

THE WINDOW

MPC Quarterly Newsletter

Season of Advent 2020



The Pastor's Page

by Reverend Dr. Luke H. Maybry



Dear Members and Friends of MPC,

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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I certainly hope that Old Saint Nick gets a vaccine before his global trek on December 24th. If not, he almost certainly will come back to the North Pole with more than an empty sleigh and nine hungry reindeer. For that matter, I hope that we all get the vaccine. We may not travel around the world sliding down chimneys in every household, but we travel *enough* and we go in *enough* households to make it dangerous. As of the writing of this article, a vaccine appears to be around the corner, but that corner will be this spring if we're lucky, maybe in time for Easter. For Christmas, the only strategy to fend this virus off is masks and social distancing, three words that we are all tired of hearing.

How do we do Christmas without gathering? Office parties, family meals, candlelight services are all essentially prohibited this year. We'll do the best we can, of course. Thank God for technology. I mean that, but it's nowhere near the real thing.

What it might well be, though, is very much like the first Christmas. I doubt, for example, if Jesus had a "holiday tree" next to that manger. Christmas is for children, we say, but not for Jesus when he was a child. Jesus and his parents were political and religious refugees: poor, homeless peasants fleeing a power structure that treated them more like pawns than people.

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WELCOME

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Save the date:

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

* To access recent worship services online, visit our website:

www.matthewspresbyterian.org

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.

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Before we celebrate Christmas, after all, the church forces us to at least consider Advent. We try everything we can to minimize Advent's minor keys, darkness, and prophetic brimstone preachers, but there is no escaping that this year.

Maybe in some ways, that can be a gift. Christmas is my favorite time of year, so I mourn all the things that we can not do this year. Yet despite all of that, and in some profound ways through all of that, the light still comes and shines in the darkness. I know we will badly miss so much of what we love this time of year, but I pray and believe that we will see the Light that is Jesus Christ in profound ways that we may have missed in the past.

So hold your heads up and keep the faith. We're in a dark season now, darker than any of us ever imagined it would be. There is no working around Advent this year. But the Light still shines and always will. Stay well, maintain your distance, and keep the faith. God is doing a good thing in these dark days of COVID. Be alert and stay awake so you won't miss it. "The night is far spent," wrote Paul, "the day is at hand. Therefore, let us cast off the works of darkness and let us put on the armor of light." (Romans 13:12).

Yours in Christ,



We welcome Selina Malherbe to MPC as our Seminary Intern

Selina Malherbe resides in Charlotte and is a member of First Presbyterian Church and a Candidate for ordination in the PC(USA). She is a fifth-year student in the M.Div. program at Union Presbyterian Seminary's Saturday program in Charlotte and plans to graduate in April 2021. Selina has worked in the legal profession for over 30 years and is looking forward to a new vocation in ministry. Her favorite courses at seminary have been ones that focus on exegesis and research. In her free time, Selina enjoys working with stained glass in her garage workshop.

Selina says that “the year 2020-2021 presents a rare opportunity for a student intern to observe a church struggle to respond to unique, global, and frightening circumstances that are a challenge to church members and to church ministries. It is a privilege to experience these circumstances from inside a pastor’s office and with a congregation as it struggles to do old things in a new way. In the two months I have been here, I have been impressed with the energy, commitment, and cooperation of the church staff to continuously strive for new and better ways to serve this church. I am thankful to participate in any small way with this ministry team and to be a part of MPC this year.”



Selina delivering her sermon entitled “What’s In A Name?” during the service on October 18.

We invite you to get to know Selina by watching her recent sermons online, or viewing her recent Bible Study on Jeremiah, also available on the church website.

* www.matthewspresbyterian.org
(click on the Worship tab)

SHARE

Christmas Services & Events

Join us as we celebrate the birth of Jesus through worship, caroling, and fellowship.

Advent Devotionals - Each Monday, join us online for a devotion that goes along with that week's Advent candle. These devotions will be designed intergenerationally, so that everyone in the church can participate. Throughout the week, you will see other devotions that continue the theme for the week as well. These will be available and posted on the MPC Facebook page.

Dec 6 - Middle School Christmas Party

Dec 13 - High School Christmas Party

Dec 16 @ 6pm - Caroling & Christmas Play Virtual Viewing Party



On behalf of the children participating in this year's AMP program, we would like to invite the church to join us for caroling, hot chocolate, and to enjoy a showing of this year's virtual Christmas play on the big screen in the parking lot! Bundle up and wear a mask!

