Coming Together Week
by Sarah Brouwer, Associate Pastor

As we move toward the end of another Minnesota summer, excitement usually builds among Westminster families and members for the new church program year. But with Covid, this year we will miss the children and teachers in their grand worship procession on Coming Together Sunday and the All-Church Picnic following the morning service. This year it will be different...Welcome to Coming Together Week! To enable us to spread out responsibly, we are offering a number of opportunities to connect over a period of five days.

It all gets underway with a Sneak Peek Saturday for our Families, Youth, and Children. Stop by the Marquette driveway at Westminster on Saturday, September 12, between 10 am and 2 pm. Receive a Blessing of the Backpacks, supplies for our virtual fall programming, and participate in a contactless Passing of the Peace.


Join us for a Coming Together Coffee Hour after the 10:30 am service on September 13. Tim Hart-Andersen will offer welcoming remarks and then you’ll divide into small groups for conversation.

The Coming Together Sunday Picnic will be held in parks throughout the metro area. Groups of 10 or fewer will sign up for a 3 pm meet-up. Bring a snack for yourself (not to share), a mask, and enjoy fellowship with other Westminster members!

Finally, there will be a Coming Together Drive-thru on September 14-16 from 6-8 pm at Westminster. Come to the Marquette driveway to see your pastors and enjoy some special music, art, and fun!

For more information about all of these events and to register, visit westminstermpls.org/2020/08/coming-together-week.

Lt. Governor Peggy Flanagan to Kick-off Coming Together Sunday Learning Hour
by Tim Hart-Andersen, Senior Pastor

Lt. Governor Peggy Flanagan will join me for a live-streamed conversation during the 9:15 am Learning Hour on Coming Together Sunday, September 13. The event is co-sponsored by the Social Justice Forum and Adult Education Council.

Flanagan is a mom, an advocate, a member of the White Earth Band of Ojibwe, and Minnesota’s 50th Lieutenant Governor. Her career is built on standing up for children, working families, communities of color and Indigenous communities, and Minnesotans who have historically been underserved and underrepresented.

Given all that has transpired in the last few months in Minnesota and the nation – with Covid, economic collapse, and renewed urgency in addressing systemic racism in America – this will be a timely conversation. It will kick-off the Social Justice Forum’s yearlong theme: Wade in the Water: Becoming Antiracist, and launch the Adult Education fall Sunday Series.

As a former State Representative, School Board Member, non-profit leader, and community advocate, Flanagan brings her experiences of building coalitions and advocating for children and families to the Lieutenant Governor’s Office. Westminster is honored to have her join us for Coming Together Sunday.
A New Day at the Town Hall Forum
by Melanie McCall, Interim Director, Westminster Town Hall Forum

The Westminster Town Hall Forum returns for a fantastic fall season. Similar to Westminster worship and education opportunities, the Forum’s four speakers will come to you via the internet. You will still be able to ask questions, but now we will ask you to submit your question for the speaker in advance. For more information and to watch the Town Hall Forum, visit the website at WestminsterForum.org.

VICTORIA SWEET
Slow Medicine: The Way to Healing
Tuesday, September 22, Noon

Victoria Sweet is Associate Clinical Professor of Medicine at the University of California in San Francisco and a prize-winning historian with a Ph.D. in history and social medicine. During her 20 years at San Francisco’s Laguna Honda Hospital, a rehabilitation center providing skilled nursing and therapeutic services to under-served populations, she evolved in her understanding of the body as “a machine to be fixed” to “a garden to be tended.” Her book, Slow Medicine: The Way to Healing, explores her insights into medicine as both an art and a science that is relational, personal, and even spiritual.

Submit your question for Dr. Sweet to info@westminsterforum.org by September 16.

MARIA TERESA KUMAR
Election 2020: Securing the Vote
Tuesday, October 6, Noon

Maria-Teresa Kumar is the founding president of Voto Latino, a grassroots organization committed to engaging, educating, and empowering a new generation of Latinx voters and to creating an inclusive and accountable democracy. By leveraging youth, technology, social platforms, and influencers, Voto Latino reaches 6.5 million people monthly, and it has set a goal to register 500,000-plus voters before the 2020 election. She is vice chair of the board of EMILY’s List, a resource for women running for elective office, and she serves on the board of the World Economic Forum’s Global Shapers.

