

WESTMINSTER PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH

WPC Westlake

THE COMMUNICANT

INTO THE WILDERNESS

Friends,

I've been thinking a lot about "the wilderness" lately.

If you were at our Ash Wednesday service, you heard me talk about the significance of Jesus spending time in the wilderness before beginning his public ministry. He was led there by the Spirit, and is tempted to take a few shortcuts. If he'd turn stones to bread, throw himself off the temple or bow down and worship the devil...just for a moment...he'd prove his identity and be given everything. Knowing a difficult journey was ahead, Jesus stayed the course.

The season of Lent invites us to step into the wilderness. It invites us to embrace vulnerability and to engage in a difficult journey. In a day and age where fear dominates our discussion and decisions, the season invites us to lean into a mysterious God who feels distant at times, doesn't always answer our questions and doubts with the responses we want to hear, and, yet, somehow still holds us in His hands.

As Jesus struggles in the wilderness, He finds strength in a few places. He remembers the history of his people, and how God provided for the people of Israel when they were in the wilderness. He also remembers

his identity, that he is the beloved Son of God. As we journey into the wilderness, we too need to be reminded that God is always at work and that we are loved.

When talking about Jesus and the wilderness, we often focus on his temptations. But the reality is, he returned to the wilderness often. We're told he got up in the morning and went to the wilderness to connect with his father, and that he led his disciples there as well.

Returning to the wilderness was essential for Jesus' journey, and it's essential for ours as well. Where do you go to connect with God? Is it the mountains, the beach, a coffee shop? How frequently do you enter that space? As we prepare for Easter, I invite you to spend some time being vulnerable before the God who calls each of us into the wilderness.

With you on a journey of faith, friendship, and service,
Pastor Dave Rohde



Spring 2020

WPC Westlake Calendar

- **March 22:** Outdoor Spaces
Watch for this presentation during worship, more on page 6
- **April 5:** Palm Sunday
One Great Hour of Sharing and one service at 10 am followed by a potluck brunch. Sign-up on the courtyard or email kathy@wpcwestlake.org.
- **April 9:** Maundy Thursday
Evening worship service at WPC at 7:30 pm
- **April 10:** Good Friday
Evening worship service at WPC at 7:30 pm
- **April 12:** Easter Sunday
Ecumenical Service at Pierce Brothers Valley Oaks 6:00 am
Worship Services at WPC at 9:30 and 11:15 am
There will be a Children's Egg Hunt after each service
- **April 28:** New Spring Session of Kids Fellowship Club (KFC) begins, please see page 7
- **May 10:** Mother's Day
Special recognition for moms in both services
- **May 16:** Family Bethlehem Experience Day
What's happening and how to sign up on page 7
- **May 31:** Pentecost Sunday
- **June 6:** Ventura County ACTION Serve Day
- **June 7:** Music Sunday
One music-filled service at 10 am
- **June 9:** Youth Sunday
Youth Sunday's worship services are led by our WPC youth group students. They will participate in all aspects of the services, from greeting, reading scripture and offering the sermon, to serving communion.
- **June 22 through 27:** Vacation Bible Camp
Save these dates for the Annual WPC Vacation Bible Camp. It will be a "Friendship Luau" to remember. Be watching for updates and additional information coming soon from Children's and Family Ministry.
- **August 1—August 8:** Annual Senior High Fellowship (SYF) Mission Worktrip
- **September 13:** Fall Flapjack Festival

ONE GREAT HOUR OF SHARING

Join with Presbyterians worldwide in sharing God's love with our neighbors-in-need around the world. On Palm Sunday, April 5, we will receive the denominational "One Great Hour of Sharing" offering. 100% of this offering is sent to the Presbyterian Mission Agenda, where 36% is distributed to the Presbyterian Hunger Program, 32% to Presbyterian Disaster Assistance, and 32% to Self-Development of People.

Special offering envelopes will be in your pew racks. You may also give by credit card at presbyterianmission.org/give-oghs, or text OGHS to 20222 to give \$10. Thank you for your generosity.



KINGDOM COME SERMON SERIES... CONTINUING

Pastor Dave has been sharing with us on "Kingdom Come," messages from Jesus' Sermon on the Mount. We began with the beatitudes, and are continuing through Lent learning how we can be "Salt and Light" in our world.

Following the Easter season, there will be some special days: Music Appreciation Sunday and Youth Sunday. This summer, Pastor Dave begins a series on spiritual disciplines called "Nudge." Come at 9:30 and 11:15 to hear God's Word!

