



WESTMINSTER
PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH

2018



ANNUAL REPORT

to the Congregation from Session

FROM OUR PASTORS 1

- Senior Pastor, Head of Staff 1
- Associate Pastor for Congregational Care 2
- Associate Pastor for the Bridge, Youth & Media 3

WORSHIP 4

- Worship Commission 4
- The Bridge Worship Service 5
- Chancel Guild 6

EDUCATION & SPIRITUAL FORMATION 7

- Children’s and Family Ministry Commission 8
- Youth Commission 9
- Adult Spiritual Development Commission 10
- Presbyterian Women of Westminster (PWW) 11

COMMUNITY OUTREACH & MISSION 12

- Membership Commission 13
- Outreach Commission 14
- Peace & Justice 15
- Town Hall South 16
- Volunteer Ministry 16
- WECEP (Westminster Early Childhood Education Programs) 17
- Westminster Recreation & Outreach Center (WROC) 18

CARING COMMUNITY 19

- Board of Deacons 20
- Caring Ministries 21
- Samaritan Counseling Center 23

STEWARDSHIP & SUPPORT 24

- Endowment and Special Gifts 25
- Property Commission 26
- Personnel Commission 27

From Our Pastors

SENIOR PASTOR, HEAD OF STAFF

This last year concluded on mixed themes of continuity, transition, and opportunity.

Throughout the year, Westminster continued to thrive as the vibrant church it has typically been, with lively worship and music, strong outreach in mission, and all sorts of groups where people could grow in the knowledge, love, and service of God. Meanwhile, the Forward in Faith campaign raised about \$2.3 million in pledges beyond our regular giving, with 80% dedicated to property repairs and improvements, and 10% each to outreach and the endowment.

Staff transitions figured prominently as well. Mandy Thomas joined us in the new role of project manager, focusing first on the fundraising campaign, then on various policies and procedures, including attention to matters of safety and security. Laura Ecklin joined the youth ministry team, and her role is likely to evolve in the months ahead. At the end of January 2019, two dedicated staff members are leaving their positions: Will Hignett as outreach liaison and Joan Watson as congregational care associate. We're deeply grateful to Will and Joan for their devoted service over many years.

Shortly after Thanksgiving we had to dismiss our church business administrator of 17 years under difficult circumstances that we're still working through. It's been a challenge not only to address the situation but also to be unable to share many details with our members while a thorough investigation and remediation are under way. The Session continues to be fully apprised, and in due time the congregation will receive a comprehensive report. Changes are being made in personnel and procedures, and the church will be even stronger in the end, as we draw upon the love of Christ and the power of the Holy Spirit to see us through this and every other thing.

And, of course, I announced my retirement last fall, effective March 1. More about that in the next few weeks, but for now I'll just say thanks to everyone for the opportunity to be with you these last twelve and a half years, and I trust that God continues to have great things in store for the ministry and mission of Westminster Church.

– Jim Gilchrist



ASSOCIATE PASTOR FOR CONGREGATIONAL CARE



Westminster Presbyterian Church is a caring community. This is evident in the many ways that the members of the church exhibit God's love to one another. As a faith community, we offer support to individuals in group settings, prayer, and personal care. We are blessed by many groups that support individuals such as Grief Care and Alzheimer's care givers support group. The WROC began a fitness program for those managing Parkinson's disease, and the AA and NA meetings continue to provide an important presence in our community. Prayer is a constant in the Christian life. I am grateful to join the dedicated group of individuals who meet regularly to lift up prayer concerns presented from the congregation.

Care is not limited to the walls of Westminster. Deacons and other volunteers take flowers to individuals on a regular basis. Other meaningful services such as home communion, meal delivery, recordings of worship services, and crafts made by our young people brighten the lives of our members. The Deacons give of their time and energy toward the Giving Gala to help those in need in the larger community. The most meaningful caring connections are the welcomes and smiles from individuals as they reach out to one another. This past year we said goodbye to 32 members who passed on to the church triumphant. We pray for God to bring comfort and peace to their families and loved ones.

Always seeking new ways to grow in faith, this year we provided devotions along with the invitation for members to take part in contemplative prayer in Galbreath Chapel during Lent. Those who participated found this to be very meaningful. Relaxed summer suppers introduced a fun way for families to get to know each other as the kids played together. Throughout the year Bible classes were offered that stimulated lively discussions.

Thank you for your gracious support this past year. No one serves alone. As the Scriptures remind us, "we are co-workers in God's service." Thank you for welcoming me, and receiving me in hospital rooms and visitations. I am grateful to be serving as the associate pastor for congregational care, spirituality, and education at Westminster Church with our talented and dedicated staff. I am privileged to have served with Jim Gilchrist, and I wish him a fulfilled retirement when he can finally get to writing that book! For the rest of us, I look forward to the year ahead as we anticipate discovering the path God has for all of us.

– Louise Rogers

ASSOCIATE PASTOR FOR THE BRIDGE, YOUTH & MEDIA



If I had to choose a word to define 2018 for me, it would be the idea of values. This is sometimes an unfortunately misused word, so allow me a moment to explain:

Too often I think when people think of the word *values* they

frequently imagine a burdensome list of rules or restrictions. This year, I've learned that values are more than that. When prayerfully considered, these values serve as a north star in a particular season of ministry, pointing our sails in a certain direction and relentlessly pursuing what God has planned for us.

In 2018, I was fortunate to be a part of the Youth Ministry Coaching Program led by Mark Oestricher, who has been a youth ministry hero of mine for a long time. Marko was an excellent source of encouragement and challenge for me, including working me through a process to define the values and priorities of our ministry, as well as my own personal vocational values. Our Youth Commission worked hard this year to create a document for the values of Veritas, which you can read in our report. I would love to take a moment though to share my values with you now:

- **My family comes first.** I am blessed with the joyous responsibility of being a husband to Sarah, a father to Joshua and Julian, and a present and active member of my extended family. Without this, the rest of my ministry will struggle.
- **It is a Christian imperative to proclaim the Good News of Jesus Christ in word and deed.** We live in a world that continues to gasp for the fresh air of redemption offered in Jesus Christ, and I am at my best when I am embodying the Good News through my spoken words and lived action for all generations.

