



ANNUAL REPORT

2024 Annual Report to the Congregation from Session



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Senior Pastor, Head of Staff



Jo Forrest

Since the opening weeks of 2024, I marvel at the ways Westminster grew spiritually, attracting new participants, and strengthening the foundation for the future.

Our prayers were answered as so many talented

individuals answered your call serve in a variety of capacities. The Reverend Laura Bentley joined full-time as a Parish Associate in late February and quickly earned the respect and trust of this congregation to be called as the Associate Pastor. The caring ministries she initiated now engage far more hands and hearts in being present with individuals in times of need. Harrison Burgess brings fresh ideas and remarkable talent to the youth and our worship. Emily Schubilla will craft a new path as Volunteer Coordinator. We are blessed.

As diverse as my professional career has been, nothing prepared me for the magnitude of upgrading the antiquated infrastructure of our electrical system. Again, we are blessed with wise leaders who led the *Let There Be Light* project. A grant from the Endowment funded the initial \$150,000 of this \$500,000 project and you responded quickly to raise the remaining \$350,000. You understood the *Light* project will span generations and untold ways to literally be Christ's light.

If anyone doubts the necessity to replace aged equipment, in early November a failure of several small electrical panels forced the shut down of the entire campus.

This January they were to be replaced in the final transfer from the old to the new system. The Friday night almost-crisis also

caused me to age a few years in a few short hours! Thankfully, the Property Commission and custodial staff secured the necessary repairs and inspections to reopen. Even a few days of darkness reminded everyone of Westminster's vital role in serving this community.

In less than 48 hours from the time of the failure, Temple Emanuel opened their sanctuary for our Sunday worship and nourished us with memorable hospitality. The relationship with Temple Emanuel through the Dismantling Antisemitism and with other congregations in the south hills testifies to the value and need for us to collaborate far beyond our walls.

Westminster's ministry continues to inspire new participants to live out their faith in very personal ways. Across all commissions, people respond to the invitation to serve whether in making sandwiches, serving as a behind-the-scenes support, or venturing beyond the South Hills to tend the needs of others.

Thank you to those who supported the 2025 *Heart of Generosity* campaign with pledges and a commitment to giving. We commit to ongoing fiscal discipline in trimming expenses while we fund new initiatives. Like other churches and non-profits, we must inspire those who do not give or give modestly to contribute. We are at a precarious point – we need to spend to support our growth, the aging infrastructure, pay down debt, and at the same time develop new funding sources.

Read this report. Rejoice in the creative ministry across generations. Because of you, this church is strong and ready to follow where Christ leads. I am deeply grateful to serve you.

—Jo Forrest

Associate Pastor for Congregational Care



Laura Bentley

I began serving here at Westminster in February 2024, and it has been a joy to look back on the past year and see how God has been at work in our ministry together. Whether in worship or talking over a coffee, during a baptism or prayer for a loved one,

sharing a meal in Fellowship Hall or gathering around the communion table, the Spirit has been taking the ordinary things of life and making them holy moments of the Kingdom breaking through as we do life together.

For me, this has been a year of getting to know this congregation—and what I have come to know is that this church does life together. I have seen a prayer request shared, vulnerably and bravely, on a Sunday morning that days later has a community of people showing up tangibly to help. You call me when you notice someone hasn't been in worship for a couple of Sundays so I can check in. You pack QuiKits and talk about our unhoused sisters and brothers with dignity and love. You show up week after week on Wednesday evenings to joke around with teenagers and to take seriously the struggles they share.

You join small groups that share meals, read Scripture, discuss books, throw axes, ask tough questions about who God is—and you create not just an enjoyable event, but a community of care.

In this turbulent election year, you have found ways to pull up more chairs around the table and to truly seek to love one another and your neighbors with the heart of Christ. We did this all imperfectly, and yet, God has woven it together in grace.

This year was a time of building relationships for me, and I have seen the ways the Spirit has led us all to deeper and wider relationships at Westminster.

As we move into a new year, my prayer is that God will continue to stretch our table, to welcome new people to this community, to open our hearts wider to care for our neighbors, and to sustain us through the love and grace that we find in one another, and in Christ who has called us together as his church.

Grace and peace,

—*Laura Bentley*

Our Priorities

The great command issued from the ancient of days to love God and built upon by Jesus to **love God and neighbor** echoes throughout our faith and calls us forward. Westminster embraced Jesus' twofold command at her inception and each successive generation brings these lofty ideals to life through concrete ministries. Westminster has and will continue to thrive when focused on spiritual growth in this community. We look to the future with these clear priorities:

Accept **EVERYONE WITH LOVE**

Witness the deep affection among members and the sense of belonging to one another and God through Westminster.

Inspire **WONDER AND MEANING**

This soul-stirring ranges from the vibrant music offered in worship, hearing Jesus' stories with an open heart, the tender children's message during the Bridge, to packing food bags and working together on behalf of someone who is hungry.

Seek **JUSTICE, WITHOUT EXCEPTION**

Our work in mission and outreach is motivated by the desire to salve the wounds where people hurt and driven to courageously seek the change that will make our community stronger.

Energize **THE NEXT GENERATION**

Honest conversations, silly games, and constant care encourage a little one's imagination feel Jesus' love.



Worship Commission

The purpose of the Worship Commission is to plan and coordinate all aspects of our worship services. The commission has met quarterly or as needed in 2024.

Westminster has three worship services on Sunday at 8:30, 9:45, and 11:00. The 9:45 and 11:00 services are livestreamed so that those who are unable to attend in person can feel connected to our church.

The following special worship services took place this year: Ash Wednesday, Maundy Thursday, A Quiet Christmas, and Christmas Eve.

The commission reviewed attendance numbers from past Christmas Eve services and voted to amend the 2024 services to 3:00/5:00/8:00. Attendance at all 3 services was high, with over 1,100 people attending worship on Christmas Eve.

Attendance for all worship services is documented. Here are the average attendance figures for Sunday morning worship:

- 8:30** – 65
- 9:45** – 73
- 11:00** – 146

Hundreds of people watch worship online.

In fact, Chartiers Bend, a retirement community in Bridgeville, joins us for weekly worship via livestream. Several of their residents have joined Westminster.

We have also had several worship services called One Service Sunday, where our entire community of faith worships together at 10:00 a.m.

