

Madison Avenue Presbyterian Church

PASTORAL STAFF LETTER

announcements, updates, and information for the weeks ahead



February 18, 2021

A Letter from Rev. J. Patrick Vaughn

Dear Friends,

Some of you might recall that I belong to an organization called Pinnacle Leadership Associates. We are a group of pastors who consult with churches, coach pastors, and produce a variety of congregational resources including books and videos.

A couple of weeks ago, the founder and leader of our group, Mark Tidsworth, penned an article that I found particularly insightful. Mark is not only a good and trusted friend but also a minister with many years of experience as a therapist, author, and consultant. This fall we will study one of his books, *Shift*, to help us grow in our understanding of the many challenges and opportunities facing the church in the 21st century.

I hope you enjoy his essay.

Thinking of you,

Patrick

Four Viruses Afflicting the Pre-Covid Church

(And Their Vaccines)

Mark Tidsworth

Romans 8:28 says God works all things together for good, not that God causes all things. I suspect God is even more grieved over this Coronavirus afflicting this world than any of us, given God's great love for humankind. So, where is the good in this life disruption experience?

Perspective; plain and simple.

On this side, we can look back with greater objectivity into our Pre-COVID church life. On this side, too, those who will are learning and growing, discovering more robust faith and church lives. Based on this kind of perspective, here are the four viruses of the Pre-COVID church along with their vaccines.

Consumerism

This one is no surprise. Living in a consumeristic culture, many simply transferred their identities as consumers to their church experience. The resulting perspective was, "Church, what have you done for me lately?" We expected the church to serve our needs and perhaps even to satisfy our preferences regarding music, form, schedules, and on and on.

With some distance, those who will are taking the consumerism vaccine – Peace. The peace that passes understanding, pure gift from God, is the antidote for consumerism. That insatiable desire for more and more diminishes as God's peace rises within us. We even discover that greater levels of contentment are possible this side of heaven. Our demands that church satisfy our preferences fades when God's peace fills the holes in our souls.

Criticism

Not just any kind of criticism; the excessive kind. Driven by consumerism, when our desires and preferences are not met by church leadership, we ratchet up the criticism. The classic forms of excessive criticism are two expressions of one dynamic – withholding. First, we withhold our participation, refusing to show up for worship, team meetings, or missional ministries. Second, we withhold our financial contributions, refusing to pledge or give. From a mile away one can see these withholding dynamics are grown up temper tantrums which hurt the body of Christ.

With some distance, those who will are taking the excessive criticism vaccine – Solidarity. This Coronavirus makes it clear that no one is immune; we all are vulnerable. Transferring this learning to church, we realize now we ARE the church. Blaming and complaining about how THEY are running the church is pretending like we are not responsible for church. Besides, when we realize the church's purpose is not to satisfy our every whim, then we settle down to live and work together in God's vineyard.

Complexity

Looking back, how did we keep such sophisticated and multi-layered organizations running? Oh, now I remember – we burned people out on a regular basis. Ever talk to someone rotating off the lay leadership team? Ever really listen to your pastor and church staff describe their work lives? I remember one Baptist Christian who refused to join his church. When asked why, he responded that he just didn't have the energy to keep that kind of schedule. The extreme complexity in our organizational structures and schedules in many churches served as a virus, sapping the spiritual vigor from the hardiest of souls.

With some distance, those who will are taking the complexity vaccine – Simplicity. Since our typical church rhythms and practices were interrupted, many are driven to examine their faith and church life, reflecting on their significance. With the realization that much complexity was unnecessary, Christ-followers are discovering a more primal faith and simple church. Loving God, loving others, and loving self; the essence of our faith, is coming into focus. Many are now aware that less organizational structure often gets us to the great commandment quicker than does eight committee meetings plus a new policy.

Control

Remember back in 2019 when we thought we were in control? In church we used our sophisticated and cumbersome organizational structures to control most everything. Everything was done decently and in order, so to speak, making us feel good. Simultaneously, very little innovative, adaptive, creative ministry took place in those highly controlled church systems. We believed that if we could control things, then we would succeed.

With some distance, those who will are taking the control vaccine – Trust. Here we are, nearly a year living in Coronavirusland, discovering God is faithful. Since we are among the living, we are learning to trust God's sustaining power. Not only that, our churches are innovating and adapting like crazy. The Holy Spirit is faithfully guiding us into new, fresh expressions of this body of Christ. We are learning to forsake control and live by faith with trust.

So, are you vaccinated yet? How about your church? Do be aware of potential side effects, like faith, hope, and love. Or you will find another side effects list in Galatians 5:22-23.

With some distance, those who will are rolling onward, becoming greater expressions of this body of Christ.

Thanks be to God!

