



WESTMINSTER

— Presbyterian Church —

Albany, New York
December 31, 2023
Service of Worship 10:00 a.m.

WESTMINSTER PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH
Epiphany Sunday



Welcome to Westminster! We're glad you're here.

- **If you're visiting us this morning, we would love to meet you and greet you!** We invite you to fill out the Welcome Card in the pew and put it in the offering plate or hand it to an usher in the back.
- **After worship, please join us downstairs as we continue our fellowship at our coffee hour.** We gather in the hall located directly under the sanctuary. Stairs are located through the doors on either side of the front of the sanctuary, followed by another stairway that leads downstairs. Additional stairs and an elevator are available at the rear of the sanctuary. We recognize that our 19th century building can be confusing to navigate! **We are here to help**—please speak to an usher if you need assistance.



WE ASSEMBLE IN GOD'S NAME

(Let the notes of our Prelude be the musical curtain through which we pass as we gather to worship together. Let the preparation we make together be prayerful.)

Prelude "Prelude in E Major from The Well-Tempered Clavier" J. S. Bach

Call to Worship *Isaiah 60:1* Margaret Randall

One: Arise, shine; for your light has come!

All: **The glory of God has risen upon us.**



Opening Hymn #151

We Three Kings of Orient Are

(Sing all stanzas, but with refrain after stanzas 1 and 5 only.)

Call to Confession Margaret Randall

One: God judges the nations with righteousness, *Ps. 72:2*
and answers the poor with justice.

Trusting in God's grace, let us confess our sin.

Prayer of Confession

All: **God of glory,
you sent Jesus among us as the light of the world,
to reveal your love for all people.
We confess that our sin and pride
hide the brightness of your light.**

**We turn away from the poor;
we ignore cries for justice;
we do not strive for peace.**

**In your mercy, cleanse us of our sin,
and pour out the gifts of your Spirit,
that, forgiven and renewed,
we may show forth your glory
shining in the face of Jesus Christ.**

Declaration of Forgiveness

Margaret Randall

The mercy of the Lord is like rain,
like showers that water the earth.
In the name of Jesus Christ, we are forgiven!
Thanks be to God.

Ps. 72:6

Passing The Peace

Margaret Randall

Words of Welcome

Rev. Heather Kirk-Davidoff

WE PROCLAIM GOD'S WORD

Prayer for Illumination

Henry Sowah

Holy One, giver of all light,
lift up our hearts and minds to Christ,
the morning star that never fades.
By the light of your Holy Spirit
reveal to us your saving Word
and lead us to offer our lives to you
in service and in love;
through Jesus Christ our Lord. **Amen.**



Scripture Lesson

Matthew 2:1-12

read by Henry Sowah

In the time of King Herod, after Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judea, magi from the east came to Jerusalem, asking, "Where is the child who has been born king of the Jews? For we observed his star in the east and have come to pay him homage." When King Herod heard this, he was frightened, and all Jerusalem with him, and calling together all the chief priests and scribes of the people, he inquired of them where the Messiah was to be born. They told him, "In Bethlehem of Judea, for so it has been written by the prophet:

'And you, Bethlehem, in the land of Judah,
are by no means least among the rulers of Judah,
for from you shall come a ruler
who is to shepherd my people Israel.' "

Then Herod secretly called for the magi and learned from them the exact time when the star had appeared. Then he sent them to Bethlehem, saying, "Go and search diligently for the child, and when you have found him, bring me word so that I may also go and pay him homage."

When they had heard the king, they set out, and there, ahead of them, went the star that they had seen in the east, until it stopped over the place where the child was. When they saw that the star had stopped, they were overwhelmed with joy. On entering the house, they saw the child with Mary, his mother, and they knelt down and paid him homage. Then, opening their treasure chests, they offered him gifts of gold, frankincense, and myrrh. And having been warned in a dream not to return to Herod, they left for their own country by another road.

