Happy New Year! It seems like every holiday is celebrated earlier and earlier each year, as our consumer culture seeks to keep us planning, purchasing, and partying! That said, my greeting to you is not in anticipation of January 1, but rather, a reminder that the season of Advent is the beginning of the liturgical year. As a church community we mark time differently, in a way that is countercultural to the rushing and the pressure of instant gratification swirling around us. Instead, Advent invites us into four weeks of slowing down – of waiting with expectation and great hope.

Like January 1, we are invited to “begin again” with this new church year, not with personal resolutions that are bound to fail, but with a renewed commitment to a community that longs for justice, peace, and love. And so, we will continue to gather in-person and online each week for multiple opportunities to worship – to hear the stories and sing the songs we know and love so well.

While many Westminster traditions will be revived this year, others are shifting in exciting ways. To kick off the season, we will gather after worship on November 28 for “Advent: Cider and Singing.” There will be cider and bonfires on the Marquette Green, a hymn sing in the sanctuary, and an opportunity to pick up materials for your at-home Advent wreath. On December 12, all are invited to stay after worship for a virtual viewing party of Westminster’s annual Christmas Pageant, hosted by Families, Youth, and Children. The following Sunday, December 19, we have combined our former Youth Lessons and Carols and Christmas Festival Sunday to create one special event – “Christmas Festival Sunday: A Service of Lessons and Carols.”

Leaning into the English tradition, we will hear nine lessons, interspersed with congregational carols and musical anthems from all of our ensembles (9 am and 11 am identical services in the sanctuary). On Christmas Eve, we will gather in the sanctuary for a family-friendly service at 4 pm, centering storytelling and songs. Evening candlelight services will be at 8 pm and 10 pm, featuring music by a string quartet and the Westminster Choir.

We will continue to worship at 8:30 am Sundays in Westminster Hall, with artistic reflections by special guests on November 28, December 5 and 12. Mid-week worship provides another opportunity to pause on Wednesdays from 6-6:30 pm, with songs, scripture, and silence that draw us toward the incarnation.

’Tis the season… to gather in worship as we eagerly await the coming of the Christ child.

Advent and Christmas at Westminster

Advent Cider and Singing
November 28 | 11:30 am
Sanctuary and Westminster Green

Christmas Pageant Viewing Party
December 12 | Noon
Sanctuary and Livestream

Christmas Festival Sunday
December 19 | 9 & 11 am
Sanctuary and Livestream

Christmas Eve
December 24
4 pm Family Service
8 pm and 10 pm Candlelight Service
Sanctuary and Livestream

Sunday Worship
December 26 | 10:30 am
Peter Cochrane preaching
Sanctuary and Livestream

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- Coat drive for Seniors, Socks for FEAST, and Christmas Joy offering for all (p. 6).
- Make it an environmentally-friendly Christmas! (p. 10).
Belonging to the Beloved Community:
We belong to God, neighbor, and creation
by Evelyn Ngwa, Westminster member

Walking through the doors of Westminster on day one, about 20 years ago, my family was warmly greeted and ushered to our seats. The preaching was very inspiring and engaging. After the service many people greeted us and made introductions. Over the years, my children have made many great friends and mentors who have positively impacted their lives—and that’s especially true for my youngest son.

As a member of this community, I use my time, energy, and intellect to be part of God’s work. Serving as a deacon, it has been humbling to visit people at home. During the pandemic, my calls to members resulted in me knowing more people and creating more relationships, thereby continuing to live together as children of God.

Our youths’ active involvement gives me hope for the future: it is inspiring to see them working locally, planting trees; and out of state, building affordable housing for the homeless while on a mission trip. It gives me joy to work alongside my teenage son, serving those experiencing homelessness at FEAST. Taking him tree planting teaches him that he must care for the environment, God’s creation. All of these experiences have taught my son humility, hard work, and to support the less fortunate amongst us.

