



The Bertha E.R. Strosacker

Memorial Presbyterian Church

A House of Prayer for All People

1310 Ashman Street
Midland, Michigan 48640-5493

UPCOMING MPC EVENTS

Palm Sunday

April 10 at 9:00 & 10:45 a.m.

Maunder Thursday Communion Service

April 14 at 7:00 p.m.

Good Friday Tenebrae Service

April 15 at 7:00 p.m.

Easter Sunday

April 17 at 9:00 & 10:45 a.m.

Booked for a Spiritual Journey

April 19 at 4:00 p.m.

Lux Women's Choir Concert

May 1 at 2:00 p.m.

Men of Music Concert

May 3 at 7:00 p.m.

Presbyterian Women Spring Rummage Sale

Ingathering: May 1, 12:00 – 5:00 p.m.

Sale Day: May 3, 12:00 – 7:00 p.m.

Half-Price Sale Day: May 4, 12:00 – 6:00 p.m.

\$2-a-Bag Sale Day: May 5, 9:00 a.m. – 12:00 p.m.

Crawfish Boil

May 21 from 12:00 noon to 3:00 p.m.

Baccalaureate Sunday

May 22 at 10:45 a.m.

Church Picnic

June 5 at 12:15 p.m.

Vacation Bible School

June 6 – 8 from 9:15 a.m. to 12:15 p.m.

Confirmation Sunday

June 12 at 10:45 a.m.

Sunday Morning Adult Bible Study

9:45 to 10:30 a.m.

Men's Bible Study

Wednesdays at 7:30 p.m.

PW Thursday Morning Bible Study

9:30 to 11:00 a.m.



illumination.

Re-Creation

By: The Rev. Matthew Schramm, Senior Pastor and Head of Staff



These days can get repetitive. I would imagine that in our school or work there are certain tasks that “get old,” where the shine fades just a bit over time and we find ourselves counting the minutes rather than our blessings. This is one reason that vacation - rest, Sabbath, time off (whatever you want to call it) - is so important. As I saw

so many folks posting photos from warmer climates over Spring Break, I began longing for Spring and Summer here as well, a time when many of us will be enjoying the outdoors, the sun, time with family and friends — the joys of the warmer months in our great State of Michigan. As we emerge from a long winter, it is time for recreation!

Now, of course, when I write “recreation,” we hear it in our heads as it would sound if I were to say “Parks & Recreation.” But, in the coming season, I am going to try and embrace time for recreation as time for Re-Creation. As you might expect, Webster defines “recreation” as the “refreshment of strength and spirits after work” while ‘re-creation’ is “the act of creating something new” (whatever happened to that elementary school rule where you can’t use part of a word to explain its definition?). By that definition, we are always in the midst of re-creation, as we are always receiving and processing information, physically changing and moving, feeling emotions and having experiences that make us very literally “different” than we were just moments ago.

Sometimes our re-creation is obvious. For me, it couldn’t be more clear than when I have the privilege of officiating a baptism. In doing so, I can feel the joy all around, the hope of a blessed future and the gravity of the vows we make to God and one another. In this

moment, God breaks into our midst with a promise of forgiveness and a challenge to live as Christ lived. God marks one among us as Christ’s own, re-creating the one who is baptized in our presence. And, for me, I am moved deeply - changed, re-created and renewed by a rebirth of joy and hope - each and every time I hold a child and say, “I baptize you in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit.”

It is a gift of grace. Recently, I have begun using a portion of the French Reformed Baptismal Liturgy, as adapted by the Church of Scotland, to tell the Christian story when we baptize. It speaks directly to the “little one” about all that Christ has done - Jesus’ birth, life, death, and resurrection - and how he has done all this, “though you do not know it yet. And so the word of Scripture is fulfilled: ‘We love because God loved us first.’” We remember the words of Scripture, that “he saved us, not because of righteous things we had done, but because of his mercy. He saved us through the washing of rebirth and renewal by the Holy Spirit” (Titus 3:5).

So, if God has created us - and re-created us in our baptism - should we not live each day in a manner that shows gratitude for that gift?

This Spring, take time in your recreation to think about your life and the ways you are growing and learning, how you are being re-created by God to serve even more faithfully into the future. This has been a long winter, both literally and metaphorically. We emerge from a season of pandemic, illness, and isolation to embrace a season of re-creation: coming near to God, beginning again, gathering strength for the journey, and knowing that we are loved, forgiven, and free.

What is God stirring within you for your re-creation? There is no better time than now to remember the promise of “joy that comes in the morning” and that God is making all things new — even us.

-Pastor Matt

ILLUMINATION

Thanks for picking up *Illumination*, a publication of Memorial Presbyterian Church in Midland, Michigan.

A Welcoming Community of Faith for Over 150 Years

MPC is a Christ-centered community of believers that is part of the Presbyterian Church U.S.A. We are a welcoming community of faith for all people: sharing, growing in, and living the Good News of Jesus Christ! And we live it out through worship, study, fellowship, and service. In everything, we want to point to Christ.

There's a place for you at MPC! We are in the heart of Midland, Michigan, connecting people with their faith and one another. You'll find that we want all people to feel welcome to find a place where they can grow in faith and where their gifts can be used in meaningful ways that impact this world. We invite you to join us as we share, grow in, and live the Good News!

WORSHIP WITH US

We invite you to join us each Sunday at 9:00 a.m. for our contemporary worship service or at 10:45 a.m. for our traditional worship service. We are broadcasting each service on our website, mempres.org, and the church Facebook page.

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Front Cover: Putting their hearts and hands into action Ethan Dastick and Bob Broekhuizen volunteer at a Habitat Revitalization project.

