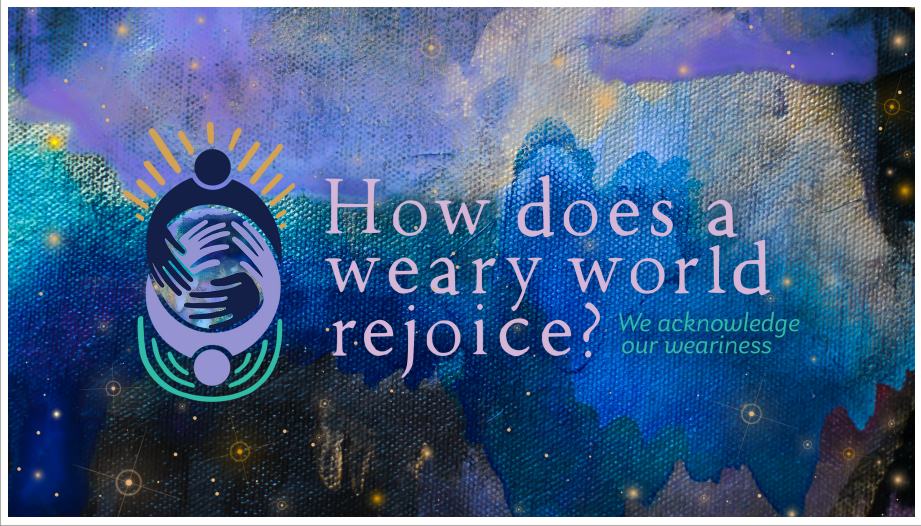




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THE WESTMINSTER LOG



With Christmas Eve falling on Sunday this year, we will have two services on December 24th. We'll celebrate the fourth Sunday of Advent during our 10:30 a.m. service. Our Adult Bell Choir will share their music with us that morning. At 5:00 p.m. we will hold our candlelight Christmas Eve Service. Communion will be served at the evening service and the Chancel Choir will provide special music.

.....

SERVICE FOR THE WEARY

Wednesday, December 20 at 6:00 p.m.
Refreshments will follow the service

For those who have experienced loss, the joy of the holiday season can often feel elusive and out of reach. The anguish of broken relationships, the insecurity of unemployment, the weariness of ill health, the pain of isolation - can make us feel alone in the midst of the celebrating and spending time with others. Sometimes, we simply need a quiet place to be with our thoughts. We need space and time to acknowledge our feelings and concern; we need to know that we are not alone.

For these reasons and more, on December 20 at 6pm we are offering a "Service for the Weary," to provide space for prayer, reflection, and remembrance amidst the twinkle lights and holiday hustle and bustle. *Friends, this service is for you.* Bring your grief. Bring your weariness. Bring your fatigue, and allow yourself a quiet space to reflect and draw near to God. Join with us as we worship together through prayer, scripture, and music that acknowledge that God's presence is forever with us - and that God's Word comes to shine light into our darkness. If you can think of anyone who might benefit from this time of reflection and prayer, please invite them to join you!

CHRISTMAS EVE
Sunday morning Worship
10:30 A.M.

Candlelight Service
5:00 P.M.

IMPORTANT DATES

Sunday, December 3
• 5:00 p.m. Advent Potluck Dinner and Workshop (page 8)

Tuesday, December 5
• 12:00 p.m. Lunch and Learn (page 4)

Saturday, December 9
• 9:00 a.m. Children's Christmas Program Rehearsal

Sunday, December 10
• 10:30 a.m. Children's Christmas Program (page 9)

Friday, December 15
• 5:00 p.m. Parents Night Out (page 8)

Sunday, December 17
• 10:30 a.m. Christmas Cantata

Wednesday, December 20
• 6:00 p.m. Service for the Weary (front page)

Sunday, December 24
• 10:30 a.m. 4th Sunday of Advent
• 5:00 p.m. Christmas Eve worship (front page)

Sunday, December 31
• 9:30 a.m. Pancakes and PJ's (page 9)

DECEMBER 2023 ISSUE 181

WWW.WPCBC.ORG

The Westminster Log is published monthly by Westminster Presbyterian Church, 103 East Midland Street, Bay City, Michigan, 48706. Articles must be submitted by the fifteenth day of each month before publication unless otherwise noted. We reserve the right to edit submissions for content and space. The Westminster Log is formatted to be printed in color.

Visit us on Facebook:

Westminster Presbyterian Church - Bay City

Phone: 989-686-1360
E-mail: office@wpcbc.org

Office Hours:
Monday through Thursday
8:00 a.m. - 4:00 p.m.

