



MOUNT VERNON PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH
GOOD NEWS

FEBRUARY 2025



A Note From the Pastor

By Rev. Barrett Abernethy

*12 Years, 12 Lessons
Be the Congregation You Are*

For the last several years in February your pastoral staff has had the pleasure each Tuesday of the month to lead the evening devotional down at the Mt. Vernon Towers. I always enjoy this evening. It's an opportunity to share a meal with some of our members, and then to get to know the neighbors in our community. Yet trekking that tenth of a mile from my office is important in a much larger way: it's living into who we are and celebrating the community that God has given us.

MVPC is not any different than most Presbyterian Churches across this country. About 20 of our members live in the Towers and on your average

Sunday a majority of the people in our pews are over 65. Because of that I believe I am not doing my job as pastor and evangelist if I do not head over to the Towers every February or any other time I am invited. Because if I have learned anything, the key to a thriving congregation is a hopeful congregation and you can't be hopeful unless you are first comfortable being who you are.

I know on its face that may seem counterintuitive. After all, shouldn't the goal of every church be to get younger, to attract those "young families with kids?" Of course, that would be great,

continued on next page

IN THIS ISSUE

Session Retreat

Book of Confessions

Volunteer Opportunity

Outreach

This & That/Celebrations

Gift of Wisdom

Getting to Know

February Calendar

Birthdays

Session Summary

Prayer Vine

but before you can get there, you have to be comfortable with who we are as a community. If you are not then those young families with kids that come “church shopping” will be turned off by the gray hair they see, but by the inauthentic way we are trying to reach them.

That’s why this lesson is: Be the congregation you are. When MVPC, or any church for that matter, is at its best - meaning it is spiritually aligned as a community - it knows who it is and how God has called it to proclaim and serve. At one point in our church’s life we were the church “Blessed to be a blessing.” Clearly that resonated with several of you. I still hear that mantra in prayers of thanksgiving and how some of you identify our church. Now we are the church “Reaching Out To... Welcome. Worship. Share. Serve.” We embody this mantra in so many ways. Whenever I talk to people - whether they be visitors or Presbytery guests - the first thing they often say is how welcoming we are. Because you are comfortable with who you are, you draw people in, and that leads them to want to worship, share, and serve right alongside you! They want to know more about God and how God moves through you as a community of faith. You give them that opportunity by the hopefulness you exude.

Here is an example of that hopefulness at work: This past December we held a children’s Christmas pageant during worship. The genesis of this pageant began about a year ago when my daughter yelled from the backseat, “Let’s do a Christmas pageant, Daddy!” As I drove, it dawned on me how perfect her idea was - we now have the critical mass of children at the right age to pull off a pageant. And we did it! Friends, we didn’t have the children a few years ago to put together something like that. My daughter’s idea became reality because you have embraced who you are and by doing that, you have invited others in, and that hope transcends generational divides because everyone, no matter their age or life experience, is looking for belonging.

I know some of you worry about the future of the church. That we are dying out. I worry about that too, but I worry more about the church not being who it is called to be. I believe to be that hopeful church that reaches out to people in the heart of Sandy Springs, on Tuesday evenings this month you can find me doing my job at Mount Vernon Towers. I will be there, because, like you, I want to see more children’s Christmas pageants.

Keep being you, MVPC. God’s working through you.

Barrett

Jan - December 2024	Actual YTD	2024 Budget
Member Giving Pledge	\$539,080	\$509,000
Member Giving Non-Pledge	\$60,738	\$60,000
Loose Offerings	\$23,050	\$9,000
Total YTD	\$622,868	\$578,000

2025 Session Members & Ministry Teams

Moderator(s)