Photo Credit: Linda Kennan

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Thank you to everyone who shared their gifts of writing and photography with us for this publication. We greatly appreciate your ministry through *Illumination*.

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Contact *Illumination* at info@mempres.org.

Illumination is published by MPC for all congregation members and distributed throughout our Midland community.

Holy Week

SCHEDULE

Palm Sunday April 10	9:00 A.M. - ASSEMBLY ROOM 10:45 A.M. - SANCTUARY
Maundy Thursday April 14	7:00 P.M. - ASSEMBLY ROOM
Good Friday April 15	7:00 P.M. - SANCTUARY
Easter Sunday April 17	9:00 A.M. - SANCTUARY 10:45 A.M. - SANCTUARY

Live-stream available on mempres.org and [Facebook.com/MPCMidland](https://www.facebook.com/MPCMidland)

IT'S HIGH SCHOOL SCHOLARSHIP SEASON!

Memorial Presbyterian Church in Midland has several scholarships available to seniors graduating from high schools in Midland County.

Scholarships open to graduating seniors who members of MPC:

THE MARK SHELDON AND MILDRED PLATE PUTNAM MEMORIAL SCHOLARSHIP

THE CATHARINE ANN & CYNTHIA CHRISTINE RING MEMORIAL SCHOLARSHIP

THE GEORGE AND JEAN METCALF MEMORIAL SCHOLARSHIP

NATIONAL PRESBYTERIAN COLLEGE SCHOLARSHIPS

Scholarships open to all graduating seniors in the Midland community:

THE CHARLOTTE B. CURRIE MEMORIAL SCHOLARSHIP

THE LAURIE ANN KARPIUK-DICKERSON MEMORIAL SCHOLARSHIP

THE BETH ANN HODGES MEMORIAL SCHOLARSHIP

THE DALE THOMAS DEAN MEMORIAL SCHOLARSHIP

THE OPERATION FUN ANNIVERSARY SCHOLARSHIP

THE WINSTON TRUST MEMORIAL SCHOLARSHIP

Visit mempres.org/scholarships to fill out an on-line application!
Applications will be accepted until April 13, 2022.



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CHAPEL LANE PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH UPDATE

By: Tracy Perry

One of our strongest desires is to belong, to know and be known, to love and be loved, to accept and be accepted. As children of God, we have the blessing of knowing our sisters and brothers at Memorial Presbyterian Church will love and pray for us through difficult and joyful times. During this past year, as Chapel Lane Presbyterian Church (CLPC) members blended with MPC, an opportunity for alternative utilization of the CLPC building emerged. In support of CLPC's desires and in coordination with MPC's long history of local outreach, we are partnering with Michael (Mike) De Ruyter to create a mission to identify and fill an unmet need in the Midland Community. Mike was the Pastor of the Midland Reformed Church for 18 years and is currently serving as Chaplain at the Midland Jail with Forgotten Man Ministries.

As members and friends of MPC, we have a strong and faithful congregation and strive to be a welcoming community for ALL PEOPLE; sharing, growing in, and living the Good News of Jesus Christ. Last year the Lake Huron Presbytery & the MPC Session accepted the following proposal from the transition team: A six-month project for feasibility study and plan development to extend the CLPC 60-year spiritual heritage through a Memorial Presbyterian Church initiative to extend ministry outreach locally. Utilizing the CLPC building to provide access to ministry in worship through religious programming, engagement opportunities and relationship building for those in our community who may not feel included or who may be underserved. Further to hire Michael DeRuyter, as an independent contractor, to review project feasibility and develop a strategic & implementation plan for The Table. Upon blending, CLPC funds were separated and will be used for the scope and

feasibility of this project. Program sustainability is an integral part of the feasibility study, including financial support and support from community partners.

Mike proposed the name for the project as "The Table", which will be a place to share meals and conversation, providing inclusion and belonging. Further, the vision is that The Table will be inclusive for all, targeting the marginalized and well connected from our community to come together for mutual spiritual, emotional and relational growth. This will be accomplished by sharing meals together; by learning together; through peer and mentor relationships. Table specific programs will recognize that healing and wholeness require genuine encounter with God, to this end there is a plan to include worship services along with a variety of other programs. The building design provides separate spaces for larger meetings or individual counseling sessions, but then the center of the CLPC building pulls people together for worship and to share a meal. Mike has identified several Midland Community Leaders to speak with to gather information and support. He has already met with Leaders from local Non-Profit Agencies, Churches, Legal representation, and Psychologists to discuss the plan and further refine the mission based on community needs. There is excitement and energy about The Table from these leaders. Initial dialog with Mike and the transition team began in January. Periodic reports and communications are scheduled with a final feasibility and scope of the project presented to MPC's Session mid-summer.

Here is what we ask from our members:

- Be prayerful and supportive of Mike DeRuyter, Matt Schramm and the transition team as we work to gather information and feedback from our community stakeholders
- Be patient during the process, as no decisions have been made and the scope of the project is under refinement
- Maintain your open and loving hearts as we follow our Lord's direction for community outreach
- Listen to the song & watch the video of our 9AM Worship Band singing "Come to the Table" by the Sidewalk Prophets at <https://youtu.be/OFe-DZiHOj0>



**"If you are more fortunate than others, it's better to build a longer table than a taller fence."
-Anonymous**

MPP

MEMORIAL PRESBYTERIAN PRESCHOOL

By: Wendy Lewis

The Memorial Presbyterian Preschool is truly a preschool for families from all regions of the world. We welcome children from the Midland area and those who move to this area. We are especially blessed this year to welcome a number of families from other states and countries. I would like to introduce you to five of our kiddos.

