

Westminster Presbyterian Church
103 E. Midland Street
Bay City, MI 48706

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THE WESTMINSTER LOG

Thy Kingdom Come: A Fall Worship Series

This summer, we practiced prayer in a way that was different for many of us, with prayer beads. This practice invited us to slow down, repeat short prayers and scriptures, using simple words that helped us listen rather than rush. That practice drew us back to the center of the prayer Jesus taught us: *"Thy kingdom come, thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven."*

Everything else in the Lord's Prayer, from daily bread and forgiveness, to protection and deliverance, flows from that one request. It's not just something we pray *for*, but something we're invited to help *build*. Throughout the fall, our worship will follow Jesus' final teachings in Matthew's Gospel as we ask: how does Jesus show us God's kingdom, and how do we help bring it here, on earth, as it is in heaven?

We'll explore this in three movements:

- **September — Shaping Our Community:** How do we become the kind of people, and the kind of church, that reflects Christ's kingdom?
- **October — Sharing Our Gifts:** How can we use what God has given us to "bring up there, down here"?
- **November — Serving Others:** Christ's teachings combine belief and action. How does the Matthew 25 text inform our Christian walk?

September: Shaping Our Community

Followers of Jesus are called to model the kind of selfless love Christ himself embodied. As we grow in Christ, we grow into that same love. Matthew's Gospel doesn't let us off easy, but challenges our assumptions about church life, forgiveness, grace, and repentance, pressing us to ask what it really means to shape a community after the pattern of the kingdom.



September 6 — Communion Sunday

Matthew 18:15-20 — Conflict in Community

We begin at the table, remembering that community is never conflict-free — but Christ promises to be present in the very places where we work through our differences.

September 13 — Fall Kickoff & Neighbor Sunday *Matthew 18:21-35 — Forgiveness and Mercy*

As we kick off the fall season and welcome our neighbors, we're reminded that community is shaped as much by mercy as by belonging. Join us after worship for a Tailgate Potluck and Ice Cream Social. This is a great Sunday to invite someone to find out what Westminster is all about!

September 20 *Matthew 20:1-16 — Generosity and Grace*

A parable that unsettles our sense of fairness and invites us into God's far more generous math.

September 27 — 50-Year Member Recognition *Matthew 21:23-32 — Doing the Right Thing*

We honor members who have shaped our community for five decades or more, even as the text calls all of us to ongoing change and faithfulness. The Deacons will host a lunch to celebrate our 50+ year members following worship.

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.

SEPTEMBER 2026 ISSUE 214

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Visit us on Facebook:
Westminster Presbyterian
Church - Bay City



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

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

Pastor Rev. Jamie Milton (ext. 204)
Parish Associate Rev. Linda Williams (ext. 203)
Secretary Bill Petzold (ext. 201)
Facilities Manager Harold Miller (ext. 205)
Financial Secretary Lisa Carelli (ext. 208)
Director of Youth Ministry Leah Sneller (ext. 206)

September

Sundays

8:45 a.m. Bell Choir Rehearsal
The Bells play during Worship once a month. The first rehearsal will be on September 13, and the first performance will be October 18.

9:00 a.m. Adult Bible Study
Adult Bible Study begins September 20, and we'll be pausing together to reflect, listen, and be shaped by the Spirit. (See Page 10)

9:30 a.m. Fellowship
Join us in Fellowship Hall for Coffee and Donuts and Conversation. (See Page 11)

9:45 a.m. Choir Rehearsal
Pre-service rehearsal

10:30 a.m. Worship
This month we'll explore how Christ calls the church to be active in shaping the world around it with everyday acts of welcome, love and compassion (See Cover).

5 to 7:00 p.m. Youth Group
For Youth 5th-12th grade, Youth Group will gather on Sundays September 13 and September 27. (See Page 10)

IMPORTANT UPDATES

Due to unforeseen circumstances, **there will NOT be a Fall Rummage Sale this year.** We are planning to host a Rummage Sale in the Spring of 2027.

