



THE SPIRE

WESTMINSTER PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH
Pittsburgh, PA

As I type this, we will throw open the doors to welcome you to in person worship at both the Bridge and traditional services on February 28. After so many months of reaching across our safe isolation through YouTube, we will once again be able to see one another and worship together.

Equally as vital, we will continue to livestream the services and post recordings for you to worship safely and conveniently. To remain connected to one another, through all the means possible, only strengthens our ability to proclaim the gospel and live as followers of Jesus.

In my short time here, I hear a drumbeat in our conversations of the life-giving connections you experience with one another through Westminster. In Zoom meetings and outdoor walks, phone calls or brief meetings, you tell me repeatedly of how precious it is to be able to worship, enjoy a 'cuppa, study scripture, raise your kids, advocate for justice, and hold one another in prayer. Those of you who joined the church last year in a pandemic speak of this with the same passion as those who became connected in the John Galbreath era.

As high as this gorgeous steeple soars to praise God, Westminster's breadth is greater in the ways it connects people to one another through God.

In this liminal time, as we continue to wait for vaccines and immunities, we must continue to nurture and cultivate relationships in all the safe ways established over the past year. Yes, we have Zoom fatigue, and yet we thrive on any form of connecting safely. Yes, we don't want to wear masks or make reservations, and yet our community flourishes when we hold the health of others with tender care.

Jo Boaler, a Stanford professor of mathematics, observes, "The thing that people who overcome hardship and do not become defeated by it have in common is that in times of need they all reached out to someone – a friend, a family member, or a colleague – and those connections helped them survive and develop strength."

My prayer for everyone is that we will continue to persevere in connecting with one another.

In faith,
Jo



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DR. JO FORREST, *Senior Pastor, Head of Staff*
 REV. LOUISE ROGERS, *Associate Pastor*
for Congregational Care

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NURSERY SCHOOL

412-835-2906

CHILD DEVELOPMENT CENTER

412-835-9450

Staff email addresses and phone extensions are available on our website, www.westminster-church.org.

Read the *Spire* online at:
www.westminster-church.org

The Spire is published monthly by the church staff from September through June. Contributions can be made by emailing a Word document to *Spire* editor Sara Kyle at sara@ruhlekyle.org. The deadline for submitting an article is the fifth day of every month for the following month's issue. Please include the author's name, telephone number, email address, and a title. All articles are subject to editing.

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Worship at Westminster




Westminster has reopened for in person worship, as of Sunday, February 28. Please make a reservation to attend in person worship at either 9:45 or 11:00 a.m. Sunday mornings by visiting our website at www.westminster-church.org and clicking on the "Worship Reservations" link.

If you are not comfortable attending in person worship or are traveling, visit our YouTube channel at www.youtube.com/user/WestminsterUSC or our website for links to the livestream services at 9:45 and 11:00 a.m. Sunday mornings, or watch anytime later on YouTube.

Bridge Contemporary Worship

 Sundays
 9:45 a.m.
 WROC & YouTube Livestream

Traditional Worship

 Sundays
 11:00 a.m.
 Sanctuary & YouTube Livestream

The Lord's Supper is celebrated the first Sunday of each month.



Join Westminster in this season of Lent, exploring familiar objects with faith-filled eyes, accompanied by scripture to awaken us to God's presence everywhere. Join us on the journey through the opportunities below.

Lenten Devotional

Visit the church's website homepage at <https://www.westminster-church.org> for a link to the day's devotion.

Coffee Time and Study for Lent Mondays through March 29 10:00 - 11:15 a.m. on Zoom

Join Louise Rogers on Monday mornings on Zoom, to talk about our impressions from worship and the book *Lent in Plain Sight* by Jill Duffield.

Labyrinth

Westminster's brick labyrinth in the south courtyard is open for walking anytime. See page 5 for details.

