



Westminster

Presbyterian Church

ZEPHYRS

FALL 2019



WELCOMING OR INVITING? | Pastor Rob McClellan

With the start of a new program year around the corner, and with new people regularly visiting Westminster, it's a good time to think about how we will receive and connect with people.

Most churches describe themselves as *"warm and welcoming."* I'm not going to tell you that they're wrong. I am going to say being welcoming clearly isn't enough. The church has to be inviting.

Welcoming as lived out in many churches translates into being friendly when people happen to find their way into the building. Many churches do this just fine. Being inviting is about more actively engaging and connecting with people, being intentional about making people feel at home. *(cont...)*

GO US! | Associate Pastor Bethany Nelson

My mom turns 70 soon, and she has said for a while that she wants to do something momentous to mark the occasion. For a while, she, my sister, and I were making plans to walk a marathon. That definitely would have been a stretch for all of us! However, a few months ago, she let us know that she had chosen to go in a different direction for her personal celebration. Rather than walking a marathon, my mom had decided to walk the Camino de Santiago in Spain ... all of it. Yes, that is 500 miles of walking! She will be gone 6 weeks from late August to early October as she takes on this challenge. My first thought upon hearing this news was ... she is crazy! That was soon followed by my inner cheerleader thinking ... Go Mom! Yes, if you knew my mom, you would think it a bit crazy for someone who prefers *(cont...)*



WELCOMING OR INVITING? | Cont...

As an exercise, imagine walking into Westminster on a Sunday for the first time. What would you see? Who would you encounter? Would you know where to go? What questions would you have? What if you had kids? Mobility challenges? Were looking for educational or service opportunities? Needed to use the restroom?

If, in doing that exercise, you recognize some important gaps, by all means tell staff or elders, but just as importantly, look to fill those gaps yourself as an ambassador for this beloved community. It's not just about building an inviting structure, but about cultivating a culture that's truly inviting, and there are some simple practical things that you can do to help:

- Introduce yourself to someone you don't know. It's important to reconnect with church friends each week, but also make it a goal to meet someone new.
- Make it a point to reconnect with a new person the second time you see them. It's okay if you have to ask them their name again. It's often the follow up that leaves the lasting impression.
- Be more interested in them than you are in getting them to do something. It's great to plug people into other aspects of the church that will help them feel connected, but you have to first get to know them enough to know what will be of interest.
- Check if their basic needs are being met. Do they need to know where Sunday School meets? Where the hymnals are? How to get to coffee/refreshments after the services?
- Recognize different people need different levels of contact, and learn to read the cues. Some people come to church in search of a quiet experience or for many reasons aren't seeking a lot of interaction right away. A warm smile can go a long way toward being both inviting and respectful of space.
- Introduce new people to others, particularly those with whom they might have something in common.
- Volunteer at the welcome table or greet at the door. The more different people who help "staff" that table, the more members get to connect with all those who walk in on a Sunday.
- Wear your name tag so others can learn your name and so you can be identified as someone who knows their way around.

- Remember that being inviting doesn't start at the church doors; it starts when you wake up and continues throughout your whole day, wherever you are!

This isn't about trying to "get members." For Christians, hospitality is a spiritual practice, welcoming others as Christ welcomed so many.

I know Westminster is warm and welcoming. Let's be inviting as well.

God's Peace,
Rob

GO US! | Continued...

to stay home, doesn't like to travel, and is not all that into fitness to decide to walk the Camino. On the other hand, good for her. It is important to step out of our comfort zones and challenge ourselves with new experiences.

I have been thinking about my mom's upcoming adventure as our Westminster community has been preparing for our own adventure of renovation. When we first started discussing this project – especially how much it would cost and how much the construction would disrupt our usual routines – my first thought was ... we are crazy! In a time when mainline churches are shrinking, why would we want to take on a multi-million dollar project? But that was quickly followed by that inner cheerleader ... Go us! How exciting to think that we will soon have a building that can adequately support this vibrant community.

As we have continued to refine our renovation plans and prepare for groundbreaking, I have found myself more and more frequently thinking "Go us!" How inspiring it has been to witness this community coming together to support this ambitious project. How exciting it has been to dream about how we will use the new space to move forward together in ministry.

I will admit, however, to continuing to have my "We are crazy" moments. This is a huge step out of our comfort zone, and an extremely challenging new experience. When I think about how displaced we will be during the construction, I feel my anxiety level rise. This will be a time that requires much flexibility and spontaneity ... qualities that are not my strengths!

