

The Shepherd's Staff

March, 2024



March 9 at 10 am - Men's Group

6-8 pm - Pupusa Fundraiser for El Ocotillo Scholarship Fund

March 10 at 8 and 10 am - Holy Eucharist

11:30 am - Adult Lenten Forum

March 16 at 10 am - Men's Group

March 17 at 8 & 10 am - Holy Eucharist

10 am - Church School, 11:30 am - Adult Lenten Forum

March 23 at 10 am - Men's Group

8 pm - *Suitcase Stories* at the Somerville Theatre

March 24 at 8 & 10 am - Palm Sunday Holy Eucharist

March 28 at 7 pm - Maundy Thursday Eucharist w/Stripping of the Altar

8-10 pm Silent Vigil and Labyrinth

March 29 at noon - 3 pm Sanctuary open for prayer and Labyrinth

7 pm - Good Friday Worship Service

March 30 at 9 am - Holy Saturday Prayer Service

at 7 pm - Great Vigil of Easter followed by Strawberries & Champagne Celebration in Parish Hall

March 31 - Easter Morning!

8 am - Holy Eucharist with hymns

10 am - Festive Holy Eucharist w/choir and special music
Easter Egg Hunt in the courtyard following the service

7 pm - Outdoor Bonfire Service followed by refreshments

April 6 at 10 am - Men's Group

April 7 at 8 & 10 am - Holy Eucharist

10am - Church School

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Episcopal Diocese of
Massachusetts

A Word from the Fold



Today, on this Annual Meeting Sunday, we celebrate the year we have just shared and look ahead into the life God is calling us into. We have done great things together in 2023- particularly in the area of mission and outreach. God is at work in our midst!

We are now, remarkably, on the brink of the 4th anniversary of the Covid pandemic, and into my 4th year as Rector. 2020 forced a re-set in every aspect of our life— and not just our life in the church. And while the world outside feels increasingly volatile, here at Good Shepherd, after years of change and disruption, we have reached a place of relative stability.

We have secure staffing in place. Ellen Oak, Deacon Ken and I have served together for 2 full years now. We love working together to craft creative liturgies that are grounded in the rhythm of the liturgical seasons, reflective of our rich Anglican culture, vibrant with music and prayer, and alive with God's spirit. We are a great team, with different, yet complimentary gifts, and I am so blessed to serve with them.

We are growing... slowly. While attendance fluctuates a lot week to week- perhaps more than it used to- our overall average worship attendance, including 8am, 10am, and our Zoom viewers, was up almost 15% in 2023, and up more than 20% since 2020.

Our pledges are up too, although not quite enough for a balanced budget with the increasing annual costs for utilities, maintenance of our building and support for our staff.

We have welcomed new lay leadership into some of our ministries and we have expanded our mission and outreach into new endeavors. We have a smaller church school, but committed and motivated families who are integrated into our parish, helping with coffee hour, organizing the Food Drive, playing music during services, engaged in parish life.

This is who we are now. We are not who we used to be. And we need to accept that-acknowledging the grief and regret that some of us may feel about that. We are not yet who we will become. And we need to accept that — acknowledging that some of us may be impatient for a future that is not yet known to us. We are who we are today. And we need to accept that. Trusting that as the body of Christ in this time and at this moment, we have been called together to be the church for today.

Churches have a particular difficulty living in the present moment. We are tied to the past, and always hopeful for the future, which can lead to discontent with the present. That comes, I suspect, with being part of a tradition that is rooted in history- the history of God's people- but also the history of this particular place and the memories of people and programs and ministries that brought each of us here at different times. We are also oriented toward the future- the future promise of new life with God and our desire for our parish to grown and thrive.

But we live in the present. With the God who dwells in the present- and not just in the past or future. We live with those who are here now- and the particular gifts we have available today and the burdens we bear right now. And I believe that God equips us with all that we need to thrive for today. That doesn't mean that we don't need to plan for the future- of course we do. It is our responsibility to be good stewards of our resources so that our church can be here for future generations. And it doesn't mean we will thrive in exactly the same ways we used to... I believe God has brought us together in this present time to be the church that is needed for today. For the mission that is before us today. And if we are doing God's work, if we are truly meant to be here... then, through the grace of God, we will thrive with the gifts and the effort and the faith that we each bring to share.

As we have navigated these pandemic years together at Good Shepherd, we have been focused a lot on the what and how of being church together. What can we do safely, how can we do this, how do we build this

back, what worship, music, programs, can we do? What works? What will draw people here? And those are important questions. But we also have to remember to ask why?