Submit your question for Ms. Kumar to info@westminsterforum.org by September 30.

TOWNTALKS PRESENTS
The Geography of Twin Cities Racism
Thursday, September 17, 7 pm

How did parts of our town become predominantly one color or the other? Our panelists will explore the history of housing covenants and other racist practices and policies and their lasting impact to the present day. As we continue to work for meaningful change and a better future for all BIPOC residents, we must learn more about the past and how we got here. Join the TownTalk online. Visit TownTalksonNicollet.org for more information and how to watch.

Peace and Global Witness 2020: Building God’s House of Peace Together
by Alanna Simone Tyler, Associate Pastor

Thank you for your past support of the Peace and Global Witness offering. Through this special offering Westminster unites with Presbyterians everywhere to share Christ’s peace with one another, beyond our doors, beyond our community and across boundaries. Together we are building God’s house where everyone is welcome; where all can find compassion, peace and justice. Please give to the Peace and Global Witness Offering between October 4 and 6 using the Special Offerings link under the Give section of Westminster’s website.
Dear friends,

This year Coming Together Sunday falls on September 13. That same day marks six months since the church shifted its worship and ministries entirely online, because of Covid-19.

Through these months, with Westminster’s building closed, we covenanted together still to be the church. God’s love did not suddenly cease with Covid. The call to share the hope we have in Jesus Christ has only heightened through these days of distance. We have had to re-learn—to re-discover—what it means to be church.

Like you, I had no idea it would last this long. The pandemic has taken, and continues to take, a terrible toll—in human suffering and loss of life, in widespread unemployment, in disruption of education, in mental health. It has laid bare shameful realities in healthcare. And the long-simmering need to dismantle deeply embedded racism has only added to the national reckoning of these last months.

The Church was created for times like these—full of peril and promise. Our task as followers of Jesus is to face the former and embrace the latter. We have covenanted still to be the church for those very reasons.

Given the circumstances, Westminster’s traditional welcome-back from summer and launch of Church School and other fall programs will be new and different. For starters, we begin with Coming Together Week—spreading the annual one-day re-connection over five days. See elsewhere in this issue of the News for how to participate.

Things will not be quite the same, but Westminster’s children will still be taught the stories of our faith. Adults will continue to be challenged to grow spiritually. Church members will care for one another and connect as we have in new ways since March. We will still serve and support the community.

Worship will continue to be at the heart of our life together. We have chosen to call this The Year of Listening as we plan sermons, music, and liturgy for the 10:30 service and Gathered at Five.

Starting September 2, we start mid-week worship again at 6 pm, each Wednesday. We will return to the popular Blue Grass Evening Prayer—this time recorded on Westminster’s green roof! I will offer a series on reflections on Rooftop Lessons from Scripture standing in the sedum, below the Westminster Bells.

Our life together is more important than ever right now. See you in church.

Grace and peace,
Quiet Worship
Saturday, September 19 | 9 am
Until the church reopens and regular services resume, each Quiet Worship service will be posted on the church's website so that people can access them and join virtually in their own homes. As before, they will also be sent to all who have asked—if you would like to be added to the list, send a note to thinplaces_us@msn.com.

Wednesday Evening Class: The Bible and Economic Justice
“Living the Faith in the 21st Century” is Westminster’s adult education class on Wednesday evenings from 5:00-5:55 pm. When health and safety concerns permit, we meet in the Bushnell Room. In the meantime, we meet by Zoom.

The first unit of the class this year will be “The Bible and Economic Justice.” Each week we’ll read and discuss selected Bible passages and view or read selected material about one or more contemporary issues of economic justice. All are welcome. The first class session—to get acquainted (or reacquainted) and to introduce the theme—is September 16. First discussion of Bible passages and contemporary justice issues is September 23. If you have any questions—and if you’d like to be on the email distribution list for the class—contact Chad Quaintance (612.374.9410; chadquaintance@gmail.com).

WestConnect
WestConnect Young Adults will continue to do a combination of socially distanced outdoor gatherings, Zoom Bible Studies, and book reads throughout the fall. Please contact Sarah Brouwer if you would like to be on our email list! Or, join our Facebook group at facebook.com/groups/westconnect.

