

**JULY
MESSENGER
2020**



**CELEBRATING
GREEN@HEART**

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GENEROSITY
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**WORSHIP VIRTUALLY
WITH US
SUNDAYS ONLINE**

THE MESSENGER

A Message from Rev. Dr. Jimmy Shelbourn:



Dear Friends of Westminster:

Thomas Merton was a Trappist monk, an order which takes vows, not only of poverty and chastity, but of silence. He lived at Gethsemane Monastery in rural Kentucky. But in the 1950s, he had made a rare trip to that state's largest city.

**We pray,
worship and
serve. We are
the church in
action.**

Merton reflected:

“In Louisville, at the corner of Fourth and Walnut, in the center of the shopping district, I was suddenly overwhelmed with the realization that I loved all these people, that they were mine and I theirs, that we could not be alien to one another even though we were total strangers. It was like waking from a dream of separateness, of spurious self-isolation in a special world...

This sense of liberation from an illusory difference was such a relief and such a joy to me that I almost laughed out loud... I have the immense joy of being man, a member of a race in which God Himself became incarnate. As if the sorrows and stupidities of the human condition could overwhelm me, now that I realize what we all are. And if only everybody could realize this! But it cannot be explained. There is no way of telling people that they are all walking around shining like the sun.

Then it was as if I suddenly saw the secret beauty of their hearts, the depths of their hearts where neither sin nor desire nor self-knowledge can reach, the core of their reality, the person that each one is in God's eyes. If only they could all see themselves as they really are. If only we could see each other that way all the time. There would be no more war, no more hatred, no more cruelty, no more greed... But this cannot be seen, only believed and ‘understood’ by a peculiar gift.”

— Thomas Merton, *Conjectures of a Guilty Bystander*

We are likely to begin the new chapter of a new pastor for Westminster Church under the restrictions which have become the “new normal” – at least until there is a vaccination against the novel coronavirus. Meanwhile, the protests against racial bias in the enforcement of laws – a bias which should have been a relic of history long ago – may actually be a factor in a new spike in Covid cases. The race to “return to normal” when the virus is still a dangerous threat, is proving to be short-sighted. As I write, Texas joins a list of states, like Alabama, which flung open public access too soon.

In these uncertain days of dealing with the fears of pandemic and the need to re-assess cultural assumptions about race relations in this and many other nations, it would be good if we could take to heart the startling realization that we are all a part of a humanity that God chose to embrace in Jesus Christ. If only some of us could cling to that spiritual truth, the earth would make strides toward ending many of our self-imposed maladies.

Have courage in Christ!

Bridge Pastor Jimmy Shelbourn



Westminster Preschool re-opened for our summer session on May 26. We opened with some additional precautions in place, but students and staff alike have quickly and easily adopted them as just part of our regular routine! It is wonderful to hear the sounds of laughter and learning in the halls once again!

Our summer session has more of a thematic schedule and the students have already dug into the topics of Music and Movement, Cooking, Fantasy and Fairytale and Insects. Creativity and exploration have been plentiful in each classroom.



Do you know what happens when you soak rice noodles in cabbage juice, then squeeze lime juice on top (other than creating a very STRONG odor?!)? Or what ingredients, in what measurements combine to make Unicorn snot? Our students do!

We have also enjoyed our first visit from our friends at Kona Ice for a cool summer treat! They will be back at the preschool June 24, July 8, and July 23 from 10-10:45, and one last visit on July 31 at 3:00! If you are in the neighborhood, you are welcome to stop by for a cool treat as well! Look for them in the parking lot! The preschool will be closed the week of June 29-July 3. If you have any questions or are interested in enrollment, please email Rachel at rachelh@westminsterlincoln.org.





