

The Shepherd's Voice



Volume 60, Issue 1

January 2024

Mountain Park United Methodist Church

Care for One Another

Celebrate the Joy that the Christ Child has come. Celebrate by caring for your family, your fellow church members, and you neighbors as Christ cares for us. Inside the newsletter see the opportunities for caring and sharing that abound at Mountain Park UMC. Come and find your place.

Celebrate Rev. Dr. AnnaKate Rawles



AnnaKate Rawles is an ordained elder and has served churches in the Louisiana Annual Conference and the N. Georgia Annual Conference. She is passionate about missions, full inclusion of all people in the Church, conservation efforts, especially around endangered and at-risk animals, and sustainability and creation care at home and in the local church.

AnnaKate is married to Brian Trepanier who works as an Assistant D.A. in Fulton County. They have a 2-year-old son, Cooper Trepanier-Rawles.

AnnaKate enjoys spending time with her family and volunteering at Zoo Atlanta.

AnnaKate has a BA in Literature and Religion from Converse College, Master of Divinity from Candler School of Theology, Certificate for Theology in Ministry from Cambridge University, and a Doctor of Ministry from Candler School of Theology.

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Mountain Park UMC

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Pastor's Corner

I hope that you had a wonderful Christmas and are ready to usher in a new year with new hope and great expectations. I would like to thank all of you for your Christmas greetings, cards, and gifts in this season. You were incredibly generous to me and our children, and I am so grateful! Thank you!

I must confess that I had a very harried and chaotic December, well, the whole year 2023 in fact, and have spent this week regretting and repenting of my sins and bad choices. I am sure you never do that.



I would like the year 2024 to be a better year for me, my family, and for our church. If you recall, my goals for the first year at Mountain Park was to preach excellent sermons, get to know you, and bring financial stability to the church. I will continue these goals and add one more for 2024: to nurture creative spaces. I don't know what it means specifically but I would like our church to be a safe and nurturing space for creativity to percolate and brew.

Wasn't it Albert Einstein who said, "If you want to live a happy life, tie it to a goal," Johan Cruyff, "Without a goal, you can't score," and Antoine de Saint Exupery, "A goal without a plan is just a wish"? We don't even have to look into secular sources. Our trusted book of wisdom says (read the whole chapter of Proverbs 16, if you can.), "Commit your work to the Lord, and your plans will be established" (Proverbs 16:3), and "The human mind plans the way but the Lord directs the steps" (Proverbs 16:9). Also Ephesians tells us our ultimate goal, "I press on toward the goal, toward the prize of the heavenly call of God in Christ Jesus. Be very careful, then, how you live—not as unwise but as wise, making the most of every opportunity, because the days are evil" (Ephesians 5:15–16). So I hope and pray that you set a godly goal and press on in 2024.

The best is yet to come! Let us usher in a new year with new hope and great expectations!

A Happy New Year!

Your Pastor,
Millie





Hope's Highlights



Thank you to all the kids, families, musicians, volunteers and staff who helped make our Family Christmas Eve service happen this year!

We were so encouraged by the show of talent and leadership by our young people. We hope everyone had a very Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year to all!

Family Ministries resumes regular programming on Sunday, January 7th with nursery, Kids and Youth Sunday School (no Kids Worship in the Park for 1st Sunday Family Worship), our monthly 4th/5th Grade Connect Night from 4-5PM, and Sunday Night Youth from 5-7PM. If you have or know of a preschooler through 12th grader looking for a fun, loving, and welcoming community of peers and trusted adults, connect them with us today!

Hope Lewellen, Director of Family Ministries



WEEKLY @ FAMILY MINISTRIES

Sundays:

9:45-10:35AM: Sunday School for all ages
Pre-K: Preschool Hall | K-5th: The Park | 6th-12th: Youth Room |
Adult Drop-in Study: Parlor

During Worship Services: Worship in The Park (K-5th)
Nursery (birth-Pre-K) available in Preschool Hall **9:30AM-12:30PM**
5-7PM: Sunday Night Youth (6th-12th, Youth Room)

First Sunday of each month:

Family Worship (NO Worship in the Park)
Children K-5th are welcome to join their families at one of our
worship services!

4-5PM: 4th/5th Grade Connect Night (Youth Room)
Fun and Fellowship for our oldest kids!

Wednesdays:

5:45-6:30PM: Community Dinner in the Family Life Center
Register online at mountainparkumc.org/wnd

6:30-7:15PM: Worship Arts Ministry (WAM)
K-5th + 6th-12th: drop off/pick up in Youth Room
Nursery (birth-Pre-K) available in Preschool Hall 6:15-8:15PM

Please find us on Facebook at
facebook.com/mpumcfammin to stay up to
date on all the latest news and events!



