



Westminster

Presbyterian Church

ZEPHYRS

ADVENT 2017



A PLACE FOR GOD | Pastor Rob McClellan

Advent, as many of you know, means “coming.” It comes from the Latin *adventus*, a translation of the Greek, *Parousia*. *Parousia* literally means “presence,” “coming,” or “arrival,” and appears in both the gospels and the letters of the New Testament. Though the season of Advent precedes Christmas, the term refers not to the birth of the infant Jesus, but the return of Christ (for Paul) or the coming of the Son of Man/Humanity (for Jesus).

As such, Advent pulls us into a space of anticipation and preparation for God to enter our lives again. It asks us to consider how we are making room for the spiritual and ethical commitments of our faith in all aspects of our lives. Similarly, it calls us to consider how are we working for *(cont...)*

HOPE AND PROMISE | Associate Pastor Bethany Nelson

As I write this in mid-November, I am already starting to notice many signs of Christmas - television commercials promoting the newest Christmas toys, black Friday early-bird sales, our own Christmas Fair at Westminster. I walked into Costco last weekend, and was met with aisles and aisles of Christmas décor.

Most years, I complain about Christmas creeping in so early. We haven't even celebrated Thanksgiving! Christmas needs to wait until December. This year, however, I can't help but get excited about Christmas coming. I love Christmas! I love the decorations, I love the food, I love the music. But most of all, I love celebrating the birth of Jesus – the Prince *(cont...)*



A PLACE FOR GOD | Continued...

communities that embody the compassion, justice, and active care embodied in the life of Jesus of Nazareth.

This year, preparing a place for God takes on a literal meaning for Westminster. For over two years, we have been preparing for a much-needed renovation of our facilities, primarily the main building, which houses Findlay Hall and Fireside room, the kitchen, classrooms, and offices. The project is intended to address significant deferred maintenance, including important safety upgrades, and accessibility (our Needs), upgrades to kitchen and classroom/gathering spaces so we can actually fit all the people who want to participate in our ministries (our Wants), and overall improvement to the flow and aesthetics of the building so that the space serves the use of the church rather than working against it (our Dream).

Last year, we “hit pause” on a potential launch to a capital campaign in order to be sure our budget was on solid footing, staff were firmly in place, and we could produce another strong stewardship season. To date, we are on track to end the year with a budget surplus, all our staff remain committed, and our 2018 stewardship campaign is again experiencing a strong response. Assuming stewardship projections hold, we will be poised to launch a 3-4 month capital campaign in February.

We’ve assembled a capable capital campaign team of almost 20 talented individuals, under the capable leadership of member Judi Sachs, who will serve as chair. We are beginning to lay the groundwork for the formal campaign, and we are already offering opportunities for advance conversations. If you have questions, please don’t feel as though you must wait until February to ask. Simply set up a time to come and talk with me.

It is easy to frame this conversation only in terms of money and buildings, but this project is about so much more. It’s about creating a space for God’s harvest to be planted, tended, reaped, and shared. It’s about ensuring a safe place for people, young and old, both to learn about Jesus and encounter the living Christ. It’s about tending a space where genuine relationships can be nurtured, and spiritual practices can be developed.

It is about maintaining a facility in a sustainable way where those in need maybe served and where servants can be trained. It is about having a house of prayer worthy of the

one to whom we pray. Those who came before gave of themselves that we might have the benefits of what they planted in faith. Now, it’s time for us to again till the soil and ensure the gift remains for another generation to come. God is again coming into the world. Let us prepare a place!

*God’s Peace,
Rob*

CHRISTMAS EVE WORSHIP SCHEDULE

SUNDAY, DECEMBER 24

10:00AM

Worship with sermon, carols,
and an extended children’s time

5:00PM

Christmas pageant
(RSVP to Bethany if your child
would like to participate)

9:00PM

Traditional candlelight worship



HOPE AND PROMISE | Continued...

of Peace, the Light of the World being born into our lives as Emmanuel ... God with us.

I feel like we especially need the hope and promise of Christmas this year. It has been a hard few months. The mass shootings that have happened way too frequently (of course, even one is way too frequent) have left me angry and frustrated. Just the other day my son was playing a rec league basketball game when another parent pointed out a boy on the opposing team. She explained that he is the son of Stacey Etcheber, who was killed in the Las Vegas shooting. A boy the exact same age as my own son. A sports lover just like my own son. Now growing up without a mom. Yes, we need the hope and promise of Christmas this year.

The October fires in Sonoma County hit close to home for me – both literally and figuratively. I grew up in Sebastopol and my high school was used as an evacuation center. Countless friends of friends lost their homes and their workplaces. So much devastation that will take years to rebuild. So many people who may not be able to afford to rebuild. So many families living with uncertainty about where they will now live. Yes, we need the hope and promise of Christmas this year.

