
The Pastor's Searchlight—May, 2025: "The Shantung Compound" (The One Year Book of Amazing Stories, R. Petterson)



Langdon was born in 1919, the son of a chaplain at the University of Chicago. After he graduated from Harvard University, he went to teach English in China, which was under Japanese rule at the time. When Japan bombed Pearl Harbor and the United States declared war, the Japanese began to round up citizens of Allied nations and cart them off to concentration camps. Langdon was sent to a former Presbyterian mission compound in the coastal province of Shantung. Some 1,500 prisoners were crammed into that pitifully small place. Most were pastors, priests, missionaries, and Christian educators. As concentration camps go, the Shantung Compound was relatively civilized. No prisoners were beaten or tortured. But there was never enough food. Langdon lost fifty pounds, more than a third of his body weight. The biggest enemies were fear and boredom. Living space was at a premium. Privacy was almost nonexistent. Chalk lines were meticulously drawn to mark off personal space. For the next three years, inmates jealously guarded their few feet of real estate, ready to fight to the death if someone crossed the chalk line. Years later, Langdon Gilkey wrote a disturbing bestseller entitled ***Shantung Compound*** about his dismay at the conditions in the camp. Even the most devout missionaries were not immune to gross selfishness. Clergymen squabbled with other prisoners over food even as they stole from communal supplies. Veteran missionaries refused to share any portion of their living space with new arrivals. One preacher argues that he needed all his space to write his sermons. Hypocrisy was rampant. Fundamentalists refused to share their meals with people who smoked cigarettes, treating them like the worst sort of sinners. Yet those same preachers grabbed all the Red Cross cigarettes they could to barter for extra tins of food. In a camp full of missionaries, the only one who could be trusted to guard the communal food store was Dick Rogers, an alcoholic ex-soldier. But many a pious preacher, whose ration of food depended on Dick's strength of character, still considered him immoral because he drank. Langdon was most disillusioned when the Red Cross delivered 2,100 food parcels to the compound. The Japanese decreed that, because parcels came from the United States, each of the three hundred American prisoners would get first choice. The remaining 1,800 parcels were to be shared with the rest of the prisoners. But the American clergy caucused and formally protested that the Japanese were grossly unfair. They demanded that, because the parcels came from the American Red Cross, the three hundred US citizens should receive all of them! **Young Langdon Gilkey almost lost his faith as a result of the moral failures of Christians in that camp.** Some sixty years later, he reminds us all that the best of saints have sinful hearts. Sadly, they will often sacrifice everything to meet their own needs. On the other hand, he saw heroic Christians who sacrificed everything to help fellow prisoners. Langdon Gilkey's story teaches us an important truth:

***You do not own what you refuse to give away to others. It owns you.
Only when you freely give it away are you free.***

Even though "I am allowed to do anything," I must not become a slave to anything. (I Corinthians 6:12)

"Young Langdon Gilkey almost lost his faith as a result of the moral failures of Christians in that camp." I will admit to you all that I found myself feeling like Langdon after the past election of 2024. I felt betrayed by the Christian community who seemed to have sold their soul to the devil. I have been battling my inner cynic, and asking God to change my attitude—to surrender my disappointment, my sorrow, my discouragement, and my rage into the Father's hands. I truly believe God has a bigger vision for our nation, and that He may allow our nation to collapse from within as a measure of holding us accountable for our enabling efforts to allow our nation to become a beacon not of justice, but injustice as we have failed our God by failing His vision of democracy which He began over 2,050 years ago! God will not be mocked! But know this...God will always welcome and forgive us back into His embrace when we repent!

In Christ, **Pastor Dave** (reved87@verizon.net)

All Are Welcome to Join Us for our Adult Study Group on the book of Acts! We meet on Tuesdays (5/6 @ Panos', W. 38th & Washington Sts.); /13, 20, 27 @ Grandview Manor Apartments in the Activity Room on the ground floor (Davison Avenue) @ 10:30am (refreshments & coffee are provided).



We celebrate in-person worship services on Sundays, but we will also continue to live-stream our Sunday morning worship experiences (9:30am @ "ErieEAPC" & 11am @ "belle.church" and the pastor's personal page "Dave Edmunds") and our Wednesday Live! devotional experiences (6:30pm) on the pastor's personal Facebook page: "Dave Edmunds" on the 2nd & 4th Wednesdays. Know that we are all praying daily for you, for our ministries, our mission, those who have been especially hit hard by this crisis, our Ghanaian Mission Partnership, and our world!

