



# THE MAINSTREAM

## SUNDAYS

WORSHIP IN PERSON  
9:30 & 11:00 AM

WORSHIP BY LIVESTREAM  
11:00 AM



Installation of Officers

FIRST QUARTER

## 2024



Souper Fellowship Luncheon



Christian Women Fellowship



*From the Heart of  
Rev. LeAnn Hodges*

## A SEASON OF DISCERNMENT

Dear GPC Members and Friends,

By the time you read this first issue of *The Mainstream* for 2024, a lot will already have happened in this brand new year.

- We will have received the initial report of what our leadership team is learning from the Church Assessment Tool.
- We will have elected a new Nominating Committee.
- We will have welcomed Katherine Williams as our new Director of Music.
- We will still be wrapping our minds around the reality that later this year Pastor Mary Beth will be launching her new season of life in retirement.

That is a lot for just a few short months!

We will also be well into our congregational commitment to 40 days of prayer, which aligns with our all-church read of *Sailboat Church* by Joan Gray as we seek God's guidance. (If you haven't picked up the book yet, or joined in on the 40 days of prayer, it's not too late!)

In the last issue of *The Mainstream*, I outlined our discernment process through May. We are still on track with that plan, with a few more pieces to add to the details between now and

the end of May, when we hope to have a Pastoral Nominating Committee (PNC) in place.

The biggest question we have at this point is what our longer-term staffing pattern needs to be in order to fulfill the mission of GPC. Before we can answer that question, we need more clarity on what that mission actually is. Our commitment to this 40 days of prayer is a significant investment in that work, and at the end of that time we will participate in a program that our presbytery offers called a Jump Start Mission Study.

This study takes the work that a PNC would spend months doing and compresses it into an intensive weekend with the purpose of helping to clarify our missional focus for the next season of our congregational life. From there we will be better equipped to determine a sustainable staffing pattern to support that vision, be ready to form a PNC, and begin the process of searching for our next full-time installed pastor who will hopefully be ready to start in early 2025.

Please continue to hold our staff and Session in prayer. I believe that God has called exactly the right people to lead us through this season, and for that I am deeply grateful and filled with hope!

—REV. LEANN HODGES  
TRANSITIONAL PASTOR

## WAYS TO CONNECT



[www.gpchurch.org](http://www.gpchurch.org)

301-948-9418

[office@gpchurch.org](mailto:office@gpchurch.org)

[@gpchurch\\_moco](https://www.instagram.com/gpchurch_moco)

# MANY BLESSINGS

Dear Friends,

By now you have heard the news that I will be retiring before the end of this year. By November 24, I will have served 22½ years at GPC, which is an unusually long term of ministry in one church.

In that time, I served with over 40 staff members at GPC. Church members have been born and others have died. Some of my favorite folk have sadly (to me) moved away. Happily, many of you have remained, and others have arrived and made their church home here. We’ve changed the worship schedule at least three times, begun livestreaming, ended some programs (anyone remember Christmas International House?) and begun new ones (fellowship luncheons come to mind, as well as our many Presbyterian Disaster Assistance mission trips).

Of course, many of you have been through all these changes, and more, as your tenure at GPC is decades longer than mine. But let’s be clear that there is One, and only One, who has been fully present in the ups and downs, the joys and the sorrows, in our going out and in our coming in.

GPC’s Center, the Rock, the Steadfast Presence whose “faithfulness is great and who changes not” is the Holy Triune God. God has been hovering over this community for 60 years, leading and guiding, shaping and forming, inspiring and enlivening our life together. I believe that God will lead GPC through this next year of change as well – if we are open to it.

If you are looking for stability in your life, if you are anxious about changes in your family, in our nation, and in our world, I cannot stress enough that it is vital that you begin, or renew, a committed relationship with God. That’s where our true stability lies. Yours and mine.

Keep the faith, GPC! Open your heart to God. Celebrate this wonderful community that we have. And let’s all do our part to make it stronger than ever.

—REV. MARY BETH LAWRENCE  
ASSOCIATE PASTOR

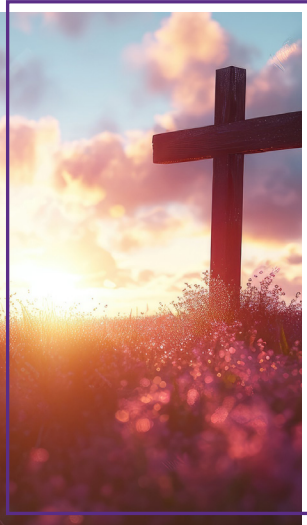


P.S. What will I do when I leave GPC? I’ll be moving to South Carolina to be closer to my family. I’ve also enrolled in the Spiritual Guidance Program at Shalem Institute for Spiritual Formation. I believe that God is calling me into a new ministry in the Kingdom by serving as a spiritual director. I covet your prayers for finding a new place to live and for my continuing education. You can be sure that I’ll be praying for you.

P.P.S. The Human Resources Committee and the Session will be working over the next few months to imagine God’s new future for GPC, which includes a new staffing model. You will hear more about this in the coming weeks.

## EASTER SERVICES

Maundy Thursday	7:00 PM	Contemplative worship service In person & livestreamed
Good Friday	12 NOON	Worship Service Grace United Methodist Church In person and livestreamed
Easter Sunday	6:30 AM	Sunrise worship service – Bohrer Park
	9:30 AM	Worship service – In person
	11:00 AM	Worship service – In person & livestreamed



# EQUIPPING DISCIPLES

I don't know about you all, but I was not sorry to bid 2023 farewell and welcome 2024. As I write this, there are several inches of snow on the ground and winter seems to have settled in, in earnest. "Wintering" seems an appropriate way to rest

before we begin our work of discerning God's will for GPC. I invite you to join us as we explore the ideas in **Sailboat Church** by Joan Gray, either as a Lenten devotional, which we will provide in several different media, or by reading the book with a group or on your own. Session has been reading it and, with Pastor LeAnn, will be using it to lead us through this discernment process.

