



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

For where two or three are gathered in my name, I am there among them. Matthew 18:20

“Glory to God: Christian worship gives all glory and honor, praise and thanksgiving to the holy, triune God. We are gathered in worship to glorify the God who is present and active among us – particularly through the gifts of Word and Sacrament. We are sent out in service to glorify the same God who is present and active in the world.”

-- W-1.0101, Opening lines of the “Directory of Worship” in the PC(USA) *Book of Order*

As our scriptures and governing documents remind us, worship is time set aside to gather in community and glorify God. Mount Vernon marks this time in ways that are similar to other Presbyterian churches: we follow an order of worship that invites us to gather, confess our shortcomings, hear scriptures, respond, and go out into the world. But Mount Vernon adds our own DNA to these elements: by singing together in a range of styles with a range of instruments; by hearing the prayers of Thanksgiving offered by church members; by greeting one another by name in a spirit of Christ’s love; by physically reaching out to one another during our collective prayers of the people. Our worship glorifies God each Sunday because of the space it opens for us to love God, together.

Worship is the anchor that allows us to welcome, share, and serve every week. The stories shared by the other authors in this tri-fold are the product of a congregation committed to being with one another again and again. As those same stories reveal, this is not repetitive! The commitment to be with one another in worship through years and decades and generations is exactly what is needed for the generative work of the Spirit to take hold in us. Our worship anchors us to that great, Divine energy.

“Grace and Gratitude: God acts with grace; we respond with gratitude. God claims us as beloved children; we proclaim God’s saving love. God redeems us from sin and death; we rejoice in the gift of new life. This rhythm of divine action and human response – found throughout Scripture, human history, and everyday events – shapes all of Christian faith, life, and worship.”

--W-1.0102, “Directory of Worship” in the PC(USA) *Book of Order*



We are located at:
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THE MVPC MEMBERS’ GIFT OF WISDOM

FALL ISSUE 2023



“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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**WELCOME
FAMT
Charlie Gray**

Hebrews 13:2 – *Do not neglect to the show hospitality to strangers, for thereby some have entertained angels unawares.*

Webster’s defines Welcome as: **To greet hospitably and with courtesy. To accept with pleasure the occurrence or presence of.** For almost 70 years our Mount Vernon Family has made an art of welcoming visitors and prospective members alike. Whether an Usher greeting with a smile and a bulletin or a member of our Connections Team offering something refreshing to eat or drink on Sunday morning we have developed a reputation as a very warm welcoming church home. Kind of a neat trick given we are part of the Great Frozen Chosen.

We welcome all who come to our campus. The families who meet us by way of Family Promise, the hundreds of Latino children and their families who cover our campus each summer. Welcoming is in our DNA, those early members knew there would be lots of folks moving into Sandy Springs and wanted a place all could be welcomed to. I imagine they would be amazed at the transformation that has occurred over the years to their sleepy little community.

Mount Vernon Presbyterian Church welcomed the Mount Vernon School to our campus over 50 years ago. Think of the thousands of children who have had some of their formative years spent here on our campus knowing they are welcome each and every day to come here.

Every time we serve the Lord’s Supper, we gladly welcome all who are believers to freely partake of the bread and the cup. Yes, we are all Welcome! That means EVERYONE!! What a beautiful, wonderful way to be. Seems very Christ like to me.



**SHARE
Stephen Ministry
Pat Bartee**

“...from whom the whole body, being fitted and held together by what every joint supplies and according to the proper working of each individual part, causes the growth of the body for the building up of itself in love.”

Ephesians. 4:16

Grammatically, “share” can be a noun or a verb, but for our church tagline, it is an action verb that describes us. In its’ definition, “share” means something communal.

Christ’s church thrives “in community” and sharing is part of that communal life. The sharing of time, resources, and talents makes the church more vibrant. Sharing time may be one of the most difficult things we do. We tend to plan our lives on our phone calendars but forget to prioritize. Ball games, part-time jobs, weekend brunches, protecting family time, and sleeping late take precedence over worshipping together and a commitment to a church ministry or committee seems less important than rearranging our social activities and after-work time. Tme with family these days excludes rather than includes worship together. Yet, it is that communal time that creates strong spiritual formation and foundations and enriches us for the week and days ahead.

Without it, we are less “whole”, as participants in the body of Christ. Our online worship allows our homebound and vacationing members to join us.

When God’s people share talents and give back those gifts so generously given to us, great things happen within the church. We all have gifts and skill-sets and ideas, and, often, it is the church who helps us discover or utilize them. Pay attention when asked to do something. Someone has noticed and wants to help you nurture your gifts! So many ministries and activities of our church came about or were invigorated by the passion and ideas of a few members (Los Niños, Zambia, Stephen Ministry, Outreach, Seniors, Circle of Grace).

Sharing our resources means making our wealth and ideas and knowledge available to help our church move forward. It means being an active rather than a passive member. Attending services, joining Sunday school, choir, a Circle, a small group, volunteering talents, serving when asked, teaching, providing food, greeting others, visiting, phoning, praying for others on the Prayer Vine, folding bulletins, ushering, or delivering supplies to our ministries are just some of the myriad ways to more fully connect. Everyone can find a way to contribute and be a part, within their ability to do so. Tithing is a goal for all, and God promises special blessings for those who do, but God also honors “the widow’s mite”. Fall and Christmas events remind us of our lives of abundance. With hearts full of gratitude, our giving can continue to define us at MVPC as we continue to support ministries here and in Zambia and world-wide through Presbyterian Women’s’ offerings.

Sharing comes from a grateful heart and a wish to be part of the whole body of Christ. It is an outward consequence of love for God and His church and His work in the world.



**SERVE
Vital Congregations
David Hill, Clerk of Session**

The New Testament book of James points out that our faith must be active faith to be real (James 2:14-26 and 1:22-25). No, this is not the litmus test that gets us a pass to heaven, but it is hard for Christians to justify their Christianity as based on strong faith if we sit back and let others do the work of serving. Being in church on Sundays is important. Welcoming visitors and new members is important. Participating in the monetary portion of stewardship is important. However, Jesus was very clear that the law (James’ point about active faith – works) is based on loving God and loving neighbor (Matt. 22:36-40). It is really difficult for others to see our Christianity if we keep it within the physical boundaries of the church campus; after all, many of the neighbors Christ expects us to love will never set foot on our campus. So, this creates the need to define just what Christians “serving” looks like.

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In our busy everyday world it is so easy to over-schedule jobs, friends, family, recreation, and more, with no time left over to serve those who desperately need our help. It is wonderful to give money to Family Promise, but even better to be an overnight host. Maybe volunteering to work a few hours each week at CAC or volunteering to work in the Los Niño’s Primero program in the summer would allow us to demonstrate the love of Christ through the specific actions of church members. Donations for our friends in Zambia certainly are needed, but imagine the powerful statement of our love by actually being on the ground there?

Vital churches work hard to make a difference in people’s lives. Hands on service is a grace-filled way to worship God by being his hands and feet in the world. Reaching out to serve is vital to the mission of Christ’s church. The New Testament church gave us a handy blueprint of how we can define what Christians serving looks like in the twenty-first century. Matt. 25:31-46 is one of the clearest Biblical references that outlines what Christian service looks like. This passage is so important that PC(USA) has a Matthew 25 initiative that encourages churches to actively serve. Mount Vernon is really good at serving and to remain vital, we must strive to continue to serve our neighbors near and far.