



Are We Ready to Conspire?

When the risen Christ was preparing his disciples for his ascension into heaven, he asked them to remain together in Jerusalem until the Holy Spirit arrived. The promised Spirit arrived on Pentecost, breathing life into the church, just like God breathed life into a lump of clay, way back in the garden of Eden.



Conspire is the combination of two Latin roots: *con* meaning *together*, and *spire* meaning *breathe*. The church is called to breathe with the Spirit ... to be conspirators!

Our PCUSA Brief Statement of Faith speaks in three parts of our trust in the triune God: Jesus Christ; God, whom Jesus called *Abba*, Father; and the Holy Spirit. The third section, the section on the Holy Spirit, speaks of the work of the Spirit (see page 2).

I invite you to read through this section of the statement using the spiritual practice of *Lectio Divina*—Sacred Reading. Read the passage through slowly several times. What words or phrases speak to you? Do you notice all the verbs? All that the Spirit is doing, and all that the Spirit empowers us, the church to do?

I know that sometimes, we feel like a lifeless lump of clay. Or we worry that the church is on its last breath. But then we remember the Spirit... everywhere (and in every time) the giver and renewer of life. The church is most alive—we are most alive—when we allow ourselves to breathe with the Spirit... to conspire with God. Each of us becomes more Christlike. The church becomes Christ's body in the world. And the world starts to look more like the beloved community Christ came to show us.

On May 19, we will celebrate the Pentecost. The day when the Spirit arrived as Jesus said it would. The day when the church took its first breath. When a collection of folks became conspirators, breathing with one another and with the Spirit to take the good news out into the world. That same Spirit continues to work in us and through us... if we will just, breathe.

With trust in the Holy Spirit, the giver and renewer of life, I am your pastor, friend, and co-conspirator,



A Brief Statement of Faith: God the Holy Spirit

Excerpted from pcusa.org



We trust in God the Holy Spirit,
everywhere the giver and renewer of life.
The Spirit justifies us by grace through faith,
sets us free to accept ourselves and to love God and neighbor,
and binds us together with all believers
in the one body of Christ, the Church.

The same Spirit
who inspired the prophets and apostles
rules our faith and life in Christ through Scripture,
engages us through the Word proclaimed,
claims us in the waters of baptism,
feeds us with the bread of life and the cup of salvation,
and calls women and men to all ministries of the church.

In a broken and fearful world
the Spirit gives us courage
to pray without ceasing,
to witness among all peoples to Christ as Lord and Savior,
to unmask idolatries in Church and culture,
to hear the voices of peoples long silenced,
and to work with others for justice, freedom, and peace.

In gratitude to God, empowered by the Spirit,
we strive to serve Christ in our daily tasks
and to live holy and joyful lives,
even as we watch for God's new heaven and new earth,
praying, "Come, Lord Jesus!"

Excerpts From *Preface to A Brief Statement of Faith*

... The faith we confess unites us with the one, universal church. The most important beliefs of Presbyterians are those we share with other Christians and especially with other evangelical Christians who look to the Protestant Reformation as a renewal of the gospel of Jesus Christ. Diversity remains. But we are thankful that in our time the many churches are learning to accept, and even to affirm, diversity without divisiveness, since the whole counsel of God is more than the wisdom of any individual or any one tradition. The Spirit of Truth gives new light to the churches when they are willing to become pupils together of the Word of God.

... "A Brief Statement of Faith" includes the major themes of the Reformed tradition ... as a confession that seeks to be both [universal] and Reformed, the statement (following the apostle's blessing in 2 Corinthians 13:14) is a trinitarian confession in which the grace of Jesus Christ has first place as the foundation of our knowledge of God's sovereign love and our life together in the Holy Spirit.

May Sermon Series: The Acts of the Spirit



We continue our journey through Acts to see how the Holy Spirit inspired followers of Jesus carry his message into the world.

As a personal spiritual practice, we commend the reading of all the lectionary texts in the week prior to Sunday. You will find your Sunday worship experience enhanced by your engagement with these texts during

the week. Find lectionary verses online by visiting <https://www.presbyterianmission.org/devotion/daily/>.

