

Wyoming County
Writing Contest

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Adult Category

Berlin McKinney Elementary School
Principal

“The Little White Church on the Hill”

On a ridge above Baileysville, where the fog
Lifts slow like a prayer from the holler,
They planted their faith in dirt and stone—
My grandparents, steady as the seasons.

Before the water came, before the maps were redrawn,
Their days were measured in fence lines and scripture,
In the lowing of cattle at dusk
And the soft turn of Bible pages at dawn.

Then the flood took more than fields—
It carried off roads, memories, the shape of home.
Men came with papers and promises,
And the valley bent to the will of the dam.

But they did not leave empty-handed.

They carried with them a hymn unsung,
A stubborn light that would not be drowned.
Up on a hill their new land rose,
Looking out over the school below—
Children’s laughter drifting upward
Like echoes of what once was.

And there, with weathered hands and quiet resolve,
They built it:
A little white church, simple as grace,
Boards nailed together with hope and memory.

No steeple piercing heaven,
Just a roof to gather beneath,
Where prayers could rise without asking permission.

On Sundays, the doors would open wide—
The bell would chime,
Boots dusted with train track coal
And pages turned by wrinkled farmer hands,

Your grandmother's hymns, quiet but certain,
Your grandfather's voice, soft as a dream —
Together, they filled that room
With something no flood could touch.

And even now, if you stand on that hill
When the light falls gold across the valley,
You might feel it still—
That peaceful feeling, that rooted love.

A church not just built of wood and nails,
But of endurance, loss, and unshaken belief—
Overlooking a future
They helped hold together.