Why are we here? Why do we do what we do? Why are we called to be the Body of Christ today? Why us? Why here? Why now? Why be the church? Why should others join us?

Living into to these questions will enable us to thrive. And when we discern the why question, the what and how become easier.

At our Annual meeting after the service today, I'll invite you to share some of your "why's" for why we are here. Here are a few of my own to get you thinking...

We are here to believe in God. To believe in Jesus Christ. To believe in the Holy Spirit. We are here to learn how to do this. To explore what this means together. To hear the stories and offer the prayers and sing the music of faith so that we can believe. And sometimes we do that through favorite hymns, and beloved scriptures, and fellowship that reinforce what we believe. And sometimes we are challenged to stretch and grow our beliefs by learning new ways to sing and pray and think about God.

Why are we here? We are here to continue in the apostles teaching and fellowship, to make sacraments and offer prayers and care for each other- to carry on this legacy of being Jesus' church for today. The joy-filled Confirmation service yesterday was a great example of this. A true celebration of preparation and learning, faithfulness and sacrament, prayer and music and family all coming together in support of these young persons.

Why are we here? We are here to persevere in resisting evil because God knows there is a lot of evil out in the world and we need to find the strength to resist it. We are here to repent and return to God as often as we need, because we will not always do the right thing- and this is a place to repair that.

Why are we here? We are here to learn how to seek and serve Christ in all persons, loving our neighbor as ourselves. To live into this basic duty of our Christian faith. To do that which Jesus has commanded us to do. Why are we here? To figure this out together.

Why are we here? We are here to strive for justice and peace among all people and respect the

dignity of every human being— because the world doesn't teach this... We need the church to model this and encourage this and remind us that we can make a difference.

Why are we here? We are here to cherish the wondrous works of God and protect the beauty and integrity of all creation. Because God made this beautiful Earth and it is an act of faith to help protect and restore it.

This is our baptismal covenant (which 25 young people and a church full of their family and friends renewed yesterday at their confirmations). This is the work we are called to do as the baptized people of God. It is the why behind everything we do.

I tell baptismal families that I honestly believe if every Christian took this Covenant seriously... the world would be very different place. The church, to be honest, would be a very different place if all Christians truly leaned into these promises. This is our why- our reason for being- to be the church of Jesus Christ- to uphold this Covenant- believing, continuing, persevering, proclaiming, seeking and serving, striving and respecting, cherishing and restoring. The verbs- the actions- of our Covenant with God in Christ.

This is the ministry of the church. And I am so excited to build on this with you in the coming year. To hold this why before us as we discern each day together in Christ. We are not the church we were before. We are not yet the church we will become. We are the church for today- with a mission and a reason for being that can change lives and heal the world.

I could not do this work, I could not be your priest, if I did not believe this really matters. If I did not believe that we have a message we need to proclaim, and others need to hear. Not, as Bishop Michael Curry says, to build a bigger church, but to build a better world.

May it be so. Amen.

+Ellie

Senior Warden's Message



As I have only served as Senior Warden for two weeks, I have little to report except that I do want to thank the Good Shepherd community for entrusting me with the Senior Warden position.

I also wish you to know I am flattered and look

forward to working with and for you. As I am rather new to Good Shepherd, it will be a steep learning curve. But with your prayers and God's help, together we can move the church and its missions forward.

P.S.

Below is something I put together for Easter a few years back, and thought I would share.

I recently watched and listened to two Easter songs. The first by Gene Autry (you remember, the singin' cowboy of 1950s T.V.)

*"Here comes Peter Cottontail
Hoppin' down the bunny trail
Hippity hoppin', Easter's on its way
Bringin' every girl and boy
Baskets full of Easter joy
Things to make your Easter bright and gay.*

*He's got jelly beans for Tommy
Colored eggs for sister Sue
You'll wake upon Easter mornin'
And you'll know that he was there
When you find those chocolate bunnies
That he's hidin' everywhere..."*

Jelly beans? Colored eggs? Not in my home.

Mom went all out for me and my sister. No store bought baskets and hollow bunnies: not for the Moore kids. Solid chocolate bunnies and eggs and some tasty marshmallow somethings. After we'd been to church and we had gorged on the can-

dy, mom and dad would hide the candy away, meting it out until we finished it all - usually by Friday. Baskets put away, empty until next Easter.

Then I watched and listened to the King's College Cambridge Choir (if you haven't been to Cambridge and attended Evensong at King's College-put it on your bucket list).

