

the

HARBINGER

open minds open hearts

VOLUME LXXIII | MARCH 14, 2021 | No. 44B

From the Pews, Mark Matlock

Pleas and Paths

Grief is a part of life we all experience at one time or another. Sometimes it's expected (death of a grandparent); sometimes it's a blessing in disguise (a parent); sometimes it's a tsunami (a spouse); and sometimes it's unfathomable (a child).

The biggest tragedy for hundreds of thousands of American families is that they have had to enter the turbulent waters of grief in the past year as a direct result of the pandemic. Having personally dealt with all but one of the types of familial loss listed above, I can tell you that death, mourning and grief tests character. You really find out what you're made of and what work lies ahead.

There is a yearning to know why. Why did Mom die? Why did Dad suffer? It's a very human question to ask.

We see that come to life in Psalm 22, described as a plea for deliverance.

My God, my God, why have you forsaken me? Why are you so far from helping me, from the words of my groaning? O my God, I cry by day, but you do not answer; and by night, but find no rest.

That plea is the one that Jesus uttered from the cross at Golgotha two millennia ago. "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?"

But that cry of fear and frustration became the glory of resurrection. And that's when the very next psalm – the one many of us know by heart – brings the balm we all seek.

*The LORD is my shepherd, I shall not want.
He makes me lie down in green pastures;
he leads me beside still waters; he restores my soul.
He leads me in right paths for his name's sake.
Though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death,
I fear no evil; for you are with me; your rod and your staff
—they comfort me.*

Psalm 23 is one of the shortest in the Old Testament but it can provide the comfort and succor those in grief so desperately need. After the death of my wife Elaine, I came to realize that the 115 words of the 23rd Psalm paint a picture of what life can be like after monumental loss. It reveals perspective and, most importantly, a path toward the loving and living God.

WESTMINSTER PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH

Sunday, March 14, 2021 | In-Person at 11:15a | Fourth Sunday in Lent



Preparation for **Worship**

“I am a Christian because of that moment on the cross when Jesus, drinking the very dregs of human bitterness, cries out, My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me? (I know, I know: he was quoting the Psalms, and who quotes a poem when being tortured? The words aren’t the point. The point is that he felt human destitution to its absolute degree; the point is that God is with us, not beyond us, in suffering.) I am a Christian because I understand that moment of Christ’s passion to have meaning in my own life, and what it means is that the absolutely solitary and singular nature of extreme human pain is an illusion [...] I’m suggesting that Christ’s suffering shatters the iron walls around individual human suffering, that Christ’s compassion makes extreme human compassion—to the point of death, even—possible. Human love can reach right into death, then, but not if it is *merely* human love.”

Christian Wiman, My Bright Abyss: Meditation of a Modern Believer

Gathering and Preparing for **God’s Word**

Welcome and Announcements

Leader: The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you.

People: And also with you.

Prelude

“Arioso”

J.S. Bach

WESTMINSTER PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH

* Call to Worship

Leader: The steadfast love of the Lord never ceases.

People: God's mercies never come to an end.

Leader: They are new every morning.

People: Great is your faithfulness, O Lord.

All: Let us worship God!

* Prayer of Confession

**Shepherd God, whose covenant with us is never broken,
and who leads us through the wilderness of our days,
we confess that we have failed to follow the way of the cross.**

**Though you lead us, we seek after greener pastures,
avoiding vales and shadows, afraid of where you may go.**

**We withhold ourselves from one another, unwilling to share
our suffering or share in the sufferings of our community.**

We prefer individual pursuits to the good of the flock.

We have failed in love, neglected justice, and ignored your truth.

Have mercy on us, O God, and forgive our sin.

**Return us to paths of righteousness and tables of bounty,
through Jesus Christ our great Shepherd. Amen.**

* Assurance of Pardon

Leader: Friends, believe the good news of the gospel.

People: In Jesus Christ we are forgiven.

WESTMINSTER PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH

Hearing **God's Word**

Prayer for Illumination

The Psalter, *Psalm 23* (translated by Robert Alter)

Leader: The Word of the Lord.

People: Thanks be to God.

Sermon

"Be Careful What You Pray For"

Meditation

"The King of Love My Shepherd Is"

Irish Melody

*The King of love my shepherd is,
whose goodness faileth never;
I nothing lack if I am his
and he is mine forever.*

*In death's dark vale I fear no ill with thee,
dear Lord, beside me;
Thy rod and staff my comfort still,
thy cross before to guide me.*

Responding to **God's Word**

* Affirmation of Faith, *The Apostles' Creed*

**I believe in God the Father Almighty, Maker of heaven and earth,
and in Jesus Christ his only Son, our Lord;
who was conceived by the Holy Ghost,
born of the Virgin Mary, suffered under Pontius Pilate,
was crucified, dead, and buried; he descended into hell;
the third day he rose again from the dead;
he ascended into heaven,
and sitteth on the right hand of God the Father Almighty;
from thence he shall come to judge the quick and the dead.**

**I believe in the Holy Ghost;
the holy catholic Church; the communion of saints;
the forgiveness of sins; the resurrection of the body;
and the life everlasting. Amen.**

WESTMINSTER PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH

Call to Prayer

“The Steadfast Love of the Lord”

McNeill

The steadfast love of the Lord never ceases.

God’s mercies never come to an end. They are new every morning.

Great is your faithfulness, O Lord.

