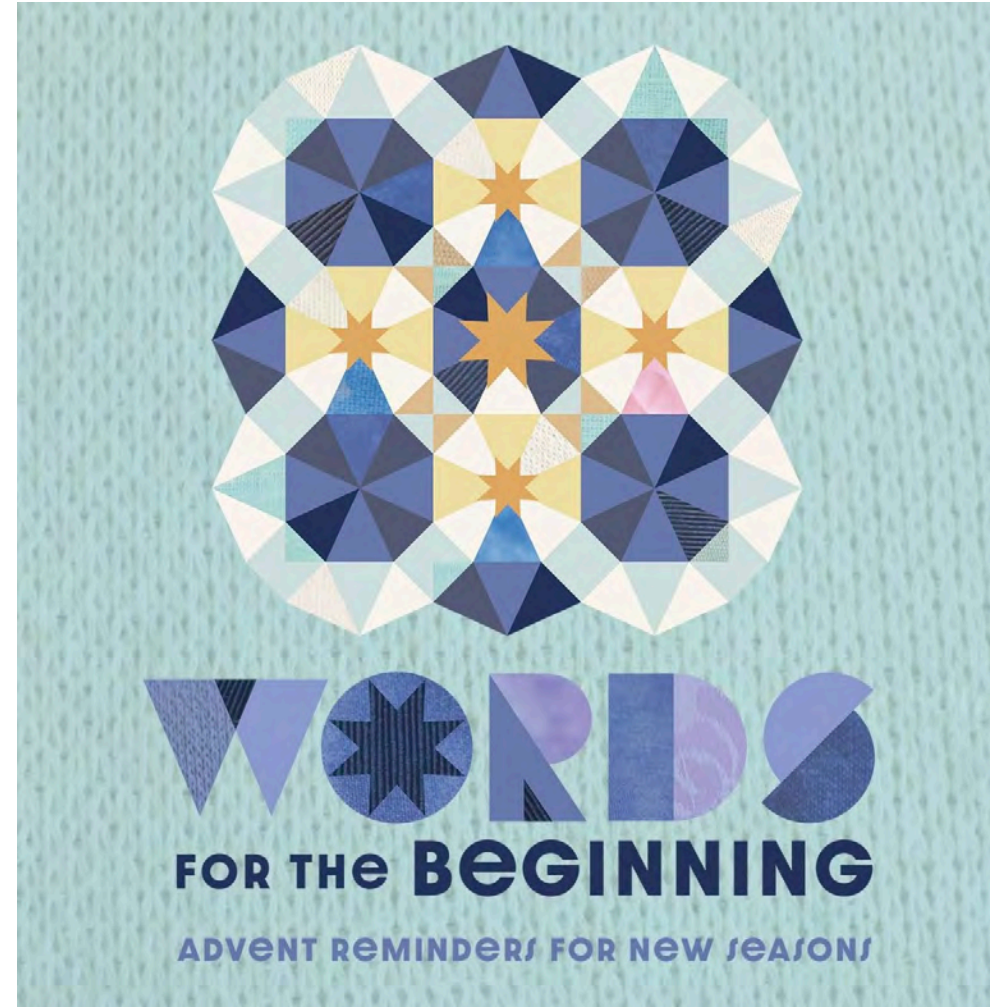




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THE WESTMINSTER LOG



Advent Series: "Words for the Beginning"

Tucked into the end of the calendar year when it can often feel like we've run out of time, Advent invites us to begin again. As the days grow their longest and the cold of winter sets in, and on the heels of an election season, Advent declares: this is not the end, this is yet another beginning. We look ahead with anticipation and hope for what is yet to come, knowing that God's love has already come, is among us, and at the same time, still to be fully realized.

With that hope and encouragement in mind, this Advent and into Christmas and the new year, we'll be focusing on these simple truths that a mother would want to tell her baby, that God wants to tell the world, and that we need to tell each other:

"You are a blessing." "We can't go alone." "Do the good that is yours to do." "Hope is worth the risk." "Love knows your name." "Don't forget to

ADVENT continues on p. 2

IMPORTANT DATES

Sunday, December 1

- 5:00 p.m. Advent Potluck Dinner and Workshop

Friday, December 13

- 5:00 p.m. Parents Night Out (page 9)

Saturday, December 14

- 10:00 a.m. Children's Christmas Program Rehearsal

Sunday, December 15

- 10:30 a.m. Children's Christmas Program (page 9)
- 1 p.m. Christmas Caroling after the service (page 8)

Thursday, December 19

- 6:00 p.m. Longest Night Service

Sunday, December 22

- 10:30 a.m. Christmas Cantata (page 8)

