



# 2023

annual report

## Dear Black Mountain Presbyterian Church Family

What a year it has been! Our elders set a goal this time last year that “we would not only survive this renovation but we would thrive through it.” And yes we have! Our spirits and our hearts have grown tremendously as God has called us to bring light and love to this congregation and the Swannanoa Valley that we so deeply cherish.

This annual report is designed to tell the story of where we’ve grown as a church over the past year and give a glimpse of where God is calling us next. What I hope is evident to you is that God’s grace, love and providence has been with us as we moved forward in ministry through a year of regrowth, renovation, and necessary flexibility.

Worship in 2023 was blessed with a renewed spirit and vitality! As renovations began in our sanctuary mid September, the congregation gathered in our beautifully restored Fellowship Hall, embracing the opportunity to worship in person as a community of faith. Our relational ministries have grown through programming and fellowship. Our RAD ministry to children is bursting at the seams and midweek spaghetti dinners are developing into a full afternoon and evening of faith formation reimagined!

We are grateful for all the ways you are a part of what Christ is doing through our church, and we hope and pray that you will see 2024 as an opportunity to get swept up in the good things that God will do through us. Thank you, Black Mountain Presbyterian Church!



*BMPC pastors with our mission partner,  
John McCall*

In faith, hope, and love –  
Mary Katherine, David, and Bob



# Congregational Life

The mission statement for our Ministry Team is: “Provide opportunities within the life of the church for members to connect and form relationships through fellowship, recreation, retreats, church events and small group activities.” In 2023, in alignment with our mission statement, we have sponsored the following events:

- January – Chili Cookoff
- February-May – Meet and Eat
- April – Geocaching led by Stephen Smith
- May – Fellowship at the Grange
- May – Tourist Baseball Game
- July – Ice Cream Social
- September – Fall Picnic with Bluegrass and BBQ
- September-December – Meet and Eat
- October – Sunday Night Live with a potluck and a presentation by Tommy Wilkinson
- November – Fall Harvest Potluck
- December – Soup and Caroling

Our committee has grown to 14 members, and everyone steps up to make our events run smoothly. We are fortunate to have Brittany Williams and David Carter Florence as our staff liaisons. They bring enthusiasm and creativity to our team.

One of our newest members, Bonnie Shoemaker, has agreed to chair a subcommittee to launch our JOY group in January. The committee is brainstorming other events to add in 2024 while continuing to sponsor the successful programs held in 2023.



TEAM: Gay Ferguson (chair), Kristy Beaver, David Carter Florence (staff), Andrea DeWitt, Nancy Ellington, Karen Hagwood, Katherine Holman, Janet Martin, Bonnie Shoemaker, Margie Stansell, Ann White, Brittany Williams (staff)



# Outreach and Local Mission

January brought our annual support for our local Martin Luther King Jr. prayer event/scholarship fundraiser, along with volunteer work by Jessi Stitt at the Annunciation House, which assists refugees and vulnerable immigrants near our southern border in El Paso, Texas.

We also finalized plans for our traditional mission month in which various organizations we support communicate with our members as a part of a worship service. Later in the year, we revisited the idea of mission month with the leadership of Pastor David, and decided that instead of focusing on one month, we should share BMPC outreach with the congregation all year long. We began doing so in late summer with a visit by Dan and Elizabeth Turk, missionaries we support doing God's work in Madagascar.



In February, we received a very insightful briefing on Men In The Mirror by former BMPC pastor Kevin Fredericks. This ministry, operating currently in Malawi and Guatemala, aims to eliminate violence against women through the scriptural education of male family members. We have provided support for this cause and have received very positive updates from Kevin. Also during this time frame, Jane Belsches showed amazing imagination and creativity in helping to establish our coffee subscription service which directly benefits a farmer in the circle of our Guatemala Partnership.

During the spring, we elected to change the way we operate the yearly mission finance budget and become more proactive in planning what we would like to see for the upcoming year. This new approach was very favorably received by BMPC leadership and led to our 2024 planning session in late summer. Throughout the spring, we were also planning to host a Rise Against Hunger food packaging event tentatively scheduled for January this year. Ultimately, the decision was made to postpone this event for a time when the renovation dust has settled and we have space to package several thousand meals over the course of a few hours. Be on the lookout for this event. You don't want to miss it!

As we moved into summer, our annual Hand In Hand school supply drive was organized. Our Hand In Hand contacts are BMPC members Kyle and Jennifer Holt. We greatly appreciate their help in making this a meaningful project each year. During this time frame, BMPC was renewed by the PCUSA as a Hunger Action Congregation thanks to the work done by so many of our church members. Special thanks go out to Margo Smith, who has done the work for our original certification along with the renewal. We hope this raises awareness in BMPC so that we may fight food insecurity even harder in the future!

