December Events at Oak Grove

Bible Study

Our Fall Bible Study of the words and concepts Biblical authors used to describe our faith concludes on Wednesday, December 4. This week’s study will be *Every Christmas Carol a Protest Song*.

We will meet at 5:45 p.m. for dinner prior to the study at 6:30. During our study time, the children and youth will have practice for their Christmas program.

Children/Youth Christmas Program

Come out to Oak Grove at 5:00 p.m. on Sunday, December 8, as our children and youth present their Christmas program.

We hope you will plan to attend this evening of joy and fellowship, and stay for the potluck meal that will follow.

Children and Youth Need Your Help

The Tree of Love is an opportunity for everyone in the church to bring mittens, scarfs, hats, and socks to be donated to those in need during the Christmas season through the Salvation Army and the Rescue Mission. Please place items under the tree at the side entrance to the church.

Another way of helping is to bring items for the Salvation Army stockings. The youth will stuff 50 stockings after morning worship on December 15. You can put your donations in the containers outside the fellowship hall. (See page 6 for a list of suggested items to go into the stockings.)

Christmas Music Worship

Sunday
December 15
11:00 a.m.

Presented by the Oak Grove Choir and Handbells

Join us on Sunday, December 15, as we go caroling to our shut-ins. We will meet at the church at 5:00 p.m. and carpool. Afterwards, we will go to the home of Dan and Eleanor Brogan for snacks and fellowship.

Christmas Eve Service

Tuesday
December 24
7:00 p.m.

Offerings in December

Virlina District Achievement offering (December 1 and 8) is a special offering to the ministries of the Virlina District and Camp Bethel.

Church of the Brethren World Mission offering (December 15 and 22) highlights relationships with international partners and churches, supporting ministries like Brethren Volunteer Service and Global Mission and Service.
Advent – Epiphany Sermons

December 1: O come, O come, Immanuel  
December 8: Come, Thou long-expected Jesus  
December 15: It came upon a midnight clear  
December 22: People look east  
December 29: Silent night  
January 5: What child is this?  

Interfaith Prayer Vigil to End Gun Violence
Tuesday, December 10, 7:00 p.m.
by Tim Harvey

Hosted by St. Mark’s United Methodist Church (19 Cedar Ridge Drive, Daleville), the prayer vigil seeks to give voice to all victims and survivors of gun violence in America. The guest speaker will be Rev. Dr. Tommy McDearis, pastor of Blacksburg Baptist Church and a chaplain of the Blacksburg Police Department.

Riley and Belinda Bowman
by Joyce Harmon

It is with great joy that I introduce Riley and Belinda Bowman as new members at Oak Grove. They joined our church family on October 27, 2019.

After 40 years of operating a 400 acre farm, Riley and Belinda decided, due to health issues, to sell the farm and move to Roanoke and live with their daughter. On a previous visit they passed our Church of the Brethren sign and decided, “This is where we will go to church.”

They were active members of Olean Church of the Brethren in Giles County. There Belinda taught a Bible study for eight years, and she continues to travel there every other week to teach the class. I asked her why she continues to do this, and with a smile she said, “I love these people and feel called from God to do this.”

Belinda is a retired nurse and Riley, a preacher’s son, was a farmer all his life. He also is an Army veteran serving during the Vietnam era. They both enjoy working in the garden. They have two daughters, one son, and four grandchildren.

Riley and Belinda have really enjoyed Oak Grove and the many opportunities available to serve, and they feel warmly welcomed by everyone here.

It was truly a pleasure to interview this sweet couple, and I look forward to getting to know them. I’m sure we will be blessed by their membership.

Welcome to Oak Grove, Riley and Belinda!

Jake Keating
by Dennis Shearer

Jake Keating was born in Long Island, New York, and grew up in New England. He served ten years in the US Navy as an Officers’ Chef. After retiring from the Navy, he worked in his family plumbing business.

