



MOUNT VERNON PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH

# GOOD NEWS

SEPTEMBER 2024



***Note: This article, written by Rev. Isaac Toney-Schmitt's father, Chuck, was originally printed on the Presbyterian Foundation website.***

**Mount Vernon Presbyterian celebrates 70th anniversary with challenge to boost ministry, endowment.**

By Chuck Toney

As the members of Mount Vernon Presbyterian Church in metro Atlanta began to plan the celebration of the church's 70th anniversary in the spring of 2024, it became clear that one element of its past was also crucial to its future: The Mount Vernon Presbyterian Foundation.

Established in 1998 and now holding some \$1.5 million in managed investment accounts, the Mt. Vernon Presbyterian Foundation was created to provide financial support for "church-related and outreach projects beyond funds provided by the church itself." According to John Allen, chair, it uses

"returns on investments to support additional outreach that our church is interested in" but cannot pay for out of its annual budget. The church's foundation also provides funding for necessary repairs and maintenance of the sanctuary, Sunday School rooms, administrative suite, and campus.

Allen and others are quick to cite the Presbyterian Foundation resources that he and other church foundation board members have used to manage the funds and communicate with the congregation.

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“The Presbyterian Foundation’s sources of information have been invaluable to us,” he said, citing in particular “Legacy Planning for Individuals” and “Legacy Planning for Church Leaders,” the Foundation’s guides to individual estate planning for church members and legacy giving for sessions and pastors. “We used these materials to communicate with our congregation about wills and estate planning.”

The Rev. Barrett Abernethy, Pastor/Head of Staff at Mt. Vernon, echoed Allen’s sentiments.

“I serve as an Ex-Officio Member of the MVP Foundation Board and I have looked to Presbyterian Foundation resources and to Ministry Relations Officers to help me understand how best to use these resources and to create alignment between a Foundation and the church,” he said. “The PCUSA is blessed with so many vital entities that clergy like me can go to when we need support and further knowledge, and the Presbyterian Foundation is truly one of those cornerstones.”

Rev. Dana Waters, the Presbyterian Foundation’s Ministry Relations Officer who serves the Southeast, says the church’s commitment to ministry is remarkable. “Mount Vernon is truly using the gifts entrusted to them in faithful ways,” Waters said. “The church has been thoughtful and practiced wonderful stewardship. This effort showcases what congregations can do with the materials we provide at the Foundation, and it is a joy to hear that our work is meaningful and helpful. Barrett is a gifted pastor and a friend, and I know that Mount Vernon is blessed by his faithful leadership.”

Board members also used the Presbyterian Foundation’s online resources to create a slide presentation on legacy giving, including a link to a video.

*(continues on “70 for 70” page)*

Jan - July 2024	Actual YTD	2024 Budget
Member Giving Pledge	\$337,399	\$509,000
Member Giving Non-Pledge	\$35,186	\$60,000
Loose Offerings	\$20,992	\$9,000
Total for week	\$393,577	\$578,000

## 2024 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  
Keith Bumgarner

### **Finance/Administration/ Stewardship**

John Hibbard

### **Outreach**

Beppie Lever  
Braegan Abernethy

### **Senior Adults**

Dee Bradford-Smith

### **Witness**

Lois Johnson

### **Worship**

Gloria Gillespie  
Malinda Holmes



# VACATION BIBLE SCHOOL

Thank you to all our volunteers for another successful VBS!





# 70 FOR 70 *(continued)*

“The Presbyterian Foundation materials add legitimacy and credibility to what we are saying about gifts to the MVP Foundation,” said Mt. Vernon congregant Charlie Gray. “On a regular basis during my time on the board we used Presbyterian Foundation materials to communicate with the congregation about estate planning and lifetime giving. In my time as a member of this congregation, I remember receiving Presbyterian Foundation materials regularly.”

During the worship service celebrating the 70th anniversary of the founding of Mt. Vernon, Allen and other members of the Foundation board announced the “70 for 70” campaign. The Foundation pledged to match \$70,000 if members and friends of Mt. Vernon contributed \$70,000. Those funds will be used for “building and campus improvements,” said board member Gloria Gillespie, noting that the aging facilities need regular preventive maintenance to guarantee functionality for decades to come.

