



MOUNT VERNON PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH

GOOD NEWS

JANUARY 2024



A Note From The Pastor

BY REV. BARRETT ABERNETHY

Last month, a parent from the school reached out to me and asked if I would serve on an interfaith panel that they are hosting on Martin Luther King, Jr. holiday. When I asked this kind person what I should share as a panel speaker, they replied, “Share your history, the central tenants of your faith, and how you are living out that sense of mission.”

As a Presbyterian, I must confess our record of living out King’s hope of creating a “beloved community” is decidedly mixed. Next month, on Sunday February 4th, we will host Professor William Yoo from Columbia Seminary. In his recent

book *What Kind of Christianity: A History of Slavery and Anti-Black Racism in the Presbyterian Church*, he writes that during the Antebellum Period, Presbyterian clergy were responsible for more proslavery writings than clergy from any other Christian tradition. This would make sense as the planter class usually came from wealthier families, which in U.S. Protestantism have been the Presbyterians and the Episcopalians. Hence, the type of Christianity that Presbyterian clergy emphasized championed piety of the enslaved over freedom. As Yoo notes, the theology offered was “antithetical to the Christian gospel and insulting to Black Americans.”

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These choices, or rather lack thereof, illustrate why so few enslaved joined the Presbyterian Church and have reverberated throughout the generations as the PCUSA remains 90% white to this day.

Yet when Dr. King also said that the “arc of the moral universe is long, but that it points to justice” he could have been talking about the Presbyterians. As you likely know, the PCUSA is a confessing church. What this means is that we confess what we believe. We do this every Sunday in the form of the affirmation of faith that immediately follows the sermon. One of the confessions that we often draw upon is the Confession of 1967. This confession, as the title suggests, points out that the faithful inspired to write it were influenced by the theological doctrines of people like Dr. King. You see this truth most clearly in paragraph 9.44:

“...Therefore, the church labors for the abolition of all racial discrimination and ministers to those injured by it. Congregations, individuals, or groups of Christians who exclude, dominate, or patronize their fellowmen, however subtly resist the Spirit of God and bring contempt on the faith which they profess.”

This confession’s sentiment has largely held true since 1967. I believe that we are a denomination that, though imperfect, tries sincerely to bear witness to this statement and others like it. At Mount Vernon Presbyterian you have lived this in your own way. Helping to start the Community Assistance Center and Los Niños Primero are clear examples, while The Mount Vernon School has increasingly leaned in to being a school that wants diversity and inclusion to be central to its values.

As we enter our 70th year, I wonder what our community will look like well into the future. I don’t have many answers, but I know that Dr. King’s dream of a beloved community is one worth considering, after all it mirrors the Pentecost story in Acts 2 when the Holy Spirit dwelled within all humanity.

*Grace & Peace,
Barrett*

January 1 - November 30, 2023	Actual YTD	2023 Budget
Member Giving Pledge	\$421,936	\$471,275
Member Giving Non- Pledge	\$74,995	\$60,000
Non member giving & Loose offering	\$7,795	\$9,000
Total Received	\$504,726	\$540,275

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 Barteo
Htet Nyunt

Fellowship
David Barclift

Finance/Administration/
Stewardship
Charlie Gray
John Hibbard

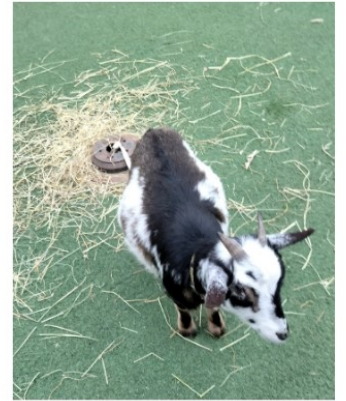
Outreach
Beppie Lever
Braegan Abernethy

Senior Adults
Dee Bradford-Smith

Witness
We are all witnesses to the love of Jesus Christ.

