



THE SPARE

WESTMINSTER PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH
Pittsburgh, PA

Talking about Marriage

You probably know that the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church (USA) voted last June to amend the *Book of Order* to permit, but not require, pastors to conduct same-sex marriages in states where it is legal. Any proposed change in the *Book of Order* requires approval by a majority of the 172 presbyteries, which happened in March. Pittsburgh Presbytery will not vote until May, but sessions and pastors are not bound by a particular presbytery's vote, so now it's up to us to decide how we will proceed.

Sessions vote on whether or not to permit same-sex marriage in their churches, pastors decide individually whether they will officiate, and neither can bind the other. Our session decided to vote in June, after we've had plenty of opportunities for church members to pray about the matter and discuss it together. Presbyterian polity is governed by elders elected by the congregation, so church members do not vote directly on these matters but entrust that responsibility to the session.

Westminster's session has had several conversations on the subject since October. In the last couple months we've invited members in worship to participate in discussions on Wednesdays at the 4:00 Bible study and 6:30 Faith in Life group, plus combined adult Sunday school classes for two weeks in March. More than 150 people have participated so far, but we want to be



sure that everyone has an opportunity, which is why we're scheduling another conversation over lunch in Fellowship Hall after the 11:00 service on May 3. Please join us, if you haven't already been part of the discussion. A background paper of questions and responses has also been available for some time on our church's website.

Needless to say, this has been an important discussion in the life of our nation as well as in Presbyterian and other churches. We've worked hard to create an environment at Westminster where people can reflect together on biblical and other considerations while hearing and respecting a variety of perspectives. I'm grateful, though not surprised, that our members have been able to talk about these things so charitably, rather than simply dismissing other points of view.

Besides setting a respectful and charitable tone for the conversation,

the only other thing we've insisted upon is a recognition that people of sincere Christian faith, who take the Bible seriously as the uniquely authoritative witness to God's love in Jesus Christ, can and do see things differently. Too often people in churches have impugned one another's faithfulness when they have disagreed on important matters. One of the blessings of being at Westminster is that we don't do that here.

Churches have been engaged in this conversation for roughly 40 years. It is not something that has suddenly come up, nor is it a matter of following some cultural agenda. As in all things, we seek to know and follow the will of God, and we covet your prayers during this time of discernment and decision.

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

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 day of every month for the following month's
 issue. Please include the author's name,
 telephone number, email address, and a title.
 All articles are subject to editing.

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Sunday Worship Services

8:30 a.m.

*Traditional
Worship*

9:45 a.m.

*The Bridge
Contemporary
Worship*

11:00 a.m.

*Traditional
Worship*

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



On Pentecost, we celebrate God's sending the Holy Spirit to be our comforter. God's gift of the Holy Spirit came not as a gentle breeze and candle flame, but with a mighty rush of wind and fire. The force of God's action is captured in many hymn texts for Pentecost. One of the oldest and most enduring is the ninth-century Latin *Veni Creator Spiritus* (Come Creator Spirit), set to a plainchant tune. This hymn, in its original form and in numerous translations, has played an active role in Christian worship over the centuries. Its text in our hymnal (No. 278) comes from Great Britain. Written by Bishop John Cosin for the coronation of King Charles I in 1625, it was included in the 1662 *Book of Common Prayer*. Cosin's poetry is both beautiful and evocative of the Holy Spirit. The opening verse depicts the intense desire for the coming of the Holy Spirit with its seven gifts, a reference to Isaiah 11:2: "The spirit of the Lord shall rest on him, the spirit of wisdom and understanding, the spirit of counsel and might, the spirit of knowledge and the fear of the Lord." The seventh gift, piety, appears in the Septuagint.

Come, Holy Ghost, our souls inspire, and lighten with celestial fire;
thou the anointing Spirit art, who dost thy sevenfold gifts impart.

The concluding verses address the Trinity, in a petition to know the unity of the three in one followed by a doxology to Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

Teach us to know the Father, Son, and thee, of both, to be but one,
that through the ages all along this may be our endless song:
Praise to thine eternal merit, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. Amen.

This Month

- 2** Handbell Festival
- 3** Same-sex Marriage Discussion
Over lunch after the 11 a.m. worship service
Fellowship Hall
- 9** Rummage-Recycling Sale
- 10** Mother's Day Musical
- 14** Ascension of the Lord
- 24** Day of Pentecost
- 31** Trinity Sunday

CHRISTIAN FORMATION SEMINARS

Sundays at 9:45 a.m.
Galbreath Chapel



John Lewis Kimmel, *Black People's Prayer Meeting*, watercolor, ca. 1811, depicting a Methodist service in Philadelphia

May 3
Searching for Religious Meaning in the Civil War

Elaine Parsons, Associate Professor of History, Duquesne University

The Civil War saw enormous suffering and death both among soldiers and among the civilian population who were exposed to guerrilla violence. Religious thinkers – Christians, spiritualist mediums, popular writers, and others – sought to understand the transcendent meaning of this violence and death. They also worked together to understand what had happened to their loved ones after death, and they engaged in a broad cultural exploration of the nature of heaven. In this seminar, we will talk about what Civil War Americans found when they searched for some religious meaning in their bereavement.

May 10
The Civil War as a Theological Crisis
David Fetterman

In the uncertain days of late 1860 and 1861, the pulpits of the United States were transformed into instruments of political theology...Ministers throughout the United States responded confidently. The will of God, as revealed first in the Scriptures and then through reflection on the workings of divine providence was clear. Or at least it was clear to the ministers as individuals, many of whom were eager to raise a trumpet for the Lord. As a group, however, it was a different story, for the trumpets blown so forthrightly were producing cacophony.

Mark A. Noll, *The Civil War as a Theological Crisis*

David Fetterman will lead a discussion based on historian Mark Noll's book *The Civil War as a Theological Crisis*. As we commemorate the

150th anniversary of the end of the Civil War, we will look at how the 1860s found people on opposite sides of the relevant issues, using the same scripture as a warrant for their positions. Why was that the case? How was the same scripture used as warrant for opposing positions? Where do we see the scripture used in that way today? What can we learn from the experience of the Civil War? You are invited to participate in this discussion as we try to learn today from the lessons of 150 years ago.

May 17 & 24

Presbyterianism in Scotland

Alima Bucciantini, Assistant Professor of Public History, Duquesne University

As Presbyterians in Pittsburgh, we feel a strong connection to our ancestors from Scotland who settled here so many years ago. This pair of seminars will take us back to Scotland as we look at the history and development of Scottish Presbyterianism from its earliest roots to the impact it has in Scottish culture, life, and politics today. We will gain a sense of the historical development and cultural weight of Presbyterianism in Scotland, and through that, an idea of why it has the impact it does throughout the world.