Tuesday, December 24

- 4:00 p.m. Christmas Eve worship
- 7:00 p.m. Christmas Eve worship

Sunday, December 29

- 9:30 a.m. PJ's and Pancakes (page 9)

DECEMBER 2024 ISSUE 193

WWW.WPCBC.ORG

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Visit us on Facebook:
Westminster Presbyterian
Church - Bay City



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

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

Pastor
Rev. Jamie Milton (ext. 204)
Parish Associate
Rev. Linda Williams (ext. 203)
Church Secretary
Bill Petzold (ext. 201)
Treasurer
Pat Foster (ext. 206)
Facilities Manager
Harold Miller (ext. 205)

December

Sundays

8:45 a.m. Bell Choir Rehearsal

for our Adults; the Bells play during Worship once a month

9:00 a.m. Sunday School

For children PreK-4th grade

9:00 a.m. Adult Bible Study

This month, we'll begin our Advent Study "How Does a Weary World Rejoice. Please see page 3 for more details

9:30 a.m. Fellowship

Join us in Fellowship Hall for Coffee and Donuts and Conversation

9:45 a.m. Choir Rehearsal

Pre-service Rehearsal

9:55 a.m. Chime Choir

For children K-4th grade

10:30 a.m. Worship

Advent begins December 3rd. Please see page 2 for more details.

11:30 a.m. Fellowship

Join us in the Chapel Hall for Coffee and Cookies and Conversation

5 p.m. Youth Bells

For Youth 5th-12th grade

5:30 p.m. Youth Dinner

6:00 p.m. Youth Group

For Youth 5th-12th grade

Sunday	Monday
1 <i>First Sunday of Advent</i> 5:00 p.m. Advent Potluck Dinner and Workshop	2 5:30 p.m. Mission Mtg. 7:00 p.m. Deacons Mtg.
8 <i>Second Sunday of Advent</i> 11:45 a.m. Fellowship and Outreach Mtg.	9 5:00 p.m. Property Mtg. 6:00 p.m. Finance Mtg. 7:00 p.m. Stewardship Mtg.
15 <i>Third Sunday of Advent</i> 10:30 a.m. Christmas Pageant 1:00 p.m. Christmas Caroling	16 6:30 p.m. Session Mtg.
22 <i>Fourth Sunday of Advent</i> 10:30 a.m. "Glorious Light of Christmas" Christmas Cantata	23
29 No Sunday School 9 a.m. PJs and Pancakes 10:30 a.m. Worship	30

Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Fri/Sat
3 10:00 a.m. Staff Mtg. 10:00 a.m. Hearts & Hands Knitting 1:30 p.m. Book Study 6:00 p.m. Personnel Mtg. 7:00 p.m. Boy Scouts	4 5:15 p.m. Contemporary Choir 6:30 p.m. Chancel Choir	5 8:30 a.m. TOPS 5:00 p.m. Food of Faith at Messiah Lutheran 7:00 p.m. Adult Bible Study via Zoom	6 7
10 9:00 a.m. Matthew 25 10:00 a.m. Hearts & Hands Knitting 1:30 p.m. Book Study 6:30 p.m. Spiritual Growth Mtg. 7:00 p.m. Boy Scouts	11 5:15 Worship Mtg. 6:30 p.m. Chancel Choir	12 8:30 a.m. TOPS 1:30 p.m. Whispers of Wisdom 5:00 p.m. Food of Faith at Messiah Lutheran 7:00 p.m. Adult Bible Study	13 Parents Night Out 14 10:00 a.m. Pageant Rehearsal
17 10:00 a.m. Staff Mtg. 10:00 a.m. Hearts & Hands Knitting 1:00 p.m. Lions Club 6:30 p.m. Session Mtg. 7:00 p.m. Boy Scouts	18 5:15 p.m. Contemporary Choir 6:30 p.m. Chancel Choir	19 8:30 a.m. TOPS 5:00 p.m. Food of Faith at Messiah Lutheran 6:00 p.m. Longest Night Service	20 21 10:00 a.m. Cantata Rehearsal
24 <i>Christmas Eve</i> 4 p.m. Worship Service 7 p.m. Worship Service	25 <i>Merry Christmas!</i> Church office closed	26 No Food of Faith Church office closed	27 28
31 Church office closed		Happy Birthday JeAnne Hebner Mary Nicholson Joy Thompson George Greene Bill Shelt Jan VanNostrand Lois MacPhail	

Greetings from your new treasurer, Pat Foster! I have very big shoes to fill since Heather was so great at her job. Be patient with me as I learn.

The **Operating Fund** had income of \$49,948.11 in October and expenses of \$44,557.00. Year to date income equals \$314,571.98 with year to date expenses of \$357,975.38.

