biblical understanding of sabbatical. Indeed, we have much to celebrate! We have not only survived a global pandemic, a 100% staff turnover, and a thorough reimaging of “how we do church,” we have thrived in the midst of it. A cycle of ministry is complete.

We have worked hard and prayed hard and loved hard and dreamed hard. This year, we step back and reflect on what it all has meant, trusting the fruits of our past six years of labor to sustain us in this seventh.

Our worship throughout the year will offer biblical and theological insights for this “Great Sabbath” opportunity. Through Autumn we will listen to the *cries* that make Sabbath necessary: cries of freedom, land, peace, rest, wealth, and healing. As we move into Advent, our theme will deepen into “Sabbath-With-Us” as we mark the coming of Christ. In January, our focus will turn toward “Practicing Sabbath” in ways large and small, in our congregational life and in our personal lives. All of this will prepare us for our shared sabbatical journey beginning in mid-February, as I re-trace the journey of ministry that led me to SPC and our Sabbatical Planning Team leads you through a similar journey.

This “Great Sabbath” sabbatical year invites us to receive Sabbath not as a break from life, but as God’s rhythm for life — a rhythm of liberation, healing, and presence that renews us all.

- 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

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Shepherdstown, WV 25443  
[Shepherdstownpresbyterian.org](http://Shepherdstownpresbyterian.org)

Church Office Hours: 8am – 2pm, Monday through Friday; 304-876-6466  
[office@shepherdstownpresbyterian.org](mailto: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](mailto: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 History and Land**

September 2025 Worship at SPC

**Sunday, September 7**

**Introducing Sabbath**

Genesis 2:1-3

**Twenty-second Sunday of Ordinary Time**

**Communion**

**Kickoff Sunday**

*So God blessed the seventh day and hallowed it.*

**Sunday, September 14**

**Sabbath and the Cry for Freedom**

Deuteronomy 5:12-15

**Twenty-third Sunday of Ordinary Time**

**Antietam Remembrance**

*Remember that you were a slave in the land of Egypt.*

**Sunday, September 21**

**Sabbath and the Cry of the Land**

Exodus 23:10-11

**Twenty-fourth Sunday of Ordinary Time**

**Antietam Remembrance**

*The seventh year you shall let the land rest and lie fallow.*

**Sunday, September 28**

**Introducing the Sabbatical Year**

Leviticus 25:1-8

**Twenty-fifth Sunday of Ordinary Time**

*In the seventh year there shall be a sabbath of complete rest.*



## CHILDREN AND YOUTH UPDATE

**Christa Mastrangelo Joyce**  
**Director of Children and Youth Formation**

The summer gives the youth and children of the church a chance to connect without a curriculum. The youth group had a fun time heading to the drive-in theater twice for two fun movies, and gathering for our now 3<sup>rd</sup> annual pool party at the end of the summer.

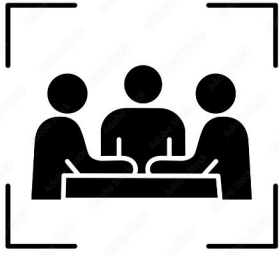
The Sunday studio kiddos had a chance to create pictures of joy and hope for the Apache and other Native people of the Oak Flat region of Arizona. They also discovered a great delight in the art of sculpting with clay!

The big delight of the summer for our families was the baseball game. Complete with fireworks and food gift cards as we exited, this was such a highlight to see both parents and their children (young and not so young!) enjoying a Friday night out.

As we head into the fall, we're gearing up for a special new curriculum in the youth group. I had the opportunity to write this curriculum with a youth pastor colleague in North Carolina. Together, we crafted a curriculum around the Parables of Jesus, entitled "**Once Upon a Parable: Real Stories. Big Questions. Kin-dom Vibes.**" Each selection includes a time of prayer, a game, a creative activity, and reflection/study time. This curriculum will be our focus from September through April.

Our Sunday studio crew will begin the fall with the theme "Do Justice," using the examples of Jesus to explore integrating justice into our everyday lives as we remember that small actions can add up to big results.





