

A serene winter night scene featuring a path of lit street lamps that recede into the distance. The sky is dark blue with falling snow and stars. The ground is covered in snow, and the overall atmosphere is peaceful and contemplative.

The Road To

JOY

Advent 2023

The Road To JOY

The Christian year begins with the first Sunday of Advent. As the world around us moves toward the coldest and darkest time of the year, we who follow Christ begin preparing to welcome his light into the world. For the past few months, I have felt strangely drawn to the word "joy," that gift of the Spirit that is ours no matter what the circumstances of our lives. Even in the darkest times, we are meant to be people of joy. This year's journey through Advent will take us on the "Road to Joy." As we make our way to the manger, the poets will be our guide. On Sundays we will listen to the poet and prophet Isaiah, as he points us toward the coming day of joy. Throughout the days of Advent, we will also explore the simple and sacred poetry of e.e. cummings, as he invites us to find joy in our everyday lives. I encourage you throughout this season to find ways to practice joy. Maybe keep a "Journal of Joy," taking note each day of simple delights that bring you joy; or find some way to be playful outside of your normal routines; or take a walk intentionally noticing signs of God's creativity in the world. May we trust that no matter who we are or what struggles we may have, in the incarnation of Christ in our world, we will find our deepest joy.



Carol

Carol Cavin-Dillon, Senior Pastor

Advent Study for Adults

We will ground ourselves in the prophetic joy of the Advent season through embracing poetry as a spiritual practice. E.E. Cummings will serve as our guide as the Spirit transforms us into becoming a people who see the joyful work of God in all people and all places. You will be able to pick up copies of *E.E. Cummings and The Joyful Poetry of Advent* at the church or it will be available online as well.



E. E. CUMMINGS
AND THE JOYFUL POETRY OF ADVENT

A "Less is More" Advent Devotional

This year we're providing a new Advent devotion great for families of all ages and sizes. The resource is from Salt Project. Read below about this fun "Less is More" Advent resource.

Christmas has become the biggest holiday in North America, and arguably the biggest in the world - and in many ways, it's become a holiday of "more": more presents, more stuff, more events, more expectations, more stress. But as it turns out, if we dial back the more, we get closer to the heart of Advent and Christmas. "A 'Less is More' Christmas Poster and Devotional" is a fun-filled, faith-filled way to help you and your family do exactly that! The poster is packed with activity ideas. Put it up on your fridge (or in some other prominent spot), and check off the activities as you do them, in no particular order. And the devotional includes simple weekly Advent services to help the family connect to the deeper meanings of the season, as well as handy instructions for some of the activities on the poster. Together, the poster and devotional will help make this Advent and Christmas the most "less is more" yuletide yet!



Both the poster and devotion booklet will be available for pick up at the church beginning December 3 and will be available in a digital format on the website.

2023 Advent Season Events



OEF Christmas Party

Saturday, December 2 ♦ 11 a.m. - 12:30 p.m.

4th, 5th, and 6th Graders are invited to join us for a Christmas Party on Saturday December 2 11:00am-12:30pm in McWhirter Hall. We'll eat, play Christmas themed games, and watch a festive Christmas classic movie. Each child should bring a gift-wrapped candy bar for the candy bar game and a donation of new men's socks for the Room in the Inn closet. Register online at westendumc.org/oefparty by November 30.

Advent Chat & Chew

Sunday, December 3 ♦ 12 p.m.

On December 3, Chat & Chew for undergrad and graduate college students, will be a special meal provided by the SPRC at the church. We will also have a fun surprise available for each student to help you prepare for finals week.

Advent Wreath Workshop

Sunday, December 3 ♦ 4 - 5:30 p.m.

Join us as we gather in the gym to make and bless wreaths for the Advent season! We'll also have crafts, cookies and cocoa, and a Christmas card making station. We'll be collecting diapers and baby wipes for Nashville Diaper Connection to support their work of providing diapers to families in Nashville who need them. To read more about their ministry: <https://www.nashvillediaiperconnection.org/what-we-do>
We hope to see everyone there, no registrations required!



Taize Service

Sunday, December 3 ♦ 5:30 p.m. ♦ Sanctuary

The liturgy of the Taize community continues to ground us in the Advent practices of waiting, searching, and hoping for God's healing and renewing work. Come along with us on Sunday, December 3rd at 5:30 (just after the Advent workshop) for a Taize worship service in the Sanctuary.