One Another - Sermon Series



1/7/24 "Ubuntu" - Matthew 2: 1-12 *Epiphany*
 1/14/24 "Observing" - Psalm 139: 1-6 , 13-18 / John 1:43-51
 1/21/24 "Listening" - 1 Samuel 3:1-10 / Mark 1: 14-20
 1/28/24 "Speaking" - James 3:1-12 / Mark 1:21-28



A Book Study: Thursday, Jan. 18, 11am

By popular demand, Rev. Millie will facilitate a book study on Thursday mornings beginning January 18 from 11:00am-12:00pm in the Park. This is a four week book study, *The Art of Bouncing Back* by Darleen Santore (Week 1: Introduction and Principle 1, Week 2: Principle 2, 3, 4, Week 3: Principle 5, 6, 7, Week 4: Principle 8, 9, Conclusion). No need to sign up; just show up! It will involve videos, discussions, and fellowship.



Wednesday Night Dinner Menus

Menus are posted for January Check this website:

mountainparkumc.org/wnd

Please sign up by Monday afternoon to help our Kitchen Staff plan for the meal. Drop-ins are always warmly welcomed.

Contemporary Worship with Nicole

The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us. We have seen his glory, the glory of the one and only Son, who came from the Father, full of grace and truth...Out of his fullness we have all received grace in place of grace already given. –John 1:14, 16

Every year, I am more and more thankful for the names of Jesus: Emmanuel (God with us), Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace (Isaiah 7:14, 9:6). Jesus is Savior, King, and Friend, and always with us. Jesus, Word of the Father, became flesh and "moved into the neighborhood," as Eugene Peterson translates it. Whatever we face, Jesus is with us. May the Light of this season continue to burn bright in your heart through Epiphany and beyond! Joy to the World the Lord Is Come!

Solo Deo Gloria

Nicole Elsey

Contemporary Worship Director



Church Office Closed

January 15th — MLK Jr Holiday

January 16th - Staff Retreat / Planning @ Camp Glisson

Confirmation Classes Starting

January 21st — 9:30 to 10:30 am Sunday Mornings

All 6th to 12th Graders WELCOME!

Fresh Expressions Spark Day

Saturday, January 20, 9am-12pm, Youth Room

At its heart, **Fresh Expressions** is about empowering and equipping God's people to develop creative expressions of church that can reach the increasing diversity of our society by **serving** those currently outside church, **listening** to people and entering their culture, **making discipleship** a priority, and **forming church where they are** — outside a traditional church.



What is a Spark Day?

A Spark Day is a great way to discover more about Fresh Expressions. In an interactive format, you will have the chance to hear how Fresh Expressions is renewing the church and discover tools to start Fresh Expressions in your community.

Congregational & Community Care Groups

H.U.G.S. Prayer & Crochet - Tuesdays 10am to Noon in the Parlor

Contact Cindy Denman for more information.

cindy7146@gmail.com 770.355.5382

Grief Support - Wednesdays 2pm in the Parlor

Alzheimer's / Dementia Support Group - Thursdays 12:30 - 2pm

Caregivers Support Group in the Park

With any congregational care needs, please call Rev. Dr. Annakate Rawles at 318-572-5012.

Choir Christmas Concert



Congratulations to the Choir and Dr David for the stunning concert that was presented for the Church and Community on December 10th. We can't wait to see what they have planned for Easter.

If you love to sing, now is the time to join the Choir. You can contact Dr David at david.walters@mountainparkumc.org or at 770.921.8512 Ext 228 for more information.

Seeking 2 Handbell Ringers

Experience preferred but not necessary to join the handbell choir! The rehearsal is on Sundays from 3:00pm– 4:30pm. If you are interested, please contact:

Kary Alicea at 770-688-0012.

MISSION NEWS

Kenya Mission Trip

The first Kenya Mission Team formation meeting will be Sunday, January 21, 2024 from 3pm to 5pm. The dates for the trip will be Saturday, May 26, 2024 through Saturday, June 8th, 2024.

This will be a zoom online meeting since people from other churches, cities, and states will be attending. The Construction Team Lead will be JD Green. The Medical Team Lead will be Ann Kennedy FNP. The Administrative Team Lead will be Rachel Tarr, Ellijay UMC.

Zoom Meeting will be open at: Jan 21, 2024 02:30 PM Eastern Standard Time

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/88170848778>

Meeting ID: 881 7084 8778



Make a game plan to give blood on **January 23rd from 1-5 PM in the Youth Room**. In thanks for helping overcome an emergency blood shortage in January, you will automatically get a chance to score a getaway to #SuperBowl LVIII in Vegas! Visit mountainparkumc.org/events to sign up!

Honduras Outreach - HOI

HOI Hope School System hopes to offer more than 300 students in the Agalta Valley opportunities to build Christian Leadership skills and achieve their academic goals. Your \$50 per month sponsorship will:

- Provide school supplies, health checkups, and mid-day meals for students
- Support School operations including teacher salaries
- Equip teachers with quality curriculum and resources
- Provide resources for extended class offerings in English, Bible, Computer, Technology, Music, and Art
- For more information, scan the QR code.



Financial Update as of December 31, 2023

Preliminary Cash Position as of December 31, 2023)

- **Operating Funds Balance: \$55,889.00***
- **Designated Funds Balance: \$230,604.00**

*Moved \$60,000 from Woodward Estate account pending the receipt of final ERTC money from IRS.

