



October 2, 2020

Dear friends,

This time last year exciting change was in the air. The old Fellowship Hall had been cleared away, the ground flat and bare. Today we are in the final phases of construction of this magnificent space to welcome the entire community.

This time last year we had just called Alex Stayer-Brewington as Associate Pastor for Youth & Their Families. We had yet to meet Cherrie Barton Henry and Marietta Wynands, now our gifted Associate Pastor for Congregational Care & Mission and our Director of Christian Education. All three have done extraordinary work, enriching us all in many ways.

This time last year the Courtyard was teeming with Sunday morning activity, as we shook hands, watched children run, and took time to chat with friends old and new. We held the door for each other as we entered the Mission Center for classes and meetings. In the Sanctuary, we lifted our voices in song and bowed our heads in prayer.

This year so much is different: the global pandemic spreads, uncontrollable wildfires and storms destroy, and the sin of racism festers violently. The patterns of school and work, community and the arts are disrupted in profound ways.

But, we are proud of how Westminster has adapted with the support of so many of YOU. Worship services shifted online in March. Youth Group and Church School classes gathered over Zoom. Teachers found new ways to connect with their students. Committees met virtually and worked toward solutions. The TREE ministry was created to care for our church family members. We looked to our community, and we responded by giving money and food, our time and our prayers.

While there is much we miss, we have learned in new ways the value of being together. We are reminded how much community matters, how important is our care for each other, how much a Courtyard handshake or a hug gives us a glimpse of God. And we yearn for a new day - one filled with good health, founded on God's justice and compassion.

In exile, far away from home and with much they knew destroyed, God's people held onto a stubborn hope. It was a hope not in themselves and their strength, but in who God was. These words from Jeremiah 31: 1-8 have meant much to the Stewardship Committee in recent months. The whole text is worth your time, but we have leaned into verse 2: ***"Thus says the Lord: The people who survived the sword found grace in the wilderness."***

Grace in the Wilderness. Even in this most difficult time, we have found grace – or more correctly, grace has found us...in creation, in each other, in the ways God has accompanied us and continued to teach us. God made promises to the people in exile then, and God continues to make promises to God's people now.

Through that grace, the Holy Spirit continues to teach us. We deeply believe that now is not a time to "hold steady" until things can be "like they were." We believe we are called to use this time to be even more fully who God calls us to be, our faith renewed and strengthened. As we grieve all we continue to lose, and as we reach towards an uncertain future, we listen for the Spirit's call to be a people that worships with thoughtfulness and joy, gathers in community to learn, and reaches out to our neighbors in a time when the needs seem only to grow.

But as we look into the future, with small groups beginning to gather outside, with a Church School and Youth Group year off to a great start, as more and more of us bag rice and beans or load groceries into cars on Wednesday afternoons, we are keenly aware that none of this happens without ALL of us. ***Your commitment of financial pledges is critical to Westminster's mission and ministry and to the future of this church.***

This year's Stewardship Campaign, **Grace in the Wilderness**, will be a time when we reflect upon our common life and listen for the Holy Spirit's leadings on our giving to the church. ***We must keep investing in our church and in our***

staff who have guided us in worship, serving, and learning, discovering new ways to keep us safely connected in worship, to God, and to one another. **And we must continue our financial support of our community partner agencies** that are caring for our neighbors in need. Those benevolence checks are the very first checks we mail out each month.

Where have you seen **grace in the wilderness** these last several months? How does God call you to give back to WPC and our community during this time? We invite and challenge you to reflect on these questions as we journey through this Stewardship month. Over the next four Sundays, the Stewardship Committee will be at worship, sharing important information about the church's work and ministries and the ways your pledges make all the difference. We encourage you to review the resources enclosed and take time in the coming weeks to reflect on God's work and call in your life, in the places of your heart, as you consider your giving to the church for 2021. Your support matters so much.

We look forward to sharing this journey with you.



Chris Tuttle
Pastor & Head of Staff



Kim Garcia
Stewardship Chair

enclosures

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