



Spring 2024

The last newsletter that you received was in late January. I had just come from a high school reunion that now seems like an eternity ago now. It was all the rage at the time, but I have almost forgotten about it. One of the burning questions in the back of my mind at the time was how to care for my father. He could clearly no longer stay at home by himself, but we had yet to convince him. Plus, we needed to find a place that would take him and where he would be reasonably happy. I remember when I saw him that weekend that I left there thinking that he was a sad old man, which was so much unlike him.

Since then, we convinced him that he needed more care, we found the place, we moved him in (temporarily we said at the time), and he got settled. All of that was easier than expected. He stayed there for two weeks and, to our surprise, got better. But then he declined rapidly all in one day, February 20, and died that night. His funeral was the following Saturday. Since then, I have tried to settle his estate, go through his belongings, sell his home (the one I grew up in), observe Lent, do Holy Week, and celebrate Easter... And... write this newsletter article, which, for the record, is three months late.

Sometimes life happens in a hurry and fundamental things and relationships get disassembled and rearranged. My parents were almost like the sun coming up every morning. They were just always present and always positive for my entire life. Until they weren't. And now I'm back doing church, going to work every morning, raising a family, and living my new normal.

None of this is bad. In fact, if anything it's good. It's natural, even grace-filled. I have been blessed with more friendships, condolences, and gestures of concern than I can count. My brother and sister have both been such a blessing. Yet the gifts that God gives us, the church that God gives us, the air we breathe, the food we eat, the people we love and who love us... are all so temporary. The only time we have with any of that is now. I think sometimes we get so anxious around the future that we forget about the gifts God has given us in the present. So go grab hold of the life and the gifts that God has given you now and enjoy them to the fullest. Don't get so anxious about setting up a perfect, pain-free future that you forget the grace-filled present. God is good all the time, including – and I would say especially – now.

Finally, if Jesus' tomb is empty, then whatever future we have, whatever decisions that we make today in creating that future, whatever mistakes we make and sins we commit, whatever harm may be done to us... we can rest assured that God holds the present and the future firmly in God's hands. God has given us a beautiful world, a beautiful life, and beautiful people in that life. Go enjoy that life and know that nothing in life or death, or life beyond death, or anything in between will ever be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be "AB", located at the bottom right of the page.

Digging Deeper

by Rev. Luke Maybry

The number of people in the US committing themselves to marriage has been falling for many years. In 1980, for example, only 6% of 40-year-olds had never been married. By 2021, a full 25% of 40-year-olds had never been married. While the reasons for such a sharp decline are numerous, the decline of marriage coincides with the decline of the church. Marriage is about forever, after all, and forever is a very long time.

Church is about forever, too. When a person is baptized in church, he or she is “sealed by the Holy Spirit in Baptism and marked as Christ’s own *forever*.” Christian discipleship proceeds from that baptism and takes many different forms. Some are called to live out that discipleship in ordination as elders, deacons, or ministers of Word and Sacrament. Some are called to different professions and some are called to marriage. The opening statement in the marriage liturgy claims that “in marriage, husband and wife are called to a new way of life, created, ordered, and blessed by God.”

Christian marriage is also grounded theologically in the doctrine of creation. Just as God gave us night and day, God also gave us marriage as a way of ordering God’s creation. The interesting thing about marriage, though, is that while God blesses and ordains it, the two people in a marriage create it. Marriage, then, is a part of God’s ongoing creation that humans help create. So, every act in a marriage, from “I-love-you” in the morning, to raising children, to the countless compromises and subordination that every marriage requires of both partners is, in fact, part of God’s good and ongoing creation.

Christian marriage is a covenant whereby husband and wife belong to each other and freely give themselves to each other. That “freely give themselves” part can be hard, especially over a lifetime. It requires far more sacrifice than any couple, giddy in love standing at an altar, could ever imagine. And to make that last forever is far more than many people can or even desire to imagine in our current me-first context.

