



Westminster

Presbyterian Church

ZEPHYRS

FALL 2022



A HAPPY...NEW YEAR?

Pastor Rob McClellan

I know it's September, but in the church this time in the calendar feels like the beginning of the year – schools begins, people return from summer vacations, and we gather in greater numbers. We have a lot to be thankful for and a lot to be excited about in the year ahead.

We are gathering in fuller and new ways. Even though COVID continues, we have found ways both to gather in person and provide virtual offerings. In that sense, we are now more effective than before at reaching people. We have even had new members join the church who came to us online during the pandemic. We will continue with this expanded range of options, making both faith formation opportunities and business meetings more accessible and flexible. (cont...)

CARING FOR OTHERS

Associate Pastor Bethany Nelson

This summer, my whole family went down with Covid for about a week and a half. Luckily, we all recovered just fine, but being in a sick household taught me several interesting lessons. First, and most importantly, the Westminster congregation is wonderful! I already knew this, of course, but your wonderfulness was reinforced for me when I was sick. After Rob announced why I was not in worship in early July, so many of you reached out to let me know you were thinking of and praying for me. I was definitely uplifted by your prayers. You were also so understanding when I was slow to respond to church-related business. It was such a gift to be able to take a few days just to focus on getting well and not on my work email. (cont...)



A HAPPY...NEW YEAR?

Continued...

We are continuing to invest serious time and energy into strategic planning, which will sharpen our ministry, aid our outreach into the community, and build the case for support into the future. For the past two years we have focused on five key areas: establishing a clear, novel articulation of our Christian identity; building a fitting committee structure to meet our needs; establishing confidence in our financial future; retaining and growing membership and engagement; and growing a sense of the beloved community. Currently, the elders are finalizing purpose, vision, and mission statements which will help us answer the call to effective relevant ministry in Marin and beyond.

Not only are we gathering and planning internally, but we are going out into the world in important ways as well. A communications committee started in 2021 continues to work to expand our messaging to those outside the bounds of the church. Youth mission trips have resumed, which both joins our neighbors in sustained partnerships and provides a launchpad for the year of youth ministry at home. Adult mission trips and faith formation experiences have been added this year, helping us join in God's work in the world. New community partnerships are on the horizon again.

You will hear a lot of doom and gloom about religious life in America these days. To be sure, there are reasons for concern, whether it is misguided or even hateful ideologies, or widespread suspicion of religion itself. However, that is not the final or most important word. As a recent op-ed in The Wall Street Journal, "Religion is Dying? Don't Believe It", argues, it is too simple to decry the end of religion in the United States. In fact, one can surmise that this is a time of immense opportunity for a church such as Westminster that exists "to embody the inclusive love of Jesus Christ" (our latest version of our purpose statement).

People are hungry for community, a meaningful spirituality, and a chance to learn, grow, and serve with others. We have the privilege and joy of offering just these opportunities. So, let us enter into a "new year" with both gratitude and excitement!

God's peace,
Rob

CARING FOR OTHERS

Continued...

Second, it is hard to ask for help! A couple people reached out about bringing us food, and my first reaction was, "No, thank you. We're fine." However, we really weren't fine. We did not have much food in the house, we couldn't go grocery shopping, and we certainly did not feel like cooking. Why would I say we were fine when we obviously were not? Accepting help is hard! I am so grateful that two different families ignored my lie about being fine and brought us meals anyway. We ate and enjoyed every single bite.

Third, it is quite difficult to respond to inquiries when you are not feeling well. I so appreciated receiving emails and texts wishing me well, but I didn't respond to many of them. I also let most calls go to voicemail. This experience made me consider how I check in with people. Moving from, "How are you?" to "You're in my healing prayers" is a subtle, but important shift. The first invites a response that someone may not feel like giving. The second allows someone to receive the love without having to reply.

