Dear Westminster members and friends,

It was another pandemic year of online and hybrid worship, education, prayer, advocacy, music, care, and more. We dubbed 2021 the Year of Belonging to help us stay connected. We are not quite out of the woods yet, but Westminster has shown resilience thus far!

Looking back, I give thanks to God for the way our congregation has persevered. An indication of Westminster’s vitality is that 24 months after being forced to isolate from one another, and nine months after starting to come back in only a limited way, we are still the church — as much as we ever were.

We have learned to extend our reach beyond the local. We discovered that online worship can be moving and powerful in its own way. We greeted newcomers and cared for the sick, visited the lonely and shared the love of Christ in hybrid ways. We continued to give generously to support ministry and mission. We taught our children and engaged our youth. We welcomed an Afghan refugee family.

The prophet Isaiah speaks of the people of God as being called “repairers of the breach.” (Isaiah 58:12) I had always thought of that literally, as a broken or damaged wall. I now see the breach as also being within the community itself. Covid interrupted Westminster’s life as a gathered community, and we have worked hard at bridging the gap.

We have tried to do the same in the broader community. As in years past, in 2021 Westminster reached out to partners in the city and beyond to join in repairing long-standing breaches in our social and economic life. That transforming work will take time – and continue to require our attention for years to come. We belong not only to God, but to neighbor, as well.

Westminster is a diverse collection of faithful people doing their best to be the church – to repair the breach in our place and time. This 2021 Annual Report tells that story in image and text.

We have made it through a challenging season, and we are stronger for it. Thanks be to God for all who have helped along the way – singers and teachers, elders and ushers, musicians and committee members, artists and trustees, greeters and volunteers, deacons and worshippers, care-providers and decision-makers. And a special thank-you to the church staff team for their creativity, skill, diligence, and patience!

Grace and peace,
“Westminster, as a Telling Presence in the City, is committed to justice ministries that bring to public expression hopes and yearnings. This body is listening in order to recognize what has long been denied and suppressed. This truth is imbedded in the DNA of the congregation.”

—The Rev. Dr. Meghan Gage-Finn, What Is and What Could Be July 18, 2021
Mission Statement for Westminster Presbyterian Church:

In response to the grace of God through Jesus Christ, Westminster’s mission is to proclaim and celebrate the Good News of Jesus Christ; gather as an open community to worship God with dignity and joy, warmth and beauty; nourish personal faith through study, prayer, and fellowship; work for love, peace and justice; be a welcoming and caring Christian community, witnessing to God’s love day by day; work locally and beyond with our denomination and the larger Christian Church; and be a telling presence in the city.

In 2021 the Westminster community continued to fulfill its mission and to be the church in the midst of a global pandemic. We proclaimed and celebrated the Good News through worship online and in person. We gathered as an open community and witnessed to others with special events. We worked for love, peace, and justice through service and giving. We studied together, prayed together, and connected with one another—in person and online. And we worked locally and beyond with the denomination through Giving Tuesday in November and with interfaith events throughout the year.

We are the church in the world, both online and in person. We belong to one another and to God. Thanks be to God!
In March Westminster returned to in-person worship in Westminster Hall and by Easter we returned to the sanctuary. In September we added a new 8:30 am worship on Sundays that allows the congregation to participate in music, word, and the sacraments of Communion and baptism. Wednesday Evening Worship continued and especially developed a steadfast group of online worshippers, joining weekly for Silence and Song.

Additional ways Westminster gathered through worship and the arts:

• Westminster welcomed many guest preachers in 2021, including the Rev. Dr. Brian Blount from Union Presbyterian Seminary, the Rev. Dr. Diane Moffett from the Presbyterian Mission Agency, Macalester College President Dr. Suzanne Rivera, and Co-Moderator of the PC(USA), the Rev. Gregory Bentley.

• The Westminster Performing Arts Series hosted bluegrass band Monroe Crossing in October.

