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Advent 2014

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The world has given back Advent and Christmas to the church. There is no room for the infant Jesus in Macy's nor for the Holy Family in Walmart. The media tell of no news of great joy which shall be to all people. The Saviour is left to the church.

And so on four Sundays we celebrate the approach of The Child. Here you will find not only a good mother and a poor father, an old man who cannot believe and an old woman who feels her child leap in her womb. Here you will find wonderful things!

So, welcome Advent in Westminster.

If you want to worship, come here.

If you need rest for your soul, come here.

If you would hear good news of great joy, come to
Westminster this Advent.

Jesus is here!

A LEAP of TRUST

Trust - noun.

1. Reliance on the integrity, strength, ability, surety, etc., of a person or thing; confidence.
2. Confident expectation of something; hope.

“We trust in Jesus Christ...” so opens the first article of A Brief Statement of Faith, from our denomination, The Presbyterian Church (USA). Those who are used to the Apostles’ Creed will notice that this faith statement uses “we” instead of “I” and “trust” instead of “believe.”

“Trust” has a different connotation than “believe.” We use the latter to mean that we intellectually agree to certain tenants of doctrine. It’s good to believe in God and to believe in people. May we continue to strive for belief in our faith journeys.

We use “trust” in many more ways in our daily lives. A trustee is someone we trust with a task or with a possession. To say we trust someone is to rely on them, as the definition indicates above. Trust is active and concrete. If we trust someone with our lives, we could not live without them.

In our faith lives, trust is something we continually cultivate. As soon as we release control of a prayer concern and trust God completely with the outcome, something else comes up we want to control. Again and again, we learn to trust God in everything.

What makes it hard for us to trust? For us followers of Christ, what’s the opposite of trust? Fear is the opposite of trust. Control is the opposite of trust. Greed is the opposite of trust. As with the manna in the wilderness, the Israelites could not gather more than their share for the day. They had to trust it would be there in the morning.

The second definition of trust above is “Confident expectation of something; hope.” May this be our mantra this Advent season as we wait for the coming of Christ. May we wait in “confident expectation” of God’s presence with us, trusting that Christ will indeed come, that he will indeed change the world and change our lives forever. ●





ADVENT FEST

Let's celebrate Advent together with an Advent Fest for all ages. The merriment begins right after worship on November 30th. Adults and youth can stay upstairs to help adorn the sanctuary for Advent. Downstairs in the Assembly Room, there will be children's activities and decorations, in addition to advent devotional materials for all ages. After we finish, everyone will gather in the Assembly Room for a pot-luck lunch. It's a chance for you to bring all your leftover turkey and dressing. Come one and all! ●

CHRISTMAS JOY OFFERING

The Christmas Joy Offering supports Presbyterian related racial ethnic schools and colleges and helps families of active and retired church workers in need through the Assistance Program of the Board of Pensions of the denomination. Envelopes for this offering will be in the pews during Advent. ●



Sunday, October 19, the congregation elected elders, deacons or trustees. Pictured in the center:

Back Row: Carolyn Smith and Nathan Powers, Deacons; Pete Seagle and John Bossung, Trustees.

Front Row: Sheila Wrede, Elder; Mary Green and Cindy Falle, Deacons; and Ruthanne Brod, Trustee.

Also elected left: Larry Volk, Deacon; and Felecia Gambles, Elder.

Also elected right: Valerie Shanley, Elder.



We are the
Church

SCHUYLER INN GIFTS & FOCUS

HOLIDAY PARTY AT SCHUYLER INN ON SATURDAY, DECEMBER 20:

Since Christmas 2004 Westminster helped to organize parties for residents at the Schuyler Inn in Menands.

Party plans for 2014 are underway. WPC's Santa and Mrs. Claus (John and Leah Bojnowski) have the date on their calendars. Paul Randall is planning songs to greet Santa. Margaret Randall and Allan Tedrow will distribute \$10 gift cards -- donated by Westminster members and others from the Community. Mary Jean Tedrow, Kris Wilhelm, and volunteers from the Zonta Club are planning special holiday crafts for the party.

