

# SACRED SPACE

A Publication of Shallowford Presbyterian Church | Winter 2023



## YOU BELONG

FINDING YOUR HOME AT SHALLOWFORD



## A Message from the Senior Pastor

# GREETINGS FROM SHALLOWFORD

Rev. Anna George Traynham | atraynham@shallowford.org

One of my favorite things about our annual *Sacred Space* Magazine is that we never know where it will wind up. These glossy pages make their way into the hands of long-time members of Shallowford, brand-new visitors, and everyone in between.

You might have picked up a copy on a Sunday morning to flip through the pages until the music begins. Maybe you grabbed one while touring Shallowford Presbyterian School or when picking up your child from one of our youth or children's programs. You might be reading these words in our office lobby as you await a support group meeting, a music lesson, or an appointment with a pastor. You might even be reading this in your own home after curiosity compelled you to take home a copy of this magazine.

Whoever you are and wherever you are, there is something for you within these pages and the ever-widening circle of this community of faith. We are glad you are here!

In the pages that follow, you will get a "behind the scenes" look at God's ministries at Shallowford

and the people who make them happen. You will read reflections on some of the past year's highlights, and you will be invited to get a taste of mission and life at Shallowford in the months to come.

Join us at Shallowford as we seek to live out that love together. You can find us in the sanctuary every Sunday at 11:00 a.m., and you can read about many, many more ways to practice your faith in community with us at [shallowford.org](http://shallowford.org).

Whoever you are and wherever you are, dear reader, this *publication* is for you. This *community* is for you. This *grace* is for you. This *good news* is for you: God loves you, no matter what.

Peace,

*Anna*

Pastor Anna



WINTER 2023

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### \*ON THE COVER

Judah (15), son of Anne and Michael Thomas and a dedicated Chapel Choir singer and youth group participant, faithfully submitted an annual pledge to the church. By sharing his God-given gifts with this family of faith, Judah is helping others to experience the life-changing good news of God's grace shared in community in 2024. \*Cover photo taken by Shallowford member Richard Phillips.

## CONNECT WITH THE CLERGY



**Rev. Bradley Kibler**  
Associate Pastor for  
Congregational Vitality  
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**Rev. Landon Dillard**  
Associate Pastor for  
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# Q & A:

## GETTING TO KNOW THE 2026 CLASS OF ELDERS

What do a dentist, two teachers, a research librarian, two business owners, a wealth advisor, a retiree, and high school senior have in common? At first glance, not much. However, they do share membership at Shallowford and have recently been elected as elders. In part, it is because of those differences in experience and abilities as well as their differences in age, gender, careers, and interests, that they were nominated and elected to the Shallowford Session, our church's governing body. They will serve as the class of 2026.

The session is the governing board of the congregation in each Presbyterian church and is composed of persons elected by the congregation to serve as ruling elders or leaders. The pastor serves as moderator. The session is charged with governing and nurturing the congregation through membership, programming, stewardship, property management, mission, and more. Each year our congregation elects eight new adults and one high school student to replace one-third of the elders on the 25-member Shallowford session. The high school student serves a one-year term.

Session meetings occur monthly, but each elder is also assigned to serve and often chair one of the 12 active committees that conduct the work of our church. Who are these newest leaders who have agreed to share their time, effort, and talents as they provide vision and direction for Shallowford?

Let's find out!

Business Owner



Pamela Blass  
member since 2004

**Q: What brought you to Shallowford?**

**A:** After an area church search twenty-one years ago, I was drawn to SPC because of the mission work of the church. As my grandmother used to say, "We are not put on this earth to see through one another, but to see one another through."

**PAMELA'S FAVORITES:**

- **BOOK:** *The Color of Water* by James McBride
- **HOBBY:** Tennis & Gardening
- **DREAM JOB:** Animal Rescue in Africa

Special Education Para.



Kay Bryant  
Joined in 2016

**Q: What ministries of the church interest you?**

**A:** I'm chair of the Welcoming Committee and a Sunday greeter! Brad and I host the youth for dinner one Sunday a month. I am also on the Programs Committee and in the Forum SS class.

**KAY'S FAVORITES:**

- **FOOD:** Anything Italian
- **MOVIE:** *The Natural*
- **HOBBY:** Reading, Traveling & Walking
- **DREAM JOB:** Something to do with travel!



JIM CRAWFORD  
Date Joined: 2022

Retiree:  
Ask me what I did!

**Q: What does 'Faith' mean to you?**

**A:** I look more to what faith "does" than what it "means." At best, faith can lead me to be kinder and more forgiving than I'd otherwise be. It asks me to learn more, reflect on what's unknowable and remain open to change.

**JIM'S FAVORITES:**

- **FOOD:** Other than sushi, I'm omnivorous
- **MOVIE:** *Lincoln* and *One Day in the Life of Ivan Denisovich*
- **HOBBY:** Yard work or tinkering with my model railroad

Wealth Advisor



Mike Johnson  
member since 1982

**Q: Why Shallowford?**

**A:** My wife brought me to Shallowford when we were married over forty years ago by Tom Are (former senior pastor).

**MIKE'S FAVORITES:**

- **FOOD:** Maine Lobster
- **MOVIE:** *To Kill A Mockingbird*
- **DREAM JOB:** Professional Athlete

Research Librarian



Lizzie Jury  
Joined in 2011

**LIZZIE'S FAVORITES:**

- **MOVIE:** *The Royal Tenenbaums*
- **DREAM JOB:** Back-up Singer (and, I can't sing)
- **FOOD:** Green Burrito from Elmyr

**Q: Why serve as an Elder?**

**A:** My family has attended for several years and I felt it was time to give back my time and energy as we have received so much from SPC.

