



# *The Westmorelander*

**Westmoreland Congregational United Church of Christ**

**An Open and Affirming Congregation**

Volume 54, No. 20

December 1, 2007

## **The Season of Expectation**

When you read Luke's account of the birth of Jesus, in the first two chapters of his Gospel, you can't help but notice how the "action" is interrupted no less than four times by the characters breaking into song. We may be tempted to skip over them, but the "canticles" as they are known are not an intrusion but rather an important addition to the story, telling it in ways that prose alone cannot, getting at its deeper mystery and meaning. We have Zechariah singing the *Benedicite*, Mary the *Magnificat*, the angles *Gloria*, and finally Simeon the *Nunc Dimmitus*. Each of them has been set movingly to music many times, and to skip over them would be like watching *Sound of Music* but fast-forwarding over the songs. For music conveys deeper truth than words alone. That's why Christmas has inspired more "heavenly" music than just about anything else.

This is background for explaining why Pam and I be will away the first weekend in December, attending a choir reunion that has been nearly forty years in the making! Our first year in our college choir was also the first year for a talented young director. Singing with him and with some 120 other students, with daily rehearsals, weekly Chapel

services, and an annual Christmas celebration known as "The Feast of Lights" was the highlight of our college experience, and more than anything else, was instrumental in our faith formation. What we couldn't quite say (and being in college we were taught how to say a lot of things!), we could sing. And now, after 38 years, our beloved choral director is retiring, and so on the first weekend of December, hundreds of former choir members will gather in Redlands, California, for a reunion. We will rehearse all day and then participate that evening in "the Feast." As I said, it's something we've been looking forward to for a very long time!

Advent is, after all, a season of expectation – and so I will look forward to coming back and participating in all of our festivities and celebrations – lighting the candles each week, singing the familiar carols, watching the children dressed as shepherds and angels come and worship the Christ child. And I will pray that our expectations of God's reign of peace and a new birth of love in the human heart may be fulfilled among us.

See you in church!

**Rich**

## **Worship Themes & Topics**

### **Sunday, December 2**

First Sunday of Advent  
"Climbing Mt. Everest with Isaiah"  
Isaiah 2: 1-5  
Rev. Dr. Robert Maddox preaching  
Presentation: Interfaith Youth  
Drama Ensemble  
Holy Communion

### **Sunday, December 9**

Second Sunday of Advent  
"Prophet of Peace"  
Isaiah 11:1-10  
Rich Smith preaching

### **Sundown Service 7 pm**

### **Sunday, December 16**

Third Sunday of Advent  
Music Sunday  
Original compositions by  
Dr. Alejandro Hernandez-Valdez  
"The Holy Way Home"  
Isaiah 35  
Rich Smith preaching

## **Christmas Greetings to Christ Church**

The Middle East Committee invites Westmorelanders to add our sister church, Christ Church Episcopal, in Nazareth, Israel, to your Christmas card list. Place your signed cards in the white basket in the narthex **or** pick up a card at the What's Happening Table and sign it on the spot. Cards with family photos would be particularly charming; children's signatures and/or Christmas art would also be lovely. **Deadline: Sunday, December 16.**

## **Poinsettias for the Sanctuary**

Poinsettia Sunday is December 16. You may donate a poinsettia in memory of loved ones or to celebrate your blessings. Red, white and pink plants are available for \$8. Send a check to the church by **December 10** along with the names of the person(s) you wish to honor or memorialize.

## Advent and Christmas at Westmoreland

### *Advent Study: The Birth Narratives*

**Saturday, December 1, 9:30 – 12 Noon:** Dr. Bob Maddox will lead a seminar on the Gospels of Matthew and Luke. Learn about the commonalities and differences between the narratives in this opportunity to “meet Jesus again” through chapters 1 and 2 of Matthew and Luke.

### *Wreath-making Workshop*

**Sunday, December 2, 11:30 am:** All ages are invited to make a wreath for yourself or to give. All materials will be provided. Bring your own pruning shears and gloves to protect your hands. A donation of \$12 per wreath is requested to defray the cost of materials. Join us for this festive and fun tradition!

### *Middle School Youth Night*

**Friday, December 7, 6:30 – 9 pm:** Christmas party! Bring a gift (\$5 or less) for giving. Let Jessica know that you are coming.

