

Fall 2021 MVPC Quarterly PW
Moderator Report – Ann Williams

<http://www.atlpcusa.org/pw.html>

Mount Vernon Presbyterian Women Day Circle, Book Circle and Sunday Circle will begin meeting in person this Fall.

Our Bible Study for the upcoming year will be the Horizon's Bible Study, **What My Grandmothers Taught Me: Learning from the Women in Matthew's Genealogy of Jesus**, by Merryl Blair.

MVPW will host our Fall Retreat on Sunday, September 26 after our 10:30 am church service. Our speaker is Mazi Robinson, a licensed professional counselor and speaker specializing in helping women discover their true voice as they navigate self worth/self esteem challenges, relationship concerns, and life stage transitions. The topic for our Retreat is **"Using Your Gifts"**. All women of the church are invited to attend.

Our Residual Funds Committee distributed \$800 for the fiscal year ending June 31, 2021. We donated \$600 to Chris 180, <https://chris180.org>, which supports Metro Atlanta foster children who have not had success in traditional foster homes or age out of the system. We also donated \$200 to the MVP Foundation's Matching Fund.



Mazi Robinson, MS, LPC, NCC, CDWF

Mazi Robinson is a licensed professional counselor and speaker specializing in helping women discover their true voice as they navigate self worth/self esteem challenges, relationship concerns, and life stage transitions.

In addition to her work as a therapist, Mazi maintains an active speaking schedule presenting workshops on topics such as anxiety, healing, self worth, healthy relationships, personal growth, and purposeful living. She is also a Certified Daring Way™ Facilitator presenting workshops and retreats based on the research and methodology of Dr. Brené Brown to individuals and groups.

Mazi is the Founder and Director of Cultivate. Through its counseling center and bi-monthly gatherings, Cultivate encourages women to cultivate joy, courage, and freedom in their lives as they pursue emotional, mental, and spiritual health.

Mazi resides in Atlanta, GA with her husband and two sons. She is an avid FRIENDS fan, loves dinner on a porch with friends, and is passionate about telling women they are loved and worthy.

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A Theological Voice

Rev. Isaac Toney-Schmitt ~ Associate Pastor for Faith Formation



<https://www.newyorker.com/news/annals-of-a-warming-planet/the-particular-psychology-of-destroying-a-planet>

<https://www.theguardian.com/science/2021/aug/09/humans-have-caused-unprecedented-and-irreversible-change-to-climate-scientists-warn>

<https://www.theatlantic.com/science/archive/2021/08/latest-ipcc-report-catastrophe/619698/>

God blessed them, and God said to them, "Be fruitful and multiply, and fill the earth and subdue it; and have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the air and over every living thing that moves upon the earth." Genesis 1:28
Christian Principle: From the very beginning we have been called by God to relate to the world around us.

In this article we return to the Biblical truth that from the very beginning we have been called by God to relate to the world around us. In light of this truth, what should this relationship look like? Alongside our last triannual issue, we will continue to view our relationship with the Earth through the lens of 'neighbor.' If our scriptures call us to care for the vulnerable and marginalized in our communities, then we must recognize the Earth as vulnerable and marginalized as well. The Earth's resources are exploited without compensation; the Earth's voice, expressed through changes in temperatures, storms, and currents, is often ignored; the Earth's potential for future life is put in jeopardy. The Earth is our neighbor in need!

This may stretch our sense of "neighbor" a little bit, but we are on solid Biblical footing. Jesus stretches his community's sense of "neighbor" in chapter 10 of the Gospel of Luke. When asked by a religious scholar who his "neighbor" is, Jesus shares the Parable of the Good Samaritan. An Israelite man lays dying by the side of the road. A priest walks past him without helping. A Levite walks past him without helping. But a Samaritan, an outsider of the community, stops. He bandages the dying man, takes him to an inn, and pays his medical bills. Which character in this parable is the one who acts like a "neighbor?" *'The one who showed him mercy.'* Jesus said to the religious scholar, *'Go and do likewise.'* Neighbors recognize need and act accordingly.

Science and politics normally dominate the conversations around Earth care and environmentalism. The Paris Climate Agreement is one of the latest international attempts to limit greenhouse gas emissions and halt the Earth's temperature rise. Climate groups continue to release new research about the impact of climate change, most recently about shifts in ocean currents that threaten weather patterns, on-land temperatures, and the stability of ice caps. Let's add a theological voice to the mix, one that recognizes the Earth as beaten on the side of the road and acts accordingly. May we continue to pray for the more-than-human-world and act to protect the life of our neighbors in need.

FALL ISSUE 2021
THE MVPC MEMBERS'
GIFT OF WISDOM



A Litany for Covid Celebration

Rev. Barrett Abernethy

We celebrate the work of faithful people who in a time of great uncertainty filled with human tragedy responded with God's love.

For where your treasure is, there your heart will be.

For the Mount Vernon Church Session, who acted boldly and created the Covid-19 fund.

For where your treasure is, there your heart will be.

