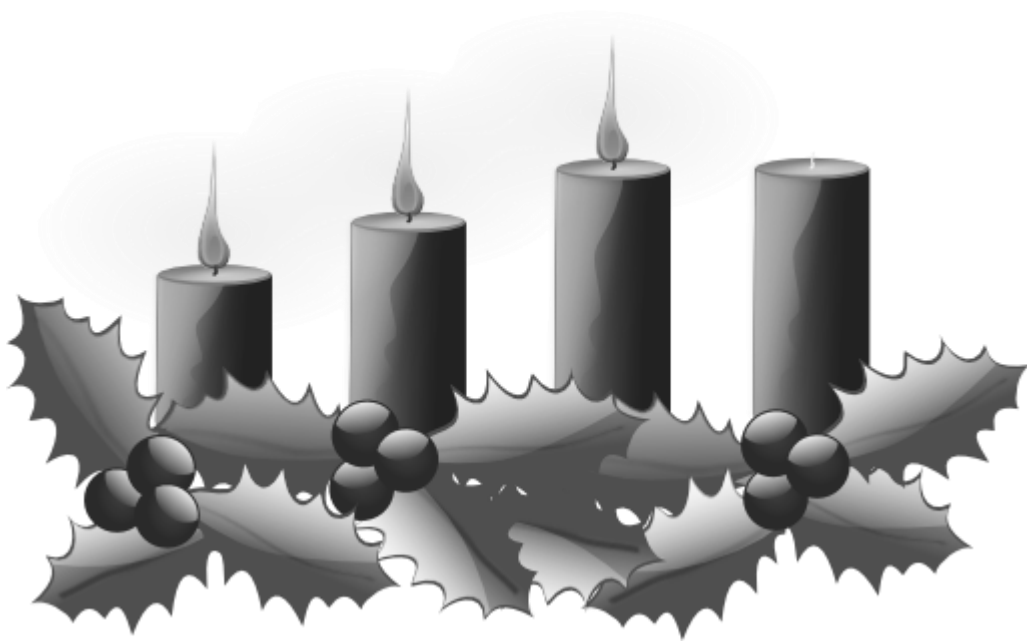


S a i n t A g n e s



St. Agnes is an inclusive Catholic community dedicated to the love of God and service to others. We rejoice in the Gospel, the celebration of the Liturgy, and the Sacraments. We welcome the opportunity to share God's message and to bring all into the life of Christ.

Pastoral Contacts

Pastor: Rev. Andrew M. Switzer
Pastor Emeritus: Rev. T. Mathew Rowgh
Coordinator of Faith Formation: Bill Donahue
Assistant Administrator: Beth Yates
Accounting: Lizzie Lowe
Liturgy: Helen Harris
Music Ministry: Elaine Rendler-McQueeney

Pastoral Council

Connie Bonner ~ Derek Gallagher
Christine Wiegman-Green ~ Patrick Green
Shaná Harris ~ Colin Hayden ~ Brendan Jarrell
Bill Sagle ~ Gil Sateia
Vanessa Santiago ~ Becky Tokarcik

Finance Council

Pat Barth ~ Steve Bledsoe
Mike Drewes ~ Todd Hershey
Sue Kemnitzer ~ David Matera ~ Arnold Thomas

St. Agnes Church

200 South Duke Street, Shepherdstown

St. Agnes Parish Office

106 South Duke Street, Shepherdstown
P.O. Box 1603, Shepherdstown, WV 25443
Telephone 304-876-6436
Office@StAgnesShepherdstown.org
www.StAgnesShepherdstown.org

St. Agnes Chapel

204 South Church Street, Shepherdstown

Sunday Readings

Isaiah 61:1-2a, 10-11
Psalm Luke 1:47-48, 49-50, 53-54
1 Thessalonians 5:16-24
John 1:6-8, 19-28

Weekly Schedule

4th Sunday of Advent Mass

Saturday, 5:30pm

Weekday Mass

Monday & Wednesday at 11am

Ecumenical Advent

Wednesday at 1pm & 7pm

Reconciliation: Saturday, 4:30pm

Parish Office: Monday-Thursday, 9am-4pm

Cash Card Sales: Weekdays during office hours
(please call first)



Mass Intentions

Saturday, 5:30pm Mass for

Catherine Havko

Sunday, 10:30am Mass for

Maureen Maidhof

In your kindness, please pray for Maureen Maidhof who died this past week. May Maureen share in the fullness of God's love and peace.

Remember in Prayer

Please pray daily for those serving in the Military, our veterans in recovery, and those recently ill especially Rebecca Ramsey, Marie Snowden, Barbara Mueller, Bill Seymour, Todd Hershey, Stef Hale (friend of Jackie Gore), Jim Keller, Anne Oxfort, and Georgette Rush. Names are placed in the bulletin for approximately one month and then those names are placed on the 2nd Friday prayer list and are remembered in prayer each month.

