



Westminster

Presbyterian Church

ZEPHYRS

LENT 2019



IN THIS DAY AND AGE? | Pastor Rob McClellan

In this day and age, what is the point of being a part of a denomination? Very few people at Westminster talk to me much about being Presbyterian. The church landscape is surely shifting, and denominations are and will continue to change as well. Even in the midst of this change, there is some real benefit to being in a congregation that's a part of the Presbyterian Church (PCUSA). I could write an entire column on what the denomination is, but a better starting point is talking about what it does. Here's a sampling:

DIRECT SERVICE TO THOSE IN NEED:

- The Presbyterian Hunger Program is just one program that works to meet the most basic human needs.
- Presbyterian Disaster Assistance (PDA) shows up when devastation *(cont...)*

MY LENTEN PRACTICES | Associate Pastor Bethany Nelson

Lent is the 40-day season (not including Sundays) before Easter. Traditionally, it is a time of self-reflection and repentance. Since repentance means "to turn," I often describe Lent as a time to commit to turning away from our sins and turning toward God. People can choose to do this in a variety of ways. Perhaps the most common practice during Lent is fasting. Though Christians observed rather strict fasts in the early days of the church, now people often choose to give up just one or two things (either food or something else) that are meaningful for them. Some say this helps them remember Jesus' fast in the desert following his baptism. Others say turning focus away from their favorite foods or favorite bad habits helps them turn their attention to God.

For me, fasting has never been a helpful Lenten practice. Though it may *(cont...)*



IN THIS DAY AND AGE? | Continued...

strikes and maintains a presence years after other relief organizations have moved on.

- **Mission Co-workers**, a community-based and partnership-oriented version of what we used to call “missionaries,” have been critical in setting up schools, hospitals and health clinics, and water filtration systems in places in need.

ENGAGEMENT IN THE WIDER WORLD

- Ecumenical and interfaith relations have long been priorities of the church, helping to foster dialogue and collaboration across sectarian lines.

- The denomination is invested in education and advocacy as part of living out our faith in the public sphere. **The Office of Public Witness** offers training and direct advocacy on issues such as hunger/homelessness, human trafficking, peacemaking, and environmental justice.

- In a number of forms, the denomination uses its resources to make a difference through investment and corporate engagement. Recently a conversation with an officer from the Presbyterian Foundation revealed that the fees for managing its \$2 billion of assets mean, among other things, that the PCUSA is the largest social service provider in Egypt, making services available that would not otherwise be possible.

EDUCATION & TRAINING

- Denominational Seminaries provide high-quality theological education that in conjunction with the PCUSA maintain standards for training clergy and other church workers. All of Westminster’s pastors have received formal education from a PCUSA institution.

- There are almost 70 PCUSA colleges that provide a solid liberal arts education with ample opportunities for faith development as well.

- The PCUSA offers campus ministry at colleges and universities across the country.

SUPPORTING LOCAL CONGREGATIONS

- As a connectional church, congregations are not only partners in ministry, but they exist as part of a system and structure of accountability and due process designed to ensure that local congregations are healthy, safe, and functioning appropriately.

- The denomination produces curriculum for Christian Education/Faith Formation for all ages.

- The church similarly provides significant music and worship resources, with recent updates to both the *Presbyterian Hymnal* and *The Book of Common Worship*.

The point of recalling our denominational ties is not to retreat from the complex religious and cultural landscape in which

we live. Quite the contrary, recognizing the gifts available from our church affiliation allows us to engage in our world with more grounding, purpose, and tools. As we celebrate and support our beloved Westminster, let us do similarly for the wider denomination that gave it birth. If you’d like to learn more about the denomination, check out: www.pcusa.org or set up a time to talk with me.

God’s Peace
Rob

MY LENTEN PRACTICES | Continued...

work for others, I struggle to make the spiritual connection between giving up something and drawing closer to God. Instead, I spend time during the Lenten season doing things that do draw me closer to God. For example, I try to get outside as much as possible. Spending intentional time in creation, paying attention to the wonder and beauty around me, always helps me to notice God’s presence more clearly and reminds me to turn toward God more regularly.

I also spend more time in prayer during Lent – specifically confessional prayer. In my regular prayer life, I do try to offer an “I’m sorry” when I have messed up, but I will admit to confession not being a natural or comfortable type of prayer for me. However, I do recognize the importance of confession, of acknowledging my sins, and of seeking forgiveness. I find that the act of confession reminds me anew of God’s unconditional and abundant love for me. Even when I sin, God loves me. Even when I make a terrible decision, God loves me. Even when I do not live into my calling as a disciple of Jesus, God loves me. Confession helps me to repent, to turn from those things which draw me away from God and to turn toward the God who calls me beloved.

