

# Westminster At Worship

## *The Longest Night: A Contemplative Christmas Service*

December 20, 2021

6:00 p.m.

Please silence your cell phones prior to entering the sanctuary.  
†Those who are able to stand may do so.



### GATHERING

#### PRELUDE

#### WELCOME

#### A STORY OF LIGHT AND DARKNESS

LEADER: ...God said, 'Let there be light,'

**PEOPLE: And there was light.**

#### CANDLE LIGHTING

#### HYMN

VENI EMMANUEL

*"O Come, O Come, Emmanuel"*  
Chancel Choir Recording

#### OPENING PRAYER

#### HYMN

GREENSLEEVES

*"What Child is This"*  
Chancel Choir Recording

#### ASSURANCE OF GRACE

LEADER: God did not wait until the world was ready.

**PEOPLE: God came when things were unsteady and people cried  
out for release.**

LEADER: God did not wait for the perfect time.

**PEOPLE: God came when the need was deep and great.**

LEADER: God did not wait until all hearts were pure.

**PEOPLE: God came to a world of brokenness and pain, imperfection and shadow.**

LEADER: God did not wait until we remembered and turned toward faith,

**PEOPLE: God came among us, Word and Flesh together, maker of stars and healer of ills, ready to love the world as it is and to take us by the hand and lead us where he would have us go. By God's grace, we are found in the midst of the world, and loved here and now.**

### HEARING GOD'S WORD

#### SCRIPTURE READINGS

#### Isaiah 40:1-9

#### Psalm 121

LEADER: I lift up my eyes to the hills — from where will my help come?

**PEOPLE: My help comes from the Lord, who made heaven and earth.**

LEADER: God will not let your foot be moved; The One who keeps you will not slumber.

**PEOPLE: Behold, the One who keeps Israel will neither slumber nor sleep.**

LEADER: The Lord is your keeper; the Lord is like shade at your right hand.

**PEOPLE: The sun shall not hurt by day, nor the moon by night.**

LEADER: The Lord will protect you from all evil; God will protect your very life.

**PEOPLE: The Lord will protect me on my journeys — whether going or coming — from now until forever from now.**

**Matthew 11:28–30**

**Revelation 21:1–7**

**MUSICAL REFLECTION**

*“Still, Still, Still”*  
Trio, vocal recording

**LAMENT**

**RESPONDING IN FAITH**

**PRAYERS OF THE PEOPLE**

LEADER: Our fear of the future, our remembrance of the past, our pain that is difficult to bear and harder to release, our emptiness which cannot be filled with platitudes, our hands which cannot hold the ones we wish to embrace: all make this a season of long nights. We pray together:

**ALL: Be with us in our loneliness, in our longing, in our loss, in our lives. In Jesus’ name, we pray. Amen.**

**CAROL**

CRANHAM

*“In the Bleak Midwinter”*  
Chancel Choir Recording

**A LITANY OF REMEMBERING**

LEADER: We pause to remember their names, their faces, their voices, the memories that bind them to us in this season.

**PEOPLE: May God’s eternal love surround them.**

LEADER: The loss of relationships, the loss of jobs, the loss of health. We pause to gather up the pain of the past and offer it up to God, asking that from God's hands we receive the gift of peace.

**PEOPLE: Refresh, restore, renew us, O God, and lead us into your future.**

LEADER: We pause to remember these past weeks and months: the disbelief, the anger, the down times, the joy and sorrow of memories, the hugs and handshakes of family and friends who care for us. We give thanks for all the support we have known.

**PEOPLE: Help us to know Eternal Love, we pray.**

LEADER: We remember that God, who shares our life, promises us a place and time of no more suffering.

**PEOPLE: Let us remember the One who shows us the way, who brings us the truth, and who bears the light.**

## THE CANDLE LIGHTING

Come forward to light a candle as you wish to do so.

Following the spoken words, any who wish to do so may come forward, take a candle from the basket and light it in memory of a loved one or for a circumstance that makes this season difficult.

