

# THE SP<sup>IRE</sup> RE



October 2022 - Generosity & Gratitude

WESTMINSTER PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH  
Pittsburgh, PA

## BOUNTY

Whenever I read the word *bounty*, I recall each year during this season, my mom would take stock of the Mason jars of tomatoes – sauce, juice, and whole – she had “put up” from the summer garden.

In a similar vein, my dad could recite the exact planting dates, rainfall amount, and seed varieties unique to the garden that year. Both Mom and Dad knew those jars contained far more than their individual labor.

### GOD PROVIDED THE SUN AND RAIN AS WELL AS MY PARENTS' STRENGTH, PATIENCE, AND WISDOM TO CONTINUE DAY AFTER DAY.

Come to think of it, God also provided the faith required to put seeds in the ground that could later produce a wall of canned tomatoes.

It may seem far-fetched to those who did not grow up with a garden. Those jars, in my memory, are more than the start of a sauce or soup; they symbolize the relationship between God's gifts to us, our prayers, and our labor.

The author of Psalm 116:12 questions how to properly thank God for the bounty received. We don't know if the bounty represents a healing of body or spirit, or the field's harvest. We know the writer's gratitude to God inspired them to search for a way to give back.

Authors for this issue of the *Spire* reflect upon God's generosity and our gratitude seen in myriad ways at Westminster. As you read, consider the way God blesses you and how you express thanks.

In your faithful service,

Jo

*What shall I return  
to the Lord for all of  
God's bounty to me?*

– Psalm 116:12



# THE SPIRE

Read the *Spire* online at:  
[www.westminster-church.org/news-&-media/the-spire-online](http://www.westminster-church.org/news-&-media/the-spire-online)

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# GENEROSITY

Love

Westminster has given me a community that accepts and welcomes me for who I am. That sense of belonging brought me back to my faith. I am so grateful to have found such a wonderful group of people to worship and walk with!

- Dee Waters



"WESTMINSTER AND GOD HAVE BEEN MY ROCK, MY STRENGTH, MY FOCUS TO CONTINUE MOVING FORWARD WITH HOPE, KINDNESS, INTERNAL PEACE, AND LOVE."



"WESTMINSTER IS SO IMPORTANT TO ME ESPECIALLY AS I RAISE TWO BOYS. I WANT THEM TO HAVE A STRONG FAITH AND ALWAYS PUT GOD FIRST IN THEIR LIVES."

- THE PAUPA FAMILY

**Our Mission:** We seek to be a caring community of faith committed to bringing people to Christ and developing their faith through worshiping God together, teaching the faith, and serving in mission.

## SUNDAY WORSHIP

**8:30 AM - Sanctuary**  
Traditional

**9:45 AM - WROC/Livestream**  
The Bridge Contemporary

**11:00 AM - Sanctuary/Livestream**  
Traditional

## CONNECT WITH US

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# & GRATITUDE

## Letters to the Church

I am grateful to be a part of this truly welcoming community. I had started to struggle with my faith because of the judgmental nature of so many. Finding Westminster and feeling really included and becoming more involved has helped me to find my way back to God.

**"WESTMINSTER IS HOME. OUR FAMILY GETS SO MUCH FROM THIS PLACE, SO IT MAKES IT EASY TO WANT TO GIVE BACK."**

**— LINDSEY SENGE**



We give to Westminster because of the loving, accepting, and supportive community here that embraces both us and our children.

*— Melissa and Andrew Galbraith*

**WE HAVE BEEN MEMBERS OF WESTMINSTER FOR 27 YEARS. THE WESTMINSTER COMMUNITY HAS REJOICED WITH US IN HAPPY MOMENTS AND LIFTED US UP IN PRAYER AND LOVE IN CHALLENGING TIMES.**

**— BETH AND ROB WAGNER**

# TABLE OF THANKS

While online shopping I saw “communion-thank you.” My curiosity got the better of me. What were they selling that fit into this category? Turns out they were marketing notecards for religious services. But Amazon was onto something; thanks and communion do go together.

Communion has many names: the Lord’s Supper, the Last Supper, and the Eucharist, which comes from the Greek word *eucharista*, which means “thanksgiving.” Eucharist is used in the Gospels of Matthew, Mark, and Luke when they describe their holy meal with Jesus. As Jesus directed his friends, he took the bread, gave thanks, blessed it, and broke the bread which symbolized his body. Next, he established the new covenant by his blood, for the forgiveness of sins. Jesus said, “Do this in remembrance of me.” Our response of gratitude for Jesus’ infinite love permeates the table.

