

Westminster Presbyterian Church

website www.wpcportage.org

facebook @westminsterpresbyterianportage



NEWSLETTER

December 2021 / January 2022

Welcome Statement

**We open our doors to all persons to join in worship,
fellowship, educational programs and service.**

**We welcome into membership all who profess faith in
Jesus Christ without regard to gender, age, race,
ethnic origin, socio-economic status,
sexual orientation, disability,
or any other human condition.**

**We elect and ordain as leaders in the church persons
who are called by God and committed to serving the
Lord Jesus Christ in the Church.**

adopted by the Session, May 18, 2009

December Birthdays

2 Aaron Pylman	20 Gabriel Rice
Scooter Tessari	21 Joyce Thorson
6 Jackie MacDonough	23 Judy Paget
7 Rashid Chapeyama	24 Timothy Myer
10 Mary Werner	25 Merry Hamilton
Daniel Schriemer	Nick Pratt
11 Jason Leese	26 Ally Martin
17 Adam Ashbaugh	Noah Weiss
Stan Rop	Jason Zerban
19 John Chapman	30 Megan Cardwell

December Anniversaries

10 Jim McKim & Lindsay South McKim
20 Tom & Christine Hamilton
26 Don & Carolyn Campbell



January Birthdays

1 Jim McKim	21 Kay Haas
2 Joseph McFarlen	22 Maeve Murphy
7 Mark Murphy	Ben Shull
9 Erica Sanders	23 Brad Rohwer
10 Betty Wells	28 Cheryl Terpstra
12 Sally Mounger	Aliya Netz
16 Drew Martin	29 Jayne Moberly
18 Marjorie Smith	31 Peggy Depper

January Anniversaries

5 Mark Cardwell & Jeanne Trompeter
11 John Kuchta & Jennifer Shimer
14 Larry & Marilyn Pierce
31 Phil & Debbie Netz

OUR OFFICE HOURS :

Mondays & Wednesdays,
9:30 am to 4:30 pm

Thursdays, 9:30 am to 1 pm

Chloe will be on vacation December
29—January 7;

Office hours that week may be limited

CHURCH as winter weather sets in while the pandemic continues ...

There is no doubt about it: the ongoing reality of the pandemic is really challenging our reserves of patience and perseverance. But the recent rise in local Covid-19 infections means we have to dig deep and find the willingness to continue to do what we have to do. We need to protect each other's health, particularly the most vulnerable. At the same time, we also need to remain committed to one another as a community of faith—to mutual support, caring, and friendship, to worship, to growing in our faith, to service in our community and world. New ideas for ways to do any of this better are always welcome!

Our **Pandemic Response Team continues to meet weekly** to assess the latest local Covid information and advise the Session; the Session reevaluates our practices at every meeting. We believe that, given our very high vaccination rate and a few sensible precautions, it is relatively safe to gather. We don't anticipate cancelling in-person worship.

We know that some folks, even though vaccinated, are more at risk and others just don't feel comfortable with gathering. We understand that, and are glad that we can offer other ways to connect. We also strongly encourage anyone who is not vaccinated (children excepted) or who is immunocompromised to continue to worship virtually.

For **worship**, we will continue to ask all in-person attendees to wear a mask indoors. We encourage physical distancing (and ask you to refrain from hand-shaking and the like). For the next little while, we won't be having Coffee Plus.

Some **meetings and church activities** are taking place fully or partly via zoom. If you need help getting connected, talk to Pastor Jerry. If meeting at church, mask-wearing is strongly encouraged for everyone indoors in the presence of others, but optional for small groups (fewer than 10), provided that all are fully vaccinated and gathering in a space where distancing is possible. Please wash/sanitize hands regularly and of course stay home if you are sick or have been exposed to Covid-19.

Thank you, everyone, for your patience, faithfulness, and grace through these times!

If you need to reach Pastors Jerry and Janet and do not find them at church, please call them at home or call on one of their cell phones.

Worship is In-Person AND Online

every Sunday morning at 9:30 am

We hope you will join us, one way or another, whenever you are able!

