



THE  
**WESTMINSTER  
MESSENGER**  
Westminster Presbyterian Church

*December  
2012*

• 262 State Street • Albany • New York • [www.wpcalbany.org](http://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

# PASTORAL *Reflections*

By Pastor Frances W. Rosenau

## 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*

## ADVENT AT WESTMINSTER 2012

During the month of December, Pastors Reisner and Rosenau will post daily Advent reflections on the Westminster website: [www.wpcalbany.org](http://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







# DECK THE HALL SUNDAY DECEMBER 2

By Sue Fedak and  
Andrea Joy Holroyd

## 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 ●



# GLORY TO GOD

## *The Presbyterian Hymnal*

By Alfred Fedak

### **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.



# GLORY TO GOD

## *The Presbyterian Hymnal cont.*

By Alfred Fedak

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 ●







# GIVING

## *Opportunities*

# USHERS

## for *December*

# DECEMBER

## *Happy* BIRTHDAY

### 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](http://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	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

### 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

## Church Calendar

# 2012

### 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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**Twitter:** WPCAlbanyNY

The Messenger is published 10 times a year.

Graphic Design: Jeanne Bianchine

February newsletter submissions are due by Noon on Dec. 23rd.  
Send submissions to: [westminsternewsletter@gmail.com](mailto:westminsternewsletter@gmail.com)