



MOUNT VERNON PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH

# GOOD NEWS

APRIL 2023



## *A Letter From The Pastor*

BY REV. BARRETT ABERNETHY

### *Easter Care*

You may recall that back in January during worship we had you take a survey that examined our congregational vitality. We held this “Survey Sunday” as we called it as part of the Vital Congregations Initiative (VCI) we have engaged in since January, 2022. A few weeks ago we got the results back, and while I don’t want to exhaust you with the entirety of what it said, I do want to celebrate one thing we gleaned from it: you are a CARING church.

In the results, it quantified what an average congregation looks like utilizing the seven marks of a vital congregation. Furthermore, it said if your congregation shows a difference of 3 percentage points or more on any particular vital mark, then you should see that mark as unique to your church. One of those vital marks is Caring Relationships, and while the average congregation scored 84% on this particular mark, you at MVPC scored 87%. The United States Congregational Vitality Survey (USCVS)

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Session Summary

(the survey we took back in January) reveals that congregations that display Caring Relationships show that “instead of a closed, judgmental community, people find freedom to share stories, encounter the Savior, and ask for help.”

When I read that quote, I see a lot of what life looks like at MVPC. I see an open community that is constantly welcoming in new people each and every week. Recently, I sat down with an old pastor friend of mine and I asked him what percentage of worshippers at his church were visitors, because ours each week is 10-15%. He sat back and said, “Not that many.” Now sure, some go on to join the church, some choose to remain a visitor but continue to attend, and some come once and we never see them again, but no matter what, our goal is to show them we CARE. I believe we do that. As David Hill, our Session Clerk, told me, we held a Called

Session meeting nearly once a month last year- and called meetings usually only happen when we are welcoming someone new to the church. That means people are responding to your CARE.

Here in a few days we will celebrate Easter, a time when that visitor percentage will go through the roof. This, once again, will be an opportunity for us to CARE by welcoming our neighbors to encounter the Savior, and solicit help in their own way. Perhaps that help will be as simple as offering them the comfort of a pew or the sustenance of bread and cup. Whatever it is, may our CARING ways inspire them, for then they might just share their story with us, and when they do that, they might just breathe new life into our story.

Grace and Peace,  
Barrett

January 1 - February 28, 2023	Actual YTD	2023 Budget
Member Giving Pledge	\$128,435	\$421,275
Member Giving Non- Pledge	\$9,972	\$60,000
Non member giving & Loose offering	\$1,559	\$9,000
<b>Total Received</b>	<b>\$139,966</b>	<b>\$540,275</b>

## 2023 Session Members & Ministry Teams

### Moderator(s)

Rev. Barrett Abernethy  
Rev. Isaac Toney-Schmitt

### Clerk of Session

David Hill

### Christian Education

Mary McClurg  
Meg Christian

### Congregational Care

Pat Bartee  
Htet Nyunt

### Fellowship

David Barclift

### Finance/Administration/ Stewardship

Charlie Gray  
John Hibbard

### Outreach

Beppie Lever  
Braegan Abernethy

### Senior Adults

Dee Bradford-Smith

### Witness

TBD

### Worship

Gloria Gillespie  
Malinda Holmes  
Amy Kiley

# SENIOR ADULT DAY TRIP



Saturday  
March 25



# VOLUNTEER SPOTLIGHT

## Carol Beckman

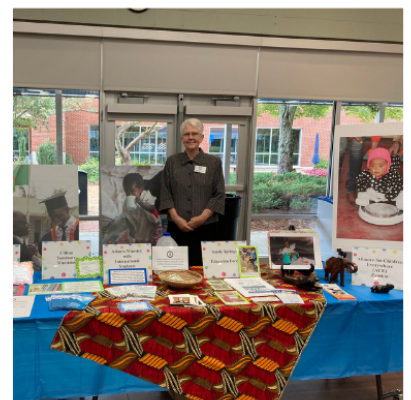
Often called “The Outreach Lady,” Carol Beckman’s heart and her hands have been deep into the work of Outreach at Mount Vernon for many years. In discussing her wide and varied work to help others, her story gives a vivid picture of how God has blessed MVPC and how we work to bless others.

