



GOD'S CALL



OUR RESPONSE

LENT AT WESTMINSTER PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH



The Bible makes one thing completely clear: God will not leave us alone. God continually provokes people, calling out until they listen, challenging them to move from the place they call home into a new land that is defined only by God's promises. God will not let up, even when we would prefer to stay put or stand back or give up.

"I've got plans for the world," God said to Abraham and Sarah and Moses and Mary and Peter and us. "They involve you. Are you in?"

During the six weeks of Lent this year, we are going to attend to God's call on our lives, separately and together. How can we prepare for it? How will we recognize it when it comes? How do we say yes – and what will happen if we say no?

We will be guided on our Lenten journey by Jesus, and by a remarkable series of people who he encounters in the Gospel of John. We'll read their stories and consider how Jesus calls each person and how they respond. What can they teach us that will help us to hear and respond to Jesus today?

We have plans for the Lenten season at Westminster, and they involve you.

Are you in?

Pastor Heather Kirk-Davidoff

WORSHIP

Ash Wednesday

February 22

6:00 pm: Soup, Salad, Bread and Brownies

6:45 pm: Singing around the tables

7:00 pm-7:30 pm: Ash Wednesday Prayers
and the Imposition of Ashes

In-Person in the Fellowship Hall, 85 Chestnut Street

Note: The 7:00 pm service will also be shown on Zoom -- use link listed on our website in the Ash Wednesday event. [Click here for event details](#)

Please join us as we gather to begin our 40-day journey together to Easter. Lent is a season of reflection and recommitment, and we begin by asking forgiveness for the ways we have ignored God's call or refused to respond. Ashes are an ancient symbol of repentance and Christians across the world mark the beginning of the Lenten season with this ritual. Adults, youth and children are welcome.

Lent 1: Get Curious

Sunday, February 26

10:00 am

In-Person and on Zoom

Focus Scripture: John 3:1-17

How do we begin to understand God's call? It is tempting to wait for a bolt of lightning, a moment when everything becomes completely clear. But Nicodemus shows us a different route—he begins with a question. Jesus doesn't offer an answer—that would end the conversation. Jesus asks his own question and so invites Nicodemus to stay curious.

*What are you curious about? How can we get even more curious?
How could our questions help us listen to God?*

Lent 2: Make a Connection

Sunday, March 5

10:00 am

In-Person and on Zoom

Focus Scripture: John 4:5-42

When Jesus starts a conversation with a Samaritan woman who he meets at a well, he crosses all the boundaries of gender, religion, ethnicity and culture that should have kept them separated.

Everyone assumed those boundaries were necessary to keep the peace. But Jesus challenged the woman to question her assumptions about people—and about herself.

Are you yearning to make a new connection? Could that yearning be part of God's call to you? What boundaries would you need to challenge to reach out in a new way?

Our guest preacher this morning will be Daniel Butterworth, the Executive Director of Refugee and Immigrant Support Services of Emmaus (RISSE) which has partnered with Westminster to host the Conversation Club that takes place in our building every Sunday afternoon at 3:00 pm.

Lent 3: Start Moving

Sunday, March 12

10:00 am

In-Person and on Zoom

Focus Scripture: John 5:1-15

One of the stranger encounters Jesus has in the Gospel of John is with a man who has been ill for thirty-eight years. This man has explanations and excuses but the fact remains: he's stuck. The explanation for his protracted suffering, he tells Jesus, is found in the people around him. No one will help him! Jesus responds with a simple question that cuts through all the man's excuses: Do you want to be healed?

What's your excuse for not listening for or following God's call? We all have one—or more! Do you want to be healed??

Remember: Daylight Saving Time begins this Sunday! Set your clocks forward one hour so you don't miss our worship service!

Lent 4: Commit to One (Small) Thing

Sunday, March 19

10:00 am

In-Person and on Zoom

Focus Scripture: John 9:1-41

Jesus healed a man who had been blind since he was born—and it upset everyone around him. But the man who had been healed held his ground and declared, “One thing I do know, that though I was blind, now I see.” It was his truth—and it challenged everyone around him to reexamine their entire understanding of the world. Small commitments to change can become big challenges to a broken world.

What do you know for sure? How is God calling you to declare that to the world? What might change if you did?

Lent 5: Cry Out

Sunday, March 26

10:00 am

In-Person and on Zoom

Focus Scripture: John 11:1-45

The story of Jesus’ encounter with Mary, Martha and their brother Lazarus is a call story of a different sort. The story begins with the sisters’ call to Jesus. They are desperate for his help and angry when he does not respond quickly. Many of us know that story from our own lives—and it has left us doubting that God hears us when we call. But in this story, Jesus also cries—and then surprises everyone by calling out to Lazarus.

