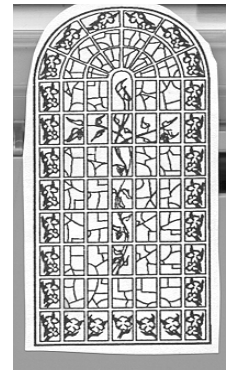


Westminster Messenger



Westminster Presbyterian Church
2343 Knob Creek Rd.

January, 2012 Newsletter
Church Office: 423/283-4643

Johnson City, TN 37604

www.westminster-jc.org

9:00 a.m. – 4:30 p.m.
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Worship God, Connect People, Equip Believers, Serve Others, Share Christ

Dear Westminster Family,

For myself and Linda, and all the Westminster staff members and their families, let me express our sincere thanks for your many expressions of kindness that the members of the Westminster church family have shown to us in the Christmas Season! As one of our staff said to me just yesterday, the love that flows from this church family is awesome! We are very thankful to serve the Lord with you all. Thanks also to all the people who have worked hard during the Advent Season to enhance our enjoyment and appreciation of God's great gift to us in the incarnation of Christ. Wonderful special Christmas decorations, a joyful Children's Christmas program, a beautiful choral cantata, an enjoyable Church Christmas Dinner and other special elements of the season have blessed us richly. A great deal of loving effort went into all of these things and we are very thankful for your service!

I hope that you have enjoyed a wonderful Christmas, and are still having one! "What?" you may be thinking, "Christmas has come and gone". And of course you are correct that December 25 has come and gone. But I was encouraged recently to be reminded of the tradition that is followed by many Christians of celebrating the twelve days of Christmas. You know the song by that name, and perhaps the symbolism associated with the various gifts that "my true love gave to me." The true love is Jesus, and the gifts represent various blessings that Christians receive from Him. But the practice of observing the twelve days of Christmas is as follows, according to Wikipedia:

The Twelve Days of Christmas are the festive days beginning Christmas Day (25 December). This period is also known as Christmastide and Twelvetide. The Twelfth Night of Christmas is always on the evening of 5 January, but the Twelfth Day can either precede or follow the Twelfth Night according to which Christian tradition is followed. The Feast of the Epiphany follows Twelfth Night on 6 January. In some traditions, the first day of Epiphany (6 January) and the twelfth day of Christmas overlap.

The reason that I was encouraged by the reminder of the practice of celebrating the twelve days of Christmas beginning on Christmas day is that we can get so caught up in the activity of getting ready for Christmas that we don't really spend the time we want and need to in being still and knowing God, thinking deeply about the significance of God's "inexpressible gift" to us in Christ. Then Christmas day comes, and is gone so quickly, and we feel like we have somehow missed something very important but now lost for another year. The idea of celebrating Christmas after December 25 is appealing, because things often tend to slow down and give us more room to stop and focus, to be still and know the Lord. By the time you receive this December 25 will be a week past, but perhaps there are still a few of the twelve days of Christmas in which to meditate on the wonder and joy of Immanuel, God incarnate as our Savior Jesus Christ.

Of course the identification of the day of Christ's birth as December 25 is historically doubtful, and the idea of the twelve days of Christmas is a human invention rather than a Biblical revelation. We can and should celebrate the gift of Christ and the gifts we receive in Christ by the work of His Spirit every day as we strive to abide in Him continually. As I have thought of what my primary goals for this year should be I can't escape the awareness of three essential callings:

- 1. Christ has called us to abide in Him, so that we might bear much fruit for His glory.** I think that Christ's call to "abide in me" (John 15:1f) is essentially the same as "keeping in step with the Spirit" (Galatians 5:22f). To abide with someone means to live in close fellowship with him or her. Spiritually this means maintaining a fellowship with Christ by means of His Word and prayer, personally and regularly. Strive to be still and know God every day. Seek to understand His will, and strive with dependence on His grace to do His will and advance His Kingdom. This will not be easy. We are in a spiritual battle. We need to expect a struggle with maintaining an abiding fellowship and dependence on Christ, and with doing His will. We need to live with the awareness that we are in spiritual warfare and arm ourselves daily for the struggle by putting on the full armor of God to resist Satan by God's power (Ephesians 6:10f). (Not coincidentally this putting on God's armor sounds about like the practice of abiding in Christ.) By the power of God's Spirit we can make real progress in sanctification and service for our joy in God and His glory in our lives in this coming year. I encourage you to identify a time each day when you can spend personal time in fellowship with God in His Word, and prayer, and then go out and live for Him.
- 2. Christ has told us that the greatest commandment is to love God with our whole being, and our neighbor as ourselves.** This is also a challenge because of the spiritual struggle. Satan has a lot of fun when Christians don't practically love God or one another. But again, God can and will help us if we seek to obey Him in this. How do we love God? With our mind, heart and will. By obeying His commandments (John 14:21) from hearts that are passionately devoted to Him and minds that are being renewed according to His will. A part of His will for us is His concern that we love one another more and more. We studied the Peacemaker curriculum a year ago. God wants us to strive for unity in His Church, and He gives us instruction about how to go about it, even how to go about repairing breached relationships when they occur. We all fail one another in some way, and we still sin against one another. But God gives grace. When we go to Him acknowledging and repenting of our own sin, even the sin of our failure to react obediently to His will in seeking to repair strained or broken relationships, we receive His grace and are better able to extend it to others who have failed us in some way. Rather than inwardly justifying and ignoring our own sin because of the sins of others against us, we should look to God for His grace and strength to practically love Him and others with obedient lives. Let us strive to love God and one another, for His glory and our joy, in this New Year!
- 3. Christ has called us to go and make disciples for Him (Matthew 28:18-20), also by His power.** In this new year let's pray and prepare to be witnesses of His Gospel grace to those around us as well as around the world, that more and more people would come to know Him and then grow up as His disciples, for His glory and our joy in being His instruments in the lives of others!

In closing I want to welcome and encourage you to welcome nine new communicant members of Westminster in December: Susan Baxter; Tim, Edie, Caroline and Joshua DeBord; Gregg and Sharon Pechmann; Loretta Van Horn; and Randy Williams.

Happy New Year!

Yours in Christ,
Pastor Jim Richter

WOMEN OF WESTMINSTER (WOW)



Happy New Year! I am looking forward to the “newness” of 2012. Are you?

Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation.

The old has passed away; behold, the new has come.

2 Corinthians 5:17

The WOW nominating committee is still seeking to fill WOW leadership positions!!! If you are a female member of Westminster and interested in serving, please contact: Kelly Atkins, Linda Richter, or Sandra Henson.

PLEASE COME:

1. **Sewing/Craft Fellowship** Please bring your sewing or craft projects for our next fellowship on Sat, Jan 7, 9am-3pm in the Westminster fellowship hall. Feel free to invite a friend and don't forget to bring a sack lunch!
2. **Pizza and Prayer** We will meet on Thur, Jan 12 @ 7:00 pm @ Corinne Kavanaugh's home. PLEASE NOTE: This will be a night of **prayer & fasting**....so, no pizza this time. We will spend some extra time praying in the New Year. Also, please bring a self-addressed stamped envelope. Contact Corinne Kavanaugh if you need more information!
3. **College Care Packages:** Valentine's Day college care packages for our college students both near and far are an important way to reach out to our students and remind them that we are thinking of them. Details may be found in the church bulletin.
4. **WOW Council Meeting** If you are a leader of a woman's group, committee, or Bible study, please meet with us on Sun, Feb 12 at 4:45pm in the Ladies' Parlor to discuss our women's ministries. We value your feedback and suggestions and hope you can attend these council meetings every other month!

SAVE THE DATE:

Women's Missions Brunch Please join us on Sat. February 25th in the WPC ladies parlor for our annual missions brunch. Details may be found in the church bulletin and newsletter.