In the fall we began planning for our annual Alternative Gifting Campaign which experienced another record breaking year with over \$22,000 raised for ministries we support. A special shout out goes to Austin Brown for coordinating and leading a very successful Walk For Your Neighbor rally at our church.

We had many walkers and donors contributing to this October event, which is Swannanoa Valley Christian Ministry's biggest fundraiser of the year. December was a month busy with the Alternative Gifting Campaign bringing our year to a close.

If you are looking for opportunities to serve without becoming a member of the mission team, opportunities are available! We are seeking volunteers to coordinate our Rise Against Hunger event, assist with our Hope For Tomorrow House apartment activities, and act as our local coordinator with Habitat For Humanity. These are great chances for families with children and retirees alike to make a difference in the lives of others! Just contact Margaret Fouse or any mission team member.

Finances: 2023 budget of approximately \$76,000 and special offerings throughout the end of the year came to \$46,201.11 which totaled a whopping \$121,818.11 that was sent outside of our church.

- Denominational support 64%
- Local ministries 22%
- Global ministries 14%
- Various unplanned needs for assistance come from local and global discretionary budgets

Ongoing activities & organizations supported include: Guatemala partnership, SVCM, Black Mountain Counseling Center, Bounty & Soul, Pisgah Legal, Hope for Tomorrow House, Men In The Mirror International, Hand in Hand (school supplies), Open Table, MLK Scholarship Support, Walk for Your Neighbor, This Child Here (Ukraine), Alternative Gifting, and more.

TEAM: Tommy Wilkinson (chair), Jane Belches, David Carter Florence (staff), Anne Drummond, Barbara Gaw, Susan Jumper, Kay Layman, Dave McClintock, Pam McMurray, Betsy Murphy, Margo Smith, Grace Stitt, Jessi Stitt

## Personnel

The BMPC staff has continued to grow the ministries of the church to the congregation and beyond with their energy, dedication, and creativity. For the first time in a several years, our church is fully staffed. Each member of the staff has a personnel liaison. This liaison is responsible to stay in communication, listen, and work with their staff members to further the ministry of the church. We are pleased with the development and direction of our dedicated team.

TEAM: Bill Gilliland (chair), Andy Banzoff, Ellen Begley, Diane Ginther, Mary Katherine Robinson (staff)





# The Weekday School

The Black Mountain Presbyterian Church Weekday School ministers to the young families of our community by combining Christian faith with the highest standards in early childhood education. Through our ministry each child is challenged to reach his or her highest potential as a respected and loved child of God.

The Weekday School provides a quality preschool program for one to five-year-olds from September through May. The 2023 school year has been a year full of joy and challenges. The Weekday School is continuing to work through issues of filling our Pre-K classroom, therefore we are depending on our reserve funds to make up any shortfall. We are in hopes that 2024 will see our numbers back up to what they have traditionally been. During this school year, we served 62 children and 57 families. Ten of those children belong to members of this congregation and six children and their families are currently regular visitors or participants in RAD.

The Weekday School offers a unique and special ministry to both young children and their parents within our community. Scholarship assistance is available to children whose families have an acute need. Scholarship assistance is provided through generous donations from both individuals and memorial gifts. During 2023, we gave out a total of \$12,500 in scholarship assistance.

While the Weekday School is Christian oriented, we welcome children from any congregation and from the community at large. We believe that this approach gives us the opportunity to enhance not only our own program of Christian education, but that of other churches in the Swannanoa Valley, and to reach non-churched children and their families. All the Weekday School staff have a strong Christian faith. It is through their love and care that we seek to teach the children how the love of Jesus affects their own lives and relationships.

As a mission of Black Mountain Presbyterian Church, the Weekday School program is funded largely through school tuition and special endowments, and partly through the church budget. The financial relationship between the church and the Weekday School was outlined by the church Session in 1987 and was reaffirmed by a task force in 2005. While the Weekday School is incorporated into the church budget, its day-to-day operating expenses



are not a part of that budget. The church's general budget funds the director's salary, janitorial support, building space, utilities and maintenance of the facilities. The Weekday School registration, tuition fees, and our Endowment Funds pay for teacher salaries, on-going teacher training, teaching materials, classroom furniture, equipment, classroom supplies, construction and maintenance of the playground equipment and required surfacing materials. All these supplies and equipment are shared by the Weekday School and all other children's programs of the church.

TEAM: Linda Stroupe (Chair), Linda Caldwell, Jeannie Maidment, Robin Stiles, Mistie Cogbill, Ken Farmer, Katie Neligan, Rebecca Papendorf, Kristin Patton, Michael Conner, Sadie Ginn, Kristi Wong-Ward, Venessa Hall, Erin Dean (Weekday School Team is made up of both church members and parents)



## Property

This year our chief accomplishment was coordinating the move of all items from the fellowship hall, parlor, library, kitchen, pantries, CR-1, narthex, sacristy, and sanctuary into storage in the church house basement and a portable POD in preparation of renovation of these areas. Then when Phase 1 of our renovation was complete, we coordinated the move of everything back to its newly painted and cleaned home. This was a logistical challenge that our team and countless congregational volunteers accomplished with amazing speed. No backs were strained, no dishes were broken, and the kitchen appliances that balked at returning to their new home have been replaced.

