



WESTMINSTER

presbyterian church | epc

GULFPORT, MISSISSIPPI

June 2021

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NEW MEMBERS AND BAPTISMS

The Westminster family continues to grow! Please say hello to Melissa and Peter Russell who became active members of our congregation on May 23. Their daughter, Olivia Ericson, along with Rylan Rhea Cuevas, daughter of Kelly and Justin Cuevas, and granddaughter of Anna Cuevas, received the sacrament of baptism, too.

LETTER FROM PASTOR WILL:

"The steadfast love of the Lord never ceases; his mercies never come to an end; they are new every morning; great is your faithfulness." --Lamentations 3:22-23

At the session's May stated meeting, the session voted to accept a recommendation from the worship committee to relax further some of the COVID-19 protocols that have been in place since June 7 of last year. Starting June 6, those attending worship in person will no longer be required to wear masks—although, they remain recommended—and congregational singing will resume. Every other pew will continue to be cordoned off to continue to keep the congregation spread throughout the whole sanctuary.

The session made this decision in light of the continued decrease of COVID-19 cases in South Mississippi, recent CDC guidance, and the wide-spread availability of COVID-19 vaccines for those who would choose to receive them.

In writing this letter, I looked back over pastoral letters regarding COVID-19. I am still rather astonished by the fact that in February of 2020, we hosted a missionary from Japan, Roger Lowther, who talked with us about the novel coronavirus wreaking havoc in the Far East. By March 17, the session was beginning discussions about how to keep our congregation safe as the virus had been discovered in Mississippi. By the end of March, the session came to the most difficult decision to suspend all in-person activities at Westminster.

I assumed we would be back in person by Easter of 2020, with a great celebratory worship service that day; however, it was not until June that we were able to come back in-person with any degree of safety. Even then, with the COVID-19 spike in the fall, the session was forced, briefly, to suspend in-person worship again.

To be able to say that Westminster has come far enough to lift our voices in song—that the church survived a year that proved so devastating for so many—is a source of nearly indescribable joy to me. Certainly, the normal we have now is a new one: We will continue a virtual option for worship and we will continue to have masks and hand sanitizer for all those who would like them. In the end though, at the core of our new normal, which we are still discovering, will still be our Westminster family of faith.

To all those who stepped forward in faith these last 18 months, and continued in worship—in whatever form it took, in financial support, in participation in Christian education and mission, in welcoming a great influx of visitors, in keeping in touch with those who could not participate in the life of the church, in showing kindness and encouragement: Thank you.

Truly, great is His faithfulness. And thank you for reflecting that faithfulness to each other and our community.

This year, the newsletter has shifted from "institutional" content to much more reader-submitted content. The story of Westminster, which we know has been written by God himself, belongs to its members and friends: Please help tell it! If you take pictures of an event or have an idea for an article, please send it to office@gulfportchurch.org or call (228) 864-3143. Please know that due to space limitations and mission focus, submissions may have to be edited or held for a future edition.

PANCAKES!

Westminster's Sunday School teachers work diligently every week to provide an excellent Christian Education for anyone who would like to have it! Not only are they teaching Westminster's children basic Bible stories, but they have also explored the historic doctrines of our faith, including the Apostles' Creed. Recently, the Sunday School classes learned simple graces to offer before mealtime to thank God for providing the food we eat. Students were able to practice these graces before a pancake breakfast cooked by Pastor Will on May 23. Good, job WPC kiddos!



LIFEHOUSE YOUTH UPDATE:

LifeHouse Youth will meet Sundays, June 6 and 27 at 5 p.m. See you there!!

Also, a great big thank you to everyone who supported our baked potato sale on May 23! We made right at \$650! We are particularly grateful to Wendy's on Pass Road for donating the majority of the potatoes and Feed My Sheep for contributing chili, butter, and cheese. Parents and youth worked so hard to make this a success. Eight of our

LifeHouse participants will be attending Camp of the Rising Son at French Camp Academy for a week in July. Camp costs \$525 a person, and we are grateful to be able to help defray some of that cost for participants. We are still able to take donations through our "Money Board," which you can find in the narthex: Every single bit helps. Thank you!

