

**Westminster Presbyterian Church  
January 10, 2021**

**God Is Holding Your Life  
. . . A Journey of Assurance for the New Year**



*You are invited to print out the image of the cupped hands above and put in a small bowl or box at home to add your prayers to during the service and perhaps also throughout the week. In this way we are reminded to let go into the care of God those things we cannot control.*



*We begin a new worship series today that we pray will bring a “breather” and a sense of assurance to us all. Life is a series of exclamations from “O No!” to “Help!” to “Oh Yeah!” We can swing between disappointment, helplessness, and gratitude on a daily basis. The Book of Psalms knows all about this. Written over a span of time from exile and isolation to the rebuilding of the community, the poetry of the Psalms will accompany us in this series, reminding us that through it all, we can trust that God is, indeed, holding our lives.*

*Let us seek to simplify this moment, slow down for a time. Let us worship, leaning on prayer, reflection and sharing with one another.*

### **Threshold**

Strength and peace is the prayer of the Psalm this week. The Psalmist says “let me count the ways” that we can know the strength of the Holy One. With awe and wonder we behold the presence of God in all the elements of creation—water, fire, air, earth. And it is this glory that assures us that God, indeed, is holding our lives.

**Lift up your eyes, behold the hills.  
From where will help and rescue come?  
We call the One who made the earth,  
Who bless’d the stars, the moon and sun.**

**God is holding your life  
God is holding your life  
God is holding your life, we believe  
*[repeat refrain]***

**Opening Collect Prayer** *Beverly Cook*

*Leader:* Holy and Awesome God,  
You who created everything in a spectacular show of light and matter.  
Open us this day to the wonder of your power

so that we might know the everlasting strength of your reign  
on earth as it is in heaven.

**People: We praise you for your mighty works,  
holding our lives in the fabric of the cosmos.**

**Amen.**

**Hymn                    “Sing Glory to the Name of God”**

Sing glory to the name of God, Whose holy splendor shines abroad.

Alleluia, alleluia!

Enthroned above the crashing waves, the God of grace and glory saves.

Alleluia, alleluia! Alleluia, alleluia. alleluia!

The name of God is full of might: resounding thunder, flashing light.

Alleluia, alleluia!

The wilderness cannot contain the echoes of the great refrain:

Alleluia, alleluia! Alleluia, alleluia. alleluia!

The name of God is wild and free, a while in holy mystery.

Alleluia, alleluia!

A secret wrapped in smoke and fire, still chanted by the temple choir:

Alleluia, alleluia! Alleluia, alleluia. alleluia!

May God forever be our peace; may hymns of glory never cease:

Alleluia, alleluia!

Let all the faithful people come; sing praise to God, the Three-in-One.

Alleluia, alleluia! Alleluia, alleluia. alleluia!

**Psalm Reading**

*Beverly Cook*

Psalm 29

*Lukan Psalter translation*

Give glory to ADONAI, you heavenly court, give ADONAI glory and strength!

Give forth the glory that God's Name deserves, and worship ADONAI in the splendor of holiness!

The voice of ADONAI resounds over the waters; the God of glory thunders over the raging seas. God's voice is powerful, God's voice is full of majesty.

The voice of ADONAI snaps the cedars, shatters the cedars of Lebanon. It makes Lebanon skip like a calf, and Sirion like a young wild ox.

The voice of ADONAI strikes with bolts of lightning; the voice of YHWH shakes the wilderness, the wilderness of Kadesh.

The voice of God twists the oaks, and strips the forests bare; and in God's Temple all cry,  
"Glory!"

ADONAI sits in judgment over the flood; ADONAI is its Ruler forever. Give strength to your people, ADONAI! Bless your people with peace!

### **Psalm Song**

In this series we have a guest composer. Richard Bruxvoort Colligan is a modern-day interpreter of the Psalms—a "psalmist." As in our theme song written by Richard, "God is Holding Your Life," his songs have easy-to-sing choruses that help bring the seminal message into our voices and hearts. Here is an introduction (video during worship) from Richard and his song interpretation "Awe and Wonder" of Psalm 29.