Weekly worship focus for Lent:

- Week One: Dust
- Week Two: Bread
- Week Three: Cross
- Week Four: Coins
- Week Five: Shoes
- Week Six: Oil

Upcoming Events

07 MAR Westminster Seminars
Lenten Series begins

28 MAR Palm Sunday
Pocket Change Project Collection

28 MAR Children's Easter Egg Hunt
11:00 a.m. during Sunday school
All children can report to Room 107 to take part. It will be a fun day to learn, play, and discover what Holy Week is all about.



Simple Prayers

My friend Sue shared that her husband Hal spotted a porcupine in a tree along Cherry Creek Trail in Colorado. Having spotted one, they kept staring up in the trees and spotted a second one. She was thrilled as she thought of these words from the Mary Oliver poem “Sometimes”:

Instructions for living a life:
 Pay attention.
 Be astonished.
 Tell about it.

Her message makes me smile when I think about the porcupine staring down on them! Sue’s delight came from paying attention. To pay attention means to “to be attentive to, become aware of, or be responsive to (someone or something).” We need to slow down to discover something we don’t initially see on the surface.

For the past year, our regular routines of life have been upended, causing us to pay attention to regular things in new ways. Having to put on a mask every day, I appreciate the smiles of my daughters’ faces even more. I walked the trails at Boyce Mayview Park this winter to re-discover the pine tree grove, where I used to go as a young girl, still standing. Most of the year the pines are hidden by the green foliage of other trees. Spending more time on the phone has given me a new appreciation for the familiar voice at the other end. These discoveries flow to my simple prayers.

Yesterday, I thanked God for these things:

- The brilliant blue sky as I walked along the sidewalk coming into church.
- A gift from someone sending me a tip on where to sign up for vaccines.
- Beautiful organ music coming from Galbreath Chapel.
- A friendly hello from someone who stopped by my office.

Short simple prayers help us to pay attention to the blessings, as well as the needs, around us especially during Lent. As I come across names of the congregation during the day, I say a prayer for them in the moment. Sometimes, I know their need for healing or strength and offer a simple prayer. Occasionally, I ask God to be present to them in bringing strength, encouragement, or what is necessary at that time in their life. I pray for the things that break my heart too, tragic situations on the news and in the lives of people where we all struggle. This has been a tough time for all of us.

As a pastor, I lead the longer Prayer of the People on Sunday morning. This prayer is a composite of broad petitions for our community, neighbors around the world, God’s healing Spirit, and heartfelt thanks. During my day to day living, my prayers are simple, quick, and specific to people and occasions. God receives them all.

The most important part of prayer is to just pray. Say what is on your heart or in your mind to God. Bring your joys, concerns, worries, and lift up the names of people to God without being obsessed about saying right words or addressing God properly. Then listen, pay attention to the Spirit’s moving in your life. Ultimately, your prayers allow you to pay attention to the Lord God, who knows us completely and loves us lavishly.

“In the morning, Lord, you will hear my voice; in the morning I will present my prayer to you and be on the watch.”

– Psalm 5:3

Together on the journey,

Louise

Walking the Labyrinth During Pandemic Times

I am often asked the difference between a labyrinth and a maze. Indeed, in literature the terms are interchangeable but not correct. Recently I have found the perfect meaning for a maze: attempting to register for the COVID-19 vaccine! You find a location and fill out the form, including taking a picture of your insurance card. When you get to the end, you find that all the slots are full. You start again. Frustrating. That is a maze, a series of starts and stops, often ending in dead ends.

A labyrinth, however, is one continuous circuit. You can see the goal, and the path takes you there, and leads you back out the same way. Along the way you come close to the center and then the path takes you meandering away again, but you will reach the middle. Walking the labyrinth is a calming experience. No dead ends. It is a metaphor for life.

Walking the labyrinth is not something to learn or memorize, but something to experience. It is a walking meditation, a path to quiet the mind and become more closely in tune with God. The labyrinth walk is a way to nourish the spirit and provide an opportunity to discover your sacred inner space and find insight into life's journey. Westminster's brick labyrinth in the south courtyard is open for walking anytime. Come walk when life is confusing or upsetting, or when a problem needs to be sorted.

