

Shenandoah Press

Volume 11, Issue 6

July/August 2025

A Message from our General Presbyter

Summer is upon us, a time traditionally known for vacations, camp and just plain slowing down. But at this moment I feel that we live in uncertain times.

Watch the news on any given day to see and hear the concerns enveloping the world, the nation, and our own communities. And through it all God continues to call us to be the people of God doing what Christ has taught us to do, taking care of the least of these among us, offering shelter, water for the thirsty, clothing for the naked, working for justice. So, this summer we may be busier than past summers as we continue to live into our calling as followers of Christ.

I hope that we can all find time for rest and refreshment this summer – but I also hope that we all listen for the leading of the Holy Spirit and have the courage to go where we are called. What is the Holy Spirit nudging you to do?

Summer blessings,

Bronwen



Inside this issue:

Book Orders	3
GA Commissioner Applications	
PW Bible Study Overview	
Church News	4
Committee News	
Leadership Formation	5
re: Ruling Elders	
Invitations	8
Calendar Dates	9

Presbytery Meeting August 23

The 206th Stated Meeting of Shenandoah Presbytery will be held on Saturday, August 23, 2025, at 9:30 am via Zoom.

Please mark your calendars and watch for registration information, along with the Handbook for the Meeting.

Zoom Practice Session August 24

For those new to Zoom, new as a commissioner to presbytery, or those who need a refreshment of the instructions, we will be holding a Zoom practice session on Wednesday, August 20 at 7:00 pm. Watch for emails.

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Associate General Presbyter—Nancy Meehan Yao

In the past five years, many congregations have made adaptations in the way they worship. Some, in early 2020, pivoted to only virtual worship, using existing or new technologies, while others continued in person worship. As time went on, many congregations chose to maintain the online worship experience, while also resuming in person worship.

Five years on, what do we know about these experiences?

First is that not everyone worships online. Many prefer the in-person worship in a physical sanctuary. A smaller portion of people switch between online and in person, as life/scheduling/other issues require.



“Findings from the 2024 EPIC Attender Survey (from the Hartford Institute for Religious Research) reveal that 26% of participants regularly engage in online worship. A significant portion, 19%, move between online and in-person attendance. This segment often consists of younger individuals with children, who have likely increased their church involvement post-pandemic. For these active members, balancing family, work, and travel, online church provides essential accessibility and connection. Without it, church participation would often be challenging.”¹

So online/streaming worship can be seen not as a loss for a congregation, but rather as an additional way to help people actively participate in the life and worship of congregation.

“As the pandemic waned, some church leaders expressed concerns over livestream worship cutting into in-person attendance. The Hartford Institute’s new data suggests that offering a live stream does not reduce in-person attendance, nor does it erode the importance of belonging to a faith community. Rather, online worship provides new pathways to connect within and beyond the congregation. It extends the reach of the church’s message, providing a satisfying and edifying encounter with faith in day-to-day experience. Far from an activity specific to the pandemic, online worship ought to be a long-term strategic priority.”²

I like to think of online worship as part of a new wave of evangelism. When we think about the history of religion in the US, we can see the uses of available technology. From pastors riding horseback to distant congregations, to the rise of the Sunday School movement and the ways that printing presses, increased literacy through public education and a growing railroad system delivered study materials, to the use of radio, and then tv broadcasts, all ways to spread the Gospel. Streaming worship, prayer groups and Bible studies is just an extension of what we are called to do—be witnesses to our Lord, studiers of the word, and a people who join together—whatever that looks like—to praise God.

Blessings-

Nancy



¹ <https://www.covidreligionresearch.org/liturgy-in-the-living-room-new-study-shows-online-church-isnt-killing-in-person-attendance/>, accessed June 19, 2025.

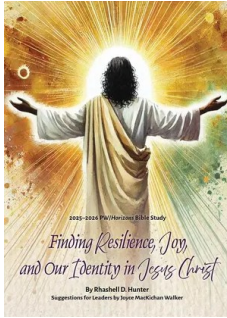
² Ibid

Presbyterian Disaster Assistance

Presbyterian Disaster Assistance enables congregations and mission partners of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) to witness to the healing love of Christ through caring for communities adversely affected by crises and catastrophic events. Host sites throughout the US are open.



Is your church longing to take action to help others? See for more information: <https://pcusa.org/disaster-assistance/how-help/act/us-work-team-sites> or contact the Committee on Mission and Outreach of the Presbytery: dthelman@comcast.net.



