



## The Grapevine

*I am the vine; You are the branches.*

John 15:5

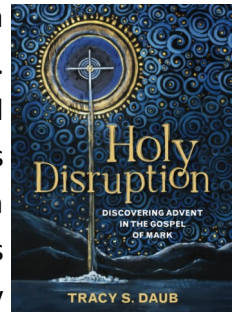
Year 121, Issue 4  
Nov—Dec 2023

### Holy Disruption

Four weeks of preparation, opening one little window per day on the Advent calendar, counting down with hope and expectation for the *one day that's almost magical because it's so special*. As a kid, it was excruciating, but Advent involves waiting. It's always been a time of preparation. And it gets swallowed up by our cultural "CHRISTMAS" celebration (imagine lights flashing around the word). We have goodies to bake and parties to attend; decorations to hang and shopping to do, presents to buy and wrap. Costco put out trees last month, Kohl's was reportedly playing Christmas music on Halloween and it's all purportedly in preparation for the big day. But, as followers of Jesus, we aren't waiting and preparing just for one day of the year. The word "advent" comes from the Latin phrase "ad venio" which literally means "for the coming." That's why we wait and why we prepare.

In the narrative lectionary, this year's gospel focus is on Mark. As is appropriate for Advent, you'll have to wait a bit because in worship Mark starts for us with the new year. But for those who want a foretaste, our Advent Study (more info on p.3 of this newsletter) also highlights the gospel of Mark. Of course, an Advent study on the Gospel of Mark may be a bit unusual. You see, Mark's gospel doesn't have much of anything that we usually associate

with the Christmas story... no shepherds, no wisemen, no manger, and not even a baby in the story Mark tells us. But at the same time, it's clear that Mark absolutely has something to say about the incarnation; about the coming of Christ into our lives and into our world. The introduction to our study says that "the coming of Christ is a thoroughly countercultural event... the incarnate presence of God comes in the One who challenges the status quo, engages the harsh realities of our world, and summons his followers to join him in a costly kind of commitment." And I can't help but wonder: *Are we ready for that?*



Maybe we need to remember Advent as we navigate the cultural juggernaut that is the Christmas season. Maybe the Holy Disruption of the season can invite us to practice preparation so that our hearts might be made ready to see the ways Jesus is coming into our lives and so that our world might be made a little more whole as God's transformative love is born in us!

This year, I wish you a Blessed Advent Season and (when the time comes) a Merry Christmas,

Pastor Dan

**Sunday Worship 10:30 am**

In person and on Zoom (Go to [zoom.us/j](https://zoom.us/j) - enter Meeting ID: 360 424 7675 Passcode: MVPC; or Meeting Room 1)

# Stewardship

## DOING WHAT WE CAN

When you hear the word “stewardship” in the context of church living, is the first thought that comes to your mind “money” or “pledge”? It’s the natural reaction.

At a recent meeting of the MVPC mission team we spent time thinking about and discussing what we feel called to do. It was a good list:

Sharing with folk about mission opportunities

Evaluate and remember what we’re doing and why

Show God’s love

Listen to the Spirit

Try to find balance and bandwidth

Do mission in teams

But at the top of the list was “Doing what we can”. Think about that. It means whatever gifts and resources God has given to us can be shared. There’s no pressure to try to do what we can’t, just what we can. It is so much more than financial. So much more. Let’s look at some examples from Scripture.

Very familiar is the story where Jesus fed 5000 men plus

women and children with the offering of a boy’s five loaves and two fish (Matthew 14:14-21), and the widow who gave her two mites (Luke 21:1-4). Here’s some more examples of folk who gave what they could and it often wasn’t money. Some you’ll know, some maybe not.

- The widow of Zarephath (I Kings 17:8-16)
- The Shunammite woman (II Kings 4:8-10)
- Joseph of Arimathea (Matthew 27:57-60)
- Peter, John, and the man at the temple (Acts 3:1-8)
- Tabitha who was “always doing good and helping the poor” (Acts 9:36-43). I love to picture in my mind verse 39 where they grieved and showed each other her sewing projects.

