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THE WESTMINSTER LOG

What's that WORD again?

**A new monthly series about some common Presbyterian words we use but may need to (re)introduce.*

Ruling Elder

If you've spent any time in a Presbyterian church, you may have heard someone introduced as a "Ruling Elder." The title sounds official—maybe even a little mysterious. Are they in charge? Are they judges? Do they rule the church?

Not quite. But they are essential.

In the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.), Ruling Elders are **spiritual leaders**, elected by the congregation, ordained for life, and entrusted with guiding the church's mission, worship, and care. Along with ministers (called "Teaching Elders"), Ruling Elders serve as the spiritual backbone of the church's leadership—sharing responsibility for the faith, life, and direction of the congregation.

Why "Ruling"?

The word "ruling" doesn't mean bossy or authoritarian. In Presbyterian tradition, it refers to the elder's **discernment**—the spiritual gift of wisdom, prayerful listening, and good judgment. Ruling Elders "rule" not by giving orders, but by **discerning God's will** and helping the congregation follow it faithfully.

What Do Ruling Elders Do?

Ruling Elders serve on the **Session**, the governing council of a congregation. Together with pastors, they make decisions about:

- Worship and sacraments
- Church programs and ministries

- Membership and pastoral care
- Mission, stewardship, and vision
- And much more...

They are **spiritual shepherds**, grounded in Scripture and committed to Christ's ministry, not just for a season, but for a lifetime.

Ordained, Not Just Appointed

When someone becomes a Ruling Elder, they are **ordained**—set

apart through prayer and the laying on of hands—just like pastors and deacons. Even if they're only serving on Session for a three-year term, their calling is ongoing. Once an elder, always an elder.

Why It Matters

The office of Ruling Elder reflects one of the most distinctive features of Presbyterian identity: **shared leadership**. We believe no one person—no matter how gifted—should carry the church alone. Instead, we rely on a team of faithful, thoughtful, Spirit-led people to guide us together.

So the next time you see someone introduced as a Ruling Elder, know this: you're looking at someone the church has trusted with its heart. Someone who listens deeply, prays often, and leads with love.



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WWW.WPCBC.ORG

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Westminster Presbyterian
Church - Bay City



Phone: 989-686-1360
E-mail: office@wpbc.org
Office Hours:
Monday through Thursday
8:00 a.m. - 4:00 p.m.

Pastor
Rev. Jamie Milton (ext. 204)
Parish Associate
Rev. Linda Williams (ext. 203)
Secretary
Bill Petzold (ext. 201)
Facilities Manager
Harold Miller (ext. 205)
Financial Administrator
Pat Foster (ext. 206)
Children and Youth Director
Leah Sneller (ext. 208)

July

Office Hours

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

website: wpcbc.org

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Westminster Presbyterian Church - Bay City

Happy Birthday*

Joyce Grigg	Leonor Robinson
Margaret Hanson	Nancy Berta
Neil Everson	Peggy Lange
Sharon Hignite	Gary Eagle
Judy Wycoff	Gena Gates

Sundays

9:30 a.m. Fellowship

Join us in the Fellowship Hall for Coffee and Donuts and Conversation

10:30 a.m. Worship

In July we are continuing our Summer Worship Series, Seasons of Rest, and beginning a second series, Re-Shaped. See page 2 for more details.

11:30 a.m. Fellowship

Join us in Chapel for Coffee and Cookies and Conversation

Sunday	Monday
6 Communion Sunday	7
13 11:30 a.m. Book and Brunch	14 6 p.m. Finance Meeting
20	21
27	28

Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Fri/Sat
1 10 a.m. Hearts and Hands Knitting Group 11:30 a.m. Do-All, Inc. Yoga Group	2 4 p.m. Westminster Community Pantry open until 6 p.m.	3 8:30 a.m. TOPS 10 a.m. Westminster Community Pantry open until 1 p.m. 5 p.m. Food of Faith	4 Happy 4th of July! 5
8 9 a.m. Matthew 25 Cafe 10 a.m. Hearts and Hands Knitting Group 10 a.m. Staff Meeting 1:30 p.m. Movie Madness: "Tuesdays with Morrie"	9 1 p.m. Bunco Party (Bring your own lunch begins at 12:30 p.m.) 4 p.m. Westminster Community Pantry open until 6 p.m.	10 8:30 a.m. TOPS 10 a.m. Westminster Community Pantry open until 1 p.m. 5 p.m. Food of Faith 7 p.m. Appreciate These Things Book Study via Zoom	11 12
15 10 a.m. Hearts and Hands Knitting Group 11:30 a.m. Do-All, Inc. Yoga Group	16 1 p.m. Out-to-Lunch Bunch at Castaways (RSVP by July 14) 4 p.m. Westminster Community Pantry open until 6 p.m.	17 8:30 a.m. TOPS 10 a.m. Westminster Community Pantry open until 1 p.m. 5 p.m. Food of Faith 7 p.m. Appreciate These Things Book Study via Zoom	18 19 10 a.m. Mindful Markings
22 10 a.m. Hearts and Hands Knitting Group 1:30 p.m. Movie Madness: "Paperclips"	23 4 p.m. Westminster Community Pantry open until 6 p.m.	24 8:30 a.m. TOPS 10 a.m. Westminster Community Pantry open until 1 p.m. 5 p.m. Food of Faith 7 p.m. Appreciate These Things Book Study via Zoom	25 26
29 10 a.m. Hearts and Hands Knitting Group 10 a.m. Staff Meeting 11:30 a.m. Do-All, Inc. Yoga Group 6 p.m. Boy Scouts	30 4 p.m. Westminster Community Pantry open until 6 p.m.	31 8:30 a.m. TOPS 10 a.m. Westminster Community Pantry open until 1 p.m. 5 p.m. Food of Faith	

*Birthdays listed are for our 75+ Members

Summer Book & Brunch – *Learning to Disagree*

It's not too late to join us for the remaining sessions of our summer **Book & Brunch!** Even if you missed the first meeting, you can still join in on the discussion of our thought-provoking book *Learning to Disagree: The Surprising Path to Navigating Differences with Empathy and Respect* by John Inazu. Inazu writes through the lens of his Christian faith and his vocation as a law professor. The result is a hopeful and practical guide for how we can live together amid deep differences. Through personal stories, legal insight, and theological reflection, *Learning to Disagree* challenges us to engage in difficult conversations with humility, courage, and grace.

Join us for our two remaining discussions on July 13 (pp. 65-114) and August 17 (pp. 115-166). We'll be meeting in the Conference Room (off of the kitchen).

Books are still available through the church office (\$12 optional donation). Copies are also available from your local library and an audiobook version is also available for free through the Bay County Library System!



Chris Elzinga, Jeff Rogers, Pat Duggan and Len Petroff represented Westminster at the annual Rescue Ministries Fundraiser Golf Outing on June 10 at The Fortress Golf Course in Frankenmuth. Thanks to their efforts, the group raised \$11,485, nearly 10 percent of the total of \$118,702. They placed 3rd in the tournament.

MOVIE MADNESS

"Summertime and the living is easy" – the opening lyrics of a familiar Broadway show tune. And though at times you may feel like the gardens need to be weeded, the grass cut, the garage cleaned...summer also reminds us of the importance of pausing and enjoying life. To that end, we are inviting you to take a break with our summer movie series – come with a friend or bring a friend - on the **second and fourth Tuesdays of June, July, and August**. The movies may be

July 8 - Tuesdays with Morrie
July 22 – Paper Clips
August 12 - The Boy Who Harnessed the Wind
August 26 - A Beautiful Day in the Neighborhood

light-hearted, or informative, or thoughtfully heart-warming, so take two hours out of your day and enjoy watching a movie here at Westminster. **1:30 p.m. in the Session Room**, once again set up to feel a bit like a small movie theater (thank you, Harold!)

Stay tuned each month on our church website or in the church bulletin for more information about each movie as the date of showing draws nearer. In August we added a movie we think might be enjoyed by all the family, a true, inspiring story about a "boy who harnessed the wind" to help out his whole village.

