

BLACKSBURG PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH

SERVICE OF WORSHIP FOR THE LORD'S DAY

DECEMBER 31, 2023

FIRST SUNDAY OF CHRISTMAS

We are a community that welcomes all.
We are committed to experiencing beautiful worship,
nurturing lifelong growth,
and pursuing justice and love in the world.



Pastor - Rev. Sarah Wiles
Director of Music & Organist - Alice Brooks Sanders
Director of Children & Youth Ministries - Susan Hunter
Coordinator of Church Life - Sarah Windes
Office Manager - Rhonda Waller
Parish Associate - Rev. Emily Rhodes Hunter

❖Please rise in body or in spirit. We invite you to join in with the words in **bold**.

❖ GATHERING AROUND THE WORD ❖

Thought for Meditation: "It has seemed to me sometimes as though the Lord breathes on this poor gray ember of Creation and it turns to radiance - for a moment or a year or the span of a life. And then it sinks back into itself again, and to look at it no one would know it had anything to do with fire, or light Wherever you turn your eyes the world can shine like transfiguration. You don't have to bring a thing to it except a little willingness to see." — Marilynne Robinson

Prelude: "Silent Night"

Music by Franz Gruber
arr. Jerry Ray

Daron Phay, piano

Rev. Sarah Wiles & Sarah Windes

Welcome and Announcements

Marilyn Hutchins

❖ Call to Worship

Grace and peace be with you. **And also with you.**

This is the day Love has made. **Let us rejoice and be glad in it!**

Look! God is here!
No, really,
right here,
right now.

**In each breath we take,
each sigh the trees exhale.**

In the stones under our feet,
steady for millennia,
holding the memory of ancient rivers rippling above.

In each gaze of love, each glance of affection,
each person on our left and on our right—
sacred image of the Divine.

Come, friends, take heart!
Love is here.

❖ Hymn 146: "Gentle Mary Laid Her Child"

TEMPUS ADEST FLORIDUM

Gentle Mary laid her child
lowly in a manger;
there he lay, the undefiled,
to the world a stranger.
Such a babe in such a place,
can he be the Savior?
Ask the saved of all the race
who have found his favor.

Angels sang about his birth;
wise men sought and found him;
heaven's star shone brightly forth,
glory all around him.

Shepherds saw the wondrous sight,
heard the angels singing;
all the plains were lit that night;
all the hills were ringing.

Gentle Mary laid her child
lowly in a manger;
he is still the undefiled,
but no more a stranger.
Son of God, of humble birth,
beautiful the story;
praise his name in all the earth;
hail the King of glory!

Call to Confession

Prayer of Confession

Before God, with the people of God,
I confess to my brokenness—
to the ways I've wounded my life,
the lives of others,
and the life of the world.

**May God forgive you,
Christ redeem you,
and the Spirit enable you to grow in love.**

Amen.

**Before God, with the people of God,
I confess to my brokenness—
to the ways I've wounded my life,
the lives of others,
and the life of the world.**

May God forgive you,
Christ redeem you,
and the Spirit enable you to grow in love.

Amen.

(Silent prayer)

Assurance of Forgiveness

Hear and trust the good news: by grace our sins are forgiven.

Thanks be to God!

❖ Passing of the Peace

The peace of Christ be with you. **And also with you.**

(Worshippers may exchange signs of God's peace, and children may come forward for a time of sharing faith together.)

❖ HEARING THE WORD ❖

Sharing Faith with Children

Sarah Windes

(Children in 1st grade age and up are invited to remain in the sanctuary. Children in kindergarten or younger may stay in the sanctuary or go downstairs to God's Garden or the nursery for nurturing and care. Please complete a sign-in sticker for each child.)

Prayer of Preparation for a New Year

As the earth completes another orbit around the star that gives us life,
we pause and prepare.

Before we go jumping to resolutions,
we take time for reflection.

Last year merits a moment
for setting free both grief and gratitude
for what has already been,
things within and beyond our control.

Remembering grants time to ask,
Am I running away from what was
or toward what still might be?

(Silent Prayer)

Perhaps this year's resolve is to allow healing to happen.

**I do not need fixing or replacing
so much as mending and gentle attention.
This requires deeper promises,
a sacred acceptance of my true self who deserves so much more
than this annual listing of faults and failures,
this withholding of grace and tenderness.**

Begin by becoming reacquainted with yourself
and confessing the fear of being truly known.
Lean on the unconditional love and acceptance given to us all.

