



Westminster

Presbyterian Church

ZEPHYRS

ADVENT 2025



FOLLOW THROUGH THIS HOLIDAY SEASON

Pastor Rob McClellan

This Advent, the season that culminates in Christmas, we are continuing our tradition of offering daily devotions. The “Advent Word” is a single word drawn from the day’s prescribed lectionary (bible) readings. Rather than giving long reflections, we’re simply sharing a short prayer for each day. The purpose is not to overwhelm you with content but give you an anchor for a daily spiritual practice. We hope you use it, or anything else that grounds you, to go deeper than the superficial trappings that can accompany Christmas.

It’s easy to enter the holiday season seeking depth only to end up quickly adrift or even marooned in shallow waters. *Cont.*

ADVENT WORSHIP SERIES

Associate Pastor Bethany Nelson

Our worship series in Advent is titled “The Inn.” We will study the biblical prophets who call us to care for our neighbors and “make room in the inn.” How might our church - and each one of us - become place where the Holy will be born anew, offering respite, sustenance and care, opening the doors ever wider to those seeking shelter from the onslaught of life? We will also consider how the lonely and frightened spaces within us might be filled with the light of hope, peace, joy, and love. *Cont.*



FOLLOW THROUGH THIS HOLIDAY SEASON

Continued...

We might kick off the season by turning to daily prayer, start the season with resolutions not to overspend, begin with the firm intention of not being so busy this time. Yet, as the days pass, old habits kick in, we get pulled in a thousand directions, and we're right back where we didn't want to be. How do we avoid this?

Maybe we can coach ourselves through the old patterns into something blessedly new. I choose the word "coach" intentionally. Over the summer, I began training in a coaching program and it has born surprising fruit. Coaching is an emerging field with promising benefits for all sorts of endeavors. A lot of clergy are becoming coaches because it makes them better at helping people through challenges.

Coaching helps individuals clarify what they want, how that will positively change their lives, what's in the way, and what the actionable steps are to get to a better place. It is amazing how well it works. I recommend taking this orientation toward your Advent desires. What are they? How do you want this season to be? What's important to you? What are the obstacles? What steps can you take to move through them? What accountability measures will you put in place?

Maybe the Advent Word could be just the thing to start each day off with intention, anchoring yourself in the Spirit. Find it at on the church's Facebook page, Instagram account, or the Member Hub section of the web site, and step into this holy season moving a little more deliberately.

God's Peace,

Rob



ADVENT WORSHIP SERIES

Continued...

November 30 – Making Room (Hope)
December 7 – A Place at the Table (Peace)
December 14 – How Much is Enough? (Joy)
December 21 – A Room with a View (Love)
Christmas Eve – The Inn

Each week, we will open worship in song – “Make of my heart a stable, a house for the Holy, a warm and sturdy place for hope/peace/joy/love to live and grow.” May that song be our Advent prayer. We will also have a devotional guide available on the “Member Hub” section of the website (wpctiburon.org) that reinforces the weekly theme with reflection questions and a verse from a familiar Christmas carol. We hope this will encourage the themes to remain in your mind and heart throughout the week.

Many of you have expressed to me that you are finding it difficult to find those traditional Advent themes of hope, peace, joy, and love in the midst of what is certainly a challenging and divisive time in our nation and world. As we move through this worship series, I hope that we may be inspired to offer the hope, peace, joy, and love of God to others as well as making room for that in our own lives. Noticing and nurturing those gifts from God does not lessen the hardship or the struggle, but instead gives us the strength we need to endure and move through the difficult times.

In addition to Sunday morning worship, I hope you will take advantage of some of our other special Advent events, classes and activities. Many are listed in this newsletter, and others will be advertised in the eNews and on our website calendar.

Blessings,

Bethany





SAVE THE DATE: OUR FIRST EVER ALL-AGES SERVICE & LEARNING TRIP!

Jeff Shankle | Director of Youth Ministry

“One generation shall laud thy works to another, and shall declare thy mighty acts.”

