

WESTMINSTER

PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH



NEWSLETTER

December 2024- January 2025

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

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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.

adopted by the Session, May 18, 2009

From the Session:

There will be a brief Congregational Meeting on Sunday, December 22, immediately following worship, for the purpose of acting on pastoral terms of call for 2025 and filling vacancies on the Financial Review Team, the Nominating Committee, and Deacons. Please stay if you are able and participate in the governance of our church!

December Birthdays

- 2 Aaron Pylman
- Scooter Tessari
- 7 Rashid Chapeyama
- 10 Sandy Cline
- Mary Werner
- 17 Adam Ashbaugh
- 21 Joyce Thorson
- Kathy Sexton
- 23 Judy Paget



- 25 Merry Hamilton
- Nick Pratt
- 26 Ally Martin
- Jason Zerban
- 30 Megan Cardwell

Anniversaries

- 10 Jim McKim & Lindsay South McKim
- 20 Tom & Christine Hamilton



January Birthdays

- | | |
|-------------------|--------------------|
| 1 Jim McKim | 28 Cheryl Terpstra |
| 7 Mark Murphy | Aliya Netz |
| 12 Sally Mounger | |
| 16 Drew Martin | |
| 18 Marjorie Smith | |
| 21 Kay Haas | |
| 22 Maeve Murphy | |
| Ben Shull | |



Anniversaries

- 5 Mark Cardwell & Jeanne Trompeter
- 11 John Kuchta & Jennifer Shimer
- 14 Larry & Marilyn Pierce
- 16 Don & Kathy Sexton
- 31 Phil & Debbie Netz

Please send JOYS AND CONCERNS

for the Prayer List each week **by 10 am on Thursday.**

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.



OUR REGULAR OFFICE HOURS :

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

COMMUNITY NEWS

Val Glascock, Marie Kerstetter and Laurie Nic invite you to come see us present "Cinderella" at the Kalamazoo Civic Theater.

Use promo code "96Season" for \$5 off each adult or senior ticket purchased.



WORSHIP NEWS

Our 2024-25 Worship theme is "CLAIMING HOPE"

WORSHIP IN DECEMBER

Join us each Sunday in Advent as we light the Advent candles, enjoy the music of the season, and rejoice in ADVENT HOPE.

December 1 **FIRST SUNDAY OF ADVENT** COMMUNION
No Children & Worship

December 8 **SECOND SUNDAY OF ADVENT** Children & Worship

December 15 **THIRD SUNDAY OF ADVENT**
Choir cantata: "Small Dancing Light" Children & Worship

December 19 **"The Light Shines in our Darkness"**

A Service for LONGEST NIGHT in the style of Taizé.

This reflective service offers solace and compassion for those grieving or struggling, and a quiet space apart from holiday hubbub for anyone.

We welcome Pastor Rachel Laughlin and members of Prince of Peace Lutheran church to share this service with us.

December 22 **FOURTH SUNDAY OF ADVENT**
Today we receive the CHRISTMAS JOY OFFERING Children & Worship

December 24 **CHRISTMAS EVE**
7pm Candlelight Communion Service

December 29 **THE FIRST SUNDAY OF CHRISTMAS**
Meditations on the Music of Christmas

Copies of our **Advent Devotions, "Patterns of Divine Possibility"** are available at church. Pick one up, or watch your email for an electronic version. At church we also have a calendar of readings for the season and Advent devotions for kids and families.

TREATS NEEDED FOR CHRISTMAS EVE SERVICE:

Do you have some treats you would like to share? Drop them at the church Sunday, December 22 (after the service) or Tuesday, December 24 (before the service) for the Christmas Eve service. Treats should be finger food that is ready to serve. Contact Kelly Schultz with questions.

WORSHIP IN JANUARY

January 5

EPIPHANY SUNDAY

COMMUNION

STAR GIFTS words of hope for this new year.

