



Non-Profit Org.  
U.S. Postage  
**PAID**  
Bay City, MI  
Permit No. 278

# THE WESTMINSTER LOG

## Tell Me Something Good: *Grounding ourselves in the good news this Lent*

Lent is often described as a season of reflection, repentance, and preparation — but at its heart, it is also a season of grounding ourselves in what truly matters. In the early church, Lent was a time when new believers prepared for baptism at Easter by studying the foundations of Christian faith. They focused on what was central to the life and ministry of Jesus and what it meant to follow him.

This Lent, we return to that same question: What is the good news at the core of Jesus’ life and ministry? And just as importantly, can we trust that this good news is truly good — even when it challenges us, stretches us, or disrupts our comfort?

If we are honest, it is easy to soften or sanitize Jesus’ teachings. Following Jesus leads to a richer, more expansive life, but it’s not necessarily comfortable. We often describe Jesus’ ministry as “radical” which comes from the Latin word “radicalis,” meaning “root” or “ground.” Therefore, the good news should bring us back to our roots, back to what grounds us: loving our neighbor, caring for the vulnerable, pursuing justice and mercy, and resting in God’s unending grace.

The good news is extravagant, untamed, illogical, and persistent. It is joyful — like fine wine saved for celebration. It grows like a mustard seed that flourishes rapidly into a tree to shelter the birds. It smells like expensive perfume poured from an alabaster jar and like crumbling bread passed endlessly through a hungry crowd. It sounds like children laughing



and like stones dropped to the ground instead of violently thrown. It feels like feet washed with tender care. The good news is alive in the world.

Throughout this Lenten season, we will explore these foundational teachings of Jesus that ground us and shape how we live. Our hope is that this series will offer fertile ground for worship, reflection, and conversation, helping us root our hearts more deeply in the expansive goodness of God.

This Lent, may we listen again for the good news. May it ground us. And may it inspire us to act in a world hungry to hear, see, and experience what is truly good.

*Images and text for this series created by or adapted from © a sanctified art | sanctifiedart.org*

FEBRUARY 2026 ISSUE 207

WWW.WPCBC.ORG

The Westminster Log is published monthly by Westminster Presbyterian Church, 103 East Midland Street, Bay City, Michigan, 48706. Articles must be submitted by the fifteenth day of each month before publication unless otherwise noted. We reserve the right to edit submissions for content and space. The Westminster Log is formatted to be printed in color.

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

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

Visit us on Facebook:  
Westminster Presbyterian  
Church - Bay City



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



# Thinking about my Star Word

I was convinced that Westminster Church's annual Star Words were divine assignment. In 2023, the word I picked at random was "STAY." In 2024, I chose the word: "DESIGN." In 2026, I chose the word "WANDER." The Star Word "Wander," made me really doubt that divine assignment idea.

My Star Word "Stay," in 2023, had nothing to do with my life, I thought. I don't let much grass grow under my feet! But, in 2023, my family life was in a bit of turmoil. The disagreement was between my children and me involving the future inheritance of the family home. I was of the opinion that all would be fine. The Star Word, "Stay," told me to wait out the drama. All worked out fine.

The Star Word, "Design" was my choice in 2024. I guess Westminster needed my design skills. Pastor Jamie asked if I could make acolyte stoles — using a pattern for adults! And then came the book writing. I don't know from where my inspiration for stories comes; but writing "The First Christmas Quilt", finding an illustrator, and having it printed seemed to be out of my control.

And, then came 2026 and the Sunday for choosing a new Star Word. On "Star Word" Sunday, I decided that I would choose a word from the center of the table. When I got to the table, there was a Star with about a ten-inch bare space around it. I knew it was meant to be mine. (Divine assignment!)

My Star Word for 2026 was "WANDER." "WANDER?"