Communion is prepared by volunteers and served the first Sunday of each month. Andie and Bob Noah have served as communion coordinators for many years, and we thank them for their dedicated service. Barb Myers has volunteered to step into the role – thank you! Daryl Criss chairs Extended Communion, which is served several times a year to members who are unable to attend worship. She will continue in that role and also oversee the preparation of the elements for our extended communion communicants.

People entering worship are greeted by knowledgeable and friendly ushers. Thank you to those who volunteer in this important capacity.

The Chancel Guild continues to beautify our sanctuary for the liturgical year (see Maureen’s report).

The Chancel, Cherub, Junior Choirs, and the Westminster Ringers have filled our ears with their beautiful sounds and filled our hearts with their musical messages. The Cherub and Junior Choirs helped to lead worship once a month. Thank you to Beth Ketterman, who serves as the volunteer Cherub Choir Director. The Westminster Ringers played the prelude on the third Sunday of every month. Jim Marshall continues to volunteer as the Westminster Ringers Director. We thank him for his expert leadership! Two highlights of this year were the Christmas concert on December 8, which featured all choirs and the November 17 performance of Elaine Hagenberg's *Illuminare* at the 11:00 a.m. worship service.

We are grateful to Temple Emanuel of South Hills, Rabbi Aaron Meyer, and their congregation for opening their sanctuary to us on November 10 so that we could worship

together when our campus was closed. We were welcomed with open arms, and treated to a lovely and delicious time of coffee and goodies following the service. Our staff and worship volunteers worked together to facilitate this quick change. The performance of *Illuminare* was originally scheduled for November 10; we were able to move the performance to Sunday, November 17.

Studies show that the number one reason (by far!) people attend church is because someone invited them. We encourage all of you to share the joy that we experience with anyone who might be seeking a church home.

—*Roberta Sarraf/Christine Hestwood*

The Bridge Worship Commission

Our Bridge contemporary worship service continues to have strong attendance in an intimate atmosphere. 2024 was a year of community-building at the Bridge. New families joined, our 9:45 Sunday School continues to grow, Bridge Ladies night has expanded its welcome, and we have continued to build upon the prayers we share each week to offer support beyond Sunday mornings. The Bridge is a thriving part of the worshipping community of Westminster. It is a real joy to see generations worship (and sometimes dance!) together in the WROC.

Throughout the year, we have embraced several changes, including a new call and response format for prayers and the introduction of scripture displayed on large

screens. The Bridge Commission reached out to new volunteers to set up, clean up, greet, and man the refreshment table. We also created a guide for Bridge volunteers and a pathway for training. This encouraged several new individuals and families to serve at the Bridge.

Under the dedicated leadership of Marilyn Rubino, our chancel guild continues to elevate our service into a truly inspiring worship environment, meticulously attending to every detail. They guide us in transforming the WROC into a sacred space as we navigate the liturgical calendar throughout the year.

continued

The Bridge Worship Commission —*continued*

Our band has continued to offer engaging music for worship. We welcomed Harrison Burgess as he began leading worship twice/month on vocals and guitar. Lauren Moore, our Contemporary Worship Coordinator, continues to lead us with inspiring songs and to bring together talented musicians each week. The staff of the Bridge has created seasonal song rotations, available as playlists on Spotify. And the band leadership provides a YouTube playlist of songs each week, so folks can listen to the music in the car, at home, or wherever they'd like.

The Bridge Commission oversaw the installation of a new soundboard, purchased through a 2023 Endowment Grant. Our AV Tech team has been trained, and the soundboard has improved both in person and livestream experiences.

The Bridge Contemporary Worship Service remains an essential aspect of our congregation's spiritual life, consistently uplifting and inspiring us in our worship every Sunday.

—*Tom Few and Laura Bentley*

Chancel Guild

Chancel Guild is responsible for the seasonal décor in the sanctuary, chapel, narthex, and other areas of the church including the exterior doors and windows. Throughout the year, both live and artificial flowers and greenery are purchased to create new arrangements that enhance the worship experience. The guild also provides candles and other items for weddings, and special worship services during the year.

Thanks to the congregation's generous response to the Christmas and Easter Memorial and Honoree requests, we were able to purchase live plants that enhanced the Bridge and sanctuary worship services. The deacons delivered many of these live plants to members in care.

Westminster's set of Chrismon Christmas tree ornaments were created by PWW members almost 50 years ago. They are in need of refurbishment and in some cases replacement. Plans are underway to host



Chrismon workshops in late spring/early summer 2025. More information will follow in the near future.

As always, Chancel Guild welcomes new volunteers to help with the decorating. Many hands make light work. Won't you consider joining us?

—*Maureen Ludwig*



Adult Spiritual Development Commission

The Adult Spiritual Development (ASD) Commission of Westminster Presbyterian Church provides opportunities and resources for spiritual development to members and friends of Westminster. Programs, events, and ministries are designed to support adult as they navigate their spiritual journey and develop friendship and fellowship within the Westminster community.

The year was marked with offering long-standing traditional programs, enhancing current or emerging programs and offering a few new adult spiritual development opportunities. All work of the commission is to support the following goals:

1. Create a culture of spiritual vitality.
2. Develop spiritual community among members.
3. Offer opportunities for people to talk about God's work in their lives.
4. Identify and equip leaders/facilitators for classes and small groups.

New Programs in 2024

- **One Hit Wonders** – Staff and church members led this weekly series which was offered over a 5-week period (September through mid-October) on Wednesday evenings as a part of the Food and Fellowship gathering. Each week a new topic was offered with the intent that the topic could stand alone in a single session or continue with the formation of a small group around a topic. This program will continue once a month in 2025.
- **Men's Prayer Group** – This new small group meets on Wednesday mornings and is led by Chuck Wolfe.
- **Summer/Tuesday Reading Group** – This program started as a 3-book series that met on a Tuesday evening in June, July, and August. The interest it generated led to its continuation, once a month, into the Fall and beyond. Jo Forrest initially led this group that is now led by group members.
- **Westminster Walkabouts** – This program was started in 2023 and continued with strong interest in 2024. Hosted and

continued

Adult Spiritual Development Commission —*continued*

coordinated by Rex and Deborah Waller, the walkbouts included:

- Vermeer, Monet, Rembrandt at the Frick
- Tour of the Fort Pitt Museum
- Tour of the Nationality Rooms (University of Pittsburgh)

Financial Support

- ASD fulfilled two financial support requests in 2024: Purchase of books for Women 2 Women Small group and the Women’s retreat that is scheduled for February 2025.
- Lent and Advent devotionals – used by individuals as well as small groups.
- Upper Room devotionals

Small Groups

Small groups continue to flourish with the goal to have more small groups form ‘naturally’ based on topical interests. Highlights of Small Groups ministries in 2024:

- A communication package was created for prospective small group leaders identifying resources available to support them. Laura Ecklin is the staff person supporting this initiative with gratitude to the following people who helped create this resource: Laura Ecklin, Megan Exley, Sue Davis, Carol Galbreath, and Steve Daniele.
- Grief Care is a vital ministry that serves members, friends of Westminster, and community members. This ministry was offered in the Spring and Fall (led by

Sandy Conaway, Barbara Marsh, and Linda McCaig.

