

**PRESBYTERY OF
SHENANDOAH**

4 Weems Lane, #333
Winchester, VA 22601

Phone: 540-433-2556

E-mail: shenpres@shenpres.org

Shenandoah Press

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A Message from our General Presbyter

As I write this, General Assembly is in full swing. Your commissioners have finished their committee work and we are now all in Milwaukee going through the reports and recommendations from that good committee work.

Yes, even though a committee has done challenging work, the assembly has the right to look at it all again. And they are! This year I am in my assigned seat as the General Presbyter-Stated Clerk of Shenandoah with other GPs and Stated Clerks and we are of course talking among ourselves as we watch the commissioners do their work, it's been fun!

Many of you may think that sitting through such meetings without having the ability to make the decisions would be boring – but we clerk types – well, we love it. The thing is we understand our polity, which is that the councils of the church make decisions through prayer and discernment and voting and majority rules. So, when you talk about GA and them – you are actually talking about the group of people, including our commissioners from Shenandoah, who are gathered in Milwaukee this week to make decisions on behalf of the PCUSA. The staff in Louisville are the ones that must make sure that what has been voted on gets done!

Remember that GA is us, equal numbers of ruling elders and teaching elders along with advisory delegates – Young Adult Advisory Delegate (YAADS), Theological Student Advisory Delegates (TSADS), and Partner Advisory Delegates (other denominations and or mission partners) (PADS). All are here because they love the church so are willing to make the time to be a part of the decision-making process. Young and old, different nationalities, different states, different abilities - it takes us all to be the church. And it is not all work. We have had meaningful worship, sung great hymns and songs, and prayed. We have celebrated and heard awe-inspiring stories from around the church and the good work that is happening on behalf of Jesus.

So, I ask that you continue to keep our commissioners and all of General Assembly in your prayers as they finish the work, travel home and begin the work of interpreting all of it to us as we work together for the kingdom of God.

Blessings,
Bronwen



New Mailing Address Effective Immediately!

Having moved out of our physical office at Massanetta Springs, we have acquired a new mailing address. For easier accessibility for the staff, we now have a Winchester address.

Please change your contact information **now** to reflect this new address. This change is effective immediately. Thank you.

Shenandoah Presbytery
4 Weems Lane, #333
Winchester, VA 22601

Questions? Contact the office at shenpres@shenpres.org or 540-433-2556

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

Many of us, this summer, might be hearing from Paul's letter to the church in Rome. It is kind of a funny book, for Paul is writing to people he has not yet met. While he is hoping to go to them (and while he is planning on asking them for financial support), he has become aware of "some things" that are happening in the faith community.

The faith community in Rome was diverse, made up of both Gentiles and Jews. There are different histories, different life experiences, different languages, practices and expectations. These all exist within a larger social and political structure.

And Paul writes to them to remind them...of their baptism.

As Presbyterians, we sometimes say "remember your baptism" when many of us cannot, for we were too young at that moment.

One of the striking things I find about our understanding of baptism is that it is not a "one off," and I mean that in a number of ways.

First, that the action of God in baptism, is an anointing of the Holy Spirit. It has lifelong effects, as it anoints us for ministry. All of us. Each of us.

Second, it is a joining into the body of Christ. It is not a solo action.

And third, that body has a responsibility. We have parts to say, and to do, when someone is baptized. We make a pledge, a promise to, by our words and our actions, demonstrate the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

One of my favorite parts of the baptismal liturgy (which comes to us out of the French Reformed Church tradition) says "For you, little one, the Spirit of God moved over the waters at creation, and the Lord God made covenants with his people.

It was for you that the Word of God became flesh and lived among us, full of grace and truth. For you, Jesus Christ suffered death, crying out at the end, "It is finished!" For you Christ triumphed over death, rose in newness of life, and ascended to rule over all.

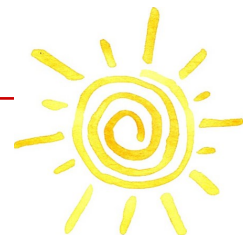
All of this was done for you, little one, though you do not know any of this yet.

But we will continue to tell you this good news until it becomes your own. And so the promise of the gospel is fulfilled: "We love because God first loved us."

We will continue to tell you this good news until it becomes your own. The waters of baptism have claimed us, all of us, as God's people, united in Christ, and we are empowered to tell of God's goodness, mercy, justice and love.

May we live that out, as together, we are the body of Christ.

