Pathways
WESTMINSTER PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH
WINTER 2026
EQUIP | CONNECT
MOBILIZE | CELEBRATE
Your guide to new life and purpose in Jesus



A Joyous Rebellion

Pastor Chris

Joy to the world!

We sing it every year. We celebrate it in worship, and we arrange our calendars around the coming of Jesus, God with us. But in between the shopping, the gatherings, and the rush to get everything done, do we actually experience the joy of his presence?

What if our moment in life is hard? What if the headlines are grim, or someone we love is struggling, or there's an empty chair at the table? Even when life is going well, we can be so busy getting to the next thing that we barely see the good right in front of us.

C. S. Lewis wrote in Letters to Malcolm that "Joy is the serious business of heaven." I love that deliberate contradiction. I picture the legions of angels lining up on the first Christmas for their great invasion, to strike a stunning blow against the forces of darkness and death. And what are their orders? To sing the good news of great joy that was for all the people, "Glory to God, the Christ child comes!"

At Christmas, God's faithfulness took flesh in Jesus. God came into a world full of grief and trouble and saturates it with hope and joy.

Christian joy is a kind of rebellion. In our modern world, we have taken to treating cynicism as simple good sense. After all, if we expect the worst, we'll be less disappointed when it comes. But cynicism can also make us question people's kindness or miss the good that is right in front of us. We can become more reluctant to give or even to admit we still hope.

The deliberate practice of joy loosens the grip of our negative perspectives, and sets us free to embrace life once more. Joy brings freedom.

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Winter Focus

Faith & Family

EQUIP
Growing To Be More Like Jesus

CONNECT
Ways to Engage with Others

MOBILIZE
Partnering With God to Change Our World

CELEBRATE
God's Work in and Through Us

COMING SOON
Save the Dates

A Joyous Rebellion

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When we delight in someone else's good news, give without keeping score, or sing a promise we're still waiting to see fulfilled, we're living as though God's faithfulness has more to say about the future than our disappointments do. (By the way, it does. God's faithfulness will always win!)

So, how do we practice joy in the middle of the lives we actually have right now?

- Make room for lament and hope in the same prayer. In the psalms, the practice of lament is deeply tied to hope, and leads us back in the direction of joy—joy despite circumstance. So tell God what hurts or what you wish were different. Then remember one way he has carried you before, and name one promise you can lean on today.

- Slow down long enough to give thanks. As I write this, I'm sitting in a patch of sunlight while our parakeets flap their wings, shake their toys, and sing up a storm. These bright patches of color and racket feel like an extravagant joy. Take a moment to notice one good thing you might ordinarily hurry past. Enjoy it long enough to thank the One who gave it.

- Sing and laugh with someone. Put on a favorite carol and sing along, even if it's just in the kitchen. Call someone who makes you laugh. Boldly and loudly stake your claim to joy.





- Give someone a little grace. Bring a meal, run an errand, or give humbly to meet a need. Mend something that would have been thrown away and make it beautiful again. When someone's having a rough day, give them the patience you'd be grateful to receive. Practice redemption.

Choose one of these to try this week. Or come up with your own subversive act of joy and goodness. Try it again when the week gets busy or the news gets heavy. Over time, these small acts can teach us to recognize God's kindness, turn our delight into worship, and pass some of that kindness along.

We don't have to be stuck with the world we have. We worship a God of grace and redemption and have been commissioned by him to take up his cause. Sometimes fighting the good fight means choosing a deliberate and defiant act of joy. Viva la revolution!

> "May the God of *hope* fill you with all *joy* and *peace* as you trust in him, so that you may overflow with *hope* by the power of the Holy Spirit."

Pastor Chris

EQUIP



Being a Kingdom-Focused Neighbor

Pastor Lori

I like to think I'm a nice neighbor. I wave to the cars that drive by. I water our neighbors' plants when they leave town. If a piece of mail gets dropped on the street, I deliver it to the proper house. If Bill and I moved away tomorrow, I like to think that people would miss us… at least a little bit.

But God doesn't call us to be nice. God calls us to purposefully and prayerfully bring His Kingdom wherever we live, work, and play. So, church family, here's a winter challenge for you: **be the kind of neighbor people would miss if you moved.** They wouldn't miss you because you were nice, but because you reflected the love of Jesus Christ wherever you went. You don't need a lot of money or a well-thought-out plan. Just show up for people, listen well, and let the Holy Spirit set the agenda.