2nd Friday Prayer Group

A list has begun for the 2nd Friday in January. Please contact Judy at any time with names of individuals you would like to add or if you would like to join the group. Judy: 301-432-2276 or jslilga8@gmail.com.

Year End Giving

If you would like to make a year-end gift to St. Agnes for 2023 Tax purposes, please be sure to write your check by December 31, 2023! Donations received for the Solemnity of Mary will be processed in 2023. Please take note of the charitable giving information on pg 11 of this bulletin!

Rides to 4th Sunday of Advent Mass

For folks who do not like to drive at night...we have drivers willing to bring folks to Mass on December 23, 5:30pm Mass. Please see Elaine after Mass or contact the office so that arrangements can be made to escort you to and from Mass.

Taizé Prayer Sunday at 4pm

As a part of the Ecumenical Contemplative Prayer Series for Advent, Taizé prayer is being offered at 4pm today, Sunday, December 17, at 4pm at St Agnes Church.

Taizé is a form a Christian prayer originating from the ecumenical Christian community of Taizé in France. One is invited to rest in God through the singing of psalm verses and other simple chants, alternating with periods of silent reflection. It is a time to "come away and rest for awhile" through experience of the simplicity and depth of the Word of God.

Come, experience Taizé!

Seasonal Schedule

Fourth Sunday of Advent Mass

On Saturday, December 23 ~ 5:30pm

Christmas Masses

Christmas Eve ~ 5:30pm

Bring the Infant Jesus from
your crèche to be blessed
(Children's Program begins 5:15pm)

Mass During the Night ~ 9pm

Christmas Morning ~ 10:30am

Solemnity of Mary

Monday, January 1 ~ 10:30am

Longings of Advent:

Praying for Peace and Justice

An Ecumenical Contemplative Prayer Series

Each Wednesday in Advent, we will meet in the afternoon for prayer and contemplation, and, each Wednesday evening, we will meet for a form of evening prayer. We also have Taizé on the 3rd Sunday of Advent.

December 17, 4pm: Taizé

St Agnes

December 20, 1pm: Contemplative Prayer Stations

New Street Methodist Church

December 20, 7pm: Lessons and Carols

New Street Methodist Church

Donations throughout our Ecumenical Advent Series will go to Doctors Without Borders. Checks should be made out to "Caring Cupboard."

Scripture Sharing

Our Scripture Sharing group continues to meet via Zoom (link found on website under events calendar) on Mondays at noon except for holidays. All are welcome!

Dear Parishioners,

This past week in Bible study, out of our discussion in the spirit of Synodality, came the insight that I think we all in the group found helpful, so I wanted to share it. We discussed how, as we look at the world, we see the Israel and Palestine situation, environmental crisis, so many immigrants displaced from home, the threat to human rights, and what seems to be the decline of democracy. We could add many things to this list. Rather than lead to a despair, the Advent season calls us to hold a tension which scripture scholars call the already and not yet. The reign of God is about bringing peace, justice, human dignity and, ultimately, the healing of all creation. We pray this prayer in one of the eucharistic prayers that all people may be raised up to a new hope. Our Bible study then shared how many people and stories we know of people that have placed themselves to usher in that reign of God—standing in solidarity with migrants, working for peace, healing the environment. No matter what they believe these, acts of love represent the reign of God. They are the already in a world that we know is not yet. As one of the people in our group pointed out, so many of the Psalms start in lament and end in celebration. May we, as we enter into Gaudete Sunday, hold the tension living out the already in the midst of the not yet.

Fr. Andy

Homeless Meals An Update on Monthly Contributions

Last week in the bulletin we explained the need for ongoing contributions to our Meals for the Hungry and Homeless Ministry. We'll cover costs if:

- 30 people donate \$5 a month;
- 20 people donate \$10 a month;
- 10 people donate \$25 a month.

Thanks to everyone who has responded. There are 7 households who are donating \$25 a month or more – so we have nearly met this goal; 2 households donating \$10 a month or more; and 1 household donating \$5 a month. Are you able and willing to donate **\$5 or \$10 a month** to feed the hungry and homeless in our area? It just takes a few minutes to set up monthly electronic giving on our website www.stagnesshepherdstown.org. This is a GREAT start! We'll provide another update in two weeks.

The Gift of Music



Memorialize this year's hymnal

Our 2024 Hymnals are here! Envelopes can be found in each hymnal if you would like to dedicate a hymnal to a loved one. Place completed forms in the offertory basket.

All St Agnes Volunteers... VIRTUS Deadline is Fast Approaching!

All Volunteers must be VIRTUS trained by December 31st! This is required by the Diocese of Wheeling Charleston of all parishes, schools, etc. If you volunteer in any capacity at St Agnes, you must be Virtus trained.

The good news is that the training is all online and can be completed in a short period of time. Our Coordinator, Bill Donahue, can assist with verifying your training status and/or initiating your training. For questions or concerns, contact Bill at 304-876-6436 or formation@stagnesshepherdstown.org.

