GOD’S VISION IS CLEAR... 
WE ARE ALL IN THIS TOGETHER!

COVID-19 appeared and changed our world. Its impact has been profound. Our time together at Westminster ended in mid-March; our usual programs and events within the church had to be shelved. The virus challenged our spirit and left us wondering what lies ahead. Yet, as the weeks rolled by, the message became clear: “We are All in this Together.” We are not alone. Amidst the pandemic, the staff of Westminster have continued to ground us, guide us, and inspire us through their spiritual leadership. Their message of Christian love and compassion for others brings us together, gives us hope, and strengthens our resilience.

To engage us, the church has adapted to the “new normal.” “Zooming” has become a way of life as we communicate over the internet. Our weekly services, social justice discussions, Bible study, Christian education classes, and other activities have moved from in-person to online. Over the summer, outdoor services on the lawn, with the congregation safely distant from one another, offered a popular alternative to the recorded version on YouTube. And throughout the year, the faithful of Westminster have demonstrated time and again their generosity, from donating food to Emmanuel Dining Room to collecting blankets, clothing, and medicines for displaced persons in Syria.

Westminster depends on your support. Over the past year, Greg Jones, Sudie Niesen Thompson, Jill Getty, and the entire staff have led us through a difficult time. They have never worked harder. They deserve our deepest thanks. As we look forward to 2021, join us in pledging your time, talent, and treasure this fall. It does make a difference — for each of us as well as all those whom Westminster serves. Never has the church meant more to so many others.

Scattered throughout the pages of this issue of the Chimes, you’ll find in colored quotes some of the reasons why we pledge. Does one or more of these resonate with you? How does God’s love inspire your generosity? Click here to make your 2021 financial pledge online. You will also receive a pledge card and return envelope in the mail. Thank you for your support!

Stand firm in the one Spirit, striving together as one.
Philippians 1:27
CLERGY COLUMN

GENEROSITY FLOWS DESPITE PANDEMIC

Gregory Knox Jones, Senior Pastor/Head of Staff

Life has slowed for many during the COVID-19 pandemic. However, someone forgot to alert our mission supporters! In the months that our building has been closed, it amazes me how often our church family has answered the call of Jesus to “care for the least of these.” No matter how many times you have read these words before, please reread these words of Jesus:

Then (Jesus) will say to those at his right hand, ‘Come, you that are blessed by my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world; for I was hungry and you gave me food, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink, I was a stranger and you welcomed me, I was naked and you gave me clothing, I was sick and you took care of me, I was in prison and you visited me.’ Then the righteous will answer him, ‘Lord, when was it that we saw you hungry and gave you food, or thirsty and gave you something to drink? And when was it that we saw you a stranger and welcomed you, or naked and gave you clothing? And when was it that we saw you sick or in prison and visited you?’ And he will answer them, ‘Truly I tell you, just as you did it to one of the least of these who are members of my family, you did it to me.’ (Matthew 25:34-40)

We have been giving people in our community something to eat and drink. Each Sunday morning it is such a spiritual boost to see you wheel into our parking lot with your much needed donations of sandwiches, bottles of water, fruit, and cookies. I calculate that we have provided more than 35,000 sandwiches for the guests of Emmanuel Dining Room. When we drive our donations to EDR, the refrain from their staff is the same: “We don’t know what we would do without Westminster!”

Friendship House was so grateful for the abundant food donations you brought to Westminster for several months. And our monthly collection for Hanover Food Pantry has helped to fill their shelves.

I pledge because of the spiritual joy of Saturday evening outdoor services.
In May and June, many of us purchased **Echo Gifts** that provided emergency food kits in Guatemala, hygiene kits and cleaning products in Syria, a month’s worth of food for a family in Congo, and contributions toward a portable X-ray machine in Gaza.

We have provided clothing for people who are among the most desperate on our planet. Through our **Syrian Refugee Collection**, we not only provided hundreds of clothing items for refugees driven from the homes by war, but also much needed shoes and boots, medical supplies, and tools. The benevolent giving to these victims of civil war morphed into an interfaith effort with our Jewish friends from Congregation Beth Shalom, our Muslim friends from the Islamic Society of Delaware, and our Roman Catholic friends at St. Joseph’s on the Brandywine. The combined response was overwhelming!

To broaden our relief efforts to the people of Syria – 82% of whom live below the poverty line – we applied for and were awarded an **Ignite Grant** from the New Castle Presbytery to provide emergency food aid. The result is that we will be able to feed 60 families for six months. (For further information, see the article entitled “Ignite Collaborates on Emergency Food Aid to Families in Syria” on page 18).

To fulfill the words of Jesus to welcome the stranger, we will soon be providing housing for displaced adults who have demonstrated a commitment to addressing their life issues and who are working their way to financial independence. In July, we purchased the house next to our property on Rodney Street to be used in a **partnership with Friendship house for transitional housing**.

The catastrophic explosion in Beirut left 300,000 people homeless. The enormous need summoned people of faith to provide relief assistance. Our Middle East Task Force studied many ways of responding to the disaster and decided our best course was to help people repair their homes so that they can return to them before the rainy/winter season begins. Our Church in the World Committee designated $2,000 of their disaster relief funds to purchase debit cards so that those whose homes were damaged can restore them to a livable condition. However, when word of this action spread to members of the Jewish community, they asked to join us in providing assistance to citizens of Beirut. Further, member Tammy Daley, who has family in Lebanon,

**Continued on page 4**
shared this information with relatives in the U.S. and they also decided to contribute to the purchase of debit cards. (See more details in the article entitled “Lebanon Disaster Relief” on page 17).

