

PENTECOST 2024

THE SPIRE



A publication of
WESTMINSTER
PRESBYTERIAN
CHURCH



*I will pour out my
Spirit on all people.*

-Acts 2:17

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The *Spire* is published seasonally by the church staff from September through June. Contributions can be made by emailing a Word document to *Spire* editor Sara Kyle at sara@ruhlekyle.org. Please include the author's name, telephone number, email address, and a title. All articles are subject to editing.

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Pentecost: A Powerful Image of the Holy Spirit Descending as Tongues of Fire. Experience the wonder and awe of Pentecost with this powerful image that depicts the Holy Spirit descending upon the apostles as tongues of fire, as described in the Bible. The composition features a group of people, perhaps gathered in a church, with rays of light shining down from above. The style is a mix of realistic and abstract elements, with warm colors that evoke the feeling of spiritual renewal. It's a tribute to the Holy Spirit and a reminder of the transformative power of faith.

From the Office of **JO FORREST**

Senior Pastor & Head of Staff



Dr. Jo Forrest

In those wee dark hours of Easter's dawn, the fear and trembling initially felt by the women at the tomb gave way to wonder and courage. I imagine their eyes lighting up as they remembered Jesus' promises. Everything he promised was true about death leading to the resurrection. They trusted even more everything he had taught and the way he lived.



From that day forward, they saw his face in the face of the stranger and continued to welcome those long excluded. They felt inspired to feed and heal and witnessed new miracles.

Jesus' empty tomb gave them the responsibility to embody his ministry. They handed to the next generation this task to embody his ministry.

It is because he is absent that the church can arise as his body. Today, we find him by not looking inward or to the past but by venturing into the future. He calls us to be his hands and feet today.

This is how St. Teresa of Avila (1515-1582) describes the mission of every Christian:

Christ has no body now but yours: no hands, no feet but yours.

Yours are the eyes through which he looks with compassion on this world.

Yours are the feet with which he walks to do good.

Yours are the hands with which he blesses the world.

In this issue of the *Spire*, we invite you to read of the varied ways Westminster strives to be his presence and imagine your own calling. ■

In faith,

Jo Forrest

Finding New Life in Surprising Places

By Rev. Laura Bentley
Parish Associate

Years ago, I worked at a church that had a pop-up ministry for people who were homeless or in need of essentials. My co-worker Jane, along with the high school youth, had begun showing up with sandwiches and a van full of supplies to Allegheny Commons in the North Side. Once a month they would set up in the park and just see who might need some warm clothes, lunch, or just a listening ear.

One Saturday, a man walked over to Jane, introduced himself as Ricky, and told her he had recently been released from prison. He then asked her what her group was doing. She told him and immediately guided him to the various supplies. But he stopped her. He wasn't there to receive anything. He was there to see if he could help.

Ricky and Jane became fast friends, and he soon shared with our congregation the story of his false imprisonment and the long battle to gain his freedom. He continued to serve and later joined the church.

This story came to mind as I read an invitation to learn more about Foundation of Hope, a faith-based organization that "offers incarcerated individuals and returning citizens the opportunity for a new life." I felt a nudge from the Spirit. My daily life rarely intersects with those who are or have been incarcerated. And I know that Jesus loves breaking down the false boundaries we've created between ourselves and others. I'm ready to get out of my bubble and to be surprised by the ways that the Spirit is bringing new life in places where I don't expect it.

How might God be nudging you out of your comfort-zone in this season? New life may be waiting for you in unexpected places, too! ■



Find Your Own Pentecost

Our Doors Are Always Open



By Christine Hestwood
Music Director

Pentecost was the moment when the Holy Spirit descended upon the Apostles and they were given the Great Commission, to spread the message of Jesus Christ to the world. I'm writing to encourage you to have your own pentecost, a time to celebrate and renew your faith, and share your faith with others. It might be as simple as "+1"!

A friend of mine grew up in a church where they were encouraged to consider the concept of +1. Go to church weekly, and then add another weekly event. I'm inviting you to walk through our doors more than once a week. Or in addition to weekly worship, walk through the doors of a volunteer organization once a week.

