



THE MESSENGER

September 2026
Shepherdstown Presbyterian Church
Shepherdstownpresbyterian.org

PASTOR'S NOTE: A Year of Grace

One year ago, as we entered our seventh year in ministry together, we began a reflection on the theme of Sabbath. We then practiced Sabbath as I retraced the journey that led me to SPC on my sabbatical and you engaged in community building, the timeline project, and a statement of solidarity with all who suffer through the rise of White Christian nationalism. Now, in our eighth year, we intentionally integrate my experience with yours into a shared commitment to the “new creation” we are becoming together as a result of those experiences. The mystics call it “a year of grace.”

The cairn we began in worship August 23 will serve as our first symbol of this year of grace. From the Gaelic, a *cairn* is a human made pile of stones used to mark a trail or a burial ground or a pilgrimage site or a collective prayer. We will move the cairn we have created to a location alongside the church building and invite all who wish to leave a stone or take a stone to do so as an act of prayer.

Our blessing of the cairn's new location will occur Labor Day weekend (September 6). Our proclamation that day will include a collective sharing of what this sabbatical year has meant to us. On Kickoff Sunday (September 13), we launch into a new program year, with a “Church Fair” in the Fellowship Hall between services to highlight all of the activities in which you might participate. I will also begin a sermon series on the Statement from the Session in response to Christian nationalism.

A second symbol of integrating our year of grace relates to worship itself. Many of you have expressed how helpful it was for the fellowship of the community during the sabbatical to limit worship services to one hour. Others of you have expressed how much you appreciate the return to an open ended service that flows with the Spirit now that the sabbatical has ended.

Please know I have heard you. While my worship leadership style tends more toward the open-ended approach, I am sensitive to the desire to use the time in other community-oriented ways. I have committed to making a greater effort to streamline services as much as possible. At the same time, I will ask your indulgence when the movement of the Spirit truly does require an extended worship experience. At the end of the day, let us all remember that worship is ultimately about expressing our gratitude to God for the gift of this life and the treasure of this community. And we are truly grateful!

- 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

Lynn Dampman (she/her), Administrative Assistant

Sheila Melendez (she/her), Choir Director

Sam Jannotta (he/him), Accompanist

Mark Nutwell (he/him), Tech Support

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lynn@shepherdstownpresbyterian.org

Contacting Pastor Gusti: Pastor Gusti makes every effort to respond to communications as soon as possible between the hours of 9 a.m. and 9 p.m. 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 Concludes

Labor Day Weekend Worship with SPC

Pastor Gusti will invite the congregation to share a collective proclamation on what the past year of focus on Sabbath and sabbatical has meant to us.

Sunday, September 6

Our Labor of Rest

Psalm 23

Twenty-third Sunday of Ordinary Time

Communion Sunday

... he maketh me to lie down ...

SPC Statement of Faith

September Worship with SPC

Pastor Gusti will reflect on the themes expressed in the SPC Statement of Faith approved by the Session while she was on sabbatical.

Sunday, September 13

RADICAL HOSPITALITY: We Choose Welcome

John 6:37

Twenty-fourth Sunday of Ordinary Time

Choir Returns

Antietam Yellow Ribbon Ritual

*Everything that the Father gives me will come to me,
and anyone who comes to me I will never drive away.*

Sunday, September 20

HOLISTIC SPIRITUALITY: Everything Belongs

Micah 6:8

Twenty-fifth Sunday of Ordinary Time

*He has told you, O mortal, what is good,
and what does the Lord require of you
but to do justice and to love kindness
and to walk humbly with your God?*

Sunday, September 27

ENGAGED COMPASSION: God Is Love

1 John 4:16

Twenty-sixth Sunday of Ordinary Time

*God is love,
and those who abide in love abide in God,
and God abides in them.*



CHILDREN AND YOUTH UPDATE

Christa Mastrangelo Joyce
Director of Children and Youth Formation

The first time I accompanied the youth group on a mission trip, I was a parent chaperone for my then 12-year-old daughter. At the time, our church was partnered with The Center, a PCUSA organization out of Baltimore, that sought to engage in mission that allowed people to discover what it means to be “the hands and feet of Jesus” in the world.

