



## *2017 - A Year in Review*

*Looking back with gratitude – looking forward with joy*

Memorial Presbyterian Church • Appleton, Wisconsin

## Pastor's Message

I am always amazed when change comes easily, and since we adopted our new mission and values statements one year ago—change has come easily. In part, I think it's because of the thorough process undertaken by the Session and embraced by the high level of participation by the congregation. And yet, I've found **Connect. Inspire. Serve.** is what Memorial Presbyterian has been trying to become for a long time.

As you read about some of the highlights in the past year, you'll see we've made some incredible strides in 2017 living our values, embracing our mission, and striving towards God's vision for MPC to be a place and a people growing deeper in faith and reaching out to the community.

### Who We Are and What We Believe:

*Grounded in the grace of God and the Reformed Tradition, we believe in:*

*Nurturing one another on the journey of faith.  
Compassion for all.  
Active engagement in the local and global community.  
Openness to the Spirit's inspiration.*

### Our Mission Statement:

*Connect. Inspire. Serve.*

*Connect people in faith, hope and love.  
Inspire lifelong discipleship and spiritual growth.  
Serve our neighbors near and far.*

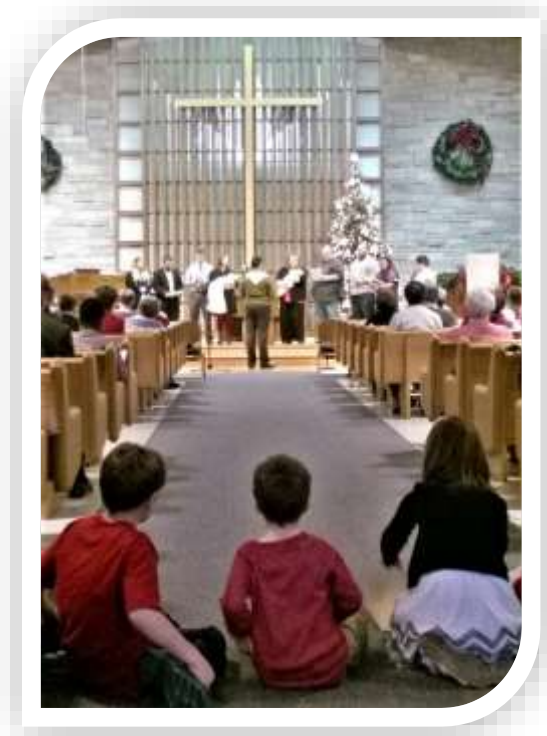
In order to bring our new mission statement to life, Session identified three high-level priorities, started in 2017 and to be continued in 2018:

1. Provide Spiritual Formation programming for the people of MPC through the creation of a discipleship path that takes into account ages and stages of life.
2. Open MPC's doors to community partners and build ongoing relationships that are mutually beneficial to invest MPC's assets (people, attention, finances, building space).
3. Create Comprehensive strategy for members and nonmembers to learn about and connect with what is going on at MPC and with what MPC is doing in the community.

Although 2017 was not without challenges, there are many good beginnings to build upon in the new year. I am proud of the progress made in 2017 to identify priorities and to try new things. Most of all, I am excited for the opportunities we have in store for 2018 to continue to become the church we have been trying to become for a long time – the church God wants us to be for our community.

Grateful to be in ministry with you,

*Pastor Mike Goodwin*



## CONNECT people in faith, hope and love.

***“Do not neglect to show hospitality to strangers, for thereby some have entertained angels unawares.” Hebrews 13:2***



*A rainy October day didn't deter neighborhood children from donning their costumes and "Trunk or Treating" in the church parking lot.*

There were new opportunities, as well, with the contemplative "Compline" evening prayer services, and the celebration of 500<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the Protestant Reformation with Professor Ken Sawyer of McCormick Theological Seminary. The traditional Women's Advent Event was reprised with the "Lights of Love: Advent by Candlelight" service for women and young ladies, and other very familiar events included the CROP Walk, Trunk or Treat, and the annual SERRV sale, all providing an opportunity for us to connect with each other and with the community.

