

The Growing Edge

Research, Adventure and Service!

Last month, I began researching the bcmPEACE apartment building on Derry Street. I began this work in preparation for researching grants. I felt it was important to know about the history of the place. Most of what I have found has been trivial, yet interesting nonetheless. I still don't know exactly when the structure was built, but I've learned it was there in 1895. I found old city directories online and from them, I learned that the downstairs was once two separate retail shops. Over the years the downstairs was home to a tailor's shop, a draftsman, and a store that sold stoves for heating and cooking. Over the years, there was also a railroad ticket office and a barber shop. CF Still and Son was a shoemaker who at one time had a shop in the building.

The basement still has secrets to reveal as well. I found the remains of an elevator used to move goods to and from the basement. While the car itself is gone; the hoist motor is still there. There are also the remains of a filled-in cistern that would have provided water to the building. One room has a concrete pier. Whatever it housed is long gone. I originally thought it might have been a motor generator providing electricity back in the building's early days. However, on closer inspection, I think it was a refrigeration motor and there was a walk-in freezer downstairs.

In the next few years, we plan improvements to the building. Its bones are quite good. Some of you probably don't know that I have some hands-on experience in historic preservation. I spent many years doing research and improvements at a historic theater and vaudeville house back in Oklahoma. I got to stand on the same stage upon which the famous magician Harry Houdini once performed.

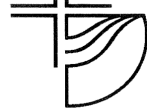
In other church related news, I accepted the job of scraping and painting the handrails outside the church. Many years of paint have been removed and, in short order, they will look new again. The lamp post is next on my agenda.

Thanks to Matt Hunn, the broken light fixtures inside the church are lit again and more are being upgraded to LED. This will save us money in lighting bills and brighten up our space. The Community Classroom is going well. We have on average of seven kids. All are well behaved and eager to learn. We held a Halloween party for them in the last week of October.

Two of us from the Ubuntu house went to a give-away at the Carlisle Presbytery office in Camp Hill that was closing operations. We picked up some nice artwork and a chair for the house. We also obtained some office supplies for the church. The past month was indeed filled with research, adventure and service! *Daniel Wright,*

BVS Volunteer

HARRISBURG FIRST



November

2020

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SUNDAY WORSHIP SCHEDULE

VIRTUAL SUNDAY BIBLE STUDY

10 AM ; VIRTUAL WORSHIP 11:15 AM

OUTSIDE ONSITE WORSHIP 11 AM

VIRTUAL BIBLE STUDY 3 PM



Of course, November is the month designated to celebrate the national holiday of Thanksgiving. Nevertheless, in the Believer's Tradition, we are called to give thanks in everything and at all times. Throughout history, God has given His people many reasons to give thanks, and this is especially true in my life and service at Harrisburg First Church of the Brethren. I am prone to say on an ongoing basis that "I am thankful God sent me to minister among such a devoted group of faithful servants who demonstrate Christ's love in word and

deed". I am thankful that day by day, I grow deeper in my faith and commitment because of your faithfulness. In other words, I recognize that indeed I'm "surrounded by a great cloud of witnesses". The witness of faithfulness here is not only in the now, but is also a part of the past, and I believe it will be a part of the future. I'm convinced the best is yet to come. The anticipation of what God will do next in your lives together is a fascinating proposition.

Not only is this a fascinating proposition, it is also an exciting experience to see God's plans unfold. I believe God will continue to bless Harrisburg First with vision, vitality and unity as you continue building together for His glory. When God created human beings, God 'blessed them', and said "be fruitful". The practice of blessing is one that empowers and entrusts. Blessing is also a responsibility. Think about it. Being created 'in the image of God' carries with it the responsibility to behave in a manner pleasing to God. In the call of Abram (later named Abraham), blessing was a central part of the call: "I will make you into a great nation and I will bless you; I will make your name great and you will be a blessing." (Gen. 12:2)

Blessing involves creativity, community, family, friends and fruitfulness. Being a blessed people and being a blessing to others is not an easy life. God's blessings often come in the working of our everyday lives. We are best able to reflect the image of God when we interact with others in compassionate concern. We are inheritors of a tradition, but we are not guardians of a museum. In your work together as Disciples of Christ, you are challenged to ask questions, explore possibilities and seek God for understanding of his desires for the ministry of the church. The blessings come as you hear each other, stay together and experience the bond of unity in Christ Jesus. Explore, wonder, listen, pray, and discern. In faithful response, God will bless your efforts.