I had no background in having ever done missional work for a church and had some basic assumptions about what mission work entailed. Not the least of these assumptions was that our youth and adults had come to Baltimore “to help” people in this city. Right away on that first night, I was tasked with the opportunity to expand my understanding of mission work and to put away the word “help” for the rest of our time in partnership.

Thinking we are “helping,” it was explained, creates a hierarchy of power and implies that we must bring something to a community that isn’t already there, i.e. that we hold the power. It turned out, and it keeps turning out, that this is not at all the case. Instead, we were asked to consider how we were there to come alongside people in a community who were already doing God’s work and to be a part of what was already happening by becoming part of their community for even a short time. This experience, it was explained, was about keeping our eyes, ears, and hearts open for what God was already up to and to make connection and relationship with others, with creation, and with God our primary intent. What a gift this mindset proved to be!

That guidance has informed every mission trip I’ve since led with our youth. It was no exception this summer when the youth and I, along with a few parent chaperones, headed off to our new mission partner, Massanetta Springs, in the heart of our Presbytery in Harrisonburg, VA.

Guided by Genesis 28:16 when Jacob has awakened from a dream of God’s presence, I led the youth to become aware through the weekend of how “surely God is in this place.” With that in mind, we spent our weekend working first at the Mennonite and Brethren Heritage Center, then at Massanutten Presbyterian Church. Both locations had us engaged in outdoor work, tending gardens, stacking wood, and cleaning up grounds.

This was important work, of course, but the special bonds that came out of this time are immeasurable. The youth strengthened their own bonds of community, while connecting with people in the wider “Church.” Each of us cast the net of community more widely.

Looking ahead, we’re excited to kick off the fall curriculum in Sunday Studio and with the Youth Group. We always welcome volunteers for Sunday Studio and the nursery; you’ll be well supported, and you’ll find that spending time with these kids is a delight.

Leadership Update: This summer, we established an SPC Children and Youth Committee to support the children’s programs at SPC. The inaugural members of that committee are Mary Anne Hitt (chair), Natasha Baihly, Lonce Bailey, Catherine Feaga, Patty Hartman, Erin Snook, and Rachel Wilkinson. I’m very grateful to everyone involved for stepping up to support our ministry for children and youth.

PICTURES FROM YOUTH MISSION WEEKEND
AT MASSANETTA SPRINGS, VA
AUGUST 2026



PC(USA) CONDEMNS ICE KILLINGS

Key leaders in the PC(USA) have signed on to a letter condemning recent killings by Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) agents. The letter has been sent to the majority and minority leaders of each house of Congress. Below is the letter.

Dear Congressional Leaders,

As 377 faith leaders and 88 faith organizations from many traditions, we join together in this statement to express outrage regarding the recent ICE killings in Texas and Maine. In Houston, Texas, Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) shot and killed Lorenzo Salgado Araujo, a beloved resident and father who was on his way to work on July 7 in the city's East End. On July 13 in Biddeford, Maine, ICE also shot and killed Johan Sebastián, a 25-year-old husband and father of a three-year-old daughter. He was a Colombian national with work authorization, and media reports confirm that he was not the intended target of the ICE enforcement operation. These deaths are part of a deeply concerning pattern: federal immigration officials have [shot and killed 22 people](#) since January 2025, and 2026 is on pace to be the [deadliest year ever at ICE detention centers](#).

Together we mourn these great losses and express remorse for a society that has grown far too accustomed to fatal immigration enforcement encounters. Throughout our sacred texts, there are clear truths we are called to hold that include loving and caring for our neighbors and refraining from harming others.

Due to a lack of oversight, training standards, and guardrails, the brutal tactics of federal immigration enforcement have continued, resulting in serious injuries and deaths of citizens and non-citizens alike. The administration's mass deportation tactics and detention conditions have reached a deeply alarming level. Hunger strikes have emerged in detention facilities, families are being detained, children are afraid to attend school, and immigration enforcement activity is increasingly occurring in places that should be protected and safe, including houses of worship and hospitals.

