



# Blacksburg Presbyterian Church

*Loving God with Heart, Soul, and Mind*

NOVEMBER 2023 NEWSLETTER



**Jesus came to give life — abundant life.**

True abundant life takes shape in a community marked by compassion and the pursuit of love and justice.

***That's what Blacksburg Presbyterian Church is all about.***

Through worship, service, and generous giving we seek to help our neighbors and the greater community thrive and experience abundant life. Over the next few weeks, we'll explore what abundant life looks like due to your generous support of programs for mission, education, worship, and fellowship. We'll hear from several of our members about why they come to BPC and why they give. Stay tuned for the next four weeks as we explore abundant life.

**Abundant Life Lunch, Nov. 12, after worship:** Jesus came to bring abundant life, and BPC certainly has an abundance of joy, delight, and love. After worship on November 12, we'll have a meal together to celebrate the abundant life we share. There will be prizes, games, and surprises! Lunch will be provided. You do not need to bring anything except yourself.

## Get to Know BPC's New Elders, Class of 2024

**Susan Bailey, Children's Ministry:** Susan Bailey is a wife to Phil, mother to Elise and Ben, and daughter of Marti and Dave Snyder who are also BPC members. She works as a teacher and is happy to be serving as an elder for the third time and working on the children's education ministry team. She teaches Sunday School, helps with VBS, serves on the MANNA team, and occasionally ushers in church. Susan and her family love to travel, play board games and lawn games, and go camping.



**Deb Call, Community Ministries:** Deb has been a part of BPC since 2010. She has served on Session, coordinated the deacons, sung regularly in the choir, chaired the Congregational Care Ministry, worked with other ministry teams, and is involved with Presbyterian Women and Lydia Circle. 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.



**Russell Gregory, Adult Education:** Russell went to school almost half his life -- Oklahoma Baptist University, Southern Baptist Seminary in Louisville, KY, Vanderbilt for an M.A., and a Ph.D. in Hebrew Bible (Old Testament). He taught in the Philosophy and Religious Studies Department at Radford University for 25 years. He has three sons who live in Brooklyn and work together on videos that show up on YouTube.com. Russell says, "I'm musical, once played piano fairly well, but gave that up for the guitar, and recently banjo. Certain songs demand a banjo."



*(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](mailto:rhonda@blacksburgpres.org).

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

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

- for Russell Gregory's son, Andrew, daughter-in-law Casey, and granddaughter Grace, as Casey is under hospice care.
- for Alice and Glenn Sanders' son-in-law who is experiencing the stress of being involved in intelligence operations and negotiations in the Israel-Hamas war.
- for Sandy Parson as she recovers from a knee replacement.
- as we stand in shock that the long, battle-scarred conflict between Israelis and Palestinians has taken yet another deadly turn. We pray for those that have died, are dying, and wounded on both sides. We ask that leaders on both sides be guided to a peaceful outcome for all.
- for the people of Guatemala, as they struggle to have a voice against threats to democracy and human rights.
- for the victims of Hurricane Otis, which struck the Pacific coast of Mexico near Acapulco as a Category 5 storm, the strongest and most rapidly intensifying storm in history to hit the eastern Pacific Coast.
- as we cry out for the earth and all things suffering from disasters made even more devastating and frequent from climate change. We pray for safety for those most affected, for relief, for hope, for guidance, and for unity of purpose in mitigation and reversal of the alarming trend of climate warming. We are grateful that we live in a time when we have the resources to affect it. Give us, as citizens of earth, the wisdom to know what to do, and the will, hope, and energy to do it.
- for those suffering from devastating earthquakes in Afghanistan, which have killed thousands of people, many of whom were women and children, who were at home at the time.
- for people throughout the world who live in one of the more than 30 countries experiencing war right now. We pray especially for women and children who bear the biggest burdens, for military and political leaders who need to hear the voices of peace, and for church leaders as they speak out against violence and for security and an end to fighting.
- as we struggle with gun violence again and again, and know that our prayers alone are not enough, though we cannot seem to find a helpful way forward. We pray for justice, peace, and societal wisdom.
- for our partners and friends in CEDEPCA in Guatemala, and for our co-workers, Betsey and Eric Moe and their family.
- for Dr. Arie Glas and our partners in Mulanje, Malawi, working to meet ongoing health, educational and food-producing needs.
- for our mission partners, Dessa Quesada-Palm and Cobbie Palm, in the Philippines, and their work with water access, theater ministry, pastoral seminars and peace advocacy.
- for those friends and members of BPC and in our community who are struggling with physical and mental health challenges. May they and their loved ones feel comforted and supported.
- for our local community and global community to support each other as we oppose racism, antisemitism, bigotry, and oppression.
- for victims of police violence and for all of us reckoning with issues of police brutality, racial inequity, and a system which engenders fear and lack of trust in many people.
- for all those struggling to have enough to eat, to live in safety, to feel loved, and to have hope.
- for Steve Drumheller and Suzanne Sanford, Sue and Ben Johnson, Stan and Janne Mathes, Renee Lahn, Nancy Alexander, Wilmoth O'Dell, Bill Foy, and for those in the military: Luke Phillips, Eden Elizabeth Lawson, and Joel Hunter.