The other parts of our facilities, grounds, and church bus also received repairs. A more secure electronic key system on outside doors has been installed. Leaking underground refrigerant lines necessitated construction of an I-beam bridge over the back driveway to move HVAC lines above ground into the third-floor furnace room. And volunteers on a fall workday cleaned around the outside of the church house and improved the drainage of its gutters.

In 2024 we will improve the exterior lighting at entrances, plan for steps down to the White Horse parking lot, and begin a maintenance contract to cover all of our 16 HVAC units.

TEAM: Alan Belsches (chair), Dale Culpepper, Frank DiPalma, John Koon, Wayne Mullis, James Robinson-Long, Bill Topham, Hannah Webber, Sam Webber (staff), Tommy Wilkinson

# Worship, Music, and Liturgical Arts

Visitors of all kinds often gave a similar comment after worshipping with our congregation and worship team. The statements were usually along the lines of “This church is special. Not many churches have what Black Mountain Presbyterian church has!” Let us give thanks for the vibrancy of our work in this community, the strength of our fellowship, and the sustenance given to our weekly worshippers of all ages and backgrounds.

The teamwork that nurtures our fruitful church life is important, and enriching to the participants. God has blessed us with a palpable sense of spirit, and a clear, hopeful vision for this unique community of faith here in Black Mountain. Let us give thanks for God’s blessings. We feel this fruitful spirit in our worship services each week.

2023 worship was enhanced by:

- Numerous visual art installations and projects: seasonal and sacramental banners and paraments, sculptures, botanical arrangements. The dedication and skill of our visual artists is a true blessing
- Dynamic, insightful and earnest preaching, prayer, and liturgy by our clergy
- Renovation of two worship spaces
- Original liturgy written and presented by members of our church
- 47 new members, including 15 children and youth
- General growth of the choir including up to 30 singers (during advent) Reconvening of our handbell choir with 12 members plus substitutes
- Vibrant music from the Prophets of Praise ensemble in FirstLight
- Permanent institution of a third weekly service geared toward families with young children

Special services including Youth Sunday, Soulstice, the Community MLK Prayer Service, partner services on Ash Wednesday and Maundy Thursday with Montreat Presbyterian, World Communion Sunday, and summer services.

The congregation was flexible and gracious this year as we held both FirstLight and 11:00 worship first in the sanctuary from May-August and then in the fellowship hall from August-January. Many weeks were tight, both in occupancy and logistics, as quick change-overs happened in the midst of everything else the fellowship is used for during the week. Thanks to the staff for all the attentiveness and good cheer. By the end of the year, many comments were made about members having grown to really enjoy worshipping in the more intimate space of the fellowship hall.

10:00 Family Worship, coordinated by Brittany and David has been a vibrant addition to our weekly worship. Children are given a comprehensive introduction to our sacrament and singing, observing communion and having discussions about what it means to worship and its fundamental importance to us as followers of Christ.







As we embark upon this new year, the worship committee is energized to have an enthusiastic and faithful congregation and competent, soulful staff. We are indeed a unique and blessed community of faith. May our praise be exuberant and humble as we strive first to love our neighbors as ourselves and serve the least of these with compassion and care, returning Glory to God!

**TEAM:** Ellen Phillips-Smith (chair), Annamarie Arens, Harriette Fulton, Barbara Gaw, Ginny Lindsey, Pam McMurray, Aaron Price (staff), Patti Pyle, Mary Katherine Robinson (staff), Gayle Shelton, Anne Straughan, Robert Sway, Beverly Thompson, Ann Wiig, Ann Wilde



# Faith Formation

## Preschool Ministry

- We continue to offer the nursery for our youngest children and have committed, paid staff in the nurseries each Sunday. Extended Session is also available during 11:00 worship for those children ages 3-5 and volunteers continue to staff this program. Children are able to participate in worship during Faith Sharing and it is always a joy to see and hear them in FirstLight and 11:00 worship!
- The Weekday School, under the direction of Alice Patton, continues to thrive and serves children one year old until they are ready for kindergarten. During the school day the children participate in monthly Pastor story and music time with David Carter Florence, Brittany Williams, and Aaron Price. Brittany keeps the Weekday School parents apprised of the happenings at the church through regular communication. The Weekday School continues to be a crucial area of outreach and community building to our young families.



## Preschool, Elementary, and Family Faith Formation Ministries

Our Preschool and elementary programs are growing and thriving under the direction of Brittany and David.

