

Westminster Presbyterian Church

222 Schoolhouse Lane ~ Columbus, OH 43228 ~ 614-878-4623 ~ westminstercolumbus.org

Disciples – Everyone here!

December 29, 2024 First Sunday of Christmas

As we prepare to worship - "We want to love mercy, but our enemies are relentless, and it feels like foolishness to prioritize gentleness in this unbelievably cruel world." (Laura Jen Truman)

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Ring the church bell calls us to worship

Welcome and Announcements

Lighting of Candles From "The Mood of Christmas" by Howard Thurman

If you are worn out from Christmas, what can you do?

"I will light candles this Christmastime.

Candles of joy, despite all the sadness.

Candles of hope where despair keeps watch.

Candles of courage where fear is ever present.

Candles of peace for tempest-tossed days.

Candles of grace to ease heavy burdens.

Candles of love to inspire all of my living.

Candles that will burn all the year long."

Prelude

***Call to Worship**

Liturgist Abby Clarke

God so loved the world that God *gave* us his Son.

At Christmas, we unwrap the greatest Gift the world has ever known.

Where all is a gift, I do not own things or persons.

Where all is a gift, I don't have to protect myself.

Where all is a gift, I don't have to protect my stuff.

We gather, thanking God for the gift of Jesus Christ!

***Hymn** "O Come, All Ye Faithful" # 133

Call to Confession (Please be seated)

"If God so loved us, we also ought to love one another," (I John 4:11).

While we're waiting, let us remember the Christmas favorite "The Grinch Who Stole Christmas". The old Grinch lived alone with his dog, high above Whoville. He plots to spoil Christmas for the people of the village by stealing their presents and decorations. But the people proceed with a

joyous celebration nonetheless. Their wonderful singing leads the Grinch to repent and to return everything that he had taken. But even though he had committed such theft against the people, they invite him and welcome him to join them in their celebratory meal. Therefore, the one who was an **outsider** had been made into an **insider** as a result of the Christmas story. The kingdom of God came near. May our joyful singing lead us to repent also.

Unison Prayer of Confession adapted from "5th Blessing" by D.S. Martin

Merciful God, thank you for making me forgetful of the times my brother or my sister hurt me. Help me to set aside my outrage over what they have done. Tell me when to turn the other cheek even in the midst of my pain. You have taught me about my power to hurt and then to choose not to hurt. Help me to fight my urge to retaliate. It's good to be forgiven by you, which I'm hoping will help me to be merciful towards others. Hear my silent prayer...

Declaration of Forgiveness Phillips Brooks "O Little Town of Bethlehem"

Yet in the dark streets of our lives shines the everlasting light – the hopes and fears of all the years, are met in Jesus. While we have been sleeping the angels have kept their watch of wondering love. We are now forgiven people. The wondrous gift is given! God imparts to human hearts the blessing of his heaven. The dear Christ enters into our hearts and we receive the heavenly peace of forgiveness. Ah, what peace and joy!

***Joyful Response** from "O Come, O Come, Emmanuel" # 88

Singing the refrain:

Rejoice! Rejoice! Emmanuel shall come to thee, O Israel.

***Pass the Peace of Christ**

The Peace of the Lord be with you. **And also with you.**

Encounters with Nativity - "Show and Tell" – your favorite Nativity, Christmas card or letter or Christmas gift given or received.

Prayer for Illumination

Let us pray. Lord, may the light of the Christmas star become the light of your Holy Scriptures, that we may find Jesus. Amen.

Litany for Refugees - "Mary, Joseph! Take Young Jesus!" by Carolyn Winfrey Gillette (Matthew 2:13-18 and Matthew 31-46)

When Herod decided to kill all the babies in Bethlehem, God directed Joseph and Mary to take their child and flee to a foreign land for safety.

“Mary, Joseph! Take young Jesus! Flee from where you cannot stay!
Soldiers seek the child, to kill him! Cross the border! Run away!”

Weary from long miles of walking, Joseph, Mary, full of grace,
hugged young Jesus, hoping, trusting God would give a safer place.

God, this story daily happens more than we can understand —
Heed the danger! Save the children! Flee a much-beloved land!
Seek a land that might give welcome! Raise a family without fear!
Cross the border, hoping, trusting some will show compassion here.

