



# THE SPARE

WESTMINSTER PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH  
Pittsburgh, PA

## Answers to Prayer

The Prosperity Gospel encourages people to believe in God as a means of getting whatever it is we want. Not surprisingly, it's very popular in America, and now there is evidence that it's becoming popular in places like China too, where some identify Christianity with Western economic abundance. Part of the appeal is that Christianity is the religion of "successful" individuals and nations, so becoming a Christian increases your chances of getting ahead in rather worldly ways.

God blesses us in all sorts of ways, and sometimes that includes abundance. If every good thing in life is ultimately a gift from God, then surely prosperity is among those gifts, but there are problems with the Prosperity Gospel.

First and foremost, it makes God a means to some other end and thus violates the first of the Ten Commandments: "You shall have no other gods before me." If what we care most about is prosperity and we think of God as a means of achieving it, then our main god really is Mammon. A related problem is that, while Mammon cultivates a possessive sense of entitlement in his followers, the God of the Bible encourages grateful generosity. Jesus says you can tell a person's god by the way he lives, and by what he does with what he has.

If the Prosperity Gospel is conspicuously vulgar, more sympathetic



is the notion that God should answer our prayers for worthier things: health, for example, or a decent job, or a suitable romantic partner. Those are reasonable desires, and it only seems natural that a good and loving God would want us to have such things.

God is ultimately the source of those blessings too, of course. If we enjoy them now it's because God has already given them, and I've known countless occasions when God appears to have brought them in response to somebody's prayers. Jesus says, after all, "Ask and you will receive," and he doesn't mean to set us up for disappointment. God often answers prayers in concrete, conspicuous ways.

The problem arises when our faith in God is contingent on getting the answers we want. No matter how good or worthy the things we ask of God, if we abandon faith because we think our

prayers have gone unanswered then God is still a means to some other end for us, and we have not yet come to faith as a relationship with the living God who knows what is best.

Over time, God's answers to our prayers may become more subtle to the untrained eye, but all the more conspicuous to those who know how to recognize them. When I was young we learned in Boy Scouts how to follow the tracks of a deer or a rabbit in the woods. Even when we didn't see the animals themselves, we knew they had been there, sometimes only moments before. For those who know how to see the signs of God's presence, answers to prayer are everywhere.

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LACIE BRYNER, *Kitchen Manager*

**WESTMINSTER RECREATION & OUTREACH  
 CENTER (WROC)**

KATHY LONG, *Director*

**NURSERY SCHOOL**

412-

835-2906

**CHILD DEVELOPMENT CENTER**

412-835-9450

Staff email addresses and phone  
 extensions are available on our website,  
[www.westminster-church.org](http://www.westminster-church.org).

Read the *Spire* online at:

[www.westminster-church.org](http://www.westminster-church.org)

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 telephone number, email address, and a title.  
 All articles are subject to editing.

**3 Worship**

Sunday Worship Services

Faith, Race, Justice, and Mass Incarceration

Upcoming Events

**4 Education**

Christian Formation Seminars

THS Announces 2016-2017 Season

Diary of a Lunatic: Blogger

Between Here and There: Distraction and Focus

"Got Worship" Workshop

Glimpse of My World

**8 Spiritual Growth**

Unfettered: I Love You

Arts & Spirituality: Words

**10 Mission**

Westminster Helps Many through Our Blessings

Diaper Month at Westminster

**12 Community Outreach**

WROC

The Gallery at Westminster

**13 Stewardship**

Giving: It's All Well and Good, but How Do We Do It?




**14 Caring Community**

Meet Westminster's New Officers




Session Update

Deaths

**Traditional  
Worship**

 Sundays
 8:30 & 11:00 a.m.
 Sanctuary

**The Bridge  
Contemporary Worship**

 Sundays
 9:45 a.m.
 WROC

*The Lord's Supper is celebrated the first Sunday of each month.  
Gluten-free wafers are available at all services.*

# Faith, Race, Justice, and Mass Incarceration

Saturday, February 6  
9:00 a.m. – 3:30 p.m.  
Pittsburgh Theological Seminary

This summer our Peace and Justice Group hosted a series on racism as it relates to poverty and mass incarceration. Many who attended expressed interest in pursuing this issue further, but lamented the fact that, because of the way our communities are structured, there is limited opportunity to get to know people of color. We have made some efforts in this direction by sharing meals with several city churches, but we wanted to have more of a connection across racial lines.

Toward this end, we will spend a day with our brothers and sisters of color, sharing meals and worship and conversation around issues of common concern. We learned in the summer seminars that mass incarceration is both a cause and a symptom of poverty and racial inequality. Coincidentally (or providentially), mass incarceration as it relates to hunger and poverty is a focus of *Bread for the World*, which Westminster has supported for many years. So we have invited Rev. Dr. Angelique Walker-Smith, a BFW senior associate with expertise in this area, to help us understand the issues involved, and to lead us in exploring some actions we might take.

Joining Westminster in sponsoring the event are Grace Memorial, Valley View, and Open Door Presbyterian Churches, as well as Pittsburgh Theological Seminary, which is hosting us. The day will begin with a continental breakfast at 8:30, and will include a presentation by Dr. Walker-Smith; small group discussion on the biblical foundation and role of the church in addressing racism, poverty, and mass incarceration; meeting with formerly incarcerated individuals; and planning for further activities. We'll also share lunch and worship together.