Reflections

Following the Magi

Led by Rev. Heather Kirk-Davidoff

WE RESPOND TO GOD'S WORD



Hymn #144

In the Bleak Midwinter (verses 1 & 2)

Prayer Concerns and Celebrations

Rev. Heather Kirk-Davidoff



Hymn #144

In the Bleak Midwinter (verses 3 & 4)

Prayers of the People

Rev. Heather Kirk-Davidoff

The Lord's Prayer

**All: 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 debts, as we forgive our debtors;
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

Margaret Randall

WE ARE SENT IN GOD'S NAME



Hymn #150

As With Gladness, Men of Old

Charge and Benediction

Rev. Heather Kirk-Davidoff

Piano Postlude

Theme and Variation 1,
Piano Sonata No. 30 Op. 109

L. van Beethoven



We welcome Eugene Sit as this week's guest musician. Thank you Eugene!

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Peter McKee, Hannah Ohemaa-Takyi, Susan Schell, Linore Southworth

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Pete Seagle, Joy L. Tallmadge, Kathy Walter, Peter Wrede

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151 We Three Kings of Orient Are



1 We three kings of O - ri - ent are; bear - ing gifts we tra - verse a - far,
 2 Born a King on Beth - le - hem's plain, gold I bring to crown him a - gain,
 3 Frank - in - cense to of - fer have I; in - cense owns a de - i - ty nigh;
 4 Myrrh is mine; its bit - ter per - fume breathes a life of gath - er - ing gloom;
 5 Glo - rious now be - hold him a - rise, King and God and Sac - ri - fice:



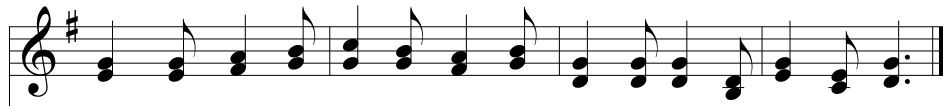
field and foun - tain, moor and moun - tain, fol - low - ing yon - der star.
 King for - ev - er, ceas - ing nev - er o - ver us all to reign.
 prayer and prais - ing glad - ly rais - ing, wor - ship - ing God Most High.
 sor - rowing, sigh - ing, bleed - ing, dy - ing, sealed in the stone - cold tomb.
 Al - le - lu - ia! Al - le - lu - ia! sounds through the earth and skies.



Refrain



O star of won - der, star of night, star with roy - al beau - ty bright,



west - ward lead - ing, still pro - ceed - ing, guide us to thy per - fect light!



Although Christians had begun by the 2nd century to speak of these visitors from eastern countries (Matthew 2:1-12) as "kings," perhaps because of passages like Psalm 72:10 and Isaiah 60:3, it is more accurate to think of them as magi or astrologers, the scholars of their day.

In the Bleak Midwinter

144

1 In the bleak mid-win-ter, frost-y wind made moan;
 2 Our God, heaven can-not hold him, nor earth sus-tain;
 3 An-gels and arch-an-gels may have gath-ered there;
 4 What can I give him, poor as I am?

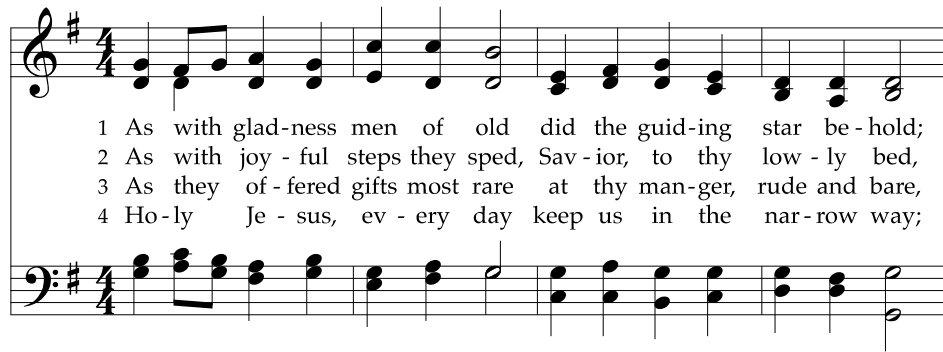
earth stood hard as i-ron, wa-ter like a stone;
 heaven and earth shall flee a-way when he comes to reign:
 cher-u-bim and ser-a-phem thronged the air;
 If I were a shep-herd, I would bring a lamb;

snow had fall-en, snow on snow, snow on snow,
 in the bleak mid-win-ter a sta-ble place suf-ficed
 but his moth-er on-ly, in her maid-en bliss,
 if I were a wise man, I would do my part;

