



THE SPIRE

WESTMINSTER PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH
Pittsburgh, PA

The Greatest Generations

Fifteen years ago Tom Brokaw published a best seller, the title of which became an enduring name for an entire cohort of Americans. *The Greatest Generation* rightly honored those who came of age through the Great Depression and the Second World War, sacrificing a lot and contributing enormously to the security and vitality of our nation.

At Westminster, we've called that generation the "Builders," partly because many of them belonged to a Sunday school class by that name and partly because they literally built the church. The Builders Class recently disbanded after many decades of faithful meeting, but their legacy will endure as long as Westminster continues to serve God and minister to the community and the world.

We're all grateful and deeply indebted to the Builders generation. Still, ever since Tom Brokaw's book came out I've felt a certain caution about what might be misleading in the notion of a "greatest generation." If the title is taken to mean that a particular generation was inherently superior to those who came before and after, as if humanity itself somehow peaked in the decades immediately before and after World War II, that would be a misreading not only of human nature but of that generation's own self-understanding.

My parents belonged to that generation, and among the qualities most characteristic



of their peers was a certain humility. They did not see themselves as exceptionally noble or superior, because they recognized in themselves the same messy mixture of vices and virtues that has always characterized humanity. What was exceptional about them was how the basic values they were taught prepared them to face the extraordinary challenges of their times.

That's important to remember for at least two reasons. First, it removes the temptation to think that one generation's brightest qualities are unattainable by another, and thus lower the bar of expectations for ourselves and those who come after us. As a historian, I'm convinced that good and bad impulses are distributed more or less consistently among human beings through the ages. What changes are the circumstances and cultural factors that pull people in one direction or another, and the challenges to be faced in any particular time or place.

Which brings me to the second point: that strong moral and spiritual development are essential in every generation, because challenges will surely come to test our mettle and the quality of our character. What we've done in times of preparation will help to determine how well or poorly we perform in times of trial – not unlike the way that a team's level of training and practice will shape the way they meet their opponents on the playing field.

When I see the emerging leaders in our church, and the qualities they're helping to instill in our children and youth, I'm hopeful that more "greatest generations" will continue to emerge, when great challenges arise to focus their attention and draw forth from them what Lincoln called, in another generation, "the better angels of our nature."

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Traditional Worship

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📍	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.

Epiphany: Celebrate the Light of the World

Christians celebrate Epiphany each year on or near January 6. Epiphany, which means "showing forth," celebrates the visit of the magi, or wise men, to the baby Jesus. These men were not Jews, but Gentiles who saw the star that led them on a long journey to Bethlehem. Their search for the Savior shows that Jesus came for all people.



Epiphany is a season of light – the guiding light of the star leads to Jesus Christ, the light of the world. We celebrate Jesus, who came to the dark places of the earth to bring light from God.

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

Starting Ministry

January brings many beginnings. For the church, the day we celebrate the start of Christ's ministry on earth is a powerful reminder that Jesus grew from the sweet infant of Christmas into the strong yet gentle adult of parables, sermons, and ultimate sacrifice for our salvation. We call this special day the Baptism of the Lord, when Jesus was baptized by John the Baptist in the Jordan River, and the Holy Spirit descended on him "as peaceful as a dove and yet as urgent as a flame" (F. Bland Tucker). And Jesus began his ministry.

Early January is also the time when new elders and deacons are ordained and installed to serve God in the leadership of our community of faith at Westminster. As these elders and deacons start new assignments that build on Jesus' ministry so long ago, each of us can remember Jesus' baptism and our own baptism as we rededicate ourselves to God's service, living out the message of Christ our Lord.

The Baptism of the Lord falls on January 8, the Sunday after Epiphany. It is a starting day for Christ Jesus and his church.

Upcoming Events

6
JAN Epiphany of the Lord

8
JAN Baptism of the Lord
Ordination and Installation of Officers

Ordination Service for Jason Freyer

22
JAN "Bittersweet Love" Concert
Galbreath Chapel
3:00 p.m.

Ordination Service for Jason Freyer

In June 2016, Jason Freyer graduated from Pittsburgh Theological Seminary. On January 8, he will be ordained as a teaching elder in the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) and will become Westminster's temporary associate pastor for high school ministry, contemporary worship, and media. Please celebrate with us at his ordination service on Sunday, January 8, at 3:00 p.m. in the WROC. Light refreshments will follow in Fellowship Hall.

WESTMINSTER SEMINARS

Sundays at 9:45 a.m.
Galbreath Chapel

January 8, 15, 22, 29

Eat What Is Set Before You: *Risk, Gift, and the Mission of God*

Scott Hagley, Assistant Professor of Missiology
Pittsburgh Theological Seminary

In Luke 10, Jesus instructs the 70 to go ahead of him in pairs. They are told to carry nothing on their backs and to radically depend on the hospitality of those to whom they are sent. Jesus instructs them to stay in homes, to heal the sick, and to eat what is set before them. Jesus' instructions unveil an aspect of God's mission we often miss. We are good at going, providing, helping, and even perhaps preaching. But we are not so competent when it comes to encountering, receiving, and depending upon God's gifts to us in the gifts and presence of our neighbors. Over the course of four weeks, we will explore three different ways that congregations might learn to participate in God's mission as such a risk and gift. We learn to "eat what is set before us" by learning to discern our call, cultivate deeper faith, and recognize the companions that God provides along the way.