VIRTUS training is designed to help adults recognize the signs that indicate a child or vulnerable adult might be suffering abuse. It also helps adults by offering key points to help children and adults, who might confide in them, deal with potential situations. Finally, it helps adults know who to contact and what the next steps are if they suspect or discover a child or vulnerable adult is being abused. All this training is designed to help adults help others through a difficult situation.

It is truly in the best interests of everyone to have all volunteers VIRTUS trained.

Prayer Sponsors Needed

We are looking for prayer sponsors for our children preparing for First Eucharist. A prayer sponsor is someone who would like to show support and offer prayer for a child preparing to receive their First Eucharist. If you are interested in serving as a prayer sponsor, please call or email the parish office. You will be assigned a child, and you faithfully pray for them every day. A prayer sponsor may send a card to them (anonymously) and let them know they are being prayed for, but the giving of gifts is not necessary. We want this to be about the gift of prayer, not material gifts. We ask that if you send a card to sign it "your prayer sponsor." It is nice to stay anonymous until the First Eucharist celebration. We ask that the prayer sponsor come to the First Eucharist Mass on Sunday, April 28th at 10:30 AM where you can introduce yourself. If interested in being a prayer sponsor, please call the office or contact Bill Donahue at formation@stagnesshepherdstown.org.

We Need Your Help

Have past experience working on a school yearbook, directory, photo album, scrapbook, or publication? Have experience in scheduling activities for yourself or others? Would you be interested in contributing your experiences toward the next St. Agnes Church Photo Directory? If you have applicable experiences or an interest in helping, please contact the office at Office@StAgnesShepherdstown.org or Gil Sateia at snoremaster@comcast.net. Thanks in advance!

Book Discussion Group

The January 19, 2024 Book Discussion Selection

Invisible Child: Poverty, Survival and Hope in an American City by Andrea Elliott, winner of the Pulitzer Prize. "It is an astonishing story about the power of resilience, the importance of family and the cost of inequality—told through the crucible of one remarkable girl."

We meet at 11am in the Parish Center. Please join us!

Shepherdstown Shares Current Needs

Shepherdstown Shares exists to respond to any crisis threatening the lives, vitality, and prosperity of the Shepherdstown Community. They serve anyone in the zip code and often beyond.

Our St Agnes food pantry collection the 1st weekend of each month goes to Shepherdstown Shares. They can also take donations of non-perishable items in the entryway of the chapel at Trinity Episcopal Church any time for those who would prefer to drop items off themselves. In addition, they also gratefully accept monetary donations as well (for electronic options, check out their website, <https://www.shepherdstownshares.org/>, or mail a check to PO Box 1780, Shepherdstown, WV 25443). They are now feeding up to 285 people a week. Their costs beyond donations have increased by \$450 per week since this time last year. Shepherdstown Shares is a 501(c)3 organization, so your donations are tax deductible.

Here are their current pantry needs:

Toilet paper

Tuna

Any soup

Canned peas and green beans

Shepherdstown Shares Toy and Gift Collection

It's that magical time again! Shepherdstown Shares is collecting toys and gifts for our clients and their families: Toys, hats, gloves, scarves, etc. Toy collection boxes can be found at Greentree Realty, Shepherdstown Public Library, St. Agnes Parish Center, Shepherdstown Dollar General, and the Shepherdstown Sweet Shop. Unwrapped toys can be dropped off until December 18th! Thanks! For additional information check out their Facebook page.

Memorial Christmas Flowers

Parishioners are invited memorialize our Christmas season decorations. Memorials will be listed in our Christmas bulletin. Gifts can be in memory or in honor of someone. Simply complete an envelope included in your monthly envelope mailing or take an envelope found on the table in the Narthex, and place it in the offertory basket by Sunday, December 17.

Need a Last Minute Gift?

Cash cards make wonderful gifts: family, friends, the mail carrier, teachers, most anyone! We carry a pretty wide selection in the office to help you meet those last-minute gifting needs. And our cash card sales program helps St Agnes out financially at no additional cost to you. Now that's a win-win!!

Be Aware of Holiday Gift Card Scams!

Every holiday season brings on an increase in gift card scams. There are dozens of ways gift cards can be used by scammers to steal money.

Among the ways scammers try to get us is through **Maliciously Modified Gift Cards in Stores**. In this scam, fraudsters steal department store gift cards, learn their secret PIN information, and then replace back onto the shelves to await a victim. When the victim purchases the previously tampered with card and activates it, the fraudster is often able to spend the gift cards value faster than the victim. The fraudster can call the store's gift card line over and over to verify when the gift card is activated and what value is left on the card.

How to prevent? Look for signs of tampering when you buy a gift card. Some people say to pick gift cards from the end of the stack, but that's assuming that the fraudsters will always place the tampered gift cards up front and that the store's staff didn't rearrange them when restocking new gift cards. Know that all the big vendors using gift cards are aware of these scams and many will offer a way for you to protect yourself against this type of scam and some may even reimburse you if you are out money.