Here is a bit about our students from South Korea, India, Niger, Arizona, and Turkey.

Jamin (Jamie) is in the 3-year-old classroom. He was born in Gumi, Gyeongsangbuk-do, South Korea. His parents are Yangsub (father) and Hwagyeony (mother). They moved to the United States in November, 2021, for Yangsub's job. Two years ago, the semiconductor material company in Korea that Yangsub worked for acquired the semiconductor material business from DuPont. He was asked to join the Auburn subsidiary and support that company.

The family heard about our preschool from their kind neighbor, Tawny. Tawny emailed Yangsub saying, "If you haven't already found a preschool, the one at Memorial Presbyterian is one of the best in the city." The family also appreciated that we are faith-based (they are Christians and want Jamie to grow up in faith), the teachers have good reputations and Jamie's teacher lived in Korea for 3 years.

At preschool, Jamie likes to play at the sand and water table, paint, ride on the slide, and play with cars. When Jamie was asked if he has made any friends, he said, "The kids are nice but they all speak English."

The family misses their family and friends in Korea the most. They will invite their parents to visit their home in Midland this summer. They believe their parents will love Midland, too.

If you see Jamie's family, please say, "*Annyeong*" (hello).

Shrivika is in the 3-year-old classroom. She is from the City of Mumbai, State of Maharashtra, and Country of India. Her parents are Sriom (father) and Shruti (mother) and she has

an older sister. They moved to the United States for Sriom's job, eight years ago.

They feel Midland is very friendly, helpful, kind, and welcoming; it feels like home. Midland also has great architecture with beautiful parks and a good education system.

At preschool, Shrivika enjoys group time, playing on the playground, playing with toys which help her motor developing skills and intellectual skills, her friends, and her teachers. She greets everyone with a huge smile!

The family misses their family and friends in India. They also miss all the festivals and the food.

If you see Shrivika's family, please say, "*Namaskara*" (hello).

Isaac is in the 4-year-old classroom. He was born in Niger, which is in the Sahel region, at the base of the Sahara Desert (it is hot and sandy). His parents are Michael (father) and Rachel (mother). Isaac has 3 older siblings. Isaac's family moved to Niger to work alongside the PCUSA partner church - the EERN. Michael was helping develop a community health program for the EERN that also supported evangelists in their small communities. Michael and Rachel lived in Niger for 7 years. They considered moving back to the United States because they felt it was time to make a change for the social and educational needs of their children; but it was so hard to leave Niger. Their hearts were sold on moving to Midland when Michael was offered a position at the Memorial Presbyterian Church as an Associate Pastor and because MPC has an active relationship with Niger (so they can continue some of their work there).

At school, Isaac enjoys playing dinosaurs with new friends and playing outside on the playground. He always has an excited wave for teachers and aides when they see him on the playground.

The family misses Hassan - their semi-adopted son - and many other friends that are like their family. People aside, they miss the ability to play outside in their "sandbox" for



Jamin (Jamie)



Shrivika



Isaac



Landon



Zeynep

hours each day, as all year the weather was play-outside-in-the-shade type weather. They miss watching the sun set over their neighborhood on the porch roof, and playing with kids on the streets. They miss their dog, Hakori, and cat, Haruna. They miss being greeted by children when walking errands or going to greet neighbors. They miss their beat up 1996 Rav 4 that had a metal seat with seatbelts soldered in the trunk to fit their family. They miss their home, especially the cement walls around it that were so fun to climb. They miss their mango and lime trees. They miss speaking Hausa daily. It is strange for them not to be surrounded by Nigerien culture.

It would bring Isaac's family great joy to return to Niger someday. (Some of the family would like to rotate - 2 days in Midland, 2 days in Niger.) They know God has them in Midland for His purposes and they are excited to grow roots in Midland.

If you see Isaac's family, please say, "Sannu" (hello).

Landon is in the Young 5's class. He was born in Millcreek, Utah to Seth and Audrey. Landon is the middle child with 2 siblings on each side. The family moved to Arizona when Landon was 3. In November, they moved to Midland to be closer to their grandparents and to live more affordably.

The family enjoys the Midland community and how friendly folks are. The children enjoy the winter snow. The family misses living near their cousins in Arizona. Mom and dad miss the beautiful winters in Arizona.

Landon can be found playing at the sand table or with the train set at school. He enjoys talking about his family and favorite memories of Arizona.

If you see Landon's family, please say, "Hello."

Zeynep is in the Young 5's classroom. She was born in Istanbul, Turkey to Senol (father) and Ebru (mother). When she was two, the family of 3 moved from Turkey to Ohio.

Senol was pursuing a master's degree and Ebru felt she had more opportunities to use her degree in engineering. After two years in a master's program, Senol accepted a job at Halla Mechatronics in Bay City. When Ebru knew they were moving to this area, she did her research and chose Midland because of the high public school ratings.

The family moved to Midland in December of 2021. They find Midland to be a small city but one that has everything they need; such as indoor and outdoor playgrounds, amusement center, library, community center, and other family friendly venues. They really like the City Forest, especially sliding on the toboggan run, ice skating, and jogging in the woods.

Zeynep enjoys drawing, painting, and dressing up in fancy princess outfits. Although we communicate with her through smiles and Google translate; everyday she surprises us with her growing knowledge and comprehension of the English language. She giggles when holding her teacher's hand and skipping around.

As much as the family enjoys the United States, they miss their family and friends in Turkey. They also miss Turkish foods. They look forward to a visit to Turkey this summer.

If you see Zeynep's family, please say, "Merhaba" (hello).

No matter where the family origin is, at the Memorial Presbyterian Preschool we are all family. The children will meet new friends, have fun, feel loved and feel safe. Whatever language we speak, a smile is our universal language - it breaks all barriers (though, I would be remiss if I did not give a huge shout-out to Google Translate).