Finally, I attend all of the Holy Week worship services. I know, I have to because it’s my job! But that is not the reason I love these services. From Jesus’ triumphal procession into Jerusalem on Palm Sunday, to his final meal on Maundy Thursday, to his crucifixion and death on Good Friday, to his resurrection on Easter Sunday, each of these moments holds a special meaning in my own spiritual life. To walk Jesus’ last week alongside him draws me closer to God. To experience the vast range of emotions of Jesus’ final week reminds me that each of us will encounter a vast range of emotions and experiences in our lives ... and God will walk with us through it all. Thanks be to God.

Blessings,
Bethany



BE NOT AFRAID OF THE CHOIR

Ruth E. Wells, Music Director

If you enjoyed the Sanctuary Choir's Feb. 3 performance of the chorale and fugue from J.S. Bach's Motet No. 4, or even if you missed it and you just like that style of singing...the choir is preparing the full double-choir motet for our 'season closer' on June 9. If you're a choral singer who's been missing your classical roots, we'd love to have you ring in to fill out our double-choir ranks. We can use singers in all parts, really, but especially need altos and tenors [and another bass].

Be not afraid, I will teach you the piece with love, joy and patience. Fear thou not, for I can give you online study tools, and we'll devote at least five full rehearsals to it (**Feb. 21, Mar. 28, April 25, May 23 and June 6**), so you can

sing with us selectively, or join us now for the remainder of the season. If it's further enticement, consider that we're probably going to sing a fiery chorus from Brahms' German Requiem at Easter, too. Come on, it'll be fun!

So please reach out to me on a Sunday or by email to let me know of your interest, and I'll connect you with a score and study recording. As the [English translation] text says, "I strengthen thee, I help, I support, and I brace thee up with the saving right hand of my righteousness." My right hand may not be all that, but I guarantee you will have a blast (maybe not every minute, but eventually). Singing Bach is its own reward.

Soli Deo gloria
(Glory to God alone)

MARK YOUR CALENDAR

Ash Wednesday Service
March 6 at 9:30am

A contemplative worship featuring readings, prayer, music, and the traditional imposition of ashes.

Spiritual Life Lenten Series

Tuesdays: March 12 & 19, April 2 & 9 at 6:00pm

Each evening will feature a different spiritual practice:

- Restorative Yoga - March 12
(special 7:00pm start time)
- Vespers Worship - March 19
- Labyrinth Walk - April 2
- Reading of Mark's Gospel - April 9

Holy Week Worship

- Palm Sunday, April 14, 8:30 & 10:00am
- Maundy Thursday, April 18, 7:00pm
- Good Friday, April 19, 12:00pm
- Easter Sunday, April 21, 9:00 & 11:00am

WRAP UP OF THE 2019 STEWARDSHIP PLEDGE DRIVE

Thank you to the entire WPC community for another successful pledge drive! We had received over \$660k in pledges and expect that number to rise soon with a number of expected late commitments. It's never too late to pledge! That compares to just over \$700k in pledges last year. While down somewhat, 2019 is worthy of celebration particularly in light of the successful Capital Campaign which raised commitments of over \$2.5m last spring to support the upgrade and expansion of WPC facilities.

The average pledge for 2019 was approximately flat with last year. As you know, our pledges fund approximately 75% of the WPC's annual budget, supporting all of our wonderful programs and staff. WPC is on sound financial footing thanks to your generosity!

Gratefully,
The Communications and Stewardship Commission



WPC CARES

Rev. Dr. Sharon Burch,
Parish Associate

WPC Cares is a group that is in the process of defining itself. It has a strong history with the congregation, and a number of you have participated to varying degrees over the years. One of its major objectives is to stay in touch with congregational members who are experiencing difficulties getting to church — perhaps they have had a recent health challenge, and although they are progressing with their recovery, they are still unable to attend church in person. Or they may have been placed in a skilled nursing facility or rehab center to recover from a fall or surgery. In some cases, members or their families have contacted the pastors requesting assistance.

The folks who are part of **WPC Cares** have been making calls, sending cards, stopping by to visit, issuing invitations to lunch, providing transportation and generally making sure that these folks who are in such situations know they are being thought of.

As we have pursued this mission, we have had our own eyes opened to the need for many different sorts of resources that might help the folks

we are in touch with. We also realized that the breadth of personal experience within our group was contributing a sensitivity to the issues that present themselves when health and/or aging issues arise.

That, in turn, alerted us to the recognition that many of us in the congregation as a whole may also have valuable information that might be shared with WPC Cares and thus make its way into circulation as others have similar needs that have to be met. In other words, we have realized that we could serve as a clearinghouse for the specialized resources and information that might be useful for others.

For example, **Transportation in Marin** — **Uber** and **Lyft** are great, but people have to know how to work with them before they are useful for their needs. WPC Cares folks can keep on file such information and pass it on to new users who may need it. And by the way, transportation is also offered by **Marin Transit** — how does that work? More information for WPC Cares to collect and make available. If you have experience in helping someone with their transportation needs, we would love to hear from you about that experience.

