



THE SPARE

WESTMINSTER PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH
Pittsburgh, PA

Good and Bad Religion

In recent days the news has focused largely on the terrible actions of the group known as ISIS, or some variation on that name. As we enter the season of Advent, it's fitting to reflect on some of the elements that make religion a good thing or a bad thing, among people of other faiths and among us Christians.

The first "I" in ISIS, of course, stands for "Islamic," because that group identifies itself with Islam. The very name ignites a whole series of debates about whether the group is really Muslim or a gross distortion of Islam, whether Islam is a "religion of peace" or an inherently intolerant, aggressive faith, and how Christians and other non-Muslims should relate to Islam.

I've studied religions, politics, economics, and international affairs for decades, and I think many of those debates generate more heat than light. Too often people simply take up sides and cherry pick facts to fit whatever views they already hold, so that elements of truth are shrink-wrapped to fit other interests.

That's clearly the case with ISIS, and with some of the responses to their atrocities. There are something like 1.2 billion Muslims in the world, the vast majority of whom live peaceably in their communities and want the same things that most other people want: security, educational and other opportunities,

freedom from poverty and oppression, and the sort of faith and hope that their religion offers. Equating ISIS with Islam is like equating the Ku Klux Klan with Christianity. Whether Klansmen are "really" Christians or the ideologues of ISIS are "really" Muslims depends on definitions, but most people denounce the distortions of their faith generated by the brutish members among them.

Fear is a powerful motivator, which is why so many groups and individuals try to use it to their advantage. Some depend on terrorizing others to get their way, and we call them terrorists. Others stoke people's fears for personal gain, in order to win votes or viewers or revenues from book sales, advertisers, sponsors, or speaking engagements. Fear can be highly profitable, and that's a dangerous thing because fear distorts our ability to reason precisely when we need to think most clearly.

A deep Christian faith should help to reshape our response to fear in general and terrorism in particular. "Though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil," the psalmist says. If we truly believe in God, we will trust in God even when someone tries to scare us, and we will treat people in the way God wants us to treat them, instead of letting fear bring out in us the very qualities we abhor.

Reality is full of nuances, and as always God and the Devil are in the details. What to do about terrorism is complicated, involving tradeoffs between conflicting values. But if faith rather than fear drives our response, the Christ we celebrate at Christmas will be glorified, and Christianity will be seen as a religion worthy of our dedication.



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 issue. Please include the author's name,
 telephone number, email address, and a title.
 All articles are subject to editing.

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📅	Sundays
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📍	WROC

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

Christmas Eve Services

5:00 p.m.
*Family Service in
the Sanctuary*

7:00 p.m.
*Contemporary
Service in the
WROC*

9:00 & 11:00 p.m.
*Lessons and Carols
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New Year's Eve

6:30 - 7:30 p.m.
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CHRISTIAN FORMATION SEMINARS

Sundays at 9:45 a.m. in Galbreath Chapel

November 29; December 6, 13, 20

Advent Lights

Jack Aupperle

This year's Advent series will examine some of the traditional themes of Advent – such as hope, peace, patience, and prophecy – from a scriptural and contemporary point of view. Advent is a season of anticipation, which calls us to a more serious Christian engagement in the world. In a time that often pulls us away from God's call to quietly prepare our hearts for the coming of Christ, these seminars will help us stay focused on the strength and responsibilities of life in Christ.

Jack Aupperle, a Pittsburgh native and Methodist minister, is a graduate of Bethany College and Drew University. He served parishes in New York and Western Pennsylvania and for over 30 years has been on the faculty of St. Vincent College, where he teaches a variety of classes in the Theology Department. Each year since 2007, Dr. Aupperle has presented a seminar series at Westminster. It is always a joy to welcome him back.



The seminars will not meet on December 27. Join us on January 3, when Brian Peck will reflect on his work as Clerk of Session at Westminster.

Thursday AM Bible Study

December 3, 10, 17

10:00-11:30 a.m.

Room 238

You are invited to a three-week Advent Bible Study led by Dave Fetterman. We will explore the Advent scripture from the Revised Common Lectionary. Bring your favorite Bible and a desire for good conversation and fellowship. **RSVPs are a must only if you need childcare.** RSVP to Tracey Mattes at 412-835-6630 or mattes@westminster-church.org. There is no cost for the study.

DIARY OF A LUNATIC



Do you know what it is like to wait? To sit with patience, awaiting a promise of goodness in the not too distant future, is a difficult discipline. As it stands, I know what waiting is like all too well. I am currently writing this on November 5, and my boys could be here any minute now. In the season you are reading this, they are surely here, the promised fulfilled. But now, I am sitting at my desk with my cell phone glued to my hand with the doctor's words from our last visit still ringing in my ear: "It could be any minute now..." Every phone call gets my heart jumping. Every text message from my wife is a shot of hope. I have paced ruts into the carpet in my house and in our office and at the school and really anywhere my feet dare to tread. I am a nervous, anxious, excited, and hopeful mess.

