

First Sunday After Christmas



December 26, 2021 at 10:30 a.m.

Follow us also on



or on our church website at westminsterakron.org

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

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 Dance Prelude on “Bring a Torch, Jeanette Isabella”
Christopher Uehlein

*Call to Worship

Leader: As we celebrate this season of Christmas, may God’s Word startle us with the truth we did not see.

People: May God’s grace fill us with the newness we did not anticipate.

Leader: May God’s care embrace us with the love we did not deserve.

People: May God’s hope surprise us with the joy we had not known.

Leader: May God’s peace inspire us with the faith we had not experienced.

People: Let us join with the angels from their realms of glory and worship the Child born in the manger.

*Hymn #22 Angels, from the Realms of Glory REGENT SQUARE

ENCOUNTER

Call to Confession

Although the Light of life has been born among us, many of us often close our eyes to the wonders of God’s grace. We choose to live by fear rather than faith, and we embrace the world’s ways rather than God’s wisdom. So, trusting in God’s mercy that enables us to begin anew, let us now

make our confession to God, so that God will remove the dull sheen of what is wrong, and allow the glory of God's light to shine upon us. Let us pray together:

Prayer of Confession

Almighty God, even as we celebrate the wonder of Christmas, we often remain blind to the vision of a renewed world. We are sinful and foolish creatures who even on our brightest days fail in faith, hope, and love. Although we are not worthy of Your saving deeds, we pray that in Your mercy You would forgive us, so that we may be renewed through the love You have given to us in Jesus Christ our Lord, 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 (adapted from Galatians 4:4)

Leader: When the fullness of time had come, God sent the Son, born of a woman, and born under the law.

People: God sent the Son in order to redeem those who were under the law, so that we might receive adoption as God's children.

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

God's love for us was expressed in the person of Jesus Christ — the One who can bring Joy to the World. And we can share the joy of God's love for all people in a variety of ways, including the sharing of our material possessions and the offering of our lives to God. By offering our resources, we reflect God's light with our congregation. By offering our gifts, we share God's word with our community. By offering ourselves, we share God's love with the world. Let us therefore use this opportunity to respond to the joy we receive through Jesus Christ by the sharing of our gifts, our talents, and our lives.

Offertory - Hymn #25

Away in a Manger

MUELLER

Offering plates may be found as you exit the sanctuary.

*Response (tune: Regent Square, *Angels from the Realms of Glory*)

**Gratefully in adoration we praise our dear Savior's birth
whose divine illumination shines God's love through all the
earth. Here we share our gifts and talents worshiping the
newborn King.** *lyrics by Tom Ulrich*

GROW

Prayer for Illumination

Almighty and gracious God, having made the journey to Bethlehem, grant that our lives will be changed because of the Child we have met in the manger. Speak to us this morning through the words of Scripture, so that we would reflect Your light in every place where darkness reigns . . . and illumine us with Your truth, so that we would follow You into the world and contribute to Your kingdom in all that we do, for we ask these things in the name of Jesus Christ our living Lord. Amen.

The First Lesson

John 1:1-5

New Testament

1 In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.

2 He was in the beginning with God.

3 All things came into being through him, and without him not one thing came into being. What has come into being

4 in him was life, and the life was the light of all people.

5 The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness did not overcome it.

Hymn #31 (verse 1)	Hark, The Herald Angels Sing	MENDELSSOHN
--------------------	------------------------------	-------------

An Interpretative Word	Rainer Maria Rilke
------------------------	--------------------

God speaks to each of us as he makes us, then walks with us silently out of the night. These are the words we dimly hear: You, sent out beyond your recall, go to the limits of your longing. Embody me.

Flare up like flame and make big shadows I can move in.

Let everything happen to you: beauty and terror. Just keep going. No feeling is final. Don't let yourself lose me. Nearby is the country they call life.

You will know it by its seriousness. Give me your hand.

Hymn #31 (verse 2)	Hark, The Herald Angels Sing	MENDELSSOHN
--------------------	------------------------------	-------------

The Second Lesson	John 1:9-14	New Testament
-------------------	-------------	---------------

9 The true light, which enlightens everyone, was coming into the world.

10 He was in the world, and the world came into being through him; yet the world did not know him.

11 He came to what was his own, and his own people did not accept him.

12 But to all who received him, who believed in his name, he gave power to become children of God,

13 who were born, not of blood or of the will of the flesh or of the will of man, but of God.

14 And the Word became flesh and lived among us, and we have seen his glory, the glory as of a father's only son, full of grace and truth.

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

Hymn #31 (verse 3)	Hark, The Herald Angels Sing	MENDELSSOHN
--------------------	------------------------------	-------------

The Word, for our sake, became poverty clothed as the poor who live off the refuse heap. The Word, for our sake, became a sob a thousand times stifled in the immovable mouth of the child who died from hunger.

The Word, for our sake, became danger in the anguish of the mother who worries about her child growing into adulthood.

The Word cut us deeply in that place of shame: the painful reality of the poor. The Word blew its spirit over the dried bones of the churches, guardians of silence. The Word awoke us from the lethargy which had robbed us of our hope.

The Word became a path in the jungle, a decision on the farm, love in women, unity among workers, and a Star for those few who can inspire dreams.

