WESTMINSTER

PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH



NEWSLETTER April 2025

1515 Helen Avenue, Portage, MI 49002 (269) 344-3966

Email <u>westminsterp@wpcportage.org</u>
website <u>www.wpcportage.org</u>
facebook@westminsterpresbyterianportage

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Our 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.

Please send JOYS AND CONCERNS

for the Prayer List each week **by 9:30 am on Thursday.**The Prayer List will be sent out by email Thursday morning and postal-mailed to those who can't get it via email.

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



OUR REGULAR OFFICE HOURS:

Mondays, Wednesdays and Thursdays: 9 am to 4:30 pm

April Birthdays

- 4 Dave Schriemer
- 6 Marilyn Pierce
- 8 Phil Netz
- 9 Marta Best
- 10 Marlin Gerber
 Tyler Ashbaugh
 - Marie Kerstetter
- 11 Adam Rice
- 14 Eliza Shull
- 15 Jennifer Shimer

- 16 Katie Rohwer
- 18 Jerry Duggins
- 22 Natalie Shull Sandy Welch
- 23 Chris Hamilton
- 25 Dick Jackson
- 26 John Best
- 27 Jodie Gerard
- 29 Lorie Leak

Val Glasscock

April Anniversary

3 Mike & Rosemary Jungel



CONGREGATIONAL LIFE NEWS

Join us for brunch on Easter Sunday! Make plans to join us for a light brunch right after the service on Easter. It will be a coordinated potluck. We'll provide some light appetizers, and folks can sign up to bring fruit or juice, pastries or muffins, or deviled eggs. We hope you will join us!

Congratulations to Rachel Netz, who has recently passed her Social Work boards and is now a fully Licensed Clinical social worker! We rejoice with Rachel on this achievement of this professional goal and wish her well in her work.





KALAMAZOO CIVIC THEATER:

Dancing at Lughnasa at Carver Studio March 28, 2025 — April 6, 2025 Traci Glasscock plays Maggie



WORSHIP NEWS

Our 2024-25 Worship theme is "CLAIMING HOPE"

WORSHIP IN APRIL

LENT CONTINUES... OUR THEME: "Pathways to Hope"

April 6 Fifth Sunday in Lent COMMUNION

<u>John 15:12-17</u> "Relationships (not transactions)" No Children & Worship today <u>Luke 15:11b-32</u> We welcome new members today!

April 13 Sixth Sunday in Lent/PALM SUNDAY

"Remembering (not forgetting)" Children & Worship

April 18 MAUNDY THURSDAY COMMUNION SERVICE

"Receiving"

April 19 Good Friday Service

"Were You There?"

April 20 **Easter Sunday** No Children & Worship today

Jesus is alive! We celebrate with flowers, music, alleluias, and Easter joy!

John 20:1-18 Join us after worship for Easter Brunch & Easter egg hunt

April 27 **EARTH DAY SUNDAY**

"The earth is the Lord's...." Children & Worship

All of our Holy Week services will be livestreamed. However, we know how meaningful it is for many to be in the sanctuary for Maundy Thursday Communion and the Good Friday service. If you want to attend in person, but need a ride in order to participate in an evening service please contact Kelly Schultz, or one of the pastors. We want to include you and will do our best to arrange a ride!

The 2025 WESTMINSTER ART FESTIVAL is almost upon us!

We began receiving poetry submissions March 1; Visual art submissions are being received beginning March 31, with a deadline of April 7 for both. We're very excited about our theme and look forward to the diverse and creative ways poets and artists will reflect on the "ONE PLANET" we share

The ART FESTIVAL OPENING RECEPTION will be Saturday, April 26, 4:30 – 7:30 pm.

Come see the art, meet the artists, sample some refreshments, participate in a community weaving project, and enjoy **music from local Celtic band** *Selkie.*

This annual celebration of the arts, earth care, and faith is a unique opportunity for our congregation to connect with folks from our wider community *and* to express some of our core values. Please plan to explore the exhibit, come to events, help welcome guests to our church, and invite your friends. Pick up a flyer of events or a poster at church.

