

The Shepherd's Voice



Volume 59, Issue 12

December 2023

Mountain Park United Methodist Church

A Season For Joy

Celebrate the Joy of the Coming of the Christ Child with us at Mountain Park UMC .

Celebrate in Worship, Celebrate with Music, Celebrate with Giving, and Celebrate with Sharing of Fellowship. All of this and more are here for you this Advent. Share the Joy with your Family, Neighbors, and Friend. Show them the Love that is to be found in fellowship of friends and of our Savior.



Inside this issue:

Pastor's Corner	2
Family Ministries with Hope	3
Contemporary Worship with Nicole	5
Mountain Park Pre-School	7
Financial Update	8
Lunches of Love	9 - 10
Christmas Eve Schedule	11
New Year's Eve Schedule	13
2024 Nominations Report	15

Mountain Park UMC

P.O. Box 871147

1405 Rockbridge Rd, Stone Mtn, GA 30087

770.921.8512

www.mountainparkumc.org



Pastor's Corner

We live in a time, age, and place where it is almost fatal to show our vulnerability. Social media has something to do with that, but it is our general tendency to paint ourselves better than who we really are. If people just look at my Facebook, they would think that I have a perfect life with a handsome husband, talented girls, almost a thousand friends, endless resources and bliss from them all. The truth is that I am not perfect and I lead an imperfect life; I am a sinner in need of grace, mercy, and forgiveness. I am a high-maintenance and needy person! I need Jesus every moment!

Brene Brown is one of my favorite authors; she is a research professor at the University of Houston who spent the past two decades studying courage, vulnerability, shame, and empathy. She is the author of five #1 *New York Times* bestsellers: *The Gifts of Imperfection*, *Daring Greatly*, *Rising Strong*, *Braving the Wilderness*, and *Dare to Lead*. These are Brene Brown's words defining 'vulnerability': *"Vulnerability...when I ask people what vulnerability is, the answers were things like sitting with my wife who has a stage 2 breast cancer and trying to make plans for our children, my first date after my divorce, saying I love you first, asking for a raise, sending my child to school being enthusiastic and supportive of him and knowing how excited he is about orchestra tryouts and how much he wants to make first chair and encouraging him and supporting him and knowing that's not going to happen, etc."*

Vulnerability is courage. It's about the willingness to *show up and be seen in our lives as who we are. In those moments when we show up, raise our heads, and stand tall, the most powerful meaning-making, meaningful moments of our lives happen. And I call them, "defining moments of our lives."* In this jolly season, I want you to meditate on the word, *"vulnerability"* and consider the cornerstone of our faith, Jesus Christ, our gentle savior and Messiah, who came to us as a baby totally dependent on his parents, taken to Egypt as a refugee at the mercy of Egyptians, growing up as a carpenter's son, mocked and beaten, and then hung up on a cross like a criminal to die. Jesus did not hide; he was not ashamed of vulnerability. He embodied it for our sake so that we may live an authentic life free of hot air or inhibitions...

A merry Christmas! Christ came; he came for me and you- and for us all! May you have a defining moment of your life this Christmas!

Your Pastor,
Millie



Hope's Highlights



This month has been full of music and gratitude for our kids and youth! The photos above feature one of our musical rehearsals and our youth

"Charlie Brown Thanksgiving." As we move into the Advent season, we want to invite you to participate in our Youth fundraiser! Wonderful paper snowflakes made by our youth will be available for a donation to our program. You also want to be sure to attend our 5PM Christmas Eve service, which will be youth-led and feature our youth and kids! We also invite you to bring donations of baby care items to benefit our Lunches of Love families. It's sure to be an evening full of family fun.

Please stay up to date on all our latest happenings by finding us on Facebook (facebook.com/mpumcfammin) and in the various church publications. Thank you so much!



YOUTH FUNDRAISER

The youth have a number of handmade paper bag snowflakes to give in exchange for donations to our program! The snowflakes are lightweight, hangable, and make great decor for the entire winter season. Please contact Hope to inquire or stop by our table at the Travelers' Christmas Eve Service on Dec. 17th.

The Voices of Advent - Sermon Series



12/3/23 "The Voice: Keep Awake" - Mark 13: 24-37

12/10/23 "The Voice: Prepare" - Mark 1: 1-8

12/17/23 "The Voice: Magnify" - Luke 1: 46b-55

12/24/23 "The Voices: Glory to God" - Luke: 2: 1-14

Advent Devotional

We invite you to share this Advent Devotional by Kate Bowler with your church family. Time and again, we are reminded of how precious life is. One moment, we are on the upswing—buoyed by our self-reliance and our success. But the next moment, the foundations of our lives are shaken—by divorce or disease, natural disaster or a global pandemic. We are reminded once again that life is so beautiful and life is so hard. For everyone.



