DECEMBER 2023

HBC ALIVE!

Harrisonburg Baptist Church's Newsletter

Pulling Up a Chair

REV. MATT WINTERS

Most of us will sit around filled tables with mismatched chairs during the holiday season. As extended family members descend on grandma's house, or when neighbors come over, often our dining table sets don't quite have enough chairs for everyone. So, we'll borrow chairs from random rooms around the house, or even pull out chairs from the outbuildings and garages, in order to give seats to our guests. We work hard to ensure there's a place at the table for everyone.

God's table is like that, too. Jesus shared his last meal with the disciples who aren't heard much from, one that betrayed him, and one that denied him. He gave a seat to the one that sprung the trap for his arrest, all the while displaying the grace that bursts out from the Kingdom of God that he said is all around him, and us. In Jesus's realm, hospitality, love and grace are displayed in our actions and in our words.

I'm so thankful to have seen this practice carried out in two occasions in the past two weeks at HBC. First, our fraternity neighbors, with the missions committee help, hosted a meal for the first responders in our community as a way of saying thank you for their service. God used that hospitality and table fellowship to imprint His spirit

This issue:

Advent Happenings
PAGE 02

Youth Update: Fall Retreat
PAGE 04

Prayer & Story Circles
Items Needed
HBC Directory
PAGE 06

God's Presence
PAGE 07

New Members
PAGE 08

Thank You
New Address
305 S Liberty St Update
PAGE 09

Prayer Concerns
Financial News
PAGE 10

Calendar & Birthdays
PAGE 11

on lives. First, some of the fraternity brothers are feeling the Spirit of God move them in a closer walk with Him and first responders have begun to look for new opportunities to rekindle community worship. We're at the forefront of what God may be doing in these experiences, and it's amazing to see how God could be at work. The key to all of this ministry has been the table—the fellowship that springs forth from shared lives and shared meals. Secondly, this church cultivates an openness to our neighbors from outside of town. Not only have you welcomed me and my family, but you make room in your lives for the Kachin Church, for refugee families, and now for a man seeking a church home—far away from his native Cameroon. You welcome with open arms and hearts.

For these reasons and so much more, I am thankful for your generosity and commitment to the narrow road of Jesus Christ who calls us to be faithful to him and share God's grace with those around us. May we always be willing to find new chairs and make room at the His table.

~ Pastor Matt

Advent Devotional

This year, for our Advent devotional, be sure you have "liked" our HBC Facebook page. Each day of Advent we will be sharing a reading that will remind us of the reality of Advent—which is a season of waiting, of anticipation and excitement, as we journey toward the celebration of Christmas this year. This will also be an easy way that you can share these Advent thoughts with others to encourage them on their journey as well.

Christmas Post Office

SUNDAYS, DECEMBER 3 - 24

Send your Christmas cards to regular HBC attendees through the Christmas Post Office, a youth group fundraiser! Place your cards in the box in the foyer. Suggested donation $0.25 per card. (**REMINDER:** The post office delivers cards to regular attendees only. Please **do not** include cards for those who do not regularly attend our worship services.)

Christmas Dinner & Children's Pageant

WEDNESDAY, DECEMBER 6, 5:30PM

Tickets for the Christmas Dinner are for sale in the foyer on Sundays after the worship service for $10/person (max $40 per family). **December 3** will be your last chance to purchase tickets.

Plan to stay after the dinner for our children's Christmas Pageant! Our kids have been working hard (along with many adults) to share with you the story of Jesus' birth. Please come out and support the Children's Ministry Department and let them know how important they are to our church. It will be a beautiful way to help you and your family really get into the Christmas spirit.

Christmas Cantata

DECEMBER 10, 10:30AM

On Sunday morning, December 10, the Choir will present "Carols – A Cantata for Congregation and Choir" by Heather Sorensen – a series of beautiful arrangements of traditional carols for choir and orchestra. As the title suggests, the congregation joins in the singing on many of the songs. They are also involved in the readings that occur between the musical selections. Our readers will be Laura Fly and Zoe Moser. So warm up your voices and come be a part of this beautiful worship experience!