During Lent you may meditate on the final days of Christ's journey to the cross. In the center, take time to ponder what Christ's sacrifice means to you. On the way out of the labyrinth, you might think of ways to incorporate your reflections as you reenter your daily life. Have a blessed Easter season.

– Mary Kay Mitchell



BETWEEN HERE AND THERE

One year. This month marks one year since we first took serious action in response to the COVID-19 pandemic; a lot has changed in these past 12 months. Some of it has occurred naturally – things that would have happened anyway – and some of it was in direct response or reaction to the pandemic. But in both cases, we're left with a very different landscape than that of our beginning. I think we can make a few parallels here.

First, the church needs to respond and react to the situations that are around us. This is true of The Church (Christ's people on earth) as well as Westminster Presbyterian. I have the privilege of working with and alongside lots of different ministry-minded folks; not one of them thinks that things are going to "go back to normal." It is certainly true that we all look forward to opening our doors to children, youth, families, and congregational worship. It is in many ways the lifeblood of what we do as God's people, but it is equally true that we've learned, grown, and changed in this "in between" time.

You've experienced this in your own life, I'm sure. Your eyes have been opened to new priorities. You've recognized different needs. You've stepped into new, or away from old, habits. You're not the same person that you used to be – but you continue to move forward. We, as the body of this nook of God's Kingdom, must do the very same. We are called to identify new priorities, values, and experiences. To meet the needs of those around us, both new and old. We're called to evaluate where we've been and where we feel that God is calling us. It won't all be "normal."

Second, here in the middle of Lent, we can take a minute to reflect upon the things that have been "given up." I'd bet enormous sums of money that before this past year landed, you'd never thought, "I can't wait to go grocery shopping without a mask." Or, more pointedly, a friend of mine recently said, "I just can't wait to go in a grocery store." A very small piece of the many things that have been lost this year, but it goes to show how much we take for granted on a daily basis. What would it be like, as we begin to see some light on the horizon, for us to view this season as a spiritual practice in the same way that we might view giving up desserts, or meat, or whatever it is that you may have set aside for this Lenten season? We're not where we want to be; we don't do all the things that we used to do. But maybe there's some reason, some purpose that can allow for us to find meaning in these sacrifices. Lent is an ideal season to reflect on what has been lost as we look ahead to a new and different life. I'm sure that we'd agree there's much to look forward to.

Let's take a collective breath and remind ourselves that it's okay to come out of this season in a different place from where we began. I can't think of a time when God called his people back to the start. Where do you feel that God is calling you as we move through this season? I'd love to hear about your experience.

Be well, friends.

– Ed Sutter



“
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Westminster Seminars Online

Welcome All!

Live on Sundays
10:00 – 10:45 a.m.

Zoom – link available on the church website and in each Friday church email

Please join us for the live Zoom meeting or watch the video later on the Westminster website here: www.westminster-church.org/news-&-media/westminster-seminars. The Zoom meeting will open at 9:40 a.m. for greetings and conversation.

Each seminar is an informal time to learn and grow in faith through engaging topics, which change from month to month. We extend a warm invitation to folks near and far to join us on Zoom or watch later. Spread the word to friends and family, wherever they live!

Lenten Series

March 7, 14, 21, 28

Forgiving: The Gift That Makes Life Better

The Rev. Dr. Graham Standish

Of all the qualities Christ has taught us to have, being forgiving is perhaps the hardest. Why? Because our wounds demand retribution. Our scars call out for self-protection. Jesus calls on us to follow God's way, not pain's way, but that is so hard to do in the moment. The Rev. Dr. Graham Standish will lead us over four weeks to explore what it truly means to forgive, as well as ways to train ourselves to follow God's way rather than pain's way.



