

MOUNT VERNON PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH

GOOD NEWS

FEBRUARY 2026



A Note From the Pastor

Rev. Kate Colussy-Estes

With the craziness of the weather as we move into February it's hard to believe that Lent is nearly upon us. In Shari's article this month you'll see more about Lent in general, so I'd like to share a bit about the theme for the season. Our theme is Seeking: Honest Questions for a Deeper Faith using resources again from A Sanctified Art.

As a congregation in the midst of transition, thinking about what we are seeking can help us focus on what comes next in the life of the congregation. We spent the season of Epiphany thinking about our call to discipleship. This season of Lent we'll

continue asking questions about our calling, about how to live as a disciple of Jesus in turbulent times.

Our small groups will be using the devotional as their resource for their gatherings this season. We'll be using questions from the series to guide opportunities for response in worship. There will be more of the amazing art you've seen from this group before. Not to mention some of the resources for children, and beautiful liturgy.

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Throughout this season the stories of Jesus are of him encountering people who are seeking “a new beginning, a different life, a deeper faith”. So this is a series filled with questions and opportunities for exploration. We hope and pray that these questions will lead to “a new beginning, a restoration, a wider grace.”

Mostly these questions won't have easy answers, instead guiding us to go deeper. In his book, Letters to a Young Poet, the writer, Rainer Maria Rilke encouraged his reader to love the questions themselves. And rather than looking for answers, to live the questions, noting that, “Perhaps you will gradually, without even noticing it, find yourself experiencing the answer, some distant day.” So this Lent, we will live the questions.



December 31, 2025	Actual YTD	2025 Budget
Member Giving Pledge	\$523,521	\$500,000
Member Giving Non-Pledge	\$66,831	\$60,000
Loose Offerings	\$7,319	\$26,000
Total YTD	\$597,671	\$586,000

2026 Session Members & Ministry Teams

Moderator(s)

Rev. Kate Colussy-Estes
 Rev. Isaac Toney-Schmitt
 Rev. Shari Freeman

Clerk of Session

Donna Neumann

Christian Education

Carrie Southard

Congregational Care

Barbara Brooks
 Sharon Murphy

Fellowship

Keith Bumgarner
 Joey Noszek
 Ed Spain

Finance/Administration/ Stewardship

Ben Cumming

Outreach

Mike Havey
 Kathryn Wade

Senior Adults

Mary Lea Woods

Witness

Lois Johnson

Worship

Penny Kiel
 Donna Martin

SESSION RETREAT



SESSION SUMMARY

January Stated Session Meeting Summary January 23-24, 2026

The Session met for its January Stated Meeting on January 23-24, 2026, and conducted the following business:

- Successfully examined the newest elder class, the Class of 2028, which includes Donna Martin, Sharon Murphy, Donna Neumann, Joey Noszek, and Kathryn Wade.
- Elected Commissioners to represent MVPC at the February 7 Presbytery Meeting. Those Commissioners include Barbara Brooks, Penny Kiel, Donna Martin, and Carrie Southard.
- Approved the Annual Statistical Report for 2025 which provides the Presbytery and PC(USA) with data about MVPC.
- The budget for 2026 was approved.
- Elected Steve Ray as Interim Treasurer for 90 days giving Session time to determine whether the Treasurer should be a staff member or a member of the Finance and Administration Ministry Team (FAMT).
- Elected Donna Neumann as Session Clerk for 2026.
- Approved the use of the MVPC sanctuary for Ministerio Gracia on January 31 because of a scheduling conflict at Kairos Church where they usually meet.
- Approved allocation of \$1.16 million from savings (cost to cure money from the city related to the Mount Vernon Hwy. project) to fund the campus restoration project.
- Changed the February Stated Session Meeting date from Feb. 15 to Feb. 22.



P4BG



In 2025, Mount Vernon joined “Presbyterians for a Better Georgia (P4BG)”, a voluntary partnership of Presbyterian congregations, groups, and individuals in the state of Georgia. P4BG congregations work together to affect legislation at the Georgia state house, especially in affordable housing and access to healthcare. They equip members of congregations with the skills to be effective advocates with their elected representatives and in their communities.

