

# Westminster Presbyterian Church

103 E. Midland Street  
Bay City, MI 48706

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# THE WESTMINSTER LOG

## *In the Midst of Change, In the Midst of Grief, There is Joy*

At the beginning of Advent, our worship service focused on the idea that “even in the midst of grief, there can be joy.” I believe this is especially true when we are serving others. While I was reading December’s “Westminster Log,” I was impressed by all our church activities. Our church is “rocking” with energy! It seems to me our church staff and other volunteers are outdoing themselves. We held gatherings where the grieving could share feelings and hopefully find comfort. We have monthly book studies and weekly Bible studies. There were many added Advent and Christmas activities and services- all reminding us of God’s love. The opportunities are there, it is simply up to the rest of us to respond, to participate. When we do, I believe we will find new joy, new hope.

During that Advent worship service, I wanted to raise my hand. I have experienced joy in the midst of grief. Perhaps you have too. If I had been with people after church for fellowship, I could have told my story. My husband, Newt, suffered from Parkinson’s disease. Only a month after he died, I took two ladies, recently diagnosed with Parkinson’s, to a support group and I told them about an exercise class for Parkinson’s patients. Newt and I had both benefited from these activities. One of the two ladies expressed her gratitude and her enthusiasm for the class and her abundant thanks gave me joy. I was surprised and grateful for in the midst of my grief I thought joy was impossible. That joy brought me a new found hope.

In recent months, I have been impressed with the number of people who have expressed the importance of Westminster, that our church community means everything to them. No question about it. We have a very warm, loving congregation. This is not true of all churches. Yes, there have been some changes in our church. But our church has a history of change. In fact, change can be necessary. We also have a history of resilience.

Reflecting on these things, I have some wishes for our church as we enter 2024. This starts with using our imaginations. I wish we could imagine three hundred people attending our Sunday services. What would draw them in? I wish each of us would ask young people, perhaps those in our own families- children, grandchildren, great grandchildren- what activities, music, readings, they would like to see in a church service. What could we do to keep these people coming? I wish all of us would think on this, do some brainstorming, and offer suggestions for worship, study, and service opportunities that would involve us all, not just the church staff, in planning and bringing new things to life in our midst.

I wish that at least once a year we would have a fund raiser to benefit the general fund of our church. A dinner where we could invite the community and serve something easy to prepare and share.

I wish more of us, myself included, would wear our name tags. I see new faces at church (isn’t that great!), but with names I don’t know (not so great). And if you’re like me, you have to see and hear a name many times before you can remember it. I bet that each of us is aware of church members we don’t really know. This would help visitors get to know us as well. I wish more of us, myself included, would gather after church in fellowship hall to share with each other our travels, our books, our humor, special moments in our lives. Years ago such gatherings were the reason I joined the Midland Unitarian Fellowship. Wouldn’t it be good for the health of our church to get better acquainted with more of the people who worship with us?

Our church family does a great job of serving others and sharing God’s love. We have much to be proud of and good reason to feel joy. In this new year, let us take note and celebrate the gift of our church. May we also give thought to the changes in our lives, and our wishes, to the improvements that can make our church, as good as it is, even better. ~ Anne Remington

JANUARY 2024 ISSUE 182

WWW.WPCBC.ORG

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Westminster Presbyterian  
Church - Bay City



- Pastor  
Rev. Jamie Milton (ext. 204)
- Parish Associate  
Rev. Linda Williams (ext. 203)
- Church Secretary/Treasurer  
Heather Heidman (ext. 201)
- Facilities Manager  
Harold Miller (ext. 205)

# THE WESTMINSTER LOG

# January

## 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 continue the study on the Gospel of John. 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**  
We will finish our Advent series on January 7th and begin the "Worship God" theme on January 14th.