You can send prayer requests to Rhonda ([rhonda@blacksburgpres.org](mailto:rhonda@blacksburgpres.org)) to be shared in three ways listed below:

- ◆ Prayers of the People in Sunday worship
- ◆ In the MidWeek Update
- ◆ Our prayer ministry page: <https://www.blacksburgpres.org/prayer>



### Get to Know BPC's New Elders, Class of 2024

(Continued from page 1)

**Gabe Minnich, Fellowship Ministry:** Gabe is a Blacksburg "townie" and an alum of Blacksburg High School and Virginia Tech. Her two sons live and work just up I-81 in Roanoke. After working at Virginia Tech in University Relations and Undergraduate Admissions, Gabe retired and enjoys reading, outdoor activities, and volunteering. Since finding her church home at BPC, being able to give back is an ongoing joy for her.



**Ed Spencer (general):** After 42 years in higher education administration (12 at Delaware and 30 at Virginia Tech), Ed retired as VT's Vice President for Student Affairs in 2012. In retirement, he devotes his time to a number of nonprofit organizations, especially Warm Hearth Village, which he serves as Chairman of the Board of Directors. He joined BPC in 1983 and has served on Session for four previous terms. His wife, Norrine Bailey Spencer, and his son, Andrew Bailey Spencer, have passed and his daughter-in-law, Melanie, and grandchildren, Brandon and Quin, make up the remainder of his immediate family.



**Tom Tillar, Endowment Ministry:** Tom, a long-time resident of our community, attended Virginia Tech in the late 60s and began working for the university in 1971, retiring after his 50th year in 2021. He has been a member of our congregation over 40 years. He previously served on our Session 30 years ago, and has been active in church committees.



### Woodchucks Christmas Baskets Collection during November

## BPC CARES Community Holiday Outreach

SEPTEMBER: MONTGOMERY COUNTY  
CHRISTMAS STORE-FUNDS FOR FOOD

OCTOBER: BLACKSBURG  
INTERFAITH FOOD PANTRY

NOVEMBER: WOODCHUCKS  
CHRISTMAS BASKETS

DECEMBER: MONTGOMERY COUNTY  
BABY SHOP

During the winter months, the Woodchucks deliver donated firewood to clients who cannot afford to heat their homes. BPC members and others in the community work year-round collecting the wood, splitting it, and delivering it. During the Christmas season, the Woodchucks provide additional warmth and cheer to the neediest of our clients by delivering a Christmas basket of food along with the firewood, and BPC members are invited to participate in this ministry.

You can participate by **Nov. 26** by placing items listed below in the collection bins in the church, you may send a check to the church noting "Woodchucks Christmas baskets" in the memo line, or you can make a donation via BPC's Give page:

[www.blacksburgpres.org/give](http://www.blacksburgpres.org/give).