WORSHIP IN DECEMBER

Our Advent theme is **"ADVENT JOURNEYS... GRACE AND LOVE."**

We hope you'll join us each Sunday for the Advent candlelighting, music of this special season, and more.

December 5

SECOND SUNDAY OF ADVENT

COMMUNION

Luke 1:26-45

"Mary's Journey"

No Children & Worship today

December 12

THIRD SUNDAY OF ADVENT

Matthew 1:18-25

"Joseph's Journey"

Children & Worship

December 19

FOURTH SUNDAY OF ADVENT

An Advent Musical Journey featuring the Carols of Alfred Burt

Children & Worship

December 21

7 pm

LONGEST NIGHT

A quiet service that acknowledges the sorrow in our lives & world, even at this season

Special music: Jason Zerban, bassoon, plus a little gift for all who come.

December 24

7 pm

CHRISTMAS EVE

Candlelight Communion Service

Luke 2:1-20

December 26

FIRST SUNDAY OF CHRISTMAS

John 1

"Love Comes to Us"

Children & Worship

*Advent in YOUR home: **Advent devotionals** are available in a printed or an electronic version. Let us know if you need us to send either to you. We also have an option for kids & families.*

You do not have to have a Facebook profile or be a regular user to access the livestreamed service. If you have internet access you can go to www.facebook.com/WestminsterPresbyterianPortage/

If you plan to worship virtually, look for an email each week (usually Thursday or Friday) with the order of worship & other info (including the link) for the upcoming Sunday.

WORSHIP IN JANUARY

Our worship theme for 2021-22 is "RESTING IN GRACE, WALKING IN LOVE"

January 2

Matthew 2:13-23

SECOND OF CHRISTMAS

"The Holy Family's Journey"

COMMUNION &

PRAYERS FOR THE NEW YEAR

No Children & Worship today

January 9

Matthew 2:1-12

EPIPHANY SUNDAY ... Star gifts!

"Another Road: the Journey of the Magi"

Children & Worship

January 16

RACIAL JUSTICE SUNDAY

Today we will be led in worship by our Racism Discussion Group

Children & Worship

January 23

"A Healthy Faith"

Children & Worship

January 30

"A Healthy Church"

Children & Worship

Our Annual Congregational Meeting will follow the service.



Please send joys and concerns for the Prayer List each week by Thursday noon.

The Prayer List will be sent out by email (again, usually Thursday or Friday) and postal-mailed to those without email addresses the following week.

*Thank you for sharing your joys and concerns with others,
and for praying for the concerns shared.*

FROM THE PASTORS' DESK

In our family we love Christmas traditions, including choosing and exchanging Christmas presents. It's an expression of love and a lot of fun. Along with needed items, like underwear and fun things like a new puzzle, our Christmas presents always include books for everyone in the family. We know that a lot of you love books as much as we do (which is why we occasionally share some of our favorites here), and perhaps you too want to consider a new book or two as a Christmas gift for someone ... or to yourself. Here is an eclectic selection of books we love.

The poet Mary Oliver is best known for her many poems that invite the reader into her close and perceptive observation of nature, but she was also a person of deep (though not dogmatic) Christian faith. The book *Thirst* may be her collection that makes this most evident. The first line in the book is "My work is loving the world." A beautiful book of accessible and thoughtful poems.

A Book of Uncommon Prayer by Brian Doyle is a collection of 100 prose-poem prayers that celebrate "the miracle and the muddle of the ordinary." These prayers have titles like "Prayer for the Men & Women who Huddle Inside Vast Rain Slickers All Day Holding up STOP Signs at Construction Sites & Never Appear to Shriek in Despair & Exhaustion," "Prayer of Gratitude for the Doctor who Saved My Son," and "Prayer for the Girl Scouts of America." These prayers will make you laugh and cry. Doyle was a poet deeply rooted in his Catholic faith, so some of his prayers reflect a definite Catholic sensibility, but he finds grace in daily experiences in ways anyone can relate to. You might find yourself praying differently after you read this book!

