

MORNING WORSHIP

This Gift of God

GATHERING: PREPARING TO HEAR THE WORD

In Preparation for Worship

Whoever is on a journey towards God goes from one beginning to another beginning.

Will you be among those who dare to tell themselves:

"Begin again! Leave discouragement behind! Let your soul live!"? —Brother Roger

Sharing the Life of Westminster

Rev. Jen Porter

As we prepare for worship, we are invited to be attentive to God's presence in our midst.

Opening Voluntary "What Is This Lovely Fragrance?"

arr. K. Langlois

Lighting the Christ Candle

Elder Martha Velting & Elder Tim Born

One: On this seventh Day of Christmas,
We celebrate again this good news:
A child has been born for us.
The Prince of Peace has come to us.
The heavens have opened,
And joy has come.

We live in the light of Christ.

All: We rejoice, for he has come!

++Hymn 110

"Love Has Come"

Bring a Torch

Psalm of Praise

Psalm 148:1-13

Susan Jennings
Elder Karen Meyers

Prayer of Intention

Faithful and Holy One, you have blessed this world and filled it with your Being. Our intention is to join our voices to the rising song of praise. Help us to hold this vision and to daily renew it in our hearts, becoming ever more one with you, our truest Self. With thanksgiving for this year and naming our own intentions in the year to come, Lord, hear our prayer...

Silent Prayer

One: Praise be to God,

All: Alleluia! Amen.

++Response Hymn 134

"Joy to the World"

Antioch

(stanza 2)

**Joy to the earth, the Savior reigns!
Let all their songs employ,
while fields and floods, rocks, hills, and plains
repeat the sounding joy,
repeat the sounding joy,
repeat, repeat the sounding joy.**

++Passing the Peace of Christ

One: The peace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you.

All: And also with you.

Ministry of Music

"Old Provençal Carol"

Franz Liszt (1811-1886)

THE WORD

Scripture

Ecclesiastes 3:1-13

Old Testament p. 616

One: The Word of the Lord.

All: Thanks be to God.

Sermon

"This Gift of God"

Rev. Jen Porter

RESPONDING TO THE WORD

++Hymn 850

"In a Deep, Unbounded Darkness"

Divinum Mysterium

++Affirmation of Faith

**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.

Prayers of the People

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

Please take a moment to sign and pass the red friendship pad located in the pew, and take note of those worshipping next to you.

Offertory

"Still, Still, Still"

arr. J. Schmidt

Doxology

**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 Thanksgiving and Dedication

One: The Lord be with you.

All: And also with you.

One: Lift up your hearts.

All: We lift them up to the Lord.

One: Let us give thanks to the Lord our God.

All: It is right to give thanks and praise.

**Guardian of this new year, we set aside our fears, worries,
concerns. We open our lives to mystery, to beauty, to hospitality,
to questions, to the endless opportunity of discovering you in
our relationships, and to all the silent wisps of wonder that will
draw us to your heart. We welcome your unfailing Presence as
we walk with hope into this new year. Amen.**

GOING OUT TO BE THE CHURCH

++Closing Hymn 666 "O Splendor of God's Glory Bright"

Puer Nobis Nascitur

++Charge and Benediction

Closing Voluntary "Prelude and Fugue" in B flat major *Johann Simon (1707-1776)*

CONGREGATIONAL CHARGE

Go into the world in peace. Have courage. Hold on to all that is good. Return no one evil for evil. Do justice. Walk with those who are fainthearted. Help those who suffer. Honor all people. Love and serve God, rejoicing in the power of the Holy Spirit.

Liturgies adapted from "Out of the Ordinary" by Joyce Rupp. Affirmation of Faith Adapted from "A New Creed" United Church of Canada 1968. "What Is This Lovely Fragrance?" used by permission under ONE LICENSE, License #724668-A. All rights reserved.

PARTICIPANTS IN TODAY'S SERVICE

PreacherRev. Jen Porter, Associate Pastor
 Liturgists Susan Jennings, Minister for Pastoral Care & Mission
 Martha Velting, Elder for Faith Formation
 Tim Born, Elder for Children's Ministries
 Karen Meyers, Elder for Older Adults
 Tom Macholan, Elder for Camp Henry
 Musicians.....Janlee Richter, Organ & Piano

AHEAD IN WORSHIP

January 7
Epiphany of the Lord
Communion Sunday
 Rev. Lynette Sparks
 Matthew 2:1-12
 Sanctuary Choir

January 14
 Rev. Lynette Sparks
 Sanctuary Choir

Ahead in Adult Faith Formation:

Adult Faith Formation meets in the Chapel after the worship service.

Reformed Roots: Confessions of the 20th Century: January 7, 14, 21

Our Presbyterian confessions offer us anchors in the midst of completing claims about what is true and faithful. We begin this year with three weeks exploring our 20th Century Confessions and how they speak directly into issues of our current times. Why do confessions matter? How do they root us together and inform our call and identity?

Week One: Rev. Kyle Nolan The confessional nature of our reformed tradition.

Week Two: Rev. Kyle Kooyers The Confession of 1967 and The Declaration of Barmen (1934), just in time for Martin Luther King Jr. Day.

Week Three: Rev. Lynette Sparks The Belhar Confession (1986), from the Dutch Reformed Mission Church in South Africa.

Welcome to Westminster

MEMBERSHIP

If you have questions about the life of the church or becoming a member, please email Nicole Koetje at nicolek@wpcgr.org. More information about worship and updates from the church can be found at westminstergr.org. You are welcome and celebrated here!