On a related but different topic, we are revitalizing the **Adult Ed Committee** along with the **Children and Young Families Committee**. If you have interesting ideas for Adult Ed classes and are equally interested in exploring those ideas as the leader or co-leader of a class or small group, or if you're just plain interested in participating in the Adult Ed Committee, please join us on **Zoom** on **Tuesday, March 12**, at **7:00 p.m.** (links will be provided in weekly emails and Sunday bulletins). If you're interested in joining the Children and Young Families Committee, please join us on Zoom at the same time, using the same link as for Adult Ed. Please don't feel unqualified or intimidated. The whole point is to learn together, not to be the expert; an open and willing mind and servant's heart is far more important than any expertise.

## Current Adult Ed Offerings

### Sunday Mornings

- 8:00 – Small Group, hybrid, Room 32/33 - considering next steps
- 9:30 – The Present Word, hybrid, Room 206 - The Present Word, Spring study
- 9:30 – The Bible as a Whole, hybrid, Room 205 - considering next steps
- 9:30 – Christian Classics, hybrid, Room 202 - the Book of Acts and **Be Dynamic** by Warren Wiersbe

### Wednesday Evenings

- 7:30 – Bible Study, hybrid on Google Meet, the Book of Hebrews (9 sessions)
- 7:30 – Frederick Small Group, Zoom, **Follow Me**

### Friday Evenings

- 7:00 – 2nd Friday Book Club, Zoom - considering next steps

## Current Children's Offerings

Sunday School meets most Sundays following the Children's Message at the 11:00 worship service except for the first Sunday of each month (Communion Sunday) and some holiday weekends.

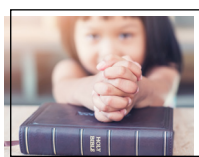
- Godly Play, pre-K – 1st Grade, Room 14
- Sunday School, 2nd – 5th Grades, Room 11

## Special Offerings



### CHILDREN AND COMMUNION WORKSHOP – 3/10, 3/17, AND 4/7 – 11:00 IN ROOM 25

Two-Sunday Workshop, plus a worship component, explaining the history and genesis of Communion, why and how we still celebrate it, and what a sacrament it is. This workshop is open to children in 2nd Grade and up. Parents are encouraged to attend with their children.



### BIBLE WORKSHOP – 4/21, 4/28, AND 5/5 – 11:00 IN ROOM 25

Two-Sunday Workshop, plus a workshop component, explaining what the Bible is, the various parts, and why after all this time we still think it's so important. This workshop is open to children in 2nd Grade and up. Parents are encouraged to attend with their children.

—CAROLYN HAYES  
DIRECTOR OF CHILDREN'S MINISTRIES AND  
ACTING DIRECTOR OF GPP&K



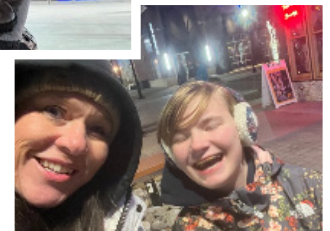
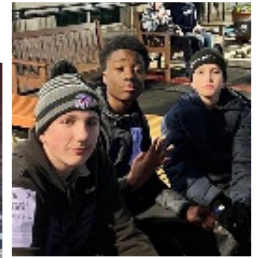


# YOUTH & COLLEGE HAPPENINGS

## WINTER YOUTH MINISTRY HIGHLIGHTS

We closed out 2023 with a great youth Christmas party, packed with good food, laughter, a gingerbread house-making competition, and a crazy gift exchange. Thank you, Dobbins family, for hosting!

We started 2024 with a fun evening of ice skating in downtown Rockville. Although it was very cold, we had a blast!



## OUR SPRING CALENDAR IS ALREADY LOOKING FULL!



**Summer Camp Registration** opened February 1, 2024! For more information, contact Carrie.

**On Ash Wednesday** we began a community devotion together. We continue serving our community by making trinkets for the residents of The Children's Inn at NIH.

Our **Lent teaching series** is called **BREAK TRAIL**. If you've ever gone hiking before, especially in the winter, you know that "breaking trail" is something you do when you encounter deep snow that's tough to navigate. When that happens, one hiker usually goes ahead of the group and clears the way so that others can follow behind more easily. A trail-breaker is someone who goes ahead, who makes a new way, and who invites others to follow along behind them. In so many ways, that's exactly what Jesus did for us. He broke a new trail just by existing, but he did so much more than that, too. In this Easter series, we'll read the stories of Jesus breaking new trails as we discover that Jesus never gives up on us, understands our pain, shows us love, is alive, can be trusted, and gives us a mission.



—CARRIE LARSEN  
DIRECTOR OF YOUTH AND YOUNG ADULTS



## SPRING INTO ACTION TO MAKE SURE THAT YOU

## HAVE A NAME TAG AND PHOTO BY EASTER!

The desire to build connections at GPC remains a top priority! Thank you to those who are wearing name tags and have added your photograph to the GPC online directory in the Member Portal of our website. We hope that you are enjoying the "Name Game," when directory photos are shown before services and during coffee hours and you try to guess the name of the person/people photographed.

How fantastic it would be if all the empty photo boxes in the online directory were filled, and everyone was wearing a name tag by the end of March. Name tags are still available to request and pick up at the Welcome Desk. You can store them in the baskets in the Gathering Space.

We are continuing to take photos at church and post them for you. If you are part of our online congregation and not coming to church in person, please email your photo to pwhiteh@hotmail.com and he will post it. There are also directions on the website for how to post a photo yourself.