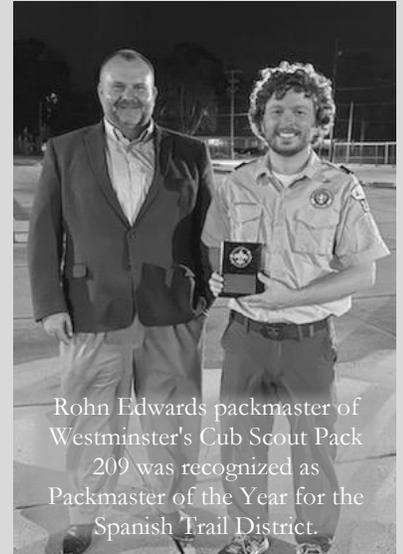
Thank you to Amy and Eli Underhill and Gay Graves and Boyd Letcher for hosting a wonderful LifeHouse pool party on May 23. The youth and their younger siblings had such a great time.



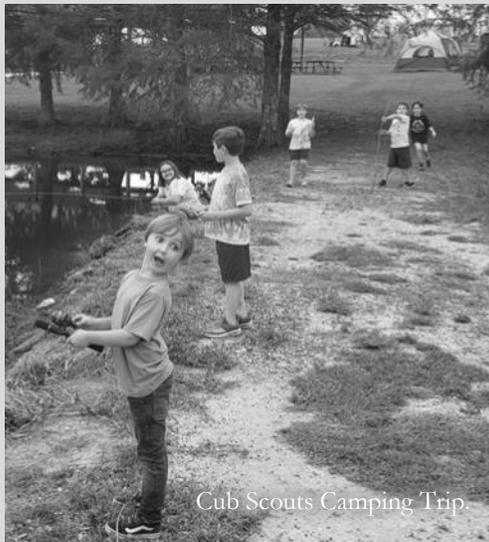
SCOUTS: Westminster's Girl Scouts and Boy Scouts have had an active Spring! Girl Scout Troop 3542 had 21 girls bridge from one rank of scouting to the next on May 9. Cub Scout Pack 209 held its annual Blue and Gold Banquet on May 15, and their graduation the following week. On May 16, all of Westminster's scouts and their families attended the post-poned Scout Sunday: More than 140 people attended worship that day! Westminster's scout programs, which are becoming a more and more integral part of the church's larger youth ministry and outreach mission, have continued to thrive during 2020-2021. Our members are always encouraged to take the opportunity to work with and meet our scouts and their families, and to welcome them into the larger Westminster community of faith.



Cub Scouts Graduation.



Rohn Edwards packmaster of Westminister's Cub Scout Pack 209 was recognized as Packmaster of the Year for the Spanish Trail District.



Cub Scouts Camping Trip.



Girl Scouts Bridging Ceremony and Banquet.



Girl Scouts Bridging Ceremony and Banquet.



Five of the seven Eagle Scouts recognized at this year's Spanish Trail District banquet were from Westminister's Troop 209.

DR. & MRS. C. A. WALKER, JR. SCHOLARSHIP

Westminster is pleased to recognize this year's class of C.A. and Helen Walker Scholars. These students have received scholarships drawn from memorial funds given in memory of Dr. and Mrs. Walker and superintended by the Walker family. Way to go, students: We can't wait to see where the Lord will lead you in this next chapter of your lives.:

Conner Davis: Conner is a graduating senior at the Mississippi School for Mathematics and Science (MSMS) and plans to attend the Honors College at Mississippi State University majoring in Computer Engineering.

Delia Hewes: Delia plans to attend Nashville State Community College.

Sarah Hill: Sarah plans to attend the University of South Alabama majoring in Neuropsychology and minoring in Business Defense Law.

Bianca McKinley: Bianca plans to attend Mississippi State University studying graphic design and philosophy.

Mackenzie McKinney: Mackenzie plans to attend Pearl River Community College.

Tanner McKinney: Tanner plans to attend Mississippi College majoring in Liberal Arts.

Trevor Mercado: Trevor plans to attend Mississippi Gulf Coast Community College.

