



MOUNT VERNON PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH

Growing Followers Of Christ Since 1902

The Grapevine

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

Year 115, Issue 12
December

1511 East Broadway Street . Mt Vernon, WA . 360 424-7675 . www.MountVernonPres.org
mvpcc@MountVernonPres.org

Chrismons on the Tree ~ Pastor Dan Holland

Advent starts this week, which means that among other things, the sanctuary at church has been decorated for the season. Twice in the last week I've been asked to share a bit of the meaning behind the decor, and I tell you there's a lot of time and energy that has been poured into the decorations over the years. From the mosaics on the back wall to the banners at the front of the sanctuary, many of the adornments have been made by people of this congregation. And if you know what you're looking at and what you're looking for, the decorations aren't just decorations... they tell stories of our faith. A few years back we built a worship service around the Chrismons hanging on our tree. I've adapted just a little bit of that service for this Grapevine article as a way of sharing the story and hopefully sparking interest.

It was in 1957 that a woman named Frances Kipps Spencer made the first set of what we now call Chrismons and displayed them at a Lutheran church in Danville, Virginia. Our tradition of Chrismons here at MVPC started in 1976 when Debbie Parker got in touch with that church in Danville and was sent instructions and the raw materials to make our own Chrismons. Some of those first have been lost and others have been added, but every year since then Debbie and Virgil and their family have been part of decorating the sanctuary with decorations that are more than just decorations.

The word Chrismon is a combination of the words "Christ" and "monogram" and it's been adopted to refer to the ornaments that have been developed over the years to point to Christ and his life's work. All of the ornaments are done in white and gold to signify the holiness and the majesty of God. The symbols and the letters have historical significance, in ancient times they could be found on jewelry or doors to buildings, on the walls of catacombs in Rome. Early Christians used them to identify themselves to one another or to designate places where the church would gather; and perhaps even more importantly than that, people passed on their faith as they shared the meaning behind the symbols. (Cont. next page)



Advent begins December 3rd and this years theme is 'Christmas Traditions around the World'.

Join us, as we prepare for Christmas just as Christians around the world are also preparing during this Advent season. This year during Advent we are beginning the use of the Lectionary. Each week will include the lighting of the advent candles and sharing of a tradition of Christians around the world as we also celebrate this season of preparation.

Cont from first page

Some Chrismons were designed to represent Christ as the cornerstone of our faith. For instance where you see the letters Alpha (A) and Omega (Ω), which are the first and the last letters of the Greek alphabet they remind us that Jesus said he is the first and the last the beginning and end. He is the one on whom everything else is built and everything else relies.

There are others which represent Christ as the light of the world. The eight pointed star was originally adopted by Christians as a “concealed” monogram during Roman persecutions. To people who didn’t know, it could have meant anything but to those who had been shown, the crossing lines reveal the Greek letters Chi (X) and Rho (P) which are the first two letters of the Greek word *Christos* which means *Christ*. *The fact that the symbol needed to be concealed reminds us that it’s not always easy to follow Christ, but it is worth it. And with Christ, the light of the world, illuminating the way, all things are possible.*

These are just two of the eighty-something Chrismons on the tree. This Sunday I’d invite you to get to church a little early or stay a little late, take a look at the decor, ponder what story is represented in what you see, feel free to ask questions and also take a moment to consider what the story of the season means for you.

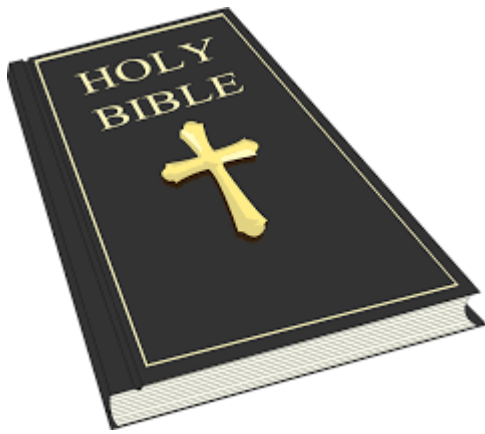
Grace and Peace to you and a blessed advent too!
Pastor Dan