For those who've completed these important tasks, please become an "Add Your Smile Ambassador." Look through the online directory and when you see friends without photos, spring into action and encourage them to get their photos taken before Easter!

—LUCILLE BAUR, COMMUNICATIONS COMMITTEE CHAIR



# MUSIC NOTES *Welcome, Katherine Williams!*



Katherine Williams is an accomplished church musician and has served several churches in the area. She is also a full-time elementary general music teacher with MCPS. Katherine started at GPC on February 1 and will be working part-time with us for a while, directing the Chancel Choir, leading worship three Sundays/month, and accompanying any choirs that are singing on those Sundays. This summer she will transition to full-time Director of Music.

Although born in Oklahoma, Katherine has lived most of her life in Maryland. She grew up in North Bethesda and attended Chevy Chase United Methodist Church, where she played in the handbell choir and sang in the choirs.

After college in the Midwest, she returned to Maryland, married, and moved her family to Damascus, where she became part of the music ministry at Damascus UMC and where her two now adult children, Rob and Rin, grew up fully immersed in the music and youth program there. At DUMC, she taught children's choirs, Kindermusik, accompanied the 65-voice youth choir, and sang in the adult choir. Later, she became the music director for other congregations in our area.

Katherine is passionate about the joy and fellowship that music can create. As a music teacher with MCPS for 19 years, she knows how music can touch and change lives and that it also has the potential to create community and provide depth and breadth of worship in a profound way.

## UPCOMING ORCHESTRA CONCERTS AT GPC!

### MONTGOMERY PHILHARMONIC

**Saturday, March 16, 4:00 p.m.**

*Conga del Fuego Nuevo* (Márquez), *Warrior Legacy* (Newbold), *Vortex* (Barker), *The Deserted Garden for String Orchestra* (Price), and *Symphony No. 5 Finale* (Tchaikovsky)

**Sunday, April 14, 6:30 p.m.**

*Symphony No. 4 in D minor, Opus 120* (Schumann), *Breathe* (Simon), and *The Oak* (Price)

**Sunday, June 9, 6:30 p.m.**

*Symphony No. 7 in A major, Opus 92* (Beethoven), *The Rhyme of Taigu* (Long), and *Serenade for Orchestra* (Still)

Concerts are held in our Sanctuary. Admission is free but donations are gratefully accepted.



Carolyn Hayes, acting director of our GPP&K, has sadly informed its currently enrolled student families that this spring semester will be the school's last. We can all be very proud of GPP&K's 48-year legacy of providing excellent, Christian-based educational programs that have supported the joyfully positive development of countless little ones. A heartfelt thank you to our devoted GPP&K staff!

January 22, 2024

Dear GPP&K Families,

It is with an incredibly heavy heart we announce that GPC Session along with GPP&K School Board have decided GPP&K will not open registration for the 2024-2025 school year. There are many reasons, including Covid being such a strain on our finances that we simply don't have the reserves to go on another year.

We are very grateful to you for placing your children in our care and want to give you as much time as we can to make arrangements for next year. You have all been incredibly supportive of us over the years and we deeply appreciate it. Please let us know if there is anything you need from us as you start to look at other programs, we will help in any way we can.

We look forward to a wonderful winter and spring with you and your children.



## THANK YOU!

Congregational Life extends a huge thank you to everyone who supported the recent **Souper Fellowship Luncheon!** Thanks to the 16 chefs, over 20 bakers, and over 20 volunteers, Lindsay Hall was filled with smiling faces on those enjoying delicious food and joyful fellowship! Plus, our Little Free Pantry gained some canned soup and KindWorks received some homemade soups! "Let's Do This More Often!" was heard frequently.

—CONGREGATIONAL LIFE MINISTRY



*1964 – 2024  
Gaithersburg Presbyterian  
Church Honors Its Past  
and Celebrates Its Future!*

## *HAPPY 60TH ANNIVERSARY GPC!*

Did you know that on May 17, 2024, GPC will celebrate its Diamond Anniversary? It's a great time to reflect on how far we've come and now, armed with the results of the CAT, make plans for a thriving future.

Looking back, it was in 1962 that the Potomac Presbytery selected Gaithersburg as the location for a new church. On May 17, 1964, Gaithersburg Presbyterian Church was formally organized with 82 charter members. Before our church structure was built, worshipers met at Gaithersburg Junior High and Gaithersburg Senior High. The first church building was constructed in 1966 at our current location. The first service in the new building was held on July 24 of that year. Many of our early members either lived within the limits of the City of Gaithersburg or in nearby neighborhoods.

GPC has gone through quite an evolution during our 60 years. Today, we are more of a regional church, with many members driving 20 miles or more to attend worship. We also have members from approximately 30 different countries.

GPC will celebrate its 60th anniversary throughout the month of May, with Pastor Mary Austin returning to preach on May 12, and Pastor LeAnn Hodges preaching for the formal celebration of our anniversary on May 19 (Pentecost).

—LUCILLE BAUR, COMMUNICATIONS COMMITTEE CHAIR

## *LITTLE FREE PANTRY*

Thank you to all who contribute to the Little Free Pantry. You are making a difference in the lives of our neighbors here in Gaithersburg, and your support is very much appreciated.

Ongoing needs for the pantry include rice; dried beans; ramen; instant or regular oatmeal; canned tuna, chicken, and SPAM; pasta; tomato sauce; soup; canned fruit; and vegetable oil (small bottle). Our pantry clients also appreciate toothbrushes, travel size toothpaste, soap, shampoo, conditioner, lotion, and wrapped plastic utensils. All donations can be placed directly in the pantry or in the wooden bin in the Gathering Space/Narthex. For monetary donations, you may donate online or via check mailed to the church (designate "Little Free Pantry" as the fund).