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

**5:30 p.m. Youth Dinner**

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

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

Website: [wpcbc.org](http://wpcbc.org)  
Join us on Facebook  
Westminster Presbyterian Church - Bay City

Sunday	Monday
	1  Church Office Closed
7 <i>We trust our belovedness</i> <i>Luke 3:21-22</i>  <i>Epiphany/Star Words</i>	8 5:00 p.m. Property Mtg. 6:00 p.m. Mission Mtg. via Zoom. 6:00 p.m. Finance Mtg. 7:00 p.m. Stewardship Mtg. 7:00 p.m. Deacon Mtg. via Zoom
14 <i>Gather</i> <i>Luke 24:13-35</i>  11:45 a.m. Fellowship and Outreach Mtg.  5:00 p.m. Parent Forum	15  12:30 p.m. January Series  Birthday of Martin Luther King Jr.
21 <i>Participate</i> <i>Nehemiah 8:1-3, 5-12</i>	22  12:30 p.m. January Series 6:00 p.m. Promise and Possibility @ First Pres.
28 <i>Be Changed</i> <i>Luke 9:28-36</i>	29  12:30 p.m. January Series

Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Fri/Sat		
2  10:00 a.m. Hearts & Hands Knitting	3  6:30 p.m. Chancel Choir Rehearsal	4  8:30 a.m. TOPS 5:00 p.m. Food of Faith at Messiah Lutheran 7:00 p.m. Adult Bible Study via Zoom	5  6		
9 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 6:00 p.m. Personnel Mtg. 7:00 p.m. Spiritual Growth Mtg.	10  5:15 p.m. Worship Mtg. 6:30 p.m. Chancel Choir Rehearsal	11  8:30 a.m. TOPS 5:00 p.m. Food of Faith at Messiah Lutheran 7:00 p.m. Adult Bible Study via Zoom	12  13		
16  10:00 a.m. Hearts & Hands Knitting 12:30 p.m. January Series 6:00 p.m. Boy Scouts 6:30 p.m. Session Meeting	17  12:30 p.m. January Series 6:30 p.m. Chancel Choir Rehearsal	18  8:30 a.m. TOPS 12:30 p.m. January Series 1:00 p.m. Lydia Circle 5:00 p.m. Food of Faith at Messiah Lutheran 7:00 p.m. Adult Bible Study via Zoom	19 12:30 p.m. January Series  20 9:00 a.m. SHP Bead Build @ Delta College		
23  10:00 a.m. Hearts & Hands Knitting 12:30 p.m. January Series 6:00 p.m. Boy Scouts	24  12:30 p.m. January Series 6:30 p.m. Chancel Choir Rehearsal	25  8:30 a.m. TOPS 12:30 p.m. January Series 5:00 p.m. Food of Faith at Messiah Lutheran 7:00 p.m. Adult Bible Study via Zoom 7:00 p.m. Deborah Circle	26 12:30 p.m. January Series  27		
30  10:00 a.m. Hearts & Hands Knitting 12:30 p.m. January Series 2:00 p.m. Coffee and Conversation 6:00 p.m. Boy Scouts	31  12:30 p.m. January Series 6:30 p.m. Chancel Choir Rehearsal	<div style="border: 1px solid black; border-radius: 15px; padding: 10px; text-align: center;"> <p><b>Happy Birthday</b></p> <table style="width: 100%; border: none;"> <tr> <td style="width: 50%; border: none;"> <p>Molly Molyneaux Thomas Lange John Butts Bonnie Darling</p> </td> <td style="width: 50%; border: none;"> <p>Sue Curtiss Anne Remington Philip Reagh Martha Tapley</p> </td> </tr> </table> </div>		<p>Molly Molyneaux Thomas Lange John Butts Bonnie Darling</p>	<p>Sue Curtiss Anne Remington Philip Reagh Martha Tapley</p>
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\* Birthdays are listed for our 75+ members

In November the Operating Fund had income of \$20,423.81 and expenses of \$37,780.12. I anticipated this shortfall as many members have already paid their pledge in full. Thank you! Expenses in November included curriculum for our Follow Me series, expenses for Advent supplies, books for our grief group and FYI Happenings starting in February, in addition to the normal expenses to keep the church running smoothly. The Operating Fund will have another short-fall this year. We will be using investment funds to make up the difference. In February, we'll ask you to prayerfully consider your gifts to Westminster in 2024. The church, like all of us, is not immune to rising costs. Each of our ministries works hard to be good stewards of you gifts to the Church. We're so grateful for the gifts you give to Westminster.