What we need: gifts for the "free" shop for all current Schuyler residents -- family members in the emergency shelter program and low-income seniors who pay for room and board at Schuyler. Westminster members will be able on November 30 and December 7 to sign up to purchase practical gifts for families who move frequently and for seniors who have limited storage space. We are seeking donated \$10 gift cards, hats, scarves, mittens, socks, and a very simple additional present for each child and adult, one towel or small fleece blanket for each family, and at least one health product for each household (laundry detergent, bar of soap, shampoo, etc.). Free dental supplies and diapers for children will be part of the shop.

Members who prefer to let others do the shopping may write a check payable to Westminster Presbyterian Church, memo: Schuyler Inn. Checks and gift certificates should be left in the Church office. Donated gifts for Schuyler Inn families may be left in the Small Meeting Room between December 1 and December 15.

FOCUS

Westminster once more is hosting the FOCUS cold weather Breakfast Program. Hours of operation are 6:30 until 9:10 on Tuesday, Wednesday and Thursday. A key to its success is having an adequate corps of volunteers. If you are interested in helping out, contact Beth at 443-0460. ●

Celebrating THE Gift of Music

By Anne Older

“Celebrating the Gift of Music and 25 Years of Music Ministry” was held Sunday, November 9.

At 3:00 Alfred and Susan Fedak and their family presented a concert attended by more than 200 church members, friends, members of the American Guild of Organists and lovers of great music and art. The concert was followed by a reception and dinner at the Fort Orange Club. Alfred was on Time Warner television that evening. The Fedak family was assisted by members of Westminster in a committee chaired by Anne Older.

The celebration was to benefit the Performance Fund of the 1929 E.M. Skinner Organ. A front page article by Paul Grondahl in the Times Union told the story of the organ saved in 1976 by Dr. Thomas Older when it was installed in the Older home where it remained until they gave it back to Westminster twenty years later.

Al Fedak played the organ while Sue sang. Their son, Peter, composed a work performed by Al and was the narrator for another work. Their son, Ben, was the percussionist for the opening work and his wife, Anna, danced to an organ arrangement by Ferdinand Dunkley. A new composition, May Night, by Iteke Prins, was also presented.

In recent years, funding for concerts on this great instrument has diminished. Thanks to the more than \$14,000 raised by the event, the wider community will continue to hear the Skinner Organ of Westminster Church. ●



Shown at the left: At the concert on November 9 “Celebrating the Gift of Music and 25 Years of Music Ministry” The Fedak Family:
Ben, Anna, Sue, Al and Peter.

MUSIC IN DECEMBER

Musically speaking, this year's holiday season will be an especially rich one, highlighted by the following special events:

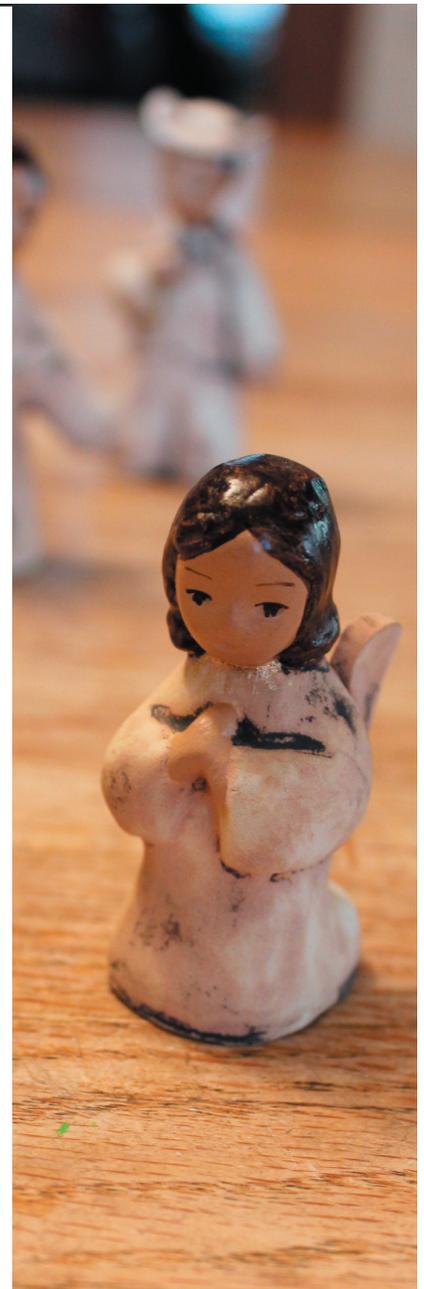
On **Sunday, December 7**, at 3:00 PM, the Festival Celebration Choir will perform its annual Christmas concert in Westminster's sanctuary. Led by their new director Philip Spaeth, and accompanied by Andrew Krystopolski, this large ecumenical choir draws its membership from over 30 area churches. The group has been in residence at Westminster since September, rehearsing here every Monday night. All are invited to attend their holiday concert.