Spring Conference May 5th Our guest speaker, Gracia Burnham, will reflect on God's sufficiency, grace, and peace in the midst of difficulty. You won't want to miss this internationally-known speaker!

In Christ,
Kelly Atkins WIC Administrative President

Women of Westminster

WOW Bible Study opportunities are as follows:

Monday Evening Home Bible Study:

Monday evenings at 7:30 til 9:00 pm, Dry Bones Bible Study led by Tanza Henninger continues to meet throughout the summer in her home. If, there is a woman 16 years old and upward that would like to join us or at least "pop-in" over the summer for a great time in the scriptures and wet your "dry bones" please feel free to come study **Absolute Surrender** by Andrew Murray along with us! Ezekiel 37:4 Again he said unto me, prophesy upon these bones, and say unto them, *O ye dry bones, hear the Word of the Lord!* We look forward to having you join us!

Ladies Bible Study – See you in January!

The Tuesday morning Bible study is at 9:30-11:30 in the church parlor. We will be studying the book of Deuteronomy. Why study Deuteronomy? In the words of the authors, because it invades our lives. It will force us to ask ourselves, 'Are we really living a thoroughgoing Christian life out of love for our gracious God?' We will also examine God's promises throughout the book. Please pray about joining us for this rich study in God's Word. All ladies are welcome. If you have any questions, call Linda Richter.

BETH MOORE BIBLE STUDY ON WEDNESDAY NIGHT

Please come join us for a Beth Moore Bible study on Wed. nights in the ladies' parlor from 6:30-7:30. We will be studying "Breaking Free: Making Liberty in Christ a Reality in Life". You can obtain a study guide from Lifeway Bookstore. We did the first lesson (Introduction) last week and will do the second this Wednesday evening. We would love to have you come and join us. If you have questions call Linda Richter.

WOW AM Circle:

Circle will meet on each third Thursday **morning** in the ladies' parlor at 10 o'clock. The next meeting will be on January 19th. Sandra Henson will continue to lead the Bible study.
Newcomers are decidedly welcome. Olive Hall, Chairwoman



Anyone interested in going to Acapulco to work and minister at Casa Hogar please meet at 10:45 in the Fellowship Hall on 1/8 for a very brief introductory meeting. If you are interested in going but are unable to attend the meeting please contact Jeff Blackburn. We need to confirm a date in June and get a head count soon.

WPC Jonesborough Bible Study

The church will be sponsoring a home Bible study in the Jonesborough area on Sunday nights beginning 8 January. The first session will be held at home of Bob and Edie Cary. The format will be determined by the participants but initially the study will meet from 7:00 pm to 9:00 pm at a designated home. The book of Ruth will be studied first. Each session will provide time for fellowship, prayer and study. For further details, contact Steve or Ina Leutbecher or Bob or Edie Cary.

Thursday Small Group

The Thursday night small group that meets at the Blackburn's will be studying the Truth Project beginning Thursday Jan 5th at 6:30. If you are interested in attending or would like more information please contact Jeff or Debbie Blackburn.

Sunday Night Small Group

The Sunday night small group that meets at the church will resume Jan 8th at 6:00 pm. We will be studying Desiring God by John Piper. All are welcome to attend. Questions may be directed to Barry Osborne or Andy Holt.



Good Samaritan Food Drive

We will be collecting groceries during the month of January!

You will find food lists on a table in the narthex, or in the bulletins.

Bob & Ruby Caswell

Proverbs 22:9

*A generous man will himself be blessed
for he shares his food with the poor.*

ITEMS TO BUY:

5 cans (any combination) soup, stew, chili

5 cans (any combination) veggies or fruit

1 box rice, pasta, or dried potatoes

2 boxes oats or cereal

2 canned meat

5 lb bag of sugar

3 boxes or envelopes of cornbread, biscuit,
or muffin mixes

1 package of cookies

*2 jars spaghetti sauce (*plastic or cans*)

4 cans tuna

Take bag filled with non-perishable food items
to the church narthex.

****no glass!***