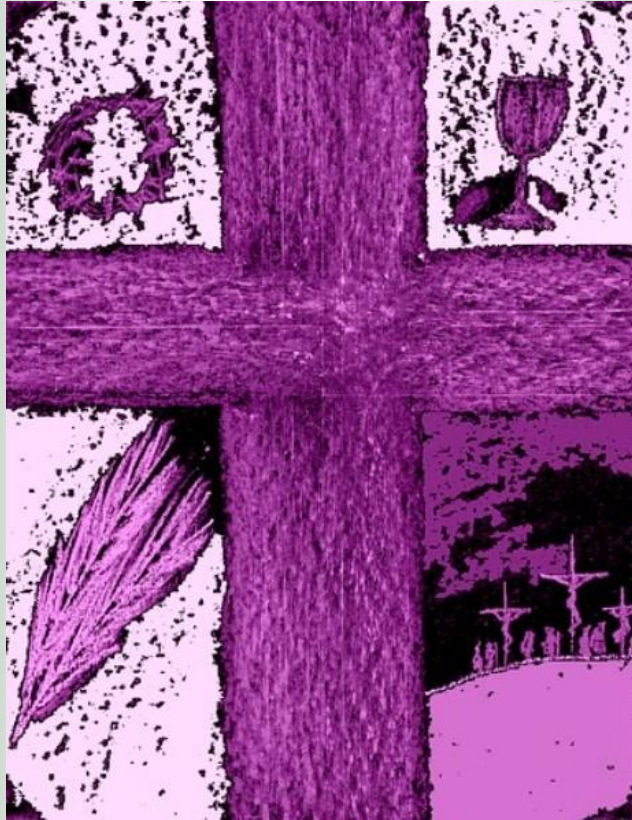


WESTMINSTER

PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH



NEWSLETTER

March 2023

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

Email westminsterp@wpcportage.org
website www.wpcportage.org
facebook@[westminsterpresbyterianportage](https://www.facebook.com/westminsterpresbyterianportage)

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

March Birthdays

1	Anne Meyer	20	David Mann
	Allison Poliak		Fred Welch
2	Luke Anderson	22	Kirk Truesdell
	Catriena Kauffman	24	Bennett Werme
5	Carmen St uut	26	Elizabeth MacDonald
	Shannon Egan	26	Emily Ruimveld
8	David Kauffman	30	Eric Vogel
	Bobbie Gerber		
13	Sam Gonzales		
14	Debbie Netz		
15	Chris Rohwer		
17	Kathy St uut		
18	Susan Weng		



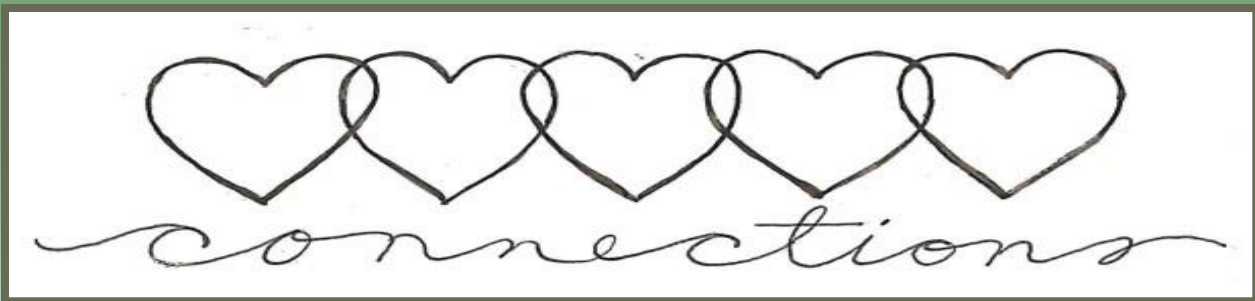
Please send JOYS AND CONCERNS

for the Prayer List each week by Thursday noon. The Prayer List will be sent out by email (usually Thursday or Friday) 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.

