

MONTHLY NEWSLETTER

December 2024



ISSUE HIGHLIGHTS

- Upcoming Prayer Training Class
- MPP Registration 2025-2026
- Stewardship & Budget 2025
- Advent/Christmas 2024
- Session Update

Call for Cookies!



If you love to bake and spread holiday cheer, please bring two dozen homemade cookies on a disposable tray to the Loretto Road Campus coffee room on Sunday morning, December 15th! If you have any questions, email Alisa Knox at alisa102189@yahoo.com.



As we navigate the busyness of the Christmas season, let's pause to reflect on the promises fulfilled in the birth of Jesus bringing hope, joy, peace and salvation to the world. Join us this Advent season on a journey through the Gospel of Luke as we explore how these promises, first foretold by prophets and sung by angels, continue to echo in our daily lives.

To explore all the MPC Christmas activities and events, visit mandarinpres.com/christmas.

Upcoming Events

- Christmas Music Celebration: December 15th
- Blue Christmas Service: December 19th
- Christmas Eve Services: December 24th
 - 4:30pm - 7pm - 9pm
- One Morning Worship Service: December 29th
 - 10am

For more details, visit mandarinpres.com or the Church Center app.



Upcoming Class



MPC is offering a six-week prayer training class from January 12th - February 16th. This class is designed to equip you to pray confidently for the people God puts in your path, and it's a great opportunity for personal growth.

This isn't just a learn-about-prayer class. It's a class where we'll practice prayer to grow more comfortable and confident when praying for others. Since that comes with practice, the goal of this class is to offer encouragement, coaching and training. But most importantly, it offers the opportunity to practice praying with others in a safe and encouraging atmosphere. By the end of six weeks, participants will have some experience (and hopefully more comfort and confidence) in listening to, loving and praying for people who need prayer.

Who should take this class?

- People who help lead small groups and Bible studies.
- People involved in ministries or mission activities with people in need.
- Anyone who wants to get better at praying for others.

What will it be like? Here's a rough outline for our time together each week:

- Take time to gather and connect.
- Ask for God's help.
- Reflect on the week (if appropriate).
- Learn something new about listening, loving and praying.
- Practice it.

Who is leading the class?

- One of our "pastors in the pews," Jesse Alexander, will lead the class with the help of one of our deacons, Marjorie Lewis.

Register at mandarinpres.com/prayer. The class is limited to 24 participants.



STEWARDSHIP

2025



Thank you to everyone who submitted a 2025 pledge! Your generosity is greatly appreciated!

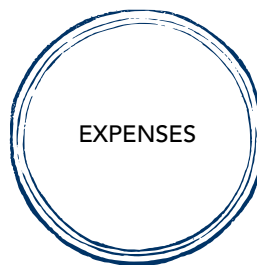
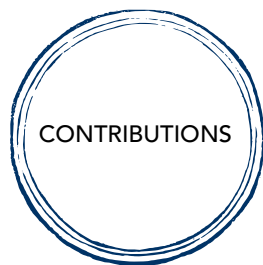
If you still need to submit your pledge, you can pledge online at mandarinpres.com/pledge.



If you missed our Vision Night, go to mandarinpres.com/vision or the Church Center app to watch the video. It's a great opportunity to hear from Senior Pastor Andrew Stepp on what God is doing at MPC and our path forward.

We are very excited for God's plans for MPC in 2025! We would like to invite you to a Budget Insight meeting at the Loretto Road Campus between services (10-10:30am) in Room 8 on January 12th or 19th. Bring your questions!

2024 Financial Update



Oct. 2024
Year-to-Date

\$203,254
\$2,096,023

\$249,142
\$2,278,133

(\$45,888)
(\$182,110)

Thank you for your faithful giving to MPC!



Daily Bread Food Pantry Update

Our **Daily Bread Food Pantry** and **Clothes Closet** have seen consistently high guest visitation rates. Our dedicated volunteers continue their weekly distribution of **three** grocery bags filled with a variety of items. These include canned goods, packaged dry goods, bread & pastries, fresh fruits & vegetables, as well as dairy products. Occasionally, meat, fish, and poultry items are also available.

Weekly distribution has steadily increased and now averages 60 households and impacting more than 170 individuals with 20+ guests taking advantage of the Clothes Closet! We are truly grateful for the opportunity to support those in our community who need assistance with food and clothing. Thanks for all of prayers and support!

