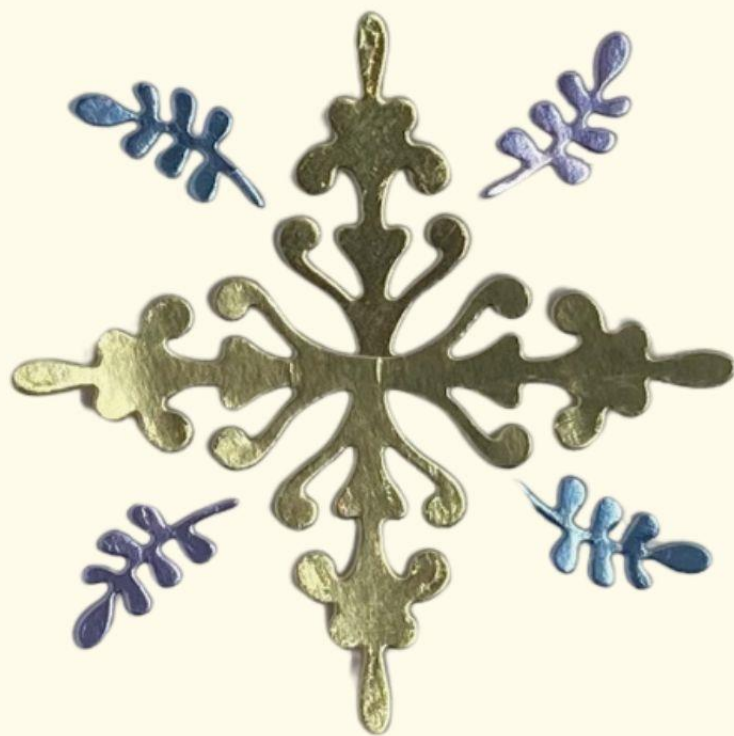


Lent  
at  
Westminster



extravagant  
love

# INTRODUCTION

This year, our 40-day Lenten journey begins on Valentine's Day, February 14th. This may seem like a set up for a conflict between our faith practices and our culture—getting ashes smeared on your forehead and confessing sins isn't how we usually prepare for a romantic evening. But in truth, **Jesus' story is about love, from the beginning to the end to the new beginning.**

Jesus said that the two greatest commandments are both about love: love God with everything you've got and love your neighbor as yourself. It's hard to argue with that. But when he expands on these teachings in the Gospels of Matthew and Luke, he makes it clear that he is not saying we should love our neighbors and hate our enemies. Our love should extend even to our enemies. Pray for those who persecute you, Jesus teaches. **How is that even possible? Who can love like that?**

The story of Jesus—especially the parts we read during Lent—is an answer to those questions. He loves with such extravagance that each of us and all of us are included.

**Westminster is a school for love.** We are learning about the love of God made known to us in Jesus Christ. And we are practicing loving ourselves, loving each other, and loving the whole world the way Jesus did. Come join us—this season and beyond.

*Rev. Heather Kirk-Davidoff*



# Please Join the Westminster Community for Events During Lent & Holy Week

Visit [wpcalbany.org](http://wpcalbany.org) for details, Zoom links, and contact information or call the church office at [518-436-8544](tel:518-436-8544).

## WORSHIP

Wednesday, February 14

### ASH WEDNESDAY

ASH WEDNESDAY PRAYERS AND THE IMPOSITION OF ASHES

5:00 pm, In-person and online

Scripture: [Matthew 6:1-6, 16-21](#)

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.

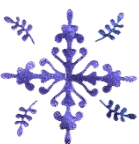
Sunday, February 18

### LENT 1: "DISARM"

10:00 am, In-person and online

Scriptures: [Genesis 9:8-17; Psalm 25:1-10; Mark 1:9-15](#)

Our Lenten journey begins with two stories about beginnings—the beginning of a covenant in Genesis and the beginning of Jesus' ministry in Mark. Neither beginning comes easily. In Genesis, God floods the world and drowns just about everyone. In Mark, Jesus is "driven" into the wilderness by the Holy Spirit. Conflict is part of our story from the beginning. But then again, so is the promise of God's abiding love.



