



Fall at Westminster • 2023

Christianity is all about love.

At least that's what it should be about. When someone asked Jesus what the greatest commandment is, he responded,

“You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind.’ This is the greatest and first commandment. And a second is like it: ‘You shall love your neighbor as yourself.” (Matthew 22:37-39)

The Apostle Paul shared his take on this in his letter to the church in Corinth. He told them that if we do even the most extreme acts of religious devotion without love, they mean nothing. Love is greater than faith or hope, he says.

Do we have our priorities straight? There are so many demands on our time and attention. Are we focusing on the right things? One way to figure that out is to consider: **are we becoming more loving?**

This Fall, we're going to put that question at the center of our life together at Westminster. I hope it will challenge us as individuals and as a church. It may help us craft our budget and organize our calendars. It may give us new eyes to see our neighbors. It may lead us to say "no" to something so that we can **say a stronger "yes" to our discipleship to Jesus**, the one who came because "God so loved the world" (John 3:16).

Westminster Presbyterian is more than a building, more than a program, more than a worship service. It's a **School of Love**. I look forward to growing and learning alongside you this Fall!

Pastor Heather



WORSHIP

*Please join us Sundays at 10:00 am in our Sanctuary
(enter at 85 Chestnut Street)*

Information also available at: wpcalbany.org

Sunday, September 10

“CAN'T WE ALL JUST GET ALONG?”

Focus Scripture: Matthew 18:15-20

What should we do about all the conflict in our communities? Jesus gives his disciples some very specific instructions (which are actually the opposite of what most of us do). But even when Jesus gives pragmatic advice his words contain a promise. We are not alone—even when we're ready to quit talking to anyone.

Our choir returns this Sunday! Stick around after worship for a special Welcome Back Coffee Hour.

Sunday, September 17

“THE LORD OF PEACE”

**GUEST PREACHER: RULING ELDER MATILDA PARKER,
PRESBYTERIAN PEACEMAKER**

Focus Scriptures: 2 Thessalonians 3:16, John 16:33, Philippians 4:7

Peace is possible. Liberia's brutal 14-year civil war ended twenty years ago but the nation is still struggling to heal from the damage that conflict caused. The Palava Hut process is an alternative dispute resolution method based on indigenous African practices and values. Our guest preacher, RE Matilda Parker, facilitates Palava Hut conversations across Liberia this morning. We look forward to learning from her experience. Ms. Parker is a Ruling Elder of the First Presbyterian Church of Monrovia, Liberia. Our denomination, the PC(USA), supports her peacemaking work.

After worship, please stay for lunch (which will include some Liberian dishes) and further conversation with Ms. Parker.





Welcome Ruling Elder Matilda Parker!

Our congregation makes connections all over the world! Westminster is excited to sponsor a visit from Presbyterian Peacemaker Matilda Parker to the Albany Presbytery, September 15th-22nd. In addition to preaching at our Sunday morning worship service on September 17th, Ms. Parker will be visiting four other churches in the area and Union College's Protestant Campus Ministry. Ms. Parker will also be a guest speaker at Greene Correctional Facility, hosted by the Alternatives to Violence Project (which is led by Pastor Heather). For more information about Ms. Parker, her visit, or the Palava Hut conflict resolution process, go to wpcalbany.org.

Sunday, September 24

“SHOULD EVERYONE GET WHAT THEY DESERVE?”

Focus Scripture: Matthew 20:1-6

Do some people deserve more—and do some deserve less? Our answers to these questions are at the root of many conflicts. This Sunday we'll explore one of Jesus' most obnoxious parables, the story of the workers in the vineyard. Although some people work the whole day and others just work an hour, all are paid the same wage at the end of the day. "Are you envious because I am generous?" the vineyard owner asks at the end of the day. *How would you answer that question?*



Sunday, October 1

WORLD COMMUNION SUNDAY

GUEST PREACHER: REV. BARBARA ASEMPA, DIRECTOR OF HOME OF CARE AND PROTECTION (HOCAP), MISSION PARTNER IN GHANA

Focus Scripture: Philippians 2:1-13

On this Sunday, Christians worldwide gather around tables to know Christ "in the breaking of the bread." We are thrilled to welcome members of our Partner Congregation, the Greenwich Meridian Presbyterian Church in Tema, Ghana who will join us via Zoom. Together with Greenwich Meridian, [Westminster has partnered](#) with HOCAP as Barbara Asempa works with the residents of a rural village, Nyitawuta, to build a medical clinic and improve the quality of life for those living in this area. Barbara has now been ordained to the ministry and we are thrilled to welcome her to our (virtual) pulpit.

