T

wice toward the end of the story of Job, after he has endured un-
bearable anguish, the Almighty
speaks: "Then the Lord answered Job out
of the whirlwind."

This is a whirlwind moment in America. Long years of suffering, generations of
trauma, and deeply-rooted systemic rac-

ism have brought our nation to the point
of exhaustion with it all. Enough. We are
on the brink, at an inflection point in
history, and Minneapolis, our beautiful
city of lakes, is at the center of it. Frankly,
given the history of racial injustice in our
town, evident in shameful disparities,
this should be a place where true change
begins.

To add to the tenor of this chaotic time,
the Covid pandemic rages on. We will
likely see the number of cases increase
from the streets filled with protestors,
however well-meaning and masked. The
economy shows few signs of improving.
Record numbers of people are unem-
ployed. Uncertainty abounds.

Westminster, like every other social in-
stitution or religious congregation, finds
itself caught in the same whirlwind. We
value public health over our desire to be
together, so we have not been able to
gather in person for three months. That
will likely continue at least through the
rest of this year. Yes, our worship and
adult education are being live-streamed
and the number of viewers is many
times more than an average Sunday. But
it is not the same. We miss one another.

Yet in the midst of it all, we have cove-
nanted while apart still to be the church.
Our worship in July and August will
focus on the theme Learning on the Way.
The preaching will invite us to adopt a
posture of those being taught – by the
texts, by our neighbors, by history and
present circumstances. We will offer an
Adult Education series helping us reflect
on incarceration. We will suggest safe
ways for church members to respond to
needs, serve others, and participate in
efforts that will make for justice in our
community. We will support our chil-
dren, youth, and families. And we will
continue to reach out to members who
are most isolated in this time.

When the voice of God finally speaks
out of the whirlwind, the words remind
Job of the power of God. Job responds; "I
know that you can do all things."

Let us hold fast to that assurance, that
with God all things are possible.

Supporting Our Neighbors
During the COVID Crisis
by Alanna Simone Tyler, Associate Pastor

In the early days of the coronavirus pandemic many Westminster members
understood some communities would be especially burdened by social and
economic disruptions. Generously offered resources were pooled in a
COVID-19 Emergency Fund. Five organizations received $5,000 grants:

- **Al-Maun**, the community outreach arm of Masjid An-Nur (The Mosque of
  Light) in North Minneapolis, for meal and grocery delivery to the elderly and
  families who are food insecure.

- **Our Saviour’s Housing** in South Minneapolis for providing shelter
  residents a safe daytime option.

- **Minneapolis American Indian Center Gatherings Café** for preparation and
delivery of 100 meals a day to American Indian community elders.

- Several churches in Nobles County pooling resources through **Sharing
  Seeds** for food support to families employed in meat processing facilities.

- **CAPI Asian Food Shelf** offering culturally specific foods for immigrant com-
  munities.

Thank you for seeing our neighbors and responding to their needs.
## 2020 Meisel Scholars

by Meghan Gage-Finn, Executive Associate Pastor

The Meisel Committee is pleased to share with you two Meisel Scholars for this summer. The Meisel Program, in honor of Donald and Ellie Meisel, has furthered young people’s learning through internship and travel experiences outside the college classroom for more than 30 years.

Anna Northenscold is a student at Luther College studying English and French, marketing and communications. Ellie McCreary, a student at Creighton University, is studying philosophy and psychology, gender and women’s studies.

For her Meisel experience, Anna will partner with the communications firm Parenteau Graves, with a focus on Westminster’s communications ministry, exploring how the power of community is maintained and cultivated. Ellie will participate in cognitive psychology research with a Creighton professor, emphasizing learning and language development. Both Scholars will be paired with a mentor in the congregation who will serve as a vocational conversation partner. We hold these young people and their mentors in our prayers as they move into these summer experiences.

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## Peace Be With You... Wherever You Are

by Anna Northenscold, Summer Communications Intern

I think it’s safe to say that a global pandemic was not in anyone’s plans for 2020. As a sophomore at Luther College, I didn’t expect anything like this. Driving home from Decorah, Iowa, I watched as my college campus began to disappear into the hills. I didn’t realize then how much I would miss that community. Things like walking with my roommate to get breakfast from our favorite cafeteria workers, talking with my favorite professor for an hour after class, even the freedom to simply gather with others. It’s the daily interactions with people that I crave most. Every face and conversation was something new. It was a connection.

