

MOUNTAIN BROOK PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH

THE MESSENGER

FEBRUARY 2012

The session started working on the budget of 2012 last fall. All session committees were asked to present a “wish list” of what they want for the coming year. At the December meeting we were given the raw material of the budget: pledged income and proposed spending. There was a gap. You can guess which way the gap leaned. The first decision was that none of the wish lists would be granted. Next we started looking at what we could cut from the program budget. The program budget is the money spent to support the programs of the church, things like Christian Education curriculum and youth ministry. You may recall the painful memory of eliminating all of the money from the Mission budget the previous year.

The Finance Committee has been meeting to balance the budget. Last year we balanced the budget by using an overly optimistic figure for the “non-pledged” income line. We did what many churches do: we hoped that new members would join and the increased growth would add to that “non-pledged” cate-

gory. That did not happen. In fact, during 2011 we had the fewest new members in the past ten years. The Finance Committee will not be unrealistic again about non-pledged income. It is determined to present a balanced budget for the session’s approval. After the session meeting the budget will be available to the congregation. It will be presented to the congregation at the annual meeting on Sunday, February 19, 2012.

You will receive this issue of *The Messenger* the week before the session meets to make the final decision about the budget for 2012. The moderator of the Finance Committee presented several options at the last meeting. As a way of illustrating how seriously the committee is about its work, I am sharing with you those options.

1. Make no cuts in expenses. Continue to draw down Restricted Funds.
2. Ask the congregation to increase their pledge.
3. Request the trustees to draw from the Trustee Fund to help finance the budget.
4. Charge an administrative

fee to the Pre-school.

5. Generate income by charging a facilities fee for non-member use.

6. Reduce the size of the staff or reduce staff salaries.

The fact is that there is nothing left to cut from the budget. Think of the church as a “service” business. Most of our budget is in personnel cost. The second largest portion is for maintaining the facilities. The building and equipment are almost fifty years old. I have been told that often I am “too subtle.” All subtlety aside, this church is at a turning point. I know that many of you dislike making church decisions based on money as much as I do. But this is where we are. The church is not a business like any other business, but it must be managed with sound business principles. Please pray for the Finance Committee and your session.



Cary Speaker

LECTIONARY B

- February 5, 2012
Isaiah 40:21-31
Mark 1:29-39
- February 12, 2012
2 Kings 5:1-14
Mark 1:40-45
- February 19, 2012
2 Kings 2:1-12
Mark 9:2-9
- February 26, 2012
Genesis 9:8-17
Mark 1:9-15

STAFF

- Pastor*
Cary Speaker
- Administrative Assistant*
Bonnie Hartley
- Financial Assistant*
Bernie Gregson
- Preschool Director*
Kelly Huddleston
- Director of Youth Ministry*
Traci Finch
- Organist*
Gary Smoke
- Director of*
Christian Education &
Children’s Music Ministry
Peggy Thompson
- Director Of Music*
Dewin Tibbs

GOOD GRIEF

Grief is not a problem to be solved. Grief is a natural reaction to loss—whether it be loss of job, home, loved one, or some other loss.

Good Grief meets Mondays at 10:00 AM in the conference room of the Administration Building. Rev. Cary Speaker is the facilitator. MBPC has a wonderful resource in Pastor Cary Speaker. I asked him to tell a little about his background with grief. Below is Cary's response.

I began paying attention to grief in 1976 when I first worked as a hospital chaplain. I was so young then that I did not have much experience with loss. That has changed with the passing of time. As a hospital chaplain I began noticing the cumulative effect of loss on the hospital staff. The sense of loss in the hospital is magnified because it is concentrated; there may be five deaths in one night at a medical center. Over a period of twenty or thirty years, we all

experience numerous losses. It is not uncommon for someone to tell me that in one year they experienced the deaths of five family members.

My curiosity about grief prompted me to study it. While I was living in Tuscaloosa, I was asked to teach a course for the University of Alabama on "The Grieving Process." My academic preparation and the experience of working with students was a wonderful learning opportunity for me. As a parish pastor I experience loss differently from that of a hospital chaplain. The deaths in the hospital were usually anonymous. When a member of my congregation dies, it feels like a family member. My own sense of loss and the accumulation of grief have led me to be intentional about my grieving.

Good Grief is an open group: invite your friends. It is also an open-ended group; we will continue to meet as

long as someone wants to meet. The meetings are weekly for one hour. My experience in leading grief groups is that the participants are helped the most when they participate. That may sound obvious, but it means that participants need to share their stories. What is said in the group is confidential to the group. I manage the time so that everyone has the opportunity to speak. We do not give advice. We are not a "problem solving" group. Grief is not a problem to be solved. Grief is a natural reaction to loss. Our culture does not do a good job with loss: loss of job, home, or loved one. One of the keys to effective grief work is that the participants feel safe. This is a safe group.

