



Westminster

Presbyterian Church

ZEPHYRS

FALL 2025



FILLING YOUR CUP

Pastor Rob McClellan

What are you doing to fill your cup, to connect to your deeper wellspring of values and purpose? Sometimes life can feel driven entirely by to-do lists. To-do lists are wonderful, but while they might keep us on track, they are not great drivers of the good life. A meaningful life needs more.

Summer hopefully is a time to slow down and make some time for the things that restore us and give us energy. This summer, I have been enjoying two terrific books. Believe it or not, my life does not afford me a ton of time for reading, so when I find the time and the right books, I treasure them. (cont...)

PURSUING JOY

Associate Pastor Bethany Nelson

Camie and I have officially begun our new chapter as empty nesters. We moved Ben into his dorm room at the University of Utah in mid-August and now are adjusting to this very strange transition of not having a child in our house for the first time in 18 years.

We are noticing many changes and differences in this new chapter, but perhaps one of the biggest is having our Saturdays free for the first time in a LONG time. It is going to be really strange to not be on the sidelines of a soccer or ultimate frisbee game, or at a school event, or at some other child-related thing each and every Saturday. (cont...)



FILLING YOUR CUP

Continued...

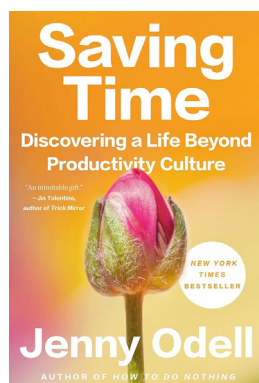
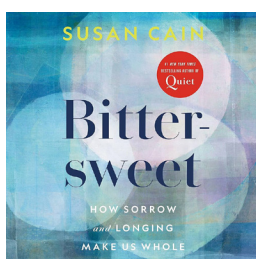
The first is called *Bittersweet: How Sorrow and Longing Make Us Whole* by Susan Cain. You may know a prior work of Cain's called *Quiet* about introverts. In the same way she lifts up the value of introverts is a culture skewed toward extroversion, in *Bittersweet*, Cain holds up the important place those who tend toward sadness or melancholy play in our society, connecting these traits to characteristics such as empathy and creativity.

In *Saving Time: Discovering a Life Beyond Productivity Culture* Jenny Odell chronicles the history of how we have thought about time and the implications for life and work. A sign of a thoughtful piece is when it gets you to consider something you prior simply took for granted. *Saving Time* is, of course, a double entendre. It is as much about reclaiming a healthier notion of time as it is maximizing a quantity of time with which to "do something." It's fascinating and liberating in its challenge to the present order.

Neither of these are religious books per se, but in a sense they are deeply theological and spiritual. They deal with how we can be in better touch with what matters, and live a healthier and happier life as individuals and communities. We don't always have to read theology to connect to God. We can find God and God's prints everywhere.

I tell you this not primarily so you can check out these two reads. Maybe they will resonate with you and maybe they won't. My larger point is we have got to fill ourselves up. It doesn't have to be reading; it could be doing something else we love, especially something that benefits someone else. If we start the fall committed only to the daily Sisyphean challenge of our personal to-do lists, we are headed for a crash before we ever reach the holidays, a too hectic season in and of itself. Figure out what fills your cup and dip in so you are not merely going through the motions, but your motion has meaning and direction.

God's Peace,
Rob



PURSUING JOY

Continued...

Knowing this was going to be a big lifestyle change, several weeks ago we began thinking about what we might want to do with our suddenly free Saturdays. It has actually been a fun exercise to consider how we want to spend our time that is no longer dictated by our child's activities. We have been asking ourselves what brings us joy, what sparks our interest, what we might want to learn and experience.

I sometimes wonder if we, as a society, have enough joy in our lives. It certainly is a prevalent theme in the scriptures. Paul lists joy as one of his "fruits of the Spirit." In John's Gospel, Jesus ends one of his teachings by saying, "I have said these things to you so that my joy may be in you, and that your joy may be complete." Proverbs reminds us, "A joyful heart is good medicine, but a crushed spirit dries up the bones." We are called by God to find joy in our lives.

This is not to say that we need to always be happy. That is impossible! Difficult, sad, and stressful things happen in our lives all the time. Feeling anger, anxiety, or grief is a part of the human experience. But let us also make room for joy. If you haven't considered recently what brings you joy, I invite you to join my empty-nester self in exploring that. Take some time each week (or even every day!) to do something that lifts your spirits and fills your heart.

During my sabbatical last summer, I was intentional about being outside as much as possible. I found much so delight in God's creation and I promised myself I would continue that practice post-sabbatical. Now, a year later, I realize that I have not followed through on that intention as regularly as I would like. One of my hopes is to reacquaint myself with the beauty and joy of creation this fall.