And it goes without saying that our "easy living, summertime theme" lemonade and popcorn will be served. Any questions, please call the church office.

A new way to strengthen connections ...

You may remember from years past this church poem learned by many children, hand motions included –

*Here is the church ... this its steeple ...
open it up ... and see all the people.*

Westminster is truly a church that is all about the people. In a heartfelt effort to strengthen our ties as a community of faith, several people from our church have expressed a strong desire to strengthen these connections and give support to parishioners who may be homebound, hospitalized, or simply in need of a friendly face and a listening ear.

In response, we are launching a Parish Visitor initiative. This is a volunteer-driven ministry seeking to ensure that no member of our faith community feels forgotten or alone. We want these visits to be not only a source of comfort but also a tangible reminder of the church's enduring presence in every stage of life.

And why now? It seems that with a more fast-paced and digitally connected world, personal, face-to-face interactions have become more precious than ever. Many of our previously trained Stephen's Ministers have expressed an interest in responding to that growing need for meaningful human connection as part of Christ's call to "love one another as I have loved you."

As valued members of our Westminster family, they want to see those personal connections remain a part of our church. As one person said, they miss the friends that they used to be able to see regularly in church on Sunday mornings or at special events. Making those connections is a two-way street – each person during a time of conversation blesses the other. We learn from one another and bless one another when we connect.

If you or someone you know would enjoy a visit or know of someone who might appreciate a Parish Visitor, please contact Rev. Linda or Pastor Jamie or Jan Witucki.

Bunco Party on July 9

Everyone ready for another round of Bunco? Our next Bunco game day will be on Wednesday, July 9. If you'd like to meet for lunch we ask that you bring your own and meet us at 12:30 p.m. in the fellowship hall. The game will start at 1 p.m. We hope to see you there! And once again, Faith Sneller will be our MC and Bunco Director.

Come join the fun. Beverages and prizes will be provided.

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



Out to Lunch Bunch July 16

In June we gathered at River Rock on Midland Street for lunch and laughter and good food. Beginning this month, we asked folks to make restaurant suggestions, placed them in an envelope and going forward each month we will pull one suggestion and go to that restaurant the next month. Drum roll, please ... Castaways! We will gather at 1 p.m. Wednesday, July 16 at 3940 Boy Scout Rd, Bay City. Come join in as we continue to make friends at Westminster.

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



Summer Worship Series



Season of Rest

We began our first summer worship series on June 22 as we entered into a “Season of Rest.” This series is helping us to explore the importance of rest in our lives. The series continues through mid-July as we reflect on God resting on the seventh day and the call to observe sabbath. We are also excited to offer a special worship service that highlights the rhythm of the church year. The service will begin with Advent and move us through Christmas, Easter, and Pentecost, while also highlighting other church “feast” days along the way.

July 6: What Kind of Rest:

The Science Behind Rest | Genesis 2:1-3

There is a natural ebb and flow for our minds, bodies and spirits, modeled for us by God.

July 13: Seasons of Sabbath:

The Liturgical Year

The church liturgical year is constructed in a way that encourages us not only to celebrate sabbath weekly, but to celebrate seasons of sabbath, the natural rhythm of the Christian stories and traditions that we pass on as we share the good news of God’s love with the world.

July 20: The Gift of Rest

Leviticus 25:1-19

Embracing the gift of rest allows us to be people of restoration, renewal, and wholeness. The Year of Jubilee teaches us about balance, equity, and kinship, celebrating that rest is a gift for all of God’s creation.



Re-Shaped

“Just like the clay in the potter’s hand, so are you in my hand...” Jeremiah 18:6

Our second worship series of the summer invites us to...change! *GASP* You were created for a purpose, formed into something spectacular—not just created, but re-created again and again. Ready to be stretched? It’s time to be re-shaped!

“Change is good... you go first!” Our brains were designed to be suspicious of change, and for good reason—homeostasis in good measure helps us thrive, protecting us from danger. But if we look closely at what the Creator set in motion, we find that change is actually the most constant part of life and necessary for animating our spirits as we find renewed purpose throughout life. Jesus advocated for changes that would keep us moving toward greater goodness!