The first session will focus on the history of Presbyterianism and its key figures, with special focus on John Knox. We will examine some surviving artifacts from the early days of the faith, and see how they are preserved in the National Museum of Scotland, and in the John Knox House Museum. We will then look at how Presbyterianism grew and was challenged in Scotland before becoming well-established and spreading elsewhere, including here in the United States, coming over with early settlers.

The second session will examine how Presbyterianism is tightly tied to Scottish identity and sense of self. It will look at how religion was built into the Act of Union of 1707, and how the Church of Scotland continues to operate independently from the Church of England, although Great Britain is one country. What does that mean for the people? We will ask how religion and nation work together through things as disparate as ferry schedules, soccer games, and voting patterns.

May 31

Diversity in the Presbyterian Church

Anthony Rivera, Associate Director of Recruiting and Admissions, Pittsburgh Theological Seminary



Mother's Day Musical

May 10

11 a.m.

Sanctuary

Please join us on Mother's Day, May 10, at the 11:00 a.m. worship service, when the Cherub Choir and the Junior Choir will present *Jonah-Man Jazz*, a musical by Michael Hurd.

It's a whale of a tale...a real fishy tale...of a man named Jonah and the choices he made. *Jonah-Man Jazz* is a spirited re-telling of what might happen if we fail to listen to the word of God.

Reflect



Here we are. As impossible as it is to believe, in just a few short weeks Ed and I will wrap up our eighth season of Veritas. I know people say this all the time, and it has probably lost the meaning it once had, but truthfully it feels like it was over in an instant!

Around this time of year, we get to spend some time in deep reflection. How did the year go? What did we do that worked? What needs to be updated? How can we better minister to the teenagers who gather in this place? We spend time (usually over lunch at Chipotle) tearing down what we've done piece by piece, examining each one, and building the program back up for another new year. As each year has gone by, we have made smaller and smaller changes, but this process of reflection is critical to us.

Reflection is such an incredible thing. On the one hand, you are looking backward. You hold all the pieces of your past and examine and critique, parse and pick, celebrate and mourn. But when it is done well, reflection is not always seated in the past. It holds us in the present, and it shapes the future. We look back so that we can move forward in a brighter future. We critique our past not so that we can feel down on ourselves, but so that we can make improvements for the future.

Each night, I try with all my might to work through the spiritual discipline of examine. (I say I try because I am a morning person, and nighttime is not my finest hour.) I try to examine the day, checking out the places where I did a decent job of living into the grace of God, and making note of the places in the day where I couldn't have been further from the kingdom. Sure, those latter reflections are painful, but I am also constantly reminded of how deep the love of Christ is for me. I am constantly reminded of how

many of my mistakes are forgiven. And, if I have practiced the discipline well, I wake up with a vision of how to live better into God's love and grace during the day ahead. The past has the ability to shape the future, if we will let it.

But the truth is that we don't often take time out of our day to reflect. Our culture so values productivity that we feel like time set aside to reflect is time we could spend doing. Constant doing doesn't help us change paths for the better. It only keeps us busy. I'm afraid that the worship of busyness has invaded our faith lives, too. Why spend time reflecting when we could read another scripture verse? Why take a few moments in silent contemplation when we could take another trip to the food bank? It's not that these activities are bad in themselves, it's just that when we do them so frequently that we don't have time to reflect, we're really robbing ourselves. Our busyness can actually steal from us.

Maybe the school year season doesn't make the natural stopping point for everyone reading this as it does for those of us in the youth ministry world, but I challenge you to stop for a few moments and reflect. Where is God moving in your life? Where are the places where you have seen the love and grace of the kingdom firsthand? Where are the areas in life that you could do a better job of living into the kingdom? Where have you fallen away? And how can those moments of active reflection provide guidance for the days ahead?

Godspeed,

BETWEEN HERE AND THERE



As I write this, I'm sitting in the Food Court at South Hills Village mall. I just watched a young boy, probably 6 or 7 years old, run around his family's table 11 times. He only meant to do 10, but he counted 6 twice. I know because he was counting out loud. I'm deeply familiar with this concept. As a child, when I would find myself in a particularly rambunctious mood, my mother would ask me to excuse myself from the family dinner table and run around the block. I'm also told that my wife used to watch out the back door as her brother would run laps around the house to burn up energy. My guess is that my brother-in-law, this young boy, and I are not alone.

My point is this: from the days of our youth, boys and men alike need to run off some energy; we need to *do stuff*. It's a simple notion. If you're anything like me, you feel better when you've *done something*. For me, there are days when I don't even feel a need to accomplish anything, I just need to *do something*. Over the next few months Westminster will be winding up events specifically for the men of our community based on this exact concept.

Of course there's value to doing stuff together, but in a community like Westminster's that has so much to offer, I feel that we can do better than that. I'll show you my playbook from the start: let's do something together, learn something together, and eat something together. I'm

not sure that it could be any simpler. By spending time *doing* together, we'll get to know one another, break the ice, and enjoy each other's company, whether it be through encouragement, competition, or shared effort. With so much depth available to us in our relationship with Christ, it makes sense that we seek to *learn* together, to further our relationship with Christ and with others. Each time we meet we'll hear from someone who's prepared a message for us on topics relevant to our lives as men of God. Finally, we'll *eat* together as we recount the day's experiences, poke fun at one another, and process what we've learned.

There's much that we can do – and even more that we can learn together – so I'd love to hear from you. What do you love to do? I'd love to get a group of men together so we can join you sometime. What would you like to learn about? I'm sure you're not alone in that desire.

Here's your homework: let me know what you'd like to get into. I'm interested in hearing about activities, topics, places, people...nothing is off the table. Keep an eye out for upcoming events!

Ed

Believing and Belonging Go Together!

Saturday, May 16
9:00-11:30 a.m.
Memorial Parlor

In writing about the early church, the author of Acts 2:46-47 tells us, "They devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching, and to the fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer....They continued to meet together with glad and sincere hearts, praising God and enjoying the favor of all people. And the Lord added to their number daily..."

These are the reasons we gather together at Westminster Presbyterian Church: to worship God, to hear and study God's Word, to have fellowship with one another, to share in the Lord's Supper and pray together, and to serve God in mission. And, yes, God continues to add to our numbers.

