



MOUNT VERNON PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH

GOOD NEWS

JANUARY 2025



A Note From the Pastor

By Rev. Barrett Abernethy

*12 Years, 12 Lessons
Let the Church Lead*

In August 2025, I will celebrate 12 years of ordained ministry. As I look back, I can assure you it has rarely been dull, largely been joyful, and always been illuminating. To commemorate this milestone, I am devoting this newsletter space to the 12 things I have learned over the past dozen years. This is by no means an exhaustive list because truth be told I learn something new every day, and I hope you find this helpful. Perhaps these reflections will remind you of your own calling to live out your faith in God, and how that faith interacts with the larger body of Christ here at Mount Vernon.

The first lesson is *Let the Church Lead*. This lesson goes back to childhood. I can remember being no more than 12 or 13 when during a Wednesday night church dinner, my father and I sat next to our pastor. The two of them got to talking and I can remember my dad saying, "Being a school superintendent and being a church pastor have a lot in common." The pastor had that discerning look on his face as he processed my father's comments, and then nodded, affirming this truth.

continued on next page

IN THIS ISSUE

Christmas

Volunteer Spotlight

Outreach

Chalking the Door

Gift of Wisdom

This & That/Celebrations

Annual Prayer Examen

Getting to Know

Birthdays

January Calendar

Session Summary

Prayer Vine

This rather ordinary exchange stayed with me because it galvanized two formative entities in my life: the church and my family. You see, my mother was the school superintendent in that town where we went to church, and one thing I learned from her was, "Barrett, every now and then I have to tell them, 'It's your school, not mine.'" What she meant was that the locals know their community the best. The school board members, the parents, and yes, even the students. Before I went to seminary, this was my laboratory. And I learned that sometimes I must tell the Session or other leaders, "It's your church, not mine." This is not a statement of disengagement, rather it's a direct call for the parishioner(s) to engage. To listen to the Holy Spirit by engaging with the people and wondering together if this is where God is leading our community. Sometimes this truth will reveal itself quite quickly, sometimes it will take a season or two, and yes sometimes it will never be realized. My call as the pastor is to help you discern where that centering spirit resides, so that together, parishioners and pastors can merge as the royal priesthood to live out a faithful call in our unique context.

Admittedly, at the core of this, is the way we govern ourselves. Yes, there is something spiritual about being "decent and orderly." To let the church lead

means to gather for committee meetings, to sit at the table and pray and question together, share a meal, or return a phone call. A "no" to something is not necessarily a bad thing, it just means the body is not yet there. At times, I have been told "no" by you, and that's okay. In fact, it has been helpful to my growth as a pastor. And yes, at times, I have felt the spirit leading me to question what you may think is a good idea. I hope that has been helpful to you as well.

Letting the church lead is to experience the presence of God in the journey. That is what I love most about being a pastor. Where we are going in community is truly a spiritual undertaking. It's beyond me. It's beyond you. So many weeks this happens. I will come into the office prepared to get done what I set out to do, and God, through you, will lead me somewhere else. Those are the best days!

As we begin this year, I look forward to wondering alongside you. To more exciting days! I wonder where you will take me. Where you will take us. I know if God's church is at the forefront of our steps, then wherever we go will be because of the spiritual providence of God. Keep leading, friends!

Barrett

Jan - November 2024	Actual YTD	2024 Budget
Member Giving Pledge	\$474,738	\$509,000
Member Giving Non-Pledge	\$56,584	\$60,000
Loose Offerings	\$22,484	\$9,000
Total YTD	\$553,806	\$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

CHRISTMAS

Hanging of the Greens



Christmas Pageant



Caroling



VOLUNTEER SPOTLIGHT

VOLUNTEER OPPORTUNITY SPOTLIGHT



HELPING NEIGHBORS

The Community Assistance Center (CAC) provides basic needs assistance for Dunwoody and Sandy Springs neighbors to prevent homelessness and hunger while promoting self-sufficiency and empowering them to thrive. CAC also offers youth programs, adult education classes, a Career Center and other services to promote self-reliance.

Originally called the Community Action Center, CAC was started in 1987 in our Gailey Hall by five congregations including MVPC. Now the organization has four locations. With the support of MVPC, CAC has assisted more than 30,000 local families.

