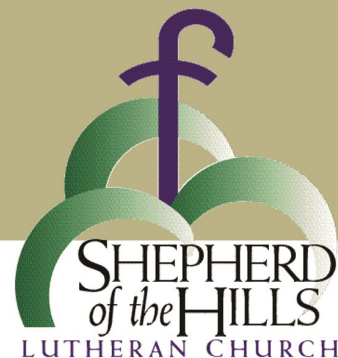


Shepherd's Voice



January 2023

“Wobble and Weave”

By Interim Pastor Susan Debner

Years ago, my friend who is an organist had a balcony-front-row seat for the children's Christmas program. One year, “Mary” had opened an early Christmas gift right before the pageant—her first pair of high-heeled shoes. The shoes were so new, in fact, their maiden voyage was when “Mary” wobbled and weaved her way down the center aisle of church on Christmas Eve. She was carrying “Baby Jesus,” of course.

“Baby Jesus,” was the one month-old daughter of first-time parents. From her perch on the organ bench, my friend could see the baby's mother physically restraining the father from jumping up at each teeter and totter as “Mary” and “Jesus” passed by.

Imagine what that was like for those young parents—watching their precious child carried on such wobbly legs! I think this is a scenario God knows well, since we are forever carrying Jesus into the world with us, wobbling as we go, for one reason or another.

At Shepherd, the wobbles are being felt in our mission planning. Like so many other churches and non-profit agencies right now, the draft 2023 budget is much smaller and tighter than we'd like it to be. The Council will continue working through these difficult conversations across the coming weeks, preparing for the congregation meeting later this month.

It's tempting to see this challenge as a lack of generosity—but that is not how I have experienced Shepherd, or the Church, at all! Our pews are filled with generous people, nearly all of whom wish they could be even more generous. Haven't you ever wished you could give more at church or to a worthy cause? I know I have!

I wonder how different things would be if we lived in a world where conversations about money, wealth and finances happened all the time, without shame, in safe and supportive environments? How would that change our feeling about the wobbles we all experience in our relationship with money? Because I think that's what God hopes for us—a wholeness of life, where our money and wealth feel under control instead of in control of us.

Please join us for worship and the congregational meeting on January 29. Together with God's help, we will manage the wobbles of our lives and of the budget, as we seek to join God's amazing work in our community.

See you in worship,
Pastor Susan

**Shepherd of the Hills
Lutheran Church
500 Blake Road South
Edina, MN 55343
(952) 935-3457**

Staff:

Pastor	Sherri Otto
Interim Pastor	Susan Debner
Music Director	Open
Administrative Assistant	Shawn Wacholz
Building Manager	Blair Prax

Church Council Members / Officers:

President	Adam Driscoll
Vice President	Don Wothe
Treasurer	Johanna Olson
Financial Secretary	Fred Jensen
Secretary	Open
Serve	Nate Lichty
Worship & Music	Karen Hofstad-Parkhill
Building & Facilities	Peter Barott
Learn	Stephanie Nordin
Communications	Joe Palmersheim
Care	Open
LMCC	Open
Evaluation	Open

Telephone & Voice Mail Extensions:

Shawn Wacholz	11
Pastor Susan Debner	12
Pastor Sherri Otto	13
Blair Prax	15

Shepherd Online!

Pr. Sherri Otto	sherri.otto@sothchurch.com
Pr. Susan Debner	pastorsusan.debner@sothchurch.com
Shawn Wacholz	office@sothchurch.com
Blair Prax	blair.prax@sothchurch.com
Church web site	www.sothchurch.com



WEATHER CANCELLATION POLICY

Have you noticed the snow and cold? ☺ It's that time of year again in Minnesota! Love it or hate it, sometimes winter weather impairs our ability to gather at church. Every effort will be made to worship each Sunday

morning, but should there be a need to cancel or shift to online worship, the decision will be made by the pastors and/or the council president at least 2 hours prior to the start of worship (so no later than 7:30AM on Sunday morning). The same practice of giving 2+ hour notice for cancellation should be used for all SOTH events whenever possible. Please check for email, text/phone messages and Facebook for notices. You may also reach out to a pastor or leader directly with questions.

Please note that if you do not feel it's safe to travel, you should stay home and join us online. When the weather clears—and it will—we'll look forward to seeing you back at church!

COLD, FLU AND COVID, OH MY!

