

The Shepherd's Staff

December, 2023

Dec. 1 - Esperanza Book Drive begins

1 pm - Decorating for Advent begins, all welcome

Dec. 3 at 8 & 10 am - Advent 1- "Healing Hope" w/Holy Eucharist
Church School, Advent Meditations begin

Dec. 8 at 7 pm - Lessons & Carols at Groton School

Dec. 10 at 8 & 10 am - Advent 2 - "Seeing Hope" w/Holy Eucharist

Dec. 10 from 2-4 pm - Holiday Open House

Dec. 14 at 7 pm - Blue Christmas Service

Dec. 16 - Diocesan On-line Advent Retreat

1:00 pm - Decorating for Advent with greenery

Dec. 17 at 8 & 10 am - Advent 3 - "Embodying Hope" w/Holy
Eucharist, Church School

Dec. 18 - Deadline for Christmas Flower Donations & Memorials

Dec. 24 at 9 am - Advent 4 - "Voicing Hope" w/Holy Eucharist
10ish am - Greening of the church for Christmas Eve,
all welcome

Christmas Eve:

4 pm- All Ages Christmas Service with Holy Eucharist

6:30 pm- Christmas Bonfire Service (A simple, short, out
door Christmas service)

8:30 pm- Carol Sing

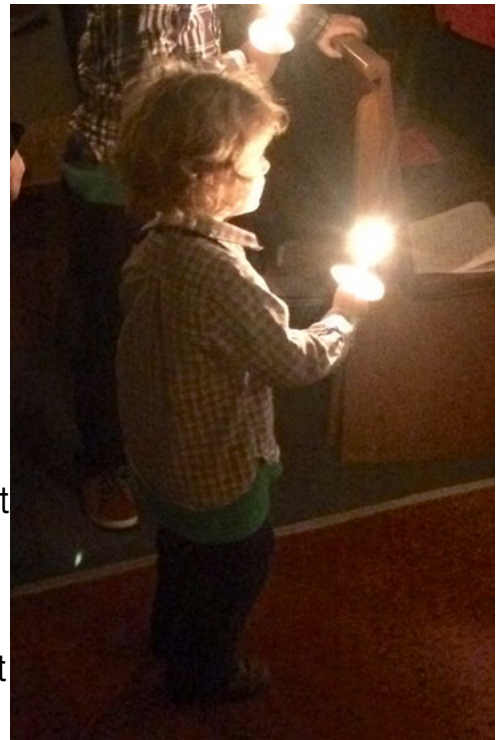
9:00 pm- Festive Candlelight Christmas Service

Dec. 25 at 9 am - Christmas Morning Holy Eucharist with carols

Dec. 31 at 9 am- One service for the First Sunday after
Christmas

Jan. 7 at 8 am - Holy Eucharist

10am- Epiphany Service of Lessons & Carols with
Eucharist



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Episcopal Diocese of
Massachusetts

A stylized illustration of a nativity scene. At the top, a wooden stable structure is shown against a dark blue night sky with several white stars and a large, bright yellow starburst. The word "Blessings" is written in a large, blue, serif font across the center of the stable's opening. Below the text, a list of Christmas services is provided. At the bottom of the illustration, a white sheep stands on the left, a brown cow lies on the right, and in the center, the infant Jesus lies in a manger, wrapped in blue cloth, with a bright yellow halo and radiating lines around his head.

Blessings

Christmas Worship at Good Shepherd

Blue Christmas, Thursday, December 14, 7 pm

Christmas Eve, Sunday, December 24

**9 am- one service for the 4th Sunday of Advent followed
by greening of the church.**

4 pm- All Ages Christmas Service with Holy Eucharist

6:30 pm- Christmas Bonfire Service

(A simple, short, outdoor Christmas service)

8:30 pm- Carol Sing

9:00 pm- Festive Candlelight Christmas Service

Christmas Morn, Monday December 25

9 am- Holy Eucharist with carols

Sunday, December 31

9 am- One service for the First Sunday after Christmas

A Word from the Fold



“God created human beings, not human doings!” I’m not sure where this phrase first originated, but a priest friend of mine is fond of saying it. For me, it’s a great reminder of who I am as we head into the season of Advent.

I love Advent. — At least, I love what it is supposed to be like in an ideal world: a time of simplicity and quiet. A time of hopeful, peaceful waiting. A time of stillness and rest as we linger in the pregnant darkness anticipating the birth of the Savior who will bring peace

and hope to our weary world.

Yet, the reality of my own life... as a priest, a mother of three teenagers, a spouse, a daughter of aging parents... means Advent is often far from simple and quiet. And the burdens of the world right now, the violence erupting in the Holy Land, the ongoing war in Ukraine, the floods in Somalia, unrest in our own country, the not-yet-over impact of COVID, the looming election in a bitterly divided country... none of this makes for an easy inner peace!

I know from my pastoral care for you that many in our parish are hurting. Some are facing the first holiday season after the death of a loved one. Others are making the transition to a new home. Some are facing layoffs and work transitions. There are frightening health diagnoses among us, and mental health challenges to address. And there is the pressure to Do All The Things to be ready for Christmas.