For you, the people of this church, who responded week after week, and who never grew tired of acting generously.

For where your treasure is, there your heart will be.

For the Mount Vernon Foundation who oversaw this fund, and for the Task Force who saw these benevolences went to where they were most needed.

For where your treasure is, there your heart will be.

On this day we give thanks for where that treasure resides.

In the meals given to our friends in Lusaka.

Where else is this treasure...

Right here in our midst, ensuring that rents were paid, families were not left stranded, and parents could do their most important job- take care of their children.

For where your treasure is, there your heart will be.

We give thanks to God in Christ, who shows us that a heart of generosity can transcend what we cannot do physically: be in multiple places at once.

Rejoice people of Mount Vernon Presbyterian, for the pandemic may have shut the physical doors, but it served to open your hearts even wider.

Let us respond this way season after season! Let us witness how benevolent God can mold us! To God be the Glory!

Prayer of Thanksgiving

God of abundance, as we feast this day, we ask that your cup continue to overflow. As we close this chapter of generosity, remind us that this horrible virus is not over. Remind us that we must remain vigilant and compassionate. Remind us to be flexible and fervent to the needs that will inevitably arise.

Dear God, for so much of the past year we have questioned this or that, we have wondered what is needed and what is not, but as so many can testify this day-those who gave freely of these gifts, and those who longingly received them-the church remains the foundation of hope for so much in this world.

Help us to rest in that truth, and help us to be guided by your still, small voice. For it is easy to get lost in the noise, but as this collective witness to love of neighbor shows when the church stands on your foundational rock, we can be a force of good that spans oceans and overcomes barriers.

We pray all of this to the one who inspires and compels us to live out our faith through our time, our talent, and treasure-your son, Jesus Christ. Alleluia. Amen.



Stephen Ministry
Pat Bartee – Leader

What Now?

Unpredictability is one of the hardest things to deal with in life. Though everyday life is greatly improved by vaccination, we are not “out of the woods”, as hesitation and new variants abound. Our national foundation of beliefs we have long trusted, whatever our party preference, is in an unstable, tattered state. Our educational and work and retirement lives have been turned upside down. Our past successful days were generally ordered and planned, although we have relearned during Covid how to pull back a bit from over-scheduled and routine lives and how to breathe and listen and love more. We are, frankly, a mess.

Going forward, as people and as a nation, we may need new and different personal goals, new awareness of “the common good”, and more inclusive values regarding our communities. Prolonged Pandemic conditions have uncovered our weaknesses. Regardless of politics, we should join April Ross of Olympic beach volleyball fame, who, after faltering while grieving her mother's death, finally picked herself up and developed a mantra for all future endeavors. She always approaches new beginnings with this question: Is this the “self” I want to continue to be?

So, how, as Christians with renewed vision and passion, can we begin again as new “selves” in a world of uncertainty? Here are a few suggestions.

* **Fill your tank.** Start with a new spiritual focus in everyday life. What can you commit to daily? A devotional book? A personal prayer list handy in the Notes section of your cell phone? Join the church prayer chain? Reread a book of the Bible? Read a book that fosters spiritual growth? Join a Circle, Sunday School class, or Small Group to learn and discuss with others and study ahead for deeper understanding? On days you feel uncertain, do a Google search for verses of Assurance, and pray for protection and safety. We have been promised, “Ask and you shall receive.”

* **Take action on one new thing.** During Covid, what did you miss or find newly important? Do more of this missed thing every day or week or do research on the important thing and how to incorporate it into your life. Pick a day of the week you will do it and put a check on your calendar as you do it until it becomes a new habit. Make this period of our lives move you forward, not backward.

* **Extend your vision and awareness.** We live in uncertainty at every intersection of life. Change is our reality. Be aware and well-informed. Listen first. Be open to other perspectives. We live best in community. If one is in distress, we all must feel and react. If you have concrete ideas, share with a Small Group, one of our Session ministries, or our ministers. Our church is committed to being part of the solution. Write your local, state, and federal legislators of your concerns and ideas.

* **Be kind in a divisive world.** Be God's light in a darkened landscape, that beacon always beckoning and encouraging. Even small, random kindnesses go a long way. Jesus gave us a simple parting message when he returned to heaven, “Love one another”. This is always a good place to begin.

<https://qz.com/2049935/what-does-a-good-life-look-like/>

PW Retreat: Save the date! The Presbyterian Women's Fall Retreat will be on September 26 in the Kirk Center after the Sunday service. More information will come soon.

Bible Study: The Bible Study for the upcoming year will be the Horizons Bible Study, *What My Grandmothers Taught Me: Learning from the Women in Matthew's Genealogy of Jesus*, by Merry Blair.

Charlie Gray
Finance/Administration Elder

My Christian principle about investing and all aspects of life is, “God’s in charge”, meaning there is no reason to panic because no matter what happens, who is elected or whatever the circumstance, God knows how to guide us through uncertain times. Basically Romans 8:28 – And we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose.

