



November 2018

Dear Friends,

In February of 2017, MDPC embarked on a new and challenging journey. It began with an in-depth examination of our church functions both internally and externally. As a staff, we looked at what we've done historically. We looked at what we were doing currently. And we looked at where we believed God wanted us to be in the future.

Based on our findings, we developed **12 Strategic Goals** that called on talents from across all of MDPC's departments and ministries. These Goals were publicized to the church, and you, the congregation, were invited to join our efforts. Committees and task forces were formed, and people got to work.

At a Town Hall meeting in January 2018, we updated the congregation on progress toward the 12 Strategic Goals, and what had been accomplished to date. Included here is another update for your review. You'll see that much has been done, much is ongoing, and even more is planned for the future.

You'll note also that each of MDPC's four declarative Mission Statements encompass three of the 12 Goals:

- *Loving God.* (Worship, Bible Study, & Prayer)
- *Proclaiming Christ.* (Mentoring, Small Groups, & Speaker Series)
- *Living Generously.* (Hunger and Justice Initiatives, Giving/Tithing, & Sunday Serve)
- *Engaging All.* (Young Adults, Hospitality, & Technology)

When we started this process, we committed to recording and reporting on Goal progress as a sort of accountability covenant. This works only if you participate! Please read through this progress report, and consider where you can help. If I can count on both your attention and investment, there is no stopping the Kingdom work we can accomplish as a church family.

In Christ's Service Together,

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read "Alf Halvorson". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Pastor Alf Halvorson
Senior Pastor

WORSHIP

Glorify God by increasing worship participation by **10%** annually for five years.

POINT PERSON: Alf Halvorson (ahalvorson@mdpc.org) <<

This committee is working on a multi-pronged approach for increasing attendance and engagement in worship. Already in implementation is the visibility of children, youth, and young adults in Sunday worship services, particularly at the 9:45 contemporary service. The Music Box Kids' Choir helped lead worship several times, and youth and young adults have participated in many different facets of worship, including music, offering collection, reading Scripture, and leading the Prayers of Confession.

Additionally, we have experimented with reshuffling and/or eliminating certain elements in the 9:45 service, attempting to keep Word and Worship together. The 11:15 service has increased the frequency of Communion, and added participatory elements such as Hymn Sings, visuals accompanying the musical prelude to prepare participants for worship, and the inclusion of men's and women's choruses.

Worship attendance has increased...(waiting for Walter Going's analysis)



- Invite a friend or neighbor to worship!
- Create a welcoming environment by greeting those around you in Worship.
- Volunteer to serve as a Greeter or Usher to enhance our guests' experience.



BIBLE STUDY

Treasure God's Word in our hearts by adding **5** strategic, deep **BIBLE STUDY** opportunities for under-represented groups.

POINT PERSON: Clay Brown (cbrown@mdpc.org) <<

BIBLE STUDY

In pursuit of this goal, we have initiated a three-year study emphasis for Sunday morning classes and other interested parties, such as small groups.

- Year 1: **Saved by Faith: A Study of Romans** (2018–19) Classes both ongoing and new were urged to commit to the verse-by-verse study of a Biblical book. Provided for teachers are commentaries, study and teaching aids, monthly review meetings, and material suitable for lecture or discussion-oriented classes. As a result, the following are using the Romans curriculum:
 - a) Nine of 13 established Sunday morning classes.
 - b) Two new Sunday School classes (9:45 AM and 11:15 AM in Amphitheater), added as entry points for visitors and others not involved in an ongoing class.
 - c) One new Bible study on Wednesday evenings with an intergenerational leadership and audience in mind.
- Year 2: **Transformed by Hope: A Study of Luke** (Slated for 2019-20)
- Year 3: **Sent by Love: A Study of Acts** (Slated for 2020-21)

ALSO ON SUNDAY MORNINGS

In conjunction with Young Adult Ministries and Relationship Ministries, a new Sunday School class called "Nearly and Newly" has begun, focusing on the engaged, newly married, or those thinking about engagement and marriage.