2023 Stewardship Campaign Update

Total pledge: \$605,398

Total Piano Restoration pledged is \$31,040 with a goal of \$50,000.

John Wesley preached "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.



Lunches of Love Christmas - Service

December Lunches of Love Story: A Weeklong Offering of Service

On Sunday, December 17, Serve Sunday began in the Family Life Center with songs of praise, a message of hope and some hands-on service. Hundreds of donated mugs were transformed into gifts as they were filled with hot chocolate mix, hand crafted chocolate covered spoons and candy canes. Across the room hundreds of large bags were filled with toiletry items for approximately 2,000 people. Upstairs, volunteers sorted and packed age-appropriate toys into dozens of large boxes to fill the back of a 26-foot truck transforming it into a mobile Christmas Shoppe. Our Serve Sunday Worship Service ended with the loading of gifts and supplies into 2 large U-Haul trucks.

The worship service was over but for dozens of volunteers, their 6-hour shift was just beginning! Over the next 2 days, hundreds of families in 4 different neighborhoods were served. Thankfully we received a large donation mid-week from the Norcross Community Co-op. Their donation of 2 truckloads of gifts and toys helped to meet the need for the rest of the week. 4 different pick-up times were organized and staffed by volunteer "elves" at the church. Individual deliveries were completed on 3 separate days. On Sunday morning, December 24th, one week after "Serve Sunday", the final gifts were picked up. - Cheryl Mitchell



Lunches of Love ~ A Christmas Story

December Lunches of Love Story: One Family's Journey

As we were finishing up at one of the neighborhoods, we met a young mom who was getting her mail. She asked why there was a crowd. As I started to explain who we are and why we were there, she told me she was trying to forget about Christmas this year. She explained that she is a single mom who recently moved to the area. She hasn't made any friends and she recently experienced the death of a child. She is alone, struggling financially and this Christmas is just so hard. She explained that she told her young daughter that she just couldn't afford any gifts this year and that there would not be any signs of Christmas at their house. As we spoke, I listened to the grief overflowing with each word. I shared with her my experience with loss and grief at Christmastime when I was about her age, acknowledging how it all just seems unbearably harder to deal with at this time of year. She opened up a bit more and then, she allowed the conversation to shift.

Soon we were talking about the hope and peace we can find in Christ, even in these most difficult situations. Especially, in these most difficult situations! We were both crying by the time she asked if she could hug me. With her permission we filled a bag with toys for her 6-year-old daughter including a brand new beautiful princess doll that looked just like her description of her daughter. She saw a pink hat that she loved for her daughter and we found matching gloves. We quickly wrapped up a simple "Mom Gift" and handed it to her with another hug. In a matter of minutes volunteers were helping to carry bags of toiletries, food, and other supplies up the steps to her doorway. By the time the volunteers returned we were packed up and ready to head to the next neighborhood full of more families waiting patiently for us to arrive and share the love of Christ. -Cheryl Mitchell

Thank you for all of the ways you support this local mission to love our neighbors!



Lunches of Love Christmas - In Pictures



Lunches of Love - Backpack Buddies

1 in 6 children in Georgia are hungry. We see the effects of food insecurity every time we make a delivery to our Lunches of Love Neighborhoods. When school starts, things shift. School aged kids who are living in poverty get 2 meals a day at school. But on the week-ends... food is often scarce again.



Backpack Buddies of Metro Atlanta has been partnering with Lunches of Love at Mountain Park United Methodist Church to fill the weekend hunger gap. As a community partner with Backpack Buddies, our part is to be the liaison to the schools. We pick up food each Wednesday morning from the Backpack Buddies warehouse, assemble the food into individual bags each Thursday evening from 6:30 – 8:00pm and drop it off with the school counselor at a local Elementary School each Friday morning at 10am.

Since September we have distributed over 20,000 servings of food to children in Stone Mountain who do not have enough food at home. We have sign ups so that individuals and groups of all ages can plan to come and serve on Thursday evenings to assemble the food bags. We are also looking for drivers to drive to Dunwoody to pick up the bulk food items on Wednesday mornings, as well as drivers to deliver the food to the schools on Friday mornings. The drivers are not required to load or unload. If you are interested in getting involved, click on this [LINK](#) for more information. If you have questions, feel free to shoot us an email: LUNCHES@mountainparkumc.org

PB & J (Peace, Blessings, and Joy),
Cheryl Mitchell and Sandra Satterwhite



Scan to Sign Up





We are getting ready for our Visioning Day on Saturday, January 27th and there is preparatory work to help this visioning process go smoothly and efficiently. **We need your help.** Please scan the QR code and participate in our survey. Respond on or before **January 20, 2024** and we will enter your name in a raffle contest. We will be giving away **4-\$25 gift cards** so there will be lots of chances to win. Winners will be announced on Visioning Day! Make sure you write your name and email address so we now how to reach you.

Thank you!

GIVEAWAY
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GIV answer the
survey for a
chance to win!
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