If you know of someone who is interested in membership, invite them to consider an Inquirers' Class. This is a time of sharing and teaching as we explore what it means to be a faithful follower of Christ in the Presbyterian tradition.

Classes take place on Saturday mornings from 9:00 to 11:30 a.m. in Memorial Parlor, and the next one will be May 16. Please contact Peg Kinsey for reservations.

GLIMPSE OF MY WORLD



What would it look like if we really tried to live the way Jesus did, to proclaim the gospel through how we live?

Recently, I have been thinking about the last instructions that Jesus gave his disciples. These instructions are reported similarly in two of the synoptic gospels: Matthew and Mark.

In Mark 16:15 Jesus says: “Go into all the world and proclaim the good news to the whole creation.” (NRSV)

Matthew 28:19 reports it this way: “Go therefore and make disciples of all nations.”

What exactly did Jesus mean for his followers to do? What was Jesus thinking?

Some translations use the phrase “preach the gospel” for this verse in Mark. It seems that Jesus means for us to tell people about him – to tell his story – teaching and preaching. Repeating the stories that the gospel writers recorded for us, perhaps adding our own stories of how Jesus is a part of our daily life. I’m certain that’s at least a part of what Jesus had in mind.

But somehow I think there’s more to it than that. Certainly Jesus did his share of talking, of teaching and trying to explain things to the disciples, to the crowds.

But look at how few understood – really understood – his message. Even his closest friends, his family, his disciples didn’t really get it or caught only a part of the message.

And so Jesus did more than just talk. When Jesus called each of his disciples, he didn’t say “Come listen to me.” Instead

his invitation was “Follow me.” Jesus invited each disciple to join him, to live alongside him, to watch, to learn, to listen. Even more than that, he invited them into a caring relationship. Jesus loved and served them, no matter how often they misunderstood, how often they simply didn’t get it.

I suspect that Jesus’ words “proclaim the gospel/make disciples” urge us toward living the way that Jesus did. Really caring for others – taking time for them, listening, putting others’ needs before our own, healing, even washing stinky dirty feet. Not an easy job, even on a good day.

What would it look like if we really tried to live the way Jesus did, to proclaim the gospel through how we live?

As I write this, I have just arrived at home after celebrating Easter with my extended family. There we were, four generations gathered together: enjoying each other’s company, laughing, telling stories, playing with the babies, and, of course, eating. My family is not exactly a typical family: it’s a family built by adoption, by birth, and by marriage; it is multi-ethnic and multi-lingual. (The story is far too long to tell here.)

But as I sat there today, watching this mixed-up group of people, I started to think about how such a crazy mishmash of folks could possibly be a family. Here’s what I think: it is love. Much of that love originated with my mother. It was

her dream of having more children – of sharing her life, and her love, with more than one birth child – that introduced adoption into our family. It was always my mother who led the way: she loved, enjoyed, and accepted each of us, each of our friends and spouses, our children, and everyone else we brought along with us. She enjoyed nothing better than spending time with each of us – listening to us talk, learning about whatever interested us, being a part of whatever we were doing, simply caring. Even today, although she is in the end stages of Alzheimer’s and is often unresponsive, she watched and even smiled.

My mother never really talked very much about her faith – she just lived it: sharing love, showing us how to care for one another. Was she perfect? No, of course not. Were there days she was cranky and tired and overwhelmed? Certainly. But it was her love that gave us the gift of each other.

Could that be an example of “proclaiming the gospel”? Maybe it is just a little of what Jesus meant.

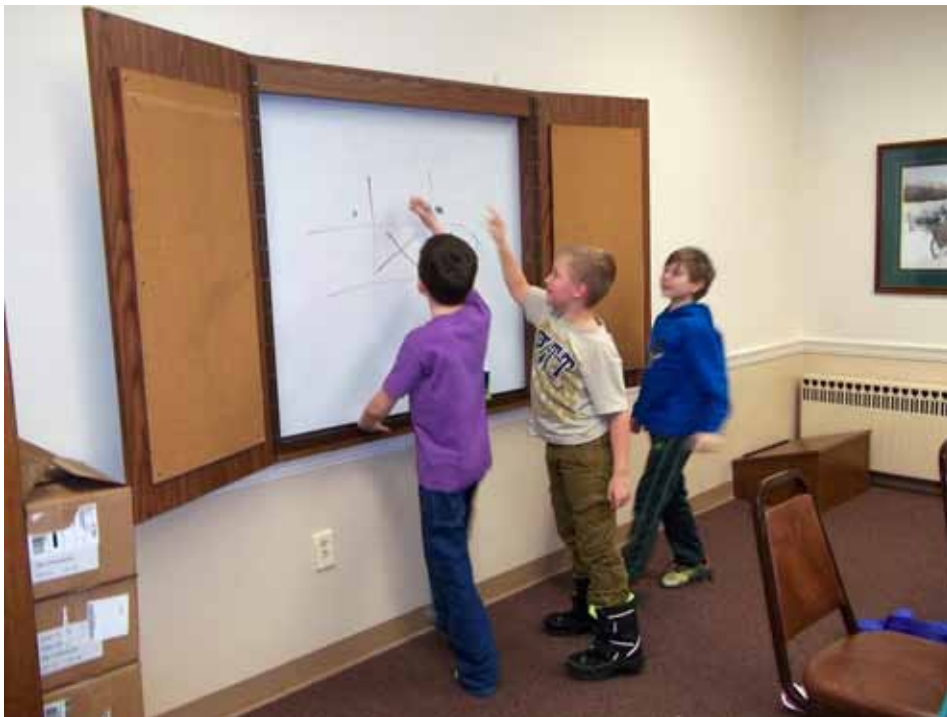
Robin

Jesus' Last Journey Workshop

During the four Wednesdays in March, a group of third and fourth graders participated in this special workshop about Jesus and his last days on earth. The workshop took them from Jesus' triumphal entry into Jerusalem to his death and burial.

The children acted in plays, made a small table to remind them of the cleansing of the temple, constructed an edible Garden of Gethsemane, and heard a rooster crowing as they learned about Peter's denial and about the last words of Jesus as he was hanging on the cross. They also participated in many activities to reinforce the events of Jesus' last journey.

The theme that ran through the workshop was Jesus loves and forgives no matter what.



Evening Prayer

Thursday Evening

May 14

7:00-7:30 p.m.

Memorial Parlor

You are invited to Evening Prayer on the second Thursday of each month at 7:00 p.m. in Memorial Parlor. Led by David Fetterman, this is a simple and informal time to pause at the end of our day for just one half hour to rest in God's love as we experience it through prayer, scripture, readings, and each other.