As a long-time member of Mount Vernon (40 years this March), I continue to be inspired by the church’s continuing commitment to Outreach and the many ways we show our love of God by loving our neighbors in our local community, the greater Atlanta area, and across the world in Africa.

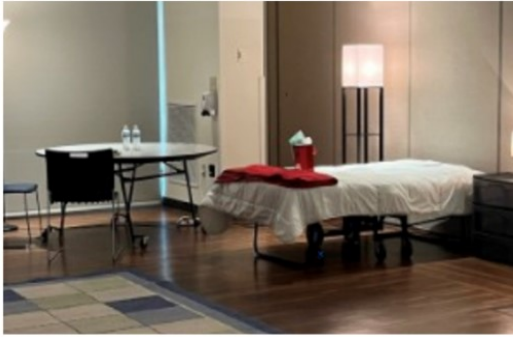
The founding of the Community Assistance Center on our campus in the mid-1980’s followed by the establishment of Los Niños Primero in the late 1990’s were pivotal events for our congregation. Also, during this time frame, the congregation began a long and rewarding partnership with Atlanta Ministry with International Students and Christmas International House. In the late 1990’s through the early mid-2000s, Mount Vernon families also served as host homes for children from around the world brought to Atlanta by ChildSpring International for medical treatment not available in their home countries (including Ethiopia, El Salvador, Haiti, Nicaragua, eastern Europe, and Colombia). Many of the congregation will remember Yessica Parra who, with her mother, stayed in my home four times over a period of 5 years while having surgery for life-threatening tumors. Not only did Yessica survive but scholarships provided by church members and other Atlanta friends allowed her to graduate from college with a degree in modern languages. I was thrilled to travel to Colombia along with the case manager from ChildSpring International for the graduation ceremony. After a couple of years teaching, she now is a self-confident young lady working as a translator and interpreter (speaking fluent Spanish, English, and French) for a multi-national business in Colombia.

The decades of 2000 through 2020 brought additional Outreach opportunities including yearly mission trips to Zambia led by Barbara Hughes, the monthly Communion Offering to collect donations for our ministry partners, and support of Stirred Up Ministries, Family Promise of North Fulton/DeKalb, the International Women’s House, and the Sandy Springs Education Force/CAC Teacher’s Closet. The challenges of the Covid pandemic inspired the congregation to donate \$100,000 in funding for our ministry partners to provide food and other necessities to their most vulnerable clients. Since 2002 Mount Vernon has provided dinner the 3rd Sunday of every month at Clifton Sanctuary Ministries, along with financial support and donations of clothing and other supplies. I am honored to serve as a member of the Board of Directors of the Clifton ministry and have seen first-hand the wonderful work being done among the most vulnerable of Atlanta’s homeless - older men, veterans, and disabled.

Thank you, Mount Vernon members, for your generous support of all our Outreach ministries through the years. For more information about these ministries, please go online to [mvpchurch.org](http://mvpchurch.org). From the drop-down menu select “Ministries” and then “Serve”.



# OUTREACH



MVPC in partnership with Congregation B'nai Torah and with assistance from Dunwoody Community Church and Misty Creek Community Church hosted three families March 5 to March 12, 2023, for Family Promise North Fulton/Dekalb. The Sandy Springs Chapter of The Young Men's Service League provided extensive assistance in both set-up and tear-down of the bedrooms and common areas utilized by the families during their stay. All of the families (consisting of three adults and six youngsters) were also with us in December and will quite likely be graduating from the program in the near future. Thank you to the different MVPC church groups who organized to have their group take all the volunteer roles for a night.

The Youth Group and Senior Adults gathered again for pizza and book sorting for the Sandy Springs Education Force on March 19.