May 5: Unbounded Love

Communion/Food Bank Collection

- † **First Reading** Acts 10:44-48
- † **Psalm** 98:1-9
- † **Second Reading** 1 John 5:1-6
- † **Gospel** John 15:9-17

May 12: Prayers of Protection

Mother's Day/PCSC Special Offering

- † **First Reading** Acts 1:15-17, 21-26
- † **Psalm** 1:1-6
- † **Second Reading** 1 John 5:9-13
- † **Gospel** John 17:6-19

May 19: Following in His Footsteps

Pentecost/Saluting New Grads (see below)

- † **First Reading** Ezekiel 37:1-14
- † **Psalm** 104:24-34, 35b
- † **Second Reading** Romans 8:22-27
- † **Gospel** John 15:26-27, 16:4b-15

May 26: How's the Water? @WOW

- † Acts 17:16-28



Celebrating Pentecost, Elders, and New Graduates

May 19th will certainly be a memorable Sunday at Westminster! First, it is the day we celebrate Pentecost—the moment documented in Acts 2 when Jesus's promise to send us a helper was fulfilled. The Holy Spirit was, indeed, poured out, and the power of that event ripples through our lives today. See page 10 to learn more about Pentecost and what it means.

The second remarkable happening on May 19th is that worship will be led by WPC's Ruling Elders while our Teaching Elder, Caroline, is away. The intent is for our Elders to embody the Acts 2:18 text as they facilitate worship and share testimony of how the spirit has worked and is working in their life.

"In those days, I will pour out my Spirit and they will prophesy."

Acts 2:18

Additionally, Westminster will celebrate the gifts of the Spirit poured out upon the young people in our fellowship as we celebrate our graduating seniors, Dashe Rainy, Laura Margaret Fennell, and Corbin Irons. Keep them in your prayers as they prepare to launch into the next phase of life. May the Holy Spirit fill their sails.

And finally, everyone is to put a cherry atop this special Sunday by attending a festive reception in the courtyard after worship, thanks to Congregational Care & Fellowship!

Westminster Happenings

- Wednesday
May 1** | **Books & Brown Bags Study**
Bring a sack supper to the Joe Gettys Room at 6:00 P.M.
Conclude discussion of Mitch Albom's book, *Have a Little Faith*.
- Sunday
May 5** | **Sunday School**
Adults: Gather at 9:00 A.M. in the Choir Room.
Children and Youth: Meet at 9:00 A.M. in lower-level education wing.
- Sunday
May 5** | **Unbounded Love**
Worship at 10:00 A.M. in person or via live streaming.
Rejoice that God sends the Holy Spirit to share love with all people.
- Sunday
May 5** | **Stated Session Meeting**
Meet in the Joe Gettys Room immediately following worship.
Conduct the business of the church, as led by the Holy Spirit
- Monday
May 6** | **BEMA Bible Discussion Group**
Meet in the Joe Gettys Room at 6:00 P.M.
Continue this amazing in-depth exploration of scripture (*see page 9*).
- Tuesday
May 7** | **Presbyterian Women**
Come together at the Dozier residence at 11:30 A.M.
Wrap up the 2023-2024 circle year with lunch and Lesson 9 (*see page 7*).
- Wednesday
May 8** | **Books & Brown Bags Study**
Bring a sack supper to the Joe Gettys Room at 6:00 P.M.
Begin a new book, *Holy Envy*, by Barbara Brown Taylor (*see page 6*).
- Sunday
May 12** | **Sunday School**
Adults: Gather at 9:00 A.M. in the Choir Room.
Children and Youth: Meet at 9:00 A.M. in lower-level education wing.
- Sunday
May 12** | **Prayers of Protection**
Worship at 10:00 A.M. in person or via live streaming.
Pray without ceasing just as the Spirit prays for you.
- Monday
May 13** | **BEMA Bible Discussion Group**
Meet in the Joe Gettys Room at 6:00 P.M.
Consider the Bible from the first century Jewish perspective.
- Wednesday
May 15** | **Books & Brown Bags Study**
Bring a sack supper to the Joe Gettys Room at 6:00 P.M.
Consider how other faiths approach and understand God.

Westminster Happenings, *continued*

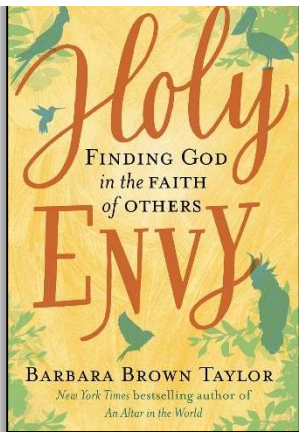
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|-----------------------------|---|
| Sunday May 19 | Sunday School Adults: Gather at 9:00 A.M. in the Choir Room. Children and Youth: Meet at 9:00 A.M. in lower-level education wing. Everything, Everywhere, All the Time Worship at 10:00 A.M. in person or via live streaming. Feel the breath of God that brings dead bones back to life. Seniors Reception Share tasty treats in the courtyard immediately following worship. Be sure to congratulate our graduating seniors! |
| Monday May 20 | BEMA Bible Discussion Group Meet in the Joe Gettys Room at 6:00 P.M. Appreciate scripture from a whole new perspective. |
| Wednesday May 22 | Books & Brown Bags Study Bring a sack supper to the Joe Gettys Room at 6:00 P.M. Join this small group wrestling with big ideas. |
| Sunday May 26 | 2024 Worship on the Water Kick-Off <i>(see page 8)</i> Note: No Sunday school—no worship at Cokesbury—no live-stream How's the Water? Worship at 10:00 A.M. at the Camp Fellowship Pavilion on the Lake. Stay for a picnic lunch and plenty of fun with your church family. |
| Monday May 27 | BEMA Bible Discussion Group Meet in the Joe Gettys Room at 6:00 P.M. Come prepared to discuss the latest podcast episode. |
| Wednesday May 29 | Books & Brown Bags Study Bring a sack supper to the Joe Gettys Room at 6:00 P.M. Find new meaning in old teachings. |



