

MOUNT VERNON PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH

# GOOD NEWS

APRIL 2025



## ***A Note From the Pastor***

**Rev. Barrett Abernethy**

12 Years, 12 Lessons

*Taking a Break*

As many of you know, my first call saw me serve the rural, college community of Livingston, AL. First Presbyterian, the church I served, had been incorporated in 1833 and throughout their 180+ year history pastors had come, and pastors had gone (they even had hired a guy in the 1950s who posed as a pastor only for it to be found out that he was actually a convicted felon and conman, but that's a story for a different day). I once did the math on every pastorate in the church's history and the average tenure came out to roughly 2.5 years.

The one man who broke the mold was Burnell Chaney. A New England born and bred Yankee, he would not have been on

your bingo card to be the one pastor that would serve this small, southern town for 20 plus years, but alas, the Lord works in mysterious ways. Long story short, he met a local woman, Patsy Derby, (*pictured above*) in Washington, D.C. while she was working for the LBJ Administration (she was a cousin of First Lady, Lady Bird Johnson) and a first date at the Watergate Hotel led to marriage and a 23-year ministry amid the piney woods of west Alabama.

Even though he and his family departed Livingston in 1992, the "old guard" around town still saw First Presbyterian as "Burnell's Church."

*continued on next page*

### IN THIS ISSUE

Ash Wednesday/Lent

Outreach

Volunteer Spotlight

Gift of Wisdom

Sanctuary Organ

This & That/Celebrations

From the Corner Office

Getting to Know

Session Summary

April Calendar

Birthdays

Prayer Vine

Rather than trying to avoid his shadow, I embraced it. "It's still Burnell's Church, I just work here now," I would tell the locals. By that point, Patsy, his widow, had returned home, living in the homestead that her father had built after he became the first person from that region to ship pigs between there and Atlanta (he knew the folks here liked to eat bacon).

Patsy, more or less, became my informal advisor. As a young pastor, 60 miles away from the nearest PC(USA) Church, having someone like her was providential. After her husband's death, she had gone to Austin Presbyterian Theological Seminary (like I had) and so we could bond, and I could confide to her from time to time. One of the things she imparted to me was something that Burnell had told her during his term of service – which is the lesson for this month:

"Patsy, the best way to live in Livingston is every now and then you must get out of Livingston."

As the years have passed, I know exactly what he meant. It's not a negative comment toward the town or the people you serve, rather it's a reminder that pastors, people who empty their cup of empathy and compassion, need to remove themselves from that place they serve from time to time. That sabbath is vital. This is a true statement whether you

live in rural Alabama or urban north Atlanta. I loved serving the people of First Presbyterian, Livingston, AL, just as I love serving you, the people of Mount Vernon Presbyterian, Sandy Springs, GA.

Mondays are supposed to be my "day off," but the emails never stop. Pastoral needs never stop. Ergo the only true way to take time is to remove yourself. This is the time that allows for spiritual growth, to "see the forest for the trees."

This is one reason why I love to travel. For me it's not the destination, it's the journey. I believe this is a universal truth no matter what your vocation. It's a reminder that God transcends the place where you give of yourself and is also present where you can replenish, and in months like this one, I hope it's also a reminder that such time is resurrectional. May we follow God this season and continue to seek new life so we can continue to serve our brothers and sisters in Christ.

To God be the Glory for good colleagues and wise leaders,

*Barrett*

<b>February 28, 2025</b>	<b>Actual YTD</b>	<b>2025 Budget</b>
Member Giving Pledge	\$151,316	\$500,000
Member Giving Non-Pledge	\$11,107	\$60,000
Loose Offerings	\$902	\$26,000
<b>Total YTD</b>	<b>\$163,325</b>	<b>\$586,000</b>

## 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

### *Outreach*

Braegan Abernethy  
Mike Havey

### *Senior Adults*

Mary Lea Woods

### *Witness*

Lois Johnson

### *Worship*

Penny Kiel  
Malinda Holmes

# ASH WEDNESDAY/LENT



We welcomed Rev. Dr. Kathryn Threadgill  
VP & Dean Student Formation & Campus Culture  
Columbia Seminary



Rev. Dr. Threadgill's Facebook post:  
"Today was a blessing to preach the Word to Mount Vernon Presbyterian Church and worship together in this Lenten season. I give thanks for their partnership with Columbia Seminary, to Rev. Barrett Abernathy for the invitation, and the gift of being with Shari, our recent alum!!"