The February Communion Offering for Clifton Night Shelter included 14 sets of twin size sheets, 46 pairs of socks, 40 sets of men's underwear, and an abundance of cleaning, laundry, snacks and kitchen supplies. The Clifton staff was thrilled! The March Communion Offering is for the Food Pantry at Columbia Theological Seminary

# PRESBYTERIAN ORDINATION

## Shari Freeman



### What did Shari learn at Seminary this month?

My Presbyterian History and Polity class has been studying the Book of Order, and we learned about a connection between the Book of Order and the Scots Confession. Dating back to 1560, The Scots Confession is one of the historic confessions from the Reformation. Section F-1.0303 of the Book of Order quotes the Scots Confession when it states that the true Church is present "wherever the Word of God is truly preached and heard, the Sacraments are rightly administered, and ecclesiastical discipline is uprightly ministered."

Here at Mount Vernon Presbyterian Church, we make visible these marks of the true Church through our life and work as a congregation. First, we read and listen to preaching on Scripture each week in our Sunday worship service. We believe that whenever the Word is read and proclaimed, Jesus Christ is present in the service through the power of the Holy Spirit. Secondly, we participate in the sacrament of the Lord's Supper on the first Sunday of every month and other significant Sundays in the church year. The Lord's Supper is the sign and seal of our communion with Christ.

Finally, we engage when needed in the administration of ecclesiastical discipline. While no one likes to dwell on the need for occasional discipline, we are thankful that the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) has an orderly process to follow. And discipline is a crucial aspect of our life as a congregation so that we can build up the body of Christ and achieve the great ends of the Church.

Through our commitment to these marks, preaching, the sacraments, and holding each other accountable through discipline, we reflect the presence of the body of Christ and the "true Church" in our community.

# WORSHIP

## Holy Week @ MVPC

**Palm Sunday, April 2**  
Worship @ 10:30am  
Lunch and Egg Hunt



**Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday, Friday**  
Daily Devotions @ Noon followed by a light lunch  
*\*the music on Monday & Wednesday will be led by students  
from the Mount Vernon School\**



**Maundy Thursday, April 6**  
Worship and Agape Meal @ 6:30pm

**April 9**  
Easter Sunrise in Courtyard - 7:00am  
Worship in Sanctuary - 10:30am



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## *Taize*

This service takes place every fourth Wednesday at 8:15pm.

What is Taize? This is a service of songs, silence, and scripture. It began in 1940 amid the violence of World War II in France. In line with these beginnings, Taize prayer is intended to suspend time for the parishioner. The simplistic songs are meant to be a chant that become prayers, while the silence invites one to talk to God, or more importantly, for God to speak to you.

Next service: Wednesday, April 26 at 8:15pm.





New Member!

Los Niños  
Primero

Community  
Assistance  
Center



We continue to grow with  
our newest member!  
Lois Johnson



Members of Mount Vernon Presbyterian learn from Los Niños Primero Executive Director, Maritza Morelli, about the Saturday School LNP hosts twice a month for 70 children from ages 3-8.



This past month members of the Sandy Springs Interfaith Clergy Association (SSICA) spent time at the Community Assistance Center's (CAC) new space on Northwood Drive. Executive Director, Francis Horton, expressed a great need for volunteers and donations – both material and monetary – as families face rising rental costs and housing insecurity. Barrett currently serves as Coordinator of SSICA.



Mailing address:  
MVPC  
P.O. Box 76051  
Sandy Springs, GA 30358

Church Office  
404.255.2211



## CHURCH OFFICE HOURS

MONDAY-THURSDAY  
8 AM - 4 PM  
FRIDAY 8 AM - 2 PM

### Did You Know?

We order our palms for Palm Sunday from a company called Eco Palms. They import the palms from Rainforest Alliance in Guatemala. This helps transform their communities with:

- Healthcare & access to medication
- Creates 821 new jobs for men, and 346 new jobs for women
- Provides technical coaching & training & workshops
- Education & scholarships for children
- Food safety
- Improvement of work conditions



Are you missing a coat, jacket, mug/thermos, keys, or anything else? Take a look at our collection to see if that could be where it is!