"Thank you" to Tim Bachleda for obtaining and installing a couple of new parking lot lights to replace some that weren't working!



From the Pandemic Response Team

Just a quick note about the current Covid status in Kalamazoo County: the CDC says we are at "low" levels of virus in our community (currently documented as 26 cases/day, or 10 cases/100,000 people). The number of hospitalized Covid patients continues to fall but the test positivity is still 21 per cent, indicating that there is still virus circulating out there. Some experts were predicting a big spike this winter, but that has failed to materialize in our area.

So where does that leave us? At this point, I think everyone needs to make their own decisions on whether and where to mask, whether to socially distance, etc. I personally still wear a mask when I'm at Meijer's (or other crowded places), or if I'm sitting in church near other people, and of course we're all still wearing masks while at work in the hospitals. Obviously, if you're feeling sick, we want you to stay home from church and watch it online (and test yourself!).

Happily, it seems like our local influenza and RSV numbers are decreasing. So overall, I'm happy to report that we seem to be in a fairly stable place. We'll keep you posted on further developments.

Paula Schriemer, M.D., for the Pandemic Response Team

OUR OFFICE HOURS :

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

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 can!

You do not have to have a Facebook profile or be a regular user to access livestreamed worship; you just need internet access. Go to: www.facebook.com/WestminsterPresbyterianPortage/

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

Reminder about winter weather and church

If we have snowy, icy, or cold weather on a Sunday morning, please remember that worship is livestreamed! If the roads look bad where you are, please stay safe and join us virtually. Everyone's safety is our first priority. And thankfully, we can still worship together.



is Our 2023 Worship Theme

WORSHIP IN MARCH

March 5

John 3:1-17

Second Sunday in Lent

Communion

No Children & Worship today

March 12

John 4:5-42

Third Sunday in Lent

Daylight Savings Time begins!!

Children & Worship

March 19

John 9:1-41

Fourth Sunday in Lent

Children & Worship

March 26

John 11:1-45

Fifth Sunday in Lent

Children & Worship

We have LENT DEVOTIONS you can use at home throughout the season to help make this a meaningful time of reflection and growth. Pick up a copy at church or request an emailed version. Lent devotions for kids are also available at church.



Westminster will Welcome an International Guest!

Sanjana Das-Singh will visit Westminster in April!

Westminster has a unique opportunity to host Sanjana during the month of April (April 2 to 24). Sanjana is from India and works in education about human trafficking. She recently completed a doctorate in this field. She will be involved in many of our regular activities--Holy Week services, leading Bible study, leading Adult Education classes, preaching, meeting with the Racial Equity study group and the men's book group. There will also be fun events which will give us a chance to get to interact in an informal setting.



We will co-host a **community wide event with the Kalamazoo Anti-Human Trafficking Coalition**. The event is on Sunday, April 16 at 5 pm at Westminster. Sanjana will be the keynote speaker and also some survivors of trafficking will share their stories. Please help to spread the news about this event.

Hosting a guest for three weeks takes the involvement of many people. She would like to get to know many of us. Please consider what you might be able to do--invite her to your home or a restaurant for a meal, take her to your vacation home or a local park, invite her to a group with which you are involved, take her to a school concert or sports event. There are many possibilities!

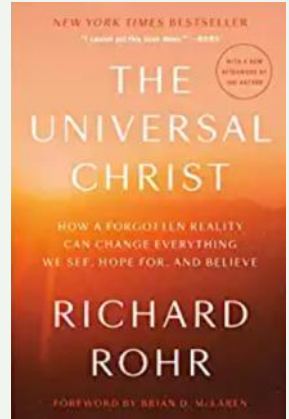
Contact Eileen Best with your ideas and to add a date to Sanjana's calendar.

SUNDAY MORNING ADULT EDUCATION

Continuing through Lent: *The Universal Christ*

Pastor Jerry leads our discussion of Richard Rohr's book, *The Universal Christ*.