I Corinthians 4:2 reminds us that “it is required of a steward, that they be found faithful”. Some versions refer to stewards as “those who have been given a trust”. We have all been given something, let’s try to find out what it might mean to do what we can with it.

God bless,

Dave Gale, for the MVPC Stewardship Committee

## Advent and Christmas at MVPC

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- Advent Study Wednesdays at 10 am 11/29 - 12/27
- Hanging of the Greens Saturday December 2nd at 10 am
- All Ages Nativity during 10:30 am Worship on Sunday, December 17th
- Cookie Exchange following Worship on Sunday, December 17th
- Advent Breakfast Worship Service\_ 10:30 am in Good Shepherd Hall on December 24th
- Christmas Eve Candlelight Service 7 pm 12/24 followed by Wassail & Cookie Fellowship in Good Shepherd Hall
- Lessons and Carols Service at 10:30 am on December 31st
- Epiphany Sunday at 10:30 am on January 7th



## Be a Part of the MVPC Advent Study!

Grow in your faith during Advent (the season preparing our hearts for Christmas) by picking up the book Holy Disruption: Discovering Advent in the Gospel of Mark from the church office in mid-November (with a suggested donation of \$12 to cover costs). Join with others at MVPC in exploring the book at the Advent Bible Study meeting on Wednesdays at 10 am in the church library starting November 29th through December 27th to explore the book and wonder together a chapter at a time starting with chapter one on 11/29. Sign up for the Advent Study (and weekly reminders) by calling or stopping in to the church office!

## Please Consider Joining the MVPC Intergenerational Nativity!

We are in search of people of all ages to be a part of the MVPC Intergenerational Nativity that will be part of the

December 17th 10:30 am Worship Service. Practice for the Nativity will be on Dec. 3rd and 10th from 9 to 10 am with a final run through on Dec. 17th from 9 to 10 am before we share the Nativity during Worship. Yes, this is your opportunity to be a Shepherd, Wise Man, Sheep, Angel, part of the Holy Family, a Narrator or back up support! Please talk with Pastor Rebecca to be added to the Nativity email list for reminders and more information.



# Christmas Giving Program

## Christmas Giving Tree 2023



If you've wandered into Kohls lately, you've heard them playing Christmas music. Can you believe it? It's way too early! Well, maybe not. The committee from our mission and service team is already hard at work contacting our mission partners and making tags for the tree that will be in the narthex soon. Look for it by November 5th - our annual Christmas Giving Tree!

Because of Covid, in past years, we had a list you could access online as well as tags you could take from the tree. This was a good idea given the circumstances but created some gaps and overlaps. So this year we are going back to taking a tag off the tree and registering that with whoever is at the table by the tree.

We know that some of you prefer to buy a gift instead of just purchasing a gift card. However, many of our mission partners are finding that folks mostly prefer the gift card so they can get the exact size, color, style, etc., of the item they are needing. It provides parents with the opportunity to take their child to the store to get exactly what the youngster wants. What a great thing for a needy parent to be able to do! There is one family who has a two-year-old that needs a heart transplant. They need flexibility with what they are going to have to get for her and their two other youngsters.

The goal (at the moment) is to have everything back to the church office and delivered to our partners the first week of December. It's our special privilege to be able to do this each year. Our church family is so generous and special. Special blessings and thanks to all! Merry Christmas!