My annual pledge goes to support these efforts. I ask every member and parishioner to find an area at Westminster that they are passionate about and pledge to support it to help achieve its goals. Please consider making a pledge to help sustain our beloved community.

Thank You to Mary Hess
by Tim Hart-Andersen, Senior Pastor

I remember back in 2006 when a colleague suggested I meet with Westminster member Mary Hess as we were starting a search for someone to help with the 150th Anniversary Campaign. At the time Mary was working in marketing in a corporate setting.

Fifteen years later it is clear Mary found a new calling and filled it well. Mary retires at the end of December after serving initially with the Anniversary Campaign, and then as Director of Stewardship. I speak for all of Westminster and the many lay leaders she nurtured when I express profound gratitude for her leadership over these years.

Mary developed Westminster’s first-ever comprehensive stewardship ministry. It focused on three areas: annual support, the Legacy Program, and capital campaigns. In every area she has done outstanding work. Westminster is now known in the Presbyterian Church (USA) as having a model year-round stewardship ministry.

With Mary’s leadership Westminster completed two successful capital campaigns that raised a combined $80 million for building improvement and expansion, mission funding, and endowment growth. Every annual budget over her 15 years at the church showed growth in giving (except one flat year during an economic downturn). And the Legacy Program grew from fewer than two dozen known estate gifts to Westminster to more than 130.

Westminster’s ministry and mission have benefited greatly from Mary’s faithful dedication and skilled leadership in stewardship. We will have a chance to thank her on Sunday, January 9, 2022.

Fall New Members Class
by Meghan Gage-Finn, Executive Associate Pastor

Westminster welcomed more than 20 new members into the life of the church in the fall new members class. After five Zoom classes since January 2020, it was wonderful to have a hybrid model for the November gathering. New members are coming to the congregation from local churches in the Twin Cities, and they join from outside the state of Minnesota. Some are lifelong Presbyterians, while others are new to the denomination, or newer to Christian faith. Young adults and folks in retirement are part of this class, as are individuals who have a significant history with Westminster. Others only know the church during Covid and have never been in the building! We rejoice in the ways the Spirit is moving in their lives and offer thanks for the opportunity to serve the gospel together. If you or someone you know would like more information about membership, I would love to connect: mgage-finn@wpc-mpls.org.
Dear friends,

The seasons are changing. The first snow has fallen. Thanksgiving gatherings will happen again, carefully.

The church is concluding its great annual cycle, bidding farewell to Christ the King as he ascends “to sit at the right hand of God the Father Almighty,” in the words of the ancient creed. And then Advent begins on November 28, setting us on the same journey followers of Jesus have made for 2000 years, toward the place where he will be born.

Westminster will move through Advent and Christmas as we always do, worshipping, singing, joining in fellowship, and sharing the hope of this time of year. Please note in this issue of the News the variety of events and services planned – none of which was available to us last year, at least not in person.

The theme for Advent worship at Westminster this year is Beginning Again. Each Sunday we will explore this Advent focus. Long ago the Hebrew prophets saw the coming of a Messiah as an opportunity to begin again. They called the people to prepare to try once more to live as the people of God in ways that reflected divine intention for human community. Isaiah and other ancient seers saw the coming of Light into a world suffused with shadows as the divine offer of a second chance.

In so many ways, today we need an Advent like that, where we can start over. This is certainly true for all of us in our personal lives, where we could use a chance to begin again in relationships where we have fallen short. But we also need to begin again collectively to repair those social realities that have caused harm historically and continue to do so today.

The prophets seized the turning point offered in the anticipated arrival of the Messiah to reassess where the people of God had wandered away from the justice and love expected of them. We can do the same in Advent 2021. This season of hope invites us to begin again – to start the hard work of undoing and dismantling the patterns and practices of life in America today that do not reflect the love of God.

See you in church – in person, if you feel safe in doing so – at worship and other events of Advent, as together we receive with joy the gift of starting over.