# OUTREACH

MVPC had a successful final week as a host congregation for Family Promise. We hosted three families (four adults and seven children) March 9-16. At the conclusion, volunteers sorted Family Promise supplies to distribute to various outreach partners, including Clifton Sanctuary Ministries, International Women's House, and Community Assistance Center. We are grateful for the years our volunteers have served Family Promise and the many families our church has helped support through this ministry.



Our February Communion Offering was for Clifton Sanctuary Ministries. Donations were delivered on March 6 by Mike and Kathy Havey and Carol Beckman.



Leftover food from the congregational meeting/brunch was all put to good use! Anna Morine took the perishables to the food pantry at CAC and Carol Beckman froze remaining items (quiche, bacon, and cinnamon rolls) to pass along to Darrell Jones for Stirred Up Ministry to serve to unhoused folks living in "tent cities" in downtown Atlanta. The frozen items plus two packages of grits that they cooked were enough to serve 25 folks a nice hot lunch on March 18.

The March Communion Offering was for the Columbia Theological Seminary Student Food Pantry. Rev. Dr. Kathryn Threadgill, VP and Dean of Student Formation and Campus Culture led worship on March 23, providing a Minute for Mission about the seminary and food pantry.

The April Communion Offering is for the Community Assistance Center Food Pantry.

# VOLUNTEER SPOTLIGHT



*Thank you to all the MVPC members who donate their time and energy to benefit our community and our world! 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 Braegan, Mike or Christy.*

## **David and Debbie Barclift: Builders of Church Community**

Mount Vernon’s commitment to Outreach is one of the many reasons we love our church so much. There are so many ways to support our Outreach Ministry that everyone can be involved. Opportunities range from bringing canned goods to the outreach bin to traveling to Zambia, and so many things in between.

We find it very rewarding to participate across the many partnerships. While our annual financial contributions to the church support Outreach Ministries, we also look for opportunities to offer additional support.

It is great when different ministry teams support one another. Frequently extra food from Fellowship events go to Clifton and even CAC. Sometimes extra portions are prepared on purpose to go to Clifton, particularly the Brunswick Stew for Hanging of the Greens dinner. Messages of great appreciation from the Clifton men are always shared with Carol Beckman.

The Los Niños annual gala is an enjoyable event. Always a fun opportunity to experience the excitement of the children, to fellowship with church friends (and others), and to offer support.

Visiting our ministry partners in Zambia last summer, especially with Barbara Hughes, was a life’s highlight for David. It was a very powerful experience seeing first-hand the impacts that our church’s support provides. What seems like so little in financial support makes such an amazing difference with our partners Garden Presbyterian School and Alliance for Children Everywhere-Zambia (ACE-Z) – from supporting the teaching staff and helping provide daily lunches for the students, to helping complete several projects at the ACE-Z farm.

It is important to always remember that all opportunities, big or small, to support our church’s Outreach Ministry collectively make a huge difference to those we serve.

# GIFT OF WISDOM



Look at you  
Aren't you a cutie!  
Awakening in a nest of daffodils and beauty.  
Though centuries pass,  
Always doing your duty

Known to be  
a prolific procreator,  
an ancient symbol of fertility.

Eggs await color, Lent's basket collects.  
Another ancient fertility symbol, celebrating Spring, adds to the effect.

