



# Westminster

## Presbyterian Church

### ZEPHYRS

SUMMER 2021



#### **COURAGEOUSLY CURIOUS** | Pastor Rob McClellan

With each passing week, more opportunities for ministry are opening for us. Having experimented with so many virtual forms, we now have more tools than before the pandemic to do the work of the church. Like many, I am fully vaccinated, and it has been a boost to my spirit to worship in person.

Churches are finding that the return to participation has been slow, measured. Some people are being necessarily cautious. Others find the ongoing constraints on worship dampen the experience. For others still, a year of new Sunday habits have comfortably set in.

There are those who will want to blame the restrictions of the past year, but the reality is far more complex. COVID has surely accelerated a cultural shift that has been happening for some time. A recent Gallup poll revealed *(cont...)*

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#### **THE ART OF HOSPITALITY**

Associate Pastor Bethany Nelson

During our recent new member orientation, we talked about the delicate balance between helping visitors to feel welcomed at Westminster without making them feel overwhelmed. Welcoming and connecting with people is especially difficult during this pandemic time, as it is sometimes difficult to tell if we know someone when half their face is covered by a mask!

Let us not allow these challenges to prevent us from being a church of extravagant welcome. As we move to having regular fellowship time following worship, stick around for a while. Introduce yourself to someone you don't know. Make it a point to talk to several different people as we *(cont...)*



## COURAGEOUSLY CURIOUS

Continued...

that in 1999 70% of Americans belonged to a church, synagogue, or mosque; by 2020 that number dropped to 47%. That is a seismic change.

As we try to figure out how to respond, perhaps returning to the church's birth story would prove instructive. In the amazing gathering that takes place in the Pentecost story, when people gather from all over the world and experience some rather strange things, their instinct is not to be afraid, but to get curious. "What does this mean?" they ask (Acts 2:12).

What *does* this mean? What does it mean that we are both emerging from a pandemic and yet our gatherings will still be affected by it for the foreseeable future? What does it mean that people today view religion and spirituality quite differently than a generation or two ago? What does it mean to be people of the resurrection in this particular time and place?

Asking these questions anxiously will lead us to work frantically to make church as easy as possible so we can keep up with the "competition." Of course, we want to be accessible, but grasping for people will have the opposite of the intended effect. As Shane Claiborne puts it when he diagnoses the state of the church today, "We're not losing young people because we're making the gospel too hard, but because we're making it too easy." His point is not to make faith artificially difficult, but to make it authentically meaningful, worthy of the sacrifice and commitment it requires.

Asking our questions curiously and in faith will help us wonder what God might be up to in and through us. Interestingly, our congregation has had a notable influx of visitors as the physical doors of the church have reopened. What is bringing them? What are they searching for and what are they finding? What about the others in the wider community aching for deeper relationships and a vibrant spirituality?

If we get caught up in the wrong questions, we will miss the answers to the right ones. May we allow the uncertainty of this season to plant in us the seeds of genuine curiosity and be brave enough to try their fruit.

*God's Peace,  
Rob*

"What does this mean?"  
*Acts 2:12*

## THE ART OF HOSPITALITY

Continued...

reconnect with each other after being separated for so long.

In their book, "The Art of Hospitality," Yvonne Gentile and Debi Nixon introduce the "10-foot rule" and the "3-minute rule." The 10-foot rule encourages us to be attentive to the people within ten feet of us. This means that we do not have to be responsible for greeting everyone, but we can focus on greeting the people who happen to be standing near us. And, if everyone is using the 10-foot rule, everyone will feel welcomed and included because no one will be overlooked.

The 3-minute rule encourages us to spend 3 minutes before and after worship (or any church event) greeting those we do not know. All of us naturally gravitate to our friends ... especially if we have not seen them regularly during the pandemic! Using the 3-minute rule helps us to be intentional about getting to know people we have not yet met.

At a recent Session meeting, our ruling Elders spent some time discussing their experiences from when they were new visitors at Westminster. They had very positive things to say about their first impressions of worship, our children and youth programs, and our vibrant community. However, the one struggle that resonated with many was their discomfort during the coffee hour fellowship time following worship. They did not know who to talk to, most people seemed content to converse with people they already knew, and it was awkward for them to not be a part of the "in" crowd. As our coffee hour time begins again, I know we can do better!

Hospitality definitely is an art. It does not come easily or naturally to all of us. However, it is such an important part of being a welcoming and inclusive church community. Let's practice together! We can help each other notice people within 10 feet of us who would welcome a friendly greeting. We can remind each other to spend the first 3 minutes getting to know someone new before we start a conversation with our friends, even if we haven't seen our friends in a long time. May Westminster always be known as a place of extravagant welcome.