WEDNESDAY NIGHT STUDY OPPORTUNITIES THIS FALL

- An intergenerational Romans study (see above).
- Meeting times for two small groups.
- A six-week series, *C. S. Lewis for Today*, in the Amphitheater with attendance of 60-80 participants.
- A four-week series in conjunction with Outreach Ministries' Justice Initiative (see Goal 7).

- Join a Bible study! Visit study.mdpc.org to see existing classes, or contact Laurien Hook (lhook@mdpc.org) for recommendations.
- Invite a friend or neighbor to join you at Bible study.



PRAYER

Increase Partner In Prayer participation to **1,000+** people.

POINT PERSON: Beth Case (bcase@mdpc.org) <<

STATUS

- As of September 2018, there are 639 “pray-ers” in Partners In Prayer (PIP), representing an increase from 2015 when fewer than 400 persons (Prayer Partners) were enrolled.
- Alf Halvorson’s sermon series on The Lord’s Prayer meant PIP was mentioned from the pulpit. Beth Case wrote weekly sermon notes, engaging the congregation in a variety of prayer forms. During that series, 6 additional Prayer Partners were added from a Sunday sign-up table.
- Beth wrote two well-received emails reminding MDPC members that they are being prayed for.
- For the 2019 PIP season, Caring Ministries and Communications are partnering to consider the appropriate methodology/technology for two endeavors:
 - ♦ Beth Case communicating monthly messaging to Prayer Partners, including prayer ideas and resources
 - ♦ A way for people to share current prayers requests to the Prayer Partner who is praying for them
- From one year to the next, we keep Prayer Partners enrolled, unless they de-select themselves.

ANALYSIS

While fully committed to the increase of Prayer Partners and prayer-experiences at MDPC, we need to expand the ways we measure our prayer involvement. Essential in this process is:

1. keeping our core commitment to have every member of MDPC prayed for every day.
2. affirming meaningful connection between a church member/attender and their worshipping community.
3. providing resources that encourage the deepening of relationship between MDPC members and God.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. To continue our efforts, we must recruit more intentionally, and through personal invitation.
 - a) Along with Communications, Technology can be a great resource for prayer and connection.
 - b) Through the reinstatement of a Diaconate. I would love to work along side a dedicated Deacon who is concentrating on developing PIP further.
2. A more holistic approach to this goal would be to measure prayer and those involved in faithful prayer (Prayer Wall, Instagram, or MDPC staff’s Daily Prayer Time). The goal could be adjusted to read: “Increase the number of those involved in Prayer Initiatives at MDPC to equal 1000+ persons.”



- Pray about your decision to join Partners In Prayer.
- Use the MDPC Prayer Wall (prayerwall.mdpc.org) to pray for others, or to request prayer for yourself.
- Attend MDPC’s Daily Prayer Time, held Monday through Thursday, 11:20-11:30 AM in Amphitheater.



MENTORING

Intentionally **MENTOR 25** new key servant-leaders annually.

POINT PERSON: Brett Hurst (bhurst@mdpc.org) <<

Partners in Leadership pairings create mutual models of healthy adult roles and relationships. These are exciting adventures. Because of different circumstances and personalities, every partnership pairing will have its own unique thumbprint. Nevertheless, we believe that each relationship will have tremendous potential to strengthen the Body of Christ...as well as help unify purpose at MDPC.

We have recently achieved our goal of 25 new discipleship mentors for 2018. Glory to God! However, we would always love to see more participating in this ongoing encouragement and development of leaders in our church.

- Consider being a mentor, or asking for a mentor.
- Visit partnersinleadership.mdpc.org to learn more.



SMALL GROUPS

DOUBLE SMALL GROUPS meaningfully connected in fellowship.