- **I am called to create space for worship worthy of our Almighty God.** Whether I have a guitar in my hands, a trail beneath my feet, or anything in between, I am passionately dedicated to creating space for others to experience their Creator in awe and wonder.
- **I want to expand the walls of the kingdom as a creative artist.** God has given me gifts to produce art for the church through music, writing, film, and other expressions that function to illustrate the kingdom of Christ in our present reality.
- **I am deeply committed to seeking God's justice in the world.** I long to be a part of seeing the hungry fed, the broken repaired, and the left-out restored. I will seek with my words, art, and action to challenge others to stand united and join me in this work.
- **I dedicate myself to bringing a sense of fun and excitement to everything I do.** God has given us the profound gift of play, to push pause on our daily lives and enjoy ourselves, our Creator, and our communities. Whether with disciples young or old, I will work to encourage believers to have fun and enjoy God's gifts of play in a variety of situations.
- **I carry a responsibility to pass the love of ministry on to others.** When Christ calls someone to serve the church in ministry, it can be a disorienting and frightening time in one's life. I consider it pure joy to walk alongside such people, helping them to recognize God's gift in their lives and offering them opportunities to flex those muscles.

Marko helped me to define what exactly it was that was driving me in this season of ministry, what gets me out of bed, what keeps me coming to work. I can't tell you how excited I am to not only be able to define these values, but to be able to do ministry in a place where I am able to fully live into and express these values on a day to day basis.

– Jason Freyer

Worship Commission

The goal of the Worship Commission is to provide meaningful worship experiences to glorify God and help participants in the knowledge, love, and service of God.

The Worship Commission is responsible for the 8:30 and 11:00 a.m. Sunday services. The Bridge service has its own commission. The activities of the Worship Commission include overseeing the arrangements for the traditional Sunday services, recruiting and training ushers who serve in teams with a head usher, arranging for the celebration of the Lord's Supper, providing the elements, scheduling servers, overseeing communion setup and cleanup, and providing general oversight to the Music and Arts Program.

Music at Westminster continues to thrive and enhance the worship experience. The quartet and Chancel Choir sang a wide variety of music during weekly traditional services. The Cherub and Junior Choirs led worship the first Sunday of each month from October through May, and the Westminster Ringers played on the third Sunday of each month from September through May. All choirs performed in the annual Christmas concert.

Holly Jones started her second year as the Junior Choir Director. Membership has grown, as the children learn about singing, and their important role as worship leaders. Westminster is blessed that several members continue to serve as volunteer directors. Jim Marshall expertly leads the Westminster Ringers, and they are at full capacity. Beth Ketterman leads our youngest singers, the Cherubs. If you're ever near the Builder's Room at 4:45 p.m. on a Wednesday, you will see over 30 of our youngest singers arrive to practice. Harriet Dilly joined the Cherubs as their accompanist.

Carol Couch is helping as an assistant. The Cherub and Junior Choirs once again presented a musical for Mother's Day and led worship at 5:00 p.m. on Christmas Eve.

The Music & Arts Series has continued to provide diverse performances through our primary mission of bringing high-quality concerts to the South Hills as we feature local, national, and international talent. Our continuing goal is to enrich one's appreciation of the arts through the timeless message and power of music. It is our hope that this outreach will enable people to experience our beautiful facility and consider attending worship with us.

Westminster continues as the fourth venue for Chatham Baroque's concert series. Concertgoers have been enthusiastic about this offering taking place in the warm environment of the Galbreath Chapel.

Scott Carson leads the ushers who serve in up to four different worship services. Currently, this group has seven captains and 53 ushers. In addition, a sub-committee of the Worship Commission is currently developing a policy regarding updated usher training relating to the physical security of the worship locations as well as the security of service participants. The policy updates, including the training of ushers, will be implemented in 2019.

Communion is served on the first Sunday of each month. Andie Noah coordinates scheduling of the communion preparation teams. These volunteer teams work in groups of two or three and provide and prepare the elements for all three Sunday services. Carrie Kushner, kitchen manager, bakes our communion bread each month.

The Worship commission has been proactive in providing Westminster Church with an inspiring, faith focused, meaningful, and joyous religious experience each Sunday morning and during all of our special Christian celebrations. Our devoted and appreciated team of ministers, musicians, ushers, custodians, staff, and dedicated volunteers who contribute to worship have led us all to experience a closer and deeper walk with our Lord and Savior, and we are truly blessed as a congregation to have them.

– Christine Hestwood, Music and Arts Director
– Jay Descalzi, Chair

The Bridge Worship Service

2018 was another incredible year of worshipping the Lord “downstairs” at the Bridge. Our service continues to evolve and adapt to the changing culture around us, all in an effort to keep the worship of Almighty God as our focus.

From the very beginning, the Bridge has been a welcoming place for families, particularly those with young children. This year we were excited to adapt our Sunday school offerings in coordination with Robin Pyles and Debb Egli, and offer a children’s blessing in the midst of our worship service. Each Sunday, children have a choice of joining Robin or Jan in the Sunday school class, or returning to worship with their families.

We have also seen a marked increase in the number of worship leaders who participate in our service, thanks in large part to our worship

coordinator Nadina’s efforts. Nadina’s creativity and planning have opened up incredible opportunities for growth and experimentation in our worship offerings.

From week to week, you are never quite sure what you might get at the Bridge. It could be a bluegrass band with the sermons we have come to know and love from Jim. Or perhaps you’ll get a more coffee house acoustic vibe with Jason’s humor. Or even a full on rock band with Ed’s practical wisdom and insight. Week to week the makeup of the Bridge may change, but from week to week you know that it will be God centered, family focused, and liturgically authentic, which will continue to be our focus in 2019!

