



First
Presbyterian
Church
of Waynesboro, Virginia

The Columns *Online*

March 23, 2022 | Waynesboro, Virginia | *a newsletter supplement*

Thousands of churches close every year. What will happen to their buildings?

by Bob Smietana, Religion News Service

(RNS) — When he was named a district superintendent for the Church of the Nazarene, the Rev. Albert Hung found himself facing the same problem many denominational leaders face:

Too many churches. Not enough people.

Of the 90 or so congregations in the Northern California district Hung leads, few have more than 100 people, with most drawing around 40 people to worship services in buildings designed to seat far more. Their long term, viable future is questionable — as those congregations are aging, shrinking and often disconnected from their neighbors. A number of churches in the district have already decided to close, leaving empty pews in shuttered buildings.

But an empty church building is not just an asset to be liquidated, said Hung, who insists these are

still sacred spaces that God can use even if the churches that once worshipped in them no longer exist. That belief led Hung to look for creative ways to use empty church buildings. In Santa Cruz, the Nazarenes have teamed up with a nondenominational congregation to turn a shuttered church building into a community center that will house a number of nonprofits.

For years, the building was home to First Church of the Nazarene in Santa Cruz, a small congregation that shut down after its longtime pastor retired. The church also rented space to Faith Community Church of Santa Cruz, a nondenominational church that runs several community ministries. The decision to close down First Church of the Nazarene was worrying to Andy Lewis, pastor of Faith Community. The church had struggled to find a place to worship before renting space from the

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Music Notes.

The anthem for the fourth week of Lent will be *What Is the World Like*, composed in 2009 by Sally Ann Morris (b. 1952). The native of Greensboro, NC is a life-long member of the Presbyterian Church, baptized at Highland Presbyterian Church in Winston-Salem when she was six. Morris began writing music in her youth, winning a composition contest in ninth grade. She composed her first hymn tune in 1990, and has since written about 100 for a variety of denominations. Morris is the Musician-in-Residence at the Wake Forest University School of Divinity, where she leads “weekly chapel services and helps seminarians learn how to use music meaningfully in crafting coherent worship.”



Morris.



FIRST FRIDAYS RETURN.



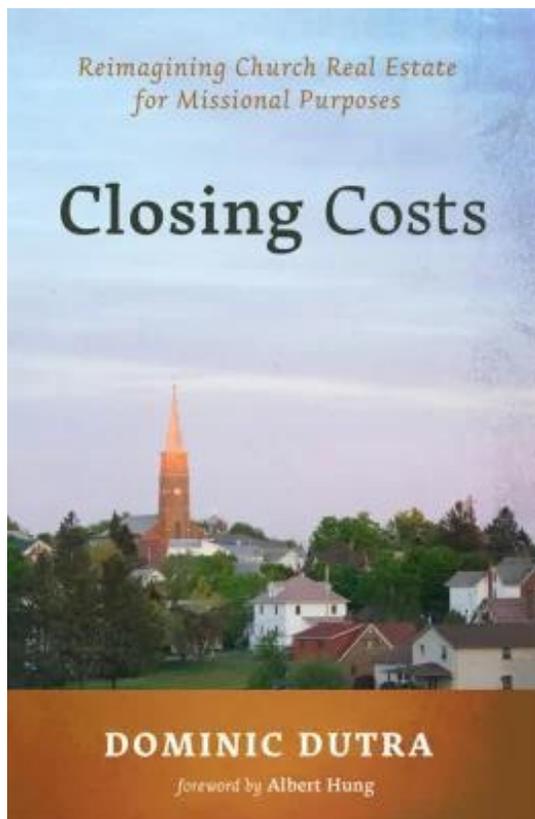
April 1st marks the return of the *First Friday Organ Recitals!* Director of Music/Organist Roger Daggy will present a concert of music ideal for our 1893 Woodberry and Harris pipe organ. Please join us in the Sanctuary on at 12:15 p.m. and plan to stay for a light luncheon, graciously coordinated by Susan Johnson. We look forward to seeing you at Roger's TWENTY-THIRD First Friday program - no foolin'!

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Nazarenes — and Lewis feared the church would have to leave the space.

In this new arrangement, Faith Community — which is nondenominational — gets to stay as one of several community partners sharing the space. The idea is to use the space for the benefit not just of the church but the entire neighborhood, he said. During the COVID-19 pandemic, Faith Community has used the space to run a food ministry and to host mobile medical clinics and a vaccination site in the parking lot. “We have to rethink how we use physical spaces so we can be a presence of love in the community,” said Lewis.



Dominic Dutra, author of “Closing Costs,” a new book about how church property can be repurposed, says there are thousands of churches around the country that have closed or will likely close in the years to come. And too often, he said, leaders of those churches put off any discussion about what to do with their building until it’s too late.

“I’ve had situations where buildings are empty and they have no plan at all,” he said.

Dutra argues that billions of dollars in church property could be put to work for ministry — if church leaders become proactive about the future. He has worked with a number of religious groups to do just that. In Oakland, Dutra helped the Nazarenes find a new buyer for a shuttered church building on the outskirts of town. The church was sold to a growing Korean congregation, which had a building close to downtown but with no parking. As part of the deal, the Nazarenes swapped their building, which had a large parking lot, for the building owned by the Korean church. That downtown church is now home to EIKON — a nonprofit that is part Nazarene church plant, part community organization. EIKON also took over another shuttered Nazarene building, which it uses to store donated furniture and appliances for a program called “Infinite Christmas.” Those donated goods — which are brand new and come from major manufacturers — are then distributed by other local churches and nonprofits.