The Feast of St. Nicholas

Wednesday, December 6 ♦ 5:30 - 7 p.m. ♦ McWhirter Hall

We will continue our "First Wednesday" gatherings on December 6 as we celebrate the Feast of St. Nicholas. We will gather for dinner in McWhirter Hall before engaging in a festive activity that will continue St. Nicholas' work of blessing others with the gift of surprising joy. RSVP at westendumc.org/stnicholas.

Parents Night Out

December 8 ♦ 5:30-8:00pm

West End Kids is hosting a parents night out December 8th from 5:30-8:00pm in McWhirter Hall. We will be having pizza dinner, games, and a Christmas movie for the kids, while parents can have a night out! A suggested donation of \$10 per child will go to Open Table Nashville, one of our ministry partners who works with people experiencing homelessness in Nashville. Registration is required by December 6th. <https://www.westendumc.org/events/parents-night-out23/>

Candlelighting Service

Sunday, December 10 ♦ 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.



Youth Progressive Dinner

Friday, December 15 ♦ 5:45 - 9:15 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 Elijah Bakker, Alex Stirling, Peter Bigelow 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 at erobbins@westendumc.org by Sunday, December 10, so we have plenty of vehicles and food!

Service of the Longest Night

Wednesday, December 20 ♦ 6:30 p.m. ♦ Sanctuary and Online

The Christmas season is often advertised as a time of celebration and cheer, yet for many the holidays can heighten feelings of loneliness, grief, and pain. Events in our lives, such as illness, the death of a loved one, job loss, divorce, infertility and more can make the season feel particularly difficult.



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 20, 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.

Child-Led Christmas Eve Service

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

All ages of children and families are invited to participate in our Child-led Christmas Eve Worship Service on December 24 at 4 p.m. 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. We will have kids lead us in worship and any children who want to are invited to dress in costume to provide a visual image of the scripture. Children can choose to be a shepherd, a Wise One, one of the animals, or an angel.

This service is lots of fun for all ages and we hope you will join us as we celebrate the birth of Christ!

If you want to volunteer to help or have questions, contact Maggie Jarrell, Pastor of Children and Families, mjarrell@westendumc.org.

Traditional Christmas Eve Service

Sunday, 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.



Mercy and Justice Advent Opportunities

Christmas Gifts for Kids in Foster Care

This year we are excited to continue to offer an opportunity to buy Christmas gifts for area kids in foster care. Like in previous years, we need these gifts to be unwrapped and grouped together. Gift bags are fine as long as we can see inside to take inventory. Durable bags or boxes are preferred to make carrying items to the central gift location easiest. Because foster kids may need to take their belongings to a permanent home or another foster home, placing the gifts in a small rolling suitcase or duffel bag may also be appropriate. Please make a tag for each box/bag so that we can make sure the gifts stay together and get to their intended donation. If there are multiple boxes or bags please mark the tags with the name of the child, the code and then 1 of 2, or 2 of 2, etc. Please keep your spending right at \$150 so that each kid has an equitable amount of Christmas gifts to other kids in the program.

Gifts need to be at the church no later than Tuesday, December 12th.

Stacey will have a bin for collection of the items at the missions market in Reed Hall on the 3rd and 10th. If you need to make arrangements to drop off the gifts at the church, please contact Stacey at sharwelldye@westendumc.org. We can work out most any daytime drop off.

Visit westendumc.org/christmasgifts to find out more!



Advent Special Offering - Open Table Nashville

This Advent we invite you to give generously to the work of Open Table Nashville. Open Table Nashville is committed to relational outreach which involves journeying with un-housed and precariously housed individuals and families, being a consistent presence in the homeless community, advocating with the marginalized, and creatively networking available resources. We are in partnership with two other entities to provide a salary to a West Side outreach worker that covers the area our church is in. This outreach worker, Claire Hennigan, takes referrals from the church to help walk with folks as they navigate resource needs. Our goal for this offering is \$4,500 to complete our \$10,000 annual commitment. Anything over will go towards our commitment next year. You can give by check made out to West End marked "Open Table Nashville" in the memo line or online with a designated gift to Open Table Nashville. You can also give with the special offering envelopes with this mailing or in the pew racks of the sanctuary.



Advent Ministry Markets

This year we are excited to welcome back vendors to Reed Hall for an Advent Ministry Market. These vendors either give money to our partner organizations, like the beautiful stained glass from Chimes for Justice, or are themselves social entrepreneurship organizations that do good in our community through their hiring or fairtrade practices. We will also be selling beautiful handmade goods from Guatemala and Creation Care will be selling recycled crayons that make great stocking stuffers. So stop by Reed Hall on December 3, 10, and 17th to pick up gifts that make a difference.





WEST END
UNITED METHODIST CHURCH



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