



currents

Spring 2023

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Pastor's Pen

Dear MPC Family,

If you were in attendance at our Congregational Meeting back in January, you heard about two big things happening in our shared life in the coming months: 1) The church's plans to provide a 13-week sabbatical for me this summer; and 2) my acceptance into the Doctor of Ministry program at Duke Divinity School. I realize this information may have been new for many of you, so I wanted to take the time to talk a little more about both of these new adventures.



As of March 20, 2023, I will have served for six years as the Senior Pastor of Morrisville Presbyterian Church, the time at which it was agreed upon in my original terms of call to be granted a 13-week sabbatical. For those unfamiliar with sabbatical in a pastoral call, a sabbatical provides an opportunity for a pastor to step away briefly from the persistent obligations of daily parish life and to engage in a period of renewal and reflection. These renewal periods are not vacations but times for intentional exploration and reflection, for drinking again from God's life-giving waters, for regaining enthusiasm and creativity for ministry. Though this idea of sabbatical may feel new, I can assure you it is a very common practice among PC(USA) churches and is now required in a pastor's "Terms of Call" in Philadelphia Presbytery.

I have known many pastors who have been given the gift of a sabbatical, and every single one of them has raved about the impact it has had on both their own lives and the lives of their churches. And I believe sabbatical has been especially important for pastors in the wake of the pandemic. I will be honest with you: never in my 13 years of ministry have I endured such an intense period of pastoral leadership as I did during the pandemic. This season required a unique pastoral skillset as well as a depth of perseverance and fortitude that I did not know I possessed. While I am grateful for the learning and leadership that has come out of this season, I am also aware of how burned out and broken I sometimes felt within it. I have consistently pursued avenues of self-care through collegial support, coaching, therapy, and continuing education, but I also find myself breathing a sigh of relief as I look toward the provision of this sabbatical timing.

To say that I am grateful for this opportunity would be a huge understatement. Through this sabbatical I hope to gain fresh experiences, perspectives, and a renewed sense of call to God's church. And it is my fervent hope that I will return with a higher level of engagement, a renewed interest in my work in the church, and a greater sense of personal well-being, all of which will benefit the church for years to come. Additionally, MPC will have the chance to see what it is capable of in my absence, remembering that the church never survives on the back of a pastor, but on the commitment of every member to serve the Lord with gladness.

For those of you who have more questions, I have prepared a Frequently Asked Questions (see FAQ on next page) portion to answer questions you might have. But if you have more questions, don't hesitate to ask! I would be happy to talk with you more about it, as would members of the Session and Personnel Committee. I thank you all for the gift of this sabbatical, and I covet your prayers for all that God will do among us in this season.

With deep gratitude for our life together,
Rachel

PASTOR PEN (CONTINUED)

Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ)

Who is in charge while you're gone?

In my absence, Pastor Alex will serve as the Head of Staff. When he is away for vacation or for our Youth Mission Trip this summer, Jack McAnlis will fill the role. We are fortunate to have incredibly able and willing pastoral staff, which alleviates any concerns I might have about stepping away for this amount of time.

What dates will you be away?

My sabbatical will begin Friday, June 9, and I will be back in worship on Sunday, September 10.

Will we see you or your family at all this summer?

My family and I will be fully away from MPC during these 13 weeks. We will not be in worship, I will not be checking or responding to email, nor will I be texting or taking calls from congregants. The presbytery expects these boundaries to be in place during a pastoral sabbatical. Pastor Alex will have details of my itinerary and will be able to contact me if absolutely needed, but any pastoral questions or concerns should be addressed to him.

What are you doing? Where are you going?

A portion of this Sabbatical will include time set aside just for me—to read, to reflect, to rest, and to reconnect to the foundations of my faith and the call that drew me into ministry in the first place. This doesn't mean I will be abandoning my family—quite the opposite! I will have more time for my family this summer than I typically do in any season of ministry. But I will also take time to recommit to regular spiritual practice and reading, as well as take a solo retreat (details below!) for about a week. I am fortunate to have a very supportive spouse and parents who will help take care of the kids while I am away.

