

THE CRUSADER

HAPPY END OF THE SEMESTER, CRUSADERS!

Mary, Help of Christians Basilica - The History of the Beating Heart of Campus

BY: SYDNEY SHERWOOD



The Basilica’s windows at night.
Photo Credit: Abigail Brame

The Basilica is the first building many new students and visitors see when first arriving at the Abbey. As such, it is often called the “beating heart” of the school due to its central role in spiritual life on campus. Built in 1892, its splendor is evident among the exterior vision of Gothic Revival architecture. Since its establishment, Mary, Help of Christians Basilica has served as a constant reminder of the Abbey’s central focus, which is serving God. Mass is offered daily throughout the week at 11 o’clock, and is also offered on Sundays at 11 o’clock and 7:30 in the evening.

Before the founding of the Diocese of Charlotte, Mary, Help of Christians served as a Cathedral. After Saint Patrick Church was designated as the Cathedral for the Diocese of Charlotte, Mary, Help of Christians was then named as a minor Basilica. Besides being a symbol of faith and dedication to God for the current Abbey students, the Basilica served the entire area as a central place of worship and leadership.

Originally, the Basilica was designed interiorly in a Gothic-revival style. There were vaulted ceilings, statues, and four columns of pews. There was also a large High Altar designated for the Latin Mass, but this was changed in 1964. The renovation of the Basilica took place after the Second Vatican Council and the development of the Novus Ordo

(New Order) Mass. The renovation made the interior much simpler, replacing the large Gothic accents and features with minimalistic, modern installations.

The Basilica serves as a place for gathering, such as the Matriculation ceremony for new students, as well as the Baccalaureate Mass for graduating students. Since many Abbey students are not Catholic, the Matriculation ceremony serves as the first experience of being inside a Catholic Church for many new first-years. At the end of each students’ career at the Abbey, their final gathering before moving on is in the Basilica for Mass. Serving as the first place of welcome and the final place of goodbye, the Basilica is truly the “beating heart of Belmont Abbey.”

Change Your Life, Change the World

BY: MARIA SPINELLI

The Belmont Abbey Benedictine Volunteer Corps is inviting Belmont Abbey seniors on a nine-month mission trip to Zambia. Students will engage in the monastery’s spiritual and social works, such as in prayer and in community outreach. The trip’s costs, such as airfare, food, lodging, and a monthly stipend, will be covered.

The Benedictine Volunteer Corps (BVC) originated at St. John’s Abbey in Minnesota in 1856 to provide an opportunity for graduates to exercise Benedictine hospitality around the world. Belmont Abbey was inspired by their work, and in 2012 the Abbey saw its first volunteers sent to Tanzania with the BVC.

The BVC aims at assisting the areas and communities where the alumni volunteer, as well as the students themselves. The BVC seeks to help these alumni to grow in the Benedictine way of life, specifically “to foster a greater appreciation of the Benedictine values of ora and labora... especially in service to those in need.” These Benedictine values of ora and labora (prayer and work) are seen in the 30-40 hour workweeks and participation in liturgical and private prayer.

The Belmont Abbey Benedictine Volunteer Corps is currently sponsoring missionaries to Zambia. If you are graduating soon and want to get involved, you can get in

contact with them to start the application process by following this link: [Contact Us - Belmont Abbey](#). The BVC provides alumni with wonderful life experiences, changing themselves and the world for better.



A photo taken on a recent trip.
Photo Credit: Maria Spinelli

Launch of Phi Delta Phi Pre-Law Chapter

BY: KRISTOPHER R. KENCK

The Belmont Abbey community will soon welcome a new honor society to campus: the St. Thomas More Pre-Law Society Hall, a chapter of Phi Delta Phi, the international legal honor society. Organized by Belmont Abbey students under the guidance of Professor Anne Gleason, the new Hall has officially filed for a charter with Phi Delta Phi and plans to begin hosting bimonthly meetings later this semester, with meeting times to be determined.

The society will be open to students majoring in Criminal Justice, Politics, or Politics, Philosophy, and Economics (PPE), as well as any students pursuing the pre-law minor alongside another major. Its mission is to build a strong pre-law community on campus, fostering professional development, networking, and an appreciation for the ethical foundations of the law. Organizers hope it will serve as a bridge between students’ academic interests and their future legal careers.

Founded in 1869 at the University of Michigan, Phi Delta Phi is the oldest legal organization in continuous existence in the United States. Originally established as a professional fraternity, it became recognized as an international honor society in 2012. The society is structured into two main branches: “Inns” located at law schools and “Halls” at undergraduate institutions such as Belmont Abbey.