Thankfully, my anxiety is usually short-lived. (cont...)

GO US! | Continued...

I remind myself that, though our loss of physical space will be a challenge over the next several months, it will also be an opportunity. I can't wait to try some new things as a congregation and to be creative about how we remain in relationship with one another and with the greater community. This will be the perfect time to experiment in ways that we might not have even considered without this renovation opportunity.

In the coming months, let us be cheerleaders for one another, holding each other in prayer, supporting each other as we try new things, and having an abundance of patience with each other as we move outside our comfort zones. This process will most certainly be a challenge, but it can also be a wonderful time of growth and discovery.

And, in the next few weeks, if you would include a prayer for my mom on her Camino adventure, that would be great!

*Peace,
Bethany*

“ In the coming months, let us be cheerleaders for one another, holding each other in prayer, supporting each other as we try new things... ”



PLANNING FOR EXILE | Ruth E. Wells, Music Director

With the prospect of packing the music library away for a year while the renovation of the administrative building takes place, I've been working to pick a "top 40" of anthems to keep at my fingertips. This turned out to be an interesting exercise.

I inherited a marvelous choral library from my predecessors, and I've steadily built on it for nearly 12 years. I haven't managed to catalog the entire collection, but I have tracked each introit, anthem and benediction over the time. That narrows it down to just over 350 titles, which is still only a fraction of what we own. How does one choose?

I decided to imagine if I were stranded on a desert island for a year, what are the 50 choral pieces I'd want to have with me (because of course I'll be stranded with a cadre of singing refugees). It didn't take long to realize that 50 is too limiting, when you have to be prepared to support worship that covers the Christian narrative from Advent to ascension, seasons of joy and sorrow, and embraces contemporary expressions of spirituality.

With an eye toward keeping some sentimental favorites as well as revisiting things we haven't sung in a while, I've managed to cull the "must have" list to just under 100...what I'm calling the Exile Repertoire. I hope several of your favorites are among them. I also hope that if you love to sing, you might make the time to participate in the choir, for a few months or the whole year.

Soli Deo gloria (glory to God alone),
Ruth E.



THE CHRISTIAN LIFE | Steffen Bartschat, Spiritual Life Commission Member

(Adapted from "Sleeping with Bread" by Dennis Linn et. al.)

Imagine you go down to your mailbox and find in it a letter, from God, addressed to YOU. In it are your sealed orders – revealing the special purpose for your time on Earth. *Would you open it*

I would – of course I would! I have been waiting for that burning bush to appear all my life. Finally, I will have all the answers! It's even better than a burning bush, because I will have a written letter I can keep in my pocket and refer to again and again. *But wait a minute, once I open the letter, what happens to my free will?*

And as you examine the letter a little more closely, you realize that the letter cannot be opened. But, if you take a flashlight to it, you can discern some words and phrases. In my view, this represents the essence of the Christian life. Our ongoing quest, never quite successful, of discernment, of trying to figure out what God wants for us.

A few years ago, I came across **The Examen**, a technique first introduced by St. Ignatius, a 16th century theologian that helped found the Jesuit order. St. Ignatius posited that our deepest feelings and yearnings about our life experiences are an important revelation from God. *But we need to listen.*

The Examen is a simple exercise that can be performed on a daily, weekly, or annual basis. It is quite simple. You get into a quiet space, and review the events of the time period in question, asking yourself two questions:

- *Did this event make me feel like I was brought closer*

*to God, closer to others, closer to the Universe?
(Consolation)*

- *Did this event make me feel like I was being disconnecting from God, disconnecting from others, disconnecting from the Universe? (Desolation)*

In general, Consolation feels energizing while Desolation saps your energy.

Many people do an Examen every day, right before they drift off to sleep. I do mine on a weekly basis. Every Sunday right after church, I am in the right mind set. I withdraw to my home office, where I light a candle and start up my computer journal.

I write a review of the major events of the week and then ask myself where and when I felt Consolation (drawing closer to God) or Desolation (drawing away from God). These notes become invaluable during my annual goal setting retreat every November. As I review the accumulated journal entries for the year, and sometimes for years past, I can see threads develop in the Consolation column. For example, I have been feeling strong consolation over the past several years whenever I engage in teaching and writing activities. Writing is not easy for me, but I feel a sense of consolation whenever I do it. Last November, I decided to turn these feelings into action – I am currently working on my first non-fiction book.

