



THE SPARE

WESTMINSTER PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH
Pittsburgh, PA

Years ago,

at REI Co-op, a store that sells anything from bicycles to hiking equipment to snowshoes, one of their salesclerks helped me buy socks. Seriously, how hard can it be to buy socks? But standing amidst row upon row of socks for all variety of outdoor and casual adventure, I felt lost. Socks can be expensive and selecting the wrong pair can literally derail your day. This salesclerk spoke humbly about her travails with socks and why we need to rely upon this very basic piece of clothing.

Her testimony convinced me to buy a pair of Darn Tough socks. Manufactured in Vermont, these socks fit, provide all-day comfort, and carry a lifetime warranty. Their tag line reads: "Socks. For life." The only circumstances not covered by their guarantee include if your dog eats them, fire destroys them, or one is lost in the laundry.

After years of wear, I can attest I also prefer them to any other socks and have not needed to test the lifetime warranty.

In the morning when I put them on, the words "darn tough," knit into the toes of the socks with large letters, catches my eye and reminds me of their promise.

Regardless of the pattern, color, gender, or purpose, all of the socks say "darn tough" across the toes. At a time of life, when so much threatens my routine and journey or reminds me of just how fragile I am, to start my day with the lifetime promise of something that is "darn tough" reminds me of what else I can trust. I smile, wondering if I too can be darn tough that day.

As I write this reflection in early December, with an office cluttered by moving boxes and a dumpster filled with discarded items, I am thinking about what endures and our journey ahead. The year 2020 humbled each of us in ways we'd never anticipated, and so I imagine we are all wondering what 2021 holds.

Our faith story surrounds us with people whose lives had been upended as they

were called to take risks. Isaiah spoke truth to power. Mary made haste to visit Elizabeth. Joseph ventured far with Mary. Shepherds snuck into the city at night. The Magi followed stars.

Each person accepted God's irresistible call to venture into the unknown and each relied upon a history of God honoring God's promises.

In their unique way they stepped with the confidence of being protected by God, regardless of what might happen, and became part of a new beginning.

My friends, at a time when we might not have a clear path forward, may we listen to our ancestors' testimonies of God being with them. They hand to us a story of God's lifetime guarantee, a span of time beyond any one of us. All we need is to do is start our day with the promise and learn to trust just how tough we can be.

Ready for our journey,
Jo Forrest

“*At a time when we might not have a clear path forward, may we listen to our ancestors' testimonies of God being with them.*”

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 REV. LOUISE ROGERS, *Associate Pastor for Congregational Care*

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 RICHARD MILLS, *Church Financial Manager*
 KIMBERLY DUNKOVICH, *Associate Accountant*

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 DEBB EGLI, *Assistant Director of Children's & Family Ministry*
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KATHY LONG, *Director*

NURSERY SCHOOL

412-835-2906

CHILD DEVELOPMENT CENTER

412-835-9450

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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.

Worship at Westminster

Westminster is currently offering both contemporary and traditional worship services online only. Visit our YouTube channel at www.youtube.com/user/WestminsterUSC or our website for links to the livestream services. The Bridge Contemporary Worship livestreams at 9:00 a.m. and Traditional Worship livestreams at 11:00 a.m. Sunday mornings. Or, you can watch the recording of either service anytime later on YouTube.

Bridge Contemporary Worship

 Sundays
 9:00 a.m.
 YouTube Livestream

Traditional Worship

 Sundays
 11:00 a.m.
 YouTube Livestream

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

Westminster Seminars Online

Live on Sundays 10:00 – 10:45 a.m.

Please join us for the live Zoom meeting or watch the video later on the Westminster website. The Zoom meeting will open at 9:40 for greetings and conversation. See page 7 for details about December's Advent series.

