



THE MESSENGER

December 2022

We welcome you to Worship in the Sanctuary with us on Sundays at 9:30 am and/or worship virtually with us on our YouTube channel at <https://westminsterlincoln.org/youtube-videos>.



Christmas Eve Worship at Westminster

Make plans for a very special Christmas Eve service at Westminster, it will be a meaningful way to begin the Christmas holiday. Worship with us at 5 pm and/or 7 pm, on Saturday, December 24. Join us in the Sanctuary, at home, abroad, or on the road—you will be with many others who are celebrating in worship. As always, feel free to invite some friends and family to worship with you.

LETTERS TO THE CONGREGATION

Dear Westminster friends,

What do you know about Christmas? Probably less than you might imagine. While the resurrection of Christ was a weekly celebration – on the first day of the week – from the earliest days of Christianity, Christmas was not generally observed until late in the 4th century A.D.; the earliest historical mention is in a calendar for 336 which notes a celebration of Christ's nativity on December 25. The date was likely chosen because it was already a holiday in pagan Rome: *Natalis Solis Invicti* or the "birth of the invincible Sun."

Meanwhile, in the Greek-speaking East, January 6 was chosen, which in the Western churches became Epiphany, for the marking of the visit of the Magi after Christmas.

Our American customs date mostly from the 19th century, developing out of German customs brought to England by Prince Albert and popularized by Charles Dickens. By the way, note that in "A Christmas Carol," it was a live issue as to whether December 25 could be a day off work! Other customs came from the Dutch and Scandinavians, the French and the Italians. But the Congregationalists, Baptists, and Presbyterians in America generally did not even observe Christmas until after 1850, the earlier generations in those faith groups counting "the frivolities of the day as unfit for the gospel."

The date and year of Jesus birth are unknown. The designation of A.D. – *anno domine* – counting years from the supposed year of Jesus' birth was a calendar devised by Dionysius Exiguus in 525 A.D. Unfortunately, his calculations were not quite correct. We now know that Herod the Great died in the year that Dionysius would have numbered 4 B.C., so Jesus must have been born in or prior to 4 B.C.

There is modern speculation that the star mentioned in Matthew's account may be based on the rare (once every 805 years!) conjunction of Jupiter, Saturn, and Mars, which in late 7 B.C. into early 6 B.C. would have risen in the constellation *Pieces*, which ancient astrology associated with the Jews. Halley's Comet came by in 12 B.C., but that is too early. This has led many students of the event to conclude that Jesus was likely born about 6 B.C., two years prior to Herod's death. And the date would have been in the spring, not in December, for shepherds would not have been staying out with the flocks at night in dead of winter. But we do not know.

The point of Jesus birth for Christians is not "winter festival" but the wondrous news that God has chosen to invade human history – the Incarnation – God's Word made flesh is essential to the hope of Christians and the redemption story. The culmination of that comes at the Cross and vindicated by the Empty Tomb.

Pastor Jimmy

Dear Westminster friends,

While the One of my very first experiences at Westminster before I joined our church family was a Christmas Eve candlelight service. We had recently moved to the neighborhood and it was an easy walk up to the church. My one vivid memory from that experience was the heart-stopping beauty of the congregation singing Silent Night, candles lit, no accompaniment, just voices. It took my breath away. The hustle-and-bustle of the season fell away, and I just soaked it the peace. I've since attended many Christmas Eve services at Westminster, and while all have been lovely, none has matched that first wonderful one.

During Advent I try to remember that others will likely be experiencing Westminster for the first time. I've come to realize that an awful lot goes in to providing those peak experiences—staff, volunteers, facility, and of course God's own spirit. In my current role as trustee for the Westminster Foundation, I'm aware that our facility needs some expensive repairs and maintenance. Our building presents challenges for first-timers and others who may have mobility impairments or other disabilities. I appreciate how members over time have contributed to the Foundation to address such issues so that our facility remains beautiful and accessible.

On behalf of the Westminster Presbyterian Church Foundation, I ask you to consider joining those earlier members in making a gift that will allow our church to continue welcoming people in body as well as spirit.

When I look around the sanctuary this Christmas Eve, I'll wonder who among the gathering is experiencing Westminster for the first time, and I'll be grateful for all of the investments in time, talent, and money, that led them to this place. I will pray they find the peace that I did.