Jake and his family moved to Roanoke for the milder climate. He has worked as a hotel maintenance supervisor and currently is retired with part-time handyman gigs. Jake has two lovely daughters and two sweet granddaughters who also live in the Roanoke area. His favorite hobby is to go fishing for relaxation and rejuvenation of mind and spirit.

WELCOME NEW MEMBERS!!

Project WARM
December 28 & January 25
We need your help!

We will meet everyone at the woodlot at 8:00 a.m. Children (with adult supervision) and youth are encouraged to help. Call Nancy Hylton if you have questions.

Red Cross Blood Drive
Saturday, January 11
10:00 a.m. - 2:00 p.m.

You can sign up on their website, www.redcross.org, or call Karin Musselman.
Jake grew up in the Catholic Church. After retiring from the Navy, he attended the Methodist Church. Recently, he was encouraged by one of our current church members to visit with us, and our close proximity made it easier. He started attending Oak Grove Church of the Brethren and discovered that we provided the spiritual structure and active prayer that supports the current family stresses he is experiencing. Jake has committed his spiritual journey with us and became a member of Oak Grove on Sunday, October 27, 2019. He has also joined our choir with his charming tenor voice.

We welcome you to our church family Jake.

John and Betty Phillips  
by Tess Anderson

You couldn't hope to meet two nicer people than John and Betty Phillips. It's been a joy getting to know them since they moved to Roanoke, and now a joy to have them become “official” members of our church, They joined Oak Grove on October 27, 2019.

Both John and Betty were born and raised in Tennessee, though that is not where they met. Betty moved with her family to Manassas, Virginia, when she was 15 years old. She completed high school there, went to East Tennessee State University, and then returned to Manassas to teach. John went to Appalachian State University, and then he, too, went to Manassas to teach.

Now, Betty had a little talk with God. She told Him that she had not had much luck with men, so it was up to Him to find somebody for her if that was His will. She was teaching homemaking and John was teaching Special Ed and Physical Education. As Betty tells it, John had “a room full of uncontrollable boys, and she had a room full of uncontrollable girls who wanted to go see those boys.” With patience and a good sense of humor John and Betty did their best to steer their charges in the right direction. In the midst of this, John and Betty met and were married. Their “uncontrollable boys and girls” attended their wedding. They have been married for 55 years. John moved to the position of principal as his career advanced.

Betty grew up in the Church of the Brethren, John in the Baptist Church. As a young couple they tried both churches, but settled on the CoB, attending Manassas Church of the Brethren. Their two sons, Sam and John, were baptized and raised there. Sam, as you well know, lives in Roanoke with his family. John is a doctor and lives with his wife and children on the west coast of Canada. Both Sam and John have a son and a daughter.

During a visit to Roanoke, Betty was inspired by the Christmas tree at our church with hats and mittens for those in need. She went back to Manassas and started a Sunday school class that devoted themselves to making things for others: cards for the sick, scarves for the homeless, hats for those getting chemo, etc. Betty continues to love crafts, and participates in the Monday morning craft group at church. John has been enjoying woodworking since retiring.

When it became apparent that she and John needed to make the move to Roanoke, Betty prayed to God that she would find a good church. We are so blessed that she and John found that at Oak Grove. They are a wonderful addition to our church family.

Stephen Wills  
by Shelly Haas

Oak Grove welcomes a new member to our church family, Stephen Wills. Stephen began playing the organ at Oak Grove on August 18, 2019. He joined the church on October 27, 2019.

I have known Stephen for many years. We were at Camp Bethel together as kids and also attended Bridgewater College. When you are a member of the Church of the Brethren, you meet so many wonderful people over the years. It is nice to see Stephen at the organ and as a member of Oak Grove.

Stephen said he was searching for a church, and he heard great things about our family at Oak Grove. He told me he would be in the pew here even if he was not hired as the organist.

Stephen has played the organ for several churches in the Roanoke area over the past several years. He enjoys cooking and traveling and has a dog named Fannie. Stephen’s mother, Betty Wills, works at the Virlina District Resource Center.