I read with interest a New York Times article recently shared with me by a WPC congregant titled, "How Not to Help a Friend in Need." In the article, author Tara Parker-Pope shares several tips similar to my Covid learnings, including:

- Think twice before you call.
- Send a text of support, rather than asking for an update.
- Send a card.
- Don't ask people what they need, instead make a specific offer to help.

I will definitely keep these learnings in mind going forward. Perhaps some of these tips will resonate with you as well. This is such an amazingly caring congregation. May we continue to share God's love in meaningful ways with each other and with the wider community.

(Here is the link to the entire NYT article - <https://www.nytimes.com/2022/02/17/well/family/help-friend-support.html>)

Blessings,
Bethany



THE KIDS ARE ALRIGHT

Jeff Shankle | Director of Youth Ministry

We live in polarizing times. Most of us would rather not end up in an argument. And those who would? Well, we'd simply rather not be around them!

So we do the easy thing. We avoid people who don't share our thoughts and values. And if we must spend time with them, we definitely don't talk about it.

About a month ago some of our high schoolers and adult leaders returned to San Diego for our summer mission trip. Due to some last minute changes, we ended up serving alongside youth from several different churches. Some of those churches traveled short distances (Claremont, CA) and others traveled very far (Buck County, PA). One (NE Indiana) even traveled a great distance by bus... without air conditioning!

As far as I could tell, every church represented a different denomination - a different branch of this big, sprawling, diverse family we call Christianity.

Most teens in Marin recognize they live in a sort of bubble. They know their affinity for equal rights, social justice, the environment, and science are not always shared in other parts of the country. They also know that other youth groups are often much more comfortable expressing their faith publicly. Where those groups live it may be normal.

To be frank, over the years WPC youth have understandably struggled in these environments. When we gather with other youth groups (especially outside of the Bay Area) we can feel out of place. Bethany once recalled to me about having to explain to one of our high schoolers, "We say we're inclusive. But are we picking who we're including?" That youth is now well into adulthood. I have shared many of those same conversations with our youth who are also now adults. We are always learning and growing.

This is why this summer's trip felt like something of a breakthrough.

Our youth have grown to be more kind, open, and curious about their lifestyles and spiritual journeys than in previous years. They listened, interested with less judgment. They even shared some from their own experience.

In John 17 Jesus is nearing the end of His crucifixion. He prays for unity and our love for one another even going so far as to claim that's how people will know God's love.

It's easy to love people who think and feel the way you do about the world. It takes effort and openness to befriend people from other walks of life, learning and growing with them. It can be exhausting and frustrating at times. But this is our call. The Spirit sustains us.



Sharing a meal with some of our new friends

I can't say that the kids are perfect here currently, but I can say the kids are alright. There may yet be an end to the age of division.

WESTMINSTER EVENTS

By Erin Elliott



A welcoming “community center” on the campus of Westminster Presbyterian Church.

Westminster Events (“WE”) is a fresh new idea, conceived in the wake of the pandemic’s isolation. The concept is best understood as a “21st century community center,” offering innovative classes, affinity group gatherings, workshops, panel discussions, art shows, book talks and musical performances. WE’s mission is to offer classes for individuals to come together in community to LEARN and GROW. A key element of

WE is our targeted promotion efforts; reaching out to not only the WPC community and southern Marin, but also the greater Bay Area.

WE’s kick-off Program, in March 2022, was a series on “Grief and Loss in the Wake of the Pandemic”, that culminated in a facilitated dinner, discussion and “end-of-life expert” talk, utilizing our beautiful caterer-friendly kitchen. Our second event was a book talk in a lively “in-conversation style” format with WPC member and memoir author, Lee Darby, in discussion with Rev. Bethany Nelson.

WE also currently offers a monthly class called a “Death Café,” which is a by-donation, facilitated discussion group for individuals who wish to discuss a wide range of topics related to death and dying. (See page 6 for more details.)



To read more about the presenters of the first two WE events, please scan the QR codes above.

WHAT WE PROGRAMS ARE COMING UP?

This fall, WE will host two engaging “In Conversation” events. And in October, a repeat of the very popular Grief and Loss workshop.