If your heart is troubled by all the inequities that exist across racial lines and you would like to be engaged in making changes, please prayerfully consider joining other concerned Christians for this event. We hope to have a racially balanced group so that we can best learn from one another. Westminster's Outreach Commission and our Peace and Justice Group are covering the cost, but you must register in advance so that we can plan both for food and for the various discussion groups. Contact Jim Gilchrist or Will Hignett for more information.

– Bobbie Hartman

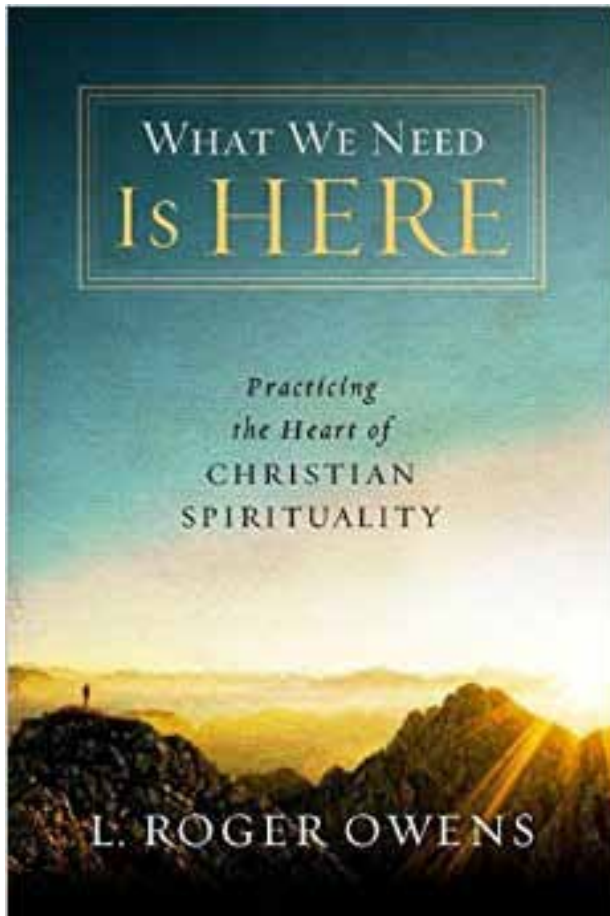
## Upcoming Events

- 01**  
FEB Nursery School & Kindergarten Registration Opens
- 06**  
FEB Faith, Race, Justice, and Mass Incarceration
- 07**  
FEB Transfiguration of the Lord
- 10**  
FEB Ash Wednesday, 7:30 p.m.
- 21**  
FEB Blood Drive

## Easter Flowers

The Chancel Guild is accepting memorial/honoree contributions for Easter flowers. Look for the order form in the Sunday bulletin.

Your contribution must be received by **Monday, March 21, 2016**, so your gift can be listed in the Easter bulletin.



Sundays at 9:45 a.m. in Galbreath Chapel

*February Lenten Series*

## What We Need Is Here: Learning New Ways to Listen to God through Scripture

L. Roger Owens, Associate Professor of  
Leadership and Ministry  
Pittsburgh Theological Seminary

We welcome Professor L. Roger Owens, who teaches spirituality and ministry at Pittsburgh Theological Seminary, to lead our Lenten series during the month of February. He will help us discover (or rediscover) ways to listen to God through scripture. Often we read scripture as a source of information about God when really it's meant to be read for our transformation. Jesus meets us and forms us as we listen to him through the words of scripture. In the new year there's no need to go on a search to find God, when we can discover that God has already given us everything we need – if we would just pause and listen.

After these four weeks, participants will be equipped to deepen their spiritual lives by listening to God through scripture. Topics include what it means to read scripture for transformation; how to read the Gospels for all their worth; getting the most out of the Psalms; and using the imagination in prayer and scripture reading. Some of the material for these sessions will be adapted from Owens' new book, *What We Need Is Here: Practicing the Heart of Christian Spirituality*, available in our church library.

## Town Hall South Announces 2016-2017 Season

Town Hall South will reveal the new series at the lecture on February 2 featuring Bill Strickland. After the lecture, you may visit the Town Hall South website to view the lineup for the upcoming season: [www.townhallsouth.org](http://www.townhallsouth.org).

2016-2017 brochures will be mailed on February 2 to current subscribers. If you would like a brochure, please enter your contact information on the THS website or phone Nancy Rex at 724-941-6704 or Kristin Matheny at 412-257-8668.

The March issue of the *Spire* will provide further details on the upcoming series.

# Blogger

I love to write. I have since I was a little kid, and it has been a passion that has grown in me throughout my life. In classes at the seminary, if I am given the choice between writing a 20-page paper or taking a final exam, I choose the paper each and every time. There's something magical about taking a blank page (or computer screen if you're a little more tech savvy) and finishing with a document, filled with ideas and artistry and passion. Where once there was nothing, now new worlds are born. This is writing at its best.

So a few years ago when I discovered this new web phenomenon called the "blog," I was sold. Short for web-log, blogging originally started as a sort of digital public diary, where in my teenage years I would whine about whatever was bothering me at the moment. I think I had maybe one and a half readers back then. No one wants to hear about that. But as I grew up, the world of blogging did as well. Blogs started to specialize by topic. Blogs about biking. Blogs about cooking. Blogs about movies. Blogs about blogs. There are even people in this world who make their entire living as bloggers. All they do from morning to night is write. That sounds pretty slick to me!

So when the new Westminster website came about, it seemed good that we have a blog. Let's be honest, quite a few people around here have a lot of really good stuff to say. We have a lot of talented people, and this is another forum for them to get the word out about the outstanding and wonderful word of God. We've been writing about matters of faith and theology, practical things like parenting and raising children, and we've even done an advent devotional. And I'm pleased to say, we're just getting started!