It is hard to imagine someone who enjoys this part, the waiting. We try to cut waiting out of our daily experience as much as we possibly can. For instance, I'm still chowing down on Halloween candy and yet Santa has been a nightly presence on my TV screen. Wait for Christmas? No way. Shipping in 7-10 business days? Hello, Amazon Prime! Waiting is no fun, and it seems like our whole experience is built around trying to eliminate waiting.

And so we enter into this quirky, odd holiday season. Before Christmas arrives, the church has long celebrated the season of Advent. We celebrate waiting. I simply cannot imagine anything so countercultural as to celebrate waiting. And yet that's exactly the season you and I are entering. Really though, we're always in that season. We live between the empty tomb of the resurrection and the coming hope of the world made right through Christ's

second coming. We're caught in the in-between. We're stuck between what is and what could be.

The good news is that much like waiting for twins, there are steps we can take in the meantime. In my case, there are cribs to be built and clothing to be sorted and car seats to be installed. In our case, waiting for Christ to return, we do what we can to make this world into what it should be. We feed the hungry. We visit the lonely. We spread peace as far as we can cast it. We wait, but we don't sit. We anticipate, but with a sense of action. We are patient, but we are still restless.

So join me in celebrating our waiting. Join me in anticipating the good and peaceable kingdom when it arrives. And join me in welcoming two new little boys to the world. They'll be excited to meet you!

Grace and peace.

– Jason Freyer

We wait, but we don't sit. We anticipate, but with a sense of action. We are patient, but we are still restless.



“Whether he is a sinner or not, I don’t know. One thing I do know. I was blind but now I see!”

John 9:25

The story of Jesus healing a blind man in the ninth chapter of John’s Gospel is quickly becoming one of my favorite testimonies of Christ’s impact on the lives he touches. I’m struck by the (formerly) blind man’s blunt innocence in the presence of all different kinds of authority, and there are certainly lessons that each of us must learn from him. Though I believe everyone to be *capable*, my hunch is that few of us are *willing* to be as bold as this man. Consider his story a challenge. Let’s break it down.

First, we are introduced to a man who was born physically blind. Never in his life has he experienced sight in the way that you or I have experienced it – until he comes in contact with Jesus. (A small aside: I think it’s interesting that the story begins with Jesus essentially talking about this man behind his back. What do you think Jesus is saying about you when you’re not paying attention?) His first contact with Jesus comes in the form

of a muddy, spitty cocktail rubbed onto his eyes – not pretty, yet deeply effective. Later, when confronted by those wishing to minimize or eliminate Jesus’ work in their world, the young man gives one of the most poignant testimonies ever spoken, in essence saying, “I have no real idea who the guy is, but I know that he’s the only reason I can see.” I wish more people could speak with such boldness. I wish there were more stories like this from people who were willing to say, “I don’t have Jesus figured out, but I know what he’s done in my life.”

For years I’ve defined testimony as “the story of how God got you to where you are today.” Your testimony can be the story of your life, or it can be the story of the last 25 minutes. It can be the story of victory upon victory, or it can be the story of having a stranger rub mud and spit on your face. The only necessary constant is the inclusion of Christ’s power effecting change in your life. I think many people are hesitant to share their testimony because it can be difficult to explain exactly how or why they were changed. We all need to take a lesson from the blind man who finds no need to give a logical explanation for the change; he only finds it necessary to give praise to the one who made the change.

Each of us would benefit from answering the question, “What changes

has Jesus’ presence made in my life?” Not “how Jesus made changes,” but “what has changed?” If you’re having a hard time answering that question, it may be wise to sit down and do some serious consideration concerning your relationship with Christ. If you find yourself uncomfortable articulating how the change came about, take comfort in the fact that no explanation beyond “Jesus works miraculously” exists for spit and dirt healing blindness. Jesus’ miraculous works can happen in your life as well!

If logical explanation of Jesus’ works were a necessity, our world would be full of empty churches and discouraged people. Fortunately for you and me, the only necessity is the boldness to proclaim that we have seen Jesus work in our lives. Let us become a church willing to boldly proclaim the changes that Jesus has made in our lives. Let us become a church willing to praise the mysterious, miraculous, and inexplicable effects of Christ. Let us become a church willing to speak boldly of a Savior’s love that logic can’t contain.

I dare you. I dare you to share your testimony. To share your story. To tell your neighbors, your coworkers, your friends, your spouse, your family. I dare you. Are you bold enough?

