The Season of Lent

The season of Lent is a time of prayer, fasting and self-examination in preparation for the celebration of the resurrection of the Lord at Easter. It is a period of 40 days — like the flood of Genesis, Moses’ sojourn at Mount Sinai, Elijah’s journey to Mount Horeb, Jonah’s call to Ninevah to repent and Jesus’ time of testing in the wilderness. (The Sundays in Lent are not counted in this reckoning of the time between Ash Wednesday and Easter, as every Lord’s Day is a celebration of the resurrection of Jesus Christ.)

In the early church, Lent was a time of preparation for the celebration of baptism at the Easter Vigil. In many communities of faith it remains a time to equip and nurture candidates for baptism and confirmation and to reflect deeply on the theme of baptismal discipleship.

The Paschal mystery

What we hear during Lent is the power and possibility of the paschal mystery, and that the way of the cross, the way to Easter, is through death. To appropriate the new life that is beyond the power of death means we must die with Christ who was raised for us. To live for Christ, we must die with him. New life requires a daily surrendering of the old life, letting go of the present order, so that we may embrace the new humanity. “I die every day!” asserts Paul (1 Corinthians 15:31). Resurrection necessitates death as a preceding act. The church’s peculiar Lenten claim is that in dying we live, that all who are baptized into Christ are baptized into his death. To be raised with Christ means one must also die with Christ. In order to embrace the resurrection, we must experience the passion of Jesus. The way of the cross, the way to Easter, is through death of the “old self.” In dying, we live.

Therefore, at the beginning of Lent, we are reminded that our possessions, our rulers, our empires, our projects, our families and even our lives do not last forever. “You are dust, and to dust you shall return” (Genesis 3:19). The liturgies throughout Lent try to pry loose our fingers, one by one, from presumed securities and plunge us into unknown baptismal waters, waters that turn out to be not only our death tomb but surprisingly our womb of life. Rather than falling back into nothingness, we fall back on everlasting arms. Death? How can we fear what we have already undergone in baptism?

It is the power of the resurrection on the horizon ahead that draws us into repentance toward the cross and tomb. Through the intervention of God’s gracious resurrection, lifelong changes in our values and behavior become possible. By turning from the end of the “old self” in us, Lenten repentance makes it possible for us to affirm joyfully, “Death is no more!” and to aim toward the landscape of the new age. Faithfully adhering to the Lenten journey of “prayer, fasting and almsgiving” leads to the destination of Easter.

During the final week, Holy Week, we hear the fullness of Christ’s passion, his death, and resurrection. From Jesus’ triumphal entry into Jerusalem and on to the Triduum (Maundy Thursday, Good Friday and Holy Saturday), all of Holy Week focuses on the passion. As his followers, we travel Christ’s path of servanthood through the Lord’s Supper and the suffering of the cross toward the glory of Easter, all of which underscores the inseparable link between the death and resurrection of Jesus.
**Wes’ Wonderings**

**March 2020 Musings**

It is the God who said, “Let light shine out of darkness,” who has shone in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ. **But we have this treasure in clay jars**, so that it may be made clear that this extraordinary power belongs to God and does not come from us. We are afflicted in every way, but not crushed; perplexed, but not driven to despair; persecuted, but not forsaken; struck down, but not destroyed...

from 2 Corinthians 4

Our Lenten theme this year is “Holy Vessels.” God’s light and love shines in us, so we are holy, yet we are, as the Apostle Paul says in 2 Corinthians, fragile vessels of clay that are broken easily by the afflictions of life, so we experience un-wholeness in our lives. The purpose of Lent is to prepare for Easter by repenting of or turning away from all that distracts us from God’s light and love and all that estranges us from other people and all creation. In so doing, our brokenness is healed, and God’s Spirit comes alive within us.

At each of our worship services in Lent, someone from the congregation will lead us in our prayer of confession after having shared her/his story of brokenness. They essentially will be offering their individual confession of sin. The hope is that by hearing these confessions, we all will be able to dig deep within ourselves to recognize the stuff in our lives that separates us from God and from one another. Our lives will become more open to God and more open to one another.