Now that I’m home, it has been difficult transitioning to this new normal. However, what I’ve been reminded of is that community is so much more than the physical space we share. Conversations with friends, extended family, and peers mean so much more to me. It’s quality time. Although it might not be happening in the same space, those connections remain just as strong. While we may not be in each other’s presence, we’re in this together.

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## Summer Adult Education

by Rachel Gustafson, Director of Congregational and Community Engagement

Adult Education is normally dormant during the summer, but since so many are feeling a desire for engagement during this season of separation, we have prepared several opportunities for the community to continue to grow and connect spiritually.

### Sunday Mornings

Our regular Sunday programming will continue via livestream. In early June, Rev. Dr. Matthew Skinner will host guest scholars for a series on “Big Questions for a Changing Church.” Each week a different theologian will visit and discuss their perspectives on how congregations can be changing creatively, thinking differently, nourishing themselves spiritually, and accompanying their neighbors generously.

June 28 through August 2, Dr. Amanda Weber will offer an exciting series in collaboration with McCormick Theological Seminary entitled “Isolation in Perspective: Criminal Justice, Disconnection, and the Church.” As the world experiences a global health pandemic, we are united in an unusual mass experience of isolation. Still, we do not all experience the same level of hardship. By studying the criminal justice system and striving to understand our own complicity in it, what perspectives might we gain on isolation and social disconnection? What might this pandemic teach us about the lasting trauma of isolation? And where is the church in all of this?

### Small Group Programming

To provide additional opportunities to engage and connect in a more intimate way, we are organizing the development of a new set of small groups for a 6-week session this summer. If you are interested in receiving more information about small groups, but you don’t receive email updates or use digital channels like social media for information, please call the office, 612-332-3421, and leave a message with your phone number indicating your interest. We’ll be sure to follow up with you.
Dear friends,

One day shortly after I began serving, in 1990, as the minister at Old First Presbyterian in San Francisco, I took a walk and came upon a church a few blocks away. "The Church for the Fellowship of All Peoples," the sign said.

I had stumbled upon an historic congregation. Founded in 1944, it was one of the nation’s first intentionally racially-integrated churches, the experiment of a Presbyterian named Alfred Fisk and the Baptist Howard Thurman. Fisk was white; Thurman, black.

The congregation still exists today. Its most enduring legacy is the work of Thurman. He left San Francisco in 1953 to take a position at Boston University, where he became a mentor to Martin Luther King, Jr. Through King, Thurman’s Gandhian principles of non-violence would have far-reaching impact on America.

Howard Thurman held that a congregation should be a place of deep spiritual – even mystical – rootedness in order to sustain the non-violent pursuit of justice in the world. Like Gandhi, he was unsparing in his critique of American Christianity.

"The basic fact," Thurman wrote, "is that Christianity as it was born in the mind of this Jewish thinker and teacher appears as a technique of survival for the oppressed. That it became, through the intervening years, a religion of the powerful and the dominant, used sometimes as an instrument of oppression, must not tempt us into believing that it was thus in the mind and life of Jesus."

**Christianity as a technique of survival for the oppressed.**

Thurman’s assertion suggests a calling for all who would follow Jesus. We are allies of those struggling to survive, co-laborers with people oppressed. In this nation, that means we align ourselves with human beings suffocated by the cruelty of racism.

The events in our city and across the nation since the killing of George Floyd are a wake-up call for America – and for the churches of this land. Even as we work with others to transform social and economic infrastructure holding up racial injustice, we must also examine the church’s place in those very structures and systems.

The church of Jesus Christ – at its gospel-following best – was created for times like these. That includes Westminster. We can rise to the high calling of joining the non-violent struggle for racial justice. That will require us to be ready for serious change ourselves.

See you in church, online.

