

# MDPC Women

CONNECT WITH FRIENDS    CONNECT WITH JESUS



# ◀ Christmas for Kids ▶



## Inside This Issue

- 1 A Farewell from Outgoing Elder Meka Arend  
A Welcome from Incoming Elder Laura Benes
- 2 Ashes & Glory by Amanda Grace Caldwell
- 3 Prayer Time by Kellie Hurst  
Fit Tips by Lauren Aikins
- 4 Recipes
- 6 Reviews on Local Eateries and Hatmaker Book

## UPCOMING EVENTS

- |                    |  |
|--------------------|--|
| Parent Palooza     | January 11 and 18                        |
| The Breakfast Club | January 29                               |
| CBGR Cook-Off      | February 11                              |
| Girls' Getaway     | February 24-26                           |
| The Well           | April 19<br>(Follow-up discussion May 3) |

*Dear Friends,*

As I reflect back on my three years as the Women's Ministry Elder, I can't begin to tell you the immeasurable appreciation I have for each of you. These years have shown me that as a community, we have compassion in caring, gratefulness in giving, sacrifice in service, and joy as we grow in Christ with one another. We are gifts to each other as a community of believers to share and spread the great news of Jesus Christ.

When I look back on the events of the year, I am in awe of God's greatness. He has provided us with rich content and community for all women. Quick highlights of our events from this past year are Girls' Getaway (our annual spring retreat), Women's Spiritual Retreat (fall), The Well (spring and fall), The Living Well, Pie Love You (with *Jesus Said Love* and Tallowood Baptist Church), Christmas for Kids, and the Women's Christmas Coffee.

We have never stopped growing, investing in our community or saying yes to opportunities to further God's Kingdom. Pie Love You was one new joint venture. We had the joy of collecting pie ingredients and then joining the women of Tallowood to make 150 pumpkin pies to be delivered by the

staff of Jesus Said Love to many women who needed to feel the love of Jesus in time for Thanksgiving.

This year, along with your help, MDPC was able to provide Christmas gifts to 245 children through Small Steps Nurturing Center (see photo at left). The joy and gratitude from the Small Steps staff on delivery day were amazing to see! At our Christmas Coffee, we had a record number in attendance as well as some very special little guests from the Yellow School pre-K and kindergarten classes who brought holiday cheer singing Christmas songs. Thank you to all who attended.

We were touched by the authenticity and the hope we found at The Well in the stories of those who shared, and we were grateful for the rest and peace the Spiritual Retreat offered to all those who attended. In The Living Well, Charlotte Crawford has led us through the Book of John this year and women have found deeper faith by meeting Jesus at dawn.

I want to personally thank all the current Women's Ministry Board Members—Amanda Grace Caldwell, Amber Caver, Christine Gentil, Amy Harrington, Brett Hurst, and Kim Perdomo—for the ideas, support and encouragement that have made MDPC Women's Ministry what it is today.



Our deepest desire is to create a Christ-centered community where women can have authentic conversation and relationships with other women. Please continue to join us throughout the year at our many events. The doors at MDPC and Women's Ministry are always open for you!

Gratefully,

*Meka*

Meka Arend

Women's Ministry Elder 2014-2016



## ◀ Meet Laura Benes, Incoming Women's Ministry Elder

I am thrilled to be working for the women of our church as the new Women's Ministry Elder. We have some fabulous events and programs planned for the upcoming year to help women grow closer in their walk with Christ. Please consider joining us for various events like **The Well in April**, and the upcoming **February 24-26 Girls' Getaway!**

I'd like to commend Meka Arend on her amazing work these past three years. She made amazing strides in this department and leaves big shoes to fill. Please join me in congratulating and thanking her for her efforts!

I look forward to this awesome opportunity!

*Laura is married to Mike. Their children are Michael and Charlotte.*

# Ashes & Glory

by Amanda Grace Caldwell  
Counselor-in-Residence and Relationships Coordinator

It's a funny time. January. It's a time of ashes and glory. We say goodbye to 2016, the triumphs celebrated, the dreams come true, the losses grieved, and the goals we didn't quite reach.

In tandem, we usher in 2017—a new beginning, a chance to right our wrongs, accomplish our dreams, and be the best version of “you and me.”

One of my favorite quotes is by Elisabeth Elliot. She says, “Of one thing I am perfectly sure: God's story never ends with ‘ashes.’”

I know a new year brings up a lot for people. There are those who would call 2016 the best year yet. There are others who have been pleading for something, anything, new.

I feel a mixture of both this year. I am brimming with excitement as I think about the coming twelve months, wondering, could this be the year one of my deepest longings is fulfilled? But I also swallow hard. If this past year

wasn't the year, what if next year isn't either?