This is exciting for so many reasons. For starters, to those who are already a part of our congregation and love what we're up to, it's more of what you love. It's a little bit like extra church! But where I get really excited is the potential this has to reach people



who aren't already a part of our church family. Imagine you have a friend who is struggling with their faith and how it relates to science, and Jim writes a post that fits their questions. Through the blog, you can send them an email with the post, and hopefully open up some more conversation. Perhaps there is someone who is far away who could use a little bit of encouragement every day in their faith? A couple of clicks and you can send them articles to encourage them along the way. Have you been desperate to share your faith with someone, but haven't been able to find the right words? The blog can be a conversation opener.

So we'll keep up the writing. As of the writing of this *Spire* article, Ed and I are working on a series covering our individual philosophies and approaches to youth ministry (Ed from a more counseling/clinical perspective, me from a theological background). After that we'll have a whole host of new series from Jim and Robin and Dave and really anyone who has something to share. We're going to look at how faith and life intersect. We're going to wonder at what Jesus is up to in our worlds. And most important, we're going to find new and fresh ways to proclaim the goodness of the gospel.

So I hope you'll tune in to [www.westminster-church.org/blog](http://www.westminster-church.org/blog) and join the adventure!

– Jason Freyer

[www.westminster-church.org/blog](http://www.westminster-church.org/blog)

## BETWEEN HERE AND THERE



## Distraction and Focus

Maybe I'm just trying to justify my actions, but I've learned something about my ability to focus. I need small distractions. For example, as I write this I am seated in a crowded coffee shop at lunchtime. Only a few minutes ago I sat in a quiet office and I was stumped. Now here I am and the juices are flowing! The same was true in college. People used to tell me, "Sit in the front row so the professor can get to know you." It was a nice theory until I could barely keep my eyes open. This was not the person I wanted the professor to get to know! Instead, when I sat in the back of the class with dozens of other students, I stayed attentive and focused throughout the lecture. When variety and distraction are built into my everyday life, I'm more productive, more focused, and more energized.

One of the reasons I love what I do at Westminster is the variety of things I get to do every day. In one moment I work with a family struggling through a difficult time; in the next I play a goofy game with teenagers. One day I'm writing a sermon to challenge my own faith and the faith of those in our community and the next I'm traveling to the sporting clays range or golf course with a group of men. Variety helps my metaphoric world to go around! This is true not only for my work and academics, but in my hobbies, my time spent with family, and my faith. I crave variety. Change the run route, play at a different playground, take on a new challenge. I wonder if you're anything like me.

It's easy to become comfortable in routines, and that's not all bad. Routines help us to build familiarity, help us to hone our strengths, create a sense of continuity in our lives. There is, however, another side to that same coin. Routines create ruts that may be hard to pull out of. Routines can also breed stagnation and lead to a sense of boredom. There's no way for me to judge exactly what effect your routines have on your life, but I would encourage you to switch it up. Today seems like a great day to build in a distraction, try something new.

Ask yourself, have I become stuck in a faith rut? Have my spiritual routines led me to growth or stagnation? Am I honing my strengths or becoming spiritually lazy? What could be gained if Jesus and I had a new adventure together? What if I let Jesus decide what we were going to do today?

"Rivers of living water will flow from within" those who believe in Jesus. Have you tended to your river recently? Is it vibrant and alive, giving nourishment to those around it, or has it dwindled to a mere trickle in an otherwise dry land? Perhaps a distraction, a small change in pattern, is all that's needed to blast open the dams blocking the flow of living water.

I'd love to learn with you as we each discover the things that lead us away from stagnation and toward growth in Christ. Let me know if you'd like to talk about it together.

— Ed Sutter

## "Got Worship" Workshop

In December, a group of third and fourth graders participated in a three-week workshop titled "Got Worship?" During the workshop, the children went back into the Old Testament to explore how people in those times worshiped God through sacrificial offerings. They then went into the New Testament to learn how Jesus became the sacrificial lamb to worship God and save us from our sins.

The children became familiar with the bulletin that is used in church and what the sections mean, especially the Gloria Patri and the Doxology. They also learned about the liturgical colors of the church year.

During the last week of the workshop, the children became Sanctuary Sleuths, roaming the sanctuary as they found out about the parts that make up the sanctuary. They went from "Got Worship?" to "I Get Worship!"

— Debb Egli

## GLIMPSE OF MY WORLD



One of my favorite parts of my job is exploring scripture with children of varying ages. Sometimes it's with the "big kids" – fifth and sixth graders. If you read this column at all regularly, it will not surprise you to hear that I am frequently intrigued with the perspectives that they share or the ideas that they have about a passage we are studying.

Not too long ago we were working on an Advent project: a Jesse Tree, creating ornaments to represent the (mostly) Old Testament people who were ancestors to Jesus – the members of his "family tree." Together we created a long list of the characters from the Bible stories the kids knew. Then each child chose several names and drew a small picture or symbol to represent something important about each person. Of course, they included all the "usual suspects": Mary, Adam and Eve, Moses, Noah. But here are a few others they included:

- The prophet Joel – the illustration is a beautiful ten-legged beetle because the prophet uses the devastation of an invasion of locusts as an illustration of God's judgment (and God's promise to replace the food lost to the locusts as an example of how God loves and takes care of us, even when we've been wrong).
- Gideon – who declares (in bright green) "Although I'm scared, I will obey God."
- Balaam – with his recalcitrant donkey, and a bird representing the spirit of God. In the illustration, the donkey has its eyes open, while Balaam (who couldn't see the angel of the Lord) has his closed tightly.
- Isaac – this illustration is an elaborate tree, labeled "family tree." The artist's explanation was that without Isaac, there would have been none of the other generations that led to the birth of Jesus. "And anyway, isn't Isaac sort of like a prediction of Jesus, with that whole story about his dad being supposed to sacrifice him?" Yes – from a ten-year-old....

