

WESTMINSTER PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH



THE THIRD SUNDAY OF ADVENT BLUE CHRISTMAS

DECEMBER 17, 2023

9:00 a.m.

ORDER OF WORSHIP

GATHERING

*Please greet each other warmly as the congregation gathers for worship.
Take a moment and sign the friendship register.*

WELCOME AND ANNOUNCEMENTS

◆ LIGHTING THE CANDLE OF JOY

Ginger Greene, Izzy Justice, and Laura Nunn

One: In a world where we often seek personal happiness,
Advent beckons us to a deeper expression of our faith in Christ.

All: For the Lord our God is with us both now and forevermore.

One: Advent beckons us to remember God's unconditional love,
even when we stumble.

All: For the Lord our God is with us both now and forevermore.

One: Advent beckons us to remember God's invitation
to the human heart to be still in the face of strife.

All: For the Lord our God is with us both now and forevermore.

One: Advent beckons us to remember we always have hope,
even when it seems as if our world is caving in around us.

All: For the Lord our God is with us both now and forevermore.

◆ PRAYER (UNISON)

Gracious God, in a world where the message is "be happy," we are reminded that only you grant the gift of true joy. This morning let us hear again with joyful hearts and proclaim with elated voices the wondrous refrain of your coming. "The Lord, our God, is with us both now and forevermore." We pray this in the name of Christ, our Savior. Amen.

◆ ADVENT SONG NO. 88

O Come, O Come, Emmanuel
(verses 1, 4, 5, 6)

◆ PRAYER OF CONFESSION

One: Dear Lord, we come to you this day to express our failures and confusion regarding our relationship with you.

All: You know that we come to you with heavy hearts that we find hard to unburden. It is particularly difficult in this time of year when the darkness of the long night collides with the brilliance of Christmas lights. We find it hard to express our losses.

One: We may be confused, sad, lonely, and feeling our losses without remembering that you are always there to support us. We tend even toward anger at you, Lord, because we feel in some way it is your will that we are unhappy. Sometimes we feel cut off from you because we allow our many hurts to engulf us. We lack trust in you.

All: Open us to the understanding that you are the source of all love and we need not feel so alone in our grief. Grant us wisdom to know that you— most of all—can be trusted and that you are with us, especially when we are at our absolute worst. Lead us in your truth, and teach us your paths, for you are our hope and the God of our salvation. Amen

◆ MOMENTS OF SILENCE

◆ ASSURANCE OF GOD'S GRACE

◆ SONG OF RESPONSE

He Came Down

He came down that we may have peace;
He came down that we may have peace;
He came down that we may have peace;
Hallelujah forevermore.

◆ SHARING CHRIST'S PEACE

One: The peace of Christ be with you.
All: And also with you.

THE WORD

TIME FOR CHILDREN TO SHINE

Claire Winkles

SCRIPTURE LESSON

Ruth 1:1-22

PEW BIBLE O.T. PAGE 241

SERMON

Gospel in the Family Tree: Ruth

RESPONDING TO THE WORD

◆ HYMN OF RESPONSE NO. 123 It Come Upon the Midnight Clear

INTERCESSION FOR HEALING

One: The God of strength moves within us;

All: **The God of courage hears our distress.**

One: The God of hope reveals wholeness to us;

All: **The God of healing touches us when we are broken.**

One: When the pain overwhelms us, when the burden is too heavy,

All: **We turn to our God, who is sustaining and redeeming.**

One: When there is loneliness, when there is isolation,

All: **We turn to our God, who is loving and present.**

One: For God created us, redeemed us and sustains us,

All: **And we are not alone.**

One: Today, O Lord, we remember in prayer...*(intercessions continue)*

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**

THE LIGHTING OF THE CANDLES AND ANOINTING WITH OIL

You are invited to come forward and light a candle for yourself or a loved one. If you choose, you may then also be anointed with oil. This anointing on your forehead is a very old gesture used to signify strength on the journey of being healed and healing others. After people have returned to their seat, the following prayer will be offered.

All: God of mercy, hear our prayer in this Advent season for ourselves, and for our families and friends who live with the struggles of illness and the pain of loss. We ask for strength for today, courage for tomorrow, and peace for the past. We ask these things in the name of Christ, who shares our life in joy and sorrow, death and new birth, despair and promise. Amen.