Come and join in a brief respite from the busyness of the day.

2015 Confirmands

We congratulate and welcome into active membership the following young people who were received on January 18 and May 3.

Taylor Baker

Jack Beisner

Nicole Cain

Grace Drinkard

Kevin Glesky

Madison Johnson

Jack Kentner

Tyler Long

Olivia Mahla

Emily Megonnell

Matthew Nestler

Jack Pyckowski

Jonathan Pyles

Alyson Reiter

Vladek Robinson

Chloe Smith

Matthew White

Wild Geese and the Spirit of God

God's Spirit blows wherever it wishes. You hear its sound, but you don't know where it comes from or where it is going. It's the same with everyone who is born of the Spirit.

John 3:8, CEB

Celtic spiritual tradition has a wonderful image for the Holy Spirit. Where we often see a descending dove as representative of the Spirit, Celtic tradition uses a soaring wild goose. "A wild goose?" you may wonder. "A honking, untamable creature as God's spirit?" Yes, indeed. On the Day of Pentecost in 2009, David Clark, then the pastor of the Community of St. Luke Presbyterian Church in New Zealand, spoke of the Holy Spirit as a wild goose:

My personal favourite image is on the wall above the pulpit here in St. Luke's. The uninformed think it is a duck, but most of you know it is actually a wild goose. It comes from the island of Iona, off the western coast of Scotland, and it is the ancient Celtic symbol of the Holy Spirit. It wasn't that the ancient Irish and Scots didn't know about doves, the more traditional biblically-originating symbol of the Spirit...But, as lovely as doves might be, Celtic Christians decided the wild goose was a far more apt symbol of the Holy Spirit.

Wild geese are, well, *wild*. That is, untamed, uncontrolled. They make a lot of noise, and have a habit of biting those who try to contain or capture them. That has been the Christian experience of the Holy Spirit through two thousand years. Time and again when theology and God have appeared to be firmly in the control of hierarchies and religious establishment, the Spirit of God has broken free – and has often bitten those who tried to prevent it happening.

The spirit of God: as peaceful as a dove and as free and untameable as a wild goose. What a wonderful image!

On May 24 we will celebrate the Day of Pentecost and, once again, focus clearly and intentionally on the Holy Spirit. What sort of Holy Spirit will we celebrate? A docile, easily directed one? Or an untamed and forever free one that leads down roads that we can't anticipate or, perhaps, even desire? The Pentecost tradition calls us to lovingly embrace the latter. Jesus spoke of the nature of the Spirit while he was still with his disciples.

One night the Pharisee Nicodemus came to Jesus seeking deeper faith. Jesus' counsel was that those seeking God's kingdom must first be born anew. Nicodemus, thinking physically and not spiritually, had no clue what Jesus was talking about. Regardless, Jesus gave this unwitting Pharisee a glimpse of the nature of the Holy Spirit in John 3:8: "God's Spirit blows wherever it wishes. You hear its sound, but you don't know where it comes from or where it is going. It's the same with everyone who is born of the Spirit." Jesus did not paint a picture of a spirit that Nicodemus, or anyone for that matter, could capture and control. This was not a picture of a spirit that led down familiar and easy paths. This was a spirit that was unpredictable: leading at will, not able to be tamed, to be followed and not controlled. Maybe a wild goose is a good image after all!

What kind of Holy Spirit do you seek this year as we again celebrate the Day of Pentecost? Do you seek a predictable, comfortable spirit that leads in fairly predictable ways to just as predictable places? Or do you seek a Holy Spirit that leads to adventure and challenge and the unknown, that is untamable and unpredictable, that inspires us with a power to discern God's will for us and the courage to act on what we discern?

This year I invite you to add the wild

goose to your list of symbols representing the Holy Spirit. Try though we might, we simply never will know where the wind of the spirit blows. For all of our best efforts to control and direct our destiny, the Day of Pentecost reminds us that those efforts are futile. They are futile because the Holy Spirit that Jesus promised and that came to comfort and to guide is, by nature, unpredictable and has the pesky habit of leading us where we don't expect and often where we don't want to go. In that adventure, though, is joy and hope and the way to the kingdom of God that Jesus promised Nicodemus.

As the Wind Song

As the wind song through the trees,
as the stirring of the breeze,
so it is with the Spirit of God,
as the heart made strangely warm,
as the voice within the storm,
so it is with the Spirit of God.
Never seen, ever known
where this wind has blown
bringing life, bringing power to
the world,
as the dancing tongues of fire,
as the soul's most deep desire,
so it is with the Spirit of God.

Shirley Erena Murray

As Celtic tradition teaches us the Holy Spirit comes like a wild goose – free, untamed, and uncontrolled. Come, Holy Spirit. Lead us where your wind blows. Give us the courage to follow. Alleluia.

Shalom,



Distant Feel

Through May 15, the Carnegie Museum of Art is exhibiting *Distant Feel*, a solo show by New York-based French artist Antoine Catala. The show is a collection of sculpture, video, and photography exploring the way images provoke emotion, especially as they are mediated through technology. According to Catala, one of the results of our increasing communication through screens, rather than face to face, is that the distance created by the screen makes our empathy more effective. The image and the screens become a sort of shield that gives us the emotional distance for our response to become more focused and detached. Catala defines *Distant Feel* as "...a cool, detached, focused form of empathy," and conceives it as the evolution of empathy.

But are images and our rapidly increasing communication through our phones or computer screens really transforming our empathy into a more channeled, better-oriented response? Are the screens giving us an emotional distance that makes our response more focused, or rather, is that distance reducing our emotional connection and sense of responsibility? And if so, can we have empathy when the encounter with the Other is mediated through a screen?

The French philosopher Emmanuel Lévinas developed the concept of face-to-face relation (*rapport de face à face*) to explain the beginning of ethics. For Lévinas it is in the face-to-face relation that we encounter the Other and his reality. The Other reveals himself to us in the encounter, and from that recognition we become responsible for one another. The obligation that arises is not a rationally processed state, but rather the deep emotional response of recognizing the intrinsic value of another person. Lévinas says that the human face "orders and ordains" us. It calls us into "giving and serving" the Other; it gives direction and meaning to our subjectivity. For Lévinas, it's in this face-to-face relation that our ethical impulse is born.

In the last decade, neuroscience has discovered what has been called "mirror neurons or mirror-neuron system."



According to brain imaging, the neurons that activate in our brains when we execute an action ourselves also activate when we observe others doing the same thing. Likewise, the neurons fire up both when we experience and see others experiencing an emotional state. Our neurons "mirror" in our brains the reality we perceive in others. That is almost to say that we are literally wired to learn from others and to feel for them.

