Union Presbyterian Seminary President Brian Blount to Preach at Westminster

by Suzanne McInroy, Director of Communications

As Westminster continues “A Year of Listening,” we welcome the Rev. Dr. Brian Blount as a guest preacher on February 14 during the 10:30 am worship as well as Gathered at Five.

Since 2007, Blount has served as President and Professor of New Testament at Union Presbyterian Seminary in Richmond, Virginia, and Charlotte, North Carolina. Previously, he served for 15 years as the Richard J. Dearborn Professor of New Testament Interpretation at Princeton Theological Seminary.

Rev. Dr. Meghan Gage-Finn and Rev. David Tsai Shinn both had Blount as a professor when they studied at Princeton. They remember him as a thorough teacher who pushed students in the classroom while also having a gentle, approachable spirit.

“He preached the Baccalaureate service for my class’s Commencement weekend, and I still remember his words of challenge for us to go out and ‘shake up the neighborhood’ in our ministry,” says Gage-Finn. “I hope the Westminster community can receive his honest and thoughtful gospel witness with open hearts!”

Shinn says Blount taught students “to listen carefully for all sides and audiences, and to guide people to greater faithfulness by walking along side with them,” and he looks forward to what he will share with Westminster as a guest preacher. “Dr. Blount’s scholarship and pastoral presence comes through clearly when you are with him. I hope WPC members will learn from his listening posture and at the same time, WPC members will also receive his prophetic wisdom, especially now on our racial issues of the day.”

The Westminster community may remember Blount from when he taught an Adult Education class this summer in the wake of George Floyd’s killing.

Creating a Sacred Space at Home

by David Tsai Shinn, Associate Pastor

Recently, our denominational publication included a story, “Finding sacred space beyond the sanctuary.” In my college and seminary days, I would set up my Bible and journal in the back corner of my apartment closet. That was where I could sit quietly without disturbance from my roommates, television, or telephone calls.

I would like to invite you to take a moment and create a sacred space of your own. Set up a place by the window, or next to an art work, or just in a comfortable spot. In that sacred space with your Bible, your computer, tablet, or phone, God will meet you there. Let us invite God to meet us as we continue on this journey with hope and peace. Let us continue to pray for the day when we will be back together in person again.
Westminster Town Hall Forum: A New Year and Dawn Breaks
by Tane Danger, Director, Westminster Town Hall Forum

As 2021 begins, I am more resolute than ever about the importance of spaces like the Town Hall Forum and our commitment to engaging the issues of the day “from an ethical perspective,” starting with our Winter/Spring 2021 season.

We begin on January 28 with two big questions: How do we save the planet? And how do we do it justly? Dr. Ayana Elizabeth Johnson has been called “the most influential marine biologist of our time.” Her work is centered at the intersection of climate change, policy, and race. She helped organize the 2017 March for Science in Washington D.C. and co-created the podcast How to Save a Planet. This program will serve as both the kick-off of our season and of the Great Northern Festival.

Longtime patient-rights activist Barbara Coombs Lee joins us on March 23 to share her vision for a world where everyone has more choices and better care at the end of their life. After a 25-year career as a nurse and physician assistant, often caring for terminally ill patients, Lee became president emerita/senior adviser of Compassion & Choices, the nation’s oldest and largest nonprofit focused on end-of-life care.

You may have heard of Walter Isaacson for his biographies of Steve Jobs and Leonardo da Vinci. He is out with a new book called The Codebreaker where he digs into the life and work of Dr. Jennifer Doudna, the scientist behind the gene-editing technology CRISPR. On April 20, he will join us to discuss what it means that we can now readily rearrange the basic building blocks of life.

The Forum gets 85% of its operating budget from individual donors like you. Help us maintain and grow this invaluable space for ideas and civic dialogue. Make a contribution 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.