**Thank you for your generous support of this ministry to our community.**

#### Suggested donations:

- Boxed macaroni and cheese
- Canned fruits, vegetables, and beans
- Canned meat such as tuna or chicken
- Canned soup or stew
- Cereal/Oatmeal
- Coffee
- Jam or Jelly
- Pasta
- Peanut butter
- Pork and beans
- Rice



## Transgender Day of Remembrance

The Transgender Day of Remembrance is on November 20. It began in 1999 to memorialize the murders of two Black transgender women, Rita Hester and Chanelle Pickett. It is now observed in more than twenty countries and recognizes the names of transgender and gender non-conforming people who have been killed in the previous year.



If you love someone who is transgender or gender non-conforming, this can be an important day to reach out and remind them how valuable and beautiful they are.

If you are transgender or gender non-conforming yourself, this is a good day to surround yourself with people who love, support, and celebrate you. If you need support on this day or any day, you are welcome to contact Pastor Sarah anytime (253-304-9659 or [pastorsarah@blacksburgpres.org](mailto:pastorsarah@blacksburgpres.org)).

And if you aren't aware of knowing anyone who is transgender or gender non-conforming, this is a good day to pause and consider how you would like to learn about and support folks of every gender in our community. You can contact Pastor Sarah for more information.

Locally, [VT's Pride Center](#) has announced this year's Transgender Day of Remembrance speaker will be [Julia Serano](#). Join them for this public event on **Wed., Nov. 15, at 6:30 pm in the Owens Ballroom** for a moderated discussion and conversation on bans and policies that limit trans futures and their role in the larger narrative of trans liberation.

## Save the Date!

**What:** The Gingerbread House Decorating Potluck Dinner

**When:** Wednesday, Dec. 6, 2023, at 5:30 pm.

**How can I help:** We need bakers! Email Susan Hunter at [susanh@blacksburgpres.org](mailto:susanh@blacksburgpres.org) for the recipe and instructions to make gingerbread.

*More info to come as we get closer to the date!*

## CHURCH PHOTO DIRECTORY



The pictorial directory is complete! Paper copies are located in the Gathering Space window. Please take one copy per household. A digital version is available via the BPC website. Contact Rhonda at [rhonda@blacksburgpres.org](mailto:rhonda@blacksburgpres.org) for the password to access and download.

On October 23rd the BPC Knitwits presented hand-knit hats for each of the 3- and 4-year-old children (17 total) that the Blacksburg Head Start program serves at BPC.

*(photo below, from left to right: Marti Snyder, Lori Belcher of Head Start, Christy Savage, and Betsy O'Brien)*



Other Knitwit members who knit hats include Jan McGilliard, Judy Pospichal, Melinda Winslow, Patti Giles and Rhea Epstein.



## November is the month to renew or begin your commitment to Cents-Ability!

**What is Cents-Ability?** Cents-Ability is one way that families, congregations, and presbyteries can support the battle against hunger and poverty. Every member is invited to contribute a few cents at every meal. Funds are then used to support local, national and international hunger ministries.

**Why should I participate in Cents-Ability?** This simple act is a small first step in the battle against hunger and poverty, and an expression of thanks for what we have received. It is also a commitment to share with others in response to Jesus' command "You give them something to eat." Our gifts can add up: at a nickel a meal, a congregation of 100 persons can offer \$2,160 dollars a year. A 30,000-member presbytery has the potential of raising over \$1.6 million annually!



**How do you participate in the Cents-Ability Offering?** Each family member - any age - is invited to contribute a predetermined amount (2 cents, 5 cents, 10 cents) at each meal. They may wish to contribute the combined amount at dinner, or whenever the whole family is together. The emphasis on daily participation by each member of the household builds awareness that we all are capable of, and responsible for, helping. Daily participation emphasizes that hunger is a daily problem; people who are hungry do not get a break! Coins can be taken to worship on the third Sunday, or coins can be "recycled." After making a contribution each month through the BPC "Give" page or in the marked pew envelopes, the coins can be reused. Each household is also encouraged to live out their commitment by finding additional ways to make a difference for people who are hungry in the community and/or around the world.