– Jason Freyer

Chancel Guild

Chancel Guild manages Sunday memorial flowers, seasonal décor, wedding coordination, and worship-related purchases.

Major purchases for 2018 were autumn themed swags for each sanctuary and balcony window and materials for the winter season retable bouquet. In addition, Chancel Guild financially supported the Forward in Faith campaign.

Peg Kinsey administers the memorial flower program for weekly worship, Easter, and Christmas. Peg receives payments from and sends thank you notes to donors, writes bulletin memorials with donor names, and provides recipients' information and maps for deacons to deliver the flowers to shut-ins. Chancel Guild members remove the large weekly memorial bouquets from the sanctuary and divide the bouquets into smaller arrangements. Donati Florist provides memorial and seasonal flowers,

palms, and plants. Several Sundays are available for donors to provide Sunday memorial flowers.

At Palm Sunday, Easter, and Thanksgiving, Chancel Guild decorates the sanctuary. At Christmas we also decorate the chapel, north entry, memorial parlor, and south reception Christmas trees. Except during winter months Chancel Guild provides wreaths at seven church entrances.

Two wedding coordinators assist the bride during the planning process, rehearsal, and wedding. Chancel Guild provides candles as requested.

Many helpful hands make our tasks fun as well as meaningful. You are welcome to join with us as we enhance our beautiful church and worship experience.

– Joy Mahrer and Marsha Gnagey, Coordinators

EDUCATION & SPIRITUAL FORMATION



Children's and Family Ministry Commission

Our mission is to set the children of Westminster on the road to a lifetime of faith. To that end, we strive to help them develop:

- Biblical knowledge (know the stories/ "information" in the Bible)
- Personal knowledge (grow their own faith through relationship with God, learning to pray, worship, and live their faith every day)
- Moral knowledge (use their faith as a basis for making right decisions)

We also provide parents with tools, guidance, and supplemental materials to enable them to journey alongside their child. We believe that children are active learners, learning best by engaging in fun activities that include their friends and family, using a variety of teaching methods and experiences.

With these goals in mind, we have provided the following programs for the children of Westminster this year:

Sunday School – Our Sunday school programs are offered during the 9:45 and 11:00 a.m. worship services. Experiential programs provide a combination of worship and small group activities, allowing children to grow in faith while building relationships with God, peers, and adult/teen leaders.

JAM (Jesus and Me) – Our Wednesday evening program for 5th and 6th graders offers an opportunity for students to continue to grow in their faith within a safe, fun environment. Interacting with a dedicated group of adult leaders and mentors, as well as with their peers, children participate in a Bible study, activities that help them apply the Bible lesson to their own lives, and a team-building game.

3rd and 4th Grade Workshops – These workshops, offered several times each year, encourage children to explore a faith building topic in a fun, engaging way. Topics for this year included "The Apostles' Creed," "The Lord's Prayer," "The Ten Commandments," and "Have My Bible, Now What?"

Jubilation Station – A new program in 2018, this midweek program for children in preK-4th grade provides an opportunity for sharing an interactive, engaging Bible story, along with some fun games.

Barefoot School – This vacation Bible school, held during the week of June 18, 2018, served 212 children from our own congregation and the surrounding community. Children in kindergarten through 6th grade are invited to attend, with an additional preschool program serving the children of volunteers. This year's theme, Shipwrecked, provided the background for an age appropriate curriculum, presenting five Bible stories in an exciting and interactive setting. In addition, the program employed approximately 110 teen and adult volunteers, serving in a wide variety of leadership, teaching, behind-the-scenes, and support roles.

Sacrament Education – Starting in 2nd grade, our children are invited to participate in a sacrament education program, focused on teaching the children and their parents about the two sacraments of our Presbyterian faith, baptism and communion. Once they have completed this program, the children are invited to join their parents in celebrating communion in the worship service of their choice.

Family Events – Periodically throughout the year, Westminster families are invited to participate in a variety of events designed to provide opportunities for fellowship and education, often across generational lines. This year, activities included a Valentine's Bowling party, a Family Pool Party, Step into Summer Picnic Series, Pumpkin Picking Potluck, Breakfast at the Manger, and Gingerbread House Factory. These activities encourage families to partner together, supporting one another and building relationships as they raise their children following God's plan.

– Robin Pyles

Youth Commission

The Youth Commission was exceptionally busy in 2018!

Our first task was to read together the book *Sticky Faith* by Chap Clark and Kara Powell. This book challenged and encouraged the way we approach youth ministry. We highly recommend this book to anyone who has an interest in youth ministry here at Westminster. We also led a four-week book study for parents of students in any grade, which was both wildly fun and successful!

Following this, we worked together to craft a document that names and defines our values as a youth ministry:

Mission: Veritas exists to create space for students to encounter Jesus Christ.

Values:

1. **The best communities make its members feel welcome and safe.** Wherever we gather, we are committed to creating space where students experience physical, emotional, and spiritual safety in an environment of fun.
2. **Conversation can be life changing.** We believe that open, honest, and challenging conversation is essential to Christian growth, and commit ourselves to fostering these conversations.
3. **God is still speaking.** We proclaim that God spoke through the inspired words of scripture, and that those same scriptures are the lens through which we understand how God is continuing to speak to us today.
4. **Worship and prayer are essential pathways to a relationship with God.** We hold each other up in prayer both in our gatherings and in our private practice before a God we are certain is listening and caring. Through our worship, we behold with wonder what God has been doing, whether through our song, our praise, or our daily lives.
5. **Growth comes from meeting the world where it is and then offering challenge.** We dedicate

ourselves to offering relevant teaching and instruction that will celebrate what is beautiful in our culture and seek to redeem what is broken.