What I love about Elliot's quote is that it's true. God's story in our lives never ends with ashes. The end of the year is a good time to slow down and take stock of our lives. We may reflect on the year in fondness or we may look around us and see piles of ashes.

Regardless of view, there is hope. Isaiah 61:2-3 tells us that Jesus has come to comfort all who mourn and to bestow on us a crown of beauty instead of ashes.

What I know is this: the story won't end in ashes. We can step into 2017 with the hope that God will redeem all the pains, mishaps, and miscommunications we have on this earth. That redemption may not come until we are Heaven-side, but it will come.

I want to choose hope this new year. I want to believe in the Jesus who offers us Glory. The thought of a new year is exciting because it's a new beginning. It's the “coming” of what we can't quite see.



As we look expectantly to 2017, my prayer is that we keep our eyes focused and our hearts grateful to the Savior who has come and the Savior who is daily *coming*.

I don't know what this new year holds for you and me, but I am holding onto the belief that God is near, bestowing on us the crown of beauty even in the smallest of blessings.

## Reflect on 2016

When I stop to reflect on 2016, I am humbled at the gifts the Lord provided along the way, big and small. Sometimes, those gifts can get lost in the hustle and bustle of the holidays or moving into the new year. But there still are gifts to be thankful for: the big and small ones and the long-awaited ones. Take time today to write down three gifts from 2016. Below are examples of my three and a space to write your own:

1. A church (staff and members alike) that feel like family and home
2. A group of women to do life with
3. Getting the opportunity to counsel in the church

Now...your turn. What are three things you are thankful for (big or small)?

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.



## Prayer by Kellie Hurst of Home Encouragement

When I was young, my youth pastor taught me about the four components of prayer. I even learned an acronym to help me remember: A.C.T.S. It stands for *adoration, confession, thanksgiving, and supplication*. A robust, healthy prayer practice includes all four of these elements. However, I've noticed that lately my prayers have become, seemingly, never-ending lists of intercessory needs for others. A spiritual "laundry list" as it were. It's hard to get away from the simple idea that people do, in fact, need prayer. I find myself praying for friends who need physical healing, marriages that need relational restoration, family members who need one thing or another, brothers and sisters who need jobs...conversations with God where I do most of the talking and requesting. And not much listening.

Of course, there's nothing wrong with petitioning the Lord on behalf of others. Supplication is a necessary part of a healthy prayer life. And it is, indeed, an honor to lift the needs of others up to the Throne Room of God. But it's also

easy to slip into a habit of supplication *only*, simply because it's a "no-brainer." I plop down in my easy chair, pull out my prayer journal, and start listing off routine prayer requests. Before I know it, it's time to say "Amen" and begin my day. Not much give-and-take there. In fact, only taking. But what about the giving component of prayer? The act of giving adoration and giving thanks? Those aspects of prayer take a little more focus. I must show up completely to this experience if I want to engage fully. It doesn't happen as easily or naturally for me. I must create space in my mind and heart for the Holy Spirit to prompt these prayers. Praising God for not only what He has done and is doing, but also for who He is. For me, this takes a little more time and focused attention.

When I meet a girlfriend for coffee, I don't jump right in and rattle off my list of needs, only to then say goodbye and leave her sitting there. I enjoy hearing about what's going on in her life, and I enjoy being in a "listening" posture so I can engage with her completely. That's



how the friendship deepens. I long for my prayers to be modeled more that way. Where I talk, and God listens. And then God speaks, and I listen. A real dialogue. What a concept. It can happen. I just need to remember that I don't need to be the one doing all the talking.

*"Blessed are You, O Lord God of Israel our father, forever and ever. Yours, O Lord, is the greatness and the power and the glory and the victory and the majesty, indeed everything that is in the heavens and the earth; Yours is the dominion, O LORD, and You exalt Yourself as head over all. Both riches and honor come from You, and You rule over all, and in Your hand is power and might; and it lies in Your hand to make great and to strengthen everyone. Now therefore, our God, we thank You, and praise Your glorious Name."*

~ A prayer of adoration (One of King David's last recorded prayers)

## FIT TIPS by Lauren Aikins, Personal Trainer



The general weekly minimum recommendation for adults to exercise is 150 minutes of moderate-intensity aerobic physical activity (i.e., brisk walking) or 75 minutes of vigorous-intensity aerobic physical activity (i.e., jogging or running) or an equivalent combination of moderate and vigorous physical activity.

For additional health benefits (including weight loss), adults should increase their moderate-intensity aerobic physical activity to 300 minutes per week, or engage in 150 minutes of vigorous-intensity aerobic physical activity per week, or an equivalent combination of moderate- and vigorous-intensity activity.

