



Newsletter

WESTMINSTER PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH

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Worship with us at 9:30 AM or online
@ WestminsterAuburn.org

JANUARY/FEBRUARY 2024

A Letter from the Pastor



Grace and peace to you my friends as we begin 2024 together! It is my privilege to serve with you during an important time of transition and I can't wait to see what God has planned for us! Our first worship service together is Sunday,

January 7, and our focus will be Epiphany and the visitation of the Magi. My preaching text will come from the Gospel of Matthew and will be focused on the idea of coming home by another road. It's right there in the text, Matthew 2:1-12, and it hasn't escaped me that I, too, am coming home by another road, as I was born and raised in Cayuga County. I am excited to share the text with you as we listen, learn, and grow together as disciples of Christ.

In the meantime, the Masten family will celebrate Christmas in Florida, soaking up every bit of sunshine in preparation for winter, even as I dig out winter sweaters,

coats, scarves, and gloves. (Do I really need to buy some boots?!) After Christmas, I'll head north and plan on celebrating the New Year with my folks. After moving into my 'home away from home' in Auburn on January 1, my first day in the office will be on January 2.

As we journey together for 4 months, I pray we will listen together to the movement of the Spirit for our church and as people of faith. What is God calling us to do and be? How will we continue to bless the community of Auburn and beyond? I will pick up with the good work Pastor Stacy has done and serve alongside with you to further the kingdom of God as best we know how, with God's help. As your pastor, it is my joy and privilege to walk with you during this season, and I look forward to meeting you and I can't wait to get to know you.

Merry Christmas, friends! Let's pray and ponder together how the Christ child will be born in Westminster Church this new year. May God bless you abundantly during the seasons of Advent and Christmas!

Grace and peace,
Pastor Pam

NEWS AND UPDATES

Highlights from the Property Committee

Three additional security cameras are being installed to cover areas in the education building. One will be in the Great Hall, one at the top of the second floor stairs that will see down the stairs and into the adjacent hallway, and one will be on the third floor in the overpass to the sanctuary. The bell cradle will be repaired in either the first or second quarter of 2024 by The McShane Bell Company. This will be paid for mostly with grant money secured by Jill Fandrich. Two important “works in progress” for the sanctuary are new heaters to be installed soon and finishing (painting and staining) of the untreated wainscoting.



Annual Meeting

The Annual Meeting of the Congregation/Corporation of Westminster Presbyterian Church will be held on Sunday January 28 immediately following worship. The purpose of this meeting is to review the annual reports of the boards, committees, ministry teams, and staff of the church, review the 2023 financial reports and the 2024 budget, and conduct any other business which might come before the congregation.



Pastor Nominating Committee Update



The Pastor Nominating Committee continues to meet weekly to conduct the search for Westminster's next called pastor. The PNC has reviewed over 50 pastor profiles and has invited about 20 to apply. Of those who have applied, the PNC is proceeding to the next steps of holding initial interviews via Zoom with prospective call seekers. January will be a busy month conducting these initial conversations. The next steps will be to conduct follow-up interviews with any applicants in whom the PNC is interested and who are interested in Westminster. The PNC also will continue to review new matches as they come in.

The pool of pastors looking for new churches is at a historically low point. There are fewer pastors seeking new calls than there have been in the past. The Church Leadership Connection (the matching site for church and pastors) also underwent a complete overhaul last summer, and everyone is struggling to learn the new system. Despite these challenges, the PNC is optimistic that the right pastor is out there and that the Holy Spirit will guide the process for both the church and the call seeker(s).

NEWS AND UPDATES

Narcan Dispenser Boxes



This past October, Mr. Jason “Wally” Meyers spoke at our Adult Forum about the **Healing Cayuga** program, whose mission is to reduce drug overdose deaths and save lives here in Cayuga County. Mr. Meyers explained how to

recognize the visible signs of an individual who may be experiencing an opioid drug overdose, and how to reverse a suspected overdose by administering Narcan nasal spray.

The Healing Cayuga program provided Narcan Dispenser Boxes and Narcan nasal spray to Westminster Presbyterian Church. The dispenser boxes have been installed in the church’s restrooms and is readily available to anyone who visits our church campus at no cost. The intent is to encourage all people, whether they personally use opioid substances or not, to carry the life-saving drug. It is critical to know how to recognize and respond to another person’s life-threatening condition and take appropriate actions.