Submission forms and instructions, as well as information about events can be found on the website: https://www.westminsterartfestival.org/

If you'd like to help prepare the exhibit, host or provide treats for one of the events, or assist with other Art Festival tasks, talk with a member of the planning team: Miriam Duggins, Jodie Gerard, Val Glasscock, Traci Glasscock, Lisa Buesing, Marta Best, Renee Szostek, Pastor Jerry, or Pastor Janet.





We're pleased to once again host a **WATERCOLOR PAINTING CLASS** here at Westminster, taught by local artist Kay Severson. The spring class will be a practice class (for those who have previously taken a watercolor basics class). The focus (which might be flowers, landscape, or something else) will be determined by a survey of the participants. The class will meet five Tuesdays in April, 6:30- 8:30 pm in our Craft Room. Cost is \$70 (you provide your own supplies). Registration forms available in the church office.

CHRISTIAN EDUCATION NEWS

SUNDAY MORNING ADULT EDUCATION

April 6, 13: Pastor Jerry will lead a study designed by Professor Amy-Jill Levine of the Vanderbilt Divinity School called *Entering the Passion of Jesus: A Beginner's Guide to Holy Week*.

Her background in Judaism and knowledge of the Old Testament offers a unique

perspective on the events of Holy Week. Beginning and seasoned students of the Bible will discover new insights. We'll cover Jesus' entry into Jerusalem, his actions and teachings in the temple, his anointing by a woman, his last meal with his disciples and his time in the garden of Gethsemane.





April 27:

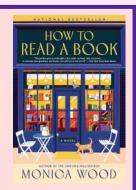
2025 Art Festival participant presentations.

FAITH BOOK CLUB

NEWS! We have switched our meeting night. We will meet on the third THURSDAY of the odd months so our next meeting will be Thursday, May 15 and we will read and talk about *How to Read a Book* by Monica Wood.

For July 17 we will be discussing *Whiskey Tender* by Deborah Taffa. New to FBC?

Contact Lorie Leak to request the Zoom link!



COFFEE PLUS VOLUNTEERS NEEDED:

We are also looking for a few additional volunteers to help with Coffee Plus. This is a very popular ministry and a few extra folks would be most helpful. You are welcome to sign up for just setting up & making coffee OR just for clean up OR both! If you are new to Coffee Plus, we can train you! Please contact Jayme or Val and we will arrange an orientation for you. We offer lots of support in providing treats, crackers, cheese and drinks. We thank you for considering helping us with this important ministry!



April 2025 Schedule for Faith Formation

Faith Formation usually meets the first and third Sundays (during the school year) and starts about a half hour after morning worship ends. Children are welcome to attend this "One Room Schoolhouse" type gathering of kids along with their parent/guardian/family members. Bible Stories are from the PC(USA) curriculum and most weeks Ms. Leslie offers a craft, science experiment or activity to reinforce the story from the Bible lesson.

Questions? Contact Leslie Ashbaugh.

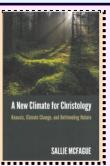
PUT THESE FAITH FORMATION DATES ON YOUR CALENDAR:

April 6 April 20: Easter Egg Hunt



MEN'S BOOK STUDY

April 1 & 15 8:30 am at the church A New Climate for Christology by Sallie Mcfaque



Wednesday Morning BIBLE STUDY

10 am at church or Zoom

We're studying *I Corinthians* Contact Pastor Jerry for info or Zoom link



Our Lent devotional is "Grieving Change and Loss: the unpredictable, non-linear, faith-filled, journey toward resurrection," published by the Presbyterian Outlook. Copies will be available at church on the table in the narthex. Lent devotions for kids & families and teens are also available.

Get Connected, Build Relationships, Enjoy Exercise!

