



What Did They Mean To Do?

I'm sure you've heard the phrase, "The road to Hell is paved with the best intentions". It's a saying that reinforces the idea that what matters is outcomes and results. We live in a result focused world. We care about what is and what happened not about the intentions and thoughts that precipitated the end result. Part of this human reality is that it is hard to evaluate a person's mind because we can't actually see what is in the person's mind. Just the other day at my son's soccer game a player on the opposing team ran like a freight train over our team's goalie. The ref blew the whistle immediately and ran down to see if the kid was okay as the players on the field knelt to one knee, the standard when a player is injured. As all this is happening, right after the whistle blew, a mother from the stands, presumably the mother of the other team's player, yells out, "he didn't mean to"! When she said this, the rest of us in the stands were thinking, "it doesn't matter if he meant to, he laid a kid out, that's a penalty". It's the results, the verifiable, understandable, reality that we use to evaluate and judge situations. Of course there was anger that followed, both on the field and in the stands. Our team had a hard time focusing on the game and what should have been important in that moment because of all the anger and frustration they were feeling.

This got me wondering, how would the world be different if we judged not by what ultimately happened, but by the heart of the person who did it. I know it is a hard task, in some ways impossible to do it fully, but what if we tried. You know our society tries to do this in some sense already. This is why motive and intent matter in a court of law and can bring about a greater or lesser punishment depending on the perpetrator's intent. Most of the time when we get angry at someone it is because reality didn't go the way we wanted it to go. Something went against us, or a plan didn't come to fruition, or somebody did something and it hurt us badly.

Sometimes we are angry when someone does something to a different standard than our standard or in a different way than we would do it. And so I wonder how our anger might be different if our first thoughts were concerned with the persons' intentions instead of the results. I wonder if this would give us the freedom to think and see the best in people. I know the boys on the soccer field would have played better soccer had they believed the incident with their goalie was an accident, perhaps we could do better in the game of life if we viewed others' mistakes with the same sort of grace.

The scriptures are full of reminders that God does not only look at the end results. Acts 15:8-9 says, "God knows people's hearts, and he confirmed that he accepts Gentiles by giving them the Holy Spirit, just as he did to us". The result wasn't that gentiles lived perfectly under the law of God, but that God knew their intentions in faith in believing in Jesus. In Luke 16:15 Jesus says, "You are those who justify yourselves before men, but God knows your hearts". In Psalm 139 the psalmist pleads with the words, "LORD, you have seen what is in my heart. You know all about me". Romans 8 reminds us that "God knows the hearts of men".

Results do matter, but so too do our intentions as well as the intentions of others. When we shift some of our focus from the outcome to the intent there is an opportunity to choose to see the best in the situation. Focusing on a persons intent gives us the ability to believe that others are not out to get us, but rather a mistake was made. And if the person isn't out to get us or to try to make us angry than that means they are still our friend. In this new year, let's do our best to see the best in others. To look past mistakes when we can, and to believe that others intentions are good as much as possible. It is true we cannot see into another's heart, but God can, and God is the judge not us. I believe life will be better for us and for all if we try to believe the best of other's intentions.

Blessings,
Pastor Brian

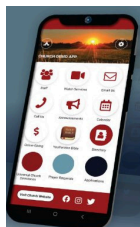
A NOTE FROM PRESCHOOL:

Happy New Year and greetings from all of us at My School Preschool. We want to thank everyone who donated in any way to purchase Christmas books for all of our preschool students. For the second year, our combined ministry of church and preschool for the Christmas Program and Live Nativity had many people in attendance. It's always a great feeling to see the church so packed with people full of love for their children and getting to share the live version of the nativity for the kids to see firsthand the story of Christ's birth. I can't thank MUP enough for the gift of the books for each of our students and for the love and support that the staff, families, and students get to have as everyone is so caring.



2025-2026 Registration will be held for our current families on Monday, January 27th from 9-10 and 1-2 pm. Church members and former families will have the next opportunity to register on January 28th at 9 am. New families may attend our annual open house and registration on Sunday, February 2nd from 1-3 pm. Please spread the good news that MUP offers preschool classes starting at 2 years old with our preschool prep class. In addition to our 3 and 4-year-old classes our school uniquely offers a transitional kindergarten class that meets 4 days a week.


Heidi S. Beahm
Director, My School Preschool



Church Directory

Our church directory is well underway. It will still be several months until we receive the finished product and access to our new church directory app.

If you were unable to get your photo taken by the photographer it is not too late to be part of the directory. Please email a high-resolution photo and submit \$15 to the church office by January 31.

 <p>MomsUP Moms lifting Moms UP</p>	<p>Where: Mars United Presbyterian Church 232 Crowe Avenue, Mars, PA When: 1st and 3rd Tuesdays of each month 10 a.m. - Noon</p>
<p>Who: Mothers of kids ages 0-6. What to Expect: SMALL GROUPS: to meet other moms and develop new friendships. CHILDCARE: qualified and loving care for our little ones.</p>	<p>For more information contact Ashley Hauser. Cell Phone: 1-814-270-9101 Email: ashleyhauser90@yahoo.com</p>

Per Capita—What is it & Why Do it???