Grace and peace,
Wednesdays at Westminster
by Sarah Brouwer, Associate Pastor

The Spirit is active in the Westminster community right now, even online. No, Bible Study on Facebook live isn’t a great replacement for the real thing, but if we show up, it’s still incarnational, it’s still the body of Christ in the world growing and learning about what God has for us this day. So, I hope you’ll pop in some Wednesday morning at 9:30 am for our study on the Book of Acts and the Holy Spirit. We are using Acts: A Theological Commentary on the Bible by Willie James Jennings, who is professor of Africana studies and systematic theology at Yale.

Congregational Nominating Committee

The Congregational Nominating Committee is beginning its work on a new slate of officers to be ordained in 2021. If you or someone you know possesses the gifts to be a deacon, elder, or trustee, send their names to Sarah Brouwer at sbrouwer@wpc-mpls.org.

A Deacon: Our ordained and installed Deacons sit on the Board of Deacons, which is the caring and compassion arm of the church. Deacons lead ministries from Befrienders to the Grief Coalition.

An Elder: Our ordained and installed Elders are part of Session, and are the governing body of the church, which houses decision-making related to worship, councils, etc. The Session oversees the deacons and trustees.

A Trustee: The Trustees are commissioned, instead of ordained, but fulfill the important role of managing the church’s finances and property.

Twin Cities LGBTQ Pride Festival Goes Virtual
by Phil Asgian, Westminster Member

For the past 15 years, Westminster has joined with other churches in the downtown area to sponsor a booth at the Twin Cities LGBTQ Pride Festival in Loring Park. This year, as with so many other events, the Festival is going virtual. There are still several ways to be engaged and show your support. Brighten up your front lawn and show your support by ordering and displaying a sign. You can order one at tcpride.org/stay-proud-signs. And check out a variety of virtual events at tcpride.org/calendar. The virtual Pride parade will be Sunday, June 28, starting at 11 am. See you there!

IN MEMORY 2020

Carolyn Hart, April 29
Sally Anson, April 30
Norman Canedy, May 4
Marilou Fellows, May 6
Marcella (Pat) Havlik, May 8

Whitney Ulvestad, May 8
Thelma Johnson, May 14
Thomas Swedenin, May 22
Adyline Felsted, May 25

Daily Devotions

June
14  Matthew 9:35-10:8
15  Psalm 105:1-11
16  1 Samuel 3:1-9
17  Luke 6:12-19
18  Jeremiah 20:7-13
19  Psalm 69:7-18
20  Romans 6:1b-11
21  Matthew 10:24-39
22  Revelation 2:1-7
23  Revelation 2:8-11
24  Psalm 6
25  Jeremiah 28:5-9
26  Psalm 89:1-4, 15-18
27  Romans 6:12-23
28  Matthew 10:40-42
29  Psalm 119:161-168
30  John 4:1-6

July
1  Matthew 11:20-24
2  Zechariah 9:9-12
3  Psalm 145:8-14
4  Romans 7:15-25a
5  Matthew 11:16-19, 25-30
6  Psalm 131
7  Romans 3:1-8
8  John 13:1-17
9  Isaiah 55:10-13
10  Psalm 65:1-13
11  Romans 8:1-11
12  Matthew 13:1-9, 18-23
13  1 Thessalonians 4:1-8
14  Ephesians 4:17-5:2
15  Proverbs 11:23-30
16  Isaiah 44:6-8
17  Psalm 86:11-17
18  Romans 8:12-25
19  Matthew 13:24-30, 36-43
20  Psalm 75
21  Galatians 4:21-5:1
22  Matthew 12:15-21
23  1 Kings 3:5-12
24  Psalm 119:129-136
25  Romans 8:26-39
26  Matthew 13:31-33, 44-52
27  Psalm 119:121-128
28  Ephesians 6:10-18
29  Mark 4:30-34
30  Isaiah 55:1-5
Service of Remembrance
by David Shinn, Associate Pastor

Beloved Westminster community. I imagine your hearts are hurting as much as mine given the tragic killing of George Floyd, and the protests and unrest that have followed. Our hearts are broken, our collective conscience is shaken, and our faith is troubled. I too feel the destructive system of racism perpetuating its brutality with modern structural and systemic institutions.

I would like to take this moment to invite you to pray, reflect, and act with kindness for justice. I also invite you to mourn for the enormous loss that racism has inflicted on our African American siblings and communities for generations. Perhaps at another time we can speak more about the impacts of our implicit biases and how we all have our own anti-racist work before us. For today, I invite you to grieve with our city, our country, and our world.