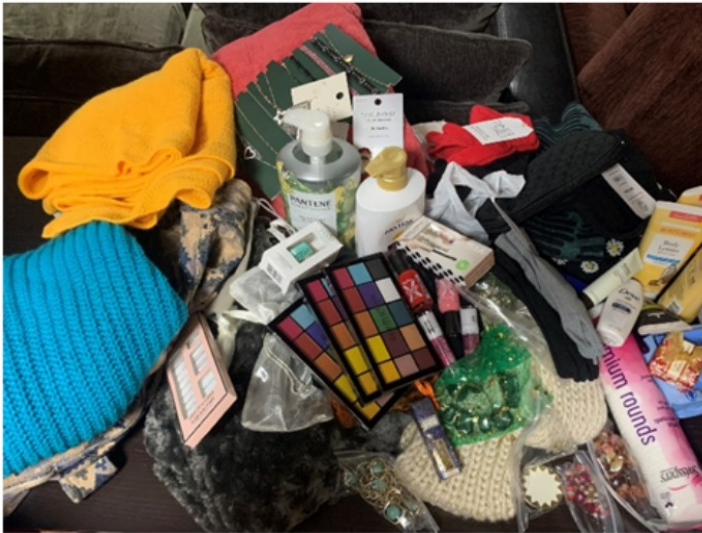
Worship
Gloria Gillespie
Malinda Holmes
Amy Kiley

CHRISTMAS



OUTREACH

Our December Communion Offering was toys, warm clothing and beauty items for International Women's House. We also collected warm accessories for men, women and children on the Outreach Tree to share with many of our Outreach Ministry Partners – International Women's House, Clifton Sanctuary Ministries, Community Assistance Center, Stirred Up Ministries.



Volunteers prepared Goody Bags and Books that were given to students participating in the Sandy Springs Education Force Reading Buddies and Tutor Teams Programs for their Winter Break. We also contributed supplies to Lake Forest Elementary School for their Holiday Parties where they made Gingerbread Houses.



The Children made Christmas Cards for the men at Clifton during their Christmas Workshop. We welcomed families into our church as their home for the week of Christmas through Family Promise.

In January we will be collecting non-perishable food for the Community Assistance Center.

SENIOR ADULTS



Senior Adult Movie Day



CHALKING THE DOOR

SHARI FREEMAN



Have you wondered about the meaning of the letters and numbers on the doors to the sanctuary? These markings tie to a medieval European tradition associated with Epiphany. Many Christians, including Anglicans, Lutherans, Methodists, Presbyterians, and Roman Catholics, write on their doors with chalk at the beginning of the new year. This Christian custom has a biblical precedent, as the Israelites in the Hebrew Bible marked their doors in order to be saved from death (Exodus 12). Christians today view this act as a house blessing, inviting the presence of God in one's home for the new year.

The markings for 2024 are "20 + C + M + B + 24". The numbers refer to the year. The letters C, M, and B have two meanings. First, they stand for the traditional names of the Magi from Matthew 2 – Caspar, Melchior, and Balthazar. They also stand for the Latin blessing *Christus mansionem benedicat*, which means "May Christ bless this house." The crosses between the letters represent Christ.

Here at Mount Vernon, we will celebrate Epiphany on December 31, and, in keeping with our Epiphany tradition, we will chalk the sanctuary's doors for the new year. You can also chalk the door to your home. All you need to do is find some chalk and write the markings across the top of your door. Here is a prayer to accompany your door-chalking service at home.

Lord Jesus, through your Incarnation and birth in human form, you have made all the earth holy. We now ask your blessing upon this simple gift of your creation – chalk. We use it as a tool to teach our children, and they use it as a tool in their play and games. Now, with your blessing, may it become a tool for us to mark the doors of our church home with the symbols of your wise servants, who, so long ago, came to worship and adore you in your first home.

May we, in this house, and all who come to visit, work, and worship, remember these things throughout the coming year. May all who come and go here find peace, comfort, joy, hope, love, and salvation, for Christ has come to dwell in this house and in these hearts.

May we be Christ's light in the world. Amen

VOLUNTEER SPOTLIGHT



Thank you to all the MVPC members who donate their time and energy to benefit our community! The Outreach Ministry Team “spotlights” our members to share their volunteer experiences and the many opportunities available. If you know of someone who should be spotlighted, please contact Beppie, Braegan, or Christy.

Carrie Southard

Tim and I joined MVPC in 1993. Our first volunteer job was hosting new member receptions (almost every week!). After a couple of years, I gravitated to my passion of helping teach the children. Sarah Chalpan and I made a great team teaching on Sundays!

I think I developed my passion to work with the children from my mother, who was the Director of the Children’s Program at my childhood church for many years. I started helping teach children’s Sunday school when I was in high school. Through the years, I was fortunate to have my mom to answer questions and share ideas.