Meet Elder Bob Mitchell



I was raised in the Presbyterian Church in Western Pennsylvania. My parents were not big on church attendance themselves, attending at Easter and Christmas services, but they made sure that my younger brother, John, and I were dropped off for Sunday School every Sunday as well as for the special services. When I got to high school I became part of Youth for Christ and attended their meetings regularly. I moved to Corvallis, OR to attend Oregon State University where I lived with my grandparents (my mother’s parents) for my freshman year and attended the Presbyterian Church with them. I met my wife to be, Glenda, during that year – on a blind date. We were married at her UCC church in West Seattle where we attended for 9 years, sang in the choir, served on the church council and taught Sunday School. We then moved to Redmond where we attended Bellevue First Presbyterian. Our children, Erika and Rob were born while we lived in West Seattle and we made sure that they attended Sunday School as we attended church each Sunday. We moved to Ferndale when my job caused me to work in Bellingham. There we joined the United Church which was a yoked Methodist/UCC Church. We helped start at children’s choir while we were there and again sang in the choir. Our next move was to Woodinville where we were involved in starting a new UCC church (a lot of work), and taught Sunday School and each served as Moderator of the Church Council. From there we moved to Everett where we were members of Everett First Presbyterian where we sang in the choir, played handbells and taught Sunday School. Now we live in Stanwood and have been members of Mount Vernon Presbyterian for 14 years – teaching Sunday School, singing in the choir, serving as Deacon and Elder, serving on the Hospitality, Stewardship, Finance, and Missions committees and working on the annual Christmas Basket event. Since I retired at the end of 2013, Glenda and I have averaged over 5 volunteer activities per week including Care Pals, Choir, several choruses, Kiwanis, teaching Sunday School, directing Chime Choir, Creative Kids Bell Choir, Vacation Bible School, Men’s Group, and Small Group.



