



# currents

Feb.-April 2021

## SPECIAL

# DELIVERIES



*Submitted by Lisa Zazzu*

The year 2020 required us to do a lot of things in new ways. We were forced to end in-person worship in November and rethink how we could celebrate Advent together. With a team of about 40 drivers, we were able to deliver “Advent Starter Kits” to everyone in our church family. You all embraced the “12 Days of Christmas” Mission Project for the Food Center by donating 119 bags overflowing with food that were distributed on Wednesdays in December along with generous cash donations from those who were unable to shop for groceries. You also filled our Gratitude Tree with ribbons filled with messages of what you are most grateful for in this strange time.



We are approaching the season of Lent and a date for our return to in-person worship is still uncertain. So, to guide you on our journey through Lent, we are preparing bags with activities, both spiritual and fun, similar to those found in the Advent bags. You can expect to receive your bag during the first week of Lent. We look forward to this season of worship with you!



## Pastor's Pen

My dear friends,

There is a file folder on my computer labeled, “Coronavirus,” and within it lies everything that has transpired in our church during this season of global pandemic. When I originally created the folder, I expected it would contain notes from Task Force meetings, worship materials to get us through Lent, and because I wasn’t particularly optimistic that this pandemic would pass quickly, I organized my Coronavirus worship spreadsheet in such a way that it contained the information needed to get us through Easter and even Pentecost. Little did I know, that almost a year later, I would still be pulling from that same folder. Little did I know that my “Worship Plans” spreadsheet to get us through Pentecost would eventually contain an entire year of the liturgical calendar. To be honest, I am filled with grief as I look through this folder. Grief that we have been unable to gather “normally” for the past year. Grief that within this folder I see names of people whose funerals I have conducted over Zoom or at a graveside when we should have had a packed sanctuary filled with singing and tears. Grief that so much of our shared life (baptisms, communion, fellowship, worship, committee meetings, Sunday School) has happened over computers or behind masks or has hardly happened at all. I know I can put on a good face and be filled with hope and excitement when I am forced to announce to all of you, once again, “WOW! We’ve never done it this way before! How exciting!” But the truth is, I’m tired. I’m weary. The fatigue is real. The grief is real. And I miss you.



But, when I look at that same folder on my computer, I am also aware that alongside the grief, I am filled with awe and deep gratitude. Within that folder are: an announcement asking you to consider giving money to help buy Chromebooks for Morrisville School District (and you raised \$11,000!!!!); an entire folder dedicated to staff meetings, where your staff have not only prayed for you each week, but have risen to every challenge this season has offered; a brainstorming session to put together “Advent Starter Kits” not just for children or for senior adults, but for the ENTIRE congregation; strategic planning notes for outdoor communion services, Lent over Zoom, Christmas Eve plans, etc; Covid-19 Task Force Meeting Notes, where incredibly faithful people have gathered on countless evenings to attend to the safety and well-being of our family of faith; and, as I mentioned before, an entire year of worship.

As you read this, some of you will resonate more with the grief than the gratitude. If you’re angry or annoyed that I’ve even dared to mention “gratitude,” then I am certain the grief feels more accurate to you. You might not call it grief at face value, but I imagine it’s there somewhere. Some of you will resonate more with the gratitude than the grief, having found ways to cope and give thanks in the midst of chaos and uncertainty. And still some of you will resonate deeply with both—knowing that there are days you wake up, ready to give thanks and have a “great day,” only to walk downstairs and find that you forgot to buy half and half at the store during your weekly, masked, outing. And before you know it, the anger and the weariness (and the grief) come storming in like a freight train.

I have always known that God can hold both grief and gratitude, but this year has been a particularly challenging time to remember that truth, especially when we can’t be together each week as many of you have done for years—or even decades—at MPC. I miss you. And I know you miss each other. I don’t know how much bigger my “Coronavirus” folder is going to get. But I do know that as Morrisville Presbyterian Church we will continue to be a community that gathers for the worship of God every week. I do know that as Morrisville Presbyterian Church we will continue to be the people of God who care for our neighbors, even in the midst of challenges we’ve never faced before. I do know that as Morrisville Presbyterian Church we will continue to be a family of faith where you can share your grief and your gratitude and know that all of it is welcome and accepted. You are loved, dear friends. And you are not alone. Even in the midst of the grief-filled days, I continue to thank God for each of you.

