



# WESTMINSTER

— Presbyterian Church —

Albany, New York  
December 17, 2023  
Service of Worship 10:00 AM

WESTMINSTER PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH AT WORSHIP  
The Third 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** "To Your Goal Leads this Road" W. A. Mozart/Arr. Richard Metzdorff

**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** Judy Hartley & Maxine Quaye

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 three candles to bring the fire of the stars  
down from heaven to earth, to nestle rest among the greens

One: We name this candle Hope. (The first Advent candle is lit.) We name this candle Peace. (The second Advent candle is lit.) We name this candle Joy. (The third Advent candle is lit.)

**Opening Hymn #93** Lift Up Your Heads, Ye Mighty Gates

**Call to Confession** Beth Coombe

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

Beth Coombe

**All: God of Love, we confess to you that sometimes  
we let the flame of joy in our hearts burn out.  
We forget all of the blessings of our lives,  
the love we have been able to give and to receive.  
Instead, we focus on the things that haven't gone the way we wanted  
and the problems we haven't been able to fix.  
We are critical of others and critical of ourselves.  
We are much more willing to share our complaints  
than to share our hope with each other.  
Forgive us God. Renew us with your strength and light.**

## Assurance of Forgiveness

*(Isaiah 61:1-3)*

Listen now to the prophecy of Isaiah:  
"The spirit of the Lord God is upon me,  
because the Lord has anointed me;  
he has sent me to bring good news to the oppressed,  
to bind up the broken-hearted,  
to proclaim liberty to the captives,  
and release to the prisoners;  
to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor,  
and the day of vengeance of our God;  
to comfort all who mourn;  
to provide for those who mourn in Zion—  
to give them a garland instead of ashes,  
the oil of gladness instead of mourning,  
the mantle of praise instead of a faint spirit."

Even when despair is all around us  
and apathy seems the order of the day,  
we chart our path by the star of joy  
and set our face steadily towards the light.

Let us pray:  
Lord Jesus, as we search for signs of joy this week,  
help us to become the signs of joy 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 joy. Amen.

## Passing The Peace

## Words of Welcome

Rev. Heather Kirk-Davidoff

**WE PROCLAIM GOD'S WORD**



### Prayer for Illumination

Beth Coombe

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

1 Thessalonians 5:16-24

Rejoice always, pray without ceasing, give thanks in all circumstances; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you.

Do not quench the Spirit. Do not despise the words of prophets, but test everything; hold fast to what is good; abstain from every form of evil.

May the God of peace himself sanctify you entirely; and may your spirit and soul and body be kept sound and blameless at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. The one who calls you is faithful, and he will do this.

## OUR CHURCH SCHOOL CHRISTMAS PLAY

“The Shoemaker’s Dream”

by Masahiro Kasuya, based on "Where Love Is, God Is" by Leo Tolstoy, 1885

### Cast

|                       |                  |
|-----------------------|------------------|
| Sallar Kumi-Yeboah    | Narrator 1       |
| Nana Afia Kumi-Yeboah | Jesus            |
| Victor Powers         | Martin           |
| Andre Ashburn         | Narrator 2 and 4 |
| Caleb Bojnowski       | Old man          |
| Angel Sowah           | Mother           |
| Maame Agyeman-Bio     | Narrator 3       |
| Choice Ashburn        | Woman            |
| Nana Agyemang- Bio    | Boy              |

## WE RESPOND TO GOD’S WORD



Hymn #135

“There’s a Star in the East”

## Gathering Celebrations and Concerns

Prayers from State Street

Ned Trudeau

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

Beth Coombe

Hymn #115

Away in a Manger

Charge to the Congregation

Rev. Heather Kirk-Davidoff

### WE ARE SENT IN GOD'S NAME



Hymn #123

It Came Upon the Midnight Clear

Charge and Benediction

Rev. Heather Kirk-Davidoff

Hymn #92 (verse 1)

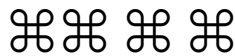
While We are Waiting Come

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

Postlude

"Soon Gleams the Morning to Announce"

W.A. Mozart  
Arr. Richard Metzdorff



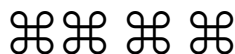
We welcome Eugene Sit as this week's accompanist. Thank you Eugene!

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### Stay in Touch with Westminster

- Visit our website: <https://wpcalbany.org>
- Like us on Facebook: [Westminster Presbyterian Church Albany](#)
- Get weekly news email messages by providing a current email address to the church office at [office@wpcalbany.org](mailto:office@wpcalbany.org) or calling (518) 436-8544

For more about Westminster's online communications, please contact us: [communications@wpcalbany.org](mailto:communications@wpcalbany.org)



### **Congregational Meeting: Sunday December 17, 2023**

A meeting of the congregation of Westminster Presbyterian Church is called for Sunday, December 17th, directly following the worship service for the purpose of voting on the slate of officers for Deacons, Trustees, and the Session.

Voting: Attendance by Zoom is permitted and votes will be counted electronically via Survey Monkey.

Voting Instructions: Following the meeting, members are asked to vote to either accept (Yes) or not accept (No) the proposed slate for the nominating committee. Voting will take place in-person, electronically, or by telephone.

To vote electronically: Members may access a link to vote online. When you attend the meeting we will share this link. You may also [call or email the church office](#) for this information.

To vote by phone: If members would prefer, they may leave a voicemail message at the church at 518-436-8544 with their name and how they vote.

Voting will remain open until 3:00 pm on December 17th and the result will be tallied by the Clerk of Session.