Presbyterian Women's Horizon Bible Study Overview

Associate General Presbyterian, the Rev. Dr. Nancy Meehan Yao, will be leading an overview of the 2025–2026 PW/Horizons Bible Study, “Finding Resilience, Joy, and Our Identity in Jesus Christ”. This will be via Zoom on Thursday, July 31, 2025 at 6:30 pm.

To register for the July 31 Overview, [click here](#).

For more information about the study, visit the PW page at: <https://www.presbyterianwomen.org/bible-study/resilience/>.

Order Your Planning Calendars and Books of the Constitution

Order your 2025-2026 Presbyterian Planning Calendars, Book of Confessions, and/or the 2025-2027 Book of Order through us and save money! (The Planning Calendars at the PCUSA Store are \$17.95. Order them through us and pay only \$12.00 each!)

The 2025–2026 Presbyterian Planning Calendar is your indispensable companion for purposeful planning from September 2025 to December 2026. *New Orientation*: The calendar grid is now vertical instead of horizontal and will span across two pages for double the writing space for personal dates and notes.

There will also be a new Book of Order 2025–2027, along with the Book of Confessions 2016.

For your convenience, we now have ordering available on our website: <https://shenpres.org/book-orders/>. You may **place your order and pay online**, or mail a check to the presbytery post office box. If you would prefer, you may still use the order form (on page 6).



Order online or mail your form to us. You will be notified when the books arrive in late August. **All Orders Due By: July 24, 2025**. If you have any questions, please contact Heather at bookkeeper@shenpres.org or 540-433-2556. **Order now!**



227th General Assembly Commissioner Applications

The 227th General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) will meet in Milwaukee, Wisconsin, June 22-July 2, 2026. The Presbytery of Shenandoah is entitled to send two minister commissioners, two ruling elder commissioners, and one young adult advisory delegate (YAAD) to this assembly.

Representing Shenandoah Presbytery at General Assembly is a tremendous opportunity to participate in the work, witness, and worship of the larger church, to provide input and insight within the Assembly and bring back to us the news of what is happening across the Presbyterian Church. Below are links to the forms requesting consideration for nomination as a minister, ruling elder, and young adult advisory delegate at this meeting. Applications should be submitted by **SEPTEMBER 1, 2025** in order for the Nominating Committee to be able to consider persons for commissioners. For applications, go to:

<https://shenpres.org/227-general-assembly/>

Warrenton Church VBS

The week of June 16-20, Warrenton Presbyterian Church hosted a Vacation Bible School. We had 55 children in attendance from ages 3 to 11. Between set-up, teaching, shepherds, opening and closing times, and clean-up, we had 38 adult and youth volunteers! Our youth are a particular blessing to us since most of them grew up attending VBS at WPC. The theme for this year's VBS was *SCUBA, Diving into Friendship with God*.



See the attached photos showing two of the youth performing a skit,



adult leaders teaching the children, and a bunch of the kids at the closing ceremony in which they shared songs that they had learned with their parents and grandparents.

Later this summer, twelve WPC youth and four adult chaperones will be traveling to Damascus, VA for a week (July 13-19) to be part of a work camp that is still addressing damage from Hurricane Helene. Prayers are requested.



Mark Johnson, Buckton Church CRE, Graduates from Union Seminary

Mark Johnson, CRE of Buckton Church, graduated with the Masters of Arts of Christian Education from Union Presbyterian Seminary Charlotte Campus on June 28. Mark says, "This has been a 3 year process that has helped me as a CRE and I look forward to the Spirit's leading as I continue on my journey."

Congratulations, Mark!



CMO Meets at Former Presbytery Office

The Committee on Mission and Outreach conducted its first in-person meeting since before the pandemic at the Navigation Center whose campus includes our former Presbytery office.

The Navigation Center is operated by Valley Open Doors that began in 2007 as Harrisonburg and Rockingham Thermal Shelter (HARTS). Their current mission is: "To provide safe shelter for the unhoused, as well as compassionate support and access to services for ALL in the Harrisonburg-Rockingham community."