Pastor
Rev. Jamie Milton (ext. 204)

Parish Associate
Rev. Linda Williams (ext. 203)

Church Secretary/Treasurer
Heather Heidtman (ext. 201)

Facilities Manager
Harold Miller (ext. 205)

December

Sundays

9:00 a.m. Bell Choir Rehearsal
for our Adults; the Bells play during Worship once a month

9:00 a.m. Sunday School
For children PreK-4th grade

9:00 a.m. Adult Bible Study
This month, we'll begin our Advent Study "How Does a Weary World Rejoice. Please see page 3 for more details

9:30 a.m. Fellowship
Join us in Fellowship Hall for Coffee and Donuts and Conversation

10:30 a.m. Worship
Advent begins December 3rd. Please see page 2 for more details.

11:30 a.m. Fellowship
Join us in Fellowship Hall for Coffee and Cookies and Conversation

5:30 p.m. Dinner

6:00 p.m. Ignite Youth Group
For Youth 5th-12th grade

Office Hours
Monday – Thursday: 8:00 a.m. – 4:00 p.m.

Website: wpcbc.org

Join us on Facebook
Westminster Presbyterian Church - Bay City

Sunday	Monday
<div>Happy Birthday</div> <div>JeAnne Hebner Joy Thompson Bill Shelt</div> <div>Lois MacPhail George Greene Jan VanNostrand</div>	
3 <i>First Sunday of Advent</i> We acknowledge our weariness 11:45 a.m. Pageant Rehearsal Acts 4-6 5:00 p.m. Advent Potluck Dinner and Workshop	4 6:00 p.m. Mission Mtg. 7:00 p.m. Deacons Mtg.
10 <i>Second Sunday of Advent</i> We find joy in connection 10:30 a.m. "A Very Special Child" Pageant	11 5:00 p.m. Property Mtg. 6:00 p.m. Finance Mtg. 7:00 p.m. Stewardship Mtg,
17 <i>Third Sunday of Advent</i> We allow ourselves to be amazed 10:30 a.m. "And Glory Shone Around" Christmas Cantata	18
24 <i>Fourth Sunday of Advent</i> We sing stories of hope Worship at 10:30 a.m. and 5:00 p.m.	25 Church Office Closed
31 <i>We root ourselves in ritual</i> 9:30 a.m. PJ's and Pancakes	<i>Merry Christmas!</i>

Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Fri/Sat
			1
			2
5 10:00 a.m. Hearts & Hands Knitting 12:00 p.m. Lunch and Learn 6:00 p.m. Boy Scouts 6:00 p.m. Personnel	6 6:30 p.m. Chancel Choir	7 8:30 a.m. TOPS 5:00 p.m. Food of Faith at Messiah Lutheran 7:00 p.m. Adult Bible Study via Zoom	8
			9 9:00 a.m. Pageant Rehearsal
12 9:00 a.m. Matthew 25 Cafe 10:00 a.m. Staff Mtg. 10:00 a.m. Hearts & Hands Knitting 1:00 p.m. Lions Club 6:00 p.m. Boy Scouts 6:30 p.m. Grief Group	13 6:30 p.m. Chancel Choir	14 8:30 a.m. TOPS 5:00 p.m. Food of Faith at Messiah Lutheran 7:00 p.m. Adult Bible Study via Zoom	15 5:00 p.m. Parents Night Out
			16 10:00 a.m. Chancel Choir Rehearsal
19 10:00 a.m. Hearts & Hands Knitting 6:00 p.m. Boy Scouts 6:30 p.m. Session Meeting	20 6:00 p.m Service for the Weary 7:00 p.m. Chancel Choir	21 8:30 a.m. TOPS 12:00 p.m. Lydia Circle 7:00 p.m. Adult Bible Study via Zoom	22
			23
26 Church Office Open 8:00 a.m.-12:00 p.m.	27 Church Office Open 8:00 a.m.-12:00 p.m.	28 Church Office Closed 5:00 p.m. Food of Faith at Messiah Lutheran	29
			30

*Birthdays listed are for our 75+ Members

In October, the **Operating Fund** had income of \$49,743.72 and expenses of \$36,738.07. Expenses included food for Food of Faith; new music for the Chancel Choir, Sunday School supplies and curriculum, in addition to the recurring expenses to keep church operations running. Thank you for your gifts to the General Fund which allow us to do all that we do! We’re so grateful for the gifts of your time, talents, and treasures.

The **Building Improvement Fund** received contributions of \$644.00 during the month and had expenses of \$410.00, to relocate the nursery. Those expenses will be reimbursed from recent memorial gifts designated by a family.

The **Major Repairs Fund** had income of \$184.00 and no expenses for October. The balance at the end of October is \$40,349.37. Thank you to those who contribute to the Building Improvement and Major Repairs Funds, which allow us to keep our building in good shape and have funds available when unexpected repairs are needed.

