



DECEMBER 2025

HBC ALIVE!

Harrisonburg Baptist Church's Newsletter

Finding Peace, Hope, Joy and Love

PASTOR MATT WINTERS

The Christmas season brings great reminders of God's love for us but also drags along hefty expectations. Finding gifts, coordinating schedules, attending events, and making visits can add up to anything but a peaceful season. I would encourage you to find a way to connect with God in a new way this season. Take three to five minutes each day to fill your cup or, actually, allow the Holy Spirit to fill your cup. Taking a break from the hectic schedules can help you stay grounded in what is the most important lesson of the Christmas season—that God took on the chaotic life of mankind by becoming one of us.

Jesus took time to pray, seek God before seeking a schedule, and to bring the kingdom of God into our awareness. One thing I enjoy doing is pausing each evening and watching the sunset. Rays of the sun mingle with the atmosphere and clouds to paint the sky. Each night is different and constant reminders of the steadfastness of God and the uniqueness of God. For all that stays the same (the sunset), there are no two alike. For me, this reminder that God's power is available at all times but in very unique ways as needed. That's where I can find my peace, hope, joy and love. What about you? Where can you find yours? If you'd like to join me, come about sunset to my driveway, and we'll look west together. I think you may be able to see God's shadow if you squint hard enough.

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New Newsletter Schedule

As we continue transitioning to the Realm Connect app for more timely communication, please note that our newsletter will shift to a **quarterly** schedule beginning with the January–March 2026 issue. If you have items to include, please email them to kim@hbcalive.org by the 20th of the final month of each quarter (March, June, September, and December).

Because each issue will now cover an entire quarter, the newsletter will focus primarily on celebrating and recapping recent events. While we will provide a few key “save the date” announcements, detailed information about upcoming events will now be shared through Realm Connect as event dates approach. Of course, you’ll also continue to find important details in the weekly emails, bulletins and Sunday announcements.

All updates posted in the Connect app will also be automatically emailed to you if we have an email address on file for you. If you’ve logged into the app, you can adjust your notification settings to choose whether you receive updates by email, in-app notifications, or both.

If you need any help using Realm or updating your notification preferences, we’re always glad to assist. Stop by the church office or contact Kim at 540-433-2456 or kim@hbcalive.org.

Welcome to our New Members!

JAY TRAXLER

Jay joined on with us on September 28. He retired from Kawneer Co. after 46 years of service. Jay has two sons—Justin, who lives at home, and Jayson, who lives in New York City with his wife Elizabeth and their children, Caroline (13) and Teddy (10). Jay enjoys golf and fly fishing. He was married to his beloved wife, Jean, for nearly 54 years before her passing in May 2025.



CHRIS GAMBLE

Chris became a member on October 12. We’re grateful to have Chris’ insight and participation in Sunday School class, Tuesdays Together and the Welcome Table Ministry.



SHAWN THORNTON

Shawn (pictured here with Carol Morrow) joined with us on October 12. He was baptised by Pastor Matt on November 19.

ERIN WADDELL

Erin officially joined on November 9 but is already a familiar face at HBC as part of our Praise Team. Erin teaches math at Elkton Middle School. We’re grateful for her ongoing involvement and joyful spirit.





Lessons & Carols

DECEMBER 7 AT 10:30AM

Celebrate the season with scripture readings, congregational hymns, choir & handbells, and praise band.

Featured music includes: *Siyahamba*, *Beautiful Star of Bethlehem*, *Mary Did You Know*, *Holy Forever*, *Jesus What a Wonderful Child* and more!

All are welcome. Come experience the joy and hope of Christmas!

Christmas Dinner

WEDNESDAY, DEC 10 AT 6PM

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 7 will be your last chance to purchase tickets. Plan to stay after the dinner for our children's Christmas program!

Kids Christmas Program

WEDNESDAY, DEC 10 AT 7PM

We are grateful to Noelle Carroll, Alice Hughey, and Jessica Winters for working with our kiddos for a shorter than usual but still special Christmas program following the Christmas dinner around 7 pm. Please plan to stay following the dinner to watch the program! Also, our memorial Christmas ornament for the kids is in memory of David Downey. You will definitely want to see what the kids takehome this year in his honor!

