

Writing Guide for Westminster Presbyterian Church's Newsletter

The staff of Westminster Presbyterian Church welcomes articles for the *Spire*, the church's monthly newsletter. The voices of church members greatly enrich the *Spire's* content, reflecting our lives together as a church family. While articles cover a range of subjects, from personal stories of faith to reports of mission trips, they share the goal of communicating a subject in a clear and engaging way. The suggestions below will help achieve that goal.

Present the topic clearly and simply in the first sentence so that the reader gets the point right away and then dives into the story. Plan the article to provide enough information for the reader without pulling them into too much reading. Brevity and a clear point are virtues. An ideal length is 500 words or less, with 600 words the limit. Occasionally longer articles are necessary and can be planned with the *Spire* editor.

Organize the article with a distinct beginning, middle, and end. Aim for short paragraphs, which are easiest to read. Include examples and, if possible, quotes from others to support your point. Stick to the topic to keep the article interesting and avoid generalizations and sentimental description. Conclude with a strong sentence that will stay with the reader.

Practice whittling down your initial drafts. Find ways to get to the point without belaboring it. Once the reader has read the point, there is no need to repeat it unless the particularly story needs it for emphasis. Shorten sentences, keeping them simple and clear. Use active voice as much as possible. Read the draft out loud to see how you can streamline it without losing meaning. Avoid jargon and idioms of spoken language that are awkward in print – "facilitate," "impact" as a verb, "journal" as a verb, "just," and "really" are best avoided. Work through several drafts before submitting the article. You can be your work's best editor.

Typing Guidelines

- No formatting.
- Type paragraphs flush left, single spaced, with double spaces between paragraphs.
- One space follows all punctuation.
- All periods and commas go inside quotation marks. Colons and semi-colons go outside quotation marks. For exclamation points and question marks, placement follows meaning.
- Keep special effects to a minimum. Exclamation points, bold and italics for emphasis, all caps, words in quotation marks, etc., will be more effectively used in moderation.