When the day of Pentecost had come, they were all together in one place. Suddenly a sound like a mighty rushing wind came from heaven, and it filled the whole house where they were sitting. There appeared to them tongues as of fire, being distributed and resting on each of them, and they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other tongues, as the Spirit enabled them to speak. *Acts 2:1-4*

Books & Brown Baggers Experience *Holy Envy*

Wednesdays
6:00 P.M. – 7:30 P.M.
Joe Gettys Room



After wrapping up Albom’s *Have a Little Faith* on May 1, our Books & Brown Bag group will explore *Holy Envy: Finding God in the Faith of Others*, by Barbara Brown Taylor. Taylor is known for her earlier works, such as *An Altar in the World* and *Leaving Church*.

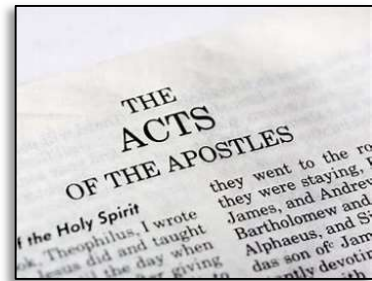
According to GoodReads.com:

“In *Holy Envy*, [Barbara Brown Taylor] contemplates the myriad ways other people and traditions encounter the Transcendent, both by digging deeper into those traditions herself and by seeing them through her students’ eyes as she sets off with them on field trips to monasteries, temples, and mosques.

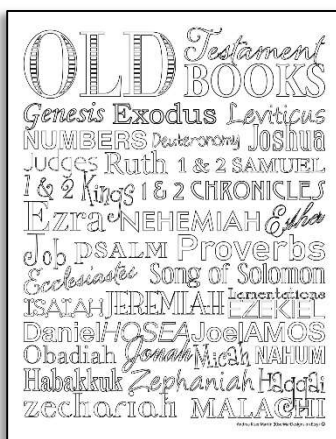
Troubled and inspired by what she learns, Taylor returns to her own tradition for guidance, finding new meaning in old teachings that have too often been used to exclude religious strangers instead of embracing the divine challenges they present. Re-imagining some central stories from the religion she knows best, she takes heart in how often God chooses outsiders to teach insiders how out-of-bounds God really is.”
Remember to bring along a light snack supper and beverage to enjoy before the discussion.

Acts is Adult Sunday School Focus

Throughout the month of May, our adult Sunday school group is staying in step with the lectionary by studying the actions and activities of the Apostles. The Book of Acts is believed to have been written by the same author as the Gospel according to Luke.



Acts tells about the birthday of the church, the further adventures of the Apostles who followed Jesus during his earthly ministry, and the transformative miracle of Saul’s



encounter with the Risen Lord while traveling on the road to Damascus. Even if you have heard these stories before—and especially if you haven’t—your appreciation for the powerful messages presented in this book will be enriched.

As for the little ones, they will continue meeting the great characters of the Old Testament through stories, games, crafts, and other group activities.

Both the adult and the children’s Sunday School classes meet at 9:00 A.M. Sunday mornings. Drop off the kids and then come to the Choir Room to promote faith formation for the whole family. For extra family fun during the week, enjoy coloring your way through the books of the Old Testament, provided on page 20. While everybody colors together, invite the kids to tell you the stories they’ve learned and tell them about your own favorite—or least favorite!—characters in the Bible. A terrific sharing time!

Festive Lunch Wraps Up Circle Year

As the 2023-2024 Circle year draws to a close, the Presbyterian Women of Westminster have a lot to celebrate—powerful Bible study, sweet fellowship, and highly successful projects. First, thanks to the efforts of the PW, our resident master craftsman David Hammond, and other willing-and-able volunteers, the Joe Gettys Classroom is once again a welcoming and highly functional space for meetings and activities. The Women of Westminster also made a special gift of \$400 to Camp Fellowship. Thank you to all who made this possible!