### **Reflections and Testimonies**

**Sermon:** "Awe, Wonder . . . & Peace"

Rev. Dr. Shannon Smythe

**Testimonies of Being Held:** *This is an opportunity for congregants to share how they have felt the love and support of others, of God, in this time of pandemic. If you would like to share a brief written or spoken testimony, please reach out to Pastor Shannon.*

### **Sung Reprise**

*"God is Holding Your Life"*

**God is holding your life**

**God is holding your life**

**God is holding your life, we believe**

*[repeat]*

### **"Selah" Moment**

*Beverly Cook*

As we explained last week, the Psalms have a repeated direction throughout—the word "Selah." While scholars are not sure exactly what it means, we are taking it to mean a "pause in the action." Pause is something that we need and our faith calls us to this holy pause. We will use an instrumental sound to remind us to take a pause, a breath, and remember that the settling of our hearts can offer the feeling that we are held in the hands of the Divine. We will hear a chime and then have some silence. Feel free to close your eyes if you like. Imagine yourself held in safety and love and care. When you hear the chime again, open your eyes.

*Silence*

**Prayers of the People** Rev. Dr. Shannon Smythe

Each week we will have a moment to write prayer concerns on small pieces of paper. We will then place these prayers in a container—a symbolic action of placing them in God’s hands, God’s care.

...

Let the people say, “Selah”

**Selah!**

Let us continue our prayers. I will offer a category of concern and we will allow a brief pause, then we will respond as indicated. As a prayer posture for this worship series, I invite you to cup your hands, ready to receive God’s love and peace, and in preparation to be God’s love and peace in the world.

Let us pray for the leaders of this world and this church community...

**God of Justice, hear our prayer.**

Let us pray for those who live in conflict around the world...

**Prince of Peace, hear our prayer.**

Let us pray for all who are experiencing loss of any kind in this pandemic...

**Comforting Healer, hear our prayer.**

Let us pray for those who are homeless, hungry and alone...

**Emmanuel, God-With-Us, hear our prayer.**

Let us pray for those who live in comfort,  
for Christ-like hospitality and generosity...

**Transforming Spirit, hear our prayer.**

Holy and Living One,  
for those whose names we do not know and for those we name before you now,  
**hear our prayer.**

The Lord’s Prayer

**Sung Prayer Response**

*“Put Peace Into Each Other’s Hands”*

**Put peace into each other’s hands  
and like a treasure hold it,  
protect it like a candle flame,  
with tenderness enfold it.**

**Put peace into each other’s hands  
with loving expectation;**

**be gentle in your words and ways,  
in touch with God's creation.**

...

**The Peace**

The Peace of Christ be with you.

**And also with you.**

Will you make a gesture of extending your cupped hands toward others who may be with or near you as a sign of offering the peace that Christ gives us. If you are alone, place your cupped hands over your heart, as a sign that you send your heartfelt peace out to the world.

...

**Give thanks for strong yet tender hands  
held out in trust and blessing.**

**Where words fall short let hands speak out;  
the heights of love expressing.**

**Benediction**

Now go in the knowledge that  
God is holding your life  
even as we hold each other.

You are not alone.

You are loved.

Amen.

**Hymn "To God Be the Glory"**

To God by the glory; great things he has done! So loved he the world that he gave us his Son, who yielded his life an atonement for sin, and opened the life-gate that all may go in.

Refrain: Praise the Lord, praise the Lord; let the earth hear his voice!

Praise the Lord, praise the Lord; let the people rejoice!

O come to the Father through Jesus the Son, and give him the glory great things he has done!