## AUGUST SESSION HIGHLIGHTS

**Session's August meeting** was opened with prayer and a quiet time led by Pastor Gusti.

**The Sabbatical Planning Team** provided an update on their work. The team is envisioning a positive sabbatical for both Pastor Gusti and the SPC congregation. The group identified future state/conditions and actions, activities, or events the SPC community could put in place before, during, and after the sabbatical to drive desired outcomes. Specific areas include Greater Engagement and Deep Community, Shared Empowerment, and Mirroring the Pastor's Sabbatical with reflection and taking stock. The group is continuing work to provide information and specific actions.

**Finance** reported that overall income remains a bit ahead of expectations while expenses are approximately on target. Stewardship material will be provided on October 1. A printed letter and pledge form will be mailed with an email follow-up. Stewardship material will also be included in the bulletin, the Messenger, webpage, and E-News. The Stewardship theme will be "Stay the Course," including a request to increase pledges by 5% as in previous years. There will be a "minute for stewardship" beginning October 5 through the congregational meeting on November 16. The awards from the Lilly Foundation will be announced August 29. An anonymous donation of \$5,000 has been received which can be used to help cover Rev. Hitt's contract, if needed, or rolled over into the next fiscal year. A quote for SPC's insurance has been received with significant cost savings and is being reviewed by SPC Trustee Jim Crawford for adequacy of coverage. The committee will continue providing periodic reports on SPC's finances during the services on August 24.

**ICE Signage/Ushers** – Adam Ware will compose a guide card for the ushers to use if ICE agents show up during a service (an unlikely event). Signs designating private spaces will be posted on restroom doors and the office.

**Moderator's Report** – Pastor Gusti reported that she has stepped down from the Westminster Foundation due to being away on sabbatical. Board member Rob Mahaffey has secured a \$5000 grant for Campus Ministry. SPC can use this or use it in conjunction with another organization. Carolee Youngblood and Adam Ware agreed to be on the Nominating Committee with Suellen Myers as alternate. Wanda Stewart is taking a six-month leave of absence from Session while recovering from her injuries. Madison Quinn (daughter of Karen Waugh) has requested that her marriage take place at SPC on April 25, 2026. The Rev. Dwight McCormick was approved to preach on August 24 and 31. Healing Minds, Hearts, and Lives has asked SPC to co-sponsor their event on September 27 in Charles Town. This event is to raise awareness of the situation of Palestinian children. The request was approved.

**Deacons** – We had continuing discussions about some of the successes and challenges in our deacon ministries this year. There were many joys shared. Difficulties included finding the right balance of communication with flock members, knowing how to maintain contact with people who have moved, as well as feeling like a failure when someone doesn't respond. Out of these discussions came the idea of developing a "Sustained Care Team" of people willing to do regular visits and other types of assistance to those who may need more than a single deacon can provide. This will be a re-envisioned version of what used to be Parish Care. All but one deacon has taken the required Boundary Training, and she is scheduled for later this year. Unfortunately, Derek Smith has made the difficult and personal decision to resign as a deacon. His flock will be covered.

**Personnel** – The committee requested and Session approved Camryn Monroe as Nursery Manager replacing Olivia Gill and the approval of Sheila Melendez as director of the handbell choir.

**Property** – Daryl Kuster has retired, and Adam Ware has agreed to Chair the committee. At the last meeting of Session it was reported that the latch on the elevator needed to be repaired and the committee requested that the repair be approved. The estimated cost is \$1700. The request was approved.

**Worship** – Worship services for July were well attended, with new visitors joining us each week. Mica did an inventory of the plastic communion cups and found we have three boxes so we will use them until we are down to one. The glass communion cups have yet to be found. If anyone knows where they are, please let Lynn Dampman or Mica Martin know.

**Clerk** – Communion was served on July 6 and August 3, and will be served on September 7, as previously approved. The next stated meeting will be September 11.

The meeting was closed with prayer.

*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.*

## **DEACON TEAM UPDATE**

### **Donna Dettling, Deacon Moderator**

We hope you were present during one of the **worship services in July** to learn about our Share the Care philosophy and the Biblical origins of our Two-by-Two deacon partnerships, and hear reflections from a few of the deacons on our team. Their words were a touching reminder of the importance of the deacon ministry at SPC. **We also handed out our new Deacon Brochure!** If you didn't receive 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.