**CAROL**

CAROL

*"It Came Upon the Midnight Clear"*  
Chancel Choir Recording

## PRAYER OF BLESSING (Psalm 73)

LEADER: Whenever my mind is bitter, or I feel myself cut to the heart, then I am foolish, without understanding, as dumb as a cow in relation to you.

**PEOPLE: But for me, the nearness of God is best; Lord God, I have made you my refuge, that I may speak of all your deeds.**

LEADER: For I am always with you: You hold my hand in yours. You guide me with your own counsel; you lead me toward your glory.

**PEOPLE: But for me, the nearness of God is best; Lord God, I have made you my refuge, that I may speak of all your deeds.**

LEADER: Whom do I have in heaven but you? My body and mind will come to an end; but God is the strength of my heart and my portion for ever.

**PEOPLE: But for me, the nearness of God is best; Lord God, I have made you my refuge, that I may speak of all your deeds. We go with the peace this brings. Amen.**

### GOING OUT TO LIVE

#### **BLESSING AND BENEDICTION**

LEADER: May we be gentle with ourselves,

**PEOPLE: Remembering that we are created in the image of God.**

LEADER: May we go into the world with honesty and thanksgiving,

**PEOPLE: Embracing tears, laughter, and all that is good.**

LEADER: May the protection of God comfort us,

**PEOPLE: May the courage of Jesus sustain us,**

LEADER: May the tenderness of the Spirit embrace us.

**PEOPLE: Amen.**

#### **POSTLUDE**

“A story of light and darkness” from Cloth for the Cradle. Wild Goose Publications  
“Candles and Conifers” Wild Goose Publications  
“Waiting in Darkness” Wild Goose Publications  
“A Service of Remembrance for the Time of Advent and Christmas” by Rick Marshall. Accessed from [www.processandfaith.org](http://www.processandfaith.org)



**INTERGENERATIONAL MOVIE EVENT:**

For many people, the holiday season feels like it is not quite complete without watching a favorite movie with family or friends. Tomorrow, Tuesday, December 21 — when the kids have already started Christmas break — we will gather in Fellowship Hall at 12:00 p.m. to watch the movie, “The Star.” In addition to just the fun of all being together to watch a movie, we will enjoy snacks together — popcorn, soda, and of course Christmas cookies. If you are an adult who loves to make Christmas cookies or a family who likes to bake together, you are welcome to share your tasty treats with the whole group. Any questions, please call the church office, Brandi Higgins, or Rev. Linda.

**CHRISTMAS EVE SERVICES:** Join us on Christmas Eve for one of our candle lighting services. This year’s services will be held at 1:00 p.m. and 7:00 p.m. in the sanctuary. Twenty minutes prior to each of these services (12:40 and 6:40), those who wish are invited to gather outside in front of the church around the Advent wreath for a time to sing some of our favorite Christmas carols before proceeding inside for our Christmas Eve candlelight service.

**PJS & PANCAKES:** There are no Sunday School classes for children or adults on Sunday, December 26, but join us at 9:30 a.m. in Fellowship Hall for an intergenerational pancake breakfast. Come in your pajamas!

## *This Week at Westminster*

### **Monday, December 20**

6:00 p.m. Longest Night Service

### **Tuesday, December 21**

12:00 p.m. Intergenerational Christmas  
Movie ("The Star")

### **Friday, December 24**

12:40 p.m. Carols outside around the  
Advent wreath  
1:00 p.m. Christmas Eve Worship Service  
6:40 p.m. Carols outside around the  
Advent wreath  
7:00 p.m. Christmas Eve Worship Service

### **Saturday, December 25**

Merry Christmas

### **Next Sunday, December 26**

9:30 a.m. PJs & Pancakes  
10:30 a.m. Worship Service  
11:30 a.m. Fellowship Time

### **Westminster Presbyterian Church**

103 E. Midland Street  
Bay City, MI 48706  
989-686-1360

email: [office@wpcbc.org](mailto:office@wpcbc.org)  
website: [wpcbc.org](http://wpcbc.org)

### **Office Hours**

Monday - Thursday  
8:00 a.m. - 4:00 p.m.

Friday  
8:00 a.m. - 12:00 p.m.