Exploring Redemption, Reparations, and Repentance

by Alanna Simone Tyler, Associate Pastor for Justice and Mission

Liberty Community Church and Westminster will welcome the Rev. Anthony Jermaine Ross-Allam for our annual joint celebration of the Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Holiday weekend. Ross-Allam served as associate pastor at Liberty and Oak Grove Presbyterian Church before becoming a doctoral candidate in Social Ethics at Union Theological Seminary. He describes his research as focusing “on the social ecology that inspires, justifies, ignores, rewards and excuses extralegal violence against Afro-Americans after Emancipation.”

With Presbyterian Church (USA) Co-Moderators Ruling Elder Elona Street-Stewart and Rev. Gregory J. Bentley, Ross-Allam is co-leading Restorative Actions, a grass roots voluntary initiative for predominantly white churches, individuals, mid-councils, and agencies of the Presbyterian Church (USA) as well as other ecumenical partners and affiliated organizations to return benefits accrued to them directly or indirectly because of systemic inequities. As Westminster is supporting the Minnesota Council of Church’s recently launched 10-year truth, reparations, and education initiative it is good timing to hear from Ross-Allam.

Recently Rev. Dr. Alika Galloway commented, “Anthony’s discourse about reparations is long overdue theologically. He is on the cutting edge regarding the marriage of reparations, theology, ethics, and justice. His work is redemptive and calls for regarding reparations as an act of repentance. As Christians we are called to repent for and make right ancestral ills; especially those whose legacy is still alive today. It’s a journey that as Christians we must take seriously, thoughtfully and prayerfully.”

In addition, the Rev. Ross-Allam’s research resonates with the themes explored in the Social Justice Forum and Adult Education this year. Westminster’s Social Justice Forum is focusing on the theme Diving Deeper Together So All Will Flourish and Adult Education is exploring the theme Building the Beloved Community: Construction, Restructuring, and Repair.

Rev. Ross-Allam will lead the annual joint workshop, Saturday, January 15, at 10 am at Liberty’s Northside Healing Space (2100 Emerson Avenue North) and preach at Westminster’s morning worship services, Sunday, January 16.

Engaging Our Neighbors Experiencing Homelessness

by Suzanne McInroy, Director of Communications

In the last year, Westminster leaders began to envision adding a staff role focused on safety for everyone engaging with the church, whether they enter the building for worship, an event, or seek shelter on church grounds. But finding someone with just the right combination of skills took some time. And then Patrick Bayle applied for the job.

Patrick has lived experience with homelessness and addiction. In 2003 he began a recovery journey and, since then, completed two degrees from Augsburg University and spent 15 years serving the community, and especially those experiencing homelessness.

Continued on page two.
Financial planning in the Third Age is important, complex, and often deeply personal. We’re pleased to have attorney Lauren Fink share her expertise in a forum scheduled for Wednesday, January 12, from 11 am to noon in the Meisel Room (also available on livestream).

Estate planning ensures that you can pass your property, and sometimes your values, on to the next generation in the most efficient way possible. This lecture will review the different ways that a person can set up their estate, the pros and cons of each method, and some general guidelines of which plans work best for different situations. Additionally, Lauren will discuss common mistakes and potential tax traps to give attendees an idea of what may or may not be missing from their own estate plans.

Lauren is a shareholder with Maser, Amundson & Boggio, P.A.’s Elder Law Department. She assists her clients on the implementation of estate, long term care planning, special needs, and business succession plans. Lauren chose to become an attorney after observing the difficulties her parents faced as caretakers for elders in her family. She wanted the tools to be a valued guide for others in the same situation. Lauren offers a warm approach, putting clients at ease as she helps them develop a plan making sure they are confident about their situations and futures. Please register on Realm to attend.

Westminster Welcomes Two New Staff Members

by Nicole Cueno, Senior Director of Operations and Administration

Kevin Kateley started on December 13 as the new Westminster Facilities Team Lead. Kevin comes to Westminster after 10 years working for Tasks Unlimited, which provides supported employment, housing, and recovery services for people with mental illness. At Tasks Unlimited, Kevin led multiple janitorial crews and helped maintain a 9-story building in downtown Minneapolis. Prior to Tasks Unlimited, Kevin had a 19-year career in production, printing, and shipping. Kevin brings great facilities management skills to our staff as well as knowledge of running a complex and active building. He will be a strong addition to the team and is regularly onsite on Sundays. Welcome, Kevin!

Gebriela Ayana began working as a member of the Westminster receptionist team in late November. Gebriela is presently a student at the University of Minnesota, where she will be graduating this winter in Film Studies. She also has an Associate Degree in Media Production from Howard University. Gebriela worked previously as a receptionist at Planned Parenthood and is also a dog walker for Wag! Gebriela regularly works weekdays in the evenings.