As Jesus so loved the children, we demonstrated our love for the children most in need by receiving financial gifts to send much needed school supplies to five low-income elementary schools in our community.

What a blessing to be part of a Matthew 25 Church! It is both rewarding and humbling to know that by extending compassion to people who are hurting we touch the heart of God.

With deep gratitude for you,

I pledge because of Westminster’s commitment to youth.

CHURCH OFFICE HOLIDAY CLOSING

The church office will be closed on Thursday and Friday, November 26 and 27, for the Thanksgiving holiday. The Westminster staff give abundant thanks to all of our beloved members and friends in our community and across the globe. Many blessings to you!

Daylight Saving Time ends on Sunday, November 1, at 2:00 a.m. Don’t forget to turn your clocks back one hour before you go to bed on Saturday night, October 31!
Come one, come all to a family-friendly Fall Festival! Showcase your creativity with a fall craft, debut your costume during a short parade, and take home a yummy snack! All materials will be provided and in individual formats, either by family unit or child.

This Deacon-sponsored event has been revised with safety and social distancing practices as first priority. Please RSVP to Jenn Blackford (blackfordj11@gmail.com) so that we are able to space families appropriately and ensure enough materials are available.

NEW DATE!
SUNDAY, OCTOBER 18

10:00 – 10:45 a.m. (after Sunday worship)
Westminster front lawn (weather permitting)

Come one, come all to a family-friendly Fall Festival! Showcase your creativity with a fall craft, debut your costume during a short parade, and take home a yummy snack! All materials will be provided and in individual formats, either by family unit or child.

This Deacon-sponsored event has been revised with safety and social distancing practices as first priority. Please RSVP to Jenn Blackford (blackfordj11@gmail.com) so that we are able to space families appropriately and ensure enough materials are available.

I pledge because of the kindness shown to me by a Deacon.
Thank you for the warm welcome to Westminster! I am having a marvelous time getting to know my new church family — socially distanced and masked, of course. Ted and I have been the beneficiaries of your great kindness and heartfelt thoughtfulness ever since our arrival at the beginning of August. The Saturday afternoon services and Sunday morning food collections have been providing great opportunities both for reuniting and for making new connections.

Speaking of our arrival, what an experience it was for us to move from New Jersey to Delaware during a pandemic and a heat wave, and then to be greeted by the remnants of a hurricane followed by a tornado three days later that disrupted our electricity for four days and Internet for two weeks. Now that we have experienced Mother Nature at her worst, we appreciate her best all the more as we enjoy the cool, quiet autumnal mornings in The First State.

When I arrived at Westminster, I knew the upcoming program year would look like nothing we have ever seen before. Safety for ourselves and for others during this pandemic continues to fill our every waking thought. Church leaders and staff are exploring various options to keep everyone healthy as we prepare to reopen the church.

I never would have imagined in my wildest dreams that singers and choirs would be labeled as “super spreaders” of a virus.
Singing has been the most personal form of spiritual and musical expression for millennia, yet now, congregational and choral singing has been put on hold around the world. How, dear Lord, how can I keep from singing?

The extraordinary Westminster Choir will sing again — just not yet. This time like none other is challenging our patience as we just can’t wait to get back to gathering, singing, and fellowship. Until we can sing together again safely, here are two opportunities I hope you will consider:

- A handbell choir — we will raise our voices in bronze, wearing gloves and masks, while remaining socially distanced from one another. To get this going, we need 8-12 players who would be committed to a regular rehearsal schedule.

- A recording of Christmas Carols — this will be released on the Sunday before Christmas, the traditional date for the Deacon’s Christmas Caroling outing. Participants will record their portions from home singing along to an accompaniment I will provide. It may feel a little bit like Christmas Karaoke at first, but once the recordings are layered together, we will have our very own virtual choir.

To learn more about these opportunities and to participate, please let me know at TonyThurman@wpc.org.

In closing, I would like to acknowledge with heartfelt gratitude the music ministry of Susan Spilecki. Sue has been playing hour-long programs of hymns on Sunday mornings and half-hour programs before our Saturday evening services. Westminster’s tower chimes are the church’s voice in the community. Thank you, Sue!

– F. Anthony Thurman

Susan Spilecki and the shadow of the cross in Westminster’s bell tower
We are called as Christians to care for God’s creation, and there are many practical ways to do so. What follows are ways to help improve the sustainability of the planet.

Cars are a part of daily life for many of us at Westminster. While cars are not as environmentally-friendly as public transportation or non-motorized transportation (i.e. bike riding), there are living situations where alternative transportation is not viable. The prevalence of cars calls for articles in both this and the next Chimes. This article focuses on tools that can help you purchase an environmentally-friendly car, and the article to appear in the December Chimes will focus on things you can do with your current car to help the environment.

