



**17 William Street
Auburn, NY 13021
315-253-3331**

Worship 9:30am Sundays

The newsletter of

Westminster Presbyterian Church

January and February 2023

**The Rev. Patrick D. Heery, Pastor
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www.westminsterauburn.org**

Walk In The Light

December 21 is the longest day of the year. It is the official start of winter. For many, it is the start of a long season of loneliness and depression. The days are short, and the nights are long. The sun seems to hide its face from the world or at least Upstate New York. The holiday season, although often festive and joyous, leaves many of us depleted and exhausted. For this reason, the January/February Ministry Team has chosen to focus on the Light of Christ. Our theme this season is Walk in the Light. Our scripture passage is 1 John 1:7 — “If we walk in the light as he himself is in the light, we have fellowship with one another.” During this season we will focus our attention on ways we, as a congregation, can rekindle each other’s light as we ourselves are restored through the Light of Christ. Read more in this newsletter and in weekly westminstergrams about the ways we will walk in the light together at Westminster this winter.

Walk in the Light

"If we walk in the light, as he is in the light,
we have fellowship with one another..." 1 John 1:7

Westminster
Presbyterian Church
where you're already home



Happy New Year From Refresh

by Bronwyn O'Connor

Refresh has had a wonderful leadership history with Shavonn Lynch, Aja Hahn and Catherine Fessenden...thank you, thank you!! This year's leader is Bronwyn O'Connor with the help of Ann Wiley on Zoom and others leading the monthly discussions.

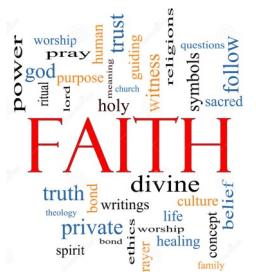
Refresh invites any interested women, not just Westminster Presbyterian women, to explore the Bible. Refresh women pray, chat, study, share, care and pray again.

The Refresh women will be exploring, for 6 months (January- June 2023), faith based words. So you might ask yourself, “What are faith based words”?

Faith based words are GRACE, HOPE, PEACE, JOY, PIETY, PRAISE, FORGIVENESS, FAITH, TRUST, EVANGELISM, and many more.

The first two months will be led by Bronwyn on January 14 and Tina Barry on February 11. We meet the second Saturday of each month at 10:00am, meeting approximately 1-2 hours, depending on the discussion. The monthly leader will pick a faith based topic and send it out a week or two in advance to the women, so everyone knows in advance the topic of discussion. There will be less pressure of homework and missing one month lesson.

If you are interested or have questions, please contact Bronwyn by phone or text, 315-323-3187, or email boconno11@gmail.com.



Behind the Scenes with Our Ministry Teams

A note from Rev. Patrick D. Heery



Last year, after conversations with the congregation, your Session adopted the Holy Conversations Strategic Vision recommendations. Among those recommendations were an experimental season of organizing our ministry in a new way.

We had heard from leaders and members that more and more work was being piled onto the shoulders of a few, albeit gifted, people. We were concerned about burn out and sustainability. If no one but these few people knew how to organize ministry, to whom would they pass the baton when they were ready to stop or when their life situation (travel, health, job, family, etc.) precluded their leadership? Even more fundamentally, how could Westminster live out the “priesthood (and discipleship) of all believers” when only a few of our members were setting the vision and organizing our life together?

We also heard from members that many just weren’t able to make an indefinite, multi-year commitment to a committee; many members winter elsewhere, have health challenges, have busy work or family seasons, or vacation in the summer. Many also just didn’t feel drawn to the committee structure, which (while having worked really well for us for decades, and while still being led very capably) didn’t feed their faith needs.

The goal then was to create a new, life-giving structure that expanded leadership, sought inspiration from God, reduced commitment, and focused on the callings, convictions, and passions of individual members. The hope was that this new model would allow the preservation of our dearest traditions and theologies, with the guidance of our experienced leaders, and introduce new opportunities for creativity and discovering the gifts of our whole congregation.

We divided the year into six seasons: Epiphany and Life of Christ (January-February), Lent and Easter (March-April), Pentecost (May-June), Life of the Church (July-August), the Story of God (September-October), and Advent and Christmas (November-December). The first team began planning in May 2022. We’ve had four seasonal teams thus far.