The Rev. Dr. Graham Standish is the Executive Director of the Samaritan Counseling, Guidance, Consulting (www.samaritancounseling.net), and the Director of its Caring for Clergy and Congregations program, which offers clergy coaching and church consulting. From 1996 to 2017, he was senior pastor of Calvin Presbyterian Church in Zelienople, Pennsylvania, where son of Westminster the Rev. David Paul is presently senior pastor (and is doing a wonderful job!).

Standish is the author of ten books, including ...And the Church Actually Changed (2020), and the upcoming Preaching to Those Walking Away (anticipated spring 2022). He has been an adjunct professor at both Pittsburgh Theological Seminary and Tyndale Seminary, focusing in the areas of spirituality and congregational leadership. He also has a background as a spiritual director, individual and marital therapist, psychiatric therapist, and drug and alcohol therapist.

Westminster Book Group

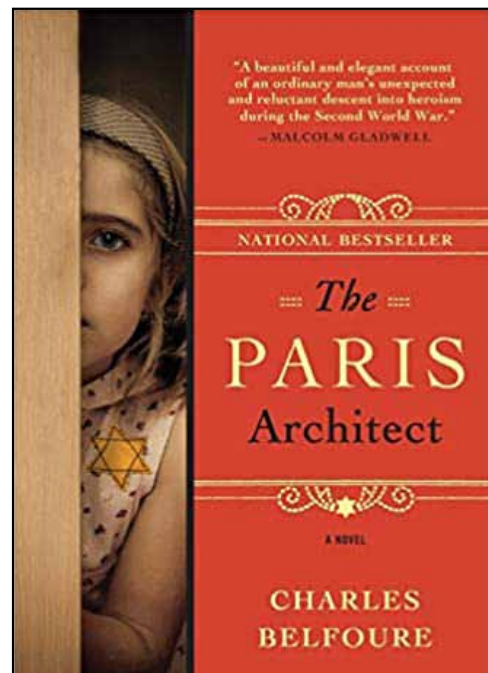
Wednesday, March 31
Noon – 1:15 p.m.

The next meeting of the Westminster Book Group will be on Zoom and in Room 238. The zoom link can be found in the meeting announcement on the church website. We will be reading *The Paris Architect* by Charles Belfoure.

"A beautiful and elegant account of an ordinary man's unexpected and reluctant descent into heroism during the second world war." – Malcolm Gladwell

Book clubs will pore over the questions Charles Belfoure raises about justice, resistance, and just how far we'll go to make things right.

We invite you to join us either by Zoom or in person in Room 238.



OUTREACH

Baby Bundles

The Baby Bundles team at Westminster is part of Outreach and we have lots of fun! Most of us are grandmas who don't have any new babies to knit blankets for, and we all love babies and making baby blankets. That's how Baby Bundles got started. We make baby blankets and then bundle up infant clothing and a digital thermometer. These bundles then go to East Liberty Family Health Care Center where they are given to parents of newborns.

The families served by ELFHCC are less fortunate than many families and often do not have the benefit of a baby shower and all the gifts to help the family welcome a new baby.

East Liberty Family Health Care Center states that their mission is "to witness to God's love, known in Jesus Christ, by empowering our patients through community centered, whole-person quality care for all, which includes those who are uninsured, underinsured and underserved."



We believe the bundles express our commitment to serve families in the greater Pittsburgh community. If you are interested in joining the Baby Bundles team, contact Jan Baumann at baumann@westminster-church.org.

– Debby Underwood

Peace and Justice Committee Hosting Watch Party, Discussion

The Peace and Justice Committee is focusing on anti-racism this year, promoting various activities and a periodic newsletter. Systemic racism is extremely complex because it is woven so deeply and pervasively into our culture and history. To try to understand it better, we are exploring different aspects of it.

In March we are sponsoring a “watch party” and discussion of the film *The Hate U Give* via Zoom. Because it is over two hours long, we will split the event into two sessions on Wednesday evenings March 3 and 10 starting at 7:00 p.m. In each session, we will watch approximately half of the movie, followed by a discussion. Depending on your internet connection, you may choose to watch the video with us or watch on your own and join the discussion portion starting just after 8:00 p.m. for about 45 minutes.

