

Bridge Builders

News from and for New River Episcopal Ministry



Moving forward ... together

The NREM Retreat held Saturday, June 2, 2024 at St. Andrew's, found council members of the New River Episcopal Ministry in agreement that the four churches will remain in community and work together to define a mission that will encourage spirituality, unity, and service. The NREM Council and others who attended are grateful for Bishop Matthew's leadership and patience.

SPIRITUALITY

I am he
who will
sustain
you.

Isaiah 46:4

UNITY

All the
believers
were one
in heart
and mind.

Acts 4:32

SERVICE

Each of you
should use
whatever
gift you have
received to
serve others.

1 Peter 4:20



Church of the Good Shepherd

Rev. Bill Sigler

(304) 881-3640

bill.sigler1584@gmail.com

1203 Center St.

Hansford, WV 25103



Church of the Redeemer

(304) 658-4910

102 Taylor St.

Ansted, WV 25812



St. Andrew's

ray.londeree31@gmail.com

(304) 469-3223

345 Kelly Ave.

Oak Hill, WV 25901



Ascension

Rev. Nancy Martin

nancyofmadamscreek

@gmail.com

(304) 860-9446

222 W. 5th Ave.

Events & Outreach

Good Shepherd

Celebrating a Glorious Ordination

Good Shepherd Episcopal Church recently witnessed a momentous occasion with the ordination of Reverend Bill. The event saw an



overwhelming turnout of over 90 attendees, each contributing to a memorable day filled with love, compassion, and prayers. Reverend Bill remains

profoundly grateful for the heartfelt support he received throughout this journey.

Special thanks go to every member of the NREM community who played a part in making the ordination day a success. Your generosity in donating to the reception, sending gifts, and volunteering your time was invaluable. A special shout-out goes to Amy Berry for operating the live stream, ensuring those unable to attend in person could still participate in the joyous occasion.

Thinking "Outside" the Box

Good Shepherd is embarking on a journey of innovation and inclusivity with our new approach to ministry. The Vestry is actively seeking ideas from everyone in the parish, emphasizing that every idea, no matter how small, is worth considering. We aim to extend our reach beyond Hansford and Pratt, spreading our message of faith and community to Boomer, Belle, Marmet, and as far south as Mahan down Paint Creek.

One exciting new ministry in its infancy is the "Good Shepherd Book Club." The club plans to parallel read the book "Learning from London" with the Diocese and hopes to hold its first meeting in September.

Returning Eucharistic Visitors and Community Partnerships

We are pleased to announce that Eucharistic Visitors will resume their service by the end of August, ensuring that Communion reaches those unable to attend church in person. Good Shepherd continues to support the Standard Baptist Food Bank, which is currently in desperate need of canned soup and vegetables.

Our ongoing project with the Highland Education Project in McDowell County is progressing. We are assisting in creating a chapel for worship, donating altar ornaments and hangings from the closed Calvary Episcopal Church in Montgomery. We eagerly await the coordination of schedules to facilitate the transfer of the altar, pulpit, and lectern.

Celebrations

August birthdays: Jonathan Burch, Jinny Ivey, Megan Sigler, Linda Kincaid, Evelyn Recco.

Anniversary: Rick and Ashley Recco

September birthdays: Fred Ferrell, Connie Stone, Bill Recco, Dustin Holmes, David Boothe.

Anniversary: Rev. and Megan Sigler

October birthdays: Bill Gray, Sarah Ivey, Barbara Oliver, Amy Berry, Joan Holmes, Tim Walker

Gratitude and Future Endeavors

Good Shepherd remains deeply thankful for the community's unwavering support and looks forward to exploring new ministries and outreach opportunities. Together, we will continue to build bridges of faith and service, extending our mission far and wide.

Thank you for being a part of our journey. We look forward to the continued growth and success of our shared ministries.

Events & Outreach

Ascension

A Full House

What a blessing it was to see Ascension's sanctuary filled for our 150th anniversary event in June! Thanks to everyone in the NREM who helped make it a success.



Sister Nancy and Bishop Cowden baptized, confirmed, and/or received five of our congregants. We welcome Weston Hartwell, Kristina, Samantha, and Contessa Kellan, and Dwayne Myers into our church family.

