

YOUTH MINISTRY UPDATE

Polar Blast And Lock-In on January 17-18, 2016

Are you ready for some winter fun?! Then sign up for POLAR BLAST Snow Tubing at Brandywine Ski Resort followed by a Lock-In at the church. WPC youth from 6th through 12th grades (plus one friend each) are invited at a cost of \$10 per person. This event will begin after church at 11:30 am on Sunday, January 17 and conclude at 9:00 am, Monday, January 18. Parents must sign a Release of Liability form for each youth participant. Forms are available in the Youth Center and in W-H Hall, or can be downloaded from westminsterakron.com. For more information contact Kacey Yates Gable at kyates.gable@gmail.com, 330-328-9189 or Pat Santelli at psantelli@sbcglobal.net, 330-283-809.

Mardi Gras planned for February 6, 2016

The party is about to begin. Join us on February 6, 2016 for a Mardi Gras Family Celebration at WPC. Plan on dinner at 5:30 pm. The menu and other details will be coming soon.

Parent's Night Out/Youth Child-Sit on February 13, 2016

WPC youth have an opportunity to engage with children of parents who wish to have a night out. Youth should arrive at WPC at 5:15 pm, and parents will drop off children at 5:30. Children will be picked up at 8:00 pm. Parents can sign up for this service in W-H Hall or by contacting Pat. Youth who wish to participate should RSVP to Pat at psantelli@sbcglobal.net, 330-283-8009. Our youth will be supervised by Pat & Sharlene Santelli.

Youth Visit Rockynol on February 14, 2016

WPC youth will attend Sunday School, stay through Worship and walk (if possible) to Rockynol Retirement Center with the Befrienders to deliver flowers to residents. Youth should RSVP to Kacey at kyates.gable@gmail.com, 330-328-9189.

Youth Progressive Dinner being held February 28, 2016

Youth visit WPC families during a Progressive Dinner from 5:00-8:00 p.m. on Sunday, February 28. We'll begin at the Jopperi home for appetizers, and then travel to Gable's house where Elliot will prepare soup or salad. Mike Grau will prepare the main course, and Kristy Yates will complete the meal with a scrumptious dessert. To sign up for this event, please contact Kacey Yates Gable at kyates.gable@gmail.com, 330-328-9189 by January 20, 2016.

The Origins of the Christmas Season

At least since the fourth century, churches have observed the births of John the Baptist and Jesus six months apart. The traditional dates are June 24 and December 25, which coincide with the pagan celebrations of the summer and winter solstices, though nothing in the New Testament confirms these dates. The church may have chosen these dates for several reasons. December 25 falls nine months after March 25, which was traditionally regarded as the first day of creation. In this view, the conception of Jesus was viewed as the beginning of a new creation. In addition, December 25 comes just after the winter solstice, when the days start growing longer. Christians saw Jesus as the true light of the world that would enlighten all people. (John 1:9) - source is *New Interpreter's Bible: A Commentary in Twelve Volumes*. Volume IX. Pg. 52.

PRESBYTERIAN WOMEN GATHERING PROGRAMS

Saturday, March 5, 2016 10:00 am in Wright-Herberich Hall
"Focus on our Community" Battered Women's Shelter
Mission: Toiletries and toy collection for Battered Women's Shelter
Host: Martha Circle, Devotions: Evening Circle
Dedication of PW Birthday Offering

Saturday, April 30, 2016 at 12:00 pm in Wright-Herberich Hall
"Focus on our PW Family" Food Preparation - New Concepts
Mission: Canned food drive for local project
Host: Discussion and Metanoia Circles, Devotions: Martha Circle

Circle Meetings And Leaders

Discussion Circle Meets 1st Tuesdays at 10:00 am
contact - Polly Fisher 330-664-1022

Martha Circle Meets 2nd Wednesdays at 6:30 pm
contact - Cathy Melver 330-873-1156

Metanoia Circle Meets 4th Thursdays at 1:00 pm
contact - Mary Lou Griffiths 330-688-7196

Evening Circle Meets 3rd Mondays at 7:30 pm
contact - Ginny Melver 330-374-1157

Sewing Circle Meets 3rd Wednesdays at 1:00 pm
contact - Peggy Messaros 666-9086

Mary's Circle Meets 2nd Fridays at 9:15 am at the church.
contact Denise Howell, childcare is available.