CONGREGATIONAL MEETING JUNE 6

The session has called for a congregational meeting immediately following the Service for the Lord's Day on June 6. The purpose of the meeting is to elect a new trustee; to elect session members; to elect a congregational nominating committee; and to act on the session's proposal to make session terms more flexible. See the proposed language below:

Motion from the Nominating Committee

The Committee moves to amend and revise the congregationally established requirements for the size of session and composition of its classes by adding language to Article III ELECTIONS, in the Rules of Operation for the Session as follows:

1. Terms of service for Ruling Elders on active service on session shall be consistent with the current requirements set forth in the EPC Book of Order. Those requirements are presently as stated below.
 - 9-15 Term of service of Ruling Elders and Deacons

While ordination is for life, active service on a church Session or Board of Deacons may be for a specified term. A local church, at a duly constituted congregational meeting, may elect to establish limited terms of service for either or both Ruling Elders and Deacons. If so, the following stipulations apply:

 - A. Terms shall be for not less than three years except to initiate the system or to fill vacancies.
 - B. There must be at least three classes; and an officer who has served all or part of two consecutive full terms shall be ineligible for reelection for one year.
2. Consistent with the EPC Book of Order, there shall be three classes, each serving for a period of three years. The total number of Ruling Elders on session, while ordinarily nine, shall be not less than six nor more than twelve. Class size, while typically three, need not equal. The Nominating Committee, with approval of session, may set incoming class size to less or more than three, provided the class size is within the range allowed by these standards. Each class shall have at least one member, and shall not ordinarily exceed four.
3. Consistent with the EPC Book of Order, and subject to its limitations, Ruling Elders in an outgoing class may be nominated and elected to a second consecutive three year term. Once serving all or part of two consecutive full terms the officer shall be ineligible for reelection for one year.
4. Nominations for Ruling Elders in a particular class will be made by the Nominating Committee at a congregational meeting called for the purpose of electing the class in accordance with the EPC Book of Order and other provisions of these Rules. Nominations may be made from the floor, provided the proposed nominee has agreed to be nominated. Nomination from the floor may not expand the size of the class as previously determined by session within these standards.

Westminster has an Amazon Smile account. To learn how to earn money for Westminster while shopping on Amazon (at no extra cost to you), call the church office or see Jane Bloss.





**GATHER & GO: JESUS & THE GREAT COMMISSION
SERMON SERIES FOR SUMMER 2021**

It's no secret: The Christian church in the West is shrinking. There are any number of reasons why: But what are we, at Westminster, supposed to do about it? And why is it important that we do, in fact, do something about it? This summer, we will take a close look at the Great Commission, Matthew's account of Jesus's last words to his followers, and explore the power of and methods behind Christ's simple command to go and make disciples of all nations.

Gather

- Week One: Matthew 28:16
"An Imperfect Church with a Perfect Commission"
- Week Two: Matthew 28:17
"Worshipping and Wavering"
- Week Three: Matthew 28:18 (Part 1)
"You Can't Go It Alone"
- Week Four: Matthew 28:18 (Part 2)
"The Universal CEO"

Go

- Week Five: Matthew 28:19a
"The Church Has Left the Building"
- Week Six: Matthew 28:19b
"Revival and Relationships"
- Week Seven: Matthew 28:19c
"Bringing Them In: Baptism Matters"
- Week Eight: Matthew 28:20a
"Teaching Them: Theology Matters"
- Week Nine: Matthew 28:20b
"There Is a Future: And Jesus Is There"

ONLINE AND APP-BASED GIVING

Westminster is now set up for online and app-based giving. Visit gulfportchurch.org to give online, or download the secure Tithely app from Android or Apple to your phone and search for Westminster to give via app. Gifts can be made through credit card, debit card or bank transfer, and can be set up on a recurring basis. Tithely does charge a small fee for each transaction: You will have the option to add to your gift to cover these fees. Westminster is grateful to everyone who has pledged and/or given his or her financial support to keep this Christian ministry alive and robust for generations to come. For more information about Westminster's financial health, please see Stewardship chairman Wayne Tisdale or Treasurer Jane Bloss.



