



# The Falling Waters Messenger

Issue Five

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## Forget ‘pulpit envy.’

Most Americans attend a small church.

By Sue Washburn | Presbyterians Today 2018

Not too long ago our presbytery meeting was held at a cathedral-like church with thick stone, intricate stained glass and a grand, high pulpit. As I climbed the steps to the pulpit, I swear the air got thinner. When I got to the top and behind the mic, I felt like I was commanding a starship. There was a smooth wooden shelf encircling the area, like an expansive console surrounding me, but without flashing computer screens. I felt like I could pilot the church straight to heaven. As I looked down upon my colleagues something inside me felt strange. Then I realized what it was. I had pulpit envy.

Everything that pulpit represented flashed through my mind — a big church, with possibly a big endowment. In my momentary reverie, I thought about all the members who would surely fill boards and committees, do outreach and take on meaningful mission projects in the community and around the world.

It’s not just pastors who suffer from pulpit envy. Many members look at other churches and think that surely things are going better in that bigger church down the road. We think about the choirs bigger than our congregations, the computer-run lighting systems and the hip programming — all of which can make us feel like we are worshiping in Grandma’s faded living room by comparison. And truth be told, some of our furniture was donated from Grandma’s living room.

Up there in my temporary command center, I remembered the small church I serve. The pulpit I use each Sunday is mostly packed with audio

equipment. Every so often during worship I disappear to bend down and fiddle with the audio levels if we have a special singer or if the mic has suddenly stopped working. Instead of a calm and powerful commander standing at the helm of a big church, I’m more like the busy conductor waving a stick at a small musical ensemble that is sometimes missing a few instruments. Of course, the reality is that big churches and small churches each have their share of challenges to face.

My pulpit envy is purely a function of my own mind. If I am honest, the problem is that too often I think of small churches as failures. I know I’m not alone in this. Many congregations have corporate memories of bursting sanctuaries and expanded education centers as cultural Christianity thrived in the ’50s and ’60s.

We often think that if we were truly sharing the gospel, our small churches would turn into the big churches we covet. And while it seems like big churches are everywhere, the reality is that on any given Sunday more than 60 percent of people worshipping in the United States are sitting in a church with fewer than 100 people. Most of those people are in churches with fewer than 50.

My perspective on small churches started to change at a synod gathering last year. We were supposed to brainstorm how a congregation of 15 might live as resurrection people. The ideas were plentiful: Sell the building and donate money. Worship in homes. Grow the congregation. Create a new worshipping community. The underlying assumption most of us had was that 15 was just not enough people for real ministry. Then someone said something that stopped the conversation. “Why do we think we need a hundred people to make a difference? Jesus changed the world with just 12.”

Things began to shift in my mind and my ministry that day. Descending the steps of the high pulpit, I discovered something else. Even though I've thought about leading a big church, being up here was not for me. That's not judgment on the people who have big-church leadership skills. Our big churches are vital to our ministry together. But we small churches have an important place, too. We are not failed big churches. Like all congregations, we should be judged on our willingness to follow God's mission in our time and place. Using that criterion, the size of a pulpit doesn't matter. Faithfulness does.

Sue Washburn is the pastor of Reunion Presbyterian Church in Mount Pleasant, Pennsylvania. She wrote this in a coffee shop next to people talking about their mega-church challenges.

Submitted by the Rev. Bob Osborne

## Mother's Day

The men of the church will host a Mother's Day coffee hour immediately following worship on May 11<sup>th</sup>. There is a sign-up sheet on the bulletin board in Fellowship Hall for those guys wanting to participate.

## Maintenance Committee News

**Pavilion:** we will be opening the pavilion in May for the summer season. We invite the congregation to make good use of it for family reunions, organization picnics, birthday parties, graduations, etc. Please schedule your event in the pavilion by calling the church office at 304-754-8211. Enjoy your summer.

## Four Cents A Meal Sunday

On the first Sunday of each month we collect our **Four Cents A Meal Offering**. This hunger offering is collected on the first Sunday of each month. 25% of the offering benefits Hedgesville Loaves and Fishes and the other 75% is sent to the PCUSA for world-wide hunger programs. It is called Four Cents A Meal because it is suggested that each family contribute four cents for each meal each family member eats in one month, i.e. a family of four would contribute 16 cents per meal per day. 16 cents x 3 meals a day = 48 cents. 48 cents x 30 days = \$14.40 per month.

## Heritage Sunday/Memorial Day



Please join us on May 25th as we celebrate **Heritage Sunday and Memorial Day** with a picnic in our pavilion immediately following worship. Please bring a covered-dish to share. The Fellowship and Recreation Committee will provide hot dogs and buns, tableware, drinks and ice. There is a sign-up sheet posted in Fellowship Hall. Please register your name and the number of people from your family attending so we can make sure we have enough chicken for everyone.