Americans buy over nine cars on average in their lifetime, so every few years an opportunity arises to purchase an environmentally-friendly car. Some tools that can help you do so are:

1. The government’s database on vehicle fuel economy. A spreadsheet is available for download and includes detailed fuel economy information for over 42,000 vehicles from 1984 through 2020 model years. The spreadsheet includes the city, highway and combined fuel economy in miles per gallon (MPG), where the equivalent fuel economy is used for electric vehicles. Other data include the fuel economy associated with alternative fuels, the tailpipe CO2 emissions, and the EPA’s greenhouse gas score (from 1-10, where 10 is the best). The chart shows some combined MPG values of interest, including the lowest MPG (the 1986 Lamborghini Countach, at 7 mpg) and the highest MPG (the 2020 Tesla Model 3 Standard Range Plus, at 141 mpg).
2. The EPA SmartWay program. The SmartWay program combines the smog and greenhouse emissions for vehicles into a 1-10 score, with 10 being the best. Each year, the top 20% scores earn the SmartWay label, with the top cars earning SmartWay elite status. The SmartWay website lists labeled vehicles for each model year, and a search tool is also available.

3. Tax-based incentives. The government provides a list of federal tax credits up to $7,500 for new all-electric and plug-in hybrid vehicles. The Department of Energy also provides a search tool for state tax credits for environmentally-friendly vehicles. Applying the tool shows 19 laws and incentives for Delaware, with the three pertinent to consumers shown in the inset. By contrast, new passenger cars with poor fuel economy are subject to a federal gas guzzler tax, which ranges from $1,000 at 22 MPG up to $7,000 when the fuel economy is below 13 MPG.

Delaware Consumer Incentives

- **Vehicle-to-Grid Energy Credit.** Electricity customers with a grid-integrated electric vehicle (EV) can get credit for electricity discharged from the EV battery to the grid.

- **Alternative Fuel Vehicle Rebates.** Rebates of $1,000 up to $2,500 are available for electric, plug-in hybrid electric, propane or natural gas vehicles.

- **Plug-in Electric Vehicle Charging Stations.** Delmarva Power has plug-in vehicle charging stations free for use. You can find charging stations nationally through a website provided by U.S. Department of Energy (see graphic). Their website also provides a calculator for examining the savings achieved from switching to an electric vehicle.

Continued on page 10
Electric Charging Stations Near Wilmington (from the [DOE EERE Alternative Fuel Station Locator](https://afdc.energy.gov/stations/#/find/nearest))

Further reading:
Despite restrictions due to COVID-19, Stephen Ministry is alive and well. Our 20 Stephen Ministers have been meeting with their care receivers these past seven months via telephone, Facetime, and Zoom.

Monthly Stephen Ministry meetings have also continued thanks to technology. Our meetings take place on Zoom and include both continuing education and supervision. Our education time often involves listening to a relevant podcast, watching a video, or reading an article and then discussing it in breakout groups online. Supervision also takes place in several small groups so the Stephen Ministers can support each other with their caring relationships.

If you or someone you know would like a Stephen Minister during this difficult time, please contact Jill Getty at jgetty@wpc.org or (302) 220-7081.
A THANK YOU FROM THE PROGRAM DIRECTOR OF EMMANUEL DINING ROOM

Camilla,

We sincerely thank Pastor Gregory Knox Jones, you, Bill Nace and the entire members of Westminster Church for the many years of support that you have provided to the Ministry of Caring, especially to the Emmanuel Dining Room. Without the support of Westminster Church, during this Covid-19 pandemic, it would have been very challenging and difficult for the Emmanuel Dining Room to continue to serve the many families who come to our doors hungry.

We are humbly grateful for all the food donations provided by the members of your church. You have been AMAZING in supporting us through this current crisis and we pray to God that we all remains safe and that we will return to normalcy in serving our dining room guests.

We thank you for your years of caring, your time and most of all for your kind generosity. May God continue to bless you and all the members of Westminster Church with his love and grace.

ReeNee LaFate & the entire EDR staff

Bill Nace, left, and Greg Jones deliver water given to Westminster’s weekly donation drive for EDR

Camilla Jones, left, unloads supplies with longtime Emmanuel Dining Room volunteer Winfred Bartley, center, and Program Director ReeNee LaFate
BACKPACKS PROJECT RESULTS

Our “backpacks“ project was modified this year to meet the unique needs of our four partner elementary schools as they navigated the start of the school year under challenging circumstances. We provided whiteboards and markers as well as crayons for the younger children at UrbanPromise; whiteboards/markers/notebooks/pencils to EastSide Charter; whiteboards/markers/pencil cases/earbuds to Shortlidge Academy; and we supported Warner’s AVID program with substantial funding for binders/dividers/folders for its students.

And for the first time, we provided real live ‘high school’ backpacks for all of the students at UrbanPromise Academy, utilizing funds provided from the 2019 Westminster Bazaar!

Your generous financial support made a real difference in these students’ readiness to learn during this challenging time.

You will never meet the hundreds of children who benefited from your generosity, yet you have clearly made a difference in the lives of so many families in our community. Thank you so much!
HARK, ALL ANGELS!
LET’S MAKE A CHRISTMAS WISH COME TRUE

Our Christmas Box volunteer elves have been thinking outside the box! We welcome you to participate in our annual Christmas Box mission to help provide gifts and food, but in a more simplified way this year to help you stay safe and share the love of Christ this Christmas with families in need.

Our simplified plan is to buy standard food and gift cards for our recipients, paid through the generosity of your check or online donation. But what’s Christmas without the joy of sharing your personal touch? Ho, ho, ho...didn’t you know? Our volunteer elves have an out-of-the-box idea and activities planned for you, too. Read on!