Your +1 at Westminster might be the Thursday morning men's group, who help to take care of our beautiful facility. You might opt to be a part of our

bi-weekly prayer group, or Women to Women. LIFT is an amazing new group for women on Thursday evenings. Wednesdays @ Westminster provides opportunities for a time of fellowship with members of our faith community. Westminster Ringers rehearse on Wednesday evenings. The Chancel Choir rehearses on Thursday evenings (Of course I'm going to highlight my passion – music!). If you can't find something that appeals to you, consider starting your own small group.

If +1/week is overwhelming to you, start with +1/month. I would be happy to help you find your +1 in our music ministry. Jan Baumann, our Volunteer Coordinator, would be happy to help you find your +1 not only within our walls but also beyond our walls. ■

By Melanie Hallums, Elder

Let the be

Our beautiful church stands tall, serving as a center of worship and the community since the end of World War II. Our original building was dedicated in 1948, and much of our infrastructure dates to that era as well. This includes the church's electrical system. The building's original and main electrical panel was installed when the church was first built. Like stories we all hear or read about in the news involving aging infrastructure, we have some of our own aging infrastructure that requires some attention.

Through grace and good fortune (along with many updates and repairs), we have kept the power on for the last 75 years. Unfortunately, many of the electrical parts for the existing system aren't made anymore.

After careful review and consideration, we realize the time has come to replace the church's electrical service, which includes the main electrical panel board, replacing the transformers, and upgrading the system to be able to handle the



Tom Page, Jay Galbreath and Doug Shuck look over floor plans before presenting to project bidders.

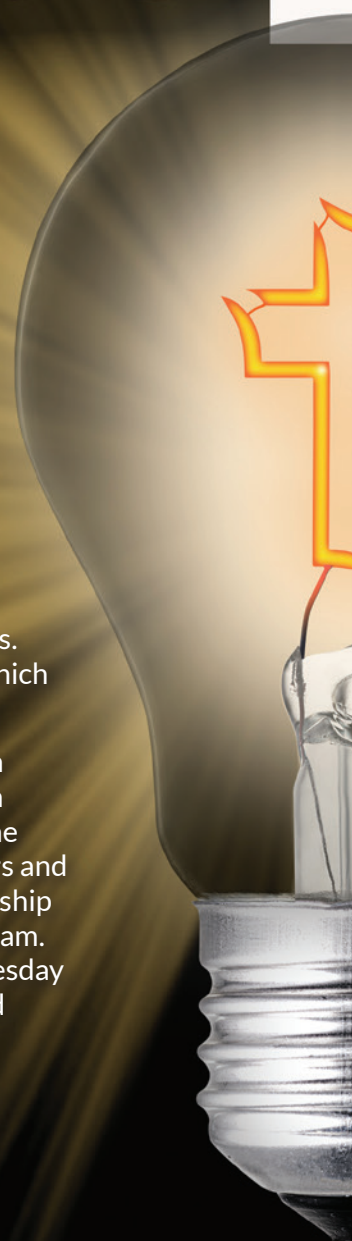
many technological and electrical equipment changes that have occurred over the past decades, and to ensure that our church building remains open for future generations.

Electricity is vital not only to the church building itself, but also to the ministry it facilitates. This impacts the sanctuary, chapel, administrative wing, nursery school, as well as all the surrounding rooms. Basically, everything except the WROC, which has its own separate electrical service.

And electricity not only keeps the lights on (literally), but also powers everything from the heating and air conditioning units to the kitchen in Fellowship Hall to the computers and other office equipment. It allows us to worship together on Sundays, including via livestream.

And it supports all our education, fellowship, and care during the week, including Wednesday night dinners and youth activities, outreach and mission work, community meetings, and preschool education.

As with most infrastructure changes, replacing the electrical service, including the main electrical panel, will require significant time and cost.





ere LIGHT PROJECT

Dave Heilman, Stewardship Commission Chair
Tom Page, Property Commission Chair

Here's an outline of where we are and where we're going:

Beginning in early 2023, we engaged an electrical engineering consultant who assessed our current system. Our project team includes our electrical engineer, church staff, and members of the Property Commission who have met with West Penn Power (WPP) to learn how the process will work. Our project team has identified electrical contractors who can do the work.

Drawings, plans, and detailed requirements were made available to pre-qualified contractors to bid. In early April, the project team hosted a pre-bid meeting with four contractors who expressed interest and gave them a tour of the church.