It's always great to find a new and beautiful translation of some Biblical text that just brings it alive for you again in a fresh way. That's exactly what *Opening to You* by Norman Fisher offers. This book includes Zen-inspired translations of 100 Psalms. Yes, we thought that seemed strange when we first saw it. And we don't usually care much for Biblical translations or paraphrases that strive to be "modern." But there is a lovely and eloquent simplicity in this book that feels timeless. Consider this bit from Psalm 3:

*With my voice I call out to you
And your silent comfort rolls out from the holy mountain
And when I lie down to sleep
You contain me and I rise up again.*

The titles of these two books speak for themselves: *The Wild Remedy: How Nature Mends Us ~ A Diary*, by Emily Mitchell, and *Wintering: The Power of Rest and Retreat in Difficult Times* by Katherine May each chronicle a personal journey toward healing.

A book on our to-read stack that we are eager to get started on: *The Good Neighbor: The Life and Work of Fred Rogers*. Probably the most famous Presbyterian of recent memory (and our fellow Pittsburgher) Mr. Rogers was an inspiration to millions of children and adults.

On the more serious side: We've read a lot of books about racism in the past couple of years. With every single one, we learn something we didn't know before about the pervasive and persistent role of racism in our society. That's a little disheartening, but we also firmly believe that truth and knowledge are fundamentally good things – for all of us.

The Sum of Us: What Racism Costs Everyone, by Heather McGee, is a book that really brings that conviction home. McGee not only opens readers' eyes to many ways racism has shaped our communities and our thinking, but makes a convincing case that it has had negative economic and social consequences for *all* of us. One of the best books to start with, if you want to explore racism.

The Color of Compromise, by Jemar Tisby, deals with the church's role in and response to racism in our history. There is a lot to mourn here, but also insight into our past and present. Essential reading for church folk who care about race relations. Our racism discussion group has been reading and discussing this book, and we know they'd recommend it.

Grief's Country, by local writer Gail Griffin, is an eloquent, honest, and very personal exploration of the experience of grief, after the sudden death of her husband. This is a book that speaks to the pain of a reader who is grieving, and offers much wise insight to any reader about the nature of this universal human experience, which is also, always, very much an individual journey.

Nature's Best Hope: A new approach to conservation that starts in your yard by Douglas W. Tallamy advocates for a grassroots approach to earth care. Tallamy suggests that, given the world's diminishing wilderness, it is imperative that those who can do so prioritize the creation of green space in their yards, in order to create the wildlife habitats and "conservation corridors" that animals such as migratory birds need. Lots of practical suggestions here!

For children: *What Is God Like?* by Matthew Paul Turner and the late Rachel Held Evans, helps children to think about God in new and unexpected ways: as a woman, a shepherd, a gardener, and even as a blanket fort. The book has vibrant illustrations by Ying Hui Tan that make the images come alive.

All Creation Waits: the Advent Mystery of New Beginnings by Gayle Boss is not your typical book of Advent reflections. In 24 thoughtful reflections, accompanied by beautifully detailed drawings, Boss shows how various animals respond to the coming of winter and the dwindling light. "The animals show us in twenty-four different ways the deep mystery and abiding truth at the heart of the Christ story: The dark is not an end, but the way a new beginning comes." This book isn't only for children, but for anyone who appreciates the wonders of the natural world.

Wishing you all a blessed Advent, blessed Christmas, blessed New Year, blessed reading!

Janet & Jerry



WEDNESDAY MORNING BIBLE STUDY

We meet 10 am via Zoom, and we'd love to welcome new participants!

We continue our study of **PHILIPPIANS!**

No prerequisites except an open mind and a desire to learn together.

Contact Pastor Jerry if you want to know more.

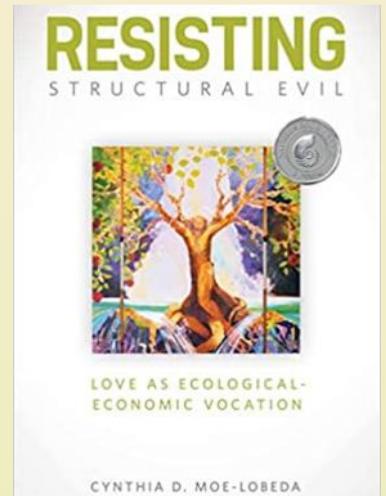
MEN'S BOOK STUDY

Meets on the 1st & 3rd Tuesdays

...Join us December 6 & 20 at 8:30 am at church or by Zoom

We're reading and discussing *Resisting Structural Evil* by Cynthia D. Moe-Lobeda.

