

THE WINDOW

MPC Quarterly Newsletter

Season of Advent 2019



A community for you.

"Now I'm turning you over to God, our marvelous God, whose gracious Word can make you into what he wants you to be and give you everything you could possibly need in this community of holy friends."

~Acts 20:32 The Message

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The Pastor's Page

by Reverend Luke H. Maybry



Dear Members and Friends of MPC,

I'm not ready for Advent. I'm even less ready for Christmas. I like to live in the moment these days. No other moment is better, in my opinion, than Thanksgiving. It has everything that I like: family, food, football, fall weather, and reflection. At some point during all the peace and quiet, I count my blessings. I love every minute of Thanksgiving.

Christmas has all of that, too, minus the reflection. The irony, of course, is that Advent was originally full of reflection. In an agrarian society, it was dark, the crops were put up for the year, it was too early to plant, and there was nothing else to do but reflect. But truth be told, there is no Advent season now. It's all Christmas and it's all busy. I hate to admit this, but at some point over the next month, Luke Maybry will have a complete meltdown over all the stuff that has to get done by December 25th. I doubt seriously if I am the only one.

I can't change the busyness. I can't change the expectations that we buy everybody in our life some new trinket that they don't need. (As much like Scrooge as I sound, all of that stuff is fun, too, but just busy, busy, busy.) What I have learned, though, is that when we take the time to practice Advent, to slow down, to reflect on our lives and community, to pray, to read Scripture, to worship... all of that changes us. It changes the way we approach life. It doesn't change the busyness itself, but it changes us.

During this Advent season, we have several opportunities to practice Advent. We have worship services every Sunday. We have a Blue Christmas service on Dec 8, which is probably the least attended service of the whole year, but one of my favorites. We have mission projects and educational opportunities. And... we have time – if we make time – to reflect on some important questions such as: What in my life is good and beautiful? What is not so good and beautiful? What needs to change? What steps can I take to change those things?

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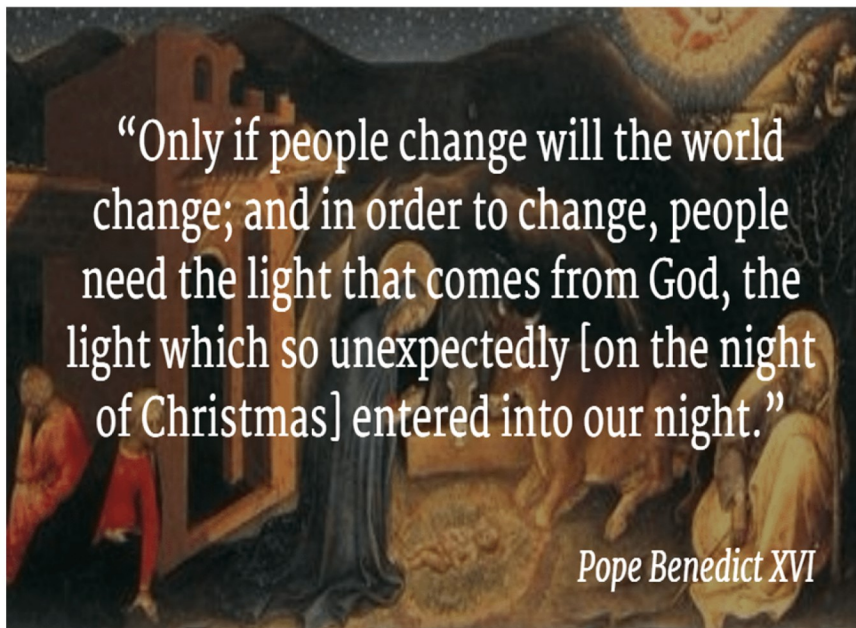
WELCOME

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What does repentance mean for me and my community? If John the Baptist came to MPC, what would he say? What does this Savior, whom we are about to celebrate, save us from? How does that relate to other areas of my life and community?

Think about those things. Ponder them. Pray over them. And tell me about them. What did you learn? How did it change you? How did it change us? I want to hear those stories. This is going to be a meaningful and hopeful Advent. It's meaningful because Jesus comes. But we have a role to play in that, so practice it, play it, embrace it, and tell me about it.

Yours in Christ,



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SPECIAL POINTS OF INTEREST

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Save the date:

For a detailed list of Advent services and events at MPC, please see the calendar on the last page of this newsletter.

Our Vision:

Motivated by the Grace of Jesus Christ and the power of the Holy Spirit, we strive to honor the Lord as we:

Welcome all to worship in God's name.

Share the love of Christ, through our lives, words, and deeds.

Serve our neighbors, in our community and beyond.

Encourage all children, youth and adults to grow and explore their faith.

Joining together, we celebrate our living traditions as a dynamic and caring congregation who seeks to glorify God in all we do.