In Gratitude for a Recent Legacy Gift

“...and some of the seed fell into good soil, where it came up and grew, and bore fruit...” Mark 4:8

One of the reasons Westminster will sustain God’s work into the future is because of legacy giving. Legacy Gifts are invested to serve the church in perpetuity. Westminster is grateful for a recent Legacy Gift from Carolyn Hendrix Hart, a member for 13 years. Carolyn supported women in leadership via the Women on Wednesday program (WOW) and many book groups. Initiatives that held a special place in her heart were helping youth find their path through the Meisel Scholar Program, creating cross-cultural understanding through our global partnerships, and addressing pollution-related illness through the Cuba Clean Water program. Because of Carolyn and others who leave a Legacy Gift, future generations will know God’s love and justice. She will be fondly remembered with love - thanks be to God for her legacy.

For information on how you can create a Legacy Gift to Westminster, contact Mary Hess, Director of Stewardship, mhess@wpc-mpls.org or 612.332.3421, and see westministermpls.org/legacy-giving. If you have a Legacy Gift already in place, please let us know so we can include you in the Legacy Circle.

A New Year for Gathered at Five
by Meghan Gage-Finn, Executive Associate Pastor

The Gathered at Five Leadership Team has been engaged in good planning in recent weeks as we move into new seasons as the church and as community. We are excited to share in opportunities for dynamic worship and growing fellowship! Rev. David Tsai Shinn is leading a book discussion group on James Baldwin’s If Beale Street Could Talk and regular post-worship fellowship time, on Zoom, creates opportunities for conversation and connection. The chat feature, which has been a part of Sunday morning worship since September, is now part of evening worship, as well. During Lent, Gathered at Five worship will follow the church-wide theme of “The Listening Season,” so expect more space for silence and attuning our hearts to God’s voice and the Spirit’s movement as part of the liturgy. As new elements are folding into the Gathered at Five community, what remains constant are the ways we glorify God by celebrating worship with beautiful music and thoughtful language, and by furthering our connections as the people of God. I look forward to worshipping with you on Sunday evenings in the coming weeks!
Dear friends,

Last fall, after interviewing Eddie Glaude, Jr., professor of African-American Studies at Princeton University, for the Westminster Town Hall Forum, our conversation stayed with me. As I look back it seemed prescient. The election had just taken place, but the events of January 6 in Washington were still weeks away.

We spoke about Glaude’s new book, Begin Again: James Baldwin's America and Its Urgent Lesson for Our Own. Glaude tells what historian John Hope Franklin calls “the unvarnished truth,” about the reality of racialized violence in our land. But it does not leave us hopeless. In fact, Glaude reissues Baldwin’s call to America to begin again, trusting that “Hope is invented every day.”

At the heart of our faith as followers of Jesus is that God always give us a second chance. We usually understand that Christian conviction as God’s grace extended to us as individuals, but Baldwin was thinking more broadly.

Glaude says that for Baldwin, to begin again means that, as a people, “We examine the fundamental values and commitments that shape our self-understanding, and that we look back to those Beginnings not to reaffirm our greatness or double down on myths that secure our innocence, but to see where we went wrong and how we might reimagine or recreate ourselves in light of who we initially set out to be.”

I write this pastoral missive just a few days before the inauguration of a new president. Such a moment always signals a new start, no matter the parties or persons involved, but this year the American ritual of political transition carries considerably more weight, coming on the heels of the attempted insurrection in our nation’s capital.

Baldwin was right: America needs to begin again. The flagrant eruption of long-simmering claims of racial superiority in the angry mob at the Capitol makes this work urgent – and essential, if we are to survive as an electoral democracy committed to justice and equality.

“In our time,” Glaude says, “with so much hatred and venom in our politics and our culture, we must actively cultivate communities of love that allow us to imagine different ways of being together.”

Beginning again is the work of the church. Creating communities of love – the beloved community – is the work of the church. Our work. Let us renew our pursuit of that good work together.

See you in church – online.

Grace and peace,

From Our Pastor
Winter Quiet Worship: Three Things We Are To Do
Saturday, February 20 | 9 am

Last February was the last time we gathered in the Bushnell Room. Our next gathering will complete a full year of worshipping virtually. But if our way of worship is new, three things Jesus calls us to do remain unchanged: to come to God in prayer, to create community, and to do ministry. Our gathering will be virtual. Our worship together will be real.