As faith leaders and organizations, we have the moral responsibility to speak out against such atrocities and to demand full accountability, an independent investigation, and the immediate release of all evidence or video footage surrounding the shootings. Additionally, we call on the U.S. Congress to oppose additional funding to ICE and Border Patrol and to support efforts to reallocate the \$210 billion in unchecked, supplemental funding that these agencies have received over the last two years. Instead, taxpayer funds should be used to provide things like food aid and medical care, resources that were stripped from our communities by the passage of last year's H.R. 1 bill, which severely cut the Supplemental Nutritional Assistance Program (SNAP) and Medicaid.

As people of faith, we believe public funding should go toward caring for our communities, rather than fueling agencies that are killing our neighbors and tearing families apart.



SPC'S FINANCIAL HEALTH REPORT

Dave Smith, Budget and Finance

CARRYING HOPE INTO THE FUTURE TOGETHER

In short, SPC remains blessed by faithful pledged giving, but our overall cash position is weaker than it was last year. The Finance Committee is watching this closely, keeping expenses aligned with the budget, and preparing a stewardship campaign that invites all of us to help sustain SPC's ministry into the future.

The Finance Committee met to review July's financial reports, discuss the Chancel lighting project, plan the stewardship campaign, and adjust shared responsibilities between the personnel and finance committees. These conversations focused on one shared goal: helping SPC steward its resources wisely while carrying hope into the future together.

SPC's current cash balance is about \$50,000 lower than it was at the end of July 2025. That difference may reflect reduced general giving and the absence of special gifts. Pledged giving is on track at 58% of budget, while general giving is tracking at 37% of budget. Expenses, by contrast, are generally on track. The committee will continue to monitor the cash position and review the factors contributing to the decline.

The committee reviewed a revised proposal to upgrade the Chancel lighting using funds donated specifically for that purpose. After Session approves the revised project scope, the project will move to the Property Committee for next steps.

Adam Ware, Stewardship Chair, is working with Pastor Gusti to develop the focus for this year's stewardship campaign. A central message will be that additional revenue is needed to sustain current operations and, where possible, expand services. Adam and the committee are grateful for SPC's generous faithfulness.

This year's stewardship message will emphasize both gratitude and responsibility: gratitude for the generosity that already sustains SPC, and responsibility for ensuring that our ministries remain strong in the year ahead.

The committee also addressed personnel committee restructuring. Payroll and benefits management will shift to the Finance Committee, allowing the Personnel Committee to focus more fully on staff development and relationships.

The next Finance Committee meeting will be September 8.

Thank you for supporting SPC's ministry through your regular giving, pledges, and special gifts. Every gift helps sustain worship, care, outreach, and the shared life of our congregation.

Ways to give to SPC:

- In the offering plate during worship
- By mail - Make checks payable to Shepherdstown Presbyterian Church and mail to:
PO Box 268, Shepherdstown, WV 25443
- Online - If you would like to make an online donation, please go to:
www.shepherdstownpresbyterian.org and use the GIVE icon in the upper right on the home page or use the QR code. You may donate through PayPal, debit or credit card or Venmo.



BUDGET AT A GLANCE THROUGH JULY 31, 2026

Income and Expenses	2026 Budget (12 Months)	Actuals* through July 31	Actuals as % of the 12-Month Budget
Operating Income	\$358,589	\$204,243	57%
Operating Expenses	\$397,841	\$224,844	56%

* Actuals include major gifts received during the reporting period.



FEED YOUR SOUL

FALL ADULT ED SCHEDULE OFFERS OPPORTUNITIES FOR LEARNING AND SPIRITUAL GROWTH

Summer is over and the busy season is upon us. What is *your* spirit calling for now? This fall SPC's Adult Education and Spiritual Formation team offers several opportunities for you to consider. How about a small group practicing the art and skill of **listening**? Are you looking for a **Bible study** – but something more aligned with our fractured world? Would you like to try out **meditation** in a small group? Do you long to slow down? **Sunday Seminars** will kickoff on September 20 and 27 with Pastor Gusti's presentations on *Sabbatical Integration*. The **Sunday Seminar series** beginning in October is entitled: *Living into the Seasons: A Time for Hope, Peace and Joy*.