[Click Here to Join Rev. Vaughn's Gospel Gathering at 9 am](#)

Meeting ID: 875 9406 5461
Passcode: 908581

Dial by your location
+1 646 876 9923 US (New York)
Sundays at 9 am

Worship

Please join us for online worship.

The Rev. J. Patrick Vaughn will be preaching this Sunday, February 21.
His sermon is entitled "Gathering, *Gifting*, Going."

Sunday Worship

Join us for pre-recorded services of worship on Sunday mornings.
Find all our services here:

[**Click Here to Watch**](#)

Ash Wednesday Ashes on the Steps

A pastor was available on the church steps on Wednesday, February 17 for the imposition of ashes.



Sunday Morning Prayer, 10:30 am



We will continue to offer Morning Prayer on Sundays as long as the public health guidelines allow for indoor gatherings of more than ten persons. Continuing any form of in-person worship also depends on worshippers following the church's guidelines below:

--Please use the Sign Up Genius link below to sign up. Since we must limit the number of people in the sanctuary, we need to know how many people plan to attend.

--Masks completely covering both the mouth and nose must be worn at all times.

--Seating is marked, and worshipers may sit where the blue dots on the pews are located. If a couple or family occupies a blue dot, then the adjacent dot needs to be left vacant to allow for adequate physical distancing.

--Please refrain from conversation with one another inside the sanctuary, and wait to greet one another after the service on the sidewalk. Talking together

outside is exponentially more safe than inside.

--As much as we want to connect with one another, it is simply not safe for hugs, handshakes or other physical contact beyond the members of one's household. Please greet each other from a safe physical distance!

Please sign up here:

[Sign Up Here](#)

If you have trouble making your reservation, please contact Beverly Bartlett at bab@mapc.com.

Special Guest Speaker Bishop Joseph William Tolton A Webinar THIS Sunday, February 21 at 5 pm



FEAR NOT, THE MOVEMENTS ARE GREATER:
Black Lives Matter, Pan Africanism & A 21st Century Christian Renaissance
A Webinar

On Sunday February 21 at 5 pm MAPC's Adult Education Committee is honored to host Bishop Joseph Tolton as he speaks about the racial justice movement. America is facing a call to a new racial justice reckoning. White supremacy in America has historically been defined, cradled, and rationalized by Christian hegemony. The church must now respond.

Bishop Tolton, founder and president of Interconnected Justice, will provide an analysis of what has led us to this point in history and propose what he believes is the antidote to white supremacy.

As an African American, gay affirming Pentecostal Christian whose work is based in East Africa, Bishop Tolton is uniquely positioned to propose an integrated web of social justice organizing that can radically and righteously reorder our global economy and heal race relations around the world.

This event will be an online webinar. It is free, but registration is required. All are welcome and encouraged to attend, and we hope you will spread the word to those beyond the MAPC community.

[Register for Tolton's Webinar Here](#)

After registering, you will receive a confirmation email containing information about joining the webinar.

For a more complete description of Bishop Tolton's presentation and his biography, click [HERE](#).

Wednesday Evenings in Lent A Lenten Spiritual Practice: Praying with Scripture



MAPC has a long history of a Wednesday evening Lenten series. Last year, we only got the first session in before we had to cancel the rest due to the

pandemic. At that early point, we hadn't yet figured out how to do everything by Zoom! This year's series will look a little different: rather than a lecture series we will engage in the spiritual practice of praying with scripture, alternating between the contemplative practices of Lectio Divina and Ignation meditation. Praying with scripture is a different approach than Bible Study--it is sometimes referred to as being "formational" rather than "informational." We encourage you to join in these Wednesday sessions as a Lenten discipline. Zoom links will be sent out a few days prior to the meetings.

The dates for this series are February 24, March 3, 10, 17, and 24 and Rev. Vaughn, and Ms. Hinkley will share in leading the sessions.

An Update from Our Sponsored Seminarian in the Synod of Harare



As part of our mission partnership with the Synod of Harare, MAPC sponsors a seminarian at Justo Mwale Theological University College in Lusaka, Zambia. Our current student, Edson Makambure, was married over the

Christmas holiday to Anne Lima John, who is now also in a Christian Ministry program at Justo Mwale. In his 2020 update to MAPC, Edson says his training has made him a different person. He writes about academic growth, learning counseling skills, and getting acquainted with other cultures through the diverse student body. Edson asks us to pray for his strength to study, for economic stability in Zimbabwe, and that the church would continue to proclaim the gospel. Please keep the Makambures in your prayers.

Cold Weather Accessories Drive



Throughout the winter, we will be giving away gloves, mittens, hats, scarves and socks 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.

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.

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

will be on hiatus until it warms up a little bit.

Mystery Book Group!

**Next Meeting - Thursday, February 11,
8 pm via Zoom**



With the pandemic and national crises swirling around us, we all need to give ourselves a bit of a mental break each day. We have started a mystery book group--what better way to escape than into a good mystery? Our second book is Peter May's, *The Blackhouse: Murder Comes to the Outer Hebrides* (Lewis Trilogy 1). Beverly Bartlett will facilitate this discussion of the book on February 11.