The **Capital Campaign Fund** received contributions of \$1,228.10, and the loan balance at the end of October is \$116,762.32.

The **Building Improvement Fund** received \$573.00 and had no expenses in October. The Fund has a balance of \$14,373.43.

The **Major Repairs Fund** received contributions of \$87.00 and had no expenses in October. The balance at the end of the month is \$43,264.69.

As a reminder, when making contributions to a non-profit organization such as Westminster, there are tax benefits to giving directly from an IRA required minimum distribution or giving appreciated securities instead of cash. These types of contributions take time to process, however, so reach out to your financial advisor or to Pat if this is something you would like to learn more about.

End of Year Information

- Envelopes for 2025 will be available for pick up here at the church starting the first week of December.
- Contributions that you would like credited for 2024 **MUST** reach me (or be postmarked) by December 31, 2024. Anything I receive or postmarked after December 31, regardless of the date on your check or your envelope, will be credited to 2025.
- Year-end statements will be mailed or emailed around the second week of January. Look over your statement carefully. If I've made an error, please let me know immediately, so I can make the correction and begin closing the books on 2024.
- Heading to a warmer climate this winter? Have you moved recently? Do you have a new email address? Please call the church office to let us know of these changes so your statement and other church correspondence reaches you.
- Per capita for 2025 is \$30.69. This is per active, confirmed member. Please do not pay your 2025 Per Capita until January 1st or after. If you have not paid your 2024 Per Capita (\$29.50) you can still get that in this month.

It is a pleasure to serve as Church Treasurer, remember if you have questions, feel free to reach out to me.

~ *Pat Foster*

Scam Alert



Please be aware of an ongoing attempt to take advantage of your generosity! Several of you received a text a few weeks ago from a scammer pretending to be Pastor Jamie or Rev. Linda. This happens from time to time and can seem very real. This particular time they were looking for gift cards to help out a person in need. We'd like to remind you that no one from the church will ever contact you via text message, or through a social media site, asking for gift cards or financial help. There will never be an emergency that requires us to text you for an immediate financial response. The church has ways to help individuals in an emergency situation. Whenever we do collect offerings or donations, you will hear about it in worship, or the newsletter. If you ever have a question about a call, text, or email you receive, please contact the church office, Pastor Jamie, or Reverend Linda.

With sincere appreciation

Dear Westminster Family,

I don't know if I can adequately put into words how grateful I am for all of you, especially this last month. Making the decision to leave my job was incredibly difficult. I can't thank you enough for your understanding and support, for your well-wishes and hugs, and for the cards and gifts. Your outpouring of love is something I've witnessed and have been on the receiving end so many times over the years. I feel so blessed to be a part of our Church and the amazing work we do together. Westminster has always meant so much to me, and while I won't be the Church Treasurer and Secretary anymore, I am looking forward to finding new ways to support the ministry of Westminster. Much love to you all,



~ *Heather Heidtman*

Thank you for the welcome

Pastor Jamie, Pastor Linda and the entire congregation of Westminster,

Just a quick note to say "thank you" for the beautiful service accepting Diana and myself into your church on Sunday.

The friendship and warmth radiates here. I am so thankful to now be officially a member. God bless all of you!
Love,



~ *Mary Nicholson*

Diana Ball and Mary Nicholson were welcomed as new members at the November 17th service.

Meet the new staff members!

Pat Foster has recently joined our church staff as our part-time treasurer. She is a certified public accountant who is not quite ready to retire! She is a member of Memorial Presbyterian Church in Midland, and served as their interim financial administrator a few years ago, which gives her some of the knowledge needed to succeed Heather. Pat lives in Midland with her partner Clyde and their three cats. She enjoys reading, listening to music, running (slower than a turtle through peanut butter!) and has recently picked up her cello again after many years.



Pat will normally be in the office on Tuesday and Thursday afternoons, but will have email access at other times.

Bill Petzold was hired in late October to serve as church secretary of Westminster Presbyterian. He lives in Vassar with his girlfriend, Melissa, who is a teacher at Bay City Public Schools. Bill has been the organist and musician for Grace Lutheran Church ELCA in Vassar since September 2008 and serves as a deacon on the church council. During his newspaper career he was a journalist for papers such as The Saginaw News, The Bay City Times, the Tuscola County Advertiser and most recently The Midland Daily News. His hobbies include playing music, art, reading, writing and video games.



Bill will be in the office each day from 8 a.m. to 4 p.m. Monday through Thursday, so stop by and say hello!

Office Hours

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

Website: wpcbc.org

[Join us on Facebook](#)

Westminster Presbyterian Church - Bay City

Where have we been? Where are we going?