***The Hate U Give*
Watch Party & Discussion
Wednesdays, March 3 & 10
7:00 – 8:45 p.m. on Zoom**

This is a challenging film to watch from several perspectives. It is rated PG-13 (for “mature thematic elements, some violent content, drug material and language”). It was released in October 2018, long before the killing of George Floyd, and large, diverse protests about continued and disproportionate deaths of people of color by police officers. Based on the book by Angie Thomas, the film follows Starr Carter (Amandla Stenberg), a black student at a largely white prep school, who is galvanized into activism after she witnesses the police shooting of her childhood friend Khalil.

As mentioned in the December Peace and Justice newsletter on context switching, this film illustrates the challenge of daily switching between the culture of a prep school, where one is a minority, and the culture of home and neighborhood, where one is in the majority. It is a coming-of-age film set in the tension between two very different worlds. Short and extended trailers for the film are available online.

If you would like to participate or have any questions, please email peaceandjustice@westminster-church.org or call Bob Dilly at 724-941-5684.



Town Hall South

*Philanthropic Mission
2019-2020*

The Town Hall South Speaker Series (THS) is a nonprofit outreach of Westminster Presbyterian Church. The mission of THS is to provide an enrichment program for the community through quality lectures and to engage the public in reflection and dialogue on key issues of the day. Equally important, THS provides outreach to the community through philanthropic gifts to a wide range of local organizations. Each lecture season, the majority of net proceeds are donated to worthy causes, most of which focus on women and children. Since its inception in 1969, THS has donated nearly \$650,000 to various local charities.

Following the 2019-2020 lecture season, THS distributed \$20,000 among 17 nonprofit organizations. The needs of these organizations have only been exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic, and in many cases, the grants from THS have been used to help fulfill those needs. Listed below is the mission of each organization that received a grant as a result of the 2019-2020 season and an explanation of how the grants from THS were used:

Blankets Over Pittsburgh distributes blankets, tents, shovels, and bikes directly to the city’s homeless. **THS funds purchased sleeping bags, tents, and personal care items.**

CASA For Kids (Washington County) and CASA of Allegheny County each train volunteers

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Town Hall South continued from page 9

to advocate for abused and neglected children in each county's Juvenile Court System. **THS funds were used to provide training to 17 new advocates**, much of which was accomplished via Zoom, enabling CASA for Kids to assign over 30 children to a new advocate who will speak up for the children's best interests and give them a voice in court.

Family Hospice provides compassionate end-of-life care to patients with life-limiting illnesses and their families. **THS funds purchased 285 pill organizers for patients.**

Family Promise of Southwestern PA provides shelter, meals, and support to homeless families with children until they are able to return to sustainable independent lives in their own homes. **THS funds were used for costs of transporting families to work or school.**

Boys Hope Girls Hope of Pittsburgh, Inc. selects academically capable and motivated young people from disadvantaged backgrounds and helps them achieve their full potential by providing them with housing, educational resources, and encouragement. **THS funds were used to fund residential counselors who work full time at the girls' home in Coraopolis, as well as to pay for students' tuition to partner schools.**

Light in my City provides solar lanterns, emergency weather band radios, and charging stations for government-issued cell phones to the homeless. **THS funds purchased 20 lanterns and 20 radios.**

Literacy Pittsburgh empowers students and adults to improve reading skills. Due to the pandemic, programming has gone fully remote, but roughly 85% of students have been retained. **THS funds were used to purchase textbooks and technology and helped to build Literacy Pittsburgh's virtual curriculum.**

Operation Safety Net provides medical and wellness care to Pittsburgh's homeless population. **THS funds were used to purchase medical supplies, warming supplies, and bus tickets to enable individuals to access housing and recovery services.**

Outreach Teen & Family Services provides affordable mental health counseling to teens and their families. **THS funds subsidized costs of counseling.**

Prime Time Adult Care provides mental and physical stimulation to the frail elderly and respite for their caregivers. **THS funds subsidized expenses to keep services affordable.**

Spencer Family YMCA/Camp AIM provides summer camp for children with special needs. Due to the pandemic, the camp was offered virtually this year. **THS funds**

THS TOWN HALL South

SPEAKER SERIES

For more information on how you can support Town Hall South's philanthropic mission, please visit www.townhallsouth.org to purchase season tickets or learn how to become a sponsor.

were used to help develop interactive programming featuring life skills, physical activities, music, and art.