Sometimes I'm sharing stories with the little kids, our two through four year olds.

Recently we were talking about Epiphany, the wise men's journey with gifts for the new king. To help set the stage, we were pretending to look at the stars through our imaginary telescopes. I pretended to be amazed at the appearance of a new star, one that had never been there before. One of the three year olds removed his "telescope" from his eye, looked at me and said, very matter-of-factly, "Oh, yes. God put that there for a birthday gift for baby Jesus."

Reading and interpreting scripture is so much richer when we share it with other people. Each of these children, and so many more, add to my experience and understanding of the Bible by their willingness to share their own perceptions.

In Acts, Philip is presented with the opportunity to read scripture with an Ethiopian official. When Philip notices that the man is reading from the prophet Isaiah, he asks him, "Do you really understand what you are reading?" Philip takes the man's response – "Without someone to guide me, how could I?" – as an invitation to climb up into his carriage and read along with him, explaining and discussing the text. Through this conversation, Philip is able to share the good news about Jesus Christ, ultimately baptizing the man. While the scripture passage focuses on the Ethiopian man's experience, as a teacher I know that certainly Philip was also affected by this interaction. Perhaps the chance to tell the gospel story reminded him of an important piece of it. Maybe he realized something new about Jesus or his relationship with God. Perhaps something became clearer or he dug deeper into the story, discovering something he had not previously known. Maybe he simply was able to join in the joy of sharing the gospel. We don't really know. What we do know is that reading scripture together, talking about what it means and how it fits into our own lives, is a deeper, richer experience when we share it with others. I invite you to engage with some other folks – kids, adults, family, friends. Read some Bible passages together – and talk about them. You'll grow – I guarantee it.

– Robin Pyles

# I Love You



“I love you.” What amazing words. When a parent holds a child – offering comfort, warmth, and a tear wiped away – the unspoken message is loud and clear: “I love you.” When a couple kisses at the end of the wedding ceremony, the unspoken message is loud and clear: “I love you.” In so many ways we send a loud, clear, profound, and often unspoken message: “I love you.” In the greeting card world, love is often indicated by warm fuzzies and cuteness and smiles all around. Love is more than that. Love is a message that is lived, not just spoken. No more poignant testimony of this exists than Jesus’ words in John’s Gospel.

The disciples had gathered with Jesus for their final meal. Jesus predicted Judas’ betrayal. Judas had slipped away into the night to prepare to hand his Master over to an army. Then Jesus looked at his disciples and said (in John 13:34-35, NRSV):

I give you a new commandment, that you love one another. Just as I have loved you, you also should love one another. By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another.

The call to love wasn’t new. It had been heard in so many ways so many times

before. What was new was the caveat that Jesus added to the familiar admonition to love. Our love was to find its model in the way Jesus loved us. What was also new was Jesus’ elevation of love to a commandment. This is a sacrificial love: a love that always puts others ahead of ourselves, a love that gives its very life to demonstrate the mercy and grace of God. Not only are we to love this way, but doing so is the way that others will identify us as Jesus’ disciples.

As I write this, some Republicans and Democrats are ramping up their attack rhetoric. Opponents are called racist, liar, unpatriotic, and more. Rather than enter into dialogue with people who have genuine policy differences, characters are assassinated and personalities vilified. I keep thinking of Jesus’ comment: “I give you a new commandment, that you love one another. Just as I have loved you, you also should love one another.” Jesus is not advocating a greeting card kind of love. Jesus is advocating the kind of love that he lived. This is a love that disagrees with the wrong, working against it (remember his actions in the expulsion from the temple). This is a love that honors differences without attacking those who are different. This is a love that listens openly even to those who have

**I give you a new commandment, that you love one another. Just as I have loved you, you also should love one another. By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another.**

positions that are diametrically opposed to ours.

Who we vote for is not the issue for the church. The issue for the church is the tone of the discourse. As we are under a mandate to love as we are loved, we are equally under a mandate to expect the same from those around us. In those few words to the disciples, Jesus elevated love from a nice sentiment to a commandment. Love as we have been loved. Expect others to love as they are loved.

Loving as we have been loved is the hallmark of discipleship. Let us join hearts and hands and voices in living lives of loving and compassionate faith that proclaim “I love you” to a hurting and often lonely world. Let us expect our leaders to do so. May Jesus’ words be our mantra:

I give you a new commandment, that you love one another. Just as I have loved you, you also should love one another. By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another.

Shalom.