We hope you will find yourself at SPC in one of these learning and growth opportunities. Sunday Seminars are held in Fellowship Hall on Sunday mornings beginning at 9:30 a.m. or on zoom. The zoom link is <https://us02web.zoom.us/j/3048766466?pwd=cnhPY3kyeG9pbUdGSmZQVVIEM2Jodz09> Please see the bulletin insert and watch for announcements in the E-news for these exciting programs! For further information contact Anne Teresa at ateresa@comcast.net

SPC's Hospitality Team invites you to the ANNUAL PICNIC

Sunday, September 13, 2026

3-6 P.M.

Morgan's Grove Park Pavilion

- Please bring a veggie, fruit, or side dish to share.
- DO NOT bring a dessert!!!!
- 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!
ice cream sundae bar to



Back by popular demand, we will have an
top off our picnic.

MEMORIES

Extending the SPC Timeline project, our entertainment will be YOU, sharing details of the memory tags you placed on our timeline. No need to sign up or prepare ahead of time, and no pressure to speak, we will guide you through the easy process at the picnic.

We will finish up the party with our annual balloon toss—fun for all ages.



Have questions or want to help? Reach out to Mary Ellen Lloyd at
mewlloyd@gmail.com or 304-261-6771



DEACON

DEACON TEAM UPDATE

Donna Dettling, Deacon Moderator

The deacons were excited to start doing **Extended Home Communion** on July 5, and have provided it three times, in both home and hospital settings. In each case it was a moving experience for the deacons as well as the recipients, and those receiving this special offering were very appreciative. They felt connected to their church and deeply supported. We hope to make this a regular occurrence after each communion Sunday, and deacons are reaching out with personal invitations to their flock members who they feel would enjoy the gesture. Please contact your deacon if you would like to arrange to receive Extended Home Communion.

Jen Jones, the **PrayerNet** lead, provided training to the two new PrayerNet administrators, Jolene Jarrell and Sarah Wagner, who joined the team on August 1. A new schedule was established for coverage of the PrayerNet that gives sessions to Jolene and Sarah and reduces the coverage time for Jen and Mica. Welcome to the team and thank you for your willingness to serve on this special ministry!

The **Sensory Support Cart** is in place in the entrance to the sanctuary, and items have already been used by a couple of families who have children that are neurodivergent or have ADHD. They are grateful that we are recognizing and accommodating their special needs in this way. The items are cleaned with antibacterial wipes after each use.

As we move forward into a new church year, we encourage you to stay in touch with your deacon and respond to their communications. We are working hard to make sure all church members and friends feel welcomed and cared for, and we enjoy hearing back from you! As we continue to **Share the Care** through the deacons and the ministries that fall under the deacon team, we hope you can answer the question, **“Do you know who your deacon is?”**

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, 8 a.m. - 2 p.m.). A couple of practical reminders as you make your requests:

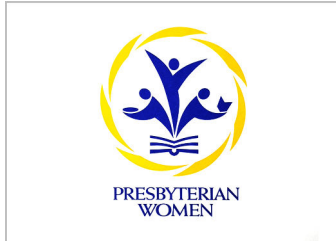
1. Please make sure the person for whom you are requesting prayer has given their permission. Due to privacy considerations, we are unable to share requests without that permission.
2. Please indicate whether or not you would like this request to be shared in worship.
3. You may also indicate that you prefer to keep this request confidential among the PrayerNet Team (currently Lynn Dampman, Jen Jones, Mica Martin, Jolene Jarrell, and Sarah Wagner.), rather than sending it to the whole PrayerNet group of over 90 people.

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.



PRESBYTERIAN WOMEN

Julie Slonaker, Co-Moderator

We hope you have marked Thursday, September 3, at 10:00 a.m. on your calendar and will plan to attend the first Presbyterian Women's meeting of the new season (in the Fellowship Hall or on Zoom.) We will begin reading and discussing the book, *Mary Magdalene Revealed* by Meggan Watterson. The focus is a review of Mary's gospel and the teachings of her gospel.

This season will usher in new leadership to the Presbyterian Women's group. Julie Slonaker and Diana Eldridge will co-moderate the meetings. The PW group sincerely thanks Donna Dettling for her leadership and organizational skills as she focuses on leading the Deacon group and other SPC activities.