Christmas Caroling

WEDNESDAY, DEC 17 AT 5PM

Join the visitation team and the choir for some Christmas Caroling on Wednesday, December 17. There will be three groups of folks going out—some to homes, some to VMRC, and some to Bridgewater Retirement Community. If you would like to join us around 5 pm that evening, please email Pastor Eli at eli@hbcalive.org or find her on Sunday morning and let her know. We will assign you to one of the teams and then we will all meet back at the church around 7 pm for some sweet treats so we can tell about our experiences.

I promise—if you're not yet in the Christmas season, you will be after this! Also, ALL WILLING TO SING ARE WELCOME—professional singing ability not necessary! Come be a blessing to someone this Christmas!

Christmas Eve Service

WEDNESDAY, DEC 24 AT 5PM

Bring the family and join us for a very special Christmas Eve service! Our offering this year will go to The Farm Ministry (aka the meat and cheese ministry) which works with the local farming community to provide healthy and delicious food basics to our neighbors who might need an extra boost. Come to the service with a generous heart—ready to give!



Upcoming JOY Events

Our Senior Adult group now has a new name: JOY - as in Just Older Youth!

CHRISTMAS SING-ALONG

Thursday, December 4 at 2pm

All are welcome to join us in singing some of our favorite Christmas hymns and songs. Let's add to the festivities by wearing our Christmas sweaters, whether crazy, ugly or classic.

JOY SURVEY RESULTS

Thanks to those who completed our survey. According to the responses, the activities you most enjoyed were Ice Cream at Smiley's (73.3%), Picnic at Hillendale (66.7%), Bingo w/ Snacks (46.7%), and Hymn Sing (46.7%). We used these results and your comments to plan events for the coming year.

The Joy Team has planned another exciting year of events and activities for 2026.

Due to the difficulty in predicting the weather conditions during the winter months, we will begin the JOY events in **March 2026** with Ice Cream at Smiley's. More information will be provided in the coming months about this event and many others. Please plan to join us in 2026 for more fun and fellowship. All ages are invited.

Christmas Post Office

THROUGH DEC 24

The youth group is sponsoring the Christmas Post Office for your Christmas cards as a fundraiser for Passport Camp next July. Please place your cards in the designated alphabetical boxes in the foyer. The suggested donation is \$0.25 per card. Important reminder: cards should only be sent to regular church attendees. The youth group is unable to mail cards and hand deliver cards outside of the church building.

Community Holiday Concert

DEC 12 @ 7:30PM + DEC 14 @ 3PM
BRIDGEWATER CHURCH OF THE BRETHREN

The Shenandoah Valley Choral Society, under the direction of Curtis Nolley, will present its annual Christmas concert "O Holy Night" Friday, December 12, 7:30 pm, and Sunday, December 14, 3:00 pm, at Bridgewater Church of the Brethren. The festive concert will feature Vivaldi's "Gloria" accompanied by the SVCS chamber orchestra with soloists Christine Fairfield and Katlyn Townsend. The program will also include a variety of contemporary and traditional carols sure to lift your holiday spirits.

Tickets are available at the door, locally at Harrisonburg Friendly City Food Co-op, Bridgewater Foods Supermarket, and on-line at singshenandoah.org. Admission is \$15 for adults and \$12 for seniors and students.



Fall Additions to Our Music Ministry

We're grateful to have these recent additions to our music team!

- **Savannah Rixon**, our music intern, is a sophomore Vocal Performance major along with a double major in music industry. She is from Virginia Beach and hopes to make music and sing for a living after graduation.
- **Megan Wong**, interim accompanist/pianist, is a junior Music Education major at JMU with a concentration in Piano. She would like to teach elementary school and accompany singers after graduation.
- **Eric Jeffers** comes to us with a great deal of experience playing music in church. He joined us in late September on bass and has recently offered to play electric guitar.
- **Malik White** came on board in November as a Bassist, and his skill has been a wonderful addition to the team.

