

THE WESTMINSTER LOG

The Light of Hope

As the April Log is being put together, we're also preparing for Holy Week and Easter Sunday. If we time things correctly, the Log should be reaching you on Good Friday or Easter Saturday—a time of darkness, as we wait for the Good News of Jesus' resurrection and the fulfillment of his promise to be with us, always.

In January, we began a new ritual of "Bringing in the Light" and "Taking the Light Out into the World" at the start and end of each of our worship services. Our children and youth, who always bring us so much joy and light, have participated in this meaningful part of the service on many Sundays.

Do you ever think about the ways we bring in the light and share it with each other? Or the ways we take that light out into the world after we leave our worship space? We see it in so many ways! We see it in conversations and laughter shared on Sunday mornings. Prayers lifted up for friends and strangers alike. We see it with your generosity—a food pantry overflowing this Lenten season. But there's more! On the inside pages you'll read about a visit to a local nursing home last year, that still brightens the day of one of our members and how choosing a Star Word in January, recalls a long-ago memory for another member.

In these dark hours between Good Friday and Easter morning, we hope you'll remember and continue to find ways to share the light with each other and with the world.



APRIL 2024 ISSUE 184

WWW.WPCBC.ORG

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Visit us on Facebook:
Westminster Presbyterian
Church - Bay City



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Rev. Linda Williams (ext. 203)
Treasurer/Secretary
Heather Heidtman (ext. 201)
Facilities Manager
Harold Miller (ext. 205)
Children and Youth Director
Leah Sneller (ext. 208)

April

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
Sunday school for PreK-4th grade

9:00 a.m. Adult Bible Study
We'll wrap up the Wandering Heart Series and begin our study on Ephesians on April 14th.

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

10:00 a.m. Chime Choir
For K-4th grade

10:30 a.m. Worship
We begin the next Follow Me unit "Care for Creation" on April 14th. See page 2 for more details

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

5:00 p.m. Jr. Bells
For Youth 5th-12th grades

5:30 p.m. Youth Group Dinner

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

Office Hours

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

website: wpcbc.org

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Westminster Presbyterian Church - Bay City

Sunday	Monday
	1 Church Office Closed 6:00 p.m. Mission Mtg.
7 "Here's my heart" John 21:1-19	8 5:00 p.m. Property Mtg. 6:00 p.m. Finance Mtg. 7:00 p.m. Deacon Mtg.
14 "Appreciate God's Abundance" Genesis 1:1-2:3 11:45 a.m. Fellowship and Outreach Mtg.	15
21 "Till" Genesis 2:4b-25 11:45 a.m. Fellowship and Games in Fellowship Hall	22
28 "Share the Planet" Matthew 25:14-30; 1 Corinthians 14:26	29

Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Fri/Sat								
2 10:00 a.m. Hearts & Hands Knitting 6:00 p.m. Boy Scouts 6:00 p.m. Personnel Mtg.	3 5:15 p.m. Contemporary Choir 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. Lenten Devotional Series	5 6								
9 9:00 a.m. Matthew 25 Cafe 10:00 a.m. Staff Meeting 10:00 a.m. Hearts & Hands Knitting 1:00 p.m. Bay City Lions Club 6:00 p.m. Boy Scouts 6:30 p.m. Spiritual Growth Mts.	10 5:15 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. Lenten Devotional Series	12 6:00 p.m. Eagle Scout Ceremony 13								
16 10:00 a.m. Hearts & Hands Knitting 1:00 p.m. Star gazers & Soul Searchers 6:00 p.m. Boy Scouts 6:30 p.m. Session Meeting	17 5:15 Contemporary Choir 6:30 p.m. Chancel Choir Rehearsal	18 8:30 a.m. TOPS 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 20								
23 10:00 a.m. Hearts & Hands Knitting 10:00 a.m. Staff Meeting 1:00 p.m. Star gazers & Soul Searchers 6:00 p.m. Boy Scouts 6:30 p.m. Praying our Goodbyes	24 5:15 Contemporary Choir 6:30 p.m. Chancel Choir Rehearsal	25 8:30 a.m. TOPS 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 27								
30 10:00 a.m. Hearts & Hands Knitting 10:00 a.m. Log Folding 12:00 p.m. Lunch & Learn 6:00 p.m. Boy Scouts		<div data-bbox="2386 1588 2961 1911" data-label="Complex-Block"> <p style="text-align: center;">Happy Birthday</p> <table border="0"> <tr> <td>Joyce Whitney</td> <td>Walter Whitney</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Richard Frontjes</td> <td>Carol Campbell</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Marilyn Lapham</td> <td>Marilyn Bechtel</td> </tr> <tr> <td></td> <td>Jill Jean</td> </tr> </table> </div>		Joyce Whitney	Walter Whitney	Richard Frontjes	Carol Campbell	Marilyn Lapham	Marilyn Bechtel		Jill Jean
Joyce Whitney	Walter Whitney										
Richard Frontjes	Carol Campbell										
Marilyn Lapham	Marilyn Bechtel										
	Jill Jean										