With gratitude and grief, and the trust that God can hold it all,

Rachel



## FAITH FORMATION UPDATE FROM PASTOR ALEX

Dear Priesthood of All Believers,

I have been looking upwards a lot more lately. I am grateful for a new habit I have picked up which is going on more walks during the pandemic. And while walking I find myself looking towards the sky to see how things are going up there. Is this a grey day? Will the sun bless us with its warmth? What is the shape of the moon this evening? I have been surprised at how different my perspective changes when I look up into the sky. I have a newfound appreciation for the impact light and darkness has on my walks and on my day-to-day life.

Barbara Brown Taylor has a similar perspective in her book, *Learning to Walk in the Dark*. She points out to fellow Christians that we have this light of Christ, but asks the question what are we to make of it? As a church we have traveled through the waiting season of Advent and bore witness to the light of Christ during Christmas! We filled our waiting with a poinsettia-filled sanctuary, online and in-person Christmas Eve services, as well as the burning candle of Christmas. So what are we to do now? What are we to make of the light of Christ in the world? As we turn to Lent, those are the questions we will be exploring together through our sermon and adult education series based on *Learning to Walk in the Dark*.



Starting February 21, our Sunday school classes will be based on each chapter from Taylor's book that corresponds to our Lenten sermon series. Every week we will have the opportunity to gather around a reading, lesson, and sermon! Please let me know via email at alexlester-abdalla@mpcusa.net if you are interested in following along with the book, so we can get you a copy. If you would like you can donate the \$15 to MPC Education Budget, or buy the book on your own, but we want to make sure everyone has the ability to participate. Also, if you would rather not read the book that is okay too! Each week's class will be accessible and meaningful whether you read the chapter or not. Please join us in this unique Lenten opportunity every Sunday morning over Zoom from 9:00 to 10:00 a.m.. If you are interested in joining, please contact me at alexlester-abdalla@mpcusa.net so I can add you to the email chain with the Zoom link for each session.

Adults are not the only ones gazing into the sky and figuring out what to do with the light of Christ in our midst. Our pre-kindergarten to fifth grade Sunday School teachers continue to make Sunday school care packages for our young disciples. Parents and students be on the lookout for another round of faith formation coming in the mail!

Also, Youth Club continues to gather on Wednesday nights from 6:00 to 7:00 p.m., as well as some weekend in-person, social distant gatherings. The spirit and faith of our youth are strong and resilient as will be beautifully displayed on our MPC Youth Sunday on February 7. Please join us in worshiping God together led by our youth as we open our hearts to the unique ways young people show us God's love and presence in our midst.

Friends, I am excited to see what we will make of Christ's light in our midst during this Lenten season and I hope you will join us in the many ways God is shaping our faith at Morrisville Presbyterian Church.

Grace and Peace,

Alex

### **SCHOLARSHIPS AVAILABLE**

*Submitted by Beth Becker*

Calling all high school seniors and college students – did you know MPC provides six scholarships to high school seniors and college students? Scholarship information and applications are now available on the MPC website. Scholarship application deadline is April 15, 2021. If you have any questions, please contact Pastor Alex.

## WE WELCOME THE NEW MEMBERS OF MPC!

**Kathryn Jervis** and **Christopher Bannister** were born in Rhode Island, and came to Pennington, NJ in May 2020 for Kathryn to become the dean of the School of Business at The College of New Jersey. Chris retired from his 29-year position as a professor at New England Institute of Technology where he taught engine repair and electricity classes and served as program director. Kathryn has enjoyed a long academic career as an accounting professor. They have been married for almost nine years and are mother and stepfather to a daughter in Virginia and son in Rhode Island. They have great joy for an 11-year old granddaughter in VA, and a new granddaughter of 17 months in RI. Kathryn's hobbies include playing handbells, oboe, piano, reading, and crafts of all kinds. Chris loves hiking, biking, golfing, and reading. A church family is important to them. The welcome, friendship, and goodwill offered already makes them feel as if they have found the right church home to follow a mission of 'spirit-filled fellowship.'



