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 www.wpcalbany.org

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The liturgical calendar has an antidote for the instant gratification that typifies 21st century American culture. It's called Advent.

In the rush and bustle of December, can we be still enough to notice a star above on a silent night? Writes Bill McKibben, "Advent is the time to listen for footsteps - you can't hear footsteps when you're running yourself."

Advent is the waiting time. We believe God is about to do something momentous, but we must wait for it to happen. In the meantime, how we live our lives during this interim truly matters.

"You keep us waiting. You, the God of all time, want us to wait for the right time in which to discover who we are, where we are to go, who will be with us, and what we must do. So thank you ... for the waiting time." John Bell

In this waiting time, come and be with us. In the pages that follow, we welcome you to a community of faith who is living in expectation of the coming of God •

- Pastor Jim Reisner



ALL GOOD THINGS MUST COME TO AN END ...

The end of one year, the beginning of another - this is a season of endings and beginnings. December 2nd, the first day of Advent, marks the beginning of the new church year. That means that the five Sundays in December are at the same time the end of the calendar year and the beginning of the liturgical year. So are we at the beginning or the end?

Christians do endings and beginnings really well. At the core of our faith is a birth that ends in death and a death that ends in new life. Remember Jesus received the gift of myrrh, used in burial, at the time of his birth. It's not just about the calendar but about God's story and, therefore, our own story.

Our beliefs are unique in that we embrace endings, even embrace death, because we know that death cannot be separated from birth and new life.

Why else would we celebrate the Light of the World at the darkest time of the year? Why else would our funeral liturgy be called a "Service of Witness to the Resurrection"?

When I preside over a funeral, I am always moved by the grief of the family over the loss of life. Even when a death is a relief after a long period of suffering, I cannot help but grieve alongside the grieving. Death is never easy to deal with, no matter what we believe.

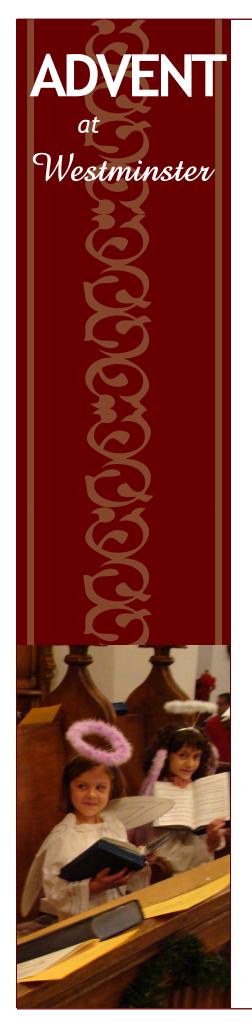
The Good News is that God's redemption has overcome death. The reality that humans have feared, grieved and dreaded has lost its power over us. God chose to enter into our human lives and even experience a tragic and horrific death in order to show that death is not the end of the story, in order to break the power of death over our lives.

...and to a beginning.

Marking the end of the calendar year reminds us of all the deaths we mark or have marked in our lives: those people dear to us who have died, the end of a beloved relationship, the loss of a sense of self.

Over these very same days, we mark so many beginnings in our lives: a new experience, birth of new life, a small new sprout of an idea that catches on, redemption after a period of sadness.

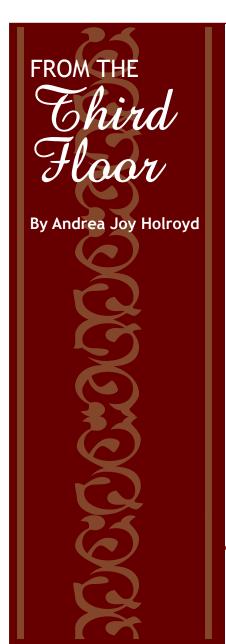
And as Christians we know we cannot have one without the other •



ADVENT AT WESTMINSTER 2012

During the month of December, Pastors Reisner and Rosenau will post daily Advent reflections on the Westminter website: www.wpcalbany.org