These dates and other details are currently being finalized, so keep your eye on WPC eNews and Sunday bulletins for details!

Do you know someone (maybe you?) who might offer a WE program? We are currently seeking individuals or groups that have an interest in presenting a book talk, a workshop, a panel discussion, offering an affinity discussion group, assembling musicians for a benefit concert, organize an art show (school groups welcome!) in WPC’s beautiful entry Narthex, or offer a donation or fee-based class or class series.

WE is currently considering programs for early 2023. Please contact Erin Elliott, WE Programming Director, erinielliott7@gmail.com for more details.

IN THE PEWS: PEOPLE OF WPC

This is the first in what will be a regular Zephyrs series highlighting the many ways you – the WPC congregation – serve our church and community. You sit next to each other in the pews every Sunday, but do you know some of the rich history and life experiences that led the person next to you to offer their time, talents, energy and love to the church? In this issue, we highlight **Sharon Terrill**, who recently retired as chair of our Worship Committee and is involved in many different aspects of the WPC community. (cont...)



Continued...

Thank you to Sharon and co-author Deb Newton (from our Communications Committee) for kicking off this spotlight series.

Q - Sharon is originally from Texas, but her family moved to Torrance, CA in her teens and she competed as Miss Torrance and won the 1968 Miss California title. Sharon, tell us a little bit about the path that took you to that stage.

A - I was attracted to the Miss America program because it is considered to be the largest scholarship program for women in the world. I came from a lower-middle class family and was trying to help out the family budget by supporting my college education. By the time I was done, I was able to finish paying for my Bachelors and obtained my Masters degree!

Q - Women who participate in such a competition have a lot experience with community service. What types of activities did you find most rewarding when you were young? Were you also involved with volunteerism your church?

A - Yes, and that was another reason I thought I had a chance at the state title. I was knee deep in “projects,” both with my family (delivering

meals to others before we were allowed to sit down at our own Thanksgiving Dinner) and with my college sorority (organizing a paint party to paint an underprivileged elementary school). I recently have been trying to clean out old (ancient?) storage boxes and came across an old newspaper article from the early 60s about the leadership in my church. I was in the picture with all these old guys, and I was only a sophomore in high school...I had not remembered that! Yes, I was VERY involved...teaching the little kids, youth group leader, pulpit guest, summer camp counselor, etc.

Q – As chair of the Worship Committee, you created such a beautiful environment for all of us to enjoy that enhances our worship experience. Where do you draw your inspiration?

A - I am definitely not a “creative” person. I am good at having an idea, gathering some materials, and then saying to the committee, “Well, folks, you think we can do something great with this?” And they do! It is always a group effort! 97% of my ideas come from suggestions from others. You name the decoration and I’ll tell you who gave me the idea!



A FEW MORE THOUGHTS FROM SHARON

In 1968, when judges of Miss California asked the top five contenders one final question, mine was: What is the most important attribute a parent can instill in a child? All I could do was blurt out: A personal relationship with Jesus Christ.

My life has taken many twists and turns, but my answer remains the same. The most important force in my life is, “My personal relationship with Jesus Christ.” These days, I think of Jesus as Chairman of my Board—the one with whom I constantly consult. Here are a few lessons I’ve learned from my Chairman.

- **Smile More:** People love openness and vulnerability. A smile can express so much and it doesn’t cost anything! I LOVE the advice Burr gave Hamilton, “Smile more...Talk Less.”
- **Talk Less:** Now, that’s more of a challenge. I’m strong and opiniated. My mouth has definitely gotten me in trouble. Some days, when I get caught up in my own drama, my “go-to” prayer is: “Dear Lord, Please keep your arm around my shoulders, and your hand over my mouth.”
- **Trust the Arm Around Your Shoulders:** I enjoy both the comfort and character-building lessons I’ve learned by trusting the nudge of God’s arm. God knows my journey and my bumbles. That gives me comfort...I hope it does you, too!

