

# THE SPARE

WESTMINSTER PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH  
Pittsburgh, PA

## Habits of the Heart

Habits have a bad reputation in our day.

Most of the time, the word “habit” gets yoked to “bad,” as if they were conjoined concepts. We say, “I need to stop doing that; it’s a bad habit,” when we keep repeating some behavior we’re not proud of, but can’t quite quit. If our own bad habits make us feel powerlessness, like victims of an uncontrollable force, other people’s bad habits are downright annoying. “Can’t you stop *doing* that?” we demand, less tolerant of somebody else’s lack of discipline than we are of our own.

Even when we’re not judging habits harshly, we don’t ordinarily give them much credit. “It’s just a habit,” we say of some benign activity, where “just” means that whatever we’re talking about doesn’t deserve any particular praise. Their very routineness makes habits sound dull, like plain vanilla ice cream or the color beige.

Habits, like the late Rodney Dangerfield, don’t get much respect. That’s unfortunate, though, because there’s a deep sense in which our habits make up much of who we are. For better and for worse, we come to be characterized by our habits as they shape our lives and form our character.

That’s why cultivating the right kinds of habits has always been central to Christian formation. The classical virtues of justice, courage, temperance, and wisdom, and the “theological” virtues of faith, hope,



and love, are among the habits of the heart that Christian discipleship strives to develop. Conversely, the traditional Seven Deadly Sins – avarice, envy, gluttony, wrath, lust, sloth, and pride in the sense of vanity – are deadly, not so much because God will punish them as because they siphon the life out of any soul that allows them to become habitual.

Christianity has claimed since New Testament times that the question is not whether our hearts will be shaped by our habits, but which habits we’ll allow to do the shaping. And since we need help to form the right habits, the cultivation of virtues has always been understood by Christians as a work of the Holy Spirit and a gift of God’s grace.

The qualities we admire most in people tend to be their best habits. When someone keeps doing what needs to

be done in spite of the risk or the fear of failure, we admire her courage. When a man refuses to cling to his own advantage but works to see that others’ needs are met as well, even at considerable cost to himself, we recognize the righteousness of justice.

None of the virtues we admire come as standard equipment at the time of our birth. We have to learn them, and practice them until they become habits shaped by the One we worship and the way we live. Eventually we’ll be inclined to do these things naturally, because our nature itself will have changed, and we’ll become the kind of soul that really looks as though it was made in the image of God.

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Read the *Spire* online at: [www.westminster-church.org](http://www.westminster-church.org)

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**Traditional  
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📅	Sundays
🕒	8:30 & 11:00 a.m.
📍	Sanctuary

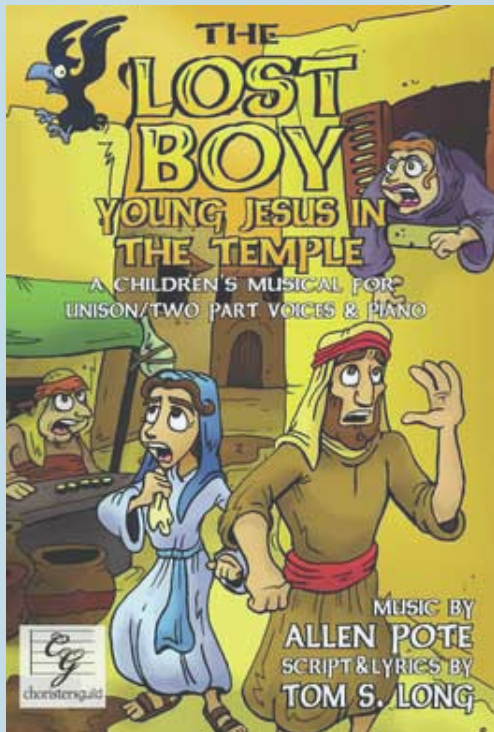
**The Bridge  
Contemporary Worship**

📅	Sundays
🕒	9:45 a.m.
📍	WROC

*The Lord's Supper is celebrated the first Sunday of each month.  
Gluten-free wafers are available at all services.*

# Mother's Day Musical

Sunday, May 14  
11:00 a.m. worship



The Cherub and Junior Choirs will lead worship at the 11:00 a.m. service on Mother's Day, May 14, and present *The Lost Boy*. The musical tells the story of Mary and Joseph when they lose track of twelve-year-old Jesus for three days. When they finally find him, he is sitting in his "Father's house" – demonstrating with his questions a great understanding of God. Within the musical is a reassuringly human message: even parents chosen by God can lose a child; even a perfect child can give his parents anxiety.

**Upcoming Events**

**7  
MAY** **70th Anniversary Luncheon**  
*All are invited to celebrate 70 years of Westminster women*

**14  
MAY** **Mother's Day Musical**

**25  
MAY** **Ascension of the Lord**

Sundays at 9:45 a.m.  
Galbreath Chapel

**May 7 & 14**

## Thank God! Living a Life of Gratitude

David Fetterman

Finding reasons for gratitude can be a challenge in a world that is filled with personal, national, and global trials and brokenness. Yet God is love; God sustains and empowers us, and continues to create good things. Join us as we explore living lives of gratitude in a tumultuous world.