January 8

Welcome to the Table

January 15

Which Tables? Discerning Our Calling

January 22

Where Are You, Lord? Cultivating Worldly Practices for Faith Formation

January 29

What Will We Do? Discovering Missional Companions Along the Way



Chapter Two

I have for the longest time wanted to be the guy who had written a book. Not so much did I want to write a book, but I wanted to have been the guy who wrote the book. They all seemed like really cool dudes to me. Donald Miller. Bob Goff. Rob Bell. Even imagining myself sitting in the Rabbit Room with Lewis and Tolkien and those guys seemed pretty sweet. So every now and again I would get pretty motivated, sit down, and start writing. I would write a great chapter one, nine or ten pages of great ideas, and then get distracted and never finish. So on my computer right now there is a folder called "Chapter ones." I have about 20 or so chapter ones that never became books. They were the beginning, but there was never any conclusion. They weren't part of a bigger idea. They weren't in and of themselves grand works. They were just...chapter ones.

Hard as it is to imagine, I have been here at Westminster for nine and a half years. We have accomplished a whole lot together, seen tremendous growth in our youth program, learned from one another, laughed, cried, and most importantly celebrated who Jesus Christ is and what he is doing in our midst. I've said it before in so many *Spire* articles, but it bears repeating: I am so grateful for this opportunity to serve Christ in this place. This congregation has been overwhelmingly kind, supportive, loving, and gracious.

And here's the best part: that was only chapter one.

On January 8 at 3:00 p.m., I'll be ordained here at Westminster. I would absolutely love it if each and every one of you could be there! The service itself is going to be tremendous. Some of our students from Veritas will be a part of it. The Bridge worship team will be in full force. My friends from seminary will be part of it. And my own youth leader will be there to preach the word. I tell you, it's going to be a great hour or so together, so please come and join us if you can!

But even more than I am excited about the service itself, I am really, *really* excited for what chapter two of ministry together looks like. We have found our way to some unique challenges. What does it look like to be a church that values honest to goodness connection in a world that will so easily settle for a 140-character twitter chat? What does it look like to reach out into the community to bring some of those "nones" into the fold, those who are angry and dissatisfied with the kind of church that is nothing like Westminster? How do we best minister to kids who are busier than ever, who may no longer have the kind of time to show up



in church for youth group? These are incredible challenges to be sure, but I'm also fairly convinced that Westminster is uniquely qualified to come together to find solutions. I'm really excited about the opportunities in front of us. More than any of the chapter ones on my computer, I am excited about chapter two at Westminster.

This *Spire* article is an invitation. Yes, of course, I want to invite all of you to join me for the ordination service (and because we're Presbyterians, hang out for a cookie reception afterward)! But even more than that, I want to invite you to be a part of chapter two. I want to invite you to engage and interact with these teenagers that we are blessed to work with week in and week out. I want to invite you to reach out with me to our neighborhoods to share the goodness of Jesus Christ with the world. I want to invite you to be creative, to dream big, to explore with me what it looks like to be the church through these cultural shifts we're seeing all around us. And most of all, I want to invite you to join me in watching where Jesus is moving and changing our world. That's where all the action is.

Let's start chapter two together, shall we?

– Jason Freyer

BETWEEN HERE AND THERE

Remembering

You know what phrase I really don't like? "Forgive and forget." I get that it comes from the best of intentions, and I've never heard anyone say it maliciously, but in my opinion, it's simply off-base. All too often it's used as a conversation stopper, as if it were the final word on how to move forward. Not to mention that forgiveness is hard enough to grasp as a concept, let alone figure out how to show it. So let's start there, with the word *forgiveness*.

A few times recently I've spoken with people who are having a hard time forgiving. Some are having a hard time forgiving themselves, some are having a hard time forgiving others, and a few are struggling with both. Forgiveness is hard. Hard to define, hard to understand, hard to practice. One of my favorite pieces in scripture is the story of a "sinful woman" who barges into a fancy dinner party that Jesus is attending. The whole group is aghast at her actions, but Jesus says this to them: "I tell you, her many sins have been forgiven – as her great love has shown. But whoever has been forgiven little loves little" (Luke 7:47). Did you catch that last part? Those who have been forgiven little, love little – which I read as also meaning that those who have been forgiven much, love much. Forgiveness has to do with replacing the actions and emotions of pain (exclusion, resentment, isolation, anger) with the actions and emotions of love (inclusion, joy, acceptance, peace). Easier said than done, I know, but at least it's a place to start.