Dear Westminster Family,

Almost a year has gone by since I graduated from seminary and took the Associate Pastor position at Presbyterian Church of the Cross. I thought it was time to give you an update on my experiences. This first year, I am learning the ropes of being an Associate Pastor. I am primarily the care pastor at the church and I have duties assisting in worship, leading adult education classes and leading a college Bible study. Like all churches, we are trying to “be the church” during the COVID-19. Seminary did not prepare me for streaming a sermon, visitations via the telephone, or socially distant Bible studies. But, like everyone else, we are doing our best to be the church. I am blessed to have my first call at a church with a welcoming congregation that is dedicated to mission and education. I think what continues to fill my bucket is the abundant grace shown to me by the congregation. They truly embrace an attitude of hope and show their love as they reach out to others.

I pray you are all well. One of the blessings of COVID-19 is the chance to check in with you every Sunday! Seeing the beautiful sanctuary, hearing the organ, and remembering my church family bring me to the sacred space that I call home. It is one of the special sacred places that I feel God’s presence and hear God’s call. It is special that I can reclaim that space by just clicking a button on my computer. I am truly thankful for you all and your role in supporting me through my seminary training.

I should also give you an update on my family who have joined me at Church of the Cross. Mike is taking a little time to get to know the people and the ministries at PCOC before jumping in although I know he misses working with the youth. He continues to work at Sirius Computer Solutions and is busier than ever as companies seek to place workers at home. Liam is home for the summer and will return to Colorado School of Mines for his third year of college. He will have hybrid classes. Cael will be a junior at Lincoln East and is loving the study of art and philosophy. He is hoping that his wrestling season can still take place.

Be safe! Take care!

Grace and peace,

Rev. Christine Dempsey, Ph.D

Reminder: All information for The Messenger is due to Tracy Hoffman at tracy@westminsterlincoln.org by the 18th of each month. All announcements for The eVine are due to Joanne Gabriel at joanne@westminsterlincoln.org by 5 pm on Monday of each week.

Amazing Generosity Continues

Stewardship & Finance Ministry

Over the year we have seen exceptional acts of giving by members to support the ministry and mission of Westminster. We would be remiss if we did not celebrate with gratitude and joy these selfless but generous gifts to our church. Today we would like to say “thank you” for these recent, generous gifts that will leave a lasting impact on so many going forward:

West Steps Restoration – The Foundation and a group of private donors replaced and restored the cracking and failing concrete steps on the west entrance to the sanctuary. Both visually and functionally our “front door” to the community is now again a welcoming place.

Parent’s Night Out Program – The late Marge Young provided a generous donation to fund this community outreach initiative from our then Interim Pastor Val Putnam to support church and neighborhood families with fun and Christian education programming on Wednesday nights.

Ladies Administration Building Restroom

Renovation – The restroom south of the Lounge was renovated and updated this spring with the help of a single, anonymous donation.

Children’s Programming Gift – The late Jean Hyland, sister of Francy Sheele, provided a generous legacy gift of \$25,000 to support the children’s ministries here at Westminster. A portion of the funds have already been put into action and allocated by the Session to begin planning a new project to update the church and preschool playground.

The wonder of these gifts is that most if not all came as selfless acts... the Spirit moved them... to hear of the need and to give back to God and to Westminster in appreciation for the blessings already received. If you are feeling that same Spirit and would like to know more about the opportunities and needs here at Westminster, please reach out to Pastor Jimmy Shelbourn, to our bridge administrator Gwen Thorpe, or to any of us on Session or the Stewardship ministry. Thank you all again for considering Westminster in your giving plans now and into the future.

PRAYER REQUESTS, CONCERNS AND PRAISES

For prayer requests, concerns and praises, please send to the email address: prayer@westminsterlincoln.org. Requests will be forwarded to the Prayer Ministry Group on a weekly basis, or more often if needed. If you would like to be a part of the Prayer Ministry Group, please email your name, phone number and your email address to: prayer@westminsterlincoln.org.

CELEBRATING COMMUNITY AT WESTMINSTER

FEATURED GROUP: “GREEN@HEART”



Green@Heart is a sub committee of Mission and Outreach and works closely with staff and many other Westminster committees and other groups to incorporate earth care in the life of the church. New members are warmly welcomed—contact Laurel Van Ham for more information. Westminster’s stewardship of creation depends on far more people than those in one small committee,

and kudos are due to everyone who helps uphold our commitments as an Earth Care Congregation. Because of YOU, Westminster is Green@Heart.