*Blessings,  
Bethany*



## WHEN IT IS SAFE TO SING AGAIN

Ruth E. Wells, Music Director

As restrictions on gatherings are easing, all the choral groups I've been part of are surveying their members and trying to figure out what to plan for the time when singing will be considered safe again.

One group is hoping to hold an outdoor concert in August. Another is considering how to get their members into shape after a year or more of not singing, perhaps beginning in the fall with rehearsals of small groups for a holiday concert. Will enough singers be ready to participate to populate all the sections of the chorus? So much is still unknown, but it is worth asking ourselves "If I am healthy, am I ready to share in the gift of song with other singers?"

While some of us are eager to resume singing as soon as possible, it is likely that not all of our regular choir members will be ready to return. Will you be ready to step into (or return to) this ministry when the green light is given to sing again?

The staff and Worship Commission have begun exploring how worship music might evolve as we move forward. Perhaps the choir will participate less frequently. Would that make it easier for you to join in the singing? The music ministry welcomes your participation. Talk with me about it.

Ruth E.

## WPC HIKING GROUP

Calling all Hikers! We are hitting the trails again following a pandemic break. All are welcome to join us the 2nd and 4th Fridays of the month. Hikers meet at the designated location by 9:15 am and hikes leave promptly at 9:30am.

If you are on our hiking list, you will receive an email a few days before each hike from SignUp Genius. If you would like to be added to the list, please email Judi Sachs at [Judisachs9@gmail.com](mailto:Judisachs9@gmail.com).

Contact Carol Coffman at [boco54@gmail.com](mailto:boco54@gmail.com) if you are willing to lead a hike.

Hikes will be of varying levels of difficulty as determined and shared by hike leader. You will find the information on the level of difficulty and location of hikes on the SignUp Genius. Each hike will begin with a prayer or poem to guide our hikes. Come spend time getting reacquainted with your friends, make new ones, and commune in the gift of nature given to us by God.





## BUILD IT BACK BETTER

Jeff Shankle, Director of Youth Ministry

All systems go! Last month teenagers were (finally) playing fall sports, winter sports, and spring sports. Many families went from total boredom to busier than ever. I remember one mother telling me, “It’s like I forgot how to be busy.”

As we try to put our post-Covid lives together again, I often wonder how we might be able to re-prioritize the spiritual lives of our youth. Maybe we could make community, prayer, and service new priorities in our families. But then I realize...

Do we currently have the bandwidth to do such a thing?

Do we have the energy to engage relationally with others again? Or for the first time?

For some of us that answer is no, at least not yet. We all love the idea of having teenagers with a vibrant prayer life, or who are compassionately working for the needy, or are in an active youth group to support and care for each other. Basically, we’d love them to carry on the life and teachings of Jesus Christ.

But we know that doesn’t normally happen without effort. And while brighter days ahead give us some excitement for the future, we also know that we simply haven’t worked out these spiritual muscles much lately. Reinstilling the value of regular church attendance is hard. After all, we’ve been comfortably in our pajamas every Sunday for the past year. Reinstilling the value of sacrificing time for others is hard. After all, since charities have been mostly shuttered, we’ve spent much of the past year focused on our home. Reinstilling the value of community and celebration is hard. After all, we’ve spent the last year staying away from others for everyone’s safety.

I started running again over the past year. There were lots of aches and pains along the way. There was some stopping and starting again. But now when I head out the door and feel my (soon to be shaved) head full of hair flying in in the wind, I feel it in my bones - it was all worth it.

As you get back on that spiritual horse again and lead your family back to God if you have wandered away, please know, there will be some aches and pains. Encourage each other! There will be aches and there will be times when it’s inconvenient for someone. There will be pains and there will be times when you struggle.

But, over time, little by little, hopefully prayerfully, we’ll all be able to rebuild our spiritual lives back better. May it be so!

## WELCOMING AND THANKING OUR CHURCH OFFICERS

During our Zoom worship service on May 2, we ordained and installed our **INCOMING OFFICERS**. Thank you for serving the church community in this way!

### **Elders**

Maria Adkins  
Susan Bertelsen  
Amanda Busch  
Jill Obata  
Lyla Tipton

### **Deacons**

Beverly Alexander  
Nancy Carlston  
Jerry Eaton  
Coral Kisseberth  
Maryland Swensen

Thank you also to our **OUTGOING OFFICERS**. We appreciate your service!

