



A Message from our General Presbyter

What does it mean to be vital? It is a question often asked of congregations. What would the community miss if you weren't here? Sometimes that is an easy question for folks to answer, but many times it is not.

The Committee on Church Vitality and Transformation is working to provide resources for congregations to reflect upon those questions, as well as prime the pump for ideas that could help increase the vitality of any congregation. You can look them up on the presbytery website's [CCVT page](#).

And I would suggest that even before going to the list of ideas and resources, a congregation should be in prayer - specific prayer asking for the leading of the Holy Spirit. A congregation should also take stock of who they are now. It doesn't help to return to the old stories or who we were back then, unless it's rediscovering the enthusiasm and energy that was felt about a project. And when we talk about community, about knowing our neighbors, well that takes some work because once again change happens.

I think of the house I grew up in. When my parents bought the house, it was on a dead-end street. Then that became a two-lane street, which then became the four-lane it is today. Same house, same street, but the neighborhood has changed. And to change is to have life.

We are changing too! The presbytery staff is becoming a mobile office. With the burst pipe earlier this year over our office, and the fact that we were in the building so little, and we have been working from home anyway, in June the staff will begin meeting in different churches throughout the presbytery. We will begin with one date in June with the hopes that folks in the region where we will be will come and join us for conversation. There will be more information coming. Of course, you will be able to continue calling us through the current phone line and using the same emails.

We look forward to being out and about with you all.

Blessings,

Bronwen

Stated Meeting of Presbytery May 19

The 209th Stated Meeting of Shenandoah Presbytery will be held on **Tuesday, May 19, 2026** at 9:30 am at **Charles Town Presbyterian Church**, in Charles Town, West Virginia. No registration is required for the meeting. Please sign in on May 19 at the registration table.

If you have any questions, contact the presbytery office at shenpres@shenpres.org or 540-433-2556.



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Happy Eastertide! The Season of easter lasts 50 days, until Pentecost. That is 10 more days than Lent, which has 40. 10 more days of joy in celebrating Christ's Resurrection!

In this time of Eastertide, many of us are hearing and reading Scripture about the early disciples, their reactions to the horrifying crucifixion and burial of Jesus, their grief and confusion, and their interactions with the Risen Lord.

One of those stories comes from Luke 24: 13-35, which we commonly know as the story of the Road to Emmaus. Two followers of Jesus have heard the stories the women brought back from the grave on Easter morning, but now, on Easter evening, they are walking...trudging...their way back home. A stranger walks with them, and they talk. They invite the stranger in, and as he sits at the Table, and breaks bread, their eyes are opened, and they recognize Jesus.

Sara Miles, in her book "Take this Bread", writes about her first experience of taking communion. She did not grow up in a faith tradition and writes that she did not know how to say the Lord's Prayer, or any kind of liturgy. She had had a life of food justice work in South America and working in professional kitchens. One Sunday morning, she wandered into St Gregory's, an Episcopal church in San Francisco. There was standing and sitting, some singing, more standing and sitting. A woman priest invited all to come forward to the Table. Then, Miles writes:

"someone was putting a piece of crumbly bread in my hands, saying "the body of Christ," and handing me a goblet of sweet wine, saying "the blood of Christ," and then something outrageous and terrifying happened to me. Jesus happened to me."

As Presbyterians, we understand that, by the Holy Spirit, at the Lord's Supper, we are brought into the very presence of Christ, and that Christ is with us at that meal, just as Christ was with the disciples at that Table in Emmaus, and as Christ was with Miles in that first communion.

So here are some questions for us to ask ourselves, and ponder in our hearts:

- ◆ When/how have you experienced Christ in Communion?
- ◆ The disciples on the road were at their very depth of grief and confusion—and Jesus came and walked with them, even though they did not know it. In looking back at your life, how/when has Christ walked with you?
- ◆ The disciples ran back to Jerusalem to share what they experienced. Sara Miles began to work in her church's food ministry. How have you been changed by an encounter with the Risen Lord? What did you do after that?