Thank you to all for embracing these changes and helping us grow musically and spiritually!



December & January Worship Pianist

During December and January, we are blessed to have **Cory Leckrone** serving as our Worship Pianist. Cory will offer beautiful music on both organ and piano and will also accompany the choir. We look forward to the richness her gifts will bring to our worship services.

New Faces of Ministry, Coming Soon!

Starting in December, we will begin advertising the role of Worship Pianist and anticipate hosting interviews in late January. Our hope is to welcome a gifted pianist who will accompany both the choir and congregation by February, enriching our worship with excellence and heart.

Once the Worship Pianist search is complete, our next goal is to bring on a new organist before Easter. In the meantime, we are partnering with local musicians to ensure the organ continues to be heard in worship at least once a month. We have already identified several talented organists who will serve on an interim basis, keeping our sanctuary filled with the majestic sound of this beloved instrument.

This season of transition is filled with promise, and we are excited to see how God will lead us as we expand and strengthen our music ministry team.



Dec Youth Events

DEC 6

9:30am-12pm Welcome Table Lunch

DEC 7

9:15am Sunday School

5:30-7:30pm Dinner & Bible Study

DEC 10

6pm Christmas Dinner

DEC 14

9:15am Sunday School

5:30-7:30pm Dinner & Bible Study

DEC 17

6:15-7:45pm Clothes Closet

DEC 21

9:15am Sunday School

5-8pm Christmas Party

DEC 24

5pm Christmas Eve Service

DEC 28

No youth events

Jan Youth Events

JAN 4

9:15am Sunday School

No evening youth event

JAN 11

9:15am Sunday School

5:30-7:30pm Dinner & Bible Study

JAN 14

6:15-7:45pm Clothes Closet

JAN 18

9:15am Sunday School

5:30-7:30pm Dinner & Bible Study

JAN 25

9:15am Sunday School

5:30-7:30pm Dinner & Bible Study

Youth Update: Fall Retreat

REV. KATELYN BELCHER

We recently had a group of 15 students and chaperones attend CBF Virginia's Fall Retreat at Eagle Eyrie Conference Center in Lynchburg, VA on November 14th through November 16th. The theme for the weekend was "Left On Read: God Calls- Do We Answer?" We were given the opportunity to reflect on God's calling and divine purpose for our lives. Over the course of four worship services, our students were blessed to hear sermons tailored to their age groups by the speaker for the weekend, Rev. Kelsey Stillwell. We participated in meaningful prayer stations on Saturday night, and we also shared a powerful time of Communion on Sunday morning. Ashlynn Lilly read scripture during one service, and Chris Belcher shared his Call Story on Sunday morning. On Saturday, our group chose three different breakout sessions that interested them, and the Lego station was the weekend favorite! We also enjoyed free time by visiting the café and playing basketball. Esmyele Elan celebrated his 17th birthday on Saturday as well! We left the mountain that weekend even more bonded as a group and closer to God. We are so grateful to our church for supporting this trip and we can't wait to go back next year!







“Bag Lunch” becomes the “Welcome Table”

“What's in a name?” ... Leaders of our Saturday lunch ministry have decided that it's time to change our name to better reflect what we do and our attitude about it. Going forward, you will see and hear our long-running “Bag Lunch” program referred to as the “Welcome Table.” This title encompasses the sit-down meal we enjoy together with neighbors each week and the brown bag (“bag lunch”) that is offered for later.

Coming to the “Welcome Table” to eat together follows the pattern set by our Lord Jesus, who sat and ate with all kinds of people during His time on earth. Join us at the “Welcome Table” any Saturday, 10:30-11:30am in HBC Fellowship Hall. Jesus is always invited to our tables!

Remembering Missionaries

The Christmas season is a time we often reflect on our missionaries serving around the world. The Lottie Moon Mission Offering is a time to support missionaries and the work they do. Lottie Moon Mission envelopes will be available in the foyer, and you can continue to support the missionaries if you so choose. We are grateful for the key work that Todd and Deborah Hoskins do in Madagascar. Pray for them as they share the gospel of Jesus Christ to the villages there. Pray for peace and open doors to the hearts and lives of their neighbors.

