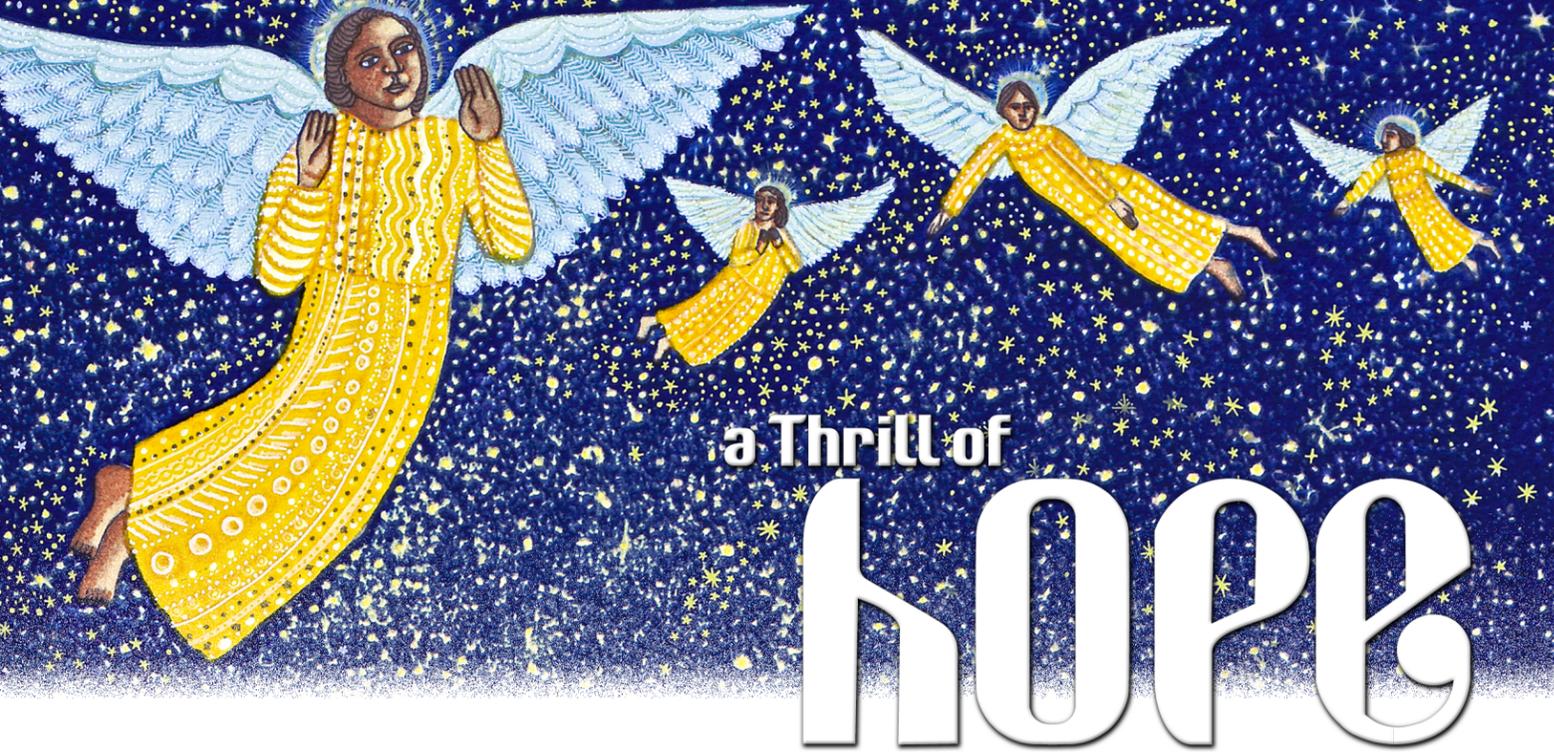


a Thrill of

HOPE



Hanging on the wall in my office is a painting by John August Swanson of Jesus washing the disciples' feet. Although weeks will go by when I hardly notice the picture, there are times when I sit and ponder its imagery and allow it to guide me into prayer. The picture continually reveals new things to me and helps me experience the love of Christ in ways beyond words. Art has a way of doing that.

