

1st Sunday of Advent



November 28, 2021 at 10:30 a.m.

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or on our church website at westminsterakron.org

Welcome Reverend Tom Ulrich and the Congregation of New Covenant Community Church!

Throughout the Advent season the congregations of New Covenant Community Church and Westminster Presbyterian Church are coming together to share the gifts of New Covenant's Pastor, The Reverend Tom Ulrich, and Westminster's Music Ministry under the direction of Interim Music Director and Organist, Bob Carlyon. Members and Elders of both congregations will participate in lighting the Advent candles during Sunday worship services and the lighting of congregational candles for the traditional singing of Silent Night on Christmas Eve.

Beginning today, each Sunday following worship, refreshments will be served in the Fellowship Hall. Please spread the word of Peace, Joy and Love this holiday season as these neighboring churches celebrate the birth of Christ together.

COME

At the ringing of the chimes please silence your conversations and prepare your hearts and minds for an encounter with the Living God. We also ask that you power off your cell phones to prevent interference with our live-streaming and recording equipment.

Bolded text is read or sung by all.

**Please rise in body or spirit.*

Voluntary There is a Happy Land George Shearing
Mason Meyer, guest organist

*Call to Worship Marcia Holcomb

Leader: During this season of Advent, let us prepare to see God's vision of what is yet to be, and to hear God's voice calling anew.

People: Let us prepare a way for the God who breaks down old barriers and builds a new world.

Leader: During Advent, we seek new revelations of God's presence in our world.

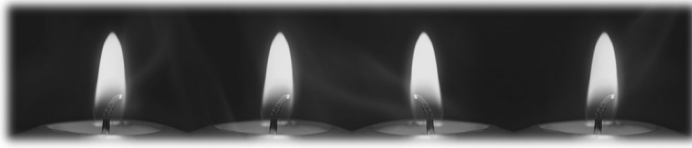
People: Let us embody Advent's hope through the forgiveness which can heal a broken heart, and in the joy which can shatter our despair.

Leader: Let us prepare our hearts to welcome the One who leads us in the ways of peace, truth, and love.

People: Let us prepare a way for the One who brings salvation to the world.

*Hymn #1 Come, Thou Long-Expected Jesus STUTTGART

Lighting of the Advent Candle



Cathy King & Nancy Clem

Reader 1: As we anticipate the One who is the Light of the world, we light this candle of hope.

Reader 2: In this place the candle of hope shines to remind us that the darkness of despair will not win.

Reader 1: This candle invites us to open the doors of hope more widely.

Reader 2: May the light of this candle lead us to build a world of hope with more bridges than walls.

Reader 1: Amid the candle's glow, we hope for a world where all people are nourished and fed.

Reader 2: In this place, at this moment, God illumines us with the light of Advent hope so that we may see all people as our sisters and brothers and seek to live in solidarity with them.

All: God of hope, as we wait for a future now hidden from view, shine on us with Your advent light and guide the paths of all Your people to the new horizons that You are preparing for us, so that we may offer Your hope to the world, in the name of the One who is to come. Amen.

ENCOUNTER

Call to Confession

During the season of Advent, we anticipate the Light of God, because we have a propensity to live in darkness; and during the season of Advent, we yearn for the love of God, because we are often torn apart by division and discord. Let us therefore come together as a community of faith to admit our faults and failures, and to confess our sins and shortcomings. Let us pray together:

Prayer of Confession

God of all times and places, during this Advent season we await and prepare for Your coming to us. Yet we confess that when You have come to us as a stranger in need, we have often turned away. When You have appeared through the truth that makes us uncomfortable, we have refused to listen. Forgive us, Lord, and open our eyes and ears to Your presence among us. Grant that we may continue to look for signs of hope that You offer to the world, and enable us to embrace the wisdom of Your way that is revealed through Jesus Christ, the promised Messiah, in whose name we pray.

Silence is observed.

Response 574

Lord, Have Mercy

Kyrie

Lord, have mercy upon us. Christ, have mercy upon us. Lord, have mercy upon us.

Assurance of Forgiveness

Leader: As we await the revealing of our Lord Jesus Christ, God will strengthen us to the end, so that you may be blameless on the day of our Lord Jesus Christ.

People: God is faithful, and God has called us into the fellowship of his Son, Jesus Christ our Lord.

Leader: Friends, believe the good news of the gospel:

People: Through the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ, we are forgiven!

*Response #23, Refrain**

GLORIA

Gloria in Excelsis Deo

*Passing the Peace

Greet both friends and strangers saying,

The peace of Christ be with you.

During this time of pandemic, a nod of the head and wave of the hand will suffice.

Time for Church Life and Call for the Offering

Those of us who have been blessed through the light of Jesus Christ are also called to share that light with all humanity. Through our offerings, we shine the Light of the world with the world as the dark corners of human need are brightened through the ministry of our Lord. Let us now seek to become bearers of the light of Jesus Christ as we share gifts, our tithes, and our offerings with Christ's church.

Offering plates may be found as you exit the sanctuary.

