



WESTMINSTER

presbyterian church | epc

GULFPORT, MISSISSIPPI

October 2020

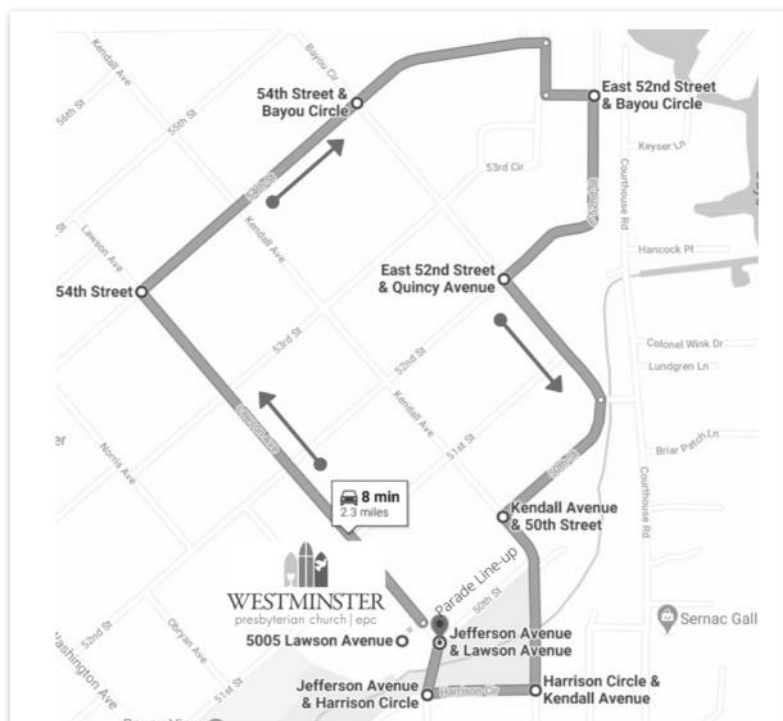
Inside this Edition

- Fall Festival Parade, p. 1
- Tuesday Chats, p. 2
- Scouts update, p. 3
- Gulf South Presbytery update, p. 3
- The Lord's Supper, p. 4
- New Sermon Series, p. 4
- Calendar, p. 5
- Sunday School, p. 6
- Lifhouse Youth Group, p. 6
- Congregational Care update, p. 7
- Pop-Up Hymn Sings, p. 7
- Advent Festival, p. 7
- Adult Sunday School study, p. 7

FALL FESTIVAL PARADE: OCTOBER 10 AT 11 A.M.

We can't wait for our parade! Westminster's first-ever Fall Festival Parade, a substitute for the covid-cancelled annual Fall Festival, will roll through Bayou View on Saturday, October 10 at 11 a.m. Please remember to keep a six-foot distance between family groups, to wear a mask, and not to park in people's front yards. Would you like to be in the parade? If you have a motorcycle, hotrod, classic car, or any car, please feel free to join the fun by driving in the parade—you can even decorate your vehicle, too! Just let the church office know so we can keep the Gulfport Police Department informed of the parade's length, per our permit. Children of the church can also ride on the church's hayride, which will lead the way. Due to social distancing, space will be limited, so RSVP to the church office.

A limited number of parade t-shirts will also be available for purchase. If you would like one, please call the church office. They are \$20 each.



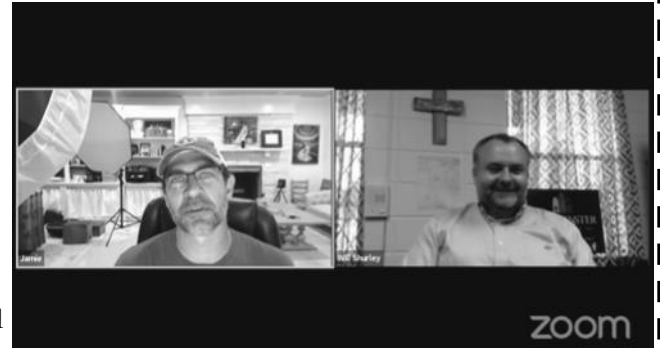
Fall Festival Parade
Saturday, October 10
11 a.m.