~ Psalm 145:4 (RSV)

Next summer, our church family will do something brand new and truly for everyone. Whether you are 8 months, 8 years, 18 years, or 80 years, we’re inviting you to join our **All Ages Service & Learning Trip**, June 15–19, 2026 to Santa Cruz, CA.

For many years, our middle schoolers have gone to Santa Cruz to serve and grow together. Now we’re expanding that vision into something wider and deeper. This is a week where all generations come together to serve, learn, and grow in faith. Families, couples, singles, grandparents, kids, teens, Westminster or non-Westminster, everyone has a place. Everyone has something to give.

We’ll continue to partner with three remarkable community organizations:

- **The Homeless Garden Project**, where work in the soil helps grow both food and hope.
- **The Boys & Girls Club of Downtown Santa Cruz**, supporting spaces where kids can thrive.
- **St. Francis Catholic Kitchen**, offering warm meals and genuine welcome to neighbors in need.

Each day will include hands-on service, time to reflect on what God is doing there and in us, and time to rest and play. Participation in service projects will be optional for small children and older adults. There will always be gentler ways to take part in the day’s purposes. Evenings will bring shared meals, evening activities, worship, and campfire conversations beneath the coastal sky.

Our high school students will help shape the theme for the week as part of our SLA program. It’s a reminder that we all have a light waiting to shine. This isn’t just a trip for any one group, it’s something we’ll create together, discovering how God meets us when generations join hands in service.

The Santa Cruz KOA offers a range of lodging options, including cabins and tent sites. We want everyone to find comfortable lodging for their stay.

We’ll share detailed pricing and registration information soon, but for now, please **mark your calendars for June 15–19** and **plan to be part of it!** Sign-ups open **January 1, 2026**, and we’ll host an information meeting later this winter.

Let’s make this a summer to remember! It’s a week of shared purpose, shared service, and shared joy across every age and stage of life for our church family. Together we’ll “laud God’s works to another” and see anew the mighty acts of the One who calls us to love and serve.



INTRODUCING WPC'S NEW MUSIC DIRECTOR

We are thrilled to welcome Rita Lilly as our new music director! Rita will begin working with us on January 15.

Rita is a sought-after singer, conductor, and voice teacher in the Bay Area. A classical soprano, she is familiar to audiences in oratorio and recital, most notably for her performances of baroque and early music. Rita is a frequent soloist with some of the finest Bay Area groups, including the American Bach Soloists, Bay Choral Guild, California Bach Society, Marin Baroque, Marin Oratorio, Sacramento Baroque, San Francisco Bach, Sonoma Bach, and Vallejo Choral Society.

A native New Yorker, Rita has also appeared as a featured soloist with the American Boychoir, American Classical Orchestra, Folger Consort, and Trinity Church NY Concerts, among others.

As the soprano soloist of the Waverly Consort, she toured throughout the U.S. and abroad, including performances at Lincoln Center's Alice Tully Hall, the Metropolitan Museum of Art, and the Cloisters. Rita has been featured on live radio broadcasts in the US and Canada and can be heard on the EMI, Naxos, Musical Heritage, and Newport Classic labels.

Previously, Rita served as the Music Director at St. Jerome Catholic Church in El Cerrito and, more recently, as Music Director of Lafayette Christian Church in Lafayette. As faculty, she has served as the Director of Mills College Choir in Oakland and as the voice teacher at the Pacific Boychoir Academy, where she formed the Sorella Girls Chorus. Rita is also Vocal instructor and Coach for the SFEMS Baroque Summer Workshop, Marin Baroque Workshop, and other vocal workshops in the Bay Area, all while maintaining an active vocal studio in her home.

Rita has been married for nearly 35 years to Dr. Nitash Balsara, a Chemical and Biomolecular Engineering professor at UC Berkeley, with a love for guitar. They have two children. Their daughter, Sonya, lives in NY, and is starring as Jasmine in Aladdin on Broadway, while their son Matthew is a drummer and kinesiology major at SF State. When the family comes together at their home in El Cerrito, they join forces and have fun with their own Balsara Band!