P4BG is gearing up for the 2026 legislative session, which convenes on January 12, 2026, and will last for 40 days. Housing affordability and homelessness are expected to be key issues taken up by the legislature in 2026, as the cost of housing has risen dramatically over the past few years. The median price of a home in Georgia has increased 55% in the past 5 years, from \$212k in 2020 to \$329k in 2025. The median rent price has risen by 50% over the same period, from \$1,042 to \$1,640 per month. Every \$100 increase in the median rent price results in a 9% increase in homelessness. P4BG will be paying attention to actions the legislature takes regarding funding for housing, initiatives surrounding homelessness, and tenant protections.

Ways that you can make a difference

- 1) Join our P4BG ministry team here at Mount Vernon. Contact Pat Bartee for more information.
- 2) Go to P4BG.ORG and sign up to receive their newsletter and Action Alerts. During the legislative session, when you get an Action Alert – Act on it!
- 3) Participate in the P4BG Advocacy Training over Zoom on February 12, 2026, at 7 pm. You can register for this event at WWW.P4BG.ORG/EVENTS
- 4) Join us at the P4BG Lobby Day at the Capitol on March 18. Several folks from Mount Vernon plan to attend.

LENT



Friends, as you read this newsletter, you may find yourself at the beginning of Lent. Lent is the 40 days (excluding Sundays) leading up to Easter. Lent begins this year on Wednesday, February 18 (Ash Wednesday), and ends on Saturday, April 4 (the day before Easter). During Lent, we are encouraged to consider our human condition, including sin and failures, and ponder the new life offered to us by Christ Jesus. These 40 days are an opportunity for growth in our faith through prayer, Scripture, spiritual discipline, and self-examination.

The pattern of fasting and prayer for 40 days is found in several places in Scripture. In the New Testament, the Gospels of Matthew, Mark, and Luke all mention the 40 days when Jesus went into the desert to fast, pray, and experience temptations after his Baptism. The Old Testament also includes several 40-day periods. Moses went into the mountains for 40 days to pray and fast before receiving the Ten Commandments (Exodus 24). The prophet Elijah spent 40 days fasting and praying before meeting God at Mount Horeb (1 Kings 19). There are other 40s in the Bible, including 40 days of rain in Genesis 7, Jonah's warning to Nineveh, and the Israelites wandering in the desert for 40 years.

The Bible stories of 40 days (or years) teach us about the power of faith, repentance, and grace to transform our lives. As we embrace the 40-day journey of Lent, we can deepen our faith, find greater meaning and purpose, and develop a closer relationship with God.

Many people choose to make a change in their daily lives during Lent to enhance their spiritual journey. These changes can look like giving something up (like a food item or daily habit), or taking on something new, like a time of daily devotion, or a daily walk. The key to a meaningful Lenten practice is to choose something that resonates with you personally and encourages spiritual growth. Whether it's a traditional sacrifice or a unique challenge, the goal is to draw closer to your faith and reflect on the significance of this season. We will have Lenten Devotionals available in the Narthex during the season. Please pick one up and read it throughout Lent. May your Lenten practices lead you closer to Christ.

Peace, Shari Freeman.

OUTREACH

The Outreach team sent money to Garden Presbyterian school Zambia to provide propane fuel for the cooker stove used to prepare food for student meals. The annual campaign with a goal of \$10,000 to provide College scholarships for deserving Zambia students was successful due to the continued generosity of the Congregation. This is the 11th year this mission has been in place.

We purchased snacks for the Day Center at Family Promise.

MVPC was the Congregation of the Month for CAC in January, as such we:

- Collected food for the food pantry for the Communion Offerings, and purchased extra items using the budget
- Promoted Volunteer Opportunities and needed donations for the Thrift Shop
- Collected costume jewelry for the Thrift Shop
- George Northrup came and delivered a minute for mission on January 11.

The Duncans, Carrie Southard, and children of the church prepared the monthly meal for Clifton on January 18. The Haveys delivered the food that afternoon.