**May 21 & 28**

## Jesus in the Context of Judaism

We welcome Rabbi Mark Mahler from Temple Emanuel to lead two seminars on Jesus in the context of Judaism. Both sessions will include time for questions and discussion.

### May 21 – Jesus the Jew

Christianity universally acknowledges that Jesus lived and died as a Jew. But exactly what was Judaism that Jesus lived and died for? Rabbi Mahler will lead us in exploring the hows, whys, and wherefores of Judaism in Jesus' day.

### May 28 – God's Face or God's Faces?

Twenty-plus centuries ago, nascent Christianity beheld the face of God in the face of Jesus. But could Judaism countenance such a belief? (Pun intended.) And what can we countenance today about God's countenance?

Rabbi Mark Joel Mahler has served Temple Emanuel of South Hills since June 1980. During his first five years at the congregation, Rabbi Mahler was Associate Rabbi and Temple Educator for greater Pittsburgh's largest Jewish religious school. In 1985, Rabbi Mahler was elected Rabbi of the congregation. He serves Temple Emanuel in many capacities: pastor, preacher, and teacher; singer, songwriter, and guitarist; humorist and social commentator. Rabbi Mahler has now served Temple Emanuel longer than any other active rabbi in Pittsburgh has served his or her synagogue.

Rabbi Mahler's passion is Talmud Torah, the study and teaching of the vast library of Jewish sacred texts and wisdom literature beginning with Torah. His lectures cover a wide array of Jewish topics from history to linguistics, philosophy to mysticism, ethics to ritual practices. He is skilled at making abstruse subjects understandable, of transforming the complex into the simple. The questions he asks and then answers are "What can we learn from 3,000 years of Jewish experience that enrich and sanctify our lives today?" and "How can we best transmit Judaism to the next generation?"

Music is also fundamental to Rabbi Mahler's rabbinate. He sings and plays the guitar at every Shabbat and Festival evening service. One Shabbat evening a month, he participates in Temple's Kol Emanuel Band. Another Shabbat evening a month, his children Moshe and Lacey accompany him for Music with the Mahlers. Rabbi Mahler has set many traditional prayers to contemporary melodies and rhythms, some upbeat and joyful, some quiet and contemplative, and some stirring and dramatic. Outside of Temple Emanuel, Rabbi Mahler is active in numerous community organizations. Within the Jewish community, Rabbi Mahler has served on the Board of the Jewish Family and Children's Service, and the Advisory Board of the Anti-Defamation League of B'nai B'rith. He is a past chair of the Greater Pittsburgh Rabbinic Association and the Pittsburgh Area Reform Rabbis. He has also served on various committees and colloquia for the Central Conference of American Rabbis and the Union for Reform Judaism.

In the general community, Rabbi Mahler has served on the Advisory Council of United Mental Health, the South Hills Interfaith Ministries, and the National Conference of Christian and Jews, for whom he was the keynote speaker at a Martin Luther King Day Observance at Trinity Cathedral. Rabbi Mahler has lectured at many synagogues and churches, colleges, and universities. He held the Jewish Chautauqua Society appointment to the Theology Department at Duquesne University from 1986 to 1991. His writings have been published in Jewish and secular journals. Rabbi Mahler is currently writing a book of Jewish law, updating the Halacha to make each one of Judaism's 613 commandments relevant and observable today.

# The Theological Significance of

# Coffee



Today, as I do many days, I am writing to you from a local coffee distributor. In this case, Judy's Java Joint in Bethel Park, which sits in the dead middle between home and work. I rode my bike here from my house, and will eventually saddle up and ride my bike the rest of the way to the office. Why make this pit stop in the middle of the work day? I think the change of location stirs up something in me, allows me to be a bit more creative with writing, or sermon prep, or video editing, all three of which are on my to-do list today. Sometimes I see people I wouldn't normally see through the day, and today is no exception. I've seen a steady stream of Westminster folks come through the door. But really, I come because at Judy's Java Joint, there is, of course, terrific coffee.

My love of coffee is legendary, though I am learning these days that I know nothing compared to our dear seminary intern, Brendan. I love a good peppermint mocha on a winter's day. I adore the smell of a pumpkin latte in the fall. Iced coffee on the back porch is remarkable in the summer sun. But really, more than any of these, I just enjoy a good, solid, cup of coffee. Black, hot, coffee.

I think what it really boils down to is the simplicity of coffee. What starts as a tree bears fruit, and inside of that fruit is a seed. Crush the seed, pour boiling water over it, and behold! Coffee. It truly is a beverage designed by God. Perhaps because of the abundance of T-shirts that celebrate coffee you may think I'm kidding, but I'm really not. There is a theological significance to enjoying a cup of coffee. God created a beautiful world, overflowing with goodness,

and placed us in the midst of it to take care of it, and to enjoy it. Countless scriptures suggest that the creation itself is pointing to God, singing God's praises, and telling those of us who live on this globe about God's goodness. God made coffee, and when I enjoy coffee, I can enjoy God.