Then on **Saturday evening, December 13**, the Capitol Chamber Artists will perform a program of music with a Jewish theme, in commemoration of the festival of Hanukkah, which starts three days later. The program will include works by Shostakovich, Prokofiev, Weinberg, and others. Performers will include violinist Mary Lou Saetta, cellist André O'Neil, pianist Aniko Szokody, and organist Al Fedak. Their 8:00 PM concert will be preceded by a 7:00 PM recital, and refreshments will be served at intermission. Admission is free for members and friends of Westminster.

The very next day, on **Sunday, December 14**, our Westminster Church Choir will present, during the morning worship service, a performance of the Magnificat by the baroque composer Dietrich Buxtehude. This highly decorative setting of the Song of Mary (as recorded in the first chapter of the gospel of Luke) is scored for five-part choir, string ensemble, and organ. The piece will be sung in its original Latin. Joining the choir will be violinists Ann-Marie Barker Schwartz and Kathryn Tomlin, and Garfield Moore, cellist.

Finally, of course, on **Christmas Eve**, the Westminster Choir will be joined by the Catskill Brass Quartet for a joyous celebration of Christ's birth. As in years past, a 30-minute concert of Christmas music for brass, organ, voices, and bells will precede the 8:00 PM communion service. The service will close with the singing of "Silent Night" by candlelight. Do plan to join us for all of these very special holiday observances. ●

Shown at the right: Al Fedak at the console of the 1929 E. M. Skinner organ of Westminster Church.



OUR PARTNERSHIP with GHANA

A FRUITFUL VISIT WITH OUR PARTNERS

Our four visitors are now safely back in Tema, Ghana. By the time they left on October 8, just about every Westminster member had a chance to meet them during their two weeks here, and many of us were able to spend time in conversation, planning and worship. Even if we didn't always get their full names, we knew them by their first names – Rev. Robert (Boyefio-Quartey), Ida (Kafui Nutsugah) and Georgina (Serwaa Amoako) from Greenwich Meridian Presbyterian Church; and Catechist Andrew (Kwashie Ashririe) from Redemption Presbyterian Church.

This visit established strong personal bonds with our members, and a consensus on how we will do both mission and worship together for the next year. More details are available, but briefly:

- Westminster will exchange prayers with our partner churches on a monthly basis. We will reserve World Communion Sunday as our Yearly Partnership Sunday.
- All three churches have agreed to support Barbara Asempa's not-for-profit working in the nearby Okushibri community, and to coordinate our work in this area. The first project is to build a new school building, and Westminster's \$4,700 contribution, raised partly from the recent African Family Night, has already stimulated enough other funding to build the building, which will get started soon. In the process, we have started a relationship with another partner, Seven Hills Global Outreach in Worcester, MA, which has been working with HOCAP for several years and focusing on micro lending to farmers in that community.
- A Westminster team is already forming for a summer 2015 visit to Tema. That team can be in communication with our Tema partners by email and Skype, and should form its own leadership this winter. An important question will be how this next visit can contribute to the projects in Okushibri in a meaningful way. If you are interested in joining this team, either as a traveler or to participate in any other way, please talk to any member of the Mission Committee, or to Gabriel Ofori-Okai or Belinda Quaye. ●

SESSION & TRUSTEES

A REPORT FROM SESSION:

Monthly Session minutes are posted for all in the Chestnut Street hallway.