### *Oh Chrismon Tree!*

**Saturday, December 8, 10:30 am:** Westmorelanders of all ages are encouraged to help decorate the Chrismon tree in the Sanctuary. Twinkley lights and beautiful Christian symbols make for a lovely tree. Enjoy hot chocolate afterward.

### *Hanging of the Greens*

**Saturday, December 15, 9:30 am:** Everyone is invited to help decorate the sanctuary with greens. Bring gloves and pruning shears to work on greens. (Balsam, boxwood, magnolia, pine, holly with berries are all needed. Please drop them off at the kitchen door by 9 am that morning.)

### *Shaw Christmas Party*

**Saturday, December 15, 11 am:** The High School Youth Group is off to the Shaw Community Christmas Party where they will have a great time with crafts, songs and Santa as they share in the joy of Christmas with the kids at Shaw. Let Jessica know that you want to be included.

### *Family Christmas Crafts*

**Saturday, December 15, 4 pm:** Children of all ages can come and make Christmas crafts (ornaments, gifts, cards) for family fellowship time. Snacks will be provided.

### *Music and Poinsettia Sunday*

**December 16, 10 am:** This year a group of wonderful instrumentalists that will join our Chancel choir in performing three choral works for choir, oboe, trumpets, timpani, and piano/organ composed by Dr. Alejandro Hernandez-Valdez. In addition he will premier his two new compositions: an instrumental work for oboe, trumpets, and timpani and a piece entitled Danza for two trumpets and piano.

### *Christmas Carol Sing-Along*

**Sunday, December 23, 4 pm:** This wonderful family event will be lead by our Chancel choir, our fabulous section leaders, and a first class brass quintet consisting of members of the Marine and Navy bands. Following the sing-a-long, we will have a special chili supper for which Santa has agreed to make an appearance. This is an event designed to get everyone, old and young, feeling the Christmas spirit.

### *Christmas Eve*

**Monday, December 24**

5 pm: The Christmas story reenacted and read from the Bible. Join the Holy Family, angels and magi at this service for all ages.

11 pm: Lessons and carols tell the story of Jesus' birth at this candlelight service.

## Festive Holiday Gatherings

### *Empty Nesters*

If you have a child that has “flown the nest” for college or work, then you are an Empty Nester. You're invited to join the group for potluck holiday fare at Gail and John Edie's home, (6116 Goldtree Way, Bethesda) Saturday, **December 15**, 7 pm. Please bring a side dish, salad or dessert for 10. RSVP to Gail at [gail@johnedie.com](mailto:gail@johnedie.com).

### *Open House at the Smith's*

Join Pam and Rich Smith at their warm and inviting Open House Sunday, **December 16**, 3 – 5 pm, 10 Sunnymeade Court, Potomac.

## Palestinian Olive Oil for Christmas

Consider purchasing one or more bottles of Olive Oil for Christmas gifts and for hostess gifts during the holidays. \$12.50 for an almost-a-litre bottle. Contact Pam Smith at [pam.smith16@verizon.net](mailto:pam.smith16@verizon.net) to arrange for bottles to be left in the office during the week or to accommodate your needs on a Sunday morning.

## Christmas Gifts for Shaw Children

Please provide a Christmas gift to a needy child or teen-ager served by Shaw Community Ministry. You may take a gift tag from the small tree on the Social Hall stage beginning Sunday, November 25. The tag will include the recipient's name, gender, and age. Please return a wrapped gift (\$20-\$25 value), with the name tag, to the stage by Thursday, **December 13**.

The gifts will be distributed at our annual children's Christmas party at Shaw on December 15. If you have any questions, please contact Westmoreland's SCM representatives: Barbara McDowell, (703) 854-8432, [bmcdowell@legalaiddc.org](mailto:bmcdowell@legalaiddc.org), and Caryn McTighe Musil, (301) 493-4571, [musil@aacu.org](mailto:musil@aacu.org). Many thanks from Shaw Community Ministry.

## Amazing Outreach

**The Embroidery Project**, headed by Westmorelander Pamela Mertz and her project partner, Gretchen Theobald, and which benefits families in Palestinian refugee camps, sold \$16,000 in beautifully embroidered items. During the sale, Pam Smith sold \$2,500+ of Palestinian olive oil, with proceeds to benefit Palestinian farmers and redevelopment projects. Pamela sends her thanks to all that helped, attended and supported these sales.