Here are **five** ways you can be a Kingdom-focused neighbor in these winter months:

1) Light a Fire
Get a fire going in the firepit or fireplace. Ask the Holy Spirit who should be there and invite them! Provide s'mores or hot cider, and keep the questions open-ended: "What's your favorite holiday tradition?" "What's the best part of the holidays for you?" Be curious and courteous. Listen well. Ask follow-up questions like, "What makes that so important to you?" "Sounds delicious! How do you make it?" "How did that tradition get started?"

2) Save a Seat
If a holiday dinner is at your house, set an extra place and ask Jesus to show you whom to invite. It might be the work colleague with no family nearby or the international student who is staying here over the long break. When you say grace, bless each guest by name, asking the Holy Spirit to give you one specific thing to honor in each person. Most people have never heard someone thank God for them out loud. Trust me, they won't forget it.

3) Walk your neighborhood with Jesus
Take a slow lap around your neighborhood and pray for each house as you pass by. Ask God what He's doing behind that front door, where He is being glorified, and where the enemy needs to flee. Learn the names of the neighbors you don't know yet. If something comes to mind as you're praying, assume that is the Spirit's prompting and pray accordingly.

4) Do the dirty work
Pick a neighbor who could use a hand. The older couple with the overflowing gutters. The new parents who haven't slept since August. Rake their leaves or take out their trash. If they mention a bad back or a sick kid, ask if you can pray for them right there in their driveway. People say 'yes' to prayer more often than we might expect.



Being A Kingdom-Focused Neighbor
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5) Deliver something yummy and true
Bake or buy something that is yummy for the tummy and a feast for the eyes. (Or, at least, one of the two!) Include a handwritten note, but before you write it, ask the Holy Spirit to give you a word of encouragement for that household. Use ordinary language; no King James English allowed. "I've been praying for you and I believe God wants you to know you are not alone." A brownie may be eaten in a minute, but a note like that might be on their fridge for years.

Jesus has placed you in your neighborhood as His representative. He has also gifted you with all you need to serve Him. Lean into Jesus and let His Holy Spirit use you to bring His Kingdom to your neighborhood.



Note: Thank you to Alex & Hannah Absalom for their article "Being an Intentional Neighbor" on which my article is based. Please see their original article at: ***dandelionresourcing.com***

EXPEDITION BIBLE
A Journey Through Scripture

Pastor Lori

The Bible is the greatest selling book of all time, yet it is one of the most misquoted and misunderstood books, as well. If you struggle to make sense of Scripture or wonder if you're understanding it correctly, you're not alone. Join Karen Coli on an expedition through the Bible as we highlight key themes, stories, and verses from Genesis through Revelation. These groups will be a place where you can ask questions, express doubts, and learn to treasure God's Word more deeply. Whether you're a beginner or a veteran of God's Word, everyone is invited!



When:

- Wednesdays beginning January 20, 9:30-11:30am
- Thursdays beginning January 21, 4:00-6:00pm

* Choose the time that works best for you.*

To RSVP or to get more information, please reach out to Karen at (224) 588-2192 (text/call) or KLCOLI@aol.com.



Growing to be More Like Jesus

Discipleship for Teens over the Holidays



Pastor Dereck

There's no doubt. The holidays from Thanksgiving to Christmas to New Year's can be like hopping on a treadmill that's going way faster than we would like. Your family definitely isn't alone. One helpful question for discerning what to say "yes" to may be, "What will most help you this holiday season to more deeply connect with what is most important to you and your family?"

Life formation can be a tricky practice with teens. As a Youth and Young Adult Pastor, I can relate on some level! **I think one first step is having a space in your weekly rhythm where your teens and family enjoy connecting and sharing deeply.** This can involve lots of laughter, and things they genuinely don't want to miss – like homemade pizza night or baking night with a movie. Part of this includes sitting down at the table and asking a good question after having connected and laughed. It can even include their friends. In that space here are two guardrail questions.

1. **"You know this holiday season can be busy with good but not the most important stuff. What are some of the most important and meaningful things for our family in this season?"**
2. **"When do you feel closest to Jesus?"**

I love that second question. Discipleship and life formation with teens is about having an ongoing discussion about what is most important in life, so that the family can make scheduling decisions accordingly to protect what is most important. And, then, what things help them connect with what is most important? That's what the second question is all about.