### Church Bulletin Bloopers:

*"This being Easter Sunday, we will ask Mrs. Lewis to come forward and lay an egg on the alter."*

*Photos courtesy of: Dee Bradford-Smith, Donna Martin, Beppie Lever, Barrett Abernethy, Carol Beckman, Penny Kiel*

The Spring Issue of  
**THE MVPC MEMBERS' GIFT OF WISDOM**  
will be available soon.

# THIS & THAT

## Palm Sunday Palms

## Lost & Found

Are you good with computers, networks, printers, etc.? We could use some assistance in the office periodically. Contact the church office if you or you know of someone who could help.

# APRIL BIRTHDAYS

Jenne Gillialnd	4/2
Dave Whitacre	4/8
James McGuire	4/8
Clark Nelson	4/8
Walt Walker	4/11
Stan Williams	4/12
Worth Williams	4/14
Iva Corbin	4/15
Linda Thomas	4/15
Lisa McGuire	4/17
Gene Elder	4/18
Beth Abernethy	4/18
Thomas Hughes	4/19
Patricia Hibbard	4/29
Safe Allen	4/30
Nancy Nutter	4/30



If you have a birthday in April and don't see your name on the list, please contact [debbie@mvpchurch.org](mailto:debbie@mvpchurch.org) or call the office.

## Staff Birthdays

Yvonne White	January 26
Shari Freeman	June 11
Rev. Isaac Toney-Schmitt	June 14
Debbie Nysewander	July 2
Rev. Barrett Abernethy	October 30
Steve Ray	December 1

# APRIL CALENDAR

## April 2023

SUN	MON	TUES	WED	THURS	FRI	SAT
<b>AA -Chapel</b> Mon 6:30pm At-Anon Tues 7:00pm Thurs 8:00pm Fri - 8:00pm	<b>AA Kirk Center</b> Mon 8:00pm Tues. 8:00pm Wed. 8:00pm Thurs. 8:00pm Fri. 8:00pm	<b>4 HOLY WEEK</b> 10am - PW CT Zoom Noon Devo/Lunch 1pm Staff Meeting	<b>5 HOLY WEEK</b> 8am School Chapel 11am Dee-Session Noon Devo/Lunch 7pm Choir Rehearsal	<b>6 MAUNDY THURSDAY</b> 9am Ledger Meeting 6:30pm Agape Meal	<b>7 GOOD FRIDAY</b> 8am Budget Prep 10am Book Circle-Session Noon Devo/Lunch	<b>1</b>
<b>2 PALM SUNDAY</b> <b>Worship 10:30am</b> 9:30am Adult Sunday School 11:30am Lunch & Egg Hunt 5pm Youth	<b>3 HOLY WEEK</b> Noon Devo/Lunch 1pm Senior Adult Mtg. - Session	<b>4 HOLY WEEK</b> 10am Sunday/Day Circle-KC 1pm Staff Meeting 5pm Worship - Session	<b>5 HOLY WEEK</b> 8:30am School Chapel 7pm Choir Rehearsal	<b>6 MAUNDY THURSDAY</b> 2pm Vernon Springs Bible Study 5:30pm M&M - Session	<b>7 GOOD FRIDAY</b> 10am Book Circle-Session	<b>8</b>
<b>9 EASTER</b> <b>Worship 10:30am</b> 7am Sunrise Service 9:30am Adult Sunday School	<b>10</b> 5:30pm FAMT - Zoom <b>OFFICE CLOSED</b>	<b>11</b> 10am Sunday/Day Circle-KC 1pm Staff Meeting 5pm Worship - Session	<b>12</b> 8:30am School Chapel 7pm Choir Rehearsal	<b>13</b> 2pm Vernon Springs Bible Study 5:30pm M&M - Session	<b>14</b> 10am Book Circle-Session	<b>15</b> LNP Sat. School
<b>16 OUTDOOR</b> <b>Worship 10:30am</b> 9:30am Adult Sunday School 10am Called Session Mtg. 11:30am Session Mtg. KC 5pm-Youth - GH	<b>17</b> Noon Stephen Ministry-Session	<b>18</b> 1pm Staff Meeting 6:30pm AMIS - Session	<b>19</b> 8:30am School Chapel 7pm Choir Rehearsal  <b>Good News Deadline</b>	<b>20</b> Senior Adults -Columbia Open House	<b>21</b>	<b>22</b> LNP Sat. School Festival 9-5
<b>23 YOUTH SUNDAY</b> <b>Worship 10:30am</b>	<b>24</b> 1pm Staff Meeting 5pm CE Meeting	<b>25</b> 9:30am School Chapel 7pm Choir Rehearsal 8:15pm Taizé  <b>Good News Published</b>	<b>26</b>	<b>27</b> 6:30pm LNP	<b>28</b> Rally Day @ School	<b>29</b> LNP Sat. School
<b>30 Worship 10:30am</b> 5pm-Youth - GH Sr. Adults-Tupelo Honey						<b>Office Hours</b> M-Th 8am - 4pm Fri 8am - 2pm



