



Celebrate

*“Knowing Christ
Making Christ Known”*



WESTMINSTER
Presbyterian Church
West Chester, PA

1892 – 2017



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Making Christ Known"*

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Presbyterian Church

West Chester, PA

www.westminsterpc.org

Acknowledgments:

Drone Photo: Special thanks to the Hershey Medical Center, and Jim George, Ray Deimler and Mark Miles who took the congregational drone photo at our 125th anniversary celebration on May 20, 2017.

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Dedication

This book is dedicated to all the members and ministers of Westminster, who for 125 years have given generously of their time, talents and treasures, to further the kingdom of Jesus Christ in the greater West Chester area, nationally, and internationally; faithfully following the Lord's commandment:

"To whom much is given, much is required" – Luke 12:48

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Introduction

Westminster's 125th Anniversary book is a collaborative effort covering all 125 years of our history, and the setting in which our church was founded in 1892 with special emphasis on the move from the Borough and our life at the new campus, important history which has not been covered in previous anniversary publications. James Jones, Emeritus Professor of History at West Chester University contributed Chapter 2 on West Chester's history up to 1892. Member John Hurt, retired Professor of History, University of Delaware, captured the key events of the first 100 years in the third chapter. Member Don Jost, Westminster's church historian, composed the fourth and fifth chapters on the move from the Borough and our history at the new campus, based on annual reports and documents in our archives, largely compiled by Pastor Emeritus Robert Young, and Dr. Robert Poole. Pastor Don Lincoln concludes the text with comments on his seventeen years as Lead Pastor and his reflections about Westminster's future. Finally, the entire 125th Anniversary Committee was instrumental in compiling the photographs and appendix material.

The Setting

West Chester Before 1892

By the time the Westminster Presbyterian Church was founded in 1892, West Chester was a town in the midst of great change. Created at the end of the 18th century, West Chester began as a small cluster of farms surrounding a tavern at the intersection of roads leading west from Philadelphia to Lancaster and north from Wilmington towards Reading on the Schuylkill River. After the end of the Revolutionary War, the residents received a state charter to incorporate, and in 1799 they held elections to form their first government. The town became both a county seat and a market town for the area's farmers, and over the next fifty years its population grew from less than 400 to nearly 5,000. During that time its growth was spurred by the arrival of a telegraph connection and two railroad lines from Philadelphia, and the construction of a market house, hotels and several private schools.

The Civil War interrupted everything. Although West Chester saw no fighting, the debate over how to respond to slavery – the inhabitants were almost universally opposed to the institution – and the decision to

go to war divided the normally pacifist Quaker majority. The county agricultural fairgrounds on the south side of town was turned into an induction camp for new soldiers, while a section of woods further south along the rail line became the site of a camp for prisoners of war. Several local men gained fame by leading Chester County troops into battle, but for most people the main consequence was prosperity obtained by producing war supplies. Local farmers and wholesalers expanded their operations and several entrepreneurs established rudimentary manufacturing facilities. By the end of the war, West Chester was no longer just the main town in a farming region located west of Philadelphia; it had become the gateway between that region and the rest of the nation.

The first new industry was based on nurseries which produced plants – principally fruit trees – for export to other states. A factory for the production of wooden wagon wheels followed quickly, as did several planning mills, lumber and coal yards, an ice business and machine shops. A climax was reached in 1890 when machinist Philip M. Sharples built a new factory to assemble the cream separators for which he became famous. As Sharples expanded, other factories followed until by the end of the century, West Chester employed nearly as many people in manufacturing as it did in agriculture and commerce.

West Chester's retail sector responded to the influx of industrial wealth. By 1888 there were three local banks and seven hotels to accommodate people who came to town for business and legal matters. The town's biggest store was the Darlington Brothers grocery at the corner of Market and Church Street (where State Senator Dinniman's office is located) which occupied five of the old storefronts. The town also supported three carriage dealers, including one – Alfred McLearn – who built horse carriages for the local gentry at 200 S. High Street (modern Seven Eleven store). Other signs of the town's prosperity were the presence of four newspapers, a public library, two hospitals and a

public arboretum with 160 different tree species in Marshall Square Park. The town's business community published a promotional book that bragged how "the spirit of enterprise and brilliant examples of thrift exhibited in the neighboring city of Philadelphia have infused the minds of the live citizens of West Chester with the desire of progress." As evidence, it cited plans for a street car line, a third railroad, improved roads, plus "an opera house, a large modern hotel, a municipal building, and a land development corporation."

The switch from agriculture to manufacturing and the resulting influx of wealth had a large impact on the population of the Borough. The first federal census in 1800 reported a population of 374, which included 33 "free negroes" but the total remained below six hundred as late as 1830, just before the first railroad arrived. After the second railroad reached West Chester in 1858, the population grew to 4,757 (including 561 "colored") and by 1870 those numbers reached 5,630 and 928 respectively. Rapid growth continued and by 1890, there were more than eight thousand people in the borough, making it by far the largest town in Chester County.

Although some of that growth was clearly the result of natural reproduction, the largest part was due to immigrants looking for work in West Chester's factories. The 1840 census reported that about one sixth of the population – 315 people – was engaged in manufacturing, mostly small home enterprises. By 1890, over sixty percent of the population resided in the industrial East and South wards. Few emigrated directly to West Chester; instead most arrived from rural areas in Chester County where they (or their parents) found farm work upon their first arrival. The largest contingent traced their ancestry to Ireland, with substantial numbers from England and Germany. The first Italian immigrants began to arrive in the 1890s, but their numbers did not become significant until after World War I.

Population growth sparked new housing development, especially when economic depressions in the 1870s and 1893 rendered other forms of investment less profitable. Local carpenters borrowed from the borough's wealthy citizens to obtain land and materials with which to construct small houses suitable for factory workers, and larger houses for the expanding white-collar population of managers, teachers, bankers and lawyers. After the Civil War, with few exceptions, the built-up part of town was bounded by Union Street on the south, Washington Street on the north, New Street on the west and Matlack Street to the east. By 1890 however, housing extended east to Franklin, southeast to Nields, south to Dean, west to Wayne and north to Biddle Streets, with even more houses planned for the east and southeast in the coming decade.

All of these developments affected the borough in other ways. For instance, the Quakers who dominated the town since its founding had always placed a high value on education, and opened the West Chester Friends School in 1800. Others followed, including the West Chester Academy in 1813, Jonathan Gause's "West Chester Boarding-School for Young Men and Boys" in 1829, Philip & Rachel Price's "Boarding School for Young Ladies" in 1830, Joshua Hoopes' "Boarding School for Boys" (moved from Downingtown to West Chester) in 1834, Anthony Bolmar's boarding school for young men and boys in 1840, Smedley Darlington's Ercildoun Seminary in 1851 and others. In 1871 the Sisters of the Immaculate Heart of Mary founded the Villa Maria Academy, the same year that a corporation of West Chester's most prominent citizens opened a school for the education of teachers. From the ten students who formed the first "normal school" graduating class in 1874, enrollment grew to over 800 students by 1892, graduating 101 in 1893.

With the growth of West Chester's population, the demand for primary and secondary schools, especially for those too poor to pay tuition, became acute. Although the public schools were authorized

by the state in 1830, at first they operated out of private homes. In the 1840s, the first taxpayer-funded school building opened on Barnard Street west of High and in the 1860s a second public school building was erected on Church Street between Washington and Biddle. In 1887 the High Street School opened on the site of the Burger King to serve the growing population in the south east. So-called “colored” students were educated separately in a building at the corner of Adams and Barnard Street until it was replaced in 1894 with the much larger Gay Street School on the site where Borough Hall is now located.

The influx of new people also produced a search for sense of community in a town that had ceased to be a village. One approach was the formation of new social organizations, a phenomena that affected the whole country, and, indeed, the entire industrialized world. In West Chester the movement began with political parties and organizations of veterans from the Civil War, but expanded to include a wide variety of interests and backgrounds. The 1899 Centennial Souvenir listed some of these. The West Chester Pioneer Corps No. 1 was described as “the oldest and leading political and social club in the borough.” The West Chester Club was “a purely social organization, taking no part in politics ... composed of leading business men, lawyers and others.” The Euterpe Choral Society gave “an annual concert in the Assembly Building” and the Home Cluster held “literary meetings monthly at the homes of different members.” Borough directories list more groups including three different Masonic lodges (plus the “colored Masons”), two groups of Odd Fellows, the Red Men, the United Order of American Mechanics, the Knights of the Golden Eagle, the Knights of Pythias and the Improved Order of Heptasophs (devoted to matters of insurance). Local Irish-Americans created a chapter of the “Irish Catholic Benevolent Union” in 1894, while African-Americans formed an “Independent Republican Colored Club” when the mainstream Republicans refused to endorse black candidates for Borough Council.

As residents of West Chester searched for a sense of community, religion played a major role. The borough's first church was a mission that began in 1793 and developed into St. Agnes Roman Catholic Church in 1854. In the beginning, Quakers attended the Bradford, Goshen or Birmingham Meetings, but in 1811 they constructed a meeting house on N. High Street at what was then the corner of Strasburg Road (modern Marshal Street). The conflict over how to respond to slavery led to the "Hicksite division" in 1827 and the construction of a second Friends meeting house on what is now Municipal Parking Lot #10 on West Chestnut Street in 1844. African-Americans founded the Bethel African Methodist Episcopal Church in 1816 and after plans fell through to build a church on West Miner Street, they built a permanent church on E. Miner Street in 1861. During the same period, a small congregation founded the First Presbyterian Church in 1834, and, as it grew, it sponsored the formation of the Second Presbyterian Church for African Americans in 1880. When the number of Presbyterians continued to expand, members formed the Presbyterian Church Extension in January 1892, which was chartered as the Westminister Presbyterian Church a few months later. Other congregations formed – United Methodist in 1810, Baptist Church of West Chester in 1832, Holy Trinity Episcopal in 1838, St. Luke Union A.M.E. in 1841, Christian Science in 1875, St. Paul's Baptist in 1887 – until, by 1889, the Borough directory listed twelve churches serving West Chester's eight thousand inhabitants. They included the Orthodox and Hicksite Friends, one Protestant Episcopal and two reformed Episcopal Churches, one Baptist and one "colored" Baptist, one Methodist Episcopal and two African Methodist Episcopal, one Roman Catholic and one Presbyterian.

The First 100 Years

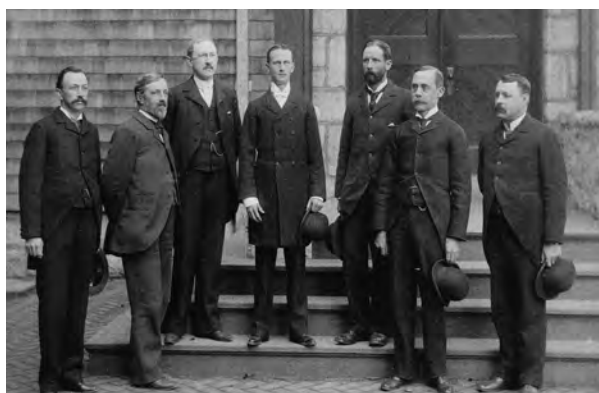
1892 to 1992

Westminster Presbyterian Church may have originated in disagreements among some members of First Presbyterian Church on Miner Street in West Chester, in 1892 the leading Presbyterian church in the borough. Some of its members felt that First Church had become overcrowded and disagreed with its practice, not uncommon in the religious community, of renting pews to churchgoers. But there were others who simply felt that the growing community needed another Presbyterian church and were ready to help organize it. Rev. J.M. Hastings of First Church cooperated with the birth of what was to become Westminster, suggesting that he at least held no grudges when some of his members left for the new congregation. In the event, fifty-one members of First Presbyterian, along with ten other interested parties, signed a petition to the Chester Presbytery advocating for a new church in the area. The fifty-one signatories from First Presbyterian included a number of church leaders—people who had served as ruling elders, trustees, clerk of session, choir director, church treasurer, and so on. Some had even helped organize the Second Presbyterian Church of West Chester, a congregation of African Americans. The Presbyterian

minister J.L. Estlin of Dilworthtown led this group in its efforts; he had already helped organize churches in Philadelphia and Wilmington, Delaware. Indeed, he had been leading Sunday afternoon services since early January for those interested in forming another church. On May 12, the Chester Presbytery, meeting at Lincoln University, approved the petition; and an organizational committee set to work. On May 25, that committee accepted the Presbytery's approval, took the name of Westminster Presbyterian Church, and elected six elders and two deacons. May 25, 1892 may therefore be considered the birthday of our church. Westminster's first worship service took place on the following Sunday, May 29, 1892. In June, the new church already had a membership of 106, most of them having come from First Presbyterian through letters of dismission. Early in its existence, the new church advertised its "free seats....supported by voluntary contributions." This distinguished the new church from First Presbyterian, of course, but the latter continued to do well with the number of its members and its finances.



Assembly Hall (Courtthouse Annex current location). Westminster Presbyterian Church was officially organized in the parlor on Wednesday evening, May 25, 1892.



Westminster's First Session and Minister, 1892.

From left to right:

*A. Thomas Smith,
Alfred P. Reid,
Herman F. Wyers,
Rev. B. Canfield Jones,
Wilmer W. MacElree,
William Dowlin
and Addison L. Jones.*



From its founding, Westminster's finances have been based on voluntary contributions, not rental of pews, a common practice in the 19th century. This sign hung in the back of the sanctuary for many years.

The founders had begun meeting as early as January, 1892 in a room over Smith's Funeral Home, on Gay Street, a building just to the right of the current Post Office. In May, they rented and met in the parlor on the first floor of Assembly Hall, a building located at 10 North High Street, in the center of West Chester, adjacent to the current Court House. They held services there on Sunday afternoons. As its numbers grew rapidly, the new church had to rent additional space in Assembly Hall to house a college Bible study group and a room for infants. It also launched two Sunday services, one in the morning and the other in the afternoon. Meanwhile, Reverend Benjamin Canfield Jones accepted a call to become the first pastor of the new church. Rev. Jones was known in the community, being the son of a former pastor of First Presbyterian, and he received a unanimous vote. Four hundred people attended his installation ceremony on September 25, 1892 in Assembly Hall.

The founders began to search for a permanent home. Somewhat ironically, in view of the modern history of Westminster, they considered but rejected the idea of moving south of West Chester and accepting the offer of a plot of land from a local family, much as would happen a century later. One can only wonder how far that land was from our current location. Such an idea did not catch on at the time. Instead, the founders became interested in a large plot of land on the corner of Church and Bernard that featured the beautiful three-story home of a Henry S. Evans. They purchased the site for \$9,000 and took possession on April 1, 1893. This location lay almost within reach of First Presbyterian, a fact which drew some comment and controversy at the time. The members planned to tear down the Evans home, and the architect Arthur Cochran, a church member, was retained to design

a church building that would fill the site and front on Church Street. Of course, the founders had also to raise the money for a building fund. Meanwhile, the Evans house was used for Sunday School classes.

In July 1893, the building fund stood at a potential \$15,000, which seemed ample. But the lowest bid for the Cochran design was \$18,000, a major disappointment. The solution was to scale back the original plans and to build a “chapel” fronting on Bernard, pending the completion of a sanctuary fronting on Church. Westminster would continue to use the Evans home, which pleased some because it had housed some prominent citizens. It would also continue meeting in Assembly Hall,



Chapel, with Evans Mansion in the background

until the Chapel was ready. Groundbreaking, presided over by Rev. Jones, took place on October 18, 1893, and the Chapel was ready for occupancy on May 24, 1894, the first Sunday in the new building. It was a rectangular building, in the Gothic style, with

Avondale stone, stained glass windows, and slate roof, with the modern convenience of electrical wiring. It had a seating capacity of 390 and cost about \$8,600.

From the beginning, however, attendance exceeded expectations, rising to 450 and then to 600, with Sunday worshippers standing along the walls. Membership, estimated at 150 when planning for the Chapel began, stood at nearly 400 in 1897. Fundraising to complete the Cochran plan resumed, and soon enough commitments for \$12,000 had been made. A building program got underway, with some modifications to the

original plans of Arthur Cochran, then deceased. In 1899, the selected contractor began tearing down the old Evans mansion and clearing the



Laying the cornerstone for the Church, September 5, 1899.

lot. The cornerstone was laid on September 5, 1899, and construction went forward rapidly. Two large stones arrived from historic sites in Ireland, a gift from the Irish contractor David Warrick, a friend of Rev. Esler, successor to Rev. Jones. One was to be used as a date stone, the other

for the base of the baptismal font. The new church was ready for services on June 10, 1900. It had new pews with cushions from a firm in Indiana, carpets, memorial windows, and a pipe organ (which had to be rebuilt in 1901). The lovely Gothic tower, which completed the structure, gave the church its distinctive look. The cost eventually came to \$22,000, but somehow the congregation covered it. The congregation dedicated the new church on May 24-25, 1908, when it also observed its sixteenth anniversary. Reverends Canfield Jones and Alexander Esler returned to West Chester to officiate at the ceremonies. Rev. Jones preached a dedicatory sermon on the morning of Sunday, May 24, and Rev. Esler preached that evening. Both visiting pastors, along with the serving pastor, Rev. C.R. Williamson, delivered addresses at afternoon "Sabbath School."