*Birthdays listed are for our 75+ Members

In February, the **Operating Fund** had income of \$32,872.00 and expenses of \$34,414.16. Some expenses included costs for our Follow Me curriculum and other Adult Faith Formation activities. We also purchased new music for Holy Week and had expenses for our Stewardship Celebration and Souper Bowl of Caring. All that we do here at Westminster is made possible by your gifts to Operating Fund. Thank you!

The **Building Improvement Fund** received contributions of \$3,284.00, and an expense of \$983.00 to cover the Landscaping done by the Eagle Scouts. At the end of the month, the fund balance is \$14,233.17. We're grateful to those who contribute to the Building Improvement Fund.

FELLOWSHIP TIME

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

Coffee and donuts included!

The **Major Repairs Fund** had income of \$54.00 in February and no expenses. Thank you for your gifts to the Major Repairs Fund, which allows us to keep money set aside for any unexpected repairs that may arise. The balance at the end of the month is \$41,658.28.

Contributions to the **Capital Campaign Fund** totaled \$3,016.10 in February. We are so grateful to those who have and continue to give and pledge to the Capital Campaign. We will be making another large payment on the principal in April. Currently the loan balance is \$150,526.75. Thank you for your continued gifts to the Campaign.

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

Per capita for 2024 is \$29.50.
This is per active,
confirmed member.

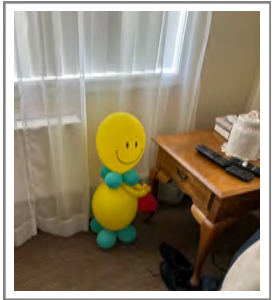
Congratulations Nikelle!



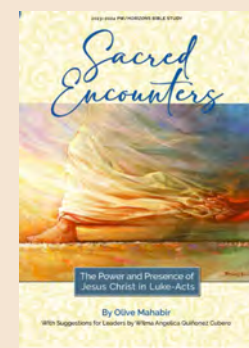
We celebrate with Nikelle Johnson as she moves into the next stage of her path towards ordination. At the March meeting of the Presbytery of Lake Huron, Nikelle shared about her journey of faith and was approved to become a Candidate for Ordination! Nikelle is in her third year at Union Theological Seminary working on a dual degree- Master of Divinity and Master of Arts in Public Theology.

Sharing Light and Joy!

Last year, our children visited Sheffield Bay, spreading joy to residents, including Lois MacPhail, a long-time member. Lois still has the balloon and remembers the visit from her WPC family fondly.



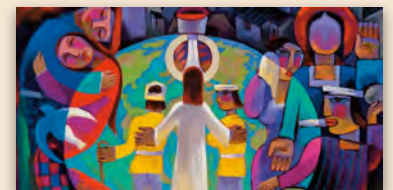
LYDIA CIRCLE



Lydia Circle continues to meet on the third Thursday of the month at 1:00 p.m. Their next meeting is April 18th. Lydia Circle is using the 2023 PW Bible Study, Sacred Emotions. Please call Barb Tolles with any questions.

