

MISSION STUDY

Westminster Presbyterian Church

Chehalis, WA

June 21, 2022



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WELCOME AND INTRODUCTION

Westminster welcomes ALL! We are excited to walk with you in our joint journey of serving Christ through loving and serving others. We hold strong values in the areas of mission, serving youth and families, relationships, and caring for God's people within our congregation, within our community, and within our world. We look towards the future as we explore the possibilities and our capacities for serving God's people in new ways. We are excited to experience new learning, new strategies, and new practices, acknowledging and honoring our past while engaging in re-development as a congregation.

A BRIEF HISTORY OF WESTMINSTER PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH (WPC)

WPC is the oldest non-federated Presbyterian Church in Washington state. Our history began when Rev. George Whitworth met in the Lewis Hawkins Davis pioneer home in Claquato, Washington Territory, October 6, 1855. With the first lumber from his mill, Davis built the Claquato Church, the oldest standing church in WA. He welcomed several denominations and when our second minister Rev. Jotham Goodell died, Davis deeded the church to the Methodists. The Presbyterians met in the home of the first elder, Henry Stearns for 18 years. When Rev. Telesphore Brouillette was pastor, a church was built on State Street in July, 1882. They met there until it became too crowded. When Rev. Donald MacKenzie was our 13th pastor, the lot on Market Street was purchased and the present building was dedicated February 16, 1908. The new church was thriving in 1942 under Rev. Herbert Gordon when instead of two front doors, 1 large one was installed. Dr. Paul Crooks found the church and manse too crowded, and he supervised the brick Sunday School addition dedicated December 1, 1950. In 1998 the Annex was purchased and converted into church offices, pre-school space, a garage for the church van, and storage. The one thing that began with those dedicated spirit led pioneers to this area and has kept this church going is our love of God, Jesus and the Holy Spirit and searching our way giving God the glory. The congregation celebrated its 150th Anniversary on October 6, 2005, has worshiped through depression, Mt. St. Helen's eruption, and the Covid Shut Down and is still the 2nd oldest Presbyterian church in Washington State.

A PROFILE OF CHEHALIS, WASHINGTON

Chehalis is located centrally between Seattle, WA to the North, Portland OR to the south, the Pacific Ocean to the west, and the Cascade mountains to the east all within 1.5 hours drive. The city of Chehalis itself has a population of 7,500. The surrounding area including the twin city of Centralia grows the nearby population to more than 50,000. Chehalis is the county seat for Lewis County. According to DataUsa.io, the median age is 33.6 and a median household income is \$42,209.

The Chehalis school system is seen as one of the strongest in the state. 100% of the last three classes from the high school graduated having been already admitted to college. The district hosts one of the strongest STEM programs with our students winning awards and scholarships in Robotics, Molecular Genetics and Chemistry.

We have abundant athletic facilities and a world class public pool and children's play area, which was just upgraded by a \$2 million community funded effort. You can see more about all of this at the Chehalis Foundation website. The air is clean in Lewis County and the crime rate is low. There are many trails for bikers, hikers and climbers as well as rivers, streams and lakes for fishing.

Chehalis has several distinct historical areas and boasts eleven locations on the list of National Register of Historic Places. The Chehalis River winds its way through the valley in which the city resides and is joined by a tributary, the Newaukum River. Chehalis borders the Southwest Washington Fairgrounds, which hosts an annual fair, usually in August, and a youth fair in the Spring. Chehalis is served by Centralia's 128-bed, non-profit Providence Centralia Hospital for short-term acute care. It also provides services for surgery, cancer, obstetrics, and is equipped with a 24-hour emergency room, an ICU, and several clinics.

NEIGHBORHOOD SURVEY

Through the Neighborhood Survey conducted as part of the Vital Congregations Initiative, several neighborhoods in Chehalis were highlighted of interest to future church growth possibilities:

South of the church: Jackson Highway runs from Market Street in downtown Chehalis to the south and has seen growth in apartments and townhouses. Many additional apartments are planned in the area over the next three years. This area has also seen growth in single family homes with 100-200 additional new homes in the planning as well as some new businesses. This area includes the local swimming pool and spray park, softball fields, and a newly renovated ADA accessible playground. In addition, all Chehalis schools are also located here in close proximity to each other.

North of the church and Fairgrounds area: This is a mix of lower-income housing and businesses. It has seen hard times from flooding and changes in the economy. There are still empty buildings, and some homeowners appear to be struggling financially. Yet, there are pockets of homes where there is potential to reach out to families.

