

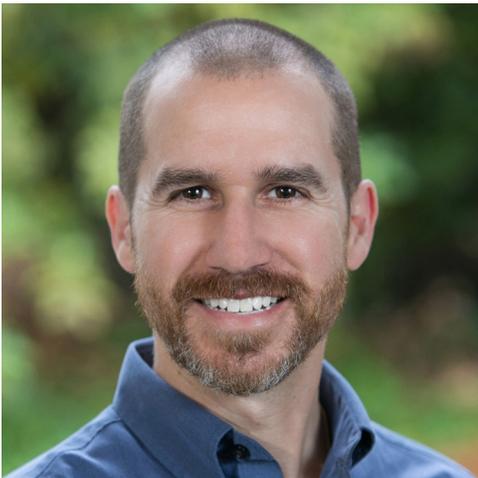


Westminster

Presbyterian Church

ZEPHYRS

FALL 2018



MORE THAN WELCOMING, INVITING

Pastor Rob McClellan

It seems as though every church describes itself as welcoming. In reality, some are more so than others. What's most interesting to me is that we've decided *welcoming is the goal*. What if there is more? This was raised for me when a colleague spoke about the difference between being *welcoming* and being *inviting*.

Welcoming, as is often practiced in churches, is more passive. It means being friendly, pleasant in response to encountering a newcomer. Let's be clear, this is really important, but perhaps there is more to which we can aspire. Being *inviting* is more active. It implies and entails reaching (*cont...*)

FINDING BALANCE | Associate Pastor Bethany Nelson

In the last Zephyrs newsletter, I wrote about how I was planning to find more spaciousness in my life and in my schedule during the summer months. Time to simply be with God, time to slow down, to pray, and to breathe. So, how did I do? I came across a prayer poem the other day that seemed to speak to my current state of being –

*“God of grace, forgive my frantic pace, my failure to find a “summer place.”
Amid the traffic of my days, the stubbornness of settled ways, and too-cluttered mind, I let this summer get away.”*

Admittedly, I did not do well in my quest for a more relaxed pace this summer! But, though I do feel a bit like I let the summer get away, I realize that summer is not the only time to live with spaciousness. In fact, perhaps it (*cont...*)



MORE THAN WELCOMING, INVITING | Continued...

out to connect with others to let them know their presence matters. Often, people report being reluctant to invite others to church because they don't want to come off as "pushy," an understandable trepidation in our highly secular context. I can report similar feelings in myself, and yet I am learning to push back against the practice of keeping this church a secret.

I think it is time to brush off the tool of inviting people to be a part of the church, be it through worship, a small group, a class, a work day, or mission trip.

What are we afraid of? If the people I know think I'm pushy with my religion, then either I have failed or our relationship is immature. If they trust me, then my sharing of something that has been meaningful to me should be well-received. I think it is fair to say Westminster is a safe place for people on different places of a faith journey. If someone I trusted told me about something that meant a lot to them but wasn't of interest to me, I would be honored even if I declined the invitation itself.

A new Pew Research Center study looking at almost 5,000 survey responses found that almost a quarter of those who don't attend regular religious services say, *"They haven't found a house of worship they like."* Don't miss the message—a quarter of people who don't attend worship services regularly are looking!

What do you suppose a quarter of the population that doesn't attend worship in Marin is? Don't be so sure that we are in an area solely hostile to religion. That's what I was told when I came here, both by those who didn't live here and by many who do. Yet, what I have found is an innate openness to spirituality here, even if not always in the form of formal religion.

No matter the religious affiliation, I have found that authenticity is almost universally prized and that is precisely the trait I treasure in you as a congregation. As a new program year starts, let's not keep this gift only for ourselves and learn to reach out to invite others to be a part of this community of faith.

*God's Peace,
Rob*

FINDING BALANCE | Continued...

is even more important in the fall, which can often be a busy and hectic time.

I am excited about the many possibilities to nurture our souls that will be offered at Westminster this fall. From a Monday morning yoga class, to a Fall Equinox labyrinth walk, to an evening Bible study, to hikes with Julie Barnes, to a workshop with a spiritual director... I hope you will take advantage of one or more of these times of nurture and replenishment. And, as Rob noted, consider inviting a friend!