We will once again be taking donations and packing **Thanksgiving Baskets** to be given away to families in need. More details to come!

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Fri/Sat
Happy Birthday Royce Stokes Amanda Halvorsen Art Sponseller Nancy Swantek Marilyn Len *Birthdays listed are for our 75+ Members		110 a.m. Knitting 6 p.m. Scouts	21:30 p.m. Tending the Wild Garden <i>Westminster</i> COMMUNITY PANTRY 4 to 6 p.m. Every Wednesday (See page 6)	38:30 a.m. TOPS <i>Westminster</i> COMMUNITY PANTRY 10 a.m. to noon Every Thursday 5 p.m. Food of Faith (See Page 11)	4
6	7Labor Day Office Closed For Labor Day	89 a.m. Matthew 25 Café 10 a.m. Knitting 12 p.m. Yoga 1 p.m. Lions Club 1:30 p.m. Book Group 4:30 p.m. Personnel 6 p.m. Scouts 6 p.m. Spiritual Growth	912 p.m. Bunco (See page 10) 4-6 Pantry 5:15 p.m. Brass Group Rehearsal 6:30 p.m. Chancel Choir Rehearsals Begin	108:30 a.m. TOPS 10-12 Pantry 1:30 p.m. Caring Connections (Page 7) 5 p.m. Food of Faith	11
13Kickoff/Neighbor Sunday (See Page 1) 8:45 a.m. First Bell Choir Rehearsal 11:30 a.m. Tailgate Potluck 5-7 p.m. Youth Group (See Page 10)	144:30p.m. Property 5:30 p.m. Finance	1510 a.m. Knitting 1:30 p.m. Book Group (See Page 4)	161 p.m. Out-to-Lunch Bunch @ TBD 4-6 p.m. Pantry 5:15 p.m. Contemporary Choir Rehearsals Resume 6:30 p.m. Chancel Choir	178:30 a.m. TOPS 10-12 Pantry 1 p.m. Lydia Circle (See Page 1) 4 p.m. Deborah Circle (See Page 1) 5 p.m. Food of Faith 7 p.m. Zoom Bible Study	12Lois MacPhail Memorial Service (See Page 1)
2011:30 a.m. Gathering and Games	21	2210 a.m. Staff Meeting 10 a.m. Knitting 10 a.m. Log Folding 12 p.m. Yoga 1:30 p.m. Book Group 5 p.m. Session Meeting	234-6 p.m. Pantry 5:15 p.m. Contemporary Choir 6:30 p.m. Chancel Choir	248:30 a.m. TOPS 10-12 Pantry 5 p.m. Food of Faith 7 p.m. Zoom Bible Study	18
2750-Year Member Celebration and Luncheon (See Page 1) 5-7 p.m. Youth Group	28	2910 a.m. Knitting 12 p.m. Lunch and Learn (See Page 4) 6 p.m. Scouts	304-6 p.m. Pantry 5:15 p.m. Contemporary Choir 6:30 p.m. Chancel Choir	Office Hours Monday- Thursday 8:00 a.m. - 4:00 p.m. (Closed 12:00 - 1:00 p.m. for lunch) Website: wpcbc.org Find us on Facebook Westminster Presbyterian-Bay City	
					19Presbytery of Lake Huron Antiracism Workshop



Gifts of Grace — Felt, Not Heard; Known, Not Seen

By Art Sponseller

How many ways does God answer prayer? Does He always answer? And how can we tell when He does? Curious, I turned to my Bible software, Logos. The answer it gave moved me deeply: God always responds, even if He does not always give us exactly what we asked for. There is no such thing as an unanswered prayer—sometimes His answer is simply “no.” He may say yes, no, wait, or work in ways we cannot yet understand. He often answers on His own timeline and through unexpected paths.

The search reminded me that prayer does far more than bring requests to God. It shapes us. I learned that St. Augustine said prayer “constructs the soul,” and Calvin taught God ordained prayer not so much for His sake as for ours. Instead of demanding an immediate change in our circumstances, we can ask God to change our hearts toward those circumstances.

