



Blacksburg Presbyterian Church

Loving God with Heart, Soul, and Mind

DECEMBER 2023 NEWSLETTER

2023

Advent, Christmas and Epiphany Calendar

- ◆ Sunday, Dec. 3, 10:00 am and 11:30 am: First Sunday of Advent - Advent Festival, including our annual Alternative Gift Fair, service projects and crafts; youth to sort Woodchuck holiday baskets after worship
- ◆ Tuesday, Dec. 5, 7:00 pm: Blacksburg Master Chorale Holiday Sing-along benefit for Interfaith Food Pantry
- ◆ Wednesday, Dec. 6, 5:30 pm: Gingerbread House-Making and Potluck Dinner
- ◆ Sunday, Dec. 10, 10:30 am: Second Sunday of Advent - Advent/Christmas hymn festival in worship, with BPC choirs
- ◆ Sunday, Dec. 10, 5:30 pm: Youth Christmas Party with donations for Baby Shop
- ◆ Saturday, Dec. 16, 4:00 pm: Chocolate and Cheer - hot chocolate, followed by caroling and delivery of gingerbread houses and cards for homebound and folks in need of cheer
- ◆ Sunday, Dec. 17, 9:00 am: Third Sunday of Advent - Congregational Breakfast, prepared by the Men of the Church, with chimes and fellowship. (Donations welcome.)
- ◆ Sunday, Dec. 24, 10:30 am: Family Christmas Eve service with participatory pageant, SNC. (There is no childcare. All children are welcome in worship--especially the squirmy, noisy ones.)
- ◆ Sunday, Dec. 24, 7:00 pm: Christmas Eve candlelight service, SNC. (There is no childcare. All children are welcome in worship--especially the squirmy, noisy ones.)
- ◆ Sunday, Dec. 31, 10:30 am: Worship Service (no childcare; all children are welcome in worship)
- ◆ Sunday, Jan. 7, 10:30 am: Epiphany worship, with Epiphany stars
- ◆ Sunday, Jan. 7, 11:30 am: Epiphany luncheon

A Thrill of Hope
a weary world rejoices



Advent at Blacksburg Presbyterian Church

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>

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

- for Beth Henika, daughter of Bill and Mary Jane Henika, as she receives treatment this week for a back injury.
- for Page Foster as he continues to heal from hand surgery. He tolerated the procedure well and is progressing better than expected.
- for the family and friends of Sue Johnson who died on Friday, November 10. Please hold Ben and their children in your prayers.
- for Russell Gregory's son Andrew and granddaughter Grace as they mourn the death of Andrew's wife Casey on Sunday, November 12. At the same time, we rejoice in the abundant generosity as people have honored Casey's life through contributions to erase medical debt for others.
- for the friends and families of two BHS students who died recently.
- for Sandy Parson as she recovers from a knee replacement.
- for peace in Palestine and Israel: Spirit of Peace, we pray that your longed-for reign of peace will become a present reality for all people, and especially today for those in Palestine and Israel. We are overwhelmed and exhausted by the brokenness of your world. Give us hearts open in compassion for all of those suffering in the present violence, for all who have lost loved ones, all who have fled the fighting, all who lie down in fear at night. We hear voices vowing even more violence, and we too want to kick at the darkness, fight the horror it brings, embrace revenge. Yet we know that your story calls us to bring peace in the midst of violence. Forgive us when we close our hearts, ears, and minds to those with whom we disagree, and strengthen us to be grace-filled and wise in our work for justice and peace. (adapted from a prayer from the Presbyterian Peace Fellowship)
- for the people of Guatemala, as they struggle to have a voice against threats to democracy and human rights.
- 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 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, Islamophobia, bigotry, and oppression.
- for all those struggling to have enough to eat, to live in safety, to feel loved, and to have hope.
- for Mary Jane and Bill Henika, Steve Drumheller and Suzanne Sanford, 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.

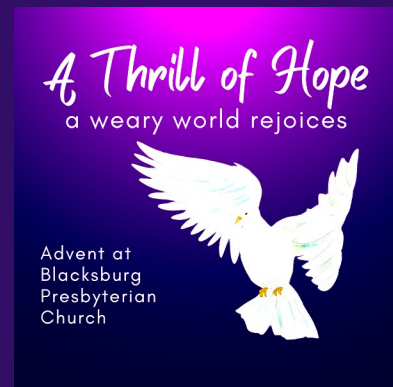
You can send prayer requests to Rhonda (rhonda@blacksburgpres.org) to be shared in three ways listed below:

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



2023 Advent Festival, December 3, 11:30-12:30
with the Alternative Gift Fair, 10:00 - 10:25 am & 11:30—12:30pm
Fellowship Hall

Join us to prepare for the season in several ways!
 There will be choices for all ages!