You can find information about gift card scams from the Federal Trade Commission at <https://consumer.ftc.gov/articles/gift-card-scams>.

Ugly Sleeping Bag Ministry

We are always in need of donated **blankets**, and **comforters** (any size) and also used **sleeping bags** (clean and in fair condition). Items can be dropped off at the parish center. Please join our team of sewers! For more information, contact Barbara Mueller by email at barbaramueller596@gmail.com.

Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults

RCIA (Rite of Christian Initiation of Adult) is for those who are interested in learning about the Catholic faith and discerning if they might want to be professed members of the Catholic faith. The goal is to see where the process takes you. Father Andy is leading our RCIA process. If you are interested in learning more or joining the group, please call the office at 304-876-6436. All are welcome!

CFF, AFF, Youth Group & Family News

CFF: Classes occur today at 9:15 AM in the parish center. There are no CFF classes on Dec. 24 or Dec. 31. Please encourage your children to be part of the "Go Tell It on the Mountain" singing during the children's program (5:15 PM) before the 5:30 Mass Christmas Eve.

ADULT Classes: Growing in Faith will meet today at 9:15 AM in the parish center. They will not meet on Dec. 24 or Dec. 31. Merry Christmas and Happy New Year.

RCIA and RCIC will meet today at Noon at Melanie's house.

Interested in being part of the Intergenerational Winter Musical? Contact Joe Yates, our resident director, at joeyates47@gmail.com. Rehearsals just started so it is not too late to join in. The shows will occur in February.

Keep watching the spot, the Youth Facebook Page, our church calendar and the church website for additional activities. **Remember to join the CFF Google Classroom (link was sent to your email).** It is a one stop spot to find all the latest forms, classroom information, recorded classes, etc.

Most importantly, if you are a parent and not receiving CFF announcements and emails, please contact the Parish center at 304-876-6436 or contact Bill Donahue at: formation@stagnesshepherdstown.org Parents are also encouraged to join our Youth Facebook Group. Please email Bill at the above address for the link to the closed group. You won't be able to find Our Youth Facebook Page any other way!

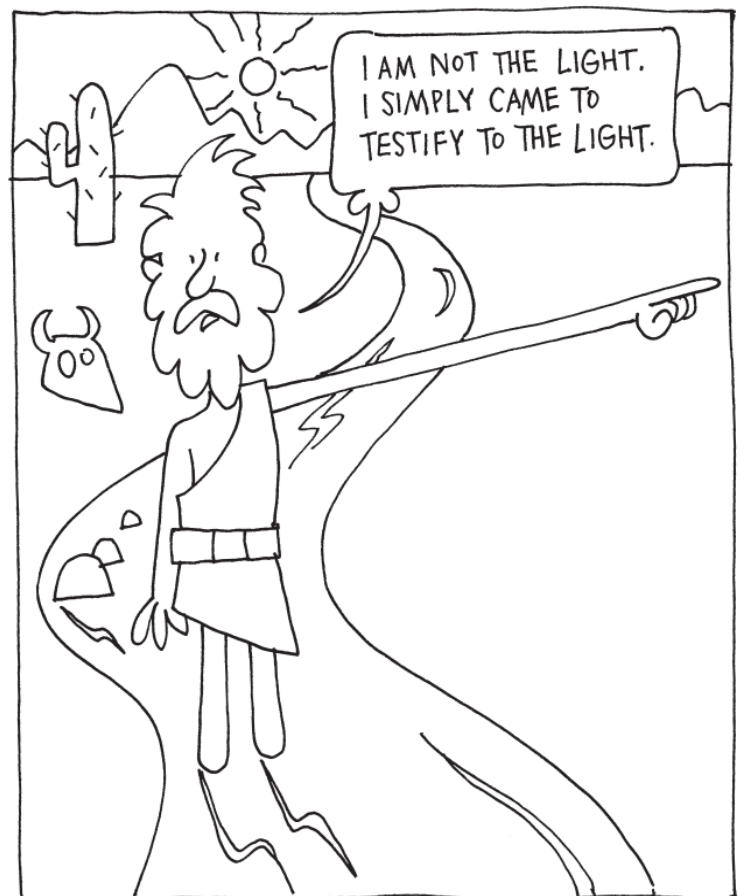
8		1	3	2		9		
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						6		
1		6					2	
	2		4				9	5
			8			1	6	3
							4	8
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THE YOUTH CORNER