Some blessings—forgiveness, spiritual growth, wisdom—are always given to those who sincerely seek them. Other gifts, like health or financial relief, may be withheld if they would not serve our eternal good. At the heart of all prayer is surrender: “Lord, if this is not Your will, give me the grace to accept it.”

In my life, God’s answers have often come in silence. I pray, I trust He hears. And often I sense a strong direction - no audible voice, no dramatic sign. But three times, His presence broke through in ways I will never forget.

The first was at my confirmation. I was twelve. As the bishop laid his hands on my head, an almost electric warmth swept from



the top of my head to my toes. I didn’t understand it then and told no one, but I have carried that moment with me for decades.

The second came during a men’s retreat at our church. I looked around at friends sitting with their fathers and was suddenly overwhelmed by a grief I had never named—the ache of my limited relationship with my own dad. In the very moment that pain rose up, a deep peace and healing washed over me. It was as if God had been waiting for me to finally feel what I had buried. An answer to a prayer I had never spoken.

The third happened at our annual family church camp. The speaker described Jesus’ love by comparing it to a mother caring for her sick child. Because my mother loved me so well, the image unlocked something inside. I was flooded with the truth that Jesus loves me even more.

These moments were gifts of grace—felt, not heard; known, not seen. How has God answered your prayers? I would love to hear your stories.

Fall Kickoff & Neighbor Sunday — September 13

It's time to kick off the season! September 13 marks the start of our fall programs, worship series, and rehearsals — and we want you here to help us celebrate!

The day begins with a special morning fellowship time hosted by the Spiritual Growth Committee, from 9:30 to 10:15, before we move into worship at 10:30. A brass quartet will join us to lead special music, and our worship together will focus on what it looks like to welcome our neighbors and one another with mercy and forgiveness.

Following worship, head to the Fellowship Hall for a Tailgate Potluck! Hot dogs and an ice cream sundae bar will be provided, and you’re invited to bring your favorite tailgate foods to share: dips, salads, finger foods...whatever YOU want to share!

This is the perfect Sunday to invite a friend or neighbor to join us. And yes, football fans, you'll still have plenty of time to get home before the NFL season kicks off (but we'll put the Lions pregame on just in case. Wear your team colors, your GRIT & Grace shirt, or any WPC gear, and help us kick off a season of learning, serving, and growing together in faith and friendship.

Looking ahead:

In addition to the full schedule of activities detailed in this month’s Log, be sure to mark your calendars for these exciting opportunities in October!

- Annual Fall Retreat at Bay Shore Camp in Sebewaing - **October 10**
- Fall Congregational Town Hall Meeting - **October 11**
- Trivia Night - **October 17**
- Harvest Party and Chili Cookoff - **October 25**

Memorial Service

Family and friends will gather at Westminster to celebrate and remember Lois MacPhail on Saturday, September 12. The family will receive visitors from 10 to 11 a.m. The service begins at 11 a.m. with a lunch to follow.

Gathering and Games

Join us for a time of games, food, and fellowship following worship on Sunday, September 20!

Deborah Circle

Deborah Circle will hold its first meeting on the new program year at **4 p.m. Thursday, September 17**, at the home of Darlene Kusterer, 5571 Hickory Lane, Bay City 48706. We will be continuing our study of the television series “The Chosen” with Season 5, Episode 2. If you are interested in joining the Deborah Circle for this new year, please contact Karen Schoepach or call the church office.

Lydia Circle

Lydia Circle will hold its first Bible Study on **Thursday, September 17 at 1 p.m.** in the conference room. Lydia Circle uses the Presbyterian Women Bible Study curriculum, *New Horizons*. The group meets on the third Thursday of each month at 1 p.m. If you are interested in joining, please contact group leaders Elaine Edwards at 989-397-5642 or Barb Tolles at 989-963-9369.

50-year members celebration

Join us on **Sunday, September 27** as we honor some of our Westminster friends who have been members for fifty years or longer. The Deacons will host a lunch to help us celebrate following worship.



