

Pastor's Report for 2018 at Westminster

Life at Westminster in service to Christ this past year has been full and meaningful. This is due, in no small part, to the work and love offered by busy and faithful deacons and ruling elders. This leadership was especially needed as the congregation navigated a transition time without a pastor and then welcomed me onto the field on January 7.

In that first month of the year, the church was able to not only welcome me and my family into the fold, but to also continue right along with its meetings, work, ministry, and meals. This included quickly kicking off Sunday night youth activities and Wednesday programs in January (in particular, featuring a study of Ann Lamotte's book on prayer *Help, Thanks, Wow*). Also, in the first part of 2018, Michael Ginn became our permanent Children's Choir Director, our Men of the Church provided a breakfast for are first responders and our Women of the Church began a prayer ministry.

On Friday, February 2, the Presbytery of Mississippi met and Westminster clearly demonstrated its role as a leader; especially in the role of Althea Jerome as she served as moderator. Also, at that same meeting, I was examined and approved by that body to formally become pastor at Westminster. On Wednesday, February 14, Westminster hosted our friends from Parkway Heights for an Ash Wednesday meal and service.

During the month of March our church held its Annual Congregational meeting, began to consider in earnest a reshuffling of committee assignments between the two governing boards, enjoyed a Meistersingers concert, commissioned a mission team to El Salvador for work with Living Waters for the World and then rightly and faithfully navigated a journey through Holy Week that landed in the joy of an Easter celebration on April 1 (no fooling!).

On April 8, a commission of the Presbytery of Mississippi installed me to active service as pastor of Westminster. That same week, with the game help of some of our furniture ministry volunteers, my family moved into a new home. A congregational meeting was held on April 15 to elect new officers and they were trained on April 21. The church was also able to hold a fish fry on April 22 as the pouring rains stopped and the clouds literally parted over our church. Also, in the month of April, Steve and Ellen Ramp were gladly and joyously welcomed back into sharing life with us at Westminster.

In the month of May, the church enjoyed a dessert auction, a Men of the Church breakfast, a PW brunch, and a Deacon party at Howard Keever's home; thus we continued to earn the title of "Eatingest Church Ever." Graduates were recognized in May and new officers were ordained and installed on May 20.

With the approach of June, we said prayers for Althea Jerome in advance of her serving as a Commissioner to the 223rd General Assembly. Also, in June our church held one of the sweetest Vacation Bible Schools for all ages that you will ever find. There was fun, more food, and a study on scripture that looked at our life of faith as being like a journey down a river. To help us understand such

things, Buford the Dog made his debut. Continuing in the month of June several of our children attended a Student Life 4kids conference at Louisiana College. They were led by Tommy, Betsy McDaniels, and Alicia Westbrook. It was also in the month of June that our congregation dedicated Breadbasket Rooms in memory of Frank Whitesell and in celebration of volunteers who have given greatly to the mission of feeding others.

As July came around, the church ate (again) with a Red, Hot, and Blue celebration. We also sent 9 youth and 1 college student to a youth conference in Montreat, NC where they spent a week growing in their faith alongside 1,100+ of their peers. The Forsyths, Ginny Graham and Shane Brooks, joined me on the trip and provided meals and support to our young people.

As August rolled around, new officers began their term of service and a new committee structure went into effect. A presbytery meeting happened on August 11 in McComb and Rally Day (with more food) swung around at WPC on August 19.

September saw a return of Wednesday night programs which included a concert by our friends from Boswell as well as a presentation on a meaningful trip to Israel that some of our members enjoyed earlier in the year. Youth and Children's programs on Sunday evenings began to meet regularly at this time too.

In October more of the same continued, with more guests and different topics taking stage for adults on Wednesday nights. Meanwhile the children's choir fell into a regular pattern of rehearsal and of sharing in worship leadership on the third Sundays of the month. Also, on Wednesday nights our youth spent time learning about wisdom literature in scripture. We hosted the Rev. Wil Howie to preach on October 7 and he shared about the work of Living Waters for the World with us. We also received word that the church had been blessed with a \$1,000 grant from the presbytery to use towards bringing in a consultant to teach us a bit about contemplative worship in 2019.

Moving into November, we remembered the Saints of Westminster on the first Sunday of the month. A very well supported workday happened on November 10 and a grand Thanksgiving Feast was held on November 18; which was also Commitment Sunday.

In December, we were blessed with many occasions to celebrate Advent, complete with a workshop where we decorated the church and made crafts (and ate), enjoyed additional anthems by our choir, were blessed by a program put on by our children and youth (and ate), went caroling (and ate), and helped to provide well over 100 boxes of food as a part of our Breadbasket ministry (so others could eat!). On Christmas Eve a full house stood together in worship and wonder by the light of candles.

In addition to all of these gifts, the church has been surely been blessed by the faithful generosity of its members. Thus, we have been able to meet our obligations, invest in our future, receive the donation of a new dish washer and funds for a new swing set. We have also been able to provide care to others (both near and far) with financial support, food, clean water, and furniture.

We do sadly remember that we did said good-bye to four beloved family members this year in Jack Burke, Margaret Suttle, Margaret Pearson and Hugh Garraway, Jr. Even as we continue to grieve their passing, and have said goodbye to others who have moved away too, we have also found our family growing as we welcomed 16 adult members into membership this year, including one adult baptism. In addition, 2 other infant baptisms were celebrated in the course of 2018.

In closing, I know full well that these paltry words do not tell the full story of Westminster in 2018, but I think it safe to say that they point to at least two truths. We are blessed beyond measure to be together in the company of such a gracious family as this... and we are blessed beyond measure because Christ is with us even now. Thank you all for being you, for living out your faith, and for all that you do in service to Christ and to this congregation.

Submitted in humble service, and with deep gratitude and sincere joy for the blessing of being your pastor,

Christopher Crotwell
December 27, 2018

*The original version of this report was shared at the joint meeting of the Session and Diaconate on November 30, 2018.