GIVING HOPE

Serving 6,900 individuals/2,500 families a year

Answering 700 calls a month for assistance

Giving food to 500 families a month
Giving clothes to 300 people a month
Giving school supplies to 1,000 kids a year

Providing holiday gifts to 1,400 kids a year



CAC needs more volunteers! For Food Pantry, Thrift Shop and other volunteer opportunities go to:
<https://www.ourcac.org/individual-volunteer-opportunities>.

MVPC is the CAC **Congregation of the Month!** Shop with your Blue Bag and help stock the Food Pantry this month!

OUTREACH

Outreach Ministry Team

Our December Communion Offering was toys, warm clothing, gift cards and beauty items for the International Women's House. Carol Beckman and Dale Morine delivered these items to IWH.



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, and Stirred Up Ministries.



OMT continued to support our local Sandy Springs schools by funding holiday party supplies for Lake Forest Elementary School and purchasing materials for kits that High Point Elementary students put together for Emory patients as part of their IB program.

In January we will be the **Congregation of the Month** for the Community Assistance Center. Please see the list of items we are collecting and let's stock their Food Pantry this month! If you're interested in touring the South Sandy Springs location, contact Mike Havey (mike_havey@hotmail.com) to arrange a time to stop by when he and Kathy are volunteering.

CHALKING THE DOOR

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 2025 are "20 + C + M + B + 25". 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 January 5, 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.

GIFT OF WISDOM



Snowy Horizons

A pristine palette awaiting your dreams,
the freedom of flying with the force of a kick, higher each effort in another Season's swing.

Carefree thoughts, the newness it brings.
Goals and reflection from the untouched snow,

Each year new thoughts, some still not done but remain on the list,
determined to not be forgotten as you lift off at the height of bliss.

Poem: Dee Bradford-Smith

Artwork: Donna Martin



C
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Anna Morine made keychains for the Family Promise families!



Resident Spotlight

JACK B.



Former member, Jack Bobeng, was the featured resident where he lives in Michigan.

The staff celebrated Barrett's birthday with lobster rolls!

Again, the staff took a break from their busy schedule to enjoy some New England "Chowda".



Clark and Finley Nelson finished in first place at the PGA Family Golf Cup at Bobby Jones Golf Course in November. This is their third consecutive win.

Mailing Address:

MVPC

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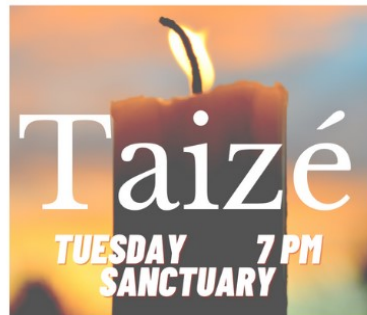


CHURCH OFFICE HOURS

MONDAY-THURSDAY

8 AM-4 PM

FRIDAY 8 AM - 2 PM



This & That

JANUARY EVENTS

Office Closed

1/1

1/20

Men's Breakfast

1/19

Combined Sunday
School with Francis
Horton, Executive
Director of CAC

1/19

Taize

1/21

Session Retreat

1/24-25

Photos courtesy of: Barrett Abernethy, Braegan Abernethy, Shari
Freeman, Gloria Gillespie, Robin Truitt

(Please send any pictures of your events to debbie@mvpchurch.org)

ANNUAL PRAYER EXAMEN

Annual Prayer of Examen

Have you heard of the “Prayer of Examen?” It was developed in the 16th century by St. Ignatius of Loyola, the founder of the Jesuits. The prayer provides an opportunity for peaceful reflection, inviting us to “find God in all things.” While it was intended to be used daily, it is also a great spiritual practice to engage in at the beginning of a new year, inviting us to reflect on the previous year and ponder how we enter the year to come. Here’s an outline for you to follow:

- 1) Find a quiet place, and ask God to speak into your heart.
- 2) Reflect over the past year, thinking about the joys and challenges you experienced. You may want to refer to a calendar to jog your memory.
- 3) Ask yourself the following questions:
 - What were the most important events I experienced this past year?
 - What brought me the greatest joy?
 - What were the troubles and challenges?
 - What am I grateful for?
 - Where do I see God’s presence in the events and movements of the year?
- 4) Look forward.
 - As I look ahead to the coming months, what comes to mind?
 - With what spirit do I want to enter the next few months? The next year?
 - How can God accompany me into this year?
- 5) Ask for God’s presence and grace as you enter this new year.



GETTING TO KNOW ...

JOEY NOSZEK



If you could live anywhere, where would it be?