*What can we learn from these ancient stories of how things begin? When does conflict lead to new possibilities and not just to more conflict? In a world where everyone seems to be fighting, how can we be different?*

**Sunday, February 25**

**LENT 2: "DENY"**

**10:00 am, In-person and online**

**Scriptures: [Psalm 22:23-31](#), [Mark 8:31-38](#)**

Jesus tells his disciples that they must lose something to gain something else—but what is he talking about? It seems at times that being a better disciple means putting aside doubts and confusion so that we can say “yes” to God’s call. But perhaps our convictions and commitments also become barriers to growth at some points in our journey.

*Have you ever lost yourself—and found that you gained something as a result? How has that experience informed your spiritual life? What do you need to deny in order to follow Jesus?*

**Sunday, March 3**

**LENT 3: "THE DEN OF ROBBERS"**

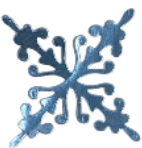
**GUEST PREACHER: REV. JOE PAPANONE, NEW YORK STATE POOR PEOPLE'S CAMPAIGN**

**10:00 am, In-person and online**

**Scripture: [John 2:13-21](#)**

In the Gospels, there are a few things that make Jesus extremely angry: exploitation and people who justify exploitation with religion. In his time, this led Jesus to confront people who were working as money changers in the temple in Jerusalem. In our time, distorted moral narratives of religious nationalism are taking hold all over the world.

*What will it take for us to confront these narratives and what will we replace them with?*



*This Sunday, our worship service will include Holy Communion, sustenance for our Lenten journey.*

**Sunday, March 10**

**LENT 4: “DOPPELGÄNGER”**

**10:00 am, In-person and online**

**Scripture: [John 3:14-21](#)**

In the Gospel of John, when Jesus speaks of his death on the cross, he refers to a story from

Exodus when the Israelites had to look up at a bronze serpent in order to be healed from snake bites. Like the bronze serpent, the cross is a display of everything that is killing us—scapegoating, empire, violence, and sin. When we bring all of that to light, we can be healed. But most of the time, we would rather avoid, ignore, and compartmentalize. We make other people our enemy instead of looking at the harmful parts of ourselves and our culture.

*Where do you see this tendency to deny and hide in your life, and in our life together? How can our faith in Jesus empower us to confess, repent, and heal?*

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

**Sunday, March 17**

**LENT 5: “DRAW”**

**10:00 am, In-person and online**

**Scriptures: [Psalm 51:1-12](#); [John 12:20-33](#)**

As the conflict heightens in the story of Jesus, so does the sense of opposition between day and night, good and bad, light, and dark. But there are also hints that God draws us forward, not through the clash of opposing forces but through connection. Seeds show us that death and birth are both part of growth. Ultimately, Jesus says, he will draw people together, not pit them against each other.



*What if we were to take Jesus at his word? Could his death and resurrection draw us together instead of dividing us? What if we refused to divide the word into opposing forces but instead affirmed God's presence in darkness and in light? What would the cross mean to us then?*

**After worship:** *Intergenerational Learning event! For more details, please see: [SPECIAL PROGRAMS FOR CHILDREN AND YOUTH DURING LENT](#)*

**Sunday, March 24**

**PALM SUNDAY: "FIGHT LIKE JESUS"**

**10:00 am, In-person and online**

**Scriptures: [Mark 11:1-11](#); [Mark 14:1-15, 47](#)**

In the Gospel of Luke, Jesus begins to cry as he approaches Jerusalem on Palm Sunday. "If only you had recognized on this day the things that make for peace!" he says. We can imagine that he might say the same thing—and shed the same tears—today. Jesus' extravagant love extends even to those who threaten him and kill him. The last week of Jesus' life reveals just how radical his vision is.

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, shout "Hosanna!" and sing as we parade into our sanctuary together. Once inside, we'll continue the story, reading together Mark's account of Jesus' last week.

*How does Jesus make peace? Do we dare to follow him?*

**Thursday, March 28**

**MAUNDY THURSDAY**

**TENEBRAE SERVICE WITH COMMUNION IN THE WESTMINSTER SANCTUARY**

**5:00 pm, In-person only**

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.

**Friday, March 29**

**GOOD FRIDAY**

**PRAYER AND REFLECTION IN THE WESTMINSTER SANCTUARY**

**4:00 pm - 6:00 pm, 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 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.