The paradox of faith is that in giving we receive, and in dying we are born to eternal life. Marriage is a microcosm of that conviction. It is one of the greatest gifts that God has given us. As we reflect on marriage, “may we all find our own lives strengthened, and that we who are married may find our own promises renewed, and that the bonds by which all of God’s children are united to one another be so transformed that God’s peace and justice may fill the earth through Jesus Christ our Lord.”

Spotlight on Children & Youth

YOUTH MINISTRY SPOTLIGHT

RECENT HIGHLIGHTS:

On Easter Sunday, March 31, 2024, we proudly and thankfully welcomed Annaliese DeVantier, Leah DeVantier, Caroline Maybry, Milyn McFadden, Hannah Purdie, and Eli Webb as members of Matthews Presbyterian Church, where they join as disciples of Jesus' Mission to bring Shalom (peace, love, justice & wholeness) into the World. This is a wonderful group of Youth with unique gifts of the Spirit that will be a blessing wherever God places them. CONGRATULATIONS CONFIRMANDS!

LOOKING AHEAD - important information, dates and links:

- **YOUTH SUNDAY AND GRADUATION SUNDAY WILL BE HELD ON SUNDAY, APRIL 28TH DURING THE 10:30 A.M. WORSHIP SERVICE!**
 - **IF YOU HAVE HOUSEHOLD MEMBER WHO IS GRADUATING FROM HIGH SCHOOL, A CERTIFICATE PROGRAM, COLLEGE, GRADUATE SCHOOL, OR BEYOND, WE WANT TO ACKNOWLEDGE THEM!**
Please contact Allison Tibe at allison@matthewspresbyterian.org with their first and last name; the institution/program from which they are graduating; with what diploma/degree/certificate; and the date of their graduation. (*This should include those who may have graduated late in 2023!!*)
- **THE EMPY AWARDS: SUNDAY, APRIL 28, 2024 FROM 7-9 P.M.**
(the EMPY's will serve treats, NOT dinner!)
 - **WHO IS INVITED? EVERYONE IN THE MPC COMMUNITY! BUT - WE WOULD PARTICULARLY LIKE TO INVITE ALL MIDDLE SCHOOL AND HIGH SCHOOL STUDENTS AND THEIR FAMILIES & FRIENDS.**
 - **A SPECIAL INVITE IS EXTENDED TO RISING 6TH GRADERS AND THEIR FAMILIES – AS YOU GRADUATE INTO YOUTH GROUP!**
 - **RSVP BY CLICKING HERE [MPC YOUTH GROUP: THE EMPY'S \(signupgenius.com\)](#)**
- **SPRING COOKOUT AT THE RENINGER'S: MAY 5 AT 7 P.M.**
 - **Youth, New-Rising Youth and Advisors are all invited to attend! Please see sign up link below for info and to RSVP: [MPC YOUTH GROUP: Spring Cookout at the Reninger's \(signupgenius.com\)](#)**

VBS - YOUTH SHEPHERDS WANTED

- VBS will be held at Matthews Presbyterian Church from July 15-19th, 2024 from 9 am - noon.
- Please check your summer calendars and sign up on the link below to be a Shepherd (a counselor)! **MPC YOUTH GROUP: BE A VBS SHEPHERD (signupgenius.com)**
- Service Hours will be given!
- If you want to volunteer to serve VBS in any capacity, sign up here!! **MPC Children's: VBS Volunteer Team (signupgenius.com)**

YOUTH GROUP SUNDAY NIGHTS

4/21 - from 5:30-7:30 (dinner at 7)

4/28 - NO REGULAR YOUTH GROUP - THE EMPYS

5/5/24 - FINAL YOUTH CELEBRATION AT THE RENINGER'S SPRING COOKOUT!

(5/12 is Mother's Day, 5/19 is Allison's oldest's graduation, and 5/26 is Memorial Day weekend)!!

HOW IS THIS THE END OF THE YEAR?!?!