**How is our gift used?** 45% of the Cents-Ability offering is awarded through grants to local organizations and agencies, and 45% is awarded to regional, national and international organizations and agencies. All grant recipients must address hunger through one or more of the following five Presbyterian Hunger Program areas of emphasis:

- ◆ direct food relief
- ◆ development assistance
- ◆ public policy advocacy
- ◆ hunger education
- ◆ lifestyle integrity

**What action do I take next?** Our Cents-Ability offering is ordinarily received on the third Sunday of each month; however, this November we will receive it on the **second Sunday, November 12**, so we can focus on renewing our commitment in the worship service.



**Presbyterian Women**  
*Nurture Faith, Support Mission, Work for Justice, & Build Community*

### Presbyterian Women and the Alternative Gift Giving Fair

Each year, for over five years, the organization of Presbyterian Women (PW) at BPC has offered an Alternative Gift Giving Fair during the Advent Festival. The fair has been in response to a rising number of people who wish to make a donation to a charitable organization either in honor of someone, or in memory of someone, in lieu of buying a material gift for that person during the Christmas holidays.

The organizations presented for alternative gift giving by PW are very rarely all the same every year. The criteria considered involves, specifically, the current year need—sometimes simply programs and projects in progress. However, the funding the organization receives from the church budget and PW also plays a role in the decision. In addition, local, regional, and worldwide organizations, mission connections, as well as categories of people (low-income families, children, college students, refugees), are a factor. PW limits the number of organizations offered for the Alternative Gift Giving experience to ensure each organization receives as much funding as possible. Donors receive a card with an envelope to mail to each honoree or to the person being informed of a memorial gift.

The annual Alternative Gift Giving Fair will be held on December 3 at BPC's Advent Festival. Watch for more information as Advent approaches and join this unique event! Your support of the organizations being showcased this Advent season will not only assist you with your Christmas shopping but also provide much needed funding that will go a long way in helping others.

## A Message from Cobbie and Dessa Palm

Dear friends,

We in the Philippines have now just crossed over the one-year mark of having witnessed the unexpected return of the son of the late Ferdinand and Imelda Marcos to the highest elected office of government. It did not seem in the remotest way possible that a direct descendant bearing the same name as the father could ever return to power after the horrific political, economic, and social trauma left by the Marcos legacy. But then again, the world appears to be playing by rapidly changing rules in the way that minds are molded and shaped in the world today.

Many have pointed to a continuing deficit in the opportunity to access education and develop the facility to think critically. A World Bank report in 2022 has shown that the Philippines has a learning poverty rate of 91 percent which is among the highest rates in Southeast Asia and the Pacific. A learning poverty rate is determined by the number of 10-year-old pupils who cannot read and understand age-

appropriate texts or written materials as a result of deficient learning opportunities. *(photo: As disinformation spreads destroying the hopes of the Peace Talks, the gathering of church people to advocate for its resumption has become tenuous.)*



A recent study on the Philippine midterm elections [showed] the involvement of powerful influencer accounts across [social] platforms during the 2022 election season. They have been shown to work beyond just positively promoting a candidate to stepping into uncharted territory aimed at manipulating public opinion through a coordinated spread of biased messages, false information, and attacks on opponents or even toward persons posting dissenting comments.

As Peace Advocates seeking the resumption of the Peace Talks between the Philippine Government and the National Democratic Front in the Philippines (NDFP), [we] have witnessed the disinformation that has rapidly spread which has even made it difficult for us to advance the Peace Process. The equation has now simply become, "To support the Peace Process with the NDFP is to support terrorism." The manipulation of public opinion has spread far and wide with alarming ease.