**Total 2024
Distributions
to Guests**
through November 2024

Food	Clothing
2883	854
	

Rotary Club of Mandarin, BSA Troop 321, Stetson Kennedy Foundation, and numerous other Groups (Bible Study, Quilters and others) along with countless individual MPC members and community neighbors have combined to contribute mightily with food, clothing and monetary gifts to power Daily Bread Food Pantry operations soon coming upon 12 years!

*Praises to all with blessings & gratitude,
Daily Bread Food &
Clothes Closet Volunteers*

J.O.Y. (Just Older Youth)



December Luncheon

Please join us for our JOY "Reindeer Games" Luncheon on Thursday, December 12th at 11:30am in the Fellowship Hall as we celebrate the season with lots of fun and surprises. The cost is \$7.00 per person. Please RSVP by December 10th at 904-680-9944.

MPP



Mandarin Presbyterian Preschool is currently registering students for the 2025-2026 school year for two year olds, three year olds, and Florida VPK four year olds. Space is limited and classes are filling quickly at our amazing school! Registration opened to the general public on December 2nd.

If you know of someone who might be interested in sending their preschooler to our school, have them contact Lee Samuels at 904-680-6406 or lsamuels@mandarinpres.com.

Spots fill quickly, so don't wait!

MPC Men's Luncheon

The MPC Men's Fellowship Luncheon is held the second and fourth Wednesday of every month. We meet in the Fellowship Hall from noon until 1:15pm. We strive to have a guest speaker at one of the monthly meetings and have a discussion based on the previous Sunday's sermon at alternate meetings.

We have a lunch of sub sandwiches with the fixings on the side, along with potato salad, chips, drinks and dessert. The cost of lunch is \$8.00.

All men of our church and guests are invited to join us. Please consider joining us for fellowship, prayer, interesting guest speakers and discussion.

Please contact Randy Hester at 904-859-4996 or hesterrandy632@gmail.com or Wayne Gaff at 904-318-0002 or w.gaff@comcast.net with any questions.

Great Banquet



Christmas - "the most wonderful time of the year," but it can also be the most stressful time of the year. Finals, if you are in school; overly filled calendars; hosting parties and family gatherings. And that which takes everybody under - giving a perfect gift. NorthEast Florida Great Banquet can't help much with the former. But we can assist with the latter. Giving the gift of a Great Banquet weekend will not only enrich their soul; it is one of the few that will keep giving loooong after it is unwrapped. April 3-6, 2025, for women, and April 24-27, 2025, for men. Visit NEFGB.com for more information.

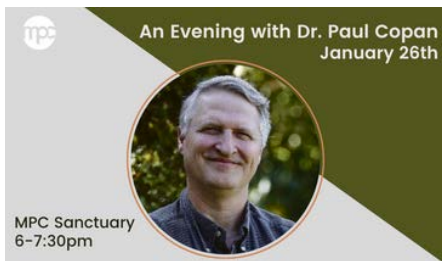
Mark Your Calendars



Come enjoy an evening of music and scripture at 7pm in the Sanctuary on Sunday, December 15th. Hear the Christmas story with special music by the Sanctuary Choir, Concert Band and Handbells! Arrive early for cookies at 6:30pm! This is an event you don't want to miss!



MPC will be offering a six-week prayer training class starting in January 2025 designed to equip you to pray confidently for people God puts in your path. Registration is available at mandarinpres.com/prayer.



We are thrilled to welcome Dr. Paul Copan, Christian theologian and author of many books including, "Is God a Vindictive Bully?" on January 26th as our guest preacher. Join for a special Q&A session in the evening. Stay tuned for how to submit advance questions.



We are very excited for God's plans for MPC in 2025. Join us for our 2025 Budget Insight meetings at the Loretto Road Campus between services (10am - 10:30am) in Room 8 on January 12th or January 19th. Bring your questions!



Save your spot for the Women's Ministry January 25th Getaway with God & the Gals retreat in Amelia Island to laugh, enjoy fellowship and spend time with God. There is a discounted hotel option (1/24-1/26) available only until December 13th. Go to mandarinpres.com/getaway for more details.



Get a Grip is returning in February! It is a 10-week class that walks through the redemption story from Creation to Revelation, chronicling the themes and major events of Biblical history. Please join us as we walk through God's story from Eden to the Ends of the Earth! Registration available soon.