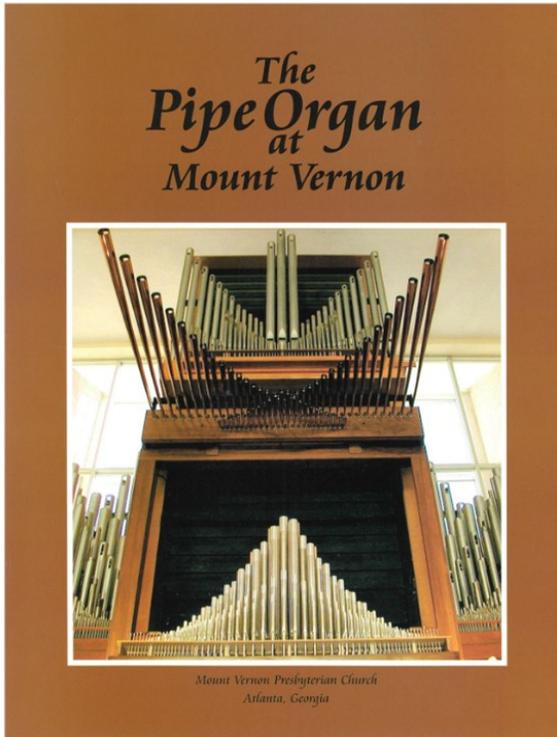
The Resurrection, the hope of life, our faithful determination  
pushing through any strife.

The emergence from the tomb, eternity brings  
the glorious Resurrection.  
Our hearts sing.

All celebrate the joy these symbols bring.  
After all, it is the birth of Spring.

*Poem: Dee Bradford-Smith  
Artwork: Donna Martin*

# SANCTUARY ORGAN



Mount Vernon organists who have played the Austin organ are:

1958-1969	Walter G. Wilkins
1970-1972	Dr. Charles H. Bryson
1972-1977	Muriel Golden (Mrs. Philip J. Golden, Jr.)
1977-1978	Ira W. Pittman, Jr.
1978-1987	Dr. Charles H. Bryson
1988-1994	Dr. Dennis Stabler
1994-2017	James M. Wingate
2017-2018	Nick Johns-Cooper
2018-2019	Won-Hee An
2020-2021	Ryan Sawyer
2021-2022	Ken Sass
2022-2023	Donna Maini
2024-	Jill Hudson

During my effort to clean up and organize our church music library, I came across this wonderful brochure created in 2004 about the Mount Vernon pipe organ. It includes the history, placement, installation, and many other interesting tidbits of information I was thrilled to read.

However, the page I enjoyed most was titled "Mount Vernon Organists", and it contained a list of the organists who played the organ from 1958 (the organ in it's current location opened for business in 1969) through 2004. It touched me to see Jim Wingate's name. Jim just passed away last month and continued to play the organ through 2017. Many choir members remember Dennis Stabler as a kind, caring, excellent musician. His baby grand piano in the Sanctuary continues to bless us all week after week. I bet there are some of you who could tell me about each of these organists.

I am so privileged to be the current player of this incredible instrument, and to lead the Chancel choir every week. And now, as I practice each day, I'll remember Walter, Charles, Muriel, Ira, Dennis, and Jim, Nick, Won-Hee, Ryan, Ken, Donna with the knowledge that I join a very special group of musicians. I am both proud and humbled that my own name will be added to the list.

To God be the Glory,

*Jill Hudson*

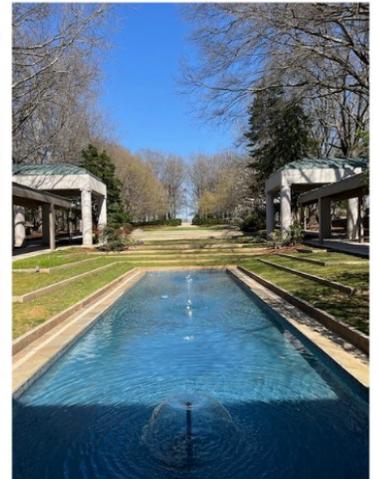




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MVPC was a sponsor of the Sandy Springs Education Force (SSEF) STEAM Showcase on March 5. These sponsorships not only help fund the Community Event but also fund grants for after school programs in all eleven public schools in Sandy Springs. Grant Duncan, shown here flying his drone, participated in the Woodland Elementary School STEM and Robotics Club.