One of the goals of the building-wide renovations was to create a welcoming space that would enable us to open our doors to the community – and we did just that in some very special ways. Musical events provided the perfect opportunity for community invitations. In April, Caritas Collegium, under the direction of Joseph Lindsay, performed Mozart's "Requiem." Later on in the fall, as part of our celebration of the 500<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the Reformation, Caritas performed Bach's "Reformation Cantata." And in December, we welcomed back the *Encore!* Handbell Ensemble to present their "Holiday Fantasia" concert with the MPC Handbell Choir.



*The annual SERRV sale provided the perfect opportunity to purchase unique holiday gifts made in fair trade conditions.*



This past year, MPC joined with Fox Cities businesses, nonprofit organizations and congregations by signing the "We Welcome All" pledge sponsored by SURJ (Showing Up for Racial Justice) Appleton. We then hosted the day-long Bystander Training presented by SURJ. This training seeks to equip people in non-violent intervention in an effort to help support and stop the harassment of people targeted by hate groups and violent persons.

Beth Lepinski, who attended the training session, thought that it was very worthwhile. "I'd like to think I would step up to help anyone in trouble, but it is very easy to think that until confronted with a fraught situation. Practicing with a training like this teaches you about yourself."

## INSPIRE lifelong discipleship and spiritual growth.

***“An intelligent mind acquires knowledge, and the ear of the wise seeks knowledge.” Proverbs 18:15***

When pastors begin a sabbatical, one of the first questions posed is, “Who’s going to preach on all of those Sundays?” MPC responded in a unique and creative way – with eight church members picking up the baton along with Resident Christian Educator Joel Screnock and Commissioned Pastor Greg Braatz. During Pastor Mike’s four-month sabbatical to *Rest, Renew, and Reconnect*, our summer preachers raised important questions to help MPC think about our future. Emily Guttenberg shared her experiences of getting out of her comfort zone, and challenged us to do the same: “As we look toward our future at MPC, are we willing to go beyond our comfort zone? How do we take all of our questions and shape our future with purpose? Past members of this congregation answered some of those questions with involvement in a fledgling Appleton Medical Center and in walking a few blocks down College Avenue into this sanctuary ... it is now up to us to continue listening and answering God’s challenge to move beyond our comfort zone.”

*“... on days when things are rushed, I remember that as a parent and church member there are times when I am not only here for me. Just when I fear he hasn’t been listening, Brock surprises me and reminds me why we come here. It is for God. It is doing God’s work. Plant a seed and watch it grow. Hopefully it grows to inspire lifelong discipleship and spiritual growth.” -- Michelle L’Esperance*

Upon Pastor Mike’s return in September, MPC started gearing up for the 500<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the Reformation with Greg Braatz leading an Adult Education series on the Reformation. We then celebrated *A Season of Generosity* in worship through the testimonies of several MPC members who shared stories of how they *Connect. Inspire. Serve.* “When I think about Adult Education at MPC,” explained Kathy Privatt, “I think about being invited to bring my whole self – my prior knowledge, my lived experience, my curiosity, my willingness to consider other ideas, my questions, and my desire for understanding.”

“The Reformations: Past & Present” was the theme of the weekend where we reconnected with our Reformed Tradition roots with a hymn sing, presentation, and a sermon in dialogue on “Soli Deo Gloria: The Continuing Reformation,” with Dr. Sawyer and Pastor Mike. The weekend culminated in the performance of “Ein Feste Burg,” Bach’s Cantata for Reformation Day.

As Advent approached, members of MPC responded eagerly to the invitation to participate in the creation of a devotional booklet that began on the first Sunday of Advent and continued through Epiphany. Thirty-two members and staff created devotions that were personal, unique, and a blessing to all who read them. Through the caring efforts of the Deacons and Visitation Team members, the booklets were shared with homebound members and friends along with a Christmas poinsettia plant.