I say "can" because we have a way of distorting this, don't we? There is a vast difference between slowly sipping on a hand crafted cup of coffee and grabbing a cup of joe from the gas station on the way to work because you were up too late, right? There's a difference between soaking in the world around you with the windows down and cursing the traffic you have to endure every day on the way to work. There's a difference between living in God's creation and enjoying it.

So as the summer approaches, don't just live in God's creation, enjoy it! Take the whole family for a walk in the woods. Turn the radio off on the way to work and roll the windows down to breathe in the air, hear the sounds, and see the sights – unless your commute goes through the Liberty Tunnel. (I tried that once. It doesn't work well.) Waking up a few minutes early to drink coffee is more than simply a way to get moving. It's something you get to enjoy to start your day.

Perhaps, as we continue to enjoy God's creation, we'll find ourselves enjoying God along the way!

– Jason Freyer

# Under Construction

Construction has been on my mind a lot recently. Elise and I just purchased a new home and are in the process of renovating it as we prepare to move in. The home was lovely, relatively new, and a complete mess. The roof leaked; the appliances and fixtures were broken, old, or missing; the garage door hung on by a thread; the flooring was cracked and broken; and water stains marked the ceilings. Needless to say, the house had not been cared for – but the price was right, we liked the house and thought we could make some changes to improve it. The new house is more than double the size of our current home (which we lovingly call a “Mansion Tiny Home”) and provides room for our growing family as well as the hospitality lifestyle we love to live. Long story short, the house we bought has changed daily since we bought it. This house’s story is far from over.

Maybe it’s because of the season I’m in right now, but I’ve come to realize that I appreciate it when people are willing to make changes, or enter into the “construction of their lives.” I’m not sure I’ve ever met someone and thought to myself, “Wow, that person is perfect.” We all need construction. I find this to be true quite often when it comes to our perspectives and opinions. A lot of us constructed our opinions years ago and simply continue to use them as life moves forward. For certain, some opinions and values should remain unchanged, but surely others must change.

Jesus presents us with this view in many of his teachings. In the fifth chapter of Matthew – five times in a row – Jesus uses the phrase “You have heard that it was said” and then proceeds to

challenge several of society’s long-entrenched ideas. When Jesus says, “You have heard that it was said,” he’s essentially saying, “I know that you have a certain opinion on this subject.” So where is Jesus trying to move us when he asks us to adopt a new method of thinking on an old subject? He’s asking us to move into a season of reconstruction.

Recently, I’ve been caught up in the phrase “You have heard that it was said.” I wonder which of my thoughts, opinions, and methods of thinking must change. If Jesus asked me to make a shift, I wonder if I’d be frustrated with Jesus or if I’d be convinced he was wrong. For this reason I find myself in the middle ground of lots of debates. For the most part, I can see where both sides are coming from, and in a world of deep polarity I’m convinced that answers lie somewhere in the middle.

A final note: I appreciate conviction and people who are firm in their beliefs, so I’m not asking us to become a community blown by the winds of culture, fear, popular opinion, or doubt. I’m asking us to accept a new conviction. One that claims, upholds, and embraces the belief that Jesus is the truth, and the truth is often dynamic and complicated, but is always worth seeking.

So what does construction look like in your life? What “projects” have you considered recently? I’d love to share in the conversation with you.

– Ed Sutter



## GLIMPSE OF MY WORLD

“Wait – that’s not fair!”

If you’re a parent or you’ve spent much time around children, those are probably pretty familiar words. The most recent time I heard them (as of this writing, of course) was in the middle of a recent JAM lesson. But the complaint wasn’t that a friend had gotten a bigger piece of the candy bar that was being shared, or got to sit in someone’s favorite seat. It didn’t have anything to do with more turns doing anything. It wasn’t about the games we play at all. Of all things, it was right in the middle of a Bible lesson.

We were studying the parable of the talents, in the book of Matthew. As Jesus tells the story, a wealthy man entrusts his wealth to his servants, and heads out of town on a journey. “But wait – he doesn’t give the servants equal amounts. How is that fair?” someone asked.

The story continues, with the man returning home after a long time, to see what the servants have done with the money. Two of the servants have been quite busy with the large sums entrusted to them, and have doubled their master’s investment: “Well done, good and faithful servants,” he tells them.

But the third servant was afraid. He hid the money and so returns it without any gain or loss. The master is angry, takes the money from him and gives it instead to the man who was given the most in the beginning. “How is that fair? He already has a lot!” the kids want to know.

And then it got worse, as we began to unpack the story, identifying the wealthy man as God, who gifts each of us with talents but in sometimes wildly differing ways. “It’s God who isn’t fair?” they asked in disbelief. “How can that be?”

Because our sense of fairness isn’t the same as God’s. Thankfully, God plays by a different set of rules, his own rules. Rules that include the willingness to forgive all of our failures and mistakes, no matter what they are (even the “on-purpose” ones). Instead, God sees each of us as his own unique, cherished children. And then he gifts each of us in totally unique ways, asking only that we use all of those gifts in his service.