The first week of August brought the sounds of excited children to the halls of Westminster Presbyterian, as Bay Shore Camp returned with its On the Road Day Camp for kids in grades K-5, along with a jungle-themed VBS for little campers ages 3 and 4. Kids had fun doing crafts, singing songs, and learning about their faith.

Children's Church and PrayGround

Beginning on September 13, children (K-5th grade) have the option of attending **Children's Church** during the morning worship service. Following the Passing of the Peace, teachers will lead children to their classroom where they will have a dedicated time of worship and a Bible lesson just for them!

All families are also invited to visit the **PrayGround** located in the Chapel. This is a space for children to be active while still engaging in the worship service. There are lots of quiet activities for busy hands and bodies to explore while worshipping with their families.



Sunday Morning Fellowship Gatherings

Join us for Fellowship Time! Before worship (9:30–10:15), stop by the Fellowship Hall for coffee and a sweet treat. After the service, we continue in the chapel with cookies, coffee, and lemonade — a relaxed chance to reconnect with old friends and meet new ones.

Whether you're new or a longtime member, we hope you'll join us!

Interested in helping serve? Sign up on the volunteer board near the Wenona Street entrance or contact Joyce Hegenauer. Everything you need will be ready in the kitchen.

Caring Meal Program

We're excited to share that a beloved ministry is returning to Westminster — the Caring Meal Program.



Sponsored by the Board of Deacons, this ministry provides short-term meals to individuals and families experiencing a recent life event or temporary hardship.

Through nourishing food and compassionate care, we hope to reflect Christ's love and support our church family during challenging times. A pilot team of Meal Preparers is serving during August and September as we fine-tune the process. Once the pilot wraps up, we'll invite the congregation to join us in making this meaningful ministry flourish.

Food of Faith

Westminster will have three opportunities to serve a hot meal to our community this fall! Our turns to volunteer are Thursdays — **September 3, October 22 and December 10**. The meal begins at 5 p.m. Thursday evenings at Messiah Lutheran Church, 501 S. Catherine St. in Bay City at the western end of Veterans Memorial Bridge. We will need **two volunteers to help prepare the meal** from 2 to 4 p.m. and **four volunteers to help serve** from 4 to 6 p.m. Those with questions may contact Pam Johnston at 989-392-1958.

Volunteer Board

As we kickoff our fall programs and weekly activity around Westminster picks back up, be sure to regularly check the Volunteer Board in the Wenona Street welcome area for opportunities to serve and help out around the church and in the community!

Choir Rehearsals

If you would like to add your voice to one of our choirs, please contact Dawn Auger or Seth Cunningham. **Bell choir** rehearses Sunday mornings at 8:45 a.m. beginning September 13, **Contemporary Choir** rehearses at 5:15 p.m. on Wednesdays beginning September 16. **Chancel Choir** rehearses Wednesdays at 6:30 p.m. beginning September 9.

Matthew 25 Café

The Salvation Army (322 Adams Street) serves free meals six days a week to the Bay City community, feeding about 100 people daily. They need help with food prep and service. On the **second Tuesday of each month, 5–7 volunteers help cook and serve**. Summer months bring fewer volunteers, so extra help is needed. If you can spare two hours a month—either preparing food (9 to 11 a.m.) or serving and cleaning up (11 a.m. to 1 p.m.)—please sign up on the Wenona Lobby board or call the church office with your name, date, and time. **Westminster's next opportunity to serve is Tuesday, September 8**. If you have any questions, please contact Darlene Kusterer at 989-385-4062 or call the church office.

Youth Group Schedule

I would like to share some information about what we have planned for the youth group. This year, we will be following a slightly different schedule and meeting primarily every other Sunday evening. Our youth group is open to students in 5th through 12th grade. Please see the schedule below for the month of September:

- **September 13** – Kickoff Sunday (Fun Night)
- **September 27** – Youth Group

We will meet from 5 to 7 p.m. each evening.

I look forward to a fun and exciting year with everyone! If you have any questions, please let me know and I will be happy to answer them.

