



Westminster

Presbyterian Church

ZEPHYRS

ADVENT 2018



SHOWING UP | Pastor Rob McClellan

Recently, I've been thinking a lot about how I want to show up in the world. There is so much I cannot control, but I can control how I am (most of the time). As we enter Advent, we remember how in Jesus Christ God showed up in the world in a particular and particularly powerful way.

God came into the world from the bottom. For all the sentimentality that surrounds the story of the baby Jesus (and sentimentality does have its place) there is also something profound about telling a story of God coming to the earth as a baby, totally dependent on his mother, fragile and helpless. He doesn't enter as a person of privilege or exorbitant means. *How can we approach problems from the perspective of the powerless, (cont...)*

TIME TO PREPARE | Associate Pastor Bethany Nelson

I am very much looking forward to our upcoming Tuesday evening Advent series, sponsored by the Spiritual Life Commission. This three-week series will feature a yoga session, a labyrinth walk, and a vespers service. During a season that can often be quite hectic, what a gift it is to know I will have a time each week of Advent to slow down and spend some time with the Spirit. For me, this series will be a time to prepare my heart, mind, and soul for the birth of Jesus. You will find specific details about the series later in this newsletter, but I want to share just a little about why each evening will be special for me.

Many years ago, I practiced yoga quite regularly. It was a rather (cont...)



SHOWING UP | Continued...

the dependent, and the vulnerable? Can we learn to privilege their perspective?

God defied expectations. Whether you look at the prophecies or at the clear expectations of Jesus' own time, Jesus was often surprising people in how he spoke, what he valued, and what he called into question. In fact, his propensity to do this was often so upsetting to the status quo and those who preferred to uphold it (because they presumed to benefit from it) that it led to his repeated and ultimate rejection. The Franciscan Richard Rohr says that Jesus was killed because of conventional wisdom, more specifically, his commitment to calling it into question. *How can we learn to call in to question harmful ways of thinking and unjust ways of structuring systems?*

God did not choose violence. Jesus was met with opposition in many forms and repeatedly. When those who defended him wanted to do so, he urged them to put down their sword. When confronted with his own execution he did not employ the supposed power he had, and had displayed miraculously for good, in order to enact violence even on those who were clearly wrong. I've grown increasingly troubled by the way some who are concerned about many of the same issues which concern me are increasingly showing up with the same aggression they claim to be opposing. I know calls from the top to be civil and unified can be thinly veiled oppression, but like King, Gandhi, and Jesus, I remain committed to the conviction that nonviolent soul force is the most powerful force in the universe. *How can we employ it for good?*

God chose to come. This may sound obvious, but the most profound thing about God coming into the world, especially in the glaring example of Christmas, is that it happened. God happened...and happens. It is easy to bury one's head in the sand—and there is a time for retreat and a need for balance—but ultimately, we are called to show up to put our bodies where it matters. This is what God did in Jesus Christ, and calls us to do as the church, the body of Christ today. *How can we show up in the places that are hurting and offer another way?*

God's Peace,
Rob

TIME TO PREPARE | Continued...

intense class, and I found muscles I never knew I had. I had to stop attending that class for a variety of reasons, and never got back into the yoga habit. When yoga instructor and WPC member Erin Elliott began offering yoga classes at the church last year, I, with great trepidation, tried out a class. I was quite worried that I would not be up to the challenge. Thankfully, I found that when Erin says that her class is "*Yoga for Every Body*," she means it! With careful attention to breath and poses that are accessible to all, I found it a wonderful way to begin my Monday morning. As Advent begins, I look forward to nurturing both my body and my soul. As I focus on breathing in and out, I plan to spend some time reflecting on the very first breaths of the Christ child – Emmanuel, God With Us.

Every time I walk a labyrinth, I experience the walk differently. I consider this one of the blessings of the labyrinth! Sometimes, I concentrate on the walking ... the sensation of my feet on the ground and my breath moving through my body. I experiment with walking quickly and walking slowly. Other times, I have a specific issue of discernment for which I seek clarity as I walk. Sometimes it is a walk of gratitude for me, as I give thanks to God for that which brings me love and joy and hope in my life. During Advent, as the labyrinth is surrounded by candlelight, I will likely give thanks for the Light of the World, breaking into our world as a tiny baby.