Mount Vernon Presbyterian Church  
*Blessed to be a Blessing*

**Sunday Worship**  
 10:30am Sanctuary

# Getting to Know...

BEPPIE LEVER  
OUTREACH MINISTRY TEAM

**Aside from necessities, what one thing you could you not go a day without?**

Books! I love to read and for many years have been listening to recorded books any time I can – in the car, around the house, on a walk.

**What would you do if you won the lottery?**

Travel with my family and friends, buy a house in Montreat, and be a philanthropist.

**Is your glass half full or half empty?**

Half full – I am an optimist, particularly when estimating how much I can get done in a set amount of time.

**What's the most unusual thing you've ever eaten?**

Bird's Nest Soup in Hong Kong

**Are you an introvert or an extrovert?**

Extrovert



*"The beginning is always today."*

Mary Wollstonecraft Shelley

Taking that first step to ask for help is difficult for many, but that step is also crucial to feeling relief and believing that you are fully heard and have been understood. At Mount Vernon Presbyterian, we are fortunate to have trained, skilled, and helpful laypeople called Stephen Ministers whose passion is to listen, to encourage, to provide perspective and resources for people going through a rough patch.



Please contact a pastor or Pat Bartee, Stephen Leader, to get started.

# ISAAC'S MUSINGS...

## What Did Isaac Think About (Too Much) This Month?

Time! Inspired by the book *Becoming Friends of Time* by John Swinton, I've wondered what time even is. Physicists tell us that time is bent and warped through space in such a way that time appears to speed up or slow down. Anthropologists tell us that different cultures experience the pace of time differently, some valuing a slower pace while others value a speedy pace. Movies play with all sorts of time-traveling themes and our own memories pull us backward in time and send us forward in time hundreds of moments each day.

The first clocks, as we know them with their twelve numbers around a dial, were invented by Medieval monks to insure that they made it to prayers on time. They wanted clocks to help them live in relationship with God. Soon after, the marketplace saw the value of accurate time keeping. Business-folks added a minute hand on the clock; eventually a second hand appeared as well. With the invention of the clock came the pressure to use one's time appropriately, since it was now visible to everyone just how much time was being spent on certain tasks.

John Swinton, in his book mentioned above, argues that this is not how God perceives time, and I think he has a wonderful point. God exists outside of time and has chosen to relate to us within time, through Jesus Christ. And Jesus Christ moved through the world at a certain speed, something like three miles-per-hour. That means that God, expressed in time, moves at three miles-per-hour. If God is love, then love moves in time at three mile-per-hour. God's time is slow, gentle, attentive, careful, giving, and soft.

I love this perspective, especially as ATL-Travelers with our pace and schedules. Time is not a pressure. Time is a gift from God, a way to relate to God, a way to live out God's purposes for us.