- **December 1:** Praise Night: A Life Concert featuring Getty and Friends 6:30 pm in the Assembly Room
- December 2: First Sunday in Advent
 Worship and Communion at 10 am
 2nd Hour: Deck the Hall:
 Preparing the Sanctuary for Advent and Christmas
- December 9: Second Sunday in Advent
 Worship at 10 am
 2nd Hour: Advent Poetry Slam: W.H. Auden and others
- December 16: Third Sunday in Advent
 Worship at 10 am
 2nd Hour: Betsy Mercogliano, Midwife, to speak
- December 17: Christmas party for residents of Schuyler Inn, a shelter for homeless families. Volunteers needed and welcome! Time to be announced.
- December 23: Fourth Sunday in Advent
 Worship at 10 am with Christmas Pageant
 2nd Hour: Christmas Party in the Assembly Room
- December 24: Christmas Eve Sacred music at 7:30 pm Worship and Communion with the Catskill Brass, organ, voices and handbells at 8 pm
- December 30: Christmastide 1
 Worship at 10 am
 No 2nd Hour
- December 31: Watch Night
 Worshipful Observance of New Year's at 10:30 pm in the African tradition
- January 6: Epiphany
 Worship and Communion at 10 am
 Ordination and Installation of Church Officers



FROM THE THIRD FLOOR

By Andrea Joy Holroyd

It's beginning to look a lot like Christmas... Too early? Believe it or not, Christmas will be here before we know it. We already hear the songs on the radio, and up on the third floor we are planning for advent and beyond.

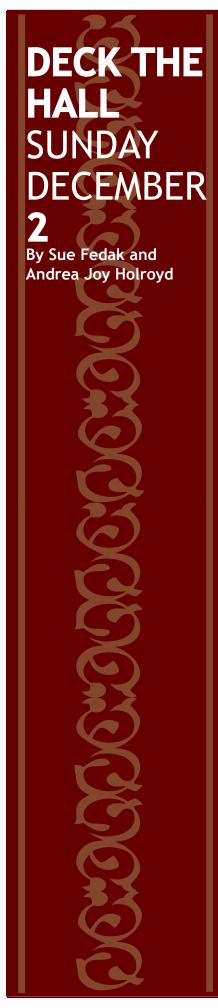
It is the old familiar story of the events leading to Jesus' birth, but every year I, at least, look forward to listening to the story again and again. The Godly Play group is looking at different groups of people who show us the way, the journey they took, to Bethlehem - prophets, Mary and Joseph, shepherds, and Magi. The We Believe class is exploring where Jesus came from and what these ideas mean: Jesus as the Son of David, of Joseph, of Mary, and of God. In Worship Plus! for kids, we will be taking a Journey to Bethlehem, meet characters along the way, and imagine what they might say to us, what stories they could tell.

As part of our Advent preparations, we have Advent Calendars available, as well as activity guides to help us in this hectic season remember why we gather at this time. For more about our Advent activities, look to see what we are doing for our traditional Hanging of the Greens on page 3.

Youth Lock In on Wednesday December 26th 6 pm - 8:30 am December 27th. Food, Laser Tag, and Jesus. What more do you need? ●

Congratulations
to those
confirmed
November
18th
in worship.





PREPARING THE WAY

If the songs on the radio, or the decorations in the malls, or the new avalanche of commercials were not enough to tell us that Christmas is coming, here is one more clue. It is time to gather for our annual "Deck the Hall", decorating the church. This is something we do every year, along with a potluck meal for all who participate, but this year the decorating will be Sunday, December 2, after worship, in combination with our usual intergenerational "Preparing for Advent".

We have heard many times that Advent means Coming, and in this time before Christmas we are preparing for Jesus' coming into the world. This is a time for spiritual renewal and reflection. It is a time to think about hope, peace, joy, and love. It is a time to slow down and prepare our hearts, something difficult to be mindful of with Elvis' rendition of "Blue Christmas", or "I Want a Hippopotamus For Christmas" oozing out of car, bus, and mall speakers at every turn.

To help with this mindfulness, while the decorating activities are taking place, there will be different crafts and hands-on activities for all generations in the sanctuary. Advent calendars for adults and children, as well as activity ideas to help focus on the season beyond the commercial hubbub will be available for everyone to take home. In addition, there will be different ideas to craft advent wreathes. You may have one in your home already!



Everyone in the WPC church family is invited to stay for this special time. It will be lots of fun to be reminded of these signs of Advent-tide and to transform our worship space. Please bring a dish to pass for the concluding potluck meal as we celebrate the season together, as a community •



GIVE THE GIFT OF SONG!

As most everyone knows by now, our Presbyterian denomination, the PCUSA, is in the final stages of producing a brand new hymnal for use in its member churches and beyond. This past summer, the contents of this new book were unanimously approved at General Assembly in Pittsburgh, in what was probably the least controversial decision on the GA's agenda.

