

The Shepherd's Staff

Church of the Good Shepherd

December 2021

Our story inside these pages

Christmas and Epiphany Worship Services

December 19 at 4 :00 pm- Blue Christmas Taize Service

December 24 at 4:00 pm - Christmas Eve Eucharist,
at 5:30 & 7:30 pm - Candlelight Christmas Eve Vigils

Christmas Day service at your convenience on-line

January 9 at 10:00 am - Epiphany & Lessons & Carols Eucharist

Events

Dec. 1 at noon - Bread and Banter on Zoom

December 5 - All LTLC donations deadline

December 12 at 8 & 10 am - IINE Speaker Cynthia

Hellman will speak to us about the Afghan Refugee
Relocation Program

Dec 12 at 10:00 am - Church School

Dec 15 at 7:30-9:00 pm - Hop, Skip and Jump Bible Study

December 19, after the Blue Christmas Service -

Greening of the Church

December 26 at 10:00 am - Church School

January 16 at 11:30 after the service - *Love is the way*

Book Discussion

Save The Date

January 29 - the Papusa Food Truck will here

Abundance and Gratitude Talks given by parishioners
are on pages 7-8, 11, 14-15

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Church of the Good Shepherd

164 Newtown Road
Acton, MA 01720
(978) 263-5782

Website:

<https://goodshepherdacton.org>

FB: Church of the Good Shepherd, Acton

Episcopal Diocese of Massachusetts

A Word from the Fold



Advent & Christmas. The time is drawing nigh.

As you may know, the word Advent comes from the Latin word for “coming”. It is the liturgical season in our church that occurs in the four weeks before Christmas. It is a time set aside in preparation for the birth of Christ. Worship in Advent is characterized by a building sense of expectation. This is symbolized in the lighting of candles on the Advent wreath. With each week, more light is added, helping us build up the light, rather than count down the days until Christmas. This year, we will invite all children and families to come forward

together to light the wreath each week. As we rebuild our in-person community, we celebrate and welcome the participation of all our families in the special Advent tradition.

As you read through Ellen’s article about the worship schedule for Advent, Christmas and Epiphany, you’ll notice some familiar offerings offered at new times and in new ways. Many of these changes are due to the pandemic and our continued eye toward providing safe ways for all of us to worship together. We continue to be in a time of transition as we regather, rebuild and celebrate (even in Advent and Christmas) the resurrection of our community. We aim to provide well-crafted worship for these beloved seasons which is life-giving, renewing and joyful, even though it may be a bit different than what we’ve done before.

This year, our **Lessons & Carols** service will be held on **Sunday, January 9 at 10 am**. We look forward to celebrating this service with our friends in El Ocotillo, thanks to the wonders of Zoom. Epiphany is a significant holiday in Latin America, marking the 12th and final day of the Christmas Season. We hope that shifting Lessons & Carols to Epiphany this year will allow for greater participation of our choir (and congregation) as we continue our celebration of Christmas into the new year.

On December 19, we’ll offer a **Blue Christmas service at 4 pm**. This service is designed for all who are grieving, experiencing loss, or simply yearn for an opportunity to mark this sacred season away from the hustle and pressures of the secular holiday rush.

Rather than a full Christmas pageant this year, all children are invited to participate in an **interactive service at 4 pm on Christmas Eve**. As lessons are read and carols are sung, children will come forward to help decorate the manger scene. This service for all ages will include Holy Eucharist.

Candlelight Christmas Eve vigils will take place outdoors, and around a fire pit, at both **5:30 pm and 7:30 pm on December 24**. Similar to last year, these simple services of prayer, Scripture and carols by candlelight are a wonderful way to mark this sacred night. We are also preparing an online service for use on Christmas Day. We hope you will watch and worship at your leisure whenever it is convenient in the midst of your family Christmas celebration.

As we approach our second pandemic-influenced holiday season, we hope these opportunities for worship will bring light and hope to your experience of Advent and Christmas. While we are not yet able to gather and worship like we once did at this time of year, we are grateful to be able to gather in these new ways.

Advent light and peace,
Ellie+

Deacon's Corner



These past few months have been wonderful for me to be with you, my Church of the Good Shepherd, Acton family. When I first spoke with Rev. Ellie, I had no idea what I was getting into. I was not prepared to be so impressed by the welcoming diversity and deep spirituality of CGS.

When I heard Rev. Ellie preach, and when I listened to you between Sunday Services, I was impressed with the exceptional intelligence and humor of this congregation. Driving back to my home in Westborough, I often have a smile on my face and in my heart, and a passion for ministry with you is re-kindled and flaming.

When Rev. Ellie interviewed me, we discovered we had a problem. You see, the usual role of a Deacon is to empower people to discern, explore and develop their own call to ministry, and to urge them to connect that call with the world outside the walls of the church. The problem is, you are already doing that work! You are already listening for, thinking about, and acting upon that quiet call of God. So many of you are very

busy in Lowell and local communities working on issues of housing, refugees and social justice. We have an amazing relationship with the El Ocotillo community in El Salvador and we are enriched by our association with that culture.

Now, if you must have a problem, this is not a bad problem to have! Rev. Ellie and I, with input from the Vestry, decided my talents could best be used to assist Rev. Ellie, and to be a true colleague in ministry. Determined to have Good Shepherd be a growing and dynamic source of spirituality, comfort, energy, and outreach, we are exploring ways to enhance and direct your already active ministries, and to provide a welcoming environment for new ideas. We are preparing for growth, both in numbers and in opportunities for spiritual enrichment. We need your help and ideas for exploring opportunities to share the wonderful gifts of CGSA with our larger communities outside our doors. Your participation is invited, welcome, and needed. Please let us know of your ideas, concerns, and hopes for our church. We'd love to hear from you.

Stay tuned! The adventure continues!

Grace and peace,
Deacon Ken Schmidt

Warden's Message



It has been inspiring to hear people in the congregation speak about what makes them thankful. I was particularly moved by Margaret Geanisis's heartfelt and honest remarks, following the 10 am service on November 21, "Christ the King" Sunday, about the power of her focus on

gratitude and how this has made so much in her life less overwhelming, less stressful, and more joyous.