Dec 21 @ 7pm - Longest Night Service

This year, we have all grieved different losses. Our losses all look different, and we look forward to providing a space to observe them through this service. More details on this to come.

Christmas Eve Services

5pm Service

While this service is outdoors in the church parking lot, it will honor the traditions that we have always known as MPC. We look forward to celebrating communion with you, lighting candles together, and hearing "Silent Night" from some special children and youth.

7pm Service

If you can't join us for our 5pm worship, please tune in to this virtual service that will be available via Facebook.



STEWARDSHIP

Managing God's Gifts To Us

A note from the Finance & Stewardship Committee:

This Stewardship season is at once the most challenging and the most important we've had in years. Even though we haven't all been together for many months, the church's expenses keep right on going, from staff salaries (and they've been working pretty hard!) to utilities, mortgage payments, and, in particular demand, missions.

As much as we look forward to meeting together as soon as we can, now is the time to consider your pledge for next year. Thank you.

The Finance & Stewardship Committee

Why We Give

We want to be both wise and generous with our money and possessions, which is why the Bible tells us to give a portion of our income to the church. No other organization on earth has the potential to make a greater impact and change the world than the local church. When we give to the church, we become a part of what God is doing in our local communities and abroad, enabling change to happen and lives to be transformed.

Maintain your giving in three easy ways:

1. Mail your offering to the church:
Matthews Presbyterian Church
P.O. Box 97
Matthews, NC 28106
2. Arrange for automatic draft through your bank
3. Make a pledge payment or gift on the church's website via our secure server.

SERVE



Thanksgiving Food Basket Mission

Thank you to the congregation for making this year's Thanksgiving mission project a huge success.

Thanksgiving blessings were needed by so many of our neighbors experiencing economic stress and/or isolation during this difficult time of the pandemic. Matthews Presbyterian Church's Mission and Outreach Committee asked for your help to make Thanksgiving Food Baskets to distribute to the local missions that we support throughout the year.

Our goal was to feed 40 families; each family receiving a basket that would serve 8-10 people. With your generous donations, we were able to provide over 50 baskets. Those baskets will provide a meal for nearly 600 neighbors in need. Thank you on behalf of the Mission and Outreach Committee for your overwhelming support of this project!



Congratulations to James Gatlin, Miller Webb, and Kylie Drake for reaching their goal of making 100 care boxes to deliver to the nursing home in Gary, WV. We are so proud of you!

The three say they are grateful for the love, support, and donations from the congregation. With any remaining fundraising donations, they are creating supply boxes for the food bank, Five Loaves and Two Fishes.

The supply boxes are filled with food, water, socks, and thanks to Matthews Dentistry, toothbrushes. The Five Loaves and Two Fishes food bank will distribute these boxes out to the local children of Gary, WV, and its surrounding areas.



For over 10 years, Matthews Presbyterian Church has partnered with the School For Life in Gary, WV to provide toys for children in the community. On Saturday, December 5th, a small group from MPC will make a one-day trip to Gary, WV to deliver the toys.

New, unwrapped toys can be dropped by the church from 8:30 am -1:30 pm Monday-Friday before December 4th.

Sign up to donate online:

<https://www.signupgenius.com/go/60b054aaead29a3fdo-gary>

For more information, please contact

Miller Webb (millerwebb04@gmail.com)
or James Gatlin (jamesgatlin2@icloud.com).



Stockings
FOR *Seniors*

In early December, the Mission and Outreach Committee will be sharing details for a new mission project. We will be collecting donations to fill Christmas stockings for our friends at Blessed Assurance Adult Day Care. Join in sharing a little Christmas joy this holiday season!

More information on how you can participate in this fun mission project will be coming soon.

