



Blacksburg Presbyterian Church

Loving God with Heart, Soul, and Mind

FEBRUARY 2023 NEWSLETTER



February Racial Equity Challenge

Our February Racial Equity Habit-Building Challenge began Wednesday, February 1, but it's not too late to get on board!

This month-long challenge focuses on building life-long habits for racial equity through daily actions for a month: read, watch, notice, connect, engage, act, reflect, inspire. Everyone is encouraged to do at least 21 actions over the 28 days of February.

Go to <https://tinyurl.com/3cfec37> and follow the instructions for Individuals. (Use this exact link, rather than trying to Google it, as you might be sent astray.) Pick up a sheet to keep track of your activities in the Gathering Space or find the tracker on the website, if you desire. You are likely to find that, as you do this Challenge, you will want to discuss with others and reflect on what you are discovering. Every Sunday morning in February, there will be a gathering in Westminster at 9:00 for anyone participating in the challenge who would like to gather with others to process the experience.

**In addition to the activities offered on the website,
BPC will be offering other opportunities for engagement:**

Sundays in February, 9:00 am: Racial Equity Habit-Building Conversation

For the month of February, we'll be embracing a month-long racial equity habit-building challenge as a whole congregation. Please see above for more information and the link to get started. At 9:00 am, we'll have conversation about the things we've been learning. It will be a chance to process the information and challenges that will arise throughout the month. Facilitated by Jack Call and the Matthew 25 Advisory Team.

Professor Dan Thorp on "Our Forgotten Past: African Americans in Early Montgomery County"

Sunday, Feb. 12, after worship, Fellowship Hall, appetizers provided

Montgomery County today is overwhelmingly White, and few residents realize that for most of the 19th Century African Americans made up nearly a quarter of the county's population. This talk will focus on aspects of our community's history that have often been forgotten: the experiences of African Americans – both enslaved and free -- in the local community.

Dan is an associate professor of history at Virginia Tech and author of *Facing Freedom: An African American Community in Virginia from Reconstruction to Jim Crow* (Virginia) and *In the True Blue's Wake: Slavery and Freedom among the Families of Smithfield Plantation*.



Continued on page 3 . . .

Newsletter Deadlines: We look forward to your items for the newsletter. Please have all items submitted to Rhonda by the **15th of each month** for the upcoming month's issue. Items may be submitted by email to Rhonda at the following: rhonda@blacksburgpres.org.

Don't forget our newsletter is available on our website: <https://www.blacksburgpres.org/newsletter>

Prayer Concerns

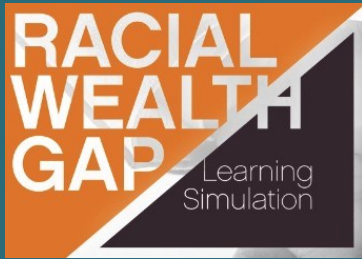
Trusting in God's presence, grace, healing, and care, we pray . . .

- for the victims of the devastating earthquake that hit Turkey and Syria - for the families of those lost; for those suffering from injury, destruction and loss; and for those still working in rescue and recovery despite the freezing weather.
- for victims of police violence - especially remembering Tyre Nichols and his family in Memphis - and for all of us reckoning with issues of police brutality, racial inequity, and fear and lack of trust in the whole system.
- for our congregation as we specifically wrestle with racial equity in our February habit-building challenge. Open our eyes, help us find new and better habits, and give us courage to help bring about change.
- for the people of Iran, struggling with courage against fear and oppression. Help us to show solidarity.
- for Susan Hunter's father who is recovering from recent health challenges and has been moved to a rehab facility. We pray for him and his family, and for his medical team.
- for Les Myers' sister, Mary Kay who is being treated for lymphoma.
- for Jan McGilliard, Bethany Brownfield, Stan and Janne Mathes, Nancy Alexander, Wilmoth O'Dell, Bill and Sally Foy, Ranee Lahn, and for those in the military: Luke Phillips, Eden Elizabeth Lawson, and Joel Hunter.
- for those suffering from one of the many respiratory viruses now circulating and causing misery. Bring us healing and relief, and help us watch out for each other.
- for those suffering from increasingly alarming effects of climate change and for all of us feeling dread about what is to come. Give us the courage and will to labor with hope as we act on opportunities to mitigate and reverse the ongoing climate crisis.
- for the people of Ukraine who are enduring continued invasion. We pray for the global community as they continue to seek a response to Russia's aggression and an end to war. We long for truth, peace, and solidarity, in Ukraine and the whole world.
- for Afghan, Ukrainian, and other refugees, and the people in our community and in other areas who work with them.
- for our partners and friends in CEDEPCA in Guatemala, and for our co-workers, Betsey and Eric Moe and their family in Guatemala.
- for the work of our mission co-worker partners in the Philippines, Cobbie Palm and Dessa Quesada-Palm.
- for our partners and friends in Malawi, working to meet health, educational and food-producing needs.
- for equitable distribution of COVID vaccines, tests, and treatments, and for continued understanding of how to cope with the persistence of the virus.
- for all those struggling to have enough to eat, to live in safety, to feel loved, and to have hope.