Advent/Christmas 2024

Bell Ringing



Invite others this season! Printed invitations are available in the church lobby or church office!

Merry Christmas, MPC Family and Friends! Join us in reflecting on the promises of Christmas and celebrating the greatest gift of all—the birth of Jesus! This season is a wonderful opportunity to focus on what truly matters and to create lasting memories. Explore all that is happening around MPC this Christmas and be sure to invite others!

Poinsettias - We are offering an opportunity to give poinsettias in memory or honor of loved ones. They will be displayed in the church Christmas Eve. Place your order online at mandarinpres.com/poinsettia or with the church bulletin insert. Plants are \$10 each. The deadline to order is Sunday, December 15th.

Salvation Army Bell Ringing - MPC will be ringing the Salvation Army bells at the Publix at Mandarin Oaks (corner of San Jose Blvd. & Mandarin Road). Dates begin Wednesday, December 11th through Saturday, December 21st. You can sign up in the church lobby on Sundays or scan the bar code at the top of the page.

Alternative Gift Market - You have the opportunity to join our congregation in supporting a number of missions both local and abroad. Purchase meals for a day for a local family, or chickens & goats through World Vision, or even send a child to a Young Life Camp; the possibilities are endless. AGM will be available on Sundays, December 8th and 15th.

Annual Christmas Music Celebration - Come enjoy an evening of music and scripture at 7:00pm in the Sanctuary on Sunday, December 15th. Hear the Christmas story with special music by the Sanctuary Choir, Concert Band and Handbells!

Blue Christmas Service - Blue Christmas is a gentle, contemplative service for those who are carrying pain or loss during this season of celebration. The Blue Christmas service is Thursday, December 19th at 6:30pm in the Fellowship Hall on the Mandarin Road Campus. Childcare is available with RSVP to wgreer@mandarinpres.com.

Tuesday, December 24th - Christmas Eve Services

4:30pm - Family and Children's Celebration with live Nativity

7:00pm - Candlelight Christmas Message, music by Worship Team

9:00pm - Candlelight & Communion Christmas Message, music by Sanctuary Choir & Concert Band

Please note activity bags will be provided for kids during the 7:00pm and 9:00pm services.

Childcare will be provided for kindergarten and younger children.

Sunday, December 29th - One morning worship service at 10am.

Just a note from the Session



(Left to right)

Front Row: Curt Etheridge, Tami Shepler, Rev. Jenn Arnold, Danielle Caplin, Rev. Dr. Andrew Stepp

Middle Row: Frank Talbot, Carol Yelinek, Rosa Heard, Kim Harris, Penny Kievet, Chris Davis

Back Row: Rev. Jeff Arnold, Matt Balanky, Hawley Smith III, Bob Gillander

Here are a few key notes from the November Session meeting.

If you could not attend the very informative MPC Vision Night on November 12th, you can watch a recap video on the MPC website: <https://mandarinpres.com/vision>.

December is a busy month at MPC, beginning with our annual Pancakes and Pajamas on December 1st, followed by the MPC Women's Ministry Jingle & Mingle on December 7th, the MPC Christmas Music Celebration on December 15th, our Blue Christmas service on December 19th and Christmas Eve services. There are other opportunities to connect with small group meetings and Sunday school classes. Check out the MPC calendar to find your connection.

MPC will hold three services on Christmas Eve. The 4:30pm service is our Children and Family service and promises to be full of fun, laughter and hearing the story of Jesus' birth. Our service at 7pm will be a contemporary service with communion and candlelight. The service at 9pm is our more traditional service with the choir, communion and candlelight. What a wonderful time to worship at MPC!

In 2025, we continue our sermon series on the Gospel of Luke as we dig deeper into God's Word. Dr. Paul Copan will be our guest speaker on January 26th. An evening event with Dr. Copan will include a time of questions and answers. Dr. Copan is a Christian theologian, analytic philosopher, apologist and author. Mark your calendars as you will not want to miss his visit.

We want to hear from you! At any time when you may have a question or just want to say hello, you can reach out to us individually or you can email the Session at elders@mandarinpres.com.

As we enter this Advent season, we thank God for the gift of His One and Only Son, Jesus Christ. May you have a wondrous Christmas filled with hope, peace, joy and love!

Please join the Session as we continue to pray for our church, our community, our world.

Merry Christmas

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