



January 2024

Everything does change except what you choose to recall.

That's a line from Merle Haggard that I have always remembered and appreciated, but that's not necessarily true. I went to a small, private school from the third through twelfth grades, Spartanburg Day School. When I graduated in May of 1994, I left there and quickly lost touch. My reunion last weekend, then, was surreal. So much of that school had changed and so much of what I knew was gone. Even the buildings that were still there were different. We former students were different, too, of course. We were thirty years older if nothing else. Most of us had married, had children, maybe even sent those children off to college, been divorced, lost our parents to death, changed careers... Everything had changed for us.

Much of what we did last weekend was reminisce about our shared experience, and that, friends, is where I can tell you for a fact that as much as I love Merle Haggard, he is wrong about that line. *Everything does change, even those things that we choose to recall.* Or maybe it's how we recall it, or why we recall it... But either way, everything changes.

I found a bulletin recently from August 12, 2007. I was an associate pastor here then. My oldest daughter was an infant. MPC was a different church back then, significantly larger with two worship services and more full-time staff. Eight of the sixteen elders on session then have either died or moved away. MPC was a great church in those days and I look back on it with fondness. It had a heart for mission, I remember. In fact, the Gary, WV mission trip started the previous summer, so we had just gotten back from our second of countless trips there. What we choose to recall about that time, how we recall it, and how we choose to define it all have everything to do with how we define ourselves now.

I choose to recall that we were a church that gathered every Sunday to worship the Triune God. We were other things, too, some good and some not so good. But we were mainly people gathered by God to do God's work in the world. That is still true about us today, even though so much about us is different. We were a great church then and we still are. We have some decisions to make this year and every year. Some of those will be hard decisions and may force us to change even more, but the part about a God who gathers us and sends us out for service remains true. In fact, regardless of what we recall and how we recall it, that part and only that part is the only thing that is assured to remain the same.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be "AB" or similar initials.

Digging Deeper

by Rev. Luke Maybry

According to the Surgeon General of the United States, Dr. Vivek Murthy, loneliness is as dangerous as smoking fifteen cigarettes per day. Furthermore, a majority of Americans report experiencing it. Japan, Sweden, Australia, and Great Britain now all have Ministers of Loneliness, a cabinet-level position to address this world-wide scourge. Experts may debate the causes for loneliness (everything from technology to diminishing trust in institutions), but no one debates the severity of it.

Oddly enough, wealthy countries report the greatest levels of loneliness. Wealth increases privacy, which increases walls, which increase loneliness. While it may have only recently become so prolific, loneliness itself is as old as humanity. In fact, after creating Adam, God saw that it wasn't good for him to be alone, so he created Eve. Many see Genesis 2 as the creation of marriage, but more precisely, God created community there. Marriage, after all, is a community. The Greek word for church, *ecclesia*, and the Hebrew word for synagogue both mean *gathering*. God gathers us together in community, which is one of God's primary gifts and fundamental creations, as old as humanity itself.

Among other things, community requires a sacrifice of autonomy. The common good must be prioritized over the individual good. At some point, self-autonomy must be compromised if we are going to live together in community. Anyone who is active in church knows this sacrifice well. Sunday school teachers, elders, musicians, cooks...all sacrifice their time and autonomy for the good of community. There could be no community without their sacrifice. They encumber themselves so that we can enjoy one of God's greatest gifts: One Another.

If freedom is the ability to do whatever we want whenever we want, then the freest person in the world is also the loneliest. We have community right here at Matthews Presbyterian Church. God said that it wasn't good that we should be alone and none less than God has brought us together. In this world of increasing loneliness, we have a cure for it. While that cure may be inconvenient at times, it is one of life's greatest blessings.

