Facebook Check-in: As you arrive, please check in on Facebook.
▲ Please rise in body and spirit, as you are able.

WELCOME AND ANNOUNCEMENTS

PASSING OF THE PEACE

HYMN  “O Come, O Come Emmanuel” vs. 1  BLUE 110

CALL TO WORSHIP:  Isaiah 35:1-10
(We will read responsively – the lector will read the odd numbered verses and the congregation will respond with the even numbered verses.)

1 The wilderness and the dry land shall be glad, the desert shall rejoice and blossom; like the crocus
2 it shall blossom abundantly, and rejoice with joy and singing. The glory of Lebanon shall be given to it, the majesty of Carmel and Sharon. They shall see the glory of the Lord, the majesty of our God.

3 Strengthen the weak hands, and make firm the feeble knees.
4 Say to those who are of a fearful heart, “Be strong, do not fear! Here is your God. He will come with vengeance, with terrible recompense. He will come and save you.”

5 Then the eyes of the blind shall be opened, and the ears of the deaf unstopped;
6 then the lame shall leap like a deer, and the tongue of the speechless sing for joy.
For waters shall break forth in the wilderness, and streams in the desert;
7 the burning sand shall become a pool, and the thirsty ground springs of water; the haunt of jackals shall become a swamp, the grass shall become reeds and rushes.
8 A highway shall be there, and it shall be called the Holy Way; the unclean shall not travel on it, but it shall be for God’s people; no traveler, not even fools, shall go astray.

9 No lion shall be there, nor shall any ravenous beast come up on it; they shall not be found there, but the redeemed shall walk there.
10 And the ransomed of the Lord shall return, and come to Zion with singing; everlasting joy shall be upon their heads; they shall obtain joy and gladness, and sorrow and sighing shall flee away.

▲ HYMN  “Now Bless the God of Israel”
GATHERING PRAYER (Unison)
God of Joy, we gather in this space knowing you are here too.
In the sanctuary of our church, we will find you.
In our hearts and our souls, we will find you.
As we await the birth of the Christ child, let us be reminded of your ever-present Holy Spirit. Amen.

GLORIA PATRI
(Please sing the words most comfortable to you. Here are two options.)

Glory be to the Father
and to the Son
and to the Holy Ghost;
as it was in the beginning,
is now and ever shall be,

GOSPEL READING
Matthew 11:2-11
One: God is still speaking.
Many: And we are still listening. Thanks be to God.

LIGHTING OF THE ADVENT CANDLES – Lett Family

ONE: Who do you say Jesus is?
ONE: To me, a sunflower, Jesus is like the sun, who I always turn towards for energy and strength.
ONE: To me, a team player, Jesus is a great coach who offers leadership, correction, and encouragement.
ALL: We wait for Jesus, the bright morning star, who brings joy with his rising.
ONE: We wait for Jesus.
ONE: (The candles of Hope, Peace and Joy are lit.)

CHORAL RESPONSE
“We Light this Candle” (Joy)

COMMUNITY PRAYERS

PASTORAL PRAYER
THE LORD’S PRAYER (Unison) (Please pray the words most comfortable to you.)

Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name. Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread. And forgive us our sins, as we forgive those who sin against us. And lead us not into temptation but deliver us from evil. For thine is the kingdom and the power and the glory, forever. Amen.

Holy God, who is in heaven, hallowed be your name. Your kingdom come. Your will be done on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread. And forgive us our sins, as we forgive those who sin against us. And lead us not into temptation but deliver us from evil. For yours is the kingdom and the power and the glory, forever. Amen.

OFFERING

DOXOLOGY
(Please sing the words most comfortable to you. Here are two options.)

Praise God from whom all blessings flow;  Praise God from whom all blessings flow;
Praise Him all creatures here below;     Praise God all creatures here below;
Praise Him above, ye heavenly host:     Praise God above, ye heavenly host’
Praise Father, Son, and Holy Ghost.     Creator, Christ and Holy Ghost.

PRAYER OF DEDICATION (In Unison)
We present to you, O God, our gifts. May they be used to make a difference in the lives of people where joy is scarce. May our gifts be a reminder, to those who receive them, of your love. Amen

CHRISTMAS PAGEANT  “Three Women of Bethlehem” by Martha Sliter Sheeran
*Produced by permission in partnership with Christian Publishers.

Children’s song: A Heavenly Gift for Everyone
Duet: O Holy Night Joe Gibson and Rachel Miller
Choir: It Came Upon a Midnight Clear
Choir: The First Nowell
Congregation: O Come, All Ye Faithful

▲BENEDICTION

POSTLUDE
THANK YOU TO ALL WHO PARTICIPATED IN THE PAGEANT!