For more information call or email Cary at 967-5037 ext. 1 or cspeaker@mbpcusa.org.

By Peggy Thompson

ASH WEDNESDAY SERVICE OF THE IMPOSITION OF ASHES

February 22 at 7:00 p.m. in the sanctuary

Ash Wednesday is forty days (not counting Sundays) before Easter. Ash Wednesday marks the beginning of Lent. Lent is often observed with fasting, study, self-examination, confession, and

prayer. Lenten devotional booklets will be available in the narthex. Please take one to help guide and inspire you during the forty days of Lent.



Our Father who art in heaven, hallowed by thy name . . .

(Original text in Greek)

Πάτερ ἡμῶν ὁ ἐν τοῖς οὐρανοῖς·
 ἁγιασθήτω τὸ ὄνομά σου·
 ἐλθέτω ἡ βασιλεία σου·
 γενηθήτω τὸ θέλημά σου·
 ὡς ἐν οὐρανῷ καὶ ἐπὶ γῆς·
 τὸν ἄρτον ἡμῶν τὸν ἐπιούσιον δὸς ἡμῖν σήμερον·
 καὶ ἄφες ἡμῖν τὰ ὀφειλήματα ἡμῶν,
 ὡς καὶ ἡμεῖς ἀφήκαμεν τοῖς ὀφειλέταις ἡμῶν·
 καὶ μὴ εἰσενέγκῃς ἡμᾶς εἰς πειρασμόν,
 ἀλλὰ ῥῦσαι ἡμᾶς ἀπὸ τοῦ πονηροῦ.

The Lord's Prayer is one of the best known and most loved prayers in the world. Christians may disagree about a lot of texts, but they all seem to find deep and abiding meaning, strength, and spiritual sustenance in this prayer. Even though we recite this prayer weekly, do we truly understand what it is we are saying as we offer this prayer?

February 5, *The Other* Sunday school class led by Rev. Cary Speaker will begin a study of The Lord's Prayer using the book, *The Greatest Prayer: Rediscovering the Revolutionary Message of THE LORD'S PRAYER* by John Dominic Crossan.

In Crossan's new book, he invites readers through eight thought-provoking chapters, exploring one phrase in the famous prayer after another.

**Join *The Other* Class in the Pastor's Classroom
 of the Administration Building
 Sundays 9:30-10:30**

CHILDREN'S BIBLE ADVENTURE RETREAT 2012

for children in grades 4 through 6

Saturday, February 11

9:00 AM-1:00 PM at the church



This is one of the most important events of the year for your child. The Christian Education Committee hopes that every child can attend.

This year Cary will tell the stories of the parables. Sina Skates will help the children experience the stories through drama. This will be lots of FUN as well as a wonderful learning experience. We will serve lunch, too!

AND, invite your friends. To make sure we have plenty of food, please let Peggy Thompson know if your child will attend and bring a friend.



Frazzled Families in February

● Wednesday nights in February (except Ash Wednesday) February 1, 8, 15, and 29

For families of all shapes and sizes . . . single parents, multi-generational families, grandparents, aunts and uncles, and teenagers.

Are you feeling **STRESSED . . . or DEPRESSED?**

Are you *worried . . . and hurried?*

Are you hassled and frazzled?

Can't communicate with your family?

Are your children or parents driving you crazy?

Does your family visit and stay too long?

Are there secrets within your family?

Are there conflicts between family members?

● Join us Wednesday nights in February for help!

Dinner at 6:00 in the Fellowship Hall

Program 6:45 -7:30 in the Reception Room

Pastor Cary Speaker will show movie clips that illustrate various aspects of family life to generate discussion. Learn family survival skills. Learn communication skills. Learn to be part of the solution and not the problem.

MBPC Dinner and a Movie



Sunday, February 26

5:00 PM in the Reception Room

Groundhog Day (PG)

Starring

Bill Murray and Andie MacDowell

A weather man (Bill Murray) is reluctantly sent to cover a story about a weather-forecasting "rat" (as he calls it). This is his fourth year on the story, and he makes no effort to hide his frustration. On awaking the 'following' day, he discovers that it's Groundhog Day again, and again, and again. First he uses this to his advantage, then comes the realization that he is doomed to spend the rest of eternity in the same place, seeing the same people do the same thing EVERY day.

Slowly, he goes through a transformation. He learns to see the "glass as half full rather than half empty." What is so powerful about *Groundhog Day* is the way it lets us experience what it would be like to make a breakthrough like this in our own lives.