Grace and peace,
Service of Remembrance
December 7 | 6 pm | Sanctuary and Livestream
The Congregational Care and Grief Support ministry will host the annual Service of Remembrance in the sanctuary and on livestream. During the COVID-19 pandemic, the comforting ritual of memorial services was not always an option for families and loved ones. The Service of Remembrance will offer an opportunity to express our grief and to celebrate our loved ones’ lives together.

Associate Pastor Nominating Committee Update
Under the leadership of co-chairs Andy Peterson and Barbara Brown, the Associate Pastor Nominating Committee (APNC) has begun the search for an Associate Pastor for Adult Ministries. Recognizing this to be a transformative time for Westminster and the wider world, the new Associate Pastor will lead a strategic vision for growing the spiritual and community life of the church through adult education, fellowship and small group ministries, and leadership development. This role will support engagement with church members, newcomers, downtown neighbors, and a wider circle of learners who seek to nurture their faith and grow in their sense of belonging. The APNC is developing the Ministry Information Form, the “position description,” which will help tell the story of Westminster and this role to those interested in serving the ministries of the church now and into the future. Soon they will begin receiving materials from applicants. We give thanks for the dedication of this committee and pray for them in their work, and for those who may be discerning a sense of call to join Westminster’s pastoral staff.

Deliver Meals to Our Downtown Neighbors
Westminster’s Meals on Wheels partner, Community Emergency Services (CES), will expand meal delivery to Tuesdays and Thursdays starting in January 2022. Deliveries were cut back due to Covid and CES will re-start 5 day per week meal service to those in need.

When we deliver Meals on Wheels, we have the opportunity to bring nourishing food to a regular group of isolated seniors or others in need. CES is inviting us as individuals, in pairs or as part of a group to commit to a specific weekly route. The weekly commitment is 1 ½ to 2 hours in the late morning/noon hour on either Tuesday or Thursday. Training is provided. Masks are required. To learn more please email act@wpc-mpls.org.
Memorial Wall: Remembering Our Loved Ones at Westminster
by David Tsai Shinn, Associate Pastor for Congregational Care

For centuries, Christians across the lands have honored their loved ones with dignified and meaningful final resting places in churchyards on their grounds. Perhaps the most well-known Westminster is Westminster Abbey in London, where dignitaries of the country are laid to rest within the sanctuary floor and cloister.

As we draw near to our annual Service of Remembrance on December 7, we are invited to remember those we’ve lost this past year. It is a beautiful candlelight service where we can honor their memories and share our grief with fellow worshipers.

Here at Westminster, we also have a sacred resting place for our loved ones in our Memorial Garden. It is on the 12th Street side of our building. In the Memorial Garden, we have 660 niches where urns containing cremated remains are interred. In addition to the Garden, at the corner facing 12th Street and Nicollet, we have a Memorial Wall. This wall is made of beautiful cream-colored limestone and it is a dignified memorial to those whose names are simply and elegantly engraved upon it. The Memorial Wall provides Westminster members an opportunity to remember those they love who may have been interred elsewhere.

In this sacred season of the year, I share these ways that we can honor and remember our loved one on the grounds of our beloved church. If you have further questions, please reach out to me (dshinn@wpc-mpls.org).

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An Invitation to Write for the Lenten Book: Belonging
by Heather Heefner, Westminster member

The theme of this Lenten season is: Belonging in the Silence of Lent. For 40 days between Ash Wednesday and Easter, we hope to journey together in contemplation, reflection, and prayer.

Part of our tradition at WPC is creating and reading the Lenten Devotional. Together, we write, read, and study this devotional. As part of this sacred and vibrant community, you are invited to write a 100 - 300 word reflection on “Belonging.” Some questions to consider are: What does belonging mean to you? How have you experienced belonging in prayer? Does listening to others help them belong? How have you experienced belonging in prayer? Is there a dark side of belonging?