### **Elders**

Harbo Jensen  
Coral Kisseberth  
Marcia Gould  
Markus Obata  
George Warga

### **Deacons**

Jennifer Cowan  
Sue Hagan  
Carla Lantier  
Diane Newman  
Peter Sayers

## SMALL GROUP PICNICS | By Randy Huyser, Congregational Life Commission Chair

Small Group Picnics have proven to be a nice substitute for our regular Small Group Dinners during the pandemic, and we are in the midst of another late-spring batch of them. After more than a year away from regular congregational fellowship opportunities, the picnics are a perfect opportunity to spend time together, renew friendships, and meet new people.

Numerous hosts have opened their patios, decks and yards to the picnic guests, and other picnics are being held at parks and gardens, including WPC's Frost Garden. Covid precautions still demand that attendees bring all their own food and drink. In locations where seating is less than plentiful, guests may bring blankets and chairs for comfortable relaxation.

### Picnic Dates:

- Sat June 5, 6:00 PM, Hosts: Lisa & Steffen Bartschat, Location: Mill Valley
- Sun June 13, 6:00 PM, Hosts: Karen & Brook Halsey, Location: Novato
- Sun June 20, 11:30 AM, Host: Randy Huyser, Location: WPC Frost Garden, Tiburon
- Sat June 26, 6:00 PM, Hosts: Gwen & Hamp Mauvais, Location: Marinwood Park, San Rafael
- Sat June 26, 6:00 PM, Hosts: Meme Hurd & Maria Adkins, Location: Mill Valley

To sign up for a picnic, see Randy Huyser or use the signup link provided in the eNews and on the WPC website.



*Images from our parking lot picnic last October.*



## MOMENT FOR STEWARDSHIP

By Karen Halsey, Stewardship Commission Member

It was evening when the Stewardship Commission met in the garden of Christina Hanson's home. Yet, small birds were still flying to and fro, chirping loudly, as they prepared to settle in for the night. We all have heard their happy, excited songs outside our windows or on our walks. Spring-time! New life, new hope, especially needed this year. First, though, nests of grass and twigs must be made. Every year brings new nests.

Stewardship is a bit like this. Each year, our commission

asks you to share your financial resources. Together, we make our spiritual nest, Westminster. Our resources also serve others in our community and help to better the world. It's a delicate business, asking for these contributions, but one that must be done to create a place for new ideas, friendships, and opportunities to serve.

With deep gratitude, the Stewardship Commission would like to share the results of our 2021 pledge drive with you. The generosity of the congregation was evident, as we raised pledges of \$652, 246. While this is less than the 2020 pledge total of \$681,955, it is remarkable to have raised so much in a difficult year for so many people. We currently have 193 pledges, including 20 from new members or members who had not pledged last year. The 193 pledges include 52 people who increased their pledge from 2020.

Let us now sing as loudly and happily as the garden birds, for we have done the work of making our Westminster nest again.

### Hope is the thing with feathers

By *Emily Dickinson*

Hope is the thing with feathers -  
That perches in the soul -  
And sings the tune without the words -  
And never stops - at all -

And sweetest - in the Gale - is heard -  
And sore must be the storm -  
That could abash the little Bird  
That kept so many warm -

I've heard it in the chilliest land -  
And on the strangest Sea -  
Yet - never - in Extremity,  
It asked a crumb - of me.

## POETRY CORNER

Poems from some of our WPC members

### A Poem for Spring Days

by *Debbie Dybsky*

God of winter, of bare trees  
that have said goodbye  
to their leaves,  
help us to understand  
that letting go  
can bring new life.

God of bears, who leave  
winter's rest  
a new season to weave,  
allow us your wisdom  
to release the  
old and embrace the new.

God of spring flowers  
born in the winter past  
and bloomed at last,  
remind us to move from shadow  
to blossom in the light  
of the dawn.

God of renewal, of new life  
of new beginnings  
and fresh starts,  
grow something new  
in our souls, in our hearts  
that surprise us into surrender.

## POETRY CORNER | Continued...

Will and Georgia were both members of our 2021 High School Confirmation Class.

### An Affirmation of Faith

*By Will Tolmie*

In every waking moment, I breathe the divine grace of God.

My lungs are filled with

His benevolence,  
His fortitude,  
His mercy,  
His diligence,  
His sanctity,  
His glory, and  
His capacity to grant me with life.

In every waking moment, I am called forth by the divine grace of God.

Every breath of mine is a blessed creation for this world:

for the sinful,  
for the loved,  
for the forgotten,  
for the faithful,  
for the astray,  
for Him, and  
for myself.

In every waking moment, I am reinvented by the divine grace of God.