Thanks MPUMC for 67
Units of Blood collected
for the Red Cross in 2023.



**American
Red Cross**

Community of Giving

Contemporary Worship with Nicole

I remember my affliction and my wandering, the bitterness and the gall. I well remember them, and my soul is downcast within me. Yet this I call to mind and therefore I have hope: Because of the Lord's great love we are not consumed, for his compassions never fail. They are new every morning; great is your faithfulness. -Lamentations 3:19-23

As we enter into the holiday season, we hold in tension the challenges we face and the hope we have as children of God. We know this season can be a reminder of all the things that aren't right in our lives or in the world, but we hold onto the hope we have in Emmanuel, God with us. We invite you to join us throughout the Advent season for our special services and events and press into the hope that is before us! Here is a little more info about what's coming up in the FLC this season.

Thursday, 12/7 at 6:30pm - Advent Worship and Art Night - Join us for music of the season, fellowship, and art with a purpose! We will complete various craft projects to be given to Lunches of Love families and homebound church members. Please bring a sweet treat to share.

Sunday, 12/17 at 10:45am - Serve Sunday - Help us prepare for the Lunches of Love Christmas deliveries during Contemporary Worship.

Sunday, 12/17 at 6:30pm - Travelers' Christmas Eve - Join us for a full Christmas Eve service a week early before you head out of town or just to get an extra helping of Christmas Eve! Our service will include contemporary arrangements of carols and a journey through the themes of Hope, Peace, Joy, Love, and Wonder as we "Come to the Manger" together!

Sunday, 12/31 at 11:05am - New Year's Eve Morning Unified Worship and Brunch - Join us for a time of worship and fellowship as we say goodbye to 2023. Please bring a dish to share and feel free to wear your Christmas garb or pajamas one more time! Doors open at 10:45am. If you would like to participate in our "worship jam" and play along with our carols for the day, email Nicole at nicole.elsey@mountainparkumc.org. All acoustic instruments are welcome!

Solo Deo Gloria
Nicole Elsey
Contemporary Worship Director



MPUMC Christmas Concert - December 10th

The Christmas Concert is fast approaching! Featuring our chancel choir and handbell choir, along with a chamber ensemble and special guests, this concert is sure to celebrate the season in spectacular fashion! Come for the music, including familiar carols and a rendition of "O Holy Night" as you have never heard it before, then stay for the cookies, cocoa, and warm cider. Join us for this glorious tradition!

"This is going to be a really special event! Join us! AND if you're not sure where to go, head towards the sanctuary from the FLC, go to the right and take the first door on your right. " - Dr. David Walters



Financial Update as of November 26, 2023

- **Cash Position as of November 26, 2023**
 - **Operating Funds: (\$12,334.00)**
 - **Designated Funds: \$230,816.00**

 - **YTD ACTUAL Revenues: \$836,677.00**
 - **YTD ACTUAL Expenses: \$876,569.00**
 - **YTD Budget: \$944,663.00**

 - **Apportionments remaining to be paid for 2023 \$1,247.00**
- We are spending less than the actual 2023 budget and still short of revenue needs.

- Operating Fund Pledges (104 Pledges) - \$537,548.00
- Piano Restoration Pledges (30 Pledges) - \$14,000.00

John Wesley preached about "earning all you can, saving all you can, and giving all you can." For Wesley, the tithe was not the ultimate goal of the Christian; it was the standard, the normative mark, the common denominator.

Wednesday Night Dinner Menus

Menus are posted for December. Check this website:

<https://www.mountainparkumc.org/wnd>





"A Peek at Preschool"

Grateful and Blessed are the two words that best describe our preschool as we move from the wonderful Thanksgiving feast that was shared with family and friends into the jolly, joy filled season of Christmas. You can feel the excitement in the air as the littles get ready to perform their beautiful dance and songs led by our very own Hope Lewellen and Nicole Elsey at Cookies & Cocoa on December 7th. Everyone should plan to also **attend the Advent Art and Worship Night on the evening of December 7th** and you can catch a second **performance by our students** and help make some fun crafts and enjoy some fellowship.