- Women 2 Women* - Meets every 2 weeks on Thursday mornings and is led by Sue Davis. The group chooses reading material related to faith issues such as prayer, scripture, and faith development.
- Ladies in Fellowship Together (L.I.F.T.)*
 - Meets most Thursday evenings and is led by Kristy Berrott. A book or resource is used as the foundation for discussions which are often centered around how to apply the lessons in the readings to everyday life in order to live more wholeheartedly.

** The program/resource A Sanctified Art program, which was used during Lent and Advent in many of the churchwide programs (e.g., sermons, Sunday School, etc.), was also used in these and other small groups during those seasons.*

Continuation of Established Small Groups and ASD-sponsored Ministries

There are several Adult Spiritual Development sponsored activities and ministries that continue to thrive without the need for direct support from ASD. Included in this are: Bible Read-Along, Westminster Book Group, Labyrinth, Library, The Artist’s Way, Fishers of Men, Centering Prayer, Tuesday Morning Men’s Group, and Westminster Single Women’s Group.

Westminster Seminars

The Westminster Seminars are designed to lead thoughtful Christian dialog on a variety of topics led by experts in these topics. Ted and Sara Kyle hosted and coordinated the seminars that are offered on Sunday

mornings in Galbreath Chapel and via Zoom. The seminars are recorded with access to audio/video recordings on the church website. The list of 2024 (and past) seminars can be found here: Westminster Seminars | Westminster Presbyterian Church.

Invitation

Westminster offers a plethora of opportunities for members and friends of Westminster to grow in their spiritual journey, deepen their relationship with God, grow in their faith, and integrate spiritual principles into their daily lives. If you see something of interest, try it out! If you are looking for something that does not seem

to be offered, reach out to any commission member so we can explore ways to meet that interest and need.

—*Claire Thornburgh*, Chair, Elder / *Jo Forrest*

Children’s & Family Ministry Commission

2024 continued the trend of growth for Children’s & Family Ministry at Westminster. Through regular programs and special events, we have continued to see this family of faith expand and share God’s love with each other and our community.

Throughout the year, we offered the following recurring ministry programs:

Sunday Mornings

- **Wiggle Room** (all 3 services)
- **9:45 a.m.**
 - Sunday School for PreK-4th Grade
 - Coloring Pages
 - Children’s Message

- **11:00 a.m.**
 - Sunday School for PreK-4th Grade
 - Worship Bags
- **Wednesday Evenings**
 - Little Ones & Loved Ones (0-preschool & caregivers)
 - Kids’ Connection (PreK-2nd & 3rd-4th Grade)
 - Jesus & Me (JAM) (5th & 6th Grade)

All of these programs have seen steady participation and growth throughout the past year. Students, parents, and volunteers have expressed how much they enjoy being a part of the faith community at Westminster.

continued

Children’s & Family Ministry Commission —*continued*

This fall, all Wednesday evening children’s & youth programming began following a new curriculum. The Follow Me curriculum from the PC(USA) teaches biblical practices for faithful Christian living inspired by practices Jesus did and taught his followers to do. Each month follows a new theme, and each week all classes PreK through 12th grade study the same practice and theme. This new all-ages approach aims to help families build faith connections together. We are continuing to explore how to best connect with parents and create spiritual growth opportunities for them.

Along with regular programs, Children’s & Family Ministry is blessed to mark faith milestones with families through Sacrament Classes, Bible Presentation Sunday, and Baptisms. These moments were reminders that God is working through each one of us, no matter our age or experience. All of these special ceremonies included children of all ages and even some adults taking the next steps on their faith journey.

To kick off the Lenten season, we planned an evening of prayer and reflection on Ash Wednesday. In lieu of normal programming, the whole church was invited to participate in a variety of prayer stations in the WROC. Participants walked the labyrinth, contributed to a communal art project, and spent the evening in contemplative prayer before journeying upstairs to the Ash Wednesday worship service together. This evening was so special, and we look forward to exploring opportunities for the whole family of faith to grow together.

June of course brings the week of faith and fun that is our annual Barefoot School VBS. This year’s theme was “Camp Firelight: A Summer Camp Adventure with God.” Over 200 children and volunteers came

together to sing, dance, play, and explore as we learned about how we can trust God. Lumen the Lightning Bug led the party, sharing the message of God’s abundant love with everyone at Camp Firelight. We were privileged to once again invite families to a celebration luncheon after Barefoot School. Many thanks to the wonderful and talented people who take part in planning, preparing, and executing this week of fun for the children in our community.



2024 Fall Festival

Families gathered throughout the year for a variety of fellowship events. We marked the end of the school year and the beginning of summer with a family bonfire night at Gilfillan Farm. In August, we enjoyed a pool party with plenty of swimming, pizza, conversation, and play. The Fall Festival returned in October where families from Westminster, WECEP, and the community came to enjoy crafts, games, and pumpkin picking. Of course, the holiday season included two beloved Westminster events: Breakfast at the Manger and Family Gingerbread Night. Breakfast at the Manger was a lovely way to celebrate the Advent season. After a

delicious pancake breakfast, Veritas students acted out the Christmas story for those in attendance. Children then made crafts to celebrate the season as parents enjoyed fellowship together. Family Gingerbread Night hosted over 40 families who expressed their creativity with icing, graham crackers, candy, and cardboard boxes. The results were delightfully festive!

As we look ahead to the new year, I am immensely grateful for the unending love and support this church family has provided to our staff, volunteers, children, and families.

Thank you for your commitment to guiding and nurturing our children, by word and deed, with love and prayer, as you encourage them to follow Christ and be faithful members of his church.