Communion is central to our worship. Together we share in the bread and cup believing that Christ is spiritually present. We teach our children the importance of the sacrament as they are welcomed to partake with the rest of the congregation.

We believe that the sacrament of the Lord’s table deepens and assists personal faith.

We don’t need to wait until we think we are worthy for a divine encounter. At communion we present ourselves offering God our imperfections, our weaknesses, even our sinfulness. God makes us worthy. The communion service of thanksgiving and praise includes prayers of thanks for God’s creation; for the birth, life, death, and resurrection of Jesus the Christ; and for the privilege of serving our neighbor.

As you take communion at church or join the congregation from livestream at home or share extended communion with the Deacons, give thanks, knowing that you are always invited, welcomed, and loved at the table of the Lord.

– Louise Rogers



# ONE PERSON AT A TIME

**“IF YOU CAN’T FEED A HUNDRED PEOPLE,  
THEN FEED JUST ONE.”**

*– Mother Teresa, 1910*

I’ve always found comfort in Mother Teresa’s quote. At the same time, I find Matthew 25:32-33 unsettling. Christ is clear throughout scripture that we are to love our neighbors, to reach out and care for one another. If I want to be a sheep, and I do, what does that look like? It seems overwhelming in the world we live in. But I can do something one at a time, something small. And if we do it together at Westminster as a community of believers, that number grows and we make a difference.

Just this summer we fed children in various food insecure local neighborhoods, grew vegetables for those who rely on the SHIM food pantries, and assembled QuickKits to hand out to those experiencing homelessness – showing one person at a time, that God cares for them.

Thanks to a grant from our endowment, we were able to provide tents and supplies to Street MOMs, a nonprofit Christian organization working with women experiencing homelessness in Wheeling, West Virginia, founded in 2018 by Susan Brossman and Lynn Kettler.

To quote Susan, “We are committed to building individual relationships and work to ‘fill in the gaps’ when agencies and support services cannot provide necessities for daily living. We believe that everyone has a right to exist, and we who are able are called to lessen the burden of those that are carrying more than they can handle.”

I learned about Street MOMs from Mary Zora, a member of our congregation. Mary and Susan know each other from college and have stayed in touch over the years.

When I asked Mary about what working with Street MOMs has meant to her, she said, “Susan and I share a compassion for reaching out and helping others. My primary role has been to support the Saturday women’s program at Laughlin Memorial Chapel. Our women come into a caring environment where they can shower, have a meal, replenish needed supplies, play a board game, or make a craft, and most importantly, enjoy each other’s company. These women have enriched my life far more than I could have imagined. I am blessed to play a small role in supporting the efforts of Street MOMs.”



*Westminster volunteers prepared and packaged tents and supplies to deliver to Street MOMs.*



*Westminster's Mary Zora has been supporting the efforts of Street MOMs.*



*Some of the individuals served by Street MOMs.*

I am going to continue to begin with Mother Teresa’s quote and look for ways to help one person at a time because that is not overwhelming, and I can do that. But the real target is the charge that Jesus has laid out for me, for all of us.

Will you join me?

*– Jan Baumann*

# BETWEEN HERE AND THERE

In the mid 1940s, as World War II was nearing its end, a group of about 30 conscientious objectors took part in a research project that came to be known as the Minnesota Starvation Experiment. These men agreed to a yearlong experiment with varying and restricted diets, work schedules, and exercise commitments that would lead them, ultimately, into a state of semi-starvation.

Each week the men would wait for their dietary allowances to be posted, nearly certain that their intake would be less than that of the week before. As you might guess, the men who were served even slightly less than their counterparts reported becoming irritable and jealous of one another, wishing for the allotment of their neighbor.

One participant recalled that “food became the one central and only thing really in one’s life.” Faced with scarcity, these men began to shift the lens through which they saw the world. What they lacked became their primary focus. They cared increasingly about their own needs and decreasingly about the needs of those around them.

The point is this: the way that we understand what we have and what we need shapes the way we respond to the world around us.

