The mission of Mount Olympus Presbyterian Church is to invite people to experience Jesus Christ and become his passionate followers.

MOUNT OLYMPUS
PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH

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Commitment of Giving Sunday will be November 1

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Thunder After Lightning: Grace, Gratitude, and Human Responsibility

Every November, our culture turns toward thankfulness. Grocery aisles fill with cranberries, children trace their hands into paper turkeys, and families gather around tables to name what they are grateful for. These are good things. The Reformed tradition, however, has always understood gratitude as something deeper than a seasonal mood. For our forebears in the faith, gratitude is the very grammar of the Christian life.

The Heidelberg Catechism, written in 1563 and still part of our Book of Confessions, unfolds in three movements: guilt, grace, and gratitude. It begins with an honest reckoning with the human condition, turns to the astonishing news of what God has done in Jesus Christ, and then devotes its remaining pages to how a person lives in response. Interestingly, the Ten Commandments sit squarely in the section on gratitude.[i] This is because our obedience to God is our primary way to say “Thank you” to God.

Karl Barth, the great Swiss theologian of the twentieth century, wrote: “Grace and gratitude belong together like heaven and earth. Grace evokes gratitude like the voice an echo. Gratitude follows grace like thunder follows lightning.”[ii] For Barth, the order is significant. God speaks first and acts first, and our lives become the echo. He went so far as to say that “radically and basically all sin is simply ingratitude.” Sin, in this light, is the refusal to receive life as a gift.

Here human responsibility enters the picture. Reformed Christians have sometimes been caricatured as passive, as though a strong doctrine of grace leaves us with nothing to do. In truth, grace sets us free for action. Released from the anxious project of earning God’s favor, we discover that all our energy is available for love. John Calvin wrote, “We are not our own... We are God’s: let us therefore live for him and die for him.”[iii] Belonging comes before behaving. The Heidelberg Catechism opens with the same conviction, confessing that our only comfort in life and in death is “that I am not my own, but belong, body and soul, in life and in death, to my faithful Savior Jesus Christ.”

Responsibility, then, is response-ability: the God-given capacity to answer. Grace makes us able to respond. When the Catechism asks why we should do good works if we are saved by grace alone, it replies that Christ is renewing us by his Spirit “so that with our whole lives we may show that we are thankful to God.” Generosity, justice, forgiveness, care for our neighbors and for creation all belong to this response. They are the echo of the voice, the thunder after the lightning.

This understanding changes how we move through the season ahead. When we give, serve, reconcile with someone we have wronged, or show up for a friend in grief, we are answering a love that reached us first. Our faithfulness never purchases God’s grace. It is how grace becomes visible in the world.

So this November, I invite you into a simple practice. Each evening before sleep, name three gifts from the day. Then name one way you might answer those gifts tomorrow. Over time, you may find that gratitude becomes less a feeling you wait for and more a way of life you choose. Let the grace you receive find its echo in the life you live.

Thanks be to God.

Pastor Chris

[i] Heidelberg Catechism Q&A 1 and 86 (PC(USA) Book of Confessions)
[ii] Barth, *Church Dogmatics* IV/1, pp. 41–42
[iii] Calvin, *Institutes* 3.7.1 (Battles translation)

NOVEMBER SERMONS

Date	Sermon Title	Scripture References
11/1	*Reading the Law*	Nehemiah 8:1-3, 8-12
11/8	*A Child is Born*	Isaiah 9:2-7
11/15	*Zechariah & Elizabeth*	Luke 1:5-17, 24-25
11/22	*Annunciation*	Luke 1:26-38
11/29	*Magnificat*	Luke 1:39-49, 52-55

ADULT DISCIPLESHIP - SUNDAYS AT 9:45 AM

The Problem of Evil (Room 501): If God is both powerful and good, why does evil persist in our world? Through the centuries, philosophers, theologians, and ordinary believers have struggled to reconcile the character of God with the evil we see around us. Join us for this series as we take on this challenging subject.

The Story of God and Us (Room 502): We continue with our Bible study which parallels the sermon series, by exploring the themes and Scriptures in small group discussion and exchange. Come with your questions, ready to learn from one another!

The church office will be closed on November 26 and 27 in observance of Thanksgiving.