**Q: Which one of Shallowford's worship services brings you the most joy?**

**A:** The Christmas Eve Candlelight Service! Even though I didn't grow up going to this kind of worship experience, it has grown into a beloved tradition in our family.

**KATE'S FAVORITES:**

- **FOOD:** Ice Cream
- **HOBBY:** Time spent with family & traveling
- **MOVIE:** *Young Frankenstein*
- **DREAM JOB:** Architectural Historian



Kate Robinson  
Joined in 2001

Retired Dentist

Youth Elder



Tucker Phillips  
confirmed in 2020

**Q: What do you hope to accomplish during your 1-year term?**

**A:** I hope to actively create, nourish, and grow a welcoming faith community for new and current members of our SPC family and the greater community. I am also committed to helping every one of our youth know they are loved and to help them grow spiritually.

**TUCKER'S FAVORITES:**

- **DREAM JOB:** Physical Therapist or a NFL Trainer
- **HOBBY:** Traveling the World
- **FOOD:** Hibachi

**Q: Name one SPC memory you'll never forget!**

**A:** Being able to see and hear my daughter Lillian read her statement of faith at her confirmation two years ago. It is such a joy to hear and see our remarkable young people share their talents and creativity.

**CARTER'S FAVORITES:**

- **MOVIE:** *LOCAL HERO*
- **HOBBY:** Attending Atlanta United Games
- **DREAM JOB:** Major League Baseball General Manager

High School Social Studies Teacher



CARTER ROBB  
Date Joined: 2021

## BEHIND THE SCENES

### Representative Nominating Committee (RNC)

The RNC nominates members to serve in leadership positions, including the elders you just read about. As needed, the RNC also receives nominations for Pastor, Associate Pastor, or Interim Pastor Nominating Committees. This group may nominate members to augment or replace existing committee members.

# Children, Youth, and Adult Happenings (contd. on p.8)

At Shallowford we offer a variety of opportunities for men, women, and children of all ages to connect and engage in the life of the church.

A gaggle of Nesters excited after carving pumpkins. Pastor Landon, Maggie (7), and Annie (7) singing in worship. Lily (6) shows off her Jurassic Park-themed trunk.



## THE NEST SMALL GROUP

Once a month, families with young children ranging from newborn to elementary age gather to discuss the ways that parenthood, marriage, careers, and other aspects of their busy life stages fit under the umbrella of faith. Members of this group prepare for each meeting by listening to podcasts, reading articles, or inviting a speaker to lead discussions on certain topics. Childcare is provided during meetings to give the opportunity for children to play as parents spend time in fellowship together. After each discussion, families reunite to share a meal.

Nest member Sara Simonds says, "I love that the Nest has grown and changed with our growing families – we have been meeting since 2015, and we have added new babies and new members every year since. It's a fun time for our kids to get together while we get to explore our faith and connect with other Shallowford members." To learn more about this thriving ministry, contact Landon.



## CHILDREN'S SUNDAY

*...and a little child shall lead them.*  
- Isaiah 11:6

Jesus loves the little children, and so do we! On November 12th, Shallowford's youngest members once again rose to the challenge of leading worship in our Annual Children's Sunday Service.

To get some insight on preparation and purpose, we spoke with Anne Thomas, Director of Children's Choirs:

**Q: Anne, can you tell us a little about how you prepare for this service?**

*A: Learning a piece of music can take up to eight weeks. The Westminster Choir generally learns all the pieces, and the Trinity and Cherub Choirs each learn sections of each piece. Then we combine for the full hurrah!*

**Q: Why is this such a meaningful tradition at Shallowford?**

*A: Children are excellent leaders when given the opportunity. Each has a unique relationship with our Lord. It is a joy to see their perspectives.*

**Q: What do you hope members take away from Children's Sunday?**

*A: Joy and hope for the future.*



## TRUNK-OR-TREAT

This year's Trunk-or-Treat event at Shallowford was a huge success, welcoming families from all across the Atlanta community. Children were thrilled to see the parking lot filled with cars that had trunks decorated in themes ranging from Jurassic Park to Barbie.

As they went trick-or-treating around the lot, children collected candy, stickers and other Halloween-themed goodies. They also played games and won prizes. Shallowford member Lyle Collins says, "Trunk-or-Treat is an event that we participate in as a whole family. Hannah and I enjoy coming up with new themes each year, and our kids get to dress up and get candy. The best part is seeing the kids' faces light up when they recognize our decorations."

Trunk-or-Treat is a great way to welcome the community to Shallowford's campus. Similarly, the annual Easter Egg Hung (March 30, 2024) brings new and old faces to campus for fellowship.

Youth playing a life-sized game of Hungry Hungry Hippos. Chapel Choir performing at St. John the Divine. Middle schoolers take a photo before conquering the zip line!



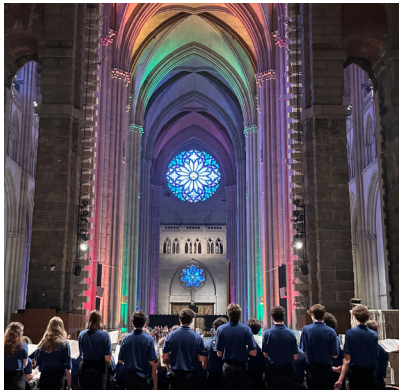
## YOUTH FELLOWSHIP

It's not every Sunday that Shallowford youth have the opportunity to come together to exercise their competitive nature in a way that involves their bodies, minds and loud voices. But on one particular Sunday, this group of 6th through 12th grade students divided into teams to play life-sized board games.