Play Pickleball (WPC Gym)

Monday mornings, 9-11 am Tuesday evenings, 6:30-8:30 pm Thursday mornings, 9-11 am



Play Volleyball (WPC Gym)

Wednesday evenings, 7:30 pm

FROM THE PASTORS' DESK

A few weeks ago in a sermon I talked about some practices to help us stay connected to our spiritual selves as well as to the Spirit of God within us. I mentioned rest, prayer, and creative work as three examples of practices that can help us stay grounded and sustain hope through times we find stressful, disorienting, or troubling. Now I want to add a fourth: beauty. As you know, I enjoy winter, but March in Michigan is often dreary, and this year I spent some of it being sick. Now as the month draws to a close, with longer days and hints of spring in the air, I've suddenly realized that this year I feel an unusually strong eagerness for spring. It's not just warmer weather I'm longing for, though. It's the *beauty* that spring offers up to us, every day another blooming daffodil or violet, a newly-leafing tree, joyous songs of robins and hermit thrushes.

Looking at my April calendar, I might be inclined to get a bit overwhelmed. April is a *really* busy month. It will start off with receiving art pieces for this year's Westminster Art Festival, and lots of conversations with artists, poets, jurors, and the planning team as we prepare the exhibit and organize all the other details, before the opening event on April 26. Meanwhile, Lent continues and then we have Palm Sunday, Holy Week services, and EASTER Sunday! Along the way, we'll receive some new members and make some plans for Earth Day Sunday at the end of the month. And somehow I also seemed to have signed myself up for a watercolor painting class. Jerry has a birthday in April too, and we definitely need to get in some yard work (and probably some birding!). Yes, the next few weeks are going to be full!

But you know... what I'm actually seeing on my calendar is a month celebrating the gift of beauty. The pleasure of art, and the way an artist's creativity can just bowl you over. The insight and humor poets bring. The fun of connecting over shared interests. Watching the forsythia burst into blossom in my yard and behind the church. Singing "Were you there?" on Good Friday. Lilies on the chancel and flowers on the cross at Easter. The thrill of trumpet music and the joy of many voices singing "alleluias." The Easter promise of life. Celtic music for the Art Festival opening. The way gratitude for the earth and our commitment to care for it come together in Earth Day prayers.

The world is a terrible and difficult place. But it also holds great beauty, all kinds of beauty. I don't know what particular kind of beauty makes your heart sing. But April, the month of Easter, is the perfect time to pay attention to it, stand still in awe and say "thank you" for it.

Because all real beauty is a reflection of God's goodness, God's endlessly creative life-giving love and grace.

This is from a poem by Mary Oliver called "North Country." She begins by talking about the springtime return of the thrush, a small, brown migratory bird with a speckled breast and one of the sweetest songs you can hear in the woods:

Then she says;

...You listen and you know you could live a better life than you do, be softer, kinder. And maybe this year you will be able to do it. Hear how his voice rises and falls. There is no way to be sufficiently grateful for the gifts we are given, no way to speak the Lord's name often enough, though we do try, and



especially now, as that dappled breast breathes in the pines and heaven's windows in the north country, now spring has come, are opened wide.

Blessings of spring, beauty, and Easter to you. Pastor Janet

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



Spring Mini-Retreat – April 12 – "Making Time for Wonder"

Join the Presbyterian Women of Westminster for a time of discussion, fellowship, and breakfast on Saturday April 12th from 8:30 a.m. to noon.

Our guest speaker is Rev. Amber Nettleton, an Associate Pastor at the First Presbyterian Church of Kalamazoo. Amber was born and raised in "Cajun country" where the Louisiana phrase "laissez les bons temps rouler" (Let the good times roll) greatly influences her life and ministry. Amber earned her M.Div. from McCormick Theological Seminary in 2012 and has served churches in the Cascades and Lake Michigan Presbyteries, as well as served as a hospice chaplain at the V.A. Medical Center in Portland, Oregon. Amber is a mom to three young children and the daughter in law of Doug and Judy Nettleton. When the ice to



the daughter-in-law of Doug and Judy Nettleton. When she isn't working, she can be found volunteering at her local public school, cooking plant-based meals, washing never-ending piles of laundry, or hiding from her children to read historical fiction novels.

During our time together in April, we will explore cultivating spiritual wonder and awe in our fast paced, politically divisive, and digital age characterized by constant change and loss. The book that has inspired Amber's presentation is *Enchantment: Awakening Wonder in an Anxious Age* by Katherine May.