If you would like to submit a short essay, piece of poetry, or art on the topic of Belonging, please see the Realm site under the group Prayer Companions Ministry Team for prompting questions and details, or reach out to Heather Heefner at hheefner@gmail.com. The deadline for submission is January 1.

Celebrating 2021 Meisel Scholars
by Meghan Gage-Finn, Executive

Though internships and research experiences have looked a little different for college-aged students in the time of Covid, Westminster’s young people persevered with creativity and resourcefulness this past summer in putting together unique opportunities as Meisel Scholars. As is tradition for the first Sunday of the New Year, we will hear from the four 2021 Scholars on Meisel Sunday: January 2, 2022. They will reflect on what they learned during their time as Meisel Scholars and how their continued vocational discernment is unfolding.

At this time, we are planning a hybrid time of sharing, in person in the Meisel Room, with a Zoom option included, after the 10:30 service. Please join the conversation to hear from Lauren Caugh, Ethan Kim-Shinn, Mae Niebuhr, and Michael Thomas. They will offer insights on how they were challenged, how they connected with their mentors throughout the summer, and the ways they are thinking critically about their coursework and what is next for them because of the Meisel program.

For those students interested in pursuing a Meisel experience in 2022, attending the after-church event is a great way to learn more. Applications will be available in late January, and please contact me at mgage-finn@wpc-mpls.org for more information. You are also encouraged to visit the church’s website to read more on the history of the Meisel Scholars program.
2021 Christmas Joy: Our Gifts Open Doors
by Alanna Simone Tyler, Associate Pastor

As we journey expectantly through Advent and prepare again to celebrate God with us, we have an opportunity to join our Presbyterian Church U.S.A. (PCUSA) siblings in providing gifts to nurture past, present, and future leaders.

Gifts to the Christmas Joy Offering are divided equally between the Assistance Program of the PCUSA Board of Pensions (BOP) and Presbyterian-related educational institutions preparing Black, Indigenous, and People of Color (BIPOC) for leadership. Through this offering, in 2020, current and former PCUSA employees facing financial crises received $1.1 million in stabilizing support. Supplements from the BOP helped 250 households remain in their residence and nearly 300 retired church workers or surviving spouses were helped. As in past years, this offer will fund scholarships for students enrolled at the Menaul School, Presbyterian Pan American School and Stillman College. All three institutions excel in accompanying BIPOC students and further developing the talents they possess.

Together our gifts open doors and help leaders at all stages of life to flourish. We will receive the Christmas Joy Offering, Sunday, December 19. Thank you for your gifts in support of leadership development and those who have faithfully served God’s people.

Share the Warmth Coat Drive
by Angelique Kingsbury, Director of the Magnet Senior Center

Now more than ever, Minnesota seniors are counting on acts of kindness from their neighbors to make it through the winter season. The Magnet Senior Center at Westminster will collect coats for older adults in need. Coats will be distributed throughout the Twin Cities and seven-county metro areas via the Gifts for Seniors organization (giftsforseniors.org).

New and very gently used (clean) coats are needed in all sizes (especially larger sizes) for men and women. We are also collecting new warm winter items such as hats, gloves, and scarves. Please bring the items to Westminster on December 5 and 12 between 9 am and 12:30 pm. Volunteers will be available in Westminster Commons to collect your gift of warmth. Questions? Please contact me at 612-332-3421, x211, or akingsbury@wpc-mpls.org.