Open House

AT PASTOR MATT & JESSICA'S
SUNDAY, DECEMBER 10, 2-4PM

Jessica and I would like to extend an invitation to everyone to come by our home on Sunday, December 10 from 2-4pm for an open house. You give so much to us, and we would like to do our small part to say thank you. You're welcome to come, meet our puppy, Cooper, and share in some refreshments.

SS Classes, Dec 24 & 31

Please note that Sunday School classes will not meet on Sunday, December 24 and December 31.

Christmas Eve Service

DECEMBER 24, 5PM

Join us for our candlelight communion service on Christmas Eve at 5pm.

FA-LA-LA-LA-LA....

Join us for Christmas Caroling at Bridgewater Home, VMRC and homebound HBC families around town on **Wednesday, December 13, 5-7pm**. To sign up or for more info, contact Kathy Ritcher (540-908-0699). Refreshments and fellowship will follow at Ralph and Sallie Darling's home.

LA-LA-LA-LA!

December Youth Events

DEC 3
- 9:15am Sunday School
- 5:30-7:30pm Dinner, Bible Study & Games

DEC 10
- 9:15am Sunday School
- 5:30-7:30pm Dinner, Bible Study & Games

DEC 13
- 5:45-8:15pm Clothes Closet

DEC 16
- 9:30am-12pm Community Bag Lunch

DEC 17
- 9:15am Sunday School
- 5:00-8:00pm Christmas Party

DEC 24 & 31
- No Sunday School or evening activities

Youth Update: Fall Retreat

REV. KATELYN BELCHER

The youth group had a terrific time attending CBF Virginia's Fall Retreat at Eagle Eyrie Baptist Conference Center in Lynchburg, VA on November 10-12. We were blessed by gorgeous weather and mountain views all weekend long. On the first night, we went around the room, and everyone shared their goals for the weekend. The responses were as follows: "learn more about God," "make a new friend," "become closer to God," and "to grow closer as a group and learn more about God." We definitely reached our goals over the weekend. Our 12 students who attended were able to participate in meaningful and hands-on worship services. The theme for the weekend was "Sparks of God," and the speaker for the weekend, Rev. Melissa Kessler, did a fantastic job of teaching God's Word to hundreds of students in very relatable ways.

Our students also participated in breakout sessions that interested them: self-care, spiritual gifts assessments, board games, ultimate frisbee, football, and disc golf. We also enjoyed exploring the mountain during our free time on Saturday. We checked out the coffee, ice cream, and gift shops.

We played gaga ball and played on the giant slide and swings. And then we played basketball and volleyball. We have a very athletic group, and all that activity still didn't wear them out! A major highlight for all of us was getting to see Heidi Ruiz there! We are so grateful we were able to attend the Fall Retreat. Many of our students remarked that it was like a "mini-Passport camp", and we all benefitted from getting out of our ordinary spaces and just focusing on God for the weekend. Thank you, HBC, for allowing us to go on yet another unforgettable trip!

Prayer & Story Circles

Our prayer and story circles continue to be a blessing to many. I am grateful to your commitment to one another as we continue in these circles together. For December, I encourage each of you as you meet with your groups or through email to share with one another a favorite Christmas memory. Give it some thought—you might be surprised what comes to the surface and brings a smile to your face! We continue to be in prayer for so many in our own church family, but also for our community, our country and for our world.

In the Midst of Winter

Lord:

In the midst of Winter, when the days are cold and wind can pierce remind us of the warmth of your love. In the midst of Winter, when days are short, dawn comes late, and dusk arrives early remind us that in the darkness your light still shines. In the midst of Winter, when the flowers of spring still lie hidden in the earth, when leaves are off the trees, and the world can seem bleak remind us that Easter is but a short time away. And when in our lives we feel as if we are experiencing a season of winter, reach out to us with the power of your resurrection so that we may feel the warmth of your love and see your light that alone can take away the darkness of our soul.