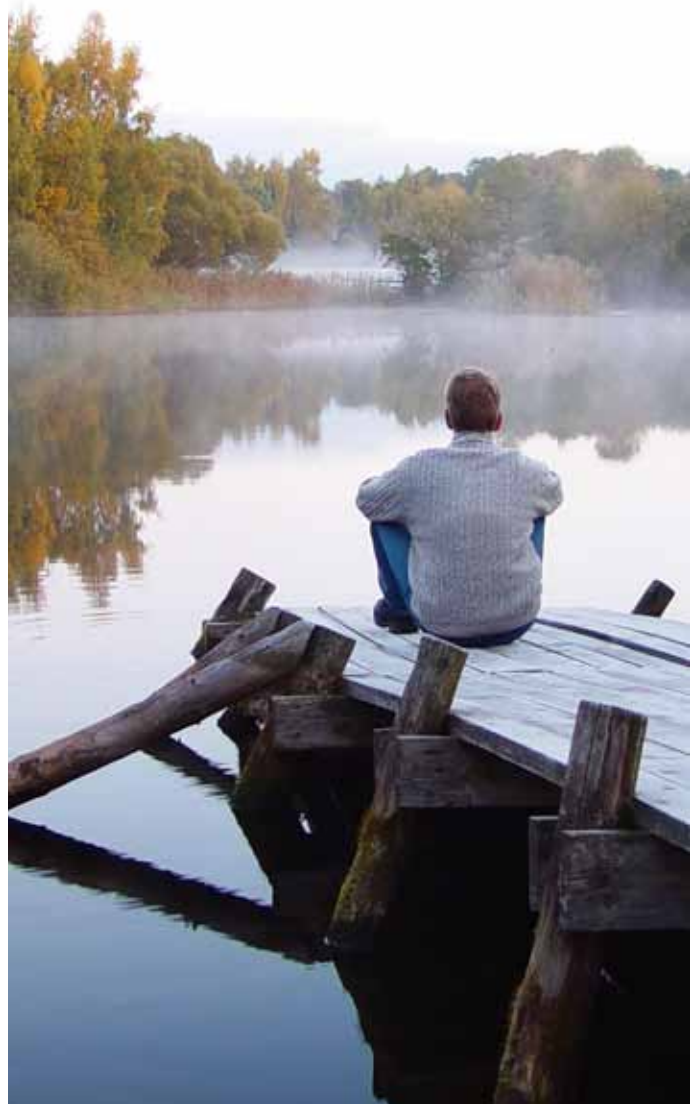
And what about the second part of the phrase "Forgive and forget"? To intentionally forget where we come from opens us to the very real possibility of ending up exactly where we began. Remembering is a necessity for growth. We learn from the things we remember; we are forced to relearn the things we forget.

There is perhaps an important note here. A few years ago I wrote a similar piece about forgiveness and someone later sought me out and said something like, "But what if there is a trauma/hurt/pain in your past?" It's a good point – no one wants to remember those things. But I believe there is a difference between remembering and revisiting. Remembering implies looking back from a new perspective. Revisiting implies a movement back to that place. It is important to work *through* our pains and traumas in order to gain the perspective necessary to look back on them through new eyes. But we must never forget them.

So, as you embark on the journey of a new year, what do you need to remember? What lessons have you learned? Hard lessons that hurt, victorious lessons that brought joy – each are important. The lessons and moments in our life that we forget are, in some ways, valueless. To intentionally forget where we once were is a dangerous practice, and to forgive is not easy. Yet, as a community, let's do our best to learn to forgive, and let's do our best to remember each of the things that made us who we are today. It's a new year – and each day gives us an opportunity to "love much."

What are the places where you are struggling with forgiveness or forgetting? I'd love to talk through them with you.

– Ed Sutter



So, as you embark on the journey of a new year, what do you need to remember? What lessons have you learned? It's a new year – and each day gives us an opportunity to "love much."

GLIMPSE OF MY WORLD

It was the Second Sunday of Advent, eleven o'clock worship service, the children's moment. The topic was "What God Sees." We spent some time considering what we might see when we look at Isaiah ("a grumpy old man," the kids said) or Elizabeth ("a *really* old woman, but she looks nice") or Mary. This would be the part of the conversation where we discovered that it's all about perspective – turns out that when you're only 6, that picture of a 14-year-old "Mary" looks completely grown up!

The point was that when God looked at those people, he saw something completely different.

When he looked at Isaiah, he didn't see a grumpy old man. He saw a prophet, someone who could speak for God, communicating his message to a nation of people who didn't really want to hear it, especially since it wasn't exactly the best news.

When he looked at Elizabeth, he saw a woman who, although she had never borne a child and was well past the normal age for such things, could birth and help raise the messenger who would prepare the way for the coming of the Messiah, Immanuel, God-with-us. A woman who could provide some comfort, companionship, and support to a young woman who was about to become pregnant under pretty unusual circumstances.

When God looked at Mary, he saw the woman who would humbly take on the role of mother to God's own son – a role that was undoubtedly filled with joy, but also with almost unbearable sorrow. God knew that Mary, untried young woman though she was, would be the right choice for such a task. He knew that each of these people was exactly the person for what God wanted.