Socks, Hats, and Gloves for FEAST Guests
by Susan Gilmore, Member, Hunger Ministry Team

During the pandemic, Westminster’s Hunger Ministry Team has continued to offer a community meal, Friends Eating and Sharing Together (FEAST), the fourth Sunday of the month in partnership with Plymouth Congregation Church. As the holidays approach, we want to offer FEAST guests a gift of new socks, hats, and gloves. Our goal is to have 300 items so each guest can pick two items of their choice. We are inviting the Westminster community to bring donations to the church and leave them in the boxes decorated with Christmas wrapping paper that will be placed next to the three Groveland Food Shelf donation boxes located near the chapel and the P1 and P2 entrance doors to the church from the parking ramps. Please bring donations to the church by Christmas Eve so they can be offered Sunday, December 26, at FEAST. Most of our meal guests are men so look for socks and gloves in large or x-large sizes. Stocking hats are mostly a generic one size fits all. Our women guests most appreciate a large size in both socks and gloves. Cotton, wool, or a wool blend are most requested for socks. Thank you so much for your donations! Our guests are already looking forward to this!
**December’s Third Age Program:**

**Christmas Carols**  
by Terry McEowen, Member, Third Age Committee

The joyful season of Christmas is upon us, including all the glorious sounds, many of which revolve around familiar Christmas carols. These carols will be heard in many different places: sung in worship, on the radio, in shopping malls, and in dozens of choir performances happening throughout the Twin Cities.

Have you ever wondered about the origin and history of some of these well-known carols? Would you like to learn interesting tidbits about certain familiar carols? Then you will want to attend the Third Age program on **Wednesday, December 8 at 11 am** in Meisel Room and via Livestream.

Dr. Amanda Weber, Westminster’s own Director of Worship and the Arts, will be our guest speaker for this event. She will share information on several of our famous Christmas carols and then lead us in song as we enjoy singing these songs together. Time permitting, we will open it up for those in attendance to request their favorite carols to sing and have an old-fashioned sing along. This program hopefully will help you begin to get into the spirit and joy of Christmas!

Please register on Realm to attend this event.

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**Belonging to a Beloved City:**

**Spirituality and Theology for Our Urban World**  
by Mark VanderShaaf, Member, Adult Education Council

Martin Luther King’s vision of “beloved community” was informed by both Christian theology and secular spirituality. Although his vision encompasses all aspects of society, it is particularly relevant in the cities where most people now live.

This winter, I will teach a short course exploring potential spiritual and theological contributions to a “beloved city,” beginning with two sessions considering how two recent transformations in the Twin Cities Area – riverfront redevelopment and light rail line neighborhood changes – can be regarded as well-aligned with a Christian ethos.

The remaining four sessions of the course will provide a closer look at the relationship between theology and urban issues. They will include an overview of the major urban issues of our time and will consider the work of the English theologian Timothy Gorringe, an Anglican priest and Exeter University professor who has produced the 21st century’s most comprehensive theological interpretation of our urban world – a component of his wide-ranging theology of culture that is both sophisticated and accessible.

His interpretation includes a powerful articulation of social ethics appropriate for a “beloved city.”

The course will be held at 6:30 pm on Wednesdays, beginning on January 19 and continuing through February 23. The course requires registration, with a maximum of 25 participants and in-person attendance encouraged, but with remote learning also provided.

Please register on Realm.
Youth Ministry Updates
by Alexandra Jacob, Associate Pastor

I have had the passage from Ecclesiastes 3 in my heart these past several weeks: “for everything there is a season, and a time for every matter under heaven” (Eccl. 3:1). The writer of Ecclesiastes goes on to name the things for which there is a particular season: mourning and dancing, embracing and keeping our distance, breaking down and building up. In Westminster’s youth ministry area, we are in the midst of a new season of life together. We’ve celebrated with Matt Lewellyn-Otten as he departed to pursue a new opportunity as Religious Coordinator at OutFront Minnesota, and we’re grieving the loss of his leadership at Westminster. This is a significant season of transition!

During this season, I am grateful to continue in relationship with Westminster’s young people as the primary staff leader for youth ministry, including Confirmation, youth groups, and youth Church School (when it returns in 2022). I give thanks for our newly formed Youth Council, who offer guidance and wisdom for our programming…and who always keep me laughing! And I give thanks for our Youth Ministry Team leaders, whose dedication to the youth program helps to keep us going, even through seasons of transition.