TRANSITIONS IN CHURCH LEADERSHIP

Many Thanks to You for Your Service!

Without the time, knowledge, and participation of capable leaders the church would, quite simply, cease to function. We cannot thank you enough for all that you do and have done to make Westminster a great place to be, as together we worship, serve, and learn about God.

The following leaders have now come to the end of their particular service. Thank you!

Elders: Kelley Adams, Ellen Daugherty, Kate Huisinga and Kevin Spring

Deacons: Shelley Koutnik, Lisa Bansen-Harp, Raphael Peoples, Earl Pierson, Bob Pulling, Pat Santelli and Anna Marie Wilton

Endowment Trustees: Ben Hoffman and Lance Mabry

Nominating Committee: Lisa Bansen-Harp (representing Deacons) and Bob Pulling (representing Deacons)

We also extend our appreciation to the following leaders who have accepted the call to serve beginning in 2016:

Elders: Ellen Daugherty (beginning a second term), Nancy Keogh, Sue Wallin and Gert Wilms

Deacons: Lynn D'Avello, Polly Davis, Sandy Grunich, Dan Shaughnessy, Susan Shellito, Marian Wahl and Margo Works

Endowment Trustees: Bill Bramley and Ben Hoffman (beginning new term)

Nominating Committee: Shelley Koutnik, Raphael Peoples, Barb Shriner, and Kristy Yates

Rachel is health coordinator for the East and West Gambella Bethel Synods of the EECMY in western Ethiopia. Rachel's work with three medical clinics in one of the most remote parts of Ethiopia offers her many challenges, the largest of which is finding well-trained medical staff willing to live and work there. She is encouraged by the commitment of the East and West Gambella Bethel Synods to overcoming these obstacles so that the people of the area may have access to health care.

Westminster Presbyterian Church has financially and prayerfully supported the Wellers for several years.

On Sunday, January 24, the Wellers will be visiting WPC so that they can speak at our 10:30 worship service. After church, there will be a luncheon in Wright-Herberich Hall so that the Michael and Rachel can talk with the congregation in a more intimate setting. The Outreach will furnish a tossed salad and dressings. We are asking that congregation members make your favorite soup to share with other members, or you may purchase or bake your favorite bread or rolls to also be shared. There are plenty of functional outlets for crockpots to be plugged in before Sunday School or Church. The Wellers are amazing people, doing God's work. We should all plan to hear about their mission in Africa, and to learn by their message.

Alexandra Walker Peace Corp Update

Alexandra Walker, a daughter of our congregation, is serving with the Peace Corp in Ethiopia for two years. She teaches English to girls and also helps current English teachers improve their language skills.

Alexandra is a graduate of DePauw University with a degree in anthropology/sociology. While a student she volunteered for Americorp Vista and traveled to South Africa to volunteer in refugee camps with DePauw Univ.

It is possible to follow her experience as an English teacher at allyinethiopia.tumblr.com. A recent blog describes the difficulties of Ethiopian female students. Most of them are kept at home to do domestic work, or marry young. She describes her students as the most eager, dedicated girls she has ever taught. On a recent Sunday over 100 girls made their way to school, some walking over an hour for the change to increase their knowledge. They understand that education increases their changes for a better life. The Peace Corp has recently introduced the Let Girls Learn initiative to expand access to education for girls around the world. The branding of this initiative brings a worldwide awareness to the educational inequalities facing your women.