*"Jesus Christ is risen today, Alleluia!
Our triumphant holy day, Alleluia!
Who did once upon the cross, Alleluia!
Suffer to redeem our loss, Alleluia!*

*Sing we to our God above, Alleluia!
Praise eternal as His love, Alleluia!
Praise Him, all you heavenly host, Alleluia!
Father, Son and Holy Ghost, Alleluia!"*

"When I was a child, I spoke as a child, understood as a child and thought as a child, but when I became a man, I put away childish things...
*Now abide in faith, hope and love,
these three; but the greatest of these is love."*

(1 Corinthians, 13)

That is one full Easter basket, not hidden, never empty, and one which lasts a lifetime

ALLELUIA!



Worship

Welcome to Holy Week 2024!

The Triduum (The Three Days) is the most sacred period of the church year, as we gather to commemorate the death and resurrection of Jesus. From sundown on Maundy Thursday, March 28 through sundown on Easter evening, March 31, we enter into the heart of mystery: God's saving love, bearing us from death into life.

The experience of this mystery is too big to be contained in just one service, so over these three days we will gather multiple times in multiple ways. Taken all together, these liturgies provide the road map for the spiritual process we are invited to undergo with Jesus Christ.

Our purpose and goal? That we, as a gathered community, as the Body of Christ, are actually transformed, just as Jesus Christ was transformed, dying and rising in love for the life of

the world.

Please consider making time in your schedule this year to join us for these liturgies. Each evening, Thursday, March 28, Friday, March 29, Saturday, March 30, and Sunday, March 31, we will worship at 7 pm. All are designed to be an hour or less, and include extended times of silence (or celebration!) following each service. There will also be a short prayer service on Holy Saturday at 9 am, for those drawn to mark the silence of the time Christ lay in the tomb. Easter Morning, of course, will feature festive services of Holy Eucharist at both 8 am and 10 am, followed by an Easter egg hunt after the 10 am service. We end Triduum with an outdoor bonfire service on Easter evening at 7 pm.

Blessed be God!
-Ellie, Ellen & Ken

Holy Week Schedule

Palm Sunday, March 24 at 8 am & 10 am

10 am service begins in the Courtyard for the blessing of palms and a festive procession into the church.



Triduum (Latin for Three Days)

Services each evening at 7 pm. All designed to be an hour or less in length with opportunity for extended quiet reflection at the end.

Holy Thursday, March 28 at 7 pm

7 pm Worship. Includes Holy Eucharist & Stripping of the Altar
8 pm-10 pm Church open for silent vigil and Labyrinth.



Good Friday, March 29

12 Noon-3 pm Church open for Quiet Prayer & Labyrinth
7 pm Worship



Holy Saturday, March 30

9 am Prayer Service to mark Christ's time in the tomb.
7 pm Worship (Great Vigil of Easter) followed by champagne and chocolate covered strawberries!



Easter Morning, March 31

8 am Holy Eucharist & Easter Hymns
10 am Festival Holy Eucharist with choir and special music
Easter Egg Hunt follows the 10 am service



Easter Evening, March 31

7 pm Outdoor Bonfire Service followed by refreshments

Service Schedule

Sunday

8:00 am Holy Eucharist

10:00 am Holy Eucharist, also live
streamed on Zoom

Wednesday

8:00 am Holy Eucharist, followed by
potluck breakfast

Thursday

8:00 pm Compline via Zoom

Worship Snapshots



Ash Wednesday



Lent



Christian Formation

Lenten Study Program Continues; Join us!



I don't know if it's only me getting older, but time sure is flying! It seems like we just put away the Christmas decorations and celebrated the new year, and now we're talking about Lent! The Epiphany Season is short this year, and Ash Wednesday is February 14.

This year, our **Lenten Study** will be a program developed

by The Forward Movement, a ministry of The Episcopal Church. It will be presented **after the 10:00 am service**, allowing time for folks to get their coffee and snack. This study group is based on our Baptismal vows. The program is appropriate for Lenten study as **Lent** is, historically, a time of preparation for Baptism which is associated with Easter.

Booklets will be provided, containing five

chapters based on the five "will you" questions of our Baptismal Covenant. Each week we will examine and discuss one of these questions.

Conversational-style readings will be provided to prompt our own questions, experiences, responses, and discussion. This is a program of exploration, enrichment and sharing, so while some reading and preparation is indicated, attentive and active listening is also encouraged.

Our Vows of Baptism are statements we, as baptized Christians, all have in common. In these days of feeling alone and isolated, where it seems we are intentionally being separated from each other, I hope you will welcome this opportunity to explore and live into this common ground of our Spirituality. This is another opportunity to be open to the work of the Holy Spirit in our lives.

I hope you will join us on this journey, and that, together, we will discover deeper dimensions of our faith. Come, Holy Spirit!

