

Westminster Presbyterian Church

February 21, 2021



**** In preparation for the Ritual Action in this service, you are invited to gather the “sea glass” that was included in the Lenten Gift Bag from the church ****

“Treasure”

First Sunday in Lent

GATHER

People gather around Jesus as his reputation becomes known from town to town. As we gather virtually or physically, we too are yearning for presence, for peace, for help.

Prelude

Welcome and Announcements

Threshold

Each of us is created a precious and holy vessel of embodied love. We have been through a harrowing time since last Lent that has shattered our sense of wholeness—body, mind, and spirit—like a glass vessel fractured into pieces. Let us enter a Lenten “season of recovery” as we focus on Jesus, the Healer of our every ill.

**Vessels, holy and whole
Broken, needing the One
Open, body and soul
Healer, come.**

Beach glass begins as something whole and yet discarded. As it is tumbled by the sea, it is broken and polished until it becomes a treasured “mineral gem.” We do not embrace that suffering is necessary or God-given, but that suffering is a part of life. When pain comes and brokenness enters our lives, Jesus reaches out to touch and remind us of the Treasure that we *all* are—worthy of new life in the midst of hopelessness. In a year when pandemic has wreaked havoc on our world, we begin by affirming our journey to physical health.

**Vessels, holy and whole
Broken, needing the One
Open, body and soul
Healer, come.**

APPROACH

People opened their lives to Jesus. We are drawn to the Healer—opening our hearts with honesty about our lives and finding assurance that offers peace.

Opening Prayer of Confession *Beverly Cook*

Lent developed into a season of intense inward reflection and confession centuries after the life of Jesus. Yet, as we will see, Jesus encouraged people to open up about their lives—to speak truth—no matter how broken. This is the beginning of compassion for ourselves and others. It is the beginning of healing. The Latin origins of the word “confess” is to “study and acknowledge.” This will be a season of studying how we can

be a healing presence in our community. To do this, we acknowledge our need to
restore our own Holy Vessels.

Let us pray:

Creator God,

We are bodies fashioned by your hand in your own image,
shapes and colors of diverse and immense beauty.

And yet too often we have ignored the sacred nature of our physical lives.

The Holy Vessels you have fashioned are tired and suffering,
ravaged by months of disrupted rhythms and ailment.

Our fragility has come into full view and we are frightened.
We cannot fathom the proportions of loss and so we look away,
sometimes even from our own needs.

Help us, Healer.

Show us our strength.

Forgive our inertia.

Move us to move
one step at a time toward greater care.

In this silence, we sense and acknowledge our yearning for wholeness.

Silence

**Vessels, holy and whole
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Healer, come.**

Assurance

Rev. Dr. Shannon Smythe

I invite you to feel a warmth begin to arise within the core of your body. It may help to keep your eyes closed. Imagine a warm orb of light deep within you. This warm glow begins to emerge from the recesses of your inner being to fill and flood your whole body until your skin is glowing with it, radiating outward. You are surrounded by light. Feel this warmth wrap you as a blanket of assurance.

Know this: God's love and grace surround you...

No. Matter. What.

You are a precious and holy vessel right now.

Christ's light is a treasure given freely.
For you, for me, for all.

Take a deep breath in to let this truth fill you...
and breathe out with the relief of assurance.

Peace

Rev. Dr. Shannon Smythe

I invite you to imagine the warmth that surrounds you extending to those who may be next to you in close proximity. Imagine it extending beyond your walls to the neighborhood...
the wider community...
the church...
and seeing it spread like the rising sun, let it expand to all the world.
Let this be our peace. **Amen.**

If you have not already, I invite you to open your eyes.

The peace of Christ is with you.
And also with you.

Opening Hymn

"Healer of Our Every Ill" Glory to God, #795

Healer of our every ill, light of each tomorrow,
Give us peace beyond our fear, and hope beyond our sorrow.

You who know our fears and sadness,
grace us with your peace and gladness;
Spirit of all comfort, fill our hearts.

Healer of our every ill, light of each tomorrow,
Give us peace beyond our fear, and hope beyond our sorrow.

In the pain and joy beholding
How your grace is still unfolding,
Give us all your vision, God of love.

Healer of our every ill, light of each tomorrow,
Give us peace beyond our fear, and hope beyond our sorrow.

Give us strength to love each other,
every sister, every brother
Spirit of all kindness, be our guide.

Healer of our every ill, light of each tomorrow,
Give us peace beyond our fear, and hope beyond our sorrow.

You who know each thought and feeling,
teach us all your way of healing;
Spirit of compassion, fill each heart.