In a little more than a quarter-century, the board of the Mount Vernon Presbyterian Foundation has distributed more than \$700,000 to support the youth ministry at the church, the Mount Vernon School, Alliance for Children Everywhere, Community Assistance Center, Los Niños Primero, Family Promise, Clifton Sanctuary Ministries, Stirred Up Ministries, and Faith Works Schools. While the church proper also supports many of these organizations, Allen said, the Foundation has the financial resources and the operational flexibility to support “additional outreach programs that our church is interested in. Our church is filled with generous donors who, thanks to support from the Presbyterian Foundation, understand what our Foundation is and how it operates.”

We hope you will join us on Sunday, September 8 at 10:30am as we celebrate 25 years of the Foundation. We will recognize those early givers who helped form this philanthropic arm of our ministry and enjoy a tasty lunch catered by Fox Bros. BBQ!

To contribute to our current campaign, the “70 for 70” project, go to our website [mvpchurch.org](http://mvpchurch.org) under the “Give” tab.





# OUTREACH



Our August Communion offering was school supplies for SSEF and Stirred-Up. Our September offering is for the CAC Food Pantry.



Volunteers continued to help sort book donations for Sandy Springs Education Force, complete with dance party from Sophie!



At VBS, our Project with a Purpose was creating 150 After School Snack bags, 75 for CAC and 75 for Stirred-Up. They also decorated bookmarks for distribution with SSEF books. VBS attendees brought boxes of cereal to donate to CAC, and our donation along with the snack bags totaled 98lbs!





# HEALTHY AGING EVENT



Some of the vendors





# TREES



## The Prayer Tree



The changing landscape around our campus and the removal of the trees due to the road construction inspired our fall sermon series, “Planting Trees: Finding a Deeply Rooted Faith.” In this series, we are exploring some of the various trees in the Bible and what we can learn from them about God and faith.

We have placed a prayer tree in the narthex as part of the series. Prayer trees date back to ancient Celtic traditions when rags or strips of cloth were tied to sacred trees. The pieces of fabric were physical representations of a person’s prayer or wish. Native Americans and other indigenous cultures have also had their own versions of prayer trees, where people could tie prayers, letters, drawings, and other creations to a sacred tree.

The intention of our prayer tree is to provide a place to acknowledge and hold our prayer requests as a congregation. Prayer tags and ribbons are available in a basket next to the tree. We encourage you to write your prayer requests on a tag and hang it on the tree or tie a ribbon to the tree in the spirit of the ancient Celtic tradition. Also, please pray for the requests on the tree as you are moved to do so. After our series is complete, we will plant the tree in a suitable place on the campus.

Our prayer tree, provided by David Barclift, is an Ironwood, *Ostrya virginiana*. It is also known as the American Hop-hornbeam or Eastern Hophornbeam. Ironwood is a tough understory tree with beautiful birch-like leaves, grayish-brown flaky bark, fine-textured drooping branches, and attractive hop-like fruits. Ironwood is considered one of the toughest native hardwoods and is not only ornamental but resistant to many diseases and insect problems. It is an excellent tree for naturalized landscapes.



# CELEBRATIONS

We have a lot to be thankful for!

Thank you to the Healthy Aging planning team for all their efforts! For seven months, they worked in tandem with the Emory Goizueta Alzheimer's Research Center to bring this conference to MVPC. This resulted in 180 people from our community attending and learning good practices for how to live well and age well!



Shari Freeman was enrolled as a candidate for ministry by the Presbytery of Greater Atlanta.



Lorry Clark and the Llama!



Healthy Aging Interview



Healthy Aging Planning Dinner



Healthy Aging Speaker  
Dr. Monica Parker of Emory University



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## CHURCH OFFICE HOURS

MONDAY-THURSDAY

8AM-4PM

FRIDAY 8AM - 2PM

# This & That

## September Events

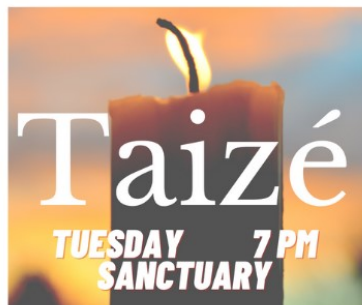
Fall Kickoff &  
Fox Bros. BBQ  
9/8

Senior Adult Movie  
Matinee  
9/14

Outdoor Worship  
Blessing of the Animals  
9/22

Taize  
9/24

Braves Game  
9/29



Photos courtesy of: Dee Bradford-Smith, Barrett Abernethy, Braegan Abernethy, Meg Christian, Christy Hill, Shari Freeman  
(Please send any pictures of your events to [debbie@mvpchurch.org](mailto:debbie@mvpchurch.org))