– Ed Sutter

GLIMPSE OF MY WORLD

Believe it or not, it's time again to get ready for Christmas. Now, by the time you read this, it really *will* be time to get ready for what may be the biggest celebration in our year. But as I am writing, it's still only the very first week of November. Amidst the early Black Friday ads and the controversy over which stores will (or won't) open on Thanksgiving Day, it feels a little early to be thinking about decorations and listening to Christmas carols and hanging stockings. So, why is it that we can't seem to wait to rush into the Christmas season and its traditions?

Of course there's the push of the commerciality of the season – all the advertising agencies competing for our attention as they try to convince us that we absolutely *must* have their products. But I think there's more to it than that. In my house, I'm already hearing the strains of Christmas music. Christmas candles are lined up ready for use right after Thanksgiving, and plans are set for decorations (including how to protect the Christmas tree from the new puppy). Not to mention the list of Christmas cookies to bake that's hanging on the fridge, along with the menu plans for Christmas Eve and Christmas Day meals. Good grief, it's almost two months away! Believe me, we're not that organized as a family. This much advance preparation is not our normal mode!

I've been reading in the Psalms, and I think I might have a clue to what's behind our obsession – our rush – to get to Christmas. This is the psalm I was reading today:

Psalm 150 (New International Version – NIV)

*Praise the Lord.
Praise God in his sanctuary;
praise him in his mighty heavens.
praise him for his acts of power;
praise him for his surpassing greatness.
praise him with the sounding of the trumpet,
praise him with the harp and lyre,
praise him with timbrel and dancing,
praise him with the strings and pipe,
praise him with the clash of cymbals,*

*praise him with resounding cymbals.
Let everything that has breath praise the Lord.
Praise the Lord.*

One word leapt out at me: "Praise." The psalmist uses this same word 13 times. Thirteen times in a psalm made up of only six verses. Here's the definition, or translation, of the Hebrew word used, according to *Strong's Concordance*:

- to be clear (originally of sound, but usually of color)
- to shine
- hence, to make a show
- to boast
- and thus to be (clamorously) foolish
- to rave
- to celebrate

I love the image contained in those words "to make a show, to be clamorously foolish, to celebrate."

Isn't that what we do at Christmas? We make a great big fuss – we go all out. Christmas is a wonderful opportunity for a party, for time with family and friends, for presents and food, special music and lots of fun. But it's also a wonderful reminder of God's presence in our world, our history, and our lives. It's a great reason to praise him – to just enjoy the chance to make a lot of happy noise, to allow the joy of God's presence to overwhelm our hearts and minds. And maybe that's at least a part of what we just can't wait to start?

Maybe that's the part of Christmas we can really hold on to – all through the craziness of the preparations, the fun and excitement of the holidays, and beyond. The words to this hymn say it well:

*Praise ye the Lord, the Almighty, the King of creation!
O my soul, praise him, for he is thy health and salvation!
All ye who hear, now to his temple draw near; join me in
glad adoration.*

So "Praise the Lord" – it's my theme for Christmas this year.

– Robin Pyles

Learning to Use the Bible

In October, a group of third and fourth graders participated in the workshop "Have My Bible, Now What?" They learned about their Bibles and all the amazing parts of this special book. During the four weeks, the students were on a great adventure of reading, exploring, and discovering all their Bibles have to offer them. Through activities and games, they learned how to look up Bible passages and use the Table of Contents to find books of the Bible. These third and fourth graders became very familiar with the Bible. And so the title of this workshop can now be changed from "Have My Bible, Now What?" to "Have My Bible and I Know How to Use It."

– Debb Egli



Removing Barriers



Do you remember the story of the rich young man who approached Jesus and asked to follow him (Matthew 19:16-22)? In verse 16 (NRSV), the young man asked Jesus, "Teacher, what good deed must I do to have eternal life?" And Jesus says:

"Why do you ask me about what is good? There is only one who is good. If you wish to enter into life, keep the commandments." He said to him, "Which ones?" And Jesus said, "You shall not murder; You shall not commit adultery; You shall not steal; You shall not bear false witness; Honor your father and mother; also, You shall love your neighbor as yourself." The young man said to him, "I have kept all these; what do I still lack?" Jesus said to him, "If you wish to be perfect, go, sell your possessions, and give the money to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven; then come, follow me." When the young man heard this word, he went away grieving, for he had many possessions (Matthew 19:17-22).

We may have wanted the young man to say, "Sure, Jesus, anything you say! I'll do anything you want if I get to follow you!" That isn't what happened, though. Instead, the young man went away grieving because he wouldn't do as Jesus asked. Some may argue that

Jesus is saying that we need to give up our possessions if we are to truly follow him. I don't think so. The issue for this rich young man wasn't that he had many possessions. The issue was that all of these possessions stood between the young man and Jesus. Matthew's story is about priorities more than it is about wealth. It is a cautionary tale about allowing nothing to stand between us and wholehearted allegiance to God.

During Advent Season 2015, two questions can be valuable for us on our spiritual journeys:

- What stands between me and wholehearted allegiance to God?
- How can I simplify my life so that I can remove those barriers?