Through the end of the calendar year, youth groups will meet on Sunday evenings (Junior High from 4-5:15 pm, Senior High from 5:45-7 pm) for fellowship, prayer, and fun. Stay tuned for 2022 plans, and don’t hesitate to be in touch if you’re discerning a call to be involved in youth ministry at Westminster!

Thoughts on Returning to Worship – Family-Style
by Marie Kruskop, Coordinator of Early Childhood and Family Ministries

Westminster opened its doors to in-person worship, with Covid protocols in place last March. Yet for many families, with children who were not yet able to be vaccinated, returning to worship in person still felt a bit too risky. Now with children ages 5-11 eligible to get the vaccine, you may be thinking…maybe it’s time to return to in-person worship, but how might we do that after so much time away?

Routines provide a sense of security for children. Consider re-establishing your routines or establishing new ones as your family returns to worship. In addition, share some of the decision-making with your child/ren. It will help them feel a greater sense of control. Here are some things to consider:

- Choose one or two Sundays a month to start – maybe Sundays when communion or baptisms are a part of the service. (Communion is served the first Sunday of the month in the 10:30 service and each Sunday during the 8:30 service. Baptism is usually the third Sunday of the month.)
- Reach out to church friends and coordinate Sundays so you can visit before or after the service.
- Choose to sit where you used to sit – the familiarity may feel more comfortable.
- Or… try a new place (let your child/ren choose) and get a new perspective.
- Visit the Tower Room, newly redesigned for families, especially if someone in your family needs to move a bit. It’s in the southwest corner of the balcony (the right side as you face the pulpit) and is outfitted with toys and books and child-friendly furniture. There’s also a glider and changing table for families with little ones.
- Take a break, if needed, and visit the Children’s Library. Return when you’re ready.

Remember: all of us enter Westminster as children of God – just as we are. And we can both offer and accept grace from one another as we return to in-person worship. To quote Tim, “See you in church!”
New Pageant Tradition
by Sonja Dziekciowski,
Director of Children’s Ministries

As we continue on with a full program year of children’s ministry, both online and in person, we are trying out a new way of experiencing the Christmas story and season together! We hope that these changes will allow even more families to be part of the festivities.

Our pre-recorded Christmas pageant this year is moving to December 12 at Noon with either an in-person viewing available in Westminster Hall or a chance to watch on the livestream from the comfort of your own home. Not able to view the pageant at that time? Do Not Be Afraid, for it will be up on the website for you to view later or for you to just keep re-watching all of your favorite scenes.

Wait, so what does that mean for our 4 pm Family Christmas Eve Service? This year’s 4 pm service will still be intentionally child-friendly and interactive – we’ll have gold stars to hold up during the Christmas story, some well-known Christmas hymns, and elements of the Christmas story portrayed for congregants of all ages to enjoy.

Advent – Preparing for Christmas with Hope, Peace, Joy, and Love
by Marie Kruskop, Coordinator of Early Childhood and Family Ministries

Advent is a season during which families can take time to prepare for Christmas, anticipating the coming of Jesus into the world as the Christ child. How might your family mark this time and prepare? Perhaps you will make an Advent Wreath and will take time each week to light the candles representing hope, peace, joy, and love, and consider what each of those words means for you and your family, and for our world. Perhaps you will use our Illustrated Ministry Advent for Families devotional booklet titled “God With Us,” which invites your family to explore the ways in which Emmanuel, God-with-us, brings hope, peace, joy, and love to our homes and community during these challenging times. Perhaps you will attend worship – online or in person – each week to witness the lighting of the Advent wreath, hearing the words of hope, peace, joy, and love. No matter how you mark this time of preparation, hope, peace, joy, and love are the ideas that both welcome the Christ child and are born with him into our lives and into our world.

If you are interested in an Advent devotional booklet, please contact me at mkruskop@wpc-mpls.org.