Narcan dispenser boxes are easy to use; simply lift the dispenser box lid and take out the contents placed inside it. The Narcan kit contains instructions on how to administer Narcan, as well as the medication itself. The dispenser boxes are also stocked with green, foil-packed Fentanyl drug test-strips and Xylazine drug test-strips. The drug test packets contain small strips of paper that can detect the presence of fentanyl or Xylazine in all different kinds of drugs.

Children, Youth, and Vulnerable Adults Protection Policy

Westminster has had a Child and Youth Protection Policy for many years, but it was due for an update because of new technology (social media and Zoom meetings) and other modern realities. Also, our denomination has mandated that policies now include best practices for protecting vulnerable adults in addition to children and youth. In light of the needed changes, a new Children, Youth, and Vulnerable Adults Protection Policy has been approved by Session, following careful rewriting in consultation with the denomination and our insurance company. The new policy will be presented and explained at an Adult Forum on Sunday, January 14, following worship. It is important that the whole congregation be aware of its contents and we encourage everyone to attend.

Rummage Sale 2024

Clean out those closets and your kitchen, basement, shed and more to be ready for Rummage Sale 2024 on



June 7 and 8 in The Great Hall. The recipient of the profit will be the Ugandan Family Education Fund which is also the May Loose Change beneficiary. Starting in January, items can be dropped off on the stage of The Great Hall. No electronics (old computers and such), moldy books or clothing (donate to the Rescue Mission store). DO NOT leave items in the Work Room or the downstairs hallway; take to the stage. There will be drop off dates scheduled on Sundays after church in April and May. Sorting will begin after Memorial Day. Questions? Contact Susan Marteney.

CHRISTIAN EDUCATION & YOUTH NEWS

Adult Forum February 11 with Sheriff Brian Schenck



Cayuga County Sheriff Brian Schenck will be the guest leader of an Adult Forum following worship on Sunday, February 11. Sheriff Schenck will talk about law enforcement in Cayuga

County, current issues in criminal justice, and what his offices offers to the community. Please join us for this important and interesting forum.

Worship & Wonder

The Worship & Wonder class for children in grades 3-6 meets following the Time with Children during the worship hour. A revolving team of teachers lead the class of enthusiastic students each week in the Education Building. During the second half of the year, they will be exploring New Testament stories, beginning with the early stories of Jesus' ministries and teachings in January and progressing to the parables in February.

Lenten Soup & Study

At this newsletter goes to press, discussions are underway about offering a Lenten Soup & Study series this year. Watch for more information in westminstergrams and bulletins.

Children's Worship Center

In the New Year the Children's Worship Center will be hearing the stories "Boy Jesus in the Temple", "Jesus is Baptized", and many of Jesus' Parables. Miss Noel will continue to lead the Worship Center until a replacement is found, at which point she will be fulfilling her new role as the Youth Ministry Coordinator and rotate between the CWC, Nursery, and Worship and Wonder class, as well as leading outings and teen events.

Meet our Children's Youth Ministry Leader: Noel Cregg.

Noel became a member of Westminster Church and began leading the Children's Worship Center in 2018. She was married in the church in 2021, and welcomed her son Hudson into the world in 2022. He can be seen running around and exploring the church when he's not in the nursery. Noel felt led to take on the role as the Youth Ministry Leader because she felt she had developed positive relationships with the youth and their families and wanted to expand on them. Her goal is to see Westminster's youth flourish with meaningful and consistent fellowship.

Youth Ministries

Teen Events will be held the third Sunday of each month from 4-6pm, in the Great Hall, unless otherwise noted. On January 21 they can participate in a baking class. On February 18 they can join in a game of Pickleball with our very own Linda Mackay. Teen events will include fellowship, faith building and fun.

Open gym will begin in February on a bi-weekly basis on Mondays from 3-4pm. All ages can attend, with a parent or caretaker. Older children can shoot hoops, school age children will be led in games, and toddlers can play with ride on toys, push toys, or the parachute. There's plenty of room for all during these cold months. Children are also welcome to play and check out the gym on February 4th, following the service on Scout's Sunday.

