

Westminster Presbyterian Church

103 E. Midland Street
Bay City, MI 48706

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APRIL 2023 ISSUE 173

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



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Brandi Higgins (ext. 208)
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THE WESTMINSTER LOG

THE WESTMINSTER LOG



I don’t know about you, but in my household growing up, the Saturday before Easter was anything but Holy! There was so much to do! We were making last minute trips to the grocery store, laying out our brand-new outfits for Easter; dying eggs—which almost always led to a squabble over who wanted to use which color dye at which time.

So, what is Holy Saturday, what is an Easter Vigil? Westminster did not have a tradition of observing this day before 2021. And did you know that not one of the gospels divulges any information about what the disciples did on the day between the crucifixion and the resurrection? A vigil by definition, is the act of keeping watch, most times when it would be customary to be sleeping. Initially, the Vigil started in the middle of the night, ending with the break of dawn on Sunday, commemorating Jesus’ followers that held vigil at the tomb. It was also a service in the early church when new Christians were welcomed into the faith through the waters of baptism followed by the celebration of the Lord’s Supper. The P.C.(USA) states the Easter Vigil is officially the first service of Easter. But what are we holding vigil for? What are we watching for? What is it that we hope to see? What are we waiting for? This night we will be reminded by the symbols of our faith; that the Light of Christ can never be extinguished. We have been baptized in the family of God, we have a unique witness to Jesus Christ who is the Living Word, and that we are invited over and over again to sit at the Lord’s table of grace in communion with God.

So let us come to this night, this Holy Night, with many thoughts and feelings. During the services of the earlier in the week we just relived what was seen to be the most tragic of days for those who followed Jesus. We listened as Jesus spoke at the table with his friends about what was coming. We heard the people yelling, “Crucify” as some that were closest to Jesus disappear into shadows. We feel the trembling and shaking of the earth as Jesus breathes his last. It seems as though all is lost, for Jesus has died and is buried, our hope has been smothered, and the powers that be seem to have triumphed. But there is hope. Jesus told us that we would see him again; that he would rise on the third day. This is most assuredly not the end.

Let us come and see the symbols of flowers, water, and the shroud so that our eyes may be hopeful with anticipation, our minds be renewed by the truth Jesus spoke, our spirits be refreshed by living water, and our hearts enlightened by Christ so that we may commit ourselves once again to God’s work of change and healing for this world.

This Easter Vigil, a time of songs, stories, and symbols will be a great opportunity to form faith, teach tradition, and build community within our church family—all while celebrating the good news at the heart of our faith, that Christ is risen from the dead! ~Brandi Higgins

	Sunday	Monday
<div>April</div> <div>Sundays</div> <div>8:45 a.m. Bell Choir Rehearsal for our Adults; the Bells play during Worship once a month</div> <div>9:00 a.m. First Light Sunday school for PreK-4th grade</div> <div>9:00 a.m. Adult Bible Study This month our theme is Pray; see pg. 5 for more details</div> <div>9:30 a.m. Fellowship Join us in Fellowship Hall for Coffee and Donuts and Conversation</div> <div>10:30 a.m. Worship</div> <div>11:30 a.m. Fellowship Join us in Fellowship Hall for Coffee and Cookies and Conversation</div> <div>4:00 p.m. Chime Choir For Children in 2nd-4th grades</div> <div>4:30 p.m. Children's Choir For Children in PreK-4th grade</div> <div>5:00 p.m. Youth Choir For Youth 5th-12th grades</div> <div>5:30 p.m. Junior Bells For Youth 5th-12th grades</div> <div>6:30 p.m. Ignite Youth Group/ Confirmation Class For Youth 5th-12th grade; Confirmation is for 8th graders</div>	<div>Office Hours Monday – Thursday: 8:00 a.m. – 4:00 p.m. website: wpcbc.org Join us on Facebook Westminster Presbyterian Church - Bay City</div>	
	<div>2 Palm Sunday</div> <div>10:30 a.m. Palm Sunday Pageant</div>	<div>3</div> <div>6:00 p.m. Mission Meeting 7:00 p.m. Deacon Meeting</div>
	<div>9 Easter Sunday</div> <div>8:00 a.m. Worship 9:00 a.m. Easter Breakfast 10:30 a.m. Worship</div>	<div>10</div> <div>Church Office Closed</div>
	<div>16</div> <div>Pray Honestly Matthew 6:9-13</div>	<div>17</div> <div>5:00 p.m. Property Meeting 6:00 p.m. Finance Meeting 7:00 p.m. Stewardship Meeting</div>
	<div>23</div> <div>Pray Persistently and Humbly Luke 18:1-14</div>	<div>24</div>
	<div>30</div> <div>Pray with and for Others James 5:14-16</div>	

