

## Shenandoah Presbytery

### Highlights of the 209<sup>th</sup> Stated Meeting

Tuesday May 19<sup>th</sup> Charles Town Presbyterian Church

Ninety-nine participants gathered for the May presbytery meeting in Charles Town which were gracious hosts for the day. Thank you Charles Town!

Nancy Meehan Yao led the yearly policy review and offered once again to help any church still needing to write their own.

We welcomed the Rev MaryAnn McKibben Dana, Associate pastor Trinity Presbyterian Church, Herndon Va, author and coach as the preacher of the day. The offering was collected for the Jefferson County Community Ministries which helps to provide housing, food, clothing, daily meals and other services.

Rev. McKibben Dana was the featured speaker for the educational hour entitled DESIGNING YOUR MINISTRY. It was an engaging presentation.

Bobby Spurgeon, Commissioned Ruling Elder for the Goshen Congregation, shared the sessions resolution on peacemaking asking each session in our presbytery to consider doing the same. The letter and resolution is attached to these highlights.

A reminder that there will be s Shen Pres Youth Retreat Oct 16-18 at Massanetta Springs

We sang Happy Birthday to the co-chair of Nominations, Ann Held during their report.

The Commissioners to General Assembly were commissioned. They are Ruling Elders Mark Facknitz (Trinity ) and Joe Crockett (Bridgewater) and Teaching Elders, Rob Vaughn (Romney) and Samantha Coggins (1<sup>st</sup> Waynesboro). General Assembly is from June 22- July 2. Please keep them in your prayers.

The COM recommended the presbytery grant retirement to the following Teaching Elders with kind words said about each of them.

The Rev. E. Reed Hopkins, pastor Loch Willow, effective May 3, 2026.

The Rev. John McDonald, interim pastor Mount Horeb, effective June 31,2026

The Rev. Karen Greenawalt, pastor Gerrardstown, effective July 31, 2026

The General Presbyter and Stated Clerk, the Rev. Bronwen Boswell announced that she is retiring September 30, 2026. More information about the process going forward to be available at the August meeting of presbytery.

## **A Call to Courageous Peace: From the Pastor's Heart**

As we look at the world around us today, it is impossible to ignore the "Epic Fury" of escalating conflicts across the globe. From Ukraine to Gaza and Iran, we witness daily the tragic loss of civilian lives—mothers, fathers, and children who each bear the *Imago Dei*, the Image of God. In the face of such widening violence, we are compelled to stop and ask ourselves: **"What are we becoming?"**

This question has led our Session into a profound season of soul-searching and prayer. I do not approach these difficult topics as a distant observer. As many of you know, I served in the **United States Air Force during the Vietnam War**. I know the weight of the uniform, the demands of duty, and the heavy complexities of national defense.

Because I have stood on both sides—as a veteran who has served his country and as a shepherd who serves the **Prince of Peace**—I have come to realize that our highest loyalty to our nation is to speak truth to power when the habit of war threatens to eclipse the pursuit of peace.

Out of this conviction, the Session of Goshen Presbyterian Church has composed and sent a formal resolution to the **Shenandoah Presbytery**. We believe that as a **Matthew 25** community, we cannot remain silent. This resolution is an invitation for our sister churches to join us in a courageous witness for peace, grounded in the following pillars:

- **Recognition of Human Sanctity:** Striving to see the face of Christ in every victim of conflict, regardless of borders.
- **A Call for Diplomacy:** Urging our national leaders to prioritize de-escalation and seek the "off-ramps" that save lives.
- **A Devotion to Shalom:** Moving toward a peace that is not merely the absence of war, but the active presence of justice.

In taking this stand, we continue to recognize and deeply honor the sacrifice of our service members. Having walked with families through the quiet, enduring wounds that remain long after the combat ends, I know that while war always promises precision, it delivers lasting grief. True support for our troops means ensuring they are never placed in harm's way for avoidable conflicts.

Our Reformed tradition calls us to the hard work of **"Just Peacemaking."** We are reminded in **James 1:20** that *"the wrath of man does not produce the righteousness of God."* It takes strength to go to war, but it takes even greater strength to stop—to choose the path of diplomacy when pride demands retaliation.

Jesus said, *"Blessed are the peacemakers"* (**Matthew 5:9**). He did not say blessed are those who win at all costs. We invite you to join us in this journey of prayer and advocacy.