Today, Advent is a time of looking backward and of looking forward. *Backward* as we remember God's faithfulness over all the years of our past. *Forward* as we look to the future in anticipation of God's continual faithfulness. Those reflections are not meant to just make us feel good that God is taking care of us, though certainly God is doing that. Instead, because of our confidence in God's care – past, present, and future – we can be propelled daily into lives of dedicated service of the God whose love will never let us go. From the

firm foundation of God's everlasting care and protection we are able to do what the rich young man would not: say yes to Jesus' call to eliminate all barriers – financial, emotional, social, spiritual – that stand between us and daily, courageous, compassionate discipleship.

Reflect on your *past*. How has God been faithful to you? Meditate on those moments; prayerfully thank God for them. Reflect on your *present*. How is God faithful to you today? Meditate on those moments; prayerfully thank God for them. Imagine your hoped for *future*. Give thanks to God for your confident expectation of God's continued care. Then standing on the firm foundation of God's faithfulness – past, present, and future – be a living witness to those around you of a God whose love will not let them go any more than God's love has let you go. In words and actions, proclaim the matchless love of God.

Join me in an Advent journey looking at God's care yesterday and today, and expectantly awaiting God's continued care in the future. Recalling that God of love and care, allow yourself to be set in motion to serve that God in a hurting world.

Shalom.

– Dave Fetterman

A River Called Time

I recently finished reading a novel by Mia Couto, African writer, entitled *A River Called Time*. The book tells the story of a family in a small town in Mozambique, the relationship of three generations, and the transition between life and death as seen by people in that culture.

The title grabbed me. “A River Called Time” is an intriguing idea that inspires much reflection on the nature of time and our lives in this world. To think of time – and especially our time on earth, our lives – as a river is to acknowledge that everything flows as part of its own nature. To think of time as a river is to recognize the constant movement, the unstoppable flow, and to realize that our own lives are lived on the waters of constant change. We become aware that on some days in our lives we’ll navigate our journey on the serene waters of a calm river, and yet on other days we’ll have to endure the turbulent currents of a dark storm.

To think of life as a river, then, can create anxiety. If life is like a river – never the same, always changing – where do we find our security? How do we stop ourselves from falling into anxious despair? How much can we control? How much do we need to control? If we can’t fully predict the waves that will threaten our journey, how can we live in the present moment without worrying about what we may have to face? How do we keep ourselves from the fear of unpredictability and lack of control? Where do we anchor our trust?

Worry steals our peace; it creates disquiet in our bodies and souls. Worry becomes the focus and pushes everything else to the background. When worry takes hold of our soul, it occupies the whole soul, reducing everything to the worry itself.

Faith is the opposite. When faith is the focus, trust in God’s power and abiding love frees and comforts us. Instead of running scenarios in our minds, trying



to prepare for realities that may never happen, we live in the enduring trust that we are part of a larger plan guided by a loving God. When faith occupies our soul, it is generous: faith doesn’t push everything else to the background, rather, it brings everything else into focus. Faith brings us closer to peace, it overthrows worry, and in the process it frees us to grow and love and do and rejoice.

Faith helps us worry less about the river, about the forces beyond our control, because we come to trust that the river is flowing the way it’s supposed to, even when we cannot comprehend its course. And we become concerned with the direction of our own journey, becoming the people we are meant to be. We sincerely care for others, because our sight expands from a view centered on our fears and ourselves to one centered calmly on God and others. And we don’t worry so much, but instead, we rest and rejoice in the notion that there is a wiser and more powerful force that keeps everything moving according to a loving plan.

In faith we surrender, not as defeat, but as letting ourselves be sustained by a loving force that is much more powerful and beautiful and wiser than we can ever be. We surrender our fears and our need for control, we anchor our trust in God, and our spirit grows in peace and love and generosity.

Faith gives us the security we long for and the only security that can truly last. Faith assures us that God is always with us, showing us the beauty of the calm waters in the clear days, and keeping us afloat when the storm comes and the river of life is threatening. And ultimately, when our journey comes to an end, it holds the promise that God will be there too, lovingly waiting to welcome us into the serene, peaceful, and joyful waters of eternal time.

– Mariela Mazziotti Antunes

“Fear not, for I have redeemed you; I have called you by name, you are mine. When you pass through the waters, I will be with you; and through the rivers, they shall not overwhelm you.”

Isaiah 43:1-2

Homewood Update



Recently WTAE aired a segment on the progress of the Homewood Collaborative and Westminster's involvement in its development. A link to the video is on Westminster's website.

For more than five years Westminster members have been involved in Homewood. Beginning in 2010, members regularly served meals at the Friday night services of House of Manna, a Presbyterian new church development. Some of HOM's members are homeless. In 2012, 25 Westminster members provided pro bono expertise to help HOM establish the Homewood Renaissance Association (HRA) and acquire a future headquarters building. HRA provided afterschool and workforce development programs to 70 of Homewood's youth, 20 of them former gang members. In 2014 our focus evolved into working with several more of Homewood's nonprofits as well as its funding stakeholders.

