



THE SPIRE

WESTMINSTER PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH
Pittsburgh, PA

My Friends,

April 1 was more than an April Fool's Day – April was a whole month of them!

And so here we are at May 1 – May Day, May Day!

That's the cry of the psalmist in Psalm 121, "I look to the hills, where does my help come from?"

This is a pilgrimage psalm for the journey to Jerusalem. Along the way, bandits and robbers would descend on the travelers. Even more, it's a pilgrimage song for us as we have journeyed through these challenging, difficult, and often cruel days as COVID-19 descended on our world.

The psalmist answers his own question, "My help comes from God, who made heaven and earth."

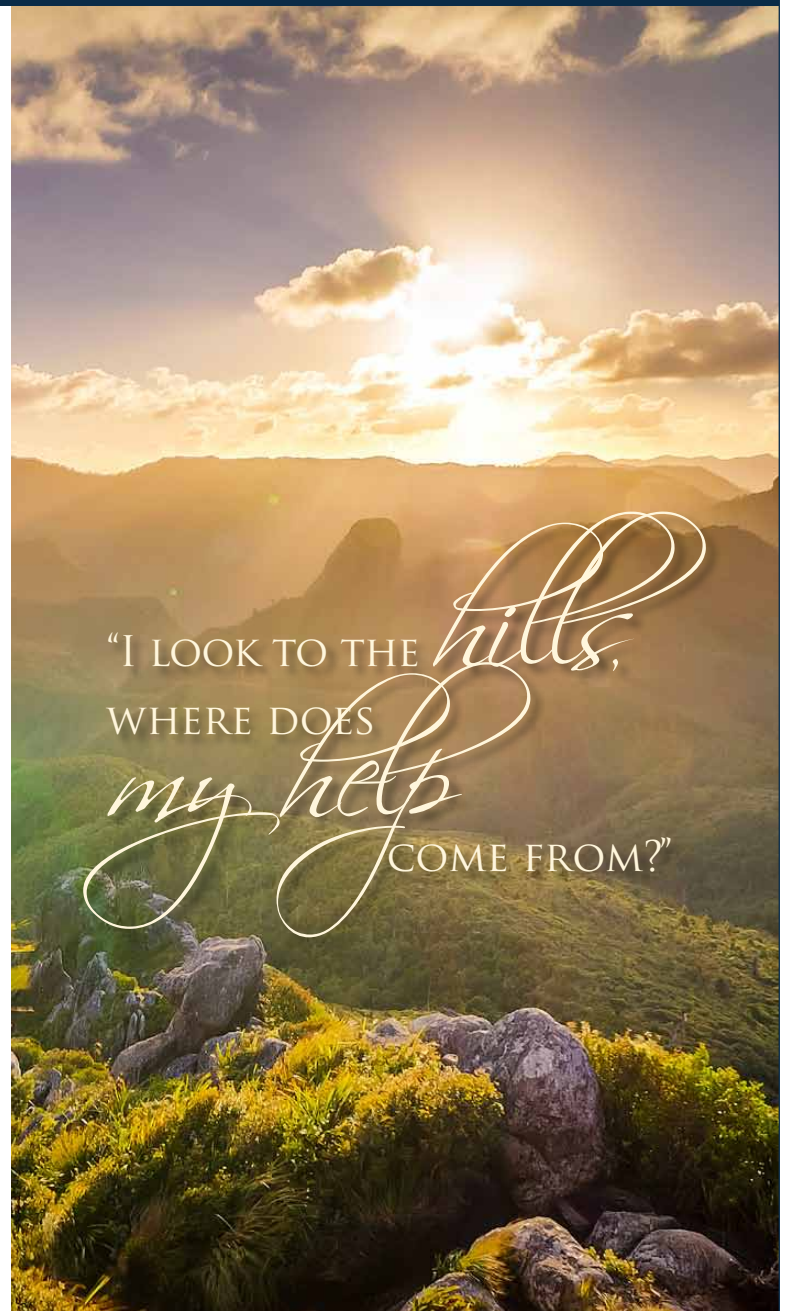
A little girl was having a nightmare. When her mother went in to comfort her, she told the little girl, "God will take care of you." To which the little girl replied, "But I want God with skin on!"

So it is that God takes care of us through those called and gifted to be Scientists and Doctors, Nurses and First Responders, Truck Drivers and Grocery Clerks and Food Delivery Drivers, online Teachers and Moms and Dads, Brothers and Sisters, Grandparents and Friends... everyone who in one way or another has helped make heaven on earth in the midst of our hell.

I've said it before, and I'm saying it again: *Let us remember that the steadfast love of God is the foundation of our faith, our hope, and our love for one another. I am firmly convinced that with that foundation, your commitment, support, and prayers will see us through these days as we journey together, a community of faith.*

Grace and peace,

Bruce Lancaster



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

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Table of Contents

3 Spiritual Growth
 On the Journey to New Life, New Challenges, New Community
 Westminster Members See Many Small Blessings
 Adult Spiritual Development
 Diary of a Lunatic: Tomorrow
 The Christian Story in May 2020
 Ascension of the Lord, Day of Pentecost
 Between Here and There
 Stay at Home, Play at Home

9 Outreach
 Giving Thanks and Giving Help in a Time of Need
 WROC: Fearfully and Wonderfully Made
 What the Deacons Do: A Special Message from the Deacons

12 Caring Community
 An Invitation
 A Place Somewhere
 Blood Drive
 Forward in Faith Quarterly Property Update

15 Other
 Financial Update
 Session Highlights
 Deaths




WORSHIP

In light of the recent Coronavirus developments and advice of public health officials, the church campus is currently closed and all activities are canceled. See below for virtual worship opportunities – socially distant but spiritually connected.