Christmas Box Check or Online Donation

This year, your generosity and check or online donation in any amount is deeply needed and appreciated. We know some of our members have lost their jobs, savings and more, while others are more fortunate.

In the words of our pastor, Greg Jones, “God loves you,” no matter your circumstances. Give what you can, and hear the bells chime within your generous heart.

All check and online donations received by the church by Sunday, December 6 will be combined to buy a ShopRite food gift card and a $10 – $20 Walmart gift card for kids from birth to 18 years of age that our mission partners refer to us this year, plus a small toy for the youngest kids to have something joyful this Christmas. Any excess funds received above our new plan budget will be donated to Lutheran Church Services (LCS), one of Westminster’s family outreach mission partners. Please write checks out to Westminster Presbyterian Church with “Christmas Box Project” on the memo line or visit www.wpc.org, click the “Donate Now” button at the top of the page, and select “Christmas Box Project” from the list of options.
Here’s what your individual donations will provide to families in need this Christmas:

- $25 will feed a family of four
- $30 will feed a family of six
- $35 will feed a family of eight
- $100 will feed four families

Our goal this year is to help 75 families in need. Last year, we helped 125 families. While the need is greater during this pandemic, we don’t want to over-promise your Christmas giving to these families.

Christmas Box Activities for You and Yours

We know writing a check is not the same experience as the joy we shared pre-pandemic by personally shopping for a cheery gift and wrapping it lovingly together for someone in need. But, ho, ho, ho, please don’t go. We have some fun in store for you, too!

Please “Zoom in” on these fun activities and enjoy participating with our Christmas Box tradition of making handmade cards and packaging cookies together, but remotely this year! All handmade cards and cookies will go with the food and gift cards to our recipient families.

Sunday, December 6, at 1:00 p.m. –

Join our first ever Christmas Box Zoom card-making class for Westminster members, friends and families. A few weeks prior, look for the Zoom and card-making details in the Weekly Word e-newsletter, including what supplies to have ready for our remote card-making class. To sign up, email our crafty Card-Maker Elves, Paula Piercy (paulagpiercy@gmail.com) or Sandie Reinicker (reinickskw@aol.com).

Sunday, December 13 – Calling all crafters for our first ever Zoom cookie-wrapping! Would you like to Zoom in and show off your creative way to package your one-dozen homemade cookies for gift giving? We’re all ears and eager to put this Cookie Packaging Zoom together for all who are interested. Contact PR Elf Louise (PR@EliasonAssoc.com) to sign up, and look for details in upcoming Weekly Word e-newsletters.

Continued on page 16
2020 Christmas Box Dates and Deadlines

Sunday, December 6 is the deadline for your check and online donations!
December 6 is the last day to drop off your check or submit your online donation in time for the elves to buy food and gift cards for recipient families and put them in gift bags along with your cards, cookies, and a small toy for the youngest kids to have some joy on Christmas.

Sunday, December 13, at 12:00 noon is the deadline to drop off your homemade cards and cookies at Westminster.

- If you make cookies, please plan to make one dozen cookies (no nuts, please), package in your quart-sized ziplock bag, cookie or coffee tin, and deliver to the church by December 13. See and join our Cookie Packaging Zoom activity mentioned on the previous page for creative ways to add your special touch!

- For food safety, please be sure to wash your hands with soap and warm water and wipe down your counter tops before making cookies. Cover your counter tops with waxed paper for extra safety and easy clean up.

Monday, December 14 is the Elves’ Out-of-the-Christmas-Box Distribution Day to the referred families in need.

Westminster’s Christmas Box project has been one of our biggest missions of the year. It’s such a wonderful way to feel the joy of giving at Christmas to those in need. Please join your fellow church friends, donors and volunteers in one or more of these Christmas Box activities and donate what you can. With everyone’s help, our church can again provide a cheerful Christmas Box of food and gift cards, along your handmade cookies and cards, to 75 families in need this Christmas. We hope you can join this great Christmas tradition.

Westminster volunteer Chief Elf Marlys Kerr and her volunteer elves wish you and yours and all our mission partners the blessings of hope, peace and joy this Christmas season. Thank you in advance for your heartfelt generosity and grace and for sharing your love of Christ with those in need!

With love and gratitude to all,
The Elves
LEBANON DISASTER RELIEF

The explosion in Beirut, Lebanon was truly a disaster of mammoth proportions, with more than 220 people killed; 6,000 injured; 350,000 homeless, including 80,000 children; six hospitals; and 20 healthcare facilities severely damaged. The explosion was equivalent to 1/5 of the power of the atomic bomb that was dropped on Hiroshima. This happened at a time when the country was already in economic collapse with high inflation, devalued currency, high unemployment and an unstable, corrupt government. Much of our mission work for Syria is headquartered in Beirut and we have members of Westminster with relatives in Lebanon, so we feel the impact.

As a Matthew 25 congregation, our Middle East Task Force felt compelled to reach out to our brothers and sisters in Lebanon. We surveyed all the options for disaster aid (of which there were many) and decided on a program with the Compassionate Protestant Society, which is the 501(c)(3) service arm of the National Evangelical Synod of Syria and Lebanon (NESSL, the Presbyterian Church). The program hopes to provide 1,000 families each with a $1,000 debit card to help them pay for repairs of their dwellings. The objective is to get people back into their homes as quickly as possible and before the rainy/winter season begins, so the need is urgent. Again, we wished to multiply our efforts by joining with Ocean View Presbyterian Church (our new Ignite partner) and Congregation Beth Shalom and pooling our funds so that we could help several families. For more information, see www.syrialebanonpn.org/prayers.