DEBORAH CIRCLE

Deborah Circle continues to meet on the last Thursday of the month at 7:00 p.m. via Zoom. Their next meeting is April 25th. Please call Karen Schoeppach for more information about their gatherings.



Congratulations Church Officers!

Congratulations to the church officers who were ordained and installed on Sunday, February 25, 2024.

Ordained and installed for the office of Elder: Pam Johnston. Installed for the office of elder: Collin Heidtman, Judy Hudson, Steve Kusterer, Bonnie Marsh and Jeff Rogers.

Installed for the office of Deacon: Marilyn Bechtel, Sally Calvo, Mary Rose Davis and Kevin Robinson



This letter was sent to Pastor Jamie from a member, reflecting on her Star War for the year which reminds us that we are all life-long learners.

Dear Pastor Jamie,

You might have wondered what thoughts your parish has as you give your sermons. Here is one example:

A few weeks ago, as you prepared us to receive a Star Word for Reflection, I thought a child's sermon given by an Episcopal Priest at a camp where I was a teenage counselor. As you spoke, I kept thinking how important it would be to pass that sermon on to my grandchildren soon.

He reminded the children of Jesus asking us to "Watch and Pray". He said it would be easy to remember if the children used the letters in the word, "WATCH"

W-Watch Your Words; **A**-Watch Your Actions; **T**-Watch Your Thoughts;
C-Watch Your Companions; **H**-Watch Your Habits.

So, I wondered what word I would be presented when we chose our Star Word. I took the wooden star and started back to my seat where I would see what the word was. But, I sneaked a peak and started to chuckle. There it was "Watch". Well, I've always felt that there must be a lot of laughter in Heaven. I could almost imagine the Lord saying, "Did she really believe that sermon years ago was only for children?" Or might he have been saying "Gotcha!" So thank you for your thoughtful and inspiring sermons, Pastor Jamie. I hope to hear as many as possible as I enjoy my 87th year, still learning.

Sincerely,
Donna Gould





“God cares for the smallest and most insignificant aspect of nature, and [shows] how we are to love others and care for others,” says Katharine Hayhoe. an atmospheric scientist at Texas Tech University and co-founder of “Science Moms.” Through her research, Katherine saw that poor and vulnerable people are the ones most affected by a changing climate, which led her to a life-changing experience. “That’s what led me, personally, as a Christian, to become a climate scientist.”

“Not every Christian will become an atmospheric scientist, but everyone can connect the dots between caring for creation and caring for our neighbors,” writes Henry Briton, the author of the *Care for Creation* unit we’ll be using in worship and study in the coming weeks. From beginning to end, the Bible invites us to be good stewards of the earth, and Jesus himself shows us how to appreciate creation and love our neighbors. Scripture begins by saying that humans have the responsibility to till and keep the earth (Genesis 2:15) and ends by warning that God will destroy “those who destroy the earth” (Revelations 11:18). There is much we can do as Christians to follow the guidance of the Bible and the example of Jesus in being good managers of our God-given natural resources.

We begin with appreciation for the abundance of creation. God created the heavens and the earth, filled the seas and the land with living things, and said that what was made was not just good, but was “very good” (Genesis 1:31). God has been incredibly generous with the resources of the world, and wants us to see richness and plenty when we look around. “Consider the lilies, how they grow,” said Jesus (Luke 12:27), inviting us to trust God to provide for us out of the abundance of the earth, just as God provides for the lilies of the field. And yet, we so often focus on scarcity and act out of fear and greed.

God created the first human being “and put him in the garden of Eden to till it and keep it.” We hear here the instructions to Adam, to not only “till” the garden and grow food for his use, but also to “keep it,” maintaining it well so that the richness of the earth would be preserved.

Adam was supposed to be a good steward, a challenge issued later by Jesus in his parable of the talents. In all of his teachings, Jesus wants us to take good care of what we have received, whether it is a gift of money or the treasure of a healthy atmosphere. Finally, we are given a vision of a garden in a city in the book of Revelation, which invites us to work toward a renewed harmony between nature and civilization. The Bible ends with a vision of a clean river and healthy trees in the middle of a city, which encourages us to support such developments in our own communities.