All ages are encouraged to meet at Auburn High school on February 11 at 11am for our annual sledding event. Any questions, including volunteer opportunities, can be directed to Noel in person or via email Noelcregg7321@gmail.com.

FELLOWSHIP, SMALL GROUPS, CARE

Refresh

Refresh Women's Group is taking a break during January and February, and will resume meeting March 9 and April 13 at 10am via Zoom. All women are welcome. Contact Bronwyn O'Connor for the Zoom link.

A Christmas "Thank You"



"Thank you" to all the Westminster Church members and friends who so graciously and generously supported the 2023 Christmas Giving Tree mission project! Over 160 individual gifts were donated to

children, youth and adults made known to us through Cayuga County's Early Intervention Program or church members. In addition, we were able to share grocery gift cards with fourteen families in our community. Givers and recipients alike are truly blessed as we live into Jesus' call to "love one another." The Giving Tree team members (Shelly Pantoliano, Jerry and Nina Wickett, Coylynn and Charlie Cator, Roger and Judy Dilmore, Audrey McNally, and Linda Russell) are honored to serve as Westminster's helpers in this mission and wish everyone the blessings of peace, love, hope and joy now and throughout the new year.

Contemplative Hikes

Monthly contemplative hikes are taking a break for the winter. Watch for more information in the next newsletter about future hikes.

Meet and Greet Potluck Dec 10

All are welcome to attend a potluck meal in the Junior Room on Wednesday evening January 10 at 5:30pm to spend time in fellowship with Pastor Pam and with each other. This is a true old-fashioned potluck; everyone is asked to bring something to contribute to the meal. It can be a casserole, a main dish, a side dish, a salad, rolls, chips, or a dessert. Home cooked or purchased items are equally appreciated. Beverages and place settings will be provided.

Westminster Deacons

Happy New Year! The Deacons ended 2023 with a brunch for the congregation. It was filled with food, music, and friendship. They also delivered the beautiful poinsettia centerpieces to 10 members of our congregation who were unable to attend. They were joyfully received.

They will continue to provide for Social Hour. If you're able to help with coffee, or bring something to serve, please let one of the Deacons know. It would be appreciated. Deacons will also assist with preparing communion and delivering home communion.



The Deacons will hold a bi-monthly "Healing Service" in the Chapel, on the last Wednesday of the month, at 5:30pm. Everyone is welcome to join on January

31. The service is about 30 minutes long, and is a time to offer prayer for people and places, as well as to receive prayer for personal needs.

MISSION AND OUTREACH

Support Meals on Wheels

Our January Loose Change Offering recipient is the Meals on Wheels (MOW) program which is part of Cayuga County's Senior Nutrition Program. Volunteer MOW drivers, many of whom are members and friends of WPC, bring low cost, hot and nutritionally sound weekday Home Delivered Meals to home-bound Cayuga County residents. Each MOW meal delivery is a means to improve the health and quality of life of the seniors served so that no one is left hungry or isolated.



Scouts

Our February Loose Change Offering recipients are our local Boy Scout and Girl Scout programs, which will support and offset the costs of their Scouting functions and activities.

Souper Bowl Offering

We are collecting the Souper Bowl of Caring offering on the first Sunday of February. Kids will be standing with soup pots at the back of the sanctuary following worship on February 4 to collect donations of bills and change to "tackle hunger" in our community. All money collected will go directly to Calvary Food Pantry.

Sleep in Heavenly Peace NY- Auburn Upcoming Bed-Build Events

You'll want to save the date for the Saint Patrick's Day Build-a-Thon at SHP NY- Auburn! On March 9 the Auburn chapter shop will be open from 9:00 AM to 4:00 PM. The goal of the day is to build 45 beds! The Fingerlakes Mall will be filled with crafters, food trucks, entertainment, bands, and raffles! Proceeds from this days' events will go to the local SHP -NY Auburn chapter.

SHP NY-Auburn always needs volunteers to assist with the delivery of beds, especially on Saturday mornings. Volunteers meet at the SHP NY-Auburn shop at 9:00 AM for delivery days.

At present, there are 86 kids on the bed waiting list. Overall, the SHP NY-Auburn chapter has delivered 681 beds. It is anticipated that over 300 beds will have been delivered by the SHP NY Auburn chapter by this year's end!

