



MOUNT VERNON PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH

SIXTEENTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST - OUTDOOR

BLESSING OF THE ANIMALS

SEPTEMBER 28, 2025 • 10:30 AM

Reaching Out to ... Welcome. Worship. Share. Serve.

† *For those who are able, please stand.*

Welcome to our outdoor service! If your pets want to run off some energy, feel free to take them to the Lower Campus field. If your pets are noisy, feel free to walk around the courtyard. We welcome their worshipful noises!

GATHERING

RINGING OF THE BELLS

GATHERING MUSIC

"Beautiful"

Rev. Jonathan Freeman

Words & Music: Phil Wickham. ©2007 Phil Wickham

WELCOME & ANNOUNCEMENTS

Rev. Isaac Toney-Schmitt

OPENING PRAYER

† CALL TO WORSHIP

ONE: All dogs and cats, large and small:

ALL: Praise the Lord!

ONE: All rabbits, hamsters, and guinea pigs:

ALL: Praise the Lord!

ONE: All goldfish, guppies, and swimming creatures:

ALL: Praise the Lord!

ONE: All robins, wrens, and birds of the air:

ALL: Praise the Lord!

ONE: All horses, cows, donkeys, and sheep:

ALL: Praise the Lord!

ONE: All lizards, snakes and creeping things:

ALL: Praise the Lord!

ONE: Every animal in the sky, the sea, and the forest:

ALL: Praise the Lord! Let us worship God!

† OPENING HYMN (*see insert*)

"All Creatures of Our God and King"

† PRAYER OF CONFESSION

Rev. Shari Freeman

Almighty God and Creator of all, you have chosen humankind for a position of special responsibility in your world. You have given us dominion over every living thing so that we can care for your creation. And yet, we too often use your creation for our own greed and consumption, failing to tend to its needs faithfully. Forgive us when we fail to respond in awe to your wonders. Forgive us when we misinterpret our role of dominion and abuse our power. Forgive us when we damage the land and cause the animal kingdom needless suffering.

Give us eyes to see the world and everything in it as you do, and give us hearts to love and cherish all you have created. We seek the vision you set before us, and we strive to respond to your call ... *(silent confession)* ... Amen.

† ASSURANCE OF PARDON

ONE: ...In the name of Jesus Christ, we are forgiven.

ALL: Thanks be to God.

† RESPONSE *(see insert)*

"O God, You Are My God"

O God, you are my God, and I will ever praise you.

O God, you are my God, and I will ever praise you.

I will seek you in the morning, and I will learn to walk in your ways.

And step by step you'll lead me, and I will follow you all of my days.

Words and Music: David Strasser. ©1991 Universal Music - Brentwood Benson Publishing.

BLESSING OF THE ANIMALS

(Afterwards the children are invited to Children's Church in the Chapel.)

† PASSING OF THE PEACE

(Please greet each other with the peace of Christ, in a manner comfortable for one another.)

THE WORD

PRAYER FOR ILLUMINATION

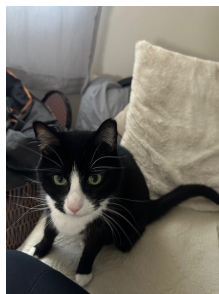
Rev. Isaac Toney-Schmitt

SCRIPTURE

Numbers 22:21-38

HOMILY

"Navigating Roads: Balaam and the Donkey"



RESPONSE

† AFFIRMATION OF FAITH (*Genesis 1:26-31, The Message, adjusted for inclusive language*)

God spoke: "Let us make human beings in our image, make them reflecting our nature so they can be responsible for the fish in the sea, the birds in the air, the cattle, and, yes, Earth itself, and every animal that moves on the face of Earth." God created human beings; God created them godlike, reflecting God's nature. God created them male and female. God blessed them: "Prosper! Reproduce! Fill Earth! Take charge! Be responsible for fish in the sea and birds in the air, for every living thing that moves on the face of Earth."

Then God said, "I've given you every sort of seed-bearing plant on Earth and every kind of fruit-bearing tree, given them to you for food. To all animals and all birds, everything that moves and breathes, I give whatever grows out of the ground for food." And there it was.

God looked over everything God had made; it was so good, so very good! It was evening, it was morning - Day Six.

Through reading the Bible, we see that there is far more to the world, more to us, more to what we see and more to what we don't see - more to everything! - than we had ever dreamed, and that this "more" has to do with God.

- Eugene Peterson,
translator of [*The Message*](#).

PRAYERS OF THE PEOPLE & THE LORD'S PRAYER

Rev. Shari Freeman

Our Father who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name. Thy kingdom come, thy will be done,
On earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread; and forgive us our debts,
As we forgive our debtors; and lead us not into temptation but deliver us from evil,
For Thine is the kingdom and the power and the glory, forever. Amen.