6. **We will shape teenagers who will change the world.** Jesus trusted teenagers to change the world, and so do we. Through our efforts to offer discipleship to students, we look forward to the world they will shape and we delight in offering students the lifelong opportunity to take the lead in that work.
7. **Serving families is serving students.** The most influential people in a student's faith journey can be their immediate family, and as such we commit to offering opportunities for learning, support, challenge, and growth for the family.
8. **We are called beyond ourselves.** We take seriously the call to be the hands and feet of Christ, and as such will work to repair the broken world through our service and mission, and to continue to spread the good news of Jesus Christ to any and all we meet in our words and deeds.

Following this, our commission has begun a study on the current middle and high school generation, frequently referred to as iGen, and will continue this study into 2019. We're excited to help our congregation imagine what it's like to be a teenager today, and to further encourage discussion between generations.

Of course as all of this exciting work was happening, we continued our vibrant ministries to young people at Westminster. Our Wednesday night Veritas programming, off-site trips, confirmation classes, and one on one discipleship continue to be strong offerings at Westminster. We of course continue to thank the congregation for its support, and welcome any and all who would like to join us in this exciting work to meet with us and dive in!

— Jason Freyer

Adult Spiritual Development Commission

The purpose of the Adult Spiritual Development Commission is to provide opportunities and resources for spiritual development. The commission has oversight of adult classes, Westminster Seminars, the library, the labyrinth, the gallery, and small groups. Small Groups include the W2W, Faith in Life, Peace and Justice, Fishers of Men, Perspectives Class, Genesis Class, Adult Bible Study, Tuesday Morning Men's Group, the Book Club, and Centering Prayer. The weekly bulletin lists a myriad of seminars and small groups to help you mature in your faith journey, as you grow in friendship and fellowship within the group.

Your thoughts and opinions matter. If there are topics you would like to explore further, or if you have an idea which may evolve into a small group, please let us know.

The Adult Spiritual Development Commission typically meets monthly. Please feel free to join us any time; see the church calendar for the next scheduled meeting. We welcome all ideas and insight that will encourage and help our congregation to grow in faith and foster a connection to God, to each other, and to the larger community.

Highlights for 2018 include the spring retreat to Jumonville, Lenten Reflections (Prayer for Peace) in Galbreath Chapel, the Lenten Prayer book study, Lenten devotions to our congregation, the Sight and Sound Bus Trip, and the fall Foundations (Basics of Christian Beliefs) classes.

Looking forward to 2019, the Westminster Blog will conduct a Lenten Study on the Gospel of Mark. Also,

WPC offers a day retreat at the Spiritans Retreat Center in Bethel Park on June 21. Please save the date for an opportunity to grow spiritually and enjoy a time of fellowship. Additionally, we look to arrange a Pilgrimage to Scotland in August 2020 which promises history, archaeological wonders, castles, cathedrals, lovely events, good food, Celtic music, and fun. More information is forthcoming.

Continuing Activity Highlights:

- Pets can be such a blessing and are a very necessary component to the well-being of some of us. Our Pet Ministry remains strong with Blessing of the Pets and Pet Remembrance Services.
- The Gallery, the Permanent Collection, and Members Showcase continue to be a source of beauty and inspiration.
- Grief Care is scheduled at various intervals throughout the year to help our bereaved navigate through the pain of losing a loved one.
- The Sunday seminars continue to inspire and to spiritually develop participants with faith based topics and spiritual lectures.
- Intergenerational initiatives continue. The purpose is to keep abreast of what our commissions are doing and explore possible collaborations.
- The Westminster Blog is an excellent source for devotions, information, and exploration of a variety of topics.

– Patricia Smith, Chair

Presbyterian Women of Westminster – PWW

Three small groups of Westminster women (Circles) meet each month during the school year for Bible study and Christian discussion. Our major project is organizing the semi-annual rummage sales. Thanks to generous Westminster member donations, purchases, and help during the sales, PWW donated over \$20,000 to local, national, and international charities in 2018. New members of Abigail, Elizabeth, and Sarah Circle are welcome, as are volunteers for the rummage sales.

– Joy Mahrer, Moderator



COMMUNITY OUTREACH & MISSION

Membership Commission

The Membership Commission has had three meetings in 2018.

There are 10 members on the commission and Jan Bauman attends our meetings as the staff liaison.

The commission has reviewed the process for new members.

There were three Inquirers' Gatherings in 2018. After these gatherings, new members joined. There were 23 new members in February, 15 new members in May, and 9 new members in October. The next Inquirers' Gathering will be on February 2, 2019. Beth Ketterman organizes these gatherings and contacts potential new members.

There were additional confirmands who joined the church in 2018.

Processes in place regarding new members or visitors are as follows:

1. Beth Ketterman, Carol Galbreath, and Jim Gilchrist periodically review the visitor attendees and make calls to all repeat visitors. Carol Galbreath has joined them in making these calls. The list is reviewed monthly.

2. Sandy Shanahan has a team who make calls to first time new visitors directly after the Sunday a person visits.
3. Calls are made by members of the commission to all new members at 3, 6, 9, and 12 months after members join.
4. The commission started monthly welcome centers at each service. These are coordinated by Carol Galbreath.

The commission has been reviewing options for how we can be more welcoming before and after each service and are developing plans for how to implement a more intentional way of greeting visitors.

We reviewed the website and under Connect/ Membership and New Here, both links have now been changed to go to the commission chair's email as the contact person if they have questions, if we can be of service, or if they want to join.

The commission has reviewed the charter for the Membership Commission and no changes were recommended.