POINT PERSON: Clay Brown (cbrown@mdpc.org) <<

SMALL GROUPS

There are approximately 20-30 small groups currently operating, though the leeway granted for group formation and the variety of small groups makes defining and quantifying them difficult. Small group ministry is the domain of multiple Ministries, including Equipping, Young Adults, Relationships, Alpha, Westside Small Group Network, Presbyterian Pilgrimage (formerly Cursillo), and more. We do not seek to corral small groups into a one-size-fits-all box, but to expand their role and reach church-wide. In this sense, the boundaries between departments and ministries are porous and flexible, modeling the collaborative ministry approach MDPC has sought.

There is a need to establish what we are calling “Growth Groups,” which have the following characteristics:

- A set of reasonably high expectations for participation and preparation.
- A concentration on the study of Scripture.
- A focus on Christian spiritual disciplines, what the Reformers called “the means of grace,” such as Bible study, prayer, core theological principles, Scripture memory, Christian witness, and service.
- A commitment to community, encouragement, and mutual personal support by use of a group covenant.
- A desire to start new groups, as those completing one small group then begin a new group with new members in order to disciple others in the Faith.

Growth Groups, using the model given by Greg Ogden in *Discipleship Essentials*, are best begun quietly and covertly, with friends asking friends to participate and commit to the study, discussion, connection, and confidentiality that marks a discipleship group.

To address the above, we are accomplishing the following:

- Four ongoing small groups in Equipping Ministries have reconfigured and adopted the Romans study as their curriculum.
- Two *Discipleship Essentials* groups have completed their 25-session commitment, and their participants are encouraged to start new groups.
- More than 10 potential group leaders attended a two-session leader training in July 2018. They were encouraged to start new groups of 4-6 men, 4-6 women, or 4-6 couples, with the *Discipleship Essentials* curriculum or a newly produced new-group ramp-up guide, *Essential Guide to Becoming a Disciple*.
- Leaders are presently recruiting participants for 4-6 new Growth Groups that are in the formation stage.

LENTEN STUDY GROUPS

Lenten-season groups are an excellent way to entice new participants by providing a means to “try a group for six weeks.” Often, these groups result in on-going participation. The 2018 Lenten Study included:

- At least 30 existing small groups or seasonal groups (come together specifically for Lent) participated.
- At least six Sunday School classes used the Lenten materials for their class study during Lent.
- Two “large-group” gatherings on Wednesdays were held during Lent at noon and 6:30 PM.
- 575 study guides were printed, compared to 400 in 2017.

HOW CAN
YOU
HELP?

- Join a small group! Visit groups.mdpc.org, or contact Laurien Hook (lhoo@mdpc.org) for recommendations.
- If you’re not currently in a group, consider starting one. Groups can be centered around subject matter, gender, demography, life-stage, or location. Laurien can help you get started.

MDPC SPEAKER SERIES

Bring in **4 HIGH-PROFILE SPEAKERS** annually to inspire and to integrate faith and life.

POINT PERSON: Alf Halvorson (ahalvorson@mdpc.org) <<

In 2017, MDPC hosted a variety of winsome, informative, and engaging speakers:

Bruce Matthews (*January 2017*)

Admiral Margaret Kibben (*April 2017*)

Dr. Adam Winn (*June 2017*)

Eric Metaxas (*October 2017*)

After presenting four speakers in 2017, a strategic decision was made to reduce the number from four to two per year. Reasons included budgetary concerns; the staff’s capacity to recruit, promote, and execute four additional high-quality events per year; and a plan to draw higher profile speakers by more efficient use of resources.

