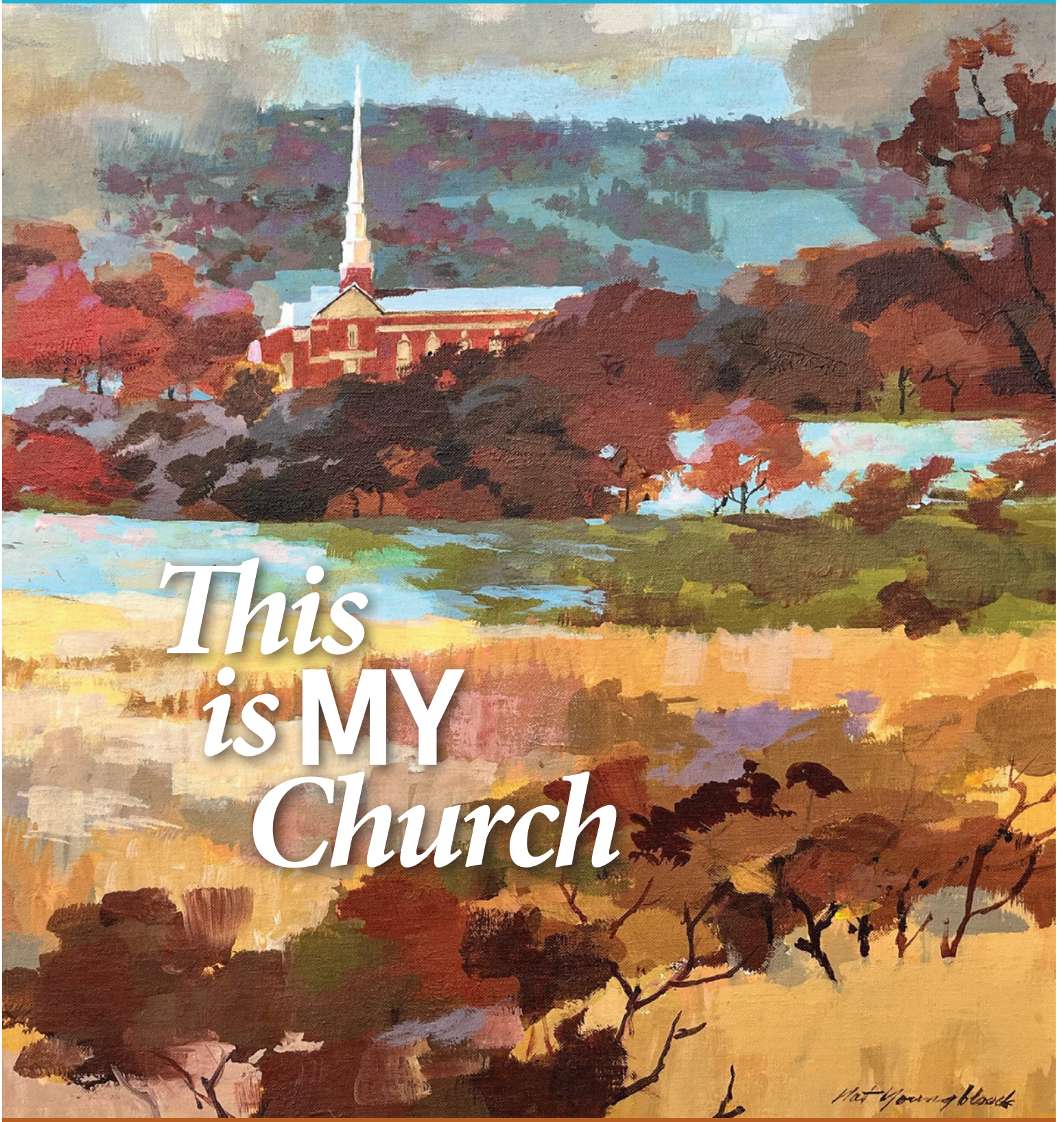


FALL 2024

THE SPIRE



A publication of
WESTMINSTER
PRESBYTERIAN
CHURCH



This
is MY
Church

Pat Young black

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The sign on Washington Road reads, "A Community of Faith since 1947." In honor of the faith of those who embody Westminster today, this issue of the *Spire* tells a few stories

from among the hundreds of people who say, "This is my church." Inside you'll read from all ages, including those baptized here and those welcomed in recent years. May these reflections nudge you to identify why this is your church. We hope you share the spirit with others about this vibrant community of faith.