The hurricanes that devastated Houston, Florida, Puerto Rico, and other places continue to leave many people displaced. My own father-in-law has been busy ripping up floor boards and working with contractors following the flooding in his Houston house. Thankfully, he is among the fortunate who have the means to quickly repair the damage. My heart aches for those in Puerto Rico and other poorer communities who do not have and are not receiving the resources they need. Yes, we need the hope and promise of Christmas this year.

It would be really easy to look at these and other events of the last several months and be depressed. In fact, I have spent quite a bit of time feeling depressed over the last several months. And frustrated. And sad. And angry. And yet, Christmas is coming. And yet, the light does shine in the darkness and the darkness cannot overcome it. And yet, the baby born in a manger reminds us of God's abundant and unconditional love for all of God's children. And yet, Emmanuel reminds us that God is with us, all of the time. Christmas is not magic ... too many people will celebrate the holidays without their loved ones this year.

Too many people will celebrate without a house to call home. But Christmas does remind us of God's hope and God's promise. Christmas reminds us that, though the weeping may linger for the night, the joy does come in the morning. Thanks be to God.

*Blessings,
Bethany*

“ But Christmas does remind us of God's hope and God's promise.

Christmas reminds us that, though the weeping may linger for the night, the joy does come in the morning. ”

IT'S NOMINATING TIME

Our Nominating Committee has begun their work of prayerfully discerning who in the Westminster congregation might feel called to serve as an Elder or Deacon in the coming years. Are you sensing this call? Serving as a church officer is a wonderful way to get involved in the life of this congregation, and to meet other church leaders. If this is not the right time for you to serve, do you know of someone else who would make a great Elder or Deacon? Don't hesitate to be in touch with one of our Nominating Committee members to nominate yourself or someone else – **Liz Arnold, Scott Bucey, Carol Coffman, Vince DeQuattro, Nancy Garrison, Michael Hatfield, Gwen Mauvais.** The new slate of officers will be approved at our Annual Congregational Meeting on January 28, 2018.



WPC Camino Pilgrimage | Art Wall 2017

ART WALL

Katharine Herbert

THERE IS A NEW ART WALL EXHIBIT TO ENJOY! “WALK WITH ME AS THE JOURNEY IS LONG”

Photographs from the 13 WPC Pilgrims' experience they had for 6 days, walking 85 miles on the Camino de Santiago on the northern coast of Spain.

Susan Bertelsen generously shares photos taken by her and by Mark Sachs while they were on the six-day walk.

It was an inspirational time. *“Imagine waking every morning with the sole concern of what combination of tape, mole skin and socks would serve my worn out feet best that day? Blisters were bountiful as was the pristine and rural beauty of the Spanish coastline. We followed the footsteps of thousands of other pilgrims on their way to the Cathedral of Santiago de Compostela where the remains of Saint James the Apostle are buried.*

Our days included our cherished morning and afternoon shares as well as picnics filled with purchased local fare. Most of all, there was lots of miles and conversation, sometimes deep and intimate and other times light and casual. We were living large yet in the simplest way possible, carrying everything we needed on our back and sleeping each night in humble dormitory accommodations.

Joining the WPC group of pilgrims on the Camino de Santiago was trip of a lifetime. Not because of famous landmarks, deluxe

accommodations or fabulous gourmet food (except of course our daily picnics) but because of the inexplicable love and connection we found together during the journey.”

-Susan

Please contact me if you are interested in sharing your art with Westminster's community at: kp@kpherbert.com

POETRY CORNER

Submitted by Debbie Dybsky

THE BRIGHT FIELD | by R. S. Thomas

I have seen the sun break through
to illuminate a small field
for a while, and gone my way
and forgotten it. But that was the pearl
of great price, the one field that had
treasure in it. I realize now
that I must give all that I have
to possess it. Life is not hurrying
on to a receding future, nor hankering after
an imagined past. It is the turning
aside like Moses to the miracle
of the lit bush, to a brightness
that seemed as transitory as your youth
once, but is the eternity that awaits you.



St. Columba Retreat House | WPC Women's Retreat 2018

WPC WOMEN'S RETREAT

Gwen Mauvais

During one of Westminster's monthly hikes, Anita Lowe, Judy Friede, and I commented that one of the things we really value about these hikes is the time we share with one another. That got us thinking that a retreat could be an important time for Westminster women to connect, share, reflect, learn and grow together in our faith. Thus was born the Westminster Women's Retreat!