EIKON is the kind of experiment that denominations like Church of the Nazarene need to try, said Hung. He said many churches still cling to old ways of doing ministry, which often involve waiting for people to show up on Sunday. Instead, he said, in the future, churches will have to find ways to get out into the community and prove their worth.

“Now is the time for bold experimentation,” Hung said. “Because we have so little to lose at this point.”

Hung also hopes congregations will develop what he called “kingdom-mindedness” — looking at the bigger-picture ministry of the Christian

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church rather than their own interests. When he talks with a church about closing — and what will happen to their buildings — he begins with a “posture of success,” giving thanks for all the congregation has accomplished in its history. He also gives thanks for those who gave generously to support the church’s mission in the past and encourages the church to bless future generations in the same way.

“What is the most loving thing we can do for our kids and for our neighbors?” Hung said.

For Sister Gladys Guenther, president of the Fremont, California-based Sisters of the Holy Family, planning for the future has been a blessing and a time of grief. Like many orders of Catholic nuns, the Holy Family sisters have been aging and declining in numbers. At their peak, there were about 250 sisters. Now there are just over 40. The sisters worked with Dutra in recent years to sell their motherhouse, which was outdated, and to use those funds to build senior housing. Members of the order live there now, and when they are gone, the buildings will likely be sold to a nonprofit that works with seniors. Sister Gladys, who is 76 — “I am one of the younger sisters” — said that in planning for the future, members of the order had two goals: to care for the sisters as they grew old and to ensure the legacy of the order would live on even after they were gone.

Gladys said there has been grief in watching her order plan for shutting down. When she joined in the 1960s, the future looked bright. Now, she said, there’s grief in watching an organization she loved die. The hardest part, she said, is saying goodbye to sisters she has known for decades.

“One would presume that all of this change is part of God’s plan, too. It might not be my preferential plan if I were informing God of what I would like to see happen,” she said. “But you know what — life is filled with things you thought you could never do or even imagine.”



calvin and hobbes



Lent 2022

Ash Wednesday Service

March 2, Noon

Book Study- and Lunch

Being Presbyterian in the Bible Belt

Wednesdays at Noon

March 9

March 16

March 23

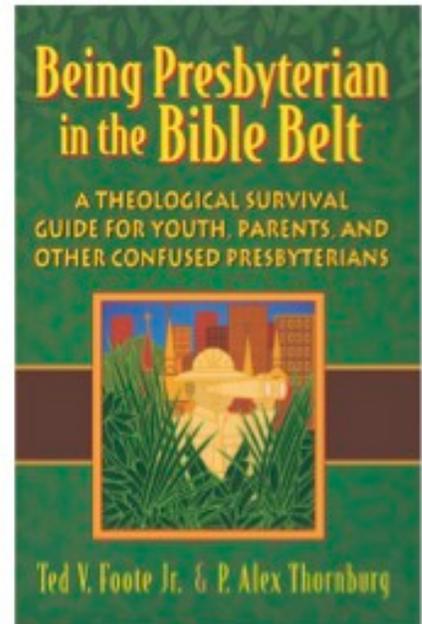
March 30

April 6

Maundy Thursday Simple meal

with the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper

April 14, Noon



Please register at

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(540) 949-8366

to receive a copy of the book



Our Worship Channels

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YouTube



First
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of Waynesboro, Virginia

Liturgist this week: Ann Wood

Psalm 32
Luke 15: 1-3, 11-32

sermon: 'Lost and found.'

This Week in History.



Burrhus Frederic Skinner born
in Susquehanna, PA.
Pioneer of Behavioral Psychology.
March 20, 1904



Johann Sebastian Bach born in
Eisenach, Germany
March 21, 1685



Patrick Henry born
in Pittsburgh, PA
March 22, 1726



At the Second Virginia Convention, Patrick Henry proposes volunteer militia companies be formed in every Virginia county, ending his speech by saying, *"I know not what course others may take; but as for me, give me liberty, or give me death!"*
March 23, 1775



Tanker Exxon Valdez runs aground in Prince William Sound, contaminating 45 miles of Alaskan coastline.
March 24, 1989

Session Digest

March 2022

- A meeting of representatives from the PC(USA) congregations in and around Waynesboro will take place on Sunday, March 27. The Rev. David Witt will lead a discussion on collaboration, partnerships and cooperative endeavors, particularly in mission. Bruce Bosselman and Betsy Ruehl will attend on behalf of FPC.
- FPC is invited to join the downtown churches for a community service on Palm Sunday to recall Jesus' entry into Jerusalem and to prepare for the Holy Week to come. This outside service will begin at 10:00 a.m. at Grace Evangelical Lutheran Church, and will conclude in time for participants to gather in their own churches for worship.
- Custodian Caroleia Strandberg resigned on March 27. Efforts are underway to secure a replacement.
- COVID-19 mask mandates at FPC have been removed.
- Session acknowledged letter sent to congregation by Danny Leech, and discussed the next steps in the process of discernment.
- Of primary concern is identifying church leaders.
 - The Nominating Committee must find one Ruling Elder immediately to fill an unexpired term, and three Ruling Elders to take office in June.
- In the interest of identifying and building our legacy in the community, the session is exploring the following:
 - Preschool incorporation as a 501c3 not for profit
 - Consolidation of community Hunger Ministries
 - Partnerships with Music & Arts organizations
 - Development of senior housing on the property
- With respect to the building and grounds:
 - Session is conducting an assessment of the Buildings/Grounds
 - Based on the assessment, session will create a repair schedule
 - Session will seek an appraisal/valuation of the property.
- Finally, with respect to Pastoral Leadership, the Session, in consultation with the presbytery Committee on Pastoral Transition, will determine if and when to elect a Pastor Nominating Committee.