In addition, we'll welcome some special musical guests who will lead us in praising God with music from around the world. *Our worship this morning will be a real celebration of what is possible when people come together in love!*

Sunday, October 8

"WHO IS REALLY WELCOME?"

GUEST PREACHER: ELDER LEAH THREATTE

Focus Scripture: Philippians 3:4b-14

The Apostle Paul says that "if anyone has reason to feel confident" of their own worthiness, he does. He goes on to list all the things that could distinguish him from others: his family background, actions, and good character. And yet, he says, what really matters to him is that "Christ has made me his own." What if we felt the same way? What if we valued what we have in common more than what sets us apart? Would we have the courage to challenge everything that separates us from each other?



Sunday, October 15

“HOW DO I BECOME MORE LOVING?”

Focus Scriptures: Philippians 4:1-9, Matthew 22:1-14

If the church is a School of Love, what is our homework? The Apostle Paul urges a community that is in conflict to focus on these things: "whatever is true" or honorable or just or pure or pleasing or commendable or excellent. Does that actually help? Should we just ignore everything that is NOT true, honorable, etc.? When is it necessary to declare that something—or someone—is wrong?

Sunday, October 22

“TO WHOM DO WE GIVE POWER?”

Focus Scripture: Matthew 22:15-22

In our scriptures, love is not just a warm sentiment—it has power. But it isn't the all-or-nothing power that rulers like Caesar exercised. When people try to get Jesus to play Caesar's games, he changes the rules. Instead of dominating, his power transforms the situation. How might we do the same? What can we do to experience and amplify the power of love in the world?

Sunday, October 29

REFORMATION SUNDAY - “Here I Stand”

Focus Scripture: Matthew 22:34-46

Jesus has a bottom line: love God with all your heart, soul, and mind, and love your neighbor as yourself. During a conflict, it can be helpful to declare that some things are not negotiable. That's what Martin Luther did at the Diet of Worms in 1521. As a result, he was kicked out of the Roman church and the Protestant Reformation officially began. This Sunday, we'll remember and reflect on the history of our part of the Christian movement and consider how it still informs (and sometimes deforms) our church today.



Sunday, November 5

ALL SAINTS SUNDAY - "WHAT HAVE WE LEARNED BY HEART?"

Focus Scriptures: Revelation 7:9-17, 1 John 3:1-3

No one becomes loving on their own—we learn to love others by being loved ourselves. Who have your teachers been in the School of Love? How did they teach you? On this Sunday, our annual All Saints Day celebration, we'll remember together the people who have gone before us in life and in death. **Everyone is invited to bring a photo or a memento of someone you'd like to remember.** Together, we'll create a remembrance table and then share the bread and the cup "in the communion of the saints" (a phrase from the Apostle's Creed, one of the historic statements of the Christian faith). *Our choir will offer two anthems during this special service—one in solemn memory and one in celebration of all of those whose life and legacy we lift up this morning.*

Welcome All! An Intergenerational Learning Experience
After Worship on Sunday, November 5th

Sunday, November 12

"LOVE IS JUST THE BEGINNING"

GUEST PREACHER: BRUCE FRANCE, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR, CAPITAL AREA COUNCIL OF CHURCHES & CERTIFIED LAY SPEAKER, UNITED METHODIST CHURCH

Focus Scriptures: Micah 6:1-8, Ephesians 1:15-23

Our scriptures teach us that God loves us, not because of anything we are or have done, but because of who God is. That's where the story of our faith begins—but it isn't where it ends. God's love for us allows us—compels us—to love our neighbors. Bruce France will share with us John Wesley's teachings about balancing "works of piety" and "works of mercy" in our faith life and share some of his own story about how he has grown as a disciple of Christ.

