



# PIECES

of the Presbytery

Issue 7

Please note: Publications from the Presbytery are best viewed on a computer.

## Property Maintenance Checklist

The Rev. Ellie Johns-Kelly presented at our Stated Meeting and shared [this valuable resource](#) from the Presbyterian Foundation with our churches. Please utilize this checklist as you prepare for the year ahead.

## Presbytery of West Virginia Elects Connectional Presbyter

The Rev. Dr. Sarah Sanderson-Doughty, M. Div, M.A., Ph. D, was elected as the Presbyter of West

Connectional Presbyter at the Stated Meeting on Saturday, February 21, 2026. As the Presbytery has worked to implement structure under a new strategic plan, this position will work closely with the Lead Presbyter, building and strengthening connections between our churches and the Presbytery. [Read Complete News Release](#)



Thank you to Village Chapel for hosting the Stated Meeting on Saturday, February 21. The Presbyterian Women provided seven fantastic soups to choose from during lunch. Thank you to South Park Presbyterian Church for providing a delicious variety of morning snacks during registration.

## With Sympathy

It is with sympathy that the Presbytery of West Virginia shares the death of Benjamin Gurley, son of Rev. Ben E. Gurley and Sue Fowler Gurley. You may find his obituary [here](#). We ask that you join us in praying for his parents, his children Landon and Maria, and their mother Alicia Houchins in the days and weeks ahead.



## First, Logan Installs Pastor

On Sunday, February 8, 2026, The Rev. Nicholas Koretskyy, was installed as pastor at First Presbyterian Church, Logan.

Members of the Installation Commission are pictured from left to right: Jessica Rutledge Houck, Ruling Elder, Gilbert

Presbyterian Church; Rev. Chris Bailey, Chaplain, Marshall University; Rev. Dawn Adamy, Bream Memorial Presbyterian Church, Interim Pastor at Kanawha United Presbyterian Church and Immediate Past Moderator of the Presbytery of West Virginia; Rev. Nicholas Koretskyy; Rev. Barry Chance, a colleague and mentor of Rev. Koretskyy's from Ohio; John Kovach, Ruling Elder, First, Logan; Rev. Mark Ruppert, a colleague and mentor of Rev. Koretskyy's from Ohio; James Musgrave, Ruling Elder, Highlawn Presbyterian Church, Huntington, and former Interim Pastor at First, Logan.

## Directory Updates Still Needed

We are working on the 2026 Directory. If your church has not submitted a 2026 updated Directory form, please do so as soon as possible. You may fill out the form [online](#) or [print](#) and mail or email the document to [info@wvpresbytery.org](mailto:info@wvpresbytery.org).

## First, Williamson hosts Annual Soup Sale

Around the end of January each year, First Williamson prepares and sells jars of vegetable soup as a Mission Fundraiser. This year, with the help of 30 volunteers, the church made 600 jars of soup!



### Lenten Devotion/ Reflection

On Fridays throughout the Lenten Season (with a few extras during Holy Week) staff and members of the Presbytery will be providing a short devotion/ reflection.

If you are not following the [Presbytery's Facebook page](#), now is a great time to begin!

### Our Presbytery in the Press

Below are links to articles and interviews that involve churches or people in our Presbytery.

- [The Wright Stuff: West Virginia elects new lead presbyter](#)
- [Morgantown's RAMP Hotel Project helps people get back on track](#)
- [First Presbyterian Church Discovery Class welcomes new rabbi to share his story](#)
- [As West Virginia foster youth age out, a Presbyterian church steps into the gap](#)