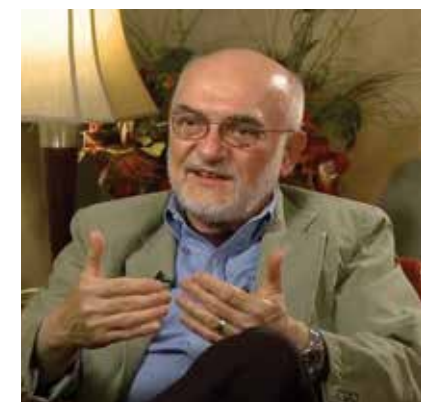
Gary Haugen of International Justice Mission (*January 2018*)

Dr. Craig Story and Christopher Rupe, *Science & Faith* (*October 2018*)

Harry Schaumburg (coming *February 2019*)

- Prominent, sought-after speakers come with a larger price tag. The Science & Faith event in October 2018 year was underwritten by a generous donor, allowing us to bring in two fantastic presenters. If you are interested in making a designated donation to the Speaker Series, you can do so through the Legacy Giving program (ontact Jody Harrington at jharrington@mdpc.org). Your support would underscore the importance of education and connectedness as aspects of our church life.
- If you would like to see a particular speaker come to MDPC, or if you have a relationship with a prominent individual who might be helpful in these efforts, please email Alf (ahalvorson@mdpc.org) with your suggestions.

HOW CAN
YOU
HELP?



HUNGER & JUSTICE INITIATIVES

Highlight 1-2 MISSION THEMES or emphases annually to “rally” congregational engagement.

POINT PERSON: Amy Delgado (adelgado@mdpc.org) <<

CHILDREN’S HUNGER

- 120 weekend-food backpacks to be provided to Spring Woods Middle School at-risk students (began Sept. 2018)
- Established food bank at nearby Houston Community College benefiting 60 dropout-risk students (began Sept. 2018)
- Juice-Box Drive benefiting Kids’ Meals (August 2018)
- Thanksgiving Meal-in-a-Bag drive benefiting ESB Food Pantry (Nov. 2018)
- ESL and computer skills classes through Spring Branch Family Development Center for food-insecure clients (ongoing)

HUMAN TRAFFICKING

- Working with Street Grace’s Atlanta office to create Street Grace Texas (ongoing)
- Arranging meetings with area churches for Street Grace partnership (Sept. 2018)
- 4-week Wednesday Night Series on God’s design for sexuality, pornography, and trafficking (Oct. 2018)
- Planning for January community education night (date TBD, pending speaker availability)
- Speaker Harry Schaumberg, *False Intimacy and Sexual Sin* (Amphitheater, February 2019)

STREET GRACE

MDPC’s Human Trafficking Task Force was created and began research to understand key players in the Houston area. We discovered that little to nothing is being done to stem the demand side of trafficking/ pornography, which is the genesis of the problem. What we did find was Street Grace, a faith-based organization mobilizing faith, business, law enforcement, and community leaders to end the sexual trafficking of children throughout the U.S. through awareness, education, and action. After much prayer and planning, we have decided to help bring Street Grace’s ministry to Texas. If it can do in Texas what it’s been able to accomplish in Georgia, it will be a game-changer for our city and our state.

Attend our **Justice Initiative** events throughout the year where you’ll:

- learn vital information on the causes and effects of human trafficking.
- get beyond the horrifying statistics to see that progress is being made, and what your role is in the fight.
- learn what to look for in order to protect the children and other vulnerable individuals in your life, and be equipped to educate others about how to protect themselves and their loved ones. Learn more at justice.mdpc.org

Get involved in our **Hunger Initiative**:

- Support Spring Branch students with Backpack Buddy (bpbuddy.mdpc.org)
- Make sandwiches for Preschoolers with Kids Meals (kidsmeals.mdpc.org)
- Support the quarterly Hunger Drives at MDPC



GIVING/TITHING

Increase pledgers and those committed to percentage **GIVING/TITHING BY 5%** annually.

POINT PERSON: Dave Steane (dsteane@mdpc.org) <<

STATUS:

Following the approval of the Advantage Goals, MDPC’s Session approved an annual budget for 2017 as \$11.4 million dollars. This figure was approved based in part on 554 pledges totaling \$7,544,722. We were ahead of our anticipated income for the first six months of 2017, but when Hurricane Harvey hit, there were some fairly dramatic shifts in giving. Unsolicited, MDPC received just under \$1 million dollars in donations to aid Hurricane Harvey victims, along with untold donations of food, clothing, personal hygiene items, toys, etc. Giving was strong leading into the final two months of 2017, then things began to slow down somewhat. We finished 2017 with total income of \$11,023,163, or \$376,837 short of the \$11.4 million goal.