Trying to figure out what to do when I feel desolation is a bit more difficult. Sometimes it's "*fake desolation*", where perhaps my mind is just not ready to engage in a certain activity. But I have also figured out some patterns over the years – I'd get a sense of desolation 1-2 years before I finally decided a certain job was no longer for me. In the end, I focus more on the consolation side of The Examen. The advice here is, if you feel consolation, bring more activities like these into your life!

In summary, the Christian Life is like the sealed envelope you cannot open. We will never get a full revelation; we will always be searching. But there is hope - with a flashlight (the Examen), we occasionally get some divine tips.

*You broke the bonds, and you loosened chains
Carried the cross of my shame, of my shame
You know I believe it
But I still haven't found what I'm looking for
~ U2*



QUESTIONS | Jeff Shankle, Director of Youth Ministry

“What do you think about weed?”

“What do you think about guns?”

“What do you think about Trump?”

“When did you first have sex?”

You were just standing in line with your teenager, about to order a burger, talking about weekend plans when all of sudden, BOOM, a question like that gets thrown into the mix. You can feel the blood rush to your face, a bit anxious about dealing with a topic like this properly.

Parents seem to come at these questions from a few different places. Most parents are very nervous about getting this just right. Many other parents couldn't wait to get this question and are sure that they are going to give their point-by-point thesis which they've been preparing for years. Still others would prefer to act like they didn't hear anything and simply respond, *“Did you say you want a milkshake?”*

What we tend to miss though is that there is oftentimes a question behind the question. Remember, this is a teenager trying to figure out how to have adult conversations and you being an adult, in particular their parent, makes this very difficult for them. What many teenagers are trying to ask you is, *“Can I actually have a conversation about this with you?”*

To that end let us take a lesson from our Rabbinical sisters and brothers. Why not answer a question with a question? *“What makes you ask that?”* *“Have you been thinking about that awhile?”* *“What do you think (or fear) I'm going to say?”* There are many more questions to be asked on topics like these. Ask them. If anything it'll give you time to pick your jaw up off the floor and think of a sensible thing to say.

If you really want to say something then let them know how much you appreciate their asking you in the first place. Also, you are their parent/relative/friend so don't hesitate to be frank about what you actually do think. Even further, don't hesitate to come back to the topic later on if you weren't satisfied with how you handled it. If there's one thing teens appreciate it's a dose of authentic humility.

Conversations like these are sorely needed and they are precious. The world may define itself in obtuse and complex ways but adolescents still need some structure lest they experience the kinds of existential crises that are so prevalent among them. As a parent you get to pass on your values and traditions to your children. After all, if that weren't true, they would've never asked in the first place.

Enjoy your burgers!



Scenes from our summer youth mission trips.



INVESTING IN OUR VALUES

Ginny Quick, Legacy Committee Chairperson

Since its inception in 2006 with two generous estate gifts from long-time Westminster members, the **LEGACY FUND** has grown to just over \$800,000 through additional bequests, memorials and other special gifts. The funds are invested as an endowment for long-term growth to provide a source of funding for Westminster in the future. A small percentage of the principal and income is used each year to enhance the church programs - special projects, speakers and musicians that would not be possible if we were solely dependent on the annual budget. The Legacy Fund also helped fund the Sacred Stories curriculum used in the children's Christian Education program.

From the beginning, investing the assets of Legacy Fund has been a focus of the committee's work. Recently, with the support of Session, the committee began to explore possible options for investing in a manner that is consistent with the values of the church. To help inform our work, we looked to the Presbyterian Church (USA), which advocates *"that church investment is more than a practical question. It is also "an instrument of mission and includes theological, social and economic considerations."*

We are happy to report that in May, Session approved a new socially responsible faith-based investment policy recommended by the Legacy Fund Committee members. The policy states, in part: *"Consistent with the faith-based investing principals of the Presbyterian Church (USA), the Legacy Fund investment policy seeks to promote: the pursuit of peace; social, economic and racial justice; equality of opportunity; sustainability; and environmental stewardship."*

Additionally, the Legacy Fund acknowledges Presbyterian Church (USA) divestiture recommendations covering corporations involved in certain military/weapons manufacture, tobacco, alcohol, gambling, for-profit-prison, and adverse environmental and human rights activities. The first step of this faith journey will be working with our investment manager this fall to identify investments that meet our policy criteria.

