

Message From Paster Bill: Blessings and Prayers

Whenever I look at my life, I can't help but reflect on how richly I have been blessed by God. That doesn't mean that there has never been any hardship or pain; there have certainly been both in my time on this planet. However, the blessings have far outweighed the difficulties, and I am always conscious of how good God has been to me.

One of the greatest blessings I enjoy is this: whenever I'm at MSCC, I have the chance to enter one of our two sanctuaries in order to pray. I can see the gears turning in your mind as you read that last sentence: "Two sanctuaries? We only have one!" On that point, I beg to differ.

Yes, we have the one sanctuary that has been our spiritual home for over 227 years. It is, in my mind, a perfect place for us to focus ourselves in reverence and worship. Sometimes, if I feel blocked as I'm trying to come up with a sermon, or if some stress threatens to invade my heart, I'll slip away from my desk for a few minutes and sit in the quiet of the sanctuary, and I always feel a kind of release – a sense of peace that comes only in a space that God has specially blessed.

However, on those days when things are tougher, and I really need to feel refreshed by God's love, I go into our other sanctuary – the Chandler Estate, with its trails, wildlife, and the magnificent view of Mt. Sinai Harbor, which in my mind is a cathedral all its own. I know we don't have exclusive ownership of the nature preserve out behind the church parking lot, but somehow the fact that it's used by all sorts of people gives it another kind of blessing.

The bottom line is that I have spaces where I can retreat and pray. I can put the cares of the world to one side and let God's love and guidance enter my heart. For many of us, this is the time when New Year's resolutions have gone by the wayside – but this year, I am thus far keeping up with a promise I made to myself to devote more time to prayer.

I've spoken of blessings and prayer, so it's only fitting that I mention one other blessing I've received during the past few months: the opportunity to serve this congregation. To have a new home, where I feel such warmth and support, is a blessing that words cannot describe. As for prayer, please know that I am praying for all of you. And it seems right for me to end with a prayer: may God's grace and mercy be with us at MSCC, bringing us together in unity for the purpose of fulfilling God's will for the world. Amen!

Something for Everybody! from the Congregational Nurture Board

Are you wondering what church activities will be happening in 2025? Your fellow Nurturers (members of Congregational Nurture Board) have a variety of ways for you to participate in the life of the church.

-Bible Study -Terry Burke has kicked off the new year with his Bible study on the book of Genesis. He uses video lectures from biblical scholars who bring out points of view that you may not have considered.

-Chili Fest - Karen and Doris Esposito have taken the lead to provide chili and corn bread for those Super Bowl Fans on Feb. 9th. Chili and corn bread makers needed; sign up on the Congregational Nurture bulletin board.

-Food as Medicine - Iman Marghoob, a registered dietician, returns with two more classes on nutritious food preparation. Dates to be arranged in March or April.

-Quilt Show - May 24th Back by popular demand!

-Senior Safety - In June members of the Suffolk Police Department will provide vital instructions on staying safe.

-Steeple Showcase Concert #1 - Coordinated by Carol Melendez, the first concert on July 26th will feature two bands have as well as several food trucks.

-Steeple Showcase Concert #2- This concert will also have two bands plus McNulty's ice Cream truck

-1/2 day Retreat -with Karen Smith from PRC in September or October

-Holiday Market -November 15, All hands on deck to help make this a success!

Your fellow Nurturers look forward to seeing you at these activities!

A Conversation with Barbara DeBree.

In December I sat down with Barbara DeBree, Lead of the Building and Grounds (B&G) Ministry Board the last six years. As she steps down, she reflected on her experiences, accomplishments, and challenges.

Jim: Describe the Board's principal responsibilities.

Barbara: Maintaining the church and grounds, the Red Barn, and parsonage. Just like keeping one's home healthy and safe, it encompasses anything needing attention.

Jim: What were important activities this year?

Barbara: To prepare the parsonage for a new minister, we undertook extensive improvements, with help from members and our custodian Mike Dionisio. The parsonage now looks beautiful. We wanted to remove some of the burdens of moving-in for our new minister.

This year we finished the church steeple, installed a new boiler, placed new shades in the sanctuary and Voorhees Hall, carpeted the hallway, and maintained the Red Barn, despite its age.

Jim: How long have you been the Board Lead?

Barbara: I became a member of the Board in 2018 and have been Lead since 2019, except for a period when I was out for back surgery. Bill LaRosa took over, for which I remain very grateful.

Jim: How have you approached your role?

Barbara: The way the board operates has changed. Before Covid, the B&G Board was large and relied on its members to undertake work. After the Board became smaller, my role has been both hands-on and trying to delegate, enlist volunteers, coordinate, and follow up. At our monthly meetings, I have tried to enlist the help of our team.

