



WESTMINSTER

— Presbyterian Church —

Albany, New York
December 3, 2023
Service of Worship 10:00 AM

WESTMINSTER PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH AT WORSHIP
The First Sunday of Advent



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

Song Without Words, Op 62 No 3

Felix Mendelssohn

Choral Introit (Hymn #84, "Creator of the Stars of Night")

Creator of the stars of night,
Your people's everlasting light,
O Christ, Redeemer of us all,
We pray you hear us when we call.

Advent Candle Liturgy

The Ashburn Family

One: In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth,
And set lights in the sky—sun and moon and stars.
By these stars, our ancestors charted their journeys.
By these stars, they knew God was with them.

Two: Today we light one candle to bring the fire of the stars
down from heaven to earth, to rest among us.
We name this candle Hope.
(The first Advent candle is lit.)

Opening Hymn #82

Come, Thou Long Expected Jesus

Call to Confession

One: We too are on a journey, and we do not always know the way.
Let us confess our sins before God and one another.



Prayer of Confession

**All: We lift up our souls to you, O God,
 knowing that we have not always walked closely with you.
 In fact, sometimes we have stopped walking altogether.
 We seem to revisit the same problems over and over
 without really looking for ways to move forward.
 So much in our lives and in our world seems played out and tired.
 Forgive us, God, for our lack of faith in your power and your promises.
 Help us to hope even when things seem hopeless.**

Assurance of Forgiveness

One: Listen now to the prayer of an ancient poet:

Psalms 67:5-8

“For God alone my soul waits in silence,
 for my hope is from him.
 God alone is my rock and my salvation,
 my fortress; I shall not be shaken.
 On God rests my deliverance and my honor;
 my mighty rock, my refuge is in God.
 Trust in him at all times, O people;
 pour out your heart before him;
 God is a refuge for us.”

Two: Even when better days seem very far away
 and the weight of the world seems to crush any sense of possibility,
 we chart our path by the star of hope,
 trusting in God’s promises.

One: Let us pray:
 Lord Jesus, help us to become the signs of hope that others are searching for.
 As these candles are but a glimpse of the light of the heavens,
 help us to be a glimpse of heaven’s hope. Amen.

Passing The Peace

Words of Welcome

Rev. Heather Kirk-Davidoff

Choir Anthem

O Come, O Come, Emmanuel

Arr. Alice Parker & Robert Shaw

WE PROCLAIM GOD’S WORD



Prayer for Illumination

Leah Threatte

One: Holy God, our hope and strength,
 by the power of your Spirit
 prepare the way in our hearts
 for the coming of your Word,
 so that we may see the glorious signs
 of your promise fulfilled;
 through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.



Scripture Lesson

Mark 13:24-37

[Jesus said,] "But in those days, after that suffering, the sun will be darkened, and the moon will not give its light, and the stars will be falling from heaven, and the powers in the heavens will be shaken. Then they will see 'the Son of Man coming in clouds' with great power and glory. Then he will send out the angels, and gather his elect from the four winds, from the ends of the earth to the ends of heaven.

"From the fig tree learn its lesson: as soon as its branch becomes tender and puts forth its leaves, you know that summer is near. So also, when you see these things taking place, you know that he is near, at the very gates. Truly I tell you, this generation will not pass away until all these things have taken place. Heaven and earth will pass away, but my words will not pass away.

"But about that day or hour no one knows, neither the angels in heaven, nor the Son, but only the Father. Beware, keep alert; for you do not know when the time will come. It is like a man going on a journey, when he leaves home and puts his slaves in charge, each with his work, and commands the doorkeeper to be on the watch.

Therefore, keep awake--for you do not know when the master of the house will come, in the evening, or at midnight, or at cockcrow, or at dawn, or else he may find you asleep when he comes suddenly. And what I say to you I say to all: Keep awake."