Deacon Ken

Church School

Easter Sunday

On Easter Sunday, there will be an Easter Egg hunt for younger children after the 10 am Festival Service. Parents and older kids are needed to help hide the eggs and help the younger children. Please see [Rev. Ellie](#) if you are able to assist in this fun Easter tradition.



Church School Calendar

March 17 at 10 am - Church School
March 31 following the 10 am Easter Service - Easter Egg Hunt
April 7 at 10 am - Church School
April 21 at 10 am - Church School

Youth

Confirmation,
February 10th





Mission Outreach

“We are called to be the change we want to see in the world by honoring human dignity and seeking to improve the rights and conditions of people locally, nationally, and globally.”



Mission Outreach Calendar

March 9 from 6-8 pm - Papusa Fundraiser for the El Ocotillo Scholarship Fund

SAVE THE DATE! May 5 at noon - Rise **Against Hunger** Meal Packing Event

Looking for ways to get involved?
Check out the newly designed Mission Outreach pages on the Good Shepherd [website.](#)

Pupusa Dinner and Fundraiser for the El Salvador Scholarship Fund

Our annual Pupusa dinner and fundraiser for the El Salvador Scholarship Fund is on **Saturday, March 9th from 6-8 pm.**

We will be once again be serving chips, salsa, Salvadoran pupusas, slaw, plantains, desserts, and soft drinks in the parish hall.



We 'll be highlighting current successes and challenges in our sister community of El Ocotillo and the important role of our scholarship program. All ages are invited. Dinner is free and you are welcome to make a donation to the scholarship fund.

Please [RSVP](#) at this email link with the number in your party. We will have a variety of pupusa types and no need to order ahead of time.

The El Salvador Ministry

Letters from Our Scholarship Students

Elvin David Argueta Nolasco
Ocotillo, Morazan, El Salvador

Hello to everybody, it is a pleasure for me to write these lines. I really hope that you all are doing well and may the lord bless you.

In the following lines, I am going to explain a little bit about my studies performance and development during the year.

First, I want to thank you for your support and all the effort that you are doing to continue helping the community. We had a great time when you came to here. I hope you have enjoyed it as



well. I hope that we will have more people coming next time.

Second, talking about my studies performance during this year, I would say that I am almost finishing my fifth year. My grades are good and it is almost over. I have had difficult situations with some subjects but they are just challenges to overcome. During this year, I also did my practices at two different public schools and now I am doing my practices at the university. Next year I will be doing my thesis and hopefully it will be over.

Now about my family I consider that we are doing well. My mother is always committed to help and be part of the community's activities. My wife is always helping and supporting me in all the activities and my boy is "my healthy earthquake." I call him like that because he is running and messing up everything around.

As a summary, I consider that everything is going well so far. My studies, family, work and all that stuff. What I have problems is with my time, it is never enough to do all. We have also been doing activities in the community and at the end of the year; we are planning to have one with mothers and children.

I wish the best for you, and may the Lord would continue blessing you always.

With love -
Elvin David Argueta Nolasco

Terencio Angelberto Rodriguez Portillo
Members of the El Buen Pastor community,

Hello, I greet you with great satisfaction and gratitude for having awarded me the scholarship for my University studies. This opportunity has meant a lot to me as it has provided me with the finan-



cial support necessary to continue my studies and achieve my academic goals.

I want to express my most sincere gratitude to El Buen Pastor community for their dedication and effort in making this scholarship possible. Furthermore, this year I completed my Civil Engineering degree and next year I plan to do my pre-specialization and thus be able to graduate.

I take this opportunity to wish you a Merry Christmas! May this season be filled with joy, peace and love for all of you and your loved ones. May the coming year be full of success and blessings for everyone in the Sister El Buen Pastor community.

Merry Christmas and Happy New Year! The Good Shepherd

Sincerely,
Terencio Angelberto Rodriguez Portillo

Luis Miguel Benitez Peraza

For: The Church of the Good Shepherd

Gratitude to God for all your generousities with each one of us.

I hope you find yourselves very well in your physical health and spiritually. This Christmas may a feeling be reborn in your hearts where the unity between our communities remains forever.

This year there have been many Good and bad things but the important thing is that we keep working for a better future and better quality of life. I hope all goes well for the Good Shepherd community.

For me, my studies in high school have been finalized and I'm taking a pause in my advanced studies. It is not easy to take such a decision but we Will continue moving ahead.

I wish you a marvelous end to the year and a generous start to the new

year. I carry you in my heart.

Merry Christmas and Happy New Year!