This Lent, may you discover your broken places, offer them to God, and be healed.

Lenten peace,

*Wes*

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**Scripture readings, sermon titles & themes for March 2020**

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>March 1</th>
<th>March 15</th>
<th>March 29</th>
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<tr>
<td>1st Sunday in Lent</td>
<td>3rd Sunday in Lent</td>
<td>5th Sunday in Lent</td>
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<tr>
<td>Genesis 2:15-17; 3:1-7</td>
<td>Exodus 17:1-7</td>
<td>Guest Preacher - Jason Welle, Community Engagement Specialist for Church World Services</td>
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<td>Matthew 4:1-11</td>
<td>John 4:5-42</td>
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<tr>
<td>Exposed!</td>
<td>Is God Among Us or Not?</td>
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<th>March 8</th>
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<tr>
<td>2nd Sunday in Lent</td>
<td>4th Sunday in Lent</td>
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<td>Genesis 12:1-4a</td>
<td>1 Samuel 16:1-13</td>
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<td>John 3:1-17</td>
<td>John 9:1-41</td>
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<td>Stepping Out</td>
<td>Mud in Your Eye</td>
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PWOW NEWS

PWOW CIRCLE MEETINGS– MARCH

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<th>Circle</th>
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<tr>
<td>Esther/Ruth</td>
<td>3/1</td>
<td>12:30 p.m.</td>
<td>Library</td>
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<tr>
<td>Hannah</td>
<td>3/7</td>
<td>6:30 p.m.</td>
<td>Serra Room</td>
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<tr>
<td>Searchers</td>
<td>3/10</td>
<td>11:30 a.m.</td>
<td>Library</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mary/Martha</td>
<td>3/16</td>
<td>1:30 p.m.</td>
<td>Serra Room</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sophia</td>
<td>3/24</td>
<td>11:30 a.m.</td>
<td>Cameron Room</td>
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All women in the church are invited to join a Circle for Bible study, fellowship, and fun. Call Roberta Franklin at 916-708-2768 for more information.

Spring Forward with Equal Exchange

Drop by PWOW’s table on Sunday, March 8, and help to improve the lives of small rural farmers in Central America (and elsewhere) by purchasing Equal Exchange organic coffee, tea, chocolate, and olive oil. Even a few dark chocolate minis at only 25 cents each would help these small farmers compete with large agri-business in their countries. Also, on sale this month are two yummy chocolate bars – Dark Chocolate with Lemon Ginger and Dark Chocolate with Almond – only $2.50 each! Hope to see you there!
St. Patrick’s Day Dinner on March 21

After your busy Saturday activities come sit down, relax, and listen to some awesome Irish music played by Linda Keen, a local musician raised at Westminster while you feast on corned beef or chicken, potatoes, carrots, cabbage. PLEASE call in your reservations and meat choice by March 19. We want to make sure we have enough for everyone. We need some help: (1) 3 people to slice the meat and prepare the vegetables for serving from 3:30 – 5 pm; (2) 4 people to serve food from 5 – 6 p.m.; and (3) 4 people for clean up and washing dishes. Thank you!

Westminster’s Got Talent!

Annual Talent Show, Luncheon, & Raffle
Sunday, March 29 at 12 noon

Don’t be shy...everyone has a talent, and we’d love to see it, hear it, or imagine it.

Raffle prizes needed, too!

- Movies/play/sporting event tickets
- Bottles of wine
- Dinner at your house
- DVDs (new)
- Gently used books
- Coffee/tea items
- Vacation house rental
- Gift cards
- Toys & bikes
- Baskets
- Chocolates
- Stocked picnic basket
- Inspirational items
- Airline Miles

All proceeds support the youth mission trips this summer.

Contact mark@westminsac.org if you're interested in participating!
Young adult gathering or Something for Everyone!

Calling all post-high school and young adults through their 30’s for an informal gathering and some “on tap time.” Connect with others in a casual setting, enjoy some food and beverages, and help define a pathway into the broader life of the church. We will be meeting at the Fox and Goose, 1001 R Street on the second Wednesday of March (3/11) from 6:30 - 8PM.