Director: Mandi Salvino
Stage Crew: Elizabeth Griffin
Narrator: Debbie Miller
Gatekeeper’s Wife: Callie Thayer
Innkeeper’s wife: Isabelle Armstrong
Shepherd’s wife: Faith Armstrong
The crowds: The children and youth of West Park UCC

MINISTERS OF GOD’S LOVE..............................................................Every Member of WPUCC
SENIOR PASTOR...........................................................................Rev. Jason Thompson
ASSOCIATE PASTOR......................................................................James R. Furry
PASTORS EMERITI..........................................................................Rev. Don Norenberg, Rev. Larry Craig
DIRECTOR OF MUSIC.....................................................................Christopher Venesile, PhD
CHURCH ADMINISTRATOR..............................................................Linda Ferro
RECORDING/SOUND SYSTEM.........................................................Mandi Salvino, Dan Karkoff
SOCIAL MEDIA ADMINISTRATOR..................................................Rachel Miller
POET LAUREATE...........................................................................Jean Clark
LECTOR..............................................................................................Jim Hutchings
SCRIPTURE READER.....................................................................Holly Sinnema
COUNTERS ......................................................................................Larry Shank, Holly Sinnema

WE WELCOME all who are here to worship with us today, especially our children and youth. Please sign the attendance pads and pass the pad to the side aisles by the windows.

PASTOR JASON’S office hours are Mondays, 2-4 p.m. and Wednesdays, 9am-3pm, or by appointment. Pastor Jason can be reached at the church office (216) 671-7228 or WestParkUCCPastor@gmail.com.

FOR YOUR INFORMATION: Attendance last Sunday was 70 adults and 8 Youth/Children. Thank you for your offerings of Operating $9,439, OCWM $445, Pink - Veterans of the Cross $380, Christmas Memorial Fund $202, Endowment Fund $20, Foundation Fund $70, Piano Cover for Music Room $148, Alternative Christmas $310, Christmas $6,000, Children's Plate $6.75, Poinsettias $40

Once again, the Season of Advent is upon us. How we wait with anticipation for the birth of our Savior! CHRISTMAS POINSETTIAS add color and beauty to our sanctuary on Christmas Eve. Please consider honoring a friend or loved one at this time. The price remains unchanged at $8.00. TODAY IS THE LAST DAY TO ORDER POINSETTIAS!

THE STEEPLE SHINES THIS WEEK in honor and celebration of Elizabeth Griffin's 20th birthday from Rick, Diane, and Sarah Griffin

THE PINK ENVELOPE FOR DECEMBER is The Christmas Fund for Veterans of the Cross and the Emergency Fund. The Christmas Fund is one of the four Special Mission Offerings of the UCC, and congregations have been generously giving to the offering for more than a century. Proceeds from the offering are used to provide direct financial assistance to UCC clergy and lay employees in several areas. Congregations across the country contribute to the Christmas Fund each year, and it is our December Pink Envelope here at West Park United Church of Christ.

NEW MEMBER CLASS: Are you interested in learning more about our church and our denomination? On Sunday, January 12 at 5pm, we will host a new member class in the parlor for those considering membership with our church. ALL ARE WELCOME.

MITTEN LINE: During the colder months, we give away hundreds of mittens, gloves, socks, scarves and hats to those in our community of all ages who need a little help keeping warm. The items are hung on our mitten line in the front of the church and are free for anyone to take. Donations are appreciated and can be placed in the bin in the narthex.

ADVENT STUDY: Our Advent study this year will be hosted in partnership with Christ United Methodist Church. On Monday evenings during December (Dec. 2, 9, 16, 23), we will gather at Christ UMC (3625 W 138th St, Cleveland, OH 44111) at 6:30pm for a simple soup dinner and the study will begin at 7:00pm. We will examine the Rev. Adam Hamilton’s book Faithful: Christmas Through the Eyes of Joseph. Reading the book is optional and the book is available on Amazon. ALL ARE WELCOME.

JESUS CHRIST SUPERSTAR, Andrew Lloyd Webber’s award winning musical, returns to Playhouse Square in 2020 for its 50th anniversary. The story of Jesus Christ is captured in this timeless performance. We are putting a group together for a church outing to see the show on Saturday, March 28, 2020 at 1:30 p.m. Tickets are $58 each. Space is limited, with only 30 spots available. Sign up in the narthex or by calling the church office. Payments for tickets should be made to the church no later than January 5, 2020.

DECEMBER BIBLE CHALLENGE: During December, please join us in reading the Gospel of Matthew. You are encouraged to read one chapter each day from December 1 through December 28. Don't be surprised if Pastor Jason asks which chapter you liked best and why!
REVERSE ADVENT BAGS: Advent is the perfect time to focus on the joy and reflection of the season, but there are also those in our community who struggle with basic necessities. This year, we will once again collect items that will assist those in need. Each day during Advent, we will collect one item and place it in a ‘Reverse Advent Bag’ with our prayers. The bags are located in the narthex if you would like to participate in sharing. Please place the bags under the Christmas tree in the Sanctuary when you return them to the church.