The final meeting of the PW season will be a luncheon held on Tuesday, May 7, 11:30 A.M. at the Dozier home (108 Pinecrest Driver, Greenwood). Many thanks to Nancy for being, as always, “the hostess with the mostess”! Please let her know if you are planning to attend, so that she can plan appropriately.

The lesson for the day concludes the “Sacred Encounters” book and focuses on the encounters experienced by the disciples of Christ, as described in the Book of Acts. Also on the agenda: planning for the new session, which begins in September. Be praying about how you will support this vital, vibrant group when it reconvenes!

PCSC Special Mother’s Day Offering Goal: \$800+

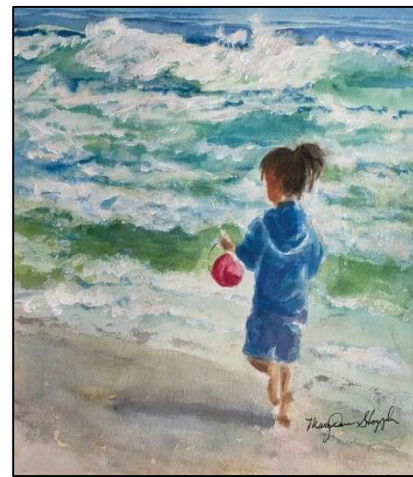
Submitted by Laine Horowitz

Westminster has a long tradition of participating in a special Mother’s Day offering that benefits residents of the Presbyterian Communities of South Carolina. Here’s some information about the history and purpose of this very special ministry.

In the early 1950s, the leaders of the Presbyterian Church of South Carolina had a vision to tend to the needs of the aging seniors of their community. Over the past 71 years, the Presbyterian Communities of South Carolina (PCSC) have grown into the flourishing ministry it is today, with Life Plan Communities in Clinton, Columbia, Easley, Florence, Lexington, and Summerville.

Since the first Mother’s Day offering in 1954, Presbyterians’ generosity has enabled PCSC to provide care for residents who, through no fault of their own, have outlived their savings. Over the last decade, this offering has provided an average of \$1.2 million in charitable care each year to seniors: your moms, dads, grandparents, who do not have to leave their homes when their money runs out. PCSC asks you to prayerfully consider making a Mother’s Day offering to continue this mission of care and compassion.

Joining with other PC(USA) churches through South Carolina, Westminster will receive our special PCSC offering on May 12th. Last year, we collected \$400. Let’s strive to double that this year! Please put “PCSC Offering” on your check memo line. Thank you!



“Pure Joy,” an Edisto Beach scene painted for PCSC by Dr. Mary Anne Stoepler



WPC Comes through for Young Campers in a BIG Way!



On Sunday, April 21, the Mission & Outreach Committee sponsored a special offering to support Camp Fellowship “camperships” that will allow young people to attend summer camp at no charge. Thanks to a lively “minute for missions” by Laine Horowitz, and her message from first-time camper, Chase Gear, Westminster outdid itself by contributing \$1,061 to this excellent mission activity! Congratulations and thank you for sharing the love of Christ and the fun of church camp with young people this summer!

The next time Jesus taught beside Lake Galilee, a big crowd gathered. It was so large that he had to sit in a boat out on the lake, while the people stood on the shore.

Mark 4:1

Worship on the Water *WOWs* Lake Greenwood Residents and Visitors!

Beginning on May 26th, Westminster is once again coordinating a fifteen-week spirit-filled worship series on the shores of Lake Greenwood. Services begin at 10:00 A.M. at the Camp Fellowship Waterfront Pavilion. Parking is available for cars and boats.

Each worship service includes lots of music, featuring area musicians ranging from guitarists and harmonica players to keyboardists and vocalists. A different pastor provides the message each week, representing many denominations and churches throughout Greenwood.

To start the summer with a bang, all Westminster members and friends are invited to the inaugural WOW service on Sunday, May 26th—Memorial Day weekend. Following worship, you are encouraged to stay for a festive picnic. The Hammonds are providing delicious slow-cooked barbeque. Please let Nancy Dozier or Beth Hammond know if you are planning to attend.

Note: No Sunday school or worship will be offered at the Cokesbury Road campus that day.

**“Come on a boat, come in your car, come as you are!”
*And remember to bring a friend!***



What's the Buzz? BEMA is the Buzz!

Submitted by Luke Christie

The BEMA Bible study group, formed in October 2023, has completed Season 1 of the BEMA Podcast and is buzzing with new knowledge and appreciation for God's Word! So much so, that others have expressed interest in participating in this different but illuminating approach to studying the Bible.