After suggesting in Part One that Christ has appeared in many times and places throughout creation's history and continues to be present, even in us, Rohr undertakes the task of laying out what this means for our understanding of Jesus of Nazareth. He brings a fresh perspective to the meaning of Jesus' life, teaching, work, death, and resurrection. His insistence that we see Jesus as a human being makes him more real and ultimately transformative for our lives. Copies of the book are available at church, but you don't have to have read it to enjoy our always-lively discussion! Join us any Sunday, in the Choir Room or on Zoom. (If you need to get on the email list to receive the Zoom links, let Pastor Jerry know.)



FAITH FORMATION: March 5 & 19
Faith Formation is for kids of any age
(parents can participate, too)

*We grow in grace and gratitude
as we learn Bible stories
& enjoy fun activities together.*

WELCOME TO WESTMINSTER CLASS

session 2 of 2 March 5, 10:45 am

If you missed the first session but would like to be part of this opportunity to learn more about Westminster and Presbyterians, please talk to Pastor Janet!



WEDNESDAY MORNING BIBLE STUDY

10 am on Zoom

Studying the gospel of John.

New participants welcome!

Contact Pastor Jerry to get emails with link

FAITH BOOK CLUB

Next meeting: March 14, 7 pm on Zoom

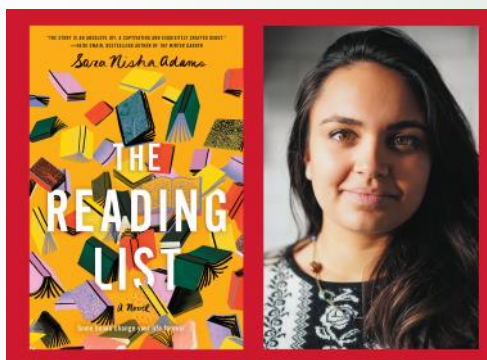
Our book will be

"The Reading List" by Sara Nisha Adams

New to FBC?

Let Lorie Leak know

if you need the Zoom link.

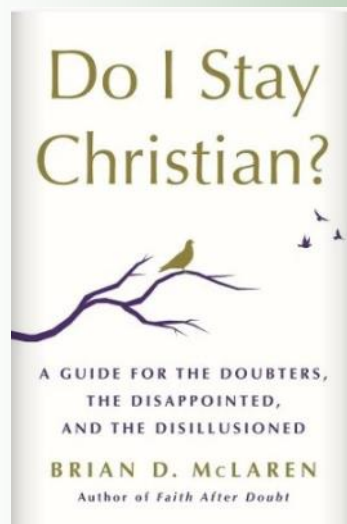


MEN'S BOOK STUDY

1st & 3rd Tuesdays, 8:30 am

Reading & discussing

Do I Stay Christian? by Brian McLaren



FROM THE PASTORS' DESK

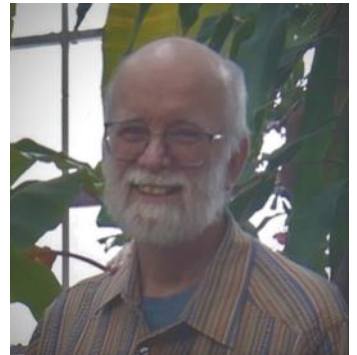
Lent doesn't have to be tedious. Gayle Boss made several efforts to persuade her children of this, mostly without success. In the introduction to her Lenten devotional, *Wild Hope: Stories for Lent from the Vanishing*, she talks about discovering, and sharing with her sons, the tradition of using the story of Noah's ark as a metaphor for the Lenten journey. All went well until she got to the "spiritual application." She writes, "Noah's story is our story, I told the boys. The ark is the church, the community that carries us across the roiling chaos of our lives...." Her boys were not interested in talking about the metaphorical journey of the ark. "They wanted to talk about the ark's screeching, leaping, hissing, slithering animals" for which the church offered no "symbolic value." Her children are now adults and things have changed. Human activity has led to changing climate, habitat loss, and the extinction of many animal species. "The boys had it right all along," she writes, "Attention to the amazingness of our arkmates routes us directly to the heart of Lent."