We talked about the idea that God sees more; he sees bigger than we do. He sees possibilities and opportunities, where we might see dead ends and problems. God sees better than we do.

The conversation went well enough. And then, the worship service went on. Just a normal sort of Westminster service.

But one of our young people stopped me in the hallway afterward. "What," she wondered. "What does God see when he looks at me?"

Her question stopped me in my tracks.

It's all well and good to say, "Well, God gets it even when we don't. Good for God!" (That's why he's God and I'm not, right?)



God sees better, and more, than we do. He calls us, I think, to be open to possibilities we can't see: for those around us, for ourselves.

But I couldn't leave it at that with that young woman. I couldn't just leave it up to God. After all, it was me she was standing in front of, looking for an answer.

And then it dawned on me. Of course, God sees better, and more, than we do. And he doesn't necessarily ask that we see the same things he sees in people.

But he does, I think, call us to be a reflection of his love for people who are hurting, even when we might not know that they are.

He calls us, I think, to be open to possibilities we can't see: for those around us, for ourselves.

He calls us, I think, to listen for God's call in our own lives, to be ready to accept his take on the people we might grow to be.

And he calls us, I think, to help others hear that call in their lives.

– Robin Pyles

An Invitation to Gratitude

"Give thanks to the Lord because he is good, because his faithful love lasts forever!"

Psalm 107:1 (CEB)

Donna was an amazing woman. She was one of my hospice patients. I visited with her and her husband many times over the long months of her dying. She was a faithful Christian and a devoted wife, mother, and grandmother. Often, she told me of her frustration and confusion at why God was taking so long to take her home. Even more often, though, she told me of her gratitude. She was grateful for God's love and sustaining presence throughout all her life, including this final, life-threatening illness. She was grateful for her beloved husband of many years. She was grateful for her two grown children and the wonderfully close relationships that they had. She was grateful for her loving and adorable little granddaughter. She was grateful for their big, lumbering basset hound. She was grateful for the rural setting in which they lived. And the list could go on.

I am grateful that I met Donna because these many years later I still remember her and am inspired. After one of our visits, I would leave marveling at Donna's faith and love and thanksgiving amid the impending loss of those she loved and of the sooner-rather-than-later death that she faced. Her gentle spirit, quiet faith, and constant gratitude for so much remind me that truly Donna

embodied the psalmist's words of praise and thanksgiving. Her life was one of thanksgiving to God whom she knew to be good and whose love lasts forever. She knew that while God's love saw her through this earthly journey, that same love was awaiting her beyond death.

Not only does Donna's life inspire me, but it also challenges me. It challenges me to consider my life. Do I live a life of gratitude as she did? Do life's challenges distract me from the God of the psalmist – a good and ever-loving God? Do minor annoyances like rude people in the grocery store or impatient drivers distract me from being grateful that I have a grocery store in which to shop and a car in which to travel? Unfortunately, all too often my answer to the first question is "not always" and to the second and third questions "yes." What about you? Look at your life and answer questions like these.

The German Christian mystic and theologian Meister Eckhart once wrote: "If the only prayer you say in your life is 'thank you,' that would be enough." As this new year begins, join me in an invitation to live grateful lives. Like Donna, there will possibly be challenges, frustration, and even sadness over the next months. Let's remember the words of the psalmist and of Meister Eckhart as well as Donna's witness. How wonderful if at the end of these next 12 months we could answer "yes" to the first question and "no" to the last two questions! Thanks be to God for his goodness and never-ending love.

Shalom.

– Dave Fetterman

*If the only prayer you
ever say in your entire
life is thank you,
it will be enough.*

- Meister Eckhart



WESTMINSTER
PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH
Music
& Arts Series

Bittersweet Love

Musicians of ARTEK

Sunday, January 22
3:00 p.m.
Galbreath Chapel

Brighten your winter as you listen to three marvelous voices singing about the eternal subject of love. You will hear solos, duets, and trios for women's voices by the great Italian composer Claudio Monteverdi (1567-1643) and his contemporaries Luzzaschi, Strozzi, and more. Three of America's finest sopranos – Laura Heimes of Princeton, NJ, Clara Rottsoik of Philadelphia, and Barbara Hollinshead of Washington, DC – present a program of beautiful 16th and 17th century music depicting the joys and pains of love. With ARTEK director and harpsichordist Gwendolyn Toth.

Monteverdi straddles the late Renaissance and the early Baroque, which makes him a fascinating figure in the history of music. A master of emotional expression in late Renaissance music, his compositional style evolved as he helped define the new Baroque style. ARTEK's program of music about the timeless topic of love exquisitely illustrates the best of the old and the new styles.

A reception in the gallery will follow the concert. Admission is free; donations will be gratefully accepted to support future concerts.



ARTEK is one of New York City's premier early music ensembles. They present historically-informed concerts of music to stimulate interest and develop appreciation for early music in our society. And they do it with compelling passion and precision, as Allan Kozinn of the *New York Times* describes: "Deeply considered, beautifully sung...consistently polished, finely balanced performances."