THE GREENING OF THE CHURCH

Come join us, bring your family and friends on Saturday November 28 at 10 a.m. to decorate the church for the Advent and Christmas season. Pizza will be provided.

CHURCH LIBRARY NOW OPEN

Our church library is organized, stocked, and ready for visitors! Stop by the library, Room 204, anytime before or after services on Sundays and borrow something. To check the book out, just place the library card you'll find in the front cover of the book into the little wooden box on the shelf. Return the book eventually. We're not the IRS, but we do keep track. You can view our catalog at tinyurl.com/MOPClibrary or make suggests for books at tinyurl.com/MOPClibrarySuggest

A recent article I read about pastoral care highlighted the importance of vocation. The author writes, “By this I do not mean career choices or steady goals, but a person's willingness to be a cheerful participant in the scheme of creation and providence, so that a sense of purpose is attached to [their] doings which validates [their] existence under [their] creator.” I find this an interesting way to think about vocation because I tend to associate it with a job: something I do to earn a living, find purpose and fulfillment, and, ideally, keep me out of trouble!

For some of us, our jobs are also part of our vocation in this deeper sense. I certainly feel this way about my work at MOPC. I feel privileged to participate with God in the work happening here. But for many people, a job and a sense of vocation are not one and the same. Our work may pay the bills without necessarily providing a sense of purpose. For others, especially those in retirement, vocation may be found in the quieter, less visible ways they care for others and contribute to the world around them. Wherever we find ourselves, we have the opportunity to seek out ways to participate in God's work.

No matter which category you fall into, I think it helps to reflect on how you are partnering with God. Perhaps you volunteer at St. Vincent's soup kitchen or work with the children and youth at MOPC on Sunday mornings. Perhaps you advocate for refugees, provide respite support for foster families, or pick up garbage along our local trails. Maybe you check in on a lonely neighbor, patiently care for an aging parent, or make a point of welcoming someone who feels out of place. The beautiful thing about vocation is that it looks different for each of us because we are all unique. God has given us different gifts, interests, and passions, and invites us to use them to serve others. We don't have to wait for a dramatic calling or a grand opportunity. Often, vocation begins by paying attention to the needs around us and recognizing the small ways we can make a difference.

As we enter November, a month when we often turn our attention to gratitude, I invite you to consider not only what you are thankful for, but also how you might put that gratitude into action. We are called to be a people who do good work—not to earn God's love, but as a response to the love we have already received. As we close out the year, let's look for opportunities to join God in the work of caring for this world and the people in it.

Blessings,

Nikki Zyp

Nikki Zyp

A CHANGE FROM PRISON FELLOWSHIP ANGEL TREE

After many years of working with Prison Fellowship Angel Tree, MOPC is beginning a new chapter in our Local Missions Ministry. This year, we will partner with the Utah Foster Care Foundation to provide Christmas gifts for children in foster care and support the families who care for them. MOPC currently supports one foster family through volunteers in a Care Community, with assistance from the Foundation.

Our decision to end our relationship with Angel Tree follows a change in the organization's requirements. Churches are now required to sign a statement of faith that includes affirming that biblical marriage is only between a man and a woman. MOPC could not sign this statement in good conscience and continue the partnership.

MOPC has offered to provide gifts for 20 foster children. Foster parents will submit lists of requested gifts, including links to websites where the items can be purchased. The cost will be approximately $150 per child. Because this is more than we typically spend per child through Angel Tree, we encourage several families or a community group to join together to purchase gifts for a child.

The children's names and gift requests will be available in the gathering area on the Sunday before Thanksgiving. We will share additional details during a Minute for Mission before that Sunday.

As we begin this new partnership, we anticipate a few glitches. Most importantly, we look forward to supporting these foster families as they care for these vulnerable children.

GRATITUDE FOR CREATION - MOPC EARTH CARE TASK FORCE

The earth is the Lord's and all that is in it." — Psalm 24:1

Thanksgiving invites us to slow down, reflect, and recognize the abundance that surrounds us. Beyond the food on our tables and the warmth of family and friends, we have much to be thankful for in the natural world— the crisp morning air, the mountains that surround us, and the changing seasons that remind us of life's rhythms.