Great things he has taught us; great things he has done, and great our rejoicing through Jesus the Son; but purer and higher and greater will be our wonder, our transport, when Jesus we see. *Refrain*

## ***Remember in Prayer***

*Pray for all those touched recently by violence and natural disasters,  
the healing of national hostility and mistrust, efforts to feed the poor and provide shelter for  
the homeless in our area, and the following people:*

*Sarah Altvater – dealing with health issues while caring for Covid patients and going to school.*

*Linda Book – still dealing with pain and lack of strength.*

*Rev. Kim Brinkmeyer – fell and shattered her tibia and tore the meniscus, not allowed to  
weight bear for eight weeks*

*Peter Culin – Sue Culin’s brother-in-law, going back on chemotherapy.*

*Pat Dickinson – suffering from infection and kidney problems related to lung transplants, but has  
a strong faith and will to live*

*Susan Frost – Sally Waugaman’s daughter, struggling with side effects from chemotherapy  
for pancreatic cancer.*

*Lacey Meade – daughter of Betty Pratt, discharged from Beebe while undergoing chemotherapy at  
Tunnell Cancer Center.*

*Dee Moore – dealing with pain in her jaws and grieving the death of Bob.*

*Pat Mossel – Had another painful fall and currently at Beebe.*

*Rev. Larry Neumark - friend of Karen & Glenn Dixon who has a recurrence of prostate  
cancer.*

*Betty Pratt - swelling in her legs greatly reduced as she undergoes massage therapy.*

*Dave Roof – Best friend of Tom Pratt, has coronavirus and suffered a heart attack,  
causing him to be in critical condition.*

*Angie Sadlon – mother of Mary Boyer and Sandra Hrin, in rehab at The Moorings*

*Brenda Sadlon – relative of Sandra Hrin, lost home and possessions in house fire*

*Mike Sant Angelo – brother of a friend of Mary Boyer, failing and remains on  
hospice. Carl Wagner – Bob & Jane Nicholson’s son-in-law, suffering from a  
herniated*

*disk and a partial rotator cuff tear.*

*Janet Waugaman – Sally’s Waugaman’s daughter, continues to lose mobility due to Multiple  
System Atrophy.*

*Larry Webster – cousin of Jane Nicholson, tested positive for virus and lost wife, Carol, to virus, 3  
weeks ago*

***Our church has a prayer chain of members who will pray for any person you ask.***

***Contact Karen Dixon by phone at 302-858-8968 or email at [k\\_dixon221@hotmail.com](mailto:k_dixon221@hotmail.com)***

## *Announcements*

**An Invitation in the midst of COVID-19:** Pastor Shannon would like to extend a warm and open invitation to any in the congregation who would like to meet with her on a more individual basis to get to know one another better or for prayer and encouragement. Please reach out to her by email: [shannonsmytheWPC2@gmail.com](mailto:shannonsmytheWPC2@gmail.com) or call the church office at (302) 227-2109. She is willing to meet over the phone, by Zoom, or socially distanced and masked in-person (outside is preferable if the weather cooperates).

**A Note from Rev. Doug Griffin:** “Su and I want to thank so many of you who sent us Christmas greetings this past year. It was delightful to hear from each and every one of you and to receive so many expressions of affection and best wishes. We had a quiet but joyful Christmas, actually being able to get the whole family together, including all 8 grandchildren and my mother, on a Zoom meeting on Christmas afternoon (our 8th grandchild was born October 27). We wish you all peace and joy in the new year and pray that we all will witness healing, recovery, reconciliation, and joy in the months ahead.”

**Congregational Meeting Announcement:** Following worship on Sunday, January 17<sup>th</sup>, we will have a very short congregational meeting the purpose of which is to receive the report of the Nominating Committee regarding the resignation of the deacon Diana Green and the new nomination of Nancy Tompkins to fill the newly vacant slot. The meeting will happen on Zoom directly following worship on January 17<sup>th</sup>.