Advent is often seen as the counterbalance for a busy December. — A reminder to simply be, rather than do. A time to light candles and breathe deeply. To read a bit more of Scripture and say an extra prayer. To go on retreat, perhaps, or attend an Advent study group so that we can focus on God, and the coming of Christ, rather than on our own burdens. The irony, of course, is that observing a holy Advent often means adding more to our schedules rather than doing less.

We want to provide a corrective to that at Good Shepherd this year. So instead of a weekly Advent program after church, or a series of evening gatherings, or a retreat day to squeeze into a jam-packed month, we invite you to experience the fullness of Advent through our regular Sunday morning worship. Each of the four Sundays of Advent will offer a different way to engage with God’s Word and an opportunity to observe a holy and meditative Advent. We’ll have Eucharist, of course, but instead of a sermon, we’ll connect with God through healing prayer on 1 Advent, through visual images and meditation on 2 Advent, through breath and non-verbal prayer on 3 Advent, and through voice and music on 4 Advent. Our hope is that for these four Sundays, as we step aside from the secular pre-Christmas chaos and offer our burdens to God, we might make room in our hearts for the hope that Advent awakens.

Ellen, Ken, and I look forward to worshiping with you this Advent. Come, Lord Jesus!

+Rev. Ellie

Stewardship

2024 Pledge Campaign

All Is Made New in the Power of the Spirit!

Thank you to everyone who has submitted a pledge for 2024. We are so grateful for your generosity. Through your support we can equip our church to thrive as we seek and serve Christ in each other and the world around us. If you have not yet submitted a pledge, you can still do so on the paper pledge forms, or through our secure online link: <https://goodshepherdacton.breezechms.com/form/9249b04573>. Timely pledge submissions are needed for our Vestry and Finance Committee to prepare a realistic budget for 2024.

Preliminary results include 42 pledges returned with a total of \$ 209,870 pledges towards our operating expenses.

We are so grateful to our stewardship speakers this year: Dave Hazen, Taryn Ross-Hyman and Ed Moore. To view their wonderful video reflections, visit our website. Thank you to Lydia Tolley

and Rev. Ellie for all their hard work preparing this year's pledge materials.

Treasurer's Report

Through the end of October our results show a year to date net loss of a little over -\$5,200. Through this point in the year we had budgeted a net loss of just over -\$9,200. However, through the end of the year we project that we will end up slightly worse than budgeted due primarily to some unexpected costs for the rectory. You may recall that our budget for 2023 projected an annual loss of -\$20,214 and we expect that we may end up with a slightly larger loss.

Thank you to everyone for keeping your pledges up to date. If you haven't yet done so and you intend to give, please do submit a pledge for 2024. Having accurate pledge amounts allow us to better plan the finances for the year.

Denise Kelly, Treasurer

Deacon's Corner

An Advent of Light and Life



As I write this, it is the day before Thanksgiving. Our home is filled with the aroma of fresh baked pumpkin pie and homemade cranberry sauce. We are trying to pace ourselves while we prepare tomorrow's Thanksgiving feast for our expanding family. Our hope is to have enough energy to thank-

fully enjoy our family, and our abundant blessings.

Preparation and pacing. Hopeful waiting as we get ourselves ready to share the gifts of our

lives with each other. This is also an image for us to carry into Advent, which begins next week, December 3. Waiting in hope for the coming of the Christ child, who will teach the world a new way of seeing God, seeing life, and seeing each other. We are also waiting in hope for the return of Christ, when the long-awaited Kingdom of God will be made manifest on the earth. Unlike our waiting for Thanksgiving, Advent presents us with a lot of unknowns and uncertainty. God came into the world through Christ, and we believe Christ will come again. But how are we to prepare, how are we to live in these "in-between" times?

Our celebration of Advent at our Church of the Good Shepherd will be different from previous years. Each Sunday in Advent we will offer a more inner, meditative, and healing experience for our souls and for ourselves. We will, of course, continue

the life enhancing celebration of the Eucharist. You will also see the progressive lighting of the Advent Wreath as we move closer to Christmas Day. And, yes, we will sing/chant “*O Come, O Come, Emmanuel*”.

This year, the first Sunday in Advent, will include a Litany of Healing, and offering a Service of “Laying on of Hands and Anointing”. This service of prayer and healing will be open to all, and it is our hope you will avail yourself of this opportunity to become more aware of, and more in-tune with, your own spirituality and your life journey. The other three Sundays in Advent will offer other meditative ways to engage this sacred season. We hope you will find these services to be fulfilling, life-enhancing, and a way of reclaiming your Spirit, as we begin to see ourselves in the new light of Christ. We also hope you will find some comfort for your

pain and loss as we face the upcoming Christmas celebrations.

At the very least, we hope you find these Sunday Services to be periods of calming renewal as we make our way through the business and “busyness” leading up to Christmas.

May this Advent be a blessed time of becoming closer to God, closer to our own Spirituality, closer to who we were made to be, and closer to each other. Let us find that True Light of Christ this Advent and learn to share it with each other. This is how we help build that long-awaited Kingdom of God. Come, Holy Spirit!

Grace and Peace
Ken Schmidt

*** No Men’s Group During Advent.**

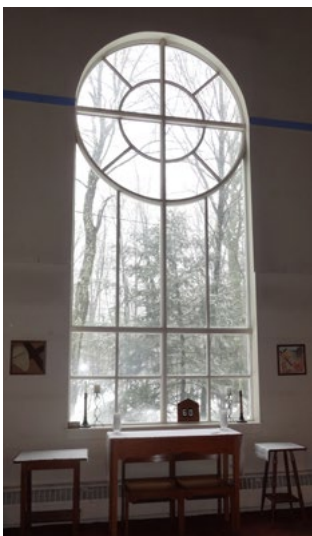
Worship

Worship in Advent

Four Sundays and four different ways to experience the hope and peace of Advent.