—ANNETTE WARD



## *GPC WOMEN'S PRAYER TIME*

MEETING DATES AND TIMES VARY

This small, yet loyal, group typically meets for about an hour and fifteen minutes, focusing on praying and sharing. Getting to know what is on the hearts of other women and finding out how ways to support one another on our journey is a blessing. Please consider stopping in and sharing what is in your heart. Check GPC emails and Sunday bulletins for meeting dates and times. Questions? Contact Sandy Menzies or Mary Nana (*call the church office*).



## *CAREGIVERS SUPPORT GROUP*

SECOND SATURDAY | 10:00 AM – NOON | ROOM 30/31

This group is for GPC members and friends who are caring for loved ones with mental illness. Upcoming meetings will be held on **March 9, April 13, and May 11**. Questions? Contact Cathy Lyon (*call the church office*).





## MEN'S BREAKFAST GROUP

FIRST SATURDAY | 8:00 AM | LINDSAY HALL

At the **January** meeting, Don Woodward spoke about "SNOTEL," a system of sensors that measure snow amounts out West, and at the **February** program Rob McLelland spoke about "Racial Disparities in the Treatment of Capital Income." The **March 2** program will feature Lisa Whitehead's presentation about perennials in our church gardens that were donated by GPC members and tended to last year by Creation Care Committee members. The speakers and topics for the **April 6** and **May 4** meetings are still being confirmed. Information will be shared in the weekly emails and Sunday bulletin announcements as it becomes available. All men and women are welcome to join us for Christian fellowship, prayer, a light continental breakfast, and a short program. Questions? Contact Ted Farrand (*call the church office*).

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## VERY IMPORTANT PRESBYTERIAN SENIORS {VIPS}

FIRST THURSDAY | 11:30 AM | LINDSAY HALL

Our Lenten meeting on **March 7** will feature a presentation by GPC's Youth Leader, Carrie Larsen, entitled "Alone We Can Do So Little; Together We Can Do So Much . . . Let's Collaborate!" Also in March, we look forward to attending the **March 10 concert** at BlackRock Center for the Arts by Jocelyn Pettit, fiddler, and GPC's Ellen Gira, cellist!

On **April 4**, Mr. Richard Allen, from the Montgomery County Human Rights Committee Against Hate Violence, will speak on the work being done in our area to combat these issues and ways that we can each contribute to these efforts. "Fire Safety for Seniors" is the topic of our **May 2** meeting. Retired Firefighter Jim Resnick, Program Manager for Senior Outreach and Education for the Montgomery County Fire and Rescue Service, will share safety tips and his recommendations. VIPS welcomes all Seniors who are 50 and over to join in the fellowship and service! For more information, contact Nancy Sanders (*call the church office*).

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## CRAFT GROUP

FIRST SUNDAY | 12:15 PM | LINDSAY HALL

The group is still collecting prayer shawls, children's hats and scarves, and fidget items for distribution to several organizations. Bring your lunch and join in the fun! We meet until 2:30 p.m. The next three meetings will be on **March 3**, **April 7**, and **May 5**. Questions? Contact Barbara Clark (*call the church office*).

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## 2ND FRIDAY BOOK CLUB

SECOND FRIDAY | 7:30 PM | ZOOM

The group is currently deciding the next book that they want to discuss. Check the calendar on the church website or contact Cindy Cennane (*call the church office*) to confirm the group's upcoming meeting dates.

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## CUB SCOUTS

TUESDAYS | 7:00-8:00 PM | LINDSAY HALL & DOWNSTAIRS CLASSROOMS

In **January**, everyone enjoyed a Popcorn Pizza Party and the annual Pinewood Derby. **February** activities included the celebration of scouting on Scout Sunday. Three Webelo scouts earned the God and Family religious award. Scouts assisted with the Shrove Tuesday Pancake Supper, and the annual Blue and Gold Banquet closed out the month. During the winter months, our scouts are also busy earning achievements.

In **March**, the scouts will begin planning for their **April** camping trip to Treehouse Camp at Maple Tree, located west of Frederick. All children in Kindergarten through 5th Grade are welcome to join Cub Scout Pack 64. We are a family pack with both boys and girls. Questions? Contact Barbara Clark (*call the church office*).







# GPC SPANS the GLOBE

## NEWS AND VIEWS FROM MALAWI

GPC benefits from and takes pride in the international diversity of its members. This is the third in a series of articles written by our internationally born members to share some of their home-country cultures and traditions, along with photos of the author and the featured country. We hope that these new, continuing articles in *The Mainstream* will help us build even stronger understanding and connections.

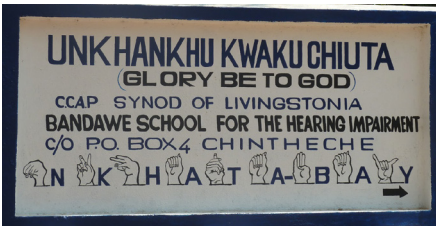
### The Presbyterian Church in Malawi

The Presbyterian church in Malawi holds a prominent position in the country's religious and social landscape. The church was established by Scottish and Dutch missionaries in the late 19th century and since then the church has grown to become one of the major Christian denominations in Malawi. Known as The Church of Central Africa Presbyterian (CCAP), the church has three presbyteries: the Livingstonia Synod in the northern part, the Nkhoma Synod in the central region, and the Blantyre Synod in the southern region. The doctrine in all three synods is basically the same, the only difference being that both the Livingstonia and Blantyre Synods were established by the Scottish missions in 1924 and the Nkhoma Synod by the Dutch missions in 1926.