As the seasons of illness rage and overlap, know we will do our best to keep up with and communicate the recommendations for masking and gathering in person. Many of us are already masking up again due to rising concerns—that's always supported at SOTH. As always, please rest and stay home whenever you are not feeling well. Prayers are highly communicable and shared generously at church, but we'd like to keep the germs under control.

THANK YOU! THANK YOU! THANK YOU!

To everyone who helped with Advent and Christmas worship at SOTH: musicians, bulletin prepares, ushers, readers, decorators, donators, tech supporters, servers, shovelers, smilers, singers, peace-sharers, candle lighters, cleaner-uppers, fellowship hosts, fellowshippers, worshippers. The list is wonderfully long and has several of you in it several times—thank you!

To all who have shared notes, cards and gifts with the Shepherd Staff. We feel the love and are so very grateful. Thank you!



PRESIDENT'S POST Travelers and Innkeepers

By Adam Driscoll, Council President

At this point, we are all familiar with the story of the Nativity and all the key players. Angels and shepherds, Herod and wise men, the travelers (Mary and Joseph), the Innkeeper, and of course, Jesus. In the story, they are static, they play one role. We know that life is often more complicated, and throughout our lives we take turns as the traveler, in need of the help and charity of others, and at other times, we may be the innkeeper, with the opportunity to be of help to those in need. Due do your support and faith, Shepherd has been able to serve as innkeepers to our guests in our parsonage, who have been living there since October of 2021 as they seek asylum in the United States, and for that I grateful, and very proud of this congregation.

Going forward into 2023, we have an opportunity to extend our hospitality, and support them as they walk towards further independence. To that point, as we have come to the end of 2022, the family and ACT-TC have mutually determined that they will no longer be actively collaborating, as the family has executed their rights to greater self-determination. That said, they are not yet at a point where they have been able to secure an apartment independently, due primarily to their short time in this country, brief working history, and absence of a credit history. After discussing with the family, the SOTH church council has determined to offer to extend their stay through June 30, 2023, in which time they will be paying a nominal rent, and they will be responsible for more of their costs, as a means for them to gain a credit history, to boost their ability to find independent living in the future, an offer which they have accepted. While we lament that relationship with ACT-TC and the family has come to an end, we are grateful for the support they have provided. Shepherd will not be taking ACT-TC's place in providing the systemic day to day support which the family had received to date, as we are not equipped to do so, and that aligns with the family's expectations. As always, if you feel compelled to support them, you are welcome to continue contacting them if you have a relationship, or monetary support can be made to the church office.

Thank you all for your faithful support of our mission, as it has provided us this opportunity to be as the innkeeper to the traveler, and may we find love and grace in the areas of life where we may be the ones in need of charity.

Merry Christmas and Happy New Year,
Adam Driscoll



ANNUAL MEETING

ANNUAL MEETING

Sunday, January 29, 2023

10:30 am

Our Annual Meeting will take place on Sunday, January 29 at 10:30 a.m. (after 9:30 a.m. worship service) Please make plans to join us. The Council will bring forward our budget recommendation for Congregational vote. We have a lot to share, so we hope you will be able to be there!

SOTH IS HIRING!

A new, paid position has been approved by the church council for a Sunday Tech Wizard! This position is paid by the hour and involves running the sound board and the Zoom worship on Sunday mornings between 8:30 and 11. Currently this work is covered by volunteers, but it has been challenging to keep this important role consistent. In shifting it to a paid position, we hope to find someone for whom this work is a good fit and a great way to connect in faith with the SOTH worshipping community. If you or someone you know is interested, reach out to the office or Interim Senior Pastor Susan for more information.

SOTH BOOK CLUB

Book club at SOTH is open to all. Please feel free to join us. For questions please contact Kaye Wothe, Faith Community Nurse at kwothe@comcast.net

Book Club Schedules

Sunday, January 15 at 7:00 pm at SOTH

Book: "The Flight Girls" by Nikki Noelle Salazar

WEDNESDAY AM BIBLE STUDY

Come for Bible study, coffee, and fellowship! The Wednesday morning group meets at 9:30 am for coffee, treats and fellowship before they begin a Bible study. The Bible study begins at 10:00 am and is based on the following Sunday's sermon text. All are welcome.



MENTAL HEALTH CONNECT

Shepherd of the Hills is part of the collaborative supporting the mission of Mental Health Connect. For more information on MHC events or resources go to www.mhconnect.org

When you or someone you know is experiencing mental health concerns, you may have questions...