July 27: “We Were Made for This”

God’s creative activity is described as an ongoing active force for good. Rather than fashioning us of something that could not change, the biblical metaphor is that we are fashioned of clay, a malleable substance that can be reshaped again and again. When life requires change of us, let us embrace our ability to roll with it, for we were made for this!

Step One for Change: believe we are created for change

See WORSHIP on Page 3

FINANCIAL ADMINISTRATOR’S REPORT

In May, the General Fund received \$47,178.97 in income and spent \$45,275.16. Again, our income has exceeded our expenses, so we have not yet needed to tap into investment funds.

The Building Improvement Fund received \$229 in contributions and didn’t have any spending. As of the end of

May, the Fund has a balance of \$9,635.55. The Major Repairs Fund received \$230 in contributions and incurred no expenses. Its May Fund balance was \$40,576.69.

Big news on the Capital Campaign front – **WE PAID OFF THE LOAN!** Great job, everyone, and so many thanks for making it possible.

As always, if you have any questions about these figures or anything else finance-related, please feel free to contact me.

Pat Foster

Financial Administrator
treasurer@wpcbc.org
 616-485-8272 (cell phone)

Have you downloaded our Westminster Church App yet?

The app is hosted through the company that put together our latest pictorial directory and includes the photos, names, addresses, and phone numbers of your Westminster friends—and we can continue to add new members and update information over time.

If we have your email on file, you should have received instructions for downloading the app along with a *unique identifier* specific to your household. This keeps the app secure and ensures only church members can access it. (Look for an email from appsupport@ucdir.com.)

If you're having trouble or aren't sure how to get started, you're not alone—and we're here to help! Feel free to reach out to Pastor Jamie, or any member of Session. We'll also continue to offer support during **fellowship time on Sundays**.



Don't forget:

- **The app is private.** Only members of Westminster have access to it.
- **No ads, no sales.** The app will *not* try to sell you anything or share your information with outside companies.
- **Only the church can send messages or notifications.** This helps us communicate more efficiently about prayer requests, events, schedule changes, and more.

Scan the appropriate QR code to download the app today!

Android



iPhone



Celebrating Our Progress, Sustaining Our Future

This spring, our congregation came together for a Westminster Town Hall—a time to reflect honestly on our church’s financial picture and to celebrate the ministry we are building together. Our committees and the Session have been reflecting on the comments made and the questions raised. We continue to be mindful of our financial situation, and committed to the ministry that God has called us to engage in.

On Pentecost Sunday, we were excited to announce that the final payment has been made on the loan from our building remodel! Again, thanks to your incredible generosity over the past nine years, we paid off over \$700,000, finishing nearly 10 years ahead of schedule. This milestone frees us up to focus our financial support on the General Fund which funds all aspects of Westminster’s ministry and mission.

We are grateful for the response that we have received since that meeting. Many of you have increased your estimated commitment to Westminster, sent in your per capita payment, or other financial gift. Our End-of-School Block party and Pentecost celebrations were both exciting, Spirit-filled events that welcomed members, friends, and neighbors.

We also acknowledge that we are still not where we need to be to sustain our ministry and programs at their current levels. To help us as we continue to serve and move faithfully into our next 160 years of ministry, we invite you to:

- **Turn in a 2025 commitment card** if you haven’t already. Even if your giving won’t change, this helps us plan responsibly.
- **Share your gifts:** increase your generosity if you are able. Every gift —

Stewardship Snapshot

GENERAL FUND	YTD through June 15	Annual Budget
Income	\$ 250,018	\$ 349,910
Expenses	\$ 194,386	\$ 474,270
Net Income/(Loss)	\$ 55,632	\$ (124,360)

One of the things we heard from the Town Hall meeting was a request for increased communication about financial matters. We’ve begun sharing a brief snapshot each week in the bulletin and each month in the Log. This will provide you with the most up-to-date information on our church income and expenses, comparing it with our expected income and annual budget. If you ever want to see a more detailed report, please let Pat know.

no matter the size — makes a difference when shared in community.

