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THE WESTMINSTER LOG



The second week of October begins the next Follow Me unit *Cross Borders* and during that first week, we will explore what it means to leave our comfort zone. Our Scriptures contain many stories of times people crossed borders, literally and figuratively, to learn about and engage with others who were different from themselves. As we reflect on these stories from our ancestors in faith, we'll explore ways we can do that now in our own lives. But seeing that phrase 'leave your comfort zone' struck a different note for me. As I think about these last couple of months, I imagine many of us are already living well outside our zones of comfort. As humans we seek and strive for stability and comfort. The changes we've experienced—hard and difficult changes—have replaced that stability we crave, and our feelings of loss and grief and uncertainty is anything but comfortable.

Many in our church family are struggling right now, and I feel that in these times, especially during these times, there is no other place I want to be than here with all of you. In this time of discomfort, there is comfort in knowing we are not alone. And therein lies our request to all of you—and we know this too, can be uncomfortable—**ask for help.**



When we try to do it all ourselves, when we try to go it alone, we deny others the opportunity to share their gifts. And we have a congregation full of people with amazing gifts! Gifts that are ready to be shared—we just need to ask.

We have a compassionate group of Stephen Ministers who are here with a listening ear and comforting words. We have an amazing group of volunteers who provide wonderful comfort food when we need it, bringing us together in fellowship. We have so many that are willing to pitch in and help out with events in our church and in our community that bring us together with others and provide fun and friendship and more fellowship—a brief, but much needed, respite from the grief we're experiencing. Our Wings of Prayer group and so many others in our congregation are ready to lift up our concerns. Our Deacons and fellow members are here for phone calls and cards and visits.

We need to continue this! But here's the hard part, the uncomfortable part...we need to know it's OK to lean on each other. We need to listen to Jesus, when he says in Matthew "ask, and it will be given to you; seek, and you will find; knock, and it will be opened to you." We see time and time again the truth in this statement, as our loving congregation shows what it means to be the hands and feet of Christ within this church and outside its walls.

Step out of your comfort zone with me as we cross borders to love God's people, together.

IMPORTANT DATES IN OCTOBER

- Sunday, October 8**
 - Blessing of the Animals worship services (page 10)
- Saturday, October 14**
 - Fall Retreat (page 4)
- Sunday, October 15**
 - Children's Sabbath (page 8)
- Sunday, October 29**
 - Harvest Party (page 11)

OCTOBER 2023 ISSUE 179


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October

Sundays

9:00 a.m. Bell Choir Rehearsal
for our Adults; the Bells play during Worship once a month

9:00 a.m. First Light
Sunday school for PreK-4th grade

9:00 a.m. Adult Bible Study
This month, we'll continue our study on the Gospel of John. Please see page 3 for more details.

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

10:30 a.m. Worship
Beginning October 8th, our theme is Cross Borders; see page 2 for more details

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

3:45 p.m. Children's Choir
For Children in PreK-4th grade

4:15 p.m. Chime Choir
For Children in 2nd-4th grades

4:45 p.m. Junior Bells
For Youth 5th-12th grades

5:30 p.m. Dinner

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

Sunday	Monday
1 <i>World Communion Sunday</i> Feed Others Psalm 146; Matthew 25:31-46 <i>No Adult Bible Study this morning.</i>	2 1:00 p.m. The Well Lived Life Book Study 6:00 p.m. Mission Meeting 7:00 p.m. Deacon Meeting
8 Leave Your Comfort Zone Acts 11:1-18 3:00 p.m. Blessing of the Pets	9 1:00 p.m. The Well-Lived Life Book Study 5:00 p.m. Property Meeting 6:00 p.m. Finance Meeting 7:00 p.m. Stewardship Meeting
15 <i>Children's Sabbath</i> Embrace Relationships Ruth 1 11:45 a.m. New Member Inquiry Class	16 1:00 p.m. The Well-Lived Life Book Study
22 Challenge Exclusion Mark 14:3-9 11:45 a.m. New Member Inquiry Class	23 1:00 p.m. The Well-Lived Life Book Study 6:00 p.m. Promise and Possibility Class @ First Pres.
29 Speak God's Language of Love Acts 2 Genesis 45:16-24 11:30 p.m. Harvest Party	30

Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Fri/Sat
3 10:00 a.m. Hearts & Hands Knitting 6:00 p.m. Personnel Meeting 6:00 p.m. Boy Scout Troop 150	4 12:00 p.m. - 7:00 p.m. Rummage Sale for Members Only 5:15 p.m. Contemporary Choir 6:30 p.m. Chancel Choir	5 8:30 a.m. TOPS 9:00 a.m. 4:00 p.m. Rummage Sale 4:00 p.m. Combustion Council (Youth) 5:00 p.m. Food of Faith at Messiah Lutheran 7:00 p.m. Adult Bible Study via Zoom	6 9:00 a.m.- noon Rummage Sale 7
10 10:00 a.m. Staff Mtg. 10:00 a.m. Hearts & Hands Knitting 1:00 p.m. Lions Club 6:00 p.m. Boy Scout Troop 150 6:00 p.m. Fellowship and Outreach Meeting 7:00 p.m. Spiritual Growth Meeting	11 5:15 p.m. Contemporary Choir 6:30 p.m. Chancel Choir	12 8:30 a.m. TOPS 4:00 p.m. Combustion Council (Youth) 5:00 p.m. Food of Faith at Messiah Lutheran 7:00 p.m. Adult Bible Study via Zoom	13 14 9:00 a.m. Fall Retreat at Bay Shore Camp
17 10:00 a.m. Hearts & Hands Knitting 6:00 p.m. Boy Scout Troop 150 6:30 p.m. Session Meeting	18 5:15 p.m. Contemporary Choir 6:30 p.m. Chancel Choir	19 8:30 a.m. TOPS 1:00 p.m. Lydia Circle 4:00 p.m. Combustion Council (Youth) 5:00 p.m. Food of Faith at Messiah Lutheran 7:00 p.m. Adult Bible Study via Zoom	20 21
24 10:00 a.m. Staff Meeting 10:00 a.m. Hearts & Hands Knitting 6:00 p.m. Boy Scout Troop 150	25 5:15 p.m. Contemporary Choir 6:30 p.m. Chancel Choir	26 8:30 a.m. TOPS 4:00 p.m. Combustion Council (Youth) 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	27 28
31 10:00 a.m. Hearts & Hands Knitting 12:00 p.m. Lunch & Learn 6:00 p.m. Boy Scout Troop 150	Happy Birthday Iraline Jahrmarkt Marlene Mehlhose James Rowley Leota Clark Joyce Hegenauer Beverly Pacynski Carol Lange Cheryl Harpst		Office Hours Monday – Thursday: 8:00 a.m.-4:00 p.m (Closed for lunch 12:00 p.m.-1:00 p.m) Website: wpcbc.org Join us on Facebook Westminster Presbyterian Church - Bay

Treasurer's Report

The Operating Fund had income of only \$16,740.40 in August and expenses of \$31,360.05 While it seems that things slow down during the summer months, there are still bills to pay and plans for upcoming fall programming. Remember that you can set up recurring gifts using our online giving portal, found on the church's website www.wpcbc.org or look for the QR code in the bulletin. Thank you!

The **Building Improvement Fund** received contributions of \$461.00, in August and expenses of \$164.98 for a Ring Camera in the nursery. Thank you for contributing to the Building Improvement Fund which keeps our building SAFE, welcoming and in good condition

The **Major Repairs Fund** had income of \$678.00 in August. We did not have any expenses. The balance at the end of August is \$46,885.50. Thank you to those who contribute to the Major Repairs Fund.

Contributions to the **Capital Campaign Fund** totaled \$1101.10 in August. We had interest expense of \$505.41. Did you know at the start of our Loan period, our monthly interest payments alone, were around \$2200.00?! As you can see, our payments and our extra principal payments have brought that down drastically. At the end of the month, the principal sits at \$156,538.50. Thank you for contributing to the Capital Campaign Fund.

IT'S RUMMAGE SALE TIME!



You may drop off items for the rummage sale beginning Sunday, October 1 after the worship service through Tuesday, October 3.

AND A BAKE SALE TOO!

If you would like to donate items for the bake sale that will take place during the Rummage Sale, please sign up at the Dewitt Street Entrance. Proceeds from the Bake Sale will support our Youth and proceeds from the Rummage Sale will support Food of Faith.



Wednesday, October 4

For Members Only
12:00 p.m. – 7:00 p.m.