Women’s Retreat
Be on the lookout for information regarding a fall Women’s Retreat! We will plan to combine outdoor opportunities with Zoom participation, small group discussion, readings, and reflections. The online portion of the retreat will just be one part. Mark your calendars and contact Sarah Brouwer (sbrouwer@wpc-mpls.org) for more information.

Thin Places
The Autumn issue of Thin Places features “The Song of Silence,” a meditation by Dr. Amanda Weber, “Graditude” as a spiritual practice and mindset, and more. Read the latest issue on the church’s website: westminstermpls.org/publications.

If you would like either a printed or an electronic copy, please let us know at thinplaces_us@msn.com or 612.866.8752. Both can be easily and quickly sent to you.

In Case You Missed It
It’s not too late to watch the exceptional and popular July/August series created by Westminster and McCormick Seminary in Chicago: Isolation in Perspective: Criminal Justice, Disconnection, and the Church. Check it out on the Westminster YouTube channel under the Adult Education playlist: youtube.com/WestminsterMpls

Daily Phone DEVOTIONS
612.332.7087

September
1 Revelation 3:7-13
2 Matthew 12:22-32
3 Ezekiel 33:7-11
4 Psalm 119:33-40
5 Romans 13:8-14
6 Matthew 18:15-20
7 1 Peter 2:11-17
8 Psalm 119:65-72
9 Matthew 21:18-22
10 Genesis 50
11 Psalm 103 (1-7), 8-13
12 Romans 14:1-12
13 Matthew 18:21-35
14 Psalm 133
15 Romans 14:13-15:2
16 Mark 11:15-25
17 Jonah 3:10-4:11
18 Psalm 145:1-8
19 Philippians 1:21-30
20 Matthew 20:1-16
21 Romans 16:1-16
22 Genesis 28:10-17
23 Matthew 18:1-5
24 Ezekiel 18:1-4, 25-32
25 Psalm 25:1-9
26 Philippians 2:1-13
27 Matthew 21:23-32
28 Psalm 28
29 Philippians 1:15-21
30 Matthew 9:2-8

IN MEMORY
Nancy Allin Nelson
August 5, 2020
Barbara Hempleman
August 15, 2020

BIRTH
Nicolas Orion Duffield
August 1, 2020
Welcome, Suzanne!
by Tim Hart-Andersen, Senior Pastor

Suzanne McInroy has joined Westminster’s staff team as the Director of Communications. Suzanne brings 15 years of experience in higher education settings, most recently as the Director of Communications at Bethel University. Her career began in journalism. “I’m a storyteller at heart,” she says. “Westminster is such an active, engaged congregation. There are many stories to tell!”

Suzanne and her family live in Saint Paul, where they are active in a local Episcopal church. She was drawn to Westminster because it combines her experience in communications with a desire to serve a local church.

Suzanne’s position was created by Westminster’s Session at the recommendation of Parenteau Graves, Westminster’s long-time communications consultants. Parenteau Graves conducted a communications audit earlier this year, which uncovered the need for an in-house communications director, as Westminster continues to expand its reach and grow its Telling Presence in the City.

With Parenteau Graves easing out of involvement at Westminster, staff members and lay leaders have expressed their deep appreciation for the outstanding skill in communication, design, and marketing they have shared with our congregation over the years. Please reach out to Suzanne to welcome her at Westminster!

Essential Household Item Drives
by Alanna Simone Tyler, Associate Pastor

This summer members and friends of Westminster generously donated essential household items for two organizations we count among our community partners, Tubman and African Immigrant Community Services, and for the residents of Great River Landing (GRL). In partnership with Troop 33, we collected items two days in July and delivered them to our neighbors. Allison Hobson from Tubman wrote, “We are truly grateful for the efforts that went into this donation drive and the continued support and partnership with Westminster.” A similar note of gratitude came from Mohamed Ahmed, “Thank you so much; we have received many products that the community needs and appreciated. The families and individuals who received it were so thankful.” Steve Thomas, founder of Better Futures Minnesota, the organization providing supportive housing services at GRL, expressed thanks as he noted the early summer unrest in which stores were closed and mass transit suspended made it very difficult for GRL residents to meet their basic needs.

The Greatest Generation:
Ruth and Ruby Hass
by Mary Hess, Director of Stewardship

Born in the early 1920s, Ruth and Ruby Hass lived long lives of devotion, modesty, and faith, and left a legacy that extends beyond their lifetimes.