As the years passed, the church added steam heat, delivered from a downtown plant (1905), and an annex to the chapel (1911); updated the sanctuary with new lights,



Westminster Presbyterian Church, completed May, 1900, on the corner of Church and Barnard Streets, with its famous "Bell Tree"

and a new Kilgen Organ (1936); carved out new rooms for classes, choir practice, the pastor's study, the church parlor, and a modern kitchen and lavatories (1950); added Sunday School rooms to meet rising attendance (1955); installed a Schulmerch Bell and Chime system (1957); purchased new carpeting and new pews and created an attractive worship center (1959); built an addition for classrooms and other facilities (1963); installed a church library (1964), a Shantz Organ (1974), and five stained glass memorial windows in the narthex of the church (1975).



*Rev. Benjamin Canfield Jones,
Westminster's first minister,
1892-1896.*

Westminster was fortunate in its choice of professional clergy. The first pastor, Benjamin Canfield Jones, grew up in West Chester and attended schools here. He had studied at Lincoln University, where his father, a former pastor at First Presbyterian, was teaching. He then attended Princeton Theological Seminary, pastored a church in Port Hope, Canada, and accepted the call from Westminster on May 14, 1892, even before the church was officially constituted. He left Westminster for a pastorate in Erie, Pennsylvania in 1895, but he was

well remembered for his eloquence in the pulpit, for growing church membership, and for leading the chapel building program.

His successor, Alexander Esler, who was from Ireland, served from 1896 to 1901. During his ministry, membership rose to 450, and he introduced children's sermons on Sundays. He had a marvelous speaking voice and sang well too, appearing in church cantatas. He oversaw the financing and construction of the new church building, and it was he who, through his Irish friend, David Warrick, obtained the decorative



*Rev. Alexander Esler,
Westminster's second minister,
1896-1901*

stones used in the new building. He took up his next pastorate, Cooke Presbyterian Church in Toronto, Canada; it was predominantly Scotch-Irish, and had issued him “urgent and repeated” calls.



*Dr. Charles Robb Williamson,
Westminster's third minister,
1901-1935*

Charles Robb Williamson, Westminster's third pastor, served from 1901 to 1935. Born in Scotland, as Rev. Esler was born in Ireland, Rev. Williamson graduated from the University of Toronto and Princeton Theological Seminary. Perhaps his proudest moment in his long tenure at Westminster came in 1908, when he declared the church debt free. He also sponsored the formation of a Boy Scout troop and obtained for the church one of the first Scout charters issued in America, dated September 1, 1910. (The

boys had to pay ten cents a month in dues.) Similarly, a Men's Group flourished under his leadership and drew members from across the denominations. He added a large chapel extension and increased church membership. During World War I, Rev. Williamson became active in the local Prohibition movement and led the church to support it. In 1935, he died at the church's first manse, on West Union Street.

The next minister, William Henry Dilts, served from 1935 to 1944. He was well educated. He graduated from the College of Wooster in Ohio in 1923 and from Princeton Theological Seminary in 1926. He took a post graduate degree from Union Theological Seminary in 1928, and studied at the Universities of Edinburgh, Scotland, and Marburg, Germany. In 1944, Rev. Dilts accepted the pastorate of the South Park Presbyterian Church in Newark, New Jersey, a large church with more than eight hundred members. Westminster congratulated him on what it took as a promotion.



*Rev. William Henry Dilts,
Westminster's fourth minister,
1936-1944*



*Rev. Robert B. Boell,
Westminster's fifth minister,
1944-1965*

Robert Benjamin Boell came to Westminster in 1944 from Rochester, New York, where he was assistant minister at Central Presbyterian. He was born in George, Iowa, where his father was also a minister. Under his leadership, the church experienced a remarkable surge of growth and improvements. Membership rose from 500 to 1,200. Sunday School Enrollment increased from two hundred to more than six hundred. An 8:30 a.m. Sunday service had to be added, and additional Sunday School classes created. The church receipts grew from almost \$10,000 to over \$90,000. He oversaw the redoing of the sanctuary and the renovation of the basement for use by the church youth. A new education wing was dedicated in 1963. As a pastor, Rev. Boell served his congregation well with frequent visits to homes, nursing homes, and hospitals. He was also known for the quality of his sermons. During his tenure, the church hired its first assistant pastor, Rev. Lloyd Umbarger. Rev. Boell's son, Robert P. Boell, was four when the family moved to West Chester, so that he was nurtured at Westminster. He too entered the ministry, becoming the fourth in his lineage to do so. Robert P. Boell took his master's and doctoral degrees from Union Presbyterian Seminary in Richmond, Virginia. Ordained in 1966, he served congregations in Aston, Delaware County, and Corning, New York. He recently retired, moved back to the West Chester area, and resumed a myriad of contributions to the Westminster ministry.

Rev. Robert Doran Young began his career at Westminster on April 17, 1966, arriving from Woodland Avenue Presbyterian Church in Philadelphia. He had earned the B.A. from Eastern College and his B.D. from Eastern Baptist Seminary. Rev. Young also held an M.A. from the University of Pennsylvania (1953) and earned a doctorate in philosophy from Temple University in 1968. An outgoing, caring pastor, he was

well loved in the congregation, which appreciated his eloquent preaching, insightful teaching, and sympathetic counseling. Dr. Young also wrote books and articles, putting his advanced degrees to good use.

During his tenure, the church established a connection with a new Lutheran church in Weimar, Germany, then part of the former East Germany. This church took the name of Paul Schneider, a Lutheran pastor and courageous opponent of the Nazis, who killed him at Buchenwald concentration camp, a short distance from Weimar. Letters between the churches flowed from one continent to the other and, with German reunification, visits were exchanged. Elsa-Ulrike Ross, the Paul Schneider pastor, was herself one of our visitors. She brought with her the large green, hand-woven tapestry that hangs in our church today. Dr. Claude Foster, a history professor at West Chester University and fluent in German, had started small group visits to East Germany, especially to Lutheran sites; and Dr. Young and his wife, Louisa, had joined those groups, as the Schneider connection developed.



*Dr. Robert Doran Young
Westminster's 6th Minister
1966-1998*

Robert Young also led outreach efforts with respect to the American Red Cross, the West Chester Center for Senior Citizens, the Salvation Army, and West Chester Day Care. During his tenure, a new family service was added to the worship schedule, and the church purchased a bus. His greatest accomplishment, however, which lies outside the scope of this chapter, was to lead Westminster to its new site on West Pleasant Grove Road. Dr. Young retired in 1998.

Meanwhile, church programs kept pace with the growth and endeavor through the years. From the beginning, men had served in a variety of leadership roles, of course. One example was the creation of a Boy Scout

troop under Rev. Charles Williamson (see above), who also organized the Young Men's Club of Westminster, which grew into the Men's Club, as older men had begun to join. In 1916, the Men's Club purchased a cabin on a steep hill overlooking North Creek Road and the Brandywine and used it for fellowships and socials. The site was reachable by trolley and automobile, and attendance was numerous. Twenty-six men from Westminster served in World War I; in their honor, the Church flew a service flag with twenty-six stars from its tower. The men who stayed behind grew crops at the Club House, a venture in cooperative agriculture intended to make more food available for the war effort. The veterans returning from the war were even more interested in keeping the Club House going. Activity thus remained high between World Wars I and II, with frequent socials and meetings and an annual dinner. The cabin was sold in 1941 and fell into disrepair and then ruin. The Men's Group of the contemporary Westminster Church visited the site in May, 2017, and reflected on those who had gone before us. Mr. Robert Hawkes, the owner of an adjacent property, led a tour of the site, now part of the Stroud Preserve.

Women had been active at Westminster from the very beginning. After the first organizational meeting of the church, the "ladies of the church" met on the next Saturday afternoon to organize a "missionary society," for missions both foreign and domestic. The two branches were later joined in a single Ladies Missionary Society. The group met every month, with long afternoon sessions. Over the next several decades the Missionary Society sponsored well-attended lectures devoted to exploring and explaining issues of the day and regions of the world. The first such program was devoted to Joppa, Israel, which seems so topical today. In 1917, moving with the times, the Society sponsored a program on immigration, with papers on Ellis Island, college girls in missions, the immigrant as future American, and a review of a recent book on the subject. Mrs. Charles R. Williamson, the pastor's wife, took charge of this important session. Pictures and maps often adorned these sessions,

giving participants a good sense of exotic locations and building interest in world affairs. Over the years, sessions focused on Brazil, Palestine, China, Persia, Africa, and India. Interested also in domestic problems, the Society sent clothing and other items to impoverished people in the South, including African-Americans. Resources, much appreciated, went to needy communities in Florida, Arkansas, and Asheville, North Carolina, among other locations. In the 1930s and 1940s, the Missionary Society evolved into the Mission Circle.

Throughout these years, the wives of the Westminster clergy contributed much to the congregation, starting no doubt with Annie Chisholm of Canada, who married Benjamin C. Jones soon after the latter became the first pastor of Westminster. Unfortunately, history does not often record the endeavors of these worthy women. We do know that the wife of William Henry Dilts organized Girl Scouts during her tenure at Westminster. But we are not well informed about pastors' wives until we get to the service of Robert B. Boell (1944-1965). His spouse, Lilian Passmore Boel, married Robert in 1938 when he, then in his senior year at Princeton Seminary, was student pastor in her home town of Nottingham, Pennsylvania. She was active in Westminster affairs out of a sense of Christian commitment, not because she thought it was expected of a pastor's wife. She had trained as a teacher and employed these skills as a teacher of young children in the Westminster Sunday School. She also played piano for her charges. Her other activities included but were not limited to service as a Bible study teacher, a Circle Leader, and a member of the Women's Association.

During the pastorate of Robert Young (1966-1998), Louisa Young was associated with music and hospitality. She sang in the choir and often gave soprano solos. She served as a junior choir director and accompanist, which entailed a heavy time commitment. She hosted sessions at the manse before prospective new members joined the church. Dr. Young held monthly luncheons with West Chester clergy, a



*Westminster Presbyterian Sabbath School
at the Evans Mansion, 1895*

time for comparing notes and talking shop, and Louisa helped make these a success. He gives his wife credit for being stimulating with ideas and, most important, helping him to see that he needed to lead the church to its current location (see the next chapter). Westminster's connection with the Paul Schneider

church captured her interest, and she took a leading role there. In short, she, like the pastor's wives before her, contributed in her own way to the success of her husband's pastorate.

Westminster has always devoted its attention to its youth. Our very first Sunday, May 29, 1892, included what was then called Sabbath School, with thirty-eight pupils and seven teachers. They assembled, of course, at Assembly Hall, our first home. After a while, Sabbath School moved to the Evans' mansion. Herman Wyers, the first superintendent of Sabbath School, served for twenty-five years, until 1917. The local newspaper recorded the School's socials and holiday events and the occasional guest speaker. Activities were numerous and lively, including picnics, games, and debates. A debate in 1902 centered upon the farseeing topic of racial and ethnic injustice. The church ensured that there were abundant decorations for Christmas and Easter festivities. Rev. Esler created organizations known as the Pastor's Boys and, for the older youth, the Pastor's League, both of which sponsored group activities. Some of these activities were quite serious. A debate in 1902 centered upon the forward-looking topic of racial and ethnic injustice. In 1954, Rev. Boell led a widely-attended discussion about the causes of juvenile delinquency, also a meaningful topic. As we have seen, Rev. Williamson led the church to sponsor a Boy Scout troop, a legacy which endures.



Children's Choir, Rally Day, 1931



Choir picnic, 1933

Westminster devoted energy and attention to its music programs from its birth. The choirs not only performed at church services but gave cantatas and other programs as well. We have had mixed choirs, girls choirs, ladies choirs, junior choirs, boys choirs, and a men's chorus. The congregations supported these choirs and singing groups with a large participation. As a concluding note, the future world-renowned composer Samuel Barber, a native of West Chester, played the church organ for two years (1922-

1924) as a teenager. When he became famous in the 1930s, he wrote an original piece for the church's new Kilgen Organ, "Chorale for a New Organ," which we still possess.

Today Westminster Presbyterian Church still owes much to its courageous founders and their successors and to all the members who worked so hard to build upon foundations so well laid. It might have appeared in 1992, after a century of its ministry, that the church had already risen to a peak and had no place left to go. In fact, a profound change in its life was about to occur, one which would carry it to a new location and to new heights of Christian endeavor.

The Big Move

From the Borough to
West Pleasant Grove Road

Prelude

For a little over 100 years, from its founding in May 1892 to November 1993, Westminster Presbyterian Church served the Lord in the heart of West Chester. The chapel, completed in 1896, and the church, completed on the same property on the South East corner of Barnard and Church streets in June 1900, was a beloved religious home to all who worshipped there. With its classic Gothic architecture, beautiful stained glass, and signature “Bell tree,” the Westminster Church was a landmark in the town. To accommodate a growing congregation, the chapel was expanded in 1911 and a Christian Education wing was added in 1963.

But by the later part of the 20th century, pressure was rising to consider a move to a different location. There were several reasons for considering a move. Paramount among these was lack of parking for Sunday worship, lack of air conditioning, and handicapped access limitations. Also, demographics had changed markedly during the 20th

century. There were now seven Protestant churches within a four block radius of Westminster, and by the 1980s the Westminster congregation was largely living outside the borough and needed to drive to Sunday worship.

As early as 1966, when Robert Young arrived as Westminster's sixth pastor, he was asked what he "thought about moving." At this time, Session was already expressing concern about the physical limitations and was discussing options. However, after consulting with a city planner and the Presbytery, Westminster decided to stay put and acquire the properties along Church Street south of the church, with hopes of future expansion to alleviate the problems.

By the late 1980s congregational attendance had noticeably declined. Even though official membership records show a fairly stable membership of around 1,200, church attendance was dropping steadily. The average Sunday attendance rose to a peak in the 500s but began declining in the 1980s, slipping into the 400s and even high 300s. First Presbyterian Church, just two blocks away, with air conditioning and public parking nearby, was growing, approaching 2,000 members, while Westminster was struggling. At the same time a Donegal Presbytery study projected a coming population explosion for Chester County, with need for a new Presbyterian church in the area, and Westminster was land-locked. The church had purchased four of the five properties south along Church Street, and was in the process of purchasing the fifth property. However, using them for purposes of Christian mission was problematic, and tearing them down would destroy the appearance of historic West Chester. Removing just the non-historic, back additions to the homes and using the space to build a parking garage was seriously considered but found to be too expensive. A two-year task force headed by Bonnie Korengel, designated "The Westminster Mission Campus Proposal," called for tearing down the back of the five houses and building a two-level parking garage with an enclosed walkway to the

church. With a price tag of \$1.1 million, the proposal was defeated at a special congregational meeting on June 11, 1989, by a vote of 141 – 103.

The Decision to Stay

On November 8, 1988, church member Dr. Robert Poole had written to John Caldwell, chairman of Westminster’s Board of Trustees, suggesting that relocation was an option that could solve all the obstacles to furthering evangelism and growth. Consequently, with the defeat of the “Campus Proposal,” a task force on relocation, consisting of ten church members headed by Dr. Poole, was commissioned on June 27, 1989, to develop compelling reasons and comparative costs for relocating the church, and to prepare a report to session by September. In just eleven weeks the report was submitted on September 18. Pastor Bob Young said, “I have read more than my share of reports over the years, but I have never read one more cogent in its reasoning, thorough in statistical backup and projections or incisive in summarizing the reasons to move and the problems we will have in the future if we do not move.” The report analyzed five options from “Do Nothing” to “Relocate” and concluded that relocation was the best way to enhance the ministry and mission of the Church. The cost to relocate was estimated at \$3.1 to \$3.5 million, less an estimated transferable equity of \$1 million, leaving a balance of \$2.1 - \$2.5 million. However, since no specific site or size of a new building was known, this was really just a blind guess. It was pointed out that while this is a lot of money, it was only \$1.1 million more than the “Campus Proposal,” resolves all the existing problems, and enables future growth in mission and evangelism. This report was presented in a special congregational meeting on October 10, not for a vote, but only for study and prayer. On December 5, 1989, Session voted to accept the task force recommendation to relocate the church. It presented this recommendation to the congregation at its annual meeting in January, 1990, having previously notified church members by letter of the recommendation.