The Word became Light, The Word became History, The Word became Conflict, The Word became indomitable Spirit, and sowed its seeds upon the mountain, near the river and in the valley, and *those of good will heard the angels sing.*

Tired knees were strengthened, trembling hands were stilled, and the people who wandered in darkness saw the *light...*

The Word became *the seed-of-justice and we conceived peace...*

The Word made *justice to rain and peace came forth from the furrows in the land. Grace and Truth celebrated together in the laughter of the children rescued by life. And the Word shall continue sowing futures in the furrows of Hope.*

And we saw its *glory in the eyes of the poor transformed into real men and women. And those who saw the Star opened up for us the path we now follow.*

*Hymn #44

O Little Town of Bethlehem

ST. LOUIS

Sermon

Light and Life to All He Brings The Reverend Tom Ulrich

SERVE

Hymn #28

Good Christian Friends, Rejoice

IN DULCI JUBILO

We are called to proclaim the truth... and let us believe: It is not true that we can be indifferent to humanity and creation. This is true: Jesus has come that we may have life and have it in abundance. It is not true that we must accept inhumanity and discrimination, hunger and poverty, hurt and destruction.

This is true: the Coming One will bring justice and equity, and there will be no more pain or destruction.

It is not true that violence and hatred should have the last word, and that war has come to stay forever.

This is true: a Child is born for us, and His authority shall grow continually, and there shall be endless peace. It is not true that hopelessness, disunity, and chaos are meant for this earth and for this history.

This is true: the wolf shall live with the lamb, the calf and the lion shall dwell together, and a little Child shall lead them, and no one will hurt or destroy anywhere in God's realm, for the earth will be full of the knowledge of the Lord.

Prayers of the People and The Lord's Prayer

Glorious God of new beginnings, like a faithful shepherd, You have gathered us from mountain and valley, from country and city, and from different plights and places . . . and as we celebrate Christ's birth, grant that we may learn from Him about the sanctity of human love, and help us to embrace the truths that He teaches us, so that we may live in peace with all people and share the abundant life that You offer to us. Through Your illumination open our eyes to Your salvation, so that we may be inspired through the wonder of growth, the joy of service, the splendor of beauty . . . and utilize us as a light for Your revelation, so that all people may experience Your grace and glory. Enable us to share the good news that was revealed through the Christ Child . . . and as we reside at the cusp of a new year, grant that You would be the center of our heart's devotion, and Your wisdom would serve as the goal for every questing mind.

As we seek to be faithful to our calling, lead us into the kingdom waiting for us. Strengthen us to walk upon the path of justice . . . season our

language to speak words of love . . . and inspire us to live in unity with the earth. Fill the world with compassion . . . utilize our actions to demonstrate the good news of Your reconciling love . . . and awaken in all of us the new hope and new life that are revealed in Jesus Christ our Savior and our Lord, and the One 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 #40

Joy to the World!

ANTIOCH

*Charge and Benediction

May the One who is the Wonderful Counselor fill you with wisdom.

May the Mighty God empower you with strength for service.

May the Everlasting Father embrace you with love to be shared.

And may the Prince of peace surround you with peace, now and forevermore. Amen.

Voluntary

IN DULCI JUBILO

J. S. Bach



ANNOUNCEMENTS

Poinsettias/Flowers Memorials for Christmas Poinsettia donors please pick up a poinsettia plant after worship today.

February/March Script Please have your articles and pictures ready to be send to wpcoffice1250@gmail.com on Tuesday, January 11, 2022.

Stewardship Seventy four households have pledged \$241,848 towards our 2022 operating budget. There are still many people whose pledges have not reached our church office. We encourage you to bring your pledge to church, mail it to the office or pledge online. We urge everyone to be part of this year's Stewardship Program. Please make your commitment to our church and ministries today. Thank you to all who participate.

Let's Talk Taxes Just a reminder that your year-end gifts must be physically delivered to the Finance Office or postmarked on or before December 31, 2021 to be included on your 2021 giving statement. We follow this policy to be in compliance with IRS regulations regarding tax deductions allowable in a specific year. The church offices will be closed Friday, December 31 and Monday, January 3. Contributions received during worship on January 2 will be included on your 2022 giving statement. Thank you for your generous support of Westminster Presbyterian Church during 2021.

Taking down the Greens Thank you to all who participated in the Hanging of the Greens. Just as we needed help to put up the greens, we will need help taking them down. Please stay following Worship on January 2, your assistance is greatly appreciated!

Please dispose of your used masks in the trash receptacles located in the narthex and Wright-Herberich Hall.

Calendar of Church Events week of December 26, 2021 to January 3, 2022

Sunday, 12/26

10:15 am Nursery Opens

10:30 am Worship Service in Sanctuary & on YouTube Livestream

Monday, 12/27 Church Offices will be closed

Tuesday, 12/28 and Wednesday, 12/29

No Church Events

Thursday, 12/30

9:30 am WPC Staff Meeting in the Library

Friday, 12/31 Church Offices will be closed

Saturday, 1/1, 2022 - Happy New Year 2022!

Sunday, 1/2, 2022

10:15 am Nursery Opens

10:30 am Worship Service in Sanctuary & on YouTube Livestream

The Reverend Dr. Sandy Selby Preaching

First Sunday Food Collection

Monday, 1/3, 2022 Church Offices will be closed



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 wpchildren1250@gmail.com				
	Bob Carlyon	Bob Carlyon	Bob Carlyon	
Music Director/Organist wpcmusicdir1250@gmail.com				
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

Laurel Labbe, Youth Music llabbe@roadrunner.com

Traci Range, Director of Childcare wpcchildcare1250@gmail.com

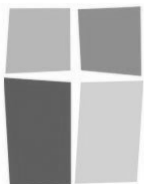
Bruce Klucharich, Audio-Visual Technician

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

1250 W Exchange • Akron, Ohio • westminsterakron.org • 330-836-2226