

A photograph of a cave interior. The walls are dark, layered rock. A bright light source, likely the sun, is visible at the end of a sandy path that leads into the distance. The light creates a strong beam on the sand, which is covered in footprints. The overall atmosphere is one of mystery and hope.

LOVE

where are you leading us?

A Word From Our Senior Pastor

Years ago I met a one-eyed poet named Robert Creeley. His was a very exciting occasion for me, because I was already familiar with his work and was especially taken with his poem "Kore". The final lines of that poem ask the question, "O love, where are you leading me now?" These words became my mantra through six appointments to local churches and one to a general agency of our church. This Advent I want to share this mantra with you in the Advent Theme for 2015:

LOVE

where are you leading us?

God leads by example in the person of Jesus. As we open our minds, hearts, and lives to God's example of love's leading in Jesus, we begin to discern where God is leading us as individuals and as a community of faith.

Where is God leading you? Where is God leading West End UMC? The first letter of John states boldly that "God is love and those who abide in love abide in God and God abides in them." This is the witness of Advent, God's love born into the world as an infant to show us the growth of God's love for the world and all people. The revelation of God's love in Jesus teaches us how to abide in love and to ask where that love is leading us. This Advent we are living into that very question as we prepare ourselves and our congregation to celebrate Jesus' birth. Love, where are you leading us?



Michael Williams
Senior Pastor

Texts and Topics for the Advent and Christmas Seasons

November 29, 2015

First Sunday of Advent
Signs of the Times
Luke 21:25-36

December 13, 2015

Third Sunday of Advent
Fruits of a Changed Life
Luke 3:10-18

December 24, 2015

Christmas Eve
Good News of Great Joy
Luke 2:1-14

December 6, 2015

Second Sunday of Advent
The Voice
Luke 3:1-8

December 20, 2015

Fourth Sunday of Advent
The Visit
Luke 1:39-55

December 27, 2015

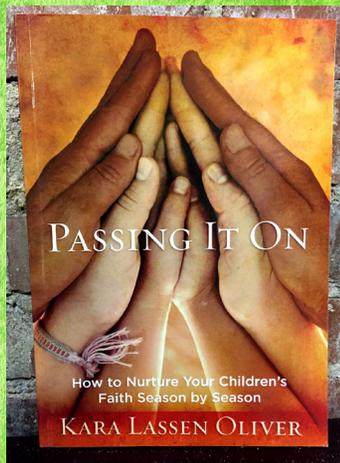
The First Sunday after
Christmas
Lost and Found
Luke 2:41-52

Advent 2015 Family Resource: *Passing It On* by Kara Oliver

Every year, we busily prepare for Christmas day: baking cookies, buying presents, and visiting family. This year we also want to pay closer attention to God. We want to prepare our hearts to receive Jesus on Christmas day, to remember that we are celebrating Jesus' birthday. Kara Oliver's new book, *Passing It On*, helps us to do just that.

Oliver prompts us to look for symbols in daily life that remind us that God is with us.

West End will have copies of *Passing It On* available at our Advent Wreath Workshop and at the Wednesday, December 2 Workshop for use this Advent. This resource can be used with whomever we consider family—with friends, with parents, grandparents, children, and youth, and in conversations over the phone or in video chat. This Advent, let us practice living the ways Jesus wants us to live!



Connections Class Continuing During Advent Sundays, 9:45-10:45 a.m. in McWhirter Hall

This new Sunday Morning Class is designed to be accessible and drop-in friendly, so you're welcome to come to every class or just drop-in whenever you're able. Each month the class will be hosted and led by a different Sunday School Class or small group, so it will be a great opportunity to grow deeper in your faith and connect with a diverse mix of West Enders. The _____ will be hosting and leading discussions during the month of December using the Advent curriculum SENT. Join the discussion of Advent, reflecting on John 17:18:

AS YOU SENT ME INTO THE WORLD,
SO I HAVE SENT THEM...