- 1 Advent: [Sunday, December 3 - Healing Hope](#)
- 2 Advent: [Sunday, December 10 - Seeing Hope](#)
- 3 Advent: [Sunday, December 17 - Embodying Hope](#)
- 4 Advent: [Sunday, December 24 - Voicing Hope](#)

This year we will be doing something different during the sermon time on each of the four Sundays of Advent. As we enter into this season of contemplation, and our lives outside of church are bombarded with messages to rush, spend, and do, do, do, we wanted to create an opportunity to rest in hope. Rather than create an additional program to attend to engage the message of Advent, we will use our worship to experience it. Instead of a sermon, each Sunday will provide a different way to engage and respond to God’s Word. The first Sunday of Advent will



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

include extended healing prayers and a time of quiet meditation. The second Sunday of Advent will feature contemplation of visual images of Advent. The third Sunday of Advent will invite us to use our bodies and breath to pray without words. The fourth Sunday of Advent will help us respond to Mary’s hope through different musical settings of her Magnificat. We hope these four Sundays will provide a respite from the weary world of violence, fear and anxiety that we all yearn for as we prepare

for the hope and peace of Christmas.

Holy Eucharist will be celebrated each week of Advent as well. At our 8am service, we will return to Eucharistic Prayer B from the Book of Common Prayer. This setting includes a particular emphasis on the incarnation and the role of Mary and is especially appropriate for the seasons of Advent and Christmas. At the 10am service, we will again use a Eucharistic Prayer for the season of Advent from Common Worship, a liturgical resource from the Church of England.

+Rev. Ellie

Blue Christmas, Thursday, December 14 at 7pm

Before you start singing the song, the Blue Christmas service has nothing to do with Elvis, but it does have to do with missing someone or something. Blue Christmas services make room for sadness, loneliness, or loss during the holidays.

All are invited to a quiet, contemplative service of light and healing on December 14th. at 7:00 pm. The service will incorporate Taizé traditions, including music, song, meditation, and readings, providing a supportive space to those in need of an alternative to traditional Christmas services and celebrations.

Blue Christmas has its foundation in ancient Yule celebrations of the Winter Solstice, celebrating the hope of returning light and life. Here we acknowledge that darkness will always be defeated by this brighter side. For people dealing with memories of loss and grief, it can serve as a respite from the frenzied holiday shopping and pressures that Christmas can bring. The worship includes opportunities for expression of grief, pain and heartbreak. Candles are lit at numerous occasions during the service; we commemorate those who have been lost during the previous year. Please join us for this special service of comfort.



Christmas Service for All Ages, 4pm Christmas Eve

Join us for our new interactive nativity service at 4pm on Christmas Eve. Using “life-size” cut outs of the Nativity, this service of Holy Communion with Lessons and Carols will tell the Christmas story in a fresh and festive way. We’ll have readers of all ages and children will place the nativity figures around the church so that we all become part of the scene.

We’ll enjoy familiar carols, share Eucharist together, and sing Silent Night by candlelight.

We cannot wait for you to celebrate Christmas Eve at Good Shepherd!



Christmas Bonfire 6:30pm

A short, simple service to welcome the light of Christ. Gather round the fires to pray, sing and reflect on this holy night.



Festive Candlelight Christmas Service

8:30pm Carol Sing- we can never have too many carols on Christmas!

9:00pm Service of Holy Eucharist with sermon, choir, carols, and candlelight.



Music Through the Season

An Advent Icon In Sound: Handbells & Humming

This year in Advent we will sing the gathering hymn by humming with a sparse and random ringing of handbells. Why? It's an embodiment of the spirit of the season in sound. What happens when we set aside text, and focus on the somatic experience of humming—breath making a home in us, vibrations comforting, freeing, and transforming flesh and blood and bone? What happens when we still ourselves and listen for God-With-Us?

My Soul Magnifies The Lord

On the fourth Sunday of Advent at the 9am Eucharist, the gospel reading is the Song of Mary, also known as the Magnificat (see Luke 1:46-55). During the sermon time we'll sing together several settings of this "theme song" of Advent, exploring ways in which the music highlights different aspects of the text. How do we experience this spiritual reality in our bodies: My soul magnifies the Holy One?

Christmas Eve Singers & Players

A varied, bustling bunch of people have stepped up to enliven our Christmas Eve celebrations. Thank you!! There is still time to join in, as long as you can make the rehearsals. Singers for the 9:00 pm service are especially needed.

- 4:00 pm Handbells and Instruments at Nativity Story and Eucharist;
- 6:30 pm Bonfire Midwinter Wonder Outdoors with Percussion;
- 8:30 pm Community Carol Sing;
- 9:00 pm Choral Contemplative Candlelight Eucharist with flute and violin.

If you have questions about or interest in any of the above; or if you have a musical idea or talent you want to share that you don't see listed, please connect with Ellen Oak, Pastoral Associate for Liturgy and Music. She's at coffee hour after the 10am service most Sundays, or call the main office.

