



The Westmorelander

Westmoreland Congregational United Church of Christ
An Open and Affirming Congregation

Volume 55, No. 14

December 2008

God's Announcements

One of the most debated topics in our discussions about worship is the Announcements: Where in the service they should go? Who should make them? How can we keep them short? Should we even have them at all? Some feel they interrupt the flow and sense of worship. Others find that they complete worship, in the sense that when we come before God it's a two-way street and the announcements ask us to do something. Some feel that we should not repeat what people could easily read in the bulletin. Others like the sense of community that this time of sharing creates.

So how do we deal with all this? One church newsletter I receive announced that "from now on, due to excessive time folks have been taking, all announcement will now be made by the ministers." I once visited a church that ran a video loop for 15 minutes before the service that detailed the "opportunities for involvement and service." My own feeling is that announcements done right can contribute to a fuller experience of worship, and experience teaches that we have to make them in multiple ways if they are going to be really heard – in the newsletter, in the bulletin, on the Westmorelandnet, on our sign, and verbally by a multitude of voices.

And it seems that God likewise employs multiple ways of getting the word out. Think of how many ways God tried to reach people in the Bible – signs, wonders, prophetic utterances, angelic messengers, and finally in the person of Jesus Christ, God's greatest-announcement-in-the-flesh! Even some of the things Jesus said to the disciples were really "announcements" – as seemingly mundane as instructions for getting food for 5,000 hungry people, or arranging transportation for his entry into Jerusalem, or setting up an Upper Room for a last supper.

In this season when we will be making all sorts of announcements in church, let's be aware of how they ultimately point to the Great Announcement – *Good News of Great Joy for all People*.

Christmas Blessings! See you in Church...

Rich

Worship Themes & Topics

Sunday, December 7

Second Sunday of Advent

"The Thing with Feathers that Perches in the Soul"

Rev. Rich Smith, preaching

Isaiah 40:1-11

Music by the Kieskamma Gospel Choir
of South Africa

Holy Communion

Sunday, December 14

Third Sunday of Advent

Music Sunday

Advent and Christmas portions of Handel's Messiah

Psalm 126

Meditation by Rev. Rich Smith

Sunday, December 21

Fourth Sunday of Advent

"Mary, Full of Grace (and Questions)"

Luke 1:26-38

Rev. Rich Smith, preaching

Wednesday, December 24

Christmas Eve

5 pm: Service for all ages

11 pm: Candlelight Service



Sunday, December 28

First Sunday After Christmas

Rev. Dr. Bob Maddox and Jessica Petersen

"An Old-fashioned Christmas Gathering"

Senior Minister.....Rev. Richard L. Smith
Minister of Discipleship....Rev. Dr. Robert L. Maddox
Director for Children's & Youth Ministries...Jessica Petersen
Director of Music....Dr. Alejandro Hernandez Valdez
Newsletter Editor.....Janet Moyer
Office Hours: 9 AM - 5 PM

Poinsettias

December 14 is Poinsettia Sunday, the day we decorate the Sanctuary with these lovely seasonal flowers. You may order pink, white or red poinsettias in memory of loved ones or to celebrate your blessings. Plants are \$8 each. Complete the form in the Sunday bulletin insert, attach a check and place it in the designated boxes in the narthex, Social Hall or office hallway. Alternatively, you may mail your check to the office with the name(s) of the person(s) you wish to memorialize or honor. **Deadline: December 9.**

Westmoreland Welcomes a Very Special Choir

On **December 7**, we will welcome members of the Keiskamma Gospel Choir from Hamburg, South Africa. Named for the Eastern Cape River near Hamburg, the Keiskamma Trust was born out of the poverty and decimation of the AIDS epidemic that has impacted much of Southern Africa. The Trust has been an engine of transformation providing health care, a vibrant music and arts program and educational opportunities for the children of the community. The **Keiskamma Altar Piece**, a triptych combining intricate embroidery, appliqué and beadwork, was on display at the Washington Cathedral last year. See it and find out more about the Trust at www.keiskamma.org.

The December 7 offering will go to support the programs of the Trust.

Intergenerational Oral History Presentation

This fall Westmoreland children and youth have been working hard to show our senior members how much they are truly valued in the church through our church school program "Honoring Our Elders." Our youth in the fifth, sixth, and seventh grades have interviewed ten senior Westmorelanders who have graciously shared the stories and experiences that they have gathered throughout their lives. These stories have been collected in an anthology, which has been illustrated by the youth. Now it is time to see the final product! The youth will share these stories with us all in a final presentation on Sunday, **December 14**, 11:30 am in the Social Hall.