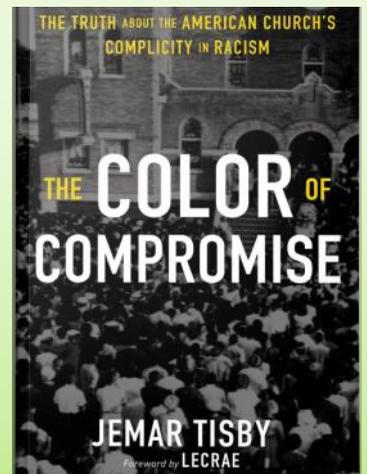
New participants welcome! Talk to Pastor Jerry if you have questions or would like to get a copy of the book.



RACIAL EQUITY DISCUSSION GROUP

Will meet on December 5 at 3:30 pm at the church (Note the new time!) We will continue discussion of *The Color of Compromise* and view a segment of the accompanying video by Jemar Tisby. Anyone interested is welcome to join. It's not necessary to have read the book to gain valuable insight from participating in the conversation.

Contact Cindy Green or Paula Schriemer for more information.



FAITH FORMATION December 5 & 19

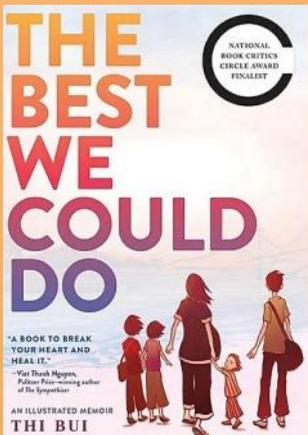
Our children's Christian Education continues to meet the first and third Sundays of each month at 10:30 am. Meet Leslie in the narthex! Wear your masks!

Please bring your children to Westminster for about an hour to learn about God, hear Bible Stories, play games and hang out with Leslie doing activities and simple crafts. We may do some outdoor activities, so dress accordingly! With colder weather, we will be indoors in the fellowship hall and other areas of the building where there is plenty of room to practice social distancing.

We hope you enjoy your "Advent at Home" bag, to help your family learn about and enjoy this special season!

Future dates: January 2nd and 16th

Any questions please let Leslie know.



FAITH BOOK CLUB

Next meeting: January 11

Our book will be: *The Best We Could Do* by Thi Bui
(This is the 2022 Kalamazoo Reading Together book)

We will meet by Zoom

New to FBC?

Let Lorie Leak know that you need the Zoom link.



Thanks for Your Angel Tree Gifts

If you haven't claimed a tag, remaining tags will be in an online sign-up sheet emailed to everyone on November 29. After that...

- Shop in person or online for your child, \$15 - \$25 per gift.
- Due to supply chain problems, we recommend you **shop early**. If you can't find the exact item requested, substitute with something similar.
- Wrap gift(s). (Still sheltering and no gift wrap? We have a stash at church. Someone can wrap for you.)
- **Attach your tag to your wrapped gift (peel off the back) or temporarily clip it to your unwrapped gift.**
- Deliver gift(s) to church **by Tuesday, December 14**, and place around Angel Tree in the narthex.
- Can't deliver your gift(s) to church? Let Nancy know; someone will pick them up for you.
- **Consider sending a communication to the imprisoned parent.** (See other article)

Questions? Contact Nancy Husk or Janet Duggins.

*Thanks to all the Westminster Angels who take this opportunity to be in relationship with both imprisoned parents and their children, bringing them the joy of this blessed season.
We're Walking in Love.*

Reminder: Send a Card or Note to an Imprisoned Parent

This year let's add a layer to Westminster's Angel Tree ministry. Every year Prison Fellowship, our Angel Tree sponsor, offers the opportunity to write the imprisoned parent. **Our goal is for each imprisoned parent to receive at least one communication.** It can be as simple as a Christmas card or as elaborate as a letter. Each one should mention that your church (or you personally) has delivered gifts to the prisoner's child or children on his/her behalf. This is an outreach which takes just minutes and a stamp. It can involve your whole family. Angel Tree has some recommendations.