Lévinas' philosophical work on the face-to-face interaction and its ethical consequences and neuroscience's research place great importance on what arises from our personal contact with others. If presence is so important for creating empathy and if it is necessary for our brain to mirror what someone else is experiencing, then to have that presence removed by a screen is not the advancement of empathy. It's not evolution; it's a barrier.

If we say that advancements in technology and communications are making us more empathetic, we assume that empathy is a phenomenon that starts from the outside in. The problem with this idea is that the process is thought in reverse: empathy happens from the inside out, not from the outside in. Empathy starts with a loving heart – or if you prefer, a well-developed set of mirror neurons – and we can feel for others only when we hold love in our hearts. And as we grow into more loving and caring people, we are able to better feel for others in their presence, in the face-to-face relation.

Thus, it's not technology or the advancement in communications that will improve our empathy; it is *us* becoming

ever more loving. Technology is keeping us more connected than ever, but it cannot by itself create or perfect empathy. The way to empathy is love, and the evolution of empathy is each one of us becoming an increasingly more loving and caring person. The more our hearts are predisposed to love others, the more love becomes the first impulse of our hearts, the more we'll be transformed into sensitive people capable of empathizing with others. And only then, when our hearts are finely attuned to others, will technology expand the horizons of our empathy. And the screen won't be a barrier anymore, given that we never forget that on the other side of the screen there is a real person, with real emotions and infinite value.

The path to empathy is not a passive one. Empathy is hard work. It's transforming ourselves into the loving people God calls us to be: people with a heart sensitive to the suffering of others and the will to act in this world in ways that will alleviate that suffering. It's recognizing and being responsible for the Other. It's being able to see the infinite value of another person and glimpse the grace of the Maker in his face. The path to empathy is to shape our lives by the call of love, until we come to rejoice in others' joy, weep with those who weep, and have the strength to do what is demanded of us.

And our empathy won't ever be a *distant feel*, but rather, we'll *feel close* to one another even when we are at a distance.

– Mariela M. Antunes

“If the whole body were an eye...”

Reflections on Westminster’s Spring 2015 Haiti Mission Trip



At first glance, it didn't seem like we could be very productive. Our areas of expertise were so varied: an artist, a computer expert, an architect, an electrician, bakers, ministers, teachers, business people, and high school students. But as it turned out, we accomplished a great deal. Last year we transformed a classroom into a library, complete with study tables, bookshelves, and even a circulation desk. This year we expanded the library into a second room, adding materials for older students. New books (a current total of 2,186), furniture, artwork, and ten new computers connected to the Internet were added. Thanks to Paul Conley, Jim Miller, Bruce McCurry, Ken Rapko, and Dan Paul, the library was connected electrically to the main system...

the lights lit and the computers came on. When the work was completed, students were brought in and Jenny Gallo taught them to turn the pages with care and to reshelve books properly. On the surface, this is just a room. But it is the result of many different contributions. Westminster members donated books. Funds for flooring, paint, windows, lighting, furniture, and computers came from the Endowment Fund and Outreach. Some team members used skills perfected in their professional lives – Paul Conley setting up computers, Sandy Conley instructing students making art for the walls, Tom Hartman working on the room design. Others such as Jim Davison (who also led a pastors' retreat and preached the second Sunday), Ken Rapko,



Keith Pyles, Raymond Van Cleve, and Gary Gallo proved to be excellent carpenters and furniture finishers. Jenny Gallo and Sarah Fetterman have worked all year to catalog the books which were shelved by Jenny and many other team members.

Across the courtyard, in the chemistry lab (Thank you, Westminster, for purchasing lab equipment for the past five years), students used their new instrument to test for iron in beans. Rev. Eugene Blackwell, pastor from Homewood who preached the first Sunday, has a degree in chemistry, and he happily assisted the students with lab work, along with Lois Franks who has been a valuable part of this team for several years. Reeny Davison and Eileen Swazuk, who both worked with the afterschool English club, taught us to include English lessons as part of the chemistry class. High schoolers Caitlin Pyles, Mary Cugini, and Kayla Rapko easily connected with the students.

On the floor above, the computer lab is now fully functioning. A graduate of the La Croix schools teaches classes of students at various levels. Paul Conley has been developing this resource over the years, and there is such high interest that students share computers so that everyone gets a chance to use them.

In the cafeteria after school, young girls led by Sandy Conley continued their silk dyeing to produce the beautiful scarves that we all enjoy wearing and giving. Sandy also invited the boys to create pieces of art representing 20 countries around the world; this array of artwork became part of the new library.

Next to the cafeteria, a solar oven was unfolded. John Walsh and Salome Johnson of Bethel Bakery worked with Haitian bakers to perfect recipes. While we Americans want to measure everything precisely, the Haitians seem to be more intuitive about their work, but the results were delicious. The children were able to enjoy the peanut butter cookies (and some of us volunteered to taste-test them).

This is not the whole story of our two weeks in La Croix, but it highlights some of the ways that we were all able to give our particular gifts to serve the people of La Croix. We are told in scripture that by working together in service we truly become the Body of Christ at work in the world. This is the source of our joy, and we are eager to return!

– Bobbie Hartman

the Spring Rummage-Recycling Sale

Saturday, May 9

Regular sale: 8:00 a.m. – noon

Closed for lunch: noon – 12:30 p.m.

Bag & half-price sale: 12:30 – 2:00 p.m.

Friday, May 8 – Collection Day

8:00 a.m. – 5:00 p.m.

and

6:00 – 8:00 p.m.

Please donate only clean and usable items. Magazines, textbooks, large pieces of furniture, and broken or unusable items will not be accepted. Leftover goods will be donated to local mission and recycling efforts.

Volunteers are needed both Friday and Saturday. Plan to join the Collection Day Volunteer Party any time between 8:00 a.m. and 8:00 p.m. for great fellowship, food, and shopping. On Saturday we need at least 60 volunteers. Each volunteer will have a specific job.

We also need donations of salads and desserts for volunteers' lunches on both days.

WE NEED YOU!

For questions or to volunteer, please call Marilyn Hayes at 412-831-5704 or Jan Baumann at 412-835-6630.



Offerings for Seniors: Arthritis Exercise Program and Tai Chi

Seniors everywhere are trading their crossword puzzle books for gym shoes!