I will lead the Advent vespers service, which will include time for both spoken and unspoken prayer, readings from scripture and other sources, and opportunities for quiet contemplation. For me, no service is complete without music, so we will explore some Taize chants together, as well as special Advent music. Every year I lament that there just is not enough worship time in Advent to explore the beautiful music of the season, so this will be a wonderful chance to do that. The vespers service will be a participatory time together, as we each in our own way prepare for the birth of Jesus.

Hope to see you at one, two, or all three!

Blessings,
Bethany



PREPARE THE WAY

Ruth E. Wells, Music Director

I may be alone in this, but I absolutely love the dark time of the year. I love the season of waiting and watching, of contemplating the possibility of what is to come. But this year, in planning for the Advent music, I started focusing on the prophetic text to *“prepare the way of the Lord,”* which got me working on a new anthem for Dec. 9.

What strikes me about the Isaiah 40 text is that the voice in the wilderness isn't telling us to just wait around for a savior (someone else). It's exhorting us to get ready – prepare the way. There are rough places to make smooth. Where are they?

Is *“the way”* I am preparing literally through me? How do I prepare for that? Should I eat less, or at least better? Should I make time for a meditative practice, or start doing yoga or tai-chi? Or get out of my head and use my presence in the world to work for social justice. There's no shortage of possibilities. Pick one. Do something.

There's a voice in my wilderness calling, and the charge is simple, *“What are you waiting for?”*

Soli Deo Gloria,
Ruth E.

CHRISTMAS EVE WORSHIP

Monday, December 24th

10:00AM - Traditional service with sermon & choral music
(nursery care available)

5:00PM - Children's Christmas pageant

9:00PM - Candlelight service with sermon & jazz music

TUESDAY EVENING ADVENT SERIES

The Spiritual Life Commission will offer a special three-part “Self-Care” evening series this holiday season to encourage you to set aside time to tend to some of your most precious relationships - with yourself and with God - this sacred season.

We begin this series on December 4th from 7:00 - 8:10pm with a Restore and Replenish yoga class. This class is appropriate for those interested in a nurturing and nourishing yoga session, welcoming all levels of students. Please bring a mat if you own one. Extras will be provided. In order to accommodate all interested, advanced registration is encouraged as the class is limited to the first 20 students. There is no fee. **To register please email Erin Elliott at: erinielliott7@gmail.com.**

On December 11th from 7:00-8:15pm, drop in any time to experience our beautiful candlelit labyrinth in Findlay Hall. Both the Sanctuary and Findlay Hall will be aglow with candles for your contemplation and sacred experience.

On December 18th from 7:00-7:45pm, we will have an Advent vespers service in the sanctuary. This will be a contemplative time of prayer, readings, music, and silence.

A POEM FOR AUTUMN DAYS

Submitted by Debbie Dybsky,
Spiritual Life Commission co-chair

God of autumn, the trees are saying goodbye to their leaves, letting go of what has been. We, too, have our moments of surrender. Help us to let go when we need to do so.

God of geese going south for another season. Your wisdom enables us to know what needs to be left behind and what needs to be carried into the future. We yearn for your insight and wisdom.

God of life, you believe in us, you enrich us, and you entrust us with the freedom to choose life. For all this, we are grateful.

- by Joyce Rupp

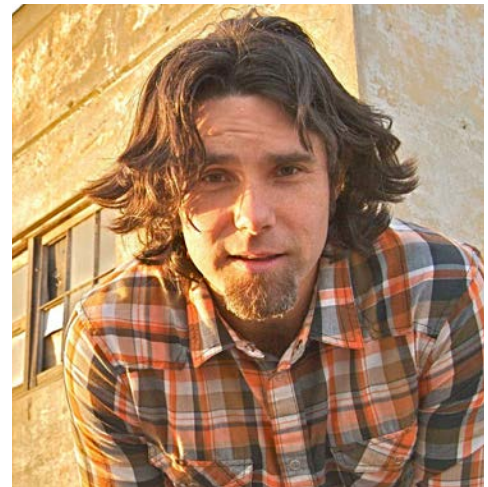


ALL HANDS ON DECK | Jeff Shankle, Youth Director

It's not simply intuition anymore, we now know through research that faith-based, intergenerational relationships are the most important determining factor for our young people to have spiritual vitality as young adults. Having a church that values our young people with their time and attention is obviously a big component to this. How will they forge these relationships if we're not creating opportunities for that?