EDUCATION CLASS INFORMATION

Children's Ministry Major Events Calendar January 2016-May 2016

Sunday School meets every Sunday at 9:30 am
Sunday School takes a break on January 3, 2016

Infant's Nursery (Infants through age 4) 9:00 am to Noon
Nursery- Pre-K (Ages 3-5) - Room 105, Bible Story Room
Grades Kindergarten through 3rd - Room 202, Godly Play
Grades 4 through 6 - Room 210/211, Tween Room
Choir Rehearsal 11 am - Children's - Kindergarten - 3rd Grade - Ms. Franzmann
Youth Choir - 4th-8th Grade - Ms. Howell
*or when church ends

2016		
January 3	3:00 pm	Ice Skating @ Lock 3, Akron
February 6	5:30-8:00 pm	Mardi Gras Party
March 27	10:00 am	Easter Egg Hunt
April 17	11:30 am	Family Event TBA
May 22	9:30 am	Last day of church school
May 29	11:30*	Memorial Day Picnic after church

Confirmation Classes Will Start

Confirmation class begins on Sunday, January 10 at 6:00 pm in the Youth Center. If you are interested in learning more, please contact Pastor Jon at jhauerwas.wpc@gmail.com.

MISSION UPDATE

Wellers Visit on Sunday, January 24

Michael and Rachel Weller were appointed in 1994 to serve in Ethiopia with the Ethiopian Evangelical Church Mekane Yesus (EECMY). Michael is PC(USA)'s regional liaison for the Horn of Africa, where PC(USA) works with partner churches in Sudan, South Sudan and Ethiopia.

OTHER NEWS

Good Neighbors

The demand for food at Good Neighbors remains high. Don't forget their need by bringing food to church on February 7 and March 6. They also can use your paper and plastic grocery bags. Place them in the box marked Good Neighbors that is in the coatroom.

Sewing Group

The group is in need of adult size bath towels to make bibs for local nursing homes. A box for your donated towels is in the coatroom. Thank you for your support.

Greeting Card Ministry

Please contact the church office if you feel anyone needs to be contacted by this ministry.

Acme Receipts for PW

This fundraiser goes to our mission program - both locally and globally. Please look for the boxes in the Narthex and Wright-Herberich Hall. Thank you again for your continued support for the missions of the Presbyterian Women.

Befrienders

Contact the church office if you or someone else would enjoy a friendly visit!

Yoga during Lent on Saturdays at 9 am

Beginning on Saturday, February 13 we will once again offer Yoga on Saturday mornings at 9:00 am for the community. Yoga is a great opportunity to spend an hour a week in a focused activity with an intention in mind for prayer and meditation along with beginner yoga moves. There will be a free-will offering for the leader and all levels are welcome. We will meet every Saturday until March 19, 2016. Join us and bring a friend!

Worship Change

At the request of our families with children, you will note some slight changes in our order of worship related to the Time for the Young Disciples and their dismissal from worship. Session has approved these changes beginning Sunday, January 3, 2016 and going forward.



Finance Report (through November 30)

Income: \$516,705

Expenses: \$573,727

Deficit: \$57,022

2016 Pledge Report:

We are pleased to report that we reached 90.73% of our goal as of December 28:

Received as of December 28, 2015:	124 pledges	\$300,875
2016 Pledge Goal:	143 pledges	\$331,630

Your financial commitment enables us to plan our programs for the coming year. Our educational opportunities for children, youth and adults, and our community outreach, local and abroad such as Third Sunday Dinners and support of three missionaries, depend on your generosity. If you have not made a commitment to the success of Westminster in 2016, there is still time to help us reach our goal. Pledges may be made online through our website, westminsterakron.com or call Eileen in the finance office for a pledge card (330-836-2226 ext.5).

Thank you for your generous support.

EDUCATION NEWS

Sunday School WILL NOT be in session on January 3, 2016.

New Nursery Staff



Pat Richards is a retired social worker whose career was predominantly at United Disability Services where she worked with disabled adults. She spends time with friends, in volunteer positions all around Akron and with her children and grandchildren.



Maggie Weiss-Vopat is a sophomore at Firestone High School in pre-IB and engineering studies and babysits for families in the local area.