"Lend a Helping Ham" fundraiser through Honey Baked Ham is in full swing. If you plan on picking up a ham for your Christmas dinner, please consider purchasing through our link. A portion of your purchase will come back to our school and help us continue to build and grow this amazing ministry right here at Mountain Park UMC. The fundraiser will run through December 15th. Anyone can purchase a ham to help out, so feel free to share with family and friends. My personal experience the gift cards arrive quickly by mail.



The preschool would like to give a big shout out and **THANK YOU to Ferrell and Art for their tremendous help at our Thanksgiving feast.** After prepping and serving Wednesday night dinner, they still helped us make 7 whole turkeys for our feast and showed up bright and early on Thursday morning to help us carve and serve another 120 preschoolers and families. They are such hard workers and they are a true blessing to us and the church

In His Service
Beth McWilliams,
Director of MPUMC PreSchool

Thank you all for your continued support!



GIFT CARD
RANGES \$25 - \$100



Lunches of Love Christmas

Reverse Advent Calendar

The items on the Reverse Advent Calendar are needed for our Lunches of Love Christmas Event. These items will be distributed to our neighbors who are struggling. If you would like to participate but this just isn't in the budget right now, here are some adaptations to make this a bit more affordable.

1. Tackle the Reverse Advent Calendar as a group (enlist friends, family members, coworkers, Sunday school class, scout group, sports team, to each contribute items).
2. Share the Reverse Advent Calendar needs on social media or among your family, friends and neighbors who are looking for ways to help the community. Offer to coordinate pick up and delivery of a few specific items.
3. Customize this list to fit your budget. Substitute the items that are more difficult with repeats from other days.
4. Substitute any day with free activities such as writing an encouraging note or card, drawing a picture for our Lunches of Love families, or praying for those around you who are struggling with food insecurity, poverty, homelessness, etc.
5. "GIVE" your time. Use the QR code on the calendar or sign up here:
<https://tinyurl.com/LOLCHRISTMAS2023>



























REMEMBER, THE LAST DAY TO DROP OFF IS SUNDAY, DECEMBER 17

(Drop off boxes are available in/outside of the Family Life Center for early drop off - Items will be delivered to recipients beginning on December 17, if you are able to drop off any items early, that would be very helpful.)



Lunches of Love Reverse Advent Calendar

Lunches of Love 2023 REVERSE ADVENT CALENDAR

SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY
<p>WANT TO VOLUNTEER? CHECK OUT THIS QR CODE TO SIGN UP:</p>  <p>OR TYPE: https://tinyurl.com/LOLCHRISTMAS2023</p>			<p>Pick up a reusable grocery bag to place your Advent gifts in.</p> 	<p>If you want... you could put your Advent gifts into a new cleaning bucket.</p> 	<p>DECEMBER 1</p> <p>Add a bottle of hair conditioner to your Advent bag (or bucket.)</p> 	<p>2</p> <p>Visit your favorite fast food restaurant for lunch. Drop a \$10 fast food gift card into your bag.</p> 
<p>3 1st Sunday of Advent</p>  <p>Add a bar of soap to your Advent bag.</p>	<p>4</p>  <p>Add a container of laundry detergent to your Advent bag.</p>	<p>5</p> <p>Add a new pack of Adult Women's socks to your Advent bag.</p> 	<p>6</p>  <p>Add 4 rolls of toilet paper to your Advent bag.</p>	<p>7</p>  <p>Add antiperspirant-deodorant to your Advent bag.</p>	<p>8</p>  <p>Add a bottle of shampoo to your Advent bag.</p>	<p>9</p> <p>Add a multipack of toothbrushes to your Advent bag.</p> 
<p>10 2nd Sunday of Advent</p>  <p>Add 4 rolls of toilet paper to your Advent bag.</p>	<p>11</p>  <p>Add a bottle of dishwashing liquid to your Advent bag.</p>	<p>12</p> <p>Add a new pack of Adult Men's socks to your Advent bag.</p> 	<p>13</p>  <p>Add a bottle of all purpose cleaner to your advent bag</p>	<p>14</p> <p>Add some scotch tape to your Advent bag.</p> 	<p>15</p>  <p>Add a box of facial tissue to your Advent bag.</p>	<p>16</p> <p>Visit your favorite fast-food restaurant for lunch. Drop a \$10 fast food gift card into your bag.</p> 
<p>*17 3rd Sunday of Advent</p>  <p>Choose a sweet treat (candy, gum, hot chocolate) to add to your Advent bag.</p>	<p>18</p>  <p>Pray for the volunteers delivering the Advent bags on Dec. 17 and 18</p>	<p>19</p> <p>Say a prayer for the families receiving the Advent bag you prepared for them.</p> 	<p>20</p> <p>Be on the lookout for gifts of new pots and pans - if some of the original pots and pans are still in good condition, consider donating to Lunches of Love in 2024.</p> 	<p>21</p> <p>Be on the lookout for gifts of new coats, jackets, hoodies - if some outgrown jackets are still in good condition, consider donating to Lunches of Love in 2024.</p> 	<p>22</p> <p>Create a space in your home to collect cans of tuna (exp. 9/2024 or later) as they go on sale between now and May = 4000 cans needed for Summer 2024.</p> 	<p>23</p> <p>Take a moment to be thankful for all that you have chosen to share, as the recipients are surely thankful for your generosity.</p> 