Personal Retreat: I have booked a solo trip to Iceland, with a touring group designed just for women. Though I will be entering this experience through the lens of spiritual renewal, I also look forward to adventuring into Iceland's dramatic and breath-taking landscape alongside other women who are similarly searching for peace, adventure, beauty, and wonder.

As a family, we will spend a couple of weeks at the Jersey Shore thanks to the invitation of Wells Presbyterian Church, where I will preach for two Sundays.

Additionally, we will spend some time in NC, both with my family and at Duke Divinity School, as I begin my Doctor of Ministry program.

What is involved in the Doctor of Ministry program?

The Doctor of Ministry program at Duke Divinity School is a professional degree program for clergy (not a research degree, like a PhD) that will begin in the fall of 2023. This program is meant to be pursued alongside a fulltime call to ministry and will last about three years. During that time, I will participate in hybrid classes online, and will travel to Durham, NC, 2-3 times each year for an in-person intensive week of study. There is a basic curriculum centered around leadership, and then I will have the freedom to pursue a thesis of my choice.

How can we be praying for you and for the church this summer?

Please pray that this Sabbatical season will provide the rest, renewal, and reflection that's most needed. Pray that it would be a life-giving time for me and for my family, as well as for the church. And together, let us pray that each of us will return to one another in September with renewed energy and delight in our life together.

THE NEED IN OUR BACKYARD

Dear Priesthood of All Believers,

Even though the years turn, some things never change. I was walking down a hallway at Morrisville High School. Youthful angst was in the air. Big, bold, block letters were painted on the walls to spell out the school's name and mascot. Bells rang and students shuffled against the tide of onrushing classmates. As eyes wandered to catch a friendly passerby and voices shouted above the noise to get attention, I realized that some parts of being a teenager are universal. We are all just trying to make it in this world, hopefully with a friend or a community or an identity that gives us meaning and belonging.

As students found their classrooms, I finally found my destination. The Morrisville school's social workers were hoping to start a food pantry. Hearing about our Food Center, they asked me and some other volunteers our advice. I was happy to let the more experienced MPCers share their expertise about the logistics of running our food operation, but then I heard something shocking, "We have over 30 homeless students in our district." What now?! "Yes, we have 30 current students from over a dozen families whose housing is so unstable they do not know where they will be living from one month to the next."

This news from one of the social workers gutted me. How could I have worked here for years and not have known this? What must it be like to be those families and students? What is God doing to address this deep hurt and deep need in our backyard?

Our session asked these questions as they discerned whether to host a Code Blue Homeless Shelter in March. Advocates for the [Homeless and Those in Need](#) (AHTN) is a non-profit in Bucks County that seeks to meet the needs of our community, especially for folks who are homeless or on the verge of homelessness. One of the ways they do this is by providing a shelter in houses of worship from December through March. On nights when the temperature drops below 26 degrees with wind-chill, AHTN calls a "Code Blue" and snaps into action. Volunteers drive buses, manage intake, set up cots, and stay overnight so that folks who do not have shelter can come in from the cold. Churches, synagogues, and other houses of worship take turns month-by-month hosting and cooking meals for folks who stay overnight. AHTN runs a tight ship: folks are in and out of a shelter from 7:00 p.m. to 7:00 a.m. with very little fanfare and very few problems. So when AHTN asked us, MPC, if we would be willing to host a shelter in the month of March, the session and trustees did what faithful people do. They prayed, they asked questions, and they discerned the Holy Spirit's movement in their midst: they voted yes.

So this March our church will be "on-call" to host a homeless shelter when AHTN determines a Code Blue. We know that hosting this shelter will not solve the world's problems over night or even the situation of the 30 students mentioned above. But, we believe that through this ministry we will learn how to better serve our neighbors. We will attempt to show up in the places where God is addressing the deep need in our backyard. We will continue to be the church *in* Morrisville—where people are fed, in body or spirit, and find safe sanctuary Monday through Sunday.

Staff, volunteers, and AHTN have been working diligently to make sure we are well prepared for this ministry. If you are interested in participating yourself, email Fran Akelewicz at fakelewicz@gmail.com as we are looking for folks willing to grocery shop and cook meals. If you have any questions or concerns please contact alexlester-abdalla@mpcusa.net. As you try to make it in this world, may you know a friendly face, a welcoming community, and an identity that gives you meaning and belonging—a safe sanctuary open to love.