Ellen Oak

Christmas Flower Dedications

If you would like to contribute to Christmas



flowers for decorating the Sanctuary, please fill out a small red form available at the ushers' table and put it in the collection plate or leave it under the office door. Checks should be made out to the church with Christmas flowers in the memo line. You can also email Laura Brock with your dedication. Dedications must be received no later than 9:00am Monday December 18 to be included in the holiday publications. Contributions should be made as soon as possible so that flowers can be ordered.

After Christmas these plants are given to parish members and friends who are shut-in or ill.

[Laura Brock](#)

Liturgical Arts

The Liturgical Arts Committee is the group that changes the decorations in the interior of the sanctuary in response to the changing church calendar. The goal is to enrich the worship experience of all the parishioners. If you are looking for a way to become involved in parish life, this committee is fun and requires no meetings. Helping us requires about one or two hours every few months. You don't need to be creative, but new ideas are always welcome; you just need the ability to work together. One person being able to climb a 10 foot ladder is frequently needed. ;)

Advent starts on December 3 this



year, and Christmas follows quickly, the day after the 4th Sunday of Advent. We will be decorating in stages during this season.

In order not to conflict with choir rehearsal, I scheduled our activity for 1:00 pm Saturday, December 2nd. We will then start the first stage of decorating as we hang our wreaths on our exterior windows.

To continue the “greening of the church” and not interfere with the choir rehearsal, for the second stage I changed the time from Saturday morning to 1 pm Saturday, December 16th. We will hang garland in the sanctuary and put our undecorated tree up in the narthex. This activity should take no longer than 45 minutes.

Immediately after the 9:00 am Advent 4 service on December 24th, we will add red bows to all the decorations, as well as decorate the Christmas tree. We’ll need lots of help for a just a little while. This is a wonderful multi-generational and family event. Many hands make light work, and what child doesn’t have fun hanging ornaments on a Christmas tree? So grab some coffee and then come up to the sanctuary. It should only take about 45 minutes, kids included.

We want to involve as many parishioners and families as possible in this lovely effort to make Christmas come alive at Good Shepherd. Check the eblast each week as things are a bit fluid about times and dates.

See you there!

Ellen Harland



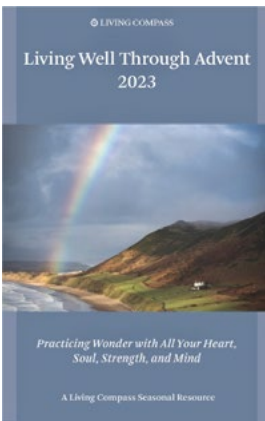
Festival of Nine Lessons & Carols with Orchestra Prelude



Groton School
December 8 at 7:00 pm,
St. John’s Chapel,
282 Farmer’s Row, Groton
Free to the public, no tickets needed

This is a beautiful event and truly sets a wonderful tone for the season. The voices are lovely, the song selection is what one would expect at King’s Chapel, and the acoustics are incredible. Arrive early, some years the chapel fills up quickly.

Christian Formation



Advent Daily Meditations

Once again Deacon Ken has ordered *Living Well Through Advent* daily meditation booklets. These are wonderful, daily meditations with thoughtful questions for those would like dive more deeply into the reading.

The Living Compass Model for Well-Being offers us guidance in four dimensions of our being: heart, soul, strength, and mind. Just like a mobile or kinesthetic art, these dimensions are interconnected—movement in one area affects all the others. We are not compartmentalized people. Whatever impacts one area of our lives (positively or negatively) has an impact on the other areas. Each of the four compass points focuses on two areas of well-being, and each of the eight areas helps

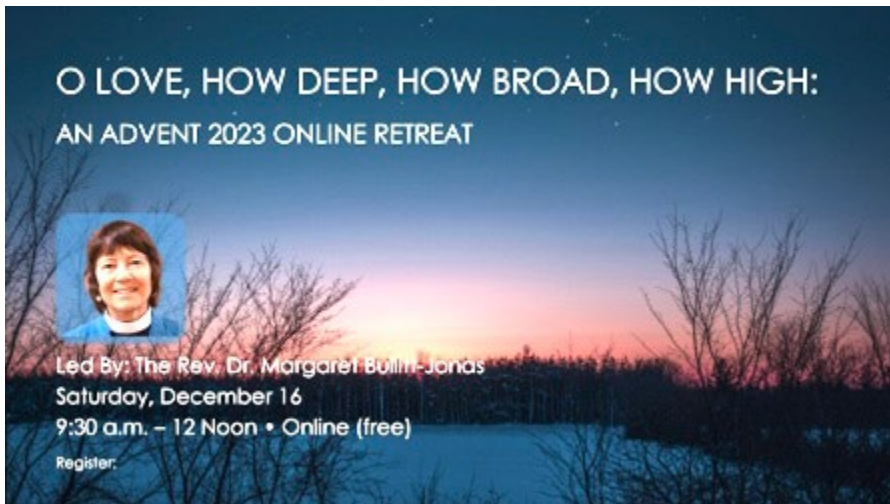
to guide and equip us as we commit to being more intentional about the way we live our lives. The purpose of this Compass is to provide a dynamic resource that will assist us in our search for balance and wellness. The invitation is to live an undivided life, where heart, soul, strength, and mind are integrated into both our being and our doing.