These gifts of creation are easy to take for granted. Yet each reminds us of our connection to the earth and to one another. The food we share comes from the soil, nourished by sunlight and water. The air we breathe, the water we drink, and the beauty we enjoy are all part of God's generous creation.

Put Gratitude into Action This Thanksgiving

Gratitude invites responsibility. When we truly appreciate something, we naturally want to protect and care for it. Consider one simple way to care for God's creation: **waste less food.** Plan portions thoughtfully, use leftovers well, and share extra food when possible. Food waste represents more than discarded food—it also wastes the water, energy, land, and human effort that went into producing it, and it produces gases that warm our planet. By valuing the food on our tables, we honor both the gifts of creation and the people who helped bring these gifts to us. **Let reducing food waste be one small but meaningful expression of thanksgiving. Let us know how it goes.**

SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY
1 8:30 & 11 am Worship 9:45 am Discipleship for All Ages 9:45 am Joyous Journey	2 12:30 pm Staff 7 pm Stephen Min 7 pm AA	3 6:30 am Men's Bible 7 pm Tech Team 7 pm AA	4 7 pm Mt O 45 7 pm Mt O Youth	5 7 am Men's Bible 9 :30 am Wm's Bible 6:30 pm Wm's Bible	6 7 pm Rescue Mission 7 pm AA	7 11 am AA
8 8:30 & 11 am Worship 9:45 am Discipleship for All Ages 7 pm Contemplative Worship	9 12:30 pm Staff 7 pm AA	10 6:30 am Men's Bible 6 pm Finance 7 pm Deacons 7 pm AA	11 7 pm Mt O 45 7 pm Mt O Youth	12 7 am Men's Bible 9 :30 am Wm's Bible 12 pm Adult Fellowship Luncheon 6:30 pm Wm's Bible	13 9 am Sandwich Making 4:30 pm St. Vincent's 7 pm AA	14 10 am Utah Food Bank 11 am Ralph Paisley Memorial 11 am AA
15 8:30 & 11 am Worship 9:45 am Discipleship for All Ages 12:30 pm Kenya Mission Meeting	16 12:30 pm Staff 7 pm Stephen Min 7 pm AA	17 6:30 am Men's Bible 7 pm Session 7 pm AA	18 9 am Men's Coffee Group 2 pm Chronic Conditions 7 pm Mt O 45 7 pm Mt O Youth	19 7 am Men's Bible 9 :30 am Wm's Bible 6:30 pm Wm's Bible 7 pm Security Team	20 7 pm AA	21 11 am AA
22 8:30 & 11 am Worship 9:45 am Discipleship for All Ages	23 12:30 pm Staff 7 pm AA	24 6:30 am Men's Bible 7 pm Adult Ministry 7 pm Facilities 7 pm AA	25	26 Office Closed	27 Office Closed 7 pm AA	28 10 am Greening the Church 11 am AA
29 8:30 & 11 am Worship 9:45 am Adult Discipleship	30 12:30 pm Staff 7 pm Personnel 7 pm AA					

Our MOPC Team will meet on Saturday, November 14, from 10 a.m. to noon. Cold weather is coming, and food will be needed more than ever! Come along and help others. It is a fun social time as well, meeting members of other groups and churches while you work. Remember, no open-toed shoes and children 12 and older are welcome with a parent. See you there!

Every 2nd Friday of the month, volunteers from MOPC help serve our community by giving their time to assist St. Vincent de Paul in providing food to those in need. On these Fridays, at 9 a.m,, we gather in the MOPC kitchen to prepare sandwiches to be delivered. Then, at 4:30 p.m., MOPC volunteers serve meals at the St. Vincent de Paul Dining Hall. Children 12 and older may help. The next opportunity to help will be November 13.

ADULT FELLOWSHIP LUNCHEON

Our next monthly gathering of the Adult Fellowship Luncheon will be Thursday, November 12, at noon in the gym. We welcome and look forward to hearing from Dave Terrion, who will speak about first responders and mental health. This will be an exciting program and give us much to think about! Don't miss this one. Come along and bring your favorite dish to share for fun, food, fellowship, and first responder education. Mark your calendars now so you don't miss out. Hope to see all of you! As always, if you are available, please come early to help set up or take tablecloths home to wash. Thank you, thank you.