*Birthdays listed are for our 75+ Members			
Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Fri/Sat
<div>Happy Birthday</div> <div>Joyce Whitney Richard Frontjes Marilyn Lapham Marilyn Bechtel Jill Jean</div> <div>Claire Jacobson Daniel Gould Walter Whitney Carol Campbell</div>			<div>31</div> <div>1 10:00 a.m. Pageant Rehearsal</div>
<div>4</div> <div>10:00 a.m. Hearts & Hands Knitting 6:00 p.m. Boy Scouts 6:00 p.m. Personnel Meeting</div>	<div>5</div> <div>6:30 p.m. Chancel Choir Rehearsal</div>	<div>6 Maundy Thursday</div> <div>8:30 a.m. TOPS 5:00 p.m. Food of Faith at Messiah Lutheran 7:00 p.m. Maundy Thursday Worship</div>	<div>7 Good Friday</div> <div>7:00 p.m. Good Friday Worship</div> <div>Great Vigil of Easter</div> <div>8 6:00 p.m. Easter Vigil</div>
<div>11</div> <div>10:00 a.m. Hearts & Hands Knitting 10:00 a.m. Staff Meeting 11:00 a.m. Stephen Ministry 1:00 p.m. Bay City Lions Club 1:30 p.m. FYI Happenings 6:00 p.m. Boy Scouts</div>	<div>12</div> <div>6:30 p.m. Chancel Choir Rehearsal</div>	<div>13</div> <div>8:30 a.m. TOPS 4:00 p.m. Combustion Council 5:00 p.m. Food of Faith at Messiah Lutheran</div>	<div>14</div> <div>15</div>
<div>18</div> <div>10:00 a.m. Hearts & Hands Knitting 6:00 p.m. Boy Scouts 7:00 p.m. Session Meeting</div>	<div>19</div> <div>6:30 p.m. Chancel Choir Rehearsal</div>	<div>20</div> <div>8:30 a.m. TOPS 1:00 p.m. Lydia Circle 4:00 p.m. Combustion Council 5:00 p.m. Food of Faith at Messiah Lutheran 7:00 p.m. Adult Bible Study via Zoom</div>	<div>21</div> <div>22</div>
<div>25</div> <div>10:00 a.m. Hearts & Hands Knitting 10:00 a.m. Staff Meeting 12:00 p.m. Lunch & Learn 6:00 p.m. Boy Scouts</div>	<div>26</div> <div>6:30 p.m. Chancel Choir Rehearsal</div>	<div>27</div> <div>8:30 a.m. TOPS 4:00 p.m. Combustion Council 5:00 p.m. Food of Faith at Messiah Lutheran 7:00 p.m. Deborah Circle 7:00 p.m. Adult Bible Study via Zoom</div>	<div>28</div> <div>29</div>

In February, the **Operating Fund** had income of \$44,655.00 and expenses of \$33,315.00. Some expenses included costs for our Follow Me curriculum, Vacation Bible School (just around the corner) and a donation to the Good Samaritan Rescue Mission. With new Session members ordained and installed last month, ministries are transitioning with new members coming on. It's exciting to hear and see the new ideas and programs our staff and ministries are working on. Holy Week is almost here and the pages in this Log are full of the special services we have planned. This, and all that we do, would not be possible without your gifts to the Operating Fund. Thank you!!

The **Building Improvement Fund** received contributions of \$792.00, and did not have any expenses in February. At the end of the month, the fund balance is \$21,405.00. We're grateful to those who contribute to the Building Improvement Fund.

Per capita for 2023 is \$29.77.
This is per active,
confirmed member.

The **Major Repairs Fund** had income of \$789.00 in February, with an expense of \$6000.00. The Session approved a major refurbishment of our 5-octave, 61 Handbell set. This is a down payment for the full refurbishment. During the summer, the bells will be shipped to Schulmerich Bells in Pennsylvania where they will fix, polish, and replace parts, as needed. Our Handbells have provided beautiful music for decades now. This refurbishment will allow that to continue for years to come. Thank you for your gifts to the Major Repairs Fund. The balance at the end of the month is \$53,718.59.

Contributions to the **Capital Campaign Fund** totaled \$6,486.67 in February. We are so grateful to those who have and continue to give and pledge to the Capital Campaign. We anticipate making several extra payments this year on the principal, continuing to reduce the balance on the note. The loan balance at the end of February is down to \$201,926.56! Thank you!