*“Consider the lilies of the field,  
how they grow; they neither  
toil nor spin”*

– Matthew 6:28

## DO YOU FEEL AS THOUGH YOU’VE BEEN BLESSED WITH A BOUNTY, OR ARE YOU IN A CONSTANT STATE OF WANT?

The ways that you consider your “allotment” might shape the ways that you view the others around you. When we are faced with either a real or a perceived sense of scarcity, the very thing that we lack becomes our one and central focus.

The verse “consider the lilies of the field” (Matthew 6:28) is an oft-quoted reminder that God cares for each and every part of his Creation. Just as the flowers come and go, so too do we. But along the way we are gifted, each and every one of us, with immense beauty, grace, and giftedness. Perhaps this season we might all consider the bounty that we’ve been blessed with as opposed to focusing centrally on what we lack.

You’ve all heard me say this before, so it won’t be a surprise when I say it again: I know that we don’t all have all that we need. Some of us lack for relationship and connection; some lack for steady income or security; some of us lack for health and wellness. In some sense, we all struggle with one lack or another. If there is ever a time that a conversation, a cup of coffee, or a gentle ear might be of support, I hope that you’ll reach out. You’re always welcome.

Be well, friends.

– Ed Sutter





# NURTURING THE NEXT GENERATION

**"PIGLET NOTICED THAT EVEN THOUGH HE HAD A VERY SMALL HEART, IT COULD HOLD A RATHER LARGE AMOUNT OF GRATITUDE."**

– A.A. Milne, *Winnie the Pooh*

One might wonder why generosity and gratefulness are not character traits that everyone is born with. Instead, they are character traits that are developed by those who are exposed to a solid foundation of good morals. Building these character traits takes more than merely teaching children to share. It's more about showing them how to be fair and kind.

Through a play-based curriculum centered around spirituality, WECEP offers children an environment that nurtures building the foundational traits of generosity and gratefulness that ultimately become a cycle of genuine positivity in the world.

WECEP is blessed to have dedicated staff that work on character development with the children daily. They model generosity and gratitude in their behaviors and provide the children the opportunities to do the same.

Families can trust that by sending their children to WECEP, the children will receive a solid foundation of



morals that will lead to spiritual, academic, and social success throughout their lives.

As leaders in the ministry of WECEP, we are grateful that we have been given the opportunity to spread God's principles of character development.

– Denise Burke



Megan Baumgartner, WECEP CDC Program Director; Denise Burke, WECEP Executive Director; Lori Feldmann, WECEP Education Director

# A MESSAGE OF PEACE AND REST IN GOD

The last few years have been difficult ones for most of us, and we long to find solace. Music, especially in worship, helps from week to week. But in these fraught times we may need something both beautiful and new to our ears that will inspire us and bring us ever closer to God. What about a Requiem composed intentionally for the living as well as for the deceased? What about a text that asks for rest and mercy in our pain, our sadness, our troubles?

The composer Dan Forrest's *Requiem for the Living* (2013) is a five-movement choral piece that acknowledges the sorrow and turmoil of humanity and asks for redemption, offers vivid musical images of heaven and earth, and leaves us with an ethereal sense of peace and rest. This is the message we long to hear.

**"THE CHANCEL CHOIR AND I HAVE REPEATEDLY BEEN DRAWN TO DAN FORREST'S CHORAL WORKS. HIS MUSIC IS TRANSCENDENT, AND HIS DEEP FAITH IS EVIDENT IN THE GLORIOUS AND MEANINGFUL MUSIC THAT HE WRITES. HE IS EXCEPTIONALLY GIFTED AT MARRYING TEXT AND MUSIC, WHICH STIRS THE SOUL."**

– Christine Hestwood, Music Director

On November 13, the congregation of Westminster will have the opportunity to hear *Requiem for the Living* during the eleven o'clock worship service, performed by the Chancel Choir, soloists, and a chamber ensemble.

The words come from the Latin Requiem mass and scripture. A single verse from Matthew appears near the end to bring the message of rest in the Lord to each of us: "Come to me, all who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest" (Matthew 11:28).

