



"The Finding of the Savior in the Temple" – William Holman Hunt

United Methodist Church of Westport and Weston

January 5, 2025 – Epiphany Sunday

Covenant & Communion

Hybrid Worship – 10:00am

Our Vision is to Know, to Live and to Share the Love of Jesus Christ.

CENTERING PRAYER

God of all learning, when the boy, Jesus, stayed in the temple to learn from the elders, it was the elders who in turn learned from him. Teach us, Lord, as you have taught others, and grant us wisdom and willingness to learn. Amen.

WELCOME & ANNOUNCEMENTS

Pastor Heather

PRELUDE

Prelude from Suite No. 2 for Cello (BWV 1008)
John Hoddinott, guitar

J. S. Bach

LITANY OF THANKSGIVING

O God, our Covenant Friend, you have been gracious to us through all the years of our lives. We thank you for your loving care, which has filled our days and brought us to this time and place.

We praise your holy name, O God.

You have given us life and reason, and set us in a world filled with your glory. You have comforted us with family and friends, and ministered to us through the hands of our siblings in Christ.

We praise your holy name, O God.

You have filled our hearts with a hunger after you, and have given us your peace. You have redeemed us, and called us to a high calling in Christ Jesus. You have given us a place in the fellowship of your Spirit and the witness of your Church.

We praise your holy name, O God.

You have been our light in darkness and a rock of strength in adversity and temptation. You have been the

very Spirit of joy in our joys and the generous reward in our labors.

We praise your holy name, O God.

You remembered us when we forgot you. You followed us even when we tried to flee from you. You met us with forgiveness when we returned to you. For all your patience and overflowing grace.

We praise your holy name, O God.

*OPENING HYMN

O God, Our Help in Ages Past

UMH 117

GOSPEL READING

Luke 2:41-52

This is the Word of God for the people of God. **Thanks be to God.**

A MESSAGE FOR ALL GOD'S CHILDREN

Pastor Heather

Children of all ages are welcome to come forward for the Message for All God's Children. Gift bags with crayons, coloring pages, and activities are available for children to enjoy while sitting with their families during the remainder of the service. The Nursery is open, but is not staffed, if you need to take a break with young children.

THE WESLEYAN COVENANT SERVICE

THE PROCLAMATION

Siblings in Christ, the Christian life is a life found in Christ, redeemed from sin, and consecrated to God. We are those who have entered into this life and have been admitted into the new covenant of Jesus Christ. He is the Mediator of this covenant. He sealed it with his own gracious life so it would last forever.

On one side of this covenant stands God, who promises to give us new life in Jesus Christ, the author and perfecter of our faith. Every day God proves goodness and grace to us, showing us that God's promise still stands firm.

On the other side, we stand as those who promise to no longer live life for ourselves but instead to only live for Jesus Christ because he has loved us and given his life for us.

There are times in our lives when it is important for us to remember and reaffirm our promises and vows. In this way, we come today to renew our covenant with God. Many generations have done this before us. Today we make the covenant our own, renewing with both joy and sincerity the covenant that binds us all to God.

THE CONFESSION

We are those who seek to live as true disciples of Jesus Christ, but sometimes we fall short. Let us now examine ourselves before God, humbly confessing our sins and submitting our hearts so that we do not deceive ourselves and cut ourselves away from God.

Let us pray:

Creator God, you have set forth the way of life through Your Son Jesus Christ, whom You love dearly. We confess that we have been slow to learn from him and have sometimes been reluctant to follow him wholeheartedly. You have spoken and called to us but we have not listened. You have revealed Your beauty to us, but we have been blind. You have stretched out Your hands to us through our friends and strangers alike, but we have passed by them. We have accepted Your gifts and offered too little thanks. We are humbled by your unchanging love.

We now confess to you our sins.