The latest research shows that it is physical activity, not mind games, that keeps you functioning at your best. Simply put, mental games are like keeping the pilot light burning on your gas stove. To really cook those scrambled eggs, you need to turn up the flame. That's what physical exercise does. It gets blood to the brain like gas to the flame!

What kind of exercise can I do? I have bad knees, bunions, and achy joints.

The Arthritis Society provides safe joint-friendly exercises that can be done in a chair. Have you heard the saying "use it or lose it"? That describes the story of your achy joints. The Arthritis Society is so confident in their program that the protocol for each class is to begin with hand flexibility exercises. At the end of class those same exercises are repeated and participants enjoy a "eureka moment" when they discover that they have greater dexterity and less pain with each movement. These classes are taught by certified instructors and are tremendously enjoyable.

My husband doesn't dance and I have balance problems; is there an exercise program that we could do together?

Tai Chi is the answer to total fitness for you and so many people. Recent studies show Tai Chi to be extremely valuable in maintaining fitness, joint mobility, balance, and mental acuity. The movements are slow and flowing. Participants enjoy relaxation and camaraderie as they learn this ancient Chinese art. The Arthritis Society supports the Sun Style of Tai Chi as a joint friendly exercise. The art

is taught as a spiral. That is, each class begins with a review of all movements and then builds to the next posture. Students are never out of step if they miss a class and do not need to worry about remembering steps. It is a gently flowing river that gains strength on the journey. Tai Chi is considered the perfect exercise and is enjoyed by men, women, and children worldwide.

– Anne Brucker

Join instructor Anne Brucker, an experienced exercise physiologist, professional teacher, and program director. Anne has years of experience and a passion for working with seniors. You will enjoy the energy, expertise, and spirit Anne brings to class. Among the many certifications Anne holds, she is also a certified Arthritis Foundation instructor.

Arthritis Foundation Exercise Program
Tuesdays, May 12 - June 16
11:15 a.m. – 12:00 p.m.
Cost: \$30

This is a fun-filled, low-impact course that helps most people with arthritis increase their joint flexibility and find relief from arthritis pain.

Tai Chi
Tuesdays, May 12 - June 16
12:15 – 1:00 p.m.
Cost: \$30

Energize your muscles, refresh your spirit, increase your blood flow, stimulate your mind, and regain youthful balance and agility through the gentle flowing motion of Tai Chi.

Visit our website at wroc.westminster-church.org for a complete listing of all our spring and summer fitness programs.



Hey Li'l WROCers

BOZ the Bear

and his friends are coming back this summer!

Save the date and join BOZ the Bear for a fun, jumping, singing, summer of adventures and imagination.

July 20 – July 31
Monday, Wednesday, and Friday
9:30 a.m. – noon
Cost: \$90.00

Look for more information in June's issue of the *Spire* and on our website at wroc.westminster-church.org.



Adventures in Printmaking *Handmade in Pittsburgh* Through May 15

Now showing through mid-May is a collection of work from a group of artists who met while attending Edinboro University. During their undergraduate studies, the artists collaborated on making intricately crafted objects by combining their multi-disciplinary backgrounds, interests in science and nature, regard for the scientific explorer, and an affinity for working with their hands.

The group later reconnected in Pittsburgh and formed the collaborative **New Academy Press**. Printing out of their living rooms and studio, they have steadily expanded the scope of their work, with the goal of becoming full-time artists and printmakers.

The artists conceive and fabricate original, handmade pieces. Using quality materials, including recycled papers and reclaimed glass and wood, they draw, cut, saw, sand, paint, and print to create images and designs.



Photography – Carl Palka May 15 – June 15

Beginning in mid-May, photographer Carl Palka, a longtime resident of the South Hills, will exhibit his work in the Gallery at Westminster. Carl's artistic journey began as far back as he can remember. He says he has always seen things around him in a different way by using imagination and creativity. Most recently, Carl has been working with the cell phone camera to creatively capture nature, still life, shapes, and patterns. He has been an active member of the photo section of the Academy of Science and Arts of Pittsburgh for over ten years and regularly participates in competitions and salons.

With a BA in education from West Liberty University and a master's from Duquesne University, Carl spent 34 years as a high school art teacher before his retirement. He believes art education in our schools is essential. "Everything we use in our daily life has some art aspect: a piece of furniture, the house we live in, the clothes we wear, all begin with an artistic drawing. Art teachers bring out the creativity in students and although not everyone is into art, students should be given the opportunity to study and explore it."

Prior to Carl's present interest in photography, he enjoyed pen and ink drawing and watercolor. This experience has found its way into hand colored photographs. Carl most enjoys nature photography, which he finds serene, beautiful, and peaceful. He challenges himself to find things that the casual photographer would otherwise overlook and to turn them into creative images.

With a son working as a graphic artist for Whole Foods and a nine-year-old granddaughter showing a promising interest in art, the "family creative torch" will be carried on by future generations.



Mental Health Awareness

May is Mental Health Awareness month. If we are fortunate enough to have good mental health, we may give it little thought. In this age of widespread promotion of health and wellness, we place considerable emphasis on preventing chronic illnesses such as cancer, diabetes, heart disease, and high blood pressure. When signs or symptoms arise, we pay attention. Usually we work with our doctors to find a way to reverse or stop the progression of the disorder. So why don't we do the same for people dealing with potentially serious mental illness? The first signs might be symptoms like loss of sleep (or too much sleeping), feeling fatigued for no good reason, loss of appetite, feeling "down," loss of motivation, wanting to avoid people, feeling anxious or experiencing panic attacks, feeling paranoid, hearing voices, etc. These signs and symptoms should not be ignored or brushed aside, thinking they will go away. Like other disorders and diseases, mental health symptoms need to be addressed early to identify the underlying problem and take appropriate action to return to a path to overall health.

Prevalence

It is estimated that 26% of Americans over 18 (one adult in four) suffer from a diagnosable mental illness in any given year, but only about 41% of them will receive any services. The stigma surrounding mental illness is a major barrier that prevents people from seeking the mental health treatment that they need. Another barrier is the shortage of available services in many geographical areas.

About 10% of American adults have a mood disorder such as depression or bipolar disorder, and 18% have an anxiety disorder, including panic disorder and PTSD (post-traumatic stress disorder). The number of children being treated for mental health problems is growing every year. And, unfortunately, statistics tell us that more of our service men die from suicide than die in combat! A variety of addictive disorders is also common. Addiction is a brain disease, usually genetically linked. It is difficult to treat, but with strong self-determination and professional help (and sometimes medication) it can be successfully overcome.