- **Give to the General Fund**, which supports our worship, staff, outreach, education, and building care.
- **Keep showing up!** Your presence and your prayers matter.

God is still at work here at Westminster. We see it in the energy of our worship, the joy of new members and longtime friends, the creativity of our volunteers, and the generosity that continues to shine through.

Thank you for being part of this vibrant church family. Let’s keep listening, keep giving, and keep building something beautiful — together.

Summer Bible Study “Appreciate These Things”

“In a culture that can tear us apart with contempt and disdain of others, Jill Duffield offers a wise perspective. Her invitation is to consider how a ‘generosity of spirit’ can heal and connect us as we appreciate the good in each of us.” So writes the coeditor of *Growing in God’s Love*.

This year’s summer Bible study series will focus on just one – but one very powerful Bible verse – Philippians 4:8 which reads: *Finally, brothers and sisters, whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is just, whatever is pure, whatever is pleasing, whatever is commendable, if there is any excellence and if there is anything worthy of praise, think about these things.*

This letter of Philippians written to one of the early churches in Christianity and is considered the most pastoral. Some have said that this verse always made them feel like they needed to “wrangle their thoughts in such a way that they could block out sin and only



think about good things...but now instead have come to appreciate that Jill Duffield is writing about and sharing a loving view of God, of life, of others, and of scripture that invites us into compassion and appreciation.” If this sounds of interest to you, please join us for eight Thursday evenings at 7 p.m. over the summer as we consider whatever is true ... honorable ... just ... pure ... pleasing ... commendable ... excellent ... praiseworthy.

We are meeting by Zoom to accommodate people’s busy summer schedules and yet still have an interest in considering these eight ways of cultivating compassion. A few books are still available in the church office for a \$12 optional donation.

Please contact Rev. Linda with any questions. Class dates are July 10, 17, 24; and August 7, 14, and 21. Come for some, come for all. Although the study is focused on one verse only, each week’s discussion will be not be necessarily linked to the previous week.

WORSHIP from Page 2

August 3: “Inside Out”

Our Scripture this week invites us to remember the baptism of Jesus and the message that we, as followers of Jesus, are changed constantly “from the inside out.” Transformation does not start with the action of change itself, but a willingness within our own spirits to “lean into” the life path that is calling to us.

Step Two for Change: start with inner change August 17: “Everything Changes”

In our scripture today, Jesus asks us to let go of life “as it is” in order to create and multiply the love that is eternal. What feels like the chaos, or recklessness, of change is

the breaking-open of possibility and the sprouting of new life. This is what it means to follow the change-maker Jesus and serve his purpose of more love in the world.

Step Three for Change: be willing to let old expectations fall away

August 24: “Be Encouraged”

It takes courage to change, to break out of whatever narrow paths we might find ourselves in. Just like Peter, if we are going to change, we have to take the first uncertain steps out of the boat onto the water and into the unknown. Luckily, we too have Jesus’ redeeming help and support, his hand reaching out to us, if we start to sink or lose our way.

Step Four for Change: courage to take the first step



On Sunday, June 1, Westminster hosted its annual End-of-School Block Party and invited everyone for fun, games, crafts and tasty snacks! About 300 people attended and enjoyed the day.



A big part of our church is giving and sharing, whether that's giving time, energy, donations, or sharing the love of God within our church family and out in our community. For the last year now, our Westminster Community Pantry has expanded the ways in which we work together and reach out to meet the needs of our community. The WCP wouldn't be possible without the people who share their resources and who volunteer their time. There are three wonderful, compassionate, and caring women who have dedicated several days each week to bring the pantry to life and keep it going. This month, we recognize the ways we see God at work in **Janet Beattie, Carol Campbell, and Janet Smylie.**

These women work together to organize the



volunteers needed for stocking shelves, unloading trucks, hauling food, and helping pantry guests. They order and arrange for food deliveries, find funding sources, and foster relationships with donors, businesses, non-profits, and the guests we serve. In the last year, the WCP has served 2,000 families (6,000 people!) and distributed almost 64,000 pounds of food!

