



WESTMINSTER PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH



*Madonna and Child from Mexico —
Mosaic from Church of the Annunciation, Nazareth*

Longing for a Savior

FOURTH SUNDAY OF ADVENT

DECEMBER 20, 2020

10:00 A.M.

MORNING WORSHIP AT 10:00 A.M.

FOURTH SUNDAY OF ADVENT

Longing for a Savior

GATHERING: PREPARING TO HEAR THE WORD

In Preparation for Worship

*My heart shall sing of the day you bring.
Let the fires of your justice burn.
Wipe away all tears,
For the dawn draws near,
And the world is about to turn.*

“Canticle of the Turning” by Rory Cooney

Opening Voluntary

(A musical prayer offered on behalf of the people of God.)

“Interlude” from *Ceremony of Carols*

Beth Colpean, Harp

Benjamin Britten

Welcome and Sharing the Life of Westminster

Rev. Laurie Hartzell

Advent Candle Liturgy

Heather and Don Pape

Response Hymn 88

**“O Come, O Come, Emmanuel”
(stanza 4)**

Veni Emmanuel

**O come, thou Root of Jesse,
free thine own from Satan’s tyranny;
from depths of hell thy people save
and give them victory o’er the grave.
Rejoice! Rejoice!
Emmanuel shall come to thee, O Israel.**

++Opening Hymn 110

“Love Has Come”

Bring a Torch

**Love has come: a light in the darkness!
Love shines forth in the Bethlehem skies.
See, all heaven has come to proclaim it:
hear how their song of joy arises:
Love! Love! Born unto you, a Savior!
Love! Love! Glory to God on high.**

**Love is born! Come, share in the wonder.
Love is God now asleep in the hay.
See the glow in the eyes of his mother;
what is the name her heart is saying?
Love! Love! Love is the name she whispers.
Love! Love! Jesus, Emmanuel.**

**Love has come and never will leave us!
Love is life everlasting and free.
Love is Jesus within and among us.
Love is the peace our hearts are seeking.
Love! Love! Love is the gift of Christmas.
Love! Love! Praise to you, God on high!**

Prayer of Confession

Rev. Jen Porter

(Trusting that God is love, we express our lament, our brokenness, and our failings to God.)

God of Promise, we so often place our trust in the things we can see, touch, and easily believe. But you do not ask us to believe what is easy; you ask us to trust in your eternal faithfulness. We confess that sometimes we would prefer you stay out of our affairs

because the systems we have built work for us. Disrupt our self-centered ways, widen our narrow vision of justice, and unloose the love we hold too tightly. Forgive us when we doubt the ways you work. Help us to respond in faith and wonder to the way you chose to enter the world, born as one of us...

Silent Confession

The Assurance of God's Grace

++ Response Hymn 106

**"Prepare the Way, O Zion"
(stanza 1)**

Bereden väg för Herran

**Prepare the way, O Zion, your Christ is drawing near!
Let every hill and valley a level way appear.
Greet One who comes in glory, foretold in sacred story.
O blest is Christ who came in God's most holy name.**

++ Passing the Peace of Christ

(A sign of forgiveness and reconciliation.)

Ministry of Music

**"Joy to the World"
Beth Colpean, Harp**

Lowell Mason

THE WORD

Prayer for Illumination

(We pray that the words of Scripture may be encountered as God's Word.)

Scripture

Luke 1:26-38

New Testament

One: The Word of the Lord.

All: Thanks be to God.

Sermon

Longing for a Savior

Rev. Lynette Sparks

RESPONDING TO THE WORD

Affirmation of Faith

"A New Creed," United Church of Canada

(We affirm our faith together to remind us who and whose we are.)

We are not alone, we live in God's world.

We believe in God:

who has created and is creating,

who has come in Jesus, the Word made flesh, to reconcile and make new,

who works in us and others by the Spirit.

We trust in God.