That is resolution enough today and every day.

Scripture

Luke 2:25-40, The Inclusive Bible

Now there lived in Jerusalem a man named Simeon. He was devout and just, anticipating the consolation of Israel, and he was filled with the Holy Spirit who had revealed to Simeon that he wouldn't see death until he had seen the Messiah of God. Prompted by the Spirit, Simeon came to the Temple; and when the parents brought in the child to perform the customary rituals of the Law, he took the child in his arms and praised God, saying,

"Now, O God, you can dismiss your servant in peace, just as you promised;
because my eyes have seen the salvation
which you have prepared for all the peoples to see –
a light of revelation to the Gentiles
and the glory of your people Israel."

As the child's mother and father stood there marveling at the things that were being said, Simeon blessed them and said to Mary, the mother, "This child is destined to be the downfall and the rise of many in Israel, and to be a sign that is rejected, so that the secret thoughts of many may be laid bare. And a sword will pierce your heart as well."

There was a woman named Anna, the daughter of Phanuel, of the tribe of Asher, who was also a prophet. She had lived a long life, seven years with her husband, and then as a widow to the age of eighty-four. She never left the Temple, worshiping day and night, fasting and praying. Coming up at that moment, she gave thanks to God and talked about the child to all who anticipated the deliverance of Jerusalem.

When the couple had fulfilled all the prescriptions of the Law of God, they returned to Galilee and their own town of Nazareth. The child grew in size and strength. He was filled with wisdom, and the grace of God was with him.

Sermon: Every Single One

Rev. Sarah Wiles

❖**Hymn 132:** "Good Christian Friends, Rejoice"

IN DULCI JUBILO

Good Christian friends, rejoice
with heart and soul and voice;
give ye heed to what we say:
Jesus Christ is born today;
ox and ass before him bow,
and he is in the manger now.
Christ is born today!
Christ is born today!

Good Christian friends, rejoice
with heart and soul and voice;
now ye hear of endless bliss:
Jesus Christ was born for this!
He has opened heaven's door,
and we are blest forevermore.
Christ was born for this!
Christ was born for this!

Good Christian friends, rejoice
with heart and soul and voice;
now ye need not fear the grave:
Jesus Christ was born to save!
Calls you one and calls you all
to gain the everlasting hall.
Christ was born to save!
Christ was born to save!

Prayers of the People and The Lord's Prayer

Our Father in heaven,
hallowed be your name,
your kingdom come,
your will be done,
on earth as in heaven.
Give us today our daily bread.

Forgive us our sins
as we forgive those who sin against us.
Save us from the time of trial
and deliver us from evil.
For the kingdom, the power,
and the glory are yours now and forever. Amen.

Call to Offering

Offertory: "Angels We Have Heard on High"

Traditional French Carol
arr. Jerry Ray

❖Doxology

Praise God, from whom all blessings flow;
praise Christ, all creatures here below;
praise Holy Spirit evermore;
praise Triune God whom we adore. Amen.

❖Prayer of Dedication

❖ BEARING THE WORD INTO THE WORLD ❖

❖Hymn 136: "Go, Tell It on the Mountain"

GO TELL IT

Refrain:
Go, tell it on the mountain,
over the hills and everywhere;
go, tell it on the mountain
that Jesus Christ is born!

While shepherds kept their watching
o'er silent flocks by night,
behold, throughout the heavens
there shone a holy light. (Refrain)

The shepherds feared and trembled
when lo! above the earth
rang out the angel chorus
that hailed our Savior's birth. (Refrain)

Down in a lowly manger
the humble Christ was born,
and God sent us salvation
that blessed Christmas morn. (Refrain)

❖Benediction

Postlude: "Joy to the World"

Isaac Watts
arr. Jerry Ray



Citations: Prayer of Confession from *Iona Abbey Worship Book*. Prayer of Preparation for a New Year adapted from *Ordinary Blessings* by Meta Herrick Carlson.

Art: *Ordinary Glory* by Lauren Wright Pittman, A Sanctified Art LLC, sanctifiedart.org.
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WELCOME TO WORSHIP!