# Festival of Faith

**"Tell Me A Story"**

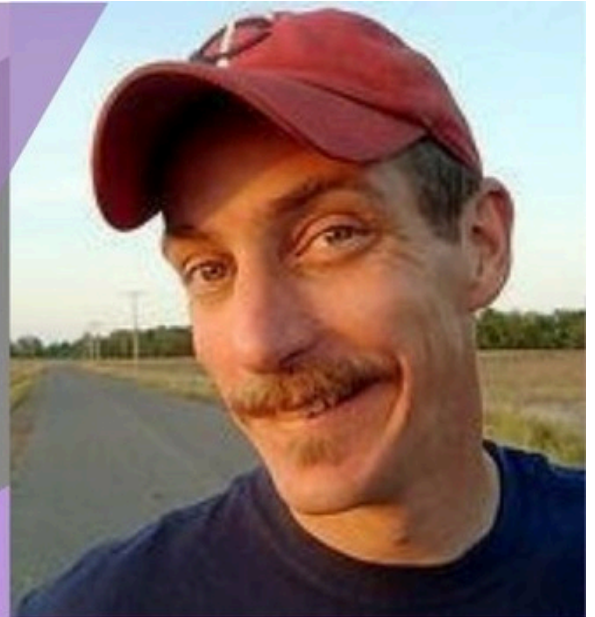
**Keynote: The Widow's Mite and the Widower's Might: Seeing Scripture in Ordinary Actions**

**Keynote Presenter: Bil Lepp, storyteller, author, and recording artist**

**Saturday, March 21**

**9:30 a.m. to 3:45 p.m.**

**First Presbyterian Church, Charleston**



[Register for Festival of Faith now!](#)

[Download Bulletin Insert](#)

[View Workshop Information](#)

[View more Festival of Faith Information](#)

## Montreat Youth Conference II

Youth in grades 8-12 and adults over 21 are invited to Montreat's Youth Conference II in Montreat, NC, from Saturday, June 14 to Saturday, June 20, 2026. Find more details and the registration forms [here](#).

# SAVE THE DATE



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**An evening of live music, dancing,  
food, drinks, and a silent auction.**

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Raising funds for  
**Saturday of  
Service**, a project  
of Edgewood  
Presbyterian  
Church, serving  
food and  
fellowship to the  
community.

Saturday  
March 28, 2026  
**6:30p – 11p**

**WVSOM  
Student Center**

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Sponsored by  
**WVSOM Christian Medical  
Dental Association**

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*Living Matthew 25: Feeding the Hungry, Serving with Love*

## Kanawha United Presbyterian Church's BRAVEHEART ST. PATRICK'S DANCE

The Braveheart St. Patrick's Dance will be on Thursday, March 12, 2026, from 6:00 to 8:00 p.m. There will be live music by the Charleston Rogues and dancing led by Steve Ballman of FOOTMAD.

Join us at 1009 Virginia Street E. Please enter our gym from Kanawha Blvd.

### Upcoming Events at Union Presbyterian Seminary

#### **The Sprunt Lectures (May 4–6, Richmond)**

Our 116th annual Sprunt Lecture Series brings pastors and Christian leaders together for worship, learning, and conversation. This year's speaker is Dr. Gregory C. Ellison II (Emory Candler) sharing lessons from Howard Thurman's *Growing in Love* sermons, with preaching from Rev. Anna George Traynham (UPSem '14).

#### **Ecumenical Transitional Leadership Training (May 17–June 4, hybrid)**

Through our Leadership Institute and a partnership with Eastern Mennonite, we're offering training for pastors serving congregations in seasons of transition—designed for interim ministers, COM members, and judicatory leaders. There are several different pricing tiers, and we're running early bird pricing through February 15.

#### **Resources for Churches**

We've also pulled together a simple “menu” of programs, learning opportunities, and gatherings for congregations and leaders who want to engage Union as a partner in ministry and formation.



# Summer 2026

## I want to ...

### Come to Camp!

#### Camp Dates:

Week 1: June 21-27

Week 2: July 1-4

**Register Online Feb-1st !**

[bluestonecamp.org](http://bluestonecamp.org)

Scholarships are available!