Christ, we wonder at the meaning, that your family had to flee.
How can we show love and welcome to the poor, the refugee?
What’s our calling as a nation, when — a stranger — you arrive,
simply seeking our compassion so your family can survive?
See the Holy Family fleeing! Would we make our border tight?
Hear a child and parents crying, turned away into the night.
God of love, now show our nation what you’re calling us to do
so that strangers may be welcomed — so you will be welcomed, too.

Old Testament Lesson I Samuel 2:18-20 and 26

The Word of God for the People of God. **Thanks be to God.**

Gospel Lesson Matthew 18:2-4 and Luke 2:41-52

The Gospel of the Lord. **Praise to you, O Christ.**



***Sermon** “God the Giant or God the Child?”

“Did you not know that I must be in my Father’s house?” (Lk 2:49)

Can we rejoice in God as Child?

Origin of "Silent Night" - "Your spark can light up the world."

***Hymn** "Silent Night, Holy Night" # 122

Focus on Mission – The Synod of the Covenant

Invitation to Our Joyful and Generous Stewardship Together

Rev. Joel Esala (Covenant Presbyterian Church pastor) uses a free app called "Gratitude Jar" in which he writes three things for which he is grateful every day. He writes "Gratitude is not about things going the way you want. Instead, gratitude is about paying attention to the gifts present within the life we already have. Alex Snider writes, 'It isn't about ignoring the darkness but about noticing the light—a colleague's perseverance, a neighbor's hug, or a wisp of new possibilities.'"

Offertory

***Doxology** "Praise God, from Whom All Blessings Flow" # 606

***Prayer of Dedication**

Please accept, O Lord, my offering this morning. All through this past week I have held onto my possessions, the things that seem to matter to me the most. Now, at least in my heart and mind, let me imagine letting go of things and holding onto people. Let the offerings I have given for your work through this church become my attempts to let go of more things and hold on to more people. This I ask in the power of Jesus' name. Amen.

Sharing of Joys and Concerns

"Whenever something or someone becomes difficult in our personal experiences, we are in danger of blaming God... In our prayers of intercession we bring a person or a circumstance that is confronting us into God's presence - until we are moved by God's attitudes towards that person or circumstance. Put yourself in that person's place. Never try to put yourself in God's place." (Oswald Chambers)

Prayer Chorus "Lord, Listen to Your Children Praying" # 469

Prayers of the People and the Lord's Prayer

***Hymn "Angels, from the Realms of Glory" # 143**

***Benediction**

***Postlude**



Westminster Presbyterian Church was founded December 4, 1955.
We are one of eighty-three member congregations
of the Presbytery of Scioto Valley; and the
Synod of the Covenant – 11 presbyteries and nearly 700 congregations
mainly in Ohio and Michigan.

Our Mission - our purpose

To bring God's word to everyone, that God loves **everyone**, including you. The Gospel calls us not to just preach, but also to practice Christ's compassion for all by serving others and leaving no one out.

Vision – our roadmap

The vision of Westminster Presbyterian Church is to build our community of Christ with love and care. We are committed to reaching across the street, and around the world to proclaim the Gospel.

Serving Westminster Presbyterian Church

Our Session - Elders – Linda Crumley, Trent Rowe, Karen Flowers & Lynne Kelly (Clerk)

Our Deacons - Jim Benney, Carol Jones, Marsha Ross & Joyce Sizemore

Church staff – Karen Flowers, Sexton Rene Miller, Treasurer
Rev. Jonathan T. Carlisle, Gap Pastor Olivia Mitchem, Pianist

Announcements

In preparation for next Sunday's service please read our Epiphany Sunday passage from Matthew 2:1-12. Epiphany is the new action of God, with the magi representing God's revelation to the Gentiles. We will celebrate the Lord's Supper.

A prayer for you. "Oh Lord, go with each of us to rest; if any awake, temper to them the dark hours of watching; and when the day returns, return to us, our sun and comforter, and call us up with morning faces and with morning hearts, eager to labor, eager to be happy, and if the day be marked for sorrow, strong to endure it."
— Robert Louis Stevenson

Save the Dates! –

- Our **combined worship** service with Galloway Presbyterian Church will be at the Galloway church on January 12th at 10:45 with beverage and dessert to follow.
- Our **Annual Congregational Meeting** will be held after a luncheon on Sunday, January 26th! A powerpoint of our 2024 activities will be shown. The budget and Annual Reports and the 2025 Contact List will be available. A Question & Answer time will be provided with our Elders.