

Our Story, Continued.

In 2014, the Associate Pastor Nominating Committee was tasked with updating the 2012 Mission Study as part of the nomination process. The resulting Mission Study Addendum is included here.

FINDING A PASTOR

Rev. Beth Buckingham-Brown served as interim pastor until mid-2013. In June of 2013, she received and accepted a call to Lincoln Park Presbyterian Church in Chicago, IL. MPC is deeply grateful to her for her wonderful work in leading and challenging our community through a tricky transitional period.

Once Rev. Beth made her decision to leave, MPC began searching for another interim pastor. Fortunately, Rev. Melinda McClain was ready and willing to serve in that capacity, and she became our interim pastor -- technically a Temporary Supply Pastor -- after Rev. Beth's resignation became effective on August 31, 2013.

Rev. Melinda was no stranger to MPC, having been the morning program speaker at MPC Family Camp in 2012. She is a UCC minister who has served UCC, Presbyterian, and Congregational churches as an interim minister. She is also a musician, non-profit consultant, educator, and retreat leader.

She brought these wide-ranging talents, as well as a great love for jazz and improvisation, to MPC in the Fall of 2013.

As Rev. Melinda led the church forward with grace and humor, the Pastor Nominating Committee continued their search for a permanent pastor. At the end of 2013, they found a wonderful candidate in the person of Rev. Ben Daniel of Foothill Presbyterian Church in San Jose. The MPC congregation wholeheartedly agreed with their selection, unanimously voting Ben in as pastor in January of 2014.

Rev. Ben Daniel continues the MPC pastoral tradition of nurturing and expanding the community's emphasis on social activism, particularly with regard to immigrant rights. Through his heartfelt writings and inspiring sermons, he encourages MPC to keep "fighting the good fight" in support of marriage equality and refugee rights, and against economic inequality, torture and human trafficking, among other issues.



Rev. Ben Daniel

As with our interim pastors, he brings an evolving spiritual perspective to MPC, having been raised in a conservative theological environment before shifting towards a more progressive theology. Above all, he questions everything, and he encourages the MPC community to do the same. He challenges us to reconnect with our roots in the Reformed tradition. We ask: Is there a way to understand better the traditions, symbols, and stories of our past so that we may know the foundations of the community we experience today and more effectively express our faith in a new age?

ONWARD FOR JUSTICE

While there have been many changes since 2012, MPC's legacy of social justice continues. With regard to gay rights, we were formerly a defiant entity within the Presbyterian Church, fighting for full inclusion -- however, recent amendments to the Book of Order made marriage ceremonies for same-sex couples and the ordination of LGBT persons possible. Our efforts to feed the needy in our communities have shifted away from delivering food bags, focusing instead on volunteering at the Fruitvale Food Pantry. While our international work with groups such as Joining Hands continues, we've been finding new ways to take action locally, including participation in Friday Night Walks against gun violence in Oakland.

As a community, we're thinking more about how social justice issues converge with environmental ones. We're becoming more aware of the ways in which our environmental choices -- such as ones that relate to global warming -- can have a negative impact on the poor and marginalized. This kind of thinking gave extra momentum to our recent drive to install solar panels.



Our new solar panels

While our passion for social justice work is unabated, our core group of activists is aging, so it's becoming more challenging to find leaders for these various projects. We're faced with two interconnected questions: where do we focus our energies moving forward, and who from the MPC community will lead these efforts?

INCREASING OUR (OUT)REACH

In 2012, we began the work of increasing awareness in the local community of who we are and what we have to offer. Since that time, we've continued and expanded these activities and seen many positive effects as a result. Our presence at the Farmer's Market in August is now an established event; thankfully, so are the potluck barbecues that follow Celebration in that month. We have also become a regular participant in the Montclair Holiday Stroll, offering cookies and cocoa to passersby and helping the wider community understand who we are and what we stand for. Our "author talks" program continues,

bringing writers such as Michael Chabon, Anne Lamott, Dave Barry, and Garry Wills to MPC, and encouraging Montclair and the rest of Oakland to join us. Finally, in recognition of the fact that many people begin their search for a spiritual home online, we have been strengthening our web presence: posting more frequently to social media, and working hard to keep our website's content up-to-date.



A postcard advertising August Sundays

NURTURING A CHANGING COMMUNITY

Our church continues to change in interesting and sometimes challenging ways. As of this writing, at least 24 members have moved to the Rossmoor community in Walnut Creek, raising questions about how best to maintain a sense of connection despite the increased distance. An increasing number of members living in Piedmont Gardens, some in assisted living, leads us to look for new ways to facilitate Celebration attendance and committee involvement.

At the same time, the number of young families attending MPC is growing steadily. In the 2012 Mission Study, we said that the number of “Under 54s” was perhaps too small to form peer groups; happily, this is no longer the case. As more young families join our community, we need to consider how best to make them feel welcome and to encourage their involvement with MPC in a way that works with their child-rearing responsibilities.