MOPC CHRONIC CONDITIONS SUPPORT GROUP

If you or a loved one is affected by a chronic condition, we invite you to check out our support group. We meet on the 3rd Wednesday of the month via Zoom to talk, pray, and encourage one another. Our next meeting is Wednesday, November 18, at 2 p.m. Please text or call Janet Nelson at 801-560-9044 for the Zoom link or more info.

PRESBYTERIAN WOMEN (PW)

November, pumpkins, pilgrims, a day to be thankful for so much, leaves changing color, PW doing Bible study, serving and such!

Our November MOPC monthly meeting will be held on Tuesday, November 3, at 9:30 a.m. in Room 206. We will install our officers, and Carol Day will lead the installation and Bible study. Our hostesses will be Carol Day and Gwen Mitchell, and light refreshments will be served. As we prepare for the coming year, please be thinking about whether you might be willing to serve as co-moderator.

In October, we enjoyed a visit from Teresa Wood, Program Director and Case Manager of the Rescue Mission Women's Ministry. We were pleased to donate $300 to support this ministry.

We also had a wonderful time at our most recent Women of Wisdom gathering featuring guest speaker Monica Schaffer, leader of the Wasatch Back League of Women Voters. We look forward to gathering again in the spring!

We look forward to seeing you all on Tuesday, November 3, for Bible study, fellowship, and light refreshments.

- Pauline Forster

KENYA MISSION TRIP MEETING

The first preparation meeting for our June 2027 trip to ByGrace schools in Nairobi, Kenya, will be held on **Sunday, November 15**, after the 11 a.m. service. Neema Mbogo, the daughter of Drs. Stephen and Rosemary Mbogo, who founded ByGrace Mission, will join us to discuss ByGrace. We still have open positions on our team if you are considering this adventure. The trip runs from June 3 through June 16. We will spend six days at the ByGrace school, then take a few days on safari to explore Amboseli National Park (iconic backdrop: Mount Kilimanjaro) and Tsavo West (known for the famous Mzima Springs). Please pray about whether God is calling you to join this mission effort. Contact Dennis Winge if you want more details at dennis.winge@hsc.utah.edu

Family

In late September, Children and Youth Ministries hosted our annual Family Retreat at Bear Lake. Our weekend was filled with fun, meaningful conversations, delicious food, prayer, learning, and worship. It was a gift to spend this time together, strengthen our relationships, and grow closer to God. A heartfelt thank you to Pastor Chris for leading our parents' teaching time, to Heather Allen for leading us in worship, and to Megan and Dan Shelly for putting so much time, thought, and love into planning and preparing our meals. We are so grateful for each of you and for the care you put into making this weekend such a meaningful and memorable experience for everyone!

-Jen Christensen, Director of Family Ministry
-Matt Vaughan, Director of Youth Ministry

Ministry

Ministry Staff

Pastor	Chris Pritchett
Pastoral Associate	Nikki Zyp
Executive Administrator	Sheila Barnish
Administrative Assistant	Sarah Brozek
Director of Family Ministry	Jen Christensen
Director of Youth Ministry	Matt Vaughan
Treasurer	Roberta Bolton
Director of Childcare	Jolie Bawden
Facilities Manager	Serene Cutler

Contact Information

Office Hours:
Mon-Thurs 9 a.m.-5 p.m.; Fri. 9 a.m.-1 p.m.
Phone: (801) 277-2674
Fax: (801) 277-2059
Pastor: *cpritchett@mtopres.org*
Pastoral Associate: *nzyp@mtopres.org*
Exec. Administrator: *sbarnish@mtopres.org*
Newsletter Items: *sbrozek@mtopres.org*

Mount Olympus Presbyterian Church
3280 East 3900 South
Salt Lake City, UT 84124

Website: *www.mountolympuschurch.com*
Visit us on Facebook: *www.facebook.com/mountolympuspresbyterian*

Elders Serving on Session

Class of 2026	Class of 2027	Class of 2028
Carol Day	Brad Hayden	Mike Bicker
Megan Judkins	Rick Spratling	Sarah Jelsema
Edward Owens	Tammy Stevenson	Gary Peterson
Mark Templeman	Dawn Wright	Alie Serrato
	Kris Zyp	Brian Strike

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