After worship, please enjoy a brief Coffee Hour in

Oral History continued...

the Social Hall, and then stay to hear the youth share the stories of our fellow Westmorelanders. A light lunch will be served after the presentation. Please RSVP to Jessica Petersen [if you plan to stay for lunch:](mailto:jpetersen@westmorelanducc.org) jpetersen@westmorelanducc.org or 301-229-7766.

How Can You Serve? Let Me Count the Ways

Meet many of your fellow Westmorelanders... Make folks feel part of the Westmoreland family... Make a commitment to social action and community involvement... Mentor young adults who work in the Volunteer Corps... Assist in enhancing the worship experience... Lift up our youth and children... Help meet the structural and financial challenges of WCUC. These are just some of the way you can serve by joining a board. The Nominating Committee is soliciting names of any who want to share their talents and time at Westmoreland. Boards meet monthly, but jobs can be shared. Consider joining a board if you have never served on one before. If you have already served, consider volunteering for a very different Board experience.

If you are interested in a Board or want to know more, please call me at 202-586-4598 (days) or email me at jeff.eagan@verizon.net.

I'm looking forward to hearing from you!

Jeff Eagan

Nominating Committee Chair

Annual Reports and Nomination Materials

All church officers, board chairs and committee chairs are reminded that annual reports are due in the church office **on or before January 5**. They should be brief and emailed to ssutton@westmorelanducc.org. It would be most helpful if these reports were submitted before Christmas due to the "crunch" of work to get the annual report prepared for the January 25 meeting. And you will not have to think about writing a report the week after Christmas!

Biographical sketches for new board members are due to Sanelma by **December 19** for everyone who has agreed to serve by that date. If your new term on a board or as an officer begins in January 2009, you should receive a form emailed to you from Sanelma. If you have not, please contact her ASAP.

Advent and Christmas at Westmoreland

The Sounds, Sights and Spirit of the Season

Saturday, December 6

9:30 am: *Hanging of the Greens.* Westmorelanders of all ages are invited to help decorate the sanctuary with greens. (Balsam, boxwood, magnolia, pine, and holly with berries are all needed. Please drop them off at the kitchen door by 9 am that morning.)

Saturday, December 6, 7 pm

Concert: The DC Chamber Brass will engage the audience with music that transcends time and place. The concert includes classical works by Bach and Debussy and fresh, newer works as well as traditional seasonal favorites.

Reception and Art Show: Beautiful, handmade Christmas quilts made by the late Margaret Fable, a long-time member of Westmoreland will be on display in the Social Hall.

Free. Donations benefit Shaw Community Ministries

Sunday, December 14, 10 am

Music Sunday: Handel's *Messiah*, Advent portions. Westmoreland Chancel Choir, soloists, and faculty members of the Washington Conservatory of music.

Sunday, December 21, 4 pm

Christmas Carol Sing-along: An annual tradition at Westmoreland! Come sing your most beloved Christmas tunes with the Westmoreland Chancel Choir, organ, and one of the leading brass ensembles in the area - - the DC Brass.

Chili Supper. Following the warm, Christmas charm of the all-church Carol Sing-along, everyone is invited to the Social Hall for a Chili Supper. Remember last year? Let's do it again! Everyone who wants to may bring a pot of already-cooked chili, keeping it warm in your crockpot or slow cooker. (Need a tried-and-true recipe? Call Bob Maddox.) We will need lots of chili to feed the expected large crowd, so let us know if you can bring a pot.

We will have the accompaniments: pasta, rice, sour cream, grated cheese and robust jalapeno peppers.

To cap off the afternoon, we may even have a surprise appearance from a very special visitor...

Ho! Ho! Ho!

Wednesday, December 24, Christmas Eve

5 pm – *The Christmas Story* reenacted and read from the Bible. The Holy Family, shepherds, magi and angels herald the arrival of the baby Jesus at this service for all ages.

11 pm – *Candlelight Service.* Lessons and carols tell the story of Jesus' birth.

Sunday, December 28, 10 am

A Westmoreland Family Gathering: After the rush and hurly, burly of Christmas in Bethesda, let's all join in an old-fashioned gathering of the Westmoreland Family. Come to Grandma's "living room" (the Sanctuary) still decorated for the holiday season. Grandpa Bob, Aunt Jessica, Uncle Alejandro, all the cousins, children and grandchildren will have a grand time for an hour singing carols, listening to one another's stories of how Jesus and some of the rest of us got our names and thanking God for our many blessings. Then we'll go to "Grandma's kitchen" for some special goodies before heading out into the cold to take the horse and buggy back home. Bring the whole family, neighbors and friends!