George Northrup from CAC gave the Minute for Mission on Sunday, January 11. Here he is with several of our CAC volunteers.

"Diaper Czarina" loading diapers for delivery for CAC. Thank you for the donations! We dropped off 366 lbs. of diapers!



"We think we listen, but very rarely, do we listen with real understanding, true empathy. Yet, listening of this very special kind, is one of the most potent Forces for change that I know."

Carl Rogers

Your church's Stephen Ministry has laypeople trained with listening skills to help members and community friends when circumstances in life become intolerable. A Stephen Minister can fully hear your story, help you clarify options, and stand with you as you move forward to change things in your life. Contact Pat Bartee, Stephen Leader, or a pastor, to get connected.



The generosity of the MVPC Congregation has once again demonstrated the wish to change lives. Our annual goal of \$10,000 for the Zambia scholarship fund has been achieved. Thank you for your continued support.
IHS Stan and Ann

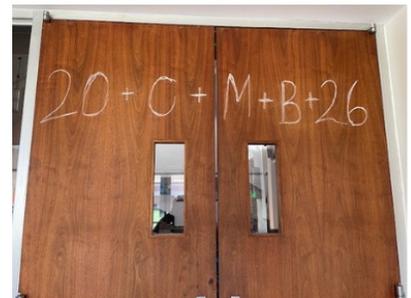
Book Sorting
January 18



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Here is Isaac supporting Samantha Fifield at her swim meet.



Saturday Movie Matinee
"The Best Exotic Marigold Hotel"



Picking up Baptism of the Lord Stones



Senior Lunch at Aldo's Italian Restaurant

Mailing Address:

MVPC

P.O. Box 76051

Sandy Springs, GA 30358

404.255.2211

mvpchurch.org



CHURCH OFFICE HOURS

MONDAY-THURSDAY

8AM-4PM

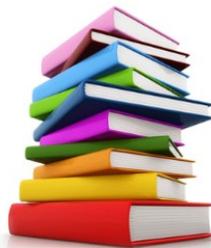
FRIDAY 8AM - 2PM

This & That



Inquirers

FOR THE CURIOUS NEWCOMER



Inquirer's Lunch

2/1

PW Day Circle

2/10

PW Book Circle

2/13

Senior Adults

Lunch and Games

2/11

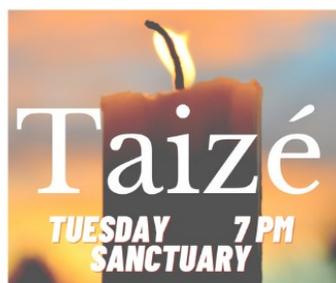
11:30am Gailey Hall



LUNCH BUNCH

Lunch Bunch

2/15



Taizé

2/24

7pm

Photos courtesy of: Shari Freeman, Christy Hill, Donna Martin, Dee
Bradford-Smith, Penny Kiel, Mike Havey

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

GIFT OF WISDOM



Nature's Love Nest

Coupling, bonding, a familial lifetime nest is in all of nature. The pain of life's untying of these bonds is throughout our future.

Persistence and fortitude engraved on our hearts
by the Holy Spirit to strengthen our start.

Chasing his reflected image in a car's side window
keeps a lonely male cardinal left with new ties to grow

But no, he is faithful, his heart is full.
The image must be his beloved, he continues, believing in the pull.
Emotion showing his commitment and soul.

Some turn away from the pain, they can not return to the aching loss.
Others pursue the tie that binds, at whatever cost

The mystery of the Holy Spirit, these profound ties, reflections of unspeakable elation and joy!
Eventually the cardinal relinquishes his ploy.

For others, the depths of melancholy grow weary in the web of remembrances of the heart - yet
blessed be the tie that binds, the engraved heart
of the Holy Spirit from the very start.

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

CHEESE SABLES

By popular demand here is the recipe for these crackers from the Connections Table.



