

FALL FESTIVAL PARADE

Westminster's first-ever Fall Festival Parade provided a spot of joy and light during COVID-19. The route, which was 2.3 miles long, circled the Bayou View neighborhood, where participants could watch from the safety of their own homes.

The church gives its deepest thanks to all of the partners who made the parade happen: Cub Scout Pack 209, Girl Scout Troop 3542, Bayou View Elementary School cheerleaders, Gulfport Police Department, Harrison County Sheriff's Office, Gulfport Harbor Lights, Humane Society of South Mississippi, and the Gulfport Fire Department. The church also thanks Pete Bloss for again providing his famous hayride, Dave Carlson for helping Pete, Garnie Dubuisson for line-up work, and car entries by Ron Barnard, Mary Ellen Thornhill, Melanie Gilgan, Jim Roberts, Sharon McKinney, and Eddie and Sally Wilson. Sunday School participants included Smith Hewes, Virginia Shurley, Oliver Shurley, Charlotte Underhill, and Caroline Underhill. A great round of applause also for Karen Barnard, who chaired the event.



CELEBRATION

Congratulations to Laura and Thomas Wilson who were married in Pass Christian on October 17. Thomas is the son of Sally and Eddie Wilson.

Do you have a celebration you would like to have listed in an upcoming newsletter? Please call the church office at (228) 864-3143 or email it to office@gulfportchurch.org

Welcome to the EPC, Diamondhead Community Church!

The Diamondhead Community Church joined the EPC at the most recent meeting of the Gulf South Presbytery. Elder Pete Bloss and Pastor Will Shurley will be serving on the installation commission at the church's service of installation on Nov. 8 at 4 p.m. Westminster member are invited to attend the service, as well.

LOCAL SCHOOLS

Pastor Will has been spending each Monday morning from 9 a.m. to 10 a.m. at Bayou View Middle School to serve as a "listening ear" for teachers and staff who would like to talk about life and work during 2020.



Bayou View Middle School



FEED MY SHEEP

The Coast Ecumenical Fellowship met for lunch at Feed My Sheep on October 13. The group prayed for the community, share best practices for care and worship during COVID-19, and learned more about how to support Feed My Sheep in its ministry to the hungry of Gulfport. On Nov. 21 and 22, Feed My Sheep Interim Director David Lion spoke to Gulfport Kiwanis and Rotary, respectively. After Hurricane Zeta, Feed My Sheep remained fully operational except for one day, and partnered with the Giving BAK Foundation to provide more than 1,000 hot meals to Harrison County first responders over the weekend of October 30, 31, and Nov. 1. On Nov. 19, Feed My Sheep in partnership with Coastal Family Health will again offer free, drive-through COVID-19 testing from 9 a.m. to 2 p.m.



CUB SCOUT PACK 209

COVID-19 meant no overnight campout this fall at Camp Tiak, but, with proper protocols in place, Pack 209 was able to attend day camp. The boys enjoyed BB gun shooting, slingshots, archery, learning about fossils and cave painting, and an obstacle course. Pack 209 is grateful to Westminster for all of its support in helping form young men of character.



LIVESTREAMING OF WORSHIP

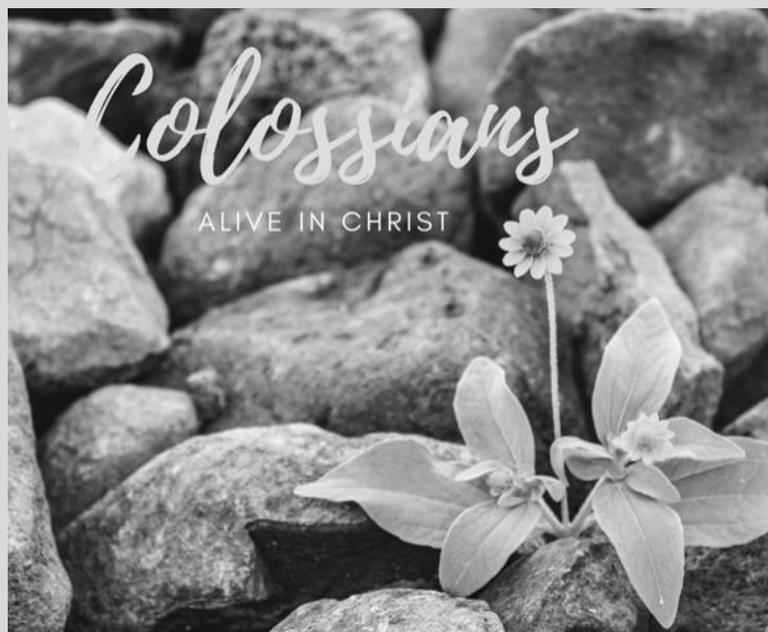
Since before COVID-19 Pastor Will and the session have thought it most important that Westminster's worship services be offered live over the internet. Especially during the pandemic, this livestream has provided for members and friends quite literally around the globe a way to continue to worship--both because it is of first importance that Christians regularly glorify the Most High God together and because worship is the primary vehicle by which God has chosen to feed our souls.