This may feel like a mystery to many of us, so let me give you a glimpse into the happenings of our teams. First, Session elects annual members who serve throughout the calendar year’s seasons, lending continuity, wisdom, and experience to the process. Then, prior to each season, Session and I recruit

seasonal members (who commit to that season alone and can’t be asked to serve consecutively) and advisors (who come to the first meeting and participate in the conversation, and from whom no other commitments are expected). We also put out an open call through church communications. Anyone can serve, whether they’re a member or not.

The ministry team meets three times in the two months before their season. For example, your January/February ministry team met in November and December. Each meeting begins with shared prayer. Holy Conversations discerned a need for an expanded prayer life in our congregation, and this shared prayer provides our first opportunity to listen to the deepest concerns and hopes of the congregation. During the first meeting, we share a Bible study, explore the Scripture readings for that season, and reflect on the season’s usual ministries and what’s going on in the lives of our congregants and community. This first meeting is one of my favorites, and is one of the best innovations of this process: it’s so fun and meaningful to see the conversation come alive, as people discover God in the Scripture readings and reflect on what would make our ministries most relevant.

In the second and third meetings, we select our theme, plan programs, and receive an orientation on how to do these ministries. Each person chooses one or more ministries to coordinate (a worship service, a mission project, or something else) that interests them. During the two months of the season, there are no more meetings; we’re just implementing. People are responsible only for what they’ve felt called to do. We match gifts and passions, rather than trying to force people into roles just because they need filled.

The hope is that eventually every person will serve on a team, creating a truly Spirit- and people-led church as the full expression of the body of Christ!

We’ve seen new leaders rise and plan ministries in a way we’d have never conceived before. We’ve also seen our most essential beliefs and traditions preserved. We’ve learned as much from our mistakes as from our wins. We are learning as we go. Session is monthly evaluating the process. Every seasonal team concludes with evaluation. And we’re planning forums and other opportunities for the congregation. At the end of 2023, or mid-2024, Westminster will decide if this is the right path for us. The church may feel called to move forward with this new structure, or adapt it significantly, or return to our previous committee model. Whatever we do, we will know that we have bravely hitched our sail to the Spirit, and been responsive to the needs and gifts of our members and community. I am very hopeful, and I encourage you to sign up!

Upcoming Sermons

- Jan. 1:** Special reading of Henry Van Dyke's famous "The Story of the Other Wise Man" (abridged)
- Jan. 8:** "Walking in starlight," an Epiphany sermon about what it means to live with just a flicker of hope
- Jan. 15:** Special MLK Jr. Service led by Shavonn Lynch
- Jan. 22:** "Beautiful, beautiful light," a sermon about Jesus' first act of ministry
- Jan. 29:** "In the footsteps of God," a sermon about walking in discipleship
- Feb. 5:** "Let your light shine," a Scout Sunday sermon
- Feb. 12:** "The church of our ancestors," a special sermon about Westminster's finances and future
- Feb. 19:** "The search for the soul," a Transfiguration Sunday sermon sleuthing out the location and nature of the soul
- Feb. 22:** "Stardust," an Ash Wednesday sermon about the hopeful possibilities of remembering we are dust
- Feb. 26:** "Who is your Lord?" the first in a Lenten sermon series on Confirmation questions, exploring how we make decisions

Epiphany



Epiphany marks the end of Christmas and the beginning of the church year when we tell the story of Jesus' life. Traditionally, it is when we celebrate the visit of the Magi and their gifts to the Christ child. They are led, Matthew tells us, by a bright star. The word "epiphany" means

"appearance" or "manifestation" of God, and has roots in the word for sunrise or dawn. Epiphany is thus a festival of light, as we celebrate God's self-revelation to the world in Jesus Christ. The symbolism of light is important: not only because of the star that guided the magi, but as it relates to the bright dawning of God's grace in Christ. The timeless mystery of the incarnation, God in flesh, leads us forth to show and tell of Christ as God's gift of love for all persons. Some call this ongoing epiphany the work of Christmas. We will celebrate Epiphany on **January 8** with a dramatic procession of the Magi, a sermon on the theme, and the ordination and installation of our officers. Thomas Fessenden and Linda Russell will be installed as elders, and Ernie DeCaro installed as a deacon. Amy Sargent and Chrissie Thornton will be ordained and installed as deacons.