CHILDREN'S MINISTRY SPOTLIGHT

RECENT HIGHLIGHTS:

- CHILDREN'S SUNDAY ON MARCH 3, 2024 DURING THE 10:30 A.M. WORSHIP SERVICE
 - Children's Sunday was a wonderful experience to highlight the faithfulness, courage, gifts, talents, and overall wonderfulness of Matthews Presbyterian's Children!! So many members praised the children for their songs, their strong voices and their enthusiasm! Thank you to every single one of the dedicated volunteers and parents we count on *all year long* who made Children's Sunday possible. An especially huge thank you to Tom Kiff for helping them all semester long with their musical selections! WELL DONE, KIDS!
- "JOURNEY WITH JESUS: AN EASTER STORY ADVENTURE" held on Wednesday of Holy Week
 - Children of preschool age through 6th grade attended the "Journey with Jesus: An Easter Story Adventure" and were guided to five stations that recounted the lessons and experience of Jesus in his final week before Easter Sunday. This was followed by a fun pizza dinner. We were DELIGHTED to have members of the church as well as members of the CDC come out for this very special experience. A special thank you to Cathy Barefoot, Janet Cline, Steffani Hardesty, Betty Meadows, Cara Lee Spence and Barbara Wissbaum for helping to make their particular stations special and meaningful. I cannot wait to learn to make this event even better next year!

LOOKING AHEAD:

- **VBS AT MATTHEWS PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH!**
 - We will be **GLOWING WITH GOD** and invite children ages 3 (must be potty trained) through 6th grade to come enjoy this special week of faith, fun, and fellowship!
 - Dates are July 15-19th from 9 a.m. - 12 p.m.
 - Registration Forms are available on the table in the Friendship Court or by reaching out to Allison for a link to print/complete at home.
(allison@matthewspresbyterian.org)
 - PLEASE SIGN UP TO VOLUNTEER IN ANY WAY, LARGE OR SMALL, HERE!!!
 - [MPC Children's: VBS Volunteer Team \(signupgenius.com\)](https://signupgenius.com)

REGULAR OFFERINGS:

- **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 UP TO 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! **Final Midweek Manna will be held on Wednesday, May 15th!!!**
- **WEDNESDAYS FROM 5-6 P.M.**
- MEET OUTSIDE on field out front (when weather is nice...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).

Upcoming Worship Services and Events

Wednesdays: *Mid-Week Manna*. Below is the schedule through May 15th:

Children's Program (4 years old-5 th grade)	5:00-6:00
Supper for all ages (children must be accompanied by a parent or other adult)	6:00-6:30
Spirit Ringers	6:30-7:30
Chancel Choir	7:30-8:30

April 20th: Matthews Kiwanis Club Pancake Breakfast; 8:00 am – noon; MPC Friendship Court

April 21st: Stated Session Meeting; 11:45 am; Room 206

April 22nd: Earth Day

April 28th: Youth Sunday, Graduation Sunday, and Communion; 10:30 am in Sanctuary

April 28th: EMPYs; 7:00 pm in Sanctuary

May 5th: Youth End of the Year Cookout at the Renninger's home; 6:00 pm

May 12th: Mother's Day

May 15th: Final Mid-Week Manna until the Fall. Potluck dinner in the Friendship Court with meat and drinks provided. Bring a side dish or dessert to share.

May 19th: Pentecost Sunday and Communion; 10:30 in the Sanctuary

May 19th: Stated Session Meeting; 11:45 am; Room 206

May 21st: Presbytery of Charlotte Meeting; Locust Presbyterian Church; 9:00 am

May 22nd: CDC Graduation 10:00 am in the Sanctuary and Picnic

May 27th: Memorial Day; MPC Office closed in observance of the Memorial Day holiday

May 30th: Final ESL Class for the Spring Session

June 3rd – 6th: CDC Camp Session 1

June 15th – 22: Adult Worship & Music Conference in Montreat

June 16th: Father's Day

June 23rd: Stated Session Meeting; 11:45 am; Room 206