Christmas Eve Rehearsals and Christmas Crafts

A rehearsal for the 5 pm Christmas Eve service will be held in the sanctuary, Saturday, **December 20**, according to the following schedule:

Magi (7th-12th grade): 10 am-10:45 am

Shepherds (3rd-6th grade): 10:45 am-11:15 am

Angels (pre-K-2nd grade): 11:15 am-11:30 am

Children and youth are invited to make Christmas crafts in the Mabry Room (35) when they are not in the sanctuary for rehearsal. Materials and snacks will be provided and all children and youth are encouraged to attend.

On **Christmas Eve at 4 pm**, a dress rehearsal will be held in the sanctuary prior to the 5 pm service.

Advent and Christmas at Westmoreland

More Sounds, Sights and Spirit of the Season

Opportunities for Christmas Giving

Anacostia Health Center

As we have for the past several years we will collect new clothes and toys for **infants and very young children** (ages 1 - 3 years) from **November 23 until December 14**. The Sisters of the Holy Cross, will wrap the gifts and see that each gift is given to one of the neediest infants in the DC area, this year for the children at the Anacostia Health Center.

Bring the gifts you purchase (**not** wrapped) to church and place them in the box marked "Christmas Gifts for the Very Young – Anacostia Health Center" which will be in the Narthex before church and in the social hall during Coffee Hour. BCA members will deliver the gifts to Saint Angela Hall where they will be wrapped and delivered in time for a holiday celebration at the Anacostia Health Center.

Shaw Community Ministries

Please provide a Christmas gift to a needy **child or teenager** served by the Shaw Community Ministry. Take a tag from the small tree on the Social Hall stage beginning **Sunday, November 30**. The tag will include the recipient's name, gender and age. Return a wrapped gift (\$20 - \$35 value) with the name tag attached, to the stage by **December 13**. The gifts will be distributed at the annual children's Christmas party at Shaw on December 20. If you have questions, please contact one of Westmoreland's SCM representatives: Barbara McDowell, 703-854-8432 or bmcdowell@legalaiddc.org and Caryn McTighe Musil, 301-493-4571 or musil@acu.org.

People in Need Around the World

A llama for your Mama? Maybe some chicks that hatch hope. Or the "shear" kindness of a sheep. You won't find these under the Christmas tree but you will find them - and many other wonderful gift ideas in a wide range of prices - in the **Heifer International** gift catalog. Did you know that gifts given through heifer in honor of our family, friends and neighbors help struggling families around the world become self-reliant by giving them a hand up? Heifer animals keep on giving in the form of milk, wool, eggs, honey and pulling power. Check out the catalog on the What's Happening Table in the Social Hall or visit

People in Need continued...

www.catalog.heifer.org. Take the kids along and give them an opportunity to learn about responsible giving.

Holiday Gatherings

Parents' Group

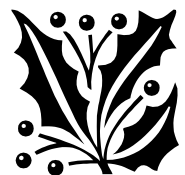
You are invited for a celebratory Christmas potluck dinner at the home of Mary Sue and Ron Johnson, 4909 Scarsdale Road, Bethesda, on Saturday, **December 6**, 7:30 pm. RSVP to Mary Sue at 301-320-2515 or marysuejohnson@aol.com to let her know what you can contribute to the dinner. Parents' Group is mainly comprised of parents with students in high school and college, but all Westmorelanders are welcome to attend.

Young Professionals

Singles and couples in their 20's and 30's (give or take a few years), are invited to the holiday get-together Sunday, **December 14** in the Parlor. Bring a gag gift, not to exceed \$10, for our "white elephant gift exchange," a holiday snack or finger food for eight and a bottle of wine or soft drink. RSVP to Trey Holloway at holloww2001@yahoo.com or 202-527-1832.

Empty Nesters

If your children have flown the nest for school or work, you're anticipating they will, or they have returned to the nest for a while, you are invited for a holiday potluck dinner at the home of Kate Mahaffey and David Jacobs, 5025 Hawthorne Place NW, on **December 13**, 7 pm. Plan to bring a side dish, salad or dessert for 10 or two bottles of wine. RSVP to krmahaffey@starpower.net or 202-237-2875.



The Middle and High School Youth Groups

Westmoreland youth, and their friends and visitors will have their annual Christmas parties with snacks and fun on Fridays, **December 12 and 19**, 7 pm respectively. Bring a gift, not to exceed \$5, for the gift exchange. Let Jessica know you are attending: jpetersen@westmorelanducc.org.

Check Out the Church Blog

Have you seen the Westmoreland blog yet? If not, you aren't keeping up with all that's going on around church and with our members! The direct link to the blog is: <http://westmorelanducc.org/news/>. Bookmark it in your browser and check in regularly. Or go to the home page of the church website, <http://www.westmorelanducc.org/>, then click on **News and Notes**, listed on the left rail.