This study is facilitated using the BEMA Discipleship Podcast and gives a walkthrough of the entire Bible using the Eastern lens of its original hearers. Starting at the very beginning is crucial to understanding the teachings because they build on one another.

Since the current group has now finished Torah (first five books of the Bible) and is past the point where catching up is reasonably possible, we want to invite those interested to start another BEMA group! Gloria Christie will introduce you to the format and guide you through your first few meetings. Please let her know by phone/text (864-379-5034) or email (ggchristie716@gmail.com) if you want to begin this adventure or would like more information. An organizational meeting will be scheduled after hearing responses.

Thank You for Your Faithful Stewardship

Westminster is blessed to have many faithful, cheerful givers! Even though our congregation is small, your generous offerings have sustained the church and allowed us to share the Good News of Christ.



Your *continued* support is essential to sustain WPC, especially as we enter the summer months when many members are enjoying vacation travels and weekend trips.

Bills arrive relentlessly every month, so even when you are on the road, please remember to fulfill your pledge and make other offerings as you are able to do so.

You can send your tithes and offerings anytime from anywhere using the Tithely app on our website (wpcgnwd.org). Go to the Giving page and click the Give Now button. Or mail your check to:

Westminster Presbyterian Church
2330 Cokesbury Road
Greenwood, SC 29649



Westminster Milestones!

Best wishes and sincere prayers for these members and friends with May birthdays:

- ❖ 3rd – Flora Hobson
- ❖ 6th – Jacob Dennis
- ❖ 21st – Len Bornemann
- ❖ 28th – Jennifer Sholar
- ❖ 29th – David Bell
- ❖ 29th – Kayla Gillespie
- ❖ 31st – Nathan Gillespie

Additionally, let's rejoice with those celebrating May wedding anniversaries:

- ❖ 14th – Jennifer & Ody Sholar
- ❖ 19th – Kayla & Nathan Gillespie
- ❖ 26th – Kathy & Arthur Gillespie

Ascension Day—May 9th, 2024

From *pcusa.org*



Forty days after the Resurrection of the Lord (Easter Sunday), we remember and celebrate the Ascension of the Lord Jesus Christ into heaven. (See Luke 24:50-53 and Acts 1:1-11; see also Mark 16:19-20.) On this day, the church gives thanks for Christ's sovereign rule over all the earth, as well as his priestly intercession for us at the throne of mercy (Hebrews 4:14-16).

Christ is Lord

Given that John Calvin's theology placed great importance on the ascended and regnant Christ, Ascension Day is in some ways *the* Presbyterian feast day. Christ is Lord of the world and head of the church, we proclaim. Christ's ascension, therefore, concerns us not only with ecclesiastical matters but also with social and political ones. If Christ has ascended, then there are no other rulers — all others are merely pretenders. Christ reigns supreme.

With the raising of Christ to a position above all worldly powers, the earthly ministry of Christ begun at Christmas's incarnation now concludes. The path of faithfulness obediently followed by Christ traveled through the suffering of the cross to the exaltation of the glory. From glory to suffering to glory again is the shape of Jesus' ministry as well as ours. We too, are destined for the glory we share now in Christ only by faith. "It does not yet appear what we shall be, but we know that when Christ appears we shall be like him" (1 John 3:2).

Pentecost: Come, Holy Spirit

From *pcusa.org*

On the Day of Pentecost, we celebrate the gift of the Holy Spirit descending in a mighty rush of wind and flame to inspire the church's proclamation of Christ's rising and to empower its mission and ministry to the world. (Acts 2:1-13; Joel 2:28-32)

Pentecost is new creation

According to the Day of Pentecost story in Acts 2:1-13, God gave the gift of the Holy Spirit to empower witnesses to the resurrection. Sounds from heaven, cosmic language, the rush of a mighty *ruach* (wind, spirit, breath) invaded the house in which the apostles gathered, and appeared to them as a burning fire. Tongues of fire touched their nerve centers. A power—the *unseen* power of God—moved among them and gripped them. The Holy Spirit is unseen, like the wind, which is why the Old Testament calls it *ruach YHWH*, "the wind, or breath, of God" (cf. John 3:8).

Therefore, on the Day of Pentecost, we celebrate God's gift of Holy Spirit which draws us together as one people, helps us to comprehend what God is doing in the world, and empowers us to proclaim, in word and in deed, God's plan of reconciling all people in the name of Christ.



Without the gift of the Spirit, Christ's church dries up and withers away, and we are left with only our broken selves. With the gift of the Spirit, all things are possible. A spirit-filled community of faith opens eyes to needs in the world and sees its missing as God's new people.

The Day of Pentecost is the climax of the Great Fifty Days of Easter, celebrating as it does the gift of the Spirit to the body of Christ: the church.