**David Hough** was born and raised in Upper Darby, just outside of west Philadelphia as the 2<sup>nd</sup> of 5 children. Dave graduated from West Point and served as a regular Army officer for 5 years in California and Arizona. He then attended medical school and served as an Army physician in Washington DC; Seoul, Korea; Honolulu, Hawaii; and Tacoma, Washington. He retired from the service in 2002 and has been working since that time in pharmaceutical research helping to develop new medicines for people suffering from a variety of mental illnesses. He has two sons, Jeff and Marc, and 3 beautiful grandchildren (2 boys and a girl). In his spare time, he enjoys reading, going for long walks, and visiting with friends and family. He is looking forward to becoming a part of the MPC family and helping the community in any way he can.

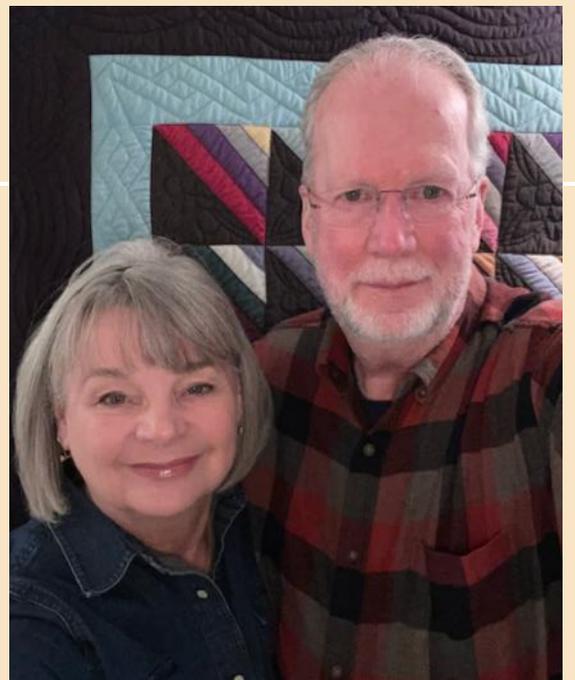
**Stephanie Weaver** was born in Yardley, PA. She currently lives in Warminster with her husband, Will and two children, Jane (3) and Eliza (1). They are currently house hunting and hoping to move back to the Yardley area. Stephanie attended West Chester University and earned her bachelors in Elementary Education. Since then she has been teaching ESL to students in grades K-12. While teaching, she has earned a master's degree and continues her own education. Stephanie grew up attending MPC and is looking forward to getting involved in the church community as an adult and helping to introduce her family to the church.

*(Photo on page 5)*

**Brian & Alicia Romig** reside in Yardley and have been married for 9 years. Brian grew up in Yardley, PA while Alicia grew up in Frederick, MD—the two met in college at the University of Delaware and have two sons, Brayden (6) and Jackson (3). Brian works as VP, Digital Marketing Manager at US Bank and Alicia works as an HR Director- US for Cello Health. When not working, both Brian and Alicia love to spend time outdoors with their children and have them experience the world with new adventures (pre-COVID). Brian enjoys golfing, working out, and sampling new craft breweries and beers. Alicia enjoys spending time with family and friends, reading, and home decorating. Both Brian and Alicia share the common passion of loving to travel—especially in Europe. They are looking forward to joining a church community where they can continue to learn about their faith and have their children learn through an active and welcoming congregation.