Session has received eleven new members: James Josiah, Henry Kopplin, Zion Mendoza, Robert Quaye, Joseph Reisner, Emmanuel Tay, Christabel Abban, Yawa Anato, Eva Maneison, Theresa Oware and Anita Agyen.

We also approved the baptism of Morgan Patricia, daughter of Brian and Nicole Keough, and Eric and Benjamin Tengue, sons of Yawa Anato.

Session acted to approve Westminster as a More Light Church. The Echo cluster will bring a plan on how we can present ourselves as a welcoming congregation.

Session also approved a September fundraiser for the Ebola crisis as well as a book sale for mission initiated by Zach Rosenau.

The 2015 budget was adopted in October with expenses of \$752,418. A goals-based process is followed in the forming of our annual budget. In the effort to keep a balanced budget, all program areas received less funding than requested. However, any dollars that come in over our 2015 pledge goal will be committed to increased program funding. ●

TRUSTEES: PAST, PRESENT and FUTURE

One of our tasks it to keep the church building in repair, including changing the light bulbs! Recently, we have seen to the replacement of pew cushions, installed a Hearing Loop system and upgraded the computers.

At present, we are finishing the renovation of two bathrooms and replacement of the second floor carpet. The stair treads are now far more visible and safer. Sorry for the inconveniences and delays. What of the future? We have plans to refurbish the handicapped bathroom. We are studying needed repairs to the steeple and the water leakage through the north basement wall. And, we have made a wish list for improvements in every room in the building.

We hope to improve the bathroom and complete work on the basement wall in the near future. We also hope to repair the steeple and restore the balcony walls. Everything else on the wish list is still a dream. How much is actually accomplished depends on all of us, the people of Westminster. And, of course, we will keep an eye on those light bulbs! ●

GIVING

By Arthur Fullerton

GIVING AS AN ACT OF FAITH

As a community of faith, Westminster is an incredible place. We gather for worship, support each other with prayer and with acts of mercy. We live out - whether single or married - the traditional vows for richer or poorer, in sickness and health. In a world too often focused on what divides, Westminster focuses on what unites.

Last month, the Session presented the 2015 budget to the congregation. The budget sparked lots of conversation and concerns. Our pledge goal is \$215,00. In addition, we hope to finalize plans for a capital campaign to meet the critical needs of Westminster. We expect the campaign goal to exceed a million dollars.

The session has heard concerns about reductions in program budget items. We hope, if pledges exceed the \$215,000, to restore program. To reach a goal of \$233,000, would require additional pledges of about \$400 a week. If everyone gave an additional \$5.00 a week, we would be a long way to restoring these program cuts.