Have you ever cried out to God? Have you ever heard God cry out to you? How does the story of Lazarus challenge your assumptions about what is possible and what is impossible?

Palm Sunday

April 2

10:00 am

In-Person and on Zoom

This Sunday—weather permitting—we'll begin worship outside our State Street doors (with chairs provided for those who prefer). We'll wave our palms and shout "Hosanna!" as loud as we can, remember all of those who greeted Jesus as he entered Jerusalem on a donkey. Once inside, we'll continue the story, reading together Matthew's account of Jesus' last week. We'll end this service on a reflective note, leaving the sanctuary in silence.

*Where do you find yourself in the story of Jesus' last week?
Is someone in this story calling to you this year? What would it
take to listen?*

Maundy Thursday

April 6

6:30 pm: Light Meal with Table Communion in the Fellowship Hall

7:30 pm: Tenebrae Service in the Westminster Sanctuary

In-Person only

We'll begin our worship together downstairs with a simple meal and a table communion service. Around 7:30 pm we'll proceed to the sanctuary. Our Tenebrae Service offers a series of scripture readings, short reflections, and hymns. After each reading, we blow out a candle until the sanctuary is completely dark. We relight a candle before we leave, declaring again that God's light shines—even in the darkness.

Good Friday

April 7

**4:00 pm - 7:00 pm: Prayer and Reflection
in the Westminster Sanctuary**

In-Person only

On this solemn day when we remember Jesus' death on the cross, we invite you to spend time in prayer and reflection in our sanctuary. A series of prayer stations which will help you to focus as you light a candle, write a prayer, shape a vessel out of clay, reflect on scripture and more. You are also welcome to just come and sit and enjoy the beauty of our historic building.

A booklet will offer directions, instructions and some readings to inspire you. All are welcome! Our sanctuary is handicapped accessible. Children and teens are most welcome to come and participate.

Easter Sunday

April 9

10:00 am

In-Person and on Zoom

Focus Scripture: Matthew 28:1-10

Our sanctuary will be filled with flowers and the organ will help us declare the good news: Jesus Christ is Risen Today! Easter Sunday worship at Westminster features special music by the Westminster Choir, a sermon by Rev. Heather Kirk-Davidoff and a few Easter surprises!

Have you ever been surprised by God? When you're willing to be surprised, how is life different?

SPECIAL PROGRAMS FOR LENT

God's Call, Our Response

Wednesday evenings during Lent

7:00 pm - 8:15 pm

On Zoom only

Do you have a “calling”? While we often reserve the term “call” for those who pursue full-time Christian service as ministers or missionaries, all Christians are challenged to shape their lives in response to Jesus’ call to discipleship. But what “counts” as a call? Does it have to be a job—or could it be a volunteer activity, a hobby, or even a relationship? Is a call something we “do”-- or could it be a way of being in the world?

Please join us for a series of conversations that will help us develop a deeper understanding of God’s call to each of us and the many ways we respond throughout our lives. Each week, we’ll hear members of our congregation reflect on their lives and consider how they are currently living out their call. We’ll learn about what they are doing—but also consider the WHY that guides them. Before we close each week, we’ll turn the question back to ourselves: what is *our* call? Have we learned something from each other that can help us respond to that question – and to say yes?

March 1: Responding to God’s Call through our **volunteer work**
(Moderated by Kelly Crisfield)

March 8: Responding to God’s Call through our **jobs**
(Moderated by Lisa Petter)

March 15: Responding to God’s Call through our **rest and reflection**
(Moderated by Heather Kirk-Davidoff)

March 22: Responding to God’s Call through **our service to the church**
(Moderated by Paul Randall)

March 29: Responding to God’s Call through our **family relationships**
(Moderated by Susan Schell)

Good Friday Children's Program

April 7

11:00 am - 1:00 pm

In-Person only: Fellowship Hall of Westminster Presbyterian

Get ready for Easter with the Westminster family! Belinda Quaye, Chris Price and Pastor Heather will offer a free program for the children of Westminster, their friends and the wider community. Our time together will include fun music and games and a chance to decorate Easter eggs. At the end of our time together we'll enjoy lunch. Children who are interested can then visit the Good Friday prayer stations in our sanctuary for some age-appropriate reflections on the story of Jesus' last week. Parents and caregivers are welcome to stay and help out--and other volunteers are needed too. If you'd like to join in the fun, please contact Belinda at belindaquaye@wpcalbany.org.