Advent Outreach Opportunities

Share the Gift Mission Market

Sunday mornings, December 6, 13, and 20

Share the gift of Christmas by shopping the Alternative Giving Catalog and by visiting our Mission Market during Advent. Rethink the typical Christmas gift by purchasing fair trade and handmade gifts in Reed Hall on Sundays, December 6, 13, and 20. You will be able to purchase locally made products from Thistle Farms, Justice for Our Neighbors, Humphrey Street Coffee, WOW Soap, Project Transformation, and Henderson Settlement. You can also purchase items handmade from Guatemala. Additionally, you can pick up your alternative giving cards with your order from the Alternative Giving Catalog.

Advent Special Offering Edgehill Neighborhood Partnership (ENP)

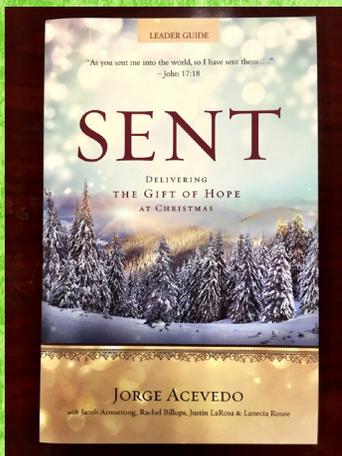
This year's special offering will benefit Edgehill Neighborhood Partnership (ENP). ENP works with their neighbors to improve the quality of life in their community. It was started by Edgehill United Methodist Church and its programs were born from the ministries of the church. Their mission is to work for justice and equality with their neighbors in the Edgehill community of Nashville, Tennessee, through building relationships, community action, service, and empowerment.

ENP has developed two programs addressing pressing neighborhood needs. The Spot, a twice-a-week afterschool program for high school girls, focuses on the girls becoming their best selves. ENP also offers the FreeStore, a twice-a-month welcoming place for all in the neighborhood to share a meal and "shop" for needed household and personal items.

You can contribute to the Special Advent Offering for Edgehill Neighborhood Partnership anytime throughout the month of December. Just designate your gift for Edgehill Neighborhood Partnership (ENP).

Decoration Drive for Renewal House November 22-December 6

Please bring in new or gently used holiday decorations for Renewal House, an organization that gives treatment to women affected by substance abuse and provides housing for them and their children. To make the holidays a more enjoyable time of year for these families, donations will be collected to decorate their apartments from November 22nd through December 6th. This includes Christmas lights, garland, ornaments, wreaths, stockings, etc. Financial gifts can be given directly to the church, designated for Renewal House Holiday Drive. Contact Caroline Hoffman with any questions at caroline.a.hoffman@gmail.com.





Advent Dinner and Workshop

Sunday, November 29 at 5:30 p.m.

Experience Advent in a way that helps us discover where God's love in Jesus is leading! What better way than by participating in the Annual Advent Wreath Workshop and Dinner. The entire congregation is invited to participate in the Annual Advent Wreath Workshop and Dinner on November 29 from 5:30 – 7 p.m. in McWhirter Hall. We begin with a potluck dinner, followed by hymns, readings, and preparation of Advent wreaths.

Dinner is a potluck and we ask you to bring enough to share with 6-8 others: last name A-I bring a starchy side dish or bread; J-R vegetarian entrée, vegetable side, or salad; S-Z dessert. Meat and drinks will be provided.

Advent is a season for preparing how to celebrate and recognize the gift we receive through the birth of Jesus. What better way to begin our preparation than by creating an Advent wreath to use in our homes. Wreath making supplies will be provided, but each family is asked to bring greenery for decorating the wreaths. If you still have your Styrofoam wreath form from last year, please bring it and re-decorate it. This will allow us to have enough supplies for families to create a 2nd Advent wreath to take to a neighbor or a home-bound church member.

Join with your church family in an Advent worship time at the end of the experience as we light the first candle on the Advent wreaths.