Offertory

The Truth from Above

traditional English

Adapted by Michael Larkin - *Paul Stewart*, soloist

This is the truth sent from above, the truth of God, the God of love; therefore don't turn me from your door, but hearken all both rich and poor. The first thing which I will relate is that God did man create; the next thing which to you I'll tell - woman was made with man to dwell. Then after this 'twas God's own choice to place them both in paradise, there to remain from evil free, except they ate of such a tree. And they did eat, which was a sin, and thus their ruin did begin - ruined themselves, both you and me, and all of their posterity. Thus we were heirs to endless woes till God the Lord did interpose; and so a promise soon did run; that he would redeem us by his son.

*Response 592 Praise God from Whom All Blessings Flow *Doxology*
Praise God, from whom all blessings flow; Praise God all creatures here below; Praise God above, ye heavenly hosts; Praise Father, Son, and Holy Ghost. Amen.

Time with Young Disciples

Margo Works

Following the Time with Young Disciples, children are invited to remain with their families, participate in the children's K-5 choir rehearsal in room 207 or visit with our childcare staff in the nursery.

GROW

Prayer for Illumination

Almighty God, do not allow us to hear these words from Scripture without also being changed by them. Enable Your word to pierce our hearts, so that we may be instructed, informed, guided, and directed by the truth You set before us, through Jesus Christ the promised Messiah. Amen.

The First Lesson

Psalm 25:4-10

Old Testament

4 Make me to know your ways, O Lord; teach me your paths.

5 Lead me in your truth, and teach me, for you are the God of my salvation; for you I wait all day long.

6 Be mindful of your mercy, O Lord, and of your steadfast love, for they have been from of old.

7 Do not remember the sins of my youth or my transgressions; according to your steadfast love remember me, for your goodness' sake, O Lord!

8 Good and upright is the Lord; therefore he instructs sinners in the way.

9 He leads the humble in what is right, and teaches the humble his way.

10 All the paths of the Lord are steadfast love and faithfulness, for those who keep his covenant and his decrees.

Hymn #5

Let All Mortal Flesh Keep Silence

PICARDY

The Second Lesson

Jeremiah 33:12-16

Old Testament

12 Thus says the Lord of hosts: In this place that is waste, without human beings or animals, and in all its towns there shall again be pasture for shepherds resting their flocks.

13 In the towns of the hill country, of the Shephelah, and of the Negeb, in the land of Benjamin, the places around Jerusalem, and in the towns of Judah, flocks shall again pass under the hands of the one who counts them, says the Lord.

14 The days are surely coming, says the Lord, when I will fulfill the promise I made to the house of Israel and the house of Judah.

15 In those days and at that time I will cause a righteous Branch to spring up for David; and he shall execute justice and righteousness in the land.

16 In those days Judah will be saved and Jerusalem will live in safety. And this is the name by which it will be called: "The Lord is our righteousness."

This is the Word of the Lord. **Thanks be to God!**

Sermon

Branches of Hope

The Reverend Tom Ulrich

SERVE

*Affirmation of Faith

from A Brief Statement of Faith

We trust in Jesus Christ, fully human, fully God.

Jesus proclaimed the reign of God: preaching good news to the poor and release to the captives, teaching by word and deed and blessing the children, healing the sick and binding up the brokenhearted, eating with outcasts, forgiving sinners, and calling all to repent and believe the gospel. With believers in every time and place, we rejoice that nothing in life or in death can separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord. Glory be to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit. Amen.

Prayers of the People

Holy God, not only do Your prophets call us to look forward to the dawn of a new day but You continue to reveal Yourself in the world at unexpected times and in unexpected places. As we anticipate the One who brings peace and justice to humanity, we pray that You would help us to live in the expectation of the promises You have given us to bring about a new heaven and a new earth. Grant that the One who is the Righteous Branch would not only raise up signposts of Your new reality, but would also fortify us as we seek to bring in Your glorious reign of

peace. Come among us to reveal the quality of life that You desire for all humanity through acts of mercy, giving, and forgiving.

O God of the Coming One, enable us to heed the words of the prophets as we await the new reality that is fashioned by the Messiah. Transform our neglect of the truth into a commitment to the gospel; overcome our tolerance of hypocrisy with an insistence on sincerity; and eliminate the darkness of indifference with the light of Your love. Empower us to participate in the new world that You are crafting, and strengthen us to pursue Your possibilities for peace on earth and good will to all people. Help us to see Your vision of what is yet to be; grant that we may hear Your voice calling anew; and inspire us to join You in breaking down old barriers and building a new world as we prepare a way for the One who is to come, Jesus Christ our Lord, who taught His disciples, when praying, to say together:

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.