Please don't hesitate to reach out to me if you have questions about the information here, or any other questions on Westminster's finances.

~Heather Heidtman
Church Treasurer

Congratulations Church Officers!

Congratulations to the church officers who were ordained and installed on Sunday, February 26, 2023.

Ordained and installed for the office of Elder: Faith Sneller, Tami Sivy, Collin Heidtman
Ordained and installed for the office of Deacon: Jason Hildebrant, Kathy Elzinga, Jim Majchrzak, Amy Weatherwax
Installed for the office of Elder: Pat Duggan
Installed for the office of Deacon: Nancy Berta
Gary Eagle will be ordained and installed for the office of Elder at a later date.



Stations of the Cross This year during Holy Week, we are excited to offer you the opportunity to again journey through the Stations of the Cross. The colored posters and devotional materials provided by Illustrated Ministries, help children and adults use all four gospel accounts to tell the story of Jesus' passion, death, and burial. These stations will be posted around the church building and can be accessed any time the building is open. **(Monday-Thursday 8:00 a.m. – 4:00 p.m.).**

Maundy Thursday Worship Service (7:00 pm)- This year's service is based around three simple elements that make their way through the story of the Last Supper in the upper room: WATER,

BREAD, and SILVER. Its three parts mirror the three days between Jesus' death and resurrection. We start with water rooting us in baptism and the knowledge that we are claimed and known by God. Next, we gather around the table, where we are reminded that there is always room at God's table for us. Finally, we come face to face with our forgetful and flawed nature. We are reminded how easily we can turn from the promise of baptism and the beauty of Communion to betrayal. The service will conclude with the act of darkening the sanctuary. This move is done to help shift our hearts from the comfort and light of the sacraments to the anxiety and pain of the garden and the cross.

Good Friday Service of Silence & Sorrow (7:00 pm)- Our Good Friday service rests in the belief that in places of sorrow, lament, and grief we meet God differently. Too often we rush through these moments, skipping them, reaching out for the new life offered on Easter Sunday. In doing so, we do not give ourselves a chance to meet the God who sits with us in our sorrow. Central to this service is creating a space where people can gather around the cross with as much vulnerability as possible in silence and in sorrow. Throughout the service we will be sharing in times of silence in three-minute intervals to symbolize the three hours Jesus suffered on the cross before his death.

Easter Vigil- Saturday (6:00 p.m.)- See the front page of the Log for information on this special service.

Easter Breakfast- The Fellowship and Outreach Committee will host Easter breakfast on **Sunday, April 9th at 9:00 a.m.** Tickets are \$8; \$3 for children 10 and under. Tickets are on sale now, both during and after worship and can be purchased in the office during the week. Tickets can be purchased at the door, but prices will increase to \$9 and \$4.

Easter Sunday Worship Services - Join us Easter morning for a joyous celebration of Christ's resurrection! We will again offer two services **(8:00 and 10:30 am)** with communion being served at each service. Guest organist, Laurel Taiple, will join us for both services, along with our pianist, Rachel Webb. The Chancel Choir will be joining with the Adult Handbell Choir for the 10:30 am Service.

With Sympathy

Prayers are extended to the family and friends of Gerald Pavlawk. Jerry passed away, March 4, 2023. A funeral service was held March 9, with Rev. Jamie Milton and Rev. Linda Williams officiating.



Gerald E. Pavlawk

Dear Rev. Milton and the Westminster Church Family,
Thank you for your \$500.00 gift to the Good Samaritan Rescue Mission. Your gift is helping



ensure homeless and hurting neighbors receive help and hope in their hour of need. When the storms of life come-whether brought on by personal

crisis or financial ones-people come to the Rescue Mission because they have no other options. During the past month, we saw an increase of homeless men, women and children looking for warmth, hope and refuge from the hardships they are facing. Your compassionate support will give them a chance to reclaim their future.

Thank you again, and God bless you for giving homeless people shelter from whatever storms they face this winter.

Gratefully,
Dan Streeter
Chief Executive Officer



Stephen Ministry
will be meeting
Tuesday, April
11th at 11:00 a.m.



THANK YOU Harold for building the cross we used during this Lenten Season.



*Mid-Lenten Potluck,
Workshop and Worship*
March 15, 2023

Vacation Bible School will take place Monday, June 12 – Friday, June 16 beginning at 9:00 a.m. and concluding at 12:00 p.m. Check-in each morning will begin at 8:30 a.m.