Blessings-

Nancy



College Scholarship Deadline—June 1

Shenandoah Presbytery has limited funds to support members of Presbyterian churches in the Presbytery pursue post-high school education. Applications must include an endorsement from the applicant's session and completed applications are due by June 1st, 2026. We will accept mailed applications, but digital is preferred. Go to [our webpage](#) to view and download the application. The Committee on Educational Resources will evaluate applications at our July meeting and will notify all scholarship recipients by August 1st, 2026.

If you have any questions about the application, disbursement procedures, or the scholarship process in general, please contact Rachel Watson, chair of the Committee on Educational Resources, at revrachelwatson@gmail.com.

Blessing Boxes

submitted by the Hunger Action Subcommittee

A Blessing given - a Blessing received.

That's the simple idea behind the many "Blessing Boxes" that have appeared in front of churches all over the country - and even here in our own presbytery.

A "blessing box" is a weather-proof container of some kind where food items (usually non-perishable), toiletries, or other household items are provided on the basis of: "Take what you need; Give what you can." No pre-conditions. No judgment. Just sharing with neighbors who might need a helping hand.

A recent survey about "Blessing Boxes" here in Shenandoah Presbytery had 11 different congregations responding to tell us about their boxes and the ongoing need for access to food in their own communities. Everyone reported that they re-fill their boxes at least weekly - and many need to re-fill more than once a day. Often the supplies come from the members of the church, but sometimes members of the community help to fill the boxes as well.

The boxes are filled with things like peanut butter, cans of tuna fish, breakfast bars and all sorts of non-perishable foods. In some cases, when available, fresh produce and even fresh baked goods are provided, along with diapers, toiletries and hygiene items. A few churches include books as well.

What a tremendous way to share a blessing with our neighbors in need. Thank you to all the churches in Shenandoah Presbytery who have taken this step in faith.

To help support the ministry of the Blessing Boxes, the Committee on Mission and Outreach **welcomes domestic grant requests for an existing blessing box OR a request from any congregation wanting to start one.** To find an application for "Mission Grants - Domestic" — please check the Presbytery's grant request webpage: <https://shenpres.org/scholarship-grants/#grants-domestic> . The next grant request deadline is October 1.

Do you have a story to share about the "Blessing Box" at your church? We'd love to hear it! Send it to Sara Holben at: saholben53@gmail.com .



The Blessing Box at Hedgesville Presbyterian Church

Free Liturgy for Older Adult Sunday

Each year, POAMN prepares a worship service honoring the gifts and contributions of older adults. The liturgy, prayers, and resources are designed for use in congregational worship and can also be adapted for retirement communities or other settings.

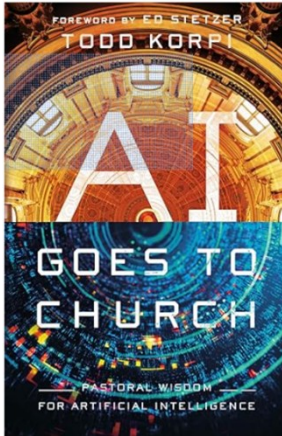
Older Adult Sunday, observed on May 3, 2026, is an ideal occasion to use this service, though congregations are welcome to select another date that suits their context. This year's worship service was created by Jen Rabenaldt, CRE, of First Presbyterian Church in San Luis Obispo, California. [Download the service here.](#)



Past Worship Guides Available on POAMN's Website

POAMN's annual resource guide contains a worship service for Older Adult Sunday. Find the services created for 2025, 2024, and 2023 on [our website](#).

AI Goes to Church: Pastoral Wisdom for Artificial Intelligence



In May, we will begin a book study, via zoom, using Todd Korpi's book *AI Goes to Church: Pastoral Wisdom for Artificial Intelligence*. We will meet for four Thursday evenings in May: **May 7, 14, 21 and 28**, beginning at 7:00 pm. The book may be purchased through any bookstore or online book retailer.