No Children & Worship

January 12

BAPTISM OF THE LORD SUNDAY

Renewing our baptismal promises

Children & Worship

January 19

Racial Justice Sunday

Children & Worship

January 26

Today we give thanks for God's presence
in the life of our congregation in the past year

Children & Worship

Our ANNUAL CONGREGATIONAL MEETING

will be held right after the service.

We'll elect officers, celebrate the year past, and look ahead to 2025!

Copies of the 2024 Annual Report will be available after worship on January 19.



A Potluck will be held after the meeting - and will be a coordinated potluck - we will be providing main dishes - and you are asked to bring in side dishes, salads, and desserts.

We will have sign up sheets for the potluck and to help with set up and clean up.

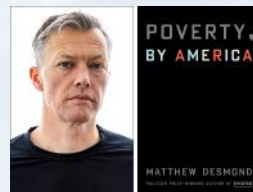
The popular book and game exchange will be offered, as well - so start looking around for books and games that you would like to bring in to trade.

SUNDAY MORNING ADULT EDUCATION

10:45 am in the choir/Zoom room

Discussion of Matthew Desmond's book, *Poverty, by America*, continues for one more Sunday in December.

Reading: Sunday, December 1 Chapter 9 and Epilogue



December 8, 15, 22

The Word Became Flesh: Patterns of Incarnation

With poetry, music, scripture, and conversation Nancy Husk will lead us in exploring tensions that Jesus experienced and we live with still:

Between Love and Suffering (the wisdom of Richard Rohr)

Between Hope and Despair (the wisdom of Parker Palmer)

Between Embrace and Release (the wisdom of Mary)

January's Adult Ed will offer a series on Incarceration:

Jan 5 Nick Pratt and Fred Welch will share their work mentoring citizens returning from incarceration.

Jan 12 will be a presentation about theological issues surrounding incarceration.

Jan 19 speakers from the Center for Transformations and Citizens for Prison Reform will present their insights.

Feb 2 everyone can sign notes to the incarcerated parents of our Angel Tree children and engage in discussions about incarceration over Coffee Plus.

Winter 2024-25 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:

December 1

December 15

January 5

January 19



FAITH BOOK CLUB

Our January book is
THE BEST STRANGERS IN THE WORLD

by Ari Shapiro

Join us Tuesday, January 14 at 7 pm on zoom

New to FBC?

Contact Lorie Leak to request the Zoom link!



MEN'S BOOK STUDY

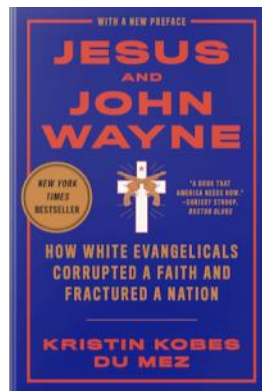
December 10 & 17

January 7 & 21

8:30 am at the church

Jesus and John Wayne

by Kristen Kobe DuMez



Wednesday Morning BIBLE STUDY

(No meeting December 25 or January 1)

10 am at church or Zoom

We're studying *Mark*

Contact Pastor Jerry for info or Zoom link

We haven't gotten out our box of Christmas books yet, but there are a few that we leave on the shelf because we sometimes need them as we plan for Advent. The other day, I picked up *God is in the Manger: Reflections on Advent and Christmas*. In addition to the devotional that we get from church, there are other devotions that we like to browse through every year, and this book is my favorite. It features selected writings of Dietrich Bonhoeffer, and in my mind, no one says the message of Christmas better. Bonhoeffer is straightforward and simple without being trivial and simplistic. He's theological without being academic. He captures the mystery without being esoteric.

He writes: "God becomes human, really human. While we endeavor to grow out of our humanity, to leave our human nature behind us, God becomes human, and we must recognize that God wants us also to become human – really human. Whereas we distinguish between the godly and the godless, the good and the evil, the noble and the common, God loves real human beings without distinction" (p. 50).