Patti Allen and Mary Pugsley



# Discipleship

## **Godly Play Kids Ask: *When was the last time you explored one of Jesus' Parables?***

The Godly Play Kids Program has been exploring the parables of Jesus this Fall. The Godly Play Parable Stories all begin, "there was once someone who said such wonderful things and did such amazing things that people followed him. As they followed him, they heard him talking about... and they just had to ask... and he told them..." The parables are all in beautiful Gold Boxes because they are valuable and like a gift given to us by Jesus. We always say "you have to be ready to enter a parable and come back to it again and again to hear Jesus' message for you each time." During their wondering, one of the Godly Play kids asked if the adults of the church come back to parables again and again to hear Jesus' message for them too? A few of the parables have been shared during first Sunday worship in September, October,

and November, but, perhaps this is the invitation you were needing to open up your bible (or google) and explore a parable again, listening to the message Jesus has for you today? The Godly Play Kids have explored and recommend the parables of the Good Shepherd, the Good Samaritan, the Great Pearl, the Sower, the Leaven, and the Mustard Seed if you are looking for a parable to come back to again and again.



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## **MVPC Youth Ask: *What do you remember about your Confirmation Experience?***

The MVPC Youth are doing a year long Confirmation Experience during the 2023-2024 Program Year with lessons during Youth Group and monthly gatherings with Confirmation Mentors, as well as encouragement to volunteer in the church and community. The Confirmation Experience is an overview of the basics of faith and the church as well as a challenge to listen and discern what they are called to do in service and life as a part of their faith? During the first Confirmation Mentor Lunch, the Mentor's were asked about their Confirmation Experiences. There were a wide variety of stories ranging from having to attend a year's worth of classes and memorizing a lot of information including a full confession of faith to attending a few different denominations confirmation programs to learning how to spell Presbyterian to, yes, even getting in trouble during confirmation. Some remember it being a meaningful part of their faith journey while others have only vague memories of gathering in church basements. And of course, there are a number of us

(Pastor Dan and Pastor Rebecca included) who never attended confirmation classes. The youth want to challenge everyone in the congregation: if you attended Confirmation, what do you remember about your Confirmation Experience and how did it help to shape your faith journey? Please use your experience to pray for the MVPC Youth, the Confirmation Mentors, and the Youth Team as they continue exploring their faith and how they are called to live out their faith as they journey through this year's Confirmation Experience.



## **Discipleship Team Forming in January and we need YOU!**

Do you care about how people at MVPC are able to grow in their faith and fellowship beyond Sunday Worship and do you want to support and encourage ministries like the Sunday Bible Study, Prayer Group, Advent and Lenten Studies, Women's Fellowship, Men's Breakfast, and Small Groups, as well as Intergenerational Programs and Events

and age specific Programs and Events (like Children, Youth, and Senior's Ministries)? MVPC is in need of a Discipleship Team to prayerfully discern the Discipleship Ministries at MVPC. Please talk with Pastor Rebecca Holland if you are interested in being a part of a life giving, dynamic, creative (and need I say fun) team. Once we have a number of folks interested in joining the team, they will work together to decide how often and when they would like to meet. Please consider joining!

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## **Be a part of the MVPC Prayer Group!**

The MVPC Prayer Group meets every Thursday from 9 to 10 am in the church library for a time of sharing what's on our hearts and then a guided prayer practice, learning and experiencing a variety of contemplative prayers. As people of faith, we are called to make prayer a regular practice in our lives. Prayer has been proven to make a difference not

only for the people and situations that are being held in prayer, but also for those who are praying the prayers. You are invited to attend Prayer Group as often as you are able. Before the holidays, during the Advent and Christmas Season, and as you start the New Year are all wonderful times to build your life of prayer and join! Talk with Pastor Rebecca Holland to be added to the weekly reminder email list.