Since the early days of the Christian movement, believers have turned to images, artwork, and icons as sources of spiritual growth and windows into prayer. You may have heard of the practice of *lectio divina*, "holy reading," that listens for God to speak afresh through the words of scripture. But did you know that there is also the practice of *visio divina*, the pondering of art and imagery in ways that allow God to speak to us?

This time of year, we are surrounded by lots of different images: Christmas cards with Santa and his bag of toys; winter scenes with sleighs and bemitted children; wreaths and mistletoe and stockings. In the midst of all the images around us, I want to invite you to explore with me sacred depictions of Jesus' birth narrative painted by John August Swanson. We will be turning to his art to help us see the Advent scriptures in new ways. Our theme will be "A Thrill of Hope," and Swanson's paintings will accompany us as we hear stories from Luke's gospel.

As we enter into this Advent season of holy waiting, may we see with new eyes the hope that Christ brings into our world. May we find beauty and meaning in unexpected places. May we experience afresh the story of Christ's birth. And may that story thrill us with new hope!

Carol Cavin-Dillon, Senior Pastor

Scripture Readings for the Advent Season

November 28 ♦ Luke 21:25-36

December 5 ♦ Luke 1:68-79

December 24 ♦ Luke 2:1-20

December 12 ♦ Luke 3:7-18

December 19 ♦ Luke 1:39-55

Missions and Outreach Advent Opportunities

Christmas Gifts for Kids in Foster Care

We are pleased to announce that we will once again be providing gifts for kids in foster care in our area through the Tennessee Alliance for Kids. You can select the kids you'd like to purchase gifts for at westendumc.org/angeltree.

Gifts should add up to around \$150 per kid and are due to the church no later than November 30th. Questions? Ask Stacey by email sharwellde@westendumc.org

Advent Special Offering - Lunches for Hope Program

This year's Advent Offering will go to the Lunches for Hope Program in the Dassa-Zoume region of Benin, Africa. The funds will be used by former West End member Hilarion Vegba who worshipped and studied with us when he was enrolled in a program at Vanderbilt. He had a great idea to provide a daily lunch to the 30 girls enrolled in the program. These thirty girls will receive lunch five days a week for nine months of school. Before this program, girls without this lunch money asked for the money from men who took advantage of their situation. West End funded this program last year and there was a dramatic decrease in girls dropping out of school, early pregnancy and trafficking. Our goal is \$5400 which will fully fund lunches for one year. You can give online by marking the "Other" and writing in "Advent Special Offering" or by check with "Advent Special Offering" in the memo line.

Advent Mission Markets

We are restarting our tradition of hosting an Advent Missions Market in Reed Hall. We will be in person this time as well as pointing you to other vendors in our community who also have a social mission but cannot join us at this time. Vendors will be with us from 8:15 a.m. - 12:15 p.m. on the following dates:

November 28 ♦ Earl Henry Bird Prints

December 5 ♦ Harvest Hands (Soap and Coffee)

December 5 ♦ Offsite Mission Market ♦ Sage Refill Market

1214 Wedgewood Ave, Nashville, TN 37212 from 4 - 6 PM (4-5 PM with other shoppers, 5-6 PM West End exclusive shopping hour)

December 12 ♦ Chimes for Justice (Stained Glass)

December 19 ♦ Ten Thousand Villages (Fair Trade goods)

We also want to point you to the website of our historic partners at Thistle Farms (thistlefarms.org) who are not doing markets of our size this year.





Spiritual Formation Advent Opportunities

Keep Watch With Me: An Advent Reader for Peacemakers

A Resource for Personal Devotion and Group Study

As we focus on our Advent theme “A Thrill of Hope,” we do well to remember that this phrase comes from the lyric of the hymn O Holy Night, among the most popular of Christmas hymns. In that beloved hymn we sing, “Truly He taught us to love one another, His law is love and His gospel is peace.” This Advent season, you are invited to meditate on the words and reflections of modern-day peacemakers.

Many of you may remember Michael McRay who is a consultant and coach in storytelling and conflict transformation, a trained mediator, and an author. In 2017, he led West End’s summer Sunday morning series as he taught us about the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. In 2019, Michael and co-author Rev. Claire Brown embarked on a project to create a new Advent devotional that contains daily reflections from a variety of persons working to bring peace and justice into the world today.