After the Presbytery office property was sold to the city of Harrisonburg, plans began for a low-barrier shelter that included a new shelter facility that accommodates 80 unhoused adults. The facility also supports a weekday drop-in center that includes a medical clinic, laundry, Wi-Fi, counseling and other services. The Presbytery provided a grant to build and equip a commercial kitchen. The



new facility is very versatile and connects to the old house that was the Presbytery office. That structure was totally renovated including the original hardwood floors. It still has several meeting rooms that have served us well. Your group is welcome to meet there too! Dr. Nate Riddle, executive director, would be happy to hear from you, and if his schedule permits, you can get a tour. Nate's contact info can be found on the Open Doors website at: <https://www.valleyopendoors.org>.



Welcome, Church Leaders!

Whether you're a teaching elder, ruling elder, deacon, or other leader of a congregation or new worshipping community, start your journey here. Find resources and other information that can help you engage with Presbyterians and others in your local community. <https://pcusa.org/church-leaders>

We're eager to share this information with you and look for other ways to support your ministry. To receive notices and announcements of other events and resources for ruling elders and deacons, [subscribe to the Leader Formation newsletter here](#).

A Leader Formation Webinar for Ruling Elders and Deacons:

Pondering God with Presbyterians: What Does It Mean to Say "Jesus Saves"?

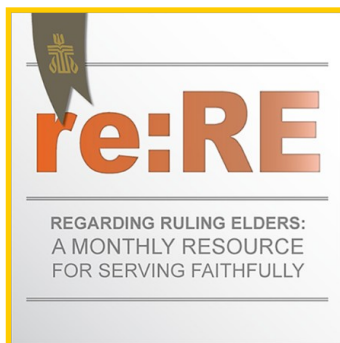
July 17, 2025 | 7:00-8:30 pm eastern

Registration deadline July 9, 2025

Designed for ruling elders and deacons who seek to learn more about Presbyterian beliefs and faith, this webinar will explore the tricky question of what we mean by "salvation," with particular attention to the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus. What does Jesus save us from? What does he save us for? And how does this happen? If you are interested in wrestling with these basic questions of Christian faith as you continue to grow in your role as a spiritual leader, come join the conversation! It will be led by Columbia Presbyterian Seminary Theology Professor, the Rev. Dr. Martha Moore-Keish.

As always, this event is provided for free for participants and will be provided in several languages with interpretation based on requests made through the registration process. As a result, there is a registration deadline of **July 9, 2025**, in order to be able to have time to arrange for those services. Advanced registration is not necessary for access to the recording which will be available in English following the event.

For more information, [click here](#). To register, [click here](#).



[Regarding Ruling Elders: A monthly series for serving faithfully](#)

[Subscribe](#) to receive notifications of monthly Regarding Ruling Elders articles. Visit the PC(USA) [Leader Formation website](#) for more resources for ruling elders and deacons. For more information, email [Martha Miller](#), editor of Regarding Ruling Elders.

June 2025 re:RE: Post

[Rooted: The Foundations of Presbyterian Polity — Mission of the Church: The Church and the Holy Spirit](#)



Immigration, faith, and the PC(USA)

The Presbytery has received questions regarding why and how we are called to faithfully think about immigration issues.

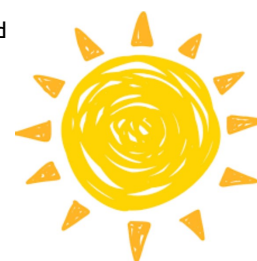
Scripture has a great deal to say about immigrants, sojourners, aliens and temporary workers. As people of faith, we turn to Scripture for guidance.

"When a foreigner resides among you in your land, do not mistreat them. The foreigner residing among you must be treated as your own citizen. You shall love them as yourself, for you were foreigners in Egypt. I am the Lord your God." Leviticus 19: 33-34

"Come, you that are blessed by my Father, inherit the kingdom that has been prepared for you from the foundation of the world; for I was hungry, and you gave me food, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink, I was a stranger and you welcomed me... Truly I tell you, just as you did it to one of the least of these who are members of my family, you did it to me." Matthew 25: 34-35, 40

"Love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your strength, and with all your mind; and love your neighbor as yourself.... And who is my neighbor...?" Luke 10: 27, 29

"So, then, you are no longer strangers and aliens, but you are citizens with the saints and also members of the household of God..." Ephesians 2:19



But we might also wonder what the PC(USA)'s stance is on immigration issues.