The cost to cover the food is \$5 for adults, \$2.50 for children/youth.

WHAT**WHEN
WHERE**

Sunday, April 29, 2012
2:30 p.m.

(Registration opens at 1:45 p.m.)

Caldwell Park

(Across from Virginia Samford Theatre, 1116 26th St. So.)

WHO

...Gets the money? One-fourth of the funds raised stays in the Birmingham area to support hunger and poverty fighting programs. The 2012 walk will support the work of **Greater Birmingham Ministries**. The remaining money is used by **Church World Service** to alleviate hunger throughout the world.

...Is Helped? In addition to assisting hungry families in Birmingham, CROP helps families in the U.S. and around the world who are victims of disasters like the U.S. Southeast tornadoes, the earthquake in Haiti, and refugees fleeing war or famine in countries in the horn of Africa.

...Participates? Teams and individuals from public and private schools, civic and cultural groups, area businesses, and all faith groups - Protestant, Catholic, Orthodox, Jewish, Muslim, etc.

COST

No fee to participate. All donations are helpful, but each walker is encouraged to raise \$100 or more. The Birmingham CROP Hunger Walk hopes to raise \$30,000 in 2012.

INFO

Contact William Blackerby at William@gbm.org or 205-326-6821 ext. 108.

Website: www.bhamcropwalk.org

INDEPENDENT PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH RELIGIOUS ARTS FESTIVAL CHILDREN'S PRESENTATION ABOUT THE PIPE ORGAN WEDNESDAY, FEBRUARY 8, 2012 AT 6:30 P.M.

All children, K through grade 6, are invited to join us on a field trip Wednesday, February 8, 2012, to the IPC Religious Arts Festival. The program is a children's presentation about the pipe organ. John Panning of Dobson Pipe Organ Builders will be the presenter. IPC has recently purchased and installed a new

pipe organ for their sanctuary. This presentation about the organ should be fun as well as informative. Please contact Peggy Thompson to sign-up for the trip. We will be eating dinner early and leaving the church at 6:00 for the 6:30 program.

For a complete line-up of the 41st Annual Religious Arts

Festival, visit www.ipc-usa.org/concertschedule.

IPC
41st annual
Religious Arts Festival



LAST CHANCE TO SIGN-UP! WHAT'S YOUR INTEREST?



Have you seen the sign-up board for "Interest Groups" in the narthex?

Don't miss the opportunity to join others who have the same interest as you by joining an "INTEREST GROUP." After you sign up, the group will then choose a facilitator and agree on a time to meet, a place to meet, and how often to meet. Topics of interest include:

- The spiritual growth of children
- Single parenting
- Parenting a teenager
- Money management
- Marriage and family
- Divorce
- Facing retirement
- Aging parents
- Facing death
- Cooking with local ingre-

dients

- Theater
- Books
- Subject of the day

You can sign up by calling the church (967-5037) or on line by contacting Peggy Thompson at pegthompson@aol.com.

Deadline to sign up is **SUNDAY, FEBRUARY 5, 2012**

WHY?

The "why" question is difficult to answer. One way to get at that question is to change the question. Years ago, Harold Kushner, a Rabbi, wrote a book entitled, *When Bad Things Happen to Good People*. In the book, Rabbi Kushner made it clear that the better question to ask has to do with how we survive when the bad things happen.

A very short answer to "Why?" is that we do not know. The better questions are "How?" and "What?" How do we survive and what do we do?

It seems to me that every time a tragedy strikes, whether of human construction or what we name as "natural," clergy of all faiths are asked, "Why?" Some faith traditions have simple answers to that question: it is Karma and the tragedy balances some horrible thing you did in a previous incarnation. Christians do not believe that.

One of the great mysteries of our faith is the crucifixion.

Why did God let Jesus die on the cross? Our theology answers that by saying because God loved us so much that God allowed Jesus to die for us. That satisfies some people but not everyone. Then the question comes, "Where was God when Jesus was tortured and died?" The answer is, right there with him. Which is the same answer to the question, "Where was God when the tornado struck?" Right there beside us.

When Christians experience tragedy, we often are angry at God for allowing it. That is a normal human response and I am convinced that God can handle our anger. After I have shouted my anger at God, then what? I believe that is when we have the opportunity to experience transformation. I believe that it is often in those moments, sometimes very low moments -- what the saints refer to as the "dark night of the soul" --

that we feel closest to God.

In our lowest, most desperate moments we feel the presence of God.

Our God is not like other gods. Our God suffers with us and for us. God is not the god of magic. To the disappointment of many, God does not prevent tragedy. But God is with us in the tragedy.