Cheese Sables with Rosemary Salt

1/2 c. plus 2 Tbsp. self-rising flour, plus more for dusting
7 Tbsp. unsalted butter, softened
1/2 c. grated Parmigiano-Reggiano cheese
1/3 c. shredded sharp cheddar cheese
Pinch of cayenne
1 Tbsp. chopped rosemary
1/2 tsp. kosher salt

In a food processor, combine all of the ingredients except the rosemary and salt. Pulse until a crumbly dough forms. On a lightly floured surface, form the dough into a log 1.5" in diameter. Wrap in plastic and chill until firm, about an hour.

Meanwhile, preheat the oven to 350°. Line 2 baking sheets with parchment paper. In a mortar, pound the rosemary with the salt until blended.

Using a thin, sharp knife, slice the dough into 1/8" thick rounds. Arrange the sables 2" apart on the baking sheets. Bake in the middle and lower thirds of the oven for 12-15 minutes until golden; shift the pans from top to bottom and front to back halfway through baking. Sprinkle the hot sables with the rosemary salt and let cool on the sheets for 5 minutes

GETTING TO KNOW

BARBARA BROOKS
Congregational Care



What's your favorite type of foreign food?

I grew up in Texas, so Mexican food would have to be at the top of that list! When I first moved to Atlanta in 1984, I was a little dismayed at what Mexican restaurants served (Velveeta cheese on a chile relleno?). The first time some friends from my office took me to a Mexican restaurant for lunch, they had no idea why I ordered tortillas before the meal. Once they tasted the hot tortillas rolled up with butter, salt and salsa, they understood. Over the years, several new restaurants have opened that serve food that is much more comparable to Tex-Mex and that makes me very happy.

Who is your hero?

My grandmother, Flora Mae Wallace. As a teenager (around 1915), Mimi went to work at the flagship Neiman Marcus store in downtown Dallas. Over the years she rose to be the head of ladies' alterations and retired after working over 50 years. The only time she missed work was for vacation or for leave for the birth of her two daughters; she never took a sick day. At her 50th anniversary, the store threw a big party for her and Stanley Marcus presented her with a beautiful diamond necklace and 50 long-stemmed yellow roses. He also wrote about her in his book, "Minding the Store." This was long before it was common for women to have careers, and as I grew up, I realized what an amazing, accomplished, and empowered woman she was. She was my Mimi, which is why I chose Mimi as my "grandmother name."

What is your favorite family vacation?

My daughter, son-in-law, and grandson have been visiting the south of France for several weeks every summer for the past 14 years (except during Covid), and I have been lucky enough to join them for a few weeks on eight of those trips. They stay at "the farm" in Laudun, a small town they discovered in 2010. It's a lovely apartment attached to the side of the main house, with a view of the owner's vineyards in front and the goat pen and chicken coop in the far back yard – I did say casual! Every morning we get fresh eggs, and every evening we take leftovers to feed the goats. It's a great location to go visit some of the more popular towns, but my favorite days are when we stay home playing games, reading, doing laundry and hanging it on the clothesline to dry, and cooking fresh food we bought at the market that day (and maybe drinking a little French wine). Over the years my family has become close friends with the owners, and we enjoy dinners with them quite often, usually accompanied by wine they bottled. It's a long journey, but when you turn off the main road onto the dirt driveway that runs next to the vineyards, all of your travel exhaustion disappears, and you feel at home and at peace.

FEBRUARY CALENDAR

Feb 2026 (Eastern Time - New York)