ACCESSIBILITY

If you'd like a large-print bulletin please ask one of the ushers at a Sanctuary entrance. For T-loop hearing assistance, set your hearing aid to T.

We have accessible, all-gender, companion bathrooms available off of the Dining Room.

CHILDREN

The nursery (babies through two-year-olds) is available during the service.

YOUTH

If you would like more information about youth ministry, please contact our Minister with Youth and Young Adults Kat Jonker at katj@wpcgr.org.



This Gift of God

SEVENTH DAY OF CHRISTMAS

DECEMBER 31, 2023
10:00 A.M.

EXTENDING THE WESTMINSTER WELCOME!

As we welcome guests and visitors each week, we encourage everyone to personally extend the "Westminster Welcome" to those you have not met. Yours may be the welcome that truly helps all feel included.



WE ARE A
MATTHEW 25 Church

Matthew 25:31-46 calls all of us to actively engage in the world around us, so our faith comes alive and we wake up to new possibilities. Convicted by this passage, the Presbyterian Church (USA) decided to act boldly and compassionately to see our neighbors through Jesus' eyes and and serve those who are marginalized or in need, by building congregational vitality, dismantling structural racism, and eradicating systemic poverty.

Announcements

SIMPLY GIVE: December 31 - March 30 Help our neighbors facing food insecurity! From December 31 to March 30, you can buy a Meijer Simply Give food donation card at the Meijer store on Kalamazoo and 28th Street to benefit Westminster's Downtown Food Pantry.

CHILDREN'S SCHEDULE: Nursery available, but no worship centers or church school and choirs. All children's programs resume as usual on January 7.

IN THE IMAGE DONATION DRIVE: January is our month for collecting and giving for In the Image, a nonprofit organization that provides items at no cost to people who need assistance. We will be focusing on Baby Basics and would love your help in collecting diapers sizes 1-7, baby wipes, pull-ups, and newborn essentials! Starting in January, bring your items to the Children's Check-in Tables. Questions? Contact Nancy Greidanus (nancygw@wpcgr.org).

CUBA COLLECTION: REQUEST FROM GUINES Thank you for all the donations of medicine and hygiene items for Cuba! The children's program in Guines Presbyterian Church is putting together a church "toy box" and asked if we could help. We still have room in our suitcases to add through Sunday, January 7. Items: gently used toys (small to mid-sized blocks, dolls, vehicles); functional suitcases to be donated, gently used spring/summer clothing, multi-vitamins, soap, or deodorant.

BAPTISM SEMINAR: January 7, 9:15 a.m., Parlor Baptism is a joyous occasion for God's people! If you are interested in baptism at Westminster, we offer a seminar to talk about what this important sacrament means to all of us. Contact Nancy Greidanus (nancygw@wpcgr.org) for more information.

MEN'S SMALL GROUP: The Adult Spiritual Formation Committee is offering a men's small group gathering (8 to 10 men) early Thursday evenings (5:00 p.m. to 6:45 p.m.) twice monthly during January, February, and March of 2024. The group will likely include men from a range of ages and Christian traditions. To learn more, contact Rev. Jen Porter (jenp@wpcgr.org) or Larry Slager (slagerla5@gmail.com).

MLK DAY VOLUNTEERS: January 15, 12:00 p.m. Join us for lunch with our Heartside neighbors on Monday, January 15 to celebrate Martin Luther King day! This is a free lunch at church from noon - 2:00 p.m., and everyone is welcome! Our hope is to get to know our neighbors a little better, to offer a welcoming space, and to enjoy a special meal together. We need volunteers to assist with set up, serving lunch, and clean up. If you can help, please contact Susan Jennings at susanj@wpcgr.org or Ruth Posthumus at mpc@wpcgr.org.



DONATIONS: Donations can be made by scanning the QR code, through our secure online giving site, or by check sent to the church office. Email angiek@wpcgr.org or call (616) 717-5533 with questions.

This Week's Calendar

SUN. DECEMBER 31

- 10:00 a.m. Worship Service.....Sanctuary
11:00 a.m. Coffee Hour..... Gathering Place

MON. JANUARY 1

All Day Church Office Closed for New Years Day

TUES. JANUARY 2

- 7:00 p.m. Session Meeting Chapel

WED. JANUARY 3

- 6:30 a.m. Youth Prayer Breakfast..... Wolfgang's
6:30 p.m. West Michigan Gay Men's Chorus..... Choir Room

THURS. JANUARY 4

- 9:30 a.m. Children & Parent Social Hour.....Children's Hallway
10:00 a.m. Spiritual Formation Group.....Library
10:30 a.m. Food Pantry Front Lobby
7:00 p.m. Sanctuary Choir Rehearsal..... Choir Room

SUN. JANUARY 7

- 9:15 a.m. Baptism Seminar Parlor
9:30 a.m. Sanctuary Choir Rehearsal..... Choir Room
10:00 a.m. Worship Service.....Sanctuary
11:00 a.m. Coffee Hour Gathering Place
11:15 a.m. Church School & Choirs Various Locations
11:15 a.m. Youth Group & Choirs..... Various Locations
11:15 a.m. Adult Faith Formation..... Chapel
3:30 p.m. Communion Service..... Porter Hills
4:00 p.m. Fiction Book Group.....Library
4:00 p.m. Game On Board Game Group Conference Room