It is time for me to turn my attention to this topic. I am grateful for the many talents that people share within our community, from music to preaching to preparing the linens for the altar to installing elevators. I am grateful that God surrounds me with people who are patient with my uninformed questions as I peer around the furnace room trying to figure out the electrical system. And I am grateful for creativity, in so many forms, that I believe is the "spice of life" — so mysterious when a

spark of an idea comes into one's head (even when it's "my" idea). I believe strongly that this is God working through us and in us. We could not have that spark of creativity without God. I maintain that the more I trust that God will provide, the more freely the creative ideas flow into my mind. I am sure I am not alone in that feeling. It is such a joyful, energetic feeling!

I urge us all again to trust that God will provide and to be joyful and hopeful. Let us use our God-given creativity to support each other, and to plan activities and programs that are meaningful to

us and to others in the community and beyond. We all have a part to play and something to offer.

I am thankful for all of you and for the trust you have placed in me and for all that I have learned while serving as Warden. Finally, I am grateful to God for the mystery of the love in our hearts, our thinking minds, and our creativity and talents. It is enough for us to thrive.

Faithfully,
Lydia

Worship

Advent Worship

The Both/And of Advent

The season of preparation for the great festivals of Christmas and Epiphany encompasses many moods, from boisterous anticipation to quiet pondering. We want to be generous and hospitable in all our experiences of Advent. We want to honor and delight everyone who shows up to worship, longing to belong at Good Shepherd. For those who want to actively welcome the many newcomers we are blessed to receive with warm conversation and laughter, and catch up with old friends, **Diocesan guidelines now permit gathering before and after worship in the parish hall—as long as people wear masks and maintain safe social distance.** For those who crave stillness, music, and meditation before and after worship, we offer the sanctuary space during the prelude and postlude.

Whether you want to talk, or want to be quiet, take a moment to consider the impact of your actions on those around you—especially on those who don't know any of us yet and are unfamiliar with our patterns of worship and community. Let's support one another, whoever we are and whatever we need to gather together and grow more fully into the Body of Christ—being born, living, dying, and rising, in love for the world.

The Advent Liturgy

The sights and sounds of Advent fill our worship. Seasonal banners have been hung in the sanctuary. At 8:00 am, our worship will be drawn

from the *Book of Common Prayer*. For Advent and Christmastide, our Eucharistic Prayer shifts to Prayer B, with its particular emphasis on the Incarnation and the naming of Mary.

The 10:00 am Eucharist has been shaped to highlight silence and song. We intentionally pause for quiet reflection at the opening of the service, and after communion. We are "trying on" allowing the organ to rest for the season, inviting us to listen more closely for the gentler voices of the divine in our midst, and priming us to revel more fully in its glory in the Christmas and Epiphany seasons. At the lighting of the candles on the Advent wreath and the altar we sing a "mash-up"

of a rambunctious refrain by Bernadette Farrell with a verse of the contemplative "O Come, O Come, Emmanuel." Each week we sing the response between the readings—this year's lectionary gives us four of the best known and most beloved song texts: Psalm 25, the Song of Zechariah (the Benedictus), the First Song of Isaiah, and the Song of Mary (the Magnificat). During the Eucharistic prayer, we burst forth three times with the shining refrain, "Rejoice, rejoice! Emmanuel shall come to thee, O Israel!" In between, we hum under Ellie's spoken words. This humming gives voice to our



presence in the moment, sounds our prayers too deep for words, and intensifies our self-offering in the Eucharist.

Blue Christmas Service

On **Sunday December 19 at 4:00 pm, we will hold a Blue Christmas service.** This is a time to honestly acknowledge our struggles, sorrows, and losses, and to be offered comfort, healing, and hope. Gathering together under the shadow of God's wing with music from Taizé, Scripture, prayers, and a simple ritual of lighting candles can help us navigate the inevitable challenges of our lives in this season.

Ellen Oak,
Pastoral Assoc. for Liturgy and Music

Christmas

Greening of the Church

Immediately following the Blue Christmas service, all are invited to share in refreshments and then work together to decorate the church for Christmas. Many hands make light work! And it's a wonderful opportunity to enjoy one another's company. (For more information see Liturgica Arts article on page 7.)

Christmas Celebrations



Our big indoor celebration will be at **4:00 pm on Christmas Eve, Friday, December 24.** This service will include lots of Christmas music, an interactive telling of the Christmas story for all ages, and Eucharist. At **5:30 pm and 7:30**



pm there will be a 15-20 minute service outside, gathered with candles around a fire pit, to proclaim the Christmas gospel, sing a few carols, and steep

Service Schedule

Sunday

8:00 am Holy Eucharist
10:00 am Holy Eucharist, also live streamed on Zoom

Wednesday

7:30 am Morning Prayer via Zoom

Thursday

8:00 pm Compline via Zoom

ourselves in the mysterious and miraculous grace of the moment. A Christmas Day pre-recorded service will be made available online, so we can take time during our home celebrations to rejoice and reflect in thanksgiving, joy, and peace. There are two Sundays after Christmas this year —December 26 and January 2— on which we will keep to our regular Sunday schedule of 8:00 am and 10:00 am Eucharists.

Ellen Oak

Epiphany

Epiphany means “revelation.” In the Christian liturgical year, we celebrate the great revelation of God's incarnation to the whole world with a great festival 12 days after Christmas. On **Sunday, January 9, at 10:00 am we will mark this wondrous feast of Epiphany with a service of Lessons and Carols with Eucharist.** We are working toward collaborating with the El Ocotillo community for this special worship, and hope that we will be together on Zoom for the service, sharing music, prayers, readings, and community across cultures.