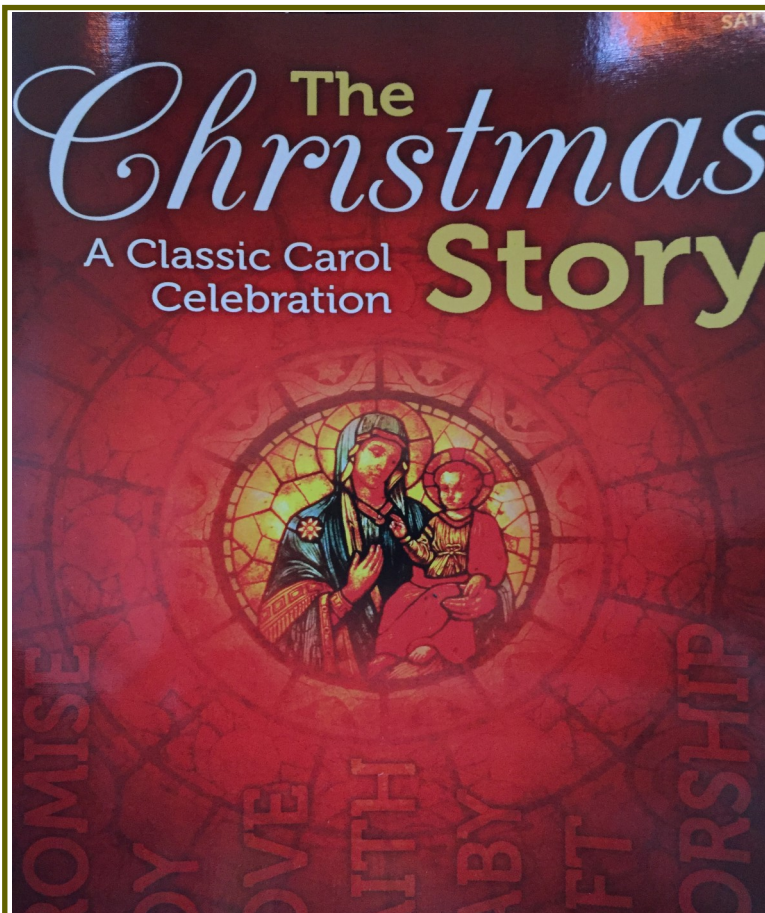
A Lectionary Experiment

MVPC is embarking on a Lectionary experiment starting this Sunday! Pastor Dan and the worship ministry team have been considering this change for about a year, and now it's time.

Starting December 3rd (This weekend!) Pastor Dan will be preaching on texts chosen from the Revised Common Lectionary (RCL)

The RCL is a collection of scripture passages selected and arranged in 1992 by a group called the *Consultation on Common Texts* which is made up of the PCUSA and 22 other denominations. The lectionary was built in hopes of bringing unity within churches and among churches and has the added benefits of exposing the congregation to texts their pastors might not normally choose to preach, encouraging a message which is "bible-applied-to-life" and making it easier for those in positions of worship leadership to plan and prepare worship services.

We will be starting with "Year B" of the RCL. Below you'll find the texts for the 4 Sundays of Advent. If you would like to learn more about the RCL straight from the organization that put it together you can find info at <http://www.commontexts.org/rcl/> and if you would like to see any of the future planned readings for any given week, there are many resources available on-line and in print. The PCUSA Mission Agency version of the resource can be found at www.pma.pcusa.org/devotion/revised-common-lectionary. And, of course, as always, if you have questions or want further information you can talk with Anne Long (Elder for the worship ministry) or Pastor Dan.



CHRISTMAS CANTATA

Join the choir on December 10 at 3pm in the Mount Vernon Presbyterian Church sanctuary for a performance of the Tom Fettke and Thomas Grassi cantata "The Christmas Story". "The Christmas Story" combines popular and lesser known carols from around the world with a new narration of the classic Christmas story. The remaining portion of the program will be filled with other solo and group performances from members of the church and community as a whole. The performance will last approximately one hour and is free to attend.

Christmas Eve



Since Christmas Eve falls on a Sunday this year we will be having both a morning and an evening service. The morning service will be in Good Shepard Hall with a light breakfast provided. You are invited to gather together at the breakfast table as we celebrate the traditions of Christmas and the anticipation of Christ's Birth at our usual service time of 10:30.

At 7PM we will gather again for our Christmas eve candlelight service as we celebrate the birth of Christ, who is the Light of the World.

"Where is the child who has been born king of the Jews? For we observed his star at its rising, and have come to pay him homage." Matthew 2:2

Children are always welcome and there will be the usual "goody bags" for them during the service.



The season of
Christmastide will
continue with a service
of lessons and carols on
December 31st and a
celebration of Epiphany
January 7th, both at our
usual service time of
10:30 a.m.

DEC 2017 Children and Family Ministries



Kids Afternoon (Parents Afternoon Off)

Thank you to everyone who RSVP'd for the "Kids Afternoon" of pizza, games, crafts, and a movie in the Great Room on Sunday, Dec. 3rd from Noon to 3 pm so that parents can enjoy an afternoon off! If you did not sign up and you would like to, please contact Rebecca as soon as possible to see if there might be space. It's going to be fun!

December Sunday School Lessons

	<u>Seeds (Preschool)</u> <i>Meets in Nursery</i>	<u>Sprouts (K-2nd)</u> <i>Begin in Worship</i>	<u>Saplings (3rd-5th)</u> <i>Begin in Worship</i>
Dec 3rd	Story of Baby Jesus	Daniel p. 152 *	Lesson 11: Jesus the Messiah
Dec 10th	Story of the Shepherds	God's Messenger p. 160*	Lesson 12: Headed for Disaster
Dec 17th	Story of the Wise Men	Get Ready p. 170*	Lesson 13: To Jerusalem
Dec 24th	Nativity Story and Craft	He's Here p. 176*	Christmas Lesson
Dec 31st	New Year's Craft	Light of the World p. 184*	Fifth Sunday Worship
*In the Jesus Storybook Bible			