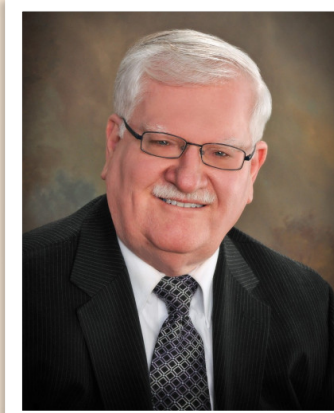
Thursday, October 5

Open to the Public
9:00 a.m. - 4:00 p.m.

Friday, October 6

Open to the Public
9:00 a.m. - 12:00 p.m.

With Sympathy



Prayers of the congregation are extended to the family and friends of John Tapley. John passed away September 21, 2023. A funeral service took place at Westminster on September 25, 2023.



Prayers of the congregation are extended to the family and friends of Marcia Andrews. Marcia passed away September 18, 2023.



MATTHEW 25 CAFE
FOOD OF FAITH, THANKSGIVING BASKETS

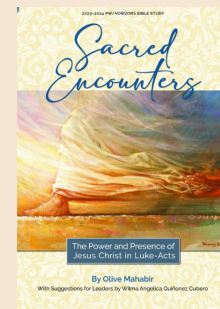
Last month Westminster took the lead on two special events: Bay City's Welcome Table that brought us together with our community in fellowship and Coming Together to End Hunger, the Presbytery-wide event that started a conversation in finding ways to work together to alleviate food insecurity in our area. We have an opportunity to continue meeting our neighbors where they are by volunteering with the Matthew 25 Cafe (formerly the Salvation Army Soup Kitchen). A team from Westminster will be serving lunch on the second Tuesday of each month, including October 10th, beginning with meal prep at 9:30 a.m.

Our amazing Food of Faith team will be serving a hot meal Thursday evening, October 26th beginning at 5:00 p.m. If you are interested in helping with either time, please contact the church office.

In a few weeks we'll begin collecting for our annual Thanksgiving Basket drive. This year, more than ever, we will need funds AND helping hands to continue this wonderful tradition that was lead by our dear friend John Tapley. More details to follow in the coming weeks.



LYDIA CIRCLE



Lydia Circle continues to meet on the third Thursday of the month at 1:00 p.m. 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. (except in December); please call Karen Schoeppach for more information about their gatherings.

FELLOWSHIP TIME

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



Coffee and donuts and cookies included!

FOLLOW ME-CROSS BORDERS

The theme for our worship and study this month is "Cross Borders." We usually think of borders as lines that separate two geographical areas: two countries, regions, cities, neighborhoods, and so on. The author of our curriculum, the Rev. Dr. Laurie Lyter Bright, writes, "For this study we are considering borders as points of separation, the lines imagined or real that separate us from them and you from me. God's creation is a full, rich, diverse place, a place where flourishing is inextricably entwined with that diversity."

Scripture offers numerous examples of the beauty in our God created diversity. From the beginning stories of creation, through the inclusive nature of the early church, we see our differences as cause for celebration. Despite this, humanity tends to react to difference as though it is scary rather than sacred, erecting borders in response. In biblical and Christian history, those borders—and in particular crossing them—become frequent sites of not only conflict but also action, transcendence, and transformation.

Throughout scripture, we encounter cultural and national borders everywhere, causing strife, tensions, and division. Not much has changed. Then as now, people of faith were often forced to encounter the other and decide through the lens of their culture and faith how they would respond to otherness. In Scripture, we see over and over again the stories of borders between people of different faiths, cultures, classes, genders, and ethnicities. Even communities that wandered had boundaries that they carried with them.

Rev. Bright sees that, "The people of God are called over and over again to cross borders in order to live more faithfully, in relationship with one another and with God. We often see these people encountering the other, rejecting and being rejected, falling back on stereotypes and snap judgments, allowing fear to fuel decision making. Yet, again and again, people of faith are pushed, pulled, invited, and commanded by God to embrace the fullness of humanity. Following Jesus demands that we follow him outside of our comfort zones and step into the unknown."



We will focus on four aspects of the ways borders are crossed in Scripture and in the Christian life over the month of October.