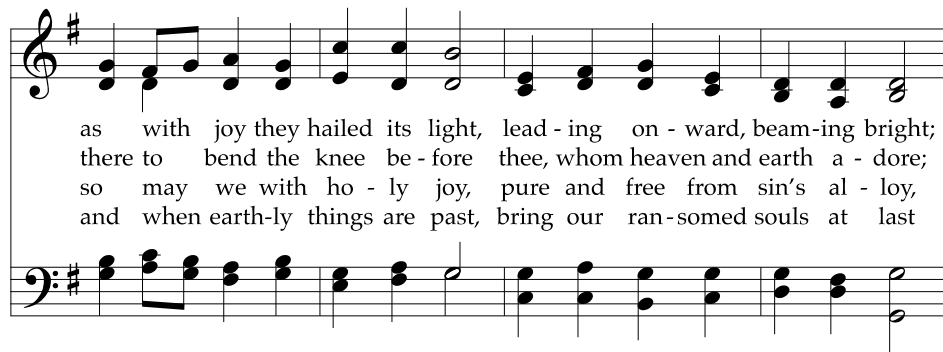
‡ in the bleak mid-win-ter, long a-go.
 the Lord God in-car-nate, Je-sus Christ.
 ‡ wor-shipped the be-lov-ed with a kiss.
 yet what I can I give him: give my heart.

Though this text describes winter weather in England rather than in Palestine, the poet is using familiar surroundings as a means of making the Nativity more immediate and personal. The tune name honors a Gloucestershire village near the composer's birthplace in Cheltenham.

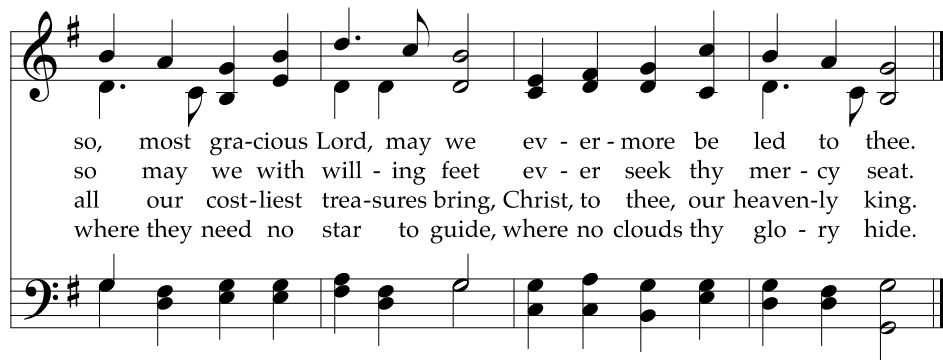
As with Gladness Men of Old 150



1 As with glad-ness men of old did the guid-ing star be - hold;
 2 As with joy - ful steps they sped, Sav - ior, to thy low - ly bed,
 3 As they of - fered gifts most rare at thy man-ger, rude and bare,
 4 Ho-ly Je - sus, ev - ery day keep us in the nar - row way;



as with joy they hailed its light, lead - ing on - ward, beam-ing bright;
 there to bend the knee be - fore thee, whom heaven and earth a - dore;
 so may we with ho - ly joy, pure and free from sin's al - loy,
 and when earth-ly things are past, bring our ran-somed souls at last



so, most gra-cious Lord, may we ev - er - more be led to thee.
 so may we with will - ing feet ev - er seek thy mer - cy seat.
 all our cost-liest trea-sures bring, Christ, to thee, our heaven-ly king.
 where they need no star to guide, where no clouds thy glo - ry hide.

The first three stanzas here use an as/so structure to draw parallels between the coming of the Magi and the spiritual lives of the singers, summed up in the prayer of the fourth stanza. Even though this adapted German tune was named for him, the author did not care for it.