Ash Wednesday Service

Hey friends, Lent is coming up! Can you believe it?

I emailed a couple of my pastor friends to ask them what they were doing for Ash Wednesday, and one of the suggestions was so amusing! A UCC friend in Salt Lake City told me about drive-by ash impositions, where people stay in their cars with their windows rolled up, smash their foreheads against the car window, and the pastor would smudge the window with ashes. That’s one way to do it I guess!

With that in mind, we are going to save you the trip (and car wash). Pastor Wes and Ministry Assistant Rola will be livestreaming the Ash Wednesday service at noon on February 17. Be sure to have some ashes ready at home so you can apply them for yourself or for family members. Make sure you don’t mix the ashes with water but with oil so you don’t end up with lye. We also invite you to have a notepad and a pen ready to write down your Lenten sacrifice if you would like to have any.

The service will be available on our website and YouTube channel later throughout the day.
Our Youth were asked the question: “What have you been doing since COVID started?” They have kindly shared their responses below.

During COVID, I have been helping my moms with the business such as cleaning the studio and making sure that everything is organized. I have also been working on my writing. When COVID started, I began to write more than usual which was kind of fun. In August, I started to go to the gym to work out which was cool because I was happy to get out of the house at least 3 times a week. Then my little brother started soccer so I helped coach the team with my mom, which was fun to do.

– Iyana Tyrell
Congratulations to the Lyman Family on their newest addition!

Lillian George Miller Lyman, born 1:30 pm, 26 December, 2020, in Portland, Oregon, 7 lbs. 10 oz., 20.5 inches. Georgie and Natalie are both doing well.

Good news. Betsey and I are now grandparents. Georgie was born on Boxing Day (British holiday on the day after Christmas). We are VERY HAPPY and pleased with the beautiful child and the uneventful pregnancy/delivery.

Thanks to you all from us and from Blake and Natalie for your gifts, prayers and thoughts along the way. It’s nice to bring new life into the world during this unhappy COVID-19 situation.

- Don Lyman

Daniel Thweatt is deployed and his birthday is February 18th. I would love to have his Church family flood him with love and wishes. Although overseas, postage is as if in the states. Here is the address:

   LCPL Daniel Thweatt  
   SPMAGTF 3/1 Det1  
   Unit 89087 Box 625  
   FPO, AP 96610-8700

- Kathi Thweatt

Sally and Elizabeth are selling Girl Scout Cookies! We are sad that we're not able to see you all in church and get your orders in person, but you can still get your cookies! Your orders can be purchased online through both Sally and Elizabeth's links, which we will have on Westminster’s website and on the Facebook page, and then have them delivered to your home. Thank you for supporting Girl Scouts!

- Hilary Pollock
2020 Westminster Annual Report

This is your friendly reminder for the 2020 Westminster Annual Report. The Congregational Meeting is scheduled for February 28, which means annual reports should be available for distribution by February 14.

Note that this year, we’ve decided to keep with the shorten report like last year.

Meaning, reports should be no longer than a single page and should include a bulleted list of 2020 highlights and goals/upcoming events for 2021.

Please submit information to (membership@westminsac.org) by February 7!

Weekly Meditations

Pastor Wes and Ministry Assistant Rola will be continuing their weekly meditations but with some slight changes. From now on the meditations will be at the noon hour on Facebook Live. Wes’ meditations will be on Tuesdays and Rola’s will be on Thursdays. They will also be on our YouTube channel and website later in the day.

Wednesday Adult Education Class

February 24 - March 24

Bioethics: Choices in Life and Death

Led by Rev. Dr. Emil Augustine, this Zoom course examines the growing debate in contemporary society over clinical and medical bioethical choices. It seeks to understand the various conflicts that have evolved around a whole range of personal, social, religious and political decisions. Among the issues we will be considering are: informed consent, truth-telling, physician-assisted suicide, genetics, cloning, organ transplantation, and resource allocation.

The course will consist of presentations and discussions on the various topics noted. Current event materials will also be utilized. Student participation will be encouraged.

Per Capita

In case you missed it! The per capita for 2021 is $30.13.
Valentine’s Day with Equal Exchange

Remember your special someone this Valentine’s Day (February 14) with Equal Exchange coffee, tea, or bars of yummy chocolate! PWOW offers these fair trade items for sale throughout the month via phone or email. How about a box of herbal Peppermint tea or a tin of baking cocoa for those homemade chocolate sugar cookies (recipe below) – very tasty and perfect for that special treat! In addition, a few Dark Chocolate with Carmel Crunch bars are on sale for only $2.00 each. Delight your sweetheart while helping to improve the lives of small farmers in Central America and elsewhere. If you have any questions or wish to purchase any items, please contact Maryann Hopson (916-284-4013 or maryann.hopson@gmail.com) or Lynne Stevenson (LStevenson249@mail.com). A list of available fair trade items, prices, and flavors is available upon request.