I am aware, however, that life is always a balance, and along with these opportunities to slow our pace come chances to engage in the community and in the world around us. I look forward to not only hearing from Khadija, my colleague on the Marin Interfaith Council board, (*see page 4*) but also discerning how we might best support refugees. In the coming weeks, our high school Confirmation class will glean produce at Green Gulch Zen Center to donate to the Marin Food Bank and will also bag lunches for those in need at Glide Church in San Francisco. As they serve in these ways, they will consider how else their faith calls to serve in our community. Perhaps you will consider that question along with our students.

This fall, my goal will be to find a balance between nurturing my soul and serving the world. Not that the two are separate... serving the world does nurture my soul! But, as any good caregiver will tell you, caring for one's self and caring for another are BOTH important. The same Spirit that draws me inward to my own heart and soul, also draws me out into a world in so much need. Jesus would not have been able to minister in the way that he did if he had only spent time in prayer. However, he would not have been able to minister in the way that he did if he had never spent time in prayer. He modeled well for us the balance of being and doing ... of serving ourselves and serving others.

This fall, may we help each other to find that balance.

*Blessings,
Bethany*



WALKING THE LABYRINTH

Steffen Bartschat, Spiritual Life Commission member

“Be still, and know that I am God” Psalm 46:10

I first walked a **LABYRINTH** about eight years ago. The labyrinth was outdoors in the woods, next to a conference center. I appreciated the gentleness with which it drew me to the center. As I entered, I realized that there are no wrong turns, only one single path leading me to the center. I could concentrate on slowly putting one step in front of the other, not worried about making a mistake. My mind started to focus more on the present moment, listening to the birds happily chirping and watching the trees sway in the breeze. As I wound my way into the center, it felt as if the whole universe rotated on this exact point. Somehow the center feels different. I lingered there, feeling protected by the long pathway it took to get inside, and by the successive circles of lines between me and the outside world. Reluctantly, I decided to leave the center and retrace my steps. Now, I could feel the convoluted path prepare me to get back into the real world. The whole process took about 20 minutes, and I emerged with a sense of inspiration – and connectedness.

Labyrinths are an ancient tradition that may have originated in the Minoan palace in Crete (Greece) during the Bronze Age. In the Middle Ages, Christians built labyrinth patterns into their cathedrals, perhaps as a substitute for the arduous journey of a pilgrimage to Jerusalem. In the late 1980s, Grace Cathedral’s Rev. Lauren Artress rediscovered this ancient pattern at Chartres Cathedral in France. By 1995 San Francisco’s Grace Cathedral sported both an indoor and outdoor labyrinth, adopting that same pattern. Since then, labyrinths have been rapidly (re)adopted worldwide. **A search at www.labyrinthlocator.com reveals 28 labyrinths within ten miles of Tiburon zip code 94920!**

Westminster’s Spiritual Life Commission decided to purchase a canvas labyrinth in 2014 with help from the Sarah

Todd legacy fund. Our pattern is an “abridged” version of the one found in Chartres cathedral and it fits neatly within Findlay Hall. Drop-in events to walk our labyrinth are held quarterly and upon special request.

As Rob mentioned in a recent sermon, *“there are places on Earth where the firmament that separates us from the Divine is thinner.”* For me, the center of the labyrinth is such a place and I never tire of the opportunity to walk our labyrinth in Findlay Hall – or the many other labyrinths located where-ever my journeys take me.

Our next Labyrinth Walk is scheduled for Sunday, September 23rd at 7pm in Findlay Hall. This is a drop-in event that concludes at 8pm. If you arrive at 7pm, you will likely walk the labyrinth with others. If you arrive after 7:30pm, you might have the labyrinth to yourself. Walking by yourself and with others are different experiences – be sure to try both! Beginners are always welcome and short introductions are provided by the labyrinth “staff” (aka, your Spiritual Life Commission members).



