February 2021



Good News

Month At-A-Glance

February 7
Online Worship 11am
PW Feb. Mission
Program 12:30pm

February 10 Taizé/Burning of the Palms 6pm

February 14 Valentine's Day Online Worship 11am

February 15
Presidents' Day

February 17
Ash Wednesday
Dinner/Ashes 5:30pm

February 21 Online Worship 11am Youth Sunday

February 28 Online Worship 11am

FOR GOD SO LOVED THE GAVE HIS ONLY SON, SO THAT EVERYONE WH BELIEVES IN MAY NOT PERISH BUT MAY HAVE ETERNAL LIFE.

John 3:16

Thriving Stability

Last month, your church Session gathered for its yearly Session retreat. Like nearly everything in this season of life, we met in the virtual sphere, a place where each hour seems like 2. Hence, what is normally an overnight affair was paired down to a morning smorgasbord of reports, approvals, sign-ups, and faith statements. In the midst of this, I took five minutes to share my thoughts for the year that passed and my outlook for the year now upon us.

I told the Session that my goal is to maintain stability because right now, to be stable, is to thrive. I suspect as you read this you probably are facing some sort of uncertainty. Perhaps it is a personal anxiety or a sense of what is happening all around us as a community and society. Either way, I believe the church needs to live into the lyrics of the old hymn, "On Christ the solid rock I stand, all other ground is sinking sand..." We need to feel something solid. I hope in 2020 we were the church you could turn to, to sense that stability. If we were, then I believe we were doing God's work. If we were not, let us know why. We want to serve you. We want to meet you. We want to be present when you are broken. We want to be present when you are whole.

In the book *Digital Cathedral*, which I asked the Session to read an excerpt from for our retreat, the author invites us to see church is not just a Sunday activity, but rather how do we connect beyond the Lord's Day. Admittedly, prior to the pandemic, I struggled to see how we could get beyond Sunday. The school that occupies our campus is a gift to so many and a treasure to the community, but I wondered, when I first arrived as your pastor, how we could build our ministry while the school thrived.

The pandemic has opened that creativity. It took us, and took me, to places I would have avoided or even shunned (the idea of being a TV evangelist was an anathema to me). I hate that it took this horrible event, but I believe it has shown me how we will thrive and find stability not just until we are all vaccinated, but beyond. So, in 2021 I look forward to glorifying God with you when we worship/pray/or just pause for a Mount Vernon Moment together on Sunday, and Monday, and Tuesday, and so on... For we will thrive this year by being the calming presence and the compassionate responders to a world in search of its solid rock.

Grace and Peace,

Barrett

The Solid Rock

My hope is built on nothing less Than Jesus' blood and righteousness; I dare not trust the sweetest frame, But wholly lean on Jesus' name.

Refrain:

On Christ, the solid Rock, I stand; All other ground is sinking sand, All other ground is sinking sand.

When darkness veils His lovely face, I rest on His unchanging grace; In every high and stormy gale, My anchor holds within the veil.

His oath, His covenant, His blood Support me in the whelming flood; When all around my soul gives way, He then is all my hope and stay.

When He shall come with trumpet sound, Oh, may I then in Him be found; Dressed in His righteousness alone, Faultless to stand before the throne.

- Edward Mote

January/February Announcement

Dear Mount Vernon Family,

As we write this, we do so with the gratitude for a faith community that has remained flexible and eager to try new things in this season when truly the best laid plans have gone awry. You have been faithful worshippers, eager stewards, benevolent givers, and left us, your pastoral staff and your ruling elders in awe because we are bold enough to declare that amid the darkness of this time, we have witnessed the light of Christ in and through all of you.

This light, or the representation of this light, is witnessed through the new cross mounted over the courtyard that has become our sanctuary. A testament to the work of the Mount Vernon Presbyterian Foundation and individual church members, it is emblematic of who we are as a collective body. Recently, we added a spotlight to this symbol of Christ's love, so that all who come upon our campus after the sun goes down will know that the light of Christ never dims.

Unfortunately, our outdoor sanctuary will remain vacant for the time being. Out of an abundance of caution, due to both the winter weather and the continued rise in Covid-19 cases, the Worship Committee in consultation with your pastoral staff and approval of the MVPC Church Session has made the decision to move all Sunday services to digital only. This decision is in effect for the remainder of January and the month of February. We hope that we can return to outdoor worship in March.

