



I am the vine; You are the branches.
John 15:5

MOUNT VERNON PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH

Growing Followers Of Christ Since 1902

The Grapevine

Year 119, Issue 3
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Preparing to come close to the mystery of Easter



We are in a time of Lent, a time of preparing ourselves to come close to the mystery of Easter. Lent began with Ash Wednesday, when we remembered our mortality, and continues until Easter, when we celebrate Jesus' resurrection and our redemption. Many people use the time of Lent to take on a study or practice that will help them grow in their faith and draw closer to God. You are encouraged to take a few minutes each day to read the Bible, spend time reading a devotional or study, and spend time in prayer. In addition to finding a study or practice that will help you to grow in your faith, please consider participating in the MVPC Lenten practices. As a congregation, during what is (hopefully) the end of the pandemic, we felt called to spend time connecting with each other in faith during Lent. On Sundays during 10:30 am Worship on zoom, we will be diving together into Pastor Dan's "I Am" series with after-the-sermon guided, consistent breakout groups. On Wednesdays at 7 pm on zoom, we will have a "We Are" program of stories and sharing around the four goals discerned by session for the congregation: biblical literacy, a deepening life of prayer and discernment, caring relationships, and unified mission. Please also plan to attend our special worship services on zoom as we head toward Easter with Palm Sunday on Sunday, March 28th at 10:30 am and Maundy Thursday on Thursday, April 1st at 7 pm. Easter Sunday will be on Sunday, April 4th at 10:30 am on zoom and you are encouraged to invite your friends and family!

Lenten Services and Programs on zoom:

- ♦ Worship Services on Sundays at 10:30 am "I Am" Sermon Series with after-the-sermon guided consistent breakout groups.
- ♦ "We Are" Wednesday Lenten Program on Wednesdays at 7 pm with stories and sharing as we look closer at biblical literacy, prayer and discernment, caring relationships, and unified mission.
- ♦ Palm Sunday Worship Service on Sunday, March 28th at 10:30 am. Please bring branches from your yard or plan to use the "palms" of your hand for our processional.
- ♦ Maundy Thursday Worship Service on Thursday, April 1st at 7 pm for a journey through Jesus' last days using art, music, and scripture.

Easter Worship Service at 10:30 am

Sunday April 4th

Invite your family and friends!



Congregational Priorities

A few years back at a retreat of the Session of MVPC, the elders were asked to consider *what* we do as a congregation and *why* we do it. With each answer that was given we again asked ...”and why do we do that?” or “Why is that important?” As you can imagine there were many reasons given for the many activities and practices of the church but the place where there seemed to be convergence of purpose was with the statement: **“We do what we do in order to know God’s love and to share it with other people.”**

Session talked at length about what that means and developed four priorities for the congregation that will help us to live more fully into our purpose. The priorities are:

- Biblical Literacy,
- A Deepening Life of Prayer and Discernment,
- Caring Relationships and
- Unified Mission.

We decided that we would seek to use the existing groups of the church to help everyone grow in relationship to the priorities in order that we might, more fully, know God’s love and share it!

Over the course of the next few months, in an effort to shed a little light on what those priorities mean, some of the leadership of the congregation have agreed to write a primer on the subject from their perspective. The first is on Biblical Literacy and comes from Elder Dave Gale.



BIBLICAL LITERACY

What is “Biblical Literacy”? Is it knowing the name of Timothy’s grandmother (II Timothy 1:5), or how many toddlers lived in Nineveh (Jonah 4:11), or even knowing how many books are in the Bible and their names (in order)? Maybe somewhat, but probably not.

Or does it have anything to do with how many times you’ve read through the entire Bible in your lifetime? Maybe somewhat, but probably not.

According to the famous evangelist Gypsy Smith, “What makes the difference is not how many times you have been through the Bible, but how many times and how thoroughly the Bible has been through you.” So the first step to Biblical literacy is a desire to know what God says and what it means to my daily life. *“Your statutes are my delight; they are my counsellors.”* (Psalm 119:24).

So Biblical literacy becomes a very worthy pursuit, given our overall objective of: “Knowing God’s love and sharing it with others”.

So, assuming our heart’s desire is to move in the direction of knowing the Bible better, where to start, oh where to start?

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Take some time to do a little research into finding a version of the Bible you are comfortable with. Literally hundreds of translations and paraphrases are available. At www.biblehub.com you can compare about 25 different versions (and they don't even include my favorite). Last estimate I saw was that there are over 400 translations. I'm guessing you can find one that you like. Also many good paraphrases are available: *Living Bible*, *J B Phillips*, and *the Message*. They're not for exegetical study, but great for devotional reading.

Biblical literacy will not happen overnight. What a great lifetime journey! Here we go!