The one thing that all of us can do is pray for healing powers for the people of Lebanon during this challenging time.
IGNITE COLLABORATES ON EMERGENCY FOOD AID TO FAMILIES IN SYRIA

Since the beginning of the Syrian war, Westminster has been sending aid to people whose lives have been disrupted. Our efforts have taken many forms of humanitarian support: boots for children, food and fuel packages, repair work on churches, clothing and bedding for people in refugee camps, schooling for children in the neighboring Lebanese refugee camps, hygiene packages to prevent Covid-19, and most recently, a very successful collection of medical and school supplies, hand tools, clothing and blankets shipped to camps via the Narenj Tree Foundation.

Nine years of continuous war in Syria have displaced one half of the population (11 million people), leaving the country in a dysfunctional state. Loss of homes, businesses and agriculture, compounded by extreme devaluation of the Syrian pound, high inflation, Covid-19, and recently, punitive sanctions by the U.S. government (the Caesar Act), have left the country devastated. Eighty-two percent of the Syrians have been living below the poverty level. The dire situation has been exacerbated by the catastrophic explosion at the port of Beirut which has cut off supply chains of food, goods, and services. Westminster’s Middle East Task Force has surveyed the country’s needs and found the most pressing one is emergency food relief.

Addressing this enormous problem was overwhelming and we knew we couldn’t do this alone, so we sought out other interested
parties with whom to collaborate. We contacted the **Syrian-Lebanon Partnership Network** (a U.S. based Presbyterian organization of churches who participate in mission work in the region) and they connected us with another interested church in our Presbytery, **Ocean View Presbyterian Church** in Sussex County. As we started to work together, the magic began. Together we applied for a grant from the Ignite Fund of the New Castle Presbytery. The good news is that we have generated over $20,000 between Ignite, WPC, and Ocean View which will feed and sustain 60 families or 300 people for 6 months.

To implement the program, we found the **Fellowship for Middle East Evangelical Churches** (FMEEC) that has been effective in identifying and assisting the most-needy families in Syria, without discrimination on the basis of religious or ethnic background. Westminster had used them for the anti-Covid hygiene package distribution and it was very efficient and cost effective so we wanted to continue this partnership. FMEEC will acquire and manage the food distribution to families via a proven infrastructure of churches and civic organizations. The food supplier has been vetted and approved by the United Nations and their products are considered good quality and good value. FMEEC also provides case management to these families to monitor their well-being and audit the program. FMEEC is an association of Protestant churches in the Middle East (of which Presbyterians are members) whose objectives are to strengthen ministry and mission in the region.

**I pledge because of the generosity that so many have shown in providing for displaced persons in Syria.**

Continued on page 20
Westminster and Ocean View strongly felt that to remain silent or uninvolved during this crisis violates our core Matthew 25 beliefs of helping the hungry and sheltering those in need. By assisting these families, we find comfort in being part of God’s plan across the world and solace in being part of a solution rather than standing by as our brothers and sisters suffer needlessly, when we have the ability to help them. Additionally, through our shared work on behalf of Syrian families, we have been able to meet and work with a range of faith groups and houses of worship that we would not have otherwise known, thereby uniting us as children of one God.

INVITATION TO JOIN “BOOK TALK”

2nd Thursday of each month
10:00 a.m. via Zoom

Do you enjoy reading and discussing books? “Book Talk” (formerly called “Girl Talk”) meets monthly at 10:00 a.m. on the second Thursday of each month. The members discuss a variety of books, usually alternating fiction and non-fiction. The book to be read is chosen by members and many books involve current events. “Book Talk” is inviting anyone interested to join the group – both women and men. If you are interested in joining, please send your name and email address to Kitty Knox at kittyandgary@verizon.net. If you have questions, please contact Kitty at that email address.
FAMILY PROMISE SERVING FAMILIES DURING COVID

Along with so many other changes and adjustments required by the presence of the COVID virus, Family Promise (FP) services morphed with the demands. With church buildings closed, the network that usually provides evening meals and overnight shelter for temporarily homeless families could not function. In March, FP staff moved the families we would have housed in our building to the FP Hospitality Center on Milltown Road. Westminster members, along with volunteers from St. Stephen’s Lutheran Church and Bethel AME Church, provided meals for the families housed at the Hospitality Center.

With capacity limited at the Hospitality Center, FP staff began searching for another way to serve more families until churches are able to open and house families safely. After considerable effort, staff made arrangements for shelter with a safe residential-type hotel. So during Westminster’s host week in August, our meals were delivered to two families in this situation.

As long as COVID restrictions remain in place, Family Promise staff will continue to provide shelter along with housing and job counseling services to families housed in a residential hotel. Westminster’s mission will be to provide food and household essentials for laundry and cleaning to those families. Our next host week begins October 11. Please contact Mary Lou McDowell (marymcdowell5@gmail.com or 302-547-8084) if you are willing supply a meal item for one of the dinners Westminster will provide during the week of October 11.
FEEDING THE HOMELESS, ONE PERSON AT A TIME

By Gathoni Murugi-Jenkins

As the days have gone by this summer, Ciru and I have woken up several Sundays to make sandwiches and deliver them to Westminster’s parking lot. My girls have wondered: Where are the sandwiches taken? How many children eat them? Fortunately, one day while relieving Greg and Camilla from overseeing the Sunday sandwich donation drive, I was paired up with Bill Nace. He graciously answered all my questions and invited me to join him in delivering the sandwiches to Emmanuel Dining Room.