You bless each other by being together. You bless others by your acceptance of them and where they are in their faith journey. *You will be blessed* by combining your work and witness for Jesus. The practice of blessing empowers and entrusts. What new things are opening up for HFCOB? What needs to be gratefully retired? Who is being called to lead out? Please pay attention to the blessings here at Harrisburg First Church. May you all act 'in the image of God'. Be a blessing and give a blessing—with thanksgiving—*every day*.

You'll notice the shift from 'we' and "us" to "you and "your" in this article, since my resignation as pastor has been accepted and goes into effect at the end of this year. (see page 9) I won't continue on this journey with you, yet, I'll cherish the memories of our service together, and will always pray for God's blessings upon the people and ministries of this household of faith.

Pastor Belita



bcmPEACE is Giving Thanks and Giving Back

Thank you for Giving us your **Gifts**.

We have volunteers who are gifted in a number of areas including working with children, leadership, engaging the community, construction, and so much more.

the abundance of gifts that our volunteers possess all bcmPEACE to thrive and continue to grow and serve the community. These gifts allow our programs to run and offer a home for our Allison Hill family.



Thank you for Giving your **TIME**.

We have over 20 volunteers volunteering their time each week through our Wellness Hub, our Agape Satyagraha program, and general work within the organization.

Our time recently has been spent getting donations for Kids Keeping Kids Warm, teaming up with other organizations like Power to the Hill, being leaders in Community Classrooms, assisting our neighbors in the community, and creating a path forward within bcmPEACE!



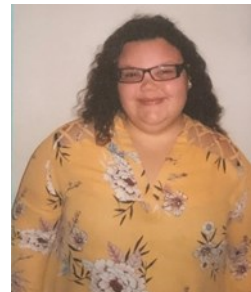
Thank you for Giving us your **FINANCES**.

We could not be more blessed for all the monetary support we have received thanks to our donors. These include donations of books for the Social Justice Library, hats and gloves for Kid's Church, or general funds to make sure our community is being served and our staff are being paid!

Please join bcmPEACE in our final fundraising push for 2020 by making a donation to our Giving Tuesday Campaign!

Thank you for Giving your **ALL!**

bcmPEACE would not be where it is without the help of all those who give their all so that our neighbors can thrive. In this season of Thanksgiving, we give thanks for all of you!



#GIVING TUESDAY

Alyssa M. Parker
Operations Manager

"Be the Peace"