Outside of the church, I’m a physical therapist and work with the children in special education in Dekalb County Schools. It is so rewarding to be able to help those students!

I’m grateful for being able to do something at our church that I enjoy so much.

If you would like to join the fun and get filled up with the children’s smiles and energy, we could always use volunteers on Sundays and for special events. Contact Carrie at carriensouth@gmail.com or Isaac.

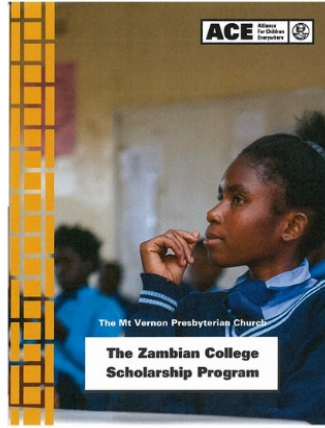


CELEBRATIONS

Zambia College Scholarship Fund

Atlanta Concert Band

Eagle Project: Labyrinth



To a most generous congregation,

The most recent effort to raise \$10,000 annually to fund the Zambia Scholarship Fund has been achieved and because of this success 15 students will pursue college degrees and vocational training studying Medicine (1 as an MD), Pharmacy, Computer Tech, Education, Auto engineering\mechanics, Fashion design and Hospitality. All following their dreams because of you. You are changing lives! THANK YOU!!

In Christ Name,
Stan & Ann Williams



This is an excerpt from an article in Atlanta's *RoughDraft*.

“Andrew Sevcik, a 9th grader at Wesleyan and son of member Michelle Smart, created a labyrinth next to the Church sanctuary building using salvaged stones for his Eagle Scout project. Sevcik salvaged the paving stones from an area slated to be demolished to make way for the widening of Johnson Ferry Road. He relocated the stones and placed them in a labyrinth pattern with the help of other Scouts from his Troop 1963, church volunteers, and friends.”

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

Church Office
404.255.2211



CHURCH OFFICE HOURS

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



THIS & THAT

Office Closed
January 1
January 15

January
Events:
PW Luncheon
Jan. 14

Men's Breakfast
Jan. 21

Directory Pictures
Jan. 7
Jan. 14
Jan. 21
Jan. 28

Taize
Jan. 23
7pm

Lunch Bunch
Jan. 28

LUNCH BUNCH



Church Bulletin Bloopers:

"The ushers will turn and light each worshipper in the first pew."

Photos courtesy of: Dee Bradford-Smith, Donna Martin,
Beppie Lever, Barrett Abernethy, Isaac Toney-Schmitt

The Fall Issue of
THE MVPC MEMBERS' GIFT OF WISDOM
is available in the Narthex.

VITAL CONGREGATIONS



At the final Presbytery meeting of the year this past November, Rev. Isaac Toney-Schmitt shared our church's experience engaging in the Vital Congregations Initiative (VCI). As you may recall, this two year commitment allowed our church to explore our vitality and assess our communal gifts. One thing that has come out of this work includes our new tagline: Reaching Out to...Welcome. Worship. Share. Serve. Even though VCI has formally concluded, its work continues through the Mission and Ministry Committee which is currently looking at updating our website and physical signage on our campus, among other potential plans.

Isaac's comments and photo from this meeting were shared on the PCUSA website. To read the full article, please see:

<https://www.presbyterianmission.org/story/presbytery-of-greater-atlanta-shows-its-marks-of-vitality/>

The Rev. Isaac Toney-Schmitt of Mount Vernon Presbyterian Church in Sandy Springs, Georgia, admits practical motives for joining the initiative. "It came from a desire to do a church-wide survey after the pandemic ... and the survey was more cost-effective than the other options." He appreciated how the process did not lead with a survey but with storytelling that allowed Mount Vernon to delve into its nearly 70-year history. "Because of the intentional, thoughtful storytelling work done prior to that survey, we were able to look at the results of that survey with excitement and hope." The church updated their church tagline and are beginning a digital rebrand through what they learned about themselves through the VCI process.