# Getting to know...

## ED SPAIN



### **What is your proudest accomplishment?**

My wife Carolyn and I just celebrated our 40th wedding anniversary. We were married at the First Presbyterian Church in Franklin, TN. Together we raised two sons who are both Eagle Scouts, College graduates, and happily married. We also now have two grandchildren. We have laughed about changing our vows from “For Better or Worse” to “For Better AND Worse!”. We have been through a lot together, and still love each other dearly.

### **What is your favorite thing about your career?**

Being Retired! With the support of Carolyn, I have had a wonderful career. Opportunities have taken us to other countries including living in Europe and the Caribbean. There have been many challenges, many up and downs and most of all many satisfying moments. I’m looking forward to slowing the pace as I ease into retirement.

### **What’s the most daring thing you’ve ever done?**

I have been a SCUBA diver since the 1980s. When our sons decided they too wanted to earn their certifications, I decided it was time to improve my skills to the level of Divemaster. There is extensive training for this certification including search and rescue skills. The most daring dive was the Great Wall of the Cayman Islands. At the top of the wall at 50 feet deep, you can look down to a depth that is 240 feet, and the water is pitch black. One’s imagination runs wild thinking what all could be down in that water!

### **Have you ever had a surprise party?**

Yes! Carolyn put together a surprise birthday party for me. I arrived at the location and there were so many friends and family waiting for me. She really did a good job of keeping this secret, I had no idea what she was planning. I was truly surprised!

### **What do you do to keep fit?**

I used to play tennis, but now pickleball is more enjoyable. I try to walk at least four miles every day and begin every morning with a stretching routine. For many decades, I have practiced Tai Chi every single day. I think Carolyn’s great cooking also helps me to stay fit, as she always prepares a very healthy meal for us.



# SEPTEMBER CALENDAR

MVPC Events, barrett@mvpchurch.org

Sep 2024 (Eastern Time - New York)