- The RAD (Recreation, Arts, and Drama) program met weekly with an average of 35 children for fall and spring session from 3:30 to 5:30. Weekly intergenerational spaghetti dinners were offered with children, youth, families and choir members partaking. RAD was served by a committed group of volunteers, driving the bus for school pick-ups, leading arts, games, drama, music and worship programs, and cooking the meal for over 100 participants.
- Family Worship began meeting weekly at 10:00 a.m. each Sunday with an average of 50-60 people and while they are targeted toward younger children and their parents, they tend to be intergenerational.
- Family nights at area restaurants such as The Grange and Phil's Barbecue were held, in addition to activities such as attending Tourist games, picnics, Trunk or Treat, Advent Workshop, and more.
- Vacation Bible School (VBS) was held for a week this summer with the theme of "Let your Light Shine" and 30-35 children attended each night.
- Route 45, a monthly pre-youth group program for 4th and 5th graders, began this fall with an average attendance of 8-10 children.
- Brittany keeps families informed of the many opportunities available to children through weekly family email and updates on Facebook. David continues to do pastoral follow-ups with children and families.
- Children participated in and assisted in leading worship after RAD in the spring and fall.





## Youth Grades 6-12

Our youth group continues to grow and be a secure and enriching program under the direction of Katie Duvall and David as well as our amazing youth leaders.

- Middle school and high school youth have Fellowship Sundays from 2-4 p.m. or longer, if needed, for certain events. They have dinner at 5:30 at our intergenerational spaghetti dinners and small group time on Wednesday evenings from 6:30-7:30.
- Katie sends out weekly texts and emails, and stays in close communication with our youth.
- Monthly events with St. James Episcopal Church Youth.
- Youth attended Massanetta Middle School Youth Conference.
- Four to five Presbytery Youth Council events are attended by our group and we support the PYC leadership with two adult leaders.

## College Students

College students continue to receive care packages twice a year. Presbyterian Women sent care packages in the fall to college students. The college database was updated to reflect addresses of college aged young adults. Initiatives to reach out to college students and young adults in their twenties and thirties are being considered for the future.



## Adult Education

- Regular opportunities for adult education on Sunday mornings including special speakers and ongoing adult education classes.
- Wednesday night offerings
- Additional events are sponsored often in partnership with the Ministerial Association and St. James Episcopal Church both on and off site – yoga, tai chi, parenting classes, workshops and conferences.
- The Earth Care Reading Group and other book studies are offered seasonally during Advent and Lent.
- An emphasis on retreats included a “Dad’s retreat” that grew into a monthly small group gathering. Retreat ministry is an area Faith Formation continues to want to nurture. A Moms’ Retreat, a second Dads’ Retreat, and a Wise Men’s Retreat are being planned for the new year.

## Library

The church library accomplished a major purge and gleaning, received over 100 donated volumes, and continues to offer high quality resources for our members, including hard-to-find commentaries and classic Christian sources. The Earth Care satellite library and additional theological books are in the church house. Children’s books and teaching resources are all housed on the education wing as our collection continues to grow.

TEAM: Alison Banzhoff (chair), Susie Burns, David Carter Florence (staff), Weston Hall, Ken Kelly, Emily Munn, Alice Patton (staff), Brittany Williams (staff)



# Finance and Generosity

For the “quiet” ministry team, it’s been a busy year.

Finance has the role of allocating resources to the front-line ministries and acting as a steward for the money entrusted to BMPC by the congregation. We work behind the scenes to manage the details needed to ensure smooth operations through two primary accounts: operating and capital campaign.

The operating account handles the church’s routine, recurring costs. This is where your regular annual pledge goes; it is used to pay annual budget expenses, including missions, utilities, staff salaries, committee expenses, building upkeep and repair, the costs for three worship services each Sunday and many other things. There’s good news here: BMPC ended the year with a \$13,000 surplus! That money will go into a contingency account in the 2024 budget to cover unexpected expenses that pop up during the year.

Our 2024 operating budget will be slightly more than \$1 million, an increase of about 3 percent from 2023. Practically all the increased spending will go to personnel expenses. That growth, which defies the laws of 21st century church physics, is possible because of a very successful generosity campaign.

The 2023 generosity theme focused on “Generosity as a Response to God’s Grace,” emphasizing individual and community gratitude rather than duty or obligation as a motivation to support our annual giving. We urged all ages to get involved in the campaign and designed numerous programs and events, even for the youngest participants in our faith community. Our worship leadership did a fantastic job of communicating the theological message of our 2023 theme.

The response from our ever-faithful congregation was a great affirmation that together we are seeking to keep our hearts and our resources available for the continuing and new ministries to which God has called our church. The campaign was a great success, with our total pledges slightly exceeding the growing budget requirements of our vibrant and faithfully ambitious congregation with its gifted leadership.

Our total 2024 annual pledges of \$850,000 represent an increase of nearly eight percent above 2023. We had a large number of pledge increases, 19 more pledging units than last year, and 31 new pledges.