HERBERT AND TOMMY MEET COWBOY

By: Tommy, Herbert (the Talking Presbyterian Church Mouse), and Mike Hoy (Herbert's Story Editor)

Last Sunday, as I was getting ready to leave and passed by the pulpit, I heard a clearing of a throat so I looked up and found Herbert standing there with paws on hips. "Well, when were you going to introduce me to that big black dog that follows you around all the time?" asked Herbert from a safe distance.

Then I knew, based on his tone of voice, I best introduce the two of them and how could I have neglected to do so? "I'm sorry Herbert. Come on down and I will introduce you to the most well-mannered and smart dog I've ever known."

I decided to do this officially, so I said, "Herbert this is Cowboy my new service dog and Cowboy this is my long time friend Herbert. He has lived in the church since the first pipe organ was installed nearly 70 years ago. I hope the two of you get together and become good friends. I'm sure that Cowboy can be your transportation sometimes." Then Cowboy, who had been looking at Herbert, says "is he a new play toy?"

I felt that I best get on top of this and said "NO!" Herbert moves closer and I say "There, now you're eye to eye and can better greet one another." Cowboy licks him and Herbert cringing asks "yuck, what is this?" Chuckling just a bit, I say, "That is the way dogs say hello and find out whether you're good or not." Cowboy takes a step back and says "I think we'll be good friends you taste like a good mouse." Herbert looking at me asks "what does he mean—good—as in good taste or taste good?"

Before I could answer, Tommy comes running in and stops in his tracks when he sees Cowboy. "Wow, I heard that there was a big black dog in church. I did not know it was yours Mike. How come he is here?" "Well, Tommy," I say, "I have just introduced my new service dog, Cowboy, to Herbert and now you can meet him."

"That is so awesome! What can he do? Is he like a Leader Dog? "Kind of" I explain, "he has had special training specific to my needs. He came from an organization called PAWS With A Cause. Cowboy is what is called a combination dog because he is both a hearing and an assistance dog. If you can believe this, it took me awhile to learn all the commands. To be trained. Cowboy came with a trainer who worked with me until we became a team."

"How does he help with hearing?" asks Tommy. "Well, he alerts me to sounds I have difficulty hearing like smoke alarms, door bells, or even if someone calls my name, by nudging me in the leg."

"What else can he do?" asked Herbert. "Cowboy's favorite thing to do is pick up things that I drop including my cane, his leash, and bring me the phone when I ask for it. (The phone has a strap on it so he can grab with his mouth.) Many things are out of my reach, but with Cowboy nothing is anymore. One time, I was at a meeting and had dropped my hat, but didn't realize it until Cowboy had picked it up and brought it to me. Cowboy also has a special 'pull device' that he uses to open doors for me when I need it."

"Boy" says Tommy "I can see why you had be trained to keep up with Cowboy. Can Herbert and I pet Cowboy?" "Yes, though he is working, but because you asked, he will sit for you and then you both can briefly pet him. When he is not working, Cowboy likes to play fetch and get attention just like any dog."



KID'S CORNER



Join us for Worship!

Nursery Care is available on Sundays from 9:00 a.m. to 12:00 noon for children newborn to age 3.

BibleBLAST is worship enrichment and Sunday School for age 3 to grade 5.



DRAWING OUR CIRCLES WIDER

By: Sheryl Billmeier Hnizda, Children's Ministry Director

Recently, I attended the annual APCE conference in Chicago, Illinois. At the start of the week, the name was Association of Presbyterian Church Educators. By the end of the week, the new moniker was voted in as Association of Partners in Christian Education. Our theme was "Circle of Faith" and drew inspiration from Hebrews 12:1, "Therefore, since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, let us also lay aside every weight and the sin that clings so closely, and let us run with perseverance the race that is set before us." In an effort for PC(USA) to draw their own circles wider, the name change is more inclusive of their many other covenant denominations and faith partners.

At the conference, we always have open dialogue about current events and our role in secular society. Plenary sessions are packed with music, speeches and sermons, new insights, and fellowship. Workshops explore a wide range of topics that benefit all ages and all areas of a church's Christian education outreach. We also connect with other educators, share ideas, and learn from each other.

In one workshop, we delved deeper into how we can make well known Bible stories more relatable to children. For example, for the story of Adam and Eve, one aspect we can explore is how they were the first farmers of the earth. Children are very aware of precious natural resources, sustainability, and recycling. When we can add contemporary points into beloved Bible stories, we make deeper connections with God's plan for us. We can widen our circles of knowledge.

In another workshop, I learned about the role of Presbyterian Ministry at the United Nations. The Presbyterian church has been active in the UN since 1945 and a consultive partner since 1998, which allows the Presbyterian voice to be heard, inspire and equip others, and advocate for peace and justice in the global community. We also sampled "Engaging Our World," their adult Sunday School resource on the UN's 17 sustainable development goals. We can widen our circles of advocacy.

I learned about Story Productions, a ministry of Presbyterian Disaster Assistance that educates and engages the viewer through



film. Their film narratives on the Flint water crisis, US immigration detention centers, Indonesia's 2004 tsunami, US gun violence, and more can be found on their website, many with study guides and screening kits. We can widen our circles of transformation.

The next workshop I attended offered insight on the hallmarks of a thriving congregation. One point is to discern people's gifts and help them find a good fit with your church's needs. Another is to equip, thank, and support program volunteers. And we must never forget that our interactions should be Christ-centered. We can widen our circles of inclusion.