—Faith Kemmler

Youth Commission

Veritas continues to be a vibrant and growing ministry. Weekly attendance is climbing higher as the year continues and the students coming each week are growing in their connections tot Westminster.

As students rotate through the program, the dynamic of the group changes. During this season, we have a lot of students that belong to families of long-time church members, but we also have our fair share of students who were invited by a friend and don't come from a religious background. This creates interesting discussions each week. It is a very close-knit group. They care for and protect each other. They laugh together and share the difficulties of their lives. Their bond continues to deepen with each opportunity to spend time together.

We keep ourselves busy through the year. Here are some of the events we have hosted in 2024:

Retreats & Trips

Splash Lagoon (April) We took students to the indoor water park in Erie, PA, for a weekend of bonding and water slides

Mission Trip (July) Students traveled to West Virginia to repair homes. The trip unfortunately ended early due to illness; however, the students truly made the most of the time/work that they did have.



continued

Youth Commission —continued

Crestfield Camp & Conference Center

(December) The Pittsburgh Presbytery hosts a retreat for youth programs in the area. Students got to meet other students in youth groups at other churches nearby.

Events

Youth Sunday (June) Veritas students led worship on June 2.

Charlie Fun Week & Mission Project

(July) Four days in a row we gathered together to have FUN. This is the most highly anticipated event of the year. We visited an escape room, Puttshack, and Keystone Safari. We also learned more about StreetMOMs, met some teens whose parents are impacted by addiction and homelessness, and created more QuickIts.



Veritas leading in worship

donations for SHIM. We collected over 3,000 items to stock their shelves for the holidays.

In May we added Harrison Burgess to the youth department. Laura Ecklin completed her seventh year as a part of the staff. Reverend Laura Bentley is now overseeing the department. They have been working hard together to create new opportunities for students in 2025. The staff is very graciously assisted in leading this ministry by the Youth Commission, incredible volunteers, and dedicated parents.

This has been an incredible year for the youth. We cannot wait to see how Veritas continues to grow and thrive in 2025!

—Laura Bentley / Laura Ecklin / Harrison Burgess



Having fun at Keystone Safari

Bonfire at Gilfillan Farm

(October) A giant game of hide and seek (with Biblical history) in the entire church building with the lights off.

SHIM Food Drive (November) Students ventured into neighborhoods to collect food



Communications Commission

This year started with the implementation of a computer system upgrade to track membership, church operations, activities, and finances. “Realm” is easier to use, presents information clearly, and allows for quick ad hoc reporting that makes operational processes much easier for church staff.

This technology upgrade benefited church members as well. Many people have installed the Realm “Connect” app on their phones, allowing them to see news postings, get details of upcoming events, and access our church directory to obtain contact information for other members. Our expectation is that Connect will be our member directory going forward, versus having a portrait photographer come on site to create printed directories. Stay tuned for more information in 2025 as we work toward getting photographs in Connect for everyone in our church community!

The Bridge and 11:00 Sanctuary worship services continue to be livestreamed each week, and recordings are available through YouTube.

The church published four issues of *The Spire* in 2024, sharing insights from staff and church members as well.

Devotional Guides were printed for both Lent (Kate Bowler’s “Bless the Lent We Actually Have”) and Advent (“Words for the Beginning” from A Sanctified Art).

This year the Communications Commission was primarily focused on the church website. This is the final component of the communications initiatives funded by the Endowment. A team was formed to design and implement an upgrade to our church website with the following goals in mind:

- Engaging, welcoming
- Attractive, ease of use, focus on the user
- Clear display on both desktop and mobile devices
- Ease of update, allowing subsequent changes to be made w/o a software developer
- Representing both “Bridge” and “Traditional” worship communities
- Balancing “informative” and “persuasive” content

Changes are underway and will be implemented in early 2025.

—Christine Hestwood / Carol Galbreath

Community Engagement Commission

Congregational engagement is a primary factor in the spiritual health and growth of the church. This year our commission continued to provide many opportunities for the Westminster community to get involved through hands-on volunteer ministry and fellowship events. We received 36 adults and confirmed 12 youth into membership, and have seen an increase in participation for activities across the board in 2024. We look forward to growing our current programs and adding new volunteer opportunities in the coming year.

Below are some of the activities this commission has used to provide opportunities for people to engage in the life of our church.

Membership

- Inquirers' Gatherings
- New Member Followup
- West Fund Scholarship program

Hands On Volunteer Ministry

- Food to Go
- QuickKits

- Street Mom's activities
- Grow Living Stones
- Horses with Hope
- Rise Against Hunger
- Meals on Wheels events



Celebration Sunday

Fellowship Events

- Sunday Welcome Center
- Church Picnics and Luncheons
- Celebration Sunday
- Forks and Fellowship small groups
- Holy Scoops!
- Food and Fellowship (Wednesday Dinners)
- Church Bike Rides

WROC

- Fitness Classes including Parkinson's Fitness
- Recreational Athletics including basketball, pickleball, and volleyball

-*Meghan Widmar*



Church Bike Ride

Outreach Commission

The members of your Outreach Commission recognize the heart of Westminster members to serve their neighbors, their community, and those less fortunate with their heads and hands as well as their gifts.

In 2024, we sought and considered mission partners that enable opportunity for hands-on service of many natures to provide a variety of meaningful ways to be involved.

Outreach sponsored and funded the Refugee Resettlement project. Our second family arrived in February 2024. Within weeks the four kids were in school, and both parents were working. Their housing situation has presented challenges; in early January they moved to a safer home.



SHIM Garden

We continue to stay connected to our first family of seven who arrived in late 2022. By January 2023 the father was working full time, the three older kids were in school, the younger enrolled in Head Start. The children are thriving, both parents are working, and the family is settled into a home they purchased!

So many WPC members contribute to this effort in large and small ways, and everyone

expresses how rewarding they find the experience to be.

The project leaders have chosen to pursue another refugee family in 2025. This again will certainly be a blessing to anyone who joins the RRS team as well as the family themselves.

A new mission opportunity began this year in collaboration with City Mission to create a novel Aftercare program to support their graduates. Once the program begins, volunteers will act as mentors to these individuals with support from City Mission and an innovative technology device. The Aftercare program seeks to see these graduates sustain long term success in independent living after leaving the Mission.