– Susan Van Cleve and Beth Ketterman, Co-Chairs

Outreach Commission

Westminster has always placed Outreach as one of its highest priorities. The Outreach Commission is dedicated to Christ's call to serve, helping to enlighten church members about mission opportunities and faithfully distributing available donated funds. This commission of approximately 20 members meets monthly to review activities and needs of mission partners, to plan and promote service opportunities, and to consider the many needs of communities near and far. Mission partners have come to depend on the generosity of Westminster Church. Included among the recipients of your many hours of service and generous donations are:

INTERNATIONAL MISSIONS

- La Croix New Testament Mission in Haiti – serves over 3,000 school-age children
- India Missions – Miraj Medical Centre, a 500-bed hospital; Vadaketh Development Center for special needs children; Prabhat Tara Sanstha Mission, a hospice and the Home of Hope school for children; and Sangli Industrial School, a trade school
- Malawi Maoni Orphan Care – supports orphans primarily because of the AIDS epidemic
- Oikocredit

MISSIONS FOCUSED ON HUNGER

- Rise Against Hunger – 250 volunteers prepared 40,000 meal packs on February 10 at Westminster
- Garfield Community Farm
- Produce to People – volunteers distributed fresh produce and other food three times per year at MLK Elementary School on the North Side
- Greater Pittsburgh Food Bank
- Jubilee Food Kitchen
- Peter's Township Meals on Wheels

PITTSBURGH MINISTRIES AND ORGANIZATIONS

- City Mission – for over 75 years has shared Christ, sheltered, healed, and restored the homeless to independent living, without discrimination
- SHIM (South Hills Interfaith Movement) – with teams of dedicated volunteers, donors and partners, works to reduce the devastating effects of suburban poverty among the working poor, unemployed, families, single parents, senior citizens, women, and the high concentration of refugee families in our service
- The Corner, a ministry of Friendship Church; continued support of the youth program at Friendship Church, an intergenerational and diverse congregation in the city
- Grace Memorial Presbyterian Church and the Schenley Heights for Youth afterschool program
- Rebuilding Together Pittsburgh – provides safe and improved housing for seniors, veterans, and low-income homeowners
- Open Hand Ministries – promotes justice in the East End of Pittsburgh by building diverse community focused on financial wellness, equity creation, and home-ownership
- Bair Foundation (which provides Christ-centered quality care and services dedicated to the treatment, restoration, and empowerment of children, youth, and families) – received Christmas gifts for 305 foster children, collected from our congregation
- Family Links
- PRISM Garage Giveaway – supports international students each August
- Homewood Housing and Workforce Development; Own Our Own
- Open Door of Crafton Heights
- Center for Victims
- Pittsburgh Presbytery Lazarus Fund

- Pittsburgh Theological Seminary
- Pittsburgh Presbytery

MISSION THROUGH PCUSA and AROUND THE WORLD

- Support for PCUSA missionaries
- Funds to the Presbyterian Disaster Assistance (PDA) to address hurricane Florence and other disasters

- Global Links
- Medical Benevolence Fund (MBF)
- Project Hopeful
- World Mission Initiative
- Bread for the World

– Paul Conley, Chair

Peace and Justice

Peace and Justice has been part of Westminster since 1983 when Ruth Rylander led our congregation in joining over 4,500 other Presbyterian churches in the PCUSA *Commitment to Peacemaking*. In those early days the focus was primarily on international peacemaking. Recently we have begun to include social justice issues such as hunger, economic inequality, racism, incarceration, and environmental concerns. In order to reflect this broadening focus, in 2015 we changed our name to Peace and Justice.

This year, Peace and Justice sponsored the following activities and events:

Grace Book Club: An outgrowth of our 2016 workshop *Faith, Race, Justice, and Mass Incarceration*, Grace Memorial Presbyterian Church hosts Westminster for this ongoing discussion. This racially mixed group meets biweekly, and over the last 2½ years has explored 16 books that address topics such as mass incarceration, poverty, inadequate schools, limited job opportunities, and other racial justice issues.

Summer Discussions: In July Peace and Justice sponsored a four-part series on poverty, *Bringing Good News to the Poor*. This series addressed income inequality, the poor among us, and how their lives are affected. It explored the many ways that we can help, ranging from direct assistance to

addressing public policies that affect poor people.

Peacemaking Sunday: October 7 was both World Communion Sunday and Peacemaking Sunday. We celebrated both by preparing communion breads from all around the world and participating in the PCUSA Peace and Global Witness Offering.

Letter Offering: On Peacemaking Sunday following worship, nearly 100 members of our congregation addressed letters to our congresspeople advocating for continuing accessibility of the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP).

Peace and Global Witness Offering 2018: A total of \$1,661 was received. Of this amount, 75% goes to support presbytery and PCUSA efforts. The remaining 25% will be used in Westminster’s peacemaking efforts in 2019. (Funds from the 2017 offering were used to provide honoraria for the *Bringing Good News to the Poor* 2018 Summer Series.)

For more information about peace and justice work at Westminster, contact Barbara Myers at barbwmyers@gmail.com or Bobbie Hartman at hartman1967@verizon.net.

– Bobbie Hartman

Town Hall South

Town Hall South (THS) celebrated its 50th anniversary season of bringing nationally and internationally acclaimed speakers to the community. The 2018-19 slate of speakers featured Jon Meacham, Adam Steltzner, Francine Segan, Lara Logan, and David Eagleman. Since its inception in 1969, this outreach program of Westminster has provided such quality speakers with the goal of engaging the public in reflection and dialogue on the key issues of the day.

The subscription-only series includes five lectures held in USC High School Theatre on the first Tuesday in the months of October, November, December, February, and March. The cost for the series is \$165. A subscription-only luncheon series at St. Clair Country Club immediately follows the lecture for those who attended the lecture. The speaker is available to answer questions submitted by the luncheon audience. The cost is \$135 for all five luncheons.

THS also provides service to the community through annual philanthropic gifts to a wide range of local organizations. Last year, THS donated \$20,000 to

20 deserving charities. The recipients were: Bethlehem Haven, CASA for Kids, Inc., CASA of Allegheny Co., Chartiers Center, Domestic Violence Services of Southwestern PA, Family Links, Family Promise of Southwestern PA, Girls Hope of Pittsburgh, Inc., Greater Pittsburgh Literacy Council, Mainstay Life Services, Outreach Teen & Family Services, Inc., Prime Time Adult Care, South Hills Interfaith Movement, Spencer Family YMCA, The Early Learning Institute, Urban Impact Foundation, Veterans Leadership Program of Western PA, Inc., Washington City Mission, Watson Institute, and Zonta Club of Washington County.