Feel free to bring a friend! Questions? Contact one of the following people:

Michelle Mosnier at michelleym1@yahoo.com OR
Allyson Sage at asage_43@comcast.net OR
Pastor Wes at wes@westminsac.org

WESTMINSTER CHURCH RETREAT SCHEDULED

The all church retreat will be happening May 1-3, 2020. Please consider joining us. Sign-up forms will be in the office, as well as, after both services on a number of Sundays leading up to the event.

If you are looking for a roommate during the retreat please contact the office. If you have additional questions, or can provide scholarship funds for others to attend please email Jen Cox at jaceysac@yahoo.com.

A Moment For Mission

In our worship services on Sunday, March 15, German Zarate, Coordinator of Missions for the Presbyterian Church of Colombia, will offer a Moment for Mission. He will be talking about the state of the church in Columbia and the PCUSA accompaniment program that Lynn Bartlett was a part of last year.

CONGRATULATIONS TO PROFESSOR LISA R. PRUITT

Professor Lisa R. Pruitt will receive UC Davis School of Law’s 2020 Distinguished Teaching Award. The award, made possible through the generosity of Bill and Sally Rutter, will be presented March 12 at the “Celebrating King Hall” event at the Mondavi Center on the UC Davis campus.

There is a wonderful article with more information about Lisa’s distinguished accomplishments and career on the UC Davis School of Law website that you can read by going to https://law.ucdavis.edu/news/news.aspx?id=9586.
As you may have read in our recent newsletter, or noticed at one of our events, Westminster has a goal of encouraging zero-waste. As a start, we are attempting to eliminate the use of single-use plastics, such as cutlery and plastic plates. If you’d like to think about how you can help the planet in a small way in your personal lives, there are numerous ideas on the Internet, of course. But, as a suggestion in line with Westminster’s goal of eliminating single-use cutlery, think about making your own portable cutlery set to carry with you for when you go to take-out restaurants, or even events where you know food will be served. One of the simplest ideas is to gather up a knife/spoon/fork from your household supply (or also readily available random pieces at your local thrift shop) and wrap your utensils in a cloth napkin and toss it in your backpack or purse. Now you have your utensils at hand, and when you return home you can easily clean up the utensils and napkin, return to your bag, and you are ready to go the next time you have the pleasure of dining out!

A “Thank you” From Gail LaFortune’s niece

Dear --,

Well I can’t single out just one “Dear”. Thank you to all of you in the Westminster family who graciously, generously and lovingly contributed toward the memorial for my aunt, Gail LaFortune.

It was wonderful - the music: Piano, organ, vocal and bells. The words spoken, the room, prepared beautifully and the refreshments provided (delicious!) I really didn’t know how to begin planning a memorial. I am deeply grateful to you all.

I loved hearing stories about Gail. She really gave of herself to make the world a good place. Please know your efforts really touched the hearts of Gail’s family.

She was really at home at Westminster and loved being a part of your family.

Sincerely,
Sue MacDonald

ZERO-WASTE TIP OF THE MONTH

by Chuck Nicol

As you may have read in our recent newsletter, or noticed at one of our events, Westminster has a goal of encouraging zero-waste. As a start, we are attempting to eliminate the use of single-use plastics, such as cutlery and plastic plates. If you’d like to think about how you can help the planet in a small way in your personal lives, there are numerous ideas on the Internet, of course. But, as a suggestion in line with Westminster’s goal of eliminating single-use cutlery, think about making your own portable cutlery set to carry with you for when you go to take-out restaurants, or even events where you know food will be served. One of the simplest ideas is to gather up a knife/spoon/fork from your household supply (or also readily available random pieces at your local thrift shop) and wrap your utensils in a cloth napkin and toss it in your backpack or purse. Now you have your utensils at hand, and when you return home you can easily clean up the utensils and napkin, return to your bag, and you are ready to go the next time you have the pleasure of dining out!
Guest Preacher - Jason Welle

In our worship services on Sunday, March 29, Jason Welle will be preaching on poverty, hunger and the CROP Hunger Walk. Jason is a Community Engagement Specialist for Church World Service based in Southern California. He was first called to global social justice during his service as a Peace Corps Volunteer in Malawi, and that drives his work with CROP Hunger Walk today. Jason has a Masters in Divinity from the Jesuit School of Theology in Berkeley, California.