OCTOBER 10, 2020

TUESDAY CHATS: MOST TUESDAYS AT 3 P.M.

Pastor Will conducts a live, online chat on his Facebook page most Tuesday afternoons at 3 p.m. with a varied line-up of participants. The interviews generally rotate between a theological topic in the life of the Christian church or a mission organization supported by, or of potential interest to, Westminster members and friends. Past guests have included the Rev. Dr. Jim Goodloe of the Foundation for Reformed Theology on the importance of the Reformed faith today; the Rev. Dr. Nancy Lammers Gross of Princeton Theological Seminary on the role and worth of preaching in churches today; Andy Mayo of Medical Benevolence Foundation on medical mission; Chad Riemann of Riemann Family Funeral Homes on funeral customs and planning, especially during COVID-19; and David Lion of Feed My Sheep on the coronavirus's impact on the homeless. Guests are scheduled week to week: Check the church's Facebook page for upcoming chats.

**LETTER FROM PASTOR WILL SHURLEY**

Like so many of you, I have found myself increasingly desensitized to the seemingly never ending chaos in the world. Just when we think another norm cannot possibly be broken, it happens again. A few days ago, though, I actually found myself looking at my computer screen in stunned disbelief. A friend had alerted me to what was then the number one song on the Billboard Hot 100, which is a weekly ranking of popular music consumed in America. This particular song had, in fact, been ranked number one for six weeks, and, at the time of this letter, had only just dropped to number two.

I knew it would be racy, given the nature of the megastar who performed it, but when I looked up the lyrics--out of simple curiosity--I could not believe its level of abject filth. It is so vile that I won't reprint the song's name or the artist who recorded it here: It is not something to be celebrated. Lest you think your pastor is simply projecting a level of pastoral prudishness, let me assure you I am not: I know what locker room talk is. I understood every word, turn of phrase, and allusion in the song's lyrics--not that I am entirely proud of that fact--but, still, I cannot fathom a situation in which any of the words I saw on my screen could ever be remotely uttered appropriately.

Yet--and this was the main reason for my stunned disbelief--so many Americans were willingly and publicly consuming this verbal obscenity that it ranked as the number one song in our country for six weeks!

What are we consuming, particularly through our eyes and ears? What we take in matters, because, as food fuels our bodies, so do images and sounds fuel our minds and our spirits. There is some level of junk we will simply absorb by the fact we live in a human society--sort of like the occasional McNugget and fry that just makes for a convenient dinner. In this day and age, though, it is beyond a doubt that there are powerful forces who outright assault our senses in the hope our behaviors, and our economic choices, might be shifted for their gain--regardless of the collateral damage to our souls.

Let me be blunt: They do not care about our souls.

So what can we do? The short answer is to watch our diets--to exercise control not just over what we will not consume, but to change habits so that we will consume what is healthy. We will be bombarded with words, images, and sounds that exploit, degrade, and debauch, all of which are a direct affront to our humanity, and bring, frankly, spiritual decay, if not outright death. This is the root of our being pitted against one another, being dehumanized, and being led to actions that defile people's own bodies and spirits.

The only answer to prevent all of this happening--yes, even to us and our children--is to add God's own Word, read and heard among faithful, loving, covenant communities, to our regular diets. This is basic preventative spiritual health. Jesus himself said, at John 6, "The words I have spoken to you are spirit and life."

Again, let me be direct, because it matters: Preventative spiritual health is not like a one-time vaccine. It cannot be achieved by simple occasional "exposure" to "spiritual things." It must be cultivated over a lifetime, because the disease that seeks to claim our souls will not take a break, and will not cease mutating, as long as we live.

Your soul--our souls--are precious in God's sight. He does care about your soul. In Isaiah 55, we hear God say that his word shall not return empty, but shall accomplish the purpose for which he sent it, which is the bringing about of our truest joy and peace. So, let's feast on what is good and healthy so we won't gorge ourselves on sickness-inducing trash because we were so otherwise hungry.

