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**FIRST-EVER CHRISTMAS VACATION BIBLE SCHOOL**

Westminster hosted its first-ever Christmas Vacation Bible school December 19-21. Thirty children, from the congregation and the neighborhood, enjoyed music, snacks, crafts, and learning about the grand story of Jesus, God-with-Us. The church is deeply grateful to all of the faculty and supporters, especially our LifeHouse Youth, who served to make this event possible.





**LIFEHOUSE YOUTH UPDATE FROM ALICE BELLANGER:**

LifeHouse Youth Group had an eventful December. We met on the 4th for our Christmas party, which was lots of fun! We met on the 18th and put together gift bags and cards for our home bound members. Supper was provided by Melissa Russell and her family! Many of our youth attended the Christmas Eve service at church! We're gearing up for the youth-led service

which will take place on February 12. Our dates for January are Jan. 8, 22 and 29.

**CUB SCOUT PACK 209**

Cub Scout Pack 209 closed 2022 with some great fun at Westminster! At their last pack meeting of the year, December 5, the Fellowship Hall was filled to overflowing with boys and their families. They made blankets for community neighbors who needed a little warmth during the cold spell that occurred near Christmas. They also had a special visitor—in a big red suit—who distributed Pinewood Derby cars for the pack's upcoming Pinewood Derby race on January 28. Parents also picked up the more than \$13,000 of popcorn the boys sold during their annual popcorn sale fundraiser!

Later in the week, the pack gathered at Westminster for their annual Boy's Night Out, which was complete with games, food, ping-pong, wall-drawing on the youth room's whole-wall chalkboard, and movies. Many thanks to Westminster for all of its support of his vital and growing program for our community's young men.



**DECEMBER HIGHLIGHTS FROM GIRL SCOUT TROOP 3542**

Our Girl Scout troop ended our first semester of scouting with our annual Christmas party. Instead of exchanging gifts with each other, we "adopted" two children through the Gulf Coast Center for Non-violence and purchased gifts for them. Alicia Tarrant from GCCFN joined us for our party and talked to the scouts about the center's mission and how our gifts will make a difference to the family we adopted this year. It was a very meaningful end to the first half of our year!



**SCOUT SUNDAY & FIFTH SUNDAY POTLUCK:** Don't miss worship on Sunday, January 29, and stay for the first Fifth Sunday Potluck of 2023. Bring your favorite dish to share: The congregational life committee will provide jambalaya to supplement the congregation's gastronomic creations!

Westminster will also welcome the members of Boy Scout Troop 209, Cub Scout Pack 209, Girl Scout Troop 3542 and their families that day.

Did you know that Westminster, through its members' giving of time and money, touches the lives of nearly 200 young people each month through these ministries? Many of them come through Westminster's buildings two or more times each month: Scout Sunday is the prime opportunity for church members to reach these families through worship and hospitality. Please help your church make the most of this "low hanging fruit" by being present and saying hello to our guests on Scout Sunday: Who knows? Perhaps your kindness that day may help transform some of our guests into members and friends.

### CHURCH LIFE CLASS

Been visiting Westminster for a while? Want to learn more about who we are? Interested in becoming a part of this covenantal family of faith?

Pastor Will will host Westminster's Spring 2023 Church Life Class on Saturday, February 4 from 9 a.m. until noon. It will begin with a continental breakfast and then go through church history, Reformed and Presbyterian theology, worship, and an overview of Westminster's own unique mission and ministry. This class is for visitors, friends, new members, prospective members and all those who want to learn more about our church.

RSVPs are encouraged at [office@gulfportchurch.org](mailto:office@gulfportchurch.org) or (228) 864-3143. Childcare is available, but registration for it is required. For more information or questions, contact Pastor Will at [pastor@gulfportchurch.org](mailto:pastor@gulfportchurch.org) or call (228) 864-3143.

**ADVENT VESPERS:** Each Sunday during Advent, a pick-up choir led vespers services for the congregation and community. Many thanks to everyone who participated: It was good to have the opportunity to worship quietly and simply through the singing of the Word. Westminster even welcomed several visitors for this special time of prayer.



### Ladies Lunch Bunch

The Westminster Ladies Lunch Bunch meets the last Friday of each month at 11:30 a.m. On January 30 we'll be at Half Shell Oyster House in Gulfport. Please RSVP to Rachel Price.



**WESTMINSTER'S DINERS CLUB:** Westminster's Diners Club met in December at the home of Jerrye & Wayne Tisdale for our annual Christmas Party and "Sneaky Santa" gift exchange. We all had a wonderful time of good food and fellowship. If you'd like more information on Diners Club, see Karen Barnard.