Creative Kids ~ Kids Christmas Program Sunday December 17th

Sundays 9:30 to 10:15 am in the Great Room. Kids of all ages express their faith creatively. The kids have written and are preparing to perform their Christmas Program for the congregation during the beginning of worship on Sunday, December 17th. Talk to Rebecca or Jodie if you have children or youth interested in participating or if you might be willing to volunteer to help! No Creative Kids on Dec. 24th or Dec. 31st. We'll be back January 7th with more ways to express faith creatively!

Family Night

Wednesdays 5:30 to 6:30 pm in the Great Room for food, faith, and fellowship for families of all ages and stages. Everyone is invited to the special Family Night Christmas Party on Wednesday, December 20th from 5:30 to 7 pm. No Family Night on Dec. 27th due to Christmas Break.

**Questions? Contact Rebecca Holland, Director of Children and Family Ministries.
Church Office 360.424.7675 - Rebecca@MountVernonPres.org**

Family Night Christmas Party

Everyone is invited to a special Family Night Christmas Party on Wednesday, December 20th from 5:30 to 7 pm in the Great Room. We will enjoy a potluck dinner, decorate Christmas Cookies, and sing Christmas carols!





Youth & Family Ministries



Youth Group—Please Note!

There will be **no youth group this month** due to the holidays. HOWEVER, Starting in 2018 we will have Youth Group on **BOTH** the 2nd and 4th Sundays of the month after worship. Please put our January 14 and 28 Youth Group gatherings on your new 2018 calendar!

Kids Christmas Program

We are continuing to develop our Christmas program at the Creative Kids group that meets in the Great Room on Sundays from 9:30-10:15. We still need kids able to take on speaking and nonspeaking roles and would love to include more of our youth! The Christmas Program will be presented to the congregation on December 17 during worship. Talk to Rebecca or Jodie if you would like to participate!



Underground Christmas

God wants us to live in relationship with one another.

But relationships require contact and time, and there are those in our society who have neither. This Christmas we will be helping dads and their kids maintain relationships while they are separated by collecting and wrapping gifts for kids ages 2-16 whose dads are in prison and are being served by Underground Ministries.

Gifts are accepted now **until Dec. 3** at donation bins in the Narthex.

Dec. 10 after worship we will meet in the Great Room after worship to wrap gifts and ready them for delivery. All are welcome to help and also to stay afterward for the 3:00 Cantata in the sanctuary.



Youth Classes

Seekers (middle school) is studying the letters of Paul, and Explorers (high school) is looking at the Gospels. Classes are on the 2nd and 4th Sundays of each month. This month classes are Dec. 10 & 24.

Coming Up ...

Nov. 26—Dec. 3	Donations accepted for Underground Christmas!	Unwrapped gifts for kids age 2-16, wrapping paper and tape!	Donation bins in the Narthex
Sun., Dec. 3	Creative Kids - Christmas!	Sanctuary	9:30-10:15
Sun., Dec. 10	Creative Kids—Christmas!	Sanctuary	9:30-10:15
	Seekers/Explorers	Library/Great Room	Start in 10:30 Worship
	Wrapping party for	Great Room	After Worship
	Underground Christmas!		
Sun., Dec. 17	Christmas Cantata	Sanctuary	3:00
	Creative Kids—Christmas!	Sanctuary	9:30-10:15
	Seekers/Explorers	Library/Great Room	Start in 10:30 Worship
Sun., Dec. 24	Christmas Eve breakfast service	Good Shepherd Hall	10:30 Worship
	Christmas Eve candlelight service	Sanctuary	7:00pm

Questions? Please contact Jodie Kercheval, Director of Youth & Family Ministries.