Video Worship

	Sundays
	11:00 a.m.
	YouTube*

Bridge Worship Live Stream

	Fridays
	6:00 p.m.
	YouTube*

* Visit the church's YouTube channel at www.youtube.com/user/WestminsterUSC or the church website at www.westminster-church.org to access these virtual worship opportunities.

On the Journey to New Life, New Challenges, New Community



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Our faith is set on the One who stretched out his hand and “even the winds and the waves obeyed him.”

— Luke 8:25

Can you guess what happened here?

This tiny church marks the place – tradition holds – where Jesus ascended into heaven. Now you know why it is called the Church of the Ascension. Such a small structure in Jerusalem, hardly worthy of the title “church.” But, inside the gray slab of concrete holds an indentation that practically fills the interior space, and presumably shows the footprint of Jesus. How I would have loved to see the expressions on the disciples’ faces when Jesus floated up into the clouds before their eyes.

What did they say? What was their mood? Were they scared or were they more like, “We’ve got this”? The Scriptures leave this to our imagination.

What the disciples did do was get moving. First thing, they started praying. Peter, James, and John practiced what they knew, only to discover nothing was really the same at all. They had seen Jesus raised from the dead, victorious over death and now ascending to sit at the right hand of God the Father. They had borne witness to the Son walking with them. They now spread resurrection joy and preached that Jesus was indeed the Messiah. Kingdom faith overcame their fear. New life, new challenges, new community!

I tell this story because we are moving into a time of rebirth ourselves. The coronavirus will eventually wane. Soon the stay-at-home order will be lifted and social distancing guidelines will permit us to assemble as God’s people. What will we carry with us from this terrific storm we are facing? The full scope is still unfolding, but Jesus’ bold disciples show us how to venture out into our new reality.

Trust that God always remains with us. Although Jesus headed up into heaven, God’s steadfast love endures forever. The one who created the seas and the rainbow, the ant and the eagle is still present with us. Our future is full of tough questions, yet God will be present with us every moment as we venture forward.

The disciples stayed together in Jerusalem where the teachings of Jesus came alive for them in profound ways. Having passed through their own darkness into the light of the resurrection – all things became new. Once we get out of the house, we will begin to see, and appreciate even more, the gifts God has given. We need each other! No one is called to go on alone. Being a part of the church is one of God’s greatest blessings for each one of us.

New opportunities for growth and compassionate care occur in unexpected places. It’s amazing how many people can now Zoom or watch worship services on the computer. Neighbors have reached out to help each other. Cards, calls, and virtual contacts are flowing in creative ways from our church. “Once this epidemic is conquered here and elsewhere, we cannot be content to go back to what was before as if all was normal. There needs to be a resurrection of our common life, a new normal, something that links to the old but is different and more beautiful,” says Justin Welby, Archbishop of Canterbury. Challenges are before us to ignite the economy and reestablish so much of what has been lost. We grieve with those who have lost loved ones and support each other as we face the hard days. As we do, our hope is set on the One who can turn “mourning into dancing” (Psalm 30:11). Our faith is set on the One who stretched out his hand and “even the winds and the waves obeyed him” (Luke 8:25).

The disciples could never have imagined the adventure where Jesus would be leading them. Now it’s our turn!

Together for the journey,

Louise

Westminster Members See Many Small Blessings

What is something good you have learned in self isolation?



Happiness is sitting down for a home-cooked meal!

To depend on God first and foremost.

Family time to play a board game or finish a chapter book.



How to sew a mask!



I'm loads better at staying home than I ever imagined I could be.

Just talking to another person in person.



Thankful to go out in my garden and weed, and love the flowers.

Patience, peace, and faith.

Growing a beard.



I love my church and the choirs! Missing them has been tough!

I am happy and blessed.

To care for others.

Learning to Zoom.

I miss friends and interacting with them...

Spending lots of time with the family to discover we still like each other!



Reading is still fun.

Focus of Easter on the Resurrection. This year I could focus on the real meaning.



Seeing God's blessings in each new day.

Apparently, I'm gray.



It's not a lack of time that keeps me from housework.

Gotta keep movin'. It is easy to get stiff!

Sharing communion with tortillas and orange drink.

Holy Humor.

ADULT SPIRITUAL DEVELOPMENT

Silence for our lives

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In the silence rests my freedom and my guidance;
you are the heart of my heart,
my refuge is in the silence.
Trust in love at all times, O people;
pour out heart to the Beloved;
Let silence be a refuge for you.



— Psalm 62

Tomorrow

Greetings, friends!

I have often given away the secret that we write these *Spire* articles about a month or so before you read them, usually in seasons where knowing that I write from the past might help us shed light on the future, or my ignorance of it.

Today is one of those days. It's April 10 today, Good Friday. And the reason I feel it's important you know that is I have no earthly idea what the world will look like by the time you're reading this. The coronavirus pandemic has radically shifted life in ways big and small, and it surely feels like we stand on the precipice of a radical change in our way of life. And if there's any word that Presbyterians shy away from, it's *change*.