Welcome Beth Haynes, our new Administrative Assistant

Beth became a member of the staff at Matthews Presbyterian Church in October 2019, as the Administrative Assistant. She grew up in Asheboro, NC and moved to the Charlotte area in 2001. Her career focus has been in healthcare and administrative support. She is married to her best friend, Travis. They have two beautiful Labrador Retrievers who fill their lives with joy. She enjoys shopping, traveling, cooking, and watching the Hallmark Channel (especially around the holidays). We are grateful for Beth's dedication and hard work. Next time you are in the church office, take a moment to introduce yourself to Beth, and welcome her to Matthews Presbyterian Church!



Seminary Update from Sarah Evans

As many of you know, I am a seminary student at Union Presbyterian Seminary here in Charlotte. I wanted to take time to thank each and every one of you for making this possible for me, while I work and serve here at MPC. My time at seminary so far has brought me peace and confidence knowing that I am truly living into God's call on my life.

With every reading, and every class, I feel better prepared and equipped to aid in the faith formation of our children and youth.

About Union Presbyterian Seminary:

Union Presbyterian Seminary, one of 10 theological schools of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.), was founded in 1812 as a theological adjunct of Hampden-Sydney College in central Virginia. The "Union" in the name represents the partnership of the synods of Virginia and North Carolina on behalf of theological education.

In 2002, at the invitation of four presbyteries in North Carolina and one in South Carolina, Union Presbyterian Seminary began holding classes at the new seminary extension on the campus of Queens University. In 2012, classes moved to a state-of-the-art facility on the campus of Sharon Presbyterian Church. The Charlotte campus provides students with a unique learning opportunity born out of the vision of faith communities in North and South Carolina. These Presbyterian leaders, both clergy and lay people, discerned a need for a local seminary to provide for education of future pastors and educators in the church. Their vision was to enable non-traditional students with a call to ministry to pursue this theological training without having to relocate to a traditional residential seminary.

Ways to Find Peace This Advent Season

For many of us, the words “holiday season” are quickly equated with feelings of being rushed, stressed and overwhelmed. As Christmas approaches, we are plagued with thoughts of buying gifts, fighting crowds, making plans and talking to our complicated families. Sometimes we just want to give up and throw in the towel.

Through Advent, God invites us to tune in to our faith rather than check out—a challenge given the frenetic pace and pressures the holiday season can bring. We are not distant from God; we just aren’t paying attention. When we take deliberate steps toward our faith, community, and God, we may find the peace we crave.

The following ideas may help you cultivate peace in your heart as you await the coming of the Christ child this Advent.

1. Carve out time to read devotions.

Devotions can serve as a daily reminder to hit the pause button. Before you start thinking, “*I don’t have time to read!*” aim for a moment a day. Whether it occurs each morning in advance of the rush of to-do lists and obligations or right before bed to wind down a racing mind, devotional time is an opportunity to reconnect with God’s word, ask for help or acknowledge gratitude.

2. Say “no.”

You have countless parties, activities and obligations at your fingertips during Advent. From the get-go don’t overcommit or pressure yourself to show up at every event. Instead, choose those that are most nourishing to you. Remember, a packed calendar isn’t the same thing as a full life.

3. Try alternative worship services.

Many congregations hold special, short weeknight services during Advent that can feel more approachable or convenient. “Churches are increasingly aware of how hard the holiday season can be for people who are grieving, recovering from addictions, estranged from their families or impacted by mental illness,” said Corinne Freedman Ellis, pastor of Macalester Plymouth United Church, St. Paul, Minn. “If the holidays are hard and church feels like the last thing somebody wants to do, one of these alternative services might be a good way in.”

4. Limit social media.

The constant influx of new pictures and status updates on Facebook can amplify feelings of loneliness, low self-esteem or anxiety. Research indicates that regular use of social media makes people susceptible to seeking approval, acceptance and even love from the online world, which over time has the opposite effect of creating sensations of disconnect. If you find that you are constantly checking social media, distance yourself from your device. Call a friend, open your Bible or go outside for a walk. Make conversation with the person next to you in line at the coffee shop. Notice the sights, smells and sounds around you. Resist the urge to scroll and find a way to reconnect with yourself, others, and God.

5. Focus on presence, not presents.

Secular culture sends a strong message that suggests what you buy represents who you are. This is false, which is vital to remember at this time of year. Remember your baptism and find peace and comfort in your identity as a child of God. To disconnect from consumerism, consider ways you could share your presence with others instead of handing them a wrapped item. While the art of giving and receiving thoughtful gifts can certainly be a meaningful, beautiful ritual during the holidays, nothing beats the power of showing up, conversing face-to-face and being there for loved ones or your community. Multiple demands on our minds and time can cause us to rush through the holidays without recognizing the holy and sacred. This year give yourself permission to slow down and pay attention to the traces of faith all around you. And above all, allow yourself to trust and anticipate the radical love and compassion that Jesus brings, this Advent and every day.