The technology to provide this service broadly--particularly to ensure sound quality for the broadcast of both a speaking voice and a pipe organ--is still new, and the learning curve for our volunteer operators has been steep.

In the last few weeks, the church, with the tireless work of administrator LeAnn Davis, elder Amy Underhill and her husband Eli, and sound operator Chip Westbrook, has been able to purchase a new camera, physically install 150 feet of new internet cable, and integrate the new sound system with the broadcast camera.

If you are providentially hindered from worship, please take advantage of the hard work of these folks by watching the livestream--and please continue with your patience as we work together to make Westminster's worship life available to all who wish to partake.

WORSHIP AT WESTMINSTER: COLOSSIANS: ALIVE IN CHRIST



- ◆ November 8: Colossians 3:18-4:1. The formation and modeling of the Christian life begins at home. Hymn: “For the Beauty of the Earth”
- ◆ November 15: Colossians 4:2-5. A robust prayer life--and joy-filled life--is founded on being thankful. Hymn: “Now Thank We All Our God”
- ◆ November 22: Colossians 4:7-18. A Christian life is best lived, and strengthened by, being with your people. Hymn: “Come, Ye Thankful People, Come”

“ADVENT: THE WORD MADE FLESH”

- ◆ November 29: John 1:1-5. Hymn: “I Want to Walk as a Child of the Light”
- ◆ December 6: John 1:6-8. Hymn: “Comfort, Comfort Ye My People”
- ◆ December 13: John 1:9-13. Hymn: “Lo, How a Rose E're Blooming”
- ◆ December 20: John 1:14-18. Hymn: “O Come, All Ye Faithful”

Please remember, drive-through communion distribution will be available December 6 from after worship until 12:15 p.m. Especially for those who are worshipping virtually, please make sure to take advantage of these means of grace: They are spiritual food for your soul. The distribution is handled with masks, gloves, and all COVID-19 precautions for those driving through.

LETTER FROM PASTOR WILL

A few days I ago I came across a short article titled, “Acedia: the lost name for the emotion we’re all feeling right now.” It appeared on an Australian Catholic university’s website, and I decided to take a look. Acedia, meaning literally “without care, concern, or grief,” was once a well-known spiritual and mental descriptor, but gradually became folded into the ideas of sloth, laziness, or apathy. The article, and its various citations, however, note that acedia is a far more complex phenomenon, and one that does seem to characterize much of spiritual life around, and perhaps even inside of, us.

In the middle ages, acedia was regularly identified as the “noonday devil,” a reference to Psalm 91:6, which says, “[He who dwells in the shelter of the Most High...will not fear...] the destruction that wastes at noontime.” Ordinarily, acedia, this wasteful destruction at the middle of the day, was understood most commonly to strike monks who had committed themselves to silence and isolation in their rooms while going about their spiritual work of communing with God. Although this spiritual and prayer-filled life was considered the highest calling a human could receive, at its own height, it could bring a sense of listlessness, undirected anxiety, and even revulsion at the true spiritual good of their contemplative work, particularly as it would begin to appear of far less value than, say, visiting the sick or undertaking some other set of good deeds.

The coronavirus pandemic, with its necessary social isolation, coupled with the number of social and cultural stressors to which we have all been exposed in 2020, in a very real way mimics the stressors that produced acedia in those devout monks. Surely many of us are anxious, stressed, lonely, or simply worn out in deep physical, emotional, and spiritual senses. Lots of folks have lost their ability to care much anymore about anything because they are simply running on empty. Interestingly, also like the monks, the things that are most able to fill us up spiritually—prayer, scripture reading, worship, receiving of the sacraments—become the very things that are the hardest for us to do. It’s not just that we’re too busy or that the pandemic makes it unsafe to go to church, virtually or otherwise: It is a devilish ploy to push us away from the things that most nourish us, or to redirect our attention to matters that, in the short run, seem more practical, but are of secondary importance to our wellbeing.

If you have been feeling anything like this acedia, especially if it makes you feel more and more distanced from your faith, please know you’re not alone. Just as importantly, I am here for you. Just as one calls to make an appointment with a doctor when physically sick, because the doctor may not know of the illness otherwise and therefore be unable to help, one absolutely can call a pastor when he or she feels spiritually sick. Our job—my job—is to help care for your soul. I am glad to visit with you and to talk through these things, because, unlike those medieval monks, you and I did not commit ourselves to doing our spiritual work alone. We can do some of our best work together.