New York or San Francisco. I love walking and a car-free lifestyle, so I would like to live in a city that facilitates that.

What was the last movie you went to? What did you think?

Sonic the Hedgehog 3. Fantastic movie. I liked the first two, but this one really went to another level.

What would you sing at a Karaoke night?

My signature karaoke song is Frank Sinatra's "My Way". It's perfect for my voice and allows for baritone belting. I love to belt, but not many songs call for a low voice to really put it all out there.

Have you ever had a nickname? What is it?

It's no secret that I have the nickname of Joey. I've actually had that nickname since birth. My parents agreed on Joseph before I was born, but once my mother saw me, she knew it was wrong. That's when she started calling me Joey. I also used to be called Porcupine, as I had spiky, vertical hair throughout middle and high school.

What are your hobbies?

I used to do a lot of theatre. I hope to get back into it someday, but it's been awhile, so I probably shouldn't currently count it as a hobby. My hobbies currently are singing, weightlifting, and puzzling. Before you ask, I'm not talking about jigsaw puzzles (at least, not just jigsaw puzzles). A puzzle is something that tells you a word or phrase while working very hard to not let you know what the word or phrase is. In particular, I enjoy working with friends to complete puzzle hunts, which are collections of puzzles where the solutions of the puzzles come together to form a metapuzzle.



Now a new year begins, and your Stephen Ministry team is standing by to walk with you as you decide how to improve strained relationships, leave a toxic situation or job, learn to go on alone, move, send a child off to school or a job in another state, or get a troubling diagnosis. New year, new opportunity to change your life and your perspective.

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

JANUARY BIRTHDAYS



Garrett Hahn	1/1
Brian Eusltis	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

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

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.

JANUARY CALENDAR

Jan 2025 (Eastern Time - New York)

MVPC Events, barrett@mvpchurch.org

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
29	30	31	1	2	3	4
9:30am - Crossroads 9:30am - Discovery 10:30am - Worship @ 7pm - AA @ Kirk Center 7pm - Atlanta Concert	1pm - Senior Adult 6:30pm - AI Anon @ 7pm - Scouts @ Gailey 8pm - AA @ Kirk Center	10am - Staff Meeting @ 1:30pm - Staff Worship 5:30pm - CE Meeting 7pm - AA-Women's Big 8pm - AA @ Fellowship	CHURCH OFFICE CLOSED 8am - School Chapel @ 1pm - PS weekly meet @ 7pm - Choir Rehearsal @	7:45am - MVAA @ 8pm - AA @ Kirk Center	12:30pm - Allison Elustis 8pm - AA-Primary	8am - AFS @ Sanctuary
5	6	7	8	9	10	11
9:30am - Crossroads 9:30am - Discovery 10:30am - Worship @ 7pm - AA @ Kirk Center 7pm - Atlanta Concert	1pm - Senior Adult 6:30pm - AI Anon @ 7pm - Scouts @ Gailey 8pm - AA @ Kirk Center	10am - Staff Meeting @ 1:30pm - Staff Worship 5:30pm - CE Meeting 7pm - AA-Women's Big 8pm - AA @ Fellowship	8am - School Chapel @ 1pm - PS weekly meet @ 2pm - Worship Ministry 2:30pm - Stephen 7pm - Choir Rehearsal @	11am - Vernon Springs 2pm - General Ledger 8pm - AA @ Kirk Center	8am - Finance/Admin 10am - PW Book Circle @ 8pm - AA-Primary	9am - Busy 3:15pm - Magic Club @
12	13	14	15	16	17	18
9:30am - Crossroads 9:30am - Discovery 10:30am - Worship @ 3pm - YMSL @ Sanctuary 7pm - AA @ Kirk Center 7pm - Atlanta Concert	5:30pm - Busy 5:30pm - Monthly FAMT 6:30pm - AI Anon @ 7pm - Scouts @ Gailey 8pm - AA @ Kirk Center	7:30am - MV Parent 10am - PW Coordinating 10am - Staff Meeting @ 10:30am - PW Day Circle 1:30pm - Staff Worship 7pm - AA-Women's Big 8pm - AA @ Fellowship	8am - School Chapel @ 1pm - PS weekly meet @ 7pm - Choir Rehearsal @	12pm - SSICA @ session 8pm - AA @ Kirk Center	8pm - AA-Primary	
19	20	21	22	23	24	25
8:30am - Men's breakfast 9:30am - Sunday School : 10:30am - Worship @ 11:30am - Session Mig @ 7pm - AA @ Kirk Center 7pm - Atlanta Concert	Office closed 6pm - Magic Club @ 6:30pm - AI Anon @ 7pm - Scouts @ Gailey 8pm - AA @ Kirk Center	10am - Staff Meeting @ 1:30pm - Staff Worship 4pm - Stephen Min. - 7pm - AA-Women's Big 8pm - AA @ Fellowship	Newsletter Deadline 8am - School Chapel @ 1pm - PS weekly meet @ 7pm - Choir Rehearsal @	10:30am - Senior Adult 7pm - LNP Board Meeting 8pm - AA @ Kirk Center	5pm - Session Retreat @ 8pm - AA-Primary	9am - Session Retreat
26	27	28	29	30	31	1
9:30am - Crossroads 9:30am - Discovery 10:30am - Worship @ 3pm - YMSL @ Sanctuary 7pm - AA @ Kirk Center 7pm - Atlanta Concert	6:30pm - AI Anon @ 7pm - Scouts @ Gailey 8pm - AA @ Kirk Center	10am - Staff Meeting @ 1:30pm - Staff Worship 7pm - AA-Women's Big 7pm - Taize @ Sanctuary 8pm - AA @ Fellowship	8am - School Chapel @ 1pm - PS weekly meet @ 7pm - Choir Rehearsal @ 7pm - Magic club @ FH	8pm - AA @ Kirk Center	8pm - AA-Primary	

