

Shenandoah Press

Volume 11, Issue 2

March 2025

Special points of interest:

- Lent Thoughts
- Easter Respite
- Oasis Dinner
- Spain Trip
- Much more...

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A Message from our General Presbyter

Most of the snow is gone and today it feels like we are on the verge of spring. I look forward to seeing flowers and budding trees and the beauty it brings.

But spring also brings Lent, a time to reflect and repent of our sins, those things we have done or left undone.

How are we following Jesus?

Are we following his teachings in loving our neighbors, doing justice, and walking humbly with him? What are we feeling nudged to do by the Holy Spirit? Where are we to be using our time and talents in service to God?

All these things and more are thoughts to ponder and actions to take in being followers of Christ and beloved children of God.

As Spring arrives, let us make this season of Lent, one of true renewal and deeper commitment to become disciples of the Good News of Jesus Christ.

Blessings for the continued journey,

Bronwen



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Lent begins Wednesday, March 5.

We traditionally, appropriately, associate repentance, grief and death with Lent.

It is, after all, 40 days of preparation for Easter morning, but first we have to go through Good Friday..

And traditionally, people have “given up” things for those 40 days, as ways of getting rid of all the things that get in the way of our following Christ.

I don't claim to compare giving up chocolate or beer as similar to Christ's offering on the cross, but in some ways, Lent can function like a near death experience, in which we are stripped of all the unnecessary things, and are left with... abundant life.

Many, in a service of worship on Ash Wednesday, receive an imposition of ashes: that is, the sign of the cross is marked on the person's forehead (or hand, if desired).

And we hear these or similar words: “Almighty God, you have created us out of the dust of the earth. May these ashes be for us a sign of our mortality and penitence, and a reminder that only by your gracious gift are we given everlasting life; through Jesus Christ our Savior.

Remember that you are dust, and to dust you shall return.”

Sounds kind of dark, doesn't it? It is the absolute stark truth about human mortality...and a bit of a harsh note in a service of worship.

But here is the part that I love about Ash Wednesday:

We get to tell, and hear, the whole truth about our lives. That we are mortal. And, that we are redeemed, not through our own actions, but through the gracious mercy given to us, and to the world, in Jesus Christ.

We get to wear our faith. Literally. If you attend a morning or mid-day service on Ash Wednesday, you will be wearing the sign of ashes and penitence all day long. (prepare to get some side-eye in the grocery store). As Presbyterians, we are not great at witnessing/testifying. Having a cross marked on your forehead, and wearing it all day, is a kind of public testimony.

And it is a reminder of our baptism—for the ashes are marked on our foreheads, in the same place we received the baptismal waters. God has claimed us in baptism and anointed us with the Holy Spirit.

Remember your baptism, and be thankful...even as you are marked with ashes to begin the journey of Lent.

Blessings

Nancy

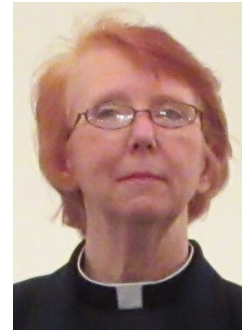
We at the Presbytery staff hold you, your congregations and pastoral leaders in our prayers. We pray over the cards sent out to congregations and over the cards for those who serve on committees, giving thanks for all your faithful service.

The office also frequently receives prayer requests through email or phone calls. Please know the Presbytery shares those among the staff, and we include those concerns and requests in our personal prayers.



However, when sending a prayer request to be shared with the Presbytery, please be sure that you have the permission of the one named in the request to share that widely. Please include that in the message of the email. We don't ever want to “overshare” by accident.

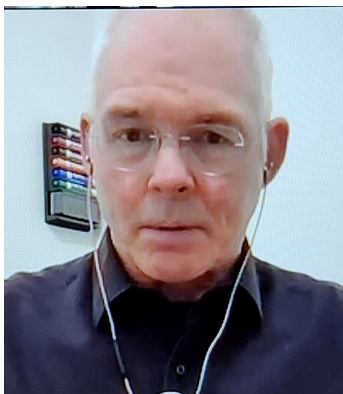
We pray you understand!



204th Stated Meeting of Shenandoah Presbytery February 25, 2025 via Zoom



2025 Moderator, RE Debra Fitzgerald O'Connell,
2024 Moderator, RE Bill North,



Mark Dewey called to serve
as Chaplain
at UVA Medical Center



TE Gary Cecil,
Seneca Rocks & Circleville
Churches

The offering for the Stated Meeting was Church World Service (CWS). You may still donate using the QR code to the right, or [click here](#) to go to our Giving page.