Leah Sneller, Director of Youth Ministry

youthdirector@wbcbc.org

989-402-7576

Youth Group Dinners

Do you like to cook or bake meals? If yes, then we would love for you to sign up to help with Youth Dinners for



Sunday night youth group meetings. If not, there is still a way you can help with dinner. You can choose to provide dinner by providing pizza, chicken

tenders, Mac & Cheese or something along those lines. We usually have dinner from 5:00 to 5:30 p.m. You will get a count a couple of days in advance. Please scan the QR code or see Leah Sneller to sign up.

Bunco

LET THE GOOD TIMES ROLL - Bunco continues by popular demand—and everyone is invited to join the fun! We'll meet monthly in Fellowship Hall on the second Wednesday of each month for laughter, fellowship, and a friendly game where luck is all you need. Bring a bag lunch and come at noon if you'd like to eat and visit together. The dice start rolling at 12:30 p.m. No experience needed—just come ready for a good time!

PLEASE NOTE CHANGE OF DAY. Come join us on **WEDNESDAY, September 9th.**



Adult Bible Study

Adult Bible Study kicks off this fall with two opportunities to gather, learn, and grow in faith together. Our Sunday morning class begins **Sunday, September 20, at 9:00 a.m.**, and our Thursday evening Zoom study begins **Thursday, September 17 at 7:00 p.m.** Whether you prefer to meet in person on Sunday mornings or connect from home on Thursday evenings, we hope you will join us for thoughtful conversation and fellowship.

This year we will be using **The Wired Word**, an adult Bible study curriculum that connects current events and weekly news stories with Scripture. Each lesson includes Bible passages, commentary, and discussion questions designed to help participants reflect on faith in relation to everyday life and the world around us. The material is interdenominational and encourages open, meaningful discussion as we consider how God's Word speaks to today's realities.

All are welcome—whether you have attended Bible study for years or are joining for the first time. Come with your questions, your curiosity, and your willingness to listen and share as we explore Scripture together.

Any questions, please see Rev. Linda.



Westminster welcomed some of its favorite members for a special mid-week service on **Wednesday, August 19.** The special service is for members who have difficulty getting to Sunday services and includes a luncheon, a communion service, Christian fellowship ... and maybe even a little bit of goofing around, as evidenced in the photo at left.

God Sighting Sally Kish

Do you ever need to be lifted from a low mood? Someone to brighten your day? Ever need a little jump of joy?

This month's God Sighting is Westminster member Sally Kish. Sally has been a member of WPC for 40 years. She grew up at Westminster and has many fond memories of friends and members at church. From a young age Sally has joyfully participated, and served, in many church activities and events.



Sally continues to serve Westminster as an usher on most Sunday mornings. You can't miss her heart-lifting smile, and delightful laugh. She enjoys greeting people and meeting new people!

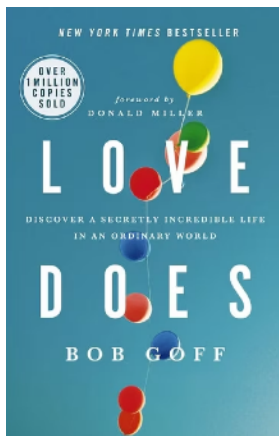
Sally truly is mindful and caring for her Westminster family, and she is a delight to know.

So, the next time you need to light up your Sunday morning say "Hi" to Sally Kish. God's enthusiasm for us shines through Sally's big blue eyes.

Thank you, Sally, for your many years of dedication and service to our Westminster family.

Book Group

Our fall Book Group will kick off with **Love Does: Discover a Secretly Incredible Life in an Ordinary World** by Bob Goff.



Through engaging stories and reflections, Goff invites readers to see love as something we actively do—living with faith, joy, courage, and a willingness to make a difference in ordinary life. This book was chosen by the group earlier in the year; we are also taking suggestions for our next book reads.

The group meets in the Lounge on **Tuesdays at 1:30 p.m.**, beginning **September 8**. Books are available in the church office; cost is \$8

All are invited to join us for good conversation, thoughtful reflection, and fellowship this fall.