Meals on Wheels and the food program available through **Whistlestop** — excellent ways for people to make certain that their nutritional needs are being met while they are healing or recovering are another resource that WPC Cares can have on file.

Choosing an Assisted Living facility or Nursing Home is often something that presents itself urgently — and families, caregivers, and patients need clear and pertinent information that includes prices, ratings and

rules. WPC Cares had to privilege recently of being addressed by an experienced nursing home administrator and has gathered data that can help with this daunting task. Is this something that you or a loved one has been through lately? Are there things about your experience with such facilities that you would like to share? We invite you to call or email and let us know.

Assistive technology for those with visual or hearing problems is another area we are interested in. There are new technological advances in this field. Might you have knowledge about these products that we could share with others?

We are meeting regularly about once a month immediately after the 10 a.m. service ends. If you would like to participate or just check us out, please know that you are welcome. Our next meeting will be on **Sunday, March 3 at 11:15 a.m.** in the Library. If you would like to join us, just come to the meeting, or, if you have questions, please give me a call or send an email — I'll look forward to talking with you.

Sincerely, Sharon
415-342-9501 | spburch@att.net

“ As we have pursued this mission, we have had our own eyes opened... ”



WHY I WAS AN ADULT LEADER ON THE HIGH SCHOOL MISSION TRIP X2

Jeff Heely

About two years ago, Jeff Shankle “pulled me aside” one Sunday after the 8:30 Sunday service. While Jeff is the epitome of a servant leader, I was none-the-less aware that there was likely an “Ask” about to come. Little did I know that “*The Ask*” would be an introduction to one of the best experiences of my life.

Jeff’s Ask was that I consider being an adult leader (not chaperone) on the high school mission trip to San Diego the upcoming summer. My daughters are both grown and gone (one in Orange County, married with a daughter, and the other a successful business woman living in London). They are both well past their high school years (ages now 29 and 30).

I had been, not an absent father, but certainly one whose business had come first in trying to meet the maddening costs of living the Marin life-style. We try to look nonplussed whilst internally eating ourselves up awakening at 2:15 in a cold sweat...

What could someone like me offer these high schoolers on a very important trip? This trip for many would be the turning point of their spiritual lives. Was I in any way qualified to be a mentor to them?

I prayed on it and for the first time in a long time actually listened for GOD’s word to me. Well, GOD’s word was revealed when I looked to Isaiah 6:8 - Then I heard the voice of the Lord saying, “*Whom shall I send? And who will go for us?*” And I said, “*Here am I. Send me!*”

So, I was in. Driving down to San Diego I had the benefit of sitting in a van filled with equally anxious high schoolers

and Susan Berkhout. Susan and I were able to talk uninterrupted for about 7 hours about what we were hoping to experience. We talked about the lessons we might impart and the methods that might be most useful.

With all deference to Susan, that discussion was not the best use of our time. I was about to become the student, not the leader. These young people were full of knowledge and incredible questions. They allowed me to plumb the depths of my beliefs; nay, they forced me to.

The week passed way too quickly for me. (Although sleeping on the floor was not the best memory ... I took an inflatable mattress for the second one!) Learning from these young adults and sharing questions and insights was the best.

When we (the young people who went on these trips) come upon each other at church, at school, or just walking in Marin, I know that the future of this world is in some very impressive hands. They are connected to the world and are determining their best roles in ensuring the future being better than the present.

If you are thinking even a little bit about being an Adult Mentor for the trip, please feel free to stop me and chat. I will tell you up front that I will not give you a balanced review. I will tell you how unbalanced the experience was and is. It will change your life.

POETRY CORNER

Submitted by Debbie Dybsky,
Spiritual Life co-chair

By Ann Freeman Price

Listening God,
who hears my conversations
with friends and not-so-friends each day,
help me to remember to speak with love,
even when I’m frustrated,
to listen with interest when the other is speaking,
to risk being who I am each moment,
so that my talk is honest and kind.
I ask this in your name, God,
for I hear you whispering in my ear:
pay attention to words
and to the value of silent spaces.
Readied the day.
Waited.



WHY DO TEENAGERS STINK?

Jeff Shankle, Youth Director

For those of you either currently with or who once had teenagers in the house may notice a particular pattern: the smell. It doesn't really make evolutionary sense that as you grow up and your body begins to emit sulfuric stench, it is the same exact time you seem to care less. In the battles being waged between parents and their teens, cleanliness is the most fundamental... well, at least to you it is.