Grace and Peace,

Alex



OUR CHURCH FAMILY

In Loving Memory

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

- Dick Scott
on Thursday, December 1, 2022.
- Shirley May
on Tuesday, February 14, 2023

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



HOLIDAY FOOD BASKETS

Submitted by Cindy Moskow

A trip to the grocery store has us all feeling “the pinch.” As food costs have risen considerably, so has the need. The Deacons ask that you prayerfully consider making a donation to our fund so that we can continue our outreach to the surrounding community, especially this Easter. While funds are adequate at the moment, it is projected that we may be in a deficit in the near future without your help.

For your convenience, the online giving portal at mpcusa.org/give has been modified to indicate a place where you can specify donations to the Deacons for this purpose. Additionally, envelopes will be provided on the information table found in our narthex, as well as in the pews and bulletins.

We know that this is a struggling time for many, but especially for those who are hungry. We are extremely grateful for all the ways you continually support the Deacons and thank you for your generosity.

CONGRATULATIONS LEW!



Lew Mohr receiving his 70-years in scouting pin with his family.

On February 5, MPC recognized that Sunday as *Boy Scout Sunday*. During the service, it was announced that Lew Mohr was celebrating 70 years in scouting. Later that day, Lew was honored by receiving a pin acknowledging his many years of service.

Scout Sunday is a day to celebrate. It's the scouts day to say thank you to our chartered organization, MPC and its members. What does the chartered organization provide? It provides leadership, meeting facilities, encouragement, and other support as needed.

The BSA serves community-based organizations. Who benefits from scouting? Children, youth, adults, families, and communities. The BSA offers an educational resource program based on "Duty to God and Country." Volunteers and professionals work together in a team effort. Scouting is led by more than a million volunteers and nearly 3,800 professionals. The mission of the Boy Scouts of America is to prepare young people to make ethical and moral choices over their lifetimes by instilling in them the values of the Scout Oath and Scout Law.

Troop 3 thanks MPC and its members for 112 years of continued support. Because of your support they have mentored over 3,500 young boys and 112 scouts have achieved the rank of Eagle.

Visit mpcusa.org

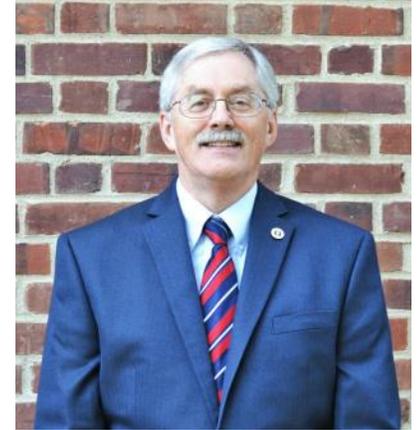
GOD OF THE SEASONS

Submitted by Rev. Jack McAnlis, Minister of Visitation

Do you ever get tired of winter? I am glad that the days are getting longer. It means that winter is passing into spring. It means that those cold days that zap my energy will be fewer and fewer. I know that a snowstorm is still likely, but the days with more sunlight will increase. The earth will burst forth with hyacinths, daffodils, azaleas, and dogwoods. The trees and grass will be green again.

But eventually, I know, I will have to trudge through falling leaves and winter will return. Such is the repeated nature of our seasons – spring, summer, fall, and winter. In the Bible, there are many references to annual recurring periods, often distinguished by weather – winter, late autumn, cold, and “time of rain.” Sometimes the passing of seasons is noted by the behavior of animals. Animals emerge from hibernation and birds migrate. Other times, the seasons are noted by human behavior: plowing time and harvesting time.

In Ecclesiastes, there are all matter of seasons including times for mourning, healing, birthing, dying, sewing, tearing down, throwing away, warring, and loving. This emphasizes that God is the one who determines time and timing. The Psalmist declares God’s faithfulness at all times, particularly when tired or disheartened. “The Lord upholds all who are falling and raises up all who are bowed down. The eyes of all look to you, and you give them their food in due season” (Ps. 145:14-15). It is an affirmation of God’s sustaining power to provide for God’s own people with sustenance for the body (and spirit), despite the weather. Think Spring!