Over the last ten years Pittsburgh's foundations have invested more than \$60 million in Homewood with limited progress, due in part to the need for greater cooperation among the community's service organizations.

Over the last two years several Westminster members have worked with a team of Homewood stakeholders to establish the Homewood Community Development Collaborative and the Homewood Growth Fund. The Collaborative's mission is to align the work of all Homewood stakeholders (nonprofits, politicians, government agencies, foundations) and equip them with the best practices in community development technology from across the U.S. The work started with five of the nonprofits serving Homewood; it's

now grown to include ten nonprofits and will soon encompass 20. Pittsburgh's key planning agencies, City Planning and the Urban Redevelopment Authority, have funded the development of a comprehensive community plan that will guide the investment of the Growth Fund's venture capital. Homewood's nonprofits will be funded for working together as a team on a wide variety of projects which address Homewood's needs in housing, work force development, safety, justice, recreation, and education. A brochure describing this effort is available in Westminster's gallery and north entry.





It is remarkable to build a coalition of 20 organizations, all working toward a unified master plan, but even more impressive that the Collaborative has the public and active support of Mayor Bill Peduto, Representative Ed Gainey, and Councilman Ricky Burgess. As shown in the above photo, more than 300 of Homewood's residents attended the introduction of the Collaborative to the community.

The Growth Fund's goal is to raise \$75 million to fund the Collaborative's work, \$12 million of which we hope to raise through a capital campaign across Pittsburgh churches. To date we've raised \$1,000,000 from individuals at Westminster and another suburban church. The churches in Homewood will play a key role in engaging the entire community in this journey. Westminster and other suburban churches will assist Homewood by raising funds, providing supplemental expertise, and working toward racial reconciliation.

If you would like to know more or are interested in being involved with Westminster's efforts in Homewood, please contact Dan Paul at 412-580-0372.

– John Van Cleve

It is expected that the work of this Collaborative will motivate significant giving through the sharing of financial resources and the volunteering of time and talents, so that Homewood will become once again a vital center in one of America's most livable cities.

THE GALLERY AT WESTMINSTER

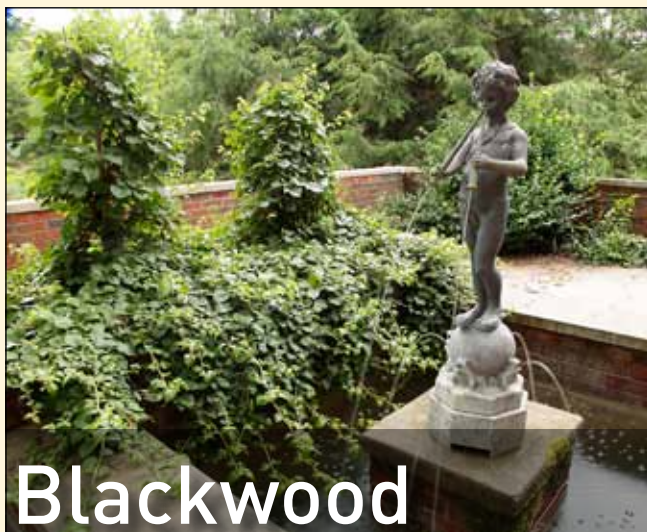
Art, by definition, is “an expression of human creative skills and imagination.” Over the past years, the Gallery at Westminster has exhibited many forms of art – paintings in various mediums and style, fiber art, photography, etc. – but gardening as a form of art has never been explored, until now. The Gallery Committee knew the backgrounds and uniqueness of the gardens of Susan Kemenyffy and Ben Robertson, and invited them to create an exhibit that would show that gardening also meets the definition of art, and more. The two gardens are not acres of beautiful flowers planted and maintained by professional landscapers. Rather, they are places of the heart that have evolved over many years by the tenacity of their owners, and they continue to be maintained and developed by the work of their owners’ hands.



Raku Place

Inspired by the spiritual qualities of the gardens in Kyoto, Japan, Susan and Steven Kemenyffy have turned **Raku Place** into an introspective journey. They have created ponds and sculptures, special walkways and mountains, using the beauty of nature to induce a thoughtful atmosphere. A visitor will stroll for about a mile before reaching the end of the journey. Susan finds great joy in working the earth and propagating the plants and turning forgotten spaces into areas with a purpose. The gardens shown in the Raku Place display were chosen and photographed by Susan.

Blackwood (owned and developed by Ben Robertson and Don Fink) is defined as “a state of mind, an ambience of sound and silence, sight and insight.” With its open meadows and rolling hills, Blackwood is more parklike than Raku Place.