Green@Heart meets monthly and that’s as “routine” as it gets. It’s possible that no other Westminster group enjoys as much variety in its activities. Some are serious—planning educational opportunities for adults, inviting Rep. Fortenberry to talk about environmental efforts in Congress; some are spiritual—working with pastors and our music programs to incorporate an appreciation of creation in our worship services. Some challenge families to try out new green practices at home. Some make it easier to do the right thing, like recycling all that Styrofoam packing material. Green@Heart activities are designed to reach people of all ages and interests. That means talking about earth care in Children’s Conversations and incorporating a service project in a youth retreat. It means planning field trips to visit the Hawley Hamlet neighborhood gardens or a water exhibit at Omaha’s Keneko Gallery and opportunities to enjoy locally sourced food with Saturday brunch at the Hub Cafe or Ladies’ Night Out at Billy’s. And who could forget the fun of creating sun-shaped door hangers and the auction finale that raised enough money to lease six LES solar panels?

Although many of this year’s Creation Celebration plans were preempted by the pandemic, one project is now taking root in the church parking lot. A Green@Heart discussion about native plants led to securing a grant with the Nebraska Statewide Arboretum for a landscaping consultation and the acquisition of over two hundred starter plants! A crew of Westminster volunteers tucked them into their assigned places in late May, and you can now check on their progress in the beds along the library drive and parking areas.

Green@Heart meets throughout the year, 6:30-8:00 PM on the third Monday of the month. We gather at a member’s home and start with casual conversation over dessert before focusing on planning and evaluating our efforts to promote creation care.





Here's what people say about their involvement:

I'm in Green@Heart because I wanted to be in a group that believed, supported and educated me in my mission to be a better caretaker of the Earth. The group is inspiring to me and helps me to educate others.

I am lucky to be here on this fine planet and I choose to honor God by taking care of its wonder as best I can. I'm proud that we at Westminster are taking important steps toward a lifestyle that reveres Creation Care.

I participate in Green at Heart because of a commitment to protect God's creation, the earth and all of its inhabitants; humans, animals, plants and other organisms. Being a part of Green @ Heart is one small bit that I can play to help maintain our environment for us and all of those around us.

When I was still the pastor in Beatrice I already knew about Westminster's involvement in ecological concerns. I was pleased when I joined the Westminster staff that the pastor assigned me to attend Green@Heart meetings. As a pastor, I firmly believe that a commitment to be stewards of the earth is a vital to Christian mission as care for the needy, evangelism, comforting the bereaved or social justice.

The consequences of a changing climate are similar to the consequences of racism, a pandemic or a recession in that they most profoundly affect the poor and vulnerable among us— "the least of these" as Jesus referred to such people. I feel compelled to do what I can to diminish those consequences.



We want to do as much as we can to give our grandchildren the opportunities that we have had to appreciate and enjoy our natural world.

I love the wonder of creation and fear for the future of our planet if we don't take better care of it. But that's pretty overwhelming if I'm looking at it all on my own.

Green@Heart is a wonderful community where we share one another's concerns and work as a team to take action. And action is always the first step toward hope.

When we joined Westminster and found out about Green @ Heart, it sounded like the perfect group for me to be a part of. I've learned so much from the other members and the experts that we have invited to our events. It's a fun group to be a part of, and Laurel treats us to delicious homemade pie at every meeting!



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VIRTUAL COMMUNION SUNDAY WORSHIP SERVICE | JULY 5, 2020

The Virtual Communion YouTube service will be posted July 5. The General Assembly Council and Clerk have given churches leave to have members prepare their own elements at home and receive as they watch virtual worship.

Before you watch the Communion service, please have bread (of any sort) and a cup of grape juice or wine for each member of your household who is watching.



Pastor Jimmy Shelbourn preaching.
Scripture: Deuteronomy 10:12-22,
Deuteronomy 26:1-11, Hebrews 11:8-16