Sermon

"Notice Beginnings"

Rev. Heather Kirk-Davidoff

WE RESPOND TO GOD'S WORD



Prayer Hymn #84

Creator of the Stars of Night (verses 1 & 2)

Gathering Celebrations and Concerns

Prayer Hymn #84

Creator of the Stars of Night (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.**



Invitation to the Offering

Hymn #607

Doxology

SACRAMENT OF COMMUNION

Invitation to Communion

Rev. Heather Kirk-Davidoff and Leah Threatte



The Lord be with you. **And also with you.**
Lift up your hearts. **We lift them to the Lord.**
Let us give thanks to the Lord our God.
It is right to give our thanks and praise.

How can we thank you, O God?
for sun and moon and stars;
for breath and life and all things good;
for your steadfast promise and your faithful love;
for the day that is surely coming
when all things will be made new.

With saints, with angels, and with the whole creation,
we join the ancient and eternal hymn:

**Holy, holy, holy Lord,
God of power and might,
Heaven and earth are full of your glory.
Hosanna in the highest.
Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord.
Hosanna in the highest.**

We give you thanks, Holy God, for Jesus,
who came to be your living Word,
to baptize us with Spirit and fire,
to feed the hungry, to humble the mighty,
and to announce the good news of your coming realm.

With thanksgiving, we remember how, when the hour had come,
Jesus took his place at the table with the apostles.
He said to them, I will not eat this Passover again
until it is fulfilled in the kingdom of God.

Then Jesus took bread,
and when he had given thanks,
he broke it and gave it to them, saying,
This is my body, which is given for you.
Do this in remembrance of me.

After supper, he took a cup, saying,
This cup that is poured out for you
is the new covenant in my blood.
I will not drink of the fruit of the vine
until the kingdom of God comes.

With thanks and praise we offer ourselves to you,
sharing this holy meal,
remembering Christ's dying and rising,
and praying: **Come, Lord Jesus!**

Pour out your Holy Spirit upon us—
this bread, this cup, these people—
Christ's body and blood,
given in love for the world.

**Make us one in the Spirit,
one in the church,
and one with Christ our Lord.**

Make us gentle, joyful, thankful people,
serving our neighbors, worshiping you alone.
Keep us in the peace of Christ
until you gather us at your table in glory.

**Even now, a voice is crying in the wilderness:
prepare the way of the Lord!**

Through Christ, with Christ, in Christ,
in the unity of the Holy Spirit,
all glory and honor are yours, almighty God,
now and forever. **Amen.**



Sharing Bread and Cup

Communion Hymn #91

"Come, Come Emmanuel"



Prayer after Communion

Leader: Mighty God, holy is your name.
We thank you for gathering us at your table
and feeding us with the bread of life.
**All: As we leave this table
to go to the many places where you call us,
send your Spirit to accompany us,
so that we may share in your magnificent work:
lifting up those who are laid low,
showing mercy to all in need of human kindness,
and feeding the bodies and hearts
of all those who are hungry. Amen.**

WE ARE SENT IN GOD'S NAME



My Soul Cries Out with a Joyful Shout

Charge and Benediction

Rev. Heather Kirk-Davidoff

Hymn #92 (verse 1)

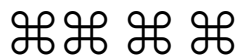
While We are Waiting Come

**While we are waiting, come; while we are waiting, come.
Jesus, our Lord, Emmanuel, while we are waiting, come.**

Postlude

Song Without Words, Op 19 No 4

Felix Mendelssohn



AFTER WORSHIP THIS MORNING: THE HANGING OF THE GREENS

Please stay for a bit after worship and help us decorate our sanctuary for the Advent season. Adults and children are welcome! There are heavy jobs (assembling our big Christmas trees) and light jobs (decorating a tree with chrismons) and everything in between. We'll have coffee, tea and some Christmas cookies on hand to sweeten the work!