Some of the changes that we have already experienced are good and lasting ones. We have had to come together as a church and try to find ways to sustain a community that can no longer meet together. The incredible creativity and ingenuity of the staff, the session, and the members of this church is overwhelming! These are the times that bring us to new insights and new revelations. All along this unique season of ministry, my question has been, "What are we going to carry with us into whatever normal follows the season of weird?" Some of this stuff is really good!

And yet, some of it is really not so good. Just a moment ago I walked through the sanctuary alone and realized that it will look exactly like that on Easter Sunday. Empty as a tomb. I was extremely grateful yesterday for the NHL Network, which replayed the 2009 Stanley Cup Final Game 7, where our beloved Penguins beat the Red Wings to raise Lord Stanley's cup for the first time in the Crosby era. And yet, I was a bit sad when I heard the cheer of a crowd. When will be the next time that we feel comfortable getting together with 18,000 of our closest friends to cheer for the team we love? I just don't know. Things are odd, and even that brings me to a place of grief. I am privileged to only be inconvenienced in this harsh season. There are others who are struggling to survive. What are we as a church called to do about them?

What are we as a church called to do with a tomorrow that we know nothing about?

Lucky for us, Jesus had a teaching for exactly such a moment:

INSTEAD, DESIRE FIRST AND FOREMOST GOD'S KINGDOM AND GOD'S RIGHTEOUSNESS, AND ALL THESE THINGS WILL BE GIVEN TO YOU AS WELL. THEREFORE, STOP WORRYING ABOUT TOMORROW, BECAUSE TOMORROW WILL WORRY ABOUT ITSELF. EACH DAY HAS ENOUGH TROUBLE OF ITS OWN.

– Matthew 6:33-34

You and I have been given today, and today alone. And may we absolutely never forget that no matter how weird, dire, despairing, and difficult today may be, it is a gift from God above. We don't



know how this epidemic will affect tomorrow, and the truth is we don't need to. Jesus told us that the Kingdom is enough for us.

So wherever you are reading this, I offer a few questions to reflect on. Where do you see Jesus at work in this season of isolation? Is he with the lonely? The left out? The forgotten? How can we leverage the incredible technology at our fingertips to reach out to those whom Jesus holds dear? How can we put our focus and our energy on Jesus Christ, the lover of our souls, the one who reminds us not to worry? What do our prayer practices look like in this season, and what can we do to increase our consideration of the Kingdom of God? What is it about today, this day, and not tomorrow, that requires our attention? Perhaps most important, how have we thanked Jesus for this marvelous gift of today?

One day, this thing will pass. No one knows when yet, and that's probably for the best. Tomorrow will worry about itself. Today, my hope and prayer is that you remain safe, that you are surrounded by the love of your family near and far, and that you are engulfed in the grace of Jesus Christ.

He is risen, friends. May we never forget!

– Jason Freyer

The Christian Story in May 2020

In the midst of these uncertain times, as our lives are upended and filled with anxiety, we can find hope in the Christian story that guides our Sundays through the year. We celebrated the resurrection of Christ on Easter Sunday, April 12. Easter is a glorious celebration that reminds us that Christ risen from the dead is central to our faith. And the season of Easter, continuing well into May, gives us ample time to remember Christ after his resurrection. Beyond the season, we find strength by remembering that we worship the risen Christ on every Lord's Day through the whole year. That focus on our redemption through Christ's overcoming death is our hope that doesn't end.

The unfolding of the church year follows the story of the incarnate Jesus and the beginning of his church. We prepare for the Messiah in Advent, celebrate Christ's birth at Christmas, and then move on to Christ's baptism and ministry on earth. The story turns dark during Lent as Christ looks toward his death on the cross. The climax of the story comes at Easter, when Christ rises from the grave. But it doesn't end there. The risen Christ remains on earth until his ascension into heaven to sit at the right hand of God, 40 days after Easter, May 21. The Ascension of the Lord completes the story of Christ in human form.

Ten days after Ascension, we celebrate God's summation of the Christian story, the coming of the Holy Spirit to be with us in the world forever. The Day of Pentecost, May 31, is often called the birthday of the church. It is the beginning of the Christian faith, when followers of Christ proclaimed and spread the good news of our Lord and savior. Pentecost also completes what became known as the triune God – one God in three persons: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. Trinity Sunday, the Sunday after Pentecost, stresses the importance of God in three persons. With this strong foundation, the Christian story has continued and expanded for over two thousand years. And it will continue to sustain us as we put our trust in our faithful and merciful God.

The 24 Sundays after Pentecost focus on the riches of scripture and topics beyond the major events in Christ's life. Often called Ordinary Time, these Sundays are far from ordinary. They afford us a time of spiritual growth and renewal.

Year after year, the rhythm of the church year gives meaning to the Christian life. While the pattern remains unchanged, endless variety in worship and reflection keep the story of Christ and his church new and ever compelling to Christians all over the world.

In this month, the most challenging May that many of us have experienced, we may miss worshipping together in the sanctuary, praying as a congregation and singing hymns together to the glorious sounds of the pipe organ. But we need not miss the spiritual rewards of reflecting on Christ's resurrection and ascension, and the coming of the Holy Spirit.

To help our reflection, two familiar hymns in our hymnal can bring the special days of Ascension and Pentecost into our minds and hearts. On the following page you'll find the text of the hymns along with brief commentary adapted from the hymnal itself and from the hymnal companion, *Glory to God: A Companion*, written by Carl P. Daw Jr., published by Westminster John Knox Press, 2016. May the peace of Christ be with you and may the message of these hymns stay with you during the coming days.