Members currently serving on the THS Board are Leanne Adamo (Logistics), Bonnie Bacik (Speakers/Treasurer), Janette Clements (Graphics), Melissa Epler (Luncheons), Erin Madson (Marketing), Kristin Matheny (Membership), Suzanne Palko (Chair), Nancy Rex (Membership), Marianne Trachok (Luncheons), Wendy Vespa (Marketing), Joan Watson (Philanthropy), and Becky Wiggins (Graphics).

– Suzanne Palko, Chair

Volunteer Ministry

Our congregation showed their care and love for others through what they gave this year. Every month, throughout 2018, we gave hands-on help to World Vision, the Greater Pittsburgh Community Food Bank and Produce to People, Rise Against Hunger, Rebuilding Together, PRISM, and the Bair Foundation, to name a few. Our members reached out to each other when there was need for caring, healing, or just a friendly ear. They prayed, welcomed, invited, led, sang, taught, organized, drove, built, fed, and listened. Over 50% of our congregation gave their time and talents in 2018. It is exciting to anticipate where God will lead us as a congregation during 2019 and where, as individuals, he is asking us to volunteer.

– Jan Baumann, Volunteer Coordinator

WECEP (Westminster Early Childhood Education Programs)

The school year began in August with a new leadership team in place. Both the WNSK and WCDC coordinators began their new roles in the school year. A new position of Curriculum Specialist was also approved by the board of directors and began in the summer.

The Creative Curriculum and Bible Time Curriculum were implemented in the school year.

We also introduced a new logo this year. The children selected a Westie dog to be our new mascot. On Election Day, we held an election to name our mascot. The name Scout was adopted.

Our most noteworthy accomplishment was obtaining the National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC) accreditation for the infant and toddler programs in the WCDC and renewing the accreditation for the Preschool, PreK, and Kindergarten classes for both WNSK and WCDC. This process entails a site visit and review of professional portfolios.

Representatives from NAEYC spent several days at the center observing and reviewing portfolios. We provided them with samples of the children's work, lesson plans, policy and procedure manuals, parent and staff surveys as well as other examples of best

practices we utilize daily, which align with the ten NAEYC Quality Standards.

NAEYC Scores:

Relationships – 100%	Teachers – 100%
Curriculum – 81%	Families – 100%
Teaching – 96%	Community Relations – 100%
Assessment – 80%	Physical Environment – 96%
Health – 100%	Leadership & Management – 100%

Notable Statistics:

- 285 children enrolled in the Nursery School and Kindergarten program in 2017-18 school year
- 93 children enrolled the Child Development Center in 2017-18
- Over the course of a year, the Children's Day In Program provided care for 40 children per week for 48 weeks
- WECEP employed 48 full-time and part-time staff
- 300 professional development hours provided to staff to deliver high quality educational experiences to the 418 children enrolled
- 4 Family Forum Events to educate and engage families of children enrolled

– Michele Charmello, Executive Director

WROC (Westminster Recreation & Outreach Center)

The energy in the WROC has surged this year with the addition of several new programs.

Pickleball was introduced in October. Initially on Thursday evenings, it grew quickly, with Friday evenings added to the schedule. The 58 participants include both church members and non-members, bringing some folks to Westminster for the first time. The initial expense associated with the program (including nets and equipment) was quickly recovered by collecting a \$10 participation fee.

Delay the Disease, a fitness program for those managing Parkinson's disease, was added in May and is offered two days per week. In conjunction with the Parkinson's Foundation, Ohio Health, and a certified trainer, we are meeting an essential need for this population.

The WROC fitness classes continue to be well attended with a variety of aerobic, yoga, athletic, strength, conditioning, and balance classes offered throughout the week. Pole Walking, offered in the spring and fall, continues to grow as it encourages a healthy lifestyle. All past Pole Walking participants were invited for a free refresher class and an opportunity to reestablish the walking groups they had formed in the past.

The WROC offered several Bible/book studies throughout the year led by Pastor Louise Rogers. Studies included Bible Basics, Foundations – More Bible Basics, Psalms in the Courtyard, and a book discussion of *Help, Thanks, Wow: The Three Essential Prayers* by Anne Lamott. In conjunction with Children's and Family Ministry, Step into Summer Picnic was established to invite all ages to gather for a relaxed summer evening that included an opportunity for fellowship and exploration of God's Word. Programming was offered for both children and adults.

Several special interest programs were offered in 2018 including a safety and self-defense workshop for girls, presented by Ruling Out Experiences (ROX) Inc., and Nutrition for Tweens and Teens presented by Kathy Parry. Dave Ramsey's Financial Peace University, led by church members, was offered again this year.

Overall, the WROC continues to incorporate new programs and enhance opportunities for outreach and fellowship. But, as always, our greatest accomplishment is not quantifiable. We have been able to minister and show the face of Christ to many participants. This is our ultimate goal.

– Kathy Long, Director

CARING COMMUNITY



Board of Deacons

The Board of Deacons once again had a very fulfilling year of serving our church members through congregational care. The Deacons met nine times throughout the year on the fourth Monday of the following months: January, February, March, April, May, August, September, October, and November. We had a total of 29 deacons including two high school youth deacons.

During the 2018 calendar year the Deacons served Westminster through the following committees:

Blood Drive

Kathy Crisanti, Chair

We held three blood drives in 2018: February, June, and September, averaging 36 units donated per drive. Central Blood Bank has officially changed their name to Vitalant. They have merged with some other sizable blood banks throughout the country, so when large quantities of blood are needed they have a larger pool to access. In addition to signups in the north entry after each service and the Bridge service, church bulletin, and *Spire*, the blood drive video was shown to all three services in the month of February 2018. Most donations were from signups, but we also saw walk-ins at all three donation dates.