360-424-7675 or Jodie@MountVernonPres.org



Serving Prisoners

The gospels tell us to visit prisoners, and that when we treat the least privileged in society with care and respect, we are treating Jesus with care and respect. But why should we care about prisoners? Perhaps because everyone makes mistakes, but Jesus saves anyway. Or maybe because God loves prisoners as much as he loves everyone else.

This Christmas season MVPC has the opportunity to help a small number of inmates connect with their families through a program called "Underground Christmas", a ministry of Underground Ministries.



Underground Christmas

God wants us to live in relationship with one another. But relationships require contact and time, and there are those in our society who have neither. This Christmas we will be helping dads and their kids maintain relationships while they are separated by collecting and wrapping gifts for kids ages 2-16 whose dads are in prison and are being served by Underground Ministries. We will wrap each gift with care, love and gift wrap after worship on Dec. 10, and Underground Ministries will deliver them on behalf of the dads.

How you can help...

1. **Donate an unwrapped gift, giftwrap, tape and/or postage funds and encourage others to do so too (by Dec. 3rd, please)!**
2. **Let Jodie know you will be at the wrapping party after church on Dec. 10! We will be done by 2:30pm, so stay for the Cantata in the Sanctuary if you can!**

Once again this year MVPC will be preparing and delivering Christmas Baskets for area families as part of the Skagit Valley Herald program. We are in process of calling families who will receive the baskets so they can select turkey or ham for the dinner, specify what their children would like for Christmas, and to verify their address (with any special instructions as to how to get there).

There are two ways for you to participate.

1. **Right Now** ~ Choose one or more of the cards and purchase the gift listed. When you take a card Please remember to sign the control sheet so all cards are accounted for. The gifts should be wrapped and delivered to church with the name tag attached no later than December 10.
2. **December 16** ~ we need volunteers to box/bag up the food and gifts and deliver them to the families.

Thank you for your help.

Your Missions team.



A BRIEF SYNOPSIS OF THE NOVEMBER STATED MEETING OF THE SESSION
WILL BE AVAILABLE IN THE NEXT GRAPEVINE.

Children's Christmas Presentation

Don't miss the Annual MVPC Kid's Christmas Program on Sunday,
December 17th during the beginning of Worship!

Get to know Barbara Koozer!

Our new Ministry Facilitator/Office Coordinator has been hard at work for several weeks now. Some of you may have already met Barbara and know that we have a gem! I have known Barbara for around 40 years. We joined Trinity United Presbyterian Church (where she and husband Howard are still active members) about the same time. Barbara has always been a busy lady. She worked full time with Howard on their egg/chicken farm but still found time to play piano for the children's choir and even church services when needed. Barbara has held many positions within the local church including keeping the books. You'll find her willing to take on just about any task with a "can do" attitude. She is the calm in the storm and without fail, comes up with sensible ways to solve problems. Best of all, Barbara has an unwavering faith. She has been a rock for me and I'm delighted that she's here at MVPC.



Mim Ambrose

(PS from Barbara) I am feeling warm and fuzzy and welcomed after reading my friends' article. Please stop by and say "Hello" so I can get to know you and find out what you do best. There are many opportunities for volunteers.

A SEASON OF *Discernment*

“Discernment is more than saying prayers that ask God to guide us in rational consideration of matters. It is a mode of prayer that involves opening our entire selves to the working of the Holy Spirit. It bids us to let go of preconceived ideas so that we can be open to new possibilities with a readiness to view things from new perspectives. Discernment beckons us to be still and listen with the ear of our heart. It draws us into alignment with God.” - Suzanne Farnham, in her book *Grounded in God*

The third of four discernment retreats led by Denise Easter and Dianna Kunce from Renewal Ministries Northwest (www.renewalminnw.org) happened on November 18th.