Westminster Church has many strong connections to this new hymnal, and in many ways, it is already "our book." For nearly five years, Al Fedak has been a member of PCOCS: the Presbyterian Committee on Congregational Song (i.e., the hymnal committee), and a number of his hymntunes and arrangements are set to appear in the book. But beyond that, our local worship practices have had an important influence on the hymnal's contents. The Ghanaian song we sing so often, Da n'ase, will be included: this will be the song's first appearance in an American publication. In addition, Westminster took part in a denominational hymn-usage survey in 2008, and, as many will recall, also served as a test site for new hymns. Our members' individual responses to the test hymns we sang were very helpful to the hymnal committee in its deliberations.

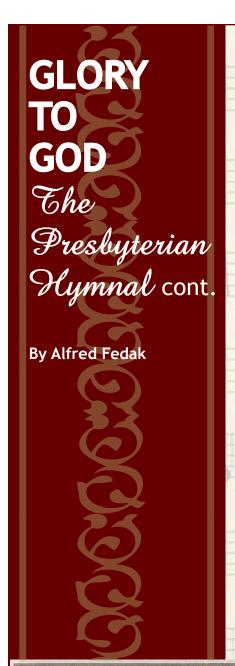
The new book is titled:

GLORY TO GOD: THE PRESBYTERIAN HYMNAL

But there's more: our good friend the Reverend Dr. Carl Daw, the eminent poet and hymnologist who has visited Westminster and worshipped with us several times over the past two decades, is making his own unique contributions to the new hymnal. At the bottom of each page, for every hymn, he has provided a few sentences of historical, literary, musical, biblical, or devotional commentary. He is also in the process of writing a "Hymnal Companion," a separate book which will provide much more information about each hymn.

Finally, Westminster had the great pleasure of getting to know PCOCS chair Mary Louise (Mel) Bringle when she came to preach and teach here last year. Like Carl Daw, Mel is a gifted poet and hymnologist, as well as an engaging speaker with a magnetic personality.

So already, we at Westminster rightly feel a degree of ownership about GLORY TO GOD. And now we have the opportunity to turn that feeling of ownership into the real thing.



Starting this December, Westminster Church will begin seeking donations to purchase copies of GLORY TO GOD for our pews. Each copy of the book will cost \$15 (a remarkable pre-publication price!), and will have a bookplate inside the front cover for inscribing a memorial or honorary dedication. (As memorial gifts, hymnals are especially appropriate and meaningful.) Multiple purchases are welcome and encouraged, and not just for the church, either—hymnals make great gifts for family and friends, too! Watch your mailbox or visit the church's website for detailed information on how to donate to the Hymnal Fund.

GLORY TO GOD is scheduled for release in September, 2013.

By virtue of the contributions we have already made to the new hymnal's development, and by placing the book in our pews and singing from it, we will do much to help shape the Christian faith and practice of the next generation of worshippers at Westminster Church. Glory to God!

REACH OUT TO HOMELESS FAMILIES AT SCHUYLER INN

Westminster supports families living at Schuyler Inn in Menands, one of the largest shelters for families in the region.

Ways you can help:

Purchase a gift for a child, youth, adult, or family unit. This year, shop for gift certificates, teddy bears; sets of hats, gloves, and

scarves; and socks. Sign up Dec 2 and 9, then return gifts Dec. 16 or 17.

Join with small groups of volunteers to help distribute dental supplies, diapers, and other necessities to Schuyler residents on Thursday, Nov. 29, 5 p.m. and Thursday, Jan. 17, 5 p.m. For more information, contact Lois Wilson (Lwilson502@aol.com) or the Church office.

Help with a Christmas party on Saturday, Dec. 22, 1 to 4 p.m. Mr. and Mrs. Santa Claus will make a special appearance at the party. Give smiles and hugs and provide a very festive atmosphere to all who attend •





UPDATE ON AFRICAN MINISTRIES

AFRICAN FAMILY NIGHT THANK-YOU: To date, Rev. Alice Kyei-Anti has raised enough money in the US to start a laundry center building for Donkorkrom Hospital in the Eastern Region of Ghana. We are most grateful to the African Family Night organizing committee headed by Gabriel Ofori-Okai, the speakers, the workers at the dinner, and all who attended. Donations at the dinner total \$1,863.

Note of Appreciation from Mama Alice:

In her farewell note to Westminster members, she said: "I thank God for the opportunity to visit Westminster once again and express my appreciation to all who have extended hospitality to me. It is my prayer that the partnership between the Presbyterian Church of Ghana and Westminster will grow from strength to strength, and I am looking forward to seeing the 2013 Ghana mission team. May God continue to use the members of this congregation to extend love to all through your mission work in this country and in Africa. I will cherish the cross, which Jim Reisner presented to me on behalf of the Westminster family at African Family Night. It will continually remind me of walking in the footprints of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. I will pray for you, and I ask you to pray for me. I hope you will continue to think of me as a distant parish associate. May the peace of God and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit be with you all."