The weekend of May 3-5, 2019 is our **RECLAIM** weekend. We participate in lots of interfaith, ecumenical, and other cross-cultural work. It is also important for us to have some time that is just about us - the youth ministry of Westminster Presbyterian Church - which I hope you now know includes all of us in some capacity.

My friend, Justin McRoberts (Twitter, Instagram, Facebook @justinmcroberts), will join us for the weekend. Justin is the author of 3 books, but is mostly known from his musical career that spans more than 10 albums. He is a creative dynamo who will help our youth engage their spiritual lives with passion. Justin travels the world as a speaker and musician. We are lucky to have him.



Justin McRoberts

You can help us by providing a home for 4-8 youth and adults to spend the nights. If you think of the RECLAIM weekend like going to camp, Westminster is the camp and the homes of WPC members are the cabins where small groups of teens can gather to forge tighter relationships and explore deeper truths in conversation. We simply need places to stay where we can sleep (in our sleeping bags) and shower.

On Saturday of that weekend, our youth will be scattered through the area serving people and places in need through a variety of service projects. As a host home, you'll have the joy of getting to hear from these young people as they grow in the Spirit and share stories about their service in the community as part of the weekend. On Sunday morning, RECLAIM will lead the 10:00am worship service. All of WPC and the community will be able to celebrate the work of Christ together.

If you are willing to contribute to the RECLAIM weekend by hosting a group of teens and adult leaders or by helping to provide meals, please let me know. If you're interested in being a small group leader and sharing the entire weekend with us, please also let me know. We are excited to share a spring weekend with you. As the change of season brings new life, we look forward to seeing a new life spring up in all of us.

ANNUAL WOW CHRISTMAS LUNCHEON

Our annual **Women of Westminster** Christmas luncheon will be Wednesday, December 5 at 11:30am. Our speaker is Rev. David Gregory from Community Congregational Church, who will be sharing his spiritual journey. **We need your RSVP no later than December 2nd.**
Please contact: sally.pasternack@yahoo.com.



GROWING IN GOD: A LIFELONG JOURNEY

SAVE THE DATE FOR THIS ONE DAY RETREAT ON SATURDAY,
JANUARY 26, 2019 FROM 10:00-2:00PM.

One very helpful way of appreciating the adult faith journey is through understanding the spiritual gifts, tasks, and challenges of young adulthood, midlife, and elderhood. Each phase invites us into a growing and developing experience of God, ourselves, and community. In this retreat we'll be praying with scripture and examining Richard Rohr's description of first and second half of life spirituality. With time for personal reflection, we will share with one another those movements of the Spirit that continue to call and guide us, always in unique and often in unexpected ways, into deepening faith, hope, and love.

Spiritual director Ruah Bull will facilitate this retreat. She leads workshops and retreats at Santa Sabina in San Rafael and Mercy Center in Burlingame, as well as at various retreat centers and churches in the Bay Area. The cost for the retreat, which includes lunch, is \$20. **For questions and to register contact Pat O'Neil: ptoneil30@gmail.com | 415-747-5285.**



Ruah Bull



HERE WE GROW! | Ron Meserve, Renovation Committee Chair

What an exciting time in the life of Westminster Presbyterian Church! We have completed a successful fundraising campaign and now we are in the early stage of planning the start of construction. We have an incredibly talented architect and will select the general contractor soon. Members of the staff, congregation, and the Renovation committee met with the architect on November 6 to provide recommendations for final design considerations.

Members of the congregation will have the opportunity to meet with Ron Meserve, Chair of the Renovation committee, and other members of the committee at two Town Hall meetings. An update on the renovation will be provided, followed by a time for Q&A. These Town Hall meetings will be held at 11:45am on December 2 and 9. On December 16, a congregational meeting will be held at 11:00am for the purpose of securing necessary financing as explained in the renovation update letter you received in November.