The result of their work is titled *Keep Watch with Me: An Advent Reader for Peacemakers*. Press for the book describes it as “a collaborative daily devotional featuring diverse contributors: black, white, LGBTQ, Latinx, Palestinian, incarcerated, Native American, Australian, Americans, Irish, South African, clergy, laity, activists, authors, organizers, and more.” In it, you will read, reflect, and learn from an amazingly diverse collection of contributors, many of whom have spoken or taught at West End at some time in the past. Furthermore, you will find prayers and daily spiritual practices to guide you in your Advent journey.

We would encourage you to use this resource in any or all the following ways:

- ◆ As a guide for personal devotion: The book is designed to be read daily beginning on December 1st. Simply purchase the book and begin reading when December arrives.
- ◆ As a small group study or group reflection: While this book is designed primarily as a daily reader, the meditations and spiritual practices can be used by your Sunday morning class or other small group as a foundation for discussion, reflection, and prayer together. If your Sunday morning class or other small group would like to use the book during Advent and you have questions about how to adapt it for group study, contact Pastor Brandon for more assistance, bbaxter@westendumc.org.

You may purchase the book at Amazon (<https://www.amazon.com/Keep-Watch-Me-Advent-Peacemakers/dp/1501876333/>) or from Cokesbury (<https://www.cokesbury.com/Keep-Watch-with-Me>).

Advent Prayer Stations Weekly Prayer and Lighting of Candles at WEUMC

Wednesdays, 5:30-8 p.m.

Last Advent, we were forced to be creative because we could not use our worship spaces in the traditional ways to which we were accustomed. One of the adaptations that emerged in that season was the creation of Advent stations that remained set up in the church for the duration of Advent. These stations were very popular, so we will continue this practice of providing quiet space for prayer and reflection during the busyness of the Advent season.

Beginning the first week of Advent, prayer stations will be available in the breezeway between Scales Chapel and the Sanctuary. These stations will include a place for lighting prayer candles, weekly prayer prompts, music, our Chrismon tree, and even our life-size nativity. The stations will incorporate the artwork of John August Swanson whose art is serving as a focal point for this holy season. The prayer prompts and art will change weekly.

Every Wednesday evening in Advent (12/1, 12/8, 12/15, 12/22), we will have the entrance to the breezeway open for prayer and reflection from 5:30 - 8 p.m. When the schedule allows, we will also make the Sanctuary available for prayer during these hours. Pastors will be monitoring our stations at these hours and available for prayers of healing. Furthermore, you may visit these stations on Sunday mornings or whenever you happen to be in the building.

We hope these prayer stations will awaken your spirit and bring peace to you this Advent season. Take time to engage this wonderful opportunity to prepare your heart and mind for the arrival of Christ through the beauty of art, music, prayer, and our Spirit-filled worship spaces.

Events During Advent

Advent Wreath Workshop

Sunday, November 28 ♦ 4 - 5:30 p.m.

The Advent Wreath Workshop is back in person for 2021! We will be in the gym this year making wreaths to prepare for the Advent season of waiting and hoping for the birth of Christ. We will be asking everyone to register to attend the event so we can be ready for everyone with space and supplies.

The wreath making will include an Advent worship time, celebrating the 1st Sunday of Advent! Resources and devotional materials will be available for church families to observe lighting the Advent wreath candles in their homes during the Advent season.

We will also have a mission focus this year of snack bags for people experiencing homelessness. Check out the Amazon list below to see what supplies we need for the bags, and we encourage you to bring 1 or more item from the list. You can also bring a monetary donation (suggested \$10). We will have an assembly line set up for making bags after you finish your wreath!

Snack bag items: nutri-grain bars, handwarmers, peanut butter crackers, apple sauce pouches, crunchy granola bars, individual peanut packs, slim jims, and tuna and cracker kits. For the full details see the link: <https://a.co/8bvJoE3>

Please register online by November 24 at westendumc.org/adventwreath.

Handel's Messiah Part 1

Sunday, December 5 ♦ 4:30 p.m.

Our Chancel Choir, Sanctuary Choir, and orchestra will kick-off the Christmas season with a performance of Handel's classic telling of the Christmas story. Join the choirs and orchestra, in-person or livestream, for their first concert since the beginning of the pandemic.

OEF Christmas Party

Sunday, December 5 ♦ 5 - 6:30 p.m.