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

SESSION SUMMARY

Stated Session Meeting December 8, 2024

The MVPC Session met for its regularly scheduled meeting on Sunday, December 8, 2024, and conducted the following business:

- Special offerings for 2025 were approved
- The baptism of Liam Andrew Qualls, great grandson of Bob Addison, was approved to take place on January 12, 2025, during the worship service.
- A Building Use Policy was approved that delineates various rules for building use by outside groups. In the past the church did not have such a policy.
- Rev. Abernethy outlined plans for the Annual Session Retreat that will take place January 24-25. Plans include discussion of what we mean by “Reaching out to Welcome, Worship, share, and serve.” Session will also engage in some middle and long-range planning.
- Early planning has begun to create a follow-up event to our very successful healthy aging conference. Preliminary thinking is to put together a program to help churches do a better job of serving members who have memory care needs.
- The Sandy Springs Interfaith Council is discussing the issue of homelessness in Sandy Springs and will be inviting Family Promise and MUST Ministries to help develop solutions.

The next Session Meeting will be held as part of the Session Retreat on January 24-25. Incoming Session members will be ordained and installed on Sunday, January 26. New members include Barbara Brooks, Ben Cumming, Mike Havey, Penny Kiel, Carrie Southard, Ed Spain, and Mary Lea Woods. Current member Malinda Holmes will serve an additional year on Session.

PRAYER VINE



Christian Sympathy for Jeanne Gilliland and family on the death of Hazel Cofield who died December 14.

Dee Bradford-Smith - comfort and peace as she deals with the death of her sister, Marcia Hutchinson in Charlottesville, VA.

Jeannie Chettleburgh - sister-in-law of Shari Freeman, healing and recovery as she takes chemo in preparation for a new treatment in January.

Mike Damron - strength, faith, and stamina as he struggles with health setbacks, brother-in-law of Mary Lea Woods.

Joann Egan - a frequent visitor who is undergoing treatment for cancer.

Gene Elder - rejoicing that side effects from radiation are subsiding.

Malinda Holmes - joy for "minimal post-operative treatment" for breast cancer.

Helen Johnson - healing from receiving a pacemaker and a successful move to Assisted Living.

Kathryn - thanksgiving that the bones in her foot are naturally healing along with physical therapy, Moira Speir's sister

Kirt Lattanze - strength and stamina after he had surgery a few weeks ago but was rushed back to surgery for gall bladder surgery, friend of Charlie Gray

Corny Laube - peace as he enters hospice care.

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

Karen Morine - perseverance and hope as she continues chemo, sister-in-law of Bruce Morine.

Freida Townsend - thankful that a tumor in her lung has stabilized, friend of Charlie Gray.

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.

Mount Vernon Presbyterian Church Staff

Rev. Barrett Abernethy	<i>Senior Pastor/Head of Staff</i>	barrett@mvpchurch.org
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Good News!

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Thanks to Solo IotoCoyote 02-07-2014
MOSES AND NOAH HAVING AN ARGUMENT

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