We entered 2018 by approving an annual budget of \$11.6 million dollars. This figure was approved based on 559 pledges totaling \$7,864,381. Total 2018 income to date is \$5,770,574, which is \$322,462 more than our anticipated income for this point in the year.

The Generosity Committee has met with greater regularity and has been far more engaged in generosity on a year-round basis, rather than just a seasonal pledge campaign. They have worked hard to educate the congregation, with a specific focus on connecting with the new members during their orientation classes.

We have also bolstered our electronic giving options which include online, auto-deduct, and smart device.

We have also committed to communicating better with the congregation our financial needs and status. The ECO-required Annual Congregational Meeting will be an opportunity to share both budget and future vision for ministry.

- Submit your pledge for the 2019 budget year. Budgetary planning is greatly enhanced when we have a more accurate picture of our financial situation.
- If you’re not currently giving, pray about starting percentage giving in smaller increments of 1 or 2 or 5%.
- If you’re giving but not tithing, consider prayerfully building toward a 10% tithe.



SUNDAY SERVE

ONE Sunday annually, **WORSHIP BY SERVING** in our community, side by side with partners and friends.

POINT PERSON: Rachel Poysky (rpoysky@mdpc.org) <<

MDPC's first Church in the City (CITC) event occurred in February 2018, and was a great day for the congregation. Approximately 800 people served, including 600 who traveled to Houston Food Bank and 200 who did service projects at MDPC. Following the morning of outreach, the congregation ate lunch together, and were challenged to continue serving in the community.

WHAT WORKED WELL

- CITC was a multi-generational event, accomplished by:
 - coordinating with Youth Ministries to ensure Confirmation students could participate.
 - representatives from each ministry area being on the committee in order to involve the entire congregation.
 - connecting the English and Spanish-language services by having everyone serve together.
- Many MDPCers met people they had never met before, and made new connections. This was an unintended but wonderful consequence of CITC.
- We served the city of Houston and the hungry in Houston. This complemented the MDPC Hunger Initiative (see Goal 7).

PLANS FOR 2019

We plan to go back to Houston Food Bank for one more year, on February 24, 2019. It is our hope and dream to find a new project for the following year. It is difficult to find one place that can take 1,000 people, so we will have to get creative about new opportunities to serve in the city. Our goal for 2019 is to engage 1,000 people in CITC.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FUTURE INITIATIVES

1. Invite our Ministry Affinity Groups* (MAGs) or other churches to join us in Church in the City.
2. Plan a "Church in the Country" where we serve a camp outside of Houston.
3. Invite our outreach partners to come serve with us.

*Our MAGs include First Presbyterian Church and Grace Presbyterian Church.



- Volunteer to help lead the efforts for CITC 2019. Contact Rachel at rpoysky@mdpc.org.
- Sign up to participate in CITC 2019.



HOSPITALITY

Create a **HOSPITALITY DEPARTMENT** to increase evangelism and congregational involvement and buy-in. Goal of **5 BELIEVER BAPTISMS** annually.

POINT PERSON: Dave Steane (dsteane@mdpc.org) <<

BACKGROUND:

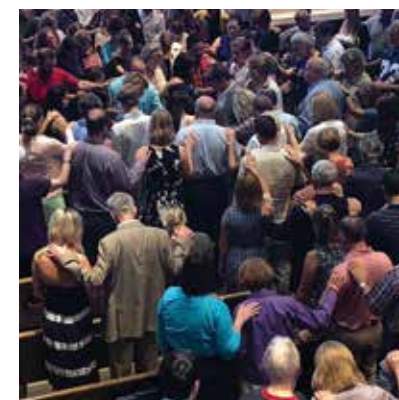
MDPC had been considering the creation of a Hospitality department long before this goal was established. Initially, the idea was to have a full-time Hospitality Director who would coordinate food, receptions for weddings and funerals, outside groups using MDPC facilities, greeters, ushers, and other all-church events.