In the kids’ words: “God wants us to use what he gives us – the stuff we can do and the stuff we have – to make people’s lives better and to help them know him better, so that more people love God.” And what could be more “fair” than that?

– Robin Pyles



# The Power of a Word



“I love you.” “I love cheesecake.” “I love my new car.” “I love these shoes.” “I love my children.” “I love God.” Have you ever said any of these things? All of these things? “Love” is a word that we use freely – perhaps too freely. Is it possible to love all of the things that we say that we love? Is it possible to really *love* cheesecake... or a new car... or shoes? We may really *like* those things. But *love*? Not likely. On the other hand, we can *love* our spouse, boyfriend, girlfriend, partner, our children, and God. Love is about relationship, not ownership.

In Paul’s first letter to Corinth he offers his marvelous exposition on love. Of the three Greek words for love, Paul used *agape* (a selfless commitment to another). Just before his passage on love, Paul was reminding the Corinthian church that they all had different gifts to contribute to the spreading of the gospel. He was reminding them of the need for working together rather than being jealous of someone who had a gift that they wanted. He concludes his admonitions with this: “Strive for the greater gifts. And I will show you a still more excellent way” (1 Corinthians 12:27-31, NRSV). And the “more excellent way?” Love.

If I speak in the tongues of mortals and of angels, but do not have love, I am a noisy gong or a clanging cymbal. And if I have prophetic powers, and understand all mysteries and all knowledge, and if I have all faith, so as to remove mountains, but do not have love, I am nothing. If I give away all my possessions, and if I hand over my body so that I may boast, but do not have love, I gain nothing. (1 Corinthians 13:1-3)

Paul proceeds to tell us that love is found and expressed in relationship with one another and with God. Love’s object is always *someone*, not *something*. Patience; kindness; rejection of envy, boastfulness, arrogance, and rudeness; selflessness; forbearance; and hope: these are the hallmarks of love for Paul.

Paul wants the Corinthians – and us – to know that love is essential to our lives as Christians. Love is the glue that holds us together with each other and with God. Love is the spark that ignites the flames of our service with others. Love is the tender touch that comforts us when we ache. Love is the patient word that continues to teach us about life and living even into old age. Many things exist in this world of ours but the most profound, the greatest, is love.

And now faith, hope, and love abide, these three; and the greatest of these is love. (1 Corinthians 13:13)

The question for us is not *what* do you love, but *who* do you love? Meditate on love: Who do we love? Who loves us? What difference does loving and being loved make in our lives? Celebrate Paul’s words that of all that exists in life, of all that we see and do and share, “the greatest of these is love.”