Luis Miguel Benitez Pera

** Luis will be completing his education as part of an apprentice program. Here is his thank you letter:*

From: **Luis Miguel Benitez Peraza**

For: The Church of the Good Shepherd



It's very difficult to start this letter. I'm very happy for all the help you gave me for so long. Thank you for supporting me for 6 years. You have been "key parts of my engine", inspirational people.

Thank you for having kept me in your prayers. Thanks to you, in 2023 I graduated from high school at the National Institute of Perquin, another accomplishment.

During your visit this past August, I said was done studying after this year. But my studies have not finished. I have many goals and objectives to achieve. You all have been an inspiration for me. Because of you, I've realized that while I am not continuing my studies right now, some day I will again. Then you will see the fruits (of your efforts) not only in the US but here in El Ocotillo as well.

Thank You, I appreciate you all very much. God bless you!

From: **Jaime Rafael Martinez Diaz**

Church of the Good Shepherd:

Receive a cordial greeting from the community of El Ocotillo. The reason for my letter is the

tell you about this past school year.

In this past year I studied 9th grade at the Panamerican Union School in Perquín. I was able to complete the courses and materials with success. I had difficulties in some subjects such as Math and English, but thanks to God, I was able to overcome those challenges. In November I graduated from middle school and next year I will begin high school at the National Institute of Perquín.

I am very happy because it is another achievement in my life as well as for my family (who are very well thank God). Similarly, the triumphs of the youth are a joy for the community.



I want to offer my great appreciation for your efforts and dedication in helping us with the scholarships. For me as well as the other youth from the community, this is a blessing for all.

With happiness and gratitude, I close wishing that all in the church are well and in Good health.

Yours faithfully,
Jaime Rafael Martinez Diaz

From **Josue Isaias Martinez Perez:**

A cordial hello to our sister community in Boston. I hope you find yourselves very well.

Josue Isaias Martinez Perez greets you. I am 13 years old and this year I studied 7th grade and next year I will enter 8th grade.

My best wishes that you have a Merry Christmas and a Happy 2024 with many blessings.

Remember our community always welcomes you to visit and we appreciate you very much.

Yours faithfully,
Josue Isaias Martinez Perez

From: **Idania Perez**

Dear Friends from Good Shepherd,

I am Idania Patricia Martinez Perez, it is an

honor once again to write you, hoping that you and your families are well.

My reason for writing is to express my gratitude to each of you who support our scholarships and contribute to making this community a special place.

Thank you for the moments of shared laughter, for the blossoming friendships, and for the occasions of solidarity.



I also want to let you know that soon I will have only 3 years of studies remaining to complete my degree as a systems and network engineer.

Each day I learn something new and feel inspired to continue studying in my field of interest.

Once again thank you for all the support and care. I hope to have you again soon in the community of El Ocotillo.

With gratitude and affection,
Idania Perez

Education is a blessing every child deserves.

In 1961 my father was arrested and scheduled for execution by the government of Cuba. It was a miracle that he was saved but it was clear that he wouldn't get a second chance. After a year of living in fear and poverty, we were given permission to leave our country and come to the US. I was only 3 years old and didn't understand what was happening. But for my 2 brothers and sister who had been in high school, it was the end of their education and the beginning of lives filled with limitations and hard choices. Our parents decided that the whole family would get jobs, work hard and make sure I would get a college education some day.

God blessed me with a good mind, excellent

teachers, and a supportive home. I was able to get a full college scholarship and eventually to become a doctor. I accepted these gifts from God and the sacrifices of my family with humility and gratitude. I worked hard to make the most of the life-changing opportunity my adopted country had provided me.

Many years later, in 2001, I visited El Salvador as part of Good Shepherd's first delegation trip. We met inspiring Salvadorans, people of profound faith and incredible perseverance. My youth had been shaped by revolution and exile and theirs by a long and terrible civil war. In the rural mountainous region of Morazan, we came to know the people of a small community called El Ocotillo. The village had been founded by survivors of the war less than 10 years earlier. They were led by Samuel Guzmán and his wife Claudia Perez, both veterans of the armed conflict. Like my family, they had made tremendous sacrifices so that their children could live in a free and democratic nation.

The days spent in El Ocotillo were deeply moving for our entire Good Shepherd delegation. We returned with an invitation to form a sister community relationship which our parish immediately embraced.



From the outset we wanted whatever support we could offer to be guided by the priorities of our Salvadoran brothers and sisters and not our own. It quickly became clear that their greatest aspiration was that their children be educated. They knew educating the next generation was the best way to honor the martyrs of the war, lift their community out of poverty, and rebuild a better El Salvador.