Outreach Funding was provided in 2024 to these Mission Partners:

LOCAL & NATIONAL

- Refugee Resettlement Support
- SHIM (South Hills Interfaith Ministries)
- Washington City Mission
- Street Moms
- Meals on Wheels @ The Crossroads
- Grow Living Stones
- Bread for the World
- Rebuilding Together Pittsburgh (Homewood)
- Bair Foundation

INTERNATIONAL

- Haiti La Coupe School – Teacher salaries, food distribution and technical School support

continued

Outreach Commission —*continued*



- **EMERGING NEEDS** – for new opportunities or needs that arise throughout the year
- **Presbyterian Disaster Relief** – for Hurricane aid

- **Foundation of HOPE Prison Ministries** – Bibles for Prisoners

As we move forward in 2025, the Outreach Commission will continue seeking to discern where the heart of Westminster leads us in terms of mission partner selection, fundings, and the ways we can enable opportunities for hands-on service.

We are always open for your feedback and requests for mission partners.

—**Allison McGee**, Elder, Chair of Outreach Commission

—**Jo Forrest**, Staff Liason

WECEP (Westminster Early Childhood Education Programs)



WECEP (Westminster Early Childhood Education Programs) operates two outstanding education programs that offer full or half-day programs for children ages three months to six years. The staff is made up of 42 highly experienced and dedicated individuals. A board of nine committed volunteers assist in making sure that WECEP remains one of the most respected programs in the Pittsburgh area. The love for and commitment to teaching children based on Christian values is one that holds true for all of the staff and families served.



Lori Feldmann,
WNSK Education Director

The Nursery School (WNSK) offers classes for children aged two through kindergarten. This includes comprehensive Transition, Pre-K, Pre-School, Twos, Enrichment, and Spanish classes. The enrichment classes place emphasis

on academic and creative areas such as literacy, art, cooking, and STEM. WNSK has a theme-based curriculum aligned with PA State standards that is specifically designed to meet the needs of each age group. There is a focus on six developmental areas including social, emotional, cognitive,

language, physical and spiritual. There are currently 196 children enrolled from September through June. Registration takes place in February. The director is Lori Feldmann.



Megan Baumgartner,
WCDC Program Director

The Child Development Center (CDC) currently has 75 children enrolled and is considered a year-round childcare program. The CDC philosophy is based on educational research that children learn best through play, so the curriculum is play based.

The classrooms available for both full time and part time care are Infant, Toddler Prep, Toddler, Preschool Prep, Preschool, and Pre-K. The director is Megan Baumgartner. Liz Heslin supports both programs. Enrollment is rolling admission and is open all year. There is currently a waitlist for openings.

WECEP is licensed by the Pennsylvania Department of Education and Pennsylvania Department of Human Services, and maintains a certification through the Keystone STARS program.

The staff continue to work very hard to create and maintain an educational community which provides the highest quality early childhood learning experiences in a safe, nurturing, and creative environment that is based on a Christian foundation. The programs feel very strongly about teaching the importance of giving back to

continued

WECEP —continued



Liz Heslin, WECEP
Office Manager

the community. Families and staff participate in a sock drive in October for Socks with a Mission and a food drive in November with SHIM. In close work with the church, WECEP participates in the Bair

Foundation giving tree program in December. The program continues to provide a loving early learning environment and strong foundation for new families.

—Lori Feldmann, Liz Heslin,
Megan Baumgartner



WROC (Westminster Recreation & Outreach Center)



With an established slate of programs, the WROC focused on increasing visibility through print, social media, and community involvement. In April, the WROC was represented at the Parkinson’s Foundation, Living Well Conference. This conference provides an opportunity to highlight WROC programs offered for those with Parkinson’s Disease (PD). In appreciation of Westminster’s support, the church received a painting titled *The Boxer*. This painting is currently in Westminster’s Gallery and was inspired by the PD boxing classes offered at the WROC.

The list of WROC classes increased to include Gentle Yoga, Pilates, Tai Chi, and Cardio Drumming. Cardio Drumming, a new trend, has been an incredible outreach with close to 50 participants. WROC Talks (a free speaker series) continues to be a reliable source of community outreach. The three talks presented this year had an average of 50 participants.

The WROC is so much more than the programs it offers. The WROC is part of something bigger. It is part of a family – first the church family and then our extended community. We are blessed with fitness instructors and program volunteers who create an atmosphere of Christian Fellowship, a place to be known and to know others.

—*Kathy Long*, WROC Director



Westminster receives a gift of appreciation at the Parkinson’s Foundation, Living Well Conference.

Town Hall South

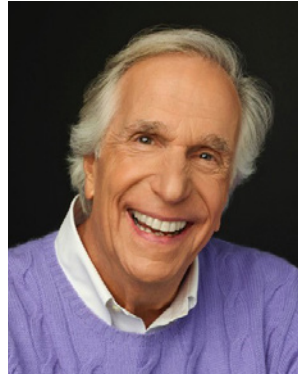


On May 10, 2024, the Town Hall South Speaker Series (THS) came to an end after 53 seasons with the uplifting lecture of actor, producer, director, and best-selling author Henry Winkler.

THS was conceived and organized in 1969 by WPC members Edna Brown and Ruth Bayley, with the encouragement of Pastor John Galbreath, as part of the Outreach Mission of the church. The THS mission was two-fold: (1) to provide an educational enrichment program to the community through quality lectures while engaging the community in meaningful discussion of the issues of the day, and (2) to provide service to the community through philanthropic gifts to a wide range of local organizations.

In furtherance of the THS mission, THS presented daytime lectures to the South Hills community from its inaugural season in 1969-1970, during which actor Vincent Price graced the stage, to its final season in 2023-2024. Significantly, THS was run by a board of dedicated volunteers (all of whom were women) who personally researched, evaluated, and selected each speaker, ensuring that THS consistently engaged speakers of the highest caliber covering a wide range of topics.

In furtherance of its philanthropic mission, THS donated a significant portion of its net profits to local charities after each season. Since its inception in 1969, THS donated



Final guest speaker,
Henry Winkler

over \$650,000 to community organizations in need.

In September of 2024, the THS board voted to concentrate THS' final donations on two worthy organizations – Sojourner House and City Mission of Washington County.

Although the speaker series, a long-standing South Hills community treasure, must end due to substantial increases in speaker fees and related expenses, as well as decreases in ticket sales for daytime lectures (trends that existed for many years), the THS board hopes the community will continue THS' efforts to encourage education, community fellowship, and engagement on important issues of the day. Most importantly, we celebrate the significant contribution THS made to the South Hills for over 50 years. It was a remarkable run!