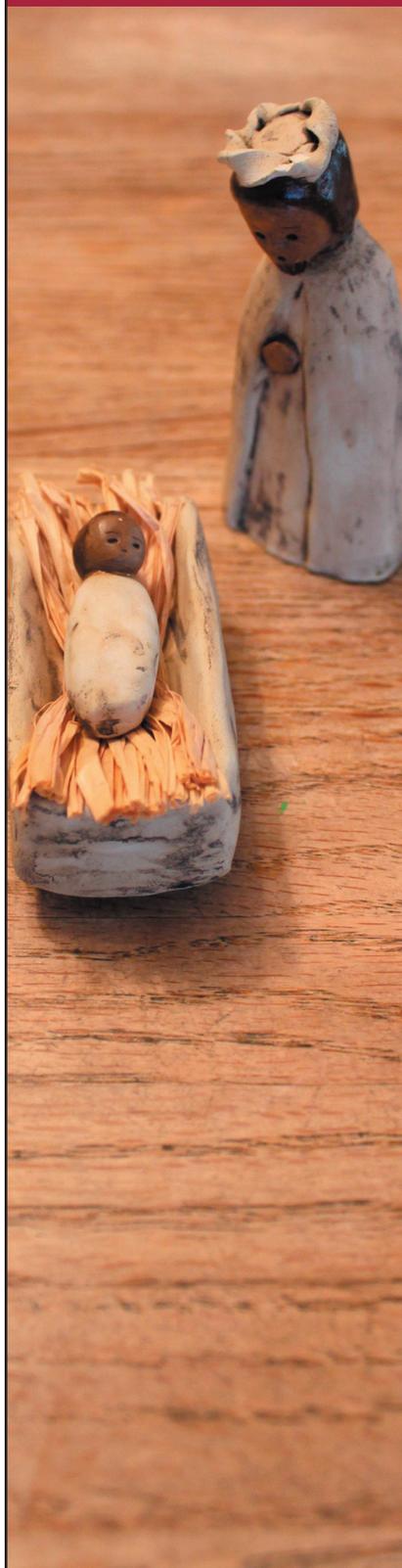
Each year, we have talked about the tithe. Some might hesitate to give a tenth of their income to the church. That's OK. Few tithers started out that way. One way of working up to tithing is to commit to give a tithe from one paycheck each quarter or four times a year, then to tithe one paycheck each month.

Giving is an act of faith, a reflection of your faith in God and in Westminster as your community of faith. We are all in this together. And we are not alone. When Jesus fed the 5,000, the key ingredient was faith, not loaves, not fishes. If we pledge our faith, there will be abundance. ●



ADVENT & CHRISTMAS 2014

SERMONS & SECOND HOURS



Sunday, December 7

10:00 Worship with Communion
“Comfort Food”

2nd Hour: “Waiting patiently in expectation is the foundation of the spiritual life.” Simone Weil.

A Discussion of Christian Hope led by Pastor Reisner

The Second Sunday of Advent

Isaiah 40:1-11

Rev. Jim Reisner

Sunday, December 14

10:00 Worship
“The World About to Turn”

2nd Hour: The Annual Advent Poetry Slam -
Bring prose and poetry to share.

The Third Sunday of Advent

Isaiah 61:1-4, 8-11

Rev. Jim Reisner

Sunday, December 21

10:00 Worship
“How Can This Be?”
2nd Hour: Children’s Reception

The Fourth Sunday of Advent

Luke 1:26-38

Rev. Jim Reisner

Wednesday, December 24

7:30 Catskill Brass Quartet
8:00 Candlelight Communion Worship
“For Unto Us a Child Is Born”

Christmas Eve Communion

Luke 2:1-20

Rev. Jim Reisner

Sunday, December 28

10:00 Worship
“Now Let Your Servant Depart in Peace”

The First Sunday of Christmas

Luke 2:22-40

Rev. Jim Reisner

Wednesday, December 31

10:00 pm Watch Night Service
Westminster pastors, Charles Norbi and the NAKOMI Band and African church leaders lead in welcoming 2015.

Sunday, January 4

10:00 Worship
“Into Such a World as This”

The Second Sunday of Christmas Celebrating Epiphany

Matthew 2:1-11

Rev. Jim Reisner



Westminster Presbyterian Church

85 Chestnut Street
Albany, New York 12210

Westminster Presbyterian Church

CHURCH OFFICE- Hours

9 am- 4 pm Monday-Friday

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Parish Associate: Paul Randall

Minister of Music and Arts: Alfred V. Fedak, FAGO, ChM

Associate Minister of Music and Arts: Susan Hermance Fedak

Office Administrator: Kristen L. Southworth

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Send submissions to: westminsternewsletter@gmail.com