"The middle school girls dominated at Hungry Hungry Hippos. They had the best strategy by far and were also laughing the most! It was silly and joy-filled. Exactly what we like at youth fellowship," shared Maggie Johnson, Youth Director.

Other life-sized games played included Tic Tac Toe and Connect 4, but Hungry Hungry Hippos was the clear favorite. Even Pastor Anna got in on the fun. She shares, "It's always great to see our youth work together. The whole evening was hilarious!"

This youth fellowship experience ended no differently than the rest — time for reflection and prayer.



## 2023 CHAPEL CHOIR TOUR

"PIVOT!" could've been the theme of the Chapel Choir tour to New York as poor air quality rolled over the city and shifted three days of agenda into a moment-by-moment chance to imagine a new trip.

Highlights of the tour included the Museum of Ice Cream where the youth spent an hour pit diving in giant pools of plastic sprinkles, as well as fun tourist activities like Central Park, Radio City Music Hall, Top of the Rock, Aladdin on Broadway, the Staten Island Ferry, Coney Island, and the American Museum of Natural History.

As they neared the end of the tour, the Choir was finally able to sing! Congregations at Madison Avenue Presbyterian and Good Shephard Lutheran in Brooklyn loved the chance to hear our choir. At the Cathedral of St. John the Divine, groups of school children gathered around in awe at the sound of the choir echoing through the building.

The 2023 Chapel Choir did what "Shally" does best, have fun, build community, and share beautiful music, one pivot at a time.



## MIDDLE SCHOOL RETREAT

It was a perfect fall weekend in November when a group of Shallowford's 6th through 8th graders set off to the North Georgia Mountains for the annual Middle School Retreat. The goal for the weekend was simple — get away from the city, share meals together, study scripture, and experience God in a new place, in a new way.

This year, the group had a particularly special experience learning, growing, and building friendships alongside other middle schoolers from First Presbytertian Church of Atlanta's youth ministry. With help from one another, they conquered ropes courses and half-mile long zip lines, bonded around bonfires, played field games, and dove deep into scripture and nightly Bible study.

Through the pages of their Bibles, these middle schoolers learned about Creation — as individual creations of God, and the beauty of the natural Creation all around.

CONNECT

Children's Ministry | Rev. Landon Dillard, ldillard@shallowford.org  
Children's Choirs | Anne Thomas, athomas@shallowford.org

Youth Ministry | Maggie Johnson, mjohnson@shallowford.org

CONNECT

Shallowford women in Montreat, North Carolina.



## WOMEN'S CONNECTION RETREAT

On a warm weekend in August, women from all walks of life gathered at Montreat Conference Center in North Carolina for a time of fellowship and spiritual enrichment. The Women's Connection Conference was an opportunity for 25 Shallowford women to make space in their busy lives to pause, reflect, and share their stories with new and old friends.

The theme of the weekend, "Seen," brought more than 1,000 women together to reflect on the ways God looks beneath the surface to see our true selves and love us *no matter what*.

Shallowford member Katie Kilch says, "The retreat was a wonderful opportunity to connect without distractions to close friends at Shallowford, and make new connections with those not in my circle. The weekend had it all – Bible study, a great speaker, entertaining team building activities with lots of fun sprinkled throughout."

Shallowford's Programs Committee will host the next Women's Retreat in 2026.

Joy Chorale sang for Margaret McGarity and friends.



## JOY CHORALE

Shallowford's Joy Chorale is bringing their joy to retirement homes across the community. This daytime singing group creates space for people of all ages and backgrounds to come together and bond over their shared love of singing, without the level of commitment some of the larger choirs require. Director Lynn Rogers explains that recently, the choir has taken on a new mission: to share their music with as many retirement homes as possible.

"We started at my mother's community," Lynn explains, "Then one of our singers mentioned a parent who lived nearby so we went there, too." With each visit, singers felt the joy and meaning their songs brought the residents. They've even had a community request for them to return!

Lynn says, "When we go to these communities, rather than performing, we do sing-a-longs with songs that everyone knows, like 'Take Me Out to the Ballgame,' and what's amazing is that in a memory care setting, residents still recall the words to these familiar songs and love to sing with us."

If you'd like to join Joy Chorale, or request a community visit for a loved one, please reach out to Lynn.

Shallowford men after conquering their escape!



## SHALLOWFORD MEN'S OUTING

Getting locked inside King Tut's tomb or Al Capone's speakeasy was probably not on anyone's 2023 bingo cards, but last August, that's exactly what happened to our Shallowford men's group. Men of all ages went on an exciting outing to an Escape Room, where they were divided into teams and given 60 minutes to decode messages, find hidden objects, and solve logic puzzles to help them escape.

After everyone exited their rooms, either by solving the puzzle or by being forced to admit defeat, the group grabbed dinner and shared their experiences. Shallowford member Trent Vigar says, "It was a great opportunity to talk with and learn more about the men at Shallowford that I may not get a chance to see on Sundays. Our group didn't solve the room, but it was a great time with good people. Can't wait to see what's next."

Throughout the year, Shallowford men come together for fun, faith, and fellowship. In 2023 Shallowford men bonded through projects, bowling, cook outs, and an escape room. Join us for our next adventure!



## sex, puberty, & healthy relationships

Submitted by Steve & Sorrell Poelzer

**We'll start by saying what LeAnn Gardner said to open our parent retreat, "I'm going to make you squirm a little bit!"**

The idea for this retreat was generated by discussions through the Faithful Parenting Sunday school class. We all felt the need for guidance on how to approach and tackle the topic of sex with our young children. In our minds it was way down the line when they are much older. After much reflection, we came to the conclusion that we wanted to be armed with the information and knowledge so we were prepared whenever that time came. Thankfully, Shallowford's pastors responded by bringing in a well-educated professional, licensed therapist, ordained minister, wife, and mother with ALL the answers — LeAnn Gardner!