ARTEK's music resonates with audiences and illustrates the vitality, depth of feeling, and sheer beauty of music before 1800. Read more about ARTEK at www.artekearlymusic.org.

WESTMINSTER RECREATION & OUTREACH CENTER (WROC)

First Place 4 Health

A Weight-Loss Program and So Much More!

First Place 4 Health invites you to discover the most complete Christ-centered weight-loss and healthy living program available, based on proven techniques and 25 years of experience.

See how putting God first can lead to successful weight loss. Learn about how God calls Christians to be physically fit. Understand the positive effects that good nutrition and exercise have on your emotions and spirit.

Experience the difference when you put Christ first in all areas of your life.



Emotional

This component is the experience of genuine community combined with your ability to handle the stresses of life.

The First Place 4 Health plan for emotional wellness includes a weekly group meeting specifically designed to:

- Combat isolation
- Increase optimism regarding personal change
- Provide information regarding effective coping techniques
- Change self-focus to God-focus
- Build healthy interpersonal relationships rather than focusing on a destructive relationship with food

Mental

Loving God with your mind means that you let him take every thought captive, especially those negative voices that keep you in doubt and despair. You will be asked to memorize one scripture passage every week.

Scripture memory will:

- Empower you to resist temptation
- Keep you on course as you move toward your goals
- Allow the Holy Spirit to bring the verses stored in your heart up into the mind at just the right time
- Enable you to meditate on God's Word rather than give into negative thinking

Physical

A lifestyle of physical health includes eating healthy foods, making time to exercise, getting enough rest, and learning how to enjoy quality recreation.

Taking care of yourself physically includes:

- Exercising daily
- Eating well, choosing quality foods in the appropriate quantities
- Balancing work, rest, relationships, and recreation

Jesus understands our physical weakness and limitations and asks that we care for our physical being so we can be his body in a world that needs his compassion and love.

Spiritual

Spiritual health is vital to balance and harmony. By following our Savior's example we can enjoy the peace of God that passes all understanding, no matter what circumstances we are in at the present moment.

First Place 4 Health will teach you to spend time with the Lord on a daily basis through:

- Bible study
- Scripture reading
- Prayer

Once again, Jesus is our example when it comes to loving God with all our spirit.

Free Orientation Meeting

(Orientation is required for new members.)

Monday, February 6

10:30 a.m.

Room 231

Register at wroc.westminster-church.org or call Kathy Long at 412-835-6630.

First Place 4 Health Orientation will give you an opportunity to hear about this Christ-centered weight-loss program that addresses all areas of life – physical, mental, emotional, and spiritual. You will have the chance to view materials, ask questions, and have a good understanding of what to expect during the journey to a new you.

Visit our website at wroc.westminsterchurch.org for registration and details on all WROC winter events and fitness classes.

Twelve-Week Session

February 13 – May 1

Mondays, 10:30 - 11:45 a.m.

Room 231

Instructor: Marianne Trachok

Cost: \$15 includes *Start Losing – Start Living* Bible study book

Additional Resources:

- Member's Guide – Required, but not provided; please search online for a new or used book
- Member's Kit – Optional; includes above Member's Guide

Register online at wroc.westminster-church.org or call Kathy Long at 412-835-6630.

Pet Ministry

Caring for the Health of God's Whole Creation

In the growth of pet ministries, Westminster Church is hardly alone. Animal ministries are growing so rapidly in every state that the Humane Society of the United States has made Faith Outreach a major program under the leadership of senior director Christine Gutleben.

Religion professor Laura Hobgood-Oster tells us:

The history of Christianity is full of animal blessings and animal burials. Most of the holy people, saints, are pictured with animals, and have had caring and loving relationships with animals. The tradition is full of animals. We just started to lose sight of that three or four hundred years ago.

It's worth acknowledging the strong scientific basis for the interdependency of humans and animals. The relationship between human and animal health is especially strong. Diseases spread from animals to humans and humans to animals. This understanding provides the foundation of "One Health" programs at the U.S. Centers for Disease Control.

In the area of obesity, we are seeing a nearly perfect intersection between personal health, family health, and the health of our beloved critters. The parallels are stunning.

Rates of obesity in small animals – both cats and dogs – are rising in lockstep with humans. Veterinarians are seeing an alarming increase in obesity so severe that the affected cats and dogs cannot move around, cannot function, and can become impossible to care for.

Recognition of obesity in cats and dogs is a problem for veterinarians on many levels. Though it is dramatically shortening the lives of cats and dogs, obesity is seldom noted in an animal's health record. It's even harder for a pet owner to acknowledge or discuss obesity with the veterinarian. The very word *obesity* might lead a pet owner to never return to the practice.

But the most interesting and challenging aspect of obesity in humans and their beloved animals is the coincidence of obesity between a pet and an owner. Veterinarians report that this coincidence challenges them daily. Very frequently, an owner with severe obesity presents a pet with severe obesity. The roots of the problem might be slightly different, but both the human and the pet share the same problem. A vet can very easily offend an owner when addressing obesity in a beloved pet. These owners identify almost completely with their cats and dogs.