Building a Culture of Discipleship and Service

A series on Westminster's 2024 Area of Focus

As we seek to build a culture of discipleship and service throughout this year, our values shape both what we do and how we do it. This series explores each value in depth.



Core Value #1: Spiritual Growth

Everything we think, say, and do should be directed toward enjoying and glorifying God. Our worship and our work, individual and shared, must always help draw us closer to God.

Spiritual Growth was the clear top choice of Westminster family members who participated in the 2023 values clarification process. And that makes sense—after all, church is the place where most of us learn about and begin to practice spiritual disciplines.

According to “Introduction to Spiritual Disciplines,” from *Thoughtful Christian*, “Spiritual disciplines are regular practices and actions that are intended to facilitate spiritual growth and ultimately bring about transformation. The word *discipline* refers to a method or system of rules that develops self-control, character, orderliness, and/or efficiency. What makes spiritual disciplines spiritual is that our methods (1) are focused on God and patterns for faithful Christian living, (2) have biblical roots, and (3) have been interpreted, refined, and practiced by Christians throughout the ages.”

Take a few minutes now to consider the list of classic spiritual disciplines provided below and ask yourself:

1. How is being part of Westminster strengthening me in these disciplines?
2. How can I strengthen Westminster as a community that is fully committed to the spiritual growth of everyone we meet?

- Prayer
- Sabbath
- Fasting
- Worship
- Study
- Service
- Sacraments
- Simplicity
- Guidance



Have a Whale of a Good Time at VBS—Save the Date!

Children of Promise Come...Into the Waters! This year we are excited to partner with Immanuel Lutheran for a week of diving into the Bible with children ages 4 through rising sixth grade. For more information, see (and share!) the flyer on page 19.

Mark your calendars now for VBS 2024!



SUPPLY LUNCHEON
June 8th, 2024



Save the Date: Supplies for Thornwell

Thornwell's annual Supply Drive Luncheon will be on Saturday, June 8th, 2024. This event allows church groups, community organizations, and individuals to come together to support children and families in need.

Thornwell, a dedicated organization with a rich history of caring for vulnerable children and families, is hosting this Supply Drive Luncheon to address the most current and urgent needs of those they serve. The focus is on collective community effort, encouraging groups and individuals to contribute to the betterment of our children and families.

The Western Cluster of Trinity Presbytery will be collecting items for this drive and delivering them at the June 8th luncheon. Be on the lookout for additional information about the what, when, where, and how of our collection efforts! The Western Cluster is one of the most active in Trinity Presbytery. Churches in our cluster: Abbeville, First Presbyterian-Greenwood, Hodges, Little Mountain, Lowndes, New Faith, Ninety Six, Upper Long Cane, Ware Shoals, and Westminster.

May is Mental Health Awareness Month

Excerpted from <https://www.thenationalcouncil.org/mental-health-awareness-month/>

May is Mental Health Awareness Month, a national observance started in 1949 by Mental Health America to bring attention to the importance of mental wellbeing. Across the country, individuals and organizations step up to raise awareness of and help address the challenges faced by people living with mental health conditions.



Despite recent strides in how our society approaches mental wellbeing, many Americans still don't have access to the high-quality, comprehensive treatment and care they need.

To help raise awareness in our community, the National Council for Mental Wellbeing compiled publications, toolkits, original content and other learning materials for you to take advantage of throughout the month. Visit their website for more information and access to tools and resources that you can download: www.thenationalcouncil.org.

Stewardship Snapshot

The Stewardship Snapshot is a regular report from the Session to the *Westminster Times* newsletter. Please note that because of the newsletter publication schedule vs. timing of month-end close, these reports will typically be about six weeks behind.



March 2024

| | March Actual* | Monthly Budget | Year-to-Date Actual | Year-to-Date Budget |
|-----------------------|---------------|----------------|---------------------|---------------------|
| Total Income | \$7,290 | \$17,938 | \$59,481 | \$53,814 |
| Total Expenses | \$17,014 | \$18,662 | \$53,095 | \$64,486 |
| Net Gain/Loss | -\$13,266 | | \$6,386 | |

* Note that monthly Actuals do not reflect income from prepaid annual pledges

Revenues for the month were \$7,290; well below budget of \$17,938. Member pledged income was \$5,663 and when added to January and February member giving, we stand at \$42,753 versus a first quarter budget of \$49,893,

Operating expenses were \$20,557 for the month versus budget of \$18,662. This overrun was primarily due to Board of Pensions billing and bank draft issues that resulted in three months of Pastor medical and pension benefits being drafted in a single payment. Also, the One Great Hour special offering received in March was \$630, but the payment to PC(USA) was not sent in until April. *Please direct any questions about church financial matters to Treasurer Len Bornemann or to the Business Affairs Committee.*

Doing Well by Doing Good

A Message from the Business Affairs Committee

So far, three Westminster families have chosen to contribute the full amount annual pledge. Why would members choose to take this option of fulfilling their pledges in advance or in a lump sum? Part of the answer can be the favorable tax benefits that result.