Seeking Prizes for Scouts
Troop 100 is planning to conduct a fruit sale in February. We always award our top salespeople with prizes. Do you have prizes to donate? – bicycles or other sports equipment, camping gear, electronics – anything a boy or girl might like. You can call Dave Moore at 612-747-8364 and we can arrange to pick it up.

Jesus: Our Model of Vulnerability and Courage
At first glance vulnerability and courage may seem opposites, but our faith and scientific analysis demonstrate that they are intimately connected. We will explore these connections from 10-11 am Saturdays during Lent. We will reflect and explore both a scripture passage and contemporary reflection on courage and vulnerability. Email Rachel Gustafson (rgustafson@wpc-mpls.org) to sign up, or contact Chad with questions (612-374-9410; chadquaintance@gmail.com).

Beyond Sunday Connections
by Paula Huey Fox, Westminster Member

Beyond Sunday Connections will be livestreamed for all Westminster women on Monday, February 8, at 6:30 pm. Rani Murdoch Zappa emcees the program and Rachel Sheild Gustafson, Westminster’s Director of Congregational and Community Engagement, is the featured speaker. At the end of the program, church women are invited to participate in small group discussion on Zoom.

Rachel joined Westminster’s staff this past summer and looks forward to the time when we can gather in person for greater involvement in church and community efforts. Her professional experience spans grassroots community organizing to federal policymaking, particularly around public health, child welfare, and the arts. She has an MFA in creative writing from Seattle Pacific University and an MPH in maternal and child health from the University of Minnesota. On a personal note, Rachel says she has three strong-willed daughters. In her free time, she enjoys writing essays, getting outdoors, and gathering people in her home for food and connection. Rachel titled her talk “Eager with My Meager: Learning to Step Out with Imperfect Offerings.” Tune in to find out just what she means and her ideas for strengthening Westminster’s connections to our community.

To sign up for Beyond Sunday Connections, contact Deb Wagner (dwagner@wpc-mpls.org). She will provide a handout and link for the Zoom conversations. Questions? Contact Lynne Thompson, 612.339.3971.
Prayer Companions: Companions in spirit and in body
by Ann Rainhart, Deacon, Prayer Ministry Team

Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest.” — Matthew 11:28

Prior to the pandemic a group of lay leaders made their way to the chapel every Sunday after the 10:30 am church service. One of us served as a greeter, and two of us sat in the chapel, near lit candles, at quiet tables awaiting a guest or two to find their way into the space for prayer with a companion. We aptly called ourselves prayer companions. Some weeks, we prayed quietly by ourselves, sometimes we prayed with each other, and some Sundays we were joined with request for prayer by individuals who wanted to share their stories, burdens, and needs for prayer with one of us. While those moments remain confidential, I think I can speak on behalf of all the prayer companions to say that praying with another person when they are in need is definitely a profound sacred space.

Since the pandemic began, the prayer companions have continued to pray as requests for prayer make their way to the pastors and to the church office. However, we’ve continued to miss being in person with people and have been in conversation and discernment as to the best way to be in prayer with individuals during this time. We met recently via Zoom and have decided to launch a new phase to our ministry during Lent.

There are three ways that you can pray with someone on the prayer team. The first is after Sunday service. You may pray with a prayer companion over the livestream chat feature after the service. The second is prayer on a telephone or ‘Zoom’ call with a prayer companion. The third is the prayer email chain. We will practice all of these ways of connecting as we prepare for the day when we can be together again. And who knows, maybe we will learn that there are many ways to support each other in prayer and will continue them long after Covid-19.

Opportunities for College-Age Families and Students
by Meghan Gage-Finn, Executive Associate Pastor

There are regular opportunities available for college-age caregivers to connect, share wisdom, listen, and pray together. We meet on Zoom about once a month and if you are parenting a college-age student through this unusual season for them, and for you, I hope you will join us. The next meeting will be Tuesday, February 9 at 7 pm. Contact me at mgage-finn@wpc-mpls.org for Zoom information.

There is also a regular meeting time for students on Sundays at noon, via Zoom. This time is a mix of fellowship and support, with some weeks focusing specifically on conversations around dismantling racism. We are exploring what that means for individuals of faith, and in particular in the context of the college environment. If you are a student, or know of one, who might like to be part of these gatherings, please be in touch with me for more information!