We look forward to worshipping with you each Sunday online at 11am, and more details regarding this change will be forthcoming.

Grace and Peace,

Rev. Barrett Abernethy

Rev. Isaac Toney-Schmitt

Elder Wendy Hageanu, Worship Committee Co-Chair

Elder Dale Morine, Worship Committee Co-Chair

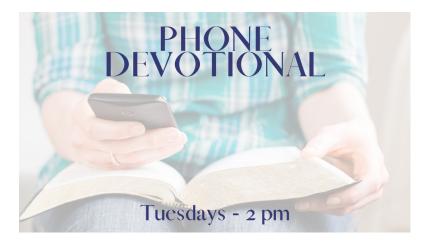




We tried to get Bernie to sing Amazing Grace with us, but he just wasn't into it...



Don't forget to share your Six-Word Story of Faith on <u>Facebook</u> or by emailing Barrett! Watch Barrett's video above by clicking on the photo or visiting our Facebook page if you missed it.

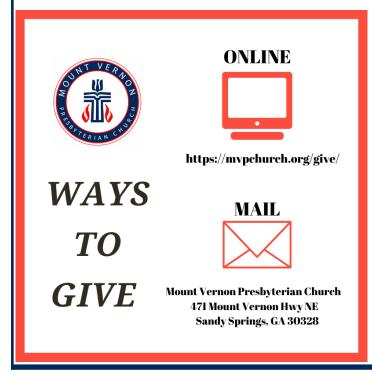


Join us on Tuesdays at 2 pm for a phone devotional!

Dial 701-802-5094

Access Code: 5154569

If you would like to know how you can help, or if you need help during these unprecedented times, please visit our website at mvpchurch.org. If viewing online, click on the links below.







2021 Session Members and Ministry Teams

Christian Education Carrie Southard

Clerk of Session David Hill

Congregational Care
Joy Carden

<u>Fellowship</u> David Barclift

Finance/ Administration/ Stewardship Charlie Gray John Hibbard

Moderators Rev. Barrett Abernethy Rev. Isaac Toney-Schmitt

<u>Outreach</u> Carol Beckman Brent Schwieger

<u>Personnel</u> Vacant (merged with FAMT for 2021 only)

Senior Adults Mary Kilgore

Stewardship Wit Truitt

Witness Angie Hawthorne

<u>Worship</u> Wendy Hagenau Dale Morine Amy Kiley

<u>Youth</u> Jon Barber Ben Barber

The beginning of a new year marks the beginning of the next school year for students in Zambia, including the secondary school students who have been supported by this congregation for the past five years. As many of you know, Garden Presbyterian School in Lusaka, Zambia only goes through grade 7 and many of its graduates are unable to afford the tuition of secondary school. Through Hannah's Zambia Fund, we seek to raise money to pay the tuition for these students so that they may further their education. We are pleased to announce that this year, the sponsorship fund will be supporting 39 secondary school students. This group includes two seniors: Elina Kabwe and Catherine Banda. Hannah Hagenau met both of these young women on her recent trip to Zambia in March 2020. This will be Elina's fifth year on this sponsorship and Catherine's fourth. Both young women are extremely impressive and hope to continue their studies after graduation. In addition to the two seniors, we will also be supporting 14 eighth graders, 11 ninth graders, 8 tenth graders, and 4 eleventh graders. Most of the students in grades 9-12 have been previously supported by this congregation. Thanks to your kind donations, we were able to raise over \$5000 in 2020. If you would like to donate to this cause to continue to support these students please either send a check to the church office marked for Hannah's Zambia Scholarship Fund or donate through the church website on the give page by selecting the fund by the same name. Click here if viewing online.

Pictured left to right: Mr. Kamanga (Garden Pres. 7th grade teacher), Hannah, Elina, Catherine, and Katie Ann Peterson, on Hannah's visit to Zambia in February 2020.

MVPC Covid-19 Fund Update

"Why have you given to the Covid Fund?" Below are some responses from our congregation:

By the grace of God, we are who we are, and we have what we have. While other people are hurting and hungry, losing jobs and homes — why shouldn't I give what belongs to God?