 Sundays
 10:00 a.m.
 Zoom <i>(links available on the church website and in the Friday email)</i>

Upcoming Events

03
JAN **Communion**
Rev. Dr. Dan Marry preaching

06
JAN **Epiphany of the Lord**

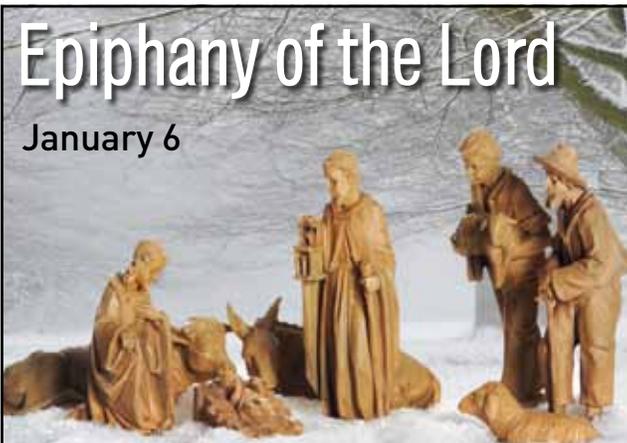
10
JAN **Baptism of the Lord**
Rev. Louise Rogers preaching

27
JAN **Westminster Book Group**

31
JAN **Congregational Meeting**

Epiphany of the Lord

January 6



Again Jesus spoke to them, saying, "I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will never walk in darkness but will have the light of life."

— John 8:12

Welcome to the new class of deacons

Deacons Dive into the New Year

At Westminster Church we are blessed with a remarkable group of men and women dedicated to serving the members and wider community – the Board of Deacons!

Following the tradition of the original deacons found in the New Testament, our deacons serve the congregation by caring for the hurting, friendless, grieving, and lonely. For the larger community, they have raised funds to support ministries dedicated to serving the needy. At the church, the Blood Drive, Extended Communion, Giving Gala, Treasures for Troops, and flower deliveries are just a few of the ways the deacons reach out to others. Given the restrictions on personal ministries last year, they had to get creative in reaching out. The deacons got busy making care calls, sending caring notes, and sharing care packages with others. They continue to discover new ways to share God's love with others.

Thank you, deacons, for your care!

Louise

Game Night with the Deacons

**Friday, January 8
7:00 p.m. on Zoom**

Hello all. Are you a Trivia Genius? A Fantastic Family Feuder? Or a Scattergories Superstar? Join the deacons for a fun evening of games over Zoom on Friday, January 8, at 7:00 p.m. Looking forward to seeing everyone for a fun evening of friendly competition and laughs. Watch the Friday email for Zoom details.

All the best,

Deacon Ian Thomas



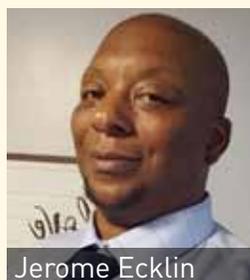
Stacy Chambers



Pat Cover



Sue Davis



Jerome Ecklin



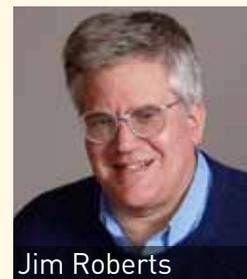
Melissa Galbraith



Jake Howard



Jane Lahniche



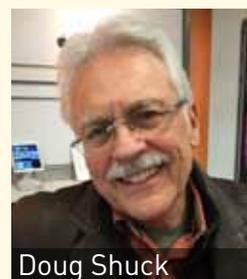
Jim Roberts



Lindsay Senge



Flo Van Cara Sheap



Doug Shuck



Susan Van Cleve



Matt Baculik, Moderator



Kevin Green,
Vice Moderator



Carol Couch, Secretary

January Series

Disparities, Justice, and Loving All Our Neighbors

The seminars begin the new year with a focus on how we can better understand the realities and challenges of working toward justice for all. What are the realities, especially in health? What is the history that created these realities? How can we as the church come to terms with loving all our neighbors? How can we meet the challenges and work harder to follow the model of Jesus?

Learning is the first step. We begin with what Presbyterians believe about justice. Elder Ralph Lowe from Pittsburgh Presbytery will explain how our denomination is addressing issues surrounding justice and anti-racism. Next we'll learn from Dr. Fatima Cody Stanford, who will describe the relationship of race, ethnicity, and health to the disparate effects of COVID-19 on people of color. She will relate this to our calling as Christians and explore ways that we might reduce the burden that these communities are bearing. Dr. Jamy Ard will lead the third session on why people of color are having a starkly different experience with COVID. The differences are predictable based on our history of inequities in healthcare from the earliest days of our country's existence. The series will close with noted columnist Tony Norman exploring ways we can reimagine America as a more perfect union. What does that look like in our divided country?