CARE FOR CREATION DURING WORSHIP

April 14

Appreciate God’s Abundance - Genesis 1:1-2:3

April 21

Till - Genesis 2:4b-25

April 28

Share the Planet - Matthew 25:14-30;
1 Corinthians 14-26

May 5

Restore Creation - Revelation 21-22;
Isaiah 43:1-2



Game Gathering and Perpetual Puzzle Place

Do you enjoy playing games with friends? Perhaps you are competitive, maybe you enjoy the strategy behind a good game, or you just play for fun? Maybe you just want to join others around a table for a good chat and a delicious snack. Well, look no further than Westminster’s Game Gathering! Following worship on Sunday, April 21, you’re all invited to pull up a chair in the Fellowship Hall choose a couple of partners and play! We’ll have some games on hand, but feel free to bring your favorite card game, strategy game, or something else you think we’ll love. Those joining in on the fun are also invited to bring a snack or finger food to share.

We’ll also be kicking off a new “Perpetual Puzzle Place” that day. We’ll have a table set up in a corner of the Fellowship Hall with a communal puzzle. It will remain there until it is finished and is replaced by a new challenge! You can work on it Sunday mornings or stop in during the week when the building is open to put in a few pieces.

God Sighting



Karen Brown-Fackler

There are a few members of Westminster Presbyterian Church who have spent most or all of their lives as part of this church family. One of them is Karen Brown-Fackler. Her parents are Ross and the late Virgial Brown. The Brown Family has been a part of Westminster for many years.

In 2017, Karen was ordained an elder and became a part of the Family & Fellowship/ Fellowship & Outreach Ministry. That same year, Karen also was installed as moderator of Presbyterian Women at Westminster. On Sunday morning, when the Chancel Choir is present in worship, you will find Karen in the soprano section joining her voice to sing praises to God.

On many Sundays, you will also find her in the kitchen preparing, serving, and clearing up for Fellowship Time, sharing her gifts and caring for her church family. Karen is nurse and uses her talents and training to educate future nurses at SVSU. When Covid-19 was ruling our lives, Karen was full of concern for her Westminster Family. When vaccines became available and we had to wait to be scheduled for our injections, Karen had an opportunity to arrange for some of our members to get appointments for vaccinations to insure they were protected.

We are grateful for the kind and caring spirit that is Karen Brown-Fackler.

Westminster Presbyterian Church

VBS 2024

AUGUST 5-8

REGISTER NOW!



Come join us, August 5-8 for a fun-filled week! Bay Shore Camp's "On the Road" Day Camp is coming to Westminster for VBS! Monday-Thursday from 8:30 a.m - 4:30 p.m.

\$99.00/child

Full and Partial Scholarship are available

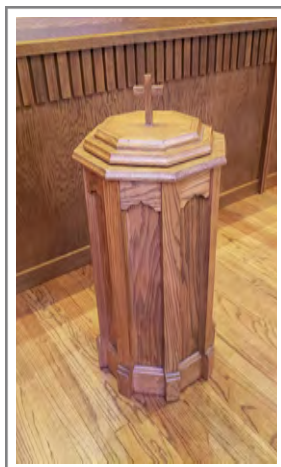
Grades Entering K-5th grade

Scan the QR code to register or call the church office for more details!

SUMMER CAMP

The Sacrament of Baptism

"Both believers and their children are included in God's covenant love. The baptism of our young children witnesses to the truth that God claims people in love even before they are able to respond in faith." PC(USA) Book of Order W-3.0402



Every time we baptize a child, we covenant with them and their family to "guide and nurture them by word and deed, with love and prayer" and "encourage them to know and follow Christ and to be faithful members of Christ's church." We do this in worship, in education classes, and in fellowship activities. We encourage you to pray for our children and youth regularly. A new monthly addition to the Log will be a section where we'll list the names of our children who are celebrating the baptismal anniversary. The Spiritual Growth Committee prays for each child and sends them a card, and we encourage you to pray for them as well!