Contributions to the **Capital Campaign Fund** totaled \$4,622.89 in October. The balance on the loan at the end of the month stands at \$154,547.41. We are so grateful to everyone who has and continues to help us pay down this loan.

FELLOWSHIP TIME



Join your church family for a time of fellowship before and after Sunday’s worship service. Coffee and donuts included!

STEWARDSHIP 2024

2024 Commitment cards will be collected after our Annual Meeting in January. We found this worked well in 2023, for two reasons, first we know the holiday season can be a busy time and we hope in January things will have settled down and you can prayerfully discern how to share your gifts with Westminster in 2024. Second, we will, once again, ask our Elders and Committee Chairs to share their plans, needs and goals for 2024. It can be hard to “see” what we’re doing in and around Westminster when looking at only numbers on a page. We want you to see, hear and understand all the great things our ministries have planned. As always, if you have questions or concerns, please talk to me or a member of the Stewardship or Finance Committee. Thank you!



End of Year Information

- Envelopes for 2024 will be available for pick up here at the church starting the first week of December.
- Contributions that you would like credited for 2023 MUST reach me (or be postmarked) by December 31, 2023. Anything I receive or postmarked after December 31, regardless of the date on your check or your envelope, will be credited to 2024.
- Year-end statements will be mailed or emailed around the second week of January. Look over your statement carefully. If I’ve made an error, please let me know immediately, so I can make the correction and begin closing the books on 2023.
- Heading to a warmer climate this winter? Have you moved recently? Do you have a new email address? Please call the church office to let us know of these changes so your statement and other church correspondence reaches you.
- Per capita for 2024 is \$29.50. This is per active, confirmed member. Please do not pay your 2024 Per Capita until January 1st or after. If you have not paid your 2024 Per Capita (\$29.77) you can still get that in this month.

It is a pleasure to serve as Church Treasurer (and Secretary), remember if you have questions, feel free to reach out to me. ~Heather Heidman

Thank You Knitters

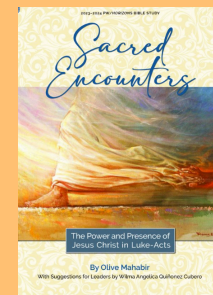
Our knitting group, Hearts and Hands, has been crocheting and knitting up a storm! They have made over 150 dish clothes for our Thanksgiving Baskets, warm hats for prisoners in the Bay County Jail and lap blankets for residents of Toni and Trish House. Below is a thank you they received recently. Hearts and Hands meets every Tuesday from 9:00 - noon in the Session Room. Beginning knitters and crocheters are welcome!

Dear Hearts and Hands,
On this cold rainy morning
our hearts are warmed by the
kindness of your
beautiful gift of Lap
Blankets. Our guests
are so blessed to
have these to use.



~Toni and Trish House

LYDIA CIRCLE
DECEMBER 21
NOON



Lydia Circle’s December meeting will be held at Pizzeria Uno’s on Wilder Road for a Christmas lunch.

DEBORAH CIRCLE

Deborah Circle will NOT meet in December. Meetings via Zoom will resume in January. If you have any questions about Deborah Circle or are interested in joining, please call Karen Schoeppach at 989-684-1322 or email her at kaysue@chartermi.net.



FROM THE PERSONNEL COMMITTEE

Westminster friends,

Last month we announced the resignation of Brandi Higgins as the Director of Children and Youth Ministries and Bell Choirs, and the attempted work of restoration and reconciliation by the Personnel Ministry leading up to that decision. In the interest of confidentiality, only necessary details have been shared outside of these leadership circles. For some, this has led to unanswered questions and possible concerns about the church you love. If you do have questions or concerns, please reach out to a member of the Personnel Ministry or Pastoral Staff, as they would be glad to listen to your concerns and answer any questions that they can. The leadership of Westminster Presbyterian remains committed to the work to which Christ has called us: to worship God in spirit and in truth, to love our neighbors as we love ourselves, and to serve Christ in one another. Thank you for your trust and continued prayers for WPC.

In Christ,
Westminster Session and Personnel Ministry

Personnel Ministry:
Phil Reagh Chris Elzinga Pat Duggan
Julie Kelly Karen Schoeppach

Pastoral Staff:
Rev. Jamie Milton Rev. Linda Williams

OFFICE HOURS DURING THE
HOLIDAYS

As I type this, Advent hasn’t even begun and yet here we are thinking about time off around the holidays!

The Church Office will be closed Monday, December 25th; we will be open 8:00 a.m. - noon on Tuesday and Wednesday that week and close again on Thursday, December 28th. Pastor Jamie will be off from December 25th through January 1st. If you are in need of pastoral care at any time during this week, please reach out to Rev. Linda, her cell phone number is in the church directory.