Building Improvement Fund received contributions of \$672.22 in November and the expense of \$2400.00 to use the Lake Effect parking lot each Sunday morning. The fund has a balance of \$11,204.08 at the end of November. Thank you for contributing to the Building Improvement Fund.

The Major Repairs Fund had income of 119.00 and thankfully, there were no expenses for November. The balance at the end of the month is 40,468.37 Thank you to those who contribute to the Major Repairs Fund.

Contributions to the Capital Campaign Fund totaled \$1241.60 in November. We made our regular loan payment and the balance of the loan at the end of the month is \$153,547.07. We've paid down almost \$50,000 in principal in 2023! With our monthly loan payments at a more reasonable amount we are continuously working to shorten the life the loan by making extra principal payments. If we continue as we have been, we could potentially pay the loan off in just 3 more years!!! Taking a 20 year loan down to 10 years, and saving us thousands of dollars in interest. THANK YOU!

*Heather Heidtman*  
[treasurer@wpcbc.org](mailto:treasurer@wpcbc.org)



### Stewardship 2024

As we have mention in a letter sent home in December, 2024 pledge cards or estimate of giving cards will be given out after our Annual Meeting on February 4th. This will give you an opportunity to hear from our Ministry chairs and Session members about their budgets for 2024. Both a Narrative and a Line-item budget will be available. We hope that you will prayerfully consider your gift to Westminster in the coming year. We want to continue many of the great programming we're already doing, plus expand on others. Westminster has such a long history of showing we are the hands and feet of Christ within our church and outside our walls. Let's keep doing this!

We kindly ask that you continue to give in January as you normally have. As always, if you have questions or concerns, don't hesitate to get in touch with me or any member of the Finance Ministry.

Per capita for 2024 is \$29.00. This is per active, confirmed member.

#### Upcoming key dates

January 21st  
 The 2023 Annual Report will be available

February 4th  
 Annual Meeting of the Congregation during worship

February 18th  
 Stewardship Sunday



#### With Sympathy

Prayers and sympathy of the congregation are extended the family and friends of Russ Marvin. Russ passed away December 5, 2023.

We would like to thank our church family for the cards and messages of condolences we received on the recent passing of Kathy's mother, Shirley Arneson. Your kindness was very much appreciated.

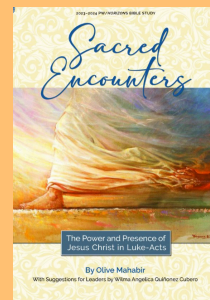
Kathy and Chris Elzinga



Dear Church Family and Friends,

We want to extend our heartfelt thanks for your love, support, cards and calls during our father's brief illness and passing. Words cannot express our gratitude for our church family. We would also like to extend a big thank you to the crew that prepared the luncheon after dad's service. Our sincere thanks and gratitude,

Patti Wesenick and Ellen Lesniak



### LYDIA CIRCLE

**THURSDAY, JANUARY 18**  
**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, Sacred Emotions.

### DEBORAH CIRCLE



Deborah Circle will meet **via Zoom at 7:00 p.m. on Thursday, January 25.** If anyone wants to join, please call Karen Schoeppach at 989-684-1322 or email her at [kaysue@chartermi.net](mailto:kaysue@chartermi.net).

### FELLOWSHIP TIME

Join your church family for a time of fellowship before and after Sunday's worship service.



Coffee and donuts included!

## ANNUAL MEETING OF THE CONGREGATION OF WESTMINSTER PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH

**Westminster's Annual Congregational Meeting to be held on Sunday, February 4th.** Like last year, the meeting will be held during our 10:30 am worship service as we celebrate the good work that God did in our midst in the past year and look ahead to what God may be calling us to in 2024. In addition to the presentation of the 2023 Annual Report, we will elect a new class of Elders and Deacons, and the 2024 Nominating Committee and vote on the Pastoral Terms of Call for Rev. Jamie. The 2024 Congregational Budget will be presented, and we will be invited to consider the ways in which we can help support God's work through Westminster. Following the worship service, a soup lunch will be served in the Fellowship Hall.