Ellen Oak

Wednesday Morning Prayer at Good Shepherd

Our Wednesday morning Eucharist for early risers followed by an amazing potluck breakfast

has, due to Covid, morphed into a Zoom Morning Prayer bring-your-own-coffee service. Sounds dull? Not so much! Because apart from the rich liturgy of the Morning Prayer service, we still celebrate our “Saint of the Day”, and read an expanded account from *Holy Women, Holy Men* or from the alternative *All Saints* book. This generates some interesting discussions after the readings, and leads us to some unexpected places as we contemplate the accomplishments and persecutions, the virtues and the quirks of Christians who have gone before us. We still take the time to focus on prayers for those in our congregation and those in our lives who are suffering and in need of intercessions. And we remember to give thanks for all the good stuff too. Come and join us if you are around at 7:30 am on a Wednesday morning. It is a wonderful way to start the day!

Beverly Ridpath

Compline

Each Thursday night at 8 pm, a group of Good Shepherd members gather via ZOOM for a Compline prayer service. Compline is the last of the daily prayers that that completes the day and prepares us for an evening’s rest in God’s protection. Scripture readings lead us to a time of silence, thankfulness, and healing prayer. All are welcome, just click on the Compline link in “This Week at Good Shepherd” and the Zoom access is right there.

John Link

SING AT GOOD SHEPHERD ADVENT/CHRISTMAS/ EPIPHANY	Eucharist Sundays 10 am	Christmas Eve Friday 12/24, 4 pm	Blue Christmas/ Talzé Sunday 12/19, 4 pm	Epiphany Lessons and Carols Sunday 1/9, 10 am
Thursday 12/2	7:00–8:30 pm Rehearsal			
Sunday 12/5	9:15 am Warm-up 10:00 am Worship	11:45 am–12:45 pm Rehearsal	12:45–1:45 pm Rehearsal	
Thursday 12/9	7:00–7:45 pm Rehearsal			7:45–8:45 pm Rehearsal
Sunday 12/12	9:15am Warm-up 10:00am Worship	11:45am–12:45pm Rehearsal	12:45–1:45pm Rehearsal	
Thursday 12/16	7:00–7:45 pm Rehearsal			7:45–8:45 pm Rehearsal
Sunday 12/19	9:15 am Warm-up 10:00 am Worship	11:45 am–12:45 pm Rehearsal	3:15 pm Warm-up 4:00 pm Service	
Thursday 12/23		7:00–7:45 pm Rehearsal		7:45–8:45 pm Rehearsal
Friday 12/24		3:15 pm Warm-up 4:00 pm Service		
Sunday 12/26	NO CHOIR			
Thursday 12/30	NO REHEARSAL			
Sunday 1/2	NO CHOIR			
Thursday 1/6	7:00–7:45 pm Rehearsal			7:45–8:45 pm Rehearsal
Saturday 1/8				9:30–11:00 am Rehearsal
Sunday 1/9				9:15 am Warm-up 10:00 am Service

Open Call for Singers and Instrumentalists!

Singers, your church community needs you. All are welcome, whatever your previous choral experience may or may not be. Kids and grown-ups. The time is always right to begin anew. We have three special services in coming weeks that will be greatly enhanced by robust choral singing. Rehearsals have been designed to make it possible



to join in the choir for one, two, or all of these offerings, as desire impels and availability allows. Fun, satisfaction, and beauty await! Please see the chart on page

5 for details, and contact Ellen Oak through the church office for more information and to sign on.

Instrumentalists near and far, please contact Ellen Oak to share your gifts in the special services coming up. The Christmas Day service and Epiphany Lessons and Carols will incorporate pre-recorded and live Zoom elements as well as in-person contributions. So whether you or a loved one is far away or near to hand, there is a way you can take part in these wonderful celebrations.

Ellen Oaks,
Pastoral Assoc. for Liturgy and Music



Flowers For the Altar For Christmas

Because of the pandemic, we suspended the sale of Christmas wreaths and greens. This activity, as well as your donations, used to fund the beautiful poinsettias and other flowers on the altar for Christmas. At Good Shepherd it is customary for parishioners to donate money for decorating the altar and the church. This is an opportunity to express our joy for God's gift to us of his Son and to give thanks for our families and friends, those here with us and those who have departed this life. We will include a list of dedicated offerings in the Christmas bulletin. You may use the form below, click on the link, or donation forms in church.

Christmas Altar Flower Donation

Donated by: _____

In Memory of: _____

In Thanksgiving for: _____

Dollar Amount: _____

[To donate on-line please click here](#), mail into the office, or place in the offering plate on Sundays **by Dec. 19.**

Liturgical Arts

With Advent here, our committee is in full swing for transforming the church. We want our efforts to express our shared faith and joy of being in community during this time of year, in addition to enhancing everyone's experience of the liturgy. For me, that's the most important reason that I am on this committee. This committee is open and we would love you to join us.



By the time you read this the first step, which is the hanging of the Advent themed purple banners in the sanctuary, will be complete. There will also be some banners in the narthex, as well as the wreaths on the windows in the courtyard.

This has been a difficult 18 months because of the pandemic, and we have all struggled and coped in various ways. We will be having a "Blue Christmas" Taize service on Dec. 19 to acknowledge the losses that people have experienced, and to foster a sense of healing and the hope that Advent represents.

After that service at 4:00 pm, we will "Green" the church, in preparation for Christmas Eve.

This should be a fun event, and we will need the help of as many of you as possible. We will need to take down the Advent banners, and put up indoor wreaths, hanging themed Christmas banners, as well as setting up the creches that we have. We will also be putting up the Christmas tree in the Narthex at that time, which is a great project for kids and families to do

In January we will be having a special

service for Epiphany, and we will want to change things up a bit to reflect the message of Epiphany – Christ being revealed to the world. We will have more details on that to come, watch for that in the eblast.

Ellen Harland

Tech Notes

You are invited! The tech team continues to support our in-person and on-line audio and video. We've got cool toys. Please join the fun. You can Zoom host, mix the audio or video. No experience necessary. All training is on-the-job. And the company is excellent.