NEWS FROM THE SCOUTS

Cub Scout Pack 209 is up and running! The year already looks quite different due to COVID-19, but the mission to build up young men of character continues. The boys gathered with their parents for a masked-up ice cream social kick-off on Westminster's lawn September 11, and enjoyed a visit from Gulfport Fire Department's Number 5 engine. The dens will begin meeting, primarily outdoors, in the coming weeks. Their annual popcorn sale is also going strong.

Boy Scout Troop 209 continues to produce a strong class of Eagle Scouts. Scouts John Mozingo, Nathan McKissick, and Ben Botters, have all passed their respective boards of review, and will be hosting their courts of honor in the coming weeks.

Girl Scout Troop 3542 hosted its first meeting on September 24. The girls made several large banners for area nursing facilities to show their support for residents who have been unable to receive visitors as frequently as they were before the coronavirus pandemic.



NEWS FROM THE GULF SOUTH PRESBYTERY

The Gulf South Presbytery met September 25 at the First Presbyterian Church of Baton Rouge and on Zoom. Highlights from the meeting include

- Receiving the Diamondhead Community Church as a full member and setting November 8 at 4 p.m. as the time of installation
- Approving new pastors and/or associate pastors for Covenant (Monroe), Graceminster (Monroe), Christ (Daphne), and First (Vicksburg)
- Receiving a new candidate for ministry from First (Ocean Springs)
- Coordination of Hurricane Laura relief efforts through First (Baton Rouge), which maintains a website for making personal contributions to the efforts
- Establishing a scholarship fund at a Beirut-based Christian school for children of Syrian refugees.



"COLOSSIANS: ALIVE IN CHRIST"

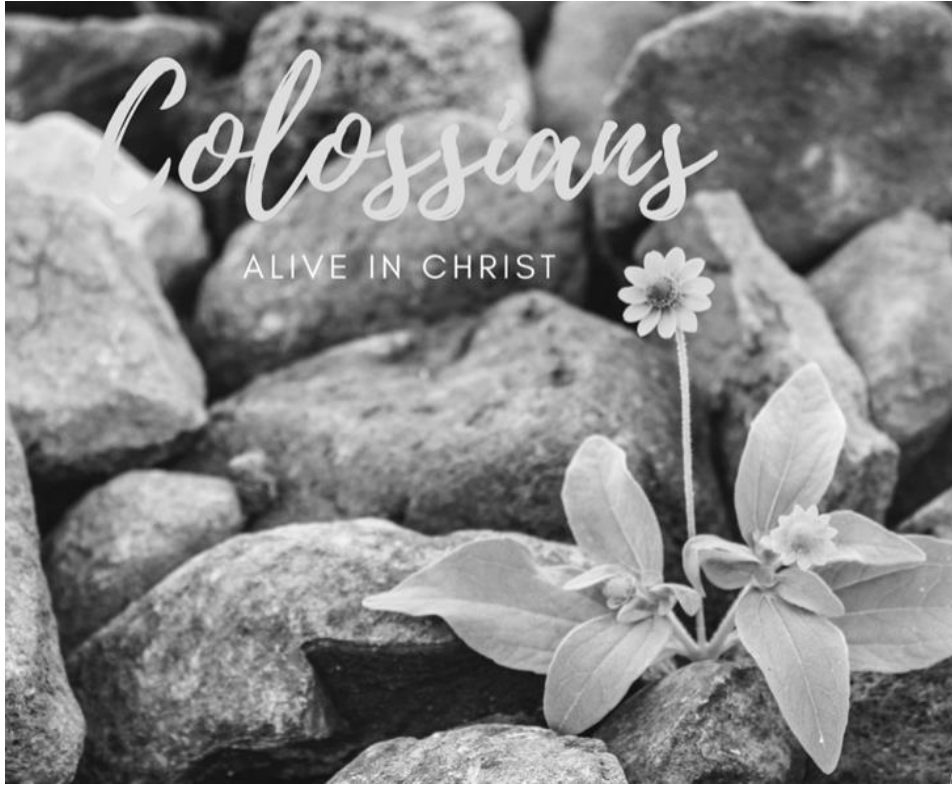
This fall, Westminster's worship life will return to the practice of *lectio continua*, or the orderly, line-by-line reading of one biblical book. This practice, once a hallmark of Reformed and Presbyterian churches, allows worshippers to become deeply acquainted with a particular book of the Bible, and to savor it as a source of spiritual and practical nourishment.