The next SPC-sponsored Mid-week Manna Meal at The Community Cup in Martinsburg will be on October 21, at 6:00 p.m. 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. 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>

Presbyterian Women is on the move, and we welcome you to join in the action! Hope to see you at our meeting on September 3, at 10:00 a.m. for book study, prayer, food, and fellowship! All are welcome and encouraged to attend.

SAVE THE DATES!

On October 21, the next SPC-sponsored Midweek Manna Free Community Meal at The Community Cup in Martinsburg will be held at 6:00 p.m. Join Presbyterian Women and the Eastern Panhandle Youth Alliance to help provide food for our neighbors.

On October 25, SPC will once again hold an Oxfam dinner in Shepherdstown! This dinner will be focused on local poverty and food insecurity in West Virginia. More to come on this important educational and, frequently, inspiring event.

Also, visit SPC's website to get involved

<https://shepherdstownpresbyterian.org/volunteer/>

SABBATICAL PLANNING TEAM REFLECTIONS AND FEEDBACK

By Jen Jones, Donna Dettling, and Keri Mahoney

We want to begin by expressing what a phenomenal experience we shared as a team during the sabbatical. We weren't sure what to expect, nor did we have much firsthand experience with the role of our team, how we as a church would move through the sabbatical, or how it would impact us personally and as a congregation. The Sabbatical Planning Team invited members of the congregation to share their experiences, insights, and hopes following the four-month sabbatical period. Our goal is to share these reflections with you so we might all incorporate them into our weekly practice and grow together as a church. Thirty-four people completed the survey.

The three questions that we asked of the congregation:

1. During the sabbatical, what strengths have you observed in our church community?
2. What sabbatical practices, events, ministries, or lessons would you like to see continue?
3. How do you think the sabbatical has shaped SPC for future shared ministry and leadership?

Congregational Reflections During the Sabbatical, based on responses to the questions:

Key Insights and Themes

Theme 1: Deepened Connections and Relationships

One of the strongest themes throughout the survey was a sense of increased connection among congregation members.

Members shared that they especially appreciated:

- Sabbatical planned events and activities (timeline project, Bingo night, listening sessions)
- The Sunday Seminar series, with members of the congregation responding to specific topics
- Fellowship opportunities before and after worship
- Informal conversations and time spent together

Many respondents described experiencing a greater sense of closeness and belonging within the church community. The opportunity to spend intentional time together strengthened relationships and fostered a deeper sense of connection with one another.

Theme 2: Shared Leadership and Empowerment

A second recurring theme was the congregation's experience of stepping into leadership roles and responsibilities.

Members observed that:

- People were willing to step up and serve in new ways
- Leadership responsibilities were shared across the congregation
- New gifts and talents emerged
- Members gained confidence in contributing to the life of the church

Many respondents viewed this as a positive period of growth, demonstrating the congregation's ability to work together and support one another.

Theme 3: A Stronger Sense of Community

Respondents repeatedly reported a sense of "closeness" during the sabbatical.

This was reflected in:

- Increased engagement with one another
- Greater participation in church life
- A stronger sense of mutual support and care
- Feeling "heard" and "seen"

Many felt that the congregation became more intentional about being in relationship with one another, which enhanced the overall sense of community. Some commented that Pastor Hitt's presence during social and shared gatherings helped us to get to know her better and to feel more connected to her.

Theme 4: Time for Fellowship

Many members specifically noted their appreciation for worship ending on time and not needing to leave for other commitments prior to the service's conclusion.

They shared that:

- Predictable ending times created space for fellowship
- More people remained after worship to visit and connect
- The additional time encouraged relationship-building and community conversations
- Early service attendees appreciated being able to attend Sunday Seminar on time

What may seem like a simple logistical change had a meaningful impact on community and connection.

Looking Forward - As we reflect on these experiences, several hopes emerged for the future:

Continue Building Relationships

Members would like to maintain opportunities for connection through gatherings, educational offerings, fellowship, and shared experiences.

Encourage Shared Leadership

There is interest in continuing to nurture leadership gifts among congregation members and creating opportunities for people to serve and contribute, to include those who've not served previously.

Preserve the Sense of Community

Many hope to retain the feeling of closeness, engagement, and mutual support that developed during the sabbatical.