MPC IS PART OF CODE BLUE VOLUNTEERS NEEDED

We have partnered with [Advocates for the Homeless and Those in Need](#) (AHTN) for this March to provide a hot meal and a cot for the night when weather conditions become dangerous for unsheltered individuals in lower Bucks County. We are looking for volunteer to shop, cooks, and for kitchen help. Please contact Fran Akelewicz at fakelewicz@gmail.com if you are interested. Have more questions? Please contact Pastor Alex Lester-Abdalla at alexlester-abdalla@mpcusa.net.

The Ivins Outreach Center encourages you to give the precious gift of time to those in need in your community. They are urgently in need of volunteers to assist with their Staying Put in Lower Bucks Program. Staying Put is driven by volunteers who provide services to give homebound seniors the practical means and social support to live their lives to the fullest, safely, and confidently in their own community with familiar connections. Volunteers provide transportation to medical appointments, grocery shopping, pharmacy, and hair salon appointments. If you have a few hours to spare, we welcome your assistance.

OPEN HOUSE

Submitted by Christina Alexy, Director of Weekday Nursery School



MPC Weekday Nursery School is enrolling for the 2023-2024 school year now. The nursery school serves children aged 2.7-4 years old. Please join us at one of our Open Houses to learn what we are all about on March 16 from 6:00 p.m.-7:30 p.m.; and April 1 from 1:00-3:00 p.m. Visit Weekdaynursery.org for more information!

For more information concerning the Staying Put program and how you can help, please visit ivinsoutreach.org or contact Frank Walter at (215) 428-0500 x101 or frank@ivinsoutreach.org.



GRATITUDE FOR YOUR GIVING

Submitted by Caroline Thompson

With glad hearts, we are sending our words of gratitude for the faithful response to our 2022 estimate of giving campaign and year end giving. It is top of mind for the stewardship committee, our pastors and our session to say thank you to each of you as supporters of the ministry of MPC. In 2022, pledge incomes surpassed our budget by over \$25,000! We are excited as we look to 2023 and continue to receive your pledge cards for the current year. The spirit has moved this congregation to continue strengthening our relationship with Jesus Christ and deepening our roots of faith and generosity through gifts to MPC. Current receipts show the average pledge amount has increase from 2022 to 2023 by \$295. Thank you, MPC and thanks be to God! What new and exciting work will these funds enable us to prayerfully accomplish in the year to come? We can't wait to find out.



If you haven't pledged for 2023 yet, it's not too late. Stewardship will be contacting each of the 20+ giving units that we still eagerly await estimate of giving cards from if we have not talked with you already. If you have any questions, comments or concerns about stewardship or estimating your giving to MPC, please contact Laurie Jacobson, Financial Secretary at lauriejacobson@mpcusa.net or 215-295-4191 ext. 226..

PER CAPITA APPORTIONMENT

Submitted by Caroline Thompson

Have you given your Per Capita apportionment yet this year?

The Per Capita apportionment for 2023 is \$32.00 per member. For example, for a family of 4 (if the children are confirmed), the total would be \$128.00. We kindly ask that each member considers covering their per capita apportionment for 2023 by writing a check to MPC or submitting an online gift through our giving portal. **On March 12, we will have a special dedication of Per Capita offerings during our regular worship service, whether you donate that day or beforehand.**

On Per Capita Sunday, we will celebrate the ways in which our gathering together makes Christ's church possible. One of these ways is through our generous support of the PC (USA) in the form of per capita gifts. Per Capita is the primary source of funding for the PC (USA) Office of the General Assembly and is how Presbyterians mutually and equitably share the costs of coming together to discern the Spirit's leading for the future. These gifts are part of our call to be one church, one community. Through our gifts we support the work of our congregation, our presbytery, our synod, our national church, and beyond.

In recent years many members have transitioned from envelope offering to online contributions. Those of us who give online no longer receive an envelope to remind us to give our Per Capita apportionment. Morrisville Presbyterian Church pays the General Assembly \$32 for each active member, regardless of whether that cost is covered by the congregant. Therefore, this item has negatively impacted the church budget in recent years. Help us help the connectional church!

iPhone



Introducing mobile giving

Scan the appropriate QR code with your phone and find MPC by searching code 'FEDN99' or 'Morrisville Presbyterian Church.'