Westminster began its *lectio continua* reading of Colossians September 20. Written by the Apostle Paul, the letter to the Colossians addressed two fundamental and enduring questions for Christians: How can Christians best hold firm to their faith in Christ's

sufficiency for all areas of their lives, especially in the face of competing spiritualities and philosophies around them; and, how does this faith compel Christians to live, practically, in a world of greatly diverse standards and expectations of behavior?

Take time—sabbath, holy time—to nourish your soul and equip yourself for Christian living with your community at Westminster. Worship has resumed in-person, and is also streamed live on Facebook and the church's website, gulfportchurch.org.

- October 4: Break in Series--Pastor Will preaching at pastor's installation in presbytery
- October 11: Colossians 1:24-2:5
- October 18: Colossians 2:6-15
- October 25: Colossians 2:16-23
- November 1: Colossians 3:1-17
- November 8: Colossians 3:18-4:1
- November 15: Colossians 4:2-5
- November 22: Colossians 4:7-18

**ALTERATION TO THE LORD'S SUPPER SCHEDULE**

Pastor Will will be out of town Sunday, October 4, as part of an invitation to participate in a fellow Gulf South Presbytery church's installation of a pastor and associate pastor. As such, the session has authorized celebrating the Lord's Supper on October 11, rather than the customary first Sunday of the month. The drive-thru distribution of elements will continue to be available from approximately 11:30 a.m. to 12:15 p.m. in the Lawson Avenue parking lot on October 11 for those who have participated in worship virtually.

The Rev. Dr. Sam Clark will fill the pulpit on October 4, and Bryan Batson will provide music for the day's service.

**CONGREGATIONAL MEETING SEPTEMBER 20**

The congregation held a called meeting on Sunday, September 20. The first order of business was to allow--for the first time--participation in the meeting via Zoom due to the ongoing COVID-19 threat. Karen Barnard and Amy Graves Underhill were elected to the Session's Class of 2022. Pending examination by the session, as prescribed by the *Book of Order*, Amy will be ordained and installed to service, and Karen, having been previously ordained, will be installed to service on Sunday, October 25.



BACKPACK BUDDIES: COVID-19 hasn't stopped some of Bayou View Elementary School's students from being hungry over the weekend. Westminster's mission committee will pick back up with its participation in the Back Pack Buddies program, which provides healthy snacks for children who need them. For more information, see Pat West or Dona Haynes.

October 2020

SUN	MON	TUE	WED	THU	FRI	SAT
27 Children's Sunday School <i>via Zoom</i> , 8:30 a.m. Adult Sunday School <i>via Zoom</i> , 9:30 a.m. Worship, 10:30 a.m. Hymn Sing <i>via Facebook</i> , 5 p.m.	28	29 Prayer Group, 10 a.m.	30	1	2	3
4 Children's Sunday School <i>via Zoom</i> , 8:30 a.m. Adult Sunday School <i>via Zoom</i> , 9:30 a.m. Worship, 10:30 a.m. Hymn Sing <i>via Facebook</i> , 5 p.m.	5	6 Prayer Group, 10 a.m.	7	8	9	10 Fall Festival Parade, 11 a.m.
11 Children's Sunday School <i>in-person</i> , 9:15 a.m. Adult Sunday School <i>in-person & via Zoom</i> , 9:30 a.m. Worship/Communion, 10:30 a.m. Drive-thru Communion, 11:30 a.m.- 12:15 p.m. Hymn Sing <i>via Facebook</i> , 5 p.m.	12	13 Prayer Group, 10 a.m.	14	15	16	17
18 Children's Sunday School <i>in-person</i> , 9:15 a.m. Adult Sunday School <i>in-person & via Zoom</i> , 9:30 a.m. Worship, 10:30 a.m. Lifehouse Youth Group, 5 p.m. Hymn Sing <i>via Facebook</i> , 5 p.m.	19	20 Prayer Group, 10 a.m.	21 Session, 7 p.m.	22	23	24
25 Children's Sunday School <i>in-person</i> , 9:15 a.m. Adult Sunday School <i>in-person & via Zoom</i> , 9:30 a.m. Worship, 10:30 a.m. Hymn Sing <i>via Facebook</i> , 5 p.m.	26	27 Prayer Group, 10 a.m.	28	29	30	31 