Be Intentional About Fellowship

Respondents expressed a desire to continue prioritizing time and space for meaningful interactions and relationship-building.

SABBATICAL INTEGRATION NEXT STEPS

By Donna Dettling, Keri Mahoney, and Pastor Gusti

On Sunday, August 9, the Sabbatical Planning Team and Pastor Gusti invited the congregation to integrate the feedback from the sabbatical surveys into planning for the 2026 – 2027 program year. Pastor Gusti began with a celebration of what the sabbatical was for SPC, an overview of the calendar-in-progress, and an encouragement to integrate the desire for community and shared leadership into the “ordinary” life of the church. Donna Dettling and Keri Mahoney led participants through a process of establishing desired outcomes for activities within church life in the coming year.

A total of 12 people came to the meeting: Pastor Gusti, Donna Dettling, Keri Mahoney, Season Jones, Yvonne Fisher, Carol Richmond, Rie Wilson, Elaine Hurd, Larry Neumark, Joyce Neumark, Siri McDonald, and Mica Martin.

The main outcomes that people seek from SPC gatherings are:

1) Continue to build a sense of community by making and enhancing connections between members and friends of SPC

- Tell our stories
- Introduce ourselves and others in worship, at the pulpit, and at events
- Have fun together

2) Build a sacred pause, contemplation, or reflection into our events and gatherings

- Prayer, breathing, gratitude, thought, spirituality, grounding (i.e. at a Town Run clean-up event, take a moment to be in awe of the water that sustains us; or at a committee meeting pause for a prayer, or a time of gratitude for work accomplished)
- Begin to find a sense of rest and peace, even in our busy interactions

3) Enrich what is already in place

- There is a tendency to feel we are not doing enough or being enough; we need to realize that we are already doing it all *even if we don't add more events* (we have some of everything on the calendar)
- How can we reframe our activities to breathe new life and engagement into them
Learn to let go of what was and embrace what is (i.e. there is a longing to recreate the Lenten suppers where people talked about their spiritual journeys --- realize we have already been doing this in our Sunday Seminars, just in a different format!)

Some next steps:

- Build these outcomes into session, team, and committee meetings, Sunday Seminar, and everything we do
- Gusti set this expectation at the August session meeting and shared the calendar with them
- On Kickoff Sunday (September 13), groups can have a table in the Fellowship Hall to promote their team and activities, and recruit volunteers
- Look for ways to provide better communication (i.e. on Kickoff Sunday and perhaps quarterly, remind people where they can get information on church activities and groups: website, *The Messenger*, E-news, bulletin, Facebook, etc. - maybe in a bulletin insert?)
- Roll more under existing committees/teams to avoid stand-alone activities (i.e. Adult Ed committee could include Bible at the Bar, Bible for Progressives, Dream Tending as Spiritual Practice)
- Be clear that if someone wants to add an activity, they should check the calendar to choose the best timing that doesn't conflict with other events, and get session approval before proceeding
- Encourage people to step up and help with or run an activity they are interested in; we can't rely on the same group of leaders to do everything for us





WHAT'S NEW AT WORK IN THE WORLD

Budget and Finance

The Work in the World team is funding organizations and programs we've identified for support in this first year of our new collaborative model. The \$30,000 approved by Session is comparable to 2025, but some of the beneficiaries have changed. Specific programs identified in each organization align more closely with our focus areas of Justice and Peace, Inclusion and Equity, Systemic Poverty and Earth Care where we believe we can have a more tangible impact. We've also built flexibility into our funding model so that, where needed, we may shift funds to meet emergency needs, for example.

Recipients in the Third Quarter:

- \$3,000 for **Jefferson County Community Ministries**
- \$1,000 for **Martinsburg Rescue Mission**
- \$1407 for immigrant family support
- \$120 for LGBTQIA Advocacy and Support

Recipients in the Second Quarter:

- \$250 for **More Light Presbyterians**, committed to centering LGBTQIA people in the Presbyterian Church (USA) and beyond
- \$150 for immigrant family support
- \$525 for **LGBTQIA** support and Pride month supplies
- \$1,500 for **Coalfield Development**, Huntington, WV
- \$2,000 to complete funding of SPC **Guns to Gardens**
- \$1,500 for **Durable Solutions Congo** to support a solar power project
- \$1,000 to **EPEC** (Eastern Panhandle Empowerment Center)
- \$1,000 to **ANAR** for Palestinian children's programs
- \$3,000 to the **Presbyterian Home of the Highlands**, Wytheville, VA
- \$500 to **Annunciation House** in El Paso, TX for migrant care
- \$250 to support **Covenant Network of Presbyterians**, a national LGBTQIA support group of churches

Recipients in the First Quarter:

- \$3,500** to the **Bluefields Nicaragua Partnership & VERBO Scholarships**
- \$1,000** to **West Virginia Rivers and Jefferson County Foundation** for watershed support and advocacy in WV
- \$500** to **Jefferson County Foundation** to educate about local impact of development on groundwater and land use
- \$750** to **Community Markets Inc.** during the United Way campaign so that the CMI donation will be matched by the "Unity" campaign

“I’VE NEVER BEEN SO LOW IN MY LIFE”

- - Helen Swire Comer, Yawkey, West Virginia

Helen Swire Comer quit her job as a bank manager to care for her aging parents when she was told that her SNAP benefits would drop to \$24 from \$400 per month. She began selling her household goods to offset the loss of her income.

Food stamps are now the main source of food for people experiencing poverty in West Virginia and, just as more families are turning to food pantries, the current administration has cut SNAP from \$10 million per year to \$1.4 million per year. The number of households served has fallen by 9,000.

In the coming weeks more will be asked of all of us to buy, cook, grow, pack and deliver food for those in need. Please review the list below for all of the ways you can lend a hand right here at SPC.

Create! Grow! Buy Local! Forage! Cook!

- ✓ **Food collection for JCCM** - Presbyterian Women spearhead this ongoing collection basket activity for non-perishables, tied in to our communion days, although food can be dropped off any time (in the sanctuary or outside the office).
- ✓ **Food collection for Shepherdstown Shares/Ecumenical Food Pantry** - Presbyterian Women also spearhead this ongoing collection basket activity for non-perishables, tied in to our communion days, although food can be dropped off any time (in the sanctuary or outside the office).
- ✓ **Food and supplies collection for the Youth** away/at school - Part of the deacons' Young Adult Ministry to stay connected with those who have graduated from high school and are in college or working; care packages that include snacks and candy are collected and sent periodically.
- ✓ **Community Meal**—Held the first Sunday of each month at Zion Episcopal Church in Charles Town. Cook or buy food to share and/or be a part of the serving team! If you have more questions, email Connie Ross at rossjc316@gmail.com. If you are ready to jump in, go to: <https://www.perfectpotluck.com/meals.php?t=WTED3207&v=cdb4748866>
- ✓ **Community Cup meals** - Presbyterian Women provide and serve a meal approximately every two months on a Wednesday evening for 25 - 50 people; anyone can help serve or provide food for the meal.
- ✓ **Meals for congregants in need** – the Deacon's Meals and Rides Ministry provides meals as needed for people dealing with a loss, health issue, or other challenges.
- ✓ **Community Markets, Inc.** – Is a WV non-profit purchasing food from local farmers and providing affordable, healthy food to the community. SPC supports CMI through donations, but they are always in need of drivers and helpers.
- ✓ **Plant** an extra row in your garden. JCCM and Shepherdstown Shares can always use food donations as well as neighbors in our congregation and beyond. Let someone on the Work in the World team know you have fresh food to share. workintheworldspc@gmail.com
- ✓ **Become a food driver** for those who fear leaving home for myriad reasons. This population is growing.

HEALING MINDS, HEARTS AND LIVES--CONTINUED

Anar Now on the Ground in Gaza Helping Palestinian Children

By Pat Hamilton

In the January *Messenger* I wrote about a new beneficiary of SPC's **Work in the World**, Anar's work in Bethlehem and Palestine. A year ago, Anar was situated in Bethlehem in the West Bank, developing and delivering restorative programs for Palestinian children. Recently, Anar has been expanding into other West Bank towns: Hebron, Tulkarem, Nablus and Tubas. (Yes, you should get out your map now—I did. It will surprise you).