April Baptismal Anniversaries: Astrid Morse, Declan Weaver, and Meadow Gustafson



THURSDAY EVENING ADULT BIBLE STUDY

From beginning to end, the Bible invites us to be good stewards of the earth. Scripture begins with the repeated proclamation that what God created God called good. God then gave humans responsibility to till and keep the earth. Throughout the Old Testament, God's people depended on and identified with the land God promised to them. Later, Jesus shows and teaches how to appreciate creation and love our neighbors. The closing chapters of Revelation warn that God will destroy those who destroy the earth. At the same time, images of a new heaven and new earth, with generously flowing waters and streets paved with gold, depict a fully restored relationship between humans, creation, and God. God joins us in living and caring for the earth and its fullness.

The spiritual practice of Care for Creation begins with noticing the good creation around us and listening to the stories of the trees, the grasses, the waters, and the animals. To care is to have a relationship with the object of care and to advocate for its well-being. There is no one right way to care for creation; it looks different for each person and is a continuous process of seeking right relationships with the world. There is much we can do to be good managers of our God-given natural resources. When we care for creation, we love, support, and advocate for the earth as God loves, supports, and advocates for us. Caring for creation is an act of loving our neighbor. During these four sessions we will explore biblical texts that illuminate four dimensions of the practice Care for Creation. To explore this practice, we will study Scripture texts to guide our awareness and care for creation.

Join us Thursday evenings at 7 PM via Zoom, beginning April 18th. Books are available in the church office. Please call with any questions.



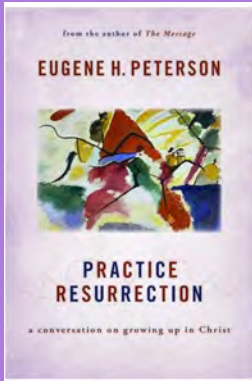
One: Appreciate God's Abundance—Genesis 1:1–2:3 affirms that God has been generous with the resources of the world. God repeatedly calls creation good and wants us to recognize and appreciate its richness and plenty.

Two: Till—Genesis 2:4b–25 tells that God put the first humans in the garden of Eden to till it and take care of it so that the richness of the earth is preserved.

Three: Share the Planet—The book of Leviticus has some very specific instructions about how to share land and resources. In 1 Corinthians, Paul reflects on the nature of the body of Christ. We all play a role in caring for the creation.

Four: Restore Creation—Imagery from Isaiah 43:21-2 and Revelation 21-22 invites us to actively work toward a renewed harmony between nature and civilization.

STUDYING THE BOOK OF EPHESIANS



Late last spring a small group of folks asked that in the fall we begin a Bible study focused on just one book of the Bible and to take our time reading it together and discussing. And so, the Sunday morning study of the Gospel of John was born. We took our time – many weeks actually – and completed our study of John the Sunday before Ash Wednesday. And now that we have celebrated Easter, what better way to begin a new study of a Bible book then by focusing on the book of Ephesians, using as our study guide the book – Practice Resurrection – by Eugene Peterson. In the introduction to his book, Peterson calls the book of Ephesians one of “soulcraft”– the formation of a mature life in Christ. He writes: “All of us are born. No exceptions. Birth brought us alive into a world that is vast, complex, damaged, demanding...and beautiful....Jesus used the birth event as a metaphor for another kind of birth: becoming alive to God...vast, complex, damaged, demanding and beautiful. Alive to God’s holiness, God’s will, kingdom, power, and glory.”

Please don’t hear this as too abstract to have practical value in our everyday living – that is the beauty of Eugene Peterson’s writing and the beauty of the book of Ephesians. “The Bible is not a book to carry around and read for information on God, but a voice to listen to.” If this sounds intriguing to you, as well as practical in how you want to live your everyday life, come join us on **Sunday, April 14th at 9 AM** in the Conference Room. Please call the church office or see Rev. Linda with any questions.