Creating resources grounded in the integration of spirituality and wellness is what makes Living Compass different from other wellness programs. Living Compass believes we all have many compasses that compete to guide our lives, often outside of our awareness. When we intentionally choose the compass that guides decisions in all areas of our lives, we are better able to experience wellness and wholeness. It is worth noting that health, healing, wholeness, and holy all come from the same root word *hal* or *haelen*.

For more information, visit their website: <https://www.livingcompass.org/advent>

Advent 2023 Online Retreat

Advent 2023 online retreat



O Love, How Deep, How Broad, How High:

This Advent retreat on **Saturday, Dec. 16, 9:30 am–noon**, takes its name from the opening line of a 15th-century hymn attributed to Thomas á Kempis. Guided by the Rev. Dr. Margaret Bullitt-Jonas, those gathered will enjoy a morning of listening, prayer and conversation as we open ourselves to the presence of Divine Love. The time together will include presentations, guided

meditation and gathering in small groups. If you like, have a candle on hand and wear something comfortable for an optional walk outdoors.

All are welcome to join this fourth annual Advent retreat, free and open to the public, and sponsored by both Episcopal dioceses in Massachusetts and the Southern New England Conference, United Church of Christ.

Church School

Church School Calendar

December 3 at 10:00 am - Church School

December 17 at 10:00 am - Church School

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

December	Esperanza Book Drive
January	Refugee Fund Raiser
March 9	Pupusa Dinner
May 5	Rise Against Hunger - Save the Date!

Advent Book Drive for Esperanza

Giving books to friends and family at Christmas is an old tradition. This Advent, Church of the Good Shepherd will be helping our friends at Esper-

anza Academy grow their library collection by purchasing books through our local Acton bookstore, The Silver Unicorn, from a wish list compiled by the Director of Curriculum and Instruction and the student librarians at Esperanza.



Interested in visiting Esperanza Academy after the holidays? We will be planning a visit. Stay tuned for details!

CGS, Esperanza, and The Silver Unicorn have been working together over the past few months to develop a plan for this Advent Project..

Here's how it will work:

- On December 1, The Silver Unicorn bookstore will publish the Esperanza Wish List on [their website](#). The list will include the price of each book.
- You can also use this [direct link](#).
- A copy of the Esperanza Wish List will be included in the CGS weekly E-blasts and on the church website, so you can preview it before visiting the Silver Unicorn website.
- At the close of the book drive, The Silver Unicorn will ship all of the purchased books directly to Esperanza Academy.

Note: People who are unfamiliar with online shopping may purchase their book donation by calling or visiting the bookstore, Mon.-Fri. until 2:45 pm. **It is important that you identify yourself as a CGS parishioner purchasing from the Esperanza wish list.** Contact Barbara Dailey for more information about purchases by telephone or with any other questions you may have.

Barbara Dailey

The Shelter at Minuteman Inn



In the last few weeks, we've been reading about the shelter crisis in Massachusetts. There are many concerns that the governor and the legislature must address that speak to our deepest values. The scarcity of affordable housing, paired with the numbers of migrants seeking refuge, has created a horrific situation. Yet, in the midst of this, there

are things for which to be grateful.

On November 15, several of us attended a forum sponsored by the United Way of Acton-Boxboro to learn about the shelter at the Minuteman Inn in Acton. Town residents, representatives of faith communities, and town government players, totaling nearly 100 people, were in attendance. The state has hired the agency Making Opportunities Count (MOC) to manage the shelter. MOC runs Head Start, WIC, and many other anti-poverty programs. It is also the manager of the shelter at the former Best Western in Concord, which is considered the gold standard for what serving a shelter population should look like. In Concord, MOC provides the full range of services--from housing and food to legal services and an on-site preschool. There's a van for transportation, drivers, and 24-hour staff.

MOC has coordinated with the Acton Schools, the police department, and Emerson Hospital in preparation for the arrival of 33 families over several weeks beginning November 20. They expect about 80% of the families to be immigrants, mostly from Haiti, and 20% to be homeless residents from Massachusetts. There is also likely to be several pregnant women and a high percentage of children under the age of eight.

We were told that it will take time to determine what the families need and how we can engage in welcoming these new residents. MOC is working with A-B United Way to funnel specific needs for clothing and other goods from the community



through the A-B Resource Center to the shelter.

We are ever so grateful for the funds provided by the state, the warm and welcoming community waiting to help, and especially for the expert professionals who bring the wisdom of experience and understanding hearts to this important work.

We at CGS will watch and wait to hear if there are ways that we might extend a hand and a greeting of “Bienveni” to our new neighbors.

FACT:

What US state has the most Haitians?

Florida has the highest number of Haitians in the United States, with 487,632 individuals, representing 2.15% of the state’s population. Massachusetts has the second-highest number of Haitians, with 81,050 individuals or 1.16% of the state’s population.

worldpopulationreview.com

[https://worldpopulationreview.com › state-rankings](https://worldpopulationreview.com/state-rankings)

Barb Magee

News from the Interfaith Partnership for Refugee Resettlement

It’s getting closer! We expect to welcome our new family in mid-January!