Breakfast and opening begin at 8:30 a.m. Sign up on the sign up sheet at church or by emailing Kelly Schultz. We hope to see you there!

Lake Michigan Presbyterian Women Spring Gathering

May 3 at First Presbyterian Church of Grand Haven

Want to attend? Email Susan Ochs (<u>s2123@aol.com</u>) your name, phone, email address and tell her your church and if there are dietary needs. They are also asking for your favorite hymn. Cost is \$20 (includes program and lunch). The program will feature the Hope Project and Kenzie's Be Cafe.

Presbyterian Women in the Synod of the Covenant Gathering

Friday, June 27 at 3 pm - Saturday, June 28 at 3:30 pm at First Presbyterian Church of Battle Creek, cost is \$75 (does not include lodging)

Program by Rev Dr. Rhashell Hunter titled "Rooted in Faith" and based on the 2025-26 Horizons Bible Study.

Bring an item for a Hygiene Kit - see <u>lamemichiganpresbytery.org</u> for more information and the registration form.

God's House / Our House...WPC Building & Grounds Update

Building updates since last month:

- 1. The exterior lighting for the fellowship hall is complete, and the sanctuary's exterior cross is lit once again. Several of these lighting areas are controlled with timers, and we'll be replacing both the faulty and still-working timers with battery back-up, digital timers in a few months (once the contractor receives the ordered parts). The current electromechanical timers must be manually reset after power outages, and we don't always know that an outage occurred if it happens overnight. Thank you to the Tom Schuster Electrical Inc. team for their great service and support.
- 2. An old galvanized water supply line in the basement sprung a leak after 65 years of service; a new copper pipe was installed. Thank you to R.W. LaPine for mechanical contracting support.
- 3. The boiler room hot water heater inlet pipe was also found to be leaking, and this was replaced by the system installer.
- 4. The roof drain connected to the cistern near the front entrance continues to work well with the basement's previously wet floor staying dry. We will monitor it through the spring and summer.
- 5. Our transition to Summit Fire Protection for our smoke/fire detection is going well. Summit has repaired several sensors that were previously identified as requiring complete replacement, a considerable cost savings.
- 6. The arts and crafts room's closets have been 98% cleared of B&G supplies. This room was previously used as a staging area thru the COVID-19 era while the Fellowship Hall Refresh project was pursued.
- 7. As a result of several lighting updates, we have a modestly large inventory of used 4-foot long fluorescent T-20 and T-8 light bulbs. Just how much life these bulbs have left is unknown but Contact Tom VerHage or Jim Gluys if you would like some bulbs to try out.

Looking forward to spring:

Spring activities include exterior spring general clean-up (look for a date to come in May), downed-wood removal from 2024 storms, and project quoting to power the new HVAC in the main office with electricity from our fellowship hall solar panels.

The Building & Grounds Team continues working to provide a safe, welcoming space while being good stewards of money and the environment. If you have a desire to help with this mission or have input on our facility, please contact Jim Gluys or Tom Verhage with information contained in the church member directory.































MISSION NEWS

Kalamazoo Loaves & Fishes 2025 Warehouse Volunteer Schedule

Monday, April 28

Monday, May 19

Monday, June 30

Monday, July 28

Monday, August 18

Monday, September 29

Monday, October 27

Monday, November 17



Promoting a Hunger-Free Community Since 1982

Time: 12:30-2:30pm.

Please contact Judy Paget

with any questions. Her contact

information is in the directory

Please mark your summer calendars:

Westminster Service Sundays, July 13th & 20th. Plan to stay after the worship service to help with various projects.



The Kalamazoo CROP Walk is BACK!

MARK YOUR CALENDAR!

Join other walkers on Sunday, April 27th at 2 pm (Registration begins at 1 pm) to raise awareness and money for Kalamazoo Loaves & Fishes and Church World Service Hunger programs around the world. The walk will start and end at Trinity Lutheran Church on S. Westnedge in Kalamazoo. Two routes (1.25 mi & 3.1 mi) will take walkers through the downtown, Vine & Edison neighborhoods, and the Central Business District. Register online at Kalamazoo Valley CROP Hunger Walk. Join the Portage Westminster

Church Team to walk or make a donation. A sign-up is located on the bulletin board if you plan to walk. Contact Barb Daniels, WPC's coordinator, with any questions.