Forgive us for the poverty of our worship...

for the selfishness of our prayers...

for our inconsistency and unbelief...
for the ways we neglect fellowship and connection...
for our hesitation to tell others about Christ....
for the ways we deceive others...

Forgive us for when we waste time and when we misuse the gifts you have given us. Forgive us for when we have made excuses for the wrong things we have done and when we have purposefully avoided responsibility.

Forgive us that we have been unwilling to overcome evil with good and that we have not been ready to carry our cross. Forgive us that we have not allowed Your love to work through us to help others and that we have not made their suffering our own. Forgive us for those times when instead of working for unity we made it hard for others to live with us because of our lack of forgiveness, inconsiderate judgment, and quick criticism.

Forgive us for when we have not tried to reconcile with others and when we have been slow to seek forgiveness and redemption.

Forgive us also for these sins that we silently confess to you now.

Pause for a moment of silent prayer.

WORDS OF ASSURANCE AND PARDON

Siblings in Christ, hear these words of assurance: God, of all mercies and grace, is faithful to cleanse us from our sins and restore us to Christ's image. Praise and glory be to God through Jesus Christ our Lord! Amen.

SHARING THE PEACE OF CHRIST

The Peace of Christ be with you! **And also with you!**

*Share a sign of peace with the people around you
and those worshiping at home!*

THE INVITATION

Let us gathered here before the Lord now in covenant commit ourselves to Christ as his servants. Let us give ourselves to him so that we may fully belong to him. Jesus Christ has left us with many services to be done. Some of these services are easy and honorable, but some are difficult and disgraceful. Some line up with our desires and interests, others are contrary to both. In some we please both Christ and ourselves, but then there are other works where we cannot please Christ except by denying ourselves.

Let us, therefore, go to Christ, and pray:

Let me be your servant, under your command.

I will no longer be my own.

I will give up myself to your will in all things.

Lord, make me what you will.

I put myself fully into your hands:

put me to doing, put me to suffering,

let me be employed for you, or laid aside for you,

let me be full, let me be empty,

let me have all things, let me have nothing.

I freely and with a willing heart give it all to your pleasure and disposal.

Christ is Savior to those who are his true servants. He is the source of salvation to those who trust, obey and follow. To be his servant is to consent to his will. Christ accepts nothing less. Christ will be all in all, or he will be nothing.

Now confirm this truth in holy covenant. Make it a reality in your life in these three ways:

First, set apart time in your day, more than once, to be spent alone with the Lord. Seek to perceive God's special care for you and gracious acceptance of you. Carefully think through the words of this covenant and its conditions. Examine your heart, even if you have freely given your life to Christ. Name the sins in your life. Reflect on whether you are willing to choose Christ's holy laws and strict commands. Be sure you are clear in all of these so you do not lie to God!

Second, uphold a serious spirit of holy awe and reverence.

Third, claim God's covenant. Do not trust in your own strength and power but rely upon God's promise of giving grace and strength. In this way, God will empower you to keep your promise.

Fourth, be determined to be faithful. You have given your heart and life to God. You have opened your mouth to dedicate yourself to the Lord. With God's power, never go back to your former way of living.

And last, be prepared to renew your covenant with God. Fall on your knees. Lift your hands. Open your hearts.

THE COVENANT PRAYER

Let us pray together: **My righteous God, for the sake of Your Son Jesus Christ, see me now as I fall down before You. Forgive my unfaithfulness when I have not done your will. You promise mercy if I turn to You with my whole heart.**

God requires that you rid yourself of every idol in your life.

From the bottom of my heart, I here and now renounce every idol in my life, covenanting with You that I will not commit any known sin. By turning against Your will, I have turned my love toward the world. In Your power I will watch for any temptation that will lead me away from You.

Through Jesus Christ, God offers to be your God again, if you allow God to be God.

Before all heaven and earth, I here and now acknowledge You, Creator, Christ, and Holy Spirit, as my Lord and God. I vow to give all of myself, body and soul, to be Your servant and to serve You in holiness and righteousness all the days of my life.