Once set up, you can schedule recurring gifts or make one-time offerings with one click!

Android



Need help? Email Office@mpcusa.org and ask that your questions be forwarded to the Stewardship Committee.

MPC "OUTREACHES" NEAR AND FAR

Submitted by Ray Hendrickson

There are many organizations, both near and far that MPC supported in 2022 and will continue to support in 2023 because of your generosity. To name a few....

Presbyterian Disaster Assistance (<https://pda/pcusa.org>) is a site that we all should visit. For many years, MPC has been a church that has supported the Presbyterian Disaster Assistance (PDA) in its many efforts to assist those adversely affected by crisis and catastrophic events. Over \$14,000 was donated to the PDA – Ukraine Relief Fund. And currently, MPC is collecting money to benefit the PDA - Syria/Turkey Earthquake Disaster where 37,000 lives have been lost. You may donate to this fund using a check and placing “*Syria/Turkey Relief*” on the comment line or you may use MPC’s online portal at mpcusa.org/give.



Just across the Delaware River is the **Trenton Area Soup Kitchen** (TASK), which MPC has supported substantially for years. TASK is so much more than a soup kitchen! Volunteers and staff serve nutritious meals, free of charge, no questions asked, to anyone who comes seeking nourishment; provide education, job training and workforce development that empowers people to pursue their hopes and dreams; and provide case management, access to community resources and assistance to help neighbors in need. Not only has MPC supported this organization financially, but prior to the pandemic, MPC volunteers travelled to Trenton to prepare meals and support for those in attendance. Might we continue this outreach, both financially and “hands-on”? Please visit the TASK website at trentonsoupkitchen.org to learn more about the organization. Contact Ray Hendrickson at hrrh1453@gmail.com on how you can help.



Habitat for Humanity of Bucks County is building a home down the street from MPC on Hillcrest Avenue. Habitat is a global nonprofit housing organization working in local communities across all 50 states and in approximately 70 countries. *Faith Build* is their project of building homes where faith groups and congregations have come together to put their faith into action! MPC has long been a supporter of Habitat in many ways – assisting at a work site, assisting at a Restore location and making substantial donations.

Do you want to volunteer as those pictured? March 10 is the next day designated for MPC. More will follow and will be listed in the Sunday bulletin. You may contact Ray Hendrickson at 215 495-3114 or at hrrh1453@gmail.com to be a part of *Faith Build!* Make it a fun day, grab a friend and “Habitat” for a day! You may also visit their website at habitatbucks.org/volunteer to sign up.



Other organizations MPC continues to “outreach” to both near and far from its walls!

Near

[Snipes Farm and Education Center](#)

[Ivins Outreach Center](#)

Morrisville Presbyterian Towers

[Urban Promise of Trenton](#)

[Anchor House](#)

[Worthwhile Wear](#)

[Family Promise](#)

[Advocates for the Homeless and Those in Need](#)

Far

[Adopt a South African Preschool](#)

Holistic Evangelism Project in
Tete Province, Mozambique

[PCUSA – Special Offerings](#)

- One Great Hour of Sharing
- Peacemaking
- Christmas Joy
- Pentecost

Each one must give as he has decided in his heart, not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver. 2 Corinthians 9:7

SPOTLIGHT: THE FLOWER MINISTRY

Submitted by Damon Miller

A subtle change occurs each Sunday in the sanctuary, that many may not even notice. Two bouquets of fresh flowers are placed in the chancel, helping brighten the church and the weekly worship services. But the function of these flowers goes beyond decorating, they bring joy to those who may have recently experienced a loss or an illness; serve as a message of gratitude for a person's work within the church; or remind a homebound member that MPC is thinking of them. And behind all of the coordinating of this ministry is DeeAnn Martin.