Retirement Communities: Woodland Estates in Chehalis offers independent living (both cottages and apartments), assisted living, and memory care services. Stillwaters Estates is a 55+ community in Centralia but close to Chehalis that includes about 206 owner occupied homes, duplexes (2 & 3 bedroom), and one condo unit of 5 apartments. There are also eighty-three rental units, most being four-plexes. This retirement community offers an assisted living facility as well. The retirement-age community in Chehalis and Centralia has been on the rise, indicated by the lack of vacancies in Stillwaters.

Historical Downtown and the Westside: WPC resides in the center of the historical downtown Chehalis proper. Several businesses, the regional library, city hall, the police department, and the county offices/services also reside in this area. The Experience Chehalis Project located in the downtown area, is an active

member of Washington’s Main Street Program, and has a mission to “cultivate relationships and celebrate community to deliver a more vibrant Chehalis.” The main train tracks separate the downtown area from the westside historical residential area. The Westside has several historical homes and a community park with a picnic area and playground as well as a variety of businesses.

Snapshot of WPC Leadership

Rev. Ralph Carr (Pastor)	1973 - 2004
Rev. Barbara Schacht (Interim Pastor)	2005 – 2006
Rev. Brian North (Pastor)	2007 – 2012
Rev. Melody Young (Interim Pastor)	2012 – 2013
Rev. Joyce Emery (Interim Pastor)	2013 – 2013
Rev. Shari Monson (Interim Pastor)	2013 – 2014
Rev. Ed Wegele (Pastor)	2014 – 2020
CRE Tony Reynolds (Bridge Pastor)	2020 – 2021
Rev. Debbie Garber (Transitional Pastor)	April 2021 - June 2022

VITAL CONGREGATIONS INITIATIVE YEAR ONE FINDINGS

In March 2021, a Congregational Vitality Survey was conducted with the congregation participating. This was part of the Presbytery’s Vital Congregations Initiative (VCI). Fifty-six surveys were returned. The survey was designed to help us understand the attitudes, opinions and perceptions of worshipers and leaders in our congregation. It measured the Seven Marks of Vital Congregations — discipleship, mission, evangelism, leadership, worship, caring relationships, and ecclesial health. We have received the results of the Congregational Vitality Report. Those scores were compared to the average scores across the PCUSA of all congregations, which also participated in the survey. A copy of the detailed survey results is available from the office upon request.

Transitional Pastor Debbie Garber highlighted the following areas in the survey results: Our overall vitality score is 68% (compared to 77% PCUSA). This is based on the congregation’s ratings over all the survey questions. There are strengths, gaps, and opportunities underlying this score, which will be highlighted in this brief summary. Congregational Strength: Caring Relationships; Congregational

Gap: Evangelism; Congregational Opportunities: Discipleship, Mission, Leadership, Spirit-Inspired Worship, Ecclesial Health (clarity of identity and purpose)

Congregational Strength: Caring relationships. Our church believes strongly that it loves and cares for all its members. As we support one another, we need to continue to be intentional in our caring and deliberate in our effort to make sure all congregants feel a strong sense of belonging.

Congregational Gap (area where we are least strong): Evangelism. One thing to note is this is also the least strength across all the churches that participated in the survey. Our score may indicate that 1) this area needs more education and attention, 2) evangelism may be uncomfortable for many, and/or 3) evangelism is something we will not or can't do. No matter how we interpret the results, there are opportunities for us to explore in this area, as a congregation and individually. There is general consensus that, as a congregation, we make visitors feel welcome. Yet there are plenty of opportunities for the church to better equip congregants to share their faith and God's love with others.

Congregational Opportunities: While there are several we could highlight, Mission (or Outward Incarnational Focus) stands out at the crossroads of our strength and gap highlighted above. Mission, in which we are personally engaged and visible whether locally or beyond, is an opportunity for us. It is less about sending money and more about sending people. There are many opportunities through mission to build upon our strength of caring for one another and shoring up our gap of sharing our faith and love of God with others. Some might be 1) increase our physical presence in missions we are already serving; 2) re-engage in our Preschool through volunteering and promoting this mission to our community; 3) learn more about the needs of areas in our community, as highlighted in our neighborhood survey.

Mission provides us opportunities to work together and strengthen our bonds, to reach outward into the world to serve those in need, and to glorify God.

