



# Westminster

## Presbyterian Church

### ZEPHYRS

ADVENT 2019



#### THROUGH FIRE | Pastor Rob McClellan

In the 43rd chapter of Isaiah, the prophet records God saying, *“when you walk through fire you shall not be burned, and the flame shall not consume you.”* That line, of course, was not written with California’s fires in mind. Some here have been burned, some homes consumed. Even in its original context, Isaiah may have been working on a metaphorical level in addition to reflecting on a literal deliverance. That said, the fires of the past weeks have given us much to consider in terms of presence, the divine and our own.

It may be hard to see the presence of God in such destruction. To find it, some turn to firefighters, first responders, and even utility workers, *“the helpers”* as Mr. Rogers used to refer to them. Surely their efforts *(cont...)*

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#### ADVENT WORD | Associate Pastor Bethany Nelson

Every year, we provide some type of devotional guide for you to use during your Advent journey. This year, our devotional will be entirely on-line. We will join with others around the world using “Advent Word,” an Advent calendar that encourages us to reflect on a different word each day of Advent. We will post a combination of video, written, and photo reflections on our Facebook page every day of Advent.

We encourage you to get involved as well! Take a look at the Advent Word calendar. If a specific word calls to you, write a bit about that word, or take a picture inspired by that word, and send it to me. ([bethany@wpctiburon.org](mailto:bethany@wpctiburon.org)) We will be sure to post that as part of our on-line devotional. *(cont...)*



## THROUGH FIRE | Continued...

are those of heroes if not angels in our midst.

I stop short of assigning God's discernable will to everything that happens. I do believe in times like these, though, that lessons arise for us if we are open to them. As we are learning on the church staff with our recent relocation of the office to Larkspur for the renovation, a change of environment reveals a lot about how we've been living.

I wonder what the power outages in the face of fire dangers revealed to you. What did it reveal to you about the pace of our life, slowed if not stopped by limited access to power, gas, and communications? What did it reveal about our connection or lack thereof to our neighbors? What did it reveal about what's most important, and as a result what is less so? What did it reveal about what usually goes unnoticed in your life and what gets more of your attention than it should? What did it reveal about inequality in our communities, how people of different means have vastly different ranges of options of what to do in such situations?

I have found the power outages a powerful time to reflect on these questions. I feel moved to live more simply, live more slowly, live more connected – not waiting until the next crisis to connect, but to build strong neighborhoods in advance. I feel more convinced that kindness and decency is the fabric of community. I feel like my devices could use more time off that I might be more “on” when in the presence of loved ones. I feel that darkness and quiet are undervalued goods.

I pray for those more negatively affected by the fires than I—the people, the creatures, and the land. I give thanks for the presence I experienced in the midst of it all. In the end, maybe Isaiah's writings didn't refer to our times, but perhaps the one from whom these writings flow did have us in mind. Maybe a piece of God's presence in the fires, as in the waters of chaos, is in the revealing.

*God's Peace,*  
Rob

## ADVENT WORD | Continued...

In order to take advantage of this, be sure to “like” our Facebook page at Westminster Pres-Tiburon. If you are not a Facebook user, the devotions will also be posted on the blog on our website:

<https://www.wpctiburon.org/our-blog/>

I love that our very first Advent Word is “*UNEXPECTED.*” How appropriate for a church going through a renovation! We certainly have experienced our share of the unexpected already, and will no doubt continue to encounter the unexpected. And, it is the unexpected which is at the very heart of Christmas. The Messiah entering our lives as a little baby? Unexpected! An unknown teenager told by an angel she would be his mother? Unexpected! Lowly shepherds being the first to hear the news of his birth? Unexpected!

Though the unexpected can be uncomfortable and scary, it can also be full of wonder and delight. May we delight in the unexpected this Advent season.

*Blessings,*  
Bethany

**#AdventWord**  
a global advent calendar

1	UNEXPECTED	13	WATER
2	VISIT	14	GATHER
3	TIME	15	TURN
4	HUMBLE	16	LEARN
5	RAISE	17	PRAY
6	HOUSE	18	WORSHIP
7	UNITY	19	BLESS
8	WORTHY	20	GO
9	ROOT	21	REST
10	GRACE	22	RESTORE
11	CONFESS	23	MESSAGE
12	HARMONY	24	BELOVED



## LESSONS AND CAROLS | Ruth E. Wells, Music Director

Several times over the past few years we have programmed a service of lessons and carols during Advent. This service is patterned after a Christmas Eve service established at King's College Chapel in 1918 and is now broadcast each year to millions of people around the world.

