

Good Shepherd Episcopal Church



News from the Mountain Top

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January 2023

Boxing Christmas, *by Judy Hall*

This year was another bountiful year for the Good Shepherd Christmas Boxes. We delivered more than 130 boxes of all shapes and sizes starting with our community groups – Meditation Walkers, Sunday Centered and Pine Grove AA. Then we spread out into Pine Grove: Pine Grove Road, Kelly Lane, Good Shepherd Road, Banjo Lane, Village Lane and Mountain Ridge Lane. We visited quite a few in Shenandoah Retreat and up on Raven Rocks Road. What a treat to knock on doors with some Christmas peace and good will!

A special thanks to all those who made this possible. We had eight bakers who made close to 70 dozen cookies. A BIG thank you to all the bakers: Lois, Janet, Josette, Eileen, Tim, Judy, Cindy and Martha. Five people helped load the boxes. There were six who delivered the boxes: Lois and Martha, Richard and Tim, and Judy and Penni. Thank you, Diane, for handing out extra bags of cookies at the Village Market.



Getting 'Centered' at Good Shepherd, *by Rev. Martha Clark*

"Being part of the Centered class has definitely brought me into a closer relationship with Jesus. I pray more often during the day and value the informative lessons with reflective questions. It is a blessing to be in a group with other women who love Jesus." - Patti

Through the months of November and December, a group of up to ten women has been meeting every Sunday evening to share a simple meal and reflect together on what it means to live a life centered on Jesus and his Way of Love. Using the Episcopal Church's new course, Centered: A Christian Discipleship Experience, we have been prayerfully exploring how we intentionally deepen and grow in loving and life-giving relationships with God, each other, and the earth, all in the pattern of Jesus.

"What a blessing it is to partake in this exploration of deeper Christian discipleship with such a wonderful group of women and under the steady guidance of our leader Martha! Knowing that I'm not alone in my struggles and being able to share with others and to hear their stories has meant the world to me." - Janet

Five o'clock on wintery Sunday evenings is usually a time for many of us to get in our PJs early and relax with a good book or movie. Coming out for a church program better be worth it! I heard this voiced several times as we started up our Centered gatherings together! Over these several weeks, a sense of community has been growing. This happens when we faithfully take time with each other and "go deeper" in our conversations; when we share real life challenges, questions, and vulnerabilities; when we "listen to understand" and when we pray for each other. Then we begin to experience the Holy Spirit at work forming and blessing us in new ways... and preparing us to go back out into the world as disciples more deeply rooted in God's love and service. So a huge thank you to those who made this commitment. You all are a blessing. - Rev. Martha

The Men's Centered Group will start weekly gatherings at 6 p.m. on Wednesdays, beginning January 18th. For more information, contact Tim Hall at timhall0054@gmail.com or 540-454-0564.

Walking Towards Peace, *By Rev. Martha Clark*

Teach me your way, O Lord; I will walk in your truth. ~ Psalm 86:11

Many thanks to all of you who have joined in our fall Meditation Walks at Cool Springs. It has been a peaceful way to share a once-a-month Saturday morning in the beautiful (and sometimes chilly!) outdoors... and all while practicing the art of slowing our pace and walking more mindfully. I hope that some of the seeds of Meditation Walking will grow and flourish on your own path as you practice them... the seeds of prayerful "Yahweh" breathing, of using scripture and "mantra" words to focus thoughts and intentions, of blessing ourselves and each other with Metta (Friendship) Prayer, and of centering our hearts and minds in gratitude as we walk.

Walking Towards Peace, our final Meditation Walk of the year, took place on Dec. 10. We walked for peace, both in our hearts and in the world, as we held in prayerful compassion the struggles and losses very real in the lives of so many and the "blues" that can accompany the season.

Many blessings to all my walking companions! Let's look towards the spring for more Meditation Walking together. Blessings and Peace. – Rev. Martha+

P.S. A great resource for a New Year of Walking is the book "52 Ways to Walk: The Surprising Science of Walking for Wellness and Joy, One Week at a Time," by Annabel Streets.