Ruth was a nurse during WWII and took care of American and Japanese soldiers. Ruby also became a registered nurse, and they both earned master’s degrees. Ruth continued into leadership positions in nursing administration, and Ruby into teaching. Their achievements were exceptional for women of the Greatest Generation, and their examples paved the way for future women to learn, serve, and earn. At Westminster, they will be remembered as service-oriented members of the community, especially because of their regular participation in Westminster on Wednesday, and their love for education and children. They were dearly loved, and rarely missed a chance to help out.

Ruth and Ruby wanted to see Westminster thrive beyond their lifetimes, so they made provisions for legacy gifts. Their gifts will help Westminster’s women and children’s ministries by supporting the Open Doors Open Futures campaign. The Recreation Room, especially, was designed to expand children’s ministries. In addition to the congregation’s children using that space, the children of St. David’s use it daily. It’s a better day for kids at Westminster—and women—because Ruby and Ruth joined many others to make these spaces possible.

Thanks be to God for the faithful lives of Ruth and Ruby Hass. Their legacy of love and gratitude will help sustain the church for generations to come.
Gathered at Five: There Is No Fear in Love
by Sarah Brouwer, Associate Pastor

Gathered at Five this fall will take seriously Westminster’s focus on a year of listening. Our theme through October is “There is No Fear in Love” from 1 John 4:18. We will discuss our fears, stresses, and anxieties during this uncertain time, listening to one another, and reminding each other of the God who loves us.

In addition, Gathered at Five will lift up the fears and internal biases we have around race. In 1 John 4 the author says, “The commandment we have from him is this: those who love God must love their siblings also.” But we can’t love those we do not know like siblings.

In the last few months, Minnesotans in particular have realized we are in an alarming and urgent moment around racism and white supremacy. We can’t ignore this anymore, and we must commit to continuing the momentum around these important conversations. For those who wish to join (this includes everyone!), there will be another opportunity to do a book read. This time we will read A Good Time for the Truth: Race in Minnesota. This book was written in a series of sixteen essays by different Minnesotans who are black, indigenous, people of color. On Monday nights at 7 pm we will meet on Zoom to discuss and listen to these voices. We plan to invite some of the essayists to join us.

I am looking for volunteers who would be willing to pre-read the book and help lead the discussions. If you are interested in leading or attending, email sbrouwer@wpc-mpls.org. Books will be available for pick-up, or you can order your own.

Worshipping during the time of Covid keeps us connected and strong, as does listening and speaking about our fears and God’s love. We hope you’ll join us this fall for Gathered at Five.

Women’s Bible Study (WOW)
by Sarah Brouwer, Associate Pastor

Join with other women of Westminster for a timely series on lament in our Fall Bible Study! I will lead alongside Rev. Judy Kim, Rev. Bebe Baldwin, and Shirley McKinney. We will team teach beginning Wednesday, September 23.

The study comes from the Presbyterian Church’s Horizon’s Magazine series for 2020. “In this nine-lesson study, Lynn Miller revives lament as a proper theological response to the difficult situations of our world. One of the foundational points of the study is that, in scripture, lament usually leads to hope. After crying out to God, the one who laments remembers God. And while that doesn’t fix things in the moment—the injustice, the loss still exists—the lamenter is strengthened to face the world and to hope. And for us as Christians, hope is not just an emotional response or an attitude of pie in the sky. Hope implies movement: both God’s inherent movement toward justice and our movement toward God. Recovering lament may be one of the church’s most timely gifts to the world.”

Sign-up to be on our email list and receive a copy of your study. We will meet on Wednesday mornings via Zoom (there is a call-in option). We begin with a brief check-in time at 9:15 am, with the study starting at 9:30. All women are welcome!
Reckoning with Privilege: Where Christ Leads the Church When the World is Disrupted

by Rachel Sheild Gustafson,
Director of Congregational and Community Engagement

The theme for the upcoming year of Adult Education programs will be Reckoning with Privilege: Where Christ Leads the Church When the World is Disrupted. We will explore questions, including: Is there any unique contribution the church could offer during this time of growing unrest, uncertainty, and division? The Old Testament is full of instructions for how God’s people must care for the widow, the orphan, the oppressed, and the foreigner. The New Testament follows Jesus’ path from power to humility both in his incarnation and death. As seen in scriptural characters from Solomon to the rich young ruler, Dorcas to Zacchaeus, Boaz to Susanna, our Bible represents different ways those with resources or privilege are called to engage within the church and their world. Yet even Christians can’t seem to agree on how we must live.

