



THE WESTMINSTER MESSENGER

Advent and Christmas 2018



Westminster Presbyterian Church • 262 State Street • Albany • New York • www.wpcalbany.org

COME HOME: OUR ADVENT & CHRISTMAS FOCUS

Over the river and through the woods to Grandmother's house we go! Do you remember singing this bouncing little piece as a child? I sure do! It was my song.

And it didn't seem to matter that the trip was actually from our house to our aunt and uncle's house to which Grandma and Grandpa Case journeyed. There were river crossings and woods along the way. This song was mine!

The mere hint of the tune suggested everything that I loved about those Christmas dinners: the unalloyed affection in my life—Grandma—who lived by grace; the mysterious smell of Grandpa's pipe (long before anyone worried about second-hand smoke); the prospect of high adventures with cousins rarely seen; and, of course, the cornucopia of “goodies” that graced that table of love!

Over the river and through the woods to Grandmother's house we go! This was my song!

I am no longer a little boy. In time the song applied to trips to my parent's home with our children. Over time my heart has been tuned to sing other songs for Christmas. But the longing to return home—especially at Christmas—has never left me. As the Scriptures for this year's season of Advent and Christmas attest, this desire to come home is lodged deep in the human heart. We all long to go to our Father's house.

Listen to Zephaniah's call to come home:

“Sing aloud, O daughter Zion; Shout, O Israel! Rejoice and exult with all your heart, O daughter Jerusalem! At that time I will bring you home, at the time when I gather you; for I will make you renowned and praised among all the peoples of the earth, when I restore your fortunes before your eyes, says the LORD. (3:14,20)”

Centuries later, St. Augustine told the tale of everyone's heart:

“You arouse us to take joy in praising you, for you have made us for yourself, and our heart is restless until it rests in you.”

As you plan for Christmas travels and celebrations and during this season of Advent and Christmas, also address the natural longing for the heart's true home. Our Advent themes will encourage you to come to aspects of the home we have in Christ: **Hope, Peace, Joy and Love**. Please come home to these. Think also of members who have been less visible and invite them to come home. Think of neighbors or family who could be blessed by the gospel's call to come home. Join our services and activities described elsewhere as a way come to the true heart of Christmas.

Peace, Pastor Bill

Memorial Poinsettias: Remember Loved Ones

Donations for memorial poinsettias for Christmas are now being received. Names of persons memorialized will be printed in the bulletin on **Sunday, December 16**. The suggested donation is \$35; please either call the church office with your request or place a request in the offering plate. Deadline for submission is **Sunday, December 9**.

Surrounded by Beauty - Giving Thanks for the Hanging of the Greens

Enjoy the lovely décor created by our volunteers on Sunday, November 25. A time of fellowship and cheer was enjoyed by those who gathered to beautify our sanctuary in anticipation of Advent and Christmas.

Annual Children's Christmas Program

Sunday, December 23, During Worship

This year, the Children's Christmas Program will take place during worship on December 23rd. This will add a wonderful element to our worship experience! Rehearsal for the program will be at the beginning of December, during the Sunday School hour. We want as many of the children as possible to be a part of this, so, please ensure that your children are in church. We shall also need adult volunteers so please let our Director of Christian Education, Belinda Quaye, know if you will be available to assist.

Music in December

• God Still Sings: Sunday Morning, December 9

On Sunday morning, December 9, our Westminster Choir will present a liturgy of Advent Lessons and Carols entitled "God Still Sings." Passages from the Old and New Testaments will be read which focus on God's promised salvation and its fulfillment in Christ. All the choral music was composed by Al Fedak, with much of it new to Westminster Church. Additional music during the Opening Voluntaries and the Offertory will be provided by the flute-and-harp duo Stringwynde (Melanie Chirignan and Darhon Rees-Rohrbacher), whose musical beauty has graced our services several times during the past year. We encourage you to attend this special musical worship service!

• Russian Chamber Music: Sunday Afternoon, December 16

On Sunday afternoon, December 16, our resident Capitol Chamber Artists will perform a concert of Russian Chamber Music in the sanctuary, including works by Tchaikovsky, Rachmaninov, and Prokofiev. Performers will include Mary Lou Saetta, violin; André O'Neil, cello; and Aniko Szokody, piano. Admission is free for members and friends of Westminster, and all are invited.

