



Stephen Ministry

Pat Bartee – Leader

Isaiah 41:10

Fear not for I am with you; be not dismayed for I am your God. I will strengthen you. I will help you with my righteous right hand.

Anxiety the new "normal"?

Post Covid life is different. Stores we loved are shuttered, customer service is disappearing, and limited products are on grocery shelves. Many have left the workforce altogether. Amidst all these changes, we find ourselves re-evaluating our own goals and needs. And we feel anxious about the future. Anxiety is always being discussed as something to treat, and for some who find it debilitating, it truly should be. But, for most of us, anxiety is now part of our unsteady amble into the future and something we need to learn to manage. Thinking ahead is what marks us as human and mature, yet that is what spurs anxiety. How do we tame anxiety so we can function?

Four tips:

*** Start your day in prayer or meditation.** Beginning with a calm centering makes the day go better. In my last few years of working, I turned off the news in the car and took a slower, less traveled route along a river to work. I prayed, as I rode, for others and for strength for my day. What a stunning difference that made!

*** Stop and take a breath or a walk during the day** when you feel anxiety building. Walking physically clears a befuddled brain and allows for clearer thinking while activating endorphins that elevate your mood, providing a much better environment for decision-making. If you cannot walk, shut your door, get comfortable, and take 10 deep breaths.

*** Sleep more and set a routine.** Stop technology early in the evening, even television, if it stimulates too much for a good night's sleep. A good book is often a magical sleep-inducer. Eight hours of sleep and a routine make a huge difference in your ability to manage stress and anxiety. If that routine includes Sunday worship, you get another leg up for strengthening your spiritual life.

*** Seek social connections.** That is one of the top predictors of successful aging. We can all attest to the uplift we get from being with and sharing with others. Our church is working hard to make a combined worship service all can enjoy and many fellowship events to feed body and soul. Anxiety is reduced markedly by participation in these events. Bridge, book clubs, date nights, symphony tickets with a friend are all smart options for keeping your spirits high. As Christians, we have a faithful Father whose purposes we see dimly but we have seen His hand in our lives before and know we can trust Him to hold our hand going forward. No rose garden promised but He will be there in it with us.

Isaac Toney-Schmitt

Associate Pastor for Faith Formation

God created the earth, and it is sacred. As Psalm 24:1 proclaims, "The earth is the Lord's, and all that is in it." Therefore, we are called to stewardship of the earth. When we work to protect creation, we are answering God's call to till and keep the garden (Genesis 2:15)

(<https://www.presbyterianmission.org/ministries/environment/environmental-issues/climate-change/>)

This is the call-to-action found on the Presbyterian Mission webpage on climate change, alongside articles and links about the impacts of food, transportation, energy, personal lifestyle choices, and church policies on our environment. This column in the Gift of Wisdom has focused on similar calls-to-action and covenants in scripture that link us to creation's health. Moving forward in 2022, I'd like to explore the ways Presbyterians already approach climate change and how we can join in. Much of what I share here can also be found in the "Sustainable Living & Earth Care Concerns" page of the Presbyterian Mission website.

For the Spring, I lift up a hymn/prayer that will ground us in our efforts to join our Presbyterian partners as caretakers of the earth, a hymn/prayer written in response to the United Nations Climate Change Conference in Glasgow, Scotland (2021). Sing along, look it up on YouTube, even ask Matthias to sing it in worship! Use it anyway that works it into your prayer life.

(Hymn chosen by Rev. Isaac Toney-Schmitt)

https://www.carolynshymns.com/the_climate_is_changing.pdf

The Climate Is Changing

Carolyn Winfrey Gillette, 2021 St. Denio
arr. Caniadau y Cyssegr, 1839

1. The cli - mate is chang - ing! Cre - a - tion cries out!
 2. We pray for the a - ni - mals here in our midst
 3. We thank you for peo - ple who trea - sure the earth,
 4. We thank you for lead - ers, cou - ra - geous and brave,
 5. You love this good earth, and you sent us your Son!

Your peo - ple face flood - ing and fire — and drought.
 who can - not de - fend their own right to ex - ist.
 whose faith has long taught them its beau - ty and worth.
 who know that the earth is worth fight - ing to save,
 May we love our neigh - bors— there's work to be done.

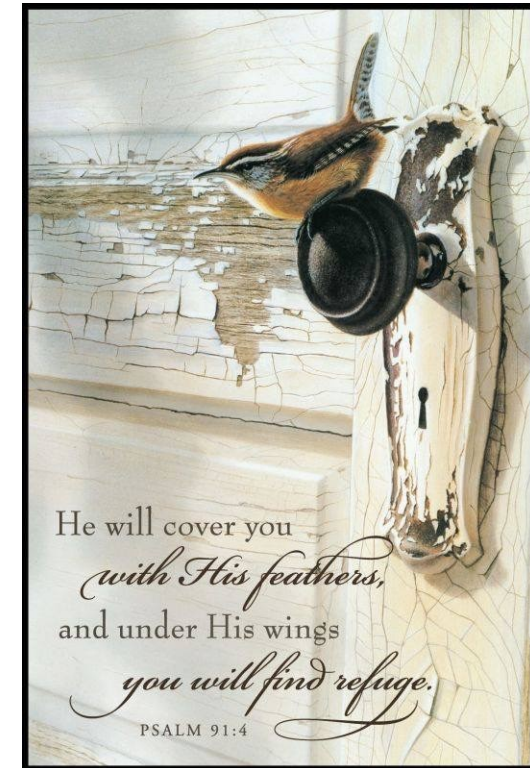
We see the great heat waves and storms at their worst.
 We pray for the moun - tains and fo - rests and seas
 We thank you as well for the chil - dren and youth
 who care a - bout jus - tice and what they should do,
 May we, by your Spi - rit, do all in our power

We pray for the poor, Lord— for they suf - fer first.
 that bear the harsh foot - print of our hu - man greed.
 who look to the fu - ture and speak out the truth.
 who lis - ten to sci - ence and work hard for you.
 to care for your earth in this cri - ti - cal hour.