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– Sara Kyle

Ascension of the Lord

*Crown him with many crowns, the Lamb upon his throne;
hark, how the heavenly anthem drowns all music but its own!
Awake, my soul, and sing of him who died for thee,
and hail him as thy matchless King through all eternity.*

*Crown him the Lord of love; behold his hands and side,
Rich wounds, yet visible above, in beauty glorified;
No angel in the sky can fully bear that sight,
But downward bends his burning eye at mysteries so bright.*

*Crown him the Lord of peace, whose power a scepter sways
From pole to pole, that ward may cease, absorbed in prayer
and praise.*

*His reign shall know no end; and round his pierced feet
Fair flowers of paradise extend their fragrance every sweet.*

*Crown him the Lord of years, the potentate of time;
Creator of the rolling spheres, ineffably sublime.
All hail, Redeemer, hail! For thou hast died for me;
Thy praise shall never, never fail throughout eternity.*

– Matthew Bridges, 1851

This text is so familiar that it is easy to miss all its paradox, mystery, suffering, and beauty; it rewards careful reading and meditation outside corporate worship.

Biblical allusions

Verse 1: Revelation 7:9-12

Verse 2: John 20:27; Revelation 5:12-13

Verse 3: Isaiah 2:2-4; Revelation 11:15

Verse 4: Revelation 15:3; 1 Timothy 6:15-16 (KJV)

The multiple crowns describe the multiple identities of Christ (Lord of love, Lord of peace, Lord of years). The text also invokes multiple senses. Verse 1 is primarily concerned with sound, especially music (both making it and hearing it). Verse 2 deals primarily with vision (“behold,” “visible,” “sight,” “eye”). Verse 3 makes a valiant effort to include smell (“fragrance every sweet”), the most difficult and least used sense in hymnody.



Day of Pentecost

*Come, Holy Spirit, Heavenly Dove, with all thy quickening power;
kindle a flame of sacred love in these cold hearts of ours.*

*In vain we tune our formal songs; in vain we strive to rise;
Hosannas languish on our tongues, and our devotion dies.*

*Dear Lord, and shall we ever live at this poor dying rate?
Our love so faint, so cold to thee, and thine to us so great!*

*Come, Holy Spirit, heavenly Dove, with all thy quickening powers;
Come, shed abroad a Savior's love, and that shall kindle ours.*

– Isaac Watts, 1707

In contrast with many hymns to the Holy Spirit, this one is notable for being in the plural, a valuable reminder that the Holy Spirit has been bestowed on the whole Church, not just on a few individuals.

In Isaac Watts' 1707 collection, *Hymns and Spiritual Songs*, this hymn is headed “Breathing after the Holy Spirit; or, Fervency of Devotion desir'd.” Watts' concept of the hymn thus includes three familiar images we associate with Pentecost: the breath of the Holy Spirit and, in the text, the Holy Spirit as a dove (referring back to the Baptism of Jesus) and the flames of Pentecost from Acts 2:3 (“kindle a flame”). The intensity of the text is heightened by the words “quickenings powers” (perhaps a reference to Genesis 1:2, the beginning of creation). These words signal that the text looks forward rather than backward, just as the message of Pentecost looks forward to the future of Christianity.

BETWEEN HERE AND THERE

I have a very soft spot in my heart for anything that gets groups of people into the outdoors together. Through the years I've slept on snowy mountains, built fires in the rain, waded across flooded streams, and run races through rainy nights. These experiences are memorable for lots of reasons, but primary among them is the company along the way. The outdoors, especially when it comes to the elements, have a way of leveling the playing field in any group. If it's cold, we're all cold. If it's wet, we're all wet. When the sun shines on you, it shines on me. There's not a lot of special permission afforded to anyone once you walk out of the parking area or cross the starting line. The permission that is afforded tends to be shared: community forms in beautiful ways when everyone is in the same boat.

There's a lot of that same feeling in our world today. You've probably seen the signs and the commercials: "We're all in this together," "Pittsburgh will Prevail," "Still here for you." Community is forming in some new and amazing ways, and in lots of ways we really are in the same boat, but I think that we'd do well to check ourselves on how far we take that analogy. Take, for instance, the frustrations that so many of us are facing: I'll throw myself right under the bus...

I've felt a bit edgy these past few days. As so many of us now know, it's not easy to manage family life, work life, school life, and personal life from the same few rooms each and every day. It's worn on all of us. It's worn on me. Which is exactly why I think I need to be held accountable. Maybe you do, too.

I woke up today in a warm and dry house. My refrigerator and cupboards are stocked. I have access to my work and schooling. My family is healthy. My family is here with me. I live in a neighborhood that allows me easy access to natural spaces and time outside. I'm guessing that you've heard, not everyone is so lucky these days.

It's not exactly the same boat for everyone, is it? Sure, we're all out on the same water, but it's not fair to say that we're all in the same boat. If we look at the situation more closely, we see lots of different boats out there with lots of different settings and circumstances.

The big question left is, "So what?" I suppose that I can't offer a definitive answer for each and every one of us, but my hope is simply that we'd remember the other boats out there. What you do after that is up to you. In lots of ways we truly are in this together, and I believe that signs of hope and community are popping up everywhere. Maybe that's the takeaway – to remember that we are called to be agents of hope through the differing gifts of grace that each of us have been given (Romans 12). Blessings come in many shapes, sizes, and packages, and your blessings are no less valuable than another's, so share them willingly.

