

Madison Avenue Presbyterian Church

PASTORAL STAFF LETTER

announcements, updates, and information for the weeks ahead



December 23, 2020 & January 6, 2021

A Letter from Rev. J. Patrick Vaughn

Dear Friends,

When the pandemic struck, I was living in Bedford, New York. It is a charming village with great people, and I loved living close to the city. My visits to Manhattan, of course, came to an abrupt end in March as did any opportunity Deb and I had to spend time together.

Deb is a chaplain in a retirement community, and it quickly implemented very strict protocols. Given the vulnerability of the people she served, we decided that we would not see one another. It simply wasn't worth the risk of possibly transmitting the virus.

Sixteen weeks passed before I traveled back to Pennsylvania.

I share this not to complain. I actually managed quite well, and, as many of you, I spent a lot of time on Zoom and FaceTime.

I appreciate the availability of these media. Bible studies, conversations with friends, confirmation classes, session meetings and weekly congregational fellowship gatherings continued unabated. With a little camera and a tiny microphone we were able to see and hear one another, nurture relationships, and be the church online.

Nevertheless, getting together online is not the same thing as getting together in person. As helpful as these were (and are), something was (and is) missing.

What is it?

In a word, skin.

We are tactile creatures, and we long to be near other tactile creatures. We want to shake hands and pat one another on the back. We dart our eyes to others in the room when a funny story is told, and we offer a tissue to a friend who is grieving.

During our time apart, I saw Deb on a screen, but I couldn't physically hold her when she was worried, and she couldn't hold me.

There is just no substitute for skin.

This is not a surprise to those of us who follow Jesus, the word of God who became flesh and lived among us. We call this the doctrine of the incarnation, and it reminds us that ours is the God who comes to us in this world, this *physical* world. The incarnation means that God comes to us in flesh and blood, in a baby, lying in a pile of straw.

The incarnation has always been a bit of a scandal in the church. Some early Christians called Docetists argued that Jesus was only a spirit and that when he walked he didn't even leave footprints in the sand.

But every year at Christmas we again refute this heresy, and we affirm the utterly unexpected good news that God comes to us as one of us. Christmas means that God has skin, and as Covid-19 has taught us, there is just no substitute for skin.

Wherever you might be and however you might celebrate, I hope you have a very merry (and safe!) Christmas.

Thinking of you,

Patrick

P.S. Elliot Henderson has created a Christmas gift for all of us to enjoy. Look in this Pastoral Staff Letter for more information!

For All the Saints

We learned this past week of the death of longtime MAPC member Kathranne Rossman, at the age of 100. Though Kathranne had moved to Pennsylvania about 18 years ago, she kept her membership at MAPC, and many will remember her. You can read Kathranne's obituary below:

[See the Obituary Here](#)

"Blessed are the dead who die in the Lord, says the Spirit. They rest from their labors, and their works follow them."

-Revelation 14:13

Christmas at MAPC Join Us for Virtual and In-Person Worship



VIRTUAL SERVICES:

- Our **Christmas Eve Family Service** will be on December 24 at 5 pm via Zoom. Everyone from our Church Family is welcome to participate in this service for children. Click below to join.

Meeting ID: 871 124 0151

Passcode: mapc

Dial 1 646 558 8656

[Join by Zoom](#)

- Our traditional **Christmas Eve Candlelight Service** will include a sermon by the Rev. Dr. J. Patrick Vaughn entitled "And That's All We Need to Know", music sung by the Choir of Madison Avenue Presbyterian Church accompanied by guest instrumentalists, and the celebration of communion. A link to the service will be emailed on Christmas Eve.

- Our **Christmas Day Service of Lessons and Carols**, featuring plenteous carols sung by the Choir of MAPC and readings offered by members of the congregation will be emailed on Christmas Morning.

IN-PERSON SERVICES:

- **We will offer two-30 minute, identical services on Christmas Eve at 6 pm and 9 pm.** These services will be similar to our Sunday Morning Prayer services, with appropriate stringent precautions in place. Both services will feature congregational carols, scripture readings, and prayers, with music sung by members of MAPC's professional octet. **Advance registration for these services is required.** Please sign up below!

[Sign Up Here](#)



Worship

Please join us for online worship.