As we come to the end of 2024 and prepare for a new year to begin, our officers and ministry teams reflect on the year that is ending and dream together about what is to come. We look back with gratitude on where God has led us to serve together and look ahead with anticipation for where we can join God's work in 2025. We are grateful for all the ways that you, Westminster's members and friends, have supported the

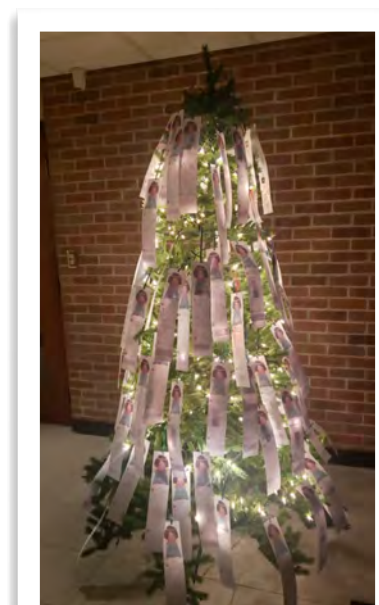
church's mission through the sharing of your time, talents, and monetary gifts.

When you begin to think about 2025, which area of ministry do you feel most called to participate in? How might you be able to use your time and talents to benefit your church and our neighbors? As you begin to prayerfully consider your financial gifts to Westminster's shared ministry, how is God calling you to commit to the

ways we love God with all our heart, soul, mind, and strength?

Our Westminster church family is known in our community to be loving, caring, and welcoming. This will continue to be our legacy as we support the work of our ministries and their programs.

Your Stewardship Ministry,
Karen Schoeppach, Phil Reagh, Sally Calvo, Pastor Jamie Milton, Julie Kelly, Heather Heidtman



THE ANGEL GIVING TREE

Mission Partnership Committee invites you to help make Christmas a little brighter for families in our community. Working with our partners at **The Salvation Army**, we have received 75 Angel Tags listing toys, gift cards, clothing items and bedding for kids ranging in ages 0 – 17-year-olds that you can purchase for an individual boy or girl. Angel Tree tags will be available starting today until Sunday, December 15. Participants are encouraged to take an angel tag from the tree located in the entry to the Chapel, write your name and contact number on the bottom portion of the tag and leave that section with representatives at the Angel Tree table in the Wenona Lobby. Purchase the gifts and return them in a gift bag (no tissue paper) or any type of bag to the church by **Noon on Sunday, December 15**. We suggest a spending limit of \$25-\$30 per item - one toy/"fun" and one clothing/textile. If you prefer, you may choose to donate, and we'll do the shopping for you! For questions or help, contact Darlene Kusterer or Bonnie Marsh.

ADVENT from the cover

laugh!" "The road isn't straight."

These words for the beginning, these affirmations, these anchoring concepts help us to have a life well-lived in the sight of God. Goodness,

confidence, and the love of God are reflected in these ideas. Our prayer is that these weekly themes can be a foundation for beginning again, a foundation built on hope and love. May we add these phrases to the endless list of reminders of beloved-ness that we want our children, our

families, friends, and communities, to feel and experience no matter what beginning they were facing. May these reminders give you strength, courage, comfort, and grace, week after week.

Adapted from materials provided by Sanctified Art

Folks in need of food ...

Right in our backyard! Yup, that's what we found out. 29% of Bay County residents earn less than the basic cost of living, and 14% live in poverty.

For these neighbors, finding food is not an "emergency," it is an everyday struggle, and that is why you are hearing so much from the **Mission Partnerships Committee** about the food pantry and Thanksgiving baskets. We didn't make this up. The 2023 study conducted by United Way found ASSET LIMITED, INCOME RESTRICTED, EMPLOYED (ALICE) make up nearly 30% of our households.

Matthew 25 teaches us to serve people who are hungry, oppressed, imprisoned or poor. You can help by getting involved. Volunteer for the pantry, Matthew 25 Café at Salvation Army or Food of Faith. Make a donation. Join the Mission Partnerships Committee. We are always looking for new ways and efficient ways to serve, and your voice and involvement are needed.

Thanks to a grant from Bay Area Community Foundation, we will be able to provide nearly 100 Christmas food boxes to needy families.

More ideas and help are needed. If you would like to experience the joy of giving to your community and your church, reach out to a member of the Mission Partnerships Committee to learn more.

Sincerely,

Bonnie Marsh, Chair, Janet Beattie, Carol Campbell, Irene Eskilson, Richard Frontjes, Pam Johnston, Darlene Kusterer, Len Petroff, Judy Randall and Janet Smylie

MATTHEW 25 CAFE AT THE SALVATION ARMY

We will be continuing our community service and outreach at Salvation Army Matthew 25 luncheon! Over the past couple of months volunteers from Westminster have participated, and we are committing to help the second Tuesday of each month. It's a fun, rewarding opportunity to connect with others in the community and work with fellow Christians.