Adult Education

Adults please join us on Sunday mornings at 9:30 am for one of our adult class options:

Library Conversations continues! It is wonderful to be able to discuss parenting in an open, supportive and safe place. Join us in the library with other parents and let's see what comes up...

B.R.E.A.D. is a Bible Study for our adult education class on Sunday's at 9:30-10:15 am in Room 106. If you would like to sign up or need more information contact Rae Leonard at Leonardrae4@gmail.com or 330-256-9316.

Eye-Opener Bible Study is another option for study. Join us on Thursday mornings at 8:00 am in Room 106 at the church. Come enjoy fellowship and discussion. All are welcome!

5@5

Season Seventeen 2015/2016 Remaining Schedule

February 7, 2016	Baldwin Wallace University Motet Choir
March 13, 2016	University of Akron Steel Drum Band
May 8, 2016	Mother's Day Opera/Broadway Gala

GROW

Celtic Garden

As the Westminster Flower Arrangers decorated with the lovely poinsettias they gave thanks! They gave thanks to our members and friends that gave in memory or in honor of loved ones this Christmas season. We hope the poinsettias added to your blessings this Christmas season.

SERVE

Third Sunday Dinners

WPC members will host our friends and neighbors from the community for dinner on Sunday, January 17 and February 21 in Wright-Herberich Hall. Dinner is served at 5 pm. Check with Anne Karney, meal coordinator, or Sharlene Santelli, volunteer coordinator, to see if your services are needed. Or come to serve as table hosts and share a fine meal with our church family and guests. During these winter months consider asking a neighbor or friend to join us for a warm meal and fellowship. All are welcome!

Totes for Hope

You are invited to participate in the Hope tote collection, a special Easter outreach ministry of the Haven of Rest to needy and homeless men, women and children in our community. We will be collecting full-sized personal care items beginning Sunday, February 14, through Sunday, February 28. The Haven of Rest will distribute the items the week before Easter. Personal care items that we take for granted are luxuries for many needy people. Please be generous. A collection box will be in Wright-Herberich Hall. The items needed are: toothbrushes and toothpaste, soap, shaving cream and disposable razors, shampoo and conditioner, deodorant, lip balm, socks, brush and comb, shoelaces, hand or body lotion, and facial tissues.

Westminster Presbyterian Church
Children's and Youth Ministry
Visioning Documents
Revised October 24, 2015

Mission Statement

The children and youth ministry engages and serves the families in our community, teaching God's word and nurturing faithful disciples who will grow in God's love.

Values

1. **We are faithful:** We teach children and youth to explore and grow in their faith through the biblical reformed tradition. Living a life of integrity, all are encouraged to deepen their relationship with God through questioning, discovery and prayer.
2. **We are joyful:** We lead with joy that grows out of faith and commitment to our ministry, creating an environment in which children, youth and volunteers flourish.
3. **We are inclusive:** We are open and affirming. We welcome all families and recognize each child and youth as God's unique creation.
4. **We are compassionate:** We offer a caring and engaging environment. We encourage a loving and respectful approach to others as we demonstrate God's love in our world.

Three-year Goals and One-year Benchmarks

(Target Date for Goals: Oct. 31, 2018

Target Date for Benchmarks: Oct. 31, 2016)

The Children's Renovation Team and Youth Design Team will evaluate and revise the 3-year goals and 1-year benchmarks annually.

1. **2018 Goal:** 45 children (3 year olds-12th grade) have participated weekly in their respective Bible class in the previous year.

2016 Benchmark: 30 children (3 year olds-12th grade) have participated weekly in their respective Bible class in the previous year. (SHEILA)

2. **2018 Goal:** Six intergenerational events have each averaged at least 40 children and youth and 60 adults in the previous year.

2016 Benchmark: Three intergenerational events have each averaged at least 20 children and youth and 50 adults in the previous year. (SHARLENE)

3. **2018 Goal:** An average of 15 children and 8 youth have participated in six church sponsored service projects in the previous year.