Advent Workshop with Authors Kara Oliver and Jenny Youngman

Wednesday, December 2 from 6-7 p.m. in 4th Story Theatre

Discover Immanuel, God with us, in a new way this year! Join Kara and Jenny as they explain how we can slow down and look for God in the midst of this busy season. Through conversation starters, Kara's book, *Passing It On*, offers prompts that remind us of God's presence with us. Free copies of the book will be available for each family to use this Advent. Join us before the workshop for Wednesday night dinner, served between 5-6 p.m. in McWhirter Hall. Menu and reservations can be found at westendumc.org/RSVP.

Sleepers Wake! Chancel Choir and Orchestra

Sunday, December 6 at 4:30 p.m. in the Sanctuary

Join the Chancel Choir and orchestra as they perform an eclectic mix of Christmas choral music including acapella treasures, music by John Tavener, Herbert Howells, and Bach's famous Cantata 140 "Wachet Auf."

Advent Beyond Canon with Rev. Austin Adkinson

Wednesday, December 9 from 6-7 p.m. in 4th Story Theatre

This workshop is an introduction to using extracanonical texts for the spiritual use of faithful people. Focusing on texts like The Gospel of Mary, The Gospel of Thomas, and other ancient Scripture not in The Bible, this primer will focus on the early Jesus movement writings discovered at Nag Hammadi and other parts of Egypt, from the unhelpful label of "Gnostic Gospels," and ease participants into granting provisional authority to writings that help bring the teachings of Jesus to life in new ways. Familiarity with these ancient writings is not expected. Join us before the workshop for Wednesday night dinner, served between 5-6 p.m. in McWhirter Hall. Menu and reservations can be found at westendumc.org/RSVP.

Reconciliation Dinner

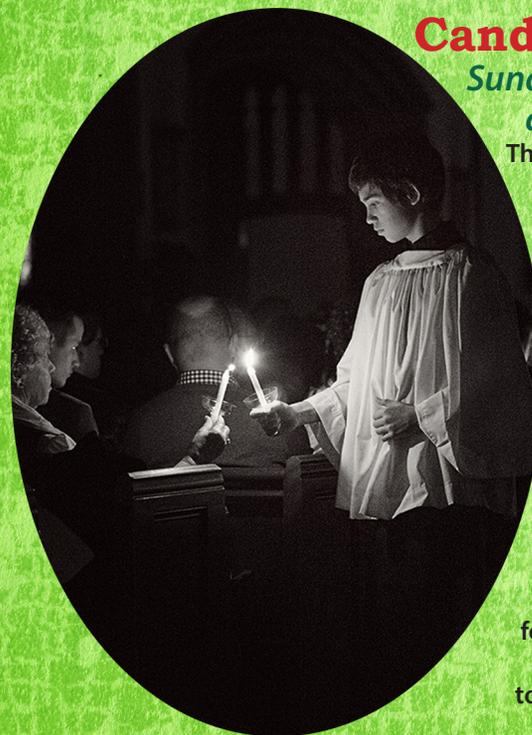
Saturday, December 12 from 6 - 8 p.m. in McWhirter Hall

An annual special event for the families of incarcerated individuals will be held on Saturday evening, December 12 from 6-8 p.m. in McWhirter Hall. You can participate by purchasing gifts for the families, donating funds for the dinner and gifts, and helping at the dinner as a table host. Table hosts will be paired with one of our guest families and will escort them around to the craft tables and photo booth and sit with them during the meal and program. If you would like to participate, please contact Lisa Gwock at lgwock@westendumc.org or 615.321.8500.

Candlelighting Service

Sunday, December 14 beginning
at 5:30 p.m. in the Sanctuary

The Candlelighting Service is a long time West End tradition featuring all the singing choirs and all the handbell choirs. At 5:10 p.m. the handbell choirs begin ringing carols with the service beginning at 5:30 p.m. in the Sanctuary. The service retells the Christmas story through scripture, from the prophecy to the birth, with carols being sung by the choirs and congregation. The service ends with the lighting of candles and singing of Silent Night. It is a very meaningful way to celebrate the Christmas season by focusing on the birth of the Christ-child and the implication it has on our lives today. Early arrival is encouraged as this service fills up quickly



Preschool Christmas Celebration

Friday, December 18 at 9:30 a.m. in McWhirter Hall

All are invited to join West End Preschoolers on Friday, December 18 at 9:30 a.m. in McWhirter Hall as classes share their favorite holiday stories and songs. A reception will follow with breakfast treats fellowship.