Late in the year, the Session voted to combine the Finance and Generosity teams. That merger was welcomed by both teams, and the transition has been seamless.

Now, about our capital campaign: We all have already benefited from the results of the campaign, with the renovation of the church house, fellowship hall and meeting rooms, and now the beautiful sanctuary. The first two rounds of the capital campaign brought in just above \$2 million in pledges, and we’ve received about \$1.8 million of that money already. That, however, will not be enough to cover the costs of the transformation of our church facilities. Because of rising construction costs, problems discovered during the renovation and some adjustments to our original plans, we will likely have spent around \$2.5 million when all the bills are in. We are current with all payments, but we have a balance of \$644,000 on the credit line we opened to manage the construction project. Our shortfall will shrink as the rest of the money from the original capital campaign pledges comes in, but we will need more, likely at least \$500,000 in additional funds, to pay for the entire project.

If you’ve already paid your capital campaign pledge, we thank you. But what happens now?

If you’ve already made a capital campaign pledge and were planning to pay it off sometime this year,

we ask that you consider doing it very soon. And please consider an additional capital pledge when that request comes – and it will come soon. All of this will help us reduce the size of the debt the church carries forward, or perhaps eliminate it entirely. We would all feel better about that.

Thank you for being faithful during these turbulent times; your donations have enabled us to respond to real needs. God has profoundly blessed Black Mountain Presbyterian Church – which means we all have work to do!

TEAM: Steve Riley and Mike Begley (co-chairs), Austin Brown, Suzane Churchman (staff), Steve Coward, Kitty Fouche, Dave Johnson, Mary Katherine Robinson (staff), Sam Webber (staff)

## Endowment

For 26 years our church has been the beneficiary of so many who shared a HOPE for the future and that HOPE is reflected in our Endowment Fund. Established in 1997 by the Session of Black Mountain Presbyterian Church the Fund provides our church members and friends an opportunity to extend their stewardship beyond their lifetime. The Endowment Fund provides support for projects beyond the scope of the annual budget. In 2023 Your Endowment Fund awarded eight grants totalling \$27,104.95:

- \$2079.23 for HVAC repairs Education Wing
- \$8,000 for a portion of the costs to replace old, unsafe blinds in the Weekday School
- \$2,763.39 for Hospitality to purchase and install a commercial coffeemaker
- Christian Education Fund (Faith Formation)
- \$3,238.32 balance of the costs of the blind replacement
- \$2,283 for drainage repairs to playground
- Music & Worship Fund \$2,365 to repair piano in sanctuary
- McCoy & Walker Funds \$8475.01 for Weekday School

These grants supported property improvements outside of the capital campaign, supported our children, and enriched our worship.

The Endowment received a generous bequest of \$49,621.35 from Nancy Sprinkle's estate. This gift was specified for an endowment to support the work of the Weekday School. This new fund will begin awarding grants in 2025. The Board of the Endowment and Session approved renaming our Property Fund to the William "Bill" Hollins Property Fund. Bill loved his church and his community and gave generously of his time, talent and treasure during his life. He left much of his worldly treasures to support his church and community.

Psalm 145:4 calls all of us to praise the Lord's work to the next generation. Bill Hollins and Nancy Sprinkle both accepted this challenge and shared the HOPE of our church now and into the future. Let us all accept this challenge and this HOPE in 2024 and beyond!

TEAM: Gayle Petty-Johnson (chair), Libba Fairleigh, Rosie Johnson, Jim McDonnell, Tanner Pickett, Liz Riley, Mary Katherine Robinson (staff), John Snell

# Earth Care

The Earth Care Team expanded its activities in several ways during 2023, touching on education, outreach, worship, and stewardship of God’s creation.

Late in 2022, our book group read *Saving Us* by Katherine Hayhoe, a Christian climate scientist. In it she advocates reaching out to others about our concerns surrounding climate change, and much of her focus is on building bridges with folks with whom such conversations are difficult. Thinking this might be a good springboard for a Lenten focus, we got support from church leaders and built a study program that covered five weeks and involved over 60 attendees. We got very positive feedback and have been encouraged to continue seeking new ways to involve the church as a whole in our work.

We extended our outreach in other ways. Our members attended City Council meetings to advocate for policies that would limit single-use plastics and for budget planning that included expanding the town’s use of renewable energy. We participated in activities alongside the PEC (Presbyterians for Earth Care), the Creation Care Alliance (a local grassroots organization), the Sierra Club, Creation Justice Ministries, Bread for the World, and the EBCI (Easter Band of Cherokee Indians). Our members gathered signatures on petitions and postcards advocating for reducing plastics, increasing protection for our local National Forests, and maintaining the federal Food for Peace program for international food aid. Working with our Baptist neighbors to increase food security in our own community, our Ecumenical garden project provided fresh vegetables to Bounty and Soul and the Swannanoa Valley Christian Ministry.