What the Death of Jesus Tells Us about Him ... and Us
by Matt Skinner, Scholar for Adult Education

Mondays, February 22 through March 22, 7-8:30 pm

How did the death of Jesus come about? What did the event accomplish, or what does it tell us? How should it inform our attitudes about suffering, oppression, the use and misuse of power, and the mysterious presence of God in our midst? This Lenten season, you’re invited to take a fresh look at a defining event for Christian faith: Jesus’ crucifixion. Join me for a new installment of the “The Bible Then and Now” program. We will meet online each Monday for five weeks to consider how the Gospels describe and interpret the public execution of Jesus. We will reflect on the stories’ ability to tell us about our roles in the event and their ability to urge us to respond to God and to those who suffer injustice and violence 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 Bible Then and Now.”
New Old Adventure: Who Are We Presbyterians?
by Rachel Gustafson, Director of Congregational and Community Engagement

Our Presbyterian/Reformed Tradition has a rich history coming out of the Reformation of the 16th Century. But that was a long time ago. Does it still matter that we are Presbyterian? New Old Adventure will explore this issue on February 10 at 11 am, through a Zoom presentation from the Rev. Dr. Paul Capetz, historical theologian and pastor of Christ Church by the Sea, Newport Beach, California. Capetz has taught adult education classes at Westminster many times while he was on the faculty of United Seminary of the Twin Cities. Capetz will address the origins of the Reformation and follow the stream that became the Presbyterian Church through the work of John Calvin in Geneva and John Knox in Scotland. The theological principles of Faith alone, Grace alone, Scripture alone, which initiated with Martin Luther carried through to our Reformed Tradition, which includes all groups that come out of Calvin's work.

Westminster has a history of strong ecumenical and interfaith relationships with other congregations in the city. Knowing our own origins and theological underpinnings makes those relationships stronger and assures that we bring something to the table in our important conversations.

Hunger Offering: Our Threefold Response to Food Insecurity
by Alanna Simone Tyler, Associate Pastor

One in 11 Minnesota households is food insecure—meaning the income of the household was not sufficient to feed everyone in the family. The youngest among us and our elders struggle with hunger. Studies estimate the rate of childhood food insecurity is four times greater than the rate before the Covid-19 pandemic.

Westminster is responding to our neighbors who live with food insecurity through service activities coordinated through the Hunger Ministry Team—please see our website for opportunities to serve. Westminster has and will continue to advocate for expanding and increasing the benefits low-income households receive through the effective and proven Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP). We know from our friends at Second Harvest Heartland for every one meal provided by food banks SNAP provides nine. While we continue to serve our neighbors and lift our voices in support of SNAP, Westminster also provides direct financial support to food shelves, meal programs and other local organizations responding to hunger in our communities.

With our neighbors in mind, please consider a generous contribution to the Hunger Offering. Our gifts to Groveland Food Shelf, Liberty Church 21st Century Academy Summer Meal Program, Al-Maa’uun Food Program and the Division of Indian Work make a big difference. To give online, visit the special offerings page on our website (westminstermpls.org/specialofferings) and select “Hunger Offering” in the fund drop-down menu. We will receive the annual Hunger Offering Sunday, February 28.

Congregational Nominating Committee
by Jim DeBuse, Westminster Elder, and Meghan Gage-Finn, Executive Associate Pastor

The 2021 Congregational Nominating Committee (CNC) invites you to offer names of people you believe should be called into ministry at Westminster, to serve in the coming years in the role of Trustee, Deacon, or Ruling Elder. While Trustees take on very distinct jobs on their board, particularly in the area of finance, they are commissioned instead of ordained, to serve a three-year term. Elders serve on the Session, the governing body of the church, and the main decision-making board in a Presbyterian congregation. This is why they are called Ruling Elders, and pastors are referred to as Teaching Elders. Deacons are called to be the caring arm of the church, with ministries of compassion to those in need in our community. Deacons and Ruling Elders are ordained and installed into their leadership positions. They are asked to serve a term of three years.