I love that this question is so creative, because discipleship and life formation with teens is inherently (and necessarily) creative. The answers to this question can vary widely from person to person. Maybe it's having silent time to walk the dog and be with Jesus. Maybe it's being with Christian friends, playing music as part of the worship team, reading Christian books, serving together with other Christians, or simply being at youth group or the worship services. Whichever it is, these are some things to protect, and keep margins for in this season. Together.





CONNECT



Adopt a Grandparent/Grandchild

Building Relational Support Between All Generations

Pastor Dereck

God made us for relationships, and this design has no age restriction on those in that relationship. In fact, healthy relationships between seniors and young people have unique benefits to both.

Seniors engage in a highly meaningful and purposeful relationship. The goal is not to "succeed" or "accomplish" something, as much as simply to pour out into that person. To show up for them. This is how Jesus teaches us to live our life by pouring it out for others, and is especially important in the final third of life. It takes some extra energy and calendaring, but it is well worth it for adding something rich and meaningful to our lives.

Young people receive a non-judgemental, safe relationship with someone who has walked with Jesus through hardships; a relationship with a prayerful, warm, and encouraging person to accompany you in life. You also have an opportunity to serve someone you know. Service is an important habit that forms our hearts, and is a tangible way to help people that our society sometimes doesn't see, know, and support. You can make a difference in making this world a better place.

Parents find that the grandparent role has unique opportunities that the parent role is not afforded. The grandparent role is able to provide another trustworthy adult to invest in your child's life, supporting them in ways that the parent would want, but doesn't always have the opportunity to so. Even more, you could arrange with the "grandparent" some ways of being with the "grandchild" that also involve practical help – such as homework help, learning an instrument, or babysitting, if appropriate. That's a win-win-win.

Here's what that would practically look like. A student and their family commit to adopting a "grandparent," and the grandparent commits to adopting a "grandchild." We use that language because we are family in Christ, and because the grandparent-grandchild relationship is a helpful script for what to do. As in, "What would you do for your grandchild/grandparent?"

The "grandparent" would:

- Intentionally connect with the grandchild at church once a month
- Reach out to connect with the grandchild some other way once a month… for example:
  - Attending an activity (soccer game, band performance, etc.)
  - Write a letter of encouragement related to something in their life (e.g. starting school)
  - Meet for ice cream or food with their family
  - Offer to babysit if appropriate
  - Accompany the student in a healthy stretching new skill class they enjoy and teaches a new skill (e.g. cooking)
  - Set a weekly reminder to pray for the grandchild's prayer requests

Ways to Engage with Others

Adopt a Grandparent/Grandchild

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- Consider joining for holidays or celebrations once a year

The goal is to build a trusting, warm relationship as someone who follows Jesus. Keep showing up for them. Be consistent in their life long-term.

Accompany them in life and faith. You don't have to be perfect or know all the answers. In fact, it's better to listen and ask agenda-free questions, anyway!

The parent would:

- Help communicate with the "grandparent" for arranging time together in public
- Providing safety considerations is the responsibility of the parent
- If appropriate, the parent can arrange ways for the grandparent to be with the grandchild in ways that help the parent also (e.g. running an errand with the grandchild, helping babysit)
- Parents could find out who the child would want to adopt by asking, "Who in our church would you most want to have babysit? Who would you most enjoy time with?"

The "grandchild" would:

- Commit to spending time with them, listening, and talking
- Commit to helping the "grandparent" with requests as they are able (e.g. tech problems)
- Look for ways to help and bless their "grandparent" like they would their family

To adopt a grandparent/grandchild, we suggest that individuals find their own match based on who they connect with, including the parents in the discussion. Then, contact dereck@wpcmedford.com to let us know about the relationship, so that we can support you with any questions you might have.

If you have questions on conversation with kids & teens, Dereck, Hannah, and others are available to help coach, listen, pray, and encourage as you go.