Music Ministry

“O Rest Beside the Weary Road and Hear the Angels Sing”

These words are even more poignant today. The text to this hymn was first published in 1849 soon after the Mexican-American War, and as tension mounted leading up to the start of the Civil War. In some ways, it is comforting to know that others have experienced heaviness and sadness during this typically celebratory time of year. I look forward to this time of year, as we all do. There is nothing like Christmas music that gets people singing. This year, that will look different. So, I search for opportunities to help you rest and listen to the angels sing. Each Sunday of Advent will begin with 5 minutes of music provided by our bell choir, youth, and various MPC musicians. On December 16, spread out in the parking lot, we will sing carols, watch the children’s virtual Christmas play, and drink hot chocolate. On Christmas Eve, we will once again gather in the parking lot for a homey service with communion, candles (if it’s not too windy), and lots of music accompanied by guitars. Finally, like so many other things this year, our annual Lessons and Carols service will be much different. First, it will be on Sunday, December 27 at 10:30am on Facebook. Second, well let me save something as a surprise. It will be special, different, but special. I hope you will all tune in.

Let me leave you with these words

*And you, beneath life’s crushing load, whose forms are bending low,
who toil along the climbing way with painful steps and slow,
look now, for glad and golden hours come swiftly on the wing:
O, rest beside the weary road, and hear the angels sing.*

May the music of MPC give some rest this Advent and Christmas season.



GROW IN FAITH

Digging Deeper

by Pastor Luke

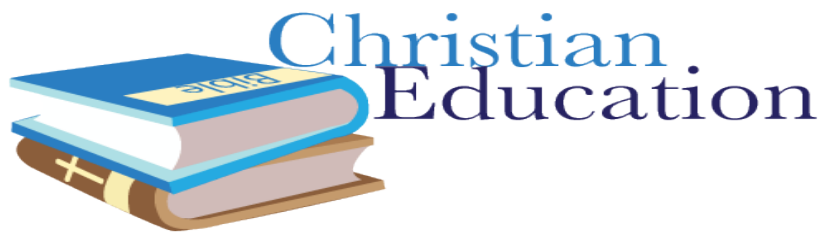
Was Jesus actually born on December 25, 0000? We don't know. According to Luke 3:23, Jesus was "about thirty years old when he began his work," which began immediately after his baptism, which, according to Luke 3:1, was the "fifteenth year of the reign of Emperor Tiberius," which would have been around AD 28 or 29. If that's the case, then Jesus was born around 1 or 2 BC. John 2:20 actually confirms that date as "the forty-sixth year of the Temple," which, again, if backed up thirty years, would be around 1 or 2 BC. Then again, if we place the date around the death of Herod the Great, the reign of Quirinius, or the work of Jewish historian, Josephus, Jesus may have been born as early as 6 BC.

The particular day of Jesus' birth is even murkier than the year. 2nd Century theologian Clement of Alexandria suggested a date of May 20th? (Maybe we could combine Christmas with Memorial Day!?!). The earliest mention of December 25 comes from the Philocalian Calendar, which was mostly likely chosen to oppose the Pagan feast of the celebration of the "Sun of Righteousness." In the Armenian Church, January 6 (the day we celebrate Epiphany) is the only celebration of the Incarnation.

Finally, almost none of the symbols that we use for Christmas are specifically Christian. Hollies, evergreens, candy canes... were all most likely pagan symbols that over centuries became Christian. Adding Chrismons on Christmas trees is a little like adding Christian lyrics to secular tunes, which our hymnal does all the time.

The symbols and dates that we all love this time of year, then, are a mix of pagan symbols and uncertain dates all adapted for and flavored with Christianity. None of that is bad, per se. Isn't that exactly how we live our lives? We try to look at the good, bad, and ugly of the world through the eyes of faith. Sometimes, that doesn't always create a very clear vision for how we're supposed to live, worship, and act.

And yet, if we are intentional enough, those things become clearer and clearer over time. So go cut down a tree and put it in your house this year. Deck the halls with boughs of holly. The pagan "Sun of Righteousness" would be proud. But the pagan god has come and gone. Jesus lives. For as much as we do not know, we do know that. Go live and act accordingly, and enjoy this most profound celebration of God becoming one with us in Jesus Christ.



Sunday School

As we continue to navigate through ever changing and trying times, our Sunday School ministries have continued to meet in new and inventive ways, as they continue to be in community and learn about God with one another. The Explorers class is currently going through the Bible and studying various prayers to study together and discuss. The Living and Learning class is also continuing to meet at 11:30 via Zoom each Sunday morning. For the children, their virtual Sunday School is called KidsZone. Parents get an email each week with a link to the video, along with a list of supplies that children will need to complete the various activities in the video. MPC has been blessed to have teachers and volunteers to keep these ministries running despite being distanced from one another physically.