After worship, please stay for a **Second Hour** conversation about Bruce's work with Braver Angels, an organization working to unite red and blue Americans in a working alliance to depolarize America.



Sunday, November 19

STEWARDSHIP SUNDAY - "LET IT GROW"

Focus Scriptures: Psalm 90:1-12, Matthew 25:14-30

There's a children's song that proclaims, "Love is something if you give it away, you end up having more!" God's gifts are like that—they are meant to be shared, not hidden. A church is an expression of our willingness to offer our gifts to each other and to our common calling. This Sunday will be a celebration of what becomes possible when we come together, sharing our time, talent, and treasure. How is God challenging us to grow in the coming year?

STEWARDSHIP AT WESTMINSTER

Our 2024 Stewardship theme is **Stewardship is Faith in Action**. One important way we live out our faith and our calling to love God, one other, and our neighbors is through financially supporting Westminster's vital ministries. We are so grateful for all God has done and continues to do through Westminster! Throughout October and November, we'll be hearing about the impact of our church on the city, the world, and the lives of our members.

We believe our church has a future. For this reason, Westminster makes careful use of our invested funds so that we can use them to maintain and operate our historic building for years to come. We seek to fund our living ministry—our ministry staff, our programs, our mission support, and our outreach—with the ongoing financial support of our members and friends.

We invite everyone to make a pledge to support Westminster financially in 2024. You can do so [online](#) or by filling out a Giving Goal card, available in our sanctuary. This is an estimate of what you intend to give in the coming year; we understand that the current economic climate is challenging and that some years we can give more, and some less. You can offer this gift in weekly, monthly, or quarterly installments or in a single installment. Submitting your Giving Goal helps us plan how best to carry on God's work at Westminster.

Sunday, November 26

“WHEN DID WE SEE YOU?”

Focus Scripture: Matthew 25:31-46

As we wrap up our fall season, we'll reflect on one of Jesus' most compelling—and most challenging—parables. He describes a scene in which a king on a "glorious throne" explains that whenever someone helped a person who needed food or clothing, whenever someone welcomed a stranger or visited a prisoner, they were actually doing these things for the king himself. Everyone is surprised to hear this—those who helped and those who didn't. What would it mean to take this story to heart? What does it mean to serve people in need regardless of our ability to see them as worthy of our love?



WELCOME ALL!

A SPIRITUAL DEVELOPMENT CURRICULUM FOR ADULTS, YOUTH, AND CHILDREN

In Matthew 25, Jesus challenges his disciples to welcome strangers as if they were welcoming Christ himself. This fall, our congregation's young people and adults will explore **the spiritual practice of hospitality**.

We'll be guided by an intergenerational curriculum called "Follow Me!" designed to engage the whole church in the practices that help us live out the most important teachings of our faith. We'll study where these practices are found in the Bible and how they have been used in the Christian faith, both in history and today. The curriculum also introduces music, visual art, and storytelling that helps us hear familiar teachings in new ways.

FOR CHILDREN AND YOUTH: [Westminster's Church School](#) is led by our Director of Christian Education, Belinda Quaye, with the help of volunteers from our congregation. Ms. Belinda builds a strong sense of community in her classroom and encourages her students to ask questions, to share news from their lives, and to pray for each other.

We meet IN-PERSON ONLY on the first Sunday of the month. On those Sundays, young people take an active role in our worship service, reading scripture, ushering, and bringing the communion elements to our table. Every other Sunday, we have a virtual class with kids joining us online. For Zoom links and more information, please contact Ms. Belinda.

FOR ADULTS: The [Adult Spiritual Development](#) Team will offer four sessions for adults to explore the Christian practice of hospitality. Would a stranger—or a friend—experience the



welcoming spirit of Christ when they meet us? These conversations will occur after worship in the Welles Room and will be in-person only. While each conversation will build on the previous ones, you are welcome to attend as many as you can.