• Christmas Eve with the Catskill Brass - Starting at 7:30 pm

Once again, this year, the Catskill Brass Quartet will be at Westminster Church on Christmas Eve, helping us welcome the newborn King with their joyful tones. Our traditional 8:00 PM service of candlelight, carols, and communion will be preceded at 7:30 by a half-hour concert of music for brass, choir, piano, organ, and handbells. Come celebrate with us!

Schuyler Inn Holiday Party with Santa

Saturday, December 15

Westminster is again joining with other organizations to sponsor a Holiday Party, including a visit with Santa and Mrs. Santa, for all Schuyler Inn residents on Saturday, December 15 from 2:00 pm - 4:00 pm. Volunteers are needed from 1:00 pm - 4:30 pm for a variety of roles including greeters, craft leaders, photography and clean-up.

To volunteer, please look for a clipboard at Westminster or contact the Church Office. We hope you can join us and help create a special time for the homeless families living at Schuyler Inn.

Help Empower Schuyler Inn Families to Make Holiday Choices for Their Families: One gift that is much appreciated by families: gift cards from Price Chopper or Walmart. If you are able to donate one or more \$10 gift cards, bring them to Westminster by December 9. Please leave gift cards in the Church Office. You can also give them to Allan Tedrow, Nancy Ost or Lois Wilson.

Blue Christmas Service

THE FIRST CHURCH IN ALBANY
DECEMBER 19TH AT 7 PM

110 N. PEARL ST, ALBANY

A COMBINED SERVICE OF
FIRST CHURCH IN ALBANY
+ FOCUS CHURCHES OF ALBANY

Blue Christmas Service

Wednesday, December 19

FOCUS Churches of Albany will hold a Blue Christmas Service on Wednesday, December 19, 7:00 pm at The First Church Albany. Be it from stress, loss of a loved one, illness, or daily struggle, there are people who feel separated from the joy we assume Christmas season brings. This service is designed to acknowledge that separation, and reaffirm the promise, presence and support of God. Join us and invite anyone you know who is struggling.

Lois Wilson Honored by Zonta International

On Saturday, November 10, several WPC members were present as the Albany chapter of Zonta International honored Lois Wilson for 50 years of membership. The club members made several mentions of the Westminster/Zonta partnership in helping at Schuyler Inn. Congratulations, Lois. It is a well-deserved recognition.

African Family Night Fundraiser a Success!

Thanks to all donors! Westminster has achieved its \$10,000 fundraising goal. As of Saturday, November 17, the Church had received and counted \$11,650.

Save the Date: African Mission Day at Westminster - January 12

January 12, 10:00 am - 3:30 pm: African Mission Day with a MoonBee at 10:00 am and Zumba party for Ebola orphans 1:30 pm. Event co-chairs: Fatmata Hilton and Felicia Kollie-Gambles.

Capital Campaign Projects Update

While weather prevented completion of the steeple repair work by Thanksgiving as had originally been planned, work continues to move forward. Contractor Robert Morgan solved earlier supply chain concerns and the goal is to see completion of the project by the end of the year. The Session has agreed that, upon completion of the steeple repair work, the next priority project is to make the Chapel a flexible use space suitable for small worship experiences, adult classes, and church or community meeting space complete with availability of internet access and large screen display.

FOCUS Advent 2018 Devotional

Foreword



Grace and Peace to you!

On behalf of the FOCUS churches and organization, I want to wish you blessings of grace and peace as you read, celebrate, and witness in the waiting of Christ's coming in this Advent season.

Advent is a centuries old tradition that unites the church as we wait with expectation and hope for the birth of our Savior, Jesus. The word "Advent" in Latin literally means, "Coming." A word that implies something, or someone, notable is about to arrive. Maybe you're like me, and when you know a major event is coming up, or a particular guest will be arriving soon, you like to prepare for such noteworthy event. In a similar fashion, the four Sundays leading up to Christ's birth, the church prepares by meditating on hope, peace, joy, and love.

Advent 2018

brings us to this devotional. You'll find in this devotional twenty-four reflections on passages from all of Scripture, with voices from all of the FOCUS churches, FOCUS staff, as well as a reflection from one of the Breakfast Club guests. It is one of FOCUS' core beliefs that we worship and learn together, though we have differences, we come together in the name of Jesus as one united body of Christ. There may be some devotionals that confuse or surprise you, and that is okay. It's our hope that this will be an opportunity to lean in and learn from one another, rather than put up walls within denominations or people groups.