Due to the pandemic and social distancing, many in our congregation who have lost a loved one could not experience the intimate touch and the sacred opportunity to stay by the bedside until the last moment. On top of their losses, nearly all of our families and communities are not able to gather to mourn and celebrate the lives of their beloved ones.

Recognizing the heartfelt losses of this pandemic, the pastors set out to respond to the desires of our members to name their losses and to mourn. We developed a special service to pour out our grief, name our unwavering trust in God’s eternal love, and to light a candle in our homes to honor and remember our loved ones. For those of you who have attended the Service of Remembrance in December, you know the depth and meaningfulness of that sacred gathering. If you weren’t able to watch when the service was broadcast, visit the livestream page. Please contact any of the pastors, and we would be glad to pray with you and mourn with you. You are not alone; let us grieve together.

Remember the words of the Psalmist in Psalm 139: “Where can I go from your spirit? Or where can I flee from your presence?” No heights of heaven, depth of the valley, no farthest limits of the sea, and no darkness can keep us from God’s presence. No pandemic can keep us from the loving presence of God.

Highlighting the Absence... or the Spirit?
by Sarah Brouwer, Associate Pastor

During a WestConnect Zoom Bible Study last week, I asked our young adults if they were the preachers, what would they need to hear right now? One admitted he had tried tuning in to online worship a few times, but said that instead of making him feel better, more grounded, and in tune with the rhythm of the community, it just highlighted the absence of the real thing. I was taken aback by how well he articulated this feeling, how engaging with worship in this way left him with a haunting sense of what used to be, of what he’d lost. I suspect this is a form of grief.

I’ve noticed this in my six-year-old, as well. We went to her elementary school a couple of weeks ago for a “reverse parade.” It was a beautiful sight. All of the teachers and staff spreading out over several blocks with posters, balloons and cowbells, waving and yelling that they missed and loved their students. At the end I could feel the tears welling up in my eyes, and I turned around to ask her what she had thought of the whole thing. She said, “is that it? That wasn’t fun at all.” I could feel myself wanting to convince her it was fun, to try and take it for what it was and not what it wasn’t. For her it just highlighted the absence. She was grieving in her honest kindergarten way, saying the thing all the grown-ups were secretly thinking.

It’s okay to be honest about our grief, I think, alongside acknowledging the privilege of being able to stay home. But I also believe we are more resilient than we think, and I’m confident this time is teaching us a lot about ourselves and the deep wounds in our world. Maybe God is the one highlighting the absence, shedding light on a community rather than a building, and beckoning us to engage. To turn inward, or away, at this moment, to not tune in, or to sit at home and not sing the hymns out loud or pray the prayers, might mean we miss the Spirit at work. We might miss the chance to collectively transform the violent forces in the world. Worship in the time of COVID, worship in the time of grief, worship in the time of racial injustice, is an act of resistance to what we were before and who we might still be if don’t live into this moment.

If you’re worried about it not feeling the same tune into livestream worship, trust me, it won’t feel the same! But, it will feel like something new. Something not to be missed. It will feel like the Spirit. I hope you can join us for Gathered at Five one of these days, as we explore the role of the Spirit with the ongoing theme Holy Thresholds.
Stay Camp, our virtual day camp, is taking place **June 15 through 19**.

Our theme of *Building the Beloved Community* seems even more relevant given the past few weeks. We will focus on who our neighbors are and how we can spread kindness during this challenging time.

Our brand-new, virtual format will creatively connect counselors and campers through games and movement activities on Zoom, artwork and fort building video tutorials, and daily devotionals.

I cannot fully express just how proud I am of the dedication and innovation that our high school counselors are putting into this week. During planning meetings, they articulated the importance of making **Stay Camp** completely different from previous Day Camp weeks, along with the intent of finding ways to connect with campers in meaningful ways.

Counselors and staff will be doing a socially distant care package drop off for campers the weekend before the fun begins. These care packages contain cheerful **Stay Camp** t-shirts, snacks, and all the supplies needed for the adventure.

**The Spirit is moving among the families, youth, and children of Westminster during this time!**

To keep current on all FYC happenings, including resources for families to enter into conversations about the killing of George Floyd, visit the Facebook page at facebook.com/groups/WPCFYC and sign up at the top of our website for the FYC emails.