Our Book of Order, in its Foundation Section, says:

"In Christ, by the power of the Spirit, God sends the Church into the world to share the Gospel of God's redemption of all things and people." F-1.0302

The PC(USA) has long been involved in immigration/justice issues, going back to the church's 1893's action against the Chinese Exclusion Act. Presbyterian policy on immigration is approved by the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.), which convenes biennially. Presbyterians from across the country draft overtures for the assembly to consider in faithful response to the immigration issues in their context. After prayer, discernment, and motions to amend, the General Assembly votes to determine which overtures will become the official policy of the General Assembly.¹

Most recently, the PC(USA) has said this: "Guided by their call to welcome the stranger and belief in the inherent dignity of all people, PC(USA) actively advocates for and works toward more just immigration laws and processes."² This statement is found as part of the lawsuit the PC(USA) has joined, in response to a recission of the Department of Homeland Security's "sensitive locations" policy.

We know that these can be contentious issues and might be difficult to talk about with your congregation. The PC(USA)'s Office of Immigration Issues can help the church respond to the movement of all God's people. The Office provides advice and counsel to congregations and mid-councils regarding immigration issues and resources.

<https://pcusa.org/about-pcusa/agencies-entities/interim-unified-agency/ministry-areas/immigration-issues>

Amanda Craft is the staff person for the Office of Immigration Issues:
Manager, Immigration Advocacy amanda.craft@pcusa.org

Rev. Jimmie Hawkins serves the PC(USA)'s Office of Public Witness, with a physical office in Washington, DC. He may be reached at: Jimmie.Hawkins@pcusa.org

For more resources, read [this document on our website](#).

¹ <https://pcusa.org/about-pcusa/agencies-entities/interim-unified-agency/ministry-areas/immigration-issues/advocacy-accompaniment>

² <https://pcusa.org/news-storytelling/news/2025/2/12/pcusa-joins-religious-freedom-lawsuit-challenging-ice-enforcement-actions-churches>

Remember: You Can Now Pay Online

We now have online payments available on our website. Churches can pay their acceptances with a few clicks of the mouse.

To use this feature, point your camera at the QR code below, or go our new [payment webpage](#).

If you have questions, contact Heather at bookkeeper@shenpres.org.



IT'S TIME TO PLACE YOUR BULK BOOK ORDER

From the Shenandoah Presbytery office

PLEASE MAIL YOUR ORDER FORM WITH PAYMENT

Payable to: Shenandoah Presbytery, Attn: Book Orders
P O Box 1146, Harrisonburg, VA 22803

OR COMPLETE FORM [ONLINE](#)

ALL ORDERS DUE BY: JULY 24, 2025

You will be notified when the books arrive; expect late August.

If you have any questions, please email bookkeeper@shenpres.org or call 540-433-2556

ORDER THE FOLLOWING:

_____ 2025 - 2026 Planning Calendars	\$12.00 each	\$ _____
_____ The Book of Confessions - 2016	\$ 9.50 each	\$ _____
_____ 2025/2027 Book of Order	\$ 9.50 each	\$ _____

TOTAL AMOUNT ENCLOSED \$ _____

NAME _____

CHURCH _____

ADDRESS _____

CITY/STATE/ZIP _____

TELEPHONE # _____

EMAIL _____

Deadline for September Shenandoah Press

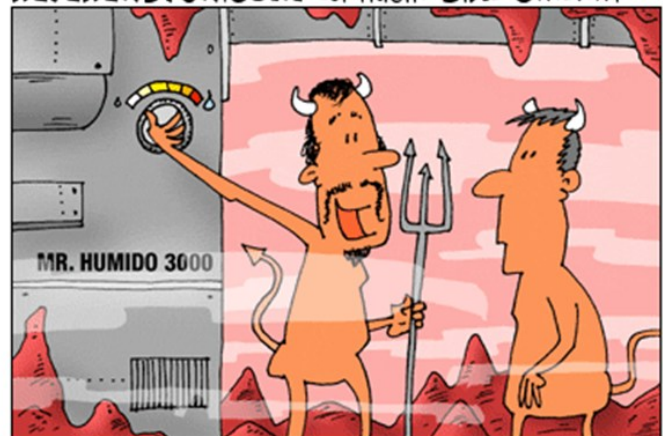
Get ready for the Fall! Send your summer news, fall events, committee reports, and church photos for the September issue of the Shenandoah Press newsletter by Monday, August 25 to be included. !

We want to hear about your church events, celebrations, adventures and more. Send in your committee reports, photos, invitations, and other items to share by August 25.