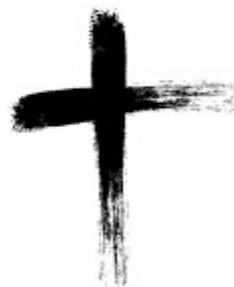
Annual Meeting January 29

The Annual Meeting of the Congregation/Corporation of Westminster Presbyterian Church, Auburn, will be held in the sanctuary on Sunday, **January 29**, at 10:30am 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 2022 financial reports and the 2023 budget, vote on the changes in the terms of the pastor's call, and conduct any other business which might come before the congregation. Voting and discussion, per NYS law, will be limited to our in-person participants, but we will live stream the meeting for anyone who wishes to observe.

Special Meeting of the Congregation February 12

Session, in collaboration with the Finance and Property Committees, has called a special congregational meeting to discuss the financial future of the church, budget deficits, capital needs, the theology of stewardship, and the creative and hopeful paths God is inviting us to take. We'll get a preview of these issues at the annual meeting on January 29, when the budget is presented, giving us a couple weeks to reflect. On Sunday, **February 12**, at 10:30am immediately following worship, we will gather again in the sanctuary for a more thorough presentation and discussion. Since the corporation will be taking no formal action at this meeting, we will be able to offer a hybrid experience, inviting participation both in-person and online.

Ash Wednesday



On **February 22**, Westminster Church will observe Ash Wednesday with a Communion service in the sanctuary at 7pm, both in-person and online via Facebook Live. Pastor Patrick 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. Lent begins with Ash Wednesday, a spiritual time of repentance, reconnecting with God, and joining Christ in his walk to the cross and beyond, to resurrection.

There will be a drive-through for ashes from 5 to 6pm for anyone unable to attend the service in person. Simply pull your car up to the archway between the church and education buildings, and you will receive a blessing in ashes; extra-long Q-tips will be available for anyone wishing to avoid contact.

Degreening

The church will be degreened and decorations packed away following worship on Sunday morning, **January 8**. We invite adults and youth to stay for fellowship and to lend a hand. A light lunch will be available in the social room for the workers.



Why Is It So Difficult To Talk About Racism?



and engage in an open forum discussion. The topic of discussion will be "Why is it difficult to talk about race and racism?" Through our time of worship together we will explore ways in which we can faithfully come to the table to have meaningful and purposeful conversations regarding race relations. Ironically, however, this is not a service on race or racism; it is an opportunity to examine how we can better understand one another, actively listening to one another and acknowledge the ways we silence the voices of others. As Christians, we are called to shine our light in the darkness. Hopefully through this service we can discover ways to shine our lights on a difficult and complicated conversation.

Westminster Build a Bed

Sleep in Heavenly peace is a nonprofit organization that builds beds for children who are literally sleeping on floors. Westminster has donated to the Auburn chapter in the past to help with this program. Now we will have an opportunity to actually get hands-on experience helping create beds for local families. On Monday **January 16, 2023** from 2pm to 5pm at the Finger Lakes Mall, Westminster will have its own "build" time to roll up our sleeves, grab a tool and get physical. Volunteers must be at least 8 years old. Space is somewhat limited, so anyone wishing to join us or wanting further information, please contact George Hiza at 315-283-8418. The regularly scheduled build-days for SHP are January 28 and February 18 from 9:30am to 2pm, if you'd like to join the effort on those days as well.



Burrito Pillow Case Making Workshop For SIHP

by Susan Marteney

Westminster members and friends will be participating in a special bed-build day on Monday, January 16, and the March Loose Change Offering will be donated to Sleep in Heavenly Peace, which provides beds and bedding to local children. You also have the opportunity to make fun and individualized pillow cases for the kids!



The workshop will be on Saturday, **March 4** from 9am to 3pm with a BYO/brown paper bag lunch at noon. Registration is required by **February 25** (no registrations = no workshop). All ages welcome and no sewing experience is needed. A simple materials list will be sent upon registration; however, most materials will be provided. Donations of cotton fabric are appreciated. We will be cutting, pinning and sewing as many pillow cases as possible that day. While Susan has two machines, a few extra plus extension cords would be great. You may also take cut fabrics home to assemble on your own. Register by calling Susan Marteney at (315) 252-7141.