**At our August 2 Deacon meeting**, we had an uplifting conversation about the successes and challenges of our individual deacon ministries with our flocks. We shared our joys and concerns, and worked together on ways to solve the challenges, including asking if anyone else on the team was familiar with the people we didn't know and had never gotten a response from. **Our joys included making deep connections with certain flock members, people opening up to us with obvious trust, being able to support someone in crisis, and getting responses from people we had not previously heard from.**

During this meeting, **we decided to start a Young Adult Ministry through the deacon team**, to provide support to youth who have completed high school and are moving on to college and/or work. We plan to send cards of encouragement, birthday cards, and care packages throughout the year. **If you or someone in your family falls into this category, we ask that you please contact Susan Lovell by September 15 at (304) 261-8644 or [slovell242@gmail.com](mailto:slovell242@gmail.com) and provide her with the person's name, mailing address (home or school) and birthdate (MM/DD.)** We will send our initial cards later in September, followed by care packages in October. Thanks for your help to get this ministry started, so we can keep our young adults connected to their church and let them know they are cared for!

## PrayerNet

Please send your prayer requests to [prayernet@shepherdstownpresbyterian.org](mailto: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](mailto: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](mailto:cwood453@aol.com).



## COFFEE TALK

**By Mary Ellen Lloyd, Hospitality Chair**

Do you enjoy chatting with friends over a cup of coffee after church? Do you get excited when there is a plate of goodies waiting in the Fellowship Hall? I do, and I need some help making it happen.

SPC's Hospitality Team wants to revive the coffee teams. Before COVID, we had six teams of volunteers to keep coffee hour running smoothly and consistently. It is time to bring back that spirit of teamwork and expand our welcome after Sunday services.

We need folks willing to make coffee, set out goodies (provided by SPC) and clean up after coffee hour (which is more like "coffee 30 minutes" ☺). If enough people sign up, each team will only need to commit to one shift every 4-6 weeks. We can use volunteers from both the early and late services.

This is a great way to gather with our church family and to show a warm welcome to our visitors. I hope some of you will find this to be "just the right thing" for you. Please reach out to Lynn in the church office or to Hospitality chair Mary Ellen Lloyd ([mewlloyd@gmail.com/304-261-6771](mailto:mewlloyd@gmail.com/304-261-6771)) if you would like to know more.

Thank you for thoughtfully considering participating in this important social ministry of SPC.



## SECOND ANNUAL BASEBALL OUTING AT MERITUS PARK



There were 84 SPC-ers and friends who attended the 2nd Annual Baseball Outing at Meritus Park in Hagerstown in early August. The weather was perfect and the company was the best. Even the game was going well until the hometown team fell apart in the 9th inning and lost in the 10th. Fireworks followed the game and were enjoyed by all. Here are some pictures from the event.







A good time was had by all. If you missed it this year, plan to join us next year for our 3rd Annual Baseball Outing!



**SPC 's Hospitality Team invites you to the**

**ANNUAL PICNIC**

Sunday, September 14, 2025

3-6 PM

Morgan's Grove Park Pavilion

- Please bring a veggie, fruit, or side dish to share.
- Garden bouquets to adorn our tables are always appreciated.
- Paper goods, utensils, fried chicken, and drinks will be provided.

**Did somebody say ICE CREAM?!?!?!?**

DO NOT bring a dessert, we will have an ice cream sundae bar to top off our picnic.



**SPC's Got Talent**

For this year's entertainment, you are invited to bring a poem or reading to share. Funny, serious, romantic, or fanciful. Original, classic, or someone else's words you admire. Spoken, sung, accompanied by instruments or movement. Let's see your creativity!



Be prepared for the annual balloon toss send off at the end of the picnic....  
you will get wet!

Have questions or want to help? Reach out to Mary Ellen Lloyd at  
[mewlloyd@gmail.com](mailto:mewlloyd@gmail.com) or 304-261-6771.