Malawi is a religious country. Nearly 87% of its citizens are Christians, so both policymaking and culture are highly influenced by its religious leaders. The Presbyterian church is the second largest denomination after the Catholic church and, as such, is revered; even non-members of the denomination rely on the church to speak up for social injustices as well as contribute to the social development of the country at large. As a result, the Presbyterian church is at the core of every area of socio-political development, including education, health, and governance.



St. Michael and All Souls Church – a National Monument and one of the oldest churches built by missionaries in the Blantyre Synod



Sign for Bandawe School for the Hearing Impairment

### Education

Education is a cornerstone of the Presbyterian church's mission in Malawi. It has played a pivotal role in establishing schools across the country, contributing significantly to the educational infrastructure. In addition to the mission schools, the church has schools for children with special needs, such as a school for those with visual and hearing impairment. These schools often prioritize not only academic excellence but also the moral and spiritual development of students.

### Health

The church has been actively involved in the well-being of communities, establishing and supporting healthcare facilities. Hospitals and clinics across the country aim to provide accessible medical services to communities. The church further engages in health education and also promotes preventive measures and community health awareness.



The Ekwendeni Mission Hospital (under the Livingstonia Synod)





President Lazarus Chakwera with some Reverends from the Nkoma Synod of Malawi

## Governance

Historically, the Presbyterian church in Malawi has been engaged in social justice issues and community development. It advocates for ethical governance principles and often participates in initiatives promoting good governance and societal well-being. The leadership of the Presbyterian church frequently has courtesy call meetings with political leaders to advocate for good policies and rebuke them when they feel that political leaders are going astray. When these leaders are not responsive to the advice from the church, the church leadership issues pastoral letters that normally influence voting patterns in the general elections.

## Women's Guild

The church understands that although the spiritual welfare of its church members ranks high, they have created an enabling environment for its members to fellowship in different ways within the church. The most notable fellowship is the women's guild. Known as Amayi a Mvano or Umanyano (Women in Unity), depending on the Presbytery, it is a very active group within the church and is widely recognized across the country by other denominations because they wear a uniform of a white shirt, a black skirt, and a white head wrap when executing their philanthropic duties. The group unites women around the Bible; they normally meet every Friday or Saturday for Bible studies at prayer houses. In addition, women play a huge role in times of bereavement and sickness of church members. They cheer the sick in homes and hospitals; console the bereaved by singing soothing songs; assist the elderly; care for widows and orphans; assist the needy, disadvantaged, and those who have reverted to bad habits; look after the welfare of children; and provide leadership in congregations, prayer houses, presbyteries, and synods.

The Presbyterian church in Malawi continues to be a vibrant part of Malawi's religious and social landscape, contributing to the well-being and impacting the spiritual and social uplifting of the people of Malawi.



Madame Gertrude Mutharika, former First Lady of Malawi, addressing the Women's Guild at one of their meetings

—LOYCE SIMFUKWE

*Loyce Simfukwe grew up in Lilongwe, Malawi, one of seven siblings in a Presbyterian family. Being raised in a big family taught her to be selfless and compassionate. She combines her faith and skills to serve others.*

*Loyce moved to the United States in 2022. She is a diplomat and works as a Political Officer for the Embassy of Malawi in Washington, DC. Loyce joined GPC in 2023 and is grateful to serve as an usher and a member of the GPC family.*



IF YOU WOULD LIKE TO CONTRIBUTE AN ARTICLE ABOUT YOUR HOME COUNTRY, CONTACT PETER FOFUH AT [OFFICE@GPCHURCH.ORG](mailto:OFFICE@GPCHURCH.ORG).

# WELCOME, NEW CHURCH OFFICERS!

THE FOLLOWING ELDERS AND DEACONS HAVE BEEN NOMINATED TO SERVE  
AND WERE ORDAINED DURING WORSHIP ON JANUARY 7 AND FEBRUARY 4, 2024.

## ELDERS



### Alice Alexander

I was raised by my father, whose early years were spent in India as the only child of missionaries, and by my mother, who came from a very formal church environment. My six siblings and I lived in Minneapolis and attended a great Presbyterian church, where we were active in the church choirs, Sunday school, youth group, church retreats, etc. I went to a summer church camp, which was where my faith started to come together. I also went to a YMCA summer camp in northern Minnesota. These camping experiences tried my faith and ultimately built a strong foundation for it.

In my mid-30s, I met my husband, Fred Mosher, at a Methodist church in Prince George's County. We married and became very active there until our children joined our family and we found another church.

Through major life events, including my mother's death when I was 17 years old, serving in the Peace Corps in Fiji for two years, backpacking around the world, having three major car accidents, marrying late in life, and adopting two transracial children (Cody, 22, and Alex, 19) really late in life, the many ups and downs have not only tried my faith but strengthened it.

I'm honored to be asked to serve as an Elder, and I look forward to using my skills to give back to GPC for all the blessings that I have received.

felt there was a large gap between my understanding of who Jesus is and what he taught, and what I saw in the Church, the world, and myself.

One of my favorite passages is Jeremiah 9:23: *"This is what the Lord says: Let not the wise man boast of his wisdom or the strong man boast of his strength or the rich man boast of his riches, but let him who boasts boast about this: that he understands and knows me, that I am the Lord who exercises kindness, justice and righteousness on earth, for in these I delight," declares the Lord.*

*"To understand and know me, declares the Lord"* is what I continue to pursue, but always with the knowledge that it is a never-ending pursuit. What Paul the Apostle stated in Philippians 3:12 about his desire to know Christ and his power resonates with me, *"Not that I have already obtained all this, or have already been made perfect, but I press on to take hold of that for which Christ Jesus took hold of me."*



### Edge Kaunda

Born and raised in Malawi, I grew up in a Christian family. My parents made sure that I never skipped church or Sunday school and taught me to thank God for the blessings that He gives us. I took this for granted back then but have come to realize how important it is.