When we were envisioning the Covid Fund, we were mostly thinking about so many people in our community being in need and knowing that at least some members of the church would have both the desire and the means to help. We also thought that sometimes the hardest part about giving is knowing where to start and not knowing how to find the people and groups that have the greatest needs. Having caring members of the church managing the funds solves that problem. Also, we thought that some people might have limited resources but still want to contribute, and by pooling their contributions with others they can have a bigger impact.

We are God's hands in the world. If we don't give, how can God's kingdom be built? How can people see the face of God if Christians fail to carry on the work of Jesus Christ?

Covid and the related economic challenges that come with it have hit some parts of our community harder than others; through no fault of their own, so many people have lost jobs and businesses, sometimes losing everything they have worked for during their lives. We think that this is a time for the community to rise up to help the most vulnerable. We don't want to just sit in our basement waiting for someone else to step in.

MVPC has always had a focus on outreach, and we have strong relationships with organizations that do so much good work in our local and global community, including CAC, Atlanta Mission, Stirred-Up Ministries, Clifton Shelter, Alliance for Children, and others. While we could have tried to add funds to each of these, as an individual, it would be hard to know how to provide the most benefit for hardships created by Covid or to contribute enough to be meaningful. Giving to the Covid Fund puts the research in the hands of our trusted stewards, the Covid Task Force. I am confident that every dollar we have contributed to the Fund has been put to good use!

Matthew 25:31-46 is our marching orders for what God expects. Of course, we give and will continue to give to the Covid-19 Fund. Some people are losing all they have because of the pandemic. We need to respond as Jesus taught us.

We would love to hear from others.

Please email your reason/thoughts to Carol, Christy or Jeanne.

Jan 21- Jan 27	Actual	Actual YTD	2021 Budget
Member Giving Pledge	\$3,330	\$70,910	\$439,217
Member Giving Non-			
Pledge	\$140	\$5,565	\$80,000
Non member giving &		·	
Loose offering	\$0	\$75	\$15,000
Total for week	\$3,470	\$76,550	\$534,217

The Communion Offering for February is non-perishable food for the Food Pantry at the Community Assistance Center (CAC). Since the beginning of the COVID pandemic last year, CAC has provided food, financial assistance, and other services to 9,188 individuals from 3,466 households (a 41% increase from the previous year). Weekly home delivery of food to elderly and medically fragile clients was also implemented.



Currently the most needed items are canned fruits and vegetables, canned meats, canned pasta meals (Spaghetti-O's, etc.), macaroni and cheese, meat entrees (canned chili, beef stew, etc.), juice and milk boxes for kids, and rice. Laundry detergent (small container) is also needed.

Please note: The "most needed" list will be updated in the weekly email to the congregation. Donations may be brought to the church at any time and left in the bin outside the entrance to the office wing. The bin is checked daily and all donations will be delivered to CAC on a weekly basis.

Thank you for your generosity!

The newly formatted **Winter Issue 2021, an MVPC PW Publication**, <u>THE MVPC MEMBERS' GIFT OF WISDOM</u>, is available! It can be viewed on the MVPC website and by a link in the weekly emails. You can also pick up a printed version outside of the church office, at the Information Center. <u>If viewing online</u>, <u>click here</u>.

Presbyterian Women February Mission Program The Community Assistance Center







Sunday, February 7, 2021 12:30 PM Streaming Video via Livestream after the Sunday service!

Tamara Carrera, CEO of the Community Assistance Center will be leading a tour of the facility. Ms. Carrera, who has led the Community Assistance Center since 1997, has announced that she plans to retire in the coming months. Under her leadership CAC has become widely recognized as the cornerstone emergency human services agency preventing homelessness and hunger in the Sandy Springs and Dunwoody communities. Please join us for an informative and interesting tour of the important work that CAC does.

The Day and Sunday Circles will not have their regular meetings in February. The Book Circle will meet on February 12 and review *Crossing to Safety* by Wallace Stegner.

Grace and Peace,

I pray this poem finds you rested and curious for God's movement all around. Amidst a new year of resolutions and expectations, this month's poem is hopeful, attentive, and calm. It does not shy away from the challenging moments, but instead invites us to move forward with care. This poem seems to live in our back pocket, waiting for its time to balance the doubts and difficulties that may emerge. May it be a blessing this month.

