Continuing to Build the Beloved Community
by Rev. Dr. Alika Galloway, Co-pastor, Liberty Community Church, and Rev. Alanna Simone Tyler, Associate Pastor, Westminster

Westminster and Liberty Community Church welcome the Rev. Gregory J. Bentley, Co-Moderator of the 224th General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church (USA) for our annual joint celebration for the Martin Luther King, Jr., holiday weekend. The event presents another opportunity to proclaim that the Beloved Community is still a work in progress; the dream may have been deferred, but it is still alive with possibility. Our gathering is a bold witness to the dream’s reality and a significant celebration of the hope that accompanies it. A hope deeply rooted in the prophetic possibilities of the human divine connection.

Rev. Bentley was born and raised in Alabama and graduated from Stillman College, in Tuscaloosa, Alabama, the only Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCU) founded by the Presbyterian Church. During college he felt a call to ministry and later earned a master of divinity from Interdenominational Theological Center in Atlanta. He serves as the Pastor of Fellowship Presbyterian Church in Huntsville, Alabama.

This year in the wake of the heightened attention to racial injustice, Westminster is especially interested in hearing voices we don’t often hear and we have named this program year, “The Year of Listening.” Rev. Bentley will speak to us from the wellsprings of the historic south regarding the building of equity and unity. He will share how he and Co-Moderator Elona Street-Stewart are embracing cultural, geographic, and political differences to help the PCUSA become the best version of itself to join in God’s redemptive and transformative work in the world.

Saturday, January 16 | 10 am
Workshop on Livestream with Liberty Community Church

Sunday, January 17 | 10:30 am
Worship on Livestream with Liberty Community Church

New Old Adventure:
Demystifying Health Care Reform
by Ken Joslyn, M.D., Westminster member

January 13, 2021 | 11 am | Zoom

Health care reform remains one of the leading questions shaping public policy discussions at the national level. Explore it and more with me, as a Westminster member, physician, educator, advocate, and ex-insurance medical director.

An attempt at reform will happen, and soon. High costs will force Congress and the president to try again to reform our complex, powerful, creative, broken, lucrative, unjust, and truly miraculous health care system. The big question is, will we do the radical surgery necessary to improve the system and control costs, or will we simply put band-aids on our gaping wounds?

I will discuss health care reform, provide a brief primer to health economics and an overview of the Medicare-for-All bills in Congress as well as suggestions for how to get involved. Come with questions, concerns, and disagreement! Contact Rachel Sheld Gustafson (rgustafson@wpc-mpls.org) for the Zoom Link.
Westminster Town Hall Forum Welcomes New Director
by Suzanne McInroy, Director of Communications

On December 1 Tane Danger began his new role at Westminster as the Director of the Town Hall Forum. Best known as the co-founder and host of the nationally renowned civics-inspired improv comedy show, The Theater of Public Policy, Tane has built a career bringing people together to grapple with big ideas.

“The Town Hall Forum offers an opportunity to bring important voices to our city and to open up a dialogue about issues and ideas,” Tane said. “But the Town Hall Forum is not just any speaker series, it is a series rooted in looking at things from an ethical perspective, and to be a part of it as the director is a dream come true for me.”

As The Theater of Public Policy’s host, Tane interviewed more than 500 people, from journalists and academics to political leaders and authors since the show began in 2011. But what makes the show different is that after the interview, a cast of Minnesota’s sharpest improvisers takes everything that’s been said and turns it into entirely unscripted improv comedy theater.

“Tane brings a unique combination of skill and experience to the Westminster Town Hall Forum,” said Tim Hart-Andersen, Moderator of the Forum. “With his public policy background and skill in promoting and producing, he will broaden the reach of the program. And I am especially eager to see how the new Town Talks series will expand under Tane’s leadership.”

Tane grew up in Hollywood, Florida, and came to Minnesota to attend Gustavus Adolphus College. His parents both still live in Florida where his mother works as a journalist, primarily with the Miami Herald, and his father is the pastor of St. John’s Lutheran Church in Hollywood. Tane lives in South Minneapolis with his fiancé Eric.

It’s Not Too Late to Pledge!