- ♦ Participate in a **children’s craft project**
- ♦ **Wrap gifts** provided by BPC for refugee families through the **Blacksburg Refugee Partnership** and for seniors through the Santa for Seniors Program sponsored by the **Agency on Aging**
- ♦ **Design and make Christmas cards, with provided supplies, for delivery to those who are homebound**
- ♦ Sign up to participate in the BPC Woodchucks ministry
- ♦ Shop for Christmas gifts while at the same time supporting charitable organizations through the **Alternative Gift Giving Fair** sponsored by Presbyterian Women (see below)

Alternative Gift Giving Opportunity:
A Summary of Charitable Organizations

Please join PW in spreading Christmas blessings through gifts to charitable organizations supported by BPC. At the same time, the contribution is an opportunity to honor that special person in your life during the holidays. Cards explaining a little information about each organization will be provided for donors to mail to honorees announcing each gift. Below is a list of organizations, with brief descriptions of the work of each, being presented in 2023 for alternative gift giving. A brochure will be in the December 3rd bulletin with further details about each organization.



Blacksburg Refugee Partnership, run entirely by community volunteers, provides support, helping refugee families become self-reliant. With no overhead; all contributions directly help refugee families.

CEDEPCA (Protestant Center for Pastoral Studies in Central America) is located in Guatemala. Our financial gifts will provide support for the Women’s Ministry, a program that empowers women to assume their rights, care for themselves, and take leadership in their churches and community.



Habitat for Humanity envisions a world where everyone has a decent place to live. In the New River Valley, Habitat improves homes, in partnership with individuals and families in need of a decent and affordable place to live.

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Alternative Gift Giving Opportunity: A Summary of Charitable Organizations



Malawi (Africa) Partnership is a BPC connection with Mulanje Mission. Donations to the partnership provide medical scholarships for the Mulanje College of Nursing and further medical training for employees of the hospital, as well as scholarships for students at Mulanje Secondary School.

Presbyterian Children's Home of the Highlands is a residential children's home providing love, sanctuary, guidance, and support to children who have been removed from their homes and families. Many of the children are victims of forms of abuse and neglect.



UKirk Campus Ministry at Virginia Tech (Cooper House) partners with the Presbytery and four area churches, one of which is BPC, for care and support. Its mission includes responding to human needs regardless of ethnicity, gender, or sexual orientation, and promoting peace and justice.

The Women's Resource Center of the New River valley is a diverse, inclusive, accepting, welcoming, safe place for everyone. It provides services to adult and child victims of sexual and domestic violence.



Christmas Joy Special Offering

What child is this?

If we all do a little, it adds up to a lot!

What is the Christmas Joy Offering?

The Christmas Joy Offering supports retired ministers and church workers and their families as they face medical and emergency costs. The offering also supports students as they pursue their education in Presbyterian-related schools and colleges equipping communities of color.

This offering will be received on December 17. More information will be shared in the weeks to come. Thank you for giving generously. Your gifts make a difference.

Upcoming Events

GINGERBREAD HOUSE DECORATING DINNER ...IT'S SHEER JOY!

December 6, 5:30pm @ BPC

We provide the houses

Bring a dish and decorations to share



Friends are welcome!

Help is needed:

- * Bakers - to prepare the gingerbread house parts. Paper copies of the recipe and pattern are in the Gathering Space window. Bake gingerbread house parts and bring to the BPC freezer by Dec. 3.
- * Builders - to assemble houses at 12:30-3:30pm, Dec 4 & 5, in Hatcher conference room.
- * Beaters - four people and stand mixers to whip frosting at 5:30pm, Dec. 6.

The BPC Choir and
Handbell Choir present

Savior of the Nations, Come

An Advent/Christmas Hymn Festival
by Michael Burkhardt
with readings from the writings
of Dietrich Bonhoeffer

Sunday, December 10,
during worship
Blacksburg Presbyterian Church

Alice Brooks Sanders, Music Director & Organist



Meet in BPC Fellowship Hall to enjoy cocoa, chocolate treats, and fellowship, and then spread some warmth to our community!

There are many BPC members and friends who are homebound or who are in need of some cheer this season. At the Advent Festival on Dec. 3, we'll be making cards to send or give to some of those folks. Then we will be gathering on **Saturday, Dec. 16 at 4:00 pm**, before leaving the church in groups to spread out in the community to go to folks' homes where we can carol with them, give them the cards and perhaps deliver some gingerbread houses!