• Westminster featured five organists and organs through its Organs of the Twin Cities mini series.

• The Westminster Art Gallery began the year with window gallery exhibitions, but moved back into the gallery space in September with an exhibition on Belonging.

“We have spent the past year and a half learning new ways of belonging, because we were forced to. And now we know that our capacity for creativity and vulnerability is deeper than we may have realized.”

— The Rev. Alexandra Jacob, Creative Belonging, October 17, 2021
**Through Learning**

Adult Education held weekly meetings online and in person in 2021. Speakers addressed topics around reckoning with privilege, the theology of play, and building the beloved community.

Social Justice Forum also met online through May and then re-started in September in person. Invited speakers from the local community spoke on topics related to the two themes for the year, “Wade in the Water: Becoming Anti-Racist” and “Diving Deeper Together So All Will Flourish.” Executive Director of the Under-Told Stories Project Fred de Sam Lazaro launched the new program year on Coming Together Sunday in September.

Families, Youth, and Children continued to hold Church School on Zoom and were able to hold the weeklong summer Day Camp in person at a nearby park. Youth groups met again in person and Confirmation classes continued. Youth also participated in mission trips over the summer by staying local and taking day trips from the church.

Additional ways Westminster gathered through learning:

- Adult Education held four evening class series since last year’s Annual Meeting and a Saturday class during Lent on “Vulnerability and Courage.”

- The Westminster Town Hall Forum hosted 12 speakers in 2021, including special May talks by racial justice leaders and a fall series on democracy.
In January 2022, the Session released $400,000 from Westminster’s endowment to support two long-time church partners—Liberty Community Church in north Minneapolis and Grace-Trinity Community Church in Uptown. This funding parallels last year’s $100,000 in special endowment gifts to two non-profits serving indigenous and precariously housed communities, for a total of $500,000 in extraordinary grants beyond annual mission giving.

In each of the last two years, Westminster has budgeted $460,000 for mission. The extraordinary and annual funding, when added to the nearly $200,000 in special emergency support from the church during 2020 and 2021, means that during the two pandemic years Westminster shared more than $1.6 million in the community.

Financial support for Westminster was also strong in 2021. Year-end gifts came from 100 members who gave nearly $105,000, exceeding the goal. In addition, Westminster achieved the pledge goal for 2022, with more than 400 households pledging to support the mission and ministry of the church.

Additional ways Westminster served through giving:

• Westminster’s Community Partners Ministry team supported 17 local organizations working to transform social systems, challenge inequalities, and practice love of neighbor for those who are poor, hungry, or homeless.

• Sock, hat, and gloves drive in December for Friends Eating and Sharing Together (FEAST), and a February Girl Scouts cookie sale provided 239 donated boxes of cookies for FEAST guests.

• The Magnet Center collected 80 coats for seniors in need and wrapped 30 gifts for Magnet participants and community members in December.

• Small Hands, Big Hearts held a food drive for Groveland Food Shelf and monthly collections for Groveland Food Shelf have seen overflowing donation bins each month.

• Special offerings throughout the year brought in even more support locally and beyond: the Hunger offering in February, the Peace and Global Witness offering in October, and the Christmas Joy offering in December.

Clockwise (this page): Visiting Envision Community in Minneapolis; Pride and Play event in June; and the Fair Trade Gift Fair. Left to right (opposite page) Faith in Action 5th Sunday event; and youth summer mission trip.
SERVING

Through Justice and Mission Work

Westminster’s Hunger Ministry remained active in 2021 and continued to serve food on the last Sunday of the month for Friends Eating and Sharing Together (FEAST) at Plymouth Congregational Church. In addition, Westminster members and friends brought food and household items to support the monthly drives for Groveland Food Shelf coordinated by the Hunger Ministry Team. Westminster volunteers also helped deliver fresh, nutritious meals directly to the homes of seniors and individuals with disabilities in the downtown area through Meals on Wheels.