Youth Education Opportunities

As CMS made the announcement that children would not be returning to school this semester, the CESG committee put their heads together on how we could provide a safe space for our children to do their online school. Two days a week, our youth lounge has been open for the youth to do their online school and connect with one another, while staying socially distant and wearing a mask. This opportunity for the youth to spend more time at the church has been a blessing to our youth group family, parents and Sarah Evans as well. The kids have had more opportunities to grow in their friendships with one another, all while getting their school work done. As the school system continues to make decisions based on COVID numbers, we plan to keep the youth lounge open as long as schools are closed. In addition to this time together, the youth group has also been meeting each Sunday. Every Sunday evening they rotate through music, fellowship and a faith based discussion. While it is different to be spaced apart and wearing masks, the opportunity to meet has been so important to the youth of this church, as well as the youth advisors.

Children's Educational Opportunities

Before COVID, Wednesday evenings were booming at MPC. Every week, it seemed like more and more children were joining our AMP (Arts at Matthews Presbyterian) ministry. While we miss this growth and what AMP looked like before, we have continued to meet in a scaled back way. Each child is assigned a different Wednesday of each month for them to attend, keeping our count down to 5 kids or less each week, so that we can properly social distance. Our older groups have been learning about the sacraments of Baptism and Communion. They are looking forward to the opportunity to help bake communion bread later in the year. Our younger groups have been learning all about Worship. So far, they have learned how to navigate a hymnal as well as an order of worship. We have also been working on filming the nativity story and are looking forward to the video showing of it on December 16th. The children of the church would like to extend an invitation to the entire congregation to join us that day at 6pm to carol in the parking lot with hot chocolate, and watch a showing of their Christmas play on the big screen.

Women's Bible Study: Sermon on the Mount

Taught by Betty Meadows

Tuesdays at 7:00 pm on Zoom

For more information contact Betty Meadows at
(502) 445-1974 or bettym29@gmail.com.

Women's Bible Study:
2nd half of Gospel of Mark
Taught by Jackie Ford

2nd and 4th Tuesdays at 10:00 am
on Zoom



Matthews
Presbyterian Church
Child Development Center



This year Matthews Presbyterian Church Child Development Center looks a bit different than years past. Even with all the changes, our classrooms are filled with learning and laughter every day! The infant class is enjoying art with lots of footprints and fingerprints. Our toddlers have mastered morning circle time and are learning the names of all their friends. The 2-year-old class celebrated fall by going on a leaf hunt and took their collection home to share with their family. Our 3-year-old class was able to enjoy a Halloween Parade and showed off their costumes to the other classes by peeking through their windows. The 4-year-olds are deep into the Learning Without Tears curriculum and have started learning popcorn words. The staff at MPC-CDC are enjoying watching these children grow while they are in our care!

MPC-CDC usually celebrates the Thanksgiving season with their Annual Thanksgiving Feast & Program. This year, instead we celebrated in our classrooms and sent videos to parents of the 3 and 4 year old classes strutting their turkey feathers as they sang: Turkey Pokey, A Turkey is a Funny Bird & Sanctuary along with other favorites. These classes made adorable Thanksgiving hats to commemorate this holiday season. The classrooms all prepared Thanksgiving artwork to share with their parents for years to come; including turkey handprint potholders, Thanksgiving placemats and turkey handprint ornaments to name a few. MPC-CDC would like to express their thankfulness to all members of the Matthews Presbyterian Church congregation for all of their support this year!



Matthews Presbyterian Season of Advent Calendar

Dec 6 - Middle School Christmas Party

Dec 13 - High School Christmas Party

Dec 16 - Caroling & Christmas Play Virtual Viewing Party - 6pm, church parking lot

Dec 21 - Longest Night Service - 7pm

Dec 24 - Christmas Eve Service - 5pm, church parking lot

Dec 24 - Christmas Eve Service - 7pm, Facebook Live

Join us for worship each Sunday:

In-person outdoor service @ 9am, inside service @ 10:30am - limited capacity, sign-up required

Online worship via Facebook Live @ 10:30am - worship services are recorded weekly, and are available for viewing following the service at www.matthewspresbyterian.org.



Matthews Presbyterian Church

A community for you.

Reverend Dr. Luke H. Maybry - Pastor

Sarah Allred - Director of Music Ministries

**Sarah Evans Shetley - Director of
Children and Youth Ministries**

Tom Kiff - Organist

Marcy Doak - 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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