Rev. Barrett Abernethy
Rev. Isaac Toney-Schmitt

Clerk of Session

David Hill

Christian Education

Carrie Southard

Congregational Care

Barbara Brooks
Htet Nyunt

Fellowship

Keith Bumgarner
Ed Spain

Finance/Administration/ Stewardship

Ben Cumming
John Hibbard

Outreach

Braegan Abernethy
Mike Havey

Senior Adults

Mary Lea Woods

Witness

Lois Johnson

Worship

Penny Kiel
Malinda Holmes

SESSION RETREAT



SESSION 2025



Christian Education

Carrie Southard

Congregational Care

Barbara Brooks, Htet Nyunt

Fellowship

Keith Bumgarner, Ed Spain

Finance/Admin/Stewardship

Ben Cumming

Outreach

Braegan Abernethy, Mike Havey

Senior Adults

Mary Lea Woods

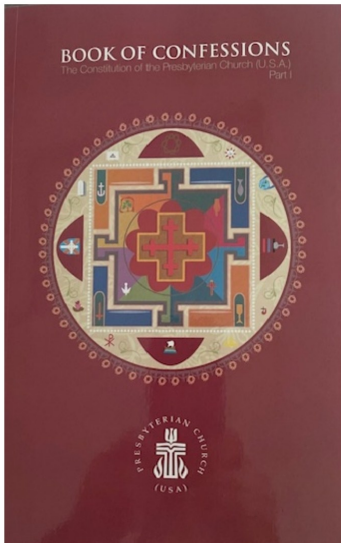
Witness

Lois Johnson

Worship

Penny Kiel, Malinda Holmes

BOOK OF CONFESSIONS



On January 26, we ordained and/or installed eight elders. As part of the ordination service, these elders were asked several different constitutional questions. Two of the questions included a commitment to being led by the confessions of the PC(USA).

In case you didn't know, the PC(USA) has twelve different creeds and confessions found in our Book of Confessions. These confessions span the church's history, from the 4th to the 20th centuries. The first two documents, the Nicene and Apostles' Creeds, are from the early church.

The Scots Confession, Heidelberg Catechism, Second Helvetic Confession, and The Westminster Standards were all written during the protestant reformation. The four newest confessions, The Declaration of Barmen, The Confession of 1967, The Confession of Belhar, and the Brief Statement of Faith, are all from the 20th century. We recite a confession together each week in our worship service, typically right after the homily.

Reading from the older confessions, especially those from the Protestant Reformation, can be challenging. They often use words and phrases that are different from the wording we would use today. For example, in the December 29 service, we read from the Second Helvetic Confession. The text included the word "catechize," and the staff debated whether we should change this word to the more common "teach". We decided not to change the word, but we did include a margin note on the meaning of "catechize."

In general, we do not change the wording of the confessions used in worship. Each confession comes from a particular time and historical setting, and we are encouraged to understand them in their own context and not to alter them to conform to current theological, ethical, or linguistic norms. Instead, these confessions invite us to reflect on what the church used to be, what it currently is, and what it strives to be. We also read these confessions with the understanding that they are subordinate standards in the church, subject to the authority of Jesus Christ, the Word of God, as the Scriptures bear witness to him. This rich history of confessions bears witness to the affirmation of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) to be "Reformed and always being reformed according to the Word of God in the power of the Spirit."

Shari Freeman

VOLUNTEER OPPORTUNITY

In February, we're spotlighting our Communion Offering partner Clifton Sanctuary Ministries. Clifton provides a transformational experience for unhoused men through comprehensive life skills training, purposeful and assertive case management, collaborative community partnerships, and dedicated volunteers. Clifton is a Presbyterian-affiliated ministry and is the oldest house-of-worship shelter in Atlanta, operating 365 days a year. In addition to preparing and serving dinner each 3rd Sunday of the month, MVPC provides financial support and donations (sandwiches/sack lunches, gently used clothing, and paper products/cleaning supplies) throughout the year.



How can you help?

We need volunteers (individuals, families, or ministry teams) to prepare or shop for a hot meal and dessert for 20 men (ready to heat and serve). Some homemade or store-bought options include:

- 2.5 gallons of soup or stew with bread and salad
- Costco Pizza with salad
- Costco Chicken Pot Pies
- Fried Chicken (Legs and Thighs) and side dishes
- Pasta/Chicken/Meat Casseroles

Sign up now!

Meals are delivered on the third Sunday of each month. Contact Carol Beckman at carol.beckman@att.net to sign up for a future month.

Contact board member Amy Kiley at Amy_kiley@hotmail.com to learn more about Clifton's work and other ways you can get involved.



OUTREACH

To kickoff the new year, we sorted your generous donations to the Outreach Tree. We distributed them to Stirred Up Ministries Youth and Men Under the Stars, Clifton Sanctuary Ministries, International Women's House, and the Community Assistance Center.



The January Communion Offering was non-perishable food for the Community Assistance Center. We were also the Congregation of the Month for CAC. CEO Francis Horton picked up the large donation of diapers and provided a Minute for Mission at worship on Sunday, January 19.

Supporting our local schools, OMT bought candy for Lake Forest Elementary School Candyland Holiday Parties, flashcards for Dunwoody Springs students, and funded an International Baccalaureate project at High Point Elementary where students (including young MVPC member, Christian) put together and delivered gift bags to the patients of Emory Saint Joseph's Hospital.



We hosted two families through Family Promise for December 22-29 with some help from supporting congregations. Food leftover at the end of the week was picked up by Darrell Jones with Stirred Up Ministries and distributed to unhoused individuals through their Men Under the Stars initiative.