# PRAYER VINE



**Becky** - Mary Lea Wood's sister-in-law is using a walker and learning to live with the loss of vision in one eye after a bad fall.

**Sam Brasher** - continues recovery from back surgery and has received an injection for pain.

**Diane Bumgarner** - condolences to her and her family on the death of her mother, Betty Miller.

**Keith Bumgarner** - continues his recovery from successful surgery on his spine.

**David Cullen** - Mary Kilgore's son-in-law needs strength & improved kidney health so he can continue with lung cancer treatment.

**Neill Ferrill** - gratitude that the new clinical trial for glioblastoma is successful so far and is in good health.

**Brandy Harvey** - Barbara Brook's daughter is recovering from an appendectomy.

**Dave Malloy** - friend of Charlie Gray, healing from a blood infection after his hospitalization.

**Frank Mayer** - Colleen Nelson's father continues with chemo and is in good spirits.

**Lisa McGuire** - comfort and peace after the death of her mother in Ohio.

**Betty Miller** - Diane Bumgarner's mother recently entered hospice care in VA.

**Karen Morine** - healing and strength while dealing with chemo for ovarian cancer.

**Neile Morrison** - Betsy Cozine's friend's niece is taking chemo for breast cancer.

**Andy Nelson** - hospitalized at Emory awaiting to hear next steps from a recent diagnosis.

**Bev Northrop** - has entered hospice care at Vernon Springs.

**Wilma Schmidt** - Braegan Abernethy's mother, has completed radiation for breast cancer.

Blessings for all ministries our church supports in Atlanta and in Zambia. Bravery, courage, and faith for the people of Ukraine, Myanmar, Syria, and Turkey. Also for the victims of the recent tornadoes here in the U.S.

Do you need prayer?  
Have our Prayer Vine pray for you!  
Email your requests to [pbartee@yahoo.com](mailto:pbartee@yahoo.com)

# SESSION MEETING SUMMARY

## Stated Session Meeting March 19, 2023

The Session met for its scheduled monthly Stated Session Meeting on March 19 and conducted the following business:

·The Finance and Administration Team reported the weekly offerings continue to be strong, but also reminded us we are operating on a deficit budget. The plans for HVAC installation continue on schedule with the work slated to begin as soon as school is out.

·The Outreach Ministry Team has added the Columbia Seminary Food Pantry as an Outreach partner. Many of the seminary students don't have transportation that would allow them easy access to grocery stores. In addition, many are on very tight budgets! Family Promise just completed a successful week on the MVPC campus. We will need to find a way to provide better internet access for the Family Promise students.

·The Senior Adult Team has planned an upcoming trip to Macon. Seniors continue to partner with the youth to support the work of the Sandy Springs Education Force.

·The Christian Education Team suggested we investigate the possibility of having a celebration next year in recognition of the MVPC's 70 years as a congregation.

·Rev. Toney-Schmitt gave a report summarizing the results of the Vital Congregations Survey that congregants responded to in January. Survey responses from our congregation mirror the responses of other Presbyterian churches that are part of the VCI initiative.

·Preparations for the upcoming Agape Meal on Maundy Thursday were discussed, and the Session approved the use of wine as part of that meal.



*The next Stated Session Meeting will be  
April 16.*



P.O. Box 76051  
Sandy Springs, GA 30358

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 Wednesday of each month for the *next month's* newsletter. Send your submissions to [debbie@mvpchurch.org](mailto:debbie@mvpchurch.org).

*If you no longer wish to receive the Good News, please send an email to [debbie@mvpchurch.org](mailto:debbie@mvpchurch.org).*

## Mount Vernon Presbyterian Church

<b>Rev. Barrett Abernethy</b>	<i>Senior Pastor/Head of Staff</i>	<a href="mailto:barrett@mvpchurch.org">barrett@mvpchurch.org</a>
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<b>Shari Freeman</b>	<i>Seminary Intern</i>	<a href="mailto:shari@mvpchurch.org">shari@mvpchurch.org</a>

# Good News!

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(See Genesis 3)  
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