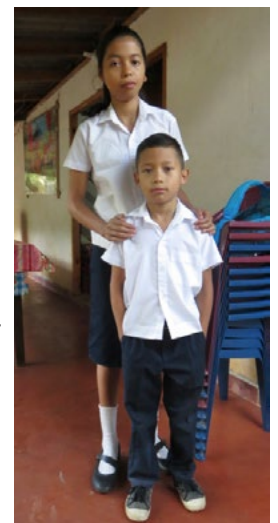
A scholarship program was soon established for El Ocotillo and it continues to this day. Good Shepherd has been the principal supporter of this program which has helped their most promising students to attend middle school, high school, and college.

During return visits to El Ocotillo in the

spring and summer of 2008, I remember meeting a toddler named Idania in the home where I was staying. She had a deformed left ear and a drooping of her left eye and cheek. I didn't know if she would prove to have any learning disabilities but I worried about what her future might be like. Fortunately, this child was born into an exceptional family which nurtured her and instilled in her the spirit and perseverance of her ancestors. Idania Patricia Martinez Perez comes from a long line of remarkable women: Her mother Mabel has become a key leader in El Ocotillo, the community which Idania's grandmother, Claudia Perez Guzmán, helped to found.



By 2017 Idania qualified for one of our scholarships which allowed her to go onto middle school. In contrast to organizations who provide funds for limited projects, our educational mission has always taken the long view. Idania has worked hard and earned our continued support for 8 years now. She has grown into a self-confident, intelligent young woman who is beginning her 3rd year of university studies. It is not at all surprising to me that Idania is among the very few women who have chosen the difficult path for a degree in Systems Engineering. In this field she will analyze organizational systems to find more efficient ways of doing things. While her skills should be in demand in a developing economy, Idania may still have to overcome additional hurdles. Some of these are academic, such as improving her English language skills to be able to interact



with international companies. Others may include navigating social and political biases that the current government is magnifying.

With your help Idania and her fellow scholarship students can live into the dreams of their grandparents and be the future of El Salvador.

Rafael Pupo

The Early Weeks of Refugee Resettlement

It has been a busy time for our Rohingya families since their arrival on January 20. The move to their apartment finally happened on February 14. The families chose to reconfigure their living arrangements: Yasin, his wife Rozina and daughter Yeasmin are sharing the bigger apartment with his mother Elam and brother Nur; Abdul and Humaira (Yasin's sister) and their two daughters, Monowara and Arbia, are staying in the two-bedroom apartment. We moved two desks and a bunkbed into that apartment for the girls, a double bed for the parents, and a kitchen cabinet to safely store food. The larger apartment on Fort Hill Road is fully furnished with donated furniture from the seven churches and looks homey and comfortable for their new start.



The two apartments are a short distance from IINE and the Health Center and about a half hour walk apart. We often find them at each other's homes. In the ensuing weeks the families have met many times with their caseworkers and other professionals at IINE to register for social security cards, health benefits, and EBT cards for groceries. The men had employment assessments and the children had language and learning assessments to determine school placements. The Cultural Orientation and English Classes will begin soon.

Rouben, their main caseworker, has been a

godsend, going to the apartment on their first night when they blew a fuse and lost power, driving the children to school while they waited for bus assignments, and even taking the kids to Target to buy lunch boxes when Arbia found the food at school strange and wasn't eating. He is in constant contact with the families and available to us as needed.

The Partnership's Transportation Team has provided rides several times a week. We've accompanied them many times to the Lowell Community Health Center where we've been impressed by the wonderful job the healthcare providers do, sorting out the health concerns of refugees in their native languages. Friday trips to the mosque in Chelmsford are routine, each time bringing more members of the family. Special thanks to Jon Panek and Linda Schmitt and her husband who have been drivers during these hectic weeks.

Our goals for the next month are to introduce the families to additional ways to independently navigate Lowell by obtaining free bicycles for the men and accompanying them on the city bus to the mosque in Chelmsford. We will also begin small group meetings with each family to get to know each other, explain our role, and define expecta-



tions for our financial support. We will continue to have these meetings to listen to how they are doing, help with budgeting, and plan outings.

The new apartment arrangement presents a larger financial commitment from IPRR if we are to support them until they can be independent.





First month, last month, and security deposit have been paid from the new refugee funds they receive from the federal government. This week we voted to support full rent for the next five months, and, with the hope that they will have jobs, half rent for the following five months which will take us to a year. Elam and Nur will pay their portion at Fort Hill from their own funding source. As of the end

The owner of Foodland is Bengali. They were so excited to find their home food.

of February, IPRR has about \$13,000 in hand and anticipates raising an additional \$10,000 to meet this goal.