Christians worship God and, for more than two thousand years, have done this weekly, on Sundays. Yet to say we worship God is at once clear and complicated. Does worship happen only in church on Sunday morning? Or can it be at any time, and in any location? Should worship be formal or informal? Is it personal or communal? What is the content of our worship? What makes worship the worship of God? Is it an essential part of our relationship with God? These are questions that lie underneath the seemingly simple imperative to worship God.

Some Christians think worship is the primary way to follow Jesus and that every other practice flows from our communal Sunday worship. This understanding of worship does not ignore all other practices, but it emphasizes that the worship actions we do together, Sunday after Sunday, shape us to be people following Jesus in the world. Sunday worship is the source for how we make choices about our lives and our behaviors, how we treat neighbor and stranger, how we care for resources of land and sea, how we learn and grow into our baptismal identity as Christ's own body in the world.

In the Sundays leading up to Lent, we will focus on four key aspects of Christian worship. These aspects of worshipping God hold together our Sunday liturgy with our daily lives in the world. Worshipping God involves an ongoing ebb and flow of disciples (and seekers!) gathered and then sent out into the world and gathered again, as well as the ebb and flow of the communal to individual and societal and back again to communal. The four aspects we will focus on are:

- Gather (January 14)**
- Participate (January 21)**
- Be Changed (January 28)**
- Bless God (February 11)**

Let's start 2024 off by worshipping together!



Christmas Eve



### 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 1<sup>st</sup> 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. The 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>



### Thanksgiving Basket Drive and Project Angel Tree Success!

Westminster has once again shown what a remarkable faith community we are. Both the Bay County Emergency Food Pantry Network and the Salvation Army reached out to our Mission Partnerships Ministry to help fulfill requests for Thanksgiving Baskets and Christmas gifts for families in need in our area. We packed 100 Thanksgiving Baskets and 97 gift bags this holiday season. With turkey sales and shoppers, and donations throughout November and December, Westminster helped make the holidays a little brighter for our neighbors in need.

Mission Partnerships would also like to thank all the volunteers that helped with both the Thanksgiving Basket Drive and Project Angel Tree! Those that sold turkeys, packed baskets, purchased food and all the volunteers that helped coordinate, set-up, hang tags, man tables, shopped and tallied and organized gifts for pick up! What a wonderful way to spread joy in a weary world!



### 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, January 9, 2024  
Tuesday, February 13, 2024  
**First Crew will work 9-11 a.m.**  
**Second Crew will work 11 a.m. - 1 p.m.**

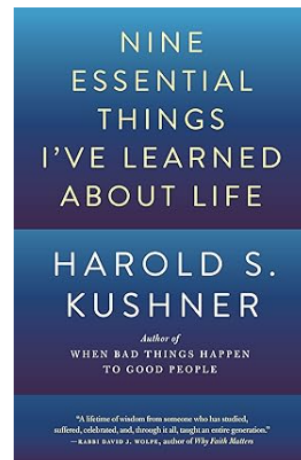
### New Book Study Starting in February!

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, February 13th**. 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.



Copies are available in the office



Following Jesus is a lifelong journey where we learn and do what Jesus said and did. It takes more than the head, checking off boxes of belief. It even takes more than the heart, feeling deeply about another person or a cause.

Following Jesus is about these things and more. It is also about doing. And it takes practice. And practice. And more practice. We are not practicing for perfection, however, but practicing to put faith and love into action. As we explore faith practices, we are diving into the essence of what makes us Christian, those who follow the one who practiced what he preached!

Christians think worship is the primary way to follow Jesus, and every other practice flows from our communal worship. This understanding of worship does not ignore all other practices but emphasizes that the worship actions we do together shape us to be people following Jesus in the world. Worship informs who we are and shapes what we say and do. Worship is the source for how we make choices about our lives and our behaviors, how we treat neighbor and stranger, how we care for resources of land and sea, how we learn and grow into our baptismal identity.