Thank you to Edna Brown, Ruth Bayley, and Pastor John Galbreath for creating the speaker series in 1969, positively impacting our community and beyond for decades.

—*Janette Clements*, Town Hall South Board Chair



2024 Church Statistical Report

Will be added at a later date.



Board of Deacons

The Board of Deacons serves the congregation with acts of care and compassion. The Deacons met throughout the year on the fourth Monday of the month, except June and July.

Our twenty-six deacons, including two youth deacons, served the congregation through standing committees and special events. They also served through relational ministry, paying attention to the needs of the congregation, welcoming new folks as they get to know the congregation, and notifying the pastors when anyone was in need. The work of deacons is often behind-the-scenes, but it is work that makes Westminster the warm, caring community that it is.

The committees and special events of the Board of Deacons in 2024 were as follows:

Blood Drive

The Deacons held blood drives through Vitalant in February, May, and September. In total our 2024 blood drives included 78 donors, who gave 80 units, and saved 240 lives!

Care Team

New in 2024, the Care Team was formed to offer spiritual companionship to members of Westminster who are homebound or dealing with various challenges. This team has reached out monthly to care partners through cards, phone calls, and visits.

Care Meals

The Deacons provided meals through 2024 to members of the congregation recovering from surgery, welcoming a new child, mourning the loss of a loved one, or various other transitions.





Extended Communion

The Deacons delivered communion to homebound church members in March, May, and December, fellowship which is much appreciated by the recipients and attending deacons.

Flower Delivery

Following Easter and Christmas, deacons and volunteers from the congregation delivered flowers to homebound members of Westminster. Children's and Family Ministry also contributed cards made by the children with the flowers. The deliveries were appreciated and enabled those at home to feel a joyful connection to the church during the holidays.

Greeting Cards

The Deacons continued to send cards in celebration, condolence, and prayer to members of the church community throughout 2024.

Staying Connected

Social gatherings were arranged by the Staying Connected team at Providence Point and Friendship Village in February. These gatherings were a time of fellowship and a time to hear about goings-on at the church. The refugee team shared about their work; Jo Forrest shared news about church; and Laura Bentley was introduced.

Staying Connected continued to mail packs each month to homebound members. Packs include activity pages, scripture readings, crosswords, and a letter from the Deacons.

Donuts with the Deacons

Each Sunday in November, deacons provided donuts in the Welcome Center between worship services. They shared about the work they do.

We are looking forward to ways God will move the Board of Deacons in service in 2025!

—*Ian Thomas*, Deacon Moderator /
Laura Bentley

Caring Ministries

There are times in all of our lives where we need extra support and care from our community. It is heartening to see the ways our congregation reaches out to one another in moments of uncertainty, fear, or mourning. This ministry is often one-on-one, built over time through the relationships that have been formed over years. But we also have created intentional supports, with dedicated volunteers and staff, who are able to offer prayer and encouragement when we need it most. In 2024, our caring ministries included:

Grief Care

Led by dedicated volunteers, our Grief Care group is offered in the fall and spring. Grief Care groups meet weekly for six sessions and are open to the public. Each season of Grief Care draws in folks who happen to pass the sign as they drive on Washington Rd. The groups have been a light in darkness for many within our church and broader community. Those who have been part of Grief Care speak of the safe space that is created where they can be vulnerable, feel heard, and take away both practical advice and a sense that they are not alone on their journey of grief.

Care Team

Though a committee of our Board of Deacons, our Care Team includes members of the congregation beyond currently serving Deacons. This team of twelve, formed in May 2024, has consistently offered encouragement and care for homebound members through visits, calls, cards, and prayers.

Pastoral Care

As members of our congregation have encountered health challenges, life transitions, or loss this year, our pastors have reached out through calls, texts, visits, cards, and prayer. We always want to be responsive to the needs of the congregation. Please remember to contact the church if you know of someone who has been hospitalized or is in need of pastoral care.

Samaritan Counseling

Westminster is one of seven satellite locations of The Samaritan Counseling Center of Western PA, headquartered in Sewickley. Their licensed staff have continued to meet with individuals, families, and groups throughout the year.

Funerals and Memorials

Volunteers and pastoral staff offer consolation and care when families have lost a loved one. In 2024, we were honored to remember the saints who passed away and bear witness to Christ's resurrection and promise of eternal life. The sanctuary, chapel, columbarium, and Memorial Parlor within our church property have offered beautiful spaces to gather, remember, and be uplifted with hope in Christ.

All Saints

November 3, 2024 we named each of the sixteen saints of Westminster who had passed on to the Church Triumphant this year. We offered a special welcome in worship to their loved ones, and it was a moving and meaningful moment to grieve together and to offer gratitude to God for their lives and their witness to Christ.

Prayer Group

Westminster's Prayer group meets biweekly to offer intercessory prayer for those who have requested prayer or for individuals and community concerns that have become known to a member of the group. This year we updated our prayer request cards and have encouraged members of the congregation to share prayer concerns during worship. While this small, intentional group maintains confidentiality, their ministry reaches a wide range of the church membership and the community.

—*Laura Bentley*, Associate Pastor



Finance Commission

As stewards of the financial resources of the church, the Finance Commission is pleased to provide both fiscal highlights and key accomplishments for 2024.

The year began with the church successfully migrating to a new cloud-based church management platform. The new system included enhancements to the chart of accounts which has provided improved visibility and reporting of the church’s financial performance. Commissions are now receiving regular actual vs. budget variance reports to enable improved fiscal management.

With the new system in place the following are key financial highlights:

- General Fund receipts decreased year-over-year by \$50,000 or 3%. This variance was largely driven by fewer unpledged contributions while the pledged receipts increased. Similar to last year given this trend, the General Fund budget was kept unchanged for 2025.
- From a Total Revenue perspective, excluding funds specifically identified for the replacement of the electrical panel, the church met its normal operating revenue budget.

- As in the past, the church pro-actively managed its expenses coming in slightly under budget from a normalized perspective.
- Given the challenges with property-related expenses in the past, the 2024 budget reflected an increase over 2023 actuals. While certain expense categories were over-budget, such as utilities, as a whole Property expenses were slightly under budget. Part of this is due to continued diligence to reduce on-going costs from bringing grass cutting in-house to the replacement of paper towels with hand dryers.
- The endowment loan balance was paid down ~\$130,000 to ~\$485,000 with a maturity date of June 2028.
- Finally, our cash balance remained relatively stable with only a minor decrease over the year as the church benefited from a solid money market interest rate and a near break-even operating year.