TITHE.LY



July

June

- | | | | |
|----|-------------------|----|-------------------|
| 1 | Connie McCabe | 11 | Sarah Ellzey |
| 8 | Sara Beth Gregory | 12 | Charlotte Scott |
| 8 | Haynes Nault | 13 | Thomas Batson |
| 8 | Hudson Williams | 15 | Dot Cunningham |
| 12 | Sophia Batson | 15 | Philip Shaw |
| 13 | Karen Barnard | 15 | Nancy Stone |
| 17 | Mike Skeen | 20 | Jake Ellzey |
| 19 | Linda Necaise | 21 | Shanna Batson |
| 21 | Analeise Williams | 25 | Elise Everett |
| 23 | Eliza Williams | 27 | Carolyn Cadenhead |
| 24 | Eddie Wilson | 28 | Alice Bellanger |
| 27 | Summer Hewes | 30 | Vicky Heath |
| 29 | Walter Dukes | 31 | Phillip Hopkins |

FROM THE STEWARDSHIP COMMITTEE... DID YOU KNOW?

Westminster has implemented the unified budget for over 30 years. Each year, the session committees decide on plans for the following year, submitting a budget for the funds needed to carry out the various missions and ministries of our church. Then, one budget is prepared. We don't have separate accounts to raise funding for Missions, Sunday School, operational expenses, etc. We operate under this one unified budget and each year ask you for pledges towards that budget. We also promise not to ask for special offerings during the year, as many churches do, unless approved by the session. All donations to the church are ordinarily applied toward meeting this unified annual budget.

TREASURER'S REPORT FOR APRIL:

Budgeted income	\$22,413.69
Budgeted expense	\$18,271.16
Gain for April	\$4,142.53

Most committees are operating within their set budgets. Unfortunately, those budgets are not as large as we would like. If you want to help, the best way to do this is to make your donation to the general fund. Then all committees will be able to share in the funds.

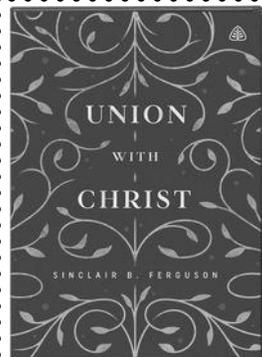


SANCTUARY FLOWERS

The sign up sheet for Sanctuary flowers is posted on the bulletin board next to the nursery. **NEW:** A link to an online signup chart is now available at gulfportchurch.org.

SUNDAY FUNDAY: Church friends can become best friends! Sunday School for children and youth happens each week at 9:15 a.m. Students have been working through the foundation of the Christian faith by studying the Exodus and the 10 plagues. Sunday School classes are safe: Rooms are thoroughly cleaned, students are encouraged to use hand sanitizer, and masks are provided for any participants that does not have one.

CHILDREN'S Sunday School



ADULT SUNDAY SCHOOL: Sundays at 9:30 a.m. led by Pete Bloss in person and via Zoom.

The Adult Sunday School class led by Elder Pete Bloss is studying the video-based study by Dr. Sinclair Ferguson, "Union with Christ." *The Zoom meeting ID number is 817 0590 9102, contact Pete at 228-861-0817 if you have issues or are prompted to give a password.*

Class description: The Apostle Paul had no question about what it meant to be a Christian: he was "in Christ." This simple phrase encapsulates the glorious benefits and blessings of the Christian life, and the importance of this expression is underscored by how regularly Paul used it. But many Christians today suffer from an identity crisis, unaware of this truth and how this new identity can reshape every aspect of their lives. In this teaching series, Dr. Sinclair Ferguson explores the crucial meaning of our union with Christ, revealing that being a Christian is far more wonderful than many of us know.

POTLUCK AND HYMN SING

How much have we missed singing and eating together during COVID-19? We'll be able to do both again at a special in-person potluck and hymn sing on Sunday, June 27! Bring your favorite dish to share at 5 p.m. We'll join with the LifeHouse Youth students for supper, and about 6 p.m., the youth will go to their meeting, and the rest will head to the sanctuary to sing! The hymn sing will be broadcast live on Facebook Live and gulfportchurch.org. Do you have a favorite hymn? Let us know! We'll primarily use the "Celebrating Grace" and "Sounding Joy" hymnals; however, if your favorite is not in either of those, with enough notice, we'll make sure to have copies available. Send requests to office@gulfportchurch.org or call (228) 864-3143.