OFFERTORY

"In the Garden"

Mike & Kathy Havey

Words & Music: C. Austin Miles. ©1989 The United Methodist Publishing House.

† DOXOLOGY

"Praise God, from Whom All Blessings Flow"

Praise God, from whom all blessings flow; Praise Him, all creatures here below;
Praise Him above, ye heavenly host; Praise Father, Son, and Holy Ghost. Amen.

Text: Thomas Ken. Music: OLD HUNDREDTH, Genevan Psalter.

† PRAYER OF THANKSGIVING

Kathryn Wade

SENDING

† CLOSING HYMN

“O God, Your Creatures Fill the Earth”

(to the tune of “Hosanna, Loud Loud Hosanna”)

O God, your creatures fill the earth with wonder and delight,
And every living thing has worth and beauty in your sight.
So playful dolphins dance and swim; Your sheep bow down and graze.
Your songbirds share a morning hymn To offer you their praise.
You made the pets we welcome in — They're wondrous blessings, too.
With paws and whiskers, wings and fins, They offer praise to you.
O Lord, you call us to embrace These creatures in our care.
May we show kindness, love and grace To all pets everywhere.
Your creatures live in every land; They fill the sky and sea.
O Lord, you give us your command To love them tenderly.
We're called to have dominion here — To care for them always.
By loving creatures you hold dear, We offer you our praise.

Words: Carolyn Winfrey Gillette.

Music: Gesangbuch der Herzoglich Württembergischen Katholischen Hofkapelle, 1784

† BENEDICTION

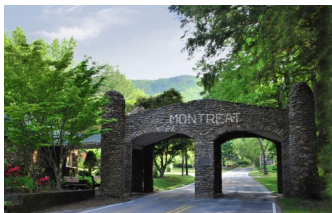
Rev. Isaac Toney-Schmitt

† POSTLUDE

“D'un Jardin Clair”

Ryan Sawyer
Lili Boulanger

CONGREGATIONAL MEETING



Navigating Roads

Montreat, NC, is one of my favorite places. Their tagline is “We gather people in sacred spaces to explore, renew, and connect with our faith, our communities, and ourselves.” Montreat Road runs from Black Mountain, NC into Montreat passing through the stone gate. I have been going to Montreat for retreats and vacations since I was 5 years old.

-Beppie Lever

Leading Today's Worship Service

Rev. Isaac Toney-Schmitt, Associate Pastor

Rev. Shari Freeman, Associate Pastor of Spiritual Care

Ryan Sawyer, Guest Musician

Rev. Jonathan Freeman, Contemporary Musician

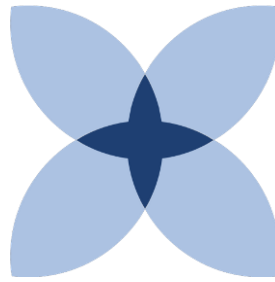


We are located at:
471 Mount Vernon Hwy., NE
Sandy Springs, GA 30328

Our mailing address is:
P.O. Box 76051
Sandy Springs, GA 30358

MVPC Announcements....

Sunday School
9:30 - 10:15am



Connection
10-10:25am

Worship
10:30-11:30am

Welcome! We are glad to worship with you today!

Visitors & Membership: Please go to our website: mvpchurch.org, contact our church office at **404.255.2211**, or speak with one of our pastors after the service. Please sign the Friendship Pad and pass it down the pew as you greet your neighbor.

Upcoming Services/Events:



- October 5** "Navigating Roads: The Path of Loyalty", Ruth 1:1-9, 16-18, 22
Rev. Shari Freeman
- October 12** "Navigating Roads: The Road to Jericho", Luke 10:25-37
Rev. Isaac Toney-Schmitt



In **September**, we are shopping for 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. For more information, please go to www.ourcac.org.



Pumpkin Palooza: Join us on Sunday, October 19, 4-6pm for pumpkin decorating, a costume contest, family fun activities, and chili!



AMIS Atlanta invites you to befriend an international student during the 2025-2026 school year! Join our **Amigo Friendship Program** to be matched with an undergraduate or graduate international student studying at one of metro Atlanta's colleges or universities. You will broaden your horizons through cultural exchange and help an international student adjust to living in a new place. To learn more about their program, visit www.amisatlanta.org/amigovolunteer.

Interim Pastor Nominating Committee: The IPNC is currently interviewing candidates.

September 28, 2025



Make sure to follow us
on social media to stay
up to date!