The Rev. Beverly A. Bartlett will be preaching this coming Sunday, December 27. The title of the sermon is "To Those Who Wait".

Sunday Worship

Join us for pre-recorded services of worship on Sunday mornings.

Find all our services here:

[Click Here to Watch](#)

Cold Weather Accessories Drive

Throughout the winter, we will be giving away gloves, mittens, hats, and scarves to our Open Table guests. If you are able, please ship something from

[our Amazon wishlist](#) or send a monetary donation to the attention of the Outreach Committee.

Christmas Joy Offering

The annual Presbyterian Church (USA) Christmas Joy Offering supports retired pastors and church workers in need and equips leaders in Presbyterian communities of color. We encourage you to give generously as we collect this gift during the Christmas season. You may give online through our website by clicking on the button below. Select "Christmas Joy" from the drop-down list or send a check to the Church Office noting "Christmas Joy Offering" in the memo line.

[Give Here to the Christmas Joy Offering](#)

Morning Prayer In-Person

Please note there will be no in-person Morning Prayer services on December 27 or January 3.

MAPC Musical Performances

- Our **16th Annual Carol Sing**, a professionally recorded concert of seasonal readings, carols, and anthems by the Choir of MAPC and New York City Children's Chorus, accompanied by organ, harp and violin can be viewed [here](#). The concert program (PDF) may be downloaded [here](#) so that you may sing along! If you have not yet made a contribution the continuing work of the Saint Andrew Music Society this season, you may make a donation online through our [website](#) (selecting "Saint Andrew Music Society" in the drop-down list).
- Our **New York City Children's Chorus** has created a virtual choir performance of "O Come, All Ye Faithful" as a holiday gift for all. Please view the performance [here](#), or visit the *TODAY* show website at today.com to view the achieved performance from December 23.

- MAPC Youth, **Elliot Henderson**, recorded a voice recital as a Christmas gift for all after working on French, Italian and English art songs as his "pandemic project." You may view the recital [here](#). Elliot encourages anyone inspired by the recital to consider a gift the MAPC Christmas Joy offering.
- MAPC's Director of Music & Organist often plays several *Messiah* performances in NYC during the Christmas season. This year's *Messiah* was a bit different, filmed in upstate NY in the conductor's barn! If you are longing for your annual dose of Messiah (and haven't heard excerpts at In-Person Morning Prayer at MAPC), please visit osny.org or click [here](#) to listen to your favorite excerpts from the Ontario Society of New York.

Year-End Giving--Business Office Closing at 1 pm on December 31st

This is our annual reminder of the IRS rules concerning year-end contributions of cash and securities. In general, the delivery date determines the year in which a contribution can be claimed as a deduction. Checks mailed with a postmark of December 31, 2020 or earlier, or hand-delivered by December 31, 2020, will be credited as a contribution in 2020. Please note: The Church House and Business Office will close at 1 pm on December 31st! Please contact our Director of Administration & Finance, Roger Pierce or our Bookkeeper, Carmen Olmeda, by December 31st, if you wish to make a contribution or need assistance in making one. After January 1, 2021, contributions will be credited as contributions for 2021. For gifts of securities, the date of mailing is the delivery date; if hand-delivered, the date of receipt by the charity is the delivery date. When securities are delivered from a donor's bank or broker, the delivery date is the date the securities are transferred to the charity. To make a year-end gift of securities, please contact Roger Pierce at 212-288-8920. Please note that you can also make your year-end gifts online through our website at <http://www.mapc.com/giving>. Thank you!

Wednesday Prayer

Weekly devotions will be posted on Wednesdays. We hope that with Wednesday devotions, Morning Prayer in person on Sundays and our

recorded Sunday worship service you will find devotions and worship opportunities that help sustain you during these times. Click on the button below to find all of our videos.

[Click Here to Watch](#)

Opportunities for Fellowship & Study

Zoom invites are sent regularly by email.

Virtual Fellowship Hour

Sundays at 12 noon

Please join us for Virtual Fellowship Hour. Every Sunday.

****NOTE:** An email with the Zoom link will be sent out on Sunday mornings at 8 am.

A Walk in the Park

is on hiatus until January 9. Please join us then!