WELCOME AND (WELCOME BACK!) NEW STAFF MEMBERS



Just in time for Holy Week, Leah was hired as Westminster’s new Director of Children and Youth Ministry. Leah is no stranger to Westminster’s youth and children having helped with VBS and Sunday School since she was attending those very programs herself. Leah graduates in April with an Associated Degree in Early Childhood Education. For those who haven’t met Leah before here is short biography:

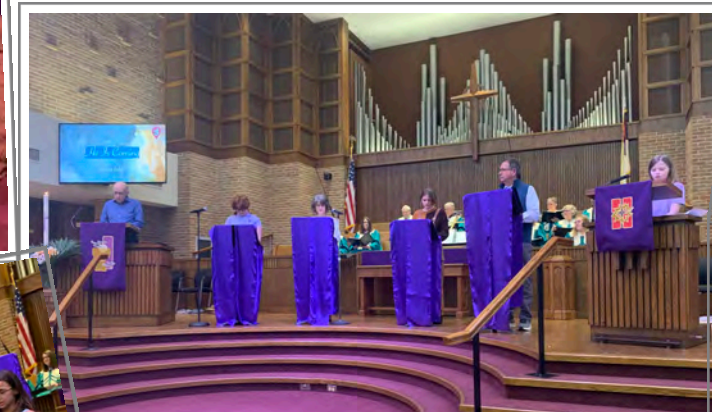
I am so happy to be the new Director of Children and Youth Ministries. I have belonged to this church since I was confirmed in 2014, but most of you know that I was born and raised here. I started as an assistant Sunday School teacher when I was in the seventh grade and am now finishing my 11th year in the Sunday School program. I have an Associates degree in

Applied Arts in Child Development from Delta College and will be receiving my diploma in April. I plan on furthering my education in this field so that I can work as a lead teacher in a school setting. I am so excited to be working with children and youth within this church family and cannot wait for all the new changes to come.

Judy Harrelson is joining the staff as the director of the Chime Choir and the Junior Bells! The Chime choir consists of our youngest ringers (fourth grade and under) while the Junior Bells are made up from members of our youth group (fifth through twelfth grades). Judy has been a long-time member of the adult bell choir and has been studying music for many years. She is excited to help teach and prepare the next generation of Westminster Bell Ringers and we’re excited that she’s back as a staff member again!



*Mid-Lenten Potluck, Workshop
and Worship
March 6, 2024*



*Palm Sunday Worship Service
March 24, 2024*

(We’ll have more Holy Week pictures in the May Log)



STAR GAZERS AND SOUL SEARCHERS

Writer and Presbyterian Pastor, Julie Hester shares each week (Email or post) a writing prompt, meant to be jumping-off points for us to write about what matters. She encourages us to use the prompts however we like—to journal, to draft thoughts for our own writing project, as meditation or prayer ideas, or for another creative endeavor. As she always says – “Grab your pen and paper and let your words loose on the page.”

It has been Julie Hester’s experience that when a community of folks gather there is rich cross-pollination of good ideas that get shared, re-shared, and discussed. Fellow writer and pastor MaryAnn McKibben Dana’s church in Virginia has spent some time examining how to move through the world like Jesus did, and used a four-step process as a foundational tool. Show up...Pay attention....Tell the truth...Don’t attach to the results (or Let go of the outcome....OR, as the church reframes it: “Let God handle the outcome”.) These four steps have been used by many others and in a variety of settings, because these are truly four life-long tasks.

Wondering, wandering, and following Peter shortcomings is how we have been experiencing the Lenten season this year at Westminster. The Lenten season reminds us of how fragile our faith is and how easy it is to stray from the faith life we want to live. The third verse of "Come Thou Fount of Every Blessing" which we have been singing this Lenten season, reminds us:

O to grace how great a debtor daily I'm constrained to be!
Let that grace now, like a fetter, bind my wandering heart to thee.
Prone to wander, Lord, I feel it, prone to leave the God I love;
here's my heart; O take it seal it; seal it for thy courts above.