◆ SONG NO. 121

O Little Town of Bethlehem

SENDING OUT

◆ BLESSING AND RESPONSE

We sing together: He came down that we may have peace;
He came down that we may have peace;
He came down that we may have peace;
Hallelujah forevermore.

◆ Please stand, if able

LEADING THE SERVICE TODAY

Daniel Smoak, Pastor; Lissa Long, Pastor; Nancy Parrish, Music;

Ushers: George McAbee*, Mary McAbee, Graham Wade

11:00 am Livestream at www.wpccharleston.org, YouTube (Westminster Presbyterian Charleston)

You may also listen to the weekly sermon by utilizing *Sermon By Phone* and calling 843-252-0146.

The Season of Advent

ADVENT is the Latin word for “coming.” For Christians it refers to the church season that prepares for the coming of Jesus Christ as God in human flesh – the incarnation. We celebrate his humble birth, his coming to us now, and his coming again in glory at the end of time.

The round shape of the Advent Wreath is a symbol of God's never-ending love for us. The evergreens represent everlasting life, and the purple candles are for him who comes royally as King of kings and Lord of lords. The pink candle is for the joy of the season, and in the center of the wreath is the white Christ candle lit on Christmas Eve. In the ancient world, various peoples lit fires to mark the turning of the light into winter's season and to pray for the return of the light. To us, these candles are signs of the growing light of Christ who is coming again in all fullness into the darkness of our world. Until the dawning of that Great Day, we watch and wait in Holy Spirit for Christ's coming into the darkness of our world, lighting candles of hope, peace, joy, and love; and remembering the promises of God with prayer.

The Christmas tree is adorned with lights and Chrismons. Lights remind us that Jesus is the light of the world. Chrismons are symbols that illustrate aspects of the Christian faith.

WELCOME TO WORSHIP! LET US KNOW YOU'RE HERE.

Please take a moment to sign and pass the Friendship Register in the pews. There is a virtual option for those who are worshipping online. Simply scan the QR code with your smartphone camera to open or find on our website under the Quick Links, Virtual Friendship Register. Want to get involved? Fill out and return a "Using Your Gifts" form in the Friendship Register.



LET'S GET TO KNOW EACH OTHER!

Name tags are available on the name tag cart in the Narthex. Please find yours and wear it on Sunday mornings, returning it before you leave. If yours is missing, please use a sticky badge and put your name on the 'I need a name tag' form.

IS GOD CALLING YOU TO JOIN THE WESTMINSTER FAMILY?

Here's how you can do it.

1. Fill out a New Member Form and put it in the offering plate in the narthex. Forms are available at the Hospitality Table in the narthex, or you may fill one out online under the visitor tab at wpccharleston.org or using the QR code.
2. One of our pastors or someone from the Membership Committee will quickly be in touch, providing an opportunity individually or with a group to learn more about the church.
3. On a Sunday morning, you'll attend a meeting with the Session for reception into membership. We'll handle paperwork if you're transferring from another church or arrange baptism if you've never been baptized.
4. That same Sunday morning, you'll be introduced to the congregation during worship. Questions? Speak with an usher or one of our pastors following the service.



WAYS TO GIVE TITHES AND OFFERINGS

Church Pew Envelope: Place cash or check in the Pew Envelope and drop it in the Offering Plate in the narthex. Online: Click the "Give Now" button in the top right of our homepage wpccharleston.org. Text: "charlestonwpc" to 73256. Thank you for giving.

PRAYER REQUEST?

Leave your written requests in the basket next to the main sanctuary doors. WPC staff will pray for your request at our weekly meeting and throughout the week.

JOIN US FOR SUNDAY SCHOOL! 10:00 - 10:45 ALL OVER CAMPUS

- Children 0-2 Nursery.
- Children 3K-K, 1-2nd, and 3rd-5th classes meet in the Christian Education Building.
- Youth 6th-8th and 9th-12th grades meet in Covenant Hall.
- Adult Class Offerings
- Anchor Class (Christian Education Building)-Bible Study through 6-8 week studies. Currently the group is using the book called Following Jesus.
- Cary Grayson Class (Covenant Hall-Room 4)-This class works through the scriptures by chapter and verse!
- Jesus in the Gospel (Parlor/Admin. building) Book study utilizing the book Having Nothing, Possessing Everything by Michael Mather.