The blog is a great way to bring information together and to learn more about one another. Snagged a new job? Written a book you want everyone to know about? Celebrated a special birthday or anniversary? You can post all this and more. Contribute your own announcements, personal, professional or church-related, and email them to llynch@usaweekend.com. Use **News and Notes** to make it easy to stay on top of all the business and events at Westmoreland as well as to promote a connection to fellow members.

Try a Daily Dose of the Devotional

Would you like to start your day out with a very short meditation leaving you ready to focus on the rest of the day? Then try out the UCC's **Daily Devotional**, a free email meditation to which you can subscribe. It's very brief and need not take more than a couple of minutes to read. To subscribe, visit <http://i.ucc.org/FeedYourSpirit/Subscribe/tabid/101/Default.aspx>.

As described on the UCC website, "A team of some of the most gifted writers and pastors in the United Church of Christ collaborate on this daily spiritual email message. We include a brief daily thought, a prayer, and a passage from scripture. Use it to center your thoughts any time of the day, or to help with your time of daily prayer. Try it out, and if it's not what you need, unsubscribe at any time."

You can also read the Devotional at <http://i.ucc.org/StretchYourMind/OpeningtheBible/DailyBibleReadings/tabid/109/Default.aspx>.

Library News

Be sure to check out the Library Table in the Social Hall for books in the Advent and Christmas themes. You might pick up one of your childhood favorites to share with your children or to relive pleasant memories of childhood Christmas. Reading is a great way to relax in this hectic season.

Meet Our New Members

On October 19, we welcomed four new members to our congregation. Brendan and Miriam Hill live in the District. Brendan conducts research at the Pew Charitable Trust and enjoys music. Miriam is an analyst with the Government Accountability Office. They both joined as Associate Members.

Trey Holloway is a financial advisor with the West Group and lives in Chevy Chase. In his spare time, he enjoys all sports, especially football. Lisa Hoopes, who lives in the District, is a nurse who works with young, pregnant women. They both joined on reaffirmation of faith. Trey and Lisa are coordinating the Young Professionals group at Westmoreland that meets monthly.

Thinking About Joining?

We will receive new members into the congregation on **December 21**. If you would like to join Westmoreland or just learn more about our church, please contact Rev. Rich Smith at 301-229-7766 or richsmith@westmorelanducc.org.

Hello, Visitors!

Wow! We are seeing many visitors to Westmoreland these days. Maryn Goodson and a small host of Ambassadors help me to greet visitors every Sunday morning. We make every effort to make each visitor welcome and to invite all of them to Coffee Hour. I want the entire congregation to see themselves as "Ambassadors" and extend the hand of hospitality to all the new faces.

Worried that you might mistake a member for a visitor? If you don't know a person's name, then simply introduce yourself. Even long-time members want to get to know other Westmorelanders.

Let's become known as the friendly, hospitable church that we strive to be.

Janet Moyer

Membership Coordinator

Whoever you are, wherever you are on life's journey, you are welcome here!

The Westmorelander
Westmoreland Congregational UCC
1 Westmoreland Circle
Bethesda, MD 20816
301-229-7766
www.westmorelanducc.org



*Wishing You Peace and Joy
in this Blessed Season*

Rich Bob Jessica
Alejandro Janet Sanelma
Marilyn Debbie

December 2008

Saturday, December 6

Hanging of the Greens 9:30 am
Concert & Art Show - *DC Chamber Brass* 7 pm
Parents' Group Holiday Party 7:30 pm

Sunday, December 7

Fellowship Breakfast 8:30 am
Worship, Church School, Nursery Care 10 am
Guest Choir: Keiskamma Gospel Choir

Monday, December 8

Bd. of Deacons 7:30 pm

Tuesday, December 9

Mid-East Committee 4 pm

Friday, December 12

Middle School Christmas Party 7 pm

Saturday, December 13

Empty-Nesters Holiday Party 7 pm

Sunday, December 14: *Music & Poinsettia Sun.*

Adult Bible Study 8:30 am
Bd. Community Action 8:30 am
Worship, Church School, Nursery Care 10 am
Intergenerational Oral History Presentation 11:30 am
Young Professionals 5 pm

Monday, December 15

Bds. Trustees, Membership, Christian Educ. 7:30 pm

Friday, December 19

High School Christmas Party 7 pm

Saturday, December 20

Rehearsal for Christmas Eve Service and Christmas Crafts 5 pm

Sunday, December 21

Tech Committee 8:30 am
Worship, Church School, Nursery Care 10 am
Carol Sing - *DC Brass* 4 pm
Chili Supper 5 pm

Wednesday, December 24: *Christmas Eve*

Rehearsal 4 pm
The Christmas Story: Service for all ages 5 pm
Candlelight Service 11 pm

December 26: Office closed

Sunday, December 28

Worship - *An Old-Fashioned Family Gathering* 10 am

Tuesday, December 30

Sandwich-making 10:30 am