In recent months, I had come to the conclusion that I did not enjoy the challenges of long trip travel. I had resolved myself to



short trips and definitely not traveling by myself at night! I pondered the word wander for many days. I looked up the meaning, the opposites, the synonyms, and I just didn't get it. Then on Facebook, this piece caught my eye from a site called "Love Ireland.":

*Dear Ireland,  
You don't rush. You WANDER. You linger.  
You remind us that life isn't meant to be measured in deadlines or steps, but in stolen glances across green hills, the sound of a fiddle drifting through a doorway, or a laugh shared over a slow pint (or cup of tea).  
You invite us to remember who we were before the world got so loud - and to return, even for a moment, to the quiet magic of being in the moment.*

Although I have never been to Ireland, this piece spoke to me! It says to me: *Slow down, Judy, live in the moment!* May I be more like Ireland in the year 2026. My faith is now restored that our Star Words ARE divine assignment.

*Written by Judy Hudson*

## STEWARDSHIP CELEBRATION

Join us, **Sunday, February 15th** as we celebrate Stewardship Sunday. During worship, we'll receive our 2026 Pledge cards and rededicate ourselves to the ministry God has called us to as a congregation. Following worship, we are hosting a Celebration luncheon. Please plan to attend and celebrate all that we are able to do together through your continued generosity to God's ministry here at Westminster!

### *Thank you!*

Thank you to everyone who has reached out to me to express their sympathy on the passing of my dear friend of 28 years, Thomas Rivard.

Even though he was not an official member of Westminster please know that this church held a special place in his heart.

He cherished the many friends he had here.

— *Christine Thurman*

### LYDIA CIRCLE

Lydia Circle will meet **Thursday, February 19 at 1:00 p.m. in the Session room.** We are using the *Horizons* Bible Study, "Finding Resilience, Joy and Our Identity in Jesus Christ." If you would like to join, contact Barb Tolles at 989-963-9369 or email her at [apple2school@yahoo.com](mailto:apple2school@yahoo.com)

### DEBORAH CIRCLE

Deborah Circle will meet **at 4 p.m. Thursday, February 26 at the home of Sally Calvo.** If anyone wants to join, please call Karen Schoeppach at 989-684-1322 or email her at [kaysue@chartermi.net](mailto:kaysue@chartermi.net).

## ANNUAL MEETING

The Session has called for the **Annual Meeting of the Congregation** to be held during our Worship Service, **Sunday February 1, 2026 at 10:30 a.m.** During worship, we will highlight some of the good work that God has done in and through Westminster in 2025, and some hopes for 2026! The 2026 budget will be available that morning for your information. Other business will include electing a new slate of officers, the 2026 Nominating Committee, and voting on Rev. Jamie Milton's 2026 Terms of Call. After our morning worship service and annual meeting, we hope you'll join us for the **Souper Bowl of Caring** lunch and Youth Group Bake Sale. All youth are asked to attend. We'll have a variety of soups and breads, plus desserts you can purchase. A free-will offering will be collected for the Soup luncheon, with the **collection going towards our Food Pantry. Donations of cans of chunky soup are also requested.** Proceeds from the Bake Sale will go to support our Youth Group.

## SAGINAW SPIRIT FAITH NIGHT

A group outing is being planned to attend the Saginaw Spirit's annual Faith Night on **Sunday, February 22.** The Spirit take on the Guelph Storm beginning at 5:30 p.m. Tickets are \$14. Please let Leah Sneller know if you would like to attend by February 15. You may send your ticket money to Financial Administrator Pat Foster. Contact Leah or the church office with any questions.



### Ash Wednesday, February 18, 7:00 p.m.

*The good news is...all are invited*  
**Luke 14:15-24**

We begin Lent with an open invitation. In Jesus' parable of the wedding banquet, though the net is cast wide, too many guests deny the invitation, instead focusing on their individual concerns. Yet, the host's invitation is persistent. They search high and low for the dispossessed and the vulnerable, perhaps those who are hungry to accept the invitation. The good news is that there is still room. God's grace is abundant, and all are welcome to the table.