Prayers of Thanksgiving and Intercession

The Lord’s Prayer

**Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name,
thy kingdom come, thy will be done,
on earth as it is in heaven.**

**Give us this day our daily bread; and forgive us our debts
as we forgive our debtors; and lead us not into temptation,
but deliver us from evil.**

**For thine is the kingdom, and the power,
and the glory forever. Amen.**

Charge and Benediction

Postlude

Postlude on Old 100th

Bock

Leading Worship **this Morning**

Leigh Stuckey, *preaching*

Lauren Slingerland, *liturgist*

Caroline Clark, *sponsor*

Nancy Smith, *organist/pianist*

Daphne Bickley, *violinist*

Jae Lowe, *head usher*

Durden Collins, Phillip Cox, *greeters*

* *All who are able may stand.*

WESTMINSTER PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH

Join Us in Welcoming

BAPTISM

This morning we welcomed into our fellowship *Evelyn Ann Waldrep*, daughter of Clark & Everett Waldrep, at our 9a recorded service.

We welcome *Nora Jeanne Fountain*, daughter of Jacob & Jade Fountain, in our worship service this morning.

With Thanksgiving We Celebrate

MARRIAGE

On Saturday, March 6, 2021, Keri Biles and Julian Dixon were united in marriage at Westminster.

We Remember in Prayer

Phillip Cox on the death of his father, James Phillip Cox in Greenville - 3/4/2021.

The family of Clara Lawson.

In Memoriam

Clara Whitney Lawson (8/17/1931-3/4/2021)

"I am the resurrection and the life." John 11:25

OPEN HEARTS • Gathering@WPC

PARTICIPATING IN WORSHIP FROM HOME ON SUNDAY MORNING?

Our pre-recorded service will continue to air on our website at 9a, and on our social media platforms. Our in-person worship service will air on our website via livestream at 11:15a. The Harbinger that you receive in the mail will be for our pre-recorded worship. If you would like the Harbinger for our 11:15a livestream worship, you may download it from our website at <https://wpc-online.org/sermon-archive>.

WESTMINSTER PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH

A SEASON OF OUTDOOR WORSHIP: YOUTH SUNDAY

Today, Sunday, March 14, all ages are welcome to the Green Lot at 3p for a worship service led by our older Senior High Youth. We will be exploring the theme of community through Bible stories and images. You will need to register prior to attending and you can easily do so at wpc-online.org. Bring a chair and a mask; we look forward to welcoming and worshipping with you!

OPEN MINDS • Education@WPC

SUNDAY MORNING ZOOM BIBLE STUDY

The Pastor's Zoom Bible Study is scheduled for Sunday mornings at 10 am and will run through early May. Leigh Stuckey will lead participants in engaging and provoking discussions based on the texts of the day. We hope you will join us.

Meeting ID: 918 5587 5662

Passcode: 785672

ZOOM CHILDREN'S SUNDAY SCHOOL

Join us each Sunday for a Zoom Children's Sunday School at 10a.

Meeting ID: 980 3425 3372

Passcode: 700049

JUSTFAITH:

FAITH AND RACIAL HEALING

Zoom meetings have resumed and will continue through Monday, March 22 at 6p. For information, previously registered class members may call Susan McLeod (787-6262).

WESTMINSTER PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH

CHILDREN'S MINISTRY EVENT

LENTEN SYMBOL SCAVENGER HUNT

Come hunt around the church campus for symbols of the Lenten season. Families with children 5th grade and younger can pick up a guide sheet from Lauren at the church office door starting at 4p on Sunday, March 21. Search around the church and the stained glass windows to find the symbols at your own pace, work together or race your friends! Masks and social distancing required.

MEN OF THE CHURCH - SPRING CAMP THORNWELL MISSION

The Spring Men's Mission Trip to Camp Thornwell will be Wednesday, May 12 through Saturday, May 15. Overnight indoor accommodations will be limited according to Covid protocol, so sign ups to reserve beds are required (<https://wpc-online.org/events-registration/mens-mission-trip/>). Camping onsite is also an option. All food will be provided. We will be finishing construction of a cabin structure plus the ever present landscaping, cleaning, and odd jobs. We have something for all to do whether you come for a day or for one or more nights. Contact Paul O'Neal (paulmoneal@aol.com) with questions.

Memorials/Honorariums/Easter Lilies

Those desiring to remember or honor loved ones during the Easter season may do so in three ways: Money may be given to the Heritage Lecture Fund, the Endowment Fund, or to purchase a lily for the sanctuary (\$15.00). Deadline for ordering is Wednesday, March 24.

Donor _____

In Memory of _____

In Memory of _____

In Honor of _____

In Honor of _____

Heritage Lecture Fund \$ _____ Endowment Fund \$ _____ Lily \$ _____

WESTMINSTER PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH

CALENDAR OF EVENTS

March 14 - 21, 2021

March 14

FOURTH SUNDAY IN LENT

Daylight Savings Time

- 9:00a Online Worship Service
- 10:00 Zoom Sunday Bible Study
 - Zoom Children's Sunday School
 - Confirmation Class: Session 2
- 11:15 In-Person Worship Service
- 12:30p Zoom Called Session Meeting
- 3:00 A Season of Outdoor Worship: Youth Sunday
- 5:00 WPCYG Middlers Shepherd Groups

March 21

FIFTH SUNDAY IN LENT

- 9:00a Online Worship Service
- 10:00 Zoom Sunday Bible Study
 - Zoom Children's Sunday School
 - Confirmation Class: Session 3
- 11:15 In-Person Worship Service
- 12:30p Zoom Stated Session Meeting
- 4:00 Children's Ministry Lent Scavenger Hunt
- 5:00 WPCYG Middlers Shepherd Groups
- 6:30 WPCYG Senior High Shepherd Groups

WESTMINSTER PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH

CHURCH STAFF

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