Praying Through Winter

Our next meditation series will be from 11 a.m. to noon one Saturday a month at 27 Good Shepherd Road, Pine Grove. Our facilitator will be the Rev. Martha Clark. Please bring a yoga mat/blanket and cushion. There will be chairs for those who wish to be seated off the floor.

Winter prayers can be a powerful way to sustain our hope and joy throughout the cold season. Come and connect to the sacred in winter!

Using our whole being... body, mind, heart... we will pray with and without words to more fully experience God's presence and love in our lives. Each one-hour session will include an introduction to prayer using our bodies and movement as well as forms of seated contemplative prayer or meditation practice.

Sat., Jan. 28 - Body Prayer/Centering Prayer – Explore Body Prayer as was taught by the 14th century Christian mystic Julian of Norwich. This will be followed by the ancient contemplative practice of Centering Prayer, helping us be fully open and present to the Holy Spirit.

Sat., Feb. 18 - Prayerful Yoga/Lectio Divina – Awaken and stretch your whole being through simple Prayerful Yoga poses and meditative music, leading to a session of traditional monastic Lectio Divina, a shared spiritual practice of scripture reading, meditation and prayer.

Sat., March 11 - Movement Meditation/Sacred Chanting – Mindful Movement Meditation releases tension, calms the mind and brings us inner and outer peace. It is shared across many faith traditions in the practices of meditative walking, labyrinth walking, sacred dance, and Tai Chi. We will end our morning with Sacred Chants from the Taizé community, connecting us with the Holy and each other.

A Month of Music, *By Josette Keelor*

Advent and Christmas offer a chance to enjoy seasonal hymns and carols, and this year God provided us a timely abundance of musicians to make our celebrations especially musical.

The first chance for us to fill our sanctuary with song was at our Advent Lessons and Carols service on Nov. 27. With Eileen Cawood on piano, the service began with a choral introit led by Bryan Clark processing toward the altar and singing "Prepare Ye" from *Godspell*. He was joined by Janet Locklear, Dan Cawood,



and Josette Keelor before the congregation joined in. Throughout the service, we enjoyed Janet on recorder and Dan on guitar and djembe, and duets of "Wayfaring Stranger" and "The Angel Gabriel" sung by Josette and Dan. We also passed out bells so the congregation could chime in throughout the service. One of our most attended recent services, the first Sunday of Advent also welcomed seven online participants.



Throughout the month, we saw more opportunities to add and enjoy the season's music both at our services and around the region. On Dec. 15, a small group from the church took a field trip to see Handel's *Messiah* at The Kennedy Center. On Dec. 19, we went caroling at Commonwealth Senior Living in Berryville, where Janet on piano and carolers Tim Hall, Judy Hall, Charlene Fu, Rev. Martha Clark and Josette led about fifteen residents and a handful of staff members through many beloved and well-known Christmas songs.

On Christmas Eve, we prefaced our service with several songs, welcoming guest musicians Robert Purnell singing "O Holy Night" alongside Stephanie Purnell and Cody Locklear on violin. Additionally, Eileen and Janet wowed with a piano duet of "Bring a Torch, Jeanette Isabella" and the Good Shepherd Singers performed two pieces in three-part harmony, "Shepherd's Echo Carol" and "Infant Holy, Infant Lowly". Always a musical highlight is our traditional candlelight rendition of "Silent Night," and we concluded the evening with "Hark the Herald Angels Sing."

Creation Care Corner: Ways to Recycle or Reuse Your Christmas Tree, *By Cindy Ingram*

1. Buy a potted tree and plant it in the ground after the holidays
2. Make compost or mulch with it
 - a. You can do this yourself if you wish, [YouTube](#) has several videos demonstrating how
 - b. Check with your garbage pickup company for tree pick-up days, many turn the picked-up trees into mulch (Republic Waste does!)
 - c. Take your tree to your [Citizens' Convenience Center](#) (for Clarke and Frederick County residents)
3. Repurpose your tree for the benefit of the local wildlife
 - a. [Use the trunk to make a bird feeder](#)
 - b. [Use your tree to make habitat for wildlife](#)
 - i. [Use it in your pond or lake for the fish to use as habitat](#)
 - c. Feed it to your neighbors' goats
4. Cut it up and use it for landscape edging (We've used trees in our prayer and meditation garden in this manner if you'd like to see a sample)

Have a blessed and sustainable winter!