BELIEVE

People were fortified by Jesus' words and deeds that revealed care for all—especially those marginalized. We strengthen our belief in the possibility for renewed health and vigor for all.

A Contemporary Word

Bad things do happen; how I respond to them defines my character and the quality of my life. I can choose to sit in perpetual sadness, immobilized by the gravity of my loss, or I can choose to rise from the pain and treasure the most precious gift I have - life itself. — **Walter Anderson**

Some people spend so much time hunting treasure that they fail to see it all around them. It's like sifting through gold to find the silt. — **Richard Paul Evans**

Musical Proclamation

“Sacred the Body” Glory to God, #27

An Ancient Word

Matthew 8: 1-4; 16-17

Beverly Cook

When Jesus had come down from the mountain, great crowds followed him; and there was a leper who came to him and knelt before him, saying, “Lord, if you choose, you can make me clean.” He stretched out his hand and touched him, saying, “I do choose. Be made clean!” Immediately his leprosy was cleansed. Then Jesus said to him, “See that

you say nothing to anyone; but go, show yourself to the priest, and offer the gift that Moses commanded, as a testimony to them.”

That evening they brought to him many who were possessed with demons; and he cast out the spirits with a word and cured all who were sick. This was to fulfill what had been spoken through the prophet Isaiah, “He took our infirmities and bore our diseases.”

Sermon *Rev. Dr. Shannon Smythe*
“The Living Temple”

ASK

People who were healed by Jesus were not afraid to ask. And so we come before the Holy One, making our petitions and desires known, trusting the work of the Spirit.

Song of Preparation

“Make Us Holy, Make Us Whole” (refrain only)

**In your love, make us whole.
May we rest in your compassion.
Calm the lost, weary soul
in the warmth of your love.
May your peace fill our hearts.
May we know the love of Jesus.
By your grace, you console.
Make us holy, make us whole.**

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

*Leader: Healer of our every ill,
especially our malady of separation and fear,
we come before you to make our petitions known.
Hear our cries for healing of body, mind, and spirit.
We know that already you are at work among us,
showing us the way to recovery from the toxicities and grief of our time.*

As demolished pieces that are treasured when found,

we trust that beauty from brokenness is possible
when we seek to bind together that which is wounded.

We pray especially for those who have experienced
the physical loss of family and friends in the pandemic
and those who are still suffering the consequences of the illness.

We pray for each person who suffers in body in other ways—
weariness from inactivity or weariness from overactivity in this time.

We pray for those whose treatment of maladies have been put on hold and those who
suffered isolation in their illness, whatever the cause.

We pray grateful thanks for the medical staff everywhere around the world who have
shown unbelievable strength and stamina
and we mourn the demise of too many caregivers
who risked their lives for our sake.

We pray this day for...

Prayer of Jesus (The Lord's Prayer)

...

**In your love, make us whole.
May we rest in your compassion.
Calm the lost, weary soul
in the warmth of your love.
May your peace fill our hearts.
May we know the love of Jesus.
By your grace, you console.
Make us holy, make us whole.**

KNOW

The parting words Jesus' gave to those he healed were often as much balm as the healing act itself. We hear words of encouragement from the One who makes beauty from brokenness.

Ritual Action for the Week *Rev. Dr. Shannon Smythe*

Leader: The words of Jesus we heard in this week's healing story were "I do choose. Be made clean!" Faced with a request, and given the choice, Jesus chooses to say "yes." And he says "yes" to each precious and treasured life. Recovered wholeness is offered to everyone and will look different for each one. I invite you to take up a piece of beach

glass now and examine it closely, noticing the worn edges and the color, feeling the texture and thickness. Examine it as a treasure that is completely unique, which of course it is.

Then shift your thinking to your own rough edges. What broken edges in your own life need help? What will you do in this Lent season to focus on healing of body, mind, and spirit?

Take a moment to think on this and then when you are ready, enclose the broken piece in your hand and hold it to your heart, breathing (“*spirare*”) deeply and inviting that Spirit to live and move in you in a special way over the next six weeks. Keep your piece close at hand... perhaps on your desk, nightstand, or pocket where you can feel it regularly this week.

RESPOND

Scriptural accounts of healing often end with responses from the “crowd” of witnesses. How will we proceed into the brokenness of this world and respond as the Body of Christ?

Closing Song

“Jesus, Savior, Lord, Now to You I Come (Saranam, saranam)” GTG 789

*Jesus, Savior, Lord, now to you I come.
Saraman, saranam, saranam*

From the earth wherever I may be,
Out of desperation and through agony,
I cry in helplessness:
O answer me.
Saranam, saranam, saranam.