At the beginning of the retreat, we were asked our reasons for attending and what we hoped to learn during our time together. Generally, we all felt ill equipped to talk to our children about sex, perhaps because our parents never talked about it or because school health classes were awkward and impersonal. For others, sex may have been shamed through religious teachings. Whatever the reason, we all had one thing in common: talking about sex with our children was daunting.

By the end of the retreat, we walked away with a broad understanding of how to teach our children about their bodies, about consent, about what God designed our bodies for and how all this translates as they grow. LeAnn shared the analogy of scaffolding...you start

with the first level (a subject). Then, you continue to discuss the same subject as your children grow and build on that information with new content as it applies to their developmental stages.

One of our biggest takeaways from LeAnn was the realization that our children deserve to have a better understanding of the bodies that God gave them. As a whole, we focus on our children's essential needs, their health, academics, athletics, arts, spirituality, and faith, but when it comes to sex education, we're not teaching them more about the one thing they will live

*in their entire lives...their bodies. We can and should teach them how to protect and respect their bodies and those of others.*

We learned that we can normalize conversations like these so caretakers and children do not approach this subject matter as an embarrassing secret. It can be more of an open conversation that allows our children to feel comfortable discussing with anyone in their safe circles sex, consent, and their own bodies.

We are now armed with in-depth information and great book recommendations to help with those

"squirmy" conversations. LeAnn encouraged us to start talking to our children about sex and their bodies NOW — it's never too early (or too late) to start building that scaffolding. We are so thankful to have received this opportunity through Shallowford, and look forward to continuing to nurture this portion of our families learning journey at the retreat for children and youth in January.



LeAnn Gardner, LISW-CP  
Counseling and Training Expert

# CONNECT

**Program Ministry** | Rev. Landon Dillard, ldillard@shallowford.org  
**Joy Chorale** | Lynn Rogers, dlcjrogers@gmail.com

**Save-the-Date — January 20-21, 2024**

Join us for a follow up retreat to create a safe space **for children and youth** to have important conversations about sex, relationships, and their bodies.



## ... You Belong to God ...

Submitted by Robert Schoonover, Stewardship Committee

*You know what? What?  
God loves you, and God loves me.*

Anyone who visits our church hears these words during the Time with Young Disciples at 11:00 a.m. worship. In my two-ish years of attending Shallowford, these words continue to live in my brain week after week. Like the Taylor Swift songs my wife plays in the car, I find myself repeating them in my head as I move through my daily rhythms.

I think they swirl in my brain because this saying captures the two biggest reasons why I come to church. The first is that the message of God's love is never something we need to "move on" from. It is a truth we need to be reminded of daily. Amid the world's chaotic gospel of love earned, it is so important to hear God's word of love given. The second reason is because it also reminds me that God's love isn't just for me but for everyone. *God loves you, and God loves me.* God loves the person next to me, the person who is not here, and even the people who I find hard to love. Because of this truth of God's love, it means that we **belong**. We belong to God, and because we belong to God we belong to each other.

Coincidentally, the stewardship theme this year is, "You Belong." If you've been around Shallowford in the last few months, you've likely seen images of prayer shawls or woven ribbons. You've also heard personal testimonies from families about their own understanding of belonging – here at Shallowford and out in their own lives. You probably have your own story of belonging, too. Maybe your story of belonging happened in a community book club, or maybe it was a neighborhood tennis team. I hope that

you have felt the unique kind of belonging that faith communities like Shallowford can provide.

Our sense of belonging is not simply for us. I don't go to church to merely strengthen my own connection with God, I also go so that others can feel God's presence as well. To say, "You Belong" is to look to those around me and remind them of that truth. When we can live into belonging, we begin to realize that we hold our possessions and our things more loosely. We begin to see the value in giving back.

One part of giving back is the giving of our finances. Each October members of our church collectively come together to make the ministry of Shallowford happen. These collective offerings go straight to work to fund the ministry of Shallowford Presbyterian. It is through these programs, worship services, conferences/retreats, missions, and social events that you and I receive tangible reminders that we all belong. Practically speaking, making a pledge enables the church to effectively implement the plan that God has called us to do. Twenty-twenty four is shaping up to be a big year in the life of Shallowford; we're expecting to welcome a new Associate Pastor for Mission and Youth, as well as a new Director of Music Ministries. Additionally, Shallowford's Food Pantry has seen massive growth in the past year. If you are able, and choose to give, your contributions will go directly to making our church dreams become a reality.

As a millennial who grew up in the shadow of the recession, nobody taught me about the act of giving. Sure, I



Bob & Bette Chambless share what it means to "belong" at Shallowford as longtime members.



Pastor Anna preaching from the pulpit.

Hand-woven tablecloth crafted by Laura Bishop.



donated to food banks and disaster relief as needs arose – but I never planned to give. I budgeted for groceries, gas, and rent, but never did I include giving within that monthly budget. That all changed when I started attending church, and a pastor was bold enough to hand me a pledge card. This pledge card caused me to reflect. I realized that so much of the money I spent (aka the things I valued) was tied into things for me. It was a wake-up call. That pastor wasn't just inviting me to give to my church, but also inviting me into deeper discipleship.

Every Sunday after worship, I stop by a coffee shop before heading home to watch my beloved Atlanta Falcons. With each purchase, the barista flips a white tablet around to display three amounts: 10%, 15%, or 20%. It is without fail that I feel a moral judgment, no matter which option I choose. I feel bad if I don't provide a large enough gratuity, or I feel financially irresponsible if I choose too much. Maybe giving our tithes and offerings to a church can feel that way, too, like we're being watched for how much we give, and that there is some magic amount that God deems worthy. But what if we began with gratitude instead of obligation?