STATUS:

- In 2017, Personnel approved a job description for a Hospitality Director position which included leadership and oversight of Food Ministries, Receptions, Connection Center and provided support for New Members, Ushers, etc. This job description was largely based on the initial vision for the position as stated above.
- Also, in 2017, MDPC enjoyed an income surplus for a good part of the year, so we began to think that we could fill the Hospitality Director position even though it wasn't budgeted for 2017. We did post this position and casually considered a few resumes of potential candidates. Then Hurricane Harvey changed those plans.
- In 2018, the Hospitality Director was included in the budget, but we elected to defer filling that position until 2019. Instead, we opted to fund a few other positions in order to provide better support for ministries such as Relationships, Communications & Media, Facilities (security) and Youth (to cover for Laura's maternity leave).
- The "five believer baptisms annually" clause has been met and then some. Since the approval of our Advantage Goals, in 2017 we baptized 13 people as they have professed their faith in Jesus Christ: three confirmands, two adolescents, and eight adults, and thus far in 2018, we have baptized eight; six confirmands and two adults. It's impossible to manage the movement of the Holy Spirit, but there does seem to be a growing awareness that MDPC is a place for seekers to find a home, and I'm thankful for the effective outreach efforts of Sarah Stone, Dan Aikins, and others.

ANALYSIS:

The current thinking is that this Goal needs to be re-evaluated in light of the emerging emphasis on MDPC becoming more invitational. The elements of this Goal should include a recommitment to evangelism, hospitality and engagement.



YOUNG ADULTS

2% INCREASE annually of new connections for the Gospel with **YOUNG ADULTS** and **INTER-CULTURALLY**, so that **MDPC** will more accurately reflect Houston's diversity.

POINT PERSON: Christyn Knoop (cknoop@mdpc.org)

PROGRESS

The now three-person Young Adult staff has been busy! In all things, we are motivated by a desire to see younger people (specifically college to mid-30s) become transformed, mature, and flourishing disciples of Jesus Christ. We are actively developing an annual rhythm of young adult-specific programming (e.g., college activities, sports leagues, Theology On Tap, small group Bible studies), integrating younger adults into the other ministries of the church (e.g., Harvey clean-up, mentoring, Romans Bible Study, ALPHA, MOPS, Men's Life), and building relationships outside MDPC with the Brazilian congregation and also non-believers. We are honing our communication methods and leadership teams, carving out a Young Adult nook on Sunday mornings for 3 lay-led classes, pouring ourselves into relational ministry by reaching out to young adults for lunch and coffee to hear their stories, and gearing up for our first fall retreat.

The goal of increasing young adult connections by 2% has been far too easy thanks to the vibrant programming, preaching, vision, generosity, and community of this church! Connections are easily made through outreach events like Theology On Tap and when friends invite friends to events, Sunday worship, sports, and more.

CHALLENGES

- Young adults are busy and transient. In any given month, we can meet a dozen new people and lose track of a similar number because they opt to go to church elsewhere, move, get into a busy season in work/life, or withdraw for one reason or another. So many things can happen between ages 20 and 30: first jobs, dating, marriage, babies, graduate programs, job changes, divorce, moving, etc. Pray that young adults in Houston find a warm community of faith to grow in their understanding of God's love for them and purpose for their lives, be it at MDPC or another church.
- As a church, we need to continue to figure out how to "close the back door." Many younger adults visit our church, but, for one reason or another, we have a low rate of people sticking around and plugging in. As leaders step forward to create more communities into which these young adults can connect and be disciplined, that will help. We also rely on the community at large to make younger adults (especially those who are single) feel welcome, valued, and included.