– Sara Kyle



**I'D LIKE TO THINK THAT GOD MADE ME TO WRITE MUSIC, AND WHEN I DO A GOOD JOB AT IT, I CAN FEEL GOD'S PLEASURE IN DOING WHAT I WAS MADE TO DO.**

**AND IT'S SUCH A BEAUTIFUL WAY TO MINISTER TO PEOPLE IN TERMS OF PROVIDING MUSIC FOR COMFORT, MUSIC FOR CELEBRATION, MUSIC FOR MEMORIALS, MUSIC THAT SPEAKS PEACE OR HOPE OR SEEKS TO BIND UP WOUNDS OR PROVIDE HEALING WHEN THERE'S BROKENNESS.**

– Dan Forrest, *Greenville Journal*



# GRATITUDE IN THE MIDST OF LIFE'S CHALLENGES

Every Monday, Wednesday, and Friday 15 individuals diagnosed with Parkinson's Disease arrive at the WROC for fitness class. The fellowship, support, and encouragement radiate from the gym. We don't know how the symptoms of this disease affected their morning. Is this a good day or was it a rough night?

Dave participates in the Parkinson's Fitness Level 1 (PD1) class and arrives early to transfer the heavy boxing equipment from storage to the gym floor. You'll often find him in conversation with other participants, encouraging and supporting them. He also helps coach the Parkinson's Fitness Level 2 (PD2) class.

**“WE ARE TRULY BLESSED TO HAVE THIS PROGRAM AVAILABLE TO US. NOT SURE HOW I GOT TO BE A HELPER IN PD2. BUT IT IS REWARDING TO SEE THE DIFFERENCE IN THESE MEN,” SAYS DAVE.**

He finds strength and encouragement through scripture and people God places in his path. Dave is not grateful for his diagnosis, but he is grateful “in” his diagnosis.

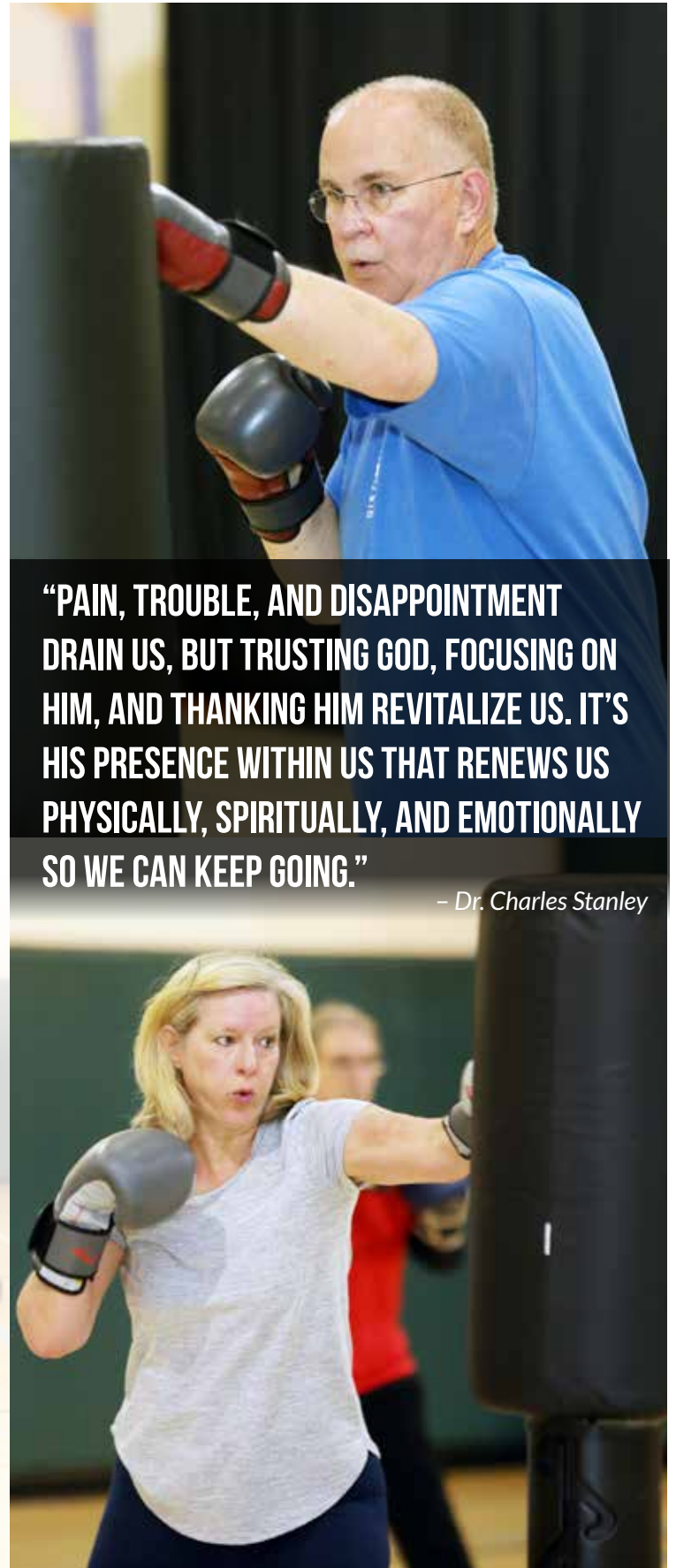
For Mary, being a part of this church community, and specifically this exercise class, has reinforced that gratitude and thankfulness can strengthen lives and bring us closer to God. Mary participates in class with a vitality that is infectious and is a powerful witness for Christ.