*Hymn #10 On Jordan's Bank the Baptist's Cry WINCHESTER NEW

*Charge and Benediction

As the light of the Advent candle of hope shines among us,
may the God of hope go with us every day,
filling all our lives with love and joy and peace.
May the God of justice speed us on our way,
so that we may share light and hope to every land and race.
So, let us work for peace, and let us share our joy with all,
as we work for a world that's new,
remaining faithful when we hear Christ's call.
And may the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God the Father,
and the communion of the Holy Spirit be with you and all those whom
you love, this day and forevermore. Amen

Voluntary

Now Thank We All Our God

Sigfrid Karg-Elert

**** This response takes the place of the *Gloria Patri* during Advent.**

Our USHERS Today are Donna Gorrington, Dan Gorrington, Bob Leonard, Don Rearick, and Dave Stobbs (head usher).

Greeters from New Covenant Community Church Today are Hal Horton, Jackie Horton, Marty Pastor, Jim Strandberg.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

Mason Meyer

Mason is a born and raised Akronite who at a young age became interested in the organ, liturgical music, and classical music. His family encouraged lessons, and he has been hooked ever since. Although not professionally trained, Mason plays as a regular substitute organist for a number of churches throughout northeast Ohio. He continues his studies with Organist/Choirmaster Daniel Fortune at St. Paul's Episcopal in Akron. His wife, Megan, is a trained soprano and teaches Choir at Firestone High School. Mason is the Senior VP/Director of Sales at the Rubber City Radio Group in Akron.

The Flowers in the Chancel are given by Marcia Holcomb and family in gratitude for God's many blessings and in loving memory of John Holcomb.

Children's Pageant will be presented during worship on December 12. We will be bringing forth gifts for the Summit County Children's Services Holiday Toy Room Program. Costumes will be distributed today, Sunday, November 28, 2021 after the worship service.

There is no Adult Choir today, Sunday, November 28, 2021.

WPC Giving Tree Once again, we will have the annual Giving Tree available to receive your donations of scarves, mittens, hats, and gloves. These will be taken to ACCESS Inc. a shelter for homeless women and children. The tree will be available until December 31. Please donate freely.

Members of Our Congregation Please remember to wear your name tag.

Handicap Persons from New Covenant Community Church
The entrance on the side of the church and the limited handicap parking (next to the playground) are available to you.

Calendar of Church Events for the week of November 28 to December 4, 2021

Sunday, 11/28

9:15 am Nursery Opens

9:30 am Sunday School

9:30 am Parenting Group

10:30 am Worship Service in Sanctuary & on YouTube Livestream
Children's Choir in the Choir Room

11:30 am Children Pick up Pageant Costumes in Education Wing

4:00 pm Children's Christmas Pageant Rehearsal & Advent Family
Movie in Youth Room

Tuesday, 11/30

2:30 pm Adult Bell Choir Rehearsal in the Chancel

Thursday, 12/2

9:30 am WPC Staff Meeting in the Library

7:00 pm Adult Ed Zoom Meeting

Saturday, 12/4

9:30 am Food For Life in the Kitchen

For the most recent CDC guidance, we encourage you to visit:
<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/vaccines/fully-vaccinated-guidance.html>

Westminster's policy presently includes the following:

- Masks are now optional for all vaccinated adults. Unvaccinated adults are asked to continue masking.
- Masks are also optional for children and youth of every age, whether they have been vaccinated or not. This is at the discretion of the parent or guardian of the child or youth.
- For the protection of our children, all nursery workers are fully vaccinated and wearing masks.
- Solos and congregational singing will continue both with and without masks.
- We will continue to observe social distancing measures, and the ushers will assist worshippers with seating in the sanctuary. The pews where worshippers are asked to sit are marked with a green sticker. If you would prefer to sit at a greater distance from others, please inform an usher who can guide you to a place where you will feel more comfortable.
- We have returned hymnals, Bibles, and giving envelopes to pews with green stickers. Offering trays and fellowship pads will not be passed at this time. Offering trays may be found at the entrance to the worship space.
- Livestreaming services will continue on YouTube.

Giving Online During these difficult times, the church remains grateful for your faithful support. To give electronically on the WPC website click under the tab "online giving" and use this QR Code.



Staff Schedule in the Office:

Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday
Claudine Schooley		Claudine Schooley	Claudine Schooley	Claudine Schooley
WPC Church Office wpcoffice1250@gmail.com				
	Margo Works	Margo Works	Margo Works	
Director of Children, Family, and Youth wpcchildren1250@gmail.com				
	Bob Carlyon	Bob Carlyon	Bob Carlyon	
Music Director/Organist wpcmusicdir1250@gmail.com				
Denise Hochevar	Denise Hochevar	Denise Hochevar	Denise Hochevar	
WPC Church Finance wpcfinance1250@gmail.com				
Dave Bodnar	Dave Bodnar	Dave Bodnar	Dave Bodnar	
Daytime Custodian wpcbuilding@gmail.com				

Other Staff:

Val Stewart, Director of Children's Choir wpcchildrenschoir1250@gmail.com

Bruce Klucharich, Audio-Visual Technician

Traci Range, Director of Childcare wpcchildcare1250@gmail.com

Volunteers:

Kristy Yates, Director of Adult Bell Choir

Shelley Koutnik, Head of Staff

The Church Office is open from 9:00 a.m. to 2:00 p.m., Monday - Friday.



Westminster Presbyterian Church

come encounter grow serve

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