The well-being of children is near and dear to my heart, so of course I was interested in Mapping Children's Faith Formation. This research initiative of Union Presbyterian Seminary deals with innovative ways to increase at-home religious experiences, thereby making at-church worship more meaningful for families. We can widen our circles of inspiration.

Along with all this new-found knowledge, what I also enjoyed about this conference was the sense of community I felt among the participants. Although masking and social distancing was a bit of an obstacle, we still managed to have meaningful interactions. I was also excited to share this information with MPC, my circle of faith. And I love our scripture inspiration: WE are surrounded, let US lay aside every weight, let US run...the race that is set before US. We can widen our circles together.

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MISSION UPDATE

By: The Reverend Michael C. L. Ludwig, Associate Pastor

Alarm and Encouragement in Niger

We knew the security situation had really deteriorated when Issaka could no longer drive to check on the students at the hosting center. Memorial has partnered with the EERN (Evangelical Church in Niger) to buy land for this student hosting center, and churches from our Presbytery are committing to raise money for building a hostel that can serve the 50 students asking to live there. That's a lot of Christian students for the equivalent of one county, since Christians are only around 1% of the population. But it highlights how access to education in Niger, especially secondary education, is among the worst in the world.

Currently the EERN is renting a small house that holds 15 boys at this location, but the whole area has been on precarious footing since last Fall when terrorist cells from neighboring Burkina Faso started coming across the border. Up until then, Issaka, a member of the national church board had been faithfully visiting this city of Torodi, which is only about an hour outside of Niger's capital. But early this year, government workers started abandoning clinics and schools in most of the surrounding region because the terrorists were intimidating the village leaders through burning crops and schools. Fortunately, the government has been able to increase its security forces along the roads and in main towns like Torodi. This only makes the demand for student hosting centers greater, because more students have to leave their village areas to go to the biggest towns for middle school or high school.

Keeping Girls in School

Another positive part of the story is that the hosting center that is being prepared for is likely to have more female students. As we shared in last year's stewardship publication, it's been disappointing to see families be so hesitant to make use of the three existing hosting centers for their girls. For this reason, the pastor's family is now living in a connected set of rooms at the new centers being built. But in the Torodi area, several parents have already sent their daughters to live with this pastor's family because there is less danger of terrorists coming to bar girls from school in this bigger city. As the security situation settles, and we anticipate the money transfer from the PC(USA) Mission Agency, we hope that this hosting center can be ready for next school year.

Partnership and Strategic Connection

I'm planning a partnership-focused trip to Niger in August to keep up with the developments at the student hosting centers and the other work that the EERN church is doing. Over the past eight years that we worked along side the EERN, we found that making time to listen to the church leaders and let them talk about how God is leading them is one of the most important ways we can serve them. Listening and valuing the gifts that God

We found that making time to listen to the church leaders and let them talk about how God is leading them is one of the most important ways we can serve them.

is helping them to exercise is what they've told us is our biggest contribution to the increased strength of their church. We're also glad that they're committed to working hard on the projects we've shared in the past too.

The fish are growing in experimental fish farms. A taxi business is expanding to help to provide continued Community Health Evangelism (CHE) training for pastors and their spouses. This CHE training is now focusing more on equipping the pastors to be trainers of others in the health and development techniques they've learned.

I'm very pleased that Memorial has valued this connection with Christians in Niger enough to enable part of my work in congregational life and mission to focus on further nurturing mission partnerships. Since our Presbytery has now designated me a "Strategic Mission Liaison," Memorial will also be central in helping the Presbyterian churches in our area to engage with the EERN. I hope we can find a variety of different ways to connect with everything from students to women's fellowship to drama groups, in an effort to learn and build better relationships with the body of Christ half a world away. I believe we'll grow much more as we serve God by encouraging others and being encouraged at the gifts we discover in what they share with us as well.

The students and pastor in Torodi sit strategically in the shade of their next-door-neighbor's tree, as a pastor from the capital comes to visit and encourage them (standing).



These are the newest female students to be hosted by the Pastor at Torodi (left). They are being visited by the EERN's national secretary for education and his wife (Pastor Sani and Ruth).

SUICIDE PREVENTION

Introduced by Kellie Froelicher RN, BSN

While pondering various topics for this issue of Illumination, I came upon some posts from a friend of mine. Her family had experienced a tragedy; one that could have possibly been prevented if those around had had the knowledge of how to help. She has agreed to share her story with us.

Facts & Figures: Wrapping our Hearts and Minds around Death by Suicide
Written by: Julie Hart, MSA, Survivor of Suicide Loss

It has been said that data changes minds and stories change hearts. With that in mind, this article will contain both. Since I am a person that leads with my heart, I will start with the story.

On October 6, 2020, my 20-year-old nephew took his life while he was attending Michigan Tech University. Ben was a brilliant and talented young man with a limitless future. He was a 2018 graduate of Freeland High School where he was a captain on the varsity soccer team and a member of the honor society.

In addition to excelling in academics and on the soccer pitch, Ben played in the key position of goaltender on the combined Freeland, Nouvel, Valley Lutheran (FNV) varsity hockey team. Ben had been one of the greatest success stories of the FNV hockey. After three years of coming up short in making the roster, Ben demonstrated remarkable resiliency and tenacity in his senior year. He not only earned his roster position, but his poise, calmness, and leadership led his team to the most wins in a season by any FNV team. He went on to become a unanimous choice for the 1st team MidMichigan Conference goaltender for that season. Besides being successful on the ice and in his studies, his caring manner and generosity allowed him to tutor his teammates and mentor underclassmen. He was a very caring person who would do anything for his teammates.