I'm looking forward to reading about the species she discusses in her book. I suspect that paying attention to the Panamanian Golden Frog, the Monarch Butterfly, or the Black Rhinoceros, may actually be a healthier approach to Lent than the emphasis on self-improvement that occupied us in some previous Lenten seasons.

Of course spiritual disciplines such as prayer or scripture reading are still good practices to foster! But it seems that whatever we learn, it takes on more meaning in the context of "attending to our arkmates." Relationships matter! Sometimes we only see ourselves accurately when we shift our focus to others. I'm hopeful that Boss will help me experience Lent differently as she draws my attention to the nonhuman world.

Richard Rohr's *The Universal Christ*, which we are studying in Adult Education on Sunday mornings, does a similar thing for me as I think about my human "arkmates." I think I see the Christ in me better when I focus on the Christ in you. Of course, some self-examination is important, and so is self-care. But to practice seeing ourselves as part of the human and the earth community is part of the Lenten journey... maybe the most interesting part.

Lenten Blessing! *Pastor Jerry*



Rescheduled!! Hopefully no power outage this time!



WOMEN'S RETREAT: "Making Time ... for BLESSING."

Westminster's Presbyterian Women invite you to join us as we continue our series of occasional "Making Time" mini-retreats focusing on "blessing" as a spiritual practice.

What: Friends, faith, and fun

When: Saturday, March 18 , 12:30 –4 pm

Light lunch of salad & soup provided

Where: At Westminster

Who: Women of any age

Can you invite a friend? Of course! *Is there a cost?* No

Come refresh your spirit with fellowship, conversation, reflection and prayer!

Listening Together in Lent



When: Tuesday nights from 7 - 7:30pm, February 28 – April 4
(*except* on March 14 when Faith Book Club meets)

How: Zoom (link and subject of reflection emailed the day before)

Facilitator: Nancy Husk

Together we'll reflect silently on a scripture passage, poem, image, or song using the practice of lectio divina. What word, phrase, or detail draws your attention? What images or memories do you associate with that part? Do you sense an invitation for more attention, action, or reflection? After an additional 3 minutes of resting in silence together, each participant may share their experience without interruption or comment from the group. Each week is a separate experience so come when you can. Join us for this age-old prayer practice.

NURTURING OUR CONGREGATIONAL LIFE

The **Congregational Life Team will meet** on Monday, March 6 at 7 pm to discuss plans for Spring/Summer events. We are hoping to grab a couple new members for this committee. It's pretty low-stress: we meet a couple times of year to brainstorm about fun things to do —potlucks, outings, etc.—that provide us opportunities for us to know one another and build relationships.



If you have interest and/or ideas, please come! We'll meet in the choir room at church. If you need a link to join by Zoom, contact Jayme Ruimveld or Paula Schriemer.

Get Connected, Build Relationships, Enjoy Exercise!

Play **Pickleball** (WPC Gym)

Monday & Thursday mornings 9-11 am

Tuesday evenings, 6:30-8:30 pm

Play **Volleyball** (WPC Gym)

Wednesday evenings, 7:30 pm



Outdoor Walking Group will begin on Thursday, April 13th
(Watch for the weekly schedule in the April Newsletter.)

WESTMINSTER ART FESTIVAL 2023

EcoWisdom

Our 11th annual Westminster Art Festival will be April 29—June 15. This year, we'll be inviting visual artists and poets to submit work on the theme "EcoWisdom." We look forward to sharing art and poetry that reflects on the wisdom we need to care for the earth, and how paying attention to the webs of connection that make up our living planet might offer wisdom for our lives, for human communities, and our environmental stewardship.