This is a space for everyone. No matter who you are, no matter what your story is, no matter what--you are welcome here. May this be a time where your breathing slows, your heart opens, and you connect with the Holy One. If you are seeking a church home, we invite you to explore some of what happens in the life of this community.

Serving: Church Opener: Brent Opell

Ushers: Natalie, Bill, Lily Alex, and Blake Rascher

Elder Serving Refreshments: Judy Pospichal

Nursery and God's Garden Sign-in Stickers (one per child): Complete information about each child and parent(s) on the sign-in sticker.

Headsets for the hard of hearing are available. Speak to an usher to use them for the worship service.

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

Text or QR Code to Give: To give by text, send keyword **bpcva** and an amount to phone number **77977** (e.g., bpcva 20). If it is your first time, there will be a brief registration process. To give via QR code, use the camera app on your phone and follow instructions. Thank you for your support of BPC's ministry.



ANNOUNCEMENTS

bread of life
finding community
in the gospel of John

weekly class at 9am
worship at 10:30am
begins Jan. 7
Westminster

A photograph showing two hands kneading a ball of dough on a floured surface. The background is a light-colored, textured wall. Text on the left side of the image reads "bread of life" in a large, flowing script, followed by "finding community in the gospel of John". Below this, smaller text indicates a weekly class at 9am and worship at 10:30am, starting on January 7th at Westminster.

New weekly adult education class: Bread of Life, Finding Community in the Gospel of John, beginning Sunday, Jan. 7, 9:00am, WM. Led by Anna Bach, Linda King, and Pastors Emily and Sarah.

Celebrate Epiphany!

mark the turning of the year with
an all-church feast & Epiphany party

soup, salad, king cakes
Christmas & Epiphany trivia
star words & prizes

Sunday, January 7, after worship
Fellowship Hall

A circular graphic with a gold gradient background. It features several large, five-pointed gold stars of varying sizes scattered around the perimeter. In the center, the words "Celebrate Epiphany!" are written in a white, serif font. Below this, smaller text invites people to mark the turning of the year with an all-church feast and Epiphany party, listing soup, salad, king cakes, Christmas and Epiphany trivia, and star words and prizes. At the bottom, the date and location are specified: Sunday, January 7, after worship in the Fellowship Hall.

THIS WEEK
FH-Fellowship Hall, HCR-Hatcher Conference Room,
WM-Westminster, SNC-Sanctuary, GS-Gathering Space

All activities are open to everyone.
Contact Rhonda at rhonda@blacksburgpres.org for more information.

Sun. Dec. 31:

- 10:30 am: Worship Service, SNC. (There is no childcare. All children are welcome in worship--especially the squirmy, noisy ones.)

Mon., Jan. 1:

- Church office and building are closed.

Tues., Jan. 2:

- Resumes Jan. 9 - 7:30-9:00 am Morningstars Bible study, Zoom. Contact Pastor Sarah for link.
- 9:30-2:00 pm: Quilters, FH

Sun., Jan. 7:

- 9:00 am: Bread of Life: Finding Community in the Gospel of John class, WM. See announcements for details.
- 10:30: Epiphany Worship with Epiphany Stars, SNC.
- After worship: Epiphany Luncheon, FH. See announcements for details.

UPCOMING EVENTS

Mon., Jan. 8:

- 12:00-1:30 pm: Deacons meeting, HCR
- 1:30-3:00: Lydia Circle meeting, FH
- 6:00: Hildegard Circle meeting, Zoom

Thur., Jan. 11:

- 3:30-4:30 pm: AIM meeting, Zoom



To Our House (TOH) provides winter shelter for unhoused adults in the NRV and connects them with resources that lead to employment, housing, and long-term economic sustainability. Many of the guests who have found shelter through TOH have previously lived in the woods, caves, storm culverts, a friend's pickup truck, or a cardboard box. BPC is grateful for the ability to host TOH in our building for a week or two each year.

To Our House - Save the Dates:

Sat.-Fri., Jan. 13-19:

- To Our House, FH: BPC will be hosting clients overnight with other churches assisting with food, laundry, etc.

Sat.-Fri., Jan. 20-27:

- To Our House, FH: BPC will host and provide food and other assistance this week. To volunteer, please see the TOH volunteer sign-up boards in the Gathering Space or you can sign up here: blacksburgpres.org/local. Volunteer opportunities include bringing food, doing laundry, staying overnight, and setting up.