Fissures in the global church continue to deepen and, in the U.S., conservative and liberal Christianity seem more divided than ever. How do we reconcile these truths with Scriptural exhortations to be peacemakers, Christ’s ambassadors, and justice seekers? When are we called to overthrow the table and when are we called to sit at it with people who disagree? Is there a specific call to those of us at Westminster who inhabit places of unique privilege? The world’s eyes were drawn to Minneapolis after George Floyd’s killing, what is our witness?

Visit the website regularly to find more specific information, including names of presenters and titles of their presentations, and a schedule of upcoming Sunday morning presentations.

New Old Adventure

by Rachel Sheild Gustafson,
Director of Congregational and Community Engagement

The New Old Adventure continues this fall with a kick-off forum by Tim Hart-Andersen on Spirituality & Aging During COVID on September 16. Join us via Zoom at 10.45 am to visit together and provide time to smooth out any technology kinks before Tim begins his talk at 11 am. As we navigate a season of increased isolation, uncertainty, and health concerns, Tim will share insights into cultivating mental health and spiritual practices so we can not only get by, but thrive. He’ll share how Westminster is coping with COVID, including new ways of listening and caring for one another. RSVP to rgustafson@wpc-mpls.org for the Zoom info.

Also, mark your calendars for our October forum! On October 14 at 11 am, we’re eager to welcome Aging with Gusto, an organization committed to encouraging more positive views on aging and increasing appreciation for how people of all ages contribute in their families and communities. More information to follow.

For more than two months, the Responsible Building Use Task Force has met weekly to develop a plan to reopen our building responsibly. The Session of Westminster received and reviewed the plan on August 20 and will vote on the plan on August 27. By the time the September Westminster News is published, Session will have taken action. Visit the website to learn more.
New Opportunities from FYC

by Meghan Gage-Finn, Marie Kruskop, Sonja Dziekciowski, and Matt Lewellyn-Otten

The Families, Youth, and Children Staff and lay leaders have spent the summer months listening, researching, discerning, and collaborating in order to offer new opportunities for learning and connection this fall. In our shared ministry, we hope to support families in nurturing faith formation together, enabling us all to participate in the gospel imperative to further God’s love and justice in the world.

With virtual learning starting back up, we recognize that many families are facing digital fatigue. As a result, we have reformatted Sunday morning programming.

INTRODUCING FAMILY EDUCATION HOUR: BUILDING THE BELOVED COMMUNITY

The Families, Youth, and Children Ministry team is excited to roll out Fall curriculum that focuses on the intersection between faith formation and social justice, equity, and cultural intelligence: Building the Beloved Community! This fall, with scriptural guidance, you will examine your own family’s cultural identity, and we will encourage you to consider how it compares to your neighbors’ or classmates’ culture. We will encourage you to read and learn together, see those around you with new eyes, and form new understanding and new relationships, as we grow together in this season of change, renewal, and hope.

Fall programming will include regularly scheduled large and small group opportunities on Zoom, as well as a few in-person, socially distanced events, as we are able.

Each week, families will receive resources via email, which will include thematic content and links to activities and videos, so everyone can participate when/as you are able. At 9 am on Sunday mornings, FYC will host Zoom meetings to introduce the weekly topics. Optional break-out groups will begin at 9:15 am, but families are also welcomed to attend Adult Education or the Social Justice Forum, and work through weekly lessons on your own time. Wednesday nights will offer a variety of virtual and in-person opportunities (read below to learn more!)

Family Matters will put its name into practice in new ways this fall. Given FYC’s plans for a Family Education Hour on Sundays before worship, we will shift our gathering time. We do know that Family Matters will happen each week via Zoom (look for updates on day and time in the FYC email). Despite these changes, our purpose remains the same: to provide a place of welcome and connection to parents with children of all ages.

Moms Group will take a break during the month of September to allow families to adjust to new fall schedules. We will begin meeting again on October 7 (time TBD) via Zoom.

Moms “Off the Clock” is a time for moms to gather once the kids are asleep – or at least in or on their way to bed! Join us for fellowship and casual conversation once a month. Mark your calendar for September 24 at 9 pm.