Christmas Giving Tree

A big "Thank You" to the members and friends of Westminster Church who provided a tangible message of love and support for nine families in the name of Jesus Christ through this year's Christmas Giving Tree ministry. Seventy donors provided 150 gifts (including two cribs) for 26 children and adults. Families referred through the County's Early Intervention Program also received very generous food gift cards with funds donated by individuals and the church's mission budget. Case workers reported that families were visibly emotional when gifts were delivered on December 15, as were the case workers themselves.

Beyond the numbers, however, this is the story of a congregation inspired and led by the Holy Spirit to generously offer joy and comfort to their neighbors in need. Original members of the Christmas Tree Team (Nina and Jerry Wickett, Shelley Pantoliano, Coylynn Cator, Roger and Judy Dilmore, and Linda Russell) were soon blessed with the help of Audrey McNally, Charlie Cator, Melanie Toole, and special "consultants" Carolyn and George Hiza and found themselves energized and spiritually uplifted by this mission. We thank you for the privilege of shepherding this ministry and wish you and your loved ones the blessings of peace, love and joy at Christmas and throughout the New Year.

A Biblical Storytelling Event



All are invited to a Bible Storytelling activity and potluck supper at the church on Saturday, **January 28**, from 5 - 7pm. The evening will begin with a potluck supper. Participants are requested to bring a soup and chili, and a plate of cookies or other dessert to share. Members of the January-February Ministry Team will provide corn bread and beverages.

The storytelling program will feature Scott Leonard, a Commissioned Lay Pastor and leader of the storytellers at Stone Presbyterian Church in Clinton, NY. Scott has been telling Biblical stories in worship since 2007. He has attended three of the National Biblical Storytelling Festival Gatherings both in Canada and the USA. Pastor Scott became enamored with Biblical storytelling through his mentor and former minister, as well as professional storyteller, Dennis Dewey.

Scout Recognition Sunday

Our annual Scout Sunday worship service will be held on Sunday, **February 5** at 9:30am. On Scout Sunday we invite all Girl Scout and Boy Scout youth and adult Scouters to join with us in worship. Together, we will recognize their participation and continuing contributions to the Scouting movement.

Girl Scout and Boy Scout programs are more than just activities for our youth to learn about the outdoors. Scouting provides fun, fellowship, and training to our youth as well as youth in our community. It emphasizes honesty, self-reliance, and respect. Through their year-round program, it affects character, citizenship, and personal fitness. But successful Scouting programs also depend on the adult volunteers, who serve in a variety of leadership roles so that our young people may benefit from the ministry of Scouting. As we celebrate our Scouts and Scouters and the anniversary of their Scouting programs, we salute the splendid volunteer troop leaders, committee members and others in leadership positions who serve the youth.

Come, worship with us as we honor our Scouting families, and learn more about their Scouting programs.



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 5 to collect donations of bills and change to "tackle hunger" in our community. All money collected will go directly to Calvary Food Pantry.



Forum on Ministry Team

What is this new Ministry Team process all about?

You've heard that we are experimenting with a new way to plan worship, Christian education, mission and fellowship, but how does it work? Does it replace committees? Can you really sign up for short term commitments? How is it going?

We're nearing the half-way point of the 18 month trial period of the new Ministry Team process. Many people have participated so far, and many more might be interested but have questions. On Sunday, **January 22**, we'll hold an open forum during the education hour following worship to talk about the Ministry Team process and answer questions about what's involved. Jill Fandrich, Carolyn Hiza, and Paul Dungey will facilitate the discussion, and we hope to have lots of participation from folks who have been involved and also from those who might want to be! We'll talk about what's working and what could be improved, and this forum will help us with our ongoing evaluation of the new process. Join us in the social room following worship on January 22 to hear more about this new way of doing God's work at Westminster.

Join the Westminster Choir

Start off the new year in song and fun! Westminster's vocal choir rehearses on Wednesday evenings at 7pm in the upstairs choir room adjacent to the choir loft. Adults and teens are welcome. Please contact Lori Rhodes Pettit with questions at (315) 406-3417 or loripettit22@gmail.com.