Our health is tightly intertwined with the health of our beloved creatures. Obesity provides the perfect case study.

Obesity is perhaps the biggest health problem facing our animal companions. Many owners deny that it's a problem. And it is devilishly hard to treat. Just as parents are frequently blamed for the obesity of their children, so are owners blamed for the obesity of their pets.

One Health

The health of people is connected to the health of animals and the environment. This connection requires a multisectoral, One Health approach to improve health for all.

AVIAN INFLUENZA

SINCE 2003, THE WORLD HEALTH ORGANIZATION REPORTED 854 HUMAN CASES OF AVIAN INFLUENZA A (H5N1) VIRUS AND 450 DEATHS.

RIFT VALLEY FEVER

CAN CAUSE PERMANENT BLINDNESS IN ABOUT 1-10% OF PATIENTS.

SAFER FOOD

OVER 100 COUNTRIES HAVE REPORTED USING THE WORLD HEALTH ORGANIZATION'S FIVE KEYS TO SAFER FOOD, WHICH HELPS PREVENT FOOD POISONING AROUND THE WORLD.

Visit cdc.gov/OneHealth

CDC

The prevailing bias about obesity in pets is that owners cause it. The presumption is they do it by using food as an expression of love for their animals. Pet health advocates also blame "Big Pet Food" for making food that animals devour greedily. Cats purr and dogs wag at the sight of this "junk food" for pets.

Myths and presumptions are hard to separate from facts about pet obesity.

One fact is clear. Obesity in animals is on an almost perfectly parallel path with humans. The understanding of obesity in animals is incomplete, just as it is in humans. Trying to solve a problem without really understanding it seldom works out well.

When we set aside myths, presumptions, and bias, research will lead the way to prevention and treatment that works in both animals and humans. Until then, wheels are spinning. As ever, we rely on imperfect human answers and the gift of God's grace.

– Ted Kyle

Westminster at 70

I Say Communicant, You Say Confirmand

For those of us “of a certain age,” it is always a bit confounding to see our confirmands join the church. It’s not that we aren’t delighted to welcome them to the congregation. It’s just that their experience is foreign to our own. I am indebted to Jason Freyer for giving me the chance to speak to the confirmands each year about some of the history of Westminster, part of which is how they differ from us.

Back in those days, for me 1968 and 1969, joining the church was a two-year process that extended throughout our seventh and eighth grade years. During seventh grade, we completed a year of Bible study using *The Graphic Bible*, which used maps to help us visualize where various events took place. It was a wonderful book and one that remains in my library today. The year I completed that process we were led by an intern from the seminary.

The eighth grade year is a little harder to define. In my mind I have always thought of it as Practical Presbyterianism. The focus was on putting faith into action, something that has always been and remains a hallmark of the faith journey at Westminster. Across the year, our communicants class met with various leaders. Sometimes it was Dr. Galbreath. Sometimes it was Rev. Marsh. It was always action oriented. My clearest memory is of the week Dr. Galbreath talked to us about his participation in the civil rights march in Selma, Alabama. To understand the impact, you need to remember that Dr. Galbreath was telling us about this just a handful of years after his trip there. Dr. Galbreath explained that before leaving for Alabama he went to Session to explain that, despite any personal consequences, his conscience told him that he had to go. While I didn’t start attending Westminster until after his participation in the march, I was indescribably proud to be joining a church whose Session had, in effect, said, “John, go with our blessing.” That was not a foregone conclusion in those days. It’s a part of the legacy that keeps us focused on social justice all these decades later.

Beyond the two years of classes, we had to complete a number of things before finally becoming full members of the church. We wrote a statement of faith and a report on an approved book; then we were interviewed by one of the ministers and by members of Session. Once the process was complete, we had the crowning experience. Before the Sunday of our joining, we had the Upper Room supper in the old Coral Room. It’s where part of the childcare center is now and was named after the color of the paint.

No matter the process we complete to arrive at the Sunday on which we publicly proclaim our faith for all to hear, see, and know, what stays the same is that we complete that process by thinking deeply about our Christian faith.



As described in the March 1961 issue of the *Spire*, students “gather in the Chapel before joining in a repast that is served in somewhat the same manner as the ancient Passover, using no silverware and with a typical menu of those times.” For our year, the meal included grapes, bits of meat, cheese, matzo, and grape juice. While we had cups, everything was eaten without implements, just as the disciples would have

eaten. The ministers led the dinner, which was attended by the communicants and their parents. At the end of the dinner, we all took communion for the first time. That is why we were referred to as communicants. The Upper Room Supper remains so clear in my mind. If that Coral Room still existed I could walk to the exact spot where I sat for that moving and inspiring evening.

Today, most young people joining the church have taken communion since they were much younger. In confirmation, they are confirming the commitment that was made for them when they were baptized.