“Waking up on the concrete is a really tough way to live,” Patrick says. “And if I can give someone just a little bit of a notion that somebody sees you and somebody cares about you, that’s a real honor and fills my soul to be able to look somebody in the eye and say, ‘I see you and I want to help.’ That’s really the best part of my job.”

Watch a video online to hear Patrick’s passion for this work, plans for his new role, and his hope for the future.
Dear friends,

When our two-and-a-half-year-old grandchild plays with their small wooden cars, they often set up a little stop sign. They push a car up to it, turn it to the right and say, “No cars coming this way,” then to the left, “No cars coming that way. It’s safe now.”

As Westminster heads into a New Year, that image comes to mind...look back, look ahead, then proceed with caution, trusting the way is clear. With everyone else, the church is gingerly moving forward through the uncertainties of this time.

We have experienced much over the last 22 months of global pandemic. Perhaps most importantly, we have rediscovered the power of Christian community. We belong to one another and to One who will never leave us. Through the isolation and sickness, the racial reckoning and revealed disparities, we have leaned on each other and our neighbors, and been sustained by the Holy Spirit.

Now we move into a year we believe will be better than the last and the one before that. I have great hopes for Westminster in 2022. At some point this year, our children will finally come back to church school in person. The nursery will re-open and be filled with little ones again. Our choir will take off masks and lead us in singing the praise of God unhindered. We will share meals or simply drink coffee at church once more. (I will never again take a potluck for granted!)

There is much to look forward to in the year now opening. We will reconnect in person with partners in mission and justice. We will call a new Associate Pastor for Adult Ministries. The church facility will hum again with the activity of church and community groups. We will develop a new sustainable model for the Westminster Counseling Center. We will begin planning the capital campaign to complete Open Doors Open Futures.

I see God at work everywhere among this resilient, healthy congregation – in our music and our prayers, in the visits we make and the care we provide, in thriving partnerships in the city and around the world.

Let us begin this year with confidence, looking back to learn and looking ahead with hope. And then, with gratitude in our hearts, let us step forward to follow Jesus, “the pioneer and perfector of our faith.”

See you in church – in person or online!

Grace and peace,

[Signature]

From Our Pastor

January 2022 | westminstempls.org
Seminarian Sunday: December 26

For worship the morning after Christmas, Westminster will welcome to the pulpit Jim Cochrane. Jim is a child of Westminster, now studying for his Master of Divinity degree at McCormick Theological Seminary in Chicago. Before discerning a call to enter seminary, Jim studied math and economics at Luther College in Decorah, Iowa, and served as Youth Director at Westminster. He will graduate in May and is preparing for ordination in the PC(USA). We look forward to Jim’s leadership in worship as we continue to celebrate the joy of Christmas together!

Lay Leader Training

January 9 | 11:30 am
There will be a Lay Reader Training session on Sunday, January 9, 2022 following the 10:30 service. If you are interested in becoming a lay reader, please contact Priscilla Northenscold at pjnorth59@me.com.

Downtown Grief Coalition: Back to Zoom

Starting January 1, the Downtown Grief Coalition will transition back to Saturday morning Zoom meetings due to the uptick in COVID cases in our state and winter weather. Meetings are every Saturday from 10-11:30 am and include a speaker and small group time. Please visit mplsgriefsupport.org for more information, schedule updates, and resources to help you grieve during these uncertain days. Use the contact form on the homepage to inquire about Zoom credentials.

Coffee Hour Servers Needed

Looking for a way to serve others on a Sunday morning? We need a few more volunteers to help once a month during Coffee Hour. This opportunity involves an easy set up before each service, serving after each service, and a short cleanup after Coffee Hour. The task is fun and sociable! It provides a great way to interact with the congregation and to meet new people. Contact Laura Lee Moffett at lmooffett@wpc-mpls.org to volunteer. Finally, a special thank you to our “4th Sunday Team,” a pre-pandemic serving team who has returned to help regularly these last few months.

Do you know that you can easily find contact information for Westminster members through Realm? Log into your account and use the search bar at the top of the page. Start typing in the name you want to find and members will begin to appear in a drop-down list as you type. Find the person you’re searching for and click on their box to find their contact information. Sometimes members have selected to keep their contact information private, but most of the time you will be able to see information for members. You can also manage your own privacy settings by visiting your profile and clicking on the “Manage Privacy” button. Find out more about Realm on the Westminster website.
In 2021, we launched a new way of choosing topics and speakers for the Westminster Town Hall Forum. First, we decided to pick themes for our spring and fall seasons, allowing us to connect each of the talks. Then we asked the Forum’s advisory board, evenly comprised of Westminster and community members, to take the lead on deciding those themes.