There were of course, many members of the congregation who opposed relocation, and for good reasons. The opposition submitted “Another Point of View” to Session at its January 2, 1990 meeting. This essay was signed by important lay leaders of the church, all with good reputations and long service. Key reasons given for not relocating were that the existing church was beautiful and serviceable, mission had not been compromised, mounting debt associated with a move would take away needed funds for ongoing missions, and finally, “we object to being uprooted and displaced from our church home when we see no compelling reason to do so....let those who want to move, move.” Session, wanting to be fair, mailed this essay to all members. The ensuing controversy thus reached a climax and threatened a church schism. It was a most stressful time for the entire congregation and especially for Pastor Young, who later reported having a recurring nightmare of seeing an epitaph on his gravestone, “Here Lies the Man Who Destroyed a Perfectly Fine and Functioning Church.”

Usually, the congregation follows the lead of Session, but leaving a beautiful old church after almost one hundred years was not a casual undertaking, and the opposition was active and well organized leading up to the annual congregational meeting on January 21, 1990. The meeting began with alternating presentations- one pro, one con. This is usually followed by lengthy discussion and debate before asking the question, which in itself is not debatable. At this meeting, however, someone was primed to “move the question” immediately following the second presentation. This motion carried, 398 -77, and the ensuing vote on “shall we move” was defeated convincingly by a two-thirds to one-third vote, 291 – 170. However, the way in which any discussion was disallowed by the motion to “move the question” left a sour taste in many who had planned to speak following the presentations.

The Decision to Move

Accepting the decision of the congregation, Session met three days later and formed two task groups with the purpose of moving forward in the present location. The first was to review and redefine the congregation's mission statement. The second task force, chaired by Ross Bortner and Ed McFalls, called the Committee on Church Improvement, was to address solutions to the existing physical problems. Session also agreed to create a third task force, consisting of members who supported the idea of a move. This was called the New Church Fellowship. Session invited other Westminster members to help in this endeavor to form a new Presbyterian church in the greater West Chester area, as previously encouraged by the Donegal Presbytery.

It was at this critical time that fate, or more likely God's hand, intervened. Dr. Bob Poole, who had headed the task force recommending a move to Session and was now an active member of the New Church Fellowship group, also served on the Board of Managers of Chester County Hospital chaired by Mr. James Robinson, also a member of Westminster. An early objective of the New Fellowship Group was to find a location for a new church, and Bob started looking for some open land for this purpose. He found, as it happened, the Robinson's Crebilly Farm, just south of West Chester off Rt. 202, which was the largest tract of open land nearby, and in a perfect location for a new church. Dr. Poole asked Mr. Robinson if he would consider donating a small part of the farm to the Presbytery for a new church. The Robinson family has a rich history as benefactors of the Presbyterian Church. James Robinson consulted his wife Gay, and the Robinsons together agreed to donate up to seven acres of land on the corner of West Pleasant Grove Road and Rt. 202, for the future construction of a Presbyterian church. At later dates, the Robinsons generously increased the grant to eight and then ten acres of land to meet township "impervious surface rules."

This gift of land came just six weeks after the congregational meeting that defeated the Session's proposal to move. While Dr. Young's immediate reaction was joy over this generous gift, there was also regret that Westminster had missed a golden opportunity to advance its ministry. Dr. Young believed that Westminster had made the wrong decision, and that future generations would regret the decision to stay in town. Dr. Young quickly realized that a brand new Presbyterian church, with a highly visible location and ample facilities, including parking, would act as a powerful magnet in the recruitment of new members, to the detriment of Westminster and its ministry if indeed it stayed in West Chester. "Was it too late?" "Could I get Westminster to reconsider?" "Could the vote be reversed?" Dr. Young decided that he had to try.

After checking with Dr. Poole, the Robinsons, the Presbytery, the New Church Development group, and lastly with Session, Dr. Young obtained permission to write a letter to the congregation explaining the implications of the Robinson family gift of land and asking them to vote by enclosed ballot (one for each confirmed member in the family) whether or not to reconsider the decision to move. This letter was sent on May 19, 1990. By the deadline on June 5th, an amazing 718 ballots, or 58% of those sent, had been returned with 580 (81%) voting to reconsider.

A key paragraph in the letter described Dr. Young's vision of a "New Westminster:"

I dream of a new Westminster seen from thousands of cars each day, whose location advertises its cause. I see it as a large church, not because I admire bigness, but because West Chester continues to grow and more families than ever need the Gospel of Jesus Christ. I want Westminster to have room to grow and to welcome newcomers in a building that has classic lines, sunny classrooms, ease of access and programs that bring honor to our Lord.

(Note: the complete letter is reproduced in the Appendix)

Session scheduled a congregational meeting for September 23, 1990 to reconsider the decision to stay or move. This second congregational meeting was preceded by Monday prayer sessions in September. The meeting itself was almost anticlimactic with good presentations followed by good discussion before a vote was taken. Harry Sandstedt, a talented tenor in the choir, made the case to move most succinctly: “Either we move or we die.” Having said everything that needed to be said, he sat down. The final vote was 303 in favor of moving, 132 in favor of staying and renovating, four abstaining – two-thirds of the quorum attending now favored moving, a complete reversal in just eight hectic months. Enthusiasm ran high after the vote. A motion to begin a fund raising drive in 1991 was unanimously approved. Another unanimous motion approved a task force to develop a preliminary design and to select an architect. This was the beginning of the CPC (the Committee on Plans and Construction). Now came the hard part, pulling it all off.



Sign advertising location of Westminster's future home, corner of Route 202 and West Pleasant Grove Road, March 8, 1992.

*From left:
Mr. and Mrs. James Robinson,
Ed McFalls, Jack Webster, and
Dr. Young.*

Building the New Church

A real morale booster was the Thanksgiving Day service on November 22, 1990, held on the field at the corner of Rt. 202 and West Pleasant Grove Road, the site of the new church building. At 8:45 a brass quartet struck up the opening hymn. As Pastor Bob Young recalled, “some found it hard to sing because of a lump in their throat, and others brushed away a tear.” After the benediction, the congregation shared beverages they had brought and donuts provided by the church. Some

folks driving by stopped to inquire what was going on. This first service held at the new site was indeed a historic occasion and a harbinger of things to come.

Not all was euphoria in the early days and months following the decision to move. Long time members, including elders who had opposed the move, left the church, petitioned Session to reconsider, and even wrote an article in the Daily Local News in April, 1991 with the headline “Westminster Presbyterian Should Not Leave West Chester.” While the membership dropped from a peak of 1,225 after the decision, it remained above 1,000 members during the transition years.

While 1991 was, on the surface, a typical year in the old church, about one hundred volunteers were actively working on plans and preparations for building the new church. An overarching Steering Committee chaired by Henry Fisher was charged by Session to coordinate and communicate the work of several committees. The primary Committee on Plans and Construction (CPC) was co-chaired by Ed McFalls and Greg Walters. Greg, being an architect by profession, was familiar with area architectural firms, knew their reputations, and selected four for serious consideration. Anne Walters, Greg’s wife and a trained landscape architect, was to assist with planning the landscaping design. Early in 1991, the firm of Crothers, Daley and Jaboot was selected. Their approach impressed the committee because they wanted the design to fit in with the surrounding fields and woodlands, and showed a simple stone building they had designed in Bucks County as an example of a style they thought would work here - “simplicity, and function.”

To best meet the concept, the architects suggested a new design with four buildings: sanctuary, fellowship hall, office and music, and a two-story building for education, youth and day care, enclosing a central courtyard. This design was both functional and allowed for staged construction. Most of 1991 was spent working out the many details of

the concept, especially the design of the sanctuary. For example, even the arrangement of pews is significant. The four sections fan out so that people sitting in the pews can see the faces of those sitting in the other sections. The width of the sanctuary and pew arrangement also gives the feeling of gathering around the pulpit and communion table, which is intentional. Another major change from more traditional church architecture was to have windows all around for looking out onto the fields and adjacent highway, expressing the concept that the church was indeed of the world, and reaching out into the world. On September 21, 1991, almost a year to the day that the congregation voted to move, the overall plan and models of the buildings were presented to the congregation by architects Tom Daley and Sam Crothers. The congregation liked the plan, but the estimated price at \$5.3 million was more than a little daunting.

The difficult task of raising the necessary money to build the new church was gladly shouldered by Dr. Bob Poole, who believed strongly that the church's "commitment to mission" was a central purpose of this ambitious move. In addition to his medical practice, Dr. Poole was an experienced professional fund raiser for his profession and the hospital. Between 1985 and 1989, Bob had served as a national coordinator for the Polio Plus Campaign of Rotary International. With the powerful motive to immunize children of third-world countries, Rotary had set a goal to raise \$125 million but succeeded in raising \$240 million.

However, in September of 1991, the first capital fund campaign had just begun and success was not assured. Two guiding principles were adopted: first, no building could begin until there were adequate financial resources to proceed; and second, we would not cut corners if it meant inferior construction. This principle was demonstrated later when the building plans had clapboard on the ends of the sanctuary. Fortunately, the bids came in lower than expected and Westminster was able to afford stonework, which added much to the Chester County feel and beauty of the building.

Thanks to the professional leadership of Dr. Poole, a generous starting grant from Richard and Barbara Heckert, the work of many volunteers, and the sacrificial giving of Westminster church members to the new building fund, the pledges for the first capital campaign totaled \$1,761,000, four times the 1991 operating budget. Normally a capital campaign is considered successful if it can raise twice the annual budget. Another source of building funds was provided through the sale of special bonds, orchestrated by George Warren, which raised an additional \$800,000 at interest rates lower than the church could obtain from banks. The Westminster Thrift Shop, with a mission to serve the community by selling donated goods, also contributed half of its profits to the capital campaign. By 2007, the Thrift Shop contributions to the church collectively totaled more than \$200,000, with half going toward the building funds.

While very successful, this first campaign had only raised pledges for one-third the total estimated cost, and the decision was made to build only three of the four buildings. The expensive, two-story Christian Education building would have to be deferred until additional resources could be raised at a later date.

Groundbreaking day took place on September 27, 1992 in a driving rain storm, complete with bagpipers and a celebration cake (under tents of course). It was a wet, wonderful and memorable event for all who attended. Over 300 braved the elements, including the architect, Tom Daley; Gus Feroa, representing Adams-Bickel, the construction firm; Duke Evans, the church's banker; Synod executive Dr. Thomas Johnston, Presbytery former executive Rev. Bill Brown; State Senator Earl Baker; local clergy and other friends of Westminster. The oldest member of the congregation, Addie Nesbit, who wouldn't miss it, was allowed to stay in her car near the speaker's platform and needed a push to leave when her car got stuck in the mud. The hymn "Fairest Lord Jesus" never sounded better, and Dr. Bill Hess of First Presbyterian noted

the wonderful togetherness when an entire congregation can get into a shower with each other and sing. Dr. Hess, a scratch golfer, brought along a club and golf ball, and Dr. Young broke ground by producing the first divot and hitting a line-drive into a puddle. One member summed it up pretty well: “The weather is not what we ordered, but it surely shows that Westminster people are able to take whatever is dished out. Now let’s up and build.”

Sale of the old church was another fortuitous event in this transition saga. A Westminster member, Richard Cain, happened to car-pool with a deacon of the Emanuel Southern Baptist congregation, which was in the early stages of starting a church in West Chester. When Richard learned that they had purchased property on the other side of Rt. 202 from our own site on West Pleasant Grove Road his response was, “Why not buy our church instead. It’s already built and will give you a faster start.” Negotiations began under the leadership of Gary Lorgus, a Westminster member and realtor, and the old church was sold for \$530,000 in early 1993, providing much needed funds for the new church now under construction. There is a bit of irony here. In 1892, when the group that would become Westminster were searching for a name, someone had suggested “Emmanuel Presbyterian Church.” At a joint worship service with the Baptist congregation, the Baptist minister, Rev. Paul Broyles, playfully commented, “It seems you people of Westminster are just one hundred years too late and the wrong congregation.”

The properties owned by the church south along Church Avenue were also sold. Real estate values had appreciated since their purchase, and their sale provided additional funds for the new building program.

As construction progressed during 1993, the congregation was invited to updates at the site itself. One of these occasions, on May 23rd, was designated as “sign on day.” A large number of families, parents and

children roamed the area armed with colored markers, and drew whatever they wished on the cinderblock walls. When shirt-sleeve weather arrived, a weekly program was scheduled. Picnic suppers, and a time for singing, communion and meditation took place every Thursday. The first Sunday service in the new church was held on December 3, 1993, and on January 9, 1994, a memorable day in the history of Westminster, the new sanctuary was officially dedicated.

The dedication service started with a procession led by Jack Webster, clerk of session and of Scottish heritage, dressed in Balmoral tam and kilt, carrying the pulpit Bible; followed by the eight great Presbyterian Confession banners; then the clergy and choirs. All rose to sing, "The Church's One Foundation is Jesus Christ Her Lord." Special music by Carl Nygard, Jr., a graduate of West Chester University, wove together choir voices with hand bells and brass, organ and piano. The prayer expressed the desire of the new Westminster to further its mission:

Here may the faithful find salvation, and the careless be awakened.
Here may the doubting find faith, and the anxious be encouraged.
Here may the tempted find help, and the sorrowful comfort.
Here may the weary find rest, and the strong be renewed.
Here may the aged find consolation, and the young be inspired.

Westminster's difficult and ambitious journey to a new home had ended successfully, thanks to the grace of God and the spirit of Jesus Christ working through His people here at Westminster.

The New Westminster Church

Over the 15 year period from 1992 to 2007, Dr. Poole would lead five successful 3-year Capital Fund Drives raising over \$7 million. This unprecedented support from the congregation provided the necessary

funds to build the expensive two story Christian Education building, expand the parking area for 200 more cars, establish a reserve fund for maintenance, and retire much of the debt. Always, mission was the primary driver for the capital fund drives with the following results:

	Years	\$
#1	1992-1994	1,761,000
#2	1995-1997	1,100,000
#3	1999-2001	1,585,000
#4	2002-2004	1,247,715
#5	2005-2007	<u>1,332,076</u>
	Total	7,025,791

In addition to generous financial support, the new church could not have been built without the volunteer time and talents of the congregation – legal management, fund raising management, project management, site engineering, landscape architecture, real estate sales, bond issue and special gifts management, art work, computer skills, fine cabinet making for interiors, and many more – all given voluntarily by church members. Stewardship involves the gifts of time and talent in addition to treasures. The value of these gifts of time and talent is incalculable.

The new church facilities were a dramatic departure from the dear old Gothic church in West Chester. Spacious and functional in design with handicapped access, air conditioning, many windows providing natural light, but most important, sufficient land for adequate parking and room for future growth. Not least in importance was the location on Rt 202 providing visibility and easy access by car in reasonable commuting time for the entire greater West Chester area.

The new sanctuary also featured important new art work. William Daley, father of the architect Tom Daley, and a world-renowned sculptor, was commissioned to make five ceramic bas-relief tablets for the pulpit,

another for the lectern, and the baptismal font (Daley is especially known for his ceramic bowls). These ceramic pieces were fired to match the cherry wood used for the new chancel. Bob Sumner, a member of Westminster, dentist by profession and expert cabinet maker by avocation, agreed to make the large Celtic cross which is the centerpiece of the sanctuary. The cross made of cherry wood edged with gold leaf is 14'8" high, 8'5.5" wide, and weighs 600 lb. Bob's comments on building the cross are noteworthy: "I thank God for the gifts He gave me and try to use the gifts to His Glory." Bob has contributed many other pieces of fine furniture and cabinetry in the church.

While the beloved old Westminster church in West Chester, with its famous bell tree, is in our past, there are a few parts of her that are with us still. Most prominent is the Shantz organ. This magnificent instrument, originally installed in the old church in 1974, was dismantled and reassembled in the new church. The five rectangular New Testament stained glass windows in the West clerestory, were originally installed in the narthex of old Westminster in 1975. Manufactured by the Willet Glass Studio in Philadelphia, they were removed by Willet and reinstalled in the new sanctuary, side panels having been added to fit the square windows in the new walls. The five Old Testament windows in the East clerestory were made over a year later and dedicated on April 30, 1995. These windows were also made by Willet for the new sanctuary and matched the same style as the older windows in the West clerestory. As you leave the sanctuary by the center aisle, directly ahead is the stained glass window, "Enter into His gates with thanksgiving." This is the oldest stained glass that we have from the old church and was over the entrance. Many paintings and other artwork in the church, too numerous to mention here, were also brought over from the old church.