- Call or email Nancy Husk for the prisoner's name, ID#, and address. We will not be publishing this list of confidential information.
- Do not use your last name to sign or in a return address.
- Use the church's address as the return address.
- Be aware that your communication will likely be opened and read by prison officials.



Recycling Reminder

Many Christmas gifts are shipped using polystyrene (styrofoam) as packing material. Please help to keep this material out of the landfills by recycling. A flyer listing what is accepted is on the bulletin board in the narthex. Material can be placed in the blue bin in the coatroom or in the large bag in the hallway to the outside door to the left of the kitchen. The recycling program is run by the City of Kalamazoo. During the last collection in October, we completely filled the trailer! Thanks for helping with this project and please ask your family and friends not to throw away polystyrene but to recycle it.

Supplies for Cuba

The shipping container from the Cuba Partners Network has arrived in Cuba! Rice, beans, soap, and other necessities have been divided and sent to the churches. Our friends in Cuba are so grateful for the love and support.



Adult Ed in December:

Sunday Morning

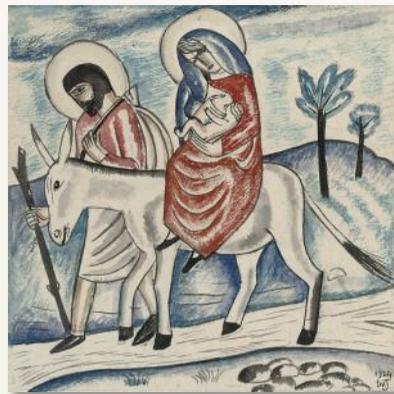
Advent Journeys

We're reflecting on the different journeys (and there are quite a few!) in the Christmas story, via a variety of art and poetry. Join us in the sanctuary or via Zoom.

Continues through December 19.

Let Pastor Jerry know if you'd like to be on the list to receive the Adult Ed Zoom links.

No Adult Ed December 26 or January 2.



FAIR TRADE SALE continues through December 6

Our Fair Trade Sale this year features a variety of wonderful items that make great Christmas gifts for the people on your list (or maybe for yourself!) A bonus is that each purchase directly benefits and empowers the artisans or producers, helps to lift their families out of poverty, and strengthens their communities. You can learn more about each of these organizations on their websites. But we hope you will come and check out our sale. It's fun to handle these beautiful items and feel a connection with those who made them. (In some cases, the name of the artist is on the item's tag!)



Of course we also have soap from AACORN Farm, too, and plenty of Equal Exchange coffee and other goodies you can stock up on.



AACORN

We've spread the around the narthex, to allow for social distancing, and of course we want you to wear a mask while you shop. If you are able to come by the church during office hours, we encourage you to do so... and maybe bring a friend.



Shop after worship on November December 5, or during office hours through December 6.



Creations Of Hope

From The Artisans Of Haiti

Adult Ed in January:

RACE RELATIONS SUNDAY

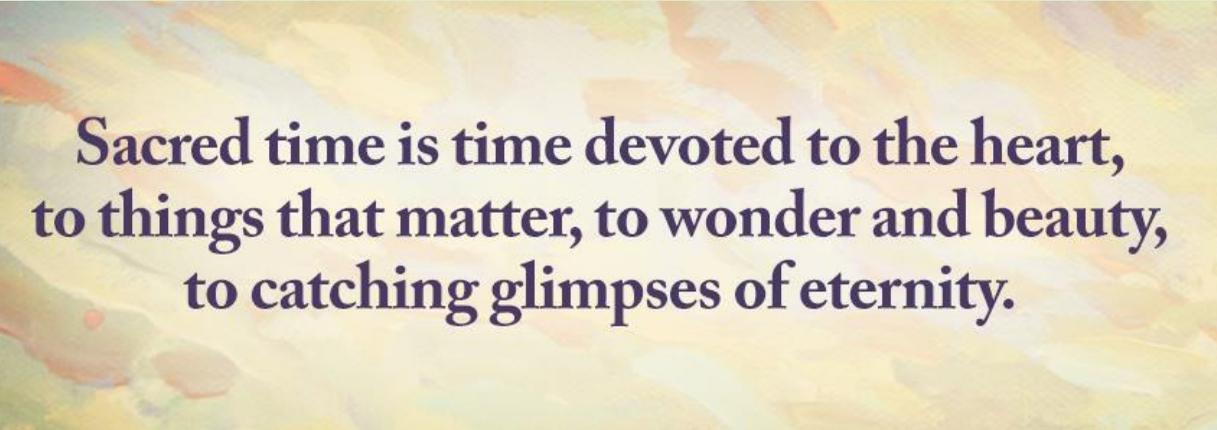
Several people participating in the Racism Discussion Group studying Jemar Tisby's book, *The Color of Compromise*, will be sharing things they have learned from the study during worship on January 16th. Adult Education on that day will invite conversation through comments and questions. Join us as we attempt to deepen our understanding of this important social issue.