For all documents and video of the meeting, find us at
<https://shenpres.org/presbytery-meeting/>

Has COVID affected people's religious participation?

While I will never say we are "post-Covid," (it's still around ya'll, as this past winter has shown), we can certainly, 5 years after the first announcements, look back and see how and where we are as faith communities.

Based on data collected in October 2024, The Pew Research Center has some data to share with us.

"The vast majority of U.S. adults say their religious participation habits have not changed:

About eight-in-ten say either that they attend services in person about as often as they did before the pandemic (31%) or that they did not attend before the pandemic and still don't (48%).

Roughly eight-in-ten say either that they watch services virtually about as often as they did before the pandemic (18%) or that they didn't watch services before the pandemic and still don't (62%).

There may be a small net decrease in in-person attendance: 13% of Americans say they attend in person less often than they did before the pandemic, while just 7% say they now attend more often. But that difference is almost exactly offset by an increase in virtual participation: 13% of Americans say they watch services online more often than they did before the pandemic, while 6% say they now watch less often.

Together, these survey findings paint a picture of remarkable stability in U.S. religious life during a time of widespread upheaval in how houses of worship operate and despite a decades-long decline in religious affiliation and participation."

We are strong, vibrant, resilient people of faith. The new ways of "being church," while at first (perhaps) resisted, are showing that whether our people attend in person, or via technology, we are still the body of Christ, together. Alleluia!

Nancy

<https://www.pewresearch.org/2025/02/12/how-the-covid-19-pandemic-affected-u-s-religious-life/>

Ruling Elder Exam Readers Needed!

Thank you to all the teaching elders who have volunteered to serve as readers for the spring ordination exams. We are required to have two teaching elders and two ruling elders. No travel is required, but reliable Wi-Fi and enough time to read through exams (1-2 hours per day). This will happen the week of May 5-9. There is training provided and required to be completed ahead of the week in May.

If anyone is interested in serving or has questions please contact Rev. John Bethard at 304-240-4527 or jbethard@ctpres.org.

Strong Ministers Program Grants Spring 2025 Applications

Applications for the Spring distribution of the Strong Minister's Program Grants will be accepted through March 31. The guidelines and applications are on the Shenandoah Presbytery webpage, <https://shenpres.org/strong-ministers-program/>. The Strong Ministers Program information is under forms and policies.

HUNGER FUNDS SUBCOMMITTEE of the Committee on Outreach and Mission -



YOUR DONATIONS to the HUNGER FUND:

Did you know that 60% of the hunger funds collected in our presbytery through the “Cents-Ability” program stay within the bounds of our presbytery, helping to support local food banks and other anti-hunger programs?

The other 40% goes to help support regional, national, and international efforts to end hunger. One of the regional projects that your hunger funds help support is the **Society of St. Andrew**. The Virginia chapter of this national organization is based in Big Island, VA.

The Society of St. Andrew (SoSA) operates a nationwide, volunteer-driven Gleaning Network that includes volunteers who save fresh produce every year and use it to feed individuals, families, and agencies struggling with access to fresh, healthy food. Through the Virginia Gleaning Network, SoSA coordinates thousands of volunteers in six local areas who enter fields after farmers have finished harvesting and simply pick up the tons of edible produce left behind.

In 2024, in Virginia alone, 1,915,786 pounds of food was gleaned and distributed to 289 recipient agencies and partners, thanks to the hard work of 5,551 volunteers.

It’s good to know that the Society of St. Andrew is helping make every pound of food count. You can find out more about them at their website - <https://endhunger.org/>.



Opequon Presbyterian Church

\$200 was provided from Presbytery and the Mission Team was challenged to do something with the money. It was decided to provide it to Bright Futures, an organization in Winchester that provides immediate support to kids in need in our community. Bright Futures works with school counselors to provide immediate assistance from coats, sleeping bags and clothing, to food and meals and school supplies for kids in our Winchester and Frederick County communities.

McDowell Church Statement on Antisemitism

The McDowell Presbyterian Church session went through a process that arrived at a statement on antisemitism which they would like to share with all who are interested. Contact Rev. Beth Pyles at beth.pyles@gmail.com or (540) 396-3450 or (540) 292-6644 for more information.

Woodstock Church Pews Give-Away

Woodstock Presbyterian Church is transitioning from Pews to chairs - right now! We have around 18, 20 foot slightly curved, pressboard (with a fabulous veneer and cushions!) pews (see photos). And we are trying to find new homes for them. They are currently standing on end in our fellowship hall!



If you are interested, or know someone who may be, contact Woodstock Church at wstkpres@gmail.com for more information.