The KCC tradition includes choral selections that reflect on readings from the Bible that trace the story of God's redeeming love from the older testament through the Gospels' birth narrative. The opening carol is always 'Once in Royal David's City', and since 1982 there is always a new, specially commissioned carol.

We haven't always observed the part about commissioning a new carol, but this year I decided I'd like to write something specifically for this service. To my surprise, my muse was very keen on this notion and blessed me with the inspiration for not one, but three new works.

It is my custom to have three of the carols be sung by the congregation, three by the full choir and three by small ensembles. This year, two of the choir pieces and one of the ensemble pieces will be premiere performances, and a second ensemble piece is one I wrote for the service four years ago. In a few more years, perhaps I'll have set the entire service.

May this service bring you a respite from the bustling pace of the holiday season, and help us all recall with gratitude the amazing gift of the Word made flesh.

Soli Deo Gloria,  
Ruth E.

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## FROM OUR SEMINARIAN

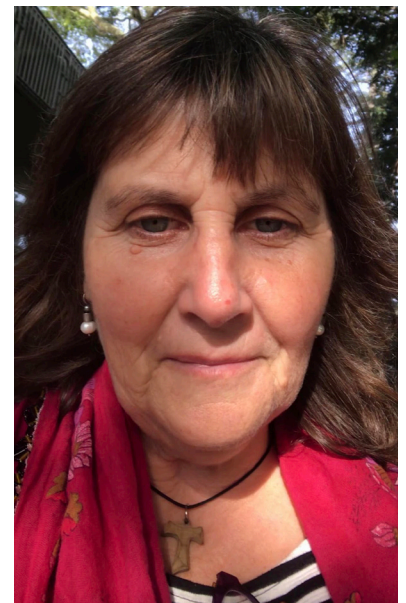
This is your Seminarian, Lynn Chittick. As many of you know I am at SFTS, our local Seminary in San Anselmo. It is my 3rd year and I am under care at Westminster as an inquirer. I have jumped into my last year with studying Greek, Organizational Leadership, and Christ and Culture. The classes have sparked my interest and I am so happy about this semester.

I have a MA in Theology and will be finishing my MDiv in May 2020, God willing. My year is filled with joy and connection with my six children. I also do ministry in Peace in Pakistan and will keep you updated about the work I am doing there.

Please introduce yourself to me and let's get to know each other. I have appreciated being supported by this community and look forward getting to know you in a closer way.

Peace and Best,  
Lynn Chittick, RN

*PS: Yes, I am also a Registered Nurse and keep busy in homecare.*





## MY WAR AGAINST NUMBERS

Jeff Shankle, Youth Director

We'd just returned from a mission trip (this is several years ago) and everyone was buzzing. Our spirits were so high because everything we were hoping for happened. The internal conflict within the youth group got resolved and new friendships were forged. People who hadn't been able to open themselves up to have their souls mended found healing. We came as broken individuals and a group and returned home whole as individuals and as a group. We saw brokenness and found great hope in knowing that our talents could make things better.

The next day I came to the office and I was still processing how the trip went. I was still searching for the words to describe how the Spirit

had moved in our midst. Most of what I was thinking was vague as I was still trying to make sense of it all myself. I replayed brief moments: We found a company to furnish someone's entire home. One of our youth who had difficulty with substance abuse opened up to the group about it asking for help. More and more these memories came in and out of focus.

The first series of questions I got upon returning to the office made me wonder if anybody would understand. *"How was your trip? [immediately followed by] "How many people went?" Can I be totally transparent with you? I hate that second question. I hate that question because I knew that after telling someone how many people came with us they'd be disappointed it was not many. And so, after telling them how many they replied, "Oh that's too bad." What?!*

What do you mean, *"that's too bad?"* Did you hear the story about the group coming together? Did you hear the part about people discovering their gifts of service? Did you hear the miraculous story about that single mom's house? Okay, I get it. I know. What they really meant was, *"It's too bad not more people got to experience that."* Yes, you're right. That is too bad. However, how do our youth and volunteers internalize those conversations?

In our youth ministry we talk a lot about not trying to chase numbers. According to the Exemplary Youth Ministry Study, which covered 7 denominations, size of the church and youth group did not matter in regard to long-term faith development. Further, size of the youth group didn't meet any of the criteria of the Sticky Faith study which looked for causal factors in faith development.

Some assume this means we don't want more youth. Wrong! We believe this church is a safe haven and benefit to anyone who would participate. To be frank, we do care about numerical growth but never at the expense of spiritual growth. Anecdotally, what I've learned is when your ministry is in a healthy place you can't help but find new people getting involved.