Small and large changes are afoot with our audio and visual service support. We've started to replace some of our cameras. That has improved the broadcast resolution. That has also allowed for removal of the iPhone camera tower on the left side, along with the cables that had been crossing

the center aisle carpet. Coming before Christmas is the relocation of the tech table. It's currently in front of the piano in the back of the Sanctuary. The table will be moved to the back wall, making it less intrusive. Then, sometime after Christmas, we'll complete the installation of the new speakers. That will improve the Sanctuary audio. The two PA speakers up front will be mounted on the wall. That will allow for the PA speaker towers to be put into storage. We've started getting quotes for adding electrical outputs in the Sanctuary. Doing so will reduce the amount of visible extension cords.

Harry Peebles

Abundance & Gratitude

Good morning,

My name is Ellen Harland. When Rev. Ellie asked me to share stories of gratitude it was easy to say yes.

Bill and I have been members since 1977. We will always be grateful to the friends who encouraged us to check out Good Shepherd. We were welcomed with open arms, even though Bill was a Congregationalist, and I was a Catholic, and

this church became our second family.

In May of 2000 Bill experienced a catastrophic illness during which he went into septic shock and multi-system organ failure. That meant his kidneys, liver, and lungs were failing. In addition, because of the septic shock, it became a possibility that he would be left with brain damage. Over the whole time that he was on a respirator, in a drug induced coma, the support we had from



Good Shepherd was beyond words. Everyday people came to sit with me as I kept vigil with Bill. They prayed, brought food and helped me to get through each day.

Three weeks into this ordeal was Father's day. That was the

worst. His heart was giving out, and it looked like he wouldn't make it through the night. I called our priest who came, anointed him, and we had a Folk Mass around his bedside. We literally were saying goodbye to him. Over 40 people from Good Shepherd, as well as friends from our Cursillo community came and filled the waiting room outside his room, praying and singing. It was a beautiful but sad time.

That night, like many nights, I slept on a cot outside his room. The next morning the Dr. came in and said that his vital signs were markedly

improved, as were his lab tests. They repeated the test for his brain activity, and the neurologist was unable to explain why the test showed so much improvement.

Three days later Bill came out of his coma, and began a slow but steady road to recovery. Three doctors called it a miracle, and they don't use that word very often.

That was 21 years ago, and we are grateful for every day that we have. We are especially grateful for God's mercy in restoring Bill to health, and grateful for the love and support that we received from this community during this ordeal. If you have to walk through hell fire, you couldn't do it any better than this.

We recently moved to Fitchburg to a retirement community. Part of the criteria for finding a new home was proximity to Good Shepherd. It takes us 40 minutes to get here, and staying connected to this Spirit filled community makes that an easy drive.

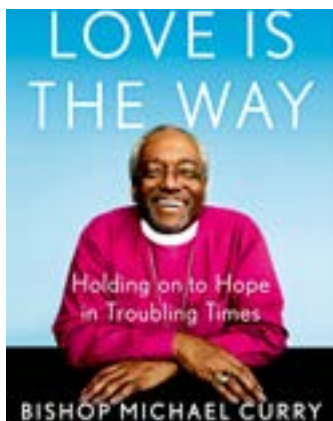
So we have much for which to be grateful.

God is good, all the time! Thanks be to God!

Ellen Harland

Christian Formation

Love is the Way! Adult Christian formation book group starting in January



Are you a fan of Bishop Michael Curry (the Presiding Bishop of the Episcopal Church)? Join our Rector in a conversation about his latest book, *Love is the Way: Holding on to Hope in Troubling Times*. We'll meet on **Sundays at 11:30am in person in the Library, and on**

Zoom, January 16, 23, 30, February 6. The book is available online and by order from the [Silver Unicorn](#) and other local bookshops. Add it to your

Christmas list! We'll aim to discuss three chapters per week.

January 16- Introduction- Chapter 3

January 23- Chapters 4-6

January 30- Chapters 7-9

February 6- Chapters 10-end

Ellie

Hop, Skip & Jump through the Bible

We will be holding our Bible Study on Zoom on **Wednesday, 15th December from 7:30 - 9:00 pm.**

“Stir up your power, O Lord, and come among us ...” are the beginning words of the collect for the Third Sunday of Advent. John the Baptist came to stir up the people of his time in preparation for Jesus. This month we will look at

the role John the Baptist played in the ministry and life of Jesus, and how we can be “stirred up.”

Readings: Luke 3: 1-18, Matthew 11: 2-11, Mark 1: 1-12, John 1: 6-8, 19-28.

Come and join us as we explore the scriptures and consider how they speak to us today. Each session is a stand-alone meeting so join us for whatever sessions you can fit into your schedule. All are welcome.

The Zoom link and readings will be posted in the e-blast for two weeks before the meeting.

Bev Ridpath & Neal Ogle

Diocesan offerings

Cathedral observes extended Advent

The Cathedral Church of St. Paul in Boston observes an expanded season of Advent, beginning this year on Nov. 7 and affording more time and space in which to prepare more fully for the coming of Christ.

As part of the Cathedral Church’s



observance, it is offering a contemplative time of prayer and reflection open to all each Tuesday from 5 to 6 pm in the sanctuary, followed by evening devotions at 5 pm. For details, visit www.stpaulboston.org.

Advent Quiet Day: “Make Your Home in Me”

Jesus invites us to make our home in him, just as he makes his home in us (John 15:4). In a rapidly changing world, when so much that we took for granted has become unreliable or unstable, our old familiar “home” is gone. Weather is erratic; institutions we once depended on are shaky; households and communities are stressed. Is it possible to feel “at home” in the midst of a troubled world?

This online Advent Quiet Day on Saturday, Dec. 4, 9:30 am-noon, invites participants to respond to Jesus’s invitation to come home to the One who loves us utterly. This time together will include silence and guided meditation, presentations and small group conversation, and free time for solitary prayer. <https://www.stpaulboston.org/>

This joint online retreat with the Diocese of Western Massachusetts will be led by the Rev. Dr. Margaret Bullitt-Jonas.