You can read more about the theme and other details of the Art Festival on our website: <https://www.westminsterartfestival.org/>

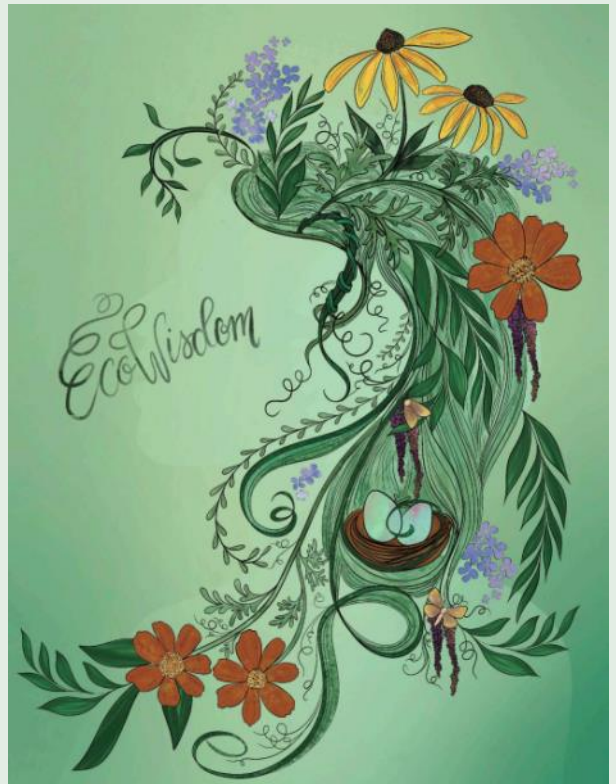
Please share info about our Art Festival with any artists or poets you may know! Information and entry forms are available at church as well as on the website.

We also have posters! Please take one if you know of a good place you could hang it.

We'll be receiving visual art submissions March 29—April 3. Poetry entries can be submitted any time between now and April 3.

We can use volunteers to receive the art submissions as they come in and to help with hanging the exhibit. If you can help, please talk to Miriam Duggins, Jodie Gerard, or Pastor Jerry.

Mark your calendar for April 29, and plan to attend the opening reception, from 5—8 pm. More information to come!



An opportunity to serve:

United Campus Ministry and the Wesley Foundation will provide a community lunch to students on WMU's campus from 11 am -1 pm every Wednesday throughout Lent. Our Presbyterian Women have adopted Wednesday, March 15 as the day we will bring lunch. If you want to help provide a soup, side, or dessert that can sit on a counter (or in a crockpot) for two hours, contact Kelly Schultz. Kelly will bring the food to the Wesley building so all you need to do is get it to her.

PER CAPITA OFFERING

Dear Church Family—I'm writing to tell you about the Per Capita offering. Per Capita is the annual amount Westminster pays to support the larger Church of which we are a part. The Per Capita rate for 2023 is \$39.10 for each member in our congregation family. At the beginning of 2022 we had 161 members. As a result, **our budgeted expense for 2023 Per Capita is \$6295.10.** (161 x 39.10)

Per Capita funds are allocated as follows: \$9.85 for the Office of the General Assembly; \$3.25 for the Synod of the Covenant, and \$26.00 for the Presbytery of Lake Michigan. You can read more about how Per Capita dollars are used at <https://oga.pcusa.org/section/departments/per-capita/>

Many members like to make a special gift to offset their portion of the Per Capita cost. Last year we received \$317.19. **I want to thank everyone who made a donation for the Per Capita offering in 2022.**

I encourage you to consider giving a \$39.10 Per Capita offering this year to help support the administrative and other functions of the Presbyterian Church.(USA). Your gifts enable us to use pledges and offering income for other important priorities.

Thank you! *Paul Paget, for the Finance Team*

BREAD FOR THE WORLD OFFERING OF LETTERS March 19

Bread for the World is a non-partisan, ecumenical, Christian advocacy organization urging U.S. decision makers to work towards ending world hunger. Their mission is to educate and equip people to advocate for policies and programs to address hunger nationally and internationally.

