

# THE EXTENDED FAMILY

Warren Wilson Presbyterian Church

## Steve's Slant

BY REV. DR. STEVE RUNHOLT



Maybe it's due to the success of Finishing Strong, our recent, Lenten educational series focused on preparing for life's final stages. Or maybe it's due to our proximity to Memorial Day.

Whatever the cause, I have found myself thinking a lot about death this week. You know, in a good way.

For example, I was startled to realize I was thinking about how funny death can be. About the time my Aunt Edith called our house to speak to my mother. How she asked if I would do her a favor when I explained my mom wasn't home.

"Can you deliver a message for me?"

"Sure," I said, in my most mature eleven-year old voice.

"Tell her that Grampa Anderson died."

Me. Tell my mother her sister called to tell her, in turn, that their father, my grandfather, had died.

Like a skit out of *Prairie Home Companion*: funny but also a tiny bit horrifying. I have been thinking about how beautiful death can be, and how hard. About all the memorial services we have done here, all the lives we have celebrated, all the losses we have grieved together. And all the ministry we have shared in together, all the love our church family has shown, caring for spouses and family members in some of the hardest moments and seasons of their lives.

The number of these services, these goodbyes, is now approaching ninety. I have been thinking about all the lives we've celebrated; the many ways they touched mine, the many ways they contributed to our shared life: the special food they prepared for our potlucks (those bacon wrapped figs!); all the Habitat houses they built; all the lunches and sandwiches they made for others; all the ways they tended to our cemetery; all the resources they helped us steward; all the hymns they played for us, all the anthems they sang. The list of these memories could fill this page, and the next. (Continued on page 2)

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## Steve's Slant continued...

I have been thinking about how each one of these beautiful people died differently, their last step an experience entirely their own. How some of them died peacefully, at home perhaps, or in a hospice center surrounded by their loved ones. How some of them died beautifully, a palpable sense of holiness in the room. How some died suddenly, unexpectedly.

How all of those deaths, even the peaceful ones and the beautiful ones, were hard.

I am thinking about what a gift these experiences have been, all the lessons I've learned while shepherding individuals through the valley of the shadow of death; all the lessons I have learned helping guide family members out to the other side, safely. About how to be present, how to be available, how to be unafraid, to listen, to pray.

I am thinking about how much I am still learning about death. About the ways our culture and our faith has shaped how we think about life's final stage; how we sometimes say death no longer stings because we have somehow emerged victorious over it. How this can perhaps make death feel like the enemy of life, a foe to be conquered.

And I am thinking about how much there still is to learn. About other ways to see death, and to understand it. How it is possible to view death not as an enemy to be defeated but as a natural part of life, an experience not to be feared but respected. And how the dying process can lead to healing—of memories and traumas, personal and familial.

Mostly I am thinking what an incredible privilege it has been, and continues to be, to share in these experiences with you, to walk through death's dark valley together and to come out on the other side, safely and alive.

And I realize that thinking about death in all these ways is, in fact, a very good thing because it makes me value my life more, reminds me that every breath I take is a gift.

## JUNE BIRTHDAYS

Emma Eagle Joslin June 1  
Jim Storey June 3  
Mary fran Spencer June 6  
Nancy Garrison June 16  
Fitz Legerton June 20  
Kristin Williams June 25  
Rodney Lytle June 27

Marc Mullinax June 2  
Erika Lytle June 4  
Fran Roberts June 13  
Anne Dale June 17  
Jackie Wintle June 25  
Owen Montgomery June 26  
Steven Hamilton June 27



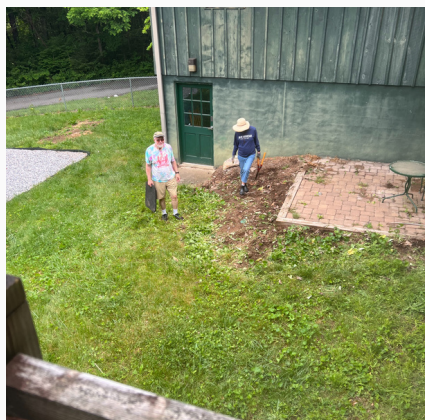
Happy  
Birthday

## Joys and Concerns

Our Healing Prayers go out to: Susan Runholt, Steve's sister; Lee & Martha Dugger and family; Betty Smith; Bob Gambrell; Salyna Morgan; Walt Roberts, Fran & Burnace's son; Erika Lytle; Houston Huggins, Beth Meriwether's brother; Carol Lee and Brooks Joslin, Blake's parents; Jackie Wintle's cousin, Richard Taylor and her niece, Jessica Brown; Kip Smith, Tacci's father; Pat Crumpler; Shane Reece, Nancy Garrison's son; Pat Wilson's son, Kell; Fred Porter & Fred Harvey, the Griswold's brothers-in-law; Bartley and Phyllis Spencer, Sandy Brauer's brother and sister in law; Jackie Ligon Cole; Rick Garrison; Fran Roberts' sister-in-law, Linda Briggs; Flo Bishop; Jon Hettrick and his family; Marjorie Hettrick; Kim Reece, daughter of Nancy and Rick Garrison; Bobbie Galgaro and daughter Lisa, friends of the Daugherty family.



## Beautification Team



A lot of outdoor and landscaping activity happened during the month of May! Beginning with removing the "Burr Plants" in the area where the table is in the playground, and digging their roots out of the ground so they wouldn't come back. Things were culminated by a "Work Day" on May 27 where many members concentrated on the areas in front of the church. Thanks to all who came out and helped with this work! It takes a village, and we sure have a good one!

## THE WARREN WILSON BOOK GROUP



The Warren Wilson Book Group will meet at noon on Thursday, June 8. This month we'll be discussing *The Whistling Season* by Ivan Doig. Marian will lead our discussion, which begins after we have lunch from 12-12:30. We are always happy to welcome new members!





## NOTEWORTHY EVENTS

### **JULY 2 CHURCH PICNIC**

Join us after Sunday Service on July 2 for fellowship and food!

Hamburgers, hot dogs and veggie hot dogs along with condiments and lemonade will be provided by the Congregational Life Ministry Team. Since this will be a pot luck, so be sure to sign up if you plan to bring something!



## Church Contacts

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