Pat Leach

Advent/Christmas Schedule

Dec. 18, 9:30 AM	Service of Lessons and Carols by Children and Youth
Dec. 24, 5 PM & 7 PM	Christmas Eve Worship Services Brass, Choir and Candle Lighting Sanctuary and Live Stream
Dec. 25, 9:30 AM	Christmas Day Worship Service Live Stream Only (no sanctuary worship)
Dec. 26	Church Building Closed for Holiday
Jan. 1, 9:30 AM	Worship with Communion Sanctuary and Live Stream

Westminster Friends,

Over the last couple of years, Westminster members have participated in a Reverse Advent Calendar project that supports the Westminster Food Pantry. Instead of “taking” something each day, we have the opportunity to “give” a food item each day of Advent. We had a wonderful response last year, and plan to do this as an annual event each Advent season.

Please see the calendar on the opposite page for your reference. These are suggested items based on the weekly food packages we provide through the Westminster Food Pantry.

We will have the church open to bring your Advent Box (an office paper-sized box would be ideal) during the following times: Sun 12/18 morning, Tues 12/27 - 9 am - 1 pm, Wed 12/28 - 10 am - 2 pm, Thur 12/29 - 10 am - 2 pm, Sun 1/1 morning.

**If you could mark your box with the words "Reverse Advent Calendar", this will help us to track the participation for this meaningful event.

If you are unable to bring your food during the available times above, please contact your deacon to arrange for someone to pick this up from your porch.

If you prefer not to collect items, the Westminster Food Pantry is always accepting donations! Please make your check out to Westminster Presbyterian Church, note the Food Pantry in the Memo line, and mail to the church at: 2110 Sheridan Blvd, Lincoln, NE 68502. Thank you!

Blessings From Your Westminster Deacons



Matt Talbot Kitchen Family Service Opportunity

If you are looking for an opportunity for your family to serve today, sign your family up to serve at Matt Talbot here

<https://forms.gle/gqmdsmiWbdRqVJJW8>.

Serving is simple – arrive at 5:00 pm to learn the ropes of setting out food and serving, then work as a team to serve from 5:30 until 6:30 p.m., and then help with basic clean-up before wrapping up around 6:45.

This is a great opportunity for a family or two households to partner together to follow the call of Jesus to “love our neighbor.”

Please contact Susie Hughes (skh@eskays.com) with questions.

Reverse Advent Calendar

EACH DAY, PLEASE ADD AN ITEM BELOW TO A BOX
(OFFICE PAPER-SIZED BOX IS IDEAL).
THESE ITEMS WILL BE DONATED TO THE WESTMINSTER FOOD PANTRY.

- December 1: box of cereal
- December 2: peanut butter
- December 3: pancake mix
- December 4: boxed potatoes
- December 5: macaroni and cheese
- December 6: canned peaches
- December 7: bar of soap
- December 8: canned tuna or chicken
- December 9: ravioli or spaghetti o's
- December 10: applesauce
- December 11: pancake syrup
- December 12: canned pears
- December 13: canned kidney beans, chili beans, etc.
- December 14: box of crackers
- December 15: box of Jell-O
- December 16: oatmeal
- December 17: pasta
- December 18: spaghetti sauce
- December 19: chicken noodle or tomato soup
- December 20: creamed soup
- December 21: canned corn
- December 22: canned mixed vegetables
- December 23: pork & beans
- December 24: canned green beans

Reverse Advent Calendar to Support the Westminster Food Pantry

During the Season of Advent, please consider participating in Westminster's Reverse Advent Calendar. Unlike traditional Advent calendars in which you receive a gift each day, this activity has you *give* a gift each day. The activity can be done either personally or as a family.

Specifically, we are asking our members to place food items in a box throughout the month of December. (See the Reverse Advent Calendar list of the requested food items).

These items will be used to stock the Westminster Food Pantry, which in turn provides food to families in need. Details will follow in the eVine as to how to drop off your box or call to have it picked up. Join us in preparing our hearts and minds for Christmas by remembering the needs in our community.





Hearts & Hands | Church Library

Wednesdays at 1:30 - 3:00 PM and/or 6:30 - 8:00 PM

Feel free to bring anything you'd like to work on. Some creative things you can enjoy doing with your hands are coloring, rock painting, embroidery, knitting, and stitching. Men and women and ALL craft projects welcome! Questions: Call Francy Scheele at (402) 310-4212.

Lunch Bunch | Wednesday, December 6 | 11:30 a.m. at Tico's

Lunch Bunch will meet at Tico's, 317 S 17th St, on Dec. 6 at 11:30 A.M.

RSVP to Jim Kinkennon at jimkinkennon@gmail.com.

Faith and Cancer Support Group | Library | Tuesday, December 20 | 7 p.m.