HAVING AN "EXPECTANT" FAITH

Our senior high students and advisors recently returned from an amazing weekend at Forest Home in the San Bernardino Mountains. We enjoyed the time having fun, worshiping, and just hanging out with each other. The time goes fast but the relationships built and the messages each of the students brought home will last for a very long time.

We learned to have an "expectant" faith. That means expecting God to do some very significant things in our lives here at home, not just away on a mountain top experience.

We learned in Mark 4:19 that though we might want to remain at camp, cling to our friendships, and never lose the very real connection we feel with God, we need to return to our lives here at home and share the messages we received with others. We also learned that knowing scripture is very important to our faith but in addition to the knowledge, we must be "obedient" to the word and live our faith in real time.

Winter camp is always a very special time for all who attend and this particular weekend even included some SNOW! God is good!!

Blessings, J.R.

*Photos from SYF and JYF Winter Camp weekends
(JYF above and SYF below)*





SOUPER BOWL OF CARING

**THANK YOU FOR DONATING
860 POUNDS OF FOOD!**

Thank you to everyone who participated in the overwhelming successful *Souper Bowl of Caring* in February. Your generosity provided nearly 860 pounds of food! Manna is so thankful for the donation and looks forward to feeding 50 many people.

The need for food continues year round. Thank you for continuing to put Manna, our Conejo Valley food bank (go to mannaconejo.org for more information, volunteer opportunities and more), and our many food insecure neighbors on your shopping list.



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Women on Wednesday

Ladies of Westminster,

We are an ongoing weekly women's Bible Study that meets every Wednesday evening at 7:00 pm in the WPC Library to discuss various Scriptures—both from the Old and the New Testaments. Think about joining us—bring a friend! We meet in faith and friendship.

You're invited to contact Sue Minihan (please call the church office or check a printed newsletter for contact info).

Find a Perfect Devotional in the WPC Library

Somehow Lent seems like the perfect time for one to start the habit of spending time in daily devotion. So what is your "go to" for such a purpose? We regularly hand out short selections every Sunday with the order of worship. Seasonally, there is a booklet available with longer ones for those who keep them bedside. These are always in the Narthex and often on the deacon table. Adult Christian Formation offers a Lenten publication published by the Presbyterian Church to get you started.

You might want to borrow a book of devotions from the church library. These would be in the 242 category and be of personal interest or appropriate for groups. They often are written to a certain group of people: women, men, youth, or simply anyone. If you want to use a Bible, choose your version from our collection in the 225 section. It's always good to have something on hand so your intentions don't get lost in the hurry of everything else you seem to be doing!

Pick what you can manage in the time you've chosen and let it feed your soul, spirit, and sense of what you hope your relationship to God will always be. Seek Him there and enjoy.

Ruth Grey, book brigade



WPC NOW HAS A SOFTBALL TEAM!

Come out on Wednesday evenings to cheer on our co-ed softball team in their inaugural season! Contact Jerry Zimmerman for game times and location (jzimm@verizon.net).

Contact Information for Non-Staff Members

Many of these articles have a "contact person" but—in this online version of the church newsletter—the contact telephone numbers and email addresses have been removed due to our concern for our congregation members' privacy. We apologize for the extra step but please check a printed version or call the church office for the contact information. Thanks!

SPRING BLOOD DRIVE

Did you know that one in seven patients entering a hospital will need blood? On the morning of Sunday, May 3, the Vitalant (formerly United Blood Services) bloodmobile will be at WPC to accept blood donations.

Donating blood is safe and easy to do. But sometimes we all need help finding the power to do our part. We'll be here to guide you every step of the way and answer any questions to make you feel comfortable.



If you're in good health and meet the general eligibility criteria, then you are likely able to donate blood. Depending on the circumstances, if you were told previously that you couldn't donate, you might be able to now.

Due to COVID-19 (2019 Novel Coronavirus), we are recommending a 28-day self-deferral for donors who have:

- Have traveled to/from mainland China or South Korea.
- Lived with or been in close contact with individuals diagnosed with or suspected of having COVID-19 infection
- Been diagnosed with or suspected of having COVID-19 infection.

(If for any reason you wonder about your eligibility to become a blood donor all the current requirements are on the Vitalant website at <https://vitalant.org/Donate/Donor-Eligibility.aspx>)

On the Courtyard on Sundays in April, you will be able to sign up for an appointment time. See one of our youth deacons, who are sponsoring this visit, or look for the Bloodmobile poster. And thank you!

▶▶▶ W4W (Women for Women) meets most Sunday evenings, with various speakers and programs, and occasionally a relaxing dinner out (pictured).

Contact Erin Brown for more information about this group, which is for all women, all ages and stages.



Get to know your WPC Deacons!