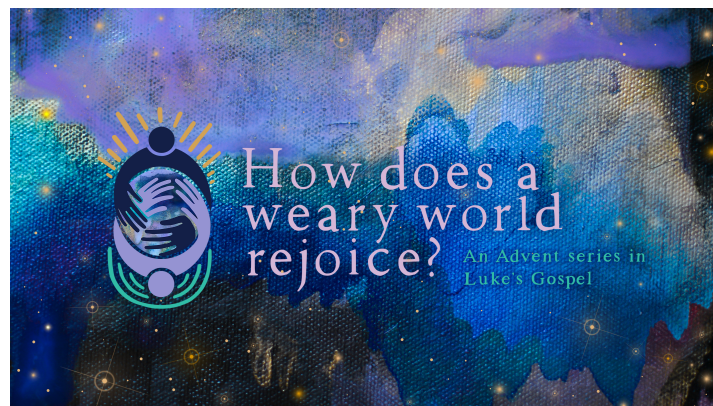
Advent at Westminster

This Advent we will be guided by a question that you have already seen in many places, "How does a weary world rejoice?" The season of Advent is intended to help us prepare ourselves for the coming of God's Messiah. It is a season of waiting and watching.

Throughout the Sundays of Advent and into the new year, we'll follow the narrative in the first three chapters of Luke's Gospel. The story of Jesus begins by interweaving Christ's birth with the parallel story of Elizabeth, Zechariah, and John the Baptist, stories that are certainly less familiar to us than that of Mary, Joseph, and baby Jesus, surrounded by shepherds and angels. In these stories we see the full scope of human emotions: Isolation, fear, and disbelief, as well as connection, trust, and joy.

In a time when there are holiday lights on every corner and "It's the most wonderful time of the year..." echoing in our heads from November 1st onward, we may find ourselves experiencing a similar wide range of emotions. The Christmas season is often an emotionally charged time when we feel many things deeply, sometimes all at once. We may even experience an emotional struggle in the midst of hearing such joy-filled carols and attending various holiday festivities.

Throughout Advent, we will respond to our focal question with a statement inspired by these Luke scriptures. These texts bring us into a space of possibility; in them, we find rhythms for rejoicing, even during difficult circumstances.



As we move through Advent and into Christmas, we hope to create space for acknowledging the weariness of our world while celebrating God's closeness with great joy.

December 3: "We acknowledge our weariness" (Luke 1:1-23) Elizabeth and Zechariah

December 10: "A Very Special Child" Christmas Pageant

December 17: "And Glory Shone Around" Choral Cantata

December 24: "We sing stories of hope" (Luke 1:46-55; 67-80) Zechariah and Mary sing

Christmas Eve: "We make room" (Luke 2:1-20)

December 31: "We root ourselves in ritual" (Luke 2:21-38)

January 7: "We trust our belovedness" (Luke 3:21-22)

JANUARY SERIES-MARK YOUR CALENDARS

For the past two years we have participated in the January Series of Calvin University, a free 15-day lecture series that takes place each year at Calvin University and aims to cultivate deep thought and conversations about important issues of the day in order to inspire cultural renewal and make us better global citizens in God's world. Thanks to the gift of technology we need not travel to Grand Rapids to participate in this series on timely topics with its focus on culture and faith. More information on topics and speakers will be available next month. But for now - **save the date** for the January Series 2024! Mark your calendar for **January 15 - February 2**. Each session is about one-hour long. We will gather at 12:30 in the Session Room to watch the day's speaker (or we will provide the link so you can watch from home). Each Thursday though we will set aside some time following the day's lecture so that we can discuss what we heard from that day's speaker as well as the previous week's speakers.

Any questions about the series, please call the church office or Rev. Linda with any questions.

**SLEEP IN HEAVENLY PEACE BED BUILD**

If you are looking for a wonderful volunteer experience please note that Westminster is sponsoring a full bed build for the Sleep in Heavenly Peace organization. The date is the morning of **January 20, 2024**. Sleep in Heavenly Peace (SHP) is a national non-profit organization that makes hand made single and bunk beds for needy children who do not have a bed of their own. We are teaming up with 1st Presbyterian Church to fully staff one bed build day which will require 50+ volunteers. No construction skills are required, and SHP provides training and all tools and equipment. Location will be at Delta College. Youth are welcome and encouraged to participate. To sign up, please click on the link below or scan the QR code to the right. A sign up sheet will be located in the Wenona lobby starting January 7th. In addition, Len Petroff will provide more information on the 7th. Contact Len Petroff, Bill Shelt, or Darlene Kusterer if you have questions. Link to sign up: <https://x.gldn.io/e/UaXiHJdyHEb>

**THE ANGEL GIVING TREE**

Westminster Mission Partnership Committee invites you to help make Christmas a little brighter for families in our community. Working with our partners at The Salvation Army, we have received 100 Angel Tags listing toys and clothing items that you can purchase for an individual boy or girl. Angel Tree tags will be available starting Monday, November 20 during week and on Sundays through December 10. Church members are encouraged to take an angel tag from the tree located in the Wenona Lobby, purchase gifts and return them in a gift bag to the church **by Noon on December 11**. We suggest a spending limit of \$25-\$30. If you prefer, you may choose to donate and we'll do the shopping for you!