Mission Minute

JULIE AITTAMA, MISSIONS CHAIR

Operation Christmas Child Boxes have been blessed and are on the first leg of their journey. A Bible in the child's language will be placed in the box before completing the next leg of the trip. Once the child receives the box, he or she will have the opportunity to attend a Bible study to learn about our Savior Jesus Christ. Not only are you blessing a child with items that they don't have access to, but you are also spreading the gospel in a special way! Thank you!

The Angel Tree tags and unwrapped gifts for Salvation Army are due Sunday, November 30th or before December 4th to the church. The gifts will be delivered to the Salvation Army office December 4th. The wrapped gifts for Spotswood Elementary are due Sunday, December 7th. The gifts will be delivered to the school on Monday, December 8th.

Again, thank you for blessing children in our community and around the world! Merry Christmas!

Mission Trip

Just a friendly reminder that our summer mission trip to Welch, WV will take place the week of June 29-July 4. We'll be working in flood recovery, and all ages and skills are welcome. Let Pastor Matt know if you would like to join the team.



Love My Small Groups!

CATHY LAWRENCE, DEACON

One of the things that led us to join HBC (back in 2000) was the small group, our Sunday School class. Small groups help all of us to build closer relationships as we get to know each other personally where we are comfortable to share our deepest feelings, ask questions, share wisdom and search for God's answers. It's not practical to have a conversation with a crowd, but in a smaller group with trust, we can share the ups and downs of life, get support, and pray in specific ways for each other as well as others we are aware of with life needs. The more frequently we can schedule to be together with our group, these friends in faith and fellowship, the stronger the bonds, encouragement, and joy that fill our souls.

Small groups are not only relational and helpful, but they are biblical! We remember from the Bible when at age 30 Jesus began his public ministry. He was baptized and then immediately formed a small group of 12 guys that he ate with, traveled with, and ministered with for the next three years. If Jesus needed a small group for his ministry, we need one so much more to make it in life. We need a small group (or more than one) to stand with us, encourage us, pull us up when we fall, support us in ways we need to keep moving forward toward God's best for our life. We need a team of people who show up to celebrate together, share together, raise each other up. I know I've got that with my small groups at HBC.

I'm thankful for the opportunities HBC provides for me to build relationships in various small groups whether it's a Sunday School class, Bible study group, prayer group, or working together in mission projects, Welcome Table (Saturday Bag Lunch), or the many other options. I've been blessed to know those in my groups more intimately through shared hearts in the Lord. I hope you too have the joy and support of being in some small groups in our church. If not, I hope you will be able to experience the strength and growth that comes from being an integral part of one or more of them. There's always room for any and all to join in these groups.

Address Changes

Kent & Karen Folsom
PO Box 286
Shenandoah, VA 22849

Dorothy Layman
696 John Tyler Cir, Apt 101
Harrisonburg, VA 22801

Deb Propst
3841 Fifle St
Mt Pleasant, SC 29466



Wonder Women Update

PASTOR ELI WITHERS

The Wonder Women group will be taking a break through the winter months and will resume meeting in March. In the meantime, you are encouraged to spend some extra time in these upcoming cold and sometimes dreary days practicing something called Wintering. Author Katherine May says that wintering is a dormant period in life, not just when Mother Nature takes a kind of break, but one in which we are all invited to pause for a bit. She says, "The changes that take place in winter are a kind of alchemy, an enchantment performed by ordinary creatures to survive... It is all very well to survive the abundant months of the spring and summer," she says, "but in winter, we witness the full glory of nature's flourishing in lean times... winter is a time of withdrawing from the world..." It is a time when we are witness to the sparseness and sometimes "sparse beauty" of the world around us. If we're open to it, winter can be a time of extended sabbath for us. May continues, "Winter is a time for reflection... and slow replenishment... for slowing down, letting your spare time expand, getting enough sleep, and resting (which she calls a radical but essential act)."