January 10 Why Justice Is Essential for a Beloved Community Ralph Lowe

Ralph Lowe Jr., Director of Justice Ministries at Pittsburgh Presbytery, is the proud husband of Kelli and father of four boys: Jonah, Joshua, Koen, and Korey. At the presbytery, he provides leadership to break down barriers that prevent truth, justice, and reconciliation. His vision is to create communities where people of all races come together in love and compassion despite differences. Through various justice ministries, Ralph seeks to shed light on injustice and inequality while offering hope for a better future.

January 17 The Color of COVID-19 Fatima Cody Stanford, MD

Dr. Stanford is an obesity medicine physician and scientist at Massachusetts General Hospital and Harvard Medical School. Among her many professional activities, she chairs the Minority Affairs Section Governing Council of the American Medical Association. She is a tireless advocate for her patients and social justice.

January 24 From Slavery to COVID-19: Understanding the Origins and Impact of Health Disparities Jamy Ard, MD

Dr. Ard is a professor of epidemiology and prevention at the Wake Forest School of Medicine. In his clinical role, he co-directs the Weight Management Center and provides medical treatment of obesity as part of a multi-disciplinary team.

January 31 Let's Try Systemic Justice (For Once) Tony Norman

A columnist and book review editor for the *Pittsburgh Post-Gazette*, Tony Norman has presented Westminster Seminars in past years on topics that reflect how his life as a Christian informs his work. He excels at addressing complex problems with a clear view of Christian ethics and justice as well as frank and engaging rhetoric.

Westminster Seminars Online

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!

“You do well when you really fulfill the royal law found in scripture, Love your neighbor as yourself. But when you show favoritism, you are committing a sin, and by that same law you are exposed as a lawbreaker.”

– James 2:8-9
Common English Bible

BETWEEN HERE AND THERE

If you've read my articles over the past several months, then you'll be aware that I often like to look at two sides of a coin, and that is, once again, where I find myself. Are things about to change or will they carry on as they ever have? I'm not talking about vaccines, presidents, or even pastors – I'm talking about faith, ministry, and the ways that we, as a community, seek out the care of one another and the connection that we have with Jesus Christ.

We've said it more than a few times around here over the past several years: "We're in a season of transition," and guess what? We still are! So, through one lens, things are going to continue to change, and that change will bring a few hiccups, some growing pains, and a whole lot of "getting to know each other." Through another lens, however, Westminster will keep on being the Westminster that we've always been. We will continue to be a caring community of faith that works for the love of our families, our neighbors, and the least of our brothers and sisters.

We will continue to be a church that welcomes hard questions, embraces dialogue, and understands that a body is made up of many important parts – as different as they all may be. And, most important, we will continue to be a people of faith who walk boldly toward Jesus, seeking him as both Lord and Savior – following, learning, and growing because of our communal walk of faith. No amount of transition could change any of that.

So, we have an adventure in front of us, that's for certain. Our church, our country, and our world are all on the edge of a new

season, and you can't have an adventure without a dose of uncertainty. But maybe we know more than we think we do. I wonder what would change if we worked together to embrace the things that have always been true about us. What would it be like if we changed our "What if..." into "How can we..."? No longer, "What if we have to continue with livestream worship?" Instead we'd ask, "How can we reach our community in new ways?" We wouldn't say, "What if it takes a while for everyone to settle into a new pattern?" We'd say, "How can we make this transition meaningful for everyone involved?" How can we act as the body of Christ in a world that could use a serious dose of redemption and resurrection? It's the question that was asked in a cornfield all those years ago, and it's the same question that we need to keep asking today.

Yes, I suppose that lots has changed in the past few years, and I get the impression that there's a bit more to come. I believe that Westminster is on the verge of something good. Something very good. Ultimately, that has very little to do with who we are; it has everything to do with who God is. That's the beautiful thing about the church; it's always been a way for God to work through creation to bring his Kingdom on Earth. That's never changed.

What changes do you see in this season – or what do you feel must remain? How would you fill in the blank, "How can we....?" I'd love to hear your answers.

Be well, friends.