EARLY CHILDHOOD

Nursery Circle Time continues each week, complete with singing, a story, and suggestions to extend the learning at home by asking, praying, and doing. Links are provided in the weekly email and the Families Facebook Group.

Early Childhood Family Fellowship is new this fall! Beginning October 3 at 8:30 am we will gather via Zoom to sing songs, read the Nursery Book of the Month, and get better acquainted! Join us!

WEDNESDAY NIGHT LIVE

Church School is moving to Zoom! Join us at 5:45 pm for opening prayer, singing, and fellowship activities, to kick off FYC Wednesday evening programming. Then at 6:15 pm, families will have the chance to split into age-group breakout rooms with Church School Teachers for connection and Bible study.

Our Youth Group will continue to build community, learn together, and serve our neighbors. Taking what we have learned from Stay Camp and our high school Mission [Trip], we will use a blend of safe, in-person gatherings as well as online gatherings through the fall.

We will take advantage of the beautiful weather for as long as we can with outdoor gatherings and service projects. Weekly coffee shop-style gatherings will continue. We will also have Sunday afternoon and evening youth group for middle and high school. Confirmation for our 9th grade cohort will be completely online on Wednesday evenings, 6:15-7:30 pm, with additional opportunities to gather safely in person.

We look forward to celebrating Confirmation Sunday with the current class in worship on Sunday, September 20. These students have worked hard this past year and it is with joy we anticipate the ways they will reflect on their faith journey as part of the culmination of Confirmation!
Learning to Listen through the Arts

by Amanda Weber, Director of Music and the Arts

As we launch a new program year themed the “Year of Listening,” I can’t help but think of it as a musical skill; I should be good at this, right? For those who sing or play an instrument, listening is a regular part of our practice. And yet, our field, like many, has missed the mark. If we are so good at listening, how is it that countless voices have gone unheard?

During the month of July, Westminster’s music program hosted an educational series called, “Hearing Soul: A Guided Overview of African/African American Choral Traditions.” Five guest speakers shared about a variety of topics, from the history of Black music, to the many idiomatic genres we have become familiar with, to the non-idiomatic music that has been buried by our stereotypes and assumptions. These sessions have encouraged us to not just listen, but to truly hear one another. Watch the series on Westminster’s YouTube channel under the Music playlist: youtube.com/WestminsterMpls.

“Hearing is the first step toward understanding,” the Rev. Dr. Yolanda Williams told us in our first session. We are “singing people’s lives” through music, Adrian Davis said in another session. What an opportunity we have to explore history and culture! Doing so in the context of worship adds yet another layer of depth, and while the result has such great potential for beauty and inclusivity, it can also be done with ignorance and misrepresentation.

The circumstances of this pandemic time are particularly challenging for the arts, but perhaps there is an opportunity for more listening and reflection, deeper study beyond what we are already comfortable with, and truly seeking to hear one another’s souls. The various arts at Westminster will be exploring these things in creative ways during our upcoming program year. We hope you will join us in this time that is calling out for Holy Creativity and Imagination!

Rose Window Returns to the Sanctuary

by Rodney Allen Schwartz, Director, Westminster Gallery and Archive

The Guardian Angel rose window has been reinstalled on the north balcony of the sanctuary following conservation and restoration. This ends the project of restoring the stained glass in Westminster’s sanctuary.

The stained glass dome window and paisley-like rose window in the center of the balcony are original from when the sanctuary building was built in 1897. The other windows were filled with beautiful stained glass that was typical of Victorian era glass, but lacking Biblical stories and quotations. In the 1950s and 1960s these windows were replaced in small installments as memorial funds became available for the purchase of new windows. The Guardian Angel window was one of the earliest and was made by Charles J. Connick of Boston. The other windows were made by Willet Studios of Philadelphia.

The glass is cut and some of the pieces painted, with some of the paint scratched away to reveal the color of the glass allowing for greater detail and text beyond what simple colored glass would offer. These pieces are held together with soldered lead channels. The glass is heavy and the lead is soft—and gravity eventually wins. Stained glass needs to be restored about every 80 years.

The windows on the south wall were all removed and restored during the construction of the new wing several years ago. Since then the other windows were taken out a few at a time, and the process is now complete. It will be wonderful when we can return to worship in the sanctuary and enjoy the glory of the windows, knowing that they are preserved for decades to come.