Any questions, please call the church office or Rev. Linda.

Lunch & Learn

Over the past few years, our monthly gatherings have focused on self-awareness and personal growth. This year, we will use the next three months to build greater awareness of the needs in our community. Speakers and topics may include the Disability Network, the needs of older adults in the Bay City community, ALICE, and more.

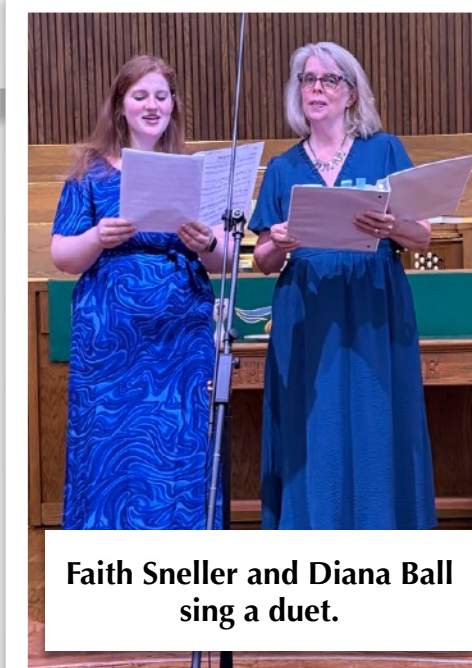
Please join us for thought-provoking speakers who will help us better understand community needs and consider how we—as a church and as individuals—can support our neighbors. We will be gathering at **noon**. Bring your own bag lunch - drinks and a sweet treat will be provided.

Meeting on : **Tuesday September 29, October 27, and November 24th**. Stay tuned for specific details each month.

Please call the church office if you have any questions.



They started the summer as complete beginners, but on August 16 the Westminsterian Uku-terians made their debut during worship, playing a few well-known songs. The group met on Wednesdays this summer in preparation for the performance.



Faith Sneller and Diana Ball singing a duet.





Celebrating God's Beauty at Westminster

The Property Committee extends heartfelt thanks to everyone who contributed to the Courtyard Garden this year. From preparing the beds and selecting annuals to planting, connecting the watering system, weekly weeding, and pruning, your efforts have created a truly beautiful space for our church family. **"That's Stewardship!"**

A special word of appreciation goes to **Judy Randall and Alicen Rogers**, who faithfully tended the flowers and shrubs each week to ensure everything remained vibrant and healthy.

If you haven't had a chance to visit the courtyard yet, we encourage you to take a moment to enjoy the beauty God has blessed us with this summer.

Our group had a great time at the Loons game on 8/14, even though the Loons offense and defense decided to take the night off.



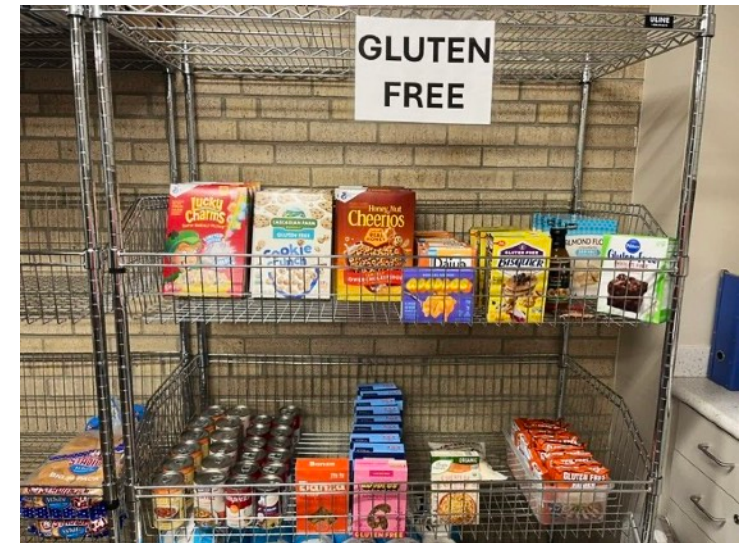
July Statistics: The Pantry served 633 people from 244 families with 7,542 pounds of food. Our weekly averages included 126 people from 49 families with 1,508 pounds of food. We also noted that 18% of families were new, 48% came in the last month, 24% came 2-4 months ago, and a whopping 10% hadn't come in 5 months or more.