bcmPEACE.org and bcmPEACE on social media

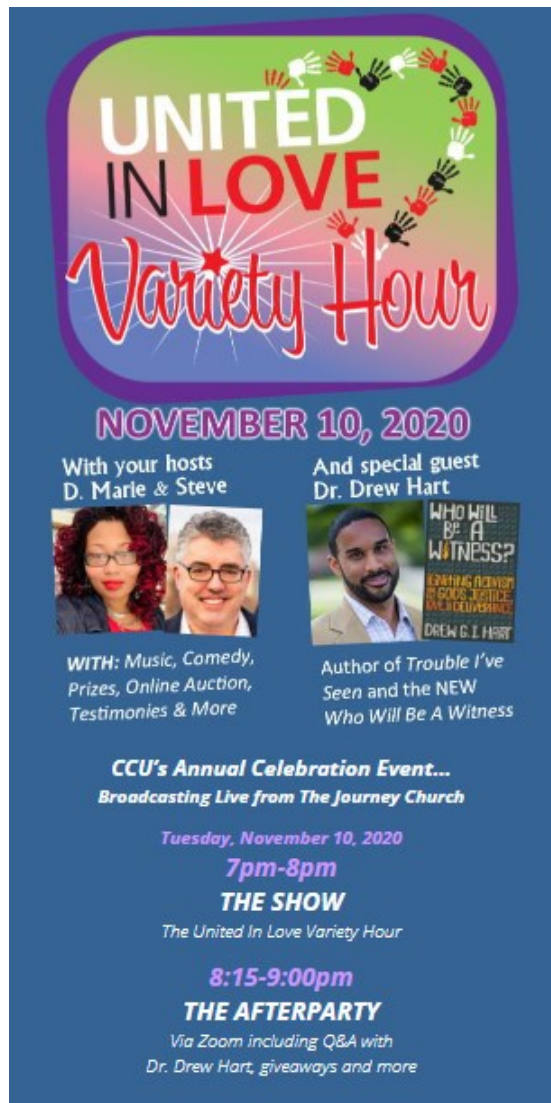




As I See It

Going forward, my goals are to see changes and growth within myself and the church community here in Harrisburg. I look forward to contributing in every way I can to improve myself and the people I meet in our community and the church. I know God called me here to this community for a reason, and as a member of Harrisburg First Church of the Brethren, I want to make a positive change each day helping others and giving back to those who are less fortunate. Another way I believe I can be helpful in the Harrisburg community is by advocating and standing up against the injustice and oppression of other groups, especially during these troubling times. I want to have a voice in advocating for people and striving to see positive change in our communities and elsewhere in the world. I certainly believe God is calling me to do my part, and each day I want to plant those seeds in people's lives and see it bear fruit. During my time here, I've come to love the Harrisburg community and the church because of the many doors God has opened, and the work He's doing in my own life so I can be a helping hand for the community and the church. I know each day as I strive to contribute to this community and the church, with God's help, my contributions will be beneficial.

Eric Joloka.
VBS Volunteer



UNITED IN LOVE Variety Hour

NOVEMBER 10, 2020

With your hosts
D. Marie & Steve

And special guest
Dr. Drew Hart

WITH: Music, Comedy, Prizes, Online Auction, Testimonies & More

Author of Trouble I've Seen and the NEW Who Will Be A Witness

CCU's Annual Celebration Event...
Broadcasting Live from The Journey Church

Tuesday, November 10, 2020
7pm-8pm
THE SHOW
The United In Love Variety Hour

8:15-9:00pm
THE AFTERPARTY
Via Zoom including Q&A with Dr. Drew Hart, giveaways and more

For more information, or to register, go to www.ccu.hbgorg!

Wellness Hub — *(the name for our weekly food distribution)*, is serving over 150 families each week with much needed fresh produce, staple goods, and meats. This ministry is supported by the Central Pennsylvania Food Bank, and volunteer help from The Journey Church, members of Harrisburg First Church Community Members, and others. Many of the former Harrisburg Food Ministries volunteers also continue to serve alongside our own HFCOB & bcmPEACE volunteers. The plan is to offer holiday meats, *aka turkeys, for Christmas if grants are approved. Referrals will be given to area agencies who are providing turkeys for Thanksgiving.* Please contact Alyssa Parker or pastor Josiah Ludwick if you'd like to make a contribution or have information to share about other sources.



MASKS AND SOCIAL DISTANCING REQUIRED AT

SUNDAY
(As Announced)
Youth or Young Adult Group

WEDNESDAY
Agape-Satyagraha
Conflict Resolution
Training: 5-6 pm



Associate Pastor's Page

**Give Thanks**

As I sit down to write this in the wake of our most recent election (we still don't know the result as I'm writing), I'm struck by all we as a congregation have been through this year. Our nation seems staunchly divided along party lines and different people's perspectives on reality or truth are quite different depending on one's point of view. We have been through a global and nationwide pandemic that has made being together all but impossible. And most recently, we have received and accepted the resignation of our dear leader, Senior Pastor Belita Mitchell. Amidst all of this, God has blessed us and our bond remains as strong as ever. This is truly a time to Give Thanks!!!