She believes each of us has a burden to carry, an adversity of some kind. She chooses to approach adversity with a grateful and thankful heart, so she can lift others up.

“Not to say that facing adversity is that easy but when we can support others, our own burden is lightened,” says Mary. She carries this thought with her: “Bear your cross while you wait for your crown.”

God's blessings abound!

– Kathy Long



**“PAIN, TROUBLE, AND DISAPPOINTMENT DRAIN US, BUT TRUSTING GOD, FOCUSING ON HIM, AND THANKING HIM REVITALIZE US. IT'S HIS PRESENCE WITHIN US THAT RENEWS US PHYSICALLY, SPIRITUALLY, AND EMOTIONALLY SO WE CAN KEEP GOING.”**

– Dr. Charles Stanley

# GOD'S LOVE IN ACTION

You are loved. Take a minute and pause to reflect on how it feels to be loved no matter what. That is one tremendous gift from God. No matter how we fall, we are still loved without condition.

What other gifts have been bestowed to you? Maybe you have the gift of clear communication, a sporting ability, musical talent, patience...so many possibilities. Whatever gifts we have, we owe our thanks to God.

Those gifts allow us to thrive in life through our relationships with others, our careers, daily activities, and hobbies. How are you expressing your gratitude for those gifts? Westminster has so many opportunities for you to share those gifts, whether it be through joining our softball team, the handbell choir, or the Bridge setup team, helping to run the technology for worship, serving as an elder, teaching Sunday school, or being an usher to greet worshippers and collect their offerings.

Speaking of the offering, how are you sharing your financial gifts? All of our financial means can be attributed to God and the gifts he has bestowed on us. How are we honoring those blessings? When asked what Westminster means to them and why they give, the Exley family said,

**“WESTMINSTER IS GOD’S LOVE IN ACTION. WE GIVE AS A FAMILY BECAUSE LOVE IN ACTION NEEDS RESOURCES. IT NEEDS OUR TIME, COMMITMENT, AND FINANCIAL FUNDS.”**

Supporting the church financially gives others the means to realize their own gifts and use them to honor God. As the Stewardship Commission, our aim is to increase pledges by 21% this year to \$1.7 million in order to carry out God’s Love in Action.

As you consider your pledge this year, be a joyful giver full of gratitude to God for your gifts and know that you are supporting God’s Love in Action.



by **MICHELE BURGESS**

*Michele is an elder (class of 2022) and serves on the Stewardship Commission*



**WE JOINED WESTMINSTER AFTER A LONG JOURNEY OF TRYING MANY CHURCHES. WESTMINSTER PROVIDED OUR FAMILY AN EXPERIENCE WITH GREAT YOUTH PROGRAMS, BEAUTIFUL AND MEANINGFUL WORSHIP SERVICES, AND INITIATIVES THAT HELP OTHERS NEAR AND FAR.**

**WE KNOW OUR GIVING IS VITAL TO ALLOW WESTMINSTER TO CONTINUE ITS MISSION AND BECOME THE CHURCH HOME FOR OTHER YOUNG FAMILIES LIKE IT HAS OURS.**

– Broc Sleek

# OUR HOUSE OF FAITH

**“MY HOUSE SHALL BE CALLED A HOUSE OF PRAYER FOR ALL PEOPLES.”**

– Isaiah 56:7

Westminster is a giving congregation in so many ways. We provide worship and spiritual growth, programs and lectures, musical concerts, and many other activities for people of all ages in our building. And we support efforts to bring food, clothing, and many more resources to people in need beyond our congregation. Westminster is a significant symbol within our community. Our doors are open to all. The more we continue to grow, the more we can do and give.