While it would be a lot of fun to stink up a Zephyrs' column with tales of locker room smells and youth mission trips sans actual showers (Axe body spray + stinky teens ≠ potpourri), I would like to continue my advocacy for the sake of teenagers for a moment. According to a recent study in the Journal of Chemical

Senses, teenagers simply don't have the ability to detect their own noxious fumes. While adults are better at noticing sweat, smoke and soap, those between 12 and 18 were better at picking out scents of soda, ketchup, and chocolate bars. Hmm...

Do you mean to tell me we have to teach our children the difference between stink and spice? For the sake of your youth pastor and our adult leaders, please do so! We promise to help as well in your kids' discernment process. Whereas you've heard, *"it takes a village,"* this is one circumstance where society is happy to chip in by telling your child that deodorant is a necessary part of life.

There are many things we learn on our journeys towards adulthood of which managing body odor just happens to be one, albeit a notable one for the rest of us. In Scripture we're told we carry the *"aroma of Christ"* which is noticed by others around us. I'll never forget the first time that passage was pointed out to me because, well, the fellow had an aroma that I wouldn't normally associate with that of Our Lord and Savior. How about that though? Your mere presence is meaningful to others. The *"aroma of Christ"* goes with you everywhere bringing life to those on a pursuit of holiness.

While teenagers might not notice their own smell, they do notice who is present and who is not. They may not detect the aroma of socks, but they do detect the life-giving aroma of those who are



FROM THE DEACONS | Carrie Burroughs, Deacon Moderator

What an amazing community we have at WPC. How do people possibly cope with all of life's ups and downs without such incredible support? With Peter Wuertz's recent diagnosis of aggressive bladder cancer, the Deacons organized a signup system for meals. (*In case there is any confusion about Deacons, this is what the Deacons are all about - offering help in times of crisis to our church community.*) It actually took me longer to create the email and add the names to Signup Genius than it did for the dates to fill with volunteers from our WPC congregation. It was thrilling to get immediate updates from Signup Genius as dates filled quickly. Wow. Isn't that a testament to the love of this marvelous network of people known as the WPC community. Not to mention the role Peter plays in our church as beloved greeter known by all! As my Deacon term nears an end, I feel lucky to have witnessed this spontaneous outpouring of support. The Deacons maintain a list of volunteers for meals and rides etc. Please email me if you want to be added to that list for future needs or if your situation has changed and you would prefer to be taken off the list, that's fine too.

Carrie Burroughs | carrie.clb@gmail.com

WESTMINSTER2020 - FORWARD IN FAITH | Elke Bray

The WPC Renovation Project is moving forward and we are grateful to have so many people involved in planning for the next phases of the project. If all goes according to plan the current indications are that construction could start by late summer. The actual date will be determined after permitting and budgeting have been completed.

Highlights from this quarter include:

- Revised architectural plans with input from the staff, congregational members, and the committee.
- Began developing a plan for solar electricity. Michael Hatfield is working on a solar plan for the church with the goal of selecting an option that will not require a capital outlay and will provide electricity at a reduced rate. Vendors will be presenting proposals to the committee in the coming month.
- Entered into a pre-construction agreement with a general contractor, but after learning new information about them, terminated our agreement with them on the recommendation of the Session. We will be interviewing new contractors soon.
- Began the permitting process with the Marin County Planning department. We requested staff review by the planning department in lieu of a full design review process. If this is approved the time required for the permitting process will be greatly reduced.
- Continued working on the logistics for the construction. Tod Moody is planning for the rental of temporary space for the staff and the Strawberry pre-school, storage for furniture and equipment, and many other important details.



Other committee and congregation members are working on a number of important areas including kitchen planning (Jo Cooper, Ann West), 'green' building considerations (Judi Sachs, Mary Mossteller), and neighbor relations (Chuck Quick).

The Renovation Committee will offer a detailed update following a Sunday worship in March. If you are interested in helping with an aspect of the project or if you have any questions please contact a member of the WPC Renovation Committee: **Ron Meserve, Tod Moody, Adam Krivatsy, Ann West, Jo Cooper, Lauren Kline-Nunnally, Chuck Quick,**

WOMEN'S RETREAT

Join facilitator Rev. Stephanie Ryder as we reflect on "Connecting with the Divine Within."

Stephanie will share with us practices that sustain and enliven. With large and small group time, as well as plenty of free time on the beautiful grounds of St. Columba's, this retreat will nourish your soul.

From March 29-30.

See Bethany for details or pick up a registration form in the narthex.



St. Columba Retreat House | WPC Women's Retreat 2019

GIVING IT UP FOR LENT

Every Sunday during Lent, you are encouraged to bring a specific canned good to be donated to the Marin Food Bank. The children will gather the cans during worship. The schedule for this year will be:

- **March 10** – Canned Beans
- **March 17** – Canned Chicken
- **March 24** – Canned Fruit
- **March 31** – Canned Fish
- **April 7** – Canned Chili