At the first retreat, on September 30th, all of the members and friends of the church were invited to participate as we practiced praying with the scriptures and listening for God’s voice through Lectio Divina, we received an invitation to listen for God’s voice daily in prayer and we heard an overview of what our discernment process was going to look like. At the second retreat, October 14th, the leadership of MVPC gathered to listen for the congregation’s unique giftedness, or charism, which we articulated saying: *“MVPC is and is becoming a welcoming, caring and graciously safe community because we are deeply committed to seeking Christ, listening for the Holy Spirit, and discerning God’s will.”* We also set out to frame a question for us to put before the Lord: *“Lord, what are you saying to us about nurturing and extending our charism inside and outside our church?”*

At the third retreat, again, all of the members and friends were invited and over 30 participated. There were many things discussed and at least four consistent themes emerged.

- Change: recognizing that it produces anxiety and yet at the same time any gardener will tell you that pruning is an important part of fruit production, and God calls us to trust him. We may be invited to some fairly bold change.
- Focus: that as a church when we do something we want to be able to do it well so we need to be asking questions like: “Who are we called to serve?” and “How does this program fit into the mission and ministry of the church?”
- Partnerships: someone at the meeting said, “... with humility, we recognize the wheel has already been invented. Perhaps we can intentionally work with like services in the community to do lots of good.”
- Education: that people within the church need to be trained and equipped. It is important for us to learn from others and we also want to be able to share what we’ve learned.

These don’t represent action plans at this point, but they point to what we have heard God saying to us about nurturing the particular gifts the Holy Spirit has given to us and extending our charism outside the church as well.

On December 2, the fourth retreat for the leadership of the church will focus on distilling the results of the congregation’s discernment and developing a plan of action that faithfully represents what we’ve heard from the Lord.

Please continue to pray for the discernment process and pay attention to how God is speaking to you. And if you haven’t already, get involved in the ministry and fellowship of the church in ways that are going to be life-giving for you!





Prayer

Would you like to join our prayer group?

We have a small but dedicated group that meets to pray every Tuesday morning from 10:30 to 11:30 a.m. in the Library. You are always welcome to come pray with us. There is no right or wrong way to pray, so don't feel intimidated. You don't have to come every week—come when your schedule permits.

Would you like prayers, for you or someone you know?

Email prayers.mvpc@gmail.com and you will be prayed for during this time as well as throughout the week. You can also write your prayer request on the Friendship Register on Sunday mornings and they will be forwarded to the Prayer Team.

Contemplative Prayer Group

The Contemplative Prayer Group will meet in the Great Room on the 2nd and 4th Thursdays from 6 to 8 pm to spend time learning and experiencing a variety of contemplative prayer practices. Everyone welcome! Talk with Pat Papadopoulos or Rebecca Holland to find out more.



WHITE GIFT OFFERING

December 10 we will receive the White Gift offering for the Deacons.

The Deacon ministry is not funded as part of the church's operating budget, so the White Gift offering makes possible the many Deacon ministry activities.

In the past year, in addition to regular activities the Deacons have provided scholarships for children attending Tall Timber summer camp, purchased provisions for the Annual Christmas Baskets organized by the Mission Ministry, provided boxes for Operation Christmas Child, helped fund the new Hearing Assistance system now being used Sundays during worship, provided extra funding for Friendship House Mission, and facilitated memorial services and receptions for our MVPC community.

The Deacons thank you in advance for praying for and giving from your heart so that we may continue and enlarge our ministry.



Mount Vernon Presbyterian Church ~ Thursday, December 7th 6:30 pm

Annual Women's Dessert

The Christmas Light: Letting Christ's Light Shine Through You

Come listen to Guest Speaker Barb Chure, the Mount Vernon High School Synergy Choir, and enjoy dessert on 12 tables creatively decorated for Christmas. A great tradition! Tickets: \$7

Proceeds benefit Skagit Domestic Violence and Sexual Assault Services





Knitting/Crochet Fellowship

The MVPC Knitting Group will meet on **Thursday, December 28th**, from Noon to 1 pm in the Great Room. Everyone is welcome - bring any craft you want and come enjoy fellowship and friends!