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**FYC Updates**

by Meghan Gage-Finn, Executive Associate Pastor and CC Strom, FYC Co-Chair

As a Families, Youth, and Children Ministry Team, we hold before us Westminster’s baptismal covenant to share the good news of the gospel and to serve that gospel alongside one another as we seek to know and follow Christ. Covid-era times have pushed us all to connect with each other in new ways and to live out this covenant, even while we are apart. Since the killing of George Floyd, we are living into the imperative to witness to the good news of justice and love for the world even more fully. We are being called to lead as Christ did into hard places and truths.

FYC Staff and leaders are providing support, education, and space for open and honest conversation with young ones, youth, and parents, and we give thanks for their leadership, hard work, and ingenuity. We move into the summer hopeful, but also mindful of the ways we can join the efforts of the wider church to be part of Westminster’s telling presence in the community.

We are staying connected and strengthening relationships through Family Matters, Children’s Choirs, Confirmation, and youth game nights, as well as with new offerings, all through Zoom. Mom’s and Parents’ Groups are meeting regularly, and there are weekly offerings for youth to share their experiences of this time, to support each other, and to receive the care of the church.

The annual summer Day Camp has been re-structured to become “Stay Camp,” and will focus on the theme of “Building the Beloved Community,” which feels more relevant than ever. (see article on this page). The stories of Stay Camp will be highlighted in worship on June 21.

Mission trips will look a little different this year. The middle school mission trip will be re-imagined as one or more events during the school year. Read about the High School Mission Trip below.

The Spirit is moving among the families, youth, and children of Westminster during this time!

To keep current on all FYC happenings, including resources for families to enter into conversations about the killing of George Floyd, visit the Facebook page at facebook.com/groups/WPCFYC and sign up at the top of our website for the FYC emails.

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**Senior High Mission Trip:**

The Amazing Minnesota Race

by Matt Lewellyn-Otten, Director of Youth Ministries

The Youth Group of Westminster is a resilient group of young people, searching for ways to connect with the community inside and outside the walls of our church. Many were saddened by the prospect of not being able to travel for our annual summer mission trip but it has become evident that our young people want to take action now more than ever! I am thankful for the contributions of a small planning team who has volunteered their time to help plan a Senior High Mission Trip that is engaging, proactive, and fun.

Senior High Families please continue to mark your calendars for **July 13 through July 19** for this unique service opportunity. Our Senior High Youth Group will remain in the city of Minneapolis in a Mission: Possible-style Mission Trip that will take them all over the city. Our Youth Group will be split up into small groups that will have the opportunity to be of service to our community, as well as opportunities to gather together safely for sharing and fun.

Senior High Families please continue to mark your calendars for **July 13 through July 19** for this unique service opportunity. Our Senior High Youth Group will remain in the city of Minneapolis in a Mission: Possible-style Mission Trip that will take them all over the city. Our Youth Group will be split up into small groups that will have the opportunity to be of service to our community, as well as opportunities to gather together safely for sharing and fun.
Gratitude Upon Program Completion
by Jeffrey Gram, Artist-in-Residence 2019-2020

Serving Westminster as Artist-in-Residence for the 2019-2020 program year has been a wonderfully enriching experience for which I will be forever grateful. It has been a true blessing to serve our community through performance, leadership, and community-building this past year. My appreciation for this opportunity is made even greater given the circumstances of our current affairs. What a blessing it was this past year – pre-pandemic – to compose and perform marimba and percussion music for our morning and evening worship services; help plan Wednesday evening contemplative services; accompany our adult and children’s choirs; offer community-building drumming classes for adults and children; compose and choreograph an audience-participation community-rhythm piece for the Christmas Dinner production; and present talks on community-building through music.

As my residency concludes, I wish to offer my heartfelt gratitude to Dr. Amanda Weber for her artistic and programmatic vision in leading this residency initiative, to Kenny Vigne for his immense creativity and willing collaboration, and to all WPC leaders and staff who supported this residency.

Peace, blessings, and gratitude to this wonderfully creative community!