GROUNDS PROJECTS

Two campus projects (tree work and repair/reseal/restripe asphalt) of the front parkway will be done Monday December 18th through 21st. During this time the right entrance and left exit will be barricaded. Vehicles, Food Pantry recipients and delivery trucks will be re-routed to the front entrance facing Sam Rittenberg. Staff and visitors may park on the side by Vivient Healthcare, or continue around the back of the property and park by the kitchen. Any groups meeting on campus during this time will be notified and instructed on alternate parking. Point of contact is Carole Russell (843-442-5276).

2023 YEAR END GIVING

As we approach the end of the church's fiscal year, please be aware that the church books will close December 31, 2023. In order to be recorded for 2023 all contributions will need to be received by December 31. You can mail your check, bring to the church office, or take advantage of the safe and convenient online giving. Thank you for your faithful and generous support of the missions and ministry of Westminster. 2023 Giving Statements can be accessed through your online Realm account. If you need to have it printed for pick up or mailed, please contact the church office. If you have any questions or need any information, please don't hesitate to call Tommye Owen at 843-766-8311, ext 105 or finance@wpccharleston.org.

For online givers, please make sure to update your "giving fund" to 2024 pledge starting in January. That drop down will be available by 1/1/2024. This is particularly important if you have set up for automatic weekly or monthly giving.

PRESBYTERIAN WOMEN

Presbyterian Women are continuing with our women's undergarment ministry for the Leeds Avenue Detention Center. You can participate by donating a packet of white, regular briefs, in your own size so we get a variety of sizes for the Christmas collection. They can be dropped off at the church office until December 15. Questions? please contact Barbara Lundy at 843-607-2102.

GIFT OF WARMTH

Our mission partner, Mary Ford Early Childhood Center, is looking to help students keep warm on the playground. Needs include new or VERY gently used outer clothing (coats, sweaters, gloves, caps, and socks) sizes 2T-Children 8. Clothing can be dropped off in baskets located in the narthex. Thank you!

NEIGHBORS TOGETHER

Volunteer to help serve one of the hot meals during the week! We have a team who serves on the third Wednesday of the month, or you can register at www.neighborstogethersc.org. Email Jim Frye at fecr1@yahoo.com to receive emails about our regular Wednesday group.

FOOD PANTRY NEEDS

Soap bars, small toothpaste tubes, individually packaged toothbrushes, and deodorant

ADVENT DEVOTIONALS AND CALENDARS

Advent Calendars and devotionals are available in the Narthex. Devotional guides for your daily reading, a calendar for all ages with a question for journaling and/or discussion each day, and star stickers to help identify the days passing as we countdown to Christmas, celebrating the coming of Jesus.

ALTERNATIVE GIFT GIVING

When we think about what we are giving for Christmas, often we want to give something that is needed and celebrated. What if you could give gifts to your friends and family that you knew would do both? The WPC Alternative Gifts Catalogue will help you give gifts to WPC Mission Partners who have an established avenue for God's missional work in our community and in the world. Catalogues and cards to 'wrap' are available in the Narthex.

Make checks out to Westminster Presbyterian Church with "Alternative Gifts Fair" in the memo line and fill out the (enclosed) Order Form to make sure your monies get sent to the correct mission partner. You can mail or drop off checks and forms to the Church Office OR you can gift online! Visit wpccharleston.org and click "Give Now" in the top right. Simply choose "Alternative Gift Fair" under the FUND tab. Please identify Mission Support in the memo section. When you make your donation, gift note cards and envelopes will be made available to you to wrap and give to friends, family, co-workers and neighbors. Your gift will make a difference in someone's life.

ADVENT AND CHRISTMAS WORSHIP AT WESTMINSTER

December 24: The Fourth Sunday of Advent

10:00 Note the special time for morning worship! We'll gather together in the morning for the final service of Advent worship. One service only, no Sunday School.

December 24: Christmas Eve

3:00 & 5:00 Two options to attend a Service for Families with Young Children. We recreate the nativity with help from the congregation and all the children who wish to participate. Costumes provided; it's wiggly and wonderful.

