



This pastoral comment was offered by pastors Leah Hrachovec, Eric Dorville and Jon Frost before the Pastoral Prayer at both worship services on March 1, 2026 at Westminster Presbyterian Church, West Chester, PA.

A Call to Courageous Love from the Westminster Session will be forthcoming.

(Leah)

Dear members and friends of Westminster-

Many of you have shared your dismay and deep concern for the recent violations of human and U.S. constitutional rights of immigrants as well as citizens in our country, the rise of political violence, global rise of authoritarianism, and an increase in Christian nationalism, which is the misalignment of Christianity with a message of power, cruelty, racism, and national identity that is at odds with the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

(Eric)

Through parable, proclamation, and lived ministry, Jesus teaches us through Scripture to love God with all our hearts, minds, and strength, and to our neighbors as ourselves, with no exceptions.

The gospels are clear that Jesus Christ is Lord, he is the way we follow, the truth we know, and the life. Not just an ordinary life, but abundant life. The life God intends for each person.

(Jon)

However, we know that our lives fall short of the abundant life to which God calls us. It's why our order of service always includes a prayer of confession.



We are also part of a faith tradition which confesses in another sense: Through the statements contained in our *Book of Confessions*, the “church declares to its members and to the world who and what it is, what it believes, and what it resolves to do.”

With the Reformation-era confessions we affirm that powers and authorities are instituted and ordained by God for the manifestation of God’s glory and the common good of all. (3.24, 5.252, 6.127)

With the 20th-century confessions we affirm that there are times when powers and authorities overstep their bounds. We affirm the 1934 Declaration of Barmen, which took a stand against the mistaken concept that the gospel might be rewritten as a political accommodation, and we affirm:

“Jesus Christ, as he is attested for us in Holy Scripture, is the one Word of God which we have to hear and which we have to trust and obey in life and in death. We reject the false doctrine, as though the church could and would have to acknowledge as a source of its proclamation, apart from and besides this one Word of God, still other events and powers, figures and truths, as God’s revelation.” (Barmen 8.11-12)

We affirm the 1986 Confession of Belhar, which took a stand against apartheid in South Africa, and we affirm:

“that God has entrusted the church with the message of reconciliation in and through Jesus Christ... Therefore, we reject any doctrine which, in such a situation sanctions in the name of the gospel or of the will of God the forced separation of people on the grounds of race and color and thereby in advance obstructs and weakens the ministry and experience of reconciliation in Christ.”

(Eric)

In Matthew 25, Jesus told us, “I was hungry and you gave me food, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink, I was a stranger and you welcomed me, I



was naked and you gave me clothing, I was sick and you took care of me, I was in prison and you visited me.”

We committed years ago to be a Matthew 25 Congregation with sister congregations in the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.), to be a Care for Creation congregation that values the health of God’s creation, whose degradation most impacts people on the margins; and Session approved an Inclusivity Statement in 2022 so that those who had historically not received hospitality by the church may know this church as a beacon of welcome, hospitality and inclusion in the name of Christ.

(Leah)

At our last Session meeting, I asked the Session to issue a call to Courageous Love. Members of Session are working on this call, which I pray will include a deepening of our commitment to listen to and stand with vulnerable and harmed communities in our midst, especially those who have experienced increased upheaval in life and bodily harm because of their country of origin, immigration status, color of their skin, or accent when they speak.

(Jon)

As your pastors, we are deeply grateful for you and your commitment to know Christ and make Christ known. In these times, we urge the community to show forth our oneness in Christ, commitment to the body of Christ, and the way of love even when it is costly. Together we live this good news from Ephesians 2: “But now in Christ Jesus you who once were far off have been brought near by the blood of Christ. For he is our peace; in his flesh he has made both into one and has broken down the dividing wall, that is, the hostility between us” (Ephesians 2:13-14).



(Eric)

We pray that we can engage honestly and openly with those who hold different points of view by working to seek common ground in our shared humanity. There must be a seat at the table for every person – even those with whom we may disagree. Yes, Jesus calls us to love “even them.” The Adult Spiritual Growth Team will be providing more opportunities for these curious, courageous conversations, where we may hear one another’s stories, concerns, hopes, and perspectives in the future.

We understand that this pastoral word today may be something you view as needful in these times, and that this word may feel challenging or unsettling to some of you. No matter how you receive it, we pray that you hear our deep love for you in Christ and our desire to continue to be pastors to you in your lives, and individual trials and joys.

(Leah)

Rather than turn against one another, Christ calls us to turn toward community and our faith in Christ, who is our peace. The false powers of chaos, terror, and division do not have the last word. Rather than giving in to the forces seeking to undermine our sacred connections, Jesus’ example of loving all people must guide our journey together. If we proclaim that Christ is Lord of all, the church should be a place where we can practice and speak about what courageous love looks like as we witness powers that would counter it.

The season of Lent calls us to “Come and See” how Jesus loves, even to the cross, trusting in God’s resurrection power. We understand following Jesus to be a deep joy, and also a living sacrifice of love, as we bear one another’s burdens, including those most burdened in our world today.