**Sunday, March 31**

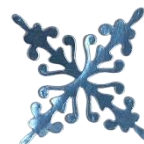
**EASTER SUNDAY: “DECLARE”**

**10:00 am, In-person and online**

**Scriptures: [Psalm 118:1-2, 14-24](#); [Mark 16:1-8](#)**

We celebrate Easter with great joy, and this morning will be filled with flowers, color, and song. But the miracle of Jesus' resurrection happened in darkness, in a tomb that was sealed closed with a heavy rock. So even as the Resurrected Christ revealed himself to his disciples, he left some questions unanswered, some things unexplained.

*What does it mean to tell others what we have seen when we still don't quite understand it all ourselves? What do you feel compelled to announce to the world?*



# SPECIAL PROGRAMS FOR ADULTS DURING LENT

## LOVE GOD, NEIGHBOR, ENEMY

Offered in two identical sessions:

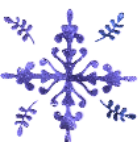
- **Sunday morning Second Hour, 11:30 am - 12:30 pm (in-person only)**
- **Weekday session online (via Zoom), to be arranged according to the availability of registered participants**

***NOTE: Please register in advance for the Zoom session by sending a message to [pastor@wpcalbany.org](mailto:pastor@wpcalbany.org).***

Jesus commands his disciples to God, to love our neighbors as ourselves, and even to love our enemies. In each case, the love to which he calls us is the same. Love is **an act of giving of ourselves**, as the Hebrew word for love, *ahava* (rooted in the word meaning "to give"), suggests. When we connect these three calls to love we begin to understand how we might even love those who we might identify as enemies, which is surely one of Jesus' most challenging teachings.

Together, we'll reflect on scripture, make connections to our current time and culture, and consider how we might extend our own practice of love. Lisa Petter, Rev. Paul Randall, Susan Schell, and Pastor Heather Kirk-Davidoff will share leadership for both the in-person and online study. Each participant will receive a study guide to use in the group and throughout the week to deepen their reflections.

Everyone is welcome—you may come to one, some, or all sessions as your schedule allows. On Sunday, March 17th, we will join together (in-person only) with our children and youth for an Intergenerational Learning Session in the Fellowship Hall (For more details, please see: [SPECIAL PROGRAMS FOR CHILDREN AND YOUTH DURING LENT](#)).





## **WENDELL BERRY AND THE SABBATH POETRY OF LENT: A LENTEN DAY OF REFLECTION**

**Saturday, March 23**

**9:00 am - 12:30 pm, In-person only**

**In the Welles Room and throughout our church building**

Wendell Berry is an American poet, novelist, farmer, and environmentalist who knows the values of the sabbath, a time when we pause and reconnect with the rhythms of the natural world. During this half-day retreat, Rev. David McMillan and Pastor Heather Kirk-Davidoff will use some of Berry's sabbath poems to guide our reflection and our practice. Together we'll prepare some ground for whatever seed God may want to sow in us.

We'll open at 9:00 am with coffee, tea, scones, and some time to greet each other. At 9:30 am we'll begin our reflections, reading some of Berry's poems and reflecting together and separately. We will also have an hour for practicing sabbath on our own. You might pray in our sanctuary, write in your journal, walk around Empire Plaza, or just breathe. We'll end with a simple lunch at 12:00 noon.

All are welcome—you do not need to be a scholar to appreciate Berry's poetry! There is no charge for this retreat. Please register in advance by emailing [pastor@wpcalbany.org](mailto:pastor@wpcalbany.org). All poems will come from "This Day: Collected & New Sabbath Poems" by Wendell Berry. The book is widely available, but you need not buy a copy to participate.



# **SPECIAL PROGRAMS FOR CHILDREN AND YOUTH DURING LENT**

## **LOVE. FULL STOP.: AN INTERGENERATIONAL LEARNING EVENT**

**Sunday, March 17**

**11:15 am - 12:30 pm, In-person only**

**In the Fellowship Hall**

This Sunday, adults, youth, and children will all join together to explore God's extravagant love. After worship, we'll gather in our Fellowship Hall to talk about scripture, play games, experience a guided meditation, make up a skit, and...eat popcorn! On this day, everyone is a teacher, and everyone is a student. We show our love for each other when we learn together!