Blackwood

Yet even its most reflective areas are functional as well as beautiful. The spring house at the pond, for instance, sits above a 25,000-gallon reservoir that supplies water to the many houses and structures on the estate. And the memorial tower includes a vertical, four-room furnished apartment (for guests) and a vintage clock whose works and huge pendulum may be viewed by all who are interested in the passage of time. Soft sounds from the wind harp, the carillon’s Westminster chimes, or the theatre pipe organ may occasionally be heard as one explores the ever-changing vista. There are colorful flowers at all seasons, starting with winter aconite and snow drops in mid-February, followed by trillium and wild flowers; daffodils and thousands of naturalized narcissus; pink and orange azaleas; hundreds of daylilies, Asiatic and Oriental lilies; many varieties of allium, annuals, verbena; and over 50 varieties of dahlias that bloom until they succumb to the fall frosts.

Because many local homes have beautiful flower gardens, Ben chose to include in the Blackwood exhibit – photographed by David Diffenderfer, Audrey Pollock, and Ben – some of the strategically-located statuary that tend to reinforce the pensiveness of the garden areas.

The Blackwood carillon can be heard over a half-mile radius. Imagine being on one of the nearby country lanes on that special December eve and encountering – from an unknown source – the sound of bells pealing the beloved carol “Silent Night, Holy Night”!

– Betty Digby

WROC Gift Certificates Make Great Stocking Stuffers!

Give the gift of fitness to a child or adult in your life. Visit our website for a complete listing of our Winter 2016 programs.

■ **Basketball Skills and Drills Basic Course**

(for boys and girls ages 7-11)

The course will cover a variety of skills with your child: ball-handling, dribbling, shooting, passing, offense and defense principles, and fast-break fundamentals. Each session will provide an opportunity for a scrimmage game.

January 14 – February 18

Thursdays: 5:30 – 7:00 p.m.

Cost: \$65

■ **Imagination Yoga**

(for children ages 3-5)

Through Imagination Yoga children will have time and space for relaxation, movement, imagination, and joy. The teacher will use biblical adventure themes to guide children through a kids yoga class designed just for them. Each biblical adventure introduces developmentally appropriate kids yoga poses, kindness activities, calming techniques, and concentration exercises.

February 10 – March 16

Wednesdays: 11:45 – 12:15 p.m.

Cost: \$60

■ **BRICKS 4 KIDZ CAMP – DESPICABLE BRICKS!**

We learn, we build, we play with LEGO® bricks!

(for children ages 5- 12)

Minion fans, we have a camp for you! Who doesn't love those little yellow guys? Come and build with us as we adventure through their madcap world – all made out of LEGO's®! Kids will use fascinating and challenging LEGO® components to create dynamic minion-inspired inventions, machines, and more. Bricks 4 Kidz camp will keep the pace fast and varied with guided projects and challenges as well as time for free play, so the kids are always having fun.

December 28, 29, and 30

9:00 a.m. – noon or 1:00 – 4:00 p.m.

Includes a Bricks 4 Kidz t-shirt.

\$75 - first child

\$65 - each additional child

New

Bible Basics

A Six-Week Overview
of the Bible from
30,000 Feet

If you don't know Moses or Paul and can't name many of Jesus' miracles or find Canaan on a map, this class is for you! In a simple format you'll be introduced to Bible characters, places, and events in a framework so you can "walk your way through" the entire Word of God.

A pastor with long ties to Westminster Church, Louise Rogers will lead the group through *30 Days to Understanding the Bible* by Max Anders. Everyone is welcome.

January 26 – March 1

Tuesdays

7:00 – 8:00 p.m.

OR

January 27 – March 2

Wednesdays

9:30 – 10:30 a.m.

(childcare available)

No cost; registration required.

Books are optional and can be purchased from local bookstores and online.

Chatham Baroque!

Westminster is delighted to provide a “south of the city” home to Chatham Baroque for its 2015-2016 season. Described by the *Pittsburgh Post-Gazette* as “one of Pittsburgh’s greatest treasures,” the trio continues to excite local and national audiences with “dazzling technique and lively interpretations of seventeenth- and eighteenth-century music played on instruments of the period.”

Here is an opportunity to experience the charm of Baroque music for the holiday season in the intimate setting of Westminster’s Galbreath Chapel. Friday, December 18, at 7:00 p.m. brings us *Paris in Pittsburgh*. Chatham Baroque will transport you to the magnificent salons of Paris for a joyous celebration, featuring soprano Sara Botkin and organist Alan Lewis. Enjoy French Noels, German Carols, and spirited dances from Praetorius’ colossal *Terpsichore*.

Purchase tickets online at www.chathambaroque.org or at the door.