One of the things I have learned is the importance of communication and coordination among Board members, as well as with other Boards and members. To assure safety, cleanliness, neatness, and comfort, the Lead should know the status of planned projects and their implementation. To guide our work, we have developed procedural guidelines. Also, supplementing his custodial responsibilities, Mike Dionisio now will be addressing some of our maintenance needs.

Jim: Is there sufficient funding to meet our church's ongoing needs?

Barbara: Yes, although we rely on investment earnings from the Wicks Fund. Recently we have been blessed by a strong stock market, making available resources for the steeple repair, blacktopping, a new retaining wall, exterior painting, new gutters at the Red Barn, etc. We also rely on fundraisers such as the Antiques Fair.

I feel confident that our buildings are safe and well maintained. We do have unmet needs, such as new central air, new sanctuary pew cushions, which have been here since some of our members were children, the boy's bathroom downstairs, and, of course, the Red Barn.

Jim: What support does the Board need from the congregation?

Barbara: The congregation may see things we don't see. We welcome feedback, concerns, or complaints.

Jim: Is there anything else you'd add?

Barbara: I think Michelle Cipriano, the new Lead, will be great. She listens and responds.

Jim: Thank you, Barbara, for your indispensable service to our church.

The Worship Board Seeks Your Visions

*"In the last days, God says,
I will pour out my Spirit on all people.
Your sons and daughters will prophesy.
Your young will see visions.
Your elders will dream dreams."*

Acts 2:17

Even before the latest revision of the church's bylaws, boards and their teams were tasked with setting goals in January or February for the coming year. One way to think of goals is to ask, "What is your *vision* for this board this year?" Now, thinking of it this way could actually engage more than just the logical side of our brains; it should engage our imagination, too.

I'd like those of you who read this to offer the Worship Board some visions. Let the Spirit rest on your imagination and consider worship as it *is* and as it *might be*. What in our services stirs you, and how could we build on that? What might you like to see added or subtracted or done differently? And if you don't attend worship services, what would the service look like that would encourage you to attend? Yes, I'm asking for you to challenge yourself to be a *visionary* who sees creative possibilities for worship at Mt. Sinai.

You can email me (mshoff23@gmail.com) or speak to me or any other board member listed below. We want to hear from you!

Sue Hoff, board lead
Jamie Dunlop
Doris Esposito
Vicki Francis
Celeste Gronda
Patrice Perreca



*The Island Heart Food
Pantry
is holding a "Souper" Bowl Soup
collection on February 9th*

*Please bring a **can of soup** to help us
stock our shelves and share the warmth of
your generosity with our neighbors.*



*Mt Sinai Church's
Super Bowl of Chili
Fundraiser
Sunday, February 9th
@ 11a.m.*

*Chili-makers and Cornbread-bakers:
Please use the sign-up sheet on the
Congregational Nurture bulletin Board in
Voorhees Hall.*

Happy New Year from Sunday School!

Where does the time go? It feels like only yesterday that we were talking to the children about Lent, when suddenly we offered our message to the congregation about the birth of Jesus and his journey along the way to Bethlehem.



On the last Sunday in January, we learned about the Chinese Lunar New year, the "Year of the Snake."

2025 is going to be a good year for all of us! As we prepare events and activities for the children of our church, we are happy to announce a new addition to our mornings: an invitation for a family member of one of our students to be a "mystery reader." More details to come, so stay tuned!



Spring Clothing Drive Please save your gently used clothing, shoes, handbags, backpacks, stuffed animals, small single-item plastic toys (NO PUZZLES, BOARD GAMES, LEGOS, OR TOYS WITH PIECES) and linens (including towels, curtains and table linens; NO BLANKETS OR COMFORTERS). Collect these items in large plastic trash bags. These will be weighed, and the church will receive a portion of money depending on the total weight of the donations. **The pick up date for the truck to be at church will be March 30th.** More information next month!!

Board of Missions News



Women's March

On January 18, members of MSUCC stood with others at the corner of 347 and 112 in Port Jefferson Station to show solidarity with the Women's March on Washington happening that day. Despite the cold weather, an enthusiastic group gathered to express our concern for the future of women's rights and in support of all civil rights in general. Thank you to all who participated!

Dress For Success

During the month of February, Missions is hosting a clothing drive for the Dress For Success program run by the Town of Brookhaven. This program provides new and nearly new professional clothing for unemployed women to wear to a job interview. If you have any professional women's clothing that you no longer use, please consider donating it to this cause. The list of desirable clothing includes blazers, slacks, button down blouses and skirts. Things not accepted are denim, sweats, tee shirts or other similar casual clothing. A large bin has been placed in Voorhees Hall for your contributions. Thank you for considering this donation! Collection runs through February 23rd.