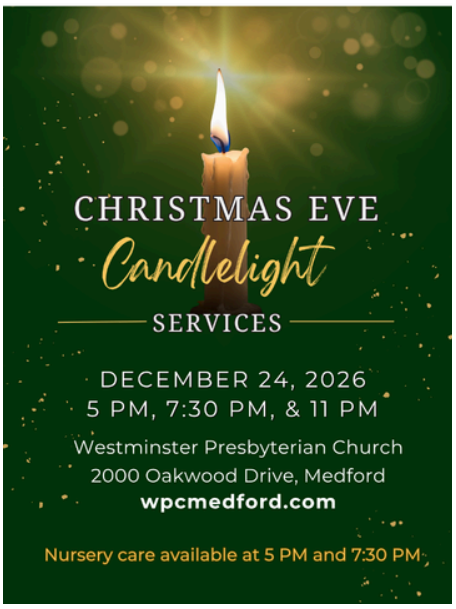








Ways to Engage with Others



Christmas Eve Children's Choir

Amy Bell

Calling all WPC families with kids! We are making preparations for our Christmas Eve service, and we would love your kids' help with our song "The Hope" that will be presented at the 5 PM and 7:30 PM Christmas Eve services.

We have made a video we will send you with the hand motions for them to learn. Please have them practice with the video as much as they can on their own, and we will gather after the 10:45 AM worship service during the Sundays in December 6, 13, and 20 to practice together. (For those coming from home, this will be around 12 PM or so.)

We will begin soon after the service ends, so please pick up your kiddos promptly and bring them back to the sanctuary to rehearse. Your kids are precious and valued here, and we would love for them to have a part in this important day of celebration of what God has done.

For access to the video, please text worship director Amy Bell at **541-778-4447**. Also consider which Christmas Eve service your family will be attending on December 24 - 5 PM or 7:30 PM.

Youth Group Winter Retreat

Pastor Dereck

One of our favorite youth group traditions is Winter Retreat. It's a time to step away from the hamster wheel of life, and take some time to re-charge and re-focus on what's most important.

That looks like waking up in a warm cabin. Sharing family-style meals. Laughing with new friends over a board game. Team building in group games. Relaxing around the campfire. Connecting with Jesus over times of worship, lessons, and small group discussions. Free time. And if there's snow… then we do some sledding and snow games!

These rhythms of community can be highly formative moments for students. It's worth protecting the time on the calendar for this weekend. These community activities can spark new friendships and new community belonging in ways that normally would take a full year. Students come back with new and deeper connections with peers as well as with trustworthy and trained adult mentors.

You can sign up now! Registration closes by 1/11, and register before 12/1 for an early bird discount. Friends are welcome to join in this community time. Check out all the details on safety forms, packing, times, and more on this registration qr code and link (that you can share with your friend:)

https://bit.ly/wpc_yg_wr_2027





MOBILIZE

Story In Lights "Hope Has Come"

Pastor Dereck

One of the things that I love about how **God made the church is that we exist for others. We don't exist for ourselves.** Take Abraham for example. Genesis 12 shows he was called out to… bless the nations! This is fulfilled and continued by Jesus.

There are several rhythms in our church life that bring alive this theological belief and church value: Harvest Party, Spring Celebration, Clothing Sale for Kenya, and … Story in Lights!

Each of these aims to find **meaningful ways to meet our community in their place of need**, whether that is family connection, wholesome fun, or the holiday pastime of Christmas lights. But this is simply the platform for getting to connect with our community in different acts of service.

We connect so share and to show the good news of Jesus. In both the face-to-face interactions (like serving a cup of hot cocoa) or from gifting each family with a Christmas ornament.

We not only get to celebrate the wonderful story of Christmas – God coming down to save us in the life of Jesus, we get to participate in it. **We get to continue the story of the shepherds who heard and heralded the good news to others.** We continue the story of the angels who sing and carol the joy of such a sacred gift.





To do this it takes a village of lay leaders using their giftings and acts of service. It takes a whole church congregation working together in humility and joy. You can help by:

- Signing up for a setup crew to put up lights and other decor 11/28-12/13
- Signing up for helping on the nights we host Story in Lights 12/17-12/20
- Inviting your small group to serve together & sign up
- Inviting your friends, family, neighbors, co-workers to drive thru or join you
- Liking and sharing this event and posts on Facebook

Scan the QR code to sign up today and share with your small group!

https://bit.ly/wpc_sil_2026

SCAN ME

CELEBRATE



Harvest Party

Meredith Clark

Congratulations on another wonderful Harvest Party, Westminster Family! This event is one of my favorites each year because it gives us such a tangible opportunity to love and care for our neighbors and community members.

Before I talk a bit about the wonderful things I saw at this year's event, I just want to share a couple of statistics that I think are relevant. They will likely feel a bit negative to read, but stick with me--there's a point! Did you know that in a recent poll by the Barna Group, about 32% of millennials said that they felt churches do more harm than good in their community? Similarly, about 88% of millennials describe Christians as being hypocritical. These perspectives cannot be separated from the negative experiences that many of us (myself included) experienced growing up within the church, and as such, there are many young families who could not imagine themselves willingly entering the doors of a church again for worship.