- Jo Forrest

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By Kathy Peelor

Westminster Gardener and Weed Puller

For years I would drive by Westminster Presbyterian Church and wonder if I would "fit in" with the people of such a beautiful and very big church. Would that be the place for me? I was Methodist all my life but on the recommendation of my friend, Ellie Pigman, I visited Westminster off and on for several months. During those visits I could feel the comfort of warm, friendly people.

And then I wondered what this church had to offer. I soon found out that Westminster was a busy church with lots of activities that reached out to its members and the community as well. Great sermons, lovely music, thought-provoking seminars, Wednesday night dinners, preschools, exercise classes, Bible studies and youth groups, just to name a few. And a church that accepts and loves everyone! So, I took the plunge and joined in the summer of 2010.

And then the question was, "What do I have to offer the church?" When I retired in 2012, I called Jan Baumann and asked if there was help needed with pulling weeds (yes, there was), planting flowers (yes), and so on. I met with the "landscaping guys" on Thursday mornings and when I proved that I could get down on my knees to plant flowers, and then get up again, I was in! Getting more involved, I began ushering, answering the phone at the reception desk in the office, and then becoming an elder. And as a result, I still serve on the Property Commission. All while meeting more members and making lovely new friends and realizing I had a church family right here.

Having lived in Salt Lake City, I am familiar with the statue of Brigham Young. After a long trek with other pilgrims across this land, he is reported to have said, "This is the place." And now I am saying that this church is the place – this is the right place for me. This is my church. Thanks be to God! ■

The Need to Pull a Weed





Livestream ... Chartiers Bend Style

By Sandy Shanahan

Chartiers Bend Resident

In early 2021, my husband Jim and I moved to an independent living community, Chartiers Bend, in South Fayette Township. Because of mobility issues I continued livestreaming worship; livestreaming began during COVID.


One day in early 2023, a member of our Bible Study group commented that it would be nice if we could livestream worship from the National Cathedral in our theater. My brain turned that over several times and said to itself, why not Westminster? We are in the same neighborhood. I was given the green light and learned how to use the technology in our theater. Our first service was in April 2023 with 4-5 in attendance. Currently, we are averaging about 15 per Sunday.

Our preparation begins on Fridays when we download and copy the Sunday bulletin. Along with that, we copy the hymns for the day from the hymnal that Chris Hestwood delivered to us. We finish off our paperwork with what I call Page 1. Page 1 contains information that is unique to us and includes what our offerings have been. We

started to collect offerings this year in thanksgiving for all God's blessings and they total over \$2,000. Westminster has been very supportive of our efforts. Both pastors, Jo and Laura, have visited. We have hopes for more as our community grows.

Finally, through Pastor Laura and the deacons we feel very much a part of the larger Westminster congregation. The deacons come, routinely, to visit and pick up our offerings and take them to the church's finance office. In addition, they come to us on Extended Communion Sundays and serve us the Lord's Supper. For the other communion Sundays, we have an elder in our group who sets up and serves the elements.

I would be remiss if I did not share a personal note about all of this. My husband died in December 2022 and I was alone. My small extended family live in several towns and states. Because of the Holy Spirit's prompting and guidance to do this, I have a very large family here now. Thanks be to God for blessings too numerous to count. ■



This is my church! In 1996 I graduated from Carnegie Mellon University with a master's degree in choral and orchestral conducting. While at CMU, I was waiting tables at the Grand Concourse. I wasn't a very good server (lots of spilled drinks on customers!), but I was friendly and loved to chat with my customers. One evening, I was talking with a family and lamenting how difficult it was to find a job as a conductor. Their daughter remarked that she was a student at Upper St. Clair High School and that they were hiring a new choral conductor.

A NOTE on a Little Holy Intervention

By Christine Hestwood

This was a God moment! I contacted the district the next day. The deadline for applications was that very day. I submitted my materials and was hired to start that fall as the High School Choral Conductor. (In fact, there had been an heir apparent all set to "win" that job.)