Senior Adult trip to the Carter Center



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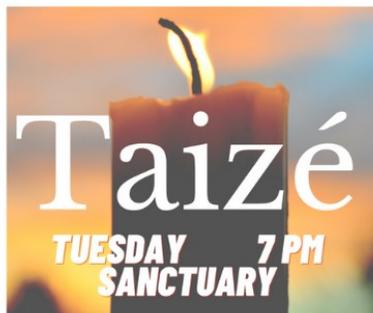


## CHURCH OFFICE HOURS

MONDAY-THURSDAY

8AM-4PM

FRIDAY 8AM - 2PM



# This & That

## APRIL EVENTS

Palm Sunday

4/13

Lunch & Easter Egg Hunt

Holy Week

Monday-Wednesday &

Friday

Noon Devotionals &

Lunch

Maundy Thursday

4/17

6:30pm

Easter Services:

4/20

Sunrise 6:45am

Sanctuary 10:30am

Taizé

4/22

7pm

Lunch Bunch

4/27

After Worship

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

(Please send any pictures of your events to [debbie@mvpchurch.org](mailto:debbie@mvpchurch.org))

# FROM THE CORNER OFFICE ...

## Thankful for Those Who Journey with Us

On Sunday, March 23, I attended the ordination of Dana AbuGhazaleh, a friend and classmate of mine from my years as a student at Columbia Theological Seminary. Dana and I both started seminary in the Fall of 2020. Our first year of seminary was all online because of the pandemic, and we met over Zoom on the first day of orientation. All incoming students were in the Zoom room, introducing themselves. They were from multiple states, including Georgia, Florida, and Michigan, as well as various countries, including South Korea, Kenya, Ghana, and Nigeria. Imagine my surprise when Dana introduced herself and said she was from Alpharetta, Georgia!

In addition to living only 5 miles apart, we had all of the same classes that first semester. Our Hebrew language class included a study group that met (over Zoom) every weekday at 9 am. Dana and I were both faithful participants in this study group, so I got to see and chat with her every day. She was a lifeline for me that first semester. Even though I was physically alone in my home office, I felt like someone knew me and what I was doing. We were even in similar places in our ministry discernment, initially unsure if we wanted to seek ordination, and we were both new to the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.)

Dana was a gift from God that first semester, someone to travel with me as I started on this new journey. And on March 23, I was thrilled to witness her ordination as Minister of Word and Sacrament at Alpharetta Presbyterian Church. Below is a photo of several of the Columbia students, graduates, and professors who were present at Dana's ordination. Dana is in the middle, wearing the robe and red stole. Thanks be to God for the friends that accompany us on new journeys in our life.

This photo also reminds us why supporting seminary education in general and Columbia Theological Seminary is essential. Included in this photo are future leaders in our church. People who have given up other careers to pursue a calling to ministry. Mount Vernon's support of Columbia, including outreach contributions to their student food pantry and participation in their community events, is an investment in the Presbyterian Church for decades to come.

Peace,  
*Shari Freeman*



# GETTING TO KNOW ...

## GILL HUTT

### **If you could live anywhere, where would it be?**

Amsterdam in the Netherlands. It's by far the most beautiful city I've ever been to, every person I met was friendly, and the museums were great!

### **Who is your favorite author?**

John Le Carre. He's a great spy novelist, and I enjoy all of his books.

### **What's your favorite holiday?**

Christmas. It's a great time of year with lots of fun traditions, and the weather is usually nice and brisk.

### **What's your favorite type of foreign food?**

Indian food. I love a hot spicy curry or a dosa.

### **What is your favorite game or sport to watch and play?**

Golf. I'm a big Rory McIlroy fan.



What kinds of events would propel me to seek help from a Stephen Minister?