Individuals and church groups are welcome to attend! Space is limited to 30 screens to facilitate good conversation. If you will be meeting as a group on one screen, please register only once for the group.

To register and receive the zoom link: https://shenpres.breezechms.com/form/AI_and_Church

For any questions, please contact Nancy Meehan Yao, assocgp@shenpres.org, or 540-236-2609.

Mandatory Boundary Training June 2026

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 every three years in a Mandatory Boundary Training, given through Shenandoah Presbytery. 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 Training, please contact Nancy at assocgp@shenpres.org and not the office staff.

We require this, not because we want to make more rules, but because we want to help you be a healthier church. The more people in the congregation that know - and have - healthy boundaries, the healthier our congregations will be! Boundary Trainings are offered periodically throughout the year.

We will have two sessions in June, via Zoom:
Thursday, June 4 at 6:30 pm: [REGISTER HERE](#)
Saturday, June 13 at 10:00 am: [REGISTER HERE](#)

SPACE IS LIMITED!



In person trainings may also be arranged: contact Rev. Dr. Nancy Meehan Yao assocgp@shenpres.org. Or, Sessions may choose to use the Boundary Training with content approved by the Presbytery, as a Session directed training, either at one event, or as a devotion at Session, spread over months of Session meetings. Contact Rev. Dr. Nancy Meehan Yao for information.

General Assembly Resources from Presbyterian Outlook

This year, the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) meets in its 227th General Assembly (GA). This is a gathering of commissioners (Ruling Elders and Teaching Elders) elected from every Presbytery, along with staff and observers. Some call it “a family reunion,” for we certainly are gathering as the family of Christ with our sisters and brothers. The prayerful discernment General Assembly takes shapes the theology, governance and mission priorities of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) At the assembly, commissioners prayerfully discern the Spirit as it forms and moves us, the church.



The GA meets this year in Milwaukee, from June 22-July 2. Committees will first meet in committees online, to discern and discuss the matters before them, and then join in person at plenaries (whole gathering meetings) in Milwaukee the second week.

The Presbyterian Outlook is offering many resources (most of them free) to help us stay up to date on the General Assembly. There are bulletin inserts, conversations with those standing for Moderator, text and email updates: <https://pres-outlook.org/ga/>. These will be available after May 1st:

This Presbytery elected Commissioners at its November 2025 meeting, and those commissioners are:
 Teaching Elder Commissioners: Samantha Coggins (Waynesboro First), Rob Vaughan (Romney)
 Alternate Teaching Elder Commissioners: Jeff Binder (Staunton First), Brint Pratt Keyes (Tinkling Spring)
 Ruling Elder Commissioners: Mark Facknitz (Trinity), Joe Crockett (Bridgewater)
 Alternate Ruling Elder Commissioner: Denise Rouse (Slanesville).

Please hold our commissioners, and all those attending in prayer.

Ecumenical Transitional Leadership Training

Union Presbyterian Seminary’s Leadership Institute, in partnership with Eastern Mennonite University, is excited to offer this [innovative hybrid program](#) designed to equip pastors and lay leaders across denominations for the vital work of interim ministry. Over the course of this program, participants will engage with 11 modules covering essential competencies for transitional ministry:

Format: Online (May 17–23) + Live Q&A (May 24–30) + Optional In-Person (June 3–4, Richmond, VA)

- ● Key Topics: Grief/trauma, conflict transformation, systems thinking, holy listening, transition teams, soul care.
- ● Pricing Through May 1:
- ● Online only: \$349–\$649
- ● Online + In-Person: \$599–\$1,099
- ● Subsidized tiers available. Late fee after May 1.

Extras (with in-person attendance): 12-month course access, library resources, monthly content, and cohort community.