Chocolate Sugar Cookie Hearts

**Ingredients**
- 1/2 cup butter softened
- 3/4 cup sugar
- 1 large egg
- 1 teaspoon pure vanilla extract
- 1 1/2 cups unbleached white pastry flour
- 1/3 cup Equal Exchange Organic Baking Cocoa
- 1/2 teaspoon baking powder
- 1/4 teaspoon salt
- Confectioners sugar for sprinkling (optional)

**Instructions**
In a medium bowl, cream the butter and sugar together until smooth. Beat in the egg and vanilla until light. Sift together the flour, cocoa, baking powder, and salt. Stir the dry ingredients into the butter mixture and form into a thick dough. If the dough is soft, wrap it in plastic and chill for 1/2 hour. Preheat the oven to 375 degrees and butter a baking sheet. On a lightly floured surface, roll out the dough to about a 1/4 inch thickness and cut into **heart shapes**. Place the cookies on the prepared baking sheet, sprinkle with confectioners sugar, if desired, and bake for 15 to 20 minutes until the centers of the cookies are firm. With a spatula, transfer the cookies to a cooling rack. Store the cookies in a tin with a tight-fitting lid to keep them fresh (yields 18).
“Y’all need me!” I said to Pastor Wes in a meeting with him last summer as he was describing to me the vision and plans that Westminster has set forward for the next couple of years! He agreed! I said that thinking at the time that I was going to another church. Well God had different plans…

And yes, I did say “y’all.” After all, I learned my first “American” expressions in the South. Six years ago, during my seminary years, I got the opportunity to be an intern for three months at the First Presbyterian Church in Huntsville, Alabama. Besides occasional preaching back in Lebanon, that was my first time experiencing life as a church leader, standing before the same congregation every Sunday and thinking what my words might mean to that specific crowd. I have to say, that experience left me certain that church ministry is what I want to do with my life. But that was only a part of the story of my calling; let me start from the beginning.

I come to you from a family of five; I am the middle child, sandwiched between two boys. My brothers Hani and Fadi added new members to our family in recent years, two wives and two little kids Raphael and Marylin, both of whom will be four years old in May.

We are one of the very few Presbyterian families in Lebanon, and the only other Presbyterian family in our village. Yet, my family was not the most devout, but like many in my country, religion was more of a culture for us. We went to church on Easter and Christmas for most of my childhood and as a teenager I started dragging my parents to church every Sunday. My love for the church and service grew exponentially in my teenage years and when I told my parents I wanted to study theology at age 17, they weren’t in favor of the idea. So it was another 8 years before I finally joined seminary.

In the meantime, I got a Bachelor of Science in Computer Sciences and started working in a software development company. Three years later, I left that job to become a flight attendant for the Middle East Airlines, a folk dancer with a “Zaffeh” group, and -you guessed it- a seminarian!

I continued to work for the airlines and dance throughout the four years of my part-time seminary studies at the Near East School of Theology in Beirut, and I finally transferred to be a full-time student at Princeton Theological Seminary where I got my degree.

After seminary, I heard the call to come to this weird place called Sacramento California. Dreaming about the California beaches I often saw on TV, I answered God’s call. I won’t lie to you, I was a little disappointed when I got here in January 2018 to find no beaches and cold weather. But little did I know at the time that this place would become home… Today I can say, with no hint of doubt, that this is exactly where I should be. Sacramento has captured a part of my heart, and I can see now how God had been all along leading me to this very town and church.

I am beyond excited to start this journey with you; the more I learn about this church and the more people I talk to, the more I am reassured that there is no other place on earth I’d rather be. So
thank you for your warm welcome despite the circumstances. I can feel your love and enthusiasm even through the digital medium that is connecting us at this time, and I am looking forward to being together with you all soon, and to all the wonderful work we can do together.

May God bless our ministry.
Salaam.

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**Statements of Faith**

Lent begins with an Ash Wednesday Service on February 17. Everyone is invited to participate in our pre-Lenten and Lenten discipline this year, which is to write a personal statement of faith. Presbyterians have a rich history of thinking deeply about the faith and articulating belief in a way that others can draw strength and inspiration from. Allyson Sage and Pastor Wes have facilitated a discussion class in January that gave participants an opportunity to practice expressing belief. It was very spiritually stimulating to hear of the diverse ways people at Westminster think about faith. Thank you to everyone who joined us. Now comes the time to write these thoughts down. Beginning Sunday, February 21, we’ll provide an opportunity for folks to share their statement of faith during Lenten worship services, either by coming down to the church on Sunday morning to offer it live or provide a recorded version from their home to be played in the livestream. Please contact Pastor Wes to be included in one of the weekly worship services.

Here are some general guidelines for your statement of faith (adapted from NPR’s “This I Believe” project):

- Write honestly and intimately—say something that no one else could write for you and in familiar words.
- Name your belief: If you can’t name it in a sentence or two, it might be a sermon rather than a belief. Rather than writing a list, consider focusing on one or two core beliefs.
- Be positive: Write about what you do believe, not what you don’t believe.
- Be personal: Make this about you; speak in the first person. Avoid speaking in the editorial “we.”
- Be honest: Consider a belief you once held and you’ve discovered you were wrong about.
- This is not a debate. You don’t have to back up your beliefs with proof, or disprove other beliefs.
- Think about it this way: What has faith asked you to say “yes” to? To what have you said “no”?

Our Zoom Annual Congregational Meeting will be held immediately following the worship service on February 28. If you are a member of Westminster, please join us to hear about the ministry of the Church during 2020 and plans for the future. The Annual Report will be made available on our website in mid-February.
Our Mission Statement:
Westminster is a welcoming, inclusive community of faith, following Christ’s example by supporting spiritual growth, serving others, and promoting peace and justice.