Whatever it is that brings you joy, pursue it! We can also encourage others to pursue their joy. Let us always make time in our lives to revel in God's joy, for as the Psalmist reminds us, "in God's presence there is fullness of joy."

Blessings,
Bethany



“AS IF WE WERE DREAMING” – MY FIRST TRIENNIUM

Jeff Shankle | Director of Youth Ministry

Sometimes life feels like a dream. Sometimes it feels like a nightmare. Therein lies the theme from Triennium—the every 3-year global gathering of 2,000+ PCUSA high schoolers. For 4 days in Louisville, KY, we were invited to reflect on our dreams (and reality), and those of God’s as well.

It can be lonely as a follower of Christ here in Marin, even more so for our teenagers. Our teen years are spent finding our identity in the world while balancing it against the normal insecurities of fitting in. When faith doesn’t fit the cultural norm, it can feel even more isolating than adolescence would otherwise. This is why we work hard to make Westminster a sanctuary. This is also why Triennium matters so much.

For a few precious days, we were surrounded by others asking the same questions and seeking the same hope. Our values were reflected by the people leading worship and preaching from the stage. They represented a diversity of gender and ethnicities, and they shared our griefs about the planet, immigration, war, and equal rights. They pushed us to listen to God’s dreams of hope and inclusion. We dared each other to believe that following Jesus keeps us grounded in an identity of purpose, hope, love, and perseverance.

For our two teens who haven’t regularly attended church and were new to this kind of environment, it was like walking into a room they didn’t know they belonged in—only to find out they were already welcome. On the way home we talked about how strange, yet wonderful it was that among the thousands of people, everyone was kind. Everyone was nice. How often can a teenager say they spent multiple days with thousands of their peers only to say, “There was no judgement!”

We made new friends from other parts of the Bay Area. We made new friends from NYC, the Texas panhandle, VT, Colombia, Puerto Rico, Indonesia, and more.

We sang, danced (Hello silent disco!), played, prayed, laughed, and wept together. For a few precious days we knew we were not walking this journey of faith alone.

Thanks for praying for us, supporting us, and believing in the power of one week to shape a lifetime.



ONE BOOK, BIG INVITATION: RETHINKING ALCOHOL AND RECLAIMING YOUR TRUE SELF

By Karen Halsey

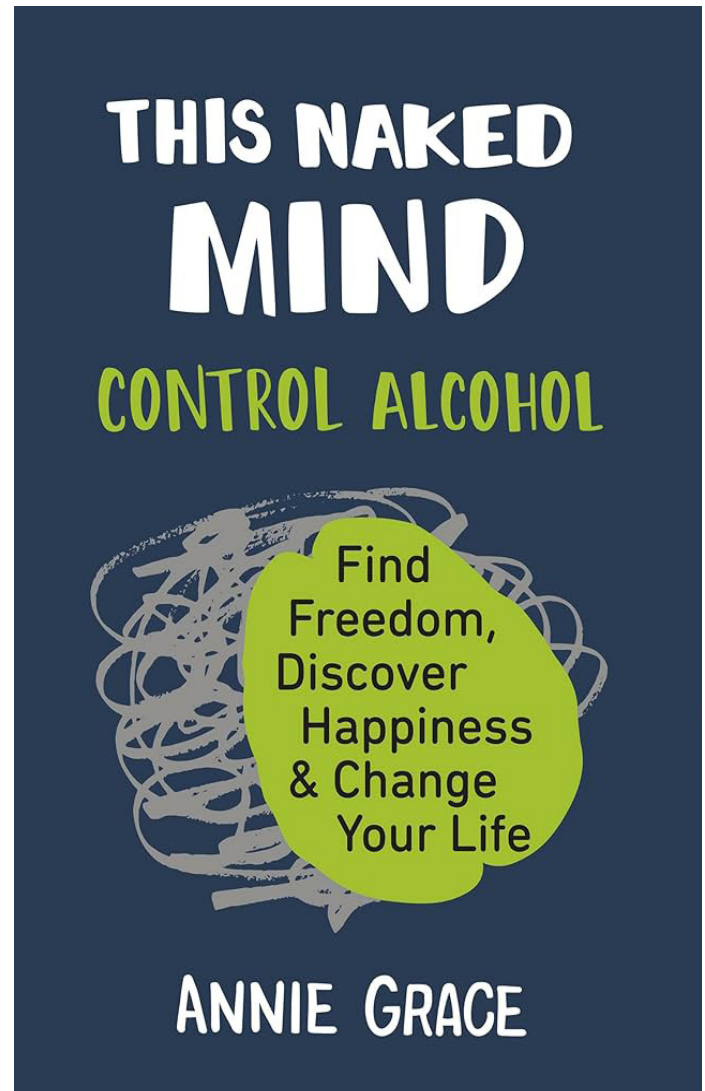
In recent months, a growing number of us have been exploring the role alcohol plays in our lives. One book that has sparked honest conversation and reflection in our Sober Spirituality discussion group is *This Naked Mind* by Annie Grace.