- Cal Wick

Items Needed

Winter Gear (coats, hats, gloves, scarves) is needed to share with friends who join us for Community Lunch on Saturdays. Gently used, clean items are welcome, with adult sizes being most needed. If you can share some warm things, please place them on the rolling rack in the Liberty St. elevator foyer. Thank you!

Yarn is needed for winter hats and scarves being made by Edy Cupp to share with neighbors in need. If you have yarn to donate, please place it in the church parlor. Thank you!

HBC Directory

Did you know that there is a quick and easy way to obtain HBC members' most up-to-date contact information, and it's available 24/7? HBC maintains an online directory through Instant Church Directory, which is easily accessible via the internet or an app on your mobile device. For links and instructions, visit www.hbcalive.org/directory.

Once you've logged in, please take a moment to verify that the information we have for you is correct—and then upload a recent picture of you or your family! Click on the "Edit My Family" button to change your information or upload a new picture.

For those who prefer a printed directory, there will be non-pictorial directories available in the foyer beginning January 7. If you would like one mailed to you, please contact the church office.

God's Presence

KAREN BURKE, DEACON

We hear the name Emmanuel, also spelled Immanuel, especially around Christmastime in Scripture, and in songs. Immanuel, means "God is with us." God sent his Son, Jesus to earth to be physically present with people.

Psalm 139 is all about God's presence. The Israelites probably used this Psalm in their worship. In it, we read that there is no place where the Lord is not present. David says the Lord knows him; he knows when he sits and when he gets up. Even before a word is on his tongue, God knows it.

Probably everyone reading this has at least one, if not multiple examples of when God was with you, guiding you, comforting you, protecting you. Sometimes you may feel lost, abandoned, or unsure of your next step in life. You can be sure that God is with you!

I'll share an example from this past August. I traveled with my daughter, Leanne and her two sons to Tokyo, Japan. Her oldest son, Ethan, was accepted at Temple University in Tokyo and we went there to help get him settled in. The very first day when the plane landed, we rode a bus to where Ethan's dorm was. When we got off the bus, we tried to follow the written directions the school had sent Ethan, but it wasn't as simple in person as it was on paper. As we stood on a street corner with all our luggage, a man came up to us to try to help. After several minutes of looking at the directions and the street signs, this man pointed us in a certain direction. We thanked him and continued. At another intersection, we were again not sure which way to go.

As we stood there, trying to figure out the signs, a lady stopped by to help. She wasn't sure where the address was, but she was trying. Then, she stopped a young man who was walking by and told him the situation. They spoke for several minutes, and then she told us this young man was going to put the directions in his phone and walk with us until we got to the dorm! So, the four of us dragging our luggage, were led by this young Japanese man, another 20-30 minutes on this very hot and humid day until he led us straight to the dorm!

We got Ethan settled in his dorm, and he decided to stay there the first night. A lady at the desk at the dorm called a taxi for my daughter and her 17-year-old son, Liam, and myself to find where we were staying. After a taxi ride of at least 20-30 minutes, the driver pulled up alongside a street and said, "Here it is." We looked around out the windows. It was now dark, and there were lots of lit up buildings and people on the streets. But we didn't see the building that looked like where we were staying. I asked, "Where is it?"

This taxi driver asked us to wait, and he got out of the cab and started walking up and down the street looking for the right place. After a few minutes, he got back in and used his phone to call the phone number we had for where we were staying. He called them,

got out of the cab again, still talking to them and walking as they were leading him to the place. In several minutes the driver returned to the taxi, said he'd found it, and helped us out of the taxi with our luggage, and led us up an alley which was close to where he had parked. Several hundred feet up the alley, he led us to where we were staying!

God was leading us by using these wonderful people to help us get settled that very first day in Tokyo! He was certainly with us and had not abandoned us. These people literally went out of their way to help. During our two weeks there, we had at least seven or eight other times when people helped us.

