

Blacknall

Memorial Presbyterian Church



1902 Perry Street . Durham, NC 27705 . 919-286-5586 . www.blacknall.org

NOVEMBER / DECEMBER
2011

Letter from the Pastor

[This article is dedicated to my own personal campaign to not skip over Thanksgiving entirely by allowing the Christmas season to begin on November 1.]

Happy Thanksgiving! I am thankful for many things. I am thankful for you.

Thank you. I was really kind of dreading the celebration of the 25th anniversary of my ordination as a Minister of Word and Sacrament in the Presbyterian Church (USA). I never realized how much fodder I have provided for people to make fun of me. I laughed very hard at myself, which may be the very best antidote to someone who takes himself too seriously. Thank you.

Thank you. Blacknall is an Outpost of the Kingdom. This Kingdom is ruled by a King of infinite grace. I have experienced the reality of our King's grace in your love and acceptance of me. My family has experienced the reality of the grace that characterizes our King in your warm and gracious love for us. Thank you.

Thank you. I laugh more at Blacknall than at any other church I have been a part of. I cry more at Blacknall than at any other church I have been a part of. I laugh because, like the Kingdom, our congregation is filled with real characters. I laugh because I don't have to be perfect. I cry because the Spirit touches me in worship on a regular basis. I cry because of your witness as I come to know you better and the brave, heroic ways you are loving God and one another. Thank you.

Thank you. One of the greatest joys in life is to work together as a team in some really important work. I get to be on a team with a great, great staff. I get to work with many of you doing mission and discipleship and worship together. It is joy-filled to struggle and strategize and strive to do this really important work for God's Kingdom. Thank you.

Thank you. We get to worship together in one of the most exciting communities in the world at the crossroads of people from all over the country and around the world. Every Sunday there is the possibility that we will sit next to someone from virtually anywhere in the world. Every Sunday each one of us is seated next to a fascinating person, and whoever is seated next to you is also seated next to a fascinating person. Thank you.

Thank you. I am a deeply flawed individual. It is wonderful to be a part of a congregation that acknowledges that to be true of each one of us. It is wonderful to be broken and to feel normal because of that. Thank you.

Thank you. Part of my being deeply flawed is a wonderful propensity for complacency and an affinity for comfort. I am very thankful for the restlessness of Blacknall. I am thankful that we long for more; that while we acknowledge the many gifts of Blacknall we also admit that God desires us to be much more. I am grateful that we have a vision for God's Kingdom that is much larger than where we are and that demands of us a greater dependency on the Lord and His Holy Spirit. Thank you.

Before you go out shopping, can you write down what you are thankful for?
Happy Thanksgiving!

D.A.D.

Holiday Closings

Church office will be closed
November 24-25
and
December 26-27

In this issue:

[Blacknall Happenings](#) 2

[Christmas Season... Schedules](#) 3

[Children's Corner...](#) 4

[Youth Schedule... Christmas Fun!](#) 4

[Library... Christmas Devotions](#) 5

[Announcements](#) 5

[Finances... Year-end giving](#) 6

BLACKNALL HAPPENINGS

Stay up-to-date with ways to get involved

GriefShare Support Group - If you are grieving the loss of a loved one, we invite you to join GriefShare, a small group video and discussion series which addresses the grief journey from practical, spiritual, and biblical perspectives. Whether your loss is recent or in the distant past, you are welcome to participate. We'll meet on Tuesday evenings, 7-9 pm in the home of Kristy Roberts (4215 Farrington Road, Durham, NC 27707). The group begins in November, bridges the holidays, and ends in February. Leaders are Kristy Roberts and Emily Hamilton, a Duke Divinity student who is serving as our pastoral care intern this year. For more information, please contact Margaret (286-5586 or mfrothingham@blacknall.org). To view the GriefShare website for other group locations and times, go to: www.griefshare.org.

Special Guest from Congo on Sunday, November 20 - We are excited to welcome back to Blacknall Drs. David and Kaswera Kasali on Sunday, November 20. The Kasalis are from the Democratic Republic of Congo, and they are the co-founders of the [Congo Initiative](#). David is a theologian, pastor and visionary leader called by God, along with his wife Kaswera, to spearhead a work of transformation in the heart of Africa, where the land and the people have been ruthlessly exploited in one way or another for the past 120 years. Now God is doing something new and fresh through the Kasalis and their team to bring hope and reconciliation to DRC. The vision of Congo Initiative is "to train and develop strong, indigenous Christian leaders to transform their communities and their nation of the Democratic Republic of Congo."