[gulfportchurch.org](http://gulfportchurch.org)

### 2023 Pledges as of Dec. 29

- |                                   |                         |                          |
|-----------------------------------|-------------------------|--------------------------|
| Mark & Teresa Alspaugh            | John & Vicky Heath      | Sherry Shonk             |
| Ron & Karen Barnard               | Nell Helms              | Ed Shumski               |
| Terry Barnes                      | Summer Hewes            | Will & Anna Kate Shurley |
| Brian & Christie Batson           | Cummings & Paula King   | Jim & Jane Shurley       |
| Susan Blanchard & Stan Hoogerwerf | Dee & Mimi Lineberger   | Ben Stone                |
| Pete & Jane Bloss                 | Debby Lipely            | Barrett & Cindy Taylor   |
| Susan Bourne                      | Al & Susan Littell      | Wayne & Jerrye Tisdale   |
| Robert & Myra Bruce               | Lil McCollum            | Eli & Amy Underhill      |
| David Carlson                     | Marcia Milner           | Bob & Debbie Walker      |
| Rosemary Chaloult                 | Clinton & Linda Necaise | Buddy Weir               |
| Garnie Dubuisson                  | Brenda Pace             | Pat West                 |
| Scott & Jenny Ellzey              | Stacy Pair              | Chip Westbrook           |
| Frank & Elisabeth Faust           | Carl Parker             | Butch & Camille Williams |
| Lynda Gary                        | Bill Pettey             | Eddie & Sally Wilson     |
| Joe & Donna Gewin                 | Rachel Price            | Scott & Annie Winter     |
| Gay Graves & Boyd Letcher         | Richard Pryor           |                          |
| Jason & Sarah Gregory             | Jim & Sharon Roberts    |                          |
| Ted & Valarie Hammer              | Peter & Melissa Russell |                          |
| Dona Haynes                       | Frank & Charlotte Scott |                          |

It's not too late! Scan the QR Code to pledge today!



*Do you have a full, gently used artificial Christmas tree? We are looking to replace the narthex tree in 2023.*

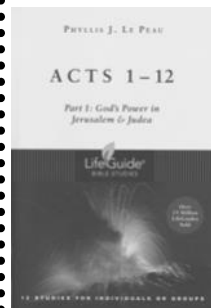


Sunday School for children and youth happens each week at 9:15 a.m.

# CHILDREN'S Sunday School

Children of all ages meet every Sunday to learn from well-prepared teachers more about the faith into which they were baptized. Students are currently learning Old Testament stories that form the foundation of Christian discipleship. So far we have learned about -- and acted out -- stories of Joshua, David, Abraham, and many more.

All children are welcome to learn about Jesus Christ each week at 9:15 a.m.



**ADULT SUNDAY SCHOOL STUDY:** Sundays at 9:15 a.m. Adult Education Class led by Ted Hammer, in-person in the Library. Don't miss the fellowship and deep discussion of important topics in Westminster's Adult Sunday School class each week.

**Current study:** "Acts 1-12, Part 1: God's Power in Jerusalem & Judea" by Phyllis J. Le Peau.

**Description:** Do you ever feel powerless? The people of the early church discovered what true power looks like. Jesus transformed their lives—and they changed the world! Acts is the extraordinary record of what these early Christian disciples did. The power that you see in action in this book is the same power that can transform your life. As Phyllis J. Le Peau leads you through the first half of Acts in this twelve-session study you will begin to understand what the Holy Spirit can do in you and in the world.

AFTER **31** Years of Dedication to Westminster's children

Barbara Perkins is

# Retiring

We will present her with a gift basket on

**Sunday, January 8**

Please bring cards, memories, or mementoes to help fill the basket for her.

## Turning the Page



As we turn the page into a new year, why not turn the pages of your new favorite book?

Beginning this month, our church library will be undergoing a makeover. Some of the older titles will be phased out and new titles added to help update our content.

If you have any Christian fiction or Christian non-fiction books that you would be willing to donate to our library, it would be greatly appreciated. There will be a donation box set up in the library where donations may be placed. - Susan Littell

## PRAYER WARRIOR CELEBRATION BREAKFAST: FEBRUARY 12

Wow! What a wonderful response to the call for Prayer Warriors for Westminster's children and youth. Westminster is committed to fulfilling the vows it takes at each child's baptism, and we are grateful for each and every person who has committed to praying daily for a particular child of the church. If you are interested in becoming a prayer warrior for a Westminster kid, please see Karen Barnard or call the church office: We expect more children to be added to our church family soon!

