



Westminster

Presbyterian Church

ZEPHYRS

LENT 2020



REBUILDING | Pastor Rob McClellan

Following a memorial service one Saturday, I took a moment to walk through the building being renovated. It was a strangely moving experience. All the blueprints finally coming alive.

First, it was simply a shock to see the floors taken up, raw earth exposed, the walls stripped, and the roof gone from the single-storied wing—it's quite a thing to stand in what was once a church hallway and be able to see the sky. Then a deeper set of emotions set in. With just the frame of the old building in place, I started to imagine generations of children being formed as Christians in the classrooms, conversations in that dreaded old kitchen out of which you all did mighty work over the years, babies and toddlers cared for safely and lovingly while young families worshipped. (cont...)

LENTEN PRACTICE | Associate Pastor Bethany Nelson

As we enter the season of Lent, I find myself thinking back to Advent – especially my Advent Word devotional practice. Each day of Advent, I wrote or recorded a brief devotion based on a specific word. Some of the words were obvious for the Advent season, such as “*beloved*.” Others were less obvious, like “*root*.” Each brought their own joy and challenge. Never before had I set a goal to write something for 24 days in a row, and I was very uncertain about how it would go.

In the end, I am happy to say that the process was a tremendous blessing for me. Some of my reflections flowed easily. Others I had to sit with for almost the entire day until I figured out what I wanted to say. But each word helped me to focus on God and focus on the Advent season in a new way. (cont...)



IN THIS DAY AND AGE? | Continued...

I thought, “*What have we done?*” It wasn’t an expression of regret, but a recognition of how significant it is to take something apart, knowing you are doing so for the purpose of putting it back together safer, stronger, and better able to support the ministry we’ll be called to do over the next generation. What we’ve done, or are doing, is good, brave, and faithful.

For me, it’s not a leap to connect this project to Lent. During that holy time that culminates in Easter, we are asked to go deep, to go within, to likewise deconstruct who we are that we might reform ourselves in a way that will better serve us. The old paradigm of Lent was to think of it as a time of repentance. That word doesn’t resonate with many today, connoting images of self-flagellation or guilt. But, repenting is simply about change, examining in what direction we are moving and changing our course. In Lent, we are called to take apart some of the walls we have constructed within ourselves, some of the rooms we have made and the purposes to which we have dedicated them. It’s a time to discard what is not serving, to declutter, to simplify, to clarify, and to reconstruct in a way that aligns with what the Spirit is trying to express to the world through our lives.

This all sounds very personal, and it is, but as we are rediscovering, Christianity in the West has become far too individual. This is not simply about rearranging our inner landscapes, but rather discerning together what kind of world we are trying to build or form.

Don’t let this Lent go by without taking advantage of the permission given you to be in daily prayer. I am not talking about articulating a laundry list of things you want from a next-day-delivery-God that looks more like Amazon than the creator of the heavens and earth. I am talking about emptying yourself out and listening deeply for what emerges in the space you’ve made. Make this space in your prayer time, in your church meetings, with your families and with your friends.

Marvel as a new blueprint starts to come alive.

*God’s Peace,
Rob*

MY LENTEN PRACTICES | Continued...

I could not take any days “off;” each day required that I remind myself of the hope, peace, joy, and love of Jesus’ birth. I was more prepared to celebrate the birth of Christ than perhaps I have ever been before, because of my daily practice of writing.

Heading into Lent, I invite you to consider what your daily practice might be. Often, people choose to give up something, and to reflect daily on how that giving up strengthens their relationship with God. Others choose to take something extra on each day, not out of obligation, but out of service to God. Perhaps you might try a writing practice, or a new prayer practice each day. The actual practice does not matter as much as how that practice influences your faith journey. One of the themes of Lent is self-reflection ... what practice will help you reflect on your life of faith and your relationship with yourself, with others, and with God?