Peace,

Isaac

This is the Time to Be Slow By John O'Donohue

This is the time to be slow,
Lie low to the wall
Until the bitter weather passes.
Try, as best you can, not to let
The wire brush of doubt
Scrape from your heart
All sense of yourself
And your hesitant light.
If you remain generous,
Time will come good;
And you will find your feet
Again on fresh pastures of promise,
Where the air will be kind
And blushed with beginning.

*Page 12 is an excerpt from John O'Donohue's work To Bless the Space Between Us: A Book of Blessings. I highly recommend it as a collection of prayers and poems!

Summary of the Stated Meeting of the Session Saturday, January 23, 2021

Rev. Abernethy called the meeting to order and opened with prayer at 10:00 am. The January Session Meeting this year was done as a ZOOM meeting. All current Session members were well as the new members elected as congregation to be ordained and installed at the January 24th worship service. The three elders-elect are Angela Hawthorne and Amy Kiley who will serve three-year terms, and Ben Barber, the Youth representative, who will serve a one-year term. Following their examination by the Session, it was moved that the ordination and installation should move forward planned.

The new church budget must be approved by the Session each year. Representing the Finance Ministry Team, Charlie Gray presented the proposed 2021 budget pointing out that the church finished the 2020 year in really good shape considering the impact of the pandemic. The proposed budget is a very lean budget built around stewardship pledges. In the past few years, some members who gave substantial amounts have passed away; despite this, the church should be in good shape for the year. It was noted there is a projected shortfall in the new budget. The Session approved the budget as presented.

Continued on page 14....

Announcements/Reminders:

The Presbytery of Greater Atlanta has posted on their YouTube channel the recent town hall meeting, "A House United" led by Allen Hilton. This is a wonderful town hall based on Hilton's book by the same title. The author contends that the church at large has contributed greatly to the divide in our country, but the church can and must lead in reuniting the country. You can access the town hall by going to the Presbytery website – https://www.atlpcusa.org/ – and on the right side of the home page click on the little YouTube symbol. Once you get to YouTube, please click on "Subscribe" since this helps increase the visibility of our Presbytery in the YouTube world. Then look for the town hall video that features Allen Hilton.

Presbytery meetings this year are scheduled for February 20th, May 11th, August 14th, and November 9th. The Presbytery of Greater Atlanta continues to hold its meetings through ZOOM until further notice. MVPC elects three Commissioners to attend these meetings to represent our church.

We received a letter from the Community Assistance Center (CAC) thanking MVPC for our December donation of \$750. This donation was part of the MVPC Foundation COVID-19 fund. CAC has been a regular recipient of grants from our COVID fund. Over the past year, in addition to feeding many people, CAC has been able to help 1,348 families stay in their homes. The total number of individuals receiving CAC assistance in 2020 was 9,200 people up from 6,500 people in 2019.

The Christian Education Ministry Team, chaired by Carrie Southard, announced its decision to postpone the usual dates for small group studies to after Easter when the weather is warmer. This will allow small groups to meet outdoors on campus following the MVPC pandemic protocols. Dates will be announced soon.

The Worship Ministry Team, co-chaired by Wendy Hagenau and Dale Morine (with a third co-chair, Amy Kiley to be added soon) decided to cancel outdoor worship plans through February due to cold weather. With better weather in March, we should be able to resume outdoor worship. Saturday, February 6th will be a sanctuary cleanout day. This will be a time for the removal of items that may currently be stored in various areas of the sanctuary that need to be moved elsewhere. Anyone with personal items in and around the sanctuary is encouraged to participate in helping to remove the clutter!

Commissioners for the February 20th Presbytery Meeting were elected. They include Jon Barber, John Hibbard, and Carrie Southard.

The church bylaws require the Church Nominating Committee to be composed of two Elder representatives currently serving on Session and additional members chosen by the congregation. Charlie Gray and Wendy Hagenau were selected as the Session representatives on the 2021 Nominating Committee.

The church bylaws also require the Session each year to appoint the Clerk of Session and the Church Treasurer. David Hill was elected to continue serving as Clerk and Steve Ray was chosen to continue as Church Treasurer.