Bedding Materials: Twin Bed Comforters are the most needed item currently.

If you have questions, please reach out to the local Sleep in Heavenly Peace NY – Auburn chapter at ny-auburn@shpbeds.org; or call and leave a message for Drew Scharoun at 315 294-0674.

Coat Tree

Winter weather means more and more people are coming to Westminster for a coat to keep them warm. If you have a gently used winter coat (any size) that you no longer need, please donate it to the coat tree in the first floor hallway of the education building.



WORSHIP

Epiphany

We will celebrate Epiphany on Sunday, January 7, with a procession of the Three Kings during the first hymn and a celebration of communion during worship. Following worship, we invite everyone to stay and help “degreen” the church, carefully taking down the trees, greens, and decorations and storing them for next Advent.

Epiphany is when we “chalk the door” to the sanctuary, a practice that we also encourage in your home. “Chalking the door” is a tradition in many European countries to welcome visitors to homes or churches. It is done by writing the year and the letters C-M-B, which stand for the traditional names of the magi, Caspar, Malchior, and Balthazar. This year’s inscription will read like this: 20-C-M-B-24.



Ordination and Installation

On January 14, we will ordain elders and deacons to serve in the church and we will install officers who have previously been ordained to roles of active ministry. Mike Pantoliano and Alice Hoatland will be ordained as Elders, and Donna Riester will be ordained as a Deacon. Ted O’Hara and Linda MacKay will be installed as Elder and Deacon respectively. We thank God for these people who have answered God’s call to ministry at Westminster.

Scout Sunday

Scout Sunday is to be celebrated during worship on February 4. We will celebrate with the youth, and the leaders of both the Boy Scouts, and Girl Scouts programs.

Scout Sunday helps raise awareness about the Scouting movements in our faith community while also highlighting all Scouts, who in their oaths, promise their honor and duty to faithfully serve God.

Westminster Church invites all Scouts, Scouters and their families to join us in worship as we honor them and thank them .

Ash Wednesday

Lent begins on Ash Wednesday, which this year is February 14. Lent is a spiritual time of repentance, reconnecting with God, and joining Christ in his walk to the cross and beyond, to resurrection Westminster will offer “drive through ashes” from 5-6pm under the archway in our church driveway. This is a practice that we introduced during Covid and found that many people appreciated it, especially those in the community who were leaving work or unable to attend services later in the evening. We are happy to continue to provide the imposition of ashes in this way.

We will also offer an Ash Wednesday worship service at 7pm in the sanctuary, which will include music, readings, a sermon, and imposition of ashes. We will mark the hand or forehead of each worshiper saying the words, “You are dust, and to dust you shall return.” The ashes remind us of our mortality, and, because the mark is in the shape of the cross, of the hope we have in Christ.. Ash Wednesday is a time when we prepare our hearts and minds for the season of Lent and we welcome all.

Pledging to support the church

Every week in worship, we hear about the many ways we can offer ourselves to God — by serving others, by using our gifts to be God’s witness, by loving our neighbors, and by supporting the church financially. In November, a Stewardship letter was sent, asking our members and friends to pledge financial support to the church. The congregation’s support pays for many things, primarily the salaries of our pastor and staff, the upkeep of the building, utilities, insurance, mission, fellowship, supplies, and more. Congregational support is the primary means of general income for the church, supplemented by income from trusts and investments. Building use income, which was once a significant part of our budget, is minimal now that Westminster has no major tenants.

Why are pledges important? Pledges help the church plan its budget. Isolated, spontaneous gifts and donations are always welcome too, of course, and many people give in that way. Pledges are helpful because they let us know how much income we will have to work with. We are facing a deficit budget again this year, which could mean major cuts in what is already a lean budget. We ask that everyone examine their hearts and make a pledge to the church for 2024 to financially support its mission and ministries. All amounts, big and small, are valuable. Pledge cards are available in the office.

Westminster welcomes everyone, no matter where you are on your faith journey or your life journey. In faithfulness to our understanding of Christ, Westminster affirms the full inclusion of all God’s people in the life and ministry of the church. We welcome persons of every race, gender, age, sexual orientation, family status, ability and economic status into full participation in our faith community. We value questions as much as answers. We encourage curiosity, discovery, and honest struggling with questions of faith.

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