On Friday, June 16, we will extend the time of VBS until 1:00 p.m., inviting parents to come at 12:00 p.m. to see what the children have been up to during the week.

Please register by filling out the form below and returning it to the church office, or registering online on Westminster's website, www.wpcbc.org.



Registration Form

Child's name: _____ Child's gender: _____

Child's age: _____ Date of birth: _____ Last school grade completed: _____

Name of parent(s): _____

Street address: _____

City: _____ State: _____ ZIP: _____

Home telephone: (____) _____

Parent/caregiver's cellphone: (____) _____

Home email address: _____

Home church: _____

Allergies, medical conditions, or special needs: _____



In case of emergency, contact: _____

Phone: _____

Relationship to child: _____

Crew number or name (for church use only): _____

REACH THE FORGOTTEN JAIL MINISTRY (FORMERLY FORGOTTEN MAN'S MINISTRY)

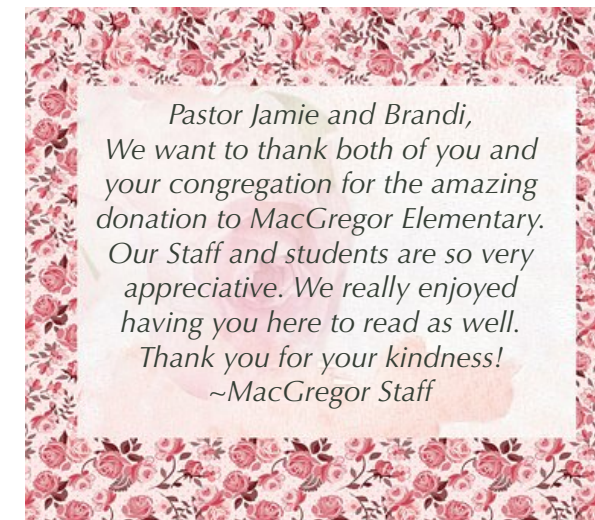


At the March meeting of the Mission Partnerships meeting, we were joined by Steve Scott who serves as the chaplain at the Bay and Midland County Jails. Steve shared with us the many ways that Reach the Forgotten Jail Ministry works in county jails all around the state of Michigan. Their mission is to “provide Christ-centered hope and healing through biblically-based, chaplain led, volunteer jail ministries.” The hope is that through this ministry, “every incarcerated person to experience new life in Christ and develop healthy family, church, and community relationships.”

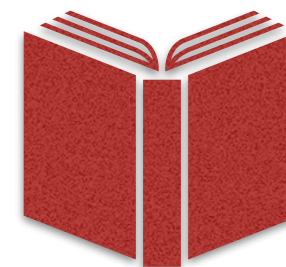
While this ministry does employ staff chaplains where they are able, it is primarily volunteer run. Some places where volunteers are needed are in helping to lead Sunday worship services, weekly Bible Studies, as well as meeting leaders for Addiction Recovery meetings. One of their hopes is to connect those who are incarcerated with mentors who can help incorporate them into the life of a church once they have served their time.

Our Mission Partnerships Committee has supported this ministry financially for many years. In addition to financial support and volunteers, Pastor Steve shared with us some other ways that we might be able to partner with this ministry by collecting items to help inmates and their families, and by supporting their recovery efforts. The Mission Partnerships Committee will continue to evaluate how we might partner with this ministry.

You can find more information at www.jailministry.org



PASTOR JAMIE, REV. LINDA AND MRS. BRANDI HEAD BACK TO ELEMENTARY SCHOOL!



Last October we celebrated Children's Sabbath and raised \$3000.00 to help three local Elementary Schools. In March, Pastor Jamie, Rev. Linda and Mrs. Brandi, not only hand-delivered checks to those schools, but spent some time in classrooms, sharing their time with children in our community.

Mrs. Brandi visited Bangor Central and read to several classrooms. They are using our gift to purchase books for their Book Worm Vending Machine.

Rev. Linda visited Bush Elementary School in Essexville and read to their Young 5's class. She read the book "What in the World is Wrong with Gisbert." Bush is using our gift to purchase books for all of their classroom libraries.

Pastor Jamie participated in National Reading Month by reading to Third Graders at MacGregor Elementary School, where he also delivered the donation from our Children's Sabbath offering. He was able to meet the class that would be the recipient of the funds to start their own coffee shop at the school, learning valuable life skills of setting up and running a business, taking and fulfilling orders, receiving payment and making change. Once the students have their business up and running, they hope to come share their skills with us for our Fellowship Time one Sunday.