Communal worship is a life-giving stream as we meet with God and with others in God’s name. Worship identifies us again and again as people of the resurrection, who follow Jesus and grow in Jesus’ likeness and image. We gather, we participate, we are changed, and we go forth blessing God and blessing God’s world.

Please call the church office to pick up your book and to get a zoom invitation if needed. Any questions, please contact the church office or Rev. Linda.

### THURSDAY EVENINGS

Over four sessions, **beginning Thursday, January 18th at 7 PM via Zoom**, we will explore biblical texts that illuminate four dimensions of the practice of worship.

**Week One:** Gather (Luke 24:13–35) details disciples’ encounter with Jesus on the Emmaus Road and offers a model for worship: gather with disciples, hear the word in Scripture and interpretation; break bread together; go and tell others the good news.

**Week Two:** Participate (Nehemiah 8:1–3, 5–12) describes ancient Israelite worship, highlighting active participation by the gathered people. They listen attentively as Scripture is read. They offer “Amen,” and physically respond to what they hear. With great rejoicing, they eat and drink and share portions with others.

**Week Three:** Be Changed (Luke 9:28–36) presents Jesus’ transfiguration, in which he meets God face-to-face and is changed. Three disciples witness the event and are themselves changed.

**Week Four:** Bless God (Psalm 104) begins with the words “Bless the Lord, O my soul,” acknowledging in thanksgiving that God is the source of every good.

### Thank you Westminster! Thanksgiving Baskets and Angel Tags

REJOICE!

GENEROSITY!

Please see the article on the opposite page

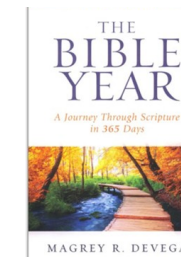


We will be wrapping up our study of the Gospel of John in the month of January and early February, beginning on **Sunday morning, January 7th at 9 AM in the Conference Room**, which will then complete our study in time for the start of Lent.

John’s Gospel was written decades after the first three Gospels of the New Testament – Matthew, Mark, and Luke. Pastor Magrey deVega writes in his book, *The Bible Year Devotional*, “in the first three Gospels we read three versions of the feeding of the multitude, two versions of the birth of Jesus, as well as all the parables, all the miracles, all the teaching. Jammed packed with accounts of Jesus’ life. And then comes John’s Gospel; John has even more to tell us about Jesus in a very different way. It is consistent with the other Gospels but tells us about Jesus in a way that emphasizes different things, capturing different aspects of who Jesus is and why his life, death, and resurrection are important.

Come join us as we explore the Gospel of John, **Sunday mornings in at 9:00 a.m.** All are welcome, even if you haven’t attend the earlier sessions.

Please call the church office or see Rev. Linda with any questions.



### SUNDAY MORNINGS



**JANUARY SERIES IS BACK!**

The award-winning January Series of Calvin University is one of the leading lecture and cultural arts series in the country. As the University celebrated its 38<sup>th</sup> year in this endeavor, it continues a long tradition of providing for informative and challenging speakers for 15 weekdays in January. The purpose of these 15 days is to stimulate conversations about important issues of the day in order to inspire cultural renewal and make us better global citizen in God's world.

The speakers are varied in their backgrounds and expertise:

- Lerone Martin – In Celebration of MLK Day – January 15<sup>th</sup> – the speaker's topic is "Soul Force: The Challenge of Martin Luther King, Jr." Dr. Martin is a professor of religious studies at Stanford and a writer and guest on the History Channel, PBS, the New York Times, and for the upcoming series "The History of Gospel Music and Preaching (PBS).
- Matthew Desmond, writer and sociologist. His most recent book is "Poverty, By America."
- Robert George who will speak on "Religious Liberty and the Common Good."
- Dr. Lydia Dugdale whose topic will be "The Lost Art of Dying: Ethical Consideration in Facing Our Mortality."
- Timothy Dalrymple – "What's Becoming of Us?: Artificial Intelligence and the Future of the Church."

Other topics and their speakers will include a baker, writers, musicians, poets, and a rock climber. Rich and varied speakers and topics.