MATTHEW 25 CAFE AT THE SALVATION ARMY

We will be continuing our community service and outreach at Salvation Army Matthew 25 luncheon! Over the past couple of months volunteers from Westminster have participated, and we are committing to help the second Tuesday of each month. It's a fun, rewarding opportunity to connect with others in the community and work with fellow Christians. Continuing in December and January two crews of 4 people will be needed each day. The first crew will work from 9:00 – 11:00 am on Meal Prep, the second crew will work 11:00 am – 1:00 pm on Lunch Service and clean-up. A Sign-up chart can be found in the DeWitt St entrance. For more information, contact Darlene Kusterer or the church office, or scan the QR Code to the right to go to our Sign Up Genius page.

Upcoming Dates
Tuesday, December 12, 2023
Tuesday, January 9, 2024

First Crew will work 9-11 a.m.
Second Crew will work 11 a.m. - 1 p.m.



**2022**

Wendy S. Tally

2023

Marcia A. Andrews
 Ronald O. Deuscher
 David M. Fenske
 Daniel F. Gould
 Irvin "Glenn" Hignite
 Lucille R. Newcomb
 Gerald E. Pavlawk
 Mary Kay Prudden
 Bonnie Scheddel
 John C. Tapley
 Sandra L. Thibo



The Book of Common Worship introduces the celebration of All Saints' Day by reminding us that "All Saints' Day was established as an opportunity to honor all the saints, remembered and forgotten, known and unknown." This past year the Westminster family has lost many of our own saints.

On Sunday, November 5, we took a few moments to celebrate those saints and remember their lives with us. For each member we had lost in the past year, we read their name, showed a picture, and lit a candle in their memory.



*We'll find space for our weariness and
 for our joy*

We look around us – things outside our immediate family and friends and things within our own circle of family and friends and community – and wonder "How does a weary world rejoice?" A question that has been asked for centuries.

Christ was born into a weary world. King Herod ruled the land with a legacy of ruthlessness. The Romans treated the people of Israel with contempt, imposing harsh taxes and land seizures that forced many into subsistence farming. Poverty and destitution were pervasive. And yet, Christ was born, bringing good news of great joy for all people.

This season, we invite you to look closely at the details in the opening chapters of the Gospel of Luke. Discover where joy is sprinkled throughout the narrative. Identify the moments when joy arrives—despite trepidation, fear, or grief. And consider how joy can be a companion to you this season, for our joy is rooted in the truth that we belong to God. Can you tether yourself to that deep truth? You deserve to feel joy—fully. The world needs your joy, even if you are weary.

This year we are providing a devotional that is designed to help you practice joy in a weary world. Each week offers art, reflections, poetry, and hymns. Journey through these pages at your own pace. May each week offer you rhythms for rejoicing—through acknowledging your weariness, finding joy in connection, allowing yourself to be amazed, singing stories of hope, making room, rooting yourself in ritual, and remembering your belovedness.

And so, this Advent, let us hold space for our weariness and our joy. Let us seek a "thrill of hope" in our hurting world. Let us welcome joy—even and especially if, like the prophet Isaiah, we cry out for comfort (Isaiah 40:1). In this weary world, may we find many ways to rejoice.

We invite you to join with others during this Advent journey on **either Sunday at 9 AM (beginning December 3rd) in the Conference Room or Thursdays at 7 PM (beginning December 7th) via Zoom.** We will gather for the four weeks of Advent sharing our experiences of hope, weariness, and joy as we read, reflect, and consider the Advent-Christmas story as written in the Gospel of Luke.

Devotional books are available in the church office. Please call with any questions.

ADULT BIBLE STUDY

Bible Study classes are offered at two different times to accommodate various schedules. Join us **Sundays at 9:00 a.m.** in the Session Room or **Thursdays at 7:00 p.m.** via Zoom. The same study materials will be used at both gatherings.

Please visit our Adult Bible Study page on our website at www.wpcbc.org or see Rev. Linda or Pastor Jamie with any questions.