4th, 5th, and 6th Graders are invited to join us for a Christmas Party on December 5 from 5-6:30 p.m. in McWhirter Hall. We'll have dinner, play Christmas themed games, and watch a festive Christmas classic movie. Each child should bring a gift-wrapped, regular-sized candy bar for the candy bar game! Register at westendumc.org/oefchristmas.

Youth Progressive Dinner: Christmas Pajama Theme!

Friday, December 10 ♦ 6 - 9 p.m.

This is an evening for ALL of our 7th -12th graders to come together for fun, fellowship, yummy food and a lot of laughter. We will ALL meet at the church and then travel to the homes of Anna and Peter Bigelow, Alex Stirling and Trip and Lochlan Cook and then return to the church.

Bring a fast food gift card to share with our friends who live on the street AND a gift for our Dirty Santa Gift Exchange!. Please don't buy your gift - try to find something unique in your home to exchange!

Please RSVP to Emily by Sunday, December 5th, so we have plenty of vehicles and food at erobbins@westendumc.org

Candlelighting Service

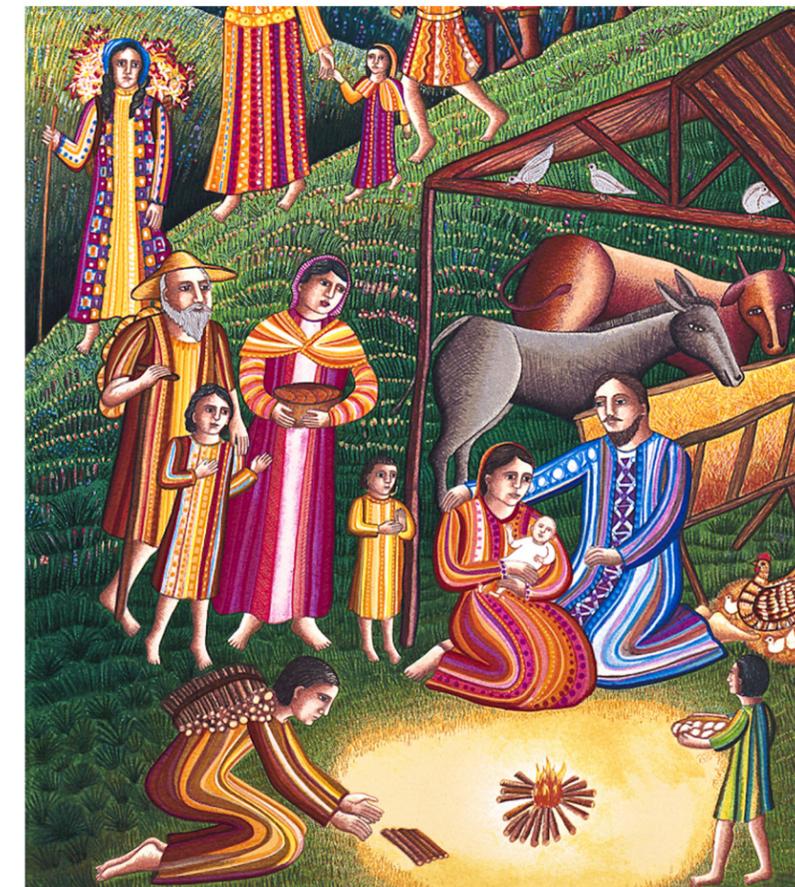
Sunday, December 12 ♦ 5:30 p.m.

Join West End's choirs and handbell choirs in our annual tradition of lessons and carols. Early arrival is recommended. Livestream is available.

Family Movie Day

Sunday, December 19 ♦ 3 p.m.

Join Drama and Visual Arts for an interactive reading and viewing of *How the Grinch Stole Christmas* (2018 film, starring Benedict Cumberbatch) This will be fun for the entire family!



Service of the Longest Night

Tuesday, December 21 ♦ 6:30 p.m. ♦ Sanctuary and Online

The Christmas season is often advertised as a time of celebration and cheer, yet for many it can also be a time of loneliness, grief, and struggle. The collective trauma we have experienced due to the Covid-19 pandemic has only been layered on top of all of the other losses and struggles we face, such as illness, the death of a loved one, job loss, divorce, infertility, financial difficulties, and more.

Services of the Longest Night, traditionally held on the longest night of the year, are meant to hold space for those who may need a quiet place for reflection, prayer, and tears. In the midst of the darkest time of the year, a Service of the Longest Night draws people into a community of those who "get it," where candles are lit as a reminder that even in the midst of darkness, the Light of Christ is coming into the world.