The Property Commission thoroughly examined the proposals and recommended the lowest bidder who also is able to complete the project in the shortest timeframe. This contractor can complete the work during the summer of 2024. The work proposed by other contractors would extend over eight to ten months.

In addition to the electrical contractor, the scope will include constructing masonry screen walls, repairing the sidewalk and driveway, replacing landscaping, miscellaneous repairs to the electric room, and fees from WPP.

At the May 6 Session meeting, after robust debate of the timing of this project, total costs, and long-term benefits, the elders unanimously approved the project, estimated at just under \$500,000.

Work will begin this summer with funds from the Endowment Committee's 2024 grant and a secured line of credit. In the fall, the church will launch a campaign to raise funds to pay off any balance in the line of credit and complete the work.

We wanted to share all of this with you to let you know that positive changes are coming and to explain why people will be working in and around Westminster starting this summer. We also seek to dispel any rumors or speculation.

Our current system has lasted us 75 years. Now we need to make sure that it will serve and illuminate our ministry for the next 75 years.

These are exciting times to continue to invest in our church and its ministry! Stay tuned for more information. ■



COME
ALIVE!

By Laura Ecklin



My earliest memories of Pentecost include dozens of red balloons on a Sunday morning during worship. If you have been around Westminster for a long time, maybe you remember, too. This year, I am approaching this celebration of the Holy Spirit with eyes wide open.

The phrase “come alive” immediately makes me think of the song by the same name from *The Greatest Showman*, a movie following P.T. Barnum as he starts his circus. The song speaks of gray skies and dark days, but then encourages the listener that you are in control of the light in your life.

I am not usually a New Year’s Resolution kind of person, but this year I have made a promise to myself that I will make a strong effort to be more responsible for my demeanor. I have no control over a lot of things in life, but I do get to choose *how I react* to what happens around me. As the song says, I can flip the switch and brighten up my



darkest day. I have two tiny people watching my every move; their childhood is in my hands. I get to teach them whatever I want, but if my words are going to matter at all, my actions have to match.

By the end of the song, P.T. Barnum is joined in song by all of the circus performers with the energizing message to dream with your eyes wide open. They are met with a standing ovation from the audience and well on their way to achieving their dream of success.

The Holy Spirit is alive and well within you. Imagine how much good you could do for the world if you celebrated each day with the enthusiasm of several dozen red balloons. I’ve been working on this resolution for a few months now and it is much easier than I ever dreamed it would be. The level of happiness I have from just a single shift in mindset is significant. Listen to that song and give it a try. Let me know if it works for you. ■

Shine Your Light

By Jerry Malarkey
Youth Commission Chair



“You are the light of the world. A city set on a hill cannot be hidden. Nor do people light a lamp and put it under a basket, but on a stand, and it gives light to all in the house. In the same way, let your light shine before others, so that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father who is in heaven.”

Matthew 5:14-16

We all inhabit various platforms in our lives from which we have the opportunity to make a difference in the lives of others. Oftentimes young people feel there isn't a lot they can do that would make an impact on someone's life.

I would like to share with you the story of a young high school student who had a platform thrust upon him through a difficult and unfortunate occurrence. He chose to use it as an opportunity to help others who were going through a similar experience.

Early in his high school career, Mike's father developed cancer. The cancer progressed over the next year or so and Mike's father passed away during Mike's junior year. I was Mike's high school counselor, and we had many conversations during his dad's illness and after his passing. Naturally, this was a very difficult time in his life and Mike's grieving took its toll on him physically and emotionally.

In one of our conversations several months after his dad passed away, Mike said to me that he knew there were other young people in the high school who had recently experienced the loss of a parent. He wondered if we could get these kids together and meet once a week to share experiences, grief, and coping strategies. We put together a list of five other students who had all lost their father within the last year to cancer, suicide, or sudden heart attack. I made it clear to Mike that I had not lost a parent as a teenager, so I was not in a position to share my experience with the group.

I facilitated the group, but Mike often directed the conversations and made it comfortable for the others to share their feelings and their personal grieving process. The effect this group had on the participants was unlike anything I had experienced before in my career. I still run into some of the members and each time they talk about the value of the group and especially Mike's role in helping them through the impact of losing their dad.