The thing that helped me most with my Advent practice was knowing that many of you were reading my devotionals and you would hold me accountable if I skipped one! As you consider adopting a practice for Lent, you might also think about who will hold you accountable. Not someone who will be a mean-spirited task-master, but someone who will lovingly encourage you to stick with your practice through the season of Lent (which is much longer than Advent!) Perhaps you can find a prayer partner to connect with – someone who will be in prayer for you as you are in prayer for them, and with whom you can check in regularly. Or a writing partner with whom you can exchange your devotional writings. One of the great things about being a part of a church community is the reminder that we are not in this alone. We support each other in our faith journeys. However you decide to walk your Lenten journey, may it be a blessed time for you.

*Peace,
Bethany*

“ ...what practice
will help you reflect on
your life of faith ...? ”



FROM PSALM TO SONG | Ruth E. Wells, Music Director

As we enter the season of Lent, I've been thinking about the Psalm appointed for March 1, specifically Psalm 32: 6-7. The psalmist urges the faithful to offer prayer, that *"at a time of distress, the rush of mighty waters shall not reach them. You are a hiding place for me; you preserve me from trouble..."* These words bring me such solace.

I've been operating on "overwhelm" for several months, and the experience of God as a place of retreat and safety is very comforting. Then there's that water reference...the rush of mighty waters. As I was doing my morning workouts in the pool (my meditation time), these things have been streaming through my mind, and began to sing to me. What that means for you is that if you are in church on March 1, you will get to hear the world premiere of my latest compositions. I am writing both a solo ballad for the 8:30 service and

a choral gospel arrangement of the spiritual Jesus Is a Rock in a Weary Land, which I am titling **A Shelter in a Time of Storm.**

This hiding is not about avoiding the challenges in my life. I'm focusing on the refuge that comes from taking shelter for a time, waiting out the storm, thinking things through. It doesn't make the trouble go away, but it does give me the space to see things more clearly and find peace.

Thanks be to God!
Ruth E.

LEGACY FUND HELPING TO FINANCE SPECIAL PROJECTS

Randy Huyser, Legacy Committee Member

Westminster's quasi-endowment, the Legacy Fund, is still quite small at just under \$1 million in assets, but it has now reached a state of maturity to where it contributes nearly \$33,000 annually to the various church commissions for use in special projects. These funds are above and beyond the normal operating budget. They particularly support special events and programs that otherwise could not happen without shorting budgetary needs elsewhere.

Naturally, as the Legacy Fund grows larger it can help support even more ambitious projects — something everyone in the congregation benefits from. We often note particular events that are wholly or partially sponsored by the Legacy Fund in the bulletin, but many others are relatively small projects or programs that easily fly under the radar. Almost without exception, Legacy Fund money is involved in helping finance the unique and special programs offered to the entire congregation.

Most of the donations to the Legacy Fund are memorial gifts from individuals honoring a member or former member, or from people wanting to give extra support to a partic-

ular aspect of our ministry such as music or youth. But the big money is generous gifts from estates from those who would like to see their legacy carry on after they've passed on. Of course, this requires advance planning to make sure WPC is remembered in a person's estate plan. It's a straightforward process and easy to execute. Any of the pastor staff or the members of the Legacy Fund committee can quickly point you in the right direction for guidance and assistance.

Just a little bit of forward thinking, either by specifying a dollar amount or a percentage of the proceeds of the estate or of a certain asset in the estate, is so meaningful in perpetuating the parts of the WPC experience that we've all grown to love and want to see continued or expanded.



"One of the handcrafted story sets used in our Sunday School program. This purchase was made possible by the Legacy Fund."



MAKE A DIFFERENCE FOR THE ENVIRONMENT | Mary Mossteller and Judi Sachs, Loving Creation Team Leaders

Perhaps you saw the recent article from Huff Post: **“10 Life Changes That Will Actually Make a Difference for the Environment”** It’s a challenging list, but worth our consideration as we experience and are saddened by the increasing evidence of climate change on our world. Below is an abbreviated version of key actions we can take. The full article is available here:

https://apple.news/AP9a4h0DiRrSL9_CdwjU_tQ

CUT BACK ON AIR TRAVEL — ENTIRELY IF YOU CAN

As The New York Times reported recently, take one round trip flight between New York and California and we’ve contributed about 20% of the greenhouse gases that the typical car emits over the span of an entire year. For unavoidable flights, consider purchasing carbon offsets. With your purchase, you fund environmental projects aimed at reducing greenhouse gas emissions.