TOYS FOR TOTS: TODAY IS THE LAST DAY TO BRING IN YOUR TOYS!

THE LONGEST NIGHT CHRISTMAS SERVICE – Joint service held at Christ United Methodist Church, at Lorain Ave. and West 138th St., Cleveland, Dec. 17 at 7:00 p.m. The holidays are traditionally a family time filled with joy, celebration and worshipping the great gift of God. Sadly, not all people experience this holiday spirit. There are many who struggle during this season. This service provides an opportunity to acknowledge what the world seems to ignore at this time of year.

WOULD YOU LIKE TO BE A LECTOR/SCRIPTURE READER? We are putting the schedule together for 2020. If you have not done it before, or in a few years, please sign up on the sheet in the Narthex. If you have served as Lector or Scripture Reader in the past year and want to continue, you do not need to sign up; however, if you do not want to be on the schedule for 2020, please indicate that on the sign up sheet. Thank you!

FAITH IN FILM: In January, West Park UCC will begin a film series to highlight the intersection of ongoing societal issues with our faith. Each film will be screened in the sanctuary on Saturday nights and followed by a panel led discussion about topics raised in the film. The first of these films is An Act of Love, the story of a United Methodist pastor who was defrocked after refusing to abide by rules that prohibit clergy from officiating marriages of same-sex couples. The panel that will lead our discussion afterwards will include J Bennett Guess, Executive Director of the ACLU of Ohio, Steven Bailey, District Superintendent of the North Coast District, East Ohio Conference of the United Methodist Church and Bentley de Bardelaben-Phillips, Executive of Justice & Local Church Ministries at the national setting of the United Church of Christ. This event will take place at 6pm on Saturday, January 18. ALL ARE WELCOME.
**ALTERNATIVE CHRISTMAS CATALOG** - This is the 37th year for the Alternative Christmas Catalog which gives us an opportunity to help others with our financial gifts. If you did not receive the catalog in our Christmas mailing, there are some available in the narthex. To name a few items in our catalogue: Bright Pink is for those who have a genetic high risk for cancer, Moving for Life provides dance exercise for patients recovering from cancer and other health issues and Youth Challenge provides recreational activities for youth with special needs. We also added the West Park UCC Emergency Food Pantry which is being used by many in the neighborhood. Your Alternative contribution is especially useful for saying thank you to a friend or neighbor. We have gift cards on the table in the narthex that you can fill out and give to your gift recipient.

**THANK YOU** to all of you who sent cards, prayers and expressions of sympathy and condolences on the passing of my father in law. Our whole family appreciates your love and concern at this time. Robert’s mom is adjusting very well to her new surroundings here in the Cleveland area. We are blessed by you. In gratitude, Linda Ferro and family.

**2020 PLEDGE REPORT AS OF DEC. 8, 2019**
Operating $104,800; 54 giving units (25 couples, 29 individual donors)
  We are ahead of last year at this time by $2,904
OCWM $6,032; 20 donors
  We are ahead of last year at this time by $700

**THE LONGEST NIGHT CHRISTMAS SERVICE** – Joint service held at Christ United Methodist Church, at Lorain Ave. and West 138th St., Cleveland, Dec. 19 at 7:00 p.m. The holidays are traditionally a family time filled with joy, celebration and worshipping the great gift of God. Sadly, not all people experience this holiday spirit. There are many who struggle during this season. This service provides an opportunity to acknowledge what the world seems to ignore at this time of year.
THIS WEEK AT WEST PARK

SUNDAY, DECEMBER 15:
10:00 a.m. Worship & Christmas Pageant in Bartter Hall
11:30 a.m. Coffee with Santa, Art Show, Bake Sale

MONDAY, 12/16:
6:30 p.m. On the Road: Advent Study at Christ UMC
7:00 p.m. Mood Disorder Support Group, Youth Room

TUESDAY, 12/17:
6:00 p.m. Deacons
7:00 p.m. Stewardship & Finance
7:30 p.m. Recovery, International, Youth Room

WEDNESDAY, 12/18:
7:00 p.m. Chancel Choir, Music Room

THURSDAY, 12/19:
6:15 p.m. Low Impact Exercise, Bartter Hall
7:00 p.m. Longest Night Service, Christ UMC
8:00 p.m. AA, Chapel

FRIDAY, 12/20:
12:00 p.m.-7:00 p.m. Discovery World Christmas Programs
7:30 p.m. Al-Anon, Parlor

SATURDAY, 12/21:
10:15 p.m. Alpha-Omega AA – Bartter Hall
12:00 a.m. Westside Midnight AA – Bartter Hall

NEXT SUNDAY, DECEMBER 22:
10:00 a.m. Cantata Worship & Baptism
3:00 p.m. Bowling