OPTION FOR IN-PERSON SUNDAY SCHOOL AND NURSERY BEGINS OCT. 11

In-person Sunday School for all ages, as well as nursery care, will resume Sunday, October 11 at 9:15 a.m. A Zoom option for Elder Pete Bloss's adult class, which is completing an R.C. Sproul study of the parables of Jesus, will continue to be offered. For children's classes, parents and caregivers who would like a virtual option through Facebook Live should contact the church office for more information.

Children and youth classes will meet in the Christian Education Building following the same social distancing guidelines as established by local school systems: There will be touchless thermometers to take temperatures, hand sanitizer, and a mask requirement.

CHILDREN'S
Sunday School

Jeannie Congleton will teach 4-year-olds to 1st graders; Mary Ellen Thornhill will teach 2nd graders to 4th graders; Anna Kate Shurley will teach 5th graders and up. The curriculum will be organized around the "Apostles' Creed," and will use Bible stories to illuminate the words the congregation so often uses in worship to confirm its faith.



Pastor's Study

Please make note of the church's new nursery facility, which is now housed in the main, or Sanctuary building. After several years of consideration, the session voted to move the nursery from the Christian Education Building to the former pastor's study in the main hallway, primarily for safety and security, but also to increase accessibility for parents attending worship and to expand the visibility of Westminster's youngest disciples. As part of this move, the pastor's study has been moved to a portion of the parlor, and the toys, bedding, and furniture in the nursery have all been thoroughly cleaned and sanitized. Many thanks to all who made this project possible for the children of Westminster!



Nursery



Parlor after renovation

**LIFEHOUSE YOUTH GROUP:****OCTOBER 18**

We had a great time at our inaugural gathering of Westminster's new "Lifehouse Youth Group" on September 20! We can't wait to continue this ministry for 5th graders and middle-schoolers. Our next meeting will be October 18 from 5 p.m. to 7 p.m. in the youth room of the Christian Education



Building. This monthly time for fun, food, and fellowship, under the direction of Westminster member Alice Bellanger, gathers the third Sunday of each month for supper, a time of sharing in each other's lives, games, and a scripturally based life lesson. For more information, contact Alice Bellanger at (228) 229-9629.

**CHANCEL FLOWERS**

Each Sunday, we have flowers in the Chancel that are sponsored by individuals in our church. Many weeks, the flowers are not taken by the person who sponsored them. It has been our practice to call the person who sponsored the flowers and verify that it is acceptable for one of our members to share them with our sick and homebound. Going forward, we'd like to have a standing policy for the flowers to alleviate the need to find the sponsor. If you sponsor the flowers and wish to take them yourself, please contact Wally Alford at 228-896-5860 or the church office during business hours at 228-864-3143. Otherwise, it will be assumed that they are designated to be shared with individuals who need the encouragement.

CONGREGATIONAL CARE DURING COVID

The Congregational Life committee has formed a group of congregational callers who seek to make sure the congregation stays connected with each other during COVID-19. Many thanks to chairman Buddy Weir, along with Wally Alford, Dona Haynes, Jeannie Congleton, Donna Gewin, Anna Cuevas, and Karen Barnard for being part of this new effort.

Please make sure your contact information is up to date in the church's files, especially if you have recently changed your email address or phone number, especially as many folks are disconnecting home telephone numbers in favor of cell phone numbers. Please feel free to call the church office to verify your directory information.

**ADVENT FESTIVAL: NOVEMBER 15**

Westminster's Discipleship Formation committee will host the church's first Advent festival for children and their grownups on Sunday, November 15. This festival will be a time for children and their families to learn about --and make-- chrismons, the traditional Christmas decorations adorned with symbols from Christian history. See next month's newsletter for more information, especially modifications that may be necessitated by social-distancing guidelines.