The CNC will begin its work in the spring, which continues through the summer and into the fall, to nominate a slate of candidates, and their work will culminate with the Congregational Meeting in November. Please consider if you know someone who would be a good candidate for the CNC to receive, and you are encouraged to put forward your own name if you feel called to serve Westminster in a particular role. You may contact Rev. Meghan Gage-Finn (mgage-finn@wpc-mpls.org) and Elder Jim DeBuse (jimdebuse@gmail.com), who serves as CNC Chair.
Psalm 85 Serigraph Added to the Westminster Collection

by Rodney Allen Schwartz, Director, Westminster Gallery and Archive

John August Swanson is an artist living and creating art in Los Angeles, and a friend of Westminster. His life’s work is well represented in the Westminster Collection. He was discovered and mentored by Sister Corita Kent and, like her, made antiwar and social justice themed art early in his career. He later developed bodies of work about the circus, acrobats, and orchestras, and then Biblical stories. The Westminster Collection has a significant number of these Biblical pieces.

Swanson’s art is mostly serigraph prints which are a cross between a silkscreen and a stencil. They are printed with ink pushed through small holes in a specially cut screen, one for each different color of ink. Other kinds of prints might use a few colors but serigraphs like his can have many different inks that are matte and glossy and opaque and transparent. These differing inks create a luminous and bright image. He used 51 inks in the production of this serigraph. Interspersed in this delightful bucolic scene is text from Psalm 85: “Justice shall look down from the heavens; justice and peace shall kiss; kindness and truth shall meet; truth shall spring out of the earth.”

The Window Gallery featuring an exhibition of Advent and Christmas art was a great success in sharing Westminster’s art with the community. A new Lent and Easter exhibition will be installed in mid-February to coincide with Ash Wednesday.

Organs of the Twin Cities Recital Series Continues

Our Organs of the Twin Cities mini recital series continues in February with Central Lutheran Church’s Associate Director of Music Isaac Drewes. Though the recital series will be hosted on Westminster’s streaming site, each performer will play in their own church, offering a closer look at five great organs in the Twin Cities metro area. Each recital will consist of a 20-minute program and a short interview.

The February 28 at 2 pm recital will feature Central Lutheran Church’s 107-rank organ built by Casavant Frères Opus 2722, and include works by Paul Hindemith, Johann Sebastian Bach, and Charles Marie Widor.

The streaming site can be found on Westminster’s website by clicking the “Livestream” link near the top of the page, or directly at westminstermpls.online.church.

Meal Ministry Update

by Megan MacFarlane & Sarah Hardy, Meal Ministry team

In 2020, the Meal Ministry Team provided over 85 meals for nine recipients. Meals varied from home-cooked, to personally delivered take out, to BiteSquad gift cards. Our recipients included families welcoming new babies and congregants undergoing surgery or some other hardship through which some meal support would greatly help them.

It is a blessing to provide and receive meals. Bailey and Andy Kaul, 2018 meal recipients, recall that, “We received meals following the birth of our daughter, and it was such a blessing to have a warm meal during such a busy time of life. The food itself was such a gift, but seeing members of the congregation in our home was the biggest treat! Our daughter was born over two years ago, and I still remember each meal and visit — we felt so cared for!” Cindy McCready and her family received meals in 2020. Cindy writes, “We were so grateful for the WPC Meal Ministry! Each meal was delicious and brought physical and spiritual healing in a very powerful way. The meals provided us with much needed rest and renewal during a difficult time and helped us feel cared for and supported. Thank you for everything you do for the WPC community!”