STAY WOKE

Jeff Shankle,
Youth Director

“WOKE”

Definition: Although an incorrect tense of awake, a reference to how people should be aware in current affairs. Example: “While you are obsessing with the Kardashians, there are millions of homeless in the world. STAY WOKE!”

(Taken from UrbanDictionary.com)

There were four youth groups serving together in San Diego on July 26th. We all did many of the same things. We spent time alone with the Divine. We spent time together singing, praying, and worshipping God. We ate meals. Slept on the same floors. *(continued on page 7...)*



DOES IT STILL HOLD UP? | Ruth E. Wells, Music Director

On a recent trip home to rural North Dakota, my siblings were given the opportunity to glean what we want from the music library from the church where we grew up. The church has closed, and the music library that my father built over 40-some years was being given away. Although not much of it is suitable for an urban congregation with a different musical and social appetite, I was pleased to find about 25 pieces that I think we can use.

It was an interesting experience to comb through the library (with some haste). I felt a little sad that the institution that was fundamental to my development as a musician and a Christian could not be sustained. Yet I also am profoundly grateful for the enduring legacy my father left me in music.

The choral program at WPC has been challenged over the past couple of years to sustain a balance of voices. I am hopeful that we can add an alto section leader to our ranks this fall who will have several members of the section to lead. We would happily welcome more additions to the choir as well.

I invite you to pray about our worship music program. Your support - in whatever way that manifests - is important. And if you have talents to share (vocal or instrumental), please let me know. I am grateful for the depth of our resources here, and eager to use each of them.

AFTER-WORSHIP GUEST SPEAKERS

We have some fabulous guest speakers planned this fall. They each will present from 11:15am-12:30pm.

- **September 16 - Southern Marin Fire District** | In light of the busy fire seasons this year and last, the SMFD will join us to help us think about fire safety and fire prevention. They will also bring a fire engine for the kids to see!
- **September 23 - Laura Schwartz** | Laura works at the Interfaith Counseling Center in San Anselmo and will be with us to discuss how we communicate with and show up for one another - especially our kids. Are our daily interactions filled with stress and worry, or with joy and love?
- **September 30 - Colette Lafia** | Colette, a writer, spiritual director, workshop facilitator, blogger, and part-time school librarian, will offer a presentation entitled "Living Comfort, Living Joy," about the spirituality of nurturing our selves and others. Learn more about Colette at colettelafia.com.
- **October 14 - Khadija Hansia** | Khadija, who grew up Muslim in Marin, will speak about her experiences visiting Syrian refugee camps in Turkey and Greece, as well as her experiences with Rohingya refugees in Bangladesh.

30TH ALTERNATIVE CHRISTMAS FAIR

Sundays, November 11 & 18, 9:15am & 11am, Findlay Hall

Mark your calendars for the Annual Westminster Alternative Christmas Fair which will be held on two consecutive Sundays immediately after both worship services. Your holiday shopping at the Fair provides aid to those in need and inspires those who receive donations in their name: family, friends, teachers, coaches. Several of our church groups have chosen non-profit agencies to support. We hope to see you there!



Advent Fair, 2017



ANNUAL IN-GATHERING | Randy Huyser, Congregational Life Commission Chair

The annual In-Gathering is a long-enduring church tradition, originally conceived as a biblically-grounded thanksgiving celebration after the fall harvest, originally known as the Feast of the Tabernacles in ancient Jewish tradition. But as congregations have become less agriculturally-oriented over the years, In-Gathering celebrations have assumed other related and worthy themes surrounding our material blessings and the spiritual blessing of fellowship. At Westminster and at many other churches, the In-Gathering highlights the beginning of a new church year and celebrates the depth, breadth and closeness of our church community.

Our In-Gathering celebration at Westminster has always been an important event on the calendar and it is the biggest all-church fellowship event of the year. For many years it was primarily a potluck meal after the morning worship service. It has become more elaborate in recent years as the Congregational Life commission, which organizes and hosts the In-Gathering, has significantly expanded the brunch theme and now prepares all of the main courses, several of which are becoming traditions themselves. People are still encouraged to bring a side dish to share, or they may make a donation to help cover the costs of the event. Some of those side dishes have long and storied reputations too, especially the various recipes of deviled eggs, of which there are never enough.