Today, Phi Delta Phi boasts a membership of more than 200,000 individuals, including five U.S. presidents, two vice presidents, 14 Supreme Court justices, and numerous members of Congress, Cabinet officials, and ambassadors. The establishment of the St. Thomas More Hall marks an important milestone for Belmont Abbey’s pre-law community, offering students the opportunity to join a legacy of academic excellence and professional achievement that spans more than 150 years.

For more information, interested students may contact Vice Magister Grace Mendoza at melissagmendoza@abbey.bac.edu.

Join the Circle! Buried Treasure for Abbey Bookworms

BY: HANNAH PATTERSON

The Hermeneutics Circle is a hidden gem for book lovers on campus. This obscure little club hides behind the label of Sigma Tau Delta (ΣΤΔ): An internationally recognized English Honors Society. What many students do not know is that they do not have to be a member of ΣΤΔ to join the Circle’s meetings which take place in Stowe 300 every other Friday at 3:00 pm. Students wishing to become involved in the Circle must email Dr. Svetlana Corwin (svetlanacorwin@bac.edu), ΣΤΔ’s faculty advisor. Members of this little known club meet weekly to read and discuss fun and thought-provoking books they ordinarily would not get a chance to read in their classes. These discussions provide students with the opportunity to ask questions and share insights and favorite passages with the other members in a relaxed, low-stakes environment.

One member of both ΣΤΔ and the Hermeneutics Circle, Abby Brame says “ I enjoy the casual setting of the Hermeneutics Circle and being able to go in-depth with good literature we do not otherwise have a chance to study in the classroom. I always love hearing Dr. Corwin’s insights!” Another member of both organizations, Lauren Nies, says she likes being a member of the circle because “As an English and Great Books double major, the Hermeneutics Circle is a valuable place to discuss provocative and insightful literature that both bolsters and expands upon [my] education in the classroom.”

Both students have been members of the Hermeneutics Circle since last year when the club discussed Kazuo Ishiguro’s *Never Let Me Go*, a suspenseful and thought-provoking dystopian novel that prompted discussions about propaganda, bioethics, and what makes a human. This semester (Fall 2025), the Circle has been reading C.S. Lewis’ *The Great Divorce*, a beautifully imaginative account of the afterlife. Any book-loving students who think they may be interested in joining are welcome to attend a meeting.

Befriending the Saints Club

BY: ABIGAIL BRAME

Saints Club at Belmont Abbey offers students an engaging opportunity to learn more about the saints while growing in fellowship with the faith community on campus. The club hosts biweekly evening events, open to the college community, to celebrate different saints on their feast days. There are no requirements for joining the club or attending the events—anyone curious about the saints or looking for fellowship on campus is invited to participate!

Co-presidents Hannah Blaha and Charlotte Sweet described Saints Club as a place for “learning how the saints are cheering us on as we strive for Heaven.” Members of the club learn and cultivate their faith together in accordance with the Benedictine hallmark of “community.” “Especially

this semester,” Blaha said, “we have had a lot of people come to Saints Club for the community.”

The community gathered on Oct. 2 for the club’s party in honor of St. Thérèse of Lisieux. Those in attendance enjoyed a talk, snacks, fellowship, and making “sacrifice beads,” a practice inspired by St. Thérèse’s habit of using a string of beads to count and offer to God her little daily sacrifices. Saints Club also hosted its annual Halloween “Martyrs Bonfire” this semester on Oct. 30, during which students met around the fire to share stories about the lives of saints who died defending their faith.

Saints Club recognizes through its events that learning about the saints together enriches campus life. “We are all called to unity, and the saints are already unified in Christ,” Sweet explained, “So leaning on them brings us closer in unity with each other and with Christ.”

Saints Club is always eager to welcome new members. The best way to get involved is to join the club’s [GroupMe](#) to find out about upcoming Saints Club events and receive daily updates about Saint Feast Days.

any team at Belmont Abbey can host a game. Additionally, anyone interested in the chapter, regardless of athletics, is welcome to join. More information, including contact details, can be found on the Belmont Abbey website for clubs and organizations. Morgan’s Message is found under the Advocacy, Volunteering, Fundraising, and Faith sublink. The chapter remains committed to spreading mental health awareness and hopes to keep growing in the future.

History in the Making: Belmont Abbey Cheer Team Heads to UCA College Nationals for the First Time

By: MORGAN CAMPBELL



The cheer team poses in front of Robert Lee Stowe Hall.
Photo Credit: Morgan Campbell

For the first time in school history, Belmont Abbey College’s cheerleading team is heading to the Universal Cheerleaders Association (UCA) college Nationals competition at Walt Disney World in Orlando, Florida. The competition, scheduled to take place from January 17 to January 19, 2026, features top collegiate cheerleading programs from across the country; and, now, the Crusaders will be among them.

