



Beyond Being Nice

**“Be kind to one another,
tenderhearted, forgiving one another,
as God in Christ has forgiven you.”
(Ephesians 4:32)**

As the fall begins, many of us move out of our summer routines and back into patterns of school, work, and familiar fall rituals like attending football games (or volunteering in the parking lot!). With the change in season comes more opportunities for conflict, and a renewed need to build relationships of trust, even with people we don't always agree with. Maybe you're thinking about the upcoming midterm elections, family gatherings bringing together people you haven't seen in a while, or new classmates or teammates who aren't always easy to get along with.

It's tempting to think that our faith simply leads us to be *nice* to everyone. And I believe it does call us to kindness. But “nice” and “kind” aren't always the same thing. Niceness can be a way of avoiding one another: smoothing things over, staying pleasant, and keeping the peace by keeping our distance. Real kindness requires us to actually know our neighbor, to stay at the table through disagreement, and do the harder work of listening, reconciliation, forgiveness, and building trust, even when it is difficult.

Over the first three weeks of September, we'll be diving into a mini sermon series, focused on the idea of how Jesus calls us to think about conflict, forgiveness, and fairness in counter-cultural ways. We'll consider how followers of Christ are called to model the kind of selfless love that Jesus exemplifies, even when it can be hard to feel entirely charitable to all of our neighbors all of the time. We'll consider what it means to pay attention to one another, recognizing that the skills of

deep listening, honest speaking, and building healthy relationships are best practiced in everyday moments among people with whom we have established trust.

Here at church, we have some good, ordinary opportunities to practice these skills. On September 20th, we'll gather for our annual congregational meeting, looking back on the past year and looking ahead to the next one. Shortly after, in early October, we'll host several congregational listening circles, simple gatherings to build connections among ourselves and share hopes for where we're headed as a church. Don't worry, I promise there is not some great congregational conflict brewing. In fact, I regularly delight in the fact that Westminster is in a uniquely healthy place when it comes to mutual understanding, problem solving, and loving one another well.

Still, a healthy time is often the best time to practice these skills, considering how God is at work among us, and how we can do more to build loving relationships of trust and understanding, both within and beyond this church. So as you head into this fall, may you find in this worship series, and the gatherings to come, some practice for the larger, harder work of loving our neighbors well and listening to one another across difference.

Peace,
Rev. Hannah Lundberg

Engaging Our Neighbors

New Play Structure Constructed!

Westminster completed the installation of the new playground for ages 2–5 on August 27. This playground is a gift to the neighborhood and will also provide age-appropriate equipment for the children who attend UDT. Many hands made light work, as Westminster members drilled, assembled, and mulched. Many thanks to all who helped make this project a reality through your hard work and financial gifts. The primary funding for the project was through the general endowment and the children's endowment. A blessing and dedication of the playground is planned for September 13 following worship.



Sack Lunches for HOPE

Thank you to everyone who has contributed to our Fall sack lunch drive! We've got just a couple slots left: visit our website to sign up to provide needed items.

Prefer to Donate Funds Instead? If shopping isn't convenient, monetary donations are also welcome! Give online through the Westminster online giving page or by check. Please note "Hope Lunches" on your donation, and a member of the Mission Ministry Team will happily shop on your behalf.

Collection Dates: Please drop off donations at Westminster by Sunday, **September 13**. Collection bins

will be located at both the Scio Church and West entrances.

Want to Help Pack the Lunches?

We'd love to have you join us! If you have questions or would like to help assemble the lunches, please contact Lynda Berg (lrwberg@sbcglobal.net).



Football Parking

Kickoff to football parking season is September 5! There will be eight home football games in 2026, and we are expecting more demand for our parking facilities because of the closure of a large lot down the street. Football parking provides us with a wonderful opportunity to be welcoming and hospitable to those who use our facility. This is also a big fundraiser for the church, with a portion of the funds going to mission causes, and the rest supporting our general budget. We welcome anyone who can stop by for a few hours to join us! We always have a potluck (for those who can contribute)

which means plenty of (good) food, and the opportunity to chat and get to know each other. Bring a lawn chair, park on the street, come be part of the team, and Go Blue!



Gemini Concert on the Lawn!