I'm not sure the world has done a good job of being really human this past year. War in Gaza and Ukraine, political and social rhetoric that demonizes people as the enemy, and a failure to prioritize the poor, the hungry and the homeless. The time is right for Christmas, to refocus our efforts on being really human, on being Christ-like.

Advent reminds us that this is God's world, and no matter how discouraging or despairing we may be, God intends to enter it, to become really human. "This is about the birth of a child," writes Bonhoeffer, "not of the astonishing work of a strongman, not of the bold discovery of a wise man, not of the pious work of a saint. It really is beyond all our understanding: the birth of a child shall bring about the great change, shall bring to all salvation and deliverance" (p. 51).

Advent brings renewed hope, joy, peace, and love into our lives. It reminds us that we are not abandoned. I'm ready for that, ready for the joyful music, the focus on love, and the invitation to welcome the Christ-child, and the call to be "really human."

Advent begins the new church year with the gift from God that transforms us and our world. Something we can celebrate and at the same time something to challenge us: to receive the "really human" and to become "really human."

Peace,

Pastor Jerry

Thank you from the bottom of our hearts for the wonderful celebration of our 25 years of ministry at Westminster! It was a special day, and made us even more grateful for the joyful and generous spirit of this community of faith. Huge thanks for everything about the celebration – poem, prayers, toast, music, pictures and memories shared, thoughtful gifts and cards, great food, delicious and beautiful cake, so many kind words – and especially the presence of so many of you. Special thanks to those who planned, organized, and did so much work to make it happen. We appreciate all of you. We are blessed.



Janet & Jerry



SHOP GREEN FRIENDLY THIS CHRISTMAS

Did you know that on the Kalamazoo Downtown Mall there are 3 shops that can help preserve the environment as you shop for Christmas gifts? At Gazelle Sports you can recycle your old running shoes by putting them in a bin there. Spice & Tea has savory teas, spices and salts from all over the world that are preservative free. Bee Joyful Shop sells items that are all from natural fibers and plastic free. You will be supporting small businesses too.



CONGREGATIONAL LIFE NEWS

Coffee Plus Volunteers Needed

We are looking for a few more people to take a turn helping out with Coffee Plus. 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 (and very popular) ministry!

Congregational Life Team Do you like helping with events? The Congregational Life Team would like to have you! We are a small, casual and informal group that meets occasionally. We plan and coordinate events such as the picnic, Breadfest, potlucks, and more. Contact Jayme or Val to join the fun! (Contact information in the church directory.)



Plan to join us for "Breadfest" Sunday, December 22nd!
Please bring your family's favorite holiday bread, pastry, coffee cake or rolls to share during Coffee Plus.
We will have cards available for you to label your breads.
Gluten free and vegan treats are welcome!
This is a longtime tradition here at Westminster
What a lovely way to start the week of Christmas!

Get Connected, Build Relationships, Enjoy Exercise!

Play Pickleball (WPC Gym)

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

Play Volleyball (WPC Gym)

Wednesday evenings, 7:30 pm

MISSION NEWS



Developing & Sustaining our Leaders

Each year during the Advent and Christmas season, we lift up past, present, and our future leaders of the church.

Contribute to the Christmas Joy Offering
December 1 – December 22, 2024

WARMING CENTER AT WESTMINSTER THIS WINTER

The Warming Center opened on November 19. It will be open from 10 am to 2 pm Tuesdays and Thursdays through March 27 in our gym/fellowship hall. It's great to be able to make use of our facility once again for this outreach to unhoused folks in our community who may need a meal or a place to keep warm during the colder months.

We provide food, warm drinks, a place to rest or socialize, the opportunity to do laundry or take a shower, puzzles or pickle ball for those interested, and a warm welcome for all.

Volunteers are needed — contact team leader Judy Paget for information and training; contact Nancy Husk (438-1196; driftseeker@gmail.com) to get on the schedule. Volunteer times are 9:30 - 12:15 or 12:00 - 2:30 Tuesdays and Thursdays through the end of March .