STEWARDSHIP

Managing God's Gifts To Us

CAPITAL CAMPAIGN UPDATE

In August 2016, Matthews Presbyterian Church kicked off a huge endeavor – a Capital Campaign. The objective of the campaign was to raise funds to reduce the mortgage debt and complete various capital improvement projects on church buildings and property. A total of \$531,859 was pledged to the Capital Campaign.

Through November 26, 2019, \$470,910.61 or 88.5% of the total amount pledged has been received. Thank you to everyone who has committed their time and financial resources to help the church reach this level of giving.

Completed Projects:

Re-roofed the Christian Worship Center (CWC)	\$ 36,918.97
Repaired and resurface church parking lots	\$ 33,200.00
Repaired church bus	\$ 2,951.48
Installed energy efficient lights	\$ 14,240.50
Carpeted CWC downstairs	\$ 15,971.00
Installed woodwork in CWC Friendship Court	\$ 3,960.00
Painted CWC downstairs (excluding sanctuary)	\$ 4,900.00

Ongoing Projects:

BB&T Loan Principal (Church Mortgage)	\$250,000.00
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A \$25,000 payment is made every quarter through June 2019

**Planned Projects:

- Remove & replace oil furnace in the chapel building
- Paint/wrap church bus
- Repair termite and water damage in the chapel building
- Remove carpet and refinish the hardwood floor in the chapel building

**** Please note that the list of planned projects will be contingent on having sufficient funds and Session approval.**

SERVE



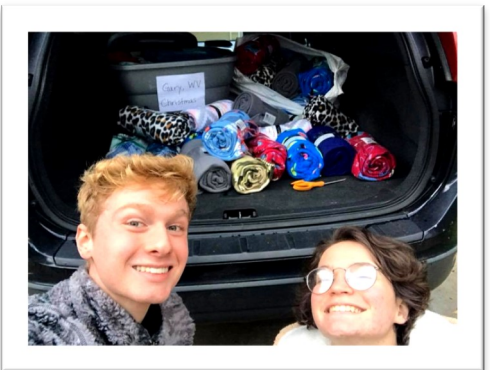
On Saturday, December 7th, a small group will be making a one day trip to the School For Life in Gary, WV. Each year we collect toys, clothing, and other items for our friends in the area.

If you would like to donate any new toys, clothing, sporting goods, etc., please do so before Friday, December 6th. Items should be new and unwrapped, and can be for any of the following categories:

Boys or Girls ages infant to 2, 3-5, 6-10, 11-13, 14-18 years.

Several of our youth are hand-crafting fleece blankets that will be given to our friends in the nursing home in Gary. Thank you to James Gatlin, Kylie Drake, and Miller Webb for their outstanding work on this project, and thank you to the congregation members who have supported their efforts!

For more information on this mission trip, or if you have questions regarding donations, please contact Chip Meyers.



Christmas Carols:

To sing or not to sing, that is the question.

The world has already started to celebrate Christmas, sometimes as early as November 1 at 12:01 am. Some of you may have your favorite Christmas music stations playing already and expect to hear some of your favorite songs in worship each Sunday. Instead, you will notice music of anticipation, preparation, and hope for the coming of the Christ child. Songs like “O Come, O Come Emmanuel”, “O Lord, How Shall I Meet You”, and “Come, Thou Long-Expected Jesus” remind us not only of Jesus’ coming in flesh, but also of Jesus’ coming into our hearts daily, and when Jesus will come again in glory. I invite you to use the songs we sing in worship each week as a devotional preparing your heart, mind, and soul for the coming of Christ this Christmas. Then, when get to raise our voices for our favorite Christmas Carols, we will sing with even more joy and vigor warming our hearts that Christ has come to bring hope, peace, love, and joy to the world.

Mark your calendars for December 15 as the Music Ministry of Matthews Presbyterian Church offers its annual Lessons and Carols service at 10:30am. All the musicians at MPC have already begun their preparations for this special offering of scripture and music highlighting the journey of the Christian faith from creation, to the fall of humanity, to Christ. Join us!

GROW IN FAITH

Digging Deeper

by Pastor Luke

Martin Luther King once said that the moral arch of the universe bends towards justice. Some might argue that point, but even the most skeptical among us would have to admit that at least certain things are better now than they used to be, mercifully so. Things are far from perfect, and justice might not necessarily roll down like waters and righteousness like an ever-flowing stream like Amos said it would, but it does flow *better* that it did.

