



# WESTMINSTER

— Presbyterian Church —

Albany, New York  
December 22, 2024  
Service of Worship 10:00 AM

WESTMINSTER PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH AT WORSHIP  
The Fourth 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**

Shepherd's Song

James Mansfield

**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**

Robert Quaye & Caleb Adjei

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 four candles to bring the fire of the stars  
down from heaven to earth, to rest among us.

We name this candle Hope. *(The first candle is lit.)* We name this candle Peace. *(The second candle is lit.)* We name this candle Joy. *(The third candle is lit.)* We name this candle Love. *(The fourth candle is lit.)*

**Opening Hymn #123**

It Came Upon a Midnight Clear

## Call to Confession

John Bossung

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

John Bossung

**All: God of Love, you are indeed great.  
You have given us wonderful blessings: life and love.  
Forgive us for not aligning our lives with yours  
and for not loving the way you love.  
Instead of singing our praises to you,  
we mutter our complaints about the people around us  
and the world in general.  
We have so much and yet we wish we had more.  
We give our attention to those who are richer and more famous than we are  
and forget those who are struggling around us.  
Forgive us, God, and call us back to you.**

## Assurance of Forgiveness

John Bossung

Listen now to the wisdom of the early Christians:  
“Beloved, let us love one another, because love is from God;  
everyone who loves is born of God and knows God.  
Whoever does not love does not know God, for God is love.  
God’s love was revealed among us in this way:  
God sent his only Son into the world  
so that we might live through him.  
In this is love, not that we loved God  
but that he loved us and sent his Son  
to be the atoning sacrifice for our sins.  
Beloved, since God loved us so much,  
we also ought to love one another.  
No one was ever seen God;  
if we love one another, God abides in us,  
and his love is perfected in us.”

*1 John 4:7-12*

Even when sharp words rattle in our ears,  
and our hearts sit cold and numb,  
we set our face steadily towards the light  
and chart our path by the star of love.

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

## Passing The Peace

John Bossung

## Words of Welcome

Rev. Heather Kirk-Davidoff

## Choral Anthem

Coventry Carol

arr. Martin Shaw

## WE PROCLAIM GOD'S WORD



### Prayer for Illumination

John Bossung

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

Luke 2:1-14

read by John Bossung

In those days a decree went out from Caesar Augustus that all the world should be registered. This was the first registration and was taken while Quirinius was governor of Syria. All went to their own towns to be registered. Joseph also went from the town of Nazareth in Galilee to Judea, to the city of David called Bethlehem, because he was descended from the house and family of David. He went to be registered with Mary, to whom he was engaged and who was expecting a child. While they were there, the time came for her to deliver her child. And she gave birth to her firstborn son and wrapped him in bands of cloth and laid him in a manger, because there was no place in the guest room.

Now in that same region there were shepherds living in the fields, keeping watch over their flock by night. Then an angel of the Lord stood before them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were terrified. But the angel said to them, "Do not be afraid, for see, I am bringing you good news of great joy for all the people: to you is born this day in the city of David a Savior, who is the Messiah, the Lord. This will be a sign for you: you will find a child wrapped in bands of cloth and lying in a manger." And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host, praising God and saying,

"Glory to God in the highest heaven,  
and on earth peace among those whom he favors!"

Sermon

"Tender"

Rev. Heather Kirk-Davidoff

## WE RESPOND TO GOD'S WORD



Prayer Hymn #115

Away in a Manger

Gathering Celebrations and Concerns

Rev. Heather Kirk-Davidoff

Prayers of the People

## 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

John Bossung

## Offertory Music

The Holly and the Ivy

John M. Rasley

## Hymn #607

Doxology

Praise God, from whom all blessings flow;  
Praise Christ, all people here below;  
praise Holy Spirit evermore;  
Praise Triune God, whom we adore. Amen.