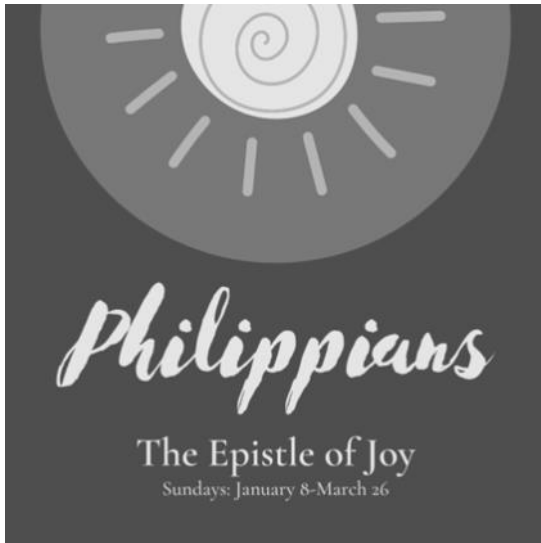
*For Parents:* Would you please send an updated picture of your children to [office@gulfportchurch.org](mailto:office@gulfportchurch.org)? We will be updating the prayer cards that go to each prayer warrior.

*For All Prayer Warriors and Parents:* Make plans now to attend our Prayer Warrior Celebration Breakfast February 12 at 9:15 a.m. in the Fellowship Hall. What better way for our Prayer Warriors to pray for their children than to meet over good food together the same Sunday our Youth Group leads in worship? Current and former prayer warriors are invited!



## MGCCC CONCERTS AT WESTMINSTER

Westminster hosted the MGCCC Harrison County Choir for its Christmas Concert on December 6. The students performed a delightful program that included traditional carols and contemporary pieces. As always, Westminster is glad to be able to put its beautiful buildings to use in service to the community.

**WORSHIP AT WESTMINSTER: WINTER/SPRING 2023: "THE LITTLE EPISTLE OF JOY"**

During worship until Palm Sunday, Westminster will be embarking on an excursion through Paul's letter to the church at Philippi, otherwise known as the Book of Philippians, and commonly called "the little epistle of joy."

According to Acts 16, after having been prevented from preaching in Asia Minor and subsequently called to the region of Macedonia in a vision, Paul, along with Silas, Timothy, and Luke, set sail for what is modern-day Greece. Travelling to Philippi, an important Roman outpost, they founded the church there—the first in Europe. Among the early converts were a number of women, including Euodia, Syntyche, and Lydia, the baptism of whom and of her whole household, provide, in part, the biblical underpinning for baptism of believers' infants and children. Other early Philippian church members were the jailer that held Paul and Silas during their time in the city, along with Clement, who at various points in church history has been, disputedly, assumed to be the fourth bishop of Rome and author of I Clement, one of the earliest Christian writings outside the New Testament.

Traditionally, it was understood that Paul wrote his letter to the Philippians from his place of imprisonment in Rome sometime toward the latter end of the decade

following his establishment of the church. During that time, the Philippian church, in particular, had been generous in providing spiritual and material support to Paul, especially during his various imprisonments and other difficulties. On a general front, though, some nascent Christian churches, notably the one at Galatia, were struggling internally with competing cultural and religious factions. Among these were tension caused by the relative wealth of the Gentile congregations to the relative poverty of the Jewish congregations, particularly at Jerusalem. Churches were also visited by various preachers who taught that Gentile converts to Christianity must first undergo the ceremonial Jewish rites, such as circumcision, before becoming part of the faith. As Paul notes in part in Philippians, and very directly in Galatians, this position was diametrically at odds with the gospel of salvation in Christ by grace and faith alone, and therefore robbed the Gospel of its power.

Undoubtedly these sorts of struggles, along with others' petty jealousy of Paul's missionary successes, and ordinary personality clashes, were headed for the Philippians, who had been so faithful and persistent in their mission. To head these things off, Paul's wrote his letter of encouragement to the church that had brought him such joy.