– Dave Fetterman

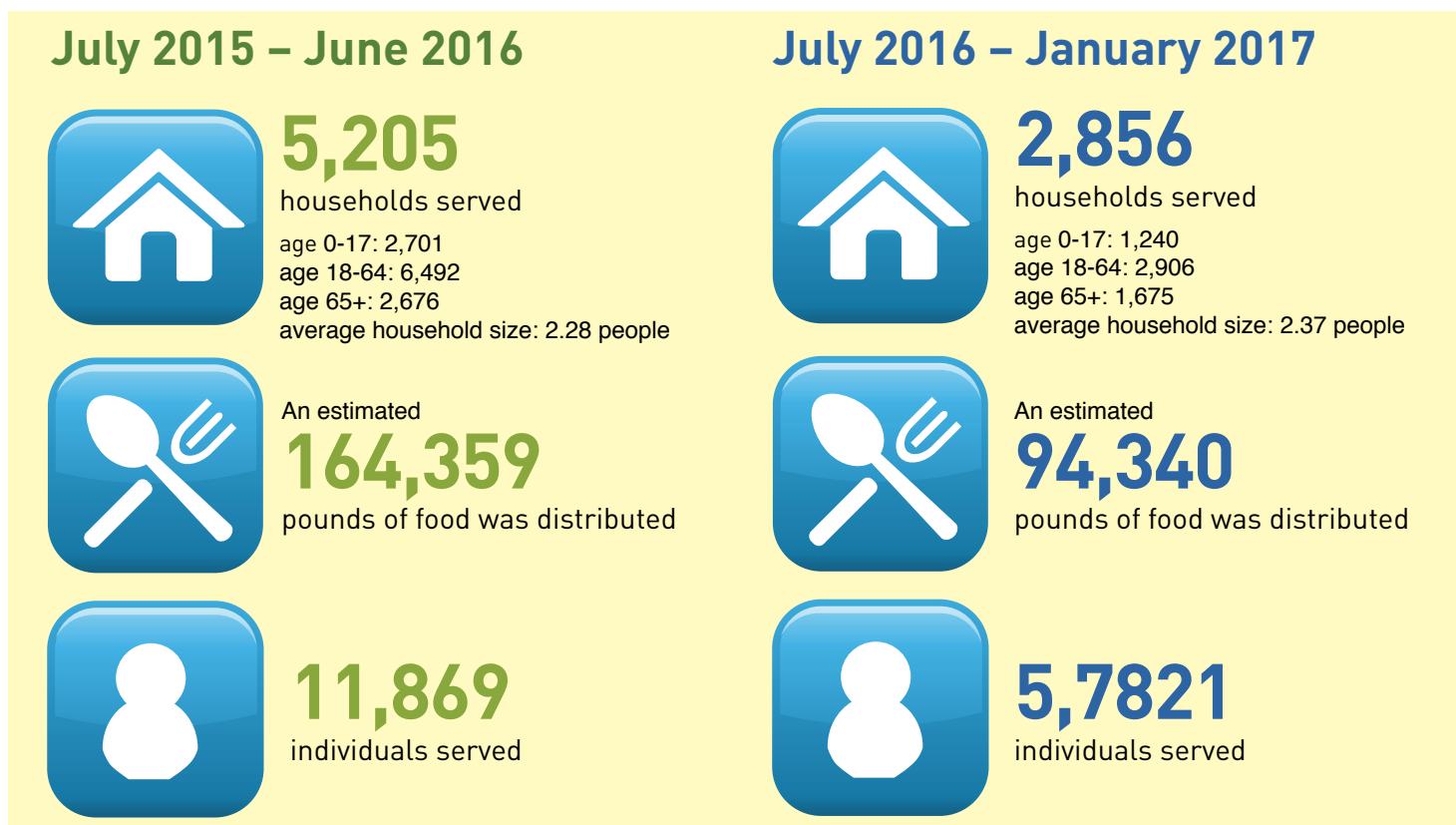


# What Has Westminster Presbyterian Church Been Up to in Our Community?

Over the past several months church members have been volunteering together in a number of efforts to serve the community.

**Produce 2 People:** Westminster volunteers three times a year at the Produce 2 People food distribution held at the Martin Luther King School on the near North Side. Low-income individuals and families who go to this distribution, which is held the third Saturday of each month, get between 40 and 60 pounds of food. When Westminster volunteered in February, the food was entirely fruit and vegetables.

To give an idea of how many are served and the total food distributed, here are statistics for the MLK School Produce 2 People site July 2015 through January 2017:



**World Vision:** On January 28 and March 18, Westminster volunteers traveled by school bus to World Vision’s Pittsburgh Global Distribution Center in Sewickley to sort, process, and prepare donated products for domestic and international distribution. The entire Saturday morning flies by for these volunteers who rapidly unpack, sort, fold, and repack donated clothes and other goods to be shipped to refugee camps and other World Vision supported international partners.

**Rebuilding Together Pittsburgh:** On April 29, eight Westminster volunteers joined some ATT volunteers to rehab Ms. Carolyn’s home in Homewood. Westminster Outreach sponsored and funded this house project. The daylong project was part of National Rebuilding Day when hundreds of projects across the country repaired thousands of low income houses. Over the past 25 years, Rebuilding Together Pittsburgh has provided more than 2,400 Pittsburgh area homeowners with free health and safety repairs, allowing them to stay in their homes.

The activities above were organized by Westminster to provide volunteers for these mission activities. Yet it is important to recognize that many other Westminster members volunteer directly with groups such as SHIM, City Mission, Open Door Ministry in Crafton, Meals on Wheels, St. Clair Hospital, and many other groups. Westminster is active in the world and seeks to compassionately serve those in need throughout the Pittsburgh area and beyond.

– Will Hignett and Jan Baumann

# Better Choices, Better Health at the WROC!

The Allegheny County Better Choices, Better Health® program (also known as the Chronic Disease Self-Management Program, or CDSMP) is a free six-week workshop that provides tools for living a healthy life with chronic health conditions, including arthritis, high blood pressure, heart disease, diabetes, COPD, and other conditions that affect your daily life. This program benefits those who have a chronic condition(s) or care for someone who does.

Through weekly sessions, the workshop provides support for continuing normal daily activities and dealing with the emotions that chronic conditions may bring about.

Participants will learn:

- ✓ Distraction techniques to help manage pain
- ✓ Relaxation techniques
- ✓ Guidelines about healthy eating
- ✓ How to communicate more effectively with their doctor(s), family, and friends
- ✓ The power of positive thinking
- ✓ Better breathing techniques
- ✓ What level of exercise intensity is right for you
- ✓ To make Weekly Action Plans on a goal that is important for you
- ✓ And much more

**Tuesdays, May 16 – June 20**  
**9:30 a.m. – 12:00 p.m.**  
**Room 231**

**Cost:** Free. Each participant in the workshop receives a copy of the companion book, *Living a Healthy Life with Chronic Conditions*.

**Instructors:** Workshops are facilitated by two trained leaders, one or both of whom are non-health professionals with a chronic disease themselves.

## Positive Program Outcomes

People who participated in the program demonstrated significant improvements in exercise, cognitive symptom management, communication with physicians, self-reported general health, health distress, fatigue, disability, and social/role activities limitations. They also spent fewer days in the hospital, and there was also a trend toward fewer outpatient visits and hospitalizations.

The most important outcome of the Chronic Disease Self Management Program is that through this practice and group feedback people become more confident and are able to combine more active lives with self management of their chronic health condition.