FINANCES AND SUPPORT FOR CALLING A NEW PASTOR

Westminster has been fortunate to have a dedicated congregation that will step up to meet a financial need when asked. This has been especially true during the

pandemic. Income from 2020 to 2021 increased by over \$20,000, while expenses decreased by about the same amount. This gave us a positive balance at the end of the year. We anticipate a continued increase in income in 2022 by about \$14,000.

We believe we can support and call a full-time pastor going forward for at least the Presbytery minimum, plus benefits.

Annual income: \$228,101

Annual Expenses: \$228,156

Mission: \$44,512

MISSION FRUITS

Since the 1850's, the congregation has grown and shrunk many times. The church has had many pastors and thousands of congregants over its life. There are consistent threads, DNA if you will, that were part of this church at its beginning and still are present today. Our congregation has always been focused on serving others. Sometimes this is through direct church programs but always it is through our congregation members' service. WPC has been instrumental in establishing and maintaining the local food bank. Other recipients of its giving are Westminster Preschool, Love in the Name of Christ for office expenses and gas vouchers for folks screened by them, Hope and Health free clinic, Guardian Friends, Presbytery of Olympia, Sound View Camp, PCUSA, in addition to emergent disasters. Over the years there have been mission trips to Alaska, New Orleans and Malawi, Africa. It has a history of enormous giving to mission with our mission budget ranging between 20-40% during the last 50 years. Below are two results of this remarkable giving.

Synod of Livingstonia in Malawi, Africa

One of the most impactful and rewarding mission endeavors of WPC has been our relationship with the people of Malawi, Africa. It began in 1998 when a group of

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12 members went to Malawi. The group took many boxes of medical supplies, donated by WPC members, to a hospital pharmacy. Members of the group organized the medical supplies, helped build a shallow well, did some painting,

helped in a mobile clinic and in a school, and established a relationship with officials of the Synod of Livingstonia of the Presbyterian Church.



Westminster has maintained this remarkable relationship in support of education and ministry in Malawi since that time. Dr. Hank and Jenny Kirk led the rebuilding of the first

Christian university in Malawi, the University of Livingstonia (UNILA). Dr. and Mrs. Kirk

accepted Synod of Livingstonia appointments as vice chancellor and director of university relations respectively from 2002 through 2009. After the initial trip, others from our congregation have gone to Malawi. During these years, our congregation has supported Synod efforts by providing funds for playground equipment and soccer balls at a school, secondary school scholarships, bicycles for ministers and health care workers, roofs for churches, stipends for retired ministers, other Synod-identified needs in addition to funds for the university. WPC's involvement in Malawi encouraged other churches in Olympia Presbytery and internationally (England, Ireland, Scotland) to become involved. This University has graduated thousands of professionals including nurses, pastors and teachers who are now serving in vital roles across Malawi. The university continues to grow and graduated over 600 students in 2021, now serving over 2,000 students pursuing their higher education goals. The WPC Mission of the Church Commission (MOCC) continues to respond to Synod of Livingstonia needs and to provide scholarships for students who cannot afford to attend the university. Yearly, MOCC funds are also sent to support Mariya Nkhoma's Orphan Care Program by providing secondary school scholarships, food, clothing,

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school uniforms for those in need, and special gatherings to teach the youth hygiene and traditional dances and songs. The WPC congregation has hosted many Malawian visitors throughout the years to increase awareness of need and to deepen relationships between us and Malawians. Many other people and

organizations have contributed to the development of this remarkable success story in Malawi, and we are grateful God used WPC to establish this relationship. Session will discern future missional opportunities with the Synod of Livingstonia and the University of Livingstonia.

Westminster Preschool

Another example of meeting the needs of the community is the Westminster Preschool, originally Westminster Nursery School. It is the oldest preschool in Chehalis having begun in 1966 and was formed to meet the need for early childhood education. At first it was independently run and self-sustaining, being housed in the education wing of the church. The teacher's salary and all expenses were paid by the tuition the parents of the children paid. If there was a need to help a family pay the tuition, someone from the church would help out. The teacher and 2 or 3 volunteers utilized three rooms. Many families have made WPC their church home because of the preschool. Some time after the annex was purchased, the school was moved to one room there. In 2005, it was incorporated into the children/youth program of the church. Instead of having its own account and treasurer, it became part of the finances of the church, with parents paying the tuition to the church and the church providing the space and utilities, hiring the paid staff, and buying everything needed to run the school.