You can send prayer requests for Prayers of the People in Sunday worship and/or to be added to the website prayer list to Rhonda (rhonda@blacksburgpres.org).



February Racial Equity Challenge & Engagement Opportunities, *continued*:



Racial Wealth Gap
Learning Simulation
Sunday, Feb. 26
5:30 pm,
Fellowship Hall

February Challenge:



All youth and adults are invited! Dinner provided.
Please register here:

[https://www.signupgenius.com/
go/70a0845a5a72eaa8-racial](https://www.signupgenius.com/go/70a0845a5a72eaa8-racial)

Achieving racial equity means that all people, regardless of race, have fair opportunities to enjoy equal outcomes.

The simulation helps people understand the connections among racial equity, hunger, poverty, and wealth. It is a good first step for people unaware of structural inequality, a support tool for those who want a deeper understanding of structural inequality, and a source of information for experts who want to know the quantifiable economic impact of each policy that has widened today's racial hunger, income, and wealth divides.

Since materials will need to be printed and dinner is being provided, please register at the above link so we can get an accurate number of people attending. For more information, contact Rachel Parson at rachelparson@gmail.com.

Newly-Updated Black History Driving Tour, coming in February: Christiansburg Institute has been in the process of retooling and updating the Black History Driving Tour. The new tour will include more locations to visit across Christiansburg, Blacksburg, and in the region with an interactive online map, and in-depth information and activities. The relaunch will happen hopefully sometime in February.



We hope you will plan to join the challenge!

Winter and Spring Adult Spiritual Formation Opportunities

We have a little something for
everyone this season

Racial Equity Habit-Building Conversation Sundays in February, 9:00 am, WM

For the month of February, we'll be embracing a month-long racial equity habit-building challenge as a whole congregation. We'll have conversation about the things we've been learning. It will be a chance to process the information and challenges that will arise throughout the month. Facilitated by Jack Call and the Matthew 25 Advisory Team.

The Different Drum — M. Scott Peck Sundays, 7:00 pm, HCR

Starting February 5 and continuing throughout the season at 7pm on Sundays, Jack Call and Russell Gregory will be leading a study of *The Different Drum: Community Making and Peace* by M. Scott Peck. Peck (author of *The Road Less Traveled*) draws on his personal spiritual journey, his training as a psychiatrist, and his Christian faith to describe true community and the process whereby community can be achieved.

Streams of Living Water — Richard Foster Sundays, 9:00 am, March-May, WM

We'll be studying Richard Foster's book *Streams of Living Water* with Pastor Sarah and Jonathan Anderson. Through an exploration of many different Christian approaches, this class will be a chance to consider where you came from spiritually and what speaks to you now. If you struggle with Christian baggage, this class will offer many avenues to reconstructing a spiritual practice that resonates with where you are now.

Congratulations, Deb!



At BPC's **Presbyterian Women's Annual Meeting** on February 5, an **Honorary Life Membership** was conferred upon **Deb Call**! Deb has used her gifts of music, leadership, passionate persistence, and deep caring to contribute widely to the work of BPC and in service to the entire community for decades. We are pleased to honor her this way! *(right: Sarah Windes, previous recipient, presents the life membership pin to Deb.)*



PW's Honorary Life Membership is given every few years or so in recognition of faithful service to the women's organization and to the church. Deb and her husband Jack first started attending ~2010. She has been deeply involved in the Blacksburg Refugee Partnership, working closely with families from Syria and Afghanistan, and helping to coordinate the work of supporting refugees who are making a home in Blacksburg. Just in the last three years here at BPC, Deb has

served on Session, coordinated the deacons, sung regularly in the choir, chaired the Congregational Care Ministry (including being a funeral reception organizer) and the COVID Emergency Response Team (CERT), served on PW's Coordinating Team, and been a member of Lydia Circle. In addition, she has served on Advocacy and International Missions Ministry, Community Ministry, Membership Ministry, Endowment Ministry, the Nominating Committee, and playground renovations team! Whew! We are grateful that Deb continues to grace us with her faith, her time, and her very self.