Church School

Church School Update

Our two church school classes are off to a great start this fall. Please join me in expressing your thanks and appreciation to our committed teachers Jen Thornton, Mary Bunker and the all-around awesome Taryn Ross-Hyman. Jen’s class,

focused on the Godly Play curriculum, gathers children in grades K-4. Mary’s class, using a lectionary-based curriculum designed to expose older children to the lessons the adults are hearing in church, is for students in grades 5-8. Church school meets on the 2nd and 4th Sundays of each month. It has been a great joy to welcome our

children and families back to Good Shepherd in person.

Looking for other opportunities for children and youth at Good Shepherd? Let us know and we can make it happen!

Confirmation

We are gauging interest in a Confirmation Class for youth in grades 8 and above. Please email Rev. Ellie if you have youth interested in this opportunity this winter/spring.



Worship roles

Acolytes! Lectors! Choir! Have children interested in any of these? Please email or speak to Rev. Ellie. As we build back our in-person worship, we welcome the involvement of our children and families.



Abundance & Gratitude

It is good timing that I am asked to write about Abundance and Gratitude on the day before Thanksgiving. I'll consider this request as a "two-for", in that I will complete this piece for The Shepherd's Staff, and it's a good rehearsal for offering thanks tomorrow.

Like many of you, my life was put on hold the past two years. Having family living in Pennsylvania and Texas, we were unable to travel to see each other. All the usual joys and troubles of life had to be shared over the phone, through email, or on ZOOM. My parish church was closed, and for a while there were no Services at all. I was ending my time there soon after ZOOM Services began, so I had no "spiritual home" for a while.

This year, my family is planning to gather in PA to be with my brother who is dealing with cancer. It's been years since I've seen some of my family. My daughter is expecting her first baby,

my first grandchild, in January. And I have found a great, new faith community with you. Sharing ministry with Rev. Ellie and Pastoral Associate Ellen Oak is joyous and enlightening. And working with our Admin., Laura Brock, is fun and educational. I'm also enjoying sharing ministry with the many lay leaders and with all the great ministers of our worshipping community. (That's you!)

I am grateful for God's gift of family, in all its many shapes and sizes. I am grateful for God's gift of friendship and community. Thank God we don't have to go through life alone. I am grateful for a challenging and rewarding life, both spiritual and physical. And I am grateful for you, my community at Church of the Good Shepherd, where we can all share our gifts and talents. Thank you.

Praise God from whom all blessings flow!

Deacon Ken Schmidt

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: Immigration

January: El Ocotillo Pupusa Fundraiser

February: Esperanza Academy

March/April: Food Pantry

Afghan Refugee Endeavors

“I was hungry and you gave me food, I was thirsty and you gave me drink, I was a stranger and you welcomed me.”

Matthew 25: 31-40



Afghan families have been arriving in the area in great numbers over the past few weeks. The International Institute of New England (IINE) is one agency working hard with resettling these

families. In these initial weeks they are finding temporary and permanent housing, providing food support, winter clothing, interpretation services and connection to healthcare. If you'd like to hear from their staff about what that experience has been like, [check out this six-minute video](#).

Once the newcomers are safely settled, IINE will provide English and literacy classes, cultural orientation, assist with registering children for school and employment, and guidance with immigration paperwork. Their work extends as long as it is needed to provide independence and integration. If you'd like to read the story of Safeena's family's resettlement from 2018 until today, [this inspiring video is worth watching](#).

On Sunday, December 12, Cynthia Hellman from IINE will join us at 8:00 & 10:00 am to describe the services that they provide and the stories of their refugees.

There are numerous ways that you can live the words of Matthew by helping our new Afghan immigrants as they settle in the area:

- Contribute gift cards to stores easily accessed in the Lowell area or to online vendors. See the flyer below.
- Join a cooking team at the church or add to the meal from your own kitchen. We are hoping to prepare a meal for a group of families temporarily housed in hotels on a Saturday or Sunday in early December. Contact Barb



Magee if you like to grocery shop, cook, or have experience in the church kitchen.

- Contribute a winter coat or outer wear in excellent condition for an adult or child.



Are you looking for a way to engage more deeply in meaningful volunteering? Are you thinking about a way your family might contribute to a better world in the New Year?

The Mission Outreach Committee is looking for several people or a family to lead a Food Drive and/or a volunteer work experience at a food pantry during the weeks of Lent (March 2 - April 17).

Please reach out to Barb Magee or Rev. Ellie if you are interested.

Barb Magee
Mission Outreach Committee chair

“Undies Sundies” Ministry

Donations needed for the Lowell Transitional Living Center

On November 14th the director of the Lowell Transitional Living Center (LTLC), Andy McMahon, visited the Church of the Good Shepherd. Andy presented the challenges the staff at LTLC have faced during the pandemic, He reminded us the winter emergency program is not subsidized by local or state governments and the annual cost of 95,000 dollars is totally reliant on charitable contributions such as ours.

The winter emergency program is open to anyone who is homeless and in need of a warm place to sleep. No one is turned away no matter their physical or emotional condition. Andy described the conditions as well over capacity during these difficult times and how the center is using every resource available to keep people from getting trapped in the cycle of homelessness.

Please consider making a donation towards the items listed below. You can also send



a note or card with encouragement for the staff and visitors at LTLC. Please send your checks made out to Church of the Good Shepherd (with LTLC donation in the memo) to 164 Newtown Rd, Acton MA, 01720 or put your donation in a labeled envelope(LTLC) in the offering plate during Sunday service.

In 2020 we did a virtual fundraiser and

donated over four thousand dollars to this program. We are hoping to match or increase our gift this year.

Here are the donation options which will purchase:

10.00 - socks, underwear, undershirts, scarves, hats

20.00- pillows

50.00 - blankets

100.00 - cots

If you'd prefer you can also donate checks/**gift cards** for items that are not on the list above.)

We are requesting donations be made by December 5th.

I thank you in advance for your support of this ministry.

Helene Gagliano

Esperanza Academy

There's a lot happening at Esperanza Academy, a tuition-free school for middle school girls in Lawrence MA. Good Shepherd has been in relationship with the school since 2007.