Care Calendar

Cathy Kramer, Chair

The Care Calendar is a collaborative service opportunity for the entire congregation to volunteer to help a local family in their time of need by reducing the stress of preparing and serving a meal. During 2018 a Care Calendar request was made for a variety of reasons: illness, surgery recovery, birth of a child, and more. Those requests were as short as a week, and as long as two months, depending on the specific need. Those

in need provide the Care Calendar chair with a list of preferences on type of food, nights that dinner delivery would be most helpful, and arrangements such as an exterior cooler if the recipient is not home but wishes to enjoy the meal later in the evening. Recipients were extremely grateful for the program during the year and the help it provided them. In addition to deacons providing meals, many members of the congregation also helped support those in need and their help was greatly appreciated.

Extended Communion

Bobbie Copeland and Mary Schmitt, Chairs

Under the direction of Reverend Louise Rogers, persons serving on this committee are trained to provide communion to shut-in members four times a year. The months of January and February were eliminated due to the flu season when many nursing homes are quarantined. We serve in teams of two, sometimes serving multiple members. Servers must be ordained deacons or elders but do not have to be currently sitting. During 2018, we averaged 30 recipients on Extended Communion Sundays. Our goal has been to increase that number. Understandably, the need exceeds the number of available servers, so we are constantly working to recruit servers. We will serve in March, May, October, and December of 2019.

Flower Delivery

Dave Gambridge, Chair

The Deacons this year delivered flowers on almost every Sunday following the 11:00 a.m. service.

Each week, two deacons volunteered to deliver flowers to members assigned to us by Peg Kinsey. Usually, there were anywhere from two to five deliveries. Communities covered were Upper St.

Clair, Bethel Park, Carnegie, Canonsburg, Bridgeville, Mt. Lebanon, and Peters Township. All deliveries were within a ten-mile radius of the church. On Easter we delivered 80 Easter lilies; approximately 78 poinsettias were delivered at Christmas. In addition to the deacons, we had volunteers who assisted us with the deliveries at Easter and Christmas. Thanks to all who participated.

Treasures for Troops

Andrée Jeffrey, Chair

Treats For Troops: Nine deacons baked homemade cookies totaling 36 dozen in November. They were collected and packaged in one-dozen Ziplock bags on November 11 and two boxes were mailed out on November 12 to avoid the Thanksgiving and Christmas crush so the troops could enjoy them sooner.

Treasures for Troops: We asked the congregation for help in collecting personal items for our troops being deployed in the Middle East. We listed the items needed in the bulletin, as well as in the *Spire*. The collections ran all four Sundays in February in the north entry and again there was an overwhelming response. Dick Hestwood was

present on some of these Sundays in his dress uniform and we thank him for his help with this service. At the end of the drive, items – which were packaged by six deacons, Jeff Jeffreys, and Knox Brown – were sent overseas in the beginning of March. Plans are now being instituted to run this drive again in the spring of 2019, with collection to run on five Sundays in March.

Giving Gala

Andrée Jeffrey and Hedy Pitcairn, Chairs

The Giving Gala, the Deacons' annual fundraiser, was held on Saturday, November 3, at St. Clair Country Club and supported The Open Door of Crafton Heights. The event was a huge success and raised \$36,000 for Open Door with live auction, gift card raffle, and 37 beautiful gift baskets that were raffled at the event. This once again provided a wonderful bonding experience for all of the deacons. And all who attended really enjoyed an evening of fellowship.

Dave Palko will serve as the Vice Moderator and Jennifer Bollman will serve as Moderator for 2019.

– Jennifer Bollman, Moderator

Caring Ministries

Congregational Care at Westminster Presbyterian Church is a woven tapestry that gives the entire congregation an opportunity to be a Christian community of care. We are blessed by the range of services and the dedication of individuals who care for others. Should you want information on any of the services or groups listed, please contact Louise Rogers, associate pastor for congregational care, spirituality, and education: rogers@westminster-church.org or 412-835-6630x216.

- **Alzheimer's Association Support Group** – This special group supports those who care for loved ones with Alzheimer's disease or a related dementia. The group gathers the fourth Thursday of the month and is sponsored by the Alzheimer's Association. Anyone is welcome to join us to support each other on this road that can be a combination of sadness and joy. Reservations are not necessary, and there is no cost to attend.

- **Grief Care** – A recovery support group can help individuals face the challenges of loss and move toward rebuilding. The group meets in the fall and spring for five sessions which are led by Sandy Conaway, Mary Lou Dickson, Pat Boyd, and Louise Rogers.
- **Grief Contacts** – Ongoing support is provided through regular mailings of meaningful grief materials to those who have experienced recent loss. Counselors and pastors are also available to meet for ongoing support.
- **Prayer Group** – The Westminster prayer group focuses on prayer for our church’s ministry, our community, our nation, and the world, as well as for those in hospitals and those who have suffered a loss or are experiencing other concerns in their lives. An ongoing list of prayer receivers contains members and non-members of Westminster.
- **Blessing of the Pets** – All people-friendly pets and their owners come to a celebration that recognizes the animal companions that love us unconditionally. A pastor blesses these special family members and the people who love and care for them. The Blessing of the Pets is held once a year, the first Sunday in October, at 2:00 p.m. in the north parking lot.
- **Prayer Shawl Ministry** – Members knit or crochet shawls that are given to persons who are ill, have suffered a loss, or are in the midst of a life crisis. The shawl is a tangible reminder of the abiding presence of God with us.
- **Open Arms Ministry** – Open Arms Partners are available to minister one-on-one with people both within and beyond Westminster’s community of faith to offer support, respite, and love for those who are experiencing a crisis; who are sick or hospitalized; who are unemployed or underemployed; and/or who would benefit from a friendly visit with a Christian friend. We are grateful to Joan Watson as the coordinator of this group.
- **Christmas Remembrance Service** – Missing a loved one can be particularly difficult at the holidays. A special worship service is held in Galbreath Chapel in December to give family members and loved ones time to remember and grieve during the busy Christmas season.
- **In-Home Services** – Visitations are made by pastors to those church members who are at home recovering or in the hospital. Meals are provided by the Deacons and through the church. Recordings of the church services can also be delivered on CDs.
- **Deacons** – The Deacons provide a variety of support to the members of the church. They facilitate the Care Calendar in providing meals as needed, serve home communion, deliver flowers, coordinate the blood drive, and organize the treasures for troops. In addition, they host the Giving Gala to raise money for the broader community.
- **Welcome Baby Baskets** – Such a joy to have a new baby. Volunteers from Westminster visit families and take a gift to assist them in caring for the new bundle of joy!
- **Care Team** – This new group of church members is developing to provide visitation and support to Westminster members and the community.
- **Blood Pressure Screening** – On the first Sunday of the month medical personnel are located in Memorial Parlor and at the Bridge to take blood pressure to help us care for our bodies.