Young Adult Gatherings on Zoom

Mondays from 7 to 8 pm: Jan. 11, and Jan. 25

Young adults are studying Ephesians. Bring your drink for a mid-evening happy hour and join us for fellowship and discussion.

Chesna Hinkley & April Martin will lead this group on Zoom. Please watch your email for the link and more information.

Adult Education Opportunities

Anti-Racism Discussion Group, Sunday Afternoons at 5 pm Beginning January 10

Please note the new time for this group!

Beginning January 10th, the Anti-Racism Discussion Group will meet from 5 to 6 pm on Sunday evenings. We will be reading Isabel Wilkerson's book *Caste* next, discussing Part One on the 10th. A Zoom link will be sent to the church email list that Sunday morning. All are welcome--whether you have previously been part of this group or not, we would love to have you join the discussion! If you have questions, please contact Rev. Bartlett,

bab@mapc.com.

Curious About Jesus?

What did Jesus actually say? What did he actually do? Many of us are curious about Jesus but we tend to avoid Bible studies because we do not want to expose our lack of knowledge about scripture. Many of us are also interested in reading the Bible but we are not quite sure where to start. If you find yourself in this situation, you are invited to read the gospels with Reverend Vaughn. Beginning with Mark we will read one-third of a gospel each week. Then, on Sunday morning via Zoom at 9:00 we will gather together to share one or two passages that grabbed our attention. This is not a traditional class with a lecture. Instead, we will learn together as Patrick leads us in a conversation about the texts and questions that intrigue us. This is an opportunity to get a broad overall sense of the flow of the gospels. Questions? Write to Reverend Vaughn at jpv@mapc.com.

Bible Studies

Monday Evening Bible Study is on Hiatus

This Monday Evening Bible Study will be taking a break for the next several weeks. We will start up again with a study of the Saul and David stories in 1 and 2 Samuel on Monday, February 1.

Women's Bible Study

The Women's Bible Study, which is currently studying the Psalms, meets by teleconference. The next meeting is Monday, December 28. Please contact Lissette Perez-Eraza for more details: lgp@mapc.com

Youth and Children at MAPC

Youth (Ages 6th - 12th Grade)

CONFIRMATION:

Our confirmation class is in full swing. We are meeting on Zoom and look forward to exploring our faith bi-monthly on Tuesday nights!

YOUTH IN 2021:

January 13, 20, 27, February 3 & 10

Middle and High school youth groups will meet with April and Chesna on Zoom.

Children's Ministry (Connecting Virtually)

PRESCHOOL MINISTRY

Sunday School in a Box is delivered quarterly during the pandemic for at-home learning.

Contact Chesna Hinkley ceh@mapc.com for more info and watch this space for updates!

MONDAYS FOR KIDS! (K-2nd grade) **on Zoom**. The Winter Session of Mondays for Kids will meet January 11 to April 12. We will learn about what God is like.

Contact Chesna Hinkley (ceh@mapc.com) for more info.

PRETEEN CONNECT (3rd-5th grade) **on Zoom**.

Our Winter Session will run January 20 to April 7. We will learn about the Bible's call to gender equality, our place in God's plan, and using our gifts in the Body of Christ. Contact Chesna Hinkley (ceh@mapc.com) for more info.

Three Ways to Give to MAPC During this Time

We are grateful to all of you for your financial support of the church during this time. As you know, the church continues to be the church, with staff to pay, buildings to maintain, and ministries to carry out even though our buildings are closed. We understand that with job losses and furloughs, many people are not able to contribute financially. For those of you who are able to continue your financial pledges and offerings, click on the link below to see the three ways you can give:

Give Now

Thank you for your faithful giving!

Links for MAPC Worship Services

Sunday Worship

See pre-recorded services of worship below.

[Click Here to Watch](#)

Children's Worship

Find all of our children's worship videos here:

[Click Here to Watch](#)

MAPC on Social Media

Facebook

Follow MAPC on Facebook for news, reminders, events, and pictures from everyday life at the church. It's a good way to engage in fellowship and to know what's going on each week.

facebook.com/MadisonAvenuePresbyterian/



Madison Avenue Presbyterian Church | 921 Madison Avenue, New York, NY 10021

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