First: Read the Bible. Every day, if you can. At least, regularly. This is really the heart of biblical literacy. Start with devotional reading which can be facilitated by books such as Sarah Young's, *Jesus Calling*, which is excellent, Or Oswald Chamber's, *My Utmost for His Highest*, *The Bible Promise Book*, or on-line such *Our Daily Bread* (www.odb.org). Also: www.dailyscripture.net/daily-meditation . Google "daily bible readings (or something similar) and you'll be inundated with suggestions.

Sometimes it's fun to read the Bible as you would a novel. Just read and soak in the stories. I grew up listening to *The Child's Story Bible*, by Catherine Vos. Also recommended for the youngsters is Sally Lloyd-Jones' *Jesus Storybook Bible*. If this is as far as you get, great! You're in the 35% of folks who read the Bible at least once a week. About 15% read it every day. Make a few notes of anything that stands out to you.

Next: Study the Bible. Google "ways to study the Bible". You'll get lots of options. I recommend olivetree.com/blog. They outline seven different ways to go at it. Try the different methods they suggest. One or more will hopefully work for you. Be sure to take notes and/or journal – very important to retaining what you've studied. Further discussion of how to study the Bible is a whole other subject.

And then: Have some fun. There are many web-based quizzes you can do to see how you're doing, or just learn more. Christianity.com/trivia offers lots of assessments and can send you a daily question to answer. Some are more focused towards kids, so this can be fun for the whole family.

And an important conclusion: Join a small group doing Bible study. Reading and studying with others helps by sharing various insights and knowledge. This includes studying books written by Christian authors on a whole variety of subjects.

Final thoughts: There is no one perfect way. The simple key is your willingness to make it a lifetime habit, process, and journey. Also, Bible commentaries can be helpful, but do your own study first. Commentaries are not inspired scripture. They are someone's opinion – often helpful, but sometimes potentially a little theologically slanted. This is why we ask the Holy Spirit to be our guide and teacher. Bible study is us having a conversation with God where we mostly listen.

Lastly, remember the words of James 1:22 – "Do not merely listen to the word, and so deceive yourselves. Do what it says." Dear Lord, please help us!



Pause Prayer Group Tuesday 9 am (on Zoom)

Want to grow in your prayer life with the support of a group of friends? Come check out the Pause Prayer Group that meets on Tuesday mornings from 9 to 10 am for a time of prayer and sharing. Please talk with Rebecca Holland or Pat Papadopoulos to get on the email reminder and zoom numbers list.



February 2021 Session Notes

- * Session opened with checking in and Listening Prayer on Matthew 7.
- * Approved the Sexual Misconduct Prevention Policy and Procedures with minor changes.
- * The committee, Lou Cheney, Bruce Lavers and Joe Seabott will continue to work with others knowledgeable in the area to revise the Safe in our Care Policy (Child, Youth and Vulnerable Adult Protection) and present to Session at the March meeting March 16th.
- * Received the financial report showing a (\$2149.27) deficit through the end of January, 2021.
- * Approved the expenditure of \$3000 to purchase tablets and cases to be checked out making it easy to participate in Zoom worship. After the pandemic when we are in a form of hybrid worship (in person and online) the tablets would be available to check out for those unable to be there in person (after surgery, vacation etc.)
- * Approved a motion from personnel to increase Rebecca's annual vacation by 2 weeks per year for additional responsibility for her new position.
- * Approved a session retreat for prayer and discernment led by Pastor Dan on March 8 via Zoom.
- * Approved a request from Underground Ministries for a wedding on 5/29/21 to be held outside on church grounds.
- * The meeting closed with prayer.

Coming Soon!

We are creating a new system of Zoom meeting numbers which will be easier to create and use.

Recurring meetings will always have the same numbers. Yay!

WATCH FOR THE ANNOUNCEMENT

CRAFTING ON ZOOM



The second and fourth Tuesdays of each month find busy fingers flying as a group of crafters and knitters meet on Zoom from noon to 1 pm. March meetings are the 9th and 23rd. Call Patti Allen for more information.

Tablets for Zoom Use

Do you know anyone who isn't able to experience our church services because they don't have access to a computer, tablet, or phone? Or is ease of use an issue? The Membership and Evangelism committee is so glad to announce that tablets will be available very soon. They will be very simple to use – turn it on, push one button and sing “Hallelujah!” These are available at no cost to shut-ins and anyone in our church family that needs them. Contact the church office if you need one.

Also if you have the skills to help set up and distribute tablets please let the office know.