Welcome, Stephen, to our church family!

**January**

- **Mondays, January 13, 20, 27**
  - Crafters meet in the fellowship hall, 9:00 a.m.

- **Thursdays, January 9, 16, 23, 30**
  - Games at the church, 2:00 p.m.

- **Thursday, January 23**
  - Joyful Hearts Planning meeting, 10:30 a.m.
Oak Grove Shows Up!
by Patricia Ronk

The annual District Conference of the Virlina District was held at the Grandin Court Baptist Church on November 8 and 9, 2019. As usual, Oak Grove had a substantial presence.

The theme of the conference was Don't Hide the Cross. Friday evening was a worship service with several Oak Grovers in attendance. Carol Elmore was part of the team leading the music. Dana Cassell from Peace Covenant Church of the Brethren in Durham, North Carolina, delivered a provocative message referring to racism as a "hidden cross".

Saturday was the day for business. Shelly King Haas was on the music team for the worship and breaks during the day. Tim Harvey was the parliamentarian (and he was actually called upon to make a ruling). Kathie Robinson, Treasurer for the District, gave her reports. Randall Eakin was elected to serve on the Outdoor Ministries Committee which oversees Camp Bethel. Ed Woodard is one of three Standing Committee Members representing Virlina District at Annual Conference. Your voting district delegates were Tim Harvey, Rhonda Marcum, Rachel Mabe, and Patricia Ronk.

Offsite Carol Elmore and Amanda Marcum were providing activities for youth, and Randall Eakin helped a group of children visit a fire and rescue station.

On a sad note, our beloved Randal Cronise was listed in the memorial section as someone who had died in the past year.

There were also denominational staff present: Nancy Heishman, Director of the Office of Ministry, gave the message to the Ministers and Spouses Dinner on Friday evening as well as a message to the conference on Saturday morning. Also present were David Steele, General Secretary, and Steve Mason, from BBT.

Much of the business was routine, yet without its completion the workings of the district would cease to exist. We appreciate the continued commitment of Oak Grove members to serve in these ways.

Highlights From District Conference
by Rachel Mabe

- **Attendance:** 388 persons attended the Friday and Saturday sessions, with an additional 52 children and adults participating in activities on Saturday.
- **Elections:** Randall Eakin was elected to the Outdoor Ministries Committee.
- **Constitution:** Approved changes to the Virlina District Constitution: (i) District Board membership increase from 33 to 34 members; (ii) the Board shall provide for annual review of the corporate financial statements instead of an audit; (iii) areas reorganized to facilitate geographic representations; and (iv) authority for the District Board to make grammatical changes and other changes to be in compliance with District Conference.
- **Budget:** Reviewed and approved. Concern expressed by Conference members regarding executive salary and the importance of increasing to meet industry standards, which will enhance the District’s ability to recruit future executive leaders.
- **Report from Camp Bethel:** Camp Bethel served close to 1,500 campers during the past year, as well as hosting 2,300 other guests. Financially the camp ended with a positive net income after two previous years of ending with a negative net income. The camp is much more than a summer camp for kids.
- **Financial Report from Virlina District:** The district is operating significantly under the established budget; however, it ended with a negative net income. It should be noted that the negative balance is much less than previous years.
- **New Pastor Placements:** There are 18 open positions. Growth of leadership must be developed and advanced within the church.
- **Receipt of District Reports:** Review of activities, projects, and upcoming events.