GOD SIGHTINGS MARCH 2023

THANK YOU FOR DOING YOUR
PART TO SERVE THE
CONGREGATION OF
WESTMINSTER!



**COLLIN
HEIDTMAN**



**JOYCE
HEGENAUER**



**NANCY
BERTA**



**AMBER
SCHULTZ**

PRAY

Following up on our celebration of the Resurrection on Easter, we will begin our next series for worship and study on prayer. The Rev. Dr. Marcus Hong introduces the practice:

Prayer remains both a central spiritual practice for followers of Jesus, and, for many, one of the most difficult to grasp. It seems like prayer should be simple: just talk to God. Some of us do seem to pray as naturally as we breathe. Yet, for others, prayer involves stumbling over words or losing focus; we fall asleep, like the disciples in Gethsemane, just when we should be paying attention. Some people encounter a presence when they pray; others feel nothing. When asked to pray in public, some resist, convinced they will somehow misstep. Others fear that prayer just distracts us from *doing* something about the world's problems. Some are daunted by the different ways people pray; which is *right*? Many worry that no one is even listening.

To believe that prayer is important enough to worry about messing up, that someone *is* listening, and that the listener is concerned; these are supreme acts of trust. Prayer relies on our belief that God cares for us and hears us. This belief shapes us. Even as we hope that our prayers are heard, we are encouraged to consider what it is that God desires for the world. Even as we lay bare our pain, if we listen carefully and compassionately, we come to hear other people's pain, and we are invited to pray for and with them. Even as we thank God, our perspective on our own lives shifts, revealing moments of grace where we least expected them.

In all of this, we are in good company. Practicing prayer ties us to rich spiritual traditions from around the world and throughout time. Those same disciples who could not seem to stay awake with Jesus in his hour of need were the ones who had already asked him "Lord, teach us to pray." Jesus' reply to them remains a good place to start exploring prayer, though we will take our cues below from Matthew's account instead of Luke's. From there, we will move to a curious set of parables that Jesus shares to illuminate the posture of prayer. Then we will hear from the letter of James, about praying with and for others. Finally, we will dip our toes into that great font of prayer, the book of Psalms, to explore the vast array of embodiment and emotions that we can bring into our praying. From these explorations emerge our themes for the four weeks after Easter:



THE PRACTICE OF PRAYER

April 16: Pray Honestly

April 23: Pray Persistently and Humbly

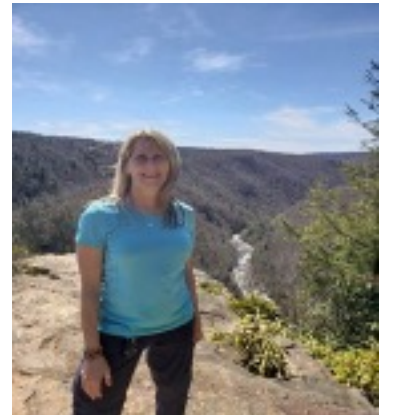
April 30: Pray with and for Others

May 7: Pray with Your Whole Self



During this year's January Series, hosted & streamed from Calvin University, Grand Rapids, many people had the privilege of hearing 15 speakers from a wide variety of perspectives and passions. The series aims to cultivate deep thought and conversation about important issues of the day, to inspire cultural renewal and make us better global citizens. Rev. Kyle Meygaard-Schaap (Christian Reformed Church in North America) did just that, calling upon us as followers of Jesus to consider how we do that - to be good global citizens - in a warming world. He made an intelligent and passionate plea for us as Christians to address the climate crisis as an act of discipleship and neighborly love.

In response to the call to be faithful in our care for this world, we have invited a Lunch & Learn speaker to be with us on **Tuesday, April 25th at noon** to share from her experience as a concerned citizen and high school educator. Ms. Cyndie Roberts is a Dow High **GO GREEN** Club Advisor and has been so since the club's inception in 2017. Sustainability is based on a simple principle: Everything that we need for our survival and well-being depends, either directly or indirectly, on our natural environment. To pursue sustainability is to create and maintain the conditions under which humans and nature can exist in productive harmony to support present and future generations (EPA). During her presentation and then in the conversation to follow, we will have the opportunity to consider what we can do as individuals and as a local church to support and enhance sustainability.



HOW DOES WESTMINSTER STRIVE TO BE GOOD STEWARDS OF OUR PLANET?

- We recycle! While we do our best to limit the amount of paper we use, we do recycle bulletins and documents. We also recycle cans, plastic and other materials used in the kitchen.
- We have timers on the lights in several rooms-in case they get left on accidentally.
- We reuse and repurpose costumes, sets and props. Take a look at the sets for the upcoming Palm Sunday Pageant, odds are, you've seen them before!
- We have timers on our thermostats. Have you ever come into the sanctuary on a weekday? It's cold! We don't turn on the controls until Sunday morning when the room is fully used.