On December 21, at 6:30 p.m. West End will hold a Service of the Longest Night, both in-person and online. We will gather, physically and virtually, to hear words from Scripture, light candles, hear comforting music, receive Communion, and pray. Those joining us online will be able to submit prayer requests and someone in the Sanctuary will light candles on your behalf. Even if you are not experiencing a difficult season yourself, you are invited to attend and pray for those who are.

The word, "Immanuel," means "God with us." Our Immanuel is indeed with us, even in the midst of struggle. During West End's Service of the Longest Night, we will claim that promise for ourselves and our loved ones. We hope that you'll join us.

For more info, contact Rev. Erin Racine at 615.321.8500 or eracine@westendumc.org.

Family Christmas Eve Service

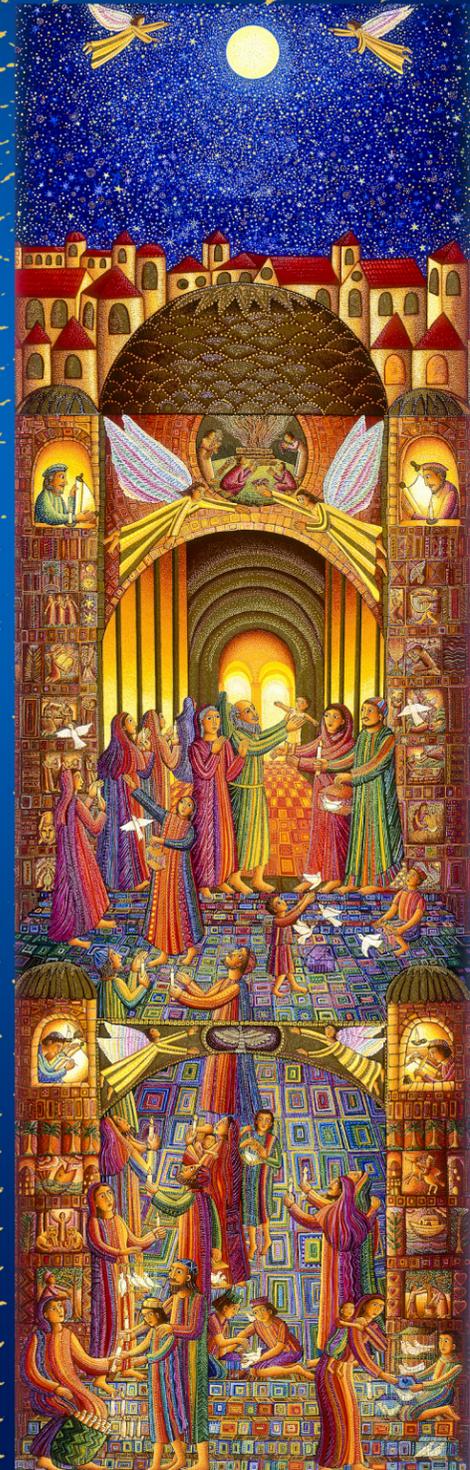
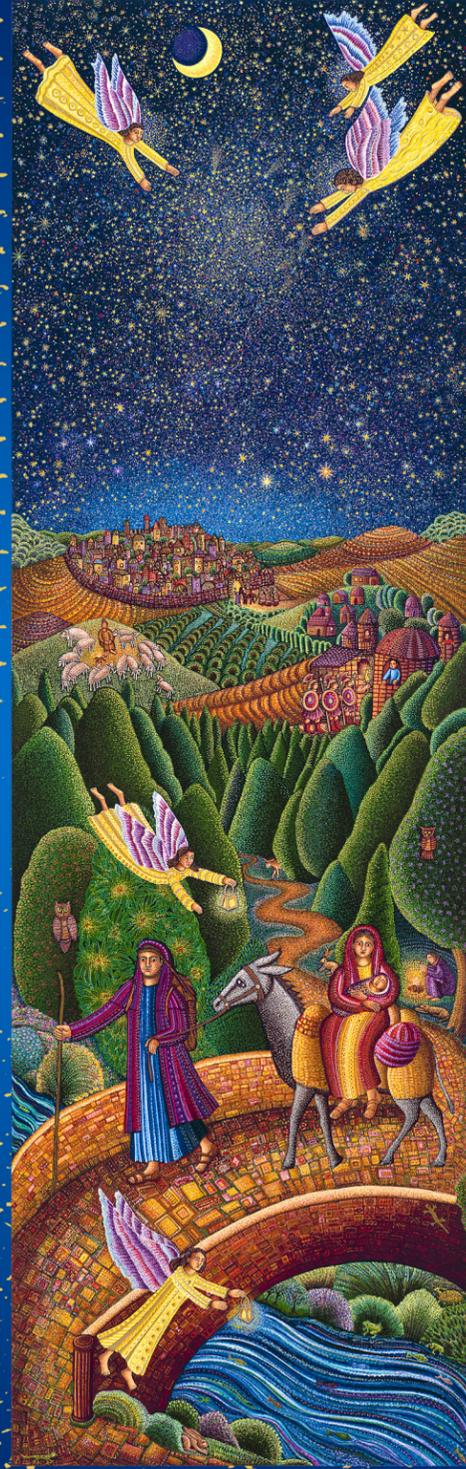
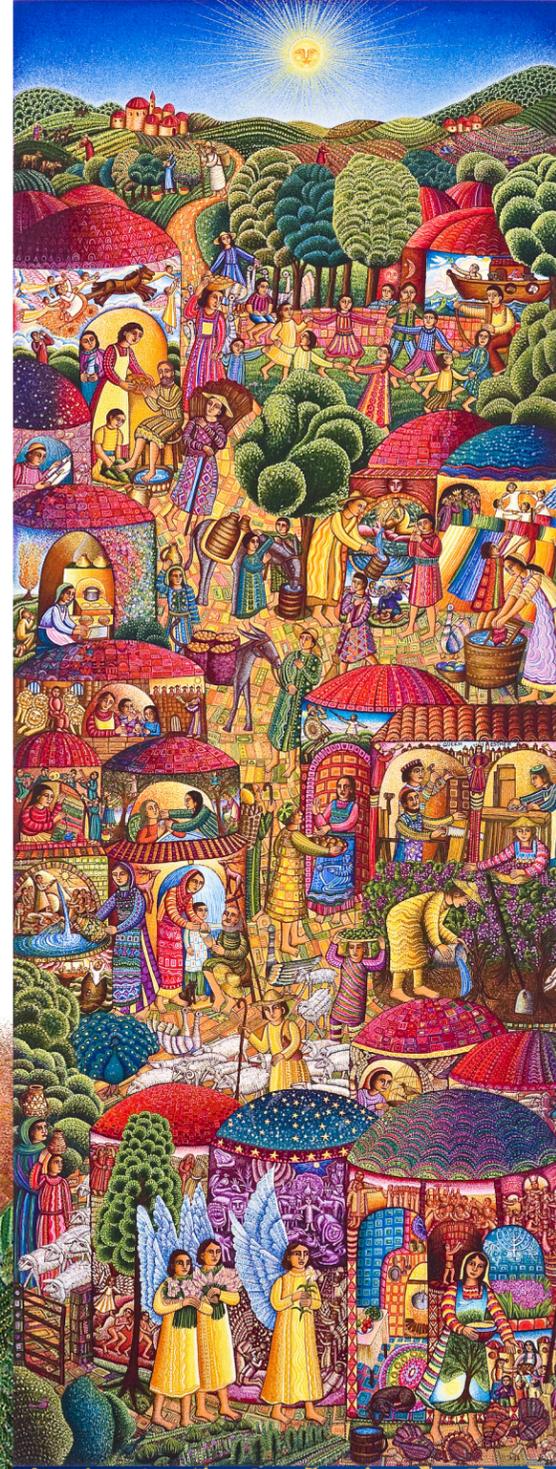
Friday, December 24 ♦ 4 p.m. ♦ Sanctuary and Online

All ages of children and families are invited to participate in our Family Christmas Eve Worship Service on December 24 at 4:00pm. We are excited to have our children lead us in worship and participate in bringing the story of Jesus' birth to life for us on Christmas Eve. Details of the service will be provided in early December.

Traditional Christmas Eve Service

Friday, December 24 ♦ 10:30 p.m. ♦ 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. and the service begins at 10:30 p.m.





WEST END

UNITED METHODIST CHURCH



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