Forum on Mental Health Awareness

On Sunday, **February 26**, 2023, the Adult forum will focus on mental health awareness. Please check upcoming Westminstergrams and church bulletins for more information.



Membership Information Updates!

Church Directory

UPDATE



As you have read in other articles from the January/February Ministry Team, there are many exciting plans for worship, education, and membership activities this winter. In addition to those plans,

the team has identified a need to update the church directory. Over time, changes in addresses, phone numbers, and email addresses may not make their way to the office. Your help is needed to ensure the church database is accurate.

The goals are multi-faceted:

- * Ensure all members and friends are included in the master list including those who join worship in-person and virtually
- * Ensure contact info is correct
- * Identify which info individuals wish to share with other members and friends
- * Produce a list for distribution

To accomplish this, Michael Trapani and Carolyn Hiza will reach out by phone with a brief survey to identify new info or fill in the blanks where some info is missing.

If you wish to report any changes before receiving a call, you may call or send an email to Michael Trapani, 315-246-6968, michael.trapani@outlook.com, or Carolyn Hiza, 315-283-8419 geoton@roadrunner.com.

News From the Deacons

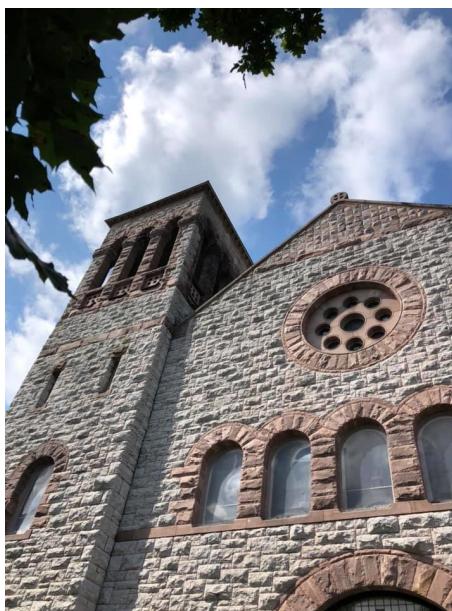
We welcomed Amy Sargent and Christina Thorton to the Board of Deacons. Thank you to Judi Dorsey, Anne Malvaso, and president Judy Santillo for their service as deacons.

The Deacons continued to make calls and send cards to our members. They also provided meals to individuals following surgery or otherwise in need.

The Deacons were very happy to continue the tradition of the Deacons Brunch. A special thank you to Jackie Darquea for chairing this event and all the deacons who assisted. It was well attended and a special way to begin the Christmas season.

We look forward to the coming year and will continue to support our members and community.

Property News



Rich and Gardner, the company overseeing the work being done around the sanctuary and education buildings, is just about done with the improvements to our drainage system. Some parts for the gutters are back ordered and will be installed as soon as they are in. The people at Rich and Gardner have done a fantastic job and were great to work

with. The church property will benefit greatly from this work, with water and snow melt now being diverted away from the buildings and into the city's storm system.

The church has purchased scaffolding to reach the sanctuary chandeliers. By the time this newsletter reaches you, it will have been used to replace the bulbs and clean the fixtures.

November's property work day was a huge success. Under Aaron Creighton's leadership, the scouts raked leaves and helped polish the church pews. The playground fence was taken down for the winter and sand from the unused sandbox in the playground area was carted away. Thanks to the many helping hands that day: Aaron, the scouts, Jim Burlingame, Rich Newman, Paul Dungey, Rob Schemerhorn, Audrey McNally, Bill and Linda McKay.

The new year brings new projects in the continuing work to preserve and maintain the buildings. One goal is to have the new carpeting in the family and youth wing installed by the end of January. Caretaker Shawn Reeves will prepare for this by laying down underlayment for the carpet, which will be installed by Carpet House. Additional work suggested by the property assessment done by Beardsley Design includes bringing certain areas up to code and repointing the exterior masonry in the sanctuary and education buildings where needed. Future years will bring more projects as found by Beardsley's assessment.

Thanks to all on the property committee for their hard work: Jim Burlingame, Thomas Fessenden, Joe Runkle, Robyn Warn, and chair Beth Salvage.