God has given us Jesus as the way and means to salvation.

Jesus, I here and now accept You as the new and living Way. I join myself in covenant with You. I come to You hungry, blind, and humbled even to wash the feet of Your servants. With all my power, I accept You as my Lord. I renounce my own unworthiness, and vow that You are the Lord, my righteousness. I renounce my own wisdom and take You for my only guide. I renounce my own will and take Your will as my rule of life.

Christ has told you that you must suffer with him.

Jesus, I here and now make this covenant with You and accept whatever comes in life. Through Your grace I promise that neither life nor death will separate me from You.

God has given holy laws as the rule of your life.

I here and now willingly take on Your yoke and burden. All Your laws are holy, just, and good. I accept them as the rule for my words, thoughts, and actions, promising I will strive to order my whole life around your direction. I will not allow myself to neglect anything I know to be my duty.

The Almighty God searches and knows you, even the thoughts of your heart.

O God, You know that we have made this covenant today in sincerity. If You find anything false in me, guide me and help me to set it right.

Glory be to You, God the Loving Parent. From this day forward, I shall look upon You as my God.

Glory be to You, God the Christ. You have loved me and cleansed me from my sins. From this day forward, I shall look upon You as my Savior and Redeemer.

Glory be to You, God the Holy Spirit. By Your almighty power, You have turned my heart from sin to God. From this day forward I shall look upon You as my Comforter and Guide.

Almighty God, Creator, Christ, and Holy Spirit, you have now become my Covenant Friend. And I, through Your infinite grace, have become Your covenant servant. You are mine and I am Yours. So be it. May this covenant that I have made here on earth be ratified in heaven. Amen.

SILENT REFLECTION & SIGNING OF THE COVENANT

You are advised to make this covenant, not only in your heart, but in word; not only in word, but in writing. Therefore, with all reverence, lay the service before the Lord as your act and deed. And when you have done this, sign it. Then keep it as a reminder of the holy agreement between God and you that you may remember it during doubts and temptations.

I make this covenant with God on this 5th day of January 2025.

X_____

OFFERING OUR PRAYERS & GIFTS

Through our baptism and membership in the church, we covenant to give of our prayers, presence, gifts, service and witness. Financial gifts, tithes and offerings support the mission and ministries of this congregation and the connectional church. Online giving is available at WestportUMC.org.

Prayer cards may be placed in the offering plates to be lifted up during the Prayers of the People and/or added to the weekly Prayer List.

MUSIC OFFERING

In Christ Alone
©2002 Thankyou Music. One License Song #30070
Ahyoung Son, piano

K. Getty arr. C. Tornquist

*HYMN OF PRAISE

Tune: *O Come, O Come Emmanuel*

***Praise God from whom all blessings flow
Praise God, all Spirit messengers below.
Praise God, the source of all our gifts!
Praise Jesus Christ, whose power uplifts!
Rejoice! Rejoice! Emmanuel shall come to thee, O Israel.***

OFFERING PRAYER

PRAYERS OF THE PEOPLE

THE LORD'S PRAYER *(You are invited to pray in the version and language of your heart.)*

Our Father who art 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 trespasses as we forgive those who trespass 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.

HOLY COMMUNION

Sung Responses – *This is the Day of New Beginnings*, UMH 383

Christ invites to this table all who are ready to move beyond the limitations of the past, all who are eager to move into the “new thing” that God is doing in our midst, all who are willing to let go of the pain that’s gone.

***This is a day of new beginnings, time to remember and move on,
time to believe what love is bringing, laying to rest the pain that’s gone.***

And so this is an open invitation to come and receive the bread that will sustain us as we embark on this new calendar year. All are invited to receive the sweetness of the cup as a sign of God’s promise of abundant possibilities. All are invited to this meal, for all are forgiven their past regrets and invited into God’s grace-filled future.

The Lord be with you.