This Week's Gospel:
John 1: 6-8, 19-28

December 17, 2023

Third Sunday of Advent



John the Baptist's Testimony

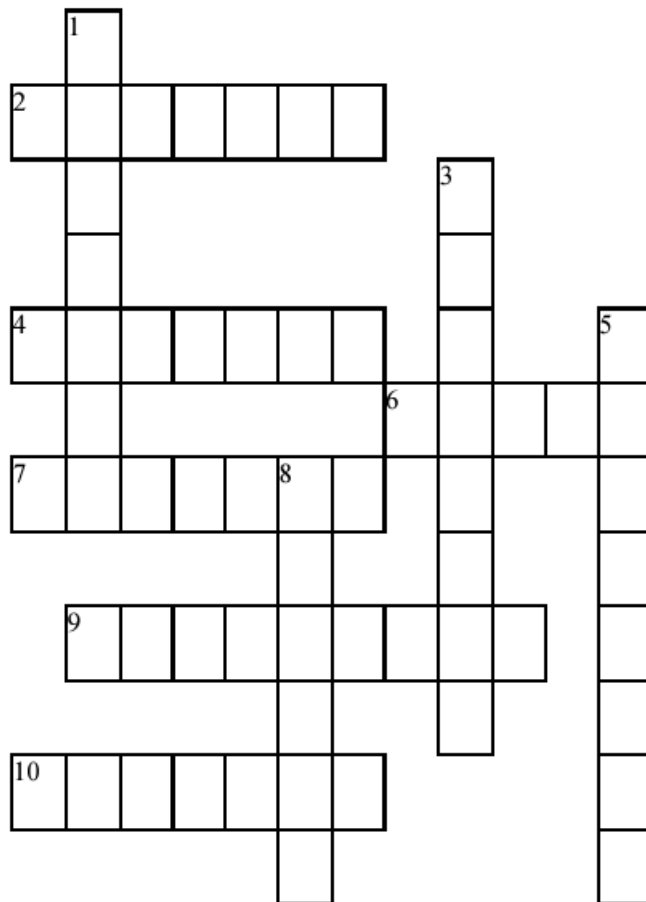
John 1:6-8,19-28

Across

2. give a witness, give evidence
4. A town near the Jordan river.
6. John came to give witness to this.
7. They where sent to ask John who he was.
9. They asked John why he baptized.
10. John said the he was not the _____.

Down

1. John was sent by God so that people might _____.
3. did not deny it
5. Make _____ the way of the Lord..."
8. He was a prophet a long time before John the Baptist lived.



John 1: 6-8, 19-28

R	E	W	S	N	A	G	B	E	L	I	E	V	E
S	T	R	A	I	G	H	T	E	S	R	L	D	J
E	H	G	N	I	Z	I	T	P	A	B	A	E	E
S	W	H	N	B	I	H	H	L	S	I	D	S	R
I	P	W	N	W	R	P	A	S	J	O	N	E	U
S	H	I	G	I	J	R	I	E	O	C	A	R	S
A	A	L	N	T	O	O	S	H	H	R	S	T	A
I	R	D	T	N	R	P	S	I	N	A	R	W	L
A	I	E	L	E	D	H	E	T	R	B	T	W	E
H	S	R	I	S	A	E	M	H	A	N	E	O	M
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S	E	E	H	E	R	E	L	I	J	A	H	T	N
I	S	S	T	A	R	R	E	C	I	O	V	H	Y
S	H	S	E	A	E	O	N	E	I	Z	D	Y	R

PHARISEES
 BAPTIZING
 ONE
 WORTHY
 JOHN
 DESERT
 PROPHET
 WILDERNESS
 LIGHT
 WATER
 JORDAN
 ISAIAH
 BELIEVE
 STRAIGHT
 SANDAL
 JERUSALEM
 WITNESS
 ELIJAH
 MESSIAH
 ANSWER
 VOICE

Part 2 (See last weeks bulletin for part 1)



Saint John the Baptist

John was the last prophet God sent to prepare the way for Jesus. Finish this short biography of John by filling in the blanks. You'll find all the missing words in the box below. You will need to use some words more than once.

Mary	Gabriel	nine	baptize	believe
Zachariah	Jordan	locusts	skinny	old
Herod	Temple	baptized	weird	preaching
Simon Peter	mute	honey	sinless	Jerusalem
Andrew	leaped for joy	camel's hair	speaker	Elizabeth
Jesus	beloved Son	desert	John	repentance

Even when he was in his mother's womb, John gave his mother a sign that Jesus was God's own Son. When the pregnant _____ greeted _____, he _____.

After John's birth and naming, the Gospels do not mention him until he is about thirty. By then, John lived in a _____ near the River _____. He spent his time in prayer, doing penance, and _____. He wore a scratchy tunic made of _____ and lived on _____ and wild _____. John must have been very _____. He must have seemed _____ to the crowds who gathered in the desert to hear him speak. No matter, he was a powerful _____. He persuaded many, many people to turn away from sin. As a sign of their _____, he _____ them in the River _____.

Although Jesus was _____, he came to the desert and asked John to _____ him. When Jesus came up out of the water, a voice from heaven said, "This is my _____." Shortly after that, Jesus began his ministry. John continued to preach and baptize and point his own followers to Jesus. One of the followers was a man named _____, who together with his brother _____, became the first followers of Jesus.