- Leave Your Comfort Zone (10/8)
- Embrace Relationships (10/15)
- Challenge Exclusion (10/22)
- Speak God's Language of Love (10/29)

Chancel Choir Christmas Cantata

On Sunday, December 17, Westminster's Chancel Choir will be performing a special Christmas Cantata, "And Glory Shone Around." Designed as a Christmas worship experience, this work was created as a collaboration between two seasoned veterans of church choral music, Lloyd Larson and Douglas E. Wagner. Through the scripture-based narrative and music, singers and listeners are once again invited to the humble birthplace of the Savior. The music recalls the dark days of anguish for ancient Israel, only to give way to the dawning of a new day of light and love when Christ is born. The cantata blends new melodies and familiar Christmas carols, and invites the congregation to join in the singing of familiar melodies.

All singers are invited to join this inspiring Christmas musical event. If you would like to be a part of the special Cantata Choir, plan to attend rehearsals on Wednesday evenings at 7:15 pm beginning in October. For information call Dawn Auger: home (989) 894-0426 or cell (989) 327-0412.



Harvest Party
Sunday, October 29
immediately following worship

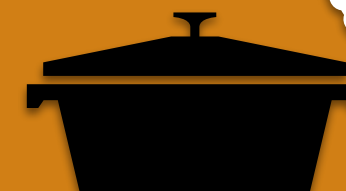
Join us for some family fun!

Enjoy chili and grilled cheese sandwiches for lunch!

Members are invited to make desserts: cookies, brownies, bars, etc.

Prizes
Candy
Photos

Chili Cook-off Contest!
Contact Kevin Robinson
Brandi Higgins or Dawn Reszke to enter!



Prizes will be awarded in 2 categories: traditional chili recipes and non-traditional recipes

Mummy Bowling - Apple Toss -Pumpkin Ring Toss - Pumpkin Painting - And More



50-YEAR MEMBER RECOGNITION
SEPTEMBER 24, 2023

Congratulations to this year's 50-year members: Janet Beattie, Irene Esckilsen and Janet LaFave. Thank you to the Deacons for hosting luncheon and Dawn Reszke for the wonderful pictures.



Blessing of the Animals

Sunday, October 8
3:00 p.m. - for all animals
(please remember to cage or lease your pets)



Westminster will hold our annual Blessing of the Animals service on the north lawn **Sunday, October 8th at 3:00 p.m.** Saint Francis of Assisi lived during the twelfth century and was known for his love of animals and care for the environment. On October 4th each year, the Catholic church commemorates the Feast of Saint Francis and a growing tradition in many other Christian churches is to remember his care for God's creatures by holding a Blessing of the Animals service.

On October 8th, we'll have a brief service of worship that will conclude with an individual blessing for each pet and family present. All animals are welcome, but must be caged or on a leash at all times (for everyone's safety, especially your pets!). You may also bring a photo of your pet if you do not wish to bring them to the church, or more likely, your pet doesn't want to travel.

Thank you to our Westminster Family who volunteered their time for this amazing event and those who came down and enjoyed the day with us. It was a great opportunity to meet with our neighbors and community!



THURSDAY EVENING BIBLE STUDY

A border is a line ...

drawn between two entities. For this study, we will consider borders as points of separation. These can be physical, separating one country, state, neighborhood, or property from another. Borders can also be social or emotional, separating people by characteristics or ideology. Throughout human history, people have consistently tried to make order and understand the world by noticing differences and drawing borders between us and them, you and me. Creating such borders creates places of comfort and safety for ourselves. Yet in so doing, we lose the diversity that leads to creativity and beauty and increase divisions in our world that lead to conflicts. To cross a border is to erase the line that separates, move beyond what is known and comfortable, acknowledge and embrace differences. In crossing borders, we challenge the status quo and call into question "the way it always is." Border crossing involves action to break unhelpful boundaries and norms that keep us from truly encountering one another. In biblical and Christian history, borders—and in particular crossing them—became frequent sources of conflict, but also action, transcendence, and transformation. The people of God are called over and over again to cross borders in order to live more faithfully, in relationship with one another and with God.

Over the next four weeks – October 12, 19, 26, November 2 – we will explore biblical texts that illuminate four dimensions of "Crossing Borders"

Week One: Leave Your Comfort Zone—In Acts 11:1-18, Peter is criticized by the Jewish leaders in Jerusalem for going to the uncircumcised and eating with them. Peter reports that in Joppa, he witnessed the Holy Spirit come upon the people, and he baptized them. He challenged his critics, saying, "who was I that I could hinder God?"