Celebrations

Birthday blessings August 16 to Felisha Hartwell, September 27 to Samantha Kellan, September 29 to Cleo Mathews, and happy anniversary September 6 to Darrell and Nancy Martin!

Reading and Studying Together

Indaba, Ascension's book study group, meets each first and third Sunday at 7 pm. We are currently working our way through *Just This*, by Richard Rohr.

We recently began a Thursday night Bible study. Sister Nancy explains:

As Christians, our most direct knowledge of God comes from the Bible. In order to know God more closely, our knowledge of the Bible is

vitaly important.

Reading the Bible straight through can seem like a huge undertaking. An



easier way to do it is to read one book of the Bible from beginning to end. At Ascension in Hinton, we will be doing just that, starting with the Gospel of Mark – out loud and straight through. Mark is a great book to start with as it is the book that we focus on this year as our Sunday gospel readings. It's also the shortest gospel, it's to the point, and it centers around the cross.

Or consider the book of Jonah. You can read through that with your family at a restaurant before your order gets to the table! Or try the short book of James for some quick wisdom!

Mark can be read in a couple of hours, so it's not a big undertaking. Consider reading these books of life out loud with someone you care about. You will find amazing stories!

Redeemer

Outreach

Members of Church of the Redeemer will again be working at the Ansted Ministry Center on the first Thursdays of the month from 10 am to noon. Those dates are August 1, September 5, and October 3.

Festivals

Church of the Redeemer members enjoy meeting residents and visitors to the area at various local festivals. They will have a table or booth at these upcoming events:

August 29 - 31

Oak Leaf Festival, Oak Hill WV

September 13-15

Country Roads Festival, New Martinsville, WV

September 19-22

Gauley Fest, Summersville WV

October 19

Bridge Day, Fayetteville, WV

Events & Outreach

St. Andrew's

Fifth Sunday in September

St. Andrew's is looking forward to hosting Fifth Sunday on September 29. These multi-congregation gatherings have been valuable in solidifying relationships, exchanging ideas, and unifying our four churches under the umbrella of the New River Episcopal Ministry.

Celebrations

August: Kerry Guerini, Carrie

Bledsoe, Deborah Short & Ray Londeree

September: Melissa McCune, Maggie

Blanchard, Phillip DeAth, Melanie

Dragan, Rosy Corley, Nancy Shott

October: Benny Miller, Katherine Dyer, Bailey DeAth, Olivia Lambert

Missions and Outreach

For many years at St Andrew's our mission projects have been focused on the educational needs of our church youth. We have been working with the classroom teachers in several local schools where our youth attend. Their teachers have requested educational materials as well as supplies for their classrooms.

This year we are supporting a classroom at the elementary school in Fayetteville in which "Q" Guerini is a student, and a classroom at Oak Hill Middle School in which Lily Dyer is a student.

In addition to school supplies, we are collecting hygiene items for the Oak Hill Middle School "Health Closet." We will continue to restock these items for the classrooms as needed throughout the school year.

Highland Education Project

Kathy Rutledge and Jane Crist, from Redeemer, will participate in the Clergy Spouse

Mission Project to provide much-needed school supplies for the Highland Education Project.

Thanksgiving Meals

In October the St Andrew's family will begin working on preparations for the Thanksgiving Meal on Thanksgiving Day in November that will feed several thousand hungry people in the NREM area.

Prayers, please

Kathy Rutledge will undergo total shoulder replacement surgery August 19. She would appreciate your prayers, and we all wish her a complete and speedy recovery.

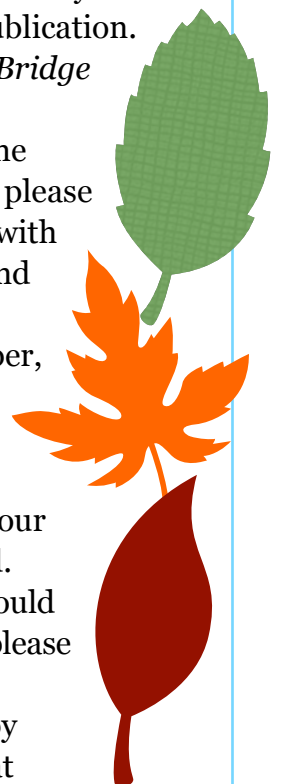
A Note from Your Editor

The holiday season seems like a long time from now, but Advent is just 122 days from the date of this newsletter's publication. Deadline for the next issue of *Bridge Builders* is **October 25**.