We hope for God to clearly show up and let us know what to do. But he doesn't always show up in a burning bush or in the wind. Sometimes it is "that still, small voice" or through other people.

Sometimes we feel God's presence more than at other times. It's not that God has left us. Sometimes it's because we've moved away from God. We may feel like David in Psalm 22, "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me? ...." And of course, we hear these words again from Jesus as he's dying on the cross. God is present with us when we're lost, afraid, and grieving.

Jesus promised his disciples when he was gone, he would send the Holy Spirit, the Comforter. He told his disciples, and us, "**I am with you always, to the very end of the age**" (Matthew 28:20).

New Members

KEVIN TAGUEDONG

Kevin joined us on November 19.

SANDY BOBBIO

Sandy became a member on November 5.

SHARON MILLER

Sharon formally joined HBC on October 22.

Thank You's

Dear HBC Family,

Thank you for all the expressions of sympathy after our Mom's passing. Mom loved HBC and all the friends she made in her 60+ years of membership. We were lucky to be raised in a loving Christian home. Even as Mom's Alzheimer's progressed, she could tell you her church was "Harrisonburg Baptist Church." What a testament to her faith! Mom had a real gift in sharing her belief in God and we have no doubt she's feasting as his heavenly banquet. What a blessing!

May God continue to guide us as we adjust to life without our sweet Mom. Weappreciate the many acts of kindness from the church.

Blessings, Sallie Strickler & Ginger Shover
Lola McBride's daughters

On behalf of Katelyn and Eli, I want to say thank you so much for your generosity and kindness shown to us during Pastor Appreciation month. From meals to cards, kind words and actions, you continue to demonstrate God's love to us. We are all so grateful for the love you share. Harrisonburg Baptist people are amazing and we are so thankful to God to be able to share and live life together. Thank you so much!

~Pastors Matt, Eli & Katelyn

305 S. Liberty Street

We are getting so close to finishing the work on 305 S. Liberty Street. We have just a few more items to complete prior to the house being ready for occupants. We are excited for the next chapter in the church's ministry "across the street," so may God's will be done. I have little doubt that something new and surprising will happen in this new era.

Address Changes

Neese Spitzer
The Phoenix
3615 Stone Spring Rd., Apt E
Harrisonburg, VA 22801

Alma Spitzer
The Phoenix
3607 Stone Spring Rd., Apt 8
Harrisonburg, VA 22801

Sue Jones
Bridgewater Retirement Community
302 N Second St., Unity House
Bridgewater, Va 22812

PRAYER CONCERNS

HBC FAMILY

Irv Byrd
Sandy Cude
Edith Cupp
Diane Gray
Dennis Greene
Wayne Hannah
Sue Jones
Judy Miller
Sarah Northen
Bill Pond
Karen & Kerry Potter
Wayne Robertson
Jimmy & Nancy Russell
Mary Smith
Judy Stewart
Neese & Alma Spitzer
Constance Via
Jim Wampler
Tracie Ward

EXTENDED FAMILY

Stacy & Bryan and family
(Cathy Lawrence's niece)
Carole Gaines & family
(Karen Burke's sister)
Cynthia Shifflett
(Joyce Deavers' daughter)

October Stewardship Snapshot

Budget needs as of 10/31/23	$503,932.00
Budget receipts as of 10/31/23	$519,937.05

Non-Budget/Designated Funds

• Love Fund	$200.00
• Saturday Bag Lunch	$150.00
• VA State Missions (Alma Hunt)	$50.00
• CBF Global Missions	$20.00
• Staff Christmas Fund	$90.00

Upcoming Financial Dates to Remember

December 3 – 2024 envelope sets will be available in the church foyer. For those unable to pick them up, your envelopes will be mailed or delivered by our Visitation Team.

December 31 – 2023 year-end stock and other donations to the church must be in the church office by December 31st or postmarked by December 31st.