The IPRR has been meeting every two weeks via Zoom with Jessica Cirone, International Institute Nwe England’s coordinator of the Resettle Together program. This new program is designed to support sponsor groups with clear parameters and streamlined communication. Several of our fall meetings have been training sessions that have discussed the various categories of immigration status, the expectations for sponsors, and best practices for building relationships with our new neighbors.



If you are cleaning out a home or know someone who is downsizing, please watch for information in upcoming eblasts about what goods will be needed to furnish an apartment and where to drop them off.

We will also be looking for volunteers in January to set up an apartment, prepare a welcome

meal, and provide rides to appointments. The first few weeks after arrival are very busy!

Barb Magee

Successful Food Drive For the Acton Food Pantry

Thank you for the tremendous support we received for the food drive for the Acton Food Pantry. It was a huge success! We have donated over 221 food items which were delivered to the Acton Food Pantry this week. We had so much food that we needed a truck!

“It has been wonderful to participate in the food drive. Helping our community and involving our children in this important work has also been fulfilling and eye opening for them. Working as a team has made this volunteer work possible and the added bonus is getting to know other parishioners in our community. My sons were already asking when the next drive will be!” (Kristen)

“We so appreciate the opportunity to grow relationships and make a meaningful impact for our community! It was such a collaborative and flexible way as working moms to participate in such an important ministry - the support structure was amazing! My daughter, Angela said, ‘It’s good to know I am helping those in need.’” (Kim)

This outpouring of generosity will undoubtedly help a great many of our neighbors in Acton and Boxborough. Thank you for your thoughtfulness and care during this season of giving.

Kristen Bates, Kim Wardell
and Tina Humphreys





Ukrainian Update from Emmanuel

As I begin to pull my thoughts together and write something of the life here in central Ukraine, Cherkasy, to be specific, I am sitting on a bench outside ASTRA, a full service rehabilitation center. My stressed doctor friend Ludmilla works inside and Marsiyah, a long time friend from 1992, is also inside, getting advice about her multiple bone fractures she sustained a few months back.

So, I think 'Update'. I look up and take a photo, through birch branches, into a gray sky. This country, invaded by a country 3.3 times larger by population and 28 times larger by square miles, is in an



existential struggle for its survival, while the invader simply wants more land, power and influence. Here, the pain of losing even one soldier or citizen to the daily military attacks is a huge tragedy and an in-your-face war crime. There is no way around this reality. That said, ANY loss of life in war is regrettable.

War-wise, with one more month of autumn in Cherkasy, though there are lots of military men in their fatigues on the street and constant news of the war, there are few other obvious evidences of a war going on, Well, except today, while passing through the center of town, I happened to see the result of one Russian rocket, a local hotel, half destroyed. It happened about a month ago, when the Ukrainian Air Defense system intercepted a huge Russian rocket headed for Kyiv, another 125 miles North. That's good, except that the payload exploded, causing the bulk of the damage. Fortunately and amazingly, no one was killed, though there were multiple injuries.

The odd thing about this event is that I personally was 200 yards, 2 football fields, away from the explosion. It was 5:00 am and I was sleeping very soundly. A few minutes later, I was awakened by my mobile phone ringing. "Hello?" I answered groggily. "Are you okay?" Sasha, my friend asked. "Ah, yes," I answered, "but, is something wrong? What's going on?" "You didn't hear the explosion?" "What explosion?" "Are you joking?" my friend asked. "You must be an incredibly deep sleeper. My God!!!"

Just so you know, Sasha is a military translator, with very good English skills. Well, that was a

month ago and aside from the many daily Air-raid sirens, not much has happened here that speaks of an ongoing war.

But, and this is a big BUT, this war has created a daily stress factor not easy to imagine from the relative safety of New England. Almost everyone here is at loose ends about the future. Every day, for example, there are thousands of women, many tending children, who dread a visit from a military man with bad news about their husband, father or grandfather. This now has been going on for 21 months. Today, riding the trolley bus to yoga, I searched in vain for a happy face, young old or in the middle.

That being said, I see incredible strength, know-how and a real future here. Also today, on the sidewalk, I walked by a very nimble active 1 + year old, in a winter suit, tended by his mama and I say to myself "wow, this child is going to move mountains some day." I lean into the two of them and ask, like a loving uncle, "How old? Poltora? Dvi?" (1 and ½, 2?). Mama proudly says - 1 year, 4 months. As I headed up the sidewalk, I laughed.

So, it's a very mixed situation here. I myself have managed to jump through the passle of bureaucratic hoops in order to become a 'Native Speaker' who will assist an English teacher at a highly ranked local high school, First City Gymnasium. This is a good step and in conjunction with tutoring 3 students here and managing an English language film club, I'll be a busy man.

God bless you all,
Emmanuel

Events

Christmas Open House

Join friends new and old from Good Shepherd at a Christmas Open House on Sunday, December 10 from 2-4pm in the Parish Hall. This festive event is for everyone- all ages are welcome! Wear your favorite (or ugliest) Christmas sweater, sing some carols, and enjoy a fun afternoon together. You are encouraged to bring a plate of Christmas cookies to share (but it's ok if you don't).

Merry Christmas!!

Ministry Updates

Advent & Christmas Pastoral Care

Looking out for and taking care of each other and those in need is a way of life here at Good Shepherd. The ministries involved include the Prayer Chain, Prayer Shawls, and Pastoral Care, which are here to serve you, or those you know and care about. Please do not hesitate to call on them for help at any time, but especially in this season. In case of emergency, contact Rev. Ellie Terry at 860-942-9824, or the church office at 978-263-5782.