If God is all-powerful, why does God not cure all diseases, or better yet, prevent them from ever happening? Why does God not prevent famine, drought, and plague? Why does God not prevent hurricanes and tornadoes? I do not know, but here is what I think. God loves us so much that God wants us to experience life to the fullest, even when that includes heartbreak and tragedy because they are a part of life. And in the heartbreak and tragedy, God stands with us as one of us in Jesus Christ.

By Cary Speaker

Who doesn't love fresh, homemade baked bread?



*"I am the bread of life. He who comes to me will never go hungry, and he who believes in me will never be thirsty."
John 6:35*

The youth bake bread that feeds you physically and gives them the opportunity to go feed their spiritual well-being by attending the Montreat Youth Conference.

*Bread will be baked and ready for pick up from the Fellowship Hall
Sunday, March 11
following worship until 1:30 p.m.*

*Paid pre-orders
are being taken until March 7.*

*Pre-Order Price: \$5.00 Artisan bread
\$5.50 Cinnamon bread*

*Purchase on Sunday, March 11
\$6.00 Artisan bread
\$6.50 Cinnamon bread*

Bread Pre-Order Form

Please include your check or cash with your pre-order.

Make checks payable to MBPC,
mark for Youth Fundraiser.

Name: _____

Phone: _____

_____ Artisan bread (\$5.00 each)

_____ Cinnamon bread (\$5.50 each)

TOTAL \$ _____

Mail or bring your pre-order and check
to the church office.

MBPC
3405 Brookwood Road
Birmingham, AL 35223

NURSERY NEWS

Mountain Brook Presbyterian Church Nursery enables parents to participate in the life and worship of the church with confidence, knowing that their children are well cared for and safe. Mountain

Brook Presbyterian Church Nursery provides an unconditionally loving environment for the children entrusted to our care. Through the nursery we hope to surround our children in a community of

love and forgiveness that they may grow in their understanding of God's love.

WELCOME MORGAN ROGERS!

Morgan Rogers is our new MBPC Nursery Attendant. Morgan grew up in Mountain Brook and in fact attended the MBPC preschool. She has been a MBPC preschool teacher for several years.

Having three children of her own and working with children in the MBPC preschool, she is very qualified and experienced. Please stop in to see her and make her feel welcome! If you know of

families with babies and toddlers, please invite them to visit our church. We know their babies and toddlers would love it here!

BIBLE STUDIES

Weekday Bible Studies

Led by Rev. Cary Speaker (Both meet in the conference room of the Administration Building.)

Tuesday Mornings at 10:00 a.m.

This study group is using the Kerygma publication *Psalms: Passion, Promise and Praise*. This

book explores the richness of the Psalms in terms of spirituality, personal growth, and worship. Everyone is invited to attend.

Friday Mornings at 7:30 a.m.

The Gospel of Matthew is the focus of this Bible study. Cary uses Dale Brunner's two vol-

ume theological commentary of Matthew as a reference. This Bible study does not demand homework. It will help if you have read the text for the day before you arrive, but even that should not stop you from joining. The style of this study is "slow and steady." Everyone is welcome.



Thanks Amigo's!

The Youth of MBPC greatly appreciates your generous support during our Chili Fundraiser!

We have deemed it a huge success thanks to YOU!



STEPS 2 DISCIPLESHIP: WEDNESDAY NIGHTS AT MBPC

Blessed Yoga

5:00-6:00 PM in the Reception Room

No previous experience with yoga is necessary, and participants can be anywhere between ten and a hundred years old, male or female, and any fitness level. Please bring a yoga mat, wear stretch clothes, be prepared to practice barefoot, and have an empty stomach. Kathryn Woodson Barr is the leader.

Dinner

Wednesday dinner in Fellowship Hall begins at 6:00 PM.

Adults - \$6 / Children - \$3 / Family Maximum - \$15

Godly Play (children age 4-grade 6) 6:30-7:00

Godly Play is an experiential way of teaching. Bible stories are told very simply without interpretation or moral instruction. This method of spiritual formation invites personal involvement in the story, using a child's natural sense of imagination and wonder.

Jubilation Choir (children age 4-grade 6) 7:00-7:30

Choir gives children the opportunity to use their voices in worshiping God. Through rhythm, movement, vocalization and working together as a group, children develop discipline and cooperation.

Frazzles Families in February 6:45-7:30

Wednesday nights in February (except Ash Wednesday) for youth and adults

Cary will show movie clips that illustrate various aspects of family life to generate discussion. Learn family survival skills. Learn communication skills. Learn to be part of the solution and not the problem.