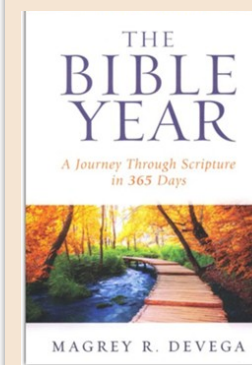
Week Two: Embrace Relationships—**Ruth's words to her mother-in-law, Naomi.** Ruth (chapter 1:16–17) express her commitment to their relationship across traditional boundaries of home, culture, and belief.

Week Three: Challenge Exclusion—When Jesus' disciples angrily scold the woman who anoints Jesus with expensive oil (Mark 14:3–9), Jesus challenges their rebuke of her, celebrating the service and kindness she offered him.

Week Four: Speak God's Language of Love—The Pentecost event (as described in Acts 2:1–20) displays the work of the Holy Spirit in filling and empowering Jesus' disciples to speak God's good news and deeds of power in languages that a diverse gathering of others could understand.

Come join us **Thursday evenings at 7 PM via Zoom.** Please call the church office to pick up your book or to be added to the list to receive a Zoom invitation. Any questions, please contact Rev. Linda.

SUNDAY MORNING BIBLE STUDY



John's Gospel was written decades after the first three Gospels of the New Testament – Matthew, Mark, and Luke. Pastor Magrey deVega writes in his book, *The Bible Year Devotional*, "in the first three Gospels we read three versions of the feeding of the multitude, two versions of the birth of Jesus, as well as all the parables, all the miracles, all the teaching. Jammed packed with accounts of Jesus' life.

And then comes John's Gospel; John has even more to tell us about Jesus in a very different way. It is consistent with the other Gospels but tells us about Jesus in a way that emphasizes different things, capturing different aspects of who Jesus is and why his life, death, and resurrection are important.

Some of the most treasured and widely known biblical passages of all time come from John's Gospel - John 3:16: "For God so loved the world..." The theme verse for John's Gospel is found in chapter 20, verse 31: "But these things are written so that you will believe that Jesus is the Christ, God's son, and that believing, you will have lived in his name." John tells the story so

that you, the reader, may come to believe that Jesus is the Messiah, the Son of God."

But reading the Gospel of John also holds it challenges –

Each week when we gather on Sunday mornings –**at 9 AM** - we will combine both a devotional reading of John along with addressing some of the challenges in understanding this fourth Gospel. We will ask both questions – what does the passage mean? How am I being called to respond?

Come join us as we explore the Gospel of John. This will be an in-person gathering, though if there is an interest in making the gathering a hybrid meeting, we will make accommodations for this. Please call Rev. Linda or the church office with any questions.

The very first verse of the Bible can be translated “When God BEGAN TO CREATE,” which implies that the creation of all that is seen and unseen was just the beginning! God is still creating—many times through us. It is incredible that God invites us to be co-creators by gifting us with talents and passions for the work of the kin-dom.

Our retreat is going to be filled with opportunities to participate in creative expressions— as an individual and as a group. As you just read in the verse above, God is a creative being, and since we are made in God’s image, we are creative beings too. Let’s remember that “being creative” is not necessarily about art gallery submissions—although it can be. Being creative is about the actual creating—or “making” is another word. There is a product, but creating is much more about the process. Our job is to let go and relax into the rhythm of creating.

One of the things we will do during the retreat is make what’s called “Little Altars Everywhere”—and it’s exactly what it sounds like. This will even include items gathered from an outside walk or little slips of paper with favorite sayings or scripture. Each one of us will get to add whatever you want to these altars. These will be a spot to “curate,” to “create.” Near the end of the retreat, we will gather as a group and share about the things that have been placed there.

You will also receive a journal for jotting down your thoughts, discoveries, and revelations—enter poems, scripture, feelings, prayers.



In the world of the driven
Let us be drawn in
 Let your love be a given
Let us be drawn in
 To imagine, to dream, to create, to redeem
 For the sake of the livin’
Let us be drawn in

Come join us on **Saturday, October 14th at Bay Shores Camp in Sebawaing.** Just like last year there will be an opportunity to carpool. **The retreat will begin at 9 AM. Cost will be \$25 which includes lunch and snacks. Please call the church office to register.**



Join us Tuesday, October 31st at noon for the next installment of Lunch & Learn for this fall season. Our speaker will be Miyong Beslaer, Chaplain, who serves women prisoners in Bay County. She has been a chaplain since 2004.