### Work at Camp!

#### Paid Staff Positions:

##### **Resident Counselor**

High School Graduate  
College Ages 17+

##### **CIT Support Staff**

High School Jrs & Srs

##### **Service Support**

Kitchen; Lifeguard

##### **Volunteers Welcome Too!**

Camp Nurse; Keyleaders; Crafts & More!

### Bring the Whole Family!

#### Family Camps:

Half-Week #1: June 24-17

Half Week #2: July 1-4

Summer Send-Off

Retreat: July 3-5

### Get Some More Info!

Web: [bluestonecamp.org](http://bluestonecamp.org)


**Email:** [mark@bluestonecamp.org](mailto:mark@bluestonecamp.org)

**Phone:** call (304) 397-5050 and  
leave a voicemail

[Click here for a printable  
PDF to distribute at  
your church!](#)

## Session Record Review Events 2026

Clerks of Session are invited to attend the Session Record Review for 2025 minutes. Clerks of Session (or a representative) will need to attend an event by October 2026. **Please note the change of dates in April.** The events are:

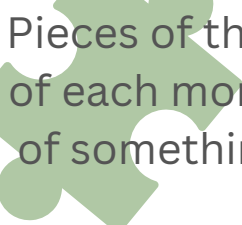
 **April 12 – Greater Bridgeport/ Clarksburg Area in person event, 3:00 PM**

 **April 13 – Zoom event, 3:00 PM**

 **August – Greater Lewisburg Area in person event & Zoom event, dates TBD**

 **October – Greater Huntington Area in person event & Zoom event, dates TBD**

The checklists for the 2025 record review events can be found [here](#). Please use the correct form for the type of event you attend. If you have any questions, [contact the Stated Clerk, Maureen Wright](#).

 Pieces of the Presbytery is distributed the second and fourth Thursdays of each month. If you wish to include an announcement or share photos of something your church has done, please send it to [Kristin Rhodes](#) by the second and fourth Tuesday of the month..



Our latest issue of Magnify the Message is out now! [This issue](#) focuses on Ash Wednesday and Lenten season traditions that congregations and community members anticipate each year. You will also hear from our Association of Partners in Christian Education (APCE) Scholarship Recipients who represented our presbytery at the annual event in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania.

## Background Checks

To help with data security the Presbytery has moved to a secure encrypted service with box.com to upload private information for background checks. When requesting a background check please either mail to:

Presbytery of West Virginia  
PO Box 11720

Charleston, WV 25339

or upload consent forms via the link below or on the website. If you need any assistance, please contact Chris Alfred.

[Background Check Consent Form](#)

[Upload Background checks](#)

## Grant for BOP Dependent Medical Coverage

At the November 2025 Meeting the Presbytery voted to give \$1,200 grants for 2026 to help churches cover medical dues for congregational pastors with dependent medical coverage. If your church qualifies, please email a request to the Presbytery Treasurer with a copy of your most recent 2026 Board of Pension Statement. This grant will be paid in two installments, once in the spring and the second in the fall.

## Church Annual Financial Review Resources

It's that time of year again to conduct our annual financial reviews, as required by the Book of Order (G-3.0113). These reviews are more than a constitutional requirement, they are an important expression of faithful stewardship and accountability. An annual financial review helps ensure that proper procedures are being followed, resources are handled with integrity, and the congregation can have confidence in the church's financial practices. By completing this review each year and utilizing the available resources, churches strengthen transparency, protect those who handle funds, and demonstrate their commitment to responsible and ethical ministry.

[FINANCIAL REVIEW CHECKLIST-  
from the PCUSA.](#)

*The Volunteer's Audit Guide for Churches & other Non-Profits* is available [on Amazon](#).