**November Board Retreat**
by Rhonda Marcum, Church Board chair

- **Christian Education** is working to find Sunday School teachers.
- **Finance** can always use more money counters on Sundays. For a new option of giving, download TITHLEY from the app store.
- **Property** is working on new parking lot lights.
- **There will be a church retreat on February 7-9, 2020. More information to follow.**
- **Commissions organized for 2020 are as follows:**
  - **Christian Education:** Rena’ Brown, chair; Randall Eakin, vice chair; Sharon Hanger
  - **Missions & Service:** Rachel Mabe, chair; Pam Conner, vice chair; Ellen Phillips
  - **Evangelism & Membership:** Connie Bierly, chair; Patricia Ronk, vice chair; Alii Yingling
  - **Finance:** Emily Nelson, chair; John King, III, vice chair; Sam Phillips
  - **Ministry & Worship:** Kathie Robinson, chair; Jodi Zabo, vice chair; Joan Simpson
  - **Property:** Mike Tyler, chair; Bob Milliron, vice chair; Bill Fowler

Executive Committee will meet on the second Sunday each month at 1:30 p.m. in the library. Church Board will meet the second Sunday every other month at 2:30 p.m. in the fellowship hall.
“Come to Bethlehem and See…”
Saturday, December 7

Travel through a live outdoor nativity program at Bethlehem Church of the Brethren at 4250 Bethlehem Road, Boones Mill. Come experience the story of Christmas as you walk by scenes of Mary and Joseph, shepherds with their sheep, angels, and wise men. Then come into Bethlehem Church for cookies, hot chocolate, and warm fellowship. Golf cart rides are available to assist your tour.

Please join us anytime between 5 and 8 p.m. on Saturday, December 7, and enjoy this Christmas story. This program will be held, rain or shine. For information or questions, contact Sharon Grindstaff at (540) 493-7252 or grindstaffsharon@gmail.com.

NEW Mountain Biking Trails

Volunteers headed by Rob Odenwelder (Troutville CoB) have built mountain biking trails and bridges winding through our “Adventure Forest.” Call or email ahead, and bring your bike and helmet for fun in our beautiful property.

Contact Barry at CampBethelOffice@gmail.com or (540) 992-2940.

Approved “RV Village”
Site Design Available

Site layout and images for Camp Bethel's long-planned “RV Village” camping area are available for view at www.VirlinaFuture.org. Plans include 15 new campsites, each with water, electricity, sanitary sewer, a picnic table, campfire ring, and parking for 2-3 cars. Site sizes range from 60’x23’ to 65’x28’.

World Hunger Auction Distribution

The 2019 World Hunger Auction and associated activities were a great success. A heartfelt and sincere thank you goes out to all who were involved in any way.

A total of $67,600 has been distributed by the steering committee to the following organizations:

- Heifer International Dairy Network in the Andes of Ecuador Project - $33,750
- Roanoke Area Ministries – $16,875
- Church of the Brethren Global Food Initiative – $6,750
- Heavenly Manna (Rocky Mount) – $3,000
- Stepping Stone Mission (Rocky Mount) – $3,000
- Lake Christian Ministries (Moneta) – $3,000
- His Cupboard (Boones Mill) – $1,225

Pilgrimage XXIV

Pilgrimage XXIV will be held March 20-22, 2020, at Camp Bethel. People from 60 congregations in our district have attended this event, which is a spiritual retreat for adults of all ages. It is for the young and old, for the new Christian and the one who has been a Christian for decades. No matter where a person is on his or her faith journey, it is always good to take another step and draw closer to God.

The basic structure of the weekend is the same each year with talks, small groups, fun times, inspiring worship services, and much more. Yet God continues to work in wonderful ways through this ministry, and we give Him all praise and honor. The only way to truly understand what Pilgrimage has to offer is to experience it. Prayerfully consider if this is your year to attend.

If you would like more information about Pilgrimage, go to www.experiencepilgrimage.com. You may also contact Karen Haynes at haynesmk1986@yahoo.com or call (336) 765-5263.

Winter Camp
at Camp Bethel

10:00 a.m., Monday, December 30 until
2:00 p.m., Tuesday, December 31

Winter Camp is a fun holiday retreat for kids in grades 1-5 and youth grades 6-12. The cost of $70 includes 4 meals, lodging, and lots of fun activities (including sledding, if it snows). You will also see a 2020 summer camp preview.