The Eco-Justice Ministry Team continued its efforts to move Westminster and its members to carbon neutrality at church and at home. The team hosted a Social Justice Forum with Sam Grant from Minnesota 360. Grant discussed the connections between racial justice and climate change. Finally, the Eco-Justice Ministry team challenged the congregation to use less plastic and encouraged members to learn more about electric vehicles and plugin hybrid vehicles.

Additional ways Westminster served through mission work:

• In September, a group of Westminster members partnered with the Minnesota Council of Churches to co-host and sponsor an Afghan refugee family.

• Westminster’s Global Partners Ministry team collected an offering to purchase syringes for Cuba and continued to sponsor water systems bringing clean drinking water to Cuba.

• Westminster continues to actively participate with Align Minneapolis, an interfaith collaboration that addresses homelessness. Through their Emergency Rental Assistance program 64 neighbors received direct assistance to remain in their homes.

“We will not allow anything to interfere with our actively believing in God’s presence. Our believing will look like seeking, following, doing, and being. Our believing involves learning and being disciplined, and gaining insight about the presence of God.” —The Rev. Alanna Simone Tyler,

For What Do We Hunger? August 8, 2021
Small groups at Westminster grew in 2021, with groups meeting on Zoom and in person. As a way to deepen one’s faith and provide opportunities for broader connection in the community, Westminster holds small groups for those who identify as men, women, LGBTQ+, moms, dads, couples, single, older, younger, and even topical groups, such as discussing the Sunday sermon.

Westminster hosted a number of events at the church to welcome the community and introduce neighbors to Westminster. During the summer Westminster held Pride and Play in June, a picnic with lawn games in August along with open houses, and Coming Together Sunday festivities in September.

The Magnet Senior Center returned to the building, offering a space and activities for local seniors to learn and socialize.

Additional ways Westminster showed belonging through engagement:

• Westminster sponsored a booth at the Loring Park Arts Festival over the summer, showcasing to surrounding neighbors the church’s music, arts, and children’s offerings.

• Working with the Downtown Interfaith Senior Clergy, Westminster hosted an interfaith prayer vigil to mark 400,000 lives lost to Covid in January 2021.

• The Fair Trade Gift Fair returned to Westminster in November, featuring sustainably sourced and fairly-exchanged goods from more than a dozen vendors.

• Westminster continued to welcome new members in 2021 on Zoom and a hybrid class in the fall, including new members from three different states outside of Minnesota!

“The church must always ask itself if it can be a place and a people reflecting the love and justice of Jesus, where all can discover they belong. If it cannot, it may soon no longer be the church.”

— Rev. Dr. Tim Hart-Andersen
Belonging and Believing, September 19, 2021
Through Caring for One Another

As the church opened its doors to in-person worship and gatherings, the community began again to hold memorial services, baptisms, and weddings. Prayer companions adapted their ministry to pray with those in need on the phone, on Zoom and the livestream service, as well as after worship in the building. The Health Ministry team began offering monthly blood pressure screenings before and after worship on Sundays again in the fall.

Additional ways Westminster showed belonging through caring for another:

- Westminster’s New Old Adventures became Third Age and continued offering monthly programs for older adults in the Westminster community.
- Beyond Sunday Connections for women at Westminster invited four women to share personal reflections about their faith, work, and daily lives.
- WOW, or the weekly Wednesday morning Bible study for women, continued on Zoom and moved back into the building in the fall.
- Family Matters and Moms Group met regularly to offer Westminster parents a chance to connect in Bible study, prayer, and fellowship.
- WestConnect, Westminster’s young adult group, gathered twice a month to share a meal and to build community and faith formation.
“Let’s all go forth to deepen our trust in God, and be the ambassador of God’s generous and beautiful grace from our hearts to our hands. Amen.”

— The Rev. David Tsai Shinn,
Does It Line Up? August 29, 2021