Many have asked questions about per capita, What is it? What does it support?

The Per Capita is an important aspect of how we do church. Presbyterians are proud of how our convictions inform our church function and organizational structure. As Presbyterians, we believe in “the priesthood of all believers” and acknowledge that all are called to bring their gifts and talents to God (1 Peter 2:9). And so, we champion this idea “call” throughout all levels of our denomination. On the local church level, church members are called to serve as Elders, Deacons, and pastors. Elders and pastors of churches in geographical groupings gather as Presbyteries.

As 1 of 61 congregations in Beaver-Butler Presbytery, your church is part of a larger family that is...

- enabled by shared resources
- strengthened by administrative help
- enlivened through combined ministry
- empowered by valuable training
- assisted through transition
- connected to regional Synod and national PCUSA



The “Per Capita” cost per member in 2025 is \$45.24. In a small but significant way, consider Per Capita as one way YOU and MARS UP CHURCH might be able to respond along with other Christians and churches across the nation, proclaiming the Gospel message that sin, separation and disunity will not have the final answer for us, our church, our denomination OR our world. The final answer is fully in the sovereign hands of God. Indeed, God is greater and more powerful than our broken and foolish ways of sin. This is Jesus’ prayer and petition for us: “I have told you (plural) these things, so that in me you (plural) may have peace. In this world you (plural) will have trouble. But take heart! I have overcome the world” (John 16:33).

January Office Hours

January MUP office hours for are
Tuesday & Thursday 8:00 - 4:00
The office email is monitored
regularly: marsup@mars-up.org



Flowers

If you would like to provide flowers during the year for the sanctuary, please let us know by signing up on the yellow form in the Tarry and Talk area.

Ski Trip - Saturday, February 8

Please register for the Peak n Peak ski trip by January 26 .
Email marsup@mars-up.org to reserve your spot.
More details to come!

Cost for adults:	<u>Lift Ticket</u>	<u>Equipment Rental</u>
	\$51.00	\$25.00
Cost for Junior (6-11 yrs. old):	\$36.00	\$16.00



Reverse Advent Calendar Challenge –

Over 25 boxes were collected that will be donated. Thanks to your generosity, the congregation had an elf visit on Dec. 29. Thank you Pastor Brian!!



Live Nativity

It was a cold but wonderful night on December 13 for the Live Nativity



My School Preschool Polar Express



Dates for your Calendar

Date	Event	Time
January 5	Communion	
January 5	Youth Group/Kids Club	1:00 p.m.
January 19	Installation of Officers	10:00 a.m.
January 19	Youth Group/Kids Club	1:00 p.m.
January 26	REGISTRATION for Ski Trip needed	
February 2	Congregational Meeting	After worship
February 8	Youth Ski Trip	

Happy New Year
2025



A Prayer for Walking Into a New Year

Holy God,

As we look out on the horizons of a new year, it is hard to see your promise with fresh eyes. The memories we carry in our bodies, the patterns we know from the lives we have lived, and the stories we have told cloud our vision. We are weighed down by the fears of all the years, the old fables, the generational wounds, the trusty and cautious hopes that got us through this far.

But God, you are not the slowly bending arc of history. You are not the past warmed up to meet us yet again in infinite and gently looping cycles. You are not likelihood and probability, plausible outcomes and logical conclusions. You do not come to us in the slow march of progress or the incremental degradation of structures and institutions.

Your story is the deeper magic from before the drums of history, before our forming stories and earthen bodies set us here to walk this particular, human road – and yet you walk with us even here in this in-between space.

As we look to a new year, we ask that you dispel the ghosts we conjure and fear. Meet us again with genuine newness. We are so tired of what has been, so afraid of what may come again. Stay with us as we wait for what will be.

Spirit of new life, give us eyes to see what feels implausible. Grant us the hope and the diligence to follow the seeds of revolution and revelation already planted.

Point us again to the surprise and delight of nature and neighbor. Reintroduce us to the people you have made and the communities to which you have called us.

Grant us the presence and good sense to look up and out, to seek eyes that might meet our own and sun to touch our skin. Remind us that the past we drag with us does not govern your future, that the future you bring is broader and wider and newer than all we have ever known.

As we look out on the horizon of a new year, give us the courage and trust to see you even there. Join us as we walk into your new morning.

Amen.

Prayer by: [Karen Rohrer](#)

Karen is a Presbyterian Minister and a middle manager, tilting at the giants of bureaucracy and risk management, wrestling for the blessing of life together in a trusting and trustworthy community. She currently does those things at Princeton Theological Seminary as Associate Dean for Academic Affairs. She lives in Central New Jersey with her Presbyterian Minister husband, Andy Greenhow, and her beloved three-legged pit bull, Melody.