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MVPC's Ongoing Discussion on Race

Since mid-November, a number of people from MVPC have been studying how issues of race intersect our faith. The hope is to understand our neighbors and enable reconciliation where there is broken relationship. You are welcome to join the discussion! Since August, we have read "[Re-Discipling the White Church](#)," participated in the "[Jesus Christ and the Dividing Wall: Race and God's Mission](#)" online series hosted by Pittsburgh Seminary, and searched ourselves through a process of journaling with "[What Lies Between Us](#)" a study by [Brownicity.com](#).

In our most recent meeting we took a moment as a group to reflect and summarize the benefits of our discussions. Here's a sampling of responses:

- "If there is an issue in our society/community, expressed by ANY group, we need to be willing to open our eyes to it. Are we?"
- "We have been able to talk about things that are uncomfortable and important in some depth."
- "As we sit together (in zoom) I realized I am not in this struggle alone."
- "It was a gift to listen to each other's stories and insights."
- "I was surprised by history I did not know and attitudes I did not recognize."
- "It has changed my conversations with my friends, outside of the group, too",
- "I found a willingness to use my voice."

Ultimately, the hope is to pause and look to Jesus for truth, for answers to difficult questions and for a faithful way forward, glorifying God and honoring ALL of God's people.

Initially we focused on big questions of racial justice and reconciliation. As we continue our conversations we will be focusing on the history and experience of the Native American people and the Latin-x community, often specific to Skagit Valley and surrounding areas. We want to "know our neighbor's stories and have our stories be heard". I encourage each of you to join this conversation when it begins again after Lent, on Wednesday evenings via Zoom.

If you have questions or suggestions please contact Pat Papadopoulos or Paul O'Donnell via email or phone message.

Thank you to:



- * Aaron and David for the behind the scenes work on Sunday mornings.
- * Bruce Lavers and his team who do security checks on the building every day during the pandemic
- * Doug Catton for edging the lawn at the church ~ it looks great!
- * The Pray-ers and Tech Team for the Ash Wednesday Prayer time.
- * Ward Ernst for completing the end of year reports for Presbytery and the GA.
- * Bob Wygal and Tom Howard for doing our annual internal financial audit.
- * All the people who carry out their ministries that mostly go unseen but are appreciated by those they minister to!

If you would like to acknowledge your gratitude for someone's role in the church in next month's newsletter please email Barbara in the church office. mvpc@mountvernonpres.org

Children, Youth, and Family Ministries March 2021

Dear MVPC Families,

We love families of all ages and stages at MVPC! We know that the past year has been challenging for everyone and especially for the kids, teens, and their parents. Families, know that you are loved and please let us know how we can support and encourage you and your family. We are here for you!

This month, you and your family are encouraged to participate in 10:30 am Sunday Worship where there is a special Lenten Breakout Room Time with a Breakout Room just for Families to connect with each other. We also hope to see you at Family Small Group on Sunday, March 7th at 4 pm!

Blessings,

Rebecca Holland

Director of Christian Education and Spiritual Formation

Mount Vernon Presbyterian Church



Family Small Group

1st Sunday of the Month from 4 to 5 pm on Zoom

Families of all ages and stages are invited to be a part of the Family Small Group on the 1st Sunday of every month for a time of family fellowship, prayer, and games. Everyone is welcome! It's a great way to connect with others families!



MVPC Kid's Group (k-5th)

Wednesdays at 4 pm on Zoom

Story, Games, and Fun!

March 3rd	Jesus' Anointing
March 10th	The Last Supper
March 17th	Garden of Gethsemane
March 24th	Crucifixion
March 31st	Resurrection!



MVPC Youth Group (teens)

Sundays at Noon on Zoom

Video, Discussion, and Games!

March 7th	God
March 14th	Son of Man
March 21st	The Messiah
March 28th	Holy Spirit

Godly Play Stories in Sunday Worship on Zoom

March 7th	The Many Faces of Easter: Jesus' Baptism and Blessing
March 14th	The Many Faces of Easter: Jesus' Desert and Discovery
March 21st	The Many Faces of Easter: Jesus as Healer and Parable Maker
March 28th	The Many Faces of Easter: Jesus Offers the Bread and Wine



Care Pals Part 2 by Kitty Willis

As mentioned in last months' article, the mission of Care Pals is to show the love of God through caring, laughter and the devotion to others. The crafts we work on are just vehicles by which we connect with the residents. We are constantly amazed by the variety of backgrounds and talents they possess and the creativity that emerges from the days' craft project. From those who say they are 'nt "crafty" to those who have created beautiful works of art, they come for the company and conversation. Frequently we ask a "question of the day" (where they were born, their first job, favorite singer etc.). The resulting information and subsequent conversations are interesting and intriguing. Sometimes connections are made between residents that might not have happened otherwise.