Soon after my trip with Bill, when my girls needed a change of scenery from our home, I decided to drive them to Emmanuel Dining Room one afternoon to see where the fruits of their labor were delivered each time we donated sandwiches on Sunday morning. As we drove from North Wilmington to the city, my girls were talkative and full of laughter. However, as we exited I-95 South at the 4th Street exit, their conversation grew quieter. Both Murugi and Ciru had been to this part of town several times before. However, this summer day was different. There were the sounds of construction overhead, the shouting of a young Latina boy hawking roses at the traffic light, and several young teenage boys playing basketball under I-95! Pedestrians were navigating their way across 4th Street and on the city sidewalks. There was so much to take in.

On that drive into the city, I had noticed several hungry people. The next day, I decided to pack a few peanut butter and jelly sandwiches, apples, and three bottles of water into several Trader Joe’s bags. As I exited I-95 South on
Delaware Avenue, there was a man asking for some money. I told him I didn’t have any, however, I had a bag to give him with some food in it. I reached over to the front passenger seat and handed him the bag. As he opened it and saw the water bottle and food, his eyes lit up. He mouthed the words ‘thank you’ as I had to drive off since the light had turned green and several cars were behind me. Before I reached 4th Street, all my bags had been given away.

The next time, I enlisted my girls, Murugi and Ciru. They made the sandwiches, bagged the fruit, and packed the Trader Joe’s bags with all the goodies. As we were getting ready to leave, my husband Rob decided to come along for the ride. As we left our suburban neighborhood and rode a short drive on I-95, we saw an elderly homeless couple sitting on the steps of the Children’s Theatre. To our left was a homeless man asking for some money. Rob handed him our signature Trader Joe’s bag filled with a sandwich, fruit and several bottles of water. Upon viewing the bag’s contents, the homeless man was filled with gratitude and said ‘thank you.’

We drove across Pennsylvania Avenue and parked adjacent to the Children’s Theatre. Ciru and I got out of the car and walked towards the homeless couple still sitting on the steps leading into the theatre. After saying hello, Ciru handed the first bag to the older gentleman while saying ‘this bag is for you.’ I, in turn, gave our second bag to the woman and said ‘hello Ma’am, here’s a bag for you too.’ She smiled and said thank you as well. Upon looking at the contents in each bag, they smiled and both said ‘thank you and May God Bless You.’ We responded ‘You’re welcome. May God Bless you too.’ Then we started walking back to our car.

We headed down to 4th Street and a young man saw us. He walked over to our car and asked Rob for money. ‘Got a few dollars man?’ Rob responded ‘No, however, here’s a bag for you.’ The young man looked at the contents in the bag and asked Rob again ‘man, do you have some cash?’ Rob answered ‘no’ as we drove away since the light had turned green and there were several cars behind and beside our car. Both our girls asked ‘why does he want some cash?’ By some divine intervention, we saw another homeless person. Both girls immediately got to work and started to reach out for another bag. The process continued until we were all out of bags.

As we drove home, we saw yet another homeless woman stake her space on the side walk. Instinctively, I expressed frustration that we should have brought more bags. Rob aptly stated ‘we brought what we could and the need is so great. We did our part for the day.’
We retraced our route home and passed the first homeless gentleman on the side of the road eating the sandwich and drinking the water we had gifted him earlier. Murugi and Ciru smiled. It was nice for them to see the fruits of their labor being enjoyed by a person who was in need.

As we drove along through the city on our way home, I was reminded about my own childhood growing up in Kenya. My grandfather had seen the need in post-colonial Kenya to provide affordable housing for many of the Kenyans who had come to Nairobi, the capital, looking for work to support their families in the rural areas. Guka, as we call him in my tribal language Kikuyu, which means grandfather, purchased a plot of land close neighboring the affluent neighborhoods and built homes to rent out to several Kenyans to live in affordably and create a community for them away from their employers.

As it was in the colonial times, and is often the case today, house help would live on the same property as their employer. My visionary Guka decided there needed to be some space between the employer and the employee. Many of the employees who worked as maids, gardeners, and security for affluent Kenyans flocked to my grandfather’s properties. They jumped at the opportunity to live independently from their wealthy African employers. Not only did it provide autonomy, but it also provided community for all those employees, many of whom are from different tribes and different parts of the country. Whenever I visit Kenya, I love going there to interact with these families and give their children books, which they are sorely lacking. It’s wonderful to listen to their life stories. Often, we’ll talk for several hours and it never amazes me how generous these people are. Even though they earn meager incomes, they always want to offer me a cup of tea and some bread or bananas to have fellowship with them as we talk. It’s so heartwarming to reconnect with them on a very human level.