First, I want give thanks to God for the blessing of our Pastor and to reflect on all He was able to do through her time of service with us. For those who have been here that whole time, just take a moment and think about where we were as a congregation back in 2003 in comparison to where we are now. Our vision statement was just that, a far off minute possibility. As time has passed and intentional effort and prayer have occurred, we now find ourselves ever closer to truly being "a Christ-centered, multicultural community in the inner-city..." I want to give thanks to Pastor Belita for dedicating her time and talent as well as her blood, sweat and tears to this good work and to encourage all of us to reflect on all that has transpired. Though any transition is uncomfortable, This is truly a time to give thanks, both to God and to Pastor Belita!

I also want to give thanks to God for how He has enabled us to remain unified even as our actual presence with one another is limited due to safety concerns. When we first started making plans for virtual worship, many questions arose regarding whether we could remain together and whether people would remain invested in being the unified Body of Christ. These concerns have swiftly been answered as we have actually seen more people involved in Sunday Bible Study and Midweek Bible Study than when the building was open. We have also seen a higher number of attendees at our outdoor services than we have ever seen in years past. Just this last week, we were outside on an under 50 degree, rainy Sunday. Even so, a sizable group bundled up and gathered under our canopies and adjacent to our outdoor heaters to be together. People are checking in on each other, we continue to strengthen our relationships with one another and technology has enabled us to regularly worship together during this trying time.

Lastly, I want to give thanks to God for how He has enabled us to remain unified even as our nation seems fractured. This election season had the makings of dividing just about any sizable group of people, but regardless of our political leanings, we as a body have taken the lead to speak out, to welcome and to value the lives and the voices of the least, the last and the lost in our society. Right here in our midst, God is about knitting together a faith community that welcomes, values and empowers all people from all walks of life, and I have so much gratitude for Him who has begun this mighty work here at First Church

Even as we have much to be thankful for, we have so much more to pursue and to be about. My hope is that we will be about striving toward a reality when the chorus of the song "Give Thanks" doesn't seem like a far off pipe dream. "And now, let the weak say, 'I am strong,' Let the poor say, 'I am rich, because of what the Lord has done for us .'"

Regardless of how this election goes, regardless of who the Lord blesses our faith community with as a next team member, and regardless of how soon we are able to resume gathering inside, we have so much to be thankful for. Let's continue to be the Church. Let's Continue to pursue right relationship with God and one another. Let's continue to pursue the things that God has set before us, that His kingdom come and His will be done right here as it is in Heaven. Let it be so.

Give Thanks!!!

Pastor Josiah



“Reflections on District Conference”

District Conference – an Annual Opportunity

Each year, the Atlantic Northeast District of the Church of the Brethren holds a one or 2 day conference to bring congregations up-to-date on its many activities and celebrate new fellowships or congregations. The conference is very well planned. Designated delegates from every member worshiping group receive a booklet well in advance of the time. It includes copies of all reports, which can be read ahead of time. Reports given at the conference are held to strict time limits. As with many District and denominational events, this year's Conference was a virtual event held on 10/2-10/3. Karen Hackett was this year's moderator. *“BE STILL AND KNOW I AM GOD”* was the conference theme based on Psalm 46:10.

The Program and Arrangements Committee wisely chose Harrisburg First Church Praise Team to provide ethnically diverse music along with a Praise Team from Un Nuevo Renacer. bcmPEACE was the featured service project and donations were collected through their Amazon wish-list. The request for support generated a gracious and generous response!

A highlight of each District Conference is the worship service. This year, the service was held on Friday evening with Eric Landram preaching. Eric is the lead pastor at the Lititz Church of the Brethren. Closed Captioning and Closed Captioning Translation was available for English, Spanish, Arabic and Korean.

