

the

HARBINGER

open minds open hearts

VOLUME LXXIII | DECEMBER 27, 2020 | No. 34

From the Pews, Corey Sanders

There were two musical highlights of the Christmas Eve service at the church I grew up in. First, was the choir director's rendition of "Mary Did You Know". Second, was the soprano belting the high note in "O Holy Night." These were constants every year, and honestly the Christmas season did not feel right without them.

Over time, "Oh Holy Night" has become one of my favorite Christmas hymns. There is a sense of nostalgia as I remember my childhood. The music is one of the most masterful compositions ever written in the Christmas genre. While those two reasons typically bring me goosebumps when its sung, as of late it is the lyrics and its history that have captured me even more.

The hymn's origin comes from medieval southern France. It was written by a merchant and poet to commemorate a local parish's newly renovated organ. The poem was then passed to a renowned composer and that is where it was born. In the mid-1800s it was translated to English and we have been singing it ever since.

As we have now closed the Christmas Advent season, I am still drawn to the words of this hymn. "Long lay the world in sin and error, pining. Till he appeared, and the soul felt his worth. A thrill of hope, the weary world rejoices."

I can't help but believe we aren't so different than those who were anxiously awaiting the birth of the savior. Just as the world was pining for (or better defined as "longing for the return of") Jesus' arrival, we too are living in a world pining for the days where masks are designated for surgeons and Halloween parties, where every pew can be full on Sunday mornings, and where family gatherings have no limitations.

As we try our best to refocus and recharge heading to the new year, I am reminded of the covenant made between God and His people. Today's Old Testament passage reminds us we are part of a promise made many years ago. A covenant that brings us blessings, righteousness, and salvation. Isaiah's soul is rejoicing in this promise.

It's fair to say we are living in a weary world. One whose problems seem to be growing by the day. My hope is that you are reminded of the words of "Oh Holy Night". I hope you remember God appeared in flesh and that the soul felt his worth. And more than ever, I hope this weary world will rejoice in the blessings of God's covenant to each of us.

Happy New Year.

WESTMINSTER PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH

Sunday, December 27, 2020 | On Demand on Facebook & YouTube | 9a & 11:15a wpc-online.org



First Sunday after Christmas Day

Preparation for **Worship**

Almighty God, your Son Jesus Christ
was presented in the temple and acclaimed
the glory of Israel and the light of the nations.
Grant that in him we may be presented to you
and in the world may reflect his glory,
through Jesus Christ our Lord,
who lives and reigns with you in the unity of the Holy Spirit,
one God, now and forever. Amen.

Gathering and Preparing for **God's Word**

Prelude "Lo, How A Rose E'er Blooming" 15TH C.

Welcome and Announcements

Leader: The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you.

People: And also with you.

Call to Worship Galatians 4:4-6

When the fullness of time had come, God sent God's Son, born of a woman,
born under the law, in order to redeem those who were under the law,
so that we might receive adoption as children.

And because we are children, God has sent the Spirit of God's Son into our hearts.

Let us worship God!

String Quartet "Bring a Torch, Jarette, Isabella" FRENCH CAROL

Prayer of Confession and Assurance of Pardon

God of grace and truth,

in Jesus Christ you came among us as light shining in darkness.

We confess that we have not welcomed the light,

or trusted good news to be good.

We have closed our eyes to glory in our midst,

expecting little, hoping for less.

Forgive us, O God, for letting our impatience get the better of us.

We have set our hearts on what is shallow and fleeting.

Renew our strength and courage,

so that we would trust in your goodness,

abide in your faithfulness,

and share your love with the world. Amen.

Hearing **God's Word**

Prayer for Illumination

Old Testament Lesson, *Isaiah 61:10-62:3*

Gospel Lesson, *Luke 2:22-40*

Leader: The Word of the Lord.

People: Thanks be to God.

Sermon

"In Search of Happy Endings"

Responding to **God's Word**

Affirmation of Faith, *From The Confession of 1967*

God's sovereign love is a mystery beyond the reach of the human mind.

Human thought ascribes to God superlatives of power, wisdom, and goodness.

But God reveals divine love in Jesus Christ by showing power in the form

of a servant, wisdom in the folly of the cross,

and goodness in receiving sinful men and women.

The power of God's love in Christ to transform the world discloses

that the Redeemer is the Lord and Creator who made

all things to serve the purpose of God's love.

Prayers of Thanksgiving and Intercession

The Lord's Prayer

**Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name,
thy kingdom come, thy will be done,
on earth as it is in heaven.**

**Give us this day our daily bread; and forgive us our debts
as we forgive our debtors; and lead us not into temptation,
but deliver us from evil.**

**For thine is the kingdom, and the power,
and the glory forever. Amen.**

String Quartet

"My Soul Cries Out"

TRADITIONAL

Charge and Benediction

Postlude

"Pastorale" from *Messiah*

HANDEL

Leading Worship **this Morning**

Ben Dorr, *preaching*

Amos Workman, *liturgist*

The Mulfinger String Quartet

Joanna Mulfinger, Xiol Saliny, *violins*

Caleb Cox, *viola*

David Saliny, *cello*

WESTMINSTER PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH

OPEN MINDS •

Education@WPC

WESTMINSTER BOOK CLUB

The Westminster Book Club will meet on Tuesday, January 5 at 7pm. Verify location or type of meeting with Ellen Stevenson (ellens7377@gmail.com). Susan McLeod will lead our discussion of The Housekeeper and the Professor by Yoko Ogawa and Stephen Snyder. Please join us! New attendees are always welcome.

GIVING HEARTS •

Financial Update@WPC

2021 STEWARDSHIP CAMPAIGN

As of Tuesday, December 22, we have received \$2,112,619 in pledges toward our 2021 budget goal of \$2,513,715.

For your convenience, you may pledge via our website at wpc-online.org/pledge-today, you may mail in your pledge, or send your pledge by email to the Church Financial Secretary, Sherri Owens, at sherri@wpc-online.org.

FINANCIAL MINISTRY

2020 BUDGET UPDATE

2020 Pledges	\$2,517,968
Amount Received	\$2,159,991
Pledges Outstanding	(\$357,977)

Our auditing firm has informed us that we must close our books on December 31. Please have any contributions you wish to show on your 2020 statement in by December 31, 2020. By fulfilling your pledge, you enable us to keep faith with our mission partners. Thank you.

RETIREMENT GIVING

For those 70 and 1/2 years of age or older, you can make a direct transfer of up to \$100,000 from your IRA to Westminster Presbyterian Church. Though you will not get a charitable deduction, the withdrawal can serve as your required minimum distribution. The money will not be taxed and will not count toward your adjusted gross income. If you have any questions, please contact Sherri Owens, the church's Financial Secretary.

WESTMINSTER PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH

CALENDAR OF EVENTS

December 27, 2020 – January 2, 2021

FIRST SUNDAY AFTER CHRISTMAS DAY

9:00 a.m. Online Worship Service

11:15 a.m. Online Worship Service

FRIDAY

Church Office Closed for Holiday

CHURCH STAFF

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