AVOID ALL SINGLE-USE DISPOSABLE PLASTIC ITEMS

Do a personal plastic audit of your current plastic use and assess where you’re at. Buy in bulk rather than purchasing packaged foods. Eliminate your takeout plastic waste by carrying your own non-plastic mug, water bottle, utensils, straw, food container, reusable bag.

EAT LOCAL AND GO VEGETARIAN OR VEGAN

There’s no way around it: A meat-heavy diet is not great for the environment. The production of one calorie of animal protein requires more than 10 times the fossil fuel input needed for a calorie of plant protein. Then, there’s the carbon footprint of the refrigeration required to extend the longevity of foods when they’re being shipped, the transportation of

goods to and from airports, and the packaging. Even minor tweaks to our diet can make a huge impact if more of us do it.

CANCEL YOUR AMAZON PRIME SUBSCRIPTION...

and cut back on line purchases overall. If a FedEx Priority Overnight truck is dispatched to our neighborhood just to bring the socks we ordered (*even though we could have waited for [slower] ground delivery or bought them somewhere locally while buying other things*) that’s a significant greenhouse gas emissions tab we are creating unnecessarily.

DITCH THE CAR

It’s time to be more mindful of our driving. Avoid all unnecessary car trips and cluster errands for efficiency.

RECONSIDER THE NUMBER OF KIDS YOU’D LIKE TO HAVE

While the decision to have children is deeply personal, many believe it’s worth reevaluating ideas about family planning.

GIVE COMPOSTING A CHANCE

Americans waste an unbelievable amount of food and most of it ends up in a landfill. *“You think food would break down since it’s dumped into a giant hole in the ground, but it doesn’t because landfills aren’t aerated for proper decomposition,”* says Kathryn Kellogg, author of **“101 Ways to Go Zero Waste.”** Just put some yard waste in your green can and add your kitchen compost to it during the week for a no mess way to compost.

DON’T RUSH OUT TO BUY NEW CLOTHES AND SHOP SECONDHAND WHENEVER YOU CAN

The fashion industry is responsible for 10% of annual global carbon emissions, according to the World Bank. It is best to follow steps of **Reduce, Reuse and Recycle**, using what we have and making stuff last. If you’re really hankering to shop, consider going secondhand. Try the **Tiburon Thrift Shop**, a portion of their sales supports WPC!

HOLD MORE MEETINGS ON LINE

If you’re in a managerial position at work and your employees are far-flung (they have long local commutes or live in distant cities), suggest video conference calls over in-person meetings.

TALK ABOUT THIS STUFF REGULARLY WITH YOUR FRIENDS AND FAMILY...

and get involved politically. If you tried any of the suggestions above and found it a lot easier than you’d expected, tell your friends and family about it. Personal stories are often the most effective in persuading others to give change a chance.

SPEAKING UP ON STEWARDSHIP, A CHAT WITH CHRISTINE AND BOB MILLER | The Stewardship Commission

Christine and Bob Miller have been part of the WPC community for over 30 years. You've probably seen them sitting on the right side pews, about half way down by the garden and bay, at the 8:30am service. We sat down with the Millers to get some perspective on how they think about stewardship.

Christine and Bob explored churches before their daughter Whitney was born 30 years ago, and have been supporters and actively involved in WPC ever since. There are many ways to be involved – spiritual growth, prayer and listening to Sunday sermons, while important, were just the beginning of the Miller journey. Their faith and experience grew deeper with time as they became more involved in WPC starting with teaching Sunday School. From the early days of Christine's establishment of Stewardship of Creation (an interfaith, ecojustice program) to Bob's current involvement in devising programs for spiritual journeys through the Spiritual Life Commission, the Millers remain actively involved. *"Diverse involvement in the life of church and its members brings a rich experience to the givers as well,"* noted Bob.