Lunch & Learn

Chaplain Beslaer is originally from Seoul, Korea. She is a wife, mother, and grandmother who enjoys cooking and eating hot spicy foods, loves traveling and hiking, and listening to Christian music. Her life focus and life Bible verse is - Trust in The Lord with all your heart, and lean not on your understanding. In all your ways acknowledge Him, and He shall direct your paths.

Lunch & Learn will begin at noon. Lacey & Richard Frontjes will be our hosts. Please bring your own bag lunch; beverages and a sweat treat will be provided.

**Join us in Fellowship Hall
 Tuesday,
 October 31st at noon. For our
 next Lunch and Learn**

Weekly Schedule for Youth & Adults

Sundays

- 9:00 a.m. First Light (Sunday School for 3-year-olds – 4th grade)
- 9:00 a.m. Adult Bible Study (meets in-person in the Session Room; currently focusing on the Gospel of John)
- 10:30 a.m. Worship Service
- 3:45 p.m. Children and Youth Music Rehearsals (see the Calendar for details on specific times)
- 6:00 p.m. Ignite (Youth Group for 5th grade – 12th grade)

Mondays

- 1:00 p.m. The Well-Lived Life Book Study at Sheffield Bay Assisted Living (through Oct. 23rd)

Thursdays

- 4:00 p.m. Combustion Council
- 7:00 p.m. Adult Bible Study (Using the Follow Me Curriculum; October 8th begins the Cross Borders Unit. Books are available in the Office.)

**Dinner
 volunteers are needed for
 Sunday evenings!**



Sunday Evenings

This program year, Westminster will offer a time of fellowship and food for 5th through 12th grade students on Sunday evenings. If you would like to bring dinner for youth and volunteers, please review the dinner schedule by scanning the QR code at the right. Or call Ms. Brandi. Dinner will take place from 5:30 until 6:00 p.m. in Fellowship Hall.



THE WELL-LIVED LIFE BOOK STUDY CONTINUES

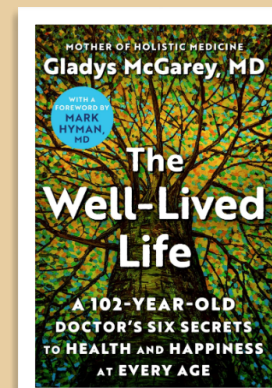
These past two years at Westminster we have made several opportunities to move outside our walls – the fall block party and most recently Bay City’s Welcome Table event that brought out 175-200 people. In September we too had the opportunity to move outside of our walls by going to where others are – sharing in a time with a few folks at Sheffield Bay as we began a discussion on the book – “The Well-Lived Life.” The book is written by Gladys McGarey, MD who is considered by some to be the “Mother of Holistic Medicine.” In the pages of her new book, Dr. McGarey shares her life experience in living life fully (for 102 years!) You don’t even have to be half of her 102 years to find this book meaningful.

We’re continuing to meet for the next four Monday afternoons in October and explore what she sees as the secrets she has discovered in living the “Well-Lived Life”: *LOVE IS THE MOST POWERFUL MEDICINE, YOU ARE NEVER TRULY ALONE, EVERYTHING IS YOUR TEACHER, SPEND YOUR ENERGY WILDLY.*

Her ideas are both inspiring and practical. She writes from her childhood experience as the child of missionaries, her life as a doctor and the wife of a doctor, as the mother of six children, and then in her 60’s facing both heartbreak and illness. Each of the sections include a practical exercise to put to use in our everyday lives.

It’s not too late to join in the discussion with fellow members of Westminster and residents of Sheffield Bay. A few copies of the book are still available in the church office. Please call the church office or Rev. Linda with any questions.

Stay tuned next month for further updates on other FYI Happenings for later in the fall, winter, and even Spring 2024.





"Each child belongs to all of us and they will bring us a tomorrow in direct relation to the responsibility we have shown to them."