Hope Rising: Las Trés Hermanas ,

Don't miss this uplifting short film (under 25 minutes) illuminating the stories of three sisters as they move through Esperanza Academy and into



the world. Janelly is a quiet leader. Gissel is a talented artist. Maritza is a savvy business student. Their mother, Elizabeth, a wise matriarch, and their father, Ventura, as hard

a worker as they come. They are all of these things and so much more.

To see the film: <https://www.esperanzaacademy.org/hope>

Science with Discovery Museum

The students at Esperanza Academy have had some stimulating science learning through Acton's Discovery Museum. Thanks to the museum's Open Door Connections funding, all grade 5-8 Esperanza students had a summer field trip to Discovery, and then this November each



grade had a lesson on the physical changes of matter through the museum's Traveling Science Workshop.

The students investigated the physical properties of solids, liquids, and gases. Dry ice and liquid nitrogen made learning the phase changes very dramatic as together they changed liquid water to gas, shattered flowers and rubber bands, and even used a banana as a hammer.

Carolyn Platt

Save the date!

The PUPO PUPUSA truck will come to Good Shepherd Saturday, January 29th for take-out orders!

This is our major fundraising event for El Ocotillo scholarships.

Abundance & Gratitude

When Ellie asked me to speak about Abundance and Gratitude, my first thought was how abundantly grateful I am to all of you; you are the body of Christ which is our church; and this past year we learned just how much we, our church, are not defined by this building but by the Holy Spirit which unites us. I am extremely grateful to you all for your prayers and support, for your mentoring, for our shared experiences, and for the fun and good times we have shared. God is good, and his love for all of us is abundant.

Our lives are full of God's Abundance if we look for it. But that's the key, we need to develop the habit of looking for it – and of course giving thanks to God when we find it. Tony & I have traveled to third world countries three times, and each time got an education in true poverty.

Personally I think all Americans need to experience 3rd world poverty. It set a standard which has made me grateful for for running water, for heat, for electricity, and for food.

Back in my mid-thirties I went on a weekend retreat, possibly even the same one that had Ellie looking at her checkbook to see where she spent her money. I was presented with an opportunity for a metanoia, or paradigm shift, about how I looked at my life and to see more clearly God's abundance in it. If I truly believe that God is a loving parent to me, or what a loving parent needs to be, then I needed to trust that God provides what I really need, even if that isn't necessarily all I wanted. I began looking at all that I already have to provide what I truly needed, and to use it more effectively. To let go of my fears and

trust that God would provide if I looked for it in faith. Before I went to bed I started thanking God for five things I was thankful for each day; it was quite illuminating.

We have a big old house with a falling down barn that we have somehow managed to afford through the years, and even fix up. When money was tight Tony was able to use his mechanical training to boost our income by repairing Volkswagens in our barn. When I began to teach art classes, rather than having the expense of a rental studio, I was able to use the extra space in our big old house to teach art, enabling me to have a much more profitable business. The house came with some land and when the kids were at home we grew most of our own vegetables, saving us a lot of money. We really had all we would need already in place

I had learned about tithing in the Bible from my Education For Ministry classes, another much needed learning experience I received through this church. One day a week for the growing seasons I would give all the ripe produce from our garden to a then fledgling Loaves and Fishes, who back then didn't know what to do with things that weren't canned goods. Once as I was pulling out of the parking lot, the kids and I observed a young mother with toddlers leaving with a bag full of our produce. We all felt such gratitude that we could help her. God is good, and that young mother had her needs met for a few days.

Practicing being able to focus on all that we have rather than focusing on what we want and don't have, as media marketing likes to constantly and consistently point out to all of us, makes me grateful. It makes me want to share all that we are blessed with, including friends and strangers. We often entertain and love sharing our big old home whenever we can. We see giving good times to all visitors at our home as a way of giving back to our friends; we feel so blessed and are filled with gratitude for where we get to live and for those friends. We both have more than we ever thought we would, and get great joy in sharing our blessings. God is good.

Focusing on what we have, rather than what we want, also makes us happier. Now, don't get me wrong, I often send up a prayer that we'll win the lottery before the barn caves in. But in truth we do have enough. Do you actually have enough? Think about that for a minute..... Could you be more content celebrating and sharing what you already have?

Tony and I have found that when we give freely with faith we will have enough, and miraculously we always do. Saint Francis was right. We ARE more blessed when we give than when we receive.....in part because then others can also receive.

God is indeed good.

Margaret Geanisis

Events

Join us on Zoom for Monthly Bread & Banter

At the beginning of the pandemic, our monthly Bread and Banter Luncheon became a weekly zoom gathering. This month, we are adjusting its schedule to meet again on the first **Wednesday of each month at 12 noon on Zoom beginning Dec.1**. This is a lovely opportunity to gather informally with Good Shepherd friends while enjoying lunch from the comfort of your own home. All are welcome! Follow the link in the weekly e-blast, or find it on our website calendar.

Rev. Ellie



Committee News

Creation Care

The 2021 Convention of the Episcopal Diocese of Massachusetts Calls for a Carbon Drawdown.