At Westminster we have a long history of supporting Bread for the World. We contribute financially, as a Member Church, and participate in advocating for legislation to address hunger through the annual Offering of Letters. The Offering of Letters is a coordinated effort to communicate with our lawmakers about our faith based commitment to addressing hunger. Each year, Bread for the World identifies upcoming legislation that has the potential to positively impact hunger through direct aid, agricultural development, education, etc. They work with grass roots advocates and stakeholders to develop specific talking points for communicating with lawmakers, and share that information with Member Congregations.

Our work in our own community through Loaves and Fishes, Generous Hands, Meals on Wheels, etc., matters. This direct service connects us to people in our own community and builds important relationships. Yet this work is not enough to help the many hungry people in our community, and other communities. Federal nutrition programs provide 10 times as much food assistance as private churches, and charities combined. Our participation in Bread for the World is an important addition to other mission projects because advocacy plays an important part in addressing social concerns such as hunger.

This year the Offering of Letters will focus on the Farm Bill. The Farm Bill is an important bill addressing hunger because three-quarters of the funding associated with the farm bill supports nutrition programs such as the Supplemental Nutritional Assistance Program - by far the largest domestic nutrition program. The Farm Bill also dictates the main ways the US provides emergency humanitarian support globally.

At Westminster, we will host an Offering of Letters on Sunday, March 19 after Worship. Information will be provided about the Farm Bill and talking points recommended by Bread for the World. We'll join in writing letters to send via postal mail or email to our senators and representatives, urging their support for important hunger related programs. Please participate if you can!! Questions? Talk to Mary Anderson.



Westminster's **RACIAL EQUITY DISCUSSION GROUP**

will meet on Sunday, March 19 at 3:30 pm at church.

How to Fight Racism by Jemar Tisby provides the starting point for our conversation.

Anyone is welcome to participate.

Questions? Contact Cindy Green or Paula Schriemer



TRHT Kalamazoo & Rootead Community Racial Healing Circles

TRHT Kalamazoo and Rootead will be partnering up to provide the Kalamazoo Community free racial healing circles this Spring!

- Monday, March 6th between 3:45 PM- 7:00 PM
- Monday, April 3rd between 3:45 PM - 7:00 PM
- Monday, May 1st between 3:45 PM- 7:00 PM



RSVP TODAY!
bit.ly/communitycircles2023



WISH LIST ... a few items we can use at church:

- 1 Coffeemaker (10-12 cups)
- 1-2 Plant stands, 1-2 ft. tall, for single large potted plant
- 1-2 large bags of potting soil suitable for houseplants

If you have any of these things unused around your home, and would like to donate them, please contact Pastor Janet.



Just a reminder... We have fair trade coffee, tea, and other items from Equal Exchange available for purchase at church year-round. We also have locally-made soaps from AACORN Farm. A price list is posted. You can use the envelopes provided.

Make checks to Westminster.



AACORN

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

Office Manager – Shannon Egan

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, Paul Paget, Carol Pratt,
Jayme Ruimveld, Paula Schriemer, Kelly Schultz , Fred Welch

DEACONS

Ann Cirvencic, Moderator; Laurie Bushnell, Connie Campbell,
Jodie Gerard, Valerie Kirkwood, Nick Pratt, Mary Lou Rohwer, Chris Rohwer

Administration

Finance.....	Paul Paget, Leslie Ashbaugh
Personnel.....	Carol Pratt
Building & Grounds.....	Jim Gluys
Children & Youth Ministries; Faith Formation.....	Leslie Ashbaugh
Adult Education.....	Linda DeYoung
Congregational Life & Evangelism.....	Paula Schriemer, Jayme Ruimveld
Art Festival.....	Miriam Duggins, Jodie Gerard
Mission.....	Fred Welch
Green Team.....	Eileen Best
Worship.....	Kelly Schultz, Pastors
Presbyterian Women.....	Kelly Schultz

Worship 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