Grace, a former marketing executive in the alcohol industry, combines neuroscience, behavioral psychology, and her own personal story to challenge nearly everything we've been taught about drinking. Her approach is not based on willpower or deprivation. Instead, she invites us to get curious: What if alcohol doesn't really relieve stress the way we think it does? What if it subtly increases anxiety, disrupts sleep, and clouds our ability to feel present and connected? What if freedom from drinking isn't a loss, but a gain?

What made *This Naked Mind* especially compelling was its compassionate tone. Grace didn't shame or preach. She assumed her readers are intelligent, capable, and simply looking for a better way to live. Whether you drink a little, a lot, or not at all, the book encourages a deeper awareness of how alcohol affects your mood, health, and self-image—and whether those effects are aligned with your values and goals.

For those of us in a spiritual community, the themes in *This Naked Mind* connect to something larger. The book gently asks: Who are you, really, without the substances you've leaned on? What would it feel like to live with greater clarity, authenticity, and peace of mind?

Whether you're sober-curious, reevaluating your habits, or supporting someone else on their path, *This Naked Mind* offers tools and encouragement for anyone who suspects that drinking might be getting in the way of becoming



ing their fullest self. It's not about judgment—it's about transformation. We invite you to join our discussion group to read books like these and to ask questions in a supportive, intimate, and non-judgmental group setting. We hope you will find something spiritually enticing about living a more sober or sober-curious life alongside us!

This discussion group meets at WPC on Monday mornings from 8:45-10:15 am. To learn more, please contact Rev. Brook Scott at brook.scott@icloud.com.

WESTMINSTER EVENTS GEARS UP FOR FALL, OFFERING THOUGHTFUL AND ENGAGING COMMUNITY LEARNING AT WPC

By Lucy Carrico, Westminster Events Committee Chair



First, we'd like to acknowledge members rolling off the committee and warmly welcome our newest additions. Mary Beth Culler and Nancy Carlston have completed their terms on the Steering Committee. Nancy played a pivotal role in transforming our post-event receptions by introducing action partners—organizations aligned with each event's theme—bringing deeper community engagement. Mary Beth graciously emceed several events and generously shared her strategic thinking, refined copywriting,

and editorial expertise, helping shape our programming and communications. We are deeply grateful to both and look forward to their continued contributions as members of the Westminster Events Advisory Council.

We're also thrilled to welcome two new committee members:

- Tyna Jensen, our new Deacon representative, brings warmth, hospitality, and a knack for organizing high-quality receptions.
- Susan Sundberg, an experienced teacher, offers a passion for community building and connecting with young families

Welcome, Tyna and Susan—we're delighted to have you on board!

MARK YOUR CALENDARS!

Ancient Wisdom for Modern Life: A Conversation Across Faiths

Sunday, November 2, 2025, 3:00–5:00 p.m.

Westminster Presbyterian Church

Free and open to all

Join us for a lively interfaith conversation, led by our very own Bethany Nelson. In an age marked by loneliness and uncertainty, where many struggle to find connection and meaning, where do we turn for belonging, purpose, and hope?

Our panelists will explore how ancient spiritual traditions continue to speak to our deepest needs, offer guidance through life's transitions, and foster real community in a fragmented world.

Whether you're deeply religious, spiritually curious, or somewhere in between, this event is for anyone seeking insight, connection, and thoughtful dialogue.

Bring your friends, neighbors, and family—everyone is welcome. Panel discussion followed by audience Q&A and a casual reception.



Looking Ahead: The Future of Public Health

Sunday, March 8, 2026, 3:00–5:00 p.m.

Westminster Presbyterian Church

Free and open to all



In partnership with the Outdoor Art Club of Mill Valley, Westminster Events presents a timely and important conversation with Dr. Lisa Santora, Marin County's Public Health Officer, moderated by longtime civic and public health

leader Teri Dowling. This discussion will explore how communities are tackling today's pressing public health challenges—from the long-term impacts of COVID-19 and rising mental health concerns to climate-driven health risks, equity, and emergency preparedness.

Dr. Santora brings over 20 years of leadership experience and is known for her community-centered, collaborative approach. This is a rare chance to hear directly from a key local official as she shares lessons learned, current priorities, and how we can all help build a

healthier, more resilient future.

A reception will follow, offering attendees the chance to connect with local health organizations and enjoy light refreshments.