- \* losing a job
- \* losing a baby
- \* changing jobs or locations(moving) and feeling uneasy and alone
- \* receiving a new health diagnosis of a chronic or terminal nature or learning how to manage one
- \* grieving
- \* divorcing
- \* struggling with your faith
- \* mid-life reassessment
- \* later life reassessment
- \* mild depression
- \* plagued by a series of events
- \* any loss that takes time to process and a needed plan to rebuild a life

Please contact Pat Bartee, Stephen Leader, or a pastor to get in touch. We are open to members and the community. Please refer friends to us.

# SESSION SUMMARY

Summary of Stated Session Meeting Held on March 16, 2025

The Session met on March 16, 2025, for its regular monthly meeting. Following are the highlights of that meeting:

- Confirmand Samantha Fifield attended the meeting as part of her preparation for confirmation this spring.
- The Session discussed the PC(USA) *Book of Order* requirements regarding sexual misconduct, harassment, child and youth protection, and antiracism. The church has a personnel handbook and a child and youth protection handbook, but needs to review these handbooks and update them, if needed, and develop policies and handbooks related to ruling elders (Session members) since the PC(USA) policy now includes all church leaders. Over the coming months Session members and others in the congregation will work on policy and handbook development.
- The Session is working to define the words we use to describe our church (Reaching out to Welcome, Worship, Share, Serve). Definitions of these words are being created using a refinement process that began with brainstorming at the January Session Retreat; development of descriptive sentences at Session meetings; and finally, having the Ministry and Mission Team further refine and finalize definitions that will then be approved by the Session.
- Each year the Session must confirm that pastors are up-to-date on required Boundaries training. Both Rev. Abernethy and Rev. Toney-Schmitt are up-to-date as confirmed by the Presbytery.
- Since ruling elders are now required to go through Boundaries training, the Session watched a video developed by PC(USA) that meets this requirement.

Because of Easter, the next Stated Session Meeting will be held one week later than normal on April 27 in the Kirk Center.

# APRIL CALENDAR

Apr 2025 (Eastern Time - New York)

MVPC Events, barrett@mvpcchurch.org

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
30		10am - Staff Meeting @ 1:30pm - Staff Worship 5pm - Elevate bb @ gym 5:30pm - CE Meeting 7pm - AA-Women's Big	8am - School Chapel @ 1pm - PS weekly meet @ 2:30pm - Stephen 5pm - LNP @ GH 7pm - AA @ Kirk	7:45am - MVA @ 5pm - Elevate bb @ gym 5pm - LNP 7pm - Busy 7pm - LNP Board Meeting	5:30pm - LNP @ field 6pm - Young Adult Small 8pm - AA-Primary	8am - LNP @ ED AB Gym 8:45am - Bagpipes @ GH 10am - Jim Wingate
6	1pm - Senior Adult 5:30pm - AFHC @ Church 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 5pm - Elevate bb @ gym	8am - School Chapel @ 1pm - PS weekly meet @ 2pm - Worship Team Mtg 5pm - LNP @ GH 5:30pm - Mission and 7pm - AA @ Kirk	11am - Vernon Springs 2pm - General Ledger 5pm - Elevate bb @ gym 5pm - LNP 7pm - NABB @ Gym 8pm - AA @ Kirk Center	8am - Finance/Admin 10am - PW Book Circle @ 5:30pm - LNP @ field 8pm - AA-Primary	8am - LNP @ ED AB Gym 8:45am - Bagpipes @ GH 1pm - Dee's Sister
13	9:30am - Crossroads 9:30am - Discovery 10:30am - Worship @ 11:30am - Luncheon 12:30pm - Egg Hunt 7pm - AA @ Kirk Center 7pm - Atlanta Concert	12pm - Holy Week Noon 2:30pm - Busy 5:30pm - AFHC @ Church 5:30pm - Busy 5:30pm - Monthly FAMT 6:30pm - AI Anon @ 7pm - Scouts @ Galley	8am - School Chapel @ 12pm - Holy Week Noon 1pm - PS weekly meet @ 1:30pm - Seniors Game 5pm - LNP @ GH 6:30pm - Cubs @ GH 7pm - AA @ Kirk	5pm - Elevate bb @ gym 5pm - LNP 6:30pm - Maundy 7pm - NABB @ Gym 8pm - AA @ Kirk Center	12pm - Holy Week Noon 5:30pm - LNP @ field 8pm - AA-Primary	8am - LNP @ ED AB Gym 8:45am - Bagpipes @ GH 1pm - Brass band @
20	6:45am - Sunrise 9:30am - Crossroads 9:30am - Discovery 10:30am - Worship @ 7pm - AA @ Kirk Center 7pm - Atlanta Concert	7:45am - SSEF Breakfast 10am - Staff Meeting @ 1:30pm - Staff Worship 5pm - Elevate bb @ gym 6:30pm - AMIS Board @ 7pm - AA-Women's Big	Newsletter Deadline 8am - School Chapel @ 1pm - PS weekly meet @ 5pm - LNP @ GH 6pm - YMSL meet up @ 7pm - AA @ Kirk	8:30am - Come See 12pm - SSICA @ Sandy 5pm - Elevate bb @ gym 5pm - LNP 7pm - LNP Board Meeting 7pm - NABB @ Gym	6am - rally day @ UC 5:30pm - LNP @ field 8pm - AA-Primary	LNP festival 8am - LNP @ ED AB Gym 8:45am - Bagpipes @ GH 9am - Senior Adults Trip
27	9:30am - Crossroads 9:30am - Discovery 10am - YMSL @ FH 10:30am - Worship @ 11:30am - Session Mtg @ 7pm - AA @ Kirk Center	5:30pm - AFHC @ Church 6:30pm - AI Anon @ 7pm - Scouts- Annual 8pm - AA @ Kirk Center	8am - School Chapel @ 1pm - PS weekly meet @ 5pm - LNP @ GH 7pm - AA @ Kirk 7pm - Choir Rehearsal @ 7pm - NABB @ gym			