*Jesus, Savior, Lord, now to you I come.
Saraman, saranam, saranam*

In your heart give me a hiding place,
And beneath your wings let me find sheltering grace;
O let me see the sunshine of your face.
Saranam, saranam, saranam.

Jesus, Savior, Lord, now to you I come.

Saraman, saranam, saranam

Then with joy to you my vows, I'll pay.
And give thanks for all your mercy every day.
I'll humbly follow in your perfect way.

Saranam, saranam, saranam

Commission *Beverly Cook*

Leader: Jesus' healing actions often get "buzz" from onlookers. Some are amazed and in awe and sing praises. Some are bewildered and wonder at this teacher. Some are disgruntled and feel threatened by the boundaries he breaks and the change he invites. We are perhaps prone to all of these at one time or another. Our own work of recovery will sometimes feel immediately refreshing and sometimes it will demand uncomfortable effort. But the rewards are great.

We are also working toward something communal in this season. How can we as a church community become a "health hub" through our ministry and mission? The needs are so great, especially now. Throughout this time, I invite you to explore with us the possibilities for a new or renewed commitment to a contribution we can make at Westminster Presbyterian Church to our larger community's effort to recover from this past year. You are invited to engage in contemplative prayer during our Praying the Psalms on Tuesdays at 11:00AM on Zoom, and/or our Lenten Study on Wednesdays at 10:00AM on Zoom, where we will take up Sunday's scripture and sermon topics for consideration and discussion. You are also invited to consider such renewed commitments in silent prayer and reflection in the church sanctuary on Thursdays between 10:00am-12:00pm.

Blessing *Rev. Dr. Shannon Smythe*

Now go with confidence
as "Treasures of God,"
recovering your depth of love for all
and our joy of living in this world.

May the words of Jesus ring in your ears:
"I do choose you."

And may the Spirit hover, move, and deliver

salve to your soul
and a spring in your step.
Amen.

Threshold Into the World

**Vessels, holy and whole
Broken, needing the One
Open, body and soul
Healer, come.**

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 financial and health issues while going to school.

Linda Book – still experiencing pain and lack of strength.

Rev. Kim Brinkmeyer – continued healing and recovery.

Lisa Cleveland - second surgery for colon cancer. She is a mother of four children.

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

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

Hull McLean –Recovering from shoulder surgery. Please keep his wife, Barbara Miller, also in your prayers

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

Dee Moore – grieving the death of Bob.

Pat Mossel – healing at home but still in a lot of pain.

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

Joan Nicholls - Grieving the loss of George.

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

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.

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.

Announcements

ATTENTION: 2021 Per Capita: This year’s amount for per capita is \$29.80 per member. Checks can be made payable to Westminster Presbyterian Church. Thank you for your timely attention to this. Per Capita is a vital part of a connectional church, like the PCUSA. But what is it? A set amount of money – sometimes referred to as “apportionment” – per member that congregations pay to the larger Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.). Said another way, it is like a Presbyterian community fund – part of the glue that holds Presbyterians together.

Lenten “Non-Snack” Community Drive: LRAC, the CRC, and West Side New Beginnings are all requesting “non-snack” items such as: deodorant, toothpaste, soap and shampoo, hand soap, dish soap, laundry detergent, bleach, hand sanitizer, dish detergent, paper towels and toilet paper to give to those in need as these are items not covered by food stamps and otherwise expensive to buy and always needed. Please consider making a donation. Items can be dropped off at the church Narthex on Tuesdays or Thursdays during Lent.

Stewardship Pledge Update: During January, Westminster Presbyterian Church received cash receipts of \$9,764.80. The church appreciates this substantial sum, which represents about 84 percent of the monthly goal:

Annual pledge goal	\$140,000
Monthly pledge goal (1/12)	\$11,667
Total cash received	\$9,764
Portion of monthly goal received	84 %

Although the church continues to hold frequent events each week, services cannot be held in the church building. We recognize that this may make it more difficult for you to make regular contributions to the church. This is why our new on-line giving capability may help you keep up with your giving plans. **In January, the church received only \$905.52 through online giving.**

If you've not yet tried online giving, it's not hard. You simply open the church website (westminster-rehoboth.org) and click on giving/online giving. Then scroll down the page to another tab called **GIVE NOW**. Open that button, and the page appears that accepts your contribution with a credit card. You don't even need to enter a password, and the church will acknowledge for tax purposes your online gift along with your other contributions.