JANUARY CALENDAR

January 2024

SUN	MON	TUES	WED	THURS	FRI	SAT
	1 HAPPY NEW YEAR 2024!	2 10am PW CT-Session 10am Staff Meeting Chapel 1:30pm Worship Planning	3 7pm Choir Rehearsal	4 MV School starts back	5 10-2 LNP Session	6 LNP Saturday School 7:30-1:30pm AFS Interviews - Chapel & Sanctuary
7 Worship 10:30am 9:30am Adult Sunday School 10am Connection Snacks 11:30am Family Pictures 7pm ACF-FH	8 1pm Senior Adults-Session	9 10am Day Circle-Session 10am Staff Meeting Chapel 1:30pm Worship Planning 5pm CE Meeting-Zoom	10 8am School Chapel 2pm Worship 7pm Choir Rehearsal	11 10am Sr. Adults & Emory - Session 11am Vernon Springs Bible Study 2pm Ledger Meeting	12 8am Budget Prep 10am Book Circle Session	13
14 Worship 10:30am 9:30am Adult Sunday School 10am Connection Snacks 11:30am PW Luncheon FH 11:30am Family Pictures	15  5:30pm FAMT	16 10am Staff Meeting Session 1:30pm Worship Planning	17 8am School Chapel 7pm Choir Rehearsal	18	19	20 LNP Saturday School
21 Worship 10:30am 9:30am Adult Sunday School 10am Connection Snacks 11:30am Family Pictures 7pm ACF-FH	22	23 10am Staff Meeting Session 1:30pm Worship Planning 7pm Taize	24 8am School Chapel 2:30pm Gift of Wisdom Mtg. - Session 7pm Choir Rehearsal Good News Deadline	25 11am Vernon Springs Bible Study 7pm LNP	26 Session Retreat	27 Session Retreat
28 Worship 10:30am 9:30am Adult Sunday School 10am Connection Snacks 11:30am Family Pictures 7pm ACF-FH	29	30 10am Staff Meeting Session 1:30pm Worship Planning Good News Publish	31	AA -Chapel Mon 6:30pm AI-Anon Tues 7:00pm Thurs 8:00pm Fri - 8:00pm	AA Kirk Center Mon 8:00pm Wed. 8:00pm Fri. 8:00pm	Fellowship Hall Tues.8:00pm Thurs. 8:00pm



Mount Vernon Presbyterian Church

www.mvpchurch.org
404.255.2211

Blessed to be a Blessing

Sunday Worship
10:30am Sanctuary

Office Hours
M-Th 8am - 4pm
Fri 8am - 2pm

Getting to Know...

ANNA MORINE

What is your favorite family vacation?

Florida where I look for sharks teeth on the beach.

What is your favorite sport to watch?

Baseball

In the evening would you rather play a game, watch a movie, or read?

Watch a movie

How would your friends describe you?

Friendly, outgoing, and happy

What are your hobbies?

Artwork, watching movies, and horseback riding

What is your favorite zoo animal?

A zebra because it looks similar to a horse.

Do you hate or love rollercoasters?

Love

What is your favorite thing about your career?

I have a volunteer job 3 mornings a week at the south Sandy Springs CAC food pantry. My care giver goes too. I love how everyone there is friendly, happy, and we are helping people.



The holidays have a way of bringing out the best and the worst in people. For those whose hearts are already heavy, the excitement, joy, and hectic activity simply exacerbates the pain. Please know that here at MVPC, we have people called Stephen Ministers who want to walk with you as you work to resolve problems and renew your joy. Contact a pastor or Pat Barte, Stephen Leader, to get connected.

SESSION SUMMARY

Summary of December 10, 2023, Session Meeting

The MVPC Session met in its regularly scheduled meeting on December 10. Following is a summary of that meeting:

- Commissioners for the February 4 Presbytery meeting were elected. Those representing MVPC will be Dee Bradford-Smith, Mary McClurg, Keith Bumgarner, and Lois Johnson. Mount Vernon will be hosting the November 9 Presbytery meeting on our campus so Session members will be closely observing how the Presbytery meetings are organized. Session will be calling on members to help us prepare for almost 400 Presbyterians from across Atlanta who will participate in that meeting.
- Session meeting dates for 2024 were approved. Session meetings will be on the third Sunday of the month with the following exceptions: January 26-27 (Session will meet during its annual retreat), May/June (there will be no meeting in May and the June meeting will be on June 9), and November/December (there will be no November meeting and the December meeting will be on December 8).
- Approval was given for the various special offerings and outreach offerings for 2024. Information regarding outreach ministry offerings will always be announced in church publications throughout the year.
- The church Safety Committee will continue work on safety procedures. In January the committee will ask for additional input from some member regarding how we will address possible threats of violence.
- The Session elected Amy Kiley to fill the MVPC position on the Clifton Ministries Board created by the recent retirement of Carol Beckman. Carol served faithfully in this position for many years.
- Rev. Abernethy will serve as part of an interfaith panel discussion that will be part of the Dr. Martin Luther King holiday celebration.