If your family or someone you know may benefit from receiving a set of meals, please contact Rev. David Shinn (dshinn@wpc-mpls.org). If you’d like to join our growing list of prospective meal providers, we need you! Please email the team at westminstermealministry@gmail.com.
FYC Updates
by Alexandra Mauney, Associate Pastor

On the first Sunday of January this year, the Families, Youth, & Children (FYC) program area kicked off our year with a lesson about African American author and activist James Baldwin. We ended our time together in Zoom breakout rooms to ask questions about whether or not the historical figures we learn about in school look like us, and about how artists like Baldwin might teach us to love our neighbors. Later that same day, the junior high and senior high youth groups each had their own conversations about Kimberlé Crenshaw’s concept of intersectionality, examining how our own various identity-markers intersect with one another in beautiful and painful ways. As I moved from my Zoom screen to the dinner table that evening, I recall feeling particularly grateful for the willingness of our leaders and young people to engage the kinds of questions and discussions that often make adults squirm in our seats. It was a reminder that the Spirit of God continues to move within and among the young people in our community and beyond, and that no one is too young to begin discovering the truth in Cornel West’s beautiful quote that hangs as a banner outside the church: Justice is what love looks like in public.

As we enter the season of Lent, the FYC areas continue to ask hard questions and learn new things, all in the midst of the beautiful and lovely chaos of online forms of community. We will journey together alongside the wider church community, listening for God’s movement and voice through the various wildernesses of our own lives. We will laugh and learn together; we will create and grow together; we will be Church together, even through our Zoom screens. If you have little ones in your home and haven’t yet joined us for Wednesday night or Sunday morning programming, I hope you’ll consider joining us sometime soon.

Youth Group Continues to Build Connections and Prepares for Cabaret
by Matt Lewellyn-Otten, Director of Youth Ministries

Our Youth Group is a resilient bunch of young people who continue to connect via Zoom through regular gatherings on Sunday night, a digital Coffee Shop on Tuesday afternoons, Confirmation class on Wednesday evenings, and Friday night game nights – all from the safety of our homes. For the semester ahead, the Youth Groups have made a commitment to explore nuances around race, discrimination, and injustices in America, as well as ask the question of how people of faith should respond. We aren’t shying away from the hard questions and often it’s our young people who take us there.

We continue with Youth Group traditions in new, imaginative ways. This year’s 27th Annual Cabaret will be Friday, February 26 at 6 pm via Westminster’s livestream platform. You will still be able to support the Youth Mission Fund through financial contributions during this performance. This much-loved Westminster tradition will bring some much-needed levity – even during Lent! To make things a little bit sweeter, if you contribute to the Westminster Youth Missions Fund during Cabaret, you will be entered into a drawing for a Caribou Coffee gift card. Your generosity is welcome as we navigate a time of social distancing and look forward to gathering in person in the future.

If your young person hasn’t had the opportunity to join in the Youth Group fun, this is a great time to jump in! And if you no longer have a young person in your home, your generosity and prayers will help to sustain our work in building a more just and faithful world.

Chinese New Year FYC Family Reunion
by Greta Wicker, FYC Parent

On Friday, February 12 at 6 pm celebrate the Chinese New Year with some Westminster Family Fellowship. Cook or order in your own Chinese meal, and then “Zoom” into the Year of the Ox, where we’ll share table talk and learn about this festival. Dragon dance and fireworks included! RSVP to Marie Kruskop (mkruskop@wpc-mpls.org) to get Zoom info.

Join a Lenten Covenant Group

Lenten Covenant Groups will meet via Zoom this year. To sign up for a group, please fill out the online form: westminstermpls.org/2021-covenant-groups. If you need assistance signing up, please contact Mahin Hamilton (mhamilton@wpc-mpls.org; 612-332-3421, ext. 216).

As Ash Wednesday gets closer, look for a link to this year’s Lenten Devotional book!
Parents and Caregivers Gather Together

by Marie Kruskop, Coordinator of Early Childhood & Family Ministries

Parents and Caregivers of children of all ages are invited to gather together, albeit virtually, to build connections with Westminster’s FYC community. Come when you can, stay as long as you are able; you are always welcome! Contact Marie at mkruskop@wpc-mpls.org with questions and for Zoom information for the following opportunities.

**Family Matters** is a place of welcome and connection for parents and caregivers with children of any age. We meet Sundays from 8-8:45 am. Currently we are taking a look at Everyday Family Faith practices as described by Sandy Swartzentruber. During Lent we will serve as a Covenant Group and consider the themes through a parenting lens.