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
<p>1</p> <p>9:30am - Crossroads 9:30am - Discovery 10:30am - Worship @ 11:30am - Wedding Prep 12pm - Lunch Bunch @ 7pm - AA @ Kirk Center</p>	<p>2</p> <p><b>CHURCH OFFICE CLOSED</b> 6:30pm - AI Anon @ 7pm - Scouts @ Gailey 8pm - AA @ Kirk Center</p>	<p>3</p> <p>10am - Staff Meeting @ 1:30pm - Staff Worship 5:30pm - CE Meeting 7pm - AA-Women's Big 8pm - AA @ Fellowship</p>	<p>4</p> <p>8am - School Chapel @ 9am - Busy 1pm - PS weekly meet @ 7pm - Choir Rehearsal @</p>	<p>5</p> <p>7:45am - MVAA @ 8pm - AA @ Kirk Center</p>	<p>6</p> <p>8pm - AA-Primary</p>	<p>7</p> <p>9am - Bagpipes @ Gailey</p>
<p>8</p> <p>9:30am - Crossroads 9:30am - Discovery Class 10:30am - Worship @ 11:30am - Luncheon, 7pm - AA @ Kirk Center 7pm - Atlanta Concert</p>	<p>9</p> <p>1pm - Senior Adult 5:30pm - Busy 5:30pm - Monthly FAMT 6:30pm - AI Anon @ 7pm - Scouts @ Gailey 8pm - AA @ Kirk Center</p>	<p>10</p> <p>7:30am - MV Parent 10am - PW Coordinating 10am - Staff Meeting @ 10:30am - PW Day Circle 1:30pm - Staff Worship 7pm - AA-Women's Big</p>	<p>11</p> <p>8am - School Chapel @ 1pm - PS weekly meet @ 6pm - Busy 7pm - Choir Rehearsal @</p>	<p>12</p> <p>11am - Vernon Springs 2pm - General Ledger 8pm - AA @ Kirk Center</p>	<p>13</p> <p>8am - Finance/Admin 10am - PW Book Circle @ 8pm - AA-Primary</p>	<p>14</p> <p>9am - Bagpipes- 1pm - Seniors Movie 6:30pm - Young Adults,</p>
<p>15</p> <p>9:30am - Zambia Trip 10:30am - Worship @ 11:30am - Session Mtg @ 4pm - YMSL @ Sanctuary 7pm - AA @ Kirk Center 7pm - Atlanta Concert</p>	<p>16</p> <p>6pm - Magic Club @ 6:30pm - AI Anon @ 7pm - Scouts @ Gailey 8pm - AA @ Kirk Center</p>	<p>17</p> <p>10am - Staff Meeting @ 1:30pm - Staff Worship 4pm - Stephen Min. - 7pm - AA-Women's Big 8pm - AA @ Fellowship</p>	<p>18</p> <p>8am - School Chapel @ 1pm - PS weekly meet @ 7pm - Choir Rehearsal @</p>	<p>19</p> <p>12pm - SSICA @ Ignatius 8pm - AA @ Kirk Center</p>	<p>20</p> <p>8pm - AA-Primary</p>	<p>21</p> <p>9am - Bagpipes @ Gailey 10am - Lion King set 5pm - LNP Gala</p>
<p>22</p> <p>9:30am - Crossroads 9:30am - Discovery 10:30am - Worship - 11:30am - Bless the 12pm - Connections Tea, 7pm - AA @ Kirk Center</p>	<p>23</p> <p>6:30pm - AI Anon @ 7pm - Scouts @ Gailey 8pm - AA @ Kirk Center</p>	<p>24</p> <p>10am - Staff Meeting @ 1:30pm - Staff Worship 3pm - Stephen Ministry @ 7pm - AA-Women's Big 7pm - Taize @ Sanctuary 8pm - AA @ Fellowship</p>	<p>25</p> <p><b>Newsletter Deadline</b> 8am - School Chapel @ 1pm - PS weekly meet @ 7pm - Choir Rehearsal @</p>	<p>26</p> <p>7pm - LNP Board Meeting 8pm - AA @ Kirk Center</p>	<p>27</p> <p>3:30pm - Amy Kiley 8pm - AA-Primary</p>	<p>28</p> <p>9am - Bagpipes @ Gailey 4pm - Amy Kiley wedding</p>
<p>29</p> <p>9:30am - Crossroads 9:30am - Discovery 10:30am - Worship @ 3:20pm - Braves Game @ 7pm - AA @ Kirk Center 7pm - Atlanta Concert</p>	<p>30</p> <p>2pm - Songs for the Soul 6:30pm - AI Anon @ 7pm - Scouts @ Gailey 8pm - AA @ Kirk Center</p>	<p>1</p>	<p>2</p>	<p>3</p>	<p>4</p>	<p>5</p>

Go to our website for a live view of the calendar!

# VOLUNTEER OPPORTUNITY



Volunteers are needed to help restock Blessing Bags. These bags are kept in the church office and serve as a blessing when individuals stop by the church looking for resources. Two types of bags are available, one with snacks/food items, and one with common travel toiletries (soap, toothbrush/paste, sanitizing wipes, etc.). Bags also contain information for resources like the Community Assistance Center and Family Promise. Volunteers are needed to shop for items and be reimbursed, as well as stock bags. We anticipate this would be a quarterly project to make sure bags are well-stocked and food items kept within expiration dates.

Contact Beppie ([beppielever@earthlink.net](mailto:beppielever@earthlink.net)) or Braegan ([bcabernethy@gmail.com](mailto:bcabernethy@gmail.com)) if you are interested in helping out with this important outreach project.



Join us for a combined Sunday School Class on Sunday, September 15 at 9:30am in the Chapel.

We will be sharing our experiences while in Lusaka, Zambia this summer!

We will possibly be planning another trip in 2025!



Stephen Ministry is open to church members and the community. If you have grief that is bearing you down, recent job loss or a new, chronic or terminal health diagnosis, empty nest blues, mid-life angst, a move that has been disorienting, or other upsets that make you sad or confused, we are happy to walk with you through it and be a sounding board and offer resources. Contact Pat Bartee, Stephen Leader, or a pastor to get connected.