Oak Grove CoB will pay half the cost for church attenders. To register, go to: campbethelvirginia.org/winter-camp
Youth News

December 2019
Middle & High Schoolers’ Events

Saturday, December 7
5:00 pm — Junior High and Families Cowboy/Cowgirl Christmas dinner at the home of Bob and Sherry Milliron. Wear your cowboy boots and bandanas, and bring a friend! RSVP by December 1.

Sunday, December 8
5:00 p.m. — Children and Youth Christmas Program and Potluck (be here by 4:00 p.m.)

Friday, December 13
5:00 p.m. — Senior High Youth Christmas dinner at the home of Beth and Dennis Shearer.

Sunday, December 15
12:15 p.m. — Salvation Army Stocking Stuffing and Pizza in the fellowship hall.
5:00 p.m. — All Church Christmas Caroling!

Tuesday, December 24
7:00 p.m. — Christmas Eve Service

Monday & Tuesday, December 30 & 31
Winter Camp at Camp Bethel

January 2020
Middle & High Schoolers’ Events

Friday & Saturday, January 3 & 4
Senior High Girls’ Overnight at the Elmores’ home! Movies, stories, games, meals, fun . . .

Saturday & Sunday, January 11 & 12
IYC Retreat (Senior Highs) at Antioch CoB. We will leave from Oak Grove at 9:00 a.m. on Saturday and return on Sunday after lunch. Cost is $20 per person. Please register ASAP!

Thursday, January 16
5:30 p.m. — Workcamp Registration Party — dinner at Jersey Lily’s (bring $). We will decide which workcamps we’ll attend. Be praying for guidance, and check out the schedule at: www.brethren.org/ workcamps.

Saturday, January 18
Winterplace tubing

Looking Ahead . . .

February 7-8 — Virlina Junior High Retreat at Summerdean CoB
February 28-March 1 — Senior High Roundtable at Bridgewater College
March 8 — Ken Medema and Ted & Co. at Central CoB
April 11 — Easter Egg Hunt
April 25-30 — Christian Citizenship Seminar (NYC and Washington, DC)

Salvation Army Stockings

Stockings are given to babies and children up to 12 years old. Here are some items we can use for the stockings:

- Coloring books
- Cars & trucks
- Small games
- Action figures
- Toothbrushes
- Bath gels
- Shampoo
- Combs/brushes
- Jewelry
- Gloves/mittens
- Socks & hats
- Movie tickets
- T-shirts
- Markers
- School supplies
- Small plush toys
- Small books
- Learning toys
- Toothpaste
- Deodorant
- Hair accessories
- Nail care items
- Purses/wallets
- I-tunes cards
- Individually wrapped candy/gum

Everything must fit in the mesh Christmas stockings distributed by the Salvation Army. This is a very meaningful outreach for the youth, and they appreciate everyone’s help with donations.

Remember
by Barbara Mann

In Bethlehem a baby came and Jesus was the baby’s name. A manger was the only bed where He could rest His little head. He came as prophets long foretold to give us hope and save our souls. We celebrate His birthday when the Christmas season comes again. Remember Him this special day and don’t forget to stop and pray.
Pledge Card Report

Thank you for your response to our 2019 Discipleship Emphasis. This year, we received pledge cards from 52 individuals/households. It is not too late to turn in a pledge card. The financial giving information you provide on the pledge cards helps establish a long-term giving baseline, enabling the Church Board to plan the annual budget for Council Meeting each year.

Financial pledge information is recorded by our Financial Secretary, Kathie Robinson, and held in confidence.

You noticed that there were other categories on our pledge cards this year. It was encouraging to see near unanimous response to areas like prioritizing relationships with God, family, and church and our commitment to pray for enemies, work for peace, and resolve conflicts according to Jesus’ instructions in Matthew 18:15-20. Investing in and maintaining healthy congregational relationships is a significant way we can give witness to our faith in Jesus Christ in our community.