But many of them will come to free family events like Spring Celebration and our Harvest Party, and this is important because it's difficult to continue to hold negative perspectives towards the people you interact with up close. As families continue to attend Harvest Party year after year, they begin to recognize members of Westminster and build tentative relationships with them. As I sat at one of the welcome tables this year, a grandmother told me about how she used to bring her own kids to the Harvest Party every year and how she can hardly believe that now she's bringing her grandkids! She said that even though they aren't church members, they look forward to this







event and talk about it amongst themselves throughout the year. This may seem like a small thing, but it's actually a very big deal! These small interactions are planting seeds.

Westminster, you do this so well--I heard volunteer after volunteer welcome families. I heard many of you joyfully exclaim over costumes. You enthusiastically encouraged kids through obstacle courses, painted faces, and handed over batch after batch of cotton candy. These things really matter, and I'm thankful to be a part of a church that values caring for our community in this way.

Thank you to everyone who helped make Harvest Party a success. Thank you for your time and for your talents. Thank you for planting new seeds, and for continuing to water the seeds that have been planted in the past. Thank you!

God's Work In and Through Us

Habitat for Humanity Build
Laying the Foundation



Chris George



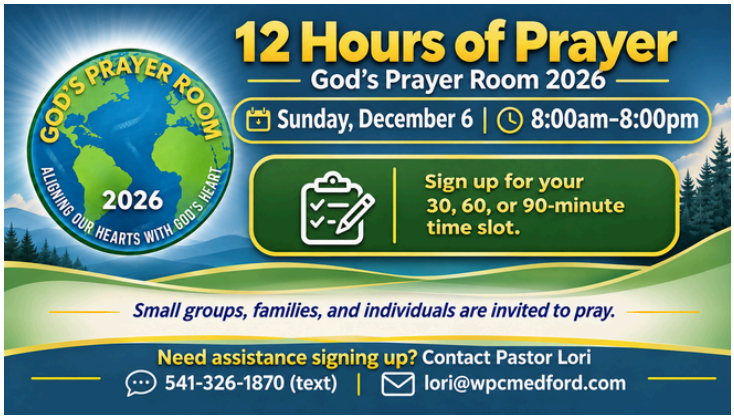
Yes, the actual foundation was poured months ago, and all sorts of work has gone on since then, but the project is so much more than the actual building. As things near completion, and the family works to finish up their obligations, we pray the home will provide the foundation for positive experiences, healthy relationships, and great memories to last a lifetime.

We now anxiously await word regarding the handing off of the keys to Danny and his daughter, Harlow, in the near future. We also look forward to a visit from Danny and others from Habitat on an upcoming Sunday. A great big "thank you" to all who donated time, sweat, and sometime even a little blood to the cause. It has been a joy working alongside so many great people and developing new friendships that might otherwise gone unrealized.



Coming Soon...

Day of Prayer, Dec. 6



Women's Christmas Brunch, Dec. 8
Preschool Christmas Program, Dec. 10
Story in Lights, Dec. 18-20
Christmas Eve Services, Dec. 24

2027

De-greening, Jan. 10
Youth Retreat, Jan. 16-18
Welcome Lunch, Jan. 17
Marriage Retreat, Jan 22-24

Ash Wed. Soup Supper, Feb 10
Lent Mental Health Workshops, TBA
Parents Night Out, Feb 19
Celebration Sunday,
10 AM Single Service, Feb. 28



Palm Sunday, March 21
Maundy Thurs. Soup Supper, Mar. 25
Good Fri., Meditation & Prayer, Mar. 26
Easter Sunday, March 28
Spring Celebration, April 18
Sports Camp, July 7–9

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OFFICE HOURS

Mon, Tue, Thu
9 AM - noon
and 1 PM- 4 PM

Wed
9 AM - 11:30 AM
and 1 PM - 4 PM

In Person Worship Services
9 AM & 10:45 AM

To view our weekly message go online to **wpcmedford.com**

Westminster Cooperative Prechool
8:30 AM – 11:30 AM
Tue. & Thu. for 3yr olds
Tue, Wed, Thu. for 4yr olds
(541)773-8274

FIND, FOLLOW, AND LIKE US ON THESE PLATFORMS

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