[Registration Info: Get all the details and register here!](#)

CRE Mental Health Event on Saturday, May 30

The CRE Oversight Committee is offering a workshop on Saturday, May 30, at Massanetta Springs Resource Center on working with individuals with mental health issues. The workshop will be led by Rev. Bill Everhart. We will gather at 9:30 am with the workshop beginning at 10:00 am. Lunch will be provided in the Massanetta Springs dining area. Please [register here](#) by **May 21** so we have a count for lunch.



Bill Everhart has worn many hats in ministry, from parish ministry, to counseling, and on to a combination of the two. With a wealth of talent, he currently serves as a Chaplain at Westminster-Canterbury in Winchester, Virginia, and is well suited as this upcoming event speaker. He conducts seminars and classes when he can, and has a good perspective on the subject. He currently lives near Front Royal, Virginia.

Judy Hensley/Bob Osborne

[CRE Mental Health Workshop Registration](#)

Choir Robes Give-Away

We at McDowell Presbyterian Church have a set of choir robes that we have not used in nearly two decades. Session voted to donate them and we are reaching out to see if any other church wants them.

We have a total of 25 maroon robes in these sizes:
XL- 3 L- 4 M- 11 S- 6 Youth XL- 1

We have 20 white/gold reversible sashes and 22 green/purple reversible sashes.
They all need a good professional clean as they have been in the closet unused for years.

If your church is interested, please contact Tammy Minnigh, Session Clerk, at 540-396-3418 or tammydemigirl@gmail.com



UKirk Collegiate Ministries & Rise Harrisonburg



Do you have High School Seniors at your church who are preparing to head off to college in the fall? Connect them to Presbyterian campus ministry by passing along information about UKirk!

The U stands for University and Kirk means "church" in Scottish. Visit <https://ukirk.org/> to learn more about UKirk being a church home away from home for students! You can see where UKirk ministries are located or refer a student to one.

If you have youth going to college in the Harrisonburg area, we hope you will check out Rise Harrisonburg at <https://www.riseharrisonburg.com/>. Campus Minister Alexis Owens is ready to welcome students to their community!

Let CER Committee Member Rebekah Witt (rwitt@opequonchurch.org) know if you have any questions.

Buffalo Gap Church Celebrates 100 Years!

On June 14 Buffalo Gap Presbyterian Church will celebrate 100 years! Meal at 1:00 pm with a service to follow. The Church will provide fried chicken. Bring a covered dish, and come celebrate!

RSVP to: Debbie Hinkle 540-280-3867, or Tammy Arbogast 540-487-8623.



Warrenton Church - Palm Sunday Music Series IV

On Sunday, March 29, 2026, the Warrenton Presbyterian Church Festival Choir of 37 local singers and 4 guest soloists presented Mozart's *Requiem* to an audience of more than 200 people in the newly renovated sanctuary.



The singers were accompanied by a guest orchestra of 11 musicians plus the WPC organist and pianist with WPC Music Director Jeff Anderson conducting. Three of the soloists were Jeff's former students.

In addition to the *Requiem*, the program included *Sing Me to Heaven* by Daniel Gawthrop and *Deep Peace* by Elaine Hagenberg.

This is the fourth year that the choir has presented a Palm Sunday concert. Past years' programs included *Requiem* by John Rutter (2023), *Requiem* by Gabriel Fauré (2024), and *The Seven Last Words of Christ* by Théodore Dubois (2025).

Hedgesville Church Easter Gathering and Egg Hunt



Pastor Vanessa, the Easter bunny (Glenn Jenkins), and Mira Smith (the pastor's granddaughter)



The Egg Hunt

Hedgesville Presbyterian Church held their annual Easter gathering and egg hunt on March 28, 2026. Children and adults gathered to hear the Easter story and hunt over 1,500 Easter eggs. Pastor Vanessa Smith Ellis lead the group in songs after the Easter story. Prizes were given to all children.



