

Shenandoah Press

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Special points of interest:

- AI and Church
- New Members
- Oasis Dinner
- Much more...

Inside this issue:

Associate General Presbyter Report	2
Stated Presbytery Meeting	3
Hunger Funds	4
Trinty's Trip to India	5
Job Openings	6
Calendar Dates	8

A Message from our General Presbyter

My Dad was one of those people who never met a stranger. He would catch your eye and say hello. He would start conversations in the checkout line at the grocery store. He knew the folks at the hardware store, the local gas station and was the chief greeter at the door on Sunday mornings. My sister and I remember him as a person who showed respect to everyone and worked at getting to know you.

Now this sounds like he may have talked a lot – he didn't - what he did do was listen. I say all that as someone who begins conversations in the checkout line and tries to listen, though I may do more talking if I'm honest.

But one of the things I do, as he did, is look at people, and as always, I am in awe of God's creation, people all made up of the same stuff, and yet all different! What a miracle!

We forget that we are part of God's miracle of creation and that everyone on earth is a part of that creation because "God so loved the world... (John3:16)." Jesus was sent for everyone, and that all-encompassing love of God does not depend on our belief because it is God's love which made us in God's image and loves us still and all! So, whenever we look at someone else, we need to remember we are all, everyone, a part of God's miracle of creation.

Stop and look at the folks around you and maybe even start a conversation in the checkout line – give thanks to God for God's creation and the miracle of us all.

Blessings and happy spring,

Bronwen



Presbytery Staff

Bronwen Boswell,
General Presbyter & Stated Clerk
Email – presbytersc@shenpres.org

Nancy Meehan Yao,
Associate General Presbyter
Email – assocgp@shenpres.org

Kim Stroupe, Admin. Assistant
Email – kims@shenpres.org

Heather Carter, Funds Admin.
Email – bookkeeper@shenpres.org

Donna Lanaghan, Communications
Email – shenpres@shenpres.org

Ken Smiy, Treasurer

Associate General Presbyter—Nancy Meehan Yao

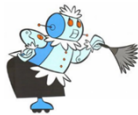
AI and Church

I know we have all seen, or heard stories, about AI, and our lives. Maybe it pops up as you are searching for information, as you begin to write a paper, sermon or newsletter article. Like everything else, we ask how, and when, and IF the use of AI applies to our lives as faith communities.

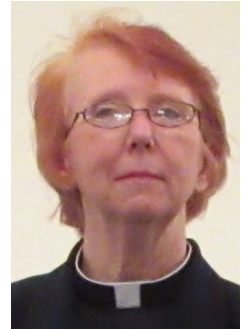
The letters AI are short for Artificial Intelligence. And while we, perhaps understandably, have concerns about this, we also need to step back and see how we are already using AI, and think about how we can faithfully decide how/when and if to use this tool.

We have all seen images and stories about the robots—

Some helpful:



Some scary.



So what do we need to consider as think about the faithful use of AI in our faith communities:

Scriptural and Theological Considerations:¹

That God is the Creator, and both gifts and charges humanity to be creative (be fruitful), and that we are given stewardship over creation (including technology).

If our “chief end” is to enjoy God and glorify God forever, then how will using AI help us in that? How might it interfere with that?

Ethical Considerations:

Is it “cheating” to use AI prompts to create/start a sermon/sermon series? CE class? Bible Study or bulletin covers? What about plagiarism issues: Are sources properly cited/given credit? Is the content generated showing appropriate care for others and reflecting of the diversity that God has created? Will jobs be reduced/displaced through the use of this technology? Are the images (especially of minors) being used for wrongful purposes?

Ecological Considerations:

Just because the content shows up digitally (unlike paper/journals/books, etc.) does not mean that it is “clean.” Or non-polluting. The use of AI includes the use of energy and water, as well as data centers being built in many marginalized areas.

The Presbytery discussed this topic in the Education time at the February 28 Presbytery meeting. Look for more times and methods of discussion as we learn about this tool and technology together, as people of faith.

Nancy

¹These categories come from Jason Moore’s *AI and the Church*, Invite Press, 2024.

Here are some resources to help us think faithfully about the use of AI in our lives together:

The Presbyterian Church (USA) has an Office of Innovation, with resources to help congregations and faith leaders in thinking about the use of this technology:

<https://pcusa.org/about-pcusa/agencies-entities/interim-unified-agency/ministry-areas/innovation/ai-and-church>

The Presbyterian Outlook has had a number of articles about this issue:

<https://pres-outlook.org/2024/02/artificial-intelligence-is-here-now-what/>

<https://pres-outlook.org/2024/03/what-is-ai/>

<https://pres-outlook.org/2024/02/ai-reflection-evolution-transformation/>

Christianity Today:

<https://www.christianitytoday.com/2023/09/artificial-intelligence-robots-soul-formation/>

The New York Times:

<https://www.nytimes.com/interactive/2021/07/16/opinion/ai-ethics-religion.html>

The New Garden Podcast:

<https://www.firstpresatl.org/the-new-garden-podcast>

208th Stated Meeting of Shenandoah Presbytery February 28, 2026 via Zoom



2025 Moderator, RE Debra Fitzgerald O'Connell
2026 Moderator, TE Jim Yao

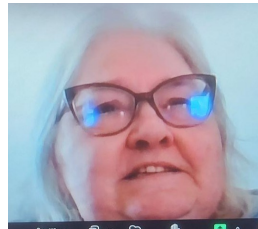


2026 Moderator,
Rev. Jim Yao,
Moorefield Church

We Welcome New Members to Shenandoah Presbytery



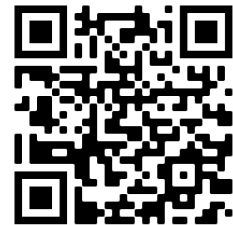
Rev. Alan Adams,
Honorably Retired



Rev. Susi Ennis,
Honorably Retired

For all documents and video
of the meeting, find us at
[https://shenpres.org/
presbytery-meeting/](https://shenpres.org/presbytery-meeting/)

The offering for the Stated Meeting was Open Doors of Harrisonburg. You may still donate using the QR code to the right, or [click here](#) to go to our Giving page.



Ordination Exam Readers Needed

Shenandoah Presbytery is asked to provide four readers total (2TE, 2RE) for reading ordination exams. Reading week for the Spring exams is May 5-9, 2026, and the reporting deadline is March 31, 2026. Please contact John Bethard (TE Charles Town PC, jbethard@ctpres.org) if you are interested.

The 2nd Annual Rural Ideas Conference

Have you ever wanted to be part of a gathering where every single person lives and works in a rural area or small town? This is your place!

What is the Rural Ideas Conference?

Hosted by the Town Square Collaborative, this event is designed to help your church:

- Embrace its role as an anchor institution in your community.
- Reclaim its identity in Jesus Christ.
- Focus on the unique opportunities and challenges of rural ministry.

What to Expect: To support these goals, we're bringing together:

- Leaders from across the country who specialize in rural congregations.
- Non-profit partners who can help churches better engage with their neighbors.
- A space dedicated entirely to the rural areas and small towns you love.

The 2nd Annual Rural Ideas Conference is held at University of the Ozarks, in Clarksville, Arkansas—and it is free to rural/small town faith leaders, through the Lilly Endowment. Housing in on campus dorms is also free to participants.

Want to learn more? <https://townsquareco.org/the-rural-ideas-conference/>



The 2nd Annual
Rural Ideas Conference
June 24–26, 2026

Mandatory Boundary Training

To serve our Lord faithfully, and to guard the welfare of our congregations, Shenandoah Presbytery requires that all congregational leaders (Teaching Elders, Commissioned Ruling Elders, and those At-Large) take part in a Mandatory Boundary Training, given through Shenandoah Presbytery, every three years. Others are invited and welcome to attend these trainings: Ruling Elders and Deacons from congregations, staff, and members of congregations as well.

If you are due for renewal in 2026, Nancy Meehan Yao has sent you an email stating that you are due. If you have questions about when you last completed your Mandatory Training, please contact Nancy at assocgp@shenpres.org and not the office staff.

We will have two sessions in March:

Thursday, March 19, 6:30 pm—9:30 pm - [register here](#).

Saturday, March 21, 9:30 am--12:30 pm - [register here](#).

SPACE IS LIMITED!

BOUNDARY
TRAINING

Strong Ministers Program Grants Spring 2026 Applications

Applications for the Spring distribution of the Strong Minister's Program Grants will be accepted through March 16. 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 -



Thank you to everyone in our presbytery who helps our “Cents-Ability” Hunger Funds make a difference in the lives of our neighbors near and far.

Thanks to your generosity, in 2025 we received a total of \$56,536 for the Cents-ability ministry - that means that in 2025 every local project received a total of \$1,359 each and regional/national/international projects each received \$2,513.

In addition, in 2025 we added 2 new local projects to receive Hunger Funds: Ashwood Food Pantry (in Hot Springs, VA) and Highland County Food Pantry (Monterey, VA). A full list of all projects that receive Hunger Funds is available as a “Fact Sheet” on our website: <https://shenpres.org/cents-ability/>

The Martinsburg Union Rescue Mission writes this thank-you to all of us: “... please know how grateful we are for your partnership. Every warm meal, every word of comfort, every changed life, it’s all because of your kindness. Our prayers are filled with gratitude for you!”

Help us make 2026 another year in which we help to end hunger!

Submitted by Sara Holben, Hunger Funds



Small Church, BIG Generosity The Stewardship Workshop on 3/7 in person at Massanetta

Rev. Erin Skinner, Ministry Relations Officer from the Presbyterian Foundation will be leading events about Stewardship and Generosity, on Saturday, March 7, beginning at 10:30, at Massanetta Springs, with lunch provided.

For more information, contact Rev. Dr. Nancy Meehan Yao assocgp@shenpres.org.