Be a part of Building the Beloved Community by mailing your 2021 pledge card to the church, or pledging online at westminstermpls.org/pledge. If you pledge online, you will receive a link to a special musical tribute as an acknowledgement of what your giving means to the church. Westminster needs your support to carry out God’s hope for the world; thank you.

Imagining Justice and Mercy
Mondays, Jan 18-Feb 8 | 7 pm
by Matt Skinner,
Scholar for Adult Education

Interested in discovering more about the Bible? Interested in expanding your ideas of what justice and mercy look like in action? Join me for a look at some of Jesus’ parables, as told in the Gospels. Hear the parables as Jesus’ ancient followers might have heard them, as seemingly simple stories that subvert common expectations about who deserves what and how the world is supposed to work. Consider how other readers and artists have understood these stories and their implications for our faith. Jesus’ parables have inspired and confounded Bible readers for generations; explore how they might nourish our hearts, minds, actions, and imaginations today. All are welcome, whether the Bible is foreign ground to you or whether you’ve been reading it for years. Sessions will take place online, via Zoom. Email Mahin Hamilton to register (mhamilton@wpc-mpls.org). For more information, visit the Adult Education page of Westminster’s website and read about the program “The Bible Then and Now.”
Dear friends,

I am not alone in being relieved to say farewell to 2020. The months since Covid burst into our world have been among the most challenging any of us will ever face.

As I look back, I am grateful for the fine work of my colleagues on the staff team and our deacons, elders, and trustees. They all have shouldered the responsibility of leading church ministries in ways none of us could have anticipated.

Back in March we said, While apart, we covenant still to be the church. We have kept that promise – and will need to keep at it for much of the coming new year.

I recently went through the minutes of the meetings of the Westminster Session and Board of Trustees for 1918-1920. Those were the years of the last global pandemic, and I wanted to see how our church leaders responded to that similar crisis.

To my surprise, there was not a single mention in church records of the pandemic that ravaged the state 100 years ago. The disease entered Minnesota through contact with troops returning from WWI. At least 12,000 persons in the state died from the flu back then – more than twice the number we have lost to Covid today, with less than half the population. It was devastating.

In October 1918, the Minneapolis City Council ordered that no public assemblies could be held, including church services. Westminster was not allowed to gather for worship for two months, and, surely lost church members to the flu pandemic, as we have today to Covid – but not a single word about the global health crisis shows up in the official records of the congregation.

At their meetings 100 years ago, the elders and trustees discussed and voted on primarily three things: welcoming new members, managing Abbott Hospital and its expansion with a new Children’s Hospital, and funding mission. In the midst of a global pandemic we sent mission workers overseas and committed ourselves to their ongoing support. We funded various city missions. We gave to the YMCA and new ecumenical efforts in the city.

In short, we did back then what we are doing today in the Covid pandemic: continuing to be the church and reaching out with the love of Jesus to serve others.

Thanks be to God for this faithful community.

See you in church!

Grace and peace,
Winter Quiet Worship
Saturday, January 16 | 9 am
You are invited to take part in a “Candlemas Quiet Worship,” an opportunity to remember and give thanks for the lives and ministries of all of the clergy and lay members, for all the saints who have gone before us at Westminster. With gathering in-person still on hold, you are invited to download the Quiet Worship bulletin [visit westminstermpls.org, then type “Quiet Worship” in the Search Box], then gather in your own special place to read or pray the bold-face words quietly, out-loud . . . knowing that they are being read or prayed by others at the same time . . . by a cloud of witnesses.

Beyond Sunday Connections
Monday, February 8 | 6:30 pm
Women are invited to come together for Beyond Sunday Connections’ next virtual event, February 8 at 6:30 pm. Rani Murdoch Zappa will emcee the livestream program. Rachel Gustafson, Westminster’s Director of Congregational and Community Engagement, will be our featured speaker. Small group discussion follows with Zoom participation. Contact Deb Wagner to sign up, dwagner@wpc-mpls.org.