In the fall of 1996, I received a call from Diane Kapp. I asked around and was told that she sold Mary Kay cosmetics. So, I ignored the call. Thankfully, she was persistent and reached out again. In addition to Mary Kay, Diane was also working as an administrative assistant to Bill Evans, the Westminster organist and Director of Music. Long story short – I began my tenure at Westminster as his assistant Director of Music and the Youth Choir director. And here I am 28 years later with a Chamily (choir + family) and a congregation that I cherish.

My church is a beacon to the community. The spire is visible to me when I walk my dog, Cooper. At times, I can hear the chimes from my neighborhood. The chimes are especially poignant as I enter Sunrise, the personal care facility where my dad lives. I help my dad with lunch every day. While I cherish our time together, it is challenging to see him in a wheelchair and slowly declining. Lunch starts at noon. As I enter, I often hear our church bells, and they serve as a God wink to me, encouraging me to be strong for my dad.

My office is on the north side of the building, and I am often the only staff member on this side of the building. I love the opportunity to help people find the Samaritan Counseling

Continued

Continued

Center. Recently, I helped two women find their AA meeting in Fellowship Hall. Just today I was visited by David, a gentleman who participates in the WROC classes for people with Parkinson's. He had attended a class and came back to try to find his lost hearing aids. We searched the WROC to no avail. Then I suggested that we retrace his steps. Sure enough, there was his hearing aid on the ground next to where he had parked that morning. And they were intact!

If you only attend worship, you are missing out on a wealth of opportunities for additional fellowship and learning. As Gail King preached years ago, Westminster has 32 doors. I encourage you to walk through one of those doors and experience our thriving church.

I'll close in a musical way, as that's my first love. Do you know the children's song "I Am the Church"? I remember this fondly from my childhood in the Methodist church:

I Am the Church

Refrain:
I am the church! You are the church!
We are the church together!
All who follow Jesus, all around the world!
Yes, we're the church together!

The church is not a building,
the church is not a steeple,
the church is not a resting place,
the church is a people.

Refrain

We're many kinds of people,
with many kinds of faces,
all colors and all ages, too,
from all times and places.

Refrain

And when the people gather,
there's singing and there's praying,
there's laughing and there's crying sometimes,
all of it saying:

Refrain

Words and music by
Donald S. Marsh and Richard K. Avery

A few years back when we were moving to the South Hills and looking for a faith community, we were immediately drawn to Westminster. The church offers so many different ways to get involved. Wednesday night church dinners have become a staple of our weekly schedule during the school year and allowed us to meet new families like ours.

I play on the church softball team (led by the notorious Jim Roberts) and my wife has attended several gatherings with other women from the church. Our daughter attends the nursery school, and we look forward to sending our son next year. Finally, the actual church services: the traditional and contemporary services offer a slightly different experience for whatever style of service you might be looking for, but the overall feeling of community and love is consistent throughout.

I encourage everyone to take advantage of the community aspect of Westminster outside just the physical church. The concept of church or changing churches can be overwhelming for some people, but once someone gets a feel for the community of Westminster, they'll be drawn in on a regular basis. Our kids get genuinely excited when we tell them we are going to a church service or event. Westminster has become an important part of our family's story, and we look forward to making many new memories over the years. It's been a real hit! ■

A Place to Dance



By the Roode Family

We think the church can mean many things to many people, the meaning of which can evolve over time.

In the case of our family right now, Westminster is a place of worship, learning, community, and for meeting new people. And if you've ever been to or perhaps watched the stage left area of the 9:45 Bridge Contemporary service, also for our dancing.

As one can imagine, with our young kids, sitting and listening for more than ten minutes is a skill our children continue to work on. Hence, the dancing. The warm welcome of our less-than-usual approach to worship has been appreciated. While it may not be Mom and Dad's cup of tea, it does seem to be a source of enjoyment for the kids and so we should be thankful that even our kids associate joy with the gathering for worship at the 9:45 service.

Since our children are still quite young, we find it helpful to have Westminster as a place to expose

them to the triune God and biblical stories, along with Sunday school that Mrs. Egli graciously allows our oldest to attend despite being a bit young. While it may not seem like our two children are paying attention, based on things my oldest has said, they do seem to absorb a lot just by their presence and (sometimes very passive) listening.