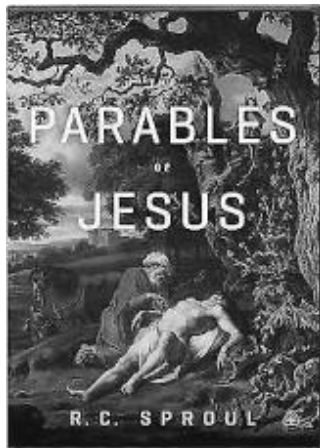
VIRTUAL HYMN SINGS MOST SUNDAYS AT 5 P.M. Do you love old hymns? Join Pastor Will and Anna Kate for a virtual hymn sing most Sunday afternoons at 5 p.m. on Facebook Live or on the church's website, gulfportchurch.org. During the live stream, you can send your favorite hymns, and if they have them in a hymnal at their home, Will and Anna Kate will do their level best to play and sing one for you!

**October**

- 2 Jerry Tisdale
- 2 Chip Westbrook
- 4 Nancy Harris
- 9 Ben Taylor
- 12 Carl Parker Jr.
- 15 Justin Cuevas
- 15 Thomas Graves
- 17 Cindy Taylor
- 19 Louis Congleton
- 20 Millie Pittman
- 27 Ernie McCabe
- 28 Wayne Tisdale
- 29 Donna Smith

November

- 3 Amelia Hopkins
- 7 Rachel Price
- 18 Jeanel Pettey
- 24 Patty McKinley

**ADULT SUNDAY SCHOOL**

Sundays at 9:30 a.m. led by Pete Bloss via Zoom.

The Adult Sunday School class led by Elder Pete Bloss. *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.*

The Adult Sunday School class led by Elder Pete Bloss is studying the video-based study by R. C. Sproul, "The Parables of Jesus."

Class description: "I speak to them in parables" (Matt. 13:13) During Jesus' earthly ministry, one of the primary ways He would instruct His disciples was through parables. People would gather from far and wide in order to listen to what Jesus said about the kingdom of God, and the most common way He would explain the kingdom was in parables. But what does God want us to learn from these parables? In this series, Dr. R.C. Sproul examines several parables of Jesus, exploring the rich truths they reveal about who Jesus is and what He came to achieve through His life, death, and resurrection.



WESTMINSTER

presbyterian church | epc

5005 Lawson Avenue
Gulfport, Mississippi 39507

NON PROFIT ORG
US POSTAGE PAID
GULFPORT, MS 39507
PERMIT NO. 138

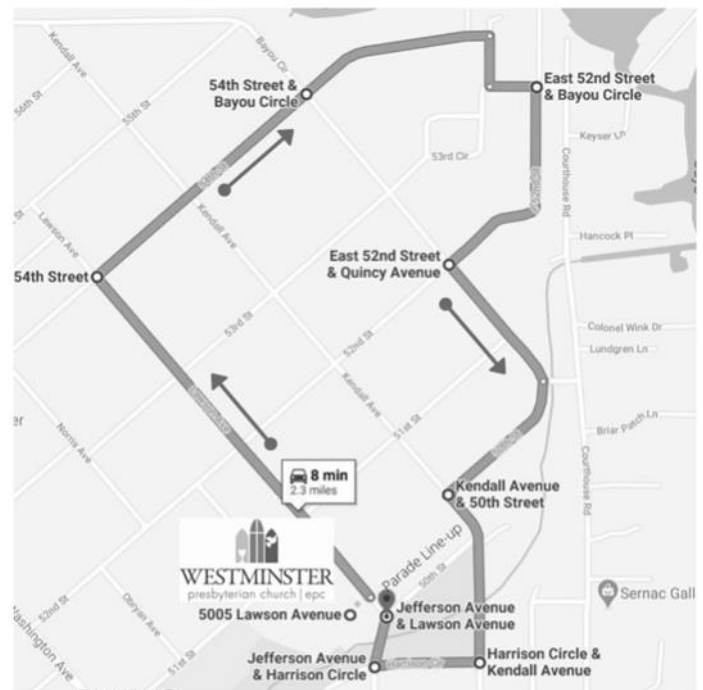
ELECTRONIC SERVICE REQUESTED



WESTMINSTER

presbyterian church | epc

phone 228.864.3143
gulfportchurch.org



Fall Festival Parade
Saturday, October 10
11 a.m.