Pastor Will

November 2020

SUN	MON	TUE	WED	THU	FRI	SAT
1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Children's Sunday School <i>via Zoom</i> , 8:30 a.m. Adult Sunday School <i>via Zoom</i> , 9:30 a.m. Worship/Communion, 10:30 a.m. Drive-thru Communion, 11:30 a.m.- 12:15 p.m.		Prayer Group, 10 a.m.				Scouting for Food in College Park
8	9	10	11	12	13	14
Children's Sunday School <i>in-person</i> , 9:15 a.m. Adult Sunday School <i>in-person & via Zoom</i> , 9:15 a.m. Worship, 10:30 a.m. Diamondhead Installation, 4 p.m.	Cub Scouts & Girls Scouts meetings	Prayer Group, 10 a.m.				Scouting for Food Pick up
15	16	17	18	19	20	21
Children's Sunday School <i>in-person</i> , 9:15 a.m. Adult Sunday School <i>in-person & via Zoom</i> , 9:15 a.m. Worship, 10:30 a.m. Advent Festival, 5 - 7 p.m. Lifehouse Youth Group, 5 p.m.		Prayer Group, 10 a.m.	Session, 7 p.m.			
22	23	24	25	26	27	28
Children's Sunday School <i>in-person</i> , 9:15 a.m. Adult Sunday School <i>in-person & via Zoom</i> , 9:15 a.m. Worship, 10:30 a.m. Thanksgiving Service, 6 p.m.		Prayer Group, 10 a.m.		 <i>Church office closed</i>	 <i>Church office closed</i>	
29	30	1	2	3	4	5
Children's Sunday School <i>in-person</i> , 9:15 a.m. Adult Sunday School <i>in-person & via Zoom</i> , 9:15 a.m. Worship, 10:30 a.m. Hymn Sing <i>via Facebook</i> , 5 p.m.		Prayer Group, 10 a.m.				



In-person Sunday School for all ages, as well as nursery care, resumed October 11. 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.



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.

Please make note of the church's new nursery facility, which is now housed in the main, or Sanctuary building.

LIFEHOUSE YOUTH GROUP: NOVEMBER 15

Lifeshouse Youth Group continues in full force! All youth in fifth grade and middle school, are welcome each month. Our next meetings will be Nov. 15 and Dec. 20 at 5 p.m. See. You. There!



HURRICANE ZETA

More than 15 years ago, after Hurricane Katrina, a church in Southern California gave Westminster a generator in order for the whole building to remain with electricity in the event of a storm.

With power out in parts of the area immediately around Westminster's building due to Hurricane Zeta, because of that generator, the church staff was able provide free coffee along Lawson Avenue, which was advertised via social media. Initially, they planned to go through only a pot or two: However, this most simple act of love for the community brought people out for four days--even on a Saturday. The church gave quite literally hundreds of cups of coffee to residents who were cold and in the dark. Amazingly, the unsolicited donations made to the church because of this outreach more than covered the cost of the coffee served.



On Halloween, with much of the north end of Bayou View still dark, power lines still down, and debris along the roads, the church invited the neighborhood to an impromptu trunk-or-treat in the parking lot: Westminster simply provided space and hot chocolate, and advertised via social media. Again, the response was almost overwhelming: The front half of the lot was full of residents' cars where they gave out candy to wave after wave of young children who simply needed a bright spot during the days after Zeta.



Often churchgoers worry about what can be done to attract people to a church. The short answer is this: As a church shows love to the community and meets their needs--and while those people are there, simply be there to model what Christian joy looks like. One never knows when those same folks might come to worship seeking the sort of fellowship we enjoy together as a body.



COMMUNITY THANKSGIVING SERVICE

Westminster will host this year's community Thanksgiving service on Sunday, November 22 at 6 p.m. We will welcome our neighbors at Trinity United Methodist Church and St. Mark's Episcopal Church. Please strongly consider attending so we can extend warm Westminster hospitality to our guests. Note: Due to COVID-19, there will be no reception following this service this year.



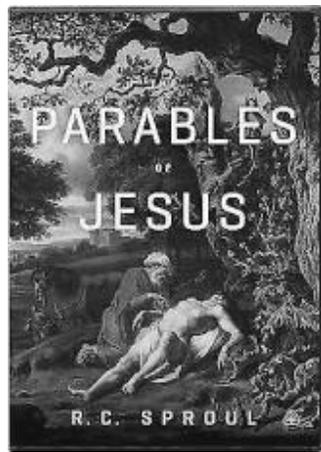
CHANCEL FLOWERS

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.



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.

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!



November

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

December

- 1 Will Symmes
- 3 Melanie Gilgan
- 3 Shere Murray
- 4 Dona Haynes
- 4 Carol Wood
- 6 Mary Davis
- 7 Carter Congleton
- 10 Betty Shaw
- 11 Lil McCollum
- 12 Kelly Cuevas
- 13 Jenny Ellzey
- 13 Braxton Williams
- 23 Susan Blanchard
- 23 Jane Bloss
- 23 Jillian Curry
- 25 B.J. Muller
- 26 Oliver Shurley
- 30 Milton Harris
- 31 Jim Roberts



Many thanks to Karen Barnard, Garnie Dubuisson, The Ellzey Family, The King Family, and The Shurley Family who worked tirelessly to clean up Hurricane debris.

Support us when you shop this Christmas season!

Buy your gifts and holiday essentials at smile.amazon.com.





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ADVENT FESTIVAL

Sunday, Nov. 15

5 - 7 p.m.

All ages welcome!