- Sunday, October 1st, 11:30 am to 12:30 pm, led by Sue Schell
“Welcome Others as God Welcomes You” (Genesis 1:1–2:4a; 2:4b–25)
- Sunday, October 15th, 11:30 am to 12:30 pm, led by Lisa Petter
“See Christ in Every Person” (Matthew 25:31–46)
- Sunday, October 22nd, 11:30 am to 12:30 pm, led by Pastor Heather
“Know Your Gifts” (Luke 10:38–42)
- Sunday, October 29th, 11:30 am to 12:30 pm, led by Paul Randall
“Challenge Othering” (Luke 7:36–50)

FOR EVERYONE: On Sunday, November 5th, our congregation's young people and adults will come together after our worship service for an intergenerational learning experience! *Stay tuned for more details....*

OTHER OPPORTUNITIES FOR SPIRITUAL DEVELOPMENT

SACRED CONVERSATIONS

September 11, October 16, and November 13

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. Will you join us? 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 (518-436-8544).



PRAYER LINE

Wednesday nights

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 at wpcalbany.org.

EARTH CARE AT WESTMINSTER

WESTMINSTER COMMONS: COMMUNITY CLIMATE CONVERSATIONS

“The Historic Summer of 2023: What Have We Learned about Climate Change? What Must Be Done?”

Sunday, September 10, 5:00 pm - 6:30 pm in the Welles Room

LED BY DR. DAN KIRK-DAVIDOFF, CLIMATE AND ENERGY SCIENTIST

The global average temperature set a record high in July, about half a degree Fahrenheit warmer than the previous warmest of July 2019. Multiple local high-temperature records were set in the United States, with Maine, Arizona, New Mexico, and Florida experiencing their hottest July on record (since 1895). In addition, we heard news of a dramatic reduction of sea ice growth around Antarctica and reduced flow of heat from the tropics to the Greenland area in the Atlantic Ocean.

Is this just what we expected from global warming, or do we need to adjust our expectations? What are we doing as a state, a country, and a world to stop heating the planet, and is it enough? How could we do better, and **how can we protect our communities from increasing climate hazards?** We'll talk through these questions—and others you may have—and share knowledge about how to help.



FALL RETREAT AT THE KELLY ADIRONDACK CENTER IN NISKAYUNA

“We Gather Together: Support and Inspiration for Earth Care Congregations”

Saturday, October 14, 10:00 am - 3:00 pm

HOSTED BY THE EARTH CARE TEAMS OF THE DELMAR, NEW SCOTLAND, AND WESTMINSTER PRESBYTERIAN CHURCHES

We're stronger together! Please join members of some local churches who have made caring for the earth a priority for their work together and their witness to the world. You are welcome to join us if you've been working for a while to make your congregation greener or if you're just getting started. You'll leave our time together with some great ideas for specific actions your church can take this year and some new friends to support you. Our time together will include lunch and plenty of time for a walk in the woods or time by the fire. Children are most welcome to join us for all or part of our time together. Registration is \$10.00. For more information go to wpcalbany.org and please [register](#) online by October 7th.

“THE CLIMATE CHANGE CHALLENGE”

Saturday, November 4, 5:00 pm - 8:00 pm, Dinner included

HOSTED BY THE EARTH CARE TEAMS OF DELMAR AND WESTMINSTER PRESBYTERIAN CHURCHES

Taking place at Delmar Presbyterian Church, 585 Delaware Ave., Delmar

Come join us for a role-playing exercise to explore climate dynamics up to the year 2100. We'll use the online simulator “En-Roads” to explore the impact that various strategies would have on climate change. You'll have fun and gain some hope that we can take action to meet the challenge of limiting the impact of global warming. Along the way, connect with some like-minded Christians and enjoy dinner! *All ages are welcome!* Please register by

November 1st online—you'll find the link at wpcalbany.org.



SPECIAL EVENTS

AFRICAN FAMILY NIGHT

Saturday, September 30, 5:30 - 8:30 pm

Dinner will be served at 6:00 pm

We are excited to announce the return of our in-person African Family Night fundraising event!