The End of the World – “Again”

and Other Lessons from Investing in a COVID World

Lesson IV – “Harvest those tax losses”

The sharp decline in the market last March, proved again how critical it is to capture losses as they occur in your portfolio. Unless this is a concept you are familiar with, this likely sounds insane. Who in their right mind wants anything to do with losses? Here's how it works. In taxable accounts that allow investors to sell his or her investments at a loss are where this can happen. These losses can be used to offset future gains in the account, as well as to offset up to \$3,000 per year in ordinary income under current tax rules. However, in order to do so, you must sell the investment after the value has declined. In order to follow the earlier lesson of not timing the market, you must reinvest your funds in order to stay invested. This takes some help because there are other rules that say you can't sell and immediately buy back the same investment. What you can do is sell and buy back a similar investment. For example, if you bought Home Depot for \$100 per share and the value fell to \$65 a share, you can sell it and capture the \$35 per share loss. Then on the same day you can buy shares of Lowe's stock. In this example, if the market recovered the way it has this year, unless the Home Depot stock was sold, you miss out on the opportunity to capture the loss.

In conclusion, for many this has been an incredibly tough year! As humans, we all have emotions and the pandemic has certainly impacted our way of life and our ability to interact with one another. In life when times are tough there is tendency to want to take action and investing certainly falls into this category. While some actions make sense such as tax loss harvesting, staying the course is the real key and the old adage of, “slow and steady wins the race” has once again proven to be true.

“Let us love in truth and action” *

**By Applying our Christian Principles
in Changing Times**

***1 John 3:18b**

Conversation | Sunday School: 9:30-10:15

Connection | Fellowship: 10:00-10:25

Church | Worship: 10:30-11:30

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Reading List for Learning about Race and White Privilege
in American Society

David M. Hill, Ph.D., August 2020

My "Golden Rule:" Christ summed up the law in two simple rules we must follow; one is to love God with all my heart, the other to love my neighbor just as much as I love myself. Imagine what a wonderful world if we all would strive to follow these rules in every interaction we have with others. This would make God visible to the world through our actions. What a wonderful way to witness to the world!

Annotated Bibliography

Anderson, Carol. *White Rage: The Unspoken Truth about Our Racial Divide* (New York: Bloomsbury Publishing, 2016). Anderson is the Samuel Candler Dobbs Professor and Chair of the African Studies Department at Emory University. A beautifully researched book written after the 2014 Ferguson, Missouri, police-shooting of a black man, Anderson carefully documents how white America responds to black American progress by pushing back after every major black advancement dating from the release of black Americans from slavery to the present. Most recently, the populist political campaign and election of Donald Trump is the pushback to America's first black president. The history of white pushback is so clear it cannot be missed and yet it is.

Beals, Melba Pattillo. *Warriors Don't Cry* (New York: Washington Square Press, 1994). In this memoir of one of the nine Black students who integrated Little Rock's Central High School, the author details what it was like hearing white adults shouting hate-filled words at children. Very readable and hard to put down, readers are taken back in time to 1957; any white person reading this book should be aghast and ashamed of how “regular” white people threatened, threw things, and even encouraged violence against nine American children who simply wanted an equal opportunity to get a quality education.

Biss, Eula. *Notes from No Man's Land: American Essays*. (Minneapolis, MN: Graywolf Press: 2009). Winner of the National Book Critics Award, Biss takes us on a journey to see America, as it is, not how we want it to be. The book is a collection of essays written in memoir style. Here is a hard-hitting passage that illustrates the book's power:

“...disguising the fearful things we do to children as essential elements of their education are as good as dynamiting the foundation of the classroom. The walls are bound to collapse, eventually, around that betrayal, and bring with them the roof. One of the most frightening things about children, in my experience, is their intelligence. They inevitably know more than we suspect them of knowing. They appraise us with devastating accuracy. And they are aware of injustices we have learned to ignore.” Perhaps this is why young Americans are in the streets now weary of blatant injustice that has for so long been ignored.

Blackmon, Douglas A. *Slavery by Another Name: The Re-Enslavement of Black Americans from the Civil War to World War II* (New York: Anchor Books, 2008). Formerly a bureau chief for the *Wall Street Journal*, Blackmon is currently host of *American Forum*, a PBS program. The book won the Pulitzer in 2009 and is **must reading** for anyone who believes black and white Americans have the same “starting line” for the race to success in America. Heavily documented, this book describes the enslavement of black Americans after the Civil War in the South, supported by large corporations including US Steel and the Southern Company. This is an astounding story about the sins of our nation. *The Wall Street Journal*, well known as a conservative publication, ran portions of the book in its pages. Unmarked graves of hundreds of blacks who died at Sloss Furnace, a U. S. Steel facility, can be found today on that property that was simply a cover for maintaining a system of slavery that supported Southern landowners at the expense of slaves and non-landowning whites. The data is gruesome. **(To be continued with Annotated Bibliography, Winter Issue, January 2022)**