ARE YOU THROWING AWAY PERFECTLY GOOD FOOD?

By Judi Sachs and the Loving Creation team

Every year, 40% of the food produced in the United States goes uneaten, leading to 160 billion pounds of wasted food in our landfills. Being good stewards of God's creation means being mindful of not wasting food – and it also can save money!

Around 90% of people in the U.S. don't understand expiration dates on food labels. They throw away food that is still good or could be frozen for later. You may see different wording on product labels. How long is food good for based on the wording? By understanding expiration terms, we can better interpret how long our food is good.

1. Sell-By Date

Refrigerated products most often have sell-by dates on labels. Stores use this date to know when to remove products from shelves. For example, dairy products are good for 1 week after the sell-by date. Eggs are safe for 3 to 5 weeks after the sell-by date.

2. Best if Used by Date

"Best if Used By/Before" indicates best flavor or quality. It is not a safety date. Your food doesn't spoil after this date, but it may dry out or not taste as good. The USDA tells us that even if the expiration date on your food item has passed, it should still be safe to eat if handled properly until spoilage is evident.

Your food may be good for months or even years after this date with proper storage. Don't eat food from damaged packaging that have holes, dents, or bulges because it may not be good. Don't eat food if it has a bad smell.

3. Expiration Date

Expiration dates use phrases like "expires on" or "do not use after" for products. Expiration dates are used on food products like:

- Infant formula, Baby food, Vitamins, Over-the-counter medications
- Cake mixes, Baking powder, Pectin

These products have an expiration because they may not function the same after the date listed.

Yeast may not be as effective. Medications may not offer the same results.



September 29 is the 3rd International Day of Awareness of Food Loss and Waste.

To help celebrate this day, in addition to knowing about food labels, try out some easy habits for reducing food waste:

1. To help you buy only what you will use, shop from a list with a meal plan in mind.
2. Store food wisely by moving older products to the front of your cupboard or refrigerator so you consume them first.
3. Get creative by using leftovers as ingredients for another meal; leftover night can get the creative juices flowing.
4. Shop at Farmer's Markets as their fresh produce lasts so much longer since it is freshly picked when you buy it.

MONTHLY DEATH CAFE

First Thursday of the month, 7:00 pm

What is a Death Cafe? Individuals come together to share what is on their minds and hearts, without a particular theme or topic other than death. Come with your musings, curiosity, and willingness to listen. The event is by donation to cover costs of tea and cake; \$5 is suggested. Reservations are not needed. Facilitated by local End-of-Life Doula Anthea Grimson and Karen Murray. You can learn more at deathcafe.com, compassionatewalk.com, and lifedeathbreath.com.

A MOMENT FOR STEWARDSHIP

A Conversation with Marissa Danney | by Bill McLeod



You may not have seen **Marissa Danney** very much around WPC lately, and for good reason. She is busy with a career and being a new mom and a step-mom too! Marissa lives in Forest Knolls with her husband, Stefan Ritter, her six-month-old son Theo (pronounced “tayo”), and her two step-daughters, June (13) and Sienna (11). I had the benefit of chatting with Marissa over coffee at her neighborhood espresso shop. We sat outside on a beautiful day as Theo sat on a blanket playing with a paper cup and chewing on whatever he could get his hands on!

Where are you from?

Marissa is from Nyack, NY, a community on the beautiful Hudson River just north of New York City. She was “raised in faith” in a close-knit family including her mom (a therapist) and brother who still live in NY, and her Dad who is deceased and was a long time minister in the Reformed Church of America.

Can you tell me more about your Dad?

Her Dad was a big and loving influence on her life, yes in part because he was a pastor but also because he was just a kind soul. He was “tall, gentle, nurturing, and goofy.” And even though he was a pastor, he was always someone who put no pressure on her about being faithful.

How did you end up pursuing a career as a chaplain?