**Moms Group** for moms with children of all ages, meets Wednesdays from 1:30-2:30 pm. We are using selections from Rachel Macy Stafford’s book *Only Love Today* as our weekly devotional and we will serve as a Covenant Group during Lent.

**Moms “Off the Clock”** is a time for moms to gather once children are in or at least on their way to bed! Join us for cozy, casual conversation using conversation starters from “The Hygge Game.” We gather on Thursdays at 9 pm on these dates: 2/25, 3/25, 4/22, and 5/27. RSVP “yes” or even “maybe” to Marie to get Zoom information.

**Dads Group** – Men’s Ministries invites any and all dads to a time of fellowship and conversation on the second Friday of each month. On February 12, spouses are also invited to a “meet and greet” with FYC’s Associate Pastor Alexandra Mauney. This will be a nice time to connect with both Alexandra and parents with children and youth of different age groups so she can get to know us better and vice-versa. Contact Brandon Tourtelotte (btourtelotte20@gmail.com) with questions and for Zoom information.

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Small Hands, Big Hearts
by Sonja Dziekciowski

Small Hands, Big Hearts, a service project group for elementary students in 2nd through 5th grade, has been hard at work throughout this program year. Under the vision of Gene Davis, this group has been meeting once a month via Zoom to create artwork, calls to action, and learn more about the importance of acts of service. We kicked off the fall with a Groveland Food Shelf Supply Drive. Our Small Hands, Big Hearts students made signs for their donation drop-off sites at their homes and also sent out email messages to neighbors and friends regarding items in high demand for the guests of Groveland. Our students dropped off supplies they gathered to our Trunk or Treat event in October, and the Groveland Food Shelf Bin at the entrance of the Trinity Stairs overflowed. It took volunteers from Faith in Action two trips to transport the paper products, pet food, spices, diapers, and hygiene products to Groveland.

In January our students created Care Cards for the college students of Westminster to send encouragement as everyone is navigating a much different format for learning and limited social interaction.

Our service project for February will focus on raising funds for the nonprofit organization, Every Meal, previously known as the Sheridan Story. Students will work on completing chores to earn money to donate culturally-sensitive meals that are available for students and families at local community centers like the YWCA.

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Girl Scout Cookies Will Soon Be Here!
by Megan MacFarlane, WPC Member and Girl Scout Mom

Life has changed a great deal in the last year, but the Girl Scouts are still on duty and rest assured they will be selling cookies for FEAST, the Groveland Food Shelf, and the congregation! This year’s choices include: S’mores, Lemonades, Shortbreads, Thin Mints, Peanut Butter Patties, Caramel deLites, Peanut Butter Sandwiches, Caramel Chocolate Chip (gluten free), and Toast-yays (new!).

Our Virtual Cookie Booth will be open February 20 through March 20. Look for more information on how to order cookies in upcoming FYC weekly emails, the All-Church email, and in the FYC Families Facebook Group. Contact Megan MacFarlane (megmac89@hotmail.com) or Gina Gustavson (margaretgustavson@gmail.com) for more information.
Making Lasting Changes to Care for our Emotional Health

by Carol Hornbeck, MA, LMFT, Westminster Counseling Center

As the difficult year of 2020 has ended, we might begin to feel hopeful about the changes the new year could bring, including the availability of the Covid-19 vaccine; yet we are still months from being safer and ending the practices that reduce the spread of the illness.

How can we care for our emotional health when we must continue socially isolating? The practices that help most are adequate sleep, regular exercise, good nutrition, and avoiding excesses like too much alcohol or screen time. If you decide to make improvements in one of these areas, having an accountability partner can increase your success.

Years of working with couples, families, and children have shown me that the best accountability partners are those who are invited, rather than self-appointed. This is because most of us resist change, even when it is positive. So if someone simply asks me, “how are you doing with getting more exercise?” and I am struggling with making the changes, it is easy for me to feel defensive, and stay “stuck.”

Boost your chance of success by inviting someone you trust to check in with you at a prearranged time, so that you know when to expect it. Make the transaction mutual by asking the other person what they would like you to check in about. This decreases defensiveness and makes the relationship feel collaborative, because you become two people who each want the other one to succeed.