Mossy Creek Presbyterian Church, 372 Kyles Mill Rd, Mt. Solon, will serve a Shrove Tuesday Pancake Supper, March 4, 4:30-6:00pm. A meal of pancakes, sausage and sausage gravy will be served. A freewill offering will be collected to benefit the Mt. Solon Rescue Squad in their fundraising efforts for a new ambulance. Come and enjoy!

Mossy Creek Presbyterian Church will host the community Ash Wednesday Service at 7:00pm on March 5. Come and see!

Trinity Presbyterian Church 725 S. High Street, Harrisonburg, VA 22801, invites anyone who is in Harrisonburg during the day on Ash Wednesday, March 5, to worship with us at 12:30 pm.

Love Your Neighbor Lenten Meal for Children

Thursday, March 20th (Mr. Rogers Day) @ 5:30 pm

Won't you be my neighbor?

Better Together invites all neighbors in the Shenandoah to bring children, ages 10 and under, to First Presbyterian Church Waynesboro for a dinner of kid-friendly food. Join us at Lent, to follow God's commandment to love our neighbors as ourselves, by celebrating the mission and ministry of Mr. Rogers! We will say grace together in song, and do a couple of Mr. Rogers-themed activities.

Please RSVP to Samantha Coggins (scoggins@firstpresway.com or (540) 907-7401), pastor at FPC, with the names & ages of children who will accompany you. All children must be with a caregiver aged 18 or older.

Who: Better Together churches

What: free kid-friendly dinner & Mr. Rogers-themed activities

When: Thursday, March 20th (Mr. Rogers Day) at 5:30 pm

Where: First Presbyterian Church Waynesboro, 249 S Wayne Ave, Waynesboro - Barksdale Room (use main sanctuary doors to enter)

If you could only sense how important you are to the lives of those you meet; how important you can be to the people you may never even dream of.



FRED ROGERS

Presbyterian Women 2025 Spring Gathering Saturday, April 5, 2025

Massanetta Springs Camp & Conference Center
712 Massanetta Springs Road, Harrisonburg, VA 22801
Hotel Welford Room

The Annual Spring Gathering is open to ALL women (teen to adult). You do not have to be a member of a PW group.

“Belonging”

“But now, this is what the Lord says - he who created you, Jacob, he who formed you, Israel: Do not fear, for I have redeemed you; I have summoned you by name; you are mine.” Isaiah 43:1

9:30 am—Registration and Refreshments

10:00 am—Fellowship, Bible Study Introduction, Mission Presentation, Installation of Officers, Worship & Communion

12:30 pm—Lunch on your own



WORSHIP SPEAKER & COMMUNION:

The Rev. Rachel Hamburger models a life of working and serving under God's direction. She works in a mission organization based in Harrisonburg and serves as Supply Pastor at Smyrna Presbyterian Church in Waynesboro. Rev. Rachel graciously has taken time to be with us today to share her ministry. Please welcome her to our Annual Spring Gathering!

INTRODUCTION TO BIBLE STUDY

The Rev. Punker Robertson of Fairfield Presbyterian Church, and a member of the PW Coordinating Team, will introduce the 2025-2026 PW *Horizons* Bible Study **Finding Resilience, Joy, and Our Identity in Jesus Christ** by author **Rhashell D. Hunter**. Come hear Rev. Punker give us a refreshing start to the new Bible Study!

SPECIAL MUSIC:

Our musical guest this year is Teresa Whitesell, guitarist, and singer, from Olivet Presbyterian Church in Staunton, VA. We are looking forward to having “Tee” join us again this year!

MISSION OFFERING RECIPIENT:

Kingsway Prison and Family Outreach is a non-profit 501(c)(3) organization that has been offering assistance to the incarcerated, ex-offenders, and their families since 1983. In addition to services provided within the prisons and jails, Kingsway provides a safe haven for released inmates to come for help at the office in Harrisonburg, Virginia. Please make checks payable to *Shenandoah Presbyterian Women*. Our Treasurer will then write one check to Kingsway.

There is no cost to attend this year's PW Spring Gathering! However, you must mail your registration to be received by **March 28, 2025**. You can find the registration form on the PW webpage: <https://shenpres.org/presbyterian-women/>.

Easter Respite and Oasis Dinner

Massanetta Springs Camp and Conference Center is once again offering an Easter Respite, April 21-25

From Massanetta: Are you ready for a break following Easter? Whether you are an installed teaching elder, commissioned ruling elder, transitional pastor, or other church leader, the season of Lent is a busy one! After we celebrate the resurrection of Jesus Christ, come and rest.

PC(USA) leaders and other friends of Massanetta who have previously attended programs are welcome to join us anytime from April 21-25 at no cost. Arrive on Monday and stay for all four nights, or come for any part of these days. Family members are welcome to join you!