If anyone would like assistance with the on-line giving, the Finance and Stewardship Committee stands ready to help you. Just contact the church and your inquiry will be forwarded to a member of the Committee who will follow-up with you. For questions about your pledges, contact our new Bookkeeper, Waneta Chaffinch at wpcbooks301@gmail.com. You can also call the church office on Tuesdays to speak to her.

NEW Safe in Office for Pledges/Contributions: If you bring your pledge envelope or offering to the office, please drop it in the small black safe located under the window in the church office. For security reasons, please do not leave any check/cash offerings/envelopes out on the office desk, or anywhere other than our new safe. Thank you!

Annual Congregational Meeting: The annual congregational meeting will consist of these agenda items: 1.) vote on the report of the nominating committee; 2.) discussion of the annual report, 3.) receive the budget for 2021, 4.) approve the pastor's terms of call for 2021. The meeting will take place on Zoom directly following worship on **Sunday, February 21st**.

Calendar Upcoming in February

- Sunday, February 21st
 - Sunday School, 10:00AM, ZOOM
 - Worship & Annual Meeting of the Congregation, 11:00AM, ZOOM
- Tuesday, February 23rd: Praying the Psalms, 11:00AM, ZOOM
- Wednesday, February 24th
 - Lenten Bible Study, 10:00AM, ZOOM
 - Hand Chime Choir Rehearsal, 3:30PM, Fellowship Hall
- Thursday, February 25th
 - Silent Prayer & Reflect, 10:00AM-12:00PM, Sanctuary
- Sunday, February 28th
 - Sunday School, 10:00AM, ZOOM
 - Worship, 11:00AM, ZOOM

Lent 2021: Let's Engage our Faith Together Even While We're Apart!

Silent Prayer & Reflection: Thursdays (Feb. 25-March 25), 10:00AM-12:00PM, Sanctuary

Please keep a mask on, covering your mouth and nose, while in the sanctuary, and sit socially distanced from others. This time is your own, but there will be a prayer station in the front of the chancel, if you would like to write your prayers and put them on the Lenten Prayer Cross. Quiet music will play softly in the background.

Lenten Study: Wednesdays, starting Feb 24th, 10:00AM-11:30AM, ZOOM

Our Lenten Study will complement each Sunday's scripture, which all center on healing stories in the Gospel of Matthew. No outside preparation necessary. We will spend a little time reading and discussing the healing story. Then we will watch a short video that highlights one dimension of healing and recovery as it is being worked out in the world, often by churches. We will spend time discussing what we watch in small groups, using Zoom "breakout rooms." There will be time for prayer and reflection.

Lenten Soup Suppers: Wednesdays during Lent, (Feb. 24th-March 24th), Your House

While we are all missing the fellowship with others over meals, such as the common practice of Lenten soup suppers at church, along with a time of scripture and prayer, you are invited to join with one another for symbolic fellowship as we partake in a simple soup supper in solidarity with others in our congregation. You might want to use the time during your soup supper to watch Pastor Shannon's recorded midweek devotion. **Please share a picture of your soup supper by email (shannonsmytheWPC2@gmail.com) or text (302-703-9129).**

Holy Week Activities

Stations of the Cross Exhibit: March 29th-April 1st, 10:00AM-2:00PM, Fellowship Hall

You are invited to come on your own or with one or two others. You will journey through each station at your own pace (you may want to plan for at least 20-30min.) to allow you time for reflection and prayer as you experience the multi-sensory elements of each station. Please wear a mask and adhere to social distancing. For safety, no more than ten people at a time will be allowed in the Fellowship Hall and a volunteer will ensure that there is no crowding at any one station.

Protestants are sometimes surprised to find out the Stations of the Cross is not exclusively Catholic. In fact, the PC(USA) has published a Stations of the Cross service on its website. But just what is it? Early on in the Christian movement, Jesus' followers remembered Jesus' execution and the places where various parts occurred, recounting

the details. By the Middle Ages, a pilgrimage to Jerusalem for Holy Week was a once-in-a-lifetime pilgrimage. When people couldn't go to Jerusalem to walk the via Dolorosa with Christ, the ritual of the stations of the cross was born so that people could journey with Christ spiritually as an act of devotion.

The Stations of the Cross experience offered at our church this year will honor the ancient story of Jesus' death while recognizing the ways this narrative repeats itself again and again throughout the past and present. Each of the ten stations, anchored in scriptures telling of Jesus' journey to the cross during his last week, will provide multisensory ways to engage, confess, and lament.

Good Friday Service: April 2nd, 2:00PM, ZOOM
More info TBA.