*You know what? What? God loves you, and God loves me.* I'm grateful each time I hear those words. Because each time I hear that, I'm reminded of my belonging – to God, to my community, and to Shallowford. My prayer is that you feel that sense of belonging as well. My hope is that as we abide in belonging we may begin to see the finitude of the things around us and instead focus on those things which are eternal and unseen (2 Corinthians 4:18).

The testimonies shared in worship have painted a picture of what real generosity can look like. Just like you have your own story of belonging, I'm sure you have your own story of generosity. That one can work both ways – you've been on the receiving end of something beautiful, and God has also used you to be the giver of something beautiful to someone else. Our lives, no matter what you may think, are full of generosity.

If you're like me and you're in a position to make a gift to Shallowford – I ask that you prayerfully consider making a pledge. Not out of obligation, but out of gratitude for all that God has done and is doing in our church and community. Grace and peace.

### BEHIND THE SCENES

*The beautifully handwoven cloth (displayed on the communion table) and hanging paraments were inspired by the 2023 stewardship logo, and handcrafted by member Laura Bishop. "The colorful strips with names and belongings are woven together as we are God's people. Note that the edges and the sides are not finished; although we are woven together, we are not finished, or the same," explains Laura. We give thanks to Laura for the many ways she shares her gifts with Shallowford!*

[shallowford.org/give](https://shallowford.org/give)



## Staff Roles & Ongoing Searches

**Current Pastor Staffing** – As Shallowford searches for an Associate Pastor for Mission & Youth, **Pastor Anna** continues support for the ministry of Mission, while **Rev. Bradley Kibler** collaborates with Shallowford Men and leads member care. **Rev. Landon Dillard**'s role now includes support for Adult Education, Shallowford Presbyterian Women, and small groups. We are grateful to the wonderful lay leaders in each of these ministry as we work together to build on our strong legacy of mission and adult discipleship!

**Music Leadership** – The search for a full-time Director of Music Ministries continues thanks to Shallowford's Search Committee. Meanwhile, existing music staff and dedicated volunteers, continue to step up in impactful ways. **Jinhee Kim** (*organist & associate director of music*) occasionally conducts during worship; **Anne Thomas** (*director of children's choirs*) stepped into an interim chapel choir director role and managed the 2023 Evergreen Sale; **Lynn Rogers** conducts weekly Joy Chorale rehearsals; and **Keren Barr** assists with Wednesday evening programming.

[shallowford.org/session](https://shallowford.org/session)

Annual

# State of the Church Address

To invite all people to a faithful way of life in Christ and in community.

## 2024 Ministry Priorities

Each year Shallowford opens up the Great Hall and invites all congregants in for a churchwide luncheon and state of the church address. This year was no different, and members were treated to a tasty meal.

### Adult Discipleship

- Deepening Discipleship
- Lenten Series: "Foundations of Reformed Theology"

### Children & Programs

- Hands on Mission
- Kids' Nights Out
- All-Church Retreat

### Congregational Care

- Home Visits
- Home Communion & Prayer Shawl Ministry

### Music

- 2024 Chapel Choir Tour
- Director of Music

With joy and excitement over recent events, Shallowford pastors highlighted celebrations from the past year and cast a vision for the 2024 programming year ahead.

### Welcoming

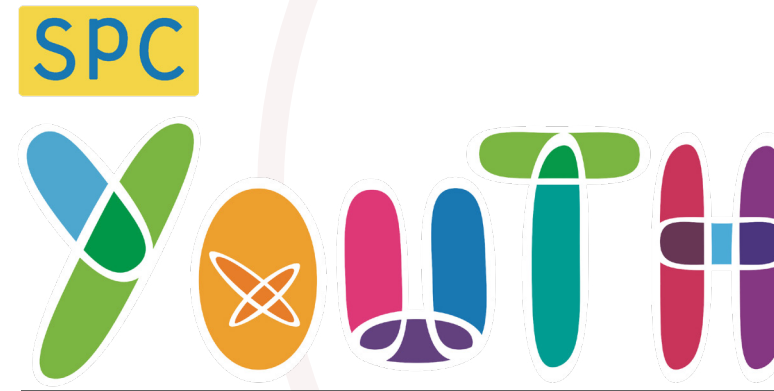
- Visitor Retention
- Connection Cards
- Churchwide Meals

### Youth

- Youth Leadership
- 2024 Mission Trip to US/Mexico Border

## BEHIND THE SCENES

*Anna made one ask of the members in attendance – "Take a strip of fabric and fill in the blank: "I/You belong...", "Belonging means...", or simply write your name. Each response was woven together to create the beautiful tablecloth (pictured on the cover).*



## SMALL GROUPS, BIG IMPACT

Navigating the teenage years in today's world is both exciting and challenging. Teens have access to more information and opportunities than ever before. They also experience many pressures in their lives, from the challenges of social media to what may feel like endless school responsibilities.

For the past few years, Shallowford's youth small groups have been meeting with their group leaders in members' homes on a monthly basis to discuss aspects of their lives and how they fit within the framework of their faith. These groups provide a relaxed setting in which fruitful conversations can take place and faithful community can grow.

Offering these small group opportunities requires a number of dedicated volunteers to offer up their homes and to help lead thoughtful discussion. This is all managed under the thoughtful leadership of Youth Director, Maggie Johnson. Small group leaders plan lessons, lead discussions, participate in team building activities, and communicate with their group throughout the month. Hosts volunteer space in their homes for groups to meet and provide dinner for all.