We love to hear and read your news from around the Shenandoah Presbytery!

Send all items to: shenpres@shenpres.org

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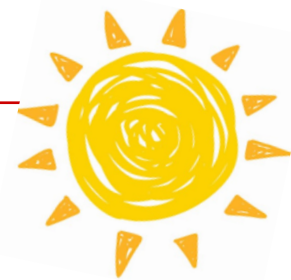
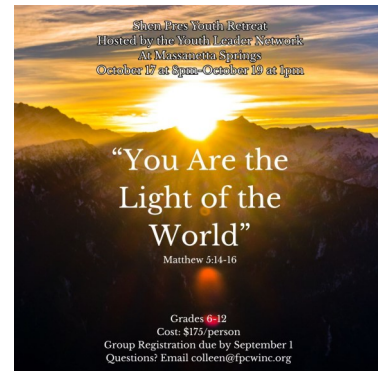
IT'S NOT THE HEAT, IT'S THE HUMIDITY

Shenandoah Presbytery Youth Retreat!

Calling all youth and their leaders, either volunteer or paid! The Shenandoah Presbytery Youth Leader Network is hosting our second youth retreat! This year's retreat is **October 17-19th**, at Massanetta Springs! If you are ready to sign up, please fill out [this form](#), or reach out to [Colleen Stearns](#), our Registration Coordinator! Group registrations are due September 1st!

Do you have youth that you think would be interested, but you don't have someone that is specifically in charge of Youth Ministry? Let Colleen know! Members of our Youth Leader Network are happy to come speak with your church or youth group!

Would your congregation be interested in helping supply a meal, sponsoring meal supplies, or transporting a meal to our retreat if your church is close to Massanetta? If you think your congregation or members would be interested in helping in some way with this need, please reach out to Colleen Stearns!



Organ Concert at Hebron Church—August 17

You are invited to Hebron Presbyterian Church for a concert on the Taylor and Boody Op. 46 organ featuring guest organist **Gary Garletts** on Sunday, **August 17th**. A potluck meal will follow the 11:00 am service and the concert beginning at 2:00 pm with cookies and lemonade to follow. The church is located at 423 Hebron Rd, Staunton, VA. A free will offering will be taken to benefit the Thursday Morning Music Club which provides scholarship funds for local music students who plan to study music in college.

For over four decades **Gary P. Garletts** has enjoyed professional endeavors as a conductor, organist, and accompanist. He recently began his 27th year as Director of Music and Organist at Ardmore Presbyterian Church, and as Artistic Director and Conductor of Chester County Choral Society in suburban Philadelphia.

At Ardmore Presbyterian Gary directs a five-choir program, provides music for all services, and conducts special events. He has guided the Chester County Choral Society through transformative growth in membership, musicianship, and repertoire. The Society presents choral-orchestral works, seasonal concerts, and thematic programs; and its Chamber Ensemble performs advanced *a cappella* repertoire.

Gary earned music degrees at Oberlin College and Duquesne University, studying organ with Haskell Thomson and Ann Labounsky, piano with Frances Walker, and conducting with Sandra Willetts and Daniel Moe. An *Associate* of the American Guild of Organists, he has served in various capacities via its Pittsburgh, Lancaster, and Philadelphia chapters.

PRESBYTERY OF
SHENANDOAH

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E-mail: shenpres@shenpres.org

ShenPres.org

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!

July 2025

- 3 - Office Closed for Independence Day
- 7 - CCVT 1:00 pm
- 10 - COM 9:30 am
- 16 - Staff Meeting 10:00 am
- 17 - Pastors' Meeting 12:00 pm
- 17 - CPA 1:30 pm
- 22 - CPC 10:00 am
- 24 - CER 9:00 am
- 31 - PW Bible Study Overview 6:30 pm

August 2025

- 4 - CCVT 1:00 pm
- 7 - CRE Oversight 4:00 pm
- 12 - Nominations 10:00 am
- 13 - CPM 10:00 am
- 14 - COM 9:30 am
- 20 - Staff Meeting 10:00 am
- 20 - CNCD 1:30 pm
- 20 - Zoom Practice for Presbytery Meeting 7:00 pm
- 21 - Pastors' Meeting 12:00 pm
- 21 - CPA 1:30 pm
- 23 - Stated Meeting of Presbytery 9:30 am
- 25 - Shenandoah Press Deadline

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

