

MORRISVILLE  
PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH



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# currents

June - July 2021

Summer  
at  
MPC





## Pastor's Pen

Dear MPC Family,

On Pentecost this year I spoke a bit about Joan Gray's book, *Sailboat Church*, and her challenge for churches to put up their sails and catch the wind of God's Spirit. In her book, Gray talks about the fact that many churches today are decorated with symbols that come out of the early days of Christianity. One of those is a symbol for the church; it is a boat. Now in Jesus' time, there were two ways to power a boat on open water. One was to use muscles, most commonly by rowing. The other way was to harness the power of the wind. When the early Christians used a boat as a symbol for the church it was never a rowboat; it was always a sailboat. Because you see, from that very first Pentecost day, the church was intended to be a God-powered movement. The Spirit of God moved the church along as the wind moves a sailboat. Now those early disciples and that early church could have fought the wind. They could have pulled down their sails and rowed in whatever way they wanted to go. But instead, as the Spirit arrived, blowing the church into new places and toward new people, those early believers raised their sails and began the process of learning how to sail.

Gray goes on to talk about many "rowboat churches" she's seen over the years—churches committed to God's agenda, but churches that live with the dominant attitude of either, "we can do this" or "we can't do this." Everything is dependent on their own strength, wisdom, and resources. Do we have the money? Do we have the right people or leaders or community? It's all about how hard and how long people are willing to row. But in a sailboat church the dominant attitude is, "God can do more than we can ask or imagine." Its members know that what they have or lack in human and material resources is not the decisive factor in what they can accomplish as a church. They look on church as a continuing adventure with a God who guides and empowers them to do more than they could ever have dreamed. Sailors in a sailboat church do not assume they know the Lord's agenda. Rather they ask, "What is God leading us to be and do now in the place and in the time where we find ourselves?" In many ways, sailing is just as much work as rowing. The difference is that rowers are confined to the power they can generate themselves; sailors learn to let the boundless power of the wind move them where God needs them to go.<sup>1</sup>

So I'm curious, MPC...what kind of boat are we in? And what kind of boat do we want to be in as we navigate the ins and outs of this Covid and Post-Covid world? Truth be told we could row our boat in whatever direction we want. We could row and row without any regard for the wind of God's Spirit or the ways it might be seeking to speak within us and among us in new ways. Or we could prayerfully seek to raise our sails, seeking to open our hearts and our future to God's Spirit. Now I'll be the first to admit that when we already feel disoriented and we're already unsure about the way things look and feel, to trust our future to God's Spirit feels even more dangerous and daunting than usual. But what if we sought to take a page out of the book of those first disciples; a group of folks who had no idea the places God would take them or the spaces God would send them and they chose to lift the sails anyway. They chose to trust that God had greater plans for them than they had for themselves. They chose to trust that God would lead them into a future that they had not planned and that they could never have dreamed of on their own. And because they were willing to do that, the good news of the gospel journeyed to the ends of the earth and into the lives of people who would otherwise never have heard it.

My dear friends, these continue to be challenging times. There is no question. And yet we need to begin asking ourselves, "who do we want to be as we emerge from this strange season? What kind of church do we want to be?" Are there ways in which God may be moving in us and through us in this particular time that we will risk missing if we continue to row? And what might God do among us if we're willing to throw up the sails and trust the wind of God's Spirit? There are many questions ahead, friends. But there are even more possibilities if we are willing to partner with the wind of God's Spirit and hold fast to the promise that we never journey in this world alone. I will leave you today with the words of Walter Brueggemann: "*The news is that God's wind is blowing. It may be a breeze that cools and comforts. It may be a gust that summons you to notice. It may be a storm that blows you where you have never been before. Whatever the wind is in your life, pay attention to it...and the blessing of God, Father, Son and Spirit, will abide with you always.*"

Let's set sail together, friends!

With gratitude for our life together,  
Rachel

<sup>1</sup>Joan Gray, *Sailboat Church*. 2014.