In January, plan to attend Chatham Baroque’s *Trio Brillante* concert on Friday, January 29, at 7:30 p.m. in Galbreath Chapel. The three brilliant musicians will entertain with some of their favorite tunes. You’ll enjoy the complexity of Bach, fantastic flourishes from Italy, and the sultry sounds of Spain.

WESTMINSTER VOLUNTEERS

Westminster’s Kitchen Manager

I would like to introduce you to our kitchen manager, Lacie Bryner. The position was created to support all of our volunteers in the work they do. If you attended our Taste and See Sunday on September 13, you probably sampled her cooking.

If you have been providing any food, whether snacks or meals, as a part of your volunteer service, would it be easier for you to turn over all or part of the planning, shopping, or preparation to Lacie?

Or, would food enrich something you are already doing?

Contact me with questions. Or, contact Lacie directly at bryner@westminster-church.org or 412-495-0280.

To request her time, you must use the food request form in the members' section of our website. You can find a paper version in Peg's office.



– Jan Baumann

Florence Freeman
October 31

Doris Wheeler Hartman
November 6

Ada Rossin
November 17



Christmas

REMEMBRANCE

A Service of Comfort and Hope

Wednesday, December 16

7:30 p.m.

Galbreath Chapel

The Advent-Christmas time is a beautiful time of celebration. It can also be a time when feelings of loss and grief are profound. You are invited to join with others who have lost loved ones at a special service of Christmas Remembrance. The service will be a time to remember your loved ones, to acknowledge your grief, and to be reminded again of the comfort and hope that the newborn Christ brings to us all, especially those who are hurting.

Join us for this special time of remembrance, of comfort, and of hope.

For more information, contact Dave Fetterman,
dfetterman@westminster-church.org or 412-835-6630.

Pet Remembrance Service

Sunday, December 13
2:00 p.m. in the WROC

It's common to have a memorial service to celebrate the life of a loved one who has died. In fact, we do it all the time because these gatherings allow us to grieve the death of our beloved and also provide an opportunity to start coping with the loss and start moving toward healing. So why wouldn't we do the same for our beloved pets? After all, our animal companions have given us years of joy and are often regarded as members of the family. And when we lose them, the grief we experience can be as powerful as it is with the loss of any family member.

These are some of the reasons we're having a Pet Remembrance Service. We'll share memories, we'll laugh, we'll cry. But most important, we'll acknowledge the loss and pay tribute to these cherished members of our families. So if you – or someone you know – have recently lost a pet, please join us on Sunday, December 13, at 2:00 p.m. in the WROC. All family members, including pets that are still with you, are invited and encouraged to come.



STEWARDSHIP

Legacies

The gift that keeps on giving

The holidays find mailboxes flooded with gift requests. At the same time, many of us are conflicted between which solicitations to honor and what we wish to bestow upon friends and loved ones.

Consider the Westminster Endowment Fund. It is the gift that:

- Provides a continuing remembrance of a loved one
- Expresses love and appreciation to a friend or family
- Ensures the future of Westminster
- Supports a specific ministry that is important to you
- Extends your Christian influence to bless others both now and in perpetuity

Collectively, gifts to the Westminster endowment are invested to provide funding for major church capital projects not able to be funded by annual giving, to advance Westminster's ministry initiatives in the church and the community, and to choose missionary involvement for both the local area and worldwide. 2015 marks the fifth year the endowment will have grown sufficiently to allow giving in all of these areas.

By endowment standards, Westminster's is modest, but it enables us to stretch our ministry. Your gift or bequest, whether large or small, makes a meaningful difference in the long-term growth of our church. Please send gifts to the attention of Dave Reiter.

A joy filled Christmas from the Endowment and Special Gifts Committee.

Financial Report *As of October 31, 2015*

General Fund Contributions	
Year-to-Date Actual 2015	\$1,614,024.83
Annual Budget	\$2,073,722.00
Amount needed to fulfill budget	\$ 459,697.17

Year-to-Date Income Statement	
Income	\$1,887,596.09
Expenses	\$1,886,714.01
Net Position	\$ 882.08

Thank you for your wonderful support through the first ten 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 22.2% of our 2015 budgeted contributions yet to be fulfilled.

If you are current or ahead on your 2015 pledge, we thank you for your continuing support. If you are behind on your 2015 pledge, we ask that you would consider catching up and fulfilling your pledge, so that we can continue to meet our commitments. Thank you.

2016 Stewardship Campaign Update

As of November 18, 2015

	2016	2015
Number of pledges received	317	468
Amount pledged	\$1,244,025	\$1,706,016

The 2016 Stewardship campaign is underway, and we thank you for your pledge for 2016. We have received pledges for 2016 from about 64% of those that pledged for 2015. If you have yet to make your 2015 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 visiting the Give page on our website.. The 2016 Stewardship campaign pledge cards are available in the pew racks and in the brochure racks around the church. Thank you.