## PRESBYTERIAN WOMEN

Donna Dettling, Co-Moderator

Ten of the Presbyterian Women from SPC met for an **informal get together at The Community Cup** in Martinsburg on Thursday, August 7. We had fun catching up with each other, talking about plans for the upcoming year of PW, and supporting The Community Cup by enjoying our delicious breakfast and beverage purchases.



We hope you have marked **Thursday, September 4, at 10:00 am** on your calendar and will plan to attend the **first Presbyterian Women's Group meeting of the new season (in the Fellowship Hall or on Zoom.)** We will begin reading and discussing the book ***See No Stranger: A Memoir and Manifesto of Revolutionary Love*, by Valarie Kaur.** We will learn ways to strengthen ourselves and be beacons of hope for others during this turbulent and unprecedented time. **Please read the Introduction and Part 1, Chapter 1, "Wonder."**

**The next SPC-sponsored Midweek Manna Free Community Meal at The Community Cup in Martinsburg will be on September 3 at 6:00 pm.** Our Women's Group, the Eastern Panhandle Youth Alliance, and congregation members are invited to provide food or volunteer to serve or lead a devotion. This will be a **taco dinner** for those with food insecurity in the Martinsburg area. We will be providing these meals every two months for approximately 40 people. **Here's the link to sign-up and see details:**  
**<https://www.perfectpotluck.com/meals.php?t=KBVD6811>**

**On Communion Sunday, September 7, 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.

PW has a **special activity planned for Sunday, September 28 at 1:00 pm.** We will carpool to Chris Madeo's entertainment barn in Boonsboro after church, to watch the movie, "Resurrection" starring Ellen Burstyn. We will have a discussion afterward on spirituality and healing, along with a brief talk by Chris Duewel about the work of the healer Edgar Cayce. Lunch will be provided and we encourage you to join us and invite someone who can't attend our regular meetings.

**Presbyterian Women is on the move, and we welcome you to join in the action! Hope to see you at our meeting on September 4, at 10:00 am, for book study, prayer, food, and fellowship! All are welcome and encouraged to attend.**



## DEBBIE ROMANO - CANDIDATE FOR MINISTRY

By Rie Wilson

Debbie is on her journey to become a Presbyterian minister. She has been a *child* of SPC since she joined in 1991. We are pleased to give the congregation an update on her path.

First, a little about Debbie's background. She was born in Maryland, then lived in various other places. She attended Shepherd (then) College in the early 80s, where she met and married her husband. They raised three children here who were baptized at SPC. She is now a widow.

As a teenager, she sensed a call to ministry while attending Fairfax Presbyterian Church. Her pastor and his wife were the first ones to encourage Debbie to discern a call.

While at SPC, Debbie served on the Deacon Board after her ordination in 2001 (alongside Sally Fitzgerald, the first openly gay candidate for ordination in the Presbytery). She implemented the Deacon Shepherding Program. Debbie is grateful for the special relationship with Reverend Jim Macdonell, now deceased, who guided her through the process and sensed her call to ministry 25 years ago.

She was active in Sunday school and nursery when her children were small and directed the Christmas Pageant for several years. Debbie served as Hospitality Chair, Presbytery commissioned representative, and SPC representative to the Eastern Panhandle Mission Community. Canterbury Center appreciated the monthly worship service of song, scripture, and prayer Debbie led for about 10 years. She was involved in administrative consulting and the church office before SPC hired an Administrative Assistant. Debbie was the Worship Committee Chair until she left SPC for her Field Education commitment in June 2024.

While Debbie was initially enrolled at Wesley Theological Seminary in Washington, DC, she transferred to Pittsburgh Theological Seminary. She needed to enroll in Presbyterian Ordination classes to comply with Presbytery requirements and preparation for Ordination exams. Their hybrid program allows for distance learning. She attends in person two weeks each semester.

She has found all her classes to be rewarding, but her language classes (Greek/Hebrew) were the hardest. She took them in the summer terms covering two full semesters in 10 weeks! She has formed community with classmates, growing and developing through study of mission, pastoral care and counseling, theology, and from amazing class discussions. Debbie is on the chapel team, where she can express and learn diversity in language and traditions.