Join us April 25th at noon in the Fellowship Hall and learn how we can do even more to protect our planet.

Please bring a brown bag lunch, beverages and dessert will be provided.

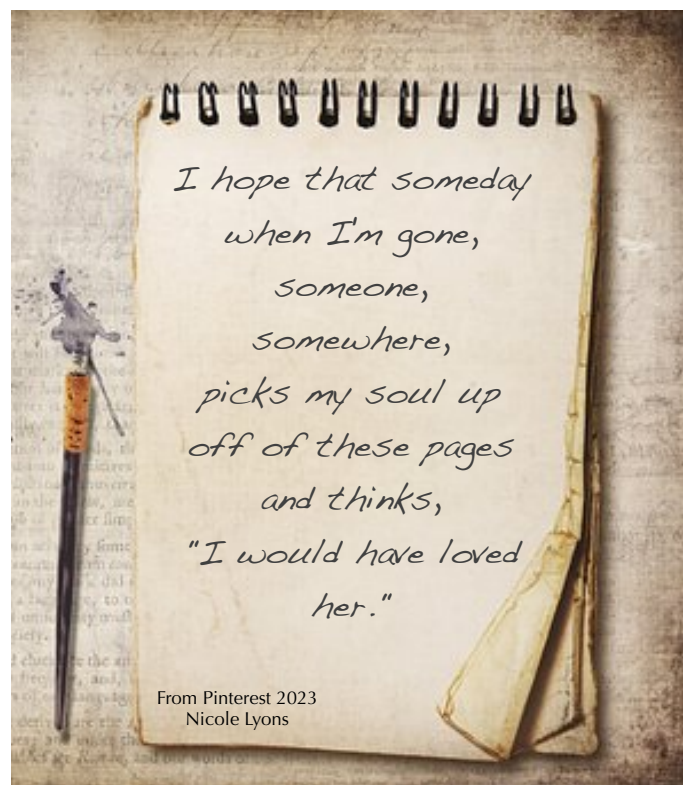


And check out the Earth Day Expo at Dow High School on April 22nd!

MEMOIRS: THE LABELS YOUR LIFE

*The other events of Abijah's reign, what he did and what he said (memoirs), are written in the annotations of the prophet Iddo.
-2 Chronicles 11:22*

A person's life is often compared to a beautiful quilt, more specifically, a beautiful crazy quilt. Quilts are made of many small scraps of fabric. Those scraps are combined to make squares that are fit together in rows and columns to assemble a quilt. Daily living is made of many small events and pieced together as a life.



Modern quilters don't consider a quilt finished until a label is attached to the quilt. Labels contain the who, what, where, why, and when of the quilt. These labels serve as the beginning of the history of the quilt. Families that are lucky enough to have a vintage quilt, are encouraged to add a label or add to a label that is already attached to the quilt. Those tiny stitches are a connection to the quilt maker. Those small scraps of fabric can be identified as belonging to a special piece of clothing. No label on the quilt, is a loss of family history.

A couple of recent incidents in my family history, prompted me to consider putting more labels on my life. I was telling my son about buying a '69 Pontiac GTO on our way to the hospital on the day he was born. And another story my daughter wanted to know more about, was the time just before her Dad and I were married. We were working in different towns and saw each other only on weekends. These stories are probably not

interesting to anyone but my children; but each story needs to be written down for them.

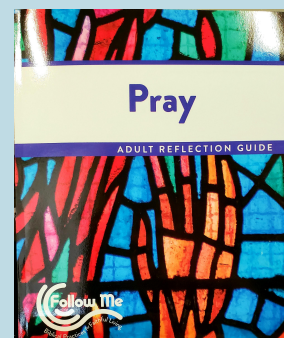
In our writing experience at Westminster in April, May, and June, we will attempt to write down things that only each of you may know. We will remember some interesting characters and some scary important family happenings. This writing experience will be made as painless as possible. All of your writing will be your own.

There will be no requirements to share, unless you want to share. Hope you can join us.

~Judy Hudson

JOIN US APRIL 11TH AT 1:30 IN THE NARTHEX AS WE START THIS NEW SERIES.

TWO OPPORTUNITIES TO EXPLORE YOUR FAITH — THURSDAY EVENINGS AND SUNDAY MORNINGS



Practicing prayer ties us to rich spiritual traditions from around the world and throughout time. John Calvin called prayer “the chief exercise of faith.” As an exercise, prayer is practiced, repeated, and nurtured.