## Portions of Hope: Lessons from the Lead Presbyter

Road trips are an iconic American experience. From images of the wood (or faux wood) paneled station wagon packed to the brim with suitcases, coolers, and snacks – perhaps with a car top carrier from Sears and Roebuck to an early Dodge minivan also packed with suitcases, coolers, and snacks to a SUV packed with suitcases, coolers, and snacks but with the luxury of video screened entertainment systems, many of us remember the road trips of our childhood. The most iconic question of all road trips, whether it comes five minutes or five hours from home, is are we there yet? In many ways, the Presbytery of West Virginia’s “trip” from where we have been to the mission and ministry to which God is calling us could be termed God’s great road trip. I am fairly certain that we started asking God, are we there yet, almost as soon as we started. At the Presbytery meeting on Saturday, I shared the following.

Presbytery of West Virginia, we are here! The journey has been long. In August of 2020, the Leadership Team reported to the Presbytery that a Financial Sustainability Task Force had been created in response to the Stewardship Committee’s concerns that the Presbytery was drawing on its investments at a level that was inconsistent with best financial practices. In August of 2021, this task force reported its findings which focused on three areas: the cost of owning and maintaining a brick-and-mortar office in South Charleston, the need to control staffing costs – especially the cost of medical insurance, and the need to explore the cost of maintaining and supporting Bluestone Camp and Retreat.

The findings of the task force led to the Presbytery approving the sale of the office building in South Charleston in May of 2022. It also led to a decision to implement a five-year phase out of family medical coverage, moving to cover the cost of medical coverage for Presbytery employees only.

The conclusions of this group also led to the appointment of the Bluestone Working Group in 2021. At the Presbytery meeting on May 15, 2025, the report of the Bluestone Working Group and its recommendations were adopted. Bluestone Camp and Retreat will transition to an independent entity

supporting the greater West Virginia community. This decision by the Presbytery marked the beginning of a new chapter in Bluestone's ministry. The Bluestone Transitional Board begins its work in the next 30 days.

The work of the Financial Stability Task Force helped the Presbytery to seek to be a more financially stable Presbytery; work that continues as the Commission on Operations begins its work.

While the work and implementation of the Financial Sustainability Task Force moved forward, the Leadership Team of the Presbytery began to ask the question, what's next for the ministry and mission of the Presbytery? By the end of 2022, it was clear that God was leading the Leadership Team to guide the Presbytery in a formal time of self-reflection. In January 2023, Ruling Elder Tom Haywood of Bream Memorial Presbyterian Church who is a lawyer, a consultant, and a leader who seeks to help people solve problems, met with the Leadership Team to determine how to engage in the needed Presbytery self-reflection, seeking to answer who would lead the process. This important work led the Presbytery to engage the services of Holy Cow! Consulting guided by Emily Swanson who joined the Presbytery for its meeting in August 2023.

Members of the Presbytery were invited to offer input about the Presbytery, its mission and ministry, and God's direction using the Landscape Survey tool. The results of the survey and multiple meetings between Ms. Swanson and the Leadership Team led to the development and presentation of a Strategic Plan for the Presbytery, adopted by the Presbytery in November of 2024. The key areas of focus identified in the plan are relationships, resources (for congregations and leaders), and leadership development. The plan called for a new committee structure and a new staffing model.

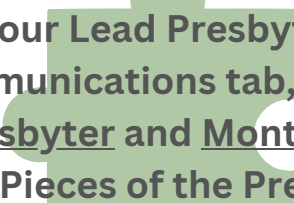
For those of you who have followed my reflections in earlier newsletters and as I shared at the August 2025 Presbytery meeting, you may remember these words – on paper the implementation is orderly. In reality, the plan requires polishing, trial and error. In reality, the implementation is messy. The timeline, noted as aspirational when it was approved, was adjusted. The new committee structure originally targeted to start in September 2025 would begin in

January 2026. On paper, a new staffing structure is smooth, without twists or turns. In reality, searching for the staff that God is calling to lead us is untidy. Our timeline is not God's timeline.