John died before _____. A wicked leader named _____ had him beheaded. When he heard of John's death, Jesus said, "He was a burning and shining light."



The Gospel at Home

This Sunday's Gospel: John 1:6-8, 19-28

During Advent, we prepare for Christmas by listening to the people who prepared the way for Jesus' coming. In this Sunday's Gospel, people ask John the Baptist who he is—the Messiah or a prophet. John answers by identifying himself as a voice in the desert, crying out, "Make straight the way of the Lord." He insists that someone more important than he is coming. The Gospel asks us to recognize Jesus among us by answering his call to be our best Christian selves.

Exploring the Gospel Message

Promise (Grades K–1): This week, your child learned why it is important to make preparations for Christmas. Talk about how your family prepares for the feast. Talk about how Mary and Joseph prepared for the birth of Jesus. Ask your child to share the story of “The Just-Right Christmas Plate” with the family. Consider displaying your child’s “Getting- Ready Mobile” from class in a prominent place at home.

Good News (Grades 2-3): This week, your child recognized the preparations for Christmas that are happening in the parish. Ask your child to share what some of those preparations are. Talk, too, about how John the Baptist announced that Jesus was coming to be with all the people. Ask your child to share with the family the story, "Waiting for a Surprise."

Scan here for
parent resources
or visit goonboardfiles.com/family

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Venture (Grades 4–6): This week, your young person learned about the Messiah from the words of the prophet Isaiah and from the Blessed Virgin Mary. They learned that the Messiah brings Good News to the poor and comforts the sorrowful. They learned, too, that God fills the hungry with good things. Talk about ways your family can bring the Good News of Christ to others and how you can feed the hungry and comfort the sorrowful during this Advent season. Prepare to add the O Antiphons to your daily prayer starting December 17.

Visions (Grades 7–9): In class this week, your teen explored how to spread the Good News. The class learned that it was the mission of John the Baptist to prepare people for the coming of Jesus. John's life and preaching pointed not to himself, but to "the one who is to come." Ask: How is spreading the Good News to others part of our family's Advent activities? How does the way our family lives and acts point to Jesus? The class also compared the two narratives of Jesus' birth in the Gospels of Matthew and Luke. Share both stories. Talk about the similarities and the differences.

Pray Together

As you say your Advent wreath prayer this week, include prayers for all the people who need the message that John the Baptist proclaimed. As each member mentions someone who needs the message, the whole family can respond: "Lord, help us be Good News for others."

R	E	W	S	N	A	G	B	E	L	I	E	V	E
S	T	R	A	I	G	H	T	E	S	R	L	D	J
E	H	G	N	I	Z	I	T	P	A	B	A	E	E
S	W	H	N	B	I	H	H	L	S	I	D	S	R
I	P	W	N	W	R	P	A	S	J	O	N	E	U
S	H	I	G	I	J	R	I	E	O	C	A	R	S
A	A	L	N	T	O	O	S	H	H	R	S	T	A
I	R	D	T	N	R	P	S	I	N	A	R	W	L
A	I	E	L	E	D	H	E	T	R	B	T	W	E
H	S	R	I	S	A	E	M	H	A	N	E	O	M
T	E	N	G	S	N	T	W	A	T	E	R	R	I
S	E	E	H	E	R	E	L	I	J	A	H	T	N
I	S	S	T	A	R	R	E	C	I	O	V	H	Y
S	H	S	E	A	E	O	N	E	I	Z	D	Y	R

**I AM NOT WORTHY
TO UNTIE
HIS
SANDAL
STRAP**

SOLUTIONS:

8	4	1	3	2	7	9	5	6
9	7	2	6	5	1	3	8	4
5	6	3	9	8	4	7	1	2
4	8	5	7	9	2	6	3	1
1	9	6	5	3	8	4	2	7
3	2	7	4	1	6	8	9	5
2	5	4	8	7	9	1	6	3
7	3	9	1	6	5	2	4	8
6	1	8	2	4	3	5	7	9

St. John the Baptist: Part 2

Paragraph 1: Mary, Elizabeth, leaped for joy

Paragraph 2: desert, Jordan, preaching, camel's hair, locusts,

Honey, skinny, weird, speaker, repentance, baptized, Jordan

Paragraph 3: sinless, baptize, beloved Son, Andrew, Simon Peter

Paragraph 4: Jesus, Herod

[illegible]

Spotlight on Ministry

SPOTLIGHT ON MARIA STEWART

What does my faith mean to me?

My faith is what grounds me, keeps me sane in a sometimes strange and scary world. In *New Seeds of Contemplation*, Thomas Merton writes, "Our vocation is not simply to be, but to work together with God in the creation of our own life, our own identity, our own destiny....To work out our identity in God." For me, just trying to see God in everyone I meet helps me find my place in/with God and, hopefully, I pass a little of God's love on to the next person. For me, faith means action!