Nancy



Presbytery Staff's First Mobile Meeting

The Shenandoah Presbytery staff began our monthly mobile meeting on June 24 at Slanesville Presbyterian Church in Slanesville, West Virginia.

Ruling Elder and Clerk of Session, Denise Rouse set the narthex up for us. She supplied coffee, snacks, water and soda. She was a wonderful host! Thank you, Denise!



Heather and Donna explored the church as they have both been former members at Slanesville! We told stories to the rest of the staff and explained how we had turned the church around at one point, switching the pulpit area and the front door that had steep steps. There have been many improvements at Slanesville in the past 46 years. Too many to count!



After our meeting, we traveled to Capon Bridge and enjoyed ice cream and continued our fun and fellowship.



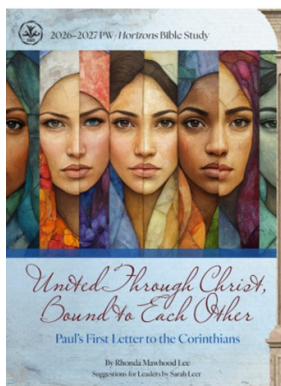
All are welcome to join us each month as we visit each church for fellowship and snacks. Every month we will be at a different church in the Presbytery to meet and greet. We hope to see you there!

Let us know if your church would like to host the staff for our trip around the presbytery. Contact the office at shenpres@shenpres.org or 540-433-2556.

We will be at the Elkton Church next month on July 29. Come and join us!

Future meetings:
 August 28—Waynesboro First
 September 30—Woodstock
 October 28—Petersburg
 December 2—Staunton First
 January 27—Smyrna





Save the Date!

PW Bible Study Overview via ZOOM - Thursday, August 6 at 6:30 pm

Please mark your calendars for a Zoom gathering for an overview of **“United Through Christ, Bound to Each Other: Paul’s First Letter to the Corinthians,”** the 2026-2027 PW Horizons Bible Study.

Written by Rev. Rhonda Mahwood Lee, with suggestions for leaders by Rev. Dr. Sarah Leer. This overview is for Circle leaders, Bible Study participants, anyone who wants to know more.

To register: https://shenpres.breezechms.com/form/PW_Overview_2026

Questions? Contact Rev. Dr. Nancy Meehan Yao: assocgp@shenpres.org

PW Horizons Bible Study via Zoom 2026-2027

A monthly zoom Bible Study, using the 2026-2027 Horizons Study, “United through Christ, Bound to Each Other,” will be held monthly on zoom, from 7:00—8:30 pm, beginning in September.

The dates are: 9/22, 10/20, 11/24, 12/15, 1/19, 2/23, 3/16 (note: 1 week earlier due to Holy Week), 4/20 and 5/18.

Hope you will join us! Groups/circles are welcome to zoom together!

To register: <https://shenpres.breezechms.com/form/United-Through-Christ>



Shenandoah Presbytery Corporation

The Shenandoah Presbytery Corporation (SPC) oversees an investment fund for our presbytery, its churches, cemeteries, endowments, scholarships, and committees. The fund is managed by Atlantic Union Bank and is overseen by the SPC board of trustees.

SPC Board members bring diverse experience in church management and finance with a shared commitment to joining Christ's work in our community. We offer an investment resource for advice, assistance, or just as a conversation partner.

If you'd like to learn more about investing church funds or if your church already invests with us and you would like to talk through the work we are doing on your behalf, please email Rev. Dr. Tommy Carrico at finleypastortjc@gmail.com. Likewise, if you are interested in learning about offering your own expertise by serving as a board member, please be in touch!

We are always happy to discuss financial stewardship within the presbytery.

Hedgesville Church Hosts Golf Tournament

Hedgesville Presbyterian Church hosted their fourth annual Jerry Smith Memorial Shotgun Scramble Golf Tournament at The Woods in Hedgesville on Wednesday, June 17th. We were blessed with beautiful weather and lots of fun fellowship.

Proceeds from the tournament fund many missions of the church including Presbyterian Disaster Relief, Angel Tree Summer Camp Ministries, Massanetta Conference Center, and CRU. Jerry Smith, the deceased spouse of Rev. Vanessa Ellis, was a faithful and devoted servant of Christ in the PCUSA.



Successful VBS at Warrenton Presbyterian Church

The week of June 8 through 12 saw otters, bears and other creatures participating in our True North: Trusting Jesus in a Wild World Vacation Bible School. The 56 children and 28 adults were kept busy with activities, story time, and the all-important snack of the day.



The families were asked to bring food for a local food bank. Their generous donations filled two shopping carts.