Register by calling Kathy Long at 412-835-6630 or [wroc.westminster-church.org](http://wroc.westminster-church.org). Visit the website at [alleghenybetterhealth.org](http://alleghenybetterhealth.org) for more details.

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## Introduction to Ballet: Incorporating Faith and Dance

(for children ages 3 through 5)

Children will celebrate God's love for them while learning basic ballet technique. Kids will leap, jump, turn, and smile for God's love!

Participants will receive an introduction to ballet, which consists of short ballet barre, stretching, and beginner ballet steps. At the end of each class, children will hear and explore a short Bible verse that relates to class.

**Session I: June 3 – 24**

**Session II: July 8 - 29**

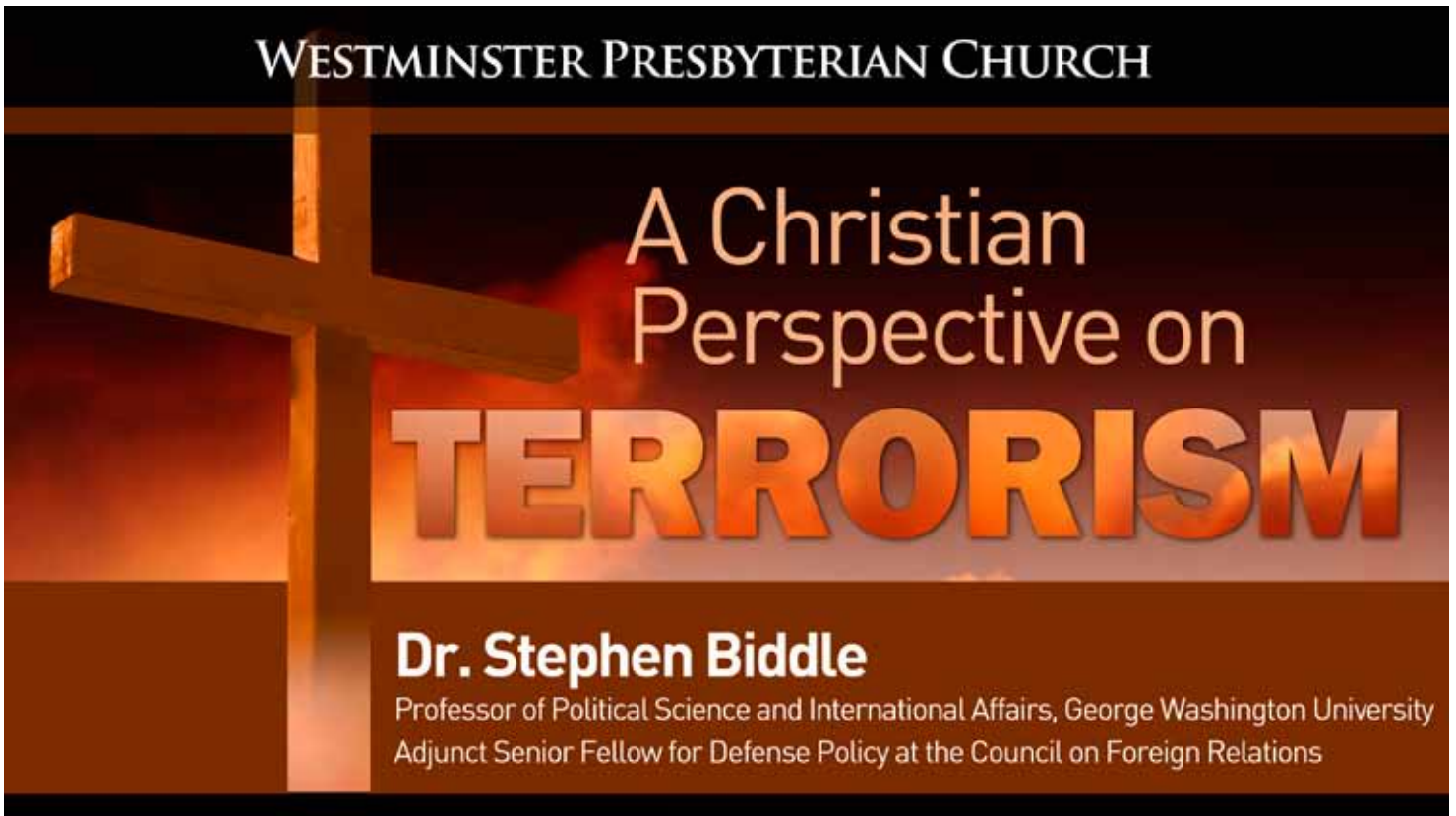
**Saturdays: 9:00 – 9:45 a.m.**

Cost: \$50

Location: WROC Fitness Room (above gym)  
Instructor: Kiera Pyles\*

*\*Kiera Pyles has been a competitive dancer for 14 years at Janet Hays and Company. She also attends West Point Ballet and has participated in Point Park's six-week summer dance intensive for two summers. She has taken classes in New York at Steps on Broadway, Broadway Dance Center, and New York City Ballet. A recent Upper St. Clair High School graduate, Kiera now attends Point Park University as a dance major.*

# Coming in June...



**WESTMINSTER PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH**

A Christian  
Perspective on  
**TERRORISM**

**Dr. Stephen Biddle**  
Professor of Political Science and International Affairs, George Washington University  
Adjunct Senior Fellow for Defense Policy at the Council on Foreign Relations

Dr. Stephen Biddle, Professor of Political Science and International Affairs at George Washington University and Adjunct Senior Fellow for Defense Policy at the Council on Foreign Relations, will be the featured speaker at a luncheon at Westminster on Sunday, June 4.