# SEPTEMBER BIRTHDAYS

Nancy Kennedy	9/3
Betsy Cozine	9/3
Kirk Pumphrey	9/4
Chris Gray	9/4
Hazel Cofield	9/4
Channing Snynn	9/5
Carolyn Spain	9/6
Emma Plumly	9/6
Suzanne Snynn	9/10
Jim Loth	9/13
Meg Christian	9/14
Sam McClurg	9/15
Stephanie Skidmore	9/20
Minnie Robinson	9/21
George Henry	9/24
Penny Kiel	9/26
Barbara Wasson	9/26
Jack Bobeng	9/30



*If you have a birthday in September 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
Jill Hudson	October 21
Rev. Barrett Abernethy	October 30
Steve Ray	December 1

# SESSION SUMMARY

## Summary of the Stated Session Meeting August 18, 2024

Following is summary of the business conducted at the August Stated Session Meeting held on August 18, 2024:

- Thank you letters were received from PC(USA) and Sandy Springs Education Force thanking Mount Vernon for financial support. MVPC sent \$1,688.23 to the One Great Hour of Sharing offering. Sandy Springs Education Force received \$2,500 from our Outreach Ministry budget to support programs for at-risk students who struggle academically in school.
- MVPC membership dropped recently to 376. We added new member Kathy Harbin, but long-time members Dave Whitacre and Barbara Bush passed away.
- Rev. Abernethy and others who recently returned from Zambia will give a report of their mission trip on Sunday, September 15 at 9:30am in the Chapel.
- Temporary entrance signs are going up since road construction necessitated removal of the old signs. Once construction is completed, new entrance signs will be installed.
- Reports were given regarding business conducted at the recent Presbytery meeting as well as a summary of the work of the recently completed PC(USA) General Assembly.
- Our own Shari Freeman was unanimously approved by the Presbytery Commissioners to move into candidacy for ordination.



# PRAYER VINE



*Christian Sympathy for the families of **Dave Whitacre** who died August 3, **Rev. Frank Brown** who died this summer, and for **Barbara Bush** who died August 17.*

**Bob Addison** - faith and hope as he continues cancer treatment and evaluation of his kidneys.

**Jeannie Chettleburgh** - sister-in-law of Shari Freeman, needs courage and hope as she continues chemo and head cap therapy for her brain tumor.

**Lorry Clark** - has recently made Addington Place in Johns Creek her home.

**Gene Elder** - quick recovery after surgery for a rare kind of skin cancer.

**Bruce Hagenau** - continued positive results for his months-long cancer treatment.

**Megan Kendall** - strength as she nears the end of her cancer treatment and then surgery.

**Erven Kimble** - comfort and peace for Charlie Gray's friend who has been diagnosed with terminal cancer.

**Chitip Likitcharoen** - sister of Chantima who works in Children's Church, relief of severe back pain and lives in Thailand.

**Chuck McCrory** - future father-in-law of Amy Kiley, improvement in symptoms and health so he can travel for their wedding.

**Bruce Morine** - full stamina and health as he recovers from hip replacement surgery.

**Karen Morine** - faith and endurance as she continues chemo treatments.

**Meredith Nash** - rejoicing that she has started school as a healthy, normal girl!

**Andy Nelson** - full health as he nears his 90-day mark after his transplant.

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

**Minnie Robinson** - has had a few bumps in the road since her knee replacement surgery but is progressing.

**Maeve Ross** - continued improvement as she is home from the hospital and thriving!

**Katherine Slayback** - comfort and hope for her family, who was seriously injured in a car accident while visiting her father in NY and is on life support. She is the caregiver for Anna Morine.

Blessings upon all the ministries our church supports in Atlanta and in Zambia. Please fill your BLUE BAGS with school supplies this month. Courage and faith for those oppressed and hungry, wisdom for those negotiating for a more peaceful world, and discernment for voters everywhere to choose leaders who exemplify the country's values and are looking at positive solutions to problems.

Do you need prayer?

Have our Prayer Vine pray for you!

Email your requests to [pbartee@yahoo.com](mailto: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](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).*

**Good News!**

## Mount Vernon Presbyterian Church Staff

<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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