Since volunteers had set up for VBS before Sunday, June 7, Rev. Patrick Pettit preached with the Aurora Borealis in the background and an owl as his pulpit companion.



Rebecca "Beck" Lister was installed at Cooks Creek Church on May 31.





Global and Domestic Mission Grants

How beautiful upon the mountains are the feet of a messenger who proclaims peace, brings good news, who proclaims salvation . . . [Isaiah 52:7]

Presbyterian Churches are indeed global and domestic messengers!

If your church is considering *global or domestic mission projects* that “empower congregations to be centers for mission . . . sending servant leaders to minister at home and abroad,” consider applying for a grant. **There is one application form for all grants.**

The next deadline for the receipt of applications is October 1, 2026.

Information about grants and application forms, is found on the Presbytery web site under Committees - Committee on Mission & Outreach, and under Resources - Scholarships & Grants. Visit the Shenandoah Presbytery web site at <https://shenpres.org/scholarship-grants/>.

The Four-Cents-A-Meal Program is Evolving

Summer time is here - and that means that a lot of children who, during the school year participate in school breakfast and lunch programs, are more vulnerable to hunger.

A recent article in *The Citizen* reported that with the summer closing of school feeding programs in Virginia, many families will struggle to keep food on the table over the summer¹. In addition, the Federation of Virginia Food Banks reports that 1 in 7 children in Virginia are food insecure². This is all at a time when the Blue Ridge Area Food Bank is reporting the highest demand for help they've had in 45 years of food banking.



So - make sure you don't forget to take up the Cents-ability offering over the summer. Every donation will help local food pantries and regional food banks feed our neighbors in need. *To find out more about Cents-ability go to:* <https://shenpres.org/cents-ability/>

If you are looking for study materials for this fall about hunger, here are some links to resources:

◆ Presbyterian Hunger Program -

- ◇ 1 session Bible study - https://pcusa.org/sites/default/files/2025-05/PHP-Bible-Study_2011-0101_0.pdf
- ◇ 7 session adult study - "Just Eating? Practicing Our Faith at the Table" - <https://pcusa.org/sites/default/files/2024-10/Just-Eating-Leaders-Guide-2022-.pdf>
- ◇ Posters and Placemats from the Presbyterian Hunger Program - https://pcusa.org/sites/default/files/2025-04/php-poster-list_2025-0422.pdf
- ◇ What Do You Know About Hunger?" (Crossword puzzle) - <https://pcusa.org/sites/default/files/2024-09/Hunger-Crossword-2024-07.pdf>

Submitted by Sara Holben, Hunger Action Subcommittee

◆ Institute for Faith and Learning (Baylor University) -

- ◇ Background reading, worship materials, and resources on Food and Hunger - <https://ifl.web.baylor.edu/media-and-resources/christian-reflection-project/food-and-hunger>
- ◇ 6-session adult study on "Food and Hunger" - <https://ifl.web.baylor.edu/sites/g/files/ecbykj771/files/2022-12/foodandhungerstudyguides.pdf>

◆ Feeding America -

- ◇ "Teaching Children about Hunger" - <https://www.feedingamerica.org/hunger-blog/teaching-children-about-hunger>

¹ <https://hburgcitizen.com/2026/06/17/for-already-strapped-area-food-banks-summer-wont-offer-a-break/>

² <https://vafoodbanks.org/hunger-in-virginia/>

Do You Want to Build with Hope?

By TE Jeff Binder, Transitional Pastor, Staunton First PC

The Building for Hope program guides congregations through a journey to repurpose underutilized facilities and other physical assets to advance a congregation's mission.

The program is a response to the epidemic of underutilized church facilities across the US: by reorienting these spaces, congregations and their surrounding communities are equipped to flourish.



Building for Hope envisions a movement of sustained revitalization through creative, community-based uses of underutilized church facilities. Building for Hope will help congregations see the space they inhabit in their neighborhoods as sacred spaces that can be utilized for the best and highest good for the glory of God and the blessing of others.

How does it work?

Building for Hope is a two-year program for churches and their leadership funded by The Lilly Endowment Inc. Each participating congregation is represented by a pastor and up to two lay leaders from each congregation.

In-Person Gatherings. The first year of the program includes multi-day in-person meetings in Alexandria, Virginia spaced out over spring, summer, and fall. These in-person gatherings will meet at the Common Good, a nonprofit center created by Old Town Community Church as part of their own process to reorient their underutilized space for congregational and community flourishing.

Cohorts. Cohorts (typically representing about 10 congregations) learn and participate together throughout the process, sharing in the experience of discernment and innovation.