7:00 Carols and Candlelight. A more reverent service with traditional carols, a sermon, and candle lighting.

December 31: The First Sunday of Christmas

9:00 & 11:00 Morning worship as we rejoice in the Savior's birth and look forward to the New Year. 10:00 Fellowship time in lieu of Sunday school.

THIS WEEK AT WESTMINSTER

Sunday, December 17

9:00 am Worship Service, Blue Christmas
10:00 am Sunday School
11:00 am Worship Service, Lessons and Carols
5:00 pm Mid-High Youth
6:00 pm Senior High Youth
6:00 pm Session Meeting
7:00 pm AA Meeting, Covenant Hall

Monday, December 18

8:00 am Tree and Asphalt paving projects begin

Tuesday, December 19

10:00 am Staff Meeting
7:00 pm Handbell rehearsal

Wednesday, December 20

7:00 pm Sanctuary Choir Rehearsal
7:00 pm AA Meeting, Covenant Hall

Thursday, December 21

1:00 pm Staff Christmas luncheon/ office closed

Friday, December 22

Saturday, December 23

Sunday, December 24

10:00 am Worship Service
3:00 pm Worship Service for Families with Young Children
5:00 pm Worship Service for Families with Young Children
7:00 pm Worship Service Carols and Candlelight

WESTMINSTER PRAYS

Cary Alexandre	Nikolai Fruth	Love Moody	Judy Tag
Joyce Aydlette	Harold Fountain	Roy Nickles	Bryan Thomas
Daryn Barker	Bruce Hamilton	Joe Nuchols	Towne Family
Mary Ashley Barbot	Judy Hatch	Gary Payne	Gloria Underhill
Gary Brooks	Megan Hatfield	Nancy Plowden	Dick Unger
Maryann Brown	Jennifer Holladay	Suzy Pitsey	Maryalice Vann
Brian Carolow	Rev. Chris Huff	Brayden Preus	Nancy Waller
Susie Cashion	Maurice Jackman	Monnie Privette	Lisa Wilcox
Lydia Crosby	Brenda Jonsson	Reed Family	Laura Wilson
Harper Croft	Mildred Kennerly	Charles Reeves	Robbie Yarnall
Sandi Daniels	David Kerr	Nita Rodemann	Robin Zemp
Martin Davis	Adam Kozel	Gloria Ricoma	
Rose Derrick	Fran Ligon	Kevin Ritzel	
Cynthia Ebigwei	Evan McMillian	Jim Seay	
Will Edwards	Frances McLean	Dave Stanton	
Bob Ferguson	John Martschink	Mark Stender	
Pat Finn	Mary Martschink	Ginger Stoke	
Edward Fitzgibbon	Christina Miller	Rachel Singletary	

PRAYER LIST UPDATED DECEMBER 2023

If you need to add or remove someone from the prayer list, please email Suzann at office@wpccharleston.org

College Student of the Week	Friend of the Week	Mission of the Week	Church Family
Izzy Justice PO Box 7207 2020 Alumni Drive Winthrop University Rock Hill, SC 29733	Pat Coggins 201 W. North Street Unit 93 Summerville, SC 29483	Boy Scout Troup 79	Greg and Kendall Ramsey -Jillian and Henry

WESTMINSTER SESSION MEMBERS AND COMMITTEES

Administration: Tom Whetstone and Matthew Patrick; **Buildings and Grounds:** Matt Teitsort and Randy Davis; **Christian Education:** Lindy Coleman and Laura Patrick; **Fellowship:** Jonathan Bazzle, Betsy McLaughlin, and Mike Niblock; **Finance:** Norman Hook and Chuck Towne; **Membership:** Beth Georgen and John Dounian; **Missions:** Dee Bee Wright and Mary McAbee; **Preschool:** Abbie Mobley; **Worship:** Allyn Bruce and Ashley Snider; **Clerk:** Carole Russell; **Assistant Clerk:** Lindy Coleman; **Treasurer:** Nancy Dixon; **Assistant Treasurer:** Patty Stokes

Westminster Presbyterian Church

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Rev. Dr. Daniel L. Smoak, Pastor, dsmoak@wpccharleston.org

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Tommye Owen, Financial Administrator finance@wpccharleston.org

Alicia Crosby, Preschool Director, preschool@wpccharleston.org

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