Asked to reflect on their decision to host, Karen and Bobby Shackleford said, "We choose to host the youth boys because it gives us a chance to give back. We want to provide a safe space for them to be together, to grow, and to learn from one another and from their small group leaders. It feels good to do for these kids what others before us have done for our children."



Small group leader Andrew Galbraith says, "In these groups, the youth get to examine their faith together with the guidance of an adult that can shepherd them through tough or vulnerable conversations. Though they are likely already receiving great guidance from their parents, meeting in a group with another trusted adult can help these teens feel comfortable sharing honestly about what is going on in their lives."

If you'd like to help make these small group offerings a meaningful part of our youth's faith community, please consider:

- Writing a letter to the hosts and leaders of these small groups to thank them for their hospitality and for their commitment to our youth.
- Praying that God will continue to bless and use these groups to provide a sense of community and belonging to our youth, and that this time together would help nurture their faith.

If you would like to write a letter or get involved, contact Maggie Johnson ([mjohnson@shallowford.org](mailto:mjohnson@shallowford.org)).

## BEHIND THE SCENES

*It takes a village to raise our children. The same can be said about creating space for important life conversations with youth. This village consists of **12 small group leaders, 6 in-home hosts, 50+ youth, support from every youth parent, and a fabulous staff director!***

MINISTRY SPOTLIGHT

# Connecting at Shallowford

**"Find something that appeals to you and 'get at it'. Find people who like doing the same things as you and get to know each other so that there's more than just sitting next to someone in a pew."**

- Betsy Smith

Becoming "connected" at Shallowford requires more than just showing up for the Sunday morning service, shaking a few hands, and then going home. To be fully engaged and to experience the relationships and love that Shallowford has to offer will require you getting involved and maybe getting outside of your comfort zone.

Here are four stories of Shallowford members who found ways to connect. Let them inspire you to stay open, keep trying, and find your place. Join the choir, go on a retreat, join a small group, or volunteer your time. You will be rewarded with friendships and opportunities to grow and serve others. If you're not sure where to start, check out the Mission Menu of Service on page 16.

## Connecting through Relationship

**Lindsey Thames** has been a member of Shallowford all her life. She was baptized at Shallowford and grew up in the church. "I saw the friendships that my parents had at the church. These were the people who helped



Lindsey Thames and her three children, (L to R) Graham, Jake, and Celia at the 2023 Winship 5k.

raise me." When she eventually had kids of her own, she knew that she wanted what her parents had: a community of people that supported each other. And she knew she would find that at Shallowford.

Lindsey's husband Mike passed away from leukemia in March of 2020. "The people of Shallowford took care of us when Mike was sick," she said. "This community held us. They gave us prayer shawls, they brought us meals. This church has taken care of us through our good times and our bad times." She credits small groups and retreats as ways that she has deepened these relationships. The small groups that she's been a part of, some intergen-

erational, helped her connect on a deeper level with people at different stages of life. Retreats have also helped her reconnect with people at Shallowford, including the most recent women's retreat. She's thankful for these opportunities to connect and also for the children and youth group activities for her children, Jake (13), Celia (10), and Graham (7). "You can be yourself at Shallowford. We can show up at early church with the kids half-dressed and nobody cares. We feel at home and we feel the love."

## Connecting through Service

**Betsy and Bridges Smith**, members since 1974, have found many ways to connect with others at Shallowford through singing in the choir, teaching Sunday School classes, building for Habitat, and going on mission trips. Betsy is one of the organizers of "Take them a Meal", a meal delivery program at Shallowford. Betsy and a team of volunteers cook and deliver home cooked meals to people going through a challenging time. Betsy especially



Betsy Smith came to Shallowford in 1974 with her husband Bridges, and two children.

enjoys delivering meals to families with a new baby. "It's a great way for me, as an older person, to meet some of the younger families at church. When I see them at church, I always feel a connection with their family."

Betsy's advice to people who are looking to connect at Shallowford is to find something that you like to do and pour yourself into it. "Anything that allows you to help people. It shouldn't be a burden," she says. "You should enjoy it and find that your life is richer for doing it. If not, try something else."

## Connecting through Youth & Mission Trips

**Heidi Gleason**, her son Gardner (12), and her daughter Savannah (11) joined Shallowford in March of 2023. When deciding on a church, Heidi knew they were looking for a church with a strong youth program where Gardner and Savannah could get involved. "I have always heard the youth program at Shallowford is awesome," said Heidi. "And it is."

Since joining, Gardner and Savannah have appreciated the "fun factor" of the youth activities and especially enjoy the small groups. "It's so nice not to have to twist their arm to go to youth activities."

Heidi and Gardner are particularly excited about the upcoming youth mission trip. Heidi is going as a chaperone and is looking forward to experiencing this time with her son. "I think it will be a transformative experience, and I'm excited that we have this opportunity and time together," said Heidi. This year's summer mission trip is going to the US/Mexico border to serve people affected by challenges at the border. "The border is complex. Being on the ground will be the best way to gain a better understanding of its complexities."



Heidi Gleason, and her two children, joined March 2023 and have loved being here since.

Heidi also looks forward to the mission trip as a way to deepen relationships with other SPC families.

### BEHIND THE SCENES

What do Lindsey, Betsy, Heidi, and Peggy all have in common? Whether being raised in youth group or raising youth, all ties lead to SPC's Youth Ministry.



Peggy Hollandsworth joined in 2008 and enjoyed watching her grandsons participate as youth.