## **A Prayer for our World**

*Gracious and Holy God, we thank you for the gift of peace which passes all understanding. We lift up the leaders of the nations, asking for the wisdom of Solomon to find the path of restraint. We pray for the protection of every life—for our service members in harm's way and for the innocent families caught in the crossfire.*

*Lord, forgive us when we find war easier than the hard work of diplomacy. Soften our hearts, steady our hands, and guide our feet into the way of Shalom. May our witness reflect the heart of your Son, the Prince of Peace. Amen.*

COMMITTEE ON EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES

**Resolution of the Session of Goshen Presbyterian Church (PCUSA)**

**On the Moral Imperative of Peacemaking in Global Conflict**

**WHEREAS**, the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) has a long-standing historical witness to "Just Peacemaking," asserting that our primary calling as followers of Christ is to pursue the peace of God in a broken world; and

**WHEREAS**, the **Shenandoah Presbytery** has formally committed to being a **Matthew 25 Presbytery**, pledging to act on the words of Jesus to care for the "least of these," which necessitates protecting the vulnerable and seeking justice for those suffering from the systemic violence of war; and

**WHEREAS**, the current military operations involving the United States and Iran have escalated into a widening conflict with mounting civilian casualties—reported to exceed 1,500 lives in recent weeks—causing extensive destruction to families and communities who bear the **Imago Dei** (Image of God); and

**WHEREAS**, we recognize the profound sacrifice of American service members and their families, understanding as a community that while war promises precision, it in reality delivers lasting grief and enduring wounds to those placed in harm's way; and

**WHEREAS**, we affirm our respect for the governing authorities and those who serve in our military, recognizing that their devotion to duty is a profound expression of citizenship; yet we believe that the truest support for our nation and its defenders is the pursuit of restraint, ensuring that lives are never risked in unnecessary wars or avoidable conflicts that do not serve the cause of true justice; and

**WHEREAS**, we view with profound alarm and deep grief the sustained military actions and aggression by Israel in Gaza, the West Bank, and now Lebanon, noting that while nations seek security, the resulting humanitarian catastrophes—marked by the destruction of civilian infrastructure, the displacement of families, and the mounting toll of innocent lives—cannot be ignored by the Christian conscience; and we assert that this current path of escalation further destabilizes the region, represents a moral crisis, and moves us away from the biblical vision of *shalom*; and

**WHEREAS**, the "wrath of man does not produce the righteousness of God" (**James 1:20**), and our moral concern extends to all ongoing conflicts where human life is devalued, including the prolonged war between **Russia and Ukraine**, where the normalization of violence continues to erode the global sanctity of life; and

**WHEREAS**, a significant majority of our fellow citizens now favor a swift end to involvement, reflecting a moral intuition that we must choose a path of restraint before our national identity is further eroded by perpetual warfare;

**THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the Session of Goshen Presbyterian Church hereby:**

1. **Affirms** that our **Matthew 25 commitment** compels us to see the face of Christ in the victims of conflict, regardless of national border, and requires us to ask not "Are we winning?" but "What are we becoming?"
2. **Calls** upon national leaders to prioritize the strength of diplomacy over the pride of retaliation, seeking immediate "off-ramps" to de-escalate the "Epic Fury" campaign and other global hostilities.
3. **Commits** to our Reformed tradition of "Just Peacemaking," moving beyond military strategy to a path of humanity and restraint that reflects the heart of God.

4. **Urges** a renewed focus on the protection of all those currently in harm's way—civilians and service members alike—acknowledging that while we support the institutions of our government, our highest loyalty to them is expressed by seeking a swift transition toward a peace that is not merely the absence of war, but the presence of justice.

**BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED** that the Session of Goshen Presbyterian Church respectfully **calls upon the churches of the Shenandoah Presbytery** to join us in this witness, to adopt similar resolutions, and to take a courageous stand for peace within our region and beyond.

**BE IT FINALLY RESOLVED** that we offer our prayers for the wisdom of our leaders and the healing of the nations, following the One who said, “Blessed are the peacemakers” (**Matthew 5:9**).

**ADOPTION AND ATTESTATION**

This resolution was moved, seconded, and **ADOPTED** by the Session of Goshen Presbyterian Church at its meeting held on the 26<sup>th</sup> day of April, 2026.

Attested by:

Bobby Spang

Moderator of Session

B. E. [Signature]

Clerk of Session

**Members of the Session in Affirmation:**

Jina M. Glenn \_\_\_\_\_

Janya M. Bryant \_\_\_\_\_

William E. [Signature] \_\_\_\_\_

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