David will preach in both services on November 20 and will also be speaking in the college Sunday school class that morning. Anyone interested is welcome to come to the class to hear from Dr. Kasali. The Kasalis will also be interacting with our congregation in other ways throughout that weekend, and we are looking forward to their visit with great anticipation, trusting that God will challenge us in new and deeper ways as a body.

WOMEN'S BIBLE STUDY

Getting Ready for Christmas?

The Women's Bible Study invites you to attend two special events during the Advent season. We all spend lots of time preparing for Christmas each year with shopping, baking, decorating, traveling, etc. Please join us for two wonderful opportunities to prepare our hearts to receive Christ anew this Christmas season:

Thursday, December 1 from 9:30 to 11:30 am in the Fellowship Hall

We will worship together and hear from speaker Paula Rinehart. Light refreshments will be served. Childcare is provided.

Thursday, December 8 from 9:30 to 11:30 am in the Fellowship Hall

We will worship together and hear from speaker Jo Oldham. A Celebratory Christmas Brunch will be served. Childcare is provided. Please join us even if you do not normally attend the Thursday morning study. This is also a wonderful opportunity to invite a friend. If you have questions, contact Melissa Hartemink (mhartemink@yahoo.com).

Women's Bible Study will be continuing in the new year with our study of Acts. It is not too late to join us! Our teachers include Jennifer Hagin, Traci Hoover, Anne Paulson, and Janise Smith. Our weekly Thursday morning meetings resume January 12, from 9:15 to 11:30am, and run through May 10, 2012. As always, childcare is provided. Cost of Acts study is \$20 for the semester.

Please visit this CCB [link](#) for online Thursday Morning Bible Study Registration. Questions? Please contact Ryan Runestad (919-265-3491 or ryan.runestad@gmail.com)

Christmas Season Schedule

Sunday, December 4

Service of Lessons and Carols

8:30 and 11am worship

We will enjoy music with a chamber orchestra, gorgeous choral singing, lots of congregational participation, all of it built around selected scripture readings. This is a wonderful way to be reminded of the enormity of God's plan as expressed in the Incarnation. *Invite a friend!*

Thursday, December 8

Women's Bible Study Brunch

9:15-11:30am

All women are welcome to come, worship, share, and enjoy good food and fellowship. Bible study will resume January 12, 2012.

Sunday, December 11

Carols and Cocoa

6:30-7:30pm

Join this Christmas songfest with refreshments to follow. Here's your chance to sing most every carol and seasonal favorite you can think of! We will begin in the Sanctuary with carols, then move into the fellowship hall for a few more favorites, capping the evening with cocoa and cookies. *Bring a friend!*

Sunday, December 18

Worship on the Longest Night

6:30-7:30pm

Perhaps this has been a difficult year for you, or you are having a hard time getting into the 'spirit' of the season. We will gather for prayerful worship of Jesus Christ, the Light of the World, who is with us even on this the (symbolically) longest and darkest night of the year. Childcare for infants through 2nd grade provided.

Saturday, December 24

Christmas Eve Services

5:30 and 7:30pm

Childcare available through age 4. Would your children like to be included to play/sing? Contact Dave Stuntz — dstuntz@blacknall.org

Sunday, December 25

Christmas Day Service

11 am

We will be having one service, with no Sunday School or childcare. Come celebrate Christmas with us!

C H I L D R E N ' S C O R N E R

Children's Dance Group: All children in grades 1 through 8 are invited to join us Sunday evenings in the Community room from 5:30 to 6:30 as we learn to worship God through dance. Please contact Bethany Innes with any questions (blinnes@gmail.com).

Assistants Needed in Children's Worship at both 8:30 and 11:00 am services. No outside preparation required; Just come and enjoy learning alongside some amazing children and amazing Bible Stories! Contact Amy Rowell if interested (arowell@blacknall.org).

Table Talk Update... This fall, we have enjoyed singing, ringing bells, chanting, and thinking creatively about worship. Our "Children in Worship" Table Talk class has had three main emphases: first, we have hoped to expose the children to the basics of choral singing through warm-ups and basic choral technique; second, we have hoped to teach the children the basics of music through worksheets with introductory music theory; thirdly, we have hoped to help the children enter more deeply into worship at Blacknall by talking about what worship is and how we participate in worship. On November 6, the children did a beautiful and gracious job helping to lead the congregation in singing during both services. These children are a tremendous joy and encouragement to us in our life together at Blacknall.