Presbytery of West Virginia, we are here! It is a bittersweet moment. Moving into the space to which God is calling us means loss – we no longer have a “presbytery office”, Bluestone is moving toward independence, committees and programs have changed, the staff has changed and shifted – during this process we have said goodbye to Ed Thompson, Amy Robinson, and on Saturday, Susan Sharp Campbell. Saying goodbye to what was means naming our loss and grief.

Presbytery of West Virginia, we are here! We have new priorities, new committees, and a newly elected Connectional Presbyter, Sarah Sanderson-Doughty. God has called us to a new place. God is asking us to look toward what is new, what is possible for the Presbytery of West Virginia in 2026 and beyond.

Presbytery of West Virginia, we are here! I am excited to discover what God will do next as we build and rebuild relationships and community between the Presbytery and its churches, between the Presbytery and the people in the pews of its churches and their pastoral leaders, between churches, between people, between leaders. I am energized by all the ways in which the Presbytery of West Virginia can resource its congregations and the people of the Presbytery. What will leadership development look like for the Presbytery we are becoming? God is doing a new thing. This gives me hope. Presbytery of West Virginia, we are here! We are a Presbytery of hope.



**To easily find remarks from our Lead Presbyter and Moderator, please visit our website, select the communications tab, and tabs for Portions of Hope: Lessons from the Lead Presbyter and Monthly Mod Musing are available under Pieces of the Presbytery.**

## Monthly Mod Musings

By John A. Bolt, Moderator, Presbytery of West Virginia, 2026

Ready, set, go!

With the election of Sarah Sanderson-Doughty as connectional presbyter on February 21, all the pieces are now in place for the Presbytery of West Virginia to start running with the new strategic plan. (If you need a refresher on exactly what that is, read the full plan or the summary.)

For those who weren't there, there were a couple of words and themes that were often repeated: grief and connections. Grief over those programs and individuals being lost, and the importance of connections to our future.

If you hang around the Presbyterian Church for any time at all, it won't be long before you hear it referred to as a "connectional church." It is built into our DNA, or at least we think it is.

But just what does it mean to be connectional? You won't find it spelled out in either part of our constitution: the Book of Order or the Book of Confessions, but it still runs through our veins.

There is probably no one better than the Rev. Gradye Parsons, stated clerk of the General Assembly from 2008 until his retirement in 2016, to explain this.

Writing for The Presbyterian News Service after his retirement, Parsons said, "[T]he connectional life of our church is not wholly based on our polity. (I hope people who know me were sitting down when they read that sentence.)

"Our connectivity is based in our relationship to each other as we live out our communal worship – a worship that has us confess together before we all, with educated brains, engage the Word; a communal worship where we come to the table together and meet the Christ who has died for us all; a communal worship where we all pledge to raise our child together."

“The PC(USA) is a church made up of a variety of people and places. We are urban and rural. We are small and large. We have fancy worship and simple worship.

“But my six months on the road researching [Our Connectional Church: The Hopeful Future of the PC(USA)], and 39 years of ministry, have shown me there is an ethos (beyond polity) that serves to nurture us in a very strong way that, in turn, connects us at a whole different level. ... [a] church where grace rules and gratitude flows into service.”

Last December, in a retreat with members of the Leadership Team and committee/commission chairs, we were asked to list some of the presbytery’s key characteristics. There were several, but by far, the one most often identified was “relationships,” which is nothing more than another word for connections.

At the same time, many of us expressed concerns that too many of our PWV connections have deteriorated for a variety of different reasons, and as a result, we are not as strong as we might be – and I would offer – as God wants us to be.

So, we pledged to repair, even create if need be, those connections/relationships. You will see that playing out in many ways as the year goes on.

I hope that we can be successful in strengthening our connections with each other, small churches and large churches, financially strapped churches and wealthy churches, red churches and blue churches, rural churches and city churches, former northern churches and former southern churches.

“May the God of steadfastness and encouragement grant [us] to live in harmony with one another, in accordance with Christ Jesus, so that together [we] may with one voice glorify the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.” (Romans 15:5-6)