Prayer Chain

If you are feeling less than jolly as the holidays approach, remember that you can always ask for prayers from the Good Shepherd prayer chain. You can also ask healing prayers for others who are ill or facing any difficulty. Prayer chain members hold all requests in strict confidence.

You can share your request with me at church, email me, or make an anonymous request using the link from the Good Shepherd web page under [Community Care; Pastoral Outreach](#).

If you would also like to add your request to the Prayers of the People in Sunday worship, mention that and I will pass it to the right person.

Peace,
Jane Lothian

Prayer Shawl Ministry

Advent and the Christmas season are sometimes full of joy — and sometimes not. Whether you are celebrating or grieving or ill or worrying, please know that we have a great selection of prayer



shawls available to be given to anyone who needs to be wrapped in prayer right now. Our shawls have been sent around the world; they are not just for members of Good Shepherd.

Please let [Rev. Ellie](#) or Diane Cooke know your needs, and they will be happy to get you a shawl. Alternatively, you may take a shawl from the bins in the library marked blessed (but don't take the unblessed ones!). If you help yourself, please remember to write your name on the list posted on the bin, so that we'll know (and pray for) whoever took the shawl. For those who have been faithful contributors of shawls, bless you!

Nancy Brown and Lorraine Summerfelt Pastoral Care Ministry

The Pastoral Care Team is available to assist you in various ways. We provide meals, send cards, visit parishioners and provide other miscellaneous help, even picking up some groceries. We also deliver prayer shawls and altar flowers in addition to plants at Christmas time. If you know of someone in need due to illness, grief, or other issues, or if you are in need yourself, please contact [Rev. Ellie](#) or [Laura](#) in the office.

We are always in need of fellow parishioners able to help our Team, especially with providing meals and transportation. Please contact Diane Cooke or Margaret Geanisis. if you are able to provide these or any services to people in need.

ProgressMinistry

(formerly known as DisabilitiesMinistry)

The handrail proposed from the parking lot to the church will be in soon!

My personal "Epiphany" came early a year ago; a broken knee in October made my life more like someone well into their 90's than their 60's. It was eye opening, like "walking a mile in another's shoes" – except I couldn't walk. I started in a wheelchair, progressed to crutches, and then to waddling a few months later. I'm now doing fine.

My big paradigm shift was when I realized how hard it is for mobility-impaired people to get up and down the ramp from the parking lot to our

church. It doesn't look steep and seems easy to traverse, but it's not. From my wheelchair I noticed many parishioners struggling to use the ramp, and many were needing assistance.

The Progress Committee (formerly Disabilities Committee) took up the matter and determined that we should install a handrail on the right side of our main entrance. The proposed handrail will look similar to the photo at the right.

The handrail will comply with ADA regulations, be made of strong, low maintenance aluminum, and be round because that offers the strongest grip. The Vestry has approved using funds in our Building Account for this purpose. We hope to install the handrail before Christmas and/or Winter.

With thanks to BJ, Rene, Ellie, Ken, Gail,



and others for helping to move this project along.
Ray Lyons

With Abundant Gratitude to:

- **Dave Hazen, Taryn Ross-Hyman and Ed Moore** for sharing their inspiring Stewardship stories



- **Lydia Tolley and Rev. Ellie** for all their hard work preparing this year's pledge materials
- **Kristen, Andrew and Henry Bates, Kim Wardell and Angela Jackson and Tina Humphries** for all their work on such a successful Food Drive. And to **Margaret Geanisis** for mentoring them.
- **all who donated food** for the Acton Food Pantry

- **all those who took photos of events** and forwarded them to Margaret Geanisis for Shepherd's Staff. It was a huge help! Keep up the good work
- **Wendy Fedderson and Gail Lyons** for all their time working as our Wardens
- **Denise Kelly** for all the time she will be putting during the busy Advent/Christmas work-

- ing on next year's budget
- **Harry Peebles and Jon Panek** who prepare sermons and events and post them on Facebook
- to **Carole Kuenzler, Helene Gagliano, Gail Lyons, and Pat Kosicki** for calling and stopping by to visit Tony & Margaret Geanisis with food when they were sick with Covid.
- all those who helped Lorraine Sumerfelt in any way during her recent move back to Acton, and

- especially to **Rev. Ellie** who came and peeled her off the ceiling a few times!
- the **choir** for their leadership with signing and **Ellen Oak** for her musical knowhow
- **Deacon Ken** for acquiring the Advent booklets
- **Laura Brock** and **our staff** for preparing the Worship Bulletins a month in advance

Administration

Vestry Vignettes- November

Rev. Ellie Terry was absent as she was attending a very important community meeting about the Haitian Refugees coming to Acton (see Page 11.) In her absence, Gail Lyons led the meeting.

The vestry reviewed the minutes for October and approved them.

Rectory Updates – Warden’s report

The final-needed repairs to the Rectory have been made.

Rector’s Report - Rev Ellie via email

The stewardship link went live and 11 pledges are in. There are pastoral care needs for folks in the congregation and staff, including Laura Brock, who is out on medical leave.

A contemplative and prayerful Advent is being planned by the staff. The confirmation of 5 teens is on the horizon for next year.