And as new-ish transplants to the McMurray area a couple of years ago, we still find it a place to meet similarly inspired people to connect with and build community. Our youngest was baptized here and we've since become members, so we plan to build this aspect of community as we (hopefully) have more time as the kids get older. Perhaps then a more fitting adjective for Westminster is for us to simply call it home. ■

Luke, Sarah, Caroline, and Alex Roode



Sarah, Caroline, Luke, and Alex.

WE INDEED FOUND OUR SPIRITUAL HOME

By Rae Burton



Front row (l-r): Lucas, Rachel, and Matthew; Back row: Rae and Jacob.

As background, I lived my first 22 years in Texas as a member of the Disciples of Christ denomination. The next four years were spent at sea as a US Naval officer. I then went to work for a company based in Pittsburgh, living in Cincinnati, Boston, and Houston. I moved to Pittsburgh in 1981 with my family and began looking for a church. We chose Westminster because it was very welcoming. My eldest son was particularly welcomed into the high school group and we enjoyed Laird Stewart's sermons. We became Presbyterians.



The next 40 years saw celebrations of joy as both of my sons were married in the church, three grandchildren were baptized, religious holidays were celebrated, and as a widower I was remarried again in the chapel. The Child Development Center was home for my five grandchildren while their moms worked.

There were times of sorrow as well. My wife of 40 years battled breast cancer for six years before God took her home. My only sibling succumbed to HIV at an early age while living in New York City. I was at a total loss at that time and the compassion of Bob Norris and the generosity of a church member allowed my compromised wife to fly to New York where Bob conducted a funeral for my brother. It was like a miracle to me that left an indelible impression of the power of the body of Christ in the form of Westminster.

Hearing the gospel preached has always been an important part of my striving to practice Christianity. While each pastor has their own distinctive style, I feel blessed to have experienced four called pastors and three interims. The power of our Chancel Choir has also been very important to me.

Overarching these years, I made many lifelong friends by participating in many aspects of church life. Serving as an elder and a member of a senior pastor search committee stand out in my memories. It all helped me understand how the church is a living body of Christ.

I came to Pittsburgh as a stranger looking for a place to attend church. I was blessed to find a spiritual home that has helped me weather the hard times, celebrate the joyful, and continue my flawed quest to live a Christian life. ■

A Family Tradition

By Max and Lindsay Senge

For our family, Westminster feels like home. Starting with my great-grandparents, there have been four generations in my family who have attended Westminster. Westminster is a place that we associate with fun, comfort, and happiness.

It is so much more than a building though. We have many memories both within the walls of our church and with our church family. Our roots in Westminster started with my great-grandparents, Gigi and PopPop.

They involved themselves in both the preservation of the building and the people. Gigi joined groups and volunteered her time with things like the rummage sale. PopPop joined the Thursday morning crew, gardening and painting to keep the building looking nice.



My grandparents, Lala and Bubba, immersed themselves in the life of the church, helping coordinate family-life events, running Barefoot School for years, and serving as both deacons and elders. My mom has made lasting friendships and gave her time to the WECEP board, coordinating family-life events, and serving as a deacon. Through activities like Sunday school, Barefoot School, Westminster softball, Wednesday night events, and everything in between, our time spent with our church family is always a good time.

Gigi and PopPop, our great-grandparents, were always at church events with us and with the generations in our family before us. They are now in the Columbarium, which gives us an opportunity to continue to experience Westminster things with them. We are lucky to be intertwined with this building that houses so many wonderful memories for us, and to have made so many lasting friendships through our church. The largest impact this place has had on our family is through the people we have met here and the generations who have shaped my family. ■

NOTE: The ideas for this were from Max (9 years old). He explained his feelings and I (Lindsay) wrote it out a little nicer!

Bodie, Bucky, and Max visit the Columbarium.

HOLY Generations!

By Lauren MacWhinnie

As a little girl, I can remember feeling a sense of comfort as my parents, four sisters, three brothers, and paternal grandparents squeezed into the front, right-side pews of the Westminster sanctuary. My grandparents, Russ and Dorothy McClintock, were first generation members of the church, and my parents, Bruce and Sue McClintock, became second generation members. My seven siblings and I became third generation members, and now many of the fourth generation McClintock family are actively participating in Westminster Presbyterian Church and Nursery School.