Coaching. An assigned coach will support the congregation's pastor in their leadership journey as they move their congregation forward through Building for Hope.

Education. The program includes a faculty of practitioners, pastors, and experts to educate and support participants on this journey, both during the in-person gatherings, as well as through continued support throughout the duration of the program.

Rooted Good Curriculum. Participants will be provided an established curriculum from Rooted Good, an organization focused on helping churches reimagine their assets to impact local communities and glorify God.

Program Expenses Paid. Aside from travel to and from gatherings, all costs of the program are covered for congregations accepted into the two-year program, thanks to funding from Lilly Endowment Inc. Please note, however, that any congregational decisions and resulting initiatives for your church that result from program participation will be the responsibility of the congregation itself. Please inquire with the presbytery on means/opportunities to help defray these costs.

The congregations at First (Staunton) and Woodstock have both participated in this program. Feel free to reach out with any additional questions you may have.

If you would like to register to participate, you may find the links to do so here: <https://buildingforhope.org>. The next cohort begins in the fall.



Strong Ministers Fund Grant

Shenandoah Presbytery has financial resources to help you thrive!



Our next application deadline is September 15. We encourage you to look at the possibilities and reach out if you have questions. If you have an urgent need not covered under the parameters of SMF, please reach out to Bronwen.

In October of 2025, the **Housing Assistance Grant** was increased to a maximum of \$7500. This is a one-time grant available to Teaching Elders, installed full-time or retired, Full-Time Certified Christian Educators in good standing, and Temporary Pastors who have been under contract within Shenandoah Presbytery for 5 years or

more. If retired, the applicant must have served Shenandoah Presbytery in the capacities stated above. This Grant is available at the time of a home purchase, mortgage refinancing, or upon the occasion of a move to a retirement facility within the geographic boundaries of Shenandoah Presbytery. Applications for housing assistance may be received and distributed as needed year-round or at the established spring and fall application deadlines. +your Strong Ministers Fund Team

Please review our Guidelines and Online application, at <https://shenpres.org/strong-ministers-program/>. All applications are confidential, and it is our pleasure to offer this kind of assistance.

[GUIDE](#)
[APPLICATION](#)



Serve with Us this Fall

What: Harvest of Hope Intergenerational Mission Trip

Where: Massanetta Springs Conference Center

When: September 25–27, 2026

Cost: \$50 per individual or \$100 per family

The Committee on Mission and Outreach (CMO) invites individuals and families to join us for a weekend of service, learning, and fellowship. CMO will partner with participants who attend Harvest of Hope, reducing the registration fee to just \$50 per individual or \$100 per family. (The total cost per participant is \$175.)



Harvest of Hope is a faith-based service and learning experience that provides opportunities to take action, participate in hands-on mission activities, and help rescue and share nutritious food with people in need. Staff from the Society of St. Andrew organize and lead this weekend event at Massanetta Springs. Learn more about Harvest of Hope at <https://endhunger.org/get-involved/overnight-camps/>.



The weekend begins on Friday evening as participants get to know one another and take part in a hands-on mission project, such as preparing potato bags for harvest. On Saturday morning, participants will glean in a local orchard or field for approximately two hours before enjoying a bagged lunch. Saturday afternoon includes a visit to a nonprofit organization that benefits from the food gathered through the Society of St. Andrew's gleaning ministry.

Participants will also enjoy free time on Saturday afternoon, followed by dinner and an evening of learning, fellowship, and faith reflection. The retreat concludes with worship on Sunday morning.

If you have questions or would like to attend, please contact Rev. April H. Cranford at acranford@wp-church.com.

Is God Calling You to Guatemala?

In April, a group of women from First Pres Winchester traveled to Guatemala to celebrate the 20th anniversary of the Faith Stories Project. The Faith Stories Project is the result of a partnership with First Pres, Looking for Lilith Theatre Company in Louisville KY, PCUSA Mission Partner CEDEPCA (The Protestant Center for Pastoral Studies in Central America) and *Historias de Fe*, a group of Guatemalan women who work together to share their stories. The project began when Jennifer Thalman Kepler, then from Fairfax VA, was a PCUSA Young Adult Volunteer working with Karla Koll, a PCUSA mission co-worker whose work in Guatemala was supported by First Pres. Karla served with CEDEPCA. Karla and Jennifer worked with women from the Presbyterian Church of Guatemala. When Jennifer's year of service ended, one of the Guatemalan women asked her what she would do when she returned home. Jennifer told Marina that she would be working with Looking for Lilith Theatre Company using applied theatre to lift up the unheard voices of women. Marina asked, "Why can't you do that with us here?" And the Faith Stories Project was born.