## Connecting through Online Ministry

**Peggy Hollandsworth** would prefer to be in the sanctuary every Sunday, but these days it's not always easy to get to church. She is 93 years young and lives in Parks Springs, a senior community in Stone Mountain. Her daughter and son-in-law, Laura and John Jernigan are long time members of SPC.

"I listen every Sunday online and I'm glad it's an option," says Peggy. Her favorite part of the service is the sermon. "My husband was a Presbyterian minister, so I'm more interested in the sermon than anything." She also enjoys the holiday performances.

Shallowford's online ministry is a valuable resource for many of our fellow members. Twenty-eight percent of church attendance on an average Sunday is online. Online services are just one way to connect with members who may be homebound. Shallowford also offers online support groups and gratefulness gatherings.

[shallowford.org/connect](https://shallowford.org/connect)

# MISSION MENU

**Hungry to make a difference and share God's love?**

Shallowford has curated a menu of opportunities for you to make your heart and the hearts of others feel very full. Select an appetizer, entree, or have a full course meal of service. *Bon appétit!*

## Appetizers

*Seasonal, low commitment opportunities*

**Presbyterian Disaster Assistance** ([pda.pcusa.org](http://pda.pcusa.org))

Monetary donations for families and communities impacted by natural disasters.

**NETWorks Annual Golf Tournament** (Spring)

Fundraiser inviting golfers, sponsors, volunteers, and donations for auction items.

**NETWorks Taste of Tucker** (October)

Annual food festival in Downtown Tucker. Volunteer or purchase food tickets to try local restaurants.

**Thornwell Turkey Banks** (November)

A children's fundraiser and teaching moment about giving back. Take home a paper Turkey and return it "stuffed" with loose change.

**NETWorks Good Neighbor Christmas Shop**

(December) Provide new or unopened Christmas gifts for local families.

**Shallowford Food Pantry Volunteer**

(ongoing) Pack grocery bags and welcome clients in need of food assistance.

**Decatur Cooperative Ministries** (ongoing)

In-kind donations to help families facing homelessness. For a list of current needs, visit [decaturcooperative-ministry.org](http://decaturcooperative-ministry.org).

## Desserts

*Member-led organizations and opportunities*

**Caitlin's Kids at Indian Creek Elementary**

(November/December) Sponsor a child from Indian Creek and purchase items from their holiday wishlist. This effort is led by member Pamela Blass ([pblass@comcast.net](mailto:pblass@comcast.net)).

## Entrées

*Greater time commitment*

**Shallowford Food Pantry Donations** (monthly)

Food and/or monetary contributions needed to keep pantry shelves stocked. To view monthly needs, visit [shallowford.org/food-pantry](http://shallowford.org/food-pantry).

**Habitat for Humanity, DeKalb Faith Build**

(Saturdays) Manual labor or volunteer to host or cater lunch for hardworking families.

**LaAmistad Afterschool Tutoring**

(Mon & Weds, 3:30-5pm) Provide homework help for children from Hawthorne Elementary. Support for the spring and/or fall semester.

**LaGonave Haiti Partners Annual Conference**

(July) Attend a two-day conference to support education for children and adults, and improve access to healthcare and nutrition.

**Back to School Supplies Drive** (July & August)

Donate new or unused school supplies for a number of mission partners.

## Shallowford Special

**Alternative Gift Market** (December)

Make a donation in honor of a friend or loved one to the mission partner of your choice! 100% of donations go to the mission partner.

**Share Love, That's All** ([sharelovethatsall.com](http://sharelovethatsall.com))

A non-profit organization led by member Lindsey Thames focused on "paying" Love forward to those who need it most.

**Bob Buechner Blood Drive** (December)

Annual ask for blood donations at the American Red Cross in memory of beloved member Bob Buechner.



## The Green Team

### Rethink, Reduce, Reuse, and Recycle

*Submitted by Jill Buechner*

**God calls us to be responsible stewards of creation and demonstrate love and wisdom in our relationship with the Earth.**

The Green Team seeks to cultivate the sacred spirit of stewardship and lead by example, promoting environmentally friendly ways of living and regularly reflecting on our actions so that they accurately reflect our reverence for God.

Opportunities abound when you look around. The Green Team sees recycling, reducing waste and reusing things as paths toward reverence. Simple and effective. We held a plant swap in April during Earth Month. We took a request for a water bottle filler and have saved over 300 plastics from landfills. We bought recycling cans to help you recycle. We are starting a "Grounds for the Ground" coffee campaign to begin composting our waste. Other ideas include a community garden and a Little Free Library. We want to make less waste, fill fewer landfills, decrease our energy usage, and increase our welcoming actions on campus and beyond. Is your heart in it because we could really use your thoughts, ideas, and action.

We toured the Mercedes Benz stadium and the Kendeda Building at Georgia Tech. We attended

the Green Summit with Georgia Interfaith Power and Light (GIPL.org) and learned how other houses of worship are seeking ways to lessen the extreme burden on the planet and its resources. We have created beauty through flower arranging lessons, flipped fluorescent light fixtures to LED, cleaned Peachtree Creek, and composted floral waste all through fun moments we self-started or joined thanks to GIPL.



Georgia Interfaith Power and Light is our partner in this green work. They educate us. Invite us. Support our efforts. They even show us where grant monies are.