Later that evening as Murugi and Ciru got ready to go to bed, we thanked God for giving us the ability to help someone else and make each homeless person we gifted a bag of Trader Joe’s goodies a little brighter.
PROPERTY NEWS:  
THE PHIX-IT CORPS RETURNS  

Fresh donuts and coffee greeted the members of the Phix-It Corps as they returned to Westminster in early September. It had been six months since they had last met. COVID-19 had kept them away. This time the group gathered in the dining room of the newly acquired residence at 1307 North Rodney Street. Paul Crothamel, Director of Facilities and Security, gave everyone a tour of the house and presented the upcoming projects for the fall. The Phix-It Corps will repaint the Ruth Christie Room, install Plexiglas panels in the reception area, carry out modest repairs to the Rodney Street property, and complete renovations to the third floor of Daughtry House.

Work on the latter two properties reinforces the long-standing relationship between Westminster and Friendship House. Over the past 30 years, Friendship House has provided transitional housing for employable, displaced persons in Wilmington. Demand for such spaces has grown dramatically, prompting a decision to create additional bedrooms at Daughtry and convert the property on Rodney Street into transitional housing. At Westminster, our commitment to help others in need begins here on our grounds, guided by the Christian call to “love one another; [to] be compassionate and humble [1 Peter 3:8].” Through our partnership with Friendship House we offer a path forward for individuals deserving of another chance.

All of us owe Westminster’s Phix-It Corps a hearty round of thank-yous. They have served the church in so many ways. In the process, their volunteer efforts have made it possible to stretch the funds available to the Property Committee much further. Whenever the opportunity arises, do offer a word of appreciation to the members of the group: Roger Reinicker (the scheduling “foreman”), Rich Albert, Steve Brackin, Gary Bryde, Jim Carter, John Doyle, Tom Hogue, Steve Johnson, Jeff Lippincott, Mark Mosher, Fred Nelson, and Wayne Sparling. And don’t forget the “boss,” Paul Crothamel, who develops and manages the many projects undertaken by our Phix-It angels.

I pledge because of the church’s long-standing relationship with Friendship House to provide transitional housing for displaced persons.
SPIRITUAL FORMATION FOR ADULTS
SUNDAY SEMINARS  1:00 – 1:50 P.M.

Podcast Series: Presbyterian 101
Presented by the Rev. Sudie Niesen Thompson
October 14, 21, and 28

Peace and Justice: Voting Rights
Facilitated by Sue Linderman
October 11

Peace and Justice: Talking Across the Political Divide
Facilitated by Sue Linderman
October 4

The Opioid Crisis
Presented by atTack addiction
October 25

Church in the World: Update on Congo Mission Partnership
Presented by Mission Coworkers Larry and Inge Streshley
November 1

Making John Calvin Human
Presented by Dr. Elsie McKee, Professor of Reformation Studies and the History of Worship at Princeton Theological Seminary
November 8

Podcast: Reformed Worship
Presented by Chesna Hinkley and the Rev. Sara Jane Nixon
November 15

Transhumanism
Presented by Jim Lee
November 22

* I pledge because of the spiritual leadership I received in the face of a pandemic. *
NEW BANNER ON WESTMINSTER CLOISTER

Westminster’s Peace & Justice Work Group has been active within our congregation and our community since Spring 2018. Formed with the twin goals of combating violence in Wilmington and promoting racial justice, we are focused on a number of key issues, including:

• Education and dialogue on racism and its effects
• Criminal justice reform
• Voting rights

Our active partnerships include:

• Coalition to Dismantle the New Jim Crow
• Campaign for Smart Justice Delaware
• Poor People’s Campaign
• Campaign to End Debtor’s Prisons
• Episcopal Church of Saints Andrew and Matthew
• New Castle Presbytery
• Peace Week Delaware

Over the summer, as issues of racial equity exploded across our country, we concluded that the role of the church in promoting justice and peace is more essential than ever. Volunteers from the Work Group and Session met to develop the wording for the banner that hangs on the Pennsylvania Avenue cloister of our church, letting all who pass by know where we stand and to know who and whose we are.

The group was grounded in the words of Micah 6:8 –

What does the LORD require of you but to do justice, and to love kindness, and to walk humbly with your God?

We welcome everyone who sees the need for this work and wants to make a difference in our church and our community to join our Peace & Justice Work Group. For more information, please contact Mike Gnade (302-562-4464 or mgnade@hotmail.com), Lynne Kielhorn (302-593-5527 or lynne@kielhorn.us) or Sue Linderman (302-239-7650 or srlinder@dca.net).
This will be an ongoing series of essays grounded in information contained in various Zoom-based education events produced by Westminster and facilitated by New Castle Presbytery. For additional information, please contact Sue Linderman (srlinder@dca.net or 302-239-7650).

VOTER SUPPRESSION THEN...

When the United States Constitution was ratified in 1788, it provided the framework for electing members of the House of Representatives. Voting rights were to be determined by the individual states; most established white male landowners as those eligible to vote.

To determine the number of Representatives allocated to each state, the population was to be “determined by adding to the whole Number of free Persons, including those bound to Service for a Term of Years, and excluding Indians not taxed, three fifths of all other Persons.” (In the context of this reference to Indians, the Declaration of Independence declared them to be “merciless Indian savages.”)

The end of the Civil War was marked by passage of three constitutional amendments relating to slaves in the United States as the period of Reconstruction began:

- 13th Amendment (1865) – Slavery Abolished (except as punishment for a crime when convicted)
- 14th Amendment (1868) – Citizenship/Due Process
- 15th Amendment (1870) – The Right to Vote

The election of 1872 marked African-American voter turnout at nearly 90%. Black citizens were elected to more than 600 state legislature seats, 18 state executives, the governor of Louisiana (the last black person to hold that office until 1960), 18 U.S. Congressmen and two U.S. Senators.