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## **Attend the Tall Timber Winter Family Camp: All Ages Welcome!!!!**

All ages are welcome to attend the Tall Timber Winter Family Camp Friday, December 29th to Monday, January 1st. It's a long standing MVPC tradition for children, youth, families, and anyone who is looking for a wonderful winter getaway with a fantastic group of old and new friends. In addition to delicious meals and wonderful lodging, as well as morning devotions and evening worship, Tall Timber provides supplies for cross country skiing and snowshoeing to enjoy on their groomed trails, as well as inner tubes for sledding down the snow hill, plus games, activities, and simply gathering by the crackling fire in the lodge with old and new friends. There are a variety of options for lodging including private cabin rentals (for 9 to 13 people), shared cabin lodging, and dorm style lodging in the Schultze Center. Register today at [talltimber.org/snowcamp](http://talltimber.org/snowcamp). When you register, be sure to mention that you are a part of Mount Vernon Presbyterian Church and the Northwest Coast Presbytery. There are scholarships available through Tall Timber that you can

request as you register. Please talk with Pastor Rebecca Holland if you or your family is in need of a partial scholarship from MVPC or if you would like to offer funds to help others receive a partial scholarship to be able to attend the Winter Family Camp.





# Mission Partners



My name is Maya and I am an Alcoholic/Addict. I know this isn't an AA meeting but that is usually how I introduce myself when I speak in public now.

I'm here today to talk about how I got to the Skagit Friendship House and my experience there. I moved up here from California in December 2021 because I have family in Washington and they thought that if I moved and changed my scenery and was closer to family, that I would get better. Unfortunately, I got worse. I ended up spending the entire year of 2022 in and out of hospitals, rehabs, and finding couches to crash on. I lost close friends, I lost my relationship with my family, I lost a lot of my belongings, and I lost myself. It was, and always will be, one of the lowest parts of my life. I felt like I was always going to end up an alcoholic/addict who was going to end up lost on the streets.

The breaking point in my life was in December 2022. The week of Christmas found me homeless, using meth 24/7, and binging alcohol endlessly. The whole time I was crashing on a drug dealer's couch. I forgot it was Christmas. I forgot I had a family. Nothing mattered to me anymore. I went to bed every night just wishing that I would not wake up in the morning. I wanted to give up on my life and my alcoholic/drug induced mind convinced me to try to end my life.

Thankfully, I survived, and I had a sudden moment of clarity. I had to get help. I had to get my life back. I had officially hit rock bottom and I wanted out for real this time. I called my sponsor at the time, and she immediately sent her boyfriend to come pick me up. He took me to Smokey Point Behavioral Hospital in Arlington.

It was there that I got help and learned about the Skagit Friendship House. My counselor at Smokey Point told me the Friendship House would be a great place for me to start putting my life back together, and it turns out she was right.

When I showed up Jan 17th, 2023, at the Women's House in Mount Vernon, I was immediately welcomed by a couple women who today, I can still call good friends. I can whole-heartedly say that the house felt like home- warm, friendly, and welcoming. Because of the Friendship House, I was able to take the time to work on myself.



**Giving Thanks Lunch**  
**Nov 12th after worship**  
To celebrate God's faithfulness  
to MVPC as pledge cards are  
dedicated.

**See you then!**

# Noteworthy

## Birthdays and Anniversaries

### November

2-Howard Koozer  
4-Sandy Seabott  
6-Martin Boer  
7-Don Wolf  
9-Warren Weeks  
11-Mary Ellen Byerly  
13-Natalia Weeks  
17-Donovan Maas  
19-Bob Mitchell  
22-Robin Hoke



### December

4-Ward Ernst  
Al Berger  
6-Pat Schlecht  
10-Bob Wygal  
11-Kristen Jasper  
14-Kimora Hansen  
15-John Braun  
16-Pat Papadopoulos  
Linda Rabenstein  
17-Sylvia Schneider  
19-Laurie Parker  
Joe Seabott  
21-Keith Tacker  
Aurelia O'Donnell  
22-Troy Olsen  
28-Barb Clure  
31-Jodie Kercheval  
Carol Peterson  
Marcie Ruthford



Soup-er Senior Lunch 11.2.23



Pumpkin  
Party  
2023





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*MVPC is...and is becoming...a caring, welcoming and graciously safe community.*

### **Know God's Love**

*Deepening life of prayer and discernment  
Growing understanding of the Bible*



### **Share it with Others**

*Caring for one another, the church and the community  
Unified mission with the marginalized*

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