Although I grew up in a God-fearing family, my spiritual life was strengthened later on. Around 2009, I lost my place at the university and was at a low point. Malawi had only one major university, so my future prospects were in jeopardy. I lived at my parents' house with no clear future in sight, little knowing that God had plans for me. The previous year, I had applied for the green card lottery—something that I'd totally forgotten about. In 2010, while still staying with my parents and praying to God to show me a way forward, I received a letter notifying me that I had been selected for the application process! That is when I realized that when you ask, God will provide. I had dreamed about the United States, but actually coming here can only be attributed to God's doing. And now I've been blessed in many ways. I was fortunate to meet my wife, Omega, who is also



### Gary Aller

I grew up in a churchgoing, non-religious household where church was only for Sundays. My faith journey started when I first became personally aware of God at 11 years old, and for the past 60 years I have been trying to figure this "God" thing out. My search has led me to several faith traditions: Congregationalist, Lutheran, Presbyterian, Baptist, Episcopalian, non-denominational, para-church groups, and charismatic fellowships. I met a lot of wonderful Christians along the way, but I always had a hunger to push further on. I



God fearing, and last year we were blessed with a baby girl, Sandra.

My faith in God and Jesus Christ started when I was going through some life difficulties, and I would not be where I am today without it. I feel God's presence in my life now more than ever because I listen to Him and He hears my prayers. I'm ready to fully serve Him because I know that's what He wants me to do. It is an honor to be chosen to serve as an Elder and I look forward to being of service to the best of my abilities.

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### Kofi Kumi

I grew up in a Christian home. My dad was a Presbyterian pastor and my mother was a leader in the Women Fellowship organization in the church. My older siblings and I were awakened at 5:30 every morning for devotions. Our parents instilled in us the belief, trust, and

dependence on God for all things.

Despite my Christian upbringing and training, it was not until high school, when I joined a religious organization called Scripture Union (SU), that I fully appreciated and understood the concept of having a personal relationship with Jesus Christ. I gave my life to Him and accepted Him as my Lord and Savior. I surrendered my life to Christ for Him to take control and direct me in His ways. I became active in SU, disseminating the word of God and serving. I try to lead my life to the glory of God. In spite of my shortcomings and backsliding at times, Christ has been at the core of my life as well as good and faithful to me in all things and in all circumstances.

I'm honored to be asked to serve as an Elder and will prayerfully ask God for guidance in executing my responsibilities.

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### Elisa McClelland

I grew up in the Los Angeles area in California, and went to the University of California, Santa Cruz, where I met my husband, Rob. In 1989, we moved to Maryland with our son, James. After our second child, Erin, was born, Rob joined GPC, and in 2000 I joined as well.

I've spent most of my adult life serving as a volunteer for various organizations and have served as an Elder (2015–2017) and Deacon (2018–2020). I have also enjoyed participating in 11 PDA mission trips.

I believe that God loves us and wants us to do good in the world. I believe that God sent His Son, Jesus Christ, into the world to show us The Way. I believe that to be a Christian is to follow the two greatest commandments Jesus gave: to open up my heart to God and love Him with all of my soul, and to recognize and love each person as another child of God. If I am to truly call myself a Christian, I have to follow the path that Jesus set before me. In attempting this, I will work to let God's light shine through me before the world.

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### Paul Whitehead

I was born in Washington, DC, but moved to Atlanta, Georgia, when I was 5 and grew up there. As a child, I attended Sunday School regularly at a local Methodist church. I felt comfortable in the love of Jesus Christ and was fascinated by the Bible stories. Following my parents'

divorce when I was in high school, my family became high holiday church attendees. I remained one as well for many years.

After graduating from UVA with an MS in Systems Engineering, I went to work for Bell Labs in New Jersey. I married Lisa and we had three boys. When they started school, we both felt the need to start attending church again, for our sake and theirs. My faith began to be renewed as we made great friends whose faith was deep. By then I was working in Colorado, so we found a Presbyterian church with a wonderful children's education program and nurturing support groups for us as new parents.

When our boys were older, we moved to Texas and joined a Presbyterian church there. I co-taught the high school Sunday School class, ran a monthly church volleyball game, and operated the sound board for the early service. I also joined a men's group for weekly Bible study and sharing of our personal lives. Their deep faith and good works inspired me to work to deepen my own relationship with Jesus and to find more ways to help serve that church. I've found that the mission trips I participated in while in Texas and at GPC have also inspired me to live a life of service.

After finishing my career leading R&D teams developing new data and video services, Lisa and I moved to Gaithersburg to be closer to family. We began attending GPC in 2019 and, since joining, I've gone on PDA Mission trips and joined the Communications Committee.

I'm honored to be invited to serve as an Elder at GPC and look forward to serving this church and our community during my retirement.



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# DEACONS

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## Susan Morris

My faith journey began 71 years ago in Conway Springs, Kansas. Baptized as an infant, I joined the First Presbyterian Church at the age of 10. While active in our church, my family farmed, and both parents taught full-time. Many hours of my first 25 years were spent on

John Deere tractors, raising sheep, and running a seed cleaning business with my siblings. The death of my brother, Johnny, in a 1958 farm accident forever changed us. “Faith, Family, and Friends” became our mantra, creating an unbreakable family bond.

Ed and I met during grad school at Kansas State University. We married in 1977 and moved to Maryland when he joined MacArthur Animal Hospital in Washington, DC. Since joining GPC in 1982, I’ve served as parish secretary; taught youth and adult Sunday School classes; and volunteered with VBS, the Lord’s Table soup kitchen and food pantry, Angel Network, and other ministries. Our children, Stephanie (40) and Ryan (28), were raised in and by the GPC family.