Pastor Vanessa and Mira lead the singing



PRESBYTERIAN WOMEN SYNOD OF THE MID-ATLANTIC SUMMER GATHERING



Thursday, June 11 – Sunday, June 14, 2026

Massanetta Springs Camp and Conference Center, Harrisonburg, Virginia



We Belong to Each Other!

“Now you are the body of Christ and individually members of it.” (1 Corinthians 12:27)

Presenters and other leaders include, but are not limited to, the following:

Sarah Leer, writer of “Suggestions for Leaders” for the 2026-27 PW/*Horizons* Bible study,
United Through Christ, Bound to Each Other: Paul’s First Letter to the Corinthians

Susan Jackson-Dowd, Executive
Director, PW, Inc., PC(USA)

Pam Snyder, Moderator, PW,
Inc., Board of Directors

Kelsey Law, Vice Moderator, PW,
Inc., Board of Directors

Ivy Lopedito, Office of
Public Witness, PC(USA)

Teri McDowell Ott, Editor and Publisher,
The Presbyterian Outlook (Sunday Worship)

Kate Rascoe, Pastor
(Morning Devotions)

Click on the brochure above for registration form, or find it on our PW webpage: <https://shenpres.org/presbyterian-women/>

If mailing registration, include **check made payable to PW/SMA/SG**. If registering by email, mail check only asap. All registrations will be confirmed by email. Registration forms and/or payment should be mailed to: Shelda Wills, 401 Craig Street, Christiansburg, VA 24073. Emailed registration forms should be sent to: swills@usit.net.

NO REFUNDS AFTER MAY 25. EARLY BIRD REGISTRATIONS MUST BE POSTMARKED BY MAY 1.



Pass It On

Bible & Church Music Conference

Worship Schedule July 19-25, 2026



Sunday: Rev. Tom Are, preaching from Deuteronomy 34:1-8 and Mark 1:14-15; music led by pickup choir

Monday: Rev. Anna George Traynam preaching from Philippians 2:1-13; music led by conference choir, chamber choir, and campfire choir



Tuesday: Rev. Dr. Lis Valle Ruiz, preaching from Isaiah 52:3-10 and Romans 10:8-15; music led by conference choir, chamber choir, and jam choir

Thursday: Rev. Nate Taylor, preaching from Isaiah 52:3-10 and Romans 10:8-15; music led by youth choir and youth handbell choir



2026 Speakman Chair of Preaching



Rev. Dr. Aqueelah Ligonde of Ministry Architects will preach **Wednesday** from Psalm 145:1-7 with the conference choir and adult handbell choir leading music, and **Friday** from Psalm 145:8-21 with music leadership from the conference, chamber, and adult handbell choirs.



Worship is every night at 7:00 in Hudson Auditorium and is open to the public. Learn more about our leadership, sign up for a choir or class, or register for the whole conference at MassanettaSprings.org/programs/bcmc or at the QR code to the right.





SHEN PRES YOUTH RETREAT

OCTOBER 16-18, 2026
Grades 6-12 at Massanetta Springs
Contact Colleen Stearns at colleen@fpcwinc.org with questions

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11-08-2005

FIRST SAMUEL MEETS SECOND SAMUEL

**PRESBYTERY OF
SHENANDOAH**

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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!

May 2026

- 6 - CCVT 11:00 am
- 7 - CRE Oversight 9:00 am
- 12 - Nominations 10:00 am
- 13 - CPM 10:00 am
- 14 - COM 9:30 am
- 20 - CNCD 1:00 pm
- 20 - CER 2:00 pm
- 21 - Shenandoah Press Deadline
- 21 - CPA 1:30 pm

Other Dates

- 7 - AI Goes to Church 7:00 pm
- 14 - AI Goes to Church 7:00 pm
- 19 - Stated Meeting of Presbytery 9:30 am
at Charles Town Presbyterian Church
- 21 - Pastors' Meeting 12:00 pm
- 28 - AI Goes to Church 7:00 pm
- 25 - Presbytery Office Closed for Memorial Day
- 28 - AI Goes to Church 7:00 pm

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