Outside the church is the oldest remnant from old Westminster. This is the five-sided stone located near the Memorial Garden. It is from the famous Giant's Causeway formation on the coast of Ireland. This stone

was a gift sent to Westminster's second pastor, Rev. Alexander Esler, who was born in Ireland. It arrived on December 19, 1899, when Esler was building the church in West Chester, and has remained with us ever since. While the bell tree could not be moved, its memory is captured in the William Daly ceramic tablet in the lectern. A shoot from the old tree was also planted in the lawn between the church and West Pleasant Grove road, so an offspring of the old bell tree is with us still.

While not from our old church, the bell in our belfry has an interesting West Chester history. Holy Trinity Episcopal Church, just around the corner from Westminster, had the only full carillon in town with sixteen bells. The carillon tower had deteriorated and was demolished just before Westminster moved. Only one bell could be located. It was a large one, a brass casting forty-eight inches in diameter. Westminster purchased the bell, which was quickly installed in the new church. It can be struck or tolled, and a Schulmerich system was added to allow seasonal religious music to be played from the belfry.

As mentioned before, the new construction was accomplished in two phases. Phase I included our sanctuary, a wing for fellowship and kitchen, and a wing for offices and music. These were completed in December 1993 and dedicated on January 9, 1994. The large fellowship hall is dedicated to Dr. Elwood "Ozzie" Spellman. Ozzie was a beloved, stalwart leader of the church and community; serving as Sunday school teacher, Elder, Boy Scout leader, district governor of Rotary, and President of the School Board during the difficult period of racial integration. He was a strong proponent for building the new church and influenced many to support the move. He died tragically in an automobile accident just before the church was completed. It is most fitting that Westminster's heavily used fellowship hall is named in his memory.



Dr. Elwood "Ozzie" Spellman

The two story Christian Education wing was half completed in 1998 when Dr. Young retired. It was completed in 1999 and was named the Heckert Center, honoring that family's commitment to the importance of Proverbs 22:6 "Raise up a child in the way he should go: and when he is old, he will not depart from it." This wing includes a chapel dedicated on November 14, 1999, as the Robert D. Young Chapel. It includes two William Daley bas-relief tablets and a cross made by Bob Sumner with a center ceramic piece by Daley, all in the same cherry wood and color as in the sanctuary pieces. The new wing also provided a room in the northwest corner for the church library. This space has since been opened up and converted to coffee and fellowship space and the library was moved to the Bell room next to the Music office.

Dr. Young's vision for a "New Westminster" has indeed been realized thanks to the time, talents and treasures of many dedicated servants and by the Grace of God. The next chapter, on the last 25 years of our history, describes how the church's mission, "Knowing Christ, Making Christ Known," has successfully expanded in size and diversity, thanks to the leaders and members of Westminster who had the foresight and courage to move from a beloved old church in the heart of West Chester to a new location better suited to serve our Lord and Savior in the future.



"Westminster" activities bus used in West Chester



Dr. Young preaching at the old church, 1972



Christmas Eve candlelight service at the old church



Louisa Young and Elsa-Ulrike Ross, pastor of our sister church, the Paul Schneider Lutheran Church, in Weimar, Germany, exchange the Prebyterian Seal and Lutheran Rose stained glass gifts.

Groundbreaking Day, September 27, 1992. Left to right: Dr. Young (note the golf club), architect Tom Daley, Gus Feora of Adams-Beckel Construction, Pastor Ann Dickey, and pastoral support Rev. Carl Bogard..



Thursday night "Open Air" communion service in the sanctuary under construction, Summer of 1993

Dr. Bob Poole adds his name to the church under construction on "sign on day", May 23, 1993.





Placing the steeple, 1993



Phase II - the two-story Christian Education building under construction



Richard "Dick" and Joanna Heckert, at the opening of the Heckert Christian Education wing, 1998.



Westminster's new home - God be Praised!

Westminster

at West Pleasant Grove Road,
1993-2017

LOCATION, LOCATION, LOCATION— MEMBERSHIP AND ATTENDANCE

Except for the first year of the last twenty-five years, Westminster has worshipped and operated in new church facilities located on West Pleasant Grove Road and US Route 202. When Dr. Bob Poole negotiated this site as the best location for a new Presbyterian church in the greater West Chester area in 1990, he did not know this would become the future home of Westminster. Nor could he have imagined the dynamic growth in membership and mission that was to result from his location. As foreseen in Dr. Young’s vision, “I dream of a new Westminster seen from thousands of cars each day, whose location advertises its cause”, they did see, and they did come.

Membership

The risks taken with the decision to move out of the borough were rewarded with steadily increasing membership. Both Dr. Young's vision of bringing the gospel to a growing population, and Dr. Poole's goal of expanding Westminster's mission, were realized from the start. In spite of incomplete facilities for the first five years, membership grew every single year for fifteen years, from 1994 to 2008. Starting with 1065 members when the new church opened its doors in December, 1993, membership passed 1500 by the end of the 20th century, the 2000 mark in 2006, and hit a peak of 2152 in 2012. At this level, facilities were once again maxed out, and membership has essentially stabilized at a few above or below 2100 since 2008. Based on the latest available membership statistics, Westminster is the 30th largest PCUSA church. In summary, with the move to West Pleasant Grove Road, Westminster has evolved from a medium size neighborhood church in its earlier years, to a large regional church today.

Attendance

While growth in membership was steadily upward for the first fifteen years, and stable since, the growth in worship and Sunday school attendance has been even more impressive. In 2001 a second summer service was added, and in the fall, a third Sunday morning worship service was added to accommodate increasing attendance. The following summer, the third service was maintained through the summer when a pilot contemporary service was started. Westminster's average weekly church attendance has been steady at around 800 to 900 for the past several years, with attendance as a percentage of membership in the 40% to 50% range. In the last few years, church membership and attendance has declined for most churches in the United States, and our numbers have also dropped a little, but very modestly compared to the national averages. In 2016, average weekly attendance was 796 or

38% of membership. For comparison, the average weekly attendance as a percentage of membership for the twenty largest PCUSA churches was 31%. As just one example of how well Westminster is sharing the Gospel of Jesus Christ with more and more people, at the six Christmas Eve services last year, total attendance was 3,275.

The Sunday school has essentially been operating near, or at, full capacity since the church was built. Thanks to ample parking, modern facilities, and an excellent program, our church was both convenient and appealing to younger families. A steady influx of families with school age and pre-school age children joined Westminster. In the first full year in the new facilities, Sunday school attendance averaged 150 with 25 teachers. With completion of the Heckert Christian Education wing in 1999, attendance continued to grow, reaching an enrollment of 256 in 2001. A major factor in attracting younger families is the pre-school program. A community outreach program, Westminster's pre-school brought many non-member families in contact with Westminster. Hugely popular, and providing good use of the church facilities during week days, this important outreach program, enabled by the new campus, served 217 children in 2016, with two-thirds being children of non-members.

Youth programs, always an important part of Westminster's ministries, also flourished in the new location. In 1995, just the second full year in the new location, the Youth Fellowship program had tripled over pre-move attendance. Last year Westminster confirmed forty-two youth into our membership, and an average of thirty middle school and high school youth attend Sunday evening meetings.

While a convenient location, modern facilities, and ample parking were enabling factors, the dynamic growth of the church could not have occurred without the Westminster people. Leadership of the clergy, educational and outreach programs, and the amazing volunteer commitment of time, gifts, and talents of the congregation, to further

Christ's kingdom here and abroad, are the real story of Westminster's success over the past quarter century. It is impossible to capture all the people and activities that comprise Westminster's ministries since the move. As Pastor Don Lincoln noted in our 2016 Annual Report, "the scope of Westminster's service to the Gospel and the world defies comprehensive knowledge. And that is a good thing." A quick way to get an appreciation of the many activities and the number of volunteers involved in the many church programs is to go to our website, www.westminsterpc.org, and run the cursor over the main menu topics and drop down menus. You could spend several hours and still not cover all that is presently going on at Westminster. Hopefully, the following sections provide enough highlights and anecdotes in our history since the move to capture the spirit of this amazing story of "Knowing Christ, Making Christ Known," Westminster's mission statement, adopted in 2001.

OUR MINISTERS – LEADERSHIP AND WORSHIP

Ministers

In the last twenty-five years, Westminster has had more ordained ministers than for the first one-hundred years. Only associate ministers and pastoral support ministers with three or more years of service are mentioned in this section. The complete list of ministers is in the appendix.

When Westminster moved to our new location in December, 1993, Pastor Bob Young was assisted by Associate Pastor Ann Dickey, and part-time pastoral support of Dr. Robert L. Gordon. A beloved member of the pastoral staff, Dr. Gordon died while in Westminster's service in 1997. Not long after Dr. Gordon's death in 1997, Dr. Wesley Smith joined the staff part-time, but quickly became full-time pastoral support, leading the Retired Men's Bible Study group along with other

assignments. Dr. Smith continued to serve Westminster until his retirement in 2006.

Pastor Young stayed on a little longer than he had originally planned, to ensure continuity of leadership, until the church, with its large financial obligations, was well established in its new location, and on a firm financial footing. This was accomplished in 1998, with sufficient funds in hand to begin construction of the Christian Education wing. Pastor Young retired in June, 1998, and was elected Pastor Emeritus. He was also honored by his alma mater, Eastern Baptist Seminary, with their prestigious “Outstanding Ministry” award. He has remained an active participant in the congregation ever since, and still teaches courses in the Lay Academy.

With Dr. Young’s retirement on June 30, 1998, the Reverend Dr. Graham Hardy accepted the call as interim pastor starting in August. Dr. Graham had just completed his eighth Interim assignment at St. Simons, GA. With extensive ministerial experience and a jovial personality, he quickly became a popular senior minister, and Westminster continued to prosper under his leadership.



Pastors Wes Smith, Ann Dickey and Don Lincoln

The search committee for a new senior pastor worked conscientiously for two years (finding a worthy successor to Dr. Young was not an easy task) and finally extended a call to the Reverend Donald D. Lincoln to become Westminster's seventh Senior Pastor. Pastor Lincoln arrived in August from Annapolis, MD, with twenty years of ordained ministerial experience, and immediately recognized the future potential of this dynamic Christian church. In his first message to the congregation, in the 2000 Annual Report, Pastor Lincoln shared his enthusiasm:

“God has granted us an abundance – an extra portion, full measure and overflowing – in ways too numerous to count. Everything about Westminster – staff, members, location, building, programs, growth, mission, involvement, spirit, worship, music, vitality – speaks of OPPORTUNITY! We have been given so very much! It is not only our duty, but our joy, to be able to share these blessings with a world so much in need of a Savior!”

Westminster has indeed been blessed with long term ministerial leadership. During essentially the entire twentieth century, Westminster had only four senior pastors. Pastor Don Lincoln continues the trend as the only head of staff in the twenty-first century, completing his seventeenth year as Head of Staff as we celebrate our 125th Anniversary this year. A superb preacher and administrator, Pastor Lincoln is largely responsible for our current diversity in worship, establishing Westminster as a teaching church with many seminary interns, and managing and mentoring a large, ever changing, pastoral staff. During Pastor Lincoln's tenure, Westminster has become the largest congregation in Donegal Presbytery.

In 2003, the Reverend N. Anthony (Tony) Sundermeier joined the staff as Associate Pastor of Youth Ministry. His wife, Katie, a seminary student, later joined the pastoral support team on a part-time basis. A dynamic couple, the Sundermeiers quickly became important additions to the pastoral staff. Katie Sundermeier completed her degree and was

ordained in our church on April 15, 2007, as the Associate for Pastoral Care. When the church set up a satellite campus at the Dilworthtown Community Church in September, 2006, Pastor Tony Sundermeier led this satellite campus congregation as lead pastor until the decision was made to combine the two congregations at the main campus in 2009. His experience as lead Pastor at Dilworthtown proved important, and the congregation was sorry to see the Sundermeiers leave later that year when Pastor Tony accepted a call to the large First Presbyterian church in Allentown as Head of Staff.

In 2004, fresh from a year in the mission field at an orphanage in Mexico, Jon Frost joined Westminster's team to assist with youth ministry and contemporary worship. A highly skilled classical guitarist, Jon was ordained in 2014 and became full-time Associate Pastor for Worship, a position he continues to fill today.

For the first ten years in the new facility, the Reverend Ann G. Dickey served as Associate Pastor. Her primary responsibilities were evangelism and pastoral care, but Pastor Dickey added important continuity in the pastoral leadership, both with the move to the new church, and with the transition of leadership from Dr. Young to Pastor Lincoln. Her experience working with Dr. Hardy as interim minister was very rewarding, so much so, that she decided to be trained as an interim minister. Having completed her training, Pastor Dickey accepted a position as interim minister at the Unionville Presbyterian Church in 2004. After two years serving there, she served at the Doe Run Presbyterian Church, and is now Pastor of Bethany Presbyterian Church in nearby Mendenhall, PA. Pastor Dickey's vivacious personality and Christian caring was an important factor fueling Westminster's growth for the important first decade in the new church.

To fill the void left by Pastor Dickey's departure, the Reverend Gary ArnTessoni joined the staff as Associate Pastor of Spiritual

Growth and Development. Pastor ArnTessoni played a major role in furthering Westminster's adult spiritual growth. While adult bible study and other adult classes have been a traditional part of our ministry, Pastor ArnTessoni was instrumental in expanding the recently formed Westminster Lay Academy. The Lay Academy offered several morning and evening courses, with close to 250 total attendees in its first full year. The Lay Academy has been the workhorse of Westminster's adult spiritual growth since its founding. Pastor ArnTessoni resigned in 2015, having served Westminster for over a decade, to accept a call as Associate Pastor at the Christian Life Center in New London, PA.

With the departure of the Sundermeiers in 2009, Westminster lost the pastor responsible for the contemporary service and the pastor responsible for pastoral care. In 2010, the Reverend Shelton R. (Shelli) Latham was called to be lead preacher for the contemporary services, now being held in Spellman Hall, as well as pastor for Outreach ministries. Pastor Latham, and her creative gifts, made many contributions to the contemporary service and expanded our Outreach ministries at Westminster until 2014, after the two contemporary services were combined into one service held in the larger sanctuary. Reverend Ann Hatfield joined the staff part-time in 2011 with primary responsibilities for pastoral care. Pastor Hatfield moved to full-time in 2014 with expanded responsibilities to include Outreach. Now in her sixth year at Westminster, her warm and cheerful personality has added greatly to making Westminster a "welcoming" church.

The Reverend Jennie Clark is our most recent minister. She joined Westminster in 2015 as interim minister to lead spiritual growth and the Lay Academy. Her position was made permanent in 2017.

The Reverend Ed Brandt, a Presbyterian Pastor and Army National Guard Chaplain, has provided part-time pastoral support to Westminster twice in the last decade, first in 2009-2010, and more recently from 2015 to the present.

Westminster's ministers rely heavily on the staff to get their work done. There have been many full and part-time staff members since moving to the new church, too numerous to mention here. But Ruth Kershaw, Karen Koepke, Barbara Fox, Martha Anderson, Barb Dalton, Nancy Bergsten, Stacey Smith, Barbara Drain, and Laura Mauro deserve special recognition for many years of devoted service, keeping the office running smoothly, efficiently, and friendly. Financial Administrators Arthur Griffith, followed by Donna Harrison, provided the church with timely and accurate accounting over this period. And finally, Jim Worthington has given many years of service to Westminster as our custodian.

Worship Services

As the congregational membership and Sunday worship attendance continued to grow under Don Lincoln's leadership, more worship services were needed to help alleviate overcrowding. Sunday worship attendance increased 21% in 2001 over 2000 and a third Sunday morning worship service was added in the fall of 2001 with services at 8:15, 9:30, and 11:00 AM. A radio broadcast of the 9:30 service was also made available for those who could not attend. By the time this book is published, the 9:45 service will also be streamed on the internet. In 2002 the 11:00 AM worship service was changed from a traditional service to a contemporary service, complete with worship band and more modern music, in response to the growing preference, particularly among younger families, for this alternative form of worship. The contemporary service has been a popular mainstay of Westminster's worship ever since. In 2015, the Worship Band released their first album "Lord Have Mercy on Me," featuring leader Jon Frost and many of the musicians who lead the contemporary services. In 2004, a Sunday evening service, "The Gathering," was added with the Rev. Tony Sundermeier as lead pastor. For two years this service attracted many youth, young adults, and a number of Westminster members who enjoyed this alternative worship at an evening hour.