Treatment

Most mental health disorders are readily treatable, particularly if therapy is initiated in the early stages. The most effective treatment usually consists of a combination of medication and talk therapy. A number of good medicines are available to treat most disorders, and new medicines continue to become available. Depression is almost always successfully treated with medication, although it may take a trial of several different medications to find the most effective one or a combination of meds may be needed. It also takes time for the medications to have their optimal effect. Anxiety is not so easily treated with medication alone. Learning and practicing relaxation techniques, particularly deep breathing, is critical in relieving anxiety. Relaxation and stress-reduction practices (including yoga and meditation) are beneficial in relieving symptoms of any mental health disorder.



Once medication has had some effect on symptoms, it is up to the individual, usually working with a therapist, to decide what they need to do to help themselves. This typically involves some lifestyle and/or environmental changes such as reducing stress, exercising, changing eating/sleeping patterns, and developing a more balanced daily routine. When seeking treatment, it is very important to find a highly qualified, experienced professional with whom the patient feels comfortable.

Considerable help and support services are available for individuals and families affected by mental health issues. Local support groups and agencies provide for a range of needs, including full-time supervision, periodic monitoring, job placement and coaching, and socialization. Westminster is blessed to have its own Counseling Center in house managed through the faith-based Samaritan Counseling Center. Also, NAMI, the National Alliance on Mental Illness, is a nationwide grassroots advocacy group representing families and individuals affected by mental illness in the U.S. NAMI provides support, psycho-education, and research through various public education and awareness activities. It operates almost solely with volunteer members who are typically consumers of mental health services, family members, and professionals, all working together toward a common goal.

Like most chronic health problems, mental health disorders are highly treatable. Achieving a better quality of life is greatly rewarding for those who seek help.

– Marilyn A. Hayes, MSW, MPH, LCSW

Blood Drive

Sunday, May 17
8:00 a.m. – 2:00 p.m.
Fellowship Hall

The Deacons thank you for your continuing support in the worthy mission of donating blood. In order to donate, you must:

- Be 17 years or older (16 with parental consent)
- Weigh at least 110 lbs.
- Not have donated within the last 56 days
- Be in good health

Medications such as insulin, aspirin, and high blood pressure treatments do not prevent you from donating. If you have any medical questions, please call Central Blood Bank's Medical Help Line at 412-209-7160. For your convenience and to help the Central Blood Bank to plan for this drive, we ask all prospective donors to pre-register in one of the following ways:

- Online at www.centralbloodbank.org, using sponsor code G0010171
- Sign-up tables before or after worship services on May 3 and May 10
- Contact the church office at 412-835-6630

Walk-ins are always welcome. Before donating, please remember to eat a good breakfast and drink plenty of non-caffeinated beverages. There will be homemade cinnamon rolls for all donors! The Westminster Deacons thank you in advance for your support of this worthy mission.



Seminary Students

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

Please submit completed application by **June 17, 2015**. Questions may be directed to Carl Lindstrom at 412-833-8628 or 412-418-1003

Deliver application to:

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

**APPLICATION IS DUE IN THE FINANCE OFFICE
BY JUNE 17, 2015.**

Legacies

Act as if what you do makes a difference; it does. – William James

May is the traditional month for celebrating the Westminster Endowment. Although its beginning dates to 1995, the endowment became better known to the congregation in 2004 when efforts began to change its size and scope. It grew from the enlargement of WEST, Westminster Education Service Trust formed through a vision of John Galbreath, and an unrestricted fund, which held gifts to the church in an investment vehicle supervised by the Presbyterian Foundation.

Today, through the foresight and generosity of members and friends of Westminster and through careful investment, the endowment has grown to more than \$3,000,000. Its earnings, calculated by a standard formula for endowments, are used to further the mission and ministry of Westminster and to make capital improvements not funded by annual giving. Of course, growth to the fund is important and encouraged. Each year people memorialize others and consider remembering the church in their wills or through charitable annuities or foundations.

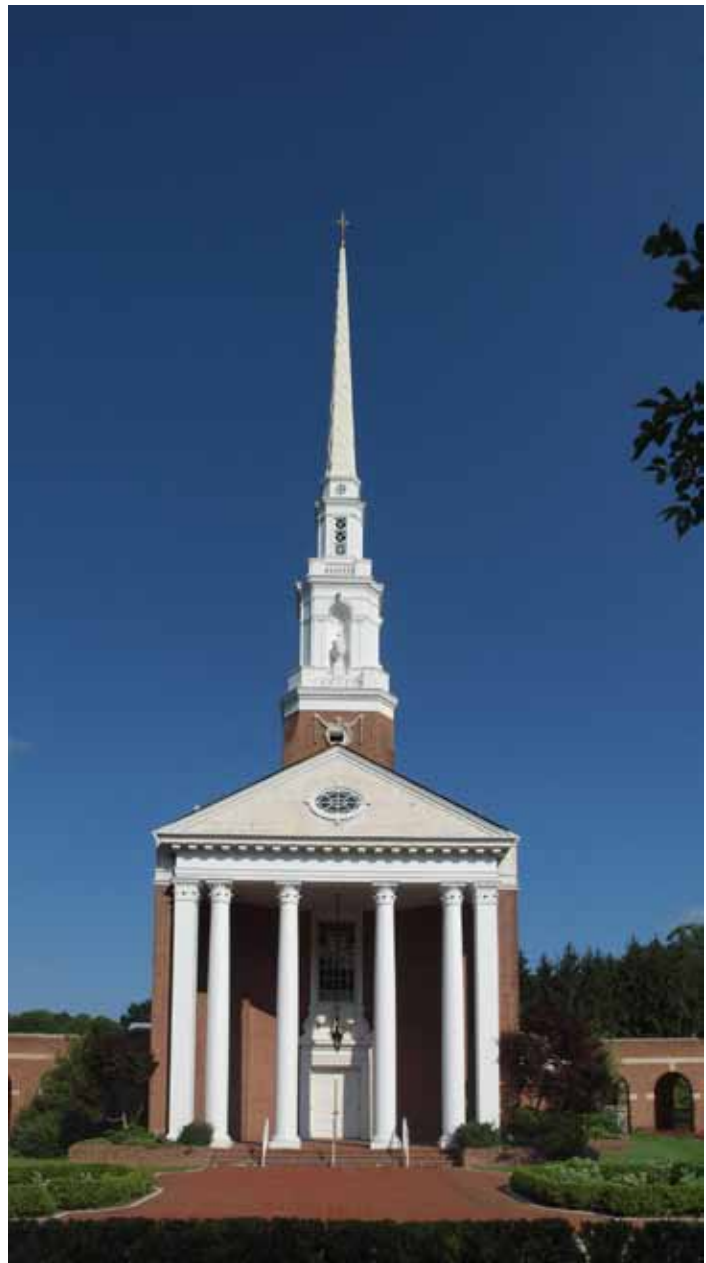
At Westminster, unlike large charities or other entities, we can readily see the results. Session and the Endowment Committee use carefully designed applications and review to "make a difference." Whenever you honor a loved one or make a gift as a personal discipline, you truly help stretch the possibilities of what the church can accomplish.