Children's Ministries

by Noel Clegg



Happy New Year! What a wonderful year 2022 was. The children ended the year with many acts of love.

In November children rang the bell for the Salvation Army and brought in around \$300! What a difference that will make in the lives of those who need some help.

In December the children bought presents for eight children from the Giving Tree using the proceeds from the lemonade stand held over the summer. Wow! They also spread Christmas cheer at Connect 55, a senior living center, by singing Christmas Carols. It was a spirit filled event with church friends of all ages! Perform 4 Purpose wrapped the event up with a real worshipful performance. The Advent pageants continued as is Westminster's tradition and it was refreshing seeing new faces partake.

Thank you to all who participated in each of these events. YOU ARE THE CHURCH. God is Love. Love was spread and felt because of you.

Going into this New Year know that you are loved! Take time to refresh and reflect. Outings in January and February will be about fun and fellowship. A time for children to strengthen friendships and for parents to relax and visit. Wednesday January 18 children are invited to come to PlaySpace. The time is TBA. Let Ms. Noel know if this interests you and if you prefer earlier, 3:30, or later, 5:00. on February 26 we will go sledding (if there's snow of course) at the High School following worship and the forum.

As always, your thoughts and ideas matter. Speak to Ms. Noel anytime about what's on your mind.

Ugandan Family Fund

The Ugandan Family Fund Small Group will meet on Wednesday, **January 18** at 1pm at Sylvia Wasserman's home to discuss future plans for May. Since the UFF will be the recipient of the May Loose Change Offering, strategies for a Ugandan Supper and other community events will be discussed. If interested in attending, reach out to Sylvia or Susan Marteney for details.

Beverly Miller's adopted Ugandan daughter, Agnes, sent us copies of the children's report cards from the schools they are attending. All three children are doing very well in school and are diligent in their studies. The UFF and individual sponsors are providing tuition support for Agnes' extended family.

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 (known and unknown), and by supporting the church financially. Every fall, we send out a Stewardship letter asking our members and friends to pledge financial support to the church. The congregation's support pays for many things, primarily the salaries of Pastor Patrick and the rest of the staff, the upkeep of the building, utilities (heat, light, and power), 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 (which fluctuate with the market). 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.

As of the writing of this newsletter, we have received 55 pledges for 2023 totaling \$130,338. We thank these 55 individuals and families for their generous support! We are, however, facing a large deficit budget, 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 2023 to financially support its mission and ministries. All amounts, big and small, are valuable.

Keep in Touch

Our church family has grown to include many folks who join us online or who have visited in person. We want to keep everyone informed of all the good things happening at Westminster **by staying in touch**. Please email Melanie in the church office at office@westminsterauburn.org if you would like to be added to the newsletter mailing list, to Patrick's weekly "westminstergram" list, or the prayer chain email group. Also, make sure to follow Westminster on Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram. There is also a closed group for Westminster REACH **to share information** about youth, children, and family programs. You can join the REACH group page by hitting the "join" button on the page.



January Loose Change



In January, our loose change offering will support Cayuga County's Senior Nutrition Program, better known as Meals on Wheels. The program's goal is to help our older adult friends remain healthier and more independent every day by providing hot, nutritious meals delivered to their homes. In addition to delivering the meal, the volunteer drivers (many from Westminster Church!) deliver a friendly greeting and make a vital safety check to each recipient. We are in a significant position to raise awareness for the growing number of older adults facing hunger and isolation, both serious problems impacting our community and the nation at large. We thank you for your support of Meals on Wheels. To learn more about Meals on Wheels or other Office for the Aging available services call (315) 253-1226.

February Loose Change

Westminster's February loose change offering will support Cub Scout Pack 40, Scout Troop 43 and Girl Scout Troop 40938.



Westminster has been a proud supporter of these children for many years now, as they explore nature, learn life skills, build friendships, serve the community, foster faith, and develop positive identities. Most of these Scouts come from low-income families. For some, Scouting is their only safe, loving community. A couple years ago, the national organization raised dues substantially, and many families cannot afford them. The February loose change will help pay those fees (families will still be expected to contribute a portion of the fee).

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, 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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