Giving



NEW! Little Blessings Room: The Little Blessings Room (located in the Session Room) is available for parents to go with their 0-3 year olds during the worship service. The worship service is live-streamed into the room and there are chairs for nursing and holding babies and toys for toddlers.



Presbyterian Women: The **Day Circle** will meet on October 14 at 10:30 in the Session Room. Pat Davis will teach Lesson Two: *Mary "of a Certain Village"* in the 2025-2026 Bible study guide, *Finding Resilience, Joy, and our Identity in Jesus Christ*. The **Book Circle** will meet on October 10 at 10:00 in the Session Room. Pat Davis will lead a review of *My Antonia* (Historical fiction) by Willa Cather. **Circle of Grace** - for more information contact Lisa Cumming at lisa.j.cumming@gmail.com

SUNDAY SCHOOL

Adult Sunday School: **Discovery** meets in the Chapel and is using the curriculum "*The Present Word*". **Crossroads** meets in the Session Room and is studying "*Understanding the Old Testament*", Prof. Robert D. Miller, The Catholic University of America. Both classes meet at 9:30 a.m. Contact Rev. Shari Freeman for more information.



Stephen Ministry: When you need someone to walk through a difficult time with you or someone to be a sounding board and help you clarify your goals for moving through and out of trouble, a role change, a job loss, an empty house or nest, a new health diagnosis, early dementia, mild depression, a move to a new place or anything you feel you can't share with those around you, please utilize our church Stephen Ministry. Call or email Pat Bartee, Stephen Leader, or Isaac or Shari to get connected.



Do you feel a need for prayer? Have our Prayer Vine pray for you! Email your requests to barbara@babrooks.com or call her at 404.422.5175.

Prayer Concerns: Carolyn Bowen, Sarah Chalpan, Gerald Fudge, Lorry Clark, Megan Kendall, Penny Kiel, and the Interim Pastor Nominating Committee, Los Niños Primero, Clifton Sanctuary, Israel/Gaza, Ukraine, Myanmar, and Zambia.

Christian Sympathy to the family and friends of Marion Satterfield who died September 17. A service at MVPC is TBD.

Attendance 9/21: Sanctuary: 86 Online: 3

Dates for your calendar:

October 19 Pumpkin Palooza
October 26 All Saints' Day, Outdoor Worship
November 30 Hanging of the Green

Financial Update

As of September 25	Actual YTD	2025 Budget
Pledge Member Giving	\$ 406,116	\$500,000
Member Giving Non-Pledge	\$ 52,752	\$ 60,000
Non-Member Giving & Loose Offering	\$ 5,720	\$ 26,000
Total	\$464,588	\$ 586,000

If you have any announcements that you would like to appear in the weekly *Happenings* email or monthly *Good News* newsletter, please email them to debbie@mvpchurch.org



**Announcement for Called Congregational Meeting
September 28, 2025**

There will be a Congregational Meeting on Sunday, September 28, 2025, immediately following the worship service in the courtyard for the purpose of conducting the following business:

- Receive the report of the Nominating Committee of new elders to be elected by the congregation to begin service on Session beginning with ordination and installation in January 2026.
- Receive changes to the Mount Vernon Presbyterian Church By-Laws recommended by the Session. The changes requested by the Session are:
 - ◇ Replace the old mission statement with the new mission statement
 - ◇ Change the number of Sundays required for notification of a called congregational meeting from four Sundays to two.

455 All Creatures of Our God and King

LASST UNS ERFREUEN LM with alleluias

Francis of Assisi, 1225

Trans. and para. William Henry Draper, c. 1910; alt.

Geistliche Kirchengesang, 1623; alt.

Harm. Ralph Vaughan Williams, 1905

Unison



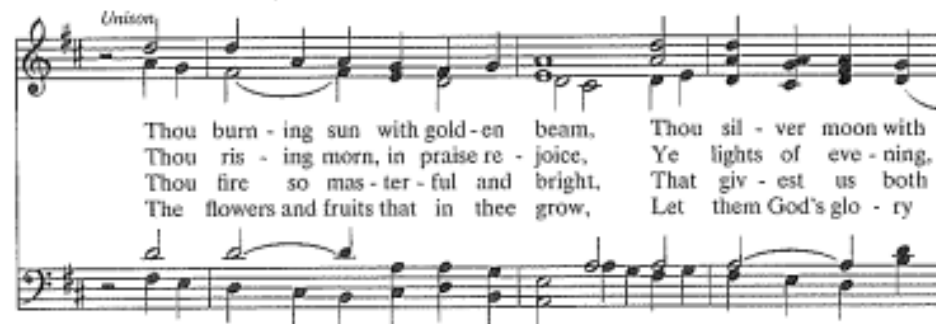
1. All creatures of our God and King, Lift up your voice
2. Thou rushing wind that art so strong, Ye clouds that sail
3. Thou flowing water, pure and clear, Make music for
4. Thou fertile earth, that day by day Un - fold - est bless -

Harmony



and with us sing, Al - le - lu - ia! Al - le - lu - ia!
in heaven a - long, O sing ye! Al - le - lu - ia! Al - le - lu - ia!
thy Lord to hear, Al - le - lu - ia! Al - le - lu - ia!
ings on your way, O sing ye! Al - le - lu - ia! Al - le - lu - ia!