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

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For more about Westminster's online communications, please contact us: communications@wpcalbany.org

2023 CHURCH OFFICERS

Session

Leah Threatte, Clerk of Session
Ephraim Adjei, John Bossung, Nancy Holroyd, Felicia Kollie-Gambles,
Peter McKee, Hannah Ohemaa-Takyi, Susan Schell, Linore Southworth

Deacons

Mary Bullis and Dodie Seagle, Co-moderators
Ruthanne Brod, Kelly Crisfield, Cynthia Dwyer,
Mabel McGraw, Elizabeth McMillan, Carolyn Smith

Trustees

John Bossung and Leif Hartmark, Co-chairs
David Adjei, Marie McClumpha, Laura Moody, David Norman,
Pete Seagle, Joy L. Tallmadge, Kathy Walter, Peter Wrede

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84 Creator of the Stars of Night



1 Cre - a - tor of the stars of night, your peo - ple's ev - er -
 2 When this old world drew on toward night, you came; but not in
 3 At your great name, O Je - sus, now all knees must bend, all
 4 To God the Fa - ther, God the Son, and God the Spir - it,

The Latin original of this text for Advent dates from at least the 9th century, and the English version was created a millennium later as part of the 19th-century recovery of early Christian hymns. It is provided here with its traditional plainchant setting.

TEXT: Latin hymn, 9th cent.; trans. John Mason Neale, 1851; as in *The Hymnal 1940*, alt. CONDITOR ALME SIDERUM
 MUSIC: Sarum plainsong, Mode IV, 9th cent.; harm. Alfred V. Fedak, 2011 LM
 Text Alt. © 1940 Church Pension Fund (alternate tune: PUER NOBIS NASCITUR)
 Music Harm. © 2011 Alfred V. Fedak

JESUS CHRIST: ADVENT



last - ing light, O Christ, re - deem - er of us all,
 splen - dor bright, not as a mon - arch, but the child
 hearts must bow: all things on earth with one ac - cord,
 Three in One, praise, hon - or, might, and glo - ry be



we pray you, hear us when we call.
 of Mar - y, blame - less moth - er mild.
 like those in heaven, shall call you Lord.
 from age to age e - ter - nal - ly. A - men.

Come, Thou Long-Expected Jesus 82

1 Come, thou long - ex - pect-ed Je - sus, born to set thy peo-ple free;
2 Born thy peo - ple to de - liv - er, born a child and yet a king,

from our fears and sins re - lease us; let us find our rest in thee.
born to reign in us for - ev - er, now thy gra - cious king - dom bring.

Is - rael's strength and con - so - la - tion, hope of all the earth thou art;
By thine own e - ter - nal Spir - it rule in all our hearts a - lone;

dear de - sire of ev - ery na - tion, joy of ev - ery long - ing heart.
by thine all - suf - fi - cient mer - it raise us to thy glo - rious throne.

With its opening "Come," this hymn sounds the note of entreaty and invitation that characterizes the Advent season (from the Latin *adventus* = "coming"). Its blending of memory and hope helps us to give voice to our present faith as we stand between the past and the future.

84 Creator of the Stars of Night



1 Cre - a - tor of the stars of night, your peo - ple's ev - er -
 2 When this old world drew on toward night, you came; but not in
 3 At your great name, O Je - sus, now all knees must bend, all
 4 To God the Fa - ther, God the Son, and God the Spir - it,

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 splen - dor bright, not as a mon - arch, but the child
 hearts must bow: all things on earth with one ac - cord,
 Three in One, praise, hon - or, might, and glo - ry be



we pray you, hear us when we call.
 of Mar - y, blame - less moth - er mild.
 like those in heaven, shall call you Lord.
 from age to age e - ter - nal - ly. A - men.

607 Praise God, from Whom All Blessings Flow

Doxology

Praise God, from whom all blessings flow; praise Christ, all people

TEXT: Neil Weatherhogg, 1988
MUSIC: Genevan Psalter, 1551
Text © 1990 Neil Weatherhogg

OLD HUNDREDTH
LM

SERVICE MUSIC

here below; praise Holy Spirit ever more;

praise Tri-une God, whom we adore. Amen.

Come, Come Emmanuel 91

Come, come Em - man - u - el. Come, Em -

The first system of music is in 3/4 time with a key signature of one sharp (F#). The vocal line begins with a half note 'Come', followed by quarter notes 'come', 'Em -', 'man -', 'u -', and 'el.' The second measure of the vocal line contains a half note 'Come,' followed by a quarter note 'Em -'. The piano accompaniment consists of chords in the left hand and a melodic line in the right hand.

man - u - el. man - u - el.