The words of the Apostle Paul sound a relevant call to us who immerse ourselves in the ministry of advocating ways to peace that are not in the interest of the powers and principalities around us: *Do not be conformed to this age, but be transformed by the renewing of the mind, so that you may discern what is the will of God—what is good and acceptable and perfect.* (Roman 12:2)

Our ministries flourish and survive because there are individuals like yourself who recognize the struggle of correcting historical revisionism and upholding fact over persuasive disinformation. Your prayers, your words of encouragement, and your generous commitment to giving us hope in difficult times are a lifeline that empowers us to carry on.

**Cobbie and Dessa Palm**  
Mission Co-Workers Serving in the Philippines

## Plastic Bag and Film Recycling - The Goal is Not the Benches!

Many of you participate in our program for recycling plastic bags and film. We are grateful for your participation and especially grateful that most of you know how to keep your donations uncontaminated, which is important for Trex, and a true time-saver for those of us who gather it, weigh it, and deliver it to Food Lion. Thank you!



However, it may sound counterintuitive to you that our goal for doing this is not to get benches as a reward (even though we have received 9 benches now), or even to maximize the pounds we collect. Our goal is to REDUCE waste!

For those plastic bags and films which we cannot avoid acquiring, which is still a LOT of plastic, we want to recycle it into a form where it can be re-used and stays out of the landfill. We think Trex does a good job with that, and if we sort it correctly before we deliver it to Food Lion, we believe that most of it gets turned into benches and railings and decks made out of Trex's composite material.

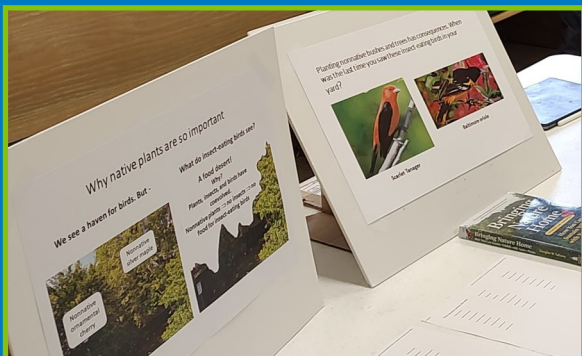
Nonetheless, we wish to remind you (and you can remind your friends if they participate as well), in dealing with plastic film:

- Step 1 is REFUSE IT - this means carry your own bag, take items to your car without a bag, prioritize your purchases from companies that ship in boxes or paper, buy in bulk, cover your leftovers in reusable materials, etc. etc.
- Step 2 is REUSE IT - What can your plastic bag be used for prior to being recycled? Admittedly, however, much of it is too flimsy to reuse more than a time or two.
- Step 3 is RECYCLE IT - Recycling with our Trex program is much better than putting it in the trash. Most of you know how to tell the correct kind of plastic film (#1 and #2 polyethylene), but remember a few other no-no's for your collection.

### Please do not include the following:

- Biodegradable or compostable bags. When mixed with other bags, the additives used in these bags can contaminate the new products.
- Plastic bags used for packaged frozen foods, which contain food preservatives that contaminate the other recyclable bags in the batch.
- Bags that aren't completely dry: The water interferes with proper processing.
- Bags that aren't completely free of food residue or other contaminants

## Fun and Learning at the Creation Fair—September 17, 2023



# Dates to Remember

## NOVEMBER BIRTHDAYS

- 1: John Dillard, Shane Parson
- 2: Eden Elizabeth Lawson
- 6: Emily Rhodes Hunter
- 8: Linda Smith, Charles Taylor
- 9: Bob Stalcup
- 11: Rachael Byron, Ben Johnson
- 12: Scott Smith
- 13: Frank Thompson
- 14: Marilyn Hardell
- 15: Chris Zobel
- 17: Miranda Mauldon
- 21: Sarah Woolsey
- 24: Ian Davis
- 27: Mike Giles
- 29: Matt Drumheller, Melanie Spencer
- 30: Jack Barnard