– Ed Sutter

“So, we have an adventure
in front of us, that's for certain.”



Book Review

His Truth Is Marching On: John Lewis and the Power of Hope

by Jon Meacham

Booksellers categorize Meacham's latest work as both history and politics, but it is also about faith, that of both Lewis and Meacham. There is resonance throughout, a recognition of the faith foundation of Lewis's life and work, a connection to Meacham's own religious core. What makes this account so rich is that Meacham himself, having been steeped in the gospel, recognizes the same in Lewis. Meacham presents this story as Lewis's longing for the Beloved Community, "nothing less than the Kingdom of God on earth."

Lewis grew up with the Scriptures, imagining himself as a preacher who, for lack of a congregation, preached to his family's chickens. He was "the serious young farm boy presiding over an unruly flock...insistently offering the gospel to an audience disinclined to heed it." Lewis's view of the gospel, though, was broader than most. He saw the churches of his youth as focused "mostly on the hereafter and not so much on the here." Lewis saw the gospel differently, believing that "the Lord had to be concerned with the way we lived our lives right here." Meacham notes that at the center of Lewis's life was "the willingness to suffer and die for others – again and again."

Martin Luther King Jr. introduced him to nonviolent religiously inspired protest but warned him of likely consequences. "Don't despair if you are condemned...for righteousness sake. Whenever you take a stand for truth and justice you are liable to scorn...to be called a dangerous radical...it might mean going to jail." King's words resonated for Lewis, "as though a light turned on in my heart."

Lewis did go to jail many times and suffered beatings at the hands of both troopers and ordinary citizens who could not abide black people enjoying the same privileges as they. Meacham recounts stories where Lewis puts his life at risk. Integrating a Nashville restaurant, Lewis and another student bought lunch and sat down to eat. At only 2:30 in the afternoon, they were told to leave, that the place was closed. The staff began pouring water on them and turned up the air conditioning, trying to freeze them out. Then the manager told them to leave; he had decided to fumigate the place. He locked the doors and turned on the insecticide. With no escape. Lewis and his friend began sharing Daniel's story of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego in the fiery furnace. They, too, thought they would die, poisoned by the insecticide. And they might have, had it not been for an angel in the form of the city fire department. Passersby had seen the cloud of billowing insecticide and mistaken it for smoke. Upon release, Lewis said, "We could have died...I was not eager to die but I was at peace with the prospect of death." He was 21 years old.

Meacham tells one story of the origin of the Selma marches. Jimmie Lee Jackson, veteran and deacon in the Baptist church,

was shot during a protest. During the funeral procession someone proposed carrying young Jimmie back to Montgomery and symbolically laying his casket on the capitol steps. They did not carry the casket to Montgomery, but they did plan a march. On Sunday, March 7, 1965, marchers gathered at the Brown Chapel AME Church. They marched to the Pettus Bridge. When they crested the bridge, they saw a sea of uniforms. They could not go forward and would not turn around. They decided to kneel and pray, but before they got to their knees the officer gave the command "Troopers, advance."

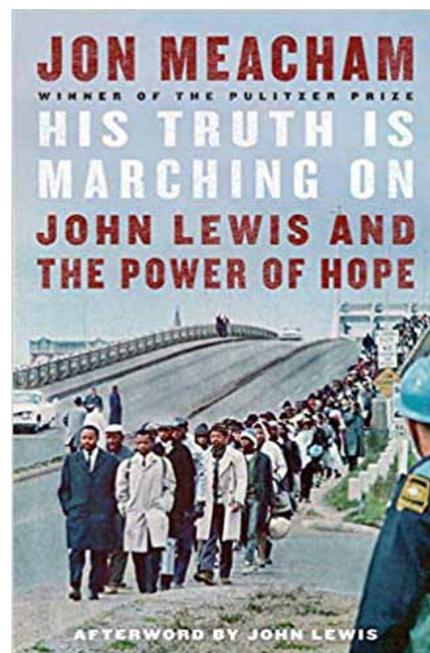
There were clubs and bullwhips and horses trampling marchers. Lewis was the first to be hit, his skull fractured. "At that moment, I saw death and thought 'It's alright – I am doing what I am supposed to do.'" Lewis regained consciousness and was taken to the aptly named Good Samaritan Hospital.