What has this experience been like for you? I'd love to hear some of your story. I usually say something like, "Give me a call," but under these circumstances maybe it's more appropriate to say, "Let's set up a Zoom."

Be well!

– Ed Sutter



Stay at Home, Play at Home

The majority of the ministry I am a part of relies on in-person meetings, so figuring out how to connect with students while social distancing was an interesting challenge at first. We set up Zoom calls, sent home lesson plans, posted on social media, and did anything we could think of to make Westminster's kids feel connected to the church while we were physically apart.

Every week we have been doing a Veritas Zoom call to connect with kids and check in on each other. Right before Easter, we talked about emptiness and read John 20:1-18 together. Emptiness usually has a negative connotation (empty pizza boxes, empty bank accounts, empty plates of waffles, and empty hearts are not good). We discussed how right now – while we are missing our usual schedules, activities, and friends – can feel empty. In this scripture where Mary finds the tomb empty, emptiness is not just a good thing, it's a miracle. Proof of God's power and love. His love can fill any emptiness we are feeling. His love is strong enough to help us through.

The weekly Veritas Zoom calls have become the highlight of my week – a touch of normalcy and familiar faces. Even through a computer screen, the laughter is still overwhelming. The students check in on each other and with us, share the ways God is still showing up in their lives, and let us know what they're doing to keep themselves busy. Sometimes they're struggling. They want to go back to school and see their friends, they want to come to church and play dodgeball, but overall, they're leaning into it.

(I've received pictures of home baked birthday cakes and funny videos.) They're creating art and spending time outside. They are grateful for extra time with their families to play games and learn things about their parents they never knew before. All these things, they realize, they are usually too busy to do or enjoy.

It's said that kids are resilient and can adapt to new situations easily. Sometimes that's true, but I think in this moment we can all learn something from kids' appreciation for the needed adaptations.

It's said that kids are resilient and can adapt to new situations easily. Sometimes that's true, but I think in this moment we can all learn something from kids' appreciation for the needed adaptations. Sure, they want things to go back to normal, yet they are so grateful for these new experiences and challenges. People sometimes say it's wonderful that we run programs like this to benefit the kids, but they have no idea how much the kids benefit us as well. Kids are resilient, but they are also really, really cool.

– Laura Ecklin

OUTREACH

Giving Thanks and Giving Help in a Time of Need

Westminster Responds to COVID-19

Most of us wake up every morning giving thanks that we are not one of the more than 750,000 Americans with symptoms of COVID-19. But even for those remaining healthy, there is still plenty of pain. While many of us can continue to work from home, many others in service jobs have found their livelihoods gone. We have all seen the current unemployment numbers of over 12% as a result of businesses closing to stop the spread. People who never dreamed they would have to rely on a food bank are waiting in three-hour lines, praying there will be something left for them. And while there has been some assistance through federal grants and loans, many people – the poorest of the poor – do not qualify for this aid.

In the middle of all this, Westminster members are longing to help, but are not sure how. You may not realize it, but by supporting Westminster you *are* helping.

In early April a special request went out to the congregation to help fill SHIM's food bank. Members have given a generous

\$6,235 so far for this project. In mid-April, your Outreach Commission allocated funds to a variety of helping agencies. Some of these are more familiar, such as the Greater Pittsburgh Community Food Bank (\$5,000), SHIM (\$7,500), and Friendship Community Presbyterian Church (\$3,000). Less familiar are Garfield Farms (\$3,000) supporting people in the hard-hit Garfield area in growing their own food, and Pittsburgh Presbytery's Lazarus Fund (\$2,000), which helps with financial emergencies such as a pending utility cut-off or eviction. It is your donation to Westminster that makes it possible for Outreach to disperse critical funds.

These donations will not fix everything, but they can provide a lifeline for some. They are also a tangible way of making God's love visible. This would not happen without you and your support. Thank you, church, for your continued love and generosity.

– Sandy Conley and Bobbie Hartman
Outreach Commission

Fearfully and Wonderfully Made

“I am fearfully and wonderfully made, your works are wonderful, I know that full well.”

– Psalm 139:14

Our bodies are made up of 206 bones, 608 muscles, 800 nerves, 100,000 miles of blood vessels, and 80 to 100 trillion cells. We have ligaments, muscles, joints, and sinews that help us bend and move. It’s hard to look at the human body and not believe there is a God who created us. We are truly fearfully and wonderfully made.

Our bodies are designed by the Creator to be active! It’s essential to keep yourself moving during quarantine. Federal government guidelines recommend 30 aerobic minutes of moderate intensity five times a week, or 25 minutes of vigorous intensity three times a week. Even breaking this down to three ten-minute segments throughout the day will give you the same benefits. And your daily chores and life activities like walking the dog, shopping, washing your car, and yard work count!

It is also recommended to strength train at least two days a week with a day of recovery in-between workouts. There are a number of methods of strength training without weights. Many common calisthenics exercises are effective ways of developing strength without using weights.

You can begin working out from the comfort of your living room by taking advantage of online workouts and virtual classes that can be accessed from a computer, phone, or tablet. No equipment, no problem. Many programs require no gym equipment and provide tips to use what you have at home. If you’ve been hesitant to start a program, doing so slowly in the privacy of your home can help you build the confidence you need to keep a fitness program going long after quarantine.

You can do this!

“
I can do all
things through
him who
strengthens me.
”
– Philippians 4:13

Looking to start a low-key yoga practice?