In addition to the Devotional Booklets, DAILY PROMPTS FOR PRACTICING JOY IN A WEARY WORLD, are available for your use during this season of Advent. These daily cards – encourage us to not only reflect, but to find ways to connect with expressions of joy and hope with those around us. We'll post these on our Facebook page each day starting December 1st. Or if you would like your own cards, stop by the church office to pick up a set.





You may remember this past spring during the Christian season of Lent and the Jewish celebration of Passover that Beth Cook from the local Jewish faith community was our speaker in April.

We are pleased that she is able to return and share with us information about the Jewish celebration of Hanukkah or Festival of Lights. **Hanukkah** is a Jewish festival commemorating the recovery of Jerusalem and subsequent rededication of the Second Temple in the 2nd century BCE.

Hanukkah is observed for eight nights and days, starting on the 25th day of Kislev according to the Hebrew calendar, which may occur at any time from late November to late December in the Gregorian

calendar. The festival is observed by lighting the candles of a candelabrum with nine branches, commonly called a menorah. One branch is typically placed above or below the others and its candle is used to light the other eight candles. Each night, one additional candle is lit until all eight candles are lit together on the final night of the festival. Other Hanukkah festivities include singing Hanukkah songs, playing the game of dreidel and eating special foods.

Although a relatively minor holiday in strictly religious terms, nevertheless, Hanukkah has attained major cultural significance in North America and elsewhere, especially among secular Jews, due to often occurring around the same time as Christmas during the festive season.

Come join us on **Tuesday, December 5th at noon** in Fellowship Hall. This is a date change; normally we would have met on last Tuesday of the month, but since Hanukkah is celebrated this year beginning December 7th, it seemed especially appropriate to have our speaker come the week of Hanukkah.

Any questions, please call the church office. You are welcome to bring your lunch, beverages and a sweet treat will be provided.

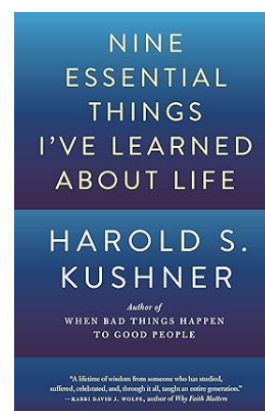
FYI HAPPENINGS-STARTING IN LATE JANUARY

From the #1 national bestselling author of *When Bad Things Happen to Good People*—"a lifetime of wisdom from someone who has studied, suffered, celebrated, and through it all, taught an entire generation" (Rabbi David Wolpe, author of *Why Faith Matters*).

In this compassionate and deeply personal work, Rabbi Harold S. Kushner distills his experiences as a twenty-first-century rabbi into nine essential takeaways. Offering readers a lifetime's worth of spiritual food for thought, pragmatic advice, and strength for trying times, he gives fresh, vital insight into belief, conscience, mercy, and more. Grounded in Kushner's brilliant readings of scripture, history, and popular culture, *Nine Essential Things I've Learned About Life* is practical, illuminating, and compulsory advice for living a good life.

After the success of our first six-week book discussion (*The Well-Lived Life* by Dr. Gladys McGarey) we will be diving into this next book by Rabbi Harold Kushner, **beginning Tuesday, January 30th**. This book was chosen because someone from the previous discussion said that they have turned to this book time and again – "almost like a Bible" – when life brings challenges to life and faith.

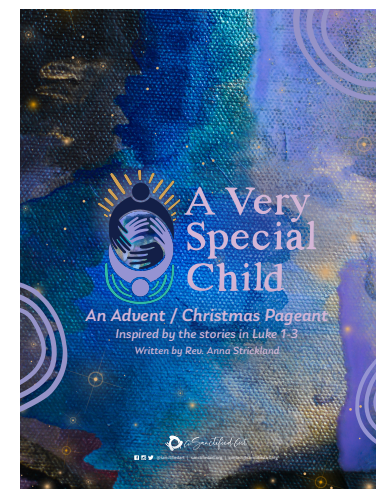
Books have been ordered and already are available in the office. Any questions, please call the office or see Rev. Linda.



CALLING ALL READERS!

Children's Christmas Program

Sunday, December 10 @ 10:30 a. m.



We hope you'll make plans to attend the always highly anticipated, Westminster Church Christmas Pageant. This year's pageant will be held Sunday, December 10 during the 10:30 worship service. "A Very Special Child" interweaves the birth stories of John and Jesus. Both Elizabeth, being older and Mary, young and unmarried, are shocked, scared and a little unsettled by the news they are pregnant, but they trust in the Lord and are determined to find joy even in their times of uncertainty.

Pageant Rehearsal Schedule

Sunday, December 7th

12:00 - 1:30 p.m.
Acts 4-6 will rehearse

Saturday, December 9th

9:00 a.m. - Noon

All participants.