Continuing in December and January two crews of 4 people will be needed each day. The first crew will work from 9:00 – 11:00 am on Meal Prep, the second crew will work 11:00 am – 1:00 pm on Lunch Service and clean-up. A Sign-up chart can be found in the DeWitt St entrance. For more information, contact Darlene Kusterer or the church office, or scan the QR Code to the right to go to our Sign Up Genius page.



THANK YOU to everyone who donated time and money to provide 100 Thanksgiving food bags to our community in need. Thanks to you, 100 households including nearly 350 people enjoyed a holiday meal. Bless you all!!

Upcoming Dates
Tuesday, December 10, 2024
Tuesday, January 14, 2025
First Crew will work 9-11 a.m.
Second Crew will work 11 a.m. - 1 p.m.

OCTOBER 2024 FOOD PANTRY STATISTICS

156 Households that utilized the Pantry in October.

478 Individuals helped

55 New Households
Of the 156 households, 35% utilized the pantry for the first time

5,956 Pounds of food distributed

Since the Westminster Community Pantry opened in June, we have served:

655 households (376 new) (average 131 per month; average 30 per week)

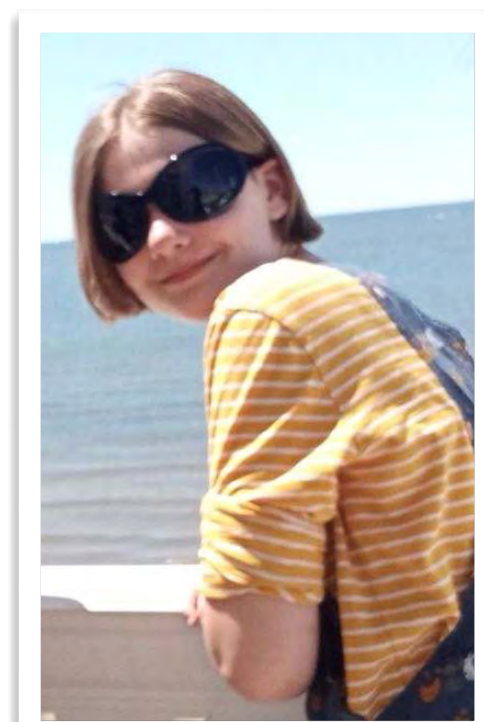
2,044 people (1,177 new) (average 409 per month; average 93 per week)

23,199 pounds of food (average 4,640 per month; average 1,054 per week)

Our December ITEM OF THE MONTH is flour to help with holiday baking. We will need 2 or 5 pound bags which can be left on the cart outside the pantry door. This partners nicely with the brown and granulated sugar we have received from Monitor Sugar.

God Sighting – Sabine Sivy

The young adults of Westminster are essential to the growth of the church as leaders. Sabine Sivy has been involved and active in many ways in the church. She has been in VBS and a leader, Sunday School, Chimes, Bells, Children's Choir, Youth Group, many Christmas programs, and has baked cookies for bake sales. This year Sabine has become a leader in the Pre-K through 1st grade classroom. Helping Ms. Pam with the littles is a big task but a rewarding experience. She has stepped up in many ways when asked to be a special guest for Children's moment. With little prep she was able to do it, and the children really enjoyed it. Sabine thank you for being a leader and helping the younger members learn more about Jesus.



Words for the Beginning

Advent is a season of endings and beginnings. As the calendar year comes to a close, a new church year begins. Christ's birth ushers us into new ways of living and loving; and yet, the world as we know it spins madly on.

In many ways, pregnant Mary was surrounded by endings—large and small, personal and political. But Mary proclaimed hope in a God who was and is making all things new. Christ's birth offered a beautiful new beginning for shepherds and Magi alike—all the while, King Herod tried to bring Christ's story to an end. When we ourselves navigate seasons filled with endings and beginnings, we need reminders. We need words that can feel like steady ground, like a path for our feet to find as we step forward into the unknown.

This year's Advent series is filled with blessings, with the scriptures and reminders we need to hear again and again as we begin a new season. These reminders root us in the fundamental truths of our faith. Many of them are life

lessons we teach to children—lessons that adults continue to learn and relearn. They may resemble the blessings we impart to loved ones during special ceremonies like weddings, graduations, or baptisms.

And so, we invite you to move through this Advent season as if you are entering a sacred new chapter, holding fast to the reminders that will bolster you for the journey ahead.