Donations are also welcome... **ONLY the items requested, please!**

- | | |
|--------------------------|---|
| -hand warmers | -#10 (gallon size) cans of soup (Gordon Foods) |
| -gallon zip plastic bags | -crackers (such as saltines) |
| -hot cocoa mix | -packaged cookies |
| -peanut butter | <i>(sorry, we can't have homemade)</i> |
| -jelly | |
| -canned chicken | |



Of course,

monetary donations are welcome as well!

Have questions? Talk to one of these members of the planning team: Judy Markusse Paget, Fred and Sandy Welch, Carol and Nick Pratt, Barb Daniels, Cindy Green, Nancy Husk, Pastors Janet and Jerry Duggins. (Contact information in the church directory.)

The total weight of the food drive was 432 pounds! Pretty amazing – so many wonderful products. We truly appreciate our partnership with your congregation!

Greta M. Faworski, CFRE

Associate Director

Kalamazoo Loaves & Fishes



ANGEL TREE 2024

This year we will again shop for imprisoned parents who, through Prison Fellowship, want to give gifts to their children. Westminster will provide one clothing and one toy/entertainment item for each of 50 children in the Kalamazoo area. Each gift should be in the \$25 - \$30 range so children receive gifts of similar value.

Choosing a tag . . .

- ☺ Tags will be available on the Angel Tree in the narthex Nov 24 through Dec 8.
- ☺ **Register your tag number and "C" for clothing or "T" for toy on a log sheet at the Angel Tree table. This is essential.** If you wish to help deliver the gifts, please put your phone number on the log. (Delivery will occur December 16 through 22.)

OR donate and request a shopper . . .

If you're no longer able to shop, email or call Nancy* (Contact info. in the church directory.) to make arrangements.

Then . . .

- ☺ Shop in person or online for your child, \$25 - \$30 per gift.
- ☺ **Wrap your gift(s).**
- ☺ Attach your tag to your wrapped gift (**peel off the back to reveal adhesive**).
- ☺ Deliver your gift(s) to church **by Sunday, December 15**, and place around the Angel Tree in the narthex.
- ☺ Can't deliver your gift(s) to church? Contact Nancy; someone will pick them up from you.

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.
Claiming Hope for prisoners and their children



FAIR TRADE SALE continues December 1 & 8

In the Narthex after worship (and during office hours through December 9)

Support artisans and farmers to receive fair return for their work and empower their communities, and do a little Christmas shopping (or buy yourself something special) and at the same time!

This year we have many beautiful products from **Fair Trade Winds**.

This family-run business offers a variety of products that celebrate traditional crafts, use sustainable materials, empower women, fight human trafficking, and protect children. Items come from all over the world – cards, jewelry, socks, candles, nativities, ornaments ... and much more!

You can check out their website at <https://www.fairtradewinds.net/>



We also have items from:

Africa Bags... a nonprofit organization addressing poverty in rural Malawi by empowering individuals and communities through sustainable fashion. Handcrafted bags are produced by sewing groups using foot-powered treadle sewing machines.



<https://www.africabags.org/>



Goats' milk soap (many lovely scent options!) from **AACORN Farm** and delicious coffees, teas, chocolate and more from **Equal Exchange** make great stocking stuffers!



Send a Card or Note to an Imprisoned Parent

We hope to reach **each imprisoned parent with 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 (665-9004; driftseeker@gmail.com) for the prisoner's name, ID#, and address. We will not be publishing this list of confidential information, but here's a specific way to address their mail.
- **Do not use your last name to sign or in a return address.**
- Use the church's address as the return address (1515 Helen 49002).
- Be aware that your communication will likely be opened and read by prison officials.