DONATION OF COMPUTERS FOR LIBERIA. Westminster continues to find new partners for mission programs in Africa. Assemblywomanelect Patricia Fahy has donated five very good computers to Cuttington University in Liberia. Our very own Felicia Kollie-Gambles is a graduate of Cuttington and made this donation possible.

SIGN-UP FOR 2013 TRIP TO GHANA: Come to the initial meeting of the new Ghana Mission Team in 2013. Find out more by contacting the Church office or email Lois Wilson at LWilson502@aol.com.

Congratulations to Andrea Holroyd who was approved as a candidate for ministry by Albany Presbytery on November 17th. This is the next step in the process towards ordination. When you see Andrea in the halls or on Facebook, congratulate her on her recent achievement.



UPCOMING MISSION GIVING OPPORTUNITIES

Superstorm Sandy remains a concern for prayer and support. If you would like to make an individual donation for Sandy Relief, money can be sent to the office or put in the offering plate. Please indicate Sandy on the memo line or envelope. On line giving is possible on the www.pcusa.org website.

The Christmas Joy Offering will be collected on December 23rd. The money raised from this offering equally supports the Board of Pensions Assistance, through grants and financial supplements and the six Presbyterian Racial and Ethnic Schools and Colleges. Please note that offering envelopes will be in the pews, but will not be mailed home this year. Online giving is also available.

The following have graciously given Westminster their gift of service. Please be sure to thank them!

Date:	Ushers:		
December 2	Tom and Anne Older, Ruthann Brod, Tom McPheeters		
December 9	John and Diane Bossung, Louise Besch, David Hershey		
December 16	Ervin and Judy Ashburn, Sheila Wrede, Bob Stone		
December 23	Diane and Nick Scaptura, Judy Hartley, Zach Rosenau		
December 24	December 24 Gabriel Ofori-Okai, Zach Rosenau and others		
December 30	Ben and Belinda Quaye, Lois Wilson, Peter McKee		

Celebrating the following birthdays in December:

Susannah Sebagala	Dec. 1	• Jayden H.	Dec. 15
Annatacha T.	Dec. 1	Alison McKee	Dec. 15
Michael Levato	Dec. 4	• Eve Ryan	Dec. 15
Charles Seagle	Dec. 7	• Pam Marvin	Dec. 16
• Sean G.	Dec. 8	Chris Schell	Dec. 18
Lauren McLaughlin	Dec. 8	• Iteke Prins	Dec. 20
• Sarah Williams Bojdak	Dec. 9	Shernette Grant	Dec. 20
• Alison D.	Dec. 9	• Rev. Rick Otty	Dec. 22
• Esther Asamoah	Dec. 10	William Kinum	Dec. 25
Rhonda Hermance	Dec. 11	• Sion H.	Dec. 26
• Andrew K.	Dec. 12	• Leslie Shaffer	Dec. 27
Jeremy Gordon	Dec. 13		

Sorry if we missed your birthday. Please send your birth date into the church office so we may have it on record •



2013 STEWARDSHIP CAMPAIGN GAINS MOMENTUM!

After an uplifting sermon on Stewardship Sunday November 11th, we're off to a great start on our 2013 Pledges! As of November 13, we have received 54 pledges totaling \$142,921. Thanks to those who have pledged generous gifts! For those who have not pledged yet, there is still plenty of time to give thoughtful prayer to your many talents and how you might share them with Westminster next year.

Please submit your pledges and your Spiritual Gifts Assessment directly to the church office. Our Stewardship goal for 2013 is \$220,000 and we're over half way there!

Our average pledge to date for 2013 is approximately \$2,647. Stewardship should be a reflection of our gratitude for all the blessings in our lives. May you experience abundant joy and overflow with generosity this Stewardship season •

Worship and Second Hours:

DECEMBER 2 Advent 1 I Samuel 2:1-10 Set the Scene 2nd Hour: Advent Extravaganza

DECEMBER 9 Advent 2

Luke 1:57-80 The Silent Treatment

2nd Hour: Advent Poetry Slam

DECEMBER 16 Advent 3

Luke 1:39-45 The Support Group **2nd Hour:** Midwife Betsy Mercogliano

DECEMBER 23 Advent 4
Luke 2:46-55 *Mary's Song*2nd Hour: Christmas Party

DECEMBER 24 Christmas Eve 7:30 pm Sacred Music

8 pm Worship and Communion

DECEMBER 30 Christmastide 1 Luke 2:22-33 Seeing Salvation No 2nd Hour

DECEMBER 31 Watchnight 10:30 pm

JANUARY 6 Epiphany, Ordination and Installation of Officers
John 1:35-42 Andrew the Apostle