This year's Ash Wednesday service will include a celebration of the Lord's Supper, the Imposition of Ashes, and both communal and individual reflective actions.

### First Sunday in Lent, February 22 (Ordination and Installation of Church Officers)

*The good news is ...*

*so good it catches us by surprise*

John 2:1-11; Matthew 13:31-32

John's Gospel opens Jesus' ministry with a wedding miracle. It may feel a bit lavish to start the season of Lent with a wedding banquet, but the good news begins with joy. This week we focus on the subversive and playful nature of the good news. Like a mustard seed, the good news can grow from the smallest seed into the tallest tree. Like an unruly weed, or fine wine saved for last, the good news is abundant and cannot be contained. As we sink into Jesus' teachings throughout the season, we may not always be comfortable, but we can trust that these

**This Lent, the Gospel reading each Sunday will be shared as a dramatic reading. If you are interested in participating, please contact Pastor Jamie.**

teachings are good, rooted in love, and worthy of celebration.

### Second Sunday in Lent, March 1 (Sacrament of the Lord's Supper)

*The good news is ...*

*great love for God & neighbor*

Luke 7:36-50; Matthew 25:35-40

Simon and some Pharisees host a dinner for Jesus and an unexpected guest arrives: a woman from the city who kneels at Jesus' feet and washes him with expensive perfume. Simon scoffs at this party foul, but Jesus reorients his focus, asking him to truly see the woman and recognize that she has shown "great love." The woman with the alabaster jar shows a shocking, extravagant love that exemplifies the greatest commandment: to love God with all your heart, soul, and mind and to love your neighbor as yourself. Will the other guests see that loving God goes hand in hand with loving neighbor?

#### Lenten Activities:

*Wondering Wednesdays*

Throughout the Wednesdays of Lent (February 18-April 1) the sanctuary will be open from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. for an intentional time for prayer and reflection. We'll have some quiet music playing and some images for reflection on the screens.

#### **Mid-Lenten Potluck and Interactive**

**Prayer Service:** Wednesday, March 11, 6:00 p.m.

**Palm/Passion Sunday:** March 29

**Maundy Thursday:** April 2, 7:00 p.m.

**Good Friday:** April 3, 7:00 p.m.

**Holy Saturday:** A Service of Waiting, Wonder, and Resurrection Hope (April 4, 4:00pm)

**Easter Sunday:** Services at 8:30 and 10:30 a.m.; Breakfast served at 9:15 a.m.

## Update on church finances

As you can see and as is normal, we are starting the year with expenses (primarily payroll) exceeding income. However, because of your generous giving last year, we have enough cash on hand to cover these expenses without needing to tap our investments.

Let's talk per capita! Per capita has been a part of the funding history of the Presbyterian Church for over 150 years. It funds the necessary expenses of the presbyteries, synods, and the General Assembly, and allows these governing councils to make decisions regarding distribution of mission dollars without being funded by those same dollars.

The 2026 per capita is \$35 per member, with \$20.34 going to the Presbytery of Lake Huron, \$3.40 to the Synod of the Covenant, and \$11.26 to the General Assembly. The amount each church pays is based on its membership as of December 31, 2024. Westminster's membership at that time was 292, so the per capita amount we will pay is \$10,220.

That amount is due to be paid by February 15. If each of our members pays the per

Month to Date  
thru January 18,

GENERAL FUND	2026	Year to Date
Pledges & Other Giving	\$ 13,943	\$ 13,943
One-time Gifts	\$ -	\$ -
Other Cash Received	\$ 55	\$ 55
Total Income	\$ 13,998	\$ 13,998
Expenses	\$ 20,503	\$ 20,503
Net Income/(Loss)	\$ (6,505)	\$ (6,505)

Budgeted expense total for 2026 is \$467,000.

capita amount above his/his pledge or regular giving, it keeps pledged funds in our church for our budgeted use. You can pay your per capita in any of the same ways you currently pay your regular offering; just use the special per capita envelope or make a note that that is what the payment is for and we will credit it accordingly.