Once again, attendees came away from District Conference with a better understanding of the many facets of district work and how important that work is to individual congregations. Together with our own immediate needs here at Harrisburg First, we need to respond to the request to help the ANE District reach its ministry investment plan goal. Aside from the Praise Team's leadership, our congregation was well represented by delegates, Romaine Reeser, Waneta Benson and MCT Chair, Jon Brenneman. Rev Roger Dixon, church moderator, also attended.

Pastor Belita

Denominational News



Advent Devotionals: 2020 Devotional for Advent through Epiphany “Give Light” by James Benedict this annual publication is available from Brethren Press and offered for sale by our Spiritual Life Team. Regular print size, \$6 each; Large print size, \$7 each.

LIVING LETTERS

The Mission and Ministry Board of the Church of the Brethren published their 2020 annual report in a novel format this year and included it with the mailing of the September issue of Messenger Magazine. Based on the Scripture found at 2 Corinthians 3:2-3, *“² You yourselves are our letter, written on our^[a] hearts, to be known and read by all; ³ and you show that you are a letter of Christ, prepared by us, written not with ink but with the Spirit of the living God, not on tablets of stone but on tablets of human hearts.”* the report consists of 12 postcards that highlight denominational core ministries and global ministries. Each postcard carries a scriptural text highlighting God’s love. A select number of these have been sent pre-stamped to some of our homebound members with a note of encouragement to remind them they are not forgotten and to assist them in staying connected with others by sending a postcard. There are a few unstamped booklets available from the church office while supply lasts. Call 717.234.0415 to request your copy.



FROM THE ANNUAL CONFERENCE MODERATOR

Dear Friends,

Good news! A recording of our October Town Hall with Phil Stone, President emeritus of Bridgewater College, is now available.

A link to the recording follows: Link: <https://vimeo.com/471154337>

We are excited to share this resource with you, praying it will continue to bear much fruit for Christ and the Church. Phil has granted us permission to distribute this recording as needed, so feel free to share it with others.

Additionally, we are now producing study guides for each of our Town Halls. You are free to use or distribute the study guide as you desire. **To receive a pdf copy, please notify the HFCOB church office.**

Please note: the study guide can be used in a wide variety of ways, either for personal reflection and/or group study. Please utilize as you deem best for you and your context.

One final thing to note: CEUs are now available for viewing or participating in our Moderator's Town Halls. For more information on how to obtain 0.1 CEU for this event, please view the updated policy and instructions found @brethren.org/archive of webcasts and webinars. We’d love to have feedback, please email Rachel Kelley, who is helping coordinate our study guide project: cobmoderatorstownhall@gmail.com. If you have any questions or concerns, we can be reached by email at cobmoderatorstownhall@gmail.com

Blessings,
Paul Munday
Moderator, Church of the Brethren



Thankful for the Harrisburg First Church Scholarship Fund

I have been blessed to be a part of the Education Scholarship Fund that this church and bcmPEACE have so faithfully and generously been supporting. We have been able to contribute thousands of dollars towards the education of some students from this congregation, and we thank you. The support from the Education Scholarship Fund enables local youth and older students to receive an education without having to go into debt, which is oftentimes a barrier to receiving an education. Thank you for being a community that removes that barrier. Individuals enrolled in a Post-Secondary education program can access these funds by submitting an application to the committee. If you would like to learn more about the Scholarship Fund, please feel free to contact one of the committee members: Pastor Josiah Ludwick, Donna Benson, Sara Brenneman, or John-Michael Cotignola-Pickens.

By John-Michael Cotignola-Pickens

CHRISTMAS IS SOONER THAN YOU THINK !

Plans are underway for Advent and Christmas celebrations. **November 29th** is the first Sunday of Advent. ***The ministry staff will be planning the holiday worship schedule*** and we hope you will be willing to accept the invitation to serve as needed. While we are still in this pandemic, our plans will remain fluid and flexible. We trust God will bless us with a faithful and creative response to these strange and unusual circumstances.