-Maya Angelou

We are a part of the movement! Once again, this year we will be participating in an annual, nationwide multifaith National Observance of Children's Sabbaths. (This is our fourth year of participation here at Westminster!) Every year, places of worship across the nation and from every religious tradition, join together in common concern for the struggles children, youths, and families face. The Sabbath is our expression of shared commitment to listening deeply to the voices of children and youths. This will mark a spiritual commitment to our united voice responding with care, action, and advocacy for our children. This intergenerational partnership will launch the

weekend of October 15th and continue in the year that follows.

Children's Sabbath was launched by the Children's Defense Fund 50 years ago. This year's umbrella theme is, "And a little Child Shall Lead Them" lifted from the verses, Isaiah 11:6. It is a promise of peace and rest, wholeness and flourishing. It is also a foreshadowing that God's chosen one, the one who come to subvert the establishment of the ruling power, would be a baby – a child – whose foray into the world begins in a makeshift house, a manger, because Jesus and his parents were temporarily housing insecure.

You may remember that in 2019 we shared information about hunger and unpaid school lunch programs. Westminster responded and \$1200 was raised for our local schools. Two years ago, in 2021 – Westminster pledged through the Presbyterian Disaster Assistance Program to help a poor, overseas community establish a working farm so that they might be self-sufficient and generous with each other. We raised \$5000.

Last year the congregation came together once again and raised \$3000 for area elementary school programs. On Sunday, October 15th, some of the children from MacGregor School in Bay City who learned practical life skills will share their presence and helpfulness with us, serving coffee and sweets following our Sunday morning worship service. Stay tuned on October 15th for details regarding this year's outreach program.

All of our children belong to all of us, because that's what kinship does. It's a reminder of that dust we came from and of that dust we will return to. It's a reminder that while we are here, we make room for the next generation to spring up from the soil and create a new landscape.

WPC AND ME! (NEW MEMBER INQUIRY)

Have you been participating in the life and worship of Westminster and want to know more about what it means to become a member of the church? You are invited to attend our new member inquiry classes! We will hold **two, one and a half hour classes following worship on Sundays, October 15 and October 22**. Participants will learn about our PC(USA) denomination and what it means to be an active member of Westminster Presbyterian Church. There is no obligation to join the church after taking the class, but the classes are required for those who would like to become members. Please let Pastor Jamie or the church office know if you are interested in attending or know of someone who might be.



PROMISE AND POSSIBILITY THE MOVEMENT OF THE SPIRIT THROUGH GEN Z

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

The church is not immune to this struggle as it tries to maintain traditions, but also present the Gospel in ways that will reach new

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

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

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

Please see Pastor Jamie if you have any questions.



A four class study with First Presbyterian and Westminster.

The schedule is as follows:
October 23, 2023 (First Presbyterian)
November 20, 2023 (Westminster)
January 22, 2024 (First Presbyterian)
February 19, 2024 (Westminster)

Each session runs from
6:00 p.m.-7:00 p.m.

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



Reflections on the Journey Through Grief

"We are not human beings having a spiritual experience, we are spiritual beings having a human experience." ~ Teilhard de Chardin

We often think of grief as an emotional response, one where we experience a range of emotions such as anger, guilt, sadness, loneliness and yearning. Grief can also affect our spirituality. Spiritual doubts and questions may arise after someone we love dies. We may pause to confront and re-think our basic beliefs about God, death, religion and the existence of an afterlife. Some people may turn to God for strength and consolation and find their faith has been deepened or renewed. Others may question the religious teachings they've practiced all their lives and find the foundations of their beliefs shaken to the core. Even people with no religious upbringing may feel angry at God for letting their loved one get sick and die.

Broadly defined, the essence of spirituality is how we find meaning in life. The assumptions that guide our life — that life is fair, that people get what they deserve, that God is benevolent, that the old die before the young, etc. — are strained and sometimes shattered.

This collapse in beliefs and assumptions about the world and your place in it can lead to a spiritual crisis regardless of your identification or affiliation with an organized religion. One difficult issue in grief is rebuilding faith or philosophical systems that have been challenged by the death of a loved one.

We all have beliefs that provide a sense of security — that make sense of the world and offer a code of conduct for life no matter where these beliefs originate. But sometimes a loss deeply challenges these notions and leads to a crisis of belief. Parents mourning the death of their child are especially prone to this type of crisis because of the unique and powerful bond between parent and child. A child's death defies the natural order in life. A crisis in belief can also occur when someone is diagnosed with a protracted disease such as dementia or Lou Gerig's disease, where the quality of life is compromised and the suffering is viewed as intolerable.