**Jim Lytle and Christy Stephenson** look forward to the days when they can share the peace again with the MPC family face-to-face. Since they first started attending, the MPC family has always been friendly and welcoming. Christy was born and raised in Michigan and Jim was born and raised in New Jersey. Both his grandfather and father were United Methodist Church ministers. Jim and Christy are both enjoying retirement: Jim retired from a career as an environmentalist and working for the USPS. Christy retired from a career in healthcare. Their family includes two sons, their wives and six very precious grandchildren. All live in Bucks County but “seeing” them has been via FaceTime/Zoom for the last several months. Christy loves quilting, reading and hiking. Jim is an avid gardener, fisherman, reader of American history and hiker. Both Jim and Christy have enjoyed being involved in leadership in previous church families and have served as Elders and Deacons. As soon as we can safely get together again, Christy and Jim look forward to being involved in the life of MPC and have a special interest in the Food Center.



## DEACONS' FOOD BASKET THANK YOU

*Submitted by Cindy Moskow*

Our church building may be closed, but our ministries are alive and well at MPC!

The Deacons recently put out a call to our congregation expressing the need for contributions to the Deacons' Fund that we might continue our food basket ministries. Your response was not only quick, but generous, which allowed us to provide 96 baskets for Thanksgiving and another 96 baskets for Christmas! In the past, 72 food baskets have been provided through the MPC Deacons' Fund. However, due to the increased need in our community, and the generous donations from the congregation, we were able to then increase the number of baskets given to help meet the increasing need of food-insecure families. We are grateful and want to thank you all for providing us with the funds necessary to continue this effort.

The agencies with which we have relationships are also extremely grateful and have asked for our assistance again to help get these families fed in the coming months. The Deacons voted to provide another 96 baskets at the end of February and another 96 baskets for Easter. Please remember to continue to support your Deacons in this most vital ministry.

## 2021 ANNUAL PER CAPITA ASSESSMENT PER MEMBER: \$30.00

*Submitted by Drew Hunger*

***MPC must pay this amount for each member on our rolls. We invite you to contribute \$30 in 2021 to pay for your per capita assessment by the Presbytery to which MPC belongs.***

This assessment supports the work and witness of the Presbytery as it serves MPC, other local Presbyterian churches, regionally, and nationally.



62% of your contribution, or \$18.65, will go to support Presbytery mission in Philadelphia, Delaware, Bucks, and Montgomery Counties. MPC's called pastors are members of the Presbytery.



8% of your contribution, or \$2.40, will go to the Synod, which consists of 16 Presbyteries across Pennsylvania and parts of West Virginia and Ohio. The Synod supports Presbyteries with training and larger mission projects.



30% of your contribution, or \$8.95, will go to the national Office of General Assembly, which supports our Synods, Presbyteries, and over 10,000 congregations. It ensures that the Presbyterian Church maintains itself as a national-in-scope church by carrying out constitutional, missional, and ecumenical functions.

Checks can be payable to MPC with 'Per Capita' on the memo line or one-time gifts can be made through our online giving portal at [www.mpcusa.org/give](http://www.mpcusa.org/give) with including 'Per Capita' in the notes section.

## MPC CLOTHING CENTER

As we move into Spring, please be advised that the Clothing center will be accepting spring & summer clean & in good condition clothing starting **March 17th**. Thank you for your support.

## THE FOOD CENTER THANKS

The Food Center would like to thank the MPC congregation for their generous participation in the Advent 12 Days of Christmas mission project. The overflowing bags were distributed throughout the month of December, and will continue to be distributed as they come in. Many monetary donations were also received and will be used to purchase needed items for the pantry. Your generosity, in the name of Christ, is overwhelming. Thank you!!

## SOME THOUGHTS ON EXPRESSING SYMPATHY

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

The COVID-19 pandemic, with its social distancing restrictions, has created barriers to meeting and greeting friends and family members. This has been particularly true, and frustrating, when someone has died. We want to be close to our loved ones who are grieving but we cannot without taking health risks. An alternative is to offer a written expression of condolence.