FEED MY SHEEP ROUTE VOLUNTEERS: Westminster has sponsored a home delivery route for Feed My Sheep for many years. During the COVID-19 pandemic, LeAnn Davis has filled in regularly for Westminster members who ordinarily volunteered for the route, but were unable to do so due to health concerns. As Westminster members receive their vaccines, or otherwise become more comfortable with venturing out from home, we are looking for volunteers who would like to return to the route, or explore beginning for the first time. Please contact LeAnn at (228) 864-3143 or Westminster's route captain, Rachel Price, at (228) 864-5737 for more information.



NEW BOLLARD LIGHTS

The Property Committee is grateful for a surprise gift that allowed for the replacement of the bollard lights in the church's front courtyard. The older lights had cracked and become terribly discolored: Several had quit working. The new lights not only make our courtyard shine in the evening, but they present the message to our neighbors that Westminster is alive and actively able to be good stewards of our buildings and grounds. Many thanks to Robert Wood and Jim Roberts for installing the lights in order to make the project more affordable!



* Many thanks to Seabee
* Chaplain Jamieson Prevoznak
* for preaching May 30 in
* observance of Memorial Day.



THE EASIEST EVANGELISM IS INVITING A FRIEND TO JOIN YOU FOR WORSHIP.

SAVE-THE-DATES: VBS AND FALL FESTIVAL



Westminster's annual vacation bible school will look quite different this year! It will be Wednesday, October 6 through Friday, October 8, culminating with the Fall Festival on Saturday, October 9. Why October? The Gulfport School District will begin a new "flexible schedule" academic year this fall, which will feature shorter summer breaks and new "intersession" breaks in the Fall and Spring. Instead of packing more into a shorter summer, the Discipleship Formation committee has decided to take advantage of these new breaks to make sure children have faith-forming activities throughout the year. October, also, might be a bit cooler for our VBS faculty and students! Look for more information coming soon.

June 2021

SUN	MON	TUE	WED	THU	FRI	SAT
30 Children's Sunday School <i>in-person</i> , 9:15 a.m. Adult Sunday School <i>in-person</i> , 9:15 a.m. Worship, 10:30 a.m. Lifehouse Youth: 5-7 p.m. Hymn Sing <i>via Facebook</i> , 5:30 p.m.	31 	1 Prayer Group, 10 a.m. Congregational Life, 5:30 p.m.	2	3	4	5
6 Children's Sunday School <i>in-person</i> , 9:15 a.m. Adult Sunday School <i>in-person</i> , 9:15 a.m. Communion Sunday / Worship, 10:30 a.m. Congregational Meeting after Worship Lifehouse Youth, 5-7 p.m. Hymn Sing <i>via Facebook</i> , 5:30 p.m.	7 Worship Committee, 6:30 p.m.	8 Prayer Group, 10 a.m. Discipleship Formation, 6:30 p.m.	9	10	11	12
 13 Children's Sunday School <i>in-person</i> , 9:15 a.m. Adult Sunday School <i>in-person</i> , 9:15 a.m. Worship, 10:30 a.m. <i>No LifeHouse Youth</i> <i>No Hymn Sing</i>	14 Missions Committee, 7 p.m.	15 Prayer Group, 10 a.m. Property Committee Meeting	16 Stewardship Committee, 10 a.m.	17	18	19
20 Children's Sunday School <i>in-person</i> , 9:15 a.m. Adult Sunday School <i>in-person</i> , 9:15 a.m. Scout Sunday / Worship, 10:30 a.m. <i>No LifeHouse Youth</i> <i>No Hymn Sing</i>	21	22 Prayer Group, 10 a.m.	23	24	25	26
27 Children's Sunday School <i>in-person</i> , 9:15 a.m. Adult Sunday School <i>in-person</i> , 9:15 a.m. Worship, 10:30 a.m. Lifehouse Youth, 5-7 p.m. Potluck & Hymn Sing, 5 p.m. Hymn Sing <i>live and via Facebook</i> , 6 p.m.	28	29 Prayer Group, 10 a.m.	30	1	2	3



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