Adults L to R: Nur, Yasin, Rozina, Anne and Joan.
Children L to R: Arbia, Monowara, Yeasmin

Thank you to everyone for your commitment to this important work and all of the ways so many of you have contributed. We have formed wonderful relationships among the seven churches and appreciate that by working together we can make a huge difference!

The Interfaith Partnership for
Refugee Resettlement

Church of the Good Shepherd, St. Matthew's United Methodist Church, South Acton Congregational Church, First Parish of Stow and Acton Apple Valley Catholic Community of Acton and Stow, St. Anne of the Field Episcopal Church of Lincoln, Trinity Chapel of Shirley

Resources to Learn More

Rohingyas are considered one of the most persecuted groups in the world. Our newest refugee family is Rohingya, originally from Myanmar (formerly Burma), but many of them have lived their entire lives in Bangladesh in Cox's Bazar, the largest refugee camp in the world. To read Al Jazeera's report "What is Life Like in the Worlds' Biggest Refugee Camp?," [click here](#).

Refugees, asylum seekers, parolees.... Do you find the different terms associated with immigrants confusing? Do you wonder how refugees are chosen to come to the US or how they are vetted? To better understand the differences between the many categories and terms used to describe immigrants, [click here](#).

Refugees seeking to come to the US go through an 11-step process that can take two years. It is the most extensive vetting process in the world. To read about these steps, [click here](#).

Barb Magee



Cox's Bazar Refugee Camp, largest in the world.



SAVE THE DATE
May 5th at noon!

Outreach Committee - join us!

The Interfaith Partnership for Refugee Resettlement (IPRR) is going to a performance of ***Suitcase Stories*** on **March 23 at 8:00 pm, at the Somerville Theater, 33 Davis Square, Somerville, MA.**

Suitcase Stories® features foreign- and US-born residents sharing powerful and inspiring stories of refugee and immigrant life. The series provides a way to dig beneath the headlines, exposing audiences to the complexity of migration.

STORYTELLERS



- Somerville Mayor Katjana Ballantyne unpacks her journey of belonging
- Shweta Bhatt navigates what it means to be Indian-American
- Gak Kon seeks connection as a Sudanese refugee after resettlement
- Ishtar Pady shares how her migration from Haiti brings loss and hope
- Antonio Sacre explores memories as the son of a Cuban father and Irish-American mother
- Andrew Shellfo faces unexpected anti-immigrant bias in Western MA
- Aida Zilelian searches for identity as an Armenian-American

Started by Cheryl Hamilton, the former Director of IINE Lowell, and much like Moth Story Hour performances, *Suitcase Stories*® is an inspiring live performance series that features foreign-born and US-born residents sharing stories of migration.

Buy tickets at [Global Arts Live](#).

Events

Annual Pupusa Dinner & Fundraiser for the El Salvador Scholarship Fund! on Saturday, March 9th from 6-8 pm All Ages are Invited.

We will be once again be serving chips, salsa, Salvadoran pupusas, slaw, plantains, desserts, and soft drinks in the parish hall.

We will also be highlighting current successes and challenges in our sister community of El Ocotillo and the important role of our scholarship program. All ages are invited.

There is no charge for the dinner, but you are invited to make a donation to the El Salvador Scholarship Fund.

Please RSVP by calling the church so we will order enough pupusas!



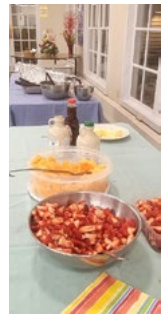
The El Salvador Ministry



Annual Meeting



Shrove Tuesday Pancake Supper



Thank you to everyone who helped to make the Shrove Tuesday Pancake Supper a success! The Parish Hall was decorated in a Mardi Gras theme. The kids enjoyed making masks at the craft table. Everyone enjoyed several types of pancakes, fruit, sausage and bacon. It was a great evening. Roulez les Bon Temps!



50th Anniversary Celebration of the Ordination of Rev. Jorge Gutierrez



Ministry Updates

Creation Care

Send Green Tips for our April CGS Creation Care Calendar



Earth Day is an annual event on April 22 to demonstrate support for environmental protection. First held on April 22, 1970, it now includes a wide range of events including 1 billion people in more than 93 countries. The official theme for 2024 is **Planet vs. Plastics**. Watch the movie *Plastic Earth* to learn what we can do to help.

Our Creation Care team invites you to submit a tip (plastic or other) for caring for our Earth to go on our April calendar. Examples:

- Buy glass containers for leftovers.
- Consider “Blueland” cleaning products

Thanks!!
Carolyn Platt

Coffee Hour aka - The Third Sacrament

The members of Church of the Good Shepherd are very fond of our Coffee Hour. It is a time when we can minister to each other, catch up, reach out to newer people so that they aren't new any longer, and just enjoy the food and coffee or tea!