Westminster's exploration of this joy-filled epistle, with its enduring exhortations to Christians and ageless wisdom and encouragement, will follow this outline:

Week One: Philippians 1:1-11. *Paul's offers thanksgiving and prayers for the faithful Philippian church.*

Week Two: Philippians 1:12-18. *Paul's suffering has advanced the cause of Christ.*

Week Three: Philippians 1:18-26. *The greatest joy, even in the face of death, is in Christ's gift of salvation.*

Week Four: Philippians 1:27-2:4. *Christian joy is meant to be lived out in holiness.*

Week Five: Philippians 2:1-11. *Jesus is the preeminent example of humility, perseverance, and joy.*

Week Six: Philippians 2:12-18. *Christians, by their conduct, are meant to be as lights to the world.*

Week Seven: Philippians 2:19-30. *Timothy and Epaphroditus are examples of service to Christ and the church.*

Week Eight: Philippians 3:1-11. *The greatest identity one may ever have in life is "Christian."*

Week Nine: Philippians 3:12-4:1. *Paul encourages the church toward faithfulness even in the face of struggle and persecution.*

Week Ten: Philippians 4:2-9. *Joy and peace, inside and outside, come from minds united around what is good and honorable.*

Week Eleven: Philippians 4:10-23. *A closing thank you note and blessing.*

The series will conclude the Sunday before Palm Sunday.

**YOUTH SUNDAY:** Don't miss 2023's Youth Sunday on February 12. Enjoy the prayer warrior breakfast at 9:15 a.m. and stay for church at 10:30 a.m. as Westminster's LifeHouse Youth lead the congregation in worship.

**TITHE.LY****ONLINE AND APP-BASED  
GIVING**Westminster is now set up  
for online and app-based

giving. Visit [gulfportchurch.org](http://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. For additional information, please call the church office at (228) 864-3143.

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You Shop. Amazon Gives.**WESTMINSTER HAS AN  
AMAZON SMILE ACCOUNT.**<https://smile.amazon.com/ch/64-0386498>

Alcoholics Anonymous meets weekly on Thursdays at 6 p.m. in the C.E. Building. For more information, call the church office at (228) 864-3143.

**CONFESSING OUR FAITH: A NEW SUNDAY SCHOOL CLASS COMING IN FEBRUARY**

Is it enough to “just love Jesus?”

Are all churches and religions more or less the same?

Is the Christian faith just another sociological or psychological phenomenon?

All of these are legitimate questions for Christians to consider: But to begin, a Christian must have a basic understanding of the content of “the faith once imparted to the saints.” From that point, a Christian can—and should!—dive more deeply into how this imparted faith fits with his or her own convictions, how it squares with other religions, and what it means for the world at large.

Starting February 19, Pastor Will will begin a second adult and older youth Sunday School class that will spend the better part of 2023 exploring The Westminster Confession of Faith, which is the most classic statement of Presbyterian beliefs. This class will begin by exploring the basic tenets of the Reformed theological tradition, and from there move into discussion about how these articles of faith challenge or affirm us and how they compare to other Christian traditions.

For those youth interested in confessing their own faith in 2023—that is, making a public profession of faith in Christ and becoming a covenantal member of the Westminster family of faith—this class will provide for them basic doctrinal content, which will then be discussed very practically during confirmation meetings before LifeHouse youth group gatherings throughout the year. Children’s Sunday School classes will also introduce, in addition to their usual content, coordinate questions from The Shorter Catechism, which will provide for points of discussion between parents who choose to participate in this class and their children who attend Sunday School.

The Confessing Our Faith class will begin alongside the Adult Sunday School class on February 19 at 9:15 a.m.

**GULFPORT: CITY OF LIGHT PRAYER GATHERINGS**

Local church leaders along with the Coast Ecumenical Fellowship came together at Westminster on December 13 for City Council Ward IV’s City of Light Prayer Gathering. More than 100 people from across the city prayed for Gulfport’s teachers and students; first responders and military personnel; homeless and hungry; churches and pastors; and elected officials and public servants. The final prayer was for God’s continued protection of the city as its churches continue to seek revival and renewal of the community.

The upcoming City of Light Prayer Gathering schedule is as follows:

- Ward 5: St. Mark’s Episcopal Church. January 17 at 6 p.m.
- Ward 6: First Baptist Church. February 7 at 6 p.m.
- Ward 7: Grace Truth Baptist Church. March 7 at 6 p.m.

A city-wide final prayer gathering will be April 4 at Jones Park following the city’s annual Easter Egg Hunt.



**Christmas Eve Service:** Westminster welcomed nearly 100 worshippers for the annual Christmas Eve Candlelight Lessons and Carols Service. The attendance was higher than even the 2019 Lessons and Carols service, which was the last one before the start of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Many thanks to our organist, Bob Chism, for specially arranging so many of the evening’s works for violin and organ, as well as to Dave Carlson for sharing his musical gifts on the clarinet.