Several members over the age of 70½ make their church offerings from their IRA accounts. This is because of the “required minimum distribution” (RMD) rule of the U.S. Internal Revenue Service. This rule states that a certain minimum dollar amount must be withdrawn from a tax-protected IRA and made taxable in the current year. An individual can choose for all or a portion of the annual RMD to be donated directly to a qualifying charitable organization’s account...like WPC. The RMD withdrawal becomes *non-taxable*.

A second option that results in tax savings is gifting of *highly appreciated stocks* (e.g., you bought at \$10 a share but could sell today for \$100 a share). When a stock is sold, the difference between the original cost and the selling price is a taxable gain; however, if the owner of the stock gives it directly from the stock account to a qualifying charitable organization, not only is the capital gain not taxed, but the donor receives a charitable giving tax deduction based on the sales proceeds. Good stewardship benefits all concerned.

PC(USA) and the Matthew 25 Movement

PC(USA) is building a denomination-wide network of churches committed to the PC(USA) “Matthew 25 Movement,” based on the parable of the sheep and goats that Jesus tells in Matthew 25:31-46. In the parable, Jesus makes it clear that **what we do matters to God** and **how we treat others is important to God**.



The denomination’s aim is to help multiply this loving commitment to radical and fearless discipleship by partnering with mid councils and congregations to help them embrace three focus areas. In April, we focused on the first initiative, “Congregational Vitality.” This month, we are centered around the second initiative, “Eradicating Systemic Poverty.”

“We believe the Holy Spirit inspires, motivates and guides all faithful work to eradicate poverty and build communities of well-being.”

The Presbyterian Mission Agency
Seven Faith Assertions on Poverty

Through the work of our Mission and Outreach Committee, Westminster Presbyterian Church actively partners with agencies in our community that “build communities of well-being,” knowing that these neighbors in need are indeed the face of Christ for us. We value these partners’ expertise and the way that working with them help us to come to know our neighbors and understand the systems that limit the well-being of all.

Westminster works closely with The Food Bank of Greenwood County, Thornwell Home for Children, Pathway House, Community Initiatives, Greater Greenwood United Ministry (GGUM), the Boys and Girls Club, Megs House, Healthy Learners, and others who are providing pathways out of poverty in our community.

What is “systemic poverty”?

Systemic poverty refers to the economic exploitation of people who are poor through laws, policies, practices, and systems that perpetuate their impoverished status. Not all people have equal access to education, transportation, fresh food, financial resources, clean air, water or healthy environments, employment with a living wage, healthcare, benefits, citizenship, and affordable housing. This lack of access creates generational cycles of poverty and a racial wealth gap that are systemic in nature. Individuals cannot change their economic and social location easily just by “working harder.”

*For more information, visit:
[Presbyterianmission.org/ministries/matthew-25/](https://presbyterianmission.org/ministries/matthew-25/)*

Here are some ways the Holy Spirit has inspired us to engage this focus area of the Matthew 25 Initiative so far this year at Westminster:

- Our 2024 Souper Bowl special offering resulted in a donation of \$772 to the Greenwood County Soup Kitchen, more than double our goal of \$300.
- We enriched our monthly Communion celebrations by incorporating “purple bag” food collection to the Greenwood Food Pantry, over and above the usual donations.
- Our Mission and Outreach Committee sponsored an outing to Pathway House, where we learned more about the causes of and solutions to poverty in South Carolina.

Toddler Learning Center Receives \$5,000 Grant

Published in the April 17, 2024 issue of the Index-Journal Lakelands Connector

Submitted to the I-J by Britney Mazyck

The Toddler Learning Center (TLC) of Community Initiatives, Inc. announced it received a \$5,000 grant from the Duke Energy Foundation.



This funding will support the operational costs of TLC, enabling it to continue providing high-quality, affordable early childhood education to families in the community.

Much more than just a day-care, TLC serves children ages 2-4 and is an initiative of Community Initiatives, Inc, a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization located in Greenwood, SC. The program's mission is to prepare young children for early success in school by focusing on key developmental milestones and increasing literacy and positive social-emotional outcomes. By encouraging curiosity, exposing students to a language-rich environment, and intentional planning, teachers and staff work to cultivate an enriching learning experience for students.