So Wonder Women, this winter when you find yourself stuck inside on a snow day or simply not wanting to go anywhere because of the bitter nip at your skin when you walk out the door, do something different. Let yourselves be challenged by the words God spoke through the Psalmist... "Come and see what

the Lord has done, the desolations he has brought on the earth... Be still, and know that I am God..." As someone who is less than fond of the cold and snowy season, I can think of no better use of these winter months.

College Ministry Update

SHIRLEY COBB, CHAIR

The College Committee thanks the congregation for its support in the college ministry. Your extended warmth, welcome and friendship to our students is much appreciated.

We graduated 16 students who had been involved in some aspect of the college ministry this past spring. This fall we have welcomed so many new students - many in the congregation on Sunday mornings, an increasing number attending college lunch, and weekly Bible studies with some students.

A special thank you to those of you who contributed to Sunday lunches - your preparation and offering, and your involvement with our students. At present, we plan to continue the Sunday lunches in the spring which continues to offer not only a good meal, but a time of fellowship and deepening relationships.

The college committee also welcomes new committee members, Phil and Janet Hoskins. We look forward to a great spring semester. Thank you HBC for your support!



Thank You, Music Ministry Team!

To all who are involved in our music ministry at HBC:

We want to express our deepest gratitude for the extra hours of practice and dedication you have invested over the past few months in preparation for Lessons and Carols and our Advent offerings. Your commitment and passion have truly blessed our congregation. The time you have given, often behind the scenes, reflects not only your musical excellence but also the deep faith you bring to this ministry. That faith transforms every note into worship and makes your work a powerful witness to God's love.

Special appreciation goes to our Praise Band members, Handbell Ringers, Choir singers, and our incredible Sound and AV team. Your efforts have made this season of worship extraordinary, ensuring that every voice and instrument is heard clearly and every service runs smoothly.

I also want to express my sincere gratitude to our pastors and staff who have walked alongside me during this transition into the role of Director of Music and Worship. Your guidance, support, and willingness to help problem-solve week in and week out have been invaluable. You are true partners in ministry, and I am blessed to serve with such a dedicated team.

Sincerely,
Todd Martin
Director of Music and Worship

Thank You!

THANK YOU to Dustyn Miller and Cindy & Doug Skelley for regularly collecting recyclables at church and taking them to local recycling centers. Their efforts are one way HBC cares for God's creation! Would you like to take a turn collecting HBC recyclables? Contact Dustyn or the Skelley's.

From HBC Creation Care Team – Because *the earth is the Lord's!*

Dear Harrisonburg Baptist Church,

On behalf of the Ojo Afolabi Initiative, sincere appreciation is extended to your church for the generous donation of \$1,000 in support of our upcoming monthly distribution to widows and orphans in Nigeria. Your commitment to uplifting underserved communities and spreading hope reflects a profound expression of compassion and Christian service.

This contribution will directly empower families in need and strengthen our mission to provide dignity, relief, and sustainable support to the vulnerable. Your partnership is invaluable, and the impact of your kindness will be felt by many.

Thank you again for believing in this vision and for standing with us as we continue to make a difference, one family at a time. We pray that the grace and blessings of God will continually abound in your ministry and congregation.

With sincere gratitude,
Ojo Afolabi, Lead
The Ojo Afolabi Initiative



PRAYER CONCERNS

HBC FAMILY

Fernand Pre
Mike Kopcinski
Kerry Potter
Jean Holthaus
Eddie Mozingo
Vickie Westlake
Joyce Deavers
Faye Bland
Dale Wright
Nancy Russell

NURSING CARE/HOMEBOUND

Bryan Acker
Dennis Greene
Wayne Hannah
Neil Showalter
Constance Via

EXTENDED FAMILY

Freddie Roach
(Joyce Deavers' brother-in-law)
Jack Wampler
(Sharon Wampler's grandson)
Bella (Angela Hayes' niece)
Bob Withers (Pastor Eli's Father)
Tom Dagenhart (Cathy Baugh's brother)
Charlotte Saufley
(Judy Simmons' cousin)
Arnold family (Julie Aittama's friends)
Bobby Grove family
(Julie Aittama's friends)

