

# Westminster Chimes

Coming in to be nurtured, going out to serve

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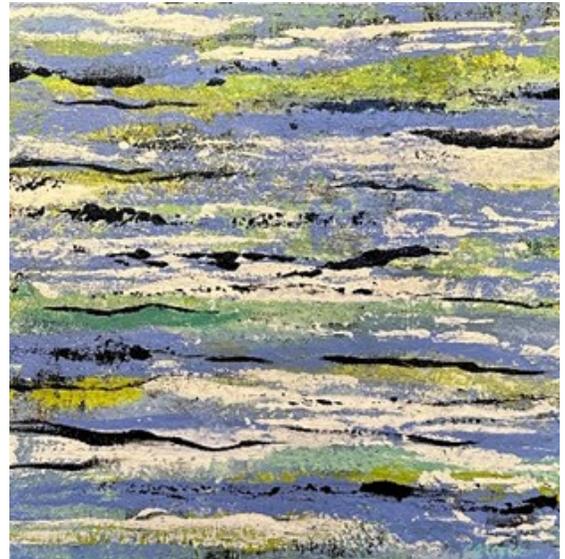
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## Wade Into Troubled Waters for Lent

By Caroline Greger

*Thus says the Lord... Do not fear, for I have redeemed you... When you pass through the waters, I will be with you, and through the rivers, they shall not overwhelm you; when you walk through fire you shall not be burned, and the flame shall not consume you. Because you are precious in my sight and honored and I love you...  
Isaiah 43: 1 - 2; 4a.*



Westminster's theme for Lent this year is "Wade Into Troubled Waters," based on these words of Isaiah, reassuring us that God is with us in times of trouble, threat, and sorrow. The theme addresses the turbulence in current events, as well as the turbulence and uncertainty many of us feel at times of personal transition or loss. It challenges us to answer God's call: to wade into whatever troubles lie in our path, especially as we seek to follow Jesus, bringing justice and hope to a hurting world, healing and reconciliation to broken lives—always trusting in God's love and presence to sustain and guide us. How are we called—as individuals and as a congregation—to bring about God's kingdom/kin-dom in hard times? Can we trust that God will not let us be overwhelmed or consumed? What is the relationship between the waters of our baptism and troubled waters? What gifts might be found when we answer God's call?

The Worship and Music Committee has created two, 17-foot-long banners and a collage under the cross depicting the "troubled waters." In the side aisles, there are six luminarias casting a mix of blue and purple hues on the walls. The effect is to remind us that we are always immersed in and surrounded by the waters. Even so, God is with us; we are not alone. The love of God in Christ Jesus surrounds us, dwells in us, and empowers us to wade into troubled waters with transformative hope for ourselves and the world.



# Northeast Community Childhood Development Center (NCCDC) Update

Westminster's oldest building mission partner is NCCDC, which is a daycare and a preschool. Our partnership is over 40 years old. The pandemic was a difficult time for daycares and preschools all over the county, including NCCDC.

NCCDC came to the Session concerned about its financial ability to open after it was allowed to by the state of Oregon. The Session, after much consideration by the Finance and Administration (F&A) Committee, decided to provide a line of credit to NCCDC. Due to Oregon laws, nonprofits are not allowed to give interest-free loans, so an interest rate was included in the agreement.

Westminster offered up to \$45,000. NCCDC took \$25,000 from the line of credit. Eventually a loan agreement was written by an attorney specializing in property law and not connected to Westminster. Then, the next problem financially for NCCDC was Multnomah County's Preschool for All.

Preschool for All opened during the 2022-'23 school year. Preschool for All made competition for daycare employees a good thing, because it increased wages for daycare employees, but it was another financial burden. Also, a few NCCDC families were offered space by Preschool for All and left NCCDC for a different daycare/preschool, causing more financial difficulties.

F&A has been working with NCCDC because through 2023 -'25, Westminster forgave building usage fees for several months over that period to keep NCCDC financially viable. The good news is that NCCDC in September of 2026 has 10 spaces funded by Preschool for All and F&A has worked out a new agreement for NCCDC to have the loan completely paid by the end of 2027. We celebrate Westminster's partnership with NCCDC.

## A Time for Lament and Grief as Resistance

On Saturday, March 7, at 5 p.m., the Racial Justice Working Group and members from the Westminster Chancel Choir will be putting on an informal concert/sing-along in the sanctuary as an invitation to the community to gather to lament and grieve through song, fellowship, and meditative contemplation. We invite any and all to join us in the sanctuary to sing along with us and each other, as we continue to resist our own sense of hopelessness by coming together as a restorative community. The music selection will include songs from popular culture, movement culture, and religious communities.