Claiming Hope through our gifts and our words

PRESBYTERIAN WOMEN NEWS

WESTMINSTER'S PRESBYTERIAN WOMEN

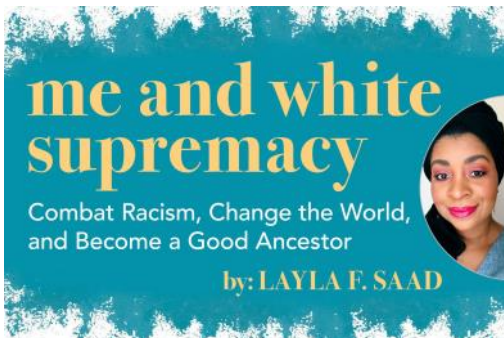
INVITE YOU TO JOIN US FOR A CHRISTMAS TEA

When ? Sunday afternoon, December 8 at 3:30 pm
Where? At church in the Narthex
What? Christmas treats, fellowship, fun, and surprises
Who? Women of all ages

Show and share: Come prepared to tell about a food-related tradition you have for the holidays – something special you make or serve, how the tradition got started, memories or family stories about it. Bring the recipe or tell us where you get this Christmas-time treat. We'll compile and copy any recipes to share with the whole group.

RSVP? Not absolutely necessary, but it would be helpful if you can let Kelly Schultz know you plan to attend. (Contact information in the church directory.)

The RACIAL EQUITY Group meets Sunday, December 1 at 3:30 pm.



All are welcome to participate. Over the next few months, we will be planning some learning opportunities, looking for ways we can make a difference, and discussing the book *Me and White Supremacy*, by Layla Saad.



CONVERSATIONS ABOUT REPARATIONS

A number of Westminster members, along with folks from other area churches, had the opportunity this fall to hear a presentation about reparations for African-Americans, from speakers representing the Justice League of Greater Lansing. The attendees were moved by what they learned, and want to learn more.

The idea of reparations is new to many, and raises questions for others. Questions like "Wasn't slavery over a long time ago?" "Why is this needed?" "How can it possibly happen?" Reparations is about more than slavery; a long history of unequal treatment extending right to the present day has led to a host of inequities. This was never random or accidental, but the result of policies enacted by governments and other institutions. Those wrongs can never be righted but are there ways to make amends and address the inequities? It's a difficult question and a huge issue, that begs for greater understanding.

Some Westminster folks are taking part in conversations with members of First Presbyterian, Kalamazoo and other churches about the possibility of forming a reparations organization similar to the Justice League in our community. They also feel it's important for us to have conversation about this within our church. **Watch for information and an invitation to one of several small group opportunities** this winter to discuss, ask questions, and hear about the very interesting approach the Justice League of Greater Lansing is taking. Questions? talk to Fred Welch or Pastor Jerry.(Contact information in the church directory.)

Westminster Staff

Reverend Janet Robertson Duggins
Reverend Jerry Duggins
Parish Associate - Reverend John Best
Pastor Emeritus – Reverend Richard Jackson
Engagement & Communications—Matt Ray
Sunday School Coordinator – Leslie Ashbaugh
Director of Music & Pianist – Marie Kerstetter
Choir Director – Jason Zerban
Office Manager/Administrative Assistant – Laurie Nic
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, Jodie Gerard
Mary Lou Rowher, Val Kirkwood and Nick Pratt

Administration

| | |
|---|----------------------------------|
| Finance..... | Chris Rohwer, Leslie Ashbaugh |
| Personnel..... | Carol Pratt |
| Building & Grounds..... | Jim Gluys, Tom VerHage |
| Children & Youth Ministries; Faith Formation..... | Leslie Ashbaugh, Alissa Worstell |
| Adult Education..... | Jerry Duggins |
| Congregational Life & Evangelism..... | Jayme Ruimveld, Val Glasscock |
| Art Festival..... | Miriam Duggins, Jodie Gerard |
| Mission..... | Fred Welch |
| Earth Care 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 Rowher, Kelly Schultz |
| Communion..... | Kelly Schultz |
| Coffee Plus | Jayme Ruimveld, Val Glasscock |