Important, upcoming dates:

- Ed Stockbridge Coffee Hour - December 3
- Holiday Open House - December 10 with Cookies - wear an ugly Christmas Sweater.

- Pageant - December 24th at 4pm

Treasurer’s Report- Denise Kelly

Rectory repairs have caused some higher expenditures. Pledges and income are down; we are missing 17 pledges. Rev. Ellie will work to check-in with folks.

Deacon Ken Schmidt

Talked about how special Al Gregory’s funeral was. A Blue Christmas invitation will go out to all who have lost someone this year and who have held funerals with us.

Communications Update - Jon and Catherine

Website content is out of date and stale. Communication is held by the same folks. Redundant content creation. We are placing energy into communications that have a lesser reach.

Additional Concerns

Folks raised the question of installing Rev. Ellie officially as our Rector, and getting it scheduled.

Folks raised concerns about declining attendance at services, and it was moved that we will set aside some time at the next meeting to discuss that.

Passages

Baptisms

Gwen Kay was baptized on November 5th, Her parents are Wendy and Ethan Geil. Wendy is a regular worshiper at Compline on Thursday evenings.



Moved

Beverly Duncan has moved to Assisted Living in Hudson, MA 01749



Ed Stockbridge has also moved to Assisted Living in Hingham, MA 02043.



Please feel free to contact them, we are sure they would enjoy conversations and visits.

Lorraine Summerfelt has also moved. Her new address is: Avalon Dr. Acton, MA 01720



Funerals

Albert (Al) Gregory passed away after a long battle with Alzheimer's Disease, on November 7, 2023. He was the beloved husband of Bernice and father of Lauren Soucy and Andrew Gregory; he had two grandchildren and three great-grandchildren.



Born and raised in New Bedford, MA, he graduated from Massachusetts Industrial Technical School in Boston. He spent four years in the United States Navy as a Torpedoman Mate 2nd Class during the Korean War Era. He settled in Littleton in 1963 and worked 34 1/2 years at MIT Lincoln Laboratory as a Senior Project Technician, until his retirement in 1996.

His interests included woodworking, history, and fife and drum (he was a member of the Acton Minutemen and marched independently



with other fife and drum groups). Al loved the church choir where he was a fixture for many years. He also enjoyed writing music, cooking Saturday and Sunday breakfast for his family, taking walks outdoors, watching shooting stars, the ocean, collecting Pairpoint glass, and celebrating the seasons.

He was a very social person who loved to tell stories and had a great sense of humor. He was always smiling. Most of all, he loved his family and always made sure they knew it.

His funeral was held Good Shepherd on November 13, with one of the most interesting congregations we've seen. Many were garbed in colonial costume and they were a very generous lot, coming in with food to donate to our Food Drive! Good and interesting people attract good and interesting people.

"I remember Al at social events almost as much as I remember seeing him in the choir every Sunday. He was friendly, outgoing, social, and perhaps even a bit of a flirt. I can hear him laughing at that! Many of us have missed him the last few years as his Alzheimer's curtailed his involvement with Good Shepherd." Margaret Geanisis



"Al always had a big smile on his face, and I never heard him complain. When he talked about his wife Berni, it was with deep love, and it was clear he did whatever he could for her. Al sang with the choir as long as possible, and then for some time his daughter Lauren would bring him to church, and they would sit up close to the choir so he could still be with us." Jessie Panek

"I did not know Al except as a member of the choir. He always had a pleasant demeanor about him. As a legacy he left each of us with a hand crafted cross that we would wear when dressed in our choir robes. As his dementia became apparent and limited his ability to participate, I was always pleased when his daughter

would bring him to church. I am sure being present brought him joy.” Carole Kuenzler



Autumn is a Self-Cleaning Oven

Autumn is a Self-Cleaning oven,

Final Page

one cannot think otherwise.
There is but one month left this season,
thirty days to complete the task,
unimaginable - making this world ready
for the harshness of winter.
Withered green and yellow leaves,
each a dying masterpiece, all
swept away by wind, rain and dvornitsi,
the good people assigned to clean up.
Brown creeps in, with darkening skies,
each day, cold yields to freezing, all of us.
And the two sides of this catastrophe
This 21 months of death and destruction,
(though some say 10 years is more accurate)
Or, we could go further back,
it's been 876 years since Moscow was founded
and then stole the 'Rus' from Kyiv,
though 'Rus' is neither Ukrainian nor Russian,
it's an Old Norse word that means
'men that row', for it was the Vikings and
Varangians - capitalist marauder pirates
who traded along the great rivers,
Dnepr and the Volga, long ago.
Now instead Ukrainian and Russian soldiers
are killing each other,
at an astonishing rate,
when they should be brothers,

like Canadians and Americans,
but instead, it seems,
utter stupidity is the reality,
an enormous shame and blasphemy.
That being said, my assignment today,
on this early morning trolleybus,
packed with people,
is to find one happy face –
I fail - - there are none today.
The text of the season is simply too harsh.
A constant flow of designated officials
have the awful task
of informing family members
of their dear loved one's demise.
Is this the elegance of nature,
this skverni awful disgusting
riot of killing and displacement ?
Or is it just echoes of the Mongolian Horde?
And, how far away today
is the Chinese tiger,
ready to pounce ?

23 November 2023 – Cherkasy, Ukraine
Emmanuel Aronie