As always, if you have any questions or if there is anything I can do for you, please contact me via email at [treasurer@wpcbc.org](mailto:treasurer@wpcbc.org), or on my cell at 616-485-8272.

*Pat Foster*

Financial Administrator



Our God Sighting for this month is Iain Harrelson. Iain was baptized and confirmed at Westminster and has been involved in many programs and groups here. Over the years, he has participated in VBS, Youth Bell Choir, Youth Choir and Youth Group.

In 8<sup>th</sup> grade, Iain joined the Adult Bell Choir, and he can be seen ringing with the choir when they play in worship. On the Sundays that his usher team is scheduled, Iain takes his place at the entrance of the sanctuary to hand out bulletins.

Iain is a junior at Central Michigan University and is majoring in geology with a minor in chemistry. He plans on a career in geochemistry and mineral exploration.

Thank you, Iain, for continuing to give so generously of your time and talents to your Westminster family. We appreciate you!

## Pledge

For many of us, the word pledge can stir up mixed feelings. Outside the church, it can sound formal—or even intimidating—often associated with contracts or promises we're afraid we might not be able to keep.

In the life of the church, though, a pledge means something a little different—and something deeply faithful.

## What Is a Pledge?

In a Presbyterian congregation, a pledge is an estimate of what you hope to give in the coming year in support of the church's ministry and mission. It is a way of sharing your intention, offered prayerfully and honestly, based on what you believe you can give at this point in your life.

A pledge is not a bill or a binding contract. It is not set in stone. Life changes, circumstances change, and because of that, pledges can be amended at any time—up or down—with grace and understanding.

## Why Do Pledges Matter?

While pledges are not binding, they are incredibly helpful. Together, they allow the church to:

- Estimate the financial support it will receive
- Plan responsibly for ministry, staffing, and mission



- Help meet the budget that supports the ministries and values we share

- Practice transparency and good stewardship
- In short, pledges help turn generosity into faithful planning.

Rather than asking, "What money do we have?" pledges allow the church to ask, "What is God calling us to do — and how can we prepare for it together?"

## A Spiritual Practice, Not Just a Number

At its heart, pledging is a spiritual practice. It invites reflection:

- What do I value?
- How is generosity shaping my faith?
- How am I participating in what God is doing through this community?

A pledge is about participation—joining others in supporting worship, care, outreach, formation, and the shared life of the church.

If you've ever hesitated to make a pledge because of uncertainty, please know this: your pledge is an act of trust, not a demand. It is offered honestly, with room for change, and with the understanding that life circumstances can and do shift.

A pledge is simply a way of saying, "This church matters to me, and I want to help sustain its life and work."

For our February Lunch and Laugh gathering, we are planning another Bundle Up and Bunco, although hopefully the weather will be warmer and less bundling will be required! We will meet in the Fellowship Hall for lunch at noon on **Tuesday, February 24** for lunch with games to follow. Bring a sack lunch and join us for fun and fellowship!



Our February Out-to-Lunch Bunch destination is Gulino's Pizza, 1406 N. Henry St.

We will be gathering at 1 p.m.

**Wednesday, February 18.**

Please RSVP with Dave Crook by Monday, February 16 by calling 847-624-5798 or emailing crookds@earthlink.net.

The Out-to-Lunch Bunch

## We distributed nearly 79,000 pounds of food in 2025!

**2025 Statistics:** What a year! In total we served 7,248 people from 2,494 visits with 78,721 pounds of food. People came from nine Bay County cities, with the vast majority from Bay City zip codes. We are blessed to be able to serve our community in this way.