In September, 2006, many from “The Gathering” helped start an additional contemporary service at the newly acquired Dilworthtown campus. In 2008, a complete overhaul of the morning schedule on the main campus was undertaken to alleviate crowding. A thirty-five minute traditional service was added at 8:00 in the sanctuary and the other two traditional services were held at 9:00 and 10:30. At the same time, Spellman Hall was set up for the contemporary service to run concurrently at 10:30. Pastor Sundermeier and Jon Frost led worship at 9:00 on the Dilworthtown campus, and then came to the main campus to lead worship at 10:30 in Spellman Hall. When the decision was made to fold the Dilworthtown congregation back into the main campus in 2009, a 9:00 service was begun in Spellman to accommodate the Dilworthtown congregation. So there were now five Sunday morning worship services, three traditional and two contemporary, all held at the main facility. In effect, Westminster had two separate congregations with limited interaction between the traditional and contemporary families. In 2012 the decision was made to hold all the services in the sanctuary to help consolidate the congregation, with traditional services at 8:30 and 9:45, and the contemporary service at 11:10, which is the schedule still in use at present. In addition to the Sunday morning services there is a monthly Taizé service and a weekly Wednesday morning communion service in the Chapel.

Pastor Lincoln is fond of telling colleagues that Westminster changed its worship schedule ten times in the first twelve years he was pastor. The current availability and diversity of worship at Westminster provide a variety of choice in timing and format of worship. This is a major factor in attracting new members to join us in “Knowing Christ, Making Christ Known.”

Music Program

Music has always been an integral part of Westminster's worship and fellowship. The move to West Pleasant Grove road brought not only numerical growth to the choirs, but the opportunity to greatly expand outreach and effectiveness of the many musical programs. Bob Morris became Director of Music on August 1, 1991, and is the only current staff member to precede the move. Now in his twenty-sixth year, Mr. Bob is the heart and soul of much of our music program. The three vocal choirs, Kid's Jam, Youth Choir, and Chancel Choir, not only produce marvelous music to lead us in worship, but carry our music mission out into the community as ambassadors of our mission "Knowing Christ, Making Christ Known." Bob deserves the lion's share of the credit for the phenomenal success of our music programs, along with primary assistance from Linda Lorgus, Organist and Bell Choir Director until 2007, and Glen Kinckner, who joined Westminster in 2000 as accompanist and Assistant Organist, and has been our organist from 2007 to the present. Both assisted Bob in many of the music department's work in addition to their primary duties. When Linda Lorgus left, she had been working in some capacity in music with Westminster for over thirty years. Many others too numerous to mention have assisted with the children's, youth, and bell choirs over the years.

At the time of the move, the Chancel Choir numbered around thirty-five, sang at the 11:00 AM worship service, and performed one Christmas concert. In 2016 there were almost one-hundred regular members of the Chancel Choir (110 for the Christmas concerts), they regularly sing at both 8:30 and 9:45 Sunday services, and performed six Christmas concerts to a total audience numbering close to 3500. Similar growth in size and mission has occurred with the other music programs. In 2006, there were three bands and five hand bell choirs in addition to the four vocal choirs.

Three Great Westminster Organists



Linda Lorgus



Glenn Kinckner



M Ruth Thomas

The Westminster Chancel Choir has become one of the very best choirs in the greater West Chester area, and West Chester is a mecca for fine music. The Westminster Christmas Concerts have become so popular that all available seats in the sanctuary are quickly sold out, even with six concerts. With increasing demand for tickets, and long waiting lists, the concerts were increased to two in 2002, three in 2005, four in 2009, five in 2013, and finally six in 2015. In some years there were additional concerts at retirement homes and Longwood Gardens. A non-member attendee confided that the Westminster Christmas Concert was better than the Philly Pops Christmas Concert, and was a “must” to really get in the Christmas Spirit. We are very fortunate to have several talented solo voices and musicians in our congregation who have added much to the success of our concerts. Desiring to spread the mission of Jesus Christ to the community, Westminster has never charged for tickets, and many non-members attend each year. One Christmas concert each year is recorded and CDs and DVDs are sold to help raise funds for music, choir trips, and other choir expenses. In addition to the Christmas Concert the choir performs an annual Lenten concert featuring a requiem mass, and an occasional non-liturgical concert with popular music. To help celebrate our 125th Anniversary, the choir commissioned a narrative blending our history with key national and world events, and took the congregation

on a wonderful musical journey of songs popular from 1892 on. In 2007, the choir embarked on a two-week European tour, performing in several famous churches and participating in the Salzburg International Choral Festival. They have also enjoyed two more European tours, visited Washington, DC and New York City, including a soup kitchen mission in the Bowery. But this is more than a choir. The Chancel Choir offers a good example of how a large church can still operate on a smaller, even individual and personal level. The choir members are effectively a close Christian family, sharing prayers, fellowship, travel, and pastoral care.

The children and youth choirs get our kids off to a good musical start. Kids Jam for ages K-5 can vary from sixty to over ninety singers. They also lead in worship and present a Christmas and Spring musical in the church. The Youth Choir for middle and high school age generally has fifty or more singers. Periodically, the Youth Choir stages a full musical comedy show at a local high school auditorium and a cabaret program in the church at the end of every school year. We have members of the Chancel Choir who have participated in every age choir as they grew up in our church.

Westminster has two adult hand bell choirs, the Genesis and Chancel Ringers, under the able direction of Ron Bellamy. The bell choirs perform monthly in worship and the Chancel Ringers always play an important part in the Christmas concerts.

CHILDREN AND YOUTH SPIRITUAL GROWTH AND FELLOWSHIP

Mary Allen joined Westminster's staff as Director of Educational Ministries, shortly before the move, with responsibility for Sunday school, youth, and adult education programs. In the first full year in the new facilities, Sunday school weekly attendance averaged over 150, the Jr. and Sr. high youth group was small but active, and there were three adult

classes. A small pre-school program was started called Kids' Morning out, with fifty-six children meeting three days a week. By the time Mary Allen retired in 2004, after eleven years as Director of Educational Ministries, there were several paid staff and clergy involved in educational ministries.

Sunday School & Vacation Bible School

With rapid growth in membership – 150 new members each year in the first three years - the facilities and staff for educational programs quickly became strained. Over-crowding was already a problem in the Sunday school classes by 1995. In addition to the regular Sunday school at 9:45, between services, a new section after the children's sermon at the early service was added in 1996. By 1998 a third class had to be added until the new building was finished in 1999. By 2002, there were over fifty youth and adult volunteers in the Sunday school program. In 2004, after the retirement of Mary Allen, the Rev. Joelle Beller became Westminster's part-time children's ministry director. Two years later, after the arrival of twins, commensurate with needing a full-time director in Children's ministry, Rev. Beller resigned, and in 2006, Sue Spotts became full-time Director of Children and Family Ministries. Sue has held this responsible position since then, and has led a large staff of volunteers in our Sunday school and annual Vacation Bible School programs. The VBS is a major activity held for one week each summer, with 150 to 250 children and over 100 adult and youth volunteers participating in a fun-filled, Christian educational experience. Like all Westminster ministries, mission is an important part of the children's programs. In 2012, as a typical example, 400 gift boxes were sent overseas in Operation Christmas Child, and VBS raised \$1800 for malaria nets for Africa and the Estado 29 orphanage in Mexico.

Preschool

Starting as the Kids Morning Out program, the preschool was quickly expanded to five days a week in 1995, with an enrollment of 129. With completion of the Christian education building in fall, 1998, Jacqueline Steinmetz joined the staff as Preschool Director, and enrollment grew to 175. Jackie has been our preschool director ever since, heading a large staff of trained teachers and assistants. As stated earlier, Westminster's preschool program has been a hugely successful outreach program of the church now serving approximately 200 children a year and introducing many non-members to Christian learning and fellowship experiences at a critical, impressionable, young age.

Youth Fellowship

In just two years in the new church, youth fellowship had tripled. Recognizing the need for additional youth leadership, the Reverend Douglas W. McPheeters, joined the staff in 1996 as Westminster's first ordained Director of Youth and Family Ministries. After Rev. McPheeters, Laura Manger was hired as Youth Director, and served until 2003. A major change in the youth program was made in 2003 with the creation of the "Cove" in a large corner room of the Heckert wing. The Cove, designed to appeal to twenty-first century teens, is a full blown internet café, complete with computers on internet, coffee, smoothies, sofas, and games – "Hot coffee and Christ served daily." The Cove, plus the arrival of Tony Sundermeier as Associate Pastor for Youth and Young Adults, assisted by Jon Frost, gave a real boost to the youth ministry. In the fall of 2003, 189 youth participated in the programs with over 40% non-members, and average Sunday evening attendance of 67 youth. When Pastor Sundermeier assumed Lead Pastor responsibilities at Dilworthtown in September, 2006, the Rev. Jessica Vaughan Lower became the Associate Pastor for Youth. Following her departure a year later, Greg Klimovitz became Youth Director, and a year later, seminary

graduate, Erin Hayes, joined Greg Klimovitz in leading the youth ministry. In addition to weekly meetings in the Cove, there were annual retreats and mission trips. In 2008 the Senior High youth adopted a new name, Imago Dei Ministry, meaning image of God, to better represent their mission as a Christian youth group. In 2014, Erin Hayes was called as pastor of the First Presbyterian Church in Rahway, NJ. In 2015, Greg Klimovitz resigned after leading youth ministry for eight years to accept a call as Associate Executive Presbyter in Philadelphia Presbytery, and Chris Clark, the current youth director, took over. Over the years Westminster's junior and senior high youth have regularly participated in most of the church's



Youth Directors Erin Hayes and Greg Klimovitz

many areas of activity: worship services, choirs, Sunday School and Vacation Bible School, mission trips to Honduras, Mexico, and Pittsburg, Souper Bowl Sunday collection, Broad Street Ministry, to name just a few.

ADULT SPIRITUAL GROWTH AND FELLOWSHIP

Westminster has a rich history of adult ministry, and the years in our new location again reflect a continuation of the existing groups and activities but with growth due to the larger congregation. However, with better facilities and an ever increasing staff, many new avenues for adult spiritual growth and fellowship were now possible that would have been impractical with the old facilities and smaller staff. A prime example of the latter is the Lay Academy.

Replacing ad hoc individual classes and seminars, Westminster started a formal Lay Academy in the fall of 2003, with 165 enrolled in four evening classes, each a six week session. In 2004, the first full year with two semesters, the Academy offered twelve classes with a total enrollment of 423. Each year, the Lay Academy publishes a spring and fall semester curriculum with topics, speakers, and times. Speakers have included staff, members of the congregation, and outside speakers. The number of classes offered has varied some from year to year and the format has evolved more to Sunday morning classes from the original evening schedule. But the subjects have always been diverse, covering religion, church history, art, literature, current events, and many more. The following sampling of just a fraction of the courses illustrates the diversity of subjects that have been offered in the Academy:

Introduction to the New Testament
The Life of C.S. Lewis
The Big Picture – Artists and Their Art
Introduction to Church History
Pathways to Health
Slowing Down to Pray
The Art of Westminster
Single Parenting
The Separation of Church and State
Biblical Stories of Reconciliation
Christianity in Egypt
Martin Luther and the Origins of the Reformation

Now, in addition to classes usually held in Spellman Hall and the Chapel, through our web site, course sound tracks are available on the internet and some courses are made available on U-Tube. Use of electronic media will continue to allow our spiritual growth ministries to reach an ever wider audience.

In 2010, Westminster began hosting the **Global Leadership Summit**, a simulcast leadership event from Willow Creek Church in Chicago featuring nationally known speakers. This has become a community-wide event held annually during the summer in Spellman Hall. Attendance is usually over 225, including members from other nearby churches and community leaders. While primarily an adult leadership conference, this is also an outreach program to the community. The hope is that community-wide participation in the Summit can act as a catalyst to create more effective leaders in churches, schools, businesses, and home in the community.

ADULT CHURCH GROUPS

The many Westminster women's, men's, and special interest groups, while primarily social and fellowship groups, also play an important role in spiritual growth, outreach, and mission.

Women's Groups

The **Westminster Presbyterian Women (WPW)** was a strong and active group in the old church and has continued to prosper in the new church. The following statement from the 1999 Annual Report gives a good snapshot of the organization:

“WPW offers leadership in building a caring community, nourishing a spirit of giving, and providing avenues for addressing concerns, near and far. Our Christian faith is deepened through study, affirmation of faith, and shared effort in ministry.”

Their many circles and interest groups, including bible study, knitting and gardening (to mention just a few), luncheons, dinners and retreats, have provided both spiritual growth and fellowship to a large number of Westminster women over the years. Perhaps you have noticed the nine banners hanging in the upper Heckert lobby which are based on the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) Book of Confessions. These were all made by the WPW quilting group and represent more than 900 woman-hours of quilting. Eight of the banners were quilted over a two year period, and dedicated in a special Festival of Banners service on October 27, 1996. When the ninth Presbyterian Creed based on the Brief Statement of Faith was adopted, the quilting group produced the last banner to complete our collection. These quilts are an important contribution to the art work in our church. Another interesting example of WPW's work was "The Westminster Story," an original dramatic and musical revue written, produced, and directed by the Drama Group. The show chronicles Westminster's first 100 years and was performed at the WPW Spring Banquet, May 17, 1996. WPW always made annual contributions to several charitable organizations of its choosing, and their "Magic Needles" group provided hand made goods as well. As an example, in 1999, the group donated 280 clothing items, which included afghans, caps, sweaters, scarves, etc., to three local missions. Magic Needles has now made and donated close to 4,000 clothing items for charitable organizations. Although the umbrella WPW disbanded as a formal organization in 2013, the circles and interest groups have continued on and are still very active today. The Westminster women continue to hold an annual spring retreat and in September hold a luncheon as a kick off for the Bible Study Groups.

The **Mother's Group** was another women's group that was active at the time of the move, meeting regularly on Wednesday mornings. This group welcomed all mothers of young children and focused on fellowship and mutual support of their families through discussion and programs. Baby sitting was provided for the children at a nominal cost

during the meetings. As examples of the Mother's Group services to the church and community, they cleaned toys in the nursery and pre-school rooms twice a year, and cooked and served a dinner at the Safe Harbor homeless shelter in West Chester. The Wednesday morning Mom's group stopped meeting around 2014; however, a small group of Mom's continue to do Outreach Ministries, such as the Giving Tree, to this date, and a new Mom's group started in the Fall of 2016, meeting on Monday mornings.

A **Westminster Women's Book Group** has been meeting in the library on a monthly basis for many years. While the membership has changed some over time, the group has averaged fifteen members over the past decade. Each year the members nominate books and then vote on which ones they want to read and discuss. One member of the group then leads the discussion on one book every month. The group also meets for an end of the year luncheon after their June meeting.

Men's Groups

The **Retired Men's Group** has been meeting for Bible study and fellowship on Tuesday mornings long before the move from West Chester. In the year of the move, the group completed a series on the Parables and an in-depth study of the Psalms, led by Dr. Young. This tradition has continued to the present time, one of the few groups to remain relatively unchanged over the time in the new church facilities. When Dr. Wes Smith arrived in 1998, he quickly assumed leadership of the Retired Men's Group and led them in weekly Bible study during the school year until he retired in 2006. By this time the group had over thirty members. Over the last decade, the group has continued to grow, with membership now at sixty, and the range of topics has expanded beyond Bible studies to a wide variety of interesting topics. The ministers usually provide at least one talk a year, each on timely church topics, and many of the sessions draw on the impressive expertise and experiences of the group members themselves. Following a half-hour of

coffee and fellowship, there is a featured speaker and discussion. Topics have ranged from digital devices, health and diet, climate change, Art History, Ancestry, Civil War and World War II History, Engineering and Technology topics, and recently, some newly discovered history of Westminster itself, and a visit to the Men's cabin on the Brandywine, used by the Westminster men almost a hundred years ago. No longer restricted to retired men of Westminster, spouses and guests are always welcome to the interesting Tuesday morning sessions. A highlight each year is the Spring Banquet held on the last meeting date in May, when the Retired Men host members of the church staff at luncheon.