MPC’s Youth Fellowship group takes seriously the part of our mission statement on lifelong discipleship and spiritual growth. In 2017, they asked difficult questions of the Christian faith and created a safe space to explore those questions. Using a book called *Can I Ask That?*, they looked at questions like: “Can I be a Christian and believe in evolution?,” “What does the Bible say about being gay?” and “Is Jesus really the only way to God?” Everyone agreed that these discussions opened up their minds to new ideas, helped to strengthen their faith, and grew their connections with God and with each other.

## SERVE our neighbors near and far.

***“Then the righteous will answer him, ‘Lord, when was it that we saw you hungry and gave you food, or thirsty and gave you something to drink?’” Matthew 25:37***

*Fox Valley Warming Shelter. Homeless Connections. LEAVEN. Salvation Army. St. Joseph Food Program. CROP Walk. Community Clothes Closet. Habitat for Humanity.* The need for nutritious food and adequate shelter are great in the Fox Valley, and these are just a few of the area organizations that work to provide for such needs. It is the mission of Memorial Presbyterian to work with, donate to, and financially support these agencies so that all community resources are utilized to full advantage.

A project that is particularly important to MPC is the Community Garden. The idea for the garden began in 2011, when the church was looking for a multigenerational, church-wide local mission effort. From its beginnings in 2012, it has since grown to a 1.5 acre plot on Petersen Dairy Farm in north Appleton. The rich, naturally composted soil provides the perfect environment to grow nutritious vegetables which are donated throughout the growing season to St. Joseph Food Program. In 2017, church volunteers averaged 40 hours per week tilling, planting, weeding and harvesting. This year’s harvest yielded tomatoes, green beans, eggplant, squash, cucumbers, carrots, zucchini, banana peppers, turnips, and onions, ultimately providing over one-third of the total produce donated to St. Joe’s for the season.

“The need for healthy food is so great in this area,” emphasized Karen Ziemke, Marketing and Development Director of St. Joseph Food Program.

“We can’t move people out of their situations without having nutrition, so we’ve really focused on getting them the best nutritional foods that we can. The MPC garden effort in this goal is huge. We just can’t do it all, and it takes all of our outside community-based efforts to provide nutritious produce all summer long. And the MPC garden has been so successful and has set such a great example for other community businesses and agencies, that they’ve been inspired to start their own gardens, as well.”



*The MPC garden yielded one-third of the total produce donated to St. Joseph Food Program in 2017.*

***“Let no one seek his own good, but the good of his neighbor.” 1 Corinthians 10:24***

### ***Mission by the Numbers***

*152 “Empty 2 Full” pans  
150+ grocery bags for Salvation Army  
586 volunteer hours at Community Garden  
799 items collected for Christmas in July  
5,000 pounds of produce from MPC Garden*

Participation of all members of the congregation is essential in the life MPC, especially so with our young people. Over the summer, several youth in grades 10-12 travelled to Louisville, Kentucky where they partnered with the YouthWorks organization to assist with area service projects.

Their volunteer work included helping to run a day camp for kids at a nearby Salvation Army, assisting at a local nursing home, and helping children at a refugee center. *(continued on next page)*



*Breckyn Shaffer helps a young child with her writing skills during the youth mission trip.*

“One of the days we worked with refugee children learning English and numbers, and I think that was one of the things that I enjoyed the most. It’s one of the things I’m most passionate about, having resources to help and to see kids playing and having fun even though they came from horrific backgrounds,” recalled Claire Boldt.

Throughout the trip, the group formed deeper relationships with each other and built relationships in the community. Under the guidance of the YouthWorks staff, everyone got to see the positive impact of their work, grow in their faith, and step just a bit out of their comfort zone to reach those who were in need.