Year-End Contributions: *Recording & Reporting*

In order for your charitable contributions to be tax-deductible in 2015, they must be received in the church or postmarked by December 31, 2015. Any contributions received in the church during January 2016 (other than those that are mailed, dated, and postmarked by December 31, 2015) will be deductible only on your 2016 tax return.

Also, to ensure the deductibility of your church contributions, please do not file your 2015 income tax return until you have received a written acknowledgment of your contributions from the church. Some of your contributions may not be tax-deductible if you file your tax return before receiving a written acknowledgment of your contributions from the church. The 2015 contribution statements will be mailed to you on or around January 12, 2016.

If you have any questions regarding year-end contributions, please contact David Reiter, church business administrator, at 412-835-6630x201.

Donations of Appreciated Assets

Contributors to Westminster Presbyterian Church may give appreciated assets to the church (such as stocks or mutual funds) without being required to pay tax on the capital gains. This can be accomplished by either delivering certificates to the church or by electronic transfer of these assets to Westminster Presbyterian Church as payment on your pledge. Please note that these gifts must be long-term investments. Short-term capital gains do not qualify for the tax benefits.

The procedure for each of these types of donations is quite simple.

Certificate Donation

- Present the certificates to Dave Reiter, church business administrator, at the church office.
- The owner(s) must sign and date the certificates. If all of the shares of the certificate are being donated to Westminster Presbyterian Church, the owner(s) must sign a form letter to confirm the donation to Westminster Presbyterian Church.
- If a fraction of the total shares of the certificate is being donated to Westminster Presbyterian Church, the owner(s) must sign a form letter to confirm the donation to Westminster Presbyterian Church and a request for reissue of the remaining fraction of certificate shares.
- An acknowledgement of the receipt of the stock shares will be given or sent to the donor(s), followed by a confirmation letter of the sale, per share average price for the date of the gift, and total value of the donation.

Electronic Transfer

- Notify your broker that you wish to donate shares to Westminster Presbyterian Church through **Morgan Stanley Smith Barney**.

The transfer should go to:

DTC 0015
Account no. 827-105717-515

- It is important that you or your broker contact Dave Reiter at the church office, 412- 835-6630x201, informing us that a transfer is being made. This will ensure that proper credit is given to you on your church giving statement.
- A letter of confirmation of the sale will be sent to the donor(s). This letter will state the date of sale, per share average price for the date of the gift, and total value of the donation.

If you have further questions, please call Dave Reiter at 412-835-6630x201.

Christmas Joy Offering

Presbyterians have long celebrated the birth of Jesus Christ by giving generously to a Christmas season offering. The 2015 Christmas Joy Offering at Westminster supports two programs. Your gift to the Christmas Joy Offering helps provide financial assistance to current and former church workers and their families and also enables deserving students to attend Presbyterian-related racial ethnic colleges and schools.

Envelopes for the 2015 Christmas Joy Offering will be in the pews beginning December 20, and are also contained within your 2015 Offering Envelope boxes.



Session Update

On November 16, Session approved a tentative budget for 2016, subject to the results of our stewardship campaign and review by the Finance Commission in December. To date, pledges have been averaging a four percent increase over the current year, and Westminster members who have not yet responded are asked to do so soon, so that plans for ministry and mission may be completed for the year ahead.

Since the normal meeting date for December falls so close to Christmas this year, the November meeting will probably be the last for 2015, and members who are completing their service on Session were thanked for their many contributions.

Church Closing Policy

When the Upper St. Clair School District is closed due to weather conditions, the church offices will be closed and all activities and meetings scheduled for that day are canceled. When the school district is on a two-hour delay, the church offices will be open during normal business hours and all activities and meetings scheduled for the day will take place at their scheduled times. Church closing information is broadcast on television (KDKA, WTAE, and WPXI), radio (KDKA-AM 1020), and the church's website.

Christmas Poinsettias

The Chancel Guild is accepting memorial or honoree contributions for poinsettias. The beautiful poinsettias throughout Westminster during the Christmas season are the result of generous contributions by our members and friends. Use the form below and make your check payable to the Chancel Guild. Mail the form and your check to Peg Kinsey at the church office or place it in the collection plate. Contributions must be received no later than **Monday, December 14**, so your gift can be listed in the Christmas Eve bulletin.

No poinsettias will be disbursed on Christmas Eve. Please indicate if you plan to pick up your flower or whether you would like it delivered to a shut-in.

Christmas Memorial and Honoree Poinsettia Order Form

Memorial Honoree

Name of Memorial/Honoree (PLEASE PRINT)

Deliver poinsettia to shut-in Will pick up poinsettia on Sunday, December 27, following the worship service, or Monday, December 28, or Tuesday, December 29 (9 a.m. – 2:00 p.m.)

My Name _____

Please return this form to Peg Kinsey in the church office by Monday, December 14.



**WESTMINSTER
PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH**

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A PC(USA) Congregation

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