Dr. Biddle has been an advisor to Generals Petraeus and McChrystal, and has served on the Defense Department's Defense Policy Board and testified before committees of Congress on many issues pertaining to war and peace. His book *Military Power: Explaining Victory and Defeat in Modern Battle* has won four major prizes, and his insights continue to appear in a wide variety of print and broadcast media. Dr. Biddle is also a member of Second Presbyterian Church in Carlisle, PA, where Jim Gilchrist served before coming to Westminster.

Watch for details about this extraordinary opportunity to hear from an expert on national defense from a Christian perspective.



**Sunday, June 4**

Fellowship Hall

## Westminster at 70

# Reflections from Laird Stuart

During the 1980s and early 1990s, senior pastor Laird Stuart reflected on a number of subjects that continue to resonate in 2017. The following excerpts come from Stuart's pastor columns in the Spire. Thanks to Sue Wyble for her research of the Westminster Archives.

### The Power of the Holy Spirit for Presbyterians October 1982 Spire

*The column addressed the importance of the Holy Spirit in the Reformed Protestant tradition, which includes Presbyterians. Reformed churches "had a particularly strong emphasis on the power of the Holy Spirit in the life of the church. They believed that the Holy Spirit would constantly reform and renew the church's vision, capabilities, and structures so that it could meet the distinctive challenges of each new era."*


*This month in 2017, as we move through the Easter season and begin to think about Pentecost, Stuart's closing thoughts offer inspiration for celebrating the power of the Holy Spirit:*

We trust in the Holy Spirit. We trust in its reforming presence and powers even in times when we do not sense it. We trust in its presence and powers as we worship, as we meet, as we study, as we gather together in fellowship. Sometimes we can "sense" the Spirit moving. Always we can know it is with us.

There is much to celebrate in our heritage as Presbyterians. Part of it is our faith in the Holy Spirit. Closed to it we stifle each other. Open to it there will be no end to the fresh inspiration and strength it will give to us individually and in our worship and work together.


### Read the Story of Pentecost May 1992 Spire

*The column invited the congregation to prepare for Pentecost by reading Acts 2:43-47 over the month of May as they prepare for Pentecost, which fell in early June, just as it is this year. Here are Stuart's guiding words for reading the passage:*



**Pastor's Desk**

At the end of October there is a special day which reminds us of an essential element in our life together in the church all year long. It is Reformation Sunday.



Dr. Stuart

During the Reformation, a particular set of churches among all the new Protestant churches came to be known as the Reformed Protestant churches. The Presbyterians were part of this segment of protestantism. These churches had a particularly strong emphasis on the power of the Holy Spirit in the life of the church. They believed that the Holy Spirit would constantly reform and renew the church's vision, capabilities, and structures so that it could meet the distinctive challenges of each new era.

In recent years it has become common for people, especially non-churched people, to assume that only the Pentecostals believed in the power of the Holy Spirit.

Yet we too are a church of the Holy Spirit, even us Presbyterians! This is not a new conviction for Presbyterians. There is no reason for us to be embarrassed by talk about the powers of the Holy Spirit in our own lives and in our life together in the Church.

Read it as a revelation of what happens to people when they allow the Holy Spirit to be alive in them. Read it as a sign of what the Holy Spirit still does. Read it and then use it as a foundation and guide for your prayers for Westminster.

It is a passage which tells us not that we must be generous, not that we must gather for worship, not that we must praise God, not that we must act so people will respond to us with good will. It promises that when we are alive with the Holy Spirit we will be generous; we will gather for worship; we will praise God; we will be a people who are met with good will.

### Our Call as Disciples of Christ June 1982 Spire

**We can be, by the presence and inspiration of God, a community of healing and support. We can also be advocates for justice in our society.**

It is not simply the condition of our social environment that challenges the quality of our good will. It is also the Lord himself. He clearly does not want his church to turn either a cold shoulder or a deaf ear to the plight of people. We do not always agree on what should be done... even on whether or not we should "get involved." Yet the mandate from God expressed in the Bible to be agents of his love on earth is an unmistakable call to social activity. It is a call for applied Christianity. It is up to us individually and together to make the best decisions we can on how to be faithful to our Lord in the midst of uneasy times.



WESTMINSTER  
PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH

THIS FAR BY GRACE 70 years FORWARD IN FAITH

**Active Goodness for Christ**  
**April 1986 Spire**

“The cry of the world” has many voices. As we gather for worship we bring our own voices to that cry, our own concerns, hurts, and hopes. We are part of the world that comes into the church.