Observing the consequences they feared when slavery was abolished, the Southern states embarked on a crusade of brutality and terrorism to discourage blacks from voting in 1876. That Presidential election ended in a virtual tie between Samuel Tilden and Rutherford B. Hayes, so the “Compromise of 1877” was created whereby Hayes would become President if he promised to end Reconstruction. Federal troops were withdrawn from the South and the former Confederate leaders once again assumed control of the various state governments.
In 1890, Mississippi called a constitutional convention to end black voting once and for all. In the words of James K. Vardaman, who would go on to become governor and then a United States senator, “There is no use to equivocate of lie about the matter. Mississippi’s constitutional convention of 1890 was held for no other purpose than to eliminate the nigger from politics... let the world know it just as it is.” And every Southern state eventually followed suit.

In 1898, Louisiana convened a constitutional convention specifically to disenfranchise African Americans – “to establish the supremacy of the white race.” After its adoption, the number of registered black voters dropped from 130,344 to 1,342 by 1904.

In addition to being disenfranchised, unable to vote, blacks were not eligible for jury service, which contributed to the lack of convictions in more than 99% of the egregious lynchings that occurred across the South between 1877 and 1950.

It took passage of the Voting Rights Act of 1965 to rectify these inequities.

**AND NOW...**

The Voting Rights Act of 1965 has been called the single most effective piece of civil rights legislation ever passed by Congress. Its three most significant sections were:

- Section 2 – Whose language closely followed that of the 15th Amendment
- Section 4 – Created a formula for identifying jurisdictions with a history of racial discrimination
- Section 5 – Specified that those areas identified by Section 4 could make no changes to their voting laws without pre-clearance from the Federal government.

When written, the Voting Rights Act called for renewal every five years; its renewal history is:

- 1970 – Renewed for 5 years
- 1975 – Renewed for 7 years (and Section 4 was updated)
- 1982 – Renewed for 25 years
- 2006 – Renewed for 25 years (House vote was 390-33; Senate vote was unanimous)

In 2013, the Supreme Court decision in Shelby County v. Holder decimated the effect of the Voting Rights Act by striking

Continued on page 30
down Section 4, relieving nine states plus numerous counties and municipalities from the pre-clearance requirement.

Consequences:

- Within hours of the decision, Texas instituted a Voter ID law that had been previously blocked by pre-clearance.
- North Carolina reduced early voting locations from 16 to 1.
- Alabama closed DMV offices in 8 of the 10 counties where the black population is > 75%.
- North Dakota required that Voter IDs include a street address; most Native Americans have only P.O. Box numbers.
- Indiana requires a birth certificate to obtain a driver’s license/state ID. In Marion County, where more than 200,000 black citizens live, a driver’s license is required as proof of ID to get a birth certificate.
- Alabama issues photo IDs for its public housing residents, but they are not valid as Voter IDs.

And the list goes on and on.

In addition, massive voter roll purges have eliminated millions of people from the voting rolls and gerrymandering has prevented true representation of the population across election districts.

WHERE DO WE GO FROM HERE?

We believe it is essential that voting is treated as a right, not a privilege, and that action must be taken to ensure that as many American citizens as possible have the right to vote and be represented. Actions would include:

- Automatic Voter Registration
- Election Day as a national holiday
- Passage of the John R Lewis Voting Rights Act
- Independent districting commissions

Look for opportunities to make your voice heard at state and Federal levels. Our democracy depends on it.
FLYING SOLO

Flying Solo is a group of single adults who meet to support each other in friendship, through social activities and fellowship.

Due to the coronavirus outbreak, Flying Solo has suspended its activities for the foreseeable future.

We hope to resume Sunday brunch at an outdoor location, weather permitting. A group email will be sent when plans are made. If you would like to be added to our email list, please contact Bill Kaye at billkaye3@verizon.net.

I pledge because I love Westminster and all the good that it represents.

RECENT DEATHS

Those Who Have Joined the Church Triumphant

We remember the families of those who recently died. We pray that they will be comforted in their loss and be assured that their loved ones have joined God’s heavenly kingdom.

Kenneth A. Barnaby
January 8, 1936 – September 10, 2020

Lowell T. Underhill
April 9, 1934 – September 12, 2020

I pledge because I love Westminster and all the good that it represents.
VIRTUAL TRIVIA NIGHT CONTINUES!

Wednesdays, October 28 and November 18
7:00 p.m. via Zoom

Are you a trivia buff? Jeopardy fan? Smart cookie? We’ve got a game for YOU! Put your knowledge to the test and team up with your family members to play against other Westminster households in an interactive, virtual trivia night. Upcoming themes include “All things Fall, Y’all” (October) and “Holiday Trivia” (November). Virtual Trivia Night will occur on Wednesdays, October 28 and November 18, 2020, at 7:00 p.m. via Zoom and takes approximately 45 minutes to play.

We will use an online, interactive game called Kahoot! You will need access to Zoom and a separate device with internet to access Kahoot! This is a family-friendly event; no experience needed to play. Please email Deacon Jenn Blackford at blackfordj11@gmail.com to RSVP.