Unison



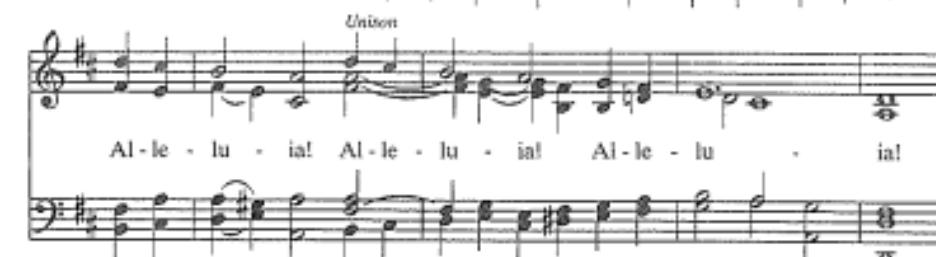
Thou burn - ing sun with gold - en beam, Thou sil - ver moon with
Thou ris - ing morn, in praise re - joice, Ye lights of eve - ning
Thou fire so mas - ter - ful and bright, That giv - est us both
The flowers and fruits that in thee grow, Let them God's glo - ry

Harmony



soft - er gleam, Al - le - lu - ia! Al - le - lu - ia!
find a voice! Al - le - lu - ia! Al - le - lu - ia!
warmth and light, al - so show!

Unison



Al - le - lu - ia! Al - le - lu - ia! Al - le - lu - ia!

5. And everyone of tender heart,
Forgiving others, take your part.
O sing ye! Alleluia!
Ye who long pain and sorrow bear,
Praise God and cast on God your care!
Alleluia! Alleluia!
Alleluia! Alleluia! Alleluia!

6. All creatures, your Creator bless,
And worship God in humbleness.
O sing ye! Alleluia!
Praise, praise the Father, praise the Son,
And praise the Spirit, Three in One!
Alleluia! Alleluia!
Alleluia! Alleluia! Alleluia!

Numbers 22:21-38

So Balaam got up in the morning, saddled his donkey, and went with the officials of Moab.

God's anger was kindled because he was going, and the angel of the Lord took his stand in the road as his adversary. Now he was riding on the donkey, and his two servants were with him. The donkey saw the angel of the Lord standing in the road, with a drawn sword in his hand; so the donkey turned off the road, and went into the field; and Balaam struck the donkey, to turn it back onto the road. Then the angel of the Lord, it scraped against the wall, and scraped Balaam's foot against the wall; so he struck it again. Then the angel of the Lord went ahead, and stood in a narrow place, where there was no way to run either to the right or to the left. When the donkey saw the angel of the Lord, it lay down under Balaam; and Balaam's anger was kindled, and he struck the donkey with his staff. Then the Lord opened the mouth of the donkey, and it said to Balaam, "What have I done to you, that you have struck me these three times?" Balaam said to the donkey, "Because you have made a fool of me! I wish I had a sword in my hand! I would kill you right now!" But the donkey said to Balaam, "Am I not your donkey, which you have ridden all your life to this day? Have I been in the habit of treating you this way?" And he said, "No."

Then the Lord opened the eyes of Balaam, and he saw the angel of the Lord standing in the road, with his drawn sword in his hand; and he bowed down, falling on his face. The angel of the Lord said to him, "Why have you struck your donkey these three times? I have come out as an adversary, because your way is perverse before me. The donkey saw me, and turned away from me these three times. If it had not turned away from me, surely just now I would have killed you and let it live." Then Balaam said to the angel of the Lord, "I have sinned, for I did not know that you were standing in the road to oppose me. Now therefore, if it is displeasing to you, I will return home." The angel of the Lord said to Balaam, "Go with the men; but speak only what I tell you to speak." So Balaam went on with the officials of Balak.

When Balak heard that Balaam had come, he went out to meet him at Ir-moab, on the boundary formed by the Arnon, at the farthest point of the boundary. Balak said to Balaam, "Did I not send to summon you? Why did you not come to me? Am I not able to honor you?" Balaam said to Balak, "I have come to you now, but do I have power to say just anything? The word God puts in my mouth, that is what I must say."