The second system of music is divided into two parts: 'For repeat' and 'Final ending'. The 'For repeat' section contains a half note 'man -' followed by quarter notes 'u -' and 'el.'. The 'Final ending' section contains a half note 'man -' followed by quarter notes 'u -' and 'el.'. The piano accompaniment features chords and a melodic line, with a repeat sign and a final double bar line.

This Advent refrain centers on the name of Jesus meaning "God with us" (Matthew 1:23, quoting Isaiah 7:14). Intended for repeated congregational singing, it can be expanded by the addition of stanzas sung by a soloist or choir, or it can serve effectively as a prayer response.

100 My Soul Cries Out with a Joyful Shout

Canticle of the Turning



1 My soul cries out with a joy - ful shout that the
 2 Though I am small, my God, my all, you
 3 From the halls of power to the for - tress tower, not a
 4 Though the na - tions rage from age to age, we re -



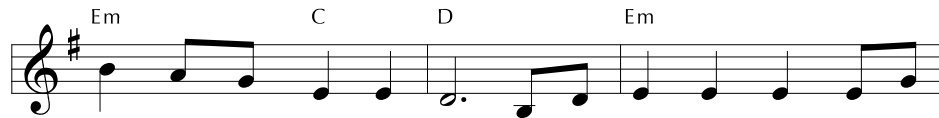
God of my heart is great, and my spir - it sings of the
 work great things in me, and your mer - cy will last from the
 stone will be left on stone. Let the king be - ware for your
 mem - ber who holds us fast: God's mer - cy must de -



won - drous things that you bring to the ones who wait.
 depths of the past to the end of the age to be.
 jus - tice tears ev - ery ty - rant from his throne.
 liv - er us from the con - quer - or's crush - ing grasp.



You fixed your sight on your ser - vant's plight, and my
 Your ver - y name puts the proud to shame, and to
 The hun - gry poor shall weep no more, for the
 This sav - ing word that our fore - bears heard is the



weak - ness you did not spurn, so from east to west shall my
 those who would for you yearn, you will show your might, put the
 food they can nev - er earn; there are ta - bles spread; ev - ery
 prom - ise which holds us bound, till the spear and rod can be

By employing an energetic Irish folk song for its melody, this ballad-like paraphrase of the *Magnificat*, Mary's song at her meeting with her relative Elizabeth (Luke 1:46-55), recaptures both the wonder and the faith of the young woman who first recognized what God was doing.

JESUS CHRIST: ADVENT



name be blest. Could the world be a - bout to turn?
 strong to flight, for the world is a - bout to turn.
 mouth be fed, for the world is a - bout to turn.
 crushed by God, who is turn - ing the world a - round.

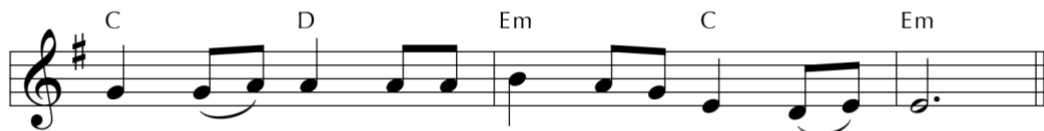
Refrain



My heart shall sing of the day you bring. Let the



fires of your jus - tice burn. Wipe a - way all tears, for the



dawn draws near, and the world is a - bout to turn.

92 While We Are Waiting, Come

1 While we are wait - ing, come;
 2 With power and glo - ry, come;
 3 Come, Sav - ior, quick - ly come;

while we are wait - ing, come.
 with power and glo - ry, come.
 come, Sav - ior, quick - ly come.

Je - sus, our Lord, Em - man - u - el,

while we are wait - ing, come.

This simple and meditative Advent hymn is so uncomplicated in both text and tune that it can be learned quickly and sung without reference to a book, which might make it effective as a prayer response. It would also lend itself to improvised stanzas on appropriate occasions.