The Special Services Planning Team

P.S. Christmas Blessings instructions are below.

2020 Christmas Blessings

As usual, we will print a page of Christmas Blessings in our December edition of the Growing Edge. You are invited to add your blessing, thus saving on postage and the cost of individual cards. You might consider using these savings to contribute to our Annual Advent Offering or the Living Witness Fund.

If you decide to send Christmas Blessings through the Growing Edge, reaching our entire readership, please contact the church office by mail, email, or phone. Your greeting should be stated in two lines or less:

office@hbgfirstcob.org

717-234-0415

219 Hummel Street, Harrisburg, PA 17104

by December 1st, 2020 at noon.

Special Announcement

October 25, 2020

To the Harrisburg First Church of the Brethren Congregation:

On September 9, 2020, Pastor Belita met with me to share her intent, after much prayerful consideration and consultation with family and trusted advisors, to move on from her position here at Harrisburg First Church of the Brethren effective December 31, 2020. I formally shared this with the Executive Committee and subsequently we as the Ministry Coordinating Team accepted her letter of resignation at our meeting on October 6, 2020.

This news certainly brings about a lot of emotion—anxiety, thankfulness, concern, and a hopefulness for both what God is doing with Pastor Belita and what He continues to do in this congregation (among what I imagine are many others). As we reflect on what this means for the congregation, we as the MCT became keenly aware of all that pastor Belita has meant to this body over the past 18 years. She brought to us the vision that we all share today:

“We are called to be a Christ-centered multi-cultural community in the inner city, Sharing the love, healing, peace and justice of Christ.”

Pastor Belita has been the embodiment of this vision and has given this to us as a gift. At the local level, she has called us to a new level of awareness of the vision of Revelation 7:9 where “a great multitude that no one could number, from every nation, from all tribes and peoples and languages, standing before the throne and before the Lamb.” Look around you today and remember if you can what HFCOB looked like 18 years ago. And more than that, we have begun to have the challenging conversations and doing the difficult work of this vision as demonstrated most recently in our series on the complicity of the Church in racism in America.

Pastor Belita has been a voice for this vision denominationally through her work as Annual Conference Moderator among many other acts of service at both the national and district levels. It was under her guidance that the denomination was able to pass the Separate No More paper of 2007 which adopts this Revelation 7:9 vision as the “denominational vision for the remainder of the 21st century” We are at the center of what God is doing in the world today, and I am personally thankful for her leadership in this time!

But even more than that, Pastor Belita has walked with many of us through the realities of life. It is in these moments that we can be most thankful. It is the call of a pastor to pour out so much, and we are very thankful for all that has been poured into us over these past years. Whether you are new to the congregation or were part of the team that brought Belita on board so long ago, we are changed because of her commitment and sacrifice. It is a beautiful thing to see someone whom God has used so well.

Pastor Belita, we send you with our blessing and love. May the peace of Christ and the experiences we share guide us all from this place; and may we cry out together, Maranatha—“Come Lord Jesus”! Thank you our dear Sister and may God bless you until we meet again!

In Christ’s Love,

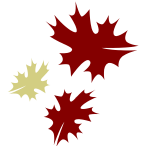
Jonathan Brenneman MCT Chair,

Harrisburg First Church of the Brethren



7—November Chuck Fuge
8—November Leighton Stansbury
10—November Alyssa Parker, Kori Maclin
14—November Wayne Eberly
19—November Ken Zook
23—November Alex Knight
26—November Joy Reardon

30—November Doris Ziegler



Make sure you send a card or give these people a beautiful smile on their special day!