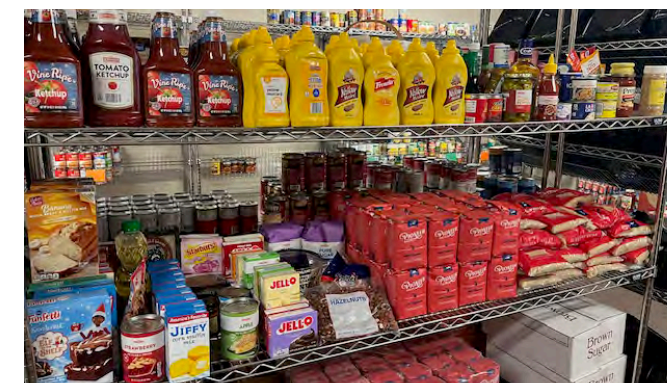
**The February "Item of the Month" is chunky-style soup.** This is a favorite of our guests, especially during the cold winter months. Donations may be left on the cart outside the pantry door. Thank you for your support!

**Thinking about spring? Planning your garden?** Consider planting a little extra to donate to the pantry! Fresh produce is a wonderful addition to our summer pantry options. All donations are appreciated.

**Want to get involved? There are many ways you can join our pantry team!** Volunteers are always welcome to help as your schedule allows. Talk to co-chairs Janet Smylie or Janet Beattie for more information or send an email to [pantry@wpcbc.org](mailto:pantry@wpcbc.org).

- Help when the pantry is open by escorting guests through the pantry or volunteer to take their bags to their cars. Orientation/training is given before your first shift. We are open on Wednesdays from 4-6 p.m. and on Thursdays from 10 a.m. to noon. We need six volunteers each

Westminster  
COMMUNITY PANTRY



day. You may also sign up on the bulletin board in the Wenona St. lobby.

- Have a truck? Deliveries from the Food Bank are dropped at a site in Bay City every other Monday morning. Join our crew of drivers who pick up the food, bring it to the church, and help get it into the church. You can stay to help stock the shelves or be on your way.
- Stock our shelves with food as directed by the shift leader. Food Bank deliveries are every other Monday at 9:30 a.m. and Hidden Harvest delivers every Wednesday at 12:30 p.m.

## Session Highlights from the January 20, 2026 meeting:

- Session had a discussion regarding ways we might expand our presence in our community.
- Elected Christine Thurman as Clerk Of Session for 2026.
- Elected Phil Reagh as Treasurer for 2026.
- Approved the Presbytery Statistical Report for 2025. Current active membership stands at 267.
- Approved receiving the three 2026 special offerings of the PC (USA): One Great Hour Of Sharing, World Communion Offering, and the Christmas Joy Offering.
- Approved communion dates for 2026: The first Sunday of each month, Ash Wednesday, Easter Sunday, and Christmas Eve.

## A New Year: Finding Your Way

As we enter 2026, for many this marks a new beginning, resolutions, and new possibility. We begin to create goals to help us find ourselves 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 comforts 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 future, 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



***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.***

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. Be patient with yourself and your grief.

*Reprinted from St. Luke's Hospice, Bethlehem, PA*

### Remember when .....

A way to find meaning in the future after a loved one passes is to not forget the past through memories. By remembering the person we have loved, we are able to slowly heal. Healing doesn't mean we will forget that person. It actually helps us to better remember and stay connected as we move forward.

In a recent meeting we had some beautiful sharing time of memories. Some humorous, some very serious, and some just refreshing. We laughed, we were sad. We felt emotions we were supposed to feel in order to get through this grief process.

It is my hope that if you are struggling with mixed emotions in your grief journey that you will consider attending one of our meetings

on the first Thursday of the month and learn ways to help you reach your new normal.

This is something that was shared at our last meeting and I'd like to share it with you.

### To My Husband in Heaven

***I was supposed to spend the rest of my life with you. And then I realized...you spent the rest of your life with me. I smile because I know you loved me till the day you went away. And will keep loving me...Till the day we're together again. From: Your Love***

We meet again on **Thursday, February 5** from 1:30 to 3:00 p.m. at the church.

Warm thoughts and prayers in this cold month of February,

*Mary*

### New Year's Resolutions for the Bereaved: This year, I resolve to....

- Give myself time. 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 damaging.
- 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*