The Worship and Fellowship Ministry Teams would like to provide the traditional Ash Wednesday (February 17) pancake dinner and marking with ashes. The pancake dinner will be provided in takeout containers. There was discussion of whether marking with ashes can be safely done. Discussion suggested it would be safer to provide ashes in a bag.

Continued of page 16....

It was suggested that participants could all gather at one time in their cars and marking could be overseen by the pastors as people in cars applied the ashes to their foreheads. The Session approved and the Worship and Fellowship Ministry Teams along with church staff are tasked with determining the safest way to provide the pancake dinner and the marking with ashes within the approved MVPC pandemic protocols.

The Session approved the 2020 Statistical Report that the Session Clerk must send to PC(USA). The report includes membership, participation, and financial data for the previous year.

The Session concluded its meeting with a worship service conducted by Rev. Abernethy and Rev. Toney-Schmitt. Those elders who will continue with consecutive terms on Session (Charlie Gray, David Barclift, both to serve three-year terms, and Joy Carden to serve a one-year term) were installed as Session members during this worship service since the pandemic has forced us to limit the number of people we can safely have in the sanctuary at one time. The Session also celebrated the Lord's Supper.

Rev. Abernethy closed the meeting with prayer. Stated Session meetings are scheduled for the third Sunday of each month (there is no June meeting, and the January meeting is always part of the Annual Session Retreat). The next meeting will be February 21st.

If you are not receiving our weekly emails and would like to stay up to date on the latest MVPC news, please subscribe on the contact page of our website or click here.



The church office is open from 8 a.m. to 4 p.m. The doors remain locked at all times. Please call upon arrival so someone can let you in. Yvonne is in the office from 8-12, and Debbie from 12-4.

Youth Group
February 7 & 28
Youth Sunday
February 21



Pastor
Office Hours
January 20, 2020

Tuesdays 8-10 am Wednesdays 12-2 pm

We would like to congratulate lason Locke his on new that he position will be transitioning to within next couple of weeks Director of Operations at a school/church in Buckhead. Thank you, Jason for your service! We wish you the best!





The Information Center is outside the Church office if you need Upper Room Devotionals (Jan.-Feb.), These Days Devotionals, the Good News, Stephen Ministry information, The MVPC Members' Gift of Wisdom, or Care Notes.



Feeling alone, discouraged, overwhelmed?

Our church has committed to having trained, caring Stephen Ministers available so that our members, school employees, and neighborhood friends never have to walk difficult paths alone. A Stephen Minister can be your companion, encourager, resource-giver, and sounding board as you tackle grief, health issues, isolation, moving, divorce, and all the hard places in life. Contact Barrett, Isaac, or Pat Bartee, Stephen Leader, to get involved.



Do you feel a need for prayer?
Have our Prayer Vine pray for you!
Email your requests to

<u>prayerrequests@mvpchurch.org</u> or call the church office at 404-255-2211.

Please keep these individuals and their families in your prayers.

Patricia Hibbard's brother, James Ballew, is home from the hospital and has nursing care at home several days a week while he recovers following colon surgery. Prayers for perfect healing. Prayers for perfect healing for Julie Chesnutt as she heals from a lumpectomy. She will start radiation therapy in February. Prayers for peace and comfort for Karen, Mary Lea Woods' sister, who has inoperable brain cancer.

Prayers for recovery for Corny Laube. He is moving from Pruitt Rehab to MV Towers on January 29th to be closer to his sister. He will have 24 hour care and hopefully start rehab. He is weak and appreciates our prayers for healing.

Prayers that Rylynn will walk independently. Rylynn has physical therapy twice a week and is making progress little by little. Pray for renewed health and strength for Eleanor Brazell. Pray for healing and comfort for Barbara Hughes. She has not been able to start physical therapy because of Covid concerns. Prayers for freedom from addiction for Rob Southard. Prayers for the use of his left hand and arm for Kirk Pumphrey. Prayers for strength and provision for vulnerable children,

families and staff we support at schools and an orphanage in Zambia, with Los Niño's Primero, Community Assistance Center, and with Family Promise.

Prayers for health and peace for our children, parents, and teachers at school and for those who opt for homeschooling or a gap year navigating education during a pandemic.

Prayers for financial stability and recovery for those who have lost employment or whose revenue is drastically reduced, and business owners who are trying to stay in business.