## DECEMBER BIRTHDAYS

- 2: Carter Eschenmann
- 3: Dave Hayes, Nathan Pienkowski
- 5: Ella Lawrence, Shelly Threlkeld
- 6: Matthew Green, Marti Snyder
- 7: Judy Davis
- 8: Marilyn Hutchins, John Hunter
- 9: William Ducker, Charles Good
- 10: Tate Pospichal
- 11: Mary Harder
- 12: Nolan Stewart
- 14: Beth Mattson
- 17: Mary Frances Taylor
- 18: Carla Bundren, Laurie Good, Paul McFall
- 20: Sophia Warren
- 22: Chris Byron, Lucinda Cherbaka, Judy Pospichal
- 25: Susan Barnard, Bob Savage
- 26: Jack Call, B'easy Thompson
- 27: Daniel Bowling
- 31: Sheridan Bell

**HAPPY  
BIRTHDAY**

The building is open during 8:30-4:30. 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

### NOVEMBER 2023 — Recurring Meetings:

- Monday:** Staff meeting, 10:30 a.m., HCR  
Deacons meeting, second Monday at 12:00 p.m., HCR. Next meeting on November 13.  
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 am, various rooms  
Contact Susan Hunter, Dir. of Children & Youth Ministries at [susanh@blacksburgpres.org](mailto:susanh@blacksburgpres.org).  
Adult Ed: Contact [adulted@blacksburgpres.org](mailto:adulted@blacksburgpres.org).  
Youth Group, 5:30-7:30 pm, FH
- ♦ 11/5, 5:30 pm: Dinner & Discussion — Care for the Sick, FH
  - ♦ 11/12, 5:30 pm: Dinner & Discussion — Water for the Thirsty, FH
  - ♦ 11/19, 5:30 pm: Dinner & Discussion — Clothes for the Naked, FH
- Session meeting, third Sunday each month, 7:00 pm. Next meeting is on November 19.



- Mon., Nov. 6, 1:30-3:00 pm:** Lydia Circle meeting, FH  
**Mon., Nov. 13, 6:00-7:00 pm:** Hildegard Circle meeting, Paula Stith's home  
**Thur., Nov. 30, 7:30-9:00 pm:** Faith Circle, Kara Espinoza's home (no meeting in December)

Please contact your Presbyterian Women Circle leader for information about any other summer meetings that may occur.

**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.

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**Subscribe to BPC emails today!**

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

Check out our website, [www.blacksburgpres.org](http://www.blacksburgpres.org), for more information about BPC and church activities.

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

**701 CHURCH ST SE, Blacksburg, VA 24060-5213**  
**540-552-2504 FAX 540-961-5691**  
Email: [bpc@blacksburgpres.org](mailto:bpc@blacksburgpres.org)  
Website: [www.blacksburgpres.org](http://www.blacksburgpres.org)

**Rev. Sarah Wiles**, Pastor: [pastorsarah@blacksburgpres.org](mailto:pastorsarah@blacksburgpres.org)

**Alice Brooks Sanders**, Director of Music & Organist:  
[alice@blacksburgpres.org](mailto:alice@blacksburgpres.org)

**Sarah Windes**, Coordinator of Church Life: [sarah@blacksburgpres.org](mailto:sarah@blacksburgpres.org)

**Susan Hunter**, Director of Children and Youth Ministries:  
[susanh@blacksburgpres.org](mailto:susanh@blacksburgpres.org)

**Rhonda Waller**, Office Manager: [rhonda@blacksburgpres.org](mailto:rhonda@blacksburgpres.org)

**Rev. Emily Rhodes Hunter:**

- ◆ Parish Associate: [emily@blacksburgpres.org](mailto:emily@blacksburgpres.org)
- ◆ UKirk, Pres. Campus Ministry: [campusminister@pcusa-vt.org](mailto:campusminister@pcusa-vt.org)

**Rev. Kathy Carpenter**, Campus Outreach Minister:  
[outreachminister@pcusa-vt.org](mailto:outreachminister@pcusa-vt.org)