Ministry

I have always felt that I pray best when singing. I've been in music ministry for over 50 years in some way, shape or form, and have been blessed to witness what music can provide a community. During the readings at Mass, there will inevitably be a phrase or line which brings a musical piece into my head (Isaiah is good for that!), and then it's my earworm for the rest of the day! What makes music so important to my faith and why I've made it my primary ministry is that it's not passive – music requires action and understanding and emotion to be effective.

Please consider joining one of our ministries at St Agnes. There are so many ways to get involved and grow in your faith. Contact Helen Harris for more information at liturgy@stagnesshepherdstown.org.

JCCM Food Pantry Current Needs

Canned meats (especially chicken)
Mac and Cheese
Soup (tomato and hearty soups)
Canned Beans
Rice
Jelly
Syrup
Pancake Mix
Crackers
Coffee (Instant and Ground)
Canned fruit
Canned pasta
Cooking Oil
Razors
Shampoo
Conditioner
Paper towels
Dish Soap
Laundry Detergent
Cat and Dog Food

Homebound Ministry

For any parishioners who have needs (groceries, rides to doctors or pharmacies, etc,) our **HOMEBOUND MINISTRY** is willing to help. Please call Claire Williamson (304-876-1357), or Judy Lila (301-432-2276).

A Thank You to Our Youth

A couple of weeks before the start of Advent, an idea for bringing the light of Advent into the lives of shut-ins was sprung on our youth. There was no hesitation, and they just got right to it and got the job done.

Their gift to these folks was a simple advent wreath with battery operated votive candles that were painted the appropriate colors of purple and pink. It was important to provide something that would not be a fire hazard. Our Homebound ministers then distributed the wreaths.

This simple gift truly has brought so much joy to the recipients. The feedback, full of gratitude, has been amazing.

So, thank you to our kind, thoughtful youth! And special thanks to Bill Donahue who, in a Holy Spirit moment at an ecumenical gathering, learned of this idea and brought it to our youth and assisted them in making it a reality.

Glass Recycling

St Agnes is very fortunate to have a partnership with Jim King so that we can offer glass recycling to our parishioners. You will find the black recycling bin behind the parish center. It is helpful if you secure your glass in bags before placing in the bin.

Recycling of Plastic, Cans, and Paper

We have baskets for recycling of plastic, cans, and paper both at the church and the parish center. We encourage everyone to recycle all appropriate items! Please note that these items need to be clean and free of food. So, unfortunately, coffee cups, paper plates, and napkins cannot be recycled and must be thrown in the trash. But empty water bottles, aluminum cans, cardboard, paper, etc, can and should all be recycled! Thanks for helping us to lighten our footprint.

A Few Potholders Still Available

We have just a few potholders remaining from the Kolofata fundraiser if you are still looking for a meaningful last-minute gift. Please call or stop by the office!

International Migrant's Day

On 18 December 1990, the United Nations General Assembly adopted the international convention on the protection of the rights of migrant workers and members of their families (resolution 45/158).

This day is observed in many countries, intergovernmental and non-governmental organizations through the dissemination of information on human rights and fundamental political freedoms of migrants, and through sharing of experiences and the design of actions to ensure the protection of migrants.

<http://www.un.org/en/events/migrantsday/>

Laudato Si'

The St. Agnes website currently features an Advent calendar that is a visual representation of Parish Life at St. Agnes, our beliefs, and our journey to the celebration of Christ's birth. Each day on the calendar, you will discover what's happening at St. Agnes, people in the parish community, videos, and reflections.

For December 7th, the Advent calendar features a contribution from Brendan Jarrell, a member of the Laudato Si' Initiative, who helps us to rethink how we approach the consumer pressures of the holiday season. Brendan, also a member of the Pastoral Council, brings an informed perspective through his work as an engineer for *SkyTruth*, a conservation technology non-profit. Brendan offers several creative suggestions for practicing a sustainable approach to gift-giving. You can read his observations and recommendations here: www.bit.ly/sustainable-106.

Supporting Brendan's efforts is the work of the *Catholic Climate Covenant* that also advocates for a more environmentally conscious approach to observing Christmas. They offer additional suggestions including the use of L.E.D. lights that provide a 75% reduction in energy use and forgoing the \$12.7 billion Americans spend on gift wrapping each year by recycling paper products.

The *Catholic Climate Covenant* emphasizes four tenets for practicing a more mindful approach to the holiday season: "Worship fully, spend less, give more, and love all." They also recommend that using our faith to be more aware of how personal behavior affects the environment is something that should not end after December 25th. Our New Year's resolutions can offer a way to start 2024 on an environmentally friendly note.

You can learn more about the Catholic Climate Covenant here: <https://catholicclimatecovenant.org/>.