The marchers were not giving up. A call was sent out for clergy of all faiths to come for Sunday, March 21, 1965. It was to this call that our own John Galbreath responded.

Meacham says, "It is difficult to overstate Selma's significance... not because of a conventional clash of forces but because the conventions of history were turned upside down. Selma changed hearts and minds when Americans watched the brutal forces of the visible world meet the forces of an invisible one, and the clubs and horses and tear gas were, in the end, no match for love and grace and nonviolence. Meacham observes that to Lewis, history "will end not in despair and dust but in hope and harmony with the coming of the Beloved Community. To him, then, politics was not an end but a means to bring about a world in which, in the words of the prophet Micah, every man shall dwell under his own vine and fig tree, and no one shall make him afraid." Lewis was working for the here and now to be transformed by the infusion of the spirit of Jesus.

NOTE: This summer we saw people throughout the country again standing against racism – people of all colors and ethnicities and gender identities, all ages and religious traditions, a broader coalition than in the 1960s. Overall, there may have been more fist-waving and less knee-bending, but still there were many pockets where the church was prayerfully calling for an end to racism.

– Bobbie Hartman



Twenty-Four Hour Prayer Vigil for Annual Week of Prayer for Christian Unity

**Thursday, January 21, 7:00 p.m.
through Friday, January 22, 7:00 p.m.**

During the week of January 18-25, 2021, congregations from all Christian denominations will come together in observance of the annual Week of Prayer for Christian Unity.

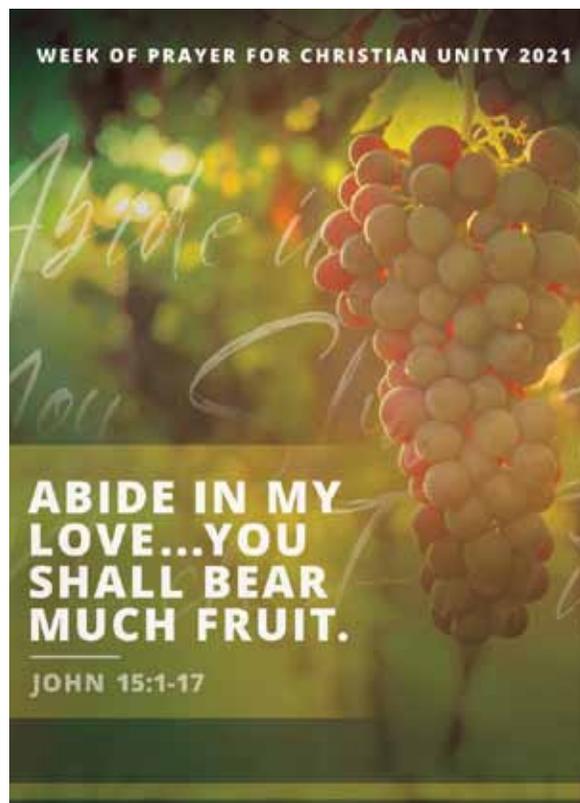
As part of this observance, we will offer a Twenty-Four Hour Prayer Vigil on Thursday, January 21. We invite you to pray during a 30-minute time period. You simply sign up for a half hour time to pray and pray at home, or you can pray in Galbreath Chapel during church business hours. To sign up, either go to the church website and click on "Prayer Vigil" or find the link in the Friday WPC news email. Prayer suggestions will be provided to help guide our efforts.

Begun in 1908, the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity is celebrated each year in cities and towns across the country and around the world.

The theme for the 2021 observance is "Abide in my love...you shall bear much fruit" (John 15:1-17). The theme and text for each year's observance of the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity are chosen and prepared by representatives of the Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity and representatives of the World Council of Churches. The international texts are developed, adapted, and published for use in the USA by Graymoor Ecumenical & Interreligious Institute.

We hope you will find this to be an opportunity to pray with ours and the worldwide Christian community for reconciliation and unity. Please join this prayer undertaking.