Westminster was founded on a firm vision of faith, commitment, and outreach. By working together, we led this faith community forward with a successful three-year capital campaign. And the fruits of that campaign commitment continue to be realized as we celebrate the completion of Fellowship Hall’s renovation.

Hundreds of people volunteer in and through our church, caring for one another, helping each other grow in faith, and reaching out to serve beyond the congregation. We have been honored to be a part of this Forward in Faith effort, remembering how important the church has been in our own lives, and sharing our stories with others.

Thank you for joining us in moving forward in faith. We are blessed to be a part of this dedicated faith community, our “second home.”



by  
**MIKE &  
DEBORAH LEE**

*Mike & Deborah served as co-chairs of the Forward in Faith capital campaign*

*The recently completed refurbished Fellowship Hall, funded by the Forward in Faith campaign.*

# WESTMINSTER EMBRACES A FALL TRADITION OF GIVING

Out of all the seasons in Western Pennsylvania, I have to say that fall is my favorite. I love the cool mornings, clear blue skies, crisp white clouds, the vibrant colors of red, purple, and gold, and the smell of burning firewood. The change of seasons sometimes happens unexpectedly, but the Giving Gala preparation season begins as soon as one Gala has ended.

In preparation for the Giving Gala, I am blessed to work with many members and deacons within our church family who make this Gala a vibrant event that serves neighbors within our community. The team works together to coordinate event space, gather gift baskets and gift card donations, secure silent auction items, and sell tickets to benefit neighbors in need.

Each year, as the Gala evening winds down, the Gala Team experiences a sense of satisfaction for an event that benefited an organization that serves others. We have collectively gathered as friends, shared a meal and some laughter, and supported a cause near and dear to our hearts.

**THIS YEAR'S GIVING GALA, HOSTED ON FRIDAY, NOVEMBER 11, WILL BENEFIT THE BAIR FOUNDATION CHILD AND FAMILY MINISTRIES. SINCE 1967, THE BAIR FOUNDATION'S CHRISTIAN FOSTER CARE MINISTRY HAS PROVIDED HOPE AND HEALING TO HARD-TO-PLACE FOSTER CHILDREN AND TEENS.**

The vision of founder Bill Bair continues to provide quality services, faith, and commitment to foster youth. By providing a safe home, unconditional love and acceptance, Bair sends a message of encouragement and faith to children who are hurting.

Every year we are overwhelmed by the support of the members of Westminster and their passion for helping others. It is because of God's generosity during this time of harvest that we are grateful for the opportunity to serve the community beyond the doors of Westminster. In scripture, the word *harvest* symbolically refers to God's provision for us and God's blessing for others. In this *Spire* – where the theme is giving in mission, service, and outreach with time, talents, and treasures – we are honored to support the Bair Foundation as they support God's children.



*The Bair Foundation strives to provide and/or facilitate safe, secure, and nurturing living experiences that uphold Christian values for children and youth who are abused; neglected; physically, mentally, and/or emotionally handicapped; and/or suffering from parental deprivation.*



by **JENNIFER BOLLMAN**

*Jennifer serves on the Board of Deacons and is the Giving Gala Chair*



# IMMIGRANT, REFUGEE — WHAT’S THE DIFFERENCE?

Lots of Americans think immigrants and refugees are, basically, the same. Not true.

If you look up the definitions, you will see that an immigrant is defined as “a person who migrates to another country, usually for permanent residence.” For most of us, our ancestors were all immigrants.

On the other hand, a refugee is defined as “a person who flees for refuge or safety, especially to a foreign country, as in time of political upheaval, war, etc.”