With a digital publication, the number of pages isn't limited; please feel free to send photos along with your stories and other event and outreach information for the months of November, December, and January. Consider sharing how a particular event came about, or what a special celebration means to your congregation or neighborhood.

If you know of others who would enjoy reading our newsletter, please feel free to forward it to them.

Forward your information by October 25 to Debbi McNeer at djmcneer@gmail.com.



Cultivating Connection: How Effective Branding Can Transform Your Church

By Juliette Acker, Episcopal Church Foundation

When you think of Coca-Cola, Nike, or McDonald's, what images, emotions, and even tastes come to mind? Perhaps it's the unmistakable shape of a Coke bottle, the iconic "Just Do It" slogan from Nike, or the silhouette of the golden arches. These companies have mastered the art of branding, transforming their logos and names into memorable symbols of their products and values.

But branding isn't just for corporations. It's equally important for institutions with deeper, more personal missions—like churches. Faith communities are vying for attention and relevance in the lives of their congregants and their broader communities, and understanding and honing your church's brand is key. Just as a strong brand can evoke trust and loyalty among consumers, a well-defined and communicated church brand can foster a deeper connection with current members, attract new ones, and extend your reach and impact within your community.

So, what do you imagine your parishioners and community think or say about your church? Would they talk about the warmth and welcoming spirit of your congregation? Your uplifting worship services? Perhaps your church's rich historical legacy would come up? Maybe you are known for the impact of your missional work and endowment. Or, it could be that people are not as familiar with your church as you'd like.

These questions are at the heart of why branding is crucial for churches. Just as with

Coca-Cola, Nike, or McDonald's, your church's brand tells a story, evokes emotions, sets expectations, and communicates the values of your church to the community.

Why is Brand Building Important for Churches?

Before diving into the "how," let's understand the "why." For faith-based organizations, branding transcends logos and taglines; it's about forging a connection that encourages engagement and reflects shared values. Brand building is essential for several reasons:

1. *More Engaged Congregations:* A clear brand fosters a sense of identity and belonging that helps members feel a part of something larger than themselves, increasing their involvement and dedication. For example, a church known for its vibrant youth programs might attract young families and see higher attendance at events and services.
2. *Greater Connections with the Community:* Effective branding communicates your church's values and draws in people who share those ideals, extending the church's reach and impact. For instance, churches that position themselves as community centers often host significant local events, attracting non-members who can later become part of the church community.

Continued on next page

3. *Opportunities for Missional Work:* A well-established brand can attract resources, volunteers, and partnerships, strengthening the church's ability to serve and make a difference. A church known for its active role in social justice can more easily get support for mission projects such as a food drive or educational program.
4. *Church Growth and Giving:* A strong brand can be a significant factor in an individual's decision to join or financially support a church, which can lead to growth in both attendance and resources. For example, churches that communicate the impact of donors' gifts often experience higher levels of giving.

5. *Enhanced Church Endowment:* The cumulative effect of branding on engagement, community connection, mission opportunities, and financial growth contributes to a stronger endowment, ensuring the church's longevity and impact. A well-branded church can increase its donations for not only current projects but also for future initiatives.

Branding is more than just a tool for businesses; it's a crucial strategy for churches aiming to deepen their impact and extend their reach. By strategically enhancing your church's branding, we can ensure it plays a pivotal role in the lives of our members and the broader community.



Rack Cards have been delivered

Each of our four churches now has a generous supply of rack cards, welcoming the many New River Gorge National Park visitors and encouraging them to add a worship service to their weekend activities.

Rev. Bill Sigler posed with Sister Nancy Martin's granddaughter Ashley to illustrate that "Sunday best" can mean t-shirts, shorts, and sneakers.

Designed by Debbi McNeer of Ascension in Hinton, the Diocese generously paid for the printing. The rack card project and this newsletter are direct results of our meeting in June with Bishop Cowden. Communicating effectively is a key element in nurturing the NREM.