- What support is available for my family?
- What treatment is available, and how do I get it?
- Who can help me (financially, emotionally, physically)?

Mental Health Connect (MHC) is a good first step toward answering these questions and more. If you're living with mental illness, or think you may be, or have friends or family that are suffering – Mental Health Connect is for you. The Mental Health Navigator can help find mental health treatments, resources, support, and education.

Our Mission

Mental Health Connect provides community-based resources, support, and education to improve access to mental health services and to connect individuals to the services they need.

Mental Health Connect is a 501(c)(3) organization, sponsored by Bethlehem Lutheran Church Twin Cities.

Mental Health Connect works to eliminate barriers to accessing care. We believe mental health care is integral to overall health and everyone deserves treatment, no exceptions. Our service is free, customized, and confidential.

Why Mental Health Connect?

Navigating the ins and outs of the mental health system is overwhelming, especially when mental health symptoms are present. We support people in their desire to feel better and embrace their strengths by providing resources, support and education needed in their journey to mental health and wellness.

About Us

Mental Health Connect is an interfaith collaborative non-profit organization where faith communities, including Shepherd of the Hills, collaborate together to provide mental health support and resources for their community. We are funded through grants and donations.

Our Work Focuses On...

- *Mental Health Collaborative: Providing mental health educational programming in our communities, bringing people together to raise awareness and reduce stigma.*
- *Mental Health Navigator: Helping people gain access to mental health services and support with resource navigation.*

Contact our Navigator:

CALL 612.642.1220 TEXT 612.642.1220

EMAIL navigator@mhconnect.org



SOTH CALL COMMITTEE UPDATE January 2023

Thanks again to all who participated in our Congregational Listening session on December 11th with John Hulden, Assistant to the Bishop. We appreciate the fantastic attendance and tremendous feedback.

We are asking you to submit names of potential Senior Pastor candidates for us to consider. Submissions are appreciated as soon as possible so

we can provide them to the synod, and will be accepted no later than Sunday, January 8th.

Please provide:

- Name
- Current congregation and location (city, state)
- Email address or contact number, if available to you.

Email this information to both Alyssa Barott and Kathy Wiemer—please check the email spellings as we both have unique and often misspelled last names!! apbarott@gmail.com and klwiemer@aol.com

Since the listening session, the call committee has gathered to walk through our notes from December 11th and have been preparing interview questions for the first round of candidate interviews. We anticipate receiving a complete candidate list from the synod before the end of the month. Things are really going to be moving then!

Please continue to pray for our team as we continue this vital work for our SOTH family.

WITH GRATITUDE

By Emily Koski

Thank you to the whole congregation for so many blessings you've shown me and my family this fall during two major events:

1. For the meaningful program, cards and incredibly generous gifts as I stepped down as music director. The kind words and gentle "roasting" were so fun and appreciated! We plan to use some of the gift money to put in a couple apple trees and build a small garden in the back yard. Not only will it give us something fun to do as a family, but hopefully we'll have a harvest to share in the next few years!

2. For your outpouring of support as Shay underwent open heart surgery in November to address a congenital heart condition that's been monitored since he was two years old. It went well and he is recovering slowly but surely. (He assured me that the doctor said he shouldn't shovel for 2-4 years, although I was sure I heard 2-4 months... ha!). The meals, prayers, calls and conversations mean so much to us!

We are so grateful to be part of this amazing church family! Thank you!



Staff Reflection

Continued from below

- Mental Health Awareness Sunday
- Lutheran Partners in Global Mission speaker
- Ordination of Pastor Anne
- Call Committee created
- Moonlight Madness
- Turkey Bingo
- Thanksgiving Service in partnership with Calvary Lutheran
- Christmas Tea
- Children's Christmas Program
- Hope in the Darkness Service
- Decorating for Christmas
- Celebrating Christmas
- Many volunteers: Altar Guild, Choir Members, Coffee Hour Hosts, Communion Assistants, Sound Board, Funeral luncheons, Lectors, Tuesday Men's group, Quilters, Visitation and Care Team, Care Givers' group and The Foundation group.

I'm sure I have not mentioned everything and to those, I apologize, but just look at this list! We are a community of faithful believers living out our call as to what God is up to in our midst!! Shepherd of the Hills is blessed in so many ways! And without you, none of this would take place!! So, thank you!!

Yes, we have had challenges. Yes, we have had questions. Yes, we have had doubts. But in all of these things, in all of the transitions, this is an exciting, revitalizing, reenergizing time in the life of this church. I am so looking forward to the future here at Shepherd and I pray that you are looking forward to it too!!