Read, look, and sing your way through the pages of this year's devotional. Each week (beginning with Advent and concluding with Epiphany) offers art, reflections, poetry, and hymns to give you strength, courage, and grace. Each week has its own separate theme and reminders of God's love and presence through the gift of Jesus:

- *YOU ARE A BLESSING*
- *WE CAN'T GO ALONE*
- *DO THE GOOD THAT IS YOURS TO DO*
- *HOPE IS WORTH THE RISK*
- *LOVE KNOWS YOUR NAME*
- *DON'T FORGET TO LAUGH*
- *THE ROAD ISN'T STRAIGHT*

FELLOWSHIP TIME



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

ADULT BIBLE STUDY

Bible Study classes are offered at two different times to accommodate various schedules. Join us **Sundays at 9:00 a.m.** in the Session Room or **Thursdays at 7:00 p.m.** via Zoom.

The same study materials will be used at both gatherings.

Please visit our Adult Bible Study page on our website at www.wpcbc.org or see Rev. Linda or Pastor Jamie with any questions.

JOY AND CELEBRATION

I knew it the first moment I met you / heard your name / learned there are 7 billion of us on this planet.

I knew it in my bones, the way my feet know the way home.

You are a blessing. For our creating God breathed life into your being.

And there is simply no way that, along with that life, some of God's goodness didn't slip right in...

—Rev. Sarah (Are) Speed, excerpt from "Joy and Celebration"

For the past three years we have participated in the **January Series** of Calvin University, a free 10-day lecture series that takes place each year at Calvin University and aims to cultivate deep thought and conversations about important issues of the day in order to inspire cultural renewal and make us better global citizen in God's world. Thanks to the gift of technology, we need not travel to Grand Rapids to participate in this series on timely topics with its focus on culture and faith.

This year a diverse group of speakers have already committed to the two weeks – **January 20-24 and 27-31, 2025**. Each session is one hour long, from **12:30-1:30 PM**. We will again provide the link so you can sign up yourself and be able to watch from home. On the two Thursdays – the 23rd and the 30th, we will gather in the Session Room to watch that

day's speaker together and then have the opportunity to discuss the week's speakers and presentations.

Just three of this year's speakers:

- On the 22nd, through conversation, **John Inazu** will teach us how to disagree better while shedding light on how we often view our adversaries not only as wrong but increasingly as evil, resist notions of forgiveness, and distrust institutions that try to mediate our disagreements. These are all themes of his latest book, "Learning to Disagree: The Surprising Path to Navigating Differences with Empathy and Respect."

- **Michaela O'Donnell** - Life in Flux - will teach us the practical skills needed to navigate constant change: a life in flux. She'll show us how to face the pain and longings that come with change, embrace the unknown with confidence, and listen to God's guiding voice.
- The series concludes with **Hunter Woodhall**, who may be a familiar name to some after he won a gold medal at the 2024 Paralympics. He is an inspirational speaker – "They told me I couldn't walk, so I decided to run." Any questions about the series, please call the church office or Rev. Linda with any questions.



TUESDAY AFTERNOON BOOK STUDY GROUP

New Year - New Book

After wrapping up our reading of Savannah Guthrie's book – *Mostly What God Does* (Love Us), our 2025 Book Club series **begins on Tuesday, January 7th at 1:30 PM** in the Lounge.

At this time, we have not yet chosen our next book, but we are considering several suggestions from group members – a book by Max Lucado, another by author Marie Armenia on Molly Brown who lived a life of powerful prayer, a true story about a family's journey through grief leading to hope, and a book by Pastor Timothy Keller, who was pastor to Savannah Guthrie. Other authors and titles are still being considered and our group of 14 participants is yet to vote.

Come in as we begin a new series! Any questions, please call the church office or see Rev. Linda.

Annual Christmas Pageant



I am so excited for this year's Christmas Pageant which is The Colors of Christmas. The children and youth are hard at practicing and are excited to share their gifts and talents with you. There will be singing, acting, and recitations throughout the program. Hope to see everyone on December 15th to not only celebrate the children and youth and their hard work but to celebrate Jesus' Birth.

And Parents, mark your calendars, we'll have a dress rehearsal, Saturday December 14th at 10:00 a.m. here at the church.

~Leah Sneller

Parents Night Out

Friday, December 13th
5:00-8:00pm

We want to give our parents a night off during this holiday season. Bring the kiddos over to the church where we will have dinner and a fun evening together.

Please see Leah Sneller, Sheryl Petroff, or call the church office at (989) 686-1360 to register your children for the event

Christmas Program Rehearsal Schedule:

December 1:
After church with Tie-Dye Party

December 8:
During Youth Group

December 14:
Dress Rehearsal, 10 a.m.