Cancer is associated with many emotions wrapped up within. In our support group at Westminster we can share those thoughts and feelings with others who are experiencing similar concerns.

All are welcome. Contact Bruce Sheffield at 402-783-0394 or Janice Rohwedder at 402-730-5568.

Prairie Readers | Wednesday, December 21 | 1:00 p.m. in Lounge

This will be a time to enjoy each other's company, munch on goodies and watch a holiday film.

Ladies' Night Out - Tuesday, December 27 | 5-7 PM

LNO will be gathering at Well & Good at the Scarlet Hotel on Innovation Campus 2101 Transformation Drive. As always, feel free to bring a friend, sister, aunt, daughter or mother to all our gatherings. RSVP to Robyn Uebele at robynu2@hotmail.com. Text or call Robyn 937-935-6858.



Westminster Presbyterian Women Circle 4

We will meet on December 5, 5:45 pm, at Venue Restaurant.

Upcoming Events & Save the Dates

Holiday of Trees Returns

The Heritage League is holding their 50th annual Holiday of Trees on Wed., Nov. 30 and Thurs., Dec. 1. The hours on Wed. are 10am to 8 pm and on Thurs. 10 am to 7 pm.

The admission is a donation at the door. Proceeds from this year's ticket sales will go to the St. Elizabeth Hospital Burn Unit. Come and see the beautiful trees and enjoy some treats.



Advent Study: A Branch Shall Grow

Have you ever thought of Advent as a time of growth? Have you ever wondered if your neighbor would welcome an invitation to attend church with you? Isaiah begins chapter 11 with “A shoot shall come out from the stump of Jesse, and a branch shall grow out of his roots.” What if we understood that that shoot, the Messiah, was calling us to be sharers of the Word not just hearers?

December 11 “The Holy Highway”: Isaiah 35:1-10 - Luke 1:46b-55

December 18 “Immanuel, God with Us”: Romans 1:1-7 - Matthew 1:18-25

Adult Education Series: “Fixtures in the Christmas Story: Dreams and Angels.”

On December 11 and 18, from 10:40 to 11:30 a.m. in the lounge, Pastor Jimmy will delve into the Hebrew Bible's take on dreams during the December 11 class; the following week do the same for “Angels.”

LiNK Neighborhood Caroling on December 14th

Join us for a meal in Cole Hall and then go caroling with us through the church neighborhood.

We'll finish up with hot cocoa back at the church. Share with our neighbors the HOPE, LOVE, JOY and PEACE of Advent.

Westminster's Children and Youth invite you to attend the children and youth led Lessons & Carols Service on Sunday, December 18th at 9:30 AM.

The Lessons & Carols service tells the story of God's plan for God's people, begun so long ago. It is a beautiful story told in narration and song. If you have any questions, contact Trish at trish@westminsterlincoln.org.



Are you an Amazon shopper? Do you use Amazon Smile? Did you know you can support Westminster while shopping on AmazonSmile?

AmazonSmile donates 0.5 percent of your Amazon purchases to WPC, if you have selected Westminster as your selected charity.

It's simple to do...

Go to smile.Amazon.com and choose Westminster Presbyterian Church, Lincoln, NE. Then start shopping. Amazon Smile will do the rest!

Westminster Preschool Christmas Program

Join us on December 6th in the Sanctuary from 6:30-7:30 pm. We have put together a Christmas Program to share with you & your family. Feel free to invite friends!



Styrofoam & Tree Lights Recycling

WHY are we recycling Styrofoam and string lights? Because we are an Earth Care Congregation that takes seriously our stewardship of creation.

HOW does recycling actually help with care of creation? 1) It reduces the energy and emissions used in producing new raw materials. 2) It keeps useable materials from emitting greenhouse gases in a landfill. 3) It keeps toxic matter from leaching into our waterways.

WHEN will we start collecting? Right after Thanksgiving.

WHERE do we bring our stuff? A bin for Styrofoam (no food containers or packing peanuts, please) and a box for lights will be just inside the parking lot doors

WHAT ELSE? We'll need a trailer to haul everything to Omaha sometime in February. If you have access to one, please talk with Tom Pappas.

THANK YOU! Because of YOU, Westminster is Green@Heart.





Christmas is Coming! Advent Workshop December 4, 10:30 AM-11:30 AM

We invite you to dive into the holiday season with the Advent Workshop. We will gather with the anticipation of great joy on the second Sunday of Advent, immediately after church to renew friendships, participate in the chili cook-off and compete for the coveted Silver Ladle Award, and enjoy cookies and fellowship at the children's craft workshop.