Debbie has now completed her Field Education at Tuscarora Presbyterian Church where she loved affirming her ministry abilities. New to this community as a student-intern, it took only a short time to be accepted and embraced as Pastor Deborah. The congregation and session embrace new perspectives and practices and have been patient and supportive. She will continue in this ministry until she graduates in May 2026 with her Master of Divinity (MDiv) degree.

There are still some major steps to take before beginning the process of *ready for a call*. She will go where God leads her. Debbie is grateful for the prayers and support from SPC as she continues her journey to ministry. She says, "Shepherdstown Presbyterian will always hold a big space of love in my heart."

# OUR WORK IN THE WORLD - SPC PARTNERS IN NICARAGUA

By Kay Schultz

SPC has been assisting with ministries in Bluefields, Nicaragua since 2010. Ten of us participated in a mission trip there in 2011 with one teen, Alex Navarro, saying that the trip “helped open his eyes to the real world”. Another said that the trip was about leaving his comfort zone entirely, realizing that possessions no longer mean as much because having friends and family who love us is all that people really need. Wendy Ranson, one of the adults who traveled with us, said in response to someone’s statement that the trip must be very sad: “Yes, the needs and problems are great. But the smiles run rampant there as well. They seem to have a profound faith that God will look after them.”

Our mission investments in Nicaragua have helped address a variety of local and regional needs including technical and food support for the school, support for the farm including the development of a Forest Conservation and Stewardship plan for the property, feeding programs for poor children and homeless adults, support for poor women expecting babies, support for widows and children in remote villages, digging wells, building a playground for children, and other improvement and care initiatives.

We have been supporting a young man named Maynor during his high school education and university study in agroecology. He is now in his second year of university studies. He sent us a letter last month:

*“My name is Maynor Ariel Guillen Lira, I am 19 years old and I am from the city of Bluefields, Nicaragua. I studied at the Verbo Christian school, in primary and in secondary, where I benefited with a scholarship that provided me with school expenses until my final year of secondary school. Today I am in my second year at the National Agrarian University (Managua) studying Forestry Engineering and I still receive the same support for my university expenses. My parents also support me because they want to see me succeeding in my career.*

*My hobby is learning English and music. I want to get a guitar and be able to learn how to play. I have put a lot of effort into myself with the aim of learning and improving myself every day. The difficulty I have had in my studies is mathematics but, even so, I try to give the best of myself in order to make the most of the support that Shepherdstown Presbyterian Church gives me in my career of Forestry Engineering.*

*I enjoy walking in various parts of the country for exercise and taking notice of the land around me. What I am learning about the career as a future engineer, makes me committed to the protection of our resources and the sustainable development of forests. That is, I am preparing myself to be a guardian of forest ecosystems, promoting the balance between conservation and the responsible use of resources.*

*My mother, Andrea Lira Gaitán, is 47 years old. She was a teacher, but due to illness she was forced to resign, so now she is at home. My father, Antonio Guillen Garcia, is 60 years old. He works in construction but he does not have a steady job. He works in different jobs that come day by day. We are five brothers and three sisters, of which I am the youngest.*

*I want to express my deepest gratitude first to God and then to Shepherdstown Presbyterian Church for the valuable support you have given me in my studies. Thanks to your generosity and faith, I can continue to prepare myself as a future forestry engineer. Your help is not only an academic opportunity, but also a sign of Christian love in action. May God multiply in blessings all that you do for young people like me. Without further ado, I wish you success in your daily lives.*

*Your help has been a blessing in my life.*



To learn more about SPC and the Verbo church and school in Bluefields, Nicaragua, go to:  
<https://www.shepherdstownpresbyterian.org/ministries/serving-world/verbo-church-and-ministries-nicaragua>



## **SUPPORT GROUP FOR THOSE AFFECTED BY EXECUTIVE ORDERS**

**The SPC SUPPORT GROUP** was formed in response to an urgent need, as people began being impacted by job loss, job insecurity, and other issues related to actions of the current administration. We met weekly on Zoom from February through June, then went on a hiatus for the summer. **Please contact the church office by September 14 and let us know if you would like the meetings to resume, so we can determine if there is currently a need for this type of support.** You are also encouraged to contact your Deacon directly and/or make an appointment through the church office to meet with Pastor Gusti.