## **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

## **CHURCH PROGRAM TEAM**

Rev. Heather Kirk-Davidoff, Pastor  
[pastor@wpcalbany.org](mailto:pastor@wpcalbany.org)  
Cell: 240-281-5005

Christopher Price, Music Director  
[music@wpcalbany.org](mailto:music@wpcalbany.org)

Belinda Quaye, Director of Christian Education  
[belindaquaye@wpcalbany.org](mailto:belindaquaye@wpcalbany.org)

## **CHURCH SUPPORT TEAM**

Lorraine Charboneau, Church Administrator  
[office@wpcalbany.org](mailto:office@wpcalbany.org)

Kim Deal, Communications Manager  
[communications@wpcalbany.org](mailto:communications@wpcalbany.org)

Forrest Holroyd, Treasurer  
[treasurer@wpcalbany.org](mailto:treasurer@wpcalbany.org)

Joy L. Tallmadge, Associate Sexton

## **WESTMINSTER PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH**

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Email: [office@wpcalbany.org](mailto:office@wpcalbany.org) website: <https://wpcalbany.org>

# 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.



# Lift Up Your Heads, Ye Mighty Gates 93

1 Lift up your heads, ye might - y gates; be - hold the  
 2 Fling wide the por - tals of your heart; make it a  
 3 Re - deem - er, come! I o - pen wide my heart to

King of glo - ry waits; the King of kings is  
 tem - ple, set a - part from earth - ly use for  
 thee; here, Lord, a - bide. Let me thy in - ner

draw - ing near; the Sav - ior of the world is here.  
 heaven's em - ploy, a - dorned with prayer and love and joy.  
 pres - ence feel; thy grace and love in me re - veal.

Beginning as a paraphrase of Psalm 24:7–10, this text then applies the door imagery to the singer's heart, and concludes with the individual's welcome of the approaching Savior. It is set to a very effective anonymous 18th-century English tune that has served many texts.

# There's a Star in the East 135

Rise Up, Shepherd, and Follow

1 There's a star in the east on Christ-mas morn. Rise up, shep-herd, and  
 2 If you take good heed to the an - gel's words, rise up, shep-herd, and

fol - low. It will lead to the place where the Christ was born.  
 fol - low. You'll for - get your flocks; you'll for - get your herds.

*Refrain*

Rise up, shep-herd, and fol - low. Fol - low, fol - low;

rise up, shep-herd, and fol - low. Fol - low the star of

Beth - le - hem. Rise up, shep-herd, and fol - low.

This African American spiritual, cast in a characteristic call-and-response style, provides a reminder that the good news of the Incarnation should lead Christians not only to awe and adoration but also to living and acting in ways that make God's purposes known to others.

# 115 Away in a Manger

Capo 3: (D) F (G) B $\flat$  (D) F

1 A - way in a man - ger, no crib for his bed,  
 2 The cat - tle are low - ing; the poor ba - by wakes,  
 3 Be near me, Lord Je - sus; I ask thee to stay

(A7) C7 (D) F

the lit - tle Lord Je - sus laid down his sweet head.  
 but lit - tle Lord Je - sus, no cry - ing he makes.  
 close by me for - ev - er and love me, I pray.

(G) B $\flat$  (D) F

The stars in the bright sky looked down where he lay,  
 I love thee, Lord Je - sus; look down from the sky,  
 Bless all the dear chil - dren in thy ten - der care,

(A7) C7 (D) F (Em) Gm (A7) C7 (D) F

the lit - tle Lord Je - sus a - sleep on the hay.  
 and stay by my side un - til morn - ing is nigh.  
 and fit us for heav - en to live with thee there.

Though erroneously attributed to Martin Luther, this anonymous carol has North American roots, probably originating among Pennsylvania Lutherans. Although more than forty melodies have been connected with these words, this tune was among the earliest written for them.

# 123 It Came Upon the Midnight Clear

1 It came up-on the mid-night clear, that glo-rious song of old,  
 2 Still through the clo - ven skies they come, with peace-ful wings un - furled,  
 3 Yet with the woes of sin and strife the world has suf-fered long;  
 4 And you, be-neath life's crush-ing load, whose forms are bend-ing low,  
 5 For lo, the days are has-tening on, by proph-ets seen of old,

from an - gels bend - ing near the earth, to touch their harps of gold:  
 and still their heaven-ly mu - sic floats o'er all the wea - ry world:  
 be - neath the heaven-ly hymn have rolled two thou-sand years of wrong;  
 who toil a - long the climb-ing way with pain - ful steps and slow,  
 when with the ev - er - cir-cling years shall come the time fore - told,

“Peace on the earth, good will to all, from heaven’s all-gra-cious King”:  
 a - bove its sad and low - ly plains they bend on hov-ering wing,  
 and we at war on earth hear not the tid - ings that they bring;  
 look now, for glad and gold - en hours come swift - ly on the wing:  
 when peace shall o - ver all the earth its an - cient splen-dors fling,

The “it” of the first line of this text by a Unitarian minister does not refer to the birth of Jesus, but to “that glorious song of old,” the angelic tidings of peace on earth. The restored third stanza laments how often the noise of human strife has obscured that message.

JESUS CHRIST: BIRTH

the world in sol - emn still - ness lay, to hear the an - gels sing.  
and ev - er o'er its Ba - bel sounds the bless - ed an - gels sing.  
O, hush the noise and cease the strife to hear the an - gels sing!  
O, rest be - side the wea - ry road, and hear the an - gels sing.  
and the whole world give back the song which now the an - gels sing.

# 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.