Despite the complexity of putting on an elaborate event such as this, especially coordinating the many hands and details involved, it is a labor of love and of respect for each individual's role in our church community. The reward is in seeing new and long-time members, visitors and guests, old and young alike, dining and laughing together while enjoying delicious food and getting to know each other better. There is no better glue to help strengthen and hold us together. And no better way to introduce Westminster to someone new. **All are welcome on Sunday, September 9th at 11:00am.**

YOGA FOR EVERY BODY

On Monday, October 1st, another season of **"YOGA FOR EVERY BODY"** yoga classes will begin at WPC. Erin Elliott, a long-time WPC member, will offer this ten week series on Mondays from 9:30am-10:40am in Findlay Hall.

This is an opportunity for new practitioners as well as seasoned yogis to participate in a breath-focused, gentle yoga class. All ages and abilities welcome. The suggested donation for this class is \$15, although any amount is appreciated. Please bring a yoga mat if you own one. (Extra mats are available.) Newcomers, you are invited to come a few minutes early to your first class.

Questions or simply wondering if yoga is right for you? **Contact: Erin Elliott at erinielliott7@gmail.com or 415-601-1037.** For more information about Erin's Yoga teaching style, please view this short video: https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCB0tO-hiywaW-JRzHq6DCt0Q/videos?disable_polymer=1



CAPITAL CAMPAIGN UPDATE AND NEXT STEPS | Judi Sachs, Capital Campaign Chair

On June 17th, the Westminster congregation joyfully celebrated the conclusion of our **WESTMINSTER 2020-FORWARD IN FAITH** Capital campaign. The campaign, our first in 30 years, was not just about raising money for the needed renovations and future expansion, it was about being together in community, getting to know each other through our **Forward in Faith** gatherings, the prayer vigil, and celebratory gatherings. We learned more about how to further our mission and you came forward with generous and sacrificial pledges.

Thanks to the hard work and generosity of so many, we out performed even the top projection of our feasibility study, exceeding our Challenge Goal of \$2.25M with pledges of \$2.4M! This is a very exciting and gratifying result. While we have not raised full construction costs, we hope this gets us close enough that through additional giving and financing options we can accomplish everything we need to with the renovation. If you have not yet pledged, there is still opportunity to give. Just contact **Diane Masarweh**, church secretary, who can take confidential information by phone.

Call (415) 383-5272 or email secretary@wpctiburion.org.



NEXT STEPS

The Renovation Committee met in August with their first priority to gather updated costs, look at architectural plans and begin to schedule the work of addressing deferred maintenance and safety concerns, upgrading our kitchen,

and expanding our meeting and classroom spaces. Many of you have asked about the impact of the fires on costs – we will know more as the construction committee gets into their work. If you have questions, contact: **Ron Meserve**, chair of the Renovation committee at: rmeserve@larcen.com | 408 930-4342 or **Tod Moody**, vice chair at: todmoody@gmail.com | 415 509-4582. Or, talk to the pastors. Watch for regular news bulletins about the project and progress reports on pledge receipts from **Sharon Terrill**, head of the Continuation Committee.

MARIN SANCTUARY CONGREGATIONAL NETWORK

THE OUTREACH & SOCIETY COMMISSION is exploring what it would mean for Westminster to join with this interfaith network to provide legal and meaningful humanitarian aid to our more vulnerable immigrant neighbors. The opportunity presents a lot of questions, but chief among them:

What is the best way right now to pursue being inongoing, real relationships with our immigrant neighbors?

As part of our discernment, about 60 members and guests attended an educational presentation on August 5th.

Ashley Reid, a seminary student and intern with the Marin Interfaith Council, detailed volunteer opportunities and offered additional resources to bolster our internal discussions. She fielded many good questions and passionate comments. It comes as no surprise that this is a topic that raises strong and differing opinions.