Street Symphony, a mission of recent THS speaker Vijay Gupta, offers performances and teaches music and arts to the LA County homeless and incarcerated population. An important part of Street Symphony is the Daniel Chaney Fellows Program, which pairs Skid Row community individuals with one of Street Symphony's professional teaching artists. **THS funds were used to purchase tablet devices and mobile hotspots, giving fellows the technological access necessary to continue working safely with their mentors.**

The Early Learning Institute provides therapeutic programs for young children with specialized needs. **THS funds were used to purchase materials and equipment used by the early intervention therapists.**

Washington City Mission's Shelter for Women with Children provides shelter, childcare, and support to homeless women and their children. **THS funds paid a portion of the salary of a qualified childcare coordinator** who operates a childcare center during the day to help women care for their children as they rebuild their lives.

Westminster Early Childhood Education Programs provides day care and education for children 6 years old and younger. **THS funds supported playground improvements.**

Zonta Club of Washington County provides networking and community service opportunities for professional women. **THS funds were used to buy 20 warm-up suits and stuffed animals for women and children who were victims of sexual assault.**

For more information on how you can support Town Hall South's philanthropic mission, please visit its website at www.townhallsouth.org to purchase season tickets or learn how to become a sponsor.

Financial Report

As of January 31, 2021

Income	
January Income	\$175,553.57
January Budget Income	\$206,762.77
YTD 2021 Income	\$175,553.57

Expenses	
January Expenses	\$145,104.33
January Budget Expenses	\$154,231.13
YTD 2021 Expenses	\$145,104.33

Session Updates

Please visit the "Church Organization" page on our website for links to approved Session minutes and the financial report presented at the January 31 annual meeting. Here is the direct link to the page: <https://www.westminster-church.org/about/church-organization>.

Deaths

Joe R. Irwin
February 14

Jean Noll
February 17



Easter Giving

Due to the unprecedented times and the many variables we currently are dealing with, only a few Easter flowers will be required to decorate the sanctuary this year. The Chancel Guild and Deacons have joined forces to decorate the sanctuary and help individuals in need during these difficult times.

If you wish to contribute to the memory or honor of a loved one, you may do so by completing the form below. **Please make checks payable to Westminster**

Presbyterian Church and indicate if you wish your donation to be for flowers or Deacon Fund. Distribution of the Deacon funds will be at the direction of Rev. Louise Rogers. Please note because of the Coronavirus the Deacons are unable to deliver flowers to shut-ins or nursing homes.

Your gift for either donation will be listed in the April *Spire*. Please return this form to Peg Kinsey in the church office **by Monday, March 22.**



EASTER GIVING ORDER FORM

In memory of In honor of

Name of memorial/honoree (PLEASE PRINT)

Easter flowers donation **OR** Deacon Fund donation

My name _____

Please return this form to Peg Kinsey in the church office by **Monday, March 22.**



**WESTMINSTER
PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH**

2040 Washington Road
Pittsburgh, PA 15241
www.westminster-church.org
A PC(USA) Congregation

ADDRESS SERVICE REQUESTED
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Thank you for helping to care for God's creation by recycling this *Spire*.



www.facebook.com/Westminster.Pittsburgh



www.youtube.com/user/WestminsterUSC

*“Show me your ways, Lord,
teach me your paths.
Guide me in your truth and teach me,
for you are God my Savior,
and my hope is in you all day long.
Remember, Lord, your great mercy and love,
for they are from of old.”*

- Psalm 25:4-6 (English Standard Version)