One of the ways we are invited to participate in Advent is by reflecting on God's word in community. Which

Each day, during Advent, you'll be asked to read the passage that is at the top of the page, followed with the devotional reflection on the Scripture, and then finishing with a prayer. You'll notice that each of the authors is named, along with their particular congregation or FOCUS affiliation if you'd like to follow up or even thank them for their writing.

Join with me as well as the whole of the FOCUS community as we turn towards Christ and hear the Scriptures afresh each day on our Advent journey.

May God embrace you, Christ enlighten you, and the Holy Spirit empower you in this season of waiting in expectation and hope for Christ's birth.

Be held,
Rev. Marcy Rudins, Delmar Reformed Church

Please visit the Westminster website for the full devotional. We will publish weekly blogs during Advent to highlight the daily reflections for each week. Join with our FOCUS community to read, reflect, and pray during the Advent journey.

www.wpcalbany.org



We Will No Longer be a Welcoming Church

by Pastor Bill

For the sake of the church's future we need to quit being a welcoming church, and move to being an inviting church. It won't be easy, but let's commit to it. We'll do it in stages, easing our folks into it step by step. It will take total commitment in embracing a new focus.

Historically, churches have sunk an amazing amount of time and energy into becoming a welcoming church. We trained greeters and ushers, we wore name tags, we brewed coffee, we put our friendliest people in the most prominent places on Sunday mornings. It's now time to realize that simply continuing to do that will be misplacing our emphasis. These things will all continue but are seen as a means but not the end.

Instead, we will become an Inviting Church. That's different. You see, "welcoming" is passive. It denotes waiting for visitors and guests to drop by. When they do, we attempt to treat them very well and do everything possible to make them comfortable. We'll do whatever it takes to have them come back the next Sunday. We'd love that. In effect, welcoming is actually about us, not about them.

"Inviting," however, is different. That means we leave the comfort of our congregational home-court advantage. The main activity doesn't happen in our worship space when people drop in, but in the neighborhood when we go out. It isn't so much welcoming them into our place, but going out into their place and meeting them there.

December, Month 1: We ask people to use the phrase "my church" in a conversation with one person each week. Really simple. "Just go two blocks past my church and you'll see the state capital." "No, I can't go away this Sunday; I've already made plans to be at my church." "Yes, my church is getting decorated for Christmas, too!" Just one person, one time each week during the month.

Christmas Joy Offering

During this Advent Season, the Presbyterian Church USA celebrates leadership; past, present and future through the opportunity to support the Christmas Joy Offering. Church leaders greatly impact our lives of faith, walking with us down the path to be more like Jesus. We want future leaders for the church and world, like those educated at our Presbyterian-related schools and colleges equipping communities of color to reflect the wideness of God's intended diversity, and we want those church leaders and their families who find themselves grappling with a critical financial need to have the resources they need. For those supported through the Christmas Joy Offering, this help is truly a gift from above. If you wish to share in this opportunity, use one of the envelopes in the pew racks during December. May the lives of those leaders who receive the support point us always to the truth of the one whose birth we celebrate, Jesus Christ – the truly perfect gift.



Worship & Second Hours

Sunday, December 2 First Sunday of Advent - Hope

9:00 Bible Study and Worship Preparation

10:00 Worship

Rev. Bill Schram leading worship

"Come Home to Hope"

Jeremiah 33:14-16, Luke 21:25-36

Second Hour: Thoughtful Christian course on Christmas hymns: "O Come, O Come Emmanuel" - Exploring Its Meaning for Today

Note: No church school - pageant rehearsal

Sunday, December 9

Second Sunday of Advent - Peace

9:00 Bible Study and Worship Preparation

10:00 Worship

"Come Home to Peace"

Rev. Bill Schram leading worship

Advent Music Celebration: Lessons and Carols - Westminster Choir

Second Hour: Thoughtful Christian course on Christmas hymns: "O Little Town of Bethlehem" - Exploring Its Meaning for Today

Note: No church school - pageant rehearsal

Sunday, December 16

Third Sunday of Advent - Joy

9:00 Bible Study and Worship Preparation

10:00 Worship

Rev. Bill Schram leading worship

"Come Home to Joy"

Isaiah 12:2-6, Luke 3:7-18

Second Hour: Maxine Quaye's report about her time as a Young Adult
Advisory Delegate to last Summer's General Assembly of the PCUSA