Family Matters, Pausing
by Marie Kruskop, Coordinator of Early Childhood and Family Ministries

“Many things can wait. Children cannot.” – Gabriela Mistral

The COVID-19 pandemic continues to impact our lives in both familiar and unfamiliar ways. In talking with a number of parents, I’ve learned you are weary and fatigued. Your children need you now in ways they haven’t before, and that leaves little time or energy for you to take part in things like Family Matters. So… Family Matters is pausing until after the New Year. Please know that I continue to hold you and your dear families close in my heart and in my prayers.

In the meantime, feel free to reach out to me with questions, concerns, or if you’d just like to touch base. Send me an email at mkruskop@wpc-mpls.org. I’d love to catch up!
I’ve just returned from Austin, Texas, where I attended the CIVA (Christians in the Visual Arts) Biennale. This was my sixth time participating in this conference. Commercial art galleries, public museums, churches with art collections, and numerous presentations, panel discussions, and conversations filled three days. It was especially fun to see old friends and make new ones.

Most attendees are artists; seeing their work provides inspiration for the future of Westminster’s collection and exhibitions. This was also an opportunity to connect with other collectors and curators and learn how they are blending diverse art to tell Biblical and other stories. I have had the pleasure of traveling with some CIVA members in past years and am excited at possibilities for the coming year.

The conference theme, Transcend, led us in considering how art makes God present; the gift of art reveals the divine presence. The artist Grace Carol Bomer said that we don’t have to hit someone over the head with a Bible, a dove, and a cross to lead them to finding the love of God in the beauty of art. I acquired two pieces of art for the Westminster Collection during the conference. The Woman at the Well, a linocut print by African-American artist Steve Prince gives us a new way of seeing this familiar story in a contemporary way. Shown here is The Fisherman’s Song by Grace Carol Bomer which illuminates nets released from the hand of Creator God who sings “I will bring forth my people out with joy, my chosen ones with singing.” Psalm 105:43

1. Decorate a live, potted tree with paper, wood, and glass ornaments instead of with plastic.
2. Don’t travel so far. Consider spending time with far-flung family members and friends via Zoom rather than being in person.
3. Buy local! Every time a package is delivered to your door there is an impact on the environment—the amount of packaging it takes to ship; the energy required to get it to you; and the fact that many goods come from places where working conditions and wages are not what they should be.
4. Be creative: wrap gifts in biodegradable newspaper, fabric, cardboard, or a bag that you can reuse or recycle rather than in plastic or single-use wrap.
5. Reduce gift giving through a Secret Santa program so everyone gets one desired gift instead of many gifts from everyone.
6. Send seed cards as your Christmas cards!
7. Use LED Christmas lights. And do not throw your Christmas lights in your trash! Recycle them at your County Recycling Center, Lowe’s, or TechDump (techdump.org).
9. Have conversations, sing songs, and play board games instead of watching TV.
10. Turn down the heat. What do you think those favorite (or ugliest) Christmas sweaters are for?
Westminster Announces a New—Yet Familiar—Director of Stewardship
by Suzanne McInroy, Director of Communications

Westminster is excited to announce that Kelsey Crouch-Dodson has been named the new Director of Stewardship. Church leaders began an extensive search for the position after Mary Hess announced her retirement this summer. Kelsey is well known at Westminster and currently serves as a Ruling Elder of Session, Stewardship Co-Chair, and as the Christian Vocations Team Committee Chair.

“Kelsey brings to this role a combination of good professional stewardship experience, creative energy, and knowledge of our congregation that will help Westminster continue its strong tradition of generosity,” said Senior Pastor Tim Hart-Andersen.

Kelsey’s professional experience in development work includes working for Baylor University in Waco, Texas, and The ALS Association in Minneapolis. Currently, Kelsey works as a Senior Decision Science Coordinator at BWF, a fundraising consulting firm that advises clients in higher education, healthcare, and the nonprofit sector on philanthropic strategies.