In addition, Designated Gifts to the church are administered by the endowment. For instance, gifts to Music and Arts, to specific funds, and to special projects are held and invested until the money is needed. Later this month, the Taylor and Boody pipe organ, specifically designed for Galbreath Chapel, will be installed. This is made possible through a matching gift and contributions from approximately 20 people who wanted, in some cases, to honor others and who appreciate the possibilities Westminster can offer its members and the Pittsburgh area in music outreach.

In March, Session approved applications reviewed by the Endowment Committee for the following:

- Replacement of electronic carillon: \$13,700
- Sound system for Fellowship Hall and the north courtyard: \$18,500
- Repair to roofing areas north of the sanctuary: \$43,000
- Additional clinical staff member for the Center for Victims: \$20,000
- Cognitive enhancement therapy for City Mission: \$25,000
- Replacement of a door and sidewalk for Friendship Community Church: \$15,000

More detailed information on these projects is available through the Westminster Endowment Fund. Total funding for distribution this year is \$126,615. The Outreach Commission is funding the balance of \$8,585 to complete the last three projects, which are mission projects. The carillon and Fellowship Hall/



North Courtyard sound projects are replacements for outdated technologies that cannot be serviced.

Hopefully, this article provides clarity for why Westminster's endowment deserves your support. *What you do **does** make a difference*, as William James proclaimed.

– Endowment and Special Gifts Committee

Financial Report

As of March 31, 2015

General Fund Contributions

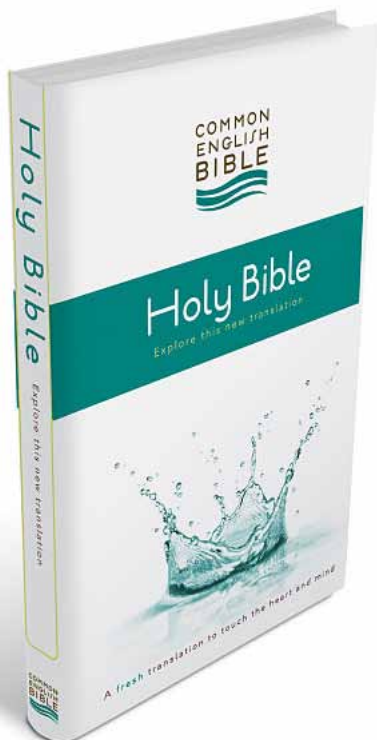
| | |
|---------------------------------|-----------------|
| Year-to-Date Actual | \$ 485,606.97 |
| Annual Budget | \$ 2,073,722.00 |
| Amount needed to fulfill budget | \$ 1,588,115.03 |

Year-to-Date Income Statement

| | |
|--------------|---------------|
| Income | \$ 580,731.74 |
| Expenses | \$ 578,464.09 |
| Net Position | \$ 2,267.65 |

William W. Simpson
A Lawrence Spencer
Patricia Templeton

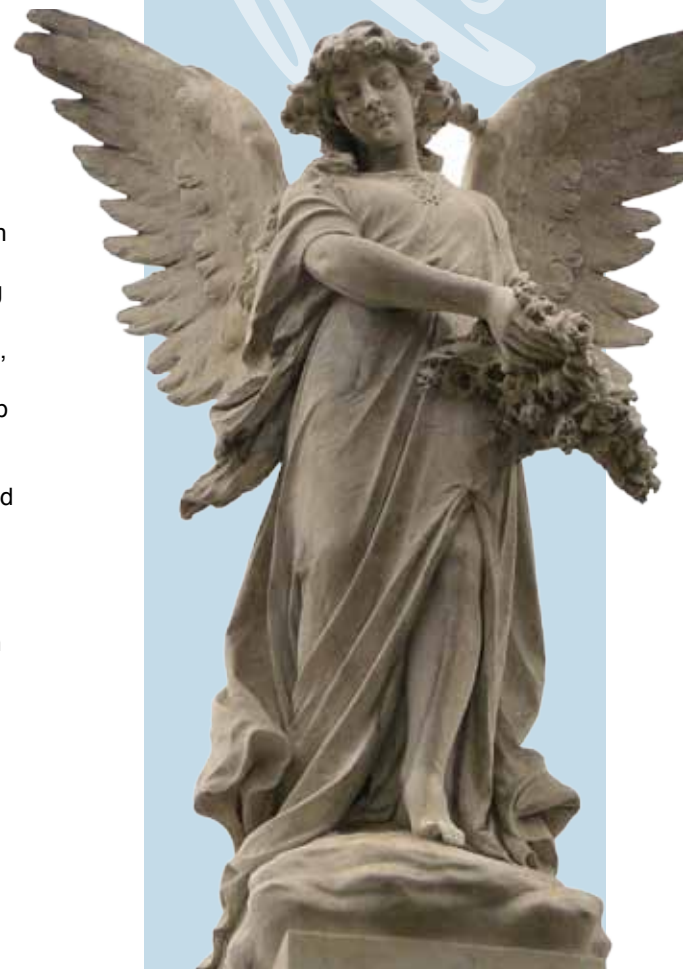
What Is the CEB?



The Common English Bible is a fairly new English translation of the Bible, completed in 2011, that aims to be both accurate and accessible to children, youth, and adults. With smooth reading one of its goals, it works well read silently and aloud for worship, devotion, and study.

The CEB draws on broad scholarship from 24 faith traditions in American, African, Asian, European, and Latino communities. Over 120 scholars worked to translate ancient words into English that can be easily understood by a broad audience of readers. It is a Bible for the whole church of Jesus Christ.

More information about the Common English Bible may be found at <http://www.commonenglishbible.com/home/>.





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www.facebook.com/Westminster.Pittsburgh



www.youtube.com/user/WestminsterUSC

Come, *Holy Spirit!*
Rain upon our dry and dusty lives.

Wash away our sin and heal our wounded spirits.

Kindle within us the fire of your love to burn away our apathy.

With your warmth bend our rigidity, and guide our wandering feet.

The Book of Common Worship