Y O U T H C O R N E R

BYG Time Christmas Party
December 4, 6:30 pm

This will be our last BYG Time of 2011. Come join us as we have fun celebrating the true meaning of Christmas!

Carols and Cocoa
December 11, 6:30 pm

We want to invite the youth to join the congregation for this event in the sanctuary.

Caroling
December 18, 6 pm

Come join us for a night of caroling around Durham. Meet at the church at 6pm.

Visit www.youth.blacknall.org for more information about Blacknall Youth, including weekly announcements.

LIBRARY NEWS

As we prepare our hearts to celebrate the Savior, which Jesus are you looking for? Maybe it's the baby in a manger who asks only for a quick smile? Or the heavenly answer to your earthly problems? Or the savior who put aside glory to bring hope to broken lives? Perhaps this year you might ask to see Him apart from your expectations. To change up your Advent devotions, consider visiting the library for resources like these:

God With Us: Rediscovering the Meaning of Christmas – A collection of devotions that cuts through the sentiments and obligations of Christmas to discover the meaning of the Incarnation.

God Is in the Manger: Reflections on Advent and Christmas – Dietrich Bonhoeffer explores the unsettling realities that Christmas brings, challenging us to see the disruptive miracle at the heart of Christmas.

The Christ of Christmas – Calvin Miller offers a daily reflection with scripture and storytelling, that quickens the imagination to travel back to the very first Christmas.

God Came Near – Relive what it meant for Christ to be made man in this portrayal of Jesus' humanity and divinity.

Just 25 Days 'Til Christmas – This interactive book offers daily Advent devotionals, practical ideas for incorporating children into your planning, fun activities and a Christmas checklist for holiday preparations.

We have a wealth of Advent literature for adult meditations and devotional ideas for families as well as favorite Christmas storybooks. Our prayer is that each book will help you and your family experience the miracle of God with us this Christmas.



Announcements

Duke Divinity Professor in need of a car for Spring semester: This Divinity School professor is from England and has ties to Blacknall and needs use of a car while here next semester. (Jan. – April 2012). If you have an available car, please contact Claire Ruth (churchoffice@blacknall.org).

Welcoming Kazakh Scholars - Once again, Duke University is hosting a group of scholars from Kazakhstan and once again Blacknall, in its partnership with International Students, Inc., has been asked to help in welcoming these scholars. We have been invited to be hosts for these scholars and their families. Being a host means inviting them to share a meal with you 2-3 times during the course of their three month stay in Durham and doing your best to be a friend and help them to adjust to life here. If you are interested in being a host then please contact: Jim Demarest (james.f.demarest@viivhealthcare.com) or David Dunderdale (ddunderdale@blacknall.org).

Just released in October, Alice Wisler's book, *A Wedding Invitation*: Set partially in the Philippines at a refugee camp, [A WEDDING INVITATION](#) by Alice J. Wisler, embraces the plight of the Amerasians. After relocating to the United States (Winston-Salem, North Carolina) young Lien seeks to find her mother before her own wedding. Two of her former American teachers from the camp are instrumental in helping her. A story about the need to belong and be invited, *A WEDDING INVITATION* is for all who long for acceptance and forgiveness.

Year-End Giving

As you are considering year-end financial gifts, please take these Blacknall deadlines into consideration:

In order to be counted as a contribution in the year 2011, checks mailed to Blacknall must be postmarked by **December 31** in order to comply with IRS regulations. Any gifts brought to the church office must be received by noon **Friday, December 30**. Checks brought to the office in January 2012 that are dated December 2011 will be considered a 2012 gift to the church.

The church is equipped to receive gifts of stock. Information on how to transfer stock to Blacknall is available from Rick Every, Treasurer (489-9733). It is very important that you notify Rick no later than **Monday, December 19**, in order to **allow sufficient time for the transfer and sale of the donated stocks.**

Requests for reimbursements from Blacknall for 2011 expenses need to be turned in to the church office no later than **Monday, December 19**. It is most important that all 2011 expenses be reimbursed in 2011.

Blacknall Substantiation Letters for 2011 Offering Gifts

Blacknall is required by the IRS to keep a record of any single gift of \$250 or more. For gifts less than \$250, your cancelled checks are your documentation.

We will mail out letters of substantiation for 2011 contributions by mid-February. These letters are only for your records; they do not need to be sent to the IRS as an attachment to your tax papers.

Please notify Diane Beacham as soon as possible if your letter is incorrect by calling the church office at 286-5586.