Born and raised in Texas, Kelsey attended Austin College in Sherman, Texas, and moved to Minneapolis in 2015 with her husband, Taylor Crouch-Dodson. The couple welcomed their first child, Rowan, this past year.

“It is truly a blessing to serve a community so near and dear to my heart. I look forward to deepening my connections with the congregation and building on the established legacy of stewardship at Westminster,” said Kelsey.

Kelsey will begin her new position December 1. The November Session meeting will be her last one as an elder as she shifts to her staff role.
An End and a Beginning
by Margaret McCray

December will be my last month working at the Westminster Counseling Center. As I retire from my professional work as a marriage and family therapist, I intend to maintain the practice of my ministry of pastoral counseling. What that will look like in a volunteer capacity I have yet to solidify. Right now, looking back before moving forward is helpful.

I loved seminary, and quickly decided I could never be a preacher. My calling found me via my work in campus ministry, which led me to earning my Doctor of Ministry in the field of pastoral counseling, which eventually brought me, in 1994, to Westminster. I could not have asked for, or even imagined, a more fulfilling ministry than the 27 years I have been a part of the Westminster Counseling Center.

I am grateful to pastors, notably Dan Little and Tim Hart-Andersen, colleagues, especially Max Maguire, Susan Ritchie Nienaber, and John Henrich, board members, and donors.

The people who found their way to the counseling center have been the heart and soul of my ministry. You trusted me with your stories, your fears and tears, your anger, your stress, your grief, your needs and desires. Best of all, you gifted me with the resilience and wisdom you discovered within yourself. Being a participant and witness to that unfolding is what I will miss the most. I can’t share your stories, but know that without your bravery and trust, my life and ministry would not have the deep satisfaction I now carry into whatever the future holds. Thank you, and thanks be to God.

Thank You to Margaret McCray
by Tim Hart-Andersen, Senior Pastor

After 27 years as a therapist on the staff of the Westminster Counseling Center, the Rev. Dr. Margaret McCray will retire at the end of 2021. Over her nearly three decades of service, she has helped hundreds of clients.

Margaret, a classmate of mine at McCormick Theological Seminary in Chicago, has been a wonderful colleague to the pastors on the church staff. We have relied on her as our go-to therapist for referrals.

Margaret served as Clinical Director of the Center, leading a team of counselors from a variety of faith traditions. Under her leadership the Center expanded its reach, establishing satellite centers in other churches. She worked with James Dayton Design to create a new suite of offices for the Center at Westminster.

Westminster members and others know Margaret as a skilled, compassionate, wise counselor. She conducted herself over the years with great integrity and professionalism. She clearly was called to the ministry of pastoral counseling; she excelled at the work and found it personally fulfilling.

Margaret has served Westminster as a Parish Associate, or volunteer clergy. We have been privileged over the years to hear her preach and pray in worship. On Sunday, December 5, she will offer the Pastoral Prayer in worship, and after the service there will be a reception to thank her for her service.

Ways to Share God’s Love at Year-End
by Mary Hess, Director of Stewardship

“Those who trust in their riches will wither, but the righteous will flourish like green leaves” (Proverbs 11:28).

Supporting God’s work through Westminster reflects God’s love for us. Ideas to consider: 1) Checks or online contributions are easy and may be eligible for a federal tax deduction. 2) Appreciated stock gifts can also be appealing because long-term gains are not taxed, and the gift is generally deductible. 3) IRA giving: Depending on your age, you may give directly from your IRA without having to pay income tax on the gift. Several provisions of the CARES Act were extended into 2021, including the cap on deductions for cash contributions. Contact your plan administrator or read more online. 4) Legacy Gifts, such as a bequest in your will, support future generations. 5) A no-longer needed life insurance policy can be donated and may be eligible for a tax deduction. Please consult with your tax or financial adviser before you act. Contact Nicole Cueno, Senior Director of Operations and Administration, (ncueno@wpc-mpls.org), if you would like to make arrangements with Westminster. Thank you!