Should you have questions outside of these opportunities, feel free to speak with Ron or any other member of the Renovation Committee. Committee members are: **Jo Cooper, Elke Bray, Lauren Nunnally, Ann West, Tod Moody (Vice Chair), Chuck Quick, Adam Krivatsy, Carol Coffman, Rob McClellan and Ron Meserve.**

UPDATE ON OPPORTUNITIES FOR HELPING HUNGRY & HOMELESS IN MARIN | Judi Sachs, Carolyn Grey, and Trigg McLeod

Many of you have asked what Westminster will be doing to support the homeless now that the REST program is officially dissolved. Below is an update on what's being done in the County and how people can get involved.

WHAT IS HAPPENING IN MARIN NOW

St. Vincent de Paul Society, Homeward Bound, Ritter Center, the Marin Housing Authority, County of Marin, City of San Rafael and other public entities continue to work together with a "housing first" model through the Homeless Outreach Team (HOT), Coordinated Entry, and Whole Person Care. Since the County and local nonprofits serving the homeless made this switch a year ago, 70 chronically homeless people have been placed in housing that includes supportive services to ensure they remain housed. (cont...)



UPDATE ON OPPORTUNITIES FOR HELPING HUNGRY & HOMELESS IN MARIN | Continued...

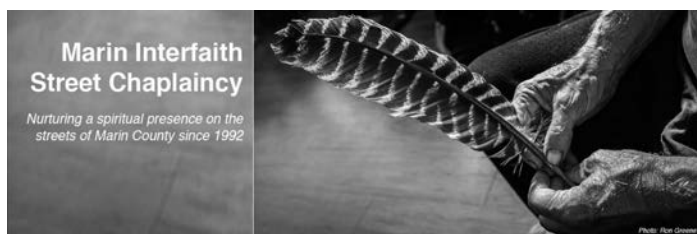
Mary Kay Sweeney, executive director of Homeward Bound of Marin, the principal provider of shelter and services for homeless in the county, said, *"In the old days, we used to fix people before they went into housing. We had every type of service imaginable: trauma services, drug and alcohol rehab on site. We wanted to get somebody ready to get into housing,"* Sweeney said. *"Now it's more like get them into housing and then bring the services there."*

St. Vincent De Paul in San Rafael is launching a new Bridge Housing program, a low-barrier shelter that provides temporary placement for people coming from the street to stabilize while working to access permanent housing. These clients have high needs and may be challenged by a group shelter setting. Paul Fordham, deputy director of Homeward Bound, said, *"It's great to celebrate how far we've come, but let's not celebrate too much because there is a lot more to be done."*

The change of approach coincides with the end of Marin's Rotating Emergency Shelter Team (REST), which operated for 10 years with the assistance of some 40 churches, synagogues and other organizations. With this program ending, the County is still not clear where homeless men and women will sleep this winter. Westminster has participated for 10 years serving a hot meal on Sunday night from November through the end of April and allowing men experiencing homelessness to sleep in Findlay Hall. We now have a new option for Westminster's members and friends to stay involved and supportive of our neighbors who live on the street.

COMING IN JANUARY:

Tuesday Night Dinners at First Presbyterian in San Rafael The Marin Interfaith Street Chaplaincy (TSC) hosts around 55 people for dinner each Tuesday night but they anticipate growth up to 70+ as the weather changes. This is a meal



only – no accommodations are made for sleeping. They are inviting congregations to support this effort starting in January. Many of us at Westminster would like to get involved in this effort on a monthly basis and will be asking

for volunteers. **Judi Sachs** and **Carolyn Grey** have volunteered to organize these meals. Westminster will continue to support the homeless beyond REST through Mill Street meals, the Thursday Hot Lunch program, and Voyager Carmel meals. We have a list of over 60 people who have participated in the past.

The TSC effort is different from our REST program in some ways and similar in others.

HOW IT'S SIMILAR:

- Guests will gather at 5:30 and dinner served roughly at 6:00, with time for volunteers to sit with and visit those in attendance.
- The meal will be prepared off-site (ultimately in our new kitchen!) delivered to and served at First Presbyterian San Rafael.
- Meals will be served, for now, on paper plates etc. (provided and paid for by the Street Chaplaincy).
- Clean-up will be done by volunteers with assistance of guests.
- We will organize, plan a menu, get food donations and transport the food. (There will be a parking lot "valet" to help unload contributions from cars to kitchen.)