Muscle-strengthening activities such as weight lifting should be done involving major muscle groups on two or more days a week. If you're new to exercise, start with something simple like a brisk walk and build up from there. Enjoy being physically active with friends or family! Make the time go by faster by walking and talking with a friend. Take an exercise class with a sibling. Go for a walk, bike ride, run, or swim today!

God calls us to take care of our bodies: "Or do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit within you, whom you have from God? You are not your own, for you were bought with a price. So glorify God in your body" (1 Corinthians 6:19-20). God brings us so much joy when we take care of our bodies! Spending time with Him while exercising in His beautiful creation is the perfect time to pray and listen to God. It can become the sweetest part of your day!

# Treats for the soul..



## Simple Egg Cups

*For the health-nut! (freezer-friendly for a quick breakfast)*

### Ingredients

- 2 tablespoons coconut oil
- 12 individual bacon
- 10 individual egg
- ½ teaspoon salt
- 1 teaspoon black pepper
- 2 tablespoons chopped chives, fresh

### Directions

1. Grease muffin tin with coconut oil.
2. Line each muffin tin with a slice of bacon.
3. In a large bowl whisk together eggs, salt, and pepper.
4. Divide egg mixture evenly between muffin tins. This will fill each muffin approximately half-full of egg.
5. Sprinkle chives over the top.
6. Bake at 350°F for 30-35 minutes until eggs are set.

### Freezing

Cook as directed, allow to cool completely, and store in freezer bags.

*Do not neglect to show hospitality to strangers, for by this some have entertained angels without knowing it.*

*– Hebrews 13:2*



## Oatmeal Cookies

*Surprise the kids with a back-to-school treat!*

### Ingredients

- 1 cup shortening
- 1 cup white sugar
- 1 cup brown sugar
- 2 eggs
- 1 cup flour
- ½ teaspoon salt
- 1 teaspoon vanilla
- 1 teaspoon baking soda
- 3 cups oatmeal (old fashioned, not instant)
- ½ cup coconut
- ½ cup chopped pecans

### Directions

1. Preheat oven to 350°F.
2. Cream shortening and sugars together. Add eggs. Mix in all dry ingredients. Add vanilla, oatmeal, coconut, and pecans.
3. For cookies, roll into small balls and place on cookie sheet. Bake for 10 minutes.
4. For bars, spray Pyrex with cooking spray. Press all dough into Pyrex. Bake for 16 minutes.

*...be hospitable, loving what is good, sensible, just, devout, self-controlled...*

*– Titus 1:8*

## Rosemary & Dried Cranberry Biscuits

*Add some flair to your Easter spread!*

### Ingredients

- 2 ¼ cups all-purpose flour
- 2 teaspoons granulated sugar
- 1 tablespoon baking powder
- ¾ teaspoon salt
- ¾ teaspoon baking soda
- 9 tablespoons unsalted butter, cut into pieces
- 3 teaspoons minced fresh rosemary
- ½ cup dried cranberries
- ¾ cup buttermilk (see below for substitutions)
- 1-2 tablespoons heavy cream or half & half for brushing biscuit tops

### Directions

1. Preheat oven to 400°F. Line a baking sheet with parchment paper or a silicone liner. Set aside.
2. In a large bowl, combine flour, sugar, baking powder, salt, and baking soda. Add butter, and using your fingertips or a pastry blender, cut the butter into the flour until the pieces of butter are pea sized and the mixture resembles coarse meal.
3. Stir in rosemary and dried cranberries. Stir in the buttermilk, then use your hands to knead mixture briefly until it comes together.
4. On a floured surface, pat the dough out until it is ½ to ¾-inch thick. Cut rounds using a biscuit cutter (mine was 2 ½ inches across), being careful not to twist the cutter as you press down.
5. Transfer cut biscuits to the prepared pan. Brush the tops lightly with cream or half & half and bake for approximately 12-14 minutes. These biscuits are best served warm the day they are made.

### Recipe Notes

Want to make these ahead of time? Prepare the biscuit dough and form the individual biscuits, then tightly cover/wrap and freeze. Bake directly from the freezer (brush on the cream or half and half for golden tops), adding a few more minutes to the baking time.

Don't have buttermilk? Worry not! Simply thin out plain yogurt or sour cream with enough milk until it is the consistency of buttermilk. Alternately, you can add 1 tablespoon of white vinegar or lemon juice to 1 cup of milk and let it sit until curdled, about 10 minutes (note: you only need ¾ cup buttermilk for this recipe).