### *Calendar*

#### **Upcoming January Events:**

- Tuesday Praying the Psalms is ON PAUSE while Pastor Shannon trains our incoming Office Manager
- Wednesday John Bible Study is ON PAUSE while Pastor Shannon trains our incoming Office Manager
- Telling Our Stories: An Invitation into Knowing & Being Known: Monday 11<sup>th</sup>, Noon-1pm, on Zoom
- Sunday, January 10<sup>th</sup>: Sunday School at 10:00AM; Worship at 11:00AM, ZOOM
- Sunday, January 10<sup>th</sup>: Drive Through Communion (weather dependent), noon-1pm
- Sunday, January 17<sup>th</sup>: Sunday School at 10:00AM; Worship & Installation of Incoming Elders and Deacons at 11:00AM, ZOOM; **Congregational Meeting following Worship on Zoom to Vote on a New Deacon**
- Sunday, January 24<sup>th</sup>: Sunday School at 10:00AM; Worship at 11:00AM, ZOOM
- Sunday, January 31<sup>st</sup>: Sunday School at 10:00AM, Worship & Installation of Pastor Shannon at 2:00PM, ZOOM

Meet our new Bookkeeper: Waneta Chaffinch



### **Meet our new bookkeeper: Waneta Chaffinch**

Waneta has lived in Sussex County nearly her whole life. She was raised in the Mennonite Community, and loves the rich heritage she has. She married Barry -the “boy next door” 25 years ago. Together they have 3 grown children; a married daughter, and two sons in college. She is a grateful mama to see her children serving the Lord in their various roles and activities.

She has served 4 years as a fulltime volunteer with Rosedale Mission Board, 2 ½ years of that as a missionary’s assistant in Ecuador. She enjoys people, and working with numbers. She worked 7 years for Eagle’s Nest Church in Milton as administrative assistant and bookkeeper. She currently works part-time at The First Presbyterian Church of Milford, as well as managing the bookkeeping of several more non-profits. She started Waymaker Bookkeeping, LLC in 2018 desiring to work with more churches and non-profits in the area.

She is very excited to come on board at Westminster, and is looking forward to meeting you soon.



Dear Siblings in Christ,

Our beloved country is like the biblical Rebekah, pregnant with Esau and Jacob fighting within her. *“If it is to be this way, why do I live?”*<sup>[1]</sup> Rebekah asked. We see our country divided in two, fighting over ideology, each side claiming to represent the “true” America.

The traumatic events of yesterday have us all questioning how America can survive with such divisions, and how half the population of our country can believe things diametrically contrary to what we do. Like it or not, even we church people are not a unified voice.

Most of us in this country believe that an election was duly carried out according to the dictates of our constitution. No court in the land found enough evidence to pursue allegations of widespread fraud. And yet a significant proportion of the population claims that there was rampant cheating, this story claimed repeatedly by the president. Credibility has become a subjective thing, with competing media sources and repetition giving weight to any number of theories that either boggle the mind or feed into suspicious inclinations, depending on your perspective. We disagree about science, about who we trust to bring us the news, and about wild conspiracy theories.

These phenomena cannot be disconnected from racism, which is embedded in our social fabric. Even when we have worked to enact fair laws, their enforcement has been carried out unevenly and selectively. Yesterday, an angry white mob stormed the Capitol and were met with little resistance, as compared with the brutal response to the Black Lives Matter protests of recent past.

This is not the America we want to be.

If we claim to be a democracy that strives for “liberty and justice for all,” then we must become people who respect reason, decency, compassion, and work for the common good.

If we claim to be followers of Jesus Christ, we must seek God’s wisdom and compassion. *“We must no longer be children, tossed to and fro and blown about by every wind of doctrine, by people’s trickery, by their craftiness in deceitful scheming.”<sup>15</sup> But speaking the truth in love, we must grow up in every way into him who is the head, into Christ,<sup>16</sup> from whom the whole body, joined and knit together by every ligament with which it is equipped, as each part is working properly, promotes the body’s growth in building itself up in love.”*[\[2\]](#)

How can we, as followers of Jesus Christ, care for the whole body, for our whole community, and not just those who look like we do, think as we do, and vote as we do? How can we faithfully respond to Jesus’ call to stand with and for those who hunger and thirst, not only for food, but for righteousness?