The purpose of the preschool is to focus on identified early childhood learning needs including: kindergarten readiness, social emotional needs, learning letters and numbers, learning about the Christian faith, and socialization skills including how to share and get along with each other. Public school teachers have over the

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years expressed appreciation for the readiness of our preschool children to attend kindergarten. The preschool fits into our overall ministry of nurturing the faith life

of children, where they can talk openly about God, learn about Jesus, and have a good start in life. Around 2013, the leadership of the church became aware that the tuition collected did not cover all the expenses of the school and began to provide help in collecting the fees and to supplement the shortfall. In 2019, a formal budget was reviewed and put into place that better aligned with the church budget. When Covid shutdowns were in effect there was a



limited number of children who could attend the school, which greatly affected the income. The leadership also became aware that the preschool has lacked adequate oversight, budget controls, and enrollment marketing, all of which have contributed to the debt, which has become significant.

A congregational conversation was held during worship one Sunday to hear about the hopes for the preschool, members' commitment, the school's current and future role as a mission of the church, and to understand the financial debt that must be reconciled by the Session and the impact of that decision on the overall finances of the church. The Session has appointed a board of directors to establish policies and procedures, with a solid financial plan and oversight. We feel this will help maintain the school as an important ministry in the Chehalis-Centralia area and one way in which we can show God's love for all children, youth, and families.

Children, Youth, and Families

The heart of this congregation has held a strong value for our children and youth along with their families across the decades. Over the years our congregation, like many others, has experienced an ebb and flow of families with children and

youth. This has provided us with opportunities to experience new ways of serving this group. We have shifted between having designated paid staff along with

volunteers, and having just volunteers to work with our young people. We have been serving our youth and families without a designated staff member working in this capacity for approximately the last three and a half years.

Approximately five years ago, CYF took a bold new approach to serving children, youth, and families, both within our congregation and our local community, when we pivoted away from a “traditional” VBS model to a “whole-family” model by providing three community wide events through the summer at Alexander Park. We offered a meal and intergenerational activities to families as opposed to only children. We were able to offer this for two summers before COVID put a pause on this practice. Prior to the COVID pause, CYF was considering a plan for WPC intergenerational mission trip to the Campbell Farm in Yakima, WA. This organization serves children, youth, and families in the Yakima Valley who experience poverty. We hope to pursue this plan in the future.

The COVID pandemic ushered in a pause to our youth programming. As we emerge from this pause, we have focused our attention on offering a weekly gathering of families for a meal, games, activities, music, Christian education, and prayer. Our goal this past year was to invite the congregation to join us once a month, but new variants of COVID put a hold on this plan. We look forward to continuing to explore an intergenerational focus within our church and beyond as we focus on “koinonia.” We seek to grow relationships across generations and increase opportunities to come together as a community. As we move forward we also seek the opportunity for our congregation to not only engage across the ages but to simultaneously “grow younger.” We know that this will demand us to think differently and creatively about how we serve each other.

SHIFTING WITH THE EBB AND FLOW OF CHANGE

As we enter a new chapter, we look to the future with a deep desire to spend time wondering and asking questions about new opportunities and to reimagine

our practices, missions and programs. We seek a process of redevelopment for our congregation writing a new story as we journey through an ever changing world, while continuing to experience and share God's deep love for all of creation.

Our church was blessed to have had three called pastors serving our congregation over the last five decades, one serving us for thirty-one years. Each brought his own strengths and talents leading us through a variety of new practices, programs, and worship styles during his tenure. With each new pastor brought an opportunity to try new things.

The COVID pandemic provided an opportunity for adaptations, which were greeted with mixed engagement from the church membership, and which kept us connected during this unexpected global experience. We shifted to worship and fellowship via ZOOM and uploaded the service into YouTube for access at any time. Although we returned to offering worship in-person beginning in November of 2020, we continue to offer worship via ZOOM providing increased access to the congregation as we continue to navigate COVID with both its challenges and opportunities. Many of our Connect Groups have reengaged after taking a pause during COVID, first via ZOOM and then shifting to in-person. Our youth group returned to a weekly gathering in September of 2021 with a new focus on engaging the whole family.

WORSHIP AND FAITH FORMATION AT WPC

Worship life at Westminster centers around Sunday morning worship. In worship we are called to remember that we belong to God; to pray our corporate confession to God and pass the peace of Christ to one another; to hear the Scriptures proclaimed, and to respond with our own prayers, the mission of the church, and the offering of our time, talent, and tithe. We are sent out into the world with the blessing and the benediction. We are blessed to have both an organist and a pianist who play solo and together, bringing a variety of worshipful music to the congregation each Sunday. Our vocal choir and Westminster Handbells enhance our worship with their passion for the healing and hope-filled ministry of music. We occasionally have praise music from two members on guitar

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and drums. Our hymns come from two hymnals: The Celebration (red) Hymnal and the Glory to God (purple) Hymnal.