Funding Our Future

Annual Stewardship Pledge Drive

2020

A MOMENT FOR STEWARDSHIP | Bill McLeod, Stewardship Chair

There is much excitement around Westminster these days with ground-breaking soon on our facility renovation and expansion. The new space will provide the opportunity for growth which is exciting for the Stewardship Commission! As we begin the fall worship season, PLEASE BE ON THE LOOKOUT for materials, speakers and messaging about WPC's ANNUAL PLEDGE DRIVE ("APD") for 2020. As a reminder, the APD collects our community's pledges to support WPC financially in the following year. So your pledge this fall will support WPC in 2020. The APD supports everything from WPC outreach programs to our wonderful staff to our Sunday school and music programs among others. Did you know that 75% of the annual budget for Westminster is funded through the APD by members and friends of Westminster like you? So please be on the lookout for lots of information in September and prayerfully consider your pledge to support WPC in 2020.

You can find more information, including the FAQ about APD, at www.wpctiburon.org/give/ .



RENOVATION UPDATE | Ron Meserve and Elke Bray

THE RENOVATION PROJECT IS MOVING FULL STEAM AHEAD!

The permitting process with the county is proceeding and, if all goes well, construction could begin as early as October with completion expected in May 2020.

Work is well underway to secure the financing loans with the Synod. Loans approved to date include:

LOCs	\$1,600,000	5.50% 2 yr. fixed; renewable for 2 yr.
Amortized	\$ 150,000	3.75% 15 year fixed

The LOCs are interest-only for up to 4 years and funds can be withdrawn from the LOCs as needed. We don't accrue any interest payment until funds are withdrawn. The loans fund a significant cash flow mismatch during the period of construction. After we receive all pledges, we will likely carry a final loan balance in the amount of \$900,000-1,000,000 at 5.50% amortizing over 20 years with rate adjustments every 5 years. It is assumed that 2-3 years after project completion we will initiate a Debt Reduction campaign. **Anything we can do now to help reduce the shortfall between construction costs and pledges received will reduce the church's debt burden.**

"VALUE ENGINEERING" is the work by the contractor, architect, and Renovation Committee to find ways to reduce the cost of the project. As of July 15, changes have been proposed that could reduce estimated construction costs by as much as \$60,000. Of course, there still may be other construction cost increases as we proceed with the project, but we will continue value engineering in hopes of further reducing the shortfall.

Here is how YOU can support this effort:

- **Pay your capital pledge ahead of schedule**
- **Extend your pledge commitment for an additional year - an increase of 1/3 your original pledge**
- **Underwrite the cost of one of the items on the "Sponsorship List" (Contact Ron Meserve if you are interested)**
- **If you are a new member or if you did not enter a pledge previously, make your pledge now (pledge cards are available in the Narthex or contact Diane Masarweh in the church office)**

Tod Moody is hard at work on the logistics for the construction project. Highlights include the delivery of the preschool modular unit and securing office space for the staff at Redwoods Presbyterian Church in Larkspur. We will hire a moving company to move furniture and materials either to the staff temporary offices at Redwoods Presbyterian or to a storage facility. If you would like to volunteer to help pack, please let Tod know. Information will follow about the timing of the staff move and the impact of the modular units on parking.

Jo Cooper and Ann West are working closely with the architect as they start the interior design process. This includes kitchen appliances, furnishings, color palate and much more. Ann has also agreed to help with the landscaping plan and will be looking for ways to 'save' some of the current foliage in front of the Narthex.

For more information, including the most recent architectural plans and updates from the Renovation Committee, please visit the WPC website <https://www.wpctiburon.org/news-stories/westminster2020--forwardinfaith>

Should you have any further questions, feel free to contact Ron Meserve or any member of the Renovation Committee.

SACRED STORIES

This fall, we are into the second year of our “**SACRED STORIES**” Sunday School program. This program, for students in Pre-K through 2nd grade, immerses children in Bible stories and encourages them to wonder about and work with the stories in order to let their creativity shine.

This program has been impactful not only for the children, but also for the adults who have been trained as storytellers and work with the children from week to week. Perhaps most fun for me has been watching these adults – most of whom do not have children in the program – get to interact with the kids and to share their love of God

with them. What a beautiful experience it has been.

I invite you to consider participating in the “Sacred Stories” program. This is not an every-week commitment ... you can sign up to participate as often as makes sense for you. It is important that you are trained as a storyteller so you will feel prepared to lead the lesson.

Our next training will be Sunday, September 15 from 11:30-2:30. RSVP to me if you are interested in attending.

Thank you,
Bethany



Story sets that we will use as we tell the Bible stories – beautifully hand-crafted out of wood and fabric.