Several members of Deb's family were on hand for the occasion. *(pictured: Deb with husband, Jack; back, Phyllis and Rick Geoghegan; right, Jeff and Lindsay Call with Sophie and Abigail)*



New to BPC?

Join Pastor Sarah for a newcomers class on February 19 and 26 at 9am in Hatcher. The class will offer a chance to meet other folks who are new in a more intimate setting and learn more about BPC. There will also be the chance to officially join BPC at the end of the class, but there's no pressure to do so if you would prefer not to at this time.

All are welcome.



from
dirt
you came
and to dirt
you shall return

Ash Wednesday . February 22 . 5:30 pm



News from Dessa Quesada Palm

BPC's Advocacy and International Mission (AIM) Team recently received a letter from Dessa, who, along with her husband Cobbie Palm, are the PC(USA) mission coworker couple with whom we are connected, in Dumaguete in the southern Philippines. (left: Melanie Smith shares a meal with some of the youth of YATTA and with Dessa in her home in the Philippines.)

"Thank you for your heartwarming letter amidst your wintry days. It has been raining non-stop for a few days, which made it actually cool enough to wear a light jacket. The rain has finally let up, and flooding has receded in some low-lying areas.

I just got home from a YATTA (Youth Activism Through Theater Arts, a group managed by Dessa) activity related to gathering youth to find out reasons for hesitancy to be vaccinated. We are doing this project with the public health office to generate awareness while grounding ourselves in specific contexts of young people. We are creating radio plugs to demystify some of the notions that prevent youth from getting vaccinated, and also will be preparing a community "informance" slated for next month.

YATTA also had a recent interaction with students from Harvard University who were part of an organization called "Harvard Philippine Forum." Many of the students were Filipino-Americans. YATTA performed an excerpt from its pieces about disinformation and human rights violations and got a standing ovation from the visiting students.

Cobbie also prepared a short program with the students on behalf of the Silliman University Water Project, and they were able to visit a poor, urban community to deliver water and talk with the families there.

We are hoping to fly to the US for a meeting organized by PCUSA in March, and I am praying I will be able to get my green card in time for that. We will certainly keep you in the loop so we can come and visit BPC when we are in the area. "

*In peace,
Dessa*

BPC to Richmond for the VICPP Day for All People

On January 18th, Elizabeth Day, Melanie Smith, and Scott Smith left at 4:30 in the morning to make the trip to Richmond for Virginia Interfaith Center for Public Policy's Advocacy Day: Day for All People. Joining with 300 other people of faith who were part of the VICPP, we were briefed and divided into our voting districts. In the morning gathering, we were surprised when Kim Bobo, the executive director of VICPP, thanked Blacksburg Presbyterian Church for our gift. They used our gift as a challenge grant to encourage other supporters to give enough money to pay off their office building's mortgage.

**2023
DAY FOR
ALL PEOPLE**



We left there and spent the next two hours meeting with our State Delegate Jason Ballard and Senator John Edwards advocating for bills to bring to this session of the General Assembly that will directly affect our least resourced and most disadvantaged citizens. Representing BPC and VICPP, we urged our representatives to limit solitary confinement in jails and prisons, to support a living wage for minimum wage workers, to back more investment in low-cost housing, and more.

Learn how and when to support these bills by signing up for more information at <https://www.virginiainterfaithcenter.org/>.

Empowered Women Reinvent Lives & Livelihoods

When COVID struck, many who depended on visitors to purchase their handicrafts suddenly had no market, and no means to feed their families. In the midst of this crisis, CEDEPCA reached out to one association of women and offered a new avenue of development that has turned their lives around.



“Two years after the start of the pandemic, we have all had to reinvent the way we do the things we were used to, and in some cases, we have had to do completely new things,” said one of the women.

The Disaster Ministry team introduced a reforestation project and showed them how to plant 200 pine and cypress seeds in a forest nursery. The women will market the saplings.

CEDEPCA also brought seeds; and Pamela Liquez, Women’s Ministry coordinator, helped the women plant seed trays with five types of vegetables, to transplant to their own family gardens. Women who attended the morning workshop will not only be able to feed their hungry families, but they will be less dependent on markets, and connected to God’s creation through preparing the soil and growing food, traditionally a part of their culture.

Cheryl Rowan, a CEDEPCA Board member who joined them, noted, “What joy to see the delight on their faces as they explored using their hands in a new way.” She reflected that the secret to the success of this venture was the strong organization, pride, and commitment to each other that the women had developed earlier.



They had first come together after fleeing the 20-year armed conflict and had started their weaving cooperative, Corazon de Mujer. CEDEPCA provided them with courses then that helped them gain self-esteem and empowerment, based on Christian perspectives about dignity and rights. With this foundation and CEDEPCA’s continued partnership, they have found another new beginning, reinventing once again their lives and livelihood.