## FAITH FORMATION UPDATE FROM PASTOR ALEX

Dear Priesthood of All Believers,

Approaching the summer of 2020 was a different vantage point than where we find ourselves now. Our program year of Sunday School classes, Bible studies, and youth activities was cut short by the pandemic in March and unknowns ruled most of the summer. The staff, church committees, and I were essentially looking at a blank canvas and asking ourselves “what do we do next?” From that blank canvass came loss: cancelling the Youth in Mission Trip, no in-person end of year celebrations, moving Bible studies and Adult Education away from the building and on to zoom. Yet, from that blank canvass also came newness: a growing Adult Sunday School, monthly faith formation packets to church families, youth Sunday School at Wednesday night Youth Club.



As we approach the summer of 2021 we do not face a blank canvass, but more a hazy horizon. With more adults getting vaccinated we feel both the conscious and subconscious hope that things will return back to normal: joyous end of year gatherings, in-person Sunday School classes, a Youth in Mission Trip as we knew it before. But we find ourselves hitting the wall of disappointment: we are still in the pandemic, vaccinations have stalled, children are not eligible for vaccines yet, and we are a different people—a different church—having gone through this pandemic year.

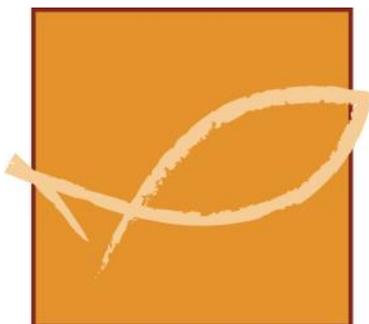
So looking towards the summer of 2021 we are grateful for what we have learned before and the hope of what is to come. What guided us from a blank canvass to a vibrant program picture last year was the acceptance of the challenges before us, a creative spirit, and decisions both faithful to the desires of MPC and the Gospel of Jesus Christ. I am grateful for all the extra meetings, change in direction, and dedication of our Sunday School teachers, committee members, and youth volunteers who made this year possible! We will use that energy and spirit to guide us into the year ahead even though it will be different than what we are used to or what we hoped for. We begin with our Youth in Mission trip that will look different, but will nonetheless show us the love we witness in our neighbor and unique spirit we witness in our youth! We also hope to include more children in Worship and time for music with Mr. Carpenter outside and socially distant to engage our families of young children in-person! This summer will also include planning for Adult Sunday School classes next year, confirmation class, and other faith formation opportunities that will need to adapt to our constantly changing world.

I hope you will join us in prayer, discernment, and sharing of God’s grace in a world that desperately needs it as we embark on another program year to journey alongside God’s spirit guiding us to new things for our community and world.

Grace and Peace,

Alex

## REMEMBERING OUR IDENTITY



*The fish represents the first disciples, who were fishermen, and the feeding of the 5, 000 with a boy’s lunch of five loaves and two fishes.*

*It serves as a reminder of the mission opportunities that are continually available to MPC members and staff.*

## STILL TALKING ABOUT HEALTH

*Submitted by The Rev. Jack McAnlis, Minister of Visitation*

Talk of health is all around us. Every day the news is full of chatter and debate about COVID-19 with its effects and consequences. Related topics include insights on how to maintain good physical and mental health during this pandemic. The church also understands that there is a spiritual component in this conversation. The church's understanding of the meaning of health emphasizes a comprehensive perspective. Health is complex. The intricate nature of body-mind-spirit-community-individual interactions is truly awesome.

To ignore some dimensions while seeking to maintain or restore the others is unrealistic. To put a lot of energy into taking regular long walks without putting similar effort into acknowledging God around you is missing the point of good health. Likewise, it is just as important to deal with the stresses that effect mental health as it is to maintain a good diet.

Good health is a dynamic dimension of life. It is not merely negatively defined. We should not diet, watch our cholesterol level, or take vaccines to "keep from getting sick" but to be well and to continue to function in the healthy state of being God intended for us. We exercise, talk to a therapist or counselor, and pray not only to maintain fitness but to be effective witnesses to our life in the faith. Being in good health means we are ready to answer the call of God whenever God needs people to relieve the hurt and suffering in our homes, communities, and world. Be well. God may have something in mind for you real soon!