~~For Thursday, March 5, via zoom: REGISTER HERE~~ **EVENT FULL**

For Saturday, March 7, in person at Massanetta Springs: [REGISTER HERE](#)

Oasis Event on Easter Monday, April 6, in the Harrisonburg Area

Through the generous gift of the Ramkey family, pastors have the opportunity to relax, breathe, and spend time together.

We will be doing an Oasis event on the evening of Monday, April 6 - and would love to hear your suggestions/ideas about what, and where to spend time together. Some of us will be staying at Massanetta for the Pastor’s Respite, but the Oasis event is open to any pastoral leader who would like to join.

Please contact Nancy Meehan Yao, Associate General Presbyter, at assocgp@shenpres.org, with ideas/suggestions/great places to get together and share some time with colleagues. No agenda, no topics, just being present with each other—and maybe some really good food, too!

Trinity Church Visit Members in India

Our trip to India was intended to touch bases with the family of Haresh, Hamitha, Harshita, and Hazel, long-distance members of Trinity's congregation, and to further assure ourselves that it was right and reasonable to support them in their mission to care for children. Our experience greatly exceeded both expectations and hopes. We formed deep bonds of friendship with the family and several of their helpers, met and spent time with the first ten children under their care, and met some forty other children whose needs are acute. We feel more certain than ever that we should move ahead, doing all we can to support them in their outreach.



We also discovered that the Nags have established three house church congregations in outlying villages where they minister to people whose circumstances preclude traveling to church on Sunday mornings and whose Christian inclinations tend to set them apart from their neighbors. We shared communion with two of these groups in what was for me the most profound and different expression of the Eucharist I have known. For starters, we used chapatis.

The \$6,000 grant from Presbytery was essential to our ability to carry our love to them, and will forever remind us of the resources we wish to continue to offer in bringing our support to the growing number of children whose needs they are so amply meeting.

Yes, I predict that you will be hearing more from us. We are also hoping to make some brief presentation at an upcoming Presbytery meeting and of course stand ready to visit and involve other congregations, as well as individuals and secular organizations.

Namaskaara abng dhanyabada. Thank you, and all the best wishes to you,

Mark Facknitz



Covenant Church Taizé Worship

Covenant Presbyterian Church in Staunton will be offering Taizé worship services each Wednesday evening at 7:00 through March 25. These half hour services include beautiful music, Scripture readings, prayer, poetry, and ten minutes of silence for reflection. A simple meal of soup and bread at 6:00 in the Great Hall precedes the service. Everyone is welcome.

Music at Hebron Church— Organ Concert

Join us for a free concert on Sunday, March 22, 2026 at 3:00 PM at Hebron Presbyterian Church, 423 Hebron Road in Staunton, VA.

Nancy Novelly, from Southport, NC will present music from Sweelinck to Brahms and Beyond. She will be joined on the program by her daughter Anne-Michele Yong, soprano and Angela Harrington, flute and alto. Reception to follow.

Shenandoah Valley Westminster Canterbury Seeks Chaplain

Shenandoah Valley Westminster Canterbury in Winchester, Virginia, is looking for a full-time Chaplain. This will be a second full-time chaplain position. If interested, or for more information, please contact Rev. Bill Everhart at 540-665-5971.

Hebron Church Job Opening

Hebron is hiring a new secretary. Are you interested? Computer literate on MS Word. 12 -16 hours a week. Bulletins, Newsletters, Correspondence, Greeting Visitors and Answering the phone. Please call the church office - 540-885-1648.

Volunteer as a Camp Chaplain!

We'll provide housing and meals, you provide some energy to our Netta Day Camp campers and some pastoral care and spiritual support to our summer staff. There will also be time for personal study and rest. Read the [full description here](#), and contact Massanetta's Program Director, Rev. Colleen Earp, at colleen@massanettasprings.org if you're interested.



**PRESBYTERY OF
SHENANDOAH**

P. O. Box 1146
Harrisonburg, VA 22803

Phone: 540-433-2556
E-mail: shenpres@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!

March 2026

- 4 - CCVT 11:00 am
- 5 - CRE Oversight 3:30 pm
- 11 - CPM 10 am at Massanetta Springs
- 12 - COM 9:30 am
- 17 - Nominations 10:00 am
- 19 - CNCD 1:30 pm
- 19 - CPA 1:30 pm
- 23 - ShenPress Deadline
- 24 - CPC 10:00 am
at Massanutten Church

Other Dates

- 5 - Stewardship Workshop 6:30 pm
- 7 - Session Minutes Review 10:00 am
at Massanutten Church
- 7 - Stewardship Workshop 10:30 am
at Massanetta Springs
- 14 - Session Minutes Review 10:00 am
at Staunton Third Church
- 16 - Strong Ministers Grant Deadline
- 19 - Pastors' Meeting 12:00 pm
- 19 - Boundary Training 6:30 pm
- 21 - Boundary Training 9:30 am
- 21 - Session Minutes Review 10:00 am
at Petersburg Church
- 28 - Session Minutes Review 10:00 am
at Opequon Church

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