## Seeking Children's Ministry Volunteers

Amanda Smith and the Children's Ministry Committee are looking for two sets of volunteers. First, for the committee itself. We meet monthly, usually via Zoom. Second, we need Sunday School teachers. The lessons are sent to you in advance and are very easy to follow (Bible story, short activity or art project, then free time with whatever time we have left until parent pickup). Teaching experience is not required. This is a great way to meet the children of our community. Please contact Amanda Smith ([Amanda@westprespdx.org](mailto:Amanda@westprespdx.org)) for information.

# Pastor's Column

The Rev. Gregg Neel at 503-287-1289, ext. 114

I have been holding two authors in my head and heart these days as I think about church. The first is Dr. Stephen Patterson, who is a professor at Willamette University. In his presentation at our adult education class, he posed a thesis about how American Christianity came to have two different emphases, love and vengeance. The book he is working on, and the name of his class, is "Between Love and Vengeance . . ." I wish that while in seminary I had had Steve's information gathered in the way that he has presented it. His work has really opened my mind to why American Christianity might have this huge theological split in how we view Christian Nationalism, immigration, and more.

I would encourage anyone who is struggling about why some theologically conservative Christians are supporting government actions that are causing hurt and harm to others to learn more about the New Testament and to watch Dr. Patterson's second, third, and fourth classes (we don't have the first class), which are available on Westminster's YouTube channel. To find both our worship services and our adult education classes, go to [www.youtube.com/@westprespdx](http://www.youtube.com/@westprespdx).

The second author I've been thinking about is Priya Parker, who lives in New York City. While Stephen Patterson is a white, male, baby boomer, Priya Parker, by her own description, is a biracial, female, millennial. I first became aware of her through her book, "The Art of Gathering" (2018). At a recommendation by my wife, I just listened to a recent podcast of her talking to Ezra Klein on his podcast, "The Ezra Klein Show," recorded February 3, 2026.

For me, Parker and her thinking are not conducive to congregational life, but I have been wondering if maybe there is something to learn for us. Here are some of her quotes:

- "In a world of infinite choices, choosing one thing is the revolutionary act. Imposing that restriction is actually liberating."
- "In a group, if everybody thinks about the other person's needs, everyone's needs are actually fulfilled in the end. But if you only think about yourself, you are breaking that contract."
- "The first step in convening people meaningfully: committing to a bold, sharp purpose."
- "People have to take chances in order to do something extraordinary."
- "Gathering well isn't a chill activity."

I believe in the transformative power of congregational life. I also think it is important to understand the "other." As Westminster moves through 2026, and as we journey together through Lent, let us commit to gathering, growing, and learning to change the world—because friends, the world needs some significant change.

*Gregg*



## New Deacon Connections!

In addition to the variety of ways our deacons provide care, most deacons have a "Connections List" which includes members and friends of Westminster. When deacons reach out to the folks on our lists, it helps us to connect with those around us, especially those people who may be new or unable to worship with us in person regularly. At the beginning of each year, some deacons who have completed their service "roll off" the board and new deacons take their places. As a result, you may be contacted by a different deacon than you have before. Your deacon may reach out to you by greeting you at church, or perhaps by phone, email, or snail mail. You are always welcome to opt out of this type of contact by responding to your deacon and asking politely to be removed from those communications. That person will still be your deacon if you need to reach out to them later in the year or want to say hi to them at a Deacon Doughnut Day!




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## Cloisters Reading Event

Do you like a good story, or a poem that pulls at your heartstrings? If you want to spend an afternoon hearing funny, serious, empathetic, and thoughtful readings, join us in the gallery on Sunday, March 8, from 2 to 4 p.m., to hear two of Westminster's favorite authors—Scott Dalgarno and Mark Niemann-Ross—read from their most recent writings. You will be entertained in grand style!

Scott will be reading from his book "Third Class Relics," which was a finalist for the 2024 Sally Albiso Poetry Prize. He is described as having a discerning mind, a musical ear, a witty intellect, and a bruised but open heart. He will also read a couple of poems published since then in two, cutting-edge literary journals. Mark Niemann-Ross is the pseudonym used by an impressionable observer of the unexpectedly exceptional. Mark seeks fame and fortune through the use of alliteration to astound, amaze, and amuse his audience. At this reading, Mark will relate his adventurous experience as a kidney donor.

As with all Cloisters-sponsored events, there is no charge, but it will be helpful if you will let us know if you will join us by emailing Sally Woolley at [woolley7667@comcast.net](mailto:woolley7667@comcast.net).