Announcements



The Harrisburg Chapter of Heeding God's Call to End Gun Violence is excited to partner with CeaseFirePA, the state's largest gun violence prevention organization, on a workshop entitled, 'Gun Violence Prevention 101'. The workshop will provide a summary of the important gun violence prevention policies in Pennsylvania. This workshop will take place on **Thursday, November 12, 2020 at 7:00 pm by Zoom**. John-Michael Cotignola- Pickens will lead the workshop. Hope you can join us. The Zoom link is below.

Zoom link:

Topic: Hbg Heeding God's Call Leadership Institute

Time: Nov 12, 2020 7:00 PM Eastern Time (US and Canada)

Join Zoom Meeting:

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/87929968467?pwd=M1g3SC9UNlFLNVFPWUx2WWJMYjBFZzo9>

Meeting ID: 879 2996 8467

Passcode: 220496

One tap mobile



+13017158592,,87929968467#,,,,,0#,,220496# US (Germantown)

+13126266799,,87929968467#,,,,,0#,,220496# US (Chicago)

Dial by your location

+1 301 715 8592 US (Germantown)

+1 312 626 6799 US (Chicago)

+1 646 558 8656 US (New York)



The deadline for the **December** Growing Edge will be **November 15**. Please make arrangements to turn in your submissions *early* to the church office. Late submissions will be automatically deferred to the next issue.

Office Closings:

November 26, 2020	December 25, 2020
November 27, 2020	December 31, 2020
December 24, 2020	January 1, 2021

**SAVE THE DATE !**

Camp Swatara
ADVENT DAY RETREAT
December 5th 9 am-3pm

Held in the West retreat Center,

This spiritual retreat will include time for group and personal reflection as we move into this season of holy waiting. Optional overnight accommodations are available. Cost is \$30 per person.

Please Bring:

A packed lunch (refrigeration and microwaves available)

A face mask

Bible

Notebook (optional)

Leader: Karen Haldeman

Visit www.CampSwatara.org or call 717-933-8510 for more details and to register.

SAVE THE DATE!

Fall Church Council Meeting

December 6 by Zoom

Information on time and link to join the meeting will be sent by email. Make plans now to attend. You may contact your deacon or the church office for additional details.

He changes times and seasons; he removes kings and sets up kings; he gives wisdom to the wise and knowledge to those who have understanding; -Daniel 2:21

November 2020

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
1	2	3 Kids Church CANCELED	4	5	6	7 UMI Virtual Event 9 am- 12:30pm
8 Outdoor Worship Service 11 am Zoom Bible Study 3 pm	9	10 Growing Edge Submissions DUE	11 Veterans Day	12 Heeding God's Call Workshop 7 pm	13	14
15 GROWING EDGE SUBMISSIONS DUE	16	17af	18	19	20	21
22	23	24	25	26 Happy Thanksgiving! Office Closed	27 Office Closed	28
29 Advent Begins	30	1 Christmas Blessings DUE	2	3	4	5

Happy
Thanksgiving

Weekly Activities

Church Service:: See Front Page	4p BHA Support Group	5:00p Agape- Satyagraha	Pastor Belita's day off 7:00 pm Zoom Bible Study	10:00a Food Distribution	Pastor Belita's Day Off
6:00p Youth Group or Young Adult Group					

Harrisburg First Church of the Brethren
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Website: www.hbgfirstcob.org

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CHANGE SERVICE REQUESTED



The Growing Edge

OUR CHURCH STAFF

Belita D. Mitchell
Pastor

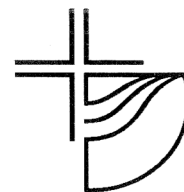
Josiah Ludwick,
Associate Pastor

Alyssa Parker,
Operations Manager
Brethren Community Ministries

Waneta Benson
Organist

Vacant
Administrative Assistant

We are called to be a
Christ-centered multi-cultural
Community in the inner city,
Sharing the love, healing, peace
and justice of Christ.



**Anointed to share transformation
in Christ Jesus.**

The Growing Edge is published monthly by the First Church of The Brethren for our members, friends, and neighbors, except for the combined issues 2 times a year.