These flowers are not purchased by the church but by generous members of MPC. Those who purchase the flowers, also do so to honor someone they know or love. Their messages are usually "in loving memory of" or "in gratitude for." "For many years," DeeAnn said, "I think flowers were given only 'in memory of' a loved one. I thought of opening it up to many options such as to celebrate a special occasion (new baby, anniversary graduation), or in gratitude for a ministry or act of kindness (our Youth in Mission, support during a difficult time, Youth Sunday, new pastor). For me, the real blessing of the Flower Ministry is my getting to know many of our church members beyond just a name or a face. It is a gift when someone chooses to share their stories and memories behind their giving flowers." Even those who no longer live in the area have given to the Flower Ministry, as they still feel a connection to MPC, to express their gratitude. A picture of the arrangement is even sent to the donator so they are aware of the beautiful gift they are giving.

Names of recipients of the flowers are usually offered by the pastors, members of the Wednesday Prayer group, Presbyterian Women. DeeAnn gave thanks to the members of MPC in the 2022 *Annual Report* stating, "Your reaching out to our pastors to share a member's need for prayer and a caring visit is a vital part of this ministry. These persons are contacted, which often leads to a wonderful conversation of sharing and caring."

DeeAnn has been part of the Flower Ministry for close to twenty years and has the process down to a science. With her trusty notebook, she's able to keep track of her "regulars" who like to request a certain date each year, as well as those who have special requests like, "daffodils were my mother's favorite flower." Utilizing florist "Flowers by Jennie Lynne", in Fairless Hills, DeeAnn coordinates the 100 flower arrangements over fifty Sundays (Easter tulips and Christmas poinsettias cover the remaining weeks) with approximately 200 phone calls and arranges for 100 personal visits by volunteers who deliver the flowers after worship service. Those volunteers provide the "in-person" contact to those unable to be with us during worship and let them know they are remembered.



DeeAnn is grateful for how "so many immediately stepped forth" to help the Flower Ministry easily rebloom after the church reopened after the COVID-19 pandemic, including the "special givers who make generous donations which helps to make sure every Sunday has flowers to share." Everyone's efforts have allowed the church to have fresh flowers every Sunday since May 2022.

There is no need to wait for requests for donations. You may submit a donation to the Flower Ministry at any time to honor someone, express gratitude, or celebrate an event. Your gift will bring the warmth of MPC into the lives of those who receive the flowers. Contact DeeAnn Martin at 215-493-3865 or email deemar918@aol.com to place your donation. Volunteers are also needed to help deliver flowers to those unable to attend church. If you are interested in being a part of this important outreach ministry, please contact DeeAnn.

SCENES FROM THE CHRISTMAS SEASON AT MPC



WORD IN MUSIC SUNDAY

MPC held a *Word in Music* worship service on Sunday, February 19. The choir, friends, soloist and ensemble comprising flute, oboe, 'cello, glockenspiel, timpani, organ and harp presented John Rutter's uplifting *Requiem*, written in 1985, and now one of the most sung large choral pieces.

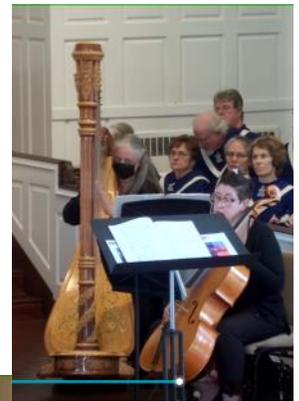
The participants providing their musical offerings were:

Singers: Tiun Duong, Laura Goe, Jan Johnson, Summer Kuhns (soloist), Maureen Kyle, Ashley Librizzi; Carol Carpenter, Betsy Jurey, Carolyn Landis, Nancy McHenry, Kim Neighbor, and Sandy Parker. Karl Helland, David Massey, Larry Parker, Nancy Powers; Arnauld Dorgeles, Drew Hunger, Seth McHenry, Clark Martin, Eric Moyer-Harrington, Konan Noël, and Kyle St. Sauveur.

Instrumentalists: Erica Simon, flute; Beth Benson, oboe; Christine Mello, 'cello; Cheryl Cunningham, harp; Bill Trigg, timpani; Anthony DiBartolo, glockenspiel; Yun Kang, organ.

The Introit was commissioned by the choir and composed by Kyle St. Sauveur, a composition student at Westminster Choir College and our bass section leader.

A recording of the service is available on the [MPC YouTube](#) and [podcast](#) outlets. Both may be accessed through the MPC website at mpcusa.org.



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