And also with you.

Lift up your hearts in this new day.

We lift them up to God.

Let us give thanks to the Lord our God.

It is right to give our thanks and praise.

It is right, and a good and joyful thing, always and everywhere to give thanks to you, Creator and Renewer of all life. Time and again you seek us out, breathing again the breath of life into the deflated places into our lives. And so, we come to your table again to praise you and taste again what your steadfast love can do.

*In faith we'll gather round the table to taste and share what love can do.
This is a day of new beginnings; our God is making all things new.*

Holy are you, and blessed is your Son Jesus Christ. He healed the sick, fed the hungry and ate with those others considered unworthy. Through him, faith and hope were born again for so many.

*For by the life and death of Jesus, God's mighty Spirit, now as then,
can make for us a world of difference, as faith and hope are born again.*

On the night in which Jesus gave himself up for us, he took bread, gave thanks to you, broke the bread, gave it to his disciples, and said: "Take, eat; this is my body which is given for you. Do this in remembrance of me."

When the supper was over, he took the cup, gave thanks to you, gave it to his disciples, and said: "Drink from this, all of you; this is my blood of the new covenant, poured out for you and for many for the forgiveness of sins. Do this, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of me."

And so, as we remember these words and acts of Jesus, we offer our own lives, leaving behind what we do not need, seeking new paths full of risen life in you. As followers of Christ, we proclaim and live out this holy mystery:

Christ has died; Christ is risen; Christ will come again.

*Then let us, with the Spirit's daring, step from the past and leave behind
our disappointment, guilt, and grieving, seeking new paths, and sure to find.*

Pour out your Holy Spirit on us gathered here, and on these gifts of bread and wine. Make them be for us the body and blood of Christ, so that we may be for the world the body of Christ, breaking ourselves open to your future. By your Spirit make us one with Christ, one with each other, and one in ministry to all the world, until Christ comes in final victory and we feast at his heavenly banquet. Through your Son Jesus Christ with the Holy Spirit in your holy church, all honor and glory is yours, almighty God, now and forever!

*Christ is alive, and goes before us to show and share what love can do.
This is a day of new beginnings; our God is making all things new!*

BREAKING OF THE BREAD

SHARING THE BREAD AND CUP

The United Methodist Church offers an open table. All who wish to receive the love and grace of Jesus Christ are welcome to the Lord's Table, regardless of age or religious affiliation. You are invited to come forward at the direction of the ushers to receive the gluten-free bread and cup of juice. You may pause for prayer at the altar rail and return to your seats by the side aisles. If you need communion to be brought to you, please notify an usher. If you are worshipping at home, the bread, crackers, juice, water or wine which you bring to your worship space is blessed in the presence of God and the gathered community.

MUSIC DURING COMMUNION

You Satisfy the Hungry Heart

UMH 629

PRAYER AFTER COMMUNION

GOSPEL READING

Matthew 2:1-12

*HYMN

We Three Kings

UMH 254, vv. 1, 2 & 5

BENEDICTION



*Portions of the Order of Worship are adapted from:
The United Methodist Hymnal, The United Methodist Book of Worship, and The Faith We Sing,
Nashville, TN: The United Methodist Publishing House
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Wesleyan Covenant Service adaptation from seedbed.com*



WELCOME! It is a blessing to welcome you today. If you are visiting, please fill out a visitor card, introduce yourself to Pastor Heather or an usher, and check out **WestportUMC.org** to find out more about the mission and ministries of this community of faith.

ETIPHANY PARTY TODAY – IMMEDIATELY AFTER WORSHIP

Celebrate the arrival of the Magi with a Potluck Brunch and Seasonal Trivia Contest.

All Are Welcome!



SAVE THE DATE

An Interfaith Youth Event to support “Dignity Grows”

January 19, 5:30-7pm in Fellowship Hall

Visit: <https://dignitygrows.org>



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OUR MINISTERS

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