Survey of Congregational Participation – Results

One of the proposals that resulted from our Visioning Process, completed in early 2019, was to build and strengthen the sense of community within our church and to increase the participation within our church community. In late summer 2019 we asked members, regular attendees, and friends of Westminster to complete a survey regarding their participation in church-sponsored groups and activities. The results of the anonymous survey are summarized here.

We had 114 responses, of which 100 were from members and 14 were from other regular attendees / non-church members. The majority of the respondents were female (59%) and most (33%) had been a member of the church for 21-40 years. Two-thirds of respondents attended the 11:00 “Traditional” service, 28% attended the 9 am Praise Service, and 5% had no service preference. The median age of respondents was 71 years.

Of those respondents who identified as members of Westminster, 92% reported participating in church-sponsored groups or activities at the time of the survey. The most common forms of participation at Westminster were:

- Adult education/Kerygma/Connecting on Wednesdays (COW) – 33%
- Social Groups such as Stowaways, Mixed Blessings, etc. – 32%
- Communion Server – 24%
- Usher/Greeter – 23%
- Lay Reader – 22%

Since the overall participation was quite high, we also looked at the average number of activities members reported being involved in (including Session or Deacons but excluding Worship) and the overall average was 3 (three).

As this was the baseline survey to evaluate our efforts at building and strengthening the sense of community within Westminster, we will repeat it in 12 – 18 months to see if there is an increase in participation overall as well as in the number and types of activities our members engage. If you have any questions about the survey, please contact me or Pastor Wes.

--Allyson Sage, Elder and Membership Ministry Chairperson
We gather as a community of faith, friends, and family to share a meal, and explore our faith. This program is open to all ages, membership in Westminster Presbyterian Church or any other faith program is not required.

**Wednesdays: March 4, 11, 18, 25, and April 1**

- **5:30pm - Fellowship and gathering**
- **5:45pm - Dinner served. Please join us. Adults $5, Children free.**
  - If you have special dietary needs feel free to bring a sack dinner and join us in fellowship.
- **6:30pm-7:30pm - Small groups (Kerygma may run later!)**

**Class 1: Kerygma**

The Kerygma series, HALLELUJAH, began last October with Part 1. The series will continue this spring. March 4th begins the new class. This is in conjunction with Connecting On Wednesdays (COW). The Chicago Symphony presentation of the Messiah is the central element of the course. The Resource book, HALLELUJAH, chapters 6-10 will be our guide. It will not be a problem if you missed the Christmas portion from before; our summary will catch you up. Resource book available at registration. Mark your calendar now!

**Class 2: Beginner Ukulele**

Here's your chance to learn to play the ukulele in a fun, familiar and friendly atmosphere! Julie Meyers, a professional ukulele, guitar, piano, and voice teacher will teach classes. A total of five classes will be offered on consecutive Wednesday nights, starting on March 4, 6:30 - 7:30 pm. A donation of $5.00 per class (such a deal!) would be appreciated to offset the cost of our guest instructor, Julie Meyers. Do not delay, space is limited...contact youth@westminsac.org for more info. Class will fill up fast at this price!

**Class 3: Living the Question**

After four years and dozens of 90-minute meetings, the Westminster Progressive Christianity Forum has run its course and fulfilled its purpose! The Lent’s C.O.W class is intended to thoroughly review what has been accomplished and, most importantly, to open up a discussion about the significance and implications of progressive Christian theology and the progressive Christianity movement. It will be a challenging, “outside the box” experience for all, and we welcome all critics and sceptics. it should be fun!
A Comment on Theological “Free-Speech”
By Deacon David Barnitz

Since the inception of the Progressive Christianity Forum, I have heard some complaints that my views about Christianity are “too political” and contain a radical liberal bias. Some insist that the church should avoid political entanglements because they are too controversial and too divisive. They explain to me that this church is not Republican or Democrat, Liberal or Conservative; that this church should transcend party politics and avoid electoral positioning.