2016 Benchmark: An average of 10 children and 4 youth have participated in three church-sponsored service projects in the previous year. (ELLEN)

4. **2018 Goal:** An annual education event for parents/guardians sponsored by the youth ministry has taken place and involved at least 50 people.

2016 Benchmark: An annual education event for parents/guardians sponsored by the youth ministry has taken place and involved at least 25 people. (WALTER)

5. **2018 Goal:** An annual education event for parents/guardians sponsored by the children and family ministry has taken place and involved at least 100 people.

COME

Children & Family Event

Sunday, January 3rd at 3 pm. Meet us at Lock 3 to ice skate. Bring your own skates or rent them there. Cookies provided!



The Men's Club of Westminster Presbyterian Church

The Men's Club will meet at the Olive Garden in Montrose on Monday, January 11 and on Monday, February 8. We meet at 11:30 am. All men of Westminster are welcome. If you would like to be added to the reminder list, please call Art Schooley (330-666-3816) or Joe Henninger (330-867-5938).

Monday Night Supper Club

All WPC members are welcome to join us for dinner on Monday, January 25 at 6:00 pm. Bring a casserole, vegetable, salad, or dessert to share and your own place setting. Beverages are provided. Following dinner we will have a discussion on the future direction of the Monday Supper Club. For reservations, please call Pat & Sharlene Santelli at 330-825-7583.

Mardi Gras Party on Saturday, February 6, 2016

We are in the planning stages but plan on joining us on February 6, 2016 for a Mardi Gras Family Celebration at WPC. Dinner at 5:30 pm. The menu and other details will be coming soon.

ENCOUNTER

Book Discussion Meeting

The book group invites you to join us as we continue in our 15th year! On Monday, January 11, 2016, Kacey Yates Gable will lead *Dead Wake: The Last Crossing of the Lusitania* by Erik Larson.

With this fundamental transition in my view of God (from watching and judging to loving and forgiving), I began to understand scripture, the world around me, and the people in it in an entirely different light. Then, in seminary, one of my two closest friends from high school “came out” to me as gay. At the time, I remember telling him over the phone, “I don’t judge you, but I also don’t understand.” That was less than ten years ago. Today, I am sure that my words were deeply painful to my friend, which would explain why we didn’t speak very much for the next couple of years. I am thankful that we have since reconnected and that we remain in regular conversation now. Also while in seminary, I began seriously wrestling with those particular scriptures which focus on same-sex relationships. You may be interested to know that while Jesus had much to say about divorce, he was completely silent about homosexuality.

My whole life I have been friends with people who were gay. Sometimes I knew it. Sometimes I didn’t. But, the sexual orientation of my friends has never really mattered. Of greatest importance was the quality of our friendship. And, ultimately, what I have learned is that who one is attracted to has nothing to do with his or her character or ability to love God and neighbor. My position on same-sex relationships finally transformed during a mission trip to South Africa. There, in the presence of apartheid’s ugly past, I was reminded of my own lingering judgments. I knew that my heart was still clinging to a form of discrimination that both the world and I could do without. And when I came home from that trip, I never looked back.

All along the way, it was the church that changed me. It was the church and our scriptures which made me more willing to love and slower to judge others. Now, same-sex marriage is legal in Ohio, just as it is legal in the eyes of the Presbyterian Church (USA). As you would expect, I have already received a request to perform a same-sex marriage while serving as the Pastor of Westminster. In response, our Session voted at the December 1 meeting to allow the Pastor to officiate at legally binding, same-sex weddings.

I know that not all will agree with this decision. But, it is the logical next step in so many ways. You may recall a letter from my predecessor, Derek Starr-Redwine, endorsing same-sex blessing ceremonies at Westminster. That was before legally-binding weddings were permitted, both from the perspective of the national church and the state government. For me, participation in all marriage ceremonies is an affirmation of what God is doing in the lives of individuals and the greater community. And I rejoice when love is the law that guides us.