We are grateful to the people who coordinate the Westminster Community Pantry and all who volunteer their time. We give thanks to all the people who donate to keep it going. We thank God for giving us the ability to open our doors to those in need. What an awesome way to share God's love and abundance with our community! Happy Birthday, Westminster Community Pantry!



Church members celebrate the pantry's first birthday.

PANTRY from Page 8

that Carol is still dedicated to the Pantry and will continue to volunteer in many capacities. When you see Carol, please thank her for her service.

Item of the Month for July

The Item of the Month for July is **cereal**. Our guests are always excited to have a variety of cereal to choose from. You may place your donations on the cart outside the Pantry at any time. Thank you!

Westminster Community Pantry Celebrates its First Birthday!

The Pantry celebrated its first year with birthday cake and ice cream after worship on Sunday, June 8. It was a fun way to thank the congregation for your incredible support as we completed our first year.

When we opened in our current format in June 2024, we weren't sure if anyone would come. Boy, were we wrong! In our first month we served 116 families. In May 2025 we had grown to serve 769 people from 261 families with 7,976 pounds of food. From June 2024 through May 2025, we had almost 2,000 family visits and served over 5,900 people with 63,600 pounds of food. Amazing!

None of this would have been possible without the help of the congregation. From opening the pantry with food from our Lenten food drive, to your contributions for "Items of the Month" and more, to monetary donations which allow us to shop from the Food Bank of Eastern Michigan (FBEM) at greatly reduced prices, your support has been most appreciated. The community has chipped in with grants, food drives, and other gifts. We have been blessed beyond measure to be able to feed our hungry neighbors.



Pantry volunteers waiting for a large delivery of food from the Food Bank of Eastern Michigan.

Our dedicated volunteers serve in these ways and more:

- Helping our guests choose their food during the hours the Pantry is open on Wednesdays and Thursdays.
- Drivers meet the FBEM truck every other Monday at a drop-off location in Bay City and bring our delivery to the church. They help unload their trucks and get the food into the Pantry. Stockers then put that food on the shelves.
- Stockers meet the Hidden Harvest truck at the church every Wednesday, get the food into the building and

stock the shelves. The food from Hidden Harvest comes at no cost to us.

We are always looking to expand our Pantry Volunteer Team. If you would like more information about how you can help, talk to Janet Smylie or Janet Beattie or email us at pantry@wpcbc.org. Friends from the community are also welcome to help in the Pantry.

Thanks to Carol Campbell

Carol Campbell has stepped back from her role as Pantry co-chair. We thank her for her vision and enthusiasm during our first year of operation! We are pleased

PANTRY continued on Page 9

Vacation Bible Schools planned for August, sign up now!

Westminster will host Vacation Bible School for two age groups again this year! Both are planned for Monday, August 4 through Thursday, August 7.

We are happy to host **Bay Shore Camp's On The Road Day Camp** for the

second year. The curriculum is designed for children entering Kindergarten through fifth grade. Each day's fun will begin at 8:30 a.m. with check-in and end at 4:30 p.m. A full scholarship from a generous donor is provided to all campers, so everyone can come free of charge!

Our **Preschool VBS** theme this year is SET SAIL. Preschool VBS will be from 8:30

a.m. to 12:30 p.m. each day. This camp is designed for a younger age group: Pre-K, 4, and Young 5. Preschool VBS will have crafts, bible stories, songs, snacks and lunch, and outdoor time.

The organizers would like to do something different this year with **VBS donations for food.**

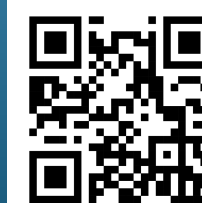
We are just asking for monetary donations so that we can go ahead and buy in bulk. So ... this means we are going to do the shopping for you!

If you have any questions, contact Leah Sneller, Director of Children and Youth Ministries, at (989) 686-1360 or youthdirector@wpcbc.org.

A Young Adult gathering is being planned for August 9! Look for more information as the date approaches.



**Come Set Sail at Preschool VBS
For kids ages 3, 4, and young 5's**



Scan the QR code beneath the VBS logo to register you child for this week of fun!