We are the friendly faces of WPC who provide care and support to members of the church and community at large. We plan and host Memorial service receptions, work alongside the Congregational Life Committee, support Lutheran Social Services (LSS) and can't wait for our next Pie and Bingo night fundraiser. Please keep us in mind each Communion Sunday as your generous donations help us to HELP!

We are your WPC Deacons! Jo Zimmerman, Ed Wohlenberg, Lynne Wilkins, Kristina Virtue, Amy Theaker, Patricia Smart, Lisa Rush, Kim Robertson, Sue and Jim Reeves, Philip and Dianne Rammon, Michelle Nash, Kerby Langendorf, Tamara Kilpatrick, Ruth Grey, Laura Felberg, Phyllis Drenning, Lori Cross, Sandra Chang, Mike and Katelin Blum, and our Youth Deacons, Amandine Velten & Abigail McLane.



REVITALIZING OUR OUTDOOR SPACES

"The LORD will guide you always; he will satisfy your needs in a sun-scorched land and will strengthen your frame. You will be like a well-watered garden, like a spring whose waters never fail."

Isaiah 58:11

It is time to rebuild, and to dwell in the garden! This year we will rebuild our courtyard. We will honor the mighty oak that sheltered us for so long, that gave us a place to call "ours."

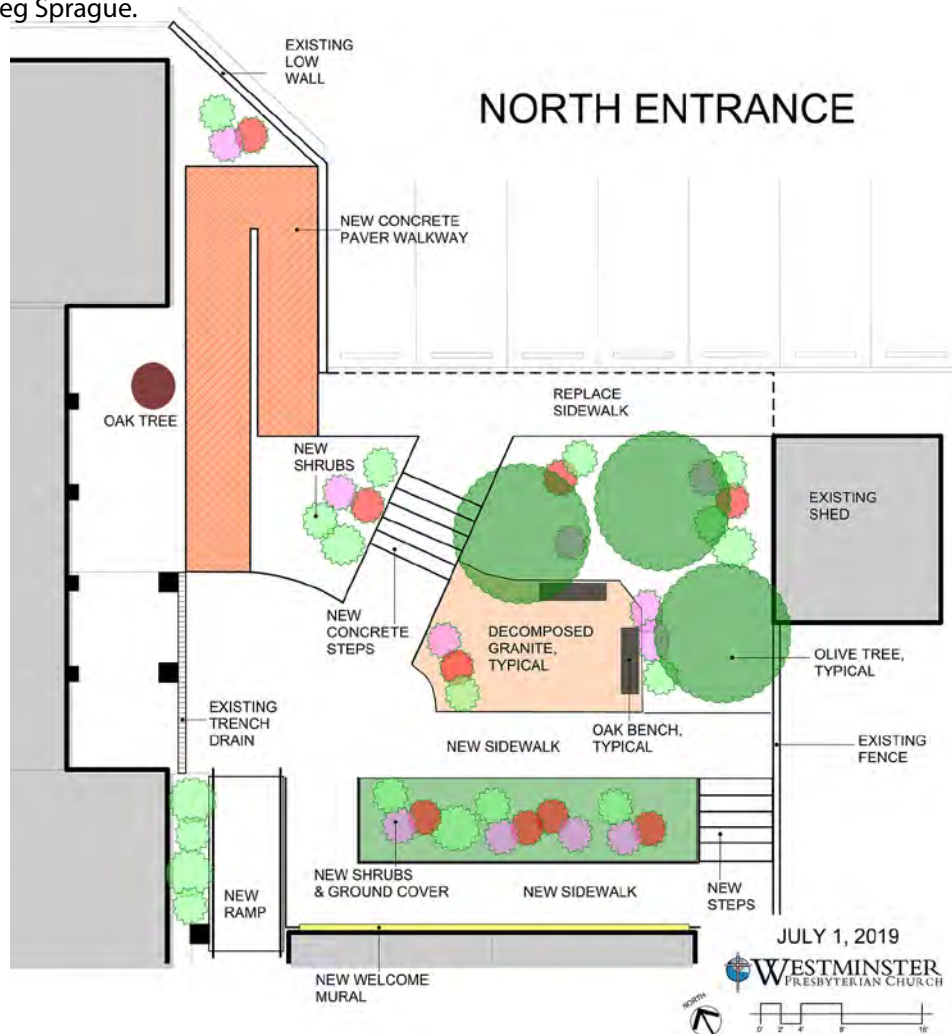
In October of 2018 we were all shocked and dismayed that our beloved central oak, the heart of our outdoor space, was dying. WPC's Property Committee began right away to develop plans and budgets for the revitalization of our courtyard. We also studied improvements to our Watergate Entrance and our North Entrance. Workshops and presentations were held throughout 2019 and now in 2020 it is time to realize our vision for these communal outdoors spaces to gather, celebrate and worship.