## WHAT CAN WE SAY BUT, THANK YOU!

*Submitted by Cindy Moskow*

Our congregation never ceases to amaze us with its unending support! The Deacons were able to provide another 96 food baskets to our surrounding community during the Easter season, thanks to your tremendous generosity. These baskets went to families through the Rescue Mission of Trenton, Center for Child and Family Achievement (Trenton Head Start), Christ the King, Anchor House, and two MPC families.

Due to Covid 19, our way of assembling the groceries has changed slightly. All operations are held outside now instead of the Fellowship Hall. We have discovered that this is actually a better way to do things and we plan to continue this method in the future!

Stay tuned. There may be a need to have yet another food basket drive this summer, and we ask that you continue to remember the deacons each month with your giving in anticipation of this need.

Our sympathy goes out to the families of those who recently passed away:

- Loretta Beadle, on Monday, January 18, 2021.
- Barbara A. Harveson, on Wednesday, February 10, 2021.
- Bruce Jablon, on Saturday, February 13, 2021.
- Marian C. Earle, on Wednesday, February 17, 2021.
- Agnes (Sue) Northrup, on Saturday, May 15, 2021.
- Linda M. Alexander, on Saturday, May 22, 2021.



Let us continue to remember these individuals and all members of their families in our prayers at this time.



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## PASTORAL UPDATE: COVID-19 SAFETY PROTOCOLS

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Dear MPC Family,

What a gift it has been to see a light at the end of a very long tunnel! The CDC's recent guidance now permits people who are fully vaccinated to stop wearing masks both indoors and outdoors in many settings. Hallelujah! Based on conversations with many of you, we believe a high percentage of our congregants are on their way to being fully vaccinated. Hallelujah! Youth from 12 to 16 are now eligible to be vaccinated, and several manufacturers of the vaccines are in trials to test the dosages necessary to protect children under the age of 12. Hallelujah! Our national health experts are indicating that we may achieve herd immunity in the coming months. Hallelujah, praise the Lord! We rejoice in this good news and continue to give thanks for the gift of science that has brought it to our doorstep. If you have not yet been vaccinated, we strongly encourage you to do so and would be happy to assist you in setting up an appointment if you are struggling to find one.

It is an understatement to say we are eager to ease back into our in-person, unmasked, worshipping life. We have spoken with so many of you and know that our life together as a family of faith is an essential part of your personal life. We give thanks for the community we know and love at MPC and know that you have remained so faithful in the midst of a very long year. We also know that we, as the body of Christ, are always called to care for those most vulnerable among us. While recommendations and CDC guidance changes, this gospel witness remains the same. We do not worship in isolation and, therefore, cannot guarantee everyone in our pews will have yet been vaccinated. Currently, only about 52% of Bucks County residents have received at least one dose of the vaccine and children under the age of 12 are still ineligible.

We are still very much in a transitional phase, and though this pandemic life has lasted far longer than any of us ever hoped or imagined, we continue to be encouraged by Philadelphia Presbytery to move forward with care, caution, and thoughtfulness. Until we can be assured that all those entrusted to our care will be safe, we need to remember that we all are God's children and are called to care for one another. **With this in mind, we will continue to wear masks while in the church building at MPC at all times.** We recognize that this will be a relief to some, a point of frustration for others, and (though we pray it will not be the case) we recognize it could even be a deterrent from participating in worship in-person for others. But we make this decision mindful that even in the midst of our own longings and frustrations, Christ calls us to serve "the least of these." This means we are called to care for our siblings in Christ over and above our own comfort and desires, and we are called to care for the most vulnerable as if they are Christ among us. At this time there are many in our church family who remain vulnerable (i.e. children, those who are immunocompromised, those who are not yet fully vaccinated, those who cannot be vaccinated for medical reasons). We can see the light at the end of the tunnel friends, but we remain in a time of transition.

It is our deep hope and expectation that once vaccines become available for all people it will not be long before nearly all (if not all) mitigation factors can be relaxed. As you know we have already begun to relax many safety protocols in the sanctuary and anyone who would like to come to worship is welcome to do so. It is our hope that throughout the summer months we will pave the way for young families to feel safe returning to worship and that those who have been "hunkered down" for the better part of 15 months will feel safe returning to a community that continues to value their safety and well-being.