The **Men of Westminster** is a group which formed in 2000, and works to foster spiritual growth by providing opportunities for mutual encouragement, inspiration, challenge, and personal support. They meet monthly for breakfast followed by a Bible study, or other topic of interest. Initially Dr. Wes Smith led the monthly Bible study, and Pastor Gary ArnTessoni assumed leadership of the monthly study group when Dr. Smith retired in 2006. The MOW have also hosted Sweetheart's Events - breakfasts and dinners to include spouses, held golf outings, trips to Phillies games and Broadway shows. The Sweethearts Dinner in 2003 was a particularly popular event, attended by 170. Church service projects include cooking a traditional St. Nicholas pancake breakfast in Advent for young families, complete with a visit from St. Nick. For community service, the MOW provide leadership for the church's work with Habitat for Humanity. In 2004 the group sponsored a new Boy Scout troop at our church, BSA Troop 93, and have provided adult leadership to the troop ever since. Now in its fourteenth year, Troop 93 has been a very successful troop, graduating several Eagle scouts and winning District honors. The troop currently serves over fifty scouts, assisted by over twenty adults. As mentioned earlier in the book, Westminster sponsored one of the very first Boy Scout troops in the nation back in 1910, and our current sponsorship of BSA Troop 93 carries on this rich tradition.

Dinner Groups

Dinner groups are another long-standing tradition at Westminster. Composed of members and friends of the congregation, groups of different sizes voluntarily agree to share a dinner together, usually on a monthly basis. Administered and encouraged by the deacons, the dinner groups allow smaller numbers of the congregation to really get to know each other well in an informal and social setting. Several of the dinner groups have stayed the same for many years, while others form as new members join, or change with time as members leave, and new ones join. There were twenty-five dinner groups in 1994, and by 2007 there were over thirty groups. In 2008 a new format was added called “Dinner for 8.” In the first year seventy-five singles and couples participated in the new format in addition to the established dinner groups. Interest in forming new dinner groups has diminished in recent years, but many of the established dinner groups still meet regularly to share Christian fellowship and good food.

Other Groups

When Pastor Bob Young retired in 1997, he started a group called “**50+ Explorers.**” The mission of this group was to provide opportunities for Christian fellowship and sources of support in dealing with lifestyle, financial, health, and other issues important to those in or nearing retirement. By 2003 the group was holding four meetings a year in Spellman Hall with average attendance close to ninety. The meetings would start with fellowship and either a pot-luck dinner or soup and sandwich, followed by a speaker and discussion. The group also produced a booklet entitled “Are Your Affairs in Order,” which provided excellent guidance for legal and financial planning in retirement.

In February, 2010, with Pastor Gary ArnTessoni as the driving force, Westminster’s Adult and Spiritual Growth Ministry Team launched a

new program called **Celebrate Recovery**, a Christ-Centered 12-step ministry where people can find God's healing and strength in dealing with life's challenges. Celebrate Recovery provides a community of people working their way along the road to find God's grace and forgiveness. By 2013, fifty people had completed a year of recovery and CR continues to be a vibrant, life altering program today. The average monthly involvement reaches approximately sixty people, and several have completed training to join the leadership team. The success of the adult program over the past seven years has encouraged formation of a new CR group, **The Landing**, to help youth successfully recover from challenging habits.

There are, and have been, many other small adult groups too numerous to mention. A few recent examples provide some insight into the variety of group activities available at Westminster: Pub Theology, in conjunction with First Presbyterian Church; Monday AM Mom's Group; Aerobics Group; Veterans Group; Church-wide Lenten Small Study Groups. All of these groups, large and small, permanent and transient, serve to make a large church like Westminster more like a coordinated group of smaller, more personal, congregations, but all united in worship, and in furthering our mission "Knowing Christ, Making Christ Known."

PASTORAL CARE

Deacons

The deacons are elected and ordained lay members of the congregation with responsibility to minister to the shut-ins, elderly, needy, and the Christian community at large. During the time on West Pleasant Grove Road, the deacons have been led by Pastors Ann Dickey, Katie Sundermeier, and Ann Hatfield. The Board of Deacons, consisting of the lay deacons and lead pastor, meets once a month to discuss and

evaluate ongoing programs, and plan for upcoming activities and events. Currently, thirty Deacons, serving three year terms, minister to the congregation and extended community in a variety of ways. The following list of current activities provides a good snapshot of the Deacons work at Westminster.

A major activity of the deacons is Adopted Friends. Many of the deacons adopt a church member who cannot attend church, to visit, phone, send cards, and otherwise keep in touch on a regular basis. The first Sunday each month, or on any Wednesday following in-church communion services, Deacon teams take Extended Communion to members who are homebound and hospitalized. Each week, after Sunday worship services, the deacons take the chancel flowers to a needy person, often a church member in the hospital. Once a quarter, the Deacons go to three area nursing homes to conduct a worship service for the residents. In conjunction with the women's knitting group, the Deacons give prayer shawls to members suffering illness or loss. Hundreds of prayer shawls have been given out by the Deacons over the years. The Deacons also send cards each week to thank those who donate flowers, send get well and bereavement cards to members, and recognize staff birthdays. A "Prayer Chain" is maintained offering intercessory prayers for specific needs of Westminster members, their families and friends. Fellowship activities include the Pancake Supper during Lent, the Plant Swap in spring, a Strawberry Festival in June, a Peach Party in August, and the Advent wreath making in December. Each year the deacons provide a photo display of high school and college graduates of the congregation. For Sunday worship services, the Deacons organize and schedule volunteer greeters to welcome people entering the sanctuary, and staff the information booth in the narthex to answer questions, provide directions, and help visitors to learn more about our church.

Stephen Ministry

The Stephen Ministry program provides one-on-one confidential ministry to members of the congregation who are struggling with a variety of life stresses, such as depression, serious illness, divorce, death of loved ones, job loss, family upheavals, and other personal difficulties. This important pastoral care ministry started at Westminster shortly after the move. Stephen Ministers must be trained before they can begin their ministry. The first two members of Westminster completed a two-week national Stephen Leaders' Training Conference in August, 1994. In collaboration with Pastor Ann Dickey, they then conducted training sessions at Westminster, and the Stephen Ministry program began in earnest in 1995. In that initial year, fourteen members received 400 hours of support from fourteen Stephen Ministers. By 1997 the ministry had grown substantially, providing 1900 hours of care giving and training. In later years Pastors Katie Sundermeier and Ann Hatfield became Stephen Ministers and provided staff support to the ministry. Stephen Ministers generally meet once a week with their Care Receivers to listen and pray, and, meet as a group twice a month for ongoing training, support and supervision from the leadership team. Today, Westminster has twenty-five active Stephen Ministers who work in conjunction with our pastors to provide confidential emotional support and spiritual encouragement to those in need. with more than 100 individuals trained since the ministry's inception in 1995.

Outreach and Mission

Outreach and mission have been essential elements of Westminster's ministry from its founding in 1892 to the present day, in response to Jesus's command "Go into all the world and preach the Gospel." Several capital fund campaigns have set aside a portion of the revenues for mission, and a compelling reason for the move to the new church was to enable Westminster to continue to grow in mission and outreach to

the larger community and world. Space does not allow mention of all the various ways Westminster reaches out to help our neighbors and those in need around the world. Over the years in the new church, donations of money, goods and services have been extended to a multitude of charitable organizations. Some of the regular missions we support are West Chester Food Cupboard, Broad Street Ministry in downtown Philadelphia, Serving at the Crossroads in Honduras, Estado 29 Orphanage in Mexico, Family Promise, Habitat for Humanity, Safe Harbor of Chester County, and La Iglesia Spanish Community Center in Kennett Square. Suffice to say that our 2016 Annual Report lists seventeen regional mission recipients, six international mission programs, over \$200,000 of outreach giving, and over \$34,000 of special offerings. Outreach and mission generally accounts for over 10% of the General Fund Operating Budget. Westminster currently ranks 6th nationally out of all the PCUSA churches in giving to denominational special offerings of One Great Hour of Sharing, Peacemaking Offering, and Christmas Joy Offering.

The following sections describe some of the more prominent mission and outreach programs since our move to the new campus.

Westminster's **Thrift Shop** was started in November 1990, shortly after the decision was made to move to a new church. The Thrift Shop serves as an agent of Westminster's outreach to the West Chester community by providing quality recycled merchandise at affordable prices. All profits are turned over to the church each year with at least half designated for Westminster's outreach programs. The shop operated out of the Education building at the old church on Church Street for over fifteen years and was very successful, not only in providing needed clothing and household items to the community, but also financially. By 1995 the shop had donated a total of \$86,000 to the church, and by 2000 the total had grown to \$178,000. In that same year fifty-two volunteers contributed 3,245 hours working in the shop. In 2007, the

lease at the old church could not be renewed, and the shop moved to E. Barnard Street, but at significantly higher rent. Within a year, the shop was fully self-funded once again and began to show a profit as it continued the important outreach mission it provided to the community. In addition to sales from the store, excess merchandise was routinely passed on to other charitable agencies including the Salvation Army, Goodwill, SPCA, Habitat Home store, and Orphan Grain Train. This year the Westminster Thrift Shop celebrates its twenty-eighth year of service to the community, and has contributed a grand total of \$296,000 to the church – a real “Win-Win” story. The Thrift shop is in the midst of moving again, and the expectations are that the new location in the Gay Street Plaza Shopping Center will increase its visibility within the community that has come to appreciate its ministry.



*Some of Westminster's Thrift Shop teams
hard at work*



Westminster was one of Chester County's founding churches for **Habitat for Humanity** and its first Covenant Church. So our involvement with HFH goes back well before the move out of the Borough. Since the move we have continued active work with



Habitat for Humanity workers start on Westminster's 6th house, 2015

HFH, partnering with First Presbyterian Church of West Chester, and spearheaded by the Men of Westminster. The first home was completed in 2004 in Coatesville. Since then work has been in the West Chester area. In 2015 Westminster started on its sixth Habitat home, which was completed in 2016 and is currently assisting with several homes in Coatesville.

In 2002, Westminster started a new mission program called **Food for Our Neighbors**, which continues today. Each month a category of non-perishable food is featured and the congregation places the food items in collection containers located at the church entrances. Volunteers collect the food each week and deliver it to the West Chester Food Cupboard. Each year, since inception of this program, Westminster has delivered tons of food to the needy. In addition to food, other special collections have been conducted for the needy over the years. For example, in 2010, Westminster donated over 8,000 pounds of food to the West Chester Food Cupboard, collected over 1,160 pairs of socks, 650 pairs of shoes, 420 coats, 150 hygiene kits, and over 150 turkeys at Thanksgiving. We also have a **Gleaning Garden** on the church property, tended by gardening members of the congregation, which provides over 100 pounds of fresh vegetables for the food cupboard each year. Another outreach food program is Stop **Hunger Now**, a national program providing basic non-perishable meals for families abroad who are facing starvation. On

Outreach Sunday between services, Westminster's congregation forms a production line in Spellman Hall to fill plastic bags with nutritious meals. In 2014, one of the earlier years in this program, over 200 volunteers packed 20,500 meals for the world's hungry. In 2016 Westminster held a twenty-four hour marathon (the first EVER such marathon for Stop Hunger Now), and over 700 volunteers packed 120,000 meals. Westminster's people are indeed a generous congregation, living up to the challenge "to whom much is given, much is expected."



Westminster's mission team in Honduras

In 2001, members of Westminster, in partnership with the Liberty Corner Presbyterian Church in New Jersey, traveled to the town of **La Entrada, Honduras** on a mission trip to conduct a bible school for the children and to help with construction projects. Every year since

2001, Westminster members helped with many housing improvement projects for families living in very substandard housing; a library was established in the town; and a sewing cooperative was started. While in Honduras, Westminster member Dr. Bob Sumner was shocked by the lack of adequate medical care available to the people in the villages of this country. With his initiative, the dream of a medical and dental clinic in the hills outside La Entrada was undertaken. A non-profit organization, Serving at the Crossroads, was formed with leadership from Westminster members, to raise funds and coordinate with medical and dental resources in America to bring modern health services to this remote town. The clinic was opened in 2010 and continues to expand its medical services. More recently, the medical capability was extended to include an eye clinic. In 2013 a Living Waters of the World project

was initiated, and by 2017, three water purification facilities were in operation providing safe drinking water for three villages in Honduras. Westminster's Imago Dei youth have also participated each year through mission trips and supporting the Honduras Youth Fellowship. For example, in 2016, eleven Imago Dei youth helped paint a school, and distributed bags of food in Honduras.

In addition to regular domestic mission trips each year, in 2004 Westminster's youth ministry started a second international youth mission with a trip to Mexico. This was the beginning of another long-term relationship. By 2006, fifty-five youth made two mission trips to Mexico to serve at the **Estado 29 Orphanage** in Ensenada, Mexico. Almost every summer since then, a group of youth and adults has traveled to Mexico to serve at the orphanage.



Westminster's youth on a mission to the Estado 29 Orphanage in Ensenada, Mexico



Westminster supports Earth Day, April 22, 2017



Intergenerational Mission Trip to Washington, DC, July 2016. Since 1911, Westminster groups of all ages have traveled to DC to experience first hand, issues of poverty, hunger, and homelessness involving worship, fellowship, and hands-on service.

No section on mission and outreach would be complete without mention of Westminster's **Endowment Fund**. The Endowment Fund was established in 1981, as a separate financial entity, for the receipt and distribution of donations and bequests, the principal amount of which are invested, and only income from the investments is used to further Westminster's religious programs and charitable mission work. The fund is administered by a Board of Managers approved by the congregation. Applications for grants must come from a church member, and are reviewed quarterly by the Board of Managers. Once recommended by the Board, the grants must then be approved by Session. Most of the grants respond to one-time requests for a worthy church or outreach activity that is not covered in the church's operating or capital budgets. Over the years the Endowment Fund portfolio has grown to an excess \$1,400,000 today, and since inception, has distributed over \$1,100,000 in grants, to help support many of the outreach programs mentioned above, and countless more specific grants to further Westminster's mission.

GOVERNANCE, PROPERTY, AND FINANCES – PREPARING FOR THE FUTURE

Governance

Session governs the church, and when the church moved to its new location in 1993 there were fifteen elected elders with Jack Webster as Clerk of Session. Session was expanded to eighteen elders in 1999, where it remains today. Jack Webster retired in 2000, Gary Huddell served in 2001, and Leah Johnson became COS in 2002. Leah remained as COS until her move out of state in 2014, and Ed McFalls has been COS since then.

No one can ever accuse Presbyterians of not being organized and democratic in their governance. While Session is the governing body of the church, elders also serve on the many church committees, and rely

on the reports and advice of the committees, Deacons, Staff, and the Board of Trustees in making final decisions. The number of deacons was increased from fifteen to eighteen in 1997 and to thirty in 2002 to meet increasing demands for pastoral care. The number of trustees has remained at twelve.

Many of the church committees reporting to Session have formed and disbanded, changed their titles and/or modified their focus over the years in response to changing issues. But there have always been active committees covering the basic church areas of worship and arts, music, spiritual growth and education, outreach and mission, property and planning, personnel, and stewardship. The time and talents of congregational members serving on the committees provide valuable and diverse input to the committees' work, while engaging hundreds of church members in active work to further Westminster's missions.

While not a member of session, an important staff member who attends Session meetings, in addition to the ministers, is the Church Administrator. This position was created in 2000 to provide overall administration of the staff, and to also assume the previous responsibilities of Don Hammond, Westminster's volunteer Property Administrator who had served since moving to the new facility. Bill Winters was Westminster's first Church Administrator, hired in July 2000, one month before Pastor Lincoln arrived. Bill served for one year in the position, while simultaneously becoming the CEO of the new Collegium charter school in West Chester. When Bill went full-time with the charter school, Thomas W. Snyder became Westminster's second Church Administrator serving until 2013. Gerald McShane has been Church Administrator from 2013 to the present. Our current staff, including part-time, now totals twenty-six.

The time on West Pleasant Grove Road has seen rapid growth, many changes in worship and church activities, major repairs and

improvements to the new facilities, additional land acquisition, and almost continual capital fund drives. The session has worked diligently to steer the church through these invigorating but challenging times, and position Westminster to successfully address more changes and growth in the future.

Property and Finances

As mentioned in the last chapter, the first service in the new sanctuary was held in December, 1993, but construction of the facilities occurred in two phases, and was not fully completed until the Heckert Christian Education wing was completed in 1999. As a consequence, during the first six years at West Pleasant Grove Road, except for the larger sanctuary, the other facilities for offices, classrooms, and fellowship had to do double duty, so to speak, to partially alleviate the cramped conditions until sufficient assets could be accumulated to complete the four building campus.