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## Building Improvements Survey

We are gathering feedback to help guide future building and property improvements. We are interested in understanding what works well, where challenges or barriers exist, and how strongly these issues affect your participation, work, or use of the facility. You can take the survey here: <https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/7GPJ693>. Please submit your survey by Sunday, March 15, 2026. The survey will close after that date. Thank you for your participation!

# Meet Your Elders - Nancy Harlan Crean, Class of 2026

*In this column, we'll introduce you to the elders who serve on Westminster's Session. If you're a Westminster member who might be interested in being an elder, contact the Reverend Gregg Neel for more information (gneel@westprespdx.org).*

## **Which committee(s) do you serve on, and what do you do with them?**

Adult Education (chair) and Safety and Security Task Force. The Safety and Security Task Force is tasked with developing emergency exit plans on Sunday mornings.

## **How long have you been active at Westminster?**

28 years. I joined in 1997.

## **How do you like to spend your free time?**

Travel, gardening, and spending as much time as I can with my wonderful husband and son.

## **Do you have pets?**

I take care of other people's pets and do house sittings all over the world. I'm spending all of June in England doing exactly that.

## **What's something people probably don't know about you?**

I worked all of my career with the Oregon Judicial Department and believe in the rule of law. I am very proud of my 37 years of government service.

## **What's one thing you enjoy about serving on Westminster's Session?**

The lively discussions we have and how much we all care about the building, the congregation, and our community at large.




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## Holy Week and Easter



Please save the dates for these observances of Holy Week and Easter:

- Palm Sunday, March 29, 10:30 a.m., worship in the sanctuary
- Good Friday, April 3, 7:30 p.m., worship in the sanctuary
- Easter Sunday, April 5, 9 a.m. and 11 a.m., worship in the sanctuary

Although Westminster will not have an Maundy Thursday service on April 2, you may wish to attend Maundy Thursday worship at Rose City Park Presbyterian (1907 NE 45th Ave., Portland) from 6:30 – 7 p.m. with communion.

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## Adult Education

For information on our adult education classes, please visit our website: <https://westprespdx.org/connect/adult-education/>.

# An Activist's Lent

If you are looking for ways to take action during Lent, check out "The Tomb Is Empty but the Streets Are Full: An Activist Lenten Devotional." In this guide, you can find a variety of practices (such as writing, making art, digital activism, and more) that will help you to have a more meaningful Lent. You can find the guide here: <https://justiceunbound.org/activistlent/>

## Session Action in February

In its February 2026 meeting, the Session:

- Held the first Session meeting of the newly ordained/installed elders, the class of 2028, with the classes of 2026 and 2027.
- Approved landscaping projects as presented by John Barker; details, including ways for people to donate toward projects, will be explained in the April Chimes newsletter.
- Heard a report of the Personnel Committee approving a rewritten job description for the Assistant Director of Music for Handbells. The search for this position has begun with a beginning date (hopefully) of August 1, 2026.