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SPRING-SUMMER ISSUE 2022

**THE MVPC MEMBERS'
GIFT OF WISDOM**



***"Let us love in truth and action" *
By Applying our Christian Principles
in Changing Times***

***1 John 3:18b**

A Publication of the Christian Education Ministry Team

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Are We a Vital Congregation? David Hill, Clerk of Session

Christ is the cornerstone of the church which he left in charge of kingdom-building. We have no choice; Mount Vernon must be a Vital Congregation in the same way Christ tasked the early church with spreading the Good News.

As we all know by now, MVPC is one of 12 congregations in our Presbytery participating in the Vital Congregations Initiative (VCI). We have listened to seven sermons addressing the marks of Vital Congregations. Let's take a moment to consider how we might measure our effectiveness with each mark.

1. Lifelong Discipleship Formation – Learning opportunities provided to support discipleship formation. Examples include Sunday School, Small Groups, Presbyterian Women. Effectiveness measures could include how many different options are offered, how many people participate on a regular basis, and what visible impact does participation have. For example, after a study regarding homelessness, does the study lead to changes in how we approach the issue?
2. Intentional Authentic Evangelism – This means spreading the Good News, but not necessarily knocking on doors. Examples could include making your Christianity visible through social media. How could we measure our effectiveness in doing this? Surveying the congregation regarding the ways in which we share the good news and our frequency in doing so would provide useful information.
3. Outward Incarnational Focus – Outreach programs are the most visible signs of outward focus. Examples include Family Promise, Clifton Ministries, and Stirred-Up Ministries. Measuring this is not so much about how many outreach programs we have, but how engaged is the congregation in these programs. How many hands-on volunteers are engaged? Giving money is important, but so is hands-on engagement. Counting heads is a good measure.
4. Empower Servant Leadership – It's easy to sit back and wait to be asked to help, but that's not how Presbyterian churches function (successfully). We have ministry teams which are empowered to do the work of the church. A good measure of vitality would be how many members are actively engaged on ministry teams. Another measure could examine the productivity of the teams – what good work is being produced?

5. Spirit-Inspired Worship – Engagement in worshiping God in spirit-filled ways. Worship takes place in the sanctuary, but also through everyday actions. Measures could include simple things like counting heads, but also asking people if the service was engaging for them. Other measures could be MVPC engagement in larger events sponsored by the Presbytery or partnering with other congregations in joint worship events.
6. Caring Relationships – This involves fostering fellowship with other Christians in ways that show we care. Measures can include participation in church events, but maybe more importantly in contacting someone who hasn't been here in a while, making a point to welcome visitors, and thanking church leaders (staff and volunteers). The measurement would be how often these things occur and how people respond. Imagine a church where everyone served their turn during the year as ushers, greeters, note writers, and so forth!
7. Ecclesial Health – As a church body, are we frozen, lukewarm, enthusiastic, or really on fire? Ecclesial health really pulls the other six marks together in a cohesive way and determines where we are and where we are going. Measures include counting heads, measuring hands on engagement, observing togetherness in moving forward on initiatives related to the church's vision and mission.

In the coming months the MVPC congregation will have the opportunity to respond to a VCI survey. We will do a community survey too. Session has a VCI steering committee that started out as a strategic planning committee (now called the Ministry and Mission Planning Team). As this team leads the VCI work, we will call on you to be engaged in helping make MVPC a Vital Congregation. Your ideas will be important and your hands on engagement will be invaluable.



Spring-Summer 2022 MVPC Quarterly

PW Moderator Report

Ann Williams

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

All women of Mount Vernon Presbyterian Church are members of Presbyterian Women and are welcome to attend meetings. We WORSHIP through prayer devotions, and Bible study. We MISSION through home, community, and the world. We FELLOWSHIP through sharing and caring. TOGETHER IN SERVICE

Mount Vernon Presbyterian Women Day Circle, Book Circle and Sunday Circle are meeting in person. Each month, we will review whether we continue to meet in person or via Zoom.

We are continuing the Horizon's Bible Study, **What My Grandmothers Taught Me: Learning from the Women in Matthew's Genealogy of Jesus**, by Merryl Blair.

The Circle of Grace continues to meet monthly at a Circle members' home. The Circle of Grace recently hosted a grandmother's baby shower for Debbie Barclift, Wendy Hagenau and Patricia Hibbard.

Nancy Dimmock spoke with us after our church service on February 6. Nancy Miller Dimmock is a second-generation missionary. She and her husband Frank served for 30 years with the Presbyterian Church in Lesotho, Malawi, and Zambia. The presentation was held via videoconferencing.

Laura Snipes celebrated her 100th birthday on February 18. Laura was the first woman to be elected Elder in the Presbytery of Atlanta. Members of Presbyterian Women and church members attended her birthday party given by her family on February 19 at Merrill Gardens.

- As part of our April Community Missions Activity, we had a paper goods and cleaning supplies shower for Mission Haven. At our April 12 meeting, we collected paper towels, paper napkins, Kleenex, laundry detergent, dishwasher soap, shower and tub cleaner, etc. These items will be used in housing for Mission Haven residents.