Walking with the Presbyterian Women

Everyone is welcome! It's not just for women!
We begin Thursday, April 24th at 6 pm at Y'OPA's parking lot,
165 W. Centre Ave (Frozen yogurt treat after we walk.)
A 2025 WPC Walking Group Schedule is located in the narthex.
The group meets every Thursday evening from 7-8 pm at various trailheads.

Questions? Contact Barb Daniels or Leslie Ashbaugh.



VOLUNTEER AT THE WARMING CENTER AT WESTMINSTER

Volunteers are needed, especially as we plan for next fall. Contact Nancy Husk or the church office for more information. Plan to volunteer next fall starting in November.

WARMING CENTER AT WESTMINSTER

WESTMINSTER'S WARMING CENTER

Westminster's Warming Center wrapped up the 2024-25 season on March 27. We opened on November 19 and over the past 4-1/2 months have welcomed unhoused folks from our community every Tuesday and Thursday between 10 am and 2 pm. Many of these folks were "overflow" from Ministry with Community; use of a Metro van (free to non-profits, with training for drivers) enabled us to provide transportation. Each day, a warm lunch and snacks were served, and some participants were able to take showers and wash clothes. We were also able to provide warm clothing, hats, gloves, and hand warmers. Most of all, volunteers offered welcome, respect, and caring to each participant. Most days, we had between 13 and 17 guests. Some were "regulars" and over the winter we had approximately 150 different participants.

Volunteers made this all possible! We had 27 Westminster volunteers and three non-members, who came to us through pickle ball, a friendship, and Red Cross volunteering (heard us listed as a county warming center). Every week we staffed four 4-1/2 hour shifts, eight 3-hour shifts, and eight 2-1/2 hour shifts. Each week two volunteers took home laundry to prepare for the next Warming Center day. Two volunteers called on Airport Inn residents to invite them to our center. And two new people trained as Metro van drivers. We appreciate all the volunteers! We do want to especially note that Judy Paget and Fred Welch provided essential leadership, Sandy Welch and Carol Pratt oversaw food prep and kitchen procedures, and Nancy Husk handled the challenge of volunteer scheduling.

One day two young adults and a staff member from Kalamazoo Covenant Academy interacted with guests. One non-member volunteer purchased and prepared lunch one day. And thanks to Karen VerHage's generous friends we had homemade cookies left over from her memorial service for many days!

There were many challenges, but in this second year we had a better handle on how to make a project like this work. We've gained a greater understanding of the needs of unhoused folks in our community, and been blessed by the opportunity to make connections and build relationships. It's been a meaningful way to put our faith into action.

We had grants from the Presbytery and the Synod for this work, as well as mission funds from our endowment, but also relied on donations of food items, coffee donated by Biggby's and Ron's Beans, warm clothing and other things needed by participants, including bus tokens provided by Prince of Peace Church.

Thanks to all who have supported this ministry with prayers, time, encouragement, and donations.

RACIAL EQUITY NEWS

Join other Westminster folks for the Friday night production and community discussion of *Smoldering Fires*. Friday, April 11 @ 7:30 pm

The Jolliffe Theatre @ The Epic Center, Kalamazoo, Michigan The tickets are \$20 per performance. Visit their online box office or call 269-250-6984.

Smoldering Fires tells the poignant story of two young boys grappling with their dreams and the harsh realities of their environment. This play is a compelling piece that resonates deeply with Face Off Theatre Company's mission to inspire change and dialogue. Contact Barb Daniels if you are interested in attending this show. A sign-up is also located on the bulletin board.



RACIAL EQUITY: During the month of March, the Racial Equity Group held listening sessions regarding the reparations project that is starting with First Presbyterian Church and other local churches. We wanted to make sure that all participants at Westminster Presbyterian Church are aware of the project, the purpose of the project, and the future possibilities. The reparations project is a faith response with justice. The listening sessions have been very helpful to share experiences as well as the project.