The September Item of the Month is canned ravioli, chili, beef stew, etc. These are highly popular items. Help us refill our shelves! All donations may be left on the cart outside the pantry door. Thank you!

Fresh Produce: It's that time of year when summer produce is ripening. If you have extra produce from your garden, we are happy to share it with our guests! For the freshest choices, bring it on Tuesday afternoon or Wednesday morning so we can distribute it on Wednesday afternoon and Thursday morning.

We thank Maillette Family Chiropractic for sponsoring another food drive for us during the month of August. This is the third food drive they have hosted, and we appreciate their generosity (and that of their patients)!

We added a Gluten Free section for our guests who cannot tolerate wheat, made possible by a generous grant from the Bay



Area Community Foundation. We only average 10-12 of these guests per month, but it will be a huge help to them, especially since gluten free food is very expensive.

Our Free Little Library book cart has been a big hit, but that means the selections are running low. We welcome all book donations!

Westminster Community Pantry is completely funded by congregational and community donations. If you would like to support this ministry at any time, simply indicate "Food Pantry" on your check or envelope. Thank you for your continued support of this ministry and our neighbors in need!

TRIVIA NIGHT!

Come test your knowledge at our FREE Trivia Night!

Ages 10 and older • FREE admission • Snacks and refreshments
Fun questions • Friendly competition • A few prizes

Saturday, October 17, 2026
6 to 8 p.m. (Doors open at 5:30 p.m.)
Westminster Fellowship Hall

Bring your team of 6 or come on your own and make friends!
Please register in advance by calling Bonnie Marsh at 989-460-7108

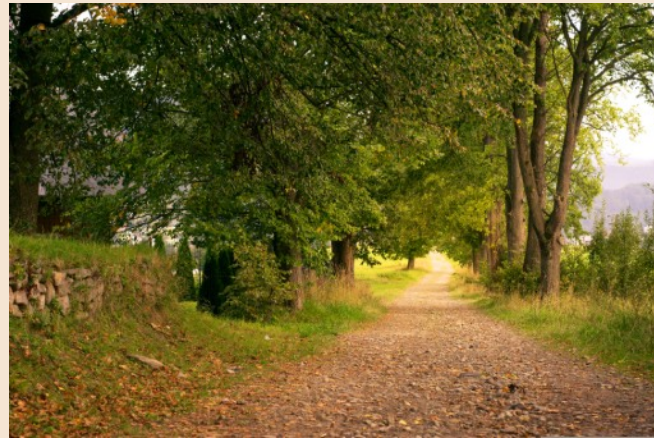
The Oxygen Mask for Grieving

When moving through the motions of loss, you may feel as if you are operating on autopilot. Many of your senses feel dull, there is not much activity you feel you can do beyond the basics of sleeping (or disrupted sleeping), eating to sustain yourself, maintaining your home, and even returning to work or other necessary activities that keep your life going.

There is a version of your reality where autopilot feels comfortable because you may have spent a lengthy amount of time being a caregiver and easily putting others' needs before your own – because you had to. You might be experiencing a shift where you are not sure how to meet your own needs, let alone prioritize them.

Let's attempt to envision this current phase of your life as a plane ride, and you are experiencing extreme turbulence. It isn't what you expected from your ride, but you knew in the back of your mind it was a possibility. There are signals alarming all passengers to put on their oxygen masks. Your initial instinct may have always been to ensure your loved one had their mask on first, but you are now on this plane ride alone. You know that if you do not put your own mask on in the next few seconds, you could pass out and no longer be able to help anyone, let alone yourself. Attempt to envision this metaphor as a reminder of self-compassion: Attending to your own needs to take care of others. Envision that in the future, the turbulence will subside, and your ride will resume to its destination safely.