January	January (continued)
4 Bill Pettey, Sr.	28 Chuck McKinley
5 Buddy Hammett	28 Bob Walker
6 Boyd Letcher	31 Nell Helms
7 Maybelle Dukes	<b>February</b>
9 Erica Hopkins	1 Melissa Russell
9 Emily Thomas	4 Judy Hazelwood
12 Rosemary Chalout	6 Brooke Bryant
16 Clint Necaize	6 Kaylee Bryant
16 Frank Scott	8 Buddy Weir
17 Hannah Symmes	15 Matt Nault
18 Wesley Batson	15 Sharon Roberts
18 Ben Stone	17 Addison Cuevas
21 Gay Graves	18 Smith Hewes
21 Mary Ellen Thornhill	19 Howard Hazelwood
22 Scott Ellzey	19 Barrett Taylor
23 Bianca McKinley	21 Melissa Bryant
24 Annistin Pickich	21 Kinsley Cuevas
26 Anna Kate Shurley	26 Valarie Hammer
27 Pat West	28 Lynda Gary
27 Scott Winter	

**SAVE THE DATE: ANNUAL MEETING OF THE CONGREGATION**



Tentatively, the Annual Meeting of the Congregation will be held in the Fellowship Hall over a potluck lunch immediately following worship on Sunday, February 26. The session will report, briefly, on the church’s accomplishments in 2022, vision for 2023, and the church budget and related matters. Per congregation-approved changes to the church’s bylaws in 2021, officer elections will occur later in the Spring.

*Do you feel called to serve as a church officer? Do you know someone you believe to have the giftedness and skills to be a church officer? See Chip Westbrook, chair, congregational nominating committee chair, to share any ideas or request more information.*

# JANUARY 2023

SUN	MON	TUE	WED	THU	FRI	SAT
<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>7</b>
Children's Sunday School, 9:15 a.m. Adult Sunday School, 9:15 a.m. Worship, 10:30 a.m. <i>No LifeHouse Youth</i>		Prayer Group, 10 a.m.		AA Meeting, 6 p.m.		
Gulfport Schools - Winter Holidays						
<b>8</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>11</b>	<b>12</b>	<b>13</b>	<b>14</b>
Children's Sunday School, 9:15 a.m. Adult Sunday School, 9:15 a.m. Communion / Worship, 10:30 a.m. Ms. Barbara's Retirement LifeHouse Youth, 5-7 p.m.	Worship Committee Meeting, 7 p.m. Girl Scouts, 6 p.m. Cub Scouts, 6 p.m.	Prayer Group, 10 a.m. Discipleship Formation, 6 p.m.	Stewardship Committee Meeting, 1 p.m.	AA Meeting, 6 p.m. Cub Scouts Webelos, 6 p.m. Highlands & Islands Meeting, 6 p.m.		
<b>15</b>	<b>16</b>	<b>17</b>	<b>18</b>	<b>19</b>	<b>20</b>	<b>21</b>
Children's Sunday School, 9:15 a.m. Adult Sunday School, 9:15 a.m. Worship, 10:30 a.m. <i>No LifeHouse Youth</i>		Prayer Group, 10 a.m.	Stewardship Meeting, 1 p.m. Session Meeting, 6 p.m.	AA Meeting, 6 p.m.		
<b>22</b>	<b>23</b>	<b>24</b>	<b>25</b>	<b>26</b>	<b>27</b>	<b>28</b>
Children's Sunday School, 9:15 a.m. Adult Sunday School, 9:15 a.m. Worship, 10:30 a.m. LifeHouse Youth, 5-7 p.m.		Prayer Group, 10 a.m.		AA Meeting, 6 p.m.	Lunch Bunch at Half Shell Oyster House - Gulfport, 11:30 a.m.	
<b>Scout Sunday 29</b>	<b>30</b>	<b>31</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>
Children's Sunday School, 9:15 a.m. Adult Sunday School, 9:15 a.m. Worship, 10:30 a.m. Potluck, after worship LifeHouse Youth, 5-7 p.m.		Prayer Group, 10 a.m.		AA Meeting, 6 p.m.		Church Life Class, 9 a.m. - noon



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gulfportchurch.org



Westminster has been recognized as one of the Gulfport School District's Community Partners of the Year.

**Upcoming:**

Scout Sunday & Church  
Potluck: **Jan. 29**

Church Life Class: **Feb. 4**

Prayer Warrior Breakfast:  
**Feb. 12**

Youth Sunday: **Feb. 12**