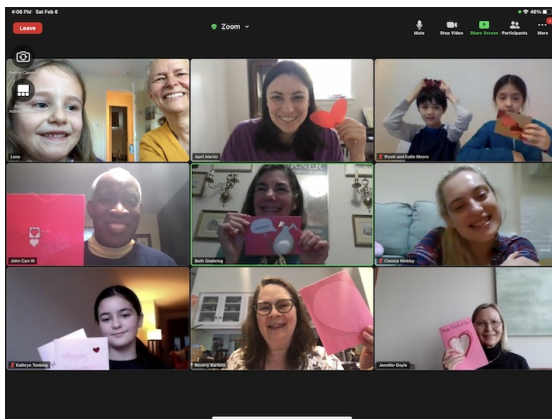
The Blackhouse is available as an ebook on the New York Public Library's Overdrive site, and for Kindle or in paperback on Amazon.

Saturday Crafterdays



On Saturday, March 13 at 3 pm, let's get ready for St. Patrick's Day and make Irish Soda Bread together! We'll post a list of needed ingredients in a future newsletter.

Zoom links for these events will be sent by email as the dates draw near. It would be helpful to know who plans to come, so please respond to Lissette if you can.



Saturday Crafterdays

Here is a picture of the group who joined to make Valentine's Day cards on Feb. 6th!

Young Adult Gatherings on Zoom

Mondays from 7 to 8 pm: Feb. 22, Mar. 8 & 22, Apr. 12 & 26

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.

On March 8, we'll begin discussing *Faith Unraveled: How a Girl Who Knew All the Answers Learned to Ask the Questions* by Rachel Held Evans. You can find it on Amazon or Bookshop, or email Chesna Hinkley (ceh@mapc.com) or April Martin (aem@mapc.com) and we will get you a copy.

Please read Introduction and Chapter 1 before March 8 so we can talk about it. We hope to read about 30 pages prior to each session.

Adult Education Opportunities

Anti-Racism Discussion Group, Sunday Afternoons at 5 pm

Please note: This coming Sunday the group will participate in Bishop Tolton's event (see above to register).

The Anti-Racism Discussion Group is now meeting from 5 to 6 pm on Sunday evenings. We are reading Isabel Wilkerson's book *Caste*, and will discuss Part Six--Chapters 25-29 on Feb. 28th. 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. This week, read Luke 1-8. Questions? Write to Reverend Vaughn at jpv@mapc.com.

Bible Studies

Monday Evening Bible Study, March 1 at 7 pm

The Monday Evening Bible Study begun reading and discussing 1 and 2 Samuel which contain the stories about the prophet Samuel, King Saul and King David, and the transformation that happened to Israel when they moved from a company of tribes to a nation ruled by a monarchy. Newcomers are always welcome! Please read 1 Samuel, chapters 16-21 in preparation for the discussion on March 1. Questions? Email Rev. Bartlett at bab@mapc.com.

Women's Bible Study

The Women's Bible Study, which is currently studying the Psalms, meets by teleconference. The next meeting is Monday, February 22 at 5:30 pm. Please contact Lissette Perez-Erazo for more details: ljp@mapc.com

Youth and Children at MAPC

Youth (Ages 6th - 12th Grade)

CONFIRMATION:

Our confirmation class meets bi-monthly on Tuesday nights via zoom.

YOUTH IN 2021:

February 24, March 3, 10, 17 & 24, 6-7 pm

Middle and High school youth groups will meet with April and Chesna and adult volunteers for bible discussion and games on Zoom.

Virtual Children's Ministry

Questions about Children's Ministry at MAPC? Contact Chesna Hinkley (ceh@mapc.com) for more information or to be added to the mailing list.

CHILDREN'S TIME

During every Sunday service, one of our pastoral staff teaches on the sermon text in a short time just for kids.

RECORDED CHILDREN'S WORSHIP

(Designed for 3-8 years old) Every Sunday, a member of the staff or congregation leads a 10-15 minute chat about the lectionary Bible reading and a related children's book.

PRESCHOOL MINISTRY

(2-4 years old) Sunday School in a Box is **delivered** quarterly during the pandemic closure for at-home learning.

MONDAYS FOR KIDS

(K-2nd grade) **on Zoom**. The Winter Session of Mondays for Kids will meet February 22, March 8 and 22, and April 12 at 4:30-5:15 pm. We will learn about what God is like.

PRETEEN CONNECT

(3rd-5th grade) **on Zoom**. Our Winter Session will meet March 3 and 17, and April 7 at 4:30-5:15 pm. (No class on February 17 due to NYPS Midwinter Recess). 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.

Four 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/