– Dave Fetterman



# Words

The mask was gone now,  
burned away  
(from inside)  
by God's gaze

There was no  
I, there  
was no he—  
finally

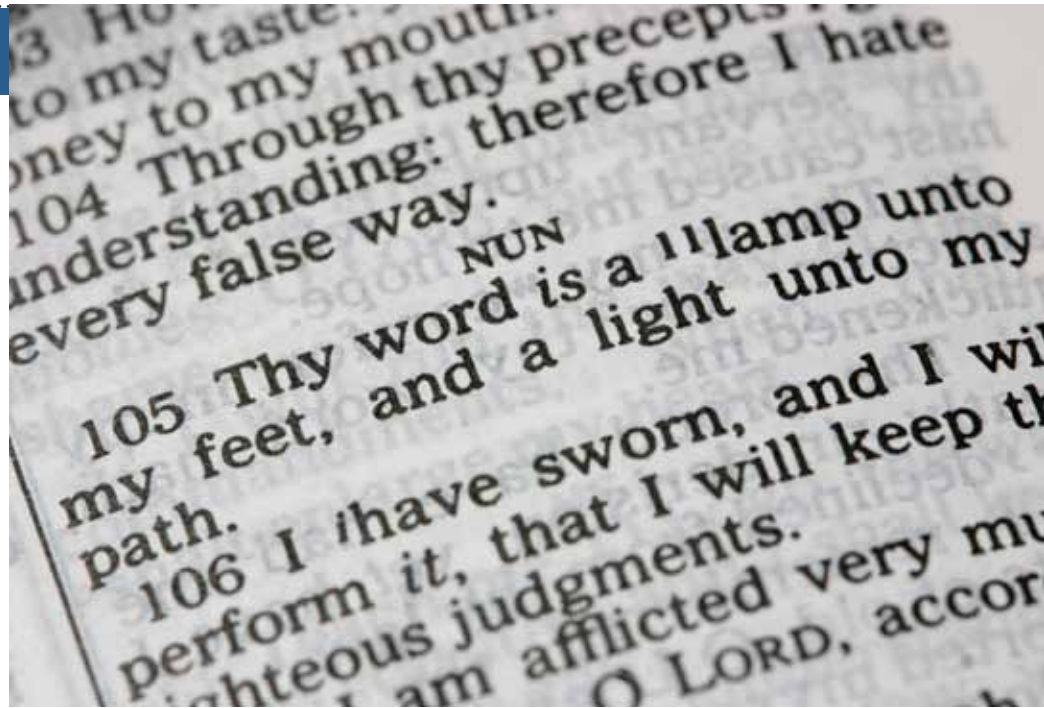
there was no text, only  
what the words stood for;  
and then

what all things stand for.

— Franz Wright, “The Reader”

Words are interesting creatures. They are small language formations that can communicate from the simplest commands to the most profound thoughts and emotions. We rely on them as our main means of expression. But not all words are the same; not all words affect us the same way. Are there different stages in how words can have an effect on us?

Sometimes words are just words, signs that, combined with others, communicate meaning. When we read an article, an essay, or a book, we may get the idea but fail to be really inspired to pursue further thinking. After we close the book, the words simply sit in our memory. Or we listen to someone and hear the words, yet we don't quite connect with what is said. The words seem to vanish from us after a while. When words are at this stage, they are sounds we hear or texts we read. We perceive the words — we see them, we hear them — and we may be able to remember and repeat them, but they do not affect us in any profound way. We remain readers or listeners, and the words remain external objects.



Other times though, we come across words that shake us. We read a poem or a book or we listen to someone's wise words, and we are moved and inspired. At these times, words make us pause and reflect. They make us feel and they unravel emotion in us, or they make us think and try to unveil their meaning. At this stage, words affect us: they cross the outside barrier of the self and make inscriptions in our minds and hearts. We are now active participants: the words prompt us to think and feel and act. These words are no longer external; they are shaping who we are.

And yet other times, words go beyond affecting us to become incarnate. We intuitively know this as parents: we know the importance of expressing loving and affirming words to our children. We say caring words to them because we know that eventually those words, along with our loving actions, will take hold in our child's soul. Our loving words will let him know that he is loved and valuable, and he'll grow up to be what those words mean. When words reach this stage, the process is mostly unconscious: the words have become incarnate. They don't stay on the outside or affect us in some way. Rather, they become who we are.

I wonder if the word of God follows that existence in us. Do we go through similar stages with the word of God? As we grow in our faith, does the word begin to shape us? Does it become alive in us?

We start as readers and listeners of God's word. We read about God and we hear the stories from our parents and teachers. At this stage, we are outsiders and the word is an external object. But the word of God is not meant to merely be printed text or the sound of the preacher's voice or memorized lines.

If we grow into the second stage, God's word becomes a powerful yet tender force that guides and transforms us. The word affects us and we are moved, we reflect on it, and we begin to practice its teachings. We follow what the words mean and apply them to our own lives and the way we treat others.

But ultimately, we hope to reach the third stage. We hope for a time when God's word is no longer an object but the subject itself. We hope for a time when the words become *us* and we can't tell them apart from who we are anymore. We hope to no longer be readers or mere listeners, but to become what the words stand for. We hope for God's word to become alive in our own flesh, heart, and mind until we naturally love God above everything and our neighbor as ourselves.

— Mariela Mazziotti Antunes

# Westminster Helps Many through Our Blessings



The De-worm the World initiative at Evidence Action is a top-rated charity addressing the over 600 million children worldwide who are at risk of parasitic worm infection and who are untreated. Worm infections interfere with nutrient uptake, can lead to anemia, malnourishment, and impaired mental and physical development. This problem is estimated to cause a loss of 200 to 524 million years of primary schooling. Treatment against parasitic worms with a simple pill is recognized as a safe, cost-effective, and scalable solution. The cost of school-based deworming is less than \$0.50 per child per year. Westminster's \$2,000 investment helped to treat around 4,000 children!