The advisory board’s charge is to select themes that reflect a pressing issue for our community and world. Then they help curate specific topics and speakers under that theme. The goal is to help ensure the voices and issues at the Forum reflect the interests and concerns of our entire community.

For our spring 2022 season, the advisory board selected the theme of “climate and the future of the planet.” They have directed the Forum to put together a set of speakers who will discuss how climate change will intersect with long-standing challenges of economic inequality, racism, and international cooperation. At the same time, our speakers will talk about climate solutions, adaptation, and a positive path forward.

Our first speaker in the climate series this spring will be Katharine Hayhoe, the Chief Scientist for The Nature Conservancy where she oversees the global climate advocacy and adaptation work. Her new book, Saving Us: A Climate Scientist’s Case for Hope and Healing in a Divided World is a candid look at the science of climate change and what can be done about it.

Dr. Hayhoe will speak at the Westminster Town Hall Forum Monday, January 31, at noon. The talk is presented in collaboration with The Great Northern Festival and their “Climate Solutions” series. The remainder of the Town Hall Forum’s spring 2022 season will be announced in January.

2022 Pledge Reminder
It’s not too late – if you have not already done so, be a part of Building the Beloved Community with an online pledge or mail in your pledge card or gift.

Find out more ways to give online. Thank you!
Youth Ministry Updates
by Alexandra Jacob, Associate Pastor

The Senior High retreat is over; the greens have been hung in the Cloister Hall; college care packages are assembled and mailed; White Elephant gifts have been exchanged; and festive sweaters are retired to our closets. The Christmas season in the youth ministry area has wrapped up in typical Westminster fashion, full of joy and community!

As the new calendar year begins, I am working in collaboration with three Personnel Committee for Staff and Ministers (PCSM) members (Jacque DeBuse, Brent Hall, and Ann Rainhart) to discern the way forward with Westminster’s youth ministry staffing. The three of us met twice in December with Rev. Dr. Meghan Gage-Finn to reflect on where the youth program has been and where the Spirit might be leading us. We have reviewed the past 20 years of youth ministry staffing at Westminster, raising questions and reflections about strengths and opportunities for growth in the program area, and we have reviewed recent Director of Youth Ministries job descriptions.

Next steps in this process will include sharing these findings in an information and listening session with parents/caregivers of youth, along with intentional times of listening and processing with our current and former youth (include date if we have it).

This is hard work, and it is “Holy Spirit work.” With deep gratitude for where we have been, I am eager to continue listening for where the Spirit is leading us as we imagine the future of youth ministries at Westminster. We’ll look forward to sharing another update in next month’s Westminster News.

Extended Winter Break for Children’s Ministries
by Sonja Dziekciowski, Director of Children’s Ministries

After another robust and creative fall of Church School on Zoom, our Children’s Ministries volunteers will take some time off screen to prepare for the next phase of the Church School year. Church School will resume on February 4, either on Zoom or in-person, depending on the state of the pandemic and the comfort level of Church School teachers and Church School families as reported in our survey emailed out over Winter Break.

Volunteers and staff are planning ways for Westminster children to re-enter the Education Wing, hopefully at some point this new year. Several Church School classrooms have not had teachers in them since March of 2020, so stepping inside of them feels like a time warp back to pre-pandemic days.

All accolades and gratitude are lifted up for the ways that our Children’s Ministries volunteers have continued to keep our children connected. It has been a gift to witness the songs, costumes, games, and experiments shared over Zoom and at in-person, outside events.

Nursery Update
by Marie Kruskop, Coordinator of Early Childhood and Family Ministries

The Covid pandemic remains a major concern for the youngest among us. The pandemic continues with no clear end in sight and vaccines are not yet available for those under age 5. Therefore, our Nursery Reopening Team has determined the nursery will remain closed to keep our littlest ones safe and healthy.

Our Team has been at work determining what needs to be in place to reopen the nursery safely and we have asked the Responsible Building Use Task Force (RBUTF) to help guide these plans. We have used this time to review the nursery’s purpose and have identified some additional ways in which to enhance our programming and ministry to these young ones. We have reviewed and made minor changes to the Nursery Coordinator position description and have sent it on to the church’s personnel committee for review.