We are happy to share all the things we learn and invite you to join us on our Shallowford webpage as we lessen our negative human impact and grow our positivity and strength

toward sustainability, climate, and justice. **Join us! We'd love to have your contributions and community.**

## BEHIND THE SCENES

*Green Team members have placed blue recycling bins throughout campus with signage to help educate you on what can and cannot be recycled. Can you locate all 8 blue bins?*

# SHALLOWFORD CENTER FOR MINDFUL LIVING

ShallowfordMindfulLiving.org

Submitted by Sue Ellen Williams on behalf of the Advisory Board



**A place for contemplative practice, deep listening and compassion.**

Over time, things, people, and places evolve into new and different things. Thus, it is the same with the counseling center at Shallowford Presbyterian Church. Over the last few years, the counseling center began offering seminars and classes on mindfulness. In this task-driven and busy world, there was

an obvious need for mindfulness, for the ability to slow down and focus on being present in the reality of living. With the advent of Covid, the offerings took on a new life with Zoom. The Advisory Board realized that these offerings were well received and that our focus had shifted from counseling to mindful living.

Under the leadership of Robby Carroll, M.Div, LMFT, and Kay Stewart, M.Ed, the Board moved to create a name that reflects our mission and our offerings. *Mindful Living* leads us to focus on who we are and how we choose to live. *Mindful Living* provides a pattern for our everyday routine, a slower pace to life. "In quietness and confidence shall be your strength." (Isaiah 30:15) *Mindful Living* brings peace as stillness and self-awareness grow. "Be still before the Lord and wait patiently for him." (Psalm. 37:7)

In a world of distractions and frustrations and conflicts and challenges, we seek moments of quietness and contemplation. The Shallowford Center for Mindful Living provides just that. Come, all people. Come, be still. Come, grow and learn through intentional practice and experience. Life will expand and bring you home.

As we embrace this evolution and this change in direction, we seek to provide a place for the soul to rest, a place for the mind to quiet, a room where we all can sit with all things holy as we listen.

Through our connection with Shallowford Presbyterian Church, we are committed to enhancing and deepening mental, spiritual, and emotional health. Visit the Shallowford Center for Mindful Living website to learn more about mindfulness education, healing circles, classes, retreats and special offerings.

[ShallowfordMindfulLiving.org](http://ShallowfordMindfulLiving.org).



We dedicate this new name and the future of the Shallowford Center for Mindful Living to the memory of **Mary Ellen Pendergrast**, whose insight and dedication faithfully guided this process.

## Carrie Newcomer Retreat

*The Beautiful Not Yet:  
Living at the Growing Edge (9am-3pm)*

*Music, Poetry, and Conversation with Carrie...  
an informal evening of sharing and connection  
(6 pm-7:30 pm)*

**February 24, 2024**

On a fall Sunday evening at Eddie's Attic in downtown Decatur, folks gathered to hear music and poetry, to sing along and transcend the noise of the world. There was a warmth and richness in the space. Carrie Newcomer invited a pause as her folk song style and her humor brought relaxation.

**"We live in an ever accelerating goal oriented world. It is easy to become distracted and restless. Life is always lived between then and soon, right here and now, in the beautiful not yet."**

This quote from singer songwriter Carrie Newcomer clearly illustrates the reason the Shallowford Center for Mindful Living presents a full day with Carrie in February 2024.

Carrie Newcomer is an American singer songwriter and musician who has published over 19 CDs, has written

three books of poetry, and cohosted THE GROWING EDGE, a podcast with Parker Palmer. She is a workshop facilitator and a collaborator with other musicians as well as focus groups. These names may be familiar and will help draw a picture of who Carrie Newcomer is: Alison Krauss, Mary Chapin Carpenter. Barbara Kingsolver and Parker Palmer.

The titles of her songs also paint a portrait of this special woman: "A Great Wide Mercy", "Lean into Light", "Sanctuary", and "The Beautiful Not Yet."

I leave you with her words: "Come on and look inside you it's the best place to start and the greatest revolution is a simple change of heart."



Join the Shallowford Center for Mindful Living in February as we pause and ponder in the beauty and wonder of music, poetry, and conversation.

## Retreat Details

**Base Tuition:** \$75.00 per attendee

**Location:**  
Shallowford Presbyterian Church  
2375 Shallowford Road NE  
Atlanta, GA 30345

**Registration:**  
Register at [ShallowfordMindfulLiving.org](http://ShallowfordMindfulLiving.org)  
by Wednesday, February 14, 2024

**Event Contact:** Kay Stewart,  
Director of Mindfulness Education  
([kstewart@shallowford.org](mailto:kstewart@shallowford.org))



Sunday Services 8:30 & 11:00 a.m.  
Sunday School Hour 9:30-10:30 a.m.

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Rebecca Porter, Editor & Director of Communications  
rporter@shallowford.org

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## Download the App

Visit the App Store on your smartphone or tablet and search: "Realm Connect - For Our Church."

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Shallowford



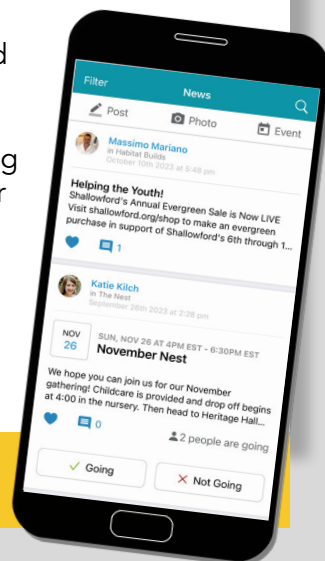
# News



## Online Member Directory

Access Shallowford's directory no matter your location! Through Realm, members can connect, share, and grow within individual ministry areas and committees.

- **Member Info on the Go** — Access phone numbers, emails, mailing addresses, or even birthdays.
- **Pictorial Directory** — View profile photos and upload your own.
- **Track Giving History** — View individual giving statements and annual pledge information for current and past years.
- **Register & Pay for Events** — RSVP or sign up for churchwide lunches, retreats, ministry events.



[onrealm.org/shallowford](http://onrealm.org/shallowford)