And, now Easter ends Lent. Pastor Jamie reminded us March 17th, "it's time to expand our faith." Beginning in April we will have the opportunity to take some time on two Tuesday's in April, and again in May and June to write and share together. On **April 16 and 23 at 1:00 pm**, we will meet in the “chapel” area exploring questions and reflections that can expand that faith. The plan is to reflect on the Beatitudes that can help us think about our own lives and faith. We will hear stories, discuss modern situations, and write our own impressions of the Beatitudes for today's world.

These informal sessions will be convened by Judy Hudson and Pastor Linda. As always, no one will be required share their writing, unless they want to share. Hope to see you on **April 16th at 1:00 pm**.



Back by popular demand, we will have the opportunity to hear again a retired Federal Magistrate Judge and a local retired attorney discuss a day in court. With all the constitutional questions being raised in state legislatures, as well as state supreme courts and questions even at the federal level, we can look forward to a lively discussion and understanding of our legal system here in the United States. In addition to the information presented, there will be time for questions and answers. Presenters are the Honorable Charles Binder (ret.) and Prosecuting Attorney, Pat Duggan (ret.).

All are welcome to attend, including those on a lunch hour break from work. Bring lunch to enjoy during this talk. Beverages and a small sweet treat will be provided. For more information, please call the Church Office.

Tuesday, April 30th @ 12:00
p.m. in Fellowship Hall



MISSION ON THE MOVE

By now you’ve probably heard of and hopefully participated in the Food Pantry Challenge, bringing in hundreds of packages and cans of food to fill the pantry. The friendly competition is fun, but you might be asking yourself why we need all of this food? Won’t it expire?

Truth is, there has been a rapidly increasing number of food insecure people and families within Bay County,

and that has trickled down to an increase in demand within local pantries. 13.1% of the Bay County population is now food insecure. (Food insecurity is defined as disrupted eating patterns and reduced food intact, reduced quality, variety and desirability of food.) Additionally, unemployment in Bay County last year averaged around 5%, and the average rent increased in 2023 by over 13%!!!

These economic conditions have all contributed to the challenges facing many of our neighbors, and the Mission Partnerships Committee is committed to helping in their time of need.

In addition to expanding our Pantry by moving it to the former nursery off of the Wenona entrance, we have formed partnerships with Hidden Harvest and the Food Bank of East Michigan.

Membership to both of these organizations will give us accessibility to fresh produce, some free products and deep discounts when buying.

A few additional questions we are pondering:

- What is the nutritional value of what we are providing?
- Can we better meet specific nutritional needs (diabetic diet)?
- Is the food we provide easy to prepare?
- Is there an interest in learning basic food preparation?
- Is there a need for personal products?

The list goes on. Another very important question – how are we reaching out spiritually to pantry visitors? How are we inviting them into Christian fellowship?

You may have some ideas and/or suggestions about this new direction, and we’d like to hear from you. In fact, we’d like you to join the effort. Join the Mission Partnerships Committee or contact a committee member about signing up to volunteer. “All are welcomed here.”



Food Pantry Challenge

Westminster you continue to amaze us with your generosity! As the April Log goes to print, you have donated close to 1500 food items and bags for our Lenten Food Pantry challenge and we still have one more week to go! The Food Pantry is so full, we have an over-flow room that is also filling up! THANK YOU!!!

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.



“Sometimes we need someone to simply be there. Not to fix anything, or to do anything in particular—but just to let us feel that we are cared for and supported.”

~ Unknown

“How are you doing? What do you need? How can I help?”

These questions probably seemed so much easier to answer, in what may feel like, a lifetime ago. People tend to have the best of intentions when reaching out, but sometimes you just don't know how you're doing, what you need, or how they can help.

In grief, everything tends to feel so immense, overwhelming, confusing, and sometimes downright scary. It is like trying to navigate uncharted waters in gale force winds, choppy conditions, and with no compass in hand. It can leave you feeling like a castaway, alone in an ocean of grief.

What may appear to others to be the simplest of questions, asked with the kindest of hearts and purest of intentions can just feel so vast as we try to navigate and make sense of something that is just so difficult to wrap, not only our heads around, but our hearts.

Sometimes when these questions are asked, the most genuine thing you can do is just be honest. It's okay to let people know you do not know what you need right now and that this is all so new to you. Let them know you appreciate that they care and that once you figure out what you need it is good to know that they will be there for you.