– Barb Myers, Adult Spiritual Development Commission



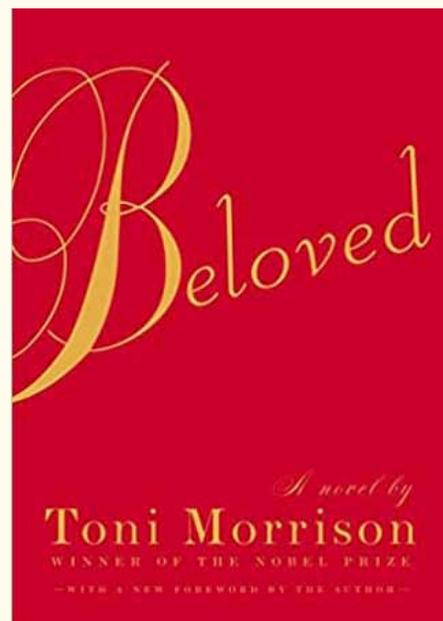
Westminster Book Group

**Wednesday, January 27
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 *Beloved* by Toni Morrison. We invite you to join us either by Zoom or in person in Room 238.

Toni Morrison's magnificent Pulitzer Prize-winning novel – first published in 1987 – brought the unimaginable experience of slavery into the literature of our time and into our comprehension. Set in post-Civil War Ohio, it is the story of Sethe, an escaped slave who has risked her life in order to wrench herself from a living death; who has lost a husband and buried a child; who has borne the unthinkable and not gone mad. Sethe now lives in a small house on the edge of town with her daughter, Denver, her mother-in-law, Baby Suggs, and a disturbing, mesmerizing apparition who calls herself Beloved.

– from the book cover



A Longstanding Pandemic Hides in Plain Sight

Watching the pandemic of COVID-19 play out has given us an education in so many things. Will it prompt us to wrap our heads around a pandemic of racism? Or shall we debate the semantics of this widespread plague? Racism has profound effects on health and lifespan for people of color. The facts are plain. Racial discrimination explains much about the diseases like diabetes that racial and ethnic minorities endure more often and more severely than the rest of us.

These diseases are more likely to go untreated or poorly treated in Black, Hispanic, and Native American populations. Thus, with poor health as a baseline, COVID-19 has come with devastating effects. Native American, Hispanic, and Black persons are almost three times more likely to die from COVID.

A new CDC analysis explains that racism is a key driver:

Unfortunately, discrimination, which includes racism, exists in systems meant to protect well-being or health. Discrimination can lead to chronic and toxic stress and shapes social and economic factors that put some people from racial and ethnic minority groups at increased risk of COVID-19. There is increasing recognition that addressing the underlying inequities in social determinants of health is key to improving health and reducing health disparities.

Indeed, this is why the American Medical Association has declared that racism is a threat to public health.

Rationalizations

These facts describe an unpleasant reality. So we look for reasons to explain the disparities. For example, much is written about the “mistrust” that minority communities feel toward health systems. It is more comfortable to talk about how *those people* don’t trust healthcare providers. If the problem is mistrust, then the solution is to fix the way Black and Brown people feel about the system.

But in fact, mistrust is not the real problem. The real problem is a lifetime of experiencing racism in healthcare, in employment, and in daily interactions. Mistrust is a direct result. Disparities in health are not due to the behaviors and beliefs of racial and ethnic minorities. They are the result of health systems that have evolved for the entire history of our country to deliver first-class healthcare to White and privileged people, while offering inferior care to people of color.

So mistrust is a sensible response to experiences with racist systems for delivering healthcare.



Sunday Morning, June 14, 2020
Washington, DC

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Turning Away

When we find other reasons for the unpleasant truth of racism, we are turning away from our brothers and sisters – our neighbors. Jesus tells us in Matthew 25, verse 45 (*The Message*):

“I’m telling the solemn truth: Whenever you failed to do one of these things to someone who was being overlooked or ignored, that was me – you failed to do it to me.”

In this way, COVID-19 presents us with a difficult challenge. For many of us it is an abstract threat. If we are working from home, secure in our jobs, our wealth, and our health, then we can say, “I feel blessed. Really, I have not felt much impact.” But what about our neighbors who cannot work from home and feel the risk of COVID exposure every day? While the economy has recovered for White and wealthy Americans, for Black Americans it is still in a deep recession. Can we turn away from this reality and call ourselves followers of Christ?