At Michigan Tech University Ben's success continued in academics; he consistently made the Dean's list. In his second year he joined Sigma Tau Gamma and became the recruitment coordinator for the fraternity. The year he died, Ben recruited the largest group of Sig Tau members in the history of the chapter. That summer he tutored my son, his older cousin, through a college calculus class. When he died Ben was a college junior majoring in mechanical engineering. He had a brother, a sister, parents, aunts, uncles, cousins, and so many friends who loved him dearly and cheered his successes. It seemed to everyone Ben was doing great, and his death was a shocking tragedy.

We did learn after his death that Ben had confided to a couple of his friends, and they did what they knew best at the time, what any young person would likely have done if they had never been in that situation before. As good friends often do, they respected his wishes and did not share what he had told them with anyone. It is important to share this part of the story, not to place blame but because by sharing Ben's story we might help someone else who learns of another person's struggles. If you find yourself hearing another person say they have lost hope or that life feels pointless, you have an opportunity to help them decide to seek the help they need by showing them you care and destigmatizing mental health care. Finding yourself in such a situation can be very frightening; it is okay to tell others who can help.

Unfortunately, the data outlined below demonstrates the prevalence

of suicide in the United States and reinforces the need for community members to be aware of how to seek help.

- On average, there are 130 suicides per day.
- A total of 45,979 deaths were attributed to suicide in 2020
- Suicide is the 10th leading cause of death in the US and the 2nd leading cause of death for individuals between the ages of 10-34
- The rate of suicide is highest among middle aged white men. This group accounted for nearly 70% of deaths by suicide in 2019
- Other groups more likely to die by suicide include members of the military, first responders, medical professionals, and members of the LGBTQ community.
- Everyone can be at risk; suicide does not discriminate
- 93% of adults surveyed in the US believe suicide can be prevented.
- In fact, 90% of survey respondents said they would do something if they were worried about someone's mental health, but there are barriers
- Barriers to providing help include
 - o Fear of making the person feel worse
 - o Worry that using the word suicide will increase the likelihood of action
 - o Not knowing what to say or do

The good news is there are a variety of evidence-based training programs that can help people from a variety of backgrounds feel prepared to care for someone in crisis the same way CPR training helps community members save lives. Through recent grant funding, the Barb Smith Suicide Resource and Response Network will be providing numerous prevention trainings in Midland. For additional information visit www.srrn.net or call 989-781-5260

Additionally, I invite you to join Ben's Blue Stars Facebook group, a Facebook page dedicated to honor Ben with messages of hope, gratitude, and awareness of the importance of mental health and the promotion of wellbeing.

Sources: CDC and American Foundation for Suicide Prevention

Remember, help is available if you are in crisis, or if you are a friend or family member of an individual in crisis. If you are questioning the need to help, do not hesitate to ask.

**Are you in crisis? Call 800-273-8255 or
text TALK to 741741**



**American
Foundation
for Suicide
Prevention**

BELL TOWER RENOVATIONS

Restoring Our Church's Iconic Symbol

By: Martin Severance

The bell tower of our Memorial Presbyterian Church building is a familiar presence in the skyline of Midland, and at over 125 feet tall it is one of the tallest structures in the city. Regrettably, our beloved tower has experienced some rough going over the past couple of years. Repair efforts, led by Ivan Wood, are underway to restore the key functions of the tower so its iconic presence can be felt once again in our neighborhood.

Problems with the tower's two clocks were observed in early 2021. One clock faces Ashman Street and the other is directly opposite facing Rodd Street. It was noticed that neither clock was keeping correct time. There was much as two hours difference in the clocks' displayed times, although they are supposed to be synchronized. It was determined that the coupling on the rods that connect the two clocks to each other had broken; when one clock would advance, the other clock would not be able to advance by the same amount. Additionally, the Roman numeral "6" on the Ashman-side clock went missing and could not be located - it was ultimately found sometime later when the gutters were cleaned.

Arguably the most familiar aspect of our tower to the city of Midland is the regular ringing of its bells. The ringing has been a constant in our surrounding neighborhood for decades, chiming every quarter hour and playing hymn refrains on Sunday mornings. However, in late 2021 our neighbors were not too happy with us. The church office received calls saying the bells were ringing in the middle of the night, and whatever was playing was not recognizable. An investigation found that the computer

system that controls the ringing was failing and in need of replacement. A decision was made to terminate any ringing until a new solution could be installed.

Under Ivan's leadership, the church has been working with the Verdin Company of Cincinnati, Ohio, which specializes in all aspects of bell tower functions and is able to address both the issues with the clockfaces and bell ringing. A new digital system has been installed which will control both functions using the most up-to-date technology and will ensure reliable operation for years to come. The computer for the bells will be easier to program, and the chimes and music that is played can be managed locally at the church or even remotely by an app on a smartphone. Repairs have also been made to the largest bell, which weighs nearly 2500 pounds, which has not been able to swing for years.

At the time of this writing, the final revisions are still being made and are targeted for completion in early spring 2022. This includes reprogramming of the hymn tunes for the bells and installation of new hands for the clockfaces. The new hands will be made of lighter material to make it easier for the new mechanism to move them and will look identical to the original ones.

It won't be long until our tower clocks are keeping good time and the bells will be ringing joyfully once again! Recognition and gratitude go to Judy Dean and the Bridge family, whose donations enabled these repairs and upgrades to take place for the enjoyment of future generations.

CHURCH DIRECTORIES HAVE ARRIVED!

By: Tammy Hayhoe

They say a picture is worth a thousand words. Looking at a picture can stir up many memories, maybe not a thousand. Our new pictorial directory may do that but we hope it will calm your memory when you see people and can't remember who they are. That's happening way too frequently in my case. With our church family continuing to grow it is more of a challenge.