The BPC choir and handbell choir have need of new members. Rehearsals are on Wednesdays at 5:30 pm (handbell choir, FH) and 7:00 pm (choir, choir room).

Feel free to show up for rehearsals!

You may contact
Director of Music Larry Wyatt
at larry@blacksburgpres.org for
more information.



The 2022 BPC Annual Report
is complete and can be found on
our website here:

<https://www.blacksburgpres.org/newsletter>

What a great way to see what we have done and what has been important to us during 2022, and a little bit of what we see coming for 2023.

Paper copies will be available in the narthex this Sunday and then in the Gathering Space. Copies will be mailed to our home-centered members and friends.

Dates to Remember

FEBRUARY BIRTHDAYS

- 2: Ariana Wyatt
- 5: Luke Rakes
- 6: Daniel Stahl
- 7: Sophia Thompson
- 8: Holly McFall
- 9: Brynn Stewart
- 12: Barbara Michelsen
- 13: Nettie Stewart, Paula Stith, Henry Wyatt
- 18: Ben Corl
- 20: Steve Grieco, Ryan Stewart
- 21: Jennifer Stewart, Claire White
- 23: Charles Wyatt
- 25: Leif Anderson, Marcia Andrews



MARCH BIRTHDAYS

- 1: Matthew Ducker
- 2: Thomas Ducker
- 4: Travis Eschenmann, David Harder, Bill Neely
- 7: Phyllis Albritton
- 6: Sarah Wiles
- 8: Anne Campbell
- 9: Airlie Harder, Kyle Knobl
- 13: Tom Booth
- 14: Ken Schor
- 15: Mary Jane Henika
- 16: Susan Hunter
- 17: Ben Harder, Griffin Warren
- 18: Madeleine Evans, Linda Pospichal
- 19: Sam Dickinson
- 20: Susan Bailey
- 21: Jordan Boffen
- 22: Lisa Smith
- 24: Garrett Knobl
- 25: Mary Fain
- 28: Cynthia Wimberley
- 30: Judy Reemsnyder



The building is open during 8:30-4:30.
Signing in is still required of everyone. Masks are optional.
Meetings are in person and virtual.
Please hold each other in prayer and continue to look out for one another.
Say healthy, safe, and kind.

BPC's Calendar

FEBRUARY 2023 — Recurring Meetings:

- Monday:** Staff meeting, 10:30 a.m., HCR
Deacons meeting, second Monday at 12:00 p.m., HCR
Knitwits, fourth Monday at 1:00 p.m., WM
- Tuesday:** Worship Planning Team, 10:30 a.m., HCR
BPC Quilters, 9:30 p.m., FH
- Wednesday:** Helping Neighbors by phone
- Sunday:** Sunday School for youth and children, 9:00. Contact Susan at susanh@blacksburgpres.org.
Adult Ed: Contact adulted@blacksburgpres.org.
Youth Group, 5:30-7:30 pm, FH
Session meeting—February 19, 7:00 pm, HCR

Presbyterian Women Circles — upcoming meetings:



- Hildegard Circle: 02/13, 7:00 pm, Zoom
- Faith Circle: 02/23, 7:30-9:00 pm, Peg Warren's home (book discussion and desserts)
- Lydia Circle: 03/06, 1:30-3:00 pm, FH

Youth Calendar for January:



- 02/12, after worship: Souper Bowl of Caring donation collection (no evening meeting)
- 02/19, 5:30-7:30 pm: Dinner and discussion, FH
- 02/26: 5:30-7:00 pm: BPC Adults are invited! Dinner and Racial Wealth Gap Learning Simulation (see page 3) with adults and the Matthew 25 Team.

Please remember to contact the church office in advance to schedule room use and avoid conflicts.

Meeting Room Key: HCR—Hatcher Conference Room, FH—Fellowship Hall, WM—Westminster Hall, SNC—Sanctuary, GS—Gathering Space

BLACKSBURG PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH
701 CHURCH ST SE
BLACKSBURG, VA 24060-5213

*change service requested

BPC offers both in-person and livestream worship services with both beginning at 10:30. You can access the livestream via BPC's [YouTube channel](#).

Bookmark the page for easy access. The video will be available after Sunday worship if you missed the live service.

Subscribe to BPC emails today!

To join the email list, click [here](#) or contact Rhonda at rhonda@blacksburgpres.org.

Check out our website, www.blacksburgpres.org, for more information about BPC and church activities.

BLACKSBURG PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH
*A Vibrant Congregation of
Welcome, Worship, and Outreach*

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