Each month we contribute material for the “Window” newsletter with a focus on educating, informing, and inspiring our congregation. We recently began including a monthly summary of the energy gained and funds saved through our solar panels. Our consistent message about care for creation has led the folks directing our church’s renovation to value energy efficiency as we upgrade the spaces in which we work and worship. As the renovation draws to a close we intend to focus on the land surrounding our buildings. With landscaping that emphasizes native plants to benefit wildlife and a reduced need for mowing and other mechanized maintenance, we hope to build an outside presence that mirrors our internal commitment to care for creation.

**TEAM:** Karen Austin (chair), David Carter Florence (staff), Alan & Jane Belsches, Larry Berglund, Scottie and Tom Cannon, Pat Crittenden, Carolyn Crowder, Margaret Fouse, Jeannie and Carl Franklin, Katherine Holman, Anita Kurz, Jim and Kay Layman, Gayle and Peter Mudge, John Murphy, Martha Jane Petersen, Robin and Tom Stiles





# Hospitality and Welcome

2023 was a wonderful year of welcoming folks to Black Mountain Presbyterian Church. The Hospitality and Welcome Team hosted four Discovery Class luncheons throughout the year for potential new members, where they have an opportunity to learn more about the life and work of our church. We had 47 new members and 15 children (and youth) join our church family this year!

In May, we hosted the New Member Cookout at the church house. Elders, deacons, and staff joined in the celebration of connecting our new members into the fabric of our church.

The Summer Kick-Off Party in June was a huge success. A bouncy house, yard games, and DJ Munn spinning the best dance tunes kept everyone entertained. We enjoyed cotton candy, popcorn, and hot dogs while welcoming families from the church, Weekday School, and from our greater Swannanoa Valley community. It was a joyous occasion and a fun way to kick off summer and connect with both children and adults.

We hosted “Popsicles in the Park” twice this summer, once at Robert Lake Park in Montreat and once in the Town Square. This was a great way to show our love to the community by passing out treats and making people smile.

Trunk or Treat was our big fall event, welcoming families from Black Mountain and beyond. Visitors appreciated the activities we offered like face painting, a photo booth, and art stations, giving a chance to linger and build community. Nineteen cars were decked out in Halloween fun and we passed out candy to little princesses, superheroes, and goblins. We also provided some healthier snacks like mandarin oranges with jack-o-lantern faces, popcorn, pretzels, and lemonade, which were much appreciated by the parents!



Holly Jolly was the final event of the year. Smiling volunteers were decked out in red and green in front of the White Horse passing out hot cider, hot chocolate, and cookies. People could also get their picture taken in our Holly Jolly Photo Booth with fun Christmas-themed props. It was a lively evening!

We also began an internal audit to look at the various aspects of our church to try and get an honest account of how welcoming we are. Each month this fall, we analyzed a different topic such as the website, communion, coffee station, or our physical spaces to see how we can make changes, both big and small, to help our church feel more inviting, accessible, and warm. We look forward to continuing that work in 2024 and seeking more feedback from our community to truly create a church family where the “welcome never ends.”

While the members of Hospitality and Welcome made a special effort to welcome folks on Sunday mornings and at church events, we are ALL part of this church family. It takes each of us to “roll out the red carpet” of welcome to visitors. We encourage you all to smile, introduce yourself to others, and help folks get connected to this amazing congregation in 2024!

**TEAM:** Mary Carroll Dodd (chair), Leslie Applewhite, Barbara Brinson, Julie Culpepper, Cherie Lunsford, Joyce Massey, Julie Moore, Deb Mullis, Melisa Pressley, Mary Katherine Robinson (staff), Janine Spiller, Brittany Williams (staff), Cheryl Wilson

# Presbyterian Women

We held our Spring Gathering/Birthday Offering event this year at Cragmont Assembly where we enjoyed a beautiful meal and experienced warm fellowship. We also announced one of the two Honorary Life Membership recipients – Ginny Soll. Mary Katherine Robinson gave us an inspiring talk and then helped to install our new officers.

The Fall Gathering/Thank Offering event was held in the fellowship hall on a Sunday afternoon. We announced our second Honorary Life Membership recipient – Cheryl Wilson – and wrote supportive letters to our 30 college students, enclosing \$10 each for a coffee break. For our program, several members gave us inspiring and educational views of seven of the 11 recipients of national PW's annual Thank Offering. To actually see and hear details of where our money is going and how many people are being helped around the world was wonderful.

We have 102 women participating in Presbyterian Women at BMPC. There are seven circles that meet monthly for fellowship and Bible study. In the spring of 2023, our study book was *Celebrating Sabbath: God's Gift of Rest and Delight*. For Fall 2023, our study book is *Sacred Encounters: The Power and Presence of Jesus Christ in Luke-Acts*. Karen Austin prepares the teachers each month and, additionally, records a video lesson that is posted on the church's website and available to members who are unable to attend their regular meetings. Recently, we learned that other churches are watching her video lessons and their circles are benefitting from Karen's work and insights.