It's been way too long since our last directory. We've had a lot of change in our church family, leadership, loss of members, and many new members. Your church pictorial directory is kind of like looking at your family photo album or your school yearbook. It brings back memories and smiles.

We had 196 pictures in all and we thank all of you for participating. It warmed my heart to see how many of you included your "fur" children in your family pictures. They all didn't make it into the directory though...

One thing you won't see in the activity pages is any activity pictures starting from March 2020 forward when the world went on pause from the Covid pandemic because there were none. Stephanie Kirkpatrick and I went through the photo historical album and chose representative photos of prior times. We also didn't include pictures of folks in those attractive masks either since the purpose was to be able to identify people.

There will be new features available with this directory we haven't had in the past. We've had six prior directories since 1984. This is the third one I've been involved with and they continue to make advances. We will be able to take your photo and upload it into the REALM data base. You will also find pamphlets in the pews that resemble a mini directory with names and pictures only, it will give one the opportunity to do a quick search. We purchased these as a convenience for you. These are not meant to be removed from the pews or taken home. We can't replace them.

For those who had your photos taken or submitted your own pictures you will be eligible for a free directory and they will be available at the reception desk or from the office professionals during working hours - 8:30 - 4:30. Directories will also be available after the services. After 9:00 they will be available in the Assembly Room and 10:45 at the Reception desk. We will be able to record the receipt of your directory from the master list in order that we don't accidentally give out duplicate copies. If you did not have your picture taken but would like to obtain a directory, we did purchase additional copies to accommodate this and they are available for \$10.00 each.

Stephanie and I can tell you this was a long labor of love (2019). I learned a lot of new faces and names and now it's your turn. This can only make our church one big happy family.



YOUTH & YOUNG ADULT MINISTRY

By: *Elijah Schweikert, Interim Director of Youth & Young Adult Ministry*

We turn over to a new chapter as Katie Brinklow, our cherished Director of Youth Ministry has taken a step to further her career as Fund Development Specialist for Greater Midland Community Centers. Her five faithful years in service to our young people has made a positive impact in the lives of not only the youth, but also their families, the congregation, and the community at large. Her vibrant personality coupled with her drive to cultivate meaningful relationships gave us pause to think about what truly matters in life and live out those convictions!

Katie will indeed be missed as the Director of Youth ministry, but she won't be going far. She plans to remain in the area and keep her active membership status with the church. We expect to see her contagious smile with us in worship on Sundays and hope she can find time to volunteer elsewhere after she has settled into her new position. Her final day with MPC Youth Groups was February 27th, with a wonderful party organized by the Leonard family and other Growing Youth in Faith volunteers, and attended by youth, former youth, and well-wishers. The commemorative event featured some of the group's favorite foods and silly games to honor Katie and reminisce with the many young people who attended the celebration.

As Katie moves on to something new, Elijah Schweikert has taken on the role of Interim Director of Youth & Young Adult Ministry. This interim position will lead the program through the end of the school year and summer events while the GYiF and Personnel Committees take time to decide on a permanent Youth staffing. Eli's role at the church has been to oversee production of the 9:00 contemporary services with his gifts in music and technology. These responsibilities will be maintained alongside his responsibilities with the Youth Ministry. He is excited about the possibility of becoming a permanent part of the Youth & Young Adult ministry and looks forward to working closely with senior staff and volunteers to make the leadership transition a success.

GET TO KNOW ELI!

Elijah Schweikert began attending MPC in 2019, during his Junior year at Grace Christian University in Grand Rapids. After volunteering to help with sound at the 9am contemporary worship service, Eli was hired on a temporary basis to help with worship production part-time. His role expanded during the pandemic to include video production for choir and youth music projects, and livestream coordination at 9am. In 2021, Eli moved to half-time and was named the Assistant Director of Worship & Arts for Contemporary Worship, organizing and directing the praise band (including filling in on any instrument needed!), leading the technical production of the early service, and assisting with A/V at the 10:45.

He grew up in the church, as his father acquired his Master of Divinity from Rockbridge Seminary and remains an active member of a Southern Baptist congregation in Flushing, MI. Eli appreciates the reformed traditions of the Presbyterian denomination and is excited to continue learning what it means to be part of a Presbyterian Church.

Eli spent six summers touring the Midwest with the youth music ministry The Michigan Singers. He worked two summers at the Christian campground Warner Camp as a camp counselor in 2017 and 2018. In 2019, he volunteered with a group of students at Grace Christian University who played contemporary worship for several youth groups in the Grand Rapids area. He also made connections with South Grandville Christian Reformed Church in Grandville, MI and volunteered with their Wednesday night children's ministry. Since the beginning of the pandemic, he has been a regular volunteer leader with the MPC Middle School ministry.

Elijah graduated in 2021 with BA in Music for Worship Arts from GCU, while also holding an Associate's degree in Music Technology from Mott Community College. He is married to Natalie (Schwartz), a MHS graduate, who owns the local dance studio Elite Arts Company. They live near MPC in Midtown Midland.



WELCOME NEW MEMBERS...