Keith & Diane Bumgarner,
Steve & Lauren



Charles & Lisa Gray
& Margaret Ann



Bruce & Dale Morine,
Kim & Anna



Peter & Linda Thomas,
Travis & Emily

It's time for a new pictorial directory!!

We will be taking pictures after worship in January beginning January 7, 2024.

Please plan on staying after the service so we can get a casual picture of you and your family. This will not be a formal commercial photography session. No purchase required!

JANUARY BIRTHDAYS



Brian Eustis	1/2
Christina Toney-Schmitt	1/4
Christy Hill	1/5
Gloria Gillespie	1/7
Donna Neumann	1/11
Anna Morine	1/19
Mark McGuire	1/19
Corny Laube	1/21
John Christian, Jr.	1/23
Aidan Ray	1/24
Charlie Gray	1/25
Betsy Hastings	1/26
Joe Kelvington	1/26
Lisa Hughes	1/27
Mary Lea Woods	1/31

If you have a birthday in January and don't see your name on the list, please contact 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

PRAYER VINE



Susan Doyle - recovering from RSV but recently discovered she has a heart blockage. A heart catheterization is planned for early January.

Eliana - is surrounded by the love and confidence of her family during the holidays.

Fay Hendricks - good care for Betsy Cozine's friend who was recently back in the hospital with heart issues.

Megan Kendall -thankful that she finished her last chemo treatment before Christmas.

Mary Lynch - healing for Felicia Hutt's mother in Virginia who is undergoing radiation treatment for breast cancer.

Chuck McCrory - Amy Kiley's boyfriend's father, continued healing mercies.

Karen Morine - Bruce Morine's sister-in-law in New Zealand had successful chemo treatments but has a twisted bowel that needs surgery or treatment.

Meredith Nash - family hopes to end her chemo in January and get to ring that bell!

Mrs. JB - still waiting on a bone marrow donor.

Carter Ramsey - Steve Whisenant's relative in a north GA boarding school is home surrounded by family with hopes this will boost his recovery.

Rob Russell - continued recovery to gain strength after a stroke, Lorry Clark's son-in-law.

Elizabeth (Elo) Small - healing and recovery as she battles RSV and vertigo.

Isabelle Vannucci - friend of Christina Toney-Schmitt in CA who was critically injured after being hit by a drunk driver.

Barbara Wasson - continues to recover from knee replacement surgery.

Gail Williams - renewal of strength as she recovered from a fall.

Blessings to our homebound members who continue to join us online and hold us up in prayer.

Blessings upon the ministries our church supports here and in Zambia.

Courage for those reeling from disaster, gun violence, oppression, and injustice and those fighting for freedom and identity.

The greens have been hung. Let us keep the true meaning of the season foremost in our thoughts.

Do you need prayer?
Have our Prayer Vine pray for you!
Email your requests to pbartee@yahoo.com



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.

If you no longer wish to receive the Good News, please send an email to debbie@mvpchurch.org.

Good News!

Mount Vernon Presbyterian Church

Rev. Barrett Abernethy	<i>Senior Pastor/Head of Staff</i>	barrett@mvpchurch.org
Rev. Isaac Toney-Schmitt	<i>Associate Pastor of Faith Formation</i>	isaac@mvpchurch.org
Steve Ray	<i>Church Finance and Operations</i>	steve@mvpchurch.org
Debbie Nysewander	<i>Administrative Assistant</i>	debbie@mvpchurch.org
Yvonne White	<i>Financial Secretary</i>	yvonne@mvpchurch.org
Shari Freeman	<i>Seminary Intern</i>	shari@mvpchurch.org

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(See Genesis 3) 12-30-2013

REMEMBER THAT NEW YEAR RESOLUTION YOU MADE TO TRY NEW THINGS?

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