Among the people we have met over the years are immigrants and "transplants" from all over the country – as well as people who were born and raised in the Skagit Valley. They have been farmers, were "Rosie the Riveters" and worked retail as well as in state government. There are those who work quietly and others who are quite gregarious. Some came from or had large families, others only children, but they all have stories to tell. They enjoy singing the "oldies" and have mastered "the Wave". Laughter, chuckles, and groans abound when hearing the answers to the riddles and jokes Doris comes up with.

Each resident we meet is unique and has something valuable to contribute. Occasionally someone will ask where we (the volunteers) come from and who pays for the crafts. When told Mount Vernon Presbyterian Church they are quick to express their appreciation. I think all of us who are involved, volunteers and residents alike, agree that while the crafts are fun the real joy derived is from the true friendships that develop!

New Earth Recovery

2020 was a good year for New Earth Recovery and their residents. With your help, we purchased Cedar House and opened Willow House, the new women's graduate home. Here are more encouraging humbers:



- In 2020 52 people were served.
- 30 residents reestablished relationships with children or regained custody.
- 22 graduated from Genesis, our inhouse relapse prevention program, and 31 remain in the program
- 19 found employment or attended school while residing with us, and the rest volunteered in the community.
- 16 graduated from outpatient treatment
- 15 moved into our second-step (graduate) homes.
- 13 found secure housing upo departure.
- 9 who had unresolved court issues became free from justice system involvement
- 7 started college.
- 5 got their driver's licenses back, enabling them to more easily pursue work, school, and family commitments.
- 5 regained child visitation.
- Many more began in faith or grew in existing faith.
- We have 5 homes and 7 staff members, 3 of whom are graduates of the New Earth Recovery program.

Exerpts from Thank you notes from Faith House

~ "I am currently at Faith House in Mt Vernon. I am growing & changing everyday...I wouldn't be here today if the Faith House didn't open their doors to me...I cannot thank you enough nor espress my gratitude to you for your generosity..."

~ "...The women and myself here at the Faith House are all well. It's been hard these past few weeks but our recovery is pressing on. Our father in Heaven has given us the strength through all of it. We are doing everything that we are involved in online. ..Thank you for your continuous support as we continue on this amazing journey."...

To All Women of MVPC

The Women's Fellowship Zoom meeting will be on the 4th Saturday, March 27. As usual, we will gather for a check-in conversation at 9 a.m., followed by a Bible study for an hour. It is a good time to come out of isolation for casual exchange of ideas and supportive listening.

Our new Zoom numbers are: 833 7553 4428 Our password is 012407.

March Birthdays & Anniversaries

2-Ruth Haines

Lucy Nash

5-Jim Byron

Don Schlumberger

Katie Weeks

Margie Tavenner

6-Ben Cooksey

7-Ariel St. James

8-Barbara Hazelwood

Marjorie Riedel

9-Bruce Lavers

Nello Bottari

10-Margo Wortham



15-Brad Vardy

19-Kurt Swanson

20-Ken Ball

22-Ron & Rita Vander Stoep

25-Brian Anderson

Rob Hall

26-Dottie Thayer

27-Pete & Pat Papadopoulos

29-Wayne Yerigan

Joan Lavers

80th BIRTHDAY – ARNOLD (JIM) BYRON

Jim Byron will celebrate

his 80th Birthday on March 5th.

Best Wishes can be sent to his home or Jim's email address.

(Please check the church directory or contact the church office 360-424-7675 or mvpc@mountvernonpres.org)



Mount Vernon Presbyterian Church

Growing followers of Christ

Our Vision Statement

Encounter The Hope

of the living God through Jesus Christ

Engage One Another

in authentic friendship

Embrace The World

with the heart and hands of Jesus

MVPC Church Leadership 2020-2021

Elders			Ministry Area	Deacons		
Lou	Cheney	2021	Worship	Danya	Wolf	2021
Chris	Hoke	2021	Discipleship	Ruth	Neal	2021
Bruce	Lavers	2021	Ministry Support	Connie	Bowser	2021
Anne	Long	2021	Membership/Evangelism	Tracy	Hall	2021
MaryEllen	Byerly	2022	Membership/Evangelism	Tom	Howard	2022
Bill	DeHon	2022	Ministry Support	Sandi	Seabott	2022
Gail	LaFleur	2022	Worship	Sumiko	Shinozaki	2022
Bob	Rauch	2022	Discipleship	Vacant		2022
David	Gale	2023	Membership/Evangelism	Arlene	Andersen	2023
Becky	Goodell	2023	Mission & Service	Rosemary	Gale	2023
Bob	Higbee	2023	Ministry Support	Colleen	Higbee	2023
Joe	Seabott	2023	Mission & Service	Wendy	Bartholomew	2023