Our church members have been blessed, and Westminster individuals and families have been generous to many people who are in need and crisis, locally and around the world. A look back at our church's efforts over the past year encourages us to continue to humbly provide talents and resources to those in need. We are grateful to have done many good things last year, yet deeply concerned that this year we may do less.

Westminster serves through our Outreach Commission and through members volunteering and helping organizations and causes by aiding efforts of various groups. Examples of the latter include attending fundraisers like the Deacons' golf outing for City Mission and Family Promise, the Haiti golf outing, and Celebrate with SHIM, as well as participating in the Bair Foundation gifts program at Christmas. Westminster volunteers give time and talent by serving in the Pittsburgh area (Food Bank, Produce 2 People, SHIM, Global Links, World Vision, Stop Hunger Now, City Mission, and others). And volunteers travel. Adults and youth serve in many ways at the La Croix New Testament Mission in Haiti, and youth go to other cities in the U.S. on their mission trips.

Christ's greatest commandment is to "love one another." This is the aspect of serving that the Outreach Commission does directly. Outreach's overall portfolio provides opportunities for hands on mission work, supports organizations financially along with volunteer efforts, and also addresses worthwhile initiatives that only require monetary donations. For example, our church supported the De-worm the World initiative.

Our church's many efforts and investments yielded significant results. Here are a few:

- In Haiti, school buildings established in seven villages in the La Croix community educate 3,500 children. This is significant because only 15% of children in Haiti attend school. Westminster built one school and has assisted with the new school in Paul, Haiti. Westminster also assists schooling with the child sponsorship program, which makes it possible for most of the enrolled children to attend school, receive a nutritious meal, a school uniform, and hope for the future.
- Our support of South Hills Interfaith Ministries (SHIM) through food drives, gift and coat collections, Outreach financial support, and volunteering assists this local organization, which served more than 4,000 individuals in 2015.
- We supported Rebuilding Together Pittsburgh (RTP) financially and with volunteers. RTP transforms the lives of low-income homeowners by improving the safety and health of their homes and revitalizing their communities. RTP is a significant part of the revitalization of Hazelwood and a partner of the Homewood Collaborative. Over the last two years RTP has rehabbed over 225 houses in Pittsburgh, at no cost to the homeowners.
- City Mission provides hope for the homeless and saves lives. Serving the homeless and lost in Washington, PA, for the past 75 years, City Mission makes a difference in many

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lives. Between 2014 and 2015, 111,764 meals were served and 38,142 nights of shelter were provided along with 6,096 medical interventions. We support City Mission through volunteers and funding. The Deacons' fundraiser allowed the Mission to open a winter emergency shelter for several months to provide needed shelter for 15 additional men who would not have had space in the full shelter.

Westminster assisted many other local and international groups in the last year, and we are grateful to have had the resources to help. Serving is a great way for all of us to grow spiritually while assisting communities and individuals in need.

Sadly we will do less this year because currently the church's budget has a significant shortfall, and the budget is balanced partly through a large deduction in the Outreach Commission budget. To maintain our work of reaching out to help others, we rely on the congregation's talents as well as strong financial support. Please give generously so that Westminster Presbyterian Church can live out Christ's call to "love one another."

With Advent – the season of hope – still in my memory, I believe all of us can come through and address this church budget shortfall and maintain our giving and support of these great mission partners. By the virtue of hope, we trust that God will provide us with whatever means are necessary for our becoming a source of grace in this world of trials.

– Will Hignett

**Our church members  
have been blessed, and  
Westminster individuals  
and families have been  
generous to many  
people who are in need  
and crisis, locally and  
around the world.**

## Diaper Month at Westminster

Presbyterian Women of Westminster (PWW) is supporting the Western Pennsylvania Diaper Bank, a nonprofit organization that distributes diapers to families in need throughout our seven-county region through 23 local social service agencies. PWW is helping to diaper the babies.

February is Diaper Month at Westminster. Sizes 4, 5, and 6 are the most in-demand sizes of diapers. If you would like to help this effort, please place packages of diapers in the large white donation boxes at church during February.

The estimated Southwestern Pennsylvania regional diaper need of families living in poverty is approximately 140,000 diapers per day (77,000 per day in Allegheny County alone) and growing. Disposable diapers cost up to \$150 per month per baby. Government programs do not provide diapers.

Most childcare centers, even free and subsidized facilities, turn away children without an adequate supply of disposable diapers. Cloth diapers are not accepted at most day care centers and Laundromats. As a result, many parents cannot go to work or school consistently, thereby continuing the cycle of poverty. Diaper-need can affect a child's chance to develop cognitive abilities and language skills, and frankly, the uncomfortable baby will cry – a lot.

Western Pennsylvania Diaper Bank is affiliated with the National Diaper Bank Network. To request additional information about Diaper Month at Westminster, contact Joy Mahrer at [joymahrer@yahoo.com](mailto:joymahrer@yahoo.com).

## Memorial Flowers

Beautiful memorial flowers illustrate God's glory and enhance our worship experience each week in the sanctuary. Bouquets frequently welcome us in the narthex. Chancel Guild manages the memorial flower program and determines the price for the memorials. Beginning in January 2017, flower memorials will be \$45, the first increase in many years. Donors may arrange to donate flowers by contacting Peg Kinsey.

– Joy Mahrer and Marsha Gnagey  
Coordinators of the Chancel Guild

# Creative Expression at the WROC

## *Painting with a Twist*

Are you ready to discover your inner artist? Join us for an evening of fun, creativity, and fellowship as we create one-of-a-kind pieces of art to take home and, perhaps, discover a new found talent. A local artist will guide you step by step to create a floral picture. Participants will paint on a bare 16" by 20" canvas using paint and brushes (all provided).