Give yourself a gift of an overnight special spiritual experience in the beautiful surroundings of Tomales Bay in Inverness at St. Columba Retreat House. The retreat will be March 16-17, 2018, with Rev. Jan Reynolds (pastor at First Pres. San Rafael and former WPC member) as our Keynote Speaker. We will have small group discussions, Bethany's music, meditations in the chapel, delicious meals, free time, and great companionship. \$125 w/ scholarships available. Registration will begin in January. Contact Gwen Mauvais with questions. 415-456-0586, gmauvais@comcast.net

COMMISSION CORNER

In each Zephyrs issue, we will highlight the work of one of our eight commissions. This month we focus on the Congregational Life Commission. The Congregational Life Commission's purpose is to facilitate fellowship within the congregation and to welcome visitors throughout the year.

FELLOWSHIP CAFÉ: Every Sunday the commission encourages members and visitors to become better acquainted by inviting them to enjoy refreshments after the 10am service.

NEW MEMBER RECEPTIONS: New members are welcomed three or four times a year at receptions hosted by the Commission. These receptions are usually combined with our Fellowship Café.

SMALL GROUP DINNERS: In the fall and spring the Commission recruits dinner hosts and manages the sign-ups for informal potlucks in members' homes. This provides more intimate settings for new and established members to become better acquainted.

IN GATHERING BRUNCH: Traditionally held in September, this all-church brunch marks the beginning of the Sunday school year. The Commission is responsible for hosting the event and preparing the majority of the meal. Members may contribute by providing a brunch dish or making a cash donation.

SPRING PICNIC: Our BBQ picnic is held in a nearby park to mark the end of the Sunday school year. In addition to plenty of food and fellowship, a variety of games are organized by the Youth Ministry.

SPECIAL EVENTS: Congregational Life Commission members are occasionally responsible for other special church events.

INCLUSIVE: The commission welcomes members, friends and visitors to join in all activities and to enjoy connecting with others. Our goal is to provide a variety of events, all of which nurture and deepen fellowship.

NEW VOLUNTEERS WELCOME: The members of this commission are a warm group of long-serving volunteers who enjoy connecting with others. We would love to include new members to our team.

If you are interested in joining us please attend one of our meetings or contact the current co-chairs:

Katharine Herbert: kp@kpherbert.com or

Laura Hill: lrhgoldco@comcast.net.



HIGH SCHOOL CONFIRMATION CLASS OF 2017

Over two and a half months this fall, 16 of our high school students met weekly for our Confirmation Class. They explored many different faith topics, participated in service projects, and led worship. Each also got to know an adult guide who journeyed with them through the class. It is such a blessing when our students have the opportunity to form meaningful relationships with adults at church other than the ministry staff. We offer our gratitude to this year's guides:

Allison Hart,
Marilyn and Peter Wuertz,
Tod Moody, Coral Kisseberth,
Nick Dybsky, Lisa Dini,
Polly Chandler, Jeff Heely,
Cassie and Lauren Kline-Nunnally,
David Heneghan,
Jenn Mangosong-Shankle,
Hugh West, Barbara Kessell,
Ivy Pannepacker

In addition, the students each wrote a statement of faith – sharing what is important to them and what questions they continue to have on their faith journeys. Some excerpts of those statements are below.

"When I fall into darkness, God, Jesus, and the Holy Spirit will lead me back into the light. In the future, I trust they will still lead me back into light. My future holds lots for me, and I hope they will lead me into the right direction."

"To me, church is a place where anyone can come and feel accepted. It is a place for the community to come together and share their love for God and each other. Church is meaningful to me because I know it is a safe place to be myself and share my thoughts."

"I am inspired to be a kinder, more loving person. It is because of my faith that I am able to do this. My faith is what has shaped me as a person, and what motivates me in my everyday life."

"I believe God is everywhere and everything. I believe God is my parents and my sisters; I believe God is my friends and my teachers; I believe God is that amazing sunset I saw last night; I believe God is love."

"My church community is a place where I can find peace and tell my ideas."

"God helps us be good people and do the right thing. God directs me in my life and helps me make good decisions. God can help me in a time of need and I can pray to God."

"I think everyone has a little piece of God within them, that the holy spirit lives inside of them. I think that people pour a little of their holy spirit into everything they do. Their words, their songs, their poems, their writings, their everything. I believe that people are the happiest when they are the most in touch with their own piece of God, their holy spirit."

"Throughout my life, Jesus has inspired me to become the virtuous person God desires me to become. Jesus is a window through which we can only begin to recognize the importance of forgiveness, love, and the many virtues that compose Christianity."

"God is someone I can always turn to when I make mistakes and do the wrong thing. God is someone who is always forgiving and can always listen whenever I need help."

If you missed the Confirmation Class leading worship on November 19, check out the audio recording and find the text from Strat Tolmie's sermon on our website...
www.wpctiburon.org

CHRISTMAS FAIR

Thank you to all who so generously supported our Christmas Fair this year. We raised \$10,590 for 8 non-profit organizations. What a wonderful Christmas gift.



Photos by Marsha MacColl



WPC High School Confirmation Class of 2017


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