Sacred Time: Experiencing God in the Rhythms of Time

What: An exploration of God's presence in each breath, the hours of each day, the weekly Sabbath rhythms, the monthly phases of the moon, the seasons, the phases of our life, the flow of generations, and the great arch of cosmic time – shared reflection, conversation, music, and prayer.

When: Sunday morning on ZOOM at 11a.m. starting January 9 (email Pastor Jerry for a link) for 6 sessions.

Who: Nancy Husk will lead using *Sacred Time: Embracing an Intentional Way of Life* by Christine Valters Paintner.



**Sacred time is time devoted to the heart,
to things that matter, to wonder and beauty,
to catching glimpses of eternity.**

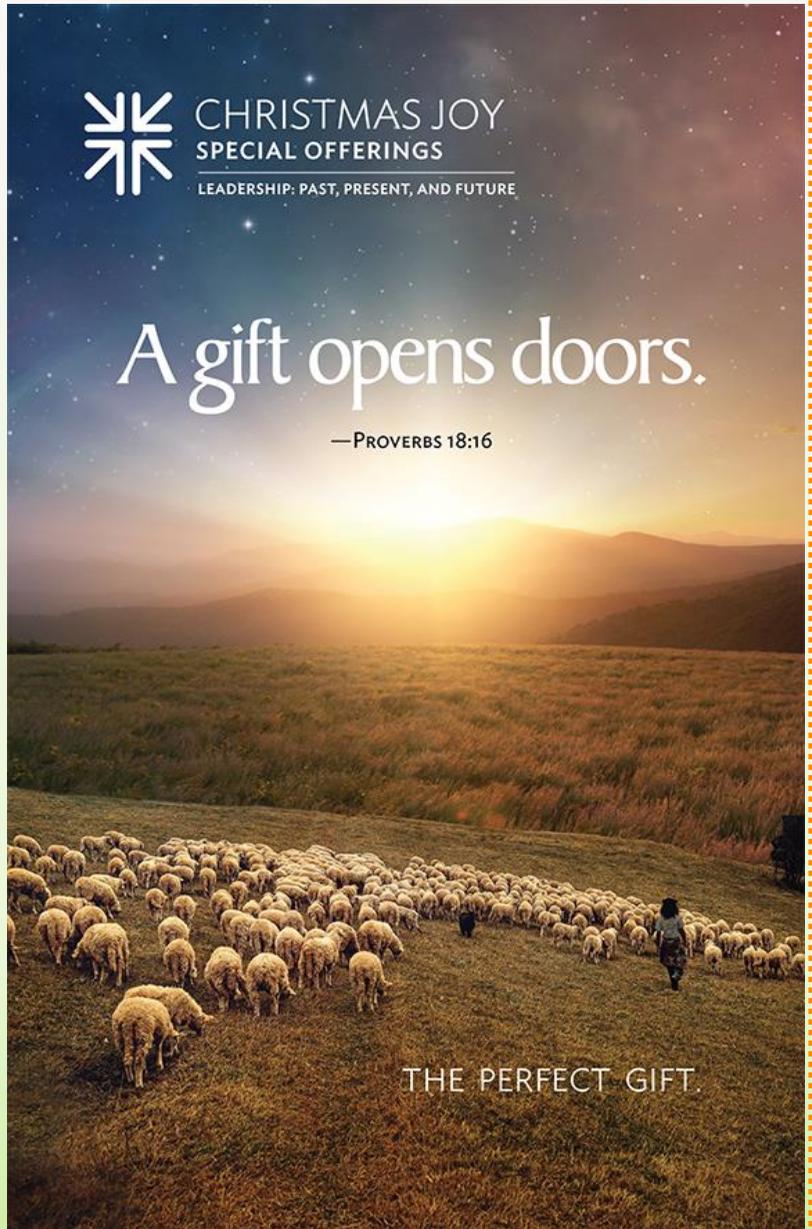
CHRISTMAS JOY OFFERING

God saw the great needs of the world and offered a perfect gift, Jesus Christ. In Jesus, we receive the perfect gift of God being with us, and of being with those in need—the gift of being together when we are near, and being together when we are apart. When we give to the Christmas Joy Offering (one of four special offerings of the Presbyterian Church), we share our love with the leaders of our Church — past, present and future.

50% of your gifts make it possible for students to learn and grow in faith at Presbyterian-related schools and colleges equipping communities of color.

50% of your gifts provide assistance for current and retired church workers and their families with critical financial needs.

Please mark your gift clearly for the “Christmas Joy Offering” or use one of the special envelopes



Dates to take note of:

There will be a brief **Congregational Meeting after worship on Sunday, December 19**, to vote on the pastors' terms of call for 2022.

Our **Annual Congregational Meeting will be Sunday, January 30**, following worship. Annual reports will be available the week before.

The deadline for reports to be included in the Annual Report is January 6.