“When I went to work with the kids, you could see God in these kids. When the kids went to chapel they strongly believed in God, and it really increased my faith,” said Ashley Zuege.

It was a great experience for all, and no sooner did they return from their trip, but they started planning next summer’s urban adventure in the Boston area.

*“In all these experiences you really see how God brings out all the good in the world . . . it’s amazing to see how many people come together to help one another.” – Paige Kempf, Youth Work Trip Participant*

***“Jesus said to them again, ‘Peace be with you. As the Father has sent me, so I send you.’” John 20:21***

The journey to Nicaragua in early spring by a four-member delegation was the culmination of several years of discussion, exploration and discernment on MPC’s global mission concept. Working under the auspices of the Council of Protestant Churches of Nicaragua (CEPAD) proved to be an excellent fit, with their five-year partnership programs and emphasis on community organization. Justin and Renee Sundberg, mission co-workers in Nicaragua who work with the education and development work in the country’s villages, coordinated the visit.

On the delegation’s first day in Nicaragua, they were expecting to work on a service activity, but they soon discovered that the village wasn’t ready to begin that project. So, their time was better spent talking and connecting with a community leader, and learning, through a translator, the history of the community, how the community is organized, the dynamics of the society, and what their needs truly are.

“It was information that we never would have gotten otherwise,” explained Fred Umland. “The five-year cycle is an excellent way to partner with another organization. When you go in and connect with people, you understand what they’re going through. They want just to share something about their country.”



*Pat Spindler and Fred Umland learn about a community and its school from the town chairman of a rural Nicaraguan village.*

The delegation learned a great deal about CEPAD's sustainable community development programs to address specific issues. A Water Capture Systems Program developed a retention pond to collect water during the rainy seasons. A Food Security Program trained four village residents to become agriculture experts in crop diversity, organic fertilizer, and sustainable soil. There is a program for strengthening families, and another to provide financial support for women's entrepreneurial projects. Food security, community service, strengthening families are all sustainable, realistic, long-term solutions to rural Nicaraguan villages.

In December, MPC had the privilege of hosting Justin Sundberg, providing the congregation with several opportunities to learn about this work in Nicaragua.

So now what?

"It would be ideal to stay involved, and connect with a community in the next five-year cycle. We could then get to know each other and work gradually to determine what is needed," said Fred. "CEPAD helps you to determine that. We would like the congregation to know more about this, and we're planning another trip in 2018. The congregation will have many opportunities to be involved in our mission work."

*"I want to share how much I enjoyed my time with you and how grateful I was for your wonderful welcome at every turn...every event helped me appreciate just how committed MPC is (in) considering how mission will continue to deepen in Nicaragua. I enjoyed being able to think with all of you about your new commitment to working with CEPAD to join in the Spirit's Realm-building work with the people of Nicaragua. Hooray for partnership!"  
Warmly in Christ, Justin Sundberg, CEPAD Mission Co-worker*

## Looking ahead to 2018



In the year to come our focus is clear: Connecting more deeply with one another and together Connecting more deeply with God. Through our Connections, being Inspired to grow as disciples of Christ and realizing we each have a role in Inspiring one another as we share the journey of faith and mentor one another to grow in faith. As we open ourselves to each other and to the Holy Spirit at work in us and through us, we can then open ourselves to Serve our neighbors near and far, open our doors to our community as a place of worship and as a community gathering space and Serving the needs of our community.

These are big goals and a worthy vision—big enough for each of us to have a place, a purpose, and a part to play; worthy enough to bring our best; worthy of God's vision for MPC to be a place and a people growing deeper in faith and reaching out to the community.

Let's do it MPC family—together,

*Pastor Mike Goodwin*

# *Memorial Presbyterian Church*

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~ As adopted by the Congregation on February 12, 2017

803 East College Avenue • Appleton, Wisconsin 54911  
Corner of College Avenue & Meade Street

920.734.1787  
info@mpcappleton.org  
www.mpcappleton.org