DECEMBER

1

6:30pm Getty and Friends Praise Night

2 SUNDAY

10:00 am Worship

11:15 am Bell Choir

11:15 am Adult Education

11:15 am Church School

7:00 pm Youth Group

4

7:00 am FOCUS Breakfast

5

7:00 am FOCUS Breakfast

7:00 pm Christian Life and Learning

6

7:00 am FOCUS Breakfast

6:30 pm Youth Choir

7:30 pm Adult Choir Rehearsal

9 SUNDAY

10:00 am Worship

11:15 am Bell Choir

11:15 am Adult Education

11:15 am Church School

11:30 am Young Adult Brunch

11

7:00 am FOCUS Breakfast

7:00 pm Session

12

7:00am FOCUS Breakfast

13

7:00 am FOCUS Breakfast

6:30 pm Youth Choir

7:30 pm Adult Choir Rehearsal

16 SUNDAY

10:00 am Worship

11:15 am Bell Choir

11:15 am Adult Education

11:15 am Church School

7:00 pm Youth Christmas Party

18

7:00 am FOCUS Breakfast

7:00 pm Trustee Meeting

7:00 pm Deacons' Meeting

19

7:00 am FOCUS Breakfast

20

7:00 am FOCUS Breakfast

6:30 pm Youth Choir

7:30 pm Adult Choir Rehearsal

22

1:00pm - 4:00pm Schuyler Inn Party

23 SUNDAY

10:00 am Worship

11:15 am Bell Choir

11:15 am Christmas Pageant Party

24 CHRISTMAS EVE

Office Closed

7:30 pm - 8:00 pm

Pre-Service Music

8:00 pm - 9:00 pm

Christmas Eve Service

DECEMBER 25 MERRY CHRISTMAS

7:00 am FOCUS Breakfast

26

7:00 am FOCUS Breakfast

6:00 pm - 8:30 am Youth Lock In

27

7:00 am FOCUS Breakfast

30 SUNDAY

10:00 am Worship

31 NEW YEAR'S EVE

10:30 pm Watchnight Service

JANUARY 2013

1

7:00 am FOCUS Breakfast

2

7:00 am FOCUS Breakfast

3

7:00 am FOCUS Breakfast

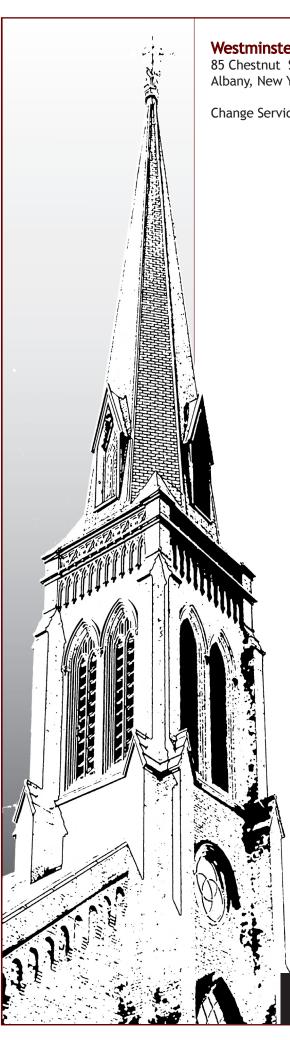
7:30pm Adult Choir Rehearsal

6 SUNDAY

10:00 am Worship

11:15 am Adult Education

11:15 am Church School



Westminster Presbyterian Church

85 Chestnut Street Albany, New York 12210

Change Service Requested

Westminster Presbyterian Church

CHURCH OFFICE- December Hours

9 am- 3 pm Monday-Friday

Phone: 518.436.8544

Pastor: James L. Reisner

Associate Pastor: Frances Wattman Rosenau

Parish Associate: Paul Randall

Minister of Music and Arts: Alfred V. Fedak, FAGO, ChM **Associate Minister of Music and Arts:** Susan Hermance Fedak

Director of Christian Education: Andrea Joy Holroyd

Administrative Secretary: Nancy J. Sokil Sextons: Glenda Bennett, Joy Tallmadge

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