MPC has been responding to these changes in a variety of ways. Our Beacons groups have taken a more active role, facilitating communication and helping coordinate efforts to help members in need. Our Women’s Program has expanded their community-building work, adding Coffee and Conversation Gatherings to supplement their

two yearly retreats. This coming June, when a large proportion of MPC spends a week at Lake Tahoe, one focus of the morning program will be on building relationships between the various parts of the MPC community. Finally, various intergenerationally-oriented programs are in the works, such as our new Family Life Small Groups.



Generations together at Family Camp

MORE CHILDREN, MORE YOUTH

Our Children and Youth programs have seen significant growth in recent years. Sunday night Youth Group meetings, led by our Children and Family Life Coordinator Talitha Phillips, have expanded by leaps and bounds, and more than 25 youth typically attend. This growth has led to more opportunities for youth service projects, and will no doubt have an impact on the yearly Youth Mission Trip.

We are also seeing more children regularly in our Godly Play program on Sundays. This may be connected to our recent decision to convert a couple of back pews in the sanctuary into a playspace for very young children and toddlers, where they can draw, color and read as their parents and siblings attend Celebration. This change, along with the continued good work of our Nursery Head Teacher Airiana Gill, makes it easier for families with young children to attend.



Supporting each other at a recent youth retreat

THE CELEBRATION CONTINUES

Our Sunday service, known as Celebration, is still the focal point of life at MPC. The music program continues to offer vibrancy and variety, anchored by a choir that not only sings to us but teaches us to sing with them. Celebration is also enriched by instrumental soloists and ensembles, vocal soloists and singing groups who regularly join us. We decorate the sanctuary with banners, ribbons, and artwork from the congregation's artists that reflect the colors of the calendar seasons and the liturgical year. This sense of variety is also expressed from the pulpit, as Rev. Ben has been introducing us to new ways of celebrating and praying together, while carrying forward the MPC tradition of preaching that is both inspiring and intellectually challenging.



The many colors of World Communion Sunday

Happily, this energy and enthusiasm translated into more filled pews in 2014, as average weekly attendance jumped almost 7%. This could be attributed to any number of factors, including our various outreach programs and our efforts to make our sanctuary a more child-friendly place (both described above), as well as the sense of stability and continuity that comes with hiring a permanent pastor. Whatever the reason, it's wonderful to see more members of the Oakland community attending Celebration with us.

SESSION, COMMITTEES AND STAFF STRUCTURE

While MPC continues to have many committees and groups that meet, a new structure has been put in place since the Mission Study was completed that provides for efficient communication and coordination with Session, yet allows for committee freedom and creativity that is cherished. Session members are serving as direct liaisons to committees and groups, and annually each committee submits a written evaluation to Session that summarizes its current status: program activities, successes, challenges and concerns; staff and Session support received and needed; committee representation, assessment of committee functioning, and future plans.

In keeping with the church's size and the fact that we are primarily a program church, MPC is now in the process of hiring an Associate Pastor to work closely with our Pastor/Head of Staff to form a collaborative, collegial clergy team, sharing a broad range of pastoral responsibilities. The Associate Pastor brings the strength of an ordained, installed position to programs for children, youth, family life, Celebration (worship) pastoral care, and other areas as needed.

These additional efforts link all the parts together in a more effective way than two years ago, and with the hiring of the Associate Pastor, there is even more opportunity in the future for synergistic staffing and structure.

Maintaining Our Balance

2013-2014 FINANCES

Actual Income

\$520,318

Actual Expense

\$476,860

CAPITAL CAMPAIGN SINCE 2006

Actual Income

\$2,152,204

raised and pledged through 2014

\$150,000

Gifts to outside non-profits

\$294,394

Outstanding debt

Budgets, Funds and Pledges

| | FY 2015 | FY 2014 | FY 2013 |
|-----------------------------------|-----------------|------------|------------|
| GENERAL FUND | | | |
| Income | Budgeted | | |
| Gifts and Pledges | \$310,000 | \$331,646 | \$294,012 |
| "Promised" Pledge Revenue | \$292,500 | \$321,969 | \$267,763 |
| Number of Pledges | 116 | 110 | 129 |
| Average Pledge | \$2,521.55 | \$2,926.99 | \$2,075.68 |
| Rents | \$103,000 | \$101,340 | \$99,138 |
| Other Income and Designated Gifts | \$104,800 | \$87,332 | \$89,093 |
| Total Gifts and Income | \$517,800 | \$520,318 | \$482,243 |
| | | | |
| Expenses | | | |
| Total Salaries & Operations | \$517,800 | \$476,860 | \$512,026 |
| CAPITAL CAMPAIGN FUND | | | |
| Income | \$40,000 | \$80,042 | \$37,857 |
| Expenses | (80,000) | (13,522) | (69,434) |

**THE 2014/15 ASSOCIATE
PASTOR NOMINATING
COMMITTEE WISHES TO
THANK...**

**JIM ALLARDICE
REV. BEN DANIEL
SHERRILL FIGUERA
ELOISE GILLAND
SUSANNE LEA
MONTE MCCLAIN
AL PETERS
TALITHA PHILLIPS
MINDA LUCERO**

and

SESSION

*for their assistance, advice, and
support.*

Blessings,

Francie Chan, Frank Dauby, Claire
Kelly, Steve McKiernan, Marge
Nicholson, Anna Santos