ANCIENT WISDOM FOR MODERN TIMES: WESTMINSTER EVENTS BRINGS TOGETHER MARIN FAITH LEADERS FOR A TIMELY DISCUSSION

By Lucy Carrico, Westminster Events Committee Chair

On a beautiful Sunday afternoon in November, Westminster Events hosted Ancient Wisdom for Modern Times, an interfaith discussion moderated by the Rev. Bethany Nelson. Four Marin faith leaders—representing the Jewish, Catholic, Protestant, and Buddhist traditions—shared how ancient teachings offer grounding and hope in a rapidly changing world.

Cantor Naomi Weiss (Congregation Kol Shofar) spoke of the sustaining power of music and community; Rev. Elaine Donlin (Tokudo ordained priest and a minister assistant at the Buddhist Church of SF) described her night ministry as a Buddhist priest in San Francisco; and Michael O'Smith (Campus Minister and Theology teacher at St. Vincent de Paul High School in Petaluma) reflected on helping students connect faith to modern life. Together, they highlighted how spiritual practice, community and compassion can steady us in turbulent times.

Following a lively Q&A, guests gathered in Findlay Hall for a warm reception and continued conversation. Deep thanks to Bethany, our speakers, and the Westminster Events committee and volunteers—Nancy and Gary Carlston, Mary Beth Culler, Erin Elliott, Karen Halsey, Tyna and Harbo Jensen, Marsha MacColl, Barbara Rowe—who made this inspiring event possible.

Looking ahead, please mark your calendars for **Sunday, March 8** when Westminster Events in partnership with the Outdoor Art Club of Mill Valley will host 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.

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. Help us welcome the Marin community into WPC!

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.

We are always looking for new ideas, speaker suggestions, and volunteers. Feel free to reach out to any of our committee members: Erin Elliott, Judith Harkins, Tyna Jensen, or Lucy Carrico. You can always find more information at www.westminsterevents.org.



WOMEN OF WESTMINSTER UPDATE

By Susan Berkhout and Sally Pasternack, WOW Board Members

For many years, Women of Westminster (WOW), along with four Tiburon churches and the Tiburon Landmark Society have supported the Tiburon Thrift Shop, located on lower Ark Row in downtown Tiburon. We volunteer our time staffing the Thrift Shop and donating good quality used items for sale. Profits from the Thrift Shop are shared by the five supporting groups, and from those profits, WOW is able to make a pledge to Westminster of \$12,000 to \$14,000 each year.

In addition to the Thrift Shop, WOW sponsors a charity at the annual Christmas Fair which for the past several years has been Haiti On The Rise, a charity run by local people supporting education in Haiti.

A few of the members of the WOW board have been serving WOW for over 30 years.

As we age, some of us are now faced with challenges that limit our ability to continue serving. At this time we are making an invitation to any Westminster member who might like to join in and assist us in continuing WOW's work. We hold very few meetings, perhaps two each year. In early January we will have a meeting for anyone interested in joining our team. In February our first activity will be hosting a Valentine luncheon open to all the women of Westminster, where we would like to introduce new board members. If you are interested, plan to attend our January meeting, which will be announced soon. Feel free to pose any questions to our current board members: Susan Berkhout, Chris Brettingen, Carolyn Grey, Chris Holly, and Sally Pasternack.



DO YOU HAVE A VOLUNTEER ACTIVITY OUTSIDE OF WPC THAT YOU WOULD RECOMMEND TO OTHERS?

By Suzanne Mellen, Community Service Committee Chair

The Community Service Committee is putting together a list of volunteer organizations which are currently served by WPC members. The idea is to provide a resource for people looking for ways to serve in the community. We think this would be a great way for people to help in an organization that's been vetted by a church member. The CSC is not sponsoring these organizations, but rather, helping match people with a service opportunity that aligns with their interests. Please send suggestions to wpc.csinfo@gmail.com.