– Louise Rogers

Samaritan Counseling Center

Westminster is a partner church with the Samaritan Counseling Center and we house a satellite location here at Westminster Church. Their therapists provide one-on-one counseling for adults, children, adolescents, couples, and families. They also provide life coaching services, anger management, and spiritual direction and have a Center for Clergy and Congregational Care. At Westminster, there are three full-time counselors, each with a different focus.

The new executive director is Reverend Dr. Graham Standish. Dr. Standish met with Rev. Louise Rogers in December 2017 and maintains contact with her.

Westminster has agreed to support the Samaritan Counseling Center's Partner in Ministry which is used to subsidize individuals without insurance or with high deductibles. This is called the "client aid fund" and the money we donate on an annual basis (\$3,000) goes to this fund.

– Susan Van Cleve, Elder
Liaison to the Samaritan Counseling Center



STEWARDSHIP & SUPPORT

Endowment and Special Gifts

The Endowment and Special Gifts Committee is responsible for overseeing the church's endowment investment fund. We receive and review grant requests for the use of the endowment funds. We then make our recommendations to Session for the awarding of such funds. Grant requests come in the form of capital improvements for the church, new church programs, outreach initiatives, and mission projects – locally and internationally.

The committee also oversees smaller restricted funds used for purposes within the church. We serve as advisors to donors who are interested in making special gifts beyond the normal contributions to the church's budget for mission and ministry.

The corpus of the Endowment Fund stood at \$3,554,643 for the end of 2017, of which 4% was available for distribution to approved grants. Upon recommendation by the Endowment and Special Gifts Committee, Session approved the following grants in 2018:

Project/Grant Request for 2018	Funding
Fellowship Hall gas range	\$9,264
Lighting in the south parking lot	\$27,320
Windows on north side of sanctuary	\$32,400
Homewood outreach commercial kitchen	\$25,681
Open Door – computer technology	\$2,714
Projects receiving initial approval by Session:	\$97,379
Project subsequently approved by Session:	
Open Door – outreach director	\$41,000
Total projects approved for 2018	\$138,380
Total available for 2018 distribution	\$142,186
(4% of endowment corpus as of 12/31/2017 unspent funds remain in the corpus)	\$3,554,643

Property Commission

The objectives of 2018 were to support the Forward in Faith Campaign and to continue to implement projects that support the restoration and preservation of WPC. Several of the major projects this year have been driven by significantly increased precipitation brought on by global warming. Projects completed this year under the auspices of the Property Commission were:

- Improved lighting of the south parking lot
- Restoration of the windows on the north side of the sanctuary
- Conversion of Room 206 from a file room to an office
- Replacement of the kitchen range with a fail-safe range
- Installation of backflow prevention valves in the storm and sewer lines on the west side of the kitchen
- Completion of the restoration of the original columbarium plaques and surrounds
- Replacement of the cupola over Galbreath Chapel including retention of the original finial
- Installation of pumps in the water vault and the elevator shaft pit
- Renovation of the gallery restroom including woodwork
- Excavation of the planter in southeast corner of the gallery-to-narthex walkway, replacement of the inner lining, removal and re-installation of a concrete pad, and reconstruction of failed drains

Some of the less noticeable but important projects:

- Continued replacement of T12 fluorescent lamps and ballasts with energy-efficient T8 lamps and ballasts or LED fixtures
- Exterior and interior touchup and room painting
- Culling of obsolete and non-functioning audio equipment
- Creation of an IT equipment inventory
- Restoration of the ceiling of the north walkway following the May fire
- 95% completion of the two-year churchwide HVAC study

The Forward in Faith campaign will allow consideration of several projects in 2019 including crack filling and sealing of the parking lots, resurfacing of the driveways, replacement of deteriorated wood and painting of second story fascia and trim, continued resolution of below-grade moisture issues, and replacement of some doors.

Many thanks to Dave Hilty for leading the Thursday morning crew for nearly ten years. George Krock has assumed the leadership.

Regrettably, Karen Ralston and Art Humphreys, both long-time supporters of Property, passed.

Many thanks to all who served on the Property Commission this year.

It is a privilege and an honor to continue to serve on the team that supports the restoration and preservation of Westminster.

– Doug Mahrer, Chair

Personnel Commission

The church is made of up people, and the Personnel Commission is charged with ensuring that the staff members who faithfully serve the community of Westminster feel supported, appreciated, and capable of growing professionally. This year the commission has responded to the coming retirement of Dr. Gilchrist by helping the Session approve an Interim Pastor Nominating Committee. This committee functions independently of the commission and will recommend an interim pastor and head of staff to the Session that they feel best meets the needs of the changing dynamics of Westminster. We are grateful to those who have been willing to serve on this committee. Another main contribution has been the hiring of Mandy Thomas to serve as a project manager and provide continuity for important initiatives during this transition time. On a regular basis, the commission examined staffing to ensure that resources align with the needs of the church, as well as participation in reviewing the performance of all staff members.

– Patrick McClintock-Comeaux, Chair



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