The Christmas Eve offering which went to Family Promise North Fulton Dekalb was \$2,422.49.

The February Communion Offering will be for Clifton Sanctuary Ministries.



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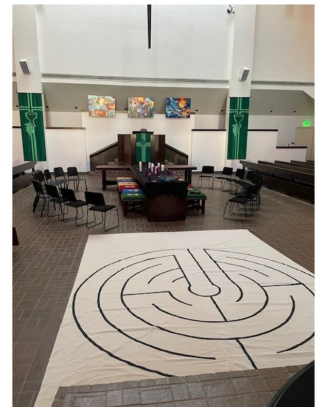
Senior Adults
Game Day



Francis Horton spoke to the
Sunday School classes



We "Chalked the
Door" for 2025



Taizé Service



ALLIANCE FOR CHILDREN EVERYWHERE FARM

PRAISE AND THANKS TO THE MVPC CONGREGATION
FOR SHARING GOD'S BLESSINGS.

Members of MVPC Congregation have recently
contributed \$32,000 for improvements to develop the
A.C.E farm located outside Lusaka, Zambia and also pay
off the existing mortgage. This will dramatically impact
the Zambians who are supported by our African mission
effort by providing food and revenue generated by the
Farm. Thank you.

YOUR OUTREACH COMMITTEE

Mailing Address:

MVPC

P.O. Box 76051

Sandy Springs, GA 30358

404.255.2211

mvpchurch.org



CHURCH OFFICE HOURS

MONDAY-THURSDAY

8 AM - 4 PM

FRIDAY 8 AM - 2 PM

This & That

FEBRUARY EVENTS

Scout Sunday

2/2

Annual Meeting &

Brunch

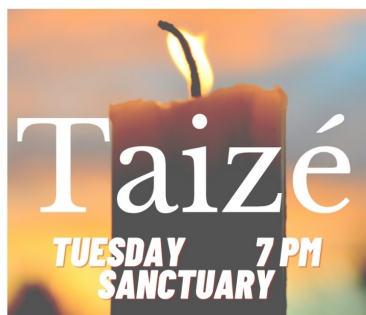
2/23

Taize

2/25

Lunch Bunch

2/23



*Photos courtesy of: Barrett Abernethy, Braegan Abernethy,
Shari Freeman, Dee Bradford-Smith*

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

GIFT OF WISDOM



Siblings at heart,
Where do we start,
tucked deeply in the brush
for our Mother's prayers of safety and loving touch.

Our markings confuse
our enemies' ruse,
the strongest row of dots
ear to tail,
the other's timid markings
meandering on each side as guard rails.

We share familiar smells, assuring ourselves in this brave new world.

Always there, standing for each other, vigilant as we
explore with each cautious step.

Poem: Dee Bradford-Smith

Artwork: Donna Martin

GETTING TO KNOW ...

JILL HUDSON MUSIC DIRECTOR



What is your favorite childhood memory?

I grew up in a musical family. My Dad played the trombone, two of my brothers played the trumpet, one brother played clarinet and saxophone, and I played the flute. On Christmas Eve we would play Sousa marches.

If you could live anywhere, where would it be?

I grew up in Elmira, New York and could have told you when I was ten years old that I was going to move south. I think Atlanta is a great place to live, especially Sandy Springs.

What are your hobbies?

Playing the piano is something I've done since age 7 and remains my favorite thing to do. I sometimes like to cook, but Bill and I prefer all the great Atlanta restaurants. During the pandemic I started to crochet, so let me know what color shawl you would like.

What is the best gift you have been given?

For our 30-year wedding anniversary, Bill bought me a Steinway B piano. It is my dream piano and I try to not let a day go by without playing it!

What's your favorite holiday?

Christmas! I go way overboard decorating. I start listening to Christmas music in September.

Where do you see yourself in five years?

I hope I'm doing the same exact things - I love what I do here, and I'm very blessed to be at Mount Vernon.

Still grieving, maybe beyond a "reasonable" time? Recently divorced and needing to recreate your life? Changing job or location and need assurance and a new perspective? Multiple issues have taken their toll and demoralized you? Stephen Ministers can help listen, encourage, add perspective, and support you during a troubling time.