Resolved, that the 236th Convention of the Episcopal Diocese of Massachusetts encourages all individuals, parishes, communities and ministries to commit to “Drawdown’— the point in the future when levels of greenhouse gases in the atmosphere stop climbing and start to steadily decline, thereby stopping catastrophic climate change,” [Project Drawdown <https://drawdown.org/>] well before 2030; and be it further



Resolved, that the 236th Convention of the Episcopal Diocese of Massachusetts encourages the conversion of campuses and facilities held by parishes in trust for the diocese to reduce carbon emissions through minimizing resource consumption, using renewable energy, restoring the land’s biodiversity with land management such

as permaculture, Good News gardening to supply local food and other drawdown practices; and be it further

Resolved, that the 236th Convention of the Episcopal Diocese of Massachusetts considers the climate implications of day-to-day activities within the diocese and its member parishes, including patterns of resource consumption and travel, and strives to drawdown carbon emissions through revision of standard practices now and in perpetuity; and be it further

Resolved, that the 236th Convention of the Episcopal Diocese of Massachusetts encourages all individuals, parishes, communities and ministries seeking to implement the practices of Project Drawdown10 to reach out to the Creation Care Justice Network for input on strategies such as the following options:

(1) Divesting from fossil fuels; (2) utilizing the Diocesan Green Loan Program to make energy-efficient changes to parish buildings; (3) partnering with Massachusetts Interfaith Power and Light to implement renewable energy options such as solar panels; (4) converting lawns to permaculture that fosters natural ecosystems and resilient design; (5) supporting biodiversity by planting native plants, limiting outdoor lighting and keeping leaf litter as winter ground cover (Nature’s Best Hope, Timber Press); (6) shifting large meetings to virtual platforms, arranging carools, using public transportation and avoiding non-mandated travel such as to General Convention; (7) advocating for systemic change at local, regional, national and international levels; and (8) committing to intentional and sustained prayer.

With Abundant Gratitude to:

- **Denise Kelly** for her ongoing hard work in preparing our budget for 2022
- **Harry Peebles** for arranging for a not-for-profit license for Google Workspace (formerly G Suite) for the church’s e-mail accounts and

- collaborative software.
- **Chris Tolley** for sharing his legal expertise in reviewing the Rectory lease
- **Harry Peebles, Lydia Tolley,**



Chris Tolley and Boy Scout Troop 1 for raking up the leaves in the parking lot and around the church.

- **Barb Magee** for taking action with the Afghan refugee (IINE) program, and giving us the chance to help the refugees.



- **Kathi Haney** for organizing meals for those recovering from illness, and to all those who have prepared these meals, sent cards, and made phone calls.
- **Debby Flint-Baum** for contacting The Acton Beacon to correct the service times in the paper, and for ongoing assistance with publicity.

- **Catherine Conway and Laura Brock** for keeping the website up to date.

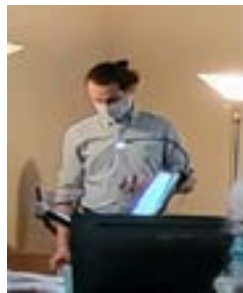
- **Helene Gagliano** for spearheading our Lowell Transitional Living Center fund-raising drive, and to **Andy McMahon** for traveling out to speak with us.



- **Those who have donated flowers for the altar:** they've added to the beauty of the altar and given us a chance to remember loved ones. (To [donate the altar flowers.](#))

- **Jessie Panek** for the beautiful pots of seasonal greens.

- **Ray Lyons** for adding to our worship experience by playing his flute and to **Alix Pupo** for the awesome drum playing.



- **the Altar Guild and Pat Kosicki**, for their tireless and faithful efforts preparing our altar for every worship.



- **Ellen Harland and the Liturgical Arts** group for enhancing worship and enabling us to find new meaning in the seasons of the church.
- **Bob Cooke, Jane Lothian, Doug Recko, Josh Conway,** and Ellie's friends from Old North Church **Chris Jones and Abby Vigneron**, for helping set up for Advent and hanging all those wreaths in the bitter cold..



Administration

Treasurer's Report

As of the end of October, compared to budget, our income is about \$12,000 better than expected, while expenses are \$12,000 less than expected, leading to a positive variance of \$24,000. The positive variance on the expense side is largely the result of some expenses occurring later than planned. On the income side it is a result of timing and a number of generous one-time gifts. By the end of the year we do expect that the budget will be essentially balanced.

As a way to save resources and some expense, we are trying to reduce the number of pledge envelopes used. If you would like pledge envelopes for 2022, please make sure to indicate this on your pledge form. In order to reduce the number of envelopes used, some envelope numbers may be reassigned. We will let you know if your envelope number is changing for 2022.

As we approach the end of the year, please remember to pay any balance of your 2021 pledge amount. If you have any questions about your 2021 pledge or payments to date please reach out to [Denise Kelly](#).

October 2021 Vestry Vignettes

Ellie began the meeting with a prayer from *The Church Cracked Open*, then did a Bible Study on Mark 14:3 -9, *The Lady with the Alabaster Jar*.

Regathering Reflection:

Worship/being inside is ok, but people really don't like the sign up procedure and it could be an obstacle for attendance. The space gap inhibits the closeness of community which worship draws us to. Can we do every other pew? At Dick Wright's funeral, there was overflow space in the Parish Hall. If we can do that every Sunday, it would eliminate the need to have people sign up. There were logistical challenges in bringing the church school kids up for Communion the first time. We can create a ministry

for hospitality around and in the overflow space. Maybe something related to Usher, Greeter, or Newcomer Committees ministries.

Deacon's Report:

Ken thanked us for how you've welcomed him, and wants to start scheduling 1:1 time with ministry leaders.

Stewardship Update:

The campaign will focus on abundance over scarcity, and will launch 10/31 with a sermon to ground it in scripture and theology. The Pledge mailing and eBlast will follow on Nov 1- 2. Nov 28 will be In-Gathering Sunday, which is also the first Sunday in Advent.

Finance Update:

We are ahead of budget by about \$17k, but we have budgeted expenses that still need to come in and should still be a little ahead of budget when those come in.

Rectory Discussion:

The lease renewal is Jan 1. We need to present any lease changes by Nov 1. Urgent needs are mold, dehumidifiers, and roof. The additional electric cost of the dehumidifiers will be covered by the church. We need to establish a maintenance plan for the rectory; possibly establish a repairs committee, and we need to look into a property management company to handle day-to-day problems at the rectory. There was a discussion of whether or not we should sell the rectory. The majority of present members did not feel that was in the Church's long-term best interests.

Vestry Nominations:

We need to fill 7 positions for next year. We discussed the possibility that the Vestry is too big. Perhaps we need to consider having a smaller Vestry to help us to have a longer term strategy.

We ended with closing Prayer (A Prayer for Quiet Confidence from *BCP*) and Dismissal.