This year our Confirmation class is smaller than the last few. Please understand, when you see that smaller group up front pronouncing their intent to join our church family on their own volition know that while they may be shy (or not), be born into a year when birthrates were down (or not), or their youth pastor simply wasn't as intentional as getting more kids (eh hem, or not), you can express gratitude by your conversations and questions. Although, those conversations probably won't include, *"How many kids are there this year?"*

## CHRISTMAS EVE SERVICES | TUESDAY, DECEMBER 24TH

10:00AM - Traditional worship

5:00PM - Children's Christmas pageant ( See Bethany if your child would like to participate.)

9:00PM - Traditional worship with candlelight

**ALL ARE WELCOME! INVITE A FRIEND!**



## TIBURON THRIFT SHOP

Lee Darby, WOW Board Member

Westminster is one of five recipients of Tiburon Thrift Shop proceeds. This allows the Women of Westminster to pledge \$14,000 to WPC's annual budget each year.

Shop expenses have gone up, however, and we need to support the thrift shop with our GOOD STUFF donations in order to continue receiving that kind of income.

The donation barrel has been removed from Westminster for the renovation, but please continue to donate items that are saleable, usable and clean to the Tiburon Thrift Shop. No books, kid's toys, or junk please!

Don't forget to shop at the Thrift Shop as well – there are many great items to be found.

The Thrift Shop is located at:  
**96 Main Street in "Ark Row" in downtown Tiburon.**

## COME ONE, COME ALL!

The Worship Commission invites you to help decorate our sanctuary for Advent and Christmas this year!

Any amount of time you can...

**Saturday, Dec. 7th | 12:30pm - 3pm.**

Please let us know if you may be able to come.

Contact Sharon at:

**sharon\_terrill@me.com or 415-216-6295.**



## POETRY CORNER

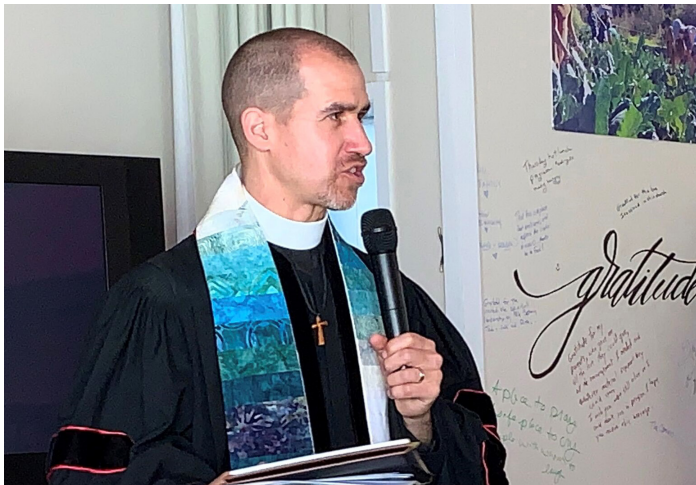
Submitted by Debbie Dybsky,  
Spiritual Life Commission co-chair

### A SONG WAS HEARD AT CHRISTMAS

A song was heard at Christmas  
To wake the midnight sky:  
A saviour's birth, and peace on earth,  
And praise to God on high.

The angels sang at Christmas  
With all the hosts above,  
And still we sing the newborn King  
His glory and his love.

*by Timothy Dudley-Smith*



## UPDATE FROM THE RENOVATION COMMITTEE | Elke Bray, Renovation Committee Member

As many of you know, there is rarely a construction project that suffers no delays. Ours is no different. We are waiting for the County of Marin Building Department to issue the building permit which allows the contractor to begin construction. Fingers crossed that by the time you are reading this construction is underway!

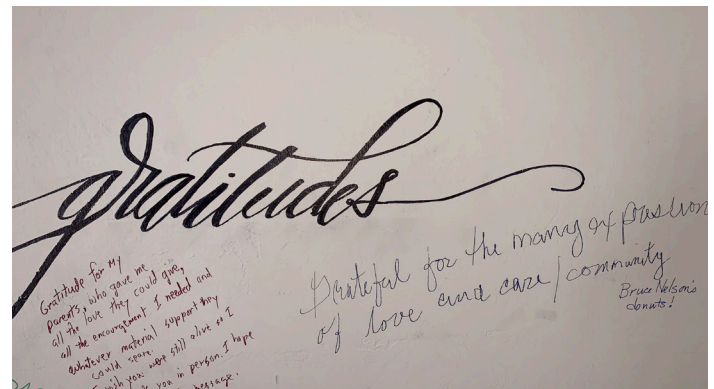
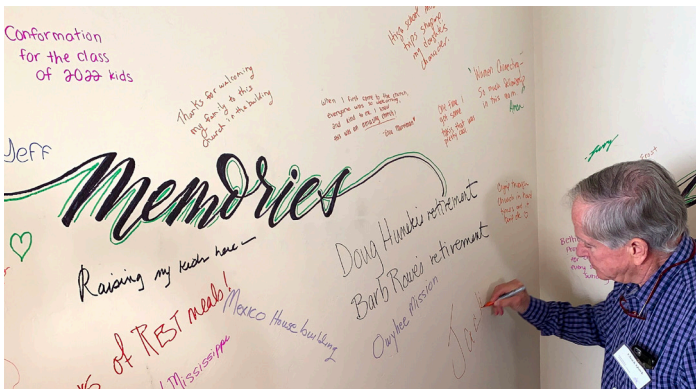
In the meantime, the committee and the staff have been hard at work. The staff moved to the Redwoods Presbyterian Church at 110 Magnolia Avenue in Larkspur