On Tuesday, May 5, several leading musical organizations co-presented a webinar titled “What Do Science and Data Say About the Near-Term Future of Singing?” More than 3,000 voice and choral professionals attended this presentation, resulting in a seismic shock through the music community. With preliminary data showing that singing may function as a “super-spreader” of COVID-19, the outlook seemed bleak. Wearing masks, standing six feet apart, and other distancing techniques we’ve embraced as accommodations simply do not provide protection in the case of this highly respiratory (and often communal) activity. The webinar concluded by suggesting that group singing should not take place until a vaccine has been disseminated, likely one to two years from now.

While the grief that this news evokes is real and the challenges seem insurmountable, it is causing my field to seek new relevance. I am asking such questions in the context of Westminster: What is the role of a choir? What is the role of congregational singing? How can we continue to engage in the practice of ministry through music in new ways? My mind immediately turns to hymn singing in the home, a practice that was very much at the heart of Reformation times in the 16th century. What might we learn by reviving the practice of singing as private or family devotion?

To explore this further, I will partner with my family this summer to share a podcast (audio) series that takes a deep dive into hymn singing – the history, the familial power, and the continuing relevance today. I hope you will engage with this upcoming resource and be comforted by the many ways music can appear in our lives. Singing together is a practice that has endured from the beginning of human life; it is not disappearing any time soon.

Stay Camp continued from page 6.

One specific act of kindness they will be focusing on is creating artwork for others. Some of that artwork will be sent to community members of the Magnet Senior Center. Also watch for new artwork to appear on the online summer worship services. Our week will end with a Family Camp-In on Friday night. Campers and counselors will be setting up their own campsites in living rooms, enjoying some microwaved s’mores, and doing a Virtual Counselor Hunt. Thanks to Photoshop, our counselors are “hiding” out in some unique places around the church building.

Be watching for updates on our social media accounts during the week on June 15.
Who are We, Right Now?

by Mary Hess, Director of Stewardship

The saying that character is revealed in adversity has felt especially true in past weeks. We have all grappled in different ways with the recent unrest and injustice, an ailing economy, lack of time (or too much time), and an onslaught of difficult news and chaos. In our household, we have attempted to retain a semblance of routine, including exercise, prayer, and reflection. We’re more aware of how we spend time and money; some purchases that previously seemed necessary now seem frivolous. We have continued our support for Westminster’s ministries, and added additional causes to help those in need pursuant to the recent police brutality.

Both the pandemic’s seismic shift, and the recent civil unrest offer an opportunity to re-assess how we use time, talent, and treasure. Gerhard E. Frost, who died in 1987, was a poet and theology professor at Luther Seminary in Saint Paul. According to his obituary, “...he could take the common and ordinary and clothe them in truth and beauty.”

He wrote the following poem:

Autobiography

If you should ask me,
Who are you, right now?
Where are you?
What road have you taken?
What have you become?
I needn’t give you fifty pages,
or even five, or one.
My check stubs are enough.

Who are we, right now? Our answers will all be different, but it’s good to know that our church home continues to try to respond to the world’s deep need for justice, offer a sacred space to see what is true and beautiful, and to express our God-given blessings outward into the world. Thanks be to God for Westminster and its telling presence.

Gathered by the Spirit

by Karen Kraemer, Westminster member

Recently I was asked the question, “What’s new in our pandemic situation that’s been unexpected and inspiring for you personally?” My response came quickly to mind, which is that with the Gathered at Five service on livestream, I’m able to worship weekly with my dear friend, Kim, just as we did together before she moved to Florida.

Once again, the two of us touch base shortly before 5:00 pm on Sunday to be sure we each will be at the service. Occasionally, while gathered online with our extended family of believers and in the presence of the Holy Spirit, we will exchange a text message with each other (instead of a whisper or a gentle nudge in person) about a favorite song we are singing, or a beautiful piece of art we are seeing, or a meaningful part of the lesson we are hearing — together! This new experience has brought both of us back to center with the Holy One and given us peace and joy within our hearts. It is a time each week that is extra special for us; new, yet familiar; and something we, as close friends, look forward to meeting up to do on Sundays, just as we did before our lives changed.

Blessings surely come in unexpected ways and are a wonderful source of inspiration. Gathered at Five has been, and continues to be, just that kind of blessing. Please join us!
No man is an island... any man’s death diminishes me, for I am involved in mankind.”