December 15:
Christmas Program



PJs and Pancakes Day

Join us on Sunday morning December 29th, for our annual PJs and Pancakes day. We'll have a pancake breakfast in the Fellowship Hall at 9:30 a.m. followed with Rev. Linda leading us in worship at 10:30 a.m.

2024 Christmas Cantata

Sunday, December 22nd, 10:30 a.m.

The soul-stirring music in **GLORIOUS LIGHT OF CHRISTMAS**, arranged and orchestrated by Marty Hamby, is artfully enhanced by powerfully moving narrations, leading to a memorable and meaningful Christmas worship experience for your choir and congregation.

Share the hope and promise that came down to earth in the form of a Baby on that first Christmas night so long ago as you sing and celebrate the glorious light of God's love this Christmas!



Do you like to sing? Do you like to spread joy and Christmas spirit to friends? The Deacons are planning an afternoon of **Christmas caroling** to help spread Christmas cheer to some of our homebound and less mobile members. The more folks we have, the more folks we can visit! Join us after on **Sunday, December 15 at 1:00 pm**. If you'd like to stay after church, we'll order a couple of pizzas and eat before we head out. If you'd rather run home to change and then come back, feel free to do that as well! Don't worry, we'll be back to the church well before the Lions kick off against the Bills at 4:25.

All Saints Remembrance

On November 3rd, 2024, Westminster held a special ceremony to honor the loved ones we've lost in the past year.

This year we remembered:

2023

Russel A. Marvin

2024

Jeanne M. Bradley

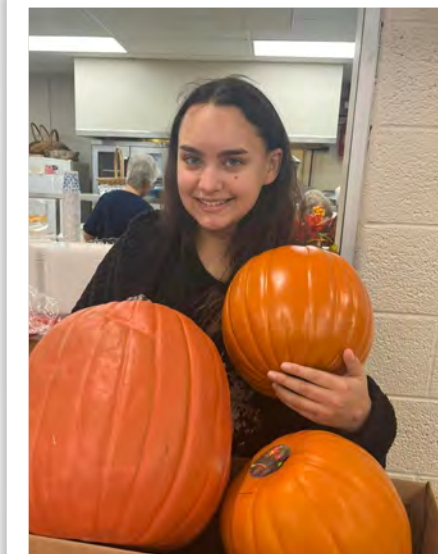
Richard L. Hebner

Claire Jacobson

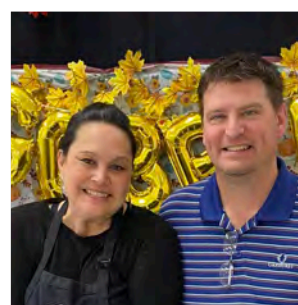
Samantha J. Kosta

Thomas F. Lange

Annabelle M. Morse



Family Harvest Party



Congratulations to **Patti Wesenick, Janelle Ballard, and Emily Morse** on winning this year's chili cook-off!



Dealing with Grief during the Holiday season

Each month the Spiritual Growth Committee will share in the Log, a few thoughts on the journey of grief that we all experience. We hope these brief thoughts will be of help and support to all.

“I’m unwrapping all these memories. Fighting back the tears. It’s just a different kind of Christmas this year.”
~Mark Schultz

It’s here! The hap-happiest time of the year! Time to put up the lights, decorate the tree, break out the Kinara, and dust off the Menorah. Make sure you get presents for everyone from your next door neighbor to Uncle Eddie. Don’t forget to handwrite all of those Holiday cards! Oooh, and you better run to the store before all the ham, turkey, brisket, chicken and sweet potatoes are sold out. You’ve made your list, right? Go... Go... .Go... We’ve got traditions to keep, people!

For many of you, this holiday season is going to be unlike any before. Even if you are hoping to keep traditions the same, it is going to be different, because a staple of your celebration, your life, is not physically here. We draw comfort from the familiar and thereby, our traditions. However, some of you may not feel like celebrating at all this year. That’s okay. Some of you may not feel like

Helping Yourself During the Holidays

- **Avoid the Would’s and Should’s**
- **Set Limits**
 - Eliminate Unnecessary Stress
 - Lower Your Expectations
 - Don’t Spread Yourself Too Thin
- **Express Your Feelings**
 - Be with Supportive and Comforting People
 - Share with Them
- **Ask for What You Need**
 - Allow Others to Help
 - Delegate Tasks
- **Be Tolerant of Your Needs**
 - Avoid Isolation - Accept invitations. Know it is okay to change your mind or leave early.
 - Plan ahead to help alleviate anxiety.
- **Holiday Traditions**
 - Same: It will never be the same, but you can

try to keep it as close to it as possible.