With the exception of 1998, Westminster had capital fund drives active in each year from 1991 through 2007. By the end of 2003 the total debt had been reduced to under \$700,000, (over a one million dollar reduction in the past three years) and a planning committee was formed to study current and long term space and facility needs. No one had anticipated how rapidly membership and attendance would grow at the new location. In less than a decade, church leadership was once again faced with the old problem of inadequate parking and overcrowded worship services. Thanks to another generous grant of 2.5 acres from the Robinson family in 1999, and another successful capital fund drive, 200 additional parking spaces were finally added in 2004, to accommodate up to 420 cars. The additional parking spaces effectively used up the remaining land of the 12.5 acre campus, and the Planning Committee began to consider the possibility of acquiring adjacent land for future expansion.

In 2006, Donegal Presbytery approved a plan to dissolve the Dilworthtown Harvest Community Presbyterian Church and authorized Westminster to acquire the property and create a new ministry at this nearby satellite location. There is a little irony here in that Pastor Estlin of the Dilworthtown church was the lead pastor forming the group that broke away from First Presbyterian Church, and became the new Westminster Presbyterian Church in 1892. Now, 114 years later, Westminster was the established church attempting to revitalize the Dilworthtown church. The new satellite campus was seeded with twelve families from Westminster, and led by Pastor Tony Sundermeier, as lead pastor, assisted by Jon Frost. Within six months, the congregation had grown to 240, with weekly worship attendance averaging 150.

In spite of the growth of the new church, several problems soon became apparent with a small satellite congregation. Some of the more important problems were: programs were more limited than with larger churches - Sunday school was limited to K to 5, and there was no youth program; the cost of repairing and maintaining the old buildings put a strain on finances and volunteer workers - Westminster was subsidizing the Dilworthtown church at a cost of \$100,000 per year; and the difficulty of holding two contemporary services at different locations put undue strain on the ministers and worship team. While the initial thought was to eventually charter a stand-alone congregation, the Dilworthtown congregation, once up and running, did not want to lose the high caliber preaching, programs, and staffing provided by their connection to Westminster. In a survey of the congregation, greater than 90% did not want to proceed with chartering. In September, 2009, worship ended at Dilworthtown, and the congregation was folded back into Westminster. To accommodate the Dilworthtown worshippers, a second contemporary service was held at 9:00 AM in Spellman Hall.

Also, in 2006, the Robinson family disclosed plans to develop Crebilly Farm. The plans called for a major housing development and a large

retirement community, Makemie Ridge, in partnership with Presby Homes. Realizing that adjacent land was being developed, and it would likely be the only opportunity for increased property, Westminster entered into partnership with the Robinsons and Presby Homes to purchase homes at Darlington Corners (south of the church on 202), to be exchanged for land adjacent to the church, to allow for future expansion. By 2008, Westminster had purchased five properties totaling 7.5 acres and was in position to swap for adjacent land. But 2008 was a year of world-wide financial crisis and bank failures. The Crebilly Farm development was postponed and eventually abandoned as Presby Homes was unable to secure enough depositors to move forward. It looked like history was repeating as Westminster now owned properties that it could not put to good use, much as had happened back at the old West Chester location. Finally, on December, 29, 2015, Westminster was able to complete the land swap with the Robinsons. In exchange for the 7.5 acres we owned, we acquired 8.5 acres adjacent to the South and West boundaries of our property. At about this same time, the Robinsons disclosed plans for another large housing development, this time with the large luxury home builder, Toll Brothers. At this time, it remains to be seen if this development will proceed. But in any event, Westminster is now in good position to handle a major addition to our campus when the need arises.



Pastors Don Lincoln, Shelton R. "Shelli" Latham and Gary ArnTesson



Some of Westminster's super staff. From left: Sue Spotts, Don Lincoln, Jennie Clark, Chris Clark, Jon Frost, Ann Hatfield, Gerry McShane, Bob Morris and Lynn George



Pastors N. Anthony "Tony" and Katie Sundermeier



Westminster's Contemporary Service Worship Band, 2005



Chancel Choir's first European tour at Bach's church, Leipzig, Germany, July, 2007



Westminster's Chancel Choir and Chancel Ringers



Westminster's famous Christmas Concerts with Chancel Choir, Chancel Ringers and Orchestra are always "Sold Out"



Westminster's Youth Choir sings the National Anthem at the Phillies



Westminster's kids and youth Christmas pageant



Music Director Robert F. "Bob" Morris with the Kids Jam



Vacation Bible School finale, 2011



Westminster's Senior High Reality Rretreat at North Bay Adventure Camp, North East, MD, Fall 2016

125th Anniversary



Guest Preacher Rev. David Young, son of Pastor Emeritus Bob Young, on 125th Special Sunday Honoring Westminster's Ministers, March 12, 2017



"125" Anniversary guest preacher Rev. Robert P. Boell, son of Westminster's fifth minister, Rev. Robert B. Boell



Guest preacher Rev. Sarah Randall Hill on 125th Anniversary Special Sunday honoring members of the congregation who have entered the ministry, August 6, 2017 (complete list of ministers from the congregation is in the appendix).



Guest Preacher, Dr. Beth Hessel, Executive Director, Presbyterian Historical Society, with pastors Jennie Clark, Don Lincoln and Ann Hatfield, on 125th Anniversary Sunday, May 21, 2017



Some of our 50+ year members honored on the 125th Anniversary Sunday. From left to right, standing: Susan Tieman, Bob Sumner, Martha Hammond, Pauline Sumner, Grace Hannemann, Cindy Poole, Bob Poole; seated: Mary Alice Knox, Barbara Drain, Louisa Young. (Note: complete list is in the appendix)



Kitchen crew for the 125th Anniversary reception. From left: Eric Hawkins, Terry Hawkins, Andie DeVries, Ginny Grassie, Tammy Snyder, Jane Ash



125th Anniversary Concert "Leaps of Faith", narrated by Dr. Tom Stretton, May 21, 2017

*125th Anniversary
Art Exhibit*

Featuring WPC Artists
3-7pm Sept. 23 +
9am-12:30pm Sept. 24



125th Anniversary Display case in Spellman Hall



125th Committee members Bob Boell and Cindy Poole on Anniversary Sunday



◀ *125th Anniversary Tapestry Committee. From left, standing: Abbie Pennington, Sue Spotts, Molly Stevens; seated: Cindy Knisley, Marty Bonds, Joan Griffith*

125th Anniversary Committee. From left standing: Dave Goodale, Bob Boell, Nancy Christy, Joan Griffith, Barb Goodale, Don Jost; seated: Sherry Breton, Ted Strand, Ivy Jost; missing: Lynn George, Cindy Poole, Pat Woolf.



Reflections and Ponderings

When I first toured Westminster's building with the Pastor Nominating Committee, I was awed by the impact the design of the worship space might have on a vibrant congregation. The sanctuary was filled with light – airy and uplifting – with a clear view of the world from which worshippers would come, and the very same world to which they would be sent. It was a powerful experience. It was also a great introduction to the life of the congregation I have been privileged to serve for more than seventeen years. I tell people I still “pinch myself” every time I drive up West Pleasant Grove Road to begin another day of ministry – and thank God for how fortunate I am to have been called to a congregation so full of the Spirit of the Lord.



*Rev. Donald D. Lincoln
Westminster's 7th Minister
2000–Present*

I describe Westminster with words one doesn't often hear when speaking of a mainline, denominational congregation with more than

125 years under its belt. I use words like “nimble,” “flexible” and “versatile” when I speak of Westminster. Those traits may well be in the DNA of the congregation, which left a secure and stable home in 1892 to begin a new mission congregation. One hundred years later, when they left THAT home to replant the congregation in a new location, on West Pleasant Grove Road, Westminster showed an agility of spirit that has been evident throughout my time as their pastor.

It has been said earlier I am fond of telling others Westminster changed worship schedule ten times during my first twelve years as pastor. In seminary, changing worship times is one of those things they tell you to never do unless you’re ready to retire, or have another church already calling you to be their pastor. But over the years of my tenure, the congregation has shifted worship spaces, changed worship times and added worship styles. We’ve had as many as six services of worship on a Sunday at one point – including one on a satellite campus when we absorbed a congregation that was closing – along with four services in the main facility on Sunday morning, and one service on Sunday evening. The congregation has not been afraid of exploring multiple styles of worship – and continues to embrace and support worship that would be commonly described as traditional, contemporary and contemplative – taking place every week of the year!

I do not believe we will ever arrive at the “perfect” worship schedule. And I count that to be a blessing! This congregation is willing to be attentive to the context in which it lives. The changing patterns of life in the suburbs in the 21st century may dictate additional shifts in Westminster’s worship life. I’m certain this congregation will continue to be gracious and flexible enough to do so. The previous chapter describes in some detail how that same nimble spirit has pervaded ALL of Westminster’s ministry, and if that spirit continues, it bodes well for the congregation and the Gospel for decades to come.

Another joy has been the ecumenical spirit Westminster has embraced. As a congregation in the suburbs of Philadelphia, and this region's large Roman Catholic population, Westminster has been open to historic traditions from the breadth of Christianity in such a way that people from virtually every Christian background find something familiar to them in the life of the congregation.

For instance, historically, Presbyterians were only required to have communion four times a year. When I arrived in August of 2000, the congregation had communion six times a year on Sunday morning, plus a few other special services. Over the years the congregation has affirmed an increased frequency in celebrating the sacrament. The Lord's Supper is now celebrated weekly every Wednesday morning in our chapel service, as well as every Sunday during Lent and Advent, and monthly throughout the year.

Early in my ministry, the congregation commissioned an artist to paint eight "Stations of the Cross" for Westminster. These paintings hang in our chapel through the year, but have a central place in our sanctuary and liturgy during Lent and Holy week. We started imposing ashes on Ash Wednesday, and even had "Drive Through Ashes" several years for people who might otherwise not be able to get to worship and receive this historic Christian symbol of penitence at the beginning of Lent.

The congregation's embrace of such changes and additions in Christian practices, rather than a resistance to them, gives testimony to Westminster's open-hearted spirit that has helped bridge centuries-old gaps between neighbors with Protestant or Catholic roots. The congregation's focus on the centrality of Jesus Christ – not denominations or a restricted, specific tradition – has made Westminster a most hospitable congregation to followers of Jesus from many traditions. It has also infused the congregation with a spirit of welcome for people

who have no religious background, who are seeking to find hope in their lives.

During my first seven years as pastor, Westminster averaged growth in membership, attendance and finances that ranged from 5% - 7% every year. It was a privilege to “grab hold and hang on” for the ride! It seemed to be the result of the perfect storm of an attractive new building, easy visibility and access from a main thoroughfare at a time when the county was seeing rapid population growth. Westminster was perfectly poised for such a time – very much what it must have been like for so many mainline congregations that sprang up in the post-war boom of the 1950’s and 1960’s. We spent virtually no time or money on advertising – because we were already quickly outgrowing the building, and didn’t want to grow faster. We developed several master plans that considered the possibility of new education space, new alternative worship/concert space, and even pondered the possibility of a gym. At one point we commissioned designs to fully enclose our courtyard and had the architect give us renderings for a 200-seat balcony in the sanctuary. Near the end of those first seven years we entered into agreements for the purchase of several properties down Route 202, which we would eventually swap for land adjacent to Westminster.

Then, as recounted in the previous chapter, the Recession of 2008 changed everything. County growth immediately halted. And Westminster’s rather meteoric annual growth quickly slowed as well. But in God’s good plan, it actually gave us a chance to catch our breath. It provided us the time, energy and wisdom to focus on the ministry at hand – to consider how and where to go deeper in our Outreach, for instance – instead of always responding to the pressing needs of an overcrowded building. It was during this season that our partnerships with missions like Broad Street Ministry in Philadelphia and multiple points of ministry in Honduras were increased and strengthened. Staff design became a little less reactive and more proactively focused on

our specific calling – the “brand” of our ministry, if you will – in this location. Ministries with children, youth and adults were fine-tuned – and structures and procedures to keep us nimble AND efficient were continually enhanced and implemented. It has been a season of faithful, thriving, healthy ministry – in a time when many mainline congregations have seen significant decline.

As I write this chapter, Westminster has just started live streaming one of its Sunday morning services online over the internet. People traveling across the country, or even around the world, can still worship with Westminster. We also began streaming on Sunday morning into the theatre of a large retirement community several miles down the road, where a portion of our worship participants live. That community is in Delaware County – the county between Westminster and Philadelphia. I am certain that few of the people who were members at Westminster in the borough of West Chester ever dreamed the day would come when one of the congregation’s largest membership growth regions would be DELAWARE COUNTY!

The growth of our membership in Delaware County serves as an indicator of the larger life of this congregation. Westminster is a regional, or a “destination-congregation,” drawing from more than 1,000 square miles. While the majority of members are within a 10-mile radius, we have members who drive from 45 minutes in every direction to share in the life and ministry of this vibrant community of faith. It is a truly amazing place to serve!

I arrived at Westminster after the congregation had been served by only four pastors for the previous hundred years. At seventeen years and counting, my tenure still ranks fourth out of the last five pastors in duration. What a testimony to the congregation’s relationships with the ministers they call to serve. A history of long tenured pastorates is a sign of strength and health, and can provide continuity to a thriving

congregation. I stand on the shoulders of a superb group of pastors, whose legacies and ministry I have benefited from more than they could ever have imagined. My predecessor, Dr. Robert D. Young, our Pastor Emeritus, in particular, set the stage for much of the joy and reward of my time at Westminster. His friendship and encouragement have been a blessing to me all these years. I am grateful for how he has remained within the community, while being a support to the pastor who followed him.

What surprised me most when I was reviewing the history of the pastors of this congregation for the 125th Anniversary was the fact that at 45 years of age when I arrived, I was the OLDEST head of staff ever called to serve Westminster! As I have entered my early 60's, it gives me great joy to consider that some time down the road, another new pastor will have the privilege of serving in this amazing community of faith. Until that time comes, I'm going to enjoy every minute and privilege of being one of Westminster's pastors.

I believe Westminster is well-poised for the next 125 years of ministry. The congregation is faithful, steadfast, healthy and strong. It is financially secure, it has additional land should new ministry opportunities arise, and it is known in the community for its vibrant life and its hospitality. Theologically, the congregation is a "big tent" – with a broad spectrum of biblical traditions and ecclesiastical backgrounds present in it, and a spirit of tolerance that arises from such spiritual diversity. Westminster lives by that old motto, "in essentials, unity; in non-essentials, liberty; in all things, charity." It is a congregation not majoring in the minors, but rather solidly and solely focused on the central and saving work of God, accomplished in Jesus Christ, who is this congregation's head, and the hope of the world. I am grateful that I have been privileged to preach the Gospel among this faithful group of disciples, and I look forward to how the Spirit of God will lead us around the next corner!

Appendix

Westminister's Ministers

<u>Lead Pastors</u>	<u>Years Served</u>
B. Canfield Jones	1892-1896
Alexander Esler	1896-1901
Charles R. Williamson	1901-1935
William Henry Dilts	1936-1944
Robert B. Boell	1944-1965
Robert D. Young	1966-1998
Donald D. Lincoln	2000-present

Associate/Assistant/

Interim Pastors

Years Served

Lloyd F. Umbarger	1961-1966
Thomas D. Woodward	1966-1969
R. Scott Sullender	1970-1973
Gary K. Scroggins	1975-1978
Bruce W. MacCullough	1979-1982
Jefferson L. Hatch	1983-1991
W. Carl Bogard	1988-1993
Robert L. Gordon	1992-1997
Ann Garrou Dickey	1992-2004
Douglas W. McPheeters	1997-1999
Graham W. Hardy	1998-2000
Wesley W. Smith	1998-2006
N. Anthony Sundermeier	2003-2009
Joelle B. Beller	2004-2005
Gary R. ArnTessoni	2005-2015
Jessica Vaughan Lower	2006-2007
Katherine B. Sundermeier	2007-2009
Shelton R. Latham	2010-2014
Ann L. Hatfield	2010-present
Jonathan M. Frost	2014-present
K. Edward Brandt	2009-2010
	2015-present
Jennifer B. Clark	2015-present

<u>Clerks of Session</u>	<u>Years Served</u>
Herman F. Wyers	1892-1934
Harold C. Fitzimmons	1934-1966
Lawrence S. Smith	1966-1971
Naomi E. "Betty" Walker	1971-1977
Wesley E. Fasnacht	1977-1981
Raymond B. Banghart	1981-1982
Boyce H. Grier	1982-1983
Peter C. Lebo	1984-1989
Jack J. M. Webster	1989-2000
Gary B. Huddell	2000-2002
Leah H. Johnson	2002-2014
Edward E. McFalls	20014-present

Signers of the Petition to form Westminster

The petition presented to the Chester Prebytery on May 12, 1892 to form the new Westminster Presbyterian Church was signed by sixty-three petitioners listed below, which included fifty-one members of First Presbyterian Church.