Our intention of communicating with God involves a trust that God cares for us and hears us, even when our prayers are not perfect. In prayer we offer our hopes and confessions. Prayer shapes how we think and act. We pray because we believe that prayer changes things; Ourselves, our communities, our relationships, our social order.

During the four weeks of this unit, our Thursday evening Zoom Bible study will explore biblical text that illuminate the “practice of prayer.”

Week One (April 20th) Pray Honestly – When asked how to pray, Jesus gave his disciples the Lord’s Prayer (Matthew 6:9-13). These foundational words begin our exploration of prayer.

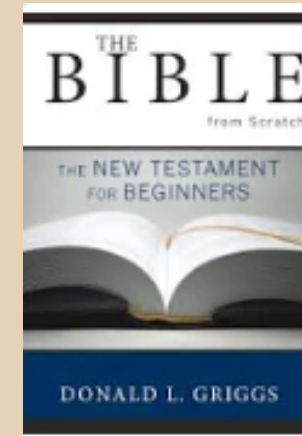
Week Two (April 27th) Pray Persistently and Humbly – In the book of Luke (18:1-14) Jesus offers a parable about the widow and the judge to illustrate the importance of persistence. The parable of the praying Pharisee and the tax collector emphasizes the value of humility.

Week Three (May 4th) Pray with and for Others - The book of James (5:13-16) includes practical advice for early Christians, especially in the ongoing practice of praying for oneself and others.

Week Four (May 11th) Pray with Your Whole Self – The Psalms are often called the church’s “great songbook.” We will focus our attention on verses from three psalms (63:1-4; 88:13-18; 139:15-16) that touch on the emotional and physical embodiment of praying.

Join us on **Thursday evenings at 7 PM via Zoom**. Books are available in the church office. Please call the church office or Rev. Linda with any questions. Each week the Zoom invitation is emailed to participants two days before the Zoom study.

The Introduction to the book – **The Bible from Scratch: The New Testament for Beginners** – begins: “Do you have memories of your Sunday school teacher expecting you to memorize all of the books of the Bible in order? Can you recite them still?”



Have you been in conversation with someone who quotes so many Bible verses that you feel intimidated and embarrassed about how little you know about the Bible.

Were you ever in a Bible study group when the leader instructed the class members to look up a Bible passage and you weren’t quite sure where to look? Have you been invited by someone to attend a Bible study group but thought of many reasons not to go because you were sure you would feel out of place?

If you answered one or more of these questions in the affirmative, it may be that this book is just the right resource.

In response to a few folks who asked for a Sunday morning Bible study that would look at the whole of the Bible (we completed our study of the Old Testament in March) , we will spend the next seven weeks - **every Sunday, beginning on April 16th at 9 AM** - reading and discussing this book with chapter headings like “Introducing the Bible, the four Gospels, the Acts of the Apostles, the Epistles of the New Testament, and The Revelation to John.”

Learning about the Bible is always more rewarding when you can share the journey with a friend. So come join us **Sunday, April 16th at 9 AM** in the Session Room or via Zoom. This will be a hybrid study group. Please call the church office (or Rev. Linda on her cell phone) to get the Zoom invitation and to pick up the books.

Each month the Spiritual Growth and Formation Ministry will share 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.

"We never lose our loved ones. The accompany us; they don't disappear from our lives. We are merely in different rooms."
— Paulo Coelho

After the death of someone we love, life can feel like a slow motion dance, putting one foot in front of the other in a fuzzy haze that can last weeks, months or even years. Still some bereaved— even as they struggle with the pain of loss and this adrift feeling — find themselves forging a deeply intimate connection to themselves. They may be able to find a new understanding of what this important to them, what is meaningful and what in life is worthy of their time.

This is not an attempt to look for a silver lining or some spun explanation why everything will be okay. Instead, it is the result of deep and raw connection we can find to ourselves, when we are vulnerable and deeply feeling. It can show us what to prioritize, what to tend to, and how to nurture ourselves differently, when we experience something so human as loss.

This was the story of Fred, a former client. Fred struggled to get his bearings after his wife died. Fred and Sally were married for 42 years and she had been a stay-at-home mother to their only child, daughter, Julie. Fred's job as an investment banker took him all over the country. Frank felt broken when he first started working with a



counselor. He had retired a few months before her death and the retired life he had worked so hard to achieve now looked very bleak without her.