If you are interested in taking part in the chili cook-off, please contact sarah.baltensperger@gmail.com.

Youth Group Baked Goods Auction December 4, 2022

The Westminster Youth Group will be holding an auction during the Advent Workshop to raise money for Angel Tree presents. The Youth Group will be baking or decorating baked goods for a silent auction, but we would like to call upon all of our talented and creative bakers to donate something special to the cause. Cakes, pies, brownies, bars, breads, or anything you would like to make is welcome. To contribute an item to the auction, please complete this form <https://forms.gle/F3YnwA97dxXKmaDP6>.

Messenger & eVine Reminders:

All information for The Messenger is due to Tracy Hoffman at tracy@westminsterlincoln.org by the 18th of each month. All announcements for The eVine are due to Tracy and Joanne Gabriel at joanne@westminsterlincoln.org by 5 pm on Monday of each week.

Join Others in Reading the Bible in a Year

Is there a book that you've heard selections from but haven't read from cover to cover? Is there a book that you read once but would like to read again for a deeper look? This is your opportunity. Join with fellow Westminster-ites in small groups to read the Bible in the year 2023.

With Pastor Chris' guidance an NRSV Study Bible has been selected that is divided into daily readings starting with Genesis on January 1 and ending with Revelations on December 31. This is not a daily reading list. In this study Bible, there are directed readings with suggestions to help you meditate, contemplate, and pray.

From now through early December there will be sign-up sheets in the Garden Room. We are asking people to sign up and indicate if you are interested in being a group leader, a group member, or will be studying as an individual or family. When you sign up, indicate if you would like to purchase the book with a group from church or on your own. The selected Bible is available on Amazon, but the church might be able to get a lower price if enough copies are purchased.

Marijane England will be the facilitator and serve as a resource for group leaders.

Check the Garden Room on Sundays or contact Marijane England at marijane.england@gmail.com or send an email to the Church office.



ANGEL TREE

Christmas and holiday gifts are provided from the Angel Tree. These gifts are given to children from low income families. Gifts, toys, clothing, and much more is provided for disadvantaged children that range in age from infant to age 12. Senior citizens who are 60 years and older can also benefit from the Angel Tree.

Angel Tree at the top of the stairs across from the front desk. Pick a tag from the tree, shop, then return the unwrapped gifts with the tag attached to the bag and place them under the tree. **Gifts must be returned to the church by December 12.**

Most people, especially children, look forward to receiving clothing and gifts over the holidays. Will you be someone's Angel?

Thank you,

Mission & Outreach

A LETTER TO THE CONGREGATION

Westminster Friends,

As we move closer to the special season of Advent, we experience the spirit of Christmas gift giving and we want to express a sincere *Thank You!* to every family that has been able to be generous givers to Westminster.

When we regularly and intentionally give a portion of our blessings, we support the ministry of Westminster and put into action a Christ-minded spirit in the community to care for those less fortunate.

While your giving is always confidential, and known only to the church office, we as a committee can say with certainty that your financial support makes a powerful impact. Your gifts allow us to strengthen what we are today and to dream about the exciting future for Westminster.

Christmas Eve will be here soon and as you make your shopping and to-do lists for the holidays, please be sure to keep these three stewardship tasks in mind...

Return your 2023 Giving Commitment pledge card

Strive to meet your 2022 Pledge commitment so we finish the year strong

Consider Westminster in your year-end giving opportunities

On behalf of the leadership team of elders, pastors and staff of Westminster, we cannot say Thank You! enough. Your generosity this year is truly inspirational. We wish you the blessings of the season and thank you for being part of this special faith community.

Thanks, Westminster!

The WPC Stewardship & Finance Ministry



Westminster Presbyterian Church

2110 Sheridan Blvd

Lincoln, NE 68502

2022 Poinsettia Donation Form

Share the joy of Christmas! This year we will be ordering poinsettias to place in the sanctuary for the Christmas Eve services. You can make a donation in memory or in honor of a loved one, to be included in the bulletin for Christmas Eve.

The donation level is \$15. Please make checks payable to Westminster and write **POINSETTIA** on the memo line. Donations must be received by **Dec. 13** to be included in the order of worship. There is also an option to donate to the Westminster Library.

Mail your check and the information specified below to:

Westminster Presbyterian Church

Attn: Joanne

2110 Sheridan Blvd., Lincoln, NE 68502



_____ I would like to donate \$_____ toward the purchase of poinsettias.

_____ I would like to donate \$_____ to the Westminster Library.

Given by: _____

In memory of: _____

In honor of: _____

Amount enclosed: \$_____