Happy New Year to you and your families!

God bless you all in 2023!!

Pastor Sherri



REMEMBERING OUR STORMS, RECHARGING OUR FUTURE

By Pastor Sherri Otto

I am sitting in our sunroom, looking out at our backyard as I write this. The trees are snow-covered, the sun is shining, and I can see deer

tracks in the snow. It is absolutely beautiful! Except for the minus 11 below temperature!!

We are in a winter storm warning... again. And it is this vein that I write to you today. We all understand that storms come, and storms go. Some come quickly and leave just as quick and some stick around for a while. Sometimes they don't bother us a bit, sometimes they are an annoyance and sometimes they change our lives in ways that we never could imagine. As I look back on 2022, we have faced several storms at Shepherd of the Hills. I'm not talking about the weather, but the many challenges that we have faced as a congregation.

Things "appeared" to be good in the beginning of 2022. We were plugging along as normal, working on future plans for Shepherd. But as time went on, we found that things were not as they appeared. Pastor Scott, our lead pastor, after much discerning, put in his notice and left at the end of May. Our Intern Pastor, Anne Schaefer, finished her internship with us in July. Our Community Nurse, Kaye Wothe, retired in August, leaving a huge hole in our hearts and our way of doing things. Emily Koski, our beloved music director, gave her notice, wanting to be more involved in church with her 4 children and husband. And organist Carolyn Diamond felt it was time to leave as well. Quite a year in the life of Shepherd in 2022. Quite the storms of challenges.

Now I could stop there, and I could wallow in the sorrow of what transpired in 2022, of the transition and the doubts, of the fear and the hurt, of the wanting to quit and yet wanting to keep things alive. And those are just a few of my feelings. I'm sure you had feelings of your own during this time.

So, in this new year, I want to focus on the positive things that occurred during 2022:

- Family Sledding event
- First Communion and Chalice Making
- Confirmation
- VBS - Food Truck Party in partnership with Calvary Lutheran
- Summer Festival Camp
- Block Party
- Book Club
- Bible Study
- Personnel Committee created
- Shepherds of Light – Sundays and Wednesday nights
- Kids singing again in worship
- God's Work Our Hands in partnership with Calvary Lutheran

Continued above



IMMIGRANT MINISTRY

UPDATE

By Paul Bohnsack

All too quickly a new year is upon us! While this is often a time of resolutions and new beginnings, I need to start with an ending.

Unfortunately, the Magomedovs, whom we have been hosting in the parsonage, are no longer willing or interested in working with the ACT-TC steering

committee despite numerous unsuccessful attempts on our part to rebuild the relationship. ACT-TC is devastated and is truly at a loss to understand the turn of events. What ACT-TC and SOTH do understand, however, is that the family has the right to determine its own future and that working with asylum families in transition can be challenging.

SOTH has offered the parsonage to the Magomedovs through June 30 at a nominal rental charge while they create a credit history by paying some bills and while they contemplate their next move. Those of you who have established a relationship with the family are encouraged to stay in touch with them as long as they are receptive. Our prayers and best wishes for success go out to the Magomedovs and their new baby boy born in late November. And ACT-TC is filled with gratitude for all the support members of SOTH have given to the Magomedovs and to this ministry.

Meanwhile, the resolution of ACT-TC for the new year is to continue the work of walking with asylum seekers. The organization has located a reasonably priced apartment to rent in St. Paul for a new family. It has a big yard for children to play in and it is located near public transportation and services important to those making this transition. ACT-TC is grateful for your continued support of time and gifts to this vital ministry.

Blessings to you in the new year.

On behalf of ACT-TC
Paul Bohnsack
952-891-5677
bohnsackps@frontiernet.net



MEN'S BREAKFAST

Saturday, January 14

8:30 am

There will be a men's breakfast at Shepherd on Saturday, January 14 at 8:30 am. Sign up at the Welcome desk before Jan. 8. If you have any questions, please contact Steve Grams at (952) 607-5840.

THANK YOU QUILTERS!

Dear Quilters,
So many thanks for the lovely donation of the hand crafted quilts. These hand made gifts have such a special meaning to our patients and families as they come straight from the heart! Again, many, many thanks to you for your generosity.

Park Nicollet / Methodist Hospital

Shepherd of the Hills Lutheran Church
500 Blake Road South
Edina, MN 55343

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for a Happy New Year!