- Everyone: Invite a young adult to church and ask them to sit with you at worship. Introduce them to some folks. Bring them by the new Young Adult nook on Sunday mornings (Rooms 217-219, upstairs overlooking the Sanctuary Courtyard). There are breakfast tacos and mingling between 10:45 and 11:00 AM.
- If you're 20-30s: Get involved in young adult ministry! Go to ya.mdpc.org to see our calendar of events, classes, and Facebook groups. Pick a few things, put them on your calendar, and show up! Once you meet some friendly faces you'll want to come back.
- If you're 40+: Get involved in the multi-generational Romans Wednesday Night Bible Study at MDPC. Trevor Harris, a bona fide young adult, will be there helping teach. This is a great place to invite your young adult friends, kids, colleagues, or neighbors!

HOW CAN
YOU
HELP?

TECHNOLOGY

Responsibly launch **5 NEW TECHNOLOGY/MEDIA** initiatives to reach more people for Christ.

POINT PERSON: Ginny Glass (gglass@mdpc.org)

Communications met its five technology/media goals in the first year of the strategic initiatives (2017), but we continue to push forward in our efforts to attract new folks to MDPC, and to connect people in meaningful conversations and relationships through enhanced technology.

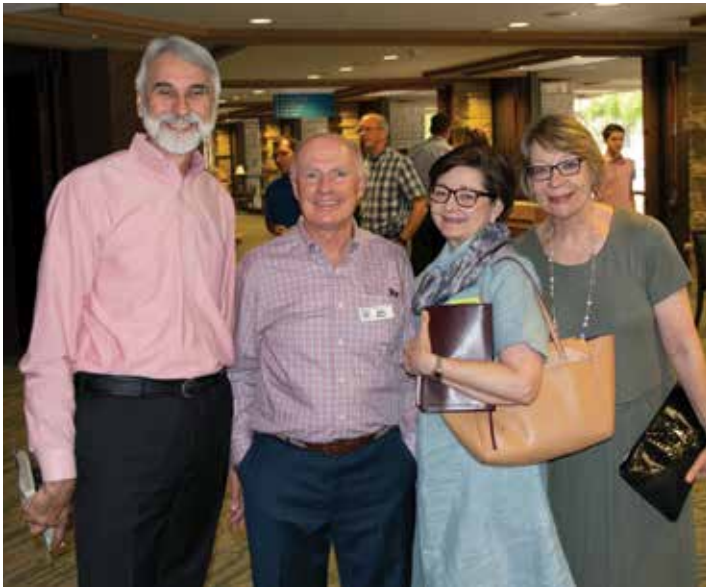
NEW INITIATIVES FOR 2018-19

- Use of Facebook Groups for ministry-specific areas. People have to request to join these private groups; as a result, the communication is more directed and interest-specific. This allows more personalized commentary and interaction.
- Pocket Platform, a new church app, recently launched by one of our partners. Pocket Platform:
 - replaces our existing app
 - allows more targeted and interest-specific push notifications to the congregation.
 - enables online check-in for on-campus events and programs
- New, easy electronic giving options aside from the traditional "passing of the plate."
- Three new website developments that further marry our website and database system (Ministry Platform), providing more accurate information and less duplication of processes.
- Social media initiatives that involve the congregation in invitational outreach for Christmas Eve services (stay tuned!).
- Upgrades to our Live Stream technology to improve user experience of online Sunday-morning worship.
- Increase the number of congregants who have uploaded photos to their Ministry Platform profile. Pictures are an incredible resource to MDPC staff! On specific Sunday mornings, we will offer members an opportunity to have their picture taken and uploaded to their Ministry Platform profile.

- Volunteer to help with social media, photography, or content writing.
- Are you, your family, your friends, or your small group planning some community service? Take a bunch of pictures, and submit them with a write up. We love sharing these items on social media and in publications!
- For information, contact Ginny Glass (gglass@mdpc.org).

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