The truth is that perhaps as much as COVID, racism plagues our nation. Can we address it head on, without worrying that it makes people uncomfortable?

– Ted Kyle

Ted is a Westminster member, elder, pharmacist, and advocate for sound health policy.

THANK YOU

*My Friends,
As I end my journey with you, I am grateful for your kind words received through phone calls, emails, and notes.
Cathi and I will treasure the beautiful Van Gogh "Sunflower" print I received on my last Sunday.
But more than anything, for nearly 20 months I would offer a benediction at the end of the worship service. The truth is that I am the one who week after week was on the receiving end of the blessing, serving with a wonderful staff and people like you who make Westminster Presbyterian Church a truly great church!
Peace and grace,
Bruce*

Church Closing Policy

In the event of severe weather, Westminster Presbyterian Church, Westminster Nursery School and Kindergarten (WNSK), and Westminster Recreation & Outreach Center (WROC) will follow the schedule of the Upper St. Clair School District.

- When the school district is closed, all activities, classes, and meetings scheduled for that day are canceled.
- In cases of delays, all meetings, activities, and classes will take place at their scheduled time, unless otherwise determined by the facilitator or instructor. Westminster Nursery School will operate on its modified schedule.

Westminster Child Development Center will make its own determination on closings, cancellations, and delays.

Closing information is broadcast on television (KDKA, WTAE, and WPXI), radio (KDKA-AM 1020), and the internet (www.westminster-church.org, wroc.westminster-church.org, pittsburgh.cbslocal.com, www.wtae.com, and www.wpxi.com.)



Financial Report

As of November 30, 2020

Income	
November Income	\$141,867.00
November Budget Income	\$166,070.00
YTD 2020 Income	\$2,042,709.00*

* includes \$274,000 of unbudgeted bequests

Expenses	
November Expenses	\$174,658.00
November Budget Expenses	\$186,492.00
YTD 2020 Expenses	\$1,820,124.00

Approved Outreach Expenditures

November 2020

Pittsburgh Presbytery	\$3,200
City Mission	\$4,000
End Hunger Advocacy	\$1,500
Medical Benevolence Mission	\$3,000
India Mission	\$10,500

Stay Connected

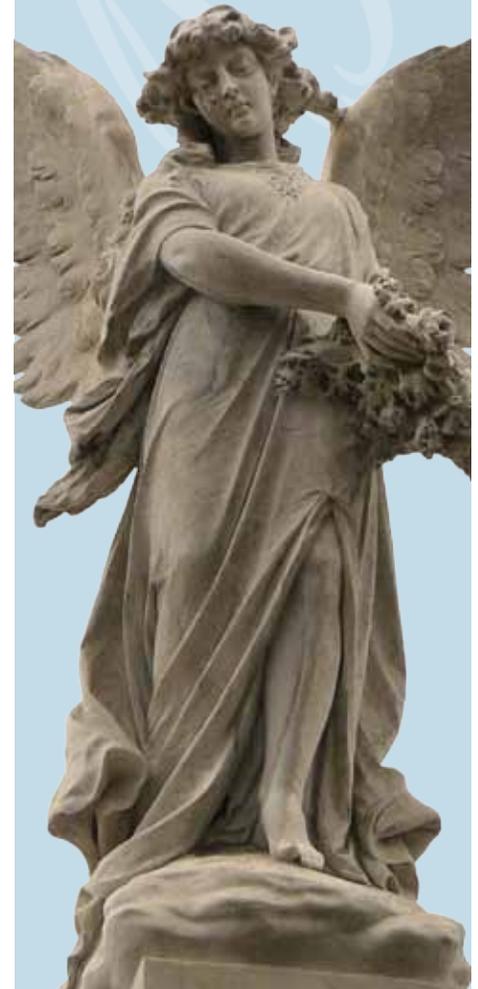
Don't miss any news from Westminster!

Update your contact information by visiting www.westminster-church.org/my_WPC or contacting Anna Hiner at hiner@westminster-church.org or 412-835-6630x207.



Deaths

Joan Jessen
December 21





**WESTMINSTER
PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH**

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

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www.youtube.com/user/WestminsterUSC



*Darkness cannot drive out darkness;
only light can do that.
Hate cannot drive out hate;
only love can do that.*

Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.