- **New:** Try something completely different. Perhaps get away for the holiday or volunteer.
- **Change:** New host, new location, change of table placement... Whatever might work!

Cards

- Send or Don’t Send - Either is okay!
- Simpler Idea- Email/ Send a holiday letter.

Gift Giving Ideas

- No Gifts or Gift Cards
- Make a donation to a cause close to your loved one’s heart. Give yourself a gift you know your loved one would have given you.

celebrating, but have little ones asking you to put up the tree and handing you their list of what they hope to get for the holidays. So, for their sake, you do your best keep up appearances... Which is absolutely exhausting! No matter what the holidays look like for you this year, there is going to be sadness and stress, but hopefully, sprinkled in, you will find some moments of joy, laughter and peace.

In this edition of *Comfort for the Grieving Heart*, we

wanted to take the opportunity to highlight some ideas for getting through the holidays. Many of these ideas focus on you and your needs, this time of year. It is not selfish when you are grieving to tell others what you think you can handle and in what ways they can help or support you. It truly is self-care and self-love. The stress of the holidays hits us all, but the emotions that come along with grieving and the

GRIEF continues on p. 7

GRIEF from p. 6

holidays can bring us to our knees. Keep those you can talk to and who genuinely care, close to you. It’s important to keep your loved one part of the holidays, too!

Pump the brakes, don’t be afraid to sound the horn and proceed slowly.

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Activities to Keep Your Loved One Part of the Holidays

Give yourself and others permission to keep your loved one part of the holidays. Encourage others to share and remember. Here are some ideas...

Memory Table - Set aside a space to place memories of your loved one.

- Photo
- A gift they gave you
- Their favorite candy, record, book...

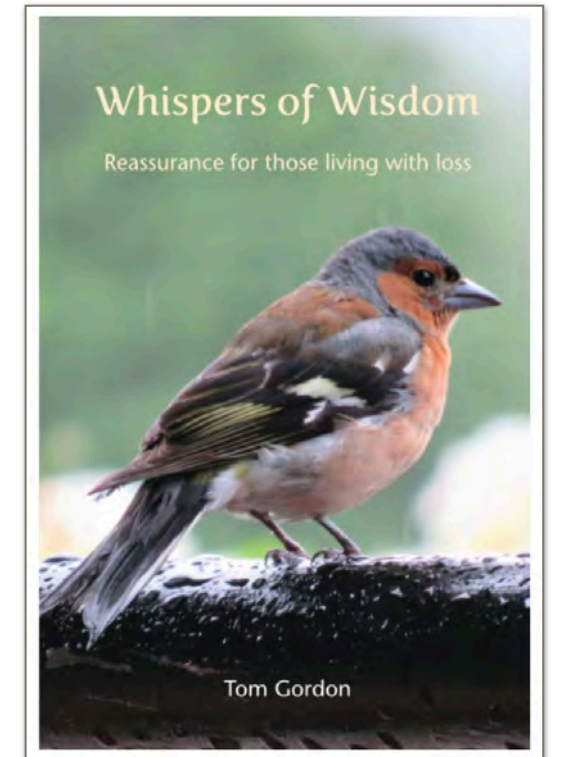
Memory Basket - Place a basket or box near the door with paper and pens. As people arrive, ask them to write a memory of the holiday or of your loved one. At some point, pass the basket and have everyone pick a memory from the basket to share. Let the kids share, too.

Toast - At dinner make a toast to those who have passed and encourage others to do the same.

Craft for the Kids (and Big Kids) - Craft stores carry bulbs, picture frames, ornaments, bookmarks, etc. that little ones and big kids alike can decorate and color. These can be nice activities to take part in and can be made in honor of your loved one.

Light a Candle - Have a candle placed and lit in their honor.

Keep Their Place at the Table - Leave a spot at the table for them. They always hold a place in your



Whispers of Wisdom

Continuing Conversations around Grief and Loss:

Whether it’s your first day or 1,000th day following a loss, grief shows up in different ways that we may or may not expect, especially this time of year. Bereavement takes us into an often unknown and uncharted world, which can be bewildering and scary, and which puts a strain on any inner resources we believed we had to cope with life’s tragedies and traumas. All of us, in our grief and loss needs not only to find some way of making sense of what bereavement does to us, but to find someone, anyone, who can be our companion in this confusing new world, to wait with us with understanding, tolerance and empathy, till clarity emerges and we are able to take tentative steps towards a new beginning. Using some stories from Tom Gordon’s book Whispers of Wisdom: Reassurance for those living with loss, join us as seek to support one another in our journeys with grief and loss. We’ll gather in the lounge (the old CE office) for coffee, cookies, and conversation on Thursday, December 12 at 1:30pm.