No art experience is needed. Simply be ready to have a good time.

Bring an appetizer to share; non-alcoholic beverages provided.

Friday, February 26  
6:30 – 8:30 p.m.  
Fellowship Hall

Cost: \$35 (Includes non-alcoholic beverages, paint supplies, and artist instruction)

Instructor: Local professional artist provided by Painting with a Twist.

Space is limited to 24 participants. Recommended for 16 years and older.

## *WROC Talk*

Anne Brucker, MEd

# Reversing the Aging Process: Tricks and Secrets

Join Anne as she shares 40 years of personal training secrets along with her experience as an exercise design coordinator and exercise physiologist. Her passion and energy for working with adults age 50 and older will inspire and motivate you to live a healthier lifestyle. In addition to sharing health and fitness tips, Anne will demonstrate weight bearing exercises that can help defeat osteoporosis, maintain flexibility, and increase balance – all of which can be done in the comfort of your own home! You'll leave the talk with the knowledge to safely begin an exercise program of your own.

*Anne Brucker (Master of Education, exercise design) has worked for 40 years as a teacher, lecturer, and researcher in the health industry. She served as the lead exercise physiologist for the six-year Highmark Osteoporosis HOPE Study. She also acted as the exercise design coordinator and conducted the pilot program for the University of Pittsburgh's 10 Keys to Healthy Living Study and currently serves on the advisory board for the MOVE UP Study at the University of Pittsburgh's Prevention Research Center.*



Tuesday, March 8

7:00 – 8:00 p.m.

Galbreath Chapel

Cost: Free; registration required.



*Grand Teton in Fall*

The photographic exhibit by Frank and Laurie Bruns, presenting spectacular views of the public lands of the West, will continue through February.

Years of camping, hiking, biking, kayaking, birding, and travel have given the Bruns a deep appreciation for the natural world. This inherent love of nature, together with their tremendous photographic skills, enables them to capture the essence of the wondrous places they visit. The gallery display concentrates on Frank's landscapes – the canyons, woodlands, mountains, waterways, and natural formations – but it also includes some of Laurie's portraits of the flowers and plants that are indigenous to the region.

Having spent so much time in the outdoors, the Bruns know that, no matter how special the scenery, the heart remains open to other interests. In the hall corridor, for instance, see a photo of the harbor seals playing along Newport Beach in Oregon, and another of the sand hill cranes and snow geese in the Bernardo wildlife area in New Mexico.

The exhibit offers amazing views of the American West – lands in our country that have remained unspoiled for centuries. These are the same views that our forefathers may have seen on their trek to the West; they are the same lands where Native American children played even before the arrival of those travelers; and they are lands that once existed with possibly no humans. If you have ever visited the western national parks, you will appreciate the current exhibit. If you have not experienced these lands, you must do so by a trip to the gallery.

– Betty Digby

## Giving: It's All Well and Good, but How Do We Do It?

There's a lot of discussion these days about the best way to give. It gets confusing.

The "original" way was to tithe: just do it.

Then, there was old-time mission giving: help those who need to be converted to Christianity – and help them with their needs along the way.

Now we see that sometimes we might be inadvertently "hurting more than helping." We need to learn how to give in ways that foster, not undermine, the group we intend to help.

More recently, it has become easy to give to a myriad of causes that fit our personal interests (you can even create your own) through websites such as CrowdRise. Hundreds of individuals and nonprofits are bombarding us online.

You may begin to feel overwhelmed and wonder if you are sending money without knowing what good it does. You want to help, but how can you choose? With all these forces tugging at our minds and checkbooks, we begin to suffer from "donor fatigue."

So here are some thoughts that may help us decide what to do about giving:

1. Don't overlook what is close by. We might assume that the institutions that surround and support us and our families are "doing fine." In our affluent community we might assume that our

church, the fire department, and the homeless shelter are not as "needy" as others. But they depend on our ongoing support to fulfill their missions. It's never too late to contribute to our church home, which supports our own congregation as well as many important outreach activities.

2. It doesn't have to feel like a sacrifice. If you are already giving to a cause and you can see it is helping, you have that satisfied feeling that you are getting much more than you give. Stay with it and enjoy – you have found the real joy of giving.

3. Share whatever you have. Financial contributions are important, but remember that your time, your skills, and your caring have unique value too. Share whatever you have. These intangibles are often just what is needed and show others that we care.

4. Pray. Ask God what to do about your giving. He knows you, your talents, your budget, your family, your needs and worries. Pray that he will guide you and then follow his leading. He knows what is best. After all, everything belongs to God, so give with his guidance and with thanksgiving for his generosity to us.

– Flo Van Cara

# Meet Westminster's New Officers

## ELDERS

### Kyle Burgess

My high school sweetheart, Michele, and I have been members of Westminster since 2008, and we have two children, Harrison (14) and Scarlett (5). An 18-year veteran of the classroom, I teach English and coach cross country at Moon Area High School. I am the current president of the Pittsburgh Mighty Penguins, the sled hockey organization for which Harrison has played since 2010. I look forward to prayerfully discovering Christ-centered ways to use my time and talents to serve Westminster.

### Mandy Thomas

I am a full-time employee, all-time mother, active church volunteer, and former deacon. My husband Ian and I have two daughters, Rachel (9) and Madeleine (6). I enjoy reading all types of books, knitting, organizing, traveling to visit family and friends, and running a busy household. Now that I have completed my MSc degree, I am embarking on a series of home improvement projects in my limited free time.