The Toddler Learning Center is housed at Westminster Presbyterian Church, thanks to a partnership with the membership led by Pastor Caroline Dennis. Seeing an opportunity to collaborate and serve the community, Westminster offered space in the church to provide a home for the program. Their heart for outreach aligned with Community Initiative's goal of bringing quality affordable childcare to familiar in the county. This partnership has been invaluable in allowing The Toddler Learning Center to grow and make a long-lasting impact.



“We are incredibly grateful to the Duke Energy Foundation for their generous support of our work,” said Teresa Goodman, Executive Director of Community Initiatives, Inc. “This grant will help us continue to provide nurturing care and early learning

opportunities to toddlers in our community. We believe that investing in our youngest generation is critical for their long-term growth and success.”

The Duke Energy Foundation provides philanthropic support to meet the needs of communities across South Carolina. Their mission is to support initiatives that protect and restore the environment, provide education and training for the workforce, and encourage diversity and inclusions.

For more information about The Toddler Learning Center and Community Initiatives, Inc., visit myci.us or call 864.223.7472, extension 2.

Let Us Pray...

"Pray without ceasing"
1 Thessalonians 5:17



For Those in Our Church

We share one another's joys and concerns:

- John Alexander, Ody Sholar's stepfather
- Mary Corley
- Tina Corley's daughter, Christina
- Kathy Felder
- Mac & Holly Hubbard
- Dave & Deb Jones
- Sally Kauffmann
- Kelli Lott and Gabby
- Kim Purcell
- Savannah, Dakota, and Briar Rose
- Ed Watkins
- Denise Waldrep
- Kelly West
- John White
- Gail & Glenn Yonce, and Georgiana
- Our pastor and her family

We pray daily for our prayer partners and their special concerns. We pray for our sister churches: New Faith, Ware Shoals, First Presbyterian, Abbeville Presbyterian, and others.

We pray for the ministries of our church, especially:

- Presbyterian Communities of SC
- Prison Ministry
- Thornwell Home
- Presbyterian College
- NAMI
- Pathway House
- Food Bank
- Soup Kitchen
- Meg's House
- Beyond Abuse
- GG United Ministries
- Camp Fellowship
- Community Initiatives
- TLC staffers Tiara Brown, Sharon Elmore, Wanda Stewart, and Amelia Sheard



For Those in Our Hearts

We pray for these members of our wider community:

- Greg Bullard
- Ted Colcolough
- Asher & Sumir Din
- Nancy Dozer's Aunt Dietrick
- Dean & Albert Fadden
- Lib Grier
- Debbie Herrin
- Michael Knight
- Katherine Martin
- The Martin family
- The McClendon family
- Floyd Nicholson
- Terence Reese
- Trae Steelmon
- The Woods family
- Kathy & Mike



For the World

We pray for our neighbors everywhere who we are called to love:

- For strength, comfort, and courage to victims of war and mass killings
- For those whose lives have been affected by natural disasters
- For justice and mercy to prevail throughout the world—*thy* will be done
- For wise leadership at every level in our community, country, and world
- For those living with mental, emotional, and/or physical illnesses
- For all who experience exclusion, or who struggle to meet basic needs
- For unity among Christians in every congregation, country, and corner of the world
- For those serving in the American armed services, especially those in harm's way
- For voters in democracies around the world to discern wisely how to use their vote
- For our enemies, that their hearts may be transformed by Your love and truth

And God Saw That It Was Good...



Easter morning—Alleluia!



Sunday Sustenance Sustainability Sing-Along!

He's Got the whole world in His hands,
We take good care of it with our hands,
He's got the whole world in His hands,
And together we will love our lands!

Be kind to plants and animals in our land,
Shake hands with sisters or brothers
throughout our land,
Dream a bright dream and do all you can,
And together we will love our lands!

Out and About...



Seven Friday Foray friends learned about Pathway House programs



Nancy Hart checked out the eclipse with her special spectacles



Claire and Caroline participated in the SpiritFlow retreat at Kanuga, NC



Mac Hubbard (& Holly) attended a dear friend's wedding

Now an angel of the Lord said to Philip, "Rise up and go...
So he rose up and *went*."

Acts 8: 26-27



Bill and Autumn participated in Thornwell Spirit Day

Coloring page...Not Just for Kids!

OLD Testament
BOOKS

Genesis Exodus Leviticus

NUMBERS Deuteronomy Joshua

Judges Ruth 1 & 2 SAMUEL

1 & 2 Kings 1 & 2 CHRONICLES

Ezra NEHEMIAH Esther

Job psalm Proverbs

Ecclesiastes Song of Solomon

ISAIAH JEREMIAH Lamentations
EZEKIEL

Daniel HOSEA Joel AMOS

Obadiah Jonah Micah NAHUM

Habakkuk Zephaniah Haggai

zechariah MALACHI

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