We are called to be the Church:

to celebrate God's presence,

to live with respect in Creation,

to love and serve others,

to seek justice and resist evil,

to proclaim Jesus, crucified and risen, our judge and our hope.

In life, in death, in life beyond death, God is with us.

We are not alone. Thanks be to God.

The Prayers of the People and the Lord's Prayer

The Lord's Prayer

Our Father who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name. Thy kingdom come, thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread; and forgive us our sins, as we forgive those who sin against us; and lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. For thine is the kingdom and the power and the glory forever. Amen.

Offering Our Lives

Offertory

“Lo, How a Rose E'er Blooming”
Beth Colpean, Harp

Es ist ein' Ros'

++Doxology (*means “words of glory”—they are a traditional expression of praise to God.*)

**Praise God, from whom all blessings flow;
Praise God, all creatures here below;
Praise God above, ye heavenly host;
Creator, Christ, and Holy Ghost!**

++Prayer of Dedication

In this moment of worship we embrace your presence again, O God, and we offer you our love. In this moment of prayer we proclaim again your purpose for the world, and we offer you our resources. In this moment of giving we hear your call again, O Lord, and we offer you ourselves. Use us to touch the world with the Christmas message: God is love. God is with us. God will never leave us. Amen.

GOING OUT TO BE THE CHURCH

++Closing Hymn 113

“Angels We Have Heard on High”

Gloria

**Angels we have heard on high, sweetly singing o'er the plains,
and the mountains in reply echoing their joyous strains.
Gloria in excelsis Deo!
Gloria in excelsis Deo!**

**Shepherds, why this jubilee? Why your joyous strains prolong?
What the gladsome tidings be which inspire your heavenly song?
Gloria in excelsis Deo!
Gloria in excelsis Deo!**

**Come to Bethlehem and see him whose birth the angels sing;
come, adore on bended knee Christ, the Lord, the newborn King.
Gloria in excelsis Deo!
Gloria in excelsis Deo!**

Charge and Benediction

Closing Voluntary

“Noël”
Helen Hofmeister, Organ

Louis-Claude Daquin

PARTICIPANTS IN TODAY'S SERVICE

Preacher Rev. Lynette Sparks, Senior Pastor and Head of Staff
Liturgists Rev. Jen Porter, Associate Pastor for Faith Formation and Pastoral Care
..... Rev. Laurie Hartzell, Interim Associate Pastor for Youth and Mission
Advent Candle Lighters Heather and Don Pape

Minister of Music Helen Hofmeister
Worship Musicians Beth Colpean, Harp; Cheri Reid, Soprano; and Mark Jackson, Tenor

Technology Team Peter Larson and Dan Cisler

AHEAD IN WORSHIP

Recorded from the Westminster Sanctuary

Christmas Eve

Thursday, December 24, 7:00pm

Intergenerational Service of Lessons and Carols

Longing for Incarnation

Rev. Lynette Sparks preaching

Music: Maria Schoon, Soprano

Michael Furman, Baritone

Sunday, December 27 – First Sunday of Christmas

Meditation of Lessons and Carols

Rev. Jen Porter preaching

Music: Abby Strand

Viviana Kloostra and Eric Richter

January 3 – Epiphany Sunday

Another Road

Rev. Laurie Hartzell preaching

Scripture: Matthew 2:1-12

Music: Eileen Doty, Violin

We're glad you worshiped with us today! If you'd like to know about the life and ministry of Westminster, visit our website at westminstergr.org, or contact Susan Jennings at susanj@wpcgr.org.

BULLETIN ANNOUNCEMENTS

Christmas Eve Worship

For children and their families, a short but sweet time of worship will be available on our YouTube channel and website on Christmas Eve. Enjoy worshipping and wondering with songs and story!

The Intergenerational Service of Lessons and Carols will be **Thursday, December 24, at 7pm** on our YouTube channel. Rev. Lynette Sparks will preach a sermon titled "Longing for Incarnation," with music provided by Maria Schoon, Michael Furman, Janlee Richter, and Helen Hofmeister.