In this time of turmoil and easy, knee-jerk hatred of the Other Side, let us listen and speak with wisdom and with love. Let us stand for reason as well as for faith. Let us love Jesus Christ more than politics, more than country, more than winning. And let us as the Church be a voice for righteousness rather than ugliness, truth rather than hysteria, and compassion rather than animosity.

Grace and peace,  
Tracy Keenan  
Missional Presbyter  
New Castle Presbytery

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[\[1\]](#) Genesis 25:22 (NRSV)

[\[2\]](#) Ephesians 4:14-16 (NRSV)

**Telling Our Stories**  
**An Invitation into Knowing & Being Known**

*Storytelling is one of the oldest and most intimate skills on the planet. We are all already good storytellers—it's literally what makes us human!*

Monday, January 11<sup>th</sup> | Noon-1pm| Zoom (contact the church office for the link)

Fr. Richard Rohr has said that “An epiphany is not an experience that we can create from within, but one that we can only be open to and receive from another. Epiphanies leave us totally out of control, and they always demand that we change.”

Since March of 2020, we've both limited and eliminated our family and faith community gatherings. This has been a tremendous loss for us. It has lessened our chances of receiving epiphanies in the presence of one another.

To counter that loss, you are invited to come to an hour of lunch-time story-sharing. The intention of our time is twofold. First, it is to share one story from your life (5-10 min) that reveals something significant about who you are or what you have learned or experienced. Second, it is to listen and receive the epiphany gift(s) that come from hearing the stories of others.

My hope is that by telling and hearing one another's stories, we, together, become known and changed in the process. Won't you join me for this special time together? -Pastor Shannon

Book Study Coming in February:

**Engaging in the Challenge of Confronting Racism**

In the midst of the COVID-19 pandemic of 2020, our eyes were opened to another pandemic—that of racial injustice, which has been ever present throughout the history of our country. As Christians we are called to pursue God's justice for our world, but as white Christians we have inherited a racialized faith that must be explored if we want to be active in anti-racist movements in our presbytery, denomination, and community. The book, *White Fragility: Why It's So Hard for White People to Talk About Racism*, by Robin DiAngelo, offers us an opportunity to explore not only the way systemic racism functions in the world but also how our emotions, words, and actions, as white people, can either help or harm the movement for racial justice.

We are proposing offering a covenant discussion group that meets on Zoom every 2 weeks, beginning with an initial introductory meeting on Thursday, February 4<sup>th</sup>, 2021, to explain and reach agreement on expectations for the group. We would then meet through April 29, to study two chapters of the *White Fragility* book each session, Thursday afternoons from 2-3:30pm for 6 meetings. This will be a very personal experience for group members, including for the co-facilitators, who will be approaching the topic with humility and awareness that this journey is one we are taking together as white people seeking to understand and engage in growth in our daily lives.

**About the co-facilitators:**

**Rev. Dr. Shannon Smythe** is pastor of Westminster Presbyterian Church of Rehoboth Beach. She is committed to the journey of anti-racism and has experience in anti-racist education and action in

academic and congregational settings. She enjoys engaging in her faith and commitment to racial justice through discussion, accountability, and action with others.

**Christine Hansvick** received her Ph.D. in Social Psychology and is Professor Emeritus at Pacific Lutheran University. In addition to being a professor for 40 years, she has led discussion groups within the Presbyteries of her home churches on small group development, healthy families, care for the environment, and peacebuilding.

**Resource Book:** *White Fragility* (2018) by Robin DeAngelo, Beacon Press. Available on Kindle (\$8.99), Amazon Prime (\$9.60), and as an Audio-Book; also available although on high demand through the Delaware Public Library System in either print or audio CD form.