MVPC Events barrett@mvpchurch.org

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
<p>1</p> <p>9:30am - Crossroads 9:30am - Discovery Class, 10:30am - Worship @ 12pm - Inquirer's Lunch @ 2pm - Birthday Party @ 5pm - Circle of Grace 7pm - AA @ Kirk Center 7pm - Atlanta Concert</p>	<p>2</p> <p>9am - Los Niños Primero 1pm - Senior Adults @ 6:30pm - AI Anon @ 7pm - Scouts @ Galley 8pm - AA @ Kirk Center</p>	<p>3</p> <p>10am - Staff Meeting @ 11am - Staff Worship 12pm - Staff Lunch 1pm - Music Lessons @ 5:30pm - CE Meeting 6:30pm - MV Towers 7pm - AA-Women's Big 7pm - North Atlanta</p>	<p>4</p> <p>7:30am - Chapel @ 1pm - Preschool meeting 1pm - Worship Committee 2:30pm - Stephen Ministry 5pm - Los Niños Primero 7pm - AA @ Kirk Center 7pm - Choir Rehearsal @ 7pm - North Atlanta</p>	<p>5</p> <p>4pm - Church-School 5pm - Los Niños Primero 7pm - North Atlanta</p>	<p>6</p> <p>8am - Finance/Admin 5:30pm - Los Niños 8pm - AA-Primary Purpose</p>	<p>7</p> <p>6:30am - Los Niños 9am - Presbytery of 9:30am - Recital @ 2pm - Organ Practice @</p>
<p>8</p> <p>6:30am - Men's Breakfast 9:30am - Crossroads 9:30am - Discovery Class, 10:30am - Worship @ 7pm - AA @ Kirk Center 7pm - Atlanta Concert</p>	<p>9</p> <p>9am - Los Niños Primero 5:30pm - Busy 5:30pm - Monthly Finance 6:30pm - AI Anon @ 7pm - Scouts @ Galley 8pm - AA @ Kirk Center</p>	<p>10</p> <p>10am - Presbyterian 10am - Staff Meeting @ 11am - Staff Worship 1pm - Music Lessons @ 6:30pm - MV Towers 7pm - AA-Women's Big 7pm - North Atlanta</p>	<p>11</p> <p>7:30am - Chapel @ 11:30am - Senior Adult 1pm - Preschool meeting 5pm - Los Niños Primero 7pm - AA @ Kirk Center 7pm - Choir Rehearsal @ 7pm - North Atlanta</p>	<p>12</p> <p>11am - Vernon Springs 2pm - General Ledger 5pm - Los Niños Primero 6:30pm - Magic Club @ 7pm - North Atlanta</p>	<p>13</p> <p>10am - PW Book Circle @ 5:30pm - Los Niños 8pm - AA-Primary Purpose</p>	<p>14</p> <p>7:30am - Los Niños 2pm - Organ Practice @</p>
<p>15</p> <p>9:30am - Crossroads 9:30am - Discovery Class, 10:30am - Worship @ 12pm - Lunch Bunch @ 7pm - AA @ Kirk Center 7pm - Atlanta Concert</p>	<p>16</p> <p>9am - Los Niños Primero 6pm - Magic Club @ 6:30pm - AI Anon @ 7pm - Scouts @ Galley 8pm - AA @ Kirk Center</p>	<p>17</p> <p>10am - Staff Meeting @ 11am - Staff Worship 1pm - Music Lessons @ 4pm - Stephen Min. - 6:30pm - MV Towers 7pm - AA-Women's Big 7pm - North Atlanta 8pm - AA @ Fellowship</p>	<p>18</p> <p>7:30am - Chapel @ 1pm - Preschool meeting 5pm - Los Niños Primero 5:30pm - Pancake Dinner 6:30pm - Ash Wednesday 6:30pm - Scouts @ Galley 7pm - AA @ Kirk Center 7pm - Choir Rehearsal @</p>	<p>19</p> <p>12pm - Sandy Springs 5pm - Los Niños Primero 7pm - North Atlanta</p>	<p>20</p> <p>8am - MVS Prayer Group 5:30pm - Los Niños 8pm - AA-Primary Purpose</p>	<p>21</p> <p>6:30am - Los Niños 2pm - Magic Club @ FH 2pm - Organ Practice @</p>
<p>22</p> <p>9:30am - Crossroads 9:30am - Discovery Class, 10:30am - Worship @ 11:30am - Session Mtg @ 2pm - YMSL @ Sanc Choi 7pm - AA @ Kirk Center 7pm - Atlanta Concert</p>	<p>23</p> <p>9am - Los Niños Primero 6:30pm - AI Anon @ 7pm - Scouts @ Galley 8pm - AA @ Kirk Center</p>	<p>24</p> <p>10am - Staff Meeting @ 11am - Staff Worship 1pm - Music Lessons @ 6:30pm - MV Towers 7pm - AA-Women's Big 7pm - North Atlanta 7pm - Taizé @ Sanctuary 8pm - AA @ Fellowship</p>	<p>25</p> <p>Newsletter Deadline 7:30am - Chapel @ 1pm - Preschool meeting 5pm - Los Niños Primero 7pm - AA @ Kirk Center 7pm - Choir Rehearsal @ 7pm - North Atlanta</p>	<p>26</p> <p>5pm - Los Niños Primero 7pm - North Atlanta</p>	<p>27</p> <p>5pm - Pinewood Derby @ FH 5:30pm - Los Niños 8pm - AA-Primary Purpose</p>	<p>28</p> <p>2pm - Organ Practice @</p>