Facility and Church Updates

Our "More than Enough" 2023 stewardship campaign resulted in a 10% increase in number of pledges and a 22% increase in total amount pledged over 2022.

December replacement of the trap and plumbing under the kitchen sink seems to have fixed the problem of a sewage smell that had been getting worse this fall. Installation of new motion detecting light sensitive fixtures on the front porch of the church has made night time entry and exit much safer..

The large, dead white oak tree by the parking lot was finally taken down last week after Flint from TreeLife had to wait on his newly purchased crane to arrive. This allowed him to do the job more safely and keep from damaging our freshly paved parking area. Thanks to a generous parishioner for covering the cost of this project. The wood is being donated to the Westminster Canterbury Firewood Outreach Group.



Diocesan News



The Rt. Rev. E. Mark Stevenson was consecrated as 14th Bishop of Virginia by Presiding Bishop Michael Curry on December 3 in Richmond. Bishop Stevenson recently announced his appointment of the Rev. Dr. J. Lee Hill, Jr. as Canon for Racial Justice and Healing. Canon Hill previously served in this position as diocesan Missioner since 2021 and will continue to work with clergy, lay leaders, congregations, and other groups across the Diocese to develop new ministries and facilitate courageous dialogue about race. He will serve alongside the Canon to the Ordinary, Rev. Deacon d'Rue Hazel and the Canon for Formation, a position which Bishop Stevenson anticipates appointing in 2023. The three Canons will support Bishop Stevenson's mission priorities: promoting racial justice and healing; fostering life-giving formation of followers of Jesus; and supporting clergy and lay leaders in their ministries.



Local Events

- SUN 15 Jan. from 5 to 7 p.m. – Women's Centered small group in the Good Shepherd parish hall
WED 18 Jan. from 6 to 7:30 p.m. – Men's Centered circle in the Good Shepherd parish hall
SAT 28 Jan. from 11 a.m. to noon – "Praying Through Winter" in the Good Shepherd sanctuary
SAT 4 Feb. from 9 to 11 a.m. – FISH Community Table in the Good Shepherd parking lot and dining room

Church Calendar - All are welcome at our services!

- SUN 15 Jan. at 11 a.m. – The Second Sunday after Epiphany: Holy Eucharist with the Rev. Deb Rutter
SUN 22 Jan. at 11 a.m. – The Third Sunday after Epiphany: Morning Prayer with Tim Hall
SUN 29 Jan. at 11 a.m. – The Fourth Sunday after Epiphany: Holy Eucharist and Healing with the Rev. Martha Clark, celebrant and the Rev. Rob Banse, homilist
SUN 5 Feb. at 11 a.m. – The Fifth Sunday after Epiphany: Morning Prayer with Cindy Ingram

To join via Zoom, go to our website at www.goodshepherdbluemont.org and click the link on the home page.

Outreach



AA meets at Good Shepherd every Saturday night at 8:30 pm, in person or by Zoom. Drop in or contact: <https://aavirginia.org/meetings> and search for Bluemont.



FISH of Clarke County (36 E. Main St., Berryville) The FISH clothing store and food pantry are open 8 a.m. to 10 a.m. Tuesdays and Wednesdays. Visitors should wear face masks. Anyone not able to stop by when FISH is open may contact FISH at 540-955-1823 or via email at fishfoodpantry@comcast.net to schedule no-contact delivery.

Good Shepherd gathers donations for FISH every month. ***Please bring your January donations to the church narthex by the 22nd of the month.*** Lois, our senior warden, will be delivering the donations on the following Wednesday. Our Thanksgiving food donation weighed 94 pounds and our Christmas holiday food donation weighed 105 pounds. Thanks everyone!

Checks made out to FISH to support this effort are also appreciated. ***The FISH Community Table mobile food pantry will be setting up at Good Shepherd on February 4 from 9:00 am to 11:00 am.***

Any questions or concerns? We would love to hear from you by email, phone, or in-person:

office@goodshepherdbluemont.org * 540-252-5825 * 27 Good Shepherd Road, Bluemont, VA 20135