Sometimes more than words, what we need is to just know we are loved and cared for. That support means more than anything. Sometimes you may just want someone to sit with you, to just be there. That is love in its purest form.

While your course may look different than anyone else's we are all unified in knowing both love and loss and trying to find dry land in what may feel like a sea of tears and uncertainty.

As for grief, you'll find it comes in waves. When the ship is first wrecked, you're drowning, with wreckage all around you. Everything floating around you reminds you of the beauty and the magnificence of the ship that was, and is no more. And all you can do is float. You find some piece of the wreckage and you hang on for a while. Maybe it's some physical thing. Maybe it's a happy memory or a photograph. Maybe it's a person who is also floating. For a while, all you can do is float. Stay alive.

In the beginning, the waves are 100 feet tall and crash over you without mercy. They come 10 seconds apart and don't even give you time to catch your breath. All you can do is hang on and float. After a while, maybe weeks, maybe months, you'll find the waves are still 100 feet tall, but they come further apart. When they come, they still crash all over you and wipe you out. But in between, you can breathe, you can function. You never know what's going to trigger the grief. It might be a song, a picture, a street intersection, the smell of a cup of coffee. It can be just about anything...and the wave comes crashing. But in between waves, there is life.

Somewhere down the line, and it's different for everybody, you find that the waves are only 80 feet tall. Or 50 feet tall. And while they still come, they come further apart. You can see them coming. An anniversary, a birthday, or Christmas, or landing at O'Hare. You can see it coming, for the most part, and prepare yourself. And when it washes over you, you know that somehow you will, again, come out the other side. Soaking wet, sputtering, still hanging on to some tiny piece of the wreckage, but you'll come out.

Take it from an old guy. The waves never stop coming, and somehow you don't really want them to. But you learn that you'll survive them. And other waves will come. And you'll survive them too. If you're lucky, you'll have lots of scars from lots of loves. And lots of shipwrecks.



“Grief is like the ocean; it comes on waves ebbing and flowing. Sometimes the water is calm, and sometimes it is overwhelming.

All we can do is learn to swim.”

- Vicki Harrison

PRAYING OUR GOODBYES-GRIEF GROUP CONTINUES



Recognizing the many deaths that folks here at Westminster experienced last year, we offered an opportunity to meet together and consider how we can support one another in this journey of grief. We gathered on two Tuesday evenings in November and December using the book – **Praying Our Goodbyes** – by Joyce Rupp. As she highlights in her book: *“The story of gain and loss, of joy and sorrow, of life and death, of union and separation, is inside each one of us. The cycle begins at birth...and continues throughout our lives. Who of us has not said farewell to someone and felt a great heartache and a deep sadness, wanting to stop the process and wondering when the ache inside would ever leave.”*

After meeting for two months using Rupp's book as our focus, a group of us continued to meet for informal support – Coffee and Conversation – once a month on Thursday afternoon here at church which we will continue in May.

But on Tuesday, **April 23rd 6:30 PM**, we will consider how “New Melodies Break Forth from the Heart.” We began this discussion series with “The Ache of Autumn in Us” and moved to longing for the light of Advent in the middle of darkest hours of the year. Now that our grief journey through Lent is complete, we have moved into the celebration of Resurrection. These stories are not just for the church year; resurrection is also a part of our life story. Rupp writes: There are stories told about those who have “died” and come back to life. They are life-after-death stories about body spirit sorts of things that proclaim: “I who have died am alive again today” (e.e.cummings). There are stories of the human heart that ring out this same strong truth. There are people who felt that all the songs in their heart had died, that all the roads they knew were wiped out and they could go no farther. Then a kind of resurrection happened within them, and they discovered “new melodies” and the wonder of “new roads.”

This one-time Tuesday evening gathering is open to all – those recently grieving, those long-time grieving. Those who have lost a spouse, a parent, a sibling, or a close friend. Please call the church office or see Pastor Jamie or Pastor Linda with any questions. A few books are still available in the church office.