We look forward to seeing you and your circle of friends, neighbors, and family at these upcoming events. Help us welcome the wider community into WPC and serve as ambassadors for Westminster Events!

Last but not least, our team is always looking for new ideas, speaker suggestions, and volunteers. Feel free to reach out to any of our committee members: Erin Elliott, Karen Halsey, Judith Harkins, Tyna Jensen, Susan Sundberg, or Lucy Carrico.

Westminster Events remains committed to creating respectful, inclusive forums on topics that matter to Marin. Through gatherings like these, we continue to Learn, Connect, and Grow as a community.

www.westministerevents.org

WESTMINSTER GIVES!

Take a moment to reflect on what Westminster has given to you and your family this past year. Most of us are grateful for the Sunday service and music ministry, our kids enjoy Sunday school and the youth ministry programs, and we feel supported spiritually, physically, and emotionally by our Westminster family.

On September 14, Westminster will launch our 2026 Stewardship Campaign. The theme this year is Westminster Gives. We ask that everyone consider giving to Westminster to keep our faith community alive and growing. Your gift of any amount will allow us to continue the ministries that support our members and also allow us to continue to support those in need in our community.

Please help us to achieve our goal of 100% participation this year!

Thank you for your continued support,

WPC Stewardship Committee



MARIN CURSILLO WEEKENDS

By Steffen Bartschat, Spiritual Life Committee Chari

Do you ever wonder if there could be more to your spiritual life in addition to attending worship on Sundays and squeezing in a few gatherings during the week like Bible Study and committee meetings? Note that the teachings of Christ are revealed not just in scripture, but also within each of our lived experiences. Cursillo (Spanish for “short course”) is designed to awaken and expand your spirituality by combining personal sharing from fellow Marin Christians about their faith journeys, with great food, engaging experiences, and tons of humor and fun.

While Cursillo is a worldwide Catholic movement, in Marin County the program is ecumenical, and Protestants comprise about half of the participants. Over a dozen WPC members have attended Marin Cursillo, and many have



Marin Cursillo
Supporting the Christian Community in Marin County

called it “the best weekend of my life.” The retreat is held annually at University of Redlands (SFTS) in San Anselmo. Each retreat starts on Thursday evening and ends early Sunday afternoon. This year, the women’s weekend is October 9-12 and the men’s weekend is October 23-26. More information can be found at www.marincursillo.com, including a link to download an application form. Early registration is encouraged, especially for the women’s retreat, which fills up quickly.

For more information, reach out to Steffen Bartschat or Gwen Mauvais, who are both active in Marin Cursillo.

COMING THIS FALL

These are just a few more of the many activities and events happening in the next couple months. Be sure to check your eNews and worship bulletin for the most up-to-date information.

IN-GATHERING BRUNCH

September 7, 11:00 am

Our Congregational Life Committee invites you to this tasty meal. Main dishes are provided; you are invited to bring a side to share. This is a wonderful Sunday to invite friends to introduce them to the vibrant Westminster community.

NEW MEMBER ORIENTATION

October 12, 11:30 am

New to the church and interested in learning more about Westminster? Join us. Know someone who is thinking about membership? Invite them to join Rob and Bethany for an information session.

SPIRITUAL LIFE RETREAT

September 13, 9:30 am

Led by the Rev. Kay Collette, this will be a wonderful time to deepen our relationships with each other and with God. This is a half-day retreat, followed by lunch.

INSPIRE TAIZE WORSHIP

October 12, 5:30 pm

A special evening worship experience featuring musicians from Westminster Woods. Worship will be filled with easy to sing chants, prayer, and silence.

HIGH SCHOOL CONFIRMATION CLASS

September 14, 11:20 am

All high school students who have not yet participated in Confirmation are invited to join Bethany and Jeff for the kick-off of this annual class series.

YOUTH PANCAKE BREAKFAST

October 19, 11:00 am

Our middle and high school youth prepare a tasty breakfast and raise money for their summer mission trip.

“DO UNTO OTHERS” SERMON SERIES

On September 7, we begin a 5-week sermon series based on Jesus’ instruction to “Do to others as you would have them do to you.” (Luke 6:31) This is the bedrock of the gospel when it comes to how we treat others. In this ongoing era of divisiveness in our culture, Christians have an imperative to live this command each and every day. Rather than stay in our monochromatic silos, the Golden Rule in scripture challenges us to engage in conversation and seek to create whatever common good we can. As we attempt to come together, the idea is not that we are obliterating either one or trying to change each other, but rather we discover the beauty that can be created when we work together to make the world a better place by cultivating kindness, compassion, humility, respect, and love for one another.

- September 7:** Especially Them
- September 14:** The Vulnerable Way
- September 21:** Listen More, Speak Less
- September 28:** Living Together on Uncommon Ground
- October 5:** New Neighbors