African Family Night is an important and fun way for the community to come together and support mission projects undertaken with our partners in Ghana, Liberia, and Sierra Leone. All projects aim to help build brighter futures for vulnerable children through vital health and education services. To continue offering these services, our goal is to raise \$15,000 this year.

This is sure to be a special evening with a time for:

- joining with old and new friends to enjoy fabulous food,
- dancing to African drumming,
- colorful fashion (traditional African attire encouraged), and more!

Westminster is providing the main meal with African specialty dishes prepared by some of our talented chefs. If you are able to bring a dish or dessert to share, that will be warmly welcomed, but not required. Most importantly, we look forward to seeing you! You can help us with planning by contacting the church office to RSVP: 518-436-8544 / office@wpcalbany.org. You may also [RSVP on wpcalbany.org](https://wpcalbany.org).

Contributions are always most gratefully received online (wpcalbany.org/give) or checks may be sent to the church: 85 Chestnut Street, Albany, NY 12210, with “African Mission” noted on the memo line.



WESTMINSTER COMMONS: "STORIES AROUND THE CAMPFIRE"

Sunday, October 22, 2023, 3:00 pm - 6:00 pm

Let's strengthen our community connections by sharing stories with each other!

3:00 pm: We'll start indoors with our Conversation Tables where English language learners talk with native speakers and build new friendships along the way.

4:00 pm: We'll light some fires in portable fire pits spread around our parking lot, toast some marshmallows, and share some stories. Each circle will be hosted by a storyteller who will have some prompts to get us talking—and maybe share a few stories of their own. There will be a circle for kids and others with Arabic, Spanish, and Pashto translators.

5:00 pm: After an hour or so, we'll go back indoors and hear some master storytellers share stories of community and connection.

All are welcome! Westminster Commons is an initiative led by friends and neighbors of Westminster for the purpose of connecting people and communities in the Capital Region so that we can develop a sense of common purpose and enjoy life more. The Commons is supported by the US@250 Fellowship at New America.



A square event poster with a black border. At the top, the title "STORIES around the CAMPFIRE" is written in green and brown. Below the title, it says "JOIN US! AS WE GATHER AND SHARE THE STORIES WE LOVE TO TELL. COME JUST TO LISTEN OR TO SHARE!". The date and time "SUN OCT 22ND 3-6PM" are in bold black text. The poster is divided into three columns, each with a small floral illustration above its text: "Conversation Club 3-4pm", "Fireside Storytelling 4-5pm", and "Featured Storyteller 5-6pm". The address "85 CHESTNUT ST ALBANY, NY" is centered below these columns. At the bottom, there is a small illustration of a building with a red roof and green shutters. To the left of the building, it says "FREE EVENT" and to the right, "ALL AGES WELCOME!". Below the building illustration, the text "WESTMINSTER COMMONS" is written in small black letters.

SERVICE and ADVOCACY OPPORTUNITIES

VIGIL FOR RACIAL JUSTICE

Every Tuesday from 12 noon - 1:00 pm

Prayer takes many forms—including public witness. You are invited to pray on your feet (or in a lawn chair!) with us each Tuesday as we gather on State Street in front of the church. A leader starts each Vigil with prayer. For 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

Sunday afternoons

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

Westminster has partnered with Refugee and Immigrant Support Services of Emmaus (RISSE) 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 into pairs or small groups to talk. Conversation starters are provided! Teens as well as adults are welcome to come. You can participate once or come every week. Tea and cookies sweeten our time together!

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 and 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, please call the FOCUS office at 518-443-0460 or email Belinda Quaye (belindaq@focuschurches.net).

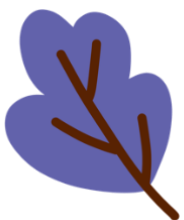


FOCUS INTERFAITH FOOD PANTRY

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, microloans, and more. We welcome your interest, support, and participation! For more information, call the Westminster Church office (518-436-8544) and we'll connect you to the dynamic leaders of this ministry.



***Let us love,
not in word or speech,
but in truth and action.
1 John 3:19***



woven **together**

85 Chestnut Street, Albany, NY 12210

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