Please Minister to Members Challenged by Chronic Health Issues (cards, calls, visits, and prayers): Dan & Diane Horton: 5 Little Pine Place, Franklin, PA, 16323 (814-657-2663); Harry Krahne: 4210 Davison Ave., 16504 (#504, 814-315-8359); Paul (Doc) & Linda Wetzel: 10540 Sampson Rd., Waterford, PA. 16441 (814-825-2070); Ellie Logan: 819 W. 8th St., Apt. 211, Erie, PA 16502 (814-520-1190).



BVPC PRAYER CONCERNS: McConnell family, Chris Tombaugh, Nick Nasibyan, Jen Mellors, Char Napierkowski's granddaughter, Phyllis DiNicola, Bea Reese, Richard/Dennis (Nancy Marzka's friends), Allen Lomax, Michelle Thayer, Aden Harman, Dawn Trojanovich, Andrew Montefiore, Barb Poirier, Cheryl Schultz, Sam Schultz, Noah Brower, Samantha Pendzich, Ken Bliss, Crystal Gardner, Sandy McConahy, Jane Clinger, Sandra Sauder, Leonie Degnan, Chelsie Belden, Jack Donovan, Char & Bob (Jr.) Napierkowski, Becky Fuller, Sarah Richards, Tyco Swick, Sullivan Bruder, Rachel Fabrizio, Patty Smolinsky's nephew (Adam), Andre Boorady, Jackie Roddy, Nohade Boorady, Cassie Shaw & family;

BVPC Mission Efforts: Girl Scouts, OLOMC Food Pantry, BVFD, BVES (including Angel Tree, backpack food prog. & teachers' supplies effort), 1st Covenant Sunday Suppers & The Upper Room Lunch efforts, ONP Overflow Shelter; Ukrainian & Middle Eastern warfare; victims of recent tornado events across the US; Systemic racial injustice; Senseless gun violence; The southern border refugee crisis & ICE injustices; Current military services personnel; the Ghana mission partnership (*We pray especially for the Chereponi District: 11 churches, 528 members, and District Pastor M. L. Agbovi*); the Wapuli Health Clinic (*Paul Mahama, director*); The President, VP, Senate, House, Supreme Court—wisdom & justice; **Presbytery prayers:** Revs. Robin Cuneo, Rachel Johns, Jim Haas, Jim Rimmer, Mary Kay Crom, Sue & Jay Montgomery, and Jim McCormack.

BVPC May Birthdays:

May 2nd Kristin Woodring, 3013 East 33rd Street, Erie, PA. 16510
5th JoAnn Barber, Grandview Manor Apartments, 4210 Davison Ave, Apt. 125 Erie, PA. 16504
6th Sandy McConahy, 3204 Norcross Road, Erie, PA. 16510
Ivy Olivia Catt, 1 Columbia Ave., Apt. A9, Hartsdale, New York 10530
(*Dave & Marcy's granddaughter*)
19th Ellie Logan, 819 West 8th Street, Apt. 211, Erie, PA. 16502 (85th)
21st Judy Gaadt, 417 McClelland Ave., Erie, PA. 16504 (80th)
28th Phil Cote, 8821 Old Wattsburg Road, Erie, PA. 16510
31st Melody Lewis, 5515 Appleman Road, Erie, PA. 16509



"Per Capita" Giving: For those who are able to pay their Per Capita for 2025 (**\$35 per member**), use a pew offering envelope. Your "Per Capita" giving supports many significant mission efforts throughout our presbytery and the world-wide Presbyterian Church. Pray about your gift to our larger church mission efforts!

Please do your best to continue your regular giving, and for those able, please increase your giving to cover those who have been negatively impacted by this pandemic's financial hardships. **Financial Report YTD thru March, 2025: Operating Revenues YTD Received: \$32,554.69; Operating Expenses Paid Out: \$31,583.27; Leaving a balance of \$971.42. Please reach out to Albert Boorady** (treasurer, [HYPERLINK "mailto:bvp16510treasurer@gmail.com" bvp16510treasurer@gmail.com](mailto:bvp16510treasurer@gmail.com), 814-218-2544) if you'd like to learn how to set up BVPC as a regular payee with your bank automatically! And **be aware that you can always donate online at BVPC's website as well** (though there will be a small fee charged by the online donation service—something your bank won't do if you use them to set up BVPC as a regular payee). *Please continue to pray for BVPC's ministries and your financial giving! The next few years will be a real test of our faith, our obedience to God, and our endurance during very thin financial conditions!*