My soul is liberated from the oppressive shackles of sin and

I am redeemed,  
I am reassured,  
I am embraced,  
I am blessed,  
I am believed,  
I am worthy, and  
I am saved.

In every waking moment, we belong to the divine grace of God.

Our existences are filled with value and faithful gratitude:

we glisten,  
we discover,  
we reminisce,  
we evolve,  
we mourn,  
we endure, and  
we live.

In every waking moment, I walk within the light of God.

Nothing in life or death has shielded me from His gifts.

I am truly joyful, and I am divinely renewed.

In every waking moment, I exist within the venerable pages of the Bible. *(cont...)*

### Statement of Faith

*By Georgia Bender*

God is a mother and fathers unconditional love

God is memories that make people who they are

God is the emotional power of empathy and compassion

God is understanding the importance of pain and the strength that it brings

God is the beauty and complexity of nature

God is the feeling of music, light, and dance

God is healing

God is the light of life and the peace of death

God is laughter and new life

God is the unexplainable

God is meaning so personal and special

God is miracles

God is a feeling of greater purpose

God is a calling and an urge to be better

God is the ability to understand that science is real and

knowledge is power; but God is faith and the power in believing in what you cannot see

Jesus is acts of selflessness and sacrifice

Jesus is forgiveness and acceptance

Jesus is growing and learning from our mistakes

Jesus is an example of how to live

Jesus is God's way of explaining and spreading His word

The Holy Spirit is the bond and connection among each other

The shared energy and feeling of faith, trust and love

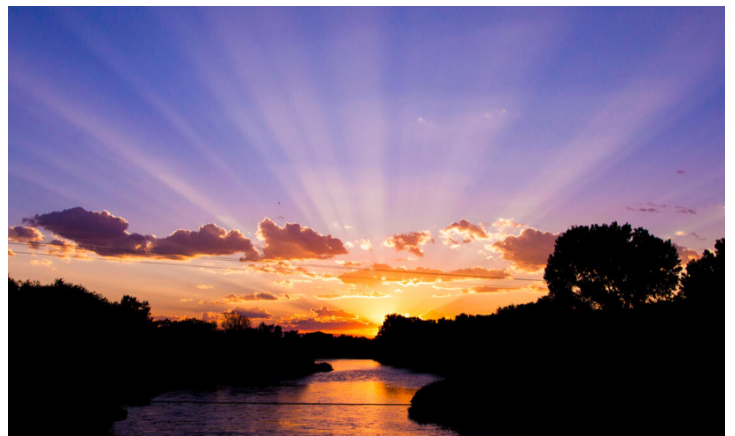
The longing for goodness and kindness

The Holy Spirit is trust, love and forgiveness

Faith is difficult to explain to others as a lot of what faith and a personal relationship with God is about is beyond words

I am willing to learn and grow and carry out my spiritual journey

I hope that in every part of this journey I become closer to God, and closer to understanding Jesus, the Bible and the Holy Spirit.



Continued...

Faithfully taking His grace by hand, I leap from scripture into the arms of our Lord God Himself.

He sings to me in blessed psalm, and I listen with an open heart, praying without cessation.

In every waking moment, I am commanded by God, in Whom I trust. When in weakness, he instills me with divine strength, leading me to true peace.

In a world imbued with fear, I find blessed salvation in His forgiveness.

In every waking moment, I face Jesus.

Coming down from Heaven, He made me human on Earth, surrounding me with His boundless, redemptive love and shattering the mirror of evil.

In every waking moment, I follow His gospel.

I am challenged to echo the melodies of compassion sounded by Jesus.

His divinity touches my humanity, and they rhythmically embrace.

In every waking moment, I fall from grace.

But His spirit releases me from the agonizing gravity of transgression.

As I am elevated to true blessedness, I faithfully understand, and I faithfully grow.

In every waking moment, I rediscover God.

His beauty is found in forgiveness, in communion, and in all creation.

The dominion of everlasting love is redeeming, and I am met with the mercy and justice of God.

In every waking moment, I am a Christian.

My soul is beckoned by reverent thought and revels in holy enlightenment,

God bestows upon me the divine courage to be proud, and I believe.

In every waking moment, I celebrate.

I feel the praise of God in the blessed winds beneath my feet.

My blessed heart beats to the cadence of His grace.

In every waking moment, I am born again,

surrounded by the Father, by the Son, and by the Holy Spirit.

I am alive. I am loved. I am forgiven.

I breathe, and God is with me in all of His glory.

Praise be to God and all of His gifts! With every breath, Amen.

*(Will notes that he connects with God through male pronouns, but recognizes that any of the existing pronoun sets are entirely suitable for God.)*



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