**Come join the conversation every weekday at 12:30 PM in the Session Room, Monday through Friday, January 15 through February 2.** You are welcome to join us in the Session Room for viewing or we will make sure you have the link to watch from home. Each Thursday we will gather following the day's presentation and have an opportunity to talk about the week's topics and what it means for us as individuals and/or as a community.

Any questions, please call the church office or see Pastor Jamie or Rev. Linda. You may register for the January Series on line – Calvin University January Series 2024.

**LUNCH AND LEARN**

*We'll take a brief hiatus in January and resume our normal Lunch and Learn schedule (the last Tuesday of the month) in February.*

It seems our Lunch & Learn Series got off to a good start in September and ended with an excellent presentation on Hanukah by Mrs. Beth Cook from Bay City's local Jewish community. **Beginning in February at noon on Tuesday, February 27<sup>th</sup>** we will host several of our past speakers who will present a follow up to their earlier presentations. We will be hosting Retired Federal Magistrate Charles Binder and Retired Prosecutor Patrick Duggan who will speak further about a day in court, as well as Bonnie Fritz from Golden Horizons for a more informal question and answer time on dementia, and then someone from the Area Agency on Aging explaining even more community services that are available in our community. Stay tuned for more information about a surprise speaker suggested from the community.

Any questions about our series or suggestions for topics and speakers, please call the church office or Rev. Linda.

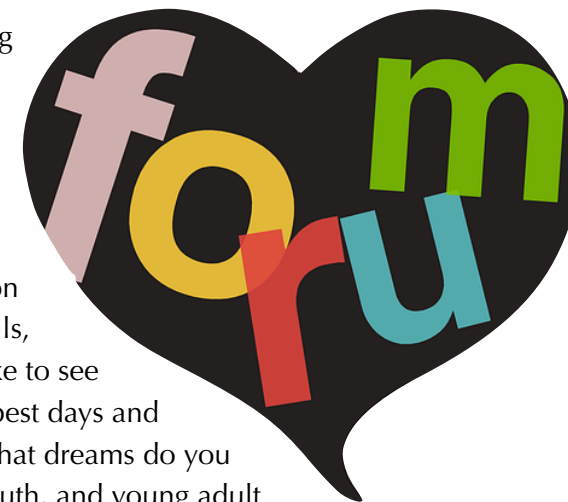


**Tuesday, February 27<sup>th</sup> at noon.**

**PARENT FORUM JANUARY 14, 2024  
5:00 - 6:30 P.M.**

All parents (and grandparents!) of children and youth—birth through high school—are invited to attend a Parent Forum on Sunday evening, January 14<sup>th</sup>. As Westminster continues to look at the future of our children and youth ministries, we are looking for input from our families. What programs are you interested in for your youth (Bible study, fun activities, retreats, mission opportunities, choirs, bells, etc)? What would you like to see continue? What are the best days and times for your family? What dreams do you have for our children, youth, and young adult programs? We want to hear from you!