After working for 30+ years as an adult educator with the University of Maryland – College of Agriculture & Natural Resources, I retired in December 2009. God has persistently nudged me to reach out—to more fully share gifts of friendship and compassion in service to others. With God’s help and your blessing, I’m willing to serve.



## Georgina Ofori-Obeng

Born and raised in Ghana, I came to the United States as an adult. I’ve been attending GPC for a long time and have served and continue to serve in a number of roles, including Deacon, Sunday School assistant, usher, helping organize the new members luncheon, and kitchen

aide. I’m married to Yaw Obeng and work with people with head injuries.

Although I’ve gone to church my whole life, I have not always known Jesus personally. I’ve known the difference between right and wrong but didn’t know much about “Grace.”

In 1994, while visiting Ghana, I went with my father to a Presbyterian Men’s Fellowship retreat. The topic for the day was “Faith.” At the end of the session, I stepped forward during the altar call. When the preacher asked if I had any questions, I asked him how to get “Faith.” I don’t recall his answer, but whatever he said stuck with me.

After returning to the United States, I became confused and depressed, but my father encouraged me to keep praying for God to show me His way. I went church hunting and ended up at GPC; I liked it here and decided to stay. I also went to a weekly prayer camp with a friend. These two events made a big difference in my life. I became stronger emotionally and developed deference to God in all that I did. I also learned to pray earnestly for Him to show me His direction for my life and to help me find my calling.

I believe that every new day is a gift from God to do His will. I thank God for His faithfulness and mercies, which are renewed every morning. I believe that by Grace we enter into the presence of God the Father. No one is perfect and it’s only by Grace that the Father reconciles with us. I believe the Bible to be God inspired and that it provides us with guidelines and clarifications for our day-to-day living, gives us hope, and reassures us that we are not alone.



## Marcellin Womeku

I am from the French-speaking country of Togo in West Africa, and I have two sisters. I’ve lived in the Washington area since coming to the United States in 1995. I’m a business analyst for an electrical company. My wife, Alvine, and I have three daughters: Grace (19),

Ushenna (16), and Daniella (10).

My faith in God and his son Jesus Christ started at a very young age when I was going through some difficulties in my life, and I would not be where I am today without my faith. I feel God’s presence in my life now more than ever because I listen to him every day and he hears me through my prayers. I am ready to fully serve him because I know that’s what he wants me to do.

*NOTE: BIOGRAPHIES AND FAITH STATEMENTS  
WERE EDITED FOR LENGTH.*

## OUR GPC LENTEN PRACTICES AND BELOVED COMMUNITY

We will never forget Mary Beth's "Feeding the 5,000" food drives during Lent as we brought in cases of food to donate to our mission partners feeding the hungry. The pandemic forced us into different paths of giving, however, and now, as we find many "new normals," we have new ways to love and be in community with others during this Lenten season.

The **Matthew 25 Racial Justice Ministry** and the **Prison Ministry** are joining together to provide us opportunities to actively observe Lent and make a difference. Dr. Christophe Ringer, with the Chicago Theological Seminary, writes in his Creating Space for Beloved Community devotion, "It's a helpful reminder during this Lenten season that the popular act of giving something up was designed to create room in the heart, mind and soul. Creating room within ourselves is an intentional practice of preparation. Preparation so that we may be transformed by the resurrecting power of God." Dr. Ringer goes on to compare struggles for societal transformation to personal transformation, saying that "transforming social structures also means transforming ourselves." Racism and injustices are "lodged in our collective imagination and expressed in our social institutions."

Please contemplate making room in your heart, mind, and soul by giving money for the purchase of books for our new Racial Justice section in the GPC library or for those in prison by purchasing small alarm clocks, white socks and white T-shirts (sizes M, L, XL) for men and women, and faith-based inspirational material for all faiths and languages. Please consider a transformative action for yourself and our community by participating in this year's Lenten giving project. Watch and listen for more details in the coming days.

Thank you from the Racial Justice Ministry and the Prison Ministry.

—DONNA DANNELS AND SHARI MCCANN

## THANK YOU from Summit Hall ES!

Words scarcely describe the deep appreciation of the Linkages to Learning Program at Summit Hall ES for the ongoing support of your church to the children and families in our school. Your community support has been overwhelming and we greatly appreciate being the beneficiary of your many contributions.

Your Coat Drive was very successful. Many students are now prepared with the right gear for their first winter weather ever. For others, replacing their old, outgrown coats is always nice. We also appreciated the donation of gently used adult clothing and shoes.

Many families had a brighter holiday season thanks to donated children's clothing and toys. We also appreciated the support with craft activities by some VIPS members at our December 20 Holiday Party.

Collaborating with GPC has been very beneficial for our Linkages program and, most importantly, for the families who benefit from your ongoing support. Thank you again for the kindness, generosity, time, and effort put into all of the activities to assist Summit Hall ES.

Best wishes for a healthy and successful 2024!

With gratitude,

ANA SCHMITZ, MS  
COMMUNITY SCHOOL COORDINATOR



*NOTE: LETTER WAS EDITED FOR LENGTH.*



# DIRECTORY CHANGES



Addresses and phone numbers  
are available through the church office.