Gemini returns to Westminster on Saturday, October 3, at 3pm. Join us for an afternoon of fun and music for kids and grown-ups alike! As a part of this event, we are inviting the neighborhood to participate in a community food drive benefiting Food Gatherers. Donations of non-perishable food or personal-care items may be brought to Westminster in the week leading up to the concert, or bring a donation day-of. More info about most-needed items can be found at foodgatherers.org.

Our Life Together



Annual Meeting

This year's annual congregational meeting will take place on Sunday, September 20th, following worship. We will share lunch together and hear updates from ministry teams, share celebrations from the past year, and conduct church business. Keep your eyes out for the annual report, which will be shared shortly before the meeting, so you can read up before the meeting. Please sign up on the bulletin board to help us plan for food. There are also opportunities to help with food prep, service, and cleanup.

Listening Circles

Westminster is launching a time of listening for the congregation to help us identify our future vision and who we want to be going forward. The first step of this process is "listening circles". We encourage all members and attendees of Westminster to participate in order to share your perspectives. The primary date for these listening circles will be on **October 4**, following worship. We will have a light lunch after which we will break into groups of 8–10 to reflect on various questions. We expect to be wrapped up by 2:15pm. Alternative dates are October 12 (7 PM) or October 13 (7 PM via zoom), but we highly encourage everyone who is able to attend on the 4th to do so. A sign-up sheet is on the bulletin board, or you can also email Hannah (hannah@westpresa2.org) to sign up for a time slot.



Blessing of the Animals: Recap

Over twenty humans and a dozen creatures, both live and those stuffed with love, joined in a medley of music, prayer, poetry, woofs, yips, and yaps at Westminster's Blessing of the Animals. The service was followed by treats and activities for all.



Children and Youth Faith Formation

Beginning again on Sunday, September 13th at 9:30am before worship, children and youth will gather on the 2nd and 4th Sundays of each month for classes. We will start the Fall with a focus on caring for creation, and then move through different faith practices through the year. Teachers and adult support volunteers are needed and greatly appreciated! Our curriculum is easy-to-follow, and you can serve either regularly or occasionally. If you are interested in spending time with our wonderful children and youth, and helping to support faith formation, contact Cathy Daniels (catld1121@gmail.com).

Christmas in September

From Joe Neely, Westminster Deacon:

Last year, while looking for a way to become more involved at church, I saw an item in the bulletin seeking a volunteer to spearhead the Deacons' Christmas Basket program.

"That doesn't sound too hard," I said to myself, and so I raised my hand. I'm glad I did.

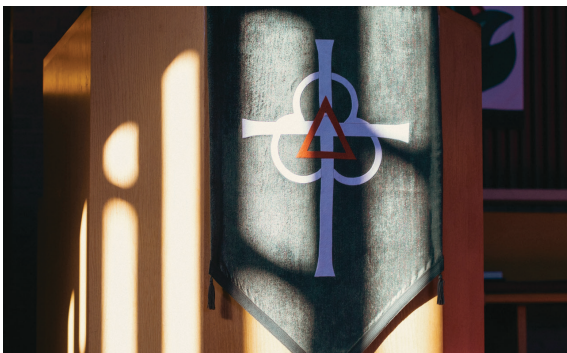
The Christmas Basket program consists of coordinating our church's efforts to help individuals or a family in need of assistance over the holidays. Names are provided by Washtenaw County Social Services, funds are collected from the congregation

and gifts are purchased and delivered to the recipients. It's quite simple and great fun.

I'm glad I volunteered last year and had plenty of help. Please let me know if this sounds like a project you might like to undertake this year. I'll be glad to help and, perhaps next year, you'll be able to share your experience with a new volunteer.

Feel free to contact me directly to ask questions or volunteer by phone (734-276-0612) or via email (joeneely55@gmail.com).

And let me be the first to wish you a Merry Christmas!



This Month's Preaching Schedule:

September 6: Rev. Hannah Lundberg (Communion)

September 13: Rev. Hannah Lundberg
11am Worship Resumes

September 20: Rev. Hannah Lundberg

September 27: Nate Veldhoff



Westminster Presbyterian Church

1500 Scio Church Road, Ann Arbor, MI 48103

734-761-9320 | www.westpresa2.org