Visit Westminster’s YouTube page for Rebecca Paul’s Flow Yoga class. Rebecca is a WROC fitness instructor and incorporates prayer and scripture into her class to help build and support the spirit, mind, and body.

Class is suitable for beginner through intermediate fitness levels. Yoga positions will be described and modified for those new to yoga. Participants should be able to get up and down off the floor with ease.



What the Deacons Do

A Special Message from the Deacons

In the midst of these difficult days our deacons continue to spread goodwill, hope, and love.

The deacons have been actively involved in making Care Calls to the congregation, grocery shopping for shut-ins, keeping regular contact with members through Care Notes, taking food to the healthcare workers at Friendship Village, sending Easter cards to the elderly members.

Many of these contacts have led to meaningful connections, some of which we would like to share. A simple phone call, especially during these extraordinary times, calmed the fears of a lonely elder; reassured a recent surgery patient coping with recovery and physical therapy; consoled a mom who runs errands for her adult child with underlying health issues and considered a high risk; shared in a church member's concerns for a loved one in the healthcare profession and on the front lines during these times of crisis; contributed surprise and joy to an elderly church member's day when hearing the message "Happy Easter" from a deacon.

As deacons, our mission continues – always extending a warm welcome, a helping hand, a kind word, a compassionate heart, and always connecting. If you know of a member in need of assistance, please contact Louise Rogers.

"Look to each other's interest and not merely your own."

– Philippians 2:4



Deacons delivered lunch to the staff at Friendship Village health center to say thank you for their diligent work in these pressing times. Children of the congregation colored Easter greetings to brighten the rooms for the residents. One way we are sharing God's love with our neighbors!



An Invitation

Did you know that Westminster Presbyterian Church is governed by the session, a group of elders elected by the congregation? Did you also know that under the session's guidance, the work of the church is carried out through 12 commissions, made up of and chaired by session members and other at-large members of the congregation? Commissions are the backbone of the church.

Now for the invitation: Any member who would like to actively engage in the work and mission of the church is invited to join a commission that best fits their interests and skills. What commission would be the best use of your gifts? Please consider serving on that commission. Although this may sound like a daunting task, commission members find that in addition to performing a valuable service and strengthening the backbone of the church, they gain fellowship and a sense of community.

Commissions meet, at most, once a month and many of them meet less frequently. You can step in at any time but should plan on a one-year commitment that you can extend at your discretion. But, as in all volunteer opportunities here at Westminster, if you try it and decide it is not a good fit for you, you can end your participation at any time.

Our commissions are as follows:

- Adult Spiritual Development
- Bridge Worship
- Children's and Family Ministries
- Communications
- Finance
- Membership
- Outreach
- Personnel
- Property
- Stewardship
- Worship
- Youth Ministry

To learn more about each commission's purpose, activities, and current members, please visit <https://www.westminster-church.org/about/church-organization>. If you have any questions or interest in a particular commission(s), you will find contact information for each commission there as well.

Stewardship Commission Highlight

The Stewardship Commission is planning to expand and energize their focus to include year-round participation beyond the couple of weeks of pledging as has been done in the past. They are looking for people who can help create a new vision for the Stewardship Commission. They need additional folks who can work together to figure out what that means and develop ideas for putting it in action.

Do you have one of the following characteristics?

- Experience or interest in marketing or publicity, OR
- Can develop or deliver a message that inspires participation, OR
- Passion for the future of Westminster, OR
- Find joy in giving

Would you have any interest in exploring this further? I am happy to talk with you about the Stewardship Commission or any of the others. Please email Jan Baumann at Baumann@westminster-church.org or call 412-559-1034 with any questions you might have.



**Commissions
are the
backbone
of the church.**



A Place *Somewhere*

Was it a dream or a memory?
 I'm not sure.
 But I saw a place somewhere,
 where there were shops and houses without doors.
 In the poetry shop
 Ezra Pound, Wallace Stevens, Gerard Manly Hopkins and Sylvia Plath
 were seated around a table
 enchanted with the magic of words.
 Ogden Nash came in with a dish of P's and Q's.
 They all broke out with laughter.
 I walked in and they offered me a chair.
 As an amateur poet I was out of my mind with the occasion.
 In the science shop
 Isaac Newton, Albert Einstein and the sage who discovered the wheel
 were standing around a telescope.
 I showed them my cell phone.
 They threw up their hands and said: "What Now?"
 Michelangelo, Picasso, Raphael, Norman Rockwell and Andy Warhol
 were standing by the art shop looking at a cloud.
 Andy said: "Not even Michelangelo can paint a cloud."
 Michelangelo laughed and said: "Who do you think I am, God?"
 I remembered his sculpture of David and thought to myself
 that it is as perfect as a cloud.
 There were so many other shops
 for everything imaginable.
 I noticed the largest building,
 the "Sinners Anonymous Club."
 The sign read: "All Sinners are Welcome."
 I walked in and they recognized me.
 Adolph, Genghis, Judas and Pontius
 and a lot of other famous and ordinary sinners
 were having their 12-step fellowship.
 In their midst was Jesus who said:
 "This is my favorite place."
 "This is where I'm welcome, appreciated and needed."
 I stayed a good while.
 The crowd swelled.
 Christians, jews, muslims, hindus, atheists,
 and more sinners poured in.
 Presidents, generals, movie stars, sports greats, religious leaders,
 composers of great music, great doers of the world.
 I couldn't believe it.
 In my selfish heart I wished that I had brought a baseball
 for autographs, at least the Babe's.
 I'll never forget Jesus smiling and laughing.
 It seemed like the place was filled with grace.
 I had the ironic feeling that it was almost
 like being in church.