Marissa is Chaplain Educator at UCSF where she mentors, trains, and educates other chaplains in the UCSF system. She loves working with dedicated medical professionals including doctors and nurses, and finds the environment inspiring. She’s also well-suited for the job: she “likes to listen, is not easily shocked, and enjoys the link to spirituality,” so being a chaplain ended up being the perfect fit for her. At a young age, Marissa seemed to have an understanding of spirituality that came naturally, and her peers often reached out to her for input and advice. This, and her faith in general, ultimately led her to feel called to study religion in college. She initially thought she wanted to be a minister like her dad, and eventually ended up studying at the San Francisco Theological Seminary (SFTS) in San Anselmo.

How did you find WPC?

As luck would have it, Marissa was at the Ghost Ranch Conference Center in New Mexico about nine years ago when she bumped into a young pastor by the name of Rob McClellan. It was there they figured out they both were headed to the Bay Area. Rob had just taken the senior pastor job at WPC and Marissa was headed to SFTS. They stayed in touch and Marissa actually worked for WPC in youth ministry during 2015. Later, after she settled near Forest Knolls, she went church

shopping and decided WPC was the right fit. She started “attending” WPC early in 2020 during the pandemic.

Can you share something you have learned about WPC since joining?

Marissa has taken advantage of Rob and Bethany’s offering of home services, where they come to the home of someone who can’t make it to church for one reason or another. She called it not just a pastoral visit but a “skim milk” service just for her when she couldn’t leave home with Theo. She said it was a special, intimate experience that people in the community should be aware of when circumstances dictate!

What is your approach to stewardship/financially supporting your church community?

Marissa takes a real faith-based perspective on giving and is very much influenced by her upbringing. She learned early about the concept of tithing from her family, church, and scripture. In fact, her childhood church raised money for her to study religion and she has never forgotten that generosity. Her definition of tithing is giving 10% of her annual earnings to her local church community. It’s a way of showing “your faith and God with your personal resources: that life has integrity and that work and life are not separate from faith.” And her intentional stewardship happens annually, rain or shine, regardless of circumstance. While she may give to other causes, those are always in addition to her gifts to the church.

A fun fact about Marissa?

She enjoys labyrinth walks. Her strategy is intentional: she utilizes the contemplative nature of the labyrinth to pray about what she needs to let go of and what she needs more of.

COMING THIS FALL

These are just a few of the many activities and events coming this fall.

Be sure to check your eNews and worship bulletin for the most up-to-date information.

ANNUAL IN-GATHERING BRUNCH

September 11, 11:00 am

Join us for a tasty brunch and a chance to meet new friends and re-connect with old friends.

SUNDAY SUPPER CLUB BEGINS

September 11, 4:00 pm

A new weekly dinner worship where we cook and dine together.

SPIRITUAL LIFE BOOK GROUP

September 12, 7:00 pm

Our book group kicks off the fall with the new book "When Things Fall Apart: Heart Advice for Difficult Times" by Pema Chodron.

HIGH SCHOOL CONFIRMATION CLASS

September 18, 11:20 am

All high school students who have not yet participated in Confirmation are invited to join Bethany and Jeff for the kick-off of this annual class series.

EQUINOX OWL HIKE

September 22, 6:30 pm

Join Steffen Bartschat and Judy Friede in Tennessee Valley for a Spiritual Life hike and perhaps some owl spotting.

CHILDREN'S 3N1

September 25, 11:20 am

Children in 5th grade and younger and their families are invited to gather for a pizza lunch and card making for our homebound members, followed by conversation for adults and a movie for the kids.

TRANS HEARTLINE PANEL

October 2, 11:20 am

Rev. Janie Spahr and THL board member Suzanne Ford will be at Westminster to offer information and an update about one of our local mission partners, Trans HeartLine.

WOMEN'S RETREAT

October 14-15

Rev. Brook Scott will facilitate our retreat at Santa Sabina in San Rafael. Our theme is "Finding Your Treasure." See Bethany to register.

PRAYER RETREAT

October 29

Rev. Ted Scott will be with us for the day as we consider developing and expanding our personal prayer practices.