*Drop off Advent bags and buckets at Mountain Park United Methodist Church, Family Life Center by noon on Sundays.
December 17 (by noon) will be the final day to drop off items.

Thanks MPUMC for your support!



Christmas Scheduling at MPUMC

Christmas Eve MORNING

WORSHIP WITH US



11:05am in the Sanctuary

Christmas Eve

Family Worship and Candlelight Service



5:00pm in the Sanctuary

Christmas Eve

Candlelight and Communion Service



10:00pm in the Sanctuary

First Sunday of Advent at MPUMC





Sunday, December 31

New Year's Eve Unified Worship and Potluck Brunch

In the Family Life Center
Doors open at 10:45AM
Service begins at 11:05AM



 SUNDAY, DECEMBER 31

NEW YEAR'S EVE WORSHIP JAM

Do you play an instrument? Join us
during our NYE Worship and Potluck
brunch! All skill levels welcome!
Email Nicole Elsey for music.
nicole.elsey@mountainparkumc.org



2023-2024 Church Office Schedule

Christmas Holiday will be observed Monday to Wednesday, December 25-27 2023
(Full Time Staff report on 28th and 29th)

New Year's Day will be observed on Monday and Tuesday, January 1-2, 2024

First Week of Advent at MPUMC



2024 Nominations Report

(These are the lay folks who will serve our Lord and Mountain Park UMC as leaders in 2024.)

Church Council

Chairpersons: Tony Barner & Merrilee Brock, Vice Chair: Dan Settle

Recording: Secretary Susan Will, Church Treasurer: Kim Abrams

Finance Committee Chairperson: Dorothy Kopp

Trustees Chair: David Gentry

Staff Parish Relations Committee Chairpersons: David Brock, Susan Kemeter

Lay Leaders: Rosalie Carden, Art Fischer, Grace Whittaker

Lay Delegates (North Georgia UMC Conference): Collins Young, Angela Gentry

Young Adult Representative: Elissa Marks

UMM President Robert Kopp, UWF President Leigh Snyder

Youth Leadership Team: Hope Lewellen, Asa Brock, Bethany Brown

Children's Ministry Representative Kasey Brady

Pre-school Board Chairperson: Sarah Brown

Contemporary Worship Leader Nicole Elsey

Lunches of Love Coordinator Cheryl Mitchell

Mission Team Chairperson Collins Young

Discipleship Team Chairperson Cindy Denman

At Large Members: Gloria Wooten, Judy Turnwall

Finance Committee: Joe Karpf ('24), Kim Abrams ('24), Amy Ater ('24), David Will ('25), Lynn Kimbro ('25), Dave Ernst ('25), Margey Detweiler ('26), Ann Eldredge ('26), Sean Brady ('26)

Trustees: Steve Inserra('24), David Gentry('24), Doug Abrams('24), Cindy Rikard('25), Elizabeth Brown ('25), Jim Jenkins('25), Fred McElveen('26), Steve Holder('26), Bonnie Baker('26)

Staff Parish Relations Committee: Amy Hammond('24), Grace Whittaker('24), Mary Katherine Karpf ('24), Angela Gentry('25), Trent Jones('25), Kirk Snyder('25), Randy Drescher('26), Lindsey Brown('26), Ed Marks('26)

Nominations: Kathy Slaton ('24), Rosalie Carden ('24), Grace Whittaker('24), Lynn Pihera('25), Adrian Adams('25), Art Fisher ('25), Ferrel Wooten('26), Gretchen Hinnant('26), Jacque Glowacki ('26)