– John Hayes



Blood Drive

Sunday, May 17
8:00 a.m. – 2:00 p.m.
Fellowship Hall

Donating blood is one of the easiest ways to give back to your community. This amazing, ever-replenishing gift is truly a natural resource that, when shared, speeds healing and provides comfort.

Westminster Deacons will sponsor a blood drive in Fellowship Hall on Sunday, May 17. Call Candy Kottyan at 412-860-3534 to schedule or go to the Vitalant website at www.vitalant.org to register online, using sponsor code G0010171. For medical questions or to make a reservation by phone, call Vitalant at 888-939-9479.

In order to donate, you must

- Be 18 years or older (17 with parental consent)
- Weigh at least 110 lbs.
- Not have donated within the last 56 days
- Be in good health

Medications such as insulin, aspirin, and high blood pressure treatments do not prevent you from donation. However, specific restrictions apply to donors who have traveled abroad, are on certain medications, or have a fresh piercing or tattoo.

Please remember to eat a good breakfast and drink plenty of non-caffeinated beverages. Snacks and goodies will be available for all donors.

The Westminster Deacons thank you for supporting this worthy mission.

Forward in Faith COVID-19 Property Update



FORWARD IN FAITH

With deep disappointment we must report that the COVID-19 global pandemic has caused further delays in the long-awaited property projects. Westminster has made tremendous progress in resolving the financial concerns of 2018-19, and the Property Commission planned to move forward with some major improvements. But the shut-down has unfortunately added further unavoidable delays.

However, we did make some progress in March and are lining up as much as possible to start as soon as it is safe to do so. Here are a few short updates:

- The contract was signed in March for the driveway paving project. Compounding the delay will be the backlog of committed projects to other clients on the vendor schedule, but we will work with the awarded vendor to get it done as soon as we can.
- The Fellowship Hall renovations will be delayed. Planned for August, the carpets – among all the other materials – will require additional time for manufacture since mills are closed. The timeline will likely be closer to November at the earliest for our project.
- Plaster work to the ceiling of the balcony in the sanctuary was completed prior to the shut-down in preparation for the exterior spire work. The collection of bids for the exterior work has slowed because vendors are closed at this time.
- Excavation and water proofing above the north and south below-ground hallways beneath the breezeways was almost completed and should be finished as soon as the shut-down is lifted.
- The Property Commission continues to prioritize all of the remaining projects.

The money for Forward in Faith is still set aside and the controls on spending are in place. As we said last month, please contact Jay Galbreath or Mandy Thomas if you would like to review the complete list of planned property projects, and Cindy Bingham if you have questions on the financials. The Forward in Faith binder is available and being updated with copies of bids, invoices, and notes. Anyone is welcome to review this information, and we will keep you updated on timelines as we know more.

We continue to welcome pledges and donations to Forward in Faith. The frustration and disappointment in the continued delays is real, but we know God remains with us. As we all search for patience and clarity in these troubled times, we keep moving Forward in Faith together!

– Mandy Thomas

Financial Report

As of March 31, 2020

Income	
March 2020 Income	\$153,949.02
March 2020 Budget Income	\$165,643.65
YTD Income	\$931,573.08

Expenses	
March Expenses	\$179,007.86
March Budget Expenses	\$194,628.02
YTD 2020 Expenses	\$553,193.53

We thank you for your generous support through the first three months of the year.

Approved Outreach Expenditures for April 2020

Friendship Community Presbyterian Church	\$3,000	Haiti Special Acct. designated for LaCoupe Teachers' Salaries	\$3,000
Garfield Community Farm	\$3,000	Pittsburgh Presbytery	\$3,200
Greater Pittsburgh Community Food Bank	\$5,000	Pittsburgh Presbytery Lazarus Fund	\$2,000
		SHIM	\$7,500

Session Highlights

The session at its meeting April 20 approved the formation of a Visionary Task Force to address pertinent issues as we reopen and thrive as a caring church community in the wake of the coronavirus. The task force will develop policies and guidelines for the programs and usage of the church including worship.

Members of the task force are to be appointed by the Head of Staff and will include staff, elders from particular commissions, a deacon, and representatives from the mental health and public health fields. The task force will make recommendations to the session and serve as a resource to commission members and the congregation overall.