First Pres's Guatemala team, members of Looking for Lilith, and for several years women from Fairfax Presbyterian Church have traveled to Guatemala. The annual trips are facilitated by CEDEPCA's Intercultural Encounters Program. We spend a week working with a core group of Guatemalan Women, *Historias de Fe*, using applied theatre to tell their stories and use workshops to share their stories with their communities and with groups traveling with CEDEPCA to learn more about a number of topics. *Historias de Fe* has developed dramatic scenes, often based in Biblical stories, to educate other women about nutrition, immigration, environmental issues, and women's issues.

The Faith Stories Project has been life-changing for the Guatemalan women and for those of us who have had the honor of working with them. Our next trip is scheduled for February 6–13, 2027. We would like to invite other women in the Presbytery to join us. For more information about the trip, or just to learn more about how God has led our experiences in Guatemala, please contact Carolyn Thalman (cjthalman@comcast.net).



Online Payments

Remember—you can submit your church payments and individual donations online!

Here is what you can do:

- ◆ Churches may send in their Church Pledge & other remittances
- ◆ Churches and individuals may contribute to our Stated Meeting Mission Offering

Place your camera over the QR code to the link, or go to [our webpage](#) to make your payments.

If you have any questions, please contact the presbytery office at 540-433-2556.



Annual Men's Summit Presbyterian Men of the Mid-Atlantic **Massanetta Springs Camp and Conference Center, July 17-19th 2026**

We are excited to invite men of all ages to attend our annual Men's Summit!
Our theme this year is:

Strength for Today, Vision for Tomorrow; Brothers Working Together in God's Kingdom

"Let Your Light Shine Before Others so that They May See Your Good Works and Give Glory to Your Father who is in Heaven"

Matthew 5:16 NRSV

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



Opequon's Generations Sunday ***Celebrating Our Roots... And Our Branches!***



**Sunday,
August 23, 2026**

10:00 AM

Join us for worship and
fellowship in celebration
of the Pillars, Generations,
and Families of Opequon!





Shen Pres Youth Retreat

All Youth in Grades 6-12 and their Leaders are invited to the third annual Shen Pres Youth Retreat at Massanetta Springs on October 16—18! The focus will be "Out of his heart will flow rivers of living water," based on John 7:38. There will be games, a service activity, keynotes with Rev. Erin Skinner, and a campfire!

Leaders should submit group information here, <https://forms.gle/8t6rT9NqwjhqlYer7>, and then will receive an online registration form for their youth to complete. Group registration is due by September 1. The cost is \$175 per person, which is due upon arrival. Checks should be written out to Shenandoah Presbytery with "Youth Retreat" in the memo line.

Do you have youth that you think would be interested, but you don't have someone that is specifically in charge of Youth Ministry? We can help! Would your congregation be interested in helping supply a meal, sponsoring supplies, supporting small group leaders, or transporting a meal if your church is close to Massanetta?

Reach out to Colleen Stearns at colleen@fpcwinc.org with any questions or ways your church can contribute!



Shen Pres Youth Leader Network

REVERENDFUN.COM COPYRIGHT BIBLE GATEWAY



Thanks to Greg Ballos

12-06-2006

HEY LOOK, THE GRASS REALLY IS GREENER
ON THE OTHER SIDE!

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SHENANDOAH**

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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 2026

- 2 - CRE Oversight 4:00 pm
- 2 - 227th General Assembly ends
- 6 - Office Closed for Independence Day
- 7 - CPC & CPA 3:00 pm
- 8 - CPM 10:00 am
- 9 - COM 9:30 am
- 15 - CNCD 2:00 pm at Strasburg Church
- 16 - Pastors' Meeting 12:00 pm
- 16 - CPA 1:30 pm
- 28 - CPC 10:00 am
- 29 - Staff Meeting 10:00 am
at Elkton Church

August 2026

- 5 - CCVT 11:00 am
- 6 - CRE Oversight 4:00 pm
- 12 - CPM 10:00 am
- 13 - COM 9:30 am
- 18 - Nominations 10:30 am
- 19 - CNCD 2:00 pm at Strasburg Church
- 20 - Pastors' Meeting 12:00 pm
- 20 - CPA 1:30 pm
- 22 - Stated Presbytery Meeting
- 24 - Shenandoah Press Deadline
- 26 - Staff Meeting 10:00 am
at Waynesboro First Church

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