

Poem for the Inauguration of Wesley R. Fugate, Ph.D. - May 17, 2021

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And so you've escaped Prestonsburg for Chambersburg,
another town at the trough
of a low wave of mountains.

I can imagine the comfort
the Jenny Wiley gave you;
the rustle of everyone clapping
after a show under the sky's infinite ceiling.

The stage's façade painted to look like
what someone in Kentucky
thought Greek columns and entablature looked like.

In a town where it was hard to move past stranger,
the choir, too, must have been a comfort.

Was it like faith to feel the sum of the voices
as more than itself?

Perhaps it felt like the day
the president of Center College told you
you could have his job
as the bourbon-bright sun spilled over everything.

And now we're here today,
and now you cross the proscenium line
to the apron of a new stage.

Wes, we are filling in
even though there are still empty chairs.

Wes, these tickets cost a fortune,
but we pay gladly.

There is that type of quiet
that comes before every communal song.

And Wes, we could use a good song right about now.

Sing us something.

Something that will make us feel
like everything is coming up daisies.