ADVENT OFFERINGS FOR THIS WEEK:

Monday, December 21, 7am: a weekly prayer experience will be posted related to the week's theme. This time of prayer will begin by lighting a series of Advent candles.

Wednesday, December 23, noon: you can see a short program of organ music on the Westminster YouTube Channel, performed by Helen Hofmeister. The program consists of spoken program notes about music, plus the actual music itself! You will enjoy hearing the music of the season played on the Westminster organ!

THE PC(USA) CHRISTMAS JOY OFFERING will be collected **today, December 20**. God has blessed the Church with incredible leadership in every time and place, but those leaders often need to be supported by their communities as well. This Offering helps address that need by supporting leadership development at Presbyterian-related schools and colleges for communities of color, and providing support for Presbyterian church workers in their time of need. To donate to the Christmas Joy offering [click here](#).

STEWARDSHIP UPDATE:

Thank you to the 309 people who have pledged \$1,090,557 so far in this year's Stewardship Campaign! Though the formal season is over, it is not too late to turn in your 2021 pledge. You can do that by accessing the link [here](#). We give thanks to God for abundance—even in the wilderness!

YOUTH GATHERING TONIGHT: The youth will be gathering tonight at 4 pm via Zoom for a time of conversation and Christmas partying. [Click here](#) for the ZOOM link.

WPC YOUTH LOOKING AHEAD: We just need to get together in person, don't we? Plan on that for Sunday, January 10 in the afternoon. A get together at a park may be in the works. And we will be going tubing at Cannonsburg on January 17. On January 3, we will start planning the Youth Sunday service for February 6. Get your creative ideas going for how we can lead the church in worship together in a video! I hear that the middle school group is fabulous at "stop action" Bible scenes! We'll talk more about it soon, but we wanted to get your wheels turning.

GRAND RAPIDS BROAD BASED ORGANIZING TEAM: There will be a follow-up meeting for all Westminster members who attended the December 10 Broad Based Organizing Training on **Tuesday, December 22 at 7pm**. [Click here](#) for the Zoom link. If you have questions contact Jeanne DeWaard at jeldersderwaard@comcast.net for more details.

CHRISTMAS VISUAL AND AUDITORY TREATS ARE AVAILABLE: Tune in any day this season to our church website (westminstergr.org) and the Children's Ministries section. Westminster children and adults created videos to enrich our spiritual lives and bring some Christmas cheer. We have lessons, dramas, stories, and songs for you!

A HUGE THANK YOU to our Westminster congregation and our local partner churches for supporting us and participating in the Thanksgiving Ingathering/\$16.65 Challenge this year. To date, we have received roughly an amazing \$31,000 in cash donations and roughly \$5,000 in kind food donations. Thank you so much, Angie Kelley, Westminster Food Pantry Director.

FROM THE FOOD PANTRY: A COUPLE OF REQUESTS... MASKS! The pantry is open on each Thursday and practices COVID masking and social distancing. Our clients really appreciate washable masks, and we are having a hard time keeping up. This will greatly enhance our ability to continue to serve safely. Also donations of **winter gloves and hats** would be appreciated for our pantry clients. New or gently used would be welcomed and may be dropped off on Thursdays when the Pantry is open (10:30a-2:30p). **RECEIPTS:** the pantry is still participating in the *SpartanNash Direct Your Dollars* program. Please remember to mail in your D & W and Family Fare receipts to the pantry. [The entire receipt](#). For each \$150,000 in receipts, the pantry receives \$1,000! This is a great revenue source for us. Keep praying for this ministry – It is vital to our purpose to help those in need. 5

SUPPORT FOR HEARTSIDE NEIGHBORS: COVID-19 has been tough for most of us, especially the most vulnerable. Even as our Open Door Ministry is closed, we have been able to partner with Heartside Ministries in supporting our neighbors. Each Monday, the Westminster "Sandwich Brigade" brings 150 prepackaged sandwiches to Heartside Ministries for our neighbors' lunch! During December, the Westminster Sanctuary Choir added homemade Christmas cookies to those lunches the first two weeks. WPC Youth and their families are making cookies for the last two weeks.