If you would like to spread some Christmas love and cheer through visiting and caroling, join us! No prior caroling experience is required (words are provided)!

CHOCOLATE & CHEER



hot chocolate
caroling & cards
for folks in need of
Christmas cheer

DECEMBER 16, 4PM | GATHER AT BPC | ALL AGES WELCOME

All ages are welcome!

(Young children can join in the groups going on shorter excursions.)

Upcoming Events

Congregational Breakfast

with chimes and fellowship

*prepared with love by the
Men of the Church*

Do you wake up hungry?
Do you love the smell of bacon grease
and fresh coffee?
Do you find jolly men in aprons
irresistible?

Join us for breakfast in
Fellowship Hall at 9:00 AM on
Sunday morning, Dec. 17.



The Baby Shop Christmas tree has returned to the Gathering Space. As in years past, the tree is decorated with ornaments representing clothing and items most needed by our less fortunate Montgomery County families.

**The last day to bring your item is
December 17.**

To participate, take an ornament, purchase that item, and place it (unwrapped) under the tree. BPC's generous participation in this tradition always makes a huge difference in what the Baby Shop can offer to children in need during the coldest time of the year.

Thank you!

Celebrate the Epiphany Feast with the BPC community!

Sunday, January 7, following worship,
Fellowship Hall

A lunch of soup and salad will be made more festive with King Cakes served in honor of the visit of the three Magi. This event will offer a relaxed time for fellowship as we mark the end of the Christmas celebration and the start of 2024.

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



ABUNDANT
life

Stewardship Update

A big thank you to everyone who has already made a financial commitment for the ministry of Blacksburg Pres in 2024! Your investment enables this to be a community that shares abundant life freely by being a community of compassion that works actively for justice and love.

If you haven't had a chance to see how our gifts are put to work, you can find that [here](#). We also have information about giving in previous years, early commitments for this year, and a tool that can help you think about your pledge for 2024 [here](#).

There is still time to make a pledge.

You can do that anytime at blacksburgpres.org/stewardship. It's a very simple form and you aren't asked to register for any kind of app or service. You can also call the church office (540-552-2504) or submit a physical pledge card.

Save the Date!

BPC will be participating with To Our House this year, from January 13 through 27.

For the first week (January 13-20), BPC's Fellowship Hall will be the host church location only. Other churches will provide volunteers, food, etc.

For the second week, (January 20-27), BPC's Fellowship Hall will be the host church, and BPC will provide food and volunteers.

Volunteer opportunities include the following:

- assist with set up before
- making meals (dinners)
- providing snacks, drinks, and breakfast items
- making lunches
- doing laundry
- being in charge for the evening at BPC
- spending the night
- break down/clean up afterward

The mission of To Our House is to provide winter shelter for homeless adults in the New River Valley (from November through March) and connect them with resources that lead to employment, housing, and personal economic sustainability.

This is the 14th housing season of TOH, and is a service sponsored by [United Way and New River Community Action](#) with assistance from local churches and many volunteers.



Dates to Remember

DECEMBER BIRTHDAYS

- 2: Carter Eschenmann
3: 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

JANUARY BIRTHDAYS

- 2: Sarah Windes
3: Skip Jubb
4: Sara Hunter
5: Eliza Ruth Hunter
8: Zoë Wiles, Isaac Wiles
10: Mark Hutchins
11: Clara Corl
12: Ellen Oliver
13: Nataleigh Pienkowski
17: Linda Harvey
18: Rachel Parson
19: Pamela Turner
22: Alice Ledford
23: Bill Henika
24: Barbara McKenzie
25: Chris Lawrence, Winnie Myers, Emma Rakes,
Mary Ann Bowling
26: Judith Jones, Brandy Salmon
27: Joseph Childers, Jenny Marin
28: Heather Lawrence
29: Lewis Barnett
30: Lilia Bundren, Julie Burger



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

DECEMBER 2023 — Recurring Meetings:

- Monday:** Staff meeting, 10:30 a.m., HCR
Deacons meeting, second Monday at 12:00 p.m., HCR. Next meeting on December 11.
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 (*not meeting from 12/17-12/31*)
Contact Susan Hunter, Dir. of Children & Youth Ministries at susanh@blacksburgpres.org.
Adult Ed: Contact adulted@blacksburgpres.org.
Youth Group, Sundays, FH (*not meeting from 12/17-12/31*)
Session meeting, third Sunday each month, 7:00 pm. Next meeting is in January.



Mon., 12/4, 1:30-3:00 pm: Lydia Circle meeting, FH
Mon., 12/11, 6:00-7:00 pm: Hildegard Circle meeting, Judy Davis' home
Faith Circle is not 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.

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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