### Chip Staub

My wife Donna and I are lifelong Pittsburghers (except for six years in Atlanta). I was initially attracted to Westminster in 1989 by the message from the pulpit and a desire to deepen my knowledge and faith through participation in Bible study classes. Since then, I have been blessed with the opportunity to grow personally and spiritually through friendships developed during a variety of activities ranging from the Deacons to Sunday Seminars to Extended Communion to the Rummage Sale. I am truly thankful for this opportunity to serve as an elder and look forward to actively contributing as best I can.

### Art Humphreys

I have lived in Upper St. Clair since 1986 and been a member of Westminster since 1997, when my wife Marion and I transferred from the First Presbyterian Church of Pittsburgh. We were both Presbyterians all our lives and met at the College of Wooster. Marion died in 2012, after a long battle with Alzheimers' Disease. I have three daughters and six grandchildren. I have become more active at Westminster in the past three years and I look forward to serving on the Session.

### Nana Wilson

I am a happy wife, an enthusiastic grandmother, and a practicing contemplative. Teilhard de Chardin is a great influence in my life and he challenges me to get involved, to create caring connections in order to grow in complexity and consciousness and thus grow the Body of Christ. For an introvert this is indeed a challenge, and Westminster has been an encouraging and supportive community.

### Susan Van Cleve

I have been a Pediatric Nurse Practitioner for 34 years and have extensive experience working with children and families in primary care settings as well as with children with special needs. I am currently an associate professor of nursing at Robert Morris University and work part time in a private pediatric practice, where I provide comprehensive assessment and treatment to children and teens with developmental, behavioral, and mental health disorders.

### Mike Lee

This is my second term on Session, and I am grateful for the opportunity to serve once again. My focus this time around is to represent the 30s and 40s age group and provide assistance where needed.

### Dave Copeland

My wife and I have been members since 1988. My commissions are Bridge Worship and Youth Ministry. I have been a musician in the Bridge worship for years and look forward to serving my first term on Session.

## DEACONS

### Kathleen O'Brien

My husband and I have two daughters and four grandchildren. Our daughters live in Columbus, OH, and Los Angeles, CA. I have lived in Upper St. Clair for 39 years, moving here from Long Island, NY. I was born in McKeesport, PA. I'm proud of my long association with Westminster. People would be surprised to learn that I was associate editor for Street&Smith's Basketball Yearbook for 23 years. At one time I knew all Division I school locations, nicknames, and colors.

### Lindsay Carter

My husband and I married in June 2015 and are proud parents to Harper. I've worked in the mental health field for five years and am set to graduate with my master's degree in counseling in May 2016. I enjoy the sense of community and family that Westminster has provided since the first day I came to the Bridge service. I look forward to raising our family here and being a part of the opportunities the church provides.

### Robert Palmer

I am both happily married and retired. I love to golf with my lifelong buddies and to spend time with my two sons, stepdaughter, and families.

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## Chloe Smith

I'm a high school junior at Upper St. Clair. I was confirmed last year and I have always been eager to expand my faith and involve myself in the church in any way possible. Confirmation, which was one of my favorite experiences through the church, broadened my knowledge of God and strengthened my relationship with him. I consider the church part of my family, and I feel honored to be selected as a teenage deacon. I am excited to further my relationship with God and the church, and I can't wait to go on this journey with the many people who share the same love and beliefs I do.

## Paul Adamo

I am thrilled to be doing my second tour as a deacon at Westminster and am looking forward to working with the other deacons and serving the Westminster and surrounding communities.

## Andrea "Andie" Noah

Originally from New Orleans, I have lived in Upper St. Clair for almost 30 years, sharing a wonderful life with my husband Robert, our daughter Michelle, and her family. After 30 years in the corporate world, I cared for my mother-in-law in our home until her death. Shortly after, I joined the field of caregiving and worked over six years in eldercare. Bob and I enjoy traveling, classical music, and our two grandchildren. We are grateful to have WPC as our place of worship and cannot think of a better way to start our Sunday and begin our week than by sharing it with fellow members and friends of Westminster.

## Tracy Hapeman

I have been an active member since 1989. I have two children, Jessica and Doug, who both graduated from Upper St. Clair High School.

## Lynn Brown

I have been a member for over 15 years. This is my 3rd round of serving as a deacon...a wonderful calling and service. One of my passions in life is helping others and Westminster has given me many opportunities to do so. My other passions are my family, hiking, biking, golfing, and lifting.

## Barb Allwes

## Amy Walker

## George Carrick

*December 23*

## Sidney Davis

*December 25*

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# Session Update

On January 9 Session held its annual meeting with the Board of Deacons to welcome new members, discuss the state of the church, and organize for the coming year.

A major topic of conversation was the challenge of stewardship. In 2015 an unusually large number of church members died or moved out of the area, including some of our most substantial contributors. Jim Gilchrist presented an analysis showing that younger members, on average, give much less than active older members, in part because they have not yet developed an understanding of and commitment to Christian stewardship. This will be an important focus in coming years, because stewardship is a central part of Christian discipleship and the church will not be able to maintain its ministry and mission unless more members grow significantly in their commitment.





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*The scripture says, "No one who believes in him will be put to shame." For there is no distinction between Jew and Greek; the same Lord is Lord of all and is generous to all who call on him. For, "Everyone who calls on the name of the Lord shall be saved.*

*Romans 10:11-13*