**Parent**

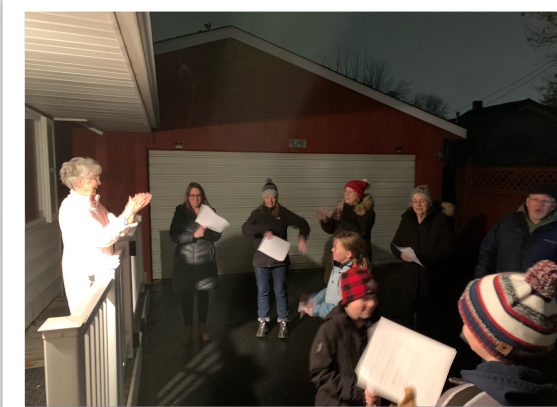


**Dinner and childcare will be provided. Please RSVP to Pastor Jamie or the office.**

**PARENTS NIGHT OUT  
DECEMBER 15TH**



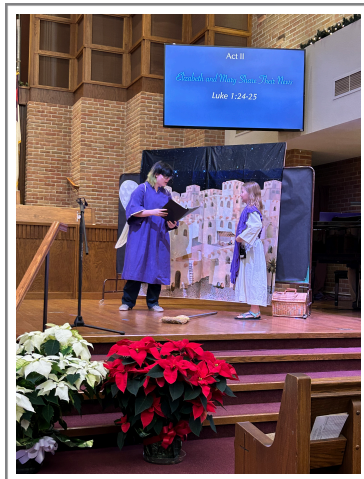
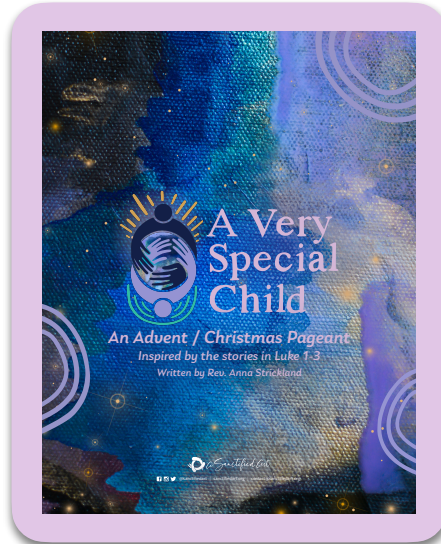
**CHRISTMAS CAROLING**



"Here we come a-caroling..." Despite the misty evening, the temperature was somewhat warm as a group from Westminster visited six homes of our Members to Remember. It was a fun evening of singing and spreading JOY!

# Children's Christmas Program "A Very Special Child"

December 10, 2023



## PROMISE AND POSSIBILITY THE MOVEMENT OF THE SPIRIT THROUGH GEN Z

As each new generation struggles to find their place in life, the preceding generations struggle to understand the differences that emerge. Whether it's a technology gap, new expressions or jargon introduced into our vocabulary, clothing trends, or any other number of differences, older generations often wonder how things have changed so much, myself (Pastor Jamie) included. As we try to tell our stories and experiences to those younger than us, we must also be prepared to listen to those younger generations that include our children and grandchildren.

The church is not immune to this struggle as it tries to maintain traditions, but also present the Gospel

in ways that will reach new generations. The Office of Collegiate Ministry of the PC(USA) has put together an interesting curriculum that invites us into a dialogue with scripture and current trends about emerging adults, commonly referred to as Generation Z (or Gen Z). The goal is for us to better understand the context of collegiate ministry, and be inspired to connect with and support young adults and ministries who work with them.

We want young adults to mature in body and spirit, to become wise and discerning followers of Jesus. For this growth to happen, they need teachers to walk with them on their journey to adulthood. College students and young adults want those who are further along the spiritual journey to sit with them so they can ask their questions and listen to our honest answers. But it is not just a one-way engagement. Just like the teachers were amazed at Jesus's understanding and answers when he was left at the temple as a boy, we, too, who accompany emerging adults will be amazed—by their passion, their questions, their pain, their stories, and their faith.

January 22, 2024 (First Presbyterian)  
February 19, 2024 (Westminster)  
**Each session runs from  
6:00 p.m.-7:00 p.m.**

We have an opportunity to impact the spiritual journeys of students who have been raised in the PC(USA) and those who have not by providing opportunities where they can experience and explore God's inclusive love and be empowered to live for the flourishing of all creation. In a joint study with our neighbors across the river at First Presbyterian, we'll share in these important conversations. All are invited to attend! We hope this study will inform, inspire, and invite all who love and care about young adults to invest in ministries that support their spiritual formation during this pivotal time in their life. Please see Pastor Jamie if you have any questions.

### EPIPHANY AND 2024 STAR WORDS

Join us on Epiphany Sunday (January 7th) for worship and to receive your 2024 "Star" word! During worship, each person will receive a star cutout with a word written on it. This will be your word for 2024. Inspired by the Magi following the star to Jesus, receiving a star word to meditate on throughout the new year can deepen your self-reflection and prayer practices. Take it with you and place it somewhere where you will see it everyday. Reflect on this word. Ponder what significance this word has in your life and how God might be speaking to you through that simple word.