Peace,
Jon

2016 Benchmark: An annual education event for parents/guardians sponsored by the children and family ministry has taken place and involved at least 50 people. (WALTER)

6. **2018 Goal:** In the previous year there has been a 10% increase in the weekly number of children active in the life of the church.

2016 Benchmark: In the previous year there has been a 10% increase in the weekly number of children active in the life of the church. (CHAR)

7. **2018 Goal:** 10 youth and 10 adults have completed an intergenerational church sponsored mission/service trip to an out of state or international location.

2016 Benchmark: 5 youth and 3 adults have completed an intergenerational church sponsored mission/service trip. (LAUREL)

8. **2018 Goal:** Based on the Ministry Architects suggested ratios for staffing norms, the appropriate number of paid staff hours has been allocated to the youth ministry.

2016 Benchmark: Based on the Ministry Architects suggested ratios for staffing norms, the appropriate number of paid staff hours has been allocated to the youth ministry. (JON)

9. **2018 Goal:** Youth and adult volunteers have participated in an assessment of the youth center facilities and have provided recommendations as needed.

2016 Benchmark: A renovation has taken place in the youth center. (TODD)

Weekly Sunday Morning Schedule

9:00 am-Childcare available
9:15 am-Choir Rehearsal in the Music Room
9:30 am-Christian Education for all ages
10:30 am-Worship in the Sanctuary
11:30 am-Fellowship in Wright-Herberich Hall

March/April Script deadline: Tuesday, February 16 please have your articles about activities in to the church office by 12:00 (Noon) that day.

WPC on Social Media Follow us on **Facebook** at Westminster Presbyterian Church and **Twitter** @WestPresAkron. Evotionals and Sunday Updates are posted on these social networking sites, as well as upcoming events, pictures, and information. If you would like to be added to our email list please contact gwilson1250@gmail.com.

WPC Staff:

The Rev. Jonathan S. Hauerwas, Pastor (cell phone 360-510-1750)	jhauerwas.wpc@gmail.com
Sheila Svoboda, Dir. of Children and Family Ministry (Weekly office days: Tuesday and Thursday)	wpcchildren1250@gmail.com
James Mismas, Director of Music/Organist	musicdirectorwpc@gmail.com
Germaine Wilson, Director of Communication (Weekly office days: Monday, Wednesday, Thursday, and Friday)	gwilson1250@gmail.com
Eileen Martinez, Staff Accountant (Weekly office days: Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday, and Thursday)	wpcfinance1250@gmail.com
Jeremiah Ward, Daytime Custodian (M-F)	wpcbuilding@gmail.com
Pat Schumacher, Evening Custodian (M-F)	ps2ctldy@gmail.com
Amanda Schumacher, Sunday Custodian	schumacher.amanda@gmail.com
Kayla Elefritz, Childcare Director (cell phone-330-564-7580)	kayla_elefritz@yahoo.com



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The Script January-February 2016

The Church Reformed and Always Reforming

As you are well aware, our country has been transitioning in recent years toward a growing acceptance of same-sex partnerships. For some, this transition has felt slow and gradual. From this perspective, after decades of personal insults, denials, and discrimination, things are finally moving in a different direction. Equal rights now seem possible for all. For others, the change seems too swift and is unwelcomed. Meanwhile, the church, much like our wider society, has continued to engage in a period of discernment about the nature of relationships, marriage, and theology.

For most of my life, I was not a supporter of same-sex couples. But, at many points along the way, my opinion was challenged and ultimately, changed. In college, I learned that the Board of Directors of the American Psychiatric Association had, in 1973, removed homosexuality from the *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders* (DSM). Also in college, and as a result of campus ministry, I began viewing God primarily as the author of love and forgiveness. Next, I started the lengthy and ongoing process of questioning which rules and prohibitions found in scripture were God-given and which were a part of the cultural constructs, expectations, and norms of a given society at any point in time. If you are unclear about what I mean here, I invite you to re-read the Old Testament book of Leviticus.

(continued on next page)