The 17th century English poet, John Donne, understood that we are all spiritually and socially connected. Human beings are made for community, not isolation; whatever affects one of us, affects us all. “Is it I, Lord?” Yes, it is. We are faced with the bitter fruits of our choice to segregate and doom to poverty, people of color. George Floyd’s death has jolted us into an awareness of the injustices not just in our city, not just now, but over our entire nation, for centuries. We must engage the humility, courage, and intention necessary to find our way to a more loving, just, and merciful world community.

The counseling center pledges itself to examine our practices and our assumptions. As Westminster Counseling Center, we intend to foster a more inclusive organization. Our therapists and our Board of Directors commit ourselves to becoming more equitable and more diverse.

If you are a contributor to the counseling center, we thank you for your much-needed support. We welcome your thoughts, prayers and suggestions for how we might better and more thoughtfully offer our services. We are here to heal, to be agents of change for ourselves, and for those we serve. We commit ourselves to that mission. We hope you will each do the same for yourself, your families, our communities, our world.

Even in the time of COVID the therapists of the Westminster Counseling Center continue to see clients through teletherapy. We are as engaged as ever in responding to mental health needs in our community. Thank you for your support.

Visit the Westminster Counseling Center online for more information and to make an appointment, westminstercounseling.org

Greetings from ‘Our Friend Rodney’
by Rodney Allen Schwartz, Director, Westminster Gallery and Archive

Each time I enter the Westminster building, I get a sense of how surreal it continues to feel. The building is just that. A big empty space filled with memories and echoes of the congregation gathering for worship and in community in so many ways. I miss seeing all of you — the members and visitors who are truly the church. Some of my colleagues haven’t been in the building since the pandemic started. Others are there regularly in small numbers for livestream worship. I have new and interesting duties now. Because the building is closed, the flowers for Sunday worship are delivered to my house on Saturday. The watering and tending of the green plants in the building is also part of my Sunday routine. I work behind the scenes to arrange the sets and find art for bulletin covers and for use in the new livestream worship spaces. It is a bit like my old Sunday morning routine, except without you. I long for the time that we can be together in some closer proximity again as the body of Christ.

Until that time, I am looking for ways that you might stay connected to the Westminster Gallery and Collection. You see art on bulletin covers and incorporated in worship. We are in the process of redesigning the website to include more artists and more art. If you follow Westminster (or me) on Facebook you will find that I am creating under-a-minute videos about three times a week that feature me as Our Friend Rodney sharing a piece of art from the collection. Until we are together again, know that I miss seeing you and hope that you are doing well in this strange time.
This year the Westminster Town Hall Forum celebrates 40 years of engaging the community in reflection and dialogue on the key issues of our day from an ethical perspective. For the first time in its history, the Forum has canceled a speaker series—for reasons that are known to all of us. This certainly wasn’t the way we intended to mark a milestone anniversary!

We’re happy to say, however, that our spring speakers are being rescheduled for the fall 2020 season, along with an additional speaker or two. As always, the Forum will explore thought-provoking issues with nationally known speakers who inspire, challenge, and inform us—but with one change: All forums will be virtual.

Although we’ll miss gathering in Westminster’s beautiful sanctuary, forums will continue to be broadcast on Minnesota Public Radio and live streamed on our website and Facebook.

Further information on the fall season will be announced later this summer.

Until then, we encourage you to discover the rich treasure-trove of audio and video recordings of past forums that are available on our website, westminsterforum.org, and as podcasts. These recordings span four decades of cultural and political history, from our first speaker in 1980 — Watergate special prosecutor Archibald Cox — to Al Gore on climate change, Michael Feinstein on the musical legacy of the Gershwins, Bryan Stevenson on reforming the criminal justice system, Nadine Burke Harris on childhood trauma and adversity, Michael Beschloss on presidents at war, Gwen Ifill on race and politics, and many, many more.

Help us to keep moving forward with your financial support. You can contribute by mailing your check to Westminster Town Hall Forum, 1200 Marquette Avenue, Minneapolis 55403, or by visiting westminsterforum.org to donate with your credit card. We are grateful for your commitment to the Forum!