Epiphany is the celebration of God's presence breaking through to shine as a light in the darkness. The hope is that this word will find its way into your heart and help you to discern God's presence all around you in new ways. For those who choose to worship online, or miss worship on January 7, the star cutouts will be available to be picked up through the church office beginning on January 8.

Each month the Spiritual Growth and Faith Formation Ministry 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.

**“Grief is in two parts. The first is the loss. The second is the remaking of life.” ~Anne Roiphe**

As the holidays wrap up, we enter January 2024. For many this marks a new beginning, resolutions, and a brand new year. It is a time of hope, dreams, new ideas, and new possibilities. We begin to create goals to help us find our- selves, and accomplish what we want the next year to bring.

We flip the page of the calendar and suddenly another new reality hits us on multiple levels: it's a new year without our loved one. Depending on where you are in your grief journey, you may face the year with anxiety and longing for the comfort of the past. You may be fearful of what the new year may bring and wonder if you can handle any more challenges. Your emotions may be so raw that finding a way to get through one day is overwhelming; the notion of what to do with a whole year may seem unfathomable.

What does that mean for us physically, emotionally, socially, spiritually and cognitively?



Time does move on; but we know, from our personal grief experience, that grieving doesn't work that way. We don't "move on." We change. We reconcile. We look forward, in our own good time, and revise our hopes for our futures, with awareness that life as we knew it is no longer available to us. We cannot un-experience the experience of our loss. We will see our futures through the lenses of both life and loss and that changes who we are now, how we see the world and decisions related to who we will become – in the coming year and beyond.

As you prepare for a new calendar year, full of new experiences and memories to be made, there is a process of not only looking back, but also looking ahead. Grief can be a reminder of what is really important to us, what we value and what brings us joy. It reminds us that we are still here, we have a future, and that we can in fact have some control over our future. While much has been lost and changed, there is still much that remains.

The passage of time will always bring a new year. This year perhaps the focus is not on a resolution, but more of a new perspective to consider. Have hope that the challenge of this new year may turn into growth. Be patient with yourself and your grief.

#### ***New Year's Resolutions for the Bereaved***

This year I resolved to...

- Not put a timeline on my grief. Loving someone means loving them for my lifetime whether they are physically present or not.
- Tell their stories, the happy & the sad, they will live on through me.
- Encourage others to share memories.
- Teach others that they cannot "make me cry", my tears are an outward expression of how I am feeling.
- Understand that crying or otherwise expressing my pain is healthy & normal. "Doing well" means I am expressing myself.
- Understand that others may not understand my pain and it isn't fair to expect them to do anything but listen
- Do something nice for myself every day.

- Know that if today I cannot do everything that needs to be done; tomorrow is another chance to get it done.
- Cry when I need to, laugh when I can, and not feel guilty about either one.
- Let go, bit by bit, of the guilt, regret, and anger because I know holding on to these can be dam- aging.
- Take a risk and let others into my life and heart.
- Take care of my physical, emotional & spiritual self.
- Reinvest in life a little bit each day....

*Adapted from Tanya Lord, The Grief Toolbox.*

*Reprinted with permission St. Luke's Hospice Bereavement Program, Bethlehem PA*

### *Coffee and Conversation for those grieving*

*By request we will continue to provide the opportunity for those who are experiencing grief to get together over a cup of coffee or tea as we share and listen to each other's experiences of grief, learning from each other and providing support as we recognize the similarities and differences in our journey through grief. Our next informal gathering will be **Tuesday, January 30<sup>th</sup> at 2 PM.***

*And this spring, we will wrap up our series – Praying Our Goodbyes – with a focus on "New Melodies Break Forth." The date for this evening gathering is yet to be determined. We will keep you posted as the date draws near.*



*“Happy are those who mourn,  
God will comfort them.  
Happy are those who are kind to  
others,  
God will be kind to them.  
Happy are those who work for peace,  
they will be called God’s children.”  
(Matthew 5:4, 7, 9)*



*Thank you to our Stephen Ministers who provided refreshments and hosted fellowship time after the service.*