Not all deaths cause a spiritual crisis. Yet when loss challenges our beliefs and assumptions, it's important to acknowledge just how normal this reaction is. Sometimes we may feel frightened that we are losing our faith. Yet periods of doubt are also part of the cycle of belief. Recognize that a new faith can grow from grief, into a deeper, more mature understanding of the divine dimension of life. Sometimes meaning must be lost before it can be found.

When Dealing with Questions of Faith

Not everyone shares the same cultural, religious or spiritual beliefs about death and the after-life. Death often forces us to confront spiritual questions we haven't taken time to address, questions that get at the heart and meaning of life: Who am I? Why am I here? Where am I going?

Whether a strong religious faith or a spiritual belief helps or hinders you, often depends on what you believe and how these beliefs are practiced. What religion and spirituality cannot do is give us immunity from loss or provide a shortcut through grief.

In the book, *Life After Loss* pastoral counselor Bob Deits identifies a few beliefs that may be harmful — believing that death is God's will and should not be questioned or that there must be a grand plan or purpose (a why) for every death.

Instead Deits offers a few beliefs that may be more helpful— that this is a mortal, frail and imperfect world where tragedies do occur and that there is no satisfactory explanation when loss occurs. The question to ask yourself is not why me, but rather if me, then what can I learn from this loss?

Deits encourages people to move away from the why questions to the how questions: How can you work through loss and achieve as full a life as possible? How do you find meaning in life without this person? How do you start anew? How can you use this experience to help someone else? If you are struggling with unfamiliar spiritual reactions or a crisis in faith, consider these strategies:

► Talk with a minister, priest or rabbi — yours or someone new. The inherent nature of spirituality is based on connection, which can be a great comfort when grieving. Explore and question the values and beliefs you've accepted in the past and formulate new ones when you need to.

Speaking with a spiritual leader or counselor may help you find a pathway to new or renewed faith.

► Make space in your schedule for daily meditation, prayer, nature or music. Spending even a few minutes can restore inner peace and be a source of strength and consolation. These practices are simple and can be practiced anywhere at any time.

► Practice rituals. Perhaps you find comfort in rituals that your faith community provided or you may need to look deeper inside, examining, modifying or creating new rituals as you adjust to life without a loved one. This may be especially true if the loss was sudden, traumatic or intentional.

► Become a student. If you're struggling with faith and spirituality, explore different points of view. Every form of spirituality has books and teachers to turn to when trying to make sense from a loss.

New research on dying, mourning and spirituality suggests the ways people rediscover meaning may be less important than the process of searching itself. In other words, the ability to re-ascribe meaning to a changed world through spiritual transformation, religious conversion or philanthropy may be more significant than the specific content by which that need is filled.

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

The post below comes from a non-profit organization called CaringBridge. This is a communication platform which allows people facing various medical conditions and their family and friends to share their stories and updates. Here, Mike, a husband and father shares his feelings on his wife, Val's illness and talks about his faith during this difficult time.

This is such a hard journey. It has been hard for the last 2 years as what started as a brain bleed that she recovered from eventually was diagnosed as a terminal stage IV glioblastoma. Yet, while we grieve, we are at peace, and we desire that Val be released from this broken earthly body. Many ask what do we need, what can I do for you? Simply, pray for a merciful death for Val. Pray for wisdom and discernment for me in any hospice care decisions. Pray for our children who lose a mother long before they should. Pray for all of us for a peace that passes understanding.

"All shall be well, and all manner of thing shall be well" Julian of Norwich

While I do believe in God's omnipotence, I do not believe that everything happens for a reason. Our free will and our decisions/actions lead to consequences that God does not micromanage. I believe that tragedy, trauma, and premature death bring untimely pain and sorrow and grief. I believe that circumstances and mistakes we make, and abnormal cells growing in our body can bring suffering and death. And God is aware, and he does not always change our circumstances, and he is in the mess and the suffering with us. We who follow the way of Jesus can have faith that allows us to chose joy, to lament, to cling to faith, in all circumstances, however adverse, and for no particular reason, except this: that all things will ultimately be put right by Christ.