OEF Christmas Outing

Friday, December 18 from 3:30 - 5 p.m.

Gather your gloves and a jacket and join the Older Elementary Fellowship (Grades 4-6) for a fun outing to the Centennial Ice Sportsplex at Centennial Park on December 18, from 3:30-5 p.m. The cost is \$8 for ages 12 and under and \$9 for ages 13 and up. Register by December 16 at westendumc.org/oeficeskating. It is important that we know who will be participating since tickets will be purchased in advance. Parents are needed to chaperone and friends are welcome.



Family Christmas Eve Service

Wednesday, December 24 at 4 p.m. in the Sanctuary

At 4 p.m. on Christmas Eve, our older elementary children and youth will tell the Christmas story from the Gospels of Luke and Matthew during the worship drama as the Word is proclaimed. Children of all ages are invited to participate in the worship drama as characters from the Christmas story.

Children who wish to dress in costumes for the drama, may come to the theater on the 4th floor at 3:15 p.m. (costumes will be provided). Costumed children will participate in the traditional processional into the sanctuary. Parents of our youngest costumed children are encouraged to walk with your little ones from the theater and in the processional. Pews will be reserved on the lectern side of the center aisle in the sanctuary (opposite where the children are seated) for families with young children and children in the processional. Please be sensitive to whether your child will be more comfortable sitting with you or with the other children prior to being invited to come join the story in the Chancel area.

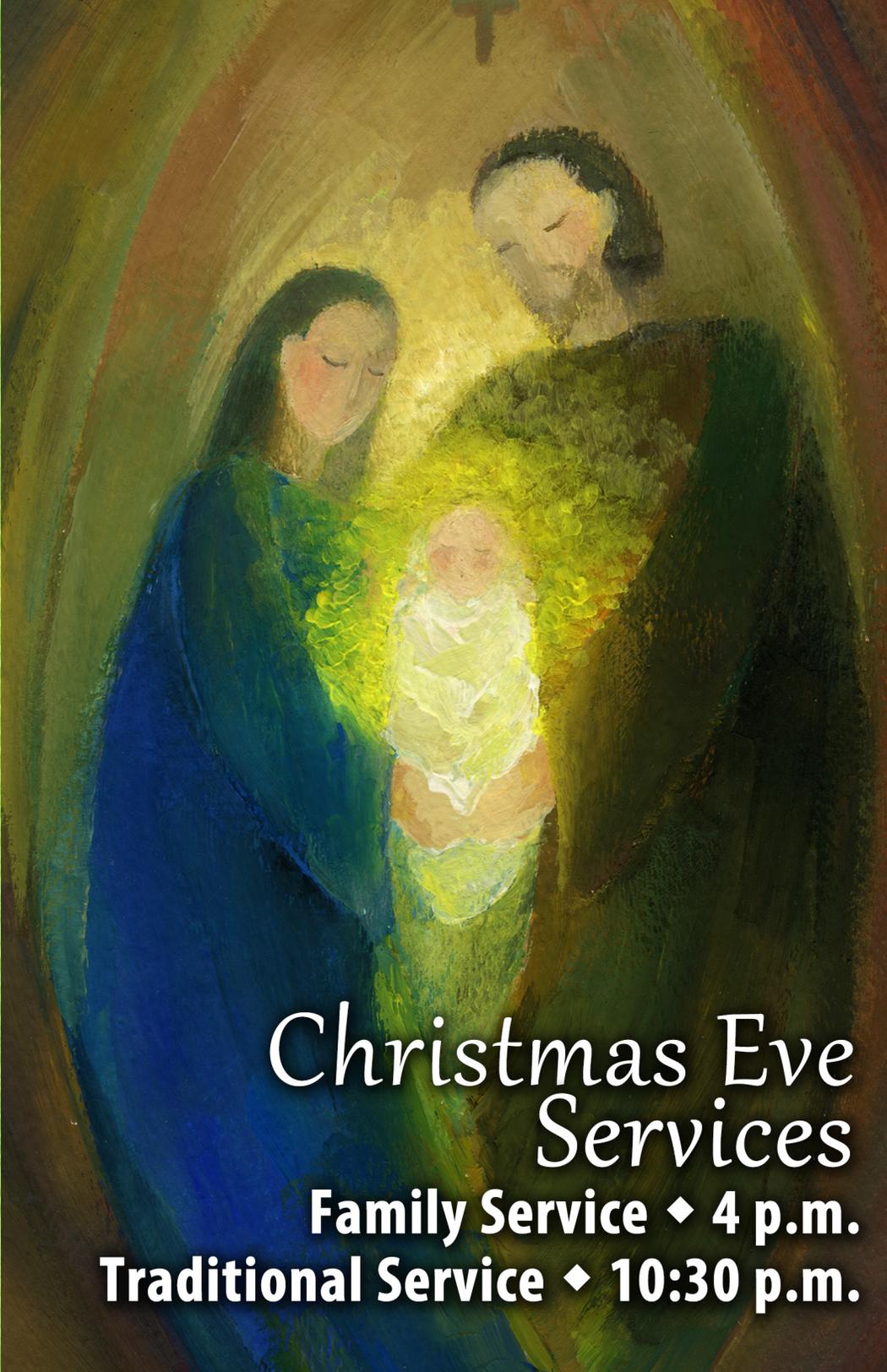
This year we are asking all children who did not participate in the drama but want to see the baby to come to the Communion rail. The baby will be held up and presented to the congregation for all to see.