Catharine W. Black	Corena Lodge
Elizabeth Black	Wilmer W. MacElree
Catharine T. Bollman	Laura McFarlan
Louisa Caldwell	R. Texanna McFarlan
Caroline Cardwell	Annie Megilligan
George G. Cardwell	L. Emma Merrick
Robbie Cardwell	J. Gheen Morgan
Eliza Clarke	Jennie M. Morgan
Jane Clarke	Anna L. Park
John Clarke	Richard G. Park
Maggie Clarke	Sarah A. Porter
Robert Clarke	Alfred P. Reid
Lewis C. Cullen	Arthur P. Reid
Sarah Cullen	Edith C. Reid
Fannie Curry	Emma B. Reid
Hugh Curry	Anna M. Sager
Amos W. Deisem	Ella I. Sager
Nora E. Deisem	Alice C. Sharpless
Isabella C. Dowlin	Emma U. Sharpless
William Dowlin	Bertha M. Smedley
David W. Eyre	Margaret H. Smedley
Mary P. Eyre	Mary E. Smedley
Ann Hammond	Oliver H. Smedley
Maggie S. Harris	Amelia Spriggs
William S. Harris	Ruth T. Taylor
Maria W. Hastings	William K. Thorp
Ella R. Huston	Elizabeth Webb
J. Newton Huston	Samuel P. Webb
Agnes Kerr	Mrs. Samuel P. Webb
William S. Kirk	Catharine Black Wyers
James Knox	Herman F. Wyers
Charles B. Lee	

Charter Members

Westminster Presbyterian church was officially organized on Wednesday evening, May 25, 1892, in the Assembly Hall where the Court-house Annex is now located, with 103 charter members listed below.

Mary L. Baker	Harry T. Ferrell	Jennie M. Morgan
Catharine W. Black	Henry Getty	J. Gheen Morgan
Elizabeth Black	Rebecca J. Getty	Sarah A. Porter
Annie E. Byers	Sarah A. Green	Lydia Priest
Emma G. Byers	Ann Hammond	William Priest
Fannie K. Byers	Hanna H. Harkness	Alfred P. Reid
Hanna M Byers	Joseph T. Harkness	Arthur P. Reid
Elizabeth M. Carlile	Maggie S. Harris	Emma B. Reid
Caroline C. Cardwell	William S. Harris	Amelia K. Russell
George G. Cardwell	Maria W. Hastings	Slater B. Russell
Bellah Clark	Nathaniel G. Hickman	Anna M. Sager
Elizabeth Clarke	Anna L. Hoopes	Ella I. Sager
Jane Clarke	Hanna Hoopes	Anne M. Scott
John Clarke	Mary Hoopes	Edwin J. Scott
Maggie J. Clarke	Anne B. Hoskins	John G. Scott
Robert Clarke	Mary Hoskins	Sarah A. Scott
Catherine I. Cope	Ella R. Huston	Alice G. Shields
Isabella L. Cope	J. Newton Huston	Sarah E. Shields
Jane S. Cope	Addison L. Jones	Bertha M. Smedley
Mary V. Cope	Clara P. Jones	Margaret H. Smedley
Lewis C. Cullen	Agnes Kerr	Mary E. Smedley
Sarah Cullen	George Kerr	Oliver H. Smedley
Anna M. Dale	Betsey D. Kirk	A. Thomas Smith
Abbie J. Davis	William S. Kirk	Amelia Spriggs
James M. Dawson	James Knox	Wilhemina Thelson
Sara E. Deisem	Ella E. MacElree	Caroline A. Walsh
Ida M.C. Dick	Wilmer W. MacElree	Eleanor S. Walsh
Wallace P. Dick	Anne M. Maris	Marianna Walsh
Isabella C. Dowlin	Laura McFarlan	May L. Walsh
William Dowlin	R. Texanna McFarlan	Elizabeth A. Webb
Anna J. Dunwoody	Delia L. Meader	Anna M. Woodward
Mary M. Dunwoody	Annie Megilligan	Catharine Black Wyers
William B. Dunwoody	E.E. Meredith	Herman F. Wyers
David W. Eyre	L. Emma Merrick	
Mary P. Eyre	Lizzie Moore	

Long Time Active Members (50+ years)

In order of joining with years of membership

Marjorie Knox	79	Barbara Wray	57
Lorraine Gilbert	68	Helene Smith	56
Mary Alice Knox	66	Barb Drain	55
Lenore Guthrie	65	Ginny McFalls	55
Lucille Ralston	65	Bob Fromm	55
Betty Pryor	65	Carol Rockafellow	54
Grace Foulk	63	Nancy Jussen	54
Jeanne Hillenbrand	62	Pauline Sumner	54
Bob Poole	62	Bob Sumner	54
Bill Patten	61	Joanna Kister	53
Anna Mae McFalls	61	Stephen Cottrel	53
Martha Hammond	60	Richard Slifer	52
Skip Guthrie	60	Linda Lorgus	51
Grace Hannemann	60	William Warihay	51
Kitty Slifer	59	Louisa Young	51
Sue Tiernan	58	Gary Christy	50
Lois Ann Vanderburg	58	Barb Wheeler	50
George Warren	58	Cindy Poole	50
Trudy Warren	58	Rich Vogel	50

Church Members in the Ministry

Robert Passmore Boell

Ordained 1965. Served churches in Aston, PA and Corning, NY; retired. Attends Westminster and sings in the choir.

David Ballantyne

Ordained 1978. Deceased. Served Churches in PA and DE and as Chaplain for the VA Hospital

Christopher Cottrell

Ordained 1984. Pastor of Congress Community Church, West Salem, OH

Jennifer Warren

Ordained 1986. Has served numerous churches in DE. Currently Interim Pastor at New Castle Presbyterian, New Castle, DE

David Young

Ordained 1987. Has served churches in MI, IN, NJ. Currently pastor of the First Presbyterian Church, Newton, NJ

Scott Stanley

Ordained 1987. Has served Churches in MI; teaches school in Grand Haven, Michigan. Parish Associate at First Presbyterian, Grand Haven, MI

Bob Davis

Ordained 2001. Has served churches in CA. Currently pastor of Chula Vista Presbyterian, Chula Vista, CA

Sara Randall Hill

Ordained 2010. Has served churches in IA. Currently Associate Pastor, First Presbyterian, Ft. Dodge, IA

Jeffrey Nagorny

Ordained 2013. Supply Pastor; First Presbyterian; Parkesburg, PA

Annalie Korengel Lorgus

Ordained 2013. Supply Pastor, Unionville Presbyterian, Unionville, PA

Erin Hayes

Ordained April 2013. Pastor, First Presbyterian, Rahway, NJ

Jonathan Frost

Ordained November 2014. Associate Pastor, Westminster
Presbyterian

Greg Klimovitz

Ordained 2015. Associate Executive Presbyter, Philadelphia
Presbytery

Maggie Smith

Ordination pending. Table Minister/Loft Coordinator Hot Metal
Bridge Faith Community, Pittsburgh, PA

Pastor Young's Historic Letter to the Congregation, May 19, 1990

Dear Congregation:

This is a pastoral letter, asking your consideration about a matter that has been troubling me recently.

On January 21st, we voted by a 2/3rds majority not to move Westminster. This vote rejected a recommendation by the Session of last December that we indeed should move. The vote was taken after an emotional January in which moving was opposed by an ad hoc committee of loyal Westminsterites.

What we did not know at the time was that a tract of land, some 7 or 8 acres at Crebilly Farm would be offered as a gift to Presbytery, either for us or for some new church. This fact became known at the end of February. The land is at the corner of route 202 and Pleasant Grove Road.

As most of you know, I voted in December to move, but I accepted the congregational vote to stay, and have been active in planning for the renovated church at our present location. In fact, on May 1st, Session voted to accept the recommendation of the Committee on Church Improvement that Mr. Paul Lederach be our architect for renovating the church. This is a good choice.

However, the new fact before us since that congregational meeting in January is Crebilly Farm's gift of land. I believe this calls for special consideration, even as we ask our architect to continue his study of what can be done at our present site, and what will be the probable cost. That is, we should compare the cost and advantages of moving with the cost and advantages of staying and vote once more.

Please keep in mind that this is your pastor's view, and is not any Board's official position, even though Session is aware of this letter and has authorized the enclosed card.

At the present moment, and working from intuition rather than hard facts, I personally favor moving. I feel we are making a mistake by elaborately fixing a building that will handicap us in the future by its location. I say this with a deep

love for our sanctuary and courtyard. To leave these would be a real sacrifice for me. However, I would not be a responsible leader if I did not make my position known, that moving is what we should do.

As I walk through the building with prospective architects, I am aware of how costly interior renovations can become. I worry that we could spend a half to three quarters of a million on our educational areas, and still not have room for the new families we hope to attract. I also worry that having spent this money, the office will still receive parking tickets from members who have been at a committee meeting or choir rehearsal. So, while I do not want to pre-judge the work of a fine architect, we may be giving him an impossible assignment.

However, I still want to wait for the final plans of Mr. Lederach. Perhaps some plan at an acceptable cost will be apparent. At the moment, I am taking the gift of land as providential, and stating my preference in advance.

I dream of a new Westminster seen from thousands of cars each day, whose location advertises its cause. I see it as a large church, not because I admire bigness, but because West Chester continues to grow and more families than ever need the Gospel of Jesus Christ. I want Westminster to have room to grow and to welcome newcomers in a building that has classic lines, sunny classrooms, ease of access and programs that bring honor to our Lord.

Having stated my position, I also state my reservations. I hate to cause further upset as we decide the question. Also, I do not get turned on by building projects, whether renovating or expanding. Many ministers thrive on these projects. My strength and interest is in preaching, teaching and doing the pastoral rounds. My proposal rests more on what I feel is right for the Westminster of the future.

If my suggestion were to be followed, the transition would require a few years. Meanwhile we would worship at Westminster, while I continue as pastor. I would plan to stay with the project as long as was necessary.

Now, having told you what I think as your pastor, what do you think as a parishioner? It will help the Session and myself if you return the enclosed card before our next Session meeting of June 5th.

Sincerely,

Robert D. Young

125th Anniversary Records

125th Anniversary Committee Members

Sherry Breton	Joan Griffith
Bob Boell	Don Jost (Co-chair)
Nancy Beecher Christy	Ivy Jost (Co-chair)
Lynn George	Cindy Poole
Barb Goodale (Co-chair)	Ted Strand
Dave Goodale (Co-chair)	Pat Woolf

Subcommittee Members

Jane Ash (Reception)	Ed McFalls (Special Sundays)
Tom Breton (Large 125 for Drone photo)	Barbara Osterheldt (Art Show)
Diane Cannon (Art Show)	Bob Poole (Book)
Andrea Devries (Reception)	Tammy Snyder (Reception)
Ginny Grassie (Reception)	Molly Stevens (Art Show)
John Hurt (Book)	Sherryl Strand (Reception)
Linda Irwin (Week in WPC History)	Darcie Swinehart (Week in WPC History)
Don Lincoln (Book, Special Sundays)	Bob Young (Book)

This Week in Westminster History

Each Sunday throughout the year, beginning in October, 2016, and running through September, 2017, “This Week in Westminster History” listed major events and interesting items from our history that occurred during the coming week. These newsworthy events were culled from Session minutes and archival documents by committee members, and presented in the Sunday bulletin, on projection screens in the Sanctuary, and in the electronic Weekly Update. As an example, following are the weekly history items for Sunday, March 12, 2017:

CELEBRATING 125 YEARS

This Week in Westminster History

March 12, 1893: First recorded baptism of an infant, Mabel Dorris, daughter of Mrs. Edith M. Dorris.

March 13, 1900: Five minute sermons to children were introduced to the morning worship.

March 11, 1957: Motion passed to install an electronic bell system in the tower in memory of L. Herbert Shields.

March 12, 2006: Stations of the Cross Paintings by Amy Guist were presented to the congregation.



Displays and Mementos

- A display case in Spellman Hall exhibited artifacts, photos and information on Westminster's history throughout the year. Exhibits were changed periodically to cover material being featured in Special Sundays.
- A timeline for 1892 to 1917, and a map of West Chester in 1892, showing locations of prominent buildings and homes, were produced and mounted on the wall above the display case.
- A large tapestry celebrating our 125th Anniversary was started and will be a permanent addition to our church décor when finished.
- In addition to the 125th Anniversary Book, a clay cross commemorative memento was commissioned for sale to the congregation.

Special Sundays

The Anniversary Committee planned the following special Sunday services and events, and recruited four guest preachers to help celebrate our anniversary year.

Heritage Sunday, January 29, 2017

The first special Sunday of our anniversary events honored the Scottish heritage of the Presbyterian Church and the multi-national ancestry of the congregation. Members of the congregation wore clothes from their ancestral countries, charter members were honored with a processional led by a bagpiper, and Scottish treats were offered in the social gatherings between services.

Lay Leaders Sunday, February 12, 2017

Lay leaders past and present were honored on this Sunday. Elders, deacons, trustees, choirs, ushers, committee members, and volunteers of all kinds, were asked to stand. Westminster's lay leadership of one of the first ten Boy Scout troops in America, chartered in 1910, was remembered on this Boy Scout Sunday.

Ministers' Sunday, March 12, 2017

All of Westminster's ministers were honored on this special Sunday, with former associate and assistant ministers leading us in worship via video clips: Tony and Katie Sundermeier greeted us from Atlanta, GA and called us to worship; Ann Dickey led us in the Unison Prayer of Confession; and Lloyd Umbarger, Westminster's first Assistant Pastor, provided the scripture reading. Robert P. Boell, son of our fifth minister Robert B. Boell, delivered the Unison Prayer of Thanksgiving for Pastors, and Rev. David Young, son of Westminster's sixth pastor, Dr. Robert D. Young, was guest preacher to deliver the sermon. Dr. Young's daughter and former Westminster organist, Linda Lorgus, played the organ; and Dr. Young gave the benediction. The participation of the Young family was especially fitting as it was Dr. Young's birthday, celebrated during social time between services with birthday cake and a rousing "Happy Birthday dear Bob."

May 7, 2017

To start the Anniversary Month celebrations, the second guest preacher Rev. Robert P. Boell delivered a timely meditation "The Future Is Behind Us." An active member of the 125th Anniversary Committee, Bob was ordained in our church in the Borough in 1965, the same year his father, Rev. Robert B. Boell retired as Westminster's fifth pastor.

Anniversary Sunday, May 21, 2017

Two services at 8:30 and 11:00 featured guest preacher Rev. Dr. Beth Hessel, Executive Director of the Presbyterian Historical Society. The hymns sung, "All Hail the Power of Jesus' Name" and "Rock of Ages, Cleft for Me" were the same hymns sung at Westminster's organizational service held on the evening of Wednesday, May 25, 1892. The bulletin included a Westminster Trivia Quiz and a simpler one for children. Between services, a reception was held with brunch, a continuous slideshow covering all of Westminster's history, and a drone photo taken of the congregation on the lawn outside Spellman Hall.

At 4 pm, a special anniversary concert “Leaps of Faith” was performed by the Chancel Choir, accompanied by instrumentalists. Narrated by Dr. Tom Stretton, this Celebration Concert highlighted the popular music of the time, from 1892 to the present, with old favorites like “Yankee Doodle Boy”, “On the Sunny Side of the Street”, “Over the Rainbow”, “Bridge Over Troubled Waters”, “The Way We Were,” and many more.

Sunday, August 6, 2017 – Honoring Church Members in the Ministry

This special Sunday honored members of the congregation who have been ordained into the ministry of Jesus Christ. Guest preacher, Rev. Sarah Randall Hill recounted her life growing up in Westminster, inspiring her to become a minister – a memorable meditation.

125th Anniversary Art Show, September 23rd, 24th

The final event of our anniversary year was the 125th Anniversary Art Show held from 3 to 7 pm on Saturday, September 23rd and 9 am to 1 pm on Sunday, September 24th. Saturday featured a reception with light refreshments and an opportunity to “meet the artists,” followed by a presentation by art historian, Fred Dixon, on Norman Rockwell and Andrew Wyeth. The purpose of the show was to showcase the impressive array of artistic talents in our congregation. Over one hundred pieces of art work were displayed by thirty five artists ranging from all different kinds and styles of paintings, jewelry, photography, calligraphy, needlework, quilts, stained glass, and pottery. The large anniversary tapestry to be woven during the coming year was also on display with the design cartoon.



WESTMINSTER
Presbyterian Church

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