No matter what we were and are called, no matter the process we complete to arrive at the Sunday on which we publicly proclaim our faith for all to hear, see, and know, what stays the same is that we complete that process by thinking deeply about our Christian faith, our Protestant traditions, our Presbyterian polity, and how we carry all three with us as we exit through Westminster’s 31 doors to do the work God has planned for each of us.

– Carolyn Kerr

Communicants’ Class Is Westminster’s Largest

Fifty-six young people comprise the 1961 Communicants’ Class, the largest in the history of Westminster Church. The Lenten season has been a period of instruction for these youths who will be received into church membership on Palm Sunday at the 9:30 A. M. Worship Service.

On Wednesday evening, March 22, they will meet, together with their parents and members of Session, for the traditional Upper Room Supper to be served in the Green Room at 6:30 P. M. They will gather in the Chapel before joining in a repast that is served in somewhat the same manner as the ancient Passover, using no silverware and with a typical menu of those times. Members of Session will repeat the familiar words spoken at our Lord’s Supper.

Last Supper Re-Enacted for Communicants

From the *Spire*, May 1957

An impressive and unusual communion service on Wednesday evening, April 17, admitted ten young communicants to Westminster Church membership.

The evening began when the young people and their parents met with the Board of Session to be examined on the course of study used in the ten-week Communicants Class series. An explanation of the "Upper Room Supper" by the Rev. John Galbreath was followed by a meal consisting as nearly as possible of authentic Palestinian foods such as unleavened bread, fruit, figs, nuts, cheese, cold mutton, grape juice, and olives. The meal was eaten by candlelight, in complete silence, and with no utensils. During the meal Rev. Galbreath read Scripture concerning the Last Supper of Christ and His disciples and a hymn was sung as the only break in the silence.

The Communion Service was taken by Intinction. In this type of service, the unleavened bread is steeped by each recipient into the Chalice so that the Communion elements are taken co-jointly. Silence was maintained as everyone left at the conclusion of the Communion service.

The young people received at this service are Sally Jamison, John Dittmer, Dana Vincent, Bruce Palmer, Karen Lanning, Zandie Reese, Tom Hill, Frank Gleve, Gary Freihauer, Elaine Leitholf, and Hugh McMillan.

Confirmation Today: Two Questions

Many will tell you that the key to success is to begin with the end in mind. A little while ago, I took that message to heart when designing our confirmation class. When a class is confirmed by Session, Jim will ask them "Do you profess faith in Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior?" and "Will you be a faithful member of this congregation through your prayers, presence, gifts, and service?" So our class lectures are split into two parts, each part trying to give students all the information they could possibly need to say yes to those questions, and to know what saying yes actually means.

But another piece that really separates our confirmation class from others I've seen is how we involve parents in the process. This can be a challenging season for parents, as they watch their children make their own choices, blaze their own trails. A few years ago Dave Fetterman and I started working together to make our confirmation program more holistic for families, and we've seen really great results.

Indeed, Westminster has a great history of confirmation. It is one of my biggest honors and joys to continue that legacy.

– Jason Freyer

Baptisms

September 11

Annawynn Fortney

Parents:

Elizabeth & Cameron Richardson

Faith Courtney

Parents:

Courtney & David Kern

Casey James

Parents:

Lynne & Jim Bateson

September 25

Calvin James

Parents:

Karen & Jamie Surber

October 23

Emma Karen

Parents:

Adrienne & Mitchell Klement

November 13

Jesse Robert

Parents:

Alison Eonta & Douglas Sechler



My Sister's Keeper

Every day, homeless youth in Pittsburgh wonder where they will sleep. They do not have a permanent home or own many items other than what is provided at shelters, but the shelters can only provide so much. The average age for the first homeless experience is 14, with individuals as young as 12 in an unstable and unsustainable living situation.

Homeless youth are typically defined as unaccompanied young people ages 12 and older who do not have a permanent place to stay and who are living in shelters, on the streets, in cars or vacant buildings, or who are "couch surfing" or living in other unstable circumstances.

Young people become homeless for a variety of reasons, including unsuitable home environment involving abuse or neglect, absent parents (incarcerated, passed away, left home) and no close relatives, or aging out of the foster system. They run away or are kicked out. Homeless young people could be struggling with addiction or may have been disowned or faced intolerance due to sexual orientation or gender identity.

Last year, the girls in the Westminster confirmation class teamed with the Veritas girls' small groups to organize a program called "My Sister's Keeper." The teens in this church recognized that when they take a shower their favorite personal hygiene products are at their fingertips, but that the teens who are homeless sometimes have little but the clothes on their backs when they enter a shelter. The Westminster teens decided to collect items – such as shampoo, soap, hair ties, feminine hygiene products, and clothing – in drawstring bags to give to the female homeless youth population in Pittsburgh.