In the following months, though, Fred's love for Sally deepened. She had kept their house immaculate so in the beginning, he struggled with learning how to cook for himself, do laundry and grocery shop. Sally had been the social butterfly in their marriage, arranging dinner parties and backyard barbecues, he was the quiet one by her side. Friends stopped by to check in on him and he heard stories about the wife who never said "no" to volunteering for school events or driving neighbors to doctor appointments. He had never realized fully what a giving person he had married.

As he moved through this experience, Fred realized he was able to connect with others who understood his experience. When his neighbor's wife died, he stopped at the house to offer condolences. Fred had always been uncomfortable talking about sad things, but over the next several months he and his neighbor often met for coffee. Fred realized he didn't have to offer words of wisdom; he just listened. It felt good to sit and affirm another person's grief.

Death often requires us to make changes. The first change is recognizing that life as we know it will be different. But through

the changes we encounter along the way, we can also celebrate the growth that comes from these changes. We can use it to be radically connected to ourselves and to learn what actually makes us feel connected to others.

Acknowledge that your needs might be different right now

If you have entered a grieving process, you've potentially been feeling new and bigger emotions than you're used to. You might be facing problems that challenge you and your sense of who you are. Small things might feel bigger and everything can feel tiring. Respect this. Often we bully ourselves with how we "should" be reacting, feeling, or being when we are in grief. The truth is that loss can spin our world upside down, change every routine we have, and really challenge our stories of who we are. It is often the hardest thing anyone ever does. Try not to make it harder by telling yourself that you're "doing it wrong". It is what it is.

Take small steps

Many of us like to think in very black and white terms. We don't see small changes as being as impactful or feel open to gray areas. Gray can feel like uncertainty. We can go all or nothing with change. As humans, we're even more vulnerable to this when we are emotionally drained or hurting. We want answers and we want a plan. But small steps count and usually have more lasting impact. Maybe you try a new walking path. Maybe you call a friend you don't always talk. Sometimes we can try out a new activity and only do it once. All of the small things count and add up.

Pick one thing and treat it like play or an experiment

When trying something new, it can feel like a lot of pressure for it to "work". Sometimes we have less gas in the tank when we are in grief. It can make it harder to do things and harder to feel comfortable be unsure if something we put time into was worth it. Instead, try to see anything new you try like as a playful experiment. Did I like this support group? Did I like lunch today with that friend? Instead of the goal being to feel better, the goal can be to try something and gain the

information about how you feel about it. You never have to do it again and you don't have to commit to anything. Just an experiment and a way to learn how you feel about something new.

Know that learning is a time based process

We aren't born knowing who we are and what we do or don't like. When we're grieving it can feel like things that used to make us feel good, feel different. After a loss, the world can feel like a different place and we can feel different in

our own skin. We are re learning who we are, in this new world. That's okay. That's normal. And it takes time and trail and error to learn. We might find that we like more alone time. Or maybe some friendships feel differently to use now. It's all information to gather and use, how- ever feels good to us. Don't feel afraid of this learning process.

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

RUMMAGE SALE TIME!

Wednesday, May 3

For Members Only
6:00 p.m. – 8:00 p.m.

Thursday, May 4

Open to the Public
9:00 a.m. - 4:00 p.m.

Friday, May 5

Open to the public
9:00 a.m. - 12:00 p.m.

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You may drop off items for the rummage sale beginning Sunday, April 30 after the worship service through Tuesday, May 2.
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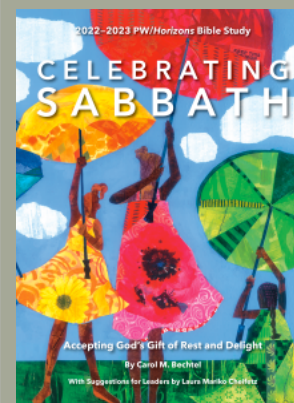


LYDIA CIRCLE

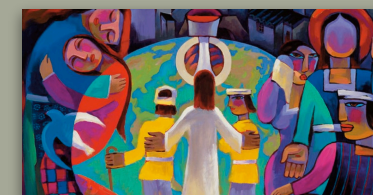
THURSDAY, APRIL 20
1:00 P.M.

Lydia Circle will meet monthly in person on the third Thursday at 1:00 p.m. in the Session room.

We are using the *Horizons* Bible Study, Celebrating Sabbath



DEBORAH CIRCLE



Deborah Circle will meet via Zoom at 7:00 p.m. on Thursday, April 27. If anyone wants to join, please call Karen Schoeppach at 989-684-1322 or email kaysue@chartermi.net.