



Another year is about to be in the books and as is our tradition, it's time to look back at what the year brought for Mars Hill Church.

In some ways, this was a year of loss. Our beloved Choir Director, Bruce Anderson, passed away after a battle with cancer that ended way too quickly. We will miss Bruce's easy-going nature and quick wit. He led us into worship with a confidence and gentleness that reassured us of God's goodness. Fortunately for Mars Hill, the entire Anderson family shares those traits along with an innate musical ability. We are thankful that Gracie Anderson offered to be our Interim Choir Director through next Easter.

We also entered a season of transition as we learned that our long-time Pastor, Bryant Harris, will be retiring on Easter 2025. Bryant has provided a steady leadership that always reminds us of God's love for us as individuals and as a church. Bryant's relaxed style pervades so many aspects of the life of our church. From the welcoming atmosphere of our church service and special events, to the identity we have of being a "church family," Bryant will leave an impression on this church for which we are all thankful.

Pastor Bryant's announcement in some ways set off a buzz of activity and in other ways slowed the development of new ministries. We are in a season of waiting- many times during our Session meetings questions have been redirected towards "let's wait until the new Pastor arrives before making any changes." On the other hand, we created three new teams that are full-steam ahead: the Pastor Search Committee (PSC), the Transition team, and the Celebration team.

The PSC jumped into action, completing the EPC's Church Information Form with the help of our congregation's survey answers. That allowed us to post the open position and begin accepting candidates. The Committee had a number of candidates, but quickly coalesced around a favorite. Members of the PSC attended the church service of the candidate, interviewed him over the phone, and then again in-person here at Mars Hill with his wife. They were extremely pleased with the results and offered him the position, which he accepted!

Now the Transition team will begin helping the church and our future Pastor succeed in this new adventure. He will tell his current church that he is leaving after the holidays, and then our church family will get an opportunity to find out more about him. We will have a Congregational Meeting in mid-January to answer questions and to approve his "Terms of Call" (compensation package he has been offered).

Next Spring, as we prepare for Bryant's retirement, the Celebration team will share some ways we can celebrate Bryant's pastorate at Mars Hill and encourage he and Linda in their next season of life.

While some things have been "on hold" as we wait to see what the future brings, we have still accomplished a lot at Mars Hill! We have been carrying out our regular ministries for all ages, from the Preschool & Children's Ministries, to the Youth and Young Adults, Men's and Women's groups, all the way to the Adult Sunday School classes and Young at Heart. Our SHARE team has continued with ministries right at our church like our Prayer team, to mailing cards and delivering Cards to Nursing Homes, feeding families in Acworth thru our food pantry, continuing Mission: Christmas Joy for kids in our neighborhood, and ministering to kids all the way across the world in Kenya.

And the Operations team has been hard at work in the background, keeping everything running smoothly so we can focus on ministry. This year did have some challenges: we had a lightning strike (again) in our Sanctuary that hit our AV equipment and we had a storm that did damage to the Chapel building. In both cases, we rose to the challenge and used it as an opportunity for improvement! We replaced the roof on the Chapel building earlier in the year and then added all new siding and painted it after the storm. We have updated some of our AV equipment already and will be replacing our 25 year old sound system in the Sanctuary in the upcoming months. Those were large expenses, but because of the good stewardship of our Operations team and your generosity over the years, we were able to pay for those repairs out of our Building Fund and Capital Expenditures accounts.

Last year we asked for end of year donations towards building a Pavilion on the concrete pad between the Chapel and Sanctuary. The goal is to have a place where we can fellowship and have overflow seating for big events like our church picnic. This project is not part of our regular budget or a "capital expenditure" so we need to raise all of the funds for the project before we can accomplish it. The good news is we raised \$30,000 last year! We anticipate the project will cost \$60-70,000. If you would like to help us raise funds for this project, please make a contribution labeled Pavilion project.

Our giving this year is below what we budgeted and below our giving from last year. We understand that inflation has hit everyone over the past few years and those increased expenses are starting to stress family's budgets. We have been watching our expenses and have reduced them when possible: we renegotiated our trash service this year and brought on a new cleaning team to cut costs. Please consider whether you have given at the level you had hoped this year and make any catch-up donations if you are able.

With a new Pastor coming next year, there will be some changes. But there are some things that will never change. We will always be a church family focused on God's love for us and how we can show that love to the world around us. We will always be thankful for our church family and will look for ways we can minister to it and our community.

We look forward to seeing how God will move in and through us in the new year.
God bless you and your family this season,

Mars Hill Church