January All-Church Book Read
Westminster’s All-Church Book Read features James Baldwin’s If Beale Street Could Talk. This novel about the false criminal accusation of a Black man gives us the opportunity to explore persistent and continuing inequities in our so-called justice system and highlights the beauty and power of Black love, romantic and familial. The community is invited to read this novel and then tune-in during the Learning Hour Sundays in January to delve into this timely and important text. For more information, or if you are interested in facilitating a discussion of this book, please contact me at rgustafson@wpc-mpls.org. You may purchase a copy of the book at your favorite online retailer or with assistance from the church. Consider supporting a local, Black-owned bookstore by visiting bookshop.org/shop/blackgarnetbooks.

New Old Adventure Spring Preview
by Rachel Sheild Gustafson, Director of Congregational and Community Engagement
Mark your calendars! People of all ages are welcome to join the New Old Adventure for monthly educational forums on Zoom. Contact me (rgustafson@wpc-mpls.org) or David Shinn (dshinn@wpc-mpls.org) to receive Zoom info. All sessions begin at 11 am, but you can tune in a bit early to resolve any potential technical issues.

• January 13 Demystifying Healthcare Reform Featuring Westminster member Ken Joslyn, MD (see related cover article)
• February 10 What do Presbyterians Believe? Featuring Westminster Pastor Emerita Kathy Michael
• March 10 How Do Presbyterians Live Their Beliefs? Featuring Westminster Pastor Emerita Kathy Michael

Details to follow for April 14 and May 12 forums.
Supporting BeFriender Ministry
by Suzanne McInroy, Director of Communications

The Westminster Congregational Care BeFriender ministry began more than a year ago with the goal to serve as a living reminder of God’s love by providing care as a listening presence to anyone experiencing a life transition or challenge. Steph Svee answered a few questions about the BeFriender ministry, which she co-chairs along with Laurie Fetterman.

Tell me a little bit about BeFrienders.
BeFriender is a listening ministry, headquartered locally in Bloomington. Our goal is to be a listening presence as you go through your journey of a difficult time. We are a team of nine trained volunteers who meet with others as they are and without telling them how they should be. We are not there to judge or tell you what to do. We care, but we do not cure.

How is BeFriender different from other Congregational Care ministries?
BeFriender is a one-on-one relationship and the duration is not defined—it is as long as that journey needs to be. After a month of meetings, we check to make sure it is still working for everyone. We help others during many different situations, but mostly ones that are more temporary journeys, such as loneliness, unemployment, divorce, a move, retirement, having a baby—life changes that you just want a person from church to be a presence with you.

Why do you think BeFriender is important at this particular time?
With COVID there is a lot loneliness and angst, and we can be a support for that by having someone reach out on a consistent basis and be a support. Also, normally stressful and difficult times may be heightened because of COVID.

Who should someone contact if they want to have a BeFriender?
Contact Rev. David Shinn (dshinn@wpc-mpls.org) or Rev. Judy Kim (jkim@wpc-mpls.org). They will get you matched with one of our trained volunteers. We have volunteers ready right now so please reach out if this sounds like a ministry you might benefit from.

Gathered@Five
by Meghan Gage-Finn, Executive Associate Pastor

Carrying on the strong vision cast under the leadership of Rev. Sarah Brouwer, Gathered at Five will remain as a space for worship, connection, fellowship, and learning. I look forward to sharing leadership with Revs. Tim Hart-Andersen and Alexandra Mauney, and the gifted music team, under the direction of David Ostenso Moore. Sunday evening worship service will continue to invite reflection on God’s Word and the work of the Spirit as we move into the New Year. Rev. David Tsai Shinn will lead a book discussion group for Gathered at Five on James Baldwin’s If Beale Street Could Talk. Revs. Alanna Simone Tyler and Matt Skinner will create new content and conversation with the podcast For Pod So Loved the World. What you have come to expect and appreciate about Gathered at Five will remain: thoughtful liturgy, beautiful music, creative and imaginative proclamation of the Gospel, and meaningful ways to connect through worship. At the same time, there will be new surprises and discoveries as the next chapter of the story unfolds!