Chancel Choir 7:30

The Chancel Choir provides music for the 11:00 worship services and special services throughout the year. Rehearsals are Wednesdays at 7:30 in the choir room. Membership is open to any youth or adult.

SUNDAY SCHOOL AT A GLANCE

On Sundays a nursery is provided for birth to age 2 from 10:30 until noon.

Adult Sunday School 9:30-10:30

The *Adventure Class* meets in the reception room. They are studying the book of *Genesis*. This class is led by Larry Harper.

The *Other Class* meets in the Pastor's Classroom in the Administration Building and is led by Rev. Cary Speaker. They are studying the book, *The Greatest Prayer: Rediscovering the Revolutionary Message of the Lord's Prayer* by John Dominic Crossan.

parenTeen 10:00-10:40

This class for youth and parents meets in the St. Stephen Youth Room. Their curriculum explores the application of Biblical issues to everyday life. Each lesson is co-taught by a youth and an adult.

Children's Sunday School

2 and 3 Year Old Class
11:00-Noon

The sessions are directed toward developing the faith of children between the ages of two and four. This Sunday school class offers them a learning experience that allows them not only to learn about the stories of their faith, but also live and play in

them. This class meets in Room 109 next to the nursery.

Step x Step Kids Learn 2 Live B.I.G. 11:15-12:15

Age 4 through Grade 2 meet in room 201 St. Stephen

Grades 3 through 6 meet in room 208 St. Stephen

Following the Passing of the Peace in the worship service, children age 4 through grade 6 are invited to leave with their teachers for Sunday school. (On the first Sunday of each month, there is no Sunday School for age 4 through grade 6. Families are encouraged to worship together and join in the celebration of communion.)

EPIPHANY PROCESSIONAL ON JANUARY 8



JANUARY 2012 SESSION HIGHLIGHTS

Mission: Margaret Nichols

We distributed 3300-3400 food items to Bridge Ministries during 2011.

The Church World Service's Crop Walk for Hunger will be held April 29, and all members are encouraged to get involved.

Finance: Bill Hester

Year-end projections -- estimate that we will receive \$385,000 in income for 2011 against a plan of \$400,400.

Estimated spending for the year is \$411,000. \$301,567 has been pledged for 2012 verses \$296,638 pledged for 2011.

The Session is encouraged to begin thinking of alternative revenue sources which would not jeopardize the church's not-for-profit status.

The Annual Congregational Meeting be held February 19.

Christian Education: Drew Spransy

Applications are being accepted for the nursery position. [That position was filled soon after the meeting.]

The Youth will be hosting a chili dinner January 11 to raise money for their trip to Montreat.

Alexandria Parrish was elected Church Treasurer for 2012.

Suzanne Cook, Clerk

LITURGIST NEEDED IN 2012

The on-line sign-up for liturgists and minute for missions is awaiting your name!

1. Visit www.signupgenius.com
2. Click on the FIND A SIGNUP tab

3. Type in CosperP@charter.net
4. Select 2012 WORSHIP SIGN UP.
5. A new window will open. Click on the Sign-

up button and type in your name.

6. Or - simply call the church office to find out available dates!
Easy!

THANK YOU

Thank you so much for your wellwishing letters, delicious food, lovely gifts, and encouraging phone calls during my illness. I truly appreciate having a wonderful church to look after me.

Thank you again.

Sincerely,
Ann Massey

THANK YOU

Ben McKinnon loved his church and the people who attended. The McKinnon family greatly appreciated all that the church members did during his illness.

Thank you for your donations and all the kindness you showed to him and the McKinnon Family.

Justin Unkel
Lisa McKinnon
Ellen McKinnon
Sharon Bruns

SCOUT SUNDAY

Scout Sunday

Sunday, February 12

Please join us as we celebrate our scouts!





MOUNTAIN BROOK
PRESBYTERIAN
CHURCH

3404 Brookwood Road
Birmingham, Alabama 35223

Phone: 205-967-5037

Fax: 205-967-4945

Email: bhartley@mbpcusa.org

WE'RE ON THE WEB

WWW.MBPCUSA.ORG

THE TOMATO VINE

The MBPC garden has been on a holiday break. Our little beets and their greens were harvested the first part of December, along with some salad mix. We may yet see some more salad mix in our future.

In the meantime, the collards and carrots will continue to

hang out and do their thing. We'll be harvesting collards periodically for the rest of the winter, and the carrots will come out sometime in the early spring.

Stay tuned in January and February for opportunities to come out and help get our garden ready for next season.

If you'd like to receive email updates, email Charlie Hunter, cshunter@gmail.com.

- Charlie Hunter