Praise the Lord for three vaccines approved for Covid! Prayers for a hedge of protection around family, friends, church members, our elderly, health care workers, first responders, grocery store workers, and those who are most vulnerable. Lord heal our world and bring glory to your name!



Family Promise of North Fulton/Dekalb, with your support, has been able to:

Assist 456 families and Individuals with referrals, hygiene items, gift cards, counseling, and food items.

provide services to 121 children outside of our rotation.

Refer 34 families to Hope Atlanta for housing placements.

Graduate 6 families in our rotational program.

Donate 3 cars!

Assist families with \$3,301.26 in car repairs.

Assist families with \$1,064.00 in childcare costs.

Receive \$92,200 in grant funds, a 186% increase from 2019.

Prepare 32 grant applications.

Increase over 200 contacts to our data base.

Receive over 100 new likes & followers on our social media sites.

Develop and fund 3 new programs to assist families with basic needs upon entering the program and aftercare.





Check out our
Facebook page
where we bring a
Mount Vernon
Moment each
weekday!

Anyone who is interested in hosting a Zoom meeting, please contact Terri Clayton at terri@mvpchurch.org.



Our next Taizé service will be Wednesday, February 10th. You can sign-up to attend this service here (limit to 15 people). We will have the burning of the palms in preparation for Ash Wednesday and the season of Lent.



5:30 pm—Enjoy some pancakes and bacon in your car or to go.
6:00 pm—Enjoy the service in your car!
More details and Signup coming soon.

You can also drop off donations for CAC during this event.

February February

Sun.	Mon.	Tue.	Wed.	Thur.	Fri.	Sat.
	I Preschool Zoom 1pm	2 Phone Devotional 2pm	3 Staff Meeting 9:30am	4	5	6
7 Discovery Zoom 10am Online Worship 11am PW Feb. Mission Program 12:30pm Youth Group 5pm	8 Preschool Zoom 1pm	9 Phone Devotional 2pm	I O Staff Meeting 9:30am Taizé/Burning of the Palms 6pm	11	12	13
I 4 Discovery Zoom 10am Online Worship 11am	I 5 Preschool Zoom 1pm	I 6 Phone Devotional 2pm	I 7 Staff Meeting 9:30am Ash Wednesday 5:30pm	18	19	20
Valentine's Day	Presidents' Day	Good News Deadline				
21 Discovery Zoom 10am Online Worship 11am Youth Sunday	22 Preschool Zoom 1pm	23 Phone Devotional 2pm	24 Staff Meeting 9:30am	Good News Published	26	27
28 Discovery Zoom 10am Online Worship 11am Youth Group 5pm						

Page 23 **Good News**

February Birthdays

2/2	George Hammett	2/22
2/6	Jim Wingate	2/22
2/9	Taylor Doyle	2/23
2/15	Viola Crawford	2/23
2/15	John Allen	2/24
2/17	Thomas Ufere	2/25
2/17	Chad Plumly II	2/28
2/18	Karen Camp	2/28
2/18	·	
2/20		
	2/6 2/9 2/15 2/15 2/17 2/17 2/18 2/18	2/6 2/9 Taylor Doyle 2/15 Viola Crawford 2/15 John Allen 2/17 Thomas Ufere 2/17 Chad Plumly II 2/18 Karen Camp 2/18

If you have a February birthday and your name does not appear in our birthday list, please contact Debbie@mvpchurch.org.



The Discovery class meets Sundays at 10 am via Zoom. Preschool Zoom - 1 pm Mondays Elementary girls are meeting once a month in person outside to do an outreach project.



PLACE STAMP HERE

Return Service Requested

Got News? We'd love to hear from you! Send us your news so we can celebrate, laugh, and/or cry with you. After all, we are FAMILY. Deadline for news is the third Tuesday of each month for the *next month*'s newsletter. Send your submissions to terri@mvpchurch.org. If you'd no longer wish to receive the Good News monthly, please email Debbie at debbie@mvpchurch.org.



Mount Vernon Presbyterian Church Staff

Rev. Barrett Abernethy
Rev. Isaac Toney-Schmitt
Matthias Young
Steve Ray
Debbie Nysewander
Terri Clayton
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SIRI ... SAY GRACE

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