Congratulations to Anna Schriemer, who helped her Calvin College Knights to the finals of the Division 3 NCAA women's volleyball championships. Anna was named to the All-Tournament team and named an Academic All-Regions player. WAY TO GO, ANNA!

Our Intention Statement

At Westminster Church
we live a whole life in response to God
attentively
together
engaging the world
for the good of all
following Jesus Christ.

adopted by the Session, April 25, 2011

Westminster Staff

Reverend Janet Robertson Duggins

jerryorjanet@wpcportage.org

Reverend Jerry Duggins

jerryorjanet@wpcportage.org

Parish Associate - Reverend John Best

johnmbest@gmail.com

Pastor Emeritus – Reverend Richard Jackson

Sunday School Coordinator – Leslie Ashbaugh

lesliea83@gmail.com

Director of Music & Pianist – Marie Kerstetter

kpianogirl@aol.com

Choir Director – Jason Zerban

jzerban@hotmail.com

Administrative Assistant – Chloe Nivala

westminsterp@wpcportage.org

Bookkeeper - Audrey Curry

bookkeeper@wpcportage.org

Custodian – Ernest Pueblo

ErPueblo@aol.com

Congregational Leaders

SESSION

Mary Anderson, Clerk; Leslie Ashbaugh, Jim Gluys, Cindy Green, Paul Paget,
Paula Schriemer, Kelly Schultz, Nick Pratt, Jayme Ruimveld

DEACONS

Judy Paget, Moderator; Beth Myer, Laurie Bushnell, Sue Weng,
Jodie Gerard, Ann Cirvencic, Connie Campbell, Catriena Kauffman

Administration

Finance.....Paul Paget, Leslie Ashbaugh

Personnel.....Cindy Green

Building & Grounds.....Jim Gluys

Children & Youth Ministries; Faith Formation.....Leslie Ashbaugh

Adult Education.....Linda DeYoung

Congregational Life & Evangelism.....Paula Schriemer

Art Festival.....Miriam Duggins, Lindsay South-McKim

Mission.....Nick Pratt, Pastors

Green Team.....Eileen Best

Worship.....Kelly Schultz, Pastors

Interpretive Arts.....Bobbie Gerber

Presbyterian Women.....Kelly Schultz

Worship Coordinators:

Hosts.....Cindy Green

Ushers.....Sarah Sullivan

Liturgists.....Jean Cox

Sound & tech.....Kelly Schultz

Children & WorshipMary Lou Rohwer, Kelly Schultz

Communion.....Kelly Schultz