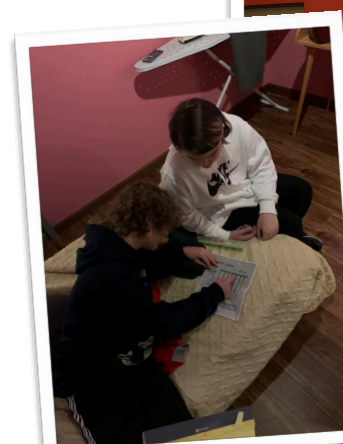
If you can only make part of the time, please be here when you can.

Sunday, December 10th

9:00 a.m. Dress Rehearsal
10:30 a.m. PERFORMANCE

Ignite Youth Group in December

- **December 3:** We'll celebrate the beginning of Advent with our Advent Dinner and Workshop at 5:00 p.m. in the Fellowship Hall. Please come and enjoy the evening with your family
- **December 10:** With the Christmas Pageant that day, we'll take the evening off.
- **December 17th:** We'll have a potluck Christmas party from 5:00 - 7:00 p.m. Bring your favorite appetizer to share!



Pajama and Pancake Day

Sunday, December 31
9:30 a.m.

Join us on Sunday morning December 31st, for our annual PJ's and Pancakes day. We'll have a pancake breakfast in the Fellowship Hall at 9:30 a.m. followed with Rev. Linda leading us in worship at 10:30 a.m.



Youth Fun Night at Stardust Lanes

Advent Dinner and Workshop

Join us for another festive start to your holiday season at Westminster's annual Advent Dinner! On **Sunday evening, December 3rd at 5:00pm**, we'll join together in the Fellowship Hall for dinner and holiday themed crafts for all ages. The main dish will be provided, but you're invited to being a salad, side dish, or dessert to round out our holiday meal. Be on the lookout for your chance to sign up!

Parents Night Out Friday, December 15th 5:00-8:00pm

We want to give our parents a night off during this holiday season.

Bring the kiddos over to the church where we will have dinner with them, play games, make a craft, and watch a movie.

Please see Pastor Linda, Sheryl Petroff or call the church office to register your children for the event.

Family Harvest Party

Sunday, October 29, 2023



Congratulations

to Martha Tapley, Chris Elzinga, Bonnie Marsh and Sandy Graves winners of this year's chili contest!



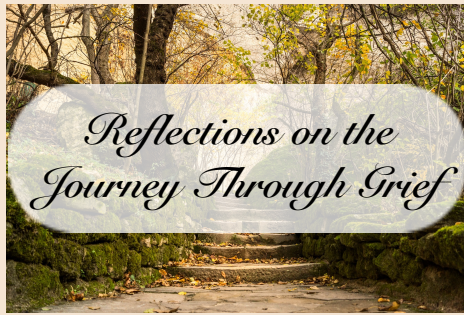
Each month the Spiritual Growth Committee will share in the Log, a few thoughts on the journey of grief that we all experience. We hope these brief thoughts will be of help and support to all.

"Sometimes only one person is missing and the whole world seems depopulated."
Alphonse de Lamartine

Grief during the holidays serves up the perfect storm, where joyous memories clash with reality and expectations. Celebrations between the months of November and January are sandwiched together, a virtual laboratory of ethnic, religious, and cultural diversity. No wonder grievers dread this time of year.

Several factors work against grievers during the holiday season. Daylight is waning and the nights are getting colder. People sensitive to these subtle changes may feel sluggish and retreat indoors. Just getting out of bed in the morning may feel like a major accomplishment. Then, too, the holiday season is awash with memories which can be confusing as well as painful. Reminders are everywhere. Decorations, music, fragrances, people, places, and traditions — the list goes on and on. Anything can trigger a memory and an unexpected surge of emotion.

When you're grieving the death of a loved one, you're likely to feel out of step with the rest of



the world. Mail continues to arrive for your loved one and a simple trip to the grocery store provides a sober reminder that you're not in sync with the season. Uplifting music is piped throughout stores as employees smile and urge you to "have a happy holiday."

Grievers are encouraged not to associate the word "perfect" with the holidays. The truth is that holidays and special days do challenge personal as well as family equilibrium. They stimulate and stress us. If you are honest with yourself, maybe the holidays were always stressful, even before the death of someone you loved, and now there's a hole in the fabric of the family.

You have a choice. You can choose to believe that this holiday season can still be a significant time for you. It will be different because you are grieving, but it can also be a meaningful time with others. It may hurt, but it may also hold hope.