Each circle has a mission project, ranging from collecting food for BMPC's Blessing Box to working with Bounty and Soul to collecting clothes for Swannanoa Valley Christian Ministry. One circle (Lydia) meets an additional evening each month for their focus on mission. All circles participate in the Least Coin prayer ministry.

To offer more options this year, we added a new evening group, Joy Circle. Joy, which meets on the first Wednesday of each month, joins Lydia, which meets on the second Tuesday. The remaining four circles gather at various times during the day, and one of them meets at Givens Highland Farms.

*Postmark: PW* is a publication that was created by Patti Pyle during Covid to help keep PW members connected while in isolation, has been revitalized under the leadership of new member (Joy Circle), Melisa Pressley! This publication is mailed three times each year (by email or US mail) to all women in our church and includes information about and pictures of our activities, gatherings, and mission work.

A circle contacts our missionaries (usually by email) each month to share our church's news and inquire about their mission work. Often we get replies to our letters and share these at our circle meetings.

**COORDINATING TEAM:** Barbara Brinson (moderator), Ann Wilde (co-moderator), Karen Austin, Jane Belsches, Andrea DeWitt, Nancy Ellington, Kitty Fouche, Margaret Fouse, Diane Ginther, Katherine Holman, Patty Keith, Deb Mullis, Patti Pyle, Lew Rudisill, Kay Salmon, Connie Schimpf, Gayle Shelton, Ginny Soll, Karen Smith, Linda Stroupe, Becky Jo Sumner, Ann Wiig, Cheryl Wilson



# Deacons

What is a deacon and what do they do at BMPC? The office of deacon was established early in the New Testament church to make sure food was distributed to widows and others in need (see Acts 6:1-6). In our denomination the ministry of deacon is described as “one of compassion, witness, and service, sharing in the redeeming love of Jesus Christ for the poor, the hungry, the sick, the lost, the friendless, the oppressed, those burdened by unjust policies or structures, or anyone in distress.” The congregation is divided up into 24 groups or clusters. Deacons are responsible for maintaining contact with their cluster and to provide an extra layer of support, if needed, during times of crisis. They are expected to assist with the distribution of Communion and participate regularly in the ministry and mission of the church.

The staff of BMPC resource the deacons closely. At staff meetings each week we review the joys and concerns of the congregation. We determine which updates need to be made on the whiteboard in the church office and published in the weekly Guide to Worship. I send weekly emails to all deacons so that they might be aware of those joys and concerns as well as news items that need to be emphasized. Deacons meet quarterly and communicate with each other frequently.

What have the BMPC deacons been doing in 2023? Deacons encourage their clusters with cards, emails, and phone calls. Now that extended Communion is offered every Communion Sunday, deacons have begun to assist in this ministry. Deacons use their own personality and strengths to make their deacon ministry uniquely their own! Some Deacons emailed links to inspirational music, poems, and prayers that they have shared with their clusters. Deacons highlight for their clusters the many creative opportunities that BMPC continues to provide in worship, education, and mission.

Who are your deacons? Deacons are elected to a three year-term by the congregation. We give thanks to God for these deacons who completed their terms of service at the end of 2023: Karen Austin, Alex Carver and Joe Carreiro, Margaret Fouse and Craig Cooley, Diane Ginther, Jeannie Maidment, Janine and Russ Spiller, and Margie Stansell. Beginning their terms of service (class of 2026) are Sadie and Andrew Ginn, Junith and John Koon, Cherie Lunsford, Janet and Blake Martin, Joyce Massey, and Sheryl Schlegelmilch. In the class of 2025 are deacons Ann Carr Adkins, Liesl Case, Katherine Holman, Alice McDowell, Susan McElrath, Harriette Fulton and Robert Sway, Jayne and Ronald Vaughan and Debby Vial. In their last year of service (class of 2024) are: AnnaMarie and Bill Arens, Christy Carswell, Julie and Dale Culpepper, Melissa Kadau, Ellen McClintock, Tom and Sam Maynard, and Ann Wiig.

What if you don't know who your deacon is? Email me at [bob@bmpcnc.org](mailto:bob@bmpcnc.org) and I'll let you know! Lists are always being updated with contact info so we welcome your inquiry. I'm proud to work with these dedicated folks and will put you in touch with the appropriate deacon who will follow up with you.

[Bob Tuttle, Parish Associate, Staff to the Diaconate](#)



# Strategic Planning

As we began to enjoy the parts of the building that have been refurbished and look forward to the completion of the sanctuary, the Strategic Planning Committee has continued to examine ways BMPC can best use our improved facilities to provide for our congregation and the community, and how what we say and do can communicate our core values, while living into God's plan.