Go to our website under "News & Events" 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
Rev. Kate Colussy-Estes	April 25
Rev. Shari Freeman	June 11
Rev. Isaac Toney-Schmitt	June 14
Debbie Nysewander	July 2
Jill Hudson	October 21
Steve Ray	December 1



PRAYER VINE



Christian sympathy to friends and family of **Barbara Bruce** who died January 10. A memorial service will be held on Saturday, March 21 at 1pm in the Sanctuary.

Bob Addison - pray for good results from a stress test so he can be cleared for his cancer checkup procedure.

Carol Beckman - prayers for comfort, strength and healing as she goes through chemo treatments

Lorry Clark - comfort and strength

Marshall & Sariah Dowdakin - Alma's grandson and wife suffered a late term pregnancy loss.

Susan Fields - prayers for recover and freedom of pain from a fractured vertebra.

Gerald Fudge - pray that radiation was successful and on the road to recovery.

Bruce Hagenau - prayers for comfort and healing as he continues chemo treatments.

Judy Harrison - prayers for recovery and relief from pain from a fall and broken hip, mother of Kathryn Wade & Sharon Murphy

Lois Johnson - prayers for continued healing from a fall and to regain her strength.

Megan Kendall - Pray for relief from pain, strength and comfort. Megan is the niece of David & Christy Hill.

Kathryn Mackie - recovery & healing for Moira Speirs' sister. Thankful that Moira is in Scotland helping.

Una Milne - results of arecent scan and treatment plan, Moira Speirs' cousin. Una lives across the street from Kathryn Mackie so Moira can help with both.

Judith Roe - Grace & strength as she cares for a family member with a reoccurrence of cancer.

A note from Deborah Galloway:

"As you may know I am in touch with a Helen De Vos graduate for many years now. I thought I would send you some pictures he sent me recently of flooding in Lusaka that you could share."



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

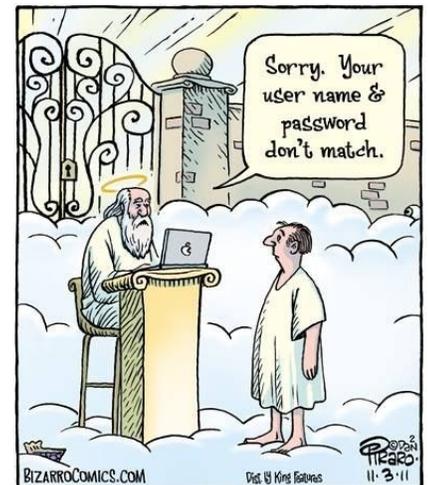
Got News? We'd love to hear from you! Send us your news so we can celebrate, laugh, and/or cry with you. After all, we are FAMILY. Deadline for news is the third Wednesday of each month for the *next month's* newsletter. Send your submissions to debbie@mvpchurch.org.

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

Mount Vernon Presbyterian Church Staff

Rev. Kate Colussy-Estes	<i>Interim Senior Pastor</i>	kate@mvpchurch.org
Rev. Isaac Toney-Schmitt	<i>Associate Pastor</i>	isaac@mvpchurch.org
Rev. Shari Freeman	<i>Associate Pastor</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

Good News!



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