 Address change | Phone number change   
\*New member

Koudzo Apedoh\* & Mote Adzo  



Ray Sickles 



Marc & Christiana\* Baafour-Coomson  

Okechukwu "Okay" & Nneka Ume\*  

Tom & Kathy Lowe 

Kendall Zammit 

Phil Nana  

Brandon & Olivia Zammit  



## WELCOME TO THE WORLD!

*Congratulations to*

Don & Nancy Wilson,  
the proud great-grandparents of  
*CHANNING MICHAEL WILSON*  
born on December 3, 2023



## WEDDING CONGRATULATIONS

Brandon & Olivia Zammit  
December 20, 2023

## HAPPY ANNIVERSARY

46 YEARS

Ed & Susan Morris  
December 10, 1977



## CHRISTIAN SYMPATHY

*We extend our sympathy to the  
members of our congregation who  
have lost loved ones.*

*We mourn the loss of members and friends who have died.*

**Al Vargo**

husband of Betty Vargo,  
in Rockville, MD  
December 27, 2023

**Irene Coleman**

mother of Carolyn and  
the late Roslyn Coleman  
in Rockville, MD  
January 9, 2024

**Sarawni Rodawla**

her brother, Muana Rodawla,  
in Burma  
December 3, 2023

**Joseph Nana**

his mother, Rebecca Tormen,  
in Newark, DE  
January 4, 2024

**Carole Tukes**

her niece, Karen Davis Metts,  
in Cincinnati, OH  
January 14, 2024

**Vandy Richards**

her mother, Linda Bee Richards,  
in Rochester, NY  
December 25, 2022

**Debonnaire Tchouambou**

her nephew, Lionel Youkam,  
in Frederick, MD  
January 8, 2024

**Don & Barbara Woodward**

their son, Bob Woodward,  
in Philadelphia, PA  
January 19, 2024

**Andy Gosnell**

(GPC's Facilities Manager)  
his brother, Larry Garber,  
in Chesapeake City, MD  
January 2, 2024

**Fletcher Tukes**

his cousin, Mary Jo Carter,  
in Washington, DC  
January 9, 2024

**Family of David Johnson,**

son of the late  
Bob and Barbara Johnson  
in Rockville, MD  
January 19, 2024







## LIVING LEGACY FELLOWSHIP DINNER

Plan to join us in early May for a short program and dinner. Specifics and RSVP details will be shared closer to the date.

### SANCTUARY FLOWER ORDERS

WANT TO DONATE FLOWERS  
*for Easter Sunday or any  
Sunday worship service?*

Easter flowers are \$14 per plant and the last day to place an order is Sunday, March 24.

You may give flowers in honor or memory of someone, or to celebrate a special occasion.

The weekly altar flowers cost \$50, and you may take them home after the 11:00 service.

Scan the QR code below to access both flower forms or visit [gpchurch.org/flower-form](https://gpchurch.org/flower-form) to place your order.



## THE MAINSTREAM

### Submission Deadlines for Articles and Distribution of Newsletters

The Mainstream is published quarterly. It is sent electronically and hard copies are mailed in February, May, August, and November.

**Submissions should be  
sent to [jobermiller@gpchurch.org](mailto:jobermiller@gpchurch.org)  
and [bmoldroyd53@gmail.com](mailto:bmoldroyd53@gmail.com)  
by January 15, April 15,  
July 15, and October 15.**

Questions? Contact the church office.

## FINANCIAL SUMMARY REPORT

December 2023

% OF  
2023 YTD BUDGET

### INCOME

Envelope Pledged.....	\$711,945	95%
Envelope Unpledged .....	\$271,380	136%
Loose Offering .....	\$16,057	178%
Other Income .....	\$3,661	183%
Room Rent.....	\$100	0%
Interest & Dividends .....	\$11,573	231%
Manse Rental .....	\$16,800	0%
Mizo Church – Offering .....	\$5,000	200%
Carryover .....	\$0	0%

Total.....\$1,036,516 ..... 107%

### EXPENSE

NCP Membership .....	\$27,712	100%
Human Resources.....	\$571,031	85%
Buildings & Grounds.....	\$233,656	105%
Office Operations.....	\$36,776	117%
Communications.....	\$6,613	125%
Stewardship .....	\$2,959	54%
Comm Engagement .....	\$91,856	93%
Eq Disciples.....	\$17,345	75%
Vital Worship .....	\$24,757	203%
Congregational Life .....	\$1,711	51%
Other.....	\$5,030	0%
Session .....	\$771	24%

Total.....\$1,020,217 ..... 93%

NET .....\$16,299

To request a complete financial summary,  
email [accountingmanager@gpchurch.org](mailto:accountingmanager@gpchurch.org).

**Correction to September 2023 Report:**  
Total Expenses were **\$764,559**, not \$609,953.



## GPC MEDIA POLICY

Gaithersburg Presbyterian Church (GPC) uses print and digital media of church life in communications materials to share the ministry of GPC with our congregation and community at large. GPC reserves the right to use any media taken at any activity sponsored by GPC, without the express written consent of those individuals included within the media. GPC may use any such media in publications, social media, and any website.



# *THE MAINSTREAM*

**Gaithersburg Presbyterian Church**

610 South Frederick Avenue

Gaithersburg, MD 20877-1297

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*WISHING YOU A MEANINGFUL LENT  
AND A HAPPY EASTER!*



## *FIND IT FAST!*

- Retirement Letter from Rev. Mary Beth Lawrence (p. 2)
- Easter Weekend Services (p. 2)
- Welcome, Katherine Williams, Director of Music! (p. 5)
- Upcoming Orchestra Concerts (p. 5)
- Souper Fellowship Luncheon Thank You (p. 5)
- Letter from GPP&K to Families (p. 5)
- Celebrating GPC's 60th Anniversary! (p. 6)
- Little Free Pantry (includes list of ongoing needs) (p. 6)
- Spanning the Globe – Malawi (feature article) (pp. 8-9)
- Our Newly Elected Elders and Deacons (pp. 10-12)
- Thank You from Summit Hall ES (p. 13)
- Living Legacy Fellowship Dinner (p. 15)
- Easter Flowers – Ordering Information (p. 15)