The Guardian Angel Window, Westminster Sanctuary
Small Groups: Groups Forming, Recruiting Leaders for Fall!
by Rachel Sheild Gustafson, Director of Congregational and Community Engagement

During this season of disconnection and isolation, small groups are an important place for connection, conversation, and building community at Westminster. For Fall 2020, we have several new small groups starting as well as some existing small groups accepting new members.

New Leaders Needed
To ensure we have enough small group slots to accommodate new members and to provide increased opportunities for connection and support, we are still recruiting new leaders. Small group leaders will receive resources to help facilitate and, if needed, support identifying a focus and related materials. Additionally, there will be an initial Zoom training call to equip leaders. If you are interested in serving as a leader, please email rgustafson@wpc-mpls.org.

Preview of Fall 2020 Small Groups
Groups may choose a unique focus for the six-week, fall session. So far this fall, one new group will explore Spiritual Practices: Creating Calm in the Midst of Chaos and another will focus on providing fellowship and connection for LGTBQIA folx. I am also working with a team to develop a series of self-guided, local spiritual pilgrimages. Experts within the congregation are developing materials which will be available for individuals, households, and small groups to use as they drive/bike/run/walk to a series of locations in the Twin Cities to explore the spiritual, social, historic and/or artistic significance of each landmark. If you’re interested in joining a small group this fall, contact Mahin Hamilton (mhamilton@wpc-mpls.org) for more information.

Counselor’s Corner
by Carol Hornbeck, LMFT

In my work, I am sometimes asked how people can best support a friend or family member who is troubled by deep grief, depression, or other chronic illness. Many people avoid spending time with those who are struggling, because they fear they will say the “wrong” thing, or that they will not be able to think of anything to say at all. Yet what most of us need in the midst of our profound suffering is not words of “wisdom,” but simply the presence of those who care about us—a reminder that we are not alone. In the presence of someone else’s despair, we might feel weak, foolish or helpless, unable to “fix” the other person’s problem or take away their pain. I think this is how we know we are trying to rely on our own human strength and wisdom, rather than using the strength that is available to us from God.

I am reminded of Paul’s words in 1 Corinthians, “…God’s foolishness is wiser than human wisdom, and God’s weakness is stronger than human strength.”

When others are struggling, we will bring more comfort if we concentrate on embodying the love of God by simply being present, and often by being silent. For most people, this takes practice, to overcome the anxiety that comes from initially feeling useless because we do not know what to say or do. In the silent moments, God’s love is able to reach through the pain and bring comfort to the suffering.

Troop 100 Boundary Waters Trip
by Dave Moore, Scoutmaster, Troop 100

For the third year, nine members of Westminster’s Scout Troop 100 took a week-long canoe trip, sponsored by Westminster member Richard Flint, in the Boundary Waters (BWCA). Leaders of the expedition were JJ Vang, Eagle Scout, Ritydaets Xiong, Eagle Scout, and Josh Yang. Scouts who participated were Alex Tchaa, Eagle Scout; Kyle Vang, Life Scout; Chris Kim, Life Scout; John Xiong, Life Scout; Reilly Vang, Star Scout, and Dominic Yang, First Class Scout.

The boys were outfitted by the Sawbill Canoe outfitters. Starting out on Sawbill, they traveled west over several large lakes and numerous creeks and swamps. Portages were a challenge. They were up hill and down, rocky and often muddy. Back packs were heavy, especially at first. But food packs grew steadily lighter as the boys themselves grew stronger. Loons accompanied them with their crazy laughter and mournful wailing, especially at night. It rained a couple of times, but only at night. Otherwise the weather was stellar, blue skies or fleecy clouds. Campsites were beautiful, but the boys had to get used to sleeping on rocks. Food was good, packed for them by the outfitters to their taste. They took a lay-over, a break from paddling and portaging, during which they went swimming in an icy lake, fishing at a small island, and just relaxed and hung out.

The trip was over all too soon. But this was an experience that these city-raised boys needed, given their heritage in the remote mountains of Laos where their parents and grandparents came from. They came away stronger and more confident, with memories of friends and fun that will always be with them.

Our thanks go out to our friend, Richard Flint, for making this life-enhancing experience possible for these boys.