SPECIAL ADVENT/CHRISTMAS EVENTS

Below are just a few of our special events in December. Be sure to check your eNews for the most up-to-date details.

HANGING OF THE GREENS

Sunday, November 30, 11:30 - 1:30 pm

Join the Deacons for a festive time of decorating for Advent and Christmas in the Sanctuary and Narthex while enjoying Christmas music and savoring warm cider and bites. Together, we'll create a winter wonderland while setting the mood for the holiday season. The entire WPC community is invited to this drop-in event.

AGELESS CAFÉ CHRISTMAS COFFEE

Tuesday, December 2, 10:30 am

All are invited for warm beverages and snacks, Christmas carol singing, and casual conversation. A fun and informal beginning to the Advent/Christmas season.

ADVENT MEDITATION

Wednesdays, December 3 & 17, 7:00 pm

Led by Judy Friede and the Rev. Kay Collette, this will be a time of quiet centering amidst the hustle and bustle of the Christmas season. We turn our gaze to the presence of God within our hearts and minds through shared quiet, poetry, reflection, and guided meditation. Meet via Zoom.

CHRISTMAS IN THE GOSPELS

Thursdays, December 4-18, 12:00 pm

Each of the Gospels tells the story of Jesus' birth very differently. In fact, Mark does not tell it at all! Join Jeff, Bethany, and Rob as we examine the various stories in Matthew, Luke, and John. We will meet via Zoom; feel free to eat lunch as we gather.

ADVENT WORKSHOP

Sunday, December 7, 11:00-11:30 am

Our middle schoolers host a time of games and crafts for all ages to celebrate the joy of the season.

LESSONS AND CAROLS AT SFTS

Sunday, December 7, 4:00 pm

San Francisco Theological Seminary celebrates their 50th year of Lessons and Carols with an inspiring time of readings and music. Held at Stewart Memorial Chapel in San Anselmo.

CHRISTMAS CAROLING

Sunday, December 21, 11:30 am-12:30 pm

We will visit the homes of some of our WPC members to bring Christmas cheer.

LIGHT IN THE NIGHT

Sunday, December 21, 7:00-8:00 pm

During the longest night of the year, our church will be open and filled with light for quiet contemplation in the sanctuary or to experience a walk on the Sarah Todd Labyrinth. Drop in any time between 7-8 pm.

CHRISTMAS EVE WORSHIP

Wednesday, December 24

- **10:00 am and 9:00 pm** – Traditional service with carols and candlelighting.
- **4:00 pm** – Christmas pageant, also with carols and candlelighting. Let Bethany know if your child would like to participate.

EPIPHANY AT MUIR BEACH

Sunday, January 4, 3:30 pm

We will celebrate the New Year and Epiphany (the arrival of the Magi) together at Muir Beach. Featuring S'mores, a guided spiritual experience by the Rev. Nancy Wiens, watching the sunset and plenty of time for fun on the beach. All ages are invited! Meet at WPC at 3pm to carpool, or at Muir Beach at 3:30.

WITH GRATITUDE FOR YOUR GENEROSITY

By Katie Smith, Stewardship Committee Chair

As we close out this year, there are so many wonderful things to be grateful for at Westminster—the inspiring Sunday Services, Bible studies, small group dinners, a pilgrimage to Iona, the Westminster Events thought provoking programs, the hiking group, feeding the hungry with bag lunches and dinners, the energy of the Youth Group ... the list goes on and on. We hope you will agree that it is the generous spirit of the people of Westminster that we are most grateful for this year. The fall stewardship campaign will continue through the end of the year, but we wanted to take a moment to say **Thank You** for your continued support of Westminster!



PLEASE JOIN US FOR

HANGING OF THE GREENS

DROP IN AS YOU WISH!
Hot cocoa, sweets, and Christmas carols by Bethany



After worship on Sunday, November 30 from
11:30 to 1:30



Westminster
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240 Tiburon Boulevard, Tiburon, CA US 94920