The Millers view stewardship in three categories, as Christine noted, *"for us it is about giving of your time, treasure and talent. Stewardship is more than just an annual financial pledge, it's a call to consider how to be stewards of each other, our community, and our physical world."*

The Millers talked about *"tithing"* which is mentioned many times in the scriptures. To the Millers it is simply budgeting gifts as a percentage of annual income. It took some time for the Millers to understand the WPC budget and specific operational needs of WPC. As their understanding grew, so did their support. Bob noted, *"When we joined the church, tithing was a concept, not a reality in our way of thinking. Gradually, as we got more involved in the church and more invested in the mission, diverse programs, and outreach, the more the idea of tithing became a priority."* Like many in the WPC congregation, the Millers directly support other organizations they believe are doing good in the world. They tithe each year and discuss how to allocate those dollars between WPC and other organizations about which they feel passionate. WPC has remained a top priority.

Contributing to WPC varies greatly as everyone's circumstances ebb and flow, including their own. *"Not everyone has a check to write, but everyone has valuable time and talents,"* noted Christine. *"At WPC we give as a community in whatever way we can."* In their annual WPC pledge, the Millers have also considered the tax benefits of their gifts to WPC as a 501c3 charity, meaning gifts are deductible for tax purposes.

When we asked about advice on stewardship, Christine noted, *"we greatly value the WPC members, their community contributions, including care of creation, and programs for spiritual growth. We highly value the open-to-all house of worship, so WPC is a high priority for us."* They would encourage others to consider supporting WPC. Bob said with a grin, *"Give 'til it hurts!"*

“...it's a call to consider how to be stewards of each other, our community, and our physical world.”



TODAY'S LEADERS, TOMORROW'S WORLD

Jeff Shankle, Youth Director

The first Sunday in February was a momentous occasion for our youth ministry. Two of our high schoolers were approved by the congregation to be Ruling Elders on Session. While it is not uncommon to find churches with a teenager serving in such a high leadership role, having two is different.

Every generation faces a world of trouble and this one has their work cut out for them. It's interesting to me how our faith gives us hope. Where does that come from? Could it be that we receive hope from "the Body of Christ?" Could it be that the church itself embodies our very Savior who gives us hope? Perhaps in this case, with more to come, Westminster is giving us and others hope through the leadership provided by our youth.

This year will be the second time SLAs (Student Leader Apprentices) will travel to Santa Cruz to meet and partner with local charities. We can all take pride in the fact that they aren't there only to listen and learn, but they are also there to humbly work with these organizations in the heavenly work they do. These high schoolers problem solve today's problems and lead both middle schoolers and adult leaders in that work.

We are also beginning to send our students to other parts of the country to serve with **YOUTHWORKS** where they work with a team of their peers from around North America to lead missions camps like the one we attend in San Diego. YouthWorks is one of a handful of organizations which knows about our youth, their experience in leadership, and actively asks for them to apply!

Hopefully, sometime in the next couple years we'll be able to send our youth around the world to deal with the world's problems. Is your daughter or son planning to take a gap year anytime soon?

The future looks bleak for many of us. Between climate change, rising inequality, and scores of other issues, it can seem daunting. But we should have hope that our faith, embodied through the young people of this church, the opportunities, guidance, and encouragement we give them, are increasingly up for the challenge.

RENOVATION UPDATE | Ron Meserve, Renovation Committee Chair

A major milestone! On January 6, 2020...after more than 15 months of planning, organizing and negotiating...we received the Building Permit issued by Marin County Community Development Department. Within 2 weeks demolition was completed and work began inside.

Plans are proceeding for installation of Solar power. Solar was not included in the renovation plans and budget, so it is necessary to determine ways to fund the system. Alternative funding strategies are currently being developed by Michael Hatfield, Solar Consultant to the Renovation Committee. If you have any interest in supporting the Solar project, please contact Michael.

The Spiritual Life Commission has offered to support the installation of a permanent Labyrinth on the floor at Findlay Hall. The Labyrinth represents a journey to our own center and back again out into the world. Labyrinths have long been used as meditation and prayer tools. A Labyrinth pattern incorporated within the Findlay Hall carpeting will be *(continued on pg. 7...)*



The WPC Renovation Committee.