2025 Slate of Officers:

Elders: Chris Tombaugh, Stacey Simons, Sandy McConahy, Leslie Sickles, Doug Ebert, Mary Ann Rice (filling a one-year term for Dave Sickles); **Clerk:** Kim Ragen, **Treasurer:** Albert Boorady

Deacons: Kim Ragen, JoAnn Barber, Kathy Simons, Anne Campbell, Becky Cousins, Corey Rice

Audit Committee: Rita Postlewaite, Chris Tombaugh, Fred Ebert (3 yr. term)

Memorial Committee: Bonnie Marshall, Melody Lewis, Nancy Marzka (3 yr. term)

At-Large Nominating Committee: Dave Sickles, JoAnn Barber, Kim Ragen, Doug Ebert



Easter Flowers! Thank you to all those who donated Easter plants to decorate our chancel area for Easter Sunday! It was beautiful! Some forgot to take their plants home. There are still 5 lily plants in the chancel, for those who can pick them up after worship this Sunday (April 27).

UPCOMING EVENTS:

- **May 4th, Communion** @ 11am worship w/Rev. Mary Louise McCullough; Mothers' Day coffee hr. after worship
- **May 10th, Outdoor work day @ BVPC** (*May 17 rain date*)—we will do some outdoor clean-up at BVPC: raking, trimming, planting. Bring your own gardening tools & any plants you wish to donate.
- **May 17th, Faith & Film event:** 4:30pm @ Elmwood Church (parlor)—bring your favorite snack to share! Watch "McFarland, USA" (starring Kevin Costner & Maria Bello)—based on a true story of underdogs overcoming tremendous obstacles.
- **May 18th, Ellie Logan's 85th birthday coffee hr.** (after worship).
- **May 23rd, Joint Men's Gathering** @ The White Turkey Drive-In; meet at EPC @ 6 and carpool together.

Belle Valley Presbyterian Church Session Meeting, April 14, 2025 @ 6:30pm

AGENDA

6:30 pm Opening prayer

6:40 pm Approval of the Docket

6:42 pm Approval of March Minutes

6:45 pm Correspondence: *Thank you card from 1st Covenant re: our Mar. 16th vol. effort at the winter overflow shelter.*

6:50 pm Pastor's Report

6:55 pm Committee Reports

- ☐ Stewardship & Finance (*Doug Ebert*) / Building & Grounds (*Dave Sickles*)—*Treasurer's Report (Albert Boorady)—B & G updates: Elevator issues (replacement hose & heater in shaft for winter use; Dave getting 5 yr. test quotes); Chris' quotes on stair lifts; Doug's quotes on exterior ramp. Exterior repairs update.*
- ☐ Christian Education (*Leslie Sickles*)—*Adult study group (Acts) continues; Faith & Film event planned for May 17 (@ Elmwood, 4:30pm).*
- ☐ Fellowship & Membership (*Sandy McConahy*)—*April 13 coffee hr. Mother's Day coffee hr., May 4; Ellie Logan's 85th birthday coffee hr., May 18.*
- ☐ Mission & Outreach (*Different events will be headed by different vols.*)—*Mar. 16 shelter event, we had 11 vols. between both congs., serving about 42-43 homeless clients. Started collection for Grace House (just delivered 5 boxes of supplies to The City Mission, 4/6). Easter Egg Hunt, April 12, 12-2pm (21 kids, possibly 15-20 families)—thx to Ragens, Sickles, Becky Cousins for their help.*
- ☐ Nominating (*Chris Tombaugh*).
- ☐ Worship/Music (*Stacey Simons*)—*MT svc., April 17, 7pm @ BVPC; 6:30am GF men's communion bkft., 3pm livestream, 12-3pm prayer vigil, April 18 (all @ BVPC); 6:30am Easter Sunrise (Wintergreen Gorge Cemetery)/11am Resurrection svc., April 20. Randy is back w/Derf as accompanists. We will still have Julie record the MT svc. music.*
- ☐ Personnel (*Chris Tombaugh*)—*report on Melinda Wingenbach.*

7:45 pm Clerk's Report

7:50 pm Old Business: *any updates on joint search committee; LEP report (Chris Tombaugh); Chris' updates on Rummage Sale fundraiser (Goodwill).*

7:55 pm New Business:

- o *Next session mtg.—May 12 @ 6:30pm*
- o *Next Presbytery Mtg.—May 20 @ 6:30pm @ Wayside (In-person only)*

8:00 pm Adjourn with Prayers of the People / Lord's Prayer

Pastor's Report (March, 2025):

- 1) Prep 5 Sunday sermons / 5 Sunday live-streaming services; 3 live-streaming Weds. Prayer & Praise svcs. & devotions; 5 worship notes (bulletins)/live streaming; Prep session agenda & pastor's report, visitors' letters, proof session minutes. Prep for and lead worship @ Nightingale Nursing Home (3/19 & 29). Prep for daytime Ash Wed. svc. to Larson Text employees & BVPC members (3/5, 12:30pm). Conduct Ash Wed. svc. of communion & ashes
- 2) Mtg. Julie von Volkenburg @ BVPC to prep svc. music on digital piano (3/13, 15). Use Julie to record BVPC svc. music on a flash drive for BVPC (3/2, 16).
- 3) Prep for and conduct weekly joint Acts adult study group sessions (3 Tuesdays, bring refreshments a few times) @ Grandview Manor Apts. & @ Panos (1 Tuesday, 3/4, p/u Harry K.).
- 4) P/u food boxes from 2nd Harvest Food Bank to deliver to BVES for their backpack food program (3/5).
- 5) Pre-marital session w/Caitlyn Wolf & Nick Vona (3/1).
- 6) Confirmation class reunion (3/2 @ Panera's, Buffalo Rd.).
- 7) I interviewed Melinda Wingenbach w/Chris Tombaugh for the BVPC treasurer's position (3/10).
- 8) Coordinate the monthly Erie area PCUSA clergy lunch gatherings @ Olive Garden (3/20).
- 9) Continue to serve on the Ghana Mission Partnership sub-committee.
- 10) COM Advocate to New Hope, Emmanuel, and Westminster churches.
- 11) Serving on the LEP Worship Planning Com. & serving on the LEP/WNY clergy retreat planning com.
- 12) Serving as secretary on the Inter-Church Ministries Board.
- 13) Mtg. @ EPC w/vols. to prep bag lunches for shelter clients; serving the homeless @ the ONP winter overflow shelter (3/16). We had a great group of 11 vols. from both churches. Thx to Leslie Sickles for coordinating us at the shelter, and to Lisa Buffalari for coordinating us at EPC.
- 14) Move projection equipment from BVPC to EPC for 3/29 Faith & Film event @ EPC ("The Secret Life of Walter Mitty"). Set up and p/u refreshments.

- 15)** Attended: mtg. w/group led by Rev. Chuck Cammarata (1st Covenant, 3/6); BVPC Newspaper recycling (3/8, also p/u Horton's coffee box & donuts for vols.); p/u donuts/coffee from Krispy Kreme for food pantry vols. (3/20); BVPC coffee hr. (3/9); Session mtg. (BVPC: 3/10; EPC: 3/11); UCC Pension webinars (3/18 & 26); Bubble-Up Zoom mtg. (3/27); mtg. w/Anita Bernhardt re: BVPC's mission giving (3/27).
- 16)** Assorted tasks: calls w/Mary Louise McCullough & Kristin Woodring re: serving our joint church partnership after I retire; proof & update BVPC prayer list; proof session minutes for both congs.; prep and email newsletters to BVPC; set up zoom mtgs. for all events I have to moderate; Email cong. re: prayer concerns & upcoming programming & recycling efforts; visitor follow-up; calls to set up visits; contacted Deacons re: hospitalized; long-range sermon planning.
- 17)** Visits: Nancy Marzka (3/3 @ Hamot); © John & Cathy Durst (3/19); © Barb Poirier (@ LECOM Senior Living, 3/5); © visits: Elmwood Gardens residents (Bonnie Massing, Helen May, Sue Keneelly—3/5); p/u Char Napierkowski for bkft. visit (3/20 @ The Original Bkft. Place); Prayer visit w/Samantha Pendzich & Roseanne Bliss (and both husbands, Kirk & Jim) @ St. V's (3/27).



**May 5th,
Mother's Day Coffee Hr.**
after worship!

May 10th, Outdoor work day @ BVPC (May 17 rain date)—
we will do some outdoor clean-up at BVPC: raking, trimming, planting.
Bring your own gardening tools & any plants you wish to donate.



Disney
**McFARLAND
USA**

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