## May Birthdays

May	1	Trevor Henry
	3	Willow Effland
	12	Mason Chambers
	15	Branden Walters
	15	Richard Blizzard
	17	Heather Witmer
	18	Patty Runkles
	23	Avalon Blizzard
	23	Michael Campbell



## Pray Without Ceasing

Gladys Alexander  
Avalon Blizzard  
Larry Brown  
Susie Cushwa  
Christie Heaton  
Bill Lawrenson  
Shirley McDaniel  
Patty Runkles  
Buck Shipper



## VBS Needs Your Help



VBS is in need of **monetary donations for snacks**. If you would like to make a donation, please see Fawn.

The VBS Staff will meet in Fellowship Hall on **June 1** after worship, to make final plans for June.

## Flock Notes

Zoe Ellis, daughter of Pete and Tara Ellis and grandchild of Sandy and Paul Pohlenz has been selected as a member of the Eagles Chapter of the National Honor Society. Zoe is a junior at Hedgesville High School and expects to attend an instate University. Congratulations, Zoe!

## From Session

Session has called for a **congregational meeting** for Sunday, May 11, 2025 to elect a Trustee, Class of 2026.

FOR SECURITY REASONS, session has requested that the outside door downstairs in the Educational Wing be left locked on Sunday mornings.

## Our Graduates

Jamie Dockeney Senft, daughter of Sherry and Pat Dockeney, earned a Master's Degree in Public History and Museum History from Liberty University and will receive her diploma in May.

Jacob Hylton is graduating from Spring Mills High School on May 22. He has participated in the concert and marching bands, Esports, and has been a key member of the ACE team (Academic Competition of Excellence), anchoring regional championship teams that has represented the Eastern panhandle in the state championships in Charleston in back to back years. He's earned multiple academic scholarships along the way.

During his senior year, Jacob is participating in the Co-op Work Study Program where he's learned to balance 1/2 days of school with 1/2 days of working at DQ and Wal-Mart, while still maintaining honor role academics.

While learning much in the co-op, Jacob is still figuring out his future, torn between pursuing a degree in archeology or history, or buying a bull whip and a fedora and living the adventure instead.

## CEMO UPDATE

Christian Education/Mission and Outreach (CEMO) has been very busy. We have completed the sock collection for the Martinsburg Union Rescue Mission in our usual fine style. Believe this or not, over 1,000 pairs of socks have been collected. Patrick Lewis of Patrick's Projects has developed a portal on the Mission website to also participate in the monthly project, and they brought in about 450 pairs of socks. The rest was brought in by FWPC!!! What a wonderful church we are. The May project is sheets. There is always a desperate need for single pillow and cases and fitted and top single bed sheets. We will talk more about this at church, but start to go through your linen closet!

Christian Ed. is going strong with Sunday School and Youth Messages and Renee is planning a women's retreat in September. Stay tuned for news of that event.

# Shared Thoughts

## From

### Judith Lawrenson

What a lovely Spring so far. My favorite smell is the smell of grass being mowed. Sometimes even as you are driving along the road you can smell it, and what a sign of Spring. The tree blossoms and flowers are simply lovely and this is my favorite time to just get in the car and go for a ride. Do people even do that any more? Well, we do and I can tell you, it somehow seems to restore your soul.

All of this beauty makes me think of our Resurrected Jesus. He seems to be all around us. He promised to return and I see Him all around in the new life of our fantastic West Virginia Spring bursting out. Strawberries are not the least of it either. The tree in my front yard blooms late but the pink flowers seem to last and last I think of the presence of our Risen Lord and being reborn in all of the new life just here in my front yard. Our bird feeder needs refilling all of the time and our under the porch doves are back of the eighth year in a row. We have huge robins all over the place and two sparrow couples are building nests in our back yard bushes.

What a tribute this all is to the ongoing love that Christ has for us. We are given so many gifts that it is hard to keep track, isn't it? Jesus came back to His new life and shared all of these blessings with us. And just a reminder, if you have not planted yet, the time is here.

# Help Fill the Pantry

## 2025

### May

Hot Dogs , Ketchup, Mustard  
Baked Beans, Bread  
Seeds

### June

Hamburger, Ketchup, Mustard  
Baked Beans, Bread  
Seeds

\* Monetary donations for Hot Dogs and Ground Beef are preferred

Additional Pantry items are always needed:

Pasta Sauce, Pasta, Canned Fruit, Soup,  
Peanut Butter, Mac & Cheese, Canned Vegetables,  
Baked Beans, Rice, Syrup, Pancake Mix, Cereal,  
Hamburger Helper

Monetary donations can be made to Hedgesville  
Loaves and Fishes

P.O. Box 726, Hedgesville, WV 25427

For more information contact:

Karen - 301-992-1368 or Bill - 571-216-9320