My response is this: the evangelical Christian right in America seems to have to experience no such reticence or constraints. The political biases of Franklin Graham, Jerry Falwell Jr., Jimmy Swaggert, Pat Robertson, and Ralph Reed are open and blatant. Progressive Christianity is, by contrast, virtually silent. My views, many of which were spawned in the Occupy Movement are the progressive left-wing equivalent of the Bible-thumping, right wing Tea party. I feel I have the right, and in fact, the duty to represent the other side of the equation, the radical progressive Christian side of the story. If some Christians find my views divisive or offensive, I can only remind them that the concept of freedom of speech extends to ideas and views that might make you angry, that you might find offensive, yet we remain American citizens, even in church.

If our church is not a source of moral authority and authentic Christian ethics – if our church must remain politically neutral in the face of brutality, racism, misogyny, deceit, and deception, then how can we claim to be servants of God? I believe we face the same existential crisis that Dietrich Bonhoeffer faced in his home country, when an amoral, sadistic, and mentally disturbed tyrant took over the German social structure and the German protestant church.

It is easy to speak the truth when it costs you nothing, but what of that moment which we are called to speak the truth, but not without great risks to ourselves and to our church? I believe that this church, and every other reasoning and intellectually honest church in this land, must stand up and speak out against the naked forces of darkness, deceit, deception, and tyranny. If not us, then who? If not now, then when?

Youth Collecting Items for Active Duty Service Members

The Youth are still collecting playing cards, cross word puzzles, word searches, protein bars, hard candies, gum, note paper, and pens for our active duty service members. You can bring any donations to the boxes that will be on the pew outside the Cameron Room.
Cross-town Choir Collaboration: A Festival of Voices!

The Westminster Chancel Choir is joining forces with the choir at Shepherd of the Sierra Presbyterian Church, directed by Julie Adams. The anthems are *Maya’s Prayer for Peace* (text by Maya Angelou) by Tom Trenney and *Song of the Wanderer* by Dan Forrest. First, we will present the anthems at Shepherd of the Sierra’s two services on Sunday, March 1. Then we’ll present them here at Westminster for the 11:00 am service on Sunday, March 8. Come enjoy the fellowship and inspiring music!

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ALL VOICES CHORAL PROJECT NEWS

On Saturday, February 8, 2020, All Voices Choral Project (AVCP) was invited to bring our program *Listen to Herstory: Missing & Murdered Indigenous Women* to a rally held in Covelo, Mendocino County to mark the 2nd year after Khadijah Britton was abducted and has not yet been found. The Round Valley Feather Dancers and the Bear Singers performed throughout the afternoon, and we were moved to learn that the Covelo community is so holistically attending to their collective trauma. Their speakers talked about Wellbriety, Motherhood and Fatherhood education, Domestic Violence prevention, the status of the Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women epidemic. The new Sheriff of Mendocino County addressed the need for more meaningful effort and pledged to follow through with increased resources. AVCP will continue to present the *Listen to Herstory: MMIW* program, and is also starting to rehearse music for Project 4: *Songs for Our Blue Mother*, focusing on climate change. We rehearse here at Westminster on Mondays, 7:00-9:30 pm. Please contact Lee Hoffman, Founding Artistic Director, for more information at allvoiceschoralproject@gmail.com.

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MARK YOUR CALENDARS

“The Knights of the North Castle” Vacation Bible School will run Monday, June 15 through Friday, June 19. We hope you will join us on an exciting quest as we discover different pieces of God’s protective armor found in stories from the Old and New Testament!
Beloved nurse hears personal stories of her grace
By Amy Yannello

It was a day fit for a queen, and one that would have delighted the fictional Tom Sawyer, as dozens of Westminster parishioners gathered Feb. 23 to wish a fond retirement to Faith Community Nurse, Jean A. Harlow.