Passages

Baptisms

Ford Donald Dutton was baptized on November 7th. Ford is the son of Kristen and David Dutton, and grandsons of Karen and David Dutton.

Deaths

Former parishioner **William Kenneth Vickery Sr.** died July 12, 2021, and was interred in Mt. Hope Cemetery on September 18, 2021.

Parishioner **Joseph P. Latulippe**, formerly of Weymouth, MA died October 4, 2021. He was the husband of the late Helen Jean (Gaskey) Latulippe and the late Nancy (Cappola) Carey Latulippe. Joseph is survived by his children; Lisa Rooslet and her husband Dennis, Lori Erickson and her husband John, Steven Latulippe and his wife, and two step children Denise Aderton and her husband Jeffrey, and James Carey and his wife Debra, as well as nine grandchildren.

Joseph was a Navy veteran having served during the Korean Conflict. He was stationed on air craft carriers where he began to learn his trade. He worked as an elevator repairman at Atlantic Elevator Company for many years. He also went to trade school at Coyne Electric where he got his electrician's license. Religion was very important to him. He was a wonderful singer and also an accomplished piano player., who also collected clocks. His Memorial Service was at Good Shepherd on November 27.



Founding Good Shepherd member **Doris Koch** passed away peacefully on October 19, 2021 at the age of 96. Doris was as married to the late Albert Koch. She is survived by her son and daughter-in-law Dana and Margaret Koch,

daughter and son-in-law Laurel (Koch) Martin and David Martin, five grandchildren, and nieces and nephews. Doris was born in 1924 in Calgary, Alberta, Canada to her American parents Frank and Bertha Dubes. In 1925 the family moved back to Wisconsin where Doris was raised on a farm. After graduating from high school in 1941, she attended secretarial school, and married Albert Koch in August of 1943. After the war they moved to Massachusetts and settled in Acton where they raised their family. Doris was secretary to the Assistant Superintendent of Schools in Acton for many years, until her retirement in 1989. She and Albert were founding members of the Church of the Good Shepherd in Acton, and were parishioners at St Marks Episcopal Church during their years in Westford. In 2006 they moved to the Overlook Life Care Community in Charlton, MA. Doris loved music, and played piano and clarinet. She was a superb cook, and loved to welcome family and friends to her home. She was an avid bridge player and a faithful Red Sox fan. Funeral Observances were private.

Parishioner **Sarah M. Mickunas** passed away on November 7, 2021 at the age of 84. She was the beloved wife of the late Juozas Mickunas Jr. and a member of Good Shepherd and a long time resident of Acton. Mrs. Mickunas was a former art teacher at the McCarthy-Towne Elementary School in Acton when she met her future husband Juozas at Iris Court in Acton. They were married thirty-six years at the time of his passing in 2009. Mrs. Mickunas had a lifelong passion for art, particularly painting. She attended classes throughout her life at various venues including the deCordova Museum, and the Worcester Art Museum. In later years, Mrs. Mickunas organized and taught art classes for residents at the Inn at Robbins Brook in Acton. Although not an outdoorsy person, she had an appreciation for animals and nature. Funeral services were held November 11th at the Acton Funeral Home with graveside services following in Woodlawn Cemetery, Acton Center.



Long time parishioner **Peter T. Houston**, who was 87, passed away peacefully at home on November 4, 2021. Peter is survived by his wife of 62 years, Ann B. Houston, and was a lifetime resident of Boxborough. He is also survived by his three children:

Mark Houston, Scott Houston and wife Marci, Susy Houston Odegaard and husband Brad, and ten grandchildren; he was predeceased by two daughters-in-law, Kathleen Houston and Debbie Houston.

Peter was born and raised in Hingham, MA. He graduated from The Rectory School, CT, followed by Tabor Academy. He attended John Hopkins University and received a Bachelor of Science degree in Aeronautical Engineering from Boston University. Following graduation, he earned his private pilot's license. He worked as an engineer for Raytheon Missiles Systems for 25 years followed by Mitre Corporation until retirement at age 74.



Settling in Boxborough in 1960, Peter was very active in town, serving on Boxborough Recreational and Conservation committees and as a founding member of the Boxborough Minutemen. He was also very involved in scouting, serving as Assistant Scoutmaster Troop 1 Acton, and in town

sports where he was Little League Coach. Peter was also very active at the Good Shepherd as a Sunday School teacher and serving on the Vestry. He treasured his family time at Lake Winnepesaukee, NH, Black Point Inn in Scarborough, ME and traveling on multiple trips throughout Europe and Alaska. Peter was an avid outdoorsman. His passion for hunting, fishing, camping, and hiking stemmed from his late, beloved grandfather. He was especially passionate about deer hunting in Strafford, Vermont with his two sons for over 50 years. Peter also enjoyed elk hunting in Colorado and bird hunting in Vermont with his brother-in-law, George Bennett, and was a member of the Harvard Sportsman Club. Peter found joy in hiking and camping the Presidential Range in New Hampshire, summiting Mt. Washington multiple times up to the age of 70. He enjoyed bass fishing in his old town canoe and salmon fishing on Lake Winnepesaukee as well as taking in the beautiful sunsets. He loved fly fishing on the Swift and Pemigewasset Rivers off the Kancamagus Highway. Peter was an avid walker routinely walking five miles a day for many years.

Peter cherished and enjoyed all the holidays and special times with his family. Peter's zest for life often entailed practical jokes on friends and family to spice up the day. Being married to Ann, he became a lifelong lover of golden retrievers which also became one of his passions. In later years was also a parishioner at Trinity Episcopal Church in Concord. Funeral Services were held November 11, 2021 at Trinity and he was buried in South Cemetery on Burroughs Road, Boxborough.

"I have fond memories of Peter, he always greeted me with a big smile and was always friendly. I have wonderful memories of their beautiful Golden Retrievers who, if we were lucky, we could visit by his car after church. I also remember his gratitude for prayers and support when Anne was ill. Rest in peace friend."