So, when you think there's nothing you can do to help someone through a rough time in their life, I challenge you to think of Mike and how he used his unfortunate experience to help his peers. In this Easter season of rebirth and renewal, what platform might you have that would give you the opportunity to make a difference? ■



¿Entiendes?

By Faith Kemmler

Director of Children's & Family Ministry

Like many others, I had to study a language in high school. My small school only offered French and Spanish, and being the practical person I am, I chose Spanish. I thoroughly enjoyed learning a new language. I liked the rhythm of practicing conjugation and the simplicity of recounting my favorite things and daily routines as I learned to translate simple sentences. Pronunciation was not a problem when my sentences were rehearsed, but doing the work of mentally translating while holding conversations with my teacher and peers was a struggle. I couldn't even imagine holding a conversation with a native speaker!

Then, after my junior year of high school, my youth group traveled to Guatemala for a mission trip. I was both excited and nervous to put my studies to the test. As soon as our plane landed, our group was inundated with people offering us services in a language we didn't understand. Not yet matched up with our translator, my youth pastor looked to me. To my surprise, I was able to translate and help our group navigate the airport.

Throughout the rest of the trip, there were a plethora of opportunities to hone my language skills.



But these moments of translation became so much more. In the market I met Raul who sold pastoral stoles and had family in Pennsylvania. We continued to get to know each other, and years later, when my friend returned for a different service project, Raul still

remembered me. Kimberly and I played together at the playground each day swapping games from our cultures. Her bright smile still brings me joy as I reminisce about our week playing together.

Despite my nerves, the Holy Spirit was clearly active and present in building bridges between us. Much like the early believers at Pentecost, even in the noise of different languages, we were able to feel and understand the connective power of God's love.

God's Spirit works in us even amid discomfort and uncertainty. This Pentecost season, step outside your comfort zone and trust in the Holy Spirit to do the rest. ■



A Note from Your Personnel Commission

By Denise Rost, Personnel Commission

For the most part, Westminster is a pretty seamless place. That's no accident. It is because of the superb work and magnificent commitment of our staff. If you don't know much about them, you are truly missing out. Here is just one of multiple examples:




The Finance Department staff is comprised of our Director of Finance and Operations, Jack Kelly, and Jane Zacchero, our Accounting Assistant. Besides all posting, verification, and various tasks as requested of Jane, both have been instrumental in our transition to Realm. And Jack has assumed additional duties in working with the Finance and Property Commissions.

As we each know, when things run smoothly, we're not even necessarily aware of the efforts being made by our staff, very much to their credit. It's important to keep in mind all those whom you may not see but who have a huge influence on the experience of members, our welcome to the community, and our ability to serve others.

So, when you wonder what exactly the staff does, we hope you'll think of all the ways these talented, dedicated professionals support all of us – in many ways. After all, the job of our Personnel Commission is to prayerfully find exceptional servants and support them as we all work to do what God has called us to do.

The Personnel Commission consists of Logan Carmichael, Dave Davis, Carolyn Kerr, Bill Ludwig, Andrew Marsh, Denise Rost/Chair, and Jo Forrest/Staff Representative. 

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-  [Youtube.com/user/WestminsterUSC](https://www.youtube.com/user/WestminsterUSC)

Summer 2024 Events @ WPC

June 2 • **One Service Sunday**, 10 a.m. (Sanctuary)

Beginning June 9, 8:30 a.m.
Sunday Worship in the Courtyard

June 12 • **Family Bonfire Night @ Gilfillan Farm**

June 13, 20, 27 & July 11, 18, 25
Westminster Organ Summer Concert Series

June 17-21 • **Barefoot School VBS**

July 7-13 • **Veritas Youth Mission Trip**

July 28 • **Worship & Picnic in the Park**,
10:00 a.m. @ South Park

August 21 • **Ice Cream Party for All Ages**

August 28 • **Wednesday evening
programming resumes**

ONE
SERVICE
SUNDAY

with Food and Fellowship

Please join us on Sunday, June 2,
as we celebrate Pentecost and Youth
Sunday at 10:00 a.m. in the sanctuary.
Plan to stay after worship for food
and fellowship in Fellowship Hall.