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



FEBRUARY CALENDAR

Feb 2025 (Eastern Time - New York)

MVPC Events, barrett@mvpcchurch.org

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
26	27	28	29	30	31	1
9:30am - Crossroads 9:30am - Discovery 10:30am - Worship, 12pm - Jimmy Carter 5pm - Small Groups @ 7pm - AA @ Kirk Center 7pm - Atlanta Concert	5:30pm - Busy 6:30pm - AI Anon @ 7pm - Scouts @ Galley 8pm - AA @ Kirk Center	10am - Staff Meeting @ 1:30pm - Staff Worship 5:30pm - CE Meeting 6pm - Vespers at Towers 6:30pm - AMIS Board @ 7pm - AA-Women's Big 8pm - AA @ Fellowship	8am - School Chapel @ 9:30am - Session Prep 1pm - PS weekly meet @ 2:30pm - Stephen 7pm - Choir Rehearsal @	7:45am - MVAA @ 10am - Busy 2pm - General Ledger 8pm - AA @ Kirk Center	8am - Finance/Admin 6pm - Young Adult Small 8pm - AA-Primary	7:30am - LNP @ Kirk 8:45am - AA bfast @ FH 9am - Presbytery 3:15pm - Magic Club @
2	3	4	5	6	7	8
9:30am - Crossroads 9:30am - Discovery 10:30am - Worship @ 12pm - Busy 12pm - MVFoundation 2:30pm - YMSL @ SB GH 5pm - Small Groups @ 7pm - AA @ Kirk Center	1pm - Senior Adult 2pm - Vernon Springs 5:30pm - Busy 5:30pm - Monthly FAMT 6:30pm - AI Anon @ 7pm - Scouts @ Galley 8pm - AA @ Kirk Center	7:30am - MV Parent 10am - PW Coordinating 10am - Staff Meeting @ 10:30am - PW Day Circle 1:30pm - Staff Worship 6pm - Vespers at Towers 7pm - AA-Women's Big 8pm - AA @ Fellowship	8am - School Chapel @ 1pm - PS weekly meet @ 2pm - Worship 7pm - Choir Rehearsal @	11am - Vernon Springs 8pm - AA @ Kirk Center	10am - PW Book Circle @ 8pm - AA-Primary	1pm - Senior Adult Movie
9	10	11	12	13	14	15
9:30am - Crossroads 9:30am - Discovery 10:30am - Worship @ 12pm - Busy 12pm - MVFoundation 2:30pm - YMSL @ SB GH 5pm - Small Groups @ 7pm - AA @ Kirk Center	1pm - Senior Adult 2pm - Vernon Springs 5:30pm - Busy 5:30pm - Monthly FAMT 6:30pm - AI Anon @ 7pm - Scouts @ Galley 8pm - AA @ Kirk Center	7:30am - MV Parent 10am - PW Coordinating 10am - Staff Meeting @ 10:30am - PW Day Circle 1:30pm - Staff Worship 6pm - Vespers at Towers 7pm - AA-Women's Big 8pm - AA @ Fellowship	8am - School Chapel @ 1pm - PS weekly meet @ 2pm - Worship 7pm - Choir Rehearsal @	11am - Vernon Springs 8pm - AA @ Kirk Center	10am - PW Book Circle @ 8pm - AA-Primary	1pm - Senior Adult Movie
16	17	18	19	20	21	22
9:30am - Crossroads 9:30am - Discovery 10:30am - Worship @ 11:30am - Session Mtg @ 5pm - Small Groups @ 7pm - AA @ Kirk Center 7pm - Atlanta Concert	6pm - Magic Club @ 6:30pm - AI Anon @ 7pm - Scouts @ Galley 8pm - AA @ Kirk Center	10am - Staff Meeting @ 11am - Yvonne's Bday 1:30pm - Staff Worship 4pm - Stephen Min. - 6pm - Vespers at Towers 7pm - AA-Women's Big 8pm - AA @ Fellowship	8am - School Chapel @ 1pm - PS weekly meet @ 7pm - Choir Rehearsal @	12pm - SSICA @ Kairos 7:30pm - Young Adults - 8pm - AA @ Kirk Center	8pm - AA-Primary	8:45am - Bagpipes @ GH 4:30pm - AA @ FH
23	24	25	26	27	28	1
9am - Annual Meeting 10:30am - Worship: 12pm - Lunch Bunch 5pm - Small Groups @ 7pm - AA @ Kirk Center 7pm - Atlanta Concert	6pm - MV Senior talk @ 6:30pm - AI Anon @ 7pm - Scouts @ Galley 8pm - AA @ Kirk Center	10am - Staff Meeting @ 1:30pm - Staff Worship 6pm - Vespers at Towers 7pm - AA-Women's Big 7pm - Taize @ Sanctuary 8pm - AA @ Fellowship	Newsletter Deadline 8am - School Chapel @ 1pm - PS weekly meet @ 7pm - Choir Rehearsal @	7pm - LNP Board Meeting 8pm - AA @ Kirk Center	8pm - AA-Primary	