Planning Ahead for Holidays

One of the best ways to survive the holidays after the death of someone you loved is to plan ahead. Regardless of what you

do, there is no way to avoid having to deal with pain and sadness. No one can offer you a way around this and despite the temptation, try to avoid canceling the holidays altogether. Accept the fact that parts of the holiday are not going to be easy. They will be different because life is now different, but keep these points in mind:

Set realistic expectations of yourself. Grieving takes energy. Be gentle with yourself and your family and allow yourself to take whatever time for yourself that you need.

Surround yourself with people who love and support you. Find those people who accept your feelings, who understand that the holidays are more difficult, and who allow you to express all that you are feeling.

Talk about your grief and about the person who has died. Share your feelings and memories with people you trust. Say the person's name and invite others to do the same.

Don't get caught up in unreasonable expectations. Losses and separations of all kinds make this a difficult season. For many of us, the holidays produce more stress and pain than joy. In light of this, there's no reason for guilt or for wondering if your grief is "ruining" the holidays for others. You don't need to provide the perfect holiday for anyone.

Embrace your memories. Memories are one of the best legacies that exist after someone dies. Sharing and hearing stories, crying, and laughing together keeps the person who died part of these special days.

Take care of yourself. Avoid using alcohol or drugs to self-medicate your mood. Physical exercise is often a healthier antidote for sadness or depression.

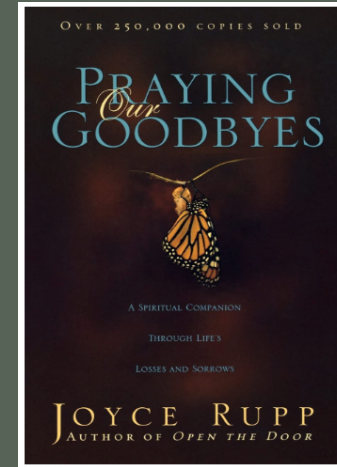
Create a new tradition or ritual that accommodates your current situation. Some people find comfort in the old traditions while others find them unbearably painful. Discuss with your family the activities you want to include or exclude this year.

Tell others what you need. Make them aware of the times that may be particularly rough for you and make suggestions on ways they can support you.

Seek comfort in your faith. If your faith is important, seek out a familiar and supportive community to provide solace.

Remember that your grief is important and unique. Be patient with yourself, love yourself and don't let anyone take away your grief. Do know that there are times, despite your best efforts when nothing will seem to work. So remember — be gentle with yourself and your family.

St. Luke's Hospice Bereavement Program,
Bethlehem, PA



Joyce Rupp writes in her book, *Praying Our Goodbyes*, that "goodbyes are as much a part of life as the season of the year. The story of gain and loss, of joy and sorrow, of life and death, of union and separation, is inside each one of. The cycle begins at birth...and continues throughout our lives. Who of us has not said farewell to someone and felt a great heartache and a deep sadness, wanting to stop the process and wondering when the ache inside would ever leave.

The word goodbye – originally "God-be-with-ye" – was a recognition that God was a significant part of the going...that leave-takings for us as Christians can happen from both a sound psychological perspective and rich faith dimension. If we are willing to move inside the heart of the experience, to live patiently through the process even as we acknowledge the difficult, painful emotions, we can experience the wonder of spiritual growth and the marvel of new depths of faith in our relationship with God and with each other.

With that in mind and recognizing the many deaths that folks here at Westminster have experienced over these past six months or more, we are offering an opportunity to meet together and consider how it is that we have been experiencing grief and to find that "the human spirit is wonderfully resilient in recovering." We will gather Tuesday, **December 12th – at 6:30 PM** to provide support and find companionship in this journey of grief. All are invited to attend – you need not be a spouse, maybe it is a close friend who has died. Or your loss may not be as recent as this past year, but you are still feeling the pangs of loss, especially as the holiday season approaches. Come join us. Please call the church office or Pastor Jamie or Rev. Linda with any questions.

Coffee and Conversation

For those still feeling the loss of a loved one, this season of holidays – Thanksgiving, Advent, Christmas, New Years, can feel more sad than joyous, at times...maybe all the time. The pain can feel more acute.

*For that reason we are having two gatherings specifically focused on "Praying Our Goodbyes" – helping us to approach our leave-takings from a faith-dimension, knowing full well how important the psychological is as a foundation. This approach means a move from saying a goodbye to praying a goodbye. Also during this season of holidays, we want to have an opportunity for informal discussions as well. So on **Thursday, December 14th at 1 PM** we will meet in the chapel area over a cup of coffee or tea or hot chocolate, and have the opportunity to just talk and listen with one another as we move through the days of holiday grief. This is open to anyone feeling grief – be the loss recent or in times long past. Any questions, please call the church office or see Pastor Jamie or Rev. Linda.*