Our church has been significant to our family since 1951 when Russ and Dorothy joined the newly founded Westminster Church. They raised my dad, Bruce, his brother, Reed, and his sister, Nancy, who all attended Sunday school and youth groups. During this time, my grandparents together taught Sunday school to children and adults. Russ was an elder, and Dorothy volunteered in the library for many years.

My dad followed in his parents' footsteps and along with my mom fulfilled many roles and positions in the church, while raising me and my seven siblings. Bruce served as an elder and as church treasurer, chaired the stewardship campaign, and served on a Pastoral Nominating Committee and the WECEP Board. Sue was a deacon, served on a Pastoral Nominating Committee, and taught Sunday school and Barefoot School.

As the third generation, my brothers, sisters, sister-in-law, brother-in-law, and I have continued the



legacy of serving Westminster as elders, deacons, members of the Pastoral Nominating Committee, WECEP Board, Youth Commission, Parent/Teen Mental Health Series, and volunteers for the Bair Project. Currently, the fourth generation of the McClintock family is volunteering at Barefoot School, Veritas, and on mission trips.

While my family has served Westminster Church in many different ways, I believe that our church has given us much more in return. Westminster has educated, prayed, celebrated, and mourned alongside my family for over seven decades. Through WECEP, Sunday school, Barefoot School, and Veritas we have been educated and guided as we developed our faith. The Westminster community supported our family with phone calls, home and hospital visits, and prayers while members of my family battled cancer and illness. In the sanctuary, we have celebrated seven weddings, presented 21 children for baptism, mourned the losses of my grandparents, my brother Todd, and most recently, my dad. Westminster has had a profound impact on its members, visiting families, and surrounding community. I feel a deep sense of gratitude for the infinite amount of stability, support, and love shared with me and my family. ■

Family Worship at Westminster

By Barbara and Lizzie Marsh

The Marsh family has been a part of Westminster Church for the past 56 years, and we want to thank you for giving us a place to worship and grow in our faith in connection with others whose faith foundation governs their lives. As grandmother and granddaughter, Barbara and Lizzie Marsh are two of our family who have been asked to write about our experiences at Westminster. Lizzie was baptized here when she was a baby. Barbara joined Westminster when her husband, Hetz, began his ministry as Westminster's youth pastor, his first ordained position after graduating from seminary in 1968. ■

Barbara's Story



We came to Westminster as a young couple, believing that faith in God was the foundation of our life – our marriage, our work, our family. Westminster showed us a community of people who shared that belief. I was a young mother with a new baby (Beth), learning how to parent, how to support Hetz in his ministry, and how to find my own way in the church. As our family grew (Andrew was born a year and a half later), our children were enveloped by this loving congregation. They learned that church is an accepting, positive place to be, full of friends of all ages. We moved after 14 years, but maintained periodic contact with Westminster through Presbytery activities, teaching classes, and my work at Westminster's Counseling Center. After retirement, we moved back to the South Hills. Beth and Andrew had grown, married, and had children of their own. Beth and her family worship at a Presbyterian church in Virginia. Andrew, Jenny, David, John, and Lizzie, living here, are active members of Westminster. David told us that we needed to join their church, and so we did. Coming back to Westminster was like coming home. We joined the choir, Bible study groups, Grace Book Group, and helped to lead the Grief Care groups. These opportunities enrich the messages of faith, encourage us to live out our faith, and remind us of God's presence even in the midst of deep distress.

Lizzie's Story

Hi, my name is Lizzie Marsh. I have been going to Westminster Church since I was a baby. Westminster has always been a big part of my life. Growing up in our church has been a blessing, not only because my grandfather was a minister there, but because everyone I've met at Westminster has become like family to me. My bond with my grandparents has also deepened because of this shared connection. At the church, I have gotten involved with a lot of activities, but the activity that has affected me the most at Westminster is the youth group which we call Veritas. Not only is Veritas a wonderful youth group, but it has helped me find and grow my faith. This makes me want to share my faith with the world. This is my goal for my future career and I can thank Westminster Church for that.








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In May, Westminster began a once-in-a-generation project to replace and update the electrical system. After 70+ years, the system could no longer be repaired and had begun to fail.

For future generations to call Westminster “my church,” please contribute as you are able to help us meet our \$350,000 goal.



Give TODAY!



Read more about the project at westminster-church.org/let-there-be-light-project