Stewardship Snapshot

Budget needs as of 11/23/25 \$ 582,189.00

Budget receipts as of 11/23/25 \$ 532,108.57

Sept-Nov Donations to Designated Funds

• Lottie Moon offering	\$600.00
• Annie Armstrong offering	\$120.00
• Alma Hunt State Missions	\$175.00
• CBF Global Missions	\$100.00
• Nasaruni Academy	\$1,100.00
• Welcome Table	\$745.00
• Youth Passport Camp	\$5,503.00
• Love Fund	\$1,020.00
• Staff Christmas Fund	\$1,525.00

Financial Dates to Remember

December 14 – Giving envelope sets for 2026 will be available in the church foyer. This year, instead of personalized envelope sets, we will be using blank giving envelopes. You are welcome to pick up a set to use for your tithes and offerings in the coming year.

December 31 – 2025 year-end stock and other donations to the church must be in the church office by December 31 or postmarked by December 31.

January 5 – All 2025 invoices or requests for reimbursement must be dated by December 31 and delivered to the church office by January 5, 2026. Any 2025 items received after January 5 will be posted to the 2026 budget.

Staff Christmas Fund

Express your appreciation to the staff at Christmas for their work throughout the year. Special envelopes for your donations are available in the foyer, or you can donate online at www.hbcalive.org/give. Please make your donation by December 15.

DECEMBER 2025

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
	1	2	3	4 2pm JOY Christmas Sing-Along	5 7pm-9am Scouts Lock In	6
7 10:30am Lessons & Carols	8	9	10 6pm Christmas Dinner 6:15pm Youth Clothes Closet	11	12	13
14	15	16	17 7pm Christmas Caroling	18	19	20
21 2-6pm Kachin Church	22	23	24 5pm Christmas Eve Service	25 	26	27
28	29 Office Closed	30	31	Staff Out of Office Matt: Dec 1; Kim: Dec 8 & 24		

WEEKLY REOCCURING EVENTS

SUNDAY

9:15am Sunday School
10:30am Community Worship
5:30pm Youth Dinner & Bible Study

MONDAY

7am Men's Prayer Breakfast (Chick-fil-A)
10am Skyline Literacy (Rms 111, 201-203)
1pm Staff Meeting (Parlor)
6:30pm Scouts

TUESDAY

10:30am Tuesdays Together (B4)
4pm Jubellation Practice

WEDNESDAY

10am Ladies' Prayer Group (B4)
6:30pm Choir Practice

THURSDAY

10am Skyline Literacy (Rms 111, 201-203)

FRIDAY

Office Closed

SATURDAY

10:30am Welcome Table

DEACON OF THE WEEK

Dec 7 — Randy Dail
Dec 14 — Laura Fly
Dec 21 — Nico Nguimbi
Dec 28 — Donna Downey

WELCOME TABLE

Dec 6 — HBC Youth
Dec 13 — Cindy Mandigo
Dec 20 — Emmanuel Episc
Dec 27 — Jeff Obenschain

DEC BIRTHDAYS

1 Diane Gray
6 Ralph Darling
6 Diego Paul
6 Joan Sanger
12 Sherri Chapman
13 Christian May
13 Erin Northen
14 Don Embrey
14 Pete Giordano
18 Erin Waddell
22 Greg Versen
22 Eli Withers
23 Christina Numfor
23 Claudia Obenschain
26 Parker Webb
27 Kim Brubaker
27 Eddie Mazingo
27 Sarah Webb
29 Marie Graham
29 Nancy Russell
30 Sarah Kopcinski
31 Scott Simmons

HARRISONBURG BAPTIST CHURCH

501 South Main Street
Harrisonburg, VA 22801

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A publication of

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STAFF

Rev. Dr. Matthew Winters, Senior Pastor

Rev. Eli Withers, Associate Pastor

Rev. Katelyn Belcher, Youth Pastor

Todd Martin, Director of Music & Worship

Susan Kiser, Financial Ministry Assistant

Kim Brubaker, Administrative Ministry Assistant

NEXT NEWSLETTER DEADLINE

MAR 20, 2026

Please submit articles to

Kim Brubaker at kim@hbcalive.org.