OTHER OPPORTUNITIES FOR SPIRITUAL DEVELOPMENT

Sacred Conversations

Beginning Monday, March 13

10:30 am - 12 noon

On Zoom only

Sacred Conversations are a series of small group gatherings focused on a series of open-ended reflective questions suggested by the leaders or members of the group. Our conversations are open to anyone interested in listening deeply and connecting with others in the congregation. We'll talk on Zoom from 10:30 am to 12 noon on March 13, April 10, May 8 and June 12. You are welcome to participate in all four--and if you know you'll miss a few you're still welcome to join in when you can. For more information contact Linore Southworth, Marie McClumpha or Pastor Heather (pastor@wpcalbany.org). To sign up for these conversations, please email Pastor Heather or call the Westminster Church office at 518-436-8544.

Prayer Line

Every Wednesday night

7:00 pm

On Zoom only

A group of 5-8 members and friends of our congregation gather on Zoom each week to reflect on a passage of scripture, share prayer concerns, and pray together. Let us pray for you and with you! Anyone is welcome to drop in. See our [website](#) for the Zoom link.

SERVICE and ADVOCACY OPPORTUNITIES

Bread for the World Offering of Letters to Congress

Throughout the Lenten season, everyone is invited to join us as we write letters to members of Congress promoting actions to end hunger here in the U.S. and around the world. We'll add our letters (written in person or online) to thousands of others sent by faith communities across the country during this annual event. We'll hear more about the specific topics for letters this year from Judy Hartley on February 26th during a Moment for Mission. If you'd like to join Judy at the FOCUS Breakfast Club as we invite guests to write their own letters, please send her an email at breendrive@yahoo.com.

One Great Hour of Sharing

Gifts Received Throughout the Lenten Season, Dedicated During Worship on April 2

For over 70 years, Presbyterians have joined with other Christian denominations to give financial gifts in support of disaster aid, hunger relief and ongoing community development. Adults and children all participate in this annual appeal.

Vigil for Racial Justice

Resumes Tuesday, March 7

12 noon - 1:00 pm

Prayer takes many forms—including public witness. You are invited to pray on your feet with us each Tuesday as we gather on State Street in front of the church. A leader starts each Vigil with prayer. The remainder of the time, participants display signs to pray for justice. Bring a sign along with wording of your choice, if you are able.

Conversation Club

Every Sunday afternoon

3:00 pm in the Welles Room. Enter at 85 Chestnut Street

Westminster has partnered with RISSE (Refugee and Immigrant Support Services of Emmaus) to offer this weekly, drop-in opportunity for English language learners to practice speaking and listening to native speakers. We gather as a group for introductions and then break up into pairs or small groups to talk. Conversation starters are provided! Teens as well as adults are welcome to come. You can participate one time or come every week. Tea and cookies sweeten our time together!

Capital Area Council of Churches

Emergency Overflow Shelter

At the nearby Emergency Overflow Shelter, Westminster volunteers have been welcoming guests and providing a hot meal since its inception in 2001. Every Sunday during the Lenten season and beyond, Westminster volunteers prepare and deliver nutritious meals for shelter guests. We welcome your help! Email Sheila Wrede (smwrede@wpcalbany.org) or Valerie Shanley (vshanley@nycap.rr.com) for more information.

FOCUS Breakfast Program

Westminster is proud to host the “Breakfast Club” program every Tuesday, Wednesday and Thursday morning from 7:00 am until 8:30 am. The FOCUS Churches of Albany runs this program which provides over 18,000 breakfasts and bag lunches to guests each year. Breakfast is staffed by volunteers who serve, clean, and provide hospitality to guests. Volunteers are needed for a range of times between 6:00 am and 9:30 am. If you’d like to help out, please call the FOCUS office at 518-443-0460 or email Belinda Quaye (belindaq@focuschurches.net).

FOCUS Interfaith Food Pantry

Located in Emmanuel Baptist Church, across State Street from Westminster, The FOCUS Interfaith Food Pantry provides families from the Capitol Hill, Center Square, Hudson, Washington and Park South neighborhoods, and beyond, with a 6-day supply of food. Volunteers are needed for a number of positions, including guest check-in and packing groceries. Please contact the FOCUS office at 518-443-0460 if you are interested in helping.

African Missions at Westminster

At Westminster, we are committed to vital mission partnerships in the West African countries of Ghana, Liberia, and Sierra Leone. Through partnerships, we strive to transform the lives of children and families in Ghana, Liberia, and Sierra Leone through projects addressing shared priorities, including education, computer literacy, health care, menstrual hygiene supplies & education, micro loans and more. We welcome your interest, support and participation! For more information, call the Westminster Church office at 518-436-8544 and we’ll connect you to dynamic leaders of this ministry.



WESTMINSTER
— Presbyterian Church —

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