Currently, congregations are demonstrating their commitment to vulnerable immigrants through advocacy, accompaniment, alerting them to their legal rights, financial support for bonds, and, in some cases, short term housing. Over the next few months, the Outreach & Society Commission will continue to gather feedback. We are better with your

participation in this discussion than without it. Please call or email us your thoughts and questions, all are welcome. Additional background, guidance from the PC(USA), and a quick congregational survey, are posted on the church website. We want to hear from you!

Charlotte Montgomery: fredandcharlotte7@gmail.com
Trigg McLeod: findtrigg@gmail.com

POETRY CORNER

Submitted by Debbie Dybsky,
Spiritual Life Commission co-chair

Every day, think as you wake up, today I am fortunate to be alive. I have a precious life that I am not going to waste. I am going to use all my energies to develop myself, to expand my heart to others, to achieve enlightenment for the benefit of all beings. I am going to benefit others as much as I can.

- the Dalai Lama

STAY WOKE

Continued from page 3...

But there is one thing unique about the youth from WPC. At the end of each day, when we were given time to meet by ourselves, we were blessed to have conversations with some remarkable people whose lives couldn't have been any more different than our own.

We first heard from a college-aged young man who grew up in Puerto Rico and was serving on staff with Youthworks, the organization running our trip. He taught himself English since it wasn't required in primary school. A deformity at the time of his birth caused him to develop much shorter arms than the rest of us and he has 4 fingers instead of 5. One of those fingers was moved to the location of a thumb. He grew up a staunch, conservative Catholic and told us about how those dogmas didn't work for him when he started serving alongside other communities outside of his neighborhood. He shared about his struggles and personal and spiritual growth over the years.

We next heard from two young ladies from Mt. Holyoke College in Massachusetts who moved to San Diego for the summer to intern with Border Angels. Both of them immigrated here from Central America. One of them actually immigrated 3 times before her family was given amnesty when she was 12. On their last trip through the desert her family was mugged at gun point by gang members. They saw the lights of a Border Patrol vehicle in the distance and the children and mother ran towards it. She told us how they'd rather be arrested and possibly sent back than die there in the desert. She also described the detention center as a "weird playground inside of a jail"



with play structures inside of chain link fencing, inside a warehouse.

We heard from another college-aged young man working for Youthworks from Hays, Kansas. Our group fell in love with his easy-going ways, his curiosity and openness, and humor. He told us about his distaste for Christianity through much of his teen years. But after some friends invited him enough times he decided to try it. The youth group didn't just accept him, they were interested in him. He talked about how his life has transformed since that time. Of course, being from small-town Kansas, and using some of the language he used, our group mostly just wanted to know who he voted for in the last presidential election and his thoughts since.

Lastly, we invited a family who have been living in their minivan for the past several years to talk to us about what day-to-day life is like for a homeless family. We had met them last year and we had mixed emotions about seeing them again. Happy to see old friends of course, but sad that their situation hadn't noticeably improved. It was past 9:00pm when we finally were able to converse. The mother brought her two youngest daughters, 4 and 6 years old, with her. We talked about how she keeps her nails and hair so clean. We talked about how the kids handle homework in an

internet age... "you know, when they don't have a home" (libraries and parks are the answer). She explained the complicated ins and outs of seeking, sometimes finding, sometimes being rejected, sometimes finding and later being rejected, housing assistance. She explained the difficult decision-making about what injury or illness is bad enough to necessitate a hospital visit.

Our youth get to meet many different people as a result of the youth ministry at WPC. It's something we pride ourselves on in creating unique and memorable experiences. But that week was especially remarkable.

It's interesting, I am now and have been over the years involved with my fair share of organizations dealing with various problems of social injustice. Oftentimes I think to myself, "Do we have any idea what these people really need?" Sometimes my thoughts are much more critical, "When are we going to stop prescribing remedies for things we know so little about?" But I can say one thing with great confidence: *The youth of this church know the real situations of people who suffer in our neighborhoods and around the world. They know more about it than many adults do. I hope we take advantage of the very important resource we have of the perspective and wisdom they offer.*

STAY WOKE | Continued...



Images from our two youth mission trips, Summer 2018..




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