## WE ARE SENT IN GOD'S NAME



## Hymn #105

People Look East

## 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

Trumpet Fanfare for Christmas  
The Shepherds (Introducing "Joy to the World")

L.N. Porter  
Charles Sergisson



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### Session

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2025: Ephraim Adjei, Peter McKee, Linore Southworth

2026: John Bossung, Kate Gallagher, Felicia Kollie-Gambles, Nathan Powers

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2025: Kelly Crisfield, Carolyn Smith

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*John Bossung, President*

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2025: John Bossung

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## WESTMINSTER PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH

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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.

# 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,

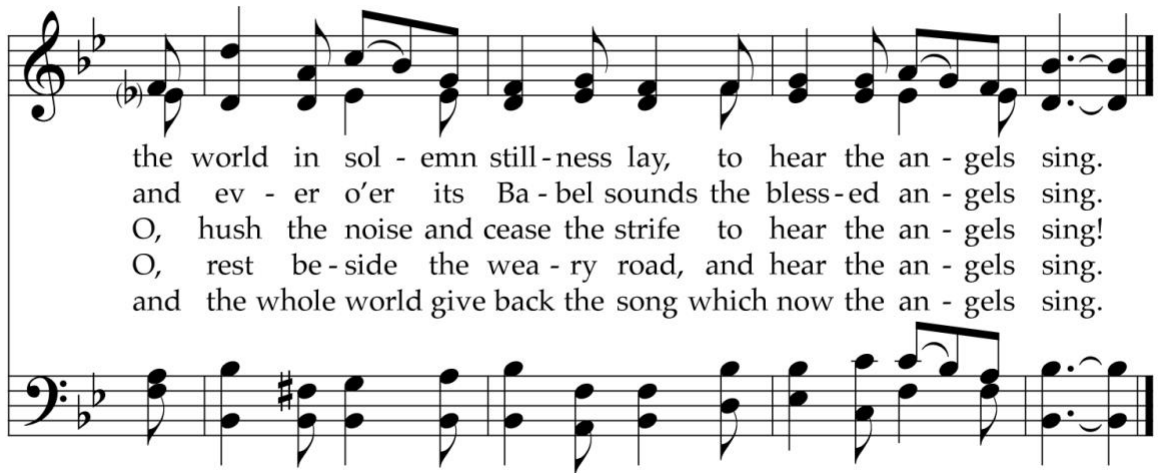
from an - gels bend - ing near the earth, to touch their harps of gold:  
 and still their heaven-ly mu - sic floats o'er all the wea - ry world:  
 be - neath the heaven-ly hymn have rolled two thou-sand years of wrong;  
 who toil a - long the climb-ing way with pain - ful steps and slow,  
 when with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

# 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.

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.

# 105 People, Look East

1 Peo - ple, look east. The time is near of the  
 2 Fur - rows, be glad. Though earth is bare, one more  
 3 Birds, though you long have ceased to build, guard the  
 4 Stars, keep the watch. When night is dim one more  
 5 An - gels, an-nounce with shouts of mirth Christ who

crown - ing of the year. Make your house fair as you are  
 seed is plant - ed there. Give up your strength the seed to  
 nest that must be filled. E - ven the hour when wings are  
 light the bowl shall brim, shin - ing be - yond the frost - y  
 brings new life to earth. Set ev - ery peak and val - ley

Peo - ple, look

a - ble; trim the hearth and set the ta - ble.  
 nour - ish, that in course the flower may flour - ish.  
 fro - zen God for fledg - ing time has cho - sen.  
 weath - er, bright as sun and moon to - geth - er.  
 hum - ming with the word, the Lord is com - ing.

This text was written to provide a new Advent text for an existing carol tune, here named for the city in eastern France where it originated. The author has imaginatively expressed the cosmic implications of Christ's coming by addressing each stanza to a part of creation.

JESUS CHRIST: ADVENT

east and sing to - day:



Peo-ple, look east:

Love, the Guest, is on the way.  
Love, the Rose, is on the way.  
Love, the Bird, is on the way.  
Love, the Star, is on the way.  
Love, the Lord, is on the way.

Peo-ple, look east:

(Love is on the way.)



# 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.