Those listed below joined MPC through transfer from Chapel Lane Presbyterian Church since September 2021:

James & Eunice Allen
Eldon & Marian Ault
Arthur & Karla Beagle
Barbara & Donald Boyer
Howard ("Butch") & Judith Brauer
Tasha Burch & Dominic Sowle
Ernest Caldwell
Erlene Carmody
Roger Chaffee
June Churchman
William Coats & Sally Ginter-Coats
James, Kimberly, & Olivia Cross
Elizabeth Ann Evans
John & Carolyn Fraser
Nancy Frederixon

Howard & Nancy Graves
Joyce Hagen-Flint
David & Connie Herriman
Ronald & Bethany Hynds
Carol Jacobs
Kristina Jacobs
Mary Lou Kelly
Howard Lewis
Clarence & Joyce Licht
Francis & Elizabeth Martin
Patricia Martin
Jerry (Jim), Jennifer, & Olivia Mayer
Robert & Gail McGee
Nancy McGilliard
Rosa Miller
Douglas Moe

James & Ann Moe
Nancy Newman
Norman & Nancy Ott
Marjorie Rouech
Carol Rowe
TamiLea, Allen, Madison, & Vance Sowle
Nancy Stanley
Michael & Cathryn Starch
Sally Ann Sutton
Paula Ulmer
Carl & Nancy Vander Woude
Sarah, Elizabeth, & Catherine Wildfong
David & Winona Willing
Alice Wiltse
James, Jennifer, Sophia, & Isabel Winkler

Since the Fall, we have also welcomed into our membership those who have completed our New Member Classes:

MEET THE LAW FAMILY



Bethany, a Realtor at Modern Realty and Director of The ROCK Center for Youth Development and Russell, who works for the family business, Magline, Inc., are parents to 9 year old Aria, who competes in gymnastics and 6 year old Chanson, who loves hockey.

MEET THE BONE FAMILY



Andrew and Yolanda are returning members of MPC. They have two children, Amanda and Matthew. They are both Physicians at MidMichigan Health.

MEET THE FRAME FAMILY



Having worked in graphic design and technology, Stephen is a stay-at-home parent to their two children, Benjamin and Megan. Jennifer works in Human Resources at Dow, Inc. They come to us after transferring from another church in the community.

MEET ERIC & CARMEN



Eric Caldwell and Carmen Schepeler are engaged to be married at MPC in 2023. They currently reside in Kawkawlin. Eric is a Supply Planner at Trinseo. Carmen is a CPA with Weinlander Fitzhugh CPA's. Carmen was previously a member of Westminster Presbyterian Church.

MEET JANNA GETZIN



Janna Getzin is a talented art quilter, which has been a passion for 35 years. She's married to member Alan Getzin and is a mother of two daughters and raised a niece and nephew. Janna loves to cook, creating amazing jams. Her happy place is the cottage on Drummond Island, occupied from May to October.

MEET THE JOHNSON FAMILY



Erin and Jason have two sons, Easton and Torren. Jason works at J.E. Johnson. Erin is a Professor of Social Work at Ferris State University and a Clinical Therapist in Mental Health. Erin and her sons were welcomed in baptism this spring.

MEET THE VERESH FAMILY



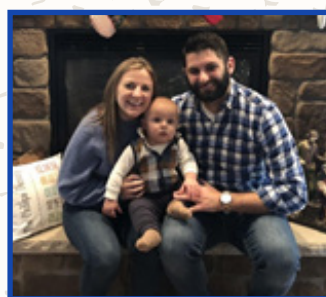
The Veresh's transferred their membership after Chapel Lane, the church where they were married, dissolved. Dan is a retired arborist who worked at Dow Gardens for 33 years and Sara is a clay artist and educator working for SVSU in the art department. Both enjoy doing volunteer work in Saginaw and their place up north (Midland). They have 2 kids and 3 grandchildren.

MEET THE LUDWIG FAMILY



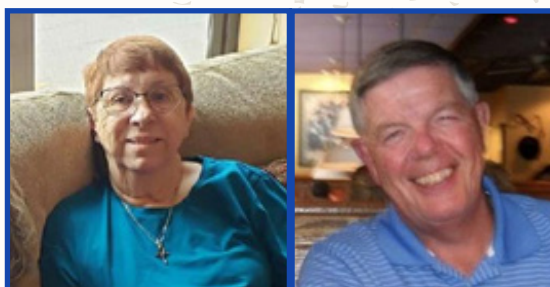
Recently moving back to the United States from Niger, the Ludwig family is enthralled with all the possibilities to be involved at Memorial Presbyterian Church. Rachel has been homeschooling their four children (plus or minus) for the last eight years and just sent the youngest off to MPC preschool 4 days a week as her first to send to school. Adeline, (12), Simeon (10), Zach (10) and Isaac (4) are so, so, so excited to be involved in the activities MPC has to offer for children.

MEET THE KWAPISZEWSKI FAMILY



Paige, being from Midland, grew up attending the family-friendly Christmas service the church had to offer. She always loved the way the church lit up around the holidays. Marc grew up in Bay City and together they have grown into Memorial Presbyterian. Marc and Paige married in this church in 2018 and have since added a little bundle of joy to their family and decided to join the church. They are excited to show Blake all that the church has to offer.

MEET THE PEARSEY FAMILY



Bill and Sue have returned to Midland and their home church after 21 wonderful years in Oro Valley Az. Having three children and their families living in Michigan made the decision easier for them. It is also nice to be reacquainted with friends they made when living here previously.

DEACON ORLOWSKI (July 9, 2006 - January 15, 2022)

Deacon grew up at MPC as an active part of the church since his baptism in 2009. After being diagnosed with cancer and beginning chemotherapy in early 2019, his faith was challenged very deeply, but he maintained a confidence that his hope was in Jesus Christ and the healing of heaven. As options for treatment grew more limited, it became his priority to fulfill the requirements of the Confirmation program. He completed the program in December of 2021, confirming the promises made in his baptism, and Deacon was welcomed into adult membership of the church and the MPC congregation. He appreciated that he was our only "Deacon" who wasn't ordained! Deacon was welcomed to eternal life on January 15, 2022. His funeral service has been viewed on MPC's facebook and website over a thousand times, and his life has provided a beacon of hope to all those who knew him.