## Cheesy Bacon Spinach Dip

*Perfect for the Super Bowl!*

### Ingredients

- 6 slices bacon, diced
- 8 ounces cream cheese, at room temperature
- 1 cup sour cream
- ¼ cup freshly grated Parmesan
- 2 tablespoons mayonnaise
- 1 tablespoon Worcestershire sauce
- 2 cups baby spinach, chopped
- 1 cup shredded mozzarella cheese, divided
- 1 cup shredded cheddar cheese, divided
- Kosher salt and freshly ground black pepper, to taste
- 2 tablespoons chopped fresh parsley leaves

### Directions

1. Heat a large skillet over medium high heat. Add bacon and cook until brown and crispy, about 6-8 minutes. Transfer to a paper towel-lined plate.
2. Preheat oven to 400 degrees F. Lightly oil a 9-inch baking dish or coat with nonstick spray.
3. In a large bowl, combine cream cheese, sour cream, Parmesan, mayonnaise, and Worcestershire. Stir in bacon, spinach, ½ cup mozzarella cheese, and ½ cup cheddar cheese. Season with salt and pepper to taste.
4. Spread bacon mixture into the prepared baking dish. Sprinkle with remaining ½ cups of cheeses.
5. Place into oven and bake until bubbly and golden, about 20-25 minutes.
6. Serve immediately, garnished with bacon and parsley, if desired.

## Restaurant Review

by Laura Benes

Food connoisseur, not so much...I just don't like to cook, especially on the weekends. But here are some of our family favorites that we have discovered over the years from different parts of town.

### WEST SIDE

- ▶ **Tony's Mexican Restaurant • I-10 at Barker Cypress**  
Best cheese enchiladas. You will find us here most Friday nights.
- ▶ **Tres Market • Memorial Drive**  
Best cookies – Buffalo Chip Cookies

### SPRING BRANCH

- ▶ **Vieng Thai • Longpoint**  
Amazing Thai food. Try the green curry chicken or Pad Thai.
- ▶ **Simply Greek • Blalock at Campbell**  
Gyros Platter or Greek Sausage Platter. The beauty of this place is its inexpensive, and the servings are huge, so consider sharing. BYOB.

### GALLERIA AREA

- ▶ **Café Lily • Westheimer**  
Amazing for hummus, tabouli, and grape leaves. And if you are brave, try the raw kibby served only on Saturdays (think beef carpaccio).
- ▶ **Adair Kitchen • San Felipe at Sage**  
Amazing custom salads. My favorite salad dressing is lemon vinaigrette. Lemon artichoke coup and goat cheese turkey burger are my favorites.
- ▶ **North • Post Oak by Whole Foods**  
Try the meatball or garlic truffle bread appetizer. Both to die for. Also great pizzas and pasta Bolognese.

### WEST UNIVERSITY

- ▶ **Vietopia • Buffalo Speedway at Westview**  
Best vermicelli in the city. I prefer it with beef or shrimp.
- ▶ **Tiny's #5 • Rice and Edloe**  
Their chocolate chip cookies are to die for...and hopefully you can get them still warm. French Country sandwich is my favorite, with pesto, goat cheese, and grilled chicken.

### THE HEIGHTS

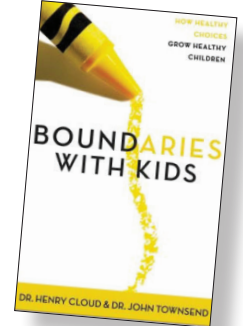
- ▶ **Mellow Mushroom • North Shepherd**  
Try the Kosmic Karma pizza.
- ▶ **Steel City Pops • East 20th Street**  
Unique popsicles – our favorites are vanilla bean and blueberry basil. Flavors change weekly.

*Do not forsake wisdom, and she will protect you; love her, and she will watch over you. The beginning of wisdom is this: Get wisdom. Though it cost all you have, get understanding.*

– Proverbs 4:6-7

## Good Reads

by Hattie Noworatzky



### Boundaries With Kids

*Drs. Henry Cloud and John Townsend*

Does your family life seem a bit out of control? Do you lie in bed at the end of each hard day questioning your parenting choices? *Boundaries With Kids* may have the answers you need!

Cloud and Townsend are both licensed psychologists, speakers, co-hosts of the nationally broadcasted New Life radio program, and co-founders of Cloud-Townsend Communications (a seminar, information, and church training group). They have co-authored several best-selling books together, including *The Mom Factor*, *Safe People*, *Twelve "Christian" Beliefs That Can Drive You Crazy*, and the Gold Medallion Award-winning *Boundaries*.

This book gives you tools to teach your children to take responsibility for their own actions, attitudes, and emotions. You will learn how to set limits while still being a loving parent, bring control to an out-of-control family life, and define appropriate boundaries and consequences for your kids.

This book lives on my bedside table, and I read it over and over as needed. I have underlined 99 percent of it. Here's one of my favorite quotes: *"The trick of parenting is to hold onto your limit one more time than your children hold onto the demand. That's all you need – one more."*