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Come to me, all who are
weary and are heavy laden,
and I will give you rest.
-Matthew 11:28



Parish Financial Activity

Collections – Last Week

Offertory Collections	\$15,249
Monthly Mortgage Assistance	\$1,555
Total (Offertory + Monthly Mortgage Assistance)	\$16,804
Weekly Target (Offertory + Monthly Mortgage Assistance)	\$11,900
Total Collections Compared to Target	↑ +\$4,904

Tithe to help those in need \$1,525
(St. Agnes tithes 10% of all offertory donations)

The Diocese of Wheeling-Charleston maintains an Office of Safe Environment in accordance with the USCCB's *Charter for the Protection of Children and Young People*. **To Report Suspected Cases of Sexual Abuse of Children:** The Diocese of Wheeling-Charleston encourages reporting to civil authorities first and foremost if a crime has been committed. We also encourage utilizing www.reportbishopabuse.org to make a report about any bishop in the U.S. If you have reason to believe that a bishop has engaged in sexual misconduct, please contact civil authorities in the applicable jurisdiction and visit www.reportbishopabuse.org. **To Report to Civil Authorities:** Contact your local law enforcement; numbers will vary based on your location. If you believe someone is in immediate danger, call 911. To confidentially report any incidence of suspected child abuse or neglect, including sexual abuse, contact the West Virginia Bureau for Children and Families' Child Protective Services by calling the Child Abuse Hotline at 800.352.6513. **To Report to Diocesan Authorities:** In addition to civil authorities, the diocese encourages reporting to the appropriate church authorities. To report suspected cases of sexual abuse of children by personnel of the Diocese of Wheeling-Charleston to the Diocese, contact one of the following designees at 1.888.434.6237 or 304.233.0880: Mr. Bryan Minor, ext. 263; Mr. Tim Bishop, ext. 353; or Very Rev. Dennis Schuelkens, Jr., V.E., ext. 270. You may also call the Diocese's Office of Safe Environment at 304.230.1504. In addition to the methods listed above for reporting sexual abuse, the Diocese also has partnered with Navex Global to offer the **EthicsPoint** platform to report other, additional concerns, such as suspected financial, professional, and personal misconduct of a priest, deacon, religious, or lay employee of the Diocese or any Catholic parish or school in West Virginia. The EthicsPoint platform can be accessed via www.dwc.org, under "Accountability", then "Report Misconduct" or by calling 844.723.8381. EthicsPoint is a third-party reporting system that reports to civil authorities where applicable and Diocesan authorities, and the identity of the person reporting is protected.

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IRA Charitable Gifts

A gift through your IRA is a great way to support St Agnes. Here is some information on how you can maximize your giving in 2023:

IRA Qualified Charitable Distribution (QCD)

- Donors age 70½ or older may make a gift of any amount, up to \$100,000 per individual (\$200,000 for couples with individual IRA accounts), from your IRA without paying income tax on the donated amount.
- For donors who have a Required Minimum Distribution (RMD), making a gift directly from your IRA to St. Agnes can be counted toward satisfying your RMD for the year, as long as certain rules are met.
- In addition to the benefits of giving to charity, a QCD excludes the amount donated from taxable income, which is unlike regular withdrawals from an IRA. Keeping your taxable income lower may reduce the impact to certain tax credits and deductions, including Social Security and Medicare.
- QCDs don't require that you itemize, which due to the recent tax law changes, means you may decide to take advantage of the higher standard deduction, but still use a QCD for charitable giving.
- Funds should be transferred directly from the donor's financial institution to St. Agnes.

For additional information about giving from your IRA, please check the St Agnes website for [Giving via Stocks and IRA](#).

Thank you for supporting St Agnes!

This information is not intended as legal, accounting, or financial advice. Please consult with your tax, legal, and financial advisors to determine whether this or other gift plans are applicable to your tax and financial needs.

Together in Holiness Marriage Conference

*Married and engaged couples are invited to the 3rd annual **Together in Holiness** marriage conference, presented by the St John Paul II Foundation and the Diocese of Wheeling-Charleston, on **February 10, 2024 from 10:45 am - 6:00 pm at St. James Catholic Church in Charles Town, WV**. This 1-day conference will help you strengthen your relationship with your spouse and discover God's plan for your family. Registration: \$32/couple and \$5/child for on-site childcare. An Early Bird discount is available through December 11, 2023 as well as scholarships upon request. For more info, visit togetherinholiness.org/wheelingcharleston or email cameron@forlifeandfamily.org.*

St Joe's Seeks Pre-K Aide

St Joe's School is seeking a teacher's aide for a classroom of toddlers. Aides support teachers in planning and implementing daily programs. Job responsibilities include ensuring the daily care of every child by following all licensing guidelines and the school's standards of care. Aides also help maintain a fun and interactive environment that is clean and organized.

Job requirements include: Must be at least 21 years old and have a high school diploma, 2 years PK or elementary education experience preferred, ability to meet state licensing requirements, scheduling flexibility, certification in ACDS (Apprenticeship for Child Development Specialist) preferred. If interested, please send a résumé to Katie MacKinnon, PK director, at kmackinnon@sjsvw.org.

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