Note: No church school - pageant rehearsal

Sunday, December 23

Fourth Sunday of Advent - Love

9:00 Bible Study and Worship Preparation

10:00 Worship

Rev. Bill Schram leading worship

Children's Christmas Program

Second Hour: Fellowship and Refreshments Time

Note: No Church School

Monday, December 24

Christmas Eve

7:30 Catskill Brass Quartet

8:00 Candlelight Communion Service

Rev. Bill Schram leading worship

"Come Home to Bethlehem"

Luke 2:1-20

Sunday, December 30

9:00 Bible Study and Worship Preparation

10:00 Worship

Rev. Bill Schram leading worship

"Peter Pan, Pippi Longstocking, Simeon and WPC" Luke 2: 25-35

Second Hour: Fellowship and Refreshments Time

Note: No Church School

Monday, December 31

10:30 pm- 12:05 pm Watch Night Service



December CALENDAR

DECEMBER

SUNDAY December 2

9:00 am Bible Study
10:00 am Worship
11:15 am Children's Christmas Program Rehearsal

3
12:15 pm EBA Seniors Class

4
7:00 am FOCUS Breakfast
6:30 pm Tai Chi

5
7:00 am FOCUS Breakfast

6
7:00 am FOCUS Breakfast
12:15 pm EBA Seniors Class
7:30 pm Adult Choir Rehearsal

7
12:15 pm EBA Seniors Class

SUNDAY December 9

9:00 am Bible Study
10:00 am Worship
11:15 am Children's Christmas Program Rehearsal

10
12:15 pm EBA Seniors Class

11
7:00 am FOCUS Breakfast
6:30 pm Tai Chi
7:00 pm Session Meeting

12
7:00 am FOCUS Breakfast

13
7:00 am FOCUS Breakfast
12:15 pm EBA Seniors Class
7:30 pm Adult Choir Rehearsal

14
12:15 pm EBA Seniors Class

15
1:00 pm Schuyler Inn Holiday Party

SUNDAY December 16

9:00 am Bible Study
10:00 am Worship
11:15 am Children's Christmas Program Rehearsal
11:15 am Deacons Meeting
3:00 pm Capital Chamber Artists Concert

17
12:15 pm EBA Seniors Class

18
7:00 am FOCUS Breakfast
6:30 pm Tai Chi
7:00 pm Compassionate Friends
7:00 pm Trustees Meeting

19
7:00 am FOCUS Breakfast
6:00 pm Pine Bush Dinner

20
7:00 am FOCUS Breakfast
12:15 pm EBA Seniors Class
7:30 pm Adult Choir Rehearsal

21
12:15 pm EBA Seniors Class

SUNDAY December 23

9:00 am Bible Study
10:00 am Worship

CHRISTMAS EVE December 24

7:30 pm Pre-Service Music w/ Catskill Brass Quartet
8:00 pm Candlelight Communion Service

MERRY CHRISTMAS December 25

7:00 am FOCUS Breakfast

26
7:00 am FOCUS Breakfast

27
7:00 am FOCUS Breakfast
12:15 pm EBA Seniors Class
7:30 pm Adult Choir Rehearsal

28
12:15 pm EBA Seniors Class

SUNDAY December 30

9:00 am Bible Study
10:00 am Worship
12:30 Prayer in the African Way

31 NEW YEAR'S EVE

10:30 pm- 12:05 pm
Watch Night Service

JANUARY

JANUARY 1, 2019

Office Closed
7:00 am FOCUS Breakfast
6:30 pm Tai Chi

2
7:00 am FOCUS Breakfast

3
7:00 am FOCUS Breakfast
12:15 pm EBA Seniors Class
7:30 pm Adult Choir Rehearsal

4
12:15 pm EBA Seniors Class

SUNDAY January 6

9:00 am Bible Study
10:00 am Worship
11:15 am Church School



WESTMINSTER

— Presbyterian Church —

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Westminster Presbyterian Church

CHURCH OFFICE- Hours

9:00 am-5:00 pm Tuesday & Thursday; Friday 9:30 am-12:00 noon
Phone: 518.436.8544

Interim Pastor: Rev. William Schram

Office Administrator: Jennifer Schoenfisch

Director of Christian Education: Belinda Quaye

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

Parish Associate: Rev. Paul Randall

Sextons: Glenda Bennett, Joy Tallmadge, John Fox

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Newsletter submissions are due by December 15
Send submissions to: newsletter@wpcalbany.org