

The Benediction Project in Roanoke

When artist Charlie Brouwer began realizing that parts of the world of public art and many of the world's religious traditions all have interests in being of help to the greater community, he wondered if there were ways art and religion could work together. The Benediction Project is a result of his "wonderings".

The project has had successful runs first in the New River Valley (2018-21) and then in Winston-Salem, NC (2021-22). Now the Roanoke Arts Commission has selected the Benediction Project for one of its Art Matters grants to take place in 2023.

This is how it works: Charlie's sculpture titled Benediction will be offered to Roanoke places of worship who want to say "Bless You" to the community. Charlie will work with the faith group to select a site on their property for the sculpture to be installed, in public view, and facing out towards the community. After 40 days the sculpture will be moved to another place of worship. Participation in the project will be free and the goal is to have each of the nine installations be on the grounds of a different faith tradition or denomination, and for the project to appear in each of the city's quadrants and in the county.

The project is an opportunity for the entire Roanoke community, and all of its faith groups, to focus attention on "community care". In addition to saying "Bless You" to the Roanoke community the 40 days of hosting the sculpture can also be a special time for the hosting place of worship to reflect and ask important questions: "What are we doing...what could we be doing in and for our community?"

This project is about art being a bridge and strengthening community connections, so when it is introduced on November 23, the Benediction sculpture will spend 40 days at the Martin Luther King Bridge – 20 days on the downtown side and 20 on the Gainsboro side. Beginning on January 1, 2023, Central Church of the Brethren will be the first place of worship to host the sculpture for 40 days.

Contact Charlie Brouwer if your place of worship is interested in participating with the Benediction Project. cbrouwer@swva.net.



To see *Benediction* installations in the New River Valley and in Winston-Salem, follow the project on FB: [@benedictionproject](https://www.facebook.com/benedictionproject)

<https://roanokearts.org/benediction/>

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