The program is continuing this year to provide these items to teen girls in two shelters: Three Rivers Youth Emergency Shelter and FamilyLinks Sylvan House. We are asking the congregation to join us this year by donating an item from the following list:

- Feminine hygiene products
- Toiletries: shampoo, conditioner, toothpaste, toothbrushes, deodorant, hair ties, brushes, body wash, scrunchies (Note: Many of the girls in the shelters are girls of color and have different skin needs, so variety in toiletries would be helpful.)
- Hats, gloves, mittens, scarves, warm socks
- Monetary donations – last year they were used for the drawstring bags

Donations will be collected during the month of January in bins located throughout the church. Please listen to the announcements or look in the bulletin for details of the collection.

– Morgan Marisa

What the Deacons Do

Keeping Our Troops Overseas in Mind

The Deacons were busy last month. Lynn Brown has a daughter currently serving in Kuwait. In keeping with the Christmas spirit, we decided to make homemade cookies to send to Kira and her troop. In early December, we sent the boxes off with our holiday wishes. The fifth and sixth graders of JAM also added their special touch by providing us with handmade cards. It was our hope that these goodies helped to ease the homesickness that is felt by our soldiers at this time of year.

We are all very excited about the new project called "Treasures for Troops" that begins this month. Starting on January 8, we'll collect small personal items for our soldiers serving in various places in the Middle East. Items such as shampoo, conditioner, toothpaste, toothbrushes, and Chapstick are in great need. One special requirement for liquids is that **nothing can be more than 8 ounces**, and travel-size products would be perfect! Other items include granola bars, small boxes of raisins, and decks of cards. We will gather these "treasures" before and after all services in the north entry and the Bridge. Look for our camouflage boxes and a salute of thanks from our own Dick Hestwood, dressed in full military fatigues. We would also be happy to accept checks to help with the postage. You may make checks payable to Westminster Church with "Treasures for Troops" in the memo box. Thank you in advance for helping us to make "Treasures for Troops" another Westminster success.

– Andrée Jeffrey

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

– *Philippians 2:4*



Deaths

Jack O'Brien

December 4

Robert Lawrence

December 7

Wilma Coffman

December 11

Financial Report *As of November 30, 2016*

General Fund Contributions	
Year-to-Date Actual 2016	\$1,763,004.89
Annual Budget	\$1,986,000.00
Amount needed to fulfill budget	\$222,995.11

Year-to-Date Income Statement	
Income	\$2,047,261.84
Expenses	\$2,034,854.84
Net Position	\$12,407.00

We thank you for your wonderful support through the first 11 months, and we are pleased to report that we have not had to rely on any outside lending sources to fulfill our internal and external commitments. However, as you can see above, we still have approximately 11.2% of our 2016 budgeted contributions yet to be fulfilled.

If you are current or ahead on your 2016 pledge, thank you for your continuing support. If you are behind on your 2016 pledge, we ask that you would consider catching up and fulfilling your pledge before December 31, so that we can continue to meet our commitments. Thank you.

2017 Stewardship Campaign Update

As of December 14, 2016

	2017	2016
Number of pledges received	373	481
Amount pledged	\$1,455,961	\$1,676,139

The 2017 Stewardship campaign is underway, and we thank you for your pledge for 2017. We have received pledges for 2017 from about 73% of those who pledged for 2016. If you have yet to make your 2017 pledge, you may do so by placing it in the offering plate today, or by mailing it to the Finance Office at the church, or by going online at www.westminster-church.org/give. The 2017 Stewardship campaign pledge cards are available in the pew racks and in the brochure racks around the church. Thank you.

What Is Per Capita?

The official definition of per capita is “an opportunity for all communicant members of the Presbyterian church through the governing bodies to participate equally, responsibly, and interdependently by sharing the cost of coordination and evaluation of mission; and of performing ecclesiastical, legislative, and judicial functions that identify a Reformed Church, while at the same time strengthening the sense of community among all Presbyterians” (GA Minutes, Part I, 1995).

In other words, per capita is a set amount of money (apportionment) per member that congregations pay to the larger Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.). Another way to look at it is that per capita is a Presbyterian Covenant Community Fund – part of the glue that holds Presbyterians together. Because every Presbyterian shares in the benefit of the PC(USA)’s system of government, the expenses associated with coordinating and performing the functions of that system are shared by everyone as well.

Please remember to forward your 2017 per capita apportionment to the Finance Office anytime after January 1, 2017. **The amount set by Pittsburgh Presbytery for 2017 is \$31.50 per member.** Each year Westminster must send the amount set for the year to the presbytery **for each active member of our church.** For those members who do not send in their per capita apportionment, we must make up the difference from our operating budget. In 2016 we had to make up approximately \$43,000 in per capita shortfall. For those of you receiving offering envelopes, there is an envelope inside each box for the per capita apportionment. For those of you who have elected not to receive offering envelopes, please note “2017 Per Capita” on the memo line of your check. If you have any questions regarding this apportionment, please contact David Reiter, church business administrator, at 412-835-6630x 201 or reiter@westminster-church.org. **Thank you.**



**WESTMINSTER
PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH**

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Arise, shine;
for your *light* has come,
and the *glory* of the *Lord*
has risen upon you.

— Isaiah 60:1