on November 1st. Office hours, phone numbers and email addresses remain the same. The Findlay Hall building is now empty with furniture in storage either onsite or at the Redwoods Church. Please check the website or bulletin board in the sanctuary for information on where classes and meetings are being held going forward.

Project financing has been secured with the Synod. This allows us to pay the bills when there is a mismatch between construction costs and pledges received. Funding your year 2 pledge contributions and, if possible, funding year 3 early helps lower the financing costs incurred during this time. Please also consider a Sponsorship Opportunity. Thank you to the Women of Westminster and to Jo Cooper for sponsoring kitchen items!

We had a wonderful “groundbreaking” ceremony on Sunday, November 3rd. Rob provided a blessing, and all were welcome to write memories, joys, hopes, and gratuities on the walls of Findlay Hall.

Please visit [www.wpctiburon.org](http://www.wpctiburon.org) regularly for updates and if you have questions please contact Ron Meserve or any other member of the WPC Renovation Committee.



Photos from our groundbreaking blessing on Nov. 3

## MOMENT FOR STEWARDSHIP | Sophia Harkins, Stewardship Commission Member

The Stewardship Commission would like to thank you, our generous community, for your support of the 2020 Annual Campaign. **As of November 7, we have raised over \$570,000, which is 32% ahead of this time last year.**

THANK YOU for getting your pledge in early. We are ahead of schedule and optimistic that together we can reach our

goal of \$750,000, so please turn in your pledge if you haven't gotten to it yet.

To celebrate your support, please join us for treats after worship on December 1st. We are so appreciative of all our pledgers and encourage everyone to join us for donuts on the 1st to celebrate!



## WHAT DO POINSETTIAS HAVE TO DO WITH CHRISTMAS?

Sharon Terrill, Worship Commission Chair

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 the U.S. 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 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 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 her church, they blossomed into the beautiful red plants we know as poinsettias, and also known as Flores de Noche Buena in Mexico ("Flowers of the Holy Night").

This year we again offer the opportunity to donate **Red Poinsettias** to decorate our sanctuary. You may designate your donation "in honor of" or "in memory of." The name of one loved one or couple, per poinsettia plant, will be printed and available the last two Sundays of Advent. The cost of each poinsettia is \$20.

Look for the Poinsettia Order form in the pew pockets. You may use the pew offering envelopes to place your donation (with your order form) in the offering plate. If writing a check, please note "poinsettias" in the memo.

For questions please contact: Sharon at [sharon\\_terrill@me.com](mailto:sharon_terrill@me.com)

Poinsettias may be taken home after the final Christmas Eve service or following the December 29 services. Otherwise, we will deliver them to a member of our community needing January cheer.

# WOMEN OF WESTMINSTER ANNUAL CHRISTMAS LUNCHEON

Susan Berkhout, WOW Moderator

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Women of Westminster announces our annual Christmas Luncheon which will be held on:  
**Wednesday, December 11, 2019 at noon.**

The women at Community Congregational Church have invited us to hold the luncheon there, which is located at: **145 Rock Hill Road, Tiburon.**

**The deadline to RSVP is:**

**Sunday, December 8, 2019 at noon.**

*(Any woman who has been to a previous WOW luncheon will receive an Evite.)*

If you have never been to a WOW or Women Connecting event, then you are encouraged to send an email to:

**Sally Pasternack at: [sally.pasternack@yahoo.com](mailto:sally.pasternack@yahoo.com)**  
*(Please include your current email address)*

Our speaker this year is Jackie Lee from **Haiti on the Rise**, an organization Jackie founded five years ago to help her native Haiti recover from a devastating earthquake.

We hope that you will be able to join us for this fun event!