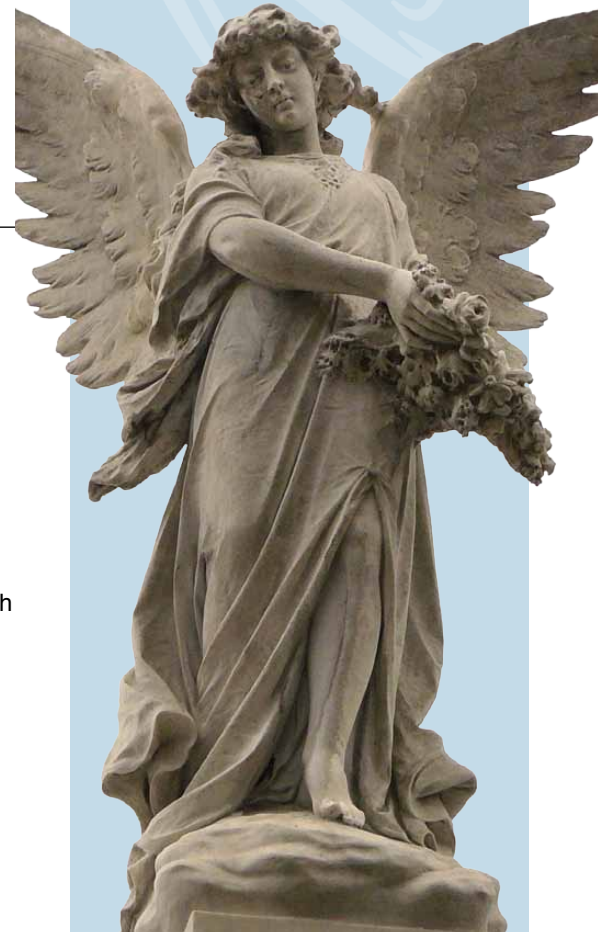
Deaths

Rev. David R. Fillpot
(former interim senior pastor at Westminster)

April 10

Dolores "Dolly" Carlson

April 12





WESTMINSTER PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH

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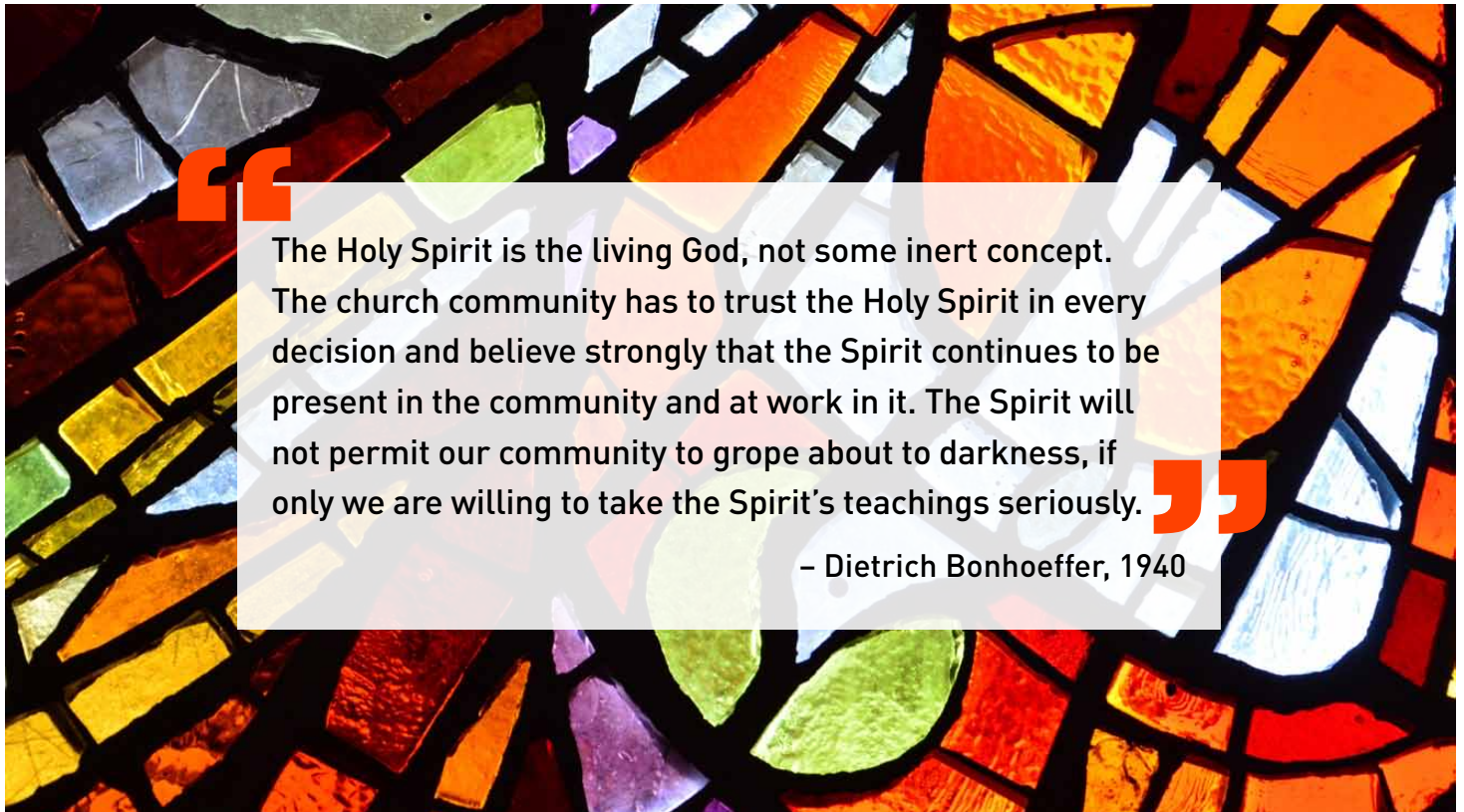
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www.facebook.com/Westminster.Pittsburgh



www.youtube.com/user/WestminsterUSC



“The Holy Spirit is the living God, not some inert concept. The church community has to trust the Holy Spirit in every decision and believe strongly that the Spirit continues to be present in the community and at work in it. The Spirit will not permit our community to grope about to darkness, if only we are willing to take the Spirit's teachings seriously.”

– Dietrich Bonhoeffer, 1940