Many of you also responded that you want to share a meal with members of the church or your neighborhood. Be on the lookout for ways to follow through on that pledge in 2020! Who might be coming to dinner?

Pastor Tim

Food, Family, and Finances

Get in the habit of home meal preparation

Jen McCoy, Financial Consultant with Everence

My 14 year old son is 6’3” and hungry all the time.

After the mortgage, food costs are the largest expense on my family’s cash flow plan.

With today’s busy families, eating out has become the norm—leading to higher food costs and less-healthy options for our kids. Here are some tips to help you control how much you spend on food.

- **Plan ahead.** Make a simple meal plan: Meatless Monday, Taco Tuesday, Sausage Saturday. Write down your schedule, then plan the meals around your schedule. Consider having your groceries delivered.
- **Prepare extra.** When you do cook at home, make enough for more than one meal. Prep cook on the weekends. Cook a chicken in a slow cooker and eat it three ways that week. Prepare your lunch from leftovers when you clean up from dinner.
- **Protect family dinner.** Pick at least one night that you all sit around the dinner table together. What you eat isn’t as important as the conversations that arise. Don’t let busyness steal precious moments as a family.

While it takes discipline and planning to eat healthy and at home, the difference in cost is dramatic. Saving money on food will allow you more income to give, save, or enjoy.

Giving Report, through October

Offerings - $229,104  Expenses - $234,661  Short - $(5,557)
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| **1st Sunday of Advent**  
Virlina Offering  
4:00 pm — Licensing service for Gina Wright-Hawkins | 12:30 pm — Joyful Hearts Christmas luncheon at Liberty Station  
(meet at church at 11:15 a.m. to carpool)  
5:30 pm — Handbells | 8:30 am — Walk & Talk  
5:45 pm — Church Dinner  
5:30 pm — Bible Study  
6:30 pm — Christmas Play Practice  
7:30 pm — Choir | 12:30 pm — Backpack | 12:30 pm — Backpack | 10:00 am — Dress rehearsal for Christmas program  
5:00 pm — Jr. Highs and families dinner  
5:00 pm — "Come to Bethlehem" at Bethlehem CoB |
| 8   | 9   | 10  | 11  | 12  | 13  | 14  |
| **2nd Sunday of Advent**  
Virlina Offering  
5:00 pm — Children & Youth Christmas Program & Potluck | 5:30 pm — Handbells  
7:00 pm — Prayer Vigil to End Gun Violence at St. Mark's UMC in Daleville | 7:00 pm — Choir | 12:30 pm — Backpack | 5:00 pm — Sr. High Christmas dinner | 9:30 am — Staunton Ave. Food Distribution  
12:30 pm — Fellowship Class banquet |
| 15  | 16  | 17  | 18  | 19  | 20  | 21  |
| **3rd Sunday of Advent**  
CoB Mission Offering  
8:15 am — Choir/Handbell Rehearsal  
11:00 am — Choir/Handbell Music Worship  
12:15 pm — Youth stuff  
Salvation Army stockings  
5:00 pm — Caroling | 7:00 pm — Handbells Christmas music program at Fairington Village | 7:00 pm — Choir | 12:30 pm — Backpack | 5:00 pm — Project WARM |
| 22  | 23  | 24  | 25  | 26  | 27  | 28  |
| **4th Sunday of Advent**  
CoB Mission Offering | 7:00 pm — Christmas Eve Service | **Christmas Day**  
Church office Closed | | | | 8:00 am — Project WARM |
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<td>9:00 am — Crafts</td>
<td>5:30 pm — Handbells</td>
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<td>Youth tubing at Winterplace</td>
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<td>11:00 am — Handbells play during worship</td>
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**Coming in February . . .**
- February 2 — "Souper" Bowl Sunday
- February 5, 12, 19, 26 — Winter Bible Study
- February 7 & 8 — Virlina Jr. High Retreat