Self-compassion is often misunderstood as giving up but in true practice, it is fuel to keep moving forward. It is a practice in momentum, keeping you strong. Self-compassion is not self-pity, or feeling sorry for yourself, or selfish. Self-compassion is backed by science and gives us an opportunity to reset. While you might have



the thought, "I don't have time to do this, I have too much else to do," remind yourself of the metaphor of the oxygen mask.

Self-compassion is an active practice, and we can tailor this practice to be short, intentional, and specifically targeting the complicated feelings that arise with grieving, whether it be loneliness, hurt, numbness, anger, despair, sadness, or any emotional response you might be experiencing. The following exercise is a gentle guide to help you "put on your own oxygen mask first."

A Two Step Guide to Kind Self-Talk

Acknowledge your pain.

This is a moment for us to be honest with ourselves with how much these experiences and these feelings hurt. This is true, authentic awareness of the depth of emotions entangled in grief. We want this moment to be wrapped in kindness as well.

A simple formula for this practice would be to develop a memorable phrase that helps name your experience of difficult emotions. An example could be, "I am noticing [emotion]," or "I am feeling [emotion]," or even "[Emotion] is showing up for me right now." Instead of saying, "I am [emotion]," we can create a deliberate space between ourselves and what we are feeling instead of identifying as the emotion. While it might

Continued on Page 7

Holding on to Hope

My article for September is taken in part from the support book, *A Time to Mourn, A Time to Dance* by Margaret Metzger.

Holding on to hope is the challenge of all grief and loss experience. Finding the courage or energy to go on day after day requires hope of healing, hope for the future. Holding on to hope is not always easy. Some days it requires all of our energy just to maintain our own lives. On other days, we at least believe that for everything there is a purpose, as we try to find the purpose in our own experience. That requires finding ways to make meaning even out of situations that may seem quite meaningless.

Many people say those days of struggle are when they lean most heavily on their faith, in order to find the inspiration and comfort they need to be able to go on. Holding on to hope requires active participation. It is not a passive process. It requires holding on to faith in the future, at a time when we can barely survive the present. It means clinging to the belief that God is good and will help us when all that we can see seems to say that is not true.

Hope comes in small steps and we must celebrate each one of them. Hope is the first time you laugh. It is when there are enough good

memories in the day to balance the painful ones. It might be the simple task of paying your bills in one sitting without bursting into tears. It might be walking through the grocery store without those tearful moments. These simple everyday experiences that you take yourself through successfully, are your tiny steps of hope moving forward.

The path is seldom clear. Somehow, some way, someday we will know that the wound is healing. We may even reach the point of offering comfort to others in need. Our faith and determination will pay off. We will find that as we stand in the sunshine of a new day, that there really is a reason that we hold on to that hope.

Healing will continue as long as we are alive. Life does go on, not without its setbacks or its reminders, but it does go on.

If you have a recent loss or are struggling with one from the past, please join us at our next Caring Connections meeting on Thursday, September 10 (note second Thursday because of Labor Day) from 1:30 until 3:00 p.m. here at the church.

Love and Peace,

Mary

Continued from Page 6

feel uncomfortable initially, making it a practice can help create a kind and accepting space for your emotions. Attempt to say this phrase in a calm and soothing voice, accompanied by two breaths.

Respond with kindness.

This step might initially appear over simplified, but it tends to be the hardest step. Remind yourself of our initial metaphor, that it is necessary to put your own oxygen mask on first, when practicing this step. Moments of raw kindness may feel foreign during this time, but it is essential to developing the whole practice. Phrases of kindness can include, "May I meet myself with kindness," or "I am

deserving of a break," or "Easy does it." Phrases that sound more like your own language will be more effective, so it is encouraged to tailor it to be your own.

Bring it all together.

Let's put this into play. During moments of emotional challenge, acknowledge your pain and respond with kindness. Incorporate a few gentle breaths and use a calm, soft tone. I am noticing sadness, may I meet myself with kindness. The same way that we wanted our loved ones to be comfortable and supported, we can give ourselves that same permission.

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