Sunday, March 3rd has a great Coffee Hour, as you can see in the photos. If you would like to sign up or want more information before you volunteer to coordinate at either 8 or 10 am please contact Wendy Fedderson our Coffee Hour coordinator.



With Abundant Gratitude to:

- **Marilyn Fedele** for hosting seven memorial receptions in 2023. **Harry Peebles** has helped her with table set-up, and **Toni Berryman** has helped with John and Kate's funerals, but often, Marilyn does most of the receptions by herself willingly.



- **Catherine Conway, Ed and Delia Moore, Doug Recko, Tom Hoch, Karen Root Watkins, Alex and Benji Flores and Kim Wardwell** for helping with the Shrove Tuesday Pancake Supper.



- **Harry Peebles** for his dedication in his role as Rector's Liaison.
- **Lydia Tolley** for leading the Supplemental Stewardship Drive.
- everyone who contributed to the Supplemental Stewardship Drive.

- **Margaret Geanisis** and team for that wonderful Shep Staff last month. It was amazing!
- **Wendy Fedderson** for arranging the reception, with help from **Rafael Pupo, Mary Bunker and Jessie Panek**. Jessie and Rafael did the decorations. Rafael was the door greeter.
- **Ray Lyons** for replacing our semi-broken lock-box
- **Rev. Daniel MacDonald** for serving as our supply clergy while Ellie was on vacation.
- **Jessie Panek, Karen Wiss Pupo and Rafael Pupo** for singing at Kate Ogle's funeral
- **Jon Panek and Dawn Sutton** for providing music during Kate's Funeral.

Dear **Good Shepherd family**,

Thank you for all of the prayers, meals, cards, phone calls, e-mails, and texts that you bestowed upon me during my recent recovery from open heart surgery, namely, double cardiac bypass. Thanks to so many of you, my recovery was made easier knowing that you all were in my corner praying for and wishing me well. I am truly blessed by the outpouring of support I have received. May God enrich you all with many blessings yourselves.

Diane Cooke

Administration

Treasurer's Report

Giving statements for 2023 were emailed in early February to all who made donations in 2023. If you did not receive your statement, or if you would like a printed copy, please reach out to me or the office.

If you made a pledge for 2024, we will be sending out quarterly pledge statements, again via email, during the year.

Denise Kelly,
Treasurer

Vestry Vignettes

January 9 meeting: We opened with prayer. The Minutes for November and December were ap-

proved.

Rector's Report:

We discussed the upcoming events for January and February, including Ellie's vacation; Rev Daniel MacDonald will be our supply clergy. All were encouraged to attend Confirmation and the following Fellowship reception on Feb 10 at 10 am to support our confirmands.

We will be having a Saturday vestry spiritual orientation retreat. Date to be decided. The Shrove Tuesday Pancake Supper will be Feb 13, therefore there will be no vestry meeting that Tuesday.

Rectory updates:

The tenants are still occupying the property even though we did not renew the lease. The Wardens are talking to our attorney about the next possible next steps.

Financial report:

Denise reported a deficit of \$24k, which was followed by lots of discussion of options. Ellie reported that Laura has reduced her hours from 25 to 20 hrs./week.

Adjournment and closing prayer by Ken.

January 23 meeting:

Ellie led us in opening prayers.

Wardens:

Updated us with the status of the rectory, which led to a discussion of strategies to negotiate with our rectory tenants.

Budget discussion:

Denise said we have a deficit budget, but sufficient funds in checking/savings to cover this deficit for this year.

According to a webinar some attended, many churches are in the same bind, and need to find income from sources beyond pledging. Concern was raised about short-term thinking on the budget and the need for long term planning. After discussion the 2024 Budget was approved.

Nominating committee:

Gail reported that seats for diocesan reps and vestry are filled; but we are still looking for a senior warden.

Events Planning discussion:

Gail reported that we still need volunteers for Confirmation, Annual Meeting and Shrove Tuesday Pancake Supper.

The meeting was closed with prayer led by Deacon Ken.

Passages

Confirmation

The children of Angus and Peace Michaels: **Michael Angus, Brian Asinyetogha, and Julia Ibinye** were confirmed on Saturday, February 10, 2023.

The sons of Obi and Anabella Umeh: **Obiamiwe C., Jr. and Ikenna Obiamiwe** were also confirmed on Saturday, February 10, 2023.



From left to right:
Ikenna, Julia, Brian,
Michael, and Obi