We provide lodging and a free buffet breakfast on Tuesday morning at 8:30. There are many other dining options available in the Harrisonburg area to enjoy during the rest of your stay.

Did we mention it's free?

To register for the respite, contact Massanetta Springs: <https://massanettasprings.org/programs/respite>

The Oasis Fund will sponsor a dinner for pastoral leaders on Monday evening, April 21 at a Harrisonburg area restaurant. This is open to anyone who wishes to come, even if you are not staying at Massanetta for respite. More details will be shared closer to the date, but to get an accurate count, please contact Nancy Meehan Yao to reserve a spot at dinner- assocgp@shenpres.org

Hope to see you there!

REVERENDFUN.COM COPYRIGHT BIBLE GATEWAY



Thanks to Richard German

10-27-2008

I REALLY LIKE YOUR BIBLE, DAD ... HOW DO YOU TURN IT ON?



Spain, Spring 2025



Provisional Itinerary

May 6 Depart Washington
 May 7 Fuente del Peregrino Ligonde
 May 8 Fuente del Peregrino Ligonde
 May 9 Fuente del Peregrino Ligonde
 May 10 Fuente del Peregrino Ligonde
 May 11 Fuente del Peregrino Ligonde
 May 12 Fuente del Peregrino Ligonde
 May 13 Fuente del Peregrino Ligonde
 May 14 In Santiago
 May 15 In Santiago
 May 16 Arrive Washington

Estimated Costs include all travel, lodging, support car, programming, guide service, and food: \$2100

Mdewey7215@gmail.com

540-454-0247



Last spring, several members of Trinity Presbyterian in Harrisonburg walked 225 kilometers of the Camino de Santiago in Northern Spain. In a village called Ligonde, we were embraced by members of an Anglican congregation who were serving as volunteer staff at a pilgrim hostel. Our experience with them felt so rich that we decided to offer the same volunteer opportunity to people in the Shenandoah Presbytery.

From May 7 through May 14, we will be staffing a facility called **La Fuente del Peregrino** which is about 60 miles west of Santiago. Our goal during that time will be to make strangers feel like beloved children of God. We'll do that by offering food, drink, shade, prayer, conversation, bathroom facilities, and other blessings to the pilgrims who pass our door. The facility has ten beds available for pilgrims who wish to stay the night, and with those people we'll share dinner, breakfast, and perhaps a simple service of thanks and praise.

A team of roughly ten people will depart from Dulles on May 6 and return on May 16. We'll spend our seven days in residence at La Fuente cooking and sharing meals, visiting nearby markets and farms, preparing the facility for over-night guests, and inviting people to talk about their call to pilgrimage. Then we'll enjoy the medieval city of Santiago for a couple of days. Speaking Spanish is not required for this service; however, if you'd like to learn some Spanish, this would be a great opportunity to do so. I might offer advance training to interested parties.

No walking is required for this trip, though much walking will be possible. Some of us are attracted to the idea of walking the first four days of the Camino de Santiago, from France into Spain, before going to Ligonde. That stretch of road gains 4,000 feet in elevation – challenging and thrilling. Join us there.

**PRESBYTERY OF
SHENANDOAH**

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Shenandoah Presbytery

A Community of Christ for Worship, Nurture and Mission

SHENANDOAH PRESBYTERY is a covenant body where:

- CONGREGATIONS are empowered to be centers for mission
- PEOPLE OF GOD are equipped to be Disciples of Christ in a challenging world
- CHURCH LEADERS and members are nurtured and strengthened for service
- OPEN COMMUNICATION and information are used constructively and creatively to keep us connected

Dates to Remember!

March 2025

- 3 - CCVT 1:00 pm
- 5 - ASH WEDNESDAY
- 11 - CER 10 am at Opequon Church
- 13 - COM 9:30 am
- 18 - Nominations 10:00 am
- 19 - Staff Meeting 10:00 am at Presbytery Office
- 19 - CNCD 1:30 pm
- 20 - CPA 1:30 pm
- 24 - ShenPress Deadline

Other Dates

- 1 - Training Day 9:30 am at Massanetta Springs
- 8 - Session Minutes Review 10:00 am at Massanutten Church
- 9 - Mark Dewey Ordination 2:30 pm at Trinity Church
- 15 - Session Minutes Review 10:00 am at Opequon Church
- 20 - Pastors' Meeting 12:00 pm
- 22 - Session Minutes Review 10:00 am at Petersburg Church
- 31 - Strong Ministers Grant Deadline

* Unless otherwise noted, all meetings will be held via Zoom.