The master plan for the Outdoor Spaces at WPC has a total cost of \$247,000. However, we have broken the program down into smaller projects and we intend to begin work in late June of 2020, right after Vacation Bible School. A breakdown of costs is included in our project information at the church website www.wpcwestlake.org.

As we raise money for this important work, we firmly believe it is most important that we get 100% participation in this effort because our courtyard truly belongs to all of us. Please give whatever works for you and your family. We will be thankful for every dollar you give to our collective future.

We are exciting to be presenting this program on Sunday, March 22, so please join us at worship. We are asking that commitments be submitted to the church office or emailed to Terry (terry@wpcwestlake.org) no later than April 30. On Mothers Day, May 10, we will report on the campaign and describe the extent of the project to be completed this summer and beyond depending on the funds raised.

If you have any questions, please talk with anyone on the Outdoor Spaces task force: Ted Malinoski, Bill Amador, and Greg Sprague.





Join us on the road to Bethlehem!

Calling all builders, painters, organizers, cheerleaders and fun seekers to help revitalize our sets and enjoy a BBQ lunch.

Nursery care and fun children's activities provided

Middle/High school students wanted for leadership roles

SIGN UP:

- At Bethlehem table on the Courtyard
- With any youth group leader
- With Sarah Ramos (sarah@wpcwestlake.org)
- With Heidi Webb (heidi@wpcwestlake.org)

THE 2020 BETHLEHEM EXPERIENCE BEGINS THIS SPRING

Bethlehem Village, in Judea, December 25th, 1 AD, is alive with merchants and artisans selling their wares, children with their goats, dancers, nomads, three mysterious kings from the east and Roman Centurions, all amongst sheep, goats, and a camel on two bustling streets of homes, corrals and market stalls. So too are a young couple and their newborn son, housed in a stable because there is no room at any inn. And you, your family and friends can join them all on December 18 and 19 this year, as WPC again presents the "Bethlehem Experience."

However, the work begins this spring on refurbishing our existing Bethlehem sets. We are also building new village set components. Come help on Saturday March 14 and May 16 from 9:00 am to 3:00 pm. We are going to expand the Bethlehem Village streets and create a whole new look for the Bethlehem Experience. Bring your tool box and heavy work gloves. There are tasks for everyone and always a lot of laughter and excitement. Everyone is welcome.

Also, even if construction is not your thing, you are invited to come to WPC May 16 from 9:00 am to 3:00 pm with your entire family to help revitalize the set props and decorations, have fun with your kids, catch a great movie, prepare WPC Holiday Service scrolls to hand out to our visitors, and enjoy a BBQ lunch.

Join us for fellowship, fun and friendship! Contact either Michelle Nash or Ron Robinson (please call church office or check a printed newsletter for contact info).

JUNIOR HIGH SUMMER CAMP REGISTRATION NOW OPEN

We will be enjoying six fun-filled days at Forest Home Camp in the San Bernardino Mountains, July 19-24.

Junior High camp is the place for students to get away from the pressures of middle school and instead focus on their identity in Christ and their place in God's family of believers. Students engage in deep conversations, sound biblical teaching, and times of prayer and worship.

Creative games and interactive team challenges ensure there is never a dull moment. Campers will be able to participate all week long in the many recreation options: zip lines, water slides, kayaks, high ropes course, Olympic-sized pool, lake activities, archery, miniature golf, and laser tag.

Cost for the camp is \$575. Spots are limited and on a first-come, first-served basis. You can reserve a spot with a deposit of \$150; please register online at <https://wpcwestlake.churchcenter.com/registrations/events/388311>. Final payment is due by May 31. We want everyone to come; if finances are an issue, please contact Matt (Matt@wpcwestlake.org).

Spring Kids Fellowship Club

Elementary-age kids are invited to KFC on Tuesday afternoons, April 28—May 19.

Children will enjoy music, crafts, games, chapel, a meal, and other fun activities around a central theme.

The cost is \$40 per child or \$30 with early registration, and a second sibling is \$5 off.

Sign up on the Courtyard during April, or contact Interim Children's and Family Ministry Director Sarah Ramos (sarah@wpcwestlake.org or 818.889-1491 extension 128).



MORE ON VACATION BIBLE CAMP COMING SOON!

Please contact Sarah Ramos, Interim Director of Children's and Family Ministry, with any questions

Sarah@wpcwestlake.org

