

The past 18 months have been challenging for Westminster. Just as we were adjusting to the loss of Bob came news that Cindy felt called to leave to be closer to family. As a church, we were blessed to have their leadership for 15 years, so it is natural to find ourselves still grieving their departures even today. Our grieving has only been compounded by Kathryn and Larry's recent departures.

Please know that Session- the group of your elected leaders - is grieving and adjusting, as well. Also know that we are determined to emerge from these transitions with the same goals we've always held: to remain the Christ-centered church Westminster has always been, a church that offers spiritual growth and expression for everyone. Westminster continues to thrive through new members, new staff, exciting outreach programs, and continued education from children through adult ministries.

One of the issues that has become apparent in recent months is that our communications, or the lack of, between Session and our congregation has created questions and concerns that we need to address.

Earlier this month, Session had an opportunity to gather on a Saturday morning and discuss what has been a turbulent year for many of us. We were blessed to have Mark and Rev. David Partington lead us in worship, prayer and reflection. We talked about where Westminster is today and where we want to be. We shared communion. We shared concerns that were heavy on our hearts. And just as important, we shared laughter. It was an equally humbling and inspiring day for everyone.

During our retreat we were asked to meditate on the passage in Matthew 8 in which a sudden and furious storm sweeps over the boat carrying Jesus and his disciples. As you may know, the disciples were terrified by the thunder and heaving waves and turned to Jesus, who somehow, managed to be sleeping through the storm.

It is not such a stretch to draw an analogy between the disciples in that boat and Westminster today. We have experienced some rough weather. However, we want you to know that Session is not sitting in the boat terrified. With God's help, we are hard at work weathering the storm and want to share some updates with you.

***Transition Team:** The Transition Team is pleased to announce that, pending final approval by Salem Presbytery's Committee on Ministry at its meeting, June 25, we will welcome a new Interim Pastor/Head of Staff who will begin work July 1.

***Pastor Nominating Committee:** The Pastor Nominating Committee (PNC) remains very busy in their search for our Senior Pastor / Head of Staff. They are in the process of reviewing more than 125 candidates. Please keep them in your prayers as they discern God's call for Westminster.

***Summer Worship Schedule:** Just like in summers past, when our pastors were on vacation or on sabbaticals or mission trips, we will be turning to pastors in our

community who can bring different voices to our Saturday and Sunday services. Know we remain committed to providing consistent, excellent worship. We are very appreciative of Rev. Butch Sherrill's continued commitment to assist in worship as he has taken on additional responsibilities at Westminster.

*Healing Process: We understand that some in our congregation remain confused and hurt by Kathryn's Threadgill's departure -- feelings that have only deepened by Session's limited communications over the past few months. At our meeting on June 9th, Session voted unanimously to develop a plan to guide the Session, Staff, and the Congregation through a healing process with the help of the Alban Institute (or similar independent, ecumenical organization) and/or our new Interim Pastor.

* Youth Ministry: Concerns over our youth ministry have surfaced in recent months. We want to ensure our youth are equipped with the wide and deep resources Westminster has to offer, not only in leadership, but in education, fellowship and service experiences, while gaining a full sense of belonging to this faith community. We have hired Rev. Marti Hazelrigg, an ordained Presbyterian pastor with 16 years of experience in youth ministry, as a consultant to evaluate our existing program, its strengths and weaknesses, and to help us determine our growing edges — opportunities that might strengthen our youth program. We urge you to contact Marti and share your experiences, any concerns or suggestions you have for ways to enhance our youth ministry. Marti can be reached at marti.hazelrigg@westpreschurch.org or by calling the church office.

* Strategic Planning: The Strategic Planning Committee is currently meeting with all Westminster committees to discuss how our Strategic Plan fits with the individual committees' missions and explore ways to move forward with the four approved objectives: infuse every aspect of life at Westminster with Christ-centered discipleship, strengthen our sense of belonging and unity, improve people's lives throughout our community and our world, and increase diversity in our congregation.

Session is charged with dealing with these matters and leading Westminster. Your input is not only valued, it is encouraged. You are welcome to attend any and all Session meetings. Please don't hesitate to call, write or stop a Session member in the hall if you have a question. You can also email any comments to us at session@westpreschurch.org. We are here to represent you.

Congregations sometimes act as though God has only two hands and they are both tied behind God's back. We talk and act and worry as though the God who creates all things, the God who died for the salvation of the world, the God who dwells within each of us, can't possibly deal with Westminster's problems or how to work with a few hundred people at a time? God doesn't know what to do with a church down to one pastor? Or a church seeking its identity? A Youth Ministry seeking stability?

But, that is the very God who presides over all storms. We are convinced God has seen more in the time it has taken you to read this letter than Westminster has seen over the past 18 months. We believe that God will continue to use this congregation in ways that

are far beyond all that we could ask or imagine.

As we are reminded of God's love and how it shines on Westminster... we anxiously await the many wonderful things in store for our church we love.

Thank you for your continued prayers and support.

Session Members:

Carole Albright, Personnel
Karen Baldwin, Fellowship
Robert Bell, Children's Ministries
Jean Camp, Congregational Care
Melissa Carter, Adult Ministries
Tony Collins, Property Trustees
Leslie Crooker, Children's Ministries
Chris Dull, Property Trustees
Sue Durant, Congregational Care
Tim Elliott, Administration and Finance
Steve Fricke, Worship
Lisa Ganem, Adult Ministries
Daphne Havercamp, Worship
Scott Henegar, Administration and Finance
Mike Howard, Children's Ministries
Betty Kane, Adult Ministries
Stephanie Keaney, Youth Ministries
Melissa Kennedy, Fellowship
Evelyn Lukeman, Worship
Sarah Newby, Congregational Care
Carolyn Plumb, Outreach
Dana Resler, Congregational Connections
Buz Snead, Youth Ministries
Amy Speas, Strategic Planning
Kim Sue, Outreach
Dick Swanson, Congregational Connections
Dale Young, Strategic Planning
Wayne Young, Personnel

Rev. Mark Brainerd, Minister