Finding Yourself After Caregiving Ends

For days, weeks, months, maybe even years, your world revolved around another. Every decision, every moment, was filtered through the lens of their needs. You were the steadfast anchor, the tireless advocate, the loving caregiver. You poured your heart and soul into doing your best to provide them comfort, well-being, and peace. And then, it happened. They're gone.

As the initial shock begins to subside, a quiet realization might dawn: the intense, all-consuming role of caregiver has ended. And with it, the constant deferral of your own needs. For so long, your focus was on them. Now, the spotlight, however unwanted, is back on you. You might find yourself asking: Who am I now? What do I need?

The truth is, after dedicating yourself so completely to another, just the thought of prioritizing yourself can feel awkward, unsettling, even selfish. You might feel a pang of guilt at the thought of focusing on your own wellbeing, as if it's a betrayal of the love and commitment you shared. But this couldn't be further from the truth.

This is not a betrayal; it is a necessary act of healing and self-preservation.

Think about it from the perspective of the love you shared. Would your loved one, who witnessed your selfless dedication, want you to lose yourself in their absence? Would they want you to neglect your own health and happiness as a way to honor their memory?

Instead, ask yourself, What would my loved one want for me? They would likely



want you to find peace, work towards healing, and to rediscover joy in your own life. Your well-being was likely something they cared about deeply. Neglecting yourself now not only harms you but also diminishes the vibrant spirit they loved.

Honoring their memory doesn't mean sacrificing your own future. It means carrying their love within you while allowing yourself to heal and grow. By taking care of yourself, you are building a foundation for a life that, while different, can still be meaningful and fulfilling. You are allowing their love to inspire you, rather than confine you.

It's time to gently turn that caregiving energy inward. It's time to nurture the one who gave so much. It's time to reclaim yourself, not as a betrayal, but as a testament to the enduring love you shared and the life you deserve to live.

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

So, how do you find yourself, again? It's a gentle process, one step at a time:

- **Acknowledge Your Own Needs:** Start by simply recognizing that you have needs again – physical, emotional, social, spiritual, etc. What are you craving? Rest? Nourishment? Connection? Solitude? Allow yourself to acknowledge these.
- **Prioritize Basic Self-Care:** Begin with the fundamentals. Ensure you are eating regular, nutritious meals. Try to establish a consistent sleep routine, even if it feels difficult. Gentle exercise, even a short walk, can do wonders for your mood and energy levels.
- **Seek Support:** You don't have to navigate this alone. Lean on friends, family, or support groups. Talk about your feelings, your struggles, and your journey of rediscovery.
- **Rediscover Your Interests:** What did you enjoy before caregiving became your primary focus? What hobbies brought you joy? Re-engaging with these activities can help you reconnect with a sense of self beyond the caregiver role. Sometimes pursuing new interests can be helpful. Don't be afraid to dip your toe in the water of things you may be interested in. Remember to be patient with yourself; it might feel different at first.
- **Allow Yourself to Feel:** There will be good days and bad days. Allow yourself to feel all your feelings without judgment. Grief is a complex process, and there's no right or wrong way to experience it.
- **Be Kind to Yourself:** Practice self-compassion and patience as you navigate this new reality. There will be moments of guilt, sadness, and confusion. Treat yourself with kindness and encourage compassion from others.

FYI Happenings – Mindful Markings to Meet During the Summer Months

Let's celebrate Summer with fun and less stress in our lives. Spiritual Growth & Faith Formation is offering just such a way! **Join us at 10**

a.m. on Saturdays, July 19, and August 16, for about 1½ hours to scribble, squiggle, make marks and add color to our mark-making where perfection is NOT allowed.

From the first sessions held in May, participants commented how much they enjoyed mark-making with the following



comments: "Awesome!" "I liked the fellowship & personal touch." "No frustration." "Loved it all." "So relaxing."

These sessions combine focused-breathing with repetitive mark-making that help improve our focus, calm our nervous system and lower stress. All of this is a way so we can hear God and our soul's voices. These moments of presence can be so rewarding!

Please call the church office or Pam Binder (989-493-9476) to register or ask questions.