It would be remiss to not acknowledge the church’s rally of support to rapidly fund the electric panel replacement project at a cost of nearly \$500,000. The combination

of the dedicated endowment gift and the contributions of many of you allowed this project to take place and not impact the financial performance of the church. This generosity allowed the church to avoid the costs of taking on an equity loan to pay for the project.

We thank you for your continued financial support which allows the church to transform our priorities into a reality that impact lives.

—*Brian Eccher*, Chair /
Jack Kelly / Jo Forrest

Financial Summary

	Operating	Special Projects*	Total
Revenue	\$2,082,205	\$347,414	\$2,429,619
Expenses**	\$2,072,785	\$302,194	\$2,374,979
Net Total	\$9,420	\$45,220	\$54,640

* Special projects were the parking lot sealing and electrical panel replacement

** Expenses do not include loan principal payments which were \$130,71

Operating Cash	\$850,545
Endowment Note Balance	\$485,104

Personnel Commission

Westminster Church continues to be blessed with a talented and committed staff that have been called to support the varied ministries of the church as well as to manage the business portion of the church.

The Personnel Commission is responsible to support the staff, address staffing needs and concerns, develop and administer Westminster’s personnel policies, and ensure that Westminster has the resources needed.

In 2024, the Personnel Commission:

1. Hired Harrison Burgess as the Youth Ministry Coordinator
2. Session accepted the Pastor Nominating Committee’s recommendation of Laura Bentley as Associate Pastor
3. Celebrated Jan Bauman for 16 years of faithful service as our Volunteer Coordinator, with her retirement from active service, in late November 2024
4. Updated the title of Christine Hestwood to Director of Music & Arts, and Communication
5. Updated job description and job title of Laura Ecklin as Youth Ministry and Administrative Manager

6. Established a search committee for the role of Volunteer Coordinator, hiring Emily Shubilla
7. Welcomed Richard Norris III as our pastor intern, beginning September 1, 2024, for nine months
8. Hired Meredith Rockenstein as Kitchen Manager
9. Addressed staffing needs for both the Custodial team and Audio Visual team

The work of Westminster Presbyterian Church and the many lives impacted would not be possible without the talented individuals called to be the church’s staff. The Personnel Commission represents this church with gratitude for the faithful work done throughout Westminster. This commission is committed to its support of staff and will continue to evaluate the ongoing needs of Westminster.

—Denise Rost, Chair / Jo Forrest

Stewardship Summary | 2025 Campaign

The theme of this year’s Annual Pledge and Giving Campaign was once again **The Heart of Generosity**. The campaign commenced on October 27 and was scheduled to run for three weeks. We communicated with the congregation during church services and through letters, emails, and social media about our annual budget needs and the implications of continuing budget deficits. A narrative budget described how our giving is used to support the activities and ministries of our church. The commission has been emphasizing that giving is a year-round activity. We will continue to receive additional pledges throughout January and well into 2025.

The campaign has resulted in 281 pledges and recurring gift commitments to date totaling \$1,261,891 with an average pledge of \$4,491 and an average of \$1,643 for each of the 768 families in the congregation. This represents only 37% of the families in the congregation making a pledge. The total amount pledged is below the final results of the 2024 campaign but is slightly ahead of where the 2024 campaign was at this point in time and more families have pledged than did so last year. Of those who pledged in 2024 and have also pledged for 2025, 49% increased their pledge. We will continue to receive additional pledges throughout January and well into 2025.

The table to the right reflects the distribution of annual pledges made by our congregation.

Over 60% of our family units have yet to pledge for the 2025 campaign. We are expanding the commission membership and determining new ways to engage with the members of the congregation that do not pledge to improve the participation rate. We encourage all of you to reflect on the gifts



**THE HEART OF
GENEROSITY**
PLEDGE & GIVE 2025

Pledge Amount	No. of Pledges
\$0 - \$500	28
\$501 - \$1,000	31
\$1,001 - \$1,500	40
\$1,501 - \$2,000	19
\$2,001 - \$3,000	48
\$3,001 - \$4,000	27
\$4,001 - \$5,000	14
\$5,001 - \$7,500	24
\$7,501 - \$10,000	23
\$10,001 - \$20,000	17
Above \$20,000	10

God has given to you, and if you have not already done so, consider making a pledge to return a portion of those gifts to further his work in the world through Westminster

At the end of 2023 the Property Commission began work on planning for the electrical service replacement project. The total cost of the project was estimated to be around \$500,000. The endowment provided the seed funding of the project with a grant of \$150,000. As this project was not a budgeted item in our normal operating budget it was necessary to hold a separate campaign to fund the project. The **“Let There Be Light”** campaign” commenced on August 25 and formally ended on October 27 as

continued

Stewardship Summary —continued



we launched the annual campaign. A total of \$346,963.78 has been raised with contributions

from 208 church families and a contribution from WECEP. This campaign stressed the importance of participation by all members and emphasized that contributions of any size were important. It is noteworthy that 100 families contributed \$250 or less. We

are still receiving contributions for this project.

Thank you to all who have so generously supported Westminster in 2024 and who have pledged their continued support of our essential ministries, energizing our youth and families to grow in their faith, inspiring wonder and meaning through vibrant worship, seeking justice through our outreach and volunteer programs, and standing as a witness to God’s inclusive love.

—Dave Heilman, Chair / Jo Forrest

Endowment & Special Gifts Committee

As a way of expressing their joyful faith and gratitude for God’s blessing, current and past members of Westminster have bestowed monetary gifts to this fund which has helped our church in so many ways including property, programs, mission related projects, and the loan to the church. Please consider donating to the fund through a current contribution, a will, an IRA, or charitable gift annuity/trust. Members may also set up a special gift fund with a minimum contribution of \$10,000. More information on the Endowment can be found in the Member Resources section of our website.

Assets as of 12-31-24 (all balances preliminary & approximate)

- Undesignated Fund Balance (including WPC loan) = \$4,240,000 (appr.)
- Balance of Loan to Westminster = \$485,104 (appr.)