If that is the case, is the church a leading or lagging indicator of that? On one hand, we are clearly lagging. Sunday morning is still sadly the most segregated hour in America. There are still many in the church who do not recognize women as being equal to men. Women are in congress, they're CEOs, they're running for president... but they still can't be an elder in some churches? That's backwards. And that's just one example of the church lagging.

However, Martin Luther King, who I mentioned before, was nothing if he wasn't a pastor. Before he was a community organizer who preached justice, he was a pastor. Actually, he was a community organizer who preached justice only because he was a pastor. Harriet Tubman, Frederick Douglass, William Lloyd Garrison, Susan B. Anthony, and many others responsible for ending slavery, guaranteeing equal rights, and advocating women's suffrage were all church people. In fact, all those movements started in the church. If you walk around the Boston Commons and see where all the abolitionists hung out, it's full of churches. That's no coincidence.

The church then is sadly lagging, but it's also leading. The question is, where does MPC fit into that? Are we on the leading edge, the lagging edge, or are we somewhere in the safe and comfortable middle? Another way to pose the same question is this: When our great-grandchildren read about us and our activity in this church, will they be proud or ashamed of us?

We live in some interesting times. History will be written about us one day. God is doing a good thing in this world, as God has done in every time past. Will we be an example of those good things, or will we play it safe and go along to get along?

*"Our lives begin to end the day we become silent about things that matter."
- Martin Luther King, Jr.*



Our church classrooms come to life every Sunday morning during the Sunday school hour. As adult classes participate in conversation together, they have continued to grow in their faith together. Volunteers provide breakfast to the youth each Sunday morning as they work through lectionary based curriculum together. The elementary and preschool classes have explored major biblical stories using a curriculum that teaches how to live out their faith in the world.

Sunday School classes meet each Sunday at 9:30am. All are welcome!

Youth News

Our vibrant youth group shows up on Sunday nights ready to participate as we rotate each month through a cycle of fellowship, faith discussion, and mission. This fall we took trips to the corn maze, Samaritan house and more. We discussed topics such as body image, mental health, and tragedy. In preparation for Advent the youth are hard at work preparing for the Lessons & Carols service.

Pictured on right: James Gatlin, Brooke Libbey, Carly Novak, Andrew Perry and Emilie DeVantier enjoying the Youth trip to the corn maze this past October.



Preparing for Advent

There has been a lot of hustle and bustle around Matthews Presbyterian as we begin this season of Advent. Families enjoyed an Advent fair together, during which they heard personal stories from congregation members that centered around the themed candles of Advent, and each family made their own Advent wreath. The AMP participants have also been hard at work preparing to tell the Christmas story through their play, coming up on December 18th.

*** Save the date for the annual Christmas play on December 18th. It is sure to fill you with the holiday spirit. All are welcome!**





Matthews Presbyterian Church

Child Development Center



Matthews Presbyterian Church Child Development Center celebrated Thanksgiving season with their annual Thanksgiving Program. The three and four year old classes strutted their turkey feathers as they sang: A Turkey is a Funny Bird, the Turkey Pokey, and Sanctuary along with other favorites in the Fellowship Hall. The school wide feast followed. This tradition is special as the preschool family comes together to celebrate their many blessings. The classes made adorable Thanksgiving hats to commemorate this event. The classrooms prepared all the decorations including the tabletop turkeys, fingerprint Indian corn and handprint turkey pot holders to name a few. MPC-CDC would like to express their thankfulness to all members of the Matthews Presbyterian Church congregation for all their support throughout the year.

If you would like more information on the preschool, check out our website at www.matthewsprespreschool.com or contact our preschool director, Heather Efird via email at cdcdirector@matthewspresbyterian.org or 704-847-5564.



Matthews Presbyterian Advent Season Calendar

December 7 - Gary, WV Christmas Trip

December 8 - Blue Christmas Service 7:00pm

December 13 - Preschool PJ Night 5:00pm-7:30pm

December 15 - Lessons and Carols 10:30am / Youth Christmas Parties 6:00pm

December 18 - Caroling on John St. 5:00pm, Soup Supper 5:45pm, Children's Christmas Play 6:30pm

December 22 - Youth and Children Caroling at Plantation Estates 6:00pm

December 24 - Christmas Eve Services

Children's Candlelight Service 5:30pm

Candlelight Communion Service 7:30pm



Matthews Presbyterian Church

A community for you.



Reverend Luke H. Maybry - Pastor
Sarah Allred - Director of Music Ministries
Sarah Evans Shetley - Director of
Children and Youth Ministries
Tom Kiff - Organist
Beth Haynes - Administrative Assistant
April Taylor - Financial Secretary

Worship Schedule

Sunday School 9:30 am

Worship 10:30 am

* Transportation available upon request

Please contact us for more
information about our worship
schedule and programs.

Matthews Presbyterian Church

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