RENOVATION UPDATE | Continued...

distinctive, attractive and a wonderful source for individual and group meditation and prayer experiences. We are currently evaluating cost and design options.

There are numerous examples of essential items that are desirable but are more costly than what is specified in the construction budget. These items range from bathroom fixtures to the Solar system. We have not focused much attention on Sponsorship options because we are all meeting our pledge commitments. But after you have completed your pledge commitments, if you would like to cover the cost of one of the items on the Sponsorship list, please notify Ron Meserve or Rob. A list of some items that could be sponsored is posted on the bulletin board at the rear of the sanctuary.



BEING PREPARED | Rev. Ted Scott, Parish Associate

Disruptions happen. Recent years have seen a number of events around the country and in California that created disruption for churches and communities. Fires have impacted congregations in Marin and Sonoma counties (remember the blue air?). Shootings and other threats of violence have occurred at churches, synagogues, and mosques. In the context of the unexpected, how can Westminster become better prepared to serve our members and the community? What skills and capabilities for dealing with possible disruption can we acquire?

Lots of people are thinking about this and exchanging information. Last September I attended a sold-out Preparedness Conference at the JCC. There were representatives from various nonprofits, fire, police, and Marin disaster preparedness officials. At presentations and table discussion groups

we talked about the various kinds of disruption which have impacted us locally and might in future. These included the fires in Santa Rosa and Paradise, as well as the potential for gun or other violence. We considered what our individual entities can do, and what resources are available from others. In August with hundreds of others I attended a San Francisco conference on congregational security. Representatives of various congregations along with police and public safety officials presented what they were doing and exchanged resource materials. I was impressed by the extent of preparedness planning and capability exhibited. Our own Presbyterian denomination is giving thought and providing resources so congregations can be better prepared for potential disruptions, while still maintaining a welcoming presence and stance of service and witness.

Disruptions can happen. However, we can be prepared to deal with possible disruption through forethought, planning and training. That's what presenters demonstrated at the events I've attended. To that end, **Westminster is co-hosting a Prepared Church workshop together with First Presbyterian Church Of San Rafael, on April 30, from 1:00-4:00pm.** The workshop will be at First Presbyterian and be presented by Men Against Gun Violence in conjunction with Marin police and disaster preparedness officials. The goal is to understand potential disruption better and outline ways to enhance readiness. WPC leaders are invited. We hope to share workshop results with you at a future time.

Our **Alternative Christmas Fair** was successful once again this past November. The participants and the shoppers had a good time and supported the great mix of local non-profit agencies, the WPC youth mission trips, also the Presbyterian Disaster Assistance Fund. As in the past, the money raised was donated directly to the charities.

The total raised over two Sundays was \$13,080, which included donations from 88 households. Thank you to the many volunteers who made the Christmas Fair happen, including the leadership of **Sandy Smith**.

FLOWERING OF THE CROSS

Sharon Terrill, Worship Commission Chair

Last year, our congregation celebrated a new Easter tradition that we will continue this year – the flowering of the cross. **We are asking church members to bring a favorite flower from their garden to Easter services on April 12 at 9:00 and 11:00am.** However, we will have plenty of flowers available at the service, if you do not have one of your own. Here is a little bit about this tradition:

On Easter Sunday morning, members of the congregation bring flowers or greenery to church. A bare wooden cross, dotted with pin holes or covered with chicken wire, stands in the church. At some point before or during the service, worshipers are invited to approach the barren cross and twine a flower around one of the wires, or to place a blossom in one of the pinholes. The congregation continues to decorate the cross until flowers cover it completely.



Easter 2019 at WPC.

The flowering of the cross represents the transition from Good Friday to Easter, from meditation on Jesus' death to joyful celebration of his resurrection. The ceremony transforms a barren cross, a reminder of Jesus' death, into an Easter symbol. Covered with fresh, living flowers, the cross serves not only as an emblem of Jesus' resurrection but also of the continuing presence of Christ among today's Christians. (Source: The Free Dictionary)