The Holy Family will lead a recessional of the children who are costumed and participated in the worship drama. Parents may collect their children in the Narthex as they recess out the center aisle while the Table is set for Communion. The entire congregation is invited to participate in Holy Communion.

Traditional Christmas Eve Service

Wednesday, December 24 at 10:30 p.m. in the Sanctuary

With the sacrament of Holy Communion and music of the choirs, this traditional service is one of the highlights of our West End worship, celebrating Christ's birth as a gift for all time. An organ prelude of Christmas music begins at 10 p.m. in the sanctuary and the service begins at 10:30 p.m.



Christmas Eve Services

Family Service ♦ 4 p.m.

Traditional Service ♦ 10:30 p.m.

The Journey to Bethlehem has many roads

- ◆ *It is the road of a young girl hearing the news that she will bear God's Son.*
- ◆ *It is the road Mary takes to visit her cousin Elizabeth and share her news.*
 - ◆ *It is the road Joseph takes as he decides to keep his commitment.*
 - ◆ *It is the road a young couple takes from Nazareth to a birth in a feed trough in Bethlehem.*
- ◆ *It is the hurried sprint of shepherds reeling from the sight of angels filling the sky.*
 - ◆ *It is the travels of scholarly minds from the East to find a King.*

There is no one single Journey to Bethlehem; there are many journeys, along many roads. The reason we journey to Bethlehem every year during the season of Advent is to remember the heart of the story:

Our Savior and God's Son, Jesus was born!

Your family is invited to join the Journey to Bethlehem this Advent season on Sunday, December 6 at 12:15 p.m. following the late worship service in McWhirter Hall to experience the Christmas story. Everyone will start by enjoying a delicious lunch catered by Martha Stamps; then, you will hear the Christmas story broken down into the multiple scenes that make up this familiar story. Children will be grouped with adult leaders who will help them discover the characters and what happens in each scene, and they will have an opportunity to interpret their scene in creative ways. Each individual scene will be filmed and used to create a mini film that will be played before the Family Christmas Eve service in the 4th Story Theater while the children dress in their costumes and wait to process into the service.

Children ages 3 (if potty trained) through grade 5 are invited to participate. RSVP for lunch, register for the event and volunteer at westendumc.org/journey. For more information, contact Monty Wilson at montywilson515@gmail.com.



Journey to Bethlehem



WEST END
UNITED METHODIST CHURCH

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