Technology has become an important part of our Sunday mornings. We have returned to in-person worship but continue to offer ZOOM as an option. We are working to improve the sound for those with hearing loss through a headset that connects them directly into the

sound system. Our elevator brings congregants with mobility issues to all levels of the church building. (Our office building is also fully accessible.) There are two long-standing Bible study groups at WPC: The Presbyterian Women's Bible study and the men's group, SALT (Sharing All Life Together). The women's group (8-12 participants) meets weekly during most of the year, using the Horizons Bible Study. The SALT group was started in the late 1980s by Henry Kirk, with a regular group of 9-12 "regulars" (during "snowbird" time, the group is closer to 9). We also have had seasonal book studies and pastor-led studies during the year.

MISSION STUDY DETAILS

Methodology

The mission study was conducted using small group and in-worship conversations, the U.S. Congregational Vitality Survey, the Mission Insights Report, with input and review by the Session, Pastor Nominating Committee, and key individuals in specific ministries. The Vital Congregations Initiative process has informed this study through the Neighborhood Analysis Survey (in addition to the reports already listed).

Congregational Membership, Worship Attendance, and Demographics

<p><i>Membership Ten Year Trend</i></p> <p>2012: 172 2013: 156 2014: 163 2015: 170 2016: 178 2017: 176 2018: 133 2019: 120 2020: 111 2021: 111 2022: 100</p> <p><i>Demographics (as reported to PCUSA in 2021)</i></p> <p>Members: 100 Average weekly attendance (during Covid): 38 (pre-Covid: 50) Age distribution: 25 and under: 8 26-40: 0 41-55: 11 56-70: 30 Over 70: 51</p>	<p><i>Worship Attendance Ten Year Trend</i> (2020 and 2021 average affected by Covid)</p> <p>2012 143 2013 80 2014 108 2015 105 2016 86 2017 71 2018 73 2019 63 2020 55 2021 38</p> <p>Finances</p> <p>Annual income: \$228,101 Annual Expenses: \$228,156 Mission: \$44,512</p>
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WESTMINSTER IS LOOKING TO THE FUTURE

Westminster Presbyterian Church Core Values are . . .

- connecting with those who are marginalized, seeking and practicing inclusivity, reaching out to serve the community outside our doors and seeking opportunities to engage with those living/experiencing marginalization.

- relationships and connections throughout the congregation and community, seeking opportunities for intergenerational relationship building.
- both individual and congregational faith growth through multiple strategies and experiences, with the desire to increase confidence and commitment to the Great Commission.
- connections with people and groups who differ from us, striving to learn from, honor, understand, and benefit from practices, beliefs, and ideas that differ from our own, knowing that we are all God's Children and God communicates in a variety of ways and through a variety of people and experiences.
- Community/relationships, spiritual development and mission.
- Glorifying God and reflecting the love of Jesus Christ to the world through mission, music, compassion, and understanding.

Hopes for the Future of the Church

WPC desires . . .

- to return to a strong family with people from all backgrounds, ages, and strengths with warmth.
- that we know God more intimately and be committed to discerning his plans for us.
- that our congregation reflects our community and grows in diversity.
- that our congregation be able to serve unmet needs in our community.
- that our congregants truly know each other and seek to develop strong and trusting relationships with one another.
- that our congregation be known outside our doors and throughout the community because of our community service and community connections.
- the creation of opportunities to provide meaningful programs and worship experiences to bring people closer to God.
- support for our preschool.
- an increase in intergenerational presence.

Pastoral Leadership

WPC is seeking a pastor who . . .

- is present in the church and our community.
- has a desire and skills to promote and support increased faith growth (beyond Sunday worship) within the congregation engaging members in teaching/facilitating as well as learning.
- has a desire and skills to support the congregation in spiritual discernment (identifying and understanding God's plans for us and for our community).
- has a desire and skills to encourage the congregation to honor the past, but to focus on and engage in forward motion as we commit to developing a more intimate relationship with Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.
- has a desire and skills to support intergenerational relationships and programming as well as promoting congregational-community relationships.
- has skills in directing and supporting both paid and volunteer staff.
- has a desire and skills to explore a variety of worship styles and congregational engagement strategies.
- is able to connect with congregants of multi-generations.
- has leadership with organization and love.

APPENDIX

U.S. Congregation Vitality Survey, full report