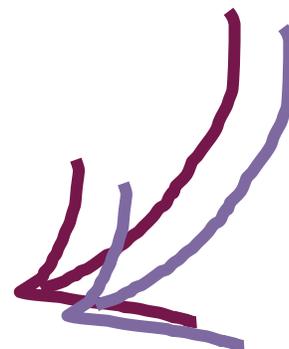
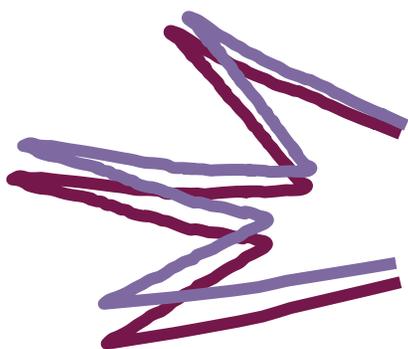
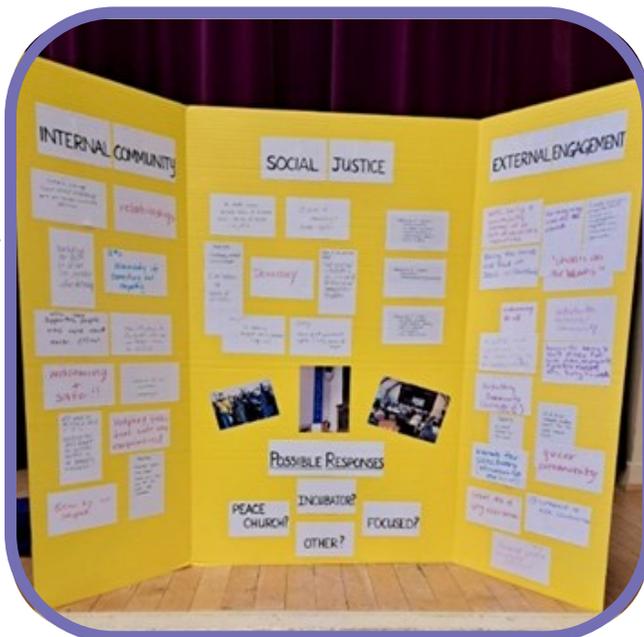
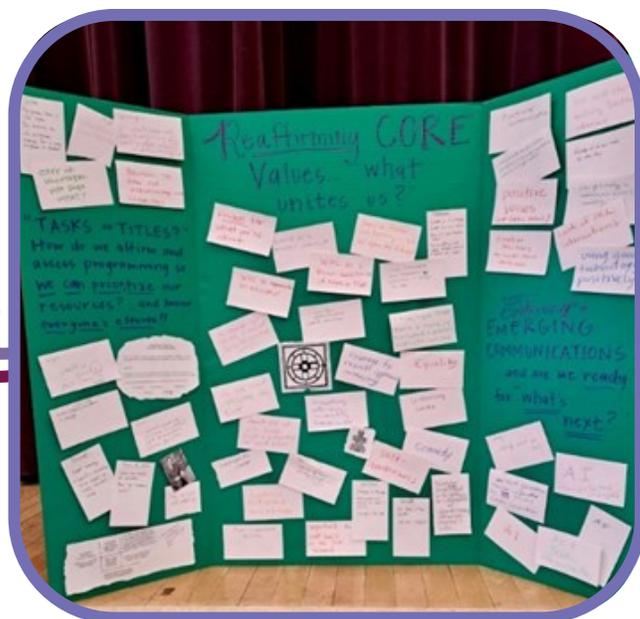
## March Birthdays

We rejoice with those members, friends of our congregation, and staff who celebrate birthdays in March:

3/2	Sue Butell, Ellie Hodge, Daja Phillips	3/19	Todd Schutrop, R. Thomas Appenzeller
3/3	Cynthia Bauer	3/20	Johna Rossetto, Elaine Friesen-Strang
3/4	Michelle Schmidt	3/21	Ginny Robertson
3/6	Jessica Sutter	3/22	Lisa Taylor, Chris Brown, Kathy Goff, Debbie Glaze
3/7	Rhoda Moeller	3/24	Fran Dyke, Jonathan Dyer, Marty Herr
3/10	Michael Furey, Scott Dalgarno, Jean Johnson	3/25	Carolyn Wieden, Amanda Smith
3/11	Julia Longbrake	3/26	Caroline Greger
3/12	Paul Sclafani	3/27	Benjamin Rice, Janet Shattuck, Philip Karn, Amy Jo Butler
3/13	Nate Karn	3/29	Marcia Jory, Bob Frantz, Maggie Vera
3/14	Haley Maddox, Jan Woodcock	3/30	Ron Bell
3/15	Evelyn Hicks	3/31	Ethan Dunham, Teena Barnett
3/16	Linda Buckley, Alli Turner		Tracy Tophooven
3/17	Sharon Ross, Sylvia McGill, Caroline Kurtz		

# A Note From the Vision and Strategy Task Force

In the final days of January, we were pleased to be able to share our work with the congregation and Session. We had a “show and tell” where we shared what you told us in the fall and how we’re interpreting it—particularly with our trifold boards (photographed here by task force member Peggy Woolf). We also shared a bulletin insert that showed the categories we sorted responses from the congregation into: art and music, filling in age gaps, budget and building maintenance, “tasks or titles?” (how we help staff and volunteers affirm their work so we can prioritize resources), reaffirming our core values, emerging and evolving communications, our internal community, social justice (especially our understanding of U.S. democracy), and our external community engagement. In the coming months, we’ll be returning to this data, as well as reports from previous task forces and the 2025 and 2026 budgets, and reporting back to you before our final report to Session in June. Thank you for your feedback! –Lindsey, Marcia, McKenna, Peggy, Ted, and Thomas



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## Publications

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Chimes articles are due by 5 p.m. on the dates listed below.

- ◆ March 11 for April 1-30
- ◆ April 15 for May 1-31

If you want to receive the monthly Chimes newsletter electronically, you can sign up for an e-subscription at this website: <http://eepurl.com/cCazsL>.

If you want to end your postal-mail subscription, please e-mail Jonathan at [office@westprespdx.org](mailto:office@westprespdx.org).