Many people have done that through Facebook, texting, or other social media. This, too often, is limited to a quickly done, short post where the statement of sympathy is lost in a flurry of emojis. “Sorry about your sister,” followed by a sad face, crying face, angels, praying hands, heart, heart. For me, this method does not extend what is most needed at this trying time – sincerity.

For people who are inexperienced (or unsure) at this, here are few ideas to consider when articulating your support in writing.

1. Do not be afraid to admit that you find it difficult to express what you are feeling. Admitting that you are at a loss for words is far more caring and more helpful than writing flowery prose or stale platitudes. Writing, “He has gone to a better place” should never be used.
2. Share a positive memory. If the deceased has had an impact on your life, let it be known to those people who mourn.
3. Don’t shy away from the ‘D’ words. Death in our culture has become so sanitized; we are afraid to mention it. Loved ones do not “die” anymore; they have “passed on” or been “lost.” We have a “celebration of life” instead of a funeral. Writing or saying, “dead,” “died,” and “death” are words of acceptance and truth.
4. Social media is not enough. Our cultural instinct seems to be to dash off a text because that is how we do things now. Technology has allowed for face-to-face calls and “Zoom” funerals. But a handwritten note to a friend, expressing a gut feeling does wonders for the grieving soul.
5. It is OK to write later. Writing immediately is comforting, but not necessary. Many mourners appreciate cards and notes arriving weeks or even months later. Thoughts and good wishes may be welcomed better after time has melted away some of the immediate heartache and stress at the time of death.

If words still fail you, do something. Walk the deceased’s dog, run an errand, make phone calls. And when in doubt, do what folks have been doing for generations, send cookies!

## ASH WEDNESDAY SERVICE

*Submitted by Molly Ramsey, Pastoral Intern*

The ashes for Ash Wednesday typically come from the palm leaves waved by children and adults alike as we sing, “Hosanna in the Highest!” during the previous Palm Sunday. In contrast to this proclamation, Ash Wednesday seems much quieter. Ash Wednesday marks the beginning of the liturgical season of Lent, a season when we journey with God for 40 days toward the death and resurrection of our Savior, Jesus Christ. Instead of jubilant shouts to celebrate the coming arrival of the Messiah, Ash Wednesday comes quietly, with a whispered reminder of our mortality, “Remember that you are dust, and to dust you shall return. Thanks be to God.”

On Wednesday, February 17, we invite you to join us at 7:00 p.m. for our Ash Wednesday Worship. The service will be live over Zoom and a link will be sent out closer to the date. As with almost everything in these days, this Ash Wednesday will look and feel different. We won’t be marking one another’s foreheads with ashes, but we will gather virtually to be reminded that yes, we are dust, yes, there is suffering, and yes, Lent is a season of loss. And yet, God works in and with the dust, our suffering is temporary, and Lent is also a season of Hope. We hope you will join us for this service as we begin walking through Lent together.



Due to the restrictions imposed by the COVID-19 pandemic new and exciting formats for MPC's annual Christmas Eve worship services were developed in 2020. Four options were offered:

- 1) A prerecorded service filmed in our beautifully decorated sanctuary was an adapted version of our usual 7:00 p.m. service and was available for viewing, as desired, from Christmas Eve morning to the end of the Christmas season through email links. It featured readings of the Christmas scriptures, live pre-recordings of Chancel Chimes selections, past and present music by our Chancel Choir, soloists and organists, as well as a message from Pastor Rachel.
- 2 and 3) Two short identical services were held outdoors in the area near the creche. one at 4:00 p.m. and the other at 5:00 p.m.. Since social distancing and mask wearing were carefully observed, the attendees were able to sing some Christmas carols, a cappella. Each person was given a battery operated candle to hold, symbolizing the Light of Christ coming into the world. Christmas scripture was read and a short message delivered.
- 4) A Zoom service was attended by about 50 families at 7:00 p.m.. The Christmas message was delivered through scripture, the spoken word and music. Four MPC families led the carol singing into our homes.

Although not "normal", Christmas Eve was celebrated creatively, inspirationally and meaningfully at MPC in 2020!



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