HOW IT'S DIFFERENT:

- The group may be as many as 65 to 70 – previously we served 45-50.
- It will include both men and women.
- Guests include those on limited budgets as well as the homeless.
- There will be a definite spiritual component of the evening, bigger than the circle with short prayer that we had in the past. This is very important to Nick Morris, Executive Director of The Street Chaplaincy, who has been independently attending these dinners for several years.
- This effort will be year-round but because of the number of volunteering organizations, TSC may only need our participation every 6-8 weeks.
- It will not be at WPC.
- There will be no screening for "suitable behavior" as with REST, so some people may be impaired. (The group does a good job of monitoring themselves. We have heard that they have not had any major incidents.)
- The guests will NOT sleep at First Pres, but will return to the street or to their homes.

(cont...)

OTHER OPPORTUNITIES TO GET INVOLVED

- Homeward Bound coordinates Mill Street Shelter dinners for 55 individuals. They welcome up to 5 individuals a night to sit down and share dinner with guests.

Contact Andrea Rey: rey@hbofm.org

- To join Westminster volunteers in providing a meal for Mill Street. **Contact Carol Femenia: carolfemenia@aol.com**

- St. Vincent de Paul Free Dining Room in San Rafael is open for breakfast and lunch daily. Sign up to volunteer in the kitchen or dining room or simply drop by for lunch and visit with folks from REST, some of whom work there.

Contact: volunteer@vinnies.org

- St. Vincent de Paul is also planning a pilot program for individuals who might like to journey with a newly housed person as they transition off the street, e.g., coffee dates or helping with setting up bank accounts, etc.

Contact: volunteer@vinnies.org



- To help with the Thursday Hot Lunch program at WPC which serves Southern Marin folks, mainly "anchor-outs."

Contact Diane Newman: dnewman258@gmail.com

- On the last Sunday of the month, join Westminster volunteers in providing a burrito meal for Voyager Carmel in San Rafael. **Contact Carol Coffman: boco54@gmail.com**

- To register your interest in joining the Tuesday night Street Chaplaincy dinners at First Presbyterian San Rafael.

Contact Judi Sachs: judisachs9@gmail.com or

Carolyn Grey: carolynkgrey@gmail.com.



WHAT DOES THE POINSETTIA HAVE TO DO WITH CHRISTMAS?

Teala Warga, Worship Commission

Poinsettias didn't arrive in the United States until the 19th century. The plant is named for the first U.S. Ambassador to Mexico, Dr. Joel Roberts Poinsett, who introduced America to the poinsettia in 1828, after discovering it in the wilderness in southern Mexico. Dr. Poinsett sent cuttings of the plant back to his South Carolina home. While it wasn't initially embraced, it's caught on over the years, and by the 20th century it was a holiday mainstay. In fact, National Poinsettia Day is celebrated on Dec. 12, honoring both the plant and the man who brought it to America

[source: University of Illinois].

So what does a poinsettia have to do with Christmas? One interpretation of the plant is as a symbol of the Star of Bethlehem, the heavenly body that led the three magi to the place where Christ was born. Another is a Mexican legend that tells of a girl who could only offer weeds as a gift to Jesus on Christmas Eve. When she brought the weeds into a church, they blossomed into the beautiful red plants we know as poinsettias, known as Flores de Noche Buena in Mexico (*Spanish for "flowers of the holy night"*).

This year we are offering the opportunity to purchase White poinsettias as Christmas memorials or honorariums to decorate our sanctuary. You may designate your donation "in honor of" (for living) or "in memory of" (for those who have passed.) The name of your loved one will be shared with the congregation during Advent. The cost of each poinsettia is \$20.

We offer several ways to participate. Look for the Poinsettia Order form in the narthex, and you can put your donation either in the offering plate (with your order form filled out) or the church office. If writing a check, please note "poinsettias" in the memo. You can also purchase on Sunday mornings in the Narthex. See Teala Warga or Sharon Terrill at coffee hour!

Questions? Contact sharon_terrill@me.com. Order form is located on back of newsletter

POINSETTIA ORDER FORM

NAME OF GIVER: _____

PHONE OR EMAIL: _____

IN HONOR OF: _____

IN MEMORY OF: _____

I WOULD LIKE TO PURCHASE _____ CHRISTMAS POINSETTIAS (\$20 EACH)



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