January 5 – All 2023 invoices or requests for reimbursement must be dated by December 31st and delivered to the church office by January 5, 2024. Any 2023 items received after January 5 will be posted to the 2024 budget.

Staff Christmas Fund

Express your appreciation to the staff at Christmas for their work throughout the year. Specially marked envelopes for your donations are available in the foyer, or you can donate online at www.hbcalive.org/give (under Funds, select "Other" and put "Staff Christmas Fund" in the comments section). Please make your donation by December 17.

December 2023

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
					1	2
3 5:30pm Youth Dinner & Bible Study	4	5 10:30am Tuesdays Together (B4)	6 5:30pm Christmas Dinner & Kids Pageant	7	8	9 9:30am Cantata dress rehearsal
10 10:30am Cantata (no Children's Church) 5:30pm Youth Dinner & Bible Study	11	12	13 5pm Christmas Caroling 5:45-8:15pm Youth Clothes Closet	14	15	16
17 2-6pm Kachin Church 5-8pm Youth Christmas Party	18	19	20 January Newsletter Articles Due	21 11:30am Brookdale	22	23
24 No Sunday School 5pm Christmas Eve service	25 Office Closed Merry Christmas	26 Office Closed	27	28	29	30
31 No Sunday School						

WEEKLY REOCCURING EVENTS

SUNDAY
- 9:15am Sunday School (Dec 3, 10, 17)
- 10:30am Community Worship
- 11:45am College Lunch (Dec 3 & 10)
- 11:45am Children's Chime Practice

MONDAY
- 7am Men's Prayer Breakfast (Mr J's)
- 10am Skyline Literacy (Rm 111, 201 & 203)
- 1pm Staff Meeting (Parlor)
- 6:30pm Scouts

TUESDAY
- 4pm Jubellation Practice

WEDNESDAY
- 10am Ladies' Prayer Group (B4)
- 6pm Choir Practice

THURSDAY
- 10am Skyline Literacy (Rm 111, 201, 203)

FRIDAY
- Office Closed

SATURDAY
- 10:30am Community Bag Lunch

DEACON OF THE WEEK

Dec 3 — Cathy Lawrence
Dec 10 — Jeff Obenschain
Dec 17 — Don Aittama
Dec 24 —Karen Burke

COMMUNITY BAG LUNCH

Dec 2 — Emmanuel Episc
Dec 9 — Obenschain
Dec 16 — HBC Youth
Dec 23 — S Miller
Dec 30 — Ritchie

DECEMBER BIRTHDAYS

1 Steve Alvis
1 Diane Gray
6 Ralph Darling
6 Diego Paul
6 Joan Sanger
12 Sherri Chapman
13 Christian May
13 Erin Northen
14 Don Embrey
15 Wayne Robertson
18 Erin Waddell
22 Greg Versen
22 Eli Withers
23 Claudia Obenschain
26 Parker Webb
27 Eddie Mozingo
27 Sarah Webb
29 Marie Graham
29 Nancy Russell
30 Sarah Beery
31 Paul Chowdhury
31 Scott Simmons

HARRISONBURG BAPTIST CHURCH
501 South Main Street
Harrisonburg, VA 22801

HBC ALIVE!
A publication of

HARRISONBURG BAPTIST CHURCH
501 South Main Street
Harrisonburg, VA 22801
(540) 433-2456 www.hbcalive.org

STAFF
Rev. Dr. Matthew Winters, Senior Pastor
Rev. Eli Withers, Associate Pastor
Rev. Katelyn Belcher, Youth Pastor
Dr. Gary Ritcher, Director of Music & Worship
Erin Waddell, Praise Team Leader
Rosemary Lonberger, Organist
Harold Bailey, Pianist
Susan Kiser, Financial Ministry Assistant
Kim Brubaker, Administrative Ministry Assistant

JANUARY NEWSLETTER DEADLINE
DECEMBER 20, 2023

Please submit articles to
Kim Brubaker at kim@hbcalive.org