SPC supports Anar through its donations to US based organization, Healing to Hope. The programs include psychosocial help for children as well as programs that use arts-focused activities to help with trauma and, very importantly, the training of community accompaniment facilitators. A decision was made to expand the programs into Gaza as a pilot, where there can be very direct, hands-on intervention.

The focus for now in Gaza is on training women as accompaniment mentors and community mobilizers. Anar has trainers to provide not only direct care for the children, but the ability to train others as the needs—and the victims—become clearer. From Rami Khader, Founder and Executive Director of Anar:

One of the most important techniques Anar is using in Gaza is debriefing, the chance for caregivers to talk openly and honestly about their experiences in a community conversation led by a trained facilitator. To be as responsible as possible to the gravity of what Gazans face, Anar is not engaging in therapy or intensive mental health work, which is referred to other trusted professionals and organizations. Instead, it is offering tools for caregivers to navigate the reality of the moment, which includes space where women can gather away from family, ask questions about caring for and educating their children, and learn techniques for coping with the extreme stress they are carrying.

The expansion of assistance into Gaza itself begins with building trust among the women and seeing Anar as a partner in the caregiving of their own children. For now, Anar is deliberately not focusing on direct conversations about individual and collective trauma with trainees, but on developing their skills to provide the significant amount of aid that will be needed in the future.

For those not familiar with the word "accompaniment," it is used in this context to mean the intentional practice of walking with individuals and being present. There are differences between Anar's accompaniment in the West Bank and now in Gaza. The Internet in Gaza opens after 10 a.m. and is sporadic, sometimes lasting only two hours per day. The children here have not been to school for three years, meaning the youngest have never been to school; this changes the approach for the caregivers as they now must include literacy and developmental elements with their assistance. This is all part of the pilot program in Gaza.

This is the first year SPC has included Healing to Hope and Anar in its donations. The **Work in the World** team was excited to support the commitment and the people of these organizations and hopes you will, too.

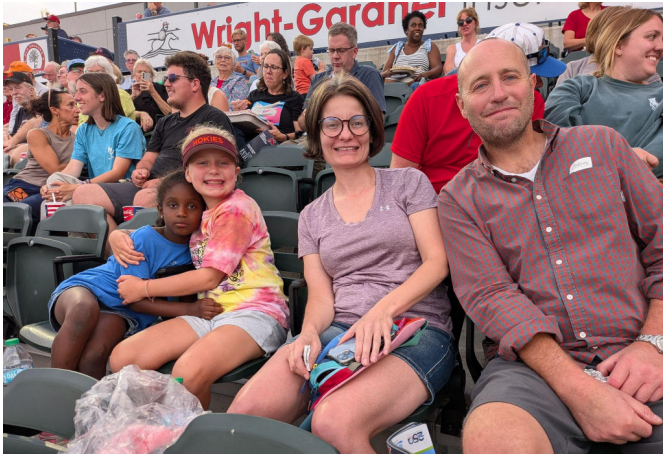
At the end of the second week with a group of caregiver trainees, Anar facilitators asked what they were hoping for that had not been provided. The women asked for a beach party. "They needed an opportunity to experience their full humanity beyond very real daily struggles and to embrace joy."

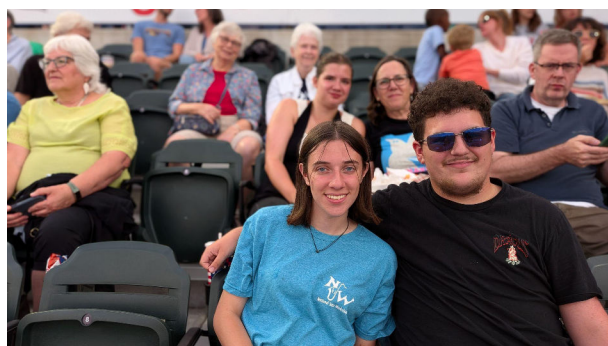


THIRD ANNUAL BASEBALL OUTING AUGUST 21, 2026



More than 60 SPC-ers and friends attended the 3rd Annual Baseball Outing at Meritus Park in Hagerstown. Fireworks followed the game and were enjoyed by all.





**Congratulations to Perry and Stephanie Jamieson
celebrating their 55th Wedding Anniversary!**