Harlow, 91, has been an R.N. for more than 66 years, and has held her post at Westminster for the last 17 years, and with it, a congregation’s trust. She has accompanied many a member to various medical appointments and has proved invaluable at taking notes, and asking medical personnel pertinent questions that might otherwise get overlooked.

Harlow, along with the expanding Health Ministry through the Deacons, has overseen the development and implementation of programs like Blood Pressure Sundays, as well as churchwide flu vaccines. Within Westminster’s Connected on Wednesdays (COW) program, Harlow brought such instruction as how to plan for end-of-life care; final wishes; and what’s to be done when you can no longer make your own decisions.

Chief among Harlow’s standing accomplishments was the writing of Hilda B. Thompson Grant that secured Westminster an automated external defibrillator (AED) machine, and the instruction to train between 60 – 70 WPC members, including staff, on its use.

“Experience has shown that being able to get heart rhythm back to normal as soon as possible, provides oxygenated blood to the brain, heart, and other vital organs. So the AED saves valuable time before the EMTs arrive,” Harlow explained.

She gives special recognition to WPC members Carol Merritt, Wilma White, & Don Lyman M.D. – “They’ve all been an integral part of developing and supporting the Health Ministry with the Deacons. I couldn’t have done this without their support,” Harlow said.

WPC maintains a free Health Resource Center, under Harlow’s care, where members may check out books, pamphlets, and videos on a variety of subjects. Pamphlets and brochures are obtained from various health-related non-profit organizations, and patient care providers.

She also oversees the church’s Medical Benevolence Fund – which is a WPC Mission Fund that provides small grants to members in times of need to help with medical bills.

But at Sunday’s reception, it was the calls she made to the member going through a divorce; or the rides she provided to a member after her husband died; or the way she routinely, and graciously opened her home to the temporarily broken and wounded in her flock when they most needed a soft place to land, and that, “love and blessings, dear heart,” at the end of the day, that caused people to rise to their feet and share Harlow’s kindnesses publicly.

“The countless rides to and from the doctor’s office,” said Connie Brown, shaking her head in disbelief, “and calling me after Jim died...I so appreciated it!”

“I had been in the hospital for some surgery,” Patty Bonnstetter told Round ‘About, “and Jean found out I was going to be alone recuperating, and she insisted I stay in her guest room. I think I was there three weeks; it was pretty amazing of her.”

Long-time friend and fellow parishioner Jan Hopson credits Harlow’s welcoming nature for cementing she and her family in their new church, in the late 1990s.

“Jean was the first person who welcomed me to...
Westminster, and she was there the next week, welcoming us again,” said Hopson. “I always think of Jean Harlow as the person who kept us going to Westminster because she was so friendly and welcoming.”

Years later, when Fred Hopson had a heart attack, and no news was forthcoming after his surgery, daughter MaryAnn would come to appreciate Harlow’s tenacious nature.

As she told it: “Everyone kept calling me, saying they couldn’t find any news about my father because the hospital said there was no ‘Fred’ Hopson there. Well, finally, Jean called; she wasn’t deterred a bit. She realized he was listed under his (given) name, found him, and called to tell me he was ‘In good spirits.’ And I just want to say, thanks for digging deeper.”

Office staff Rebecca Venegas and Samantha Jones oversaw the planning of the event, as well as made the centerpieces, and copied the bulk of Harlow’s Round ‘About columns to decorate the Social Hall. Presbyterian Women of Westminster (PWOW) donated the tablecloths, while the Board of Deacons provided the cake, and presented the corsage, and framed gift of “God’s Thumbprint” to Harlow, as well as providing the servers and dishwashers for the afternoon. WPC member Mikel Nalley amused those in attendance and kept the program moving with his lighthearted Master of Ceremonies skills.

“I’m pacing very wisely,” Harlow continued, thinking about retirement. “No major trips. I have to slow down to where my body is...I thought I’d be back in the choir by now, but I just don’t have the energy to do that yet.”

But Harlow still plans to remain active in her church. So don’t be surprised to see those red curls in the outgoing reception line at church, and a voice saying, “Blessings, dear heart.”

“SLOWING DOWN