

January 24, 2024 | Waynesboro, Virginia | *a newsletter supplement*

“I was made for this.”

*Small church member Beth Bradshaw reflects
on the ups and downs of attending a church in a small town.*

For *the Outlook*. I couldn't wait to leave the tiny United Methodist Church in Lepanto, Arkansas, where I grew up. Going to college meant graduating from this small farming community in the northeast Arkansas Delta and our church, where my sisters and I were often the only kids. We had no youth group. We performed all the acolyte duties and served communion. The weekly rhythm of my life to include Sunday morning worship was set. Although I was nurtured and loved, I was excited to experience a big church.

Throughout college, medical school and residency, I hopped from one big church to the next in Fayetteville, Orlando, Little Rock, and Dallas. I enjoyed the anonymity of being able to go to church without getting involved or needing to make a commitment. I was a spectator. And for 11 years, I loved it. I enjoyed the elaborate music, the big choirs, the seemingly flawless services — so much going on, even if I didn't participate.

After residency, my husband and I moved back to his hometown of Wynne, Arkansas, to start our practices, raise our family and put down roots. I always assumed I would live in a larger city, but my husband always knew he would become a family practice physician in the town where grew up. I joined in on that dream, and when we arrived in Wynne, joined his Presbyterian church.

I laugh when I think of my 18-year-old self, ready to move out of a small town and up in the world. Wynne is a town of 8,000 people, and I live 10 miles outside of it. While it is larger than the town I grew up in, it's still smaller than where I thought I would end up. I now attend a church that is the same size as my childhood church.

Our church experienced a lot of loss over the last year. In three months, we lost our pastor, a youth leader, treasurer, administrative assistant, organist, pianist and a Sunday school teacher. When I look back, I can't believe we even pulled off a worship service. But some of those difficulties helped us focus on the present, on what we have here and now, and on what it means to be the church. Continued



Bradshaw.

“I was made for this.” Continued

The gifts and talents of the people in our congregation bubbled to the surface during those difficult times. When all the extras seemed to fade away, it was easier to focus on what mattered. We engaged in meaningful worship. We renewed our commitment to serve our community through our day school and work to make it the best we can for all children. We worked to ensure our youth group continued to remain a vibrant place for members and friends to grow in their faith together. We opened ourselves to new ideas.

We often say to ourselves that no matter what difficulties arise, we will be the church. We will continue to worship, grow in faith and serve our community. We will not worry as much about how long we can keep our doors open. Instead, we concentrate on how our church can serve God and serve others.

Maintaining this attitude isn't easy. But we do it, anyway. Even though we have found a wonderful new temporary pastor and a gifted administrative assistant who have moved us forward, our members are assuming a lot of responsibilities. I'm the PNC chair and co-worship chair. I also serve on the Christian Ed committee. On most Sundays, I'm either filming or managing the self-playing organ from my iPhone or performing liturgist duties. Several members have similarly sized lists of duties.

But there is something about the difficulties of being a small church that have made navigating them more rewarding than the ease of a decade ago. Maybe it's the closeness of a congregation where all hands are on deck. Maybe it's giving up on the idea that we could do this ourselves and relying more on God. Maybe we've all grown in our faith. It's hard to know exactly, but it feels good.

It feels like a resurrection. I guess I was made for this.

Beth Bradshaw is a pediatrician in Wynne, Arkansas, and a ruling elder at Wynne Presbyterian Church. She and her husband, Stan, have three children who keep them busy most days.



Better Together Bible Study

Monday, January 29, 2024

First Presbyterian Church

1:00-2:00 p.m.

Join John Tindall in exploring
the great stories and themes
of the Bible

calvin and hobbes



Music Notes for January 28

Epiphany IV



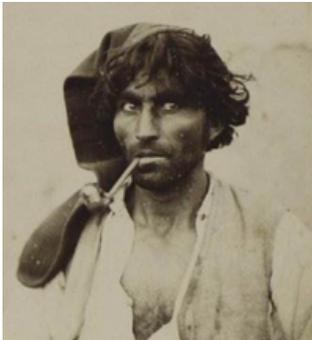
Chisholm.

The opening hymn for this Sunday will be *Great Is Thy Faithfulness*, a hymn popularized by Billy Graham, who often included it on his international crusades. The text was written in 1923 by **Thomas O. Chisholm** (1866-1960), who, after converting to Christianity at the age of 28, wrote over 1,200 sacred poems, many of which appeared in Christian periodicals, such as *The Pentecostal Herald*, where he served as business manager and office editor. Ordained in the Methodist Episcopal Church South, he would serve for only a year due to ill health.

The tune FAITHFULNESS was penned by **William Runyan** (1870-1957). Like many organists, he began playing regularly when he was but twelve years old. He became a Methodist minister and served churches in Kansas and Arkansas, including the Federated Church at John Brown University in Sulphur Springs, Arkansas. He worked for the Moody Bible Institute and was an editor for Hope Publishing Company.



Runyan.



A Sicilian Mariner, c.1890.

The closing hymn, *Lord, Dismiss Us With Thy Blessing*, is known by the tune name SICILIAN MARINERS. Originally sung at the end of the day by Sicilian seamen, grateful for their safe return to shore, the tune was included in various publications in the late 1700s, and by the early 19th century, the hymn was published in various languages.

OUR WORSHIP CHANNELS

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This Week in History.



Soviet leader **Vladimir Lenin**, leader of the October Revolution of 1917 which established the world's first Communist government, dies of a brain hemorrhage. His embalmed body would be displayed in a shrine on Moscow's Red Square.

January 21, 1924



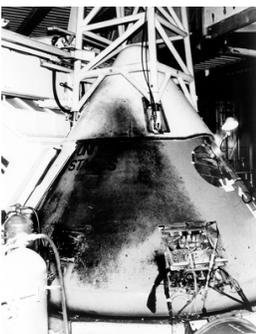
The **USS Pueblo** is seized by North Koreans in the Sea of Japan amid claims the Navy ship was spying. The crew would be held in captivity until December, with one fatality. The ship remains in North Korean hands to this day.

JANUARY 23, 1968



An American Airlines Boeing 707 made the first scheduled transcontinental U.S. flight, traveling from California to New York.

January 25, 1959



During a launch simulation at Cape Kennedy, FL, the Apollo 1 capsule erupts in flames, killing astronauts Gus Grissom, Ed White, and Roger B. Chaffee.

JANUARY 27, 1967



Queen Victoria of England dies after reigning for 64 years, the longest reign in British history, during which England had become the most powerful empire in the world.

JANUARY 22, 1901



Hawaiian Queen Liliuokalani is overthrown in a coup d'état led by American businessmen. It would be a U.S. Territory until achieving statehood in 1959.

JANUARY 24, 1895



To relieve overcrowding in English prisons, 11 British ships arrive at Sydney Harbor in Australia with 778 convicts to set up a penal colony.

JANUARY 26, 1788