Sometimes “the cry of the world” comes to us from other places and people. This is true for the sanctuary movement. People are coming to this country from many countries. Some of them... are fleeing torture and death threats. They have the marks of beatings on their bodies. They have stories of relatives who disappeared after receiving death threats. They have received death threats. Many of these people do not want to stay in this country. They want to return to their homelands when it is safe. They are afraid to report to the immigration and naturalization service because the INS sends their names back to their country as they are being processed. This can endanger relatives still there and reveal where [the refugees are in the U.S.].

We have been studying the sanctuary movement at Westminster... so we can learn from this crisis how to develop a faithful response to such situations. It is a timely and important case study in learning how to hear “the call of God” in this situation. This is our special responsibility as Christians. To others, this may be just politics.

**For us it is a challenge to use our skills at developing practical Christianity, active goodness for Christ.**

In the process we will come to different conclusions. It is the process we need to share: the process of using the Bible, our own faith, and the reflections of others to determine what we each believe is God’s will for the people involved in the sanctuary movement: the refugees, the people giving them sanctuary, the people supporting them, the immigration and naturalization service, and all of us in this democracy.

**Character and Public Office**  
**March 1988 Spire**

A person’s character is a crucial aspect of their life. No one of us can presume to have flawless character, nor do we have a right to expect that of anyone else. Yet people who set forward to run for public office have an obligation to accept scrutiny, not just about their positions but also about their character. It is their character which essentially determines how they will operate amidst the pressures of the office they seek.

The writer George Eliot quotes Novalis..., “Character is destiny.” A person’s character does determine how they live and how they influence others.

**A person's character affects not only how that person lives, but also the quality of life around that person.**

**The character in each one of us matters.**

**Moving Ahead**  
**November 1989 Spire**

I think it is possible to claim that Christian faith generates a progressive spirit. With the awareness of human sinfulness it teaches, it fosters humility and an avoidance of dogmatism. With the awareness of God’s providence it teaches, it fosters faith in the future.

THIS FAR BY *Grace* FORWARD IN *Faith*



Scholarship OPPORTUNITIES

## Seminary Students

Westminster Presbyterian Church provides financial scholarship support for church staff or members enrolled or planning to enroll in a Master of Divinity program. Applications are available in the church finance office (412-835-6630).

Please submit completed application by **Friday, June 16, 2017**. Questions may be directed to Carl Lindstrom at 412-833-8628 or 412-418-1003.

**Deliver application to:**

Westminster Presbyterian Church  
Finance Office  
2040 Washington Road  
Pittsburgh, PA 15241

## Westminster Education and Service Trust W.E.S.T.

Do you need a helping hand with post high school educational costs? The W.E.S.T. Fund has a limited amount of resources available to distribute to Westminster Church students needing some financial assistance. Gifts are often used toward book purchases and similar expenses.

Applications are available in the church finance office or receptionist area during normal working hours (412-835-6630).

Undergraduate and/or graduate students are limited to a total of four (4) annual gifts.

When completing the application, please explain why you are requesting the gift and how you are planning to use it.

If you have questions or need additional information, please contact Carl Lindstrom at 412-833-8628.

**APPLICATION IS DUE IN THE FINANCE OFFICE  
BY JUNE 16, 2017.**

# Financial Report

*As of March 31, 2017*

## General Fund Contributions

Year-to-Date Actual 2017	\$ 464,210.51
Annual Budget	\$ 1,995,623.00
Amount needed to fulfill budget	\$ 1,531,412.49

## Year-to-Date Income Statement

Income	\$ 562,960.01
Expenses	\$ 550,984.66
Net Position	\$ 11,975.35

# Session Update

On April 17, Session approved the Property Commission’s motion to make some modest changes in Room 212, next to the chapel, so that it will continue to be an attractive setting for bridal parties to gather for weddings while also being appropriate for small groups to meet. We typically have only six to eight weddings a year at the church (this year there are four), while the need is growing for Bible study, prayer, counseling, and other small group meeting space. The remodeling will occur over the summer, with the cost of approximately \$7,700 to be covered by funds remaining the New Cornfield Campaign.

Session also approved an amendment to our building use policy expressly prohibiting any sort of campaigning for public office on church property, except in the immediate vicinity of a polling place on election day. This is consistent with the obligations of our 501(c)(3) tax-exempt status and has always been our practice, but the issue was raised recently, and it was felt that an explicit written policy would be helpful in the future.





## WESTMINSTER PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH

2040 Washington Road  
Pittsburgh, PA 15241  
[www.westminster-church.org](http://www.westminster-church.org)  
A PC(USA) Congregation

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*I pray that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give you a spirit of wisdom and revelation as you come to know him, so that, with the eyes of your heart enlightened, you may know what is the hope to which he has called you... and what is the immeasurable greatness of his power for us who believe.... God put this power to work in Christ when he raised him from the dead and seated him at his right hand in the heavenly places, far above all rule and authority and power and dominion, and above every name that is named, not only in this age but also in the age to come.*

*Ephesians 1:17-21*