From **Westmoreland Bazaar** Chair, Amy Wooden: "Thank you to all who helped make this year's Bazaar such a success. I'm grateful for all who donated, sorted, priced, made signs, set up, shopped, cleaned up, and I'm particularly grateful for those who headed up each section: Kent Hughes for White Elephants, Nona Cox for the Bake Sale, Martha Hill for the Christmas Shop, Ralph Wooden for the Bottle Lottery, Ruth Avery for the Jewelry, Maryn Goodson for the Treasure Table, the 6th-12th graders for the Book Sale, and BCA for the Lunch. A special thank you needs to be said to the two most able "consultants" a Bazaar Chair could ever have — Kay Jansky and Ann Morales. Together, we all raised \$11,500. Many charities local, national and international, will benefit from your largesse of time, goods, and cash."

## Stewardship Report

Stewardship Chair Bob Musil thanks Westmorelanders for their outpouring of generosity on Consecration Sunday which clearly reflects the growing spirit at Westmoreland.

## Visitor from Bethlehem

The Middle East Committee invites Westmorelanders who aren't planning to make a Christmas wreath after worship on December 2 to come to Mabry Hall to meet a farmer from Bethlehem who will describe his family's work to bring peace and neighborliness to their part of the West Bank. Daoud Nassar, who may descend from the shepherds who heard the angels on the first Christmas Eve, is a Christian who shares the shepherds' belief in the message of peace and reconciliation.

Since 1924, the family has tended their vineyards, orchards and flocks on a 100-acre farm south of Bethlehem. The family farm now stands alone, ringed by Israeli settlements and the encroaching Separation Wall, the last holdout in a region marked for annexation by Israel.

In order to demonstrate their commitment to peace and coexistence, the family has established "The Tent of Nations," providing arts, drama, and education to the children of the villages and refugee camps of the region. Visit [www.tentofnations.org](http://www.tentofnations.org) to learn more about their work.

The Nassars are here at the invitation of Mark Braverman who has visited the Nassars several times on trips to the region. During his visit to the U.S., Daoud will receive a Community Human Rights Award from the United Nations Association of the National Capital Area.

Mark and Daoud will worship with us on **December 2**. After the service and a brief introduction to our traditional wreath-making project, they will move to Mabry Hall for Daoud's presentation. Middle Eastern snacks will be available.

## Women's Reading Group

The December meeting of the Westmoreland Women's Reading Group will be Wednesday, **December 5**, 7:30 PM. The group will discuss *No Certain Rest* by Jim Lehrer at the home of Diane Wagener. RSVP to her at 301-229-7006. The January selection is *The Most Famous Man in America: The Biography of Henry Ward Beecher* by Debby Applegate.

## Washington Conservatory Faculty-Alumni Concert

Florence Altenberger, Violin, Rachel Young, Cello  
Saturday, December 8, 8 pm

*Donations accepted at the door on a pay-as-you-can basis*



**December 1 - 15, 2007**

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
						1  Advent Bible Study 9 - 12N
2 Worship & Ch. School 10 am Wreath making 11:30 am Mid-East guest & discussion 11:30 am	3	4	5 Women's Reading Group 7:30 pm	6 Chancel Choir 7:45 - 9:45 pm	7 Middle School Youth Night 6:30 pm	8 Decorating Chrismon Tree 10:30 am
9 Worship & Ch. School 10 am Sundown Service 7 pm Immigration Disc. 8 pm	10	11 Exec. Comm. 7:30 pm	12	13 Chancel Choir 7:45 - 9:45 pm	14	15 Hanging Greens 9:30 am Family Crafts 4 pm Empty Nesters 7 pm

Senior Minister.....Rev. Richard L. Smith  
 Director for Children's & Youth Ministries...Jessica Petersen  
 Minister of Discipleship....Rev. Dr. Robert L. Maddox  
 Director of Music....Dr. Alejandro Hernandez-Valdez  
 Newsletter Editor.....Janet Moyer

**Office Hours: 9 AM - 5PM**

**Newsletter Deadlines**

<b>Issue Date</b>	<b>Deadline</b>
Dec 15	Dec 3
Jan 1	Dec 16

Articles should be emailed to:  
[jmoyer@westmorelanducc.org](mailto:jmoyer@westmorelanducc.org)