Hats, mittens and books are needed by Heartside Ministries. If you are able to make a donation, please be in touch with Lexy McCullough at lexymcc@sbcglobal.net.

WCDC CHRISTMAS PROGRAM: This past Wednesday, our WCDC children and staff created a "Virtual Christmas Program" in the Gathering Place. The children sang "Jingle Bells," "Away in a Manger," "Up on the Housetop," and of course, "We Wish You a Merry Christmas!" The staff did a great job and the children all enjoyed their time of singing and celebrating together. Friends, this is GOOD WORK going on in our church day in and day out. We couldn't be prouder of all that WCDC offers to families and their children --- especially in these COVID Days! A link for viewing the program will be on Westminster's Facebook page and on the home page of our YouTube channel by **Monday, December 21**. You don't want to miss this fun program.



ONLINE CONTRIBUTIONS: Kathy Cisler has been working on expanding ways for people to make donations digitally. We recognize that many are facing new and unforeseen financial implications in the wake of this pandemic and this message is not meant to put any pressure on people. However, we are also aware that many are able to continue, or increase, their offerings to help us pay our bills, our staff, and continue our ministry that brings justice, peace, and hope into a world God loves. Please [click here](#) for a document that provides information on new ways you can give digitally to the church. If you have any questions, please feel free to contact Kathy through her phone number at the church, (616) 717-5533.



Using Engage Giving by Scanning the QR Code: Scan the code using a QR code reader app or the camera on your phone or mobile device. It will take you to the Engage Giving log-in window where you can follow the directions above for giving using the website

BUILDING USE AND WORSHIP CHANGES FROM THE WAY FORWARD COMMITTEE:

We continue to follow these guidelines:

- There will be no in-person group meetings (both indoor and outdoor) at the church, including youth groups.
- Sunday morning worship will be pre-recorded; it will still be aired at its usual 10am time via our YouTube channel on Sunday mornings.
- Staff are encouraged to work remotely as much as possible.
- The Food Pantry will continue to operate as it has throughout the pandemic, as will WCDC.

One thing will not change: we will continue to live in faith and hope. Please continue to pray for and support all who are laboring tirelessly to develop effective responses to COVID, as well as for those who are affected physically, emotionally, spiritually, and economically by this pandemic.

THANK YOU FROM CAMP HENRY: We are extremely thankful to the hundreds of generous donors who have chosen to support Camp Henry. Between gifts already received and pledged gifts that we are anticipating receiving soon, it looks like we are well on our way to reaching - and hopefully even exceeding - our goal of raising \$100,000 and fully taking advantage of the generous \$100,000 matching challenge gift. We are extremely honored and blessed to have so many folks that enthusiastically support Camp Henry. If you are considering making year-end gifts, please consider a contribution to Camp Henry by [clicking here](#).

WESTMINSTER'S BUILDING IS STILL CLOSED
ALL MEETINGS TAKE PLACE VIRTUALLY
WITH THE EXCEPTION OF THE FOOD PANTRY

SUN. DEC. 20 - ADVENT 4

10:00 amWorship Online
4:00 pmZoom Youth Group

MON. DEC. 21

7:00 amWeekly Advent Prayers posted on YouTube
6:00 pmMission Partnership Committee Online
6:30 pmTrustees Meeting Online
7:00 pmYouth Group Alumni Meeting Online

TUES. DEC. 22

7:00 pmZoom Broad Based Organizing Participants

WED. DEC. 23

12:00 pmAdvent Music posted on YouTube

THURS. DEC. 24 - CHRISTMAS EVE

12:00 pmFamily Christmas Worship on YouTube
7:00 pmChristmas Eve Service on YouTube

FRI. DEC. 25

MERRY CHRISTMAS

SUN. DEC. 27

10:00 amWorship Online