Friends, we cannot begin to thank you for your faithfulness and patience in this strange season. It has not been easy, but the encouragement and support we have received from so many of you has been a gift. We remain so grateful for our Session and Covid-19 Task Force who have borne the brunt of difficult decisions these last 15 months and will continue to discern a way forward for our life together as a covenant community of faith. As we give thanks for the richness of our life together, we continue to give thanks to God who guides us, calls us, and loves us with a love greater than we could ever imagine or fathom. Thank you for the ways you continue to be the church, MPC. We are so grateful for each of you.

With deep gratitude for our life together,

Pastor Rachel & Pastor Alex

## MPC IS HELPING MANY BEYOND ITS WALLS

*Submitted by Ray Hendrickson*

MPC has always been and continues to be a most "Giving Church" and this year has truly been a challenging one with the COVID-19 pandemic. And so, the Outreach Committee and many other MPC members have reached out to those in need. Hundreds of pots of soups, hundreds of handmade masks, thousands of PB&J sandwiches, baked goods, boxes of cereal, crackers and mac & cheese along with clothing, toiletries, beds, school supplies etc. have all been donated and delivered to homes and the homeless in many surrounding areas. And through the COVID-19 Relief Fund, individuals in need have been supported in various ways.

Also, through the generosity of this church large donations have been made to various organizations such as:

- Presbytery of Philadelphia
- Ivins Outreach Center
- Advocates for Homeless & Those in Need
- Habitat for Humanity of Bucks County
- Trenton Area Soup Kitchen
- Philabundance



Most recently, MPC members have been spending a day working for Habitat for Humanity of Bucks County. *Faith Build 2021* is a project of Habitat for Humanity and has designated Bristol Borough as one of its locations. This is an opportunity for faith groups and congregations based in Bucks County to come together and put their faith into action. MPC is proud to continue its history of supporting Habitat for Humanity, both financially and "hands on."

## MPC CLOTHING CENTER'S SEASONAL CLOSING

*Submitted by Betsy Jurey*

The Clothing Center will be closing for the summer on Thursday, June 17. Please **DO NOT** leave any clothing donations at the church. We will reopen again mid-September. Donations will resume at that time. Thank you for all your support throughout the year.



Podcasts of recent services are available  
for listening & downloading.

Visit <https://mpcusa.buzzsprout.com>

Podcasts are also available through



## IMPROVEMENTS IN THE WORKS

*Submitted by Larry Low*

The Building and Grounds Committee of the Trustees has been busy with a number of projects that are either completed or in the planning stages. Here are a few of the projects that will provide a healthy, safe and secure building for years to come:



New air purifiers

- Air Purifiers will be installed in the Conference Room, Lounge and Fellowship Hall.
- All of the asphalt on our property will be seal-coated.
- The lighting controls of our exterior lighting are being upgraded to electronic/ astronomical devices.
- The exterior site lighting mounted on the buildings will be upgraded to new LED fixtures.
- We are working on updating the building security and WIFI network.
- Ramp construction from the north narthex exit doors to the Memorial Garden is currently being explored to facilitate convenient access to the Garden.



New LED lighting for building-mounted exterior lighting and upgraded controls



Ramp access to Memorial Garden

### *Welcome David Sterling*

With joy and thanks for the work of the Holy Spirit, the MPC Personnel Committee is pleased to announce that we have a new Property Manager, David Sterling, who started on Monday, May 3. David replaces Rich Drabb, who



retired on June 1, after many wonderful years of service to our church.

David is a talented, generous and faithful man, eager to learn more about our community of faith and serve the Lord in this way. David proclaims, "Jesus saved my life, so I will live for Him!" David has a wife Jenn, a daughter Madison (19), a son VJ (16) and a granddaughter Arabella (18 months). David is very active in his church, serving as a minister since 2016. When not working or serving at church, David enjoys music, reading, watching TV with Jenn and hanging outside with his family (especially Arabella).

Please join us in welcoming David to MPC!



*Happy  
Retirement  
Rich!*



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