The team, made up of student-athletes from a variety of majors and backgrounds, will earn its spot after training for months. This team will be competing in the Game Day division. This marks a new milestone for Belmont Abbey’s cheer program and brings new national attention to the college’s growing athletic department.

“This opportunity for our team and our school is incredibly important,” said Coach Puckett, Head Coach, who has led the program’s steady rise over the past few years. “The athletes have worked so hard for this, and to represent Belmont Abbey on a national level is something we have been dreaming about. Now it’s real.”

The training for nationals has included strength training, long practices, and mastering new skills in a short amount of

Raising Mental Health Awareness through Morgan’s Message

By: BETHANY WELCH

Morgan’s Message is a [nonprofit](#) focusing on breaking the stigma around student-athlete mental health, empowering student athletes to voice their struggles, offering them mental health resources, and so much more. It was founded in 2020 and now has over a thousand high school and college student-athlete volunteer-run chapters around the world and the country, including a chapter at Belmont Abbey College.

The organization is centered around Morgan’s [story](#). Morgan was a sister, daughter, friend, and teammate. She played lacrosse for Duke University. While playing in 2017, she suffered a major knee injury, which altered her life. She dealt with isolation and stress, which led to the return of her anxiety and depression. This time, she told no one how she felt and took her own life in 2019 at the age of 22.

Belmont Abbey College is full of athletes and is focused on the mind, body, and soul. There is a Morgan’s Message chapter on campus that is committed to the mission of the nonprofit. The chapter can be seen at the annual club fair; however, their focus lies on dedication games. These dedication games have a table where spectators can talk with club members about the nonprofit and its mission. Free merchandise and chapter pamphlets are also available at the table. A moment of silence for those fighting mental health battles often takes place at the beginning of the games.

Multiple teams, such as men’s lacrosse and women’s field hockey and lacrosse, have done dedication games; however,

time. All of this while athletes are juggling school, work, and personal life. The team does not just aim to show up; they aim to make a statement and prove how hard they have worked for this moment. We welcome all to come and watch this team perform!

The new facilities feature eight regulation courts with advanced playing surfaces designed to reduce injuries and improve performance. “These courts are a game-changer for our players,” said Head Tennis Coach Chris Nelson. “They reflect the same level of dedication our athletes bring to the sport every day.”

In addition to the athletic benefits, the new complex includes shaded seating areas, a modern scoreboard, and improved accessibility for fans and visiting teams. The Belmont Abbey Athletics Department hopes the upgrades will attract regional tournaments and encourage greater student attendance at home matches.

Students across campus have already noticed the impact. “The energy around tennis this semester feels completely different,” said sophomore player Ava Martin. “We’re proud to represent a school that invests in us, not just as athletes, but as a community.” The official ribbon-cutting ceremony will take place on October 15, and all students, faculty, and alumni are invited to attend.

Support the Men’s Developmental Basketball Team

By: JOSHUA DURHAM

The Belmont Abbey Basketball Devo Team is the Junior Varsity team of Belmont Abbey. This team is special due to its chemistry and commitment to the program. There are two Development teams here; they not only compete for bragging rights, but also for a top spot in the Conference Carolina Devo Tournament. As a player on this team, I can offer you the benefits of watching both teams.

One thing about both teams in this program is that the they are composed of freshmen through seniors. As a senior, I have been playing for this program for three years now. This team has a lot of potential. We practice three times a week, 7 a.m.-9 a.m., and games are usually played twice a week from October through February. Last season was a pretty rough year for both teams, due to a lack of chemistry and a couple of late-game errors. Since both teams built strong chemistry and bonds, however, this season will be ours.

Let’s meet the coaches of the Development teams. For Team A (7 A.M squad), Coach Tyrell is a familiar face in this program. In his second year of coaching, he has had a significant impact on this program. He has taught athletes to prioritize school first and has shown them how to be disciplined both on and off the court.

For Team B (8 A.M. squad), Coach Jason, a new face, is a graduate assistant here at Belmont. He ensures his athletes are on time for practice and ensures their mental state is prepared for anything. With his team’s willpower, they have all eyes on them. Since the teams are split, there has been some good camaraderie among them.

These teams are going to make some noise this year. Students, take a moment out of your day to watch and support your Devo teams. Stay tuned because this year is going to be a good year.

New Tennis Facilities to Elevate Athletic Excellence

By: GIANNA CARNEGLIA

Belmont Abbey College has officially opened its brand-new tennis facilities this semester, offering upgraded courts, new equipment, and expanded seating for fans. The project, which began last spring, represents the college’s growing commitment to student-athlete development and campus life enhancement.

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(no previous experience necessary)*



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