Please hold this Team and its work in prayer as we continue our work.
Contact Marie Kruskop, Coordinator of Early Childhood and Family Ministries, or Alexandra Jacob, Associate Pastor for Families, Youth, and Children, with questions or concerns.
A Message of Belonging to our Children and Youth
by Marie Kruskop, Coordinator of Early Childhood and Family Ministries

Now that children and youth ages 5 and up are able to get vaccinated against Covid, you will begin to see more and more families with children and youth feeling comfortable enough to return to worship in person. How might we welcome them? How might we send the message that they, too, belong here and we are glad they are among us? This blessing comes from speak it plain – words for worship and life together by Meta Herrick Carlson.

Children
May you find a joyful welcome at the heart of this assembly, so these adults never forget they were once children themselves.

May your eyes and ears gather good stories about what really matters to God, so that love has the loudest word whenever the world tries to say otherwise.

May your whole sense of self know safety here, honored and loved beyond measure according to the promises we spoke over you in baptism and ever since.

May your life know value and purpose, for you have been called and set free to be hope and justice for those who do not know they are already and always enough.

May you go boldly into the world, but find your way home whenever you need these sights and sounds that know who and whose you are.

The Gift of Love in Westminster Gallery
by Rodney Allen Schwartz, Director, Westminster Gallery and Archive

The birth of the Christ Child brings with it the promise of renewed and eternal life for Christians. We are well on the way through the season of Advent as we wait for this blessed event to occur. The story of Advent and Christmas is illuminated in the current Westminster Gallery exhibition, The Gift of Love. It begins with the little prophet foretelling the coming savior and takes us along on the journey to birth and the baptism of Jesus.

We have the delightful work of guest artist Virginia Averill as a special addition to the exhibition this year. Her art is informed by her education in Asian studies and history, and time living in England and traveling throughout Europe. Two Byzantine Madonna and Child icons on her mother’s dressing table and later exposure to Eastern Orthodox icons brought her to a love of art and provided inspiration and substance to her unique style.

Don’t forget to visit the second floor to see the complete series of Nativity serigraphs by John August Swanson at the top of the Trinity Stairs, and the Martha Rogers Crèche Collection near the choir room. As we strive to diversify the Westminster Collection, there are several new crèches made by Indigenous Americans in the display case near the chapel. The exhibition runs through January 9.

Madonna & Child
- Nativity Play, by Virginia Averill, mixed media, 2017
The Bible
Then and Now:
Redemption and Belonging in the
Book of Ruth
by Matt Skinner, Scholar for Adult Education

Reading the Bible with others has a way of animating and enlarging the perspectives we have on God and on our shared lives. Gathering around the short story told in the book of Ruth can help us consider how we understand the challenges of belonging, inclusion, and justice. Ruth is a story of vulnerable, dislocated people seeking survival and restoration. Although it ends well, it is hardly a comfortable or romantic story. How can it help us think about the power of God and the strengths and shortcomings of our religious traditions? How can it help us think about building community, promoting justice, and ensuring the dignity of others? On three Monday evenings in January we will explore the book of Ruth and consider where it leads us. Join me as I lead this new installment of the “The Bible Then and Now” program. You can participate in person, in the Garden Room, or online simultaneously via Zoom. Please register in advance, by using the Realm platform or by emailing Mahin Hamilton (mhamilton@wpc-mpls.org). For more information, visit the Adult Education page of Westminster’s website and read about “The Bible Then and Now.”

Mondays in January, 7-8:30 pm
• January 10 (in the Garden Room or via Zoom)
• January 17 (via Zoom only)
• January 24 (in the Garden Room or via Zoom)

Adult Education Preview
Building the Beloved Community: Construction, Restructuring, and Repair

This fall, Adult Education programming explored how Building the Beloved Community through a theological lens can guide the way we should live in community together, and how we might build new habits and systems that connect us all in greater love, justice, and mercy. Through the winter and spring, these discussions will continue to build on the same theme. We will also take time to continue our traditions of building community and strengthening our faith through the All-Church Book Read and Lenten Covenant Groups.

January 9, 23, 30: The All-Church Book Read will convene discussions on The Night Watchman by Louise Erdrich including a presentation on January 23 by Travis Zimmerman, a member of the Ojibway tribe and the director of the Milaca Indian Museum.

January 16: Martin Luther King Jr. Joint Forum with Social Justice Forum

February 6 and 13: Dr. Leon Rodrigues will share about the history of colonization and share some transformational and decolonizing practices.

February 27 and May 1: Dr. Christine J. Hong from Columbia Theological Seminary will be with us to offer her insights into building the beloved community and to help us understand our roles in crisis towards the work of justice.

March 6-April 3: Lenten Covenant Groups

April 24: Earth Sunday Joint Forum with Social Justice Forum

Adult Education classes are currently held at 9:15 am on Sundays in the Recreation Room and online at: westmintermpls2.online.church.

Senior High youth retreat at Clearwater Forest in Deerwood, Minnesota.