

CHRISTMAS JOY

As we give thanks to our good and grace-filled God in this final week before the celebration of Jesus' birthday, we are filled with Holy Joy! Nehemiah 8:10 reminds us: "The JOY of the Lord is our strength!"

There are several things that we Christians are JOYFUL about during this Christmas Celebration:

1. We are JOYFUL that God loves the world and has given us the gift of Jesus, the Son of God, and the Son of Man.
2. We are JOYFUL that in a world that continues to see violence and discord, that God has not given up on us. Psalm 46:1 says it this way: "God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in times of trouble."
3. We are JOYFUL for the hope we see in Jesus, the Christ. This hope allows us to count our blessings during difficult times. I am reminded of the gospel hymn: Count Your Blessings! "When upon life's billows you are tempest tossed, when you are discouraged thinking, all is lost. Count your many blessings, name them one by one. And it will surprise you what the Lord hath done."

Christmas Joy is what makes life worth living, year after year. At Westminster Presbyterian Church we are thankful for the ways that God has used us to make the world a better place to live. We are thankful for the ways God has used us to reach out to the hungry and the homeless through the work we have done at The Bridge and Austin Street shelters. And, just a reminder, the loose offering we receive at our joint 5 p.m. Christmas Eve candlelight service with St. Patrick's Anglican Church, will be split between these two ministries.

We are also thankful for the members and friends of Westminster Presbyterian Church who contribute and pledge to our budget each year. Your involvement in worship, Sunday School, workdays, mission outreach, worship leader, and serving on our Session help make life at Westminster a heart-felt ministry that shows Jesus' love for the world to all our neighbors and friends.

Westminster Presbyterian Church may be a small church, but we are a fellowship that loves what God has done in the world through the gift of Jesus, the Messiah. May God continue to draw us together in the bond of peace. May God continue to heal the memories of the past and bring us ever closer to what the Apostle Paul in Philippians 4:7 dreams for us: "And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus."

Have a Merry Christmas!

The Pastor & Staff at Westminster Presbyterian Church

PRAYER REQUESTS:

Rev. Dr. John Blacklock

Tom Fearson

Chris Stanley

Donn McDaniel

Michele Brockett's daughter, Allison, and her fiancé, Charlie, who are experiencing multiple health challenges and recent losses. May God richly bless their upcoming marriage and watch over the entire family!

UPCOMING EVENTS:

- Dec 21** **Serve dinner at Austin Street Center – Contact Mike Stanley at (817) 724-7430 or mike@colbystanley.com if you'd like to donate food or are interested in volunteering to serve, and plan to meet at the church at 4:00 PM on Saturday.**
- Dec 22** **We'll be collecting for the Christmas Joy Offering this Sunday.**
- Dec 24** **5:00 PM Christmas Eve Candlelight Service with special music**

The playground renovations have been postponed, most likely until February, so the play areas will be open throughout the holiday season.

UPDATE ON STEWARDSHIP DRIVE:

Westminster Presbyterian Church has received pledges for financial support of our many and varied missions for the year 2025 from 19 pledging units totaling \$ 75,250. This is an increase of approximately \$15,000 over the pledged amounts for 2024. It is very rewarding to see that our ministry continues to grow as we seek to do God's will. We ask that if you have not yet made your pledge for 2025 you consider doing so before the end of December so we can accurately forecast our church budget for the calendar year of 2025. WPC is very appreciative of the strong support we envision for 2025 and will use God's resources with wisdom and gratitude for our ministry.

CHRISTMAS JOY OFFERING - Did you know?

- ❖ The Christmas Joy Offering has been a cherished Presbyterian tradition since the 1930s.
- ❖ The Offering distributes gifts equally to the Assistance Program of the Board of Pensions and to Presbyterian-related schools and colleges equipping communities of color.
- ❖ The Assistance Program provides critical financial support to church workers and their families.
- ❖ Presbyterian-related schools and colleges provide education and leadership development while nurturing racial and ethnic heritage. This has been a Presbyterian commitment for nearly 140 years.

Look for the inserts and envelopes in your Sunday bulletin this week. Gifts are welcome at any time this month. If we all do a little, it can add up to a lot!