## We have addressed our 2023 Goals

- Utilize various methods, established and new, to effectively and efficiently deliver information to members about the work of the church including an updated and easily navigated church website. As our church grows, and we are blessed with an intergenerational congregation, we have identified the ongoing issue of effective communication to the many facets of our church family. Thus, SPC has recommended to Session that we create a new ministry team, chaired by a member of session, with the Director of Communications as staff liaison. In addition, because of the overlapping goals of Finance and Generosity, SPC recommended that these two ministry teams be combined.
- Study, evaluate, and discern our commitment to becoming a Matthew 25 church. After much study and discussion, we have joined with the PCUSA as a Matthew 25 congregation dedicated to building congregational vitality, dismantling racism, and eradicating systemic poverty. Working toward these far reaching goals will become a focus in our mission as a whole church, and we are pleased to be supported by the PCUSA with materials, inspiration, and community of other Matthew 25 churches.
- Support the ongoing renovation of the church building, our mission station. As each area of the renovation has opened, we have worked with other committees of the church to create policies and encourage creative use of our facilities. As we bring the building work to a close, we support extending the capital campaign to reconcile unforeseen costs of construction.
- Support our commitment to being a More Light Presbyterian (MLP) congregation. To better express our welcome that never ends, as a More Light Presbyterian congregation we continue to seek ways to open our doors to all, as well as to identify leadership to foster this connection within our congregation.

## Our goals for 2024 include

- As a Matthew 25 congregation, coordinate our mission efforts, encourage member participation, plan for regular and extraordinary mission endeavors.
- In conjunction with SVCM, expand outreach to those in immediate and long term need.
- Adjust our current Vision and Mission statements to engage the breadth of our congregation and of those who look for welcome in a church home, and to lead us meaningfully to live out our core values.
- Communicate our welcome to all by our support of More Light Presbyterians, by study and dedication to the tenets of Matthew 25, and by opening our doors, and our arms, to all.

We look forward to the future of BMPC with joy, enthusiasm, and hope, and invite input from you – members, regular visitors and staff – to enable our alignment with your views on the work of the church.

**TEAM:** Margo Smith (chair), Lisle Garrity, Taylor Morris, Jamie Munn, Mary Katherine Robinson (staff), Russ Spiller

# Capital Campaign

God has called the people of Black Mountain Presbyterian Church to look boldly towards our future and to imagine the inspiring new ministries, enriching fellowship, and uplifting worship that will take place in transformed spaces in our church. Thank you for your generosity, BMPC!

*Mary Katherine*



The Sowing the Seeds Capital Campaign has resulted in improved accessibility, sound structures, and vibrant spaces that offer opportunities to inspire the faith of current members and bring others in our community to know the light of Christ. These spaces are where our church's future begins, and God's work will come to life.

# Annual Proposed Terms of Call for Pastors

Approved by Session on January 22, 2024

Mary Katherine Robinson  
Pastor and Head of Staff

Effective Salary  
 Annual Cash Salary.....\$66,900  
 Housing Allowance .....\$30,000  
 SECA .....\$7,413  
 Board of Pensions  
 Medical .....\$28,101  
 8.5% Pension .....\$8,237  
 Death and Disability.....\$969  
 Temporary Disability .....\$485  
 Professional Development .....\$1,500  
 Reimbursable Expenditures.....\$5,000  
 Vacation (Presbytery minimum)  
 4 weeks, including 4 Sundays  
 Continuing Education  
 2 weeks, including 2 Sundays  
 Total annual cost of ministry ....\$148,605

David Carter Florence  
Associate Pastor for Congregational Faith Formation

Effective Salary  
 Annual Cash Salary.....\$30,500  
 Housing Allowance .....\$34,650  
 SECA .....\$4,984  
 Board of Pensions  
 Medical .....\$18,994  
 8.5% Pension.....\$5,538  
 Death and Disability .....\$652  
 Temporary Disability .....\$326  
 Professional Development .....\$1,500  
 Reimbursable Expenditures.....\$2,500  
 Vacation (Presbytery minimum)  
 4 weeks, including 4 Sundays  
 Continuing Education  
 2 weeks, including 2 Sundays  
 Total annual cost of ministry .....\$99,544

## Staff

Mary Katherine Robinson ..... Pastor/Head of Staff  
 David Carter Florence ..... Associate Pastor for Congregational Faith Formation  
 Bob Tuttle ..... Parish Associate  
 Aaron Price ..... Director of Music and Worship Arts  
 Alice Patton ..... Director of Preschool Ministry  
 Jackie Kerr ..... Director of Communications  
 Brittany Williams ..... Director of Congregational Life and Children’s Ministry  
 Sam Webber ..... Director of Operations  
 Katie Duvall ..... Youth Coordinator  
 Suzane Churchman ..... Bookkeeper  
 Steve Kint ..... Custodian



**BLACK MOUNTAIN**  
Presbyterian Church

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