Celebrating 2020 Meisel Scholars
by Meghan Gage-Finn, Executive Associate Pastor

Though the celebration may look a little different this year, as is the tradition, we will hear from Westminster’s Meisel Scholars on Meisel Sunday, January 3. Instead of an after-church lunch together on-site, we will gather in the Zoom Coffee Hour to listen to stories and experiences from Ellen Kemp, Ellie McCreary, and Anna Northenscold. They will reflect on what they learned through internships this past summer and how their time as Meisel Scholars is informing their continued vocational discernment. Please join the conversation after the 10:30 service on January 3, and for those students interested in pursuing a Meisel experience in 2021, please reach out to me at mgage-finn@wpc-mpls.org!
**Cuba Clean Water, One Year Later**
*by Dan Parten, Westminster member*

In December of 2019 a team of six Westminster members travelled to Cuba and worked with our partners there to install two Clean Water systems in the city of Matanzas, one at our partner congregation in the Versalles neighborhood, and one at the main Paediatric Hospital. Now, one year later, our partners in Cuba report that both Clean Water systems are in daily operation and are providing a safe water supply for the people near the church and for the highest priority needs in the hospital.

Our Cuba Clean Water Team now directly supports seven systems in Cuba, located at six churches and the hospital. We also provide essential leadership for the network of 62 Clean Water systems now operating in Cuba. Working with our U.S. partner, Living Waters for the World, and with the assistance of WPC member Aurora Gonzalez, the Cuba Clean Water Network has established a warehouse of spare parts and equipment in Havana to support the continued dependable operation of all 62 systems. Our Cuban Partners and their communities thank you for the gift of safe water during this time of scarcity and pandemic.

To learn more about the Cuba Clean Water Team trip view the video at: vimeo.com/383073008.

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**Family Education Hour to Complement the All-Church Book Read**
*by Marie Kruskop, Coordinator of Early Childhood & Family Ministries*

“All that can be changed is what is faced.” – James Baldwin

All fall, FYC’s Family Education Hour has considered the theme Building the Beloved Community, which focused on the intersection between faith formation and social justice, equity, and cultural intelligence. In January, we will consider these themes from another perspective. As adults take part in the All-Church Book Read featuring James Baldwin’s *If Beale Street Could Talk* (see related article on page 4), FYC’s Family Education Hour will focus on learning more about the book’s author and our time together will center around exploring his one and only children’s book *Little Man, Little Man – A Story of Childhood*. Baldwin wrote about what it is like to be an African-American in the United States, and this children’s book celebrates and explores the challenges and joys of black childhood.

Our hope is to gain a better understanding of the African-American experience so we might be a positive part of the change our country needs. By facing what needs to be changed, we hope to be part of the change for good.

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**Wednesday Nights with FYC**
*by Marie Kruskop, Coordinator of Early Childhood & Family Ministries*

Westminster Wednesday Nights continue, though not quite in the same way as pre-pandemic. There is still dinner – though not Laura Lee’s wonderful comfort foods; we now make our own dinners. There is still singing – though not with Brad in the Children’s Music Room; we now sing along with Brad as part of our fellowship time. There is still fellowship – though not around tables in the Fellowship Hall; we now gather around our computers in a Zoom call with lots and lots of friends! Our Wednesday nights look a bit different right now, but we are still finding ways to connect.

Wednesday Nights with FYC begin at 5:45 pm with Family Fellowship Time – we greet one another, we sing along with Brad, we celebrate birthdays on the last Wednesday of the month with everyone and singing “Happy Birthday!” (a joyful cacophony not to be missed), we are sent off at 6:15 pm to Church School (ages 3-Grade 5) and Confirmation with a prayer. Each week we do something to learn more about one another or to celebrate a part of our faith or something that is simply silly!

Once a month, we have a “themed” night. Join us on January 6 for an Epiphany celebration – we’ll choose a star word to guide us through the New Year, just as the Magi were guided by the star to find Jesus. And on February 10, we’ll celebrate our pets with our very own Westminster Pet Show (not to be confused with the Westminster Kennel Club Dog Show).

Even while apart, we are committed to staying connected with our Westminster family. Contact Marie (mkruskop@ wpc-mpls.org) for the Zoom information. We hope to “see” you there!
Streaming Recital Series: Organs of the Twin Cities

To kick off 2021, Westminster’s interim organist Kenneth Vigne will be joined by four other organists in the Twin Cities to present a monthly series of mini organ recitals streaming from January through May. Though the recital series will be hosted on Westminster’s streaming site, each performer will play on their own instrument in their own church, offering a closer look at five of the great organs in the Twin Cities metro area. Each recital will consist of a 20-minute program and a short interview.