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

FEBRUARY BIRTHDAYS



Mike Hughes	2/2
Jack Nelson	2/6
Rose Nelson	2/7
Nikki Player	2/7
Ella Ponsell	2/9
Erin Jackson	2/15
Kate Christian	2/15
Steve Ponsell	2/20
George Hammett	2/22
Taylor Doyle	2/23
Viola Crawford	2/23
John Allen	2/24
Chad Plumly II	2/28

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

SESSION SUMMARY

Summary of the January 24-25, 2025, Stated Session Meeting

The Session met for its annual retreat which always includes the January Session meeting. The meeting began on Friday evening with dinner at the Barclift's and the examination of the new elders. Session members met Saturday morning in Gailey Hall for the retreat followed by a continuation of the Session meeting in the afternoon.

Business conducted at the meeting included the following:

- Commissioners were elected to represent MVPC at the February 8th Presbytery Meeting which will be held at Eastminster PC in Stone Mountain. Those elected included Barbara Brooks, Ben Cumming, David Hill, and Lois Johnson.
- Session approved rescheduling the baptism of Liam Andrew Qualls, Bob Addison's great grandson, originally scheduled for January 12, to February 9.
- The Annual Statistical Report that is completed each year for the Presbytery and PC(USA) was approved.
- Session approved February 23 as the date for MVPC's Annual Congregational Meeting. The congregation will meet for brunch at 9:00AM with the Annual Congregational Meeting following. This event will be in Fellowship Hall.
- The 2025 church budget was approved. For the first time since 2016, the Outreach budget will be \$100,000. In recent years it has been as low as \$25,000 supplemented by the Foundation to reach \$50,000.
- New elders were examined and approved. The ordination/installation service was held on Sunday, January 26. New elders include Barbara Brooks (ordained & installed, 3-year term); Ben Cumming (ordained & installed, 3-year term); Mike Havey (ordained & installed, 2-year term); Malinda Holmes (installed, 1-year term); Penny Kiel (ordained & installed, 2-year term); Carrie Southard (installed, 2-year term); Ed Spain (installed, 3-year term); and Mary Lea Woods (installed, 3-year term)
- The Session acted to nominate MVPC Corporation Officer for 2025 to present for congregational approval at the Annual Meeting. Nominations include Chairman – Ben Cumming; Chief Financial Officer – John Hibbard; and Secretary – Pat Davis.
- Session elected Steve Ray to be the Church Treasurer for 2025 and elected David Hill to serve as Clerk of Session.
- The Session reluctantly received the resignation from Session of John Hibbard. John and Patricia will soon be moving to Statesboro, GA. John has faithfully served at the FAMT Elder on Session.

PRAYER VINE



Christian Sympathy for the family of George Henry on his death January 17.

Beth Abernethy - for complete recovery and recuperation from a heart ablation

Dee Bradford-Smith - gratitude for success of a heart catheterization

Jeannie Chettleburgh - sister-in-law of Shari Freeman, successful treatment and minor side effects as she starts a new experimental vaccine treatment for her brain tumor.

Mike Damron - healing and hope as he shows some progress in the hospital and will begin physical therapy as he battles metastasis of melanoma, brother-in-law of Mary Lea Woods

Gene Elder - continued recovery and is waiting for reports on his cancer treatment progress

Malinda Holmes - needs prayer that her body will tolerate and accept chemo

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 - continued mercies as she continues chemo to keep her cancer from spreading, sister-in-law of Bruce Morine

Do you need prayer?

Have our Prayer Vine pray for you!

Email your requests to barbara@babrooks.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.

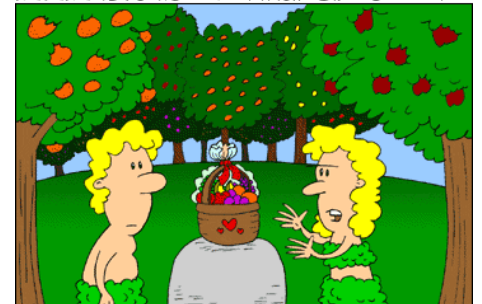
If you no longer wish to receive the Good News, please send an email to debbie@mvpchurch.org.

Good News!

Mount Vernon Presbyterian Church Staff

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
Shari Freeman	<i>Director of Spiritual Care</i>	shari@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 Assistant</i>	yvonne@mvpchurch.org
Jill Hudson	<i>Music Director</i>	jillh@mvpchurch.org

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Thanks to Benoit Paquette
**REALLY ADAM ... A VALENTINE'S DAY
FRUIT BASKET ... IN THE GARDEN OF
EDEN?!?** 02-14-2002

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