The Racial Equity team will meet on Sunday, April 6 at 3:30 p.m. at church. We are reading the book *me and white supremacy* by Layla Saad. We are reading up to page 123 for discussion.



Plastic Bag Recycling

EARTH CARE NEWS

Portage residents can now recycle plastic bags and film through a new initiative led by the Portage Environmental Board and Youth Advisory Committee (YAC)!

Drop-Off Location: Portage City Hall (Inside Lobby) Mon-Thurs: 7:30 AM – 5:30 PM, Friday: 8 AM – 12 PM

Accepted Items: Grocery bags, Retail & department store bags,

Bread & produce bags, Plastic wrap (from packages of water bottles,

paper towels, etc.), Resealable food bags (clean & dry)

Bubble wrap & air pillows (popped)

Newspaper sleeves, dry cleaning bags, & more!

Students at Portage Northern & Portage Central can also drop off bags at their schools! Learn how your recycled bags are transformed into new materials:

https://youtu.be/ZDNFXtMu6M0.



MAIL BAG

From Edward, age 74, life sentence since 2007

"I cannot tell you how moved I was by the letter you sent me. In my years of being involved with the Angel Tree Program I have never received a letter like that. I literally get tears in my eye (even this minute) from thinking that people like you can be so thoughtful.



"I miss my daughters and grandkids very much. I have never been there to see my great grandsons be born and it has been the most that I can do for them to be able to send them gifts from the Angel Tree Program.

"Yesterday I talked to my granddaughter Angelica just four hours after she gave birth to Wyatt's brother Emerson. Angelica was my first grandkid and has always been special to me. She was little when I came to prison but still remembers the time we spent together going on walks and playing. I told her of your letter and she could not believe that you were so thoughtful. I think it made her smile. I truly thank God for people such as you. Again I cannot tell you how much your letter moved me and made me smile."

From Tyler, age 36

"Thank you for delivering Angel Tree gifts to my children this past Christmas. The Angel Tree program is reliable and a true blessing to incarcerated people. Children of incarcerated people often feel forgotten, unappreciated, neglect, and sorrow. Angel Tree provides another way for incarcerated people to show their children they still love and care for them.

"I also want to thank all of you for the letters and resources,...letting me know when and what gifts have been delivered to my children.

"This is a crucial and stressful time in my life. I have been incarcerated since November 14, 2018...My earliest release date is November 12. I am excited because I have already begun filling out paperwork for my parole. I should see the parole board around July 4th. That interview will ultimately determine whether I go home in November or not."

Thanks to everyone who signed the Winter Blessings and wrote notes in December and February to the incarcerated loved ones of our Angel Tree children.



Westminster Staff

Reverend Janet Duggins
Reverend Jerry Duggins
Parish Associate Pastor – Reverend John Best
Pastor Emeritus – Reverend Richard Jackson
Sunday School Coordinator – Leslie Ashbaugh
Director of Music & Pianist – Marie Kerstetter
Choir Director – Jason Zerban
Office Manager Admin. Assistant – Laurie Nic
Engagement & Communications Director - Matt Ray
Bookkeeper – Nathan Schultz
Custodian – Ernest Pueblo

Congregational Leaders

SESSION

Kathy Stuut, Clerk; Val Glasscock, Jim Gluys, Carol Pratt, Jayme Ruimveld, Fred Welch, Chris Rohwer, Tom VerHage and Alissa Worstell

DEACONS

Ann Cirvencic, Moderator; Jean Cox, Cathy MacDonald, Kettie Chapeyama, Val Kirkwood, Nick Pratt, Deacons-elect: Barb Daniels, Pat Kurtz, Judy Markusse Paget

Team Leaders

Worship Participant Coordinators

Hosts	Cindy Green
Ushers	Sarah Sullivan
Liturgists	Jean Cox
Livestream, Sound & Techs.	Kelly Schultz
Children & Worship	Mary Lou Rohwer, Kelly Schultz
Communion	Kelly Schultz
Coffee Plus	Jayme Ruimveld