**REFUGEES HAVE NOT LEFT THEIR HOMES BEHIND BECAUSE THEY THOUGHT CROSSING AN OCEAN WOULD BE AN ADVENTURE OR BECAUSE THEY WANT A BETTER JOB. THEY WANT TO LIVE. THEY WANT THEIR CHILDREN TO LIVE.**

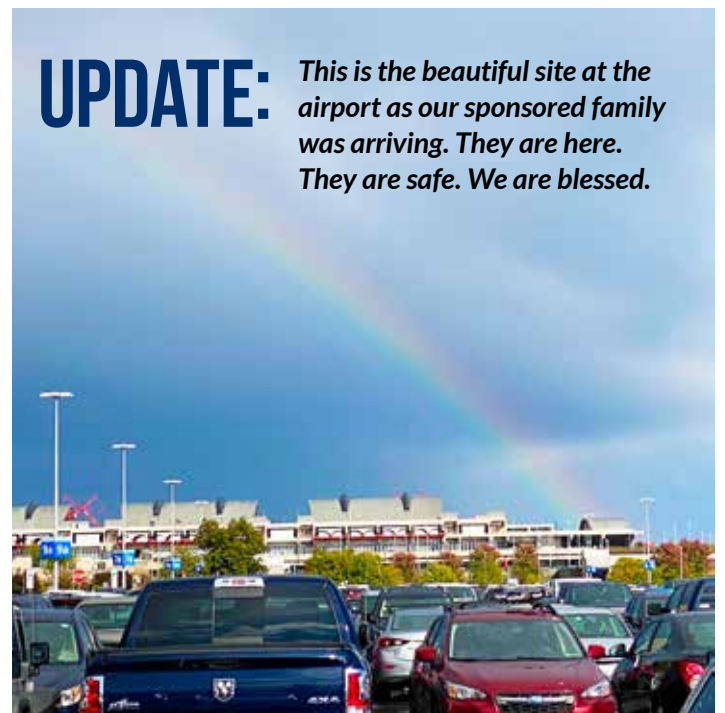
They don’t have any other choice. And they didn’t come right away. Many lived in refugee camps before finally being vetted and arriving in the United States.

According to the website for the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (the UN Refugee Agency), “the average length of time that refugees spend in camps varies depending on the crisis. In protracted refugee situations – where mass displacement has affected a country for five years or more, refugees may spend years and even decades living in camps and it is common to have entire generations growing up in the camps.”

I know that for a fact. I have spoken with SHIM clients who spent some 20 years in refugee camps. Most of us can’t even imagine that. I suspect many of us would simply want to give up. But they have children. And dreams. And a work ethic. And much to offer. And they are loved by God.

So, the Westminster Refugee Resettlement Team hopes you will stay with us – and maybe even join us – on the journey to helping a family that had no choice. Had no options. Had no miracle. Until Westminster reached out. May we help to bless them as we have been blessed.

– Carolyn Kerr



# PRAYER WALKING

An important part of Confirmation Class is learning new prayer practices. So many of us think that we must have the proper, fancy words to pray, but we really don't. There are so many ways to connect with our creator, through art, music, scripture, etc.

Our first practice, and one of my favorites, is prayer walking. I love to go walking on trails through nature, listening to wildlife and exploring plants and trees. I can almost always find God talking to me through the joyfulness of a bird's song or flowers blooming.

I love to garden but weeds have taken over my landscaping since I started working. Last week, I noticed a sunflower proudly poking its head through the weeds in my backyard. I don't remember planting this sunflower and it even brought friends along. It was if to say, "I am going to stand tall and show my gratitude to my maker, no matter what is trying to pull me down."

Praise God for all of the beauty in creation!

– Becky Boyer



# GRATEFUL



*Veritas blessing time*



*SHIM food collection*



*Bread for the World letter offering*



# FELLOWSHIP & Service



WECEP blessing of the backpacks



Day Away spiritual retreat



## MILESTONES @ WESTMINSTER

### BAPTISMS

September 18

Caroline Rose Zuzak  
parents: Katharine and  
Charles Zuzak

### DEATHS

We give thanks to God  
for the gift of life and the  
promise of life eternal.

Recognized on All Saints' Sunday,  
November 6, 2022.

Marg Barati  
Carolyn Berdanier  
Don Blasche  
Doris Bower  
Marian Cleland  
Reeny Davison  
Merritt Joy Gillen  
Ed Houck  
Dave Inman  
Liz Kearney  
Ed Keener  
Phyllis Klafehn  
Ed Lyness  
Ernie Maley  
Evalyn McCandless  
Elizabeth Myers  
Nancy Page  
Jean Pauley  
John Stephen  
Helen Watson  
Jack Watson  
Stephen Zanardelli



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For all that has been,

*Thank you.*

For all that is to come, *Yes!*

– Dag Hammarskjold