- Special Gifts Funds = \$215,000 (appr.)
- Dorothy McClintock Memorial Library Fund = \$22,000
- Special Property Needs = \$94,000
- Music and Arts = \$20,000
- Digital Ministries = \$60,000
- Chapel Organ Fund = \$19,000

Highlights

Our committee met 4 times in 2024 with the following highlights:

- The Endowment received approximately \$5,000 in donations in 2024.
- One request from Property Commission for \$156,801 in grants from the corpus was reviewed and recommended to Session for approval.

- Disbursements from Endowment Special Gifts Funds were reviewed and approved by the Endowment Committee.
- Financial statements were created and will be part of the consolidated audited financial statements.
- We held information sessions with both of our investment advisers.

Investments

The committee continues to use two investment advisers, with one concentrating on equities and the other balancing our portfolio with a mix of equities and fixed income. The blended return for 2024 was 13.3%.

Undesignated Fund Grant Approval

As per the Declaration of the Endowment Fund, each year the Endowment Fund may distribute up to 4% of the fund’s fair market value to programs which will enable Westminster Church to expand its existing Christian ministry. This includes non-recurring capital expenditures beyond the scope of the church’s normal operating budget. The replacement of the outdated church main electrical service equipment was an urgent and pressing need to keep our physical property up and running. A grant to Property Commission in the amount of \$156,801 (4% of the corpus) was recommended by the Endowment Committee and approved by Session. The \$156,801 grant provided startup funds

and gave the church time to raise additional money for the \$500,000 project.

Special Gift Fund Approvals

Special Property Needs

- WROC Sound System Upgrade \$13,443, fully funded
- Sanctuary Sound System Upgrade \$9,331, partially funded; remainder funded by church budget and member gift
- Chancel Window Replacement \$11,659 partially funded; remainder funded by church budget

Music & Fine Arts

- Refurbish Austin Organ, main sanctuary \$34,290, fully funded

2024 Endowment & Special Gifts Fund Committee

If you are interested in learning more about the Westminster Endowment & Special Gifts Fund, please reach out to one of the members of the committee.

- Deborah Waller, *Chair*
- Ken Rapko, *Vice-Chair*
- Don Baumann, *Treasurer*
- Emily Hammel, *Secretary*
- Michelle Burgess, *Von Campanella*,
- George Pitcairn, *John Wehn*
- Ex-officio: Jo Forrest, *Moderator of Session*
- and Bill Ludwig, *Clerk of Session*

continued

Property Commission

This year has been a very busy year for the Property Commission and the church staff in maintaining the grounds and building. We completed 21 of 22 projects of various types and complexities throughout 2024. For the largest project (and the only project that will not be completed in 2024), we started the planning and engineering processes in 2023 for the electrical service replacement project that is also known as the **Let There Be Light!** Project. This year we finalized the engineering plans, put together the scope of work and project bidding documents,



The new electrical box and transformer located on the north side of the Galbreath Chapel.

identified potential bidding contractors, received bids from the contractors, selected our contractor, and started construction both inside and outside the church. As of this writing, our contractor is scheduled to complete the project and West Penn Power (WPP) will switch the power on to the new electrical service system the week of January 19, 2025. Once that is completed, WPP will remove the old transformers from within the electrical vault. The total project budget was \$487,109. The commission received a

\$150,000 grant from Endowment for the project and the *Let There Be Light* Project fundraising raised \$346,963.78. This brings our total funding for the project to \$491,963.78. We also anticipate that the project will be delivered under budget, but at this time we are not able to quantify what that might be.



One of the two chancel windows being replaced.

If that project wasn't enough, we had the 21 other projects that included upgrading the sound systems in both the sanctuary and the WROC; replacement of numerous windows including two chancel windows in the sanctuary; minor roof repairs; resealing and striping the parking lots; installing a concrete pad for the dumpster area; replacing numerous doors; flooring in offices; fixing HVAC equipment; repainting inside and outside the building; and purchasing new tables, projector bulbs, and bathroom hand driers. The commission also received Endowment grants for the sound system upgrades in the sanctuary and the WROC and the two chancel window replacements in the sanctuary.

I also must note that the custodial staff led by Mr. Walter Geroda (Property Manager/ Head Custodian) and Jack Kelly (Director of Finance and Operations) have not just done their jobs but have been an integral part of identifying ways for the church to save money. Walter and Jack worked together to locate and purchase a 2006 F-250 pickup truck and used riding tractor to help reduce long-term operating costs associated with snow removal and lawncare. Walter has also purchased energy efficient light bulbs; replaced where possible paper towel dispensers with electric hand driers in rest rooms; scrutinized bids to help us attain the lowest cost for items or services; and the list goes on! The custodial staff were also integral in potentially saving lives and the building on the evening of November 8 when the small electrical fire broke out in an old breaker box panel that was slated to be replaced as part of the *Let There Be Light* Project. Walter's staff was working near the Fellowship Hall entrance when they heard the fire alarm sound. They determined there was an issue in the electrical room, contacted the fire department, and checked the building to be sure all persons were evacuated from inside the building. ***Without this fast thinking and response from the staff, we might have had a bigger and more tragic event.*** The morning following the fire, Walter was able to communicate with church staff, WECEP leadership, members of Session, and our electrical contractors to determine how the church would be impacted, what needed to be done to replace the breaker box panel, and coordinated with the fire department so the building could be reopened as soon as possible. Because of their efforts, the church was only closed for two business

days. When the building reopened, Walter also coordinated having the electrical room professionally cleaned and the installation of new fire exit signs throughout the building. The commission is continuing to work with the fire department and will be receiving a report that will discuss items that may need further evaluation regarding system or building enhancements related to fire protection.

Currently, of our 1,040 columbarium niches, 554 are interred, 333 are sold, and 153 are available for sale at \$3,000 each. Thirty-five existing columbarium plaques were sent out to be refinished this year.

To wrap up, 2024 has been a very busy and eventful year for the commission. We know that the building is and will continue to be a better operating and more energy efficient building than it was in 2023. ***We want to thank everyone that was able to donate to the Let There Be Light Project.*** With the financial challenges churches face nationwide, it is very much appreciated that we were able to raise the money through donations to complete the project without taking on long-term loans. On a personal note, I want to thank Jay Galbreath (former Commission Chair), the members of the commission, and church staff that have and are continuing to help me understand this large and complex building that we must maintain in order to help us to continue our ministry. It is truly my blessing to serve with these volunteers and staff to help keep Westminster the vibrant, loving, community of faith it is!

Tom Page, Chair / Jo Forrest

This document was produced by the staff and many members of our congregation.
Please excuse any misspellings or omissions.



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