Go to our website under "News & Events" for a live view of the calendar!

# APRIL BIRTHDAYS



Jeanne Gilliland	4/2
James McGuire	4/8
Clark Nelson	4/8
Stan Williams	4/12
Worth Williams	4/14
Iva Corbin	4/15
Linda Thomas	4/15
Lisa McGuire	4/17
Gene Elder	4/18
Beth Abernethy	4/18
Thomas Hughes	4/19
Evelyn Ufere	4/21
Brooke Bliss	4/23
Patricia Hibbard	4/29
Sage Allen	4/30



*If you have a birthday in April 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

# PRAYER VINE



*Christian Sympathy for the family of our long-time organist, Jim Wingate, on his death March 1*  
*Christian Sympathy for the family of Tom Nolan, Steve Ray's stepfather, on March 19*  
*Christian Sympathy for the family of Sandra Bullock, Barbara Hughes' sister.*

**Jeannie Chettleburgh** - sister-in-law of Shari Freeman, courage, strength and healing as she receives an experimental medication for her brain tumor.

**Lorry Clark** - comfort and healing from a fall

**Mike Damron** - wisdom and knowledge of the doctors at MD Anderson to review three medical trials to treat his metastasis from melanoma, brother-in-law of Mary Lea Woods

**Sharri Galloway** - healing, strength and comfort who has chronic lung disease, sister-in-law of Debbie Galloway

**Malinda Holmes** - is on a new regimen of chemotherapy weekly for nine weeks and prayers for minimal side effects.

**Karen Morine** - thanks that she is currently stable which allows her to continue with chemo, sister-in-law of Bruce Morine

Do you need prayer?

Have our Prayer Vine pray for you!

Email your requests to [barbara@babrooks.com](mailto: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](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).*

## 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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<b>Shari Freeman</b>	<i>Director of Spiritual Care</i>	<a href="mailto:shari@mvpchurch.org">shari@mvpchurch.org</a>
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<b>Jill Hudson</b>	<i>Music Director</i>	<a href="mailto:jillh@mvpchurch.org">jillh@mvpchurch.org</a>

**Good News!**

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AS A GOOD SHEPHERD I CARE FOR YOU AND STUFF, BUT AT THE END OF THE DAY YOU ARE STILL FOOD

03-09-2014

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