Birthdays & Anniversaries

4-Ward Ernst

9-Betty Haworth

10-Bob Wygal

10-Bill & Linda Ream

16-Pat Papadopoulos

19-Laurie Parker

21-Keith Tacker

25-JESUS

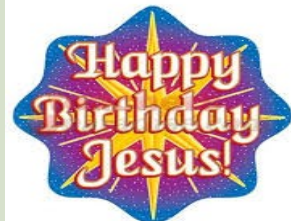
27-Aaron Fox

28-Barb Clure

29-Dave & Bev Wilson

31-Jodie Kercheval

December



Are we missing your special date?

Please contact the church office at MVPC@MountVernonPres.org, or call or text 360-424-7675 so we can celebrate with you!

**Men's Breakfast
Women's Fellowship
Will resume in January 2018**

**Tea @ 2
Will resume in February
2018**

HEARING THE WORSHIP SERVICE

Are you having troubles hearing during service? If so, come to the sound desk before service! We have hearing devices available that can work with your T-Coil hearing aids or independently of any other hearing assist devices.



Want to keep up with what's going on at MVPC? Check out the calendar that's posted on our website!

<http://www.mountvernonpres.org/calendar/>

Our Vision Statement

*E*ncounter The Hope

of the living God through Jesus Christ

*E*ngage One Another

in authentic friendship

*E*mbrace The World

with the heart and hands of Jesus

REGULARLY SCHEDULED EVENTS @ MVPC:

Centering Prayer:	Tuesdays at 9 am in Pastor Dan's office
Intercessory Prayer Group:	Tuesdays at 10:30 a.m. in the Library
Contemplative Prayer:	2nd and 4th Thursdays 6-8 pm in the Great Room
Small Groups:	Call the church to get connected to a small group!
Family Night:	Wednesdays, 5:30-6:30 p.m. at MVPC
Creative Kids:	Sundays, 9:30 to 10:15 am in the Great Room
Youth Group:	4th Sundays, Noon-1:30 in the Great Room
Chancel Choir:	Wednesdays from 6:15 to 7:30 p.m.
Glorify!:	Wednesdays, 7:30 to 8:30 p.m.
Tea @ 2:	Will resume on last Thurs in Feb at 2 p.m. in Fireside Rm
Women's Fellowship:	Fourth Saturday of the month at 9:00 a.m.
Men's Breakfast:	Fourth Saturday of the month at 9:00 a.m.
Deacons Meeting:	1st Tuesday at 5:30 p.m.
Worship Team Meeting:	1st and 3rd Wednesdays at noon
Finance Committee:	2nd Tuesday at 5 p.m.
Mission Team Meeting:	4th Sunday at 12:30
Personnel Committee:	3rd Tuesday at 4:15 p.m.
Session Meeting:	3rd Tuesday at 5:30 p.m.

THE SUNDAY SCHEDULE AT MVPC ...

9:00 CHRISTIAN EDUCATION HOUR

The Bible Class

An in-depth exploration of the Bible through discussion-based study for adults in the Conference Room.

Creative Kids 9:30 to 10:15 am

Kids of all ages express their faith creatively in the Great Room. November: Christmas Program!

10:30 WORSHIP AND SUNDAY SCHOOL

SEEDS SUNDAY SCHOOL

Preschoolers are introduced to Bible Stories in the Nursery.

SPROUTS SUNDAY SCHOOL

K to 2nd graders journey through the Bible. Begin in Worship.

SPROUTS SUNDAY SCHOOL

3rd to 5th graders study the New Testament. Begin in Worship.

SEEKERS (2ND & 4TH SUN)

Middle School Youth seek meaning in Paul's letters. Begin in Worship.

EXPLORERS (2ND & 4TH SUN)

High School Youth explore the Gospels. Begin in Worship.

11:45 FELLOWSHIP TIME: Please stay to enjoy treats and good conversation!

***Nursery Care Available 9 am to Noon.**