Spotlight on Children & Youth

YOUTH MINISTRY SPOTLIGHT:

YOUTH GROUP: 6th - 12th GRADE YOUTH ARE ALL WELCOME - **BRING FRIENDS TOO!**

- Sunday Nights from 6:00-7:00 p.m.
- Dinner from 7:00 - 7:30 p.m.
- **FEBRUARY SCHEDULE*** (*subject to change)
 - 2/4/24 SERVICE NIGHT
 - 2/11/24 NO YOUTH – SuperBowl Sunday
 - 2/18/24 FAITH TALK – President's Weekend
 - 2/25/24 GAME NIGHT
- **FULL JAN-MAY SCHEDULE** (subject to change)
2023-2024 Youth Sunday Planning Calendar link:
[2023-2024 Youth Sunday Planning Calendar - Google Docs](#)
- **CONFIRMATION**
 - **OPEN TO ALL CURRENT 8TH AND 9TH GRADERS.** (If you are an older student and missed Confirmation due to pandemic, you are welcome, as well).
 - **Sunday, February 4, 2024**
 - **Confirmands only 4:00-5:30**
 - **Sunday, March 3, 2024**
 - **Confirmands only 4-5:30**
 - **Sunday, March 10, 2024**
 - **Confirmands/Mentors 4-5:30**
 - **SESSION MEETING, Sunday March 17, 2024 – Faith Statements/Session Vote on Membership**
 - **CONFIRMATION SUNDAY – EASTER SUNDAY – March 31, 2024 during Worship**

CHILDREN'S MINISTRY SPOTLIGHT:

SUNDAY SCHOOL:

ALL SCHOOL-AGE CHILDREN ARE WELCOME! Join together to play, learn, and create using favorite Bible stories for inspiration!

- *Every Sunday at 9:30 a.m.*

NOAH'S CHAPEL:

YOUNG CHILDREN AGES 2-2ND GRADE: Gather with 2 leaders immediately following the Children's message in Worship for a Bible Story, fun crafts and free-play time.

- *Sundays during Worship (10:30 a.m.) following the children's message.*

MIDWEEK MANNA:

CHILDREN AGES PRE-K-5TH GRADE: Games, Bible Story or Mini-Plays, Crafts, and Music!

- **WEDNESDAYS FROM 5-6 P.M.** - MEET by 5 p.m. on field in front church, weather permitting...otherwise meet in Friendship Court
- **THEN** – Stay for dinner with the entire MPC community at 6:00 p.m. (\$6.00 per adult/\$3.00 per child/limit of \$20 per family...no better dinner deal in town).

SAVE THE DATES!!

- **CHILDREN'S SUNDAY – Sunday, March 3, 2024 10:30 a.m.**
 - *Children take over Worship with their gifts and talents. Reach out to Allison with musical/performative talents your child may like to share during Worship!*
- **VBS (VACATION BIBLE SCHOOL): SAVE THE DATE!**
Monday July 15-Friday July 18, 2024 9 a.m. - 12:00 p.m.

Upcoming Worship Services and Events

Wednesdays: *Mid-Week Manna*. Below is a schedule:

Children's Program (4 years old-5 th grade)	5:00-6:00
Faith Talk with Parents	5:00-6:00
Supper for all ages (children must be accompanied by a parent or other adult)	6:00-6:30
Rev. Maybry's Bible Study on <i>Romans</i>	6:45-7:30
Spirit Ringers	6:30-7:30
Chancel Choir	7:30-8:30

February 3rd: Presbytery of Charlotte Meeting, 9:30 am at CN Jenkins Presbyterian Church

February 4th: Annual Congregational Meeting and Scout Sunday; Scouting for Food Drop Off

February 14th: Ash Wednesday Worship Service, 6:00 pm in the Sanctuary

February 29th: Rare Disease Day

March 3rd: Children's Sunday

March 10th: Daylight Saving Time Begins

March 24th: Palm Sunday Worship Service, 10:30 am in the Sanctuary

March 28th: Maundy Thursday Worship Service, 6:00 pm in the Sanctuary

March 29th: Good Friday Worship Service, 6:00 pm in the Sanctuary

March 31st: Easter Sunrise Worship Service, 7:00 am in the Small Parking Lot and 10:30 am in the Sanctuary

April 1st: MPC Office closed in observance of the Easter Holiday