We'll need lots of help to make this event happen. Please send a note to Belinda Quaye ([belindaquaye@wpcalbany.org](mailto:belindaquaye@wpcalbany.org)) if you can volunteer.

## **GOOD FRIDAY CHILDREN'S PROGRAM**

**Friday, March 29**

**11:00 am - 1:00 pm, In-person only**

**In the Fellowship Hall**

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, games, and a chance to decorate Easter eggs. At the end of our time together we'll enjoy a pizza 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; other volunteers are also needed. If you'd like to join the fun, please contact Belinda at [belindaquaye@wpcalbany.org](mailto:belindaquaye@wpcalbany.org).



# OTHER OPPORTUNITIES FOR SPIRITUAL DEVELOPMENT

## SACRED CONVERSATIONS

**Mondays, February 12 and March 11**

**10:30 am - 12 noon, Online only**

Sacred Conversations is a monthly small group that focuses on listening deeply to each other, ourselves, and to God. Our conversations are guided by a series of open-ended reflective questions suggested by the leaders or members of the group. We welcome new participants. If you'd like to learn more or are interested in joining us, contact Linore Southworth, Marie McClumpha, or Pastor Heather ([pastor@wpcalbany.org](mailto:pastor@wpcalbany.org)).

## PRAYER LINE

**Wednesday nights**

**7:00 pm, Online only**

A group of 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 at [wpcalbany.org](http://wpcalbany.org) for the Zoom link.



# SERVICE AND ADVOCACY OPPORTUNITIES

## BREAD FOR THE WORLD OFFERING OF LETTERS TO CONGRESS

Throughout the Lenten season, we invite everyone 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 nationwide during this annual event. Judy Hartley and Rev. Paul Rees-Rohrbacher welcome help at the FOCUS Breakfast Club, where they will invite guests to write their own letters. If you want to let us know you are coming, please email [office@wpcalbany.org](mailto:office@wpcalbany.org) with "Bread for the World" in the subject line. Learn more at: [bread.org](http://bread.org).

## PC(USA) ONE GREAT HOUR OF SHARING OFFERING

Presbyterians join together through the [One Great Hour of Sharing](#) (OGHS) special offering to give financial gifts in support of disaster aid, hunger relief, and ongoing community development. Every Lent, we ask people to save up and contribute to the OGHS offering. Adults and children are all invited to participate in this annual appeal. Church School children will receive their own fish banks for collecting their offering.

Each gift to OGHS helps to improve the lives of people in these challenging situations. The offering provides us a way to share God's love with our neighbors in need. OGHS is the single, largest way that Presbyterians come together every year to work for a better world.

## 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 skills with 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

**Sunday Evenings (November through April)**

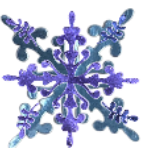
Westminster volunteers take turns preparing and delivering nutritious meals for shelter guests at the nearby Emergency Overflow Shelter throughout the cold season, including Lent. We welcome your help! Contact Sheila Wrede, Valerie Shanley, or the church office ([office@wpcalbany.org](mailto:office@wpcalbany.org)) 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, please call the FOCUS office at 518-443-0460 or email Belinda Quaye ([belindaq@focuschurches.net](mailto: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 Park and Park South neighborhoods, and beyond, with a 6-day supply of food. Volunteers are needed for various positions, including guest check-in and packing groceries. Please contact the FOCUS office at 518-443-0460 if you are interested in being a part of this important work.

## **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 products and education, microloans, and more. We welcome your interest, support, and participation! For more information, read about this ministry at [wpcalbany.org/blog](http://wpcalbany.org/blog) or contact the church office ([518-436-8544](tel:518-436-8544)/[office@wpcalbany.org](mailto:office@wpcalbany.org)) and we'll connect you to our dynamic ministry leaders.



***Let us love,  
not in word or speech,  
but in actions and truth.  
1 John 3:18***



**WESTMINSTER**  
— Presbyterian Church

woven**together**

85 Chestnut Street, Albany, NY 12210

518-436-8544 • [office@wpcalbany.org](mailto:office@wpcalbany.org) • [wpcalbany.org](http://wpcalbany.org)