Kenneth Vigne will start the series January 24 at 2 pm, exploring the various colors of the 85-rank, 4-manual M. P. Möller organ Opus 11458 at Westminster. The program will feature works by William Byrd, Jean-Philippe Rameau, Florence Price, Chelsea Chen, and Kenneth Vigne.

Questions? Contact Kenneth Vigne, kvigne@wpc-mpls.org.

Upcoming Performances

• February: Isaac Drewes, Central Lutheran Church, Minneapolis
• March: Dr. David Cherwien, Mount Olive Lutheran Church, Minneapolis
• April: Dr. Catherine Rodland, Colonial Church, Edina
• May: Dr. Christopher Ganza, Cathedral of St. Paul, St. Paul

Creativity During a COVID Christmas

by Peter Bruhn, LPC, LADC,
Westminster Counseling Center

Let’s point out the obvious: This holiday season will no doubt be dramatically different. Despite the fact that we have made the necessary lifestyle adjustments required to stay safe by now, being separated from loved ones during a time of year that is typically the height of socializing and connecting is painful. Whether it’s parties, holiday productions, church, or time with loved ones, we’re being asked to forego that which makes this time of year so special. Additionally, we’re living in a social and political climate that is unsettling. It’s a lot to navigate, and at a time we need each other the most, we’re to stay apart.

Perhaps a useful approach during this challenge is to challenge yourself. This season will not be like others, but what is still within your control? Staying put with your immediate family may mean fewer obligations, and thus the opportunity to customize the holidays more to your liking. Can a family tradition be creatively modified? Can you open presents via Zoom? Can you do something new this year? If the temperatures are mild enough, a socially distanced firepit with gluhwein and a few neighbors could result in a new tradition. The point is, moving through the holidays with creativity and flexibility will allow us to make the most of this challenge, while remembering this is, after all, temporary.

Lenten Covenant Groups to Journey Together through “The Listening Season”

by Rachel Sheild Gustafson, Director of Congregational and Community Engagement

In January we will begin to assemble Lenten Covenant Groups. Those of you who have been part of the community for a while might remember these as a Westminster tradition in which we gather weekly throughout the season of Lent into small groups to connect with each other and further explore the sermons. Groups meet for a 6-week session and are free to continue if they wish. This year, our theme will be “The Listening Season.” Each group will be equipped with a conversation guide to help them journey together deeper into the theme.

During this particularly extended and difficult season of isolation as well as national, community, and personal reflection, we believe small groups are a critical point of connection and encouragement. The word “encourage” comes from the French encourager which means to “make strong, hearten.” Now more than ever, let us gather to find strength in our community and hearten each other.

If your small group is interested in continuing through the Lenten season or if you’d like to lead a new Lenten Covenant Group, please contact me at rgustafson@wpc-mpls.org. If you’d like to join a group, please contact Mahin Hamilton (mhamilton@wpc-mpls.org).
Christmas Art: Our Gift to the City

by Rodney Allen Schwartz, Director, Westminster Gallery and Archive

We are exhibiting Advent and Christmas art from the Westminster Collection in the new Window Gallery facing the Nicollet Mall while the Westminster building and Gallery remain closed. This new gallery fills all seven windows of Westminster Hall and provides 35 feet of exhibition space, with a forest of lit Christmas trees as background. Viewing is best in the evening when the sun's glare and reflections of the city are minimized. Feel free to park briefly in the drive through and walk around the building to see the exhibition.

The waiting weeks of Advent are illuminated with art depicting the Older Testament’s prophet’s foretelling of the coming Christ child, the Annunciation by the angel Gabriel to Mary of her baby, the Visitation between cousins Mary and Elizabeth, Joseph’s dream, and the Holy Family’s travels to Bethlehem. The Christmas story includes the birth, the Adoration of the shepherds, and the later Adoration of the Magi at Epiphany. We traditionally include the Baptism of Jesus in this exhibition even though he was baptized as an adult, because we observe the baptism and reaffirm our own baptism on the Sunday after Epiphany.

Museums are closed and Dayton’s holiday windows are a thing of the past; be sure to come downtown and experience the new Window Gallery and the glory of the Advent and Christmas stories told through art.